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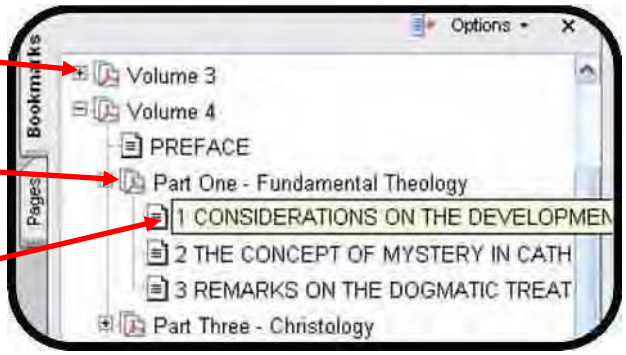

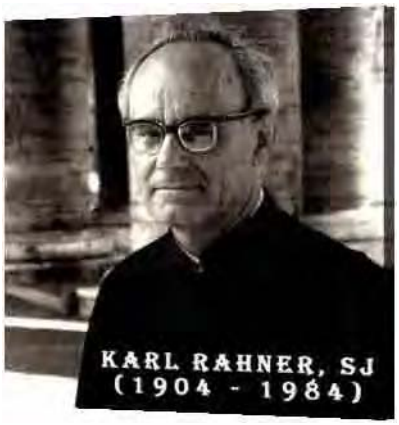

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CITING THE THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The author of the studies presented here in translation is perhaps the most influential theologian in German-speaking Catholicism today. Some indication of his authority in the world of theology is the fact that he is the present editor of Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, and co-editor of the new *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* now in course of publication. The editorship of standard works of reference such as these is a guarantee that Fr Rahner possesses one of the essential qualifications of a theologian: a detailed and thorough acquaintance with the sources of theology in the teaching of the Church as this has been propounded throughout her history, not only in the first centuries of her existence but by her living voice today. For Fr Rahner is profoundly aware of that fundamental teaching laid down by Pius XII in the Encyclical *Humani Generis*, that God has given his Church, together with the sources of Revelation in Scripture and Tradition, a living *magisterium* for the authentic interpretation of the deposit of faith (cf. Denz 3014).

As the reader will see in these studies, the Catholic theologian's sense of the living utterance of the Church here and now need not be merely a recognition that he has always an external court of appeal to which he must submit his private speculations, as though his faith and his endeavours to deepen and articulate it were fundamentally a private affair though of course subject to some external restraint. Far more than this, the Catholic theologian must be deeply aware, as Fr Rahner is, that his faith is the faith of the Church, that his life of faith, as this is manifested in his theological activity, is a participation in the life and faith of the Church, so that his 'private' and personal life is a manifestation of the Spirit in the open and the 'public' Church. And this is Fr Rahner's second qualification as a theologian. For while he is a professional theologian in the strongest sense of the word, acquainted with the sources and with the writings of other theologians past and [vi] present, and normally engaged in the teaching of theology, he is also a man of the Church, no mere academic figure for whom theology is just one specialized study among others, but a theologian who precisely as a theologian recognizes that his specialized study demands a special obedience in faith and love to the living and authoritative voice of the Church here and now, since his own special task is to receive that teaching as fully and precisely as possible and transmit it and proclaim it to the world and the Church in the world here and now. His very status as 'private theologian', not immediately associated with the authoritative teaching Church in the successors of the Apostles, is a status in the public Church, his personal task of investigation and articulation a task only to be fulfilled in the hierarchical community of the Church.

Consequently the theologian's work will only be of value if it is an independently personal contribution to that historical process by which the community of the Church realizes herself in the world and the world in herself. The theologian's fidelity to the teaching Church can never be the purely passive acceptance, the mechanical registration, of a *corpus* of doctrine which is definitively dead because it is definitively closed in the past and has nothing to look forward to in the future. Certainly we hold that the Church received her final form and content with the death of the last Apostle; but that form was a living form, the form of a reality living with a more than biological life, whose unity and continuity are guaranteed by the assistance of the Spirit of Christ. The life of the Church is at least the life of an historical community, nourished by the Spirit: that is to say, it is an organized life which realizes itself through a process of generation in time, it is in continual 'happening'. And the happening is both personal and directed. It is personal, because like any human historical happening it takes place in and is affected by the personal life of spiritual beings and their institutions. It is directed, because it is conducted consciously or unconsciously under the guidance of the

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Spirit who leads all things into the truth of Christ as this will be realized in a here and now at the Second Coming: the living voice of the *magisterium* is a manifestation of that living guidance. The theologian's life must be independently personal because it would otherwise cease to be human; but it is independently personal *within* the historical life of the community of the Church. Historical happening is not an unfortunate accident with which the Church must put up as best she may: it is the very mode of [vii] the Church's existence in the human beings who are brought into her historical community by the Spirit of the Christ who was and is her founder and head. Fr Rahner's 'originality' as a theologian is the creativeness of a thinker whose very remarkable resources as a human person have found expression in the historical growth of the Church. Human creativeness is at the very least the 'material' of the Church's history, however often it may unfortunately have been the case that it has set up tensions within her community at any given time which, by the impatience and pride of the creative spirits or the uncomprehending intransigence of the individuals who exercised her authority, or both, have never been resolved and have resulted in heresy and schism.

The Church's historical happening, we have said, is a realization of herself in the world and the world in herself. Her happening is not just a strand in the complex web of human history: it is rather, we may say, the figure in the carpet, reminding ourselves again that *we* are the carpet, that we by our active historical lives constitute the texture of history. We may conveniently regard Fr Rahner's theological work from these two points of view, as contributing to the Church's realization of herself in the world, and as contributing to the realization of the world in the Church.

The realization of the Church in the world is the continuous process by which she re-presents to the world the saving event of Christ's Death and Resurrection by tradition and sacrament. The Event was an historical event in the dimension of all created being; and it is the task and the mission of the Church to bring home to the world the Event both in its meaning and in its effectual cosmic consequences. From the earliest times of the Church, even in the inspired documents of the New Testament, we may see that the mission of communicating to the world the meaning of the Event has involved reflexion upon that meaning, primarily a searching of the Scriptures. Theology is still reflexion upon the meaning of the Event; still primarily a searching of the Scriptures, it is also a searching of the historical life of the Church as it has brought that meaning to light in various manifestation. The theologian's chief task is to explore that meaning in and for itself; his professionalism consists in a 'mastery of the sources', which is the continuous endeavour to make those sources the springs of his own life of faith, and so to display them in an ordered whole that each feeds the other and contributes to the intelligibility, at once complex [viii] and simple, of the whole. The first study in these two volumes, and the sketch for a new treatment of dogmatic theology which follows it, show how deeply Fr Rahner has meditated on the synthetic scope of a theology which would be adequate to our need today for an intelligible grasp of the meaning of the Event. The particular studies which follow range so widely that Fr J. Hamer seems to be right in suggesting that Fr Rahner has deliberately taken up one by one all or most of the problems which arise for the Catholic in the modern world.[1] But while it is true that in most cases the questions have already been asked, the 'problematic' determined in advance, so that the theologian's business would seem to be no more than a choice of one or other of the available answers, no one can fail to observe in Fr Rahner's studies at least an awareness of the possibility of asking *different* questions, questions which have not been asked before. He has indeed more than once asked, and offered an answer to, new questions, often surprisingly new questions.

It is this openness to the pressure of new questions and the capacity to formulate them

[1] 'Bulletin de théologie dogmatique', RSPT XLI (1957), p. 552.

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which constitutes Fr Rahner's contribution to what has here been called the realization of the world in the Church. In a providential economy whose character is shaped by the Incarnation, historical happening must take the form of a *conversatio*, a traffic between Church and world. If divine providence is to be regarded as being at work not only in the past but also now and for the future, then secular history, the history of what is not Church, must also somehow have its relevance in the total course of human history in the divine dispensation. The relevance need not always take the form of an indigence, a deviation into the emptiness of error and sin; it can also have the form of a 'partial plenitude', an achievement whose whole meaning can only be discovered when it is assumed into the sacred history of the Church. But whichever form this relevance takes, it is part of the theologian's task to discern and to disclose it; and this he can only do if he is open to the world to the full extent of his powers, allowing always for his own weakness, and conscious often of the need for prudence in so exposing himself – not every theologian can undergo and satisfy every one of the world's needs, not every theologian can provide in himself an arena for the total triumph of the victorious truth of Christ. It seems to me that Fr Rahner's greatest [ix] virtue as a theologian is that he has been able to undergo and bring to luminous manifestation in the Church so many and such profound needs of the world which is not the Church, to contribute so largely to the realization of the world in the Church. No reader of the studies here translated can fail to admire the astonishing generosity of mind and heart which Fr Rahner brings to his activity as a theologian.

And yet it is here, unfortunately, that the English reader is likely to find Fr Rahner most difficult.[2] It is true enough that in a large sense the spiritual needs of the world today are the same everywhere, and in a still larger sense that they are the same as the needs of the world yesterday; but it must be confessed that the English-speaking world has not been especially concerned to admit the existence of these needs, and that American and still more English Catholicism has largely tended to ignore them. It is difficult to regard the English cultural scene, either inside or outside the Church, without a sense of dissatisfaction often amounting to an exasperated despair.[3] But this is not the place in which to examine the blinkered complacency of so much English philosophy and letters, or the curiously freakish eccentricity of the few attempts which have been made to disturb it; after all, any such examination would also have to recognize the genuine sanity and civilized good manners which is so attractive a feature of English culture, and the almost total lack of these virtues (so it would seem) in continental culture. The relevant fact is that English, and to a lesser extent American, culture has become exceedingly remote from continental culture; and this presents considerable problems in attempting to make available to English readers the work of a theologian who is acutely sensitive to the issues which engage so profoundly the existence of European man.

The key word here is perhaps 'existential'; it is at least a word which the reader of these studies will meet fairly frequently. Although the word itself does not occur in the following extremely penetrating [x] delineation of a tendency common to both philosophy and theology on the Continent today, the approach described by the writer may fairly be called for the moment 'existentialist'. In a footnote to the discussion of a passage from Heidegger's *Was heisst Denken?*, the writer remarks:

> In this text there comes to the fore in a very striking way an essential aspect of the

[2] While apologizing for the personal reference, I feel bound to point out here that, in spite of my name, I have never been to Germany, and my German ancestry is extremely remote, whatever atavistic tendencies the reader may detect.

[3] The trivialization of Wittgenstein by English philosophers is a case in point. What Wittgenstein himself felt about this may be seen from some of the remarks quoted by N. Malcolm, in *Ludwig Wittgenstein. A Memoir* (1958).

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> present-day picture of man. Man's future is no longer conceived of in terms of what he is, from his eternal nature; but what man is is rather conceived of in terms of the future to which he is directed. Transcendence is no longer conceived of in terms of being, but being in terms of transcendence. We find this kind of thinking in Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre and their followers, and in Merleau-Ponty. ... A point of contact, so it seems to us, is to be found here between modern philosophy and modern theology. The latter, it would seem, conceives of man in terms of his future as this is revealed in Christ; it sees more and more in Christ the revelation of what we really are.[4]

How many English readers, it may be wondered, will respond sympathetically to this passage? And yet there can be no doubt that it does represent, both in itself and in what it describes, the dominant movement of continental thought; perhaps the fact that it is a Dutch writer we have quoted will help to bring this home: similar discussions may be found in Spanish publications. When, a few years ago, 'Existentialism' became briefly fashionable as a topic of conversation at Oxford sherry parties or in Bloomsbury pubs, it had all the limited interest of a freakish intruder upon the urbane insularity of English culture. Potted introductions to 'Existentialism' poured into print, and caused hardly a ripple on the broad, smooth surface of English sensibility. No single writer of any importance gave any serious attention to what was there offered; and perhaps the most significant episode in this little blind-alley of history was the delivery and publication of Marcel's Gifford lectures on *The Mystery of Being*. It is not without interest that the translation of Marcel's *Metaphysical Journal* which followed some time after is now being remaindered in bookshops up and down the country. Protestant interest in Bultmann's work on the New [xi] Testament and 'demythologization' has led to some attention being given to Heidegger, chiefly in Scotland.[5] But on the whole it is fair to say that for the great majority of English readers, 'Existentialism' is associated with the exotic and the queer, a continental 'new look'. Catholic readers suffer from the further handicap of being dimly aware that 'Existentialism' has somehow been officially condemned, though they are not very clear about what exactly has been condemned or in what terms. It can categorically be stated that this condemnation has no application whatsoever in the present case.[6] It would not even be true to say that Fr Rahner is an 'Existentialist' theologian: it would be far less true to call him an 'Existentialist' theologian than it would be to call St Thomas an 'Aristotelian' theologian. It would in fact be an odd sort of theologian who simply took over a philosophy ready-made and somehow applied it to revealed sources. Philosophy for the theologian can never be simply a technique of demonstration but also a process of discovery, a critique.

What has been said so far in this discussion of Existentialism in England has been intended

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[4] R. C. Kwant, 'De Historie en het Absolute', *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* XVII (1955), p. 256.

[5] The S.C.M. Press has published a thoroughly honest study of Bultmann and Heidegger, *An Existentialist Theology*, by John Macquarrie (1955); a translation by Dr Olive Wyon of a more specialized study of demythologization, *The Christian Message and Myth* (1958), by Fr L. Malevez, S.J.; and a translation of Heidegger's first major work, *Sein und Zeit*, is announced, some thirty years after its first publication in Germany. The remarkable series of translations of Kierkegaard should also be mentioned here. Other publications could be listed, but this is hardly the place in which to provide a bibliography of Existentialist writing in English.

[6] The relevant documents of the *magisterium* are: (1) the condemnation of the *opera omnia* of Sartre, *AAS* XL (1948), p. 571, and *Clergy Review* XXXI (1949), pp. 59-60; (2) the Encyclical *Humani Generis* (cf. Denz 3006, 3023); (3) the *allocutio* to the *Fédération Mondiale des Jeunesses Féminines Catholiques* concerning *Situationsethik*, AAS XLIV (1952), p. 413, and *Clergy Review* XXXVII (1952), p. 619. For a comprehensive discussion of what is involved in the references to Existentialism made by *Humani Generis*, see A. Dondeyne, 'Les Problèmes philosophiques soulevés dans l'Encyclique "Humani Generis"', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* XLIX (1951), pp. 5-56, 141-88, 293-356.

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to bring into the open the problem of presenting to an English audience the contributions of a continental theologian to the Church's mission of realizing the world in herself. Fr Rahner's openness to the world involves a good deal more than a sympathy for Existentialism; but since the English reader is likely to [xii] find some of his language puzzling, it seems worthwhile to draw attention to its sources and also – though this is even more difficult – to provide a context in which that language has some depth of meaning. It would obviously be impossible to present here, even if I were competent to do so, a survey of the whole field of Existentialist writing; and in any case a survey of this kind would remain external to the real movement of thought out of which the language developed. On the other hand it might be profitable to suggest the kind of question which has been put and variously answered on the Continent during the last thirty years, in the hope that it will provide an exercise in communication, contribute to a community of spirit, between English and continental theologians.

Since this exercise is not to be a piece of history, some historical remarks should be made beforehand. Firstly, our English word 'Existentialism' should properly be applied only to the French movement associated with Sartre in particular: since 'Existentialism' first reached England from France it has unfortunately been usual to speak of all the writers who concern themselves with 'existence' as 'Existentialists'; the German term for the movement is *Existenzphilosophie*, the philosophy of existence.[7] However, it is often convenient to use a single word rather than a phrase, and I have made no attempt to be consistent in this matter. Secondly, within the German movement there have been and are marked divergences of approach and emphasis. It is Heidegger's approach that we shall primarily have in mind, since it seems clear that Fr Rahner has found most to interest him in this particular tendency of the movement. But thirdly, Heidegger's own work falls into two fairly distinct phases, roughly before and after 1940. To the first phase belong the major work *Sein und Zeit* and a very remarkable book on Kant; to the second phase a number of smaller pieces, chiefly lectures and essays.[8] It is, I think, fair to say [xiii] that Fr Rahner's writings reflect an engagement with the earlier rather than with the later phase of Heidegger's development. The first edition of Fr Rahner's book *Geist in Welt*, a study of St Thomas's metaphysics of knowledge, dates from 1939; and he explains in the Preface to the second edition (Munich 1957) that the original work was in fact completed in 1936. It is in this work that Fr Rahner made explicit a philosophical position within the Thomist tradition which was a response to the whole movement of German thought from Kant to Heidegger by way of Hegel; and the philosophical density of his theological studies (notably the essay on Christology in this volume) is not to be fully appreciated without reference to this extremely difficult and yet rewarding statement of position.[9]

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[7] A brief but authoritative history of the German movement may be found in O. F. Bollnow's introduction to his select bibliography *Deutsche Existenzphilosophie*, fascicule 23 of the *Bibliographische Einführungen in das Studium der Philosophie*, Berne, 1953. Fascicule 9, by R. Jolivet, deals with the French movement.

[8] An excellent study of this later phase will be found in A. Dondeyne, 'La Différence ontologique chez M. Heidegger', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, LVI (1958), pp. 35-62, 251-93. See also A. de Waelhens, *Phénoménologie et Vérité* (Paris, 1953).

[9] This is not to say that I can wholly accept it. In fact, I am prepared to say that, as far as I can understand it, the foundation laid down by Fr Rahner is wholly unacceptable, however interesting the developments upon this foundation may be. What I take to be the foundation runs as follows: 'Erkennen ist Beisichsein des Seins, und dieses Beisichsein ist das *Sein* des Seienden', 'knowledge is the being-present-to-itself of Being, and this being-present-to-itself is the *Being* of any entity' (p. 82). I have translated 'any entity', because this is in fact what Fr Rahner maintains, with the utmost seriousness and cogency. Put in colourful terms, this amounts to saying that every entity (every material entity too) is a more or less deficient angel. My main objection to this approach is that what is said *cannot* be said if the Thomist thesis which the book is supposed to be maintaining is true, namely that our metaphysical knowledge derives from our experience of the world, or, putting it in Fr Rahner's (and Heidegger's) terms, that our 'ontological' knowledge derives from our 'ontic' knowledge. It is not without

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We must all of us at some time or other, in some situation or other, have asked ourselves the question, 'What does it all mean?' We should not ordinarily expect an immediate answer when we ask this question: it is not the same question as 'What does it mean?', which we might ask in some limited context, e.g. a passage in a foreign language. When we ask 'What does it all mean?' we reject, by using the [xiv] word 'all', the ordinary limitation of the context; we are generalizing the question. In fact the situation in which we put ourselves the generalized question is frequently one of loss or injury or sin: a death, a disloyalty – the characteristically 'tragic' situations, exploited in a familiar way by Shakespeare. More rarely, we might ask the question after experiencing some great joy or happiness; but only *after* the experience, for the experience of joy is itself the answer to a question, the satisfaction of the need to ask the question.

But are these situations in any way metaphysically privileged, or have we here merely a sort of exclamation, a cry of pain, the registration of a private 'experience'? It will only be possible to adopt this psychological solution, and so to answer the question by explaining it away, if we assume that, for a human being, to be in a situation is as obvious as for a dog to be in a kennel or a pea in a pod. For scholastic philosophy 'the soul' is only in place *per accidens*; but unless we are careful to recreate the philosophical meaning of 'soul', this statement may simply leave us with an image of something not-body 'located' in the body but only vaguely located there. It is important to renew this notion of soul by regarding it as the principle which makes possible and actual the kind of being-in-a-situation which is proper to human beings, i.e. we must start from human being-in-a-situation and work back to the 'soul', and not *vice versa*. We 'inhabit' the earth, we dwell 'in' cities by creating organs and tools of inhabitation which we share in community with others. We only behave humanly in situations because we have made situations possible by being human; our actual behaviour in a situation is a particularization of the human possibility of being-in-a-situation. The fundamental actualization of our human existence, we may say, is being-in-a-situation. Thus while the human body, just like any other body, is really located in space and time, it is also true that the actualization of a human body which can be located in a spatio-temporal system of reference is the actualization of a system of reference which includes spatio-temporal axes of reference as a special part. This larger and indefinitely extensible system of reference is the possibility of situation, of 'world', which is to say civilization, art, morality, religion, science. It may once have been possible to identify this human 'world' with the cosmos; but we can now see that this identification was properly a mythical reconciliation of inner and outer, we no longer live under the vault of heaven but in an historical culture. The fundamental actualization of human existence [xv] is the generation of meaning. 'O' as printed is a shape; it is also a nought or a letter of the alphabet, and it could be neither of the latter without being the former. But we do not ordinarily, nor need we, advert to the shape when we use the sign: we do not advert to the given world when, by actively inhabiting it, we use it as the sign of a human world. *Anima est magis continens quam contenta*.

The move from situation to the possibility of situation is characteristic of Heidegger's philosophy. We are *in fact* in situations, situations which do not merely succeed each other but involve each other and develop one out of the other, forming a biography, a more or less significant, more or less coherent growth not simply 'up and down' (Aristotle saw that 'up and down' were biological orientations), but in a dimension of human 'existence' in which

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significance that Fr Rahner *apologizes* in one place (p. 87) for appealing to experience for the existence of entities which are not themselves capable of knowing. I very much doubt whether the convertibility of Being and intelligibility can be made the subject of *thematic* treatment, whether it can ever be more than a disclosure within an act of discovery, remaining always then a horizon of our understanding: the light of this disclosure is what enables us to use the language of *participation*. However, it is really improper to comment so briefly on a major philosophical work, especially since I cannot pretend to have wholly assimilated it.

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meaning is generated, co-ordinated, condensed or dispersed, renewed and authenticated or conventionalized and trivialized. But to inquire into the *possibility* of this 'existence' is to raise the 'transcendental' question, in Kant's sense[10]: this is the *existenzial* as opposed to the *existenziell* question[11] and the inquiry which attempts explicitly to discuss this *existenzial* or transcendental question of the possibility of human existence as a generation of meaning is 'fundamental ontology'.

The word 'ontology' should remind us that by philosophizing in this way we are continually concerned with one single question, the question of the meaning of Being, *die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*, as Heidegger has never ceased to insist, although with rather different emphasis in his first and second phases. We cannot disclose, make apparent, the *existenzial* basis which makes our *existenziell* existence possible except by exhibiting or expounding (phenomenologically) the concealed orientations latent in this existence, but it is this actual being manifesting itself as already orientated which is the subject of our exposition. The exposition discloses what Heidegger calls 'Existenzialien', Fr Rahner (more in accordance with German inflexion) 'Existentialien', *existentials*, which are these latent orientations [xvi] of human existence, corresponding to the 'categories' of traditional ontology. They are not particularized phenomena of human existence but the *a priori* conditions in order that human existence should exhibit particularized phenomena; and again they are not *a priori* conditions in the sense of ultimate propositional formulations but the modalities of the ontological structure of human existence itself. Thus when Fr Rahner speaks of a 'supernatural existential', what he has in mind is a modality of human existence as this is concretely realized in an economy within which by God's free decision this existence is ordained to supernatural beatitude – a modality prior, that is, to its particularization as either grace or damnation. It should be clear that an 'existential' is an ontological and not a moral determination. There are indeed privileged situations in the *existenziell* order in which the questionability of our human existence is obscurely revealed; but the *existenzial* point is the possibility of asking the question at all, 'What does it *all* mean?' How is it that I am in a situation at all? Why is there Being at all and not rather nothing? What is the intrinsic, not extrinsic, meaning of Being?

Being-in-a-situation is an event, the happening (*Geschehen*) of a revelation, and it is the unfolding of this revelation which constitutes history (*Geschichte*). The revelation of the truth of Being, the event and the happening of truth, has been the particular theme of the later Heidegger. It has been very well said that while in his earlier writings Heidegger started from human existence (*Dasein*) in order to reach the truth of Being, in his later writings he starts from Being in order to reach an interpretation of man in which man is called to be the guardian and the 'shepherd' of the truth of Being.[12] But in both earlier and later writings the truth of Being is presented as revelation, disclosure: an event and a happening, the inexhaustible fertility of which constitutes human historicity as the manifestation of that secret communion with and in Being which is latent in being-in-a-situation, being *there* (*Da-sein*). Being *in* for human existence is essentially being *out*, ek-sistence into history. In this sense it is 'project' towards a horizon, the transcendental limit of a total situation whose circumscribing finitude is foreshadowed in the light of the revelation. Once human inwardness in no longer sustained by the myth of a hierarchical [xvii] cosmos of the spheres

[10] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Introduction au concept de philosophie existenziale chez Heidegger', RSR XXX (1940), pp. 152-71. This is perhaps the place to point out that there are two Rahners, Karl and Hugo, both members of the Society of Jesus, both Professors (of Dogmatic Theology and Church History respectively) at Innsbruck, both of whom have written on Origen.

[11] I have only distinguished these two words in the translation when it seemed specially important to do so.

[12] Walter Biemel, *Le Concept de monde chez Heidegger* (Louvain-Paris 1950), p. 86.

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beyond which is God, its ultimate revelation tends to be one of self-enclosed finitude; but there is no reason why we should not learn to seek God as the source of that marriage of man and earth which is consummated in the Event of truth, and which can serve as the sacramental sign of the revelation of the divine Truth itself. Our encounter with a Man can be the revelation of God; our inhabitation of the earth can be and is a sacred history. We are not merely the spectators of a cosmic play, with God behind the scenes as stage-manager and producer; we are the actors and God is our author.[13]

I am keenly aware of the inadequacies of this attempt to put the philosophical question which engages the concern of philosophers on the Continent today. And I am aware too that in spite of its inadequacy it is still quite out of proportion to the proper part played by philosophical concerns in Fr Rahner's studies. My excuse must once again be that the style of these concerns is what English readers are going to find most disconcerting in the studies, and that an introduction to Fr Rahner's work must give it special attention. The philosophy of existence is important for Fr Rahner, as it should be for us, because it has given explicit formulation to that sense of his own being as deeply questionable which is characteristic of man in the modern world; and it is to this man in this world that the old appeal to be converted and to turn to the living God must be addressed.[14]

It will be appreciated that the translation of these studies has been a matter of the utmost difficulty. Fr Rahner naturally assumes a familiarity with scholastic and modern theology, Biblical and speculative, Protestant and Catholic theology, as well as with the philosophy [xviii] of existence.15 The German language still enjoys, in scientific usage anyway, the fluidity which made Elizabethan and Jacobean prose and drama possible, and Fr Rahner exploits its resources to the full. For instance, it is always possible, at least in technical literature, to domesticate a Latin word by the simple process of giving it a German termination, thus practically doubling one's vocabulary. By a process of 'agglutination' pretty well any complex of thought can be presented as a single concept, so that each writer tends to develop his private vocabulary. While this latter process certainly increases and intensifies the expressiveness, the 'pregnancy',16 of the writing, it does not always promote clarity. Fr J. M. Oesterreicher, now an American citizen though an Austrian by origin, once gave me an instructive example of this from his own experience, which I hope he will forgive me for repeating. While still thinking and speaking in German he evolved a statement, *die Juden sind ein Menschheitsvolk* (literally, 'The Jews are a humanity people') which seemed to him to sum up pregnantly all he wanted to say. Looking back on that statement now, he claims that he is unable to say which of three possible English meanings he intended it to have. The translation of these studies has frequently involved selective interpretation. Again, Fr Rahner delights in the relatively highly differentiated accidence of German which allows

[13] Sooner or later someone is going to write a book called *Wittgenstein and Heidegger*. It would be a book very well worth writing, its main theme being the way in which these two very different philosophers have overcome the division (which is an existential as well as a 'philosophical' one) between inner and outer.

[14] It has been suggested by Fr John F. Sweeney, S.J., in a review of the German edition of this work ('Some Recent Developments in Dogmatic Theology', TS XVII (1956), pp. 375-80) that the anthropological preoccupations of the modern world do not favour new developments in theology, and there is some truth in this observation. And yet anthropological preoccupations are surely at least as relevant to an Incarnational economy as cosmological ones, but no one would wish to deny the importance of Aristotelian cosmology in scholastic theology.

[15] For instance, the notion of 'Heilsgeschichte', normally translated here by 'saving history', since it refers not merely to the historical record of salvation but to the actual *happening* of salvation, its manifest incarnation in event.

[16] For a simple example, without 'agglutination', of 'pregnancy' we may take *das Wort*, which I have frequently translated 'the Word' even when no reference is being made to the Second Person of the Trinity. Eighteenth-century English was much more lavish with capital letters than we are.

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the construction of long periodic sentences: one of his sentences in these studies runs to twenty-five lines of print. It has constantly been necessary to rethink and recast a great part of what he has written. I have in general assumed a serious reading public willing to put up with awkwardness and 'heaviness' for the sake of what Fr Rahner has to offer. The 'Scheme for a new Treatise of Dogmatic Theology' was only included after much anxious reflexion, because this formidable list of apocalyptic titles and headings proved quite intractable to the process of 'solution' which can generally be adopted in translating a continuous passage. The final decision to include it, as well as to [xix] persevere with a number of the studies,[17] was only taken in virtue of a principle which I think Mr T. S. Eliot once stated about 'difficulty' in poetry, and which applies to Mr Eliot's own poetry too: that 'difficulty' can be tolerated (and will eventually not be felt as such) if a first reading gives sufficient guarantee of the real worth of what is being said. I am myself sufficiently convinced of the worth of these studies to recommend them to at least a first reading by English readers, in spite of their often extreme difficulty. In fact I should like to acknowledge here my profound debt to Fr Rahner; I could never provide an adequate account of the influence these studies have had on me, and my hope is that they will prove equally rewarding to English readers.[18] I must not, however, necessarily be taken to agree with everything Fr Rahner says.

Partly owing to the difficulties of translation, and partly owing to circumstances beyond my control, the publication of this translation has been painfully delayed. I should like publicly to apologize to the English and German publishers, and to Fr Rahner himself, for this delay.

CORNELIUS ERNST, O.P.

[17] The Dutch translation of these studies, *Theologische Verkenningstockten* (Haarlem 1958), omits all the longer, more difficult, pieces. In the present version, only one or two very small omissions have been made, to which attention is drawn in each case. A few notes have been added, including references to later writings by Fr Rahner where these are known to me.

[18] It has also given me particular pleasure as a Dominican to be instrumental in making so eminent a member of the Society of Jesus better known in England.

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[xxi]

PREFACE

The number of specialist journals of theology is gradually becoming incalculable. The result is that essays which 'appear' in them tend rather to be hidden than to be published. Naturally it is not the business of the author to judge whether the obscurity into which these essays fall is a just fate or a regrettable misfortune. But if he has the right to make anything appear at all, he cannot be reproached for trying to publish his work in some other form which will make it more probable that someone will read it. And so we have attempted here to disinter a few essays from periodicals, leaving out work concerned purely with the history of dogma.[1]

The essays on the theology of the spiritual life will appear in a separate volume.

[xxii] The presumptuous intention of this modest collection of theological studies will be achieved if they help just a little (before they are finally forgotten) to confirm young theologians in the conviction that Catholic theology has no reason to rest on its laurels, fine though those may be; that on the contrary it can and must advance, and in such a way that it remains true to its own laws and its tradition.

Innsbruck, July 1954

KARL RAHNER, S.J.

[1] E.g. 'Die geistliche Lehre des Evagrius Pontikus', ZAM VIII (1932), pp. 21-38; 'Le Début d'une doctrine des cinq sens spirituels chez Origène', RAM XIII (1932), pp. 113-45; 'La Doctrine des sens spirituels au moyen âge', RAM XIV (1933) pp. 263-99; 'Der Begriff der ecstasis bei Bonaventura', ZAM IX (1934), pp. 1-19, 'Cœur de Jésus chez Origène', RAM XIV (1934), pp. 171-4; 'Sünde als Gnadenverlust in der frühkirchlichen Literatur', ZKT LX (1936), pp. 471-510; 'Die protestantische Christologie der Gegenwart', *Theologie der Zeit* I (1936), pp. 189-202, 'Ein messalianisches Fragment über die Taufe', ZKT LXI (1937), pp. 258-71; 'De termino aliquo in Theologia Clementis Alexandrini', *Gregorianum* XVIII (1937), pp. 426-31; 'Augustinus und der Semipelagianismus', ZKT LXII (1938), pp. 171-96; 'Die Sündenvergebung nach der Taufe in der regula fidei des Irenäus', ZKT LXX (1949), pp. 450-5; 'La Doctrine d'Origène sur la Pénitence', RSR XXXVII (1950), pp. 47-97, 252-86, 422-56; 'Zur Theologie der Busse bei Tertullian', *Festschrift für Karl Adam* (Düsseldorf 1952), pp. 139-67; 'Busslehre und Busspraxis in der Didascalia Apostolorum', ZKT LXXII (1950), pp. 257-81; 'Die Busslehre des heiligen Cyprian von Carthago', ZKT LXXIV (1952), pp. 257-76, 381-438.

(Many of the studies here translated have been enlarged and revised. Fr Rahner gives in the text a chronological list, which I do not reproduce, of the places of first publication. - Tr.)

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Volume 1

1 THE PROSPECTS FOR DOGMATIC THEOLOGY
2 A SCHEME FOR A TREATISE OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY
3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA
4 THEOS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
5 CURRENT PROBLEMS IN CHRISTOLOGY
6 THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
7 THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION
8 THEOLOGICAL REFLEXIONS ON MONOGENISM
9 CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE
10 SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCHOLASTIC CONCEPT OF UNCREATED GRACE
11 THE THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF CONCUPISCENTIA

Volume 2

1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF PIUS XII's ENCYCLICAL 'MYSTICI CORPORIS CHRISTI'
2 FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH
3 PERSONAL AND SACRAMENTAL PIETY
4 FORGOTTEN TRUTHS CONCERNING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE
5 REMARKS ON THE THEOLOGY OF INDULGENCES
6 THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY
7 ON THE QUESTION OF A FORMAL EXISTENTIAL ETHICS
8 THE DIGNITY AND FREEDOM OF MAN
9 GUILT AND ITS REMISSION THE BORDERLAND BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY
10 PEACEFUL REFLECTIONS ON THE PAROCHIAL PRINCIPLE
11 NOTES ON THE LAY APOSTOLATE

Volume 3

1 REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF THE GRADUAL ASCENT TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION
2 THOUGHTS ON THE THEOLOGY OF CHRISTMAS
3 THE ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HUMANITY OF JESUS FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
4 REFLECTIONS ON THE THEOLOGY OF RENUNCIATION
5 THE PASSION AND ASCETICISM
6 REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF GRACE
7 THE CHURCH OF THE SAINTS
8 SOME THOUGHTS ON 'A GOOD INTENTION'
9 THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE
10 THE COMFORT OF TIME
11 THE EUCHARIST AND SUFFERING
12 THE RENEWAL OF PRIESTLY ORDINATION
13 THE MEANING OF FREQUENT CONFESSION OF DEVOTION
14 PROBLEMS CONCERNING CONFESSION
15 THE APOSTOLATE OF PRAYER
16 A SPIRITUAL DIALOGUE AT EVENING: ON SLEEP, PRAYER, AND OTHER SUBJECTS

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17 PRIESTLY EXISTENCE
18 THE CONSECRATION OF THE LAYMAN TO THE CARE OF SOULS
19 THE IGNATIAN MYSTICISM OF JOY IN THE WORLD
20 PRIEST AND POET
21 'BEHOLD THIS HEART!': PRELIMINARIES TO A THEOLOGY OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART
22 SOME THESES FOR A THEOLOGY OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART
23 THE CHRISTIAN AMONG UNBELIEVING RELATIONS
24 ON CONVERSIONS TO THE CHURCH
25 SCIENCE AS A 'CONFESSION'?

Volume 4

PART ONE Fundamental Theology
1 CONSIDERATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA
2 THE CONCEPT OF MYSTERY IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY
3 REMARKS ON THE DOGMATIC TREATISE 'DE TRINITATE'
PART THREE *Christology*
4 ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION
5 DOGMATIC QUESTIONS ON EASTER
6 VIRGINITAS IN PARTU
PART FOUR The Doctrine of Grace
7 NATURE AND GRACE
8 QUESTIONS OF CONTROVERSIAL THEOLOGY ON JUSTIFICATION
PART FIVE *The Sacraments*
9 THE THEOLOGY OF THE SYMBOL
10 THE WORD AND THE EUCHARIST
11 THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
12 ON THE DURATION OF THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AFTER COMMUNION
PART SIX *Eschatology*
13 THE HERMENEUTICS OF ESCHATOLOGICAL ASSERTIONS
14 THE LIFE OF THE DEAD
PART SEVEN Christian Life
15 POETRY AND THE CHRISTIAN
16 THEOLOGICAL REMARKS ON THE PROBLEM OF LEISURE
17 THE THEOLOGY OF POWER

Volume 5

PART I *QUESTIONS OF FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL METHOD*
1 THOUGHTS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF BELIEF TODAY
2 THEOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
3 WHAT IS A DOGMATIC STATEMENT?
4 EXEGESIS AND DOGMATIC THEOLOGY
PART II *QUESTIONS ON THE THEOLOGY OF HISTORY*
5 HISTORY OF THE WORLD AND SALVATION-HISTORY
6 CHRISTIANITY AND THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS
7 CHRISTIANITY AND THE 'NEW MAN'

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PART III CHRISTOLOGY
8 CHRISTOLOGY WITHIN AN EVOLUTIONARY VIEW OF THE WORLD
9 DOGMATIC REFLECTIONS ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS OF CHRIST
PART IV ECCLESIOLOGICAL QUESTIONS
10 REFLECTION ON THE CONCEPT OF '*IUS DIVINUM*' IN CATHOLIC THOUGHT
11 ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE COUNCIL
12 THE THEOLOGY OF THE RESTORATION OF THE DIACONATE
13 SOME REMARKS ON THE QUESTION OF CONVERSIONS
14 DOGMATIC NOTES ON 'ECCLESIOLOGICAL PIETY'
15 LATIN AS A CHURCH LANGUAGE
PART V THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
16 SOME THESES ON PRAYER 'IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH'
17 THE 'COMMANDMENT OF LOVE IN RELATION TO THE OTHER COMMANDMENTS
18 THE SAVING FORCE AND HEALING POWER OF FAITH
19 WHAT IS HERESY?

Volume 6

PART ONE *Christianity in the Present Age*
1 THE MAN OF TODAY AND RELIGION
2 A SMALL QUESTION REGARDING THE CONTEMPORARY PLURALISM IN THE INTELLECTUAL SITUATION OF CATHOLICS AND THE CHURCH
3 REFLECTIONS ON DIALOGUE WITHIN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY
4 IDEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY
5 MARXIST UTOPIA AND THE CHRISTIAN FUTURE OF MAN
PART TWO *Questions of Fundamental Theology*
6 PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY
7 A SMALL FRAGMENT 'ON THE COLLECTIVE FINDING OF TRUTH'
8 SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY
9 SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION
10 REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTEMPORARY INTELLECTUAL FORMATION OF FUTURE PRIESTS
PART THREE Theological Anthropology
11 THE SECRET OF LIFE
12 THE UNITY OF SPIRIT AND MATTER IN THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH
13 THEOLOGY OF FREEDOM
14 GUILT - RESPONSIBILITY – PUNISHMENT WITHIN THE VIEW OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY
15 JUSTIFIED AND SINNER AT THE SAME TIME
16 REFLECTIONS ON THE UNITY OF THE LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR AND THE LOVE OF GOD
PART FOUR *Contributions to a Theology of the Church*
17 THE CHURCH OF SINNERS
18 THE SINFUL CHURCH IN THE DECREES OF VATICAN II
19 THE CHURCH AND THE PAROUSIA OF CHRIST
20 THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE
21PASTORAL-THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON EPISCOPACY IN THE TEACHING OF VATICAN II

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22 ON BISHOPS' CONFERENCES
23 ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANS

Volume 7

PART ONE Fundamental Questions
1 CHRISTIAN LIVING FORMERLY AND TODAY
2 BEING OPEN TO GOD AS EVER GREATER
3 INTELLECTUAL HONESTY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH
4 DO NOT STIFLE THE SPIRIT!
5 THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS WORLD
6 'I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH'
PART TWO Mysteries of the Life of Jesus
7 CHRISTMAS, THE FESTIVAL OF ETERNAL YOUTH
8 HOLY NIGHT
9 PEACE ON EARTH
10 SEE, WHAT A MAN!
11 THE SCANDAL OF DEATH
12 'HE DESCENDED INTO HELL'
13 HIDDEN VICTORY
14 EXPERIENCING EASTER
15 ENCOUNTERS WITH THE RISEN CHRIST
16 HE WILL COME AGAIN
17 THE FESTIVAL OF THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD
18 THE CHURCH AS THE SUBJECT OF THE SENDING OF THE SPIRIT
19 THE SPIRIT THAT IS OVER ALL LIFE
PART THREE The Sacrament of the Lord
20 SUNDAY, THE DAY OF THE LORD
21THE EUCHARIST AND OUR DAILY LIVES
PART FOUR Christian Virtues
22 ON TRUTHFULNESS
23 PARRESIA (BOLDNESS)
24 THE WORKS OF MERCY AND THEIR REWARD
25 PROVING ONESELF IN TIME OF SICKNESS
26 ON CHRISTIAN DYING

Volume 8

PART ONE *Patterns of Christianity*
1 WHY AND HOW CAN WE VENERATE THE SAINTS?
2 ALL SAINTS
PART TWO *Positions and Callings in the Church*
3 IDEAS FOR A THEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD
4 THE SACRAMENTAL BASIS FOR THE ROLE OF THE LAYMAN IN THE CHURCH
5 THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN THE NEW SITUATION IN WHICH THE CHURCH FINDS HERSELF
6 ON THE SITUATION OF THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL
7 THE TASK OF THE WRITER IN RELATION TO CHRISTIAN LIVING
8 PRAYER FOR CREATIVE THINKERS
9 ON THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS
10 THE THEOLOGY OF POVERTY

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PART THREE *The Veneration of the Sacred Heart*
11 THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE VENERATION OF THE SACRED HEART
12 UNITY – LOVE – MYSTERY
PART FOUR *Prospects*
13 THE FUTURE OF THE RELIGIOUS BOOK

Volume 9

PART ONE *The Shape of Contemporary and Future Theology*
1 THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL'S CHALLENGE TO THEOLOGY
2 THEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
3 PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHISING IN THEOLOGY
4 THE HISTORICITY OF THEOLOGY
5 THEOLOGY AND THE CHURCH'S TEACHING AUTHORITY AFTER THE COUNCIL
6 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY WITHIN THE TOTALITY OF THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES
PART TWO *The Doctrine of God and Christology*
7 THE NEED FOR A 'SHORT FORMULA' OF CHRISTIAN FAITH
8 OBSERVATIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN CATHOLIC DOGMATICS
9 ATHEISM AND IMPLICIT CHRISTIANITY
10 'I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST'
11 ONE MEDIATOR AND MANY MEDIATIONS
PART THREE *Theological Anthropology*
12 CHRISTIAN HUMANISM
13 THE EXPERIMENT WITH MAN
14 THE PROBLEM OF GENETIC MANIPULATION
15 SELF-REALISATION AND TAKING UP ONE'S CROSS

Volume 10

PART ONE *Ecclesiology*
1 THE NEW IMAGE OF THE CHURCH
2 CHURCH, CHURCHES AND RELIGIONS
3 ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POPE AND THE COLLEGE OF BISHOPS
4 THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT WORSHIP
5 ON THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE DIASPORA COMMUNITY ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
6 DIALOGUE IN THE CHURCH
PART TWO Sacraments
7 PENANCE AS AN ADDITIONAL ACT OF RECONCILIATION WITH THE CHURCH
8 A BRIEF THEOLOGICAL STUDY ON INDULGENCE
9 ON THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH TODAY ON THE SUBJECT OF INDULGENCES
10 MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT
11 THE TEACHING OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL ON THE DIACONATE
PART THREE Eschatology

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12 A FRAGMENTARY ASPECT OF A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE FUTURE
13 ON THE THEOLOGY OF HOPE
14 THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ENTAILED IN THE IDEA OF THE 'NEW EARTH'
15 IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD
PART FOUR Church and World
16 ON THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ENTAILED IN A 'PASTORAL CONSTITUTION'
17 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF SECULARISATION
18 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK IN THE CHURCH
19 THE PEACE OF GOD AND THE PEACE OF THE WORLD

Volume 11

PART ONE Tasks and Problems for Contemporary Theology
1 PLURALISM IN THEOLOGY AND THE UNITY OF THE CREED IN THE CHURCH
2 ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE ECUMENICAL DISCUSSION
3 REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY IN THEOLOGY
4 THE NEW CLAIMS WHICH PASTORAL THEOLOGY MAKES UPON THEOLOGY AS A WHOLE
5 THE FUTURE OF THEOLOGY
PART TWO Natural Theology and Christology
6 THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD TODAY
7 THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON SECULARIZATION AND ATHEISM
8 THE POSITION OF CHRISTOLOGY IN THE CHURCH BETWEEN EXEGESIS AND DOGMATICS
9 CHRISTOLOGY IN THE SETTING OF MODERN MAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS WORLD
10 REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN DEVISING A SHORT FORMULA OF THE FAITH
PART THREE *Anthropology*
11 THE SIN OF ADAM
12 ON THE ENCYCLICAL 'HUMANAE VITAE'
13 THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF TIME
14 THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE MOMENT OF DEATH

Volume 12

PART ONE Ecclesiology
1 THE TEACHING OFFICE OF THE CHURCH IN THE PRESENT-DAY CRISIS OF AUTHORITY
2 THE POINT OF DEPARTURE IN THEOLOGY FOR DETERMINING THE NATURE OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE
3 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PRIESTLY IMAGE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW
4 ON THE DIACONATE
5 OBSERVATIONS ON THE FACTOR OF THE CHARISMATIC IN THE CHURCH
6 SCHISM IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

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7 HERESIES IN THE CHURCH TODAY?
8 CONCERNING OUR ASSENT TO THE CHURCH AS SHE EXISTS IN THE CONCRETE
9 ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANITY AND THE MISSIONARY TASK OF THE CHURCH
PART TWO Church and Society
10 THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE
11 PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH
12 ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH TODAY
13 THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH AS A CRITIC OF SOCIETY

Volume 13

PART ONE Theology as Science
1 ON RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THOMAS AQUINAS
2 THOMAS AQUINAS ON TRUTH
3 POSSIBLE COURSES FOR THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE
4 ON THE CURRENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY
5 THEOLOGY AS ENGAGED IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE WITH THE SCIENCES
6 ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND THE CONTEMPORARY SCIENCES
PART TWO Anthropology
7 INSTITUTION AND FREEDOM
8 EXPERIENCE OF SELF AND EXPERIENCE OF GOD
9 DOES TRADITIONAL THEOLOGY REPRESENT GUILT AS INNOCUOUS AS A FACTOR IN HUMAN LIFE?
10 THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF ‘WITNESS’
11 IDEAS FOR A THEOLOGY OF DEATH
PART THREE Christology
12 HUMAN ASPECTS OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST
13 THE QUEST FOR APPROACHES LEADING TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MYSTERY OF THE GOD-MAN JESUS
14 REMARKS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORY OF JESUS FOR CATHOLIC DOGMATICS
15 THE TWO BASIC TYPES OF CHRISTOLOGY

Volume 14

1 BASIC OBSERVATIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF CHANGEABLE AND UNCHANGEABLE FACTORS IN THE CHURCH
2 THE FAITH OF THE CHRISTIAN AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH
3 DOES THE CHURCH OFFER ANY ULTIMATE CERTAINTIES?
4 ON THE CONCEPT OF INFALLIBILITY IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY
5 THE DISPUTE CONCERNING THE CHURCH’S TEACHING OFFICE
6 THE CONGREGATION OF THE FAITH AND THE COMMISSION OF THEOLOGIANS
7 ON THE THEOLOGY OF A ‘PASTORAL SYNOD’
PART TWO Questions in the Church
8 WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?
9 INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS ON THOMAS AQUINAS’ THEOLOGY

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OF THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL
10 CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE PERSON IN THE SACRAMENTAL EVENT
11 ASPECTS OF THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE
12 HOW THE PRIEST SHOULD VIEW HIS OFFICIAL MINISTRY
13 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL SPIRITUALITY AND WORK IN THE ORDERS
PART THREE *The Church in the World*
14 SOME PROBLEMS IN CONTEMPORARY ECUMENISM
15 ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY IN THE FUTURE
16 THE UNREADINESS OF THE CHURCH'S MEMBERS TO ACCEPT POVERTY
17 OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF THE 'ANONYMOUS CHRISTIAN'
18 THE CHURCH'S COMMISSION TO BRING SALVATION AND THE HUMANIZATION OF THE WORLD 'HORIZONTALISM' IN CHRISTIANITY AND IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH
19 ON THE THEOLOGY OF REVOLUTION

Volume 15

PART ONE Introduction
1 THE HISTORY OF PENANCE
2 SIN AS LOSS OF GRACE IN EARLY CHURCH LITERATURE
PART TWO The Roman Tradition
3 THE PENITENTIAL TEACHING OF THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS
4 THE POST-BAPTISMAL FORGIVENESS OF SINS IN THE REGULA FIDEI OF IRENAEUS
PART THREE The African Tradition
5 TERTULLIAN' S THEOLOGY OF PENANCE
6 THE PENITENTIAL TEACHING OF CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE
PART FOUR The Tradition of the East
7 PENITENTIAL TEACHING AND PRACTICE ACCORDING TO THE DIDASCALIA APOSTOLORUM
8 THE PENITENTIAL TEACHING OF ORIGEN

Volume 16

PART ONE Faith and Spirit
1 THE FOUNDATION OF BELIEF TODAY
2 EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT AND EXISTENTIAL COMMITMENT
3 RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GRACE
4 ANONYMOUS AND EXPLICIT FAITH
5 FAITH BETWEEN RATIONALITY AND EMOTION
PART TWO Spiritual Theology in Christian Tradition
6 THE 'SPIRITUAL SENSES' ACCORDING TO ORIGEN
7 THE DOCTRINE OF THE 'SPIRITUAL SENSES' IN THE MIDDLE AGES
8 MODERN PIETY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF RETREATS
9 REFLECTIONS ON A NEW TASK FOR FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY
PART THREE Listening to Scripture
10 THE ACCEPTANCE IN FAITH OF THE TRUTH OF GOD
11 THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIAN DOGMATIC THEOLOGY
12 ON THE 'HISTORY OF REVELATION' ACCORDING TO THE SECOND

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VATICAN COUNCIL
13 THE ONE CHRIST AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF SALVATION
PART FOUR Questions About God
14 THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD
15 AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD IN ST THOMAS AQUINAS
16 THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

Volume 17

PART ONE *The Experience of Jesus*
1 CHRISTMAS IN THE LIGHT OF THE IGNATIAN *EXERCISES*
2 ON THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE EASTER FAITH
3 JESUS' RESURRECTION
4 CHRISTOLOGY TODAY?
5 JESUS CHRIST IN THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS
PART TWO Man in the Spirit
6 THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE QUESTION ABOUT MAN
7 THE BODY IN THE ORDER OF SALVATION
8 MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY
9 THE LIBERTY OF THE SICK, THEOLOGICALLY CONSIDERED
10 'THE INTERMEDIATE STATE'
PART THREE *The Ministry and the Spirit*
11 OPPOSITION IN THE CHURCH THE POSSIBILITIES AND THE LIMITS
12 'MYSTERIUM ECCLESIAE'
13 THE AREA BISHOP: SOME THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS
14 TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE CHURCH AND SECULAR SOCIETY
PART FOUR Signs of the Times for the Church
15 THE ONE CHURCH AND THE MANY CHURCHES
16 IS CHURCH UNION DOGMATICALLY POSSIBLE?
17 THIRD CHURCH?
18 RELIGIOUS FEELING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH
19 SOME CLARIFYING REMARKS ABOUT MY OWN WORK

Volume 18

PART ONE *Theological Hermeneutics*
1 YESTERDAY'S HISTORY OF DOGMA AND THEOLOGY FOR TOMORROW
2 PSEUDO-PROBLEMS IN ECUMENICAL DISCUSSION
3 MAGISTERIUM AND THEOLOGY
4 ON BAD ARGUMENTS IN MORAL THEOLOGY
PART TWO *Theology of God and Christology*
5 THE HUMAN QUESTION OF MEANING IN FACE OF THE ABSOLUTE MYSTERY OF GOD
6 ONENESS AND THREEFOLDNESS OF GOD IN DISCUSSION WITH ISLAM
7 DIALOGUE WITH GOD?
8 THE DEATH OF JESUS AND THE CLOSURE OF REVELATION
9 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TODAY TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST?
10 FOLLOWING THE CRUCIFIED
PART THREE *Experience of the Spirit*
11 EXPERIENCE OF TRANSCENDENCE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF CATHOLIC DOGMATICS

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12 EXPERIENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
13 FAITH AS COURAGE
14 CHRISTIAN DYING
PART FOUR Grace and World
15 JUSTIFICATION AND WORLD DEVELOPMENT FROM A CATHOLIC VIEWPOINT
16 LAW AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING
17 ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS FOR SALVATION

Volume 19

PART ONE Faith and the Church
1 FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH
2 ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURAL SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY
3 THE CHURCH'S REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL PROVENANCE FROM THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS
4 BRIEF THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE 'STATE OF FALLEN NATURE'
PART TWO Priesthood
5 CONSECRATION IN THE LIFE AND REFLECTION OF THE CHURCH
6 PASTORAL MINISTRIES AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP
7 THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY OF PASTORAL WORK IN THE PARISH
8 THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SECULAR PRIEST
9 THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE PRIEST IN THE LIGHT OF HIS OFFICE
PART THREE Life in the Church
10 ON THE THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP
11 THE SUNDAY PRECEPT IN AN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY
12 BASIC COMMUNITIES
PART FOUR *The Future of the Church*
13 ETERNITY FROM TIME SCEPTICISM IN REGARD TO ETERNAL LIFE
PART FIVE Sin and Suffering
14 PURGATORY
15 WHY DOES GOD ALLOW US TO SUFFER?
PART SIX Mary and Woman
16 MARY AND THE CHRISTIAN IMAGE OF WOMAN
17 MARY'S VIRGINITY
PART SEVEN *Angels*

Volume 20

PART ONE Faith and Church
1 COURAGE FOR AN ECCLESIAL CHRISTIANITY
2 ON THE SITUATION OF FAITH
PART TWO Priesthood
3 WOMEN AND THE PRIESTHOOD
PART THREE Life in the Church
4 THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL
5 THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH'S DEVELOPMENT WORK
PART FOUR Future of the Church

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6 BASIC THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
7 THE ABIDING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
8 THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE
9 STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE
10 DREAM OF THE CHURCH
11 THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE
12 UNITY OF THE CHURCH – UNITY OF MANKIND
13 THE INEXHAUSTIBLE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD AND OUR CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE

Volume 21

PART ONE *Science and Theology*
1 PROFANE HISTORY AND SALVATION HISTORY
2 NATURAL SCIENCE AND REASONABLE FAITH
3 THEOLOGY TODAY
4 THE PRESENT SITUATION OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY
5 ASPECTS OF EUROPEAN THEOLOGY
6 A THEOLOGY THAT WE CAN LIVE WITH
PART TWO *Faith*
7 THE MATURE CHRISTIAN
8 JUSTIFYING FAITH IN AN AGNOSTIC WORLD
9 THE CHURCH AND ATHEISM
10 THE ACT OF FAITH AND THE CONTENT OF FAITH
11 A HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS
PART THREE Christianity
12 CHRISTIANITY'S ABSOLUTE CLAIM
13 THE SPECIFIC CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD
14 THE QUESTION OF MEANING AS A QUESTION OF GOD
15 JESUS CHRIST – THE MEANING OF LIFE
16 CHRISTOLOGY TODAY
17 BRIEF OBSERVATIONS ON SYSTEMATIC CHRISTOLOGY TODAY
18 THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF REDEMPTION
19 RECONCILIATION AND VICARIOUS REPRESENTATION

Volume 22

PART ONE *Humane Society*
1 CONSCIENCE FREEDOM AND THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN DECISION
2 DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE AS THE FOUNDATION OF A HUMANE SOCIETY
3 UTOPIA AND REALITY: THE SHAPE OF CHRISTIAN EXISTENCE CAUGHT BETWEEN THE IDEAL AND THE REAL
4 THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF PEACE
5 THE PROBLEM OF EUROPE'S FUTURE
PART TWO Ecumenism
6 REALISTIC POSSIBILITY OF A UNIFICATION IN FAITH?
7 CONCRETE OFFICIAL STEPS TOWARD UNIFICATION
8 ECUMENICAL TOGETHERNESS TODAY
PART THREE The Future of the Church
9 FORGOTTEN DOGMATIC INITIATIVES OF THE SECOND VATICAN

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COUNCIL
10 PERSPECTIVES FOR PASTORAL THEOLOGY IN THE FUTURE
11 THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES
12 RITES CONTROVERSY: NEW TASKS FOR THE CHURCH
13 THE RELATION BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND POPULAR RELIGION
14 SOUTH AMERICAN BASE COMMUNITIES IN A EUROPEAN CHURCH
15 CHRISTIAN PESSIMISM
PART FOUR Doctrine and Magisterium
16 WHAT THE CHURCH OFFICIALLY TEACHES AND WHAT THE PEOPLE ACTUALLY BELIEVE
17 THEOLOGY AND THE ROMAN MAGISTERIUM
18 THE PERENNIAL ACTUALITY OF THE PAPACY
19 UNDERSTANDING THE PRIESTLY OFFICE
20 BOOK OF GOD – BOOK OF HUMAN BEINGS

Volume 23

PART ONE Christian Life
1 ANXIETY AND CHRISTIAN TRUST IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
2 NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE CHRISTIAN
3 PLEA FOR A NAMELESS VIRTUE
4 INTELLECTUAL PATIENCE WITH OURSELVES
5 A BASIC THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF OLD AGE
6 AUTHORITY
PART TWO The Society of Jesus
7 THE SITUATION OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS SINCE ITS DIFFICULTIES WITH THE VATICAN
PART THREE *Piety*
9 EUCHARISTIC WORSHIP
10 DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART TODAY
11 COURAGE FOR DEVOTION TO MARY
12 UNDERSTANDING CHRISTMAS
13 THE THEOLOGY OF THE RELIGIOUS MEANING OF IMAGES
14 ART AGAINST THE HORIZON OF THEOLOGY AND PIETY
15 AGAINST THE WITCH HYSTERIA
PART FOUR *Sacraments*
16 FAITH AND SACRAMENT
17 QUESTIONS ON THE THEOLOGY OF SACRAMENTS
18 BAPTISM AND THE RENEWAL OF BAPTISM
19 THE STATUS OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

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1

THE PROSPECTS FOR DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

Unfulfilled programmes, pronouncements about 'how it should be done' (when nothing has in fact been done) are cheap enough. They arouse the suspicion that their author is one of those people who always know better. But on the other hand no human being has ever got anything done without some sort of plan in mind. Programmes are unavoidable. If it is beginning to seem impossible today for a single theologian to write a complete treatise of dogmatic theology – something more than a textbook or, speaking generally, a convenient summary of received opinions – then even an unfulfilled programme for a treatise may perhaps be more than just a pretension to superior knowledge, in that it can open and support discussion of the question: How should a group of theologians attempt to work out together a treatise of Catholic theology for today?

A brief and open-minded survey of Catholic theological writing in our time brings us to some surprising conclusions. Such conclusions are inevitably onesided and schematic, and will, happily, be unjust in particular cases. It can always be said to the critic who offers them: *medice*, *cura teipsum*. But is it really true that a man who lives in a glass house may never throw stones? He might very well be prepared to put up with the breaking of his own windows for the sake of the thing. In a word: if we review the productions of Catholic theology over the last twenty or thirty years – speaking schematically, of course, and with some injustice in particular cases and to particular individuals – we may divide them into three groups[1]: textbooks, historical [2] studies of Christian dogma, and theological studies of special or marginal topics.

The textbooks are – textbooks. Whoever has tried his hand at it will be well aware that it is no easy matter to write a properly planned textbook or even part of one. A whole series of well-arranged textbooks is available in Latin and in modern languages. It follows from the nature of Catholic understanding of the faith, and from its concern with theologians who are beginning the basic study of the Church's teaching, that it should not be the ambition of these Catholic textbooks to seek 'originality' at any price. But is it blasphemous to condemn them (that there are exceptions is not denied) for a quite startling kind of 'unoriginality'? They may have been filled out in many respects over the last twenty or thirty years: some improvement on the historical side, references to literature (seldom assimilated, admittedly) and so on. But let us bear this in mind: no one can deny that in the last two centuries cultural and spiritual transformations have taken place which, to say the very least, are comparable in depth and extent and power to mould men's lives, with those which took place between the time of Augustine and that of the golden age of scholasticism. If we hold that theology is an endeavour of the spirit and a science which has to be of service to its own time, just as it has, or should have, grown out of its own time; and if we hold this because it has to serve

[1] We ignore of course the literature of 'haute vulgarisation', theological journalism and theological freebootery (which is naturally also to be found), and still more the often necessary and sometimes superfluous writings in which the mass of the faithful needs to have the daily bread of its religious instruction new baked, new every day, even if it looks just the same today as it did yesterday. We have in mind here only those theological productions which are usually characterized as 'scientific'. Admittedly, the distinction between science and popularization is especially problematic in theology; for here 'science' rests on the faith of the 'people'. And perhaps it has almost always been the case that 'armchair [sitzende]' scientific theology (to make use of an expression, itself problematic, of H. U. von Balthasar's) has learnt more from 'praying' (and preaching) non-scientific theology than the reverse. But that is not our concern here.

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salvation and not mere theoretical curiosity (granting always that pure understanding as such is itself a part of salvation) and salvation is always the salvation of individual men here and now; if we hold in faith that divine revelation is a source of such treasures of truth that it can never be exhausted (Denz 3014): then we should have expected to find at least as pronounced a difference between a theological compendium of today and one of, say, 1750, as between the *Summa Theologica* of St Thomas and the writings of Augustine.

What are the facts? We might just as well look up the average *tractatus* of Billuart or the Wirceburgenses as a modern treatise. Where it is properly dogmatic theology – that is to say, neither history [3] of dogma or its pitiful crumbs, nor *haute vulgarisation* – such a modern theological treatise in no way differs from its predecessors of 200 years ago.[2] Let no one say that of course it could not be different from its predecessors in view of the immutability of the *depositum fidei*. That is simply not true. We need only try to form an idea of the historically contingent character of the uniform canon which has regulated the choice of topics and treatises in a theological textbook for over two hundred years, in order to see that such an assertion concerning the unavoidable immutability of our textbooks is false.[3] How much is missing from our modern manuals which was dealt with at length in the textbook composed by St Thomas (it is called the *Summa Theologica*)! Where is it laid down that the seven sacraments should be dealt with one after the other and should demand approximately a third of the contents of a textbook? Let us observe how much space is allotted to the tractate *De Resurrectione Christi* or, more generally, the *De Mysteriis Vitae Christi*, and let us ask ourselves whether this allotment of space, in itself betraying something of the deeper attitudes and perspectives of the writers' minds, is just the obvious one. We should ask ourselves why for instance in the treatise *De Paenitentia* the personal, existential side of the sacramental action usually receives explicit and extended treatment (*De Virtute Paenitentiae*), while in every other sacrament, with a pathetic sense of its obviousness, the treatment of this aspect is supposed to be superfluous, or at most disposed of in a couple of footnotes. Or again, let us imagine a Biblical theology, of a kind which we hardly possess yet but of which we can form a rough idea, and ask ourselves what themes and proportions we [4] might not unreasonably suppose it would give rise to in the field of systematic theology as well. There is a very large number of treatises on dogmatic and moral theology (or is it all of them?) in which practically nothing is said on the Pauline theme of Law and Freedom.[4] Is it simply obvious that this is right? We may test the average textbook's views of history: between Adam (*De Deo Creante et Elevante*; *De Peccato Originali*) and Christ we find – nothing. Surely there is room for a theology of saving history in general, treating of both the Old Covenant and of the way of salvation outside the history of Israel (the latter in its own right). Similar examples to illustrate the general approach to problems in the average

[2] Omitting here the consideration of *theologia fundametalis*.

[3] The vicious circle of a Denzinger Theology is beginning to threaten us here. However 'objective' Denzinger may be as to actual texts chosen and collected there, it is equally subjective as to their choice and collection. It is obviously affected by the canon which regulates the questions and theses of current seminary theology: what it has collected and selected is what is needed in the way of authoritative doctrinal pronouncements in just this context. May not much else be found in Denzinger's sources (Papal letters, bullaria, etc.) if only this other material were thought to be as important as this or that question on which Denzinger does in fact supply explanatory material? Now that Denzinger with its selection (and its *Index Systemasicus*) is in existence, the theologian feels almost instinctively that it is the canonical norm for what questions are to be treated of in dogmatic theology; for other questions, no evidence may be adduced from Denzinger. The vicious circle is complete.

[4] I have not been able to find an entry for 'Sermon on the Mount' in Noldin's *Index Systematicus*. In the Encyclical of Leo XIII on Freedom (*Libertas praestantissimum*) not a word is to be found on the freedom which has become ours by the gift of Christ's redemptive grace. The Encyclical speaks, in terms of philosophy and the Natural Law, only about the freedom which we just always have. Are observations of this kind, which could be multiplied at will, simply to be explained by every author's own personal choice of his theme?

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textbook may easily be produced, in regard to its themes alone.

No one will be able to deny that in fact the history of dogma and Biblical theology have hardly acted as a ferment in the treatment of questions of dogmatic theology itself,

From yet another point of view it can be shown, quite formally, that we cannot make the immutability of dogma the excuse for the uniformity and stagnation of our textbooks. When a scientific discipline loses its power to forge concepts it becomes 'sterile' (to use a word from *Humani Generis*).[5] Technical concepts are necessary if a science is to develop, because accumulated experience can only become fruitful for the achievement of a new, exact and various understanding when what has been acquired is made available for further employment by resolution into a determinate concept. Hypostasis, the supernatural, *opus operatum*, transubstantiation, contrition, attrition, *habitus*, *gratia sanctificans*, *gratia gratis data* and many others are concepts of this kind, which have emerged as the condensed results of theological work which has often gone on for centuries, and so could and still can [5] each form a point of departure and a conceptual tool for further theological reflexion. They are as it were symbols and trophies of theological achievements of past centuries. In the field of dogmatic theology proper, are there to be found theological *termini technici*, accepted as classical and familiar to every theologian, which have been added during the last few centuries to the available stock of means of theological clarification? *Corredemptio-corredemptrix* perhaps; but there is still a great deal of controversy about this concept.

Is this state of affairs inevitable? We cannot say that all those concepts which we require for our properly theological equipment – or which we would require if we possessed them – have already been developed. Of course this assertion can hardly be demonstrated to self-complacent theologians. But the point here is that anyone who does not hold the (strictly blasphemous) view that theology has pretty well exhausted divine revelation and translated it all into theological intelligibility, must find it strange and disturbing that there is so little active formation of concepts in theology today.

One small example of this may be given. It is admitted that there is an objective distinction between venial and grave sin, not only as regards the 'matter' of the act, but also from the side of the subject, that is, as regards the degree of existential depth, the centrality or superficiality, with which the personal core of the subject is engaged. The same distinction must then be applicable to the morally *good* act, from the very nature of the case, and in such a way that the ethical quality of these good acts, so various in kind, is only 'analogically' to be comprehended in the same concept of the morally good act. Now there is not a single word in theology for this distinction and for what it should distinguish. If there were an appropriate *terminus technicus* we could ask, among other things, in another theological field: Does *every* morally good act (in the supernatural order) increase grace, or only (how are we to put it?) the 'grave' act? Or again, where may we find the theologically and ontologically exact conceptual and terminological equipment with which to determine *positively* the relation of the angels to the rest of creation, including the material world? (If we qualify them merely as 'pure' spirits, the greater part of what Scripture tells us about their relation to the world remains unexpressed, just a blur in our minds today.)

It must not be supposed that this theological 'progress' as regards themes, the setting and solving of questions, the formation of concepts [6] and so on, could be merely a matter of more or less worthless 'refinements' – apart from a few special fields like Mariology. So long as a new formulation of the question is not worked out (the question itself generally doesn't exist!) and an answer achieved, it always looks as though everything is really quite

[5] 'Experiundo novimus', according to *Humani Generis* (Denz 3014). Thus the sterility of theology may very well be not just an abstract possibility, but something already experienced as a fact. We cannot naively suppose that something of the sort could only happen in the 'bad old days'.

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clear and that all that remains to be discussed is one or two controversies of the schools, fundamentally trivial from the religious point of view. But when we have trained our vision by the study of the history of dogma (or more accurately here, the history of theology), we may recognize that theology does not always advance to ever better and clearer solutions but that its history is always at the same time one of false approximations to a 'mean' (which is to say often mediocre) path. We may recognize too that, through 'exhaustion', it is the history of what are often merely verbal solutions, in which questions are forgetfully allowed to escape by being overlooked in favour of a convenient clarity and comprehensiveness, *ad usum delphini*. Anyone who pursues the study of theology, moved by the spirit of his time and an eager religious life and a desire to make a real proclamation to his own time, will experience soon enough the impact of new questions, questions which only obtain their clarification and solution by careful and disciplined theological investigation.[6] But because properly-conducted studies in the history of dogma and of theology (of which we have still to speak) have had in fact no far-reaching effect on dogmatic theology; and because religious life and theology seldom form a truly living unity (excepting again individual theologians and limited special questions like Mariology); and finally because the impulses of our time only reach theology in a weakened and as it were disinfected form – that is why our text-books of dogmatic theology look the same today as they did two hundred years ago.

When we attempt to evaluate this situation, we must not suppose that the difference we are looking for need and can consist of a merely [7] literary, verbal or rhetorical adaptation of an old theology to our time, in new 'applications', 'outlooks' or corollaries in the practical order. It is much more a matter here of a dogmatic theology, a genuinely scientific one (in the sense that it listens with exactness and seriousness, and reflects with exactness on what it hears), whose concern it is to be adequate to reality; for then it can allow itself to try to be adequate to its time – a preoccupation full of danger and generally quite unprofitable. For if it is in fact more intimately adequate to reality (than it has been), it spontaneously becomes adequate to its time: it makes the time its own and need not worry about suiting itself to the time, always after the event. From the practical point of view the most serious misunderstanding defended or at least encouraged by the so-called 'kerygmatic theology' was the growth of the belief upon which this theology was based, that speculative theology could remain as it is now, provided that 'by its side' a kerygmatic theology were built up. Essentially, this would consist in saying 'the same' as what had achieved systematic expression in scholastic theology, but only in a slightly different way, 'kerygmatically', together with a few practical modifications. But in fact the strictest theology, that most passionately devoted to reality alone and ever on the alert for new questions, the most scientific theology, is itself in the long run the most kerygmatic. The fact that our textbooks are so little alive, serve proclamation and witness so little, is not due to their superabundance of scholastic and scientific theology but because they offer too little of it, precisely because as relics of the past they are unable even to preserve the past in its purity. For the past can only be preserved in its purity by someone who accepts responsibility for the future, who preserves in so far as he overcomes.

The studies in the history of dogma, forming the second of the groups into which we divided current work in scientific theology, cannot make good this deficiency of the textbooks; not only because dogmatic theology and the history of dogma are not the same thing, but also for a reason almost more important: the greater part of these works has its eye

[6] By way of a small example of this, I may refer to my little book *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* (Freiburg 1951). Cf. B. Neuheuser, 'Die vielen Messen', *Catholica* IX (1953), pp. 151-3, and the essay by F. Vandenbroucke, 'La Concélébration, acte liturgique communautaire', *La Maison-Dieu* XXXV (1953), pp. 48 s. (See also K. Rahner, 'Die vielen Messen als die vielen Opfer Christi', *ZKT* LXXVII (1955), pp. 94-101, and H. F. Davis, 'The Pope and Private Masses', *Clergy Review* XLII (1957), pp. 2-14.–Tr.)

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exclusively on the past. They derive from the past no impulse for the future of dogmatic theology. They confine themselves to showing how what prevails today came into being; starting from today they simply go backwards. It is only rarely that one of these works comes upon an old crossing of the ways, past which the theologians of the time had gone their way unnoticing and perhaps [8] even fatefully, and finds there a route which we today can follow into a territory not yet explored. Of course there is bound to be a number of works of an historical kind which were originally undertaken out of a simple historical interest in past facts and processes; as far as these are concerned, we must for the moment leave undecided the question whether it might not be possible at some time – either in conjunction with other studies or in a larger context – to derive from them further results of greater significance for theology than the mere backward-looking acquaintance with their own past. Perhaps it may be possible to keep our gaze turned forwards while we glance to the rear and find in the past an ingredient of a future not yet attained. Anyone who demands quick theological returns from individual historical works (and this is specially true of the beginner, who tends to be much too impatient in looking for what can be 'got out of' historical studies) exposes historical investigation in theology to the dangers of triviality and superficiality, and encourages a dilettantism which would reap before it has sown. But however important a truth this may be, it must still be asked whether current Catholic writing in the field of the history of dogma has not been too sterile for theology proper. On the one hand it has not approached the past with a real question, one which is still open to the test of the facts. On the other it has not interrogated the past closely enough to hear it with all the overtones with which it once resounded, overtones which at that time were not perhaps the explicit formulations of a scientific theology, but rather the echoes of preaching, faith and Christian life. Yet utterances of this kind could very well be more important for us today than many other truths or *theologoumena* which exhibit a more immediately comprehensible history. If they are to have any value for dogmatic theology, histories of dogma must not propose merely to chronicle in a summary way what was said about this or that in times past. The historian of such a course of the spirit must look at reality itself with the very eyes of the theologian of the past, listening to what he says: not chronicle past theology but practise the study of theology in company with it. It is true of course that such a method runs a greater danger of misinterpreting the sources by reading modern problems into them than the mere report. But in the last resort it is by this method alone that we can get at the thoughts and not just the words of our source-texts. Success in an attempt of this kind is not demonstrated by the fact that someone has examined the body of [9] texts available, has arranged them and imposed a quite exterior structure upon them, and then, from the judgment seat of modern theology, has uttered a summary pronouncement upon the fact and extent of the intelligence of the author concerned as compared with ours. This lecture-room method puts everything on the same level; it cannot elicit the hidden energies of an old theology, it fails to discover what has remained implicit and what is consequently most active there, the secret presuppositions. It is insensitive to the opposition or the gap which may sometimes be present between what is said and what is meant, between the perhaps over-facile solution of a particular problem and the fundamental principle; possessing the parts, it lacks the spirit which informs the whole. Thus it fails to discover precisely that in the theology of the past which might be of value for theology today. Consider for example Hermann Lange's treatise *De Gratia*. This work is the best-informed scholastic manual on the theology of grace. Lange really knew the 'results' of historical investigation in this field, in so far as they were readily available.[7] But if we ask ourselves what significance these 'results' had for the properly *theological* content of his

[7] Up to the date at which his book appeared of course. Is it too much to hope that after the work of Bouillard, de Lubac, Auer, Landgraf and Alfaro, there will be some changes over a great part of this field?

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book we are bound to answer with all due respect (the judgment is a summary one of course): none at all. The fault is not Lange's but that of the historical works of which we have been speaking, their lack of dogmatic fruitfulness. Similar remarks could be made about our best scholastic manual *De Paenitentia*, by P. Galtier. Galtier is one of the best-informed scholars on the history of penance and has done some of the best research in this field. But if we leave out of his treatise the historical notes and the apologetic for the Church's teaching against misinterpretations of the history of penance, we are left with a dogmatic treatise which is the split image of any treatise written over the last two centuries. Is this Galtier's fault as a dogmatic theologian? By no means: it is the fault of the historical works themselves. That this need not necessarily be the case may be seen from Poschmann's research into the history of indulgences, to choose intentionally a quite unpretentious example.[8] What is it that makes the properly historical in studies like those of de Lubac or de la Taille so stimulating and to the point? Surely it is the art of reading [10] texts in such a way that they become not just votes cast in favour of or against our current positions (positions taken up long ago), but say something to us which we in our time have not considered at all or not closely enough, about reality itself. This is not to say that we should study the history of theology in order to justify our own private innovations, although this sort of culpable silliness is by no means unknown; but that we should enter into association with a thinker of the past, not only to become acquainted with his views but in the last resort to learn something about reality. It is because historical theology is too much lecture-room disquisition and too little συνθεολογει=ν that we generally learn from it only about that part of the past which is in any case already preserved in modern theology, but not about that part which shapes our future in our past. It is no wonder then that the great work of historical theology, one which deserves our constant praise as regards our positive gains from it, has so far been able to exert so little pressure to overcome the deficiencies of the textbooks.

The third group which we distinguished above has for its theme special and marginal questions of dogmatic theology. That is to say, there are many works, especially in the field of Mariology, the only objection to which is that they are not supported by a sufficiently large number of other works dealing with more central questions. It is thus that we gain the impression (quite unjustly, perhaps, as regards individual theologians) that these works are being made use of as a 'convenient alibi', 'as a means of evading issues which, although they cannot be ignored when the architectural laws of revealed truth are taken into account, yet would demand a more resolute and variously cultivated spirit' than the subject which is in fact chosen for treatment. The doctrines of the Trinity, of the God-Man, of Redemption, of the Passion and Resurrection, of Predestination and the Last Things, simply bristle with formulations which no one examines but towards which everyone makes a reverential bow. This deference is a mistake. The thought of earlier generations, even if it has had results in the form of conciliar definitions, is not a sort of couch for the thought of later generations. Definitions are much less an end than a beginning. A *Hic Rhodus*. An opening. No real achievement is ever lost to the Church. But theologians are never spared the task of prompt renewal. Anything which is merely conserved, or which is merely handed down without a fresh, personal exertion beginning at the very sources of Revelation, rots as the manna did. And the longer living Tradition is [11] interrupted by mere mechanical handing down, the more difficult it may become to restore contact again.[9] All honour to the countless number of Mariological works being written today; and let there be no doubt that the greater part of them, at least, is sustained by that Marian movement in the Church today which is a gift of

[8] See vol. II of these studies, 'Remarks on the Theology of Indulgences'.
[9] H. U. von Balthasar, 'Was soll Theologie? Ihr Ort und ihre Gestalt im Leben der Kirche', *Wort und Wahrheit* VIII (1953), pp. 325-32. (Citation from p. 330.)

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her Spirit. But how many themes, just as important in themselves, remain unexamined! Over how many questions does there reign the graveyard calm of weariness and boredom! There persisted into the late Middle Ages sharp differences of Trinitarian teaching within the limits of orthodoxy. Today 99 per cent of those who have followed a regular course of theological studies will have to admit that they are quite ignorant of these differences and that they were told hardly anything of them during their studies. Where are *theological* works to be found on the mysteries of Christ's life? A thick volume in French and Spanish on the Ascension, for instance, pays no attention to matters other than textual criticism and the apologetic defence of the Ascension as an historical event. In spite of its enormous size the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* has simply forgotten to have an article about it at all. An even more notable deficiency in current theology is the lack of any fundamental consideration of the mysteries of Christ's life in general. In modern dogmatic theology the only moments in the life of Jesus to which attention is still given are the Incarnation itself, the foundation of the Church, Christ's teaching, the Last Supper and the death of Christ. In addition the Resurrection is considered in Apologetics from the point of view of *theologia fundamentalis*. Everything else to do with the mysteries of Christ's life is no longer to be found in dogmatic theology but only in the literature of edification. Where may we find an up-to-date work on the doctrine of transubstantiation and the worldview of modern physics?[10] The Encyclical *Humani Generis* has not given a warning against the dangers of false attempts in this matter just so that nothing at all should be done about it. We [12] may consult any bibliography we like, and yet be horrified by the thinness or the entire lack of properly dogmatic investigation into the theology of death. Poets and philosophers reflect on it; but in our theology all we find is a few chilly remarks on death as a penal consequence of original sin. And that is pretty well all. What is said about it in Eschatology is at most a tenth of what we could learn from revealed sources, if we really read them with all our mind and heart. What thinness and lack of interest in Eschatology itself! Why can we find no work, at least no exact, thorough and patient work, on the rules of interpretation of eschatological utterances in the revealed sources? The eschatological reality itself and the mode of its manifestation inevitably act as co-determinants of the *genus litterarium* of such utterances. And yet all we find on the question as to what is content and what form in such utterances is *ad hoc* improvisation. Who has ever written a theology of the concept of time and of our understanding of it?[11] Until as late as the eighteenth century there was at least some speculation about Heaven and its local character. Today we say that Heaven is a place and that no one knows where it is. Simple, but a little too convenient. Surely there is more to be said than that. In the field of eschatology a great deal more could be done from the point of view of history of dogma alone. How poor we still are in the 'theology of history'! A formal theology of the history of the Church after Christ is entirely lacking. The Introductions to Church history are astonishingly thin. Are there for example genuine theological criteria of an intrinsic kind for assigning the history of the Church into periods? How far is Church history a theological science? What is its subject and its formal object, distinguishing it from the Christian part of the general history of religion (even if the latter is treated of by a Catholic, for whom the Christian doctrine and conviction of the divine foundation of the Church furnish a negative norm for his consequent researches into the history of religion)? All these are offered as a

[10] The new edition of Filograssi's treatise on the Eucharist says nothing at all on this point. When shall we ever have a scholastic treatise on the Eucharist which at last abandons the usual superficial division according to which first the Real Presence and then the sacrifice of the Mass is treated of, as though this division arose from the very nature of the case?

[11] The work by F. Beemelmans, *Zeit und Ewigkeit nach Thomas von Aquin* (Münster 1914), although it belongs to Bäumker's *Beiträge* series, is startlingly naive, a typical example of the 'chronicle', instead of the reflective renewal of someone else's thought, and for that reason quite profitless.

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few random examples of the fact that special studies on the history of dogma and dogmatic theology are clearly influenced by an unacknowledged selective principle by no means obvious in itself, and that in consequence a vast number of topics in [13] dogmatic theology receive no treatment at all. It is not at all easy to see what this curious principle of selection might be: a diffidence before difficult questions, perhaps; the false idea that in certain fields dogmatic theology has entered upon the final phase of its development; the paralysing impression made by the massive immobility of certain controversies of the schools, apparently stranded for good; the shrinkage of collaboration between theologians[12]; the false but widespread feeling that there is no longer any way of going beyond 'differences of opinion' when discussing new questions. The result of this last misapprehension is a despondent belief that it would be gratuitous to commit oneself too 'enthusiastically' to just one point of view which must always remain controversial; and so people prefer to express their 'point of view' in works of edification, where it will not be challenged but will be accepted in a spirit of pious faith.[13]

One common feature emerges to view from a consideration of these three divisions of theological literature: dogmatic theology today is very orthodox.[14] But it is not very vividly alive. To have established this point is to offer no sort of reproach about its being 'long-winded', 'flat', 'dry' or 'boringly pedantic', or that it isn't stylistically elegant, or that it doesn't 'edify' everyone at first go. Scientific work in dogmatic theology can dispense with all these qualities provided it does just one thing: that it devotes itself to the reality in question with that passionate sympathy which this unique reality can demand more [14] than any other, and without which it does not become truly accessible. Then what we find too little of today would be bound to emerge spontaneously: theological treatises which are not just mechanically repetitive textbooks (adorned with bibliographical data and historical notes); studies in the history of dogma which look backwards so as to go beyond the current position; specialized theological studies which have the courage to make investigations in the many dogmatic fields over which there prevails today more or less the stillness of a building site abandoned while building was still in progress. The three desiderata for the three divisions of theological literature are interconnected. They may be reduced to a single requirement: more dogmatic theology in the handbooks, more dogmatic theology in the historical studies, more dogmatic theology in the special studies over the whole range of dogmatic theology and not just in limited fields. The tentative sketch, following this essay, of a more inclusive treatise of the whole of dogmatic theology is offered as a small contribution to the task described in this critique. Perhaps it may have some significance even if a treatise constructed exactly on its model never comes into being. All this sketch is intended to do (however much laborious reflexion it has involved[15]) is just to show in its own way what we

[12] For example, it is worth pointing out that even in the field of theology, although it has fortunately not caught up with the others yet, reviewers have adopted the modern practice of a more or less uncommitted 'notice' of new publications, and have given up any concern to come to terms with a writer by a close and reasoned examination of his thought.

[13] This may be just one reason why more originality and vitality of thought is often to be found in such writings than in the so-called 'specialist' literature.

[14] That such orthodoxy can also be a danger is shown in K. Rahner, *Gefahren im heutigen Katholizismus* (Einsiedeln 1950). (Also in *Wort und Wahrheit* IV (1949), pp. 881-91.) Once the danger of explicit and theoretically formulated heresy appearing within the Church and seeking to spread within it has been largely excluded by a very high degree of reflective precision concerning the formal principles of faith and theology, then heresy can appear in just two forms: as 'cryptogamic' heresy, merely lived out existentially and avoiding self-expression in a theoretical reflexive form, and as dead orthodoxy, which may be true to the letter simply because it is fundamentally uninterested in the whole business.

[15] It should be mentioned here that the first draft of this sketch goes back to reflexions upon which the author was engaged together with Hans Urs von Balthasar many years ago. It is no longer possible to distinguish what in it, whether good or bad, is due to him and what to me. I am alone responsible for the published version.

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tried to see just now from a different standpoint, namely the abundance of undeveloped themes which awaits the dogmatic theologian.

Only a fully elaborated synthesis could, if at all, establish and justify its plan of construction. Consequently we shall not attempt here to explain and justify this sketch. We shall only make a few preliminary remarks and some brief notes on a few points without any intention of offering a complete commentary.

Every Catholic theology must be a theology of both essence and existence, or putting it simply, it must both look for necessary and intrinsic structures and connexions and it must report what in fact, without metaphysical or logical necessity, took place in saving history. The second requirement needs no explanation. But the first retains its truth in spite of every kind of modern Existentialism. For theology is thinking; and it is quite impossible to think irreducibly atomized facts. [15] For even what is freely posited has its nature and structure, its connexions, homologies and analogies. Thus in the very midst of the report that this or that took place, it has always to be said what intrinsically it was that took place. And this *what* is never absolutely incommensurate with other things. There are structures which persist even in the most surprising novel event. Otherwise it would be meaningless to speak of a single saving history taking its course according to a comprehensive and eternally abiding divine plan, although one which only slowly discloses itself to us. It is impossible, at every point in the report of the history of salvation, to deal with such common characters of an 'essential' kind in an entirely new way. Here too it becomes a matter of seeing and saying the common precisely as such. And so it is necessary to practise an *abstract* theology of essence, granted always that authentic knowledge of such things is only had when it is read off the facts of saving history. Consequently when we find in dogmatic treatises of a traditional sort what is apparently a 'methodologically impure' mixture of theology of essence (i.e. statements about how things always and everywhere went on and will go on in the history of salvation – those statements, precisely, about what is necessarily the case) and of saving history itself ('narrative', 'Biblical history'), this is no defect but a necessity arising from the very nature of the reality studied by theology. But there is a real inadequacy if no reflexive account is given of these fundamental relationships; and this inadequacy is to be observed in pretty well all dogmatic treatises. The consequence of this is that either the theology of essence or the theology of existence is abbreviated without due inspection. Many fundamental themes remain undeveloped because they are merely 'narrated': so, for instance, Revelation and Time.[16] On the other hand many events are not narrated because concern is directed exclusively to the universally significant in the history of salvation. We have already pointed out above that for the average dogmatic treatise nothing really took place between Adam and Christ which might not very well be left to Bible stories for children. A tractate *De Gratia* is so timeless and anhistorical that everything in it gives the appearance [16] of being universally applicable at any time, even when some brief reference is made to the fact that the just of pre-Christian times possessed the grace of Christ.[17]

This inevitable co-operation and interpenetration of the theologies of essence and existence (theological ontology and historical report) must be realized and appreciated for a better

[16] For instance, where are we to find in our treatises a fundamental, compact and closely worked-out dissertation on the questions why, how and in what measure God has spoken to the fathers at various times and in various ways, why nevertheless this does not go on now since the coming of the Son, what follows from this, and so on?
[17] This is quite correct. But is the difference between the ways in which grace is given sufficiently described by saying that before Christ the grace of Christ was not given so 'abundantly'? From the point of view of Biblical theology, is this not on the one hand to say too little, if we think of Abraham, Father of the faithful, in Heb 11, etc., and on the other hand too much, if we look at Jn 7:39 and other texts like it? Why is it not possible to have the beatific vision as Christ's grace before Christ, in the same way as it is possible to have Christ's grace before Christ? Where is the question, Grace and Time (History), in the tractate *De Gratia*?

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understanding of the way in which the following sketch has set out and distributed its themes.

It is no longer practicable to abandon the division into dogmatic and moral theology which was still unknown to the Middle Ages – fortunately for them, we might feel. The consequences of this division, which may be avoidable but are in fact generally not avoided, are well known. Dogmatic theology tends to become an esoteric doctrine, the significance of which for the achievement of the Christian life is barely adverted to. Moral theology is always in danger of becoming a peculiar mixture of philosophical ethics, natural law, a positivism based on canon law, and casuistry; in such a mixture the *theology* (both positive and speculative) in 'moral theology' is only a distant memory. We have only to look at the usual plan of such a treatise of moral theology in this light, or to examine the Bible for some indication of the contents and mode of treatment proper to a moral theology, in order to realize that the average treatise could do with a little more theology.[18] But that is not our business here. Yet dogmatic theology cannot abdicate its task of declaring the fullness of dogmatic truth to moral theology itself; for this task is no one else's. Moreover dogmatic theology is the older and more venerable discipline; it has the privilege of the first word. If moral theology sets itself up as a theological discipline in its own right, it must come to terms with this right of primogeniture of dogmatic theology, and must itself examine the adequacy of the reasons it [17] alleges for its own separate existence. In fact dogmatic theology has to this very day regarded as its own many themes which we find also in treatises of moral theology, or which perhaps we should even be tempted to suppose would be found there alone. If there is discussion, and lengthy discussion, of such subjects as 'de virtute Paenitentiae', 'de virtutibus theologicis' or 'de Fide' in a dogmatic treatise, the fundamental claims of dogmatic theology in this direction are clear. But if these claims are *justified*, then to this fundamental right there corresponds a fundamental duty, which may not be evaded by cheap talk about 'practical division of labour' or 'avoiding duplication of labour'. That is to say, then: it is the business of dogmatic theology itself comprehensively and with uniform thoroughness to establish the authentic foundations of the Christian Can, Ought and May: to answer the question, 'What must I do that I may enter into eternal life?' All dogmatic theology can say is that moral theology should concern itself with what, once this answer is presupposed, remains to be done. Suppose there is a science which tries as closely as possible to listen to and understand and, whatever its situation might be, to appropriate what God has said; suppose too that this understanding and appropriating science of Listening is called dogmatic theology; now God's utterance contains *both* the one indissolubly actual Truth (always and in every case – not just facts plus circumambient 'ideals') *and* the Love to be actualized (always and in every case): then it follows that dogmatic theology cannot be made into something morally neutral. But then we must ask with some bewilderment why current dogmatic treatises treat of this or that notably moral topic (quite correctly) and (quite problematically) abandon others to moral theology, where they are treated of in a manner notably – moralistic. If this state of affairs is considered, there will be no difficulty in seeing the justification for inserting a number of themes into this sketch for a dogmatic treatise.

The status of *theologia fundamentalis* as an independent discipline alongside of or prior to dogmatic theology can, or perhaps better *must*, be granted and recognized. Moreover if a dogmatic theology grasps its own nature as something supported by the faith which comprehends and judges all things but is judged by no other court and is beyond the comprehension of reason (in the sense of a superior tribunal), then it is clear that dogmatic theology must develop out of itself and within itself a theology of *theologia fundamentalis*. It

[18] For instance, how much importance is given in current moral theology to Scriptural themes such as the Pauline conception of freedom, the imitation of Christ, charismata, the Beatitudes, being crucified with Christ and so on?

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must, that is to say, declare as a part of its own proper discourse, the existence, mode and [18] meaning of a rational demonstration of the faith from without and with a view to those without, as possible and necessary. Dogmatic theology does not execute this demonstration; but it autonomously determines the possibility, the sense and the limits of such a demonstration. We call this task of dogmatic theology *fundamental theology*, which is not to be confused with what is currently known as *theologia fundamentalis*. Such a fundamental theology has to consider in like manner both the subjective and the objective aspects of this possibility of a *theologia fundamentalis*.

Where (as is the case in dogmatic theology) a unified and yet incomprehensibly manifold reality has to be expounded, the primary axiom of which is the infinite Incomprehensibility of God, the overlapping of individual themes is unavoidable; and it is impossible to lay down a single logically compelling scheme which is simply the best. There is no need to be frightened of such overlapping: it does no harm for the whole to return in every part. Extremely plain and lucid schemata in dogmatic theology are only purchased in exchange for an impoverishment of points of view. On the other hand it may very well contribute to the elucidation of the plenitude of reality contained in a truth and reality of faith if 'the same thing' is treated of in different places, as though it had apparently been divided up. For instance, one does not really do justice to the central place of the Mass as Sacrifice of the Church and in the Church, to treat of the Eucharist as one of the seven sacraments and take the occasion to speak of it as being a sacrifice too (if possible after it has already been discussed as a sacrament). Thus it can very well be maintained that the general theory of the sacraments should form part of the dogmatic theology of the *Church*,[19] and that the individual sacraments should be treated of according to their appropriate places in the Christian life. Enough of introductory remarks. Some attempt will be made to clarify particular points in the notes.

[19] If this is not done, no genuine principle is available for determining the essential structure common to the sacraments. Consequently the *De Sacramentis in genere* can be regarded only from the point of view of the individual sacraments, and infant baptism becomes in fact the unique model of a sacrament as such. The result of this is that all the sacraments are monotonously discussed according to one and the same pattern, the existential side of the sacrament (with the striking exception of Penance) is given no clear place 'by rights', and the essential differences between the individual sacraments (cf. Denz 848, a text which is hardly ever explored theologically) are obscured.

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[19]

A SCHEME FOR A TREATISE OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

DIVISION ONE: FORMAL AND FUDNAMENTAL THEOLOGY

Part One: Formal Theology

A. *The Fundamental Relationship between God and Creature*[1]

B. *The General Possibility of Revelation to the World*

I. The God of a possible Revelation: *the divine character of Revelation*

1. The transcendent God. Transcendence and Revelation.[2]
2. God's Freedom in Revelation (Revelation as Grace).
3. The Content of Revelation and Revelation as Act. The essential and the existential character of God's speech. [20]
4. God's speech and deed: *verbum efficax*.
5. The 'personal' relationship between God and man arising from God's Call. Revelation as formal prototype of God's supernatural love of grace, in which he discloses himself.

II. Revelation in the world: *Revelation as belonging to the world*.

1. The Revelation of the Absolute in the finite, conditioned and temporal.
   Revelation in space and time.
   The Activity of Salvation and space-time.
2. The Historicity of Revelation.
   Saving history.
   'Tradition'.

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[1] So far as this is possible in advance (although what is involved is a permanent feature of all we know concretely by faith about God and the world), the point here is to determine the formal nature of that fundamental relationship between God and the world which may serve as standard for the whole of theology in its treatment of particular questions: God as the ever greater God, who is never contained within a formula derived from the world ('Deus semper major'; cf. Denz 432). To this ever greater God the world is always open, without being able of itself to capture him in this openness; the world, as what has been created by God's free love, and which in spite of its radical finitude and contingency, is no mere negative quantity before God and over against him (so that here a protective wall is to be set up against that danger which always threatens pure ontology, of conceiving finite beings as mere 'limitation' of a pure Being – a view with which a really eternal validity of the world before God is no longer compatible); the basic Christian law that nearness to God and distance from him increase in direct (and not in inverse) proportion, that the means by which God shows forth his divinity among us is the very fact that we are and become.

[2] Following on from A, the point here is to develop the *theological* concept of divine transcendence, which is not simply identical with that of a philosophical doctrine of God. To this there would have to be added a close examination of the concept of a revelation of God which need not be identical with the (creation of the) world but which is uttered by God to the world: the examination, that is, of the concept of a revelation which is not the world but takes place in the world, and takes place through the Word. The Word would have to be exhibited as a reality the place of which in the self-disclosure of the transcendent God can be taken by absolutely nothing belonging to the intramundane realm of the created or the creatable.

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3. Revelation as essential and as existential.
4. The social character of Revelation, 'Church'.
5. The symbolic order.
   a. Sign, word, image, concept, myth, symbol. The nature, possibility and limits of revelation by word. Revelation and mysticism.
   Revelation and gnosis.
   b. Miracle (as 'sign' of the sign).
   c. The sacramental character of God's Word in general.
6. Provisional and definitive Revelation (the history of Revelation). The formal distinction between Old and New Covenants. Definitive Revelation: Revelation as an eschatological value; the two aions.
7. Revelation as *Mysterium*.

III. Revelation in the Bearer of Revelation.

1. The idea of the Prophet.
2. The idea of the Mediator.
3. The idea of enduring Revelation: Church. [21]

IV. Revelation in the apprehending subject.

1. The *power* to hear Revelation: man's constitution as a power to apprehend Revelation.
   a. The power of hearing as nature.[3]
   b. The power of hearing as effect of grace.
2. Hearing.
   a. Hearing as apprehension of inner and outer Word (corresponding to God's speech and deed in Revelation). Appropriation of the tidings: Faith.
   b. The formal relationship between nature and grace, reason and faith (the meaning and limits of Apologetics).
   c. The historical, social and symbolic order, in the ever new and changing subject who apprehends (development of dogma).
   d. The freedom to hear or not to hear, and the possibility of rebellion: the supernatural in itself as a cross of nature.
3. Stages of hearing. Faith – gnosis.

C. *The Idea of a Redemptive Revelation*

Transposition of the formal Revelation relationship to a new mode, the order of sin and redemption.

I. Redemptive Revelation as proceeding from God.

1. Modification of the 'content' of Revelation.
   a. The Revelation of Wrath and Judgment, and hence of man's situation as one lost.
   b. The Revelation of atoning grace.
2. Modification of the mode in which Revelation is manifested.
   a. Revelation as 'Law'; as 'scandal'; as 'Judgment'.

[3] Cf. K. Rahner, *Hörer des Wortes* (Munich 1941). ('Hören' means both *to hear* and *to listen to*. – Tr.)

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b. Revelation as kenosis and extinction: *theologia crucis*.

II. The form of the Mediator as Redeemer.

III.The hearer of Revelation as a sinner in need of redemption.

1. Sinfulness as unwillingness to hear Revelation.
2. The transformation of the sinner into a hearer: the grace of faith as submission and obedience. [22]
3. The qualification of the historical, social and symbolic orders, and of the two aions.

D. *The Idea of Theology as Science*

I. '*Theology*'; *Revelation, Proclamation, Faith and Theology.*

II. Theology as grace.

III.Theology as rational system.

IV.Theology and revealed '*sources*' (Scripture – Tradition).

V. Theology and the magisterium.

VI. Theologia viatoris – theologia peccatoris – theologia crucis *in rational theology.*

VII.Theology and theologies.
The typology of theologies.
The theological meaning of the history of theology.

VIII. Dogmatic theology in the narrower sense as a discipline within theology.

Part Two: Fundamental Theology

(Revelation *within* a concrete civilization, already in existence)
The Differentiation of Roman Catholic Christianity from other forms of religion

A. *Phenomenology of religion in general*

Nature, existence, justification.
Theology – Philosophy of religion – History of religion – Phenomenology of religion – Psychology of religion.

B. '*Religion*' *and the individual's approach to it*
Principles by which the true religion may be distinguished

The general question of truth in matters of religion.
The possibility of a decision.
The obligation of a decision, of profession, etc.

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Existential criteria of decision. [23]

C. *Phenomenology of non-Christian religions*

I. Phenomenology of religious forms.
II. The Meaning of religious forms and of the history of religions from the point of view of the theology of history.
The Theology of the history of religions.
III. Christianity as the total religion.

D. *Phenomenology of Christianity*

I. Human religion from below and Christianity as a religion instituted by revelation.
The claim to absoluteness.
Syncretism and complexio oppositorum.
II. Christ the Founder (legatus divinus *as a concept of Apologetics*).
III. The Church. Notes of the true Church in the world.

E. *Phenomenology of Christian heresies*

I. The philosophical and theological theory of heresy.
1. The possibility of error.
2. Heresy in the Church.
   a. As yet undifferentiated: tendencies of schools. Faith and gnosis, etc.
   b. In the precise sense: secret heresy.
3. Heresy as splitting off from the Church.
   Heresy and truth in faith.
   Heresy and unity in love.

II. Heresies as opinions and as churches, in the light of the theology of history.

F. *Phenomenology of Roman Catholic Christianity*

G. *The theory of the individual's approach to the true religion*

I. The possibility and limits of such a theory (*in the graced mode of existence proper to faith*).
II. Interior grace and external criteria in the recognition of the duty of faith.
III. Naive and scientific proofs. The meaning of scientific apologetics for the individual believer or pagan.

[24]

DIVISION TWO: SPECIAL DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

Part One: Man (and his world) as a nature with a supernatural finality[4]

A. *Creatureliness as such*[5]

[4] It is impossible to speak here either of man alone, or with such generality of created being in general that man is not the end in view. It is the single reality of all created being that is meant, but in such a way that we have to see it from the point of view of humanity; and this precisely in the sense that this reality is prior to the order of sin and redemption, and furthermore persists in that order (though admittedly transposed into a different key).
[5] 'Creatureliness' is not here a characterization of Nature in so far as this is distinguished from Grace and the

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I. Createdness (*Creation and conservation*).
II. The freedom of God's creative act.
III . The temporal mode of created being.
IV . The finitude of created being. The finite creature as a positive quantity.
V. God's transcendence and omnipotence as regards all *created being.*
VI. The formal doctrine of the ends of creation and of created being.
VII. The unity and interconnectedness of all created being.[6]

B. *Man as a unity* (*of* '*nature*' *and* '*supernature*')

I. The single concrete end; *supernaturality as the* ultimate form *of man in the concrete.*
1. The concrete end and the obligation it imposes.
2. The supernaturality of this end. [25]

II. '*Nature*' *as* '*remainder*' *and genuine, but still formal*, '*possibility*'.[7]
The diversity and interconnectedness of statements about these two aspects of 'nature'.

C. '*Nature*'

I. The possibility of a theology of nature
1. In terms of an immediate revelation of 'natural' truths.
2. In terms of a 'preservation' and 'interpretation' by revelation and the magisterium of truths known naturally. The possibility of a 'neutral' theological anthropology.

II. Nature: *Man*.

1. The inner dimensions of man.
a. Man as person.
(i) The immediacy to God of man as person (individualism; creationism).
(ii) Intellectuality and freedom.
(iii) Logic and ethics.
b. Man as 'nature' (a bodily, spatio-temporal person).
(i) Spiritual personality as belonging to nature.
(ii) The theology of the corporeality of the human person.
(iii) The theology of the duality of the sexes.
(iv) The theology of the states and events of human life.
Birth.
Age.
Eating and drinking.
Work.
Seeing, hearing, etc. Speech, silence, laughter, tears.

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supernatural finality of all created being; it is a fundamental property of all reality other than God, prior to the distinction between Nature and Grace: indeed it achieves its fullest realization in the order of supernatural grace, because 'creatureliness' is not a merely negative expression.

[6] It is not just the unity of the material cosmos, of humanity, etc., that is meant here, but a unity to which the angels belong too. It would be really worthwhile to attempt to state in properly ontological terms how far the angels, in spite of their 'pure' intellectuality, belong to the world by their very nature, contrary to certain neo-Platonic tendencies in theology.

[7] See pp. 297-317, below.

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The arts (music, dance, etc.)
The basic achievements of the intellectual life.
Civilization.
Death (as a natural phenomenon).
The natural 'other-world [8] [26]

2. The outer dimensions: the world.
   a. The human realm.
      (i) The theology of marriage and of the family.
      (ii) The theology of race and of the state, and of the plurality of races.
      (iii) The theology of humanity.
         The unity of the human race (Adam as a natural reality).
         The purposive unity of human history: the formal theology of history.
   b. The realm below man: the theology of Nature.
      (i) The theology of physics and biology: the overt manifestations of Nature.
      (ii) Nature as symbol.
      (iii) Magic and taboo (Nature and the spirit world).
         Spiritualism, etc., sorcery.
   c. The realm above man.
      (i) The existence and nature of the angelic world.
      (ii) The angelic world and the human world (as a natural unity).

3. Nature: Man and God.
   a. God as knowable from the world and man.
   b. The theology of the ('natural') Creator-God.
      (i) The formal doctrine of God (his 'necessary' attributes).
      (ii) The material-existential doctrine of God: his free countenance to the world.
         Wrath; love; the alternation of the two; his general purpose of salvation, etc.
   c. God and man.
      (i) God over man: his omnipotence; providence; predestination.
      (ii) Man under God: religion.
         Freedom and God's omnipotence. [27]

D. *The Supernatural dimension of human reality*

I. The God of the order of supernatural life and revelation.

1. The three Persons of the Godhead as an economy.
   Three different modes of relatedness of the graced man to God.
   a. Spirit.
   b. Son.
   c. Father.
2. The three Persons in God as immanently constituting the absoluteness of the supernatural world.

[8] We are thinking here of a theology of man's ontological condition, in so far as he loses his bodily place in the world of space and time when he dies, and yet belongs to the world; he is not simply withdrawn from the world and its conditions, but continues to belong to it in reciprocal action and reaction, all this without prejudice to the question whether his final condition as an individual person is blessedness or damnation. This would also be the place to clarify such questions as the ontological presuppositions for the possibility of Purgatory, of the 'poena sensus', and the significance of general eschatology for the individual in spite of the individual judgment.

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a. The three Persons:
   (i) Father.
   (ii) Son.
   (iii) Spirit.
b. The formal doctrine of the Trinity.

II. Participation in the Trinitarian life of God.

1. Supernatural sanctification (*de gratia habituali*)
   a. *Gratia increata*: participation in God.
   b. Created habitual grace.
   c. Grace as original state.
      (i) The grace of the angels and the grace of Paradise.
      (ii) The *dona praeternaturalia* as consequences of the grace of Paradise. 'Paradise.'
      (iii) The supernatural unity in Adam of the human race, in itself and with the angels.
2. The active accomplishment of supernatural sanctification.
   a. The life of the human spirit and supernatural grace in general: The necessity, nature and formal object of 'actual' grace; how far we may be aware of it.
   b. Logic and supernatural grace: faith.
   c. Ethics and supernatural grace:
      Hope and Love.
      The supernatural moral virtues.
   d. Growth in grace (merit), stages in the development of moral life. [28]
   e. The basic specifications of the spiritual life: *vita activa* and *vita contemplate*
   f. God's supralapsarian economy of Grace.

III. The Mediator: *the God-man*.[9]

1. The theology of the God-man.
   a. The God-man. *Unio hypostatica*; *communicatio idiomatum*, *etc*.
   b. The consequences of the hypostatic union for Christ's human nature.
   c. Christ's 'offices'.
   d. The general significance of the hypostatic union in its onto-logical-metaphysical and ethical aspects.

[9] No difficulty will be found in granting that our scheme for inserting the doctrine of the Trinity into a theology of the sanctification of man need do no injury to the intrinsic value of the former topic, if it is remembered that the interior life of the Blessed Trinity is revealed to us just because and in so far as our redemption and sanctification have been revealed to us. It will readily be admitted that it is only by drawing into close connexion the doctrines of grace and the Trinity that the empty formalism of the average modern teaching on the Trinity can be overcome. More problematic (it must be admitted) is the suggested treatment of Christology under the head of theological anthropology. But it must be remembered that Christology is taken up again from the point of view of the Redemption. Christology more easily avoids the appearance, otherwise not easily avoidable, of the mythological and the miraculous, when the Incarnation of the Logos (granting its uniqueness and gratuitousness, and its imprevisibility from this world) is seen as the supreme realization of that fundamental relationship which prevails between God and the spiritual creation in general. In this context Christ's Person and Office are more clearly seen in their unity. And finally a viewpoint 'quoad nos', of an anthropological kind, need not conceal the structures of reality 'in se', of a different kind; rather it can release them more fully than a treatment which proceeds from the first in the most objectivistic way possible. See pp. 149-200, below.

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a. The participation of humanity in the Mediator.
   a. Mary's divine Motherhood. Mary as the representative of humanity. The fundamental principle of Mariology.[10]
   b. The supernatural unity of humanity in Christ (the mystical Body of Christ in its universality). [29]
   c. The unity of all creation in Christ.
      (i) Christ and the world below man.
      (ii) Christ and the angels.

Part Two: Fall and Redemption

A. Sin

I. The nature of Sin.

II. The fall of the angels.

1. In itself.
   a. The fact. Its nature.
   b. Eternal reprobation.
2. The cosmic and anthropological consequences of the fall of the angels: *potestas diaboli*; the demonization of Nature (idolatry).

III. Original culpability.
1. The Fall.
2. Original Sin. The kingdom of sin. Sin and death.

IV. The sins of men.
1. The possibility and the fact of personal sins.
2. The state of sin.
3. Social sins other than the sin of the human race.

B. *God and Sin*

I. The Wrath of God.

II. Reprobation and hell.

III. Sin as something positive before (*and through*) *God alone* ('*felix culpa*').

IV. God's saving purpose after the Fall.

1. His general saving purpose.
2. His differential saving purpose.
   (Sufficient and efficacious grace after the Fall, predestination.)

[30]

[10] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Le Principe fondamentale de la théologie mariale', RSR XLII (1954) pp. 481-522.– Tr.

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C. *The Redeemer*

I. The theology of the history of humanity up to the time of the Redeemer.
1. Primitive revelation and the revealed content of the world religions.
2. From Adam to Abraham. The 'natural law'; paganism.
3. The theology of the nature and history of the Old Covenant. Salvation under the Law.
4. The fullness of time.

II. The Incarnation as redemption ('*physical*' *redemption*).
1. As establishing the reconciling Mediator.
2. As *assumptio carnis peccati*, the acceptance in principle of death and the consecration of humanity.

III. The theology of the human life of Our Lord.
1. The general theology of the life of Jesus.
   a. The events of Jesus' life as 'model'.
   b. The events of Jesus' life as 'mysteries'.
2. The theology of individual events in the life of Jesus.

IV. The theology of the Cross.
1. The Cross as Jesus' reality in his own eyes: the Way of kenosis and of glory (Christ's merit for himself).
2. The Cross as vicarious sacrifice and expiation for humanity (the Cross as merit for others).
3. The descent into hell.

V. The theology of the glorified Lord.

D. *The Church of Christ*

I. Christ and the Church.

1. The Church and Christ as incarnate Logos.
   The Church and consecrated humanity.
   Christ as the Head who dispenses grace (*gratia capitis*; the sanctifying function of Christ's humanity).
2. The Church and Christ as *legatus divinus*.
   The Church as Christ's foundation.
   The Church as Christ's authority (speaking).
   The Church as Christ's obedience (hearing). [31]
3. The relation between the two.
4. The extent of the Church's realm.

II. The basic structure of the Church: *the total sacrament of Christ. The effectual visibility of her life, her truth and her grace.*

III. The sacramentality of the Church in her essential offices (*the shape of the Church*).
1. The presence of Christ's truth.
   a. Tradition: as conservation of truth;
   as ever new effective presence of Revelation;
   as history and development of Revelation.

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b. The teaching office as authoritative articulation of Tradition (bearers, sources, report, extent of the teaching office, infallibility, limits, etc.).
c. The Scriptures.
(i) as Word of God; inspiration.[11]
(ii) as the Book of the Church (the Scriptures in the Church and over the Church).
(iii) as ever new truth (typical, spiritual sense, etc.).

2. The presence of Christ's will: jurisdiction and law.
a. The existence of divine law in the Church, and the bearers of this law.
b. *Ius humanum* in the Church's law.
c. The formal character peculiar to the New Testament law of the Church as opposed to secular and Old Testament law.

3. The presence of Christ's grace in the Church.
a. The Church as total sacrament.
Membership of the Church as 'res et sacramentum' of grace and salvation.
b. The Mass as central *mysterium* of the Church, in which she realizes herself totally towards God, Christ and her members.
(i) The Mass as Christ's effective presence in the Church.
(ii) The Mass as sacrifice.
(iii) The Mass as realization of the Church.
c. The articulation of the *mysterium* of the Church in individual sacraments (*de sacramentis in genere*). [32]
Their mode of efficacy (*opus operatum*).
Ministers of the sacraments.
Opus operatum and *opus operands*.
The sacraments and Christ.
The sacraments and the Church. 'Character sacramentalis'.
The sacraments as signs of Him that cometh.
d. The sanctification of the whole sphere of the profane through the Church.

IV. The inner shape of the Church.

1. The relation between 'exterior' and 'interior' hierarchy.
2. Christ as Head ('firstborn among many brethren') of the interior Church.
3. Mary as perfection of the Church.
a. The Immaculate Conception; freedom from sin.
b. Co-patient and co-agent in our Redemption.
c. Assumed into heaven.
d. Mediatrix of all graces.
4. The Biblical fathers of the Church:
Patriarchs and prophets (the 'sages' of old).
The Baptist.
The Apostles, Joseph.
5. States of life in the Church in general.
6. Gnostics and charismatics.
7. The saints and the veneration of saints.
8. The extra-sacramental life of grace as a life of the Church ('spiritual reception' of the Sacraments).

V.The Church of sinners[12]*: the erring Church.*

[11] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Über die Schriftinspiration', ZKT LXXVIII (1956), pp. 137-68. – Tr.

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the sinful Church.

VI. Historical theology of the Church.

1. The ontology and gnoseology needed for a theological consideration of the history of the Church.
   Sources: prophecy, experience. Subject, etc.
2. The formal theology of history. [33]
   a. The possibility of *theologically* assigning the Church's history into periods.
   b. Historical forces in the history of the Church.
   c. The eschatological achievement of the Church's history.
   d. The 'growth' and 'development' of the Church (extensively and intensively).
   e. The 'decrease' of the Church (intensively and extensively).
   f. Concepts such as 'Renaissance', 'Reformations', 'Persecution'.

3. The material theology of the Church's history.
   a. The Church *ex Iudaeis*. The annulment and persistence of the Old Covenant.
   b. The Church of the Gentiles.
   c. The Church in the Roman Empire.
   d. The World Church.
   e. The Church of the last days, Antichrist, etc.
   f. The 'Church' of eternity.
      (i) The Church and the definitive establishment of the kingdom of God.
      (ii) The suffering and the triumphant Church.

E. *The Theological Anthropology of the Redeemed*

I. The general nature of Christian morality.
1. The basic norm (*norma honestatis supernaturalis* [*hominis lapsi et reparati*]).
2. Law and freedom.
3. Conscience and guidance by the Holy Spirit.

II. Dying with Christ.
1. The interior process of justification.
   The precise character of penitential conversion (and consequently of life after it) in contrast to the 'ideal' virtues of 'pure' supernature.
   a. The faith (of 'unbelievers' and 'sinners').
   b. Metanoia; dying.
   c. Love.
   d. The graciousness and gratuitousness of 'vocation'.
2. Baptism as the sacramental visibility of this process. [34]
3. Life dying (mortified, hidden) with Christ as form of the Christian life (*vita contemplativa* as a Christian category).
   a. As a form of life common to all Christians.
      The nature of *Christian* ascetism[13] (the Sermon on the Mount, following in the

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[12] Cf. K. Rahner, Die Kirche der Sünder (Freiburg 1948); Flemish translation Kerk der Zondaren (ingeleid door F. Fransen, Antwerp 1952). In this Flemish edition a more precise account is given of what is meant, and with what restrictions, by the phrase 'erring Church'.
[13] Cf. e.g. K. Rahner, 'Passion und Aszese', *Geist und Leben* XXII (1949) pp. 15-36; 'Zur Theologie der

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footsteps of the Crucified, etc.).
b. As monasticism: the representation of Christian life in monasticism; the evangelical counsels.
c. As mysticism considered as a form of asceticism.[14]
d. As martyrdom as a quasi-sacramental visibility of the Christian form of life.
e. Christian 'asceticism' in the face of the great secular complexes (State, civilization, etc.).

III. Living out of Christ (vita activa; *divine life as manifest in human life*).
Mission into the world by the Spirit who becomes manifest in Christians.
1. The general mission.
a. Apostolate (witness, etc.) as a basic Christian attitude.
b. Confirmation as the sacramental visibility of mission.
c. Martyrdom as witness which overcomes the world.
2. Individual vocation.
a. Charisms in general; professions; choice of a profession.
b. The free charisms. Marriage. The widow.
d. Ordination and the priesthood. [35]
3. The ultimate relation between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.
4. The idea of Christian perfection.

IV. The central sacrament of the Christian life: *the Eucharist as the sacramental connexion between II and III*.
1. Continuing participation in Christ's death.
2. Life in the Church.
3. *Communio mundi*; the transformation of the world.
4. 'Spiritual' communion.
5. 'Eucharistic piety'.

V. The Christian's struggle with sin.
1. The Christian's sinfulness.
a. Concupiscence.
b. Temptation by the world and the devil.
c. 'Venial' sin.
2. The consciousness of sin.
3. The possibility of the loss of grace.
a. The grave sins of the Christian.
b. Unbelief.
4. The possibility of the repeated remission of sins.
5. The struggle with sin.
a. The personal acts of the Christian (penance, contrition, attrition, etc., metanola as an habitual attitude, prayer for perseverance).

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evangelischen Rate', *Orientierung* XVII (1953), pp. 252-5 (see also vol. III of these studies).

[14] This would be the place to inquire into the nature of mysticism, in so far as it is not just a psychological phenomenon but something specifically Christian. If asceticism is conceived not as a moral drill, but as participation in our Lord's Passion and Death (and as their practice), it follows as a further consequence that mysticism is a renunciatory asceticism in faith practised by the spiritual person: not an anticipation of the beatific vision but an entry into the Passion of the Lord (through 'passive purification of the spirit', through the 'night' of the senses and of the spirit). Thus it follows that mysticism is to be conceived in terms of asceticism and not vice versa, assuming that something generally Christian is understood by both concepts.

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b. The necessity of remedial grace for the justified.
c. The sacramentality of ecclesiastical penance.
d. Indulgences.

6. Concern for salvation in general.
   a. Hope and trust.
   b. The hiddenness of salvation.
   c. The grace of perseverance.

VI. The theology of death.[15]

1. The supernatural dimensions of death.
   a. The supernatural character of death in general in the present dispensation. [36]
   b. Death as punishment. First and second death and their relationship.
   c. Death as dying with Christ and redemption.
   d. Death as supernatural consummation and as supernatural separation from this world.
2. The sacramentality of dying: extreme unction.
3. Individual death as the beginning of the Last Things, as judgment.
   a. The possibility of eternal reprobation.
   b. Hell as private destiny.[16]
   c. The definitive character of union with God.

F. *Eschatology*

I. The theological gnoseology of eschatological statements considered in their possibility and their limits.[17]

II. The Eschata.

1. The new Aion as a whole.
   a. The transformation of time.
   b. The transformation of matter.
   c. The consummation of the spirit.
   d. The consummation of the new aion.
2. The relation between individual eschatology and collective eschatology. [37]
3. The relation between the present and the future aion.
4. The individual elements of Eschatology.
   a. The Return of Christ.

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[15] Death must first of all be seen as something which takes place in this Christian world here and now, as a part of the Christian life. However much it may be the end of the whole of life, it is also an inner reality within the whole; so that our whole life through we are dying into our death. Death must not be left out of account by immediately looking forward to what properly comes after it. For some reflexions on the whole theme of Christian death, see K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie des Todes', *Synopsis*, no. 3 (Hamburg 1949), pp. 87-112. (See also by the same author 'Zur Theologie des Todes', ZKT LXXIX (1957), pp. 1-44. Also printed separately. – Tr.)

[16] 'Private' in a twofold sense, as applying to the destiny of the individual, and as applying to the destiny of this individual, condemned to a loveless isolation by his own fault. 'Individual' eschatology is intentionally introduced here, before Eschatology, so as to make it clear in this way too that Eschatology is fundamentally 'general' eschatology and thus that something essential remains to be said over and above 'special' eschatology.

[17] It would be necessary here to discuss the question whether these limits are the same for 'Heaven' and for 'Hell', or whether (what would be more correct) we are bound in certain respects to deny this. This would then have to be kept in mind when in what follows the two final states are treated of in succession as though they were on the same level.

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b. The Resurrection of the body. The general Judgment.
d. Hell as the collective destiny of the ‘Corpus diaboli’.
e. Heaven as the eternal kingdom of God the Father.

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3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA

Many of the Church's doctrines are characterized by the fact that they have not always been present in the Church and in her consciousness in faith in an expressly apprehensible form. The bodily Assumption of our Lady into Heaven is an example of this which touches us especially closely today. This doctrine has not always been in existence as an explicit statement; at any rate we today cannot grasp it or point to it as something in the past with a persistent identity; it seems not to have been proposed to the faith of every age with the clarity, the precision, the definiteness and the binding character which it has today. That is to say it has – in a certain sense – 'developed', it has, in a sense still to be determined, 'come to be' within the course of Christian history, for when the Gospel was first preached this doctrine was not to be found in its present form.

But if we are to gain a true understanding of this doctrine (and all those others which are characterized by such a 'development'), we are forced to make some fundamental reflexions on the meaning, the possibility and the limits of such a 'development of dogma' in general.[1]

[1] We cannot do more here than offer a few summary indications. Without writing a whole book on the subject it is clearly out of the question to consider the history of the doctrine of development, or to take up positions with regard to the particular theories defended by theologians today. Consequently we cite only a selection of the relevant literature (omitting purely historical studies), above all the more important works or those which treat the subject with special reference to the new dogma. General works: J. H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 1845 and (notably revised by Newman) 1878; J. B. Franzelin, *De divina Traditione et Scriptura*[4], Rome 1896; J. Bainvel, 'Histoire d'un dogme', *Etudes* CI (5904), pp. 612-32; Ch. Pesch, *Glaube, Dogmen und historische Tatsachen* (*Theologische Zeitfragen* IV), Freiburg 1908; A. Gardeil, *Le Donné Revélé et la theologie*[2], Paris 1910; A. Rademacher, *Der Entwicklungsgedanke in Religion und Dogma*, Cologne 1914; M. Tuyaerts, *L'Evolution du dogme*, Lyons 1919; R. M. Schultes, *Introductio in historiam dogmatum*, Paris 1922 (with a valuable bibliography, pp. 149-52); F. Marin-Sola, *L'Evolution homogène du dogme catholique* I and II[2], Fribourg 1924; H. Dieckmann, *De Ecclesia* II, Freiburg 1925; L. de Grandmaison, *Le Dogme chrétien*, Paris 1928; H. Pinard, art. 'Dogme', *DAFC* I, 1122-84; E. Dublanchy, art. 'Dogme', *DTC* IV, 1574-650; L. Charlier, *Essai sur le problème théologique* Thuilles 1938 (on the Index); Fidel García Martinez, 'A proposito de la Llamada "fe ecclesiastica": ¿Debe ser admitida en teologia?', *Miscelanea Comillas* VI (Santander 1946), pp. 9-45; J. Hocedez, *Histoire de la théologie au XIXe siècle* III, Brussels 1947, pp. 161-72; H. de Lubac, 'Le Problème du développement du dogme', *RSR* XXXV (1948), pp. 530-60; E. Seiterich, 'Das kirchliche Verständnis der Dogmenentwicklung', *Oberrhein. Pastoralblatt* (1952), pp. 225-31, 255-63; E. Dhanis, 'Révélation explicite et implicite', *Gregorianum* XXXIV (1953) pp. 187-237 (further references p. 226 s.). See also *Lo sviluppo del dogma secondo la dottrina cattolica. Relazioni lette nella seconda settimana teologica 24-28 settembre 19*51, Rome 1953. We cannot here go into the studies by Flick, Spiazzi, Rambaldi, Bea, Balic, Filograssi, Dhanis and Boyer assembled there, as this essay was already complete when they appeared.

Works with special reference to the dogma of the Assumption (the general question is often only touched on here): L. Carli, 'La definibilità dommatica dell'Assunzione di Maria', *Marianum* VIII (1945), pp. 59-77; C. Balic, *De definibilitate Assumptionis B.V.M. in coelum*, Rome 1945 (=*Antonianum* XXI (1946), pp. 3-67); E. Sauras, 'Definibilidad de la Asunción de la Santissima Virgen', *Estudios Marianos* VI (1947), pp. 23-44; C. Colombo, 'La definibilità dommatica dell'Assunzione di Maria SS. nella teologia recente', *La Scuola Cattolica* LXXV (1947), pp. 265-81; LXXVI (1948), pp. 1-16; J. Ternus, *Der gegenwärtige Stand der Assumptafrage*, Regensburg 1948; G. M. Paris, 'De definibilitate dogmatica assumptionis corporeae B.M.V. in coelum', Divus Thomas (Plac) LI (1948), pp. 354-5; G. Philips, 'Autour de la définibilité d'un dogme', *Marianum* X (1948), pp. 81-111; R. Garrigou-Lagrange, 'L'Assomption est-elle formellement révélée de façon implicite?', *Doctor Communis* (*Acta Pont. Acad. Rom. S. Thomae*) I (1948), pp. 28-63; C. Dillenschneider, 'L'Assomption corporelle de Marie', *Etudes Mariales* VI (1948), pp. 13-55 (further references given); J. Filograssi, 'Traditio divino-apostolica et Assumptio B.M.V.', *Gregorianum* XXX (1949) pp. 481-9; C. Balic, 'De Assumptione B.V. Mariae quatenus in deposito fidei continetur', *Antonianum* XXIV (1949), pp. 553-82; C. Koser, 'Cualificación

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Of course this is a heavy undertaking, because whatever the [41] general meaning, possibility and limits of a development of dogma may be, they cannot be deduced with the necessary exactness and precision from general theological considerations alone but must be arrived at inductively from the actual facts of such a development. In itself this is not remarkable: we discover the possible from the real. We discover the laws of development of a living thing – and of something spiritually alive too, regarded as a process of spiritual unfolding – from its actual development. But in our case this has its special difficulties; for the living spirit with which we are concerned here appears in its authentic form in a solitary instance: the unique historical fortune of the Gospel of Christ under the direction of that Spirit which leads us into all truth, from the time of Christ himself to the moment when by his return faith will be transformed into the vision of God, face to face. We have here a homogeneous process of which there is just one instance. Certainly it has its laws, with which it emerged from the very beginning; it takes place according to laws promulgated at the very beginning, by which it remains bound for ever and ever and which are in force throughout the whole course of a history that has been guaranteed by the Spirit. Moreover laws certainly exist which may be observed in a section of this total process, and which can then be applied to other (later) phases and partial developments. The *perfected* law of dogmatic development however may only be laid down when the whole unique process has reached its term. And because it is a genuinely historical process, under the impulse of the Spirit of God, who never makes himself accessible without remainder to laws which can be grasped by human minds, it is never just the working out of a formula and an all-embracing law. [42] It is manifestly erroneous *a priori* to attempt to construct an adequate formula of this kind, and by this means to master the single sense of this process and combat possible 'deviations' as false developments. The historical course of the development of dogma is itself the process in which its own mystery is progressively unveiled. It is in the very act of developing, and not in any prior reflexion, that the living reality of the Church's consciousness in faith comes progressively into a fuller possession of itself. Let us suppose that in the development of the doctrine of the Assumption, for example, forms and properties of the development of dogma become apparent which cannot be demonstrated with the same clarity in other phases and sectors of this development; these properties may even clearly be of a kind which do not harmonize with the accounts of development given in the ordinary theological treatment (not of course in the authoritative pronouncements of the Church). Yet this would not indicate any false development here, a 'rank growth' in the development of doctrine; at most it would be a sign that the scheme proposed in the average treatment requires to be improved, qualified or enlarged.

An anxious theologian may enquire, 'How are we to get anywhere, if no adequate laws of this development can be formulated? Are we not leaving the field open to the rankest

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teológica de la Asunción', *Actas del Congresso Asuncionistico Franciscano de America Latina* (Buenos Aires 1949), pp. 329-53; H. Rondet, 'La Définibilité de l'Assomption. Questions de methode', *Etudes Mariales* VI (1949), pp. 59-95; J. Filograssi, 'Theologia catholica et Assumptio B.M.V.', *Gregorianum* XXXI (1950), pp. 323-60; J. F. Bonnefoy, 'L'Assomption de la T. S. Vierge est-elle définissable comme révélée "formaliter implicite"?', *Marianum* XII (1950), pp. 194-226; J. Filograssi, 'Constitutio Apostolica "Munificentissimus Deus" de Assumptione B.M.V.', *Gregorianum* XXXI (1950), pp. 483-525; B. Capelle, 'Théologie de l'Assomption d'après la bulle "Munificentissimus Deus", NRT LXXXII (1950), pp. 1009-27; M. Labourdette and M.-J. Nicolas, 'La définition de l'Assomption', RTL (1950); C. Colombo, 'La Constituzione dommatica "Munificentissimus Deus" e la Teologia', *La Scuola Cattolica* LXXIX (1951); J. Ternus, 'Theologische Erwägungen zur Bulle "Munificentissimus Deus", *Scholastik* XXVI (1951), pp. 11-35; A. Kolping, 'Zur theologischen Erkenntnismethode anlässlich der Definition der leiblichen Aufnahme Mariens in den Himmel', *Divus Thomas* (Fribourg) XXIX (1951) pp. 81-105. Further literature in: *Marianum* XII (1950) Supplementum, nn. 396-434 (pp. 37-39); C. Balic, *Testimonia de Assumptione B.V.M. Pars Altera*. Rome 1950, pp. 442-5; E. Dhanis, *loc. cit*., pp. 226 s.

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proliferations of pseudo-theological speculation and callow visionary enthusiasm?' The answer is that this danger, one which is involved in all human experience, is not going to be realized for three reasons. In the first place there are of course certain laws of dogmatic development which, because they are known *a priori* (we shall discuss this later), may be applied to 'developments' in an obvious way – though certainly with prudence – in order to determine whether they are genuine developments of the faith of the Church or on the other hand contain the danger of a wrong turning. Such laws do exist, even if they can be applied only in the Church and in the last resort only *by* the Church herself; for applications made by individual Christians and theologians are never more than appeals to the Church herself, who consequently has to be recognized as the court of last appeal. Secondly, just as with all living things, every advance achieved in this world of the finite, of shadows and images, always has something final about it and inevitably marks a restriction of future possibilities. The fuller and clearer truth becomes, the more strict it becomes, and more thoroughly excludes possibilities of future error. Looked at from this point of view, progress [43] in the development of dogmas must in a certain respect become progressively slower, which is not to say that it must come to a standstill. Thirdly, and this is the decisive point, the danger of the human factor simply remains a danger, and no precautionary measures exist which can exclude it unambiguously at the very start. Any attempt to protect oneself by human sharpsightedness against such a danger, so that it is simply not *possible* for anything to 'slip through', is itself radically false. It is the promise of the Spirit and that alone which prevents the final realization of an ever-present danger.

After these preliminary remarks we have now to consider a few essential features of a Catholic doctrinal development. From what has been said it will be clear why it is impossible to propose an interpretation *merely* in terms of a universally applicable formula or indeed one which is authoritatively taught by the Church. The general theory of the development of dogma is still in a rudimentary stage, because the history from which it must in large part be derived is not nearly sufficiently investigated for the purpose. All the same a few principles may be set down.

In the first place it is obvious that a revealed truth remains what it is, remains precisely 'true', i.e. it corresponds to reality and is always binding. What the Church has once taken possession of as a portion of the Revelation which has fallen to her share, as the object of her unconditional faith, is from then on her permanently valid possession. No doctrinal development could be merely the reflexion of a general history of humanity, a history of civilizations containing nothing but the objectivization of the everchanging sentiments, opinions and attitudes of a continual succession of historical epochs. Such an historical relativism is simply false, metaphysically and still more theologically. Yet all human statements, even those in which faith expresses God's saving truths, are finite. By this we mean that they never declare the *whole* of a reality. In the last resort every reality, even the most limited, is connected with and related to every other reality. The most wretched little physical process isolated in a carefully contrived experiment can only be described adequately if the investigator possesses the one comprehensive and exhaustive formula for the whole cosmos. But he does not possess such a formula; he could have it if and only if he could place himself in his own physical reality at a point which lay absolutely outside the cosmos – which is impossible. This is even more true of spiritual and divine realities. The statements [44] which we make about them, relying on the Word of God which itself became 'flesh' in human words, can never express them once and for all in an entirely adequate form. But they are not for this reason false. They are an 'adaequatio intellectus et rei', in so far as they state absolutely nothing which is false. Anyone who wants to call them 'half false' because they do not state everything about the whole truth of the matter in question, would eventually abolish the distinction between truth and falsehood. On the other hand, anyone

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who proposes to regard these propositions of faith, because they are wholly true, as in themselves *adequate* to the matter in question, i.e. as exhaustive statements, would be falsely elevating human truth to God's simple and exhaustive knowledge of himself and of all that takes its origin from him. Just because they are true, an infinite qualitative difference separates them, in spite of their finitude, from false propositions, however hard it may (even often) be in individual cases accurately to determine in the concrete where the boundary lies between an inadequate and a false statement. But because our statements about the infinite divine realities are finite and hence in this sense inadequate – that is, while actually corresponding to reality, yet not simply congruent with it – so every formula in which the faith is expressed can in principle be surpassed while still retaining its truth. That is to say, in principle at least it can be replaced by another which states the same thing, and what is more states it not only without excluding more extensive, more delicately nuanced prospects, but positively opening them up: prospects on to facts, realities, truths, which had not been seen explicitly in the earlier formulation and which make it possible to see the same reality from a new point of view, in a fresh perspective.

Now this evolution within the same truth is not, at any rate not necessarily, the play of empty curiosity; it can have an essential significance for man and his salvation. The human mind is not like a photographic plate, which without preference or alteration simply registers anything which falls upon it at a particular isolated moment. Rather, in order simply to understand what he sees or hears, a human being must react, take up a stand, bring the new experience into connexion with what he already knows or has been affected by or dealt with, the whole historical sum of his experience. He must find a place for his own reality, his own life and conduct in the order of divine truth, and direct his life accordingly; and this is a matter of [45] faith and love and observance, in worship, in the ordinances and the activity of the Church, and in his day-to-day life in the world. And so he can never abstract from what he is, from his ever new, changing historical reality. For it is not just his unchangeable metaphysical 'entity' which he has to insert into the economy of God's Message, but his concrete, historical 'contingent' reality, his 'existence' with all it includes: his talents, his particular, limited and evolving endowments; the spirit of his time, the possibilities of his epoch; his concepts, which, granting all the fixity of metaphysical truth, are none the less historically conditioned; the particular task, always changing and always sharply defined, which is set him by his inescapable situation in the world – and this situation again must never be thought of as just the result of a secular historical development, but is itself the result of Christ's government of his Church, as he gradually leads her, sometimes by new ways, through a changing reality to his own single Truth. If a human being does all this – and he must do it, because he always has his eye (metaphysically and theologically) on the Absolute, though always from a finite historical viewpoint – no change takes place in the divine reality, nor do the true propositions concerning this reality become false; but there is a certain change in the perspective in which he sees the reality through these propositions: he expresses this reality differently, he can state something new about it which he had not explicitly noticed before. The decisive feature of such a change is not 'progress' in the sense of acquiring a sort of plus-quantity of knowledge (as though the Church were somehow to become 'cleverer'), but (in principle, at least) the change, the new look, of the same reality and truth, appropriate to just this age of the Church: it is change in, not of, identity. By this again is not meant that the change is necessarily an entire abandonment of the earlier view or perspective; this would be a conception of change as we see it in the material and not in the spiritual realm. The mind of humanity, and even more the Church, has a 'memory'. They change while they preserve, they become new without losing anything of the old. We today have our own philosophy, while we still philosophize with Plato and his abiding truth. And still more we have our theology, which bears the undeniable stamp of our time, while we

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continue to learn anew from Scripture, the Fathers, the Scholastics. If we fail either to preserve or to change, we should betray the truth, either by falling into error or by failing to make the truth our own in a really existential way.

[46] Now it may at first sight seem that this formulation of the concept of a change within a single abiding truth is concerned just with what could be called 'theology' as opposed to revealed faith. We should then be dealing merely with the human understanding of revelation, which as it were circles continually round this fixed point of Scripture and perhaps a few fixed data of (early) Tradition too: at once removed from it and gravitating towards it. Thus we should be dealing all the time with *theology*, with something which could never become the authentic and plenary revealed Word which grasps Revelation itself. Such a relation between Revelation on the one hand, and human understanding (always conditioned by time and situation, and striving to reach perfection) on the other, does undoubtedly exist. In relation to Revelation there is such a thing as theology, the human word which seeks to express and understand the Revealed; so that one can have no certain guarantee from Revelation itself that the attempt has been successful. But there is question not only of a theology which evolves and revolves round the fixed point of a revealed utterance which has been pronounced once and for all. There exists not only a development of theology but also a development of dogma, not only a history of theology but also (after Christ, if only in the same Christ) a history of faith; and this for two reasons. Firstly the Church understands her doctrinal decisions not just as 'theology' but as the Word of faith – not indeed as newly revealed but as the Word which utters Revelation itself truly and with binding force. Secondly this doctrinal Word can be understood within broad limits and at the same time not as a merely external, verbal modification of the original revealed propositions. On the contrary it is very often impossible to say that the new doctrinal utterance is simply the old one 'differently expressed', so that the individual Christian cannot invariably limit its doctrinal content *a priori* to what he himself could recognize as 'identical' with the corresponding declaration made previously. For example, the declarations of Nicaea and Florence on the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, which are intended to be propositions of faith and not merely theological explorations, have a fixed meaning. This meaning is proposed as an object of faith, even if I myself as an individual Christian and a private theologian do not succeed in demonstrating off my own bat, i.e. by the methods of philological exegesis, that these declarations say 'just the same as', 'only in other words', what I have been able to extract from Scripture and early Tradition 'by a critical study of the [47] sources'. There can of course be no question of a contradiction between the two sets of propositions, and such a contradiction could never be demonstrated historically. We shall return later to the question as to how the difference (varying in magnitude, presumably, according to the matter under consideration) between an earlier and a later pronouncement of the magisterium may more exactly be understood *objectively*. For the moment it is sufficient to establish the fact that *quoad nos*, at least, i.e. for the individual and his private theology, such a difference can and in many cases does exist: that is, that at least in this one sense *quoad nos* a development of dogma does in fact exist, as shown in the actual practice of the Church when she proclaims a doctrine.

It is also relatively easy to see that a development of this kind must *necessarily* exist. God's revealing Word is directed through the medium of the historical process at the *total* history of humanity (speaking generally).[2] For this reason the historically conditioned mode in which Revelation is appropriated at any time need not lie absolutely outside this Revelation itself.

[2] It is not possible to say any more here about how we should determine more exactly the ontological and theological conditions which make it possible for a statement arrived at at a definite point in history to be directed at all men at all periods of that history.

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For the real understanding of what is revealed and its existential appropriation by men is wholly dependent on the transformation of the propositions of faith, as they were originally heard, into propositions which relate what is heard to the historical situation of the men who hear; it is only then that they become propositions of faith, emerging into the real, historically conditioned world of men as decision and living deed. If these translating propositions are just theology and nothing more, 'private interpretations' of the original propositions; if there were no guarantee that the proposition heard has been correctly understood: then on the one hand the proclamation of faith itself could only be a monotonous repetition, with a purely material accuracy, of the same propositions of Scripture (and perhaps of a limited early Tradition as well); and on the other what we have understood of it, in the situation which is precisely ours, would be subjective theology – an appropriation of the faith, which is itself faith, would not come to pass.

What has so far been said is only intended to indicate briefly the *fact*[3] of a dogmatic development, and offer a first approximation to [48] an understanding of its nature. In order to grasp its nature more clearly, we shall take as our starting-point a proposition which belongs to the basic pronouncements of the magisterium on faith, and which apparently points in a direction contrary to that indicated by the proposition that a development of dogma is both possible and has actually taken place.

It is a doctrine of the Church, though not in the strict sense a defined one, that Revelation 'was closed with the death of the (last) Apostle(s)' (Denz 2020 s.). What does this proposition mean? It would be false to interpret it as meaning more or less that when the last Apostle died there was left a fixed summary of strictly drafted propositions like a legal code with its clearly defined paragraphs, a sort of definitive catechism, which, while itself remaining fixed, was going to be for ever expounded, explained and commented upon. An idea like this would do justice neither to the mode of being proper to intellectual knowledge nor to the fullness of life of divine faith and its content. When we try to discover the profound reasons for the completeness of Revelation, we begin to see how we should approach the interpretation of this proposition. To start with, Revelation is not the communication of a definite number of propositions, a numerical sum, to which additions may conceivably be made at will or which can suddenly and arbitrarily be limited, but an historical dialogue between God and man in which something *happens*, and in which the communication is related to the continuous 'happening' and enterprise of God. This dialogue moves to a quite definite term, in which first the *happening* and *consequently* the communication comes to its never to be surpassed climax and so to its conclusion. Revelation is a saving Happening, and only then and in relation to this a communication of 'truths'. This continuous Happening of saving history has now reached its never to be surpassed climax in Jesus Christ: God himself has definitively given himself to the world. Christianity is not a phase or epoch of a history of world civilizations which could be displaced by another phase, another secular 'Aion'. If formerly, before Christ, something took place in history, it was and is invariably conditioned, provisional, something with its own limited range and endurance and thus leading to death and emptiness: one aion after another. The present always dies in the future. Each age goes by in successive rise and fall, infinitely far from the true Eternity which abides beyond: each carries its own death within it, from the moment of its birth: [49] civilizations, nations, states, or intellectual, political, economic systems. *Before* Christ even God's enterprise in revealing himself to the world was 'open': times and orders of salvation were created and displaced each other, and it was still not apparent how God was going at last to respond to the human answer, usually negative, to his own initiating act: whether the ultimate utterance of his creative Word would be the word of wrath or of love. But 'now' the definitive reality is

[3] And so stands still more in need of *a posteriori* proof from history itself.

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established, one which can no longer become obsolete or be displaced: the indissoluble, irrevocable presence of God in the world as salvation, love and forgiveness, as communication to the world of the most intimate depths of the divine Reality itself and of its Trinitarian life: Christ. *Now* there is nothing more to come: no new age, no other aion, no fresh plan of salvation, but only the unveiling of what is already 'here' as God's presence at the end of a human time stretched out to breaking-point: the Last and eternally the latest, newest day. It is because the definitive Reality which resolves history proper is already here that Revelation is 'closed'. Closed, because open to the concealed presence of divine plenitude in Christ. Nothing new remains to be said, not as though there were not still much to say, but because everything has been said, everything given in the Son of Love, in whom God and the world have become one, for ever without confusion, but for ever undivided. That Revelation has been closed is a positive and not a negative statement, a pure *Amen*, a conclusion which includes everything and excludes nothing of the divine plenitude, conclusion as fulfilled presence of an all-embracing plenitude.

It is further to be observed that the 'closed' Revelation with which we are concerned here is a Revelation made to the believing Church, in possession of the revealed Reality itself. A sure knowledge of this reality of divine salvation can only be gained through the divine tidings and through the faith which comes from hearing and speaks in human concepts and human propositions. Any attempts to transcend this divine message – in some 'religious experience' or emotive state, some experimental contact eliminating the faith which hears – so as to grasp this reality immediately and without reference to the message, is delusive and impossible, and must inevitably lead to a modernistic rationalization of Christianity. Our religion, in so far as it moves within the sphere of our intellectual and moral 'consciousness', is inseparably dependent upon the announcing Word. But in the aion of Christ it is not just of the remote future that this Word [50] brings us tidings, a mere anticipatory shadow of a reality still to come, but it utters what is present. The believing Church possesses what she believes: Christ, his Spirit, the earnest of eternal life and its vital powers. She cannot leave the Word behind in order to grasp this reality. But no more does she possess a word about the thing instead of the thing itself. Consequently her hearing of the Word and her reflexion upon the Word heard are not *merely* a logical activity, an attempt gradually to squeeze out all the logical virtualities and consequences of the Word heard as though it were a numerical sum of propositions; they are a reflexion on the propositions heard in living contact with the thing itself. This reflective consideration practised by the Church, which takes place in us as a 'theological' comprehension, unfolding and clarification of the Church's faith, results in 'new' propositions of faith and not just theology, takes place simultaneously in the word and in the thing itself: each in the other, neither without the other. Or putting it differently, the light of faith and the assistance of the Spirit which are at work in this reflexion and progressive self-achievement do not mean just a sort of supervision given by a teacher. The teacher's concern is to see that his pupil does not go astray in his calculations and deductions, so that what the pupil learns (if he proceeds correctly) is due only to his own insight and logical acumen and the virtualities of his own premises. It is much more in the actual result that the light of the Spirit and of faith exert their influence: the hidden but present and posited Reality takes part in its own understanding. The 'unction' teaches. We find a reflected image there of what we have seen with our own eyes of the living Word of Truth, what we have looked upon and touched with our hands (1 Jn 1:1). Consequently we need not be able to isolate this light and its operation reflexively, as against other impulses by which we grow and advance in the knowledge of faith. Even in the natural order reflexion upon our mental processes never quite exhausts what are in fact the grounds and motives at work in our intellectual growth or our behaviour: we always understand more by a direct and simple view of things than reflexion and the detailed analysis of this intellectual vision can produce for

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inspection, our behaviour is always more variously motivated than prior or subsequent reflexion upon it can make explicit. The common man, still more, in his direct apprehension of the objects of everyday life, has not reflexive or theoretical awareness of the nature of his intellectual powers or of formal logic, while he does in fact make use [51] of both. How much more true this is of knowledge in faith, and how much more it is a question of principle here! The light of faith, the impulse of the Spirit, do not permit of being isolated for inspection by a reflexive process in which attention is turned back upon itself and withdrawn from the object of faith. They are the brightness which illuminates the object of faith, the horizon within which it is contained, the mysterious sympathy with which it is understood, and not properly the object directly regarded, not a sun which we can immediately contemplate. But they are present and take part in the apprehension and unfolding of the object of faith; they form the co-operating subjectivity (God's and caused by God) with which the Word is for the first time understood in the act of hearing and understood ever new. Knowledge in faith takes place in the power of the Spirit of God, while at the same time that Spirit is the concrete reality believed: Spirit of the Father and of the Son, Spirit of the Crucified and Ascended, Spirit of the Church and earnest of eternal life, Spirit of justification, holiness and freedom from sin and death. It follows that the object of faith is not something merely passive, indifferently set over against a subjective attitude to it, but simultaneously the principle by which it is itself grasped as object. This statement of course only acquires its full significance on the assumption that the actual support given to faith under the grace of the Holy Spirit is not a merely ontological modality of the act of faith beyond conscious apprehension, but also has a specific effect in consciousness (which is not necessarily to say that it is reflexively distinguishable). This effect makes it possible to apprehend the objects of faith given through the hearing of the external announcement, under a 'light', a subjective *a priori* under grace (the formal object), which is not available to someone without grace. As is well known, this assumption is a controversial topic in Catholic theology. Nevertheless the Thomist view, which does make this assumption, seems to us to be true on Biblical and theological grounds, and we have consequently the right to make this assumption ourselves without being able further to justify it here. But if we do proceed on this assumption, we cannot allow that the unfolding of the Church's consciousness in faith is supported merely by an insight of a conceptual and logical kind and an 'assistentia per se negativa' (i.e. a protection against final error in this work of human, logical understanding) given by the Holy Spirit. It must be insisted upon that between firstly a new revelation, delivering materially new [52] elements, and secondly an *assistentia per se negativa* which contributes nothing to the treasury of faith as it unfolds but only prevents erroneous decisions and *consequently* offers an external guarantee of the validity of decisions in matters of faith, a third possibility is open: and that is a development and unfolding of the original treasures of faith under a positive influence of the light of faith bestowed upon the Church.

If from this point of view we ask what tasks and limits are imposed upon the logical activity which can and does take place upon the original propositions of faith as such (i.e. in so far as the act of grasping them can be distinguished in any way from the possession of the concealed object of faith itself as an apprehended datum, in and through these propositions with the help of the Spirit as light), we come to the following conclusion: the faith of the Church is ever reflected anew in the propositions of faith. It discovers what is implicitly contained in them, the logical and real implications which result from individual propositions or the combination of several. These 'consequences' can be binding even from a purely logical point of view; but they need not necessarily be so. There is also the possibility, in the abstract, of relations between propositions, of consequences from them, which, considered from a purely logical point of view, may be 'proximate', etc., but just by themselves can produce no conclusion which is absolutely binding logically. It may occur that a more

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particular or more exact statement appears to fit in harmoniously with a more general, less determined combination of statements or ideas; in this way each throws light on and supports the other, without its being possible to see that the more particular statement can be inferred with logical stringency from the more general one as its only possible consequence. In this case we have the so-called 'theological *convenientia*' 'probable' arguments from Scripture or Tradition, and the like. But it would be false to suppose that in such a case any sure knowledge in faith is in principle automatically excluded. For such a supposition proceeds from the explicit or tacit assumption that progress in theological understanding in the order of faith relies uniquely upon human operations of a logical kind. This is not so. A *sure* knowledge is acquired in the form of knowledge in *faith* proper to the *Church* as such (if she steps in) not just through the merely logical explication[4] [53] of propositions as such but through the luminous power of the Spirit in contact with the *res* itself. This power makes use of logical processes but its influence does not cease there, because it possesses the very *res* in question as a present principle of knowledge of it and not just propositions about a (remote) reality, always remembering that the former cannot be had without a basic minimum of the latter. It is quite possible for there to be doctrinal progress on the ground of 'arguments of convenience', 'proofs' depending on similarity.[5] Naturally the individual theologian as such cannot say when an assured progress has in fact been achieved by means of (and 'in spite of') such arguments, for it is only the (conditional) force of the logical argument as such which can become apparent to his reflexive understanding. This decision belongs rather to the faith of the Church, who finds herself in actual fact in secure[6] possession of definite knowledge in faith by means of and in spite of such mere considerations of 'convenience'; and *in consequence* sees that her development in understanding has taken place in the power and the light of the Spirit.

For our purposes we can ignore the question whether such an 'argument of convenience', which provisionally at least is 'purely' such *quoad nos*, is in given circumstances, objectively considered, really *only* such and *in consequence* appears to us as such; or whether *in itself* there *must* always in any case be concealed in an argument of this kind, if assured knowledge in faith is acquired by it, what is in fact a logically stringent argument, which merely *quoad nos* has not yet reached such a degree of objectivity by accurate reflexive analysis as to be evidently so to us. A theologian who proposes to explain the development of dogma as strictly as possible in terms of the logical explication of propositions is bound to regard the second hypothesis as [54] the only permissible one.[7] In the natural order there undoubtedly occur many cases in which we know something with complete certainty in an unreflexive, 'global' way, where on the one hand the reflexive proof in fact offered for it could still be found very loose and inadequate (as 'merely probable'); and on the other hand a more

[4] *Explikation*. It seemed proper to translate this technical term by 'explication', and *explizieren* by 'explicate', both of which terms are permitted by the Oxford Dictionary. – Tr.

[5] A more prudent formula may be preferred: 'It is not demonstrably impossible *a priori* …'. Whether *in fact* doctrinal progress has been made in this way, and when it has done so, are questions to be answered *a posteriori* from the examination of individual cases in the history of doctrine. Once again we should have to distinguish two possibilities: *either* this progress took place just in consequence of what at first sight was a mere argument of 'convenience', which turned out to be quite stringent when larger contexts of theological relevance were brought to bear on it; *or* so long as we remain in the field of theological argument we have nothing but an 'argument of convenience'.

[6] Of course 'secure' does not mean here 'logically compelling', but firm', 'undoubted', 'undisturbed'.

[7] Only he has then to be able to show that he can do justice in terms of this postulate to the legitimate development of dogma which has in fact taken place. But he has no right suddenly to relax his conditions for logical stringency when he is considering the 'stringent' deduction from original Revelation of propositions *already* defined, if he is never prepared to relax them when it is a question of the theological deduction of propositions *not yet* defined. Let us forgo examples involving the use of a double standard.

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stringent proof, the possibility of which must be accepted in principle, is all the same going to be produced or has already been produced to the satisfaction of some more penetrating thinker. All that concerns us here is simply the idea, which even a theologian of this persuasion will have to admit, that it is not possible to assert that a sure knowledge in faith cannot be had, where what is had *hic et nunc quoad nos* is 'merely' a theological 'argument of convenience'. An assertion of this kind would in fact be a piece of theological naturalism, which would reduce to the level of merely human processes of thought that specific and peculiar kind of knowledge in faith which belongs to the Church as a whole, in virtue of the Spirit's abiding presence in her as the very object of faith. What is primary and more comprehensive in this knowledge in faith would be surrendered to the inferior and secondary, to 'scientific theology', which does indeed form an ingredient of knowledge in faith but certainly does not adequately represent its nature.

Conversely it follows from what has been said that it is superfluous and injurious to the honesty which is one of the virtues of theology, to attempt at all costs to produce a logically stringent argument of a reflexive kind from the sources of faith for every doctrine of faith to which there is firm testimony in the magisterium of the Church. The theologian should try to find such an argument and not try to lighten or simplify the disciplined labour of historical investigation and rational speculation proper to his science with the explanation that it doesn't matter very much because he always practises his theology in dependence on the faith of the Church. Such a view would be false and reprehensible. But even where he is unable to find an argument which [55] is honestly justified by the facts, he should avoid giving the appearance of supposing that his own mind and his own theological reflexions are simply the point at which the Holy Spirit of the Church has achieved its fullest manifestation.

In any case the attempt is superfluous in view of the undeniable fact that in many cases the Church's sure conviction in faith has temporally preceded such logical deductions (perfectly possible ones, in certain circumstances). Even in the concrete logic of everyday discovery the consequence, the conclusion, must very often be arrived at and brought to light by quite other means than those of logical deduction, so that one can generally look for possible premises or more general concepts in which this conclusion may have been contained implicitly. If we transfer this to the field of theological knowledge, we may ask: Why should a (individual or collective) consciousness not arrive by a concrete logic of discovery at a theological proposition, which (when it is a question of the Church's consciousness in faith) is apprehended as true and certain in this direct, global and concrete knowledge belonging to the supernatural *life* of faith, even before the theologian's reflective work of deductive intelligence has produced a reflexive 'proof'? In the theological field too, where the knowledge of Revelation becomes progressively more profound, there exists a 'concrete experience', a cognition which integrates a thousand and one merely 'instinctive' observations, and which only with great difficulty, if at all, permits of being exhibited in a chain of syllogistic formulae. For this extremely 'rational' knowledge of an unreflexive kind is richer than in its reflexive articulation and logical exposition, which is always subsequent to it (though within certain limits necessary). Any living thing of a certain degree of complexity needs a skeleton but is more than this skeleton, which itself lives by the life of the whole. So too it may be impossible for every theologian strictly to demonstrate *hic et nunc* that more explicit knowledge in faith is contained in less explicit (earlier) knowledge; but this is at any rate no criterion by which we may judge of whether in fact the later knowledge is contained in the earlier or not.

If we go on to ask how this 'being-contained' of new formulations of dogmatic propositions in an earlier form of consciousness in faith is to be understood *objectively* (now some such 'being-contained' must be allowed if Revelation is held to have 'closed' with the Apostles), then we come up once more against a very large number of [56] dark and difficult

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problems, on which Catholic theologians have long failed to reach agreement. It must be pointed out once more that such a lack of clarity and unanimity is not surprising, and cannot serve as an argument against a genuine development of dogma. Spiritual processes continue to function with complete adequacy even though a satisfactory theory of their subjective and objective presuppositions has not yet been offered.

To clarify the point at issue once again. We have so far tried to show that a development of dogma does *in fact* exist and exist necessarily. Further we have learned to see that it takes place in vital contact with that *res* which is the 'closed' plenitude of revealed reality, in a contact which does indeed include as an intrinsic factor an objective givenness of the *res* in propositions and the possibility of their logical expansion, but is not simply exhausted therein. The 'motive' force which is at work in the development of dogma and guarantees its correctness is not simply to be identified with formal logic. If there does in fact exist a movement from the earlier to the later knowledge in virtue of this force, then we must yet again and more precisely put the question how the earlier and the later knowledge are related to each other. There is of course no doubt that the objective realities grasped in both the knowledge which acts as foundation and that which is founded upon it, are really connected *in themselves*, the only presupposition being that the knowledge which has emerged is a genuine dogmatic truth. But this mere connexion of the (known) *realities* in themselves is not in question: rather it is the connexion of the actual states of knowledge.[8] This connexion must be present. Not only because Revelation was 'closed' with the death of the Apostles, a fact that implies both the abiding plenitude and perfection of the Reality which is the object of faith, and in some sense the continual presence of the plenitude of faith in this reality as well. But also because if there were present only a connexion in the known object itself but not in earlier and later knowledge of it in faith, then there would have to be either a new revelation for the later proposition or an apprehension of the object independent of the earlier divine [57] pronouncements about this object; now both these views are unacceptable.

The theologians have attempted to explain this necessary connexion in terms of the explication of an implicit cognition in an explicit one. So far all are agreed. Something is really 'explained' in this way, for attention is directed by these concepts to a phenomenon which may be actually observed in the advance of knowledge in faith as well as elsewhere. There does actually exist such a thing as 'explication' of a cognition, the fullness of whose content is thereby displayed in an explicit and articulated way. We have the clearest example of this sort of propositional connexion in formal logic and pure mathematics, the propositions of which are related to each other as implicit to explicit. Moreover it cannot be denied that explications which seem to correspond exactly to those of formal logic may be found in theology too. Even if there are other, essentially different ways in which spiritual activity can achieve explicitness (as we shall see), yet the process of explication (speaking quite generally) does exist. And so this process would seem to be quite a suitable way of representing, at least in general terms, the connexion between two states of knowledge in faith, one of which arises from the other by a development of dogma.

But this catch-word 'explication' does not offer much 'explanation' of what we want, the way in which this connexion holds. For the precise nature of this explicative connexion, just that with which we are concerned, remains obscure.

We may begin with a brief account of the direction in which the average explanation offered by the theologians moves, and of the controversies which have their origin in this common starting-point. The point of departure of the explanation is tacitly and with a sense

[8] This distinction is not easy to make conveniently in English. In St Thomas's terms, we distinguish between the *res intellecta*, the independent reality in fact known, and the i*ntellectum*, the meaning or content immediately apprehended by the mind in the act of knowing, and through which the *res* is known. – Tr.

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of self-evidence taken to be the proposition. The only question is how a *proposition*, which, it is assumed, is a fixed quantity, can be explicated. It follows that the explication of the proposition must take place by means of formal logic. Explication is the analytic exposition of the content of the proposition or of the logical consequences of several propositions with the help of the principle of contradiction. The model which is expressly or tacitly employed as an example in this view is the procedure of logic or mathematics.

When the explication is that of a *single* proposition contained in original Revelation, and when this explication only states more expressly ('in other words', in a different conceptual language, etc.) [58] 'the same thing' as the original proposition (of course with the guarantee of the magisterium that the new proposition correctly renders the sense of the old), there can be no doubt that the new proposition too states what God has revealed, that it is believed with divine faith as materially *God* himself,[9] that it is 'dogma' and not just theology. But it may seriously be doubted whether the actual course of the development of dogma may be adequately interpreted in this way, by an explication of what is 'formally implicit' in a proposition. We shall discuss this in a moment.

Alongside this explication of what is formally implicit in a *single* proposition, however hard it may be to make sharp distinctions in individual cases, there exists a different form of explication of propositions: the explication of what is 'virtually' implicit in a proposition with the help of another proposition. Let us suppose that the following proposition is valid: All men born more than two hundred years ago are now dead. If I do not know that there was a Socrates who was born more than two hundred years ago, I cannot know that the general proposition includes Socrates as a particular case, not only in the real state of affairs under consideration but in the proposition as such. But if I do know the second proposition, the first contains something 'virtually' implicit: Socrates is dead, an implication which could never have been explicated by a mere analysis of the first proposition just in itself. Operations of this kind (of course more complex usually) do undoubtedly exist in the theological field. Without them it would be impossible to think of theology as a body of intelligibly connected ideas at all. In order to simplify our problem we leave out of account the case (which does undoubtedly occur too) when in a properly deductive procedure of this kind not only the formal technique (logic) but also part of the propositions and their intelligible content have their source not in original Revelation but in our natural knowledge; we shall consider only those cases in which the whole intelligible material of such a deductive explication, of the movement from the purely *virtually* implicit to the explicit, is provided by Revelation itself. Cases of this kind do certainly exist. And there is no doubt that they have their part in 'theological' development (as we wish to point out in advance, because the immediate question is whether a genuine development of dogma can be explained in this way).

[59] We can now go on to ask whether new knowledge derived in this properly deductive way as a *conclusion* from *several* previously given propositions, can still be said to be 'revealed by God', and so can properly be believed, in the proper sense of 'divine faith', 'on the authority of God'; or whether it is a merely human knowledge, not properly believed with divine faith, but at most to be accepted with 'ecclesiastical faith' on the authority of the *Church* (really infallible in this case too, with the necessary qualifications). The theologians are divided on this question. One group, the majority today, hold that these inferred propositions are purely human ones, the correctness of which can of course be guaranteed by the Church. The others believed that this kind of explication of what is contained merely 'virtually' in the immediate propositions of Revelation can and must still really be called 'Revelation', and as such can he proclaimed by the Church as the object of divine faith in the strict sense. The second view would seem more correct.

[9] 'Credere Deum', as opposed to 'credere Deo' or 'in Deum'. – Tr.

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We have already noted that in a concrete instance distinguishing between formally and virtually implicit and their explication can be very difficult, for the reason that the explication of even what is formally implicit can and often must, for the sake of clarity, take the form of a syllogistic operation. But it then becomes difficult in the concrete case to decide whether we have an instance of one or the other kind of explication. It is consequently always open to the theologians holding the first opinion, even where there has been a long chain of deductive reasoning, to explain that objectively after all we are dealing with the explication of something formally implicit and no more. So far it is not easy to dispose of this opinion. But if the concepts are allowed to keep their plain, original simple meaning, we are bound to say that an explication of what is formally implicit in a revealed proposition is present only when the new proposition really states the *same thing* as the old one in other words, has the same content as the old one, however useful and necessary it may be for various reasons to formulate the new proposition. Putting it differently: an explicit proposition has been contained in another proposition as something formally implicit only when it results from the latter in consequence of a *hermeneutic* and exegetical operation, not involving (as a necessary feature) the use of a properly deductive procedure. Where pure analysis of the meaning and significance of a proposition according to linguistic and grammatical rules does not by itself produce the new [60] proposition, there can be no question of something formally implicit. For instance, instead of the proposition: One and the same Logos is God and man, we can say: The ‘person’ of the Logos has both a human and a divine ‘nature’. If theological or metaphysical theories (very important ones perhaps, but in need of justification on other grounds) are not attached to the concepts ‘person’ and ‘nature’, we may conceive of the second proposition as the bare explication of what is formally implicit in the first. Explications of this kind do undoubtedly exist, the only question here being whether it is particularly illuminating to distinguish between ‘explicit’ and ‘implicit’, when in both cases we are meant to be dealing with something stated really ‘formally’, i.e. something which the initial proposition *itself* really states, for this belongs to the concept of the ‘formally stated’, if these words are allowed to have their natural sense.

But it is still very doubtful whether all the cases in which a development of dogma in the proper sense, one guaranteed by the Church, does undoubtedly take place, can be interpreted according to this schema. If we try to use it in order to explain such doctrines as those of Transubstantiation, Sacramental Character, the validity of heretical Baptism and so on, which have not always been found in an explicit form and yet belong to the Church’s treasury of faith today, it is clear that we can only do so by arbitrary and violent measures. Granted that there does *in fact* exist a development of dogma which goes beyond the explication of what is formally implicit, then it precisely *can* exist. And so there *must* exist (if we are going to take as our basis the logical explication of *propositions*) at least an explication of what is virtually implicit, the result of which may yet be claimed as the Revelation of God himself and consequently may be believed on the testimony of God himself.

Nor is it particularly hard, in the case of *God’s* utterances, to answer the question *why* a proposition of this kind, the result of an explication of what is virtually implicit, can be conceived of as stated by *God*, and hence credible on his personal authority. A human speaker can never survey all the necessary consequences which in fact follow from his statements. In this kind of speech, then, we cannot be sure whether these consequences too could be intended as a communication of the speaker’s own mind. The inner drive towards the infinite openness of truth which is inherent even in human concepts and propositions, is beyond the scope of the human speaker’s knowledge, and [61] therefore ceases to be fully the expression of his own subjectivity. *We* always begin by talking ‘above our heads’. The whole of what we ‘really’ state is not an expression of what *we* ourselves want to state. But when *God* speaks the case is different: he is necessarily conscious of the actual vitality and

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dynamism of his immediate communication, and aware of all its virtues and consequences. Moreover he has from the very beginning the intention and the will to bring about its explication and to guide it in his own Spirit. It is God himself then who states even what is only disclosed *as* stated in the historical life of what was (immediately) stated. And so even what is merely virtually implicit in his speech is his Word. Virtual explication, looked at from the point of view of *God* as speaker, is simply explication and nothing more, even if it requires real deduction by *us*, looked at from our point of view as hearers. What *we* 'deduce' in this way, God has not indeed *stated* 'formally' in the initial propositions from which our deduction proceeds (i.e. he has not expressed it in the immediate meaning of the propositions), but he has really 'com-municated'[10] it, so that entire faith can be given to it as *his* knowledge. It cannot be objected that on this hypothesis, in view of the absolutely unlimited virtualities of what has been revealed immediately, absolutely everything, that is, every conceivable true proposition, will in the last resort have to be regarded as revealed. For in the first place it is not true of every proposition of 'natural knowledge' that its referential content possesses that objective connexion with the original, immediate propositions of Revelation which is needed to support the claim that the proposition was communicated by God himself. Secondly the lack of the guarantee which must (usually) be given by the Church's consciousness in faith (her magisterium) will make it impossible to recognize the 'consequence' of one proposition from the other with enough certainty to permit of faith in the first proposition as something revealed by God. Thirdly, in the theory just outlined, it is only possible to regard as something 'stated' by God to man what God knows man will himself in fact evolve from what was stated immediately, under the impulse and in the light of the divine Spirit. But [62] what has in fact evolved or is in course of evolution is limited and finite.

A further objection, taken this time from inspired Scripture, might be offered to the distinction which has been made between something stated formally and something over and above this but really communicated; an objection, then, to the possibility of claiming the virtually revealed too as something which can be assented to with divine faith and authoritatively defined. In Scripture, it might be said, the inspired human author is not only a messenger delivering a message (for it is quite conceivable that a messenger should not comprehend the full bearing of the message, the range of the communication); he is also really an author, so that only that sense of the propositions is inspired which the *human* author, constructing his own propositions, intended and expressed. And so it is impossible to assert that in Scripture (which is nevertheless the most important starting-point of our deductions) more has been communicated by God than has been stated formally. For our purposes we need not concern ourselves here with the question whether this objection concerning inspiration as such really proceeds from a correct appreciation of the relation between human and divine authors.[11] But even apart from this it does not prove what it sets out to prove. It may (in just this context) be safely granted that nothing more is *inspired* than what the *human* author as such intended to state and write down. Yet it follows from this that more can be communicated, even if God, as *literary author* of Scripture and no more, should not be able to communicate more than what he and the human author have stated formally (i.e. written down). We have only to consider the fact that what is now found written in Scripture was also in historical fact, indeed primarily, the object of the Apostles' oral preaching. As preachers of this kind ('prophets'), i.e. as original, non-literary bearers of that revealed content which was also deposited eventually in inspired Scripture, they are however

[10] *mit-geteilt*. By inserting this hyphen Fr Rahner wishes to suggest the *inclusive* character of the divine utterance. Later he will show that this character is present to some degree even in human speech; and by an untranslatable emphasis suggests the communion of the hearer with the speaker in the *com*munication. – Tr.
[11] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Über die Schriftinspiration', ZKT LXXVIII (1956), pp. 137-68. – Tr.

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essentially messengers and transmitters, not authors of their message; they pass on their message not as their own but simply as God's, so that what they communicate is in itself perfectly capable of being in excess of what they themselves have explicitly appropriated of it.[12]

[63] Summing up what we have seen so far, we may say that the connexion between the original propositions and those reached in consequence of dogmatic development can consist in the connexion between something formally or virtually implicit in a proposition and the explication of this by logical procedures with the support and in the light of the divine Spirit, leaving it open as to whether or not this connexion must be logically compelling in every case 'quoad nos'.

But this does not bring us to the end of our discussion. So far we have with the majority of theologians tacitly assumed that the starting-point of a dogmatic explication is *always* a *proposition* in the proper sense. But that this should always be the case may by no means be assumed.

In the first place it cannot be doubted that there exists in the natural order a kind of knowledge, which, while it is itself not articulated in 'propositions', is the starting-point of an intellectual process which develops into propositions. Let us suppose that a young man has the genuine and vital experience of a great love, an experience which transforms his whole being. This love may have *presuppositions* (of a metaphysical, psychological and physiological kind) which are simply unknown to him. His love *itself* is his 'experience'; he is conscious of it, lives through it with the entire fullness and depth of a real love. He 'knows' much more about it than he can 'state'. The clumsy stammerings of his love-letters are paltry and miserable compared to this knowledge. It may even be possible that the attempt to tell himself and others what he experiences and 'knows' may lead to quite false statements. If he were to come across a 'metaphysics' of love, he might perhaps understand absolutely nothing of what was said there about love and even his love, although he might know much more about it than the dried-up metaphysician who has written the book. If he is intelligent, and has at his disposal an adequately differentiated stock of ideas, he could perhaps make the attempt, slowly and gropingly, approaching the subject in a thousand different ways, to state what he knows about his love, what he is already aware of in the consciousness [64] of simply possessing the reality (more simply but more fully aware), so as finally to 'know' (in reflexive propositions). In such a case it is not (merely) a matter of the logical development and inference of new propositions from earlier ones, but of the formulation for the first time of propositions about a knowledge already possessed, in an infinite search which only approaches its goal asymptotically. This process too is an explication. Here too there is a connexion *in re* between an earlier knowledge and later explicit propositions. But the starting-point and the procedure are not those of the logical explication of propositions, which we first took as model for the development of dogma.

This case, which we are going to make use of in the field of dogma as a natural analogue for an explication other than that of the logical explication of propositions, must however be examined from a different angle. The lover knows of his love: this knowledge of himself forms an essential element in the very love itself. The knowledge is infinitely richer, simpler and denser than any body of propositions about the love could be. Yet this knowledge never lacks a certain measure of reflexive articulateness: the lover confesses his love at least to himself, 'states' at least to himself something about his love. And so it is not a matter of

[12] Fr Rahner's point is that even on this limited view of literary inspiration, more can be communicated by the written word than the human author may have grasped, because the literary authorship may consist merely in making a record of a *message*, something which need not be fully understood by the messenger.

It should perhaps be noted at this point that Fr Rahner is leading up to his distinction between 'something formally stated' (*ein formell Gesagtes*) and 'something formally communicated' (*ein formell Mitgeteiltes*). – Tr.

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indifference to the love itself whether or not the lover continues to reflect upon it; this self-reflexion is not the subsequent description of a reality which remains in no way altered by the description. In this progressive self-achievement, in which love comprehends itself more and more, in which it goes on to state something 'about' itself and comprehends its own nature more clearly, the love itself becomes ordered; it has an increasing understanding of what must properly be the foundation of its own activity, mirrors its own nature with increasing clarity, approaches as its goal, with an increasingly clear awareness, what it always has been. Reflexion upon oneself (when it is accurate) in propositions (i.e. in *pensées* which the lover produces about his love) is thus a part of the progressive realization of love itself; it is not just a parallel phenomenon, without importance for the thing itself. The progress of love is a living growth out of the original (the originally conscious) love *and* out of just what that love has itself become through a reflexive experience of itself. It lives at every moment from its original source *and* from that reflexive experience which has immediately preceded any given moment. Original, non-propositional, unreflexive yet conscious possession of a [65] reality on the one hand, and reflexive (propositional), articulated consciousness of this original consciousness on the other – these are not competing opposites but reciprocally interacting factors of a single experience necessarily unfolding in historical succession. Root and shoot are not the same thing; but each lives by *the other*. Reflexive consciousness always has its roots in a prior conscious entering into possession of the reality itself. But just this original consciousness possesses itself later in a new way, such that its life is now the accomplishment of that personal act of reflexive apprehension by which it has enriched itself. Reflexive consciousness would inevitably wither if its life were not rooted in the simpler basic consciousness, or if it were to reproduce this in every particular. The simple basic consciousness would become blind if, because it is richer and fuller, it refused to allow itself to grow out into a reflexive consciousness involving 'pensées' and 'propositions'.

The question now arises whether in the development of dogma there is to be found an interrelationship of types of explication, (analogically) similar to that which has just been indicated by way of example in the natural order. We believe that it is possible to reply in the affirmative.[13]

In the first place it may be supposed that the *Apostles* themselves had a global experience of this kind, lying behind propositions and forming an inexhaustible source for the articulation and explication of the faith in propositions. Christ, as the living link between God and the world, whom they have seen with their eyes and touched with their hands, is the objective content of an experience which is more elemental and concentrated, simpler and yet richer than the individual propositions coined in an attempt to express this experience – an attempt which can in principle never be finally successful. The vivid experience of Christ's relationship to sin, for example, his death, his attitude to Peter and a thousand other experiences of the kind, which the Apostles lived through in an unreflexive and global way, *precede* [66] the doctrinal propositions (at least in many cases, though also *only* in many, not in all cases!) and form a part of the original Revelation, the explication of which, already begun by the Apostles, is not of the same character as the logical explication of propositions. Even in the many cases where our Lord's *spoken* word as such is the necessary starting-point of the Apostles' faith because the actual content of Revelation is available in no other way, these words are heard in the context of a vivid experience of daily life in his company. And so, even in these cases, the concrete experience is an essential presupposition for the true and

[13] In order to exclude the possibility of misunderstanding at the very start, let us draw attention to the following point. In the sphere of faith this global, still (in itself) non-propositional and unreflexive basic consciousness is manifestly an intelligence received from the historical revelation of God in Christ. It does not arise, any more than a dogma explicitly formulated in propositions, from some *a priori* religious consciousness or subconsciousness, itself the only source of an explication in dogmatic propositions.

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ever-deepening understanding of the words spoken and heard. These sayings are not in themselves explicit enough; rather they require the complete experience, which in turn becomes continually more explicit and reflexively intelligible as the content of these sayings is unfolded. An explication of this kind, then, is not just a matter of deduction from propositions: it takes a proposition which is offered as a conceptual expression of experience, measures it by the original experience and finds it correct by this standard. Nevertheless this experience depends for its realization upon its actually stating what it knows. The initial degree of self-reflexion in the experience may be slight but it cannot be entirely lacking. Every explication which has been successfully established in propositional form illuminates the original experience, allows it to grow to its proper stature, and becomes an intrinsic factor in the abiding life of this experience itself. Every theological proposition – in St Paul's Epistles, for example – is uttered out of the entirety of this living conscious contact with the incarnate God. *Quoad nos* the 'theology' of the Apostles is original Revelation, because it is guaranteed by the infallibility of prophetic mission and Apostolic inspiration as the new Word intended for us by God. Yet in a certain sense it is also, for the bearers of Revelation themselves, their 'theology', in relation to a more primitive communication made to them before, i.e. it is an explication and an inference from the most primitive data of Revelation.[14] In their case at any rate we have the right to speak of a development of dogma which takes place not just through the logical explication of propositions but through living self-explication within a mind's possession of a given [67] reality. The objective connexion between the new proposition and the old knowledge is not merely that between something logically explicit and something logically implicit in two propositions; it is rather a connexion between what becomes partially explicit in a proposition and the unreflexive, total spiritual possession of the entire *res*, so that the explicit proposition is at the same time more and less than its implicit source. More, because as reflexively formulated it elucidates the original, spiritually simple possession of the reality and in this way enriches it. Less, because it never does more than express reflexively and remotely a part of what was spiritually possessed before. This alone is sufficient to make it clear how one may conceive of the *full* consciousness in faith possessed by the Apostles and the primitive Christian community, and yet avoid anachronisms. It is true that men did not 'know' much then, if we understand by 'knowledge' a form of knowledge which is set up with the help of a reflexive, highly articulated conceptual system. There could have been for the most part so little acquaintance with a system of this kind that we may safely assume that it quite certainly would not have been immediately intelligible at the time, because concepts like this only emerge at a definite point in time and require a definite period of pedagogic activity to become intelligible. Yet at the same time all was known, because men had laid living hold upon the total reality of God's saving Act and now lived in it spiritually. Let us remember that in actual fact (if not in essential principle) greater reflexive articulateness of a spiritual possession is nearly always purchased at the cost of a partial loss in unhampered communication ('naive' in the good sense) with the reality given in faith (and which is still possessed in its entirety). Then we shall see that our more complex and highly differentiated consciousness in faith and the theology which corresponds to it need not fancy themselves 'superior' to the simple faith of Apostolic times! God allots to every age its mode of consciousness in faith. Any romantic desire of our own to return to the simplicity and unreflexive density and fullness of the Apostolic consciousness in faith would only result in an historical atavism. We must possess this fullness in a different way.

[14] If the Apostles use 'arguments' in their letters, they do so not merely from a pedagogic concern for their readers; rather they give us in this way an insight into the manner in which their own knowledge in faith unfolds, their own 'development of dogma' and 'theology'.

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It may be urged that in the Apostles we have an exceptional case which can contribute nothing to the explanation of the connexion between old knowledge and new formulation, because the Apostles could only pass on their completed reflexive explication in propositional [68] form and not their original living experience; so that in every age after them only a logical connexion between implicit and explicit in propositions could support the possibility of further development of dogma. But this objection has no force. It is not only propositions about their experience that the Apostles bequeath, but their Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, the very reality, then, of what they have experienced in Christ. Their own experience is preserved and present together with their Word. Spirit and Word together form the permanent active potentiality of an experience which is in principle the same as that of the Apostles even if, because it is supported on the Apostolic Word handed down in Tradition, it is an experience, resting on that of the Apostles and prolonging *theirs*, which has historical roots and can never continue to live if it is cut off from connexion with the Apostles through Word, Sacrament and the handing down of authority. But just this 'successio apostolica', in a full and comprehensive sense, hands on to the post-Apostolic Church, and precisely with respect to knowledge in faith, not simply a body of propositions but living experience: the Holy Spirit, the Lord, who is ever present in the Church; the keen flair and instinct of faith, the acute sensibility which is a gift of the Spirit, ever alert for the true and the false in the sphere of faith, for what as formulated proposition is or is not homogeneous with the undispersed vitality of truth possessed in innocence. To this extent there exists here too, in post-Apostolic development of dogma, the connexion between what is implicit as a living possession of the whole truth in an unreflexive but conscious way, and what is always only partially explicit in propositions. It is only an explication of this kind that provides both the required bond with earlier explications, already propositional in form, and also the simultaneous passage to a new explication from the original experience through the tradition already formulated; and provides them with greater power and cogency than in the Apostolic age.

If we are properly to appreciate what has been said, we must first make a critical examination of an inadequate way of regarding propositions, all the more active for being tacit. An ordinary statement of everyday life, like those which appear among the propositions of faith too, is tacitly represented under the schema of propositions belonging to mathematics, geometry or formal logic. The latter have in fact – approximately speaking – a fixed content; it is possible – approximately – to *state* unambiguously and exhaustively in a few words (not [69] only to know in an unreflexive and global way) what their concepts mean and what is said with them. Their content, as ascertainable in the form of definitions, is (more or less) identical with what is communicated in them (the object seen through them). It is possible to establish that they state or communicate *this* and *that*, so much and no more. Anything over and above this which it may be possible eventually to infer from them in the way of further knowledge is precisely – newly inferred, precisely then something else. It is possible completely and exhaustively to understand the manifest sense of the initial proposition or propositions and reflexively to exhibit their content without knowing anything about the consequences inferred from them. But this is *not* the case with a normal human proposition. It does indeed have a determinate sense which can be clearly distinguished from the sense of another or contrary proposition. But any attempt reflexively to declare its content comes up against an intrinsic and irreducible marginal indistinctness of this content: its reflexive interpretation does not allow us to state adequately and *exhaustively* all that is concomitantly stated and known in it and all that is not; it is easy to establish unambiguously the minimum but not the maximum of what may in fact be its intelligible content. The proposition is always a kind of window through which a view may be gained of the thing itself, and implies in its full sense (as Com-munication) this view of the thing through the proposition (in its 'stated'

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sense).[15] A proposition of this kind is in the nature of a window that has been opened to give a view of the thing; not of a package with sharply defined contents. For example, if I say, 'N.N. is my mother,' what has been communicated by this? What have I thought of here and *communicated?* The minimum is clear: what would make the proposition false if it did not exist: such-and-such a well-known biological relation. But do we mean by this that the proposition has nothing more to communicate, that when I spoke, I thought of nothing more and had nothing more to state? When I make a statement like this, there can and almost must be an abundance of other things in mind at the same time, globally and implicitly no doubt, but very really (as we have already said). But all this, in excess of the given minimum of propositional content, can concomitantly be heard by the hearer of the proposition: the specifically human character [70] of the motherhood, the relation between mother and son lasting long after the events of generation and birth, and all the other circumstances involved. The hearer too, just like the speaker, looks in and through the proposition with the speaker at the thing itself, and sees what he sees in the things *as* the communication made to one who is taking part as hearer. He rightly hears in the proposition not just its more or less definable minimum content, but concomitantly all that further content of the speaker's unreflexive awareness not yet propositionally objectified; and he hears it *as* something known to the speaker. This state of affairs must not be mistaken for one in which further truths, themselves precisely *not* spoken or communicated, are *inferred* from the propositional content spoken and heard, on the basis of its objective nature and specific cogency. Of course this is sometimes the case, but it need not invariably be so. It would invariably be so only if the proposition spoken and heard were in the nature of a package with clearly definable contents capable of exhaustive enumeration. But if this is not the case for the speaker, whose speech takes place in and with a knowledge, not yet articulated propositionally, of the thing discussed; and if *this* kind of speech, *together with* its 'train' of what is not yet propositionally articulate, is intelligible to the hearer[16]: then it is quite possible for the hearer to hear this knowledge of the thing too *as* the speaker's communicated knowledge, something had in common with the speaker about the thing, although not yet propositionally objectified. Or putting it the other way round, it is quite possible for the speaker to pass this knowledge on in propositions. It will then very often be the case that what seems to be something merely virtually implicit, from the purely logical point of view, will be in fact something formally communicated[17] it is not merely deducible [71] as new knowledge (not stated) from some

[15] In communication, what the proposition 'states' serves as a frame for a 'view of the thing '. – Tr.

[16] That this intelligibility is a fact cannot be doubted; but we cannot and need not proceed here to a further analysis of the presuppositions concerning intellectual knowledge on which it is based.

[17] It should now become possible to offer some clarification of the terms used by theologians in a controversy which has lasted up to our own times. One school (especially from the time of Suarez onwards) appeals to the conception of the 'formally implicit' to explain how on the one hand development of dogma is possible and on the other how what has been made explicit is still God's utterance. By the use of this conception they intend to circumvent the difficult question of how something which is properly speaking inferred by a specifically syllogistic procedure (the virtually implicit) can still be regarded as stated by God himself. The other school interprets the formally implicit as a more or less self-contradictory conception, because on their view what is formally stated in a proposition must be capable of being ascertained from the very concepts employed, with the help of grammars and dictionaries, by hermeneutical and exegetical methods. Now in practice 'explication' of this alleged formally implicit always takes place by means of what is often highly complex argumentation. In reality, then, this formally implicit is something virtually implicit, so that it will finally have to be granted that this too can become dogma.

In accordance with what we have just said in the text, the following distinction may be proposed. It is possible for something to be stated formally (the above-mentioned necessary minimum sense of a proposition); and for something to be formally *communicated* (the total meaning of the utterance, in fact communicated and intended in the speaker's utterance, but neither by speaker nor by hearer always articulated reflexively and propositionally, or even capable of immediate articulation). Strictly speaking then, what is formally stated

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other (stated) knowledge, but even regarded as something in the mind which is propositionally *not* articulated, it is in fact communicated and so understood; and this is true even if it is only made propositionally objective by the hearer and this operation is exhibited (not, properly speaking, performed) in deductive form. Suppose someone says, 'I, A, sincerely love B'; it is quite possible that this statement should be made with the *fidelity* of the love in mind, and should consequently also be heard precisely as A's express communication of his love's fidelity. Now if C says, 'A [72] has affirmed his sincere love; *atqui* sincere love is faithful: then A is faithful,' it is only in appearance that C's knowledge of A's fidelity (derived from A's first statement) seems to belong to C alone, as a piece of reflexive, propositional explication; it is quite possible that in fact his propositional knowledge is a real ('formal') communication from A, even when it is not stated *as* a proposition.

Now it is not clear why this sort of communication should not be found in the sphere of Revelation: in fact, it must exist there too. Revelation too works with human concepts and propositions. Yet it follows then that we cannot ignore the irreducible distinction between what is explicitly stated on the one hand, and what is co-present in mind and communicated on the other.[18] Its importance is felt, and legitimately so, where propositions and concepts are used to communicate knowledge of a reality to which we could not have access in our present state without verbal information: in Revelation. When, for example, someone says, 'Christ "died" for us', everyone understands what is meant by dying or death in this statement. But what is meant by 'death' in this statement is not (or more prudently: need not be) just a physiological exit. The whole human experience of death can be really *stated* (i.e. communicated) and heard (not just deduced!) in this word, an experience which neither speaker nor hearer has ever translated adequately and objectively into propositions ('definitions' of death). If the hearer should ever arrive at a reflexive propositional analysis of what the word 'death' has always meant to him, it is then perfectly *possible* (though not in *every* case necessary) that what has been analysed in this way and minted into propositional coin, may still be conceived of precisely *as* communicated by the speaker. And this can still be so even when 'historically' we may grant that the speaker himself has never used a propositionally objective form to clarify his communication 'like this', or indeed if we grant that in his particular situation he *could* never have done so. If we believe a speaker [73] when he says something, then it is still this very speaker whom we believe when what he says has been explicated in propositions, because this is just what he has (or could have) known and

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cannot be implicit, but what is formally *communicated* certainly can. Thus even when something is deduced, it may nevertheless have been something formally communicated – against the second view; and where something is made explicit, it need not have been something formally stated (implicitly) – against the first view. This distinction between what is formally stated and what is formally communicated is materially that recognized by E. Dhanis ('Révélation explicite et implicite', *Gregorianum* XXXIV (1953) pp. 187-237, especially pp. 219, 221 s.), who distinguishes what is 'formellement signifié' from what is 'formellement attesté'. The latter may itself be signified in various ways: it maybe signified explicitly or implicitly, and if implicitly signified, either immediately (sc. capable of analytic explication) or mediately (sc. by demonstration or even merely as *suasio* or *convenientia*). Consequently Dhanis allows for something formally attested which is yet signified only mediately and persuasively. Nevertheless he does not discuss in any detail the noetic connexion which as such must obtain between this mode of signification and its formal attestation. It is not merely a matter of its being known in fact (this again is possible with various degrees of certainty), shall we say in the 'dépôt pris concrètement' (cf. pp. 227 s.).

[18] For every propositional explanation (definition) of the concepts of another proposition employs concepts in its turn; and these again can be explained propositionally. A process *ad infinitum* would begin. For it would be quite false to suppose that by a finite number of members this chain of explanations would reach an absolutely simple concept, in which the propositionally expressible would exhaust the object known non-propositionally without remainder. What an infinitely large number of things can be said about the 'ultimate' and the 'absolutely simple', about an entity as such!

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communicated (though not propositionally).

This leaves room for an explication of a more complex kind (as to its *express*, propositional development) than any we have so far considered. It need not always be the case that from a proposition A, taken in its most immediate sense, a proposition B is deduced as formally, or above all, as virtually, contained in A. It might happen that in this explication the proposition B, taken strictly, should follow from what is *com-municated* in A or what is 'formally' contained in this com-munication. If the explication is to take place and to be set forth with all possible propositional and logical explicitness, the course of the explication in this case must run as follows. The immediately intelligible and express statements of Revelation in its manifold variety (propositional series A) are heard and questioned with a view to discovering what is compresent to mind and com-municated by them, that is, their background and the principle which comprehends the whole of this variety and gives it unity. This basic idea compresent to mind and con-signified (*mit-gesagte*) is extracted by making use of the individual propositions to give a view of the *res* on which they are based; in this way the basic idea is formulated expressly in propositions (proposition B). It is only from this intermediate proposition B that the desired terminal proposition is deduced, i.e. recognized as con-signified. If what has so far been said is correct, it immediately becomes clear that the procedure described does not (or need not in every case) move outside the sphere of what is properly speaking revealed. This schema according to which an explication of Revelation might proceed has been so briefly outlined that it may at first sight give the impression of something peculiar and artificially constructed. Yet a closer examination would show that in fact it is very often employed instinctively. Biblical theology always works like this: it invariably gives form to a multiplicity of concrete individual expressions in Scripture on the basis of a unifying conception, as it emerges from a consideration of various themes. For example, when an inquiry is made into the New Testament conception of God or the way in which it understands Time, or again into St Paul's idea of Pneuma, the same thing is always being done, from a methodological point of view: what is being sought is always the basic conception [74] con-signified in all the individual statements, the fundamental idea behind them, the leitmotiv, call it what you will. Now if, on the basis of this inquiry, an answer is given to a further special question, such as the incompatibility of this or that philosophical or metaphysica1proposition with a 'fundamental conception' discovered in Scripture, then we have the whole procedure outlined in our formal schema.

Nothing of what we have been saying is intended to postulate o recommend a new method of expounding dogma in theology. Theology as the practice of reflexive and scientific understanding will continue to work with its usual methods: strict attention to what has been said in original Revelation; concern for the exact sense of what has been heard, making use of all the methods at the disposal of a liberal and humane discipline (philology, history, logic, etc.); comparison and correlation of the propositions so heard and understood ('analogia fidei'); inquiry into the logical consequences resulting from these correlations (deductions), and so on. Theology as such can neither introduce the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit as a source or as a logical principle for its methods, nor can it propositionally articulate and explicate what is formally communicated (implicitly, if you will) otherwise than by logical operations. But what it is permissible to conclude (more clearly, perhaps, than before) with regard to these usual and unchanging theological methods is this: however, complex and protracted the methodical conduct of this sort of theological investigation may be, it need not necessarily lead to a result outside the sphere of what has been really stated and communicated formally by God (as though its discovery must necessarily be a piece of merely human wit). And this is so precisely because (from God's point of view) the God who speaks surveys in himself from the very beginning all the virtualities of his speech, and by his own Spirit in the Church inspires, guides and watches over their very actualization; and

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because from the point of view of men and their properly human words and propositions, even in human speech more is actually communicated formally than can formally be stated. So, for example, we can give ourselves up to theological discussion of the Assumption with a kind of unhampered confidence,[19] and yet the result, considered [75] objectively, need not necessarily be just 'theology'. It is for the magisterium of the Church, which has the advantage of the isolated theologian in being able to make use of a higher criterion, to decide in any concrete case where the boundary lies between dogma and mere theologoumenon,[20] between certainly correct and merely probable explication. The Church possesses an organ of perception by which she can tell whether something which, from our point of view, emerges as a result of theological activity, is in fact objectively something more than the result of human speculation; whether it is still God's Word, though now expressed propositionally, in a new form, in a new articulation and explication. At any rate it need not necessarily be the case that what to us seems to be the fruit of theologically complex exegesis and speculation should in actual fact lack the character of Revelation, even if in a given case this character is only guaranteed by the verdict of the magisterium.

Thus where we have an explication of faith in which it is possible to demonstrate historically that theological reflexion has co-operated (whether this be in a properly scientific way or merely prescientifically, for there is no essential difference between the two inasmuch as both work with the same instruments), the magisterium, assisted by the Spirit, has a double function. Firstly it can in certain circumstances guarantee the correctness of this theological activity even where (in principle or up to now *de facto*) the activity, just as such, has led to no strict consequence but only to a *convenientia*. (We have at least left this possibility open.) Moreover it guarantees not only that the consequence is correct, but also that it is still God's Word.

In this process of exploring dogma we have restricted the theologian to the use of those means which are made available to him by [76] his exegetical and rational methods, so far as they enter *objectively* into his actual demonstrative procedures, that is, in so far as he may not, as theologian, rely upon any sort of intuition or illumination of faith or the like, in his actual demonstration. But that does not mean that in the long run he could come to any real result if he thought of working with the data of original Revelation rather as though he were merely an historian or a philosopher of religion. Rather it is as a member of the Church and in the light of faith that he must work, in real possession of the object of faith and in real contact with it through grace. As such these presuppositions play no immediate part in the demonstration itself but in the long run it would be impossible without them to see the objective force of a piece of theological argumentation and give it its proper weight. In the long run the correctness of our arguments and deductions from the propositions of faith can only proceed from the heart of a faith known by being lived, that faith which still possesses all in undivided unity and totality. But *this* original faith can only be explicated when we attend to the binding formulations in which it has never failed to express itself, and

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[19] Following the practice in this matter and elsewhere of all the classical theologians of the Middle Ages, who with every right quite calmly took it that the results of accurate theological reflexion formed part of the content of faith Cf., e.g., St Thomas, Ia.32.4 c: 'indirecte vero ad *fidem* pertinent ea, ex quibus negatis *consequitur* aliquid contrarium fidei.' According to R. M. Schultes, it was the general teaching from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century 'ad *fidem* pertinere non tantum ea quae expresse S. Scriptura vel Traditione habentur, sed simul, quae inde bona et necessaria consequentia deducuntur' (*Introductio in historiam dogmatum*, Paris 1922, pp. 115 s.).

[20] In the last resort between a theologoumenon logically *certain* in itself and something in the strict sense revealed (explicitly or implicitly) by God. Whether *every* strict deduction from the propositions of faith must be claimed as formally implicit Revelation, is a question which we leave open. The only purpose of our discussion is to show that one has no right to say that every deduction *eo ipso* can no longer be regarded as revealed. But it does seem to us that our discussion has at least shown this.

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necessarily in objective propositional form. Neither is wholly possible without the other. For it was only to the Church as a whole that the promise was made that she should possess the original faith entire and unclouded. She alone, and not every isolated individual, has the organs which, without fear of error, can bring this reflexion to completion with universally binding authority. In the last resort this is why it only in the Church that there is a secure guarantee of a permanent connexion between the original faith (in part global and implicit) in contact with the reality itself by grace and the light of faith, and the 'new' explication by theological means. The individual recognizes the faith as binding and certain only in so far as he grasps it in the Church and with her.[21] In no case however may one side of the connexion be played off against the other. Living, growing, as it were instinctive, awareness in faith must not suppose that it can do without sober theology, on the ground that it is more clairvoyant than theology, prudently and meticulously carrying out its historical and rational [77] tasks. On the other hand, theology, in its work of rational, conceptual deduction and historical investigation, must not suppose that in the Church's awareness in faith there can only be present as a real object of faith what it has already clearly demonstrated to be present by the use of its own proper theological instruments. It is only when the Church, after consideration of some 'new' proposition, knows herself to be in definitive possession of the truth, and declares this explicitly and with binding force for the awareness in faith of her individual members, that the just balance of the two aspects in any given case is finally guaranteed.

[21] This does not necessarily and invariably mean that the individual theologian is only able to recognize as revealed by God (*fides divina*) what is explicitly taught as such by the ordinary or extraordinary magisterium of the Church (*fides catholica*). But even where this is not the case, he hears God's Word as such in the Church.

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4

THEOS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT[1]

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

I. Preliminary Remarks

A few preliminary remarks concerning matter and method will be in order before we begin the discussion of our theme, the conception of God in the New Testament.

1. *Method*. In view of the extent and complexity of the subject, it is evident that we can only offer an inadequate and provisional treatment of it in a short lecture. It need only be recalled that the relevant article in Kittel's *Wörterbuck zum Neuen Testament*[2] runs to sixty large, closely printed pages. Clearly a detailed exegetical discussion of individual passages is practically impossible. All that the lecture can offer is a general survey of the question; and thus it will unavoidably assume at least the external character of a study in the philosophy of religion and in speculative theology.

2. *Matter*. A preliminary observation of more far-reaching consequence has to be made here. If the Biblical theology we are practising [80] is to be Biblical *theology* and not simply the historical study of Biblical religion, we are justified as regards both matter and method in considering what fundamental lines of approach are laid down for us, as men who read the Scriptures in the Church with a faith instructed by the Church, by the whole of our prior knowledge of theology. This general theological *a priori* for our investigation into the teaching of Scripture need not prejudice the historical accuracy of what we are going to claim as Scriptural teaching. On the contrary: even the most recent Biblical theology, as it is practised by Eichrodt or Stauffer or, Kittel, for instance, invariably shows itself on closer inspection to be dominated by *a priori* theological concepts, formulations of the question and so on. Precisely because this *a priori* is not explicitly identified and reflexively formulated in advance, it involves a greater danger of 'eisegesis' and misinterpretation of the texts than when the general theological presuppositions from which we proceed to an examination of Scripture are honestly and plainly stated before-hand.

With regard to our question, then, we must try to discover in what way, according to the teachings of the Church, the *Christian* conception of God is bound to stand out in relief against pagan and philosophical conceptions. If we speak of a pagan conception, we have in mind for all practical purposes the conception of God in Greek and Roman antiquity; if we speak of a philosophical conception, by this is meant both non-Christian philosophy actually in existence (and so again for practical purposes Greek and Roman philosophy) as well as an 'ideal' philosophy. A review of Greek and Roman antiquity, not taking into account the

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[1] This essay was originally delivered as a lecture to a small theological study circle in Vienna, and was intended merely to prepare the way for further discussion. Consequently no attempt was made in the lecture to supply references or the usual apparatus. External circumstances made revision impossible. However, even in its present form, the essay may perhaps stimulate attempts to provide a better foundation in Biblical theology for our usual dogmatic treatises *De Deo Uno*, which are in most cases just philosophy with a few trimmings of Scripture.

[2] G. Kittel, *TWNT* III, pp. 65-123. Anyone who is acquainted with this article, by Kleinknecht, Quell, Stauffer and Kuhn, will not need individual references to see how much this essay owes to it.

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religions of the rest of paganism, is sufficient for our purposes, because (apart from the practical impossibility of further extending our field of vision) the variety and range of Greek and Roman religion allow it to serve as typical for pagan religion in general, and because it is in fact the religious context into which the Christian message of God first entered.

What we shall investigate, then, is the way in which the conception of God in paganism and philosophy may in advance be expected to coincide with and depart from the Christian conception of God in the faith of the Church.

In order to answer this question we must first go a little further back. According to the Church's teaching, the *world* in which we live is in fact *supernatural*, that is, a world which as a whole is ordered to [81] the personal, Trinitarian God beyond the world. It is ordered as a whole to a supernatural end: originally graced as a whole, then fallen as a whole (for truly 'all creation groans for redemption'), yet a world ever under the binding call of the God of supernatural life, shot through by the rays of primitive Revelation and even before Christ stirred by grace, at last redeemed as a whole in Christ. The whole of Nature, then, has always been embedded in a supernatural context. And so too the whole development of religion and all philosophy are included under a theological *a priori*. In spite of their newness, Christ and his Revelation are not the first in time to bring the supernatural into the world, although all that is supernatural depends on him; but Christ and his Revelation can indeed bring to light again the supernatural character of God's activity and of the world which stands before him, rescuing it from the oblivion in which it had been lost; and this oblivion itself might be due to forgetfulness and inadvertence arising from original sin, and thus 'theological'. It is Revelation, then, which can first tell us precisely what is natural and what supernatural in non-Christian religion and thought, what is simply lack of knowledge in the non-Christian world and what *voluntary* ignorance, and also what is supernatural knowledge or presentiment there (derived from primitive Revelation or the inner dynamism of grace). So it is Revelation which first throws light on the half or even completely concealed supernatural, theological factor in pre-Christian and non-Christian religion and philosophy, which cannot be regarded as some sort of purely natural religion or purely natural speculation, nor again as religion and philosophy which have become corrupted in some purely natural way. It follows from these considerations that the Christian faith must not and cannot owe anything to non-Christian religion and speculation; clearly its content and its formulations can appear nowhere else, either in principle or in fact. If similarities can be traced, they are purely *a posteriori* in character, matters of fact. Putting it the other way round, we may say that wherever some element or formulation of Christian faith is pointed out to us outside Christianity, even if the two are clearly shown to be connected empirically, there need be no embarrassment or disquiet in accepting such an identification, provided that it is really there and is not achieved by a levelling-down of what is specifically Christian, in the fashion widely current today among historians of religion. All that such a fact would prove is that the living God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ is at work [82] with his light and grace even outside the zone of saving history in the narrower, theological sense.

Let us now apply these general considerations of principle to the *knowledge* of *God*.

We know from the teaching of the Church that the one God as *principium et finis* of the world can be known with intrinsic certainty 'by the light of *natural reason*' from the objective world. All that is immediately given in this declaration is that such knowledge is possible for human nature. We say 'for human nature'; that is, concretely, this possibility of knowing God (concerning the content and extent of which more will be said in a moment) is something which belongs to the constitution of man even in independence of Revelation and the vocation which raises him by grace to a participation in the life of God in Trinity. It is a possibility, then, which man still has even when he has as a sinner lost the possibility of participating in God's personal life; one which consequently is still operative where and in so

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far as man's philosophy and religion lie under the law of sin; and so one which must in some form or other necessarily be met within the non-Christian world of man's religion and philosophy, simply because he is man. The phrase 'rational knowledge from the world' demarcates this way of reaching God, firstly, from a personal divine revelation to man (both as inner illumination by grace and as exterior historical revelation). Further, this knowledge is distinguished from an immediate experience of God (whether present in fact or not), as this is understood in every form of ontologism, no matter whether it is mystical or rational in tendency. Thirdly, the phrase guards against a conception of experience of God which would make it something purely irrational, emotive, not available to critical examination and incapable of mediation by rational concepts and statements. Moreover, only a *possibility* of this kind of knowledge of God is in question. A whole series of problems arises here. Does this possibility ever become a reality, and if so to what extent? How does this realization come about? Is it due in fact to human nature alone, or are there in fact causes at work such as primitive Revelation and the supernatural grace which falls to every man's share? How far does this realization depend not merely on rational and logical factors but also on a moral decision, on which again both the inherited and the personal sin of man have their influence as well as healing supernatural grace? For the concrete acquisition of this knowledge of God in a concrete man, how far is [83] growth in awareness of values always a presupposition, how far are sociological preconditions required like language, tradition, education, training of the religious sense? All these are questions on which no decision is made in the Vatican Council's definition. Taken by itself, all that is said in this definition about the content of the rational knowledge of God is that God can be known as cause and end of the world. Nothing is finally decided about the question as to whether God can be known as Creator of the world, in the strict theological sense of the word 'creation'. What in concrete terms forms the content of this possible natural knowledge of God, appears perhaps most simply when we try to determine the *theological sense* of this pronouncement about a possibility of human nature; for it becomes immediately apparent that Revelation could have absolutely no interest in determining a possibility of human nature, since it always has to deal with the concrete man, the man, then, who is always within the supernatural order. The theological sense of this decision (which in the last resort must always be related to a theological situation and not a purely natural one, in which, just in itself as a fact purely of this world, Revelation would have no interest) is clearly this: that in this conception of human nature alone is it possible for man to be a potentially receptive subject of theology and of Revelation. It is only if man stands before God always and of necessity and on every presupposition, even, then, as sinner, as turned away from God and deprived of the free gift of divine life – 'by nature', then – that he is that being who has to come to terms with Revelation, who has the power to perceive Revelation, for whom the failure to perceive Revelation involves not merely deficiency but guilt. Precisely in order to be able to experience God's personal self-disclosure as *grace*, that is, to be able to apprehend it as neither obvious nor immanent (just a part of the divine constitution), man must be a subject who in the very nature of things has to come to terms with God's disclosure or withholding of himself. Only if it is in the nature of things that he has something to do with God can he freely and spontaneously experience God's self-disclosure as it is actually promulgated in Revelation: in other words, precisely so that Revelation might be grace, it is necessary at least in principle that man should have something to do with God from a locus which is not already grace.[3]

[84] We are now in a position to state more precisely what the content of this natural

[3] Cf. K. Rahner, *Hörer des Wortes* (Munich 1941). It must of course be noted that this necessary 'natural' openness of man to God is, in the historically realized scheme of things, always necessarily 'overlaid' (even when man is not in a state of justifying grace) by a supernatural 'existential' ordering the spiritual person to the God of eternal life. See below pp. 297-317.

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knowledge of God must be. It makes no difference to us here whether the notes which we shall enumerate are held to belong to the natural conception of God in virtue of an authoritative definition, or are merely derived by us from the definition. We say: any knowledge of God's transcendence and his existence as *personal* belongs to the content of the natural conception of God. It is true that man is that being who has to give ear to a possible Revelation in history and in speech; and if he is to experience this personal self-disclosure by God not just as God's free act but also as free grace to him, man, as already constituted in being (and this is the Biblical, Christian conception of Revelation), then he must from the very beginning ('by nature') be that being who has to reckon with God's speech or silence, God's bestowal or refusal of himself. It is only if this kind of bivalent relatedness to God belongs to man's very essence that he is on the one hand a potentially receptive subject of Revelation, only then that his constitution is such that even while remaining conscious of his obligation he can culpably reject Revelation (for he would not otherwise remain capable of receiving the Word); and on the other hand it is only then that he can experience Revelation, in case it is promulgated, as free grace (for in the nature of things he has also to reckon with God's silence). In other words, even naturally speaking man must stand before God conceived of as a free Person transcending the world.

We may ask what consequences follow from all this with regard to the question as to what conception of God we may expect to find in advance *outside* the genuine historical Revelation, and hence with regard to the question how far the revealed conception of God is bound to stand out in relief against the non-Christian one. In a certain way all the influences we have found actually at work in man's religious life and enumerated when we began these reflexions, will play a part in the non-Christian conception of God: natural man's knowledge of God ascending from below through the world, the deterioration due to original sin, grace and primitive Revelation. [85] Consequently all three factors will be seen most clearly at work at that point in the conception of God which is formally decisive for the Christian conception, namely, in God's free, personal existence transcending the world as *Lord* of Nature and History. Granted that even in man's fallen state his nature and divine grace are still continually active, it will never be possible that the consciousness of a God, unique, transcendent, free and freely treating with man in history, should disappear. But if man lives in a fallen state, and if in the last resort sin is the will not to allow God to be God and the attempt to shut the world in upon itself, then every non-Christian religion, in so far as it is and must be qualified theologically as sin, is bound to give God's infinity the meaning of an infinity of powers and forces active in the world, will be in fact a polytheism. Each one of these religions, in a metaphysical and religious pursuit of unity which is quite justified in itself, will try to comprehend the multiplicity of deified powers and forces of the world in a unity; and so inevitably each will turn into a form of pantheism. Each will be guilty of forgetting God as Person and as free to enter into historical communication with the world by his revealing Word; and in the last resort each will become devotion to the world instead of obedience to the unique and living God. All these elements (in varying measure, of course) will be met with in every non-Christian religion. It becomes basically impossible, then, to interpret any one of them in terms of an absolutely clear-cut formula, by means of which it should be distinguished merely negatively from the Christian conception of God. Which of the elements present in it actually decides the issue before God for the *individual* man and his concrete, existential achievements, is in the last resort not for us to judge.

Inversely, we may note three corresponding features of the *Christian* conception of God. In the first place, it will confirm that knowledge of the unique, transcendent, personal God which is always stirring into life, whether naturally or supernaturally, even outside the history of Revelation; and, precisely from the viewpoint of Revelation, it will free what is naturally true in non-Christian religion and philosophy from the encumbrance of sin, allowing what is

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supernatural in these truths to appear *as* such, and restraining the attempt to claim it as part of man's innate, inadmissible nobility. Secondly, the Christian conception will always express God's passionate protest against every kind of polytheistic or pantheistic deification of the world caused by [86] original sin and everywhere at work, even today. Thirdly, it will alone be able to say unambiguously and definitively just how the personal, transcendent God desires *in actual fact* to stand to the world in his sovereign freedom: namely, as the God who actually discloses his inmost self to man out of grace, so compelling man in a unique, climactic situation to an absolute gravity, either bliss or damnation; as the God who gives his definitive sanction to the world in the Incarnation of his Son and so precisely summons it to share in his triune life.

3. We must now proceed to a further preliminary discussion of the material for this study. What we have so far said has been concerned with the features which distinguish the non-Christian from the Christian conception of God, still taking the history of Revelation as a unified whole. The preparatory remarks which follow are concerned with distinctions in the conception of God *within the history of Revelation itself*. In other words, the question here is whether the conception of God in Revelation itself permits of differentiation and change, and in what way it does so. In the concrete terms of our theme, this is the question whether a more or less fundamental difference between the conceptions of God in the Old and in the New Testament is to be expected in advance, and what kind of difference this may be.

For this purpose we must start somewhat further back. Revelation (by which we mean not just God's speech but also and above all his active dealings with men) does have a real *history*. Precisely because God, who is already known by man's natural reason from the world, is a free person transcending the world, the knowledge which is man's by nature must release this personal God. It cannot work out the concrete manner in which God wishes to enter into relations with man, to deal with him, by calculations starting from below, from man; it cannot, in the last resort, establish a clearly defined, concrete religion. In the last resort all it can settle with respect to religion remains enclosed within the brackets of God's free sovereignty and the knowledge of this sovereignty, at the disposal of which man must put himself by obedience in true *religio*, and in which God either denies himself to man or bestows himself in free grace. And on this either-or rests the final decision as to the concrete shape taken by a truly and existentially significant religion. Now this question cannot be answered [87] by men, in terms of a metaphysical outline of God's essence, but only by God himself, by his own free decision as event. But a decision of this kind is essentially historical, and historical in a twofold sense: firstly in the sense of a *divine* historicity (if we may be allowed the expression), by which all that is meant is simply that God's decision is personal and free, a moment in a dialogue with men already constituted in being. In so far as God's actually evinced speech to men always meets a human being for whose nature and existence God's Revelation can never become a self-evident constituent, and hence may never be interpreted in accordance with some physical law as a factor in the immanent development of human nature, it is clear that Revelation is always a free event, free even when and indeed in so far as man is presupposed as something given. It is not just because man himself is an act of God's freedom that God's Word and his saving Act are free; this metaphysical freedom is not to be confused with God's freedom within the world already in being. His Word and Act are free in the further sense that they are freely directed to men already in existence, and so are essentially Event and History, not Thing, metaphysical Idea or Norm. What happens in saving history is not the natural outcome of some unchanging ideal law, but the free, incalculable, ever new Event of God's activity. In this sense God's speech and action would take the form of an historical and temporal dialogue even if it were uniformly to accompany the whole duration of human history and physical process. But in actual fact God's decision

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is historical in a second sense – in *human* historicity: there does in fact exist a real history of Revelation. That is to say, God has certainly not established one and the same thing once and for all, but what he has said and done was said and done at quite definite points in space and time, so that even considered in extension saving history and world history do not coincide.

In spite of its character as event, its variety and multiplicity, God's historical activity in the world has as a whole an inner connexion, an inner teleology, so that any act in this saving history only becomes comprehensible and meaningful as an element in the whole. Comprehensible and meaningful, of course, not in the sense that we could on our own construct the whole from a part by some sort of physical or biological extrapolation, see it as possessing a conceptual necessity; but it is meaningful and unified just in that sense in which the manifold, changing behaviour of a free spiritual person is a *single* significant unity.

We have now to distinguish more sharply in Revelation and saving [88] history between the saving *process* itself (e.g. Paradise, the rejection of man, the Incarnation, the Church, Judgment) and the *Word* which necessarily accompanies it, and through which every saving process first exists for us as a saving action performed among us by God in the area of our spiritually perceptive personality. God's central and definitive saving act, one precisely for that reason different from all the others, is the single inner unity of Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection, in which he definitively and radically communicated himself to the world and in which he really came to us. In this sense all the earlier saving acts are intrinsically directed to Christ as their end, and every revealed Word which enters into composition with them and accompanies them thus has intrinsic reference to the definitive and unsurpassable Revelation of God in Christ. And so Augustine's statement is really true, that the New Testament is already present concealed in the Old. In accordance with what we have said this presence is of course *prophetic*, that is, the Word of the Old Testament already possesses in actual fact an inner orientation to God's definitive Word in and through Christ. It really is the first Word of a uniform, inwardly coherent dialogue, the final Word of which is Christ. But of necessity this first Word is spoken by God in such a way that within the historical dialogue of salvation man too retains freedom of speech and action, scope for genuine venture and decision. It must then be the case (returning to our question and its concrete terms) that the Word of the Old Testament, in so far as it already contains the tidings of the New, is necessarily obscure. This Word is primarily an utterance concerning God's saving Act in the time of the Old Covenant, and contains a prophetic anticipation of the saving reality of the New inasmuch as the reality of God's saving acts in the history of the Old Covenant possesses inner teleological reference to the New. It follows as a matter of intrinsic necessity that the Word of the Old Testament is in a characteristic way at once historical with respect to contemporary events and prophetic with respect to the future. It says enough about what has just happened to allow the hearer to come to a decision with regard to the future by abandoning himself in faith to the work of salvation then taking place; and what it says is so little and so obscure that his decision is still not really committed in advance. God always retains sovereign control over the course of this historical dialogue: what he had already laid down as its definitive sense from its very first Word, is disclosed to someone who can directly perceive [89] its last Word in a quite different and specifically higher way than it is disclosed to someone who only perceived the first Word. The Old Testament unfolds only in the New; and yet the inner nature of the Old Testament Word is such that anyone who abandons himself to its hidden dynamism and allows himself to be carried beyond the limits of his personal interpretation and the letter of the text, will mysteriously and secretly partake of the benediction really contained in the New. In principle, then, we can never interpret the Old Testament except in terms of our existential situation in the plan of salvation, in terms, then, of the New Testament. If we try to take up an objective, neutral position and ask what the Old Testament meant for a man under the Old Covenant, in precisely his situation and for him

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alone, it is in principle almost impossible to avoid the danger of seeing too much or too little in the text: we should either make the continuity of Old and New into an already manifest presence of the New in the Old or harden the Old into a stiff, self-contained block.

What relation should we expect to find, then, between the idea of God in the Old Testament and that in the New, in accordance with these general considerations? We may say that the New Testament idea of God cannot take its place alongside the Old Testament as something simply new, as it were by a *generatio aequivoca*; it must already be active in the Old Testament, concealed in prophecies which must by their very nature be obscure. The New Testament idea of God must be the unveiling and the fulfilment of the Old Testament idea, the Word which for the first time declares the final and unambiguous meaning of what God has said about himself in the Old Testament by his speech and action, and on the basis of which we must interpret all its statements if we are to understand them properly in their significance for ourselves. This unity and sameness of the idea of God in the New and in the Old Testaments must not be misinterpreted by falsely reducing similar statements to the static necessity proper to a metaphysical idea of God. In the last resort, God is the Same in the Old Testament and in the New, not because he is in possession of a necessary, immutable essence, but because the whole of saving history is a progressive revelation of the way in which the free God who is active in history has wished to enter into relationship with his world.

[90]

II. The Greek and Old Testament Conceptions of God

1. The Greek Conception of God

If we begin by speaking of the Greek conception of God, this is because we must have some acquaintance with the concrete world in which the Christian Gospel appeared. It is only in this way that we can understand why the conversion from idols to God in order to serve the true and living God (1 Thess 1:9), why ‘monotheism’, that is, does not mean a self-evident metaphysical assumption for Christianity, but belongs to the very heart of its message. The following remarks about the Greek conception of God are restricted to conditions in the Greek, Roman, Oriental *oikoumene* of the time; they are not offered as a description of the whole long development of the Greek conception of God. And even these indications can only be summary in character, without any attempt to explore the historical material.

a. By θεο&φ the Greeks did not mean the unity of a definite personality in the monotheistic sense, but rather the unity of the religious world, clearly felt as *one* in spite of its multiplicity of forms. The Greek conception of God is essentially polytheistic, not indeed in the sense of many isolated gods but as an ordered totality of gods, such as appears in Homer’s divine polity, for instance, where the gods are ranged in order, one above the other. This view naturally promoted the use of the term θεο&φ and achieved its most generously conceived form in the person of Zeus, the πατη_ρ α)νδρω~ν τε θεω~ν τε, the monarchic θεω~ν υ#πατοφ και∴ α!ριστοφ, the ultimate exponent of divine dominion. This view of a pluralistic cosmos of gods was maintained to the end, in spite of the most strenuous attempts to establish unity in a philosophical conception of God from which all traces of anthropomorphism had long since disappeared. The Stoa still rejected monotheism as a diminution of God. According to Plotinus, God’s greatness is proved by the multiplicity of gods, because the divine must not be compressed into a point but must be unfolded in all its multiplicity, over the whole range of its own self-unfolding. The forms of the Greek gods are nothing but the basic forms of cosmic reality, whether these are conceived of mythically (as in Homer) or in terms of an ultimate homogeneous α)ρξη& (as in Ionian physics) or as [91]

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the ι0δε/α of the philosophers. This reality is multiform, and approaches men with the most various demands, demands which exist in free and unruffled opposition in the divine world above but which often intersect each other in man's heart with tragic results. Hence the plural θεοι/ and polytheism. Wherever something profoundly actual, some massive, pregnant reality emerges majestically in the world, the Greek can only say: just this – not, shall we say, the 'wholly Other' – is God. Gods, then, are powers, which as Order, Form and Meaning penetrate the whole world with their influence, and continually restore the chaotic to coherence. The world's unfolding as Order, its realization as Form and Whole, its potent intelligibility – this is God; but the gods have not created the world *ex nihilo*. The historical development of the Greek conception of God invariably turns on the question of how this aspect of the Absolute in the world is precisely to be understood. The development of the Greek idea of God is the history of the forms in which the divine has expressed itself in Being. According as the world itself is metaphysically unified – and only so far – the conception of God too becomes henotheistic: it does not for that reason become any less cosmological. Θεο&φ continues to be a predicate, and the subject of this predicate is the cosmos.

b. In spite of this dominant polytheism and pantheism which is found throughout Greek thought even in its most sublime forms, a genuinely monotheistic note, a shadowy, unrealized knowledge of a truly personal, transcendent God, should not be overlooked. We must allow for this at least in the sense that under all the formulas, the rites and the religious practices which entered into the concrete activities of the individual man as he sought salvation and reflected on things under the touch of grace, man could enter into a truly personal relationship with a living God. It is always possible that primitive Revelation and rational, monotheistic reflexion may have contributed to the forms of Zeus and Jupiter. Something of true monotheism was really alive – it makes no difference what the ultimate motive was – wherever men simply prayed to God and so in some way or other a personal, urgent, unqualified *Thou* was uttered; wherever men asked to be told the will of the gods, or where, as in the philosophy of Plato or Aristotle, an attempt was made to discover an absolute and supreme *One*, transcending the Many; or when it happened, as in the case of the Pre-Socratics Xenophanes and Heracleitus, that the polytheism of the [92] Homeric pantheon was explicitly combated. In some such way the world became open and men attentive to what lay beyond: although this openness of the world to the living One transcending all might suddenly close in again, as soon as men tried to say who this ultimate One was to whom they prayed in real need; and the mysterious depths of the world as suddenly become again, no longer the unknown God, but the divine 'It' of νο&μοφ, δι/κη, Mind, Idea, beyond which ει9μαρμε&νη still maintained its incomprehensible and inscrutable sway.

2. The Conception of God in the Old Testament

a. A preliminary remark about method has to be made here, even if it is an obvious one. If we are going to discuss the Old Testament conception of God, we are not going to inquire what conception of God prevailed in historical fact among the individuals who composed the People of the Covenant, granting that this conception was of course reflected in the Old Testament literature. Our inquiry is directed to finding out what portrait of God is offered in the Old Testament as true and binding. And here too we must forgo any attempt to describe the historical development of the conception.

b. The religion of the Old Testament is commonly spoken of as *monotheism*. This basic

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characterization is quite just, provided that we understand what we mean by 'monotheism' when we apply the term to Old Testament religion. Monotheism must not be understood here as a metaphysical denomination of a static kind, to be applied with equal justice to Deism. In the last resort, the monotheism of the Old Testament is not based on the rational considerations of a man who is seeking for the ultimate unity of the world and can only find it in a transcendent Source of all things; rather it is based on the experience of Yahweh's saving deeds in the midst of this world and in the history of his People. The heart of Old Testament monotheism is found in the fact that Yahweh, i.e. the definite Person with a proper name who actually intervenes in the history of a people and of all men by his own free will, has seized hold of this definite people, without regard to their natural qualities, has chosen it and made it his own People by entering into a covenant with it; and as the jealous God, has forbidden it to venerate all other numinous powers so that he might establish his uniqueness as the only God with whom his People [93] can be concerned. Old Testament monotheism involves a conscious recognition of this fact: it knows that this Person Yahweh, freely active in history, can alone legitimately claim the title El-Elohim; that all other Elohim are not such in reality, are Nothings; that this Yahweh is the absolute sovereign Lord of the World and of Nature (so that every kind of worship of Baal, as a cult of the powers of Nature and fertility, is a service of idols and nonsensical); that this Yahweh is wholly Spirit and Person, on whose free 'creation' absolutely everything depends. The further working out of this conscious recognition could safely be left to the historic development of this basic idea of Old Testament monotheism; it forms in fact the greater part of what is revealed in Old Testament history. This history does not of course advance by a merely human reflexion upon the basic datum we have described, but rather through an experience of the unceasing novelty of Yahweh's personal action (so that really it is not a history of theology, but a history of Revelation and Salvation, of God's own speech and action in the world). A cosmological metaphysics ascends to a first cause of the world, to an intellectual first cause, and thence to a first cause transcending the world, and thus (in principle, at least) proceeds until it has in fact achieved some understanding of God as Person (in purely formal terms, of course); in this way it terminates in the ultimate question as to whether and how this personal God might not only continue to cause the world but also – appearing alongside the world, as it were – might wish to deal with it. The development of the Old Testament conception of God proceeds in exactly the reverse order: first comes the experience of God as a free Person active in the world, a Person generous and abundant, who reveals himself in his proper name, who calls and chooses; and it is only from this historical experience of who Yahweh is that it becomes progressively clearer *what* he is – not just *a* God, not just *a* powerful Lord in the history of perhaps this people alone, but *the* Lord of the history of all peoples and so Lord of Nature too: the transcendent, spiritual Cause and Source of all reality, lifted up above every earthly limitation. This Lord (because of the original starting-point of his People's knowledge of him) is not dissolved in the empty indistinctness of an impalpable metaphysical concept but remains in his absolute transcendence of all earthly things concretely and unambiguously *He*, just as He wished in his sovereign freedom to show himself, in the course of the unique history of his covenant with this People. A brief [94] formulation of what we have learnt would run as follows: the basic form of Old Testament monotheism is not, 'One God exists' (there is a single primary cause of the world); but 'Yahweh is the unique God'. We shall content ourselves for the moment with this brief sketch of what is decisive for Old Testament thought about God, and return to the Old Testament as occasion offers in the course of our discussion of the New Testament conception.

PART TWO: THEOS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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I. The Point of Departure

1. The *unquestioning assurance* which characterized consciousness of God.

The first thing that strikes us when we try to find out how the men of the New Testament thought about God is the unquestioning assurance which characterized their consciousness of him. It never occurred to these men to raise the question of his existence as such. The New Testament knew nothing of all those characteristic features of our consciousness of God today: an anxious sense that questioning must come first, a sense that it is first necessary slowly and reflectively to lay a firm foundation before any sort of intimation, developed feeling or recognition of God can be admitted; a feeling that God never fails to withdraw himself from the grip of man's questions; a fear that after all God may be nothing but a monstrous projection of man's subjective needs and yearnings; a suffering in religious doubt. For the New Testament God is in the first place simply there. He is there: in spite of all his incomprehensibility and sublimity, all the fear and trembling and the overwhelming joy which this divine Reality may have in store for men, nevertheless as simply the most evident fact of all, the fact in no need of proof or explanation, he is really there. For the men of the New Testament the question is not whether the reality of the world which they can see and touch might perhaps point beyond itself to the infinite darkness of a wholly Other; all they are concerned with is how this God, who has always been given and self-evident, actually behaves, so that man might for the first time learn how things really stand with himself and the world. It is not the immediate reality of the world and its visible magnitude which serve as a kind of permanent base from which, subsequently as it were, God is going to come within reach, but just the reverse: it is only under [95] God that men find their own reality and the reality of the world really clear and comprehensible. This unquestioning assurance of God's existence does not arise from any properly metaphysical considerations, nor is it troubled or put off balance by the awareness that this kind of genuine knowledge of God is absent in the rest of the New Testament world.

Firstly, then, this unquestioning assurance does not really arise from *metaphysical reflexion*. Proofs for the existence of God are never produced. There is never any guidance on how man might by himself develop a consciousness of God, nowhere an appeal to a need for God with the intention of eliciting a conscious conviction of his existence. The New Testament is indeed aware of a self-consistent possibility of knowing God from the world. The one and only true God, his δυ&ναμιφ, and θειο&τηφ (this abstract metaphysical term occurs only twice in the New Testament), his σοφι/α and the δικαι/ωμα του~ θεου~, God's sanction of the natural moral law as a divine ordination (1 Cor 1:21; Rom 1:32; 2:14), can be known through what is made (ποιη&ματα, Rom 1:20) always and everywhere, hence in independence of God's historical action in the world (α)πο_ κτι/σεωφ κοσμου=, Rom 1:21); and they can be known with such certainty that the refusal to acknowledge God by revering him or giving thanks (Rom 1:21) involves moral guilt, which provokes the wrath of God (Rom 1:18). For St Paul, something knowable exists in God, which while remaining objective, presents itself openly (φανερο&ν) for man's recognition (Rom 1:19). According to St Paul again, the character of the world as created must always have been apparent to man (Rom 1:20). There is always the possibility for the world of a σοφι/α which can come to know God from the σοφι/α θεου= objectivized in the world (1 Cor 1:21). In spite of its certainty this possible knowledge of God, which is moreover always somehow present in actual fact (φανερο&ν ε0στιν ε0ν αυ)τοι=φ, Rom 1:19; γνο&ντεφ το_ν θεο&ν, Rom 1:21), always essentially involves man's moral and religious decision. Although God is never far from men (Ac 17:27), their situation is such that they must seek him (ζητει=ν); so that in

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consequence of this character of the knowledge of God as *decision*, it is uncertain (ει0 α)/ρα γε) whether they will in fact touch him and find him (Ac 17:27).

But for the actual consciousness of the men of the New Testament this metaphysical possibility is *not* the *existential* support and cause of [96] their consciousness of God. The metaphysical knowledge of God is never discussed at length. It is never invoked by the men of the New Testament as far as their own experience of God is concerned; reference is only made to it so as to show how ignorance of God is comprehensible as moral depravity, to convict someone who does not know God of sin. Even where this metaphysical possibility is briefly touched on in the context of an apologetic for monotheism (Ac 17:22 s.) the final motive of conversion to the living God is not the metaphysical argument but the historical activity of God himself revealing himself in the foolishness of the Cross (1 Cor 1:18 s.) and the Resurrection (Ac 17:31). These are facts which are brought home to men not in the form of a truth in itself basically reasonable and available at all times for inspection, by helpful guidance and instruction, but by preaching and proclamation, by an announcement which exacts not intelligent comprehension but obedient acknowledgment (ευ0αγγελι/ζεσθαι, Ac 14:15; α0παγγε/λλειν, Ac 17:30; κηρυ/σσειν, 1 Cor 1:21.23).

In the second place, the unquestioning assurance of God's self-evident reality is not disturbed by the awareness of an ignorance of God in the pagan world round about. The New Testament knows of ξρο/νουφ τη=φ α0γνοι/αφ (Ac 17:30), an α)/γνοια (Eph 4:18; Ac 17:23, α0γνοει=ν), an ignorance of God (Gal 4:8, ου)κ ειδε/ναι; 1 Thess 4:5; 2 Thess 1:8), a failure to apprehend God (1 Cor 1:21), α)/θεοι ε0ν τω~| κο/σμω| (Eph 2:12). For the New Testament this failure to apprehend God is always a moral fault and also its punishment. It knows of no ignorance or doubt about God which is morally neutral, any religious problematic which remains purely theoretical[4]; wherever God is not known, it is a matter of a ματαιο/τηφ του= νοο/φ (Eph 4:17; Rom 1:21), a πω&ρωσιφ τη~φ καρδι/αφ (Eph 4:18), a darkening of man's foolish heart (Rom 1:21) and his understanding (Eph 4:18), a μωρι/α (Rom 1:22). St Paul deals with this ignorance of the true God, involving moral guilt, in the concrete form of idolatry (Rom 1:23; [97] Ac 14:15; 17:29; 1 Cor 8:1-7; 12:2; 1 Thess 1:9).[5] And in the last resort St Paul sees idolatry as the worship of demonic powers (1 Cor 10:20.21; cf. Apoc 9:20). The New Testament knows quite well, in an almost rationalistic way, that the pagan gods[6] are 'nothing' (Ac 19:26; 1 Cor 8:4; 10:19, Gal 4:8); but the polytheistic pagan cults do in fact come into contact with a numinous reality, the demons. For St Paul there really are powers and forces in the world which may with a certain right be called θεοι/ and κυ/ριοι (1 Cor 8:5). He maintains that a specific and essential connexion must hold between spiritual powers and Nature, even if he does not explicitly state what it is (Eph 6:12, κοσμοκρα/τορεφ; Col 2:18, θρησκει/α τω~ν α0γγε/λων; cf. the notion of στοιξει=α του= κο/σμου, Gal 4:3.9; Col 2:8.20); so that for him, to treat the world as an absolute (ε0λα&τρευσαν τη=| κτι/σει παρα_ το_ν κτι/σαντα, Rom 1:25) is really equivalent to worshipping the spiritual powers who have turned away from God, and who as at once στοιξει=α του= κο&σμου and spirits hostile to God, hold sway in and over the visible world.

We have seen that this failure to know God consists in culpably making an absolute of the

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[4] When a particular δεισιδαιμονι/α is attributed to the Athenians (Ac 17:22), it is an extensive and manifold religious activity which is meant – St Paul intentionally keeps the word as neutral as possible (TWNT II, p. 21). But it seems clear from St Paul's general view that the word is certainly not supposed to recognize the existence of a piety which while it is false theoretically, is morally praiseworthy, as though human guilt did not enter essentially into the form of this piety.

[5] On polytheism in *Acts*, see TWNT III, p. 100.

[6] ει1δωλον: TWNT II, p. 375.

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multiple reality of a world become demonic, and so becomes objectively a cult of the demons who form the metaphysical background of this world-power. For St Paul the failure is thus a *refusal* to know God (Rom 1:18 s.), and the refusal is intrinsically and necessarily coexistent with actually knowing something about God all the time (και∴ καθω_φ ου)κ ε0δοκι/μασαν το∴ν θεο_ν ε)/ξειν ε0ν ε0πιγνω&σει: they would not admit that they had knowledge of God, Rom 1:28; cf. Rom 1:19.21.32; 2:14). This is not the place to discuss this remarkable coexistence in man of a continual knowledge of God and a deliberate ignorance of him, and how we are to interpret it in logical and psychological detail; how it may be necessary to distinguish various layers in man's existential consciousness; how reference might be made to the phenomena of bad conscience, repression, self-deception, masked conscience; to metaphysical conceptions like the *scintilla animae* and synderesis. Yet this whole complex makes it clear why the men of the New Testament did not feel that their unquestioning assurance of God's self-evident reality was affected by the atheistic polytheism which surrounded [98] them. In it they saw guilt and the operation of demonic power, precisely in order to combat which they were sent in the strength of the true God who went with them. They were convinced that their Word did not encounter men to whom something till then simply unknown had to be brought home for the first time by careful instruction, but rather that it encountered men who had already had some kind of knowledge of God, even if they would not admit its truth, even if this truth was heavily overlaid in their minds by a settled ignorance – settled only in appearance. They brought tidings of the living God who had freely acted in history and so had disclosed himself to man as something infinitely beyond the capacities of the visible world; and at the same time their tidings laid bare a knowledge of God buried under original and personal sin – a kind of theological psychoanalysis, as it were. Thus the revealed Word and natural knowledge of God mutually condition each other. The revealed Word presupposes men who really know something of God in spite of being lying and lost through sinfully idolizing the world; and on the other hand this concealed knowledge of God only becomes really conscious of itself when it breaks through men's hardness of heart and is released by the Word of the God who reveals himself as utterly beyond the world.

2. The *inner reason* for the unquestioning assurance of God's reality.

The basic reason for this unquestioning assurance which characterizes men's consciousness of God in the New Testament is the simple and massive fact that God had *revealed himself*, that by his action he himself had intervened in these men's history and so had given testimony to his own actuality. Above all else the men of the New Testament are convinced that God had revealed himself in the Old Testament history of the People of the Covenant. For 'God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke to the fathers by the prophets' (Heb 1:1). Their God is the God of the fathers (Ac 3:13; 5:30; 7:45; 13:17 s.; 22:14; 24:14), the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Mt 22:32 par.; Lk 1:72 s.; 2:32; Ac 3:13), who showed himself to Abraham (Ac 7:2), who by the Covenant had made the People his People (Mt 2:6; Lk 1:72; 2:32; Ac 3:25; 13:17; Rom 9:4; 11:2; Gal 3:17; Heb 8:9; 9:15) and himself Israel's God (Lk 1:68). The men of the New Testament see this God at work throughout the [99] history of this, their People (Stephen's speech, Ac 7:2-53; St Paul's preaching at Antioch, Ac 13:16-41). They know God by seeing his action in the saving history peculiar to Israel. So too the prophetic monotheism of the Old Testament is for them the foundation of their knowledge of God. But their knowledge of God is not derived just from his self-disclosure in the past history of their People; they experience the living reality of God in his new activity in their own history. God reveals himself anew to them too. God has spoken to them in his own Son *now* (Heb 1:2), now made known his saving grace (Tit 2:11; 3:4; 2 Tim 1:10), through the Son of God, through whom they have come to faith in God (1 Pet 1:21).

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The Son has declared God to them, whom no one has seen (Jn 1:18); they have seen the Son of God with their own eyes, have heard him and touched him with their hands (1 Jn 1:1). God's glory shines for them in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6; Jn 12:45). For the men of the New Testament and just *their* situation in the plan of salvation, an indissoluble bond connects their experience in faith of the reality of Christ and their knowledge in faith of God. Hence the large number of expressions in which Christ and God are associated: eternal life is the knowledge of the only true God and of him whom he has sent (Jn 17:3); the turning away from idols to the service of the true and living God and waiting for his Son are as it were the basic formula of Christianity in 1 Thess 1:9-10. What St John preaches is κοινωνι/α with the Father and his Son (1 Jn 1:3). Salvation is fulfilled in the ε0πι/γνωσιφ του~ θεου~ και∴ 0Ιησου~ του~ κυρι/ου η(μω~ν (2 Pet 1:2). And these two realities do not stand unrelatedly side by side, nor are they connected merely objectively; they are now so inseparably connected even in the experience of the believer that whoever abandons one does away with the other too: 'Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father' (1 Jn 2:23; cf. Jn 5:23; 14:6-14). The New Testament does indeed allow for a true and enduring knowledge of God even without the possession in faith of his Son. But in that crisis in which the man whom Christ has encountered has to make a decision, this kind of true knowledge of God, such as the Jews perhaps have (cf. Rom 2:17 s.), ceases to be the only knowledge which matters to the New Testament: that knowledge which brings man into real relationship with the living God as Saviour. And in this sense those who do not have the Son do not in fact 'know' God at all, not as though it were only as Father of the Son precisely that they do not [100] know him. So the Lord can say: 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifies me. You call him your God, and yet you know him not. But I know him' (Jn 8:54-5). Because they do not acknowledge and love the Son come from the Father (ε0κ του~ θεου~) and sent by him (Jn 8:42), they no longer acknowledge the God whose sons they are convinced they are in virtue of the Old Covenant. But the men of the New Testament, the witnesses of the whole reality of Christ (Ac 2:22.32; 3:15; 10:39; 13:31), have had the living, tangible experience of Christ, his reality, his miracles and his Resurrection, with overwhelming clarity. They have encountered God there. They know him from his living, powerful action among them in Christ. The primary thing for them is not a carefully constructed philosophical conception of God, but God's own concrete self-disclosure to them in Christ.

II. The Content of the New Testament Conception of God

1. The Uniqueness of God

a. The central *significance* of the New Testament doctrine of God's uniqueness.
When Jesus was asked which was the first of all the commandments and answered that it was the commandment of love – and this is the heart of the Pauline and Johannine message too (Rom 13:10; 1 Cor 8:3; ch. 13; Col. 3:14; 1 Jn 3:11) – he himself in this critical context (Mk 12:29) cited the Shema: α!κουε, 0Ισραη&λ, κυ&ριοφ ο(θεο_φ η(μω~ν κυρι/οφ ει[φ ε0στιν. The Scribe can only confirm Jesus' profession of the faith of his People, once more in the words of the Old Testament (Deut 6:4; 4:35): ει[φ ε0στιν και∴ ου)κ ε1στιν α!λλοφ πλη_ν αυ)του~ (Mk 12:32). This confession of the *one* God runs through the entire New Testament. In Jesus' own words, eternal life is that they should know the only true God (Jn 17:3) and be mindful of the glory which is from this *one* God alone (Jn 5:44); ου)δει∴φ θεο_φ ει0 μη_ ει[φ (1 Cor 8:4). Thus testimony to the uniqueness of the sole God is

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constantly recurring: ει[φ ο(θεο&φ (Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:6; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Jas 2:19), μο&νοφ θεο&φ (Rom 16:27; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:15; Jude 25; Apoc 15:4). Now this monotheism is not just a fragment of tradition taken over from the Old Testament, although it is in fact usually expressed in the old traditional [101] formulas. It is bound up with the basic Christian confession; and when Christ wanted to state as briefly as possible what that eternal life was which he offered men, he spoke of the knowledge of the one true God (Jn 17:3). When St Paul, in the earliest portion of the New Testament, sums up what has come about in the Thessalonians who have become Christians, once again the first item to be mentioned is conversion to the living and true God in opposition to the many false gods (1 Thess 1:9). And from God's uniqueness St Paul derives support for two of his central themes: the calling of the Gentiles to the same rights in the New Israel (Rom 3:28-30; 10:12, 1 Tim 2:4-5), and the unity of the multiple workings of the Spirit among Christians in the one Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:6; Eph 4:6). Again the notion ευ)αγγε/λιον του~ θεου~ seems in many places (Rom 15:16; 1 Thess 2:2.8.9) in view of the context, to have the sense, 'Gospel of the one true God'. Confession of faith in the one true God is one of the essential elements in the Gospel of Christ.

b. The *meaning* of the monotheism of the New Testament.

The central significance of New Testament monotheism becomes still clearer when we try to discover what is meant by this teaching. This confession is not concerned with a mere metaphysical matter of course, merely the primary cause of every sort of reality, necessarily conceived of as an ultimate unity. This one God is indeed spoken of as the primary cause of all things: ε0χ ου[τα_ πα&ντα (1 Cor 8:6), he is πατη_ρ πα&ντων, ο(ε0πι∴ πα&ντων και∴ δια_ πα&ντων και∴ ε0ν πα~σιν (Eph 4:6), ο(ε0νεργω~ν τα_ παντα εν πα~σιν (1 Cor 12:6); it is he who gives to all life and breath and all things (Ac 17:25), 'in whom we live and move and are' (Ac 17:28), so that 'he is not far from every one of us' (Ac 17:27); and because of this ontological relationship to the world, it is possible in principle, according to St Paul, for this one God to be known from the world in his θειο&τηφ (Rom 1:20). We have already noted that this metaphysical knowledge of God is a buried knowledge, only brought to some understanding of itself by actual contact with God's revelation in action; but even apart from this fact the confession of the ει[φ θεο&φ of its very nature goes beyond knowledge of a unified First Cause and End of the world. Here too we have an instance of what has been called 'prophetic' monotheism.

In the first place, it is not simply a matter of establishing the uniqueness of this one God in a neutral way; rather he is confessed in faith: [102] α)λλ 0 η(μι=ν ει[φ θεο&φ (1 Cor 8:6), although (and because) there are θεοι∴ πολλοι∴ και∴ κυ&ριοι πολλοι/ in the world (1 Cor 8:5) although (and because) behind the polytheism in the face of which monotheistic confession is made, there stand real demonic powers and not just error and misconception. As in the Old Testament, the one God of whom confession is made is not primarily the end-term of autonomous human knowledge, but the living, acting God who makes himself known by his own action. And so the formula for New Testament monotheism does not run, There exists one God, somewhat in the sense of the Enlightenment, We all believe in one God; but on the contrary, He who has actively manifested himself in Christ and in the pneumatic reality of salvation which has come into being with Christ, that is the unique God. And here too it is distinguished from Old Testament monotheism: the *Father* of our Lord *Jesus* Christ is the unique God, and just this is the denial of Judaism. Because the one God (ο(θεο&φ) whom the men of the New Testament confess is the living Person who was at work in the saving history of the Old Testament and definitively revealed himself in his Son, the men of the New Testament like to go on using the old expressions 'God of the fathers' (Ac 3:13;

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5:30; 22:14), 'God of Israel' (Mt 15:31; Lk 1:68; Ac 13:17; 2 Cor 6:16; Heb 11:16), 'God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' (Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37; Ac 3:13; 7:32; Mt 22:32), and speak in the manner of the Old Testament about 'our' God (Mk 12:29; Lk 1:78; Ac 2:39; 3:22; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 2:2; 3:9; 2 Thess l:11-12; 1 Tim 1:1; Heb 12:29; 2 Pet 1:1; Apoc 4:11; 5:10; 7:3; 12:10; 19:1.5) or quite personally of 'my' God (Lk 1:47; Rom 1:8; 2 Cor 12:21; Phil 1:3; 4:19; Phm 4; Apoc 3:12 – 4 times); on the other hand they speak also of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Eph 1:3) or again more briefly of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:17). This concrete God is the unique God intended when monotheism is professed. Anyone who confesses the One God and does not thereby intend to confess in this God the God of the fathers and of our Lord Jesus Christ, certainly does not mean the God of whom the primitive Church made confession: α)λλ 0 η(μι=ν ει[φ θεο&φ (1 Cor 8:6).

Secondly, the uniqueness of the divine nature in the world and in history is *not* supposed to be something established in a merely *static* way. God's uniqueness has first to become operative in the world and in history. God must first *become* for man the unique God. For men [103] to confess the unique God does not imply merely the confession of a fact but the acceptance of a task; for this God who acts in history intends precisely by this means to extend his βασιλει/α, the acknowledgment of his unique divinity, so it is truly only by a slow process that he becomes the unique God (ε1σομαι αυ)τω~ν θεο&φ, 2 Cor 6:16; cf. Heb 8:10; Apoc 21:7), until at the end of time he will really be ο(θεο_φ [τα_] πα&ντα ε0ν πα~σιν (1 Cor 15:28). In consequence it is precisely in the commandment of all-embracing and exclusive love for this one God that monotheism finds its achievement. 'For in this alone can it become apparent whether the one God is really God, and indeed the unique God, for those who confess him. They must have no idols by the side of God, neither Mammon (Mt 6:24) nor the belly (Phil 3:19), neither statues (1 Cor 10:21; 12:2; 2 Cor 6:16) nor forces of the cosmos (Gal 4:8 s.), neither local rulers (Ac 4:19; 5:29) nor the Emperor in Rome (Mk 12:17)', nor again the angels (Col 2:18). 'What matters is to serve God and give him what is his, to listen to him and rely on him alone; what matters is to remain faithful to God in face of the gravest threats, to the point of death by martyrdom': a continually new ε0πιστρε/ψαι προ_φ το_ν θεο_ν α)πο_ τω~ν ει0δω&λων δουλευ&ειν θεω~| ζω~ντι και∴ α)ληθινω~| (1 Thess 1:9) – 'in this Jesus and primitive Christianity see the real meaning of ει[φ θεο&φ. As a profession of faith monotheism may have been a matter of course to the men of the New Testament; in the actual conduct of their lives it was always a new task.'[7]

From what has been said it becomes a little clearer perhaps – this is an old problem of the Schools – how there can be a πι/στιφ ο#τι ει[φ ε0στιν ο(θεο&φ (cf. Jas 2:19). When the New Testament refers to the conviction that one God exists, it does indeed often make use of neutral concepts which do not necessarily imply a decision of a moral and religious kind but can in fact also signify, at least in themselves, a neutral theoretical knowledge (γιγνω&σκειν θεο&ν, Rom 1:21; 1 Cor 1:21; Gal 4:9. ε0πιγιγνω&σκειν, Rom 1:28.32; Eph 1:17. ει0δε/ναι το_ν θεο&ν, Gal 4:8; 1 Thess 4:5; 2 Thess 1:8; Tit 1:16). But on the other hand the New Testament characterizes this (or at least *a*) knowledge of God as πιστευ&ειν ο#τι ει[φ ε0στιν ο(θεο&φ (Jas 2:19), as πι/στιφ ε0πι∴ θεο&ν (Heb 6:1), as πι/στιφ η(προ_φ το_ν θεο&ν (1 Thess 1:8), as πιστευ~σαι τω~| θεω~| ο#τι ε1στιν (Heb 11:6). We [104] have already discussed the relation between the natural knowledge of God and the knowledge of God from Revelation in the New Testament. The question which concerns us here is whether, on the basis of what has been said about the content of New Testament monotheism, it is possible to explain at least in part how the first article of the Creed as such can be an

[7] TWNT III, p. 102.

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object of faith – which St Thomas Aquinas, for instance, denied (Ia.2.2 ad 1; IIa-IIae.1.5). There is nothing wrong in saying that anyone who has recognized that an ultimate cause of the world exists, cannot at the same time believe this in faith. In this sense St Thomas is perfectly correct when he says: 'Impossible est, quod ab eodem idem sit scitum et creditum' (*loc. cit.*). But this sort of faith is not in question at all in monotheistic faith, as we have seen. We do not believe by faith in a unified, ultimate cause of the world, which as such is known and not believed in; but we believe by faith in a Person living and active in history, of whose existence we can become aware because of his activity, before it is known as the absolute Being which is the foundation of everything: we believe what this Person says, namely that he and he alone is the absolute God. It is possible to *believe* that Yahweh, that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (both understood as proper names in the strict sense) is the unique God, because logically it is not yet necessary nor is it possible that, before the content of this self-disclosure is known, the Person who reveals these things should be known in that respect precisely in which he reveals himself by actually speaking.

2. God as Person

A further consequence of the inner reason for the unquestioning assurance of the New Testament consciousness of God is that for the men of the New Testament God's personal being is a living reality. Their knowledge of God is not the result of their own theoretical study of the world but of their experience of God's living activity among them. 'The countless examples of living prayer in the New Testament are so many testimonies to the personal God in whom primitive Christianity believed; and they indicate at the same time in what sense the concept of God's personality must be understood here: the God of the New Testament is a God whom men may address as *Thou*, in a way in which only a personal being can be addressed as [105] *Thou*.'[8] We shall see in more detail what was involved in thinking of God as a Person by attempting to set out the individual elements in this conception of a personal God.

God is He who Acts; He who is Free; He who Acts in an Historical Dialogue with men; and He who in the true sense tells us about his 'attributes' – which would otherwise remain hidden – only through this activity. Here we have four points of view in terms of which we propose to characterize the New Testament conception of personality; it goes without saying that these four aspects continually merge into one another.

a. God as He who *Acts*.

In metaphysical knowledge of God from the world, where God is apprehended in the sense of the Vatican definition as 'principium et finis' of all reality, God is also in a certain sense one who acts, he who sets up all reality. We may leave out of account here the fact that because of original sin the unity of the one transcendent God is concealed by man's subjection to a plurality of cosmic powers which he makes into idols, the στοιξει=α του~ κο&σμου. But even setting this aside, God's activity is in a certain sense concealed in 'natural' theology by the mere fact that for the metaphysician absolutely *everything* is an objectivization of God's activity. In this way God's activity remains absolutely transcendent: it has no Here and Now *within* the world such that in this Here and Now it might be grasped and experienced in distinction from all that it is not. Because *everything* is God's action, this action fades as it were into the anonymity of the Always and Everywhere, as far as human knowledge is concerned, for human knowledge remains essentially dependent on recognizing

[8] TWNT III, p. 111 s.

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something by bringing it into relief against other things of a different kind. Now what characterizes the experience of God in the New Testament (as of course it did in the Old Testament too) is that it knows of a definite and distinct activity of God *within* the world: it knows of God's saving activity in history, an activity which, as God's new, free initiative, neither instituted jointly with the world nor already contained in it, possesses a quite definite Here and Now in the world and in human history, distinct from all other being and becoming. The New Testament does indeed also know with complete assurance [106] that *everything* is, moves and lives in him (Ac 17:27-9), God as το_ θει=ον; it sees the πατη_ρ πα&ντων (Eph 4:6) at work everywhere, in Nature too; it sees how he makes the sun rise and the rain fall, clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of heaven, as the God of the fruitful seasons, sating men's hearts with food and gladness (Ac 14:17); it sees him at work too in the history of humanity as a whole, the spreading abroad of the races of men as the historical epochs succeed each other, the coming and going of peoples (Ac 17:26).

But close observation shows that the New Testament completely lacks any expression of numinous feeling for the cosmos, excited by the world, its greatness and glory. And this is quite apart from the fact that the New Testament, when it speaks of the glory of the lilies, also remembers that they wither and are cast into the oven, and is generally aware that the whole of creation has been caught up in man's sinfulness and is thus remote from God, groaning for the revelation of its own glory (Rom 8:22). Thus on the one hand the New Testament is capable of seeing God powerfully at work in the whole of reality and history, and on the other God never becomes for it the mysterious glimmer of an Absolute immanent in the world, the world is never deified but remains always the creature of the Lord beyond all world who shapes it freely by his Word. And this is because the New Testament has experienced God's activity *within* the world, and for that reason can never be in any uncertainty about that activity of his either, from which the total reality of the cosmos derives. For the New Testament, God's self-revelation in the world is never a quality which adheres uniformly to every reality in the world. In his sovereign freedom he has chosen a people for himself to the exclusion of all others and made it his People (Ac 13:17 s.); this People alone possessed the Covenant and the giving of the Law and the Promise (Rom 9:4; σωτηρι/α ε0κ τω~ν 0Ιουδαι/ων, Jn 4:22); he has sent his Son (Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4), so that upon this unique historical event depend man's entire salvation and the transfiguration of the whole world (Ac 4:12; Eph 2:18). The New Testament is strongly conscious of a sharply defined saving activity of God within the whole of human history, which as a whole possesses no immediate relation to God's salvation at the start. So strong is this consciousness, that the calling of nations to reconciliation and community with God is not inferred from some metaphysical knowledge of God's necessary goodness but is the great mystery of God's free election, hidden from all men yet [107] disclosed contrary to all expectations, God as it were suddenly calling all nations to salvation in spite of the elective, discriminatory freedom of his love (Ac 11:17.18; Eph 2:11 s.; ch. 3).

It is from this experience of God's free personal activity within history that the confession of God as *Creator of the world*, simply speaking, also acquires its specific vitality and clarity (Mt 11:25; Mk 13:19; Jn 1:3; Ac 4:24; 17:24; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:5 s.; Col. 1:16; Eph 3:9; Heb 1:2; 2: 10; 3:4; 11:3; Apoc 4: 11).

Firstly we may say that in the New Testament (as in the Old Testament) it is never claimed that natural knowledge from the world includes as one of its objects a free creation of a temporal world *ex nihilo*; we leave undecided the question whether and how far the character of the world as *created* in the strict sense is available to natural theology. The New Testament (like the Old) accepts its knowledge of the world's createdness in the strict sense from the God who speaks and reveals himself. Further, man only really learns what *creating* is from God's free and powerful activity in history, unconstrained by any prior obligation. It is here

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that man experiences concretely the truth that God is o(καλω~ν τα_ μη_ o!ντα ω(φ o!ντα (Rom 4:17), a formula which is on the one hand related to God's free activity in the history of Abraham, and on the other is used by the New Testament as a clear expression for creation *ex nihilo*. Thus knowledge of God's historical activity within the world and knowledge of his creative omnipotence through his mere Word over against everything which is not He, complete and support each other reciprocally. Because he is Lord of heaven and earth he can maintain his sway in sovereign power and freedom over the destinies of the world and of men (Mt 11:25; Ac 4:24 s.; Eph 1:11). And in this sway over history man has a deep impression of God's free and unconstrained sovereignty in action, his creativeness – the ε0νε/ργεια του~ κρα&τουφ τη~φ ι0σξυ&οφ αυ)του~, which shows itself with power in the Resurrection, discloses to us in general το_ υ(περβα&λλον με/γεθοφ τη~φ δυνα&μεωφ του~ θεου~ (Eph 1:19.20), gives us the πι/στιφ τη~φ ε0νεργει/αφ του~ θεου~ (Col 2:12), and so allows us to experience concretely and vividly the fact that God is o(τα_ πα&ντα ε0νεργω~ν κατα_ τη_ν βουλη_ν του~ θελη&ματοφ αυ)του~ (Eph 1:11).

b. God as He who Acts *freely*.

This God who acts in Nature and in human history is one who acts [108] *freely*. God manifests himself as Person in his activity precisely by the fact that this activity is voluntary and free. Precisely because the activity even *in* his world arises from God's spontaneous resolution, which is not something given along with other ingredients in the original constitution of the world, its tendencies and finalities, it becomes clear that this active God is the God transcending natural and human worlds, that God's Activity is not just another word for the world-process, that his Will is not just another word for ει9μαρμε/νη. It is on the basis of a concrete experience of free irruptions into the historical course of the world, novel and unexpected and extrinsic to the world's immanent dynamism, that the men of the New Testament recognize God as a free, transcendent Person.

They do indeed know of the *eternity* of God's definitive decree, the purpose of his will to lead all history and the whole world to their definitive goal (Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:4; 3:9; Col 1:26; 2 Tim 1:9), and go on at once to reflect on it; and what is true of this divine purpose is obviously true of God's historical activity in the world in general. And this is to say that God's freedom has determined from the very beginning a goal for the world and for men which is in fact infallibly pursued and attained in the history of the world. But it is certainly not to say that this final, unified and definitive plan of salvation had always been so deeply imprinted upon the world from the very beginning and objectified there that from the very beginning everything was going to run its course according to a natural law, in such a way that, as in Deism, God would throughout the whole of time merely be the spectator of the immanent unfolding of that reality which he had created in the beginning. God's plan of salvation has rather been an absolute secret of his, concealed from all earlier ages and generations, and which only now, in the last times, becomes objectively real and thereby makes itself known. The reality of salvation in Christ has now emerged in the world for the first time (ε0πεφα&νη: Tit 2:11; 3:4), and *in consequence* become manifest (1 Tim 1:10); so that Revelation is not just instruction about something which has always been the case, but the unveiling of the new unfoldings of God's free activity. That this activity of God in Christ takes place precisely now and not at some other time (Heb 1:2, ε0π 0 ε0σξα&του τω~ν η(με/ρων του&των; Col 1:26, νυ~ν; Rom 16:25, φανερωθε/ντοφ δε∴ νυ~ν μυστηρι/ου); that it emerges over against man lost through sin; that contrary to every human standard it is aimed at the poor, the [109] weak, the foolish among men (Mt 11:25; Lk 1:51 s.; 1 Cor 1:25 s.), to men who can lay absolutely no claim to it in justice; that it is thus pure grace – from all this man learns that this activity is God's really new, original initiative, his free doing,

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βου&λημα (Rom 9:19: Jas 1:18), βουλη_ του~ θελη&ματοφ αυ)του~ (Eph 1:11; Ac 20:27), ευδοκι/α (Eph 1:5.9; 1 Cor 1:21; Gal 1:15), προορι/ζειν (Rom 8:29 s.; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:5.11), προ&θεσιφ, ε0κλογη& (Rom 9:11; 11:5.28; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Pet 1:10).

Disciplined by this experience of God's incalculable freedom as shown in the basic facts of our salvation, a man of the New Testament is now capable of seeing God's free activity at work *elsewhere* throughout Nature and Grace. What is distinctive in individual natural bodies is just as much the work of his freedom (1 Cor 15:38 s.) as the overwhelming and incomprehensible differentiation in his mercy and his reprobation (Rom 9:13 s.; 2 Tim 1:9; Jn 6:44.65), as the vocation to offices and gifts (Ac 10:41; 16:10; 22:14 s.; Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 12:6.28; Heb 2:4), as the appointing of a time for the End (Mt 24:36; Ac 1:7).

The eternity and immutability of God's free decree on the one hand, and its incalculability in terms of the previous situation of the world on the other, belong together and together form the presupposition for any proper human attitude to God. On the one hand, man can rely in faith on the fact that God is faithful (πιστο&φ, Rom 3:3; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 1:18; 2 Tim 2:13; Heb 10:23; 1 Pet 4:19) and true (α)ληθη&φ, α)ληθινο&φ, Rom 3:4; 15:8; Jn 3:33; 8:26), that his decrees are unchangeable and without repentance (α)μετα&θετοφ, Heb 6:17; α)μεταμε/λητοφ, Rom 11:29). On the other hand, what is still to come about by God's act, in its existential concreteness, continues to remain within God's sovereign power of disposal, and remains for us a mystery only fully to be unveiled at the end of all the ages; and for that reason this free God is never at the power of man's calculations: God remains free Lord. Because the God who acts freely is set over against man, and because he has mercy on whom he will and hardens whom he will (Rom 9:15.16.18), his free and sovereign dispensation is first and last for our 'existence' (in the modern sense of the word). St Paul does not even begin to try to formulate a theodicy in respect of God's free choice in grace: 'O man, who art thou, that thou wouldst dispute with God?' (Rom 9:20). The rightness and holiness of God's decision rests in itself alone, precisely because it is free; it is not to be [110] traced back to some necessitating source which has the lucidity of its necessity.

c. In the third place God shows himself as Person in that he deals with man in an historical *dialogue*, that he allows man, his creature, really to be himself too a person. Some brief explanation is needed of what we mean by this. Every purely metaphysical knowledge of God which starts from immediately perceptible reality and penetrates to its ultimate cause – and calls it God – always at least runs the risk of conceiving the world as a pure function of God, in such a way that the world becomes a pure expression and objectivization of this cause, merely a derived function of God (as opposed to the risk of making God into merely the inner meaning of the world). Thus it is almost impossible for metaphysics to avoid the danger of forgetting the two-sided personal relationship between God and the created spirit, the danger of not understanding that the personal God so transcends the world that he can allow this world, which is totally dependent on him, a genuine activity, even with regard to himself; that what is totally dependent on him acquires through his own agency a genuine independence with regard to him; that God can set man free with regard to God himself.

Further, this relationship between God and man, which is so obscure for metaphysics, is seen at its clearest precisely in the *saving* history of God's dealings with man. Man takes part in a real *dialogue* with God. He gives God's Word to him the answer which he, man, wants to give. And his may turn out contrary to God's will. Man can harden his heart (Rom 2:5; Heb 3:13), he can resist the Spirit of God (Ac 7:51), he can obey or not obey God's will (Rom 15:18; 16:19), he can contradict God (Rom 10:21), he can shut the doors of his heart to God when he knocks (Apoc 3:20), he can set his will in opposition to God's plan of salvation (Mt 23:37 s.). The existence of powers in the world which are hostile to God and which are yet creatures of the one God, cannot be separated from this reality of a personal independence of

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the created spirit; the reality of sin, its inexcusability before God, God's wrath over sin, his summons to reconciliation, prayer, the existential genuineness of which depends on man's having a genuine initiative with regard to God – all these realities witnessed to in the New Testament presuppose the same bi-personal relationship between [111] God and man. God's activity in the course of saving history is not a kind of monologue which God conducts by himself; it is a long, dramatic dialogue between God and his creature, in which God confers on man the power to make a genuine answer to his Word, and so makes his own further Word dependent upon the way in which man does in fact freely answer. God's free action never ceases to take new fire in the activity of man. History is not just a play in which God puts himself on the stage and creatures are merely what is performed; the creature is a real co-performer in this humano-divine drama of history. And so history has a real and absolute seriousness, an absolute decision, which is not to be relativized as far as the creature is concerned with the remark – at once true and false – that everything rises from God's will and nothing can resist it. The Scriptural basis for what has just been said lies in the simple and yet incomprehensible fact that in the Bible the Almighty, Absolute, the παντοκρα&τωρ (Apoc 1:8), through his own personally expressed Word, calls upon his creature, the work of his hands, to do his will; and that accordingly this Word which calls upon someone else cannot be meaningless, although it proceeds from him who has the power to do all things.

Although the creature is given free play in this way, the power to make a real answer to God, God retains the last word: not only in the sense that as the stronger physically, so to speak, he finally acts in such a way that no reaction of the creature can follow his action, having no further power to withstand it; but also in the sense that even the creature's sinful act, while it does indeed involve total disaster for the creature itself, is nevertheless incapable of leaving the field of God's ultimate will – the will by which God wills his glory. For God's power is revealed even in those vessels of his wrath which have fallen into destruction (Rom 9:22.23). So far as we have any knowledge of it from God, the history of the world, from the point of view of the world and in isolation, closes with a shrill disharmony never to be resolved. What is exterior to God is never in itself resolved into an ultimate, all-embracing harmony; and yet, and precisely in this way, the world proclaims the glory of the God whose ways are unfathomable and whose decisions are inscrutable. A creature can be reconciled with this end of all the world only if it unreservedly gives glory to God, and loves him and adores him precisely in the unfathomable, inappellable freedom of his will; loves him, then, more than itself, so [112] that solidarity with God's will is more important to it than solidarity with anything else, like itself created.

d. The *attributes* of God.

It is only after reaching some understanding of the living and free personal being of the transcendent God who is able to enter into an active dialogue with the world, that we can begin to examine the teaching of the New Testament about God's 'attributes'. For we have to know God as Person before we can understand that the decisive question for men is not, strictly speaking, *what* God is, but *as whom* he wishes freely to show himself with regard to the world. A person does not strictly speaking have *attributes* with respect to another person: he has freely and personally adopted *attitudes*. And this is above all true of God's absolute, sovereign being as Person with regard to his world. Certainly these free attitudes which God has adopted with regard to the world, have, so to speak, a metaphysical structure, arising from God's necessary nature; but the attitude actually adopted is not unambiguously laid down in consequence of this structure. He can have mercy and he can harden men's hearts, he can enlighten them and he can send them the ε0νε/ργεια πλα&νηφ (2 Thess 2:11) or the πνευ~μα κατανυ/χεωφ (Rom 11:8), without thereby ceasing to be the Holy One (Heb 12:10; 1 Pet 1:15) and his judgments ceasing to be true and just (Apoc 19:2). With respect to

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this God of the New Testament, then, everything depends for man on how God in fact behaves with regard to man, not just on how he necessarily is in himself. The experiences by which man learns about God in saving history are not just exemplifications, instances to show the attributes of God as a metaphysical entity which man knows in its necessary character; they are experiences containing a teaching of which man can only become aware through the experience. This experience therefore always remains new and unexpected; what is learnt from it is not identified with something always and already there, but itself occurs for the first time. The kernel of what the New Testament declares about God's 'attributes', then, is not a doctrine about God as an abstract metaphysical entity, but an announcement about the concrete, personal countenance which God shows to the world.

There are of course statements in the New Testament which express properly *metaphysical* attributes of God's nature. The Scriptures do indeed speak of a θει/α φυ/σιφ (2 Pet 1:4), a θειο&τηφ (Rom 1:20). [113] If God is called αι0ω&νιοφ (Rom 16:26; cf. Apoc 1:4.8; 4:8; 16:5), α)ι/διοφ (Rom 1:20), α)ο&ρατοφ (Rom 1:20; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; Heb 11:27), α!φθαρτοφ (Rom 1:23; 1 Tim 1:17), μακα&ριοφ (1 Tim 1:11; 6:15), ου&δε.∴ προσδεο&μενο&φ τινοφ (Ac 17:25), α)πει/ραστοφ (Jas 1:13); or when it is said of him ου) γα_ρ α!δικοφ ο(θεο&φ (Heb 6:10; cf. Rom 3:5; 9:14), α)δυ&νατον ψευ&σασθαι θεο&ν (Heb 6:18; cf. Tit 1:2), οι1δαμεν ο#τι ο(θεο&φ α(μαρτωλω~ν ου)κ α)κου&ει (Jn 9:31), ου)δει∴φ α)γαθο_φ ει0 μη_ ει[φ ο(θεο&φ (Mk 10:18), μο&νοφ σοφο_φ θεο&φ (Rom 16:27), and when his omniscience is praised (καρδιογνω&στηφ, Ac 1:24; Rom 8:27; Heb 4:13; 1 Jn 3:20; Mt 6:4.6) – all these are objective expressions of God's essential attributes, which are also experienced as such: they are axiological statements about God, judgments of essence, not of existence. Inevitably, then, what was said about the relation of 'natural' theology to the revealed theology of the New Testament holds good for these statements too: these properties of the θει/α φυ&σιφ, the θειο&τηφ, can be known and always are known from the world; they are disclosed to sinful man who 'setting aside the Creator shows devotion to the world' (Rom 1:25), and are unveiled anew to anyone who in obedience and faith encounters the living God in his saving history. But these attributes acquire new harmonics in this encounter: he who is αι0ω&νιοφ is not only without beginning or end, but is raised up so high above the earthly world that he was able to enter into it and precisely so make it share in his own upliftedness above the eternal up and down, the eternal inconclusiveness of time (2 Cor 4:8 s.; 4:17; 2 Thess 2:16; Heb 5:9; 9:12.15; 2 Pet 1:11). The same is true of God's α)φθαρσι/α (Eph 6:24; 2 Tim 1:10) and his invisibility, through which alone we can understand what is meant by saying that we shall see God (1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2); the same is true of his holiness and freedom from need, which we shall share (Apoc 21:23); of his omniscience, which no longer signifies strictly the infinite consciousness of the world-cause, containing all things in its being and knowledge, but rather the eye of the personal God, whose discerning, comprehending and provident gaze penetrates man's inmost heart and is felt there by him (Mt 6:4-6; Lk 16:15; Heb 4:12-13; 1 Thess 2:4; 1 Jn 3:20; Mt 6:8.32; 10:29).

It is also important to remember in this connexion that the New Testament does not *systematize* these metaphysical statements about God. Nowhere does it treat of them speculatively; and it remains completely silent about just those expressions which would be even [114] more important and more central for a theological metaphysics, or at any rate it has no specialized vocabulary for them: God is never appealed to in the New Testament as simply Being, his entitative infinity is never mentioned. It is not so much to the Absolute and Necessary – and thus easily impersonal and abstract – that the New Testament turns its gaze in metaphysical contemplation; its eyes are upon the *personal* God in the *concreteness* of his free activity.

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Everything depends on that. And so the decisive statements of the New Testament as to *who* God is are an answer to the question, 'As *whom* has man experienced God in history?' When God is called the just *Judge*, this is because of the shattering impression that it was the God of holiness who first brought men to any consciousness of their lost and sinful condition in his revelation to the creature, that he condemned sin in the flesh of Christ whom he made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 8:3); that God's wrath broke forth and was experienced over and over again at other times in the history of salvation (2 Pet 2:3-7; Jude 5-16). Again, we must be careful not to trivialize the experience of God's wrath in judgment by interpreting it as a mere reaction of his necessarily holy essence to the sin of the world. For the same sin suddenly and incalculably encounters on another occasion God's forbearance and *longsuffering* (Rom 2:4; 3:26; 9:22; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 3:9; α)νοξη&–μακροθυμι/α). Further, this α)νοξη& and μακροθυμι/α of God is not some metaphysical attribute which man can reckon on as a fixed quantity in planning his life for the future; for that would be to tempt God (1 Cor 10:9), and the time of God's indulgence is suddenly interrupted by the Day of the Lord, which comes like a thief in the night (2 Pet 3:10).

The existentially personal and active character of God's behaviour, in contrast to some fixed metaphysical attribute of his essence, is just as clear when he is called *good*, *merciful*, *loving*, and so on. He is forgiving (Mt 6:14; Mk 11:25), merciful (Lk 1:72.78; 6:36; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 2:4; 1 Tim 1:2; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3; 2 Jn 3; Jude 2), kind (Mt 19:17; Lk 11:13; 18:19; Jas 1:5; ξρηστο&φ, Lk 6:35; Rom 2:4; 11:22; Tit 3:4), loving (Jn 3:16; 16:27; Rom 5:5; 8:37.39; Eph 2:4; 2 Thess 2:16; Tit 3:4; 1 Jn 3:1; 4:8-11). He is the God of all grace (Ac 20:24; Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor 1:12; Eph 3:2.7; 1 Tim 1:2; 1 Pet 2:20; 5:10.12; 2 Jn 3), the God of hope (Rom 15:13), the God of peace (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; 13:11; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; [115] 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phm 3; 2 Jn 3), the God of all comfort (Rom 15:5; 2 Cor 1:3.4; 2 Thess 2:16), the God of love (2 Cor 13:11), the Saviour (Lk 1:47; 1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:11; 3:4; Jude 25), who in his compassion desires the salvation of all men (Mt 18:14; 1 Tim 2:3.4; 4:10; Tit 2:11; 2 Pet 3:9). But for the New Testament God's kind and compassionate love is in its very core precisely grace, to which no claim can be made, grace, which against all expectation, encounters the 'atheistic' sinner (Eph 2:12) who has fallen away from God. That God loves us, that he is 'dear God', is not a metaphysical matter of course, but the inconceivable marvel that the New Testament must proclaim, belief in which never ceases to demand the utmost effort of man's powers of faith. God's love had first to become objective and to 'appear' (ε0φανερω&θη, 1 Jn 4:9) in the sending of his only begotten Son into the world, we had first to experience in this sending this love as it really is, in order really to be able to believe it: και∴ η(μει=φ ε0γνω&καμεν και∴ πεπιστευ&καμεν τη_ν α)γα&πην, η#ν ε1ξει ο(θεο_φ ε0ν η(μι=ν (1 Jn 4:16). Until this love becomes finally manifest, the conviction that it encounters me in my absolute concreteness must be maintained in this aion by the ε0λπι∴φ σωτηρι/αφ (1 Thess 5:8), and never becomes a matter of course; the triumphant consciousness of being loved by God (Rom 8:39) continues to be coupled with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12; 1 Pet 1:17); for even the unburdened conscience is subject to God's judgment. More clearly still: God's love is so free and sovereign that the effects in man of its creative, saving Word, its affirmation in faith and love or its refusal in unbelief do not in the last resort vary purely according to man's response in this way or that to God's freedom. On the contrary, its effects depend on whether God himself in his unqualified sovereignty bestows or withholds his own merciful love (Rom 9:9-11), to which man really consents. God's loving call is always a call of his προ&θεσιφ, an election (Rom 8:28-33; 2 Tim 1:9; 2 Pet 1:10). Nor is it surprising, in a context like this, that God's *omnipotence*, in spite of its metaphysical quality, is preponderantly seen and experienced in connexion with

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his free operations in saving history: he has the power to raise up children to Abraham from stones (Mt 3:9; Lk 3:8; Mt 19:26 and par.); he can raise up the dead, and raise them to a quite new order of life (Mt 22:29 s.; Jn 5:21; 1 Cor 6:14; Eph 1:19; Heb 11:19); his ε0νε/ργεια is shown in the raising up of his own Son (Ac 2:24; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 13:4; Eph 1:19 s.; Col 1:12); [116] he is able (δυνατο&φ) even to convert the obstinate and to preserve those who are true to him (Rom 11:23; 2 Tim 1:12); his power is shown in his free grace (Rom 1:16; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:5; 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 1:11; 3:7.20; Phil 2:13; 4:13; 2 Tim 1:8; Heb 2:18), in the performance of his promises (Rom 4:21), in his power to punish (Rom 9:22). In comparison, metaphysical statements like the assertion that his δυ&ναμιφ can be known in the world (Rom 1:20), or which call him παντοκρα&τωρ (Apoc *passim*; 2 Cor 6:18 – hence only once outside the Apocalypse!), recede into the background. And because God's activity is part of a dialogue, his power is not seen as a magnitude continuously and obviously present in the world, something already realized, but as something which is only slowly realized, by a real struggle, in the drama of God and his world, until his βασιλει/α is actually present and his δυ&ναμιφ has really appeared (Mt 24:30; Lk 21:27; cf. Mt 26:64).

It is in the *paradoxical* utterances that we have the clearest view of God's attitude as personal and existential, to be known concretely not from the world but only in the enactments of his free activity. For metaphysical knowledge of God, the summit of the world is itself just below God; the world attempts to ascend to God by an intensification and sublimation of its values and forces; the form of its own immanent quest for God, which serves as the basis for its knowledge of God's attributes, always has the form of the Greek *Eros*, which strives upwards to the supreme fulfilment of human reality and only so to God; and in consequence the world can only expect a revelation which would be simply the manifestation of its own power and wisdom. But the free, transcendent God, who is precisely greater than what is greatest in the world and is more unlike than he is like the summit of the world, surpasses all this by his sovereign eminence, and reveals himself precisely in what in the world seems furthest from him. Not in the wisdom of the world, not in the glory of the world's might, does God reveal himself; but he reveals το_ α)σθενε∴φ του~ θεου~, το_ μωρο_ν του~ θεου~ in the foolishness and weakness of the Cross (1 Cor 1:18-25). He does not communicate himself to those who are metaphysically close to him, the wise, the strong, the successful, the ontologically compact, but to the foolish of the world, the weak, the failures, the inwardly brittle and empty (1 Cor 1:26-9; 2 Cor 12:9; 13:4; Mt 11:25). The μορφη_ θεου~ empties itself in the μορφη_ δου&λου, lowliness, poverty, the death on the Cross (Phil 2:5-8; 2 Cor 8:9). [117] The eternal creator Logos becomes *sarx*, temporal, frail, delivered up to the power of sin and death (Jn 1:14). And all this happens ο#πωφ μη_ καυξη&σηται πα~σα σα_ρχ ε0νω&πιον του~ θεου~ (1 Cor 1:29). Looked at from the standpoint of the world, there is nothing in the world obviously privileged by nature to serve as God's revelation and representative. Even the highest is infinitely far from God; nor can the lowest of itself drag God down by a voluptuous passion for the base and wretched; *both* high and low in this word are *sarx*, and so all must become dumb before God: strictly speaking, there is no name named in this world and from it, which is really an attribute of God.

Properly and precisely, we know *who* God is, not from ourselves and the world, but only from the activity in history of the free and living God, through which he showed us who he wished to be to us. Consequently the teaching of the New Testament in the ultimate analysis is not an ontology of God's attributes, not a theory, but an historical account of the experiences in which man has come to know God.

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3. The God of Love

Of all that man has learnt by experience about God in saving history, the decisive thing is that out of his grace God the Father has called us in his Son to the most intimate community with him: it is summed up in the proposition: ο(θεο_φ α)γα&πη ε0στιν (1 Jn 4:16). But to see what this proposition means we must undertake a somewhat more extensive enquiry. With regard to God's personal activity, the New Testament understands that the free, living God can act differently at different times, can enter into different relationships with man. The decisive feature of this understanding is that it involves a knowledge of the fact which is precisely *not* a matter of course for the New Testament understanding of God, that the free, incalculable God has spoken his last, *definitive* word in the dramatic dialogue between God and man. God is the Free and the Transcendent, whose potentialities could never be exhausted in a finite world, and who in consequence is never really bound by what he has done. But he *has* bound himself: he has taken up a position with regard to man and the finite which he himself freely declares to be definitive, and of which he himself says that he will never go beyond it again and never withdraw from it. And because the only time which really signifies before God does not [118] follow the periodicity of stars and clocks but rather that of God's ever new, free acts in his world, time really stands still when God has spoken his last word. And as this has in fact happened, the *kairos* is in fact accomplished (Mk 1:15), the end of time has come upon us (1 Cor 10:11; 1 Pet 4:7). The inner temporal form of the world, derived from God, is at its end, even if this last *kairos* may last for thousands of years by astronomical measures. We must realize what it means for the Infinite One to say that this deed which he has now done and which inevitably carries within itself the contingency of a free act in the sphere of the finite, is his *last* deed; that of all the innumerable possibilities which remain open to him, none will be realized after this deed; that the mode of his action at precisely this moment shall abide for all eternity.

If we are now to characterize this unique situation, one which can never be surpassed and which has never existed before, we must in the first place distinguish it against God's previous modes of behaviour, and secondly we must determine what is peculiar to it with regard to time and intrinsic content. It was said earlier that in the last analysis the New Testament does not offer a doctrine of God's attributes, but an account of those ever new attitudes of God of which man has had experience in the course of his history; and we have just seen that the *kairos* of the New Testament is characterized by the fact that God's attitude as it is experienced there is the definitive one. Our problem then may be formulated in terms of two questions: firstly, how is this attitude distinguished from God's previous attitudes, those of the Old Testament and in the time before Christ? and secondly, what in fact is this attitude or disposition (*Haltung*) considered precisely in the terminal situation of the New Testament?

a. God's love in the Old Testament.

According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, God expressed himself in the world by his speech and activity in manifold ways. But his last and definitive word, his last and definitive act, which have come to pass in the καιροι∴ ι1διοι (1 Tim 2:6; 6:15; Tit 1:3) of the new and eternal covenant and are now present, are not just the latest in a series, but the πλη&ρωμα of all earlier times (Mk 1:15; Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10), and yet precisely something new with regard to what had gone before. If this is the case, then this final disposition must be distinguished from anything *earlier*, which with regard to it is drawn into a unified order; [119] and at the same time this disposition must be understood as the *telos* of all that had gone before, which finds its fulfilment in this disposition. In other words, this ε1σξατον, which is τε/λοφ and πλη&ρωμα of everything before it, puts all God's previous saving speech and activity –

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however manifold and various this may be – over a common denominator, and thus stands in essential distinction from the whole of what had gone before; and yet the whole must be resolved into this teleological fulfilment. We must bear this relationship in mind when we ask by what distinguishing features we are to know the God of the New Testament from the God of the Old. After all we have said, it should be clear that we are not just asking the harmless question as to what *man* understood about God in Old Testament and New Testament times; we are not concerned with the subjective conceptions of the men of the two covenants, with the growing knowledge of something in itself unchanging, but with a difference in God's own behaviour (*Anders-sich-verhalten*).

It is of course impossible to set out here the whole doctrine of the New Testament concerning the difference between the Old and New Covenants, between the time before Christ and the time in Christ, although this would be the only really concrete way of showing how the God of the fathers differs from the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise we should be committed to the impossible task of discussing all the pairs of contrary conceptions like α)δικι/α (α(μαρτι/α)-δικαιοσυ/νη (Rom 3:5), δου~λοφ-υι9ο&φ (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:7), δουλει/α-ε0λευθερια (Gal 5:1), νο&μοφ-πι/στιφ (Rom 4:13 s.), σα&ρχ-πνευ~μα (Rom 8:9), κατα&κρισιφ-δικαιοσυ&νη (2 Cor 3:9), γρα&μμα-πνευ~μα (2 Cor 3:6), ε1ργον-ξα&ριφ (Tit 3:5-7), διανοι/α του~ θανα&του-διανοι/α του~ πνευ&ματοφ (2 Cor 3:7 s.), διαθη&κη παλαια& (πρω&τη)-διαθη&κη καινη& (νε/α; αι0ω&νιοφ) (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24; 13:20; Gal 4:24), σκια_ μελλο&ντων-ει0κω_ν τω~ν πραγμα&των (Col 2:17; Heb 10:1), ε0παγγελι/α-ευ0αγγε/λιον (Rom 1:1 s.; Eph 3:6), στοιξει=α του~ κο&σμου-Ξριστο&φ (Col. 2:8-20; Gal 4:3-9). This would be the only way of achieving any real clarity about how God's behaviour in the Old Testament differs from his behaviour in the New. Here we must follow a simpler way. We shall simply start from the usual (and, it would seem, justified) view of this difference, that in the New Testament, and in the strictest sense there alone, God revealed himself as God of *Love*, as Love *itself*. In concrete terms, then, our first question becomes how and why God's [120] love, become manifest in Christ, is distinguished from God's behaviour in the Old Testament and is at the same time its fulfilment.

At first sight the anticipated conclusion does not seem very probable: God seems to have shown himself as one who loves even in the time of salvation *before* Christ. In what follows, only the barest outline of Old Testament teaching can of course be offered, and that with the utmost reserve. Firstly, then, we find references there to what might be called a metaphysical love of God. When we hear that God loves everything that is (Wis 11:24), that Yahweh gives everything its nature and that his mercy embraces all that he has made (Ps 145:9), when the Psalmist celebrates the whole of creation as a work of God's graciousness and goodness (Ps 136:1-9), what we have is the reflexions of a natural theology: the goodness (the value) of reality is traced back to its source in the Source of all being, which in consequence is also conceived of as good. What was said earlier about natural theology in general holds good for this metaphysical goodness of God; it is knowable and in a way familiar, it is hidden because of original sin and is only clearly disclosed when man comes to know God in the supernatural history of salvation. But a 'love' like this does not really set up a personal I-Thou relationship between man and God. Man is aware of being borne by a Will in some way directed to value and the good, but this is not enough to let him turn round, as it were, so as to enter into a personal relationship of community and reciprocal love with this Source of his own ontological value. Again, we often hear in the Old Testament of God's goodness and mercy, as they are shown in his personal, historical activity. God has chosen his people; he has in a special way shown his goodness, his mercy and his love in a special personal guidance, in election and covenant. For the Old Testament, and especially for the prophets, the very fact

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that he has entered into relationship with man in so personal a way is itself an expression of his inconceivable mercy and grace, a revelation of his love. And the climax of his love in the Old Testament is that he does not allow himself to be turned away by the unfaithfulness of his People, Israel's repeated falling away from its God; that he does not give up his desire for a personal relationship because of the adultery of his People. We could put this more sharply and say that for the Old Testament God's love is shown by the fact that he enters into a personal relationship with his People and that he does not abandon it in spite of man's rejection of him. But that is all this love seems yet to mean. Certainly there is a [121] constant celebration of Yahweh's mercy and graciousness, his compassion and his readiness to forgive, with regard to all creatures in general and the People of the Covenant in particular. But if we are justified in identifying God's goodness with a genuinely personal love, it follows that we cannot really draw any conclusions from language like this as to whether God already loves men there in the sense that as someone wholly personal in his very essence he wants to give himself to man. Goodness, forbearance, mercy, solicitude are still attributes which can characterize the conduct of a master to his servant. Consequently a relationship of this kind still does not mean that this solicitous and just and lenient ruler wishes to have anything to do with the servant in his own personal life. He can continue to be distant and inaccessible. Surely it was the beginning of something new and personal for God to have freely exercised his dominion over all that he has made in such a way as to enter actively into the world and intervene in it by his own personal initiative, as it were surrendering his sovereign upliftedness above everything finite by becoming a fellow-actor with his world. This is a new beginning which, looking back from the New Testament, we can only understand as a moment in God's movement towards the creature, a movement in which he wished to entrust himself to man in his transcendent identity, in the inner mystery of his own personal life. But this could not yet be seen in the Old Testament. The fact that God in his personal activity takes man into his service, makes him, by a divine historical act, what he already is by nature, the fact that God accepts man as his servant and personally communicates his will to him and has personal dealings with him – all this was already so inconceivable a marvel that it could only be described by using the *image* of paternal or marital love. But that it was already in fact a love which drew men up to God only became evident in the New Covenant. It has further to be remembered that God's loving treatment of man in the Old Testament was intrinsically orientated towards something to come, to a New Covenant. Now this great promised thing remains curiously obscure and ambiguous in the Old Testament. Is this new greater thing only the establishment of God's rule in the world, which is still going to leave man merely God's servant, or is it going to be something more? Is God's law going to be completely established at some time in the future, and is this rule going to be one in which God precisely wills to be more than just the Lord who establishes himself in the world by the jealous [122] affirmation of his own being? Is God going to be beloved Lord or lordly Beloved? All these promises were existential utterances of God, not just predictions; and of their very nature (until God should have bound himself by speaking his last, definitive word), they were held in abeyance so long as it was not known what answer God's free collocutor, man, would give to these promises in the dialogue which forms the history of salvation. In the Old Testament, then, God's love for man (so long as it does not mean just God's metaphysical relationship to his creature, something quite general and unexistential and implying no personal communion at all) consists in the very fact that he desires and makes possible a personal encounter with man, that he seeks this relationship urgently and maintains it in being, and that (provisionally, at least) this relationship was not abandoned in consequence of a turning away from God on man's part. But it was concealed in the Mystery of God's eternal decree that this relationship would go beyond that between a master and his servant and that it would be irrevocable. For God had still not done anything

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in man's history which would unambiguously and irrevocably open a way for men to the depths of God's own personal life. And in consequence that love for God to which man was summoned, was still provisory, until it should be known how God himself wanted to love man. Man was commanded to love God with the whole force of his being; but it was still hidden in which of two ways this should be. This unconditional assent by man to God in his freedom, would it be the humble love of a servant for his master, who, precisely because by his love he affirms God to be as God wishes to be, remains far from his sovereign majesty and unapproachable light, not presuming to an intimate relationship with God such as would involve really unrestricted personal communion with him? Or does this loving affirmation, which man utters blindly and unconditionally, draw him into the depths of God's inner life? When in the Old Testament man uttered this affirmation of his loving *pistis* to God, he was inevitably swept up into the universal teleology of God's entire redemptive action, even when the *telos* of this activity was still hidden from him. Ready to be just a servant, he was already son; but just this was hidden from him until *the* Son of the Father came, and it thus became manifest in the history of men what the secret of God's purpose had always been.[9]

[123]

b. The nature of God's relationship to man in the New Testament.

When we say that God is love, and that this is what finally characterizes God's free, historical behaviour in the fullness of time, in the *kairos* of the New Testament, we mean to say two things. Firstly, this is in fact a free *act* of God in Christ, an Event, not an attribute: the coming to pass of the New Testament in Christ. Secondly, it is the event in which God's inmost life is communicated to men, in his love for them, fully and without restraint. A genuinely personal love always has these two marks. Love is not the emanation of a nature but the free bestowal of a person, who possesses himself, who can therefore refuse himself, whose surrender therefore is always a wonder and a grace. And love in the fully personal sense is not just any relationship between two persons who meet in some third thing, whether this *tertium quid* is a task, a truth or anything else: it is the ceding and the unfolding of one's inmost self to and for the other in love. The discussion which follows will be divided in accordance with this twofold distinction; not that the whole saving reality of the New Testament is to be depicted in this way, but rather that it will be considered only with regard to these two points.

1. That God is Love, that he has received man to the most intimate communion with himself in love – this has become manifest in the Sending and Incarnation, in the Cross and Glorification, of his only begotten *Son*. It has become manifest not merely in the sense that the Christ-reality may be taken as a particular instance, from which may be read off what attitude God has necessarily adopted with regard to man; but it has become manifest in the sense that all God's free activity in the whole history of salvation has been directed to this event from the very beginning and thus rests on this single decision; and that this free purpose of entering into unrestricted personal communion with man first became finally irrevocable and unconditional through God's act in Christ. Christ is the τε/λοφ του~ νο&μου (Rom 10:4), the fulfilment of the times (Mk 1:15); what became manifest in him is the α)γα&πη του~ θεου~ (Rom 5:8, συνι/στησιν δε∴ τη_ν ε9αυτου~ α)γα&πη ει0φ η(μα~φ ο(θεο&φ, ο#τι ε1τι α(μαρτωλω~ν ο!ντων η(μω~ν Ξριστο_φ υ(πε∴ρ η(μω~ν α)πε/θανεν. 1 Jn 4:9, ε0ν του&τω| ε0φανερω&θη η(α)γα&πη του~ θεου~ ε0ν η(μι=ν, ο#τι το_ν υι9ο_ν αυ)του~ μονογενη~ α)πε/σταλκεν ο(θεο_φ ει0φ το_ν κο&σμον. Tit 3:4,

η(ξρηστο&τηφ και∴ η(φιλανθρωπι/α ε0πεφα&νη του~ σωτη~ροφ η(μω~ν θεου~):

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son (Jn 3:16). It is not for nothing that

[9] Heinisch, *Theology of the Old Testament* (ET, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1955), pp. 91-101; TWNT I, pp. 29-34.

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the great argumentative movement of [124] the Epistle to the Romans on the theme of the new epoch which has just opened, reaches its climax in a hymn which, beginning with a celebration of the love of the elect for God, goes on to the love of Christ and comes to rest in the certainty of τη~φ α)γα&πηφ του~ θεου~ τη~φ ε0ν Ξριστω~| 0Ιησου~ τω~| Κυρι/ω| η(μω~ν (Rom 8:28.31 s.)[10] It is in the Christ-reality that God's love is really and truly present for the first time; it is there that it has first really appeared, there for the first time really objectified itself (συνι/στησιν, Rom 5:8); and through this real being-present in the world it has become manifest. And it is by this means that a definitive and unsurpassable *fact* has been brought into being; for Christ abides eternally, he has brought eternal redemption into being, he has entered into the eternal tabernacle and sits on the right hand of God. It is by this means that the Promises have first emerged from their existential abeyance and ambiguity, and have been really established (βεβαιω~σαι, Rom 15:8); so that no future epoch and no conceivable stage of development (ου!τε με/λλοντα, Rom 8:38) is ever going to annul this definitive Event of God's love for us.

2. Moreover, God has bestowed his very self upon us in Christ:- η(κοινωνι/α δε∴ η(η(μετε/ρα μετα_ του~ πατρο_φ και∴ μετα_ του~ υι9ου~ αυ)του~ (1 Jn 1:3; κοινωνι/α was frequently used in the *koine* for conjugal association); and our fellowship is with the α#γιον πνευ~μα too (2 Cor 13:13). This fellowship of love is produced by the Pneuma of God, through whom God pours forth upon us his love for us (Rom 5:5; Gal 4:6; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13); and in this Spirit God's most intimate personal life is unfolded to us. For he is the Spirit who searches the βα&θη του~ θεου~, the depths of God, which none knows and searches but the same Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:10), and so leads us into the deepest intimacies of God's knowledge (Jn 15:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 2:12; 1 Jn 2:20.27). So this Spirit of God, who is the realization in us of God's personal love and in whom God has unfolded to us his ultimate depths, is the Spirit of adoption (Gal 4:4.6), who gives us testimony of our adoption (Rom 8:15). Through him we are children of God (1 Jn 3:1.2), called to know him as we are known, to see him face to face (1 Cor 13:12). In this way we are taken up into the most intimate community of life with the God of whom it is said that no one has seen him or can see him (Jn 1:18; 1 Tim 6:16), whom only the Son knows (Mt 11:27; Jn 3:11.32; 7:29) and in consequence only he to [125] whom the Son reveals it (Mt 11:27) by giving him a share in the nature and rights of his Sonship (Rom 8: 17.29; Heb 2:11.12). It is not our concern here to inquire further into the nature of this grace and sonship. Even so it is clear enough that this relationship is inseparably dependent upon the reality of Christ, and owes its existence as a reality precisely to God's free self-disclosure once and for all in Christ. 9Ο θεο_φ α)γα&πη ε0στι/ν is not primarily, then, a statement, illuminating in itself, about the nature of God, but the expression of the once-for-all, undeniable and unsurpassable experience in which mere man has come to know God in Christ: an expression of the experienced fact that God has bestowed his own entire self on man. Certainly, in so far as God's free disposition in the *kairos* of Christ is the unsurpassable communication of all that God is and can be by essence and freedom, it is also a communication of the divine nature. But this depends inseparably on the fact that God, as Person, freely wished to love us; and in the knowledge of this truth the entire reality of Christianity is contained.

4. 'God' as First Person of the Trinity in the New Testament

a. The question formulated.

[10] TWNT I, p. 49.

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Biblical and dogmatic theology overlap in a specific way in the last question we have still to put ourselves. The question is one of dogmatic theology in so far as we presuppose the defined teaching of the Church concerning the Trinity, and consequently make use of concepts which are not immediately and explicitly given in the New Testament. But the question is also one of Biblical theology, in so far as we are attempting to determine the conceptual content of a word in its New Testament usage. Specifically, what we are trying to discover is *who* is meant when the New Testament speaks of ο(θεο&φ. Thus our task is not to present the teaching of the New Testament concerning God as Trinity; this is simply presupposed as a doctrine of faith. We take it as something given that the content of the Church's teaching concerning God as Trinity in the Unity of one and the same essence, is present in the New Testament too, though it is formulated there in different and simpler terms. But we are not concerned to ask whether, according to the New Testament, the three we find named there, πατη&ρ, υι9ο&φ, πνευ~μα α#γιον, are distinct from each other and yet identical with the divine nature possessed in common. Presupposing [126] all this, we wish to learn which of these three is meant when the New Testament speaks of ο(θεο&φ.

Within the conceptual system of scholastic theology, no real question remains once the Trinitarian doctrine itself has been presupposed (i.e. once the linguistic usage of the New Testament has been taken to conform to that of theology): the word and concept 'God' signifies (*significat*) the Person to whom the divine nature is proper; and so 'God' can stand for (*supponitur*) each of the three Persons who possess this nature, or again 'God' can stand for all three Persons together. When, for example, the Logos is called 'Son of God', 'God' in this predication *stands for* the Father, in so far as he is one of the divine Persons, for 'God' can stand for each of the three Persons, while the Father alone has a Son. Or again, in the statement, 'God creates the world', according to the conceptual system of Latin theology 'God' *stands for* the divine Person, this time indeed for the three Persons together, in so far as they are one God by reason of the unity of nature and thus one Source of the world by reason of the unity of their operation *ad extra*. For the theology of the Schools, then, 'God' is one with respect to the general concept of personality, if we may so put it, and consequently can stand for each of the three Persons individually and for all three together.[11] Once more we do not of course wish to deny that such a view of the concept and the word 'God' is possible, legitimate and in the long run unavoidable. But the question nevertheless remains whether this is also the usage of the New Testament. We may put the matter in the terms of scholastic logic. Is it the case that in the New Testament ο(θεο&φ only *stands* often for the Father and stands much more frequently for the threefold God in general, in that ο(θεο&φ signifies simply God's concretely existing and subsisting nature? Or is it the case that in the New Testament ο(θεο&φ always *signifies* the Father and does not merely stand for him often? We maintain that in the New Testament ο(θεο&φ *signifies* the First Person of the Trinity, and does not merely stand for him often; and this applies to every case in which another meaning of [127] ο(θεο&φ does not become clearly evident from the context. These few exceptions in no way support the opinion that ο(θεο&φ merely stands for the Father without actually signifying him.[12]

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[11] Of course the' 'generality' of this concept must be understood properly. A concept is truly general only when the form signified *in obliquo* by the concrete concept (the nature) is capable of multiple realization. Further, as regards personality, generality is meant only in the sense in which a 'general' concept can be formed of the ultimate, concrete and irreducible uniqueness of a subsistent being.

[12] *Translator's Note*. According to Peter of Spain, a representative thirteenth-century logician, signification and supposition differ in that *significatio est per impositionem vocis ad rem significandam, suppositio vero est acceptio ipsius termini iam significantis rem pro aliquo … significare est vocis, supponere vero termini iam compositi ex voce et significatione* (*Summulae Logicales*, tr. 6; ed. Bochenski, 6.03, p. 58). For further information on earlier theories see Philotheus Boehner, *Medieval Logic* (Manchester 1952), pp. 27-51.

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[128] This is not just a matter of logic-chopping. There will indeed be many cases in which a New Testament expression remains the same as to its material content in whichever way our question is decided; and this for the simple reason that in many or even in most cases a statement containing ο(θεο&φ, even if it refers explicitly to the Father alone (on the view, that is, that ο(θεο&φ generally *signifies* the Father and consequently stands for him alone), implicitly states something about the Son and the Spirit. But if statements about ο(θεο&φ bear explicitly on the Father alone, there is at any rate need of a much closer examination of these statements, and a strict proof that they do really imply something about the other Persons as well. For example, when the New Testament calls us 'children of God', the question arises as to whether this statement already says explicitly that we are children of the three divine Persons, and so in the same breath calls us children of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; or whether the latter can only be inferred from the original statement. No further explanation is required to see that a question like this leads on to the theological problem as to whether we are related in a specific way to each of the three divine Persons in virtue of grace. Although we shall not investigate this point here, the way in which we have formulated our question does indicate an indispensable presupposition of any theological treatment; and this single example is enough to show that the question has a real importance.

But even apart from the solution of this special problem, our question has real importance with regard to the correctness of theological language in relation to the kerygma. Not every objectively [129] true statement is also kerygmatically correct. For example, it is true, objectively speaking, that when Jesus prayed as man, he prayed to the three divine Persons.

According to John of St Thomas, from whom most modern writers on scholastic logic derive, signification and supposition differ in that the former is 'representative substitution', the latter 'applicative substitution', where the mind applies terms whose signification is already known, to stand for something about which it wishes to make some statement. Thus supposition is the 'acceptance of a term for something to which this term may be seen to refer', *acceptio termini pro aliquo, de quo verificatur* (*Logica*, P. I, lib. ii, c.9; ed. Reiser, p. 29 s.). This 'application' takes place normally in actual statements though it may also occur in everyday life when some object is physically pointed at or addressed.

For those who are familiar with the scholastic theory as well as for those who are not (both may find Fr Rahner's use of the theory puzzling), the following example may help. Suppose we wished to determine what people 'meant' when they spoke of 'the Sun' as opposed to what they 'meant' when they spoke of 'suns'. In the first place 'the Sun' is clearly being used to 'stand for' one determinate object, while 'suns' is used to 'stand for' an indeterminate range of objects. Thus in one sense of the English word 'meaning' (the suppositional or referential sense), 'sun' in *The Sun is shining* differs in meaning from 'sun' in *The Milky Way contains thousands of suns*. But no one would say that the meanings of the word 'sun' are totally unrelated. In fact 'sun' in both cases has the same conceptual meaning (what the scholastics ordinarily call *significatio*), namely 'a fixed star with satellites', though certainly this conceptual meaning is not what ordinarily 'comes to mind' when people speak of 'the Sun'. Thus a third sense of the English word 'meaning' is called for, 'what ordinarily comes to mind' when a term is used; this may be called the *contextual* meaning (or meaning in use) of the term, since it always involves implicit reference to a given context in which the term is used (cf. 'the King', 'the Prior', and the examples on p. 131). It is in a similar way that a proper name can (in spite of most modern logicians) be said to have meaning, by presupposing a context in which the name is understood to be used of a thing *of a certain sort*: by 'Nero' I may mean my bulldog. 'The Sun' in this third sense of 'meaning' means the particular object of a certain sort referred to in a given context of usage. It need hardly be said that this analysis is not meant to be exhaustive.

Now what Fr Rahner has, I think, succeeded in showing is that ο9 θεο&φ 'means' the Father in this third sense of 'meaning'; but I do not see that this third sense is properly *significatio*. Thus θεο&φ can retain its *significatio* and ο(θεο&φ yet 'mean' the Father, in a perfectly familiar sense of 'meaning' over and above the suppositional sense. The 'sort' of object here is on the one hand the Persons of the Trinity, and on the other hand anything to which θεο&φ may be applied; but if anyone objects to the notion of 'sort' or genus being applied to the Trinity, he should observe that the logical pattern and the logical difficulties are very similar for 'the Father'. In the last resort, it seems doubtful whether scholastic logic is sufficiently subtle to provide an adequate analysis of the semantics of ordinary language. One of the merits of Fr Rahner's study is that it shows how the sort of linguistic analysis practised in this country after Wittgenstein is not without its relevance for theologians.

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Yet kerygmatically it would be incorrect to dwell on the fact that Jesus worshipped the Son of God. So if we ask which theologically true statements are also kerygmatic, we shall always have to orientate ourselves by references to modes of expression current in the New Testament (though not to them alone). It is only in this way that we shall avoid the danger of bringing things into the foreground of a human consciousness which is always finite, of emphasizing connexions and relationships, which conceal or at least push into the background the more important view of revealed reality, that which is of ultimate significance for the working out of salvation. For instance, if prayer is always directed only to God in general or to the three divine Persons indifferently, there may perhaps be some theoretical consciousness of Christ's place as mediator, but in the long run it is no longer going to have the significance for the full religious life which in fact is due to it. Taking into account, then, not only the objective truth of a mode of speech but also its kerygmatic correctness, it becomes important to make a close inspection of the linguistic usages of the New Testament. And no long explanation is needed to show that in this respect the use of the word 'God' is consequently of special significance. The detailed examination of what the New Testament means immediately and expressly by calling us children of God, is of particular urgency from the kerygmatic point of view. For in the usual Western sense of the word, the relationship of *filiation* with respect to God has led much more easily to the danger of a moralistic attenuation of this relationship than it would have done if the idea of filiation had from the very start involved a living consciousness of the fact that the Father in the Trinitarian sense is our Father (because 'God' precisely signifies the Father). Thus in this relationship of filiation to the Father of the eternal Son, quite precise relationships to the Son and to the Spirit are included, but they are not directly indicated by the word 'child' in the New Testament, and so ought not to be directly expressed by us in this sense when we speak kerygmatically. If 'God' *signifies* the Father and if we feel ourselves into this mode of speech, we shall become much more clearly conscious 'in prayer to God' (cf. Lk 6:12) that we call upon the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when, taught by Christ, we say 'Our Father'. And so the Trinitarian structure of our whole religious life will become more [130] vital, and our consciousness of Christ's mediation with regard to the Father become more sharp, than if the word 'God' merely calls to mind in our prayer to God the God of natural theology and the Trinity in general (and hence indistinctly).[13]

b. Questions of method.

In the first place it is of course clear that in the New Testament ο(θεο&φ often *at least stands for* the Father in the Trinitarian sense, at any rate wherever Christ is called the 'Son of God' or where the Spirit (as Person) is called 'Spirit of God'. For the Son and the Spirit are not Son and Spirit of the Trinity, but Son of the Father and Spirit of the Father. The only question, then, is how we are to know whether ο(θεο&φ not only *stands for* the Father, but also *signifies him* (all this with reference only to New Testament usage, of course).

It might seem that this question has already been decided in the negative, for the following reasons. 1. Even in the New Testament ο(θεο&φ occurs in contexts in which the word must signify not the Father but the triune God as such; in those statements, for instance, in which ο(θεο&φ is used to speak of the God of the Old Testament, the Creator God, God as the object of natural theology. 2. θεο&φ is also used to speak of the Son. If these arguments should turn out not to be decisive for our investigation, we must ask positively how we may in general recognize whether a word merely *stands for* what is meant or *signifies* it in a given type of expression; and how we may know what follows in particular from such general methodological indications for the concrete case with which we are concerned.

[13] Cf. e.g. J. A. Jungmann, *Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkündigung* (Regensburg 1936), p. 67 s.

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From the very nature of the case, the only methodological directive available is that we should simply examine the linguistic usage before us. We may begin with the clearest case. Let us assume that a certain word is invariably used to refer to some one determinate thing and to no second thing, for which the word would also have to have supposition, in case it merely stood for the first thing but did not signify it. Further we suppose that this word occurs precisely in contexts in which, in order to avoid ambiguity, a signifying word, which does in fact exist, might have been expected and not merely a word with supposition. It is clear that in such a case the word would *signify* the [131] thing and not merely *stand for* it. It must of course be noted that in actual usage a word fluctuates between its suppositional application and its signification. This is due to the fact that the application of a word is subject to historical changes. The conceptual content of a word may become broader or narrower; a word may pass from a narrow to a wider meaning, and then to a different narrower meaning. Thus it can happen that a word may at first merely stand for a determinate thing and then signify it, or vice versa; and the signification of a word may become different as a result of an intermediate suppositional usage. It also follows from this that the principle just enunciated (that the significative meaning of a word with respect to a determinate thing may be recognized by the *exclusive* use of the word for the thing) must not be pressed too far. It is quite possible that a word should be significative of a determinate thing (still be or already be), while it may still be applied suppositionally in a few individual cases to indicate some other thing; and this fact would in no way prove that the word has been used for the first thing merely suppositionally. For example, when we are told of Howard in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* that

> His Bilboa blade, by Marchmen felt,
> Hung in a broad and studded belt

we know of course that the 'blade' here is a sword; but it by no means follows that even for Scott 'blade' means 'sword'. We have here a purely suppositional use of 'blade' for 'sword'.[14] But once a word comes to be used more or less regularly or exclusively for a determinate thing, we must say that it now also becomes significative of that thing. For example, when we speak of a 'torch' in our modern city life, the word has ceased to be strictly a generic concept for our linguistic sensibility. It no longer contains the electric lamp as merely one of its species, so as merely to *stand for* it from time to time. In the context of modern life the signification of the word 'torch' is simply 'electric torch', which is not to say that for modern city-dwellers in exceptional cases, and for others quite frequently, 'torch' may not [132] also stand for an oil or wooden torch, or even signify it.[15] Indeed it quite possible that the same word should signify two different things and not just stand for them. After the first World War, when we spoke of a 'tank', the word had the meaning 'container' or 'armoured vehicle' according to context, and yet for our linguistic sense there was no question of a single generic concept for the two things. What this shows is that we had no sense of speaking too generally and vaguely when we used the word 'tank' for an armoured vehicle; yet this would certainly have been the case if we felt that *tank* here was a wide, generic concept.[16] It is clear, then, that a word can name several things without eliciting for

[14] Fr Rahner's own example is taken from Schiller's 'Der Graf von Habsburg', where the Count 'auf seines Knappen *Tier* Vergnüget noch weiter des Jagens Begier'. Even for Schiller 'Tier' does not mean 'Pferd' but is used for it in a purely suppositional way.
[15] Fr Rahner has, rather more neatly, *Wagen – Kraftwagen* and *Pferdewagen*.
[16] It is to be noted here that 'tank' is not thought of as an accidental homophone for two different concepts, such as 'calf' for the young bovine animals and for the fleshy part of the leg, or 'ball' for a dance or a sphere (Fr. Rahner has *Steuer*, *Dichtung*. – Tr.).

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linguistic sensibility the consciousness of a generic concept which includes them. In such a case we have several significations of the same word and not different suppositional applications. These properties of language must be kept in mind if the following discussion is to be properly appreciated.

c. Arguments against the thesis.

We shall now proceed to examine the soundness or unsoundness of the arguments brought forward to show that, in itself, o(qeo&f means in the New Testament God in general; and that consequently, if it refers in many places to the Father, we have a suppositional application of the word and not its inner signification.

We begin with the first argument. It might be said that even in the New Testament o(qeo&f is used as a name for the object of natural knowledge of God; and this God is not the Father but the one God who is cause of the world in virtue of the numerical unity of his nature: this attribute, then, belongs equally to all three divine Persons, since all three possess the one nature. But just this assertion – that what we know from the world is the triune God in the unity of his nature, and not the Father – is open to question. It is obvious that the Father is not known *as* Father in natural theology, i.e. not *as* He who communicates his nature to the Son by an eternal generation; and it is obviously true that the necessary uniqueness of the divine nature is [133] discerned by natural theology. But we can still say that he who is in actual fact known from the world, is concretely the Father and not the Trinity in general and indistinctly. For natural theology itself ascends not just to a divinity but to a God: it knows, that is, that this divine nature necessarily subsists, and subsists, what is more (or at least *also*), in an absolute and unqualified *unorigination* (*Ursprungslosigkeit*). Natural theology is quite capable of affirming the necessity of a pure and absolute unorigination in God, free from any conceivable restriction, even if its statement of this remains wholly formal. Of course it remains utterly concealed from natural theology that this concrete, absolutely unoriginate Origin of all reality is Origin also by communication of the divine nature and not merely by creation *ex nihilo*; that there exists Another originating from it which itself possesses the divine nature; that consequently this absolutely Unoriginate possesses the divine nature and its own absolute unorigination simply in being related *to* its Son; and that in consequence not every origination implies a finite reality, to be classified only as creaturely. All this makes no difference to the fact that when natural theology acquires knowledge of a simple and absolutely first Principle of all reality (not just all creaturely reality), what is so known is the Father. For, as it must yet again be emphasized, the assertion within formal ontology of the necessity of an a)rch& which is purely a!narxof, bears formally and *a priori* on an Unoriginate not just as set over against an origination by creation, but as opposed to *every* conceivable real and hypothetical origination.

It will be seen that our considerations have to do with the topics dealt with in theology under the heading of a *subsistentia absoluta* in God. If we disregard questions of terminology, which sometimes seem to take up most of these discussions, the real problem consists in knowing what (or better, who) 'this God' (*hic Deus*) is: a concept which is on the one hand distinct from that of the divine nature, the divinity; and on the other can apparently be thought and known in disregard (or ignorance) of the three relative Subsistences through which the divine nature alone really acquires unqualified and immediate concreteness. Unless we wish to follow Cajetan and Suarez, among others, in positing a *subsistentia absoluta* (and at least terminologically this does not belong to the Church's teachings), only one course is open to us: to maintain that the concrete Absolute (*hic Deus*) known by natural theology is precisely the Father, although natural theology [134] does not know that this Subsistence is one which is relative to other divine Persons. For in the first place, we know by natural reason that the divine essence must subsist simply and in a way quite peculiar to it as this

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God, as Person. Secondly, remembering that it is something ultimate and immediate, we do not wish to make this personal subsistence into a concept which would fit more than one individual, or again into something which would entirely fail to bring God's absolutely immediate concreteness into focus (as is the case with the notion of *subsistentia absoluta*). It follows then that 'this God', in whom we are bound to conceive the divine nature as necessarily subsisting, must be the Father, though certainly he is not known by us *as* such.

We may see, then, that where the New Testament interprets 'God' as the object of natural theology, it does not follow as a matter of course that the triune God as a whole is meant, nor, then, that in this context we have a linguistic usage in which o(θεο&φ signifies the triune God in his unity and not the Father. The least that can be said of this view of the concept o(θεο&φ and its application is a *non liquet*.

There is no difficulty in seeing that the same holds true for the New Testament use of o(θεο&φ for the Creator of the world. For on the one hand God can be known naturally as origin of the world and thus at least in the broadest sense as its Creator; and the New Testament does give expression to the idea of God as Creator. On the other hand, this natural knowledge does bear upon the First Person as the radical term of its movement, though not upon the First Person *as* such. It follows that the same kind of thing *can* be said about the New Testament idea of God as Creator of the world. The *absolutely* Unoriginate, which is to say the Father, is Creator of the world too. This is not to deny that objectively this attribute belongs to each of the three Persons in possession of the divine nature, which is the basis of the divine creativity, the *actio ad extra*. On the contrary, it follows immediately from the first assertion; but it need not for that reason be expressly stated there. If it is possible to say without going any further, 'The Father created the world', then it is also true of the statement, 'God is the creator of the world', that nothing more need be said there expressly. Whether in fact more is expressly said there or just that and no more, is not a question to be decided from this statement in isolation; it has first to be decided whether o(θεο&φ merely stands for the Father or also signifies him. The same holds good for those propositions in which o(θεο&φ is used to speak of Him who was at [135] work in the saving history of the Old Testament. For in New Testament usage o(θεο&φ is precisely Creator *and* the Ruler of the Old Covenant, and so the same thing is true of both expressions; and it is likewise obvious that the other two Persons are included objectively in such an expression, in case this refers explicitly only to the first Person. We may just note here that there are places in the New Testament where o(θεο&φ, as God of the Old Dispensation, undoubtedly means the Father, because in the same context mention is made of Christ's being sent by this God.[17]

The second argument to show that o(θεο&φ in the New Testament only stands suppositionally for the Father, even in the texts in which he is actually referred to by this word, may seem more weighty. It relies on the fact that in some few texts θεο&φ is also used of the Son. The Jews' reproach to Christ that he makes himself God (Jn 10:33) cannot be counted among these, for in the mind of the hostile Jews there is no intention of making a distinction between the Son and the Father and so making a θεο&φ-statement about the Son with regard to his distinction from the Father. And since we are only concerned here with New Testament usage in its own right, we may also leave out of account the text (Heb 1:8 s.) where St Paul applies Psalm 44:7 s. to Christ. o(θεο&φ is certainly applied to the Son here; but this would only supply a convincing proof of the Apostle's usage if it were clear what sense *elohim* itself had in Psalm 44[18] and in what St Paul's messianic application consisted.

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[17] Ac 3:12-26 for v.26; Heb 1:1-2, God has spoken in the prophets and in his Son; Jn 10:35-6, the Scriptures of the Old Testament are the word of God, who has sent Christ into the world; and so on. Cf. J. Beumer, 'Wer ist der Gott des AT?', *Kirche und Kanzel* XXV (1942), pp. 174-80.

[18] Cf. P. Heinisch, *Theology of the Old Testament*, ET p. 348.

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But other texts of the New Testament are relevant here: in Rom 9:5 s. Christ is called o(w≡n e0pi∴ pa&ntwn qeo&f; in Jn 1:1 the Logos is called qeo&f; in Jn 1:18 monogenh_f qeo&f[19]; in Jn 20:28 Thomas says to the resurrected Christ, o(ku&rio&f mou kai∴ o(qeo&f mou; in 1 Jn 5:20 it is said of Christ, ou{tof e0stin o(a)lhqino_f qeo&f; in Tit 2:13 we are told of the do&xa tou~ mega&lou qeou~ ka_i swth~rof h(mw~n 0Ihsou~ Cristou~.[20]

[136]Thus we have six texts in which the reality of the divine nature in Christ is expressed by the predicate qeo&f. In none of them – it is not unimportant to note – is qeo&f alone, without the addition of modifying clauses but with the article, used to speak of Christ. qeo&f is either found without the article (Jn 1:1.18; Rom 9:5)[21], and so suggests a kind of conceptual generality; or it is particularized in some way, and so suggests that what is being referred to is not simply to be identified with what is elsewhere meant by o(qeo&f.[22] It is further to be [137] observed that in all these cases (with the exception of Tit 2:13), qeo&f

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[19] Assuming that we should not rather read o(monogenh_f qeo&f here, a reading which has been strongly recommended in recent times. Cf. TWNT IV, p. 784, n. 14 (Büchsel) and R. Bultmann, *Johannesevangelium* (in Meyer's *Kommentar*) 1941, p. 55, n. 4.

[20] We cannot count Heb 3:4 among these texts, because qeo&f here can just as well be referred to the Father on account of 3:6, as to the Son on account of 3:2.3; nor can we count 2 Pet 1:1 and 2 Thess 1:12, because qeo&f here is clearly separated from 'Christ' by the h(mw~n between 'God' and 'Lord' ('Saviour'), unlike Tit 2:13, and so is to be referred to the Father and not to Christ. Elsewhere St Paul often speaks of the Father as the qeo&f where he predicates ku&riof of Christ; and a mention of the Father as well as the Son is to be expected at the beginning of 2 Peter, in accordance with the usual practice at the beginning of a letter. Nor can we include Eph 5:5; Col 2:2; Tit 2:11; 3:4; in all these it is much more likely that qeo&f refers to the Father and not to Christ. The same is true of Ac 20:28; for the readings e0kklhsi/a tou~ qeou~ and e0kklhsi/a tou~ kuri/ou are evenly balanced in the manuscripts, and a change from the more difficult, because unusual, reading e0.t.ku. to the common e0.t.qeou~ is more easily explained than a change in the reverse direction, especially since from St Ignatius of Antioch onwards the phrase 'blood of God' had ceased to be linguistically unfamiliar, so that a correction of qeo&u into kuri/ou would no longer be suggested from that side.

[21] In itself, the absence of the article in Jn 1:1 and Rom 9:5 is sufficiently explained by the fact that qeo&f is being used predicatively; but the absence of the article in Jn 1:18 is all the more striking. Lagrange translates correctly, 'Un Dieu Fils unique' (M. J. Lagrange, *Evangile selon Saint Jean*[5], Paris 1936, p. 27). The article in Jn 20:28 is explained by the mou, which normally requires the article before it; by its use with the vocative (Blass-Debrunner, *Grammatik des ntl. Griechisch*[9], § 147, 3); and by its presence in the established formula o(ku&riof kai∴ o(qeo&f (cf. e.g. Apoc 4:11). It should further be noted that o(qeo&f mou, whether it is taken as vocative or nominative, is predicative in sense, and so cannot be used as evidence either way to show whether o(qeo&f in New Testament usage ever appears as *subject* of a statement referring to Christ.

[22] This should be clear from Jn 1:18, where the article is missing again: 'an only begotten God' excludes in advance the danger of simply taking this God for o(qeo&f. In Tit 2:13, qeo&f – the article is already explained by the h(mw~n – is protected against any misunderstanding by the conjoined Cristou~ 0Ihsou~, and is found in the context of a specifically Hellenistic vocabulary (e0piфa&neia–swth&r–me/gaf qeo&f); in a context like this, however, qeo&f, and especially in the cult-formula meɜgaf qeo&f, has a quite different, a much more general ring than o(qeo&f, which against its Old Testament background has much more nearly the character of a proper name. If 1 Jn 5:20 (bearing in mind that the text here is not entirely certain) must be referred to the Son, then this text is without question the summit of the predication of God with reference to the Son in the New Testament; for it is impossible to deny that a)lhqino&f here does not in itself make the o(qeo&f sound more general, but rather emphasizes still more sharply the uniqueness and exclusiveness of the one God. At the same time it should be noted that precisely in St John's First Epistle o(qeo&f so often certainly means the Father (1:5-7; 4:9.10; 4:15; 5:9-12; and ui9of tou~ qeou~ [au)tou~] in a good dozen instances) that it must be understood of the Father throughout the Epistle, unless we are to suppose that some incomprehensible change has taken place in the subject referred to by o(qeo&f. Now if at the close of the Epistle Christ is called o(a)lhqino_f qeo&f in a last emphatic utterance, this is clearly a conscious and deliberate departure from the usual sense of o(qeo&f, and we may not conclude from this that o(qeo&f possesses a signification which from the start allows it to mean the Son or the Father indifferently.

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stands as predicate or has a predicative sense,[23] and in this way suggests the more general connotation of the word in the context. But the word never appears by itself as grammatical subject, about which something else is said, as though it were a characterization of Christ needing no further explanation, like κυ&ριοφ, for instance (Lk 7:13; 10:1; Jn 4:11; 6:23; 11:2; Ac 9:10.11; 1 Cor 7:10.12; 1 Thess 4:16, etc.). But what is decisive for our inquiry is that these few texts in which Christ is called θεο&φ are vastly outnumbered by the other texts in which the New Testament intends to express Christ's divine nature in one way or another, and yet does not make use of the word θεο&φ, as one would have expected if the word had a quasi-generic signification. Christ is called 'Son of God', the 'true Son of God', κυ&ριοφ, 'Logos of God', ει0κω&ν of God, ξαρακτη&ρ and α)παυ&γασμα of God; we are told of his ε0ν μορφη~| θεου~ υ(πα&ρξειν, of his 'being-with-God', of his ει]ναι ι1σα θεω~|, of the πλη&ρωμα τη~φ θεο&τητοφ that dwells in him. All these are ways of trying to express Christ's divinity, and what is more to express it as clearly as possible, without any pedagogic attempt to withhold the full sense of the affirmation, as may have been the case when Christ began to reveal himself; and yet in all these texts the writers avoid the use of θεο&φ for Christ. The only way in which this can be explained is that for the linguistic sense of the New [138] Testament ο(θεο&φ originally signified the Father alone. 9Ο θεο&φ does not start by being neutral in a generic way, so as to be applicable to the Father and also, without explanation, to the Son. Originally it is associated with the Father and thus primarily signifies him alone; it is only slowly, as it were shyly and cautiously, that the expression is detached from him and evolves in such a way that a few texts (Jn 20:28; Rom 9:5; 1 Jn 5:20) venture to use it of Christ. These are texts in which an especially profound confession of Christ stirs the speaker to enlarge linguistic usage, whereas in more everyday language the customary signification of terms has to be followed more closely. Θεο&φ is still never used of the Spirit.

Summing up, then, we may say that the arguments against our thesis are not conclusive. These arguments attempted to show that for the linguistic sense of the New Testament ο(θεο&φ does not primarily *signify* the Father but rather any divine Person or the three divine Persons together, so that it only *stands for* the Father when it is used of him. It is not to be denied that a development in this direction is in its initial stages; but it cannot be shown that the significative meaning of ο(θεο&φ has already evolved so far in the New Testament itself that the unqualified expression ο(θεο&φ merely stands suppositionally for the Father there.

d. Positive demonstration of the thesis.

We have already stated the general rule of method for a proof of this kind. This is the principle that a word has significative and not merely suppositional meaning for a determinate thing when (a) this word is used always or nearly always to speak only of this thing; and (b) when the word is employed for this thing even in a critical context, although another word for the same thing is available which would be clearer (on the grounds of its signification of the thing), *if* the first word merely stood for the thing suppositionally. What follows falls into two parts in accordance with these two requirements.

(a) First of all, ο(θεο&φ is used so frequently to speak of the Father that the few texts already noted where θεο&φ is also used to speak of the Son, have no importance for the question whether the predication ο(θεο&φ of the Father is merely suppositional. Christ is called the 'Son of God' (υι9ο_φ του~ θεου~), where, as has been said, 'God' at least stands for the Father. Christ himself uses the phrase, Jn 5:25; 10:36; 11:4 (cf. Mt 27:43); he

[23] As the absence of the article indicates, Jn 1:18 is also to be understood in this sense: an only begotten, who is God.

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expressly confirms it, Mt 16:17; 26:63 s.; [139] others use it, Mt 4:3.6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40.54; Mk 1:1 (?); 3:11; 5:27; 14:61; 15:39; Lk 1:35; 4:3.9.41; 8:28; 22:70; Jn 1:34.49; 3:18; 11:27; 19:7; 20:31; Ac 9:20; Rom 1:3.4.9; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13; Heb 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 Jn 3:8; 4:15; 5:5.10.12.13.20; Apoc 2:18 (here too belong the texts with υι9ο_φ αυ)του~ directly related to ο(θεο&φ in the immediate context, Rom 1:9; 5:10; 8:3.29.32; 1 Cor 1:9; 15:28; Gal 1:16; 4:4; 1 Thess 1:10; Heb 1:2; 1 Jn 1:7; 3:23; 4:9.10; 5:10.11).[24] In the same sense ο(θεο&φ at least stands for the Father when God is called 'Father of Jesus Christ', Jn 6:27; Rom 15:6; 1 Cor 15:24; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Eph 1:3.16; Phil 2:11; Col 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3; 2 Pet 1:17; Apoc 1:6, or when on the other hand Christ is said to be ο(λο&γοφ του~ θεου~ (Apoc 19:13), ει0κω_ν του~ θεου~ (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), ι1σα θεω~| (Phil 2:7). There is no doubt that the Father is referred to by ο(θεο&φ (once again at least suppositionally) when ο(θεο&φ is said to send the Son, Jn 8:42; Ac 3:26; Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4, or when Christ 'proceeds from God', Jn 8:42; 13:3; 16:27, or when the Logos (Christ) is spoken of as being with God, Jn 1:1; 6:46, or when God is called 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ', Eph 1:17, because one divine Person can only belong to another if it proceeds from the other. But there are countless other texts in which 'God' actively works upon Christ or 'God' is the object of one of Christ's actions or in which 'God' and Christ seem simply to be put side by side: in all these 'God' refers to the Father. It is certainly true that according to the purely theological logic of real attributions, operations of 'God' upon Christ in his human nature can be attributed to the whole Trinity (St Thomas, Ia. 43.8), so that somewhat different relationships are found here from those found in a 'mission', in the strict theological sense of this word. But the view that it is in this sense that an operation of the triune God as such is also attributed to Christ (not merely implied logically) in the New Testament, would lead to linguistic impossibilities. For *firstly* ο(θεο&φ, put next to Christ, is often particularized by the attribute πατη&ρ (even without η(μω~ν!), and consequently can only be understood of the First Person of the Trinity; *further*, in these combinations of ο(θεο&φ and Christ, Christ is often [140] characterized as the κυ&ριοφ, i.e. as divine Person, and once again it is impossible that the Trinity and one of these three Persons should be put side by side (e.g. ε0ν ε0πιγνω&σει του~ θεου~ και∴ 0Ιησου~ του~ κυρι/ου η(μω~ν, 2 Pet 1:2); and *often* in these statements about an action of God upon him or vice versa Christ is called 'Son', and consequently this θεο&φ can only be the Father. Finally, it is quite inconceivable, bearing in mind the clear and simple language of the New Testament, that where two subjects are named side by side, the immediate and explicit sense of what is said should be that one subject ('God') just includes the other (Christ).

We can now go on to interpret a number of expressions in accordance with these presuppositions. Actions relating to Christ are attributed to 'God': 'God' has raised up Christ from the dead (Ac 2:24.32; 3:15.26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:17.33-4; 17:31; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 15:15; 6:14; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12; 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Pet 1:21. Ac 2:32 [πατη&ρ v.33]; 3:26 [. ˜]; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14 [κυ&ριοφ!] make it even clearer linguistically that the Father is meant by this God who raises up from the dead. – Cf. also Gal 1:1, where θεο_φ πατη&ρ appears as the one who raises up). 'God' has exalted Christ, glorified him (Ac 2:33; 3:13; 5:31; Phil 2:9). 'God' anoints Christ with the Holy Ghost (Ac 10:38). 'God' is with him (Ac 10:38). 'God' makes Christ sit at his right hand (Mk 16:19; Lk 22:69; Ac 7:55-6; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20 [the subject here is . ˜ of v.17!]; Col 3:1; Heb 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22 cf. Apoc 3:21, where the throne of the Father is being spoken of). 'God' has spoken beforehand of *his* (!) Christ (Ac 3:18). Christ is addressed by

[24] 'Son of God' does of course have an indeterminate sense in a number of places in the Gospels, but this sense does not in itself come into consideration here.

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'God' (Heb 5:10). Christ is attested to by 'God' (Ac 2:22). 'God' gives Christ the throne of David (Lk 1:32). 'God' gives Christ all he asks for (Jn 11:22). 'God' is glorified in the Son of Man and glorifies him (Jn 13:31.32). 'God' is κεφαλη& of Christ (1 Cor 11:3). There are actions of Christ relating to 'God': Christ ascends to *his* 'God' (Jn 20:17); Christ speaks of *his* God (Jn 20:17; Apoc 3:2.12 [four times]); Christ is in prayer to 'God' (Lk 6:12); Christ appears in the presence of 'God' (Heb 9:24); Christ brings us to 'God' (Col 3:3); Christ delivers the kingdom to 'God' (1 Cor 15:24); Christ belongs to 'God' (1 Cor 1:24); Christ is an offering to 'God' (Eph 5:2). There are texts which speak of our relationship to God through Christ: we are with Christ in 'God' (Col 3:3); we have peace with 'God' through the Kyrios (Rom 5:1); we give thanks to 'God' in [141] the name of Christ (Eph 5:20); we are acceptable to 'God' by serving Christ (Rom 14:18); St Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of 'God' (1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1). In a large number of texts ο(θεο&φ and Christ are put side by side: the kingdom of Christ and of 'God' (Eph 5:5); heir of 'God' and joint heir with Christ (Rom 8:17); priests of 'God' and of Christ (Apoc 20:6); knowledge of 'God' and of Christ (2 Pet 1:2); the righteousness of our 'God' and of the Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:1); servant of 'God' and of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jas 1:1); servant of 'God', apostle of Jesus Christ (Tit 1:1); one 'God', one Christ (1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5); commandment of 'God' and faith of Jesus (Apoc 14:12); testimony of Jesus and word of 'God' (Apoc 1:2; 20:4); love of 'God' and patience of Christ (2 Thess 3:5); the church in 'God' our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 1:1); preaching of the kingdom of 'God' and teaching about our Lord Jesus Christ (Ac 28:31); before 'God' and Christ (1 Tim 5:21; 6:13; 2 Tim 4:1); and all the formulas of greeting, containing wishes of peace and other benefits from 'God' and Christ (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phm 3; 2 Jn 3).

'God' at least stands for the Father also in the so-called Trinitarian formulas, such as Rom 15:30; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 1:21.22; 13:13; Eph 4:4-6; 1 Pet 1:2.[25] In the same way, 'God' at least stands for the Father when the Holy Spirit is called Spirit of God (Mt 3:16; 12:28; Rom 8:9.14; 1 Cor 2:11.12 [ε0κ θεου~]. 14; 3:16; 6:11; 7:40; 12:3; 2 Cor 3:3 Eph 4:30; Phil 3:3; 1 Thess 4:8 [.]; 1 Pet 4:14; 1 Jn 4:2.13 [πνευ~μα αυ)του~][26]), when he is sent and given by [142] 'God' (Ac 5:32; 15:18; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 1:22; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:17; 1 Thess 4:8; 2 Tim 1:7; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13).

It is further to be observed that the following texts, Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 8:6; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; 5:20; Phil l:2; Col 3:17; 1 Thess 1:1 (?); 2 Thess 1:2 (?); 2:16; Phm 3, all speak of God our Father; moreover this God who is our Father is clearly characterized as the Trinitarian Father by putting 'the Lord Jesus Christ' immediately after. This alone shows that in New Testament usage it is the First Person of the Trinity who is meant when the writers speak of God our Father and our adoptive sonship. Accordingly Christ himself can speak of 'my' Father and 'your' Father (Jn 20:17), clearly meaning by this one and the same Person, the First Person in God. This may also be seen from the fact that according to St Paul (Eph 1:3.5), the Father of Jesus destined us to be his sons and bestowed his Son upon us, so that

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[25] If we take 'Trinitarian' in the widest sense and consider all those short passages in the New Testament in which all three divine Persons are named, the Trinitarian texts are as follows: Mt 28:19; Lk 24:49; Jn 14:16.17; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-11; 16:12-15; Ac 2:32-3; 2:38-9; 5:31-2; 7:55-6; 10:38; 11:15-17; Rom 5:1-5; 8:9-1l; 8:14-17; 14:17-18; 15:15-16; 15:30; 1 Cor 2:6-16; 6:11; 6:15-20; 12:3; 12:4-6; 2 Cor 1:21-2; 13:13; Gal 4:4-6; Eph 1:3-14; 1:17; 2:18-22; 3:14-19; 4:4-6; 5:15-20; 2 Thess 2:13; Tit 3:4-11; Heb 2:2-4; 10:29-31; 1 Pet 1:1-2; 2:4-5; 4:14; 1 Jn 3:23-4; 4:11-16; 5:5-8; Jud 20-1. In these texts the Father is called simply ο(θεο&φ seventy times and only nineteen times πατη&ρ or θεο_φ πατη&ρ or ο(θεο_φ και∴ πατη&ρ.

[26] For the Holy Spirit as a divine Person can only be called Spirit 'of God' if he proceeds from this God, as the theologians have always insisted with regard to the Spirit as Spirit of Christ: cf. e.g. Pesch, *Praelectiones Dogmaticae* II, n. 529-31. But the God from whom the Spirit proceeds is the Father (Jn 15:26).

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we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal 4:5), and Christ so become the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29) and we together with him cry 0Aββα_ ο9 πατη&ρ (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5; cf. Mk 14:36). At any rate, New Testament usage allows us to say that we are children of God in the sense that we are children of the Father as First Person of the Trinity, not as children of the triune God (whether the latter statement too is objectively valid or not is not our concern here).[27] Christ himself says that men enter into relationship with his Father (Mt 7:21; 12:50; 15:13; 16:17; 18:10.19.35; 20:23; 25:34; Jn 2:16; 6:32; 14:2.23; 15:8.23.24). The God whom the Jews believed to be their Father, is the God from whom Jesus has proceeded and who has sent him: the Father in the Trinitarian sense (Jn 8:32). Moreover, the heavenly Father, according to Christ's teaching, is not Father of men because he is Creator or because of his providential care for them, so that he could without further qualification be called Father of all men; he is the Father of the followers of Christ, of those in fact who belong to the kingdom of heaven. At least it is only to these [143] that Christ speaks of God as their Father. This fatherhood has its basis in the free election of the Father, who calls and leads men to his Son (Jn 6:37-40.44.45). Men are therefore not children of God by nature, but they can become his children, if they dispose themselves morally in certain definite ways (Mt 5:9.45: Lk 6:36; cf. Jn 1:12). According to Christ's own teaching, then, there is no reason to suppose that the adoptive sonship which he preaches is a relationship to God in general and not to the Father of Christ. All this taken together justifies the conclusion that in *every* text which speaks of God as our Father and of us as children of God and of our being born of God, it is the First Person of the Trinity who is meant. Hence all these texts are to be counted among those in which ο(θεο&φ at least stands suppositionally for the Father (Mt 5:9; Lk 20:36; Jn 1:12.13; 11:52; Rom 5:2; 8:14.16.19.21; 9:8.26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; Eph 1:5; 2:19; 3:14; 4:6; 5:1; Phil 2:15; 4:20; 1 Thess 1:3; 3:13; Heb 12:7; Jas 1:27; 1 Jn 3:1.2.10; 4:7; 5:1.2.4.7.18; Jud 1; Apoc 21:7).

We may outline our results as follows. Nowhere in the New Testament is there to be found a text with ο(θεο&φ which has unquestionably to be referred to the Trinitarian God as a whole existing in three Persons. In by far the greater number of texts ο(θεο&φ refers to the Father as a Person of the Trinity. It should be noted here that in the texts in which ο(θεο&φ is used without its being absolutely clear from the immediate context who precisely is meant, the expression never contains anything which is not said of God in other texts; and in just these other texts, this God may be recognized (directly or indirectly) as Father in the Trinitarian sense.[28] Besides this there are six complete texts in which ο(θεο&φ is used to speak of the Second Person of the Trinity, but still in a hesitant and obviously restricted way (the restriction is concerned of course not with the reality but with the use of the word). In addition, ο(θεο&φ is never used in the New Testament to speak of the πνευ~μα α#γιον. These findings are sufficient in themselves to justify the assertion that when the New Testament speaks of [144] ο(θεο&φ, it is (with the exception of the six texts mentioned) the Father as First Person of the Trinity who is signified. 9Ο θεο&φ signifies him and does not merely stand suppositionally for him, because a constant and practically exclusive suppositional use of a word is proof that this word also signifies the thing for which it stands

[27] How little obvious for scholastic theology this apparently obvious assertion in fact is, may perhaps be seen from the fact that Knabenbauer (*Comm. in Ev. sec. Matt.* [3], Paris 1922, pp. 311-12), citing Maldonatus and Suarez, holds that even in the Our Father it is God in Trinity who is being addressed, because we are children of God and 'God' means just God in Trinity.

[28] Thus, for example, the whole Old Testament saving history is ascribed to the God who sends Jesus, thus to the Father (Ac 3:12-26; cf. Heb. 1: 1). In Ac 4:24 s., Eph 3:9 s. and Heb 1:2, the God who created all things is clearly characterized as the Father in virtue of his distinction from the 'Son' ('Servant', 'Christ'). Now if creation and saving history are ascribed to God the Father, there can hardly be a single statement about ο(θεο&φ which is not included therein.

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suppositionally, especially when it stands for the thing as subject and not just as a predicative name. The few exceptional uses of θεο&φ, where the linguistic form itself marks them as exception, do not justify the view that in the usage of the New Testament ο(θεο&φ is an expression which signifies the Trinity in the unity of its proper nature, and so has always stood suppositionally for each of the three divine Persons in like manner.

(b) This impression is strengthened when we examine some critical instances. Where Christ's Person and Nature are to be declared with the greatest theological strictness and precision, he is called ο(υι9ο_φ του~ θεου~: so in Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:16), so in Christ's decisive testimony to himself before the Sanhedrin when he was being threatened with death (Mt 26:63; Mk 14:61; Lk 22:70), so in the final recapitulation of the theological content of the Fourth Gospel (Jn 20:31), so in the oldest formula in the New Testament summing up the meaning of conversion to Christianity (1 Thess 1:9.10, δουλευ&ειν θεω~| ζω~ντι και∴ α)ληθινω~| και∴ α)ναμε/νειν το_ν υι9ο_ν αυ)του~), so in the solemn opening of the Epistle to the Romans, the greatest of the doctrinal texts of the New Testament (Rom 1:2.4), so in the superscription of the Gospel of St Mark (Mk 1:1). In all these cases Christ is called 'Son of *God*', the theological meaning being always, Son of the Father. It must be kept in mind that the word 'Father' was always available to the New Testament writers. Indeed it is of the greatest interest that our Lord himself clearly avoided the form 'Son of God' (at least in general). In the Synoptics the phrase 'Son of God' never rises spontaneously to his lips, although he recognizes it as a formula for what he is. He himself speaks of himself only as the 'Son' absolutely (except for the formula 'Son of Man'); and he speaks of God, the Father, only as the 'Father' absolutely (Mt 11:27 = Lk 10:22; Mt 24:36 = Mk 13:32; Mt 28:19; Lk 9:26)[29] or as 'his (heavenly) Father (in heaven)'. He [145] never uses the expression ο(θεο&φ in the Synoptics to speak of 'God', in so far as the latter has a relationship to Christ himself. Even in St John there are only three texts in which it is certain that our Lord speaks of himself as, 'Son of *God*' (Jn 5:25; 10:36; 11:4).[30] If it is remembered that St John uses 'Father' 102 times, in 23 of which it occurs as 'my Father',[31] Christ's own avoidance of the word 'God' in characterizing what he is, is no accident; it is even lacking in the baptismal formula.[32] Thus it cannot be denied that when the men of the New Testament wanted to speak of the Father of Christ, they had at their disposal a word which *signified* this Father, a word which was quite familiar to them from Christ's own manner of speech and which they did in fact often (excepting perhaps the Acts of the Apostles) make use of ('Father', 'God Father', 'God and Father'). If, then, in the above-mentioned solemn formulas, where for the sake of clarity and precision everything depended on the use of a word which signified the thing meant and did not merely stand for it suppositionally, these men used ο(θεο&φ for the Father, this can only be explained by the fact that in these formulas ο(θεο&φ did in actual fact signify the Father for them and did not merely stand for him suppositionally. For them the expression ο(θεο&φ was just as exact and precise as 'Father'. Nor can it be said that the word 'Father' would have been imprecise in contexts like these, in that it could not be known which Father was meant; for the New Testament writers would have been able to follow Christ's example and speak of the 'heavenly Father' or of the 'Father in heaven', or they could have used in this context the

[29] Disregarding the parables, in which Christ lets himself be recognized indirectly as Son in contrast to servants, etc.

[30] Perhaps Jn 9:35 as well. Jn 6:27; 6:46; 8:42; 16:27 should also certainly be noticed. In these texts ο(θεο&φ is found in the context of other statements of Christ about himself; the use of ο(θεο&φ is once again quite comprehensible in view of the context.

[31] Only once as 'your Father'; and in the 78 occurrences of 'Father' absolutely, the word always refers objectively to the Father of Christ.

[32] How Christ's own manner of speech is itself to be explained is not our concern here.

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common phrase 'God Father', like all the Apostolic formulations of faith.

An analogous observation may be made with regard to the Trinitarian formulas. Where this is undoubtedly ternary in form, we find Jesus himself using the group πατη&ρ, υι9ο&φ, πνευ~μα α#γιον; but for the Apostles the First Person is always signified in these formulas by ο(θεο&φ or θεο_φ πατη&ρ, never by πατη&ρ alone.[33] In these formulas [146] too, the replacement of Christ's word πατη&ρ by the Apostles' θεο&φ is only explained if ο(θεο&φ simply signified the Father.

When in consequence of all this we say that ο(θεο&φ in the language of the New Testament signifies the Father, we do not of course mean that it always signifies him *precisely in so far as* he is Father of the only begotten Son by an eternal generation. All that is meant is that when the New Testament thinks of God, it is the concrete, individual, uninterchangeable Person who comes into its mind, who is in fact the Father and is called ο(θεο&φ; so that inversely, when ο(θεο&φ is being spoken of, it is not the single divine nature that is seen, subsisting in three hypostases, but the concrete Person who possesses the divine nature unoriginately, and communicates it by eternal generation to a Son too, and by spiration to the Spirit.

It may easily be seen that this result is nothing more than a more precise demonstration of the fact that the conception of the Trinity, customarily (if inexactly) known since de Régnon as the Greek view, is closer to Biblical usage than what de Régnon called the Latin or scholastic view. The latter proceeds from the unity of God's nature (one God in three Persons), so that the unity of the divine nature is a *presupposition* of the whole doctrine of the Trinity; while the former begins with the three Persons (three Persons, who are of a single divine nature) or better, with the Father, who is the source from which the Son, and through the Son the Spirit, proceed, so that the unity and integrity of the divine nature is conceptually a *consequence* of the fact that the Father communicates his whole nature.[34] Associated with this Greek view of the Trinity is the fact that the Father is regarded as God κατ 0 ε0χοξη&ν. As Schmaus says:

> This is a procedure which goes back to the first Christian communities, because it is based on Scripture itself. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian all witness to this usage. Origen gives sharpness of definition to this view, and distinguishes between ο(θεο&φ and θεο&φ . . . This conception, even if not in so sharply defined a form, finds expression in the early Creeds; and it continued to be handed down in tradition. Denis of Alexandria reserved [147] the name 'God' to the Father. 9Ο τω~ν ο#λων θεο&φ and ο(ε0πι∴ πα&ντων θεο&φ are designations of the Father which are found everywhere in the fourth century. The Cappadocians had a general view of the Father as the absolute God or as the divine *ousia*. Hilary, as a pupil of the Greeks, is speaking of the Father whenever he uses the word *Deus* without qualification. Subordinationist ideas must not be associated with this mode of speech.[35]

Schmaus supports his assertion that this usage, which characterizes one of the two traditional ways of speaking about the Trinity, is based on Scripture itself with a bare reference to one page of de Régnon (I, p. 445); and here the only support offered is a citation from Theodore

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[33] Cf. Cor 12:4 s.; 2 Cor 1:21 s.; 13:13 s.; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 20 s. These are the texts recognized as Trinitarian by E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (ET John Marsh, London 1955), p. 326, n. 828.

[34] On these two views, see de Régnon's summaries, *Etudes de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, I (Paris 1892), pp. 335-40, 428-35.

[35] M. Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des heiligen Augustinus* (Münster 1927), p. 19.

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Abu Qurra (Abucara).[36] We have tried here to establish in more detail what was proposed by de Régnon as a thesis. This thesis may indeed be more or less obvious for someone who comes fresh from the New Testament, and the attempt to justify it may consequently arouse the suspicion that a way is being forced through an open door. Yet for someone who derives from the theology of Western scholasticism, and is accustomed to read the New Testament under the *a priori* of the conceptual patterns prevalent there, the thesis may well have its significance. We may leave aside the fact that the thesis which we have established in this way shows that the Greek conception of the Trinity is to be taken seriously on the authority of Scripture. But it is also important for a question such as what exactly is involved in our being children of God. If o(qeo&f in the New Testament is the Father, then we are children of the Father of Christ by participation in the eternal sonship of the only begotten Son. And it remains an open question whether we can characterize as sonship the justified man's relationship through grace to the Son and the Spirit (so that this fatherhood by grace is merely appropriated to the First Person of the Trinity); or whether, strictly speaking, it is *not* possible to interpret this relationship to the Son and the Spirit as sonship, so that each of the three divine Persons has its own proper relationship to the justified man, [148] not merely an appropriated one. Furthermore, this question is significant not only for a closer understanding of the nature of justifying and sanctifying grace, by providing what is in the last resort the only means of deciding whether 'uncreated grace' is merely something subsequent upon created grace, or whether it must be recognized as an independent element in the total concept of sanctifying grace. The question is significant also for the problem of the connexion between the Trinity as immanent and as economic, the entitative Trinity and the Trinity of Revelation; if man really has a special relationship to each of the three divine Persons,[37] the opposition between the entitative Trinity and the Trinity of Revelation is resolved at its very root: God *stands in relation* (*verhält sich*) to the justified man as Father, Word, Spirit, and *is* this too, in and for himself.

We may note finally that in the official prayers of the liturgy, it is the Father to whom we pray through the Son, and this Father is simply called *Deus*.[38] We have seen that this is also the usage of the New Testament. The kerygmatic significance of our enquiry was briefly touched upon earlier in this study.

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[36] In Petavius, *De Trinitate*, lib. IV, c. xv, n. 14: 3Oqen oi9 a)po&stoloi kai\. pa~sa sxedo_n h(a(gi/a grafh&, o#t 0 ea!n ei1ph| o(qeo&f, ou#twf a)polu&twf kai\. a)prosdioriestwf, kai\. w(f e0pi/pan su_n a!rqrw|, kai\. xwri\.f i0diw&matof u(postatikou~, to_n patera dhloi=.

[37] Because grace in its full sense cannot be reduced to the concept of an effect of God's efficient causality, an effect which is worked by the three divine Persons in common. See below, pp. 319-46.

[38] de Régnon, I, pp. 495-9.

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5

CURRENT PROBLEMS IN CHRISTOLOGY

Once theologians and the ordinary magisterium of the Church have begun to pay attention to a reality and a truth revealed by God, the final result is always a precisely formulated statement. This is natural and inevitable. In no other way is it possible to mark the boundary of error and the misunderstanding of divine truth in such a way that this boundary will be observed in the day-to-day practice of religion. Yet while this formula is an end, an acquisition and a victory, which allows us to enjoy clarity and security as well as ease in instruction, if this victory is to be a true one the end must also be a beginning. It follows from the nature of human knowledge of truth and from the nature of divine truth itself, that any individual truth, above all one of God's truths, is beginning and emergence, not conclusion and end. In the last resort any individual human perception of truth only has meaning as beginning and promise of the knowledge of God. But whether the latter is conceived of as *visio beatifica* or otherwise, it can only be genuine, only make blessed, in the knowledge of his incomprehensibility: at that point, then, in which comprehension and the determining limits of what is known are jointly transcended in the Incomprehensible and the Unlimited. Because every truth of the God who reveals himself is given as an incitement and a way to the closest immediacy of communion with him, it is all the more an opening into the immeasurable, a beginning of the illimitable. The clearest formulations, the most sanctified formulas, the classic condensations of the centuries-long work of the Church in prayer, reflexion and struggle concerning God's mysteries: all these derive their life from the fact that they are not end but beginning, not goal but means, truths which open the way to the – ever greater – Truth. The fact that every formula transcends itself (not because it is false, but precisely because it is true) is not due just to the transcendence of the mind which apprehends it and, in apprehending it, is always off beyond it after the greater fullness of Reality and Truth itself. Nor is [150] this self-transcendence due merely to the divine grace of faith, which always transforms the perception of a truth in propositional form into a movement of the mind towards the apprehension of God's ontological truth in itself. This transcendence is at work precisely in the movement of the formula itself, in that it is itself surpassed with a view to another. This certainly does not mean that the first formula has to be given up or abolished in favour of another, as though it were antiquated or another could take its place. On the contrary: it preserves its significance, it remains precisely living, by being expounded. This is so true and so obvious, that whole books can and must be written about the principle of identity, that is to say, the simplest, clearest, most necessary and undeniable formula of all, because it cannot really be said with much confidence that someone who monotonously keeps on repeating it – dressed up with a few 'clarificatory' phrases – has in fact understood it. Anyone who takes seriously the 'historicity' of human truth (in which God's truth too has become incarnate in Revelation) must see that neither the abandonment of a formula nor its preservation in a petrified form does justice to human understanding. For history is precisely *not* an atomized beginning-ever-anew; it is rather (the more spiritual it is) a becoming-new which preserves the old, and preserves it all the more *as* old, the more spiritual this history is. But this preservation, which recognizes the true uniqueness of something which has taken place once for all, is only historical preservation when – the history goes on, and the movement of reflexion departs from the formula which has been reached in order to discover it (just this old formula itself) again.

This holds good of the Chalcedonian formulation of the mystery of Jesus too. For this

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formula is – a formula.

Thus we have not only the right but the duty to look at it as end *and* as beginning. We shall never stop trying to release ourselves from it, not so as to abandon it but to understand it, understand it with mind and heart, so that through it we might draw near to the ineffable, unapproachable, nameless God, whose will it was that we should find him in Jesus Christ and through Christ seek him. We shall never cease to return to this formula, because whenever it is necessary to say briefly what it is that we encounter in the ineffable truth which is our salvation, we shall always have recourse to the modest, sober clarity of the Chalcedonian formula. But we shall only really have recourse to it (and this is not at all the same thing as simply repeating [151] it), if it is not only our end but also our beginning. We must say something here about this incompleteness which the formula does not resolve but in fact preserves.

Anyone who speaks of incompleteness in a matter like this must be prepared to be dismissed with contempt. This sort of language is hardly 'scientific'. It has to try to get a hearing without the help of the apparatus of learning; inevitably it sounds a little vague, rather like the cheap political programme which promises the emergence of a New Age, although the new Government is probably going to be just as bad as the old. It cannot by itself put into practice what it demands, and that is what is most questionable about it. For if someone says that this matter or that must be considered or investigated, or should be freshly analysed and treated of more comprehensively and profoundly, and yet this does not come about immediately in reality, he speaks like a man who proposes a route by which he himself has never travelled. It may very well be that many of his wishes and conjectures do not touch upon the essential, that the really decisive point will be overlooked. Nevertheless preliminary reflexions of this conjectural and tentative kind are unavoidable, and can only be despised or rejected in principle by someone who thinks that as far as Christology proper is concerned we have already reached the end. But if we are always at the beginning, then the first step is always the uneasy feeling of a need to ask whether it might not be possible to give this or that matter closer attention and find a better solution.

The object which this anxious seeking for the question (it is nothing more) has in view is not of course simply the whole plenitude of the 'objective Spirit'[1] of Revelation and theology in their long history. If we had clearly before us the plenitude of what was once perceived in faith and meditated upon in theology throughout its entire history, we should already in great part have found the question we are looking for and its answer too. For it is the bitter grief of theology and its blessed task too, always to have to seek (because it does not clearly have present to it at the time) what, in a true sense – in its historical memory – it has always known. The history of theology is by no means just the history of the progress of doctrine, but also a history of forgetting. That is the only reason why historical theology and history of doctrine have a real, irreplaceable and necessary task within [152] dogmatic theology itself. What was once given in history and is ever made present anew does not primarily form a set of premises from which we can draw new conclusions which have never been thought of before. It is the object which, while it is always retained, must ever be acquired anew, by *us*, that is, we who are just such as no one else can ever be in all history. So that when in considerable uncertainty, we set about asking – and the question itself has to be found first – what it is that we must bring back to mind so as to be able to make our own what we believe, the starting-point of this attempt to ask questions cannot be the whole of Revelation and its history in theology. It is the *answer* which lies there. The starting-point can only be the generally accepted position in theology today (meaning here Christology), as it is found in modern textbooks, in the conception which everybody would agree is the ordinary one, in

[1] In the Hegelian sense. – Tr.

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what appears really clearly in our ordinary theological consciousness today. Any attempt to describe this starting-point is inevitably going to give the impression of being ill-informed, of generalizing unjustly and of distorting current theology. For this 'current theology' cannot easily be detached from its entire past; because along with the average it always offers – thank God – something deeper and closer to the sources of life; because when it is attacked and defends itself, it can always surpass itself and relate what it holds to the past and the future. And so it is impossible to avoid the danger of seeming to caricature current Christology when one attempts to describe what it finds clear and what would have to become still clearer to it in the future. Just because in theology everything is connected with everything else, it is always going to be the case that anyone who is sensitive to the reproach of not having examined this, or that question sufficiently or given it a satisfactory answer, can impatiently, but with a good conscience, hold that he has always really been aware of the question in point, and 'basically' even discussed it and analysed it sufficiently. One can only ask such a theologian why he has only discussed so briefly and casually what clearly deserves precise and detailed treatment, and whether he has not forgotten in other places what he – so he claims – regards as 'obvious', and whether this does not show that after all what everybody knows and what has long since been cleared up doesn't perhaps count for much. One has only to consider how few really living and passionate controversies there are in Catholic Christology today which engage the existential concern of the faithful (is there a single one?). Unless [152] someone is inclined to regard this fact simply as a mark of superiority, a proof of unruffled orthodoxy and crystal-clear theology, he will listen with patience and good will to the most modest attempt, undertaken with the most inadequate means, to depart from the Chalcedonian formula in order to find the way back to it in truth.

We should also observe the following point. The degree of theoretical precision and existential vitality with which man understands what he hears depends on the degree to which he comprehends it within the total content of his spiritual being. If this were not the case, there would never have been Councils of the Church with their definitions, because a new age would always have been able 'to live on in the old clarity; or we should have to suppose that the *only* reason for these Councils was the fact that there had been evil heretics who maliciously obscured what in itself had been said with quite sufficient clarity and what in itself would have been quite sufficient for later ages in spite of their unlikeness. If then the ordinary theology current today is to be asked why what it has told *us* is insufficiently clear, by 'us' is meant we as we must be today; for man's unique standpoint in history is inescapably given him in advance and helps to determine the perspective within which we have to consider God's eternal truths too, if we are really going to let them become a reality of mind, heart and life in our personal existence. This is not to say that it is in general particularly profitable for theology to take as the explicit starting-point of a critical consideration of the average Christology current today, any characteristic features of just that spiritual situation which has been imposed upon us, in so far as they are apprehended *reflexively*. Such a method is seldom successful, if only because these reflexively apprehended characteristics of the time are probably signatures of a time which is on the way out; it is unlikely that we should discover from them postulates big with promise for the Christology of tomorrow. It is preferable simply to look at the facts, that is to say at Christology itself – always providing that one has the courage to ask questions, to be dissatisfied, to think with the mind and heart one actually has, and not with the mind and heart one is supposed to have. One can then be confident that after all something will perhaps emerge which we ought to be thinking today. For it is quite meaningless to want to be modern on purpose. The only thing one can do in this situation is not to suppose that it is necessary to deny who one is (out of anxiety or distrust or falsely understood orthodoxy), but rather allow oneself [154] honestly to have one's say, and really build on the fact that God

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can give his grace to this age of ours too, as he once gave it to sinners.

Let us then begin by going to the heart of the matter. This is primarily Biblical theology. There is no question here of practising Biblical theology in its own right; our intention is much more modest. We propose to show by means of a kind of transcendental hermeneutics[2] starting from dogma that the Church's Christological dogma never claims to be an adequate condensation of Biblical teaching, and so that there does remain from the viewpoint of dogma a place for further Christological Biblical theology. It is only in this sense that we shall speak of Biblical theology in what follows. It should be the source of dogmatic theology and so also of Christology. Without it, according to *Humani Generis*[3], dogmatic theology becomes sterile. And here we are already faced with a serious problem. How are we to pursue Biblical theology for Christological purposes, both generally speaking and in dogmatic theology in particular? Is it rash or unjust to say that among Catholic writers, the professional exegetes in this field do not practise Biblical theology, and that the dogmatic theologians know or make use of only those parts of the Scriptures which they require in order to prove Christological theses which have been laid down in advance in a canon already become traditional? Or, in case the first suggestion seems too hard, what noteworthy influence has modern Biblical theology had (so far as it is practised) upon the structure and content of the traditional scholastic theology?[4] Of course the theses of this scholastic theology are true and important, so far as they are dogma. Of course these theses are the concise, condensed expression of the fundamental testimonies in Scripture concerning Jesus Christ, an expression achieved by the immense labour of an irreversible spiritual and cultural history under the guidance of the Spirit of God in the Church. But is it true that the Chalcedonian dogma, and what little else has been acquired for the theology of the schools in the history of dogma, is a condensation and summary of *everything*, without [155] remainder, of which we hear in Scripture about Jesus the Christ and about the Son, or, again, of what we *might* hear if only we were to speak once more of what has still not entered into scholastic theology? Anyone who answers this question in the affirmative would deny that the Scriptures are the *inexhaustible* source of truth about Christ.[5] But is this conviction noticeable as an active force and a holy disquiet in the ordinary practice of Christology today? For example, let us take L. de Grandmaison's undoubtedly great work on Christ; after all its minute historical investigations, does it not, looked at *theologically*, simply arrive once again at the scholastic position in Christology? Is this to be explained merely by the fact that it has an apologetic end in view and not an immediately theological one?

Let no one say that nothing more is really possible in this field any longer. Something is possible, because something *must* be possible, if it is a matter of the inexhaustible riches of God's presence with us and if we honestly admit that we often find traditional Christology difficult to understand (we shall return to this point later) and so have questions to put to its source, the Scriptures.

For example, let us take so central an assertion of the Scriptures as the statement that Jesus is the Messias and as such has become Lord in the course of his life, death and resurrection.[6] Is it agreed that this assertion has simply been made obsolete by the doctrine of metaphysical Sonship, as *we* recognize it and express it in the Chalcedonian declaration, and that its only real interest for us now is historical, as a first formulation, important merely because Jesus

[2] An expression reminiscent of Kant, Dilthey, Heidegger. – Tr.
[3] Pius XII, *Litterae Encyclicae 'Humani Generis'* (12 August 1950), AAS XLII (1950), pp. 568-9; Denz 3014.
[4] 'Traditional' here refers to the actual practice of recent centuries, especially since the Enlightenment and the (fruitful and perilous) restoration of scholastic theology after the theology of the Enlightenment.
[5] 'Humani Generis', AAS, p. 568; Denz 3014.
[6] This is true of the Synoptics and also – though in different words – of St Paul.

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found it useful for the Jews? Is the Christology of the Acts of the Apostles, which begins from below, with the human experience of Jesus[7], merely primitive? Or has it something special to say to us which classical Christology does not say with the same clarity? Is there nothing more to say about the historical self-consummation of the Lord after we have said: *meruit glorificationem corporis sui* (and yet this is by no means peculiar to him)? Is Phil 2, for instance, really covered by this? It does indeed follow from the Incarnation of the Word of God through Mary (in the Chalcedonian sense) that he is the 'Mediator' [156] between us and God, *provided*, of course, that the real initiative, in some true sense, of the man Jesus with regard to God is given its *genuine* (anti-monothelite) meaning, and Christ is not made into a mere 'manifestation' of God himself and ultimately of him alone, such that the 'appearance' has no independent validity at all with respect to the one who appears. Such a 'Mediator' would be one in name alone. A Christology which fundamentally failed to see this would end by becoming a mythology.[8] But the fact that we have to add this proviso, in order to draw out the full sense of the concept of the mediator and thus (?) of the Messias from the theology of the Incarnation as it is currently taught in the schools, shows that the Bible can contribute something to this classical theology. In particular, if the human 'nature' of the doctrine of Two Natures[9] is seen merely [157] *in the customary sense* of a pure 'instrument', the possessor of this instrument can no longer be thought of as Mediator. He would simply be Mediator to himself. Any attempt to deal with the question by discussing it in terms of two 'moral subjects' would still only provide a verbal solution, because a 'nature' conceived of in this way could not provide any foundation for a second moral subject – in relation to God,

[7] Ac 2:21-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12.27; 5:29-32; 7:56; 9:22; 10:34-43; 13:28-41; 17:31-18:28.

[8] Thus mythology in this connexion could be defined as follows: The representation of a god's becoming man is mythological, when the 'human' element is merely the clothing, the livery, of which the god makes use in order to draw attention to his presence here with us, while it is not the case that the human element acquires its supreme initiative and control over its own actions by the very fact of being assumed by God. Looked at from this point of view a single basic conception runs through the Christian heresies from Apollinarism to Monothelitism, sustained by the same basic mythical feeling. The persistence of this idea even in theoretical formulations ought to make us realize that although it may have given up announcing itself in such a theoretical fashion today, the idea probably still lives on in the picture which countless Christians have of the 'Incarnation', whether they give it their faith – or reject it.

[9] It is not the Council's doctrine of Two Natures that is in view here, but a 'customary' curtailed form of this doctrine. We have not the slightest intention of suggesting that the Council should be blamed for this curtailed form or indeed that it represents the Council's teaching. What we have in mind is that this reduction of the Mediator to a mean term between God and man does exist in the common mind, when nature is seen as a mere instrument of the person, and consequently has no significance for a divine Person. The actual existence of such a reduction is not disposed of by the fact that it cannot find conceptual expression within orthodox Christianity in the form of obstinate error (and so is not even easy to grasp conceptually), nor by the fact that it is rejected by other doctrines which are maintained explicitly (Redemption as satisfaction). To establish this point is not to deny that the teaching of the Council, when it is taken in its full, historically ascertainable sense, was concerned to use the doctrine of the Two Natures to elucidate Christ's genuine, human role as Mediator. In the period just before Chalcedon, the recognition of a twofold physis in Christ certainly made it possible to locate the decisive mediatorial act, as against Apollinarism, within the reality of this world, in the very human nature of Christ. Although there are many who refuse to accept this view, there is a good deal to show that Athanasius located the act of redemption in the Logos as Logos; Apollinaris elevated this into a principle, by deducing the absolute hegemony of the Logos from his concept of physis. If nevertheless – in spite of Cyril's mia-physis formula – the Two-Natures formula was finally successful, all it was intended to emphasize was the fact that Christ's humanity was a φυ/σιφ, i.e. an αυ)τοκι/νητον, and so that the intrinsically redemptive act was an act of genuinely human freedom. This formed the basis of a genuine soteriology over against the over-emphasized Logos-sarx schema. Clearly it was the Mediator concept which was involved here. Once all this has not only been 'granted' but also clearly and explicitly maintained, it is surely permissible to proceed to a distinction between the full sense of the Chalcedonian formula, as this *sensus plenus* emerges according to the evidence of the history of dogma from the mind of the Council, and the perfectly true but curtailed version of the formula, as this can be drawn from the concepts of the formula alone when these are interpreted in conformity with the watered-down version of the schools. What we shall go on to say applies to this latter version alone.

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what is more – in that everything pertaining to a subject in this moral subject (= human nature) would be precisely the Logos himself; with respect to whom the Mediator is supposed to mediate. But is it possible today to keep sharply before our minds Jesus' true initiative in his human history with respect to God and before God and consequently its immediate empirical subject (in distinction from the metaphysical Person), by using *only* the word 'nature', and that in sharp distinction from the divine Person? Or is it not true that the Redemption thereby becomes for all practical purposes simply God's act among us, and no longer the act of the Messianic Mediator between us and God? And is it not true that the almost unavoidable consequence of all this is a conception, which undoubtedly dominates the popular mind (without of course reaching the stage of consciously formulated heresy), and which could be put rather as follows: 'When our Lord (= God) walked on earth with his disciples, still humble and unrecognized . . . '?

Now it may and indeed must of course be said that the doctrine of [158] the unconfused and unchanged real human nature implies, as the struggle against monothelitism after the rejection of monophysitism shows, that the 'human nature' of the Logos possesses a genuine, spontaneous, free, spiritual, active centre, a human selfconsciousness, which as creaturely faces the eternal Word in a genuinely human attitude of adoration, obedience, a most radical sense of creaturehood. Indeed it is emphatically maintained that this sphere of consciousness proper to a subject, a sphere enclosed in itself in creaturely fashion by reason of the gulf that distinguishes and separates God from the creature, only knows and only could know of its hypostatic union with the Logos in virtue of an objective communication. This communication is said to depend on the *visio beatifica* of this human consciousness, and cannot be a datum of Jesus' *human* selfconsciousness – if by selfconsciousness is understood the simple being-present-to-itself of an independent entity[10] (in the identity of the act and object of knowledge). Thus by maintaining the genuineness of Christ's humanity, room is left within his life for achievement, and the possibility of a real Mediatorship and thus – if you will – of a real Messiah-ship is preserved.

Let us first set aside the question whether this account of the matter, which Paul Galtier is trying to urge on theologians today as the unmistakable voice of Tradition, is in itself free from objection. Let us set aside the fact that the opposition which Galtier encountered, and the controversies which have continued since then, show that there still remain obscurities in orthodox theology, although both parties claim the support of the Chalcedonian doctrine. Our first concern *here* is this: is it possible from the basic Chalcedonian doctrine itself actually to evolve the account given us above in reply to the question how far Jesus can be the Mediator between us and God? Although this requirement is not strictly necessary, it seems nevertheless to be justified, because in fact the formula 'One Person and two natures' is the basic formula of Christology. If it is replied that we are quite certainly bound to take into account the fact that other truths, witnessed to in Scripture, must be *added* to this basic formula for a full understanding of the Lord as Mediator, although strictly speaking they are not found in this basic formula and cannot be *derived from* it – then the question with which we began arises *implicite* with even [159] more urgency. Is it in fact possible to *derive from* the formula 'One Person – two natures in the possession of the one Person' that characteristic relationship to God in the sphere of Jesus' human reality, a relationship apparent in Scripture and indispensable for the understanding of Christ's function as Mediator (for it makes it possible for him to act freely towards and before God)? That is to say, is it possible to recognize this relationship as contained in the formula *implicite*? Or is it in fact open to one to doubt this? It is well known that at the last moment it was decided to make an omission, verbally slight but theologically important, from the text of the Encyclical on Chalcedon:

[10] *Das schlichte Bei-sich-sein einer Seinswirklichkeit.*

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instead of rejecting a doctrine which held that there were two subjects in Christ 'saltem psychologice', the Encyclical rejected the (Nestorian) doctrine of two (ontological) subjects, by omitting the phrase 'saltem psychologice'.[11] One thing at least becomes clear from this little episode in the history of the Encyclical's redaction: that there were and are theologians who cannot see that the doctrine of two natures involves a duality of even a merely psychological and relative kind between an existentially[12] independent I-centre (*Ichzentrum*) in the man Jesus and the Logos; indeed they believe that anything of the sort is excluded. And there are theologians who hold that something of the kind is a fact which can be demonstrated theologically and historically. But what must be granted is that the concept of *person* is always at least in danger of being understood in such a way that the 'independence' in view here seems to be excluded. It is not merely since the nineteenth century, with Günther's modern concept of *person* and Existentialist philosophy, that this has been the case. The concept of *person* as the ontological principle of a free[13] active centre, selfconscious, present to itself and through itself in being, is a concept which, in the sense just indicated, has always played round the edge of the most static and objective concept of *person*.[14] We cannot prove this here. But if it were not the case, monothelitism would [160] have been quite inconceivable; for it was not just a political device for making a concession to monophysitism, but persisted with such vigour that today it is still a widespread 'heresy' among Christians – all verbal orthodoxy notwithstanding. In the customary teaching about sin, untouched by any kind of Existentialism, a distinction is made between *peccatum personale* and *peccatum naturae*; in this terminology too we see that existential[15] ideas about the *person* are simultaneously at play. If these come to the fore, a connexion obtrudes itself upon the mind: where there is a *single* person, there is a *single* freedom, a *single* unique personal active centre, in relation to which any other reality (= nature, natures) can only be in this person the material and the instrument, the recipient of commands and the manifestation of this single, personal centre of freedom. But this is precisely not the case with Jesus. Otherwise he would only be the God who is active among us in human form, and not the true man who can be our Mediator with respect to God in genuine human freedom. It would of course be utterly false to say that the conceptual pair 'Person-nature' *involves* this monothelite interpretation (it would, be better and clearer to say today 'mono-existentialist conception'). But the concept of *person*, as it is in actual fact understood,[16] in fact [161]

[11] Cf. Pius XII, *Litterae Encyclicae 'Sempiternus Rex'* (8 September 1951), AAS XLIII (1951), p. 638. On the above-mentioned emendation of the text of the Encyclical, cf. P. Galtier, 'La Conscience humaine du Christ', *Gregorianum* XXXII (1951), p. 562, n. 68.

[12] *Existential*: see Introduction. – Tr.

[13] I.e. a freely responsible active centre, which merits even before God and in distinction from him, because before him.

[14] I.e. substantial unity and distinction involving incommunicability.

[15] *Existentiell*.

[16] We shall later have to discuss at some length why it is that such a misconception or the danger of it cannot be removed simply by terminological exactitude. Clearly it can be laid down that by 'person' we shall understand only the ultimate substantial unity and completeness of a subject which is incommunicable and whose reality as one in this sense can only be expressed by this subject itself. But as soon as the concrete person understood in this way exhibits a plurality in its real being, the question must arise as to how and in virtue of what the plurality is combined with the personal unity: what is sought is just the unique unifying centre of this plural unity, the unique point prior to the instituted plural unity; we want to make clear to ourselves in terms of its actual content what the function of this prior unity is in establishing unity in plurality, not just in terms of the *communicatio idiomatum*, which is only a consequence of this unity. Consequently when we are thinking, in connexion with this unity, of a person as *ens rationabile*, we tend to think that the function of the person which consists in establishing unity is not the actual, centralized, existential control and direction of the plural realities of the person, but rather their ontological foundation, which most clearly emerges to view *in* this control and direction. How little permissible it is simply to exclude this position out of hand may be seen from the defined doctrine that Christ's 'human nature', on account of the *unio hypostatica*, is wholly subject in its freedom to the Logos,

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insistently suggests this interpretation, and it is again and again taken unreflexively in this sense, though the interpretation is never reflexively thought out and formulated (for that would be heretical). Inevitably the question then arises: how can the whole complex of Christological dogma be formulated so as to allow the Lord to appear as Messianic Mediator and so as true Man, as soon as possible, or at any rate with sufficient clarity? As true Man, who, standing before God on our side in free human obedience, is Mediator, not only in virtue of the onto-logical union of two natures, but also through his activity, which is directed to God (as obedience to the will of the Father) and cannot be conceived of *simply* as God's activity in and through a human nature thought of as purely instrumental, a nature which in relation to the Logos would be, ontologically and morally, purely passive? The ordinary doctrine of two natures just by itself is quite insufficient as a ground from which to derive this insight into Christ's mediation as something which arises from the inner tendency of the doctrine. For if someone says that a human nature has a free will and that *eo ipso* this gives us all that is required, he overlooks the point that the question arises just here as to how freedom can belong to someone[17] with whom it is not identical, whose intrinsic core it does not constitute; why this freedom is neither subjugated to the 'person' distinct from it nor in a position to rebel against it.[18]

[162] It is easy to see from all this that only a *divine* Person can possess as its own a freedom really distinct from itself in such a way that this freedom does not cease to be truly free even with regard to the divine Person possessing it,[19] while it continues to qualify this very Person as its ontological subject. For it is only in the case of God that it is conceivable at all that he himself can constitute something in a state of distinction from himself. This is precisely an attribute of his divinity as such and his intrinsic creativity: to be able, by himself and through his *own* act *as such*, to constitute something in being which by the very fact of its being radically dependent (because *wholly* constituted in being), also acquires autonomy, independent reality and truth (precisely because it is constituted in being by the one, unique *God*), and all this precisely with respect to the God who constitutes it in being. God alone can make something which has validity even in his own presence. There lies the mystery of that active creation which is God's alone. Radical dependence upon him increases in direct, and not in inverse, proportion with genuine self-coherence before him. Measured against God, the creature is precisely *not* to be reduced unambiguously to the formula of merely negative limitation. Our problem here is only the supreme application of this basic truth concerning the Creator-creature relationship (a truth which at least historically has never been reached in

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and thus was essentially sinless. But once again, how little this doctrine offers us by way of an answer to the problem with which we are concerned, may be seen by putting the following question. Is it the case either that the *unio hypostatica* just in itself as such is the immediate real ontological ground for the realization of this sinless subjection of the humanly free spontaneity of Christ's human nature to the other will (that of the Logos)? Or is it only the mediately operative requirement in order that the Logos should effect this subjection by the use of means which elsewhere in the domain of creatures God is also capable of using as sovereign master over creaturely freedom, without thereby injuring it – indeed precisely realizing it? Or finally does the question itself in its disjunctive form show itself to be a false one, once the *unio hypostatica* is set quite generally in the wider context of the ontological relationship between God and the free creature?

[17] A person in the traditional ontological sense.

[18] There is no need to spend any time here in showing that the following approach provides no solution. Someone might say: The will is an accident of the substance of the soul (=nature), and freedom is its modality; consequently this cannot be conceived of in such a way that the question should ever arise as to how the freedom could be 'eccentric' to the person. The starting-point of this answer is sound enough in certain respects; yet, 'freedom' remains in its intrinsic ontological root supremely central to the person, and thus the question we have tried to put remains. If anyone doubts this, he should consider the fact that this modality of the second act of this accident is simply speaking master of the destiny and the decision of the whole reality of the free being, and that the free act can thus never be made 'central' enough.

[19] It is just this which is meant when Christ's merit as a man before God is spoken of.

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non-Christian philosophy). And it immediately follows once again that the purely *formal* (abstract) schema *nature-person* is inadequate. We must conceive of the relation between the Logos-Person and his human nature in just this sense, that here[20] *both* independence[21] *and* radical proximity[22] equally reach a unique and qualitatively incommensurable perfection, which nevertheless remains once [163] and for all the perfection of a relation between Creator and creature.[23] But in view of the fact that this simultaneous perfection can only be realized in a creature with regard to *God*, it becomes even clearer that the abstract concept of a 'person who has a nature' is not enough to allow us to infer this characteristic feature of Christ's human liberty with respect to God, a feature which is of such decisive significance for him and which characterizes him as Man and Mediator. This liberty is possible only when the person who has this free nature is either identical with this nature or is the *divine* Person as divine. And in this way it becomes clear how necessary it is to go beyond this 'Two-natures-one-Person' formula. In so far as this assertion (as predicate) 'one Person who possesses two natures' is made of the Logos (as subject), the subject must be introduced into the predicate, if we are to avoid the danger of saying too little and of conjuring up a – monothelite – error of interpretation. The metaphysical formulation of the truth 'This human history is the pure and absolute revelation of *God* himself' in terms of the formula 'This human nature is hypostatically united to the Logos', could very well be supplemented by a metaphysical formulation of the truth 'This human history, by the very fact of being God's own pure and radical revelation, is the most living of all, the most free before God from the world towards God, and thus mediatorial, because it is the history of God himself *and* because it is supremely creaturely and free.' But where are we to find the formula which expresses this latter truth with the same clarity as that with which the Chalcedonian formula expresses the former one?

Here we have entered upon a train of thought which it may seem profitable to pursue. Christological considerations have led the way back to the more general doctrine of God's relation to the creature and allowed Christology to appear as the clearly unique 'specifically' distinct perfection of this relation. Does this fundamental perspective not permit of being extended and built upon? In order conceptually [164] to express the mystery of Christ, classical Christology makes use of concepts of formal ontology, the content of which recurs at *every* level of reality, according to the distinct mode of each: nature, person, unity, substance and so on. Would it not be possible to go further, without abandoning classical Christology, and make use of the concepts in terms of which the relation of created things to God is conceived?[24] The fact that this relation reaches its absolute peak in the case of Christ

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[20] Corresponding to the general creature-Creator relationship.
[21] Freedom of the human 'nature'.
[22] Substantial appropriation by the Logos of this human nature and its freedom.
[23] If in the Incarnation the Logos enters into relationship with a creature, then it is obvious that the ultimate formal determinations of the Creator-creature relationship must also hold in this particular relationship. Hence the question remains entirely open as to whether the special character of the Incarnation, in so far as it is *distinguished* from all other relationships of God to a created thing, may be derived as a special case of this general property or not. A negative reply may be given to this question without its necessarily following that what we have said would have to be or could be contested.
[24] It goes without saying that it is above all the relationship of the *spiritual* creature to God that we must keep in mind, and that in a special way, as we have learnt from Existentialist philosophy. For it is the spiritual creature which in a special way, as person constituted by transcendence and freedoms enters into relationship with God. We shall be speaking in what follows about 'creation' in general; but this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that it is at men above all that we must look in order to learn what the Creator-creature relationship is. It should thus appear – and this is the, point of all that follows – that Christology may be studied as self-transcending anthropology, and anthropology as deficient Christology; that Christology is the 'primitive conception' (although 'for us' in part subsequent)' of anthropology and the doctrine of creation, as Christ is the πρωτο/τοκοφ πα&σηφ κτι/σεωφ (Col 1:15).

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does not exclude such an application in advance. Such an analogical application of *general* concepts (and states of affairs) to a *unique* case occurs in classical Christology too. An attempt to carry out this suggestion would be of great importance if it were successful. The fact that the reality of Christ is intrinsically unique and cannot be derived from anything else, that it is a Mystery, does not mean that we may not regard it in a perspective in which it appears as peak and conclusion, as the mysterious goal of God's plans and activity for his creation from all eternity. Indeed this is not something new in theology. The fundamental lines of this perspective are in fact to be found in Scripture. But if this perspective is a valid one, we could try to express this inclusion of the reality of Christ in the total reality of all that is not God, not merely by stating it of him subsequently, *after* having spoken about Christ himself merely in the fashion of classical Christology; we could try to use this view in order to express the very essence of Christ. The advantage of this would be that the Incarnation of the Logos would no longer appear merely as something subsequent, a particular event *in* a world already *finished* (and hence in danger of seeming to be something mythological), a world into, which God suddenly introduces himself by his action and to which he [165] makes corrections as a kind of afterthought and which he consequently presupposes as already given. The Incarnation of the Logos (however much we must insist on the fact that it is itself an historical, unique Event in an essentially historical world) appears as the *ontologically* (not merely 'morally', an afterthought) unambiguous goal of the movement of creation as a whole, in relation to which everything prior is merely a preparation of the scene. It appears as orientated from the very first to this point in which God achieves once and for all both the greatest proximity to and distance from what is other than he (while at the same time giving it being); in that one day he objectifies himself in an image of himself as radically as possible, and is himself thereby precisely given with the utmost truth; in that he himself makes most radically his own what he has created, no longer the mere anhistorical founder of an alien history but someone whose very own history is in question. Here we must remember that the world is something in which everything is related to everything else, and that consequently anyone who makes some portion of it into his own history, takes for himself the world as a whole for his personal environment. Consequently it is not pure fantasy (though the attempt must be made with caution) to conceive of the 'evolution' of the world *towards Christ*, and to show how there is a gradual ascent which reaches a peak in him. Only we must reject the idea that this 'evolution' could be a striving upward of what is below by its own powers. If Col 1:15 is true, and is not attenuated in a moralistic sense; if then in Christ the world as a whole, even in its 'physical' reality, has really reached historically[25] through Christ that point in which God becomes all in all,[26] then an attempt like this cannot be false in principle. But if it is in fact possible to attempt something like this, we can make use of the general categories of the God-creature relation (distance-proximity; image-concealment; time-eternity; dependence-independence) in their radical, sharply differentiated form in order to make fundamental statements about Christ, and regard all other realities in this field of what is distinct from God as deficient modes of this primary Christological relation.

[166] The fact that classical Christology makes permanently valid statements about Christ which attribute to him an entitative determination[27], already (relatively) fixed and familiar (such as 'He is man' – so that we must already know what 'man' is) is no argument against this view. We may not say that it is illegitimate to try to take Christ as the starting-point in

[25] Though in a history which is at the same time essentially spirit, freedom, 'moral'.
[26] And this must be understood in an essentially Christological sense, not as something abstractly metaphysical, 'permanently valid'; because God in Christ really *became* world, and so 'All' in all.
[27] *Sachverhalt*. This can ordinarily be rendered 'state of affairs'. The word has however a technical philosophical usage, in which it means something like 'the objective content of a proposition'. 'Entitative determination' is offered as a rough approximation. – Tr.

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order to define these entitative determinations, and that consequently a 'Christian' ontology must necessarily be false in principle. For it will be clear on reflexion that our presupposition is that statements about Christ himself (even though they are intended to serve as a point of departure for the more general statements of theological ontology) are made with the help of a general doctrine of creation (and the ontology contained in it). Christology most certainly cannot and should not form an absolute point of departure for an ontology (and hence still less for an anthropology). Nevertheless the parallels in philosophical knowledge of God and the world show that a retrospective use can be made of Christology for ontological and anthropological assertions: God is known from the world, and yet we can start from God in order to say what the world is. It is neither necessary nor possible here to discuss more fully the general epistemological presuppositions of this shifting back and forth of initial and terminal points in the process of acquiring knowledge.

The only point with which we were concerned was to investigate the suggestion that other categories than those of classical Christology might be used to make the basic, initial statement of what Christ really is, categories, moreover, taken from a truly *theological* doctrine of creation. If such were the case, even the bare appearance that what was offered in orthodox Christology was an anthropomorphic myth, might perhaps be more easily avoided from the start.

A further question, to which classical Christology has given no very clear or far-reaching answer, is contained *implicite* in this question of a possible task for the future. The static categories of formal ontology employed by this Christology do not locate Christ in saving history in the narrower sense (or better: they do not locate the history with respect to him as goal and origin). The question suggests itself whether there might not be a formula for saving history as God's [167] progressive taking possession of the world in history, as the manifestation, ever clearer and more hidden at once, of God in the world as his quasi-sacramental *mysterium*. The Christ would appear as the summit of this history and Christology as its sharpest formulation, just as inversely saving history would appear as the prelude to and the extension of Christ's own history. Perhaps the ancients had a better idea of all this than we usually have today, with our still very pale and vague idea of the time before Christ as the preparation for the fullness of times. The old speculation about the Logos, which ascribed to him an activity and history in creation 'before Christ but Christ-like' distinct from the invisible Father, would be well worth rethinking, after being purified of its subordinationist elements. It is still by no means established that the extraction of this waste matter would inevitably lead to the ruin of these early speculations. The Logos did not merely become (statically) man in Christ; he assumed a human history. But this is part of an entire history of the world and of humanity before and after it, and, what is more, the fullness of that history and its end. But if we take at all seriously the unity of this history as centred upon Christ, it follows that Christ has always been involved in the whole of history as its prospective entelechy. We have then to ask how to conceive of history so that this result should follow from it. But if we do think of it in this way, it should then be possible, inversely, to learn from it who the Christ is to whom it is orientated and whom it has brought forth from its womb. What do we mean by Time, History, the Evolution of Humanity, if the Christ is to be the fullness of this time? Can all this be ascribed to Christ merely as an afterthought *after* he has been expressed in terms of the Chalcedonian formula? Or can it also be stated from the starting-point of a theology of history itself with such directness that the Chalcedonian formula in its abstract formality may rather be *derived from this*? Is it not possible so to conceive of Time and History *theologically* (not merely in terms of the philosophy of history) that one has conceptually stated the Christ of Chalcedon when one has said of him that he is the fullness of times, who as their Head definitively comprehends and recapitulates the aions and brings them to their end? We must not nurse the tacit yet active

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prejudice that conceptual exactitude and compressed formulas can only be found in those concepts which the Fathers and the scholastics worked out from Greek philosophy with their eye upon – *conversio ad phantasmata* – individual things of a physical and static kind and their [168] individual processes of change. Anyone who does not share this prejudice, anyone who is convinced that the conceptual apparatus of scientific theology can be enlarged beyond the bounds of the traditional pattern, will not immediately assume that there is no prospect of carrying out the task which has just been proposed.

A Christology which derives from Biblical theology might set us a further task. If anyone were to attempt to discover the Biblical foundation of scholastic Christology, he would reach the conclusion, which does not seem false or unjust, that it contrives to get along with handful of texts from the Bible. Its predetermined goal is the dogma of Ephesus and Chalcedon and nothing more. The only texts from Scripture, whether they are sayings of Christ himself or appear in the teaching of the Apostles, in which it is interested are those which can be translated as directly as possible into the terms of classical metaphysical Christology. The method is a legitimate one; but it cannot cover the whole ground. A whole body of Christological statements remains unused in this way, statements which describe Jesus' relationship to the Father (God) in the categories proper to conscious experience (existentially)[28]: Jesus as the only one to know the Father, Jesus who brings tidings of him, does his will at all times, is always heard by him and so on. The question, then, is whether it is possible on this basis to construct a Christology in terms of Christ's consciousness. We shall not attempt to offer a complete solution to this question here; but we may make some remarks about its meaning and significance.

When it is said of a spiritual substance that it is 'simple', what we have here is an *ontic* statement (as we shall call it). When we say that it is capable of a *reditio completa in se*[29], we are making a statement which belongs to the metaphysics of knowledge: an onto-*logical* statement, or one which belongs to the philosophy of Existence.[30] We need not delay here to explain the connexion between these two statements [169] *in re*: they correspond to each other; the same asserted entitative determination is explained on the one hand by a characteristic feature of selfconsciousness (and thus by a concept applicable to a field in which the only entities are spiritual ones), and on the other by a metaphysical concept[31] which can be verified positively or negatively in *every entity*. Anyone who has grasped the metaphysical meaning of the scholastic axiom 'ens et verum convertuntur', 'ens est intelligibile et intelligens, in quantum est ens actu', will know that *in principle* at least, every ontic statement (whether positive or negative) is capable of being translated into an *ontological* one, however difficult or impossible this may often be 'quoad nos'. The higher an entity (in the widest sense of this word, including then entitative determinations and so on) in its grade of being, compactness of being, 'actuality', the more intelligible it is and present to itself (*bei sich selbst*). Clearly this axiom of scholastic metaphysics would require closer analysis if it is to be applied correctly in particular cases. Nevertheless we may say that the fact that Christ's humanity is substantially united to the Logos, in so far as this is a determination ('act') of the human nature itself, cannot be simply 'subconscious'. For as something ontically higher, this determination is something real which cannot be simply unconscious at least in the case

[28] *Existentiell.*
[29] This phrase, deriving from the Liber de Causis and thus ultimately from Proclus, is made considerable use of by St Thomas in order to analyse the ontological status of beings capable of self-knowledge. See, for example, Ia. 14,2 ad 1, where St Thomas quotes the proposition of the *De Causis*, 'Omnis sciens qui scit suam essentiam, est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa', and concludes that since to subsist in himself is proper to God above all, therefore he above all returns upon himself and knows himself. – Tr.
[30] *Existential-philosophische.*
[31] *Seinsbegriff* ('Concept of being').

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where its subject has attained that grade of actuality in being which involves a presence to itself (*Bei-sich-selbst-sein*) of this entity. At least in the case where this presupposition is satisfied, it is metaphysically impossible that this actuality of the subject should be simply unconscious, when we remember that this actuality is entitatively higher in comparison with the level of actuality proper to the subject, and that this subject is present to itself; it is impossible that the immediate subject of the human presence-to-itself should not also be present to itself precisely in so far as it is wholly and substantially made over to the Logos. Here we must be careful to note that this 'presence to itself' is not to be confused with a 'knowledge of an object'. Presence-to-itself is the inner being-illuminated of actual being for itself; more precisely, for the subject which possesses this being in its own self. From this it follows that it is opposed to the true teaching of the scholastic metaphysics of knowledge to say that Christ's human soul knows of the *unio hypostatica* only in the way in which an object is known (and so through the 'visio immediata' as in [170] the vision of an object). Inasmuch as the *unio hypostatica* implies or involves an entitative determination, namely the being-united (*Vereintsein*) of the human reality with the Logos, as an ontological determination of this human reality, Christ's human soul is 'with the Logos'[32] in an immediately ontic and conscious way. The 'visio immediata'[33] is (if we may be allowed to make our point in this way for the sake of clarity) the consequence and not the presupposition of the conscious being-with-the-Logos of Christ's soul. It is not (in the last resort) a *donum*, conferred as a moral 'title' on the human soul on account of its being united hypostatically to the Logos, for reasons of *convenientia* or *decentia*; it *is* the hypostatic union itself, in so far as this is necessarily an 'intelligibile actu' in the *intelligens actu* of Christ's human soul. Once again: in the measure and manner in which the *unio hypostatica* is (or includes) a real ontological determination of the human nature, and indeed its ontologically highest determination; further, in the measure in which this human nature is by itself 'present to itself': the union must also be a datum of the selfconsciousness of this human nature of its very self, and cannot simply be part of the content of its object-knowledge given 'from without'. The Chalcedonian α)συγξυ/τωφ must not be taken in a sense which would result in the denial in fact of a union between the Logos and his human nature which was still being affirmed verbally.[34] But this would be the case if neither on [171] the side of the Logos (because he is immutable) nor on the side of the human nature there were present a real ontological

[32] *Beim Logos*. This being with is at a level of being which necessarily involves conscious presence (*bei sich sein*). For the phrase *bei sich sein* ('being with oneself') compare Marcel's *être chez soi*. – Tr.

[33] We prefer to say 'visio immediata' because this phrase expresses with greater exactitude and caution than 'visio beata' the 'theologically certain' content of the doctrine concerned here, in that the 'immediacy' of the possession of God follows from the considerations just proposed, while the 'beatitude' of this vision in Christ need not be experienced so nearly and immediately as something necessarily always 'beatifying'; after all, is it not conceivable that the vision may be undergone as a 'consuming fire' in certain situations proper to a 'viator'?

[34] All 'unconfused' says is that the same One is truly God and truly man and not some third thing in between. It does not however deny the unity, the human nature's state of having given itself away (*das Sich-selbst-weg-gegeben-sein*) to the Logos. It is precisely the task of theology (one which is set by the Chalcedonian formula but has not yet been performed) to throw light on (which does not mean 'to dissolve the mystery of') why and how this thing, which has suspended itself in this way, not only remains what it was, but in the most radical sense, unsurpassably and definitively ratified, becomes what it is: a human reality. But this only becomes possible once it has been shown how in the essence of man this tendency to become self-suspended upon the absolute God (in the ontological, not just the moral sense) belongs to his most basic constitution. Thus the *highest* actuation (unobliged, only once and for all realized in event) of this obediential potency (and this is no purely negative determination, no purely formal non-repugnance) makes the self-suspended thing all the more man in the most radical sense, precisely unites it thus with the Logos. And it needs to be shown too how this self-suspension can be a datum of man's selfconsciousness, because it belongs to his selfconsciousness to have, ontically and existentially, a disponibility open to God's disposal and the absolute mystery, that disponibility towards becoming self-suspended which is supremely realized and brought to consciousness in the *unio hypostatica*.

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determination other than that which would exist even if there were no unity. But if such a determination does exist on the side of the human nature, really and truly determining it, then it will also be a datum of the presence to itself of this nature in consequence of its being what it is (*des Von-sich her – bei-sich-seins dieser Natur*).[35] It is not our concern here to see how this may be harmonized with the data of our *a posteriori* empirical knowledge of the 'inner life' of Jesus and his psychology. The task is not an impossible one. In fact – given careful thought – it is considerably simpler than when traits, apparently postulated quite arbitrarily, are ascribed to Christ's inner life on the basis of argumentation ex *convenientia*, *ex decentia*. It only seems difficult to harmonize these traits with what we are told by Scripture about Christ's thinking and willing because these postulated 'traits' and 'endowments' are thought of as existing in the dimension of Jesus' everyday consciousness, on the surface of his awareness of objects. But our Lord's self-consciousness, which we have here inferred metaphysically from the *unio hypostatica*, is – in its source and primarily at least – a given quantity which must be thought of as being situated in that substantial depth of Christ's created mind which becomes aware of itself in the act of knowledge, pointing ontically beyond itself to that with which it is united, the Logos.

These are only brief indications, and we have no intention of taking [172] up the problem in its own right. All we wish to suggest is that a, Christology using categories appropriate to the description of consciousness need not be false *a priori* or impossible. If there is an ontic, Christology, there can also be an existential[36] one (or however one may wish to describe statements about the way in which a spiritual. being is present to itself). Thus we may confidently ask whether an absolutely exact understanding of our Lord's statements about his 'spiritual' relationship to God (the Father) could not lead to statements which would be equivalent, as *ontological* (existential) statements, to those of an ontic Christology. The fact that this existential[37] relationship of Christ as man to God is not immediately available in our own experience, thus where *our* concepts have their origin, does not absolutely forbid our making such statements. For the ontic relationship of his human nature is not immediately available to us either, and yet it can be stated in an analogical, indirect and asymptotic way. Otherwise there would be no Christology at all which could say something about what Christ really is. It is true that there have been attempts in this direction in modern Protestantism which, owing to hostility to the metaphysics in the 'Greek' theology of the Fathers and Scholasticism and the use of philosophically inadequate instruments, have led to heresy, because they reduce the mystery of Christ to the level of our own religious experience and our own relationship to God; but this is still no proof that such attempts are impossible and false *a priori*. Suppose someone says[38]: 'Jesus is the man whose life is one of absolutely unique self-surrender to God.' He may very well have stated the truth about the very depths of what Christ really is, *provided* that he has understood (a) that this self-abandonment pre-supposes a communication of God to the man; (b) that an absolute self-surrender implies an absolute communication of God to the man, one which makes what is produced by it into the reality of the producer himself; and (c) that such an existential statement does not signify something 'mental', a fiction, but is in the most radical way a statement about being. It may be objected that a Christological statement like [173] this, bearing on Christ's mind, either remains outside the limits of Christological dogma and its ontic formulation (and thus is

[35] This is not the place to show how the approach outlined here – very briefly, of course – bears upon the controversy between P. Galtier and P. Parente.
[36] *Existentielle*.
[37] *Existential*
[38] This example is not meant to anticipate the successful performance of an undertaking which has here only been postulated. It is only intended to illustrate, in a case which is clearly highly problematic and in need of cautious treatment, what the task proposed would in general involve.

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heretical), or must appeal to ontic formulations in order to characterize the uniqueness and specific otherness of this relationship to God in distinction from any religious experience of our own or of the prophets. The second alternative[39] may be granted, though it does not follow from this that such existential statements are superfluous. It is true that these statements (so far as we possess concepts for them) may perhaps[40] not be capable, without the help of formal ontic concepts, of distinguishing precisely enough from other relationships a conscious existential relationship to God which is not available to our immediate experience. Yet they are extremely useful in filling out the formal emptiness of a *purely* ontic Christological statement, which would otherwise be in danger of being filled out in some other way, namely by interpretations of Christological formulas which are not indeed formulated explicitly, but which only too easily crystallize round the formulas without being noticed; these interpretations then make Christ out to be nothing but God clothed in a human form. If this danger is really avoided by asserting a conscious relationship of the man Jesus with respect to God, and by asserting it in such a way that the assertion of the distinctively unique character of this relationship is *eo ipso* an implicit or explicit assertion of the *unio hypostatica*; then the Scriptural accounts of Jesus' conscious dispositions to the Father would really be translated into theological Christology. We need only consider the following two statements to see this.

a. 'The Logos, who possesses in identity the absolute divine being, assumes a human nature as his own and thus becomes man while remaining himself.' b. 'This man – who, as we have said, is God – can pray, adore, be obedient, feel in a creaturely way to the point of abandonment by God, can weep, receive the wonderful gift of "being heard", experience the claims of God's will upon him as something authoritative and alien,' and so on. Does the second statement always come immediately to mind as soon as the first, which is a formula of faith and, it goes without saying, a true one, is uttered? Or do we know all this, but in a different compartment of our minds, [174] as it were, so that we have to 'switch over' from the first formula, almost entirely forgetting it, in order to make real to our minds what is also witnessed to by Scripture and what we find so difficult to think 'about God'? How would it be if we thought and spoke about the second, the human side, in such a way that it simply remained clear that all this was only possible in a man, and it became clear that this is only conceivable as a *human* happening if it is wholly the Happening of God himself, in all truth and in the most radical way?

Here we shall cease to pursue our investigations into Biblical theology, or more accurately, the transcendental hermeneutics for a Biblical Christology. We shall try to investigate the Chalcedonian formula itself, and make clearer to ourselves the problems it sets us. The formula speaks of two natures: it puts them clearly before our eyes in the characters proper to each. For we have some knowledge of what a man is, and our experience in this matter grows daily. And so we can make a fair estimate of what is really involved in being a man. What God is we only know by going beyond any information we may possess, in a *docta ignorantia*. But in this very way the Being whom we recognize as unknown is set apart from human nature. And now the Chalcedonian formula bids us conceive of the unconfused unity of the 'natures'. Isn't that hard? Of course we have at least a vague idea of what unity is. Someone may even like to call it a clear idea, and say that the apparent vagueness is not an indistinctness but is merely due to the formal generality and abstract emptiness of the concept. But that is just the point: here is the supreme particularity, the incomprehensibly

[39] As something not wholly avoidable 'quoad nos'.
[40] This question, which would lead us into general considerations belonging to the metaphysics of knowledge, cannot be treated of here, and must be allowed to remain open.

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profound, unique *Mysterium*, which decides my destiny and that of the world, on which absolutely everything in heaven and on earth depends because it declares God's own destiny and takes up into this the destiny of the world; and I am supposed to see this mystery expressed in a concept which is one of the most general concepts of formal ontology, like that of *entity*, something which is itself always one thing and thus gives rise to the concept of unity from this emptiest of all abstractions. One should suffer the heavy burden of obscurity before running up with an answer. And please let no one say just that the concept of unity is indeed highly formal and abstract, but that in this case it acquires density and fullness from what is united. No doubt this is true in a certain respect: as the concurrence of two things, a [175] unity consists of what is united.[41] But this is precisely on the assumption that something is known of the distinctive character of the concurrence which unites what is to be made one. Now it could be said here (as was done earlier) that what is being spoken of is not just any unity of divine and human reality in Christ. What faith really makes profession of is a substantial, lasting, indissoluble, hypostatic unity, the belonging of the two natures to one and the same Person as its very own in virtue of its being the selfsame.[42] So this unity is not so empty, it does not allow the united natures to stand 'isolated' before the spiritual eye of faith, as though the duality were clearly given while the unity is as it were unverifiably situated on the side turned away from the eye of faith. The unity reaches the highest point of clarity for our understanding in the fact that, precisely because it is hypostatic, we must and can state of one and the same Person both what is divine and what is human, because precisely *both* are really and truly proper to one and the same Person. All this is true, and belongs to the essential core of meaning of the *mysterium* which we are toiling to understand. But does it say everything which can be said towards an understanding of the unity in the twofold reality of Christ? We do not propose to show that this is open to doubt by pointing to the old controversies between Catholic theologians which have once again been revived today. This would be too long a way of clarifying the question which still remains. Let us put the question in a different way; let us start from a few of the usual notions of scholastic Christology, which we shall presuppose. God the Word of the Father, so we are told, 'changes' in no way when he assumes the human nature as his own. The change, the novelty, is entirely on the side of the human nature. We have no desire at all to make the usual objection that in spite of this proposition it must remain simply true that it was the Word of God himself who became man; nor do we wish to inquire how this divine truth can remain valid if the former proposition, [176] deriving from human metaphysics, is soundly based.[43] On the contrary, the immutability of the Word in the Incarnation will be our presupposition. Thus as far as the Word itself is concerned, nothing is held to have happened, nothing emerged which has not always been there. It is purely on this side of the abyss between God

[41] This sentence illustrates the wider sense of the German *Einheit*, which means 'union' as well as 'unity'. Fr Rahner rarely uses the ordinary German phrase for 'hypostatic union', which is *hypostatische Vereinigung*: instead he either uses the Latin *unio hypostatica*, or speaks of the *hypostatische Einheit*. The English reader should bear in mind this wider sense of the word *Einheit* when he finds the phrase 'hypostatic unity' in the text. – Tr.

[42] *Die Angeeignetheit der beiden Naturen durch die Selbigkeit der einen und selben Person.*

[43] This metaphysics would need rethinking; and that would naturally lead to the problem, in what sense God does not alter when he creates the world. Here it would be necessary to say that he does not in himself become other to himself when he himself becomes other to the world as what is other than he and derived from him, and vice versa. This same formula would have to be applied in Christology. In fact the whole of Christology could be seen as the unique and most radical realization of this basic relationship of God to what is other than himself, measured by which all else in creation would be only a deficient mode, fading away into indistinctness; it would be the sharpest realization of this basic relationship, which lies in the self-alienation of the God who remains with himself, and thereby radically unchanged. However we have already alluded to this connexion between Christology and the doctrine of creation above.

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and the creature that the new, emergent Event takes place.[44] Thus what we have to learn here is what happened when the Word became flesh. This flesh, this human reality, does not belong to itself then, in that it came into being as united to the Logos. But what does it mean to say, 'It does not belong to itself', what does it mean – we keep falling back on the same formulas of the Tradition, a sign that we don't really understand them – what does it mean to say, 'This human reality is united to the Word of God'? The reality can be predicated of him, someone may answer; what takes place here in this world in his flesh is most personally his own affair, someone may explain. That is all very well, one might reply, almost in despair; but *He* is not a man as *I* am a man. For I am a man in such a way that the I, the person itself, becomes human through my human-being; this is its own lot, it does not itself remain untouched. And that is just what one cannot say about the Logos of God, according to just this doctrine of faith. Nor is that all; according to the theology current in our schools, this humanity of the Logos is, without injury to him, not only created by the one God (not by the Logos alone); but every influence upon it [177] which it undergoes, either because it is a creaturely 'human reality or because it is precisely the humanity of the Logos, is the object of the operation of the whole Trinity as a single efficient cause *ad extra*, just because it belongs to the dimension of what is created from nothing. Thus all that this humanity possesses (in the highest measure, of course) in the way of tangible, expressible reality, is what can be given to any man: grace, knowledge, virtue, the *visio beatifica*. From this point of view again, the unique distinguishing feature which belongs just to it and to nothing else, is simply the formal unity which gives it the reality of the Logos without affecting the Logos itself. An example will show us what this means. How many sorrowful souls have been comforted and have seen through their tears the everlasting stars of love and peace because in their faith they knew, 'He, the eternal meaning of the world, the Word, has wept with me, He too has drunk of the chalice!' How many have died 'piously in the Lord' with the thought that this common and general death must mean something just because the Uncommon, the uniquely important, the absolutely Indiscutable, the incommensurable Measure, the coherent Meaning at the heart of being, because He – really He himself – died! 'One of the most holy Trinity has suffered', the Scythian monks used to say, with that brutality of faith which takes not only death but its hidden divinity with the same seriousness, so that hundreds of years after Ephesus and Chalcedon we are still startled by it, though it is perfectly obvious that we are bound to speak like this and that the whole truth, the single unique truth of Christianity, is contained in it. But – the same orthodox faith may now say – how do you understand this saying? Be careful not to take it too literally! God died, certainly. But he did so in precisely the same reality whose hopeless tears and death you believe are redeemed when you say, 'He wept too, he died'. But so doing he only made just *another* human reality weep and die, and thus himself remains the Holy One, serenely exalted above death, as he always has been, is, and will be. He wept only in the *flesh*, died in the *flesh*. When what is to be redeemed happens to the Redeemer, then it is itself redeemed. But does it really happen to him, when he remains untouched by the lot of what is to be redeemed? 'Non horruisti virginis uterum', we sing to him! As orthodox Chalcedonian theologians, are we not bound to say: 'You could not and need not ever have dreaded it, because it left you untouched in your real being; and why should your humanity have dreaded it, if it began like everyone [178] else's in your mother's womb?' Or where is your kenosis, which the Apostle adoringly celebrates, if you remained in plenitude, and the emptiness which we have been from the first and which you assumed, need not itself first be emptied but has never known anything but itself – emptiness, tears, death, the whole misery

[44] But what takes place on this side of the α)συγχυ/τοφ is precisely and exactly the history of God *himself*! Primarily at least in the case of Christ. So something of the sort is possible. Anyone who suspected that we were practising Hegelian and not scholastic metaphysics in the preceding note might well reflect on this point.

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of man? Are we ever to escape from this hopeless dialectic? When we say, 'He has remained eternally the same, untouched, immutable, glorious', we say it not only under the tyranny of a rigid metaphysics of infinity, about some pure, unspotted, uninterrupted Being; we say it because we need someone who is not as we are, so that we may be redeemed in that which we are. But if that is why we say it, as soon as we say it the door beyond which we who thirst for redemption sit, seems finally to shut, and there the matter seems to end: he is in heaven and we on earth, he is not where we are, and we are not where he is. Suppose we say: he came to us; he too wept; he too died; he too is flesh; he too is the emptiness, the infinity of which is immeasurable hollowness – then the Redeemer seems to be with us, but precisely a captive with us, one who shares our fate. But what good does it do us, if he too is truly – just what we are? Yet suppose we say: the finite is good: it is by no means one pole of a tragic opposition, from which we have to be redeemed; that which makes redemption necessary is merely 'accidental' to the finite, something from which the finite must be cleansed; the finite has always been finite and yet always as a simple matter of course *capax infiniti* – what need is there then of the Lord, of the God who became flesh? Is the Redemption anything more than a small repair job to something which was good and basically has always remained good? Has he who became man still an eternal function, if it is the prior goodness of the world which supports him and not he who really gives it its foundation and completion? Of course the world is good; obviously there could be a world which would be good and so possible, even if He had not come who stands free in relation to a world already in existence and so has freely come. Of course the stock of meaning and goodness cannot be just consumed without remainder by darkness, death, guilt and damnation. But it is wrong from the start to divide up the meaning and goodness of the world and its need of redemption in this quantitative way. Because it is still good, it can be redeemed. But all this goodness, all this meaning, needs redemption, from the meanest atom to the highest spirit. All is to be redeemed, because as good it is capable of redemption, because [179] apart from Christ it is all lost, as a whole, with all its goodness. All. But how does this happen, when he shares the appearance and the concreteness of this lost state, when he himself becomes what is in need of redemption? He could have done this in another way? He could have saved the world even without this, and redeemed it *into* his freedom and infinity? Certainly: but *in fact* he did so by becoming himself what was in need of redemption, and in this way, this way alone, must take place that one Redemption which really exists and is the only one we know. And that is what is so difficult to understand, because it seems in fact not have helped us at all, both when we take seriously the proposition that he became flesh, and when we take seriously the proposition that by becoming flesh he remained immutable and intact. The dilemma becomes still more acute if we think of the ascended Lord. He must be present in heaven as the *God-man*, we reflect, in the plenitude of his redemptive function, in its complete actuality. As Son of Man in his eternity, can he be more than – let no one take offence at our boldness – more than the conservation of an instrument of past times, a meaningless instrument long since antiquated, fit only for a museum? No wonder textbook theology has nothing to say about Christ in the tractate *de Novissimis*! Thus the dilemma becomes more acute: God would be the Blessed One even without this humanity, and the humanity has strictly nothing more to do than to enjoy a *visio beatifica*, which could also be present in someone who was mere man. The Christ is split into two possibilities, held together only by the formal and empty assertion of their hypostatic unity.

We may put the whole question formally. What remains of the α)διαιρε/τωφ, when the α0συγξυ/τωφ is taken seriously with all its consequences, and how are we then to interpret the α0ξωρι/στοφ? Can it be analysed merely in terms of the *communicatio idiomatum*, and what does this mean if the actual human reality predicated of the Logos as Person does not change the Logos, and so does not make him something which he would not be without this

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humanity? Can the 'average Christian' only get on by allowing the α)συγξυ/τωφ to slip into the background of his consciousness in faith in favour of the α)διαιρε/τωφ, by tacitly thinking in a slightly monophysite way, to this extent at least, that the humanity becomes something merely operated and managed by the divinity, the signal put up to show that the divinity is present in the world – a world which is only concerned [180] with this divinity and where the signal is put up pretty well for our sakes alone, because we wouldn't otherwise notice the bare divinity? Must it be an inevitable feature of our everyday religious life and practice that the Chalcedonian formula should be tacitly cut short like this, so that – here we must weigh up the matter for ourselves honestly – the 'average' non-Christian feels called upon to protest in his unbelief, refusing to admit that God has become man 'like this' and thus believing that he must reject the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation as a myth?

Our discussion of the problems of the Chalcedonian formula cannot set out to offer a precise and detailed answer to the question which has been raised; we shall merely make a few brief observations. Obviously what we should have to do would be to work out a fresh concept of unity (of a substantial, hypostatic kind, clearly). This concept would not *merely* analyse the unity in terms of a logical predication of idiomata (however indispensable this may be), because by itself this would either only be understood 'monophysitically' in the form of a cryptogamic heresy (*sit venia verbo*!), as we have pointed out above; or, while the immutability of the Logos and the Chalcedonian α)συγξυ/τωφ remained clear, the emptily formal abstractions of the unity (for all its being hypostatic [45]) would take on no real fullness of meaning for us. We cannot escape from this trap by looking at the unity as the (even merely logically) subsequent unity of two things to be united, already [181] existing independently as two prior to the unity. The Logos may be regarded in this way; but as soon as the humanity is so conceived of too, the position becomes untenable. It is not enough to say that the humanity has never existed apart from the hypostatic unity *in fact*, that is to say temporally. Nor is it permissible to suppose that it may *merely* be conceived of as always combined *in fact*, on the grounds that its nature is the same as ours, and we certainly exist apart from the hypostatic unity and yet are 'men'.[46] The only way in which Christ's *concrete* humanity may be conceived of in itself as diverse from the Logos is by thinking of it *in so far as* it is united to the Logos. The unity with the Logos must constitute it in its diversity from him, that is, precisely as a human nature; the unity must itself be the ground of the diversity. In this way, the diverse term as such is the united[47] reality of him who as prior unity (which can thus only be God) is the ground of the diverse term, and therefore, while remaining

[45] We repeat: anyone who is tempted by our speaking of a formal emptiness of the unity to maintain that on the contrary, the unity in question is a hypostatic one, and thus a perfectly 'full' and close unity, must be warned that he should consider what precisely it is that he is saying. He will then realize (supposing that he has taken the average Christology as his starting-point) that his explanation of the hypostatic unity is conceived of in terms of a *communicatio idiomatum*. And then he will have to ask himself what it means for the Logos to remain 'unchanged' by this unity, when any sort of history which it implies takes place on this side of the abyss between God and creature, and what is more, without confusion. He is bound to indicate what remains of the former given the latter. If he says that this is just the mystery (and that we ought not to let go of one end of the famous chain because we don't know how it is linked with the other end, which we also hold), then we must ask with all moderation whether this mystery might not permit of being formulated more clearly, so as to come before the eye of faith as a whole; in this way the impression would not arise that the one truth must be utterly blotted out 'quoad nos' when we turn to look at the other.

[46] It will appear from what follows that this consideration is at any rate lacking in force. Everyone who is a Thomist in Christology must grant this. Further, it must be borne in mind that a purely *de facto* unity in the strict sense would be an accidental one.

[47] *Geeinte*. Fr Rahner gives *einen* (to unite) the sense of an act by which one of the two terms of a unity is the cause of this unity. It is difficult to make the English 'to unite' bear this sense: in English it is usually some third term which unites the other two, a suggestion which would be quite unsuitable here. *Einen* here means simply and solely 'to one'. – Tr.

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'immutable' 'in himself', truly comes to be *in* what he constitutes *as* something united (*geeinte*) with him *and* diverse from him.[48] In other words, the ground by which the diverse term is constituted and the ground by which the unity with the diverse term is constituted must as such be strictly the same. But if what makes the human nature ek-sistent[49] [182] as something diverse from God, and what unites this nature with the Logos, are *strictly* the same, then we have a unity which (a) cannot, as uniting unity (*einende Eienheit*), be confused with the united unity (*geeinte Einheit*) (this is not permissible)[50]; (b) which unites *precisely by* making existent, and *in this way is* grasped in a fullness of content without any relapse into the empty assertion of the united unity; and finally (c) which does not make the α)συγξυ/τωφ look like a sort of external counterbalance to the unity, always threatening to dissolve it again, but shows precisely how it enters into the *constitution* of the united unity as an intrinsic factor, in such a way that unity and distinction become mutually conditioning and intensifying characteristics, not competing ones. Properly speaking, we should now go on first to examine the question whether this position is in harmony with the Thomist theory of the unity of Christ, and how far it is so (we shall [183] not pronounce any final judgment on this matter here); secondly, to consider how far and in what way such a position makes it necessary to go back to a *more general* theory of the relationship between God and his world, of which the relationship 'Logos-human nature' would appear as a special case. Unfortunately this is not possible here either. All we shall do is to offer the following brief note. It might be supposed that any attempt to connect the general relationship of God to the creation with the relationship of the Logos to his humanity would immediately come to grief owing to the fact that the creation is the work of the efficient causality of the *one* God, while the hypostatic union is a relationship of the Logos alone. Before this is taken as finally settling the question, it would be necessary to offer a solution to another question: is it really agreed that another divine Person could also have become man? Or could it not be that –

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[48] It follows from this statement that the assertion of God's 'immutability', of the lack of any real relation between God and the world, is in a true sense a dialectical statement. One may and indeed must say this, without for that reason being a Hegelian. For it is true, come what may, and a dogma, that the Logos himself has become man: thus that he himself has become something that he had not always been (*formaliter*); and therefore that what has so become is, as just itself and of itself, God's reality. Now if this is a truth of faith, ontology must allow itself to be guided by it (as in analogous instances in the doctrine of the Trinity), must seek enlightenment from it, and grant that while God remains immutable 'in himself', he can come to be 'in the other', and that both assertions must really and truly be made of the same God as God.

[49] See Introduction.

[50] The weakness of the Christology associated with Scotus and Tiphanus is that it cannot distinguish these two concepts: it declares that the human nature and the divine nature are united in the Person of the Logos. When it is asked by what (i.e. by what uniting unity) they are united (in the united unity), the original formula is repeated, so that in fact no answer is forthcoming. If someone goes on to maintain that it is impossible to provide a further answer because it is precisely a mystery with which we are dealing here, it would be necessary to reply that this account would suffice *provided* that the mystery given expression in the original formula remains clear in its meaning (though not in its explanation) even when no answer is offered to the further question. But if this is not the case, i.e. if the united unity in the sense intended (a sense which, though undetected, must be there even in a mystery) does not permit of being thought unless the uniting unity comes into sight, then the *docta ignorantia* of Scotus and Tiphanus is simply not appropriate here – no matter how far the ancient tradition provides or fails to provide a further explicit question and answer as to the uniting unity. Someone may object that it is in fact the one hypostasis which is the uniting unity for the two natures. To this we must reply that this may well be true, so far as it is a matter of the two natures in their mutual concord. But the question here is to what extent the divine hypostasis unites the human nature to himself. When the question is formulated like this, the hypostasis, *in so far a*s it is just the static concept of *ens per se et in se* which is involved, is something to be united – one 'part' of the united unity, and not the uniting unity. Thus it must be asked *by what* (i.e. by what uniting unity) the hypostasis unites to himself the human nature. Putting the same thing in another way: unity (as a formal transcendental property of an entity) is never something which can be set up as such, but is always the result of some other state or process among entities. Thus one has neither explained nor even understood what one is saying, when one elucidates unity by – unity.

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when the unity of the created with the Creator given in creation itself attains by God's free act that unique height in which an existence as distinction from the Creator is bestowed upon a creature, an existence through which the distinct term becomes absolutely and supremely God's very own – could it not then be that this God is necessarily the Logos and no one else? What theological considerations would suffice positively to exclude this view? But if they are in fact produced, the suggested objection ceases to be so obviously compelling as *it* seemed to be at first.

Now, if the positing of Christ's humanity in its free distinction from God itself becomes in this way the act of unification (*Einigung*) with the Logos, it further becomes clear why this humanity, in its concrete existence as such, is *eo ipso* the mysterious manifestation, the quasi-sacramental presence (*Anwesenheit*) of God with us. We have constantly to remind ourselves that human-being is not some absolutely terminated quantity, which, while persisting as a quite self-contained whole indifferent to all else, is combined with some other thing (in this case the Logos) by a wholly external miracle. Human being is rather a reality absolutely open upwards; a reality which reaches its highest (though indeed 'unexacted') perfection, the realization of the highest possibility of man's being, when in it the Logos himself becomes existent in the world. The fact that there is human being which is not of itself the presence of the Logos existing into the world, is no more a proof of the falsity of this view than the proposition, 'The *visio beatifica* is the most perfect realization of (pure) [184] human nature', can be objected to on the ground that human being' is also to be found without the *visio beatifica*. The fact that an ('obediential') potency is only fulfilled by a free act from above is no argument against the view that this act is the pure fulfilment of just this potency for what it is in itself. It is quite true that *we* first become acquainted with human being in a less significant realization, and consequently derive our concept 'man' from this (and so can look forward from *our* point of view to a higher actualization of this concept only by way of an empty anticipation of the range, as yet undetermined, as yet open upwards, of our transcendence as a possibility perhaps possible). But this does not mean that we are not entitled to sketch the outlines of a theological anthropology from the starting-point of Christology, now that this has been revealed to us – no doubt by using our terrestrial concepts; nor is it perverse to conceive our human selves in terms of that Man who as such is God's presence for us, existent in the world. Only someone who forgets that the essence of man (although in a specifically human way, which is to say, in, accordance with the point of departure, in terms of a point in space and time) is to be unbounded (thus in this sense, to be un-definable) can suppose that it is impossible for there to be a man, who, precisely by being man in the fullest sense (which we never attain), is God's Existence into the world. But if this is the case, we only radically understand ourselves for what we really are, when we grasp the fact that we are existential beings because God willed to be man, and thereby willed that we should be those in whom he as man can only encounter his own self by loving us. The fact that God could have had a different will for us, that he *freely* willed us 'so', does not necessarily mean that he has not in fact precisely willed us 'so'. This 'so' is not just something mental, external to what is willed and without significance for its real consistency; it is a genuine 'existential', a mode of our own existence, without which we can indeed grasp ourselves as question, but never as the answer which it alone gives to the question which we are.[51]

[51] *Translator's note*. The reader may find it helpful to bear in mind the notion of existence as 'self-realization', a 'coming to the light', and this as eminently realized in human existence. It might be said that God, as supremely actual, cannot in this sense 'exist', cannot come to be himself: the Incarnation is what allows him to 'come to the light', 'existent into the world'. In this last paragraph, I take it that Fr Rahner wishes to point out that we are existential beings (*wir die sind, die existieren*) because of God's will to be an existential being himself and thus to achieve self-realization in common with other beings defined by their capacity to realize themselves, in a

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[185] At the beginning of this section it was said that our rough knowledge of what man is, when we used the formula of Chalcedon, was due to the fact that we daily learnt what it is to be human by experience of each other and of ourselves. The slightest of discussions of the problems of this formula has shown that the attempt to advance our understanding of what this unity (unconfused and undivided) is which makes the human nature that of the Logos itself, would also further our understanding of who man is; we see that Christology is at once beginning and end of anthropology, and that for all eternity such an anthropology is really theo-logy. For God himself has become man. The less we merely think of this humanity as something added on to God, and the more we understand it as God's very presence in the world and hence (not, all the same) see it in a true, spontaneous vitality and freedom before God, the more intelligible does the abiding mystery of our faith become, and also an expression of our very own existence.

In this third section we shall discuss in more detail, though without any attempt to treat them systematically, the problems of a modern Christology; and for this purpose we shall go beyond the immediate range of the Chalcedonian formula.

1. Would it not be possible and appropriate to look for some sort of Transcendental Deduction[52] of faith in Christ? What we have in mind is an inquiry, more explicit than is usual, as to why man is capable of faith in the Christ of Christian dogma. Someone may answer 'He is the hearer of a message which is of itself credible, a message which exhibits its credibility by means of ascertainable facts.' But this [186] would be to overlook the fact that it is 'not only the knowability of the *object* which must be examined, but also the distinctive nature of the *subject* and *his* specific openness with regard to just that object. If this object is something indifferent and contingent, which has incontestably always been found within the region of this subject's experience, the transcendental deduction of the subject's capacity to know with respect to *this* object is simply that of the meaning and extent of his knowledge *in general*. But just in so far as Christ is the freest and in this sense (but also only in this sense) the most 'contingent' fact in all reality, so it is true that he is also at the same time the most decisive and important, and moreover that which is the most clearly related to man (. . . *propter nos homines*). *His* subjective knowability cannot tacitly be thought of as simply subsumed under the conclusions of a general metaphysics and critique of knowledge. He is too unique for that, too mysterious and existentially significant. It cannot be objected that such a 'transcendental deduction' of Christ's knowability by man would be to prejudge the question of what is contained in Christ, who can in fact be known only by obediently listening to a message which has gone forth in history. Nor can it be objected that such a deduction would imply the *necessity* of the fact of Christ, for this was something freely established by God. Both these considerations are unacceptable. An *a priori* sketch of the 'Idea of Christ' as the correlative object of the transcendental structure of man and his knowledge, even if it came to anything *purely a priori*[53], could never decide the question as to where and in whom this 'Idea' is reality (and without this reality this 'Idea' is of less existential significance than any other). It is only from the message of 'fides ex auditu' that

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communion, a common 'presence', of love. For the meaning of the noun 'existential', see Introduction.

[52] In the Kantian sense. – Tr.

[53] It did not come to anything *before* Jesus Christ. And now it is no longer capable of coming to anything, because he exists and it would be a delusion to suppose it possible – even in a purely methodological way – to abstract from him entirely.

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this question could ever be answered. If and in so far as such an abstractly formal, *a priori* Christology were to offer a kind of formal schema of Christ to the Christology which hears the message *a posteriori*, we should reflect that such an *a priori* Christology is wholly capable of taking shape in the illuminating light of the grace of the real Christ (one need neither reflect on this nor be able to reflect on this and yet one's thought can move within the space enclosed by Christ's grace); we should thus consider that the *a priori* schema can owe its existence to the real object *a posteriori*, [187] and thus by no means implies a mastery of it. The question whether God might not wish to show us his grace, and what is meant if he did wish to show it, the deduction of a 'desiderium naturale' of the *visio beatifica*, neither makes the message from without superfluous nor restricts its content *a priori*, although these objects belong to the same strictly supernatural order as the *unio hypostatica*. Anyone who understands that an *a priori* openness to something is far from making this 'something' a *debitum* in a conceptually necessary way[54], will not say that such a deduction stands or falls with the affirmation of the necessity of the Incarnation.

A deduction of this kind must aim at showing that man is at once a concretely corporeal and historical entity on earth and an absolutely transcendent one. Accordingly he looks out – and looks out in the course of his history – to see whether the supreme fulfilment (however free it may remain) of his being and his expectation is not on its way to meet him: a fulfilment in which his (otherwise so empty) concept of the Absolute is wholly fulfilled and his (otherwise so blind) gaze can 'see through' to the absolute God himself. Thus man is he who has to await God's free Epiphany in his history. Jesus Christ is this Epiphany. It can, therefore, remain a completely open question whether the content of the *a posteriori* dogma simply 'coincides' with the Idea of Christ, which is the correlative object of this transcendental deduction, or whether this correlative only 'corresponds' to the real Christ declared to the hearing of faith and is essentially surpassed by him, although in its own axis.

An undertaking of this sort would bean important one. By means of it a religious *a priori* which lives today in every man who believes in Christ would achieve reflexive self-awareness. For this religious piety can only draw its life in fact from the historical Christ (from him and from no one else, from him and not from an Idea!) because man is continually kept in movement by the existential need to possess God concretely, to 'have to' possess him. Without such a deduction, and unless it is brought home to man as something really achieved, the historical message concerning Jesus the Son of God is always in danger of being dismissed as a mere piece of mythology. A deduction [188] of this kind might also contribute to the conceptual equipment used by Christology proper.

2. A theological phenomenology of the religious attitude with regard to Christ is greatly to be desired. It cannot be denied that in the ordinary religious act of the Christian, when it is not referred precisely to the historical life of Jesus by way of meditation, Christ finds a place only as God. We see here the mysterious monophysite undercurrent in ordinary Christology and a tendency to let the creaturely be overwhelmed in face of the Absolute, as though God were to become greater and more real by the devaluation and cancellation of the creature. Another sign of this is to be observed in the fact that Christ's humanity no longer has any part to play in the theology of the *visio beatifica*, as this is ordinarily presented. Theology is only concerned with the One who has become man in so far as he appeared at the historical time of his life on earth as Teacher, Founder and Redeemer. There is hardly any developed doctrine

[54] This proof can only conclude if the potency, the openness, etc., were to be purely and simply meaningless without just the act which is in question and which is itself foreshadowed in the potency. But that is by no means the case with the potency in question here.

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of his abiding function as man; and correspondingly, the doctrine of the specific character of our abiding relationship to him as Man-for-all-eternity is extremely fragmentary. Something is said about the adoration which is due to him even as man. But no one seems to have much to say about the fact that our basic religious acts, which are continually effected through the mediation of Christ, have an 'incarnational' structure. There is hardly any mention of Christ in the tractate *de Virtutibus Theologicis*: the discussion moves merely in the thin atmosphere of pure theological metaphysics. Reflexion on the permanence of Christ's humanity according to Chalcedon, which alone really brings God within the reach of our acts, has not yet penetrated as far as these tractates on the theological virtues or on *religio*.[55] The Council of Chalcedon has still to conquer here. The anti-Arian reaction, the special character of the Latin doctrine of the Trinity and the existential undercurrent of monophysite tendency in Christology, have all delayed this victory. But this very fact, that Christ more or less vanishes for an act momentarily directing itself to God, has led to a situation for which there are other causes as well, in which the Incarnation [189] appears to be almost a transient episode in God's activity in his world and is thus unreflexively felt to be a myth unworthy of faith. In view of this situation, a theological phenomenology of an 'incarnational' piety, valid now and always, would not only have significance for the doctrine of the spiritual life; it would also be important as a means of removing the basic causes which have led to a demand for 'demythologization'.

3. The first proposal (no. 1) would further suggest that dogmatic Christology might pay a little attention to the general history of religions. There is no intention here of proposing a 'hunt for parallels' to the doctrine of the Incarnation in other religions, nor ultimately of showing that such parallels do not really exist. In the last resort the point of such a study would be to examine the history of religions from the standpoint of our knowledge of the historical Incarnation, and from this standpoint alone, the only one to offer a really illuminating interpretation of a history otherwise unintelligible in itself: and to examine this history with a view to seeing whether and how far man in fact shows himself in history for what he unquestionably is in the depth of his concrete nature: a being who in the course of his history looks out for the presence of God himself. When the early fathers kept a lookout for such an activity of the Logos, the beginnings of his Incarnation as it were, in saving history before Christ (at least in the Old Testament), they were better advised than we are, for whom God rules there simply from heaven. It may in general be allowed that the history of religions[56] as a whole only escapes the mortal danger of infecting Christians with some sort of relativism when it is integrated (as Yes or No) in the single history of the dialogue between God and the world, a dialogue which flows into the Word become flesh, and when it is not interpreted merely as the product of a purely terrestrial religiosity of rationalism and as a human perversion. If this is true, it holds good also of the history of religions in so far as they were an unconscious Yes or No to the Word of God who was to come in human flesh.

[190] 4. Would it be a delusion to suppose that the abstract formalism of Christology has also contributed to a decrease of interest in a theology of the mysteries of Christ's human life? There is still a lively theological (and not just pious) interest in the mysteries of the Life

[55] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Die ewige Bedeutung der Menschheit Jesu für unser Gottesverhältnis', *Geist und Leben* XXVI (1953) pp. 279-88 (which appears in vol. III of the German edition of these studies).

[56] For the first time since the patristic era, this history is becoming a reality for the West again, in the perichoresis of all cultures and historical movements which is in fact taking place today. Cf. H. de Lubac, *La Rencontre du Bouddhisme et l'Occident*, Paris 1952.

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of Jesus in St Thomas and even in Suarez. In the ordinary textbook-Christology current today, one has to keep a pretty close lookout to find anything about Christ's Ascension, as if this was a matter primarily for *theologia fundamentalis*. The Passion is treated of from an exceedingly formal viewpoint in soteriology, which seems very little interested in the concreteness of the Passion on the ground that some other moral deed of Christ's would have redeemed us 'just as well' if God had so pleased. What do we hear of Christ's Circumcision, Baptism, his prayer, the Transfiguration, the Presentation in the Temple, the Mount of Olives, the abandonment by God on the Cross, the descent into the underworld, the Ascension into heaven and so on? Nothing or pretty well nothing.[57] All this is left to piety, and it is rarely that we find anything more than applications of a moral and edifying kind here. The mysteries of Christ, which precisely in their once-for-all character and indissoluble historicity form the law of once-for-all world history, are all too easily misconceived as mere illustrations and examples, as 'instances', in which general moral laws, which are just as clear even apart from Christ's life, are exemplified. Instead of a genuine theology of Christ's life, we find that the theology (not in itself unjustified) of certain abstract privileges enjoyed by Christ has forced itself into the foreground; and that this theology draws attention to certain features (in the field of knowledge, for instance, Christ's *visio* in the course of his life on earth, his infused knowledge and so on) which distinguish [191] him from us, and even these features it does not always postulate for reasons which are really illuminating. This development is conditioned (if not perhaps with a very high degree of self-awareness) by that purely formal understanding of the unity of Christ as united, of which we have spoken above. In a conception like this an event in the field of Christ's humanity only has 'interest' in so far as it is dignified by being adopted by Christ's person, and thus precisely not in itself; or again in so far as it possesses special features not to be found elsewhere among human beings. Once attention has been turned in these two directions, the only soteriology to be expected is of that single type which (perfectly correct in itself) we do in fact find even today. This still contains a section on certain permanent 'consectaria unionis hypostaticae', but lacks any theological consideration of the history (which is in itself theological in the highest degree) of the particular, once-for-all events of the life of Christ as man, born of a woman, subject to history, law and death. This human reality as human (not as something abstract, of course) in its 'bare' humanity can only be of theological importance if it is as such (as just this) the manifestation of God in the world, not just as something joined on in a logically subsequent way; if that is to say, it is one with the Logos in virtue of being the reality of the Logos itself and not the reality of the Logos in virtue of being 'one' (how?) with the Logos. If we are to have a true theology of the human life of Jesus (not merely a theology of the extraordinary in Jesus' life) we must recover that right view of things which does not (by 'abstracting') overlook just that which cannot be really separated from what is human in Jesus: we must learn to see that what is human in Jesus is not something human (and as such uninteresting for us in the world) and '*in addition*' God's as well (and in this respect alone important, this special character however always merely hovering above the human and forming its exterior setting, as it were). On the contrary, in this view the everyday human reality of this life is

[57] The Biblical exegetes proper often seem today to be intimidated by the dogmatic theologians and their true – and often presumed – office as censors. They take the utmost care to avoid going a single step beyond the letter of the text and getting down to the real theological issues involved. What really happened at the Transfiguration? What took place at the Ascension? What did eating involve for Christ after his Resurrection? What really happened when he descended into Hell? What is Mt 27:51 s. telling us about the saints who rose from the dead, and what is its theological significance? What took place when Jesus was tempted? What are we to think about his remaining behind in the Temple as a boy? How are the postulates of dogmatic theology capable of being harmonized with Jesus' wonderment, his 'ignorance' and so on? It cannot be said that the exegetes have given much sign of theological heart for these questions and others like them.

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God's Ek-sistence, in the sense cautiously determined above: it is human reality *and so* God's, and *vice versa*. Then it will no longer be necessary to ask the question: What is there exceptional about this life over and beyond ours as we are already familiar with it, whose heights we have already climbed and into whose depths we have already plunged, what is there about it (still strictly only as a plus-quantity) which could make it important for us too? But the question we must ask is: What does our life mean, this [192] life which we ultimately fail to understand when we examine ourselves, however familiar with it we may be, what does it mean when it is first and last the life of God? It is because we need this ultimate interpretation of our lives, one which is not to be had elsewhere, that we must study the theology of Christ's life and death. Why does this happen so seldom in current Christology?

5. Thus we have reached the point of laying down requirements for *soteriology*, and have indicated why and how the average textbook-Christology leads to inadequacies or omissions in this field. The gravamen of our charge may be simply formulated as follows: as far as soteriology is concerned, the average theology current in our schools today is only interested in the formal value of Christ's redemptive act, not in its concrete content, the inner structure of the redemptive process in itself. Now the account usually given of the infinite worth of Christ's act as regards satisfaction and merit, on account of the infinite dignity of the Person, is a perfectly correct one. But it would be false to suppose that this accounts for all that is essential in soteriology. Yet this is in fact what is supposed. The simplest proof of this statement is found in the fact that the satisfaction theory in soteriology not only assumes tacitly but also explicitly maintains that Christ would equally have been able to redeem us by any other moral action, provided only that God had so willed it and had accepted this action as vicarious satisfaction. The inner content of the redemptive act (i.e. the Cross, death, obedience, abandonment by God, death due to the action of sinners themselves) thus only has significance for the Redemption as such in its abstract moral quality, which as it were gives up its substratum and its matter for the value which this action acquires in virtue of the dignity of the divine Person; the precise content of the action makes no difference. Now we have no intention of denying that God would have been able to forgive us our sin in regard to any one of Christ's acts at all, and that this forgiveness would be 'Redemption', and what is more Redemption on account of a 'satisfactio condigna'. But if the matter is so regarded, essential facts and problems of a really adequate soteriology are overlooked, in that a soteriology is bound to say how *we* were redeemed in concrete fact. The view which we have just described supposes that it has already proved that all the concrete particulars of the redemptive act really do not belong to the cause as [193] such of the Redemption as such. But in fact all it makes clear is that an *abstractum* of Redemption can be achieved by means of various species of one generic redemptive cause. *If* it is true that the Redemption consists *only* in God's purpose of forgiveness, conceived of in juridical and moral terms, or is considered only under this single (formal and abstract) respect, the view we have described may be accepted as the correct one. But what reason is there for saying that this presupposition is correct? Strictly speaking, one and the same effect can only be brought about by a *single* cause. If the causes *as such* differ, they cannot have the same effect. Thus when it is said that we could have been redeemed 'in another way', one of two things may be meant. *Either it* is meant that these differing causes do not in fact differ *as such*, that they are distinguished from each other in their subject only by modalities which are simply indifferent so far as their causality as such is concerned (as two knives, for instance, which are distinguished from each other only by the colour of their handles, can really cut in 'exactly the same way'), and consequently can really bring about the same 'Redemption'. *Or* it is meant that these causes differ even as such; thus they do not bring into being exactly the

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same Redemption, even if these different Redemptions can be conceived of subsequently in a conceptual unity of an abstract, generic kind such that in *this* sense it is possible to say that God could have effected 'the same' Redemption through some other redemptive action of Christ's. It would be necessary to prove that the first sense of the proposition is the right one; it cannot simply be presupposed. In fact no proof can be offered. This means that when Scripture says, 'We have been redeemed by Christ's death (with all that death, and death alone, implies) and by his obedience (his concrete obedience, realized precisely in death, and capable of being realized only in death)', we must assume, until the contrary is proved, that *this* is what characterizes the redemptive action *in so far as* it is cause, and not other characteristics, fundamentally unimportant as far as its causality is concerned, as the usual version of the theory of satisfaction assumes. This is not to deny that this death in obedience, which is *as such* the cause of our Redemption, is precisely cause in virtue of being the death of the Logos become man and thus of participating in the infinite dignity of the Person. If the death as such is the cause of Redemption, it naturally follows that *this* cause has not brought about exactly the same Redemption as would have been achieved if we had been redeemed in some other way. [194] These are primarily considerations of an abstract, methodological kind. But they do point to the fact that the soundness of the moral and juridical satisfaction theory, with regard to what it says positively, does not serve as a proof that there is nothing more to be said in soteriology.

There are various points at which any attempt to complete positively and give real content to the abstract formalism of the average treatment of soteriology would have to begin. (a) We could first enquire whether the various theories of the *unio hypostatica* have any significance for the foundations of the satisfaction theory, and what that significance might be, for the doctrine, that is, that the infinite Person endows with infinite value even the actions he performs in his human nature. It is certainly not obvious that these theories about the hypostatic union are of little importance for this soteriological doctrine. If we do not wish to defend any sort of juridical and moral Idealism or a modern theory of 'values', and if the principle 'ens (reale) et bonum convertuntur' is true, then in the last resort every 'value', every 'dignity' (just to use another word and to look at what is involved from another point of view) *is* a reality, a real entitative determination, and does not merely 'rest upon' such a determination. Transposing our proposition into the ontological order, then, what does it mean to say, 'The Person endows its action with a certain definite dignity'? The variety of theories concerning the *unio hypostatica* cannot be without importance for this question, the answer to which again is of decisive significance for the precise meaning of the proposition to be transposed. Both the inquiry as to the uniting unity, the essence of the intrinsically hypostatic function of the Logos with respect to the human nature, as well as the inquiry as to the independence of Christ's human reality given precisely by this unity, must, if they are properly conducted, be capable of giving the satisfaction theory new depth. (b) It would then be necessary to work out in greater detail a theology of death in general and of Christ's in particular. Only then would it be possible to give a really adequate answer to the question: Why is it that we have been redeemed by Christ's *death* (and by nothing else), and what exactly does a redemption of this kind look like, which is brought about in just this way and no other? It is no exaggeration to say that a theology on these lines is still entirely lacking in our average modern treatment. Nothing is said about it in soteriology, and pretty well nothing in the tractate *de Novissimis*. Death would have to be [195] seen in its indissoluble unity of action and passion.[58] Only so can it become clear that the Redemption takes place in virtue of Christ's obedience (action) and yet in virtue of his death (itself); not, however (as is generally

[58] On what follows, see the short sketch: K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie des Todes', *Synopsis* III (1949), pp. 87-112. (Also, by the same author, 'Zur Theologie des Todes', ZKT LXXIX (1957), pp. 1-44. – Tr.)

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said in a minimizing and superficial way), in virtue of the 'Passion bringing death in its train', for then once again this Passion would as such remain outside the redemptive act and would form merely the matter 'in which' obedience is actively engaged – something in the last resort accidental and for which substitutes may be found at will. Death would have to be set forth as the connatural manifestation of alienation from God by sin (and not just as the externally inflicted 'penalty', something for which God could just as well have found some substitute) *and* at the same time, as the manifestation and constitutive sign of absolute obedience to God (at least when Christ dies this death or someone with him).[59] It would further have to be shown that in spite of the separation of body and soul, death does not simply withdraw man from the world and make him acosmic; rather it transposes him into a new and more comprehensive relationship to the world, freed from the limitation to a single point in space and time characteristic of his earthly existence.[60] This result (together with much else which would also have to be considered) would make it possible to achieve a better understanding of the significance of Christ's descent into hell, as something which does not *merely* signify a phase of his historical existence made void by what happened after. More searching questions could then be raised about the possibility of reaching a more concrete understanding of the lasting efficacity of Christ's humanity with regard to grace than is [196] allowed of in the rather thin formalism of the Thomistic teaching of the instrumental causality of Christ's humanity.[61] But it would then once more be necessary to show how all this is connected explicitly with the proposition that the humanity and the human events in the history of this humanity in Christ are the ek-sistence of God himself in the world.

In thus attempting to give a deeper meaning to ordinary soteriology, we should take account of another point of view, which could also have found a place in an earlier stage of our discussion. Scripture speaks to us in many places of Christ's σα/ρχ.[62] We ordinarily take this to be a reference to Christ's human nature or to his body. This is quite sound; but it clearly fails to exhaust the Scriptural meaning. What *we* involuntarily think of when we speak of Christ's humanity and his human nature is nearly always just that element in the meaning of sarx which belongs to the necessary and permanent constitution of the entities so characterized. But sarx is intended to characterize man or his corporeality precisely in so far as this possesses a quite definite character arising out of an historical development within a history of salvation and damnation. Flesh is the weak, the corruptible, consecrated to death, the dimension within which sin becomes manifest and tangible: it is man's essential reality in so far as it did in fact become flesh at the beginning, yet in free history, and so in primordial history. The Logos assumed the 'flesh of sin'. We must take this phrase seriously, and we must say what exactly 'flesh of sin' is. Only then can we understand why it is in Christ's flesh precisely that we are redeemed. Only then can we see that the Event of the Redemption has taken place precisely in that dimension of man's personal existence which is capable of being simultaneously the dimension in which his personal guilt becomes historically tangible *and* that in which his guilt is overcome. A really adequate soteriology cannot renounce the task of laying as its foundation a sharply defined theology of what is meant by 'flesh'. We should then see more clearly that Christ had not only to be 'like us in nature' so as to be our

[59] It is not possible here to show that death has a basic nature open to further determination, such that it becomes the death of sin or the death of redemption according as it is undergone in disobedience or obedience. Nor is it possible to show here that this is why death is 'natural', indeed that this is the fact on which is based the possibility of the above-mentioned existential-ontological dialectic of death as Adam's death and Christ's death.
[60] That the soul is not in consequence of this 'everywhere' is illuminating. This would certainly imply a more extensive relationship to the world in that dimension precisely which is abandoned in virtue of death (until the Resurrection). Thus the theory indicated above has no connexion with Luther's doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's resurrected body.
[61] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Die ewige Bedeutung der Menschheit Jesu', pp. 279-88.
[62] Jn 1:14; 6:51; Rom 8:3; Eph 2:14; Col 1:22; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb. 5:7; 1 Pet 3:18; 4:1; 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 7.

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Redeemer, but with us had to spring 'from one' (Heb 2:11), our brother according to the flesh. For he could only possess this flesh, which was to be redeemed and in [197] which we were to be redeemed, if he who was 'born of woman' shared our origin as well as our nature. Here again we see that a satisfaction theory of a purely formal and juridical kind does not exhaust the Biblical truth of Redemption. For in such a theory the Logos would have been able to redeem us whatever creaturely form he assumed, and not only in a flesh derived from a single origin and stamped by the history of man's sin.

What has been said in this fifth section only has any real importance for our purposes in so far as the usual soteriology too shows the same kind of formal and almost juridical abstractness which we have noticed in ordinary Christology today, and for the same basic reason. Any progress beyond Chalcedon, and thus really any further insight into the meaning of its definition, would then be to the advantage of both tractates. We intend to offer only a few brief indications here.

6. There are two distinct points as regards which the problems raised by the old Christology deserve fresh consideration.

a. The *single* Christ.

The question as to whether the Logos did not also become *angel* was raised as early as Origen. Today it is less possible than ever to dismiss as an idle speculation the question why there is and will be only *one* Christ, and one Christ as man, simply by appealing to 'God's decree'. There are indeed decrees of God and ultimate dispositions of his free choice. But free acts of this kind do not exclude the possibility of our asking what they mean. On the contrary, it is precisely God's field of action that is the field of the greatest intelligibility, more so than the field of a mechanical and meaningless 'necessity'. And so we should not appeal to God's decrees and his 'unsearchable' will in order to lighten our theological labours or dispense with them altogether. Anyone who wishes to proclaim the Incarnation as something worthy of faith, that is, who wishes to make it possible for modern man to assimilate this Truth of all truths, must find a place for it in his *single* historical world. But it is no longer a simple matter for modern man to accept as worthy of faith the position that the event of the Incarnation should have taken place just once. Why is there no Godmanhood in general? Or better: why does this exist in fact (as regards grace and [198] eternal life) in such a way as precisely to 'require'[63] that the *unio hypostatica* in the strict sense took place just once? How are we to understand the inner connexion and unity of the cosmos as a whole, the nature of man and angel, in such a way as to make it comprehensible that the Logos became 'only' man, and yet that as such he is Head and End of the whole cosmos (including the angels), and this not only in respect of a higher dignity (than that of the angels) but also in respect of a real function which he exercises with regard to the angels as well? We have to offer a picture of the world in which the *one* Christ, the one Christ as *man*, seems meaningful. This point is of kerygmatic importance today. A clearer and more explicit treatment of it would help to show (and this itself is important) that the classical Christology of the dogma is in no need of demythologization.

b. The same is true of the *time* of the Incarnation.

The Fathers took a more active interest in this question than the thinkers of later times. Today it has become important again: on account of the prolongation in time both of human

[63] It need hardly be said that the question is left open here as to how far this 'requirement' signifies a pure *convenientia*, i.e. a genuine connexion of meaning obtaining in objective reality, or a strict necessity.

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history *before* Christ, as well as of possible history *after* Christ. Both are more extensive, stirred by more various movements, than the Middle Ages used to think. In the expectations of many men, the higher development of humanity seems only to reach its ultimately intended realization in a mastery of the material world, the unification of men in society and their planned, i.e. rationally ordered life in common. It is of the first importance to show, with a sympathetic and yet critical regard for current patterns of thought, why this expectation does not contradict the fact of faith, that the finally decisive Event of history for all time to come has happened already: God's becoming man. To the stature of this Event all humanity can only asymptotically grow, in all its cosmic and moral dimensions, in the dimensions of grace and eschatology, whatever conceivable 'evolution' it may undergo. It can never surpass this Event, because the summit of all 'evolution', the irruption of God into the world and the radical opening of the world to the free infinity of God in Christ, has already been realized for the whole world, however true it may be that what has already taken place definitively in this Event must still reveal itself within the world [199] in the reflexion and image of all history still to come, in an eschatological climax.[64]

7. It would be to the benefit of both Christology and the other dogmatic tractates if both were more clearly aware of their unity. The fact of this unity has already been touched on more than once in the foregoing discussions. The division and structure of the tractates in the textbooks of dogmatic theology available today is a problem in its own right, and a much more serious and important problem than is generally recognized. Perspectives and existential allocations of attention are very nearly as important as the question, 'Is what is said here correct?' We shall say nothing about these matters here. But even within the customary framework of a modern treatise of dogmatic theology more Christology could be studied in the other tractates than is actually the case; it would be highly beneficial for these tractates. We have already discussed the way in which the truth and richness of content both of a 'protology' as well as of an eschatology essentially depend on its becoming clear that man and his environment and his history are from the first devised with a view to Christ, and that the man Christ at the end of all history still retains his fundamental significance. The tractate *de Gratia* is commonly entitled *de Gratia Christi*. Commonly it contains little else about Christ. And yet we only have a Christian understanding of grace when it is conceived of not only in the most metaphysical way possible, as a divinization, but rather as assimilation to Christ. And the existential transposition of this is the following of Christ, something about which moral theology ought to say rather more, although it offers a schema less handy for casuistical purposes than the Ten Commandments or other schemata of natural moral law. Furthermore, why is it only in Christology that Christ is said to have sanctifying grace in his soul? Why is it not stated conversely that grace is the unfolding within human nature of [200] the union of the human with the Logos (in the sense mentioned above and is therefore, and *arising thence*, something which can also be had in those who are not the ek-sistence of the Logos in time and history but do belong to his necessary environment? Sacramental theology is again becoming more Christological today, so too the theology of the Church as a doctrine of the 'Mystical Body of Christ'. A theology history, and what is more a Christocentric one, is almost entirely lacking.

[64] In such a theology of time in Christ, it would naturally also be necessary to discuss the question to what extent the grace of Christ, the communication of the Spirit, justification, could exist *before* Christ; and again, why, for example, there was no *visio beatifica* before Christ, and why, then, in the former case the 'post Christum' became in the historical development of theology a 'propter Christum', 'intuitu meritorum Christi futurorum', while this is not possible in the latter case.

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8. Would it not be fitting for someone to make a systematic study of the ways in which the real teaching of faith about Christ is unreflexively misconceived? This is not a question of the 'official' heresies from the earliest days up to the liberalism of our time, or if these, only in so far as behind them a profound misconception of the real dogma is at work. It would rather be a matter of investigating with exactitude and system what sort of idea the average Christian and non-Christian really has of Christ, whether it be to 'believe' this idea or reject it as not worthy of belief. It would probably emerge that the content of this idea by no means coincides with the real dogma, or at any rate renders the dogma with really serious, that is disastrous, distortions and omissions. We should then have to ask which misunderstood formulations of the dogma, either in solemn pronouncements or (what is of more practical importance) in the normal catechesis and preaching, have given rise and continue to give rise to such pre-theoretical and cryptogamic heresies in Christology. Such an investigation could be of use not only for apologetic and kerygmatic ends. It could make clear to academic theology that what are apparently very ticklish questions of theology could be of the highest missionary significance provided that they are properly put and answered. For a true theology of proclamation is nothing else than the one theology, which takes its religious task so seriously with all the scientific means at its disposal that it becomes at once more scientific and more kerygmatic.

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6

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

On December 8, 1854, Pius IX made the following solemn declaration, which the appeal to his supreme teaching authority in the Church shows to have been infallible: 'The doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, has been, by a special grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, preserved and exempted from every stain of original sin, is revealed by God, and consequently is to be believed firmly and inviolably by all the faithful.' Since then a hundred years have passed; and to mark the occasion Pius XII, in his encyclical 'Fulgens Corona' of December 8, 1953, has announced a Marian Year.

The first thing which this centenary celebration and the announcement of a Marian Year would seem to demand is an attempt to understand more deeply this truth of Catholic faith. The fact that the Supreme Pastor so explicitly desired the celebration of this centenary, more so than in the case of similar commemorative feasts (such as those of Ephesus, Chalcedon and Trent, in recent times), makes it immediately clear that a true Catholic's attitude in faith and love to this definition cannot be one of 'minding one's own business'. 'We desire', the Pope says, 'that sermons and lectures should be delivered on this subject in each diocese, so that this Christian doctrine might be made clearer to men's minds.'[1]

A truth of faith can be brought home to the understanding in various ways: we can find out what Scripture says about it; we can trace the historical course of the doctrine with the passage of time, and learn what is involved, both as regards its content and as regards its binding force on faith, from the examination of this long and often fluctuating history in which the Church's consciousness in faith has come to maturity. We can observe the influence of such a doctrine on [202] piety, liturgy and art, study that mutual interaction between life and official authority, theology and devotion, God's eternal truth and the preoccupations of succeeding ages, in which the conscious grasp of this truth slowly reaches maturity. We can also quite simply try to see how the particular truth fits into the whole of Christian faith, how it derives its life from this whole and how its meaning and content can be clarified by reference to the whole.

The last procedure is specially valuable for truths of the kind with which we are concerned here. For truths like these, which have not always been in the stage of a reflexive and explicit presence for the mind in their own right, have grown out of the totality of the Christian understanding of faith, or else they would not exist at all. The development of a particular theme of knowledge in the Church, stimulated and watched over by the Holy Spirit, takes place rather in the way in which a man's knowledge grows in the course of his historical life: it is out of the whole of his being that his knowledge apprehends the particular, although this whole may in certain circumstances be available only unreflexively. Thus it is not surprising that any attempt to understand a particular truth out of the whole of faith must inevitably have recourse to propositions and points of view which do not so certainly form part of the traditional deposit of the faith – as this is determined by reference to the Church's official teaching – as the proposition to be explained, which in a given case has already been defined. This must be borne in mind, when we now set out to see how the *de fide* proposition concerning the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin allows of being made intelligible in terms of the whole of Revelation.

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[1] *AAS* XLV (1953) p. 587.

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Mary is only intelligible in terms of Christ. If someone does not hold with the Catholic faith that the Word of God became man in Adam's flesh so that the world might be taken up redemptively into the life of God, he can have no understanding of Catholic dogma about Mary either. It may indeed be said that a sense of Marian dogma is an indication of whether Christological dogma is being taken really seriously; or whether it is being regarded (consciously or unconsciously) merely as a rather outmoded, problematic, mythological expression of the fact that in Jesus (who is basically just a religious man) we undoubtedly feel God (here again a cipher for an unexpressed mystery) particularly close to us. No, this Jesus Christ, born of Mary [203] in Bethlehem, is at once, as One and Indissoluble, true man and true Word, consubstantial with the Father. And so Mary is in truth the Mother of God. It is only to someone who truly and unreservedly confesses this that the Catholic Church can continue to speak meaningfully about her other Marian dogmas. And if anyone protests against further Marian dogmas, either explicitly or by passive indifference, he must expect to be asked whether he believes and confesses what the Church solemnly confessed at Ephesus in 431 as the faith of the one and undivided Church, and what the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century believed too, though it did not really raise the question whether this was necessary in order that one could as a sinner be consoled by faith in a gracious God.

Now according to the testimony of Scripture, this divine Motherhood is not simply identical with the biological fact that Mary is the mother of Jesus, becoming this 'passively' as it were, while Jesus is in fact the Son of God. St Luke's witness goes further than this: this Motherhood is a free act of the Virgin's faith. One comes about by the other, and both together form a unity. Mary's consent in faith, as St Luke relates it, cannot be regarded merely as a fragment of the Blessed Virgin's private biography, one which consequently should have no further interest for us. It is rather an Event of public ('official') saving history as such, more so than Abraham's faith or the Covenant on Sinai. It is for this reason that St Luke relates it: it is part of the saving history of humanity, not a pious, edifying idyll from someone's private life. Mary is blessed because she believed; and she is blessed because her sanctified womb bore the Holy One. Thus her consent at the Annunciation must not be regarded as a merely external precondition of an Event which as human (and this is something more than biological and physiological) would be exactly what it is even if this consent had not been given. She is Mother personally, not just biologically. Looked at in this way, her personal divine Motherhood precedes – this is rather a bold way of putting it, admittedly – her Son's divine Sonship. It is not as though some biological process in her reached its term in a divine Person, without her having taken any part in it. It is perfectly true that it is of fundamental significance for the Christian understanding of the divine Motherhood as a deed performed by the Virgin, that her obedience in faith, without which she would not be Mother of God, is itself a pure grace of God; but it makes no difference to the fact that she became Mother of God in the freedom [204] of faith. That is why we must say with all truth that for us and for our salvation she opened the way into our flesh of sin for the Eternal Word.

Catholic theology is often reproached with making an absolute of the official, the institutional, whatever can be applied by process of law or administrative authority, whatever has become detached from freedom, charisma, faith, to the detriment of free grace, the unique, the creative act not subject to administrative discipline, the charismatic. This is why she is said to have combatted Montanism, Donatism and so on, and the Reformation too, as so many outbreaks of fanaticism; thus she has glorified spirit-less officialdom and declared it to be God's authentic representative in the world. To this it must be replied that sacrament, office, law possess their own consistency, quite independently of the holiness, the pneumatic

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endowment of the dispenser or bearer. And this is necessary, for otherwise office or law would not exist at all, or man would have to be able to establish with certainty someone else's grace or holiness, and judgment on this point would cease to be God's secret. And further it must be pointed out that the distinction between sacrament and grace, law and pneuma, office and holiness, exterior and interior hierarchy within the Church, does not in general mean that there could be an ultimate and absolute discrepancy between them. Otherwise the Church would be a provisional synagogue, and not the Church of the Last Times, which are the times of the victory of grace over sin and defection. Thus the Church as such and as a whole can no longer escape from God's truth, fall away from his salvation, no longer lose the Holy Spirit, no more cease to be the Holy Church even 'subjectively'; she can no longer become merely an official, emptily institutional Church. And this is not because the men by whom she is borne are no longer free, but because their freedom remains comprehended within the predominance of grace. Thus the Church is not only the Event of the victory of God's *Yes* over man's *No*; it is just this become historically tangible too (allowing for all that God's grace can do by way of making things perceptible in the light of faith). In the last resort, then, the realm of the official, of saving history, in the Church cannot be sundered from the realm of the personal and the pneumatic; for the Word has definitively and for all time become flesh, and overcome in death the power of darkness. That is why the Church has always seen clearly that the Apostles' office was exercised not only while they lived here on earth, but that they sit in [205] judgment on heavenly thrones in the heavenly city too, the gates of which bear their names; and the Church has seen that we must say this and confess it. So too she has always seen that the witnesses to her faith before the tribunals of earthly history, to the point of death, are also really the delivered. So too she could be sure that the very heroes of her own prehistory in the Old Testament belong eternally to the number of those who have power with God, the redeemed. Office (= essential function in the public saving history of God's People) and personal holiness coincide at the decisive points of saving history, so that each supports the other and makes it possible. Such is the Church's conviction according to the Scriptures, in spite of her unequivocal rejection of Donatism.

We are now better able to understand what was maintained above, that according to the Scriptures Mary is Mother of the Incarnate Word in and through her free obedience in faith.

Her divine Motherhood, then, belongs to that utterly decisive Event of saving history in which the Word of the Father came into the flesh of sin, and thus also, fundamentally and inevitably, to the death which redeemed us. Her motherhood is an event of authentic, public (i.e. engaging God's People as such in its historical tangibility) saving history. In fact, so far as such an act of saving history can be performed by a mere human being, it is the decisive Event of saving history, and an eschatological one. From this time on (as opposed to all previous acts of saving history) the dialogue between God and humanity (even in this world) is no longer open, because in reply to this assent of the Virgin, God spoke his definitive word to the world as a Word of salvation and not of judgment. This eschatological and decisive Event of public saving history, through which Mary dealt in the name (= for the salvation) of all humanity, is at the same time her personal act in faith. At this point if at all there clearly coincide office and person, position in the Church and situation before God, dignity and holiness. Mary is the holy Mother of God, as necessarily as the Church is the holy Church, as necessarily as God's grace is stronger than man's power to deny him. Her life is the free act (maintained right up to the moment when she stood below the Lord dying on the Cross) through which she received God's Word in faith and in her womb, for her own salvation and the salvation of all men. This was the moment for which she existed; then it was that there took place the covenant between God and humanity, which is eternal and definitive.

[206] Here we must give more explicit consideration to the fact that this act of unconditional faith performed by the Blessed Virgin was God's grace and Christ's, and only

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so of saving significance for her and for us. A man's free performance of a salutary act and God's grace are by no means things which tend to exclude one another: grace rather bestows the power to act and the actual performance, and the creature's answer is itself the work of God's effective call. If Mary opens the door of the world for the definitive coming of the redeeming God into the flesh of humanity, she does it freely, because God wishes to come**,** and on account of this unconditional will to save the world, himself gives her the power to realize the condition under which God's Word wished to come: in the freedom of those who were to receive him, because the Word wished to come freely. Her word is pure answer in the strength of the Word directed to her: nothing else, but this wholly. That reception in acceptance of the grace of the world is itself grace. As her act, her conception of the Word is just as much grace as what was so received and conceived. He gives not only himself, but also his conception, on the human side, in free faith and in the very corporeality of the Virgin's Motherhood. But he wished to give himself only by giving the Virgin too the free word of faith.

If we were to try and sum up what we have so far said about Mary in a concise formula, which expresses it all at one stroke by means of a concept whose theological validity requires no preliminary proof, then all we need say is: Mary is she who is most perfectly Redeemed. What this formula means will appear from the following simple considerations. Redemption as one person's grace is always another's blessing; redemption takes place as the reception of Christ in the act of faith, which is itself grace and – for faith – establishes itself as something historically tangible in the world. Then the most perfect redemption is the conception of Christ in faith and in the body for the salvation of all in the holiest act of freedom, which is grace. Because Mary stands at that point of saving history at which through her freedom the world's salvation takes place definitively and irrevocably as God's act, she is most perfectly redeemed. It may be felt that these propositions take away from the significance of Christ's death; that they do not may be seen from the fact that the descent into the flesh is already the beginning of the descent into death, because the flesh assumed is dedicated to death. Thus the Incarnation is not just a [207] condition for a redemption still open, still to come, but its inception, with which the whole, however much it has still to grow, is set upon its own proper way. As Mother of God, Mary is most perfectly redeemed, and *vice versa*. The Church has always been aware of this, however little explicit that knowledge may have been in itself and in its consequences. But it is only possible for the Church always to have been aware of Mary as holy before God, as redeemed and delivered, and to know this from her divine Motherhood alone, if in the present regime of salvation there is found in her some real, objective connexion between her task in saving history and her personal holiness. If this is so, then it includes a perfect correspondence between Mary's unique task in saving history and her personal holiness. In short, for the faith of the Church Mary is she who is most perfectly Redeemed, the example and exemplar of redemption simply speaking.

We have now reached a position from which we may look directly at Mary's Immaculate Conception, but before we do this, two points still have to be considered.

The first of these may appear if we ask ourselves what we as Christians really think about the unbaptized infant. We say that it has original sin, it is not justified, possesses no sanctifying grace, is not yet a temple of the Holy Spirit and so on. We say all this without hesitation, and none of it calls for further discussion. But if we go on to say that it is under the dominion of the Devil, that it is a child of God's wrath, a lost and rejected creature, then we hesitate with some justice. And yet we must grant that these assertions are identical in content with the former ones, or are their simple logical consequences. Why do we hesitate? We notice that we have abstracted from certain things in making the first set of assertions, and

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still more the second. This child, of which we can and must make both the former and the latter assertions, is already, as unbaptized, an object of God's infinite mercy, in spite of original sin; it is included in God's vision of his only-begotten Son, and thus it has, if not yet a realized, at least a 'remote' claim to inheritance with the Son. Looked at from this point of view, its condition as first described is basically – I do not say *in itself* – already annulled, or, if this formulation seems doubtful, already comprehended within God's grace and love. We should remember that in original sin (and so in all its formulations: enmity, wrath, damnation, dominion of the Devil and so on) we are dealing with a 'sin' which [208] is essentially different from personal sin as the act of that freedom which permits of no deputization, a sin, then, which only falls under the same concept 'analogically'. We should not then be wholly astray if – to exercise our minds a little and clarify matters – we were to say that in this case (as opposed to personal guilt or freely received justification) Luther's 'simul iustus et peccator' had something to be said for it.

This coexistence of God's true saving purpose and of original sin in the unbaptized infant forms as it were a supratemporal region within which the infant has its existence. It is only because God's gracious love in Christ already belongs to the infant that the perceptible history of its salvation takes a sacramentally visible form, that history in the temporal succession of which a sinner becomes one of the just by baptism. Now this grace, given in the lifetime of this individual, derives from the former grace, which already comprehends his whole lifetime, and pretty well amounts to its temporal deployment; one might have the impression that it is not after all very important exactly when the temporal realization should take place – has anyone ever seriously regretted having been baptized after a fortnight instead of as a two days old babe in arms? That is why the whole mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception cannot simply consist in the fact that she was graced a little earlier, temporally speaking, than we were. The distinction must lie deeper, and this deeper distinction must condition the temporal difference. And this for the primary reason that it would otherwise be impossible to see why God, whose saving purpose has reigned in unspeakable power over the holy Virgin 'from the first moment of her existence', of her 'conception', as it does in every case, for us and for all things, why God did not want this difference between natural beginning and the temporal realization of his purpose in her case too, though she too is redeemed. Would it not have appeared more clearly in history that she too is redeemed, as we are? If the mystery of our dogma were merely this difference of time, it would not be easy either to understand how the Church could have come to know it, since she has not always grasped this mystery explicitly. For it would always be possible to hold that what Tradition tells us about Mary's unsurpassable holiness did not bear strictly upon a condition of grace in her, but upon God's saving purpose from the beginning.

Consequently a second point must be taken into consideration if we [209] are to make any progress. We have a rather more difficult theological concept to consider here, and the reader must be asked to be as patient as he can. In what follows we wish to discuss the free actions performed by creatures, and morally good ones, since the question of God's causal relationship to evil actions does not arise here. God can of himself i.e. prior to a man's actual decision, absolutely and effectively will a definite good act of a man's freedom, and yet this act does not thereby cease to be free, nor does it follow that on account of the creature's freedom God merely has foreknowledge of this free action just because it happens and not also because he wills it. In this way God attains his will, and man does freely what God of himself has unconditionally willed. For God is He who as God can bestow freedom itself upon the creature, freedom even before Himself. Why he can do this, how he does it – this is a mystery of blinding darkness. Let us for convenience call this fact predestination, carefully excluding everything fatalistic, unfree, deterministic from this theological concept. Thus we may say: Mary, as the Holy one and she who has been most perfectly Redeemed – her

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personal free consent includes both these – is already predestined in God's will with respect to Christ, the Incarnate Redeemer of the generation of Adam. If in the last resort God's grace is the cause and not the effect of man's actions; if consequently the redemption of sinful humanity proceeds from God's free saving purpose alone; if according to this saving purpose, which arises from God's free yet absolute initiative, the redemption through the Incarnation of the Son was to take place by the assumption of an Adamitic human nature and its destiny: then it is immediately clear that in God's predetermining will for this Christ an earthly Mother of the Son was likewise predestined, i.e. was willed absolutely and prior to any human decision, like the Incarnation itself. And so her free consent to this Motherhood is already given too. For human motherhood must be free, if it is not to injure the dignity of the human person, which is unthinkable with God. Yet in this election is also included the choice of Mary as the Holy One, as she who has been most perfectly Redeemed. That is to say, in that God's absolute and unconditional will is that the Redeemer should come from Mary and her free *Fiat*, his will is that she should be the most perfectly Redeemed in this free Motherhood itself. For here 'office' and personal holiness must coincide. If, then, God wills Christ and his Mother in the plan of predestination, he wills her as the Holy one in this single predestination: [210] not just in any similar predestination, but in Christ's, and thus in his first, original plan.

Now what does all this imply for the 'Immaculate Conception'? We have already said above that even prior to any actual eradication of original sin by baptism or any non-sacramental justification, God's saving purpose as First and Last embraces each human being; and that consequently man is never the sinner he would be if God's free grace were not to support his existence from the beginning. We can now say: this divine purpose of salvation, which embraces Mary in this way from the very beginning, indeed from all eternity, and thus precedes all other possibilities (in reality, at least, if not in time), is for her the predestination of Christ himself. That is to say, if she had not been willed as the Holy one and the perfectly Redeemed, then Christ himself, as we know him in actual fact, would not have been willed by God. This cannot be said of any other of the redeemed. It is true that a divine predestining purpose of salvation of this kind reigns over everyone who is going to find salvation; it is true that God wills this salvation as an effect of Christ the Incarnate, Christ who was crucified in obedience to the Father. And yet, so long as we are here below, this saving decision of God remains hidden from us for everyone except Mary – at least in general. In general we can point to no event in the experience of our own history which will allow us to read off this divine predestining decision for any individual as such. And further – and this is the decisive point – in every other case Christ could exist and be predestined by God without its being necessary for the individual concerned to be one of the redeemed. Any individual apart from Mary who is predestined to salvation, is not simply included in God's predestining will in respect of Christ, but relies upon a divine decision which must proceed for his especial benefit. Otherwise everyone would be certain of his own salvation by the mere fact that Christ exists. But that is a position which is forbidden to us, we who have to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, in firm hope, and not intellectual certainty; we who must always say, whatever may be our humble, acquiescent trust (and no one is forbidden to hope in the unlimited extent of this for each of us): 'I do not know whether I belong to the elect'. As perfectly Redeemed, Mary stands – in reality and for our knowledge in faith – within the circle of Christ's own predestination. And thus it is that she is different from us not merely by having become graced at a temporally earlier point in her [211] existence. It is much more the mystery of her predestination we must look at: this is the mystery which first gives its real meaning to the temporal difference between her and us in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

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But does it follow from what has been said that Mary, from the beginning of her existence, was not only the object of a specifically unique predestining purpose of salvation on the part of God, but also possessed sanctifying grace; that in this sense she was preserved from original sin, redeemed by being preserved and not just by being freed from original sin? For this, after all, whatever may have been said about her predestination, is what is immediately contained in the Marian dogma. Is the latter statement something which we have to say 'as well', 'additively', or does it follow as a consequence and a more explicit articulation of what was said earlier? We hold that the second alternative is the true one.

Firstly, then, we have already said that Mary is the perfect, exemplar, pure case of redemption in general. Now one of the points of faith on which the Church has slowly reached a reflexive clarity of insight with the assistance of her Spirit, is that redemption does not necessarily and in every case presuppose a temporally earlier condition of being unredeemed, of sin and alienation from God. Someone who is preserved in grace is just as radically delivered and redeemed, if not more so. The fact that of ourselves we are nothing and have nothing, that nothing could come from our hearts but a malice which ultimately God alone overcomes at its source and not we: all this is something which he who is preserved can and must acknowledge in praise of grace, just as much as he who is delivered with regard to his deliverance. If in the Our Father we are bound to pray to be preserved from temptation, the thanks we offer for this grace of protection is no less in praise of redemption than the thanks for deliverance from the consequences of giving way under temptation. Both standing fast and standing upright again are his grace. If this is true, then the redemptive preservation from original sin is the most radical and most blessed mode of redemption. It must necessarily have been her lot who is the most perfectly Redeemed, because she alone, by reason of her office and person, stands precisely at that point at which Christ began the definitive and victorious redemption of mankind. Thus it is that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the holy Virgin belongs to the doctrine of [212] Redemption itself, and stands for the most radical and perfect form of redemption.

There is a second point to consider. Why do infants first obtain Christ's grace only at baptism? Why not earlier, at the very beginning of their existence? If someone were to adopt the latter view (which won't do), this would not necessarily be in flat contradiction with the fact that the Immaculate Conception is a unique privilege of the Blessed Virgin. For we have already seen that this privilege involves more than just the temporal difference between her justification and ours, especially as still other differences remain, such as freedom from concupiscence and so on. Nor would such a view necessarily do away with the Redemption and the character of justification as grace; for these remain in Mary's case too. Nor again would such a view put in doubt the necessity of baptism. Although justification by faith and love is normal in the adult, and in the normal way takes place before baptism or the sacrament of penance, these sacraments retain their necessity and their meaning. Nor can such a view be disposed of simply by a reference to the lot of infants who die unbaptized. For we have absolutely no real knowledge of what happens to them, and the controversy over the 'limbus puerorum' is once more quite open today. And yet this view must be rejected, because Tradition and the official teaching of the Church too clearly presuppose and speak of original sin in Adam's posterity not just as a condition due in itself (if it were not hindered by God's redeeming grace), but as one which has come about in fact. But why does God permit it to come about, if on the one hand the reasons for it which people tend to offer immediately are not free from objection, and on the other, a divine purpose of salvation reigns over man, directed as redemption and forgiveness against the hereditary guilt? Why is this purpose not realized from the beginning of any individual's existence? It would certainly remain grace, the Redemption of Christ, and even infant baptism would remain meaningful and necessary.

Unless one is prepared to be satisfied simply with an arbitrary 'decree' of God, which is

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too cheap an answer, however frequent it may be in a theology infected with nominalism, the only possible answer to this question is as follows. The interval of time between the beginning of existence and the commencement of justification is not an expression of the bare need for redemption as such. Rather, what becomes visible here is the fact that man may not in general be regarded [213] even in the Regime of Christ as simply one redeemed, predestined, as someone who is absolutely and unconditionally taken into God's grace simply because God's mercy has become, absolutely and unconditionally, an irrevocable and victorious fact in the world in the flesh of Christ. The fact that our salvation and our attained blessedness are not simply predestined simultaneously with the predestination of Christ acquires historical manifestation in the temporal interval between the beginning of existence and the commencement of justification. And thus the converse holds good: Mary is she who is taken into predestining grace in Christ's becoming flesh as the victorious and definitive presence of God's mercy in the world, overcoming all sin; and therefore in her case this temporal interval has no meaning. Not because she did not require redemption, but precisely because she is the one member of the redeemed without whom it is impossible to think of the Redemption as victorious. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception belongs to the very heart of the doctrine of our Redemption by the one unique Mediator Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became man, died and rose again 'propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem'.

If this Marian Year which has been proclaimed should make us specially bear in mind the dogma, proclaimed a hundred years ago, of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God, such a commemoration, rightly understood, is a celebration of the mystery of our Redemption and a praise of the grace of the one Lord in whose name alone there is salvation. Ultimately we can only praise him by saying what he has done among us. If we want to speak of this as his deed, how can we do it better than by acknowledging what he has done in Mary, and in this way fulfil the saying that the Spirit put on her lips: All generations shall call me blessed.

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7

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION

In this short study we shall attempt to discuss what is actually meant by the new dogma of Mary's bodily assumption into final perfection, and not its theological foundations. Thus we shall not ask in what way precisely it can be 'based on' Scripture (this is how the *Constitutio Apostolica* promulgating the definition cautiously formulates it). Nor shall we ask how the dogma is contained explicitly or implicitly in the tradition of faith, nor how one can reach the conviction that the 'new' dogma is a truth which belongs to that Apostolic Tradition which never changes, although it was not always taught in the Church so expressly and with such binding force as is the case today. These questions too do indeed have their own, by no means small, importance; and they too must be answered in a theology of this dogma. Indeed they are even more important theologically. But everyone has the right to choose his own subject; and what we choose is not the latter but the former. Moreover we believe that an exposition of the *content* of the new dogma of Mary's 'bodily' assumption into 'heaven' is not only of importance in itself (for ultimately one has also to know *what* one believes); we also believe that it is of use in answering the questions not dealt with here. For many of the difficulties of an epistemological and psychological kind which seem to show that this doctrine does not belong to Revelation as it is handed down to us, arise rather from a misconception of its content than from any special difficulties in establishing the fact. What is more, as far as one can see, among the almost countless studies of the question today, there is hardly one which attempts to enter more deeply into the inner meaning of the new dogma. Writers are content to demonstrate the fact of what is asserted as something given in the case of Mary, and obviously take it tacitly for granted that Christians are sufficiently familiar with the truths of Christ's Resurrection and of the future general [216] resurrection to understand what is really meant by saying that someone is corporeally glorified in heaven.

Thus if we wish to know what is really involved in the substance of this defined proposition, our best plan is to ask first of all in what wider context of Christian truths it really belongs. The true meaning of any individual proposition of revealed truth does indeed contain an 'item' of new knowledge, which is added on to the other truths, enlarges and completes them; yet a proposition of this kind is itself only really intelligible in the totality of the one saving Truth. We may regard this totality as plainly set out for the first time in the Apostles' Creed. Our question then runs as follows: To which article of faith does the new dogma belong as its consequence and organic unfolding? The question seems simple: it belongs to the article 'Born of the Virgin Mary'. The answer is correct but insufficient, and that in two ways. Firstly, for the connexion we are seeking, everything depends on how exactly 'Born of the Virgin Mary' is itself understood. Secondly, this is by no means the only article of the Creed to which the new dogma is essentially and immediately related.

As to the first point we may say this: by itself, i.e. if the words are simply taken in their most primitive sense, 'born of the Virgin Mary' could mean that Mary has given the Word of the Father his body from her own (as every mother does her child), and that she is for this reason, and in this way alone, his mother, the mother of the Son of God, and nothing more. But according to the Scriptures and the testimony of the Church from the most ancient times, the phrase says more than this. It is not just of an event belonging to the private life of Mary and Jesus that the phrase speaks; even by itself (and not only in consequence of the actions performed later in his life by this child born of Mary) it means a *saving* event, an historical happening, which makes a fundamental difference to the situation of the whole world before

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God. For the Father's eternal Word has become flesh in Mary, God has already indivisibly assumed the world in the flesh of this Virgin's Son; God's eternal Son has already made his own the destiny of the world in the 'flesh of sin' (Rom 8:3) (i.e. in flesh dedicated to death), so that this personal existence in the world's sinful flesh led undeviatingly (in this wise or that) to the death in which the guilt of the world is endured to the end and overcome. Thus this Event of becoming man is an 'eschatological' event: the definitive salvation of the world, irrevocable and unsurpassable, by God's grace in the Word [217] of the Father become flesh, is already definitely in the world in virtue of what took place in and through Mary, and had to and still has to merely work itself out in what we call the Cross of the Son, his Resurrection and the history of the world *post Christum natum*. This eschatological Event of saving significance for the whole world took place in Mary: in her flesh and through her faith. In her flesh: for our whole salvation depends on the fact that the Son shares not only our 'specific' human nature but also our very generation, entering into that community of us all in which no one lives for himself or dies for himself. The Son of God had to be a son of Adam. And this he became in Mary, so that our salvation depends upon his having been born of woman, that is to say, quite concretely, of Mary. Through her faith: however true it may be that the Event took place and had to take place in the flesh, we know from the testimony of Scripture that it did not fail to engage the Blessed Virgin's 'private life', her freedom and her faith. No, what took place in the flesh, took place there through the 'Let it be done to me according to thy word', through her faith; so that because of this she might be called holy, by Elizabeth at that distant time and since then by all generations. Her objective service, by means of which her bodily reality is delivered to the Word, is also her subjective action, one in the other. Her faith is called blessed because it admitted the Word into the region of the flesh, and her bodily motherhood is not only a biological occurrence but the supreme action of faith, through which she becomes blessed. She lets the Son of God into the world; and she does it only by his power and in virtue of his grace. She can only let him into the prison of the sinful and mortal world because *he* wishes to come, and because her letting him in is itself again the work of the grace of his coming. But it is *she* who does it. She could do nothing if he did not grace her by his coming. But he graced her in just such a way that in her (flesh and faith together) the salvation of the world has definitively begun, and that in her God spoke his final, because total, word in the dialogue between him and humanity which had till then remained open. And so, when we make confession in the words 'born of the Virgin Mary', we do not merely say that the 'biological' happening of the Incarnation of the Son of God has made use of the Virgin's womb; we say that in her and through her (both) Christ's salvation (his alone!) was bestowed upon the world. She does not thereby become 'Co-redemptrix' '*by the side of*' Christ, as though the Son and the Virgin [218] 'shared' in the redemption of the world in a kind of 'synergism'. But she co-operates in the redemption of the world, in so far as she does, for the salvation of the whole world and not only for her own, what a human being can and must do in the power of grace and for grace: receive it. She has received in her flesh the salvation of the world from the Holy Spirit through the consent of her faith, she has received for all men and in the most 'corporeal' way the whole Christ.[1] That is why, however, the Church has always believed that in her the redemption which took place in her and through her in the world has reached its fullest and most radical perfection. When the Church confesses of her that she remained 'preserved' from original sin (an expression which is easily misunderstood) and always sinless, this does not mean that she 'privately' by herself, and in contrast to the rest of humanity, has not lost man's original grace in Adam

[1] No more seems to be claimed for Mary's position in saving history, as it is briefly indicated here, than what the Lutheran theologian, H. Asmussen, presents as a completely Biblical teaching about Mary. See his book *Maria. Die Mutter Gottes* (Stuttgart 1950), esp. p. 51.

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(this was lost to her too in Adam); it means that she is the radically Redeemed, in whom Christ's single and unique grace exhaustively surpassed man's sinfulness, even 'temporally' in a certain way, so that she can in no way (not even as to sin) call anything her own which is not the gift of the incomprehensible grace of the Father in the Son of her womb. And that is how she is the second Eve, the Mother of all the living, the type of perfect redemption and the perfect representation of what redeemed humanity, what the Church can be.[2] God's grace achieved its most incomprehensible and unsurpassable work where it laid hold of the world most closely and in the most 'fleshly' way: in Mary.

Before we attempt to unfold the full meaning of the article 'Born of the Virgin Mary' as it concerns the new dogma, we have yet to discuss the second point made above. We said that there were other articles of the Creed to which this proposition was essentially and immediately related. We have in mind the 'descent into the kingdom of death' and the 'resurrection of the flesh'. First of all, these two articles belong together. Because He descended among the dead and rose again there exists a resurrection of the flesh. It is only because he [219] himself arrived at that furthest point of human existence which we call being dead, which was limitless and implies something deeper and more dreadful than what modern man thinks of in terms of a cessation of biological life, that a Resurrection exists, that alone is why man is saved through and through, and is capable of God's beatitude with his whole undivided being. The heart of the earth has accepted and received the Son of God; and it is from a womb so consecrated, this womb of the 'hellish' depths of human existence, that the saved creature rises up. Not just (not even temporarily) in the Son alone. It is not that he alone descended and so rose again as victor because death could not hold him captive. 'Even now' he is not the firstborn among the dead in the sense that he is even now the only human being to have found the complete fulfilment of his whole human reality. By his death salvation has come to be definitively. Then what is there in principle to prevent any man from finding this definitive salvation? When the early Church confessed her belief in Christ's descent, victorious over death, she had in mind other dead ones, who 'already' share in the definitive character of the total victory over death and sin.[3] Let us remember (and this is something Althaus[4] has said too – quite rightly, in itself though his approach is wrong), that it is quite impossible for the Resurrection to be an individual event, because our 'bodily condition' (whether glorified or not) is simply the outward aspect of the spirit, which the spirit forms for itself in matter so as to be open to the rest of the world, and which in consequence necessarily includes a community of a bodily kind with a bodily Thou (and not just with God's Spirit). If this is so then the Son of Man 'cannot' have risen alone. What, we may ask, is really to be understood by his glorified bodily condition (if we take it seriously, and don't spiritualize it into another way of talking about his eternal 'communion with God') right up to the 'Last Day', if meanwhile it should persist all by [220] itself – something which is precisely unthinkable for the bodily condition (though glorified)? So when we find in Mt 27:52 s.[5] that other bodies too, those of saints, rose up with him (indeed even 'appeared' – as

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[2] Cf. here O. Semmelroth, *Urbild der Kirche. Organischer Aufbau des Mariengeheimnisses* (Wurzburg 1950); H. Rahner, *Maria und die Kirche* (Innsbruck 1950; ET in preparation).

[3] Cf. e.g. K. Gschwind, *Die Niederfahrt Christi in die Unterwelt* (Munster 1911); K. Prümm, *Der christliche Glaube und die altheidnische Welt* II (Leipzig 1935), pp. 17-51 (esp. pp. 29-31). It should be noted that the conclusion arrived at in these works – that the overcoming of death in others is *also* contained in the ancient Christian confession of the *descensus* – was reached wholly without an eye to the modern doctrine of the Assumption or any apologetic concern for it.

[4] The Lutheran theologian from Erlangen. Cf. P. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*[6] (Gutersloh 1949), p. 141; pp. 156 s.

[5] On the exegesis of this text and its history see H. Zeller, 'Corpora Sanctorum. Eine Studie zu Mt 27:52-3', ZKT LXXI (1949), pp. 385-465. We still maintain that Zeller's exegesis is correct and convincing in spite of the objections made to it by A. Winklhofer, 'Corpora Sanctorum', *Tübinger Theol. Quartalschrzft* (1953), pp. 30-67, 210-17. It is clearly impossible here to go into the exegesis of this text in greater detail. So too we must

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he himself did – to show that the end of all the ages has already come upon us), this is merely positive evidence from Scripture for what we would have expected anyway, if definitive salvation has already been unshakably founded, death conquered, and a man, for whom it is never good to be alone, has entered upon the fulfilment of his whole being. Hence to try to set aside this testimony from Matthew as a 'mythological' intrusion, or to argue away its eschatological meaning with ingenious evasions – such as that it is merely a matter of a temporary resurrection or even of 'phantom bodies' – would not be in accordance with the authoritative voice of Scripture. It is a fact that by far the greater part of the Fathers and the theologians, right up to the present day, have firmly maintained the eschatological interpretation of the text as the only one possible from the exegetical point of view. In this connexion it is not without interest that most of the Fathers and theologians adduced as witnesses for Mary's Assumption in the Bull of the definition also gave explicit support to this eschatological interpretation of the text.[6]

But how are we to conceive of a bodily condition like this, perfected and glorified, as an essential element in the total perfection of the single, whole human being? What kind of existence is this? And where? It is not easy to answer these questions and others like them. But can we who are imperfect ever form an idea of what has been brought to perfection? Even in the risen Lord, who showed himself [221] to appointed witnesses in his manifestations, we see little more than the fact of his Resurrection. For the inner nature of his glorified bodily condition could only be made deeply evident for 'what it is in itself' to those who themselves live in this new mode of existence. What the Apostles saw and touched of the Risen One was the Risen One himself in his 'flesh and bone', as he himself said; and yet this was necessarily in the manner in which something glorified can appear to the unglorified, it was an appearance 'for us' which permits us to say little about him 'as he is in himself'. We need only remember how seriously this in itself obvious fact ('quidquid recipitur, ad modum recipientis recipitur', runs a scholastic axiom) must be regarded if the idea is not to arise that, for instance, our Lord's 'Ascension into heaven', as the Apostles saw it take place, is something 'which continues rectilinearly 'in itself' after his being taken up by a cloud from their eyes, and in *such* wise ends in heaven. And when St Paul insists that an absolutely radical 'transformation' of our bodily condition must take place in order that we, who will no longer then be 'flesh and blood', may be able to inherit the Kingdom of God, what is being said at the same time is how little capable we are of 'forming an idea' of the new condition of the body. All we really know of it allows of being stated only from the 'outside', from two points of view: we ourselves shall be in this condition, we with all the reality we had and all our experience; and again, we shall be transformed, be quite different. Beyond this we shall say what St Paul said, that an incorruptible, a glorious, a spiritual body will rise in power (1 Cor 15:42 s.); and we shall read the blessed visions of the Seer of the Apocalypse, visions of a new heaven and a new earth (Apoc 21 s.), in which image and reality for us now are inseparably intertwined. Ancient man (who in this respect continued to exist in Catholic theology into the eighteenth century) could be easier in mind about the possibility of representing the definitive fulfilment of the whole man and of the world corresponding to him. For him (in his unreflexive, underlying, 'world-picture', not in the convictions he held in faith, even if the one passed without distinction into the other), Heaven, as the region of the glorified condition of the body, was a spatial setting which existed even before the saving

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renounce any attempt to evaluate works like that by W. Bieder, *Die Vorstellung von der Höllenfahrt Jesu Christi. Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte vom sog. Descensus ad inferos* (Zurich 1949).

[6] Daniélou's view, in *Etudes* 267 (1950), p. 291, that it is no longer admissible after the bull to interpret Mt 27:51 s. in terms of a definitive, eschatological resurrection of these saints, is quite without foundation. There can be no question of this. The bull nowhere affirms that Mary's privilege of 'anticipated' resurrection is to be understood as being unique in itself simply, as well as in its cause and title.

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Event of the Resurrection, towards which this event moved as the 'uppermost part' of its cosmos. Time ran its course (one might have said) in space; in virtue of being glorified the body came to its new place, a place connatural to it, existing prior to it and possessing the [222] 'properties of glorification'. Today we can no longer use this imaginative picture to explain an 'ascent into heaven'. Consequently it is usual for theologians today to reply to the question as to the 'place' of heaven by merely saying that it is above all a 'condition'; and that, if one must allow for some spatial location on account of the bodily condition of a man who has been saved totally, it is in fact impossible to say just 'where' this heaven is. Certainly this modesty is in large measure justified, and yet it sounds a little unhappy. Especially so, because the attempt is made, instinctively and yet without any real reason, to conceive of this spatiality, however indefinite its Where, as a portion of this 'physical' world of space, something infinite and in itself homogeneous, which we are acquainted with as the space of our experience. Today we should say something more like this: the new 'spatiality' is a function of saving history, of the time which *shapes* this space; it comes to be by the fact of Christ's rising from the dead, and it is not given in advance as the possibility and the place of this glorified state. The ancients may have conceived of the happening of historical event (i.e. time, thought of as 'local movement' up to and including Christ's Ascension) as a function of space, *in* which it moved; we today on the other hand think of it rather differently: 'space' and 'place' arise through the happening of historical event; space is rather a function of time; in virtue of an event as radical as a transforming glorification, a spatial and local condition (of a quite new kind) arises which is no longer a portion of space as it was known till then but is incommensurable with it; and hence it is no longer capable of being 'represented', but has to be 'postulated' for the single reason that the true 'bodily condition' of someone who has risen in glory must not be dissipated by a false spiritualization. What is more, Christ's body remains in this way eternally a piece of this world, bound up with it in its deepest and inmost ground; otherwise the mortal would not have attained to eternal life or the unity of the world would be split asunder. Beginning with Christ's body, this very world thus achieves even now a new mode of being by means of its history in Christ, which is a history of the material and the spiritual at once, of flesh and person in the one Spirit of God which renews all things. The world acquires a new heavenly 'dimension' (not of course to be thought of as added to previous ones as a 'fourth', but one which for the first time gives the whole of the world a new order, its all-embracing 'heaven' in fact, by means of the originating Event of [223] Christ's Resurrection). Here too and here above all is it true to say that time and history shape 'space' and do not intrinsically presuppose it. None of this makes heaven easier to 'imagine'. Yet it becomes conceivable that heaven is not deprived of 'place' by the mere fact that we are no longer capable of accommodating it in a 'caelum empyreum' by a homogeneous extension of the world of our experience. Our own representation of the world in terms of space and time is itself, as a part of this world, necessarily confined within the structures of this world and our senses. But speculation and above all faith testify to the fact that reality does not simply come to an end where our representation of it does.

Everything depends on the fact that our own reality itself is transformed and not simply replaced by another, one which could no longer be our own selves and our world. There follows, then, a twofold consequence, in so far as the new reality which has come to be through Christ's Resurrection and the space which is proper to this reality continue to cohere with our world in its ultimate ontological root. Firstly, there will be not only a new heaven but also a new earth, and the new earth will be no other than the perfection of the 'heaven' which will have wholly and exhaustively transformed into itself and its mode of being the reality of the world. Secondly, we may grant that the new heaven and the old earth are radically and necessarily connected, and that the heavenly form of existence does indeed involve a migration from the mode of being proper to 'flesh and blood', the earthly,

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perishable manner of being characteristic of the body and its environment, under sentence of death; but it does not involve a migration from the world itself (there cannot be a 'beyond' like this, if in fact man is ever to 'rise again' and this is to involve his intrinsic fulfilment). If this is so, then the reality beyond (so far as it already exists in the glorified Christ and those 'saints' who follow in his train) cannot be conceived of as lacking all objective bonds with this world, as lacking a cosmic bond with the unglorified world which objectively coheres with the glorified reality and is really capable of being used to express it; though this does not require the application to it of categories which because of their cosmological limitations could not be used to speak of things 'beyond'. Reflexion on this point will show that it is meaningful to say, for example, that one man has 'already' risen again while another has 'not yet' done so, for this does not involve any application of limited categories to an object which [224] wholly transcends them. The eternity in glory of the earthly and historical is not simply identical with God's eternity, which is equally immediate and equally near to every point in time, and to which consequently temporal statements cannot be applied. Rather, the eternity in glory of the earthly is a fruit of time and history itself. Saving history transforms the temporal itself into eternity, by means of a process which on the one hand does not necessarily run its course 'simultaneously', owing to the plurality of our earthly reality; and on the other does not in its parts and their outcome lose its connexion with the process as a whole, so that the part can be really determined 'temporally' from the point of view of the whole. What is glorified retains a real connexion with the unglorified world, it belongs inseparably to a single, ultimately indivisible world; and that is why an occurrence of glorification possesses objectively its determinate place in this world's time, even if this point in time marks precisely the point at which a portion of this world ceases to endure time itself, in so far as it is different from all others while remaining in unity with the whole. Furthermore, the Christian has a guarantee that statements of this sort, open to temporal qualification, can be made meaningfully about something 'beyond'; for Scripture makes them about the Risen Lord. Of him it is said that he has 'already' risen, while just this statement cannot yet be made of us and also of many of the dead. Supposing that this distinction may be meaningfully and justly applied to statements about the 'moment in time' in which there is possession of the resurrection-body in Christ's case and in the case of many of the dead' who have not yet risen, it follows that the distinction cannot be meaningless in Mary's case either, on the alleged ground, perhaps, that the transcendence of God and of the eternity of the man who has been saved touches *every* point of our time with equal immediacy.

We can now resume our consideration of the phrase 'born of the Virgin Mary'. As we said, this proposition of faith concerning Mary has in view not only the fact that she *is* the Mother of the Lord, in so far as she *has* bestowed upon the Son of God his earthly existence from her flesh; but also above all the fact that she *becomes* Mother, i.e. that in her and through her, in her flesh and through her faith, the eschatological Event of salvation takes place, drawing after it everything else as its inner consequence, so that Mary appears as herself the perfectly Redeemed and the representation of perfect redemption. The concept of the 'perfectly Redeemed' may in certain respects be a [225] 'dynamic' one (if we may so put it), i.e. a concept the contents of which cannot be simply enumerated, in terms of fixed, given notes, one which cannot be 'defined' like mathematical and geometrical concepts. It has a life of its own, so that it is never possible to avoid the apparent difficulty that more is found in it when it is expounded than it originally contained, or that one can find quite arbitrarily in the concept of '*perfect*' Redemption whatever one chooses to find. However, the objection does not touch us very nearly. It has already been shown that that End of time has begun already, although thousands of years may still draw out this single End in Christ; it has been shown too that that End of the whole history of salvation which has already become Event and Presence in Christ's Resurrection includes not only his Resurrection but that of the saints as

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well, however little it may be in our power to say *in general* who precisely these first fruits of complete redemption may be. But it follows from this that the total redemption in body and soul 'already' achieved is not something which has been arbitrarily invented or merely postulated *a priori* as characteristic of a perfect redemption. And what this means is that if Mary is the ideal representation of exhaustive redemption because of her unique place in saving history, then she must 'even now' have achieved that perfect communion with God in the glorified totality of her real being ('body and soul') which certainly exists even now.

Thus it is that the two articles of the Apostles' Creed from which we started fuse into one and provide us with the meaning of the new dogma: She who by her faith received salvation in her body for herself and for us all, has received it entire. And this entire salvation is a salvation of the entire human being, a salvation which has already begun even in its fullness. Mary in her entire being is already where perfect redemption exists, entirely in that region of being which came to be through Christ's Resurrection. When we speak of 'Mary's Assumption' into heaven, the 'privilege' of the Blessed Virgin implied here is simply that she has a special 'right' to this Assumption in virtue of her divine Motherhood and her unique position in saving history. It is also possible to speak of a special privilege here in so far as the temporal interval between death and bodily glorification in Mary's case must clearly be thought of as being shorter than in the case of those 'saints' in Mt 27:52 5., 'who had seen corruption'; though here of course it must not be forgotten that this distinction is conditioned not so much by the difference of the persons in themselves [226] as by the progress in the general situation of salvation in consequence of Christ's Resurrection, before which it was precisely impossible that anyone else should rise, because the 'space' of the world's glorification could only be opened up by Christ. But a 'privilege' is implied here not in the sense that Mary alone enjoyed it or that what is involved is in a real sense an 'anticipation' of a perfection which in every respect and in every instance could only 'really' emerge later. On the contrary: salvation has already advanced so far historically that since the Resurrection it is completely 'normal' (which is not to say 'general') that there should be men in whom sin and death have already been definitively overcome. Christ's victorious descent into the kingdom of death is precisely not just an event belonging to his private existence, but a saving Event, one which affects the dead (not merely and not in the first instance those who lack the vision of God). And his entry into the eternal glory even of his body does not open up an 'empty space', but institutes a bodily community of the redeemed: however far from being complete the number of the brethren may be, and however little we may be able, with a single exception, to call them by name as those who have been redeemed even in their bodies.

Because the 'future' of the Church is the presence of the glorified Son of Man, and because this future is already present even for the Church in Mary as her most perfect representation, the Church too is already redeemed totally, not in all her members certainly but already in reality in some of them. The salvation of the flesh too has already begun in its final form. The world is already in transition to God's eternity, not only in the 'spirit' of those who have gone to their everlasting home and not only in the body of the Son who came 'from above', but also in the bodies of those who are simply 'from below'. Even now there belongs to the reality of the entire creation that new dimension which we call heaven and which we shall also be able to call new earth once it has subjected all earthly reality to itself and not just an initial part of it. Perhaps the deepest reason why Protestantism rejects the new dogma is because really it is only aware of a theology of the Cross as a formula for reality here and now, and not a theology of glory; for Protestantism this is ultimately only a promise, and not something which exists 'even now', although it has not embraced everything yet and for us here below has not yet become apparent. But for anyone who believes that counter to all appearances the forces of the world to come have already seized hold of this world, [227] and

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that these forces do not consist merely in a promise, remaining beyond every sort of creaturely existence, for a future still unreal; for such a one the 'new' dogma is really nothing more than a clarification, throwing light on a state of salvation already in existence, in which he has always believed. That this state of salvation should be attributed to Mary in its entirety and fullness will not seem an impossibility to someone who knows that this salvation was born of her in virtue of the consent of her faith and in consequence has had its most perfect effect in her. The 'new' dogma has significance not only for Mariology but also for ecclesiology and general eschatology.

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8

THEOLOGICAL REFLEXIONS ON MONOGENISM

This inquiry proposes to treat of a restricted number of questions relating to monogenism in the strictly theological sense of that word. There is no intention of undertaking a systematic and exhaustive treatment. No attention will be given to that aspect of the problem concerned with the natural sciences. And even apart from this, many things which would form part of a comprehensive treatment of the topic will be omitted or merely touched on. Nor will there he any detailed examination and assessment of modern theological literature dealing with the controversy between monogenism and polygenism.[1] Occasional references will he made to this literature only [230] as a help to our own exposition. Our examination is divided into three parts: 1. The official teaching of the Church; 2. The possibility of proving monogenism

[1] We give here a conspectus of recent literature in alphabetical order. This survey makes no claim to completeness (the writings of Catholic 'polygenists'-in the widest sense-are indicated later on). It is noticeable how small the German contribution to this literature is.

J. M. Alonso, 'La encíclica "Humani Generis"', *Illust. Cler*. XLIV (1951), p. 16; L. Arnaldich, 'Historicidad de los once primeros capitulos del Génesis a la luz de los últimos documentos eclesiásticos', *Verdad y Vida* IX (1951), pp. 385-424; F. Asensio, 'De persona Adae et de peccato originali originante secundum Genesim', *Gregorianum* XXIX (1948), pp. 464-526; T. Ayuso Marazuela, 'Poligenismo y evoluzionismo a la luz de la Biblia y de la Teología', *Arbor* XIX (1951), pp. 347-72: J. Backes, 'Die Enzyklika "Hum. Gen." und die Wissenschaft', *Trierer Theol. Zeit.* LIX (1950), pp. 326-32; J. Bataini, 'Monogénisme et polygénisme. Une explication hybride', *Div. Thom*. (Piac.) XXX (1953), pp. 363-9; A Bea, 'Die Enzyklika "Hum. Gen." Ihre Grundgedanken und ihre Bedeutung', *Scholastik* XXVI (1951), pp. 36-56; C. Boyer, 'Les Leçons de l'encyclique "Hum. Gen.", *Greg*. XXXI (1950), pp. 526-39; G. Castelino, 'La storicità dei cap. 2-3 del Genesi', *Salesianum* XIII (1951), pp. 334-60; J. Caries, 'L'Unité de l'espèce humaine. Polygénisme et Monogénisme', *Arch. de Phil*. XVII-2 (?), pp. 84-100; F. Ceuppens, 'Le polygénisme et la Bible', *Angel*. XXIV (1947), pp. 20-32; – *Quaestiones selectae ex historia primaeva*.[2] (Turin 1948); – 'Rilievi ad una nota sul poligenismo', *Sapieniza* 11(1949), pp. 107-9 (contra B. Prete in Sap. 1 (1948), p. 420); G. Colombo, 'Transforrnismo antropologico e teologia', *Scuola Catt*. LXXVII (1949), pp. 17-43; P. Denis, *Les Origines du monde et de l'humanité* (Liege 1950); M. Flick, 'II poligenismo e il dogma del peccato originale', *Greg*. XXVIII (1947), pp. 555-63; J. de Frame, 'De Bijbel en het ontstaan van de Mens', *Streven* VI (1952), pp. 215-23; M. Garcia Cordero, 'Evolucionismo, Poligenismo y Exegesis biblica', *Ciencia Tom*. LXXVIII (1951), pp. 465-75; 477-9; H. Garrigou-Lagrange, 'Le Monogenisme n'est-il nullement révélé, pas même implicitement?' *Doct. Comm.* II (1948), pp. 191-202; J. M. Gonzalez Ruiz, 'Contenido dogmático de la narración de Gen. 2:7 sobre la formación del hombre', *Est. Bibl.* IX (1950), pp. 399-439; J. Havet, 'L'Encyclique "Hum. Gen." et le polygénisme', *Revue dioc. de Namur* VI (1951), pp. 114-27; – 'Note complémentaire sur l'encyclique "Hum. Gen." et le polygénisme', *ibid*., pp. 219-24; C. Hauret, *Origines de l'Univers et de l'Homme*[3] (Paris 1952); M. M. Labourdette, *Le Péché originel et les origines de l'homme* (Paris 1953); C. Lattey, 'The Encyclical "Hum. Gen." and the origins of the human race. An answer', *Scripture* IV (1951), pp. 278-9; H. Lennerz, 'Quid theologo censendum est de polygenismo?' *Greg*. XXIX (1948), pp. 417-34; J. Levie, 'L'Encyclique "Hum. Gen.", NRT LXII (1950), pp. 785-93; V. Marcozzi, 'Poligenismo ed evoluzione nelle origini dell'uomo', *Greg*. XXIX (1948), pp. 343-91; – 'Le origini dell'uomo secondo l'enciclica "Hum. Gen." e secondo la scienza', *Doct. Comm.* I (1951), pp. 26-39; B. Mariani, 'Il poligenismo e s. Paolo (Rom 5:12-14),' Euntes Docete IV (1951), pp. 120-46; E. C. Messenger (ed.), *Theology and Evolution* (London 1952); C. Muller, *L'Encyclique 'Hum. Gen.' et les problèmes scientifiques* (Louvain 1951; on the Index); G. Picard, 'La Science expérimentale est-elle favorable au polygénisme?', *Sciences Ecclésiast*. IV (1951), pp. 65-89; J. Renié, *Les Origines de l'humanité d'après la Bible. Mythe ou Histoire*? (Lyons 1950); J. Rojas Fernandez and M. de la Cámara, *El Orígen del hombre según el Génesis y a la luz de la ciencia* (Madrid 1948); J. Sagüés, 'La encíclica "Hum. Gen." Avances teológicos', *Estud. Eclesiast*. XXV (1951) pp. 147-80; M. Schulien, *L'Unità del genere umano alla luce delle ultime risultanze antropologiche, linguistiche ed etnologiche*[3] (Milan 1947); E. Stakemeier, 'Die Enzyklika "Hum. Gen.", *Theol. u. Glaube* XL (1950), pp. 481-93; G. Vandenbroeck and L. Renwart, 'L'Encyclique "Hum. Gen." et les sciences naturelles', NRT LXXIII (1951), pp. 33751; G. Weigel, 'Gleanings from the Commentaries on "Hum. Gen.", TS XII (1951), pp. 520-49.

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from Scripture; 3. The possibility of proving monogenism metaphysically.

It will be clear from this programme alone that we have no intention of setting out explicitly the teaching of Tradition, its content, its force and its limits. This is not to say that it is of no importance. But it is not difficult to see the reason for this omission. An investigation of this kind would probably compel one very soon to take up fundamental [231] theological considerations of great generality, and these cannot be undertaken with sufficient thoroughness in a short essay.

For the question would soon arise as to what constitutes a 'unanimous' witness of 'Tradition', i.e. whether the tradition is a really *theological* one in the strict sense. It is not easy to answer this question. For it must be borne in mind that another 'tradition' which is at least as unanimous exists in regards to the creation of the first man, a question which is very closely related to our own. And yet we know from the most recent pronouncements of the *magisterium*, which leave the question of some sort of transformism open to the free investigation of theology and the other sciences, that a unanimous 'tradition' like this is never sufficient of itself as a conclusive argument for a definite view which it represents; and we know then that in the case of transformism there is no certain agreement as to whether the tradition is a really theological one which binds the theologian. If we were to investigate Tradition in our case, then, we should either have to go into the difficult question of what sort of tradition was involved and what principles of discrimination were applicable, or we should have to consider not Tradition as such but the objective arguments proposed in it (on the basis of Scripture or other dogmas). It is the latter course which we shall in fact pursue in the following reflexions.

1. MONOGENISM AND THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

I. The Encyclical 'Humani Generis'

For reasons of method we begin with the *latest* utterance of the *magisterium* to do with our question. It is not only in a purely temporal sense that it is the latest. The reason why it forms the proper starting-point of our investigation is that it is the only one to treat of the topic *ex professo*, and treat of it in the context of the latest controversies; thus it is the latest by reason of an acquaintance with the questions and results of modern science, which were not available in earlier times to set the background of the problem. In addition, by leaving the question of anthropological transformism open to theological discussion, 'Humani Generis' has – in appearance at least – made the theological problem more difficult. For one thing is clear from the start. It was once usual to offer a simple and direct theological proof of monogenism. Applied to the corresponding question of anthropological transformism, this would inevitably lead to its [232] condemnation as obviously false theologically. Now such a simplicity and directness cannot be correct. For if it were (just as the practice really used to be once in both questions without distinction) the Church would not be able even temporarily to leave the question of, transformism free for theological dispute. We should thus be well advised to make a start with 'Humani Generis'.

We find the following statement in the encyclical 'Humani Generis' of 1950:

> Cum vero de alia coniecturali opinione agitur, videlicet de polygenismo quem vocant, tum Ecclesiae filii eiusmodi libertate minime fruuntur. Non enim christifideles eam sententiam amplecti possunt, quam qui retinent asseverant vel post Adam hisce in terris veros homines exstitisse, qui non ab eodem prouti omnium protoparente, naturali generatione originem duxerint, vel Adam significare multitudinem quandam protoparentum; cum nequaquam

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> appareat, quomodo huiusmodi sententia componi queat cum iis quae fontes revelatae veritatis et acta Magisterii Ecclesiae proponunt de peccato originali, quod procedit ex peccato vero commisso ab uno Adamo, quodque generatione in omnes transfusum inest unicuique proprium.[2]

There is little to be said as far as the letter of the text is concerned. The opposite opinion called 'polygenism' which the encyclical rejects, is first of all formally characterized as a *coniecturalis opinio*. This is a way of saying that even within the natural sciences and anthropological paleontology the view is no more than a hypothesis; so that it is not *a priori* impossible even from this point of view that the opinion should be rejected as false because of information derived from a source *other* than the sources of natural science. The description of polygenism which follows does not regard it purely as an hypothesis of natural science; it is taken up from the only viewpoint which could be of interest to theology. In this sense (i.e. looked at from the point of view of the 'Adam' of theology) polygenism is the doctrine which either leaves room for the existence, after the Adam of theology, of other men who do not belong to his bodily posterity; or which holds that 'Adam' is a collective concept which combines into one the totality [233] of human progenitors. By taking polygenism in this sense the encyclical clearly intends to avoid the question of the so-called Pre-Adamites: whether, that is to say, other human groups might not have existed before 'Adam', the sinful progenitor of the whole human race which was going to exist on earth after him, those earlier groups having died out. This view is not sanctioned, nor again is it rejected; it simply remains outside the theological discussion of the encyclical. This is not of course to say that a theologian may not hold that Pre-Adamitism is a theory which is scientifically speaking arbitrary, as well as being absurd and dangerous theologically.[3]

What is said of polygenism formally and substantially characterized in this way is that it is not a free opinion in the Church, it cannot be held. Thus it is not permitted positively to defend polygenism even as a possible theory or scientific hypothesis, the grounds of this inadmissibility being of course theological and not derived from natural science. Quite intentionally, a more precise theological *qualification* (for instance, 'This opinion is heretical') is not given. Thus the only theological qualification of monogenism which may be derived from the encyclical just by itself is that it is theologically certain.[4] That is to [234]

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[2] Denz 3028. Cf. also the encyclical 'Summi Pontificatus', in which the same teaching seems to have found an earlier expression, AAS XXXI (1939), pp. 426 s.

[3] I hold that it is not sufficient to qualify this theory with Vandenbroeck and Renwart (p. 349) as merely 'antiquated and lacking in interest'. Cf. also Levie (p. 789). This seventeenth-century theory is a characteristic product of an attempt to reconcile theology and secular science (so-called) in an external and basically nominalistic way. Could anyone but a nominalist, for whom reality consists of an atomized sum of divine decrees, conceive the idea that God calls one man to a supernatural end, and another of exactly the same nature, simply to a natural end? And the angels again are joined together with one part of humanity in being given a supernatural end. Again, it would be necessary in the case of these Pre-Adamites who have come into being in this polygenistic way, that they should have died out just at the time of Adam – an arbitrary postulate. It would be improper on this view for Adam to have descended from them – another arbitrary postulate. The whole position is contrary to the way of looking at things we find in Scripture: Adam is the Man, not the surviving representative of a human group. If there had been Pre-Adamites, God can 'become man' more than once. On the basis of what calculations does this possibility cease to be realized once Adam comes into existence? No, Adam was the first man; and where for the first time a man is to be found in the metaphysical and theological sense, that is where we must look for Adam, even if this is in the late Tertiary period.

[4] We are aware of the kind of discussion this concept requires, its 'general problematic'. It is often said that something is 'theologically certain' if it can be inferred from a revealed truth only with the help of a truth of natural reason. By qualifying monogenism as theologically certain we naturally do not wish to say that the truth of monogenism cannot itself be revealed. We use this problematic theological concept in a more general sense: by 'theologically certain' we mean anything of which on the one hand it cannot be said with absolute certainty that it is revealed by God and is indubitably taught as such by the Church; and which yet on the other hand can

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say, according to the current state of the Church's consciousness in faith, of the doctrinal pronouncements of her *magisterium* and of theology, monogenism must be affirmed with inner (but not in itself irreformable) assent. And this assent must be given for two reasons: because on the one hand it has not been possible, at least up to now, to say that polygenism is without danger for assured truths of faith; and on the other because monogenism itself seems to be at least contained (*mitgesagt*) in doctrinal statements; and our assent must be given in so far as this is the case. Consequently opposition to monogenism – without sufficient grounds – would threaten to deprive these statements, in which monogenism is contained, of their sense, and would imply the denial of a statement of which it can be said with good reason (though not with absolute certainty) that it is to be found in the sources of Revelation. No stronger qualification – as far as the encyclical goes – can be given. For if any such attempt were made it would be easy to reply by asking why the encyclical itself does not give this stronger qualification. It would not have been difficult. And we have no right to assume that the encyclical has been lacking in courage and in theological decision.

Now it is indeed *theoretically* possible that a pronouncement of the *magisterium* should in fact allow only of a weaker qualification, while a theologian could on other grounds decide for a stronger one.[5] But [235] this is highly improbable in the concrete case with which we are concerned. The clear intention of the encyclical is to exclude polygenism from theology. The simplest and most radical way of doing this would have been to declare that such a teaching was in direct contradiction to the teaching of faith, or to have branded it explicitly as heretical. If however the encyclical did not do this, it may very well be taken as a sign that the Church's *magisterium* does not (or does not yet) suppose such a qualification possible in the current state of her consciousness in faith and of theological reflexion. Consequently it is

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legitimately claim our interior assent, in such a way that a contrary doctrine is not tolerated by the Church.

[5] J. F. Sagüés (*Sacrae Theologiae Summa* II, Madrid 1952, n. 545) reviews the usual qualifications of the monogenistic thesis in these terms: 'etsi non constet thesim umquam explicite magisterio sollemni definitam, theologi eam expresse vel aequivalenter habent (a) aut communius ut de fide vel sirnpliciter (Pesch, Flick, Card. Ruffini), vel divina (Lahousse, Minges) vel etiam catholica (Janssens, van Noort, Beraza, Hugon) vel etiam saltem implicite definita (Boyer, Lercher, Pohle-Gierens, Muncunill, Daffara, Lennerz, Huarte, Bozzola); (b) aut saltem ut fidei proximam (Tanquerey, Garrigou-Lagrange)'. For Sagüés himself, 'de fide divina et catholica, imo implicite definita (Denz 788-91)'. Concerning these qualifications it must first of all be noted that nearly all of them belong before 'Humani Generis' and before a moderate transformism was permitted. Further they all belong to that period of exegesis which believed that it was possible immediately to extract the historical content of Gen 1-3 without taking into consideration its specific literary genus; on this view it was possible to hold that monogenism was stated with complete explicitness, and was thus *de fide divi*na. Finally, transformism is rejected by many of the authors cited with a correspondingly higher theological qualification. Beraza, for instance, held that every kind of transformism was temerarious in the highest degree, and cited authors who regarded the creation of man out of inorganic matter as *fides catholica* (Suarez, Valentia, Perrone, Katschthaler, Jungmann, Mazzella, Lahousse). Huarte held that any kind of transformism was temerarious. Hugon regarded its contrary as guaranteed by the literal sense of Scripture. For Pesch the rejection of transformism is 'evidently' taught in Scripture. Minges and Janssens hold like views. A critical revision of the methods which led to this over-emphatic qualification would doubtless show that polygenism by no means deserves exactly the same qualification as transformism; rather it would seem that the revised methods would conduce to a greater restraint in allotting theological qualifications than was practised by the authors whom Sagüés cites. Further, it would not do to get the impression that the certainty of the monogenistic doctrine is as highly qualified by all theologians as it is by Sagüés and his authorities. He himself cites Tanquerey and Garrigou-Lagrange as giving a lower qualification. To these should be added, for the period before 'Humani Generis', Diekamp-Hoffmann (*fidei proximum*), and in recent times C. Hauret, J. de Frame, L. Ott (sententia certa: *Fundamentals of Christian Dogma*[2], ET. Patrick Lynch (Cork 1958), p. 96), A. Gelin (*Problèmes d'Ancien Testament* (Lyons 1952); cf. *Eph. Theol. Lov.* XXVIII (1952), pp. 285 s.), C. Muller, J. M. Alonso, J. Havet, Labourdette. The last-named says quite rightly (p. 204): 'On sera autorisé a dire en théologie que des assertions inséparables de celle qui a été définie ne peuvent pas être niées; mais on ne le serait pas a prétendre que, du moins en vertu de ce texte-là, elles sont définies aussi. C'est ce qui nous a paru être le cas du "monogénisme".' Furthermore Sagüés himself says in regard to the qualification which may be derived from 'Humani Generis', *saltem theologice certa* (n. 543).

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[236] hardly probable that an individual theologian by himself and on his own account should see more deeply than the *magisterium*. At any rate a theologian who claims no greater certainty in this question ought not to be accused of minimalism or indecision.

Many people may find this situation unsatisfactory. But it is undoubtedly an essential part of theological conviction and its growth that there should exist theological certitudes and obligations to a positive inner assent which are not 'in themselves' those proper to a definition and the assent of *fides divina et catholica*. If this is so, the 'per se' in the *assensus per se non irreformabilis* of a theological certitude ought not to be expounded so as to give the impression that this revision of assent could never occur at all. For this would be to continue verbally to grant the existence of a distinction between a theologically certain proposition and a proposition of faith (*fides divina et catholica* or *fides ecclesiastica*) while annulling it in fact: so when a theologian declares that what is involved is an *assensus per se reformabilis*, he must not be reproached with wanting to dissolve or to throw doubt upon the certitude of the proposition concerned. All he is doing is to apply to a given proposition what is maintained in theory by all theologians in *theologia fundamentalis*, and furthermore what the history of theology requires us to say.

Corresponding to this assessment in the light of 'Humani Generis' of the degree of theological certainty to be attributed to monogenism, we should note the way in which the encyclical provides grounds for its teaching. In the first place (and this is remarkable) it does not appeal to the texts of Scripture and the *magisterium* which speak *directly* of the one Adam as progenitor of all men. Had it been the view of the *magisterium* that it was certain that monogenism was unambiguously stated in these texts, it would simply have cited them and perhaps laid it down in an authentic interpretation that monogenism was in fact the true meaning of these texts. But in reality the encyclical merely refers us to an indirect argument: monogenism is logically presupposed by the dogma of original sin, unless this too is given an inadmissible interpretation.[6] But this connexion is itself asserted in the [237] most cautious way: the encyclical does *not* say: *cum appareat nequaquam componi posse* . . .; it says *neququam appareat quomodo* . . . *componi queat* . . . We may well suppose that this milder and more cautious formulation was chosen deliberately. What is being stated is not a positive declaration of the irreconcilability of polygenism and the Catholic doctrine of original sin, but a denial of the obviousness (not in fact to be had) of a possibility of reconciliation. It goes without saying that a formulation of this kind neither offers the slightest indication nor makes any positive affirmation as to whether at some later date this reconcilability might not or could not be recognized. Thus it cannot be said that the encyclical positively 'leaves the door open' for some future polygenistic theory. Nor, on the other hand, is any positive statement made to the effect that something of the sort is always going to be impossible. Thus the attitude adopted is precisely that which theology describes with respect to the propositions which it calls theologically certain. Of course the fact that the encyclical restricts itself to this indirect probative procedure with a reference to the dogma of original sin does not mean that the theologian is prevented from bringing other arguments to bear in favour of monogenism. Admittedly it would hardly be modest if he wished meanwhile to claim for such an argument – looked at theologically and in view of a theological qualification – a greater degree of

[6] This is obviously what the phrase 'ex peccato vere commisso' points to. One tendency in modern Protestant exegesis, which has found favour here and there even among Catholic theologians (though this sympathy has not manifested itself in a literary form), has been to deny the 'actuality ('*Tat*'-*sächlichkeit*) of a once-for-all historical process at the beginning of human history, and to make of original sin (as *peccatum originale originans*) the mythological expression of a condition 'always and everywhere' to be found because of what man himself is as such: thus original sin takes place always and everywhere. On this view of original sin there could obviously be no question of presupposing monogenism. (It is often important to remember that the ordinary German expression for original sin, *Erbsünde,* means literally 'hereditary sin'. – Tr.)

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stringency than for the argument briefly sketched by the encyclical.

In view of the firm attitude of the *magisterium* in this matter and its wise restraint, one is bound to conclude that its previous utterances as regards our question cannot be regarded with absolute certainty and clarity as a formal definition of monogenism. It is clear first of all that up till now (leaving aside the decree of the Biblical Commission, which is not a definition) the Church has never imposed her anathema on polygenism as such in a decision having the form of a definition, directly and explicitly taking up a stand with regard to it. For up till now it has not been a centre of theological interest, and a definitory [238] intention of this kind, formally directed against polygenism, is nowhere to be demonstrated. Moreover, in view of the attitude adopted by the encyclical, it is not even possible to speak of monogenism as *certainly* contained in the Tridentine doctrine of original sin in virtue of so *formal* an implication that it would have to be called an implicitly defined truth of faith (granting that there was no intention of defining it directly). For the question precisely arises as to whether the single sinful ancestor of all men, of whom the definition speaks, must *necessarily* be understood in the sense of monogenism alone; and this not merely as an idea belonging in historical fact to the mental background of the Fathers of the Council, but as something which the intention was to teach in the form of a definition. It is possible to show (as we shall try to do) that an objective connexion holds between monogenism and the Council's teaching on original sin, in such wise that to contest the former is implicitly to deny the latter. But at the moment, at any rate, the demonstration of this connexion is by no means so immediately obvious *quoad nos* that one can speak without hesitation of a formal implication of monogenism in the Tridentine teaching on original sin, and could thus claim for it the status of something in fact already defined in substance. If that were the case, the encyclical would not have stated the connexion with such prudent restraint.

We need not here go into detail about the occasion of this teaching of the ordinary *magisterium*. It is well known that there were individual theologians in the years before the appearance of 'Humani Generis' who believed that the polygenist theory was an open question in the same sense as transformism, the solution of which could be left to the natural scientists.[7] And in individual cases polygenism was [239] positively maintained. Other theologians were doubtful about the theological certainty of monogenism. Consequently attempts were made here and there to assess the possibility of reconciling polygenism with the Church's doctrine of original sin: the assumption relied on here was that a plurality of ancestors could jointly act as the cause of original sin, and this plurality of ancestors was combined in Scripture in the idea of the one Adam.

2. The Decree of the Biblical Commission of 1909 (Denz 2123)

[7] The names of a few writers may be mentioned here, not so as to brand them as 'polygenists', but because they raise in their writings, more or less circumspectly, the question whether polygenism might not be an open problem for the theologian: E. Amann, 'Préadamites', DTC XII (1933), col. 2799 s.; – 'Transformisme', DTC XV (1946), col. 389 S.; J. Bataini, 'Monogénisme et Polygénisme', *Div. Thom.* (Piac.) XXVI (1949), pp. 187-201; A. and J. Bouyssonie, 'Polygénisme', DTC XII (1933), cols. 2520-36, esp. 2534 s.; J. Chaine, *Le Livre de la Genèse* (Paris 1948), p. 54 s.; A. M. Dubarle, *Les Sages d'Israel* (Paris 1946), p. 21 s.; – 'Sciences de la vie et dogme chrétien', *La Vie Intell.* XV (1946), p. 624; J. Guitton, *La Pensée moderne et le catholicisme* (Aix 1936), p. 39; A. Liénard, 'Le Chrétien devant les progrès de la science', *Etudes* CCLV (1947), pp. 299 s.; A. Mancini, 'Monogenismo e polygenismo. Informazioni', *Pal. del Clero* XXVIII (1949), pp. 904-8; B. Prete, 'A proposito del poligenismo', *Sap.* 1 (1948), pp. 420 s.; H. Rondet, 'Les Origines humaines et la theologie. Problèmes pour la réflexion chrétienne', *Cité Nouvelle* (= *Etudes*) 1 (1943), pp. 973-87.

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However readily one may grant that the more recent declarations of the *magisterium*[8] permit of or authorize, a wider interpretation of the decree of the Biblical Commission of 1909, no one can doubt the force of this decree even today.[9] As regards the matter with which we are concerned, the decree teaches that among other things the *generis humani unitas* too belongs to the historical content of Gen 2-3. The expression may in itself be undefined and vague, but it cannot be doubted that what is meant is the monogenistic unity of the human race, and not some merely specific or other conceivable unity. For the specific unity is not in question; and any other unity (apart from the two just mentioned) is not easy to grasp. It would, as it were, have to be discovered or invented first; so that the decree cannot have had it in mind. Thus a concept not yet available would first have to be found; and it would further have to be shown of this concept that it does as much justice to the ultimate theological intention of the decree as monogenistic unity, which the decree without any doubt had primarily in mind. Thus it can be said that in virtue of the continuing force of this decree monogenism is theologically certain, as the single [240] tangible point so far as we are concerned here: a result which takes us no further than 'Humani Generis'. It is stated in the decree that this *unitas* belongs to the *sensus litteralis historicus* of the first three chapters of Genesis. We may ignore the fact that the concept of the *sensus litteralis historicus* has undergone a sharpening of definition – and in some respects a restriction – as a result of the declarations already mentioned. Even so, the conclusion we have reached leaves an important question open: do purely exegetical means allow us to establish the fact that the monogenistic unity of man is contained in Gen 2-3? Nothing is stated on this point. We cannot simply take it for granted that it was the intention of the decree to indicate the possibility of doing so as something which goes without saying. For then we should also have to say, for example, that purely exegetical means (without the help, therefore, of the rest of Scripture and of Tradition) would allow us to derive with certainty from Gen 3:18 the *Reparatoris futuri promissio*. It may well be doubted whether all exegetes would undertake such a task.[10] In other words, the decree of 1909 does not require us to maintain that the monogenistic unity of the human race is not only contained in Gen 2-3, but also that it can be derived from this text by purely exegetical means and thus can be known from it *quoad nos*. Thus a theologian who is not prepared to admit the stringency of such a proof does not go counter to the decree. Obviously this is to say nothing *against* the possibility of such an exegesis: the question is left open. Thus the encyclical's approach has already been preformed, as it were, inasmuch as it does not prove monogenism simply by a Scriptural citation (say Gen 2:6 s. 18.21; 3:20; Ac 17:24-26) but by a process of theological discussion. We can sum up, then, by saying that the decree of the Biblical Commission of 1909 takes us no further than the teaching of 'Humani Generis', either as regards theological qualification or by way of supplying fresh grounds of proof.

3. The Council of Trent

[8] It is expressly said in the reply of the Secretary of the Biblical Commission to Cardinal Suhard, a reply sanctioned by Pius XII, that this decree should be understood and interpreted in the light of the Pope's recommendations, in which exegetes are encouraged to make afresh approach to difficult problems in such a way that their solution might be in full harmony not only with orthodox doctrine but also with the assured results of modern science. Thus it is emphatically maintained that the decree in no way prohibits a more searching examination of the problems in question in accordance with the results of research over the last forty years (Denz 3002).

[9] Cf. Denz 3002; 3029.

[10] Flick says (p. 558): 'Anche sei testi biblici dell'Antico Testamento potessero, considerati astrattamente, non repugnare assolutamente al poligenismo . . . '

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In the canons of the Council of Trent on original sin many theologians see an implicit definition of monogenism.[11] Clearly it is impossible [241] here to examine more closely what is really meant by 'implicitly defined'; whether such a concept allows of being reconciled with CIC c. 1323 §3, or whether 'defined' (and so 'manifeste' ascertained to be defined)[12] and 'by way of inclusion' (and so, while not perhaps 'manifeste', yet ascertained to be defined) do not cancel each other out.[13] Let us adopt as simple as possible a way of establishing what the Council of Trent has to say to us.

We should first remind ourselves of two obvious points which are easily forgotten. On the one hand, it is possible for a Council to teach or to define something even when it has no knowledge of the problems which only arise later in connexion with its teaching. Thus it would be wrong to say or to assume that, because the Council had no knowledge of polygenism and monogenism as a problem of secular science, therefore it is *a priori* impossible that it should have said anything of importance on this matter. On the other hand, it is not *a priori* impossible that a Council should formulate a doctrinal statement in such a way that one could see in the light of historical studies that the statement has been reached under the influence of a presupposition which turns out later to be false or unnecessary. The essential proviso here is that the presupposition actually made is not itself expressed (and so is no more than an actual presupposition of the mode of expression), and that what is really expressed has its own objective validity apart from the presupposition. We may take an example from a field quite [242] close to our own. The Council of Carthage, followed by many other Councils and doctrinal pronouncements, says (Denz 102) that original sin is incurred *generatione*. Speaking as historians, we must say that the Fathers of the Council thought of *generatio* in an Augustinian way, as involving *libido*; in other words, they thought of generation as communicating original sin because and in so far as it is bound up with sexual desire; and we must say then that this idea was one of the reasons which made them formulate their statement in just the way they did. But this does not prevent us from saying today (any more than it did in the Middle Ages) that what was stated in the definition of Carthage retains its validity even without this idea[14], and that what is presupposed by the formulation (not the formulation itself) is false. In other words, not everything which can be learned from the text of the definition as belonging to the mind of the definer is by that very fact defined. It may be said, conversely, that something is co-defined (*mitdefiniert*) which, although it is not directly intended by the definer as properly speaking to be defined, fulfils the two following conditions. Firstly, it must have been certainly compresent to the definer's mind (*mitgedacht*); and secondly, which is more important, it must stand in so immediate, so immediately evident and indissoluble a connexion with the proper and direct matter of the definition, that it is impossible in fact or in thought that it too should not bear the whole

[11] See above, p. 234, n. 1: all the theologians who hold that monogenism is (at the very least) implicitly defined have the Council of Trent in mind.

[12] One might well ask if something can be ascertained to be defined 'manifeste' except when the *intention* of the definition is known. But this is precisely not given in the case of something *implicite definitum*. (The text of CIC c. 1323 §3 runs: 'Declarata seu definita dogmatice res nulla intelligitur, nisi id manifeste constiterit.' – Tr.)

[13] If *implicite definitum* means no more than 'implicitly contained in a definition', such that this being-contained can be brought to expression by logical operations, then there is of course no doubt that something of the sort exists. What is doubtful, however, is whether it can be said to be 'defined'. One would have to go on to ask what the various ways are in which a proposition may be implicitly contained in another (defined) statement, and what degree of certainty the implicit proposition has, compared to that of the other proposition, according to which of the ways it is contained (formal or virtual implication; two concepts, again, whose meaning it is not easy to set out clearly and sharply). The controversies, still not settled, over *fides divina* and *fides ecclesiastica* and their relationship in the matter of what can be defined as revealed by God, show how many obscurities remain in the apparently simple concept of something *implicite definitum*.

[14] This idea is still very clearly to be seen at work in the discussions of the Council of Trent.

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weight of the affirmation given to the proper content of the definition.[15] If this is not the case, i.e. if the connexion between what was compresent to mind and what was properly intended by the definition is not seen quite directly and quite explicitly as such, although it is quite objectively given and even demonstrable, then what was compresent to mind cannot be spoken of as defined. We could say that it can be derived from a definition as a presupposition or a consequence of what is contained in the definition; but it cannot be said to be affirmed by the definer with that absolute affirmation which he gives to the proper content of his definition. For suppose one were to ask the definer in [243] such a case, 'Are you affirming what was in fact compresent to your mind just as absolutely as what you properly defined, and are you doing so for the very reason that this latter is what you are defining?' Then in this given case he would have to reply, 'I must think about this first, i.e. I must first reflect on the connexion between what is defined and what was merely compresent to my mind (as a matter of fact, first and foremost).' But what he is saying here implicitly is that he has not defined what was compresent to his mind at the time, but only that he *might be* in a position to define it on some future occasion, when in fact there emerges on further explicit reflexion an indissoluble connexion between what was defined and what was compresent to mind at the time. Thus this affirmation of the *possibility* of definition depends (so far as the individual theologian is concerned) on the stringency of the knowledge of this connexion.

If we apply what has been said to the canons of the Council of Trent, the following conclusions would seem to be true.

a. The Fathers of the Council had no intention of defining monogenism, nor does anyone in fact assert this. The definition and so its substance are directed against the Pelagian denial, renewed by Erasmus[16], of the existence of a hereditary sin; in this heresy the condition of sinfulness prior to personal sin is replaced by personal sins which each person commits for himself in his own lifetime, though certainly in imitation of Adam. Because the Council's intention was to define the existence of hereditary sin over against personal guilt, we cannot say that the phrase 'origine unum' (in the sense of a chain of causality derived from a *single* individual) is as such defined. If this were the case, we could obviously say that monogenism was defined implicitly. But is this the case? That precisely is the question.[17] It is a question which cannot simply be answered in the affirmative without further proof if it was indeed the intention of the Council to establish the existence of a state of guilt prior to personal sins against the teaching [244] of Pelagianism (and of Pelagian essays at the time of the Council, such as that of Erasmus). Certainly no one denies that the Council *could* have taught more and even defined more than what is necessarily posited in the mere contradictory opposite of the rejected heresy. But the question is whether it has in fact done so, that is (in our case), whether as well as just teaching the unity of origin of hereditary sin it also defined it; and further (this too) defined it in such a way that a 'moral' unity of origin of hereditary sin is not merely something which did not enter the Council's field of vision but has been objectively excluded by means of an authentic definition. But the proof of this is so complicated as itself to serve as a proof that there can be no question of a definition here but rather of an inference

[15] One could ultimately in this case speak of something 'implicitly defined'. But in our view it would seem preferable to say that what we have here is something (expressly) 'co-defined', something clearly and unavoidably 'co-expressed' in the definition, possessing the same theological grade as that upon which the intention to express directly bears.

[16] Cf., e.g., S. Ehses, *Concilium Tridentinum* V, p. 212. References will also be found here to Erasmus's teaching on original sin as an *imitatio* of Adam's sin.

[17] Lennerz (p. 421) seems simply to assume this. This makes it very difficult to see why the only use he makes of the consideration that polygenism does away with the unity of origin of hereditary sin is to show that monogenism is not a matter of indifference to dogma (p. 423).

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from what was defined.

b. There is no doubt that in this definition there is contained a statement (*mitgesagt*) that a single individual stands at the beginning of human history, who as 'first man'[18] and as ancestor of all men handed down original sin to his posterity by means of the natural bond of generation (Denz 788, 789, 791, 793). Original sin is spoken of as *origine unum* (Denz 790), in saying which the Fathers of the Council once again had in mind the single deed of a single historical ancestor. It cannot be doubted that the Conciliar Fathers had in mind only a single, numerically individual person at the beginning of human history, who by means of his unique historical act instituted the sinfulness of the race, a sinfulness which becomes each individual man's own in so far as he is connected with his fellows and so with the first ancestor by a bond of natural, biological generation. It cannot be doubted that the whole Tridentine teaching on original sin is formulated on this presupposition. Nor is it a matter for doubt that something contained (*mitgesagt*) in this way in the solemn definition of a fundamental dogma is of great theological weight, even if it is not defined.

[245] c. Yet it may be doubted whether monogenism is itself implicitly defined or, better, co-defined (*mitdefiniert*). The question here is no longer whether it is clearly a necessary presupposition of the Tridentine teaching. To demonstrate this would still be far conceptually from demonstrating that what we have here is an implicit definition. This would only be demonstrated once it had first been shown that what was *concurrently* asserted (Mit-*gesagte*) by the Conciliar Fathers about monogenism was for them so precisely and *immediately* a composite part (*mitgesetzt*) of their doctrine of hereditary sin that their absolute affirmation of the one had to extend with the same force and unambiguity to the other – and this is doubtful. Once again we have to start from the fact that the Conciliar Fathers *did not want* to define monogenism. But then the burden of proof does not fall upon those who doubt the status of monogenism as something defined but on those who assert it. This proof is not effected by demonstrating that monogenism is *concurrently* asserted by the Fathers in the definition of the doctrine of original sin, nor even when it is clear over and above this that the Conciliar Fathers did not engage in reflexion as to the possibility or impossibility of separating what was defined and what was concurrently asserted, or that the Fathers knew nothing of such a possibility, or (had they turned their minds to this question) would have rejected it. All this can in certain circumstances prove that anyone who defines the Conciliar doctrine of original sin or affirms it absolutely must *logically* do this in respect of monogenism, but not that he has already done so.

The question ultimately amounts to this: does what the Council defined concerning original sin stand in an objectively indissoluble and *immediate* connexion with monogenism? If the connexion exists, *and* exists immediately and so is clearly to be seen immediately and at once, then it is possible to speak of an implicit definition. If the connexion does indeed exist, but the demonstration of the indissoluble connexion requires relatively involved consideration which, looked at in itself, is not entirely free from doubt, then we can speak of a possibility of definition (definability) and of a theological certainty, but not of a definition already (implicitly) achieved. We shall be concerned in Section II with the demonstration of this connexion, and it will appear there that a demonstration is not as simple as it might seem at first sight. In other words the doctrine of a state of sin pertaining to a number of men in

[18] If Adam is the *primus homo* (Denz 788) in relation to *omne genus humanum* (Denz 789), to *omnes homines*, then the defenders of an implicit definition of monogenism would also have to say (if they are consistent) that the falsehood of any Pre-Adamite theory is equally defined implicitly. The fact that they do not do so, but rather expressly reject this view, puts the affirmation of the implicit definition of monogenism in an unfavourable light.

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virtue of an historical event prior to an individual [246] act of sin committed by each one of them does indeed imply monogenism (as we shall see); but it does not imply it with that immediacy which would be necessary for an implicit definition.

It might be objected that instead of 'historical event' in the previous sentence what should have been said (as in the Council) was precisely 'through the historical act of an *individual*', which would have made the whole matter clear and clearly in favour of an implicit definition of monogenism. The answer to this is twofold. (a) In this case too, monogenism would unquestionably be defined if the 'generatione (propagatione)', so far as it means more than just the contradictory opposite of 'imitatione', were regarded as defined in the sense of a mode in which hereditary sin is handed down. That is, it would have to be *defined* not only that a guilt derived from someone else exists prior to the personal decision of the individual (*non imitatione*), but that; this can be inherited only by a *biological* bond of generation with the historical cause of this guilt ('generatione' as more than 'non imitatione'). De Frame for example contests this.[19] In other words it could be asked whether the 'generatione' (in so far as it is the object of the *definition*) means more than 'non imitatione'.[20] If this were not the [247] case, the fact that the Council speaks of the guilt of an individual does not lead in this case either to any clear consequence in the direction of monogenism. However, we do not intend to examine this question here. (b) But that is not the main answer to this objection. As we shall see, it may be shown with sufficient certainty that the 'individual' of which the Council speaks as the originator of hereditary sin must really be an individual, because otherwise the defined doctrine of hereditary sin would no longer retain its force. But what is not proved by this is that this unique individuality of 'Adam' is itself thereby defined.

4. The Vatican Council[21]

[19] Pp. 57-62. (If this is a reference to the article cited at the beginning of this study, it is obviously wrong, but I have not been able to check it. – Tr.)

[20] Not much information on this point is to be gained from the Conciliar discussions. It is generally evident that the precise point of our question was not under consideration. There was a desire to repudiate the Pelagian error, which instead of original sin only admitted an *imitatio* of the first sinner. Ideas about why and how *generatio*, *propagati*o handed on original sin were pretty confused. There was still a widespread idea that the cause of the handing down of original sin was an infection of the flesh due to *generatio*, and theologians were still fairly far from regarding *generatio* as a pure, non-causal condition under which original sin was passed on (cf., e.g., Ehses V, p. 174: *propagatione et libidine inordinata transfunditur*; p. 176: the *caro corrupta* causes original sin in the soul infused into it; similarly p. 180; p. 166: *contrahitur ex carne infecta*; p. 181: *transfunditur in omnes ex carne infecta ex generatione*, offered as a summary of the view of the Conciliar Fathers!). This fact alone warns us of the need for a certain caution. If we were to take 'propagatione' as defined even in so far as it says more than 'non imitatione' (it is often spoken of in the acts of the Council as a pure opposite of 'imitatione'), then it would be strictly consistent to say that it should be taken in the sense in which most of the Conciliar Fathers took it: in the Augustinian sense of the corruption of the flesh due to 'libidinous' generation as the immediate cause of the soul's infection with guilt.

[21] For the following see: *Collectio Lacensis* VII, col. p 515 s. (the theologians' schema, chiefly due to Franzelin, 'De doctrina catholica cap. 15: de communi totius humani generis origine ab uno Adamo'); col. 544, n. 3 (a note on this chapter of the schema); col. 555 (*Schema reformatum constitutionis dogmaticae de doctrina catholica*, cap. 2: 'De hominis creatione et natura'); col. 566 (canon II, 4 of the canons of the revised schema: 'Si quis universum genus humanum ab uno protoparente Adam ortum esse negaverit: anathema sit'); col. 1633 (cap. 6 of the schema as revised by Martin and Kleutgen); col. 1637 (the corresponding canon of the revised schema: 'Si quis universum genus humanum ab uno protoparente ortum esse negaverit: anathema sit'). As is well known, only the first four chapters of this schema were thoroughly discussed by the Council's *Deputatio de fide* (January – March 1870) and laid before the Council in the form of a proposal for a *constitutio dogmatica de fide catholica* in its own right (col. 69.s.). The *Deputatio de fide* did indeed continue to discuss the second part of the original schema; but this part never reached the General Congregation of the Council, still less was it voted upon in a public sitting.

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In the original schema of a 'Constitutio dogmatica de doctrina catholica contra multiplices errores ex rationalismo derivatos' monogenism was included as a doctrine of faith, and the polygenism which opposed it was branded as heretical. Appeal was made for this purpose to the explicit testimony of Scripture in the Old and New Testaments (Gen 1:28; 3:20; Wis 10:1; Ac 17:26), and it was pointed out that the denial of monogenism infringed (*violatur*) both the dogma of original sin as well as that of the redemption of all men by the one Christ, and thus came into conflict with Rom 5:18.[22] The [248] discontinuation of the Council prevented any further treatment of the schema.

The first thing to strike one about the much-revised schema is the fact that neither chapter nor canon make allowance for any kind of Pre-Adamitism. Had the text been defined in the form proposed, this theory, which 'Humani Generis' prudently avoids, would have been heretical, which suggests the need for a certain prudence in our estimate of the schema. And this is independent of the fact that it did not achieve the status of a definition, that it is not the last word for theology: we must not be in too much of a hurry to wonder how things might have gone, if... Otherwise one could also pronounce sentence on Molinism, for example, in view of the fate it suffered at the hands of the theologians during the congregations *de Auxiliis*.[23] Nor ought the general parallels between the decree 'De Doctrina Catholica' of the Provincial Council of Cologne in 1860 and the Vatican schema to be overlooked. These are especially noteworthy as regards the title, purpose and choice of matters dealt with. Chapter 14 of the Cologne decree[24] rejects equally transformism (even in [249] respect of the body only) and polygenism. Now it is indeed worthy of note that the Vatican schema touches on the question of transformism with the utmost caution, by using Biblical expressions (*formavit de limo terrae*; *corpore de limo terrae formato*) to describe the genesis of man, so as to turn its full attention to the other error against which the Council of Cologne protested. Perhaps this may be taken as an indication that the two points in question were not regarded as entirely equivalent even then. But on the other hand the parallels between the Cologne decree (which was confirmed by Rome in its rejection of moderate transformism too) and the Vatican schema show that a certain prudence is in place with regard to an opinion of theologians (even if it is a general one) in questions of this kind. From the point of view of the *magisterium* the Vatican schema is no more than an unofficial product of the labour of theologians. It can only have a theological weight over and above the weight of the arguments it adduces if and in so far as it can be said to reflect the general teaching of the

[22] The annotations to the first schema (col. 544) still further developed this indirect argument. It is said there that doubt was cast upon monogenism 'nostra aetate ab hominibus quibusdam ex levissimis rationibus geologicis et ethnographicis'. Labourdette himself (p. 158) remarks: 'On ne pourrait plus parler aujourd'hui avec cette hauteur'. In the revised schema the direct argument is brought more into the foreground; here it is said (col. 555) that polygenism does injury to (*laeditur*) the dogmas of original sin and redemption. In the note it is further added: 'tertium dogma, quod statuitur, est unitas generis humani, de quo nulla est difficultas'. In the further revision by Martin and Kleutgen (col. 1633) recourse is had only to the direct argument with the help of Wis 10:1 and Ac 17:26. Not much was said on this question in the course of the Council. The American Bishop of Savannah, A. Vérot (who in his speech sought, let it be noted in passing, an explicit rehabilitation of Galileo), took it up in the sixth general meeting (3.1.1870). He objected to the phrase '*ex levissimis rationibus*' of the theologians' annotation: the reasons, he maintained, were much more serious, and it was only the authority of Scripture which prevented him from giving them his assent. In his view the schema (on this point) laid undue emphasis on German errors, and overlooked French and English representatives of erroneous teaching, as well as American polygenism in the form of a theoretical justification for racial discrimination. (Cf. Granderath, Geschichte des Vat. Konz. II, p. 100 s.; Hauret, p. 174 s.)

[23] Rabeneck says, quite rightly, 'neque quidquam iuvat illuc confugere librum concordiae aegerrime tantum condemnationem sedis Apostolicae evasisse. In eiusmodi rebus quod paene accidit pro nihilo habendum est' (*Archivum hist. S.J.* XIX (1950), p. 140). Of course we do not wish to suggest that the two cases are simply parallel; there is, nevertheless, a certain analogy.

[24] *Coll. Lac.* V, col. 292.

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theologians of the time, and so serve as a token of something of more importance than this theological labour purely by itself. But precisely this general view of the theologians, as it takes clear shape in the schema, hardly justifies a higher theological qualification than that we have already arrived at on the basis of more definite pronouncements of the Church. For the case of transformism, with regard to which the theologians of the time, generally speaking, took up the same attitude as with regard to polygenism, shows that an irreformable position is by no means reached by simply establishing the fact of a consensus of opinion (even when this consensus claims to be related to a theologically relevant question).

The results of this investigation into the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church may be summed up by saying that monogenism is to be qualified as theologically certain. Neither a higher nor a lower theological qualification would seem to be justified in the present state of the question. In view of the fact that the pronouncements we have examined or at least the most recent of them taken from 'Humani Generis' are extremely explicit, it is not to be expected that an appeal to the ordinary *magisterium* in its usual teaching would produce a different result. For it is not to be supposed that the Church's *magisterium* at the moment wishes to have this question treated in ordinary instruction and preaching and so on otherwise than in its own most explicit treatment in 'Humani Generis'. There is no need to [250] repeat here the other observations and positions at which we have arrived.

Nevertheless a general remark will not be out of place here. Some readers may have had the impression that we have as it were haggled about the Church's doctrinal pronouncements, practising the utmost theological minimalism and juridical formalism, always concerned to make their demand on us nothing more than is absolutely unavoidable. As regards such an impression it should be remembered that we Catholics rightly insist that the Scriptures can only be read rightly in and with the living Church, and under the guidance of her *magisterium* as it is actually exercised in a given situation at any particular moment; it should be remembered that the historical letter of the Bible by itself does not fully guarantee the assimilation of the truth therein expressed by a spiritual subject who belongs to another age and whose historical perspective is unavoidably different. If this is true of the Scriptures as God's Word, it is obviously true too of the historical letter of an earlier Council or of some other pronouncement of the Church of earlier times. We Catholics, then, have neither the duty nor the right so to conduct ourselves with regard to an earlier doctrinal pronouncement of the Church – like the old Protestants with regard to the Bible – as if from it alone, independently of the *magisterium today*, all the teaching we need, the answer to every problem which afflicts us for the first time today, could unambiguously be obtained. For a Catholic, then, who believes in the guidance of the *magisterium* today by the Holy Spirit, the prudent and restrained appraisal of what may be obtained with certainty from *old* pronouncements of the Church for a question of *today*, is simply a consequence of a twofold conviction. Precisely as a Catholic he holds that every age has its own questions, because it is not always simply the same thing that happens in history – even in the history of the Spirit; and he holds that the living *magisterium* of the moment so preserves the old that a real advance in knowledge is possible, and that what is said is not just an exact repetition of what has always been said. Consequently when the *magisterium* today adopts a clearcut and yet restrained attitude with regard to our question, there is still less ground for saying that more is to be learned from old declarations of the *magisterium* than from modern ones. To establish the fact that this restraint exists is not even remotely to insinuate that the present attitude is perhaps going to be revised in favour of some form of polygenism, just as little as if someone a few centuries [251] ago were to have qualified the Assumption as 'merely' certain theologically (and it was to this and no more that he would have at that time been obliged).

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II. MONOGENISM AND THE SCRIPTURES

The subject of this second section falls naturally into two parts. First we must discuss the question as to whether it may be said, and with what certainty, that Scripture testifies directly to monogenism. Secondly we must consider whether other Scriptural doctrines postulate monogenism as a necessary presupposition. In this second matter we shall proceed first by presupposing the teaching of the Church as an authentic interpretation of the given Scriptural doctrine; then try to show that monogenism is really presupposed by this doctrine. The method may not be that of 'pure' Biblical theology, but it has much to recommend it here. We are by this means relieved of a task which we should otherwise be incapable of fulfilling in this context, the task of opening out and establishing according to the methods of Biblical theology the doctrines of original sin and redemption in the Scriptures, and of doing this *in extenso* and taking all the pains required by such a task. We are specially justified in adopting this method here because the Church's doctrine of original sin presents itself not only as true in itself and revealed, but also as an authentic interpretation of Scripture itself.[25] In this way we can carry out what we have so far omitted from our consideration of the Church's doctrine concerning monogenism, and that is to ask ourselves whether the Church's doctrine of Original Sin does not necessarily contain monogenism objectively, even if it cannot be said to be implicitly defined there. Nor does this method prevent us from making ourselves clear about whether the certainty we seek does not vary, both as regards the starting-point of the deduction and as regards the process of inference, [252] according as we regard Scripture alone or together with the utterances of the Church's *magisterium* bearing on our question.

A. *The Direct Proof, its possibility and limits*

1. The Old Testament

a. *Gen 2-3*. Because there is no doubt that Wis 10:1 looks back to Gen 1-3, while there are no other Old Testament texts of importance, we must begin by considering the doctrine of Gen 1-3.

It is of course impossible to develop here all the hermeneutic principles which must be presupposed if we are to establish what the inspired author of these chapters wishes to tell us, the real content of his teaching so far as it is binding theologically. We have to take these principles for granted. There is no difficulty in assuming them in so far as they are generally acknowledged; where differences of opinion persist, we shall content ourselves with the mere application of those principles which seem to us to be correct and which we believe to be in harmony with the principles which according to the Church's *magisterium* hold good for everyone in the interpretation of this chapter.

There is no doubt that in Gen 2-3[26] an individual man is set before us; before him there

[25] Cf. Denz 789, 791. When it is said that Rom 5 contains the Church's doctrine of original sin and that this too is expressed in the canon just cited, the question obviously still remains open as to how far this content may be extracted by purely exegetical means. It is not easy to hold the proper mean here between an exegetical semi-agnosticism and an attitude in which one behaves as though the Biblical theologian had no real need of the Church's understanding in faith and her m*agisterium*. Cf. the study by J. Levie, taking precisely our question as an example, 'Les limites de la preuve d'Ecriture Sainte en théologie', NRT LXXI (1949) pp. 1009-29.

[26] We may ignore Gen. 1:26-8. Ceuppens (p. 25), Hauret (p. 162) and others have justly declared that monogenism could not be proved from this text. All that is said here is that God created 'man' ('*den* Menschen'), in two sexes. We have a statement of the origination of the species and of the duality of the sexes

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was no man who could cultivate the earth, he was 'alone', and it was only by a fresh divine intervention that he was given a companion of the same rank who did not exist before and who was to become the mother of *all* the living (cf. Gen 2:6.7.18.21 s.; 3:20). The Adam who is portrayed as the ancestor of all men is portrayed as an individual. Does this mean that according to the testimony and in the intention of the author of Genesis he was *eo ipso* an individual? What we have just established merely gives rise to this question but as yet provides no answer to it. For the question precisely arises as to what the author meant to say by this portrayal in symbolic and dramatic terms. Anyone who says that the question has already [253] been answered by what has been established is asserting that we have before us an historical report in the modern sense of the word: a statement, that is, whose *genus litterarium* itself is historical [27] in the modern sense, and not just a statement the *content* of which – in a sense to be more sharply defined – is constituted by an historical state of affairs. In other words, what we have to ask is whether, in the intention of the author of Genesis, Adam's individuality belongs to the mode of expression or to the (historical) content of these chapters. This question must in any case be *put*, in the present state of hermeneutic principles regarding the literary genre of the first chapters of Genesis. A mere citation of the sentences from Genesis in dispute, together with the assertion that monogenism is in fact unmistakably and palpably referred to there, is simply not possible any longer. By methods hike this one could equally prove that the creation of the world in six days or God's immediate formation of man out of the slime of the earth were 'acknowledged facts'. For it is really not at all clear at first sight why one rather than the other should belong to what is 'expressed' or 'meant'. And yet, while granting the methodological necessity of putting the question, people are quite prepared today to say that monogenism belongs to the content and not to the mode of what is expressed, because otherwise the statement would no longer have any historical content at all.[28]

[254] But is this really so certain? First of all, what is said about the one Adam and the one Eve is found in a narrative context of a symbolic and dramatic kind. Is the distinct individuality of the persons put before us an independent element of the account, for which as such by itself an historical content must be sought? One cannot just arbitrarily detach a

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by God, and nothing more. Lennerz leaves the question open (p. 429).

[27] A statement may be (a) historical in its *mode of expression* (and yet in certain circumstances be unhistorical as regards its content, namely when it is erroneous). It is historical in its mode of expression when it describes the historical object in the categories proper to it as an observable phenomenon. A statement may (b) have an historical *content* (and be unhistorical in its mode of expression), i.e. describe the historical object intended in categories which are not those which an observer and reporter would arrive at by an examination of the historical event in the mode of manifestation proper to it. Expressions like 'the falling to earth of the stars', 'the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of the air', 'the sounding of the archangel's trumpet' do refer to a (future) historical event (not a supra-temporal truth); but if the historical event intended were portrayed as an observer then in existence would be able to observe and narrate it, presumably there would appear in the portrayal neither the sound of a trumpet nor a cloud nor a star falling to earth. The historical content and the historical mode of expression (= historical *genus litterarium*) are two different things.

[28] Cf., e.g., Lennerz, p. 431, Sagüés, n. 546. I must admit that both these eminent theologians seem to me to reach their conclusions rather too abruptly. 'Nam,' says Sagüés about these texts, 'ea, nisi negentur aliquid historice verum continere, saltem monogenismum docere putanda sunt'. And Lennerz says, 'Non iam apparet quid in tota illa narratione veri remaneat de origine generis humani. Si ergo hoc loco aliquid de origine generis humani dicitur, non potest esse nisi monogenismus'. No more is said on this capital point; all we hear is this one assertion. But is it so certain from the first that the whole narrative of the first human pair could have no historical content apart from that of monogenism? The matter is still simpler in the case of Ceuppens (p. 25). After going through the texts (Gen 2:5-7, 18-23) he says simply, 'De ce passage il ressort assez clairement, je pense, qu'à l'origine Dieu ne créa qu'un homme et une femme'. In this way the exegesis of the texts is disposed of. It is really not clear why by such methods one could not also prove that any kind of transformism is 'assez clairement' in contradiction with Scripture; yet Ceuppens will not allow this for Adam, although for Eve again he maintains it strictly.

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single element from its total context and ask what its particular content may be. If one were to do this, could one not also consistently look for the historical content of 'God's walking in the cool of the day' and 'the sound of his feet' in Gen 3:8? Must we suppose that the first man was a husbandman, because otherwise Gen 2:15 would lack historical content? It is by no means asserted that the former case and the two latter are equivalent. But where is the strict and positive proof that they are not? Even if we ignore this preliminary difficulty, the question remains: is it true and above all is it *proved* that the account of the one man would cease to have any historical content if it were not understood 'literally' in a monogenistic sense? From the purely exegetical standpoint, is it agreed that this account is certainly intended to *give expression to* ('to teach') more than the real and genuine community of all men among themselves, who, being created by one and the same God, are meant to possess, in spite of their great mutual differences, a single nature, a single goal and a common history of salvation and damnation? We should recall the tendency of the Oriental mind to think in concrete and personalistic terms and to see the foundation of every sociological unity in a single king or a single ancestor.[29] Is it not conceivable that [255] the mutual community based upon the single divine origin of man and the unity of his nature, the family relationship of all men should be given expression by putting it before our eyes in the form of an image of a unique clan with a unique ancestor? From the purely exegetical point of view, is it immediately certain that this is insufficient as the historical content of the 'description populaire des origines du genre humain' (Denz 3002)? Nor can it be said that this content is insignificant and obvious. The fact that all men of the most diverse peoples are children of the one God and form one family was not even at that time simply a matter of course. How should this specific and historical unity be expressed in a 'langage simple et figuré, adapté aux intelligences d'une humanité moins dévelopée' otherwise than in the image of a unity of origin giving rise to relations of kinship?

Anyone for whom monogenism is simply expressed in an explicit and indubitable way in Gen 2-3 has to face the question of the sources of such a knowledge. Simply to introduce here an appeal to a recent revelation is rather too simple. Inspiration and Revelation may by no means be confused, especially since today 'it is no longer doubted by anyone' that these reports make use of extra-canonical sources both oral and literary. However if it is proposed to refer the knowledge of these sources to the primitive revelation, the following considerations must be borne in mind. 'Adam' could not know in virtue of his human experience that he was the one and only man. He could at most ascertain that no others were to be found in his environment. But God could inform him of this? Certainly, that is possible. But did this possibility become a fact? Had he to know this with certainty in order to be able to be and to do what he in fact was and did as ancestor and sinful head of humanity? Are we to suppose that this knowledge, supposing it existed, was handed down over a few hundred thousand years? It may be true that in other narratives of the Near East which describe the emergence of man several human pairs are created simultaneously[30] that is still no reason why the Genesis narrative should be a deliberate contradiction of these other narratives so as to make monogenism the content of what it has to say. For on the one hand these other narratives and the enumerations peculiar to them (7 pairs, 4 [256] men) may only wish to state the same thing as the unitary number of Genesis: the totality of men. On the other hand one would have to ask whether the intention of these other narratives was not to symbolize an essential distinction between different men (and of the peoples springing from them) by speaking of a plural number. The intention of the unitary number in Genesis would then be to

[29] Cf. e.g. Gen 9:19.22; 19:37 s.; 25:1-4. Finally it should not be forgotten that even in the New Testament (Mt 2:3; 3:5; 4:24) 'all', 'the whole', need not imply more than a great number, which need by no means include every relevant case.
[30] C. Hauret, p. 119 s.; R. Labat, *Le Poème babylonien de la création*, p.51.

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combat *this* view by emphasizing the fundamental likeness of men; but this would not necessarily mean that monogenism in the strict sense was being taught here in objective fact. Ultimately this too must be borne in mind: it is not immediately clear why an essential distinction should be held to obtain between the story of the single human pair and the story of Eve's origin from Adam in respect of a 'literal' [31] interpretation of the two stories. In connexion with the question of Biblical monogenism Ceuppens, for example, does in fact hold that Eve's physical bond with Adam is expressly taught in the Scriptures.[32] But if one is not prepared to grant this[33] it does not seem immediately intelligible how monogenism may nevertheless be presented as an explicit and unmistakable declaration of Scripture. It is not clear how one can consistently associate this conception of Eve's origin with the admission that Gen 1-3 is not necessarily in contradiction with a moderate transformism.[34] Thus from this point of view too it seems more in accordance with the facts not to assert that it is certainly possible for someone to show by [257] purely exegetical methods that monogenism is contained in Gen 1-3 as a direct statement.

It goes without saying that this is neither to throw doubt upon monogenism in itself nor positively to contest the fact that it is in actual fact contained in Gen 1-3. Thus what has so far been said in no way conflicts with Denz 2123. For all that is declared there is that the *unitas generis humani* is objectively contained in Gen 1-3, against those who deny the fact itself; no position is taken up with regard to the question of how this fact of being contained may be recognized by the use of purely exegetical methods.[35]

If we have restricted the bearing of Gen 1-3 for monogenism in this negative way, our task is by no means done. We can and must now go on to add positively: what Genesis says is *positively open*[36] to a revealed doctrine concerning monogenism arrived at elsewhere and

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[31] We make use of this term only for the sake of brevity and so as to be understood quickly. In itself it is misleading: a statement is taken most literally when it is understood to have the meaning proper to it on the basis of the literary genre employed in the given case. Someone who holds that God created the world in six times 24 hours has not really taken Gen 1 'literally'; he has misunderstood its meaning.

[32] Le polygénisme, p. 26.

[33] There appears to be an increasing number of writers who in this matter too take the literary genre of the first chapters of Genesis seriously, and see in the formation of Eve from Adam's rib a dramatic symbolization of her likeness to the man and her subordination to him, the question of the physical mode of her origination being left open: so Cajetan, Hoberg, Hummelauer, Nickel, Holzinger, Peters, Lagrange, Junker, Göttsberger, Schlögl, Lusseau, de Frame, Hauret, Premm, Colungs, Chaine, Bartmann, Cordero, Remy. Naturally there are considerable differences of detail between the views of these authors into which we cannot go here. The same is true of the extent to which they go in rejecting Eve's physical and material extraction from Adam.

[34] In fact it has been one of the 'classic' arguments against transformism in any form (Pesch, Lercher, Sagüés, etc.) that since it is not applicable to Eve, it cannot be asserted in Adam's case either.

[35] *Sensus litteralis historicus* is precisely not the same as the *sensus litteralis historicus* which can be extracted from the passage concerned taken by itself. Denz 2124 itself points out that the *analogia fidei* must be observed in the interpretation of Gen 1-3. This would be superfluous if everything a text contained objectively could be extracted from it without recourse to anything else. Certainly we must as far as possible proceed from the text itself if we wish to find out what the human author has necessarily stated as a minimum, or else we shall be dragging into *this* literal sense things which owe their origin to a later and more developed revelation.

[36] 'Positively open' is intended to imply more than 'does not exclude', 'is not in contradiction with' (but indifferent as regards any further statement). What Genesis says, rather, is so formulated that its human author did not indeed have to be conscious of its entire bearing, but so that it can nevertheless be understood without hesitation as an expression of this fuller content; and it is God's will too (as later Revelation shows) that *we* should now understand it positively like this in this 'sensus plenior'. In this case at least it cannot be objected that God wishes to say to us in the given passage what the human author wished to say, and thus no inspired 'sensus plenior' exists. This objection to a 'sensus plenior' may be justified (we need not go into the matter here) in many cases where appeal is made to it, but that is not the case here. For here it is not a matter of some new idea which is affixed additively to one which has been really expressed as its 'sensus plenior'; what we have here is a proposition (and they are countless) which exhibits marginal indistinctness, so that it was neither necessary nor possible for the human author (as opposed to God) to be reflexively clear about how far the

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[258] by other means and guaranteed by the *magisterium*; and in this sense it is now possible to say that monogenism belongs to the content of Gen 2.

Let us clarify this point a little more. First of all it can be said that all we have so far said in no way excludes the fact that monogenism is part of what is actually stated, its content. We take it that there is no question of explaining what is said in Gen 1-3 arbitrarily and without resort to really clear hermeneutic principles, finding a literal sense here and a symbolic one there; we take it that the *whole* is a great, complex image with an historical content which is meant to be the kind of content proper to a unified, symbolic utterance. But then there is nothing to prevent this plastic image of a human pair from giving expression to the reality of a unique human pair as the ancestors of all men, over and above what was said to be the minimal sense above.

But it is permissible to go further. The author of Gen 2-3 intends to tell the story of the beginnings of humanity, and by means of this, reflexion upon the Beginning to speak of what is 'original' in his own existential situation, provide a theological interpretation of his own existence, by referring it to its origin. In fact one can say that the past is regarded from the point of view of the writer's religious situation. The author sees himself faced by an ethnological and cultural plurality, and he reduces this to a more primitive unity. It is very far from our intention here to examine the exact terms in which he determines this original unity, whether he speaks quite certainly there of the strictly numerical unity of our terrestrial origin or only of a transcendent unity in God or of what is indeed a quite tangible unity of a terrestrial but not of a strictly monogenistic kind.[37] The reduction to an original [259] unity of an historical and cultural plurality belonging to his own living-space, a unity which guarantees the mutual community today of the many in a common whole of meaning and a common history of salvation and damnation – to see this and to say it is already in itself an astonishing phenomenon, especially as the author's field of vision embraced a number of peoples extremely unlike each other in race, culture and religion, in respect of whom this original unity was hardly a matter of course for the religious philosophy of this simple man. We can realize how particularly hard it must have been for him when we remember that the distinctions in Gen 1 among plants and animals, the *differentiae* of which in themselves must have seemed no greater throughout their entire range than those among men, were seen without the slightest hesitation as original in a 'fixist' way (Gen 1:11.21.24.25). It is impossible to say that the Yahwist arrives at this essentially bold idea of unity *merely* from the observation that men have children and multiply (Gen 1:28). Modern rationalist ideas (inter-racial fertility in spite of diversity, etc.) were certainly still further from his mind. The fact that he nevertheless sees the riven plurality of his own living-space as sprung from an (at least larger) unity of a terrestrial ('Adam') and transcendent kind (the one Creator of all), is the mark of a profound mind, especially since generation for him elsewhere means the

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proposition does in fact go, although he was quite capable of seeing that it *could* imply the 'sensus plenior'. In a case like this it is quite possible to say that the 'sensus plenior' is inspired, for the human author affirms it in the sense meant by God even when he is incapable of giving a reflexive account to himself as to whether everything which even he sees as a possible sense of his own statement really belongs unmistakably to what is affirmed.

[37] It would not indeed be excluded *a priori* that a terrestrial, original, historically tangible unity of humanity might be conceivable for the author of Genesis, a unity which is not precisely that of a unique original pair and for which such a pair would serve as a plastic medium in which the unity could be visualized. To portray *a priori* possibilities of this kind would serve no useful purpose here. In order to see that they are not *a priori* impossible one need only reflect on what this unity is meant to be opposed to in the mind of the author of Genesis. Looked at from the viewpoint of the whole theology of the first chapters of Genesis, what this unity is contrasted with is not simply a purely numerical multiplicity, but the qualified multiplicity of a humanity rent asunder into peoples, races and religions, a humanity which is no longer at one in anything, so that the various peoples themselves no longer acknowledge a common God as their joint origin. It is against this empirical plurality that the Yahwist writer sets his portrayal of what was 'in the beginning': the one Man from the hand of the one God as a unique pair of man and woman.

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generative cause of the like (Gen. 5:3). Admittedly the Yahwist feels this need for unity even where the plurality of individual peoples each for itself is involved: this plurality too he refers back to a unique ancestor for each (to this extent what was said above about the certainty of a strictly monogenistic statement holds good). But let us not be in too much of a hurry to say that therefore no more lies behind the former statement than behind the latter. For in the latter case we may have a secondary, inexact application, not wholly accurate objectively, of a *valid* metaphysical principle (though of a relatively unreflexive kind), which is wholly justified in the former case.

We may describe this basic metaphysical conception by which the author must be actuated in the following terms. A. In spite of their variety men are basically the same, and are thus sharply and (even [260] from a purely terrestrial point of view) unconditionally separated from the animal kingdom; they are the same by nature: perishable in their earthly substance (like the animals) and yet moral creatures addressed by Yahweh in a special way, for whom everything else exists as the environment of their own existence; over all of them there reigns in grace and judgment the one God of their origin, so that they all belong to a single history of salvation and damnation in spite of their differences; where they are found to be not merely different but divided by enmity, this is not of the origin but the result of their guilt (the history of Cain, the Tower of Babel). Thus men form ('now' primarily) a solidary community of nature and history, and this is something belonging to the origin, created by God. B. This unity in the now, which is theologically disclosed behind the surface, of dismembered existence as an existential[38] willed by God, now in force and prior to all guilt, has a beginning and an origin; this beginning is as early as men themselves (and not the effect of an historical decision of the guilty choice of men themselves), and it is primordial just because it arises from the real unity of an identical origin. For in the first place the larger plurality arises from the more restricted one, as everyday experience teaches: men multiply (Gen 1:28). But over and above this, if they are able to multiply in this way, there need only have been *one* human pair in the beginning. For if there were another cause of human multiplicity, independent of generation, why should it no longer be active now, why should there be another cause as well? And above all, would these men who have been independent of each other from the origin really form the unity and solidary community which they now are – or ought to be? Or would they not precisely stand over against each other in the same alien way as the animal species which God created? May one suppose that the Yahwist's theological reflexions moved in this direction, and occasioned that portrayal of the beginning and one origin of all men which he gives us in plastic imagery? If one can credit him with something of the kind (and there is a good deal to be said for this), then it becomes apparent with what justice we may say that his statements are – even 'quoad nos' – at least *positively open* to a genuine monogenism. Yet this is not to say that it becomes probable, purely exegetically, that monogenism belongs to what is expressed in the strict sense. Nor do [261] we wish to assert that this view that the unity of the whole of human reality is prior to its plurality, even terrestrially, is so consciously thought out by the Yahwist that his intention to act as guarantor of absolute monogenism is unmistakable.[39]

We may put this in slightly different terms. The account of the single primordial pair is first of all an element in a figurative account, and we have next to *inquire* what in its total context it is meant to express by way of historical content. It states without doubt that from the beginning humanity forms a unity of nature and of destiny in saving history, in virtue of a divine disposition (and not by its own 'choice'). Over and above this, it is quite probable and at least positively open (from the purely exegetical point of view) that Genesis means to say

[38] See Introduction. – Tr.
[39] In his theological aetiology he does not, for instance, expressly extend his reflexions beyond the surrounding history of his field of vision.

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that this primordial unity possesses a terrestrial foundation in a strictly physical unity of generation. It is not, however, possible to decide purely exegetically whether the image of a single primordial pair can *only* possess its historically intended content in a physically unique primordial pair, because the reality aimed at might in certain circumstances have been conceived of in terms of a different kind of original unity, also terrestrial in kind. For this reason, from a purely exegetical point of view we regard monogenism as a Scriptural doctrine which is only probably expressed in Gen 2-3.

We must add a few notes to what has just been said. It might be objected that we have forgotten that it is a question of Revelation here, and that consequently any attempt more sharply to determine what strictly was meant in the statement by reconstructing what the author must have thought is bound to go astray. The objection is unsound. It is nowhere laid down that what is said in Gen 1-3, over and above its character as inspired, must have been revealed throughout in just such a way that in regard to what it really certainly states – not in regard to what we arbitrarily suppose for such – it could only be known by genuinely new revelation. What the Yahwist tells us he could at least in many cases have known without new revelation (woman's equality of nature, the creation, even probably, according to the great medieval theologians, the fact of some kind of guilt at the beginning of humanity). The fact that he did see what can be known in this way, and see it and express it with such purity in spite of the obscurity of his existence, remains a marvel of the God who reveals [262] himself[40], and remains inspired. It may even be said that until the contrary is proved, that is, until it is shown to be impossible, we should presume that the *immediate* source of the human author's statements in many individual cases in Gen 1-3 is his own theological reflexion, not a revelation the content of which is communicated sheerly by God from above without any intermediary. Otherwise one would have to look for this revelation in concrete form in the Yahwist's sources, or postulate an oral tradition going back to the beginning[41] expedients, these, of a highly questionable kind, to say no more. If this view is correct, it is metaphysically entirely justified and even imperative to try to find out first of all what the author's thoughts may have been and how he arrived at them; and then by following his train of thought in this way we should have a more exact knowledge of what he really intended to say and what possibly he did not. These reflexions show how necessary it is for us to reconstruct for ourselves reflexively those metaphysical and theological considerations which moved him to form his image of original humanity; then we should see how far these considerations of his and ours will carry us. But this is something we can only turn to later.

Let us provisionally establish as our only result that in view of the literary genre it is impossible to be sure by exegesis alone that monogenism is found in Gen 1-3 in the form of an authentic and binding statement. However, the whole presentation is at least positively open to a monogenistic interpretation; this lies minimally in the author's theological tendency to explain the religious situation of his own existence by reflecting theologically on the (really historical) origin. In any case the narrative of the single ancestor is a declaration about the original, divinely willed unity of all humanity and its history of salvation and damnation. For it follows from all that has been said that this is the minimum statement made by this narrative.

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[40] Especially as this theological reflexion on the Beginning proceeds from the author's experience of God's dealings in his own period of saving history; thus the point of departure of the reflexion is by no means simply 'natural', but contains God's Revelation in the strict sense through his deed and the word accompanying it.

[41] This is not to contest the genuine possibility of such a tradition. But it, may fairly be said that if one tries to form a concrete idea of it one begins to suspect that all it is capable of preserving through thousands of years of history is what is simultaneously kept alive by man's metaphysical reflexion and his needs; just as conversely the latter is continually stimulated by the former.

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[263] b. *Wisdom 10*:*1*. We find it said of Wisdom in a review of her activity in the history of the chosen People: 'She protected the father of the world, the first creature to be formed, when he alone was created, and delivered him from his fall. She gave him power to exercise dominion over all things.' There is no doubt that the text has in view the Adam of Gen 2-3. We have a survey of the saving history of Genesis, in which Cain, the Flood, Abraham, Lot and so on are also mentioned. It is to be observed that the subject of the statement in 10:1 is not Adam but Wisdom. In chapters 10-12 her powerful sway over her lovers in mercy and blessing is celebrated. Historical examples are provided to show how active Wisdom is, and these are simply taken in a freely poetic way from Genesis as a didactic aid in making vividly clear what the writer really wishes to state: the blessings acquired by the followers of Wisdom. One may set up a principle for the interpretation of such statements: where a report belonging to an earlier book of the Old Testament is simply taken over without further commentary, the content and bearing of what has been taken over in the later book is to be assessed according to the content and bearing of its source, provided that the purpose to which it is put demands nothing further. In virtue of this principle, what may be derived from Wis 10:1 is just what can be derived from Gen 2-3 and no more. Nothing new is said except that Wisdom has protected and delivered that Adam whose story we find in Gen 2-3, in the way in which that story relates and in the way in which what is there related of him is to be interpreted. Wis 10 s. mentions no proper names (neither Adam nor Cain nor Abraham nor Lot nor Jacob nor Joseph nor Moses are spoken of in chapter 10 by their own names, although it is they who are being spoken of); and so the only purpose of the statements which are made about Adam as ancestor is to distinguish who is being talked about at all, without having to use his name. Thus the author of Wisdom could with a tranquil mind leave it to his source to determine and to guarantee the bearing of the characterization taken from Gen 2-3. Thus the text possesses no independent significance for the question of monogenism.[42]

[264]

2. The New Testament

Ac 17:*24*-26. It must first be noted that St Luke is reporting one of St Paul's speeches. Inspiration as such with the inerrancy proper to it is thus referred primarily to the fact that this speech with this content was actually delivered, not to the correctness of what was said. Thus the content of the speech can only be guaranteed true in so far as the, speech is an Apostle's sermon and is *for this reason* true in its content and exacting for faith, and in the measure in which the content of a single Apostle's sermon raises such a claim. An Apostle can err where his preaching does not exact the absolute obedience of faith[43]; and so, it would have to be proved that St Paul uttered this proposition as an absolute demand of his preaching of the faith, as the indispensable content of his Gospel.

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[42] A parallel case may help to make this clear. The Vatican schema, already cited, speaks of the *corpus* (*Adae*) *de limo terrae formatum*, of Eve *e costa eius* (*Adae*) *divinitus formata* (*Coll*. *Lac*. VII, col. 1633). It is clear to everyone that what we have here is a citation from Gen 2, and that the author of the schema relies on the source of his citation and its interpretation for the bearing and *precise* content of the citation and its delimitation; thus the text offers no conclusive argument against transformism or in favour of the physical reality of the rib. This remains true even though it is practically certain that the author of the schema was at that time convinced that Adam's body was formed directly from inorganic matter, and that Adam's rib as the matter out of which Eve was formed was a physical reality. But all he wished to *state* was what the cited text really covered with its authority. The same example in more recent times is to be found in Pius XII's address to the members of the Papal Academy of Sciences, AAS XXXIII (1941), p. 506.

[43] It is quite unnecessary to attribute any wider range of infallibility to an individual Apostle as such (i.e. when he is not at the same time an inspired author) than to the successors of Peter. In other words the limits of the latter infallibility are those of the former. For a practical example, see Ac 20:25 compared with 2 Tim 4:20.

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But we may peacefully disregard this question. St Paul says that the one God unknown to the Athenians whom he preaches, formed the entire race of men 'from one'[44] so that it might inhabit the whole face [265] of the earth. All he does is to repeat, as every preacher is allowed and expected to do, the account given in Genesis (and the ideas of Deut 32:8). And he does this to make the Athenians realize that their piety and their religious observances cannot be nationally autochthonous but must be determined by the one Lord of heaven and earth; their religious existence is not dependent upon a private God peculiar to their nationality and their history. In accordance with the principle formulated above, we must say that St Paul is simply repeating his source, giving it the meaning and the bearing which it has in itself. For the context in which St Paul repeats this teaching of Genesis demands no more either. He wishes to draw attention to the unity of humanity in its saving history due to the one living God of Israelite and Christian saving history, and so he makes it arise 'out of one' just as in Genesis and with the same intention. Genesis teaches an historical unity of origin as the ground of the unity of men and of the solidarity of their history; this is what happens in St Paul's speech too, in the same measure and with the same limits and the same certainty. Nothing more can be said with certainty. St Paul is certainly concerned in the context of his speech with a unity of origin; nor can one say that this is merely a rhetorical element without significance for the central point of his speech. But all he says in regard to Genesis is simply what is said there already. Just because a unity of origin is spoken of there [266] which would suffice for his argument in any case, he does not need to have reflected on the precise limits and bearing of the statement in Genesis with regard to the alternatives of monogenism and polygenism. But this statement taken in itself provides us with no final and unambiguous information about monogenism in the strict sense, over and above what it says about an original, historical unity of the human race, and this unity can be conceived of *a priori* in various ways; nor can we then find this information when St Paul repeats the account.

Thus what was said above about Gen 2-3 might be said here about Ac 17:26, both negatively and *positively*, too. For we have here the same ε0χ ε9νο&φ which we find in Heb. 2:11. It may be true that the same thing must be said about this ε0χ ε9νο_φ πα&ντεφ, taken purely in itself, as about Ac 17:26 and Gen 2-3, read in isolation (and also disregarding the fact that it is formally set in opposition to all α(γιαζο&μενοι not to all men). And yet, in the framework of the whole Pauline, theology of redemption, the objective context of Heb 2:11 shows that a genuine unity of origin of all men must be understood in St Paul in a really

[44] It seems to me to make no real difference whether one prefers the old reading ε)χ ε9νο_φ αι(/ματοφ instead of εχ ε9νο&φ or goes to great pains to find a way of completing ε9νο&φ. For in every case this ει9/φ or ε9/νseems to imply a unity which according to the context is other than God and is a unity of origin. Even if with de Frame (p. 55) one reads 'out of one blood' and refers to Jn 1:13 and the Old Testament significance of blood as bearing life, it is still a unity of origin (ε)χ) and not the unity (= identity) of the mode of origin of all men that is in question. For even then the translation 'from the lineage of a single individual' would be the most obvious one (cf. Bauer, W*örterbuch* (ET Arndt and Gingrich) s.v. αι[μα). One would have to translate 'make out of the same blood' and give this the meaning 'make out of the same (= homogeneous) matter' (as the ε)χ in Jn 1:13 refers to the material cause and not strictly to the origin).' But is this interpretation possible? What would then be the purpose of ε)χ ε9νο&φ? The homogeneity of men would be expressed, even without this clause, by the statement that the one God created all peoples. Surely the reference to Adam is much more obvious, since it appears elsewhere in St Paul in similar contexts (Rom 5:12 s.; 1 Cor 11:7 s.; 15:22.45), since the whole passage from the very beginning is a summary of the first chapters of Genesis, since Rabbinic theology too (Strack-Billerbeck II, p. 7, etc.) taught the descent of all men from Adam for reasons which are closely connected with those with which ultimately St Paul is concerned here: the justification of the unity of nature and solidarity of all men. 'We believe (in spite of de Frame) that Lennerz is right in saying (p. 428) that he knows of no exegete who would not interpret the text as referring to the one Adam; and we are of the opinion that this is the most obvious interpretation for the unprejudiced exegete. Only we hold that this still does not dispose of the problem in regard to monogenism; it is just the beginning of the problem, exactly as in the exposition of Gen 2-3.

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monogenistic way if it is to retain its meaning. However, we must postpone to the next section these considerations drawn from the whole Pauline doctrine of original sin and redemption, since they go beyond the exegesis of an isolated text.

A certain prudence and caution is very much in place with regard to these New Testament citations from the Old Testament.[45] Many exegetes today are no longer prepared to grant that 2 Pet 2:5 makes it certain that the Flood extended to all man.[46] Is it necessary that Jonas' stay in the belly of the whale should have been historical fact because of Mt 12:40?[47] Does Jude 9 guarantee the historicity of the [267] struggle between Michael and the Devil for Moses' dead body, which is taken from *The Ascension of Moses*, or is it still possible and meaningful to say what the Apostle wishes to say when the example which is meant to explain something else – what is really stated – has only a literary existence? Is it really possible to use 1 Cor 11:8.12; Eph 5:28-30; 1 Tim 2:13 s. to prove the 'literal' interpretation of the story in Genesis of the formation of Eve from Adam's rib? The Catholic exegetes mentioned above[48] are clearly not of this opinion. What St Paul wished to inculcate about woman by making this reference is still meaningfully illustrated by the reference even when a less 'literal' interpretation of Eve's origin 'out of' Adam is assumed beforehand. 'What historicity does 2 Tim 3:8 guarantee to the names Jannes and Jambres for the sorcerers mentioned without their names in Ex 7:8-12, since St Paul took these names from an apocryphal writing? What historical particulars about Melchisedech can really be got from Heb 7:3? It might be said that citations, especially when the writing being cited is an authoritative one, form a literary genre of their own. This is not to say, with the theory which received so much discussion a few decades ago, that a writer need not identify himself with what he cites; what is meant is that a writer, when he makes a citation, knows from the first, precisely because of the authority of the source accepted beforehand, that one can and must speak 'to this effect', and consequently need have no reflexive knowledge of the exact bearing of the quoted statement. This is something which belongs to the plain and unavoidable rights of human speech. It holds good for Scripture too. But precisely for that reason it is ordinarily to be presumed that one should assess a citation by its source; the cases mentioned above are examples of this. This is not to say that Ac 17:26 is simply an instance of exactly the same thing as we find in the other examples. By no means. But if this principle derived from an examination of the examples given above is applied to Ac 17:26, it will not be found easy to prove that this passage, taken in isolation, is [268] capable of providing more in favour of monogenism than is said by Genesis.

B. *The Indirect Proof* (*from Scripture and the Church's Magisterium*)

[45] Another example of this sort of thing is to be found in Ex 20:11; the six days of Creation do not become 'more literal' because they are spoken of in a passage which, compared to Gen 1, is extremely unpoetical and sober.

[46] It is contested by Vaccari and others, and an increasing number of writers after him.

[47] The following comparison would seem to be a fair one. Someone who says 'I shall be as brave as Siegfried was' no more vouches for Siegfried's historicity than Jesus did for the historicity of this event. J. Schildenberger too finally admits this (*Vom Geheimnis des Gotteswortes*, Heidelberg 1950, p. 316, n. 212). It is not here in debate whether Jonas' fate is necessarily historical on other grounds. Catholic exegetes like A. Calmeet, A. van Hoonacker, H. Lesêtre, M. Tobac, A. Condamin, Dennefeld are among, those who doubt this. There is no reason why the text of the encyclical 'Spiritus Paraclitus' of Benedict XV (AAS XII (1920), p. 398) should be seen as contradicting this view. It is merely being explained there by examples that the Old Testament in all its parts was an absolute authority for Jesus. But Pope Benedict gives no decision as to how one should interpret the texts which Jesus cited in this sense, in themselves firstly, and consequently in Jesus' intention.

[48] P. 256, n..3.

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The indirect proof of monogenism consists in the demonstration that it is an indispensable presupposition of the doctrines of redemption and original sin as these are contained in Scripture and in its interpretation by Tradition and the Church's *magisterium*; and that in this sense it is taught by Scripture. That this proof must be regarded as the most important of all may also be seen from the arguments with which 'Humani Generis' justifies its rejection of polygenism, though with the utmost brevity.

1. The usual form of the indirect proof

The proof is usually presented by taking the unity and universality of original sin as point of departure.[49] On the basis of these two points as taught by the Council of Trent, the argument proceeds as follows. On the polygenistic hypothesis, unless original sin is to be rejected outright, several ancestral pairs who were in possession of original justice would have to have sinned at various times and in various places; and they would have to have transmitted their sin, i.e. the loss of original justice, to their posterity. Firstly, it is argued, it is arbitrary to assume that all these men should have sinned, and, what is more, sinned at considerable intervals of space and time, independently of each other – for otherwise the polygenistic hypothesis could no longer meaningfully be maintained. It is not clear why none of these pairs should have had children before its fall or the fall of another, so that the question arises as to how these stand with respect to original sin. Nor is it clear *when* this original sin, which – as *peccatum originans* – would need to be conceived of as the one act for the whole earth of a collectivity, really came into existence. Only when *all* the pairs have sinned? But *ex suppositione* the last of these pairs exists it may be a few thousand years after the first pair. How do matters stand with the earlier pairs and especially with their children, if, while there have been personal sins of the earlier primordial pairs, original sin still cannot [269] be handed down to their posterity (although this arises by generation) because original sin does not yet exist, and does not exist because the last primordial pair belonging to the constitution of this sinful collectivity does not yet exist? Or does original sin come into existence with the sin of the first pair? But then the other pairs do not yet exist, or if they do exist, have not yet sinned. How do matters stand in this case with the children they perhaps already have? When these later pairs first come into existence, after the first pair has sinned, will they be created with or without original justice? In the first case they would not have original sin, which would not then be general; in the second case, the withdrawal of original justice on account of the fall of the first pair would not be original sin, which is transmitted 'generatione', nor would the fall of the later pairs when it takes place have anything further to contribute to the constitution of this 'original sin'. Supposing that these pairs are not conceived of as a juridical unity for the purpose of administering the original justice intended for humanity, and that each of them is thought of as having sinned 'on its own account' and only transmitting its own loss of original justice to its own posterity, then original sin would not be 'origine unum' and there would be instead be several original sins, which will not do either.

There is no doubt that these arguments show that polygenism is far from being in harmony with the doctrine of original sin. But is it completely excluded by this kind of argument?[50] It is, I hope, permitted to express some doubts as to the absolute stringency of this procedure.

Admittedly no difficulty remains if one regards both the 'origine unum' as well as the 'propagatione' of the Council of Trent as an unambiguous and defined statement to the effect

[49] For what follows see among others Lennerz, pp. 419-24.

[50] The whole series of acute arguments in Lennerz (p. 423 s.) seems in the end only intended to prove that polygenism is not a dogmatically indifferent, purely secular affair, although the whole argument is aimed at wider conclusions.

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that the *peccatum originale originans* was the sole act of one physical individual and that every transmission of original sin can *only* take place in virtue of a generative connexion with this *unus*. For then every form of polygenism is straightforwardly opposed to the doctrine of original sin, for only a physical individual can be the primordial sinner. If *everyone* else is to have original sin, and this can *only* be had through a generative connexion with this primordial sinner, then everyone else must [270] descend physically from this one individual. A postadamite polygenism cannot be reconciled with a defined doctrine of universal postadamite original sin caused by a physical individual and only capable of being transmitted by generation.

One may also regard this particular doctrine of original sin, with all the details to which attention has been drawn, as a general and obligatory teaching, though not indeed defined. In this case one will be bound to regard this proof of the irreconcilability of polygenism and this version of the doctrine of original sin as formally stringent, arid will merely have to add that monogenism acquires that theological qualification which is proper to the premises of the proof on this valuation. Thus it would not be defined *implicite*, but would have to be given a lower qualification.

But if all this (or the latter at least) may be granted, all the questions concerning this indirect proof in its usual form are by no means disposed of.

First of all, we have already shown above that it is not beyond all doubt that the '*propagatione*', in so far as it signifies more than the contradictory opposite of 'imitatione', is defined by Trent. If the doubt is admitted and one then assumes (something which is far from being implied in the first admission) that the 'propagatione' is a theological explanation, not a doctrinal statement in the strict sense,[51] it is possible to conceive of the following hypothesis. The first man created in the state of original justice is nominated by God as the trustee, in respect of the justice compulsorily intended by God for all men, for all the men who follow him, whether they descend from him physically or not.[52] This first man loses original justice for himself and all other men. Thus all are subject to original sin. The universality of original sin and its unity of origin are preserved. It is through Adam that all are subject to original sin, the other first pairs not indeed *generatione*, but *per inoboedientiam primi hominis, non imitatione*. Soon, [271] one could go on, all these men became so mixed that there was no longer a single man left who did not go back to Adam *generatione* as well. Hence *generatione* would continue to be the expression for what now holds good generally (descent from Adam as well) and what was always the chief point at issue, namely that men's likeness of nature and the consequences of this were God's reason for making the justice of all men dependent upon the action of the first man. Would it be possible to show that this view clearly runs counter to the dogma of original sin as *defined*? It seems doubtful. We have of course made an assumption which is very far from being proved. The possibility of a communication of original sin in individual initial cases without a generative connexion need not be clearly and unmistakably counter to a definition, and yet be quite untenable theologically. We have in no way proved that it is *not* untenable or even shown it to be only positively probable. The general doctrine that original sin is transmitted by generation is in truth unfavourable to this assumption. But if this doctrine is to be a simply peremptory argument against the assumption, it would still remain to be shown: (a) that 'generatione' in Tradition, and furthermore with the obligatory character of a doctrinal statement, certainly

[51] This seems to be de Fraine's assumption.

[52] This supposition need meet with no ultimately insoluble difficulty in the average theory of original sin. Grace is God's free gift. Thus he can make its possession dependent (so it might be said) upon any meaningful condition. The preservation of grace by the first man would be a meaningful condition even for the men who do not descend from him, because these other men and their posterity are intended to form a community of goal and history with the descendants of the first man.

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implies more than 'non imitatione'; (b) that the expression is not chosen as a theological interpretation of the authentic dogma of original sin merely because monogenism has been pre-supposed without thereby being absolutely guaranteed; (c) that *generatione* cannot signify, 'by reception of human nature after Adam' (the question then being left open as to whether it was received from Adam or elsewhere, while after Adam and in consideration of his stock). It is obvious that this investigation cannot be carried out *here*. And so a kind of question-mark must be left *here* against the result of the ordinary indirect proof.

To this it must be added that what was said earlier about the doubtfulness of whether 'propagatione' was defined, holds good also of the 'unum' of original sin. Certainly original sin is 'one' in so far as all men born by generation are born without original justice, the privation of which is of the same kind in all of them; in so far as in all of them this privation arises in the same way owing to the guilt of the man or men not brought into being by generation; in so far as no further increase of this original guilt occurs once there exist only men brought into being by generation. Original guilt is thus 'one' in many respects, in virtue of which it is distinguished from personal sins, [272] which differ specifically among themselves, may be increased at will and are performed by each individual self. Thus it cannot be said without further qualification that the 'origine unum' of Trent would lose all meaning if the agent of the loss of grace in men born by generation were not a numerical individual, it would be possible to translate 'origine unum' by 'a hereditary state of guilt of the same kind everywhere owing to the mode of its reception (from another)' in contrast to personal sins. Of course the Fathers of the Council had more in mind than this; but did they wish to define this plus, when in fact they only wished to define the existence of original sin against Pelagius and Erasmus? We must repeat: even if the 'origine unum' is not certainly defined in its traditional fullness of meaning it may still be binding as a doctrine of tradition. At any rate proof of the contrary has never been produced. And that surely means that the Catholic theologian cannot *tuto* or *sine temeritate* depart from the traditional meaning of 'origine unum'. But if he retains it, it follows as a consequence that he must either deny *this* traditional unity in polygenism or must postulate the juridical hypothesis of a collective guilt of primordial pairs, which once again comes into conflict with the doctrine of the hereditary transmission of original sin as the unique means by which it is handed on. Nevertheless, let us for the moment suppose that the 'origine unum', in its traditional fullness of meaning, is not defined, and let us make the (wholly unproved) assumption that the plus of the full meaning over and above the sense proposed in the hypothetical interpretation above is not necessarily demanded by a tradition binding upon faith. Then we could say that when all the original pairs (only a few, after all) have sinned[53] and transmitted their privation of grace to their posterity in each case, all born men would be subject to original sin and would have the like original sin from the origin, in so far as the same grace was lost to them all for the same reason. A true collective guilt of a true collective subject would then not be necessary. All the difficulties of such a view would cease to arise. A collective subject would only have existed in the sense that these primordial [273] sinners were brought together under the name of Adam in a symbolic and plastic way. It must once again be emphasized that even apart from 'Humani Generis' it may *not* be asserted that the restrictive interpretation of 'origine unum' can be classified as unobjectionable. No proof of this has been produced; and the weight of the tradition which points in the opposite direction cannot be denied. It would thus be temerarious to depart from it. But is it absolutely certain that this tradition which takes the full meaning of 'origine unum' for granted and hands it down, is indubitably binding upon

[53] If we say that without God's special help not one of the countless millions of men could observe the natural moral law for any length of time and yet sins by not observing it, this assumption ceases to be as arbitrary as it may seem at first sight. For the same reason the assumption of a guilt which appears very *soon* (hence before the generation of children) among several pairs is not quite so arbitrary as one might otherwise suppose.

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faith? And so, is the argument against polygenism, in so far as it is based on the 'origine unum', free from every possible objection?

The following point should also be borne in mind. Let us suppose that in virtue of Tradition, the 'propagatione' and the 'origine unum' in the original sin *common to all* is quite certainly binding upon faith (though not directly defined) in the full and strict meaning upon which the usual indirect proof of monogenism relies. It can then still be asked whether this traditional interpretation of the unity and mode of transmission of original sin can be derived from Scripture itself, and how far this may be done, such that in this way it can be made the basis of an indirect argument for monogenism.

All we have so far said about the traditional form of the indirect proof is only intended to show one thing: that there is no need to feel that the endeavour to provide this indirect proof has yet reached its term. Something still remains to be done. Clearly the most important thing to do would be to examine carefully the theological weight of that whole tradition which forms the basis of the indirect proof of monogenism in its usual form. This is of course impossible in a slight essay like this.

We have a much more modest contribution to this indirect proof in mind here, which is simply to offer a small study of the teaching of *Scripture* in this matter. We are not so much concerned with the formal conclusiveness of the considerations to be put forward in favour of monogenism, with an effort to retain the desired result in as few and as 'clear' syllogisms as possible (what usually happens here is that the real difficulty remains hidden away in one of the premises classified as obvious). We hope rather to extend the field of vision by showing how closely monogenism coheres with the fundamental Biblical conception of a history of salvation and damnation. It is in this sense that the following discussion must be understood. If we succeed in showing [274] that monogenism is not simply a marginal idea in Scripture, the only function of which is to elucidate something which would remain in just the same form without this elucidation, we should have fulfilled the task we have set ourselves here in this section.

2. The community of a stock as the basis of the community of salvation and damnation

A difficulty concerning our question meets us at the very start. In this connexion it should be noticed that the fact of the redemption of *all* men by the *one* Christ from whom we are not physically descended in no way shows that an individual and his action for others can be morally significant before God independently of whether he stands with regard to the others in an ontologically real relationship of membership or not. For the question is precisely whether Christ can only be Head and Mediator of humanity because and only because he is a member of a humanity monogenistically one from the origin.[54]

However obvious it may be in itself, one thing must be made perfectly clear from the start: it is utterly unacceptable from the viewpoint of Catholic theology to regard some object (or the inquiry into it) as dogmatically or theologically irrelevant just because it is also to be found in the field of the profane sciences or has such a scientific aspect or consequence. One cannot allot their respective competences to theology and the sciences simply by telling them

[54] Hence I do not fully understand what de Fraine is trying to prove by appealing (p. 61 or 223) to the statements of Cornelius Mussus at the Council of Trent (Ehses V, p. 175; 'omnes eramus in Adam, cum ipse peccavit antequam nasceremur, cum nascimur, Adam in nobis est. Quemadmodum cum Christus pro nobis passus est, omnes in eo eramus . . .'). The parallel may show that not every moral consequence necessarily presupposes a relationship of *descent* precisely between the cause and the subject of the effect. But it does not prove that such a consequence can dispense with the presupposition of an ontologically real connexion, based on the physical unity of the stock.

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to 'part and be friends'. One cannot begin by tidily banishing the objects of theology to an 'existential' beyond, the sphere of 'the events of faith', with the result that they are no longer even capable of disturbing the profane sciences or being disturbed by them. If God's word has gone forth and the Redemption has taken place, they have done so for Christianity [275] just where we exist in other respects, in the one space of existence in which we live in other respects with our experience and our science. Of course we *know* of this decisive event for salvation which took place there because we have been *told* of it and have believed what we were told, but it took place and is heard of just where we are in other respects. Hence theology can never admit that the object of a profane science could lie utterly outside its competence. The one identical reality is the object of faith and of profane science under *essentially* different aspects, but it remains one and the same for all that. In the last resort it is theology alone which can decide whether in a particular case something falls within her competence and is theologically significant or not. Hence if an object of theology penetrates into the realm in which the profane sciences pursue their way (as for instance happens with the existence of Jesus, the historicity of a definite statement made by him, the empty tomb), it cannot be totally untheological to want searchingly to examine the statements of faith intellectually, i.e. logically and metaphysically, in respect of their meaning, their presuppositions and their consequences. This is indeed a matter of course for Catholic theology generally speaking, but one cannot help having the impression that in the question of monogenism a kind of juridical theology has been practised with undue exclusiveness: a few individual propositions are interrogated in the way in which a jurist interrogates a paragraph of a statute and takes as indisputable in themselves propositions from 'positive law'; thus he looks at the propositions and not properly at the reality meant by them, making little attempt to discover the one meaning of the whole so as to grasp it in terms of the whole of reality.

But now to our real business. In the Scriptures Christ appears as our Redeemer, not (only) because he is man (1 Tim 2:5) and thus of 'specifically' the same nature, but because he is the 'firstborn'[55] among [276] many *brethren*, and we are his brethren according to the flesh (Rom 8:29; Heb 2:11.12.17). He is of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3) and thus has assumed just that flesh of sin in need of redemption (Rom 8:3), he is 'of' the fathers according to the flesh (Rom 9:5); he the Sanctifier and we who are sanctified are all of the same origin: ε0χ ε9νο/φ (Heb 2:11). This verse means 'that Christ and Christians are descended from one like children of a common flesh and blood (v. 14). In view of the emphasis laid upon the bodily kinship, this one is not God but Adam.'[56] Because our connexion with him is of this kind we justly lay claim to the inheritance of his glory with the Father (Rom 8: 17.29).[57] The emphasis laid upon the identity of origin and on the assumption

[55] It does not concern us here in what sense Christ is called firstborn in Rom 8:29 (in the sense of Col 1:15 or Col 1:18; Apoc 1:5; 1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21). Nor is it denied that the 'brethren' in question here are those who are being conformed to Christ, and that a close kinship with the Son is based upon the spirit of adoption. But they are not just 'brethren' because they are conformed to him, but because they are brethren they are destined to become conformed to him (in glory). *This* brotherliness cannot be simply that of a community of disposition, of a supernaturally ethical kind. For in view of the irreducible distinction maintained by Jesus and the whole New Testament elsewhere between our filiation and his Sonship, it would be peculiar if these two things were now being subsumed under the one concept of brotherhood. The reason why we can speak of a brotherhood at all must lie at that point at which we are really 'consubstantial' with him, in such a way, then, that those who are like each other are really 'brethren', hence in virtue of a common stock. This train of thought finds confirmation in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

[56] Procksch in *TWNT* 1, p. 113.

[57] To repeat, it is the possession of the Spirit of Christ that gives us our immediate right. But that his Spirit can be in question for us at all (and this must keep on happening if we are to lay hold of it) is due precisely to the fact that he belongs to our flesh. For when it is asked why the condemnation of sin in Christ's flesh should mean anything at all for us, the only possible (though not yet adequate) answer according to the mind of the New

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of a human nature precisely as historically incriminated (the σα∴ρχ α9μαρτι/αφ: Rom 8:3; Eph 2:14; Jn 1:14; Col 1:22; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 5:7; 10:20; 1 Pet 3:18; 4:1; 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 7) shows clearly that Christ's brotherhood with us can be neither a mere community of disposition or of grace, nor one based purely upon the specifically identical human nature. Rather he enters redemptively into our *one* common history of guilt, which is one because it is the history of our physically real common stock.[58] That σα/ρχ which is his is not just a quidditative but an historical concept: that which has become what it is and belongs to us as the inheritance of the stock; it is that historically evolved situation of our existence which became [277] his in that he precisely came to be as we come to be flesh (Jn 3:6), by birth in a generative series: he is of woman and *therefore* has an origin κατα_ σα&ρκα (Rom 1:3; 9:5). The unity of the community of redemption, and thus of the community of salvation and damnation of humanity in general, is not a purely juridical one, rising out of the coincidence of the actions of originally isolated individuals; it is not a 'universal' formed subsequently from individuals thought of as alone being real: it is a community of a stock. Because and in so far as Christ entered into this community by being 'born of woman' (Gal 4:4) he is solidary with men and they with him.[59] We have here a use of the concept of the unity of a stock as a theological concept independent of the Genesis account. This use (in the doctrine of Redemption) may indeed be preformed by the Old Testament doctrine of the one historical origin of the human situation of condemnation which extends to us and in which we come to be as members of this common stock. Nevertheless the *new* use shows that the New Testament takes up the doctrine independently and uses it on its own responsibility. And that again shows that it is not just 'making a citation' in this case, leaving the meaning and bearing of the idea, as well as its limits, to the Old Testament.

The objection is naturally to be expected here that even in the New Testament the whole thing arises out of a typically Semitic and anyway archaic or even 'mythological' kind of thought, which is only capable of thinking of a community of destiny and a similarity of kind in terms of the community of a stock. To this it must be replied that nowhere is it laid down that such 'archaic' thought does not see more truly than our atomistic and individualistic thought today. One would have to ask whether it was methodologically and objectively sound to push off lightly on to some alien 'thought-form' a conception which does not strike us immediately as obvious (as though this were to explain anything, since it is only to replace one question by another, provided that one does not simply regard a thought-form, in a mechanistic and biological way, as a matter in no need of further explanation and accessible to none), instead of allowing this thought [278] to draw our attention to something which would otherwise escape our notice but which is usually capable of being comprehended by us. Clearly it is methodologically necessary in such a case to look at the reality itself with the eyes of Scripture, to make this object present in its own intelligibility, which is to practise theology and not just historical philology. This will allow us to see clearly that Scripture does not merely 'elucidate' and 'illustrate' something (namely the human unity of destiny and kind) 'in this way' (by a unity of stock); it justly sees in this and expresses through it an objective and essential presupposition[60] of the former truths. One might be tempted to say

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Testament is: because his 'flesh' is 'our' flesh. This answer puts us new questions, fails perhaps to 'explain' very much. Nevertheless it is the answer which must be given first and foremost, although it may itself be in need of theological clarification.

[58] Cf. on this point E. Stauffer's analyses in *TWNT* II, pp. 432-40 (ει[φ), which are instructive for the whole problematic of the categories employed.

[59] We should remind ourselves of the theological sense of the genealogy in Luke, who takes it back to Adam (Lk 3:38). It becomes all the more necessary to ask what the genealogy really means if it is held that the last part before Adam has no historical content in the modern sense.

[60] We say 'a presupposition' not 'the adequate justification'. In the ordinary scholastic doctrine of original sin

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that a little 'blood and soil mysticism' would be beneficial here and would teach us to see what *is*, not merely what is 'thought' by one but what is overlooked by the other. We shall have to take this up in the third part of our discussion, returning meanwhile to our examination of Scripture.

This unity of saving history resting on the unity of a stock in which all men are solidary with Christ because he is of their stock[61], becomes still clearer as a reality for Scripture (and Tradition) in the doctrine of original sin.[62] It is true that the handing down of original sin (or putting it differently, the extension to further human subjects prior to their personal decision of that situation of pneuma-less ungodliness realized independently of Christ) in virtue of *generation* precisely is not expressly declared in Scripture. We have also seen that the assertion that this is a defined doctrine is not entirely free from doubt, while it is of course a doctrine general and undisputed in the Church. But the doctrine is in reality attested in Scripture. We are 'flesh', [279] 'fleshly' (in the sense of a condition of hereditary guilt, i.e. Spirit-less, subject to death as the manifestation of this guilt-incurred abandonment by the Spirit, in the servitude of the law which provokes us to personal sin) because we are *born* of flesh (Jn 3:6), because we are flesh from our very origin (φυ&σει: Eph 2:3; cf. 1 Cor 15:44-9). Death, which for St Paul is the manifestation of the sin which entered into the world in the beginning, is for him an *inherited* death (true though it is that it can also be an expression of personal guilt). We 'die in Adam' (1 Cor 15:21 s.), because it is from him that we bear his earthly image (1 Cor 15:48 s.).[63] But if this is true of death, it is true of death's inner essence, original guilt itself: it really is *hereditary* guilt, a guilt-situation which is ours because we human beings belong to a common stock: *born* of flesh and therefore flesh.[64]

All we have said about the situation of salvation and damnation may be summed up as follows: Scripture knows of such a common situation of salvation and ruin only in so far as men are of one stock.

3. The institution of the community of salvation and damnation by the act of an individual

This general situation of salvation and damnation having the unity of a stock for its presupposition is not however simply a static existential which is just there. Rather it has come to be historically by a personal action. Such an act, if it is to be of significance for all, i.e. for those too who have not posited it, presupposes that the agent and those jointly

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the question is for instance certainly treated of, without a final decision, as to how far the fact that Adam is the physical origin of the stock suffices to establish the possibility of hereditary guilt, or whether anything else is necessary. Unfortunately parallel questions in Christology are not submitted to a sufficiently careful examination.

[61] It would be interesting perhaps to reflect on how the unity of community with Christ in the one stock was gradually weakened by its Greek equivalent, that he is *consubstantialis* with us. The historical perspective is displaced by one which is confined to the static quiddity. 'He has the same, nature as we have' says less than 'He is of our stock'.

[62] It goes without saying that we have no intention of providing here a general Biblical theology of original sin. The greater part of it has to be assumed here.

[63] We have still to see that this general guilt-situation was established historically, by the trespass of an individual. For the moment the important point is that it is general and that its generality extends as far as the common stock by means of which it is spread.

[64] The overcoming of this guilt-situation can consequently be conceived of as a re-*birth*: Jn 3:3-5; Tit 3:5 s.; Pet 1:3.23. While the 'new creation' might be conceived of as 'birth' without reference to another birth, the emergence of the pneumatic man can only be called 're-birth' in regard to a birth which puts the one born into fleshly existence; what is more, this latter birth clearly does not just put him there because without birth he would not exist, and when he exists he is precisely fleshly: it is because the birth *as descent* from fleshly man brings forth the one born into the fleshly common stock.

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affected by his act are of a single stock. But the reverse is true too: the fact of being affected by salvation and damnation is caused [280] by a unique act which took place once for all within this community. This is clear with Christ in the first place. In the flesh which he shared with us, he, the concretely and historically one, abolished sin by his obedience, and our situation became that of the redeemed, of the redeemed by God.

But it is true of Adam too. That is to say, the one Adam and his act are not the plastic, symbolic simplification of a process in itself 'complicated', which St Paul merely sketched out (in imitation of the symbolic speech of the Old Testament) so as to have a smoothly working parallel to the one Christ. This we shall now try to show.

Let us ask first of all: what, according to *Scripture*, Tradition and the Council of Trent, is the minimum[65] if we are to continue to speak of original sin at all? The answer must run as follows: by 'original sin' we must at least mean a general situation of damnation[66] embracing all men prior to their own personal free decision, a situation which is nevertheless historic and not an essential condition, one which has come to be through man and is not simply given in the fact of creatureliness. If there were no situation of damnation prior to the sin of the individual, it would be impossible to speak of an hereditary original sin, a cosmic sin (Rom 5:12), the 'generatione' of Trent even as the mere opposite of 'imitatione' would be false and Pelagius would be [281] in the right. If the origin of this universal situation were not historically human, what we should have would be Manicheism (as Augustine would say) or a conception which saw inevitable sinfulness in the very fact of being creaturely. Here we must bear in mind what has already been shown: in so far as this situation of damnation is general, i.e. is binding for every individual, it is based upon the community of the stock. We may then go on to ask the following question. Is it possible to conceive of and to maintain this universally pre-personal and yet historically realized situation of damnation proper to the stock as such, if its historical origin did not lie in a single real individual in the beginning and in his act? The answer is in the negative.

A *universal* situation of damnation is only conceivable, supposing it to be based upon the community of a stock, if it was historically established at the *origin* of this community. A later member *within* such a community can certainly become, by his being and actions, of *saving* significance for the *whole* community, as we see in the case of Christ's act, which is salvation for the pre-Christian world too.[67] But a later member cannot establish a situation of *damnation* for all. For the temporal priority of many of the members of this community

[65] The word 'minimum' does not of course mean that the minimum ascertained in this way is sufficient in fact for the teaching of the Church. It is a minimum agreed to for purely methodological purposes, which if it were absent would make it impossible, as *everyone* must see at once, to speak of original sin in the Church's sense.

[66] This concept should not be allowed to obscure the character of the state of guilt, in the strict sense, in original sin. Nevertheless it is in our opinion capable of indicating the distinction between original and personal sin, and also of making a point of view clear in a way which concerns us here: this is the universality of original sin, which is precisely not that of a subsequent conceptual unification of the actual sinfulness of many individuals, but is something prior to the individuals as such. And this 'prior something' is not only Adam's one sin as a once-for-all, temporally punctiform happening, but a real *universal* unity, which may best be appreciated by being called a *situation*. This is not exactly the same as what is called in scholastic theology the *debitum contrahendi peccatum originale*; yet the latter expression too draws attention to a state of affairs which is prior to the existence of the individual and the original sin which is inwardly his, and yet cannot simply be identified with the *peccatum originale originans* as Adam's sinful act.

[67] The ancient Church was exercised by the question of how this was possible (e.g. 'Christ's preaching in the underworld'; the doctrine of faith in the Redeemer to come as a cause of salvation). In later times people have been rather too easily satisfied with the statement that the redemption of the pre-Christian world took place *intuitu meritorum Christi*. This is perfectly correct, but it is an abstractly formal answer which tells us nothing about *how* this single divine purpose of salvation embracing the totality of the world in Christ so produces its effect upon the pre-Christian world that the grace given to this world is really Christ's; for surely this means more than the acceptance in God's eyes of Christ's action as the 'juridical' title for this grace. But we cannot go further into this question here.

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would make possible and enforce a personal decision by them which would precede such a situation of damnation not only temporally but also in reality, which could, in other words, make it impossible in advance. For a situation of *damnation* can only be brought about by one who himself belongs totally to this temporal history.[68] But if the founder of damnation belongs totally to time and if this time is genuine time, i.e. irreversible, and not merely a reflexion of an intemporal 'simultaneous' network of relations of dependency which can [282] run as well in a reverse direction as in their merely apparently temporal exposition[69]; then the later cannot be the ground of the earlier's situation of damnation. To assert the opposite would be to degrade time and the temporal to mere appearance. But it is one of the basic presuppositions of Christianity that time is a reality, created by God, and that in this genuine time itself salvation and damnation come to pass. Thus the historical act which establishes the one situation of *universal damnation* of the one stock must necessarily have been established at the *origin* of the stock.

This historical origin of the situation of damnation at the beginning of the stock can only proceed from an *individual*: in other words, it cannot there and then have been posited by a multitude. The plurality of those to posit the situation of damnation is something which is in direct contradiction with what we are here concerned to maintain: that a situation of damnation is to be found prior to the freedom of any individual you like. Whether it were many (if original sin did not exist) or few (if a polygenistic 'explanation' of original sin were justified) who decide independently of each other, without presupposing in their decision an historically realized situation of damnation already there, would make no difference to the facts of the case: there would be *many* who do not act out of the solidarity of an historically realized disposition of things in their regard. But if this could be the case in this order of salvation, and with men who give being by generation[70], then original sin ought not to exist at all. If it did indeed exist for many, who would nevertheless form only a part of men, [283] although men form an historical community of goal, it would split the history of the salvation of all humanity into two wholly disparate (though unequal) parts. The situation, that is, which forms an *intrinsic* factor in man's creaturely freedom, i.e. his *externally* conditioned freedom, would be essentially different in the two parts: the situation of Paradise[71] and the situation of deliverance as a liberating redemption.

The fact that it is not at all easy to visualize this clearly is the result of a *lusus imaginationis*: one thinks of the one original member as a random, variable member of a multitude. One argues to oneself: if there has been *one* 'Adam', who in spite of the radically different situation from which he set out to make his free decision can nevertheless form a

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[68] In Biblical terms: a second individual who is still an 'Adam' is only possible if he is more than the son of Adam and his other ancestors.

[69] The eternal God's timeless knowledge of the whole of the genuinely temporally structured (i.e. objectively irreversible) Whole of the world and its history may not simply be used as a substitute for a terrestrially impossible relationship between a temporally later cause and a temporally earlier effect, when the precise question at issue is how the cause-effect relationships lie in the temporal world itself. We do not in fact pray for the happy issue of past events too, which would be perfectly possible on the contrary assumption. God can indeed, in so far as he wills the totality of a definite world, will every part so far as it is a part and hence stands in correspondence with everything else; and so everything can be of significance for everything else (no matter what point of time it occupies). But this does not signify any terrestrial causality of the later on the earlier; and that is all we are investigating here.

[70] We shall speak later in more detail about this point, that it is always a question of men who have the active power to *form* a plurality.

[71] What use is made of this situation is another question, with which we have nothing to do here. Let it be noted in passing that Mary's case is not the one in mind here, the case of a paradisal supralapsarian situation of freedom; it is the supreme and the most radical case of the infralapsarian situation of redemption, which presupposes the situation of damnation. This may be seen simply from the fact that Mary finds her salvation and works it out *in carne passibili*.

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unity of personal community and history with his posterity then there could have been two or three or more, and each one of them can (by himself or together with the others) hand down an 'original sin', if this is still to be the way of things. But tills precisely will not do, or at least this 'idea' in no way proves that this is how things are or can be in reality and that the proof of the contrary already provided must be false. For these many would already constitute – prior to their decision – humanity as a multitude, the 'members' of which share no common situation (no matter whether, each for himself, they were to produce a somewhat similar situation for their posterity in each case). The fact that there is one instance by no means proves the possibility of a multitude of them. The first is precisely not necessarily one of a multitude with the index '1' but it is in "our case the whole in its original unity.[72] Thus it is lacking in cogency to argue [284] that if there can be one Adam who is not bound to act on the basis of an infralapsarian situation of 'flesh' but on the contrary posits this situation, then there 'can' (at least) be many such. For if the one Adam is humanity in the sense of its origin and not merely the first of a series, it is no longer possible to say that there has once been a supralapsarian situation open to decision, then it 'can' exist more than once (which is impossible, as we have shown). It is not every unit that can be multiplied in every respect. Any one of these many individuals not subject to original sin would be only one *among* many in relation to the many subject to original sin who do not descend from him (not their origin, which essentially forms a primitive and not a special case) and yet of an essentially different kind: the situation of damnation would cease to be the common one. And yet this commonness of the situation of damnation is presupposed by every Christian interpretation of existence: you, I, all of us here below, begin as the lost[73], so much so that we know from the start that everyone we come across in the course of our history, with whom we have to do as 'neighbour', is of this kind. The fact that this common situation came into being 'historically' makes no difference. It shows rather how this very historical origin is to be conceived of if it is not to do away with the universality of the situation of damnation. This origin in its proto-historical character must lie wholly behind us, it has a kind of historical transcendence, it cannot be encountered as one factor alongside another in our history. But that is what it would be if (speaking quite concretely) a sinner in the course of his history could encounter another primordial man who was ('so far', at any rate) in a state of justice.

It becomes clear from these considerations that we cannot interpret Rom 5:12 s. as a plastic simplification and stylization of the plural occurrence of more than one Fall. We must either take the text as it stands, the one Adam as one[74] has made all into sinners; or we must [285]

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[72] The whole in its original unity does not make the whole which arises out of it superfluous, neither is it merely the first member of the latter. Otherwise one would have a series, but no stock and no genuine time, in which the later is no longer capable of reaching back behind the origin but remains enduringly committed to it. The idea of a mathematical series, in which one term proves the possibility of another, is out of place here. For one term does not really arise out of the other in such a series. The problem of the multiplicability of the origin is thus different from that of the multiplicability of what arises from it and of the terms of a purely quantitative series. It should be observed that the proof offered here is purely negative: we do not prove that the *possibility*, apparently obvious in itself, of a multiple human origin is more than – a confusion.

[73] Someone who thinks of Mary too and of the divine purpose of salvation embracing the situation of lostness would perhaps do better to say 'as those who are to be delivered and the one delivered by anticipation'.

[74] 'One' is really better here than 'individual'. The old problem of humanity's 'being contained' in Adam should be taken up again from the standpoint of Adam's never to be repeated 'uniqueness' ('*Einmaligkeit*'), which becomes more intelligible in the course of such considerations. It is to miss the point either – as is usual today – to make Adam merely the first individual in a series, or to try to grasp the ontological realities involved here in terms of a Platonic universal, in the Patristic manner. The transcendence of primeval history in our regard could give new life to our understanding of the Ancient traditional doctrine of the privileges of Paradise, an understanding which is in danger today (cf. H. Rondet, *Problèmes pour la réflexion chrétienne. Le Péché originel. L'Enfer et autres études*, Paris, 1945). All one has to see is that the historicity of the primeval history is not simply a piece of our history with its structures, structures which in spite of all the variety and diversity of

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simply reject original sin and understand the text as the existentialist analysis of man in general as a sinner in terms of the purely mythological image of 'Adam'. Every other explanation is a hybrid. But if original sin did not exist, then the redemption of many by one would be superfluous too; and we should have to reject it for the same reasons as those for which St Paul's doctrine of original sin is rejected *a priori* by an atomistic Existentialism based on the uniqueness of the isolated conscience and a guilt which always transcends history. St Paul was therefore completely right when, taking as his starting-point Christ and the knowledge of his Redemption, he gave new depth to the Old Testament doctrine of a situation of death inherited from Adam by making it into a doctrine of original sin, and setting the one Adam and the one Christ in strict parallel to each other.

One result at least ought to have emerged from these considerations: monogenism is a doctrine which is closely connected with the whole basic conception of saving history found in Scripture. It is not something barely attested marginally by this or that brief text, a pure matter of fact which could quite 'possibly' be otherwise. This last point may now serve as the occasion for some discussion of a few matters of principle.

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III. THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A METAPHYSICAL PROOF OF MONOGENISM

1. We assume that from the point of view of the natural sciences polygenism even as a scientific hypothesis possesses no greater probability than monogenism. We assume that monogenism in the strict sense (i.e. one unique original human pair) cannot be proved scientifically, i.e. that from the purely empirical standpoint many original pairs might be possible 'in se'.

2. However it should not simply be assumed as obvious that monogenism can *only* be known by us here and now in virtue of a positive revelation. Not as though this were impossible *a priori*. But we have here to do with realities which on the one hand belong in themselves to the natural order, or at any rate are not mysteries in the strict sense, and of which on the other hand it is extremely difficult to say just when and how they formed the express object of a revelation. One only endangers the appropriation of such realities in faith by being in too much of a hurry to banish this object from the realm of natural knowledge and erect the knowledge of it solely upon the basis of this text of the Bible or that. There is a theological positivism too, and it is dangerous. Clearly the only way in which one can answer the question whether monogenism can really be proved philosophically (i.e. within the framework of a theological metaphysics) is by trying to do it and seeing how far one succeeds.

3. *Notes for a metaphysics of generation*. Such an attempt would have to presuppose an analysis of the essence of generation in terms of natural *philosophy* if it is to be firmly based. It is not a rash judgment to assert that there is nothing adequate in this field within the framework of scholastic philosophy[75], although the subject is of course [287] treated of

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what takes place in it remain homogeneous with those of primeval history; that it is and seeks to be a history with its own structures (if it is taken seriously), granting the identity of what exists in both historical regions. Once this is seen, no insuperable reserves will be felt towards the portrayal of Paradise found in classical theology. It is to be expected, indeed postulated theologically, that this portrayal should not 'fit in with' our conceptual world and its science.

[75] It is impossible that such a metaphysics of generation should exist for the simple reason that *generatio*

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according to the lines laid down in Aristotle's *De Generatione*. Clearly it is impossible to make good this neglect here. Nevertheless we shall try to offer some remarks on this theme, in an attempt to show that such an ontology of generation might perhaps be of use in the discussion of monogenism. In full consciousness of the questionableness of such a procedure we shall omit all discussion of generation in living things in general and turn our attention at once to human generation. What is offered is merely a sketch for a route which might perhaps be followed.

a. Man is to be conceived of as spirit, and as a bodily spirit: both together, so that he is body in order to be spirit, and only is a spiritual person as such (in the concrete) by incorporation. 'Corporeality' is understood in the first place as spatio-temporal determination. Thus man has a world, i.e. he is a here and now in the one continuum of space and time and is himself a spirit who has a space-time. He is not a personal spirit first 'and then' also an entity with a body. But bodiliness is the necessary mode in which alone he can reach the achievement of his spiritual being.

b. The personal spirit is a spirit referred to others. An absolutely lonely spirit is a contradiction in itself and – so far as it is possible at all – is Hell. If (a) is correct, then what (b) means is that the bodily spirit which is man exists by necessity of nature (also) in relation to a Thou, which is itself present in its own spatio-temporal world as such~ It is not only as an isolated person but also as isolated *man* that an individual man is incapable of perfection – or is Hell. Where there is man, there is necessarily – not only in fact – *human* community, i.e. bodily personal community, personally spatio-temporal community.

c. Spatio-temporal order (the basic structure of bodiliness too) is not a subsequent, purely conceptual summation or abstract of individual spatio-temporal entities; it is the single and, as single, exhaustively distributed, prior real condition of the possibility of the individual spatio-temporal entity. Both the scholastic ontology of *materia prima*, when it has reached an understanding of its own nature, and tendencies [288] in modern physics point in this direction. Thus every material entity is co-determined in its real concreteness by the totality of material reality.

d. The *living* spatio-temporal entity must exhibit this dependency of the individual upon the whole (its whole) as something itself living, if life is to be on the one hand a new, irreducible order (dimension) above the inorganic, and on the other hand a higher dimension precisely of the spatio-temporal order and not something 'alongside' it. The individual living thing is thus an entity which is necessarily determined *as* living by the totality of the form of life to which it belongs and whose concrete individuality it displays, just as the individual, merely spatio-temporal thing is determined by the prior real spatio-temporal order in general. The institution of such a form of life itself takes place quite concretely in the institution of the first living thing of this species: this is not merely the first instance of a purely ideal multitude which arises by the emergence (no matter how) of the individuals; it is the institution of the totality in its origin.

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aequivoca was taken for a fact, so that from the first generation was looked at as being on the same level as other processes of change, all of them being conceived of after the manner of human production of a form in matter. Where *generatio aequivoca* is regarded as possible and real, monogenism must always have the look of a mere fact which could just as well not be. Consequently, the effort thoroughly to analyse monogenism philosophically is paralysed from the start. It seems as though this medieval attitude is still active in theology today.

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e. The real dependence of the individual spatio-temporal living thing upon the totality of its form of life reaches its real completion and concrete manifestation in generation. Hence this is not just *one* possible way in which an individual spatio-temporal living thing (as such) and a living spatio-temporal thing as such may 'also' come to be: it is the only possible way. Generation must be conceived of transcendentally as *the* exclusive genesis (not one of the possible ways of coming to be) for the living individual as such within a species. Just as sensibility is not just *one* of the possibilities of receptive (spiritual) knowledge but the only one, so the coming to be of the living individual within a single species (i.e. in a characteristic living spatio-temporal unity) is generation and nothing else. Where a living thing arises differently, what takes place is not the coming to be of an individual within a species but the institution of the species itself. Anyone who contests this conception of generation and treats it as a merely contingent possibility among many other, at least conceivable possibilities, denies that the individual spatio-temporal thing and the living thing as spatio-temporal are contained within a real *a priori* unity which forms the condition of the possibility of the spatio-temporal individual as such; or he refuses to allow that this holds also [289] for the living thing as such, i.e. in so far as it displays being of a higher order than the merely inorganic material thing.

f. If and in so far as man is and must be a spatio-temporal personal spirit in a spatio-temporal community of like beings, he is a spirit living in matter: *animal rationale*; living animately so as to be spirit and to be spirit in human community.

g. But then it is true of man too that generation is the one necessary way of forming community; where the human species has already been instituted in its origin, no other way of man's spatio-temporal extension in community than that of generation is possible. The institution of a new origin would be the institution of another species. Monogenism and the unity of species allow of being distinguished conceptually but not of being separated in reality. Conversely, wherever 'polygenistic' phenomena are really to be found, what we are in presence of is the genesis of a metaphysically new species, not the multiple original coming to be of the same one; or (if this is not the case) not the genesis of a new species in the metaphysical sense but merely accidental spatio-temporal variations of the same species (in the metaphysical sense).

4. *Monogenism and the transcendence of the divine creation of man*. We may look at the metaphysical problem of monogenism from another point of view. This will give us an opportunity of replying to an objection which may easily arise to what we have just said. It will probably be objected to no. 3 that it is surely beyond all doubt that God can create many men on this earth independently of each other. To doubt this would be to restrict in a quite absurd way the divine omnipotence, which must be able to do more than once what it once could and has done (thereby proving that it is intrinsically possible). Our second mode of approach may also perhaps be more easily intelligible in view of the extremely sketchy character of what has been said above.

a. Before attacking the new question itself we have once more to draw attention to an established position. Man is a being distinguished in a strictly metaphysical sense from everything below him. However [290] difficult it may be to say where natural boundaries of a really metaphysical kind run in the realm of things below man, man knows that a radical boundary of nature lies between him and everything below and near him, because he is spirit, person, selfconsciousness, transcendence opening in knowledge and freedom upon the

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unlimited, beyond the inevitable particularity of his environment. He is not just a combination in a different pattern of what is to be found elsewhere in the material world. What he is cannot be conceived of as a modification of other realities. He has an essence really distinct from any other, which is one and entire, irreducible to another. Hence he must be an original institution; not a modification of what was there already, taking place through its own powers, but an original reality newly instituted by God. It may well be that inanimate and animate elements already present in the world are drawn upon and united in this original new beginning, and that man thus has a real genetic connexion with the animal kingdom in the one dimension of organic life. But this makes no difference with regard to the really decisive point: the one entire man as a whole is God's original institution and not the *bare* product of terrestrial forces, conceived of as having produced man solely in virtue of potentialities permanently inserted in other terrestrial beings. We need not attempt to decide here whether this irreducible novelty of nature may only be recognized in the field of the spirit and of the humane sciences, or whether it is also manifested with sufficient clarity in man's bodily and sensitive life, and thus in the field of the natural sciences too.[76] It makes no difference to the established fact, though it may make some difference in the method by which the fact is exactly established.

b. A certain caution is in place when reference is made to some 'potentiality' in God in virtue of his omnipotence. The abstract possibility of an entity or a fact, when this is regarded in itself and in its own isolated relationship to God's power, is to be distinguished from a concrete possibility of whatever is in question when it is related to the totality of things in the world which already exist, to the one world in which they are to exist, to the intelligibility of the divine action (*potentia ordinata*), to the mode of action proper to God as creator of the world, i.e. to the transcendent creator of a self-consistent [291] world of, which God and his action are not a portion but the background, the meta-physical condition of the world's own reality.[77] In relation to one and the same whole, for example, something which is possible 'in itself' because it exists in this whole can both be impossible a second time[78] and can also be contradictory as an object of God's meaningful action. The possibility of an imaginative reduplication of the same thing at two different places and-or times, both being thought of as brought about by the same divine cause, affords us proof that something of the sort is a genuine possibility in itself and for God.

c. Assuming now what has been said in (a) and (b), we may follow two complementary ways in order to further our argument that polygenism as an object of the divine action is impossible.

1. It is impossible that the same thing (specifically the same, such that the *only* distinction would be that of a purely *negative* difference of spatio-temporal location) should be able to have two categorically different causes. Or putting it in another way, two causes which *as such* are (specifically) different cannot cause the same thing (specifically). Now men arise

[76] Cf. the investigations of Gehlen, Portmann and others.
[77] The Thomist may be reminded here of an example which shows how easily man's quantitative imagination deceives him in such matters. Even in the philosophy of mature scholasticism there were still countless people for whom it was 'evident' that God could create two angels 'Gabriel'. This is nonsensical for the Thomist.
[78] The case in which something is duplicated with identical local and temporal characters is easily seen to be impossible by everyone. But it would be false to assert that this is the only conceivable case. This is not a matter of course for the simple reason that the real unity of place in general can bring it about that something at one place makes 'the same thing' impossible at another.

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through generation. Thus this is not one specific mode but *the* specific of their genesis, i.e. another specifically different mode of genesis is impossible for them.

It cannot be argued against this that the first man, and thus 'a' man did not arise through generation. For obviously the transcendent institution of the cause of an effect is categorically different in kind from the institution of the effect by this cause. The institution of the world and its original potencies by the world-transcending causality of the Absolute and the institution of the terrestrial effects of these [292] potencies are categorically different. But the institution of the first man (without injury to his individuality) is an institution of a prime cause (*Ur-sache*), not the institution of an effect like that instituted by this cause. For the first man is instituted precisely as capable of generating; and he is instituted by cod, not by a terrestrial cause. But if the Absolute, without being obliged to achieve itself in the institution of the conditioned, does institute something conditioned, which can produce effects and whose capacity to produce effects belongs to its nature; then the Absolute is not 'able' once again to produce and to wish to produce that precisely for which it has created the cause distinct from itself. Of course the Unconditioned 'can' do what that which was conditioned by it can do. But it cannot wish once again to institute without the conditioned that of which the conditioned is capable, once it has instituted the conditioned.

2. A *repeated* institution of the terrestrial cause by God[79] would make his own action, in so far as he is Creator, and thus meta-physical condition of the possibility of the finite, into a *terrestrial* event. The question to arise here would not only be that of the meaningfulness of such a divine action. Why does he himself do what he has given to the creature itself to do and to perform, or why does he give the creature a power from which he himself immediately removes the field of activity by himself doing that for which in fact he created the creature? Such activity would be contrary to the principle of economy, which is not only a methodological principle of cognition but a metaphysical principle too. God's action would become a terrestrial event: it would become a miracle. That divine activity, of a miraculous kind, is terrestrial which takes place at a fixed point in space and time within the whole of material reality; and there on the one hand is as such observable, and on the other can be recognized as the divine institution of novelty. But such action on the part of God is precisely his action; in *saving* history, in which he wishes to reveal himself as someone [293] who conducts a personal dialogue with the spiritual person and in regard to him, and does not only maintain his sway as transcendent cause of the world itself. The fresh creation of a man in the realm of a man already in existence would thus be a terrestrial, miraculous activity on God's part, which therefore ought necessarily to belong to *saving* history and yet in itself would form a part of the purely natural history of creation. It is thus a contradiction. But in saving history and there alone the transcendent cause steps forth from behind the veil of space and time and conducts a dialogue with man. Otherwise it institutes the world and its individual, irreducibly separate origins, without putting itself as an agent *in* the world. Every occasion on which it does this immediately and necessarily has the character of personal dialogue addressed to man. But that is Revelation, not Creation.

A polygenistic account of man's coming into being may take one of two forms. It may either be a biological materialism, holding that no transcendent cause (i.e. one not capable of being localized as cause in space and time)[80] is needed for the genesis of man, nor any

[79] We must always reflect on the fact that the humanity in question is *one* in kind, goal and living-space. The first single human pair is already sufficient as a cause for that. Thus if several first human pairs had been created, the cause would have been instituted more than once for the same end: for all generated men, who are intended to form a unity of a more than conceptual kind.

[80] The institution of space and time in general or of a determinate spatio-temporal order (such as that of a –

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intervention of God from beyond space and time.[81] Or it may be a naive anthropomorphism, to which pious people are especially liable, imagining that God as Creator produces effects in the world (instead of the world itself), that transcendent miracles of creation can take place every day *in* the world (instead of saying that the days of the world, its course – not a link in its course – are instituted), that God fills out gaps in the world with his activity, why, he even continues to appear (as in our case) where he has not even left a gap, since he has already seen to the multiplication of men and their historical connexion by the institution of the one human pair capable of procreation.

Certainly it follows once again, when one considers more closely what has been said, though no further examination in detail will be undertaken here, that the first man must not only be thought of as just temporally and numerically the first. However true it may be that he [294] is an individual, he is also the transcendent humanity instituted by God; he is the origin, not just the beginning, the created source of humanity, not just the first drop from a source which lies behind humanity in God. There is no need of argument to show that a train of thought like this, which would need to be explained in more detail and defined more sharply in conceptual terms, is at least advisable from the viewpoint of a theology of original sin. We may enlarge the scope of the problem in the following general terms. Our somewhat medium-quality philosophy today knows only of the really isolated individual, the 'universal' as an abstract concept, and, as the real principle of unity beyond the real individuals of the material world, God alone, who merely by 'pushing from outside' orders together into a single world-machine the pluralities of the world in their reciprocal interaction, which is something wholly subsequent to their ontological constitution. In reality there are cosmic, created, ontologically real principles of unity apart from God: the one first matter, the real unity of origin of all genuine metaphysical species, the angels as created origins (α)ρξαι/) and principles of the unity of order of the material world. God is the supporting ground of these cosmic principles of unity, not a substitute for them. Where he is conceived of in this way, where for example the unity of the human race is seen merely in the one transcendent divine origin, God's transcendence is misconceived and he is made into a cosmic demiurge.

d. It would be false to argue that if what has been said is true, it would follow for the plant and animal kingdoms too that, supposing the theory of descent were maintained, the first appearance of a new species could only come about in a single exemplar. The objection may be answered as follows. Where a really new species appears for the first time in severally mutually independent exemplars and yet arising from a species which had been different up to that time, what is in question is not really a *metaphysically* new species, however true it may be that this 'species' must be assessed as new and independent from the viewpoint of a biological systematics orientated to the phenotype. A new 'entelechy' or 'form' of an essentially diverse: species (which as a new 'Idea' not to be derived from elsewhere can only arise through a transcendent divine causality) does not arise in several mutually independent instances, or alternatively these 'instances' do not generate – like the angels. But in regard to the animal [295] kingdom man is a metaphysically new, essentially diverse species, not merely in the biological sense of the phenotype, not only in name, but in that ultimate root of his psychosomatic nature, lying behind the space of outward appearance, in his spiritual form.

Thus while it is entirely conceivable that biological development in the animal kingdom reached so advanced a stage of development in a number of exemplars that the transcendent miracle of 'becoming man' could take place in them, this miracle took place only once,

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metaphysical – species) is itself transcendent with respect to the corresponding spatio-temporal order because it institutes the latter; now that which conditions is not subject to that which is conditioned.

[81] An event which for this reason is inaccessible to us in its inner *now* is unquestionably metaphysical.

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because it established something metaphysically new, which, because it should and could unfold itself by self-multiplication, did not come to pass more than once, if indeed genuine creation was not to become a cosmic spectacle.

Nor consequently is it surprising that the animal world, which drew near in the course of its development to the metaphysical locus of this miracle without being able to arrive at it by its own powers, developed away from this point again, after the miracle of 'becoming man' took place. We are told by an authority[82]:

> In the last 1½ million years of the Tertiary epoch, shortly before the appearance of man, simian forms very close to man emerge. They lived on the steppe, walked upright, their hands were free and they had a human or nearly human set of teeth. Their instinctive activities must have gone far beyond those of our modern primates (gorillas, orang-outangs, chimpanzees). South-east Africa is where they have been discovered. The most recent fossil examples were approximately contemporary with the first man. But in comparison to their predecessors they seem to have been already more simian, more specialized, than the earliest specimens of *Australopithecus*. This group of prehuman, animal forms died out at the time of the first man. Among their number may be reckoned the giants of East and South-east Asia, which likewise seem to have died out when the first man appeared.

Why did they die out? The simplest and surely the truest thing to say would be, 'Because they had fulfilled their purpose: to prepare the way for man'. We need only ask once in return: Why do the primates, closest systematically speaking to man, which once existed, no longer exist? Why does the family tree of the primates develop away from [296] man again in the modern geological period? Would it have been impossible for such manlike forms to exist today? The answer is simple: now that what was to be achieved is standing, the scaffolding which served the achievement is simply taken down again. But if the event of man could often take place as origin, these approximations to man would always be meaningful.

Nor can it be said that men would not have been able to continue if they had first appeared in a single pair. This cannot be proved. And conversely, even a greater number, which must in any case have been a small one, is no assurance against becoming extinct. Entire groups, from which man may have come under a certain aspect, have died out, although they were more closely related to him than modern primates. Remaining alive or dying out are alternatives which must depend on other factors than that of the original number of ancestors.

It further follows from these considerations that a moderate theory of anthropological evolution, maintained simultaneously with monogenism, does not lead to a shameful compromise. On the contrary *both* arise in the same way from a single metaphysical principle of economy: the transcendent divine causality influences the terrestrial course of things in the most discreet and economic way, only, in fact where something essentially and irreducibly new is to appear for the first time as an origin. What the world can do by itself, it must do in the highest possible way; and that includes both the preparation of the biological substratum which was to 'become man' and the spreading abroad of the one stock.

[82] Philipp Dessauer, in a manuscript not yet published.

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[297]

9

CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE

The questions which have recently been raised concerning the relationship between nature and grace are well-known. There is no need to provide an historical account of them. We assume here that the reader is familiar with what has been said on this subject by such theologians as de Lubac, Bouillard, Delaye, von Balthasar or Rondet (who are associated in the popular mind, not wholly without justification, with what is called 'la nouvelle Théologie'). We assume too the criticisms which have been offered in regard to these freshly formulated questions by other writers, such as de Blic, L. Malevez, C. Boyer, Garrigou-Lagrange, A. Michel, de Broglie or Philippe de la Trinité, in the way of considerations of principle, or such as Alfaro in the way of historical investigations. We assume that the point made by the encyclical 'Humani Generis' is generally accepted: 'Alii veram "gratuitatem" ordinis supernaturalis corrumpunt, cum autument Deum entia intellectu praedita condere non posse, quin eadem ad beatificam visionem ordinet et vocet' (Denz 3018). There is no intention of dealing here with the whole complex of questions to do with the relationship between nature and grace; we shall attempt this neither historically nor systematically. All we have in mind is to set in motion a few considerations of principle without any idea of even touching upon everything of importance.[1]

[298] Nor shall we be concerned then to present the criticism offered by the 'nouvelle théologie' of the average textbook-conception of the relationship between nature and grace. Ultimately this amounts to the reproach of 'extrinsecism': grace appears there as a mere superstructure, very fine in itself certainly, which is imposed upon nature by God's free decree, and in such a way that the relationship between the two is no more intense than that of a freedom from contradiction (of a 'potentia oboedientialis' understood purely negatively); nature does indeed acknowledge the end and means of the supernatural order (glory and grace) as in themselves the highest goods, but it is not clear why it 'should have much time for' these highest goods. For more is required for this than the simple facts that the good is high (higher than another) and its attainment possible. A free being at least could always reject such a good without thereby having *inwardly* the experience of losing its end. And this is especially the case because in the average (if not unanimous) view grace in itself remains absolutely beyond consciousness.

It cannot be denied that an extrinsecism of this kind has been current in the average

[1] The original publication of these considerations (here merely expanded slightly) in *Orientierung* XIV (1950), pp. 141-5, met with more attention than I had expected, not only of an unfavourable kind (though missing the real point) as in the *Schweizer Kirchenzeitung* of 7 September 1950, pp. 441-4 (cf. also *Civitas* VI (1950-1), p. 84). It also met with a friendly reception and a large measure of agreement, for example from H. U. von Balthasar in *Karl Barth, Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie* (Cologne 1951), especially pp. 278-335, 'Der Naturbegriff in der katholischen Theologie', and, in a detailed examination, from L. Malevez, 'La Gratuité du surnaturel', NRT LXXV (1953), pp. 561-86; 673-89. The study by Malevez drew my attention to the fact that the theory of the 'supernatural existential', of which Malevez approves (apart from some small improvements which meet with my agreement), had already been put forward in substance by E. Brisbois, 'Le Désir de voir Dieu et la métaphysique du vouloir selon saint Thomas', NRT XIII (1936), pp. 1103-5. I can only express my happiness at discovering this predecessor, for in questions like this there are no rights of priority for which one has to struggle. The citation from Blondel in Malevez (p. 679) may be compared here as pointing in the same direction. An account, as detailed as that by Malevez and equally in agreement, of the first publication of this study was also given by J. P. Kenny, 'Reflections on human nature and the supernatural', TS XIV (1953), pp. 280-7. (See also by K. Rahner, 'Natur und Gnade', in *Fragen der Theologie heute*, ed. Feiner, Trütsch and Böckle (Einsiedeln 1957). – Tr.)

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teaching on grace in the last few centuries. It has been usual to presuppose a sharply circumscribed human 'nature' with the help of a concept of nature one-sidedly orientated to the nature of less than human things. It has been felt that one knows quite clearly what *precisely* this human nature is and how far precisely it extends.[2] What is still more problematic, it is tacitly or explicitly [299] presupposed that whatever man comes to know by himself (independently of Revelation) about himself or in himself belongs to his 'nature' (because' supernatural' and 'knowable by verbal Revelation alone' are identified as a matter of course), and that so a sharply circumscribed concept of man's nature can be produced out of the anthropology of everyday experience and of metaphysics. Thus it is presupposed that the concretely experienced (contingently factual) quiddity of man squarely coincides with man's 'nature' as the concept opposed by theology to the supernatural. Supernatural grace then can only be the superstructure lying beyond the range of experience imposed upon a human 'nature' which even in the present economy turns in its own orbit (though with a relationship peculiar to itself to the God of creation). Hence this nature is first of all merely 'disturbed' by the purely external 'decree' of God commanding the acceptance of the supernatural, a decree which continues to be a purely exterior divine ordination so long as grace has not yet laid hold of this nature, justifying and divinizing it, and has in this way made the vocation to the supernatural end into man's inner goal. If this external decree, which obliges man to the supernatural purely from without, is not taken into account, a man in the present economy without grace is equal on this view to the man of 'pure nature'. Again, since this decree is known only through verbal Revelation, it follows that man in his own experience of himself experiences himself as this pure nature. And [300] because on this view original sin and its consequences only represent a state of man which ought not to be, in so far as once again man ought to be otherwise only in accordance with a divine decree binding from without, man is not even disturbed in the immanent experience of his pure nature by original sin. In short, what by himself he experiences of himself here and now he could have on this view also experienced in an order of pure nature.

This average view is in fact open to serious objection. There is no difficulty in seeing that it is problematic and dangerous from a religious point of view: if man, just so far as he experiences himself existentially by himself, is really nothing but pure nature, he is always in danger of understanding himself merely as a nature and of behaving accordingly. And then he will find God's call to him out of this human plane merely a disturbance, which is trying to force something upon him (however elevated this may be in itself) for which he is not made (on this view he is only made and destined for it *after* he has received grace, and then only in a way entirely abstracted from experience). This is particularly true since this offer of inwardly elevating grace remains *ex supposito* outside or above his real experience, and only becomes known in a faith which knows of its object *ex auditu* alone. A portrayal of the

[2] This is not intended to deny that something which is recognized to be present in consequence of a *transcendental* analysis of the human reality belongs to human nature (even in the theological sense). To this extent one does know precisely that this belongs to the nature, and to this extent I am in agreement with Malevez (pp. 685 s.). But conversely Malevez will have to grant that one cannot ascertain the *whole* of human nature by such a transcendental method. Any moral philosopher (so far as he retains the *lex naturalis*) would have to protest in the strongest terms if someone tried to assert that that alone belonged to man's immutable nature which allowed of being demonstrated to belong there by means of such a method. At any rate I would not venture to maintain such a position. But once anthropology (in the widest sense) is forced to make use of a non-transcendental (and in this sense *a posteriori*) method in ascertaining man's nature, it begins at this point to become unavoidably 'imprecise'. For there is no way of establishing quite clearly in all cases from experience alone (at least without recourse to theology) whether what experience shows about man belongs to his nature as such (invariably and without exception) or to his historical nature, so far as this displays features (invariably and without exception from the empirical point of view, but conditioned by the fact of vocation to a supernatural end) which it would not have had if this vocation had not existed.

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historical and spiritual consequences of this view may be found in de Lubac's *Surnaturel*. Even if it is a little on the gloomy side, it certainly provides food for thought. And even if the consequences are in great part due to the influence of a whole spiritual and cultural climate of opinion reflected in this particular view as well rather than consequences of just this theological theory, yet the portrayal of them is not without importance for the assessment of the theory itself.

But the view is also problematic in regard to its tacit presuppositions and its ontological conceptions. How am I to know that everything I in fact encounter in my existential experience of myself (the ultimate yearning, the most profound inner dispersion, the radical experience of the universally human tragedy of concupiscence and death) does in fact fall within the realm of my 'nature', and would also exist, exist in just this form, if there were no vocation to supernatural communion with God? There is no way of providing a justification for this tacit presupposition starting from man, nor is it really proved by any theological argument. And this for the simple reason that the possibility of experiencing grace and the possibility of experiencing grace *as* grace are not the same thing. If this is not assumed beforehand or taken for [301] granted, is it so easy to say what belongs to human 'nature', and what is more not merely to the contingently factual nature of this concrete economy but to 'pure' nature, in such a way that if it were lacking man would cease to be man? How could one give this question a precise answer philosophically, without recourse to Revelation? It may with justice be said that man is an *animal rationale*. But do we know whether the subsistent object actually envisaged in terms of this formula would really be just such as we actually experience it, if this man were not called to eternal communion with the God of grace, were not exposed to the permanent dynamism of grace and were not to feel its loss a mortal wound on account of being continuously ordained to it in his inmost depths? One may have recourse to a transcendental deduction in order to ascertain the irreducible quiddity of man, i.e. take that for man's purely natural essence which is simultaneously posited in first asking the question about this essence at all. But even then one does not know whether one may not have introduced too little into this concept of man, or whether in the very act of asking the question, contingently but for us unavoidably, a supernatural element may not have been at work in the questioner which could never in actual fact be bracketed off, and so would prevent one from laying hold *purely* of man's natural essence in the concept.[3] A [302] *precise* delimitation of nature from grace (supposing it were possible at all) and so a really pure concept of pure nature could thus in every case only be pursued with the help of Revelation, which tells us what in us is grace and so provides us with the means of abstracting this grace from the body of our existential experience of man and thus of acquiring pure nature (in its *totality*) as a 'remainder'.

[3] The *phantasma* of the 'conversio ad phantasma' which is necessary in order to grasp the most abstract concept of man's nature is the concrete experience, never to be absolutely and exhaustively analysed, which man has of himself. To this extent, like every concept, even the most highly purified metaphysical concept of man's nature remains 'historical', i.e. consisting in and apprehended only in a synthesis, already achieved beforehand and never wholly resolvable, of a priori conditioned 'concept' and 'intuition' (experience). But in this experience supernatural, grace-qualified factors are involved too in the present concrete economy (the contrary at least cannot be proved). And this in such a way that no process of elimination could ever be exhaustive, since the intuition which is necessary if we are to have the concept inevitably contains more elements than would be necessary for the concept, for its power to represent. In other words, we inevitably think the abstract nature of man with our eye upon a model of man offered us by experience. But right to the end of his history man will never be quite done with learning what in him is essence and what merely contingently factual model. The whole spiritual and cultural history of man testifies to this. For in this history he continually experiences new modes of the single process of the realization of his essence, which he would never have been able to infer from his essence a priori. And in each new mode he learns anew by living it the difference between essence and its concrete historical realization, the synthesis of which he had held before to be more or less incapable of being dissolved.

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The ontological presuppositions of this extrincesism are equally problematic. One in particular is quite unintelligible, though it is tacitly assumed, to the effect that where grace has not yet laid hold of I the man who has awakened to freedom by justifying him, his binding ordination to the supernatural end can only consist in a divine decree still external to the man. Even if this binding ordination is not counted 1 among the constituent elements of human *nature* as such, who is going to prove that it could only be interior to man in the form of a grace already justifying, that an interior supernatural existential of the adult man could only consist in justifying grace already stirred into faith and love? On the contrary, *must* not what God decrees for man be *eo ipso* an interior ontological constituent of his concrete quiddity 'terminative', even if it is not a constituent of his 'nature'?[4] For an ontology which grasps the truth that man's concrete quiddity depends utterly on God, is not his binding disposition *eo ipso* not just a juridical decree of God but precisely what man *is*, hence not just an imperative proceeding from God but man's most inward depths? If God gives creation and man above all a supernatural end and this end is first 'in [303] intentione', then man (and the world) *is* by that very fact always and everywhere inwardly other in structure than he would be if he did not have this end, and hence other as well before he has reached this end partially (the grace which justifies) or wholly (the beatific vision). And it is entirely legitimate to start from this point in an attempt to outline the one concrete 'quiddity' of man (if not indeed his 'nature' as opposed to grace). In short, we admit the basic contention that there is widely prevalent in the average teaching on grace an extrinsecist view which regards this as being merely a superstructure imposed from without upon a nature in itself indifferent with regard to it. It would seem to be a genuine concern of theology to put an end to the extrinsecism. Nor is it wholly overcome by emphasizing (e.g. with Malevez[5] against de Lubac) that the *potentia oboedientialis* of nature includes nevertheless a kind of velleity, indeed a yearning (only a conditional one of course) for the immediate possession of God in the depths of the essence, and that a spiritual nature cannot really be thought of without this *appetitus*, so that the *potentia oboedientialis* is not simply an absence of contradiction in a purely negative way. For so long as this yearning is really conceived of as conditional and, contrary to this basic position, a half unhappiness is not made out of the finite happiness which would be man's lot without the *visio* and a proper capacity not made out of the *potentia oboedientialis* which is identical with human nature, this *desiderium* remains so hypothetical that nature can always become enclosed within its own plane.

But is this inner reference of man to grace a constituent of his 'nature' in such a way that the latter cannot be conceived without it, i.e. as pure nature, and hence such that the concept of *natura pura* becomes incapable of complete definition? It is at this point that we are bound to declare our inability to accept the view which has been attributed to the 'nouvelle théologie' and has met with so much opposition.[6] It is here that 'Humani Generis', in the

[4] Malevez says with justice (p. 678): 'Toute volonté divine ad extra se définit par le terme, qu'elle pose; si donc le décret divin, qui a présidé a la creation, a été un décret de destination des hommes au Royaume, cette destination a dû se traduire par un certain effet au plus profond de nous-mêmes: au décret immanent à la volonté divine, a répondu en nous une certaine disposition, une ordination aux biens qui nous étaient promis.' *This* starting-point for the considerations we shall be offering about the 'supernatural existential' should be noted. This existential is *not* postulated in order to simplify the problem of the 'potentia oboedientialis', to explain why nature has an affinity to grace. If this were the starting-point it could be said that the problem was merely shifted by introducing this term (cf. E. Gutwenger, ZKT LXXV (1953) p. 462). (For the term 'existential' see the Introduction. – Tr.)

[5] L. Malevez (in a review written *before* the article frequently cited here), NRT LXIX (1947), pp. 3-31.

[6] It is certainly defended by the anonymous writer D. in *Orientierung* XIV (1950), pp. 138-41, 'Ein Weg zur Bestimmung des Verhältnisses von Natur und Gnade'. D. belongs to the circle of those theologians who are usually grouped together (though some of them protest against it) as the school of 'la nouvelle théologie'. We are not concerned to decide whether and how far D.'s presentation really reproduces de Lubac's views

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statement [304] quoted above, set out a teaching about which there can be no misconceptions.[7] The problem is this: is it still possible to conceive of grace as unexacted,[8] supposing that the existential consisting in the inner and unconditional reference to grace and beatific vision were a constituent of man's 'nature' in the sense that man as such could not be thought without it? That grace is absolutely unexacted, that this proposition is the unquestioned point of departure for all further reflexion, this was an indubitable axiom for the 'new' teaching too, which it accepted as much as any other theology. The only question then is whether this axiom is objectively consistent with the theorem of an unconditional reference to grace in virtue of *nature* as such. This reference to the beatific vision was regarded in this recent view as on the one hand an intrinsic, inamissible constituent of man's nature, and on the other so conceived that the withholding of the end of this directedness was expounded as being incompatible with God's wisdom and goodness and in this sense unconditional (provided of course that the creature does not fall short of the end by its own fault). We hold that with these presuppositions grace and beatific vision can no longer be said to be unexacted. The precise point at issue is to be noted. Even D., who is perhaps the most explicit champion of the view in question[9], [305] himself holds (as the conclusion of the article already cited shows) that grace is unexacted for the man *actually in existence*; unexacted, then, not simply for an imagined or hypothetical man who is not yet in existence and to whom consequently God does not owe being and all that he needs to be, but for the man already supposed to be in existence. This unexactedness is significant from a religious point of view: as God's real partner I must be able to receive his grace (otherwise than my existence) as an unexpected miracle of his love, not first of all think myself out of existence and then conceive of my own being as such as the miracle of his freedom. But it would appear that against his will D. goes no further than the unexactedness which is proper to creation, and that for him grace is distinguished from other created things only in respect of the greatness of the gift but not in respect of unexactedness itself; for these other created things may also be said in a certain sense to be 'unexacted', in so far as they arise out of God's freedom.

It is true that one may perhaps say too that the defenders of the unexactedness of grace, of the possibility thereby derived of a pure nature and of the impossibility of an unconditional striving of nature for the immediate vision of God by grace, make the defence of their position into far too easy a matter. For a *less* than personal entity unconditional reference to an end and the 'unexactedness' of this end are incompatible assumptions when they are applied to the same thing at the same time. This is especially the case when the matter is

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accurately, which is D.'s intention.

[7] The teaching has been heard in quarters which previously had shown appreciation of de Lubac's basic orientation – and still may show it even today. Cf. H. U. von Balthasar (further to his book on Barth) in ZKT LXXV (1953), pp. 454 s.

[8] *Ungeschuldet*. This word, derived from *schulden* 'to owe', appears so often in this study that I have decided to translate it conventionally by 'unexacted'. The disadvantage of this translation is that 'unexacted' negates obligation from the point of view of the 'creditor', while *ungeschuldet* negates it from the point of view of the 'debtor'. This is perhaps not quite so important in the present context as it might otherwise seem; and in any case it seemed intolerable to have to repeat the form 'unowed' (or worse, 'unowedness'), or resort to continual paraphrase. The reader may like to compare the relation between 'right' and 'obligation', a right in A involving an obligation in B. – Tr.

[9] We concern ourselves in what follows chiefly with D., because his essay is perhaps the clearest, and also the most extreme, exposition of the standpoint here rejected. Apart from H. de Lubac's essay, 'Le Mystère du surnaturel' in RSR XXXVI (1949), pp. 80-121, most of the essays from this circle were primarily historical in character, and are consequently not easily to be interpreted as regards their theoretical and systematic intentions. Thus H. Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris 1944); H. de Lubac, *Surnaturel* (Paris 1946); H. Rondet, 'Le Problème de la nature pure et la théologie du XVIe siècle', RSR XXXV (1948), pp. 481-521; – , *Gratia Christi. Essai d'histoire du dogme et de théologie dogmatique* (Paris 1948).

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looked at from God's point of view, in that he himself constitutes the unconditional reference through his own act of creation. But is this equally simple and obvious where a personal being is in question? Could it not be said here with apparent justice that it is precisely the essence of the personal being (his paradox, without which he cannot be understood) that he is ordained to personal communion with God in love (by nature) and must receive just this love as free gift? Is this not true of earthly love too? It is (as the act of the partner) something to which the man giving and receiving love knows himself uniquely ordained, so that he would seem lost and unhappy to himself if he did not receive this love, and yet he accepts this same love as the 'miracle' and the unexpected gift of free (and so unexacted) love. Someone might [306] ask: cannot the *essence* of a personal spirit lie just in this (in this and nowhere else!), that it must accept personal love as unexacted if it is not to lose its own meaning, and that hence its unconditional ordination to this love and the unexactedness of the love not only do not exclude each other but mutually condition each other? To the objection in this more precise form it must still be replied that it does not prove what it sets out to prove. The example, first of all, is lacking in cogency. For where is it proved that the ordination of the one loving person to the other, so far as it is really 'unconditional', precedes a free decision, which would be necessary if the example is to prove anything? But the decisive reply is this: can that person, who has *himself created* such an ordination to the personal and intimate communion of love between two persons (in our case man and God), once this has been presupposed still simultaneously refuse this communion without offending against the meaning of this creation and his very creative act itself? This question however is to be answered in the negative, no matter whether one might still be able to say that the person so created must and can regard this love as gift and grace if it is in fact bestowed upon his unconditional ordination to it. But if this negative answer is correct, it follows that on the supposition of such an ordination (*in sensu composito* with it) the actual granting of the end of this ordination can no longer be free and unexacted. Thus if the ordination cannot be detached from the nature, the fulfilment of the ordination, from *God's* point of view precisely, is exacted. And, as all admit, just this is false, and so must the presupposition be.

The defenders of the theory here rejected attempt to indicate various facts (as may be seen in D.) which in their opinion are of a kind to show that the state of absolute ordination of man's *nature* as such to grace and the unexactedness (supernaturality) of grace do not exclude each other. It may perhaps be profitable to examine these indications a little more closely.

So far as the first counter-argument to be found in D. is concerned, it seems to us to be lacking in force. The Council of Trent does indeed declare that blessedness is both grace and simultaneously merit (Denz 809; 842); but there is no difficulty in seeing here that on the one hand the *pre*-suppositions of this merit (justifying grace) are pure grace, and that on the other hand – this grace once presupposed – the further consequences of this state can be true merit: thus glory in its mediate presupposition is grace, in its immediate cause is merit (exacted). Thus [306] the example does not prove that the same thing (grace) in respect of the same (natural dynamism towards grace) can be both exacted and unexacted at the same time; thus it does not prove that a reality can possess at the same time and in the same respect the character of being unexacted and the character of being something which God could not refuse. This is not of course to deny a generosity and wisdom in God which do not annul the unexactedness of a gift as far as the receiver is concerned, although these divine attributes 'owe' it to themselves, 'exact' it of themselves, to bestow this gift, when in fact the wise and generous God has promised such a gift. But this does not prove that a gift may still be regarded as unexacted in respect of its receiver when God's wise generosity has objectified itself in the world primarily by creating in the receiver, in his very nature, a disposition which under pain of losing its own meaning finds uniquely in this gift its unique end and its only

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possible fulfilment. In this case God's wisdom owes 'itself' the fulfilment of this disposition, because and in so far as it has created this *disposition* in such a way that the disposition itself exacts the fulfilment. The example of the beggar who is promised a meal fails at the decisive point: the beggar does not have a 'disposition' to be fed by just this determinate particular host, and the host has not got to take upon himself a responsibility for the beggar's hunger: thus what we have here is a gift bestowed in pure generosity. But where an unconditional disposition of nature has preceded the gift, such a gift can at most be a part or a partial end of nature, and hence can only be unexacted in the sense in which nature itself is (i.e. God need no more have created it than the whole of nature).

An appeal to the *mysterium* of the paradox whereby grace is both unexacted and yet cannot be refused would only be appropriate once it had been satisfactorily demonstrated from positive theological sources that the impossibility of refusing a 'desiderium *naturale*' for grace was an assured theological datum and not itself a theological hypothesis. The proof of this has so far not been provided.

Of course one can and should define the essence of supernatural grace in its own terms and not in terms of nature merely. It is correct to say that its essence is God's self-communication in love. One might with justice say that a gift of such a divine order and the communication of personal love are essentially unexacted. But all that follows from this is that a disposition cannot subsist on the human side which would inevitably draw this divine self-communication of personal [308] love after it, or that if it did, the disposition must likewise be unexacted. But it does not follow that as a natural disposition it would allow the unexactedness of such a divine love to subsist. But if this disposition is conceived of as belonging to nature, grace would be unexacted merely as something given in just the same way as nature and *with* it; in fact it would represent the highest (because uncreated) gift within the formal framework of just *this* unexactedness, a gift essentially distinguished from other (created) unexacted gifts (though not under the formal aspect of unexactedness). In neither case does it cease to be impossible to say: grace is unexacted in respect of this nature. In other words, it follows from the innermost essence of grace that a disposition for grace belonging to man's nature is impossible, or it follows that such a disposition, in case it is needed, itself belongs to this supernatural order already; but it does not follow that as natural it would permit the unexactedness of grace to subsist.

It is certainly true that man's concrete end is the first object of God's will and that it is with this in view that he first devises the concrete quiddity of man. But it only follows from this that if God wills a supernatural and unexacted end and if he wills this (or must will it) in such a way that the created quiddity has for it a disposition of a positive and unconditional kind, then God must simultaneously give to this created thing the disposition to this end. But it does not follow that the disposition must itself belong to the nature of this thing. Otherwise God would be creating a creature which would as a whole, together with this natural disposition, be created freely and in this sense unexactedly, but not a creature in respect of which precisely once again grace would be unexacted. It might however be objected that it would ultimately be necessary to suppose yet again a 'disposition' to this supernatural disposition in the creature, and that this 'disposition' would then have to be conceived of as an essential constituent of man's nature. This may by all means be granted; but where has it been proved that this natural disposition cannot so be conceived of that while remaining simply identical with man's spiritual nature it still continues to have its meaning and significance even when it is not fulfilled by this inner, supernatural disposition for grace?

We may omit any consideration here of the question whether the condemnation of Baius has any relevance for or against the view here being discussed. Any attempt to answer it

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would drive us too deeply [309] into the details of historical theology.[10] But there is no doubt that this condemnation must be interpreted very cautiously – something which is frequently forgotten in the average sort of theology. If for example it results from this condemnation that God could have created man, even without his having sinned, in the state in which he now finds himself (in actual fact because of original sin), it does not follow from this that the state of man now experienced is simply identical materially with that of a *natura pura*. For obviously God could not have created man without his guilt in the state of an unfulfilled and yet binding demand for the supernatural (that, for instance, is the obvious presupposition behind the condemnation of Baius' proposition in Denz 1055). But what the persistence of this ordination to the beatific vision signifies for the man without grace in respect of his nature, whether this ordination is ontologically intrinsic to his concrete quiddity or is only juridically external, and hence whether it makes itself perceptible in his experience of himself or not, all this is something concerning which the condemnation of Baius offers no decision.[11]

Whether or not the unbounded dynamism which is held on this view to belong to nature and yet to be meaningless without grace and the beatific vision, is capable of being fully known philosophically *quoad nos* and of being analysed in terms of its supernatural end, in D's view however it objectively includes the supernatural as the end intrinsically necessary to its essence. But this is immediately to threaten the supernaturality and unexactedness of the end, no matter whether independently of Revelation we should in actual fact have succeeded in sounding these *ex supposito* natural depths of our being so comprehensively that they themselves objectively and compellingly refer us to the beatific vision as possible and real.

The paradox of a natural desire for the supernatural as a link between nature and grace is conceivable and necessary if by 'desire' is understood an 'openness' to the supernatural, and it is taught in every type of Catholic theology, even if this often interprets the *potentia oboedientialis* in too purely formal and negative a way as a mere non-repugnance. But a 'desire' which is natural and at the same time, even if only objectively, inevitably attracts grace to itself (the desire itself, [310] not just God's wisdom and his promise but the latter through the former!), is a desire which 'demands' grace, demands precisely because it would otherwise be meaningless. But this is incompatible with the unexactedness of grace.

After this critique of an unconditional and yet natural ordination of man to the supernatural, we should like to try to suggest in a few brief words how we ourselves conceive of the relationship between man and grace. God wishes to communicate himself, to pour forth the love which he himself is. That is the first and the last of his real plans and hence of his real world too. Everything else exists so that this one thing might be: the eternal miracle of infinite Love. And so God makes a creature whom he can love: he creates man. He creates him in such a way that he *can* receive this Love which is God himself, and that he can and must[12] at the same time accept it for what it is: the ever astounding wonder, the unexpected,

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[10] Cf. e.g. L. Renwart, 'La "Nature pure" a la lumière de l'encyclique "Humani Generis", NRT LXXIV (1952), pp. 337-54.

[11] See the study below, 'The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia', especially pp. 375-82.

[12] Two things are meant by this 'can and must'. Firstly, merely the *fact*: God wishes so to communicate himself that his self-communication to the creaturely subject is unexacted. Hence he must create man just 'so' that he can receive this self-communication only as grace; thus he must not only give him an essence but also constitute him as a 'nature' (as opposed to an unexacted supernatural). But this formula is intended to convey a second point: the self-communication simply cannot be other than unexacted, i.e. the will to a 'purely' *unexacted* self-communication is not only a fact but a *necessity*: there is no essence of a creaturely kind which God could constitute for which this communication could be the normal, matter-of-course perfection to which it was compellingly disposed. This is indeed (against Ripalda) the general teaching of theology today: grace and glory are simply speaking supernatural. But then one would have to draw the consequence of this proposition, more clearly than is usually the case: this grace is only then conceived of in its true essence when it is recognized to be not just the created 'accidental' reality produced by God's efficient causality 'in' a (natural) substance, but

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unexacted gift. And let us not forget here that ultimately we only know what 'unexacted' means when we know what personal love is, not *vice versa*: we don't understand what love is by knowing the meaning of 'unexacted'. Thus in this second respect God must so create man that love does not only [311] pour forth free and unexacted, but also so that man as real partner, as one who can accept or reject it, can experience and accept it *as* the unexacted event and wonder not owed to *him*, the real man. As unexacted, not only because he does not deserve it as *sinner*, but further because he can also embrace it as unexacted when, already blessed in this love, he is allowed to forget that he was a sinner once. That is all we have to say on this matter 'kerygmatically'. It will appear that one need not discourse at such great length about nature and the supernatural in one's proclamation of the Gospel as one has been accustomed to do in this connexion.

Now if one quite rightly sets about transposing these simple propositions, which every Christian can in a true sense make his own, into 'theology', because this transposition is necessary for the theologian and the preacher if he is to be preserved from the danger of misinterpreting them or rendering them innocuous, the following points may be made.

1. Man should be *able* to receive this Love which is God himself; he must have a congeniality for it. He must be able to accept it (and hence grace, the beatific vision) as one who has room and scope, understanding and desire for it. Thus he must have a real 'potency' for it. He must have it *always*. He is indeed someone always addressed and claimed by this Love. For, as he now in fact is, he is created for it; he is thought and called into being so that Love might bestow itself. To this extent this 'potency' is what is inmost and most authentic in him, the centre and root of what he is absolutely.[13] He must have it [312] *always*: for even

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includes 'uncreated grace' in its own concept in such a way that this may not be conceived of purely as a consequence of created grace. For it is difficult to see from an ontological point of view why it should not at least be *possible* for a created accident (however 'divinizing' it may be thought to be) to be ordered to a natural substance connatural with it, i.e. it is difficult to see how a purely created, accidental reality could be supernatural *simpliciter*.

[13] H. U. von Balthasar holds (at least in his book on Barth, pp. 310 s.) that if one allows this determination to the acceptance of God's unexacted loving self-communication to be the 'inmost' thing in man, one can no longer disregard this inmost centre in favour of the possible concept of a pure nature; thus he holds that the position put forward here is an uneasy compromise between the views of Maréchal and de Lubac. This is not the place to discuss Balthasar's theology of the grace-nature relationship as a whole. The reader may be referred to the essay by L. Malevez cited above and Balthasar's own most recent explanations in ZKT LXXV (1953), pp. 452 s. All that needs to be established here is: 1. If one wishes positively to contest (and that ultimately is what we are doing here) the possibility of a pure spiritual nature 'for God' (Balthasar, p. 311), i.e. looked at from his point of view, one could no longer speak of admitting such a possibility 'from the standpoint of a creaturely theology' either. Thus this distinction 'for God' – 'for us' (which is our own) does not help to reconcile the opposed positions. 2. When Balthasar asks how it should be possible to subtract 'the inmost' with a view to which all else is in concrete fact devised by God, without leaving behind a *meaningless* remainder, it is easy and in this case fair to reply by recalling the paradox of the most intimate divine Love, or, in more harmless terms, its mystery: precisely if it is bestowed freely (hence in concrete fact, hence not by essential necessity), it is the inmost, and that with a view to which everything else is willed concretely and freely. Here too it holds good that the *summum* is the *intimum*. And yet this Love, precisely because it is the highest and inmost, is the most unexacted. Does not Balthasar himself slip into a naturalistic concept of nature when he takes it for granted that the 'inmost', the 'most personal' is *eo ipso* the most inamissible, the ever-available? Is it not precisely the essence of man to receive the unexpected as the inmost, and to have the inmost as grace? But then the inmost love is not only the love of an aristocratic 'gratuitousness from above' but that of a 'gratuitousness from below' (p. 311), because precisely *man* himself, man as existential (hence very much 'from below') is meant to accept this love as unexacted by him, not owed to him. But then the concept of a possible 'pure nature' is no longer to be avoided. What has been said about this Love holds good then necessarily of an ordination to it, in so far as this 'ordination' is apprehended not merely as the natural *possibility* of the *potentia oboedientialis*, but as 'unconditional'.

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one of the damned, who has turned away from this Love and made himself incapable of receiving this Love, must still be really able to experience this Love (which being scorned now burns like fire) as that to which he is ordained in the ground of his concrete being; he must consequently always remain what he was created as: the burning longing for God himself in the immediacy of his own threefold life. The capacity for the God of self-bestowing personal Love is the central and abiding existential of man as he really is.[14]

2. The real man as God's real partner should be able to receive this Love as what it necessarily is: as free gift. But that means that this [313] central, abiding existential, consisting in the ordination to the threefold God of grace and eternal life, is itself to be characterized as unexacted, as 'supernatural'. Not because man first of all – 'obviously' – has a fixed, circumscribed nature in the sense that measured by it (as a fixed quantity known beforehand) grace, which is to say ultimately God himself, appears to be out of proportion and must therefore be called supernatural. But because the longing for, the ordination to, God's Love, this existential for supernatural grace, only allows grace to be unexacted grace when it is itself unexacted, and at the moment when, fulfilled by grace, it becomes conscious of itself *as* supernatural, i.e. shines forth as unexacted by the real man, not owed to him. Man is not to recognize himself merely as part of God's free creation; because he exists and although he exists already, he is to accept God's Love as gift and unexpected wonder. But if he were in a certain sense nothing but this existential, and were *this* – here there arises the *theological* word 'nature' for the first time – simply his nature, i.e. were it in absolutely no way capable of being dissociated from what he is otherwise and from what he could understand himself to be, then he could certainly as a free agent always continue to behave contrary to this nature in the despite of Love; but he could not accept this Love as bestowed gratuitously and without exaction upon him, God's really existent partner. Were he simply this existential, and were this his nature, then it would be unconditional in its essence, i.e. once it has been given, the Love which is God would 'have to' be offered by God.

3. Thus the man who receives this Love (in the Holy Spirit and thanks to the Word of the Gospel) will know this very existential for this Love as not owed to him, unexacted by him the real man. *This* knowledge is what allows him to distinguish and delimit what he always is (his concrete, indissoluble 'quiddity') into what is this unexacted real receptivity, the supernatural existential, and what is left over as remainder when this inmost centre is subtracted from the substance of his concrete quiddity, his 'nature'. 'Nature' in the theological sense (as opposed to nature as the substantial content of an entity always to be encountered in contingent fact), i.e. as the concept contraposed to the supernatural, is consequently a remainder concept (*Restbegriff*). By that is meant that starting as we have done, a reality [314] must be postulated in man which remains over when the supernatural existential as unexacted is subtracted, and must have a meaning and a possibility of existence

[14] The theologian must seriously ask himself how it is possible to explain the *poena damni* without adopting such an abiding supernatural existential foreordained to grace. In fact it cannot otherwise be explained. For the loss of a good which is possible, but not the object of an ontological ordination prior to free endeavour ('voluntas ut res'), can only be felt as a painful evil when the loser wills it *freely* (but the damned have no use for this and do not do it). But the decisive argument for the existence of the supernatural existential is that already indicated above (p. 302 s.): even prior to grace man's binding, indissoluble ordination to the supernatural end is a real determination of man himself, and not merely a divine intention, a decree 'in God's will'. To make of this a purely 'juridical', purely 'moral' entity is nothing but a nominalism which has not taken cognisance of itself.

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even when the supernatural existential is thought of as lacking (for otherwise this existential would necessarily be demanded precisely by the postulated reality, and it could only be unexacted with respect to a purely possible man, as an element in creation in general). But this 'pure' nature is not for that reason an unambiguously delimitable, de-finable quantity; no neat horizontal (to use Philipp Dessauer's way of putting it) allows of being drawn between this nature and the supernatural (both existential and grace). We never have this postulated pure nature for itself alone, so as in all cases to be able to say *exactly* what in our existential experience is to be reckoned to its account, what to the account of the supernatural. Where life is a matter of concrete yearning for eternal Truth and pure and infinite Love, of the inescapability of a free decision before God, of the pangs of birth, of concupiscence, labour, toil and death (hence of man's real essence and its achievement), all this is unquestionably experienced by a man who (consciously or unconsciously) is subject to the influence of the supernatural existential (if not of grace). Thus there is no way of telling *exactly* how his nature for itself alone would react, what precisely it would be for itself alone. This is not to deny that in the light of experience and still more of Revelation it might not be possible in some determinate respect to use a transcendental method to delimit what this human nature contains. 'Animal rationale' may still in this respect be an apt description. Certainly the philosopher has his own well-grounded concept of the nature of man: the irreducible substance of human being, established by recourse to human experience independently of verbal revelation. This concept may largely coincide with the theological concept of man's nature, in so far as without Revelation the greater part of what goes beyond this theological 'nature' is not experienced, and at any rate is not recognized *as* supernatural without the help of Revelation to interpret it. But in principle the content of this philosophical concept of man need not simply coincide with the content of the theological concept of man's 'pure nature'. It can in concrete fact contain more (i.e. something already supernatural, though not as such). When therefore one undertakes to state with precision what exact content is intended by such a concept of a pure nature, in particular as regards God and his moral law, the difficulties, indeed the impossibility, of a neat horizontal [315] once again become apparent for us, as the history of theology shows only too clearly. But these difficulties lie precisely in the nature of things: man can experiment with himself only in the region of God's supernatural loving will, he can never find the nature he wants in a 'chemically pure' state, separated from its supernatural existential. Nature in this sense continues to be a remainder concept, but a necessary and objectively justified one, if one wishes to achieve reflexive consciousness of that unexactedness of grace which goes together with man's inner, unconditional ordination to it. Then in fact this unconditional ordination must itself be grasped as unexacted and supernatural; man's concretely experienced quiddity differentiates itself into the supernatural existential as such and the 'remainder' – the pure nature.

4. Hence there is no longer any reason why speculative theology should avoid considering the relationship between the supernatural (including the supernatural existential) and nature in itself. It will be permissible to take hold with an easy conscience of the concept of *potentia oboedientialis* scorned by de Lubac. The spiritual nature will have to be such that it has an openness for this supernatural existential without thereby of itself demanding it unconditionally. This openness is not to be thought of merely as a non-repugnance, but as an inner ordination, provided only that it is not unconditional. It will be permissible at this point to point unhesitatingly at the unlimited dynamism of the spirit, which for D. is the natural existential immediately ordered to grace itself. All one must guard against is identifying this unlimited dynamism of the *spiritual nature* in a simply apodeictic way with that dynamism which we experience (or believe we experience) in the adventure of our concrete spiritual

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existence, because here the supernatural existential may already be at work – as subsequently emerges in the light of Revelation. And one will guard against asserting that this natural dynamism is an unconditional demand for grace. How should we know this, if we never experience it 'pure'? There is no reason why it could not retain its meaning and necessity even without grace, if on the one hand one can learn to see it as the indispensable transcendental condition of the possibility of a spiritual life at all; and on the other hand if this spiritual life, although in comparison with the beatific vision it remains eternally *in umbris et imaginibus*, [316] can at any rate be shown to be neither meaningless nor harsh but can always be seen as a positive, though finite, good which God could bestow even when he has not called man immediately before his face. Even according to D. the pure philosophy of man's nature (even his concrete nature) is not capable of discerning the possibility of a *visio beatifica*. Then D. too must hold that a spiritual life towards God as an end approached merely asymptotically is not to be dismissed as meaningless from the start. But as has already been said, we have no pure experience of this purely natural dynamism (or at any rate the contrary is not proved). Thus one who believes that he or humanity in the concrete is driven on the most sublime ways of its history, even apart from verbal revelation, by an impulse which would be meaningless if it did not lead to the immediate vision of God, need not on that account go on to assert anything which would be opposed to this view. All he would be bound not to assert (and his experience gives him no occasion for this either) is that this existentially (*existentiell*) real dynamism belongs to the substance of the nature of man in the theological sense.

Of course what has been said is far from providing an answer to all the questions which could be put concerning the relationship of nature and grace. It would be proper to speak with more precision of the *potentia oboedientialis* of nature as such. It would be necessary to examine more closely how the supernatural existential is related to grace itself, and in what sense it is distinct from it. All the questions and theses concerning the relationship of nature and grace would need to be wholly rethought in terms of an explicit recognition of the fact that grace is not just a 'neutral state' (however sublime), that it cannot be sufficiently described by purely formal ontological categories alone (created 'quality', accident, *habitus*, etc.), but that personal categories (love, personal intimacy, self-communication) can neither be avoided in the description of what grace is, nor, because they do not belong to the realm of formal ontology, are on that account inaccessible to a more precise philosophical or theological reflexion or stand in no need of it. In regard to the question of the nature-grace relationship it would be necessary to consider in more precise detail how a philosophical knowledge of a 'nature' really comes about. Scholastic philosophy and theology do indeed rightly insist (as 'Humani Generis' recently impressed upon us again too) that immutable 'essences' and concepts of essences are to be found. [317] But too little thought is given to how in fact one arrives at such an individual concept of an essence and in particular that of the essence of man, meaning by that something more than the most general metaphysical propositions (about entities in general, the transcendentals and the most general metaphysical principles of identity, causality, finality, etc.). Even the distinction made above between a transcendental and an *a posteriori* empirical method in the investigation of the essence of man is not generally familiar. The view is too lightly taken as a starting-point that whatever has been empirically observed in man 'always and in all cases' also belongs *eo ipso* to the immutable substance of man's 'nature', which then supplies the foundation of the 'lex naturae'. But the question is not so simple. Can pure natures be produced? In atomic physics perhaps? Can and may man change his nature? Is the variable *eo ipso* something which lies outside the concept of nature as such? Even when this quantity once achieved (produced) was general and (relatively) stable? It might be asked whether the scholastic concept of 'nature' as applied to the 'nature' of man does not still owe too much to the model of what is less than

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human (in the train of archaic philosophy with its orientation towards 'physics'). What is signified by the 'definition', and hence the circumscription, of man's 'nature', if he is the essence of transcendence, and hence of the surpassing of limitation? Is it meaningful at all in such a perspective simply to assign to this 'nature' an end perfectly defined materially? Not as though the remotest doubt were being thrown here on the fact that man has a nature and that this in itself has an end assigned to it. But these must not and cannot be conceived in such simple terms as the mutual order of a pot and its lid or of a biological organism and its fixed environment. One has only to ask why a supernatural end can be set for man without annulling his nature, and why God cannot do this with the nature of something below man. Then it becomes apparent at once that however universally the formal ontology of nature, end, etc., may extend, these concepts can only be used in the particular matter of each individual grade of being in a highly analogical way. There are many more such questions, and they are not idle subtleties. For that nature should remain nature for the sake of grace and yet always be grasped by the Christian as an intrinsic element in the single object willed by God when he willed man as his beloved in his Son – to bring this about is a task of the Christian life, and so a serious question for theology.

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[319]

10

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCHOLASTIC CONCEPT OF UNCREATED GRACE[1]

This brief essay has a very modest aim. Its only purpose is to inquire whether it might not be possible to use elements already found *within* the conceptual equipment (*Begrjfflichkeit*) of scholastic theology to define the essence of uncreated grace[2] more [320] sharply than has hitherto been the case. The inquiry is concerned neither to ask whether a more adequate understanding of the gracious communication and indwelling of God himself in the justified, attested by Revelation, may be better reached with the help of a conceptual equipment not so expressly a part of the substance of scholastic theology (in the terms, say, of a more personalist metaphysics)[3], nor does it propose more closely to establish and justify for themselves the conceptual elements called into service, independently of the application here in mind.

1. The Problem

a. *Grace in the primary sources of Revelation*.
All that is possible here under this heading, and all that is intended, is of course only a brief indication. As regards Pauline theology first of all, man's inner justification and renewal is

[1] On its first appearance this study received a fairly detailed and very friendly treatment from J. Trütsch in his work *SS. Trinitatis inhabitatio apud theologos recentiores* (a printed dissertation for the Gregorian University of Rome, Trent 1949), esp. pp. 25, 107-16. Cf. the review by F. Lakner in ZKT LXXII (1950), p. 116. A survey may be found in Trütsch (pp. 21-5) of the most important literature of the last thirty years (Delaye, Gardeil, Garrigou-Lagrange, de la Taille, Galtier, Retailleau, Martinez-Gómez, Mersch, Beumer, Kuhaupt, Schauf), which will not be mentioned again here. Since the appearance of Trütsch's work have also appeared M. J. Donnelly, 'The Inhabitation of the Holy Spirit: A Solution according to de la Taille', TS VIII (1947), pp. 445-70; P. Galtier, *L'Habitation en nous des trois personnes* (éd. revue et augmentée, Rome 1950); S.I. Dockx, *Fils de Dieu par grâce* (Paris 1948; cf. ZKT LXXIII (1951), pp. 111 s.); R. Morency, *L' Union de grâce selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montreal 1950); P. de Letter, 'Sanctifying Grace and our Union with the Holy Trinity', TS XIII (1952), pp. 33-58; M. J. Donnelly, 'Sanctifying Grace and our Union with the Holy Trinity: A Reply', TS XIII (1952), pp. 190-204; F. Bourassa, 'Adoptive Sonship: our Union with the divine Persons', TS XIII (1952), pp. 309-35. (Cf. also P. de Letter, 'Created Actuation by the Uncreated Act: Difficulties and Answers', TS XVIII (1957) pp. 60-92. – Tr.) There is no intention here of undertaking a detailed examination of these studies. While it is true that since the first appearance of our own study significant contributions have appeared, bearing both on the history and the objective substance of the question, which would have to be taken into account in any detailed presentation and solution of the whole topic (especially as bearing on the problem of proper or appropriated relations to the divine Persons), it still seems to us that this modest inquiry is not yet quite out of date. This all the more, since theologians as eminent as P. Galtier are still looking for a solution of the question by way of a combination of the theories of Vasquez and Suarez, so that the real starting-point of the theology of grace remains 'created grace'.

[2] This is not to imply that we propose to adopt any position with regard to the much-discussed question whether the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the justified is proper to the Spirit or merely appropriated. To this extent 'Spirit' and 'God' signify the same thing in this study. We shall return briefly to this question in our conclusion.

[3] Cf. e.g. J. Auer, 'Um den Begriff der Gnade. Grundsätzliches zur Frage: nach der Methode, mit der Übernatur als Gnade im strengen Sinn bestirnmt werden kann', ZKT LXX (1948), pp. 341-68; further his great historical work, *Die Entwicklung der Gnadenlehre in der Hochscholastik* I-II (Freiburg 1942-51), in which Auer sets out to test his threefold system of categories, (the objective-metaphysical, the psychologico-moral, the personal-existential) on the historical data. See also A. Brunner, 'Gott schauen', ZKT; LXXIII (1951), pp. 214-22; by the same author, *A New Creation. Toward a Theology of the Christian Life*, ET. Ruth Bethell (London 1955). Brunner seeks to describe the grace-relationship to God using the concepts of a personalist philosophy.

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primarily seen as a being endowed with the πνευ=μα α(/γιον, being dwelled in by it and led by it. The 'Spirit' is given to us, is (dwells) in us (Rom 5:5; 8:9.11.15.23; 1 Cor 2:12; 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 3:3; 5:5; Gal 3:2.5; 4:6; 1 Thess 4:8; 2 Tim 1:14; Tit 3:5; Heb 6:4), as in a temple (1 Cor 3:16 s.; 2 Cor 6: 16). We are made to drink of the 'Spirit', anointed and sealed with it (1 Cor 12:13 (cf. Eph 5:18); 2 Cor 1:21 s.; Eph 1:13; 4:30). Like statements are made of Christ (Rom 8:10; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17; Col 1:27). Now it is quite true that these statements do not exclude but on [321] the contrary include a created effect of the communication of the Spirit.[4] Being led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14), glowing with the Spirit (Rom 12:11), being sanctified and justified in the Spirit (1 Cor 2:15; 6:11), being made to drink of the Spirit, anointed and sealed by it, creation, renewal, rebirth, strengthening, illumination (by the Spirit, Christ, grace) (Eph 3:16; Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 2:1; Eph 1:18; 5:14; Heb 6:4), etc., all these also essentially imply or embrace an inner transformation of the justified as such, hence an inner quality which inheres in him, hence what scholastic theology calls created grace. The same result may be derived from texts which speak in a partitive sense of the gift of the Spirit (Tit 3:5; Heb 6:4) or of the earnest and the first-fruits of the Spirit (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Rom 8:23), using expressions, that is to say, in which the genitive ('of the Spirit') can doubtless be understood as not merely epexegetic but at least in a partitive sense as well. We are not justified in saying that the πνευ=μα which appears in these texts as the principle of our sanctification and justification always refers to the personal Spirit of God. In many of these Pauline texts πνευ=μα may primarily and immediately signify a non-personal created quality of the sanctified man himself, especially when it is found without the article (Rom 5:5), or is opposed to the divine Spirit itself as 'our' πνευ=μα (Rom 8:16; cf. Rom 8:9) we are 'in the Spirit' because the Spirit of God dwells in us), and yet this spirit clearly means a supernatural principle and not our νου=φ or our ψυξη/ (1 Cor 14:14; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:23). Yet it is *not* the case that πνευ=μα α(/γιον in St Paul (in its religious usage) refers primarily to a non-personal power communicated to man or a permanent quality of his sanctity, and then perhaps from time to time occurs secondarily as the name of the personal Spirit of God. Gaechter indeed has shown in a remarkable way[5] that the religious concept of πνευ=μα in St Paul [322] is a unified whole in which the Trinitarian personal Spirit is the basic element from, which all other modifications of the concept are to be derived. From this it follows that for St Paul man's inner sanctification is first and foremost a communication of the personal Spirit of God, that is to say, in scholastic terms, a *donum increatum*; and he sees every created grace, every way of being πνευματικο&φ, as a consequence and a manifestation of the possession of this uncreated grace. Thus at least from the point of view of his concept of pneuma and its structure, we should say with St Paul that we possess our pneumatic being (our 'created sanctifying grace') because we have the personal Pneuma of God. The converse proposition, corresponding to the ordinary viewpoint of the scholastic teaching on grace ('God's Pneuma is present in us in a special way because we have created grace'), lacks the same measure of immediate and explicit support in St Paul. This is not to assert any absolute incompatibility of the two formulations; the question merely arises whether the scholastic theology of grace in the matter of the relationship between uncreated and created grace does sufficient justice to the first formulation. In the Johannine theology of grace the idea of inner

[4] Cf., e.g., W. Reinhard, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes im Menschen nach den Briefen des Apostels Paulus* (Freiburg 1918); H. Bertrams, *Das Wesen des Geistes nach der Anschauung des Apostels Paulus* (Munster 1913); J. Wobbe, *Der Charis-Gedanke bei Paulus* (Munster 1932); Bertrams in particular has shown that πνευ=μα in St Paul should not invariably be understood as referring immediately to the Third Person of the Trinity.

[5] P. Gaechter, 'Zum Pneumabegriff des hl. Paulus', ZKT LIII (1929), pp. 345-408. Following in this R. Blüml, *Paulus und der dreieinige Gott* (Vienna 1929), Gaechter's study provides a certain corrective to Bertrams's conclusions concerning the concept of pneuma in St Paul.

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sanctification does not rest so explicitly and exclusively on the conception of the communication of God's personal Pneuma, inasmuch as this communication, in the form of a possession of Life, a generation (being) *of* God, a being *in* God (Christ, Truth, Love, Light), a possession of God's seed, his unction, love, witness, takes its stand upon a created quality inhering in man. Nevertheless God's own indwelling is not forgotten here either; Christ is (abides) in us (Jn 6:56; 14:20; 15:5; 17:26; 1 Jn 3:24), the Father and the Son make their dwelling in us (Jn 14:23), God is in us (1 Jn 4:4; 4:12 s.15), the Spirit is given to us and is in us (Jn 14:16 s.; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13 – admittedly it is not clear in the two latter texts whether what is in question is an inner gift of grace and the personal Spirit of God (partitive expressions again!)). Nevertheless it may be said that nothing in St John is contrary to St Paul's way of looking at God's mercy to man. As for the teaching of the Fathers, it is still less possible to offer a detailed exposition in this merely preliminary discussion than for Scripture. However we hope that it will meet with no opposition from historians of dogma if we summarize the conception of the Fathers (especially the Greek Fathers) as regards our topic by saying that they see the created gifts of grace as a *consequence* of God's substantial communication to justified men. Gaechter has already established [323] this for Irenaeus[6]: it is indeed true that for Irenaeus the personal Spirit of God and his gifts form a single, indissolubly linked principle of man's sanctification; but this result, which represents the intermediate position taken up by A. d'Alès[7] between the two extreme interpretations of his theology of grace proposed by R. Massuet and J. Körber, is not the whole of Irenaeus's conception: 'For anyone who reviews all the texts which speak of the Spirit will frequently discover that the gifts of the Spirit are *consequences* of his *conjunction* with man'.[8] That this remained the case in the later Greek tradition may be seen from Petavius[9] and de Régnon,[10] to whom it is still permissible to refer even now. For whatever the position may be as regards the soundness and theological tenability of the teaching they developed in connexion with this observation, that the conjunction of the Holy Spirit in particular with man is a proper and not merely an appropriated one, the soundness of the observation itself, with which [324] we are concerned here, is not open to doubt. It is confirmed by a historian of dogma who is under no suspicion of favouring Petau's personal thesis; Galtier writes: 'Ex his omnibus (i.e. the texts cited from the Fathers) apparet gratiam creatam seu imaginem divinae substantiae efformatam melius iuxta Patres dici *logice consequi* quam antecedere ad praesentiam personarum in nobis'.[11] And he appeals to the Fathers for his own thesis: 'Praesentia divina

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[6] P. Gaechter, 'Unsere Einheit mit Christus nach dem hl. Irenäus', ZKT LVIII (1934), pp. 503-32.
[7] A. d'Alès, 'La Doctrine de l'Esprit en saint Irenée', RSR XIV (1924), pp. 497-538, esp. 528-30.
[8] Gaechter, p. 531.
[9] Petavius, De Trinitate, lib. VIII, cap. 4-6.
[10] T. de Regnon, *Etudes sur la Trinité*, torn. IV, Etude 27, cap. 4 §7-8, pp. 553-8. Cf. also many of the texts adduced by Thomassinus, *Dogmata Theologica* III (Paris 1866), lib. 6, cap. 9-20, as well as those collected by J. C. Martinez-Gómez, 'Relación entre la inhabitación del Espíritu santo y los dones criados de la justificación', *Estudios Eclesiásticos* XIV (1935), pp. 22-50. It is demonstrated in the latter study with a wealth of texts from the Fathers and theologians – even if one may put a question-mark against some of the individual texts taken by themselves – that the idea persistently reappears in theology that a logical (not temporal) priority to created grace should be ascribed to uncreated grace (as given, not just as to be given or as causing grace). We refer to this article for confirmation from the theologians even for the later developments to which we proceed in this study. Martinez could have included Gregor von Holtum, 'Die heiligmachende Gnade in ihrer Beziehung zu der Einwohnung des Heiligen Geistes in der Seele', *Divus Thomas* IV (1917), pp. 435-63, esp. 448 s., among the theologians who defend such a priority of uncreated grace. Cf. also P. Dumont, 'Le Caractère divin de la grâce', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* XIV (1934), p. 92: 'En optant pour l'antériorité de nature de l'inhabitation divine a l'égard des vertus surnaturelles, on aurait au moms l'avantage de se mieux conformer, semble-t-il, *à la manière habituelle dont les Pères se sont exprimés* en parlant de la grâce.'
[11] P. Galtier, *De SS. Trinitate in se et in nobis* (Paris 1933), n. 411, nota 2.

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non est *mera consequentia* seu merus effectus iustificationis, quae sit per solam gratiam.'[12]

b. *Grace in scholastic speculation.*

This is not the place to set out in detail the various scholastic theories about the relationship between created and uncreated grace. We wish to draw attention only to that common feature which concerns our present discussion, being clearly conscious of simplifying matters somewhat and leaving aside other approaches (which will be indicated later). However diverse they may be among themselves, it is true of all the scholastic theories that they see God's indwelling and his conjunction with the justified man as based exclusively upon created grace. In virtue of the fact that created grace is imparted to the soul God imparts himself to it and dwells in it. Thus what we call uncreated grace (i.e. God as bestowing himself upon man) is a function of created grace. It is not difficult to see the basis of this conception: 'uncreated grace' (God's communication of himself to man, the indwelling of the Spirit) implies a new *relation* of God to man. But this can only be conceived of as founded upon an absolute entitative modification of man himself, which modification is the real basis of the new real relation of man to God upon which rests the relation of God to man.[13] This absolute entitative modification and determination of man is created grace, which has in consequence a twofold aspect: it is ontologically the formal basis of the analogical supernatural participation in God's nature through entitative assimilation of man to God's spirituality and holiness (*consortium formale*), and it is the basis [325] of a special relation (union, indwelling) between man and God himself (*consortium terminativum*). For our purpose it makes no difference how the various theories go on to explain the way in which created grace provides a basis for a new relation between man and the God of grace: whether for instance it is said that God's new efficient causality in respect of grace makes him present in a new way in the object of his activity (in virtue of the identity of being and operation in God and his immensity); or whether the view is put forward that the entitative elevation of man as regards his spiritual powers, which are thus orientated to the beatific vision as last end, gives him a new capacity (of an actual or potential kind) to take possession by knowledge and love of the God who is present in him by immensity; or whether one sees a perfect friendship with God established by grace, a friendship which provides a new and in itself sufficient basis for the presence of God in man (already there in fact). For in each case the indwelling of the Spirit in the justified man by grace is seen merely as a *consequence* of the bestowal of created grace, as the end-term of a (categorical) relationship of man to God given with created grace.

c. *The precise point at issue*.

Hence the question arises how the two ways of looking at things, that of Scripture and the Fathers on the one hand, and that of scholastic theology on the other, may be brought into harmony: there created grace as a *consequence* of God's communication of himself to the man whose sins have been forgiven, here created grace as the *basis* of this communication. There is not the slightest question of contesting the soundness of the positive aspect of the scholastic theory. Our only intention is to complete it by elaborating in more explicit terms a pattern of thought (already in principle to be found in scholastic theology) and applying it to our problem in such a way that the admissibility of the patristic formula should become clear too, and hence make available a more adequate appreciation of the nature of uncreated grace.

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[12] *Ibid*., n.412.

[13] This is already suggested by St Bonaventure (*II Sent*. dist. 26, a. I, q. 2 fund. 2) and later by St Thomas in *I Sent*. dist. 17, q. 1, a. 1 contra n. 3, (It is striking nevertheless that St Thomas no longer makes use of this argument to prove that grace (charity) is created in *De caritate* a. 1; Ia-IIae. 110.2 and IIa-IIae. 23.2.)

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2. The Presuppositions of the solution offered

a. *The relation of the state of grace* (as a whole, not distinguishing between created and uncreated grace) *to the beatific vision of God.*

It is generally recognized in scholastic theology that the closest of [326] relations holds between grace (as a whole) and the ontological presuppositions of the beatific vision. The intrinsic supernaturality of grace, for instance, is shown to follow from the supernaturality of the beatific vision and is characterized in terms of it; since the latter is supernatural simply speaking and in its inner nature, so must grace be, for it is a commencement of the blessed life, homogeneous with the ontological presuppositions of the vision (*inchoatio formalis*). The life of grace, that is to say, and the life of future glory do not stand in a purely moral and juridical relation to each other, such that the latter is the reward of the former as merit; the life of glory is the definitive flowering (the 'manifestation', the 'disclosure') of the life of divine sonship already possessed and merely 'hidden' for the moment. Hence grace, as the ontological basis of this supernatural life, is also an inner entitative principle (at the least a partial principle) of the vision of God. According to Scripture the possession of the Spirit is the earnest and first fruits of the definitive beatifying bestowal of God's grace and mercy; thus it is not just its 'pledge' and legal title, but a commencement of glory, still hidden, no doubt, only present to consciousness in faith, but really and entitatively given already. Hence the inner nature of grace as a whole in this life must allow of being more closely determined in terms of the nature of the ontological presuppositions of the immediate vision of God. We may formulate this more cautiously in view of the obvious differences between grace and glory: in accordance with what has been said, there is at least no objection in principle to applying to an ontology of grace a set of concepts which have proved themselves objectively valid in an ontology of the immediate vision of God, if such an application shows itself to be feasible and unavoidable from a consideration of the essence of grace itself.

b. *On the ontology of the visio beatifica.*

Clearly the answer to any question concerning the essence and the presuppositions of the immediate vision of God must depend in decisive fashion upon fundamental conceptions of the nature of knowledge in general. Even where terminological uniformity prevails with regard to the interpretation of the presuppositions of the *visio beatifica*, very far-reaching divergences of real meaning may prevail at the same time, since the concepts applied bear an essentially different sense according to the various metaphysical theories of knowledge they [327] presuppose. The metaphysics of knowledge presupposed here is that of St Thomas Aquinas, and with this as our starting-point we ask what is meant when St Thomas says that in the immediate vision of God God's essence itself takes the place of the *species* (*impressa*) in the created mind. Whether in some other metaphysics of knowledge (that of Suarez, say), even if it makes the very same statement here under discussion, the same thing is meant or not, is a question which may be left aside here. In order to understand what St Thomas means by *species* we must start from his basic conception of knowledge in general.[14] In the original and basic concept of knowledge (which alone provides a means of interpreting metaphysically all concrete modes of knowledge), knowledge is not an 'intentional' stretching out of the knower to an object, it is not 'objectivity' in the sense of the going forth of the knower out of himself to something other, not an externally orientated entering into

[14] Cf. K. Rahner, *Geist in Welt. Zur Meraphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin* (Innsbruck 1939), esp. pp. 41 s. (I have not had access to the first edition, but this reference would seem to correspond to pp. 71 s. of the second edition (Munich 1957). – Tr.)

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contact with an object by means of the cognitive faculty; it is primarily the being-present-to-itself (*Beisichsein*) of an entity, the inner illuminatedness of an entity for itself on the basis of its determinate grade of being (immateriality), it is a being-reflected-upon-itself (*Insichreflektiertheit*). It is only from this point of departure that it becomes really possible to conceive what is meant by *species* as the ontological ground of any knowledge. The *species* must not unhesitatingly be conceived of as the 'intentional image' of an object, made present in the mind in a non-real 'mental' way as a copy of the object due to the object's impression upon it. Rather it is primarily (i.e. if we reflect upon the nature of the *connatural species* of a cognitive power) an ontological determination of the knower as an entity in his own reality, this determination consequently being logically prior to knowledge as consciousness, and, because it shares or bestows the knower's determinate grade of being, also participating in the consciousness (being-reflected-upon-itself, being-present-to-itself) of this entity thus 'in act'.[15] If and in so far as the *species* understood in this way is also the effect of an object distinct from the knower and so *entitatively* assimilates the knower to the [328] known, the being-present-to-its-own-self (*Beisichselbersein*) of the knower as an entity determined by the *species* becomes also the knowledge of the object itself (in a manner not further to be explained here). Thus *a posteriori* knowledge rests for St Thomas on an assimilation to the object entitatively determining the knower by means of the *species* as a reality of the knower's own being, through which the knower and the known are really 'the same thing'. The knower and the known do not become one through knowledge (as consciousness); but because they are entitatively one (whether this be immediately or by means of a real determination, representing the object, of the knower as an entity, i.e. by means of the *species*), the knower knows the object.[16] 'Species' is therefore primarily an ontological and only subsequently a gnoseological concept.

Thence arises the whole problematic (a necessary one, indeed) of St Thomas's proposition, that in the immediate vision of God, God's own essence takes the place of the *species*. As regards the *necessity* of this proposition: given this concept of the *species* there is no difficulty in seeing that an immediate, non-analogical vision of God cannot be based upon a *created species*, for this could only reveal its object, God's infinite Being, in the measure of its own entitative capacity as a finite determination of the knowing subject.

As regards the *problematic* of this proposition: when it is said that God's own Being appears in the place of a created *species* of the finite mind, this is to assert a real 'relation' (speaking with all due caution!) between creature and God which is not founded upon an accidental, real, absolute[17] modification of one of the related terms in itself and with regard to itself. For a modification like this is impossible in God on account of his utter transcendence and immutability. It is not to be asserted of the creaturely term of the relation in the present case, because as an accidental modification, from without, of the creature's being in itself and with regard to itself, it could not be the basis for a fundamentally and essentially new 'relationship' of God to the creature. For the only fresh feature such an accidental absolute modification of the creature could bring with it is that relation to God [329] which is a constituent of any creaturely being, namely the transcendental reference of absolute finite being to God as to its cause. But here it is a question precisely of a 'relation' which does not immediately imply an absolute created determination; for otherwise the *species* of the beatific vision would ultimately be yet again a created quality.

Such a new 'relationship' of God to the creature, which cannot be brought under the category of efficient causality but only of formal causality, is on the one hand a concept

[15] Cf. e.g. J. Maréchal, *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique* V (Lyons 1926), pp. 60 s.
[16] St Thomas, *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1 corp.: 'assimilatio . . . est causa cognitionis'. For the rest cf. Bahner, *ibid*.
[17] 'Absolute' is used in this paragraph and occasionally later on to mean 'non-relative', of something merely inherent in the subject. 'Relation' translates *Beziehung* (*relatio*), 'relationship' *Verhältnis* (*habitudo*). – Tr.

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which transcribes a strictly supernatural mystery; and on the other hand its possibility must not be put in doubt in virtue of purely rational considerations. It transcribes in the mode of formal ontology the concept of supernatural being in its strictly mysterious character; for all the strictly supernatural realities with which we are acquainted (the hypostatic union, the *visio beatifica* [18] and – as we shall go on to show here – the supernatural bestowal of grace) have this in common, that in them there is expressed a relationship of God to a creature which is not one of efficient causality (a production *out* of the cause, 'ein Aus-der-Ursache-*Heraus*-stellen'), and which must consequently fall under the head of formal causality (a taking up *into* the ground [*forma*], 'ein-In-den-Grund[forma]-*Hinein*nehmen'): the ontological principle of the subsistence of a finite nature in the one case, the ontological [330] principle of a finite knowledge in the other. And such a formal causality of God (a Trinitarian hypostasis, his Being) is not known to us in the realm of nature (i.e. in knowledge which proceeds from the creature and consequently attains God only as *efficient* cause), and so cannot be ascertained as regards its actual realization (and hence also as regards its possibility) without Revelation. Such a relationship of God's formal causality in regard to a creature must not be put in doubt by rational considerations so far as its *general* conceptual possibility is concerned. For firstly it is indubitably given for every Catholic theologian at least in the special case of the hypostatic union. And secondly, an in all respects analogous perplexity, capable of no further resolution, lies before us in the (admittedly distinct) field of God's efficient causality in respect of the world: for here too God stands in a certain connexion with something else and yet remains wholly transcendent to it, i.e. he is active and yet this fact in no way reacts upon him nor gives him a fresh determination; so that the concept, in itself finite, of efficient causality, once it is applied to God, has to be provided with a negation, in consequence of which the continued existence of a positive content in this concept becomes obscure. If such is the case in this field, it cannot be impossible in principle to allow an active formal causality (*eine formale Wirkursächlichkeit*) of God upon a creature without thereby implying that this reactively impresses a new determination upon God's Being in itself one which would do away with his absolute transcendence and immutability. One may explicitly draw attention to this meta-categorical character of God's abidingly transcendent formal causality by a prefixed 'quasi', and in our case then be entitled to say that in the vision of God his Being exercises a *quasi-formal* causality. All this 'quasi' implies is that this forma', in spite of its formal causality, which must be taken really seriously, abides in its absolute transcendence (inviolateness, 'freedom'). But it does *not* imply that the statement, 'In the beatific vision God occupies the place of a *species* in virtue of a formal causality', is a mode of speech lacking all binding force; on the contrary, it is the *quasi* which must be prefixed to every application to God of a category in itself terrestrial.[19] The only reason why it is specially to be

[18] On the parallels between the *unio hypostatica* and the *unio gloriae* cf. e.g. St Thomas *Comp. Theol*. c. 201; Cajetan, *In IIIa*. 17.2; Contenson, *Theologia mentis et cordis* (Paris 1875) lib. I, diss. 5, cap. 1, spec. 1; Gotti, *Theologia scholastico-dogmatica* (Venice 1781), tom. I, tract. 3, q. 3, dub. 1 §3; E. Hugon, *Tractatus dogmatici*, vol. I (Paris 1933), p. 107; L. Billot, *De Verbo incarnato* (Rome 1927), p. 151. Billot offers the following excellent summary of the parallels: 'Unio hypostatica et unio gloriae inter se conveniunt: Primo quoad terminos, qui uniuntur. Utrobique enim creatura *immediate* unitur Deo, vel natura creata supposito increato, vel mens creata increato intelligibili. – Secundo quoad modum unionis. Utrobique enim Deus *actuat quasi formaliter*: vel scilicet naturam substantialem cui communicatione sui tribuit consistere, vel potentiam intellectivam cui communicatione sui tribuit adsistere obiecto in esse intellecto. – Tertio quoad supernaturalita rem unionis. Sicut enim natura creata non est in naturali potentia ad hoc quod trahatur ad esse divinum ut ad suum actum essendi: ita mens creata non est in naturali potentia ad hoc quod trahatur ad divinam essentiam ut ad suam speciem intelligibilem. – Quarto quoad non repugnanriam unionis. Eaedem enim rationes quae removent impossibilitatem circa unionem hypostaticam, similiter earn removent circa unionem beatitudinis . . .'

[19] So it is a 'hesitation' founded in the nature of things when St Thomas once simply says that in the beatific vision God is the 'forma intellectus ipsum cognoscentis' (*Comp. Theol*. cap. 105; similarly Ia. 12.5. corp.), and yet also asserts emphatically: 'Non autem oportet quod ipsa divina essentia fiat forma intellectus ipsius, sed

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recommended in [331] our case that the *quasi* should be explicitly added is that (as opposed to efficient causality) it provides an emphatic reminder of the analogical nature of our concepts in the matter of a relationship to the world known only through Revelation; and above all because in this matter of a formal, though ontological, causality of God the only causality in question is one which brings to its highest perfection the human mind as *knowing* (and in this respect only).

For the rest the ontological problematic of God's formal causality in respect of a creature is treated of in scholastic theology in discussions of the hypostatic union. What is there said about the compatibility (at least negatively demonstrable) of such a concept with God's immutability, or about the category to which such an objective state of affairs must analogically be ascribed, etc., likewise holds good in our case *mutatis mutandis*. We need consequently not go into the matter [332] again here. Nor is this the place to specify this formal causality more sharply in view of the fact that the causality precisely under discussion here is one which determines the finite spirit in the direction of the object which it is to know and love (and in this way only!). It is sufficient here to hold firmly on to the fact that in the beatific vision there is present as its ontological presupposition a 'relation' between creature and God which is not a categorical one, resting upon an accidental absolute modification, but is a quasi-formal causality of God himself upon the created spirit; so that (corresponding to the general nature of the relationship of a 'forma' to its formal effect) the reality of the mind in the beatific vision, so far as such a reality in itself is due to a *species* as the means of knowledge, is the very Being of God.

Furthermore it goes without saying that this active formal causality of God on the human spirit must not be understood one-sidedly as engaging only the intellect. It is true that scholastic theology is concerned almost exclusively with the ontology of the immediate *knowledge* of God, but there is no doubt that God's immediate communication to the created spirit extends just as much to the 'will' (understood in the scholastic sense).[20]

There is still one question to be touched on briefly here: the relationship between God's formal causality on the spirit and the light of glory. We do not have to provide here a proof of the existence of the *lumen gloriae*; our only question is how, following St Thomas, we should conceive of its relationship to God's Being as the quasi-*species* of the spirit in terms of formal ontology. If one examines St Thomas's proofs for the *lumen gloriae* in themselves,[21] it

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quod *se habeat* ad ipsum ur forma' (*De Ver*. q. 8, a. 1 corp.; similarly *Suppl*. 92.1 ad 8, 'quasi forma intellectus qua intelligit'). It is usual today to distinguish two senses of 'forma' by speaking of 'actus *informans*' and 'actus *terminans*': thus 'forma' (the determination) in the first sense is that which in itself arrives at reality and perfection in virtue of the act of determination; in the second sense it is that which in itself is and remains a perfect reality in spite of and prior to the act of determination. It is indeed not to be denied that many theologians who continue to employ the *formula* of God as the *quasi-forma* of the beatified mind, in actual fact leave it very little of its proper metaphysical sense. So for example Suarez (Vivès I, tract. 1, lib. 2, cap. 12-13), Pesch (*Prael. Dogm*. II n. 80) and others. Even Billot (*De Deo uno et trino*[4] (Rome 1902) p. 141) is not very clear on this point when he speaks of the opposite of a *forma inhaerens* as 'informare non physice sed intentionaliter tantum'. If this is supposed to mean that God is in fact an 'intentional' *known object*, the whole explanation is false, for it is a question here precisely of an ontological (hence 'physical') *presupposition* of knowledge. Thus 'intentionaliter informare' can only mean that God's active formal causality does not interiorly determinate the 'form' in itself (as is the case with finite forms), or be attempting to express the fact that God's Being in spite of its relation as form to the finite mind does not make the divinity into an inner determination of this mind. An ontology, developed in more detail than is here possible, of the formal causality of the divine Being in regard to finite being would doubtless be able to show (once this concept had been presupposed) that something of the sort is basically possible, so long as the divine Being remains unaffected, only in two cases: either as *unio hypostatica*, or as the communication of this Being as the object of immediate knowledge and love.

[20] Cf. B. Froget, *De l'habitation du Saint-Esprit dans les âmes justes*[2] (Paris 1900), pp. 148-154.

[21] *Summa contra Gentiles* III, 53, etc.

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becomes clear that he regards it as a *dispositio* of the spirit for the reception of the formal causality of God's intelligible Being upon it. Thus in respect of God's immediate conjunction with the spirit the *lumen gloriae* takes its place in the category of material causality, which does not exclude, but necessarily includes, the fact that this *dispositio*, as an entitative determination of the cognitive power, possesses the character of a *formal* cause in regard to the human spirit. This *dispositio* needs however to be determined more sharply: it is (for reasons which may be [333] studied in St Thomas) a *dispositio ultima*.[22] Now according to St Thomas it is the case with a *dispositio ultima* (*dispositio quae est necessitas ad formam*) that on the one hand as *causa materialis* it logically precedes the *forma*, and yet on the other that it depends for its subsistence upon the formal causality of the *forma*,[23] so that to affirm its presence is simultaneously to affirm with inner necessity the presence of the formal causality of the *forma* and conversely.[24]

[334]

3. The Proposed Solution

We are now in a position to offer a more exact answer to the question put above than is commonly the case, without really having to leave the traditional ways of scholastic thought.

a. *The statement of the solution*.

The possession of the Pneuma (and thus primarily uncreated grace) is conceived of in Scripture as the homogeneous germ and commencement of the beatific vision. And therefore we have the right to apply to uncreated grace in this life the concepts of formal ontology relating to the possession of God in the *visio beatifica*, at least in those cases in which the theological statements concerning this grace themselves suggest it. Now it has been seen that one fails to do justice to the essence of uncreated grace as this is declared in the sources of

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[22] *De Ver*. q. 8, a. 3 corp.

[23] Cf. e.g. *Dc Ver*. q. 28, a. 7 corp.; IIIa. 7. 13 ad 2, 9. 3 ad 2. Clearly it is of no importance in this connexion whether St Thomas's use of this *mutua causalitas* in the texts cited, which are concerned with other topics, is justified or not.

[24] Thus it becomes possible to say in what the strictly supernatural character of a created grace (here primarily the light of glory) consists: while in the created entity in general its relation to the divine cause does not belong to the inner distinguishing features of its essence (Ia 44.1 ad 1), created grace, as *ultima dispositio* to an immediate communication of the divine Being itself in the mode of formal causality – a communication which can only exist in terms of this formal causality – involves a relation to God which belongs to its very essence.

And it is so and only so that a created grace can possess the quality of something absolutely supernatural. This is seen most clearly when one takes into consideration what sort of entity is capable of being an absolute mystery. It is necessary to provide an answer to this question if one bears in mind the Thomist doctrine of the relationship between knower and known, that a created thing purely as such can never be an absolute *mysterium*. For in principle it is always possible in virtue of the convertibility of being, knowing and intelligibility, to correlate with any finite grade of being a knower of the same or a higher level of being to which the former grade of being of a finite level is not in principle inaccessible. Accordingly Ripalda's view was in itself quite sound, when he held that created grace (the inner, essential connexion of which with uncreated grace he did not clearly perceive) can only be unexacted in concrete fact with respect to any really created substance, but not with respect to some still higher, conceivable and creatable substance (cf. H. Lange, *De Gratia*, Freiburg 1929, n. 260). Given a grace which on the one hand is ontologically an accidental reality and on the other remains as such purely in the created order, it is really impossible to show why to such an accident there should not correspond a created substance as possible, from which such an accident could proceed connaturally. Hence we may sum up our conclusions as follows: it is quite impossible for something purely created to be really absolutely supernatural and to present an absolute *mysterium*; but if there is something supernatural simply speaking which is absolutely mysterious, then God himself must belong to what constitutes it, i.e. God in so far as he is not merely the ever transcendent Creator, the efficient cause of something finite which is distinct from him, but in so far as he communicates himself to the finite entity in quasi-formal causality.

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Revelation, if one sees it as exclusively founded upon a categorical relation to God of the man to whom grace has been shown, which relation rests merely (in some way or other) upon an accidental created modification of man's soul. This difficulty is resolved when we transfer to uncreated grace the concepts of formal ontology which appear in the *visio beatifica*: God communicates himself to the man to whom grace has been shown in the mode of *formal* causality, so that this communication is not then merely the consequence of an efficient causation of created grace. Thus it becomes clear that the proposition no longer holds good which maintains that man has uncreated grace because he possesses created grace; on the contrary, with Scripture and the Fathers the communication of uncreated grace can be conceived of under a certain respect as logically and really prior to created grace: in that mode namely in which a formal cause is prior to the ultimate material disposition.

In what more precisely the communication of God by way of formal causality to the creature consists – this almost purely formal ontological account says very little expressly about it – may be determined in terms of the *visio beatifica* only negatively. Just as grace in general as an entitative supernatural elevation of man can be described in more [335] precise detail only in terms of its definitive unfolding, the *visio* (though this 'unfolding' and 'disclosure' are not *just* a 'growth' to a final stage arising out of an inner impulse but are also a new eschatological intervention of the God who is still in himself concealed), so too uncreated grace is only to be determined in terms of the *visio*: it is the homogeneous commencement, already given though still concealed and still to unfold, of that *communication* of the divine Being taking place *by way of formal causality* to the created spirit which is the *ontological presupposition* of the *visio*.[25]

Firstly, then, this union, so far as it takes place by way of formal causality, is not simply a consequence of created grace – indeed it precedes the created grace to the extent that this grace, as the ultimate disposition to the union, can only exist when God's formal causality is actually being exercized. Secondly, so far as it is the ontological *presupposition* of the beatific vision, this union is already posited independently of an actually exercised apprehension of the threefold God by man in knowledge and love, whether this should be through [336] the supernatural acts of the theological virtues or through the beatifying vision and love of fulfilment. Thirdly, this ontological union is posited as a presupposition of the *visio*. By this is meant that this immediate, ontological union, in spite of or even because of its basis in formal causality, should not be conceived of vaguely as some sort of 'unity of nature', in which God and the created spirit are thought of as flowing into each other along arbitrarily adopted courses. This ontological unity arising out of the exercise of formal causality is nothing but the presupposition and the ontological aspect of the unity of the

[25] Cf. Leo XIII, 'Divinum illud munus' (AAS XXIX (1896), p. 653): 'Haec autem mira coniunctio, quae suo nomine inhabitatio dicitur, condicione tantum seu statu ab ea discrepans, qua caelites Deus beando complectitur . . .' As is well known, Pius XII in the encyclical 'Mystici Corporis' (AAS XXXV (1943), p. 231 s.; Denz 2290) has once more referred to this text as a starting-point for a consideration according to the *analogia fidei* so as to achieve a deeper understanding of the indwelling of the Spirit in the grace of justification. The Pope points out more clearly than before that the divine activity *ad extra* is common to the three Persons (Denz 428; 704) in the sense that this is to be understood of efficient causality (Denz 2290); and at the same time draws attention to the *visio beatifica* as the starting-point for a more profound theology of grace. In this way he clearly points to a theology of grace which seeks to make full use of that notion of God's formal causality with respect to the creature which is a traditional possession of the schools in the theology of the *visio beatifica* and is quite inescapable in the doctrine of the hypostatic union. The circumstance that Pius XII clearly seems to wish to leave open the question whether the relations to the three divine Persons of the man to whom grace has been shown are really only appropriated cannot be discussed here. There is hardly any need to establish the fact that the solution here proposed respects the Pope's warning against every kind of pantheism ('omnem nempe reiciendum esse mysticae huius coagmentationis modum, quo christifideles, quavis ratione, ita creatarum rerum ordinem praetergrediantur, atque in divina perperam invadant, ut vel una sempiterni Numinis attributio de iisdem tamquam propria praedicari queat'). Compare here Trütsch, *loc. cit.* pp. 112 s.

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created spirit with God in the act of immediate loving contemplation, an act therefore which implies the highest degree of unity in the fullest distinction. And here our interpretation once again reaches a point at which it can either rejoin the traditional interpretation of God's indwelling in the line of St Thomas, Suarez, John of St Thomas or Gardeil,[26] or adopt the categories of a more personalist metaphysics of the relationship between God and the creature through grace. For in the last resort this interpretation of ours seeks nothing else than to focus more sharply for the human understanding the highest and most intimate union with God which is possible to a creature in the gaze of love, and to do so by grasping as precisely as possible the ontological presupposition of the union in the categories of formal ontology.

We need not attempt to decide here how we should interpret the distinction between the communication of the divine Being to man by way of formal causality in grace and in the *visio*: whether we should interpret it as a difference in the degree of this increasing communication *in itself*, or as a difference derived from the difference in the material *disposition* to this communication.[27] In other words, we [337] do not intend to take up the question whether the growth from uncreated grace to the possession of God as the basis of the *visio beatifica* is an inner growth of this possession in itself or just the 'growth' (always understood with the restriction indicated above) of created grace into the light of glory – or whether this either-or is really not justified at all in a more precisely worked-out ontology of the relationship between *causa formalis* and *causa materialis*.

b. *Hints of this view in the theologians*.

If in order to confirm our view we refer here to a few texts of the great scholastic theologians (without any pretentions to completeness), we do so not in order to identify these theologians as defenders of our view but only so as to show *a posteriori* too how it is possible to find many examples of a preliminary movement in this direction in scholastic theology. As early as Alexander of Hales 'gratia increata' is not just the efficient cause of created grace but also the *perfectio complens* of the state of grace, as opposed to which *gratia creata* is only a *perfectio disponens*, a *medium*, a *dispositio in anima ad susceptionem gratiae increatae*. Indeed Alexander even teaches a priority of uncreated grace in a certain respect.[28] As regards St Bonaventure reference should at least be made to the fact that he regards the existence of uncreated grace as more certain theologically, and thus its existence is even objectively more basic for him than that of created grace.[29] There is to be found in this opinion not only a reflexion of the doctrinal situation which arose in the early scholastic period through the well-known teaching of Peter Lombard, but also an echo of Biblical and patristic theology: the Holy Spirit himself is the true gift – 'et hoc a fide et Scriptura determinatur', as St Bonaventure says – while created grace (even if it is now no longer possible to say of it 'investigatur a doctoribus rationum probabilitate') is to be understood in terms of uncreated grace. Should there not be an ontological order corresponding to this logical order at least under one aspect? At any rate the approach almost exclusively adopted today, which grants to

[26] At any rate, it is quite unjustified, on the basis of the fact that the created grace of the 'pilgrim' state (*status viatoris*) is distinct at least in degree from the light of glory, to conclude with B. Froget (*De l'habitation . . .*, pp. 155 s.), M. Retailleau and others (cf. Trütsch, *passim*) that if the divine essence is already united immediately with the pilgrim's spirit as it is in the *visio*, he would have to possess the *visio* already. Such a conclusion presupposes that this immediate union is the unique cause of the vision. But if a created supernatural disposition (grace or the light of glory, which are capable of growth) is a necessary presupposition of the vision, the fact that it is deficient can explain why the *visio* is not posited, although an immediate informing communication of the divine Being to the created spirit has already been posited.

[27] Cf. Galtier, *De SS. Trinitate in se et in nobis* (Paris 1933), nn. 443 s.

[28] See the texts in E. J. Primeau, *Doctrina Summae theologicae Alexandri Halensis de Spiritus Sancti apud iustos inhabitatione* (Mundelein 1936), pp. 33 s.

[29] In *II Sent*. dist. 26, a. 1, q. 2 corp.

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uncreated grace only a very modest little place in the tractate *de Gratia*, is very [338] far removed from St Bonventure's point of departure.[30] In St Thomas too the idea is found that created grace stands to uncreated grace 'ex parte recipientis vel materiae', as 'dispositio'.[31] And even St Thomas once calls the Holy Spirit the *causa formalis inhaerens* of our adoptive sonship.[32] Nor again is created grace for St Thomas simply *causa materialis* for uncreated grace but also under a different aspect its *consequence*, as may be seen from IIIa. 7.13 corp.: 'gratia enim causatur in homine *ex praesentia* divinitatis, sicut lumen in aere ex praesentia solis'; nor is there any occasion to weaken the 'praesentia divinitatis' of the text to a merely natural divine omnipresence, since this omnipresence appears as an analogous case parallel to the hypostatic union. Besides we find him saying elsewhere: 'Personae divinae *sui sigillatione* in animabus nostris *relinquunt* quaedam dona quibus formaliter fruimur (Deo), scilicet amore et sapientia'.[33] Thus the sealing logically precedes the means by means of which man arrives at the fruition of the Godhead. Finally it is St Thomas who again and again on the one hand speaks of grace as *inchoatio gloriae*,[34] and on the other hand in the ontology of glory does not see this, as has already been shown, as based merely upon a created quality (and the relation to God posited with it). In the case of Lessius and Scheeben,[35] although their theory of the essence of grace and filiation is almost inextricably bound up with their theory – not under discussion here – of the union of the Holy Spirit with man as a property of the Third Person of the Trinity, yet their authority may be invoked here in so far as they both point to the parallels which, from an ontological point of view, hold between the [339] *unio hypostatica* and the *gratia increata* even of the pilgrim state. Scheeben does indeed make much use of the concept of the *causa formalis*, but almost exclusively in the question whether and in what sense the indwelling of the Spirit is *causa formalis* precisely of the *adoptive sonship* of the justified; but the concept never or hardly ever appears in the only question which concerns us here, how in fact the indwelling *itself as such* ought to be conceived of. Franzelin[36] regards the *communicatio Dei ipsius per modum causae formalis* as the characteristic feature of a supernatural gift, and finds an example of it in the *unio hypostatica*, the *visio beatifica* and the grace of justification. In itself we like to think, our view is in harmony with that of Galtier. As we have already said above, he recognizes as not merely historically accurate but also as theoretically valid today the principle, 'Praesentia divina non est mera consequentia seu merus effectus iustificationis quae sit per solam gratiam'.[37] When he goes on to explain how this principle can be maintained Galtier makes use of the concept of the 'actio proprie assimilative . . . (quae) praesentiam substantialem implicat *ratione sui*'.[38] This concept is clearly inspired by the Biblical and patristic image of the sealing of man with

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[30] Cf. the remarks of P. Dumont in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* XIV (1934), pp. 62 s.
[31] In *I Sent.* dist. 14, q. 2, a. 1 sol. 2. Similarly in Ia. 43.3 ad 2: 'gratia gratum faciens *disponit* animam ad habendam divinam personam'.
[32] In *III Sent.* dist. 10, q. 2, a. 1 sol. 3. If to *Spirit* there is added here 'cui appropriator caritas, secundum quam formaliter meremur', this must not straight away be translated as though it read 'cui appropriator *productio* caritatis infusae'; for St Thomas has just before said simply (*loc. cit.*, qla. 3 obj. 4), 'sed caritas est Spiritus sanctus'.
[33] In *I Sent.* dist. 14, q. 2, a. 3 ad 2.
[34] Ia-IIae. 111.3 ad 2; IIa-IIae. 24.3 ad 2; *De Ver.* q. 8, a. 3 ad 10; q. 27, a. 5 ad 6; in *III Sent.* dist. 13, q. 1, a. 1 ad 5.
[35] Lessius, *De summo bono*, lib. II, cap. 1, n. 4; Scheeben, *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, II §169, nn. 851 s.; also in his controversy with Granderath, e.g. *Katholik* LXIV, 2 (1884) pp. 479 s.
[36] De Deo uno[3] (Rome 1883), pp. 340-2. Cf. also Scheeben's clarification of Franzelin's teaching on this point in Katholik LXIV, 2 (1884), pp. 480 s. C. Pesch (Praelectiones Dogmaticae II, nn. 681 s.) likewise conceives of the indwelling of the Spirit *ad modum formae assistentis et analogae*, but the formula is for him only another expression for the ordinary conception of uncreated grace.
[37] P. Galtier, *De SS. Trinitate* . . ., n. 412.
[38] *Loc. cit.*, n. 456.

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God's Spirit,[39] and renders it accurately. But the question then arises how precisely this sealing is to be conceived of, how, in other words, we are to understand Galtier when he writes: '(Personae divinae . . .) animae ita se communicant et coniungunt, ut in eius essentia simul et potentiis imprimant suam ipsarum imaginem'.[40] Is the '*se* communicare' a pure consequence (*effectus formalis secundarius*) of the generation of the created image of God? In that case Vasquez' view is not finally disposed of,[41] or alternatively, recourse will have to be had once more to the Suarezian theory [340] of the indwelling, the point of departure adopted above being abandoned. But if the 'se communicare' precedes, at least under one aspect, the generation of created grace, or if at least it is not merely a consequence of it, then the question remains how precisely this communication of God himself to the creature is to be conceived of in its own right. Finally we may refer here to the two essays of P. Dumont and J. C. Martinez-Gómez[42] who declare themselves in favour of a priority of the communication of uncreated grace to created grace, without, it must be admitted, going more closely into the question how precisely the *donum increatum* is to be conceived of. We have already referred to the fact that the Encyclical 'Mystici Corporis' of Pius XII is favourable to the theory here proposed (and proposed before the appearance of the Encyclical) to the extent that it draws attention to two points of departure from which we have set out here: the admitted fact that in the relationship between God and man there evidently exists a categorical order which is not that of efficient causality; and the admitted fact that the doctrine of the *visio beatifica* should be drawn upon in order to determine the essence of grace. It has already been said that Trütsch 'awards the palm to the solution of de la Taille and Rahner'.[43] It would take us too far to examine the most recent literature, nor is it necessary, particularly as it is orientated more towards the question of whether the relations of the divine Persons to man in grace are appropriated or non-appropriated than to the question which concerns us here.

c. *Difficulties.*

There is no need here to discuss the *general* problematic of the concept of a communication of God to the creature. Consequently we [341] have only to take up the questions which arise from the application of this concept precisely to the indwelling of God, to uncreated grace. Does not our view, with its emphasis on the relative independence of uncreated grace as regards created grace, endanger the significance of created grace for justification, adoption, etc., as Trent sees them? We need not here go into the familiar controversy conducted above all by Scheeben and Granderath as to the meaning of Chapter VII of the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent in the matter of the *unica causa formalis iustificationis*. In this question too we may surely have recourse to the concepts developed in scholastic theology in its treatment of the *visio beatifica*. Just as there the light of glory is

[39] *Loc. cit.*, n. 458.
[40] *Loc. cit.*, n. 456; cf. also n. 445.
[41] Accordingly Trütsch says of Galtier's theory too 'potest dici ulterior evolutio et modificatio explicationis Vasquesii' (p. 23). Nor has Galtier gone any further in developing his theory in the latest edition of his French book on this subject (see above, p. 319, n. 1). Cf. Lakner ZKT LXXII (1960), p. 116. Nevertheless Galtier's theory is worthy of note, since it recognizes the inadequacy of the classical solutions stemming from Vasquez and Suarez.
[42] Cf. above, p. 323, n. 5
[43] So Lakner, in ZKT LXXII (1950), p. 116. It should be made clear in this connexion that the present investigation arose independently of de la Taille's work. This is not said in order to establish any rights of priority, which would certainly not be the case. On the contrary it is a deficiency of the present study (dating from 1939) that de la Taille's important essay, which had already appeared some ten years before, escaped my attention. But if two people reach the same conclusion independently of each other, there is a higher probability that they are not totally at fault, which is a comfort in this unfortunate accident.

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seen as the *dispositio ultima quae est necessitas ad formam*, so here an analogous relationship may be assumed to hold between created and uncreated grace. In this regard created grace is seen as *causa materialis* (*dispositio ultima*) for the formal causality which God exercises by graciously communicating his own Being to the creature. In this way the material and formal causes possess a reciprocal priority: as *dispositio ultima* created grace is in such a way the presupposition of the formal cause that it can itself only exist by way of the actual realization of this formal causality. From this objective reciprocal priority there follows further the logical justification for inferring the presence of one reality from that of the other. Because created grace as *dispositio ultima* can only exist along with the actual formal causality of the form for which it is the *dispositio*, it is correct to say: If created grace is given, so too necessarily by that very fact uncreated grace, and hence the whole grace of justification, is communicated to man.

Thus on our view of the relationship between created and uncreated grace there does not exist even the beginning of a possibility of thinking of created grace apart from uncreated grace, and so of thinking of uncreated grace as a fresh gift arising out of a new and independent demonstration of God's grace. We must remember furthermore that created grace alone (as a finite determination of the subject) can be called *forma* in the strict (categorical) sense of the word (as opposed to the divine Being itself, which remains transcendent with respect to the creature in spite of its formal causality); and we must remember that the Council only wished to meet the imputation theory of the Reformers, Seripando and others, but did not wish to determine how created and uncreated (inner!) grace (of which latter it also says precisely 'signans et ungens Spiritu promissionis Sancto . . .') are [342] related to each other and together constitute the *single* grace of justification. In view of all this we may say that the Council's teaching on created grace as the *unica causa formalis* of justification does not exclude our conception of the relationship between created and uncreated grace. For in this conception too created grace remains the 'unique' formal cause of justification, in so far as it alone is the genuine (categorical) 'form' of the justified man, and once it is posited, justification as a whole is really posited with it already. In addition it must be said that Chapter VII of the Tridentine decree on justification only teaches explicitly that the *causa formalis* of justification is wholly *interior* (and thus not an *imputed* 'causa formalis extrinseca'), and that conversely therefore the *causa formalis* of justification is interior grace *alone*. It is true that the Council describes this interior grace in terms which in the theology of the schools hold good primarily of created grace, but it nowhere says that *interior* grace, as the unique formal cause of justification, must be understood *exclusively* of *created* grace.[44]

If on our view created grace is conceived of as the *dispositio* (*causa materialis*) for the *donum increatum*, this is in no way to deprive it of what is attributed to it by theology. In order that it can be a *dispositio* for uncreated grace at all, it does indeed have first of all the character of a *formal* entitative, supernatural determination of the human spirit; as such, however, on our view too all those *effectus formales* can be assigned to it ascribed to it by scholastic theology. Just in so far as and in virtue of the fact that it constitutes man as a subject fit to receive the substantial gift of the divine essence for a future *visio*, it assimilates man to God's nature considered as the principle of his possession of himself in Trinity; and thus it at once becomes the *causa formalis* of all the properties of man's supernatural elevation.[45]

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[44] Cf. Galtier, *op. cit.*, n. 413: 'Propterea communior est in dies sententia, quae tenet specialem illam in anima habitationem, esse de ratione causae formalis justificationis . . . Nec propterea ullatenus contradicitur concilio Tridentino.'

[45] In this sense our view is not in conflict with St Thomas's statement (Ia-IIae. 110. 1 ad 2; *De Ver*. q. 27, a. 1 ad 1) that created grace alone and not God himself is the 'causa formalis' in respect of supernatural 'life'. It is

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[343] It remains true, certainly, that the usual theological argument for the existence of created grace from the communication of uncreated grace must be formulated rather more cautiously in our interpretation than is usually the case. If there is someone who supposes, in accordance with the view of Cajetan or Suarez in respect of the manner in which the *unio hypostatica* is to be explained, that an active formal causality on God's part necessarily comprises a created modality, he will be able correspondingly to conclude to the presence of created grace from the premiss of uncreated grace. Someone who does not share these views of Cajetan and Suarez will use arguments to prove the existence of created grace[46] analogous to those used by St Thomas when he shows the necessity of the created light of glory in spite of and because of God's formal causality in the *visio*.

d. *A consequence of the proposed solution.*

The question is well-known and much discussed today whether God's indwelling in and conjunction with the justified man is only appropriated to the divine Persons or whether through grace a relationship to the man to whom grace has been shown arises which is peculiar to each divine Person. On the view according to which indwelling and so on is merely a relationship of God to man resting entirely upon created grace, this question can only be answered in the sense of a bare appropriation. For then we are required to apply the principle of theology recently emphasized once again by Pius XII: 'omnia esse habenda Sanctissimae Trinitati communia quatenus eadem Deum ut supremam *efficientem* causam respiciant' (Denz 2290). But if 'uncreated grace' is *not* ontologically speaking a pure consequence of created grace as a qualitative accident, if rather the view proposed here is correct, then the question which has just been put is by no means immediately answered yet; it can really be put for the first time as a question which is hence not obsolete but is still open. For it is above all at least conceivable then that the quasi-formal causality which we have attributed – simplifying the question for reasons of method – to [344] God and his essence, should also be proper, with regard to the recipient of grace, to the three divine Persons in their personal distinction. Of course one can at once raise the classical objection that this is inconceivable from the start. The argument here is that where one divine Person as such in distinction from the other two has a relation to a created reality which is proper to the given Person, this relation can only be a *hypostatic* unity (such as is given in Christ's case alone), since this union must on the one hand occur in respect of what is proper to the individual Persons, yet on the other hand proper, relative subsistence is the one thing which belongs to a divine Person in distinction from another (cf. Denz 703). We are not required here to go more closely into why this *a priori* objection, for all its apparent exactitude, need not for various reasons be taken as conclusive. H. Schauf, for instance, has treated of it at length.[47] Nor does it enter into the scope of this investigation to show the force of the arguments from Biblical theology and the Fathers in favour of the thesis that the relations of the divine Persons to the justified man are non-appropriated ones. Nor again is there any question of showing with the help of recent studies that, in spite of its justified opposition to Peter Lombard, medieval theology exhibited more nuances in its thought and sought to do more justice to the data of

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through created grace alone that man becomes a subject who is capable of knowing and loving God supernaturally, who has the capacity for it. But in order that such a supernatural 'life' should become actual there is need further of the self-communication of the object of this supernatural life, and this communication is not simply the mere consequence of the communication of the subjective potency of this life.

[46] For the diversity of the arguments brought forward in the great age of scholasticism, cf. Auer, *Die Entwicklung*. . . 1, pp. 97 s.; 111 s.

[47] H. Schauf, *Die Einwohnung des Heiligen Geistes. Die Lelire von der nicht-appropriierten Einwohnung des Heiligen Geistes als Beitrag zur Theologiegeschichte des 19. Jabrhunderts unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der beiden Theologen Carl Passaglia und Clemens Schrader* (Freiburg 1941), esp. pp. 224-49. See also M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* I[4] (Munich 1948), pp. 378 s.

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Scripture and Tradition than the simplified teaching of the schools of latter centuries might allow one to suppose.[48] We should like to draw attention here merely to one aspect of the question since it arises out of our previous considerations. If it is true that in the *visio beatifica* that alone can be grasped really immediately in its very self, without the mediation of some other known object, which communicates itself to the knowing mind in quasi-formal causality after the fashion of a 'species impressa', onto-logically prior to knowledge as such, then this holds good equally of the three divine Persons each in its own personal property. In other words, they are either not beheld immediately as such in the *visio* [345] *beatifica*; or, in logical priority to the *visio* as a conscious act, they have each *as* divine, mutually distinct Persons their own proper quasi-formal causality upon the created spirit, a causality which makes it possible for these divine Persons to be possessed 'consciously', and, what is more, immediately. Hence there also follows *one* aspect of the answer to the above-mentioned classical objection to the doctrine that the indwelling and communication of the three divine Persons are not appropriated but are proper to each. 'Communication of (in respect of) the proper hypostasis' can in fact mean two things. It can either mean: communication of (according to) the particular hypostasis in such a way that it exercises its hypostatic function in respect of that to which the communication is made. Or 'communication of (according to) the hypostasis' can mean that a true ontological communication of the hypostasis takes place, but to the end and only to the end that it can become in virtue of this quasi-formal causality the object of immediate knowledge and love. In the first sense we have such a communication only in the case of Christ, by reason of the relationship of the divine Word to the human nature assumed by him. We should have an instance of the second kind of communication in the 'uncreated grace' of the justified man. It would have to be proved in the strictest possible way that it was impossible for there to be this kind of communication of the divine Persons each in his own personal particularity and hence a non-appropriated relation to the three Persons. There is no way of producing such a proof. Consequently there can be absolutely no objection to maintaining on the basis of the positive data of Revelation that the attribution of determinate relations of the recipient of grace to the three divine Persons is not merely a matter of appropriation, but is intended to give expression to a proper relationship in each case. In Scripture it is the Father in the Trinity who is our Father, and not the threefold God.[49] The Spirit dwells in us in a particular and proper way.[50] These and like statements of Scripture [346] and Tradition are first of all 'in possessione'. It would be necessary to prove that they may be merely appropriated, on the grounds that they can be understood merely as such and that the contrary is impossible; it cannot be presupposed. So long as this has not been achieved, we must take Scripture and the expressions it uses in as exact a sense as we possibly can. There is another point which should not be forgotten. In the history of Western piety an attenuation of the 'Trinity of the economy of salvation' into a kind of pre-Christian monotheism (and that is what the doctrine of bare appropriations in the theology of grace really amounts to) has not merely diminished the significance of the Holy Trinity in concrete religious life. In itself (i.e. logically, and if the contrary were not already defined) this attenuation could also endanger the 'interior Trinity' to the benefit of a rationalistic monotheism for which the three divine Names would only be for us three aspects

[48] Cf. the writings cited above, p. 319, n. 1, especially the work by Dockx. See also C. Sträter, 'Het begrip "appropriatie" bij S. Thomas', *Bijdragen* IX (1948), pp.1-41; 144-86.
[49] See above, pp. 147-8.
[50] By this it is not of course meant that the Spirit alone makes his dwelling in us. Each Person communicates himself and dwells in us in a way proper to him. And because the indwelling ascribed to the Holy Spirit in Scripture (as a Power who sanctifies, consecrates, moves, etc.) corresponds precisely to the personal particularity of the Spirit and of his going forth from the Father and the Son, there is absolutely no objection to saying that in this way only the Spirit dwells in man.

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under which to regard the one divine Essence. For in Scripture the interior Trinity and the Trinity of the economy of salvation are seen and spoken of in themselves with such simultaneity that there would be no justification in itself (logically) for taking the expressions literally and substantially in the first case and only in an 'appropriated' way in the second. We should like to think that here our proposed theory of uncreated grace in terms of the concepts of scholastic theology offers the possibility of determining man's relationship in grace as a non-appropriated relation to the three divine Persons, without doing injury to the principle of the unity of efficient causality in the creative action of the threefold God *ad extra*, and without making the indwelling conjunction of the three divine Persons into a hypostatic union.

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[347]

11

THE THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF CONCUPISCENTIA[1]

The concept of concupiscentia as it is employed by theologians is undoubtedly one of the most difficult in dogmatic theology, not only because of its extraordinarily disturbed history from St Paul by way of St Augustine to Luther, Baius and Jansenius, but also because it must be regarded in Catholic theology from two points of view which are not easily reconciled. On the one hand concupiscentia must he seen as something which can be called sin in the sense of chapter VII of the Epistle to the Romans[2], i.e. sin at least in the [348] sense that it arises out of transgression and can give occasion to fresh transgression as the Council of Trent explains (Denz 792); thus it must be possible to see it in a certain sense as a power weighing down upon man, with all the shattering impetus attested to by St Paul, St Augustine and Luther. On the other hand, according to Catholic teaching as it was laid down against the Reformers by the Council of Trent and above all against Baius by Pius V (Denz 792; 1026; 1078; 1516 s.), concupiscentia has to be conceived of in such a way that freedom from it represents even for unfallen man an unexacted, preternatural gift. If from the first point of view concupiscentia appears as a power oppressing man in his very depths and driving him on to moral transgression, from the second point of view it presents itself as something immediately given with human nature, and so really a matter of course, 'harmless', indeed almost necessary.

There is a further difficulty as well. Concupiscentia is a concept the content of which is on the one hand known to us from Revelation and yet on the other hand is available to our immediate human experience. Now from the point of view of this human experience of concupiscentia it is easy to see that the revealed theological concept of concupiscentia is

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[1] The following reflexions were submitted to a detailed examination (based on their first publication in the *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*) by J. P. Kenny in 'The Problem of Concupiscence: a recent theory of Professor Karl Rahner', *The Australasian Catholic Record* (Sidney) XXIX (1952), pp. 290-304; XXX (1953), pp. 23-32.
(I use 'concupiscentia' to translate *Konkupiszenz*, 'concupiscence' to translate *Begierlickkeit*. Both German words are to be regarded as technical terms, but *Konkupiszenz* is simply a Germanization of the Latin word adopted by Fr Rahner in order to have a neutral word at his disposal through which he can present his special view. – Tr.)

[2] As the Council of Trent allows (Denz 792). Certainly it is very doubtful whether it is really concupiscentia as such alone which St Paul calls α(μαρτι/α. It is true that the Sin (η(α(μαρτι/α) which appears in the world and affects all men in consequence of Adam's act is not regarded by St Paul as a purely static deprivation of the Spirit suffered by Adamite man; rather this primal and hereditary Sin contains a dynamic and active element which urgently seeks to reveal its own nature in the personal sins of the individual. Thus *the* Sin comes into the world like a ruler (Rom. 5:12), 'dwells' in man's flesh (Rom 7:20), subjects man to itself as its slave (Rom 6:6.17.20; 7:14), revives through the experience of the Law (Rom 7:8, 9), in this way becomes manifest in man's concrete life (Rom 7:13) by subjecting man to its law (Rom 7:23; 8:2) and using his 'members' as its weapons (Rom 6: 13). This does indeed show that for St Paul 'the Sin' (original sin) includes concupiscence as an element in its concrete concept. But this does not prove that he ever means by α(μαρτι/α concupiscence precisely as such, inasmuch as he himself distinguishes it from the primal sin (Rom 7:8) and recognizes it for something still remaining in the justified man (Rom 13: I4; Gal 5:16; Eph 4:22; Co1 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5; 1 Tim 6:9; 2 Tim 2:22; Tit 2:12) who is no longer under the κατα&κριμα of sin (Rom 5: 16; 8:1). It is correct to say that concupiscence is often included as a partial factor in the concept of α(μαρτι/α and even stands in the foreground. But that it alone is ever called α(μαρτι/α would still have to be proved. The fact that this view has been shared even by Catholics exegetes would seem to be the consequence of a long practice of applying, with St Augustine, chapter VII of the Epistle to the Romans to the justified man; for then of course the α(μαρτι/α whose strength is there depicted can only be concupiscentia as such.

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always in danger of being interpreted subjectively according to man's understanding of himself, which is something to a large extent historically conditioned and to some extent variable. The various interpretations offered of the Pauline concept of σα&ρχ, for instance, show how hard it is not to shift the sense of a concept of Revelation without noticing it, in accordance with the unconscious *a priori* preconceptions of the interpreter's own anthropology or in accordance with that philosophical *a priori* by which he believes St Paul himself was influenced.[3]

[349] In what follows we shall attempt briefly to develop a conception of concupiscentia which will, as we believe, do justice to the real data of Revelation on the one hand, and at the same time avoid that disequilibrium which, so it seems to us, may still be encountered today in the usual theological conception of concupiscentia. For lack of space we deliberately and expressly renounce the task of supporting what we have to say with the apparatus of theological scholarship and of confronting it with the usual views in closer detail. The theologian who is familiar with scholastic teaching on concupiscentia will be able to make use of it to understand and assess this study. Our considerations proceed as follows: the conception of concupiscentia usual in modern Catholic theology will be briefly set out and submitted to criticism (I); and then an attempt will be made to offer a fresh formulation of this concept (II).

Naturally we do not suppose in the matter of this 'fresh' formulation that the elements for a 'fresh' determination of the concept are lacking in Tradition and the customary teaching of the theologians. On the contrary. In general we shall have recourse to doctrines and presuppositions of a quite self-explanatory kind (or at least also represented in scholasticism) which seem fitted to contribute to the understanding of the theological concept of concupiscentia and thus to make possible a clearer formulation of it. While it should not he necessary to discuss this point in detail, the theological *proof* for the proposed concept always consists in the fact that formulated in such a way it fits in with the assured theological data which we have about concupiscentia, and does so better than the previous concept. Once this is granted, it is unnecessary to be able to show that the conception proposed is itself clearly and explicitly to be found in Tradition, particularly as it may more easily be seen in detail that, as has been indicated, the sharper concept of concupiscentia actually found in certain Fathers and theologians is a product both of Revelation and of a philosophical anthropology.

One other preliminary remark is necessary if we are to avoid the danger that as a consequence of an insufficiently considered interpretation of human experience certain factors may be introduced into the theological concept of concupiscentia which do not belong to it, in such a way that this concept would be opposed to ours on the ground that it alone corresponded to experience. In the concrete experience of man's exposure to temptation, his moral weakness and sinfulness, [350] elements are to be found which do *not* belong to the theological concept of concupiscentia. And this for the simple reason that we must necessarily presuppose their presence in Adam even before the Fall, because Adam too, in his preternatural state of integrity, could be tempted and could sin. Now it is only what was lacking in Adam in virtue of his gift of integrity that belongs to the theological concept of concupiscentia. Thus from the first two entirely distinct elements are given in our empirical 'concupiscentia': one an element which belongs essentially to every man so long as he forms a part of this cosmic epoch, and another which is a consequence of the loss of the integrity of Paradise due to the primordial sin. Hence it is not immediately easy to say what features of empirical 'concupiscentia' belong to *theological* concupiscentia – to that concupiscentia which Adam did not have originally. Nor is it any easier immediately to decide that

[3] Cf., e.g., W. Schauf, *Der Begriff 'Fleisch' beim Apostel Paulus unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Erlösungslehre* (Munster 1924).

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theological concupiscentia is of more significance for moral decisions than those essential characteristics of man which independently of original sin and prior to it already provide the basis for his exposure to temptation and his power to sin.

I. A CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE CURRENT CONCEPTION OF CONCUPISCENTIA

Current expositions of dogmatic theology usually begin by distinguishing three concepts of concupiscentia. In the broadest sense concupiscence is for them any kind of conative potency (*Strebevermögen*) and its respective act; in a narrower and proper sense concupiscence is *sensitive* desire (*Begehren*)[4]; concupiscentia in the narrowest and strictly theological sense signifies for them the *sensitive* appetite (*Begehrungsvermögen*) and its act, in so far as this strives after its sensitive object *in opposition to* the law of the moral order independently of the higher, spiritual conative potency, and thus resists the spiritual free decision of man's will. For this reason this concupiscentia is also called evil, disordered, rebellious concupiscence, evil inclination. The gift of integrity is correspondingly defined today, generally speaking at least, as freedom from *evil* concupiscence.[5]

[351] Against this definition of concupiscence grave difficulties have been raised in two different directions. Franz Lakner has already drawn attention to the first of these difficulties as regards the concept of concupiscentia in more recent textbooks[6]; the reader may be referred to his discussion for further details. As Lakner justly says, the dogmatic and the ascetico-moral concepts of concupiscence are not distinguished in these treatments. A dogmatic consideration of concupiscentia ought not immediately to concern itself with the tendency of the sensitive appetite to what is morally *forbidden*, as the ascetico-moral consideration does – quite rightly; to the appetite there belongs in the first place the spontaneous character of a conative potency alone, on the basis of which conative acts anticipate and resist reflexion and free decision. This spontaneity is something which remains wholly *prior* to an ascetic qualification of concupiscentia as '*evil* inclination', so much so that in certain circumstances the spontaneous conative act may just as well be directed to a good of a morally positive value against man's bad free decision, as to a morally illicit good. By concupiscentia in the theological sense must be meant this character of spontaneity proper to the appetite, and correspondingly freedom from concupiscentia must be conceived of as total dominion over the appetite with respect to its character of spontaneity. Only then is it possible for an explanation of integrity to avoid the psychologically untenable view that the gift of integrity only comes into play when the appetite seeks for something morally *un*lawful; this would make the gift of integrity into a series of discontinuous new interventions of God in the psychological course of man's spiritual life. For this spontaneity (the exact nature of which we have still to discuss) and this tendency to resist found by nature in the appetite are either in themselves and of themselves suspended or they are not. In [352] the first case, this holds good then necessarily of *every one* of its acts, thus of those too which

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[4] Ia-IIae. 30.1.

[5] Cf., e.g., C. Mazella, *De Deo creante* (Woodstock 1877), n. 724; D. Palrnieri, *Tractatus de Deo creante et elevante* (Rome 1878), thesis 44; M. J. Scheeben, *Handbuch der Kath. Dogmatik* II §155; J. B. Heinrich, *Dogmatische Theologie* VI (Mainz 1885), pp. 518 s.; C. Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae* III, nn. 187 s.; H. Hurter, *Theologiae dogmaticae Compendium* II[8] (Innsbruck 1893), nn. 329-31; DTC III, col. 803-14; G. van Noort, *Tractatus de Deo creatore*[2] (Amsterdam 1912), n. 199; J. Pohle-M. Gierens, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* I[9] (Paderborn 1936), pp. 506 s.; F. Diekamp, *Katholische Dogmatik* II[9] (Munster 1939), pp. 126 s.; C. Boyer, Dc Deo elevanre (Rome 1940), p. 276. This list could be considerably extended.

[6] ZKT LXI (1937), pp. 437-41. Cf. also L. Lercher, *Institutiones theol. dogm.* II[3] (Innsbruck 1940), nn. 608-10, where Lakner's exposition has already been put to excellent account.

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would be acts of resistance of the healthy nature to the morally *inferior* free decision of the person. For the concupiscentia itself cannot decide whether its object at any given time conforms to the moral norm or is opposed to it; such a decision rising from *spiritual* knowledge necessarily conies too late. A habitual inner binding of concupiscentia would thus have to extend uniformly to all its objects. In the second case, integrity could only be conceived of in an occasionalist way, as a continually renewed intervention by God from without, which suddenly puts a brake on concupiscentia just at the moment in which it is going to turn to a good opposed to the moral norm. But an idea like this would make the conscious life of man's soul into a chain of unmotivated accidents and surprises.

The second difficulty relates to the conception of concupiscentia, in the theological sense, as a purely sensitive power. Certainly in a metaphysical psychology we must distinguish between sensitive and spiritual appetites as between two really distinct powers of man. Yet this distinction must be conceived of with the utmost caution. For a human power must not be conceived of as a 'thing'; it is never more than that through which the one man acts. And a plurality of powers are and remain always powers of one and the same man, from whose substantial ground these powers, on St Thomas's view, arise, are supported by it and held together by it in a unity.[7] Consequently the objects of the sensitive and the spiritual appetites are present to the awareness of one and the same subject, related to one and the same subject. In a properly understood Thomist metaphysics of human knowledge, the relationship between the sensitive and the spiritual cognitive powers must be so conceived of as to fulfil two conditions. One the one hand the sensitive cognitive faculty will have to be seen as itself arising from the spiritual ground as a continuation of the information of matter by the spiritual soul and thus as completely mastered by the spirit right from the start. On the other hand the spiritual cognitive faculty, because it must allow sensibility to arise from itself as the presupposition of its own realization, will itself have [353] to be seen right from the start as a 'sensitized' spirituality. Thus in virtue of man's metaphysical structure it will be fundamentally impossible from the start for there ever to be an act of sensitive cognition which is not also *eo ipso* an act of spiritual cognition. And the converse holds good too.

It further follows from this that a sensible good is never pursued by man in virtue of his sensitive appetite alone. Every object (hence a sensible object too) is apprehended by man in a sensitive-spiritual way, and consequently pursued by him in the same way too. And conversely: a spiritual value is never apprehended in man's case in a purely spiritual way either. For neither is the purely spiritual object ever apprehended by pure intellect; it must also always be given sensibly in a certain way, on account of that reversion of man's spiritual knowledge to the senses (*conversio ad phantasma*) which is necessary for human cognition, and the same holds good for the spiritual conative power too. Every human cognitive and conative act is necessarily, in virtue of man's very nature, sensitive-spiritual or spiritual-sensitive. Now it follows from this that just as there exists a sensitive spontaneous act of desire, so too there exists at least as much an involuntary spiritual conative act prior to man's free personal decision. Thus where there exists a concupiscentia in the theological sense as an involuntary concupiscence anticipating free decision and resisting it, this is spiritual too. And it is quite impossible to see why this act of spiritual craving (*Begehrlichkeit*) should only be directed to sensible objects.[8] We may think for example of a persistent [354] temptation

[7] On this point and on what follows see, e.g., Karl Rahner, *Geist in Welt. Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin* (Innsbruck 1939), pp. 175 s. (2nd edn. 1957, pp. 243 s. – Tr.); W. Brugger, 'Die Verleiblichung des Wollens', *Scholastik* XXV (1950), pp. 248-53.

[8] Thus it may be observed again and again in the literature on concupiscentia cited above, how the interpretation of concupiscentia as a *sensitive* impulse is found to be insufficient. Pesch, for example (*loc. cit.*, n. 188) finally recognizes an 'inordinatio motus in bona spiritualia . . . in quantum illa bona sub sensibili ratione apprehenduntur et facultatem sensibilem afficiunt'. But that is what all *bona spiritualia* necessarily do, when

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against faith, or to despair. In such cases we are clearly faced with acts of the appetite which bear the typical marks of concupiscentia in the theological sense, namely the spontaneity of the act and its persistence in opposition to a free decision. And yet the act in question is plainly one which belongs specifically to the spiritual appetite.[9] Thus it is by no means clear why concupiscentia should be conceived of as a 'rebellion' precisely of the 'lower' man against the 'higher'. This always tends to suggest the idea that it is precisely the metaphysically (ontologically) lower in man which is also the more dangerous ethically and in this sense lower: as if the danger of turning away from God arises precisely from the ontologically lower spheres of man; as if the higher a being is entitatively, the less in danger it is in a moral way, while in reality there is just as much danger from the Luciferan heights of the spirit as from the dark depths of the purely sensitive. It is not that the ontically lower in man is intrinsically at variance with the higher, but that man is divided against himself. But we shall discuss this positive concept of concupiscentia in a moment.

If then no solid grounds can be offered why the front line of man's inner division against himself should exactly coincide with the metaphysical line which separates the ontologically higher and lower in man, it is at any rate clear what the historical basis of this conception is. It does not lie in Revelation itself. For the concepts of 'flesh', of the 'law of the members' and so on, with which St Paul tries to make vivid to our imagination man's inner division against himself on account of concupiscentia, are purely religious concepts, not the meta-physical concepts of an anthropology which ontologically stratifies man's essence. 'Flesh' for St Paul is not a part of man, but the whole man, in his spiritual dimensions too, in so far as for lack of the holy Pneuma and of grace he is subject to sin and to God's wrath.[10] Only an

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they are apprehended by a man! Palmieri does indeed exclude the 'indeliberatae affectiones . . . partis rationalis (motus superbiae, invidiae et huiusmodi)' from the concept of concupiscentia, but then goes on to explain (*loc. cit*., p. 367): 'nihil modo refert, utrum hanc facultatem (sc. the concupiscent faculty) censeas esse potentiam formaliter sensibilem, an potius voluntatem ipsam, quae ferri potest in bonum delectabile sensui, apprehensum a sensu et proinde etiam ab intellectu'. Now if concupiscentia can be an attitude of the spirit, it is no longer clear why it can only be directed to sensible goods. At any rate for Palmieri it is something which characterizes man's sensibility and his spirituality in like manner. Hurter and van Noort also introduce into the concept of concupiscentia the conflict between the *ratio superior* and the *ratio inferior*, and so show in their own way that one cannot be content with the concept of a purely sensitive concupiscentia.

[9] The 'concupiscence of the flesh' in St Paul does not have the exclusive sense of 'sensitive desire' either. Cf. here Schauf, *op. cit*., pp. 159-61.

[10] In offering a few remarks about St Paul's concept of *sarx*, what we have primarily in mind here is only *sarx* in St Paul so far as it is seen as the seat, the source and the revelation of sin. Thus from the start our only question is what σα&ρχ means in these texts. And once again the only question which concerns us here is whether the ontological quality of 'flesh' as the *sensitive* part of man over against natural 'spirit', man's intellectuality, is or is not for St Paul the exclusive or at least the preferred cause of sin. (If the first of these alternatives were true, we could go on to ask whether it was in its essential or merely in its historically evolved particularity that 'flesh' was with such exclusiveness the seat and source of sin.) Now it need not be denied that St Paul does see *one* of the sources of sin in 'flesh' as the sensitive and thus ontologically lower part of man. But it is not true that, when flesh is under discussion as *the* source and *the* seat of sin, what is referred to (and not merely *simultaneously* referred to) is exclusively man's sensibility and corporeality as meant by a metaphysical anthropology; nor does it become true by adding that the 'sarkic' quality of the lower part of man does not belong to it by metaphysical necessity but only because of the concrete particularity of history. The identification of the Pauline concept of with the philosophical concept of human sensibility is excluded by the simple fact that for St Paul *sarx* is the contrary of *pneuma*. But *pneuma* for St Paul is not the 'spiritual' side of man; it is the divine spirit graciously bestowed from above which must cleanse and sanctify man's higher part too, so that it should not be – *sarx*. For in St Paul this *sarx* is the source of spiritual sin too, every graceless will to moral perfection is 'fleshly', the sarkic and the merely physical man are synonymous, etc.: all expressions which are incompatible with the identification of *sarx* and sensibility in the philosophical sense. For details see Schauf, *op. cit*. It is true that in a few places σα&ρχ is also seen in opposition to νου=φ. But this is far from implying that what is in question is an opposition of two 'parts' in man. The proper sense of these texts (Rom 7:23, 25) will be grasped if with St Paul one begins with the assumption that νου=φ is as a matter of course the locus of the knowledge of God and

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[355] interpretation which had not yet completely eliminated Gnostic or Neoplatonist tendencies with their *a priori* categories (and this is definitely the case with St Augustine) could have explained St Paul's [356] purely religious concepts in the sense of a philosophy for which the ontologically less perfect is also *eo ipso* what is religiously further from God and the spirit is always something more divine[11], in such a way [357] that the opposition of the flesh to God and to the law of the holy pneuma (which is not just 'spirit' as meant by a philosophical anthropology) is transposed into an opposition of man's sensibility (in the metaphysical sense) to his intellectuality.

If these two elements (concupiscence precisely for what is evil, concupiscence as pure sensibility) are taken together, it is easy to see why such a concept of concupiscence, even against the will of those who so conceive it, tends to endanger the unexactedness of the gift of integrity. For it is not clear why a rebellion of the lower part, which *exclusively* impels to evil,

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his law and of the reception of the *pneuma*; all this not because νου=φ is without further qualification ethically privileged, but because spirituality, as a morally quite neutral quality, is the ontologically necessary presupposition for all these things. Then there can be no difficulty in speaking a *parte potiori* of the whole man as flesh resisting the pneuma, and inclined to sin, and the *whole* man as νου=φ bound by God's law and requiring and receiving grace. This νου=φ for St Paul is not the part of man privileged in a moral respect on account of its purely ontological character, as may for example be seen from the fact that there also exists an α)δο&κιμοφ νου=φ (Rom 1:28), a νου=φ of the flesh (Col 2:18), a corrupted and defiled νου=φ (1 Tim 6:5; Tit 1: 16), which like everything in man is in need of renewal (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23). It remains true of him, as Catharinus once said (in Schauf, *op. cit*., p. 157): 'Quodcumque enim non est a Spiritu Sancto, sed prodit ex homine, ex carne venit. Narn et ipse hominis spiritus in carne computatur; et totus homo caro dicitur in scripturis, in quo non est Spiritus Dei.'

[11] It would of course be possible to say a great deal more about this topic both from an historical and a systematic point of view. Just one further remark for the present: scholastic ontology will never forego its right to distinguish between 'higher' and 'lower', ontologically 'more perfect' and 'less perfect', within finite being. If this qualification, which establishes not just specific varieties but rather distinctions in density of being, in 'onto-logical level', between individual beings, is primarily a measurement of finite beings in regard to *each other*, nevertheless such a comparison between finite beings by grading them implies an absolute criterion, i.e. a knowledge of being in general (however little necessary it may be for this knowledge to be given with objective reflexivity). Yet a higher grading consequently always includes a judgment as to an ontologically more perfect 'participation' of this being in the Being of God. While it is true that for a Christian ontology the concept of creation (and thus of the distinguishing mark of the finite as something created from nothing) takes precedence before that of 'participation' in God's Being (and this originally unchristian concept must be subjected to radical transformation with the help of the concept of creation), yet it remains true that for a Christian doctrine of creation it is impossible to abandon the use of the statement that the creature is *like* the cause because it has been caused by God, and like it in varying degree: thus that the creature 'partakes' in God's perfection in the measure of its own ontological density of being. Otherwise any positive statement about God would be absolutely impossible from the start. In the end we should consequently have a *theologia negativa* identical with atheism. *But* where it is a question of justification, grace or salvation, as these occur in the present concrete order, these realities are incommensurable with the ontological criterion, because they are unexacted and beyond the reach of the creature by its own powers; for even the ontically 'most perfect' finite entity lacks any positive proximity to these saving goods in virtue of which these goods could fall within its reach or be demanded by it. But it is not only religiously and ethically that greater ontological perfection does not signify any greater proximity to God. It is not true for a scholastic *ontology* of grace either, that grace is simply a 'still higher' step in the ladder of entitative perfections, immediately below which ontologically comes, let us say, the spirit (as the highest natural level). Grace can only be bestowed where there is spirit, and to this extent spirit has something to do with grace in a way that would not be true of the purely material considered purely in itself. But grace, even looked at ontologically, as the communication of God so far as he is in himself precisely *distinct* from every merely participating creature, is precisely not just a 'higher' grade of being which remains in the finite order like the lower grades and would thus be strictly commensurable with them; it is (as 'uncreated grace') even ontologically the utterly incomparable, namely God himself. And for this reason the human spirit too, like everything else, is 'flesh', i.e. something even ontologically so distinct from God as God that in *this* respect it is impossible to think of a more or less in the degree of this distinction, inasmuch as the distinction of individual creatures *between themselves* is contained within their common infinite difference (*Differenz*) from God, and the former cannot be brought together with the latter over a common denominator.

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should be conceivable in a sinless human nature and could thus be part even of a state of pure nature. If concupiscentia in the theological sense is thought of exclusively as a quality of man's 'sensitive' part, and in such a way that this only impels to *evil* and has no other function, then just this quality is something immediately and exclusively *opposed* to the moral order as such, i.e. something opposed to the inner teleology of man as a whole, and nothing else. Such a quality, which is opposed in a merely negative way to the inner orientation of man as a whole (and to this totality even the individual parts must be subject), would from the first introduce an inner contradiction into man's ontological, stratified structure: the ontologically lower stratum of man would have the character merely of something burdensome and hindering, an encumbrance which works purely in *opposition* to the moral order.[12]

[358]

II. THE THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF CONCUPISCENTIA

After these brief critical remarks on the current idea of concupiscentia we turn at once to the concept of concupiscentia which seems to us to be the correct one and which avoids the objections indicated above, in an attempt simply to develop it in a positive way from the nature of things and without further polemic. Some repetition of what has just been said will be unavoidable.

1. The Concept of Concupiscentia

a. *Desire* in the broadest sense is any witting (*bewusste*) reactive attitude adopted to a value or a good (both such an act and the permanent power of performing it) as opposed to a receptive act of awareness. Since we cannot here offer a phenomenology and metaphysics of the emotional and volitive side of man, those most general concepts with which scholastic anthropology describes human conation must be presupposed. We presuppose as familiar then what is involved in conation as a mere natural dynamism (*appetitus naturalis*) and as a witting conation (*appetitus elicitus*), what in sensitive and spiritual desire, in desire as potency and as act; the difference between a witting act which owes its existence to natural dynamism alone (*actus indeliberatus*) and one which owes its existence to its being freely posited by the person (*actus deliberatus*). Finally we also presuppose the scholastic concept of appetite, to the extent that this concept includes not only 'conation' or 'wanting' but also 'feeling' or 'emotion' (in the sense of modern descriptive psychology), not only the tending to a good not yet attained or to a value still to be realized but also the [359] value-response to

[12] That the usual characterization of concupiscentia is only with difficulty to be reconciled with its 'naturalness' (taught by all Catholic theologians as a matter of course) and also with the unexactedness of freedom from it, may be seen for instance by reading what some of them say (consistently with their doctrine of concupiscentia): that even in the *status naturae purae* concupiscentia would have 'sufficed for our dishonour' (Heinrich, op. cit., p. 527), that it is a 'convulsive and morbid excitability of the instinct' (Scheeben, *op. cit.*, n. 553), a 'rebellion' (Hurter, *loc. cit.*) of the lower against the higher, a 'disordered', 'evil', concupiscence (Pohie-Gierens, Diekamp), an 'evil inclination'. Of all these modes of expression Lakner says with justice (*loc. cit.*, p. 440): 'Ultimately all these expressions imply that concupiscentia is something which really does not belong to our nature, something which dishonours it, which ought not to be; but the consequence of this, even when the true definition of the concept is retained, is that what precisely forms the essential element in concupiscentia is denied.' The possibility of non-moral evil (death, sickness, etc.) cannot be adduced as an argument to the contrary. For evils of this kind are not in the same sense opposed without further qualification to the ultimate teleology of man as a whole (a religious and moral finality), as would be the case with concupiscentia if it were conceived from the first in a one-sided way as an inner impulsion purely towards the *morally* bad.

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a possessed or present good; and finally we presuppose this concept so far as it includes both the positive tending to the good and the negative avoidance of the contrary disvalue and evil. The characteristic feature of this concept of concupiscentia as taken in its broadest sense is that it embraces both the free as well as the involuntary acts of human reaction to value.

b. Concupiscentia in the *narrower* sense is the act of the appetite in regard to a determinate good or a determinate value, in so far as this act takes shape spontaneously in the consciousness on the basis of man's natural dynamism, and as such forms the necessary presupposition of man's personal free decision. We have already given reasons above for saying that as regards the theological concept of concupiscence we make no distinction here between spiritual and sensitive desire. In the matter of this spontaneous act of desire we have to do with a sensitive-spiritual act, whether this act is directed to a (sensible) good immediately available to human experience or to an object which in its very being transcends immediate experience. In every case man's *whole* cognitive and appetitive powers take part, and this total sensitive-spiritual human conative act precedes man's free decision (*dictamen rationis*) and is its necessary precondition.

If we are later to mark off sharply the nature of concupiscentia in the narrowest (theological) sense from the concept of concupiscentia in the narrower sense, it is indispensable here to make still more clear the fact that the act of desire responding spontaneously to the object merely on the basis of natural dynamism is the *necessary* presupposition of a free choice of attitude, and in what sense this is so. Every finite freedom, because of its finitude, implies, in the adoption of an attitude to an individual object given from without, a real transition from potency to act. Now such a transition implies that the power freely to adopt an attitude is not of itself invariably and from the first in possession of the object to which it is to adopt an attitude; thus it presupposes that the object is 'given' to the subject's appetitive power, 'given' to this power *itself* and not just to his cognitive power. In consequence of the active nature of desire (in contrast to the receptivity of knowledge) this givenness of an object for the conative power with a view to the free adoption of an attitude can only consist in a spontaneous activation of the conative power in regard to the object. For in view of the essentially active nature of the appetitive [360] power, a purely passive givenness of the object for this power is excluded from the very beginning. Thus with the same metaphysical necessity with which a finite freedom (a spiritual power, that is to say!) must be given its object if it is to become active, there precedes the free operation a spontaneous (and spiritually spontaneous too!) act of the appetitive power; and this act ultimately is no other than the innate dynamic orientation of man to his goods, but on the conscious level so soon as an object is present cognitively. This alone is enough to show that freedom from concupiscentia in the theological sense cannot be a freedom from every kind of spontaneous act of the appetite really prior to the free decision; and consequently that man's dominion over this spontaneity of his appetitive power, if it neither can nor may he thought of as a simple lack of any such spontaneity, is fundamentally capable in itself of being realized in diverse ways, of which we shall have something to say later.

c. Concupiscentia in the *narrowest* (theological) sense.

We give first of all (ignoring the distinction between sensitive and spiritual desire) the usual description of concupiscentia in the narrowest sense (= concupiscence, *Begierlichkeit*). On this account concupiscence is man's spontaneous desire, in so far as it precedes his free decision *and resists it*.

If we are to understand this description of concupiscence aright, we must go rather further back. We ask: what can be meant by saying that concupiscence anticipates the free decision and resists it? With this in mind we begin first of all with a phenomenology (if we may so

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call it) of man's free decision. This free decision firstly is obviously a spiritual act. But this spirituality must not be conceived of as though it were a *purely* 'spiritual' act. For such an act does not exist in man. It is necessarily accompanied in man by a sensitive process, and therefore necessarily has its influence also on the sensitive sphere in man. The essential feature of the free decision is thus what is personal and free, as opposed to that spontaneous act of the appetite which, because of its non-free character is essentially pre-moral.

Now such a free decision in man permits of being more closely qualified in two ways. First of all it is an act through which man is explicitly or implicitly set before God, the absolute Good, and comes to a decision in his regard. This is true in so far as God is comprehended at least implicitly in every free decision in virtue of falling under [361] the concept of the good simply speaking, for the individual finite good can only be freely assented to or rejected in the dynamism of a movement towards the good simply speaking. The spontaneous, involuntary act, on the other hand, is always referred to a finite (or finitely presented) good, for only such a good can be immediately set before man's cognitive and appetitive powers and thus call forth the spontaneous act.[13]

In the second place, man's free decision is an act by means of which he disposes of himself as a whole. For originally and ultimately moral freedom is not so much a decision with regard to an objectively presented individual value-object as a decision with regard to the freely operative subject himself. For in the last resort, on account of the first aspect of the moral act just mentioned, the morally free agent comes to a decision not so much with regard to his attitude to the finite good presented to his mind as to his relationship to God's absolute reality as value. Because man can only be free in regard to the finite good in virtue of his dynamic orientation to the infinite good, every free decision is a disposition made by man in respect of his situation before God, not only in virtue of a juridical or moral interpretation of this act but on the ground of its metaphysical structure. In this way the free decision tends of itself to dispose of man as a whole. For the spiritually knowing and willing subject necessarily brings to completion in every objective act of knowledge and decision a return upon itself as well (*reditio completa subiecti in seipsum*, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, II), and in this way is present to itself and itself acts as something so present to itself. In this way the free operation, as a [362] genuine operation and not just a passive experience, arises from the inmost core of the subject and exercises a determining influence upon this subject. For otherwise the operative subject, in so far as it is identical with this personal centre, would merely undergo the free decision passively and not actively posit it. But that is in contradiction to the inmost essence of the free operation, inasmuch as the operative subject is really responsible for it. Now the operative subject itself can only be and remain responsible for the free decision if it posits this decision in such a way that the decision becomes a qualification of the operative subject itself. Thus the free decision is essentially a disposal of himself made by man, and one which proceeds from the inmost centre of his being. Now if man's free decision is the shaping (or in the terms of modern existential philosophy, the 'self-comprehension')[14] of his own being proceeding precisely from its *inmost* core – from that core, that is to say, from

[13] This is not of course to deny but rather to affirm by implication that through the spontaneous, involuntary act (so far as it is a spiritual one), the unlimited horizon of spiritual aspiration is already opened up in a movement of transcendence towards being and the good in general, and that precisely by this means the necessity of having to decide freely in this way or that is for the first time disclosed. And conversely what has been said must not be taken to mean that the free spirit always comes to a decision before God (for or against him) in such a way that God himself is the express, objectively presented object of the free decision. Transcendence towards being and the good in general is disclosed as conscious (in receptive knowledge and spontaneous aspiration) through the finite object, which gives itself by being what it is; and in the free act the free spirit, through the finite object, adopts an attitude to the absolute good, which is simultaneously affirmed in voluntary transcendence.

[14] The reference here is to the notion, derived from Heidegger, that the personal existent (*Dasein*) contributes to its own being by a preforming comprehension of its own future realizations. – Tr.

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which man's whole metaphysical essence arises and is compacted – then the free decision also tends essentially to shape and modify this whole essence arising from the centre of the person. Thus the free decision tends to dispose of the operative subject as a whole before God.

The question now arises as to how far the freely operative subject when he makes his decision succeeds in actually extending this tendency totally to dispose of himself throughout the whole extent of his being. And here we simply lay it down *a posteriori – the* metaphysical justification of this fact will be briefly touched on later – that this tendency within man's ordinary free decision never completely succeeds in making its way. There always remains in the nature of things a tension between what man is as a kind of entity simply present before one (as 'nature') and what he wants to make of himself by his free decision (as 'person'): a tension between what he is simply passively and what he actively posits himself as and wishes to understand himself to be. The 'person' never wholly absorbs its 'nature'. [15]

[363] The metaphysical discussion of this fact can only be briefly indicated here. It presents special difficulty in that it is based upon two interdependent factors which not even a metaphysical anthropology has ever really succeeded in distinguishing in detail in a clear and concrete way.[16] Certainly in one essential respect the dualism of person and nature just indicated has its metaphysical root in the finitude of man; thus ultimately in the distinction between essence and existence, in virtue of which the essence, in its complete unfolding, always [364] remains an ideal capable of being attained only asymptotically by the concretely existent being, even as regards the freedom through which it makes itself what it is. But on the other hand it is equally a matter of course for an anthropology on the basis of Thomist metaphysics, that just as essential an element of the dualism of person and nature, of the resistance of the entity given prior to the free decision counter to the tendency of the free subject totally to dispose of its whole subsistent reality, arises from the materiality of the

[15] 'Nature' (objective presence, *Vorhandenheit*) and ' person' (existence, *Existenz*) are of course understood here in the context of modern metaphysics and the philosophy of existence. Man is a 'person' in so far as he freely disposes of himself by his decision, possesses his own definitive reality in the act of making a free decision about himself. By 'nature' is meant all that in man which must be given prior to this disposal of himself, as its object and the condition of its possibility, and in so far as this is the case. While these concepts must be distinguished from those which, for instance, are used in expositions of the Trinity and the hypostatic union by the scholastic theology usual in the Church, it must at the same time be emphasized that they cannot be avoided, and that they are not wholly alien to the scholastic tradition. They cannot be avoided, because a clear and handy distinction between that in man which is not open to question and that which he is in virtue of his capacity to dispose of himself, is of fundamental importance; otherwise the free operation is going to look like a sporadically occurring activity of the man in connexion with an object distinct from himself, and this transient operation will then leave the operative subject untouched and at most of significance for him by being imputed to him in a moral-juridical way. Apart from all else, this is already excluded by the onto-logical nature of the spiritual act: the spiritual act (the free decision, above all) is by its very nature reflexive, reflecting back upon the subject; the free act is not simply imputed to the subject, for the latter has from the first determined itself through this act. Further, the pair of concepts mentioned above have their roots in scholastic tradition. For instance, when a distinction is made between *peccatum naturae* and *peccatum personae*, the same distinction lies in the background: original sin is a *peccatum* of 'nature' because it is found prior to the free decision of the individual subject as an element in the space within which (the 'situation') man is first called to make his own 'personal' decision, and with regard to which he must take up a position by comprehending this situation in this way or that.

[16] The scholastic metaphysician knows only too well how heavily burdened the whole of scholastic metaphysics still is today by the question as to how far the concept of *materia* (in the strictly metaphysical sense of pure potentiality) may not in the last resort simply be the Greek counterpart of the concept of the real finitude of the finite in general, with this difference alone, that just this Greek pre-Christian philosophy had no knowledge of spirit as in itself finite and thus equated materiality and finitude. This does not mean that in our own view all we have here is a confusing duplication of concepts for the same thing. All we wish to point out is the reason why it would lead us much too far away if we set about the final clarification of the question: In what does the metaphysical root of the specifically human dualism of nature and (freely achieved) person consist?

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human being, from the real differentiation of matter and form, which prevents the form from bringing itself fully to manifestation in the 'other' of matter.

Here too is to be found the nucleus of truth in that otherwise too crude distinction between the spirit as the freely operative principle and the sensibility as the principle which resists this free decision. In reality of course the whole 'nature' given prior to freedom offers resistance to the 'person's' free and total disposition of himself, so that the boundary between 'person' and 'nature' stands as it were vertically in regard to the horizontal line which divides spirituality from sensibility in man.

The specifically *human* form of the distinction between person and nature (as distinguished, for example, from a like dualism which has to be supposed for the angels as well) is explained by the dualism of matter and form in man, regarded as each possessing its own consistency (*insichständig*); thus in the concrete experience of life this human dualism finds its sharpest expression – no one will contest this – in the resistance of the sensitive to the spiritual part of man.[17]

[365] From what has been said it follows that the spontaneous act of desire (*actus indeliberatus*) belongs to the 'nature' in the sense indicated by our distinction above. For to the nature (as opposed to the person) belongs everything which must be given prior to the person's free decision, as a condition of its possibility. Now as we have just shown, the spontaneous act of desire, arising from the bare dynamism of nature and directed to a wittingly apprehended object, is one of the metaphysically necessary presuppositions of a concrete free decision made by a finite subject.

It is now possible to arrive by stages at a statement of what is meant by concupiscence in the theological sense. As we have said, the free decision tends to the end that man should dispose of himself as a whole before God, actively make himself into what he freely wishes to be. Thus the end to which the free decision is orientated is that everything which is in man (nature), hence the involuntary act as well, should be the revelation and the expression of what man as person wishes to be; thus that the free decision should comprehend, transfigure and transfuse the spontaneous act, so that its own reality too should no longer be purely natural but personal.

In connexion with this personal entry into and shaping of naturally spontaneous desire, we must not think straight away simply of those spontaneous acts which can be a hindrance to one of man's morally *good* decisions. Because a spontaneous act precedes every personal act of man, whether it be directed to good or evil, and because in every one of them the person never wholly absorbs and personally assumes what it is on the basis of its spontaneous acts and what is given prior to it, it follows that the dualism of nature and person in its specifically human form, which we call concupiscence, is something which is at work both in the case of

[17] This is seen most clearly in the connexion which holds between 'passio' (πάθος) as on the one hand a spontaneous act of nature, concupiscence, and on the other the influence of a cause from without, a being-determined from without, a 'suffering'. In other words, looked at from the point of view of the free person, 'passionateness' and 'passibility' (prior to the personal act) are *in themselves* the same thing: the accidental qualification of the person by circumstances which are not brought about by the person's own freedom. Both spring from the same metaphysical root, the materiality of the person, which is the condition which makes possible a 'passio' in both senses of the word: the condition which makes it possible for a person to be open to a finite, terrestrial cause which, although it has not instituted the 'patient' itself, can nevertheless act upon it, without the patient's necessarily having had to open itself freely to this action upon it in advance. The problem of Christ's freedom from concupiscence in spite of his passibility is not to be solved by denying or weakening the connexion between the two sorts of *pathos*; it may only be solved by understanding when and how *passio* as a suffering caused from without – which in itself (i.e. *in actu primo*) is always concupiscence as well, because it is an impulse to an action outside the person's free decision – may yet be taken possession of and transfigured by the free decision from within, and in this way does not become concupiscence (*in actu secundo*). But we shall have to speak of this in another context.

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a good decision of man's freedom against the spontaneous desire of nature for a morally negative good, and also in the case of a bad free decision against a natural inclination to something morally good.[18] Both the good and the bad moral decision encounter [366] the resistance, the solidity and the impenetrability of nature. Concupiscence in the theological sense shows itself for instance just as much when a man blushes in the act of lying as when the 'flesh' refuses to follow the willingness of the 'spirit' for the good.

It must further be observed, as we have already indicated above, that the personal penetration of nature in the free decision can in itself be carried out in several ways, when the case in question is one where a decision has to be taken *against* a spontaneous inclination of nature. First of all it is absolutely speaking neither necessary nor possible that the spontaneous acts should precede the individual free decision in no sense whatever.[19] Such an absolute identity of nature and person, and so of suffered and freely-willed desire, is found only in the absolute freedom of the infinite Being. In the case of exhaustive, ideal dominion of the finite person over its nature, this exhaustiveness[20] can only consist [367] in the fact that the personal decision is wholly and securely achieved as regards the nature. Thus this permanent and (relatively) exhaustive dominion of the 'person' over its 'nature' by no means necessarily implies that no spontaneous act whatever can arise in the field of the nature so subject to personal dominion. All it implies is that no act can take shape in this nature which would be opposed to the personal engagement of the man so endowed. Now it is not the case that every kind of 'passivity' is necessarily a threat to man's actively free personal engagement. Where a graciously bestowed or freely acquired personal attitude of man really succeeds in shaping his *whole* natural being throughout, even the act passively endured from without must be subject to the inner law of this person in order to be able to arise at all. For wherever an activation encounters a 'patient' which already has its own structure and not an

[18] For instance, a man wants to be brave and goes on trembling, although he would like to be so brave that he does not tremble. And this whole process can be in the service of something good or bad, so that for instance the trembling can be an expression of the 'cowardly' nature (i.e. one whose resources of vital self-affirmation are nearer an end) or of the good nature (one which spontaneously reacts against baseness), and the bravery can be a hero's or a rogue's. Someone wants to be cordial to someone else (for good or bad motives), and only succeeds imperfectly (unfortunately or commendably). In a thousand ways like this, always in fact, a bit of the human material of free decision is left over without being refashioned, or (looked at in reverse) a bit of the inclination of the free decision remains without achieving anything, because it becomes stuck fast as it were in the sluggish mass of its natural material in man, in which it tries to realize itself. For this reason (if we confine ourselves to the empirical evidence) it makes no difference whether we say, 'The free principle is of itself too weak to achieve itself wholly in man's nature', or, 'The resistance of the material in which the decision tries to realize itself is too strong for the entire success of this intention.' And in accordance with the statement adopted, one can either say, 'The personal decision does not wholly make its own the potentialities of its material', or 'The free principle does not succeed in overcoming the resistance of its nature-material.'

[19] Most of the theologians cited above put the matter as if the man who is in possession of the gift of integrity only experiences acts of the sensitive appetite when he expressly commands them by a resolution of his spiritual will. This is an exaggeration, which would not only make the psychic life of a man in Paradise into something beyond our conception, but also comes up against the metaphysical principle that the object of a finite freedom must be given to it, while such a givenness is only to be found in virtue of an affection of the *conative* power, i.e. through its spontaneous act.

[20] This is an exhaustiveness which is and always must be essentially relative in the finite entity, because otherwise neither the phenomenon of repentance nor that of the experience of its free decision as an inner distress and an inner condemnation would be metaphysically explicable. Looked at metaphysically, repentance is only possible where man's immoral free decision has not the power so exhaustively to impress evil upon his being that no starting-point for a new decision remains over from which a fresh redisposition of the elements of the human person could ensue. One's own morally wrong decision can only be experienced as inner distress and condemnation when it does not succeed in removing from one every resistance offered to it by what is given prior to freedom (by the 'nature'). Otherwise man could also be happy by making a heroic and radical profession of evil and by wholly delivering up his being to it (even though he may suffer 'physical' pain at the same time); only the evil man who is too cowardly and weak to be wholly evil would be the unhappy one.

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absolutely empty and undetermined potentiality, the effect of this activation is just as much an expression of the reality of the 'patient' as of the particular character of the impression from without. Thus where the person has a habitual dominion over the entire nature, even the spontaneous act of the appetite, excited from without and 'passively' undergone by the person, is from the first shaped throughout by the personal engagement of the person and so not an act of 'concupiscence' in spite of man's 'passivity' with respect to this act; thus it is unnecessary to suppose that this act should come about on the basis of a 'command' of the freely deciding will. Now it is possible *per se* to think of various ways in which this habitual dominion of the nature by the person, which becomes the *a priori* law of the spontaneous natural act itself, works itself out in detail in these acts. Firstly (and this is incorrectly what is alone [368] thought of in the usual theological expositions of integrity) there is the way in which the free decision from the first excludes from man the spontaneous act of desire running in the contrary direction, and either prevents it from emerging at all or wholly suppresses it. But a second possibility is equally conceivable. Here the person does not annul the spontaneous natural act which in the last resort is only apparently contrary to its decision, either because this is impossible or not feasible for other reasons; it wholly assumes this act in a new way into the inner dynamism of its personal attitude, in such a way that finally the act is no longer resistant to the person, an undissolved remainder of nature, but becomes an intrinsic factor in the process which makes available the depths and the dominating force of the personal decision. We may consider, for example, Christ's fear and trembling on the Mount of Olives, which could be endured and experienced (in a truly human, passive way) in spite of the gift of integrity he continued to possess: this fear did not persist in Christ as a remainder, not yet in his power, of a resistance to his personal willingness to suffer and hence as a threat to this personal attitude; it was there in Christ as an intrinsic, necessary factor, wholly within his power, of this personal decision itself.[21] It depends on the particular nature of the spontaneous act of desire to be mastered in each individual case which of these two kinds of integrity is the appropriate one: whether it is one jointly given from the first, or whether it is one achieved only approximately in the course of moral struggle. We cannot go further into this question here.

It is now possible to see what is the essence of desire in the narrowest (theological) sense, the essence of concupiscence. In the concrete man of the present order free personal decision and self-determination are not capable of perfectly and exhaustively determining the operative [369] subject throughout the whole extent of his real being. The free act does indeed dispose of the whole subject, in so far as it is as free act an act of man's personal centre, and so, by the root as it were, draws the whole subject in sympathy with it. And yet man's concrete being is not throughout its whole extent and according to all its powers and their actualization the pure expression and the unambiguous revelation of the personal active centre which is its own master. In the course of its self-determination, the person undergoes the resistance of the nature given prior to freedom, and never wholly succeeds in making all that man is into the reality and the expression of all that he comprehends himself to be in the core of his person. There is much in man which always remains in concrete fact somehow impersonal; impenetrable and unilluminated for his existential decision; merely endured and

[21] Bravery 'in spite of' trembling and bravery 'in' trembling, strength against weakness and strength which can be and wants to be victorious precisely in weakness, are not the same thing. This remains true even when it may not be possible to decide in a given case which of the two is present. Weakness is really experienced and endured even in the second case. In the last resort it will be a secret of the God who is Judge whether in a concrete case the continuing weakness of the flesh was yet an intrinsic factor of the decision, integrated into this very decision, or whether this good decision, while undoubtedly present, did not succeed in so comprehending the sluggishness of the weak flesh without simply eliminating it that the sluggishness itself might become part of the victory of the willingness of the spirit.

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not freely acted out. It is this dualism between person and nature, in so far as it arises from the dualism of matter and spirit and not from man's finitude, the dualism of essence and existence and the real distinction of his powers given with it, that we call concupiscence in the theological sense. While it does indeed find its concrete experiential expression in a dualism of spirituality and sensibility, it is not identical with the latter. Thus concupiscence does not consist in any conceivable givenness of the spontaneous act prior to the free one[22] nor does it in every case necessarily consist in a capacity of the spontaneous act to be despotically expunged by freedom nor precisely in the fact that the spontaneous act drives towards what is morally impermissible contrary to the direction of the free decision. Concupiscence consists essentially in the fact that man in this regime does not overcome even by his free decision the dualism between what he is as nature prior to his existential decision and what he becomes as person by this decision, not even in the measure in which it would absolutely speaking be conceivable for a finite spirit to overcome it. Man never becomes wholly absorbed either in good or in evil.

2. The Significance of Concupiscence

a. Concupiscence and moral action.

It is clear from what has been said that concupiscence as such in the theological sense is not open to moral qualification in the strict sense. [370] Even in the strict theological sense, therefore, one should not speak of 'evil' or 'disorderly' concupiscence. One may speak in this way with some justification from an ascetico-moral point of view; but then one is regarding concupiscence in the theological sense onesidedly in so far as the resistance of nature to the personal decision does admittedly in certain circumstances work precisely contrary to the morally good free decision. But according to what has been said this is only *one* aspect of concupiscence; regarded in its full theological sense, concupiscence is just as much capable of working in a positive sense as a resistance of nature to the bad moral decision, by making this less absolute. (Even for a theological anthropology, it may be noted in passing, this is why a merely venial sin[23] is possible in a being at once sensitive and spiritual, and only in it: the resistance of the nature considered as orientated to the good prevents the free decision from reaching that intensity and personal centrality which would be required for a grave sin). Thus in so far as concupiscence (in the theological sense) precedes the free decision, which is alone capable of producing a formally moral quality, and in this theological sense is bivalent in so far as it is capable of taking on a tendency to good as well as to evil, it cannot be characterized as morally evil, let alone as sin, even regarded in itself in this full (*adäquat*) theological sense. Yet it can of course be called 'evil' in so far as it is only present in man in its concrete existential form in virtue of the Fall of the first man (something which is admittedly beyond experience), and in so far as, on account of its tendency, bivalent in itself,

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[22] Otherwise free human operation would be purely action and not reaction, and man himself would be pure 'existence'.

[23] Primarily, at least, venial sin 'ex imperfectione actus'. As free, an act always 'originates' from the personal centre: but it is precisely never as simply originating but as having reached completion in the materiality of nature, as originated, that the act is itself. Were this not the case, such an act would be precisely not free or not a merely venial sin (because it is free). A further question (which we shall not pursue here) would be whether in the last resort venial sins 'ex parvitate materiae' may also be reduced to the first type and why this should be so; for unless it has a definite kind of content, the act cannot have even in its formal freedom that intensity which it must have as originated. We shall only note further in passing how surprising it is that this ontology of free acts is only touched on in theology (if it is mentioned at all) when bad acts, sin, are under discussion. Yet the ontological and existential distinction between venial and grave sins must also exist where morally good acts are concerned. There does not even exist a terminology for this situation yet.

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to offer resistance, it can [371] on occasion also drive towards what is morally impermissible contrary to man's free decision and thus lead to sin (Denz 792).[24] What follows or does not follow from these conclusions for the question of the *experience* of concupiscentia (as 'something which ought not to be'), must be left for later discussion, since it is impossible to offer a satisfactory answer without first bringing certain other aspects to view which cannot be taken up yet.

b. In this way we gain some insight into the naturalness of concupiscentia and so into the unexactedness of the gift of integrity. Precisely because concupiscentia in the theological sense is something absolutely bivalent from the ethical point of view, because it can act as a retarding factor both as regards good and as regards evil and because it results from man's metaphysical nature as a material essence, the absence of it in men cannot be conceived of as intrinsically possible in purely natural terms, and still less can one assert a claim to this absence as something owed to man. Any idea of this kind becomes empty the moment it is seen that the absence of concupiscentia considered as an impulse to evil would also mean *eo ipso* the cessation of a retarding factor contrary to man's free decision to choose evil; in other words, it would make man into a kind of being concerning whose intrinsic possibility it is impossible to make any assertion in natural terms.

c. If we are to gain a better understanding of the nature of concupiscentia a few remarks on the gift of integrity will be in place here. From what has been said it appears that the gift of integrity, as it is ascribed to the first man before the Fall by the sources of Revelation, cannot lie in the absence of desire in the broad or in the narrower sense, but only in a freedom from desire in the narrowest and theological [372] sense, a freedom from concupiscence. But it also follows at once from our analyses of the nature of concupiscence that the 'freedom' in question here is not so much a freedom *from* something as a freedom *for* something. A man who possesses the gift of integrity is no less 'sensitive', he is no more 'spiritual' in a Neoplatonic rather than a Christian sense, involving the lack of an intense vitality.[25] Rather he is free really to dispose of himself through a personal decision in so sovereign a way that within the area of his being there is no longer anything to resist this sovereign self-determination by a sort of passive sluggishness. If we conceive of concupiscentia as a bivalent property of man, it also follows that integrity was not bestowed on the first man purely and primarily to facilitate his decision as head of humanity for or against God, by removing dangers and impulses to evil; rather it was given to him in the first place in order that his free decision, even when it went out to the good, could acquire the exhaustive existential impetus of a self-determination which a man could never have without the gift of integrity. For even where the case is not precisely one of the *resistance* of a spontaneous act to a morally *good* decision, the essence of concupiscentia as we conceive it is such that it prevents man's personal decision from achieving total and definitive mastery over his nature

[24] In so far as concupiscentia is to be subsumed under the 'deterioration in body and soul' due to original sin (Denz 788), this must be measured, as is quite generally taught today, by man's state in Paradise, and not by the state of some pure 'nature' possible in itself and what this nature 'ought' to be. But since this real term of comparison is not a datum of our experience, this 'deterioration', this 'corruption' is not an object of experience either, of the experience, that is, which man can test empirically for himself, purely by reference to his *nature* (in the theological sense). We shall have to discuss in its own right the question whether this excludes the experience of every kind of way in which concupiscentia is 'something which ought not to be'.

[25] This is already emphasized for instance by St Bonaventure (in *II Sent.*, dist. 9, a. 3, q. I) and St Thomas (Ia: 98:2 ad 3). But for true vitality it is also required that involuntary impressions from without can be genuinely 'experienced' and 'undergone'. As has already been said above, this shows that statements like that of Pesch (*loc. cit*., n. 190), 'nullos potuisse in iis oriri motus appetitus sensibilis independenter ab imperio voluntatis', are false and do not follow from the essence of integrity.

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on account of the inertia of the nature contrary to that decision. Hence integrity was given to Adam not so much for the sake of avoiding a greater danger of sin, as for making possible an exhaustive engagement of his being in a personal decision directed to the good. Indeed it might be said that Adam's state in Paradise was in a certain sense 'more dangerous' than our present state. For the gift of integrity, which was intended to make him capable of overcoming the dualism of nature and person (so far as this is possible at all in a finite entity) in the direction of a good decision, also implied for the morally bad decision which Adam in fact made, an existential impetus of which we in our present order of things are not normally capable with regard to evil either. In fact, though we shall not attempt it here, if one were [373] to try to explain in the terms of a theological and metaphysical anthropology the possibility of repentance for Adam (as opposed to the absence of such a possibility in the free decision of the angels), in the last resort one would only be able to do this by insisting that integrity was for Adam a preternatural gift, and that its loss[26] as a consequence of the loss of sanctifying grace in general, was only possible for *this* reason. But this loss of integrity once more releases the nature in respect of the personal decision, so that it is not wholly assumed by this decision and in this way repentance (purely as a psychological and personal phenomenon) is once more made possible. This is not to deny that concupiscentia produces a specifically new possibility of sin, namely that of sins of weakness in the strict sense, which are to be found where man finally gives way to the persistent inclination of his nature against a freely adopted attitude which had originally been a better one, and in a subsequent free modification of his attitude sets the centre of his being as it were in that region of it which is actualized in the spontaneous impulse of his nature at that moment. Such a modification of a freely adopted attitude by yielding to a dynamism of nature which is precisely there already and actively persists, cannot of course be found in a man who possesses the gift of integrity.

It has already been said that every free human decision tends of itself to dispose totally of the subject as a whole. If this is true it also follows that in spite of its unexactedness the gift of integrity perfects human nature in a direction in which man as a personal being is already turned. For integrity is in fact what makes possible the exhaustive realization of the tendency associated with every free decision: the tendency of the person totally to dispose of himself before God. Without the gift of integrity this tendency, which is undoubtedly proper to every free decision, will find expression in greater or less degree according to the circumstances. To this extent it is the goal of all moral growth that [374] man should increasingly bring the whole of himself into play in a morally good decision, in Biblical terms increasingly love God from his *whole* heart and with *all* his strength. The gift of integrity, we may say, made it possible for man from the first really to do from his whole heart and with all his strength what he wished to do, and none of his powers could refuse to follow this will, wholly or in part. Thus it also becomes clear that in a certain respect the goal of Christian moral maturity consists in a return to Adam's state in Paradise, not certainly in the sense of a return to some possibility still prior to moral decision, but as to a goal which is itself already the fruit and prize of moral concern. In this sense it may be allowed that the ascetic strives for the blessed α)πα&θεια possessed by Adam in Paradise, as the Greek Fathers often say. But the perfect Christian possesses it otherwise than Adam did. In Adam the person's freedom to dispose of the nature made it possible for him exhaustively to engage his nature both in a good and in an evil direction. The blessed freedom of disposal possessed by the perfect Christian, the saint, is the freedom of a man who has succeeded in surrendering his whole being and his whole

[26] This loss is insufficiently explained in terms of sin as such, for the angel who has sinned retains the metaphysical essence of his integrity (the relative identity of 'nature' and 'person') even after his sin. Thus he is 'impenitent' precisely because he was in a position exhaustively to shape his entire nature through his personal decision; hence too no remainder is left over in him, either psychologically or ontologically, which might have escaped this personal decision and from which the reshaping of the person could begin.

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life to God totally.

German mysticism often named as its ideal the man 'of the heart' (*innig*), the 'collected' (*gesammelt*) man, the man, that is, whose whole activity is an exhaustive expression of his innermost centre and his innermost vital decision, and who therefore remains 'collected' in this innermost centre without being dispersed in anything alien to this decision. The fact that man never wholly possesses this collected heartfelt inwardness of his whole life in the ultimate deed of his inmost being is what is really meant by concupiscentia in the theological sense, the index of his finitude and his terrestriality (his sensitive and spiritual essence). This inner division of man is often indeed the occasion of his ruin, but – who knows – perhaps still more often the occasion of his salvation, because it also prevents him from being utterly evil.

3. Concupiscence in the present order of Salvation

But we have not yet exhausted our subject. The whole movement of thought in what has so far been said, has been directed towards determining the character of concupiscentia in its relationship to *nature* as such. If we say 'nature' here, the word is no longer meant [375] in the sense in which we have frequently used it in the course of this study, as something opposed to *person* (and *vice versa*). 'Nature' here is intended, in the usual theological sense, in distinction to the 'supernatural', that is to say as that essential content of an entity both spiritual and sensitive called man, which inamissibly persists through sin and righteousness, grace and alienation from God, and in regard to which the possession of the Holy Spirit, adoptive sonship, justification, etc., are to be characterized as an unexacted gift, as 'supernatural' grace, even prior to any question of the forgiveness of sin. What we have so far said in regard to this 'nature' is that concupiscentia is the inertia and impenetrability, in itself *bivalent*, of that 'nature' (in the earlier sense) which precedes the person's free decision, which inertia does not permit the person as freedom totally to integrate this 'nature' into his deeds. This impossibility, we have said, is *bivalent*, i.e. we have here a retarding factor in respect of both good and evil free actions in like manner, and hence may not simply be qualified without further consideration as 'evil', 'disordered' concupiscentia; it may therefore very well be conceived of conversely as a property arising from the nature of the spiritual-material and finite creature; thus further it cannot be experienced *on that account* as 'something which ought not to be', as 'shameful', as something which could only arise from a primordial moral catastrophe: on the contrary, this should be the starting-point of an attempt to elucidate the preternatural unexactedness of integrity.

But have we not thus 'taken the sting out of' concupiscentia? Can we, starting from this position, go on to gain some understanding of the Pauline experience, 'Unhappy man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?' Can we still do justice to Augustine, whose view of man, derived from his daily experience of concupiscentia and death precisely, was such that for him man could only be the creature either of a Manichean primordial principle of evil or of original sin, his primal constitution being perverted in its very depths by the sin of the first man? Is the opinion of the Reformers or of a Pascal (leaving aside the doctrine of the great scholastics for the moment) simply false in every respect when they held that man, driven as he is by his passions, could not have proceeded 'like this' from the hand of his Creator? Is not the teaching of Pius V, that concupiscentia (and death) can be found even in a sinless 'pure nature' (a teaching which our whole concern so far has served to justify), unchristian and naive as [376] well in view of these testimonies to the meaning of Christian existence? On the other hand we may attempt to explain this concrete experience of concupiscentia in two different ways. We may ask whether it is not already exactly rendered by saying that even in our interpretation it precisely constitutes a threat to moral equilibrium,

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a danger of sin, however true it may be that it results naturally from man's essence. Or we may say that this lived awareness of concupiscentia as such is confused with the experience of real – but precisely personal – sinfulness,[27] and that this confusion is the cause of the doctrine of 'evil' cupidity and of a sinfulness which already adheres to man on its account alone.

If we want a clearer view of this question we must start from a position which has been established on a somewhat firmer basis elsewhere in these studies.[28] Even the man who has not been justified and inwardly sanctified by God's grace is *not*, in the present order, in such a way identical with a man in the 'status naturae purae' that he differs from him only in virtue of an *external* decree of God, in accordance with which he *ought* to have grace. The ordination which obliges him to a supernatural end consists (even when he is not 'in a state of grace') not just in a purely juridical obligation; as 'ens iuridicum' this would rest in reality on the reality of the divine will alone, and hence could *only* enter into awareness or experience in virtue of a communication by God in the *word*, since purely moral or juridical entities cannot present themselves to consciousness in virtue of their own reality. It is far preferable to think of the ordination to a supernatural end, which is binding on all men in the present order of reality and salvation, as a real ontological existential of man, which qualifies him really and intrinsically. Further, in the present order man is subject to the dynamism of God's saving grace, at least at those 'moments' at [377] which he is made capable by supernatural prevenient grace of performing a salutary act in the appropriate circumstances. There is nothing further in principle to prevent us from thinking of this offer as less 'intermittent'; rather we may conceive of the situation in such a way that free, unexacted grace, which elevates and makes possible supernatural salutary acts, is *always* given. Thus the *proximate* possibility of a salutary act is not constituted by an elevating grace offered precisely at a 'now' (but not 'then') but by other terrestrial circumstances (subject of course to God's supernatural providence), which precisely now make the salutary act for man into a possibility capable of immediate actualization while at another time they exclude just this possibility. In any case the conception of the unexactedness of grace by no means includes the idea that grace should be offered only now and then in a sporadic way.

Let us then presuppose this, and add to it a second presupposition, which we have no intention of providing grounds for here but which is obviously above suspicion theologically. This is the possibility that these supernatural existentials, which we have at the very least shown to be conceivable, also enter into *consciousness*. The fact of being a datum for consciousness does *not* imply that the existential concerned is capable of being reflexively apprehended or indeed is apprehended *as* supernatural. Nor need it imply that the existential concerned is capable at least of being reflexively *distinguished* from other data of consciousness. Now the Thomist school says that two spiritual acts which are essentially distinct ontologically must *necessarily* possess two specifically distinct formal objects, and these acts thus differ from each other even consciously; in our view what is being said is absolutely valid, and we can simply appeal to this doctrine in our present context. There is no difficulty at all in understanding the doctrine in such a way that it does not imply those ideas of consciousness which we are content to reject or leave open as not intended here. Now it is

[27] As a matter of fact the theological interpretation of the experience of concupiscentia would have to give more consideration than it usually does to the fact that in the concrete, man can never have a reflexive experience, which can be theologically interpreted purely as reflexive, of his essence as given prior to freedom and of pure concupiscentia in isolation. For in every *reflexive* act he already becomes aware of himself as someone who has freely chosen, which means that he is capable neither of assessing with absolute precision this 'option fondamentale' which he has already taken, nor of separating it with complete purity from his nature and from pure concupiscentia in those properties they possess prior to the free decision.

[28] Cf. pp. 302 s., above.

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certainly the case that something can be given as existing in consciousness in an *a priori* way, modifying the totality of what is objectively present to consciousness with a contour which marks it off from other objects of the kind. The objection made against the Thomist doctrine in this matter, that one would 'notice' something like this but in fact one 'notices' nothing, is childishly primitive (particularly in an age of depth psychology, etc., from which it is easy to learn that givenness in consciousness and reflexive, or potentially reflexive, objectivity for [378] consciousness are precisely not the same thing). We are thus quite free to suppose that the above-mentioned existentials also help to structure man's spiritually conscious existence, even if this does not take place in the manner in which *objects* of consciousness do it which are apprehended *as* supernatural and reflexively demarcated from others. Unexpressed impulses, basic dispositions and attitudes, which escape total clarification by reflexion, are of more comprehensive significance for the totality of our spiritual life in certain circumstances than what is objectively recognized and expressed. A conscious logic, for example, holds sway in man's mind even when he has never spent a moment's thought on logic. It is of no importance in this connexion that this logic can at least subsequently be presented formally in terms of a reflexive objectivity.

Let us then suppose that even in his *conscious* spiritual life, on account of the real ontological supernatural existential of his ordination to a supernatural end and on account of the grace which is offered to him even prior to his knowledge of it through verbal revelation, man is other than he would be if he were to find himself in a state of pure nature. What form should the experience of concupiscentia (and of subjection to death) take if it arises concretely in *this* man and is not merely related to the 'pure nature' in this man, which is what has been done so far in our study? Even in this case concupiscentia still has that ontological and ethical bivalency which we have been claiming for it. But must it for that reason be experienced as a harmless phenomenon, which can hardly be separated in thought from man's 'nature'? Related to the nature of man this must be the case. But related to *this* concrete man? This would still necessarily be the case if, but *only* if, concupiscentia and death had absolutely no contradictory relation to those conscious supernatural existentials of which we have spoken, if they are both in relationship to each other absolutely disparate quantities. But this is not the case, although it is assumed almost involuntarily in most of the theology available nowadays. The paradisal gifts of integrity and (conditional) immortality were by no means simply externally attached ones, which happened to be included, in a purely additive way, along with the grace of sanctification and justification, as another piece of paradisal equipment. Rather they are gifts which flow connaturally from the grace of justification, as it were the reflexion and the manifestation of this divine life in the dimension of man's corporeality. The fact that someone can acquire [379] the grace of justification without recovering these gifts, does not prove the absence of this close connexion in reality between *pneuma* and the preternatural gifts of integrity and immortality in the primordial state. If the justified still suffer death and concupiscentia, this is not due to the fact that the grace of justification is intrinsically indifferent in regard to them and that integrity and exemption from death in Paradise were merely externally complementary gifts. It is due to the fact that on the one hand grace has as it were a longer time to run now, until it has achieved the complete transformation of the whole nature (a connatural prolongation of a real ontological principle by no means implies that it must always necessarily be given at exactly the same moment of time as the latter); and on the other hand to the fact that the mystery of the grace of *Christ*, the Crucified, consists precisely in this, that Christ has made what of itself is contrary to the divine life of grace into the manifestation and the weapon of the victory of this grace. But if this is the case, there is no difficulty in seeing that the man with conscious supernatural existentials can by no means 'so' experience death and concupiscentia as the man in pure nature would. The latter can only experience them as not indeed

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pleasurable, but all the same unavoidable, consequences of the finitude of this nature, as (although not 'something which ought to be', yet) 'something which has to be' in his nature. But the former is entirely capable of feeling them as something alien to his being which ought not to be, not indeed in relation to his pure nature as such, but in relation to his concrete existence, to which the supernatural existentials belong. To such a man death and concupiscentia can appear very 'unnatural', although they are – natural. Of himself alone man cannot indeed interpret this 'unnaturalness' in its ultimate meaning. Of himself he can neither say that death and concupiscentia are a penalty following upon the loss of a sanctifying grace (i.e. he cannot, on the basis of the 'unnaturalness' of death and concupiscentia, recognize original sin as *our* state of *guilt*), nor can he of himself know that these oppressive forces of his being can constitute a participation in Christ's redemptive death through his grace. But none of this is an obstacle to the existence of a real ontological discrepancy, entering into consciousness, between death and concupiscentia on the one hand and the nature elevated by supernatural grace on the other, a nature which is still of this kind even when it is not justified by this grace. We may go a step further. If and in so far as the *experience* of concupiscentia (and of death) must [380] be conceived of as an intrinsic element in these realities themselves[29], we are wholly entitled to say that *this* concupiscentia which we experience, and (or) *this* experience which we have and call concupiscentia, is quite incapable of existing, in the concrete form in which it is given, in a state of pure nature. This is in no way contrary to the teaching of Pius V against Baius; for when we find it said there, 'potuisset ab initio talem creare hominem, qualis nunc nascitur' (cf. Denz 1055), this clearly does not mean that God could so create man *without* his guilt (*ab initio*) that be should be deprived of justifying grace and integrity (*qualis nunc nascitur*), and at the same time demand this grace of him (for then he would precisely be in original sin). The same state in man, which materially can be entirely alike in two instances (and *to this extent* can be present in two wholly different subjects, i.e. on account of, and without, guilt), can yet be entirely different formally, according to the difference of the subjects in which it is found. We may grant then that concupiscentia itself differs formally, though not in its barely material content, according as it is found either in a man belonging to an order of pure nature, or in a man who has been given a supernatural end; we may grant too that it is compulsorily experienced in this diversity, and that this diversity and the experience of it is an intrinsic element in concrete concupiscentia itself as such. Then we can say quite calmly that this concupiscentia is only possible in someone subject to original sin, and that he experiences it, already as such, as something in contradiction with what he ought to be 'authentically', even if this 'authentic' something is not his 'nature' but his supernatural and yet undeniable determination. Anyone who reduces man's fear of death simply to a biological instinct of self-preservation (which of course ceases at the moment of real death), anyone who conceives of concupiscentia as a *mere* threat to the moral person through an instinctive life not yet morally impregnated (but in itself bivalent), will not do justice to the phenomenon as it really is. At all events he cannot say that such an interpretation follows with logical necessity from the fact that death and concupiscentia are natural consequences arising out of man's nature.

It may be objected that our thesis concerning the givenness in [381] experience of concupiscentia as something which ought not to be (*von dem erfahrbaren Nichtseinsollen von Konkupiszenz*) rests by our own admission on a series of presuppositions, which may indeed be conceivable, but have not been proved, i.e. on the existence and givenness in consciousness of the supernatural existentials of which we have spoken. To this we answer first of all that it by no means follows from the fact that we have not proved these

[29] This is immediately obvious for concupiscentia – just as there is no 'pain' without consciousness. We shall not here go further into the reason why this holds good of death too (the question is of course more difficult).

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presuppositions *here*, that they cannot be demonstrated in themselves. They are only introduced by way of hypothesis here because to justify them here would mean going far beyond the limits of the present discussion of concupiscentia. But the following considerations seem to us decisive. In the order of realities our presuppositions really are – presuppositions. The reverse may be the case in the order of knowledge. That is to say: the experience of humanity, the analytics which considers it in the course of its history with respect to its own condition, finds no difficulty in showing that in concrete fact man does not conceive of concupiscentia as something self-explanatory, but as something which ought not to be, which causes perplexity and which forces one to ask how it can be explained, if man is the work of a God who cannot create anything contradictory. It is irrelevant here whether each and every man finds his way to this experience for himself or whether it first reaches clear consciousness at the summits of human self-comprehension in the history of the spirit. It has always been the case that man only learns slowly and arduously to know who he is and all that is in him. When and where man is present to himself with the utmost clarity (and it is a rationalistic, unhistorical superstition, not a postulate of a rational metaphysical anthropology, to suppose that he must be capable of this at any moment he chooses), he may not know why and how he finds himself to be like this; but he can notice the *fact* that he does not feel in order. And if an Augustine[30] and later the great scholastics too[31] were thoroughly convinced that the present [382] constitution of man with his concupiscentia and subjection to death could not be intelligibly interpreted except on the presupposition of a primordial Fall, i.e. if they felt that concupiscentia and death were very 'unnatural' and needed explanation (and this is the presupposition of the first affirmation); then it is possible that they were in the right, even if not every simple soul can verify this at every moment. It is also irrelevant what degree of certainty – greater or less – individual thinkers have allotted to this conclusion regarding a primordial fall (which is not the same thing as a conclusion to an hereditary sin), and also how they attempted to justify in more detail this 'unnaturalness' of concupiscentia and elucidate it rationally. The *fact* that they felt it to be unnatural is sufficient here. If today we possess in a still clearer form than even medieval theology a concept of pure nature and of the naturalness of concupiscentia, then we today are bound to explain the experience of the contradictoriness of concupiscentia in a somewhat different way and at any rate with more theological nuance; but nothing compels us to abandon this experience itself as false or exaggerated. It is not only the experience of something which objectively ought not to be, in so far as its object arises in objective fact from the primordial transgression; just this character, that it ought not to be, as such, is itself – however obscure and enigmatic it may still be – an element in the object of the experience as such.

Concupiscentia, and death too, is not just the manifestation of sin, in Christ's order it is not just what is left over in the justified, something to be overcome eschatologically because it is in contradiction with human nature in this concrete order; it is also the form *in* which the Christian experiences Christ's sufferings and suffers them himself to the end. But of this we shall say no more here.

[30] Cf., e.g., *Contra Julianum* VI, 21 s. (PL XLIV, 863 s.); further DTC XII, col. 374, 377, 390 S.; C. Boyer, 'Dieu pouvait-il créer l'homme dans l'état d'ignorance et de difficulté?', *Gregorianum* XI (1930), pp. 32-57 J. de Montcheuil, 'L'hypothèse de l'état d'ignorance et de difficulté d'après le De libero arbitrio de s. Augustin', *RSR* XXIII (1933), pp. 197-221.

[31] Cf. for Anselm, DTC XII, col. 435; for Alexander of Hales, DTC XII, col. 459; for Bonaventure, DTC XII, col. 463 s.; for Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, c. 52.

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[1]

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF PIUS XII's ENCYCLICAL 'MYSTICI CORPORIS CHRISTI'

The repercussions which Pius XII's Encyclical '*Mystici Corporis Christi*' (29th June 1943) has had in certain quarters, induces us to pose the following questions: Who, according to the teaching laid down in this Encyclical, belong to the Church as members in the fullest sense and who do not belong to it in this sense? What follows, or what does not necessarily follow with regard to justification, state of grace and union with Christ, from *this* kind of non-membership of the Church? Finally, what insights into the nature of the Church itself result from this teaching about membership and non-membership of the Church?

This is a relatively restricted subject compared with the burning questions of present-day Ecclesiology. Indeed it becomes even more confined by basing our investigations exclusively (in as far as this is practicable) on the aforesaid Encyclical.[1]

[2] Yet it is an important, as well as difficult, question. Important and difficult, first of all because the particular doctrine of this Encyclical which is the subject of our present considerations, has given rise to the opinion that the teaching authority has come to positively new decisions on this matter, and that these are of such a nature as to be offensive to non-Catholics and detrimental to the efforts towards Union. If this were true, and if the gulf between Catholics and non-Catholics had indeed widened as a result of these particular authoritative pronouncements, then this would of course be very sad and most regrettable (humanly speaking) in an age of a new awakening of love for the *Una Sancta*. Hence this question of the membership of the Church is not simply a matter for subtle treatment by the Canonists, but a vital question for all those who love the Church of Christ and who own themselves in duty bound by our Lord's will that all be one. This is precisely why we must know dispassionately and objectively to what extent all Christians are in reality already one in Christ and in the Church (in spite of outward appearances which would point rather to a separation between Christians), and to what extent these same Christians are actually separated from one another (although their yearning for unity and their mutual love might make them believe that they are more or less united already).

The subject under discussion is important, furthermore, as an instance of the work of the theologian. For it must be stressed most emphatically from the outset that a great deal in our problem is still unclarified and obscure. If we wish to proceed as true theologians in this matter, then we will have to take the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church as our starting-

[1] The following should serve as a select bibliography of the most recent literature on this question: J. Beumer, 'Die kirchliche Gliedschaft in der Lehre des hl. Robert Bellarmin', *Theologie und Glaube* XXXVIII (1948), pp. 243-257; J. Gribimont, 'Du sacrernent de l'Eglise et de ses réalisations imparfaites', *Irénikon* XXII (1949), pp. 345-367; C. Lialine, 'Une étape en ecclésiologie', *Irénikon* XIX (1946), pp. 129-152; pp. 283-317; XX (1947), pp. 34-54; L. Malevez, 'Quelques enseignements de l'encyclique "Mystici Corporis", *NRT* LXXVII (1945), pp. 385-407; A. Chavasse, 'Ordonnés au corps mystique', *NRT* LXXX (1948), pp. 690-702; V. Morel, 'Le corps mystique du Christ et l'Eglise catholique romaine', *NRT* LXXX (1948), pp. 703-726; A. Liege, 'L'appartenance à l'Eglise et l'encyclique "Mystici corporis", *RSPT* XXXII (1948), pp. 351-357; J. Brinktrine, 'Was lehrt die Enzyklika "Mystici Corporis" üiber die Zugehörigkeit zur Kirche?', *Theologie und Glaube* XXXVIII (1947-48), pp. 290-300; L. Valpertz, 'Kirchliche Mitgliedschaft und Nichtkatholiken nach der Enzyklika Mystici Corporis', *Theologie und Glaube* (= *Th. und Seelsorge*) (1944), pp. 43-46; E. Brunet, 'Les dissidents de bonne foi sont-ils membres de l'eglise?', *Analecta Gregoriana* LVIII (Rome 1954), pp. 199-218.

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point (for these are the beginning and end of all theology),[2] instead of starting with some impressive and lucid, [3] but ultimately uncompelling and subjective speculation. But the employment of this theological method will immediately bring to light a fact which is fairly familiar to the theologian, but which never ceases to puzzle the layman (and how many 'theologians' are really 'laymen'). We refer to the fact that the magisterium of the Church, supported by Tradition, simply lays down this or that particular point about a certain question, without it being at once apparent how all these individual pronouncements are to be logically combined into one systematic framework. Indeed the very attempt at logical systematization not only encounters grave difficulties, but perhaps has still to achieve any real success in theology. Thus it is a fact that there still remain important tasks for the theologian, which are of consequence even beyond the special province of the theologian as such.

Finally, our subject is important too for Ecclesiology in general. It is true, as will be seen in the course of our considerations, that any question about the membership of the Church necessarily and rightly presupposes a certain knowledge of the nature of the Church. For only in that way can it be logically determined who belongs to the Church and who does not. Yet, on the other hand, the ecclesiastical teaching authority has made pronouncements on the question of membership of the Church. Hence it is in turn possible to collect certain evidence about the nature of the Church from the positive elements of these pronouncements, which it might be impossible to find otherwise – at least as clearly. In other words, from a purely logical point of view, our question would follow on from our knowledge about the nature of the Church; but for the theologian, who works from the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church, this question is in its turn also a source of a deeper understanding of the nature of the Church. We see the fundamental importance of our subject precisely in this: that it forces us to develop a deeper-going theology of the Church as a whole.

From what has been said so far, we can already distinguish three questions within the subject under discussion:

I. What does the Encyclical say about the conditions for membership of the Church?

II. What does it say about the possibility of union with Christ through grace for those who, in the sense of the reply to our first question, are not members of the Church?

III With regard to the Church's nature itself what further facts, [4] and what indications for further lines of inquiry can be gathered from the answer to the first two questions?

I

We will inquire first of all, then, as to what *conditions* must be fulfilled in a person so that he may be called a *member of the Church*. In formulating a question such as this, we are clearly conscious of the fact that neither the notion of the Church nor the notion of membership of the Church is of itself an unequivocally or clearly defined quantity in the minds of ordinary people today or, for that matter, in theology itself. To begin with, it can be seen without much difficulty that the concept of membership is not of itself clearly

[2] But not the 'end' in the sense that theology has, in spite of this, no other task in the last analysis than to defend and comment on the present (and earlier) clear and explicit doctrinal pronouncements of the magisterium of the Church. In other words, we do not mean that the theologian can engage only in a 'Denzinger-theology' – which is unfortunately often precisely all he does. But the 'end' must be understood here in the sense that the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church are not only the starting-point, but also the abiding norm of all dogmatic theology. Whenever theology, sustained by faith and the desire for salvation, does moreover not forget its existential source and aim, then it will also continually serve the teaching authority itself, and it will then ultimately be possible to include it, with its newly gained insights, in the very teaching of that authority.

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determined. From the mere *general* conception of the union of an individual with a community, it is already possible to conceive *a priori* of many different closer or looser ways in which a person may be united with the Church. It goes without saying that the conditions of such closer or looser union of an individual with the Church would be quite different in each case. As it would, however, be completely contrary to the correct theological procedure to construct or even lay down in terminology any special *a-priori* notion of membership of the Church, the only method left open to us in this matter is as follows: We must first of all simply accept, on the Church's teaching authority, who belong as members to the Church and what conditions must be fulfilled in them to constitute such membership. Only in this way can we determine, not only how we must deal with this whole subject objectively, but also what is the Church's own notion of (i.e. this notion as defined in its very terminology by the magisterium of the Church). The same necessary method as follows from the notion of membership of the Church results also from the problematic notion of the Church itself. Here again it cannot be a question of arbitrarily adopting some notion of 'Church' and of then determining logically, in accordance with this notion, who belongs to the Church and who does not. For otherwise we could run the risk of making the full and adequate content of the notion of the Church consist in some merely partial aspect of what is, in reality, her complete nature. If this were to happen, we would deviate in doctrine or at least in terminology from the teaching of the Church, neither of which is permissible; at the very least, the teaching of the Church would be obscured or disfigured. [5] Hence our method must simply be to start with the Church's doctrinal pronouncements about the conditions of her membership. Here and now, we must simply state the definition of the authoritatively taught notion of the Church, at least as found in present-day ecclesiastical usage. For clearly we cannot treat exhaustively of this notion in these investigations and particularly not at this point. According to the teaching of the Church and the usage adopted by her (and binding also on us), the 'Church' means the Roman Catholic Church, which knows itself to be founded by Christ, even as an external, visibly organized society with the Bishop of Rome at its head, and which as such declares itself to be basically necessary for salvation. That this is the language of the Encyclical needs no special proof for anyone who has read it even once attentively. We do not mean to deny by this that the word 'Church' could of itself have also a wider sense; indeed the history of the proclamation of the Faith, and of Theology, shows that it has in fact had this wider sense as well.[3] Yet the Church is not just the infallible herald of the truths of the Faith; in other words, she does not merely announce the saving realities without error, but has also, [6] for this very purpose, the right to determine usage concerning words and concepts which are employed in this declaration of truth. And therefore, she also has the right

[3] A proper history of Ecclesiology has not yet been written. Such a history would not only need to have as adequate a grasp as possible, and make as complete a collection as possible, of what has been said about the Church in each period, and by the different Fathers – but would also have to give its particular attention to what was uppermost in the Church's consciousness during the different periods. We may mention the following among more recent works: the whole patristic literature as listed by B. Altaner, *Patrology* (Edinburgh-London 1960), pp. 32 *sq*.; J. Cl. Fenton, 'Scholastic Definitions of the Catholic Church', *American Ecclesiastical Review* CXI (1944), pp. 59-69; pp. 131-145; pp. 212-228. M. Ramsauer, 'Die Kirche in den Katechismen', *ZKT* LXXIII (1951), pp. 129-169; pp. 313-346. A. Mayer-Pfannholz, 'Der Wandel des Kirchenbildes in der Geschichte', *Theologie and Glaube* XXXIII (1941), pp. 22-34; *id*., 'Das Bild der Mater Ecclesia im Wandel der Geschichte', *Pastor Bonus* LIII (1942), pp. 33-47. S. Tromp, *Corpus Christi, quod est Ecclesia* I (Rome 1937). J. Beumer, 'Die altchristliche Lehre einer präexistenten Kirche und ihre theologische Auswertung', *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* IX (1942), pp. 19-32; *id*., 'Die Idee einer vorchristlichen Kirche bei Augustinus', *Münchner theol. Zeitschrift* III (1952), pp. 161-175; Y. Congar, *Ecclesia ab Abel*; *Festschrift für Karl Adam* (Düsseldorf 1952), pp. 79-108; H. de Lubac, *Catholicism* (London, 1950); A. Mitterer, *Geheimnisvoller Leib Christi nach St Thomas von Aquin und nech Papst Pius XII* (Vienna 1950); Th. Strotmann, 'Les membres de l'Eglise', *Irénikon* XXV (1952), pp. 249-262. H. Felderer, 'Der Kirchenbegriff in den Flugschriften des josefinischen Jahrzehnts', *ZKT* LXXV (1953), pp. 257-330.

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to say what she wishes to be understood at the present time by the word 'Church', and to demand that theologians keep to this linguistic usage in order to avoid misunderstandings and errors. Thus, when we ask in this sense what are the conditions for belonging as members to the Church, then we inquire, in accordance with the terminology of *Mystici Corporis*, after the conditions of membership of the Roman Catholic Church, understood as the visibly organized society of believers under the government of the Roman Pontiff. And so, in order to have a proper appreciation of the exact meaning and scope of the teaching of the Encyclical, we must first of all treat of the Church's previous teaching about membership of the Church, and then ask ourselves, secondly, what the Encyclical itself tells us about it.

1. The Church's previous teaching on the conditions of membership of the Church

As already indicated, we are here concerned with the conditions of membership of the visible Roman Catholic Church. This visible character of the Church has, according to her own teaching, itself several dimensions. The Church's teaching[4] itself distinguishes two powers in the Church as a visible society, which constitute it as a '*societas perfecta*': viz. the *potestas iurisdictionis* (under which we may subsume, at least in this present context, the absolute power of enacting binding decisions regarding Faith and Morals),[5] and the *potestas ordinis*. [7] These two powers are together the basis of the visible nature and visible unity of the Church, since authority is the source of the unity, community and consequent visibleness of a *societas perfecta*. These two powers cannot be regarded as two sides of one and the same thing which must always run parallel to each other. It is for instance possible, on the one hand, to have a 'power of jurisdiction' without there being a 'power of orders' (even when it is a power of jurisdiction by divine law, as e.g. that of a legitimately elected Pope, who has however not yet been consecrated Bishop; cf. CIC can. 219); and, on the other hand, there can be cases of a 'power of orders' without a 'power of jurisdiction', and this even in someone who is outside the Church. For the Church's doctrine regarding the validity of the sacraments, as brought out in the third century controversy about baptism by heretics, as well as in her fight against Donatism, shows that even outside the Church – for this was precisely the point at issue – there can be valid administration of the Sacraments and hence a 'power of orders'. Nevertheless, contrary to what might be expected, one must not conclude from this same doctrine that the power of orders can be looked upon as of no account for the constitution of the visible nature of the Church, simply because in certain circumstances this power can be exercised also outside the Church. For the important point to remember in this connection is that baptism is an act of sacramental and not, in itself, of jurisdictional power. Now, the very doctrine under discussion regards baptism basically as the act by which a person becomes a member of the Church, given the various other prerequisite conditions; and it is here quite obviously a question of the membership of the Church considered as a visible, and indeed jurisdictional body. For the Church regards every baptized person as fundamentally under her jurisdiction and obliged by her Canon Law (CIC can. 87). All this

[4] Cf. e.g. *CIC* can. 196; 210; 872; 948.

[5] We do not mean to decide by this the controverted question as to whether the powers of teaching, ruling and sanctifying are three specifically distinct powers, or whether there are in fact only two basic powers. The first alternative is the opinion of the majority of ecclesiologists, who explain that the first two of these powers (viz..the powers of teaching and of ruling) are only more closely associated with each other on account of the nonsacramental manner of their transmission; in this way (i.e. as power of jurisdiction – power transmitted in a legal manner) they are more clearly distinguished from the third power than from each other. The other alternative is the opinion of the majority of canonists. For the whole controversy cf. the bibliography in M. Nicholau-J. Salaverri, Sacrae Theologiae Summa I^2 (Madrid 1952), pp. 933-952; J. Salaverri, 'La triple potestad de la Iglesia', *Miscellanea Comillas* XIV (1950), pp. 5-84.

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makes it quite clear that both the jurisdictional and the sacramental powers of the Church are required as constitutive elements of her visible character. Therefore, when we speak of the membership of the Church in future, we must be understood to refer to membership of the Church under *both* these aspects, since the Church herself when dealing with this membership (as we shall see) does not distinguish between them. We do not mean to prejudge our question about the conditions of the Church's membership by these reflections on the constitutive elements of the Church and of her visibleness. Our intention in this has merely been to call attention, from the very start, to a [8] matter which will have to be taken into consideration when we now come to ask directly what the Church taught about the conditions of membership before the Encyclical was written.

Our procedure will be simply to try to put together, for a start, the pronouncements made by the Church's magisterium, and then to work out the essentials of this question from these various pronouncements.

a. In the first place, it is a *defined Dogma of Faith* that baptism is a necessary condition for belonging in any way to the Church; for baptism is acknowledged as the door through which a person enters the Church,[6] and the Church expressly does not claim any jurisdiction whatsoever over the non-baptized.[7]

It is similarly a defined Dogma that there can be members of the Church who are not in the state of grace, and indeed even such as will not attain salvation.[8]

[9] It must be qualified as a doctrine clearly taught by the ordinary magisterium of the Church and by Tradition (although admittedly it is not an explicitly defined Dogma), that – notwithstanding their baptism – those baptized persons are no longer members of the Church who have publicly (i.e. by a legally verifiable act) sided against the Church through schism or

[6] Third Council of Valence (855) can. 5, *Denz* 324; Council of Florence, *Denz* 696; Council of Trent, *Denz* 895; cf. *Denz* 869; *CIC* can. 12; the same is to be found also in the 1st Schema of the *Constitutio de Ecclesia*, cap. 1, submitted to the Vatican Council (*Collectio Lacensis* VII, 567): 'ad hanc vero Mystici Corporis unionem efficiendam Christus Dominus sacrum regenerationis et renovationis instituit lavacrum, quo filii hominum. . . membra essent ad invicem suoque divino Capiti. . . coniuncti.' Theologians refer to Mt 28.19; Jn 3.5 Ac 2.41; I Cor 12.12 *sq*.; Gal 3.27 *sq*.; Col 2.11 *sq*. For a more detailed statement of the relationship between baptism and membership of the Church, cf. J. Hamer, 'Le baptême et l'Eglise', *Irénikon* XXV (1952), pp. 142-164; pp. 263-275. Further texts in Gasparri-Serédi, *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes* II (Rome 1924), n. 394, p. 197.

[7] *Denz* 895; *CIC* can. 12; 87.

[8] *Denz* 424; 485 *sq*.; 588; 627; 629; 631; 838; 1422-1425; 1515. This question of the membership of sinners is emphasized also in the Encyclical (p. 203), and since we will not discuss it any further in what follows, we wish to make at least a very brief reference at this point to the development of this doctrine. On the one hand, the doctrine that in the 'Ark of the Church' and on her 'threshing-floor' there are to be found also 'impure animals' or mere 'chaff', and that the Church is not a Church of saints, is found already in the earliest period of theology. Yet even as late as St Augustine (despite his fight against Donatism), it remained comparatively vague whether these sinners are 'members' of the Church merely supposedly and in the order of external appearances, or whether they really belong to the Church. In other words, the exact meaning of the belonging '*in numero*' to the Church as opposed to the '*merito*' membership of the Church was not made clear. With Bellarmine it is clear that sinners are really members of the Church, and not merely apparently members. Yet even he underlines that they are *membra mortua et arida*, and that it is not necessary for membership of the Church that 'Christ should be active in all His members'. The Encyclical, on the other hand, calls sinners 'defiled' and 'sick' members and stresses that they are not deprived of all supernatural life in spite of their loss of sanctifying grace. This, of course, passes over the question of whether this applies also to those who have interiorly lost even supernatural faith, since in this context only those are dealt with who have preserved faith and hope. This omission is understandable, since it would otherwise have been necessary to adopt a definite position on the question of whether or not 'occult' heretics are members of the Church, a question with which the Pope obviously did not intend to deal explicitly in this Encyclical. In any case, we recognize in all this a growing tendency to regard the sinner ever more clearly as a member of the Church, and this in the sense that his membership of the Church in the external, juridically and sacramentally visible order is regarded as of consequence also for the inner impulses of grace which are received even by the sinner, and are received by him precisely as a member of the Church.

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heresy, and that by a mortally sinful act. For the whole of Tradition, and the practice of the Church concerning readmission of such heretics and schismatics, regards such *formal* heretics as no longer in the Church. Indeed, in the third century and at the time of Donatism, the entire controversy about baptism by heretics already hinged on the question of how baptism and ordination to the priesthood could be valid despite their being administered or received *outside* the Church. In this whole controversy, both opposing parties presupposed as obvious that those who are thus baptized or ordained in heresy, are not in the Church; for the whole theological problem was precisely whether and to what extent the sacrament could, in spite of that fact, still be valid and even fruitful. The same conclusion, viz. that formal heretics do not belong as members to the Church, follows also from the fact that the Church has constantly and emphatically taught (even if not by solemn definition), that she is not made up of the sum of Christian denominations.[9] If, however, public [10] and formal heretics and schismatics were members of the Church, then the one Church would nevertheless in fact be composed of the various Christian groups. For the Church is undoubtedly not to be simply equated with valid baptism as such, but is the people of God and hence a community. If, therefore, all baptized persons belonged as members to the Church simply and solely by the fact of their valid baptism, then the community of the Church would be made up also of those groups of baptized persons who have united together in the other Christian communions. The Church would in that case be objectively the sum total of Christian denominations – a conception which the magisterium of the Church expressly and resolutely rejects. We reach the same conclusion, lastly, from the Church's doctrine about the visible nature of her unity.[10] If formal public heretics and schismatics were also members of the Church, then there could no longer be any question of a visible unity of the Church through oneness of faith and of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, both of which factors are declared by the Church's teaching to be constitutive elements of her visible unity. And so, the Council of Florence[11] regards '*haeretici atque schismatici*' as '*intra Ecclesiam non existentes*'.

For the same reason we must, however, go even further now and state that even those public heretics and schismatics who either cannot be proved to be, or in fact are not, in heresy or schism through formal sin or subjective guilt are outside the Church. In short, even heretics and schismatics in good faith (i.e. merely 'material' heretics or schismatics) do not belong as members to the visible Church.

Of course, as is obvious from the very nature of things, only those are to be considered as (at least) material heretics or schismatics, who – by their own doing, even though through no fault of theirs – have cut themselves off from the Church's communion of belief or allegiance, or have moreover joined a non-Catholic communion. Merely passively received baptism outside the Catholic Church cannot as such [11] (and by itself) make the baptized infant a member of a non-Catholic communion. For baptism, of its whole nature, is in no way ordained to such an effect. And so,[12] those who are baptized outside the Church in infancy, remain members of the true Church until such time as they renounce that membership of the visible Church by their own personal action in the external forum, even though (in certain circumstances) they do so without any personal subjective guilt[13]; thus do they lose that

[9] *Denz* 1685 *sq*.; 1955; 2199. Cf. also the following canon, prepared for the Vatican Council but never actually voted on: '*Si quis dixerit veram Ecclesiam non esse unum in se corpus, sed ex variis dissitisque christiani nominis societatibus constare, per easque diffusam esse*; *aut varias societates ab invicem fidei professione dissidentes aeque communione seiunctas, tamquam membra vel partes unam et universalem constituere Christi Ecclesiam*, *A.S.*' (*Collectio Lacensis* VII, 577.)

[10] Cf. e.g. Leo XIII, *Satis cognitum*, *Denz* 1954 *sqq*.

[11] '*Decretum pro Jacobitis*' (1442) (*Denz* 714). Cf. also *Denz* 1641: To deny a defined dogma of faith is '*ab unitate Ecclesiae deficere*'.

[12] Cf. Denz 324; 696; 895. CIC can. 87 etc. Denz 869-870.

[13] When Benedict XIV says in his '*Breve Singulari nobis*' (1794), §13 (Gasparri, *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes*

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membership of the visible Church which they obtained by baptism in a purely passive manner and without any personal decision on their part, since they were at that stage incapable of receiving it in any other way.

The fact that even merely material heretics and schismatics are not members of the visible Church is proved from the same premises which we used in our proof for the non-membership of formal heretics and schismatics. We cannot, it is true, describe material heretics as heretics or schismatics pure and simple and in the fullest sense, as defined in CIC can. 1325 § 2. For this canon seems to require a *pertinacia*, and hence also a subjective guilt, for heresy or schism in the fullest sense. A Protestant in good faith does not have this.[14] But the [12] *Codex Iuris Canonici*, it should be noted, must add the factor of *pertinacia* to the notion of heresy or schism. For it is concerned with the question of ecclesiastical *penalties* for heresy and schism, and therefore cannot, in this context, omit the important factor of guilt. Nothing, however, is thereby decided as to whether this factor applies also to the notion of heresy or schism when the question of full membership of the Church is under discussion.

It was the almost universal teaching of theologians[15] even before the Encyclical, and indeed it follows from the very nature of things, that even material heretics and schismatics do not belong as members to the visible Church. For if those who are outside the Church by a non-imputable, but nevertheless public and juridical act, belonged nevertheless to the Church, then the visible Church could no longer be one in respect of her visibleness; nor could conformity of profession of faith and of subjection to the ecclesiastical juridical power be any longer constitutive elements of the unity of the Church.

It might be objected to this doctrine (i.e. that both formal and material public heretics and schismatics no longer belong as members to the Church, despite their baptism), that such heretics and schismatics are nevertheless still basically regarded as under the Church's authority (CIC can. 12). Apart from anything else, this can be quite clearly seen, for instance, by the fact that the ecclesiastical marriage impediments hold good even for heretics and schismatics (CIC can. 1038 § 2). One might say that non-membership of the visible Church and subjection to her laws are mutually exclusive. In reply to this it must be stated that full

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II (Rome 1924, p. 197): '*coopertum est eum, qui baptisma ab Haeretico suscepit, illius vi Ecclesiae Catholicae membrum effici*', nothing more is meant than what we have just indicated. For in the following paragraph (14) Benedict emphasizes explicitly that such a baptized person ceases to belong to the one Church and is deprived of all the goods enjoyed by those who 'are in the Church' ('*in Ecclesia versantes*') as soon as he accepts the error of the heresy of the baptizer. No distinction is made here between material and formal heretics. L. Richard is, therefore, wrong in trying to conclude from this text that every baptized person is a member of the Church, although this membership is '*anormale et incomplète*' in the case of material heretics ('*Une thèse fondamentale de l'oecuménisme*: *le baptême, incorporation visible à l'Eglise*', *NRT* LXXIV (1952), pp. 485-492). Benedict's teaching does not recognize any 'gradations' of membership, but, on the contrary, is absolutely in agreement in this respect with our interpretation of the teaching of Pius XII. Richard's interpretation (p. 488) of the Encyclical 'Mystici Corporis' is unacceptable, because it overlooks the fact that it is just not true that heretics '*veram fidem profitentur*', and it is beside the point whether one can or cannot say of them that *they* have severed *themselves* from the bond of the Body.

[14] Cf. already St Augustine, *Epistolae* 43 (*PL* 33, 160); Chr. Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae* I[5] (Freiburg 1915), II. n. 395. It goes without saying that even though one cannot do other than use the word 'heresy' when speaking of merely material 'heresy', any suggestion of personal depreciation in this word must, however, be avoided. This word qualifies a doctrine, and not the persons who profess this doctrine in good faith and with unwavering conviction.

[15] A few theologians hold the opposite view. Thus the *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* I[1] (cf. note 5 above), n. 1030 (p. 839) names the following as holding this view: Franzelin, De Groot, d'Herbigny, Capéran, Terrien. The following theologians of the last decades are enumerated in support of the view proposed above in the text: de San, Billot, Straub, Muncunill, van Noort, Zubizarreta, Michelitsch, Dorsch, Lercher, Dieckmann, de Guibert, Fraghi, Stolz, Vellico. The first group includes also A. Malvy (*RSR* XVII [1927], pp. 29-35), M. Schmaus (*Katholische Dogmatik* III, 1 [Munich 1940], pp. 171 *sq*.) etc., as well as those canonists whom we will mention later on.

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membership of the Church includes several [13] factors in its extension as a direct consequence of the complexity of the constitutive elements of the visible nature of the one Church. It follows from this that, even when only one of the factors required for this membership is absent, there is no longer any question of membership of the one Church in its proper and *fullest* sense. However, it does not follow that, even in such a case, there cannot be any consequences of a juridical nature due to some other factor which still survives (and indeed cannot be lost) and which also contributes to the constitution of membership. In other words, the baptized person is formally subject to the Church's authority through baptism – not because he always and *ipso facto* becomes simply a member of the Church through baptism, but precisely because subjection to the Church is an immediate consequence of baptism, quite apart from the fact of whether baptism has actually also given membership of the Church or not.[16]

We will, in the meantime, pass over the various questions controverted among theologians, up to the time of the Encyclical, about full membership or non-membership of the visible Church as far as the so-called *excommunicati vitandi* are concerned. Furthermore, we leave completely to one side the question about the position, in this respect, of those whose baptism is only putatively valid.

There remains, however, one further question of importance for a thorough understanding of the membership of the Church. This is the question about whether those still belong to the Church or not who have *inwardly* abandoned the true Faith, without this apostacy revealing itself in the external forum. This question too has been controverted among theologians up until now. Important theologians, such as Suarez, Billuart, Franzelin, Hurter, Michelitsch, Stolz, Fraghi, Liégé, etc., deny that these occult apostates belong to the Church as members, whereas the great majority of theologians, following Cano, Bellarmine, Palmieri, Mazzella, Billot, Straub and Pesch, affirm their [14] membership of the Church.[17] If we leave out of consideration, in the meantime, the question as to whether (and in what direction) the Encyclical may have clarified this issue, then we must, absolutely speaking and for internal reasons, prefer the second of these opinions. For it is impossible to see, for one thing, why such a merely inner unbeliever should belong any less to the Church than other sinners, in whose case it is absolutely certain according to the Church's teaching that they are still in the Church. When Franzelin declares that the Church is the kingdom of truth and that, therefore, someone who denies this truth no longer belongs to the Church, then if this reasoning were correct, we would have to say also that the Church is the kingdom of love and hence an unjustified person could no longer belong to her. Moreover, a bishop or Pope, according to the universal teaching and one which is necessary for the steady and sure continuance of ecclesiastical authority, keeps his ecclesiastical powers even if he is occultly unbelieving in the purely internal forum. But possession of ordinary ecclesiastical authority and non-membership of the visible Church are mutually exclusive notions.[18] Therefore even such

[16] For a more detailed treatment of the distinction between legal status, the nature of being a subject (Untertanenschaft) and membership in the domain of the Church, cf. A. Gommenginger, 'Bedeutet die Exkommunikation Verlust der Kirchengliedschaft?', *ZKT* LXXIII (1951), pp. 1-71 (and for this particular question, cf. above all pp. 17-25). The difference between membership and subjection to the authority and law of the Church is found clearly expressed as early as, for instance, Benedict XIV ('Breve Singulari nobis', of 1749, §14: Gasparri, *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes* II [Rome 1924], p. 197).

[17] The *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* (cf. note 5 above) gives (on p. 839) the following as examples of further names: Kilber, van Laak, de San, Wilmers, Tanquerey, Muncunill, Felder, Zubizarreta, d'Herbigny, Schultes, Dieckman, Vellico, Parente, Hervé.

[18] It is true that 'having legal authority' in the Church and 'being a member' of the Church are not formally identical notions (cf. Beumer, *Theologie und Glaube* XXXVIII , p. 256). But it is contrary to the nature of an ordinary sovereign power in a community, that it should be capable of being exercised by a non-member or outsider. For ordinary, enduring exercise of a function proper to the nature of a community does, in fact,

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occult heretics and schismatics must remain members of the Church. Finally, the opposite opinion is guilty in the last analysis of mixing up two spheres which must be most carefully distinguished, viz. the sphere of the inner and personal moral decision and internal grace, on the one hand – and, on the other hand, the sphere of visible juridical matters [15] and the visible sacramental sign. Sacramental sign, public profession of the truth, external belonging to the order of the Church – on the one hand – and sacramental grace, inner existential ratification of the truth of faith and inner affirmation of the order and unity of the Church through love – on the other hand – are each things which are indeed essentially related to one another. However, they must also be basically distinguished from one another and that to such an extent that, for example, according to the teaching even of the primitive Church, the sacramental sign can be entirely valid without the sacramental grace being actually obtained, and that, conversely, justifying grace can be given without the justifying sacrament. And just as these two spheres are to be clearly distinguished from one another, so also are the constitutive elements of both these spheres different from each other and in the same way as the spheres themselves. Hence, the elements of one sphere can be absent without the elements of the other sphere ceasing thereby to exist. For the same reason, the question about the conditions of membership of the public and juridical communion of belief must not be identified with the question about the conditions of the inner and personal act of faith. The opinion of Suarez and Franzelin does, however, wrongly identify these two questions.

b. With that we come to the *inner organic conception* (*Systematik*) and argument of the statements about who belongs to the Church which we have so far simply collected together in a more *a-posteriori* manner from the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church.

As Leo XIII already argued in '*Satis cognitum*' (1896), the Church is, in conformity with the Hypostatic Union and with the work of salvation in general, both a visible and an invisible structure, a juridically organized, visible society and the inner communion of those who are united in Christ and through the Spirit with the God of the supernatural life. These two dimensions of the Church are essentially related to one another, and this relationship, although it reaches much further in reality, has been thought through most systematically in theology, and has been fought over most explicitly in the history of Dogma, under the heading of the relationship between the sacramental sign and its effect of grace. Now the sacramental sign can be validly posited without there being effected the supernatural reality of grace signified by it. And, conversely, the supernatural reality of grace can, under certain circumstances, be given without the positing [16] of the sacramental sign. In general, then, the question of the conditions for the validity of the positing of the sacramental sign must be clearly distinguished from the question of the conditions for the real happening of the supernatural grace which is signified and normally called into being by this sign. Just as all this is the case, so we must fundamentally observe the same relationship, difference and distinction with regard to the connection between the two dimensions of the Church and with regard to the relationship of the human person to them both.

In this regard it is furthermore essential that we observe the following: when the usage of the Church speaks of 'Sacrament', this term is taken to signify directly the sacramental sign (i.e. the plane of the public historical and tangible proceeding) and only indirectly also the sacramental grace (i.e. in so far as the sign causes the grace), without it being thereby denied

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constitute membership. This does not mean to say that a merely delegated power, and one which is exercised *per modum actus*, can never be exercised in a particular case even by a non-member. Consider, for instance, the case (if this is really *ad rem* here – which we will leave an open question) of the confessional jurisdiction of an apostate priest in respect of the dying (*CIC* can. 882). Leo XIII is perfectly justified in saying ('Satis cognitum'): '*...cum absurdum sit opinari, qui extra Ecclesiam est, eum in Ecclesia praeesse.*' Cf. A. Gommenginger, *ZKT* LXXIII (1951), pp. 51 *sqq*.

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that the sacramental sign and the sacramental grace are objectively connected. The same is true of the ecclesiastical usage regarding the term 'Church'. No matter how true it is that grace, inner faith and the union of men with Christ and with each other in the Holy Ghost through grace, belong to the full reality of the Church – and no matter how little true it is that the full objective reality of the nature of 'Church' is accounted for by a legal organization – it is nevertheless a fact that the term 'Church' is employed in the following quite definite sense in ecclesiastical usage. Like the notion of 'Sacrament', the term 'Church' refers in ecclesiastical usage directly to the external, visible and legally structured community of believers. It refers only indirectly to men's inner faith and union with Christ by grace, in so far, namely, as these, both as signs and as tangible realities, are effected and become present in this world through the visible Church. It is true that, to some extent, one may not find this usage too obvious in itself and it is undoubtedly in a certain sense merely a question of a *de facto*, fixed terminology; nevertheless we must take cognizance of this. This fact must be respected by Catholic theology and also in the proclamation of the Faith. It must be fully fathomed if there are not to be continual misunderstandings, and it has undoubtedly (as we shall see later) its own positive and essential importance. Thus when we ask about the membership of the Church, it is a question of the Church as a visible historically tangible unity (for, as we have just pointed out, this is the direct object of inquiry when it is a question of the membership of the 'Church'). Hence this question, to put it in this particular way, is posed on the plane of the sacramental sign and [17] not on the plane of personal attitudes and inner decisions or inner grace. For this reason, therefore, all those and only those points which affect the Church as a visible, public and juridical society are significant and decisive for the question of membership of the Church understood in this precise manner. Since the visibleness and visible unity of the Church are constituted by the sacramental and juridical authority of the Church (which latter includes in its turn the teaching and ruling authority of the Church[19]), all and only those belong to the Church as members who are visibly, i.e. in the external forum, subject to these two powers of the Church. And everyone who, on the social plane, is cut off or has withdrawn himself from one or both of these powers, is not a member of the Church. From this fundamental principle there follow then quite clearly the individual propositions which we have established in the first instance in an *a-posteriori* manner under (a) from the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church and the teaching of theologians. Since the theological note of each individual proposition does not appertain to it as a consequence of a systematic principle, but only according to the manner in which it is presented by the magisterium of the Church, these individual propositions retain their different, theologically gradated notes, as stated under (a).

c. At this point we wish right away to append a few words on the statement of this question as frequently found in Catholic *canonistic literature*. In contrast to dogmatic Ecclesiology, certain canonists very often state our question as if every baptized person necessarily is, and always remains, a member of the Church (taken as a perfect society), in such a way that even a heretic, schismatic or *excommunicatus vitandus* is still a member of the Church, and that only his rights as a member are to a large extent in abeyance. This conception which has become much more common in canonistic writings particularly through the work of A. Hagen,[20] continued to be put forward even after the [18] Encyclical, as e.g. by Klaus

[19] Cf. Note 5 above.

[20] A. Hagen, *Die kirchliche Mitgliedschaft* (Rothenburg 1938). Hagen's view is not quite clear. Cf. also note 13 above. A similar view is held by J. B. Haring, *Grundzüge des katholischen Kirchenrechts*[3] (Gras 1924), pp. 38 and 942; G. Ebers, *Grundriss des katholjschen Kirchenrechts* (Vienna 1950), pp. 244 and 254; P. Minges, 'Gehören Exkommunizierte und Häretiker noch zur Kirche?', *Passauer Monatsschrift* XII (1902), pp. 339-347; L. Valpertz, 'Kirchenbann und Kirchenmitgliedschaft', *Theologie und Glaube* XIX (1927), pp. 254-258; N.

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Mörsdorf.[21] According to Mörsdorf it is through baptism alone that an essential membership is given which cannot be dissolved either by the baptized person himself or by the Church. This he calls 'constitutional membership', and this is the basis for an operative (*tätige*) membership (of an active and passive nature) which activates the legal status, both active and passive, conferred with baptism. Now, according to Mörsdorf, heresy, schism or ecclesiastical penalties give rise to a more or less far-reaching curtailment of membership-*rights*, without the membership proper, i.e. the 'constitutional' membership, being thereby destroyed. This conception bases itself on the following considerations. On the one hand, it considers it impossible to decide anything definite about the conditions of membership of the Church from the allegedly vague notion of the Church's nature as found in Fundamental Theology. On the other hand, it is possible to decide our question definitely (and in the sense of this canonical conception) by means of the declarations of Canon Law, which after all are also significant expressions of the teaching authority. For this they appeal particularly to canon 87 of the CIC (and to its sources), which declares: Baptismate homo constituitur in Ecclesia Christi persona cum omnibus christianorum iuribus et officiis, nisi ad iura quod attinet, obstet obex, ecclesiasticae communionis vinculum impediens, vel lata ab Ecclesia censura. Canon Law seems therefore to acknowledge only baptism as the constitutive element for personal legal status and hence for membership of the Church, so that, with enduring membership in the case of all baptized persons, it can only be a question of how far they possess the rights and duties which in the normal course of events spring from membership of the Church.

To begin with, we can concede without any difficulty that this difference of opinion is *in part* merely a matter of difference in terminology. But even in this respect there remains the objective question as to which conception renders the terminological usage of the Church [19] more exactly. But furthermore, this is after all *not merely* a matter of terminology. For once we presuppose the conception of these canonists, there immediately arises, for example, the still objectively speaking most important question as to whether only the 'constitutional' membership is necessary for salvation according to the Dogma concerned, or whether operative membership is also required for this. There is at least the danger that in this canonistic explanation one regards the constitutional membership alone as necessary for salvation in the sense of Catholic Tradition. But this would undoubtedly be completely contrary to the Church's understanding of the Faith, since she emphasizes even to baptized heretics and schismatics the necessity for salvation of a membership of the Church which they do not possess.

If we now turn to the arguments of the canonists, we will have to state the following (even prescinding for the moment from the Encyclical): To begin with, it is not true to say that the conception of the conditions for Church membership as found in Fundamental Theology proceeds from an absolutely controversial conception of the nature of the Church. For no matter how hotly debated and deeply problematical a 'definition' of the nature of the Church may be, it is quite clear and definite from the Church's doctrinal pronouncements that the Church is an undivided and visible quantity which essentially requires for its constitution the unity of Faith and of Law. And the conception of the ecclesiologists with regard to the prerequired conditions of Church membership follows from this with logical necessity, quite apart from the way in which they may try to capture the sense of the Church's nature more exactly in a definition.

Turning now more in particular to their appeal to can. 87 itself (and to its sources), we can

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Hilling, 'Die kirchliche Mitgliedschaft nach der Enzyklika Mystici Corporis Christi und nach dem *CIC*', Archiv für das katholische Kirchenrechts CXXV (1951-52), pp. 122-129.

[21] Kl. Mörsdorf, 'Die Kirchengliedschaft im Lichte der kirchlichen Rechtsordnung', *Theologie und Glaube* (1944), pp. 115-131; *id*., *Lehrbuch des Kirchenrechts* I[7] (1953), pp. 183 *sqq*.

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quite readily concede that the formulation of this canon does not take the conception, which we have here proposed as the common (although not defined) teaching of the Church on our question, as much into consideration as might be desirable. One is not, however, forced to say that this canon contradicts this teaching and that it is therefore a final argument in favour of the above-mentioned canonistic conception regarding our question. For one may quite rightly suppose that this canon and its sources have in mind the normal cases of baptism, in other words baptism in the Catholic Church (and particularly such baptism of those who have not yet reached the use of reason). Since, therefore, baptism in these cases does actually make the person a member of the Church by its very inner [20] nature, provided of course that the other prerequired conditions are fulfilled (which can be presumed, since they are in the same line of intention as baptism, the sacrament of faith and love), we may quite safely affirm with the Code that baptismate homo constituitur in Ecclesia Christi persona, without it being necessary to mention explicitly the other conditions of actual membership of the Church. If the canon recognizes over and above this only a limitation of the *rights* of membership, then this must simply mean that it has only those baptized persons in mind who are and remain members of the Church (and who as such experience a limitation of their rights), without wishing to declare itself on the question of whether a loss of the real membership of the Church is possible or not. The opposite interpretation of can. 87 also presupposes, without proving it, that having legal status in the Church, being a subject of the Church and having membership of the Church are all convertible or at least inseparably connected terms. But these notions must be distinguished. And when we do distinguish them, then there is a question of whether can. 87 speaks of proper membership at all, or merely of the legal status and the subject relationship of the baptized person to the Church.[22] Even if we leave this an open question, it still remains true that this canon is not a cogent argument against the traditional doctrine.

Moreover, the very concept of operative membership is itself full of problems. It presupposes that there is such a thing as non-operative membership. Now it is, of course, correct to say that there are greater or lesser degrees of enjoyment, by a member of the Church, of the rights derived from his membership of the Church – but that fact alone would not mean a change in the sort of membership *as such*.

Furthermore, if we give the terms constitutional and operative membership their normal sense, then we mean by these that anyone who, even without operative membership, possesses constitutional membership, is a member of the Church and is not separated from her. According to Mörsdorf therefore, a baptized schismatic or heretic would still be *in* the Church, because he still has constitutional membership. But the Encyclical states exactly the opposite when it [21] declares[23] that schism, heresy and apostasy cause *hominem ab Ecclesiae corpore* separari.

Finally, this whole canonistic argumentation jumps to conclusions. For it concludes from

[22] For the interpretation of this canon cf. A. Gommenginger, *loc. cit.*, *ZKT* LXXIII (1951), pp. 17 *sqq*.

[23] *AAS* XXXV (1943), p. 203. The same statement is to be found also in the *Catechismus Romanus* (I, 9, 12): '*tria tantummodo hominum genera ab Ecclesia excluduntur, primo infideles, deinde haeretici et schismatici, prostremo excommunicati...haeretici et schismatici, quia ab Ecclesia desciverunt, neque enim illi magis ad Ecclesiam spectant, quam transfugae ad exercitum pertineant, a quo defecerunt: non negandum tamen quin in Ecclesia potestate sint, ut qui ab ea in iudicium vocentur, puniantur et anathemate damnentur...*'. We already mentioned above that according to the Council of Florence, too, heretics are not in the Church (*Denz* 714). Using Mörsdorf's terminology, however, we would have to say: they are in the Church – only they do not have any active or passive functions of membership (either through their own fault or simply through being barred); for 'just as baptism, once validly administered, may never be repeated, so also is incorporation into the Church irrevocable once it has taken place, i.e. constitutional membership is indissoluble,' (*loc. cit.*, p. 184). But anyone who is irrevocably and indissolubly incorporated into the Church, can never be 'outside' the Church or separated' from her. Yet the latter is precisely what the terminology of the Church affirms.

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the fact of being subject to the legal power of the Church to the subject's membership of the Church. It is, of course, evident that a member of the Church must be subject to her. But that the subject is *ipso facto* a member, is the very thing that has to be proved and cannot be presupposed as self-evident. For the passive object of the legal claim of a community does not for that reason have to be already, without any further conditions having to be fulfilled, a member of that community.

When, quite apart from this, the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church say that a person becomes a member of the Church through baptism, we must explain that such formulations wish to emphasize that baptism is the first and most basic condition of membership of the Church. And such formulations presuppose that normally the other conditions are fulfilled automatically together with baptism, without necessarily implying by this that a person is already a member of the Church in a true and proper sense by baptism *alone*, even apart from his being subject to the authority of the Church. Whenever (as they frequently do) the sources of CIC can. 87 (and, by the way, the Encyclical too; cf. p. 201) explain the belonging to the Church and the incorporation in the Mystical Body of Christ as an effect of [22] baptism, the following fact must also be borne in mind. It is a universally accepted usage in the theology of the Sacraments to attribute certain effects to certain Sacraments without any further qualification, even if these Sacraments have these effects only under certain conditions which are not always necessarily fulfilled. Although we ascribe, for example, inner rebirth simply to baptism, no one will hold for that reason that it follows from such a statement that this effect will always be present whenever baptism is validly administered. For in fact this rebirth is effected only under certain further conditions, even although these are not explicitly mentioned in such a statement. Thus when the Council of Florence, for example, declares in the *Decretum pro Armenis* that the effect of baptism is membership of Christ in the Body of the Church,[24] it is arbitrary and illegitimate to suppose that this effect in particular is always and immediately brought about, without any further conditions, whenever baptism is valid. Only one of the effects of baptism is 'theologically certainly' caused by every valid baptism, viz. the sacramental character. Now it is indeed true to say that the sacramental character is directed in some way towards membership of the Church – viz. in so far as it is in its nature of *signum configurativum*, *distinctivum* and *dispositivum* – the condition and root of all the other effects of baptism. But just as it is not true that the other effects of baptism are always given and inseparably bound up with the character, so it is also untrue to affirm this as necessary of membership of the Church. If we now conceive *fides* and *communio ecclesiastica* as conditions of baptism received properly in every respect (and this is a completely reasonable conception), then there is no reason why membership of the Church should not be declared a consequence of the character and hence of baptism – with the tacit condition, it is true, that *fides vera* and *communio ecclesiastica* are present – without it being necessary to underline this expressly.[25]

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[24] *Denz* 696. Cf. the 'Decretum pro Jacobitis' (Denz 714) in the same Council: Heretics are '*intra catholicam Ecclesiam non existentes*', they do not remain in the '*ecclesiastica corporis unitas*', but must first of all be rejoined ('*aggregari*') to her.

[25] When Mörsdorf says (in the 6th edition of Eichmann [1947], p. 169, note 2), that the conditions demanded here over and above baptism are on the 'plane of free personal decision', he presumably means to imply by this that the conception which we have advocated here, demands simultaneously completely disparate things for membership of the Church. The following must, therefore, be kept in mind in this connection. On the one hand, even valid baptism is impossible without an 'intention' on the part of the baptizer. But this 'intention' is also on the 'plane of free personal decision', even though it does not need to be a morally good act. (Cf. for this H. Schillebeeckx, *De Sacramentele Heilseconomie* [Antwerp 1952], pp. 457-479.) On the other hand, when we speak of faith and obedience to the Church's authority as relevant to membership of the Church, we do not refer to the moral and supernatural side of this faith and this obedience, but to faith and obedience in so far as they are data of the external forum. After all, it has been explicitly stated that the 'occult' heretic still belongs to the

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[23] In rejecting the above canonistic conception, we do not mean to dispute the fact that man can have a closer or looser connection with the Church, even when, as we have established, he has not fulfilled all the conditions of membership of the Church. This looser way of belonging to the Church, however, can come about (although only in an essentially lesser measure) even in the case of a non-baptized person, as e.g. in the case of a non-baptized person who is in the state of grace. It is, therefore, impossible to understand why the canonistic conception wants to situate the step between belonging and non-belonging precisely in baptism, and why it does not want to use the term 'membership' to describe full and complete membership. For there is an alternative. We must either draw the border-line between 'belonging' and 'non-belonging' on the plane of inner personal being, and therefore between the 'justified' and the 'unjustified' person – and in that case we would, on the one hand, have to reckon even non-baptized persons [24] as belonging to the Church, and, on the other hand, reckon sinners as no longer belonging to the Church (which is impossible according to the terminology of the Church). Or we must draw this line on the plane of the visible and of what is verifiable in the historical and legal order (and *hence* also then on the plane of the sacramental sign), and then we cannot understand why baptism should have an essential priority (with regard to the constitution of membership of the Church) over the communion with the Church's unity of faith and law; the only way to understand this would be to conceive baptism in a wider and fuller sense as including also an external avowal of the Church's communion of belief and law. But in that case our question would have been pointless from the very start.

d. In conclusion, in order not to give any false impressions, we would like to add the following with regard to what the Church taught before the Encyclical about her membership. When this teaching states that only baptized Catholics belong to the Church, it is not thereby maintained that there is nothing Christian *outside the Catholic Church*. In Part II of this inquiry we will have to treat expressly of the question about the possibility of grace for those who do not belong in the full sense to the Church. But even prescinding from that, the doctrine expounded above does not maintain that Christianity simply ceases at the borders laid down by this doctrine. After all, it is in the first place a Dogma of Faith that even baptism by a heretic is valid and, under usual conditions, also fruitful. And it is a self-evident fact that the Sacrament of baptism is actually administered in this way even outside the Church. This fact necessarily represents not only a part of the grace of Christ in the world, but also a continued embodiment in history and a visible appearance of the divine causality of grace in Christ. Furthermore, there are the Holy Scriptures even outside the Church, as the Word of God – and men who receive the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God in faith and obedience. That too is a part of the continuation in the flesh and in the human word of the visibleness of the eternal Logos in this world. There is still, furthermore, an apostolic

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Church. But as data of the external and verifiable legal order, the external profession of faith and the corresponding obedience to the Church's authority are on radically the same plane as the '*professio fidei*' given in baptism – on the same plane as that of the sacramental signs, which are also connected with a 'forum' (sacramentale). In the 7th edition of Eichmann (Paderborn 1953, pp. 183 *sq*.), Mörsdorf concedes (for adult Christians) the three essential marks of membership of the Church and then distinguishes two 'strata' in this membership, since one of the essential marks depends on God alone, whereas the other two depend on a free and personal decision of the Church member. He then characterizes these two 'strata' once more as 'constitutional membership' and 'operative membership', i.e. he distinguishes two memberships and not two strata of the one membership. And then he finally states once more that 'both (memberships) together form the essence of Church membership for the adult Christian'. I still find that this terminology is unfortunate. For one cannot help asking oneself: is there one membership or are there two? What Mörsdorf describes as 'operative membership' ('the personal realization of the Christ-likeness imprinted on the baptized in a consecratory manner') is not really an active membership, but the activation of membership.

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succession even outside the Church, especially in the Eastern Churches, at least in respect of the *potestas ordinis* and at least in respect of the material connection of the present-day office of Bishop with the Church of the Apostles. And this apostolic succession in these Churches is not only factually present, but is also affirmed as [25] a necessary and inalienable Christian reality. In this way too is found a part of that reality which even inside the Church belongs to the basic elements of that Church. Even outside the Church the will to Tradition is still alive to a large extent, i.e. the consciousness of being bound in conscience to the truth which Christ brought us and which must be transmitted as his message, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost and from generation to generation. In brief, there is Christian doctrinal truth (even though not in its undiminished fullness and purity) even outside the Church. And conversely, it is perfectly true that the Roman Catholic Church knows itself as the only Church of Christ, And it is perfectly true that she stresses that the one Church of Christ does not still have to be created but is already and always was achieved in her. Yet it is equally true that it is not thereby claimed that the catholic fullness of truth, grace and sanctifying love has already always and everywhere been manifested and represented *actually* and fully in this concrete Catholic Church, or even that this is possible without the return into the Church, as to their father's house, of the separated Christian communions (and even of the pagan peoples). And these must bring with them into the Church that aspect of Christian realization which they alone can achieve in full measure on account of their racial, historical and cultural characteristics. Even the one Catholic Church, therefore, only really attains the realization of the fullness of its *actual* reality and *explicit* development, when these our separated brethren bring it back to where it really belongs and is truly at home. This is true all the more so because the present-day separated Christian communions cannot be simply put on a par with those heretical secessions from the one Church which the Fathers of old and pre-Reformation Tradition had before their eyes and against which they fought. In those days, the Fathers of the Church saw themselves faced with heresies which in relation and comparison to the one Church possessed nothing in terms of actual historical realization apart from heresy, error pure and simple, and (at the most) perhaps also that general truth-impulse towards greater and clearer truth more explicitly unfolded, which can be the real strength even of error. But over and above this these heresies and schisms had nothing. Anything else they possessed, they had brought with them, in precisely the form in which they possessed it, from the Mother Church: law, liturgy, Scriptures, etc. They were in very fact and in every respect only less than the true Church. Today the Church finds itself in quite a different [26] situation. She is faced with Christian communions which have a long history, a history of many hundred years. This history is, however, in this case not *only* the history of error and of a progressive loss of the substance of Christian reality. It is also and, at the same time, always a history of the development of genuinely Christian possibilities. The latter are indeed present in germ and radically in the one true Church and *can* unfold themselves in her. But it is not necessarily certain that they are always and everywhere equally present 'in act' in the Church, in the way in which they are present in the separated Christian communions. That it is also a history of this kind, is a historical fact which we can view without concern, since it is a living witness not, properly speaking, to heresy, but to the power of the one Christian truth and grace even outside the Church, which is a known fact. This is not the place to submit these Christian realizations in the non-Catholic Christian communions for examination and to compare them with the Church. But if there are such factors which, on the one hand, are genuine realizations of the Christian spirit and of Christian grace outside the Church and of which, on the other hand, it is not certain *a priori* that they must already be actually present to the same extent and in the same measure within the Church, then there arises a task for the Church which she did not have towards the heresies and schisms of earlier times. Previously heresy was *nothing more* than the lost Son who brings nothing with him. Today such a

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Christian communion can bring with it genuine Christian realizations which represent an enrichment of the Church. For this the Church, however, needs to have discernment and needs to be in a receptive preparedness. Men in the Church must not simply identify the present state of Christian realization (in theology, culture, Christian life, etc.) with that Christian reality which the Church has been commissioned to realize; they must be ready to learn in all humility even from those who, while they are outside, possess already (in spite of all the error and loss of Christian reality) part of those riches which we are meant to have, and indeed have already '*in potentia*', but which we do not always and in every respect possess '*actu*' and perhaps never will until everything Christian which has been scattered, has been brought into the one Church of Christ.

2. The teaching of the Encyclical about membership of the Church

We must now look at the teaching of the Encyclical against the above background. We will first of all state this teaching, then give a [27] more detailed explanation of it and finally, estimate its doctrinal significance.

a. The teaching of the Encyclical.

The Encyclical positively determines to begin with who belongs to the Church as a member (AAS 202): Only he is a member of the Church (*Ecclesiae membrum*) who firstly has received baptism, secondly professes the true Faith (*veram fidem profiteri*) and thirdly, has neither severed himself from the bond of the corporate ecclesiastical body (*corporis compago*) nor has been separated from it by the ecclesiastical authority. From this it follows, in the negative sense, that the unbaptized and those who have set themselves in opposition to the Church through a profession of faith different from the Faith of the Church or through a radical rejection of the authority of the Church (*fide vel regimine dividi*), are no longer members of the Church.

b. Indications for a more detailed explanation of the principles laid down by the Encyclical.

Prescinding for the moment from the question of the membership, or respectively non-membership, of the *excommunicatus vitandus*, we can state that these principles of the Encyclical do not mean anything more, either objectively or in formulation, than what we have established under 1) as the general teaching before the Encyclical.

With regard to the necessity of baptism for belonging to the Church, the phrase '*regenerationis lavacrum recepisse*' will no doubt not need to be interpreted as a decision about whether someone's belonging to the Church can be based on a merely putatively valid baptism or not. But it is clear, in any case, that even according to the Encyclical no one is a member of the visible Church who has not positively received sacramental baptism (which is more than '*sacramentum in voto*').

With regard to the second condition for full membership of the Church, viz. the *professio verae fidei*, we think the following must be said: The Encyclical gives nowhere even the slightest indication that it wishes to decide the hitherto controverted question about whether occult heretics are still members of the Church or not. The majority of theologians before the Encyclical had counted such heretics as still belonging to the Church, and one of these theologians was Bellarmine, [28] a classic author in Ecclesiology who is cited in the Encyclical. There is, therefore, no real reason for seeing in the Encyclical a confirmation of the opinion that occult heretics no longer belong to the Church. There is no reason for this even on the grounds of terminology. For '*veram fidem* profiteri' can be understood, without forcing it at all, of the *public* profession of faith, even when prescinding in this from the

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question of whether the inner and personal decision of faith corresponds to this external profession or not. This does not mean that the Encyclical has by its wording decided the previously controverted question in favour of Bellarmine's view. It simply means that the text of the Encyclical contains nothing which militates against his view.[26]

The Encyclical makes no distinction between material and formal heresy with regard to the fact of being separated in faith as a reason for the lack of membership. We have, therefore, no right to read such a distinction into the wording of the Encyclical and thus to try to understand the '*fide dividi*', which divides someone from the Church, as referring only to formal heresy. This is seen to be all the less admissible when it is realized that we cannot attribute a *professio verae fidei* even to a material heretic, and yet this is an explicitly demanded prerequired condition for belonging to the Church. In the abstract, on the other hand, the doctrinal pronouncement of the Encyclical retains a meaning even if it were understood merely of formal heretics. It no doubt follows from this that even the distinction in theological notes given above under (1), relative to the membership of formal and merely material heretics, is not abolished by the Encyclical. This affirmation has of course no particular significance in practice and objectively speaking. For neither before nor after the Encyclical was it possible, once one had evaluated the various objective reasons correctly, to hold [29] that material heretics belong to the Church, in spite of the different opinion of a few isolated theologians.[27]

'Those who have severed themselves from communion with the ecclesiastical body' means of course schismatics. It would be important even objectively speaking to examine at what point and by what means such a separation takes place in the concrete. According to CIC can. 1325 § 2, where the notion of 'schismatic' is more clearly described, this separation from the communion of the Church can apparently take place even without consequent entry into a non-Catholic communion. One would therefore have to inquire into the question of [30]

[26] It must, however, be added, it is true, that the official German version of the Encyclical has not been particularly felicitous in its translation of this *veram fidei profiteri*. For there is a certain difference in the genius of the German language between '*den wahren Glauben bekennen*' ('to profess the true faith' – Tr.), as stated by the Latin text, and '*sich zum wahren Glauben bekennen*' ('to profess oneself an adherent of the true faith' – Tr.), as stated by the German translation. The careless reader might thus get the idea that this '*sich zum wahren Glauben bekennen*' is always and of necessity also a matter of an inner personal faith, so that even the occult heretic or apostate no longer belongs to the Church. This the official text of the Encyclical not only does not state, hut evidently also did not wish to state.

[27] The following must be noted for the correct appreciation of this sentence. We start from the theological note which was established with regard to the doctrine that formal heretics do not belong to the Church. We determined this Note above in the sense that it is not an explicitly defined dogma of faith, but a dogma which is proposed by the ordinary magisterium and by Tradition, that formal heretics do not belong to the Church. Thus Lercher-Schlagenhaufen, for instance, (*Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae* I[3] [Innsbruck 1939], n. 407), gives *saltem fidei proximum* as the Note of this doctrine; and *Sacrae theologiae Summa* (cf. note 5 above): *implicite definitum praesertim in Conc. Florentino* (p.842). But the objective reasons for the non-membership of formal and of material heretic-decisive as it is from a moral point of view – is quite intangible on this plane. Otherwise even the occult heretic would have to be regarded as outside the Church. Since there is such an immediate inferential connection between the proposition about material heretics and the doctrine about formal heretics, we will have to say that the non-membership of the Church of material heretics may not be disputed. Nothing that has been said here attaches an adverse theological Note to the canonistic view which affirms that all baptized persons belong to the Church or are members of the Church. For this view refers equally to formal and material heretics. And so this canonistic conception is not necessarily affected by the theological Note given with regard to material heretics (viz. 'theologically certain'), to the extent and degree in which such a conception and terminology does not have to be regarded as being necessarily directed against the doctrine of the non-membership of formal heretics (since one may say that it works with a different set of concepts, which objectively do not necessarily express anything contrary to this doctrine). Of course, whether this canonistic view agrees sufficiently with the Church's official usage is quite another question. We have already stated that we do not consider it very felicitous but fear, on the contrary, practically unavoidable misunderstandings as a consequence of this view.

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whether the refusal of *communicatio cum membris Ecclesiae* (CIC *loc. cit.*) cannot also be effected in certain circumstances even without an officially registered (*standesamtlichen*) secession from the Church, but simply by a permanent non-participation in practical Catholic life. For such non-participation can in certain circumstances manifest a radical rejection of the *communicatio cum membris Ecclesiae*, even if this non-participation in Catholic life is not a direct and express refusal of obedience to the Roman Pontiff. But we cannot enter any further into this question within the present context. Suffice it simply to add that this question might under certain circumstances be important also from a pastoral point of view.

It is furthermore significant that the Encyclical also recognizes a dissolution of Church membership by a positive act of the ecclesiastical authority itself. The Encyclical does not say what form such an act must take in order to have this effect. If, however, there is to be such an act at all – and in this connection we can safely take it as self-evident that such an act of the ecclesiastical authority is not only radically possible, but is moreover already provided for in practice by the Church's actual law – then we must see this act at least in that kind of excommunication by which an explicitly named individual is declared an *excommunicatus vitandus*, and that by an express act of the Apostolic See, valid in law (CIC can. 2258). The question as to whether an *excommunicatus vitandus* is still a member of the Church was controverted up to this time.[28] Hence the Encyclical has here made a decision on this particular point of the controversy, in a manner which under a certain regard is authoritative, although of course not of itself infallible.[29]This particular point is, therefore, the only one

[28] Banez, Gregory of Valencia, Suarez, Guarnieri, and among more recent theologians d'Herbigny, Spacil and Dieckmann (cf. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* [cf. note 5 above], p. 840), all denied, as is well known, that excommunication can effect a loss of Church membership properly so called.

[29] One may, of course, say that such excommunication with which, according to the declaration of the Church, there is connected an 'e gremio sanctae Dei Ecclesiae pentus eici' (*AAS* XIV [1922], p. 593), could be in the nature of things simply a '*sententia declaratoria*' regarding an already existing state of separation on account of heresy or schism, quite independently of this sentence – and that this sentence does not effect this exclusion from the Church independently of such heresy or schism. Viewed in this way, even the appeal to Mt 18.15-18 is no longer a compelling argument. Nor is the appeal to the teaching of the ancient Church about penitential excommunication within the whole framework of penitential procedure (the 'binding' of the sinner) to the point here, because this teaching was concerned with quite a different matter. This follows immediately from the fact that according to this teaching *every* person in mortal sin had to be 'bound' in this way. This was, therefore, basically a question of that removal of the sinner to the furthermost limits of the communion of the Church, which still takes place even today in the exclusion from the Eucharist of everyone who is in mortal sin. It will be extremely difficult to name cases in most recent times where someone who was not already a public heretic or schismatic has been declared '*vitandus*' by excommunication. It will also not be easy to find an *a priori* argument which proves that the Church as a society must have the right to exclude someone completely, even when this person who has offended against her has not already cut himself off from her by his very offence. Hence, in view of this situation with regard to the proofs for the aforesaid thesis, one may begin to wonder whether the Encyclical really meant to decide this hitherto controverted question. Perhaps, in the last analysis, it meant merely to establish by this 'ob gravissima admissa a legitima auctoritate sejungi', that such an *excommunicatus vitandus* is *de facto* separated from the Church, in the same sense as (public) heretics and schismatics; and thus it would not necessarily follow from this that the question as to the real, ultimate cause of that separation had actually been decided. One could then say, in this sense, that the Encyclical has not decided whether the cause of separation is the guilt which is established by this excommunication and which must (of necessity) be at the root of the excommunication – or whether it is the sentence of excommunication itself. Even in the first case the Encyclical would still bring with it a certain clarification in regard to the above mentioned view of Banez, Suarez etc. For it would now at least be certain, as against these authors, that by an excommunication of the severest kind ('*faciens*' or at least declaratory) the Church has in view a real exclusion from the Church, of the same nature as that brought about by heresy and schism even according to these authors. To that extent the Encyclical does decide a hitherto controverted matter. It shall here remain an open question whether the Encyclical has also ended controversy in the sense of determining that such an excommunication does not simply legally establish a loss of Church membership, but is actually itself the cause of it. Cf. for this A. Gommenginger's profound work: 'Bedeutet die Exkommunikation Verlust der Kirchengliedschaft?', ZKT

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which has [31] given rise to a certain shift of position regarding the question of membership of the Church. In practice, this particular point is of no great importance; for apart from someone who is guilty of personal assault on the Roman Pontiff (CIC Can. 2343 § 1), no one is really [32] nowadays declared an *excommunicatus vitandus* except someone like Loisy, for instance, who, quite independently of this declaration, was already no longer a member of the Church, on account of his notorious heresy or manifest schism.

We said just now that at least the *excommunicatus vitandus* is to be counted as one who is severed from the ecclesiastical corporation by the Church's authority itself. By this nothing has been decided of itself, either positively or negatively, about the question of whether or not other kinds of excommunication imply a dissolution of Church membership in the sense of the Encyclical. It is indeed true that every *excommunicatio*, and hence even the kind by which the excommunicated person remains an *excommunicatus toleratus* (CIC can. 2258 § 1), is defined as '*censura, qua quis excluditur a communicatione fidelium*' (CIC can. 2257 § 1). Thus, at least explicitly, Canon Law does not recognize as essential a difference between the excommunication of an *excommunicatus vitandus* and that of a *toleratus*, as there would have to be on the supposition that only the excommunication of the *excommunicatus vitandus* implies a dissolution of the membership of the Church. Yet, on the other hand, we cannot say that Canon Law excludes this essential difference by its definition of these two forms of excommunication and by its combined treatment of them both. When, therefore, in general only the excommunication of the *vitandus* is regarded as dissolution of Church membership, there can be no essential objection to this on the grounds of can. 2257. In fact, this differentiation must be made, since e.g. according to can. 2266 an *excommunicatus non vitandus* retains his ecclesiastical titles and offices and so must obviously still possess membership of the Church. We can here leave it to the Canon Lawyers to determine how and in what sense even such an excommunication (which does not deprive a person of his membership of the Church) can be defined as *exclusio a communione fidelium*.[30]

We would like to draw the reader's attention to two further points, in view of what we will have to say in our summary under (c). Firstly, we would point out that, according to its explicit and immediate wording and sense, the Encyclical's explanation of Church membership is an explanation of the membership of the *Church* (*in* Ecclesiae [33] *autem membris* . . .) and not expressly of the conditions for belonging to the *corpus Christi mysticum*. It would certainly not be in the spirit of the Encyclical to overemphasize this nuance in any way, since it is after all the essential endeavour of the Encyclical to show the equivalence of the concepts of 'Church' and '*corpus Christi mysticum*'.[31] Yet at the same time, in the light of later reflections, this nuance does not seem insignificant either. Secondly, we would point out that the Encyclical speaks simply of membership of the Church. It does not give the least hint of any kind of distinction such as, for instance, between constitutional and active membership. Its train of thought runs throughout on the same lines as the traditional thought of Fundamental Theology on this question. We have, therefore, no right to read such a distinction into the text of the Encyclical, nor indeed do we have any reason for doing so. And so, we cannot help thinking that it is rather an arbitrary interpretation of that text for a canonist[32] to say that the Encyclical hints at a constitutional membership by the fact that it does not regard separated Christians as strangers, but as those who come home to their father's house. For those who are not in the home of the Church, are indeed to return to it, but

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LXXIII (1951), pp.1-71, which comes to a negative conclusion on this question. Similar in matter is V. Morel, *NRT* LXXX (1948), p. 721.

[30] Cf. for this article by A. Gommenginger, which we have already quoted more than once.

[31] An endeavour which was emphatically underlined once more by the Encyclical 'Hurnani Generis' (*Denz* 3019).

[32] Cf. Mörsdorf, *loc. cit.*, p. 190.

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precisely because they are not in fact in their father's house but outside it – in other words, they are not members of the Church. If they did, however retain a constitutional membership, then it would be meaningless to speak of their being outside their father's house – at most it might be said that, while being in their father's house, they cannot exercise all the rights of a child of the house. Since it is here as elsewhere a basic principle for the interpretation of the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church, let us repeat once more that what is decisive, is that the teaching of the Encyclical reproduces so obviously the usual and general doctrine of fundamental theology and of dogmatic theology, as it has been taught by theologians for centuries. It must, therefore, also be interpreted according to this general teaching, even when the conception of certain canonists diverges from that teaching, at least in terminology. The Encyclical knows, therefore, only *one* proper membership, and even baptized persons can lack this, viz. when they are separated from the Church by schism or heresy (or 'total excommunication').

[34]

c. Evaluation of the doctrinal significance of this teaching.

If we prescind from the question of the position of the *excommunicatus vitandus*, we can say that the explanation given by the Encyclical of what it means to belong to the Church, does not create a new state of affairs in theology. For what the Encyclical says on this matter had always either been Catholic Dogma or (in the case of the non-membership of material heretics and schismatics) is to be qualified as having always been 'theologically certain' on account of the common and clear teaching of theologians. The Encyclical is indeed an authentic doctrinal pronouncement, and as such it certainly obliges the believer to an internal assent. But it is not of itself an infallible doctrinal pronouncement of the supreme teaching authority of the Church. Hence it has not, in practice, altered the theological notes given to the norms regarding membership of the Church. The teaching of the Encyclical is, therefore, in this respect a confirmation and more recent enforcement of the traditional teaching. But this teaching of the Encyclical has its own significance. For evidently a false notion of the Church appeared to have been more or less clearly presupposed here and there outside the field of specialized theological writings, such as in talks on the union of the Churches, etc. According to this notion even those separated from one another in belief could nevertheless form the one Church together. But such a notion would turn the Church founded by Christ as the visible, one and juridical society with the Roman Pontiff at its head, into a purely inward, pneumatic community of love. This, however, contradicts in its very deepest sense the incarnational principle of Christianity, according to which God was made flesh and attached his grace to the concrete, historical here and now of human realities. And according to this principle, God has not left it to the free choice of man to decide for himself in what concrete form and historically verifiable reality he wishes to find Christ's salvation and the grace of God.

II

What does the Encyclical say about the possibility of *union with Christ* by grace for those who, in the sense of the reply to our first question, are *not members of the Church*? This is the second question which we must pose ourselves.

We have to ask ourselves this, for the whole question of who [35] properly speaking belongs to the Church as a member and who does not, is given its full weight and significance only by the fact that this same Church declares both herself and full belonging to her (understood in the sense explained) as necessary for salvation. This is what happens also in the Encyclical, and it is precisely its statements regarding this matter which have aroused real

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bewilderment among non-Catholic Christians. The real significance of the question about full belonging to the Church can, therefore, be explained only by confronting this question with the statement to the effect that the Church is necessary for salvation. And only in this way will the question about membership of the Church lead us back from an area of more or less exclusive concern with definitions of terminology to the question about the objective nature of the Church, which we will then have to take up directly in the third part of these investigations.

Since man's salvation is assured, in the last analysis, by the fact of his possessing the Spirit of Christ and grace, the necessity of the Church for salvation cannot be defined merely in the sense of stating that outside the Church there is no salvation. Such a definition must also include the statement that outside the Church it is impossible to possess the justifying grace of the Holy Spirit. Our present question can, therefore, be formulated both as a question about the Church, as necessary for salvation, and as a question about the possibility of grace for those who, according to the definitions of our first part, are not members of the Church. Now the formulae of the Encyclical, which are to be examined as to their meaning and extent in this second part of our reflections, do in fact follow both these directions. Just as in the first part, we will first of all present the previous teaching of the Church on this point, so that we may then look at the pronouncements in question against this background. In this part, even more clearly than in the first, it will be necessary to observe the essential rules of our theological method to which we drew attention at the very beginning of these reflections. We must first of all simply accept the doctrinal pronouncements of the Church, even when these seem to point in completely different directions or even seem to contradict each other at first sight. We must accept them, even if theology has not as yet completely succeeded in deducing them speculatively from one uniform principle, and even if we too may perhaps not succeed absolutely in this.

[36]

1. The necessity of membership of the Church for salvation, as found in the Church's teaching before the Encyclical

Before we try to answer this question directly, we must first of all reflect a little on where in practice and in the concrete this question was treated in theology *in the first instance*. In the course of the history of the development of Dogma, this question was posed first of all in the concrete form of the question about the necessity of *baptism* for salvation. This is easily understandable from everything we have said so far. It took this form, not merely because baptism is one of the necessary conditions for belonging to the Church, but also, and above all, because even the other element of membership of the Church, viz. subjection to the juridical authority of the Church, is in its profoundest nature of the same 'sacramental' structure. What is valid of the one, viz. of the element of sacramental incorporation into the Church, with regard to its necessity for salvation, is valid in the same way also of the other, viz. of the element of being subject to the legal power of the Church (as teaching and ruling power). It would be quite wrong to make any distinctions in this respect, as if for example, baptism were basically more important for belonging to the Church and hence also more necessary for salvation, than the other element. Thus it is a fact that the axiom, '*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*', was applied in absolutely the same way both to heretics (and schismatics) and to pagans. Therefore if, in what follows, we reflect more explicitly, although not exclusively, on the necessity of baptism for salvation, in order to discover whether and in what sense membership of the Church is necessary for salvation, everything we say in this connection will be equally valid of the legal element of this membership. Having pointed this out, we can now proceed immediately to the statement of the Church's teaching on her being

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necessary for salvation.

a. We find statements of the necessity of membership of the Church for salvation, first of all in phrases which are in reality synonymous with the axiom: *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. Thus Innocent III's statement of the Church: *Extra quam neminem salvari credimus*,[33] and: *extra quam nullus omnino salvatur*[34] or such statements by Boniface VIII as: *Extra quam . . . nec remissio peccatorum*[35], and: *Subesse* [37] *Romano Pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus . . . omnino de necessitate salutis*[36] or Clement VI's: *Nullus homo . . . extra fidem ipsius Ecclesiae et obedientiam Pontificum Romanorum potent finaliter salvus esse*.[37] Thus also the Council of Florence: *Nullos intra catholicam Ecclesiam non existentes non solum paganos, sed neque Iudaeos aut haereticos atque schismaticos aeternae vitae fieri posse participes*,[38] where it is expressly added that even the Sacraments avail for salvation only when their recipient remains in the Church. Formulae such as these, and others similar to them,[39] could be further multiplied.[40] This is, indeed, as Pius IX says,[41] a *notissimum catholicum dogma*. The unbending unconditionality itself of these formulae is the very property of the oldest doctrinal proclamations. The Fathers compare the Church – and by this they mean the visible Church – to an organic body, to paradise, to Noah's Ark and to the house of Rahab. And over and over again, beginning with Ignatius of Antioch and right down through Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Augustine, Fulgentius and Gregory the Great, they derive from this the one truth formulated by St Augustine[42] in the following words: *Extra Ecclesiam catholicam* [38] *totum potest habere* (*Emeritus*) *praeter salutem*. *Potest habere honorem potest habere sacramentum, potest cantare alleluja, potest respondere amen, potest Evangelium tenere, potest in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti fidem et habere et praedicare, sed nusquam nisi in Ecclesia catholica salutem potent invenire*.[43]

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[33] *Denz* 423.
[34] *Denz* 430.
[35] *Denz* 468.
[36] *Denz* 469.
[37] *Denz* 570b.
[38] *Denz* 714.
[39] E.g. *Denz* 1647, 1677, 1717.
[40] Cf. in particular the Tridentine Profession of Faith, Denz 1000. Cf. also: L. Hofmann, 'Die Zugehörigkeit zur Kirche in den Verhandlungen und Entscheidungen des Konzils von Trient', *Trierer theologische Zeitschrift* LX (1951), pp. 218-231. In the same way, Pius XII in his Encyclical 'Humani Generis' (Denz 3019). On these declarations of 'Humani Generis' cf. J. Vodopivec, 'Ecclesia catholica romana Corpus Christi mysticum', *Euntes docete* (Rome 1951), pp. 76-98; J. Cl. Fenton, 'The meaning of the Church's necessity for salvation', American Ecclesiastical Review CXXIV (1951), 124-143, 203-221, 290-302.
[41] *Denz* 1677. It was intended to issue the following definition in the Vatican Council: *Fidei catholicae dogma esse definimus extra unam Ecclesiam Christi nullam esse sperandam salutem*. This is the wording of the revised Schema, after the first draft had explicitly mentioned the '*necessitas medii*'. This phrase had then been left out, but with the explicit explanation that the necessity spoken of in the revised Schema is to be understood as a necessity of means (cf. Mansi LIII, pp. 312, 323). Cf. for this: *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* I[2] (Madrid 1952), n. 1095; J. Beumer, 'Die Heilsnotwendigkeit der Kirche nach den Akten des Vatikanischen Konzils', *Theologie und Glaube* XXXVIII (1947-48), pp. 76-86; G. Gonzalez, 'Quintana, El axioma "Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" segun el esquema De Ecclesia Christi al Concilio Vaticano', *Eccl. Xaver.* (Bogota) I (1951), pp. 71-90.
[42] *PL* 43, 695.
[43] For further texts, cf. e.g. A. Straub, *De Ecclesia Christi* I (Innsbruck 1912), nos. 365 *sq*: Chr. Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae* I[5] (Freiburg 1915), n. 392; P. Murray, *De Ecclesia Christi* I (Dublin 1860), pp. 737 *sqq*.; A. Seitz, *Die Heilsnotwendigkeit den Kirche nach der ältesten Literatur bis zur Zeit des hl. Augustinus* (Freiburg 1903); M. J. Rouet de Joumel, *Enchiridion Patristicum*[17] (Freiburg 1952), series 47, p. 761; L. Capéran, *Le problème du salut des infidèles. Essai historique* (Toulouse 1934); F. Hofmann, *Den Kirchenbegriff des hl. Augustinus* (Munich 1933); J. Beumer, 'Ekklesiologische Probleme der Frühscholastik', *Scholastik* XXVII (1952), pp. 183-209 (esp. pp. 197-203); L. Smit, 'Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus', *Jaarboek 1951 Nederl. Kath. Theologen* (Hilversum 1951), pp. 5-26. Moreover, all the early Protestant Creeds stress the necessity of

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b. The necessity of *baptism* for salvation is emphasized just as apodictically.[44] This necessity of baptism for salvation is also more immediately evident in the Scriptures (Jn 3.5) than the explicit doctrine of the necessity of membership of the Church for salvation in general, so that usually the scriptural proof of this general statement is furnished by the scriptural proof of the necessity of baptism for salvation.

c. On the other hand, the *magisterium* of the Church emphasizes, at least in more recent times, that those who live *outside the Church* can also be *saved*. Thus Pius IX says in his Allocutio '*Singulari quadam*' (1854): 'We must hold fast in the Faith that nobody outside the Apostolic Roman Church can be saved; she is the only ark of salvation and everyone who does not enter it must perish in the flood. But we [39] must hold fast just as firmly to the truth that in the eyes of the Lord no one who lives in invincible ignorance of the true religion is stricken with this guilt.[45] Similarly in his Encyclical '*Quanto conficiamur moerore*'(1863).[46] If we examine these and similar texts closely, we find that they are couched in much more careful terms with regard to the possibility of salvation for someone outside the Church than might appear at first sight. When we submit these and similar texts (to which we will return later on) to an exact analysis, we will find that they actually state only that someone who lives in invincible error about the true religion is naturally not regarded as guilty of this by God. Whether this invincible ignorance of the true religion can actually last for a whole lifetime, and what will be the eternal fate of such a subjectively guiltless person (especially when he has moreover not received baptism) – in other words, whether he will in fact reach *supernatural* salvation – these are questions about which these and similar utterances say practically nothing positive. But one can nevertheless say, first of all, that the Council of Trent evidently[47] recognizes, for all that, a properly supernatural rebirth of man by grace even by the *votum baptismi*. In other words, it recognizes a supernatural justification of man even before the most fundamental condition for belonging to the Church, namely actual baptism, has actually been fulfilled. Basing ourselves on this, we may legitimately give a wider interpretation to the first texts mentioned above about the possibility of salvation for someone outside the Church, and we may thus understand them as extending the possibility and actual, final realization of salvation even to those who never enter the Church. We are entitled to do this, even although, strictly speaking, the Council of Trent does not say anything about whether there actually are cases in this actual order of divine providence of someone having been justified by the *votum baptismi* who never reaches actual baptism and the full membership of the Church during the further course of his life. We may adopt this large-hearted and optimistic interpretation of the texts cited at the beginning without fear of erring and of reading too much into these texts, if only because it corresponds to what has now generally become, with ever decreasing exceptions, the generally accepted view of Catholic

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the Church for salvation in exactly the same way; for texts, cf. e.g. Straub I, n. 368. That it is possible even today to stretch the principle of the necessity of the Church for salvation too far, can be seen from the so-called Boston Heresy Case; for this, cf. C. Goddard-Clarke, *The Loyolas and the Cabots* (Boston 1950); G. Montesi, 'Skandal in Boston', *Wort und Wahrheit* VI (1951), pp. 233 *sq*.; E. Brock, 'The Boston Heresy Case', *Theologische Zeitschrift* (Basle) VIII (1952), pp. 49-59.

[44] Cf. e.g. *Denz* 348; 482 (*Baptisma... credimus esse... perfectum remedium ad salutem*); 712; 796; 799 (*Sacramentum fidei sine qua nulli unquam contigit iustificatio*); 861 (*Si quis dixenit, baptismum liberum esse, hoc est, non necessarium ad salutem, anathema sit*); 1470 (*baptismum esse necessarium ad salutem*).

[45] *Denz* 1647.

[46] *Denz* 1677.

[47] *Denz* 796. Cf. also *Denz* 1031-1033; 1070 *sq*. (justification is always given with believing love, even before baptism).

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theologians, a view never objected to by [40] the *magisterium* of the Church.[48] But it is undoubtedly true that such positive formulations of the possibility of salvation for those outside the Church had not been given with such clarity and optimism until more recent and indeed most recent times.

And yet it is not as if, even in earlier times, there were no traces of that consciousness in Tradition, which has since then led to such views as have already been allowed, although with very great caution, to leave their clear imprint on the above quoted formulae of Pius IX. Already at the time of St Cyprian, the anonymous author of a writing entitled *De rebaptismate* speaks, with reference to the centurion Cornelius (Ac 10.44 *sqq*.), of a baptism in the Holy Ghost, without water.[49] Well known also is the following expression which St Ambrose used in his funeral oration for the Emperor Valentian who had died without baptism[50]: *Hunc sua pietas abluit et voluntas*. It is possible to establish the doctrine of such a *baptismus flaminis* also from St Augustine, at least from certain periods of his theological development.[51] This doctrine of the possibility of justification and hence of salvation outside the Church solidified then (to put it bluntly and boldly) in the Middle Ages – beginning, for instance, with St Bernard[52] – into the explicit doctrine of the *baptismus flaminis* or *baptismus in voto*, and then settles in the Church's doctrinal pronouncements as the doctrine of the necessity of baptism, at least *in voto*, i.e. under certain circumstances also only *in voto*.[53] On the other hand, we have to admit nevertheless that the testimony of the Fathers, with regard to the [41] possibility of salvation for someone outside the Church, is very weak. Certainly, even the ancient Church knew[54] that the grace of God can be found also outside the Church and even before Faith.[55] But the view that such divine grace can lead man to his final salvation without leading him first into the visible Church, is something, at any rate, which met with very little approval in the ancient Church. For, with reference to the optimistic views on the salvation of catechumens as found in many of the Fathers, it must be noted that such a candidate for baptism was regarded in some sense or other as already 'Christianus',[56] and also that certain Fathers, such as Gregory Nazianzen[57]and Gregory of Nyssa,[58] seem to deny altogether the justifying power of love or of the desire for baptism. Hence it will be impossible to speak of a *consensus dogmaticus* in the early Church regarding the possibility of salvation for the non-baptized, and especially for someone who is not even a catechumen. In fact, even St Augustine, in his last (anti-pelagian) period, no longer maintained the

[48] Thus also the Sacred Office, in a declaration of 8th August 1949, seems to count without hesitation on the fact that a *votum implicitum Ecclesiae* suffices for salvation in the case of someone in invincible error. Cf. A. Hoffmann, 'Die Heilsnotwendigkeit der Kirche', *Neue Ordnung* VII (1953), pp. 90-99.
[49] Cyprian, *Opera* III, 75 (Hartel).
[50] *PL* 16, 1374.
[51] For further reading on this question we would suggest L. Capéran, *Le problême du salut des infidèles, Essai historique* (Toulouse 1934), or A. d'Ales, *Dictionnaire apologétique* II (1924), pp. 819 *sqq*.; F. Hofmann, *Den Kirchenbegriff des hl. Augustinus* (Munich 1930); A. Landgraf, 'Das sacramentum in voto in der Frühscholastik', *Mélanges Mandonnet* II (Paris 1930), pp. 97-143. For the Fathers this problem arose in connection with the question about the eternal salvation of those who had died as catechumens. The biblical example is usually the good thief on Calvary.
[52] PL 182, 1036.
[53] *Denz* 388; 413; 847 and above all *Denz* 796: Council of Trent, Session VI, cap. 4; cf. *CIC* can. 737, §1 and *Denz* 1031. Cf. for this also P. Hörger, 'Concilii Tridentini de necessitate baptismi doctrina in decreto de iustificatione (sess. VI)', *Antonianum* XVII (1942), pp. 193-222; 269-302.
[54] What Jansenism still denied: *Denz* 1376, 1377, 1379, 1522.
[55] Cf. e.g. the Council of Orange, *Denz* 179 *sqq*. etc.
[56] Cf. e.g. the *Canones Hippolyti*, can. 63 *sq*.
[57] Or. 40, 23 (*PG* 36, 3890).
[58] 'Sermo contra dilationem Baptismi' (*PG* 46, 424).

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possibility of a baptism by desire.[59] The hard inflexibility in the formulation of the meaning of '*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*', which has, after all, remained the same even in most recent times,[60] can, no doubt, be explained to some extent by the fact that the early Church did not, at the outset, make any very explicit or clear distinction between material and formal guilt. The Church only made this distinction in subsequently admitted, and particular cases. Instead, the early Church during the period of the preaching of the Gospel more or less took it for granted that every pagan remained a pagan through his own fault, and that every heretic and schismatic was a formal heretic or schismatic.[61] But we would not do justice to the theological sense of this ancient formula (which is [42] after all formulated in an equally apodictic manner with regard to the necessity of the orthodox faith, for instance, in the Athanasian Creed[62]), if we were to look on it as a formulation of the necessity of the Church for salvation *merely* in so far as it points out that subjective guilt either does not allow full membership of the Church to materialize or dissolves it again. This is clearly shown even by the simple fact that salvation was radically denied even to unbaptized children by appealing to this proposition: '*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*'; and in their case there is of course no question of subjective guilt. In other words, even this fact alone shows that the necessity of belonging to the Church asserted by this formula, was of a fundamentally different order from any merely subjective moral obligation to belong to the Church. Having said all that, there still remain two further questions to be dealt with in the light of the Church's teaching before the Encyclical. First of all there is the question as to the way in which theology normally defines this particular necessity of membership of the Church more exactly; and, then the question as to how such a necessity can nevertheless be objectively and logically reconciled with what we have just seen, viz. the fact that salvation is possible even for someone who does not in fact actually belong to the visible Church.

d. In order to define more exactly in what way external membership of the visible Church is necessary for salvation, theologians make use of the notions of *necessitas medii* and *necessitas praecepti*.[63] This terminology, it is true, is not yet to be found explicitly in the pronouncements of the *magisterium* of the Church – these speak simply about a necessity for salvation. But this distinction, in its application to our [43] question, has its objective basis in the doctrine of the necessity both of baptism and of faith – or, formulated differently, it is objectively based on the necessity of wiping out original sin and of being in the state of grace in order to enter Heaven. This necessity was in all this always understood by Tradition and the teaching of the Church in the sense that it still applies even to one who, without any fault of his own, cannot comply with this necessity, as is seen most clearly in the case of the necessity of infant baptism.[64] Since the necessity of infant baptism is obviously a case of something necessary for the attainment of justification and salvation which still remains necessary even when the non-reception of baptism is absolutely guiltless, this necessity is

[59] Cf. Fr. Hofmann, *Der Kirchenbegriff des hl. Augustinus* (Munich 1933), pp. 221 *sqq*., 381 *sqq*., 464 *sqq*.
[60] Cf. Denz 1647.
[61] And thus, for instance, usually regarded baptism among heretics as valid indeed (and hence as incapable of repetition), but did not regard it as conferring the Holy Ghost; – in fact, this was precisely the presupposition for the development of the doctrine of the sacramental character in St Augustine. Cf. as against this, however, the view of Pope Stephen (*Denz* 47, note 1), who obviously allows for a certain supernatural effect of baptism even amongst heretics. For the question as to which particular effects Pope Stephen adjudges to heretical baptism and which effects he excludes, cf. my remarks in the article entitled: 'Die Busslehre des hl. Cyprian von Karthago', *ZKT* LXXW (1952), pp. 264-271.
[62] *Denz* 40.
[63] Cf. J. A. de Aldama, 'La necesidad de medio en Ia Escolástica postridentina', *Archivo Teológico Granadino* VIII (1945), pp. 57-84.
[64] *Denz* 102; 410; 424; 430; 482; 712.

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therefore a *necessity of means* and not merely of precept. Thus if in fact, as is the almost universal view,[65] the consequences for the infant dying without baptism, even although this happens through no fault of its own, are that it remains in original sin and hence cannot attain justification, then this means that, according to the explicit teaching of the Church, the infant which has died in this way incurs the loss of supernatural beatitude. Consequently, the necessity of baptism for the attainment of the Beatific Vision, at least in these particular circumstances, [44] is more than just a necessity of precept; it is here a question of a necessity of means, since in this case the lack of baptism makes the attainment of the Beatific Vision impossible even although this lack is not due to any guilt. And since, according to what we have stated previously, the necessity of belonging as a member to the Church is of the same kind as the necessity of baptism, we must therefore affirm that the necessity of full membership of the Church is a necessity, not merely of precept, but of means. Accordingly, theologians do in fact teach unanimously that the Church's dogma of the necessity of the Church for salvation is to be understood in the sense of a necessity of means, so that this interpretation of the Church's dogma must be looked upon as itself a theologically certain doctrine. Up to this point the matter is relatively clear and simple, at least if we prescind from the fact that the notional distinction employed in all this is not, in fact, as unproblematical as it might seem. This doctrine, stating that membership of the Church is necessary as a means for salvation, becomes difficult only when we now go on to ask how it can be reconciled with the already explained doctrine of the Church about the possibility of salvation even for someone 'outside' the Church. For if membership of the Church, as defined more precisely in the first part, is required for the attainment of salvation with a 'necessity of means', then this membership is therefore also necessary for all those who through no fault of theirs do not possess it. Hence it would seem that the possibility of salvation is for this very reason denied to every one of these untold people from the very start, and even prescinding from any guilt, simply because they are not members of the Church.

e. It is relatively easy to give a purely formal solution to this difficulty regarding the compatibility of the facts that the visible Church is a necessary means for salvation and that it is possible for someone to be saved who does not belong to the visible Church. For just as Tradition and the *magisterium* of the Church recognize a *baptismus in voto* (a baptism of desire) besides actual baptism, so the same can and must in itself be held regarding full membership of the Church. Besides actual belonging to the visible Church (in the exact way in which this full membership was defined in the first Section), there is then also a membership of the Church *in voto*, a *desire of the full membership of the Church*. This desire in its turn can be conceived either as an explicit desire which as such is known to the person

[65] In most recent times, it is true, there has been renewed theological controversy about this question. Cf. e.g. Ch.-V. Hens, 'Le salut des enfants morts sans baptême', *Maison-Dieu* X (1947), pp. 86-105; G. Mulders, 'Rond het Limbus-Vraagstuk', *Bijdragen* IX (1948), pp. 209-244; N. Sanders, 'Het ongedoopte Kind in het andere leven', *Studia Catholica* (1948), pp. 125-138; E. Boudes, 'Réflexions sur la solidarité des hommes avec le Christ. A l'occasion des limbes des enfants', *NRT* LXXI (1949), pp. 589-605 (giving a further bibliography); P. Laurenge, 'Esquisse d'une étude sur les enfants morts sans baptême', *L'Année theologique augustinienne 1952*; F. H. Drinkwater, 'The "Baptism invisible" and its extent', *The Downside Review* LXX (January 1953), No. 223, pp. 25-42; for a summarizing account cf. Peter Gumpel, 'Unbaptized infants: May they be saved?', *The Downside Review* No. 230 (1954), pp. 342-457. These attempts to leave a way open even for the *super*natural salvation of infants dying without baptism (without going against the teachings of Scripture, Tradition and the Church's *magisterium*) do not touch directly on our subject and, therefore, we do not need to enter here into a discussion of them. For even these attempts admit that an unbaptized infant is not saved simply because it was not its own fault that it could not receive baptism and hence seek some 'substitute' for baptism. In other words, they all presuppose that the necessity of baptism is a necessity of means (albeit a conditional necessity). And in the final analysis, this is really the only point with which we are *here* concerned.

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and willed by him (e.g. [45] when a catechumen is prevented from receiving baptism by purely external circumstances) or as a desire which is present implicitly, i.e. is included in a serious general moral outlook[66] and intention to do everything necessary for salvation. And this intention or readiness can after all be present even when the person concerned does not know explicitly that membership of the Church is one of the objective factors necessary for salvation. When we thus distinguish between real and desired membership of the Church, there is no longer any formal difficulty, at any rate, in reconciling the two principles stating that the visible Church is a necessary means for salvation and that someone who is not actually a member of the Church can be saved. For these two principles are then reconciled by saying that the real full membership of the Church is necessary as a means for salvation in the sense that it can also, under certain circumstances, be supplied for by an (explicitly or implicitly) desired membership of the Church. And in this sense actual full membership of the Church is necessary with a *conditional* necessity of means. Or, to put it even more simply, full membership of the Church is a necessary means for salvation, but the notion of membership in this axiom embraces both actual and desired membership. By formulating it in this way, the possibility of attaining salvation even for someone who does not visibly belong to the Church is then not excluded from the sense of the statement that the Church is the only ark of salvation. And thus the statement, that the visible Church is necessary for salvation, loses its appearance of cruel and haughty severity towards that unnumbered multitude of those who seem to live with good intention outside the Church and beyond Christianity.

f. With the foregoing we have stated at least in outline all that can be affirmed from the explicit teaching of the Church and of theology before the Encyclical. But even before looking at the teaching of the Encyclical itself, it seems appropriate to point out a *further series of theological problems* (*weitere theologische Problematik*) which lie hidden [46] behind the apparently slick formal answer given by theology. It will be the task of the third part of these investigations to try at least to approach a solution of these problems. But even at the present stage we must not give the impression that this theological teaching on the necessity of the Church for salvation and on the possibility of salvation outside the Church does not need any further clarification. For this reason we must already at this stage clarify at least to some extent the further problems involved. It will certainly be objectively correct to say, on the one hand, that someone who has come to the use of reason can suffer the loss of supernatural salvation only through his own personal and grave fault. That seems to follow quite simply from the knowledge of the serious and universal salvific Will of God with regard to all men, which is clearly found in the Church's consciousness of Faith. On the other hand it is also true that we may not presume that all those who come to the use of reason (i.e. who have the capacity of making their own moral decisions), but who during their life do not, in fact, reach full and external membership of the visible Church, are kept from this by their own personal grave fault. For no matter how great the tendency may be for us today to be wary once more of conceding a clear conscience, we will hardly be able to suppose, in view of the immense amount of external conditioning of the personal spiritual life of man by disposition, race, upbringing, level of culture, etc., that the unnumbered millions of people, who throughout the Christian period have not come to the Church, were prevented from doing so by their own fault. Nor will we be able to assume, as Billot[67] did a few decades ago,

[66] We naturally cannot enter here into the question concerning the extent and the exact sense in which *Faith*, in its strict theological sense, is necessary for everyone without exception as a means for salvation, as part of this ethico-religious attitude which guarantees salvation. Cf. on this point S. Harent, 'Infidèles', *DTC* VII, pp. 1726-1930; R. Lombandi, *La salvezza di chi non ha la fede*[4] (Rome 1949). (E.T. *The Salvation of the Unbeliever*, London, 1956).

[67] Cf. L. Billot, 'La providence de Dieu et le nombre infini d'hommes hors de la voie normale du salut', *Etudes*

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that the majority of these people remained on the infant level with regard to ethico-religious decisions, and that therefore the question about the possibility of their salvation is simply part of the question about God's salvific Will regarding infants. We [47] will really, therefore, have to conclude from these two propositions that there are in fact people who attain their supernatural goal without externally belonging to the visible Church. If, and in so far as, these persons have an interior supernatural faith and, rooted in this, a supernatural love of God (how this can be in the case of pagans, is a question which cannot occupy us here), then we certainly can and must say on these presuppositions that such persons have at least implicitly had the desire (*votum*) for external membership of the visible Church. But if one gives these words their plain meaning and understands them exactly and dispassionately, then, by speaking precisely of a *votum* for external membership of the Church, we once more underline by this term itself, that these persons did not actually belong to the visible Church, but merely desired to belong to the Church. And it is no use, with regard to this point, to side-step the issue by suddenly and imperceptibly switching over to some concept of 'Church' other than that of 'visible Church'; the latter was the sole concept of which we spoke in the first part, and it was with this concept alone in mind that we inquired into the conditions of membership. For the axiom of the early Church about the necessity of the Church for salvation seems to state precisely that it is necessary for salvation to belong *actually* to the visible Church. It would seem that, when the early Church explains its teaching of the necessity of the visible Church over and over again by means of such illustrations as 'paradise', 'Noah's ark', 'the House of Rahab' or 'an organic body', we are meant to understand by this that it is here a question of absolute (and not merely conditional) necessity of means. After all, someone saves himself from the raging seas only when he has actually got on board the ship and not when he merely desires to be on the ship – and a member is alive only when it is actually united with the body and not simply when it would like to be united with it. Of course, it is certainly true to say that such comparisons must not be stretched too far. But would these illustrations have any meaning left if they were not meant to indicate the necessity of an actual membership of the Church? It is, after all, precisely the visibleness of the Church and the necessity of actually and fully belonging to this visible Church, which the Fathers wish to underline and explain by these similes; but to belong *in voto* to the Church means precisely that there is in this case no visible membership, and it, therefore, cannot be considered for the constitution of the visibleness of the Church either. Moreover, to solve [48] our question by showing the possibility of a baptism and a Church membership *in voto*, seems to be a confusion of two orders which should be clearly distinguished. The desire for baptism and membership of the Church belongs to the dimension of the inner and personal decisions of man, whereas the actual membership of the visible Church belongs to the dimension of the visible and signifying sacramental actuality which symbolizes and effects saving grace. The inner spiritual attitude of a man (in so far as he is capable of such) is, of course, also of decisive importance for the actual attainment of salvation; this does not, however, imply that this attitude as a personal, spiritual and free human act before God (and which as such lies beyond historical verifiability and the social order), can replace the visibleness of membership of the Church which has the nature of a sacramental sign. If one were to suppose this, however, then one would have to be consistent and say that the cessation of such an inner personal will to membership of the Church would

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CLXI (19:9), pp. 129-149; CLXII (1920), pp. 129-152; CLXIII (1920), pp. 5-32; CLXIV (1920), pp. 385-404; CLXV (1920), pp. 515-535; CLXVII (1921), pp. 257-279; CLXIX (1921), pp. 385-407; CLXXII (1922), pp. 515-535; CLXXVI (1923), pp. 385-408. For a criticism cf. L. Capéran, *Le problème du salut des infidèles*, *Essai historique*. *Essai théologique* (Toulouse 1934) (2nd edition of both works); S. Harent, 'Infidèles', DTC VII, p. 1891; pp. 1898-1912; M. Larivé, 'I..a providence de Dieu et le salut des infidèles', *Revue Thomiste* XXVIII (1923), pp. 43-73; H. Lange, *De gratia* (Freiburg 1929), n. 694 (with further bibliographical references).

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also dissolve this very membership of the Church. But we have already rejected this in the first Section for a very decisive reason, when we showed that someone who disbelieves merely internally, still belongs to the Church. If the *votum baptismi*, merely as an inner subjective human act, were sufficiently constitutive of membership of the Church, considered as a necessary means of salvation – and all the more so if this were true even of a merely implicit *votum* – then, in order to be consistent and logical, we would have to say that it is really the inner spiritual attitude of the adult which is necessary as a means for salvation. And thus it would have to be said that the obligation to belong also externally to the Church is merely implied in this necessity of the inner attitude as a consequence or as added to it, and implied by a *necessitas praecepti*, if it be possible and if one becomes conscious of this precept. But if, in this way, the inner decision of a person were properly speaking and fundamentally the sole necessary factor for salvation, then it is difficult to see why the necessity for salvation of such an inner and freely adopted attitude should and could be any different from the necessity of a moral obligation. For the necessity of a free decision seems of its very nature to be the necessity of a moral demand, i.e. a *necessitas praecepti*. Of course, one might object to this on the grounds that according to all theologians the freely and personally made act of faith is, after all, also an inner, free human act on the one hand, and that, on the other hand, it is nevertheless regarded by all theologians, [49] in accordance with Heb. 11.6, as a necessary means for the salvation of adults. However this merely extends the problem, but does not solve it. For the distinction between what is necessary as a means and what is necessary by precept would in this way seem to be reduced to a point where it can no longer be conceived with any meaning at all. The sole decisive factor for salvation would in this case seem to be merely man's inner attitude. And this attitude, in the form of a *votum baptismi et Ecclesiae* or of an act of faith, would then have to be said to be necessary as a means for salvation, in spite of the fact that, as a free moral act, it can surely imply only a moral obligation for man. And thus the question would arise of how God can demand such an act from an infant dying before reaching the use of reason for the attainment of its salvation, when it is quite incapable of performing this act. If what is strictly necessary as a means of salvation is the inner faith of man – and since God will surely not demand more of the infant than of the grown-up – he would, in that case, seem to demand an act of faith from the infant and not properly speaking actual baptism, since even of the adult he seems to demand actual baptism only by precept. Or conversely, if inner faith is really necessary as a means for salvation (understood in a sense which is more than a necessity of precept), then this faith would have to be demanded of the child as necessary for salvation, even though (according to all appearances) it is incapable of making this act of faith. There would then remain only one way out of this difficulty, viz. to postulate (contrary to all appearances) the possibility, even for a dying infant, of making a free decision of faith (as has still been done most recently by Daniel Feuling,[68] for instance). In this way we could then indeed regard the inner personal decision of faith as necessary, both as means and by precept, for the salvation of all men. But even this would not help us to solve the actual question we have posed ourselves. For this would still leave us only with a demand in the sphere of free personal attitudes and decisions, which is also a necessary means for salvation. However, according to everything that has been said so far, it is more than improbable that whatever is meant by the necessity of the Church for salvation could be found on this level of inner personal decision alone. Is it possible, ultimately, fully to explain the apodictic statements of the Fathers, who flatly deny the possibility of salvation to unbelievers [50] and schismatics practically without any restrictions (with the few exceptions we pointed out above), merely by the fact that they do not explicitly take into account the distinction between those in good faith and those in bad

[68] *Katholische Glaubenslehre* (Salzburg 1937), p. 904.

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faith for the simple reason that they always presumed in practice a formal guilt on the part of pagans and heretics? Or is there a still deeper theological reason behind the emphasis on the necessity of the visible Church for salvation, which is to a certain extent clouded by the nowadays usual formulation, according to which actual membership of the visible Church can be supplied for by a purely interior, personal human act? Or to put it more exactly: Is the *votum Ecclesiae*, in fact and in the concrete, a purely spiritual, personal human act in the sphere of a positively extra-sacramental and utterly invisible interiority of grace, and does it *thereby* and in *this* manner replace the visible and, in a certain sense, sacramental way of belonging to the Church, the sign of salvation made incarnationally visible? Or is it necessary to show that the *votum Ecclesiae* has a certain inherent 'visibleness', so that it can *on that account* replace the normal external membership of the visible Church when the need arises, without the sacramental structure of all salvation being thereby suddenly suspended in a special case? Is this the truth of the matter, so that something which is necessary as a means in the dimension of personal decisions does not suddenly supplant or replace something necessary as a means in the dimension of the nature of the sacramental sign?

This brings us to the end of our outline of the teaching of the Church's *magisterium* and of theologians, *before* the Encyclical, about the possibility of grace and salvation for someone, who in the sense of the first Section, does not belong to the visible Church. We have also at least suggested the whole line of problems which still demand further explanation relative to this doctrine. However, before we pursue this task of further explanation, we must examine the teaching of the Encyclical on whether it is possible for someone who does not belong to the visible Church to be saved.

2. The teaching of the Encyclical on the possibility of grace and salvation for those who are not members of the visible Church

a. The texts themselves:

There are three statements in the Encyclical[69] to which we must [51] now give our attention: (*Spiritus Christi*) *membra . . . a corpore omnino abscissa renuit sanctitatis gratia inhabitare. Qui ad adspectabilem non pertinent catholicae Ecclesiae compagem . . . de sempiterna cuiusque propria salute securi esse non possunt. Qui fide vel regimine invicem dividuntur, in uno eiusmodi corpore atque uno eius divino spiritu vivere nequeunt.*

As can be seen, these sentences also express the necessity of the Church for salvation in the twofold way of which we spoke before: outside the Church there is no certainty of salvation; anyone who does not belong to the Church, does not have the grace of the Holy Ghost, in which salvation consists in the concrete.

b. Some general considerations about the interpretation of these texts:

When we think back over our statement of the previous teaching of the Church's *magisterium* on the necessity of the Church, of baptism, of subjection to the Roman Pontiff, etc., for salvation, we see at once that these three statements of the Encyclical do not add anything new. They in no way differ, either from the point of view of their meaning or of the perspective which gave rise to their expression, from the previous pronouncements made by the *magisterium* on the necessity of the Church for salvation and on the conclusions to be drawn from this. These three statements are simply a reiteration of the dogma of Faith as it had been clearly held even before the Encyclical and indeed from the very beginning of the Church. Hence no one at least who knew the previous unchangeable teaching of the Church

[69] *AAS* XXXV (1943), 203; 243.

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will be surprised or astonished at the apparent harshness of these statements.

The Encyclical treats exclusively of the nature of the Church. The particular subject of the Encyclical does indeed include in some way also the necessity of the Church for salvation, therefore, but it is quite obvious, by the same token, that the question about the possibility of salvation for someone who is actually outside the visible Church, is simply viewed in the particular perspective of the necessity of membership of the Church for salvation. It lies, therefore, completely outside the scope of the Encyclical to treat of the question as to what positive possibility of salvation there is for such a person and as to how such a possibility of salvation can be objectively and logically reconciled with the necessity of the visible Church for salvation. If, therefore, we do not receive any information on this question, the [52] reason for this is not to be found in the fact that the present *magisterium* of the Church contests such a possibility of salvation, or tries to push it as far into the background of theological consciousness as possible. The reason for this lack of information will simply be the fact that this question does not pertain to the subject of the Encyclical. It is, therefore, obvious from the outset that all those insights into the possibility of grace and of salvation for non-Catholics, which had been manifested up until then either by the Church's *magisterium* itself or by the universal teaching of theologians, remain rightly intact even after the Encyclical. And this all the more so, since no counter-appeals to all this will arise out of the interpretation of those statements of the Encyclical which are under discussion. Many even of the previously referred to statements by the *magisterium* of the Church about the necessity of the Church for salvation lack those precise qualifications, in their apodictic form, which we have added to them in the spirit of the *magisterium*, of Tradition and of the universal teaching of theologians, when we spoke of the possibility of salvation for those who are outside the visible Church. When the Council of Trent,[70] for example, anathematizes anyone who denies that baptism is necessary for salvation, this canon does not deny (although there is no reference in it to the *votum baptismi*) what the same Council[71] teaches elsewhere, viz. that in certain circumstances even a *votum baptismi* can suffice for justification. In the case of all such statements about the Church and baptism as necessary for salvation, we may rightly, and indeed must, according to the mind of the Church's *magisterium*, add the qualification that this membership of the Church, and baptism, are *conditionally* necessary. Thus the statement about the membership of the Church as a necessary means for salvation may and must be understood as referring to a conditional necessity of means for salvation, so that the actual membership of the visible Church can, with the usual prerequired conditions, be replaced also by the fact of belonging to the Church *in voto*. And this is valid even when this is not expressly added in such statements about the necessity of the Church for grace and salvation.

There are partly objective and partly historical reasons why in such pronouncements by the *magisterium* about the necessity of the Church for salvation this qualification is normally not added. The objective [53] reason consists in the fact that it follows immediately from the very nature of things, that the mere *votum Ecclesiae* is not of equal privilege with actual membership of the Church as a means of salvation, but can only supply for this actual membership of the Church in exceptional cases. The historical reason for this traditional way of expression – and probably the more important of the two – lies in the fact that, in respect of our present question, it is clear from the history of the development of the Church's consciousness of the Faith that the knowledge of the necessity of actual membership of the Church came earlier and was more explicit than the reflections about the possibility of salvation for someone who is outside the Church. And, therefore, that knowledge fashioned its dogmatic formulae (which, speaking naturally, have an extraordinary consistency) much

[70] *Denz* 861.
[71] *Denz* 796.

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more decisively than the only slowly and timidly developing reflections about the possibility of salvation and grace for someone outside the Church. Added to this there is the fact that the proclamation of the Faith as message of salvation has of its very nature an existential character. This means that it is a message which tries to express God's demands of men and man's duty even in its most abstract formulae, a message, in other words, which outlines the existential situation of *man*. But it does not have so much to say, on the same lines, about the sovereign freedom and mercy of *God*, which God reserves to himself and which, precisely in these questions of grace and of eternal salvation, are largely incomprehensible to man's understanding even when enlightened by revelation. And what is valid, in this sense, of the interpretation of these earlier statements by the Church's *magisterium*, can equally well be applied to the statements of the Encyclical. This means that we have from the very start the right to add the qualification of the conditional to its statements about the necessity of the Church for grace and salvation, if they do not already state this qualification explicitly themselves.

c. About the particular interpretation of each of the three statements.

The following points should be made regarding the *first* statement cited above: the starting-point of the interpretation of this statement must be the question as to the exact meaning of the phrase '*membra a corpore omnino abscissa*'. Two conceivable possibilities offer themselves here: The *first* possibility is to understand this phrase about the members separated from the body, simply of all those who, according [54] to the norm given by the Encyclical (p. 202), are not full members of the Church, i.e. of those who are separated from the visible Church by lack of baptism, or by a profession of faith different from that of the Church, or by non-subjection to the ecclesiastical ruling power. Interpreted in this way, the meaning of the statement must be as follows: Anyone who does not possess full membership of the visible Church, does not possess the sanctifying grace of the Spirit of Christ. This statement would in that case be one of those apodictic pronouncements about the necessity of Church membership as a means for justification, which we have already frequently cited from earlier doctrinal utterances by the *magisterium* of the Church. Even although it is not here explicitly stated by the Encyclical, such a statement (as we have seen) permits of the tacit addition: 'unless he be in this state through no fault of his own and also has the *votum Ecclesiae*'.

But there is a *second* possibility for the interpretation of this first statement, and this seems the probable one to us. According to this interpretation, the *membra a corpore omnino abscissa* are not simply all those who are not members of the Church in the full sense in accordance with the norm on p. 202, but only those who are *utterly* and in every respect separated from the Church. For, in spite of its emphasis on the fact that heretics and schismatics are not members of the Church in the proper and strictest sense, the Encyclical nevertheless evidently recognizes explicitly or tacitly some sort of wider reference and manner of belonging to the Church for men. It recognizes an *inscio quodam desiderio ac voto ad mysticum redemptoris corpus ordinari*[72] (p. 243) in the case of those who are not simply speaking members of the Church. It often stresses the natural blood relationship of all men with Christ; it knows that Christ in becoming man became the Head of *all* men and the Saviour of *all* men (even although 'especially' of the faithful). When the Encyclical stresses that those who are not simply speaking members of the Church are deprived of many and

[72] Chavasse (*NRT* LXXX [1948], pp. 697 *sq*.) and Brinktrine (*Theologie und Glaube* XXXVIII [1947-48], p. 292) draw attention to the fact that Bellarmine's '*voto* esse in *Ecclesia*' is most likely intentionally avoided in the Encyclical, which says instead '*desiderio ac voto ad mysticum Redemptoris corpus* ordinari'. In other words, the Encyclical did everything in its power to avoid giving the impression that the yearning for membership is already a 'being-in-the-Church' or a proper actual membership.

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great heavenly graces (p. 43), it obviously presupposes that these [55] people who are separated, are not however deprived of every influence of grace from Christ. The Encyclical also represents the ecclesiological aspect of the Sacraments in great detail. Therefore, since it is self-evident in this connection (for it is Catholic Dogma) that the Sacraments can be valid and effective even outside the Church, this again implies that there is, if we may put it this way, a share of 'attachment to the Church' (*Kirchlichkeit*) even outside the Church, precisely if and because such sacramental visibleness of the saving work of Christ has its proper place basically 'inside' the Church. Again, the Encyclical (p. 242) speaks of the High Priestly Prayer for the members of the Church on the one hand, and, on the other hand, for those who, because they are pagans or heretics and schismatics, are not members of the Church. And in this connection it mentions not only the Souls in Purgatory but also the catechumens in the section on prayer for members of the Church. But according to the previous declarations of the Encyclical, catechumens are not '*reapse*' members of the Church. There must, therefore, be some way of belonging to the Church which is to be distinguished from the notion of full and proper membership and yet is not purely fictitious. All these hints given by the Encyclical are so many indications of the fact that, besides the simple straightforward membership of the Church, there are other lesser and looser ways of belonging to Christ and to the Mystical Body of Our Lord which reaches concrete form in the Church.[73] If this is

[73] We wish to remark at once that such a view (of which we will speak more explicitly in Part III) has nothing to do with the distinction between constitutional and operative membership of the Church as advocated by some canonists (cf. note 25 above). For this distinction, as made e.g. by *Mörsdorf*, presupposes that the proper, essential membership is the same in all baptized persons, since it can at most experience an abatement merely in its activation but never in its nature. This distinction also presupposes that the unity of faith and law is less constitutive of the membership of the Church than baptism. Even if 'operative membership' in Mörsdorf's sense were to be explained as 'essential' (since in his sense it too is obligatory), one would still be bound to say that on this supposition the distinction between constitutional and operative membership has a most misleading effect as terminology. For what distinguishes an operative or active membership from an activation of membership? An activation of membership, however, from the very nature of things, cannot be an essential membership, but can at best be only the act of an essential state. But all this has nothing to do with the acknowledgement of the fact that, besides proper and full membership (for which baptism and unity of faith and law are, essentially speaking, equally important constitutive parts), there are also looser ways of belonging to Christ and to that saving reality which becomes concrete, in an historically and juridically verifiable manner, in what we call 'the Church'. We grant that greater clarity could be achieved on this point both in the Encyclical and amongst theologians, if one were to use a more differentiated terminology. Using the precedent of canonistic terminology, we have already distinguished above between 'legal status in the Church', the 'subject relationship' ('the being-subject') and 'membership', each of which is different from the other and is also constituted in a different way. One might now go on to ask whether 'belonging' (*Zugehörigkeit*) and 'being a member' (*Gliedschaft*) are to be considered as terminologically equivalent or whether they can be distinguished. To the feel of the German language, at least, these two notions are not absolutely equivalent. 'Belonging' seems to be a wider notion which, for instance, embraces also legal status and the subject relationship (or could do so, at least). One could inquire whether, on the presupposition of such a terminological distinction, one should not say that 'being a member' (of the actual kind) is something which does not admit of degrees (one either is or is not a member) whereas 'belonging' does admit of degrees, the highest and fullest of which is precisely membership itself. From there one could go on to ask further, whether the '*ordinari*' towards the Church, of which the Encyclical speaks, is not an *even wider* notion, which does, indeed, include all grades of 'belonging' apart from the highest degree of belonging (i.e. membership), but over and above this applies also in the case where one may no longer speak even of an incomplete 'belonging', as e.g. in the case of a non-baptized pagan of good dispositions. At the same time, the notion of 'belonging' would then find its proper application, in such a context of a more precise terminology, only in cases where one or several (but not all) of the elements are present which, apart from those conditions which can never be missing, are required for full belonging (i.e. membership), such as baptism, for instance, or profession of the true faith (as in the case of a catechumen). Although the individual theologian cannot simply create such a terminology for himself in the hope that its use will then become universal, he can nevertheless try to employ it on his own account and at his own risk. It is in this sense that we speak here of 'belonging', on the one hand, and of 'membership', on the other. Objectively there is no problem about this. For no theologian can deny that even a heretic, while not being a 'member' of the

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right, then it is [57] true also that all those and only those can come under the heading of *membra* omnino *abscissa*, who do not even belong to the Church in any of these looser ways. It is, of course, in consequence absolutely and unconditionally true to say of these, that they do not have the Holy Spirit of Christ. But in the concrete this could be said with certainty only of those who, having come to the use of reason, have explicitly or implicitly rejected any union with Christ as their head by their own and subjectively grave fault, and thus have also severed every relationship with his mystical Body.

It follows from all this, however, that objectively speaking both interpretations of the text in question come to the same thing in the end. For one's meaning is ultimately the same, whether one says that heretics and schismatics do not possess the Holy Ghost unless they have a *votum Ecclesiae* (all other conditions being fulfilled), or whether one says that those heretics and schismatics do not have the Holy Ghost, who do not even have the *votum Ecclesiae* (and thus are *membra* omnino *abscissa*). It is therefore quite immaterial which of the two interpretations is formally correct, and hence we also cannot reproach the Encyclical for not having presented this doctrine clearly enough. The first statement under discussion, therefore, does not exclude the possibility that someone possesses justifying grace, who is not a [58] member of the Church in the full sense of the fundamental norms of the Encyclical (p. 202). For, on the one hand (to repeat our basic reflections once more) we have seen that, according to the traditional ecclesiastical usage and even when this is not expressly stated, the emphasis of the necessity of actual membership of the Church for justification does not exclude the possibility of this 'belonging' being supplied by a desire or *votum* for it, in the case of someone who, without any guilt on his part, is in error or ignorance. And, on the other hand, the Council of Trent (not to mention other arguments which could be adduced) evidently presupposes the possibility of a person's being justified by the mere *votum baptismi*,[74] in which connection it must be noted, however, that such a person, who has not yet received the Sacrament of baptism, is certainly not a member of the Church without any further qualification, in spite of his *votum baptismi*.

The statement quoted by us in *second* place is taken from the *Litterae Apostolicae* of Pius IX, which the latter addressed '*ad omnes Protestantes aliosque Acatholicos*' on 13th September 1868, in order to announce to them the summoning of the Vatican Council and to

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Church, remains nevertheless subject to the Church and, therefore, still 'belongs' to her in this sense, even although one cannot say that he 'belongs as a member' ('angehört') to her. Furthermore, the term 'being-in-the-Church' will be reserved for membership. For already in the imagery used by the Fathers (and especially by St Augustine), a heretic is someone who – like the soldier with his army unit or the sheep in its fold – *ought* to be in the Church (and therefore, still 'belongs', in the nature of things, 'to' the army or fold of the Church), but, in fact, simply is no longer 'in' the Church. This. manner of belonging to the Church (who is herself visible) without, however, being an (actual) member of the Church, can itself be again either 'visible' (i.e. historically verifiable) or 'invisible'. If it is 'visible', it is constituted either by baptism *or* by the profession of the true faith (in the case of the catechumen), or by baptism and true faith without, however, subjection to the ecclesiastical authority (in the case of the schismatic). If this 'belonging' is 'invisible', it is constituted by the possession of justifying grace (or by infused supernatural faith). Of course, one and the same person flay thus 'belong' both visibly and invisibly and yet not be a member. We will have to ask ourselves in the third Part of these investigations whether someone can belong 'invisibly' to the visible Church (without having proper, full membership), i.e. in a manner which has absolutely no quasi-sacramental visibleness and historical tangibility – or whether this is unthinkable. We have not really anticipated this question by the notional distinctions just made. Such a manner of belonging to the visible Church would be termed 'invisible' only in so far as it is constituted by grace, which does indeed relate man to the one Church through his social nature and the Holy Ghost, although not in a historically perceptible manner. For an account of similar attempts to evolve a more precise terminology in this matter, cf. M. Nothomb, in *Irénikon* XXV (1952), pp. 241 *sqq*. These attempts originated above all from the French-speaking world, where it is perhaps more difficult to distinguish between *appartenance*, *incorporation* etc.

[74] *Denz* 796.

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exhort them to return to the unity of the Church.[75] Let us say at once that this statement about the uncertainty of salvation for those who are separated from the Church, naturally does not mean that Catholics, as opposed to those separated from the Church, have an absolute subjective certitude of their salvation and do not have to 'work out their salvation in fear and trembling'; such an absolute subjective certitude of salvation is not normally granted to anyone.[76] Hence in the statement under discussion it is not directly a question of subjective certainty or uncertainty of salvation in the human consciousness. It is rather a question of the presence or absence of the objective presuppositions for salvation, such as they are normally provided for, prepared and demanded by God in the concrete order. Since membership of the Church is one of these conditions, it is obvious that anyone who is not a member of the Church lacks one of the positive conditions for objective security of salvation. It follows from this that anyone who of his own grave fault rejects this objective condition for salvation which is obligatory for him, thereby also forfeits salvation as long as he persists in this state of mind – and that such a person can in that [59] sense also not be subjectively certain of salvation. As is emphasized by the Encyclical (p. 243) it is a fact that actual membership brings with it a great abundance of graces, on account of the common life of the faithful in the true faith and on account of their sure direction by the Church, etc. All this is lacking even to someone who is outside the Church through no fault of his own. Taking this fact into consideration, it follows that no one has at hand the same objective aids for his salvific activity as the members of the Church, even though he is in no way responsible for his being separated from the Church. And, therefore, such a person is also objectively in a less secure position than a member of the Church. In this sense it is also true to say of him that, although he is guiltless, he is not as sure of his salvation as a Catholic (but ultimately, of course, all this is rooted in God's free and inscrutable Will of good pleasure, for he distributes his grace as he wills). But the statement in question does not mean that this objective insecurity of salvation, even for someone who is outside the Church through no fault of his own, is such that it is absolutely impossible for him to attain salvation. Indeed it does not even mean that the grace which is included in actual membership of the Church, can never under any circumstances be replaced in God's mercy by some other, more hidden supernatural aids from God. For the rest, we can apply the same to this statement as what was said about the first. In other words, if we understand by uncertainty the insecurity of salvation on account of the lack of absolutely every means for salvation, then this applies only to those who are separated from the Church through their own subjective fault. If we understand this statement as meaning an insecurity of a relative and not of an absolute kind, on account of the lesser although still sufficient[77] degree of objective possibility of salvation (which is still given even by the looser relationship with the Church), then it can and must apply to all who do not actually belong in the fullest sense to the Church. Objectively speaking, [60] these two possible interpretations come once more to the same thing in the long run.

We come now to a more particular explanation of the *third* of the statements cited above: *Qui fide vel regimine invicem dividuntur, in uno eiusmodi corpore atque uno eius divino spiritu vivere nequeunt*. In the framework of this second Section of our investigation there is no longer any question of the fact that those who are not subject to the teaching and ruling

[75] *Collectio Lacensis* VII, 8-10.
[76] Cf. *Denz* 802; 822-825.
[77] On account of his universal salvific Will, God gives every man sufficient grace to work out his salvation, if he does not reject this opportunity through his own fault. Hence, anyone who does not want to maintain that to remain outside the Church throughout one's life is always and in every case a sign of grave subjective guilt, must admit that, on account of God's universal salvific Will, a person can be provided with sufficient opportunity for salvation even when he never actually attains to membership of the Church throughout his whole life.

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authority of the Church, no longer belong to the Body of the Church. What we have to discuss here is that interpretation of this statement which goes on to conclude that these same people are moreover neither animated by, nor live in, the divine Spirit of this Church. Objectively, of course, to live by the one divine Spirit of the Church in the fullest sense, means sanctifying grace and, to a lesser degree, possibly even the infused virtues of Faith and Hope. The latter can, according to the Council of Trent, still be present even in someone who has lost justifying grace. To live by the divine Spirit of the Church does not mean a 'spiritual communion of outlook' with the Church, as some have tried to interpret it in order to make things easier for themselves. For in the whole Encyclical the word *spiritus* is never used to mean a spiritual attitude or outlook, or anything else of that nature. On the contrary, it is always used to mean the divine Person of the Holy Spirit, in so far as he is the justifying and sanctifying principle of the members of the Church, together with his created graces.[78] If, therefore, anyone who is not in the fullest sense a member of the Church is nevertheless to be said to be justified, then such justification and sanctification can only be the work of this [61] divine Spirit of the Church. But precisely this seems at first sight to be excluded by the statement under discussion. And at least at this point we cannot give the second and more probable interpretation of this text which we used when interpreting the first statement in question. In itself, only those were formally said to be deprived of the Holy Ghost together with his sanctifying grace, in that interpretation, who are no longer in any way united with the Church. But in the third statement the same is said also of those who do not possess full and proper membership of the Church, although their lack of this proper membership is still always compatible with a looser relationship to the Church. As far as the third statement is concerned, therefore, it can only be a question of emphasis on the necessity of full membership of the Church for the possession of grace. However, according to our previous arguments, this necessity of full membership of the Church for the possession of grace is a conditional necessity of means, i.e. a necessity which, in certain circumstances and under appropriate presuppositions, can be fulfilled also by the mere *votum* of full membership of the Church. Our explanations in the first section of the second part have already proved that it is ecclesiastical usage (which is, of course, based on the nature of things) to predicate this necessity of the visible Church for grace also of full membership of the Church, without mentioning always also that it is possible for this form of belonging to the Church (which is a necessary means for salvation) to be supplied for by the *votum Ecclesiae*. We have also shown already that we are not prevented from understanding this necessity of belonging to the Church as a means to salvation in the sense of a conditional necessity, by the fact that it is formulated apodictically. This usage of the Church is completely justified by the fact that the *votum Ecclesiae*, which, if need be, can be sufficient in certain extreme cases, merely re-emphasizes of its very nature the necessity of the Church for salvation. For the possibility of salvation provided by the mere *votum Ecclesiae* is not really founded directly on the objective nature of things. It is founded rather on the inadequacy (even although guiltless) of the circumstances and of the understanding of the person who finds grace and salvation by reason

[78] I cannot see why the divine Spirit in question should be the 'Spirit who is the Soul of this Body and who above all effects and guarantees the infallibility of the Church' (thus Brinktrine, in *Theologie und Glaube* XXXVIII [1947-48], p. 293, note 24). It is, of course, true that the statement with which we have just been concerned, is the summary and conclusion of the statements about the conditions of Church membership and about the reasons for them. But from this it follows that this Spirit, according to the texts from St Paul (1 Cor. 12.13 and Eph 4.5) quoted by the Encyclical in the very preceding sentence, is the One in Whom we were baptized *at* baptism *into* the one Body animated by this Spirit. Now the whole of Tradition and the whole teaching of the Encyclical take it for granted that one is granted *justification* by being made a member of the one Body of the Church and by thus participating in its Spirit. But where does the Encyclical speak of our participating in this Spirit by baptism precisely in as far as he effects the infallibility of the Church (which, of course, is in fact one of his effects)?

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of the *votum Ecclesiae* alone. For, if it is in this way understood correctly, the possibility of salvation provided by the *votum Ecclesiae* does not mean a separate possibility of salvation which would take its place with equal rights beside that other possibility of salvation provided by full actual membership of the Church. And this [62] is true, no matter how much more decisively important the *votum Ecclesiae* may be, in practice, in innumerable cases. Hence, even in the case of this third statement, we may tacitly but objectively add that anyone who is divided from the Church by faith or government, cannot possess its divine Spirit, unless he be in good faith and has the *votum Ecclesiae*.

We conclude this Section with two quotations which, although quite independent of the Encyclical, seem to us to reiterate and to summarize well the material contents of the problems with which we have been concerned in this Section. The first passage to be quoted consists of the 6th and 7th Chapter of the *Schema constitutionis dogmaticae de Ecclesia Christi Patrum examini propositum*, submitted for the Vatican Council.[79] Albeit this *Schema*, as seen from the point of view of the *magisterium*, is a purely private work of theologians, it is nevertheless a good summary of the Church's teaching on the necessity of the visible Church for salvation and on the possibility of salvation for those who are divided from the Church. Moreover, it has not really been surpassed by any theological work since the Vatican Council. It reads as follows:

> The Church is a society which is utterly necessary for the attainment of salvation. Hence everyone should understand exactly how necessary the Church of Christ is as a society for the attainment of salvation. For she is as necessary as the unity and union with Christ, the Head, and with his Mystical Body. Apart from her there is no other community which he nourishes and cares for as his Church, which alone He has loved and for which He has given himself so as to sanctify her, by purifying her through the waters of baptism in the Word of Life, in order to render her unspeakably exquisite to himself, without spot or wrinkle or anything of that kind, but rather holy and without blemish. We therefore teach: The Church is not a society with regard to which man may please himself, as if knowledge or ignorance of her, entry into her or leaving her be quite indifferent for salvation. On the contrary, she is utterly necessary for this, and this not only by the necessity of the Lord's precept, by which the Saviour prescribed entry into her for all peoples. She is also necessary for this by the necessity of means, since in the factual order of saving providence, the communication [63] of the Holy Ghost, and the participation in Truth and Life are only obtained within the Church and through the Church of which Christ is the Head. Furthermore, it is a Dogma of Faith that outside the Church no one can be saved. And yet no one who is in invincible error regarding Christ and his Church, will have to be declared deserving of eternal punishment on account of such error. For such a person is in no way involved in guilt in this respect before the eyes of the Lord. God desires that all men should be saved and should attain to the knowledge of the Truth, and He will not deny to anyone who does what is in his power, the grace for being able to attain justification and eternal life. But no one will attain eternal life who passes out of this life separated from the unity of faith or from the community of the Church, through his own fault. Anyone who is not in this Ark will perish in the raging floods. Therefore we reject and abhor the doctrine of religious indifferentism, which is both a godless doctrine and one which is, in fact, contrary to reason. We mean the doctrine according to which the children of this world annul the difference between truth and error and then declare that one religion is as good as the other for reaching the haven of eternal life. Or they maintain that one can have only more or less probable opinions

[79] *Collectio Lacensis* VII, 569.

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about the truth of a religion, but never certitude. We equally condemn the godlessness of those who close the kingdom of heaven to men, by maintaining on false pretexts that it is unbecoming and quite unnecessary for salvation to change from the religion in which one was born or brought up, even if that religion be false. We condemn the godlessness of those who reproach the Church for declaring herself to be the only true religion and for rejecting and condemning all other religious communions and sects which are separated from her communion – as if righteousness and godlessness had anything to do with each other, or light and darkness had anything in common; as if Christ and Belial could speak with one voice.

The other text is taken from Pius IX's Allocution '*Singulari quadam*' of 9th December 1854[80]:

Another error, equally destructive, has taken hold of some parts of the Catholic World, as we see to our sorrow. It has sunk deep [64] into the minds of those Catholics principally who think there is good hope for the eternal salvation of all those who in no wise live in the true Church of Christ. Therefore, they are in the habit of frequently asking what will be the future lot and condition after death of those who in no way have given adherence to the Catholic faith. Advancing the flimsiest of arguments, they expect a reply that will support this erroneous opinion. Far be it from Us, Venerable Brethren, to dare set limits to the divine mercy, which is infinite. Far be it from Us to want to penetrate the secret plans and judgements of God, which are a great abyss, impenetrable to human thought. But according to Our apostolic office, We want your episcopal care and vigilance to be on the alert to keep away from men's minds, with all possible effort, that opinion which is as unholy as it is deadly. We mean the opinion that a way of eternal salvation can be found in any religion whatever. With all the learning and ingenuity that is yours, teach the people entrusted to your care that the dogmas of the Catholic faith are not in the slightest opposed to the mercy and justice of God. It must, of course, be held as a matter of faith that outside the apostolic Roman Church no one can be saved, that the Church is the only ark of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it will perish in the flood. On the other hand, it must likewise be held as certain that those who are affected by ignorance of the true religion, if it is invincible ignorance, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord. Now, then, who could presume in himself an ability to set the boundaries of such ignorance, taking into consideration the natural differences of peoples, lands, native talents, and so many other factors? Only when we have been released from the bonds of this body and see God just as he is shall we really understand how close and beautiful a bond joins divine mercy with divine justice. But as long as we dwell on earth, encumbered with this soul-dulling, mortal body, let us tenaciously cling to the Catholic doctrine that there is one God, one faith, one baptism. To proceed with further investigation is wrong.

3. Summary and supplementary remarks to Part II

a. The Encyclical says nothing beyond what was already and always, quite apart from the Encyclical, obligatory theological doctrine in the Church, with regard to a person's membership of the true Church of [65] Christ and the necessity of this Church for salvation and grace, and regarding the possibility of salvation for someone who is not a member of the

[80] Cf. *Denz* 1646 *sq*. (English Translation: *The Church Teaches* [St Louis and London 1955], nos 173-174).

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Church in the fullest sense of ecclesiastical terminology. It stresses, on the one hand, the real necessity of strict membership of the Church for salvation, without excluding, on the other hand, the possibility of justification and salvation for those who through no fault of their own do not belong to the Church as members in the strict and full sense. The terminology of the Encyclical also moves along traditional lines with regard to the formulae expressing the necessity of the Church for salvation, without laying any more stress than had been traditional usage on the positive possibility of salvation even without full actual membership of the Church.

b. In what concerns our questions, the only peculiarity of the Encyclical is that it employs the terms 'Church' and '*corpus Christi mysticum*' synonymously, in a much more definite fashion than had perhaps been the custom up to then in respect of man here below, i.e. in the dimension of the *Ecclesia militans*. In proceeding in this way, the Encyclical is obviously imbued with the urgent desire to remove a theological error from the scene which evidently still prevails today in certain quarters in the discussions on union between Catholics and non-Catholics. We refer to that error according to which a man, or at least a Christian, may belong to the Church, or at least to the Mystical Body of Christ, no matter how he stands in relationship to the Roman Catholic Church. By identifying in practice the Church on this earth, which is also a visible, juridical society under the authority of the Roman Pontiff, with the Mystical Body of Christ, the Encyclical obviously wishes to free the theological consciousness of today from the danger, even in the field of terminology, of distinguishing these two notions in such a way that the uniqueness, visibleness and necessity of the visible Church for salvation are at least in danger of being obscured.

c. On the other hand, it is true to say that the Encyclical as a whole makes the visible *Church* on this earth and not the *corpus Christi mysticum* the subject of its declarations. Taken as a whole, the notion of *corpus Christi mysticum* remains in the Encyclical a notion which is predicated *of* the Church. It is of course equally true that Tradition also recognizes a wider concept of the *corpus Christi mysticum*, which, [66] for instance, embraces also the just who lived before Christ's coming or all those who are justified even if they are not in the full sense members of the visible Church, or which includes also the peaceful unity between Church and State.[81] Thus, in view of both these facts, it will not be necessary to regard this terminological identification by the Encyclical of 'Church' and '*corpus mysticum*' as theologically obligatory in *such* a way that it would, in principle, no longer be permissible to use the term '*corpus Christi mysticum*' in a terminologically wider sense. One should, however, be very careful in future, when using this wider notion, not to conjure up again the misunderstandings and errors indicated above. Even when making a *terminological* distinction between the two notions, which is '*in itself*' possible, it would at all events have to remain clear that the 'Mystical Body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church' are 'one and the same thing',[82] in the sense that one cannot belong to the former if, and in so far as, one does not belong to the latter. It seems to us, however, that this doctrine of the two Encyclicals *Mystici Corporis Christi* and *Humani Generis* does not require us to make the assertion, from the historical point of view, that both notions have always and everywhere been identical in theology. For one would find it difficult to make this assertion. Indeed, a careful differentiation of the two notions will even in future not be impossible, as long as one observes what has been said before. For, although it would in itself be possible for these Encyclicals to determine the *terminology* of this matter (and this is something which has

[81] Cf. S. Tromp, *Corpus Christi, quod est Ecclesia* I (Rome 1937).
[82] 'Humani Genenis', *Denz* 3019.

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frequently happened in the course of the history of Dogma[83]), which would prohibit the further employment of the previous usage, they do not say anything about intending to do so directly. Thus it will, for example, still be possible to prefer to say that the just of pre-Christian times belong to the Mystical Body, rather than to say that they belong to the Roman Catholic Church.[84] In other words, the identity of the [67] two terms, as taught by these Encyclicals, is valid in as far as they relate to the time of salvation after Christ. And, moreover, it is a material and not a formal identity, i.e. the two notions regard the same thing in so far as they relate to the Church considered as the juridical foundation of Christ for the time after Christ – yet this same reality is, and can be, looked at by these two notions from different points of view, since it has several dimensions, etc.

d. The Encyclical calls the Holy Ghost the soul of the Church (p. 220). But it emphasizes most explicitly that this justifying and divinizing Spirit is the 'soul' of the *visible* Church and hence can properly speaking be found in her alone. For this precise reason, it does not seem to be in line with the Encyclical's direction of thought simply to say (as e.g. Dieckmann still does), that those who are not members of the Church in the strict and full sense but are nevertheless justified, do not indeed belong to the Body of the Church, but do, however, [68] belong to the Soul of the Church.[85] What is, of course, correct about this manner of speaking,

[83] As, for instance, the restrictive determination of the sense of 'physis' in Christology. This is a case of a determined terminology which can now be looked upon as absolutely obligatory. For otherwise there would only be misunderstandings and confusions (if nothing worse), without there being any rational reason for resurrecting an earlier phase in the development of dogmatic terminology.

[84] Indeed, it must not be forgotten that the notion of the 'Church', too, has had, and can have, a narrower and a wider sense in history. Cf. for this the bibliography given above on p. 5, Note 3, and the examples collected together from the works of St Thomas and Suarez in the *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* I^2 (Madrid 1952), no. 1060 *sqq*. The Church is, for instance, constituted 'in the wide sense' (a modern qualification) of all men, beginning with Adam; the Patriarchs belong to her by faith, as we do; all those who have *fides informis* (i.e. the infused virtue which can also be in a heretic), are her members, it is the same Church before and after Christ etc. But one cannot simply make the above question easy for oneself by saying: just as the notion of the 'Mystical Body of Christ' can have a manifold, narrower and wider meaning, so also in the case of the word 'Church', – thus these two notions are still identical in every respect. For 'Humani Generis' does not speak of a simple identity of notion between 'Church' and 'Mystical Body of Christ', but between the latter and the 'Roman Catholic Church'. This last expression is, however, identical merely with the notion of 'Church in the narrower sense'. And so the question arises as to how this identification is to be understood. And to this we have just answered: this identification refers to the two quantities only in the order of salvation after Christ and on this earth, – and their identity is merely a material, not a formal identity. We, therefore, do not conflict in any way with the Encyclical 'Humani Generis'. Thee *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* I^2 (Madrid 1952), no. 1007, nota 30 is therefore incorrect in counting us among those who cast doubt on the traditional teaching about the identity of the two notions. This teaching is in no way disputed, but simply more precisely determined in its meaning and extent. Cf. also M. Nothomb, 'L'Eglise et le Corps du Christ. Dernières Encycliques et doctrine de Saint Thomas', Irénikon XXV (1952), pp. 226-248.

[85] The same opinion is held e.g. by B. J. Beumer (in *Theologie und Glaube* XXXVIII , p. 84; compare this also with: J. Beumer, 'Der Heilige Geist "Seele der Kirche", *Theologie und Glaube* XXXIX [1949], pp. 249-267). J. Brinktrine (*loc. cit*., p. 294), on the other hand, is of the opinion that the distinction between Body and Soul of the Church, if properly interpreted, is unobjectionable and reconcilable with the Encyclical when applied to someone's belonging or not belonging to the Church. This distinction can pass, if it is understood *correctly*. But the real question is whether it must not almost necessarily be misunderstood. Brinktrine's interpretation identifies 'belonging to the Soul' with 'belonging invisibly to the Church', and 'belonging to the Body' with 'belonging in an external, visible manner to the visible communion of the Catholic Church'. But is this 'invisible belonging' an invisible belonging to the visible Church (even *qua* visible), or is it merely an invisible belonging to some invisible element of the Church? This is precisely the question which must not be left open – but this distinction does leave it open. And then: can one belong to the visible Church, precisely as visible, in a way which is utterly and in every respect 'invisible', i.e. without any tangible historical expression whatsoever, but simply grounded in the pure interiority of a personal act? This question, too, clamours for an answer. It will be treated explicitly in the third part of the present chapter.

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is precisely what the Encyclical itself also teaches explicitly, viz. that non-Catholics cannot be simply called members of the Church without any further qualification. But it would nevertheless be misleading and contrary to the ultimate intention of the Encyclical, although very natural, to understand such a mode of expression to mean that there can be a relation to the Spirit of the Church by grace, without this having *anything whatever* to do with her visible Body. Even although the Encyclical does not in any way enter directly into this question, one may nevertheless say that it gives us to understand that there is in some way or other a further reference, relation and connection with the *visible* Body of the Church for everyone who is justified. And we may say that in this way the Encyclical somehow points out that each and every grace of God has, in a certain sense, an incarnational, sacramental and ecclesiological structure. The Encyclical, to be sure, leaves the further theological elucidation of this question to the work of theologians. We will have to return to this question in our third part.

e. In the work for union between the Churches, apparent solutions and the obscuring of differences of dogmatic teaching are neither in the [69] interest of truth nor in the interest of charity. If, therefore, the Encyclical draws attention to ecclesiological truths which belong to the Church's inalienable deposit of faith and which, with the best intentions in the world, had perhaps here and there not been clearly enough stated or professed before separated Christians, then this is not meant to arrest properly understood efforts for union but rather to further them. Union, such as Christ wills it, can only mean the unity of Christians in the Church such as Christ has willed her, and such as, according to her nature and constitution founded by Christ, she has always actually existed, and still does actually exist, in the Roman Catholic Church. Even the clearest and strongest emphasis on the uniqueness, visibleness and necessity for salvation of the true Church, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church, does not imply that one presumes in any way to judge the good faith and the grace of separated Christians. Nor does it in any way mean a denial of the great treasure of Christian reality in their teaching, in their faithfulness to Holy Scripture and in their sacramental life. It also does not mean a denial of the fact that the true Church herself would be enriched in Christian reality (in so far as this is to be realized in men according to their national, historical and psychological characteristics), if these Christians returned to the home which, in the words of the Encyclical (p. 243), is not strange to them but is their own father's home.

III

The third question which we intended to ask ourselves in our consideration, asks: With regard to the *Church's nature* itself, what *further facts*, and what *indications for further lines of inquiry* can be gathered from the answer to the first two questions? We intend to take our starting-point for this task from two problems which have been raised rather than solved by our answer to the first two questions in the light both of previous teaching and of the Encyclical. The first problem arises out of the notion of the Church which is at the root of the Encyclical's teaching on man's belonging to the Church, i.e. the problem which in practice arises out of the answer to our first question. The second problem arises out of the question about the objective Compatibility of the doctrine of the visible Church as a necessary means for salvation, and of the doctrine of the possibility of salvation [70] for someone outside the Church, i.e. the problem which in practice arises out of our second question.

1. We said in the first Part of our considerations that, according to Tradition and the

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Encyclical, only those, and yet all those, who are distinguished by baptism, by external profession of the faith of the Church and by subjection to the legal authority of the Church, belong as members to the Church. The consequence of such a definition of Church membership is that, on the one hand, e.g. some people who are justified and in the state of grace do not belong as members in this strict sense to the Church, whereas, on the other hand, some people who are not in the state of grace, are still members of the Church. This conclusion, drawn from the definition of membership of the Church, is not in itself surprising so long as one does not think of the Church as anything but an external, juridically organized society confessing one faith. For such a notion of 'Church' it is naturally self-evident that the internal possession or non-possession of grace, which is an intangible factor for the external forum, cannot be of any consequence for membership of the Church. Indeed, one will have to say at first sight that this definition of Church membership cannot but proceed from such a notion of the Church and that it, therefore, has this notion as its only legitimate basis. For if, as we have shown, this definition of Church membership is at least a theologically certain doctrine, and if the notion of the nature of the Church just mentioned is unequivocally and clearly the logical presupposition to this theologically certain doctrine, then that notion of the Church's nature must also be said to be a theologically certain doctrine. We would, therefore, have to consider it a theologically certain doctrine that the Church's nature lies exclusively in the visible and juridically verifiable sphere. For only on this condition, as we have said, can all those (and only those) circumstances of membership (*Zugehörigkeit*) of the Church be taken into account, which are to be found in this sphere. However, the Encyclical (p. 197) declares that it would be a rationalistic error to see nothing more in the Church of Christ than a purely juridical and social unity. And Leo XIII had already characterized this particular notion of the Church very profoundly as ecclesiological Nestorianism in his Encyclical *Satis cognitum* of 29th June 1896. The, Church is more than just a juridical organization, even one founded by [71] Christ himself. She is the Body of Christ, animated and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, she is the Communion of Saints; the grace of Christ, the Holy Ghost and the interior union of men with Christ as their head by an inner god-likeness and assimilation to Christ, all manifestly belong to the reality of the Church. Thus we seem to be faced with a dilemma: the definition of the conditions for Church membership knows only one notion of the Church for which the Church, whose membership is under discussion, can only be an external juridical organization; and yet precisely this notion of the Church seems to be rejected by Tradition, and also by our Encyclical, as nestorian rationalism in Ecclesiology. The solution of this apparent contradiction between various declarations of one and the same Encyclical, which is something on which the Encyclical itself does not explicitly reflect, provides us with a first possibility of acquiring a somewhat better grasp of the nature of the Church.

We have already pointed out earlier on that the theological clarification of the *notion of Sacrament* is very fruitful and important for Ecclesiology.[86] This assertion may also find verification in our present question. A Sacrament is a sign which confers grace. It does not only subsequently symbolize the internal event of the sanctifying meeting between God and

[86] I have already discussed some of *the points required for an understanding of the notion of Sacrament* (*which we are here trying to clarify*) *in Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* (Freiburg 1951), and in 'Personal and Sacramental piety', theological reflections on 'spiritual Communion' and similar matters, cf. pp. 109-134 below. Certain facts concerning the historical background of the conception of the relation between the sacramental sign and the signified reality of grace, which underlies our present considerations, become clear in the Essay: 'La doctrine d'Origène sur la pénitence', *RSR* XXXVII (1950), pp. 47-49; 252-286; 422-456. Cf. also the treatise on 'Guilt and its remission' in the present volume. Furthermore: H. Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentele Heilseconomie. Theologische bezinning op S. Thomas' sacramentenleer in het licht van de traditie en van het hedendaagse sacramentsproblematiek* (Antwerp 1952).

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man by grace. Rather this event takes place under and through this sign. The nature of a Sacrament as an external liturgical rite can only, therefore, be comprehended by having regard to that event which happens behind and through it in the form of the hidden mystery of grace. If we were to separate this reality of grace which takes place behind the sacramental rite from the latter, or even merely attempt to comprehend the sacramental rite separately from its [72] effect of grace, then the Sacrament would lose all its meaning and significance. The Church's fight against a Protestant kind of conception of Sacrament,[87] which latter ultimately and basically transposed the event of the reception of grace exclusively into the purely internal and subjective sphere of fiduciary faith and of the interior experience of justification, is sufficiently clear proof of the way in which the Church has never given its consent to the rending of the natural bond between sacramental rite and inward grace. Yet, in spite of this, it is equally a truth of faith that there are cases when the Sacraments are validly conferred but do not actually effect this grace. The third-century controversy about baptism by heretics and the fight against Donatism were not simply wrangles about the existence of sacramental events outside the Church. These controversies were at least equally also a fight for the truth that, in spite of the essential reference of the sacramental rite to the inner event of grace, there could be real and valid sacramental events which are not fulfilled by the reality of grace necessarily symbolized and, of itself, effected by these events. Two questions must, therefore, be clearly and essentially distinguished in connection with the Sacraments. Firstly, there is the question about the necessary and unalterable conditions for the sacramental sign as a real and valid visible act of Christ and the Church effected on man. And secondly, there is the question of what conditions are necessary so that this visible action of Christ and the Church on man can actually attain what it symbolizes. And in accordance with this it is, in fact, essentially and inevitably possible (and not just something due to the indifferent notions employed), to give a twofold description of the nature of a Sacrament. Thus, on the one hand, one can give a definition of a Sacrament which includes exclusively only what belongs to the constitution of a *valid* sacramental sign. And, on the other hand, one can give a description of the nature of a Sacrament which also includes that reality in its notion for which the external sacramental event is essentially intended and without which it would ultimately lose its meaning. Both these notions of Sacrament, if we may put it this way, are necessary and indispensable, neither can replace the other; they must not be played off one against the other. One may not even regard the full notion of Sacrament as the only valid one, to the detriment of the other notion of Sacrament on the plane of the sacramental sign. [73] For the fact that there can be a valid but unfruitful Sacrament shows that a genuine and decisive Christian reality can exist on the visible, and sacramentally and juridically verifiable plane, without always being, in fact, an immediately effective expression and manifestation of an actual event of grace. Indeed, one will have to go further and say that this notion of Sacrament which is concerned solely with the visible and juridically verifiable dimension, must be the one which strikes man first and foremost, as he does not and cannot, in the last resort, grasp or determine the interior event of grace. When one asks about a 'Sacrament', one's question is in the first place concerned with what man himself must do and achieve in the externality of his necessarily self-averted consciousness. In other words, one asks first of all about the sacramental happening as such, in as far as this must be essentially distinguished, although not really separated, from sacramental grace as such.

Now these facts of the particular domain of the Sacraments are, however, only a particular instance of the general structure of Christian reality. Just as in Christ himself the divine nature and the human nature are as much unmixed and necessarily to be distinguished as they are unseparated, so it is also in the case of the Sacraments and elsewhere in Christian reality.

[87] Cf. e.g. *Denz* 848 *sqq*.

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And precisely this fact manifests itself now also in the nature of the Church. The Church is in a certain sense the Proto-Sacrament[88]; this means, however, that she is, in her whole concrete, visible and juridically verifiable appearance, a real sign and embodiment of the salvific will of God and of the grace of Christ. That is, she has a bodily nature which as such possesses an unmistakable, fully determined and juridically determinable form, and which actually causes the grace which it renders present in the historical here and now; and yet that bodily nature remains essentially different from this divine grace which will always be the sovereign mystery of God's freedom and can never be subdued by man. Hence there can be, as in the case of the Sacraments, a *twofold notion of the Church* which is due, not to the vagueness of notions or inaccuracy of terminology, but to the very nature of things. Thus, on the one hand, there is the notion of the Church as incarnate presence of Christ and his grace, *together* [74] *with* Christ and his grace, and, on the other hand, the notion of the Church in as far as she must be essentially *distinguished* from this grace and inner divine union, without ceasing, however, to be even in this way a still valid Christian reality; in other words, Church as parallel notion to Sacrament, understood as sign *and* grace, or Church as parallel notion to Sacrament, taken as the valid sacramental sign, even in as far as this can be thought of, and indeed can exist, without an effect of grace.[89] We will have to say in this connection also that this second notion of the Church (i.e. in the historical, juridically verifiable and humanly clearly determinable dimension) is the most striking, but for that very reason also the more introductory notion, just as in the case of the corresponding notion of the sacramental sign. And, therefore, the Encyclical, together with more recent theology, simply denotes by the term 'Church', as we pointed out previously, the external and juridical community directly.

As a result of these reflections, the dilemma with which we began, now gradually solves itself. When the Encyclical defines the conditions of Church membership exclusively on the basis of the external social structure of the Church, this means that it proceeds from this second notion of 'Church'. And since this notion is fully valid, and to mix up [75] the two notions would merely expose us to the danger of obscuring the objectively existing multidimensional structure of the Church's reality, the definition of the conditions for membership of the Church is also valid. This definition, to express it in terms of sacramental theology, is the definition of valid but not necessarily fruitful membership of the Church, and of the necessary conditions for the full constitution of the *visible nature* of the union with Christ through grace. But it does not define those conditions in so far as this visibleness is actually imbued with the 'grace-full' reality which it signifies and, in itself, renders present in the here and now of the finite space of man's life on this earth. On the other hand, in view of

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[88] Cf. about this e.g. O. Semmelroth, 'Die Kirche als "sichtbare Gestalt der unsichtbaren Gnade"', *Scholastik* XXVIII (1953), pp. 23-39; *id*., *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt 1953), together with its review by H. Zeller in *ZKT* LXXVI (1954), pp. 94-99.

[89] One could also say: Church as '*res et sacramentum*' (or even as '*res sacramenti*') and Church as '*sacramentum* (*tantum*)'. The history of the notion of the Church is in great part a history of the transition or change of accent from the first to the second of these notions of the Church. With St Thomas, for example, the first notion still holds supreme sway: the 'Church' is humanity united with Christ in grace and faith. And this was even more truly the dominant notion before his time. The external, sacramental and juridical form of this Church was not, of course, denied; but nevertheless, the constituting cause of this external form as a Church was above all the Spirit. Thus it could, for instance, remain quite clear right up to the later Middle Ages, that the sin of the Christian sinner changes also his relationship to the Church; the whole history of Penance bears witness to that fact in the formation of the rites of this Sacrament. Cf. also for the early Middle Ages: A. Landgraf, 'Sünde und Trennung von der Kirche in der Frühscholastik', *Scholastik* V (1930), pp. 210-247; and P. Anciaux, *Le Sacrement de Pénitence au XII^e siècle* (Louvain 1949), *passim*. All this is also brought out by the fact that even St Augustine, in spite of his fight against Donatism, still struggled with the difficulty of admitting that sinners belong really and not merely apparently to the Church. Hence we also find in St Augustine the conception that the Sacraments administered outside the Church are 'valid' indeed, but that they do not on that account bestow the Spirit, since the latter can, in fact, be obtained only within the Church.

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what has been said, the comprehensive notion of the Church, which includes also the divine interiority of the Church, remains also fully valid. For the whole earthly reality which we call Church (in the other sense of that word) does, in fact, have a meaning only as the effective sign of the unity of the world with God through grace. Hence, without coming into conflict with the doctrine of faith that sinners too are members of the Church, one may rightly ask also about the nature of the conditions for a membership of the Church *by grace*. For full membership of the Church by grace in this sense, we would then have to add all those conditions to the conditions for external membership of the Church, which are required for the justification and sanctification of man (into which, of course, we do not need to inquire here). It is equally clear with regard to the full notion of the Church as giving grace, that the sinner does not belong to the Church to the same extent and in the same sense as the justified member of the Church. Thus, for instance, the ancient Church right up to the later Middle Ages was clearly conscious of the fact that the sacramental reconciliation of man with God by Penance is also a reconciliation with the Church, and that every grave sin is a 'separation' from the Church as a reality full of grace. And in keeping with this consciousness, the proceedings of the Sacrament of Penance were opened in the ancient Church by making this 'separation' visible also in the external forum of the Church. All this is proof of the fact that the Church fully appreciated that the sinner is no longer related to the Church by a fully fruitful membership, although his membership is still valid.[90]

[76] The ultimate reason for this distinction of the two notions of 'Church'[91] is easy to understand: only if there are Sacraments which really cause grace, can there be a genuinely 'incarnational' presence of God and of his grace in the world of man here below where he is imprisoned in space and time and in the' 'flesh'. Only if there are (in principle) also merely valid Sacraments which really are Sacraments and yet are empty of grace, can the grace of God remain free and beyond the ravishing grasp of man which would turn it into magic; only in this way can the grace of God remain the mystery of the unfathomable God, without this having, at the same time, the effect that God and the salvation he gives disappear into the nowhere of his infinity. In the mystery of the valid Sacraments which nevertheless are actually empty of grace there moreover reveals itself once more the mystery of the crucified God: the God-emptiness becomes a real form of God's appearance in the world. The same as is true of the Sacraments is also true of the Church: she is the real, permanent and ever valid presence of God in the world. And this remains true even when she is the Church of the sinner; the presence of God is in her in a manner which leaves the mystery of God and the incomprehensible-ness of his grace and free love intact. And just as with the Church, so also with the membership of the Church: in a certain sense, viz. in its external juridical verifiability, this membership is the basic sacramental sign of the sanctification of the individual man. And since this membership is still valid even when it has lost grace, it leaves the grace of God in respect of the individual human being with that mystery which must be respected even by the man of the Church, who must always renounce all ultimate certainty about this.

2. If the reflections on the problems of the first Part of our considerations have thus given us a somewhat deeper understanding of the unseparated and unmixed divine and human

[90] Cf. apart from the bibliography given above, p. 74, note 89, the bibliography given in my article 'Forgotten truths about the Sacrament of Penance', pp. 135 *sqq*. below.

[91] It is to be noted that it is here a question of two *notions* of the Church and not of two Churches. By distinguishing between a valid and a fruitful Sacrament, one arrives at two notions but does not thereby distinguish two Sacraments; no more do two notions of the Church imply the assertion of two Churches of which it might then be asked how far they 'coincide' or do not coincide with one another.

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natures of the Church, the reflections on the problems of the second Part will lead us to the [77] realization of a *stratification within the nature of the Church as sacramental sign*. The visible nature of God's grace which we call Church is itself composed of several realities. In what follows we must try to clarify what exactly is meant by this.

The consideration of *the necessity of the Church for salvation* in the second Part led us to the question as to the possibility of salvation for someone who does not belong in the legal sense to the Church. Our answer was that the necessity of the Church as a means for salvation does not deny the possibility of salvation for someone with the *votum Ecclesiae* and is, therefore, to be conceived as a *conditional necessity of means*. The necessity of the Church for salvation and the possibility of salvation for someone outside the Church were, therefore, logically reconciled with one another in this notion of the conditional necessity of the Church as a means for salvation, but only in a formal notional manner. For there remained the question as to what is left objectively of the necessity of the visible Church as a means for salvation, if man can attain God's grace even without the sacramental medium of the visible 'historical' Church, but simply by the pure interiority and spirituality of his own personal decision. For the ancient Church's conception of the necessity of the Church for salvation meant precisely the Church as something visible and distinct from the subjective attitude or 'good will' of man. There seems to remain nothing of this conception, if man can under certain conditions find salvation also by his 'good will', even if this be the will for the Church. Therefore, on the one hand, the practical possibility of justification by the mere *votum Ecclesiae* cannot be denied and, on the other hand, the objective significance of the dogma that a visible Church is necessary for salvation must be more clearly understood than is commonly the case in the ordinary explanation of the *votum Ecclesiae*. Since this is so, it will obviously only be possible to attain this clearer understanding by a more exact theological reflection which will show how even a mere *votum Ecclesiae*, as long as it is really present, has a *quasi-sacramental visible aspect* in the concrete, which can and must also be included in the visible nature of the Church. We must now develop what is postulated by this from a different angle.

The *human race is a unity*. This unity manifests itself right away in the common descent of all men from Adam.[92] The human species is [79] regarded and treated by God as a concrete

[92] Cf. *Denz* 3028. '*Humani Generis*' draws attention to the fact that the unity of descent of the human race is no theologically indifferent conception. In a metaphysical anthropology, the unity of the human species would have to be considered even more exactly. Scholastic Ontology recognizes properly speaking and explicitly only that '*species*' which is the purely logical comprehension of many individuals which are the same, the ontological substratum of this unity being merely the repeated sameness of 'nature' in many. This leaves out of consideration the question as to what is meant by the historical unity of many, who are the same by oneness of origin, and also the question as to how far specific unity is based on such a unity of origin and history. One cannot *a priori* point to the 'specific' sameness of inorganic things in objection to this. For in the first place, it would be necessary to look more closely into the merely analogous nature of the individuality and difference of the 'individuals' on both of these levels of being, before one could assert that the unity of origin is irrelevant to the specific unity of living beings. And secondly, one would have to inquire into whether the 'individual' (particle) in the inorganic world does not have essentially less determined limits and less independence in contrast to the 'field' (of force) etc., than is analogously the case in the organic world. And one would then have to ask whether the unity of origin and the consequent unity of history in the organic world is not perhaps in some way the 'homologue' in this world of the unity of the field in which the inorganic 'individual' exists as a moment of this field, outside of which it cannot even be thought. These reflections are simply meant to show that the unity of origin of the human species has more to do with its specific unity and hence with the possibility of a common determination of all men and of a common goal, than might appear to a more superficial view. One should in any case ask oneself seriously whether the unity of origin of the human race (i.e. 'monogenism' in its specific theological sense) is not also a datum of a deeper-going philosophy of Nature – and whether modern theologians have not 'beat the retreat' in the wrong place by regarding this monogenism as a truth which can be known only from revelation and as a fact which is simply and necessarily based on the Creator's free decree. Moreover, one need not be afraid that this monogenism might appear as a theological distortion of

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unity, not only in the natural order but also in the order of salvation, as is seen in the fact of original sin and in the fact of the radical and universal redemption of the human race by Christ. This unity can here be presupposed as a fact, without our having to enter into the ontological question as to how this unity is to be more exactly established and conceived metaphysically. It cannot, therefore, concern us here whether this unity is established more exactly in a platonic or aristotelian manner, more from the point of view of the unity of the Idea of 'Man' or more from the point of view of the infraspiritual unity of the one materiality (in the sense of the thomistic *materia prima*); nor whether it be more clearly established from that openness of man to the personal community of spirits, based on his spiritual nature, or from something else. Whatever may be the more exact explanation, there is, in fact, such a natural unity of all men, which is the underlying *potentia oboedientialis* of God's saving work with regard to humanity – in the sense that humanity is not merely the subsequent, purely conceptual summation of the many human individuals. The inclusion of the individual man within this unity is also, therefore, a reality presupposed by his free personal activity. And he necessarily takes up position relative to this reality in his activity in as far as it is the prerequired condition which makes this activity possible. Moreover, he consciously helps to consummate this unity by his action as a person, since it is part of his 'nature'. This oneness with humanity, in so far as it is presupposed as a part of Nature by man as an acting person, belongs to the *visible nature* of man, in so far as we understand by this everything concrete in the spatio-temporal sense which the freedom of man as a personal being presupposes as the preceding and determining condition of action and which, as a reality stamped by the personal decision of man, is the substance of the gradual revelation of man in history as an intelligible free being.

For by reason of his twofold nature of spirit and matter, we must distinguish between man as intelligible person and man as 'nature'. By person[93] we mean man in so far as he can be, and is, freely in [80] command of himself (as nature). By nature we mean here everything which, as condition for its possibility, precedes this free activity of man as a person and signifies a norm which sets bounds to the autonomous sovereignty of his freedom. In conformity with the general structure of human activity, which is that of a spirit in matter, we must also distinguish two strata in man's existential determination of himself.[94] We refer to

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the hypothesis of a real connection between human life and the animal kingdom. For, on the contrary, both theses (i.e. the thesis of the anthropological theory of descent and that of monogenism) arise from the *same* metaphysical principle of economy: i.e. the intervention of the divine, world-transcendent cause can be postulated only where, and only in as far as and as often as, terrestrial forces are insufficient for the explanation of a certain phenomenon – in fact, only where something really and irreducibly new appears and in so far as it does appear. It is no doubt unnecessary to explain further that a polygenism (which still wanted to recognize the irreducible novelty of man) is contrary to this metaphysical principle of economy in the case of a man who can beget his like, and that it turns the miracle of the one creation of man by the divine cause behind the world into an oft-repeated miracle of a demiurge in the world. Cf. for all this, Vol. I of the present work, pp. 229-296 ('Theological reflexions on Monogenism').

[93] The terms 'person' and 'nature' are, of course, used here in a modern sense which must not be confused with the sense which these terms have, for instance, in the scholastic exposition of the doctrines of the Trinity or of the Hypostatic Union. But if one is careful, it will not be too difficult to keep these meanings apart. In any case, the modern usage is also already foreshadowed by the old scholastic terminology, as when the latter for example distinguishes in its exposition of the doctrine of original sin between '*peccatum naturae*' and '*peccatum personae*' (*personale*). Hence it may not be said that the modern conceptualization endangers the clarity and unambiguous preciseness of scholastic terminology. Regarding the concepts concerned, cf. also chap. 11 ('The theological concept of concupiscentia') in the first Volume of the present work, pp. 347-382; and: *Würde und Freiheit des Menschen*: *Kirche in neuer Zeit. Reden und Erklärungen des Österreichischen Katholikentags* 1952 (Innsbruck 1952), pp. 9-43.

[94] For what follows cf. also (apart from the essays mentioned in the preceding note) e.g. W. Bragger, 'Die Verleiblichung des Wollens', *Scholastik* XXV (1950), pp. 248-253; K. Rahner, 'Guilt and its remission: the borderland between theology and psychotherapy', chap. 9 below, pp. 265-281; *id*., *Geist in Welt* (Innsbruck

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the initial intelligible free human act as such and its necessary materialization in what are commonly known as man's actions, actions which are always necessarily also activation and activity of the 'nature' of man. These two 'strata' in the free activity of man are, on the one hand, always inseparable one from the other. This means that man's free action is never absolutely creative (in the terms of pure existentialism), but is always also subjected to the laws of the matter of free activity (i.e. to man's 'nature' – to his 'corporeity' in the metaphysical sense – to the 'world'). On the other hand, the initial intelligible act of free will and its materialization must also never be identified, just as the 'spirit' of man is never absorbed by the soul, and just as (in scholastic terminology) the *anima intellectualis* is never *merely* the *forma corporis* (no matter how much it is this form also *qua* spirit). With this there is given a peculiar but real dialectic between what is freely willed as such and what is freely done. Because it is necessary for the action of freedom, that which is carried out by the person into the dimension of nature, is the expression and revelation of that decision of freedom in the spatio-temporal materiality of [81] man, i.e. in his 'visibleness'. But at the same time, because it is different from the initial freedom, it also throws a veil over this initial act of freedom as such, i.e. the revelation of the personal decision of man in man's spatio-temporal appearance can be mere empty appearance. In so far as the finite freedom of man presupposes nature as its condition of possibility, the expression of man's act of freedom in his historical visible nature implies always essentially an acceptance of 'impressions'. It means that what is his very own always reveals itself essentially also by accepting what is alien, by accepting the imposed determination of his nature.

The real unity of the human race, of which we spoke previously and which we saw must be considered as a natural dimension of man's personal decision, to be accepted by the free act of man, is determined in the concrete also by the *Incarnation* of the Word of God. By the fact that God the Son became man of the Virgin Mary, a member of this one human race, the Word of God became himself a member of this one Adamite humanity and, conversely, the one human race became thereby fundamentally and radically called to share the life of God supernaturally. This calling to share supernaturally in the life of the triune God is fundamentally already given as a real fact in the world (and not merely as God's 'intention' and 'law'), by the simple fact of the Incarnation of the Word. And so this calling is, on the one hand, a reality which precedes man's personal decision. And, on the other hand, because it is a reality accomplished by the fact that the Word of God became *flesh*, it is a reality which belongs to the historical and visible dimension and a reality which, as a factual determination of the human race as a whole, is also a real ontological determination of the nature of each human being. Hence, if man as a spiritual person accomplishes his 'nature' by the total decision about himself, then he must in the concrete, by this decision, always and inevitably take position for or against man's supernatural calling to a participation in the life of the triune God himself.[95]

1939); *id*., *Hörer des Wortes*. *Zur Grundlegung einer Religionsphilosophie* (Munich 1941), esp. chaps 10 *sqq*., pp. 150 *sqq*.

[95] The thesis enunciated in this sentence would, of course, require further elaboration. This would be the only way to prove it sufficiently and to incorporate it properly into the whole context of theology. Indeed, only further development would define this thesis in such a way as to avoid misunderstandings, and in this way, too, all its consequences would be fully unfolded. However, we will confine ourselves here to two observations. Firstly, if this thesis is not to appear unbelievable from the very start, the following must be taken into consideration: every free human act takes place essentially and necessarily within the dynamism of the spirit, which is directed to the good as such. This means that it takes place within the unlimited intentional transcendence of the free spirit, so that the individual good can be freely willed only in as far as man is (always and inevitably) 'set on' Being and the good as such. But this means that each free decision of the will is an act directed into what lies beyond its range of vision; and this is so not only in fact and in everyday life, but always and essentially (as proceeding from the nature of finite freedom which realizes itself in the individual object).

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[82] Taking up position in this way, considered as happening with and in man's 'nature', the reality presupposed by man's freedom and regulating it, is, on the one hand, the expression of what a man wants to be personally and, on the other hand, the visible historical aspect of the salvific Will of God which man accepts by his personal decision.

Let us try to clarify still further the objective content of what we have just stated on the metaphysical plane of abstraction. By the fact that the Word of God became man, humanity has already in advance become ontologically the real sanctification of individual men by grace and also the people of the children of God. Nowhere that men exist, [83] are they in the concrete simply 'mere men' in the abstract sense of the aristotelian-scholastic concept of the essence of man. In as far as mankind, thus 'consecrated', is a real unity from the very start, there already exists a '*people of God*' which extends as far as humanity itself, even before any social and juridical organization of mankind as a supernatural unity in a Church. This people of God exists before its juridical and social organization into what we call 'Church', somewhat as a definite historical people exists before its organization into a State on the plane of this world. This real determination of the one humanity as the people of God is a real fact and no mere abstract idea of what ought to be, for it is based on the two coinciding facts of the natural unity of the human race and of the real Incarnation of the Word of God. It is, indeed, a reality which even as such belongs to the historically visible dimension of human nature, for God became man as Jesus of Nazareth, in a historical here and now, in the 'flesh'. On the other hand, this real and historical actuality of the people of God, which precedes the Church as a juridical and social body, is however such that it can, and according to the Will of God had to be made more concrete on the social and juridical plane, in what we, in fact, call the Church. For no matter how much the setting up of such social and juridical bodies in their concrete determination depends on the free design of man or God, these bodies can at the same time be the concretion and elucidation of a reality presupposed by the freedom of man. Thus, for instance, every actual State is always set up by a free historical decision, and yet it implies at the same time a taking over and a recognition of something which was given before this free, instituting decision and which enforces itself through this decision. If we may settle for this terminology (i.e. 'people of God') to express the reality referred to, without entering into the question as to whether this or another term taken from traditional usage is the most apt, we must say that there exists, therefore, a peculiar relationship between the 'people of God' and the Church. Both of them, from the point of view of the individual man as a person, lie on the visible historical plane of a reality which precedes the free decision of each man. They are both the expression of God's loving salvific Will in this world, for even the assuming of a human nature into the unity of the Person of the Logos is, as such, once more merely the expression and visible manifestation of this salvific Will of

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Such an act is always essentially either a surrender or a refusal of oneself in face of the uncontrollable and the unpredictable – either (blind) obedience or disobedience – readiness or refusal to put oneself at the disposal of some greater unknown Force. Seen in this light, it is clear that we may not say that the question of the unknown as such (meaning what is not known as something given objectively and consciously), cannot enter into the discussion of the quality of a free and responsible action, when the latter is considered simply as such. It can merely be said that something which is itself simply and utterly finite cannot be of any significance for this free act as such, if it be unknown (even although the free act may have further consequences in the dimension of finite unforeseen realities). But such an unknown, finite reality does *not*, in fact, belong to that which, in its incomprehensible immensity itself, is the real object of the act of free will exercised on finite realities. And so this is quite different from the case under discussion here: obedience to God in his infinite incomprehensibility as found in every good act of freedom may, even as such, very well be determined by a reality which, although finite and concrete, is nevertheless the reality of *God himself*. Secondly, the thesis enunciated in the above sentence does not come to the same thing as the doctrine of Ripalda who holds that every morally good, free act is also a supernaturally elevated, saving act. For our statement leaves it still quite open whether according to God's free decree such a saving act requires also faith, with a definitely determined content of faith settled by a revelation coming from without, and whether and in what way this may be lacking in a particular case.

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God which means the union of all men as persons in grace and glory with God. And in all this the [84] Church is meant to be a further expression (freely founded, indeed, by Christ, but nevertheless natural) of the very fact that in Christ the human race is the people of God. Hence, in view of these relations it is not surprising, for example, that Tradition (at least to some extent when using terms in a wider sense) gives the name of Church even to humanity consecrated by the Incarnation, i.e. to the 'people of God', and thus has the fundamental foundation of the Church taking place already in the fact of God becoming man. The people of God has a real relation to the Church as a social and juridical body, even although that relation comes into being by way of a free decision made by the God-Man. Therefore, where there is, and to the extent in which there is the people of God, there already is radically also the Church, and that independently of the will of the individual man. Hence wherever, and in so far as, there is the personal will to the people of God, there is also grasped to that extent a reality which has a real tendency to become more concrete on the social and juridical plane in the Church. But, according to what has been said, membership of the people of God is one of the determining factors of a concrete human nature, since every human being is necessarily and indissolubly a member of the one human race which really became the people of God by the divine Incarnation. Therefore, when someone totally accepts his concrete human nature by his decision of free will (the question as to the conditions required for this need not detain us in this context), and thus turns his concrete nature into an expression of every one of his free decisions for God, his free action gains an expression which is at the same time also an expression of the proper, supernatural salvific Will of God. For this decision in freedom necessarily consents also to that membership of the people of God which, in continuance of God's Will of the Incarnation of his Word, constitutes an historically verifiable expression of the Will of God for the inner bestowal of grace on man as a person. Hence, whensoever man as a person accepts the concrete reality of his nature totally, in the free act of a *supernatural* justification by faith and love, the *membership of the people of God* becomes *the expression of this justifying act*. The act of justification itself, therefore, finds expression in something really different from itself, viz. in membership of the people of God which, in its turn, is in reality ordained to membership of the Church in the proper sense.

When the justifying act is thus understood as the *votum Ecclesiae*, then it is not merely an act which aims in intention at the Church as its [85] implicit object. It is, thus understood, a spiritual and personal act which, in fact and of necessity, already comprises something of the Church, since it is the ratification, in an ontologically real sense, of the membership of the people of God. The act of justification, *qua* act of faith and of love, is the deed of a spiritual person; *qua* act of man in the concrete as a member of the one human race which was consecrated by the Incarnation, it necessarily possesses at the same time a reality which is different from, although the expression of, the personal action and which, as membership of the people of God, has a quasi-sacramental nature. Precisely because man as a concrete, bodily human being is a blood-relation of Christ, the *votum Ecclesiae* does not at all take place in a purely extra-sacramental and invisible interiority of grace. Rather it is essentially, as an act of the concrete human being, an acceptance of the quasi-sacramental structure which by reason of the divine Incarnation is necessarily proper to humanity and hence to the individual human being, considered as the people of God or member of this people respectively. The *votum Ecclesiae*, therefore, does not replace real membership of the Church by being 'good will' towards the Church. It replaces it by being the personal acceptance of that membership of the people of God which is already a fact on the historical and visible plane and in which is already given a real reference to membership of the Church as an established society. Real membership of the Church is, therefore, a merely conditionally necessary means, not because it could be replaced by a supernatural moral act of man in so far as it is a moral quantity, but because this act itself already reaches necessarily into the

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dimension of the visibleness of salvation in which the Church in the proper sense also finds itself. Or conversely, the proposition about the Church as necessary means for salvation suffers no exception through the possibility of justification by the *votum Ecclesiae*, in so far as that necessity of the Church for salvation always does and must mean – by 'Church' – at *least* what we have called 'people of God' – and, indeed, always can mean this. Because 'people of God' has an objective reference to the Church in the proper sense (a reference which is not left to the discretion of the individual human being), the proposition of the necessity of belonging to the people of God for salvation does not impair the proposition of the necessity of the Church in the proper sense for salvation. For whenever man is consciously and freely guilty of excluding this membership of the Church in the proper sense from his intention, he [86] opposes himself to his membership of the people of God, so that even the latter no longer profits him for salvation but only for damnation. We cannot enter here into the question why the mere membership of the people of God does (or respectively does not) also, like the membership of the Church proper by baptism, bring about grace and supernatural salvation for those who are not capable of a personal act.[96] In the event of it being feasible to assume that this presupposition of incapacity of free decision is not actually valid even in the case of those who die as infants, this problem would in fact dissolve itself from the very outset as being merely an apparent one.

These arguments have been given merely as scanty suggestions with the simple intention of showing one thing: the whole series of factual problems connected with the compatibility of the fact of the necessity of the Church as a means for salvation with the fact of the possibility of salvation for someone outside the Church points in the direction of our having to assume a certain stratification in the reality of the Church. And this does not, in this ease, refer to the fact that both the juridical and social organization (called 'Church') and also man's union with God by grace belong to the full notion of the Church. The stratification referred to here is to be understood in the sense that the Church, as something visible and as sign of the union with God by grace, must itself be composed of a further twofold reality, viz. Church as an established juridical organization in the sacred order[97] and 'Church as humanity consecrated by the Incarnation'. Any question about belonging to the Church as necessary means for salvation must distinguish between these two strata in the being of the Church, the Sacrament of salvation. It will then certainly be easier to reconcile the necessity of the Church as a means of salvation (although this has to be affirmed of both strata of the Church's nature) with the statement of the possibility of salvation for someone outside the Church, without the former principle evaporating into mere verbalism.

[87] We must now, therefore, answer in the negative to the question we asked earlier on[98] about whether there can be a belonging to the visible Church (i.e. not yet membership) which is *merely* 'invisible', because merely constituted by the metahistorical possession of grace and by the necessary justifying human acts for this in an unbaptized person, *considered as* merely personal acts. For basically every personal act finds also a historical expression (a constitutive sign[99]) for the fact of its being a *votum Ecclesiae*[100] in the concrete nature of man

[96] Cf. for this the literature quoted on this question above, p. 43, note 65, which might be afforded a deeper insight by the points of view indicated here.

[97] As such a juridical organization she has then, furthermore, the three dimensions of unity of faith under the authoritative *magisterium*, visibility of grace in virtue of the Sacraments (above all in Baptism and the Eucharist) and united action under the direction of the ecclesiastical ruling authority – in other words, the three dimensions to which correspond the three conditions for strict membership of the Church.

[98] Cf. above, p. 68, Note 85 (not Note 78, as stated in the German text. – Tr.).

[99] Cf. for this expression: K. Rahner, *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* (Freiburg 1951), pp. 8 *sqq*.

[100] This does not necessarily mean that this characteristic of being '*votum Ecclesiae*' must be capable of being deciphered in such a moral act of free will by everyone and from every possible point of view. 'Expression' and 'sign' refer to an ontological quality of the human act in its relation to grace and to the Church, – they do not

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and in its incarnate act. Hence, the justified person who belongs (or is 'referred') to the Church without being a member of it, belongs 'invisibly' to the visible Church by grace *and* has a 'visible' relation to this Church, even when this relation is not constituted by baptism or by an externally verifiable profession of the true faith (as in the case of the catechumen). In other words, there is a lowest limit, in a certain sense, below which man's state of grace and its quasi-sacramental tangibility can no longer be separated from each other, as if the former could exist without the latter. Only the reverse is possible, i.e. there can in some cases be the sign-aspect of grace without there being also the personally and freely accepted grace.[101] But there always is grace in the sense that it is always offered – since everyone belongs indissolubly to the people of God – and in the sense that it is always also visible in this offer.

refer to a quality of knowability for any and every power of understanding.

[101] This is not surprising, since the expression of personal acceptance of grace (which expression can be given without acceptance) is nothing other than the (accepted) expression of the grace offered by God. This offer, however, is directed to *all* men. It is not merely a juridical, transcendental, 'abstract-unhistorical' reality existing only in the other-worldly 'intention' of God, and communicated only by the revelation of the Word. On the contrary, this offer is really present in the world and in history through the Incarnation of the Word in a humanity which is really one. In view of this, it is therefore evident that the expression of acceptance is always already given even before there is any personal acceptance of grace (i.e. before there is any 'invisible' belonging to the Church), and that the reverse is quite impossible. For the reverse would mean that man assents to a grace which is not at all offered to him, or that this offer has no incarnational presence in the world and in the history of the one human race – in short, that it would be an offer of the 'grace of God' which would not be essentially also the 'grace of Christ'.

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[89]

2

FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH

It is not at all surprising that freedom is so much talked about at the present time. In this world where things last only for a time and then perish, a world in which things are put to the test, we frequently discover values only after they have disappeared or when they seem to be dying. We invoke the values which we lack. And so we speak of freedom and need not wonder at that fact.

But – freedom in the Church: this would seem a somewhat surprising subject for discussion. St Paul spoke of the freedom of the Christian. After that, this particular topic was no longer mentioned very much. Luther turned this theme into a reformational battle-cry against the Roman Church, and yet at the same time he denied man, this same man, his freedom before God. He thought to extol grace by stressing the impotence of the human will to choose between God and the Devil. As against this, the old Church preached the duty of obedience to the teaching and command of the Hierarchy, as well as the freedom of the will before God and in face of his grace. Then there came the period of the liberalistic conception of freedom – when people became preoccupied with liberating man from social and economic restrictions and with the defence of the freedom of conscience, of speech and of the press. However, we do not seem to have got very far with this since 1789. For the proletarians do not find that they have become free. And the various freedoms of speech, etc., have been in the end simply monopolized once more by the Ministries of Propaganda and similar institutions. During this time of Liberalism, the Church preached about the law and authority, about order and obligation. And when she spoke of freedom, she meant the freedom which she claimed for herself against those who wanted to overpower the Church with their omnipotence of the State (always in the name of freedom, of course, and as Liberals), so that she might no more be tempted to threaten the freedom of modern times. And so, since the [90] time of St Paul there was really not much talk in the Catholic Church of freedom *in* the Church. Was this subject overlooked, because it is insignificant or because it was dangerous, or because we do not need to speak much about what we possess as a matter of course? Or was it spoken of in other terms? Who can say for sure?

At any rate we must speak of it at the present time. For in times when there is no freedom, we search anxiously for it in whatever place we still hope to find it; and today people are listening more thoughtfully once again to the message of the Faith, especially such as it issued originally from the pages of the New Testament. We must speak of this subject nowadays, because one has become sensitive and delicate about transgressions against the holy spirit of freedom in the Church, since one does not at any cost wish to confuse the Church with a totalitarian collectivity.

It must be understood that important points of view on this much unnoticed subject may perhaps even here be overlooked in what we shall have to say about it. However, two matters will be the subject of discussion in what follows: 1. the Church, considered in its role of sacramental sign of freedom, and 2. freedom in the Church.

I

There is a freedom which in Christian philosophy is called psychological freedom of choice. This freedom is the presupposition of what is called responsibility, and it

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characterizes what is meant by person in the modern sense of the word. The Scriptures and Christian consciousness regarded it as self-evident that man is in this sense a free responsible person, even in his relationships with God. This means that they looked on man as a person who is continually and repeatedly called upon to make decisions and choices, who holds himself and his fate in his own hands, who disposes of himself either for good or for evil and thus can be the subject of good and evil actions and of moral reward or punishment. All this is so very obvious in the Scriptures and to Christian consciousness that men never reflected explicitly on it except in times when this permanent and unchangeable basic structure of human existence was called into doubt, as it was, for instance, by Gnosticism, etc., in the second century. *This* freedom is lived in the Scriptures rather than made the object of theoretical reflection. When the Scriptures, and especially St Paul, speak of the freedom which the [91] Christian message does not regard as its obvious presupposition in man but as something which Christianity brings with it for the first time, then it is a question of a different kind of freedom. It is this freedom which we must first of all determine in its nature and then show why and how it has something to do with the Church. In this way it will then become clear that what we are above all concerned with here is the fact that the Church is the tangible sacramental sign of this freedom.

We obviously cannot give even a brief account here of the history of the Graeco-western notion of freedom, no matter how useful this might be for our purpose. Freedom was regarded at the beginning as freedom from social, economic and political coercion. It was, therefore, looked upon as the antithesis of slavery, servitude, etc. Thus it is in the first instance a property of the citizen of an independent *polis* who is concerned in the supporting and ordering of the State. After that, this notion took on a more individual and inward character. The free man now comes to be thought of as the man who has α)υτοπραχι/α, who can do what he likes. And this freedom towards himself, as not being bound by any forces which would alienate the individual from himself, is now regarded more and more as confined to the interior life, where man always is and can be really himself. Thus, if man takes this upon himself and if he recognizes and fully appreciates this unassailable precinct of his inner spiritual nature as the very region of his proper human existence, then he is and can be free at least in *this* sphere. Here and there it was apparently thought that man can also free himself from the dimensions of his being which are different from this sublime inner Ego, and from their governing forces (such as the forces of Nature, of the State, etc.), simply by abandoning all opposition to them and withdrawing himself from them as being, in his esteem, indifferent. Man was regarded as becoming free by detaching and freeing himself from these forces, having seen through them and recognized them as inessential in themselves and as insignificant for himself. The remarkable thing about all this seems to be that, until it is seen in the light of Christianity, one cannot have any clear understanding even of real freedom of choice, i.e. of the freedom which consists not merely in the fact that man is not coerced from without, but also in the further fact that a free decision about himself is demanded of him – a freedom, therefore, which is rather a requirement and commission than freedom. For only in the Christian context – in [92] God's personal love for man – is everyone a unique individual with eternal value and someone who must attain his fulfilment in complete responsibility for himself and hence in freedom.

Be that as it may, the message of Christianity tells man above all: you, together with the freedom in which you have all along taken possession of yourself, are precisely as such the one to be freed, the one to be saved. You have, of course, the formally unfilled capacity of self-mastery and of freedom, you can act in this way or that, not only towards and with the things which constitute your surroundings, but also with regard to yourself. You yourself are the one who disposes of himself. You are not simply one who develops in accordance with a law which has determined your place and role, even if this law were conceived as the most

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individual of all. You deal with yourself in freedom, forming yourself for eternity through an act which cannot adequately be dissolved into something merely provisional, and which decides precisely what you yourself finally want to be – through an act which you yourself really posit, which does not merely happen to you, an act which is your deed and not your fate.

But all this does not yet make you by any means simply free in the true and ultimate sense of the word. Finite freedom of choice, in spite of its true autonomy, is always choice arising out of a given situation. It is a choice which is imposed on us without our being able to choose it ourselves. It is a choice, imposed without choice, which can itself be the least free of all if the scope given to it, and within which it is exercised, is itself already a prison of bondage in the wrong place – somewhat as if one were to say to someone sitting in a prison-cell that he is free, because he can choose in which corner of his dungeon he wishes to sit. Everything depends on the object of one's freedom. Now one might think that this situation, which limits in advance the capacity of choosing, should of itself include what is right and good for salvation among its possibilities, in so far as the choice has a moral character and is said to be the cause of good and evil. In other words, one might think that if man is the one who, essentially as man, must dispose of himself for salvation or damnation by his freedom of choice, then his salvation must be part of his nature from the very start, as a possibility which, although it can be thrown away, can also, at any rate, be achieved and attained by him of his own power. It would seem that man, being free to choose, must have free and autonomous access to his salvation; his salvation must, therefore, ultimately be himself.

[93] But it is precisely this that is false. The conception of the consummation of human existence, which presupposes and affirms this, is the most abysmal falsehood of all. And the freedom which is understood in this way, not only as a call but as something of itself capable of achieving what it is called to, is the most radically false freedom. For the very fact that man would withdraw himself into his own unassailable interior being, into that dimension in which he would be himself alone and cut off from anything else, would mean that he is not free, but a prisoner and one banished into that inescapable limitation of his nature which is all the more apparent in this freedom. For precisely such a mode of existence, freed from everything else, would be something empty and senseless, and merely the point at which freedom is turned into a state of radical abandonment and into futility. Freedom would thus become sheer negation – in other words, a hell or a freedom which holds itself aloof from everything, because it must fear everything as being alien and oppressive. But if freedom, even in its own most proper sphere, does not of itself have what could be regarded as its liberating or saving realization, where then is the freedom of freedom, i.e. where is the object of freedom which does not cause the very ruin of freedom but, on the contrary, brings about its realization? Where, indeed, is this freedom of freedom, if freedom, delivered up to the finite as such and realized in it, becomes captive freedom, since freedom is to be had only when the finite is recognized as such and because freedom, in spite of the fact that it is essentially referred to the finite for its self-realization, nevertheless *consumes* itself in the finite or must retreat into the empty infinities of its own mere possibilities? In short, where is this freedom of freedom, if there is the oppressive and the enslaving?

To answer that it is in God, is the true answer but also the most dangerous one. For then, if what we are saying is not to be a downright lie and the worst sin, we must mean by this *the One* whom we (in order to be free) do not *have* but who gives or withholds himself, who is not conquered but always remains a grace. God must not be just another word for the splendour of our self-disposing freedom, any more than for the sublimity of our knowledge (called Transcendence). God must be God, the One whom we need, but who does not need us and for whom we remain unnecessary even when we already exist. If God, however, is to be in this way the very object of our freedom which alone makes this freedom free, then this

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freedom would neither [94] consume itself infernally in its own emptiness when it withholds itself, nor would it deliver itself to the slavery of the finite when it gives itself. Considered in the abstract, then, He can be this liberating reality in *two* ways: by refusing himself and by declaring himself, by remaining afar off and by drawing near. Even the first way would be a consummation of freedom which would give it meaning: to be before God, the unattainable; adoration of the infinitely distant; remaining open to him in the knowledge of his glory as experienced in the blessedness of the painful flame of yearning; the most obedient will to listen attentively to his silence which *also* reveals him; the acceptance of his decrees which is in any case always blessed and more fulfilling than if man wanted to pass God by. But God did not want to be the distant One, which *we* should always be prepared to let him be and, indeed, must be prepared to let him be in order to understand and grasp his gift (and in so far as we do). He wanted to be the God who is near to us, the One who gives himself as a gift in love, who communicates himself and who realizes our freedom in its (very) freedom. He is the freedom of our freedom by the grace of his self-communication, without which our free will could only choose bondage no matter what choice it might make. And he is this freedom of our freedom by way of communication and not of refusal. God's communication of himself, which is the liberating *terminus ad quem* of our freedom, is called by us grace of justification and sanctification, or sanctifying grace, and the Bible calls it also 'divine *pneuma*'. We may say, therefore, that the divine *pneuma* is the liberating freedom of our freedom; our freedom is saved by it from the dilemma of being either a freedom given up to the finiteness of the chosen finite possibilities and thus enslaved, or a freedom preserved but starving to death on account of its own emptiness – in short, it saves it from the dilemma of being either an exhausted freedom or a starved freedom.

The freedom of freedom, in as far as it is that which is offered by God in grace and is thus thought of as preceding its free acceptance, is the decisive factor in the *situation* of our freedom. It can be given or refused by God. Hence it can be made to depend on certain conditions which are outwith and previous to the decision of the freedom proper to each one of us as an individual. And thus there is a *community* of *situation* which applies to the freedom of all men, in spite of the fact that each particular act of freedom can be executed only by the individual himself and cannot be performed for him by any one else. This [95] community of situation is the basic reason for the fact that, by God's decree, the *offer* made to us of the liberating freedom of freedom (called sanctifying grace), was dependent on the acceptance of the offer made to the first man, which offer was *de facto* refused. And so man is the slave of what we call original sin, in as far as this offer of the freedom of freedom made to us in that way through the first man no longer persists, and in as far as man has, therefore, from *that* point of view, lost the freedom of freedom. This means that, as someone who has his origin in the first man, he no longer finds himself on a plane where his exercise of freedom remains free simply on account of an offered self-communication by God. And so, in as far as the *pneuma* of God, which makes freedom free, is offered gratuitously to *this* man of the Adamite community of guilt (which by this fact has become the Christian community of redemption), the freedom of freedom given gratuitously through the *pneuma* is now properly speaking a redemptive freedom from the slavery of guilt. This is all the more so the case if, and in so far as, the individual human being, who has been robbed of the freedom of God by original sin, has willed himself by personal guilt to be in this state without *pneuma*, and if he has tried to remain free while remaining without grace. Thus he might want to do the work of the world by himself in his finiteness and redeem himself in this way, possibly believing himself to be justified by this even before God. Or he might believe that by retreating into his own transcendence, he has already found his redeeming freedom there within himself. This attempt to achieve freedom in the finite, either by laying hold of it or by withdrawing from it, will to a greater or lesser degree become a slavery to the finite. In so far

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as it does, and to the extent in which the objects of such an enslaved freedom are in their respective orders under the power of personal agencies (called angels or, if evil, devils), this particular kind of slavery is objectively slavery under diabolic powers. The freedom of freedom given by the *pneuma* is, therefore, the redemption from such powers, in so far as these strive to be the *confining* boundary of the situation of man's freedom.

That the *pneuma* is gratuitously given to us as the redemptive freedom of freedom which had fallen into culpable bondage in Adam and in us, is no mere abstract theory or ideological postulate, nor is it an always necessarily valid truth or (merely) a datum of our mystical experience. On the contrary, this spiritual freedom of our freedom is established by the very act of God freely present in the flesh of Christ [96] himself as a sign in this world, and is grasped and made our own as present in this sign. In so far as God freely gives himself in Christ in a tangible and irrevocable manner, the freedom of our freedom (as offered) is really established and present in this world – in the historical, tangible reality of the flesh of Christ. In so far as he became present in the world by his birth as the presence of God himself and remained the Son of God in death and made this even more tangible in his resurrection, Christ is the real and, indeed, tangible and visible fact of the free opening out of the world into God. The fact that there is a *pneuma*, which is the freedom of freedom, has its source, is made accessible and is applied to us in Jesus, the Word of the Father in flesh of Adam, the Crucified and the risen Christ.

Now the Church is nothing other than the visible, socially composed communion of men with Jesus, the source of sanctifying grace; she is the community which, in its historico-social form, its tangible liturgical actions, its word of truth and its life, is the continuation of the historically tangible reality of Christ. And hence she is the community which continues to exercise the function of this historical tangibility, viz. to render the *pneuma* of freedom effectively and actually present in the world and to signify that fact. As the continuation of *the* Sacrament which is Christ, the Church is, therefore, the tangible and original sacramental sign of the *pneuma* which is the freedom of our freedom, i.e. she, and with her also the community, signifies and effects that we have this freedom of God.

We are now in a position to have a somewhat clearer understanding of certain New Testament phrases which state in short formulae what we have up until now tried to set forth in a rather systematic train of thought.

The love of the Father, the α)λη/θεια which has been revealed in the Son (Jn 8.36), Who became flesh, sets us free (Jn 8.32), because where the *pneuma* is, there is freedom (2 Cor 3.17), since it is for freedom that Christ has made us free (Gal 5.1). This freedom is a freedom from sin (Rom 6.18-23; Jn 8.31-36), from the law (Rom. 7.3 *sq*.; 8.2; Gal 2.4; 4.21-31; 5.1, 13) and from death (Rom 6.21 *sq*.; 8.21): from sin, in so far as this is in a thousand different ways the assertion of self freely accomplished both within oneself and in the world, without being open to the love of God as proceeding both from him and to him; from the law, in so far as this, although the holy will of God, (whether infringed or self-complacently accomplished in deed) merely [97] becomes a stimulus for man without grace to assert himself against or before God; from death, in so far as this is merely the manifestation of guilt. Man appropriates this freedom, which Christ is and gives, by obeying the call to this freedom (Gal 5.13) and by submitting himself in faith and in its tangible sign, i.e. baptism, to the event which breaks open the prison of this world, viz. the Incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son.

We cannot enter more closely into all this here. What is important, however, is that we should in some measure substantiate also the connection of this liberation of freedom with the Church from the Scriptures. Even that can be done only in brief outline. Suffice it to give the following four catch-words which establish the fact of the connection between the Church and Christian freedom from Scripture; Call, baptism, Pneuma, the New Law. The Church is

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the ε)κκλησια, the congregation convoked from those who have received their call, having been called into God's light out of the world of sin and death. But this call is at the same time the call to freedom (Gal 5.13). Baptism establishes the Church (Eph 5.25 *sqq*., etc) and is at the same time the event through which we enter into freedom (Rom 6.16 *sqq*). The *Pneuma* is the principle of freedom (Rom 8.2; 8.15; 2 Cor 3.17) and the animating entelechy of the Church (Jn 3.5; 1 Cor 3.16; 1 Cor 12.13; Eph 4.4, etc.). Christianity (in contrast to the Law of the Old Testament) is simply characterized by the Law of freedom in the New Testament (Jam 1.25; 2.12), which does not consider it as an idea or a *Weltanschauung* but only as the Church in the concrete. The Epistle to the Galatians accordingly tells us in summary that the Church (as the new, heavenly Jerusalem in contrast to the Old Testament) is the free woman, and that we are not children of bondage but children of the free woman (Gal 4.21-31).

One should now, of course, go on to prove more exactly why, and above all how, the Church is the quasi-sacramental tangible element and the historically visible factor of the redemptive liberation of the freedom of man. In so far as she is, or rather has, the *pneuma* of God, she is or has freedom, and to her alone can we strictly apply the text: *Where* the Lord's spirit is, there is freedom. She is the 'where' of spiritual freedom. In so far as she is different from the *Pneuma* living and ruling within her, the Church is the historical quasi-sacramental sign of this *pneuma*, and hence also of freedom, by which the 'pneumatic' freedom is signified and made present. One should now go on [98] to inquire into the way in which the Church is the effective sign of this spiritual freedom in her being, her Word, her sacramental action and in her history. First of all, she *proclaims* this freedom in her *Word* which is the message of Christ. She does not do this by teaching subsequently *about* freedom which would exist even without this teaching; but, on the contrary, she renders freedom present *by* proclaiming it. She gives man this freedom by effectively obtaining the divine *pneuma* or freedom for him in the *Sacraments*. Her *life* is a *sign* of this freedom, in so far as she lives the love of God and neighbour in her sanctified members. And love, precisely to the extent in which it forgets itself, relinquishes self-assertion and serves others – for the sake of others it even lets itself be bounded by many an earthly and legal limitation. Love frees man from himself. It makes him free for the boundlessness of God and of his eternal life. But even this can unfortunately only be briefly outlined here.

One thing, at any rate, must be firmly borne in mind from what has been said: the reality and the notion of freedom is not merely something which belongs to man's natural being, which the Church, as the guardian even of the natural order, would then in addition defend and regulate in its ordered exercise and in the different fields in which such freedom is lawful. Freedom is rather a proper theological notion which expresses a reality belonging strictly to the order of grace, and much more than this psychological freedom of choice and freedom as a right of the person. Freedom is a theological notion expressing a reality which in the strictest sense of identity *is* itself the gift of salvation, rather than being merely a presupposition for salvation. For the real, true and ultimate freedom, which must be gifted to our freedom to free it from guilt, law and death, is the sacred *pneuma* of God itself and of his Christ. Hence the Church is the indispensable, existential place of this freedom, in so far as and because this *pneuma* can be had only in the Church, since it is her inner reality and she its external sign.

II

Everything we have seen so far is not only in itself more important than anything we are going to treat of now, but is important also precisely for what follows. We are now going to speak of the freedom in the Church. This subject leaves out of consideration everything

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signified by the question of the religious or civil tolerance of the [99] Church or a Christian State towards other Christians and towards non-Christians.

We intend, therefore, to inquire only into the freedom which the Catholic Christian as such enjoys in and vis-à-vis his Church. This is a question which must be posed. The Church is a legally established society with laws, regulations, authorities and subjects etc. – and this will always be so, as long as she is still on pilgrimage towards the final return of Christ and as long as she lives in this world and is still *in via* between Adam and Christ in her members. All this, although determined by the will of Christ, belongs to the transience of the present aeon. It is all encircled and supported by the love of the divine Spirit, Who is freedom; this whole order of things can ultimately be respected and accomplished by Christians only out of this love, which does not seek its own and which, freed for the freedom of God, does not need to flee anxiously before earthly ties and obligations built up by this love. All this does and indeed must exist in the Church in the aeon of this world. And so also the question arises as to where exactly lies the balance between these bonds and freedom. This question has, however, its own proper weight in theology, precisely because the Church, as sign of the presence of the divine freedom in this world, must also unquestionably fashion its earthly tangible form in such a way as not to obscure her reality as a sign of the divine freedom. And in this age of totalitarian systems the Church has the additional duty not even to give the impression, either to her own or to outsiders, of being a clerical, religiously camouflaged kind of totalitarian system herself. Her objective nature is not that of a totalitarian system, because the dignity of man, the directness of man's relationship to God and freedom are part and parcel of the basic principles which are proclaimed by her and which have been constitutively established in her very being. Moreover, the Church, and she alone, has been given God's promise (and this is the decisive fact distinguishing her from every other society in danger of totalitarianism), that she will be preserved by his grace until the end of time from every essential defection from this her true nature, to which it also belongs that she must respect the genuine rights of human freedom in this world. However, since the Church is always also a Church made up of sinful men, even as far as the holders of her authority are concerned, she can also in her individual actions offend against her own principles and against the freedom of the individual both within and without. This has happened often [100] enough in the course of history. It can happen even today. And this is what the Church must guard against, for today more than ever she must be the champion of true freedom. But even by such individual offences she does not become a totalitarian system. For she acts in these cases against her own proclaimed and practised principles, whereas a really totalitarian system does not recognize such principles of the freedom and dignity of the individual either expressly or tacitly, but on the contrary idolizes the collectivity and degrades the individual. But the Church must reckon with the real danger of giving the scandal of an apparent totalitarianism. This is particularly the case because, no matter how clear her ultimate basic principles may be, there can be, and in fact there has been, a subjective development of the Church's consciousness in articulating and applying more particular and proximate principles with exactitude and sureness. And this also explains how it is possible for the Church to violate the legitimate claims of freedom both from within and from without, particularly in cases where she does not become clearly conscious of such a violation.

Authority, law, norm, command – all these are to be found in the Church, as well as the reaction of the Church against violations of such norms, which take the form of exhortation, censure, penalty. And there must of necessity be such realities in the Church. After all, she must by the Lord's commission preserve, explain, develop and teach divine revelation authoritatively in its unchangeableness as divine truth and as it terminated with the Apostles. She must maintain and guard the nature given to her by her founder in respect of her form of government, the administration of the Sacraments, etc. She has the duty to promulgate the

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abiding moral norms of the Natural Law and of the divine positive Law, and to apply them to the changing historical situations. She has, therefore, also the right and obligation to decide by her teaching- and pastoral-authority and in a manner binding on the conscience of her children, whether this or that particular, actual behaviour of individuals or social groups can be objectively reconciled with God's moral law or not. The Church, therefore, has the right and duty not just to lay down general norms of a material or even merely formal kind, as if everything else must then be left on principle to the individual and to his conscience and as if he alone must decide on every occasion whether the general norms promulgated by the Church apply to his case and situation or not. No, more than this, the Church has the right and the duty, as part of her teaching office and especially of [101] her pastoral office, to enact over and above this such norms binding *in concreto* as will make it clear that in consequence certain definite actions fall outside the objective sphere of morally good conduct, both on principle and in every case. Hence, without passing final judgment on the subjective conscience, she can also proceed in her Church law against those who by their conduct place themselves outside this field of action negatively determined by ecclesiastical authority. All this limits the Christian's scope of freedom within the world. It would be wrong to blind oneself to this fact or to try to dispute it by appealing to the pauline doctrine of the Christian's freedom from the law. For according to St Paul, this freedom of the Christian is freedom from the law understood as something divorced from grace, which makes demands from without and thus incites to sin; it is the freedom of man from himself and from his egoistical self-assertion against or before God, and thus it is a freedom for the infinity of communion with God in love. It is not, however, a freedom from the holy Will of God, in so far as this Will can and ought to become the inner law of our heart under the *pneuma* of God, and in so far as this Will of God can and will also become a completely concrete demand in the form of definite and individual material commandments right down to the particular norms of the natural moral law. This freedom is moreover not an emancipation from the teaching and pastoral authority of the Church, of which Christ spoke when He said: 'He who hears you, hears me.'

With reference to this indisputable limitation of the scope of the freedom of Church members, which is absolutely compatible with the pauline doctrine of freedom, three points must be borne in mind:

(a) Freedom, in this intramundane sense of the psychological and moral capacity to decide to act in this way or that, receives its meaning and value ultimately from the object for which and upon which one decides. It is true that freedom as such, i.e. freedom of exercise and not merely freedom in what is done, belongs to the absolute dignity of a person, so that to deprive someone completely of any scope for freedom, even in a case where the object would still be attainable even without this concession of scope for freedom, would still amount to a degrading of the person. This means, therefore, that to deprive someone of the very scope itself for making even morally wrong decisions, cannot be the business of any man or of any human society vis-à-vis other men. For such an unconditioned refusal of the possibility of an objectively and morally wrong decision would amount to [102] a suppression of the very scope for freedom itself. But it nevertheless remains true to say that the objective and moral justification for an individual free act is essentially co-determined by the object of this act. If the latter does not furnish an objective and moral justification, then such justification can also be denied to the free act *qua* individual act. There can, therefore, be no question of a real right to choose error or to decide on some objectively wrong moral conduct, although it is quite a different question whether and to what limited extent someone may have the right to be given room for freedom, within which the possibility of choosing error or what is morally wrong remains open to him. Seen from this point of view, the authority of the Church, her laws and the decisions of her teaching authority cannot be regarded as an infringement or

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curtailment of a genuine right to freedom. She merely keeps man away from objects which of themselves either cannot be the object of a true exercise of freedom or at least are not a necessary object of such an exercise which receives its dignity from the object and not by a merely arbitrary choice.

(b) It must not be forgotten that the norms promulgated by the Church in limiting the scope of freedom oblige, in as far as they are ecclesiastical norms, only those who, by the free decision of their conscience, have acknowledged the Church as a divine institution, and who acknowledge the authority of this Church as legitimatized by God. The conscientious heeding of an authority acknowledged in freedom can never be objectively contrary to this freedom. And the Church clearly refuses to allow anyone to be physically forced to accept the faith or to receive baptism.

(c) A further point is to be noted. We spoke just now about the fact that the Church is not simply the authoritative teacher of abstract or even merely formal religious and ethical norms, but has also the right and the duty to condemn certain concrete forms of behaviour by the Christian as incompatible with these norms, and thus to delimit the scope of morally possible freedom of action in a negative way. This applies to the Christian even if in a particular case he can no longer fathom the objective reasons for the binding force of the ecclesiastical norm nor understand the application of this norm to life in the concrete, but must simply be satisfied with the fact that, although this is beyond his comprehension, the legitimate authority of the Church has declared this or that to be incompatible with the moral law. But all this does not mean that the freedom of the Christian in the [103] decisions of his life consists simply in the fact that he has acknowledged the Church's authority once and for all by a free decision, and that from this moment onwards nothing is left to him but to receive orders and to carry out commands which determine even the most minute details of his life. Nor does it mean that in those cases in which the Church does not issue the Christian with any such detailed command, it can only be a question of matters which are unimportant from a religious or moral point of view. The true picture is quite different. For when the Church goes beyond proclaiming general norms by her teaching authority and draws concrete conclusions in her pastoral office which are obligatory for the practical conduct of her members, her function is in itself and fundamentally of a negative kind. She sets limits, without thereby ascribing to herself the duty, or even the ability, to say fundamentally in each case what exactly the individual must do here and now in this particular situation and within the bounds set by her in the religious and moral fields, in order to ensure that his action is right both in this world and before God.

For it is wrong to think that the concrete reality of our deeds and omissions corresponds in every respect to God's will and hence to what is fully moral, simply because it does not run into conflict with the general norms which can be formally stated in a proposition. For such an opinion is ultimately based on the platonic conviction that the individual and concrete thing or case is nothing more than the negative limitation of the universal. But if there is a concrete and particular reality which cannot be adequately reduced to the universal (and which, therefore, is not expressible in a formal proposition and thus cannot be dealt with by the authority of a community), then there is an ethics and Christian morality which, for the want of a better word and in spite of possible misunderstandings, we may call 'existential' ethics and Christian 'existential' morality. Such an ethics and morality must not be disregarded, in spite of the fact that one can give only formal and general laws for it.[1] In the concrete, this means that when I am faced with a decision in my private or public life, certain possibilities of action will – basically speaking – be eliminated as being incapable of a

[1] Cf. below: 'On the question of a formal existential Ethics'. In this connection cf. also: K. Rahner, *Gefahren im heutigen Katholizismus* (Einsiedeln 1950), pp. 9-30: 'Der Einzelne in der Kirche'.

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Christian or moral realization, since they conflict with this or that formal or material universal norm promulgated by the Church as [104] being objectively right and prohibiting this or that manner of conduct. But this does not basically provide man with a clear positive imperative as to what is to be done here and now in this concrete situation. Such a negative procedure of sifting moral possibilities may, of course, in many cases lead in fact and in practice to an unmistakable conclusion concerning the question as to what is to be done here and now. But this is not necessarily so. In the nature of things there will always still remain several possibilities which could all be realized without coming thereby demonstrably into conflict with any definite material norms of morality. And yet only one of these possibilities can be the morally correct one, because it alone corresponds to the actual demands of the case and of the will of God.

We cannot concern ourselves here with the question of how the concrete imperative for the fulfilment of my actual individual task in a particular situation can be found beyond the analysis of the situation and its confrontation with the universal moral norms. However, it should be immediately evident that this individual norm is not only not settled for me authoritatively by the Church authority, but also that the latter is unable to do this. The Church cannot, for example, tell me what career I must choose, or whether I in particular – this concrete and unique individual – am to marry or not, and whether I should choose this or that marriage partner. The Church can, indeed, promulgate this or that important and very 'practical' social norm; she can also reject this or that actual economic system as being incompatible with Christian standards. But she cannot tell the individual statesman, in the particular concrete situation in which he is placed, which among the Christianly possible social and economic constitutions he in particular is to bring about. She cannot do this, although we cannot say that the choice of a definite form from among the different abstract Christian possibilities is a morally and religiously indifferent matter, simply because all these possibilities proposed for selection are of themselves reconcilable with Christian truth and. morality. Precisely this choice from among the abstract Christian possibilities can in many cases be an important matter from the point of view of the situation in this world. Not only that, but for this very reason such a choice can also be a moral decision of the highest order, for which the person concerned is responsible before God, although the Church's authority cannot say in the concrete what is right and the Holy Will of God for him here and now. It therefore follows from [105] this, that fundamentally all moral decisions which have to be made by the Christian – and all his decisions have a moral and Christian side to them – have also a concrete and individual dimension which of itself and directly cannot be covered at all by the authority of the Church. This, therefore, provides a zone of freedom, but not of freedom to act simply as one chooses, as if anything were indifferent before God. This is a zone of freedom where the Church leaves the individual Christian to himself, to his conscience and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to his own *charisma* given him by this Spirit. And the Church does so to such an extent that the individual cannot at all transfer the burden and responsibility of this freedom to the Church. The Church is made up of individuals who can never hide themselves under the anonymity and irresponsibility of an ecclesiastical mass. The ecclesiastical and the concrete ecclesiastical reality, on the one hand, and what is Christian and what is justified before God, the Creator of the universal *and* the individual, on the other hand, never coincide completely.

Even in the Church there is to be found an application of the principle of subsidiary function in respect of the functioning of her hierarchically constructed authorities, without prejudice to her basic God-given constitution and the direct origin of her fundamental authority and powers in her divine founder. This means that even in the Church every individual, community and authority must, indeed, be fitted into the whole structure of the Church and subordinated to the highest authority of the Church; but this does not mean that

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the members of the Church (both individuals and communities), which are thus incorporated and subordinated, cannot and ought not to have their own relatively independent functions; it does not mean that the life of the Church is directed by an omnipotent central body of bureaucrats, and that all others have merely the duty to receive orders passively, without any responsibility or initiative of their own. Even in positive Canon Law (which is not unchangeable) changes can take place in the boundary between freedom and compulsion and in the distribution of duties and rights. The Canon Law obtaining at any particular moment in time does not need to be regarded as something immutable. Because someone does not have a divine right in a certain respect and in a particular case, this does not mean that the Church herself may not invest him with this right in the form of a *ius humanum*, which can be a true right and not merely a privilege. Thus it is [106] conceivable that in this respect the rights of lay people might be further extended or re-extended, since in the long run this is the only way in which the layman can be brought to a consciousness of his duties in and on behalf of the Church.

Even within her life of religion, the Church must combat the tendency among her own members of taking refuge in the mass and taking flight into a merely collective religious life, as is manifested by too great a dependence on others, by the fact of shying away from personal responsibility or waiting for ecclesiastical directives from above in the wrong circumstances, or by the opinion that everything is morally as it should be merely by the fact that the Church has not issued an explicit and detailed verdict, and by the dwindling of a *personal* private life of piety both of the individual and in families, in spite of their participation in the official liturgy, etc.

If, in conclusion, we are to give some indication of certain concrete instances where room should be left for freedom *inside* the Church particularly at the present time, then the following must be said:

(a) Even within the Church there should be room and toleration for the expression of opinion, i.e. Public Opinion.[2] Pius XII himself pointed this out and stated that the absence of such public opinion in the Church would be a fault for which both the pastors and the flock would have to take the blame. The following are the Holy Father's actual words (*Osservatore Romano*, 18th February 1950):

> Public opinion is the natural portion of every normal society composed of human beings. . . Whenever there is no manifest expression of public opinion at all, and above all whenever one must admit that public opinion does not at all exist, this lack must be regarded as a fault, a weakness and a disease in the life of that society . . . In conclusion, We wish to add a few words about public opinion within the pale of the Church (in respect of those matters, of course, which are left to free discussion). Only those will be surprised at this who do not know the Catholic Church, or at least know her only badly. For, after all, she too is a living body, and there would be something lacking in her life if there were no public opinion in the Church – a lack for which the pastors as well as the faithful would be to blame . . .

[107] (b) There must be room in theology for research, for different schools and directions of thought, for experiments and progress, within the framework of actual dogmas and any other really obligatory doctrines.

(c) There is, if we may express our meaning in so profane a manner, a lawful 'freedom of association' for Christians within the ecclesiastical sphere. Even in this sphere is it a valid rule that higher forms of organization must not be allowed to suppress, in favour of a kind of 'State Socialism' which organizes things in a bureaucratic manner from above, the

[2] Cf. Karl Rahner, *Free Speech in the Church* (London 1960).

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spontaneous individual life of fellowships which grow up within the Church from below. Such methods would be more convenient and would make it easier to survey everything, but they would not be more successful in the long run and would, in fact, mean the death of any true Church life. An exaggerated principle of parochial and natural social groupings offends against the rightful freedom of the Christian in his religious life.

(d) Side by side with the official function which is transmitted in a juridical manner, there is and must also be the charismatic and the prophetic in the Church which cannot be officially organized right from the start but must, in all patience and humility, be given sufficient room for growth, even though its bearers are sometimes rather 'inconvenient'. It is written: 'Do not extinguish the Spirit.'

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[109]

3

PERSONAL AND SACRAMENTAL PIETY

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

1. The Question

The question about the particular place which the reception of the sacraments, and especially the sacrament of the altar, should occupy in our daily spiritual life will always go on being discussed. Years ago people argued about the relationship between 'ontic' piety and subjective piety. Since that time, everyone has no doubt realized that the reception of the sacraments is not meant to dispense us from the efforts of self-discipline nor, therefore, from personal co-operation when receiving the Holy Eucharist. Consequently, the important question for us in our present discussion will lie in a different direction. What we will ask ourselves is whether a 'Spiritual Communion', for example, can be a valid substitute for the actual reception of the Eucharist – without loss of benefits – and whether it is of the same value and has the same effects for salvation. Can examination of conscience and contrition mean the same as a sacramental 'Confession of devotion'? Have there not been times when the reception of the particular sacrament – be it the Eucharist or Penance – was rather infrequent, without it being possible to assume lightly that there was less piety and less love of God among the pious in those days?

2. Insufficient Answers

To begin with, one cannot simply dismiss this question merely by stating that in fact, since the sacrament is effective *ex opere operato*, a sacrament gives grace of its own power, and that one does not receive this grace without a *sacramental* reception of the sacrament. For *firstly*: A sacrament, even when received worthily, does not simply increase grace with absolute certainty and necessity in arithmetical proportion [110] to the number of times it is received. Even although such a conception is the tacit basis of a fairly widespread popular opinion about the sacraments and their efficacy, this view falls down in face of the clear doctrine that the sacraments increase in efficacy (i.e. in the efficacy peculiar to them) in proportion to the dispositions of the recipient. These dispositions are, according to the Council of Trent (*Denz* 799), the measure (although not the cause) of the sacrament's factual growth in efficacy. And even these dispositions themselves do not grow simply in proportion to the frequency of the reception of the sacrament. Otherwise it would be impossible to explain ultimately why, for instance, the Church allows the Eucharist to be received only once per day.

And *secondly*: Are there 'sacramental' graces which can be received only through the sacrament? There are, of course, *effects* of the sacraments which cannot be received otherwise than through the sacraments, such as our alloted place in the order of the hierarchico-visible Church, given to us by Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, or the sacramental character, and the marriage bond. But our question is not concerned with such matters. The question is rather: is there some *grace* which can be acquired only through a sacrament, be it the grace of the state of justification and sanctification and its growth, or be it (actual) grace to help us to continue in the truly Christian life of oneness with Christ and to

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fight against sin, face the trial of death, profess the Faith, fulfil our vocation to the priesthood, matrimony, etc.? This may well be doubted. For when we speak in sacramental theology of the peculiar grace of each individual sacrament, which pertains to the particular sacrament in accordance with the particular characteristics and purpose of the sacrament concerned, nothing more is meant by this than that the sacraments differ from *each other* in this way in their effect and not merely in their outward rite. Such a statement does not, however, imply that the sacraments give a grace which otherwise could not be obtained in any way. In reality, sanctifying grace is increased through the whole Christian life – through prayer, penance, the carrying out of one's duties, the keeping of the Commandments, through sufferings undergone in faith, through a Christian dying. Who is going to doubt that the priest obtains further graces by his prayer and by the faithful exercise of his office to help him in the fulfilment of his priestly task, and similarly also in the case of the partners in a marriage? Who is going to deny that penance, [111] prayer, etc. obtain graces for avoiding further sins and for the removal of the consequences of sin which still remain after guilt has been remitted – graces, in short, which are 'peculiar' to the *sacrament* of Penance?

It is also not sufficient to say that God has *de facto* instituted the sacraments as the means for grace and that he therefore wants them to be used, so that anyone who culpably neglects these ordinary means of grace may not count on obtaining this grace by some other means. This may well be correct. But the real question is: *when* does one 'neglect' the sacraments? To judge by the divine or ecclesiastical commandments, the required frequency of reception of the sacraments is not very great. Can someone who takes this frequency as his norm be accused of 'neglect' of the sacraments; could he not expect to receive the necessary helps for a very holy life, merely presupposing (and this must certainly be presupposed) that he uses the other means of grace, such as prayer, penance, etc., most zealously? If one already sees tepidity, and therefore non-disposition for a rich aid of grace, simply in a relatively rare reception of the sacraments itself then one tacitly presupposes precisely what has to be proved. For, in fact, such conduct, simply considered in itself is 'lukewarm' only if the person concerned throws away chances of grace in this way, because he cannot merit them in any other way. But this is just what is in question.

One can, of course, pose the following counter-question: What reason could one have for receiving the sacraments (in which Christ applies the power of his grace to us) less frequently than the nature of the sacraments and the demanding circumstances of life and of its situations permit? One might add that a frequent reception of the sacraments is not detrimental to 'subjective' piety but, on the contrary, encourages it. And so, both frequent reception of the sacraments and subjective asceticism and piety together must at any rate be richer in blessings than if one were to be satisfied with the merely 'subjective' way of perfection of the Christian life. Hence, the fact of a rare reception of the sacraments must after all be due to a certain tepidity, i.e. to an indifference towards the divine assistance of grace. This may in fact often be the case. For it is quite right to say that, at least in general, the Christian who really believes in the Incarnation of the divine Logos with a vital faith, feels the urge to meet God's action on himself in the most tangible and human manner possible – and that means in the sacraments. There will, of course, be an upper (albeit fluid) limit [112] to this frequency for practical and essential reasons. But one would surely not be justified in saying that, prescinding from border-line and individual cases, this limit is exceeded by the present-day tradition of frequency in receiving the sacraments, as found amongst zealous Christians in the world, as well as amongst the clergy and in the life of the Religious. Such a frequency in the reception of the sacraments need not, therefore, arouse any suspicions of being exaggerated or superfluous. This is true especially because one's spiritual life, if it is genuine and hence also in accord with the mind of the Church, will fit itself quite simply and trustfully into the life of the Church as established in one's day – and, therefore,

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nowadays into a life of an increasingly sacramental piety. In this way one can be confident that one lives the sort of life which the Spirit of God, who ultimately disposes sovereignly of men and of the Church, wishes us to lead in his Church at this particular period in time. For after all it is he who in the final analysis brings in the ages of the Church and determines which aspects of the abundance of Christian existence (i.e. of the life of Christ) will be particularly marked here and now. Such accentuations fall under the law of the guidance of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and cannot be entirely deduced from theoretical considerations in theology. But does such an answer say everything that is to be said? What about the question with which we started, viz.: is it possible to receive the effect of a sacrament (the *res sacramenti*) even without receiving the sacrament itself?

II. A POSITIVE ATTEMPT AT A SOLUTION: THE INNER UNITY OF FAITH AND SACRAMENT

It seems that, in order to clarify fully the obscurities which have come to light both in the question itself and in the usual answers, we must inquire somewhat more deeply into the more exact relation obtaining between subjective activity and the sacraments. For, once their inner unity and correlation has become clearer, our original question will answer itself. For if it turns out (as we hope to show) that in the case of subjective activity and sacramental happening it is not at all a question of 'two ways' to the same goal (viz. the reception and increase of God's grace), but merely of two moments or phases of one and the same event, then it no longer makes any sense to ask whether one should take one way *or* the other.

[113]

1. The teaching of current sacramental theology about the 'two ways' of justification and of the increase of grace

The whole of the present-day theology of the sacraments is unfortunately directed in its outlook towards encouraging the conception of 'two ways' of justification and increase of grace which meet only (but then entirely) in their final result. Various trains of thought have contributed to this outlook.

When one speaks of sacraments in general and – as it were – constructs the formal model of a sacrament, one instinctively envisages infant baptism as one's example, with the unspoken thought in the back of one's mind that the pure essence of a sacrament can best be represented *in the case where* man's personal activity of faith and love is completely out of the question. As far as the other sacraments (e.g. Penance and Extreme Unction) are concerned, one would probably represent the normal case as follows: one supposes a disposition such that the effect of the sacrament (the *res sacramenti*: remission of sin, justification) does not come about without the sacrament. And one then regards this case as typical (merely imperfect contrition as sufficient disposition) and as the one which should, therefore, give us the clearest idea of the nature and effect of that particular sacrament. Hence, in the case of sacraments which demand a greater disposition (viz. the 'sacraments of the living'), one accordingly regards this disposition merely as a moral demand on the part of God for the *de facto* reception of the *effect* of the sacrament, i.e. as something which remains completely outside the sacramental event as such.

And conversely, when one speaks of the subjective way of justification and increase of grace, one thinks of a purely 'subjective' event. One knows, of course, that such an event (understood in this way) is possible only with the support of the grace of Christ. But one does not, in this connection, bring out the christological and ecclesiological aspects of this grace.

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There are whole tracts 'De gratia Christi' in which for all practical purposes, and seen as a whole, the word '*Christus*' appears only in the title. These tracts simply presuppose as self-evident, or mention only briefly, that this grace is 'merited' precisely by Christ himself. The word 'Church' just does not appear at all in these treatises. And yet every grace has analogously the same structure as its source, viz. the structure of the Word become *man*, and all grace is grace of the *Church*, i.e. all grace has an ecclesiological structure. The [114] outcome of all this is that in the sacraments, seen now also from the angle of the subjective way of justification, man's personal action in faith and love is conceived as a disposition which remains external to the sacramental happening as such. And furthermore, the ecclesiological aspect of the personal action of the believer (and with that every *inner* reference to the Church as the sphere of the sacramental happening) is then left completely out of consideration (even although it is not explicitly denied).

Against the background of such trends of thought, there must quite instinctively arise the conception of two different ways and manners of justification, and of two sometimes independent and self-sufficient causes of the same effect. This dualism is only barely bridged by the doctrine (in itself quite correct) that even in the case where the subjective way has been taken (such as baptism of desire or perfect contrition) and has borne fruit, the sacrament is nevertheless of obligation and necessary as a means for salvation, and that therefore the merely subjective manner of justification must include a *votum sacramenti* (which in fact it always does). At the same time this doctrine also underlines expressly in this connection that it is not the '*votum*' but charity which justifies, so that no one may possibly get the impression that these two ways could be allowed to fuse into one.

2. Critique of the doctrine of the 'two ways of salvation', by showing the inner unity of faith and sacrament

We naturally do not mean to dispute the correctness of the *starting*-points of this doctrine of the two ways (which doctrine itself is never explicitly expressed, but is all the more effective for that very reason[1]): there is an effective infant baptism, there is a sacramental justification of the person who approaches the sacrament only with attrition or imperfect contrition,[2] there is a justifying *votum baptismi*, etc. But [115] these facts do not at all force us to hold the external dualism which they are intended to justify. This will become clear by the fact that they can be just as easily derived from, or integrated into, a conception of the sacraments which does not contain this dualism. It will now be our task to develop the latter conception and to prove it, in so far as this is possible within the limits of a short article.

It might first of all be said that even on the metaphysical plane it is altogether impossible that *one* effect should have *two formally* different causes in the strict sense. If and when there are, therefore, two *materially* different causes for the same effect (as when one can, for instance, knock a nail into the wall by using either a stone or a hammer), one would at least be obliged to work out the formal identity of the causes as such for this one effect, a unity which must ontologically precede the sameness of the effect. But such very correct metaphysical considerations are not usually very convincing in practice. Nevertheless, they do at least give an indication of methodology: the more a theory of causality succeeds in

[1] This doctrine is not at all explicitly expressed, because each of the two ways is even treated in different scholastic tractates, so that the 'danger' of any contact arising between them is avoided from the very start.

[2] It is, however, also true that present-day theology, frequently in contrast to St Thomas, presupposes too easily, by appealing to a very questionable experience, that the dispositions do *not* change under the influence of the sacramental happening, so that the dispositions sufficient for the reception of the Sacrament and the dispositions sufficient for the reception of the *effect* of the Sacrament are presumed to be one and the same thing.

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explaining the same effect by the sameness of its cause, the greater will be its chances of being the right theory. Plurality must be proved, for it, and not unity, is ontologically the more questionable.

Now, in Scripture, justification (and increase of grace, union with Christ, salvation, eternal life, etc.) is sometimes ascribed to a sacrament (baptism, Eucharist), and at other times to faith (and to charity, conversion, etc.). The necessity of *both* sides is stressed. The Scriptures do not reflect on the internal harmony of these two assertions. But they also do not 'make it easier' for us to solve this question which they pose for us, i.e. the Scriptures do not reckon with cases in which the subjective action of man (to which they ascribe justification) would not be sufficient and in which the sacrament would then be the sole means of salvation. The Scriptures speak neither of a justification by reason of a merely imperfect contrition, nor do they speak of infant baptism. Of course, these cases are not thereby excluded. And yet theological speculation is thereby given a different direction, if it is to grasp the unity of the subjective and the sacramental sides of justification. Scripture recognizes beyond this also the possibility of a justification by faith in anticipation of the sacramental happening. It thus gives a hint, indeed, that theological speculation must begin with this point of the 'subjective' happening in order to arrive from there at the sacramental event. It hints, therefore, that wherever precisely [116] this subjective activity of man leads to justification, it must in the present dispensation of salvation lead to the sacraments (and not only in the case of merely imperfect contrition).

It is not possible here to give a theological history of the conception of the relation between *opus operatum* and *opus operantis*. This would lead us too far afield, and the analyses required would be too far-flung, especially since these conceptions are not completely uniform and many attempts have been made to understand these two facts of revelation in their internal harmony.

This question arose already in Tertullian's theology of baptism. It found various and varying answers with Augustine in the course of his life. At this stage (and already with St Ambrose) our question poses itself under the heading of the possibility of a baptism by desire, which question itself was not uniformly answered. Our question appears again later on at the end of the patristic period under the guise of the question as to whether a contrite person who dies without being reconciled with the Church will be saved. In the early Middle Ages it becomes absolutely clear that there is a baptism of desire; it is now explicitly recognized that in the normal course of events a sinner, who has been justified by contrition 'alone', does reach reconciliation with the Church – indeed it was still taught at that time that this is in itself required of him. The patristic teaching is now developed into the explicit doctrine of 'Spiritual Communion'. From the twelfth century onwards the question arises as to what happens in the case where someone comes to the sacrament of Penance with a good will indeed, but with a merely supposedly justifying contrition; and it is admitted (although only very gradually and hesitatingly and with various explanations) that the sacrament becomes effective even in such a case. The case of infant baptism is considered. However much one attributed a cleansing from original sin to it (this question had been decided by Augustine's fight against Pelagianism), one was still very far from understanding clearly whether such a baptism gives also sanctifying grace and the infused virtues. Even the Council of Vienne, in the final analysis, left this question open. It was felt that the question as to where faith is to be found in such a case is a difficulty, for after all according to Scripture faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. The average theology of today probably underestimates the weight of this question.

One can say, in any case, that theology until well into the thirteenth [117] century had a clearer consciousness of the fact that both aspects of the process of justification belong together than theology has today. It is also clear that in those days the case of a sacrament

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having a saving effect by reason of merely imperfect contrition was not considered as the classical test case for the study of the real nature of the sacrament.

St Thomas still considered it an important doctrinal part of the teaching about the sacraments, that the sacraments are '*protestationes fidei*' and hence also render the faith of the recipient truly visible in the public forum of the Church. Indeed, in his teaching on the sacrament of Penance he develops a theory about the interlacement and mutual dependence of subjective and sacramental events which is far removed from any theory of two ways of justification. The very contrition with which the penitent approaches the sacrament and which in itself he must contribute *qua* justifying contrition, already comes about in virtue of an ecclesiastico-'sacramental' grace (of the 'power of the keys') before the actual reception of the sacrament. And conversely, the conversion of the sinner, rendering itself truly concrete in and before the Church and her authority by the contrite confession of the penitent, enters as a constitutive part into the sacramental happening as such and becomes, together with the absolution given by the priest, the sacramentally efficacious sign and an intrinsic element of the *opus operatum* itself. Thus there is a dialogue between the contrite human person and the Church in which Christ's saving activity becomes really historically tangible in space and time and in the particular 'Now' of each individual existence. In St Thomas' view, it is precisely this dialogue in its unity which reacts *ex opere operato* on the inner attitude of the penitent and on his personal fulfilment of *metanoia*, and really completes it properly. Indeed, in the exceptional case of someone approaching the sacrament in good faith with merely imperfect contrition, it is only at this very moment that this personal fulfilment receives its *justifying* power. Of course, in the normal case (according to St Thomas) the personal activity of the penitent would already have this justifying power even before this moment, by virtue of *the very* grace which had continued to flow towards him from the Church,[3] [118] precisely because (and not although) justification before reception of the sacrament is the normal case. And so, in the case of the sacrament of Penance, the personal supernatural activity of the subject is embodied sacramentally in the visible dimension of the Church, because this activity had itself already been borne along by the grace of the Church. Only in this way does that activity attain the fullness of its existence, which corresponds to the fullness of existence – in the flesh and in the space-time of the empirical world – of Christ the God-Man, the source of this grace, and also to the fullness of existence of the visible-invisible Church, the Proto-Sacrament.

We do not mean to imply by this brief reference to St Thomas' teaching on Penance either that he himself would wish to see the here-developed structure of this sacrament applied to *all* the sacraments in exactly the same way, or that he himself had already thought this theory through to the very last question, or that this theory should or could still be maintained in all its details.[4] But one thing may undoubtedly be claimed by appealing to the authority of St Thomas: the nature of a sacrament as an *opus operatum* is in no way contradicted by the

[3] This conception will not seem strange to anyone who bears in mind that the Sacraments operate as signs of a human kind, and that it cannot, therefore, in itself be reasonably demanded that their constituent factors should be physically or chronologically simultaneous. This is also the way in which one must understand what current theology usually calls the 'reviviscence' of the Sacraments. This is not a question of the reviviscence of a dead Sacrament, but refers to a more extended chronological separation in time of the constituent elements of the Sacrament and the dispositions. In such a conception it will be necessary to dig more deeply than is usual in order to prove the necessity of a disposition being present during (chronologically) the actual positing of the sacramental sign – but it will not be impossible to find a reason for this necessity. To take another example: at the Last Supper, the *consecrated* elements of bread and wine will undoubtedly never have been present at chronologically the same time, although the representation of the Sacrifice of the Cross requires both of them, so that the Sacrifice of the Mass cannot be celebrated under one kind only.

[4] Thus e.g. someone who *explicitly* acknowledges himself to have merely imperfect contrition, may not be excluded from the reception of the Sacrament.

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indicated interlacement between the *opus operantis* and the *opus operatum*, which are immediately mutually and internally related by reason of their very natures and not merely by a *votum sacramenti* on account of a purely positive decree of God.

For the sake of brevity we must here refrain from indicating other elements of the sacramental theology of St Thomas which reinforce and clarify this conception further. The view set forth previously, which on the whole is also the usual view on the relationship between [119] *opus operatum* and *opus operantis* held in current theology, did not originate until after St Thomas' time. This view has the advantage of being easy to handle in a concise and 'clear' manner, but it does not have the same depth, nor does it exhaust and use all the riches and elements of a comprehensive doctrine of the sacraments as given in Tradition. It is not possible here to attest these elements from Tradition by a *positive* theological investigation. We must content ourselves with giving a brief and more synthetic and speculative outline of the basic theory which would arise from these elements. Using such a procedure, it is inevitable that certain questions cannot be explicitly tackled, and hence that certain things will remain obscure. We will simply try to get a rough idea of the relationship between *opus operatum* and *opus operantis* to the extent in which this is required for answering the particular question of this essay as objectively as possible. The particular question of this essay, let us remind ourselves, concerns the mutual relationship of ascetic endeavours and sacramental events in our day to day spiritual life, and whether there are two different ways for the attainment of salvation, simply to be followed for some reason which is not quite clear, or whether these are only two aspects or phases of what is ultimately one and the same process, viz. an always personal – 'sacramental' way of acting which sometimes, and even often (but not always), grows and develops into such an explicit and tangible activity that it is then to be called reception of the sacraments in the strict sense.

3. Theologico-speculative clarification

The supernatural grace of salvation is grace of Christ. It is not merely 'merited' by him, but bears also something of the distinctive trait of him who as God-*Man* has introduced it in a definite manner into the world and has earned it by his act of salvation on the Cross, so that it becomes the legal property of his brethren according to the flesh. This grace, if we may put it this way, has an incarnational tendency. It has not merely a dynamic directed to the inner life of God in which it makes us participate (and this indeed constitutes its nature, but, as it were, its abstract nature which prescinds from the order of Christ). It has also a dynamic directed towards the world, by which it causes the man whom it saves to be comprised within the redeeming and transfiguring descent of the Word of the Father into the world, [120] and in which HE gives this world his Holy Ghost. The grace of Christ is, therefore, also the source of the transfiguration of the body and thence of the transfiguration of the world as a whole. Similarly, it is the basic principle of the slow moral integration of human nature into the theocentric orientation of the sanctified person, i.e. the slow and, in the meantime, piecemeal recovery of the paradisean grace of man's original state in which the psychophysical 'nature' of man was completely docile to the supernaturalized human personality. Hence this grace should and wants to spread itself according to its proper nature over the *whole* stratified being of man, right down to his corporeal nature itself – forming, transforming and elevating, and sanctifying it. This grace is, therefore, not merely the principle of a merely transcendental 'interiority' of man, uniting him with God. It is meant to be rather the sanctifying formative principle of the whole body-soul life of man, coming right down into his concrete, tangible daily life, where it therefore receives its 'expression' and takes on its corporality.

Now grace – seen ontologically – always becomes externalized in this sense. For, although

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ethics may legitimately distinguish from an empirical standpoint between 'internal' and 'external' human acts, there are no purely internal acts from a metaphysical and theological point of view. For even in the most sublime interiority of his spiritual acts man still acts as *man*, i.e. as a *body*-soul being, so that even the most spiritual acts still have extension in that corporeal nature by which human beings, even as spiritual persons, are in touch with one another in a real material spatio-temporal unity. This is a real unity, no matter how difficult it may be to define it in a category. To put it somewhat crudely: even the most sublime stirring of a most supernatural love for God in the innermost depth of the spiritual person still depends on (and at the same time changes) electro-physical processes in the brain, which belong to the one totality of the material world in which everything depends on everything else and everything helps to determine everything else. It would be to the point to apply even here what was said once by a modern physicist: When a child throws its doll out of the cradle, Sirius itself will shake.

Grace, as the principle of a higher order, i.e. of the absolute divine order, transforms and elevates the moral act *qua* spiritual act; the latter however rests on, and at the same time externalizes itself in, an act in the material world (or rather: in an inner moment of the one whole act which diffuses itself through all the dimensions of human [121] existence). And so grace finds its living expression in every act (just as the body is the act and outward manifestation of the 'soul', albeit not adequately), and finds it in the spatio-temporal dimension and hence (still in a general sense) also in history. Every existing supernatural grace has, therefore, its own historical externalization in which (when accepted) it renders itself present and comes to appear. It renders itself present *in* making itself appear: analogously to the way in which the soul 'becomes' and 'is' by endowing matter with a living form and thus in-forming itself into matter, and hence cannot be thought of as preceding this act of in-forming. Grace, therefore, has of its very nature and from its very source a quasi-sacramental structure in the present incarnational order of Christ and of man.

This grace is essentially the action of God on man and cannot be thought of in any way apart from the free personal mercy of God, by which he gives himself as a gift to man. Hence the quasi-sacramental, spatio-temporal and incarnate nature of this grace is to that extent not only the manifestation in which the spiritual-existential act of the *human* person expresses itself at the very first, but also the 'outward appearance' of *God's* action on man and of *his* redeeming love for man. And so the union and relationship constituting the saving dialogue between God and man (which of itself is spiritual and transcendent), becomes present in the spatio-temporal tangible nature of every supernatural-moral act, i.e. it manifests itself in the dimension of the historical situation and existence of each human individual. One cannot object to this that (at least in general) the *empirico*-moral side of human acts for salvation belongs *only* to the domain of natural morality and that it cannot, therefore, be the 'outward appearance' of supernatural grace, since that side is possible even without saving grace. For, prescinding from everything else which is essential and which we pass over simply for the sake of brevity, even the divine assistance which we require for the factual achievement of natural moral acts is willed by God in the present order of salvation as an integral part of the one single new order which is conceived and willed precisely *as* comprehended in Christ and as projecting (and indeed assumed) in him and through him into the inner life of God. And so, in the last analysis, even this divine help is *gratia Christi* (wherever, at the very least, it finds a response). This is why even the actually achieved moral fulfilment of the natural law is already a manifestation of the divine will of grace *in Christo*, especially when it [122] is transformed and elevated by supernatural divinizing grace and is thus orientated to the goal of direct communion with God in eternal life, and when it is modified by this elevation even in its *per se* natural condition.

Over and above all this, the following should be borne in mind: the grace of Christ is

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intended for humanity as a whole; it reaches the individual in so far as he is a member of the one community of damnation and salvation which represents the human race as a unity. And Christ not only wanted to become man in this community, but to be man as a member of the one humanity, 'born of a woman'. Those who are being sanctified and he who sanctifies are of one race. His grace has, therefore, a social structure. Even in the history of personal salvation there is no isolated individual; there are indeed individuals but no individualists. Indeed, the culminating point of the process of becoming a person, which takes place through the grace of a most direct relationship to God, signifies the highest form of the communion of persons who have become in this way most personal in the one eternal kingdom of God – the highest form of the eternal communion of all saints. 'Individual' and 'community' in this sense are not realities which are opposed to each other or compete against each other. On the contrary, they are two sides of the one reality of achieved and redeemed persons which can only increase or decrease together and to the same degree.

But in accordance with the characteristics of human nature, such a communion of persons, who are justified and share in the divine life, is not willed by God merely as an invisible kingdom of inner and transcendent union by grace. Rather, God wills it as a communion which as such creates its own expression for itself in the visible and spatio-temporal dimension of history, or rather receives this expression in its institution by Christ. God's holy people of the redeemed takes on the form of the Body of Christ and of the Church, which is the combined product of the interior mutual union of the redeemed by grace and of the historical, visible form of this transcendent interior union which consists in the united profession of truth and a social union through one hierarchical order and its functions. Just as on the natural plane a people renders itself historically tangible and capable of concerted action by forming a State, so the communion of the redeemed becomes historically tangible in the Church. By the impulse of the ultimate and inmost principle of her unity – the grace of *Christ*, [123] the Holy Ghost – this communion becomes a corporate and socially constituted body. Yet this process must not be thought of as a kind of process of nature. It must not be thought of as a process which bypasses free voluntary decision and historical action. Rather it must be thought of as a process which is accomplished primarily by the will of the divine-human founder of the Church, and then secondarily by the will of the Church herself who by her own institutions renders the communion of grace and salvation (which she is) even more tangible and historically manifest.

In accordance with the nature of man which develops and unfolds itself in time, the tangibility and historical character of the Church, the people of God historically constituted, must not be thought of as something merely static which as such alone would give historical expression to the grace uniting the redeemed even amongst themselves in the closest communion. The Church carries this grace into effect and lets it appear in its *deeds*. Thus grace appears as truth in her continually renewed and progressive teaching which introduces men more and more into the fullness of the truth of Christ according to the particular character of their mental, historical position. This grace appears also as the demand made on man by her pastoral office in her law and commandments – as the sanctification of men in her sacraments – as surrender to God in the Sacrifice which she celebrates daily. There where the Church, in her action on the individual, renders grace historically manifest as the sanctifying principle on the level of her supernatural social life according to the will of her founder, she dispenses her sacraments. *By* giving this sanctifying grace a historically tangible form in such basic social acts, in accordance with the commission given her by Christ, the Church renders this grace really actual and present as well as effective in the here and now of her individual members. The Church effects grace *by* signifying it. The sacrament effects grace *because* it is its sign – a sign, in other words, which, as externalization (*Leibhaftigwerdung*) of grace, renders grace present – in short, a sacrament is a constitutive sign. In other words, it is not

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only true that the sacraments are signs of grace because they are its cause, but essentially the converse is just as true: they are causes because they are signs.

This category of causality *per modum signi* must not, however, be forced into other familiar *a priori* categories of natural causality, for otherwise the peculiarity of this particular category would suffer or at [124] least be overlooked. The relation between the outward bodily aspect of a spiritual act and that act itself is probably the closest analogy we can find. The spiritual act posits itself and is caused by taking on an outward bodily form.[5] The spiritual person, superior in its origin to the corporeal, posits its spiritual act by interpenetrating the corporeal principle formatively from this its superior position; it gains its proper achievement from its opposite, material pole.

It is somewhat similar with the activity of the Church; by positing the material, outward sign and expression of grace in space and time through her ritual action, which is the action of Christ, she obtains a really efficacious mode of presence for the grace thus signified in this historical moment of time. By the fact that Christ acts on man through the Church by giving his grace the form of a constitutive sign, it is *he* who renders his grace inwardly efficacious in man, and not his servant nor the recipient of the sacrament. This is the meaning of the term '*opus operatum*', which has therefore nothing to do with the imagination of any kind of physical effectiveness of a material occurrence which would appertain to this occurrence independently from its nature as a sign, so that this occurrence would only be 'incidentally' 'also' a sign of grace.[6] The gestures of Christ which he performs through the Church, one might simply say, are gestures meant in earnest; he on his part really effects by them what he expresses by them, simply because he performs them. If these gestures of the Church are understood from the outset (as they must be) as Christ's gestures, as the real physical appearance of his action, then it will be quite easy to understand that there is no sense in asking oneself whether and how they 'act on' the divine (and divine-human) Agent of grace, and that there is no sense in trying to solve the problem of the causality of the sacraments in that direction.

Now, whenever man really receives the grace of a sacrament as its effect, he must provide a disposition, to the extent to which he is capable of a personal act. This disposition is, however, necessarily [125] borne by grace which, as already pointed out, is, on the one hand, grace of Christ and of the Church, and, on the other hand, finds its outward bodily expression in the space and time of history by this activity of man. For after all this disposition is not merely something 'interior'; for man must desire to receive the sacrament visibly and he must manifest this desire – he lets the sacrament be administered to him and this fact of letting it happen to himself is as much a historical act as any other. Thus the sacrament takes place in a historical dialogue between Christ in the Church, on the one hand, and man on the other. And seen from both sides, this dialogue is the constitutive sign of the one grace of Christ and of his Church, which is effective at this moment.[7] A sacrament takes place, therefore (in the case

[5] One might think here of Pascal's profound remark to the effect that one must perform external humble acts in order to become humble.

[6] Hence the intention of the human minister of the Sacrament is also required, since without it the sign would just not be a sign, i.e. a human expression. And conversely: whenever one ascribes a really physical efficacy to the Sacrament, one can no longer explain properly why the intention of the minister is necessary even for the mere existence of the Sacrament.

[7] This does not necessarily involve a denial of the fact that in general, and especially on account of the case of valid and fruitful administration of the Sacraments to infants, only that part of the dialogue which the Church actively posits can be called 'Sacrament' in the strict sense. But this fact in its turn need not exclude the other fact that the totality of the dialogue is externalization (*Leibhaftwerdung*) of grace. This grace, proceeding from Christ present in the Church, seizes hold of man, becomes 'flesh' in his activity which brings him to the Church (i.e. in the words and gestures of man vis-à-vis the Church) and then receives a further tangible expression (*Leibhaftigkeit*) in the active response of the Church, precisely *as* tangible response of the Church, and this is an

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we are considering), as a dialogic unity of the personal acts of God and of man in the visible sphere of the Church's essential (i.e. given to her directly by Christ himself) sanctifying ministration. The 'incarnation' of grace, and grace's process of becoming tangibly historical, reaches its climax in the sacraments. Grace is not only incarnated in the personal supernaturalized activity of man, but also in the acts of the Church as such: not only in the activity of a member of God's people, but in the essential activity of the *historically constituted* people of God, i.e. in the essential activity of the *Church* in her own public, social sphere. There is, indeed, no saving human act which in its historical spatio-temporal nature does not experience an embodying of grace or which falls outside the fundamental law of incarnation applicable to Christian salvation as such. But this process of embodiment has its own definite variability. This is somewhat similar to what happens in an ordered society, where there are acts, performed by and on the individual, of a [126] more or less official or public nature. Everything a man does is done by him in some degree or other as a member of his people; it has to a greater or lesser extent an effect on this people and is some kind of expression of the life of this people, and hence is an act of this people, no matter how 'private' it may be – this is after all the reason why there is not only a history of States and of wars, but also a history of cultures. But there are acts of the human individual and of the people which take place in a qualified public sphere, in which the act of the people as such manifests itself and the act of the individual has its full validity only when it is done in the properly qualified public forum and is replied to by the act of the people through the action of its public authorities; thus, for instance, a marriage contracted before the registrar, a contract drawn up by a notary, a testament attested before a notary, the confirmation of property-rights by a judge, etc. So also the sanctifying word of Christ to man, which is uttered in the depths of conscience and which in any case becomes outwardly present in the world in the active assent of man, can receive a properly qualified embodiment through the Church in her public forum; it can then become sacramental in the strict sense of the word. And in view of the incarnational structure of Christian salvation and of the ecclesiastical constitution of the people of God, it is easily understandable that the Lord of grace should *wish* and (to various degrees) demand this qualified outward form of his word of grace to man wherever it is a question of the *basic* effecting of the event and acceptance of His grace.

It would lead us too far afield for our present purpose if we were to take a detailed look at the organized body of the seven sacraments in the light of what we have just seen. For the seven sacraments are the seven basic embodiments of the occurrence and appropriation of grace. What is important *in the present context* is simply to note clearly that grace does not occur merely internally and subjectively (as it were outside the visible form of the Church) at certain times, and in the form of sacraments at other times. No, presupposing the corresponding subject, grace always occurs both subjectively *and* in the Church, interiorly *and* outwardly, existentially *and* collectively, although in varying degrees of one or other of these elements.

This variability is in the nature of things: not every occurrence in a community which is brought about by the individual and is also borne at the same time by this community, can have the same degree [127] of explicitness and be of the same official public nature in the social framework of this community. The more basic and significant an act is for the individual and the community, the greater must be the public explicitness demanded of this act. The more humdrum an act is, the less will be demanded of it in the way of public and official outward expression; this is true to such an extent that it becomes practically imperceptible that even in this case the community still helps to condition such an act. The

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expression of grace precisely *qua* grace *of the Church*. And so, in this way the full 'truth' of grace now appears and carries itself into effect.

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exact dividing line between these two kinds of act cannot, of course, be simply deduced *a priori*. This is a matter which is determined legally by the authority which has the right to give intentional determination to the constitution and law of the particular constituted community. It can, therefore, also happen that it is left to the free decision of the individual whether he will perform an act in this or that form – take, for instance, the different forms of wills and contracts, or the case of a valid but clandestine contract of marriage, etc. So it is also in the visibly constituted community of the people of God – in the Church. The application of all this does not require any further detailed explanation here.

III. CONCLUSION: ONE WAY OF SALVATION BY FAITH AND THE SACRAMENTS

We can now approach our particular question from what we have seen above. What happens in fact when, for example, a Christian repents of his sins in the quiet of his own little chamber in one case and at other times makes a 'Confession of devotion'? Does he follow a different way to the same goal in each case, or else what happens? Can one say: take the first way, for the effect is the same and you can spare yourself the second way? Or should one say: in the first case you are merely concerned with yourself and everything is merely 'subjective', whereas in the second case the grace of God is having an effect on you...? Or should one merely say: do both, for after all two is better than one . . .? And similarly in the case of Spiritual and Sacramental Communion?

1. The quasi-sacramental visible appearance of the workings of God's grace in Faith and Love

God's action on man occurs even in the 'subjective' way, and even the 'subjective' way occurs in the Church. Here, too, there is a dialogue [128] of grace between God and man, an effective action of God which really and truly fills and transforms the heart of man more and more with his Holy Spirit. Here, too, there occurs not merely a disposition of repentance, but God also gives his word of forgiveness to man. Even in this case there is not merely an intellectual and affective reference of man to Christ, but a true deepening of the real union with Christ in the Holy Spirit. In this case, too, these forces pour forth upon man because he is incorporated into the Body of Christ which is the Church, and because this Church prays, sacrifices and loves for him. Here, too, the life of the one Body of Christ goes on, and everything is embraced and supported by the visible-spiritual unity of the Church, which is not an ideological but a real unity, preceding the individual man's subjective will for union. And when man acts in this way in the quiet and seclusion of his closet, it is not only his own dispositions which are expressed in his actions (his praying, kneeling, etc.), but God's grace in him and that through his freedom. When he reflects on his actions and looks at them as it were from the outside, he can say: God acted there, and in this hour of my life he became tangible and visible in the intangible workings of his grace. The life of Jesus, which pervades all spaces and times, has advanced another little step further. His hand has rested upon me and his own word has gone straight to my heart; the life-streams of his Church have risen out of the hidden depths of his Heart, in which the Holy Ghost is poured out, and have risen to the surface of my life where they become accessible to my everyday consciousness.

2. Grace and Love, inspirited and embodied in the visibleness of the Sacraments

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Why does such a person nevertheless receive a sacrament even in cases where he is not obliged to do so? Is this merely a help for the weak in faith who would otherwise not comprehend what happens in and to them even without this sacrament, when they simply believe and have faith? Or does the recipient of the sacrament suddenly do something quite different now from what he did before, because this also is blessed? Neither is true. On the contrary, reception of the sacrament continues the life of faith and lets this identical faith grow up into the fullness of its being and thus gather strength. *Ceteris paribus*, i.e. presupposing his 'subjective' act as also accomplished in the sacrament, [129] he does the same now as what he did or let be done to him before in the silent room of his secluded prayer. Only now he does it in a more tangible fashion, and hence more intensely to himself and lets it happen to him in a more tangible and hence more intense manner by his co-operation. Christ's deed and the vitality of the Church take shape in him in a tangible and express manner. Christ's gesture towards man becomes more emphatic: Christ's word of absolution is clearly set off against man's word of contrition (although the latter was never possible other than as a *response* in which Christ's word took effect). And Christ's word is here addressed to him explicitly and powerfully. Christ's body is received as a palpable pledge of the fact that a profounder union is taking place here and now with the living Lord in the Holy Ghost. Explicit expression is given now to the relationship all grace has to the *Church*, by the fact that the Church takes a visible part by her tangible action. In short, what had already been happening previously, now becomes a qualified tangible event and appears *publicly* in the form of a means of grace which had already sustained the previous events and which is the Church. However, this qualified, higher objectivity of the constitutive sign of the grace of Christ, considered as rendering man's action tangible, means (*ceteris paribus*) an intensification of man's own supernatural fulfilment of life (*opus operantis*); and when considered as the tangible aspect of the action of Christ, it means a new actualization of grace (the *opus operatum* in the sacrament). Hence no *new* path is taken. Rather the one way of salvation and of grace is pursued right to the end. The final phase follows from the first phase, and the latter is completed by the former. These two phases of the one process depend on one another; in both of them the same powers are at work: Christ, the Church, and the human person as recipient of grace.

The whole process can be compared to the life shared in common by two lovers. Everything they do is sustained and transformed by this love and is its – very discreet, almost imperceptible – expression, even the insignificant, ordinary things which seem to have quite a different meaning and purpose from love and which would have to be done even if there were no love between these two persons. And yet, sometimes, and even often, they must tell each other their love openly, in words and by gestures which are nothing but the expression of love – of a love which was already finding expression in everything they do. It is as if the hidden law of the whole of their two lives united [130] together must continually bring forth new formal, outward expressions (*Gestaltwerdungen*) of their love, in which this love, which after all is always there, realizes itself ever more fully and in ever new forms. These are only gestures, not love itself – gestures 'which do not really seem to matter' compared with the proving of one's love in deed and in truth; and yet love lives by them. Love would die if it were not for these expressions which are not love itself at all and which those not in love consider superfluous 'formalities'. There is a connection between the proofs of one's love in deed and in life (i.e. of the real, love which really matters) and these gestures; yet in the ultimate analysis this connection cannot be formulated in rules but must always be discovered anew. It is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules for everyone and for each individual, telling him in what rhythm and proportion both of these factors belong to the one life of love and in what way the one love lives by both. But the everyday course of love will always go on concentrating itself in such gestures and love itself will always draw new life from them.

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This comparison is merely a – comparison. But it may illustrate the fact that there can be no real competition in the spiritual life between the *opus operatum* and the *opus operantis*. Not only because the *opus operatum* also demands in some small measure the *opus operantis*, if the sacrament is to be in any way fruitful. But because the *opus operantis* reaches its proper climax in the *opus operatum*, i.e. its climax of outward, corporeal expression which corresponds to its proper and always given nature. And the *opus operantis* attains in this way the highest fulfilment of its own inner existential intensity which is in itself possible here and now,[8] because this intensity itself (other things [131] being equal) does not in fact grow merely through this increased intensity of its expression (by giving rise to the latter), but grows also through the grace of the sacrament itself which comes out to meet it. For the event of this grace does not merely mean an increase of a purely inactive state of grace. It also effects this increase through and by way of an intensification of the personal activity to which it responds. It would be a merely superficial empiricism to try to deny this statement by appealing to a contrary 'experience' on the occasion of a pious reception of the sacraments. One would in that case confound certain verifiable feelings of consolation, uplift, etc., which are accessible to direct internal experience, with more profound spiritual-supernatural acts which can become more interior, personal and 'existential' without this fact being necessarily verifiable by ordinary internal experience.

3. Consequences of the foregoing for determining the frequency of the reception of the sacraments

The foregoing again does not mean that we may simply lay down the principle that the greater number of times the sacraments are received, the better the recipient's spiritual life will be. Such a somewhat wild repetition of the reception of the sacraments does not only go beyond the limits of what is possible in practice or according to the law of the Church, but it would be senseless even apart from that. It is simply a fact that, if life is to remain healthy, then those spiritual acts which are done with great explicitness and solemnity must be relatively rarer and more unusual than the more humble and ordinary actions of everyday life. So also in the case of the sacraments. Let us put this more precisely and explain this matter factually, judging it by the finite, spiritual and moral possibilities of a human being which are conditioned by the level of his spiritual development, his personal characteristics, his external circumstances, etc. Now, there can be cases where, seen and judged in this light, it cannot really be [132] expected that a more frequent reception of the sacraments would mean any marked increase in the intensity of the existential accomplishment of the reception of the sacraments (even remembering that this must not be confused with certain very devout sentiments and emotions). In such cases any further increase in the reception of the

[8] It is important to note the terms 'in itself' and 'possible here and now'. For otherwise this part of the statement would be an exaggeration. To take an example: a martyr for the Faith has received the Sacrament of the Altar with great devotion – before being sentenced to death; now, supposing that – after sentence of death has been passed – he places his life in his hands for whom he sacrifices it, and that he does so out of the freest, believing love. There is no difficulty on theological grounds (on the contrary; remember the patristic teaching about baptism of blood) in assuming that in the second, i.e. the non-sacramental act, the existential acceptance of his sharing in the, fate of the Lord – the '*res*' of the celebration of the death of the Lord – is more intense than in the first act. Nor is there any difficulty on theological grounds in accepting that more happens in the line of the supernatural and of grace in the second act than in the first. The constitutive *sign* of one and the same reality present in both acts (viz. the participation in the death of Christ) is greater and has a higher excellence in the first act (i.e. in the reception of the Body of Christ, which is the sign and not the signified thing or effect of the Eucharist); but the '*res sacramenti*' is more intensely and really present in the second act, even though this act takes place without the *sacramentum*.

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sacraments will be senseless, even though such further acts of receiving the sacraments would still have to be characterized as 'fruitful' '*in the abstract*', i.e. purely in accordance with the norms of the general moral theology of the sacraments. In the normal case of the average Christian, there would be no sense, for instance, in his wanting to keep on going to Holy Communion several times successively each day, or in his wanting to get absolution from the priest several times in uninterrupted succession, even if the law of the Church had not placed any limit on this (in the former case). The reason for this is quite simply the fact that it is the 'dispositions' which are the measure (not the cause) of the sacramental effect. If, in a particular case, these dispositions cannot actually increase any further to any marked extent either before or through the reception of the sacrament (for reasons which lie beyond the sacrament and the good will of man), then the sacrament, too, cannot achieve any further marked increase of its effect. Two kisses of love – to use the language of our previous illustration – are not always more than one.

This principle in no way permits us to criticize and to combat as exaggerated what, for example, Canon Law (can. 863; 595, 2) as well as the Encyclical '*Mediator Dei*' (C.T.S., London, no. 127) and the rules and customs of Religious Orders regard as the normal frequency of reception of the sacraments for a devout Christian of today. For one must take it absolutely for granted that in the normal case the dispositions required in present-day practice (before and through the reception of the sacraments) are possible for anyone who has the good will, and that, therefore, the now normal frequency does make sense. But the aforesaid principle, even if it does not permit deduction of any hard and fast numerical rules, can be useful for recognizing in practice that a certain freedom of the children of God is justified in what concerns greater or lesser frequency, and the upper and lower limits of frequency in the reception of the sacraments. We will not, for instance, smile at a Saint (such as Francis Borgia) because he receives the sacrament of Penance daily, nor look on him as a noteworthy oddity on that account. Nor will we immediately have suspicions of tepidity [133] about a mature priest, in whose life examination of conscience and contrition are firmly established (quite apart from the rules of the Order), but who only goes to Confession every four weeks. Seen in this light, it is also absolutely understandable that the most authoritative moralists count with the fact that a priest may on occasion not offer the sacrifice of the Mass and not receive the Holy Eucharist, without thereby missing an opportunity for growth in grace.

4. The inner unity of personal and sacramental piety

One may not, therefore, say that 'Spiritual Communion' is 'just as good' and as profitable as sacramental Communion, or that the mere examination of conscience and contrition achieve 'the same thing' as sacramental Confession. This is so, not because these acts of one's private spiritual life are so to speak only an 'as if', but because, in the incarnational order of Christ and of our flesh and as long as we remain dependent on the shadows and signs of our world even in our relationship to God, these acts of our everyday spiritual life only attain their proper essential climax precisely in the sacraments. Faith (itself) realizes itself most really and intensely, of its very nature,[9] in the sacrament of faith. The unity and union

[9] I.e. if faith in its existential profundity were to correspond fully to the unsurpassable dignity of the sign as such. We have already said that this is often quite different in actual fact, even in the providence of God – i.e. that it can happen that the *res sacramenti* is acquired in greater measure outside the Sacrament (cf. note 8 above, pp. 130 *sq*.). This, however, is no argument against the principle just formulated; for in this principle it is merely a question of the highest degree of acquisition of the *res sacramenti* attainable here and now (i.e. in a case where one can receive a Sacrament, the Sacrament is offered, and its reception has sense according to the principle just formulated). In such a case, to abstain from the Sacrament would also mean renouncing the chance to increase

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with Christ, which takes place through love, appears and realizes itself with the greatest intensity in the sacrament of the Body of Christ. The forgiving grace of God reaches its clearest and most efficacious expression in the sacrament of Penance.

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one's personal exercise of faith and love. One could imagine a sort of 'case of conflict' only where a sacramental Occurrence and another act of virtue apparently compete simultaneously with one another, as e.g. if one could help Christ in a poor person 'now' and only now during the time of Mass. In such a case one must, of course, choose the act of greater and more selfless love, even if under certain circumstances it were 'only' a spiritual Communion included in the act of love of one's neighbour.

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[135]

4

FORGOTTEN TRUTHS CONCERNING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE[1]

The phrase, 'forgotten truths', in the title of this article, must naturally be taken with a grain of salt. The Church's consciousness in faith always stores up more in her memory, as her lasting property, than is 'present' to it at any particular moment in time which we may arbitrarily mark off. For the past and Tradition belong to this consciousness. But there will also be 'forgotten truths' if it is true that the Scriptures and Tradition must be the ever new and inexhaustible source of theology – the source from which theology must always draw anew and without which it would become sterile[2] (i.e. if it were to believe that it conceives everything adequately 'now', which it possesses in the memory of its Tradition but which it must also always awaken and raise again by ever new efforts). Such truths do not necessarily need to have been 'defined' or to be truths found in 'Denzinger'. For if this were necessary, then the study of 'Denzinger', and 'Denzinger' itself, could make the Scriptures and Tradition, as well as the ever renewed delving into them, superfluous. That truths are 'forgotten', also does not imply that no one knows these truths. Indeed, it is often almost comical (and yet really quite natural) how this shows itself in theology. Thus, when someone exclaims: 'This is something you have forgotten (you theologians, preachers, catechists), you never mention this!', then the accused parties take notice and [136] retort somewhat indignantly: 'You are wrong, that is something we have always known and indeed have always stated in such and such a place. For have we not always known, with Augustine, Thomas, Suarez (where the point which has been passed over in silence, is to be found), what you are now affirming?' One knows these truths – they seem familiar and (more or less) self-evident, when one is reminded of them, and yet one may have forgotten them. When we speak in what follows about such truths concerning the sacrament of Penance, we do not mean to imply by this that all of these 'forgotten' propositions have always the highest degree of theological certitude. We are satisfied (without making it an object of inquiry or defending it), if a reasonable theological justification can be given for these propositions and if they are supported by the views of authoritative theologians. Nor do we mean to maintain that these 'forgotten truths' are more important than those which are always and everywhere explicitly preached about and meditated upon. When one states that in the sacrament of Penance God forgives us our guilt by the grace of Christ and through the word of the Church, one has undoubtedly stated the most important facts that are to be stated about this sacrament. However, the works of God are in fact too rich in their reality to allow these riches to be rendered adequately by a short formula, no matter how clear and powerful the latter may be. Sober exactness and lucid abstractness, although good in themselves, may also lead to spiritual impoverishment in theology. We have no right, whether it be in theology or in our spirituality, simply to select arbitrarily according to our own particular tastes; rather we have the duty to penetrate more and more, and in ever new ways, into the infinite breadth and

[1] I was somewhat grieved to notice – only after having finished this article – that I had overlooked an article by M. Schmaus ('Reich Gottes und Busssakrament', *Müncher Theologische Zeitschrift* I [1950], pp. 20-36), in which much of what I have said here has been anticipated (besides treating other things which are not mentioned in the present article). In referring the reader to this excellent article, I hope, however, not to have worked completely in vain. Cf. also on this whole subject: K. Rahner, 'Beichtprobleme', *Geist und Leben* XXVII (1954), pp. 435-446.

[2] Cf. Pius XII, '*Humani generis*' (Denz 3014).

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depth of divine truth.[3]

1. Consideration of sin as sin against the Church

Sin is opposition to the holy will of the eternal God; it is opposition to the love which he offers us and in which he wants to give and communicate himself more and more, so that we might participate, or increase our participation, 'in the divine nature'. The offence against [137] this God is the very essence of sin. Over and above this, sin is however not only an offence against the nature of man and against his supernatural calling to grace, and against the growth and ever deeper personal acceptance of this grace. Sin is also an offence against the holy communion of the redeemed, which is the Church. For the divine will of love and the supernatural calling of man, against which man offends by sin, are not realities which concern man only as an isolated individual or existent. The Christian who is baptized meets the holy God of grace as a member of the Church. The baptized Christian belongs both to the visible and invisible reality of the Body of Christ. His visible belonging to the Church, which is based on the sacramental character of baptism, is the 'proto-sacrament' which gives him a constant and effective title to justification and sanctification in the Holy Spirit. He ought to contribute his share by his life of walking in the Spirit, so that the Church, whose member he is, will be the 'holy Church' even in a 'moral' sense and thus bear witness to the fact that God's mercy and grace have really come into the world both validly and invincibly.[4] The holiness of the *Church* (*her* Spirit) is given to the Christian as his own, because he is her member – and he is to give his holiness (his life in the Spirit) to the Church, so that she will be the holy one. The Christian who sins offends, therefore, against his own attachment to the Church (which is essential to him as a Christian) and against the Church herself. Not that he is simply severed from her by (grave) sin, as lack of baptism, heresy and schism separate a person from the Church on the level of her historical visibleness and tangibility. Nor is it that sin (if it is not schism or heresy) is of no account for the Church and for the Christian's membership function in the Church. Just how sin affects the Christian's *belonging* to the Church is something we will have to deal with more explicitly in the next section. The main thing to realize at this point is that the baptized sinner becomes guilty in regard to the Church by his sin. He offends against *her* Spirit, against her mission and against the unquestioning obedience he owes to her. He for his part renders the Church herself sinful in a certain regard.[5]

This ecclesiological aspect of sin can already be clearly perceived in Holy Scripture – even although we cannot enter more deeply into [138] this here. The Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ belong together in the one Church. Anyone who belongs to her, has her Spirit and is sanctified by belonging to her and by having her Spirit through her mediation. Anyone who belongs to her is holy in this sense, so that his holy life (his living by the Spirit) is the incumbent *consequence*, and not the original cause, of this holiness in the Spirit of God. Anyone, therefore, who as a Christian becomes once more a child of disobedience through sin, upon whom comes the wrath of God (Eph 5.5 *sqq*.) – anyone who gives way again to the lusts of the flesh when, incorporated into the Body of Christ, he could and should instead be spiritual (Gal 5.13-21) – whoever is dead and worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim 5.6-8) – such

[3] The bibliographical references given here and there in this essay do not claim to be exhaustive. Moreover, no attempt has been made in the notes to furnish scientific proofs for every proposition and every remark on the history of dogmas.

[4] Cf. e.g. 1st Vatican Council, sess. 3, cap. 3 (Denz 1794).

[5] Cf. on this: K. Rahner, *Die Kirche der Sünder* (Freiburg 1948), (also in *Stimmen der Zeit* CXL [1947] pp. 163-177).

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a person contradicts his membership of the Church and the nature of the Church, which is the sanctified communion of the members of God's household, the communion of Saints (Eph 2.19; 5.26 *sq*.; 1 Cor 12.13). The early Church knew this not only in some theoretical way, but she also really lived this in her day to day existence. One cannot understand the whole ancient penitential discipline of the Church properly, if one does not keep this ecclesiological aspect of sin constantly and vividly before one's eye, as did the early Church.[6] The fact that the early Church – as we will see more explicitly in the next section – took public action against the sinner (and this in principle even when his sin was occult), is based on the consciousness that the sinner has transgressed even against the Church. The early Church, in her penitential discipline, is not only the representative of God who helps the sinner to get rid of his guilt against God – as we are 'forgetfully' inclined to think nowadays – but she is also the representative of God who reacts against the injustice which has been done to her – although she reacts, of course, with a strictness which is the manifestation of the curative mercy of God.

It cannot be maintained that this idea is valid only in the case of those sins which 'exclude from the kingdom of God'[7] – in other [139] words, only in the case of (objectively and subjectively) grave sins. Certainly, *these* are the sins for which the sacrament of Penance exists principally. Mortal and venial sin are not only different in degree – they differ essentially, so that they are only 'analogously' covered by the one notion. But just as venial sin – although in an essentially different qualitative manner – represents an offence against the will of God analogously to mortal sin, so it is also in the same analogous measure an opposition to the Church. Since venial sins form an obstacle to the actualization of God's love in man, they simply diminish, by that very fact alone, the depth and power of God's love which should be found in a holier Church – quite apart from all the tangible social damage done to the Church by the majority of venial sins. They contribute to a lowering of 'standards' in the Church. Superficiality, tepidity, great or small egoism, obstinacy, want of prayer and penance – such and other 'venial' sins are, therefore, an offence against the Church, and this not only in those cases where we can perceive this diminution of the life and salvific power of the Church through such 'venial' sins (because, for example, they offend directly against certain official ecclesiastical duties).

Would it not be well if, when receiving the sacrament of Penance, we took to heart – somewhat less forgetfully – the truth that we have also sinned against the Church, that we are coming to the *very* grace of the Church against which we have offended and that she, too, has something to forgive us? It has been said that the man of today is almost incapable of the thought of being happy or of reaching heaven without bearing his neighbour and his fate along with him – that he does not wish for any happiness if it does not also include that of others. If this is so, then it ought to lie heavily on our soul that we have been guilty of offences against our neighbour, even if only in our most secret thoughts, and that to some extent the field of our disloyalty and of our failure is spread over the whole Church (and beyond her). No one lives for himself alone. And so no one sins for himself alone. In the darkness of the world, in its stifling sinfulness, in the mental indolence of the Church of which we complain so often – as if we did not bear any responsibility for it – our own guilt looks us in the face. Anyone who understands this, will recognize that the most truly

[6] Cf. B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia Secunda* (Bonn 1940); *id*., *Busse und Letzte Ölung* (*Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte* IV, 3) (Freiburg 1951); K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie der Busse bei Tertullian: Abhandlungen über Theologie und Kirche', *Festschrift für Karl Adam* (Düsseldorf 1952), pp. 139-167; *id*., 'Die Busslehre des hl. Cyprian', ZKT XIV (1952), pp. 257-276; 381-483; *id*., 'La doctrine d'Origène sur la Pénitence', RSR XXXVII (1950), pp. 47-97, 252-286, 422-456; *id*., 'Busslehre und Busspraxis in der Didascalia Apostolorum', ZKT LXXII (1950), pp. 257-281.

[7] Cf. 1 Cor 5.6-13; 6.9-10; Gal 5.19-21; Eph 5.5.

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Christian revolt against sin in the Church is – to accuse oneself of one's own guilt before the Church, in the face of which one has oneself been guilty by one's own sins, both great and small. Since the time when the [140] divine Logos himself became man and in his Holy Spirit permanently united himself with the congregation of the sanctified redeemed, the '*tibi soli peccavi*' of the psalm 'Miserere' no longer has the sound of lonely individualism. It does not express the thought that my relationship to God, both in good and evil, concerns myself and God alone, and no one else. This does concern me and God. But therefore it concerns everybody. 'I confess to God...to all the Saints and to you brethren, that I have sinned.' We could not and would not need to confess to the brethren if we had not sinned against them also, by every sin we have to acknowledge.

2. 'Binding'

It is a well known fact that the early Church appealed more to Mt 16.18 and 18.18 than to Jn 20 for the scriptural proof of her sacramental power to forgive sins.[8] The reasons for this fact (which may al first seem strange to us today[9]) need not be examined here. The said fact alone already shows us that remission of guilt by the Church in the sacrament of Penance – to formulate it quite cautiously and vaguely to begin with – has something to do with 'binding and loosing'. If we now go on to ask what exactly this means, and especially what is meant by this 'binding', then we discover once more that this also is a 'forgotten' truth in the theology of the sacrament of Penance. For if we inquire into the ordinary interpretation of these words current in scholastic theology today, we do not receive a really satisfactory answer. 'Binding' (and the corresponding 'retaining' in Jn 20), in so far as it regards the administration of the sacrament of Penance, means, we are told, the 'refusal of absolution' to someone who by a self-accusation has surrendered himself as a sinner to penitential tribunal of the Church.[10] Theology, in opposition to the [141] theology of the Reformers, tries to prove the *judicial* nature of the Church's power of forgiveness over the baptized sinner precisely by the *dual* power of binding *or* loosing. And so a great deal of formal juridical acumen is often summoned up in order to show that such a refusal of absolution – as opposed, e.g. to the refusal of baptism to a sinner or unbeliever – represents a truly positive judicial act which creates a new legal situation. Thus, for instance, the sinner is obliged in such a case to deliver himself up once more to the penitential tribunal of the Church, and the state of sin which had to some extent become liable to forgiveness through the accusation, has been re-confirmed through the refusal of absolution, etc.

We need not here go into the *internal* difficulties of this explanation of the meaning of the term 'binding'. All these difficulties arise ultimately from the same fact, viz. that, objectively speaking, a refusal of absolution, no matter how cleverly it may be explained, cannot be any more than the (in certain circumstances) obligatory omission and refusal of an act – no more than this can be said of a refusal of baptism (which does not involve any judicial decision on the part of the Church). Such a refusal cannot be an independent act with its own, new legal

[8] Cf. e.g. H. Bruders, 'Mt 16.19; 18:18 und Joh 20,22.23 in frühchristlicher Auslegung', ZKT XXXIV (1910), pp. 659-677; XXXV (1911), pp.79-111; 292-346; 466-481; 690-713. Also instructive in this respect would be a look into P. Anciaux, *La théologie du Sacrament de Pénitence au XII^e siècle* (Louvain 1949); cf. the Index of this work, p. 619.

[9] The Council of Trent, sess. 14, cap. 1; can. 3 (Denz 894; 913), refers only to Jn 20.22 *sq*., although with the restriction that our Lord instituted the sacrament '*praecipue*' on the occasion referred to by Jn 20. Recourse to other texts is therefore not forbidden.

[10] Cf. e.g. J. B. Umberg, 'Die richterliche Bussgewalt nach Joh 20,23', ZKT L (1926), pp. 337-370; P. Galtier, *De Paenitentia tractatus dogmatico-historicus* (new edition, Rome 1950), nos 125-141.

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consequences, which is, after all, precisely what the above explanation must presuppose. Much more decisive is the fact[11] that 'binding', in the language of the New Testament and in the view of the early Church, means something different (which also makes the 'retaining' in Jn 20 fully understandable, if this is taken in the same sense); its meaning there is 'to put under the ban'. It is important to stress from the outset that we must not be too hasty in making a mental connection between this meaning and the modern canonical concept of 'excommunication'. The latter is a proper ecclesiastical [142] penalty which is imposed in a fixed manner for certain crimes committed within the Church. In order to understand what is meant by this 'binding' banishment in the New Testament and in the early Church, we must remember what we have already said about the ecclesiological aspect of (grave) guilt. A baptized person in mortal sin still belongs to the Church, he is still 'inside'. But this very fact of his continuing to belong to the Church is robbed of its real meaning by his guilt. It should be a permanent, quasi-sacramental visible sign of his possession of the Spirit.[12] His belonging to the Church in the visible dimension of the Church (i.e. in the sphere of the historically and juridically tangible, of the tangibility of the profession of faith, etc.), becomes a lie in the case of the sinner. It becomes in a sense a 'merely valid' but not 'efficacious' continuous reception of the Proto-sacrament which the belonging to the Church represents. The first thing, therefore, the Church must do (precisely in order to save the sinner), consists in exposing this guilty and mendacious state of the sinner even in the external visible sphere. In short, the Church must first of all unmask the outward appearances – i.e. she banishes or 'binds' the sinner. She establishes the true facts even in the historical tangible sphere: you are precisely as a member of the Church not at all the person you appear to be by your visible membership; you have the appearance of being alive (simply because you belong to the communion of the living in the Body of Christ which is filled with the life-giving Spirit), but in reality you are dead. The Church, in judging, distinguishes and separates in accordance with the twofold meaning of the word κρι/νειν (κρι/σιφ).[13]

It follows from this also that 'binding' and 'loosing' are not two sides of an alternative, but two phases of the one reaction whereby the Holy Church answers the sin of one of her members. At least this is so in the intention of the Church. When she binds, she binds in order to be able to loose. Only once the truth, which is covered up by the outward appearances[14] of the belonging to the Church, has been [143] brought to light on the visible plane of the Church, can the guilt towards the Church and God be lifted or 'loosed' again on the same plane, i.e. on the sacramental plane. Nothing is altered in this regard even in a case where the obduracy and impenitence of the sinner make it impossible to proceed beyond the 'binding' stage. The second stage of the one process (i.e. the loosing) depends on the repentance of the sinner. But the binding already aims at the loosing, and the latter presupposes the former.

[11] Cf. K. Adam, 'Zum ausserkanonischen und kanonischen Sprachgebrauch von Binden und Lösen', TQ XCVI (1914), pp. 49-64; 161-197 (also in: K. Adam, *Gesammelte Aufsätze* [Augsburg 1936], pp. 17-52); Strack-Billerbeck I, pp. 738-747; 792 *sq*.; IV, I pp. 293-333; Kittel, *Theol. Wörterbuch* II, pp. 59 *sq*.; III, pp. 749-753; V. Brander, '"Binden und Lösen" in der altsyrischen Kirche', *Der Katholik* XCV, I (1916), pp. 220-232; 287-304; V. Brander, 'Ist Binden und Lösen bei Mt 16.19 und 18.18 ein rabbinischer Schulausdruck?', *Der Katholik* XCIV, 2 (1914) pp. 116-132; B. Poschmann, *De Paenitentia Secunda* (Bonn 1940), pp. 4-9. Also Paul F. Palmer, *Sources of Christian Theology* II: 'Sacraments and Forgiveness' (London 1960), p. 3 (on this particular point), and the whole work for the present chapter in general –Tr.

[12] Cf. e.g. O. Semmelroth, 'Die Kirche als "sichtbare Gestalt der unsichtbaren Gnade"', *Scholastik* XXVIII (1953), pp. 23-39; K. Rahner, 'Membership of the Church according to the teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi', see above pp. 1-88 (esp. pp. 69-88).

[13] Cf. e.g. 1 Cor 5.3 *sqq*.

[14] The sinner's belonging to the Church is not 'outward appearance' in the sense that he no longer belongs to her, but in the sense that his continuing state of belonging (both according to its true sense and its demonstrative character) gives a false appearance of something which should be there but no longer is there, viz. the sharing in the holy Spirit of the Church.

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This is the way in which the early Church always understood it.[15] She always stressed the fact that the Christian who is weighed down with grave guilt must be bound so that he might be effectively loosed. And she never regarded this binding, this segregation of the sinful Christian from the full enjoyment of her communion, as an additional penalty of merely external Church discipline, which could only be imposed in certain cases. On the contrary, she always regarded this binding as a reaction incumbent on the Church in the face of every sin (in principle) which 'excludes a person from the kingdom of God'. It is significant in this respect[16] to note the identical nature of the pauline catalogue of depravities, i.e. of sins which exclude from the kingdom of God (in other words, of mortal sins, in our terminology) and the pauline catalogue of those sins which the Church (congregation) must answer by expelling the sinner from its midst. Thus it remained also in the theology and discipline of the early Church. In our present context, we cannot give a more detailed consideration to the exact form taken by this 'ban' – the connatural reaction of the Church to the grave sin of her member – in the actual practice of the early Church's penitential discipline; and it could, of course, take on a variety of forms there. One thing is clear everywhere and this is the theologically deciding factor; the sinner was at least excluded from the precinct of the Church's innermost life. He was excluded from her central *mysterium*, the source of all salvation – from the Lord's Supper and Sacrifice. Of course, he was excluded because [144] he had excluded himself from it by his guilt. But precisely this culpable self-separation from the precinct of the Church's innermost life which takes place in the depths of conscience, is given its tangible character and bodily reality on the plane of the visible Church[17] by the 'binding' of the sinner on the part of the Church. The plane of the visible Church does not necessarily mean the '*forum externum*', in the sense in which this term is used in modern Canon Law. For, in itself, it is here a question simply of the visible plane on which are found also, for instance, the sacraments.

Now, it might be said that this interpretation of the 'binding' as an inner and necessary moment in the sacramental process of forgiveness (as the so-called 'public' 'excommunication'-penance in the early Church), must be false or, at the most, can have a merely historical, antiquarian interest for us. For, firstly, this expulsive binding is sure1y no longer to be found in the present-day administration of the sacrament of Penance; and, secondly, this whole 'construction' surely cannot be applied to the 'Confession of devotion', and yet the latter is nevertheless a dispensation of a sacrament. The examination of these objections will show us that we have uncovered a forgotten truth in this question of 'binding', which is still significant for us today and which will enable us later on to see the Church's propitiatory 'loosing' also under a 'forgotten' aspect.

The first objection states that this 'binding', such as it has been explained and defined to the exclusion of the proper ecclesiastical penalty of excommunication as found in present-day

[15] Cf. among others the literature cited above, p. 138, note 6.

[16] Cf. on the one hand 1 Cor. 5.1-8; 5.11; 2 Ths 3.6; 2 Tim 3.2-5; 1 Tim 1.19 *sq*.; Ac 8.20 *sqq*.; Ap 2.2; 2.14 *sq*.; 2.20 *sq*. (lists or cases of a 'ban', 'avoidance' etc.), and on the other hand Gal 5.19-21; Eph 5.5; 1 Cor 6.9 *sq*.; Col 3.5-8 (lists of sins which exclude from the eschatological kingdom of God).

[17] N.B.: This lies on the same plane as the 'loosing' and 'forgiving' in every possible or thinkable interpretation of the 'binding' (on earth) or of the 'retaining'. Now in every Catholic exegesis and dogmatic theology, this 'loosing' or 'remitting' is, however, a sacramental process and therefore one which essentially has a historical tangibility in the visible Church as such. In other words, it is a process which is enacted in a '*forum*', even though this '*forum*' must be called 'internum seu conscientiae sacramentale' (CIC can. 196, 1047, 2314 § 2) compared with the external dimension of the Church in which those processes are enacted which affect the Church as a merely external society and her 'bonum commune' as such. Events which take place in the sacramental forum effect directly happenings in the 'sphere of conscience' (as simply all sacraments do). They do not, however, take place only in the 'private' sphere of internal conscience, but in the visible Church. The same must, therefore, be said in any case also of the 'binding'.

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Canon Law, no longer exists today. In order to see the falsehood of this statement, we [145] will first of all make a little thought-experiment before we start talking more 'theologically'. Let us think of a very zealous little Christian parish of today, in which everybody knows everybody else even as ordinary 'citizens'. Let us suppose that *all* the members of this congregation meet together on Sundays for the celebration of the Eucharist and that, under the necessary presuppositions, they all receive during it the Body of the Lord as a matter of course. Let us suppose furthermore (without wishing, of course, to recommend such a practice) that these zealous Christians have – as in the early Church – the seemingly strange custom for us of merely submitting those sins committed by them to the sacramental tribunal of Penance which are objectively *and* subjectively grave, but that they do nevertheless go to Confession in the manner to which we are nowadays accustomed, viz. by queuing up before the Confessional on Saturday afternoons. All these hypotheses are conceivable even today, even without making the slightest alteration in the present Canon Law. The people of this parish need only act in this way. No one could oblige them to act in a contrary manner – one could at the most encourage them to do so. What form would the life of this parish take under these presuppositions? With only slight modifications in the theological or practical sense and without any new canonical measures being taken, there would immediately and visibly appear again in such a parish what could be called 'the public ecclesiastical penance' or 'excommunication-penance'. If someone in such a community committed a mortal sin and consequently does not (as he must not) receive Holy Communion on the Sunday, or (as he is equally obliged to do) queues up before the Confessional on the Saturday, then he would publicly confess himself to be in mortal sin[18] and he would be in the '*ordo* [146] *paenitentium*' even in the public sphere of the Church (even although the exact nature of his mortal sin would be known only to the Confessor through his Confession, as was also the case, by the way, in the early Church). It would not make any real difference whether such a sinner has his assigned place at the very back of the church on Sunday, as was the case in the early Church, or whether he inevitably attracts attention by remaining alone in his usual place (as would be the case in our little congregation); he would in either case inevitably avow himself 'publicly' to be a sinner. And the parish priest of this congregation could also preach just as publicly about the 'queue' which stands outside his Confessional on a Saturday evening: '*abundant hic paenitentes*; *quando illis imponitur manus*, *fit ordo longissimus*'; (innumerable are the penitents among us; there is a long queue at the time when the hand is imposed on them. Sermo CCXXXII, 7). With St Augustine, he could say of these penitents: '*proprie vocantur paenitentes remoti etiam a sacramento altaris participando*, *nec accipiendo indigne iudicium sibi manducent et bibant*' (penitents in the proper sense are also excluded from participation in the Sacrament of the Altar, so that they may not eat and drink judgement to themselves by partaking unworthily of it. Sermo CCCLII, 3.8). He, too, could preach with St Augustine: '*illi enim*, *quos vidistis agere paenitentiam* (i.e. 'who stand outside the Confessional '), *scelera commiserunt*, *aut adulteria aut aliqua facta immania*; *inde agunt*

[18] It will not be very easy to prove that the Church, in the said hypotheses, has the strict duty to modify the external apparatus of the sacrament of Penance in such a way as to prevent anyone, even in these circumstances, betraying himself in practice to be in mortal sin. At any rate, the Fathers of the Church demanded a public ecclesiastical penance even for occult (mortal) sins (cf. e.g. B. Kurtscheid, *Das Beichtsiegel* [Freiburg 1912], pp. 16-23; Offentliche Busse für geheime Sünden). Although this naturally did not signify a public *Confession* of guilt in the proper sense, the sinner did nevertheless inevitably reveal, in the then absence of a Confession of devotion and on account of the public nature of penance, that he had been guilty of grave sin. By such considerations it also becomes clear, incidentally, what pastoral difficulties would necessarily arise if the tendency of those who oppose the practice of the 'Confession of devotion' (or wish to push it into the background as far as possible) were to succeed. If these tendencies were once to prevail, it would in practice be impossible to get those who have committed mortal sins to go to Confession except on their death-bed (just; as at the time of Caesarius of Arles and during the succeeding centuries).

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paenitentiam. *Nam si levia peccata ipsorum essent*, *ad haec quotidiana oratio delenda sufficeret*' (those whom you see doing penance, have committed crimes, either adultery or some other terrible crime; this is why they are now doing penance. If they had only venial sins, daily prayer would be sufficient to blot these out. *De Symbolo* VII, is). It can also not be said that in our case the 'public nature' of this penance is only a factual one, without being constituted by a proper act of the Church. For these people are also excluded from the sacramental centre of the visible supernatural life of the Church by an act of the Church herself. Their sin forces them (under our presuppositions) to do 'public penance', because they are also excluded [147] from the Eucharist by a legal enactment of the Church, which falls upon everyone in mortal sin (and yet is not an excommunication in the modern sense of the word)-and because a commandment of the Church obliges them to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year, to which those who have not committed mortal sins are not obliged. Nothing is fundamentally changed in this by the fact that this ecclesiastical act is not nowadays enacted for every individual in particular and as such (as was the practice in the early Church) nothing is basically changed, in other words, by the fact that this act is nowadays to some extent '*latae sententiae*' and not '*ferendae sententiae*'. Even today, the Church still 'binds' everyone in mortal sin, just as she did before, by isolating such a sinner even by her own legal enactment from the circle of those members of the Church who enjoy free access to her highest *mysterium*. And this activity of 'binding', which isolates, could at any time and by purely factual changes assume again the tangible and distinct character which we find in connection with the act of 'binding' in the early Church and which we (unlike the early Church) qualify nowadays as the 'public nature' of penance.[19] The act of 'binding', considered as the first stage of the Church's reaction to the mortal sin of the Christian, is, therefore, to be found today just as in the early Church. It is merely covered up, and hence 'forgotten' by us today, because it does not attract attention. But it does not attract attention because in fact many of those who would have the right, unfortunately do not receive the Eucharist; and many, fortunately, go to Confession who are not obliged to do so.

This whole matter can be expressed somewhat more briefly and in a somewhat more theological form in the following terms. The Church 'binds' the Christian who has sinned gravely. This is still true in so far as the Church excludes such a Christian by her own act (CIC can. 856) from the Eucharist, the greatest *mysterium* of the Church's life and the communion of Christians with each other in the Church (even although this is nowadays done in a somewhat abbreviated form, as was indeed the case already here and there in the early Church[20]). It is [148] true also in so far as the Church has laid down[21] (over and above the divine commandment) that such sinners are obliged to surrender themselves to the tribunal of Penance at least once a year. And this 'binding' of the Christian in mortal sin by the Church takes place in the dimension of the visible Church, which differs indeed from the '*forum externum*' but which nevertheless is really a sphere of the visible order, because it is precisely that dimension of the Church in which the sacraments are effected as 'visible' signs of grace.

[19] The early Church did not, after all, qualify ecclesiastical penance as 'public' in contrast to a 'private' *sacramental* penance, but in contrast to non-sacramental penance for venial sins (by prayer, fasting, almsgiving etc.).

[20] We would refer the reader, for instance, to the abolition, under Nestorius of Constantinople, of the office of priest-penitentiary, who had to deal in an inquisitorial fashion with those who had rendered themselves unworthy of partaking of the Holy Eucharist. By this abolition, the decision in each *concrete* case, as to whether one is in fact in a state of unworthiness, was left to the individual, and thus the Church contented herself with laying down the general principle (considered, however, as a principle laid down by herself and not merely announced by her). In so far as, for instance, St Augustine too expected that the secret sinner would present himself spontaneously before the Church and abstain voluntarily from the Eucharist, he too really presupposes such an exclusion from the Eucharist ' *latae sententiae*'.

[21] CIC can. 901,906.

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The fact that this visible (and hence 'public') process of 'binding' is not noticed in our present-day practice, is due to accidental circumstances which lie outside the nature of this matter. Because it does not attract notice, we are inclined to overlook and 'forget' this aspect of 'binding', yet this does not in any way mean that it no longer exists.

Would it not be better if we did not forget this 'binding'? The separation from God and his grace, and the binding by guilt before God himself is, of course, the last and greatest awfulness of sin. But this very separation is brought out of the hidden depths of conscience to the surface of man's existence through the 'binding' by the Church. Anyone who has met people (and there are such people) who suffer from this banishment from the innermost sacramental sphere of the Church, will be able to imagine what this 'binding' can mean in a person's religious life. St Paul saw it as a handing-over to the power of Satan.[22] And how could man not fear this banishment, when he cannot take refuge in the very precinct of the Church in which the incarnate Mercy itself is present as the power of life over sin, death and diabolical passions? How could a man 'bound' in this way not feel; abandoned and lonely in the fullest sense, when he is shut out from the *mysterium* in which is given the closest communion of men with one another? Because there is one bread, we who are many form one [149] Body; for the one bread is shared by all, says St Paul (1 Cor 10.17). How must these words affect someone who is excluded from partaking of this bread?

At this point it might be said – and with this we come to the second of the above mentioned difficulties – that the fact that there is no possibility of a 'binding' in the case of a 'Confession of devotion', which is nevertheless a sacramental forgiveness of sin, shows that the 'binding' does not after all belong to the essence of the Church's penitential procedure.[23] 'Binding', one might therefore object, is not a necessary first stage in the judicial and saving reaction of the Church to the sin of her member, or at least this aspect does not enter into a 'Confession of devotion'. This does, of course, represent a certain difficulty which must plainly be admitted. But it must be recognized, first of all, that this difficulty exists just as much in the usual explanation of 'binding' and 'loosing' ('retaining' and 'forgiving') mentioned at the beginning of this section. For this theory tries to prove the judicial character of the sacrament of Penance precisely by the alternative dual power of binding *or* loosing, with legal consequences in both cases. It must then be admitted, however, that even in this theory there can be no question of a true 'binding' in the strict sense with regard to merely venial sins. For the wiping out of venial sins is simply not dependent (not even by obligation) on the sacramental judicial intervention of the Church in the same sense as is true in the case of mortal sin. In addition, even in the usual theory, it is only by making superfluous and objectively most problematical assumptions that one can imagine a case in which someone confesses a venial sin in a mere 'Confession of devotion' which he has not already had forgiven [150] before he comes to the sacrament.[24] Venial sins cannot properly speaking be 'bound' or 'retained' in the strict sense, *no matter how* one may interpret these two words

[22] Cf. 1 Cor 5.5; 1 Tim 1.20.

[23] N.B. we do not say: 'to the proper essence of the *sacrament of Penance* as such'. The *sacramental* power in the strict sense is, in *every* view, merely *part* of a judicial (binding and loosing) power of the keys which Our Lord has given to the Church with regard to sinners. It is, therefore, justified and unobjectionable to distinguish between the nature of the (whole) penitential procedure and the nature of the particular phase of this procedure which must (and can alone) be designated in a more restricted sense as 'the sacrament'. For the 'binding' as such retains its meaning and significance even in the case of the sinner who remains impenitent, but it is not, of course, of a sacramental nature in this case at any rate. And this sacramental nature should not, therefore, be attributed to it either in the case when, in accordance with what is properly and originally meant by it (cf. 'ι3να' in 1 Cor 5.5), the binding' in fact 'resolves' itself into 'loosing'.

[24] As to the reason why the reception of the sacrament does nevertheless not become meaningless, this has been sufficiently discussed in two of my articles: 'Vom Sinn der heutigen Andachtsbeicht', *Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik* IX (1934), pp. 323-336, and 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', cf. above, pp. 109-133.

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expressive of the full authority of Christ, which are the scriptural foundation for the sacrament of Penance. It follows from this that the above mentioned difficulty is one which affects every theory, and not merely our own particular explanation of 'binding'. For *every* theory must recognize, on the one hand, that the sacrament of Penance is geared in its whole structure to the wiping out of mortal sin, and, on the other hand, every theory knows from the practice and teaching of the Church that in a secondary and derived sense it can nevertheless also be a sacramental means for the cleansing from venial sins.

Presupposing these preparatory reflections for a '*retorqueo*', we may say that venial sin, *analogously* to mortal sin (i.e. in a really similar way or with *merely* small differences), is also an offence against the holy Church and against the functions of membership to which a Christian is obliged in the Church. Venial sin does not, indeed, exclude the sinner from the inner life of the Church which is the 'vessel of the Spirit' (as Irenaeus would say), but does, however, hold him back from the full unhindered exercise of the life issuing from this inner vital principle of the Church. As St Thomas would say, venial sin does not exclude the virtue of *caritas*, but impedes the act and *fervor caritatis*[25] however, caritas must not be understood here as the merely subjective disposition, or merely as the individualistically conceived 'infused' virtuous habit, but as the divine love which pours forth continuously in our direction from the Church: Ecclesiae *caritas*, *quae per Spiritum Sanctum diffunditur in cordibus nostris* (the Church's love which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Augustine, *In Joan*. tract CXXI, 4). By venial sin man places a distance between himself and this fiery fervour of love which issues from the Church and from her divine principle, seeking to grip man ever more fully and jealously – to this fire he consciously opposes himself. This is first of all enacted in his own private sphere, perhaps even only in the hidden [151] depths of his conscience. And he himself *can* also terminate and repair this culpable resistance to the stirrings of the Spirit in these dimensions of his existence, viz. by 'private' penance, prayer and reception of the Eucharist which is after all the very sacrament of the 'fervor caritatis' according to St Thomas.[26] But the case which really concerns us here is when the sinner comes to the Church and deplores, and accuses himself of, his remissness and contrariety, and when the Church in her official representatives accepts this accusation and takes it seriously, confirming by seriously listening to this confession that this is not merely the expression of a sensitive soul, which is concerned with its private individual blamelessness, but a confession of guilt through which the Church herself must join in suffering and expiating. In such a case even the hidden separation of man from the fullness of life and vital energy of the Church, which is implied by venial sin, is in fact given a visible character in the sacramental forum of the Church. And this visible character is analogous to the visibleness which arises through the binding of a person in mortal sin (especially since even *such* a person does still remain a member of the Church). The confession of venial guilt, consisting in the declaration by the sinner and the acceptance by the Church, renders this guilt, and the separation from the Church caused by it, 'present' in the particular public sphere of the Church (no matter how discreetly this is nowadays constituted) which, distinct from the *forum externum*, is precisely the sphere in which the Spirit and Body of the Church permeate one another most intimately. The fact that the distance of the sinner from the Church's fullness of life becomes perceptible as a result of the Church's action and not merely by the action of the sinner, makes it quite legitimate to call this action of the Church a 'binding', analogous to the 'binding' by which the Church responds to the mortal sin of a Christian.

Again, anyone who reflects properly on this will not say that these are theological subtleties which cannot be of any importance for man's religious life in practice. There is no sin by

[25] *De malo q*. 7, a. 2; I.II q. 89, a. I.
[26] III. q. 79, a. 4 etc.

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which we do not also become guilty against our neighbour; this is only too obvious in the case of most sins, including venial sins. Take a priest who kneels in the Confessional and confesses his sins. Suppose he confesses 'merely' venial sins: his gruff manner, his formalistic performance of his [152] priestly functions, his lack of penance and deficiency in the spirit of prayer, his haughtiness and his egoism, his cowardice in carrying out his mission. How much has he not in reality fallen short, both visibly and imperceptibly, in his duty towards others – how much is he not guilty towards the children, the poor, towards those who look for the Church and cannot recognize it in him, towards all those whose soul God will demand of him on the day of judgement? When this priest now confesses his sins, his 'merely' venial sins, in this way, then this is not (or should not be) only the unavoidable presupposition for his getting rid of these sins. This Confession has its own weight (after all, he could cleanse himself of these sins even without this Confession); it says: Oh my God, I, the most reverend gentleman, Your anointed and ordained priest, the representative of holy Church – I am a poor sinner and no better than those before whom I am meant to walk as a good shepherd on the paths of salvation. How great a gulf there is between what I am and should be as a priest and what I am as a poor sinner! And how this disparity weighs heavily upon me! How am I to confess it, how destroy the false appearance and the lie which spread around the truth of my priesthood by my guilt! I cannot kneel down before my parishioners to beg them to forgive me my guilt towards them, so that God in heaven may forgive me. And, therefore, I confess at least to another priest, to my own brother – in the place of God and God's holy congregation whom I have offended – my fault, my grievous fault . . . Do not take me for an exalted saint but regard me rather as what I am through my guilt: a poor sinner. Through this Confession, by showing myself before the Church and thereby before all against whom I have sinned to be far from what I should be and seem to be, I can hope that God, by the love of his Spirit Whom he bestows, will also place me again where he has placed me by Ordination. By the fact that I show my fetters, he relieves me of them. This is merely an example. It could be made to apply to the case of the person in public life, of the father who has to watch over the salvation of his children's souls, of the mother who should be an example to her, family of what is meant by being a true Christian, of the poor and lonely who should draw grace for others out of their own bitterness, of those who live in a monastery which should be a radiant city set on a hill . . . All of these should try to gain an existential realization of their being bound before and by the Church, before they let themselves he loosed from their venial sins by and before the Church.

[153]

3. The 'Matter' of the Sacrament of Penance

Anyone who has at some time or other studied theology will recall (probably with feelings of weariness and disinterest) a 'scholastic controversy' about the question of what is the 'matter' of the sacrament of Penance. He will probably regard this controversy as an exceedingly empty wrangle about words, which is utterly unimportant in practice and for our spiritual life. He will probably regard it as a controversy which drags on in the textbooks simply because theologians have taken it into their heads to distinguish between matter and form even in the case of the sacrament of Penance, although (in his opinion) this distinction which is clearly understandable in the case of other sacraments (such as baptism), can be applied to the sacrament of Penance only by dint of artificial subtleties. And so one gets the impression that the Thomists will go on calling the 'acts of the penitent' the matter of the sacrament of Penance, the Scotists (who deny this) will go on regarding these acts as merely necessary conditions for this sacrament, and that in the last resort both opinions come to the same thing. And yet this whole matter is a bit different in reality. This question is important,

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and not only because the Reformers disputed the proper sacramentality of ecclesiastical Penance partly by maintaining precisely that there is no '*res*' in this case, i.e. no 'matter' (as there is in the case of baptism and of the Lord's Supper), but merely 'words' (*verba*). And, they maintained, since these words stand on their own, there is no question here of a sacrament, but rather of something belonging to the efficacious preaching of the Gospel of forgiveness. We prescind here from the significance of the scholastic controversy in this particular respect. Even apart from this, once we presuppose the thomistic view as well founded and as the now more common opinion in theology, we can discover a 'forgotten' truth in this question discussed in the schools, which is not without some significance for our religious life.

We will come closer to the proper meaning of this thomistic doctrine, if we try to discover how it originated. The application of the notions of 'matter' and 'form' to the sacraments as a whole was not made until the first decades of the thirteenth century, partially replacing the older notions of '*res*' (*elementum*) and '*verbum*'. Now, before the question as to what is the matter and form in the sacrament of Penance was first asked in the thirteenth century, there had already [154] been a question (in the twelfth century) as to what in general is the sacramental *sign* of this sacrament, in contradistinction to the effect as such. The almost universal answer[27] given to this question during the whole of the twelfth century was, however, that the external penitential acts of the penitent are the sacramental sign, and above all his confession or the imposed penance. It should be noted, in parenthesis, that if here and there,[28] the absolution given by the priest was already regarded as the sacramental sign, this opinion is only apparently identical with the Church's present-day teaching. For practically nowhere in the twelfth and thirteenth century (up to the time of St Thomas), did speculative theology regard Absolution as the sacramental process which *effects* the cleansing from guilt as such before God. Speculative theology attributed other, even though supernatural, effects to Absolution, and regarded the contrition of the penitent (caused in him by grace) as the sole cause, even in the sacrament, of the cleansing from guilt in the strict sense. But to return to the then prevalent explanation of the sacramental sign: we should not be surprised at this explanation. Both in the practice and in the theology of the early Middle Ages, the personal doing of penance by the sinner through contrition, confession and satisfaction (all done, indeed, before, and under the direction of, the Church) stood so much in the foreground of consciousness, that theology until the time of St Thomas saw the proper cause of forgiveness of guilt in this personal penance and in this love given by God. All that remained then to be attributed to the priestly absolution (the necessity of which was never disputed) were other effects, such as, for instance, the forgiveness of the *punishment* due to sin, etc. If it was asked from this point of view as to which is the sacramental sign of the sacrament of Penance, the answer could in consequence merely lie in – the acts of the penitent. And so, when, in the middle of the thirteenth century, theologians turned slowly and hesitatingly to the question of how they could distinguish between matter and form in the sacramental sign of the sacrament of Penance (because they were trying to apply this distinction to all the sacraments), the answers necessarily took on very different and undecided forms in view of the above situation, viz. the [155] general opinion that the acts of the penitent are the sign and that the Absolution has no causal effect on the cleansing from guilt as such. We do not need to enter here into the theory propounded by High Scholasticism before the middle of the thirteenth century on this question.

At this time (shortly before St Thomas and through St Thomas himself) the original and

[27] The materials for this will be found in B. Poschmann, *Die abendländische Kirchenbusse im frühen Mittelalter* (Breslau 1930); P. Anciaux, *La Théologie du Sacrement de Pénitence au XII*e *siècle* (Louvain 1949).
[28] Cf. Anciaux, pp. 146 *sq*., 376, 382.

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early tradition of the Church was successfully given a clear formulation in the new set of concepts. This was achieved first of all with regard to the sacramental causality towards guilt as such: Absolution by the Church exercises a sacramental causality on the cleansing from guilt as such. This is the decisive step forward which was taken by the theologians of this period (William of Auvergne, Hugh of St Cher, William of Meliton, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas)[29] in the clarification of the theology of Penance; we are not, however, concerned with this here. But this very step forward also made it clear that the Absolution, which cleanses from guilt, *is* therefore also necessarily the sacramental sign, or at least belongs to it as a necessary and constitutive moment. Now St Thomas, being the conservative and harmonizing genius which he is everywhere in his theology, could not and would not simply discard the theological thesis, traditional for one and a half centuries and still current in his day, according to which the acts of the penitent are the sacramental sign in the sacrament of Penance. The two notions of matter and form give him the possibility of working the traditional thesis and the newly won understanding into a harmonious synthesis. Thus, the acts of the penitent belong to the sacramental sign (this is where the older view is right); they are the matter, the one element in the sacramental sign which must be formed and further determined, and which signifies and calls forth the divine forgiveness. But the absolution given by the priest also belongs to this sacramental sign (this is where the new view is right); it is the form, the determining element in the totality of the sacramental sign which puts the final stamp on the acts of the penitent, and by which alone these acts are given their ultimate meaning. The (moral, not physical) union in meaning of the tangible penance done by man before the visible Church and the forgiving, [156] authoritative discharge given by the Church forms the unity of a sign, which signifies the divine forgiveness and which, by signifying it, effects it, i.e. allows it to become an actual happening.

Within this totality of the sign (and only thus), the priestly absolution (understood as 'form') is, for St Thomas, the decisive element as regards the causal *effect*[30]; the acts of the penitent, however, are the more important element as far as the sign-function as such is concerned.[31] These two elements of the one sign, in so far as they are ordained to one another by their very nature, can together also form the unity of the one signifying and effective sign.

It can be seen from this that St Thomas does not arrive at the theory, that the acts of the penitent are the matter of the sacramental sign, by the consideration that the judicial verdict of the Church requires a 'matter' (as has often been done since, in order to try to 'prove' his thesis [32]). Indeed, such a proof would merely show objectively that there must be an object for the Church's pronouncement of a sentence, to which it can refer, and so this would not go beyond the Scotist theory. St. Thomas' sole proof (which, it should be remembered, he does not at all work out fully and on which he does not at all reflect) is rather the usual scholastic doctrine which was held before his time, viz. that within the one totality of the ecclesiastical process of penance, the personal act of the penitent has an effective influence on the cleansing from guilt and is not merely an extrinsic *conditio sine qua non* for the latter, as it is in the case of baptism (according to St Thomas). One could even say that this teaching of St Thomas was inspired by his deep theological instinct which urges him to let the personal and sacramental moments in the process of justification permeate one another as intimately as possible. This instinct does not allow him to recognize two separate 'ways' of justification, but urges him to regard the personal and sacramental elements-both of them in and before the

[29] Cf. for the above mentioned theologians: Valens Heynck, 'Zur Busslehre des hl. Bonaventura', *Franziskanische Studien* XXXVI (1954) pp. 1-81; for St Thomas: III, q. 84, a. I corp., ad 1, ad 2, ad 3; a. 3; a. 4, ad 3; a. *7* corp.; q. 86, a. 6 corp.; q. 89, a. I, ad 2.
[30] III, q. 86, a. 6 corp.
[31] In IV Sent. dist. 22, q. 2, sol. 2.
[32] Cf. e.g. Chr. Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae* VII 4-5 (Freiburg 1920), no. 79.

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Church-as two sides or phases of the one process, which demand and condition each other.[33] The reason why he was able to carry this basic theological conception through, particularly in [157] the case of the sacrament of Penance (and more clearly there than in the case of other sacraments), lies, it is true, in the peculiar situation of the theology of Penance at his time, which moved the acts of the penitent to an even more central position in the sacrament of Penance than in the other sacraments.

It would be most superficial to attempt to see in this thomistic theory merely a clever verbal harmonization of objectively quite different points of view, and to admit in this way that Scotus[34] was right after all. Scotus, taking his departure precisely from this newly won position of St Thomas, transposed the sacramentality of the whole process of Penance exclusively into the priestly absolution, because this is ordained authoritatively and effectively to the cleansing from guilt itself, which St Thomas had been the first to make theologians see. With St Thomas it is a question (it seems to us), not merely of including in his theory an opinion of the schools which has existed before him, but of conceptually working into that theory a *genuine* tradition from the time of the Fathers. We can give only a very brief indication here of the proof of this statement, without going into the various pieces of evidence. The Fathers see first of all an essential difference between baptism and ecclesiastical Penance.[35] Baptism is forgiveness by free favour, a new creation, simply remission, sheer direct action of the Blood of Christ. Penance (even as a sacrament) is laborious atonement, baptism in one's own tears, not rebirth of a sudden kind, but a slow bitter cure by one's own efforts (even though these must be supported by the grace of God). And the Fathers refer this difference not merely to the cleansing from the temporal *punishment* due to sins but to the remission of guilt itself.[36] They see this difference not merely in the relation of baptism to the cleansing from sin after baptism which takes place extra-sacramentally, but in the [158] relation of baptism to the cleansing from sin which constitutes the penitential process regulated by the Church terminating in the reconciliation with and by the Church. If personal penance were only an extrinsic *conditio sine qua non* even in the sacrament of Penance,[37] then this difference between the two sacraments as such could not be maintained, or at least could be maintained only with regard to the temporal *punishment* due to sins. In view of this difference between the two sacraments, it is also not possible to hold that subjective penance has an effect on the cleansing from sin precisely in so far as these acts are *meritorious*. It is true that they are meritorious. But that is true also of the personal preparation for baptism (in so far as this normally includes faith, contrition and love), and so this circumstance does not constitute a difference between the two sacraments. This difference can, therefore, lie only in the fact that in contrast to baptism, subjective penance, done before and in the Church, is itself an intrinsic co-constitutive element of the sacramental happening and hence of the positing of the sacramental sign.[38] However, the act

[33] Cf. on this: K. Rahner, 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', pp. 109-133 above; H. Schillebeeckx, O.P., *De Sakramenteele Heilseconomie* (Antwerp 1952).
[34] Cf. N. Krautwig, *Die Grundlagen der Busslehre des J. Duns Skotus* (Freiburg 1938), pp. 133 *sq*.
[35] Cf. e.g. B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda*, pp. 161, 239, 241 *sq*., 285, 287 *sq*., 400 *sq*., 409, 413, 427-435; B. Poschmann, 'Die kirchliche Vermittlung der Sündenvergebung nach Augustinus', ZKT XLV (1921), pp. 208- 228 etc. (esp. pp. 210-214); K. Rahner: RSR XXXVII (1950), pp. 52-69, 73-79, 96 *sq*.
[36] This (objectively correct) distinction which was as yet foreign to the Fathers, must not be arbitrarily introduced into their teaching to the effect that the sinner after baptism must get rid of his *sins* differently from the candidate for baptism.
[37] As it is in the case of baptism, which fact is emphasized also by the Fathers: cf. P. Galtier, *L'Eglise et la rémission des péchés* (Paris 1932), pp. 51 *sqq*.
[38] The *inner* reason for this difference is understandable: the baptized sinner is still a member of the Church. His actions in and before the Church are, therefore, an expression of the life of the Church (in contrast to the actions of the unbaptized), and can, therefore, more easily have the character of a sacramental (even though merely

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of the Church, her forgiveness, also belongs to this very happening, for it also is effectively ordained to the cleansing from sin. Hence both of these facts cannot be true at the same time unless the subjective and ecclesiastical [159] penance of the sinner and the Church's word of forgiveness combine (before there is any question of the effect) in one unified sign of the interior event of grace which is the remission of guilt, and constitute together the one sign of forgiveness. St Thomas is, therefore, absolutely right in calling the 'acts of the penitent' the *matter*, and the priestly absolution the *form* of the sacrament. He merely states in scholastic terms what had always been the conviction of the Fathers.

If we try to get a clearer idea of what is contained in this thomistic thesis, by approaching it in a somewhat less abstract and scholastic form, it will perhaps become clear why we think that there is a 'forgotten truth' hidden in it. We can do this even if someone were of the opinion that the theological proof for the thomistic thesis is not beyond all doubt. For we have the right, even under this presupposition, to entrust ourselves without fear to the authority of the 'Prince of the schools'.

To begin with: if the thomistic thesis is correct (and is really understood), then the penitent sinner co-posits the sacramental sign and hence is also a subordinate cause (of a sacramental-instrumental kind) of the sacramental grace. He is not only the passive recipient of this grace but is the one who, together with the priest, actively celebrates the sacred *mysterium* itself which is the sacramental cause of the grace which he receives. Matrimony, or, for instance, the priest's Communion in his own Sacrifice, provide us with similar cases. We may not on this account, it is true, call the penitent the 'minister' of the sacrament of Penance in the proper sense, for he does not give the absolution but only receives it, and his own penitential act does not presuppose any new authorization of an official kind in the proper sense. But it remains true to say that, in the thomistic theory, the penitent is an associate cause of the sacramental sign and hence of the sacramental grace, with the causality of an instrument and of a sign. By his confession and request for forgiveness, the penitent lends his interior penitential disposition a concrete form and a tangible character in the ecclesiastical sphere (i.e. in the public forum of the Church, no matter how discreetly a public form this may take) and in the presence of the Church – he incarnates that disposition, so to speak, historically. By doing so, he creates a reality in the dimension of the Church which, given the response and the transformation by the forgiving answer of the Church, becomes the sign of the effective presence of God's forgiving grace.

In a sacred process of mystery, he himself-the sinner, that is- provides God's pressing will of forgiveness in the Church with its matter in which this forgiveness becomes concrete and thus effective in this particular sinner. He who has ratified the black godlessness of the world by his guilt and has increased it in his own person, is permitted to prepare the means himself by which the invisible grace of God comes to shine out even in a concrete historical manner. The readiness of the sinner to accept God's grace (if it should come to him by free favour), which occurs and manifests itself within the sphere of the Church, becomes itself, under the response of the Church and with her forgiveness, the sacred sign *of the fact that* this grace really comes to pass here and now. His 'Come' is transformed into a 'Here I am'; man's cry

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partial) sign than the activity of an unbaptized person. This does not imply that an unbaptized person must every case be incapable of positing a sacramental sign (an unbaptized person can at least baptize, after all). Such exceptions are based on the historical and free nature of the divine institution of the sacraments; they do not prove that the sacraments are not intended by their nature to be posited by members of the Church and as deeds of the Church. Added to this, in our case, is the fact that the sins of the unbaptized are sins which do not incriminate the Church considered as the visible saving community. It is different in the case of the baptized. He does penance, therefore, as a member of the Church. His penance as *such* is, therefore, an expression of the life of the Church as such. The fact that *this* penance, in contrast to that of the candidate for baptism, is included in the sacramental sign-nature of the sacrament, has thereby its meaning (even though perhaps not its strict necessity) from the very nature of things.

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becomes itself part of God's answer. If the carrying out of the sacraments is 'liturgy' in the proper sense of the word, then the confessing sinner celebrates a part of the Church's liturgy and does not merely receive the effect of someone else's liturgical action. In him, too, the Church acts and executes her liturgy. A staggering liturgy this, the liturgy of the Church of sinners, the solemnly regulated appearance of the Church of sinners before the seat of grace of the Father Who holds the Cross of the Son; the liturgy of the prodigal son which consists in man's confessing himself before the holy God to be what he is of himself, namely a sinner; the sacrifice of praise by the lips which God himself must open, even if it is 'merely' a question of preventing them from denying one's own sinfulness as a result of being both proud and cowardly at the same time; the prize of grace in the confession of guilt. The early Church celebrated this terrible and healing liturgy of the Church of sinners most 'solemnly' (if we may say so) in her penitential discipline.[39] The 'celebrant' of this liturgy wore a special vestment for this, viz. the penitential robe; he fasted and wept; over and over again during the long period of penance he let the representative of Christ impose hands upon him, in prayer and in exorcism of the powers of darkness; the whole congregation celebrated with him, praying and interceding on his behalf. This liturgy took place in the presence of the whole saintly congregation; the distance from the pure bliss of the Altar, which was both punishment and healing, was clearly brought out. The priest (bishop) took [161] part in the prayer and fasting. He made his grace-giving word of forgiveness still more tangible and clear by his imposition of the hand (which was probably done ever since the time of the Apostles: I Tim 5.20-22).[40] Today this liturgy is quite sober – indeed, it is often mistaken for a primitive psycho-therapeutic consultation of hideous profanity; it is the liturgy of the Confessional. But perhaps this liturgy is in its kind most expressive for anyone who can see by faith, just because it is so sober: the liturgy of poor little sinners, of the mediocre and the weak, who are too poor and feeble to say and do more than what is absolutely necessary. Perhaps the liturgy thus expresses even better today what man is: a poor being which is just able to call for the mercy of God in a weak, almost dying whisper, and whose little lamentation is already enveloped by the loud, powerful utterance of mercy which fills all spaces: ego te absolvo. Christian Pesch is right when he says in-sober theological language: 'If someone denies that the *acts* of the *penitent* cause grace *ex opere operato*, then he is objectively on the side of Scotus, even if he says that these acts are the "matter" and "parts" of the sacrament of Penance.'[41] What we have just stated, therefore, gives a completely true interpretation of the meaning of the thomistic conception. No one will be able to dispute the fact that we usually forget this significance of the personal acts in the sacrament of Penance, even if the tradition of the thomistic conception is carried on in the textbooks.

Why and how can the 'penitential' deed of the sinner in the dimension of the Church be itself, even though only together with the priestly absolution, the sign of the effective presence of God's grace of forgiveness? First of all we must reflect on the fact that the penitent sinner is a Christian. The grace of Christ in the Church, therefore, does not flow towards him as towards someone who is 'outside' (as in the case of a candidate for baptism). He is himself already a member of the Church, his penitential activity (unlike that of someone to be baptized) is already based on the character of baptism and on the historical tangibility of his belonging to the Church. Hence whenever that activity takes place before the Church (as in this case) and wherever it is directed towards her sacramental action of grace, it takes place *as* act of the *member* of the Church in the sacramental public [162] forum of the Church, no matter how unobtrusively it may be done in the obscurity of the Confessional; it has,

[39] Cf. J. A. Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Innsbruck 1932).
[40] Cf. P. Galtier, *Aux origines du sacrement de pénitence* (Rome 1951).
[41] *Praelectiones dogmaticae* VII $^{4/5}$ (Freiburg 1920), no. 74.

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therefore, an ecclesiological explicitness; it is itself *ecclesiastical*. Since this activity is, however, necessarily supported and caused by the anticipatory and supernatural saving grace of God, and since it thus renders its own divine basis tangible in the historical here and now (which is done by any effect for its cause), the penitential activity of the Christian is also the sign of the anticipatory effectiveness of *divine* grace in the sinner. In, so far as this very grace is grace of the Church, since all grace is grace of the Body of Christ (i.e. from this Body and directed towards it), and in so far as it is given as a gift to this baptized sinner *qua* member of the Church (as her vital force), the personal penance of the baptized person is a manifestation of grace both as divine and as of the Church. Hence, the personal doing of penance by the baptized Christian is, in so far as he comes to the Church, already a sign and appearance of further divine and ecclesiastical grace in the dimension of the official, and sacramental public forum of the Church. This personal penance of the baptized is not yet simply by that fact and by itself alone an *ex opere operato effective* sign of the sacramental remission of guilt – for this it is required that the priestly absolution, the response of the Church, be joined up with it. But it is easily seen from what has been said, that the personal penance done by the baptized before the Church is in itself *suited* to cooperate in constituting this one effective sacramental sign of divine forgiveness and that it is also orientated *to* the Church's forgiveness together with which it is meant to constitute the one sacramental sign.

4. The Prayer of the Church

When the priest exercises his office of messenger of the effective word of reconciliation, he says the *Misereatur* . . . and the *Indulgentiam* . . . before he pronounces the *Ego te absolvo*. But how often does he not say these words thoughtlessly and hurriedly, if he does not omit them altogether because he must hurry as there are many waiting outside his Confessional and these little prayers really do not belong to the necessary '*forma sacramenti*'. The penitent, in his turn, will only too often wait eagerly until these prayers are past and he hears the longed for '*Ego te absolvo*' which he understands much better. In most cases he will not know or notice at all that what the priest whispers between the giving of the penance and the *Ego te absolvo* is [163] already familiar to him from the prayers at the foot of the altar at the beginning of Holy Mass. But even in the Mass he will seldom come to 'experience' that in such a request and intercessory prayer for liberation from guilt this freeing from guilt can become a real event; he is too much caught up in the constricting impression that such a thing happens simply in Confession and that such prayers are merely pious wishes which, if they are fulfilled, realize themselves, in the normal course of events (indeed, almost exclusively), in Confession. How many priests and faithful have the concrete experience – such as they have sometimes experienced in Confession – that even a truly genuine *Confiteor* . . . can be a grace-giving event of real forgiveness of sin on the part of God,[42] so that they begin the Sacrifice of the Mass as different persons from what they were when they gathered round the altar for the preparatory prayers?

[42] Even though, naturally, not of a sacramental kind. We may mention in passing that in a sober theological treatment one would have to be careful in maintaining that such a remission is 'surer' in the sacrament than outside it where it happens merely '*ex opere operantis*'. For, given the corresponding necessary personal disposition, then it is possible to have the certainty even outside the sacrament which can be attained in the sacrament, because the success even of the sacrament depends on this disposition. If one wished to insist on the fact that 'imperfect contrition' suffices in the sacrament, whereas perfect contrition' is required outside the sacrament, then it must be remembered that the 'difficulty' of 'perfect contrition' consists precisely in something which is also required for 'imperfect contrition', viz. in the honest renunciation of sin considered as an offence against God. If this, however, is truly present, it is hard to see what special and new difficulty should be presented by contrition out of *love* for God.

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What exactly is the meaning of these little wishes expressed before the absolution? They can no longer be called 'prayer', strictly speaking, since they do not address God at all but the penitent. They are a small relic of that part of the old penitential liturgy in which the Church made intercession for her member and prayed with him since she suffered with her member in his guilt. But what does this intercessory prayer of the old penitential liturgy mean? When we speak of the sacrament of Penance, our regard is more often than not strangely confined to seeing only the particular event which alone can be called 'sacrament' in the strict sense and, in fact, can be distinguished as a sacrament from other sacraments. And we moreover attach importance in this only to what is absolutely required-and sufficient-for the constitution of this sacrament. In this way we isolate the sacrament [164] from the totality of human and Church life, from the whole penance of man and the Church in which the sacrament is embedded and which leads to it and springs forth from it. We know all this, it is true, but we forget it. We need only ask ourselves some time what has all happened already in terms of supernatural events when a Christian stands outside the Confessional. Augustine[43] would say: he has already been raised by the word and grace of Christ from the tomb of sin like a Lazarus (not that he necessarily has already obtained the remission of guilt which is freely given to him by his being loosed by the Church); he has already begun to live, he needs 'only' now to be loosed by the Apostles from the fetters of sin. But the tomb *is* already open and the power of Christ, which is life, has already taken hold of him. Indeed, consider, in the light of the simplest principles of the Faith, what must already have happened before Confession and absolution! There has been a miracle of grace. For only in that way does a man come to that repentance without which the sacrament would be a sacrilege. There is no contrition of any significance for salvation unless God's gratuitous grace has already anticipated man *so that* he may be able to repent and actually does repent, since the capacity and the actual doing are God's grace. But this miracle of grace does not simply fall from heaven. It too has an incarnational nature: it is the miracle of the grace *of Christ*. It is conditioned by the historical event of Christ and of his Cross, by the preaching of the Word of God in the Church; it may depend on the example and word of another Christian which in the last analysis does also originate again in the grace of God; it is given as a gift to man, because and in so far as he is baptized and a member of the Church. Even before the *Ego te absolvo* there has already taken place a miracle of grace in the *Church*. And this miracle is also sustained by the intercessory prayer of the Church. We already find testimony of this intercessory prayer of the Church for sinners in the New Testament – it is so important there, that its refusal to certain sinners constitutes the gravest rebuff imaginable to a sinner by the Church: 1 Jn 5.16, and also in the Didache,[44] in Tertullian[45] and from then [165] onwards over and over again in the Fathers.[46] Christ prays in the Church for the penitent, and this prayer is gladly granted, says Tertullian. The Fathers of the Church emphasize over and over again that the sinner is freed from his burden by the 'prayer' of the Church and above all of her episcopal representatives – especially when, liturgically speaking, the intercessory prayer of the *whole* congregation in *direct* conjunction with the penitential process had receded into the background. And by this 'prayer' must not be understood here merely the 'absolution'; it

[43] E.g. *In Joan. tract.* XLIX, 24; XXII, 7 Sermo LXVII 1,2; Sermo CCXCV 3,2; Sermo CCCLII 3,8 (and not 38, as stated in the German text. *Tr.*). Cf. B. Poschmann: ZKT XLV (1921), pp. 214 *sqq*.
[44] *Didache* 8, 2.3; 14,1.
[45] *De paenit.* 10,5 *sq*. Cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie der Busse bei Tertullian' (cf. above, note 6, p. 138), pp. 152-154.
[46] Cf. e.g. St Augustine, sermo CCCXCII, 3 (*agite paenitentiam, qualis agitur in ecclesia, ut oret pro vobis ecclesia*); St Ambrose, *De paenit.* I. 15, 80; St Jerome, *Dial, contra Lucif.* V; Epist. LXXVII, 4 sq.; St Pacian, *Parenesis* X (*exoratricem Ecclesiam deprecari*); St Leo the Great, Epist. CVIII, 2 (Denz 146: . . . *supplicationibus sacerdotum* . . .); Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* VII, 16. Cf. also B. Poschmann, *Der Ablass im Licht der Bussgeschichte* (Bonn 1948), 10-13.

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really refers (also) to the intercession made by the Church for the sinner. Because the Church prays and does penance in her Saints and justified members, God anticipates the sinner with his grace and leads him to the conversion without which no absolution is of any avail and which itself leads to salvation, in a case of necessity, even without priestly absolution. (It is obvious, of course, that this intercession and penance of the Church springs itself again from nothing other than the grace of God and the power of the Cross. But this itself again does not rule out the fact that such a deed done by someone is significant for the salvation of others.) When the penitent Christian comes to the Church's sacrament, the Church does not only not start her work on him, but she even *has* already done her greater work on him. For his interior conversion is also already the work of the praying Church.

In earlier times the Church included this work more tangibly and in a more developed form in the sacramental liturgy of the remission of sins: the bishop imposed hands (and this quite frequently during the period of penance) with prayers and exorcisms, the congregation assisted in this prayer and there was a proper penitential liturgy joined to the Eucharistic Sacrifice.[47] In the early Middle Ages the priest and penitent knelt before the altar and said long prayers together; the priest had to fast before he administered the sacrament, etc.[48] [166] Today all that has diminished and has become much more unobtrusive: a short expression of the desire to forgive, addressed directly to the penitent. But it should remind us of what is still true and actual today when we come to the Church to beg for forgiveness: she has already borne our guilt together with us, suffering by it and helping to atone for it when we became hardened in this guilt; she already sought us in her prayers when we were still obstructing the reign of her Spirit in us; she had already met us with her love when we were still indifferent to it; we came to her because she has sought us out. And when she now completes the work of reconciliation in us by the authority of Christ, she can do this because she had already begun it a long time ago in her prayer.

5. Loosing on earth and in heaven

When we read in the Scriptures about the power given to the Apostles to 'loose' sins in such a way that they are loosed also in heaven, we think instinctively and as it were naturally of the power of according the sinner forgiveness of his sins, in the name of God and by commission of Christ Our Lord, in such a way that the annihilation of his guilt through God's grace of forgiveness becomes an event in him here and now in a sacramental process (similar to that of baptism), and all this precisely on account of these words addressed to the Apostles. To understand the Bible text in this way is absolutely correct' (especially with a view also to the commission given by Christ in Jn 20), and indeed we can recognize this immediately and historically as being the interpretation already given to the text by the early Church from the third century onwards. But if we think that we have thereby exhausted the meaning of these words, then a more careful exegesis, and the mind of the early Church, will show us that we have not done full justice to the content of this text and have overlooked part of it. Not the essential and decisive part, certainly. For all that matters ultimately is that God forgives us our trespasses and that precisely *this* [167] forgiveness is given a tangible sacramental form and an effective presence in our life by the word of the Church. And yet it is not as if the further content of truth and reality of these words regarding the earthly and heavenly loosing

[47] Cf. above all J. A. Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten* (Innsbruck 1932).
[48] Cf. e.g. apart from Jungmann, the different 'Ordines paenitentiae' in H. J. Schmitz, *Die Busskirche und die Bussdisziplin der Kircke* I (Mainz 1883), pp. 75 *sqq*., 87 *sqq*., 98 *sqq*., 239 *sqq*., 397 *sqq*., 471 *sqq*. These Ordines are still alive today – at least in writing – in the Pontificale Romanum, which still contain a solemn episcopal liturgy of penance for Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday.

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of sins could remain indifferent to us, simply because we have understood the decisive and most important thing properly and have let it become a reality in the Church in the sacrament of Penance.

We are already partially prepared to grasp what more there is in these words, by what we said above about the 'binding on earth'. For the meaning both of 'binding' and 'loosing' obviously becomes clearer by the antithetical nature of these terms. And what is even more important (and something which is not taken into consideration by the customary view about the meaning of 'binding' which we mentioned above) is that we can surmise from the very outset that the loosing by the Church to which Mt 16 and 18 refer, does not simply represent an alternative for binding but refers to the very binding undertaken by the Church – in other words, that the person to be loosed is loosed precisely from the ban imposed by the Church. This is the most obvious thought purely linguistically, simply because in this context there is no question whatsoever of any other restraint which could be loosed. If therefore, any kind of meaning can be gathered from the text in this particular direction, it must be preferred to other meanings. Now we saw that 'to bind on earth' means the showing forth, by the official authority of the Church, of the distance which has arisen in the public sacramental sphere and through man's fault, not only between God and the sinner but also between the Church and the sinful member of the Church. It is to be noted that this 'binding' contains a twofold element of 'distancing', viz. the one which arises through man's guilt itself and the one which is set up by the Church's act and by the Church herself. These two moments are to each other as nature is to connatural manifestation, or as a thing is to its constitutive expression. It therefore followed from this also that, in the case of grave sin, this expression (the 'binding') *must* in principle ensue on the part of the Church and before the Church, and that the Church's first reaction to the guilt of her members is always a 'binding'. The first element itself is again insolubly bound up with the guilt before God. Precisely because and in so far as this guilt is present, the person has (by that very fact) put himself at a distance also from holy Church, and so the Church must (in the case of grave sin) put [168] herself at a distance from the sinner by binding and banning him. She can, therefore, lift her ban (*Bindung*) only when she knows that the guilt is also forgiven before God 'in heaven' and that the sinner is also loosed in heaven. Now the words of our Lord state, however, that this very thing happens *by the fact that* the Church looses the sinner 'on earth', i.e. looses him from the ban imposed by her and (since this cannot have meaning or be possible in any other way) looses him also from the cause of this ban, i.e. from the ecclesiological side of his guilt. This means, therefore, that the remission of guilt in heaven is not simply and solely a presupposition for the loosing on earth but is also, moreover, its *effect*. It means, therefore, that if and because you loose something on earth, it will be loosed also in heaven – however much the effective loosing on earth naturally presupposed the repentant return of man to God, and however much the change in the relationship of man to God and to the Church which comes about through the loosing in heaven and on earth, represents basically only the two sides of the one unified process.

What meaning, and what increase of meaning, is given then to these texts beyond the meaning given to them by the usual, correct but inadequate interpretation? These texts now signify: when you have bound a sinner on account of his guilt in the face of God and against the holy Church ('on earth', i.e. in the visible sphere of holy Church) and when you then – on the sinner's repentant return – loose *these* bonds (his officially manifested distance from the Church) in the perceptible sphere of the Church by your sovereign act, forgiving him thereby his ecclesiological guilt, then he is also loosed *by* and *through* this from his state of guilt before God (from his 'bound state in heaven') and then he is also recognized once more 'in heaven' as a free member of the Congregation of Christ, animated by his Spirit, with all the rights and graces of such a member. The Church grants the sinner peace with God in granting

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him the gift of *her* peace and by once more according him her spiritual love in an authoritative manner.[49]

This is also how the Fathers understood this text. By receiving the -peace of the Church, we receive the Spirit of the Father, says Cyprian (Epist. LVII, 4). By the fact that they (the sinners) are restored to [169] peace with the Church, they receive the pledge of life (Epist. LV, 13). Peace with the Church remits sins, estrangement from the peace of the Church retains sins, says Augustine (*De bapt. contra Donat.* III, 18.23). Or St Augustine again in another place: 'The *Church's* love which is poured out into men's hearts by the Holy Spirit, remits the sins of those who participate in this love, and retains the sins of those who have no participation in it' (*In Joan.* tract. CXXI, 4). 'The City of God renders man guiltless by receiving him into herself' (*Contra Cresc.* II, 16).

Elsewhere too-however little the remission of guilt before God was overlooked, indeed as clearly as this final outcome was kept in view – the final result of the whole penitential process is characterized above all and before all else as 'peace with the Church', 'communion' (with the Church), 'reconciliation with the Altar', full 'return into the tower of the Church', 'reincorporation into the Church', etc. Even during the early Middle Ages, indeed until right into the thirteenth century,[50] there still persists the clear consciousness of the fact that absolution given by the priest is a 'being received into the Church as someone healed',[51] an introduction into the Church of Christ,[52] etc. This is true, even although it was perhaps no longer so clear in this connection that all this is not only *one* effect of the priest's absolution *among* others, but the first effect in the objective, ontological order *through* which the other effects – especially the remission of guilt before God – are attained. Indeed St Bonaventure still says that Confession was directly instituted so that man could be reconciled again with the Church and so that his reconciliation with (through) God might thus become manifest (In IV Sent. dist. 17, q. 3, a. 2, fund. 2). And St Thomas says that, by the sacrament, man must be reconciled not only with God but also with the Church (IV Sent. dist. 17, q. 3, a. 3, qc. 5, ad 3).[53] The decisive factor for this testimony of [170] the Fathers is, however, the practice of the early Church (and the Fathers' explanation of this practice). The 'public' penance is as such the sacrament of Penance; it is not merely a disciplinary measure taken by the Church and running concurrently with the sacrament, i.e. a 'censure' in the current canonical sense. This is why the Fathers (e.g. Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen) keep emphasizing the fact that the sinner must first of all be 'bound' (at least through the exclusion from the Eucharist) in order to be capable of being loosed. One cannot really explain why the whole process of sacramental remission of sins as such took the particular form it actually did take in the early Church, if one does not realize that the early Church clearly and consciously recognized an ecclesiological aspect in this sacramental process as such. We mean by this that she saw sin as an offence against the Church and looked on forgiveness also as a remission of the guilt of such an offence against the *Church*, as a reconciliation with the Church. And so, in accordance with the Scriptures, she regarded this very reconciliation with

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[49] Cf. 2 Cor 2. 5-11: the sinner is once more granted access to the agape of the Church in due form (cf. Kittel, *Theol. Wörterbuch* III, pp. 1098 *sq*.).

[50] Cf. e.g. Anciaux, *loc. cit.*, pp. 277, 290, 320, 321, 344, 350, 453, 496, 499,
503, 504, 516. A. Landgraf, 'Sünde und Trennung von der Kirche in der Frühscholastik', *Scholastik* V (1930), pp. 210-247. Cf. also V. Heynck, *loc. cit.*, pp. 14, 17, 34^{93}, 40, 45 (Lombard), 52^{160} (Hugh Ripelin of Strasbourg).

[51] Anciaux, p. 170^{1}.

[52] Richard of St Victor (PL 196, 1172).

[53] When St Thomas says about venial sin (in opposition to mortal sin) that '*nec indiget reconciliatione ad Ecclesiam*' (IV Sent. dist. 17, q.3, a.3, sol.3), the stress is on the *indiget*; it does not, therefore, need to be denied that when venial sins are confessed, the absolution has, as in the case of mortal sins (even according to St. Thomas), the character of an (analogous) reconciliation with the Church.

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the Church as the means to reconciliation with God. We must – one could say in the spirit of Cyprian – be reconciled again with our Mother the Church in order to be in a position to have God for our Father once more. Even though, given the present-day external structure of the sacrament of Penance, this aspect has receded more into the background in the case of a 'Confession of devotion', it is nevertheless still there even today. This needs no further proof after what has been said above about mortal sin considered as an exclusion from the Eucharist and even venial sin as an offence against the Church, and about Confession and its acceptance considered as the distance of the sinner from the Church becoming officially and publicly visible. But these truths should become less 'forgotten' truths.

The following would be a brief exposition in scholastic concepts of what has been said: The state of being reconciled again with the Church is the '*res et sacramentum*' of the sacrament of Penance. As is well known, we make a distinction with regard to the sacraments between the sacramental sign (*sacramentum*), the effect of grace which is the ultimate object of the sign-causality of the sacrament (*res* [171] *sacramenti*) and an intermediary reality between these two which has both the character of the sign with reference to the 'res sacramenti' and also the character of the effect in relation to the sacramental sign, and is, therefore, called the '*res et sacramentum*'. A more precise analysis of those sacraments in which such an intermediate factor between sign and effect is most clearly perceptible, shows that this factor always has an ecclesiological character. Thus: the character of baptism which means that a person is permanently directed to the Church as her member, the character of Holy Orders which is the appointed mandate of one's station in the Church-and the deeper incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ through communal reception of his Body in the Eucharist.

Now in the High Middle Ages, the 'internal disposition of penance' was designated the '*res et sacramentum*' of the sacrament of Penance in so far as it is the effect and not merely the presupposition of the sacrament; in modern theology, thinking in terms of purely formal, legal niceties, it is 'the right to the grace of the sacrament' which is held to be the '*res et sacramentum*' of this sacrament. For reasons which we cannot explain just now, these explanations do not satisfy. If one does not wish to abandon altogether (as is in part the case today) any attempt to find such an intermediate reality between sign and effect in this sacrament, the most meaningful answer, historically and objectively, is that in the sacrament of Penance the forgivingness of the Church towards the sinner is the '*res et sacramentum*'. This no more endangers the character of the *opus operatum* in the sacrament of Penance than is the case in the sacrament of baptism. In the latter case this intermediate reality is made to consist in the character of baptism considered as the first incorporation into the Church; the intermediate reality in this case is regarded as that real right which gives the recipient a claim to the actual reception of the grace of justification in baptism, as long as there is no obstacle placed in its way by the unbelief or the impenitence of the recipient of baptism. In so far as man, therefore, through the process of reconciliation with the Church (*sacramentum*: loosing on earth), enters once more into the state of being fully reconciled with the Church (res et sacramentum: *pax et communio cum Ecclesia*), he necessarily receives a (new or more profound) share in her Spirit which forgives guilt and justifies before God (*res sacramenti*: peace with God). This intermediate reality does not always require to be stressed in baptism (and is not, in fact, stressed [172] in the formula of baptism, and very rarely and slightly in the old Tradition [54]). Instead, the proceedings of baptism are directly connected in the explicit formulation with the final effect of baptism (baptism for forgiveness of sin, for the gift of the Holy Spirit), although there certainly is a character of baptism which constitutes that intermediate reality. Similarly, this intermediate reality does not always require to be stressed

[54] Much less than in the case of the sacrament of Penance, since reflection on the baptismal character, considered as the sign of belonging to the flock of Christ, only began with St Augustine.

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in the case of the sacrament of Penance (neither in the words of its form nor throughout its theological description), and yet it must not be denied objectively. The basic conception of the nature of the Church points in the same direction, when it is again emphasized more strongly today that the Church is the 'Proto-sacrament'. In fact, this old doctrine about the *pax cum Ecclesia* as '*res et sacramentum*', which is old in substance if not in its explicit formulation, gains more and more adherents in modern times.[55] It does not really matter so very much in the end about the formulation; what matters is the very essence of the facts. And these facts, it seems to us, are at any rate given in the forgotten truth: '*non . . . adhuc* Ecclesiae *reconciliatus est . . . nisi prius sacerdote absolvatur*' (unless the priest absolves him first, he is not yet reconciled with the Church), as St Thomas puts it.

If we stop there, this does not mean that we have even touched on all the 'forgotten' truths in the theology of the sacrament of Penance. There still remains a lot to be said. We will end by simply mentioning a few things at random.

Theologians speak about the penance imposed by the Church in the sacrament (i.e. the satisfaction) as belonging to the sacramental sign itself (even though not as an essentially necessary part, yet as an integral part), and thus as participating *ex opere operato* in the sacramental causality. Do we have too poor an opinion of ourselves and of other Christians if we maintain that such a doctrine is to be found only in books, but is not 'realized' in our religious life? I am afraid [173] that this question cannot be answered in the affirmative. One 'says one's penance' simply because this is part of the proceedings. Moreover, the penance is usually too insignificant to make us really and strongly conscious of the fact that we are doing penance. How could it then be recognized that the sacred *Liturgy* of the sacrament of Penance is not yet completed when we leave the Confessional? But this is after all what is meant when it is said that the sacramental satisfaction belongs still to the sacramental sign and indeed fuses, without ceasing itself to be sacramental, with the whole of one's life in so far as this is penance. For the penitent who has been absolved is told at the end that all his actions and sufferings are to avail him unto the forgiveness of sin.[56]

The fact that the sacrament of Penance is based on the baptized condition of the Christian, i.e. on his baptismal character, could be brought more explicitly into consciousness. Not merely in the formal juridical sense that only a baptized person can receive other sacraments. Rather, the baptized person activates, develops and carries through afresh in his life the conversion which was begun in baptism; he acts in the sacrament of Penance as a member of the Church, which he is by baptism; his sin has a peculiarity about it which does not belong to the sins committed by 'those who are outside'; he has a judgement passed on him which can be passed only on members of the Church (1 Cor 5.12 *sq*.). The negotiation of redemptive grace which takes place in the sacrament of Penance is a release of the (formal)

[55] Cf. B. Xiberta, *Clavis Ecclesiae* (Rome 1922); B. Poschmann, 'Die innere Struktur des Busssakraments', *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* I (1950), pp. 12-30; H. de Lubac, *Catholicism* (London 1958), pp. 37 *sq*.; M. de la Taille, *Mysterium Fidei* (Paris 1931), p. 581; M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV, I[4/5] (Munich 1951), pp. 527 *sqq*. (cf. also the article by M. Schmaus cited in note 1 on p. 135 above).

[56] A good number of theologians are indeed of the opinion that the prayerful wish expressed by the '*Passio Domini . . .*' is intended to urge the penitent to regard his whole life, in all its hardness, as a continuation and expansion of the penance imposed. *This* is the reason why according to this opinion the confessor (in the expectation that this stimulus will be followed up) gives only a mild penance, and why the 'penance of one's life' receives by this mutual intention also a *sacramental* efficacy of satisfaction. Cf. St Thomas, *Quodlibet* III, a. 28 (cf. also III, q. 84, a. 8 and a. 9); Pesch, *loc. cit*., no. 253; P. Galtier, *Dc Paenitentia* (Rome 1950), no. 511. This, at any rate, is – even from a historical point of view – the meaning and intention of this concluding wish, which is found in the penitential liturgy at least in spirit since the thirteenth century (in the *Poenitentiale Vallicellanum II* in F. G. H. Wasserschleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche* [Halle 1851], pp. 550-557) and which later on appears more and more often in that same liturgy (cf. Jungmann, *Bussriten*, pp. 199, 237, 262). It can also be concluded from St Thomas' *Quodlibet* III, a. 28 that this terminating formula was still quite new in his day and not quite universally used as yet.

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efficacy [174] of the baptismal character,[57] as was already seen clearly by St Augustine.[58]

We should above all consider and apply to the sacrament of Penance what St Thomas-in full accord with the old Tradition-says about the sacraments in general: viz. that they refer back in their signs to the mysteries of the life and death of Christ and point ahead to the end of the whole history of salvation. For it is true that there occurs in this sacrament, taken as a visible ritual *mysterium*, a dying to sin first of all in the mortification of the flesh, and hence (because happening by Christ's grace) a sacramental manifestation of the death of Christ, a submission of oneself to the judgement of God which on the Cross condemned sin in the flesh of the Son (Rom. 8.3). And this judgement points in advance to the judgement at the end of life and of time in which grace will triumph.[59]

[57] *Cf.* pp. 21-25 of the article by B. Poschmann cited in note 55 on p. 172 above; M. Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity* (St Louis and London 1947), pp. 576 *sqq*.; H. Oswald, *Die dogmatische Lehre von den Sakramenten* II[5] (Münster 1894), pp. II *sqq*., 310 *sqq*.
[58] Texts in Poschmann, *loc*. *cit*., p. 24.
[59] III q. 6o, a. 3. See the profound commentary on this by H. Schillebeeckx, *loc*. *cit*., pp. 143-183.

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[175]

5

REMARKS ON THE THEOLOGY OF INDULGENCES

We may sometimes get the impression nowadays that there are truths in the Church which, although they are not indeed disputed in their explicit ('*in thesi*') formulation, are being silenced to death by the fact that no one takes any notice of them any longer in the practice of their religious life.[1] They are to be found in the Catechism, but they are not inscribed 'in our hearts on tables of flesh'. Of course, we know that such a process, which threatens to kill some particular truth in the Church, cannot lead to the real death of this truth – at least not in the case of those truths which really belong to the deposit of Faith. But this does not dispense theology from reflecting on the reasons for any such 'shrinking' processes which it observes. These reasons are not always and exclusively to be found necessarily in the spirit of the age, bad faith, or heretical hardening of the heart against a truth of the Church. The reason may also lie in the fact that a changed age really finds it difficult to understand these truths 'in the form' in which they had been expressed up to this time. Theology is not trying very hard to make them understandable. And so the poor Christian, who is not a theologian and therefore cannot resist this process himself, often cannot do very much else but let such an uncomprehended truth rest in the files of the *fides implicita* where it lies buried. He has the feeling that no doubt there is a truth here and that there is no doubt something in it, but that he himself cannot 'do anything with it'; and so he feels he just has to let the matter rest there, especially since there are after all enough other things and truths in Christianity which are for the moment more 'real' to him. It is not, of course, as if such (uncomprehended) truths [176] are in danger of disappearing all at once and everywhere, and for everyone simultaneously. After all, contemporaries live only apparently in the same age, and a truth can still be very much alive and be put into practice in certain quarters when elsewhere it gives the impression of being almost dead; it can be coming to life again somewhere, while elsewhere people have not even noticed yet how dead it has been in their hearts. Regarding such truths, the following should also be taken into account: they often cannot in any way be enjoined as a necessary part of men's lives – not even in the case of a member of the Church and not even by the threat of an anathema on such a member. How could anything like this be done with reference to the certain doctrine of the profit and blessing of the Confession of devotion or of the private devotion to Our Lady or of the private Sacred Heart devotions? The Church can proclaim the truth of the profit to be gained by such things; she can hope that this proclamation will move her hearers to action, but she cannot enforce the 'realization' of such truths as it were by strictly binding regulations. And no doubt it is not absolutely certain that the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which is assured to the Church, always guarantees in the respectively desired measure that such exhortations to the realization of such truths will bear much fruit. In such cases, too, it will, therefore, sometimes be useful to reflect on the reason why so little success is granted to such efforts not merely to state certain truths in the children's catechism class or in a sermon (so that it has been said and the preacher can then speak of something else with a clear conscience), but also to make them really enter into the life of the Christian: whether it is not because the proclamation itself has not quite understood the truth in question in such a way that it can be easily 'assimilated' and 'realized'.

Is not, for instance, Christ's descent into 'hell' such a truth? Who has ever heard a sermon

[1] Cf. for this also K. Rahner, 'Der Gestaltwandel der Haeresie', *Wort und Wahrheit* IV (1949), pp. 881-891. Included also in K. Rahner, *Gefahren im heutigen Katholizismus* (Einsiedeln 1953[2]), pp. 63-80.

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on this since the time he heard it stated during the children's catechesis? Is this not strange in the case of one of the articles of the Apostles' Creed? It has recently been said that the doctrine of hell is beginning to be a truth which no longer has any existential meaning for Christians – even though they still hold it in a theoretical way. Is that not also true of indulgences and the doctrine of indulgences? There are indeed many indulgences actually in existence and it is not very long since the latest edition of the list of indulgences was published. In every treatment of dogmatic theology, and even in Canon Law, can be found what is necessary to know about [177] all this. But it is surely no false suspicion and no pessimism in the pedagogical and pastoral religious field to advance the conjecture that – at least in Central Europe – the interest expressed by the average Christian in indulgences and in gaining them has very much decreased compared with earlier, i.e. pre-reformation *and* post-tridentine, times. People still like to make pilgrimages to Rome or other sacred places during the Holy Year or on other similar occasions, and even for religious motives – and they do, perhaps, in the process gain also the corresponding indulgences – because this is simply part of these exercises. But it will be difficult to maintain nowadays that the promised plenary indulgence is the decisive motive for these pilgrimages of the Christian masses, and that the indulgence once gained is for them the most precious effect they carry home with them. Indeed, how could anyone think in this way when an indulgence, even a plenary one, can be gained 'more cheaply' and at any time by saying a little prayer after Holy Communion, for instance. It cannot, after all, be said that the plenary indulgence of a pilgrimage (in its present-day form!) is more certain than some other indulgence. Contrition for sin is equally difficult in both cases. And the prescribed works for the indulgence, the conditions on which it is granted, are, according to the common teaching of theologians, merely an 'extrinsic condition' laid down on the part of the Church and by her authority alone for the granting of an indulgence. Whether this condition be great or small, difficult or easy, does not alter anything as regards the certainty and amount of the indulgence gained. Why should one, therefore, gain it precisely by a pilgrimage to Rome? There are many good reasons for making such a pilgrimage. However, that the indulgence is one of them, is not so easily seen. Whatever may be the truth of all these considerations, it is perhaps possible already to see that the interest in indulgences, and in gaining them, has undoubtedly decreased. And perhaps some of the blame for this must be attributed to the obscurities in the doctrine of indulgences which were less noticeable to earlier ages, but which today – even if we do not reflect on this at all – act as psychological repressions for the religious realization of an indulgence. It is, however, not completely superfluous – even looking at this from a religious and not merely scientific point of view – to strive for the greater clarification of the theology of indulgences. We 'nay regret the falling-off of interest in indulgences or we may be inclined to accept it as a possible and, in itself, harmless change in the [178] history of piety (because not only are there such changes, but they are quite legitimate). But only a clear and deepened theology of indulgences will enable us to understand whether there is something to be regretted in this state of affairs or merely something to be observed and, if the former, how we can make indulgences become something vital again for men today. The latter undertaking will not be very easy. How are we to get to grips with a Christian who declares that he accepts the teaching of the Council of Trent that the Church has this power to grant indulgences and that to gain them is useful and salutary (*Denz* 989), but for the rest declares himself not to be very interested in them in his own religious practice? For he himself, he says, has the impression that his religious life in the present day and age, and in the unavoidable narrowness of his consciousness, has more important things to think about and to live for. This is so also because he has moreover the faint feeling – without being able or willing to state so clearly – that the complete wiping out of his sins with all their consequences can, in fact, be achieved more surely and honestly in other ways.

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We must, at any rate, welcome gratefully every attempt at gaining a better theological understanding of the nature and mode of operation of indulgences, especially any attempt which will do this in such a way that the man of today can more easily overcome the undeniable repressions he has developed with regard to this matter. For it is not immediately certain that the repressions are due merely to the nature of this matter.

A great deal of work would have to be done in this connection in the history of dogma and in dogmatic theology. In the field of the history of Dogma we do indeed possess the great and scholarly work of N. Paulus. But no matter how great the industry shown and how important the material results achieved in this work, it has nevertheless been written in the spirit and mentality of an age which wrote history in order to understand how it had evolved and not in order to understand what would still develop in the future. Applying this to theology, this means that the theological position which is the goal and norm of historical research, forms in the case of works of history of theology of this kind the reassured theological knowledge of the present which itself is not questioned and is regarded as complete and properly terminated without any inner dynamic. History, in such a perspective, naturally teaches also only what has been transmitted to us as theological [179] inheritance from the most recent past. And at the end of all this historical work, which has often been carried out with admirable industry and acumen, we know more about the history of the question, but not really more about the question itself. Because these historians had basically no new questions to pose, history also does not volunteer any new answers about such matters. Hence, even after having studied the weighty volumes of Paulus, we know no more about the nature of indulgences than what we could have gathered even before that from an ordinary textbook. And so it is also not in the least surprising that these manuals themselves simply refer to such historical works in a single line of the bibliography given in small print, and that otherwise everything remains as it was before.

And yet so much remains still to be done on this question. So much remains to be done in a theological way and not primarily in the manner of the history of dogmas. Or to be more precise, it must be done in the historical field of Dogma but by a dogmatic theologian who has the courage to pose questions and who does, in fact, pose them, quite unconcerned about whether he is also immediately capable of answering them adequately. A beginning to this work has undoubtedly been made by the not very bulky but important work[2] on which we wish to make a few comments in this chapter. If in this way our own contribution to the understanding of the doctrine of indulgences is only very small, this should be taken as an indication of the fact that we think this work should go on and must not come to a standstill simply because this subject is rather tricky and dogmatic theologians, too, do not like to skate on thin ice.

B. Poschmann, the well-known researcher into the ancient and early medieval history of penance, investigates in this work[3] the *nature* of [180] indulgences in the light of the history

[2] Bernhard Poschmann, *Der Ablass im Licht der Bussgeschichte* (Theophaneia IV; Bonn 1948, Hanstein). For the history of this question cf. also Paul F. Palmer, *Sources of Christian Theology* II: 'Sacraments and Forgiveness' (London 1960), pp. 321-368; 398-401. – Tr.

[3] The book has unfortunately, as far as I know, not met with the interest it deserved. So far Poschmann's theses on this question have not yet been very closely investigated. Karl Adam has given his assent to them (at least this is the impression one gets): *TQ* CXXIX (1949), pp. 242-245. H. Weisweiler declines, politely and gently, to accept them: *Scholastik* XX – XXIV (1949), pp. 591-594. The position he adopts shows indeed (even though we do not consider it as the correct position as far as its ultimate verdict is concerned) that – as we, too, shall emphasize – the question which Poschmann poses himself can surely not be answered conclusively from history alone. P. Galtier seems in the last analysis to agree with Poschmann (although he bases himself on somewhat different reasons), at least in what concerns the factual uncertainty of the effect of the indulgence grant on the individual. Cf. his discussion of Poschmann's work: 'Les indulgences origine et nature', *Gregorianum* XXXI (1950), pp. 258-274. Galtier does not at any rate, raise any conclusive objections against Poschmann from the

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of penance. His intention, therefore, is not in the last analysis a purely historico-dogmatic one, but a dogmatic one. He wishes to show, on the one hand, how the doctrine of indulgences evolves naturally out of the development of the Church's penitential practice, and, on the other hand, he wishes to clarify in this way the nature of indulgences by going beyond the position commonly adopted in theology today – an endeavour which in fact is seldom pursued and achieved in the field of the history of Catholic dogmas. In this endeavour, he traces the development of the practice and doctrine of indulgences up to the High Middle Ages – that is to say, until the last significant change in the theory of indulgences up till now. As P. himself says (in the Preface), he takes the materials for his historical expositions in this book from his own researches into the history of penance, from J. A. Jungmann's treatise on the Latin penitential rites and above all from Nikolaus Paulus' great work on indulgences and their history. Even as a mere summary of these researches, P.'s new work deserves our gratitude. But even in its historical aspect, this work is more than just a precise and concise summary of the conclusions of those other works. For he makes certain small critical corrections even in the work of N. Paulus (cf. e.g. p. 58, note 287; p. 85, note 401). The accent, too, even in the dogmatic point of view, is shifted quite significantly, in the sense that the meaning of the early medieval 'Absolutions' (both outside and in the sacrament of Penance), as seen in their significance for the development and the nature of indulgences, is brought out much more than had been the case in Paulus' work – in spite of the abundance of his material on this question.

It is not possible here to recapitulate P.'s survey of the origin and development of indulgences which is in itself already very concise. We [181] wish simply to give a few brief indications which are necessary for the understanding of the dogmatic conclusions of this book. P. first of all exposes those elements of the early Church's teaching on penance which are important for indulgences later on (pp. 1-14): the necessity of subjective penance for post-baptismal sins as a cleansing factor in respect of sin, without distinguishing in this between guilt and punishment; the support given to this subjective penance by the cooperation of the Church (congregation, martyrs, 'pneumatics', etc.) and above all by the intercessory prayer of the priest which is to be distinguished from the act proper of reconciliation (with the Church and thereby also with God) and which must not be conceived as absolution (in the modern sense) in a deprecative form (p. 11). P. then (pp. 15-36) treats in detail of the nature, forms and modes of operation of the early medieval 'absolutions' outside (this is the earlier element, beginning already with St Gregory the Great) and within (from the tenth century onwards) the sacraments of Penance. These 'absolutions' are (at first independently from the imposition of an ecclesiastical penance) the genuine continuation of the priestly intercessory prayer for the penitent; and, in spite of the continually recurring appeal in this to an apostolic authority and the power of the keys, these 'absolutions' must be conceived as an *intercessory* (though authoritative) prayer of the Church for full forgiveness (hence embracing also the *punishment* for sin) of the penitent's sins – and not as a jurisdictional and hence infallible act of absolution from the temporal punishment due to sin. This follows from the fact of their taking place (even earlier) outside the sacrament (especially also in the case of 'general absolutions'), from their style and their restrictive clauses, and from the early scholastic theories about the nature and extent of the priestly activity in the sacrament of Penance. P. then (pp. 36-43) describes the historical and theoretical presuppositions in penitential matters which lead to the origin of indulgences: the change of the penitential institution from public to private penance and the placing of the reconciliation before the fulfilment of the

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point of view of any binding doctrine of the Church. That is already a great deal. Especially since Galtier has frequently and resolutely contradicted the conceptions of Poschmann elsewhere in questions of the history of penance.

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ecclesiastical penance leads to the reflex differentiation between the guilt of sin and the punishment due to sin; thus subjective penance is now related more clearly to the payment of the debt of temporal *punishment* for sins, and the 'absolutions' are now appraised as helps of the Church for the payment of these same *punishments*, without there being as yet any question of a relaxation in the imposition of ecclesiastical penances as well. Then there follows [182] (pp. 43-62) an analysis of the first indulgences in the proper sense. They appear in the eleventh century in France, whereas the remissions of penances, granted to pilgrims to Rome since the ninth century, must (contrary to N. Paulus' view) be held to be still graciously-granted redemptions. The essence of the new indulgences consists in the fact that, on account of the hoped-for effect before God of the intercessory absolutions on the payment of temporal punishment due to sin, the penitent is made a gift also of part of the ecclesiastical penance imposed. Thus, in these indulgences in the proper sense, a jurisdictional element is now added to the previous 'absolution', in so far as the 'absolution' now regards also the ecclesiastical penance imposed and naturally has a legal character relative to this imposition. Side by side with these indulgences in the proper sense, simple 'absolutions' in the old sense continue to exist for a long time. The beginnings of indulgences, therefore, are found in a *practice* which develops without being conscious of being something new. The Church had all along claimed the right to accommodate the amount of ecclesiastical penance imposed to the concrete circumstances and capabilities of the penitent. This was already the case in the first centuries, and in the early Middle Ages this practice was merely extended by various commutations and redemptions. The Church claimed this right although the sinner himself had to pay the temporal punishment due to his sins before God, even although with assistance from the Church and her authoritative intercession. And so such an 'absolution' could be granted the penitent to help him with his own penitential efforts, in view of some good work which made him particularly worthy of this 'absolution'. It was then possible to remit a part of his ecclesiastical penance, because the ultimate purpose of the latter was thought to be achieved by the 'absolving' intercession of the Church. There follows then (pp. 63-99) an account of the judgement and theory of this practice of indulgences by the theologians of the early and High Middle Ages. Abelard completely rejects the then still new practice of indulgences (this is the first known declaration of theological attitude; Peter of Poitiers takes up essentially the same position, although in somewhat more moderate terms). Abelard was censured because he denied not merely that bishops were able to grant a *judicial* release from temporal *punishment* for sin before God, but also that they have the power of the keys in general (except in regard to ecclesiastical penances). From the end of the twelfth century onwards, the practice of indulgences [183] becomes gradually clarified and recognized in theology, but only after many vacillations and obscurities; for this the practice itself is used at first as the main argument for its justification, and its objective justification is found in the *communio suffragiorum*. With Huguccio (†1210), the notion of indulgences appears fairly clearly for the first time as a *jurisdictional* release from temporal punishment before God. But it still remains obscure for a long time why the *suffragia* of the Church are a sufficient substitute for the non-occurrence of the heavenly effect of the remitted ecclesiastical penance. And it is not clear for some time yet what is the role of the good work required for the gaining of the indulgence with regard to the effect: whether it is to be regarded as a redemption or merely as a condition for an effect which as such originates exclusively from the power of the keys. However, before the actual high scholastic period, it seems to have been the more general opinion that an indulgence does not have its transcendent effect on account of a direct power of absolution on the part of the Church, but only *per modum suffragii* (pp. 81 *sq*.). Through the explicitly developed doctrine of the 'Treasury of the Church' (already to be found in Hugh of St Cher, 1230), a new phase begins in the development of the doctrine of indulgences. It was possible to point out more clearly now the

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factor in which the remitted penance finds its substitute. And when it was then added that the Church has a legal claim to this 'Treasury of the Church', and one which can be applied in a jurisdictional manner, all the previous difficulties seemed to be solved. It was now possible to develop the doctrine of indulgences which is still familiar to us today: the remission of temporal punishment due to sin (for which, until this time, the Church had simply interceded, with the result that the ecclesiastical penance imposed was remitted) could now be seen as taking place by means of a jurisdictional act which disposes of this Treasury of the Church authoritatively (as does the owner with regard to his property) and hence with infallible effect (St Albert, St Bonaventure, St Thomas). Once this stage was reached, the reference of indulgences to the remission of an ecclesiastical penance imposed could become increasingly loose, until at least some theologians (like Billot) exclude this reference completely from the nature of indulgences. For the same reasons, the granting of indulgences (beginning with St Thomas) came to be more and more independent of the sacrament of Penance. It came to be something reserved to the Pope, because only the Pope (or someone else dependently on him) can [184] dispose of the Treasury of the Church in a legal manner: whereas before – since it had been essentially a question also (but not merely!) of the remission of an ecclesiastical penance – all those who imposed such penances (confessors or at least bishops) could grant indulgences by their own power. On the other hand, if the Church can dispose of the Treasury of the Church in a legal manner, it becomes again more difficult to solve the question why, and to what extent, a good work is required as a necessary condition for an indulgence – for basically this can be understood only in relation to the more primitive commutations and redemptions of penances, and not in the new theory.

As already stated, these merely suggestive and fragmentary references to the outline of this history of the practice and theory penance as given by P. are meant merely as a preparation for the understanding of the question which really matters to P. (pp. 99-122) and to us, viz. how are we to conceive the nature of indulgences theologically in the light of this history of indulgences? And this is what is really new in P.'s treatment. What conclusions does he come to concerning the nature of indulgences?

The Church has always known that in the Communion of Saints, in the Body of Christ, the individual Christian is assisted in getting rid of his sins by the whole Church on earth and in heaven, and she has translated this knowledge into action in many different ways. In the case of indulgences, what was new at first was the fact that the knowledge about the 'Treasury of the Church', when carried into intercessory action, gave rise to the conclusion that the sinner could be granted remission also of a part of the *ecclesiastical* penance by jurisdictional act. Thus an indulgence has an effect in heaven and an effect on earth. Everything is clear and comprehensible up to this point, and P. believes that even the pronouncements of the Church *magisterium* about indulgences do not contain anything more as of obligation. The theological interpretation of the doctrine of indulgences, however, goes beyond the bounds of what is true and what can be proved, when it now adds to this the notion that in the case of indulgences the *jurisdictional* act as such refers not only to the Church-imposed penance as such but also directly to the very punishment for sin in the next world. This means that in this interpretation a 'plenary' indulgence, for instance, results (simply on condition of repentance for the sins concerned) in the *full* remission of all temporal punishment due to these sins, and does so with the certitude due to the effect of a [185] jurisdictional act (as in the sacrament of Penance with regard to guilt). That this goes beyond what is true and what can be proved to be true, is clear on several grounds. Thus, indulgences (in so far as they refer to the arrest of punishment before God) grew out of the old 'absolutions'. The latter, however, were explicitly not intended to be an infallible means of a judicial remission of punishment, but were explicitly intended as an *intercessory* aid to the penance of the sinner, even though we may attribute a particularly powerful effect to this intercession, on account of the authority of

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the intercessor. The appeal to Mt 16 and 18, and to Jn 20, is not telling, because it proves too much (p. 101). For it would then be immediately and unconditionally possible to loose also from temporal punishment due to sin in the sacrament of Penance. And why go to the bother of proving the power to grant indulgences by reference to the Treasury of the Church, when the Church has from the very start been given a legal power over temporal punishment due to sin as well as over guilt itself? Guilt can be remitted by the Church for the simple reason that she has been given the power to do this by Christ (and this precisely in Mt 16, etc.), without having to look for any further explanation for this. In the usual theory of indulgences, the true doctrine of the 'Treasury of the Church' has been turned overmuch into the notion of a sort of 'exchequer', and has been given a legal connotation such as is possible only in the case of *material* goods (*nihil aliud* – says Billot, for instance, about indulgences – *quam solutio ex publico aerario pro debitis privatorum*). But once we see clearly that the reality of the Treasury of the Church simply means that God can gratuitously and freely grant a remission of temporal punishment in view of the Sacrifice of Christ, and the sanctity of the Saints supported by that Sacrifice, then the Church's right to dispose of this 'treasury' depends entirely on the free will of God, and the fact, as well as the manner, of such a disposal must be completely derived from the positive dispositions made by God. There is no proof of the fact that God has granted the Church a *legal* power of disposal with regard to the temporal punishment due to sin, and the assertion of such a concession meets with quite a few difficulties even apart from this. The Church certainly has, however, a moral right to this 'Treasury', i.e. the Church, in her intercessory action for sinners before God, calls upon the merits of Christ and of his Saints, whose ready support she may presuppose as the fruit of her prayers. For God, in and despite the freedom of his dispensation of [186] grace, is undoubtedly especially ready to listen to the Church as a body and to her authorized prayer.

From all this follows naturally the understanding of P.'s determination of the nature of indulgences. An indulgence is a combination of the old 'absolutions' from temporal punishment – which are effective as a *prayer* of the *Church* – and of a jurisdictional remission of ecclesiastical penances. Even in the case of a plenary indulgence, the Church aims merely at a relaxation of all temporal punishment; she cannot guarantee with absolute certitude that God will completely remit these, punishments. In this conception of indulgences many other phenomena of the practice of indulgences also explain themselves better: the fact that indulgences still continue to be determined quantitatively by the old rates of penance; the necessity of a *causa proportionata* for the, granting of an indulgence, and of a good work for the gaining of it, by which the recipient of the indulgence also disposes himself in a special way for a favourable response to the special intercession made by the Church; the factual uncertainty of the success of an indulgence on which the Church herself counts, etc.

What is to be said about this Theology of Indulgences? First of all, it should not be overlooked from the very beginning in the further discussion of this thesis propounded by P. that this thesis is not so different in its objective, ultimate conclusion from the traditional theory of indulgences as might seem at first sight. For, a thoughtful theology which really and truly reckons with the seriousness of the consequences of sin and knows something about the non-transferable character of a personal deed in spite of the whole reality of the community of guilt and its consequences, will not at all doubt that, in fact, the 'gained' indulgences do not have exactly the effect which is ascribed to them *in se*. Thus far, therefore, P.'s thesis in itself simply transfers the always-given element of factual uncertainty to a somewhat different point than is the case in the usual theory. For the rest, however, we seriously mean to defend the view here that P.'s thesis is right, although one part of the proof which P. gives does not seem to be absolutely watertight, and another part of the proof would seem to be open to still further development and deeper study. It should be mentioned that the whole of

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this defence is, of course, subject to the results of further theological discussion and to further precisions of the thesis, as well as to the obvious right of the Church's *magisterium*.

P.'s main argument is in fact the one based on the history of [187] indulgences: indulgences grew out of the old 'absolutions', the only really new element being the remission of a penance imposed by the *Church*. But, although the 'absolution' undoubtedly had an effect on the punishment in the life to come, it did not, however, have a judicial but an intercessory character in its regard. Ergo . . . Now, the *historical* connection between 'absolution' and 'indulgence' has certainly been correctly perceived and worked out. And we shall have to agree with P., that this 'absolution' is the continuation, with an intercessory character, of the penitential intercessions made by the priest in the early Church, which intercessions may not be simply and formally identified with the reconciliation proper. And it is right that the 'absolutions' within and without the sacrament were regarded as such a continuation at the time of their growth and flowering. But will not the dogmatic theologian who wishes to hold on to the current common theory of indulgences, object to the above that this historical connection (in a less empirical conception of the development of dogmas) does not exclude the possibility that the Church came to see only slowly in the course of all this, that her authoritative prayer has the efficaciousness of a jurisdictional enactment[4]? And this all the more so since the authoritative character of this prayer had always been very clearly in the forefront of consciousness, as P.'s description itself shows. And a 'prayer' of an authoritative kind need not necessarily lack the efficacy of an *opus operatum* (remember the 'prayer' of the anointing of the sick). Such a dogmatic theologian could reverse P.'s appeal to the fact that the 'absolutions' before the time of indulgences could not have been more than intercessory prayers because the early medieval theories about the efficacy of the sacrament of Penance for the cleansing from guilt hardly ascribe any more to the 'keys'. He could say that this proves precisely that, both in the first and in the second case, the clear theoretical recognition of an *ex opere operato* efficacy had first to break through, and that this clarification is equally compelling in both cases. He will, in other words, point to the fact that the same development took place also in the case of the deprecative form of absolution from the guilt of sin itself. He will point out that, with regard to its transcendent and certain effect, the jurisdictional character of the deprecative formula employed in the sacrament [188] of Penance was also recognized only slowly, and yet that the early obscurities must not be used against the later clarified teaching. P. does indeed give pointers to suggest that this parallel must itself be interpreted differently (p. 11). But this retort depends in its turn on the whole of his interpretation of penance in the *early* Church (*pax cum Ecclesia* as the *res et sacramentum* of the forgiveness of guilt before God, so that the intercessory formula does not at all formally represent the act of reconciliation as such[5]). The present author does indeed

[4] The remarks of Weisweiler, for instance, run along the same lines as this objection.

[5] We might get the impression from this work (cf. e.g. p. 20) that P. regards this doctrine of the early Church, concerning the *pax cum Ecclesi*a as *res et sacramentum* of the reconciliation with God in the sacrament of Penance, simply as a theorem of an earlier theology which has now been left behind. This impression is not correct. P. is, on the contrary, convinced of the fact that this doctrine is still correct today and it is still important for a deeper understanding of the sacrament of Penance. Cf. for this, his article: 'Die innere Struktur des Busssakraments', *Müncher Theologische Zeitschrift* I (1950), pp. 12-30. This theory, which can also appeal to de la Taille, de Lubac and Xiberta for support among present-day theologians (and which also seems the correct one to ourselves, cf. the previous chapter in the present volume), is of great significance for the theory of indulgences. For it explains easily why the Church can indeed remit the guilt but not the punishment of sin by a juridical act, although a remission of guilt is in fact more difficult than a remission of punishment, and it would therefore appear that whoever is capable of the greater is capable also of doing the lesser. If the legal power of the Church employed in the sacrament of Penance consists precisely in the fact that man is thereby incorporated into the Church's inner means of grace and hence obtains the grace of God, which is the cleansing from sin, then it becomes immediately intelligible that the Church, by a legal act of reconciliation and reincorporation into the Church *qua* bearer of the Spirit of God, can forgive everything (and only that) which is inconsistent with this

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agree with this interpretation, but it is an interpretation which has not yet by any means won the day among dogmatic theologians as a whole. If we are in this sense not quite as convinced as P. of the full force of the historical argument for the essence of indulgences based on the nature of the early medieval 'absolution', this does not mean that we do not recognize the importance of this argument. For it [189] shows that the burden of proof for the usual theory of efficacy rests with those who advocate this theory, because they assert more than can be gathered immediately from the origins of indulgences. One may, however, get the impression that theologians have not lost a great deal of sleep over this proof. And even if we presuppose as self-evident that there is a dogmatic proof *ex consensu theologorum*, it is nevertheless doubtful whether such a proof can be gathered in this case from a relative unanimity of theologians regarding the jurisdictional nature of indulgences (*qua* forgiveness of temporal punishment due to sin). For closer scrutiny shows that this unanimity is not as great as it might seem at first sight.[6] The initial verbal unanimity soon turns into [190] an objective difference of opinion, once we demand more precise information regarding particular questions.

There is another argument for his thesis which seems more telling in P.'s work than the proof from the history of 'absolution' taken by itself. Only that argument seems a little bit too brief and too historical in P. For it is not, after all, merely the *early* Church's theory of penance (which seems to be somewhat too much in the foreground with P.) but also the dogmatically binding teaching of the Council of Trent (*Denz* 807; 904; 922), that the Church does not always and necessarily absolve from all temporal punishment due to sin in the sacrament of Penance. However, this proposition, which has the whole of the ancient teaching on penance behind it, makes sense only if it is not merely a fact that in practice the Church does not remit this punishment by her jurisdictional act exercised in the sacrament,

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reincorporation. Man can, however, be justified in the grace of God and yet, in the nature of things, be burdened with what we nowadays call the debt of punishment (in a somewhat colourless, formalistic and legal jargon). It follows, therefore, immediately from this that the legal power of the Church, when it forgives guilt by such an incorporation into, and reconciliation with, the Church, does not necessarily apply itself also to the punishment due to sin.

[6] One need only enter more closely into the question as to what sort of uncertainty is supposed by theologians as regards the effective gaining of indulgences, and how they explain this uncertainty, which after all is presupposed in the practice of the faithful. Galtier (*loc. cit.*) maintains that, even in the common opinion, indulgences do not imply a real absolution (with regard to sin's temporal punishment before God), but a '*solutio*' granted by the Church, i.e. the Church places the 'Treasury of the Church' at the disposal of one of the faithful (in a juridical manner), so that *he* may then use it to pay his debt of punishment. Hence, he maintains, the extent to which God accepts this form of payment remains indeterminate (in spite of the juridical character of the '*solutio*'). Now, this explanation does, perhaps, preserve the currently common interpretation of the doctrine of indulgences ('against' Poschmann) as far as terminology is concerned, but objectively it says exactly the same thing as Poschmann. Every theological theory about the nature of indulgences must be prepared to allow itself to be faced with the following question (to be answered clearly by a 'yes' or a 'no'): if a man is in the state of grace, has repented of his sins and has fulfilled the work prescribed by the indulgence grant (and is a *homo viator*), is it *certain* then, under these presuppositions, that in fact all his temporal punishment due to sin is remitted if a plenary indulgence was attached to his prescribed work? Is this objectively certain in this case, and is the doctrine stating that this is so objectively, a theologically certain and binding doctrine? Any theologian who cannot answer these two questions with an unhesitating 'yes', must let Poschmann's theory pass as at least theologically unobjectionable for the time being. Anyone, however, who dares to answer this question with an unconditional 'yes', must not only be prepared to allow himself to be asked as to what sufficient reason he can give for his 'yes'. He must also be prepared to face the following questions: Does his 'yes' fully satisfy the seriousness of the divine justice? Why then cannot practically everyone be preserved right away from Purgatory by a simple jurisdictional act of the Pope? Why do theologians, generally speaking, nevertheless demand a *causa proportionata* for the validity of the granting of an indulgence on the part of the Church? Why does the normal Christian, with the true instinct of the faith, nevertheless regard a plenary indulgence, gained by the performance of a very small good work prescribed, as more uncertain than another indulgence gained, for instance, by a fatiguing pilgrimage? etc.

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but also that she *cannot* remit it (with certainty based on this act as such). For, on the one hand, no more is demanded on the part of the penitent for such a remission according to the usual doctrine of indulgences) than for the remission of the guilt itself. And, on the other hand, the sacrament is simply orientated in every respect towards the cleansing from sin. And so it is impossible to see why the Church would not remit by her jurisdictional act in the sacrament what she could remit. If, however, the Church cannot do this with the efficacy of a jurisdictional act *in* the sacrament, then she cannot do it either outside the sacrament. Otherwise she would be able to do more outside the sacrament – at least in one respect – than in the sacrament, and indeed in respect of an object to which the sacrament is ordained. For in the last analysis the sacrament is also ordained to the blotting out of the temporal punishment due to sin, as is shown even by the imposition of a penance which is included in the *opus operatum*. It is necessary to state all this, and all the more so since theologians appeal to the same scriptural texts to prove the power to grant indulgences as they do when proving the power to forgive sins in the sacrament.[7] If this proof proved anything, [191] it would be that the full power of a jurisdictional (and as such certainly efficacious) freeing from temporal punishment due to sin is an *intrinsic* moment of *the particular* sacramental power which is given in these texts. It is, therefore, impossible to prove from these texts the jurisdictional nature of the power of granting indulgence *and* to deny at the same time that this power can be exercised in the sacrament of Penance *qua* sacrament (which is instituted or promised in these texts). If, however, this proof from Mt 16 and 18 is abandoned, then there is absolutely no scriptural proof left for a jurisdictional power of the Church with regard to temporal punishment due to sin. However, there is not only no proof for this, but also the very object of such a proof is immediately excluded by the teaching of the Church to the effect that she does not forgive temporal punishment in the sacrament *ex opere operato* simply as she pleases (and hence also *cannot* thus forgive it). For it is absolutely impossible to find any reason why the Church should not be able to do *in* the sacrament (which is there for the purpose of cleansing from the whole sin, including the debt of punishment) what (*ex supposito*) she is able to do outside the sacrament.

To put all this in a different way: if the reasons for the uncertainty of the success of an indulgence (which uncertainty is ultimately admitted by every theologian and good Christian) were to be found, as in the sacrament, merely on the side of the subjective disposition of the penitent, and were the same as in the case of the sacrament (as the usual indulgence-theory maintains), then the effective cause of this objectively infallible result would have to be, as in the case of the sacrament, a legal act, even if not already a formally sacramental act. For only such an act (we prescind from a physical act) can be infallible in its effect and yet be hindered from achieving this effect by merely subjective conditions in the line of the aim of the act. But then this legal act could be distinguished merely formally (or as a part of the whole) from the legal act exercised in the sacrament of Penance; it would, at any rate, no longer be possible to see why it could and should not be posited in any case also within the sacrament, especially since it is supposed to be included in the sacramental power given in Mt 16 and Jn 20. It would in this case be possible at the most to show that this act, in so far as it refers only to temporal punishment, may also be posited outside the sacrament, in accordance with the principle; qui potest plus, potest et minus. In order to avoid this whole conclusion, it would be necessary to adopt the despairing subterfuge of saying [192] that the Church *can* indeed exercise this legal power of forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance with regard to temporal punishment, since it is included in the sacrament, but that she does not do so on account of a self-imposed limitation of what is itself a greater power. To this it would then have to be

[7] Cf. e.g. Ch. Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae* VII, no. 492; F. Diekamp, *Katholische Dogmatik* III[8], p. 315; J. Pohle-M. Gierens, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* III[8], p. 506; M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV, I[4], p. 541.

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replied that the Church cannot suppress in such an arbitrary manner the greater power given to her, *ex supposito*, by Christ. It is also impossible to give a really intelligible reason in the usual theory about indulgences for the fact that the Church requires a *legitima causa* for the granting of an indulgence over and above the need of the sinner for complete cleansing from his sin. For such a power of a legal kind (included in the sacramental power of Mt 16 and 18, from which it is after all derived) would be given precisely for the sake of that complete purgation of man. And so, no more than the power to forgive guilt as such could it be made dependent on any other conditions than the need of the sinner and his dispositions.

Let us elucidate these reflections further by a few observations taken from some of the most recent treatments in dogmatic theology[8] on the question of the sacrament of Penance and indulgences. Galtier refutes the theory which holds that by an indulgence the Church: simply 'makes a present of' the punishment due to sin by means of a simple remission on her part, by pointing out that indulgences would in this case be more efficacious in regard to temporal punishment due to sin than the sacrament of Penance. This theory attacked by him '*ascribit concessioni indulgentiae efficacitatem ex opere operato veriorem et maiorem, quam quae sacramentali absolutione agnoscitur*'. For the sacrament does indeed also effect a (partial) remission of temporal punishment due to sin *ex opere operato*, but only in the measure of the subjective dispositions of the penitent. But under the presupposition opposed by him, the indulgence is effective *ex opere operato* (presupposing simply contrition), purely and simply in the measure of the: amount of indulgence determined by the one who grants the indulgence. In accordance with this view, the Pope could, by a mere act of his will, remove something which is binding (the debt of punishment), which he could not do as the minister of the sacrament and by virtue of the sacrament. This consideration put forward by Galtier is, in our opinion, conclusive. But this is precisely why we cannot understand how Galtier can nevertheless teach before this, that indulgences are [193] effective *ex opere operato*,[9] and indeed in such a way that their effect, in contrast to the sacrament of Penance, '*independens est a subjectiva dispositione et proportionatur tantum voluntati concedentis indulgentiam*' (no. 610). This seems to us to be in utter contradiction to what Galtier says a few pages further on concerning the fight against the theory of indulgences for punishment due to sin *per modum absolutionis*. It cannot be said that this contradiction disappears by the fact that Galtier rejects the infallibility in the form of '*absolutio*' and admits it in the form of '*solutio*'. Given that the '*solutio*' is really infallibly effective even in its end-effect, independently of the dispositions of the recipient, then Galtier's objection holds true also against the '*solutio*': its effect is surer and greater than the effect of the sacrament. If, however, this '*solutio*' is to be taken as meaning that the Church does indeed (in certain circumstances) place her 'Treasury' – in a jurisdictional act – completely at the disposal of the penitent by a plenary indulgence for the payment of the debt of temporal punishment due to sins but that it is an open question whether, and in what measure, God is prepared to accept this supplied payment in any particular case (that he has, therefore, not bound himself in this case – contrary to what is true of the sacrament, as far as the guilt of sin is concerned), and acts in this case (in what concerns the debt of punishment) exactly as he does in the sacrament: then this is saying the same thing, in a more complicated terminology, as what Poschmann holds. For with regard to

[8] P. Galtier, *De paenitentia*, (new edition, Rome 1950), no. 613.

[9] *Loc. cit.*, no. 609. It should be mentioned that this doctrine is proved merely by an appeal to the teaching of St Thomas (*Suppl.*, q. 25, a. 2). The conceptual background of this proof, however, is the idea that the Treasury of the Church is inexhaustible, and that the Church can draw on it and apply it in an authoritative manner. *If* she can do this, it is indeed correct to say that in this case the effect of the indulgence is not dependent on the dispositions of the one gaining the indulgence, and hence that indulgences '*tantum valent quantum praedicantur*' (St Thomas, *loc. cit.*). But how can we prove this presupposition if the Church does not only not acknowledge herself to have such a power even in the sacrament, but explicitly denies having it?

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the end-effect, which consists in the effective payment of the debt of punishment, the jurisdictional process of placing the Treasury of the Church at the disposal of the faithful has exactly the same value as an intercessory prayer of the Church. Such a prayer is addressed to God in the form of an appeal to the merits of Christ and the Saints, i.e. the 'Treasury of the Church'. Galtier himself it should [194] be noted, remarks quite rightly about this 'Treasury' (no. 600), by appealing to Lehmkuhl, that it must not be imagined as something which is divided out quantitatively and bit by bit – and hence with the danger of being exhausted – but that it must be thought of rather as the undivided totality of the moral works of Christ and of all men who are in his grace, in view of which God grants grace and forgiveness to other men.

It may be maintained that this argument, which is merely hinted at by Poschmann, is more convincing and objectively more conclusive and that, considering that P.'s aim lies in the field of dogma rather than purely in the field of the history of dogmas, it should therefore have been developed further than the purely historical argument from 'absolution'. In the case of the latter argument we have constantly to ask ourselves whether it is not tacitly based on too positivistic and empirical a notion of the history of dogmas, i.e. on the conviction that the Church cannot even come gradually to the consciousness of a power of which she had not always been aware and which she had not always employed from the very beginning.

Naturally this main consideration, which we have even here merely indicated, should be deepened even further. It would be necessary above all to go into the question of how we can explain and make intelligible the fact (which at first sight seems a surprising one) that the Church can indeed wipe out the greater by a legal act, viz. the guilt before God, but not the smaller, viz. the debt of punishment. If we do not want to answer this question merely by appealing to a positive divine decree, made intelligible by means of such considerations as are contained in *Denz* 904, then we can only answer this question in a more profound manner if we enter more closely and comprehensively into the nature of the punishment due to sin than is usual in current theology. Current theology sees this punishment too exclusively as something which is extrinsically imposed on man by the justice of God, conceived merely as something vindictive. A practically necessary presupposition for a deeper study of this question would be to examine the doctrine of temporal punishment due to sin in the light of the *history* of dogmas, in such a way that this examination would also further the *dogmatic theology* of this doctrine. It is to be hoped that someone will soon write us such a history. Only a more profound doctrine about temporal punishment can offer any prospect of our being able to break down, even in this direction, the [195] objections and prejudices of Protestant and Eastern Christians against the Catholic teaching on punishment due to sin, satisfaction and indulgences.

The doctrine, and the history of the doctrine, of temporal punishment due to sin is a much more difficult Chapter than the average textbook of dogmatic theology would lead us to believe. For the Church did not get a clear consciousness of a debt (*reat*) of punishment really separable from the 'debt' (*reat*) of guilt until the moment when the practice of the Church (for very practical reasons) brought about a temporal link-up between the absolution in the sacrament of Penance and the commencement of penance. Thus the performance of the penance (which in the Fathers was concerned with the cleansing from sin in general, without any distinction between the 'debt' of guilt and that of punishment) had to have a really distinguishable effect from the reconciliation which had now already taken place in the sacrament by means of contrition and absolution. And so we would have to inquire exactly as to what doctrine of the 'debt' of punishment really does arise (and what does not) from *such* a starting-point. It would then be necessary to inquire further as to what exactly was meant originally by the Fathers' demanding a long period of subjective penance for post-baptismal sins in contrast to the cleansing from sin in baptism. Was the real 'living basis' of this

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demand the conviction that the sinner has incurred temporal punishment in the next life which he must pay for already in this life (why, by the way, already in this life?) – a payment to which he must be constrained under pain of refusal of reconciliation? (It is well known that even Scotus felt uneasy about the logical clarity of these considerations.[10]) Or is this patristic theory about the difference between the forgiveness granted by baptism and that granted by post-baptismal penance already a theory (which does not mean that it must be false) constructed to explain and support a practice whose basis lay elsewhere, viz. in the conviction that a baptized person who has relapsed into sin must be examined much more closely and critically than a catechumen, before being readmitted into full communion with the Church? And if this is the real starting-point of the practice in the early Church[11] which gave [196] rise to the theological theory, what results from this as far as this theory itself is concerned? This theory does not at all need to be false. But perhaps we could circumscribe its contents much more precisely and carefully once we think this theory through, starting from the point indicated. Would this – we may at least *inquire* – lead us to a doctrine of temporal punishment due to sin which is a little less juridical in the formal sense than the present common doctrine? Would it lead us to a doctrine which could bring more understanding to the Greeks (Origen at their head[12]) than the Latin doctrine of the punishment due to sin and of Purgatory has done hitherto? An examination of the real nature of punishment due to sin would practically have to bring in, and set in motion, the whole of theology. Is the really, from and on God's side (in distinction to an earthly lawgiver), an objective distinction between vindictive and medicinal punishment? St Thomas, to be consistent with his deepest intuitions, would have to deny this. *Non esset perpetua poena animarum quae damnantur, si possent mutare voluntatem in melius, quia iniquum esset quod ex quo bonam voluntatem haberent, perpetuo punirentur* (*Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 93) Could we not also omit the '*perpetuo*'? In other words, can we not say that man and the world (including the realities beyond) have been constituted by God in such a way that sin punishes itself? Is it not true that wherever the connatural consequence of sin is accepted and endured to the bitter end, sin becomes of itself the temporal and medicinal punishment (no matter how much this punishment is a manifestation of the justice of God and is in this sense *also* vindictive)? And is it not true that whenever the will, in permanent obduracy, refuses definitively to acknowledge the most profound meaning of the attitude of sin, sin becomes of itself an eternal punishment? Such a conception would not in the least need to dispute that there are 'external' punishments due to sin. It would not at all have to conclude that, in as far as the divine punishments are concerned, these consist merely in 'sorrow', 'feelings of remorse', and similar 'inner' punitive consequences of sin. With the principle of the nature of divine punishments due to sin thus envisaged, it would not at all be denied but, on the contrary, even demanded, that there are 'external punishments for sin'. To see this, we would simply need to base ourselves on a deeper Ontology of the nature of the spiritual (human) [197] person and its surroundings. For the human person is spirit in materiality, which itself is again a part of a uniform and (in its continuity) indissoluble world of a material kind. Whenever, therefore, some act of spiritual freedom is exercised, this act embodies itself necessarily in the 'exterior' of the being – which is not simply identical with the personal core of this act – and it does so right into the materiality of this exterior. In this 'embodiment', the actual physio-psychical corporeality of man consists much more in the most exterior stratum and in the index both of the stratification and of the outward-directed construction of man, than that this should

[10] Cf. J. Lechner, *Die Sakramentenlehre des Richard von Mediavilla* (Munich 1925), pp. 321 *sq*.
[11] Cf. on this K. Rahner, 'Die Busslehre des hl. Cyprian von Karthago', *ZKT* LXXIV (1952), pp. 257-276; 381-438, esp. 395-403.
[12] Cf. on this K. Rahner, 'La doctrine d'Origène sur la pénitence', *RSR* XXXVII (1950), pp. 47-97, esp. 79-97; 252-286; 422-456.

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simply be identical with 'what is different from the personal nucleus of man' and hence be no longer present in any way after death. Now, such 'incarnations' of man's personal decision of freedom in the 'exterior' of the person (and, beyond this, in his surroundings) are not simply cancelled out again, once they have taken place, by a change of disposition in the spiritual nucleus of the person through contrition, etc. Of themselves, these 'incarnations' remain and can in certain cases be changed, and work themselves off only by a slow process in time which may last much longer than the free conversion in the centre of the person. The person, who has himself caused these 'exteriorizations' of his own guilt in his 'exterior' and his surroundings, inevitably experiences them as something causing him affliction, as a connatural punishment. Although this punishment arises out of the guilt itself, by the collision of the guilty act with the given structures of the 'exterior' established by God into which the guilt engraves itself it must nevertheless be called an 'external' punishment. For this punishment is not simply the conscious reflection of guilt in the consciousness of the guilty person, which must disappear again together with the annihilation of the guilt. Any attempt to understand the nature of the punishment due to sin in the sense indicated must then, of course, also conceive the payment of the debt of punishment in a somewhat less juridical and formalistic manner than is usually the case. The payment of a punishment of this kind could in this case be conceived only as a maturing process of the person, through which, though gradually, all the powers of the human being become slowly integrated into the basic decision of the free person. This does not at all necessarily mean that the soul after death is still capable of meriting supernaturally an actual growth in grace. The profundity of the '*option fondamentale*' which has been made during life can no longer grow in the life beyond. But this, in its [198] turn, does not exclude the possibility of conceiving man as still really maturing in the purgatory condition of 'Purgatory'. We are not, at any rate, in any way compelled by the dogma of the Church to think of 'Purgatory' as a purely passive endurance of vindictive punishments, which, when they have been 'paid for' in this sense, release man in exactly the same condition in which he commenced this state of purification. For not every 'change' or 'process of maturing' must necessarily be already what is theologically described as growth in grace, increase of merit, advance in the degree of glory. Such a change of condition in the degree of maturity can just as well be conceived as an integration of the whole stratified human reality into that free decision and grace which, having been made and won in this life, is in itself definitive. Certainly such a conception of sin's temporal punishment in the life beyond requires implicitly also a certain modification, of the conception as to the manner in which these punishments can be 'remitted'. In the common, purely formal-legal and 'extrinsicist' conception according to which these punishments have a purely vindictive character, and according to which they are connected with sin only by a juridical decree of God and are added by a divine intervention exercised purely 'ad hoc', these punishments due to sin can obviously be 'remitted' by a simple remission which merely consists in God *not* adding them and in the fact that God refrains from the tormenting action on the 'Holy Souls'. In the conception of temporal punishment proposed for discussion above, it would not be possible to conceive the remission of punishment as a mere abstention from punishing. This occurrence would have to be conceived rather in the sense that the process of painful integration of the whole of man's stratified being into the definitive decision about his life, taken under the grace of God, happens more quickly and intensively and therefore also less painfully. That this is possible can be seen from our life on this earth. Thus, depending on circumstances, aids offered, etc., the same living 'process of working out' a moral problem can proceed easily and quickly or painfully and slowly. We cannot indeed picture to ourselves *how* in particular such a process of maturing can develop in different ways in the life after death; but *that* such a thing is conceivable will be ye difficult to dispute *a priori*. In other words, a 'remission' is conceivable even in the conception of

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temporal punishment suggested above, even although this remission does not in this case consist simply in the mere omission of punishment.

[199] Such and many other questions would have to be considered if we really wished to work out an adequate theory of indulgences understood as the remission of temporal punishment due to sin. These questions are enumerated here, not in order to give an answer to them, but merely to show how much would still have to be done to clarify the questions which Poschmann has tried to solve.

Even apart from this, P.'s theory of indulgences would, of course, require to be proved and developed more closely. What is the exact nature of an *authoritative* prayer of the *Church* in distinction to a private intercessory prayer? Where is such a prayer to be found in the present-day granting of indulgences? If we adopt P.'s theory of indulgences, is it still possible to make the distinction between indulgences for the living and those for the dead sufficiently intelligible? For surely this is a distinction which goes further than the fact that after death the soul can no longer be absolved from a penance imposed by the Church? Why does not the Church return to the simple 'absolutions' (to use P.'s terminology), since the imposition of an *ecclesiastical* penance, from which we are also freed by an indulgence, is after all purely hypothetical nowadays? Why do we, strictly speaking, still need to appeal in *this* theory of indulgences to the Treasury of the Church, which is part and parcel of the Church's doctrine of indulgences, when elsewhere (e.g. in the case of the Sacramentals) the theological explanation of the intercessory prayer of the Church, no matter how authoritative this prayer may be, does not, as far as I know, fall back (at least not *explicitly*) on the Treasury of the Church? What is the meaning, in Poschmann's theory taken as a whole, of the good work with which the Church connects the granting of an indulgence? (Schmaus[13] gives a good explanation: the good work is a sign of the incorporation into the outlook of Christ and of the Saints to which the Church appeals in her intercessory stand on behalf of the person who gains the indulgence.) How and why is there still a concrete and factual difference in this theory between a plenary and a partial indulgence in respect of temporal punishment before God? In other words, is there any intelligible sense in which the authoritative prayer of the Church (in the case of an indulgence) can be intended to relate only to a *part* of the punishment due to sin which is to be remitted by a partial indulgence? Moreover, can what [200] is contained in the Church's doctrinal pronouncements regarding indulgences be fully reconciled, after thorough analysis, with P.'s theory? Poschmann affirms that it can and gives good reasons for maintaining this. P. certainly does not come into conflict with anything really defined in the matter of indulgences. As to whether this his theory is absolutely compatible with other, if not defined yet theologically binding explanations by the Church of indulgences, is something which would require still closer investigation; it is true, of course, that even such an investigation would have to bear in mind that the expression of such a doctrine taught by the *magisterium of* the Church might possibly be conditioned by some particular age. The references in P. to the explanations given by the Church seem to me to be rather scanty, but of course this question does not really belong to his particular theme.

If we may be allowed to summarize P.'s thesis once more (in terms which do not actually occur in his own formulation of it), we would say that: an indulgence is the sacramental of the remission of sin's temporal punishment before God, and this in conjunction with a jurisdictional remission of an (at least hypothetically) imposed ecclesiastical penance. Being a sacramental, it operates *ex opere operantis* (*orantis*) *Ecclesia*, and not *ex opere operato* as most theologians teach nowadays, even although, for historical reasons,[14] it is connected with

[13] Cf. M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV, I $^{3/4}$ (Munich 1952), p. 548.

[14] Galtier, *De Paenitentia*, (new edition, Rome 1950), nos. 612-615 also declares that the 'definition' of an indulgence (contained also in the CIC) which regards indulgences as a remission of temporal punishment due to sin '*per modum absolutionis*', is nothing more now than a historical reminiscence which no longer has any real

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a [201] jurisdictional act of the Church which is concerned with the remission of an ecclesiastical penance and produces a sure effect in this regard.[15] We are inclined to think that this thesis is correct and that the reasons adduced in support of it are worthy of consideration.

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meaning in the present-day practice of indulgences. This means (in Galtier's sense) that we speak of an '*absolutio*' in contradistinction to a ' *solutio*', only in regard to the ecclesiastical penances which were imposed in the past, but not in regard to sin's temporal punishment before God. Since, however, such unperformed penances imposed by the Church, which could be remitted ('absolved') in this way, no longer exist at all in the present-day practice, the expression '*per modum absolutionis*' is merely a reference nowadays to a former practice. We do not mean by this to claim Galtier as an advocate (in every detail) of the definition of an indulgence proposed by us above. But his arguments prove at least that we may not adduce the definition given in CIC can. 911 to prove that it is a question here of a jurisdictional act of the Church as the '*per modum absolutionis*' appears in opposition to the '*per modum suffragii*' of the indulgences for the dead. As to whether the '*per modum solutionis*', which Galtier (appealing to Cajetan and Billot) declares to be the real essence of the indulgence grant (i.e. the placing of the Treasury of the Church at the disposal of the believer so that he may as it were clear off or 'pay' the debt of punishment from it), is a proper jurisdictional act and one which causes '*ex opere operato*' (as Galtier maintains), that is a different question again; and it is, at any rate, a theory which has only as much weight as the reasons adduced in support of it, since it is not taught directly and with binding force in the Church's doctrinal pronouncements. How far we today are in this respect from the old practice which still actually presupposed ecclesiastical punishments which were remitted by indulgences, can be seen also from the following observation: the Council of Trent was still afraid that too liberal a granting of indulgences by the Church could bring about a weakening of ecclesiastical discipline. Today, indulgences have become so much separated from, and independent of Church discipline as a whole, that they can neither further nor endanger it. We do not mean to imply by this that the objective content of the exhortation delivered by the Council has lost its object or need no longer be taken to heart. Galtier, too, (*Gregorianum* XXXI , pp. 273 *sq*.) makes it clear, in appealing to the words of Bellarmine, that this warning given by the Council seems still very real in his opinion.

[15] Our 'definition' is cited by M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV, I[4] (Munich 1952), pp. 548 *sq*., who seems to assent to Poschmann's theory. The same is true of L. Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Cork 1960), p. 442: 'The Church Authority possesses the right to dispose of this spiritual treasury, though not strictly judicially . . . In the granting of an Indulgence, the Church appeals to the mercy of God . . . The prayer of the Church requires the gracious acceptance of God, but . . . a hearing can, with moral certainty, be counted on'.

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If indulgences are to be found not only in textbooks but also in the practical life of the man of today, and if they are to be the means of blessings in practical life, then the Church's doctrine of indulgences must be thought through anew and in a living manner by theologians. Poschmann has made a good start in this direction, for which everyone ought to be grateful to him.

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6

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

If we look at things honestly, we must notice that divine revelation – and how could it be otherwise – always overtaxes man in a certain respect. We recognize this also by the fact that certain truths of God's revelation are always in danger of becoming 'un-existential' in the everyday practical life of man. And this not only in the case of those why deny these truths, i.e. 'heretics', but also in the case of good, orthodox Christians. This may be true of almost everyone belonging to a certain period (although it should be noted that not all those who live at the same chronological time are contemporaries), or it may be true of all those who belong to a certain stratum of society, as e.g. the 'educated' (how many of these, for instance, gain indulgences nowadays?). These people do not deny the truth concerned. They perhaps even know the truth quite well. They will perhaps even protest vehemently when such a truth is explicitly denied in some quarter. Nevertheless, such truths are 'believed' in a somewhat similar manner as when we buy something 'along with' something else which we really want, simply because there is no other way of obtaining that other thing we really want. We take cognizance of these truths and then push them (not on reflection, of course, but instinctively) to one side a little, to the periphery of thought and life, into the subconscious (as we would say nowadays), or into the sphere of the *fides implicita* (as they used to say). At any rate, we occupy ourselves with such a truth at the most only on the fringe of our religious consciousness (or not at all), compared with the 'existential' interest shown by us for other truths of the same Faith.

When you ask the orthodox Christian for his beliefs, he will refer you to the Catechism, where all the truths of faith which have been expressed most explicitly and in an existentially clear manner in the history of the Faith up to date, have kept their unchanged place. The orthodox Christian seldom stops to realize that the unprinted catechism [204] of his heart and religious life has quite a different distribution of materials from his printed Catechism, and that in the former many pages of the latter are missing completely or have become quite faded and illegible. He gets on quite well in this way with his printed Catechism. He takes from it what he needs. He finds in it everything necessary for a right way of living and for a happy death. The rest he quietly leaves there: it must be right enough. When a part of it is so good and holy, the rest will be true enough, he would think to himself, if he were to reflect at all on the selective instinct of his practical religious life. And so, on the whole, these other truths too do not cause him much brain racking or many 'difficulties of faith'. It would be interesting to investigate some time the 'interior catechism' of the average Catholic (ten years after his last religion lesson at school) in our day and in our particular region – it will not be the same everywhere in the world. The official catechesis could learn a great deal from this.

The 'unorthodox', the one who has leanings towards heresy, and the 'heretics', open their internal catechism as it were reflectively: whatever they do not find clear in it, they would then like to see removed also from the printed Catechism. They say: whatever *we* today cannot grasp quickly and clearly, vitally and comfortingly in our heart and life, likewise should not weigh down the memory and mind of the Christian of today. The fact that they are so 'difficult' to understand, that they can only be so laboriously reconciled with our present-day religious needs and 'scientific convictions' and generally speaking with everything which we possess in the way of possibilities of belief – this is said to be a sign that these other matters are pious but outmoded notions, fables, outdated expressions of a thought, right in itself, perhaps, but which must be extracted like a kernel out of its shell, myths which must be

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'demythologized' to produce the real meaning of Christian thought. This shows, by the way, that the orthodox believer and the Christian heretic differ less from each other in a certain respect than it might seem at first sight. But this also reveals a difference of vital importance (prescinding from everything even more important): once something has been erased from the printed Catechism, how, if what has been erased was true and important for life and shortsightedness and presumptuous modernism (which can be very stupid) have erased it, is it to be reincorporated into it and into the catechism of the heart? Here the *seemingly* so inaccurate and somewhat superficial orthodox person does after all act [205] with a surer instinct; he tells himself: what I do not understand today, what does not mean much to me as yet (in spite of all my good will), can nevertheless be true; tomorrow I will perhaps see it as a most important truth; the day after tomorrow it may be *the* truth of the coming generation.

Does not the 'resurrection of the body' belong to these truths, which are given a wide berth by the orthodox and the heretics alike, but by each in their own way? It is to be found in every Catechism, it is treated of in every course of dogmatic theology and is prayed in every Credo. There are, of course, books – and especially again in most recent times – which try to express this truth more clearly and intelligibly to the present generation. But this has not meant any very great change as yet. Things are really as they were in the early days: 'Now when they heard of a resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "we will hear thee again on this matter" (Ac 17.32). Since one's 'sneering' can also arise out of profound thought and deep affliction, the present-day sneerers are those who are 'demythologizing'. But the orthodox Christians should not be too quick to become indignant with them. For they themselves are probably those who in their lives today want to hear about it 'again', in other words – never. Nor can it be said that the dogmatic definition of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, *body* and soul, into heavenly glory, is a proof of how alive the eleventh article of the Creed is in the hearts of Christians. For it is significant how little, how hesitatingly and really lifelessly the whole literature on the Assumption entered into the *content* of the new Dogma. Hardly any portion of this literature seized the opportunity to re-state more precisely and vitally, and to study more profoundly, *what* precisely is meant by 'resurrection of the body'. One acted as if nothing new was to be said about *this*, as if everything about this were already clear, in so far as this is at all possible, and as if the question were merely as to whether Mary has already found this consummation *now*.

This article of faith has, if we may say so, always had a troubled existence, ever since it stepped out of the world of late Judaism (since Dan 12.2 *sq*.; 2 Mac 7) and of the New Testament (where it belongs to the first elements of Christ's teaching; Heb 6.1), to begin its journey through the history of the Church and of the Spirit. It was given the assent of faith. This goes without saying. For it is attested by the Scriptures, the word of our Lord and his apostles. Indeed, [206] theology too always pondered on it. In the Middle Ages it was perhaps reflected on even with precision and loving interest (as far as was possible at that time), since the Middle Ages were a period which was still capable of humbly and obediently resisting its own overloud taste and its own tendencies of thinking and living – no matter how much we nevertheless notice, of course, in what direction it actually tended in its theology. They defended the article of faith. Against the pagans and their 'Idealism': Tertullian did so even passionately – *Caro salutis est cardo*; against spiritualistic tendencies among Christians, such as those of the Gnostics and of Origen (interpreted this way); against the Albigenses and Cathari in the Middle Ages; against Rationalism and Enlightenment thought. The populace, the naive man who likes to think pictorially, has always liked to picture the Last Day to himself (more terrified, it is true, than comforted) with the bodies rising from the graves and the Judgement: *tuba mirum spargens sonum*. And even today, this sociological milieu is still favourable for massive images of the resurrection, as is shown by the spread of sects of a chiliastic kind.

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Thus far everything in the garden seems to be lovely and in order. And yet the road along which this article has travelled, has been a hard one. Whenever the Fathers became 'philosophers', i.e. platonists, it is noticeable that they find it difficult to include the body in the victory of the 'spirit'. In the history of this Dogma during the Middle Ages, the view of the end veers more and more away from the resurrection of the body to the soul's direct vision of God. And it becomes clearer all the time (even *against* St Bernard) that this *visio* can already be granted to the individual soul before the cosmic resurrection and consummation, until this doctrine is finally enforced in the Dogma of Benedict XII (in 1336). Almost all that the average Christian of today has written in his internal catechism is merely that the good go 'to heaven' after death. He writes on the little in-memoriam-cards: 'What we bury in the coffin is earth's vesture. What we love has remained, and remains to all eternity'. For St Paul the resurrection was the pre-required condition for the participation by the deceased in the full blessing of Christ and in his Second Coming. The average Christian of today, if he were to reflect basing himself on his unwritten catechism, would ask in astonishment why the happily deceased should be so interested in the Second Coming of Christ, since he is after already with Christ and God in beatitude and so does not need to concern himself very much any more about the fate of this world here [207] below. Even for the theologian, the 'resurrection' is usually an 'accidental' increase in the essentially already fully realized beatitude of the soul, in so far as the body is then reawakened as well and is reunited with the soul. For him too, therefore, the resurrection is very much a supplementary matter. We would suppose that if he had to make a new draft of the Creed, it would be more likely to contain an expression of the 'immortality of the soul' – which after all is stressed in many catechisms as a 'basic truth' – without mentioning in this connection the 'basic truth' of the Epistle to the Hebrews, viz. the resurrection of the dead.

What those who wish to 'demythologize' have to say against this Dogma (and against it especially) because it, practically more than any other, gives rise naturally to objection, does not require to be specified here. All this seems too 'miraculous' for them to dare to expect the contemporary man of physics to accept it. They will then maintain furthermore (falsely indeed, but with a certain semblance of truth) that the Bible itself does already begin to demythologize here and there, in so far as the bodily resurrection does not seem to be nearest to its heart everywhere in the same way, and sometimes no longer appears to be anything more than some sort of covering image for the timeless validity of the victory of the faith over the powers of death and the futility of life. They will point to the fact that medieval theology far into modern times, imagined the resurrection and transfiguration of the body within a world which no longer exists: the *caelum empyreum* as the highest and most sublime world-sphere, which as a 'spatial division' of *this* world exists before the *time*-of-salvation and its events as the fixed framework of saving history. Into this highest sphere, therefore, the bodily substance of man, to which this region has become connatural through the resurrection and transfiguration of the body, can emigrate as to its 'heavenly' place – to Christ who by his 'Ascension into Heaven' has 'ascended' into this sphere. Those who wish to 'demythologize' will ask *where* this heaven is. It must after all be a place, if the doctrine of the glorified bodily nature is to retain any inner content. How are we to 'conceive' this bodily substance? Will we still eat there, and how are we to conceive this, if it happened in the case of the risen Lord, without the wheel of changeableness and perishableness being set in motion again? Can any such bodily substance be thought of in any other way than as a prison, if we remain eternally restrained by it, or does it still make sense and is it [208] honest to speak of a body when we make a spirit or something else unimaginable out of it, in order to render the 'glorified nature' of the body intelligible?

Before we ask ourselves in the concrete what we Christians really believe when we profess

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(and whether this is believable and moreover significant for us), we can hardly avoid saying a basic word or two on the subject of 'demythologizing'. It will by no means be a thorough treatise on this question, and even less a historical statement of the pros and cons in this matter. It will simply be a question of one or two remarks to render what follows *à propos* the subject of this chapter more intelligible. All human knowledge is always bipolar: conceptual and intuitional at the same time. Even the most abstract and most precise metaphysical notions still include their particular intuitional element. Under certain circumstances an intuitional *happening* may belong and be suited to this necessary intuitional element just as much as the static image. The boundary between the image and what is meant by it is not to be found at exactly the same point in all 'meant' realities, if only for the simple reason that even something directly representable can be 'meant' (e.g. the cessation of new births, etc.). The 'proto-historical' (Gen 1-3) and the 'eschatological' must of their very nature show the greatest distance for us between their representation or image on the one hand and the intended or meant object on the other hand. Although something can be meant only together with and under cover of a representation (an image, a representable happening), it is possible to mean realities and happenings which cannot be represented (e.g. the 'depth' of the soul, the '*sub*'-conscious, the 'pure' spirit). Man can recognize the inadequacy of such notions, in which the representing element is taken 'as a makeshift' from some *other* reality than the one meant by the notion itself, and hence he can criticize and change this element. He does this, not by doing away with this element and obtaining a 'pure' concept of the object itself and in itself alone – which is beyond what can be represented – but by modifying his representation and looking at the reality anew. This can be done since the reality though not represent able in itself can still be conceived from different points of 'view', and thus man gains a clear understanding of the various points where the individual image and representation is merely an image and representation without applying simply as such to the referred-to object in itself.

[209] When someone undertakes in this sense a critique of the representation-schemata of the religious concepts which are used for a Dogma, and does so cautiously and slowly, in the constant endeavour (under the control of the *magisterium* of the Church) of not losing anything of the content of faith in the process, then he does not 'demythologize', but does something which theology has always done and must always do. And conversely, if he does *this*, he can easily see that *he* has no cause to demythologize and that such a 'demythologizing' is ultimately nothing else but his own, in itself perfectly justified method (if properly applied), which has been badly applied in this particular case, because one has – rightly – emptied out the bath-water and – unjustifiably – the child with it. This critique of the schemata of representation always remains unfinished; for we can always conceive something only with the help of *other* 'representations'. The 'critique' is, therefore, of necessity, just as inadequate in relation to the object in itself as the 'criticized' proposition. In many cases in theology it will not be possible at all to say where *precisely* the meant object stops and the '*mere*' image begins. In such cases the believing Christian and theologian will abide by the usage of the Scriptures and Tradition in theology and even more so in the proclamation of the Faith, because he knows after all that he has there an image which has been sanctioned and which allows the matter itself to be seen correctly, even though it is impossible in this case to achieve an adequate reflective separation of the two elements. There are of course notions whose representative element is of such a basically human and at the same time objectively unavoidable kind, that these notions, once they have been found, cannot really be replaced by any better ones. But in every concept there takes place a *conversio ad phantasmata*, as St Thomas says. All knowledge about any reality, no matter how supramundane the object and strict and abstract the notion, is knowledge in 'likenesses and parables'.

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Now, it is important to observe that the different parts of Scripture, when depicting the events of the consummation of the world and of the resurrection of the dead included therein, give descriptions which simply cannot be combined together into one unified *picture*, however much they mean the same thing objectively and without contradiction. Sometimes our regard is directed to the resurrection of the just alone who, conscious of their salvation, go out happily to meet their returning Lord and come up to join him as his retinue, so that there is no [210] longer any room – in this *image*, it must be added – for a *universal* resurrection and a yet to be accomplished separation of the good and the bad. Or, at other times, the saints are the retinue of the Lord who come with him from above. At one time the end takes place on earth, which only then becomes the place of beatitude; at another time the place of beatitude is the already existing abode above into which man enters on leaving the earth. The figurative nature and the easy freedom and practical variability of the cosmic images (the conflagration of the world, the falling of the stars onto the earth, etc.) is too clear to allow us any possibility of thinking that they were not recognized as being imaginative by the original speakers. Who can seriously doubt that even the writer of Holy Scripture knew that in the case of many the phrase 'the tombs open up' cannot correspond exactly to the actual manner of their resurrection? We do not need to be afraid that we will depart from the teaching of St Paul, if we do not rack our brains too much about how the dead will hear the sound of the archangel's trumpet and how this harmonizes with the sending out of the many angels or with the resuscitating voice of the Lord himself, which we are told about in his own eschatological discourses. We can regard this text as an image and yet be terrified by what it truly means to convey both to the people of those days and to us today: the aft powerfulness of God over the dead, who even when dead cannot escape him; indeed, we may conjecture that God in his omnipotence just because he is all-powerful and never in danger of being rivalled, will give even the created forces of the world a share in the work of the consummation of the dead into the life beyond all death. It follows from this that we are not 'demythologizing', but that it is an unavoidable and justified task, when we ask quite simply what reality – according to the intention of the Scriptures themselves – these eschatological, popular and poetic illustrations are actually meant to convey. For the reason given, a harmonization of the pictorial elements on their *own* level is quite superfluous and not at all in keeping with the intention of the Scriptures. In this case, too, it will not always be possible to separate the form and the content without ambiguity.

And so when we Christians profess our belief in the 'resurrection of the body', what then do we really mean by it? What is the least we mean by it?

'Body' (*Fleisch*) means the whole man in his proper embodied [211] reality. 'Resurrection' means, therefore, the termination and perfection of the *whole* man before God, which gives him 'eternal life'. Man is a many-sided being which in (and despite) its unity stretches, as it were, through several very different dimensions – through matter and spirit, nature and person, action and passion, etc. And so it is not surprising that the process of man's perfecting and the entrance into this perfection is not in itself a simple and identical quantity in every respect. And it is not surprising that the 'moment' of completion of such a stratified being is not simply the same for every one of these dimensions. Hence, as the Church's consciousness in faith has come to comprehend ever more clearly – instructed as it has been by the beginnings of such a comprehension in the Scriptures – the continuing reality of the personal spirit can already reach the direct communion with God by the event and moment which, looked at from its intramundane side, we experience as death. In so far as this union with God constitutes the innermost being of blessed completion, 'heaven' and 'eternal happiness' can already be given with death (Denz 530). Nevertheless, the deceased remains

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'united' with the reality, fate and hence the temporal events of the world, however little we are able to 'picture' to ourselves such a continuing belonging-to-the-world and however few immediately comprehensible statements on this matter are contained in the Scriptures. We must simply try to realize clearly and soberly that a spiritual union with God cannot be regarded as something which grows in inverse proportion to the belonging to the *material* world, but that these are two quite disparate matters in themselves. Thus basically, for instance, there can be vision of God before death, and 'separation from the body' for the soul in death does not by a long way need to mean *ipso facto* a greater nearness to God. Remoteness-from-the-world and nearness-to-God are not interchangeable notions, however much we are accustomed to think in such a framework.

The deceased remain therefore (despite the *visio beatifica*) united with the fate of the world.

This world in its totality has a beginning and a history; it goes on towards a point which is not the end of its existence but the end of its unfinished and continually self-propagating history. It is true, we may not succeed in representing to ourselves concretely *how* it will be possible at some time to separate its continued existence in itself, on the one hand, and its transition into the unknown (to our prevision), on the other hand; it may be impossible to imagine how the former [212] continues while the latter ceases. We may not be able to say what the then remaining world will be like (all attempts to picture this to oneself never get beyond the image). And yet, for all that, this final state of the world as a whole, which will come at a certain point but has not come as yet, is more *conceivable* for us today than it was perhaps for earlier generations and especially for the ancients. For to them this world of their experience gave the impression of being something eternal; change and transitoriness was only a happening in the lowest stratum of all in this 'eternal' world of 'eternal' laws, which was enveloped by the quietly reposing serenity of celestial spheres; for them (even for the Christians[1]), beatitude could, therefore, only mean leaving the sphere of the transitory for the blessed heavenly sphere intended for this 'migration' in the framework of saving history; the history of salvation took place in the 'heaven'-enveloped world, but was not the development itself of heaven. We today are becoming more clearly aware of the developmental character of our world as a whole, in spite of the ultimate uncertainty of the natural sciences and the extremely profound problems of a 'harmonization' of theological data and our natural knowledge of the world. We have come to realize the senselessness of trying to retrace the existence of the world into the infinite; the world itself, practically down to the last detail – and not merely the revolutions of its stars – is temporal.

If we allow the 'becoming', time and history to be really temporal and do not in the end turn them again into a false eternity, then we may say (very carefully): it does not contradict the nature of the world that this open, self-propagating history has a beginning and an end. Who can say how far this end is the very 'running-itself-to-death' of the course of the world itself (which is happening in accordance with its eternal laws), how far a halt is called by the creative and restraining Word of God, how far both of these things ultimately come to the same thing! We know at any rate from the testimony of God that the history of the world will come to an end, and that this end will not be a sheer cessation, a 'being-no-longer' of the world itself, but the participation in the perfection of the spirit. For this spirit is assigned a beginning, but in relation to God. And hence its beginning is not [213] the beginning of the end, but the beginning of a development in freedom towards freely achieved completion, which does not let the becoming end up in nothingness, but transforms it into the state of

[1] In their view the world as a whole was created and *temporal*. But this is far from implying that medieval theology could clearly see the radical temporal and historical character, as we experience it, of even the superlunary spheres of the world.

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finality. Furthermore, the deepest conviction of Christianity and of idealism is true: the personal spirit is the meaning of the whole reality of the world and, in spite of all its biologico-physical insignificance, it is *not merely* a strange guest in a world which, standing ultimately untouched and indifferent opposite this spirit, carries on its own history; the personal spirit, precisely as human spirit, is a material, mundane, incarnate – indeed *intra*-mundane spirit. And so the end of the world is participation in the perfection of the spirit: the world remains, beyond its previous history, as the connatural surrounding of the achieved spirit which has found its finality in the fellowship with God and achieves its own history and that of the world at the same point. If this is so, however, it is necessary to consider what exact form this history of spiritual persons has taken and is taking: it is a history which, as the history of mankind, has taken place (consciously or veiled to itself) with, for and against the Person of the One who – right through death and resurrection – possessed the life of God and the history of a human reality at one and the same time – Jesus Christ, our Lord. The end of the world is, therefore, the perfection and total achievement of saving history which had already come into full operation and gained its decisive victory in Jesus Christ and in his resurrection. In this sense his coming takes place at this consummation in power and glory: his victory made manifest, the breaking through into experience, and the becoming manifest for experience too, of the fact that the world as a whole flows into his Resurrection and into the transfiguration of his body. His Second Coming is not an event which is enacted in a localized manner on the stage of an unchanged world which occupies a determined point in space in this world of our experience (how could everyone see it otherwise, for instance?); his Second Coming takes place at the moment of the perfecting of the world into the reality which he already possesses now, in such a way that he, the Godman, will be revealed to all reality and, within it, to every one of its parts in its own way, as the innermost secret and centre of all the world and of all history.

This is the context into which we must fit what we call the resurrection of the body in the strict sense. The history – which has remained [214] within the framework of the world – of those who by their lives have already effected their personal finality, reaches its real completion and explicit expression together with the consummation of the world. These human beings now become achieved as totalities with soul and body, and their perfection, already begun in death, becomes itself perfected, tangible in the world, embodied. We cannot really imagine the ‘how’ of this bodily consummation. But we can say in our faith together with God’s revelation: I believe, that we will one day be the living, the complete and achieved ones, in the whole expanse and in all the dimensions of our existence; I believe that what we call the material in us and in the world surrounding us (without really being able to say what it is basically, what belongs to its essence and what only to its temporary form and appearance) is not simply identical with what is unreal and mere appearance, with what has been cast off once and for all and which passes away before the final state of man. If, however, the material world is not simply an objective illusion, and is not merely some sort of material which must be taken off and on which the history of souls gets practice in freedom until it has achieved its end, but is a part of the true reality itself, then the material world does for that very reason enter into the consummation in accordance with the divine promise, and it too can participate in the state of finality and completion. When we look at the risen Christ, taking into consideration the experience the Apostles had with him, we may also get some idea of what the perfected condition of the body is like in which the created spirit achieves itself. Only, in doing this, we must not forget that what the Apostles, being themselves as yet unachieved, were to experience of this consummation, is a somewhat broken, translated experience, and that even then it still remains obscure how the perfected appears to the perfected. In the last analysis, therefore, we can merely say in St Paul’s

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language of paradox: it will be a spiritual body (1 Cor 15.44), i.e. a true bodily nature which, however, is pure expression of the spirit become one with the *pneuma* of God and its bodily existence, and is no longer its restricting and abasing element and its emptiness. It will be a bodily nature which does not cancel again the freedom from the earthly here-and-now gained with death but will, on the contrary, bring it out in its pure form.

If (and in so far as) we cannot think of the physical nature and concreteness of the risen and real person (even in accordance with what was experienced with regard to the risen Christ) in any other way than [215] together with a definite spatial and local determination, then we must think of heaven as a place and not merely as a 'state'. In so far as there are already human beings (the risen Lord, our Lady and no doubt others: cf. Mt 27.52) who possess a glorified bodily nature, *this* place does already exist as a result, even if not as the presupposition (as the ancients thought), of this transformation of the incarnate human spirit. When we remember the intrinsic finiteness of our own physical spatiality, which is not a presupposition but an inner moment of non-glorified matter and the result of its history, we will not find it impossible to conceive (not: 'to imagine') that this spatiality and the heavenly 'kind of space' are in themselves essentially different and incommensurable quantities. This, however, means then that, on the one hand, it is *a-priori* senseless to ask where heaven is (if by this 'where' we are to understand a location in *our* physical spatial world), and that, on the other hand, it remains nevertheless possible to hold fast most 'realistically' to the conception of the bodily existence of the glorified, including their spatial determination and location. We do not need to accommodate those in heaven in the physical world system of our experience. Since we are, however, learning in physics nowadays more than ever to think abstractly, there will be less of an obstacle in this than before to our taking the existence of those in heaven very seriously in a non-pictorial way. Once the history of the Cosmos and of the spiritual world has come to its complete end, everything will be transformed. It will then be equally correct to call the one new reality a new heaven or a new earth.

The complete, all-embracing solution is always the most difficult, because it must reconcile everything. It is most difficult for such a solution to penetrate the narrow limits of our mind which demand concise and synoptical solutions. And so it is also with regard to the question about the end. Anyone who disposes of the earthly world and dismisses the perfected man from this earth for good, spiritualistically or existentially or in whatever other way, directing him into a beatitude of (supposedly) pure spirits, stultifies and betrays the true reality of man, the child of this earth. Whoever lets man perish, ground to pieces in the cruel mill of Nature, does not know what spirit and person are, and does not know how much more real, in spite of all their apparent weakness, the spirit and the person are than all the matter and energy of physics. Whoever does not believe that both of them, once reconciled, can come to the one completion, denies in [216] the last analysis that the one God has created spirit and matter in one act for one end. The Christian, however, is the man with the complete solution. This solution is the most difficult, the least synoptical. The belief for this solution and the courage for such a solution he draws from the Word of God alone. But God's Word testifies to the resurrection of the body. For the Word himself became flesh. He did not assume something unreal but something created. But whatever is created by God is never something merely negative, is never the veil of maya. Whatever has been created by God, assumed by Christ and transfigured by his Death and Resurrection, is also destined to finality and consummation in us.

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7

ON THE QUESTION OF A FORMAL EXISTENTIAL ETHICS

The subject on which we are going to reflect in this chapter reads: On the question of a formal existential ethics. It is not for the sake of making a gesture of humility that we speak of a *question*: for practically everything we can say here is and remains in fact problematical. What exactly is meant and implied by 'existential ethics' and 'formal' existential ethics should become clear in the course of our considerations.

Our subject must first of all be distinguished from what is nowadays usually called situation ethics. It would be interesting to know who first introduced the term 'situation ethics' into the present-day discussions of moral theology and philosophy. What is meant by this term can be presupposed as known; it is also well known that situation ethics has frequently been discussed during the last few years within the realm of the German language. We may remind the reader (apart from the great names of existentialist philosophy) of the essays and books by W. Dirks, R. Egenter, J. Fuchs, M. Galli, H. E. Hengstenberg, H. Hirschmann, Ernst Michel, M. Müller, M. Reding, G. Siewerth, Th. Steinbüchel and by the author of these *Investigations*.[1] The [218] general human bases for the rise of an extreme situation ethics are known to us: the intricacy of man's life at the present time and the uncertainty and manifoldness of the ethical norms advocated. The following are the theoretical foundations of situation ethics: on the one hand, an extreme existentialist philosophy, and on the other hand a protestant repugnance to the validity of a 'law' within a Christian way of human existence. What situation ethics implies in consequence of this is easily understandable: it denies the universal obligation (and one which remains valid in every case) of material universal norms in the concrete individual case, it being quite immaterial whether these norms be conceived as a natural law or as a positive divine law. Norms are universal, but man as an existent is the individual and unique in each case, and hence he cannot be regulated in his actions by material norms of a universal kind. Man is the

[1] W. Dirks, 'Wie erkenne ich, was Gott von mir will?', *Frankfurter Hefte* VI (1951), pp. 229-244; R. Egenter, *Von der Freiheit der Kinder Gottes* (Freiburg^{2} 1949); *id*., 'Kasuistik als christliche Situationsethik', *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* I (1950), pp. 54-65; J. Fuchs, *Situation und Entscheidung* (Frankfurt 1952) (cf. pp. 163-168 in this work for further bibliographical references); M. Galli, in *Orientierung* XIV (1950), pp. 13-16, 27-30, 37-39, 52-54; H. E. Hengstenberg, *Die göttliche Vorsehung* (Münster^{3} 1947); *id*., *Die Frage der Individuation als aktuelles Problem*: *Die Kirche in der Welt*^{4} (1951), pp. 349-352; H. Hirschmann, '"Herr, was willst Du, dass ich tun soll?" Situationsethik und Erfüllung des Willens Gottes', *Geist und Leben* XXIV (1951), pp. 300-304; E. Michel, *Renovatio*. *Zur Zwiesprache zwischen Kirche und Welt* (Aulendorf 1947); *id*., *Der Partner Gottes*. *Weisungen zum christlichen Selbstverständnis* (Heidelberg 1946); *id*., *Rettung und Erneuerung des personalen Lebens* (Frankfurt 1951); M. Muller, *Exkurs über das Verhältnis der 'existenziellen Entscheidung' zur Idee einer Wesens-, Ordnungs- u. Ziel-Ethik*: *Existenz-pkilosophie im geistigen Leben der Gegenwart* (Heidelberg 1949), pp. 100-106; Pius XII, *Allocutio* to the Congress of the 'Fédération mondiale des Jeunesses Féminines Catholiques', on 18th April 1952, *AAS* XLIV (1952), pp. 413-419; K. Rahner, 'Situationsethik und Sündenmystik', *Stimmen der Zeit* CXLV (1949-50), pp. 333-342; cf. also in the *present* volume: 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man' (pp. 235-263) and 'Freedom in the Church' (pp. 89-107), and the works of the author referred to in the notes to the present essay; M. Reding, 'Situationsethik, Kasuistik und Ethos der Nachfolge', *Gloria Dei* V (1951), pp. 290-292; *id*., *Die philosophische Grundlegung der katholischen Moraltheologie* (Munich 1953); G. Siewerth 'Von der Bildung des Gewissens', *Mitteilungsblatt des Aachener Bundes und der pädagischen Akademie* (June 1951), pp. 3-36; Th. Steinbüchel, *Die philosophische Grundlegung der katholischen Sittenlehre* I (Düsseldorf^{4} 1951), *id*., *Christliche Lebenshaltungen in der Krisis der Zeit und des Menschen* (Frankfurt 1949); A. van Rijen, 'Situatie Moraal', *Nederlandse Katholicke Stemmen* XLIX (1953) pp. 265-276.

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believer; and faith sets free from the Law. There remains then as 'norm' of action only the call of each particular unique situation through which man must pass successfully, be it before the inappellable judgement of his free decision as a person, or be it before God, whose immediateness to the situation, conscience and faith must not be thought of as mediated by a universal law. A law can therefore only have the function of making man always face up again to each situation peculiar to him, or forcing him to believe, but it cannot be that which has to be fulfilled. How such [219] a situation ethics is then established more in detail, whether it is in fact always advocated in the extreme form we have just outlined and whether every theory which calls itself 'situation ethics' adopts this extreme position – all these are questions which need not occupy us here. When we speak here of an (extreme) situation ethics, we mean the explicit or implicit denial of the absolute validity of material norms for the human person as such or the believer as such – the denial of norms which can state something which is also binding in the concrete situation.

That such a situation ethics is unacceptable to a Catholic hardly needs any lengthy proof, however much the practice of many Catholics in the present age is in danger of favouring such a situation ethics unconsciously. This kind of situation ethics comes in the last analysis to the same thing as a massive nominalism; it basically denies the possibility of any universal knowledge which has objective significance and truly applies to concrete reality. It turns the human person into an individual who is absolutely and in every respect unique (which the human person, considered as created and material, is not), and (what is far more important still) it also comes into conflict with divine revelations as given in the Scriptures and *magisterium* of the Church. It is not our intention to expound and establish all this more closely here. All this has, after all, been impressed once more on Catholic theologians in most recent times by 'Humani generis'.[2] Yet we must nevertheless add one thing even to this: one may get the impression that we sometimes make the proof for this rejection too easy for ourselves. For the question is – among other things – the following: *How* do we determine, for instance, the eternal, universal and unchanging nature of man? Is it by a transcendental deduction (and in that case, how and with what results)? Or can this notion of the nature be found in a purely *a-posteriori* empirical fashion? Or partly in the former, partly in the latter way? However, is the *a-posteriori* determined condition of man really unchangeable? How do I recognize in it what really belongs to the nature? Is what we have (until now) been able to find always and everywhere a sure and sufficient criterion for this condition? Can this existence (investigated *a posteriori*), *may* it (morally), be changed by man himself who achieves himself freely? What would follow in this case as to what [220] concerns the moral norms? What would then be the peculiar structure of the knowledge concerning this sort of essential make-up of man (which is first of all effected and delivered in and through freedom) and the moral norms drawn from it? Of what kind would then be the 'necessity' indicated in such norms? What sort of relationship is there basically between law, faith, grace and freedom according to St Paul? There will no doubt be few theologians who can remember from their school years in theology ever having heard anything really exact about these questions. Yet, as has been said, none of these questions are up for discussion here. We have referred to situation ethics at the beginning of our reflections merely because, on the one hand, what we are going to call 'formal existential ethics' must not be confused with the (outlined) situation ethics, and because, on the other hand, this existential ethics is in our opinion the core of truth which is also found in the false situation ethics.

In order to come now to a positive understanding of what is meant by existential ethics, we are going to start from a critical view of the reigning conception in our present-day Catholic Moral Theology and Philosophy about the content and process of a definite moral imperative

[2] Cf. also the Allocution by Pius XII referred to in note 1 above, p. 217.

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with material content in a concrete situation of the individual man. It does not really matter to us here whether in the course of this discussion of the common conception, absolutely everything is really brought out which has ever been thought and said about this question in scholastic theology and philosophy by profound and illustrious minds. What is above all important for our purposes is rather what is normally thought about this in the schools and in the *turba magna* of minor theologians. For this is precisely in question for us: whether this common conception really does justice to the way things are in reality.

Let us take a determined material imperative for a particular person in a concrete situation: here and now, this particular thing with this particular material content is to be done by you. Now how, according to the common conception of our present-day moral teaching, does such a concrete and materially determined imperative come about for the individual man in his particular determined situation? Surely it does so by the fact that the application of universal moral norms to the concrete situation results *ipso facto* in the concrete imperative. Naturally this conception knows also that in the concrete individual case there may possibly be several things which can be lawfully done (I [221] may, for instance, in certain circumstances choose to go for a walk *hic et nunc* or say my breviary). Yet this does not alter anything in this way of understanding things as far as the basic conviction is concerned that the concrete imperative arises out of a universal norm and the concrete situation simply given as a matter of fact. Simply, this imperative is in the case just mentioned merely a concrete permissiveness of several possibilities. This permissiveness itself is in this case the norm which arises out of the general norms plus the given situation.

It is not essential for us to know here how these universal norms are founded and how they are recognized. We can presuppose as given that they exist and that they are recognized by the acting subject as being obligatory for him. The question in this common conception is merely as to what is the given situation here, and what application of determined universal norms is demanded by this situation. The situation, as it were, gives the cue for the choice of the universal norms to be considered here and now. What is carried out and applied, are the universal norms and they alone. The situation is conceived tacitly and as a matter of course as *simply pre-existent* to the finding of the norm and the making of one's decision. The coincidence of this simply objective situation and the general norm results, according to the common opinion, in the concrete imperative in this situation, and this quite unambiguously, in such a way that apart from these two factors nothing more is required for the finding of the concrete imperative. Or put in another way: according to the common teaching, ethics is a syllogistic, deductive ethics. I.e., the major premise contains a universal principle: in this situation, under these presuppositions this or that is to be done. It must be noted in this connection that in such a major even the situation is something abstract – something of which it is tacitly presupposed that it can in principle happen often and that it can, therefore, be (adequately) expressed in a universal notion and in a universal proposition. The minor premise of this syllogism then asserts the fact that the presuppositions, the situation is given *hic et nunc*. The conclusion finally converts the major into a concrete and clear imperative. Conscience, accordingly, is conceived exclusively as that mental-moral function of the person which applies the universal norm to the concrete '*casus*'. The difficulty in discovering the moral imperative in the concrete is accordingly seen to lie only in the exactness and adequacy of the analysis of the given situation *in concreto* and, under certain circumstances, in the unambiguous expression of the [222] universal norms. However, if both these things are absolutely clear – this is the tacit view – then there can no longer be any doubt about the concrete imperative. Whoever knows the universal laws exactly and comprehends the given situation to the last detail, knows also clearly what he must or may do here. An ethics whose norms are theocentric, will naturally admit in this theory that the living God can, in the nature of things and basically, manifest his will in the concrete situation – a will which need not be

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derivable either from a universal norm or from the situation distinct from that manifestation, and which must then nevertheless be obeyed. Yet either such a case will always be regarded as an exception, or such a particular commandment of God will, in spite of everything, be subsumed under the general divine norms or be counted as a factor in the given situation. And so, nothing in the fundamentals of the general theory of a syllogistic, deductive ethics is altered by this case.

Is there any justification for this current view? This question is naturally not meant in the sense of wishing to question the fact that universal norms can and must be applied to the individual case, or that the individual case must obey these norms. Otherwise we would after all fall back into the very situation ethics which we dismissed as unacceptable at the beginning of this chapter. We also do not mean to dispute the fact that in practice, in thousands of cases in everyday life, the method just described suffices for obtaining a concrete moral imperative. This is obvious. And we do not have the least intention of dramatizing the speculative problem towards which we are steering and of acting as if there had been no theory of morals up until now sufficiently acceptable in practice. Yet there remains the following question to be put to the theory described above: is what we are in fact morally obliged to do in the concrete case, also basically identical with what can be deduced from the universal norms in view of a concrete situation? The morally obligatory cannot and must not contradict these norms – this is clear. There can be nothing which actually ought to be done or is allowed in a concrete or individual situation, which could lie outside these universal norms, and to that extent everything which morally ought to be done in the concrete is also the realization of the universal norms. But is it not *more* than that? Is what is morally done *only* the realization of universal norms – is what ought morally to be done in the concrete case *merely*, as it were, the intersection of the law and the given situation? And conversely: [223] if in a certain situation the universal laws leave room for a free choice, i.e. if according to the universal norms several things are still ‘allowed’ and ethically possible in a determined situation, can we then do what we want, just because *ex supposito* we do not in such a case offend against any universal laws whose content could be materially formulated? Is the concretion of the individual moral good (i.e. of the concrete morally good action) merely the negative circumscription of the ethical universal by a definite here and now, which carves out a portion for the here and now out of the sum-total of what is ethically possible and allowed, without this becoming and being more than a case or *casus* of the universal?

We should like to answer: ‘No’. The reasons for this ‘no’ and the explanation of the counterthesis lead us into the set of difficult problems regarding the basic relationship between the universal and the individual, applied to the ethical universal and the ethical individual. We cannot, of course, hope to treat this wider question here in the manner demanded by the nature of the matter. The only possible alternative, therefore, is to give a few indications regarding this question. For this question cannot be passed over if we wish to pose the problem at all from which we have taken our departure.

We would really have to ask already at this point as to what exactly is the position of the situation whose existence and perceptibility we have up until now presupposed, following the current conception of the formation of a concrete moral imperative. How does one, as a matter of fact, perceive such a situation and how far can one perceive it reflectively? Can a concrete situation – at least in principle – be adequately analysed into a finite series of general propositions? For there are no other kinds of propositions apart from general ones. For besides such propositions there is only the no longer propositional turning towards the concrete by pointing to it: ‘That there belongs to this kind’ – a ‘sentence’ whose subject is not a notion. And now, if there is not (in a complete way), nor cannot at all be, such an adequate analysis of the concrete situation as such into formulable propositions, what follows

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then from this as far as the theory described above is concerned? I.e. what follows for it, in so far as it alleges that it not merely states something definite and essential about a concrete case (especially by negative judgements and maxims), but also claims furthermore to be able to provide us fundamentally with the clear imperative for a situation which as such cannot, after all, be captured [224] unequivocally and adequately by the syllogism and be built into it? As is well known, the medieval metaphysics of knowledge greatly racked its brain- – even as far as the field of the knowledge of the ethical was concerned – about these and similar questions. We do not get the impression that the average textbook ethics of today is very much perturbed by questions of this kind. However, we intend to leave all these questions to one side, although we could – even from this angle – work up to the real question we have proposed to ourselves.

We want to approach our problem from a different angle. Let us presuppose (in an almost impossible oversimplification of the problem) that we have clarified and mentally penetrated a certain situation through and through, and that we have comprehended it by some sort of faculty of human knowledge in the moral field – let us say, by the virtue of prudence, etc. Let us suppose further, that all the universal material norms of ethical action, which can in any way apply to this case, are displayed before our eyes in all their clarity. Suppose that by reason of both these presuppositions, we have formulated a concrete moral demand of which we can say with certitude: by fulfilling this demand, we certainly do not offend against any of the universal norms applicable to this case – and also do not offend against any demand made on us by this situation, in so far as this situation has become a reflex datum for us through its analysis into propositions. The question then is this: is the fulfilment of the imperative identical in the concrete with what we are morally obliged to do here and now? Once more: the question is not whether even what we ought to do here and now might perhaps be permitted to offend against the imperative produced in the manner described. Any question of this being possible must be put out of our mind from the very start. Rather, the question is merely whether this imperative is simply identical with what we are obliged to do here and now. And this question has not yet been answered simply by what we have just described as unquestionable. It has not yet been answered for at least two reasons. Firstly: it is a least conceivable that – even in a concrete situation – all the universal norms that can be found still leave different ways of acting open to us as being allowed and possible in their respective spheres. Indeed, this will happen very often. In such a case, is all of what is allowed before the tribunal of the universal norms actually possible morally, or can I also happen that, from some other source altogether, only one of these ‘permitted’ possibilities of action is designated as the only [225] morally right one in the concrete? Anyone who opts for the first alternative, presupposes what has first to be proved, viz. the proposition that what ought morally to be done in the concrete is nothing more than merely a case and specifying application of the universal norms. This, however, has to be proved and this is precisely what we are questioning. And secondly: even if in the dimension of what is reflectively assignable, the dimension of the describable difference of possible actions and behaviours, only one action is morally permitted in a determined situation according to the universal norms – when, therefore, the syllogistic deduction has seemingly succeeded unequivocally – even then there still remains the question as to whether just this apparently one and unambiguously determined action could not take quite a different form in a dimension which can no longer be adequately regulated by the universal norms, and yet be here and now the only right one and the one carrying the moral obligation. Taking both reasons together, it is possible to ask: is what corresponds to the universal norms simply identical with what ought to be done here and now, and is what obeys these norms also simply without further qualification what is morally permitted? More concisely still: Is the concrete moral action merely a case of the universal moral good?

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This however, seems completely open to question. The concrete moral act is more than just the realization of a universal idea happening here and now in the form of a case. The act is a reality which has a positive and substantial property which is basically and absolutely unique. To prove this in a precise and sufficient manner goes beyond the possibilities offered here. We can only give a few indications of what we mean. We can, to start with, say from a more Christian and *theological* standpoint: Man is destined to eternal life as an individual and someone in the concrete. His acts are, therefore, not merely of a spatio-temporal kind as is the case with material things; his acts have a meaning for eternity, not only morally but also *ontologically*. Now we must, however (even for ontological reasons), hold fast absolutely to the fact – even if this is not obvious to everyone at first sight – that something which is merely a case and a circumscription of something universal, something which *as* an individual and concrete something is just sheer negation, also cannot have – *as* something individual – any real, eternally valid significance. Man with his mental and moral acts, therefore, cannot be merely the appearance of the universal and of what is – in this universality alone – 'eternal' and ever-valid in the [226] negative expansion of space and time. In him, the individual, there must rather be a given a positive reality; expressed differently: his spiritual individuality cannot be (at least not in his acts) merely the circumscription of an in itself universal nature through the negativity of the *materia prima*, understood as the mere repetition of the same thing at different points in space-time. We must realize that a contrary view would be profoundly unchristian, and that anyone who does not see this, really has no right to protest against a medieval Averroism or against a modern Idealism. The assertion of something positively individual, at least in man's spiritual personal acts, does not moreover, need to appear unscholastic, indeed not even really unthomistic. Of course, anyone who cannot rise to the metaphysical thought that (in good scholastic language) God cannot even *de potentia absoluta* create a second Gabriel – in other words, anyone who cannot rise *at all* to the notion of something individual which is not the instance of some universal idea, of something repeatable – cannot follow our thought here from the very start. Anyone, however, who can grasp this thomistic thought of something real which cannot be subsumed unequivocally under a universal idea or under a law, cannot reject the idea from the very start that something like this is conceivable – indeed, must be postulated – also in man as a spiritual person, as that existent who does not resolve himself completely into *forma-materiae-esse*. We may also say: if (and in so far as) man as a spiritual person participates by his acts in the permanency-in-itself of the pure form, which does not resolve itself in its ordination to matter as the principle of repeatability, then he must also participate in that spiritual individuality of the spiritual which has a positive individuality, an individuality which is not merely the sameness of the repeated universal and not merely a case of the law. Seen in this way, we therefore have to say: in so far as man belongs to the material world by his concrete activity, his activity is an instance and fulfilment of something universal which determines his actions as something different from the individual and opposed to it, i.e. as a *law* expressed in universal propositions. In so far as the same man subsists in his own spirituality, his actions are also always more than mere applications of the universal law to the *casus* in space and time; they have a substantial positive property and uniqueness which can no longer be translated into a universal idea and norm expressible in propositions constructed of universal notions. At least in his actions, man is really also (not only) [227] *individuum ineffabile*, whom God has called by his name, a name which is and can only be unique, so that it really is worthwhile for this unique being as such to exist for all eternity.

It also cannot be said that such an individuality of a spiritual act has no place in the real world, or that one cannot conceive anything by it. For, first of all, there is the whole almost unascertainable field of different possibilities which remain open to the morally acting man

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within the scope of what is morally commanded and allowed. In every case in which a man decides, *within* the ethical sphere of the universal norms, on one of several possibilities – in which he 'chooses' *within* the sphere of the universally and positively moral good – this (non-derivable) concretion of his moral 'being-thus', brought about by a decision, is undoubtedly conceivable as the 'coming-to-light' of his ineffable moral individuality and not just as the merely arbitrary selection from among certain possibilities, as if these are equally-valid in the last resort and as if in relation to them, the 'just-this' and 'not-that' has no further positive and ethical meaning. And furthermore: even in a case where the deductive, syllogistic formation of conscience from the universal norms and the concretely given situation seemingly leads to the unequivocal result of a concretely one imperative, the latter can still in actual fact be realized in the most diverse ways and with the most diverse inner attitudes. Even a case where these differences are no longer traceable, where one could conceive of exactly the same case as repeatedly realizable, *only* proves (this and nothing more) that something uniquely and positively individual cannot be expressed reflectively and after the manner of a proposition – that it cannot be the object of a reflective objective knowledge which can be articulated in propositions. It does not, however, prove that there cannot be a case of the positively ethico-individual element of a personal action.

The following must be added to what has been said: this positively individual element in the moral action (an action which is more than the fulfilment of the universal norm or of an abstract being: 'man') is even as such to be conceived absolutely as the object of a binding will of God. It would be absurd for a God-regulated, theological morality to think that God's binding will could only be directed to the human action in so far as the latter is simply a realization of the universal norm and of a universal nature. If the creative will of God is directly and unambiguously directed to the concrete and the individual, then surely this is not true merely in so far as this individual reality is the realization [228] of a case of the universal – rather it is directed to the concrete as such, as it really is – to the concrete in its positive, and particularly its substantial, material uniqueness. God is interested in history not only in so far as it is the carrying out of norms, but in so far as it is a history which consists in the harmony of unique events and which precisely in this way has a meaning for eternity. The fact that this divine binding force, which regards the individual reality as such, cannot be expressed in a general proposition, is no proof of its non-existence, but arises out of the nature of things. The perception of this 'individual norm' (if we are going to use this term for the binding will of God in so far as it regards the uniquely individual which, precisely in its particular positivity, cannot be specified in the universal which can be contracted in 'cases') cannot come about in the same way as the perception of the universal law, viz. by an abstraction which forms" notions of essences. Yet this fact is also no proof for the non-existence of such a perception and for the consequent impossibility of such an 'individual norm' or 'existential norm' as something actually binding.[3]

[3] The more familiar notion of 'individual' (individual-norm, -ethics), which would seem the obvious one to use in the context and the nature of things, has been deliberately clarified here (and in what follows) by using the notion of 'existential' (existential-norm, -ethics). We have done this in order to make use even of the terminology to guard against possible misunderstanding, such as that 'individual-' might be understood as being used here in contrast to 'social-', and 'individual-ethics' as against 'social-ethics'. The notion of an 'existential' ethics excludes this misunderstanding; it shows itself unequivocally as the counter- and complementary notion of an abstractly universal 'essentialist ethics'. Yet this 'existential ethics' does not signify an unreal 'ethics of existence' (in the sense of the familiar distinction of existence and essence). On the contrary, it relates – in accordance with the original content of meaning of the modern word 'existential' – to the *substantial nature* of man, in so far as this (at least as φυ&σιφ, as principle of the origin and actualizing of the historico-personal activity) must achieve itself constitutively in the positivity of each single, uniquely-one con-cretion of the individual decision. And so this nature in particular cannot have the all sufficient condition of its free moral self-realization in an abstractly essential ethics of norms and order, arrived at purely deductively. It remains

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[229] No matter how inadequate the reasons offered in the present context, it can surely be said that there is an individual ethical reality of a positive kind which is untranslatable into a material universal ethics; there is a binding ethical uniqueness – by which we do not mean to say that *every* ethical individual reality must also necessarily and always be a binding moral reality, and that therefore there also cannot be anything individually or existentially ethical which remains free. In so far as there is a moral reality in an existential-ethic sense and of a binding kind which nevertheless cannot (in the very nature of things) be translated into universal propositions of material content – there must be an existential ethics of a formal kind, i.e. an ethics which treats of the basic elements, the formal structures and the basic manner of perceiving such an existential-ethic reality. Just as, on the one hand, there cannot be any science of the individual considered as a really individual singular as such and yet, on the other hand, there is a universal formal ontology of individual reality, so (and in this sense) there can and must be a formal doctrine of existential concretion, a formal existential-ethics.

In practice, the most urgent and difficult problem regarding such a formal existential-ethics would, of course, be the question about the *perceptibility* of the individual moral reality and its obligation (when and where such an obligation is present). We may say: there must be some function of conscience which does not merely apply the universal norms to each of my particular situations but which moreover grasps also what has not yet been made absolutely clear by the situation and the universal norms, and which is precisely and as such what has to be done by me individually. And in saying this, we have indeed named an essential, basic function of conscience, which is for the most part overlooked by the usual scholastic ethics, but we have not yet explained how this individual – or existential-function of conscience comes about. We should go on to ask in this regard: how does the individual person know about himself at all as the uniquely individual? How is such a perception conceivable, when basically it cannot adequately be a perception of an objective propositional reflection? How are we to pose and answer the question, when (and in so far as) this individual reality is not the individuality of my being and of my already freely effected state, but the individual uniqueness of something which has still to be done by me? How can this individual future reality be perceived also as something which ought to be done? What [230] does this (moral) necessity look like, which emerges in the approaching history and affects it? It is clear that we cannot really answer all these questions here. We would have to enter into a study of the peculiarities of a non-objective perception which is not merely a subsequent, reflected subsumption and articulation of an (adequately) given condition, but also a constitutive expression of the known thing itself; we would have to go into the question of the peculiar identity of perceiving and acting in the perception of the personal. We would have to treat of the fundamental option of the total (although also in a certain sense empty) basic decision about himself, in which the person, when he begins to reflect about himself always finds himself already there. We would have to speak of the perception of the future and free individual reality by means of an, as it were, ‘playing’ and ‘attempting’ anticipation of what (as something absolutely decided) is still outstanding and in the future, because the quality of the free future can be known only in such an anticipation by testing attempts (up to the point of being ‘tempted’). It would have to be asked how all this is modified in a supernatural order where there are the gifts of the Holy Ghost, a supernatural instinct and an individual immediacy to the personal, living God far beyond anything merely in the nature of a norm or law, where there is an inexpressible groaning of the Spirit and an unction which teaches us

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installed, on the contrary, in just as unnegotiable a manner (i.e. in the line of the constitution of the substantial ethico-personal nature) in the non-derivable qualitative property of the unique, individual act – an act which cannot be treated adequately in the manner of a ‘case’. An analysis of this ‘existential’ structure of human nature could provide us with a more exact *philosophical* basis for what we have developed here from a more theological point of view.

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everything, a secret understanding between the spiritual man and the Spirit of God, so that this spiritual man judges everything but cannot himself be judged by anyone. For the clarification of this non-reflective, non-propositional self-presence of the person to itself in its positive uniqueness we might refer to the dialectic between the uncertainty of salvation, which is an essential property of the condition of a Christian, and the (equally given) testimony of the Spirit that we are children of God (which surely does not refer merely to God's salvific will in general and which cannot be adequately interpreted by a theory of a 'moral' certitude of the individual state of grace); we might adduce certain phenomena of current depth-psychology which manifest something like a coexistence of knowledge about oneself on the one hand, and nescience and displacement of knowledge about oneself, on the other hand, which is nevertheless given. These and many other things would have to be reflected on if we wished to come to a detailed knowledge about our singularity, about the existential quality of our actions as something possible and existentially binding. Yet [231] an exact exposition of all this is more than what can be undertaken in this context.

Since this is therefore not possible, we must content ourselves with pointing out, to finish up, a few things which – as it were as applications of the theory of the truth of an existential ethics and the existentially ethical – can show that the question we have posed ourselves here is not of merely speculative interest. We can merely refer to these things, and even in this we must renounce any systematic method.

It may, for instance, be said that – in addition to its other uses – the suggested theory has its meaning also for the exercise of ethico-theological casuistry. This is not meant to imply that we approve here of the horror against which the traditional casuistry so widespread and frequently engaged in in Germany. This horror rests to a large extent on mental laziness and smugness and on the dread of a clear, discerning and penetrating decision. Yet are there not cases in casuistry where one labours in vain, from the very start, to reach an unequivocal decision of the case by means of a syllogistic deduction in the manner described above, since so unequivocal a clarity cannot be reached in this way, for the simple reason that it cannot be attained by starting with the universal? Are there not cases in casuistry where we make unnecessary work for ourselves in the wrong direction, because we do not reckon with an existential ethics? Is it not conceivable that we also reach for the formal means of probabilism at the wrong time-when there is no possibility of our coming to a decision of an unambiguous kind by means of a universal essentialist-ethics and we then come too quickly to the conclusion that the concrete case must remain open to a decision *in utramque partem* after the manner of probabilism, because the only method known is that of the universal essentialist-ethics? In general, would not an existential-ethics determine the significance and the limits of the different systems in moral theology (i.e. nowadays above all probabilism) from the very start by a more exact ontology and theology of the ethical individual?

A further question would be whether we could not understand the whole teaching on Choice in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius much more profoundly and exactly if we were clearly conscious of such an existential-ethics and the way of finding an ethical existential-imperative. According to the usual theory about the finding of the correct imperative in the concrete (which we have outlined at the beginning of the chapter), the third time for making a choice named in [232] the Exercises would have to be the real and decisive way of coming to a decision. But according to St Ignatius this time is only something secondary compared with the first and second times for choice. We may perhaps hazard the assertion that – as regards this point (as also many others) – our average theology and ethics has not yet caught up with the unconscious theology underlying the Exercises.

In the usual theory of sin we treat sin too exclusively as the mere offence against a universal divine norm. Could not an existential-ethics help us to see more clearly that sin, over and above its property of being an offence against the law of God, is also and just as

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much an offence against an utterly individual imperative of the individual will of God, which is the basis of uniqueness? Would we not perceive sin more clearly in this way as the failure of the personal-individual love of God? Even though all this has been developed in a formal ontology which in itself is of a philosophical kind, would it not offer a set of categories applicable and useful in a theology of the supernatural as an immediate personal encounter with the personal God as he is in himself?

In an essay about the 'Individual in the Church', the author of the present study has drawn attention to the significance of the question developed here for the position of the individual in the Church.[4] We can merely make reference to this here. If there is an existential-ethics, then there is also a sphere of decision for the individual in and for the Church, which cannot be taken away from the individual by a material command of the ecclesiastical authority.

Has not our theory consequences also for a more profound theology of obedience in general, in the Church, and in the life of the religious? Is obedience to a person giving commands merely the respect for the objective rightness (to be presumed in the individual case) of the individual command, which is right as measured by the objective universal norms of a material kind on which it is based, or must obedience in some cases – and where and when – also be exercised as an act of homage to the individual will of the person commanding which can no longer be thought of as an interpretation and application of the universal and, in themselves, intelligible norms? When and towards whom is this second sort of obedience conceivable?

[233] Would it be possible to find reasons, in the proposed theory, for a difference between the teaching and pastoral offices as two spheres which are not adequately reducible to each other? That such a question also has very practical consequences for the life of the Church in the concrete surely does not need a great deal of explanation here.

What are the consequences of our theory for the theory of the choice of calling in the strict sense? Even though we should not dispute the practical usefulness of Lahitton's theory – the usual theory in the Church for the past forty years – about the choosing of a calling and the requirements for being called, especially where ecclesiastical functionaries are concerned (and not the person making the choice), we may nevertheless ask ourselves whether this theory is really quite correct theoretically and in particular where it is a question of the one who asks himself about his being called.

We might also ask ourselves whether the suggested theory could not provide a contribution to the question about the duty of striving for perfection. For if our theory is right, then the question about the duty of a higher moral good is not yet decided in the negative whenever it is impossible to derive this duty from universal norms.

Does our theory not permit us to contribute something also to the question about the relation between the hierarchical and charismatic elements in the Church and in her history? Is not the Hierarchy as such the bearer and guarantor of the correct application of the permanent norms instituted together with the Church? However, if the Church acts in her history and if every action is always also more than just the application of the universal norms to the concrete case and given situation, then must there not be a function in the Church which takes in precisely this divinely inspired individual impulse given to the action of the Church and gives it its validity in the Church – a function which cannot be replaced by the administration and right application of the universal norms? Must this function always be originally found and united in the person of the bearers of the hierarchical powers? And if not (as is undoubtedly the case, after all, according to the evidence of Church history), does the Hierarchy not have the duty then to accept such impulses from those quarters in which they

[4] Cf. *Stimmen der Zeit* CXXXIX (1946-47), pp. 260-276; the same in 'Gefahren im heutigen Katholizismus', in the series *Christ heute* I, 10 (Einsiedeln 1950).

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originally strike the Church in the providence of God: even from the charismatics, the prophets or whatever one may wish to call these antennae of the individual divine imperatives given to the Church? Can this provide us with a rational basis for 'public opinion' in the [234] Church?[5] (Seen from this point of view, are – for example – the reasons given for the Sacred Heart devotion completely dependent on the fact that the general and ever valid dogma gives it a Nihil Obstat?)

Such and similar questions could no doubt be still further multiplied. However, these questions may show that the suggested theory is not merely of an academic nature. Certainly, this theory must not be overestimated in its significance. Just as there was logical thought before there was a reflectively grasped formal logic, so there was and is existential-ethical action of a natural and supernatural kind individually and in the Church, even before there is an explicitly developed existential-ethics. And just as, even after the discovery of formal logic, applied logic was not essentially improved, so it will also be in the present case. And yet, just as no one will on account of this hold formal logic to be a superfluous matter of idle curiosity, so, we would think, it will be necessary also to think about an existential-ethics of a formal kind. Such an ethics might have its uses from many points of view. For this it must, of course, be presupposed that it is right and is first of all developed explicitly. We did not mean to do more here than to raise a few questions in this direction.

[5] Cf. by the author: 'Die öffentliche Meinung in der Kirche', *Orientierung* XXIII-XXIV (1951), pp. 225-258; the same under the title of *Free Speech in the Church* (London and New York 1960).

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8

THE DIGNITY AND FREEDOM OF MAN[1]

The general theme of the Austrian Catholic Congress (*Katholikentag*) is 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man'. The significance and aptness of this theme for the present state of the world is obvious. Yet so also is its obscurity. We need only remember that the word 'freedom' in particular has been the motto and war-cry of the most diverse intellectual and religious movements in the West. It was Paul's cry against Jewish legalism. It was the cry of the French Revolution and of Liberalism in their fight against the political and social system of the Christian Middle Ages in the West and against the Church . . . And strange to say, one hundred years ago under Pius IX, 'freedom' was the object of criticism and reservations on the part of the Church, whereas today under Pius XII it is the motto of a '*Katholikentag*'.

There can be no question here of formulating stirring slogans with regard to this theme. Our intention is rather to put forward – quite soberly and almost in thesis form – a few basic reflections on this subject which might to some extent supply the basis for the various specialized group-discussions. These reflections, therefore, must not remain too much on the level of mere generalities and yet they must not be so 'concrete' as to anticipate and make superfluous the work on individual problems.

I. THE DIGNITY OF MAN

1. 'Dignity' in general signifies the fact that a being has of its very nature a determined objective position within the manifoldness and [236] heterogeneity of being which demands respect and protection as well as realization both in its relations to others and in itself. Thus 'dignity' is, in the last analysis, objectively identical with the being of an entity – understood as that which is given necessarily in its 'essential structure' (*Wesensstruktur*) *and* as that which is given as a task (*Aufgegebenes*) to be accomplished. And in the present context 'essential structure' means everything man necessarily is and must be, whether this – regarded in itself – be a natural essence (*Natur*) or whether it be – with reference to the basic structure – a free gift of God, a grace and hence supernatural.

2. For the exact nature of the dignity of man we must consult Reason and Revelation. We cannot give a detailed explanation here either of the methods of natural knowledge by reason and the science of revelation or of their respective possibilities, validity, differences and mutual relationships. We must simply mention two things:

a. With regard to objective rank, subjective claim to lead and comprehensiveness in content, the knowledge and science of revelation as found in the believer is superior to rational metaphysical knowledge. This is true even though, conversely, a certain 'natural' knowledge is also required as an irreplaceable prerequisite for the knowledge of faith. For this 'natural' knowledge itself is effectively exercised through God's saving grace, as well as being co-revealed as a guarantee for its true contents by the God of revelation. Hence our

[1] This Essay was originally given as a Paper at the opening meeting of the Study Session of the Austrian 'Katholikentag' (Catholic Congress) in Mariazell on 1st May 1952. This fact determined its subject. We have not tried here to disguise its thematic thought and form as pre-determined by the leading ideas of the Vienna 'Katholikentag'.

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method in attempting to express the nature and dignity of man will be to start from revelation and to try to determine, as far as possible, the 'natural' remainder of that dignity from this starting-point, i.e. from the whole of this (historical) 'nature' of man.

b. In view of the biological, cultural and cultural-historical mutability of man, it is no easy task to attain an exact metaphysical understanding of the permanent, necessary nature of man underlying his historical mutability. Such a knowledge is not to be gained by a mere collection of factual evidence of what can be observed at a moment of time in the individual man – by using, as it were, the methods of the natural sciences. For this would imply that what can be thus observed is 'everything', or that everything observed is necessary for the nature or in accordance with it. A knowledge of essences (*Wesenserkenntnis*) which includes the concrete knowledge about the possibilities [237] of nature (which in part are to be freely realized), must rely rather on a twofold method:

(i) On a transcendental method. Everything which already reaffirms itself with implicit necessity in the very *question about* the nature of man and in the very way man puts this question (i.e. more strictly speaking, in the metaphysical aspect of the knowledge man has of himself), belongs to the metaphysically necessary nature of man and to the moral perfection of that nature. Anything in this knowledge which is not transcendentally 'lasting' in this sense, need not on that account be accidental; but the question of its belonging to the necessary nature of man does in this case require to be proved separately and cannot be presupposed as self-evident.

(ii) The reflection on the historical experience man has of himself, without which the notion of man remains 'empty' and without which this notion has no clearness and consequently no power in history. Such reflection is indispensable because only in this way can we recognize the metaphysical possibilities of man as a free being which, because he is free, cannot be adequately deduced from something else clearly given. Since this reflection, being itself a 'historically becoming' process, is essentially unfinished, the understanding of the essence is permanently *in via* in spite of its *a-priori* and transcendental metaphysical element. To give an *adequate* design of man (what he is and ought to become) by an *a-priori*-rationalistic reason is impossible. Man must always refer *also* to his history and thus even to his future in order to know what he is. And conversely, the critique of the experience of self, which is necessary because not everything which is, is right and 'rational', refers the historical experience back to the transcendental, metaphysical method of self-knowledge and to God's judgement on man in revelation. Because man really knows 'concretely' about himself in this historical experience only – an experience which is still in a state of becoming – there is no manifest knowledge of essence without *Tradition* (of a natural kind and of the kind of saving history) and without a *venturing*, planning, devising anticipation of the future (which is itself grasped in an intramundane, 'utopian' manner and in a revealed 'eschatology'). All that follows, about the dignity (i.e. the nature) of man, must be understood with the reservation that the second element of this knowledge of essence is brought out merely formally and not in its reflex content. Finally, it must be noted that nothing can be explained here regarding these questions by [238] something which is itself no more than an independent and lucid hypothesis, but that every notion refers to everyone for its explanation, and that such explanation must always merely elucidate the explaining and the explained and at the same time remove them into the obscurity of mystery.

3. The essential dignity of man consists in the fact that, within a sexually differentiated community in spatio-temporal history, man, by spiritually recognizing himself and freely identifying himself, can and ought to open himself (in the direction of immediate personal communion with the infinite God) to the love in Jesus Christ which communicates God

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himself. His dignity may be regarded as something pre-established (*vorgegebene*), i.e. as a capacity and a task, or as something fulfilled. Fulfilment, the gaining and preservation of the pre-established dignity constitutes itself the final and definite dignity of man (which, therefore, can be lost). The pre-established dignity cannot simply cease or become non-existent, but can exist as something denied, as foundation for damnation and judgement. In so far as this nature is from God and directed to God, receiving from him and opening itself in his direction, it is a nature in which the given dignity is always both the innermost being of man and what lies above man and hence partakes in the remoteness, the mysteriousness and namelessness of God. It only unveils itself completely in the knowing-believing-loving dialogue of man with God, and hence can never be given simply in the manner of object-like objectivity. We perceive God in a mirror and in images only; the same is equally true of man and of his destiny, for he is from God and directed towards God.

4. The dignity of nature is pre-appointed (vor-*gegeben*) to man for his free self-understanding – as the goal of his freedom, as its salvation or judgement.

5. The dignity of man's nature may be regarded formally, i.e. in advance of the question whether, by exercising his free choice, which is dependent of course on redemptive grace and the judgement of God, his dignity brings about his salvation or God's judgement upon him. [239] Regarded in this way, the dignity of man's nature embraces the following moments which mutually determine each other:

a. Man's personal nature (in its specifically created and human characteristic), i.e. the 'natural' being of man. This means:

(i) *Man is Spirit*: in the perception of the spatio-temporal, he is always dependent on the total unity of reality, i.e. on God, who existed before the multiplicity of his immediately-given objects. This is true even in his own case, understood as a subject set off from the object and (implicitly) perceiving.

(ii) *He is freedom*: about this we will have to say more later.

(iii) *He is an individual*: he is not merely an instance of the universal; each man is someone unique and ultimately never someone who can be totally deduced; his individuality in being-thus and in action is not merely the negatively spatio-temporal application of a universal or of a universal idea, which circumscribes him in the here and now. Because he is an individual, he has a valid existence which, as a real existence, does not coincide with his spatio-temporal existence; he is 'immortal' and the subject of an eternal destination and destiny. This is why the individual man, who is now, may never be forcibly sacrificed, in a manner which destroys him, for the future of 'humanity', of the others who come after him. The present is never just the material for a utopian intramundane future.

(iv) *He is a community-building person*: Person is not the opposite to community; rather, both are correlative realities, i.e. *qua* person, man is intended for community with other persons (God and men), and there is community only where there are *persons* and where persons are protected; he is a perfect person in the measure in which he opens himself in love and service for other persons. A genuine problem of opposing tensions exists only where (and in so far as) there is a question of striking a balance, in the plurality of human existence, between personality (or community) on *one* particular human level (as, for instance, on the level of economics, of the State, of the Church) and the same sort of community (or personality) on *another* level.

(v) *He is* (qua *human* person) *an incarnate, mundane person* who realizes himself in his ultimate core only in a spatio-temporal, pluralistic expansion, in concern for his bodily

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existence (economy) and within a community communicated in a tangible manner (marriage, parent-and-child relationship, the State, Incarnation, Church, [240] sacraments, symbol, etc.). The personality of man, therefore, cannot be relegated to an absolutely internal realm. It requires of necessity a certain space for realizing itself. Such a space, although it is to a certain extent 'external' to it (body, earth, economy, sign, symbol, State), is nevertheless essentially necessary and hence must be so constructed that it permits personal self-realization. Seen even from this point of view, a retreat into the merely 'private', the inner 'conscience', the 'sacristy', etc., is contrary to nature.

b. The supernatural existential. This means: the person, as we have just outlined him, is called to direct personal communion with God in Christ, perennially and inescapably, whether he accepts the call in redemption and grace or whether he closes himself to it in guilt (by the guilt of original sin and of personal sin). The person is addressed by the personal revelation of the Word of God in saving history which finds its climax in Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father become flesh; the person is unquestionably situated within the offer of his interior, saving and divinizing grace; he is called to the community-forming visible manifestation of this personal state of 'being directly called before God' which is the Church.

c. The supernatural existential is related to what we have called the personal nature of man, as a gratuitous gift of God, as grace. In this way man exists in nature and 'supernature'. This does not, however, mean that it is left to his free choice whether he intends to understand himself as a purely natural person or as a person called to direct communion with God by grace.

6. With this essence and this dignity of man there is given a plurality of human existential dimensions (Existentialien):

a. He is a *corporeal-material* living being, in a biological community of life with its material surroundings, and with a care for its will to live.

b. He is a *spiritual-personal*, cultural being with a diversity of personal communities (marriage union, family, kinsfolk, a people, the State, the community of nations), and with a history.

c. He is a *religious*, *God-centred* being (by nature and grace), with a 'Church', in a history which either damns or saves.

d. He is a *Christ-centred* being, i.e. his being possesses an ontic and spiritual-personal capacity for communicating with Jesus Christ in [241] whom God has forever made the countenance of a man his own and has opened the reality of man, with an unsurpassable finality, in the direction of God; only thus was the real possibility of a direct communion of all men with God established with finality. Hence we can only speak ultimately of God by engaging even in the midst of all this (in the midst of theology) in anthropology; and ultimately any information about anthropology, about the nature and dignity of man, can be given only when we engage in theology about God and from God.

7. a. While the many existential dimensions must be distinguished, they and their achievement cannot be divorced from each other 'spatially' in the concrete. Each one of these existential dimensions is really dependent on the other. The lowest dimension is determined by the highest and vice versa; the whole being of man must work itself out in each one of them in particular. Every attempt by a dimension to make itself independent and self-sufficient, even merely in its own realm, contradicts the fact that man, without prejudice to any true and genuine plurality of his ontological moments, is first and last, originally and by destination, *one person*. Hence, for instance, economics or even economic legislation do not

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enjoy a 'pure' autonomy from the laws of the spiritual person, i.e. from ethics.

b. On the other hand, man in his self-knowledge, which must always proceed from a *multiplicity* of perceived objects and remains dependent on this multiplicity as such, can never perceive himself adequately from *one* principle, in such a way that he could adequately deduce from this his existential dimensions and their structural laws. There is, therefore, a permanent plurality of sciences of man and a relative individual structure of laws for each existential dimension and of the powers administering and forming it, which must be respected by every other.

c. Because this plurality possesses in its turn a structure and a superior and lower order, the claim of the higher dimension takes precedence over that of the lower one in any (apparent or, for the meantime, rightful) case of conflict.

8. The nature and dignity of man are threatened. And that in a twofold way:

[242] a. From without: Man as a bodily being, before he has made his personal decision, is 'open to being seized by a creaturely influence which is independent of him: the influence of material forces and other created persons (men and angelic powers). Although an ultimate and final damning situation for man can arise only through the free decision, of man from within, nevertheless such interventions from without, which touch the person and his personal arid indeed supernatural dignity, are possible and hence menacing. There is no 'zone' of the person which is absolutely inaccessible to such influences from without. Every 'external' event can be significant and menacing for the ultimate salvation of the person, and is, therefore, subject to the law of the dignity of the person who as such can be degraded by some intervention from without (cf. 7a and 7c above).

b. From within: Since the dignity of man is imposed as a task on man who disposes of himself in freedom, man can fail to find himself and his dignity by a free offence against himself in any one of the existential dimensions, in so far as this offence touches the whole of man essentially. Man cannot, indeed, cancel out or change his pre-established essential dignity as he pleases; but in practice he can understand it in such a way that this dignity contradicts its own pre-established nature ontologically and hence ethically, even by the way it is activated; in this sense, he can degrade it by becoming culpable before God. The use of his freedom necessarily poses man with the choice of degrading his dignity or preserving it by the grace of God and converting it into achieved dignity.

c. External and internal threats mutually determine each other, seen from a total viewpoint. Speaking theologically, the fact of being threatened from without is, in its post-paradisian characteristic, a consequence of man's perversion from within. And at the same time, this external threat is the situation in which the inner defection of man from his own nature achieves itself in a characteristically post-paradisian, impelled and concupiscent manner, so that ultimately for us – *before* the revelation of the judgment of God – guilt and fate become unceasingly intertwined.

9. One of the results of this situation of being threatened is that man inevitably finds himself either in a state of guilt or in a state of redemption, in so far as he has had any free control at all over himself [243] (we prescind here from the manner of original sin's sinfulness). As a spiritual person, control over himself is for him inescapable. If, however, he has control over himself, then he has control (implicitly or explicitly) over himself in accordance with all the existential dimensions of his being. He accepts, therefore, his concrete being (including the supernatural existential of this being), or he possesses it in the manner of rejection and then he is guilty. There cannot be any existential neutrality in the

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face of the historical being of man. The question can only be how far man – precisely by *objective reflection* – must be explicitly conscious, in his understanding of himself (which of itself need not be adequately reflex), of the depth of his being and of his dignity. Men acting historically among each other are, therefore, in actual fact either men with a dignity which they have culpably degraded or men with a dignity redeemed by grace. The precise position of the border-line between the two within the saving history of humanity only God knows. It does not, at any rate, coincide unequivocally with the boundaries of Christianity or of the visible Church. There is also a battle of light and darkness within the Church.

10. Where the pre-established nature and dignity of man is preserved, and where the individual realizes it in the particular manner which was assigned to him alone, there is redemption by the grace of Christ. This means:

a. There is preservation and realization of a nature to which belongs the supernatural existential of being called to immediate participation in the life of God, i.e. participation in the grace of the Son of the Father become man.

b. This act of preservation and unfolding of nature has a reality which presupposes the entitative, gratuitous communication of the divine nature to man.

c. The accomplishment of this act is itself, without prejudice to its freedom, a gratuitous grace of God, considered even as an accomplishment in actual fact.

d. In so far as this act aims, in its reflex-objective explicitness, at the preservation and unfolding of the natural essence by observing the 'law of nature' (i.e. in so far as this act is considered as nothing more than this), it is in itself basically possible without any supernatural help of grace and external revelation of God. However, in so far as even [244] such a taking possession of oneself as regards one's natural essence requires quite a long temporal duration for its accomplishment, it needs the help of God's grace:

(i) In the concrete, post-Adamite situation of man, an actually undimmed and sufficiently unfolded perception of the natural essence of man, taken as the norm of his natural moral acts, can be obtained only with the help of the revelation of God's Word.

(ii) The actual accomplishment of such acts (in their longer temporal duration), even in their natural aspect, can take place only by the help of God's grace. This grace is not owed to the individual *qua* individual with regard to his actions (over and above his mere potency), it is given to him with a view to the total salvation (and hence also that which embraces the supernatural dimension of man) of the whole concrete human being in Christ and as destined for the eternal life of God.

Hence the *actual* preservation of the dignity of man, even in its natural dimensions, depends on God's supernatural will of grace in Christ Jesus. Any actually preserved dignity of man, wherever it is to be found, is a part of Christian salvation – it is redemption in Christ Jesus. This does not necessarily mean, however, that man must thus be always and everywhere conscious of this source of his actual preservation, that he must explicitly accept it *as* redemption, or that the preserved dignity in its natural and supernatural dimension can on this account be found only within the visible framework of Christianity. Where and to whom God gives the grace of Christ, this he alone decides. It is his secret. What we know about the conditions of such a distribution in the actual order (necessity of faith and, in certain circumstances, of baptism), does not permit us to make any unequivocal judgement in the concrete, individual case about whether grace has been given and thus the vocation and dignity of man has been preserved.

11. Accordingly, it is absolutely possible in the nature of things, it can and should be our

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aim, to reach a mutual understanding with unbelievers even *qua* unbelievers (i.e. with non-Christians) about the natural part of the actual constitution of the nature of man, about his dignity as a person and the 'natural moral law' resulting from it. However, the following points must be observed:

[245] a. Wherever and in so far as such an understanding is wholly or to a large extent successful, it is also in actual fact itself the result of the indirect influence of revelation (through the believer in revelation) on the unbeliever who otherwise would not actually see without error what in principle he is capable of seeing.

b. The practical consequences arising from the formal principles regarding the natural being of man and his dignity, thus accepted in common, will again differ essentially in the case of the Christian and of the unbeliever, since they do not yet give the former a grasp of the totality of the actual man. The significance of this agreement, possible in principle, must therefore not be overrated. This agreement does not in practice lead to any real concrete settlement, not even in a partial sphere of human existence, but at the most to a provisional agreement in tolerance which, even in the particular sector which really cannot be adequately separated from the rest, signifies a certain *modus vivendi* and nothing more. (Think, for instance, of the questions of education and schools, cultural-political problems, etc.)

12. If we have in this way to some extent circumscribed the dignity of man in its objective content, we can now define it in its formal quality and draw the most fundamental conclusions from the definition.

a. In so far as man is a person, who possesses himself knowingly and in freedom – in other words, is always objectively referred to *himself* and hence does not ontologically have the character of a means but of an end, an end by a reference away from himself, indeed, to *persons* but not to things (which themselves are rather referred to persons), he has an absolute value and hence an absolute dignity. What we call the absolute, unqualified validity of moral values is essentially based on the absolute value and the absolute dignity of the spiritual and free person. 'Absolute' means here the same as 'unconditional' (but not 'infinite'). This means that all subhuman things and values of an objective kind are conditional, i.e. they are dependent on a free (even ethically) determination and choice of values: *if* (you are not obliged to) you want this or that, then you must do, prefer, respect, etc., this or that. The human person by its nature and dignity demands an unconditional respect which is independent of any freely exercised determination of an end and value – i.e. is absolute.

[246] b. This dignity of man as a person is given an even greater quality essentially and in the actual order, in respect of its absoluteness, by the fact that man is called to be the direct partner of God, who is the simply Absolute and Infinite.

II. THE FREEDOM OF THE PERSON IN GENERAL

Because one of the existentials of man, viz. freedom, is particularly threatened today in its right understanding and its exercise, we must turn to it in particular at this point.

1. Freedom of choice (or of decision), being a basic condition of the person, can be defined only with difficulty. It is the possibility for the person to dispose himself in such a way that this disposal in its concreteness cannot be entirely resolved or analysed into something different from itself from which it could be deduced, so that in such case it would be, and be thus, because its prerequisites happened to bi such and not otherwise. By prerequisites we

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mean here both internal and external presuppositions, the inner disposition of the person, the external circumstances and conditions, present before the decision. The causality of free action must, therefore, be understood as a free openness to more than what is realized by the decision. This causality can, therefore, be possible only when faced with the finite, or the infinite conceived as merely finite, and hence can have meaning only in the face of the finite. Of course, in so far as the source of the existence of an affirmative or negative attitude towards the absolute God lies precisely in the adoption of a right or wrong attitude towards finite goods (or those conceived as finite) in their divinely caused order, in virtue of the necessary relation of the spirit to the absolute which supports freedom, freedom is in the last analysis the possibility through and beyond the finite, of taking up a position towards God himself. This position is taken up by the person himself and he himself is responsible for it. Freedom is possible, therefore, only as the transition from the open choice of infinite possibilities to the definiteness of the finite realization, in which and passing through which the infinite destiny of man is gained or lost in a personal manner. And so freedom is possible only where there is a transcendental openness to the infinite God, that is to say in the spiritual person. Freedom is self-achievement [247] of the person, using a finite material, before the infinite God. It is, therefore, a datum of theology, of theological anthropology. For without freedom man could not stand before God as a responsible agent, in dialogue and partnership with God; without it he could not be the subject of guilt before God nor of profferred and accepted redemption and pardon.

1. However, *finite* freedom is preceded, without prejudice to genuine spontaneity, by interior and external conditions different from its act, and hence it presupposes also a law of the ontological and ethical order. It is the freedom to say yes or no to a call; it is not an absolutely creative freedom. Of course, this call must not be understood here *merely* as a universal law, nor the ‘yes’ *merely* as the realization of universal norms of being, as if it were merely a ‘case’. These preliminary conditions, which are constitutive conditions for the exercise of finite freedom, are themselves finite and thus limit the possibilities of freedom. They are not equally great in every case and they are changeable. It follows that we cannot demand a determined and fixed magnitude of such prerequisite conditions and of the possibilities of freedom pre-established in them, as arising out of the nature of creaturely freedom. Herein consists the ontological and ethical basis for a legitimate limitation of freedom. This must be noted if we wish to distinguish the legitimate and the false meaning of an equality of rights for everyone and of the equality of all before the law. Basically, such an equality of rights can merely mean that everyone shall have *his* rights protected, rights which only coincide with the rights of everyone else in certain basic points, but not in every point of an objective kind. The tendency towards the attainment of an adequate material equality of rights for everyone would only mean the Oppression of everyone, because it would be based on an interference with the different scope for freedom objectively ordained for every individual in particular.

3. Freedom, on the one hand, is the *manner* of the appropriation and realization of the person and of his absolute dignity before God and in the community of other persons, using finite, decided materials. And yet, on the other hand, freedom must not on that account be [248] conceived as a merely formal capacity which receives its significance *only* from the result realized by it but different from it. The person and, consequently, freedom are themselves existing realities of the highest order and are, therefore, even in themselves absolute values. Thus freedom is *also* meant to be for its own sake, so that, even if all its

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results *were* attainable without it (which is not so in reality), it would still have to exist, and the frustration of its exercise would still mean an attempt on the absolute dignity of the person. And so it is *not* in the least a matter of indifference whether a result is brought about with or without freedom.

4. If, on the one hand, freedom considered simply in itself, i.e. freedom of exercise and not merely freedom in what is done, belongs to the absolute dignity of the person and if, on the other hand, it is dependent for its exercise in the concrete on conditions of an external, and internal kind, then the *concession* of these possibilities of the exercise of freedom to a sufficiently large extent is demanded by the dignity of the person. To deprive the person totally of this scope for freedom would, therefore, still be a degradation of the person even when the thing to be done would still be attainable without this concession of scope for freedom. *Simply* to deprive a person of the scope even for morally wrong decisions of freedom (even if or in so far as such a thing is or were possible) cannot, therefore, be the business of any man or of any human society in its dealings with other men. Even this would be an attempt on the dignity of the person and of his freedom which is not merely a means to an end (i.e. of the good realized, without freedom) but is also itself a part of the goal (viz. of the person). The *unconditional* refusal of the possibility of an objectively and morally wrong decision would amount to a suppression of the very scope for freedom itself. It is no counter-argument to this to point out the fact that it is impossible for the Blessed to sin. For they have already achieved their freedom totally. Freedom, however, does not consist in always being able to do the opposite of what has been done up to now, but it consists in being able to effect oneself once and for all into finality. This does not postulate any real 'right' to what is morally evil which would relate to the morally evil as such. We merely mean to say by this that the attempt to make what is morally evil more or less completely impossible by coercion is not only in actual fact [249] quite utopian in this world, but must in the concrete degenerate into a morally wrong attempt to eradicate the scope for freedom itself.

5. The scope for freedom thus demanded as the possibility of the exercise of freedom must – without prejudice to the plurality of moments of human existence – extend through all the dimensions of this existence on account of the mutual interconnection of the dimensions of human existence. To try to exclude some particular material of finite goods for freedom from this scope for freedom right from the start and absolutely, and to try to limit freedom *a priori* to certain other fields of personal freedom, would violate against the principle formulated above (I, 7a) and would represent a grave injury to the dignity of the person. Hence there must be a zone of personal freedom in the sphere of economy, of the formation of communities, of the creation of objective cultural values, in the religious field, in the sphere of Christian values, whether or not these realms in particular and taken simply by themselves could 'function' sufficiently even without such a concession of freedom.

6. The moral law as such (in contrast to the forced compliance with it) is not a limitation of freedom, since it does after all presuppose freedom of its very nature and turns to it (since it is fulfilled only when it is obeyed freely), and since it orientates freedom to its own essential goal, viz. the true achievement of the person. The law (*qua* liberating law of freedom) can do this, to be sure, only if it is more than a merely destructive demand which provokes guilt, i.e. in so far as it is not a demand made on the powerless from without but the imperative expression of a power from within which is granted to the person in the concrete order of

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salvation only by the pneuma of God (cf. above I, 10).

7. The freedom of the personal decision for which we are responsible ourselves and the consequences of which we must bear ourselves is a higher value (because more personal) than material security of physical existence as such. The flight from freedom into the enclosure of a merely secure life is, therefore, immoral. Wherever (and in so far [250] as) a certain freedom and security of the material conditions of life belong to the necessary practical prerequisites of personal freedom, they are sanctioned by the dignity of human freedom and must be demanded in the name of this freedom – they must, therefore, be fashioned in such a way that the freedom of man itself is not sacrificed to the desire of possessing these material goods.

8. There can nevertheless be a justified limitation, not indeed of freedom as such, but of the scope for freedom. For the latter is (a) changeable and finite from the very start and independently of any human intervention and (b) is unavoidably changed in one person. (even to the extent of a restriction) by the claim to freedom made by another person. Restriction of the scope for freedom of one person even when voluntarily posited by another cannot therefore be immoral, but flows precisely from the nature of the freedom of finite persons who exercise their freedom in a common space of human existence.

9. Such a limitation of the scope for freedom is thinkable as legitimate on various counts and in different ways:

a. As making it impossible to have a total or partial, but unlawful, restriction of some people's scope for freedom by others. For instance, the principle of the lawfulness of compulsion in a formal democracy: the freedom of political groupings is conceded only to those who also recognize this freedom in others; against enemies of democratic freedom we may proceed with compulsion. Or: anyone who steals is put in prison; society's reply to the unlawful limitation of freedom in the material realm of the free shaping of one's life is the enforced limitation of the freedom of movement. This principle of the enforced protection of the freedom of the many against someone who threatens freedom is not, however, the sole principle of the lawful restriction of freedom. There are others which are equally essential.

b. As an *educative* restriction of the scope for freedom with a view to the liberation of freedom. Man, on account of the uninvited influences exerted on him from without, is not simply and from the very start in lordly possession of complete control over his personal power of decision. He can be swept away involuntarily (before any action of [251] his freedom takes place) to do actions which either lack freedom and responsibility completely or possess them only to a diminished degree, and which then become an obstacle to and restriction of the possibilities of his freedom for good. He can be corrupted in advance of his decision. The enforced restriction or elimination of such influences imposed by others (viz. 'those charged with upbringing', such as the State, the Church, etc.) is not an attempt on freedom, even when it is done in the face of objections from the one who is not really limited by this in any proper sense. In this respect it would be a false, utopian outlook of an optimistic or pessimistic kind if we were to think that man can, from a certain age onwards, do without any such, to-a-certain-extent enforced education by others (i.e. an education which does not merely appeal to the free good sense of the other by exhortation and instruction, etc.) or if, on the other hand, we tried to keep *every* possibility for evil always and everywhere away from him.

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c. Whenever the legitimate demand for an objective action (be it legitimate by reason of the things itself or by reason of obligations freely contracted towards it) is of its nature independent in its objective being of whether its performance is constituted by freedom or without it – and to the extent in which this applies – then the enforcing of some action is not contrary to the nature of freedom.

d. Difficulties arise in the case of someone, on the grounds of conscience, refusing to do something which is objectively justified and hence legitimately enforceable, by maintaining that conscience forbids him to perform this task (refusal to do military service, etc.). In such a case the following has to be said:

(i) The one who makes the demand must re-examine the justification for his demand very closely, out of respect for the freedom and conscience of the person who refuses.

(ii) He must ask himself whether he has merely the right or is furthermore morally bound to make this demand.

(iii) If the former, then he can desist from enforcing his demand. In many cases such a course will even be advisable or demanded by general considerations.

(iv) If the latter, then he has the right and duty to enforce his demand (in so far as this is possible) by using coercive measures proportioned to the importance of his demand. For it is then not really a case of a conflict between freedom-conscience, on the one hand, and [252] coercion, on the other hand, but between freedom and conscience *on both sides*. The tragic conflict between the objectively justified and obligatory demand, on the one hand, and the subjective conscience in good faith, on the other, is insoluble in practice. Its tragedy must be accepted with patience and mutual respect as a sign of the imperfection of the order here below.

e. The performance of actions and adoption of attitudes which essentially include the free 'yes' as one of their internal constitutive moments (and to the extent in which they do this), must not be coerced. The only law that remains valid in this case is the law of what ought to be done, and no longer the law of what must be done. The actual demarcation of the one case from the other is indeed difficult, because the concrete execution can include both moments. On account of the higher dignity of freedom as compared with the doing of something, we must decide against the use of coercion in a doubtful case.

10. Since there is, therefore, a legitimate (and of its nature, higher) principle of freedom and a legitimate (although of its nature lower) principle of justified coercion – and since both these principles are *not* capable of simply being divided between separate dimensions of human existence and action in such a way that they do not come into conflict from the very start – there arises the problem of drawing the right line between coercion and freedom in the same realm of freedom. The following has to be said on this subject:

a. Every demarcation in the concrete is morally justified and feasible in the long run only when it respects both principles. Anarchic freedom and absolute totalitarian coercion both equally misunderstand the nature and dignity of the human person and of freedom.

b. It is impossible to find a demarcation which can be deduced *a priori*, which is valid once and for all and in every case and which is at the same time exact, because the finite realm of freedom possesses an objective variability the exact magnitude of which itself depends again both on the concreteness of the situation and on the free decision of man.

c. It is also not possible to discover such an unequivocal demarcation from revelation and the teaching of the Church. Even these sources do not provide us with any possibility of a theological rationalism [253] in the construction of a fixed system of the right proportion between freedom and coercion in society, the State, the Church, etc., which would be valid always and everywhere.

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d. Hence it is a duty of man for the preservation of his dignity and freedom continually to renew and re-establish a correct proportion between both these factors – a moral duty which he has as a man and as a Christian.

e. The demarcation of boundaries is variable. It must be undertaken, within the framework of the general principles:

(i) In accordance with the objective and changing circumstances of mental disposition, economic situation, the real possibilities of the use of freedom, etc., which objectively can prescribe certain obligatory changes of demarcation. To these 'objective' circumstances of the situation can also belong those which in themselves have arisen from the wrongly employed freedom of men but which in actual fact have already taken root in an objectified manner in certain attitudes and needs, etc. In this case it would actually cause even more serious damage to freedom and the objective order not to take cognizance of such real facts. This is the right place for showing a legitimate 'tolerance' in the proper sense of the word, which puts up with what objectively is not justified but nevertheless is given in actual fact, because its removal would in fact cause more evil than good. (Where freedom of conscience is respected as *such*, even when it – i.e. obeying the dictum of conscience – realizes itself in the wrong object and yet exists as freedom of conscience itself, it would be more correct not to speak of tolerance or 'toleration' but of active esteem and respectful deference before the conscience of another. Objectively false situations must in certain circumstances be tolerated; positions adopted by conscience which are subjectively right or must be imputed as subjectively right, even if they have a false object, must always be respected and never be injured.)

(ii) As a historical decision. This means that even bearing in mind the general principles and taking into consideration as objectively as possible the concrete situation, there still are (at least in principle) several possibilities open which form the object of the free historical decision of the powers appointed for this (both individuals and groups). This means that here the result is not merely a deduced application of formal principles to purely static, objectively established circumstances, but that it has the characteristic of historical uniqueness [254] and of creative originality in which the dignity of freedom reaches its highest achievement.

f. Hence the historical way of acting of Christians in society, the State and the Church, has inevitably the character of a bold venture, of uncertainty, of walking into the dark, of 'not knowing what we should pray for', of praying for gracious guidance from above to lead us beyond that which can be calculated in advance, of 'art' (in contrast to theory). Anyone who believes himself to be dispensed, at least *as a Christian*, from making such a decision, on account of the fact that the shaping of the future is in the nature of a venture, offends against the historicity of his existence and becomes all the more guilty. The Christian has not *merely* the duty of proclaiming and commending the ever valid principles; he must place his trust in God and venture a concrete future. Even *as* a Christian he must not only suffer but also act without the rightness and the intramundane powerfulness for the future of his concrete actions being *materially* and concretely guaranteed for him simply by the rightness of his principles. This is true in general and especially is it true of the courage needed for freedom and coercion and their concrete balancing. That we always have to deal with a fluid, unstable and provisional balance arises ultimately not from any cheap cowardly willingness to compromise on the part of the Christian, or from an uncreative decadence of man at a certain period, but from the essential creaturely nature of man; man in his knowledge and freedom as a creature does not stand at the absolutely *one* point of origin of all reality, but must master what is for him an indissoluble plural reality in the one realm of his free actions by human truth and creaturely freedom. Compromise, the middle way, the 'on the one hand – on the other hand', a seemingly uncreative lack of originality, incompleteness, provisionality, making an attempt with right of recall and with reservations, the abandoning of a position,

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being willing to learn from new experiences, slow evolution, the lack of any clear sustained construction, etc. – all these are, in their right place, signs of genuineness and of genuine humanity. We do not have any reason for letting ourselves be impressed by the unbending monoideism of other '*Weltanschauungen*' (outlooks on life). Anyone who believes that he can open all locks with one key, arrogates God's position to himself, is lying and has no genuine future. All this does not in the least signify a confused, vague both-yes-and-no-programme for the Christian. Precisely because, on the one hand, [255] the concrete imperative programme of action is not unequivocally deducible from metaphysical and theological principles and yet, on the other hand, because it is something necessary, it does not need to be a popular repetition of eternal principles in uniformly balanced vagueness but ought rather to command courageously and with justified one-sidedness (i.e. subjection to the situation) what ought to be done at this particular moment. For however true both 'sides' of a question (the question of coercion and freedom, for instance) usually are in theory, both of them are not equally urgent for action at every moment. Watchword and theory rightly have different structures. The Christian must not only have the courage to uphold a balanced eternal theory but must also have the courage and decisiveness to pass a clear, even though time-bound, watchword which *he*, in certain circumstances, can utter in the name of Christianity although it has not been and also cannot be proclaimed by the Church as such.

g. The execution of such a shifting of the boundary between freedom and coercion must generally take place by evolution, making full use of the legal possibilities already given. Whenever the present state of affairs encloses an essential and general annulment of the rights of freedom granted by natural law, the changing of this state is permitted (from the Christian point of view) even by the employment of revolutionary acts; and indeed, if there is any real hope of success, such a method of removal is demanded of those who have the necessary means at their disposal.

h. The boundary between freedom and coercion lies *within each* particular dimension of human existence, each of which regarded by itself differs from the others in the nature of things. The more material such a dimension, the more confined may be the field of freedom in principle; the more personal the dimension, the greater the actual freedom must be. The Christian is, therefore, quite rightly, more touchy about the interference of the State in matters of cultural import, for instance, than about its interference in economic matters. Although the Church is not a free association of men but rather (like the State) has a right to exist prior to such associations, she cannot force anyone to enter her against his will.

III. THE STATE AND FREEDOM

I. The State exists for man and not vice versa. It must serve the personal dignity and freedom of man. It is true that the communities of [256] interest and the orientation of man to a 'thou' in love and mutual service already belong to the nature of man from the very start. And yet the State is not the first and decisive organization of these communities but merely a subsidiary social organization which must serve these more primitive and essential communities (such as the marriage community, the family, the clan, local and vocational communities, the community of friends, a people, communities arising from common possession and creation of cultural goods, etc.). The State presupposes these; it does not first invest them through itself with their rights.

2. And yet the State is a natural institution, founded on the natural law wherever a greater number of people are living together. Its final structures and rights are not arbitrarily assigned

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to it by its citizens.

3. The State does not grant the original rights and the scope for freedom of the individual and the smaller but more primitive communities (which are more primitive because arising more closely from the core of the person). Rather, it must protect them and, where necessary, regulate and harmonize them with each other. It must, therefore, always authenticate its right to make a particular limitation of freedom in a concrete case – it cannot simply presuppose such a right. And it must in the case of such limitations of freedom and use of coercive measures keep to the already mentioned principles. It must in certain circumstances refuse to further its citizens' flight from freedom. There are also instances of a 'voluntary' transference of rights which the State ought not to accept so long as the individual or the smaller communities can look after these rights.

4. Even those laws of a formal democracy which have come into being in a formally incontestable manner, are only then justified when they do not annul the freedom of the individual in some sector of his sphere of existence or curtail it beyond right measure. Otherwise democracy becomes the dictatorship of the numerical majority, which is just as immoral (because ultimately the same) as a totalitarian State in which every right of the individual is merely a concession granted by the apparatus of the State.

[257] 5. The (written and unwritten) constitution of a State will be all the more the way it ought to be, the more that State is so constituted as to allow the citizen the effective use of his native rights and freedoms, even against the State itself, be it by a division of powers and an independent administration of justice orientated by the natural law, or be it over and above this (which is ultimately something absolutely necessary and cannot be replaced by formal State laws) by an effective appeal to the conscience of the supreme rulers of the State who bow before and know themselves responsible to God and his law. Wherever man no longer has such a possibility of exercising his rights against the State, there we have the Moloch of the totalitarian State, no matter what its written constitution may be.

6. The universal and equal suffrage in a formal democracy is neither a necessary right flowing everywhere and always from the nature of the human person nor is it a sufficient safeguard in itself of the right order of a State or of the just laws and the right demarcation between freedom and coercion. It may even stand in the way of a reform of conditions and outlook and cover up the fact that not only must everyone be given an equal right but *his* right. Of course, this universal and equal suffrage may in a certain historical situation be in actual fact an indispensable, even though by itself insufficient prerequisite for the maintenance of the citizen's freedom against the State. Yet we must not then grow forgetful on this account of the other necessities for the State: the education and formation in principles and practical acquaintance with affairs of the rising generation of political leaders, legal measures against the dictatorship of political parties, care and maintenance of the communities which have a midway position between the individual and the State, delegation of specialist problems away from the political parliament to appropriate specialized organs (which have to be set up if need be).

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7. There are unchangeable principles akin to the natural law and of a Christian kind which are valid for every State and for the constitution of every State and economy. To see that they are observed in the State and in the economy as well as in their constitutions, is the duty of every Christian. Their observation would be a blessing for every [258] one which cannot be exaggerated. However, there is no constitution of State or economy which could simply be deduced from these unchangeable principles in its concrete form. Over and above these principles, Christians (not the Church) in a certain period, culture and historical situation need a correspondingly determined *concrete* conception of how this State ought to look in the concrete here and now, especially with regard to the division of freedom and planning (coercion). The fact that they cannot simply obtain this concrete conception, the imperative of the present hour, from the Church, does not dispense them from this duty; and nothing much is achieved by a common consent to the principles when people are not clear and agreed about how these principles ought to be realized in this particular place and at this particular time. The fact that this concrete and communal, courageously forward-looking picture of order is not sufficiently present, has a paralysing effect on Catholics and turns them into an object rather than the very subject of history – in contrast to much smaller groups who have a different way of thinking.

IV. THE CHURCH AND FREEDOM

1. The Church is an indispensable shelter of freedom in the world; she teaches, lives and defends the dignity and hence the inviolability of the individual man: that he is a person, has an eternal destiny and has freedom. She places man before the living God and hence before the Guarantor of the right of the weak as against the physical power of the stronger. She proclaims the Judgement of God, before which there is no respect of persons. By her independent existence from the State she is the living protest against every caesaropapism, every idolization of the State and absorption of the whole life of the individual, considered under the spiritual and material aspect, by the State bureaucracy and by a total planning which necessarily means the death of all spiritual creative life. By professing eternal life based on the grace of God beyond history, she relieves man of the pride and the anguish of life, both of which lead to a violent attempt – and one which enslaves the present in favour of an utopian future – to achieve the kingdom of God already here on earth. She educates man to be moderate and humble, which in the long run serves the real and ever-new improvement of earthly conditions better than any utopian radicalism. In so far as she places all men before the one Lord and [259] Father and before the one goal, she creates the only really objectively tenable basis for a permanent and really sacrificing love of neighbour.

2. Today more than ever the Church must be on her guard not to appear in the eyes of men as a clerical, religiously camouflaged kind of totalitarian system. Her objective nature is not that of a totalitarian system, since the dignity of man, the directness of man’s relationship to God and freedom are part and parcel of the basic principles proclaimed by her herself and established by constitution in her very being. Moreover, she has been given God’s promise that she will be preserved by his grace until the end of time from every essential defection from this her true nature. However, since the Church is always a Church made up of sinful men, even as far as the holders of her authority are concerned, she can in her individual actions also offend against her own principles and against the freedom of the individual both within and without. This has happened often enough in the course of history. It can happen even today. And this is what the Church must guard against, for today more than ever she

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must be the champion of true freedom. But even by such individual offences she does not become a totalitarian system. For she acts in these cases against her own proclaimed and practised principles, whereas a really totalitarian system does not recognize such principles of the freedom or dignity of the individual either expressly or tacitly, but on the contrary idolizes the collectivity and degrades the individual. But the Church must reckon with the real danger of giving the scandal of an apparent totalitarianism. This is particularly the case because, no matter how clear her ultimate basic principles may be, there can be, and in fact there has been, a subjective development of the Church's consciousness in articulating and applying more particular and proximate principles with exactitude and sureness. And this also explains how it is possible for the Church to violate the legitimate claims of freedom both from within and from without, even in cases where she has not become clearly conscious of this.

3. Even in the Church there is to be found an application of the principle of subsidiary function in respect of the functioning of her hierarchically constructed authorities, without prejudice to her basic [260] God-given constitution and the direct origin of her fundamental authorities and powers in her divine founder. This means that even in the Church every individual, community and authority must, indeed, be fitted into the whole structure of the Church and subordinated to the highest authority of the Church; but this does not mean that the members of the Church (both individuals and communities), which are thus incorporated and subordinated, cannot and ought not to have their own relatively independent functions; it does not mean that the life of the Church is directed by an omnipotent central body of bureaucrats, and that all others have merely the duty to receive orders passively, without any responsibility or initiative of their own. Even in positive Canon Law (which is not unchangeable) changes can take place in the boundary between freedom and compulsion and in the distribution of duties and rights. The Canon Law obtaining at any particular moment in time does not need to be regarded as something immutable. Because someone does not have a divine right in a certain respect and in a particular case, does not mean that the Church herself may not invest him with such a right in the form of a *ius humanum* which can be a true right and not merely a privilege. Thus it is conceivable that in this respect the rights of lay people might be further extended and re-extended, since in the long run this is the only way in which the layman can be brought to a consciousness of his duties in and on behalf of the Church.

4. Even within her life of religion, the Church must combat the tendency among her own members of taking refuge in the mass and taking flight into a merely collective religious life, as manifested by too great a dependence on others, by shying away from personal responsibility or waiting for ecclesiastical directions from above in the wrong circumstances, or by the opinion that everything is morally as it should be merely by the fact that the Church has not issued an explicit and detailed verdict, and by the dwindling of a *personal* private life of piety both of the individual and in families, in spite of their participation in the official liturgy, etc.

5. If we are to give some indication of certain concrete instances where room should be left for freedom *inside* the Church particularly at the present time, then the following must be said:

[261] a. Even within the Church there should be room and toleration for the expression of opinion, i.e. Public Opinion. Pius XII himself pointed this out and stated that the absence of

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such public opinion in the Church would be a fault for which both the pastors and the flock would have to take the blame. The following are the Holy Father's actual words (*Osservatore Romano*, 18th February 1950):

> Public opinion is the natural portion of every normal society composed of human beings. . . Whenever there is no manifest expression of public opinion at all, and above all whenever one must admit that public opinion does not at all exist, this lack must be regarded as a fault, a weakness and a disease in the life of that society . . . In conclusion, We wish to add a few words about public opinion within the pale of the Church (in respect of those matters, of course, which are left to free discussion). Only those will be surprised at this who do not know the Catholic Church, or at least know her only badly. For, after all, she too is a living corporate body, and there would be something lacking in her life if there were no public opinion in the Church – a lack for which the pastors as well as the faithful would be to blame . . . (German translation: *Orbis Catholicus* III (1950), pp. 3I3-316).[2]

b. There must be room in theology for research, for different schools and directions of thought, for experiments and progress, within the framework of actual dogmas and any other really obligatory doctrines.

c. There is, if we may express our meaning in so profane a manner, a lawful 'freedom of association' for Christians.[3] Even in this sphere is it a valid rule that higher forms of organization must not be allowed to suppress the spontaneous individual life of fellowships which grow up within the Church from below, in favour of a kind of 'State Socialism' which organizes things in a bureaucratic manner from above? Such methods would be more convenient and would make it easier to survey everything, but they would not be more successful in the long run and [262] would, in fact, mean the death of any true Church life. An exaggerated principle of parochial and natural social groupings offends against the rightful freedom of the Christian in his religious life.

d. Side by side with the official function which is transmitted in a juridical manner, there is and must also be the charismatic and the prophetic in the Church which cannot be officially organized right from the start but must, in all patience and humility, be given sufficient room for growth, even though its bearers are sometimes rather 'inconvenient'. It is written: 'Do not extinguish the Spirit'.

6. If the non-Catholic fears the Church as a potentially totalitarian system which would oppress him in his freedom once it became sufficiently powerful for this, then the following must be pointed out:

a. In those cases where coercion would be directly or indirectly aimed at what can of its nature take place only by free consent (i.e. entry into the Church, etc.), the Church of its very nature cannot and will not want to use coercion. In these matters she desires freedom for herself and for others and nothing less.

b. Since the line of demarcation between coercion and freedom has in the nature of things a variability determined historically and by circumstances, and since this change in situation can bring with it not only the right but in certain circumstances also the absolute moral duty of shifting the boundary between freedom and coercion – and this even in favour of a greater freedom – the Church is not simply and absolutely bound by old ideals of protection for the

[2] Regarding the object, limits etc. of public opinion in the Church, cf. K. Rahner, 'Offentliche Meinung in der Kirche', *Orientierung* XV (Zurich 1951), pp. 255-258. The same in: K. Rahner, *Free Speech in the Church* (London and New York 1960).

[3] Cf. on this: K. Rahner, 'Peaceful reflections on the parochial principle', pp. 283-318 in the present volume.

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Catholic religion by the State; she is not bound by ideals which restricted non-Christians in their freedom. Such ideals can be absolutely justified in a certain situation, so that the Church does not need to be ashamed of her ideals even in this respect (at least not of everything appertaining to them). Yet these ideals do not have any ever-valid binding force on the Church herself. It is not as if the Church had still to regard these ideals in every respect even today as being valid everywhere and as having to be realized 'of their very nature'. Neither the Holy Empire nor the sectarian, territorial State with special privileges for the Church as the State-religion need nowadays be the Christian ideal in our country. Although there can be no right to a false cult *as such*, there can certainly be a right to scope for freedom within which a false cult is possible, and within which it would not be permitted to [263] suppress this false cult by external force merely because it is false, when (and because) this would be possible only by a restriction of what is a legitimate scope for freedom in a determined historical situation. Suppose the State permits all its citizens, and hence also the Christians, the freedom which is their due by natural law and uses only that coercion to which it can be proved to have a right by natural law, materially and not merely formally . . . Suppose further that it does not engage in culture-politics, which goes beyond the kind of politics really incumbent on the State (which is of an essentially negative and subsidiary character[4]) . . . Suppose finally that the State above all does not engage in an anti-religious culture-politics (directly or indirectly) and does not conceive the 'separation of Church and State' in this anti-religious sense, as did the liberalistic State of the nineteenth century . . . Then, under such conditions, we Christians need not nowadays nor in the foreseeable future demand any patronage for the Church by way of political coercive measures from the State, a patronage which would restrict the freedom of the non-Christians. Nor ought we to demand this, but should rather believe in the power of the Gospel. There would be no harm if we who historically speaking still come from a sectarian State with a State-Church, were to reexamine out situation and practices to see whether we do not here and there still hold fast to things from that bygone age which are or were historically justified, thus giving grounds for continued anticlerical feelings to the detriment of Christianity's real power for winning souls.

[4] And hence the State must, for example, respect the wishes of the parents even in its State schools, since the parents have the primary right and duty to be the educators of their children.

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[265]

9

GUILT AND ITS REMISSION THE BORDERLAND BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY[1]

Perhaps the most important question theology can address to psychotherapy today is whether the latter claims to be or hopes to become the secularized form of what takes place in the realm of the Christian Faith, of the sacrament and the proclamation of the faith, viz. the remission of guilt. If psychotherapy does not make this claim, since it would be senseless to believe that it could perform such a function, then we must ask ourselves where we should draw the real, basic line of demarcation between the activities of the Church and those of profane psychotherapy concerning guilt and its remission. For obviously it cannot be said that psychotherapy is in no way concerned with guilt and remission of guilt, just because it is an activity in the field of medical psychology which, unlike the activity of the Church, does not require any divine mandate. Consequently, we must determine the line of demarcation.

In the following pages we will attempt to define this boundary. We will do this in as concise a manner as possible, almost in bare thesis-form. The metaphysical anthropology underlying our reflections would, of course, require to be worked out and proved more exactly. Nevertheless we may hope that what will be said can be fairly well understood even in the form given.

[266] 1. 'Guilt' is one of the most fundamental notions in theology, for theology has to do with God and his word to man. This word, addressed to man in the totality of his being, declares him to be a sinner in the sight of God and one who is redeemed by God and his action. This at once implies a threefold truth for theology:

a. Sin or guilt, as understood in theology, is indeed an occurrence capable of description, even definition if you wish, but is not at all events a *derived* phenomenon reducible to other, more original phenomena. The theological meaning of guilt has, for instance, nothing to do with a problematical interpretation of states of depression, disturbances of the psychical mechanism, etc.; it is in no way an ideological superstructure imposed on the facts of immediate experience. Guilt is not the same as illness, 'evil' is different from 'neurotic', 'ill', etc. Theocentric ethics is neither an unwarranted *interpretation* of psychical events nor merely some sort of ideal standard *to which* the physics of the spirit ought to 'conform'. Rather, it expresses the true reality of the spiritual, God-related person and *is*, together with Logic, the 'physics' of the spirit, so that any 'setting-in-order' or 'disposing-to-the-good' of spiritual-personal reality cannot escape the question of truth. This means that since really existing guilt is an intentional happening with an *intrinsic* constitutive moment of truth or falsehood, moral right or wrong, even 'existing' or, if you like, 'physical' guilt can be repaired only by attaining the objective truth or good. In the personal dimension, to which guilt belongs, there can be no question of 'repairs' or 'setting-in-motion' of the 'physical

[1] The following was first published (in an abbreviated version of a lecture) in: *Angst und Schuld in theologischer und psychotherapeutischer Sicht*, A collection of lectures, edited by Wilhelm Bitter, M.D., D.Ph. (Stuttgart 1953). Unabridged reprint in: *Anima* VIII (1953) pp. 258-272.

Throughout this particular treatise, the author uses the term '*Schuld*' almost exclusively – a term used equally by the theologian and the psychotherapist (although in different senses). Hence we have translated it throughout by the term 'guilt'. It should, however, be noted that, whereas the German term (in its theological sense) refers directly to the free and responsible offence against God, the English term refers rather to the result of such an *offence – Tr*.

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apparatus' (which does not really exist in this dimension), except as a result of its assimilation to the objective norms of truth and goodness which express not only an objective duty but the true essential structure of this 'apparatus'.

b. Guilt in the theological sense is not an offence against some universal custom, civic morality, public penal laws or conventions, the laws and conventions arising from normal upbringing, etc. Nor is it merely a wrong action with harmful, destructive, pathogenic, physically and socially perturbing effects. Sin and guilt in the theological sense are to be found only where man, addressed by God, acts in God's sight and together with Him (as is his will), even though the overriding refusal to admit this fact and the suppression of this truth (viz. of the dialogical structure of guilt) is one of the essential moments of guilt and one which is not confessed until there is a conversion by grace: *Tibi soli peccavi*.

[267] c. Only when someone sins knowingly against God can there be guilt. It is quite a different matter (and one into which we do not wish to enter more closely here) to determine the extent to which there must be objective and reflex 'awareness' of saying 'no' to God and his will and of thus (and only thus) establishing guilt. The fact, however, that real guilt before God is possible only as a knowingly perpetrated act, does belong to the theological notion of guilt. Unconscious and involuntary personal guilt before God does not and cannot exist. There can be extremely reflectionless, forgotten, dissimulating or suppressed guilt, but not guilt brought about unknowingly and involuntarily. The different degrees of guilt, therefore, depend absolutely on the degree of knowledge and freedom. Yet, although there cannot be any unknowing and involuntary guilt before God in the theological sense, there can of course be wrong decisions or actions which are guiltless and yet offend in their material reality against the objective structures and rules of man and his world. Such decisions and actions can, without detracting from their guiltless character, have such injurious and pathogenic effects on man as to encourage and eventually induce him to incur real, conscious and voluntary guilt. In so far as there can be guilt only before the One God and his undivided will (which ultimately is the only binding one), man can also never find himself, objectively speaking, in the tragic situation of being able to choose only between different ways of becoming guilty, so that no matter what alternative he chooses, he necessarily incurs guilt. In certain situations the only choice open to us may lie between two actions, both of which must be regarded as harmful and wrong in a certain respect; yet, objectively speaking, no situation can ever force us into guilt. For this would imply the contradiction that God at the same time imposes and condemns the self-same behaviour. It is, therefore, also quite contradictory and immoral to say that we must learn to have the courage to incur guilt and to recommend such courage. It is true, however, that under certain circumstances man may have to learn to act courageously even though his action may, in certain more restricted aspects, harm him or others in some specific realm of human existence.

2. For theology and according to revelation itself, guilt and sin are principally and originally acts or events and not states, even though the very frame of mind produced by the sinful act helps to cause further [268] sinful acts and constitutes the atmosphere in which sin thrives. Sinfulness arises ultimately from sin – the first theology of sin, the account of the Fall given in Genesis, already shows this. By depicting man as becoming guilty through a deed in the state of paradisean goodness, it tells him that his sinful state does not simply come into being without reference to his own active freedom but arises out of his responsible act. It tells him that he cannot shift responsibility for his guilty acts to a dark, impersonal, anonymous fate or to an 'Ego' from which he, the one who acts and suffers, can separate himself and which he can accuse as the tragic and incomprehensible power disposing of him, the active subject. On the contrary, it tells him that he must hold himself and no one and

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nothing else responsible for his guilty state, in so far as he acts and suffers. Man has entered fully into the biblical truth only when he no longer makes any distinctions in this, and when (since the account in Genesis is the aetiology of man's disastrous state of suffering) he confesses the state from which he suffers to be his doing, which should not have happened and indeed did only happen because he who suffers, and he alone, willed it. He must not accuse his tempting surroundings or the woman or nature (real temptations all) of being the cause of his state; he must see that cause in himself and in his own inalienable act of freedom – he himself in his free act is the one whom he must accuse as the cause of the state making him now suddenly ask the question which really ought not to have been asked at all: how did all this happen? It is certainly true that, in spite (and because) of his consciousness and freedom which are the *a-priori* conditions making a guilty act possible, the reflecting man always encounters himself in his reflection as someone who has already decided, i.e. as someone in a determined moral disposition, and never as someone who makes a decision arising out of pure moral indifference – in short, as, a sinner or as someone redeemed by God's grace. And to that extent his reflection is never capable of retracing his own particular sinfulness sufficiently clearly in the unique direction of his sinful act *or* of simply attributing his sinful act to his sinfulness (brought about by previous decisions). Guilt, in spite of its basically active character and its nature as an event, has a diffused existence for us in the whole course of human history, even simply on account of the fact that ultimately our subsequent and always unfinished reflection and 'analysis' can never adequately resolve the conjunction of act and state, habitual disposition and new original decision, sin and sinfulness. We can, no [269] doubt, say with some probability or practical moral certitude that there and in this way, at this spatio-temporal point in this particular history, guilt began. And yet we must also say: it 'could' not help coming this way, in view of the 'sinfulness' which reigns throughout the whole of existence and out of which this culpable act arose. Our meaning here is not only that the culpable act was preceded by a dangerous or tragic but actually still innocent state, but also that it was preceded at least by an always possible, truly sinful state which was expressed in a consistent manner by this particular culpable act. It is of course true, as already stated, that the sinful state referred to must ultimately have sprung from an act of decision, but this does not mean that the latter must necessarily have been stored up in the person's historical memory and thus be always available for renewed reflection. Consequently, the fact of our getting the impression that this or that could really have happened no differently – 'I *acted* thus because I *am* that way' – does not necessarily argue against guilt considered as an act and thus for the tragedy of a development opposed to the responsible freedom of one's personal state; it is merely an indication of the fact that the person had always understood and accepted himself in a certain manner even before the action in question occurred, and that he had performed the act out of and in accordance with his freely acquired attitude and frame of mind.

3. Man is that strange being who attains self-consciousness only by being conscious of something other than himself, who deals with himself by occupying himself with something else (even if this be merely the perception or thought of himself), who catches sight of himself only by perceiving an object. Man always requires some material distinct from himself which will act as the Archimedean point, so to speak, from which alone he can attain himself. He must be in-the-world in order to be capable of being personal; he must diffuse himself in order to concentrate himself on himself, he must 'go out' (as the German mystics used to say) in order to be able to enter into himself and into the very core of his person. Thus we may quite rightly say that in the case of man, who is a creature and essentially in-the-world and who is at home with himself only by being-with-others, the act of freedom

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springing from the core of his person, where man is ultimately concerned with himself and his relationship to God (both insolubly [270] bound up with one another), is necessarily achieved in a material which, although different from the real spiritual core of the person, is nevertheless the prerequired object on which the act of freedom is exercised. Man's relationship to himself, and his action on himself and before God, is inevitably mediate, i.e. by means of ob-jects. Man's culpable desire-to-be-God and his emancipation from the all-embracing will of God, who wants him to be always open to his infinity, operate within man's attitude to the fruits of the world and in the face of commandments relating to this or that finite object in the world. This is why there is, according to the Scriptures, more than one divine commandment and more than one human sin, each distinct from the other although (and because) the same reality of 'becoming-guilty' before God is realized in all of them. There is, therefore, a peculiar dialectic relationship between guilt considered in itself and as arising originally, and the material of guilt in which guilt, actualizing itself, is posited – a relationship similar to that existing between spirit and body: one cannot exist without the other and yet they are not the same; each refers, for its understanding, to the other which it is not itself. The objectively tangible offence against man's nature, against his due relationship to God which can be formulated as a law, and against the intramundane, ordered structure of persons and things in his surroundings, is the constitutive *sign* of the real revolt against God taking place in the depth of man's soul and utterly determining it. We call this objective falseness of man's concrete act a 'sign'. For firstly, it is not strictly identical with what is properly speaking meant in theology by the guilt of the person as such and before God as he is in himself; this is clearly shown even by the mere fact that the same objective perversity of the action, considered as an offence against a restricted material law, can also come about, indeed can even be induced from outside, without there being any personal guilt. And yet, secondly, this objective falseness also indicates the presence of such a guilt (in the normal case), and man looks at himself in it and recognizes himself reflectively as a sinner. For example, drunkenness is normally *physically* wrong because it normally offends against man's bodily health which, as the health of a spiritual person, is also subject to the binding sovereign dignity of the spiritual person assured to him by God. Now, in certain cases a person may make himself drunk quite innocently, either because he does not know that it is contrary to nature or because he lacks the necessary moral freedom in [271] doing it; in other cases, drunkenness may be brought about by external force and still other cases, it may be the concrete material or the sign-like manifestation of personal guilt, by and within which the personal turning-away from God realizes itself *in concreto*. In this last case the concrete action is called a *constitutive* sign, because personal guilt can realize itself only in this (or a similar) sort of concrete form. This dialectic unity, this difference between personal guilt and its constitutive, concrete manifestation still exists even when we are dealing with 'internal' sins in the superficial sense given to this term in everyday experience (or, in the language of Holy Writ: when it is 'merely' a case of 'lusting after'), or when it is a question of an apparently explicit and direct refusal to submit to God himself and his will. For even the merely 'internal' act of sin is an 'em-bodied' act (in the original sense of the word), which changes man's bodily, physiological, etc., constitution and, in consequence, indicates its presence, like the external sinful action, in the 'otherness' of external reality. In other words, it indicates its presence by expressing it in the 'other' of its own bodily reality (to be understood as an animated reality which consequently includes the psychical as one of its inner constitutive moments), i.e. it shows itself as 'now-existing' by positing itself. And similarly, even when sin seems to be directed explicitly and reflectively against God himself (in a judgement and objectively), it nevertheless takes place in the material of the world and hence with a constitutive sign-likeness. For propositional thought about God is even in this case constructed with the use of the 'materials' of the world. Also, there is a difference

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between '*thought* about' God and God meant 'intentionally' and aimed at by the transcendental nature of *original* thinking and willing. And thought about God, like any other 'inner' thought and act of the will, does include a physical manifestation in the form of a sign. Thus it is conceivable, for instance, that in certain circumstances such an opposition to God, although objectively wrong, may nevertheless not be existentially culpable (i.e. in the very core of the person), because in such a case God is denied in the objective concept but not with that real, fundamental grasp (*Zugriff*) which occurs in the basic act of freedom.

4. We started above with the simple fact that according to Scripture and Tradition sin against and before God is always the same and yet [272] there are *sins* (in the plural), which must be given specifically different names and must be appraised in a specifically different manner. Proceeding with logical necessity, we have now arrived at an ontological conception of man's nature, which we now intend to outline again in greater detail so that it may then be easier to understand our subsequent propositions about guilt, recognition of guilt, guilt and suffering, divine remission of guilt and earthly triumph over suffering.

Man is a being constructed, as it were, from the interior towards the outside. He has, on the one hand, a spiritual-personal nucleus giving him an 'intentional' transcendental relation to 'Being as such and in its totality', and hence to God, and rendering him capable of hearing the word of God as such. Man's transcendent orientation and consequent freedom and openness towards all being, allow him to maintain a selective, de-ciding, consenting or denying attitude towards individual things (and the merely *represented* totality of being and hence God in this sense), since he always transcends everything limited and desires the whole, Being as such, God. On the other hand, man always has to achieve himself *qua* transcending person in a relationship to something which is neither himself nor the transcendent counter-pole to his spiritual openness for the whole as such. In short, he must constantly achieve himself as a person in an 'intermediary reality' (*in einem Mittleren*), formed by the union of his animated corporeality and embodied spirituality together with their concrete, material and propositional objectifications, and by the external world of equally real persons and things as well as by the objectifications produced there by 'external' actions. This 'intermediary reality' – which alone provides man with the means of cognitive access to himself, free control over himself and a conscious, free attitude towards God – is at the same time different and unseparated from the 'seminal' (*ursprünglich*)[2] human person. There is no permanently fixed boundary-line between these two spheres of man which are continually undergoing osmosis into one another; man constantly transforms himself into the objectifications of his body, thoughts and actions-in-the-world; he deposits himself into them without being absorbed by them (like brute-animals) and without having to deliver himself to them [273] completely; and when he objectifies himself in this way in the world, he is constantly referred back again to himself and to God. These objectifications are 'he himself' and yet not he himself; he is in the Other and becomes the Other, but never in such a way that he can be in the Other as he is in his own self. For he is never contained totally in the Other which expresses him and shows him to himself and to others. And the Other is also never completely only his expression, since the intermediary material itself includes structures alien to the person to which the person cannot refuse to submit himself up to a certain point and in varying degrees, if he is to be at all able to express himself in the Other by forming himself into it and so fulfil himself in this intermediary reality. Only by passing out of the depth of

[2] We have translated '*ursprünglich*' by 'seminal' rather than 'original', since the 'seminal person' is a *continuing* dimension of the one person, fulfilled in the 'achieved person' via the 'intermediary reality of the person' – *Tr*.

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his being into the world, can man enter into the depth of the person where he stands before God; this is roughly what the medieval mystic would already have said. Thus we may say that we must distinguish between the '*seminal*' person (*ursprünglicher* Person), understood as transcendent spirit and as freedom before God; the world-like and piecemeal 'intermediary reality' (*Mittleren*) in which the person, searching for himself, must achieve himself; and the 'achieved' person (*endgültigen* Person) who has freely fulfilled himself *via* his intermediary reality. By the fact that the seminal person achieves himself in the intermediary 'world' of his animated body and external surroundings, this constitutive sign (i.e. the intermediary reality of the person) becomes relatively independent; it may even remain when the act of the seminal person no longer persists. The connection between the act of the seminal person as such and its constitutive sign in the intermediary 'world' of the person is fluid, both as regards their interdependence and as regards the expressive capacity of the constitutive sign. The intermediary 'world' of the person is at the same time the medium of the constitutive sign and the medium of influences exerted on the person by the 'Other'. Realities different from the person, the surrounding world, Nature, heredity, other persons, etc., reflect themselves into this intermediary reality and create in this way an *a-priori* basis for the possibilities of personal self-achievement in the sphere of the constitutive expression of the person; for personal self-achievement requires such an expression in the same medium as the 'Other'. In this way (and only in this way) the 'outer world' influences the person himself; it naturally does so in the many different ways in which the intermediary sphere of personal exercise of freedom [274] can be determined: by physical influences, psycho-somatic influences of speech, etc. In so far as the seminal person *and* the Other find fulfilment in identically the same realm of the intermediary 'world' of the person, there is 'interpenetration' in this medium between Action, and Passion, between what is done and what is imposed, one's own and the Other; one's own is covered up by the Other and the Other becomes the property of the person; thus, the person posits the constitutive sign as the 'other part' of himself, becomes a stranger to himself and divests himself of himself – while, conversely, the surrounding world, originally strange to the person, finds fulfilment by forming itself into the very medium belonging to the person as sphere; of his self-fulfilment.

5. The person finds certain pre-determined structures in its nucleus, psycho-somatic medium and surrounding world which precede freedom and its formative control over the person. What in particular these structures are and how they are recognizable cannot of course be explained here; the analysis of the nature and necessity of these structures is the task of theology, metaphysical anthropology, ethics and all the other anthropological sciences (in so far as they do not regard themselves as purely positivistic descriptions of merely *temporary* conditions). Now, if an act freely performed by the seminal person (who is spiritually and freely referred to God) contradicts the right structure of the person and his proper relationship to God, i.e. if the person turns an intermediate reality and his own expression contained in it into an absolute (in other words, mistakes it for God and idolizes it), then there is sin *qua* act. The constitutive sign of sin, i.e. the embodied reality of the seminal, personal act and of the seminal person in his intermediary being, is called 'suffering' in theological language. Such a sign of the sinful act has necessarily a painful effect on the person. For the medium is not absolutely indifferent, or *pure* possibility of personal 'expression', but has its own *a-priori* structures, independently of the freedom of the person. And so when the seminal, personal act is formed into this medium in a manner contradicting its *a-priori* structures, it experiences the resistance offered by these structures as a conflict and hence as suffering (for the medium is inevitably also the medium of the '*passio*' of the person). However, in so far as the surrounding world can also enter into this [275] same

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medium by its painful influences, not every suffering is a constitutive sign of personal guilt. Yet, because the state of suffering induced from without. (independently of guilt), or continuing even after its originating guilt, constitutes in its turn a question posed to the person (about how he is to understand it), it can and must be answered either in a guilty or in a true manner. When answered in a guilty manner, the state of suffering becomes the 'tinder' of sin and hence the source of its own or new guilt. When it is accepted by faith as a sharing in the Passion of Christ (i.e. answered truly), the state of suffering becomes the means of making Christ's Passion one's own. The sinful act of the seminal person, achieved *via* the intermediary reality of the person but able to remain thus achieved even after its constitutive sign has ceased, is the state of sin, i.e. sinfulness.

6. The essential freedom of the seminal person, i.e. freedom as distinct from its exercise in the intermediary outer world of the person, is of its very nature a conscious occurrence. This does not mean, however, that basic freedom strictly as such is an objective datum of consciousness and can, therefore, be the direct object of reflection. Man can look at himself and his freedom only in their constitutive sign (by considering himself as an object) and in the objectifications of his freedom which are different from freedom itself even though they are its *constitutive* signs. This leaves him in an essentially ambiguous situation as far as his knowledge of guilt is concerned. To understand this we need only consider the sober facts of theology, even before making any deductions from what has been said so far. According to the Scriptures, man ought to confess his sins; he ought to say (hence *can* also say) that he has sinned in this way or that, and not merely make a general, vague statement about his sinful state. Now, in so far as he makes an explicit confession or admission, he must have an objective knowledge of his sinful acts which is expressible in concepts and propositions. He must, therefore, be able to gather sufficiently certain information from the objective, material data of his internal and external life to be able to say that he has sinned. The material of his consciousness, tangible to reflection and open to analysis, must really be the *sign* of the personal guilt of the seminal person about which he wishes ultimately to make a statement. And yet, according to the same Scriptures, man is not only commanded not to 'judge' others, i.e. [276] not to make *absolute* assertions about the real state of a person deep down and in the sight of God, but he also cannot and is not allowed to pass such an absolute judgement on himself and declare himself to be either absolutely justified or an absolute sinner, in the sense of declaring that a justifying or sinful act has *certainly* taken place here and now. Thus, the constitutive sign on which such a judgement would have to be based, cannot be *so* absolutely unequivocal that it allows him to pronounce such a judgement *before* the divine tribunal, in spite of the real informative function of the constitutive sign, the *real* information given by it is of an essentially equivocal character. In the light of what has been said previously, it is easy to see the reason for this ambiguity; since the constitutive sign is 'embedded' in the very same intermediary reality as that which acts as the medium for passive determinations from outside (i.e. outside in the widest sense, including the antecedents of the person as regards free, personal self-determination and the inner conditions making it possible), there is at least in principle absolutely nothing in this medium which could not be an impression received from outside as well as an expression of the original, personal act. When reflection interprets the realities in the intermediary medium of the person as expressions or impressions or both, this cannot basically be anything more than an approximate, provisional interpretation. Such an interpretation may be sufficient for practical conduct and the duties imposed by it – and indeed will be sufficient for it in the normal, everyday case – but it will not be an absolute interpretation and will always remain subject to reservations; it will always remain exclusively reserved to God, the only Judge. Only in this way can the interpretation

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correspond to the indistinct situation with which the creature must bear patiently to the end. By its character of 'not being absolutely clear about oneself', of 'not being able to deal definitively with oneself', this interpretation not only realizes a regrettable fact but also a basic and essential situation of the creature, since it is precisely at this point that the creature surrenders himself unconditionally to God. Any would-be final analysis of guilt and justice implies usurpation of God's Judgement. Reflection can never 'catch up' with man, for the simple reason that every reflection, whatever its pretensions to objectivity, is itself a morally good or evil act demanding a new reflection on its own quality and so on *ad infinitum*. A reflective self-knowledge and analysis of guilt (by oneself or with the help of others) means primarily an analysis of the constitutive sign of [277] guilt and only indirectly (and with reservations) a knowledge of the guilty act committed by the seminal person. *Qua* analysis of the constitutive sign and of the 'deposit' of the seminal person in his psycho-physical external nature (i.e. of everything which is at all analysable in itself), our analysis can of itself and *in principle* reach real certitude, even though it will not usually do so in actual fact. But even if we were to attain certitude in this, it would not be an absolutely safe foundation for an unequivocal decision about the seminal or achieved person who remains in himself necessarily unattainable by analysis. *Homo videt faciem, Deus autem cor*. The 'science of the heart' is even today reserved to God alone. Any progress made in any of the ways and techniques of psychology is amazing and important; but it is always concerned only with the outer zones and not with the real centre of the person or the 'heart' in the biblical sense, which never objectifies itself adequately. We can draw conditional conclusions from these zones, applicable to the 'heart', and these will be important, indeed may even involve practical consequences. Yet this is all we can do. The 'heart' remains the secret of the King, a secret known to itself and God but not to the Ego as it faces itself by reflection and self-expression, and not to others either. In parenthesis, it should also be remembered in this connection that every analysis even of the intermediary dimension of the person changes the data to be observed, rather like (but even more than) the effect produced by observation in physics. And so, what is observed is not the pure constitutive sign of the personal act but rather a synthesis (no longer adequately dissoluble) of the sign and the change resulting from its being observed by the self or some other person. Consequently, this observation itself is again no purely theoretical matter untouched by ethics, but a moment in that chain of moral decisions which no man can escape during his life; and so man can never, not even for a single moment, become a purely objective observer. In short, every reflection is always faced with an ultimate ambiguity: what seems to be guilt, when read off the supposedly or really constitutive sign, may ultimately be guiltless suffering alien to the person due purely to the 'passio' caused from outside; and conversely, what seems to be suffering tragically inflicted from without, may in reality be a proper constitutive sign of one's own guilt, at least by the fact that it would not have assumed its present form if man had not been guilty of misunderstanding this originally non-personal suffering by his inevitably-activated personal decision. An adequate [278] analysis of this synthesis of possibly culpable Action and possibly merely endured Passion would be feasible only if we could stop this continually flowing process of synthesis and turn ourselves for a single moment into a purely active or purely passive subject. Man never is, however, either of these while living here below. And when the ontological difference between the inner and outer person is removed in death, man is no longer the judge but God alone judges, looking into the heart and from there to the works (not vice versa); he can judge them from this viewpoint – they are the works in which the heart has fulfilled itself.

7. The foregoing considerations allow us also to see the already-mentioned connection and

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ontological difference between guilt and suffering (illness in the widest sense of the word). Suffering is the constitutive sign of guilt. Accordingly, it is not the same as guilt. It is *not* always and unequivocally a constitutive sign of *personal* new guilt, actively caused from within, or the simple expression of the suffering person's guilt. It is certainly, according to Scripture, always a sign of guilt, but this may be the guilt of the race, original sin. Yet it is not a neutral suffering for all that. Since (and in so far as) man had already understood himself, and taken up a position towards himself, even before making any *reflective* stand by his original free choice, suffering (in man already grown up to personal freedom) is never a merely neutral, personally indifferent happening simply to be deplored. Rather, it is suffering understood and responded to in this way or that and thereby actually becoming the expression of our own guilt *or* the material for justifying faith and the expression of our appropriation of redemption by sharing in the Passion of Christ. In consequence of this double possibility, always decided but veiled, suffering itself is also ambiguous.

8. Only through God can man be delivered from guilt in the strict sense. In the first place, the original, personal act of guilt of the seminal person and the sinfulness of the achieved person, of the person who has fulfilled himself, cannot be removed by evading the freedom of the person. Such removal demands at least a free personal act of conversion. We do not wish to enter here into the question of the conditions [279] under which such a conversion is even thinkable, in view of the fact that the person has *completely* activated, 'understood', and (apparently) exhausted himself in the choice demanded by the previous, presupposedly guilty 'option fondamentale'; it is – let us note – not very easy to explain how this person, who has not only done a guilty act but also *has* become guilty as a result of this act, can still be capable of such a fundamental transformation of the whole nucleus of the person. In any case, this transformation alone does not yet wipe out guilt. For the wiping out of guilt is essentially a kind of dialogue, the adoption of a position concerning God and in the sight of God. God, in spite or rather because of his absolute nature, is not an impersonal 'It', or the stationary, unattainable vanishing-point of the spiritual person's transcendence. He is the 'living God'; relative to him, every human act is essentially a response to his call, so that after the creature's 'no' to this call, the dialogic process of human existence can really continue only by a new Word of God. HE must forgive the guilty act committed against him. Guilt can, therefore, be remitted only by his act, and this act can be known only through *his* Word and can be decided upon only by him. This word, if it is to take place in the tangible manner of this world, can be spoken only by a man if and in so far as he can truly say that he has been appointed and sent to accomplish this word and be its servant. To the '*Tibi soli peccavi*' corresponds God's '*Ego te absolvo*', and this alone delivers from guilt. This deliverance remains in the nature of things just as transcendent to empirical reflection as guilt itself; it must, therefore, be heard and accepted by faith – only in faith does it become real and known.

9. This-worldly victory (at least partial) over suffering and cure of sickness in the widest sense of the word are quite a different matter. Sickness and suffering differ from guilt as such (even though they spring from guilt in certain circumstances), just as the constitutive expression (sign) is different from the reality expressed or signified; they extend over the intermediary, world-like reality of the person, where they receive their objective character. And so, suffering and sickness can be reached also from without by somatic and psychical intervention, for the dimension in which they exist is exactly the same as that in which these determinations from without are received. Combative outside interventions against suffering are possible even [280] independently of the question whether suffering in a particular case is

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due to personal, past or present guilt, in so far as the relationship between guilt and its constitutive sign is a fluid one (i.e. in so far as there is no unequivocal and absolutely fixed connection between them, in the sense that guilt can exist without any adequate expression), and the expression of guilt, i.e. suffering, can still continue to exist even after guilt has been remitted by the word of God. Since suffering is never an absolutely unequivocal constitutive sign of guilt, it is also morally justifiable to fight against it by direct means intended to destroy it, even when it can be supposed with sufficient practical certitude that the suffering comes from still unremitted guilt. Whether this attempt to remove suffering under these presuppositions will be successful in a particular case, is quite a different question which cannot be answered *a priori*. It must, however, be stressed also that there is a Christian way of overcoming suffering which does not consist in removing suffering (sickness, etc.) from the intermediary realm of the person, but in faith's acceptance of suffering – of the suffering which continues to exist in this world of transitory things and of probation, as a means of sharing in the redemptive Passion of Christ. Consequently, the phenomenon of suffering will always remain ambiguous, and this ambiguity will always put man in doubt whether he is not after all merely a sinner and will always incite him to renewed efforts in his fight for perfect happiness in this world, offending thereby against faith and hope; accepted in faith, on the other hand, suffering is the very way in which redemption, the eschatological good coming from God alone, appears. On this basis, it must be asked whether every kind of combat against suffering in this world (which in itself is permitted and a duty) for the Christian) is not itself culpably based on the secret opinion that there 'really' should be no suffering and that, with a little bit of energy and cunning, suffering can really be banished through the progress of technical science, medicine and psychotherapy, even while the economy of this world is still in existence. To say 'no' to the sufferings of this world is at once a sacred duty for the Christian in the sight of God and, at the same time, the greatest danger of allowing himself to steal past the Cross of Christ. This 'no' can ultimately consist only in helping man, by means of teaching and God's merciful benevolence, to shoulder the Cross in spite of its continued weight, so that he may carry it without bitterness and despair and go on believing in the promise of eternal life.

10. As a result of the dialectic unity and ontological difference between guilt and its constitutive sign, between sin and suffering, regarding their actual dimensions, natures and conquest, the respective tasks of priest and physician are also mutually related and different from each other. Each has a different object and procedure. The priest in himself can only be the mediator of the word of God which remits sin but which as such does not simply and necessarily remove the constitutive sign of sin, viz. suffering, even when the latter has arisen from personal guilt. For once the suffering springing from sin has arisen, it attains its own manner of existence, like any other objectification of the personal spirit and freedom, since it is supported by the intermediary reality of the person and not by the personal nucleus and the seminal person himself. The physician (both of the body and psyche) aims directly at the pathogenic suffering and not at the sinful act or state of the seminal or achieved person. He must not, indeed, simply bypass the question of real guilt in the theological sense, for his own proper object may be a constitutive sign of real guilt, and this question inevitably poses itself for the sufferer. Moreover, suffering often (though not by any means always) cannot be removed from the person, i.e. from his intermediary reality, without a conversion – μετα&νοια – having taken place in the seminal person; and such a conversion can take place, at least in actual fact, only when man, believing, accepts remission of his real guilt from God. Yet the object and activity of the physician as such remains strictly different ontologically and theologically from that of the priest. The physician should not indeed be merely

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a healer of the body; but even in so far as his 'patient' suffers or may suffer spiritually, his task still differs from that of the priest. His task remains, directly, confined to the objective materializations of the proper guilt of the seminal person in this world; it confines itself, if you wish to put it this way, to the psyche and does not directly reach the immaterial, personal ground of spiritual freedom as such, where man is called directly by God and answers him with a 'yes' or a 'no'. In so far as guilt and suffering are nevertheless connected, though not identical, i.e. are connected in the unity of the dialectically 'veiling' and 'revealing' relationship between origin and the originated, between sign and the signified, expression and the expressed, the priest and the physician are referred to each other and dependent on each other, in spite of all the differences of their task and commission.

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[283]

10

PEACEFUL REFLECTIONS ON THE PAROCHIAL PRINCIPLE[1]

I

Principles are good in themselves. Anyone who has no principles is like a 'jelly-fish'. Yet principles can also become 'fads' – and be 'flogged to death'. And that does not do any good even to the most sacred of them.

It might be advisable to distinguish first of all between two classes of principles concerning human conduct. One class consists of those which are always the only correct and valid ones, no matter how much [284] they may be violated. This is the sort of principle which is meant to govern its particular objective domain exclusively (e.g. 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'). The reason for this is that such principles alone express the whole objective structure of the reality over which their validity is meant to extend. The other class is composed of those principles which are meant 'also' to have validity in a sphere of human conduct, but together with others; they must divide their authority in this sphere with other principles and must be applied in proper doses, as it were, if they are not to become harmful (e.g. 'The economy must allow for the development of private enterprise'). Such principles not only permit but, in the very nature of things necessitate, 'compromise', (if we may use such a suspect term to express what we mean here); they demand that other principles be allowed their rights, and they themselves must be applied 'more or less'. For such principles do not of themselves alone express the whole intrinsic law of the reality to which they are applicable. Hence, if they are to be applied justly, they must leave room for the application of those other principles which flow equally well from the same multiform structure of the reality concerned. With these principles we have to be very careful not to defeat their purpose by becoming obsessed with them. In their case there are inevitably different 'manners' in which the opposing principles may be 'apportioned' and applied in the concrete (there can, for example, be freer or more restricted forms of economic organization). One of these principles may take the place of the other, and there will be no great sense or hope of success in combatting the desired new 'apportionment' of practical application by defaming the newly adopted 'manner' as being a denial of the one and only principle. There simply are no clear-cut boundaries in these cases. It will always remain a debatable point whether one of two

[1] Cf. J. Höffner, 'Um das Pfarrprinzip', *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* LVI (1950), pp. 60-62; O. von Nell-Breuning, 'Pfarrgemeinde, Pfarrfamilie, Pfarrprinzip', *Trierer Theol. Zeitschrift* LVI (1947), pp. 257-262; J. Höffner, 'Nochmals das Pfarrprinzip', *Trierer Theol. Zeitschrift* LVII (1948), pp. 236-239; A. Schrott, *Seelsorge im Wandel der Zeiten, Formen und Organisation seit der Begründung des Pfarrinstituts* (Graz 1949); M. Marchi, *Esperienze parrocchiali* (Rome 1949); A. Kirchgassner, *Pfarrgemeinde und Pfarrgottesdienst* (Freiburg 1949); C. Noppel, *Aedificatio Corporis Christi*[2] (Freiburg 1949); K. Lechner, *Laie und Pfarre* (Vienna 1949); R. Perenna, *Innovazioni o rinnovamento della parrocchia?* (Como 1950); B. Socche, *La communità parrocchiale* (Rome 1950); A. Ryckmans, *La paroisse vivante* (Tournai 1950); G. Viviani, *La parroquia* (Rome 1950); H. Legare, *Introduction à la sociologie paroissiale* (Lille 1950); J. Miller, 'Beitrage zum Pfarrprinzip', *Orientierung* XV (1951), p. 163; F. Benz, 'Die neuen franzosischen Seelsorgsmethoden und ihre Bedeutung für Deutschland', *Tübinger Theol. Quartalschrift* CXXXI (1951), pp. 208-247,320-339,464-486; L. Borlée, 'Structures sociales et ministére paroissial', *Rev. Dioc. Tournai* VI (1951), pp. 427-446; J. Peitzmeier, 'Jugendgruppenarbeit und Jugendpsychologie', *Theologie und Glaube* XLII (1952), pp. 454-461 (important for an evaluation of the 'parochial youth movement'); R. Spiazzi, 'Spunti per una teologia della parrocchia', *Scuola Catt*. LXXX (1952), pp. 26-42; A. Schrott, 'Pfarrseelsorge und überpfarrliche Seelsorge', *Der Seelsorger* XXIII (1953), pp. 202-208; P. Virton, *Enquêtes de sociologie paroissiale* (Paris 1953); *Die Pfarre, Gestalt und Sendung* (Vienna 1953); *La Maison-Dieu* XXXVI (no. 4 1953): 'Problèmes de la Paroisse'.

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principles opposing each other in this way has enough scope in practice for being realized (whether, e.g. in a particular system of education the right of authority is sufficiently preserved as against freedom). In such cases, even legal demarcations and stipulations concerning the principles can never replace the honest and decent attitude of *men*. The proof of the presence of such an honest attitude is given when the champion of one principle really and honestly recognizes the right of the principle professed by his antagonist, successfully keeps the extremists in his own 'party' within bounds and is capable of granting greater force to the opposite principle (when he sees that the concrete state of affairs [285] demands it), without fearing the reproach of being unprincipled and of betraying the party doctrine.

Let it be understood from the very beginning that the 'parochial principle' belongs to the second category. The first thing to do now, though, is to discover what we mean by the parochial principle.

Before we attempt to do so, we would like at once to suggest a distinction which is usually overlooked but which would seem to be important both in theory and in practice. We have to distinguish two principles contained in the parochial principle. We will call them the 'parish-priest principle' and the 'parish principle'. As an abstract 'principle' (i.e. one formulated on its own, before entering into an objectively-justified – not 'lazy' – compromise with other 'principles' in practice), the 'parish-priest principle' demands that all pastoral work in a determined community be exercised and directed by the parish priest of that community and his assistants, curates etc. It is quite indifferent whether these assistants are permanently at his disposal or are called upon by him (N.B.) as the need arises. It follows immediately (in principle, or at least in practice) that according to this principle the care of souls refers here only to those who belong to a particular parish. The 'parish principle' demands that all pastoral work be done within the parochial territory, in other words that pastoral care devote itself in its various activities to people belonging to the same parish. Hence this principle, looked at purely theoretically, does *not* require every particular pastoral activity to come (permanently or only for the occasion) under the authority of the parish priest or of the assistants under *his* authoritative direction. It requires merely that the group of people given pastoral care belong to the same parish. An example of what is meant here would be a parochial youth group directed by an independent diocesan youth chaplain, answerable to the bishop alone, or a parochial branch of a men's society directed by a member of a religious Order who is responsible for the work in this particular field. We do not mean to dispute that the transition between the 'parish-priest principle' and the 'parish principle' is fairly fluid in practice. Nevertheless, as we will see later, the distinction between the two is important both theoretically and practically, if we are to get a really clear idea as to what is demanded when the parochial principle is advanced. Our distinction would, for instance, make it easier at least to determine the point at issue in the debate about the line of demarcation between 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' care of souls.

[286] Following on the distinction of concepts just made, let us at once add a further distinction concerning the concept of 'extraordinary' and 'ordinary' care of souls. For we must somehow balance the 'parish principle' with the right of the representatives of 'extraordinary pastoral work'. Looked at purely in the abstract, pastoral work could be called 'extraordinary' for several reasons: either because and when it happens only occasionally (e.g. a parish Mission held only every ten years); or because it is performed by someone who does not belong to the ordinary parochial clergy even though it is done *in* the parish and by the authority of the parish priest (as for instance a course of Lenten sermons preached by a Regular in a parish at the invitation of and as the representative of the parish priest); or because it is carried out independently of the parish priest's directing authority and, therefore, (at least in most cases) outside the framework of a parish (such as work with a Third Order group formed in conjunction with a non-parochial Friary Church). It will be useful, for the

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sake of clarity, to apply the term ‘extraordinary’ (at least here) only to this third kind of pastoral work. The other two kinds are really only more exceptional cases of ‘ordinary’ pastoral work, since they are after all directly or indirectly borne by the parochial clergy and take place within the framework of a parish.

After this preliminary, formalistic distinction of concepts, we must now go more closely into the matter in hand. What in the concrete is meant by the parish- and parish-priest principle? Is there, and why should there be, such a principle? Although we ought to distinguish these two principles in theory and, as will appear later, also for practical reasons, they do nevertheless stem from the same (or related) objective conditions and may consequently be described and appreciated together for the moment. The ‘parish-priest principle’ (taken in the abstract) indicates the exclusive competence of the parish priest and *his* assistants regarding the pastoral care of the people under his jurisdiction. The ‘parish principle’ is ultimately concerned with the same object, but more from the point of view of the people given pastoral care. Thus it demands that that care must be exercised primarily and exclusively in a territorially-defined congregation, in the sense that wherever men come together for the care of their souls, they must do so as members of the same parish.

Whenever such principles have been given a new emphasis and it [287] has been demanded that they be carried out to the full, two factors have always been associated with such a tendency: a changed general situation in the spiritual field and theoretical reasons recalled to mind as a result of this new situation. We have seen the gradual development of a new situation in our day. There have been times in the Church when the ordinary parish clergy felt, rightly or wrongly, less qualified for dealing with the greater pastoral tasks. At such times they were, therefore, quite pleased to leave certain pastoral activities, demanding greater accomplishments, to the ‘extraordinary’ pastoral work especially of the regular clergy – thus, e.g. Missions, pastoral care for special groups of men making greater demands on the intelligence and spirituality of the chaplain, etc. So the parish clergy confined themselves at such times more or less to their administrative functions, regular Church services (with a sermon or Sundays), catechism lessons in the schools, instructions and the administration of the sacraments. Today the secular clergy, especially in our great cities, feel themselves fully qualified even for further and greater tasks. And since the secular clergy of today are rightly of the opinion that the responsibility for sufficient pastoral care as a whole falls ultimately on them, they also are no longer willing to confine themselves to that sector of the care of souls which might easily give the impression (at least when looked at superficially and in comparison with the tasks previously left for the most part to the ‘extraordinary’ pastoral care) of consisting of bureaucratic and administrative functions. The seculars are no longer willing to limit themselves to those duties which make great demands on time and man-power, but for which the representatives of ‘extraordinary pastoral works’ easily tend to consider themselves ‘too good’. Wherever the ‘ordinary’ care of souls is at a high level, the work will tend to be as self-sufficient as possible. If it did not show this tendency, this would merely be a sign that things are not all that they should be. In addition to this, there is a second determining factor in the matter under discussion, viz. the newly-reawakened will to community among lay people, who are the object of pastoral care. We live, from a cultural-historical and social point of view, in the period of the ‘collective man’, of the mass, and also in the age of the dissolution of those social forms and structures (‘classes’, etc.) which, by their diversity and peculiar characteristics, facilitated the formation and growth of more independent, more strongly-marked individual personalities. Although this development has been attended by its own extremely [288] grave dangers for man and for the Christian in man, it has also created a renewed understanding and will to community within the sphere of Christian life, a will to form ‘communities’ and, concretely, a desire for the parish. Indeed, in so far as modern communization threatens and diminishes the sense of security and

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inviolability of the individual, who is left to the tender mercies of anonymous, vast, soul-less and brutal collective powers, the parochial community in particular, with its religious foundations and spirit, will appear in an ever-increasing measure as a haven of refuge to the threatened individual. Living in this parish-community and finding support in it (which can in certain circumstances go far beyond the purely religious sphere through such factors as '*Caritas*', Christian neighbourhood, and the creation even of a high intellectual and moral 'milieu'), man is no longer a helpless, solitary individual and yet is not merely a 'cog' or 'number' in a soul-less collectivity. It may well be that the meaning of the parish community can still increase a great deal in this direction and that parish-life may be developed much further still, especially since the Christian of today – even in so-called Catholic countries – lives in pagan surroundings.

Perhaps something of the social, economic and cultural organization found in the Jewish community in the great pagan cities of hellenistic antiquity is necessary also for the Christian parish of today, situated as it is in the midst of the unchristian and humanly formless mass-society of our day. The parish would have to develop to a far greater extent into the complete home of the Christian man. (Yet this must not give rise to a ghetto-mentality, and Christianity must remain active in its missionary task, continuing to feel responsible for the life and salvation of all people. And so the Christian congregation must not only be self-sufficient as far as possible, but must also be mentally and spiritually alive and must regard itself as the germ-cell for the re-christianization of all the people.) '*Junge Mannschaft*' and similar phenomena are in fact the first steps towards a re-formation of the Christian parish and the Christian 'home-land'. We cannot enter further into these questions here. The little we have said, however, may suffice to indicate that even the present-day situation of the layman has urged a more *vigorous* emphasis on the parochial principle.

When we debate nowadays about the parochial principle and try to discover how it is logically and legally reconcilable with other 'principles' and to what extent it is actually limited by them, it must [289] not be forgotten that the present state of the world certainly demands a more intense life in the parish, and in that sense also a more vigorous application of the parochial principle, than was the case in former times. The fact that present-day parishes (and especially parishioners) to a large extent do not as yet, and indeed will not very quickly, correspond to the demands of the situation, is no argument against these demands.

In such a situation one naturally recalls the fundamental, and in a certain sense 'always valid', arguments for the parochial principle. These arguments can perhaps best be divided into two groups, viz. those based on dogmatic reasons and those based on pastoral considerations. The dogmatic argument is founded on the fact that the Church has an episcopal structure by divine, and hence always valid, law. We quietly leave to one side the question of whether everything attributed directly to the concrete (territorial) structure of a diocese is really as immutable by divine right as is the dogmatic notion of the Church's episcopate. (Actually, there would be quite a few debatable points in this matter.) The Church as a whole is divided into different territorial parts. And each of these parts, defined by *spatial* boundaries (and not by difference in social station or other conceivable principles of organization), is subject to a bishop. The bishop is in his own person the pastor of his diocese, with full responsibility and rights. Any pastoral care in his diocese is his responsibility, is exercised in his name and by his authority, and is concerned with those who are subject to his authority because they, as Christians, live within the boundaries of his diocesan territory. (We prescind here from the case of the exempt Orders where the spiritual care of their members within the Order lies outside the competence of the local Ordinary.) The reason for this spatial structure of the Church is a very profound one precisely because of its primitive nature, and is easily comprehensible: the Church's pastoral care is concerned with the *whole* man and with men in so far as they form a 'people' which as such is to enter

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into the Kingdom of God. Both of these purposes are accomplished by addressing man as a being with a home. For 'at home', where he is rooted with his past and his relations, where he has his house and home and where his life is lived, there man is wholly present because that is where he has his habitat both bodily and mentally which determines his characteristics, and that is where he is directly the member of a people to which the Church has been sent by the commission given to her by our Lord. [290] Now, the parish (which in the early Church coincided practically with the diocese) is in a sense the diocese in miniature. The parish in itself exists indeed only in virtue of human law and hence has not basically the same irrevocable necessity as the diocese. Thus the bishop can to a great extent (and within the framework of canon law) make use also of other instruments besides the parish (and parish priest) in the fulfilment of his pastoral duty.[2] Nevertheless, the parochial structure is a consistent development and practical application of the principle of the territorial diocese ruled by the bishop as pastor of the whole flock. The parish, too, can in this sense claim to be a realization of the divinely-wise and ever-valid principle which the Founder of the Church has established within her for all time, viz. that she should convert men into Christians, men who have a home and are a people. When principles of pastoral organization begin to vie with one another, it remains an indisputable fact that the parochial principle can claim to be the oldest and most venerable principle applied by the Church on the authority of Christ; one man is in charge of the whole pastoral work done among a group of people who are collected together under him because they have their home on the same soil. If this principle has eternal validity for the over-all structure of the Church (and hence also permanent meaning and utility), it cannot be absolutely false for the smaller structures of the Church.

Let us pass on now to the pastoral argument for the parochial principle. The pastoral effort requires a living centre on account of the unavoidable and immense variety of its activities, means and forms and of individuals with whom it is concerned. From this centre everything derives its proper place, right measure and correspondingly greater or lesser importance, and this centre is a safeguard both against a kind of planless hypertrophy and against an atrophy of particular pastoral activities. This living centre can only be the Altar, even though genuine Christian life and ecclesiastico-sacramental life do not by an means coincide, i.e. even though Christian Priesthood and Liturgy are not the same thing[3] and genuine Christianity itself must come to grips with the whole of reality (and hence also with 'profane' reality), [291] making it subject to its law. Yet it remains true that wherever pastoral care exercised in federations, associations, organizations, etc., more or less cuts itself loose from the central concern of all Christianity which man, as a member of the holy people of God, adores through the Sacrifice of our Lord and – truly and historically – encounters in the Sacrament of the God of grace and eternal life, this 'care of souls' becomes a mere empty busyness, an exclusive interest in local club life, a rationalistic urge to reform the world and an officious organization-fever, by which the members seek their own advantage and not God. The Altar, however, stands first and foremost in the parish church. For the parish church is the representative of the diocese and the primary place for the care of souls according to canon law (if only for the reason that the parish priest has the right and duty of the care of souls of *all* Christians living in his territory). Hence, if every pastoral work finds its central point in the Altar of Christ, then the life of the parish, issuing from the altar of the parish church, is and remains *the* basic form of the care of souls. In this way we also have a guarantee that individual pastoral endeavours preserve their mutual relations and proper proportion, by the very fact that in the parish they reach man under the very respect which even by nature is one of the most many-sided and yet

[2] The reserved rights of which the bishop cannot deprive parish pries according to Canon Law, form only a small sector in the business of present day care of souls.
[3] Cf. my essay 'Priesterliche Existenz', *Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik* XVII (1942), pp. 155-171.

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most uniform, viz. man as member of a natural, spatial community. Such an organization has also fundamentally the greatest stability in times of crisis. The most primitive structure is also the most indestructible. The bond uniting kith and kin, as realized in the natural community, belongs to the most primitive forms of human society. And the parish builds on the foundations of the natural community. Consequently, taking things as a whole, the parish, and hence also its pastoral function, has (after the family) the greatest social, spiritual and thus also pastoral resistance of all human associations, both against internal tendencies to dissolution and against external influences.

We have tried in the above to give at least an indication of the *inner* justification of the 'parochial principle', an indication of its 'essence' as it were. Since this principle is, however, of human law in the Church (though in practice an almost self-evident conclusion from the territorial principle of the episcopate, going back to a divine ordinance), it follows that the parochial principle, taken as something actual, can be given 'existence' (i.e. its real validity) only by Canon Law, and not merely by basic considerations about its meaning and actual [292] fitness for the matter in question. Now, the parochial principle has in fact been instituted by Canon Law. There are three canonical prescriptions which together bring what we call the 'parochial principle' into existence: firstly, the Tridentine provision that a diocese must be wholly divided into parishes (CIC can. 216); secondly, CIC can. 464 § 1,[4] which lays down the parish priest's pastoral duty with regard to all his parishioners; and thirdly, can. 94 §§ 1-3, which determines that every Catholic Christian acquires the parish priest of his place of residence or, if he has no domicile, of the place in which he is actually staying, as *his proper* parish priest. It follows from this that where the law itself does not make an exception, every Catholic Christian is inevitably made subject to a parish priest who has the right and duty of pastoral care in his regard and who carries the responsibility before God and the Church for the salvation of those Christians whose parish priest he is. There can, therefore, be no doubt about the existence of a 'parochial principle'. Nor can there be any doubt about the fact that every Catholic Christian is basically placed under a parish priest (apart from certain exceptions which are of no practical interest here, since in most cases they concern only exempt Religious). Two observations should be made here on this canonically formulated parochial principle. *Firstly*, although there can be only one parish priest in each parish (can. 460 § 2), his right and duty to exercise his pastoral function among his parishioners does not imply that he is necessarily the only one who has a pastoral duty towards the parishioners. The pastoral right of the parish priest can basically be a cumulative right and is not necessarily an exclusive one. Thus the parish priest has, for instance, a duty to instruct the children in the Catechism,[5] and yet this is (obviously) also the duty of the parents;[6] similarly in the case of those charged with seeing to it that children make their Easter duties.[7] Thus it is obviously in no way a violation of the parish priest's pastoral right when the bishop grants a certain limited right and duty of exercising pastoral care among the parishioners of a parish to someone other than the parish priest (e.g. to a teacher of religion in the school; to Religious at their own church: can. 1334), without thereby releasing the parish priest from his obligation to exercise the same function (in such a [293] case, those appointed to the same task may, of course, 'share' the actual carrying out of this task). *Secondly*, it is important to make a further observation with regard to the more precise nature of the canonical 'parochial principle'. There is no duty on the part of the parishioner, corresponding to the parish priest's pastoral rights, to make use of the parish priest's 'services'. The parish priest must preach, proclaim

[4] '*Parochus ex officio tenetur curam animarum exercere in* omnes *suos paroecianos, qui non sint legitime exempti*.'
[5] CIC can. 1329, 1330, 1333 § I.
[6] CIC can. 1335
[7] CIC can. 860.

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the doctrines of Faith, hear Confessions, distribute the Eucharist, officiate at divine service on Sundays.[8] These are indeed most important, if not *the* most important, functions of his pastoral right and duty. The Christian obviously has the duty of knowing the teachings of the Faith, of receiving the sacraments and of attending Mass on Sundays and Holydays; and the parish priest can exhort the Christian to fulfil this duty.[9] Yet in the very matter of these most important and frequent duties of their religious life, the faithful are *not* bound to fulfil their duty specifically in the *parochial* sphere of the care of souls. According to can. 467 § 2, the faithful should indeed be admonished to attend frequently, where this causes no inconvenience, the services and sermons in their parish church, but, according to the meaning of the word 'admonition',[10] this urgent recommendation is not intended to impose an obligation in the strict sense and is in itself already limited by the '*frequenter*' and '*ubi commode fieri potest*' expressly added by the canon. Hence, in so far as Canon Law itself authorizes the admonition of the faithful to take part in the *parochial* life, this admonition can concern only a 'frequent' participation (a notion which is still realized even if someone does not attend the parochial services absolutely every Sunday) and may be given only if the parishioner does not thereby experience any additional inconvenience. Thus current Canon Law (contrary to the law of previous ages) quite logically does not speak of any duty of attending the *parochial* Mass on Sundays, since the duty of Sunday Mass can be fulfilled also by attending Mass somewhere else (except in Private Oratories).[11] The same is true of the reception of Holy Communion,[12] even of Easter Communion (which we are merely advised to receive [294] in our own parish church)[13] and of the annual Confession.[14] So it is clear, even from these considerations that, in so far as it has been established as an actually valid principle by Canon Law, which alone is capable of so establishing it, the parochial principle is of itself not an absolute and exclusive principle. Otherwise the parishioners would necessarily have a duty strictly corresponding to the parish priest's pastoral right. The fact that this is not the case, that, in other words, the parochial principle determined by Canon Law presupposes that the faithful may fulfil their religious duties outside the parish, shows that Canon Law recognizes a pastoral activity of the Church which is not based on her parochial-territorial structure. Nevertheless, there is a parochial principle since Canon Law has established it, and it is also possible that future legislation will once more extend its validity further than is the case today.

II

That, then, is one side of the picture. But, as already stated at the beginning, the parochial principle is not the only valid one and must not be the only one which governs our pastoral activity. Side by side with it there are other principles which must also be given their due place in the concrete structure of the care of souls. We must not complicate matters, nor must we oversimplify them. 'Clear, simple lines' can be just as dangerous as the confusion created by discordant tendencies. No matter how justified the parochial principle is, it must never become the weapon of an (unacknowledged) 'State Socialism', which would equate, level and centralize everything from above, even if this 'above' and the 'central point' be merely

[8] CIC can. 467 § I, 1344 § I, 1329-1332, 863, 892 § 1, 873 § 1.
[9] CIC can. 863; 854 § 5; 1348.
[10] Cf. Benedict XIV, *De synodo dioecesana* lib. XI, cap. 5, no. 5 Wernz-Vidal, *Jus canonicum* II 'De personis' no. 736, IV (Rome 1943), p. 937.
[11] Can. 1294.
[12] Can. 869.
[13] Can. 859 § 3.
[14] Can. 905 *sq*.

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the parish.

In the first place, the parish (and hence also the parochial principle) is merely of *human* right in the Church. Parishes and parish priests are not divine, unchangeable realities in the Church, like the Primacy of the Pope, or the Episcopate. The territorial parish exists because and in so far as Canon Law and the bishop desire its existence and the measure of its functions. The same holds good for the parish priest. Now, it follows from this that the standard for judging the legitimacy of this humanly-given right is not the parish and its greatest possible self-sufficiency (for the parish is the measured and not the measure) but man, the object of the care of souls. And the concrete application of [295] this yard-stick, i.e. the actual organization of pastoral care as divided among the work of the parochial and non-parochial clergy, is a matter for the bishop. Besides basic clarity, this application will always require a 'prudent estimate' which can never be replaced by 'unequivocal principles'. Since the parish and the office of parish priest are merely a canonical development of the diocese and the episcopal office, which can differentiate their functions not only in this particular manner but also directly in extra- and supra-parochial organizations, it would be wrong to say that e.g. ecclesiastical associations and their chaplains can and must properly and lawfully present themselves *only* as structures arising out of the *parish* as such, although it would be very regrettable if the parish were to deteriorate into a kind of 'blanket-organization' for such associations and groups within its territory.

When it is a question of how the pastoral office should be exercised – whether parochially or supra-parochially, according to the parish- and parish-priest principle or (partly) without it – then the only objective yard-stick is furnished by the answer to the question as to how the pastoral office attains its goal, which is the transformation of man (both as an individual and as a member of a community) into a Christian so as to enable him to lead a Christian life (in knowledge and adoration of God and by imitation of Christ). For pastoral care exists for the sake of the Christian, and not the Christian for the sake of pastoral care, and certainly not for the sake of the one who exercises it. No pastor (whether 'ordinary' or 'extra-ordinary') has the right to judge and shape the technical structure of pastoral work according to whether and how far it will offer him as unhampered and undisturbed a sphere of activity as possible. Professional or 'bread-and-butter' jealousy (of a material and spiritual kind), bureaucratic 'tidiness', a schematic 'planned economy', a need for self-assertion, fear of losing the justification for one's existence – such and other 'motives' which often play their part on both 'sides', are not a fit basis for discussion whether in favour of or against the parochial principle.

The only question to be considered is how the object of the care of souls (viz. the Christian man) can best be attained. Now, the parochial principle in its intrinsic reasoning is itself ultimately based on a natural view of man, the 'object' of pastoral care, for it makes use of a basic fact of human life for its particular view on the care of souls, viz. of the fact that man has a home somewhere. In this view, pastoral care must approach man from this particular side of his existence. And this is [296] quite right as far as it goes. Man, however, is in fact a many-sided being; 'having a home' (having roots in a place) is not the only existential of his life. For he has a certain individuality endowing him with individual talents, experience of life, temperament, etc. He is differentiated according to age and sex. He has a particular occupation. As a rational being, he is free to form associations which may cut across his territorial community. He can change his place of residence. He has individual needs not catered for where he lives. And man is this many-sided being even *qua* the object of pastoral care. By the very fact that the parochial principle is based on a natural existential of man, it is obvious from the very beginning that other natural existentials of man may equally serve as a basis for the possibility, right and duty of pastoral care. In other words, the care of souls can also deal with man in so far as he is conditioned by these other existentials, i.e. it can make

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him its object in so far as he has a certain occupation, enters into certain free associations, etc. If this right and duty are denied to it, or these opportunities are not utilized as far as lies within its capability, then the pastoral ministry does not address itself to the whole man in the manifold plenitude of his being and life, and man cannot become fully Christian nor Christianity fully human. In other words, since man's being embraces different natural dimensions, the pastoral ministry may basically be exercised from the viewpoint of all of these dimensions, and indeed must be so exercised if it is seen that complete christianization of man is in fact impossible merely from the point of view of his living in a certain place (i.e. merely by applying the parochial principle).

This is, however, in fact the case. It is in fact impossible, as can be seen from the point of view of both the object and the minister of the care of souls. To these we must add a third consideration which points in the same direction.

Considering man who is the object of pastoral care, it is obvious that wherever we have to deal with simple human conditions – in other words, with agricultural communities where practically all the happenings of human life (such as work, cultural life, etc.) occur within the confines of a parish which can humanly speaking be surveyed by an individual – the pastoral ministry can deal with man in accordance with the parochial principle, i.e. basing itself on the fact that his home, interests, etc. are centred in this one place. Thus it will still be able to reach man in all his relationships, for the simple reason that his whole life unfolds itself in practice within the parish. Something similar [297] (although sociologically quite different) happens where the number of Catholics scattered over a large area in a non-Christian district is comparatively so small that Church life can of necessity unfold itself only in the form of parish life; for in such circumstances there can be no other way of exercising the pastoral ministry since the number of people who could, for instance, be interested in any particular 'society' is so small. So in this case, too, the parish is in fact the only possible soil for the care of souls. Prescinding, however, from such cases, the narrow confines of their immediate home can no longer embrace all the activities of townspeoples' lives in present-day circumstances brought about by urbanization, greater freedom of movement and the extensive departmentalization of modern man. The location of man's material and spiritual home (if we may be allowed such a distinction) differs widely. Modern man living in towns (in contrast to the farmer or perhaps even to the small-town artisan) pursues his occupation outside of the parish. He visits schools which are very often in no way connected with his parochial district. Like a nomad, he changes his residence so frequently that he cannot possibly have the farmer's sense of 'belonging'. He often knows his next-door neighbours least of all. Differences in intellectual and cultural needs deeply separate people living in the same place and lead to the formation of communities which are not in the least recruited from the immediate neighbourhood of their domicile. Man's life, lived in his society (clubs, communities of interest, etc.), side by side with his professional and family life in the narrowest sense, takes him just as far away from his immediate local surroundings. His travels, hikes, recreations and amusements, looked at territorially, all take place, in the majority of cases, outside of the narrow confines of his place of residence and hence outside of the parish. The ties binding him to his relations (if such ties still mean anything at all to him) also transfer his life out of the parish, since a man's kindred too are scattered in these days of shifting populations. We may regard these conditions as unavoidable, regrettable, requiring to be reformed or in any other way you like; the fact remains that the pastoral ministry cannot directly change this state of affairs (based on social transformations) to any considerable degree by its own proper means. It must, therefore, reckon with this general state of affairs as an established fact (for an unforeseeable length of time), just as life in the parish in bygone days did not create (though it did strengthen) the territorial community and its solidarity, but presupposed and accepted [298] it as the obvious norm for pastoral

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organization. This means, consequently, that the possibility of getting a hold of the *whole* man by pastoral means, basing one's efforts merely on the parochial principle, i.e. on the principle proceeding from the place where man lives, has diminished considerably as compared with what was the case in times past. If the pastoral ministry is to meet man on all levels of his actual life, and if to a large extent man does not actually live any longer in the community corresponding to the parish, then pastoral care must not limit itself obstinately to meeting him on the level of the parish alone. If school-children, for example, live more in the school and in youth groups created by these surroundings than in the district of the town where they happen to live at any particular moment (until their parents 'move' once more), and if our pastoral work must in its own interests meet them on their *own* ground, where they actually feel 'at home', how can the parochial youth group, i.e. the youth of their 'district', be the only and decisive meeting point between Church and school-child? If the teacher's nearest neighbour is not actually the milkman or dressmaker living next door, but his or her professional colleague with whom he shares his economic endeavours, his level of education, general interests, etc., how can the pastoral ministry refuse to create a 'personal parish' in a certain (non-canonical) sense for such people and refuse to christianize the spiritual sphere in which these people actually live? If young craftsmen, apprentices, form economically and intellectually a specific type of man, who inevitably also expresses and asserts himself in associations (if not in a religious then at least in a profane sense), can pastoral care renounce the formation of apprentice-associations, merely because these are contrary to the 'parochial principle' or because it must then answer the question as to how the Christian 'congregations' thus springing up may be coordinated in a vital union with the parochial congregation (which is most desirable) – simply because it is easier 'without all this'? If an intellectual, even I one who is very much a man of the people and who does not wish to cut himself off in a separate caste, nevertheless has his own intellectual and social needs which only come into their own if he and his colleagues are allowed to be 'among themselves' sometimes (not because they cut themselves off and exclude others, but because the 'others' exclude 'themselves' for want of corresponding interests), and if these associations are 'supra-parochial' (if only for numerical reasons), are we to say that even religiously-guided circles for such men (in any form [299] whatsoever) are forbidden simply because this would offend against the parochial principle? There may be still other needs of association according to profession, social position, age, sex, etc. (Other examples, apart from the ones already given, might be associations for priests, soldiers, students, young workers, etc.) Since these cannot be condemned together with their non-conformist, exclusive, singular and small-minded abuses, but must be judged by their natural and rightful purpose, viz. to create human and spiritual homes for the men of today who can no longer find such a home merely among their local neighbours and relations, any truly up-to-date form of pastoral activity which is trying to reach and christianize the whole man under as many aspects as possible, cannot base itself simply and solely on the parochial principle. By thus contesting the exclusive validity of the parochial principle, we do not mean to deny that it is imperative for such an 'association-minded ministry' (in the widest sense of the word) not to forget that the right structure of its activities must come from what is essential to Christianity – from the 'altar' (and that there is a real danger of forgetting this which certainly has not always been avoided in past decades). For, on the one hand, we do not deny the justification of the parochial principle nor, on the other hand, is it impossible for an 'association-minded ministry' to observe this imperative even within its own form of activity.

The conditions of social structure in which modern man lives forbid any exclusive application of the parochial principle. The latter is not the only valid principle for the organization of pastoral activities. This does not – for the reasons indicated – apply only

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where there is an almost compelling movement today towards some form of *organized* extra-parochial associations as an indispensable basis for the care of souls, but even where otherwise strongly differentiated groups of people (though not strictly organized) may be given sufficient pastoral care only on a supra-parochial level. We are thinking, for example, of the specific public catered for by our works of religious formation, or of converts in large towns.

Finally, there is a further factor which must be taken into consideration in this connection. Our city-parishes are very often so large that there cannot possibly be any sense of neighbourly 'togetherness' among *all* the members of a parish to the required and desirable extent; yet this is the natural basis for any parochial ministry. Among [300] ten-thousand people there is no neighbourliness in the way in which a parish of the old type could presuppose it. In such large parishes there may, of course, be a certain circle of people (the 'faithful' parishioners) whose whole Christian life is centred in the life of their parish with the kind of Christian 'togetherness' which is the ideal sought by the parochial principle. In this way even a large modern parish may give the impression of having a 'flourishing' parish life. Yet this impression is secured at the cost of the many others who remain strangers. Should not our pastoral ministry 'get hold' of them too?

The care of souls as practised in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (in Germany) has, of course, recognized this added need for an extra-parochial ministry and has taken pains, with greater or lesser success, to fulfil it. Yet for the last fifteen years the more vigorous emphasis laid on the parochial principle has given cause for pointing out expressly the continued existence, as far as the object of pastoral activity is concerned, of the sociological presuppositions which have led during the last hundred years to an ever more wide-spread ministry conducted *also* extra- and supra-parochially; indeed, these presuppositions have if anything become even stronger today. So it would be high-flown romanticism (even when it can apparently appeal to 'dogmatic' reasons) and typically German pedantry, or a leaning towards false ecclesiastical State Socialism, if we were to throw the experience and methods acquired by the extra-parochial ministry during the last hundred years completely overboard, in the name of the parochial principle, and regard them as something utterly out of date for modern pastoral work. We do not in any way mean to deny by this the fruitfulness and necessity of the renewed pastoral-theological appreciation of the significance of the strictly parochial pastoral ministry, extending from the '*Grossstadtseelsorge*' (1911) of the Viennese Heinrich Swoboda to the '*Aedificatio corporis Christi*' (1937) of Konstantin Noppel, S.J. Nor must it be asserted that every 'organizational development' which has ever existed has a right to existence today. Nevertheless, the fact that during the last years of National Socialism pastoral care was to a very large extent reduced to a purely parochial ministry, does not prove that we may still make a present-day virtue out of the necessity of that period of persecution, in times which now permit once more of a freer and more comprehensive development of the Christian missionary mandate.

The conclusion that the parochial principle (or more exactly: the [301] 'parish-priest principle') cannot be the only legitimate one for present-day pastoral activity follows also from a second point of view, viz. that of the pastor himself. The more departmentalized man is nowadays as the object of pastoral care, the more difficult and multiform the pastoral ministry must be, if we do not intend to subscribe to the pious and merely comfortable illusion that the care of souls is required to concern itself only with the 'universal human element' in all these differentiated people and yet can christianize them sufficiently and in all the different spheres of their lives. If, however, there ought to be special ministries concerned with priests, artists, students, converts, etc., and if such a pastoral ministry exercised on highly-differentiated groups of people presupposes a great deal of specialized experience and knowledge about the occupations, living conditions, spiritual origins, etc. of these people,

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then there surely cannot be anything sinister in supposing that not every priest is called to and capable of such a ministry merely by the fact of his belonging to the parochial clergy of a particular parish. In short, there is surely nothing sinister about suspecting that in such cases the parish-priest principle is insufficient (quite apart from the fact that in practice these different ministries cannot be carried out within the confines of a single *parish* and hence the parish principle cannot be applied even for merely technical reasons). It is no disgrace, and no reflection on their own human, scientific and moral-ascetic qualities, if the parochial clergy draw the logical conclusion from the fact that it is impossible for the parish priest and his curate (in every parish) to be qualified (humanly, scientifically and pastorally) for all these necessary specialized forms of the care of souls. *Non omnia possumus omnes*. A capable doctor – to draw a parallel – does not feel ashamed, but feels it to be his duty as a doctor in certain cases, to send a patient to a specialist or to a hospital. A sober and objective estimate of the capacities of the parish clergy, on the one hand, and of the demands of youth on the other, will make us realize that we cannot even expect to find *the* youth-chaplain in *every* single parish who will – humanly and pastorally – be equal to the demands of present-day youth-work and will have the time for it. If in this case a better pastoral care of youth can be achieved extra-parochially (e.g. by supra-parochial youth-groups organized in conjunction with the schools, or in 'federations'), then the parochial principle must not be allowed to stand in the way, nor must such a settlement of the matter be regarded as a 'sign of the poverty' of parochial care of souls. Such a [302] scheme would be nothing more than the recognition of the limitations of any man, even of the pastor, in the matter of the salvation of souls, a limitation which, after all, applies equally, in other spheres, to those to whom the clergy of a parish surrender the pastoral ministry of certain groups of men. Moreover, such an arrangement does not deprive the parish priest of his right and duty to see to it that the task of educating the youth of his parish, imposed on him as the representative of the Church, (which has the autonomous right to educate), is actually carried out to the full in these circumstances (even though partially by others).

Although we must for the reasons given dispute the exclusive validity of the parochial principle, even considered from the viewpoint of the pastor, we do not deny by the same token that *often* (though certainly not always) the parish principle may still be observed even when we have to diverge from the parish-priest principle. For instance, a men's society directed by a Regular may have its 'parochial groups', or a group of a youth federation equally directed from 'outside' may be recruited from young people of the same parish. In many cases, certainly, even the parish principle will not be applicable, if only because the number of extra-parochial pastoral 'specialists' is so small; in other words, the special groups under the care of these 'specialists' will in such cases require to be organized also supra-parochially, even when the number of members belonging to the same parish would otherwise be sufficient for the formation of a parish group. In these instances the impracticability of the parish-priest principle also requires us to abandon the parish principle.

There is yet a third point of view from which the exclusive validity of the parochial principle may be contested. As we have explained in a previous essay,[15] the individual has his own independent rights in the Church, i.e. (applying the matter to our present question) the individual must in principle be left enough scope in the Church to be able to express his individuality. This applies also to his freedom to form associations even when these arise, as in this case, 'from below', by the free initiative of the Christian individual himself.[16] The

[15] 'Der Einzelne in der Kirche', *Stimmen der Zeit* CXXXIX (1947) pp. 260-276.

[16] We do not need to make a detailed examination here of the many possible motives for the actual formation of such associations. In cases applicable to our question, these motives will usually arise in some form or other from the already suggested need of a '*spiritual*' home characteristic of the differentiated man of today. This need is nowadays no longer satisfied simply by the person's residential neighbourhood.

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authoritative [303] ecclesiastical government (i.e. the bishop and the Pope) has the right and the duty to decide whether in the actual individual case such a 'free group' (as we are going to call it) corresponds in its *concrete* characteristics to the basic norms of Christian Faith and Morals. This authority has the right and duty of deciding whether a 'free-group' is in this particular instance a necessary or desirable realization of the Christian individual's right, or at least one which may be tolerated, and whether in the concrete case the Church wishes to use such a 'free-group' as an instrument of her care of souls (e.g. by giving the group a 'spiritual leader', 'spiritual director', 'president', etc. who then owes his right and duty not only to the group but also to the Church). Thus, 'permission' or 'refusal of permission' for such a free-group does indeed lie with the Church authorities in individual cases, but it is not an act left simply to the good pleasure of this authority. For it too finds its objective norm in the basic right of the individual Christian to form such groups; it is rather an act binding on the conscience of ecclesiastical authority by objective norms, even though the actual observance of these norms is not in its turn subject to the judgement of the individual believer. Before the conscience of ecclesiastical authority, the right of the individual to free association is first of all *in possessione*; moral justification for 'non-permission' of such an association in a concrete individual instance must, therefore, be proved and not presupposed. As Pius XII himself emphasized in an address to the College of Cardinals (20th February 1946),[17] the principle of subsidiary functions is valid even in the Church, without prejudice to her hierarchical structure; but this means that fundamentally the free formation of associations from below may be prevented and replaced by organization from above only when there are compelling reasons. Hence, Christians have fundamentally the right to form such associations arising from their own initiative, because there is an inalienable right of the individual in the Church; such a basic right of free formation of groups must actually be capable of being realized, and its realization cannot always be limited of its nature by the framework of one [304] and the same parish. A group of young Catholic Christians, formed by its members on their own initiative, a Catholic students' Union, a 'Christian Section', a 'local academic group' not established by ecclesiastical authority, a Catholic Sisterhood which is not necessarily an ecclesiastical association, even the first seed-bud of an 'ecclesiastical Religious Order (when religious enthusiasm brought like-minded Catholics together) – all of these are free-groups which, even though they may not be (or are not yet or not necessarily) *fidelium associationes* in the canonical sense of CIC lib. II, tit. 18-19, have basically nothing 'unecclesiastical' about them and do not require to owe their origin to any official initiative on the part of the Church. This is all the less necessary since even Canon Law (CIC can. 684) recognizes *associationes* of the faithful which are not 'erected' by the Church. The Church, therefore, recognizes the right of the faithful themselves to form such societies; of course, even in these cases the Church reserves the right to approve or disapprove of them and of keeping a *legitima vigilantia* over them.[18] Moreover, it is self-evident that such a formation of groups cannot claim to be an 'ecclesiastical association' in the *proper* sense without approbation by the Church,[19]which again does not mean in the least that a free-group which is not an 'ecclesiastical association' must by this fact alone be 'unecclesiastical'. Such 'free-groups' of Catholic Christians will not in practice pursue exclusively or primarily religious ends in the strictest sense (we are thinking here, e.g. of a Students' Union, a youth group, etc.). Nevertheless, if they pursue a relatively comprehensive goal and have of their very nature a greater formative and educative influence on their members, they can provide a very suitable basis for the pastoral work of the Church. Thus since, on the one hand, the formation

[17] AAS XXXVIII (1946), pp. 144 *sq*.
[18] CIC can. 684; cf. also can. 336 § 2 can. 469.
[19] CIC can. 686 §1: *in Ecclesia . . . associatio*.

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of such 'free-groups' independent of the parochial territory is fundamentally an inalienable right of the individual believer (which cannot be choked off merely by an appeal to the parochial principle), and if, on the other hand, since sufficient scope must basically be allowed to them, such groups do actually come into being and as a result offer an important opportunity to the Church for influencing their members by her pastoral activity, then the parochial principle is not justified in preventing the Church from making the best use of these pastoral opportunities. In other words, the Church [305] must be allowed to fulfil her pastoral office in the soil of such 'free-groups', by providing them with spiritual guides, particularly since the bishop, precisely speaking, has no power whatsoever by current Canon Law to impose a duty binding in conscience on the believer of participating in an association established authoritatively by the Church herself (and, let us say, erected in a parish). Even the suppression of 'free-groups' would not guarantee the growth of the official Church societies. If, for instance, youth groups or 'federations' of Catholic youth have a basic right to originate in a 'movement' coming from their own free initiative – a right which the Church is *a-priori* and fundamentally in no position to annul (she has after all until now not even absolutely forbidden her young members to take part in inter-denominational youth organizations) – and if such groups actually offer an excellent opportunity for the Church's pastoral work (desired by themselves), should or may the Church, by refusing to give them the requested spiritual guides, leave this pastoral possibility unexploited merely because such a 'free-group', or such groups of a federation, 'offend' against the parochial principle?

Such an attitude could only with difficulty avoid the suspicion of being an ecclesiastical 'State Socialism', which recognizes only an ecclesiastical 'State youth movement'. It would not in the long run prevent such free-groups from springing up, but merely cause them to become indifferent religiously or cause their members to leave in order to join inter-denominational federations. The Church has certainly the right, as the divinely authorized educator of youth, to create those institutions by which she believes herself to be best able to fulfil her own task of education. She certainly has the fundamental right to make these institutions (whatever they may be) obligatory for her young faithful. But, if the right of individuals to unite freely in groups is not annulled by this right of the Church, and yet must also not be placed in the dilemma of having either to renounce its own actualization altogether in the face of institutions created from above (such as parochial youth groups) or to actualize itself merely in the formation of a religiously or even denominationally indifferent group (such as in a club without any connection with the Church whatsoever), then the only practical conclusion to be drawn from this will be that the Church ought to use the free-group itself as an instrument of her formative activity by appointing her spiritual assistants to guide it. The Church can, of course, make it a condition for such a spiritually-guided [306] free-group that it become suitably incorporated, without losing its own characteristics as a 'movement', into wider ecclesiastical institutions (e.g. into 'Catholic Action') and that the free-group for its part see to it that its members associate themselves with the pastoral youth work taking place directly within the framework of their parish (corporate Mass and Communion for the youth of the parish, etc.). It follows from what has been said that the parochial principle is neither in a position today nor basically entitled to set itself up as the *sole* organizational principle of the care of souls.

Looking back over the reasons against the exclusive validity of the parochial principle, the *conclusions* so far reached may be easily formulated. The parochial principle, in its fundamental reasoning, is the 'territorial principle', since the objectively decisive reason for it lies in the fact that man becomes the object of the care of souls in a suitable, and indeed unavoidable, manner precisely in so far as he has a 'home' (*Heimat*), a '*place-where-he-is-quartered*' (*Stand-ort*). The reasons which militate against the exclusive validity of the parochial principle, both on the part of the object and on the part of the minister of the care of

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souls, are all based on the fact that man has his 'station' (*Stand*) in life (taking the word here in its widest sense as referring to the differences in occupation, intellectual differences, differences in sex, age, culture), which owing to present-day sociological conditions no longer corresponds completely in practice with the narrow confines of the immediate locality where he lives. Now, in so far as man's social differences in this widest sense furnish a basis for the possibility and duty of an extra-parochial care of souls exercised in view of these differences, we may speak of the application of a 'social-differential principle' (*Standesprinzip*) to the care of souls. Our third reason against the exclusive validity of the parochial principle for the pastoral ministry was based on the fundamental right of the individual in the Church to form 'free-groups'. In so far as such extra-parochial 'free-groups' give grounds for the possibility and (in certain circumstances) duty of an extra-parochial pastoral care, we may speak of a 'free-group principle'. And so we may formulate the results of our inquiry so far by stating that the parochial principle is not the only legitimate principle for present-day pastoral practice. Side by side with it, and possessing their own validity, there are the '*social-differential principle*' and the '*free-group principle*' – *even* if social differences (in the meaning used here) and free-groups do not take the form of mere expressions [307] of the individual parish. The 'federation principle' implied several times during our discussion of the parochial principle is, in the terminology adopted here, a combination of the social-differential and free-group principles. For a 'federation' (*Bund*) (prescinding from its supra-diocesan organization) is a 'free-group' whose organizational principle is to be found in the 'social-differential' (i.e. occupational and similar differences). To this extent the 'federation principle' is also justified by our reflections.

In actual fact, the parochial principle has never governed alone in the *history* of the Church's pastoral ministry. The Apostles themselves had no territory as the limit of their commission and work. Already in the Didache[20] we find mention of 'wandering apostles' engaged in pastoral work, side by side with the local clergy. We have accounts of such migrant ascetic teachers as late as the third century.[21] The ever-growing importance acquired by the monk in the Eastern Church right up to the tenth century as confessor and moral adviser as compared with the secular cleric points to another chapter in such extra-parochial care of souls. The 'guest-master' who, in accordance with the rule of St Basil, gave spiritual direction and counsel to those coming from outside the monastery,[22] was also engaged in extra-parochial pastoral work. The ancient institution of 'visitors' (περιοδευται/)[23] points in the direction of an 'extraordinary' care of souls in country districts, practised by 'wandering physicians of the soul' in the name of the bishop of the town. Wherever we find the influence of monks on their surroundings in the early Church (and their influence was indescribably great), there we see also an 'extraordinary' pastoral care at work. The missionary migration of Irish-Scottish monks in the seventh and eighth centuries all over the Continent was equally an 'extraordinary' form of the care of souls, since it took place mostly in established Christian lands. Already towards the end of the eleventh century, we hear of a slight controversy concerning the right of extra-parochial pastoral care, an *altercatio monachi et clerici, quod liceat monacho praedicare* according to [308] the title of one of the writings of Rupert of Deutz.[24] Similar treatises were written by Idung of St Emeran[25] and Honorius Augusto-dunensis.[26] We might also just mention in this connection the controversy in the

[20] Chpts. 11 and 13.
[21] Ps.-Clemens, *Epist*. I, 10 *sq*.; *Ep*. II, 1-6 (Funk II, Tübingen 1901, 8 *sqq*., 15 sq.).
[22] *Reg*. *brev*. *tract*. C-CI; *reg*. *fus*. *tract*. XXXIII, 2 (PG XXXII, 1152 B *sq*.; PG XXXI, 997 *sqq*.).
[23] First Synod of Laodicea, can 57 (Mansi II, 574).
[24] PL CLXX, 537-542; cf. also PL CLXX, 541-544; 609-664; 663-668.
[25] Pez, *Thesaurus anecdotorum novissimus* II, 2, pp. 507 *sq*.
[26] Text in: I. A. Endres, *Honorius Aug*. (Kempten 1906), pp. 147 *sqq*.

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twelfth century between monks and Canons Regular, since it also touches on the justification of the monks' apostolate.[27] As early as 1096, a Synod at Nimes[28] had defended the right of the monastic apostolate, in the presence of Urban II. From the thirteenth century onwards, the pastoral ministry in medieval towns is no longer even conceivable without the extra-parochial apostolate exercised by the Mendicant Orders. In the middle of the thirteenth century, the Church experiences the first really important controversy about the 'parochial principle', in the fight between the Mendicant Orders (on the one hand) and William of Saint-Amour and his followers (on the other). This controversy ended theologically and canonically in favour of a less absolute parochial principle.[29] Of course, this does not I mean that the defenders of the parochial principle did not also have very good reasons on their side; and, above all, there has undeniably been a reverse movement since the thirteenth century with regard to the subordination of the pastoral ministry of the Orders to the *bishops* as against the privileges of the Mendicant Orders. Arguments like those put forward by Thomas of York,[30] Bonaventure,[31] or Thomas Aquinas[32] in favour of the extra-parochial care of souls exercised by the Mendicants are still worth reading, and not a few of the arguments with which they had to deal in favour of the parochial principle sound surprisingly modern (as e.g. when they speak of the nuptial relationship of the parish priest to his church in which no one else may interfere, [309] or when the parochial right is said to be analogous to the exclusive right of the bishop with regard to the care of souls). This mid-thirteenth-century controversy about the right of existence of the extraordinary pastoral ministry had its sequel in the doctrine of John of Pouilly, condemned by John XXII in 1321.[33] The significance, extent and influence of the extra-parochial pastoral ministry exercised mainly by the regular clergy (though not exclusively so; cf. e.g. the Oratories of St Philip Neri), has fluctuated slightly even in subsequent history. But basically and in practice the right and possibility of the extra-parochial care of souls has remained essentially uncontroverted since the thirteenth century. Even the Council of Trent does not represent an essential deviation in this matter, although it ordered the absolute division of dioceses into parishes.[34] If anything, it is the pastoral theology of Jansenism and the struggle against it which show signs of a revival of the former controversy about the parochial principle. The 'parochialism' of Jansenism[35] and its doctrine of the incompatibility of the Religious life with pastoral activity[36] signify objectively a dogmatic and pastoral absolutist view of the parochial principle, which has its echoes also in the polemic of the Enlightenment against the Religious life. We cannot, of course, go into details here regarding the whole history, which to a large extent is still unwritten, of the fluctuations in the relationship between the parochial principle and the principle of the 'extraordinary' care of souls. It would be a history which would reflect a great part of the history of the spirit, economics and Canon Law of the Western world. We would have to speak about many matters in the course of it: about the history of conventual exemptions, about the slow transformation and abandonment of the law imposing a duty of attending the

[27] Cf. e.g. Anselm of Havelberg (PL CLXXXVIII, 119-140); Arno of Reichersberg (PL CXCIV, 1493-1528).
[28] Mansi XX, 934 *sq*.
[29] The official Church documents on this controversy can be found e.g. in Cavallera, *Thesaurus doctrinae catholicae*, no. 414 *sq*. (Denz 458 *sq*.).
[30] '*Manus, quae contra Omnipotentem tenditur*' cap. 13-18: Bierbaum, *Bettelorden und Weltgeistlickkeit an der Universität Paris* (Münster 1920), pp. 134-167.
[31] '*Quare Fratres Minores praedicent et confessiones audiant*', *Opusc*. XIV, Quar. tom. VIII, pp. 375 *sqq*.
[32] '*Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*' cap. 4, cap. 10, 12 (*Opusc*, I, edit. Parm. XV, pp. 13-23; 52 *sq*.; 54-56).
[33] Cf. Denz 491-493.
[34] 24th Session (11th November 1563), *de reformatione* XIII.
[35] Denz 1510 *sq*.
[36] Denz 1580 *sqq*.

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parochial Mass on Sundays or the duty of confessing to one's own parish priest (at least at Eastertide). We would have to speak of the history of the right to preach possessed by non-parochial pastoral ministers, of the Third Order sodalities of the Mendicant Orders, of the 'Compagnies de Predication' in the France of Philip II Augustus (†1223), of the controversy between secular and regular clergy in the Middle Ages regarding burial rights. We would have to deal with the history of private Oratories and non-parochial churches, and to speak of the [310] efforts to incorporate churches into monasteries, of the history of the pastoral ministry of pilgrimages, of the development of confraternities and Marian congregations, of the history of parish Missions, of the medieval guilds as spheres of extra-parochial pastoral activity among people of different social stations, of the development of Catholic life in associations during the nineteenth century, and of many other matters. At any rate, such a survey of the pastoral ministry would show that the parochial principle was never exclusively in force in the Church and that the Church, on the contrary, protects the many facets of life even in the pastoral sphere, by her healthy instinct for life which defend itself against every form of pedantry.

It has already been shown in part, in connection with our treatment of the parochial principle, that other pastoral principles too are known and recognized as valid by current Canon Law, which alone, in the final analysis, can create really valid principles for the care of souls beyond mere considerations of their suitability (viz. laws which are more than, and more exact than, the merely natural law and the general norms of the Church's mission determined by divine institution). The same follows also, on the other hand, from what still remains to be said about the pastoral apostolate carried out by members of Religious Orders in accordance with Canon Law.

Since a large part of the extra-parochial pastoral ministry is carried out by Religious, it will be well to say a few words about the *Orders-apostolate* to conclude this Section. It is an undoubted fact that the final purpose of the life of an Order is absolutely compatible with the care of souls in general. St John Chrysostom and Pope Siricius already tried to attract monks to the priestly apostolate. Men like Eusebius a Vercelli, Paulinus of Nola, Martin of Tours and Augustine already tried to shape the life of the clergy after a monastic pattern. The ancient institution of episcopal monasteries, the establishment of the Clerks Regular, the almost untold number of Orders and Congregations founded since the twelfth century which count the pastoral apostolate as part of the express and ecclesiastically approved purpose of their Order, the clarification of this question by the great medieval theologians, and the already mentioned decisions by the Church's magisterium,[37] make the compatibility of life in an Order with pastoral activity a theologically indisputable truth. Nevertheless, it [311] may not be utterly useless today to call this truth expressly to mind. The pastoral ministry as exercised by Religious even in hierarchically organized countries does not of itself necessarily mean (either conceptually or objectively) an extra-parochial ministry. For such a care of souls can basically be exercised within the framework of a parish. In other words, the pastoral ministry exercised by Religious can basically be in keeping with the 'parish principle', either because the Orders take over parishes of their own (as happens frequently and is also provided for in current Canon Law)[38] or because they perform other pastoral duties *in* parishes at the invitation of the parish priest[39] (as is in fact true of the greater part of their pastoral ministry), so that even these activities of 'extraordinary' care of souls in a wider sense do not overstep the parish principle. Yet actually the pastoral activity of the Orders does very often pass beyond the boundaries of the parochial principle. And if anything, it is

[37] Denz 458 *sq*.; 1580 *sqq*.; 491 *sqq*.
[38] Cf. especially CIC can. 456; 630 *sq*.
[39] Cf. e.g. CIC can. 608 § 2 together with 1334; 1341 § 1.

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this alone which can be regarded as a serious question. What is to be said about this? First of all, we must emphasize that the extra-parochial pastoral ministry exercised by Religious is in no way a violation of the hierarchic principle of all care of souls, i.e. of the principle that every pastoral ministry must be carried out as a result of a mission and mandate given by the Pope and the bishops, and as their instrument. The great medieval theologians already referred to the fact that the Pope and the bishops have an original and inalienable right and corresponding duty to minister to the faithful, and that they do not lose the right of ministering *directly* to all the faithful (i.e. to the whole Church or the whole diocese respectively) by charging parish priests with the maintenance of their rights and the fulfilment of their duties, in a measure and to an extent left to their own discretion (determined by the purpose of the measure and not by any 'parochial rights' existing before their ruling). These theologians already concluded quite rightly from this that when the Pope or a bishop entrusts Religious with the exercise of this ministry (originally devolving on the Church's Hierarchy) even without parochial-territorial limitations, this care of souls is a function of the Hierarchy, and hence of the organism of the Mystical Body founded by our Lord himself, in exactly the same way as is the territorial parochial office. Since the Roman Pontiff has [312] universal and *immediate* jurisdiction over all the faithful (even the individual),[40] he can or could also transfer such pastoral functions to Religious without using the bishop as an 'intermediary'. Even in this case it could not be said that the hierarchical principle of the care of souls has in any way been violated (although, of course, such a measure which is in keeping with the existing Canon Law, is in fact only rarely taken, apart from marginal cases which in the main concern the internal life of the exempt Orders of Clerics). Now if secondly, the full accomplishment of the pastoral task did and does in fact also demand extra-parochial care of souls, then the Pope and the bishops are absolutely justified in calling also on Religious to help in this task. The reason for this is not that members of Orders desire to be pastorally 'employed' in accordance with the Rule of their Order and cannot in practice find such employment in the parochial ministry alone. Just the reverse is true; because the care of souls must, for reasons arising out of its objective needs, be carried out partially in an extra-parochial manner, this extra-parochial ministry may also in such a case – and in the measure of its needs – be carried out by Religious, if they are called to this by the Hierarchy. It also follows from this, however, that Religious should not include those works within the sphere of their supra-parochial, 'extraordinary' pastoral ministry which can be performed within the parish ministry, i.e. anything which does not of its very nature require to be done supra-parochially or can be done in the parish without loss of any really special benefit. If and when they are not in a position to engage in objectively supra-parochial pastoral work (either because of a lack of such work or because of a shortage of suitable men who could do it), then they should, to the extent to which they dispose of men free to do pastoral work, either do real 'supplies' in secular parishes by arrangement with the parish priest, or (in the spirit of their Order) take over humble and 'stony' parishes or found new ones. If, for example, a non-parochial Orders-church is simply an exact copy of the parochial church in whose territory it is situated, i.e. if it does not exercise a really specialized pastoral function which cannot be performed by a parochial church, then let it quietly 'shut up shop' or become a parish church in its own right in cities where parishes are too large.

It is to be expected that much could still be done in this direction to [313] make better use of those among the Religious who are able to do pastoral work, and to remove in this way much unnecessary friction between the pastoral ministry exercised by Orders and that exercised in the parish. Since there must, however, be a supra-parochial ministry in the nature

[40] Denz 1827.

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of things and since it can be exercised by Religious, the existing Canon Law (thirdly) also envisages, sanctions and protects an extra-parochial ministry carried out by Religious. Thus Canon Law commands bishops not to refuse Religious the faculty to preach or confessional jurisdiction without grave reasons.[41] The bishop is not allowed to interfere in the internal discipline and spiritual direction of an ecclesiastical association of lay people erected by apostolic privilege in conjunction with the church of an Order.[42] The ecclesiastical law governing associations[43] recognizes and sanctions ecclesiastical lay-associations (Third Orders, Confraternities, etc.) which very often have a supra-parochial organization and are often (in keeping with their characteristics) directed by Religious. The bishop may for a grave reason withdraw Religious Houses and Pious Institutes from the care of the parish priest, even though they be situated within the boundaries of his parish and are not exempt *de iure* from his authority.[44] The bishop can thus create as it were a 'personal parish', a congregation without any proper territory, whose pastoral care is therefore also extra-parochial. Canon Law[45] envisages that the bishop may also require the help of Religious, when necessary, for giving Catechetical instructions, especially in their own churches. It positively desires that there should be sermons at Sunday Masses even in non-parochial churches (even those of Religious).[46] If a bishop permits the erection of a Clerical Religious House in his diocese, he must also inevitably grant to it the right to a church or public oratory in which religious services (including Sunday Mass) may be held for the laity, according to the rules governing 'churches' and 'public oratories'.[47] Thus, wherever there exists a properly-erected house of a Clerical Religious Order, even the bishop cannot forbid a certain measure of extra-parochial ministry by these Religious, especially[48] since the permission for the erection of a Religious House includes also (unless something else was explicitly agreed upon at the time) the faculty for the Religious [314] to exercise the activities proper to their Order, and thus in certain cases also to exercise pastoral care beyond the boundaries of their own church. Although the foregoing provides us with only general, skeleton-directions which by themselves do not give a full guarantee of the *objective* justification of extra-parochial pastoral work by Religious in any individual case (even of such pastoral work as remains within these limits), these canonical regulations do nevertheless show clearly that current Canon Law does regard even extra-parochial pastoral care as something basically justified and desirable. Since these regulations were not after all drawn up expressly 'in favour' of Religious, in order to give them 'work' or 'rights' and privileges, but for the sake of pastoral work in general, these canons show that evidently the same considerations lie behind these norms of present-day Canon Law as we have adduced above on the limits of the parochial principle from the point of view of the object of the care of souls. The 'existence' of principles even of extra-parochial care of souls is therefore as much warranted by Canon Law as the 'existence' of the parochial principle which is also merely established by the fixed law of the Church.

III

In conclusion, we would like to make a few reflections, based on our theoretical

[41] CIC can. 1339 § I; can. 874 § 2
[42] CIC can. 690 § 2.
[43] CIC can. 684-725.
[44] CIC can. 464 § 2.
[45] CIC can. 1334.
[46] CIC can. 1345; cf. also can. 483, I^0.
[47] CIC can. 497 § 2.
[48] CIC *loc. cit.*

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considerations, which may perhaps be of some little use in pastoral practice. There can, of course, be no question here of defining concrete boundaries and lines of demarcation of competence between parochial and extra-parochial ministries. Such an undertaking would require a more exact examination of pastoral work according to task, available man-power, and specific situations, which is a matter for the appropriate diocesan authorities. Yet a few matters pertaining to the intermediate sphere between extremely general theories and extremely particular practice may perhaps still be added to the practical insights we have already discovered here and there.

If besides the parochial principle (both *qua* parish- and parish-priest principle), other organizational principles of pastoral care also have validity *de iure* and *de facto* (i.e. at least the 'social-differential' and the 'free-group' principle), and if there are to be settled and comprehensive (which does not mean, primitive and narrow-minded) conditions, then this requires on all sides a good and selfless will to live in harmony and to work together. Although we may not simply turn the parochial [315] principle into an absolute norm in order to create a clear situation even without good will on all sides, the advocates of the parochial principle must be able to find among the representatives of supra-parochial associations and alliances (based on different social stations) understanding of their insistence on the importance of a living parochial pastoral care and on the importance of parish life, since the parish cannot be merely a subsequent blanket-organization of groups and associations or federations in which these other organizations are not really interested. Conversely, the advocates of the 'social-differential' and 'free-group' principle must be able to feel that parish priests do not have a clerical craving for power but are possessed of that attitude which enabled St Paul for his part to solve a similar quarrel about relative competencies : *dum omni modo . . . Christus annuntietur*.[49] Whenever *several* principles are entitled to demand their rights, a ready attitude of understanding and of love will always be the deciding factor. Without it, even the reduction of the theory to *one*, *unique* principle will fail to succeed in practice; with it, even the difficult task of allowing several principles their rightful place within the same sphere is really quite simple when all is said and done. Selfless, unassuming love is most practical; it teaches us to recognize the justification of several principles and reduces them in practice to *its* own common denominator. Norms, no matter how clearly and subtly reasoned out in a legal sense, can never replace a right moral attitude on the part of those who must put them into practice. Frictions arising from the lack of such an attitude can never be avoided by guiding principles and fixed spheres of action, no matter how exactly thought out they may be. Whenever such frictions arise, we must first of all call for an examination of consciences and not for an examination by the jurists.

If we have given support in the preceding pages to the necessity and right of extra-parochial care of souls, this does not mean that we are in favour of a wild, excessive creation of extra- and supra-parochial groups, federations and associations. It does not mean that in this respect the situation as it was before 1933 has canonical validity for all time, that everything should remain as it was in 1933. There will be no harm done if many phenomena which existed at that time remain buried, for they were manifestations of singular German tastes and [316] exclusive interest in local club life rather than of genuine pastoral needs and genuine 'freedom of the spirit'. Whenever something old or necessary which has proved itself, or something new which is useful, revives again, it must have the will to real cooperation with the parochial ministry. Let those appeal to the 'social-differential' and 'free-group' principles who have the greatest love for the altar of their own parish and who prove their Christian liberty by being prepared to serve and love *the whole* which does, after all, find its first and clearest expression in the parish, in the 'Church'. Whenever the right attitude

[49] Phil 1.12-20.

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is present on all sides, this cooperation with the parochial pastoral care can be achieved, even though it will often not be easy to formulate it in legal arrangements and norms in a manner which will satisfy everyone. Anyone who has grasped the fact that such arrangements remain lifeless without the proper living spirit, will not be terribly unhappy if he feels that these agreements do not offer to all sides the desired 'guarantee' of such cooperation and settlement.

Whenever several valid 'principles' strive for and demand realization in one and the same set of circumstances, *cooperation* is impossible without some 'compromise'. In such cases, to come to the sort of understanding we have indicated is not a 'lazy' compromise. Whenever it is ultimately a question of everyone's seeking not the triumph of his own principle but rather the salvation of souls, such a compromise will *not* create the impression in those concerned that they have made a 'painful sacrifice' in the cause of mutual understanding. Since there can, in the very nature of things, be different solutions to the question of how in practice the many principles are to be reconciled, the final solution is a matter of decision; in other words, it is a task to be left to the authority of the Church. Once this decision has been made, after mature deliberation, in favour of a really workable agreement, then we should not go on debating endlessly but should set to work. For pastoral care does not consist in a debate about principles. It is better to work without '*the* ideal solution' (which in this matter can never be found), than to wait idly for principles regarding the care of souls which are still more ideal, just and wiser than those which have in fact been arrived at by an authoritative decision. Seeing the spiritual distress in which man finds himself today, it is high time we stopped fighting about the principles according to which these human beings are to be saved. When someone saves another, he does not require anyone beside him to ensure that he is doing it in accordance with [317] principles. Although there cannot really be a 'best' synthesis of the different pastoral principles deducible *a-priori*, and one which is valid once and for all, there is nevertheless a very clear criterion in practical life as to whether a possible synthesis has actually succeeded, not only on paper and as a legal arrangement, but in the hearts of the advocates of particular principles. Such a synthesis has been successful only when the parish priest of the parochial principle shows a positive, active interest in the various forms of 'extraordinary' pastoral care, when he tries to bring his parishioners into contact with these forms (federations, Orders, associations, literature, etc.) according to their (not his) needs. It has been successful only when the clerical representatives of extra-parochial care of souls have an active consciousness of their responsibility as regards the life of the parish and when they, on their own initiative and as far as in them lies, stimulate the people under their pastoral care into real service to the life of the parish.

Cooperation and right order does not exclude 'competition'. It is not at all a bad thing if a preacher knows that his listeners can go away to someone else if he preaches badly. If we were to attempt, even on the pastoral plane, to make 'competition' impossible from the very start by legal measures (e.g. by a parochial principle made absolute), this would merely be a sign of weakness and a proof that we seek ourselves and not the salvation of souls. To suspect every variety, every form of competition in the pastoral realm at once as 'chaos', 'disorder' and a 'frittering away' of our forces, would be a sign of the same evil or of very shortsighted pastoral politics. Even if things (i.e. in truth: for the man of the 'competitionless' institution) went more smoothly and with less hindrance for a time without competition, such advantages would have to be paid for in the long run by the slow but sure degeneration of such an institution into self-complacency. Thus the desired cooperation between the parochial and extra-parochial care of souls must not be thought to have succeeded only when the different institutions no longer 'compete' with each other in any way whatsoever. The will for right order and a living will to honest and objective competition are absolutely compatible. Even in the pastoral realm we do not need any 'controlled economy' bureaucratically imposed from

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above right down to every detail.

Finally, it should be expressly emphasized that we have nowhere in the course of our deliberations defined our attitude to the question of supra-diocesan societies and of the possibility as well as the limits of a [318] central direction of such societies. This is a special question which would have to be considered separately.

The work of St Bonaventure, one of the Doctors of the Church, which we have cited previously, was also really concerned with the *ius positivum* of the parochial principle. Thus it was concerned with the question of how we must act if charity, in the face of men's needs of salvation in the concrete situation of the times, demand that we do not make the parochial principle the only organizational principle of our pastoral ministry. The final words of his whole investigation contain the kernel of all our reflections and should, therefore, also conclude these considerations: . . . *rigor iuris positivi, ubi expedit, servandus est, ubi autem salutem impedit remittendus est . . . Quod enim pro caritate institutum est, non debet contra caritatem militare. Amen. Et sic est finis illius quaestionis.*[50]

[50] Quar. VIII, p. 381.

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[319]

11

NOTES ON THE LAY APOSTOLATE

If we are to attempt to say anything precise about the lay apostolate, we cannot avoid saying something about 1. What is meant by a 'layman', 2. the 'apostolate' in general, 3. the nature of the 'lay apostolate' and 4. the significance of the lay apostolate today.

I. THE LAYMAN

1. The concept of 'layman', in the ecclesiastical sphere, has nothing to do with that of the 'profane' or 'ignorant', of someone who on account of his inexperience is helplessly dependent on the expert, or of the 'unecclesiastical', religiously indifferent, the mere object of hierarchic powers. In this sense there are, or should be, no laymen in the Church. For a layman in the theological sense is one of the λαο&φ of God; in other words, someone eminently sanctified, consecrated, called from a world lost in sin and death into the ε0κκλησι/α of God and of his Christ, into the host of those who have been visibly and tangibly called to salvation by baptism. The notion of 'layman', therefore, does not mark the boundary between the sphere of the profane and the sphere of the sacred and sacral; rather, it refers to someone who has a *definite* position *within* the one consecrated realm of the Church.

2. This determined position which constitutes the layman *within* the sacral sphere of Holy Church, can first of all be described negatively (by contrast with the non-lay in the same Church) and then positively (by description of the inner characteristics of the lay state).

3. *Negative description*:

a. The layman must first of all be distinguished from those who have proper hierarchical powers in the Church (CIC can. 948). These [320] powers comprise the *potestas ordinis* and the *potestas iurisdictionis*. The 'power of orders' consists of those full powers, which of their very essence are primarily of a sacramental nature; they either *can* only be conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders (thus the power to absolve, confirm, ordain, consecrate) or at least are in fact only given in a *permanent* fashion by Ordination (thus the powers of the Diaconate and the lower Orders). The 'power of jurisdiction' is made up of those powers which belong to ruling and concern the authoritative instruction and direction of the rest of the Church's members. Lay status in the Church means, in the strict sense, that one does not have these powers. It must, however, be clearly underlined, in this connection, that there are powers in the Church which do not require to be transmitted exclusively by the sacrament of Holy Orders or cannot even be conferred by it strictly as such. Complete sovereign power (jurisdiction) is not transmitted by the sacrament of Orders but by a non-sacramental, sovereign act of the (highest) Church authority. The full powers of an acolyte, subdeacon, etc. are in fact (often) conferred by Ordination, but they can also be given without such an act (of a sacrament or perhaps merely of a sacramental). We cannot then differentiate a lay person from a cleric, with reference to these powers, by the *manner* of their transmission but only by the *content* of what is transmitted (viz. the power). And so a clear and exact theological terminology must state that anyone who is, in any way, rightfully in *habitual* possession of

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any part of liturgical or legal power (over and above the basic rights of every baptized member of the Church), is no longer a *layman* in the proper sense, i.e. no longer belongs to the simple 'people of God'. It is most important for our further reflections to understand this and grasp the reasons for it. An officially commissioned 'lay-catechist', a woman officially employed as 'parochial helper', an official sacristan, etc. are not indeed ordained; yet if these are their principal functions, they are no longer, properly speaking, lay persons. This is apparent even in the sentiment of the early Church. She conferred all these offices by Ordinations; thus the old 'Minor Orders' were *not* in fact merely transitory 'steps to the priesthood' but conferred a permanent 'minor' office in the Church through which its possessor belonged to the clergy. The same conclusion follows from the very nature of things; the precise powers by which the clergy is distinguished from the laity are of their nature *divisible*, according as the Church may think fit (as far as jurisdiction and the sacramental [321] powers are concerned). Hence, whenever the Church gives someone – whether with Ordination or without – some part of the power distinguishing clergy from laity, and does so, not merely for an individual occasion, but habitually, and as constituting a calling and office, she makes him a cleric, whether we would apply this term or not. In this strict theological sense, it is absolutely possible for a woman to belong to the 'clergy' even though, according to the will of Christ and already in the practice of the Apostles, the extent of such hierarchic powers conferrable upon her is much more limited than that accorded to men. The fact that in *current* Canon Law a woman cannot have ordinary jurisdiction in the narrower sense, because in current Canon Law such jurisdiction is an ordinary 'office' reserved to men, does not alter anything about the basic principle which concerns us here. Regarded from the viewpoint of purely divine law alone, it is absolutely conceivable that a woman, e.g. an abbess, should have the permanent right of patronage of a parish, as was the case at the time of the right to 'private churches'. If in fact the 'clergy' is normally composed of men only, it is because (at least in the case of *higher* offices) the power of ruling *and* the power conferred by Ordination are meant to exist normally in one and the same person according to Christ's will; now the powers conferred only by Ordination are reserved to men and that already *de iure divino*. And so we must be extremely careful in the use of theological terminology. Even a simple question, such as the following, will make this clear: Can a layman, who is elected Pope, accepts the election and thus already possesses the absolute plenitude of all jurisdictional power in the Church before he has been ordained and consecrated, still seriously be called a 'layman' in theological terminology, until he has been ordained? A negative answer to this question logically involves saying with us that the lay status ceases whenever there begins, in any measure whatsoever, a total or partial participation in the *potestas iurisdictionis* or *potestas ordinis* or both. It is, of course, debatable whether this or that actual, small ecclesiastical office can still be considered as participation in the proper powers of the hierarchy, or whether it merely implies obligations which can no longer be looked upon as such a participation (as e.g. the duty merely of lighting the candles); it remains therefore a debatable point whether the bearer of such an office still belongs to the clergy in the theological sense or not.

b. Secondly, the notion of 'layman' must be distinguished from [322] that of the 'Religious' (and members of 'secular institutes' properly so called, since they also, take the vows of the Evangelical Counsels). We cannot explain here the nature of the Evangelical Counsels and of vows, especially under their truly ecclesiological aspect. We wish simply to state it as a fact here, in pure thesis form and without proofs, that the vows taken in respect of the Evangelical Counsels have of their nature an ecclesiological aspect. This does not indeed mean that these vows give the one who takes them a hierarchical power and a *status* in the Church based on *this* power and distinguishing this status from that of the people of the Church as such; but it does mean that the Evangelical Counsels are an expression, visible

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manifestation and representation *in* the world of a very definite essential characteristic of the Church, viz. of her world-transcending origin and destination. They must, therefore, be found in the Church, considered as the historical, visible form of the world-transcending and eschatological grace of Christ; they consequently provide the basis *in* the Church as *such*, for a proper status, so that the one who has this status is theologically, and not merely canonically (CIC can. 491 § 1: *religiosi praecedent laicis*), distinguished from the people of the Church in general and hence from lay people.

4. *Positive description*:

a. From the point of view of the *world*. Up until now we have merely given a negative description of the layman, i.e. he is not one of those who have hierarchical powers and he does not belong to the Religious. Both of the 'estates' from which he is thus distinguished are 'states', i.e. (relatively) stable, permanent forms of life (even though they are not always irrevocable), which – each in their own way – take their subjects out of the 'world' in virtue of the content of their tasks. Correspondingly, the layman is a Christian who remains in the world, not in the sense of the profane which we have already excluded above, but in the sense that the layman must have a specific task towards the world and in the world which determines his 'status' in the *Church* and not merely in civil life. Being a layman, seen from this point of view, does *not* mean being a Christian who does not really have much say in the Church and who is merely a passive object of the pastoral endeavours made by the Church (= the clergy) for his salvation; a layman is not one who *for such reasons* occupies himself [323] with those worldly-profane matters lacking any religious relevance which would occupy him just the same even if he were not a Christian. Being a layman in the Church (and also to have the qualification of a Church member in this sense) means rather, having one's place in the Church as her member and exercising her functions wherever there is the *world* (all this referring, of course, to the lay-*Christian only in so far as* he is *distinguished* from the clergy and from Religious). For the 'world' is not merely constituted by sinful and rebellious opposition to God, Christ, grace and the Church; the world is also God's creation, a reality which can be redeemed and must be sanctified (i.e. the Kingdom of God); and even in this respect the world is not simply identical with the Church, but rather the Church is the historically tangible and socially constituted instrument used by Christ for the coming of the Kingdom of God through the redemption and sanctification of the world. In this world the layman has his determined place according to his historical situation, his people, family and calling, the individual possibilities furnished by his gifts and capabilities, etc. And he has this, his place-in-the-world, basically *in*dependently of and prior to his Christianity; after all, he is born before he is re-born. This original independence of the layman's place-in-the-world is the element of truth in the notion of the 'lay' considered as the 'profane' which we rejected above as false. The layman is originally in the world in virtue of the *pre*-Christian (but not 'godless') position of his existence; in *this* place, and not in any other, is he to be a Christian. This he must be, not just 'in addition', but by christianizing his original pre-Christian situation, which is the very essence of lay-existence, in such a way that precisely where there is the world and not the Church, the Kingdom of God may begin to exist through him as a member of the Church. We will, however, have more to say about this later on. For the moment it is important to realize the fundamental point that the Christian *qua* layman is distinguished from the non-lay (i.e. the clergy and the Religious) not merely by the fact that he has an original place-in-the-world even *for* his Christian existence (which is true of every Christian), but that he also *retains* this place *as* a Christian and for his Christian existence as such, and does not leave it even in the fulfilment of his existence (at least not by living a new kind of life which takes on the permanent form of a new 'state'). In other words, when we

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rightly say that 'the Christian layman remains in the world', this does not mean that the layman is a Christian and in addition also [324] a man, a member of a family, the father of a family, a tailor, politician, art enthusiast, etc. Rather it means that his being-in-the-world which preceded his Christian being, remains and is not changed as a 'state' by the fact of his being a Christian; but it is now both the material for his very being as a Christian and the *limit* of this being, as far as his *exterior* life and the structure of his state are concerned. As far as his state is concerned, if he goes beyond the limit set by his original situation-in-the-world, he ceases to be a layman. What has just been said provides us also with the right meaning of the expression, frequently used nowadays, the layman's 'mission in the world'. Such expressions must always be understood to refer to a twofold fact: the layman is placed in the world as a member of the Church at a determined point, given prior to his Christian being, *and* this is positively and negatively the place of his being as a *Christian* (i.e. it is a calling and the limit of his commission).

b. From the point of view of the *Church*. The positive determination of the concept of 'layman' (i.e. one which does not distinguish him merely negatively from the clergy and Religious) must not only consider his specific situation-in-the-world when trying to define his Christian being. It must also say what the layman is in the Church, as such, and what he brings with him to his place-in-the-world and what he can realize there as a member of the Church. We can obviously, give here only a very brief indication of this, since it involves, or should involve, almost everything affecting Christian existence.

(i)The layman is someone called by God, in Jesus Christ and through grace, to eternal life. He is the justified and sanctified, the gratuitously adopted son of God He shares in the one grace which in Jesus Christ was promised and communicated to redeemed humanity, to *holy* Church.

(ii) Within the Church, he cooperates in rendering this grace historically tangible (a visible manifestation which in its totality nothing other than the Church). For the layman has received the sacrament of baptism; he offers the sacrifice of holy Church together with the priest; he is given his Christian mission in the world by sacrament of confirmation which commissions him personally, expressly, and in a sacramentally tangible manner. He takes part in the Church's life in many other ways too, so that as a result, this, his life in holiness with, in and through the Church (its direction, divine service, power of grace, proclamation of the Word, charity, etc.) becomes part [325] of the manifestation of the Church. Thus he shares in making the Church what she always is and must always become more and more, viz. the historically tangible, spatio-temporal presence of the redemptive grace of God in Jesus Christ.

(iii) The life of the Church is more than just the exercise of their functions by the holders of hierarchical offices (instituted once and for all by Christ as her permanent organs) in the authoritative proclamation of the Word, administration of the sacraments, direction and celebration of divine services and government of the ecclesiastical community in all the other forms of its Christian life, on the one hand, and the acceptance of these exercised functions by the people of the Church, on the other. In spite of her permanent proper structure and hierarchical organization, given to her by Christ, the Church must always remain open to that unpredictable initiative taken by her Master through his Spirit and the charisms of this Spirit which cannot be institutionalized. Over and above the static element of official functions there must be, and is, the dynamic element of charisms. We cannot give here a closer definition of their nature and importance for the Church. It must suffice to state that even laymen can be the subject of such charisms; these charisms are not only gratuitous graces and aids granted by God for the private life of their recipients, but are also given to them for the salvation of the Church. A message received from heaven and passed on to the Church, a life giving outstanding example and which has a type-forming power in a determined situation,

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the discovery of a new aspect of the Christian Faith and life, a historical decision of universal significance inspired from above, a God-given impulse to perform a certain work in the public life of the Church, etc. – all these are to be understood as charisms inspired by the Holy Spirit. And even lay people can receive such charisms, for the Spirit has not limited himself in the distribution of his gifts by any rule known to man and applicable by man. The poor, children, women, married people can equally well be the recipients of such heavenly impulses and the point of entry of the divine Spirit's permanent influence on God's Church. God has in no way guaranteed that the movement of his Spirit should always and necessarily begin at the summit of the hierarchy. The hierarchy has, on the contrary, a strict duty to discern and further the Spirit wherever he may act; it must not extinguish the Spirit simply because he has not inquired beforehand whether he is everywhere seen to be in conformity with [326] the plans and the opinions 'in high places' on pastoral matters and the affairs of ecclesiastical politics. Ecclesiastical authority has certainly the duty, right and power of discernment of spirits (even though it is not necessarily capable of an infallible decision in every case), but it is not the original and sole owner of this Spirit. Laymen too can be the recipients of charisms which exercise an irreplaceable function in the Church, side by side with her official functions, laws, rules and everything which can be deduced *a-priori* both dogmatically and rationally. In so far as such charisms (in this narrower sense applicable here) are of their nature free, non-organisable, unpredictable and hence also uncontrollable gifts of God, they also do not give rise to a 'state', unlike the hierarchical offices or the Evangelical Counsels which for all their gratuitous realization are intended to constitute a permanent form of life. Hence even when these charisms are bestowed on a layman, they do not remove him from his situation in the world. He does not cease to be a layman by being the recipient of such charisms. It should just be mentioned in passing that we must not confuse these charisms in themselves with a possible enthusiastic manifestation of such charisms. Even absolutely normal fulfilments of Christian life can be counted as charisms, if by their strength, purity and depth (i.e. as 'moral miracles') they bear the stamp of their divine origin even in their outward appearances. This is true even when their recipient is not a clearly determinable individual but when the Spirit takes hold of many; thus the liturgical movement, for instance, can perhaps be looked upon as a charismatic happening in the theological sense just as much as, let us say, Fatima. In both cases, there will always ultimately be certain side-effects which do not have a particularly spiritual origin.

(iv) In so far as the layman is a member of the Church both in the dimension of inward grace *and* her outward (quasi-sacramental) visibleness, he also shares necessarily in the Church's mission and responsibility. He not merely enjoys the use and advantages of her activity and is not merely subject to her direction or a passive object of her missionary mandate; but by the very nature of being a member of the Mystical Body of Christ he is also an active cooperator in the fulfilment of her mission and mandate, in so far as these can, and must be, predicated of the Church as a whole and in so far as the fact of a determined mission and a definite mandate does not itself constitute the essential difference between certain members of the Church and [327] others who are called lay people. We cannot say exactly what this cooperation means in a positive and negative sense, until we deal with the lay apostolate itself. The important factor at this point is merely the most general conclusion which follows immediately from the positive content of the fact of being-a-layman-in-the-Church: the layman participates in the mission and task of the Church (which does not by any means signify that he participates in the mission of the hierarchy or the clergy, etc.).

(v) Up till now we have spoken of the layman in so far as the meaning of this concept results from the permanently established nature of the Church and of Christianity. It remains now to be seen that being-a-layman-in-the-Church can also be given content by positive ordinance and legal disposition on the part of the Church (i.e. *iure humano*). A layman can be

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a godparent, can fulfil certain functions in ecclesiastical associations, can have the right of patronage, can, by right, assist in the administration of Church property, etc. All these are functions which belong to him *de iure humano*, and they signify services in the Church which do not destroy his nature as a layman, since they do not deprive him of his proper station in the world.

Human law could, of course, assign certain ecclesiastical tasks, rights, duties and powers to laymen by which the latter would cease to belong to the lay state, in accordance with what has been said above, as for instance by ordination to the priesthood. It will, however, always be possible to state in such cases – and it must already be stated at this point – that the Church can give an assignment of such dimensions, which results in a change of the layman's specific situation, only with the free consent of the individual concerned. It is true that by virtue of her pastoral office the Church can impose certain tasks and duties (together with any rights which may be involved) on the layman, even by a unilateral decision, but this possibility is not unlimited. It may not be absolutely determined in its extent, and may vary to a certain degree, according to the conditions of culture, the circumstances of the times, etc.; but it has undoubtedly an intrinsic limit beyond which the Church authorities may not go by a *uni*lateral act. This already follows clearly, for example, from CIC can. 971 and can. 214 § 1, which declare a forced ordination to be immoral and without any of its purely canonical effects on the ordained. It is certainly not a question here merely of an ordinance by positive law, but it is ultimately a matter of natural law which applies not only to third parties but also [328] to the Church herself. Thus, *if* the Church on her part were to confide such tasks and duties to a layman in the service of her mission by a unilateral decision and as a permanent measure, so that it would have to be said that such a person had essentially been deprived of his intra-mundane state without his voluntary act (whether with or without ordination), then such a commitment of a layman by the Church would be immoral and without effect. It at once follows from this that the Church cannot charge a layman, of her own initiative, with collaboration in the tasks of the hierarchy to any extent she cares to choose. It is also impossible to determine the limits of this possibility simply and solely by reference to the needs of the Church's apostolate. For there are needs and obligations which must be borne collectively, without it being possible to come to a binding conclusion from this as to the obligation of any particular individual; it must surely be supposed that God, in his providence, will also provide for these needs in the measure really willed by him, without imposing an express moral obligation on the individual *qua* individual. The human race, for example, 'must' be propagated. But in the nature of things, nothing at all really follows from this as to the individual's duty to marry. Similarly, the Church 'must' have priests. But this premise, as such, and on its own, in no way implies the consequence for the individual that he must become a priest. The Church also, cannot impose this obligation on him of her own initiative, however urgent her needs and great her lack of priests may be. The same would consequently apply also to similar duties which might be imposed on a layman because allegedly the Church would otherwise be unable to fulfil her responsibilities. If such obligations (e.g. of always handing over half of his income) were to imply an essential change in his lay station in the world, the Church cannot *iure humano* impose them on him by a unilateral decision. The 'imposition on the layman' of the tasks of the Church by positive Canon Law has its intrinsic limits. Nothing, of course, is as yet decided thereby about any possibly existing *moral obligation* on the part of the layman to do more than he has done hitherto, whether by reason of the general principles of love of neighbour or as a result of a special divine vocation. We have merely contested the *Church's* moral right to impose and enforce such an obligation. The Church obviously, always has the right and indeed the duty to give general indications, to exhort, to describe a critical state of affairs and thus to canvass among, and appeal to, the ranks of the laity to provide those who will [329] assist her

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hierarchy in the fulfilment of its obligations; she may appeal to them to do this by entering into the clerical or religious state or by taking upon themselves some other measure of Church work which, because it essentially modifies their very state in the world, cannot be imposed on them as a duty by the Church as such and by her unilateral ordinance; nor, therefore, can the Church deduce from general principles and in the form of a definitive and authoritative ecclesiastical decision that this measure of work is a duty *hic et nunc* and in this particular case. For the latter would objectively, and in practice, amount to the same as the former, which has already been proved to be beyond the competence of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

A further point, connected with the present question, to which attention must also be drawn right away, is that current Canon Law does not give a great deal of legal determination to the tasks, rights, and duties of laymen which according to the divine law of the Church can basically be theirs without their ceasing to be laymen, and to the tasks and duties which they can morally be expected to fulfil and which can actually be imposed on them by human Canon Law. I venture to suggest that as long as this state of affairs persists, we will never have the kind of lay Catholic Action desired by us. Real responsibility and duty will only be accepted and borne where the *law* grants a certain realm of freedom (even though merely *iure humano*) for autonomous fulfilment of such duties and responsibilities. The laymen engaged in Catholic Action should not in every individual case be merely the executor of someone else's will (even though this be the will of a priest or a bishop), without any autonomy of his own which, even though always granted by the hierarchy alone, is also respected by the hierarchy in the individual case. In other words, there should be a more exactly established *right* of lay people in Catholic Action which protects the layman even vis-à-vis the hierarchy. As long as this is not the case, we will wait in vain for a Catholic Action, a direct cooperation with the clergy and the hierarchy, in which others take part besides young idealists and 'pious old busybodies' or those in whose case the suggested difficulty has been overcome by the fact that there happens to exist a relationship of personal friendship and trust between them and the Church authorities concerned. It cannot be expected that such a right of the layman will in the first instance be promulgated by Rome as applicable everywhere in the world. Conditions throughout the world are too varied for this. Could it not, however, originate [330] carefully, but also courageously, in individual dioceses and countries? Only once he knows what he is actually permitted to do in the Church *iure humano*, will the layman assume duties seriously.

5. Everything mentioned so far has been intended merely as a positive and negative clarification of what is meant by 'layman', in preparation for the treatment of the lay apostolate. The following are the salient points to be kept in mind. The lay state in the proper sense ceases whenever there is real and habitual participation in the powers of the hierarchy in such a way that the exercise of these powers characterizes the life of such a person, i.e. determines his station (in life). It is theologically indifferent in this connection whether in the actual practice of the Church these powers are given by ordination or are (or can be) bestowed without it. This is merely the reverse side of the fact that the layman has his place-and-station-in-the-world which is his permanent 'domicile' as a Christian, and one which is characteristic of him as a Christian, as well as providing the material, and setting the limit for his Christian existence, in so far as the latter is distinguished from that of the cleric.

II. THE APOSTOLATE IN GENERAL

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1. By virtue of divine right and institution by Christ, there are hierarchical and non-hierarchical functions in the Church, those who have hierarchical functions and the people. The hierarchical ministry is exercised *in* the Church and for the Church; as far as its purpose and meaning are concerned, it has been designed entirely with a view to the Church and as a function of service to the Church which is the communion of all believers. Yet, as regards its existence and the extent of its powers, it does not come from the Church, but from Christ; it represents, in the Church, Christ's position as Lord in relation to the people of the Church. The same holds good both for the hierarchical ministry in itself and for those empowered to exercise hierarchical functions. No matter how much the whole Church (including the laity) has cooperated in finding suitable candidates for the hierarchical ministry, it is through those who possess hierarchical powers, and through them alone, that the hierarchical ministry and its powers are [331] transmitted, in the name of Christ and not in the name of the Church in so far as she is distinguishable from the members of the hierarchy.

2. The hierarchical ministry has, therefore, powers in which the layman cannot participate in any way, unless he becomes himself (in the manner just described) a holder of hierarchical functions and thus ceases to be a layman. The teaching and discipline of the Church show that she is conscious of her absolute power of being able to *divide* the fullness of her hierarchical ministry according to its individual functions and to make divisions even within a single function, and thus to make others share in this ministry in different degrees. But this in no way alters the fact that everyone who shares in her official ministry ceases to be a layman in the theological sense. Now the hierarchical office, considered in its aspect of full power, gives a most specific commission and a most definite mission. For *this* mission, with its own purposes, is the highest characteristic of that office. Particular persons have this office with these powers, because a definite purpose is to be achieved by possessing this office with these powers. This mission is the apostolate peculiar to the hierarchical ministry in the Church. It follows then that there is an apostolate in the Church which can be exercised only by hierarchical functions and their powers. It is impossible, and would be absolutely self-contradictory, for the laity to participate in this apostolate; to insist nevertheless on speaking of it, would be unenlightened and airy-fairy talk, merely appearing to be pious. To put it in another way: participation in the hierarchical apostolate, in the strict and precise sense of 'participation', can only mean the reception of part of the hierarchical *office* and hence also of the apostolate and mission included in this office – in other words, ceasing to be a layman. If the term 'participation' is *not* to be used in this sense, but rather in a vague sense, then it can mean two things: (a) the 'participator' is a 'subsidiary worker' of some sort in the actual carrying out of the hierarchical apostolate (in modern terms, the bishop's chauffeur, for instance, the girl employed in the office dealing with Church funds, the housekeeper in a parish house). It is obvious that such a meaning does not realize the content and dignity of the proper lay apostolate. Or (b) it means that the apostolate of the hierarchy and the lay apostolate meet in the same object, i.e. the [332] particular people served by both (even though they have quite different starting-points and are achieved in essentially different ways), and that both of them have the same ultimate *goal* in view with regard to the same people, viz. their salvation. This is of course true and does happen. This fact alone does not, however, make the lay apostolate a proper 'participation' in the hierarchical apostolate. For it is logically incorrect to regard something as a participation in something else merely because both of them agree in certain of their characteristics. And the fact that the lay apostolate falls in a certain sense and to a certain extent under the supervision and direction of the hierarchy and its apostolate does not alter the case. After all, this fact does not 'constitute' the lay apostolate in the first instance. For the real lay apostolate is already constituted – as will be

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explained more in detail – by baptism (and confirmation), by membership in the Church and by the motive force communicated to the member by the infused habit of supernatural love. If in a particular case an apostolate must first be constituted by an individual mandate given by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, it can only be because the hierarchy is drawing upon an auxiliary force for the actual accomplishment of her own permanent task, or because it gives proper participation in her mission and powers. There is no conceivable reason or necessity for giving an individual mandate apart from these two cases. In both it is no longer a question of any real lay apostolate, since the first represents less and the second more than it. In short, there is an untransferable apostolate of the hierarchy which must not be confused with the lay apostolate. We call the former apostolate – in an attempt at clear terminology – the 'official apostolic mission'. Hence we may say that the official apostolic mission is not a lay apostolate. Where the layman arrogates such a mission to himself, or really receives it, he ceases to be a lay person, if it is given to him even though without ordination as constituting a permanent state. This statement, of course, merely provides us with a first formal distinction which in content and objectively does not yet tell us anything very enlightening about the reality signified. For the question arises as to what element of transmitted power is contained in the concrete in this official apostolic mission. For if there, nevertheless, is an apostolate of the laity (which no one seriously denies), then it is reasonable to suppose right away that both apostolates have certain generic traits and constituent elements in common. The important thing, therefore, is to ascertain which constituent elements are reserved and proper to [333] the official apostolic mission as against the apostolate of the laity, and how we may in contrast to this characterize the apostolate of the layman as such.

3. Now, the official apostolic mission (or better, the 'office' of apostolic mission, since it is not merely a question of a mission given by an official order but of a mission constituting an office and one which is to be exercised as an office) might be characterized by simply enumerating those apostolic actions and powers which undoubtedly identify someone who does and can do these things, as a non-lay person, i.e. as someone belonging in some (perhaps humble) degree to the hierarchy of God's people of the Church; thus, sacramental absolution, transubstantiation, power to confirm, to anoint the sick and to ordain, the power to teach independently and authoritatively as invested in bishops and the Pope, the right to make Church laws in the real sense etc. Yet this method is insufficient. For it does not give the basic notion and structure of the non-lay apostolate common to all these functions. Nor is it capable of shedding any light on the question where it is most needed, viz. on the border-line cases in which the hierarchical apostolate seems to become very lay and the lay apostolate very clerical, and where we are not quite certain, therefore, whether these are unavoidable 'transitions' or dangerous 'encroachments'. To get a clear view of that basic structure,[1] we must remind the reader once more of what we said above. There is in the Church, considered as the holy union of the redeemed in a visible society juridically ordered by Christ himself, a power of directing, a pastoral office, which extends in its functions into the various dimensions belonging to the nature of the Church which is the visible presence of the truth, of sanctification and of the will of Christ. This office has been transmitted by Christ to certain men, to the exclusion of the many others who are also members of the Church, and these men pass it on in the same exclusiveness by apostolic succession. It is an office constituted by the mission and power to christianize individuals and peoples, and then to maintain their Christianity permanently, and to direct the community of Christian existence, as such, as a

[1] Cf. for what follows: K. Rahner, 'Priesterliche Existenz', *Zeitschrift für Aszetik und Mystik* XVII (1942), pp. 155-171.

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community of truth, [334] of the new and eternal worship, and of sanctity. As is already clear from Scripture, the bearers of this office are already clearly stamped by Christ in two respects: they are those, from the viewpoint of their *origin*, who have been taken out of their original place-in-the-world; they must give up their jobs; they leave their nets, their kinsfolk and family, they live by the altar; they take their mission as their calling, even regarded from an empirical, intramundane point of view. Their mission, having become vocational and proper to their state, may, and indeed must, realize itself as the characteristic form of their earthly life: in their dress, their poverty, their non-stability etc. It is quite irrelevant to this how far all these factors can assert themselves in detail, in the life of the individual bearer of the office. They may take the most varied forms and have (as they have had) different degrees of intensity and clearness. Nor does it mean that the clergy will always be *de facto* a sociological 'state' and 'calling' in a profane, civil sense, as it actually is and has been for the last fifteen hundred years in the West. It is sufficient if we see that there is a fundamental 'form' which is given, together with the office and mission, and which takes hold of the office-bearer; this 'form' removes him basically from his original place-and-state-in-the-world, and is intended to integrate his whole life into his mission, so that he carries it out, not only *in* his life, but *through* his life, through the distinct characteristic of his life and the way he uses it. This official apostolic mission claims the whole existence of man, in such a way that it shifts him from his original station in life. From the viewpoint of its *destination*, this official apostolic mission sends a man away; it sends the messenger into spaces and dimensions of human existence which are not his proper place, before 'kings' and the 'Gentiles'; his message must be delivered even 'out of season'. Although such an apostolate demands committal of the messenger's whole existence, it at the same time surpasses fundamentally the person of the messenger: he does not bear witness to 'his' Christian-ness (although using it as an instrument), but bears witness to Christ alone; he is not the religious genius who overflows, but the messenger who delivers a message. He bears witness to Christ, not where he would stand by virtue of his own worldly existence, or where in the world *this* existence takes place of its very nature – but always and everywhere; in other words, particularly where of himself he 'has no business', where he has been sent 'from above' and not where he has been placed by his own human existence. He must always, therefore, [335] put up with the unavoidable fact of being mistaken for an indelicate fanatic who interferes in other people's 'private business' and of thus arousing anti-clerical feelings. His new station can be justified only by faith. It is generally understood, of course, that everybody has the inclination and the right to make known and to communicate his opinions. The *content* of a profession of Christian belief, made and conceived in this way and limited to such a situation, would perhaps surprise and seem offensive to an unbeliever, but not the actual happening of such a profession. The apostolate of one officially sent, however, does more; it does not merely communicate, and is not merely an apostolate, as it were, arising from the already given human fact of 'rubbing shoulders' with the people concerned, an apostolate 'on the spot'; it is aggressive, the apostolate of the 'itinerant preacher', of the 'traveller' going from door to door, concerned with the 'places where we still have to go' (in a spatial and especially *spiritual* sense). No wonder that such an apostolate at its summit, i.e. in the priesthood, demands the grace of a sacrament of its own.

Let us recapitulate. An official apostolic mission exists wherever there is any degree of habitual exercise of hierarchical powers (of the *potestas ordinis* or *iurisdictionis*); this is the case when that exercise provides the basis for a new existence; in other words, when it suppresses the apostle's original station in the world – his human, pre-Christian existential situation (at least in part) – and founds a new state and calling, with a new place in the world for the apostle and his own life, allocated to him by his very mission.

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4. Hence we may say conversely, and at first negatively: wherever *such* an official apostolic sending-out is *not* given and there is nevertheless a genuine apostolate, i.e. a justified influence on others for their salvation, we are dealing with the apostolate of the *layman*, an apostolate which is still to be determined in its positive nature.

5. This definition of the hierarchical apostolate and the negative distinction of the lay apostolate included in it, can be applied only with care in *practice* and leaves still much to be desired as regards its clarity in border-line cases. Yet it is not without significance even in the practical sphere. As we have already pointed out, no one without free [336] consent on his own part can be obliged by the Church to accept a share in an hierarchical apostolate. We are now in a position to add, that if one were to bring pressure to bear on a lay person to make him accept an apostolate characterized, as we have seen, by a being-sent-out and a being-removed-from his original place-in-the-world, and to accept it as a duty imposed on him on account of the 'requirements' of the Church, one would do something which one has no right to do. This fact is already no longer mere theory. It might be asked from this point of view whether, for instance, the apostolate of the Legion of Mary with its (in itself wonderful) aggressiveness and intensity (which already turns it almost into a vocation), can still be called *that* kind of lay apostolate which belongs to the duties of every Christian flowing from baptism and charity. Or does such an apostolate already verge very closely on the hierarchical apostolate? Is it the on-the-spot apostolate of neighbourhood (like the lay apostolate) or is it an apostolate constituted by a sending-out, away from one's own original place-in-the-world (like the apostolate of the hierarchy)? And conversely, our reflections show that many forms of apostolate which we are inclined to regard as lay apostolate, turn out to be an apostolate of hierarchical mission. It is, for instance, impossible to regard the life and work of Maria Theresa Ledochowska (1863-1922), the foundress and directress of the Sodality of St Peter Claver and one of the chief supporters of our modern missionary movement, as still a lay apostolate. Is a 'layman', whose profession it is to administer Church finances and who does so with a sense of his responsibility in the religious sphere, a 'lay apostle'? What is the position of a 'lay' teacher whose main employment is teaching in a junior clerical seminary? Such and similar questions are not merely questions of an idle categorization which does not change anything in reality. These are questions which may be basic for deciding about the obligatory nature of an apostolate, as well as basic for the ideal and spiritual foundation of such an apostolate, the formation required for it and the aptitudes for such a calling. It must first of all become clear that 'someone properly entrusted with an hierarchical apostolate by official mission' and 'someone ordained with a vow of celibacy' are not identical notions. It will then be possible to dispel the instinctive feeling which often has very bad effects in practice in the way the clergy treat 'laymen' employed in the service of the Church, viz. the opinion that such non-ordained laymen, by the mere fact of their not [337] being ordained, cannot also be charged with a hierarchical apostolate in a legally well-defined sphere of activity within which and for which they are truly responsible, but must inevitably be merely subordinate employees and handy men who by law itself must always take second place to any 'ecclesiastic'. Furthermore, there could then take place a gradual reawakening of the sense of the 'sanctity' of *all* official functions which in fact belong to this hierarchical apostolate; it might then become a living question once more whether this sanctity might not also be made visible again in every case, as in the early Church, by ordination transmitting such an official function. When the question of married deacons came up recently at a sacerdotal congress in Berlin, it was not a proposal to slacken clerical celibacy. Basically it is rather a question of reconstituting the diaconate itself as an hierarchical ministry with its own

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sphere of responsibilities and apostolic labours (which it no longer has in fact), and of handing over these apostolic responsibilities by ordination. Once we come to look upon this office as a permanent state in its own right and not merely as a 'step towards the priesthood', there would be no reason for thinking that it must necessarily be fulfilled by celibates, and yet it would be a grade in the hierarchical apostolate and not of the 'lay apostolate'. If there were such grades of hierarchical apostolate – transmitted with or without ordination but clearly, officially constituted as ministries and without celibacy, with their own dignity and rank, and with their own sphere of activity – it would perhaps be much easier to avoid demanding too much of the layman proper and *his* apostolate. A tree grows and thrives only when it has been planted in its natural habitat. There are many tasks in the realm of the Church's apostolate as a whole which cannot be fulfilled on the plane of the lay apostolate; it would be necessary rather to create a new theological, psychological and legal sphere for them, on the level of the hierarchical apostolate.

From what has been said, it can also be seen that the transition from one of these apostolates to the other is quite fluid in practical life. This is not surprising when we remember that it is not easy to distinguish, even merely in general, between the calling, the goal towards which the calling tends and the beneficial side-effects produced by it, or between the main occupation and that pursued 'on the side', between the temporary and the permanent, between a specific and an accidental change of situation. Thus it can also happen that in a particular situation the lay apostolate may be much more intensive and comprehensive [338] in its *final effect* than an hierarchical apostolate. It may be that the hierarchical apostolate gives very much the impression in the concrete of being occupied merely with the administration of what is already established, and of being preoccupied with keeping the established machinery running, whereas the lay apostolate (especially in the case of charismatic impulses) gives the impression of aggressive conquest, discovery and original missionary spirit. Yet none of this can alter the essential fact that the hierarchical apostolate is the apostolic mission constituting the office in virtue of which the apostle is sent *out*; the lay apostolate – when it remains true to what distinguishes it from the hierarchical apostolate – is, as will be shown more clearly still in what follows, the apostolate of man *in* his original place-in-the-world.

6. One of the consequences of what we have seen must be emphasized once more, both in general and in particular. The organizational staff of Catholic Action, composed of men who more or less give their whole time to this work, is not part of the lay apostolate, but a concrete form of organization of the hierarchical apostolate for the purpose of stimulating the apostolate of laymen. This is not the same thing. The hierarchical apostolate does not become a lay apostolate merely because non-ordained and married leaders form part of this organ of the hierarchy. This fact alters nothing regarding the hierarchical character of this administrative authority. It is merely a consequence of the realization that there is a shortage of priests and that people who come from the lay state in their more mature years and married, are fitted for certain tasks of the hierarchical apostolate; this situation will continue, particularly as long as the ordained clergy remain, sociologically speaking, a sort of caste in this country (i.e. the author's) and hence find it still rather difficult to establish contact with certain circles and strata of society. And since it is in the nature of 'Catholic Action' to be an organization for setting the action of Catholic laymen in motion, it follows also that the exact proportion of priests and laymen directing this organization is purely a question of using the most suitable means to the end and not a question of principle. Neither the priests nor the non-priests engaged in this work are 'laymen'. In consequence, it is also difficult to see why the non-priests in 'Catholic Action' must necessarily be inferior in rank to the priests (*de iure*

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or *de facto*). It would be quite a good thing if there were men today who [339] could play the same role in the Church as, in days gone by, did Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Didymus the Blind, Catherine of Sienna, Karl Löwenstein and M. Th. Ledochowska, etc.

III. THE LAY APOSTOLATE

1. It should be clear already from the foregoing that the real lay apostolate is what we nowadays like to call 'action of Catholics' in contrast to 'Catholic Action'. Bearing in mind what has been said above about the notion of 'layman', and just now about the hierarchical apostolate of the official apostolic mission, the nature of the lay apostolate might be circumscribed as follows: it is the kind of concern for the salvation of others incumbent on every baptized Christian by the duty of love of neighbour and through the force of this love in the place in the world which belongs to him, without participating in the hierarchical ministry and its apostolate. It is not the apostolate constituted by the official and vocational sending-out, but the apostolate of love in the situation-in-the-world in which the layman finds himself and which belongs to the nature of a layman. Every Christian has been given the right and duty by baptism and confirmation, without any further commission, to bear witness to his Faith and even to concern himself with the salvation of his neighbour. It is quite possible, that by doing this, he may *in actual fact* do more for the spread of the Faith, and instruction in the Faith and moral formation, than the hierarchical apostolate of the Church (as happened, for instance, in the early Church or during less formalistic ages than ours). Yet when he acts as an apostle, he bears witness to *his* faith and by *it* naturally to Christ himself). This is true when he defends himself against attacks on his Christian existence. It is also true when, and in so far as, his existence *in the world* (i.e. his family life, friendships, life with neighbours and in civil society, and his occupation) makes such active witness to his own faith necessary, obligatory and unavoidable, since the Christian layman must obviously 'declare' himself in all these situations for what he really is, viz. a Christian. The apostolate of the layman is, therefore, directly founded on his *own* Christian being, and is not determined in its extent and manner by a proper mission from above, but from below, i.e. by his situation in the world. His Christian influence is conducted through his worldly 'connections', and is not specially constituted by an additional mission and [340] mandate. He does not go out (in a spatial or spiritual sense), but works 'on the spot'. He is a missionary by the living example of his Christianity. Naturally, this life considered as a productive example includes also the Word, testimony and exhortation given by one man to another, encouragement and warning. Yet all this is legitimized and supported by the fact that the Christian lives from the start in the same spatial and spiritual sphere of human existence as does the one towards whom he is an apostle.

2. Such a lay apostolate is obligatory for the Christian. It flows from his Christian being and from the duty and strength of that supernatural love of neighbour which commands and enables the Christian not merely to regard others as his neighbours in the worldly sphere but also in the realm of salvation. Although such love of neighbour embraces all men, in the sense that it does not exclude anyone *a priori* and in principle from its proximity, it has a certain gradation by its very nature as a realistically-Christian and not abstractly-idealistic virtue: it begins nearest home, with the family, etc.; it favours those belonging to the household of the faith; in brief, its radiating power is permitted to remain rooted in its 'domicile', it is not sent-forth. This is not only its limitation but also its strength: it is an apostolate in the concreteness of the familiar milieu, heart to heart, in the reality of earthly

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life, in the concreteness of everyday happenings and not in abstract theory, by real living example and not in doctrinal, general norms, in demonstration of the power of grace within the prosaic context of everyday life.

3. Such an apostolate is therefore exercised essentially by the example given by the layman fulfilling his Christian role (proper to the layman as such) as a member of the Church, which consists in using the world *qua* world as the material for Christian existence, and redeeming and sanctifying it. In other words, science, art, medicine, politics, economics, work, marriage, etc. – in short, all the dimensions of human existence – although they all have a relative legality of their own, are an open challenge in the concrete order of salvation and damnation which can be answered in the concrete only by the Christian in the grace of God. If the Christian living in the world answers this challenge [341] by a life of patience, interior freedom, sincerity, perseverance, earnestness, etc. in these different spheres, *then* and in this way does he effectively exercise his lay apostolate.

4. If the lay apostolate as such is thus primarily the fulfilment of Christian existence in a place in the world with responsibility for one's neighbour and his salvation, and in so far as that fulfilment has a salvific significance for the other, then it follows that the lay apostolate must be exercised in all the situations which constitute the layman's place-in-the-world. First of all in *marriage*, as a father or mother, and in *public life*; these two dimensions of Christian existence are sanctified by the sacraments of matrimony and confirmation respectively. In addition there are the tasks and opportunities provided by the layman's neighbourhood, community of work and of country, citizenship, participation in the community of minds in science and art. In all these dimensions and tasks of human, and at the same time Christian, existence, the lay apostolate – it should be underlined once more – does not essentially consist in direct recruitment and propaganda, or in persuading, converting, warning and exhorting, etc., as is characteristic of an apostolic mission, but in the dynamic and effective example given to others by the layman's Christian living in these dimensions. This naturally does not mean that the Christian must be silent, is not allowed to speak of his Christ-life and must carry discretion to scrupulous extremes. No, a *Christian* may and ought to speak a *Christian* word wherever *man* normally does, may or ought to give expression to the inner motivations of his heart and life, i.e. wherever he gives a fraternal word of advice or instruction and, if necessary, a word pertaining to his responsibilities as a father or mother, teacher, master, or as one more mature. But the Christian has no apostolic duty beyond this. We need not be afraid that this represents too great a restriction of the realm of the lay apostolate. This realm, even understood in this way, is still infinitely wide. The lay apostle is not restrained by this as far as the goal and object of his apostolate are concerned, but only as regards a certain *way* of achieving them for which he is not suited. Any priest who has experienced the suffering caused by the 'inopportuneness' of his aggressive apostolate, will understand what we mean. If lay people would cultivate this apparently 'limited' field of their apostolate to the full, then the world would be Christian within half a [342] century. This theory naturally does not mean either that the Christian layman may be apostolic only in the 'private' sphere of his life. Since every Christian is a *human* being, and thus has his original place-in-the-world and hence is unavoidably involved in public life (even though with varying intensity), he has an apostolic task to fulfil even in his public life. But he must fulfil it in such a way that he occupies the very place in public life which he has as *man* (as citizen, scientist, artist, etc.) and also as what he really is, viz. a Christian. He is not, however, required to seek and gain a new place for himself in public life *for the express purpose* of

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carrying out the missionary task imposed on him. Not that he may not do this also, should he so desire. But if he does, then it is his own free and praiseworthy decision and not his apostolic duty necessarily imposed on him as a baptized Christian; also, whatever he does in this way, is not really a lay apostolate in the strict theological sense, but part of the hierarchical apostolate accepted with express or tacit approval of the hierarchy. This can happen '*per modum actus*' (something like 'managing a business without a mandate') or '*per modum habitus*', i.e. as a vocation and principal function, and then the person concerned is not indeed 'ordained' but no longer a layman either.

5. It is of the highest importance to understand the above clearly, for only then do we have a clear idea of the goal towards which any apostolic formation of the layman must be directed. Once this is clear, it immediately becomes clear also that any education for the lay apostolate is senseless from the very start without education for a holy interior Christian life. Drilling, with a view of training an aggressive militant of the 'Salvation Army' type, is not a Catholic schooling for the *lay* apostolate, but could at best be training of subordinate functionaries for the hierarchical apostolate. A functionary of hierarchical apostolate (ordained or not) can more easily forgo personal fullness of Christian life than a lay apostle. For the former has something which is effective without personal sanctity, viz. sacramental or juridical powers. A layman, on the other hand, must be apostolic precisely *by* his Christian life; his *Christian life* itself must be the testimony which wins souls for Christianity; actions and words enter into this merely in so far as they themselves form part of man's own action in his human existence. In other words, formation of lay [343] apostles is formation of the action of Catholics, not formation for Catholic Action; and education for the action of Catholics is formation for that true and full Christianity which is necessarily dynamic. Religious associations of lay people under the direction of the Church ought to reflect well on this. There naturally is also 'education for Catholic Action'; but objectively this is a recruitment of lay people for participation in the hierarchical apostolate of the clergy by which, if this participation becomes a vocation and alters his station in the world, the layman ceases to be a layman. We naturally do not mean to dispute that a layman may also participate in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church to a small extent only or *per modum actus* without ceasing thereby to be a layman. But then it will be in a way analogous to the case of the layman who on a particular occasion replaces the subdeacon at High Mass: what he does in this case is not the business of the layman in principle and habitually, although he does perform this function here and now and may even, in case of necessity, be invited and summoned to perform it. Catholic Action is, therefore, in no way forbidden by what has been said to recruit lay people to help the parish priest, notify him about the sick and the dying, etc. Such activities are not only good and useful; they are not merely an apostolate which deserves great credit and is often exercised in an admirable manner; but it may even from a human point of view be a recommendable complement in the life of a Christian layman who in effect is not 'fulfilled' by his worldly profession (and the opportunities for the lay apostolate offered by it), which is very often the case especially nowadays.

6. The layman's tasks and hence also, if you wish, his apostolate naturally include also all those factors which result from his relation towards the Church and 'within' the Church. He pays his Church dues and thus supports also the hierarchical apostolate. He takes part in divine service and thus shares in the 'edification'[2] which all members give to each other in

[2] Cf. H. Schlier, *Die Verkündigung im Gottesdienst der Kirche* (Cologne 1953).

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spirit by divine service, for even these lay people are not merely passive recipients of a grace of truth, love and strength communicated by the clergy alone. He is a godparent, member of Church Committees, etc.

[344] 7. The layman can possess charisms in the narrower sense, which are continually bestowed on his Church by the Holy Ghost. But we have already spoken about the most essential aspects of this, so that we do not need to say any more here about this possibility of the lay apostolate.

8. A further consequence of what has been said is to be found in a clear distinction of two kinds of 'ecclesiastical' (in the widest sense) organizations of the laity, their formation, the sources of their authority and of the influence exerted on them by the hierarchy of the Church.

a. Firstly, there are *Church* organizations in the proper and strict sense of the word. These are organizations created by the ecclesiastical hierarchy itself for the accomplishment of its own apostolic tasks. The Church's hierarchy creates such organizations by recruiting laymen on a voluntary basis who put themselves at her disposal for the accomplishment of these tasks; this they do either by opening themselves to the sanctifying action of the Church in a more than generally obligatory measure, or by being prepared to cooperate themselves in the apostolic mission of the hierarchy, or in both of these ways.

In the case of strictly ecclesiastical organizations existing for the purpose of cooperation by laymen in the task proper to the hierarchy, it can be a question either of cooperation by such non-ordained persons as their principal function (so that, as has already been underlined several times, they then cease to be laymen in the theological sense), or it may be a question of their putting their time and energy at the disposal of the hierarchy, but only to a limited extent (so that they then do not cease to be laymen) It depends on this distinction whether it makes sense to speak of a lay organization or not Cooperation which constitutes one's principal function, a vocation and a state, may involve an express or actual participation in the very powers of the hierarchy or not. If the former, then it would objectively be a case of a body of Church-officers who are lay merely in appearance; if the latter, then it would be a case of a body of subaltern Church employees. All properly speaking *ecclesiastical* organizations, being organizations concerned with the object (personal sanctification) or the subjects (those engaged in the apostolate) of the truly hierarchical activity of the Church, take their origin *de iure* and by nature from a direct [345] initiative of the hierarchy. They are founded *by* the Church. They also essentially depend in their activity on the hierarchy and its direct and positive, directing and commanding influence. In consequence, they necessarily are *de iure* under spiritual direction with authoritative powers. They do what the hierarchical Church tells them to do; and conversely, whatever they do is a manifestation of the Church as such, part of the life of the Church as *such*, i.e. not merely Christian Church life in the world, but the Church herself. Such ecclesiastical organizations in the strict sense are, for instance, the Third Orders, the Marian congregations, fraternities (in the strict, specifically religious sense), associations for the support of the Missions, etc. No matter how much they *direct* their members *to* the lay apostolate, they themselves do not constitute a lay aspostolate as such but are particular forms of organizations of the hierarchical apostolate enabling the latter to exercise its functions towards the laity (by forming a personal and apostolic Christianity in these lay people) or to be supported by laymen in the fulfilment of some particular task of the hierarchical apostolate as such.

b. Secondly, there are organizations of the laity as such by means of which the laity seek to

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further their Christian life as laymen. We are thinking here of student associations, federations of youth groups, unions of university men, etc. Such organizations are characterized, on the one hand, by the fact that their primary and immediate objective aim is not the religious[3] as such, but has a profane, civic, mundane, cultural, human content (or whatever name we wish to give to the difference from what is formally and strictly religious as such). On the other hand, such Catholic, 'temporal' lay organizations are characterized by the fact that they recognize the 'temporal' as a sphere for Christian action, a task which is of basic relevance for eternal salvation, is subject to God's commandments and is a commission given them by God in such a way that it cannot be determined in its ultimate concreteness and precise details simply by the hierarchy *alone*, and merely with the help of the general principles confided to [346] the teaching and safekeeping of the hierarchy.[4] Hence the layman has in this sector of the 'temporal' been given a Christian task in which he possesses real independence, and leads *these* organizations himself. The priest can only be an 'assistant', 'adviser' and, if necessary, a pastor in this field. In other words, the priest can only use these groups as the sociological basis for the fulfilment of his own task.

It is understandable that in *practice* the transition between properly ecclesiastical organizations and Catholic-Christian temporal organizations can be rather fluid. It may even happen that one and the same organization, regarded sociologically and theologically, realizes both the first *and* the second type of organization, because it objectively seeks two completely different ends simultaneously. And yet it is basically necessary to recognize this distinction with all its consequences.

9. Let us try to clarify the preceding statements by indicating their consequences for 'Catholic Action'. Thus:

a. Catholic Action is the organization intended to *form* and *school* Christians *for* their apostolic task in the world, in marriage, at their work, in the public life of community and of the State, in the realm of culture. The object of this schooling is the laity, the subject is the clergy and those laymen who assist them in this *their* task (cf. (c)).

b. Catholic Action is an organization for the purpose of safeguarding the rights of the Church in public life, a task which is practically indispensable in the age of mass-democracy.

c. Catholic Action is an organization of lay people (not simply: of the *whole* laity), constituted for the purpose of assisting the clergy in *its* apostolic task, in the measure possible to the layman without his ceasing to be a layman. It can be part of this task of the layman to see to it that the first two aims of Catholic Action just mentioned are really fulfilled, by forming an 'elite of militants' or a 'pool of leaders'.

In so far as the first two purposes are concerned, Catholic Action seeks by the very nature of these aims to form and school as many Catholics as possible. With regard to its third purpose, Catholic Action is neither simply an obligation incumbent on every good Christian, nor a task for which we can hope in practice to win every Christian, [347] much less be obliged to do so. The first task mentioned above is undoubtedly also the task of every particular Christian organization (congregations, Christian vocational associations, etc.). It follows, therefore, that Catholic Action can *in part* play only a subsidiary role with regard to this task (i.e. try to reach and school those for their Christian ministry in the world who for some reason or other would otherwise not belong to any other Christian organization), and

[3] For it will have to be said that a religious fellowship, whose *immediate* and *main purpose* is a religious one (such as prayer, divine service, religious formation, practice of the Evangelical Counsels, etc.), can be nothing other among Catholics than an *ecclesiastical* organization in the sense of a). For such a fellowship can be justified only as a function of the whole Church, and that also in her visible, hierarchic dimension.
[4] Cf. above, the essays on a formal existential ethics and on the parochial principle.

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for the rest be merely a 'blanket-organization' coordinating these other organizations for this same (first) purpose shared by them all. In practice, Catholic Action will also have to be such a coordinating blanket-organization, joining the many other organizations together, it order to achieve its second purpose, even if only to avoid any unnecessary bureaucracy and so to attain as many Catholics for its second purpose as possible. Only in this way will it be possible for it, for example, to effect a 'plebiscite', a mass petition, a school-strike, etc. From the point of view of the first two purposes, therefore, Catholic Action cannot in any sense renounce being a blanket-organization. This naturally does not in any way prejudge the question as to the possible and desirable constitution of this blanket-organization in relation to particular associations, congregations, etc. By 'blanket-organization' we mean here merely that Catholic Action embraces groups which are autonomous in themselves and which are not merely dependent functions of an organization (called 'Catholic Action') instituted from above, nor merely its subaltern ramifications. Such a conception would mean a violation of the historical rights of these groups (which existed before Catholic Action understood as an organization), a violation of the principle of subsidiary functions (which is valid even in the Church), and a violation of the right to free association. Such an ecclesiastical 'State Socialism' would inevitably choke the life of the Church eventually, no matter how clear and ordered its forms might seem at first.

And so we must come to the conclusion that Catholic Action as such cannot be the organization of the apostolate of the laity as such, and that Catholic Action and action of Catholics do *not* coincide. They do not coincide because it is absolutely impossible that what is called Catholic Action[5] in the concrete should penetrate to the place [348] where the apostolate of the laity is exercised, viz. in the family, by one's occupation and in one's work in the concrete. Catholic Action can form and educate *for* this Christian life in temporal situations (which imposes an apostolic and missionary task and responsibility), but, because certain aspects of this life cannot be organized at all, e.g. the task of the father in his family, it cannot itself take charge of this life. Other sectors can be organized, e.g. the Christian organization of an actual industrial concern, where several laymen can coordinate the carrying out of their proper lay and yet Christian task by common deliberations, mutual aid, etc. But *such* organizations arise then in the nature of things from below, from the temporal situation; they are organizations dependent on the inalienable decision of the lay people themselves, for which as such the Church therefore cannot take over responsibility, as she does with regard to what is called Catholic Action. It follows that such organizations of the proper lay apostolate cannot really form part of Catholic Action in the proper sense, in so far as the latter is more than a blanket-organization which as such does not interfere in the 'private business' of its member organizations and which therefore is also not responsible for it.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAY APOSTOLATE AND FINAL SUMMARIZING REMARKS

1. We do not need to add much to what has already been said here about the importance of the lay apostolate, as understood by us. We will therefore content ourselves with making two remarks, one positive and the other negative.

[5] In so far as it is not a 'blanket-organization' and in so far as we can apply to it what must be attributed to the groups organized by it. If such a group is really an apostolate of laymen (as, for instance, a students' union, a vocational organization, a Catholic workers' union), i.e. action of Catholics, then it is of course possible from this point of view to ascribe the proper apostolate of the laity to Catholic Action – if these groups belong to Catholic Action.

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a. The mission of the Church has encountered a special difficulty in the post-medieval period and particularly today when, the modern age having passed away, a new age is dawning. This difficulty consists in the fact that the non-religious spheres of man's existence have today become much more closely knit, full, complicated and capable of [349] absorbing man's interest than in past ages. We need only ask ourselves quite simply about the situation in general: what could interest and absorb man spiritually in the past, over and above the satisfaction of the most immediate requirements of life? The answer must be: on the whole, only religious questions of human existence. For besides this there was nothing. Anything else was (like art and science) itself a moment of the religious question. When we pose the same question for the man of today, we must answer: apart from the religious, there are innumerable other factors calling for his interest and attention. These new realizations of human existence (such as the profane sciences, art, technology, politics, a highly complicated economy, etc.) must themselves be mastered by man in new ways; they demand an original response from Christian experience, a response of such a kind as to prevent the religious and Christian element in these new realizations being covered over and being crushed by the weight of the nonreligious. Only the layman can do this, in the last analysis, not the priest. A priest, in virtue of his very vocation, cannot have the same full and original relationship to these dimensions of human existence as the layman; such a relationship is an indispensable condition for making the best possible use of these opportunities given to man. The layman, and he alone, as we have tried to bring out, is given the mandate and is enabled to do this precisely by the lay apostolate. Thus the new (contemporary) situation has brought out a completely new significance of the lay apostolate which it did not possess before in this respect. For in a completely new historical sense, the 'world' has, really only now, begun to exist, i.e. the world which man himself has brought forth out of Nature; ultimately, this world can be christianized only by the one who has fashioned it, viz. the layman. The task of the priest does not become any less urgent, irreplaceable and holy on this account. The priesthood holds the sacred reality and administers the sources of all that the layman has to introduce into his world. It has the ever recurring task of forming men into Christians who must in turn fulfil their Christian mission in the world. The priest and the Religious are meant at all times to be a tangible sign in the world, by their celibacy and the other Evangelical Counsels, of the fact that the Christian is in the world but not of the world, that all fidelity to earth and man signifies eternal life only once it becomes suffused and transformed by the grace which comes from beyond the world. Layman and priest are not in competition as regards their [350] apostolic, missionary task. Each has his own place which no one else can fill. Yet in as far as every man lives in his own world and no longer merely in the world created by God alone, the lay apostolate has taken on a new and irreplaceable significance.

b. Everything which is not lay apostolate in this sense (hence all Catholic Action), can and will nevertheless have a great importance of its own. But we must realise that everything else is important only in so far as it serves to stimulate, educate, coordinate, etc. the action of Catholic laymen. Catholic Action, taken as a whole, will in practice only be effective on and through the action of Catholics. It follows from this that every organization, and all organizational machinery, which is superfluous viewed in this light, is really superfluous, indeed harmful, because it ties up the energies of priests and laymen in the wrong place. In brief, the nature and extent of the significance of Catholic Action depends on the significance of the action of Catholics.

2. If we may be permitted finally to refer once more to a few important points which have been discussed in the course of these reflections and which may not always have been self-evident for everyone in the past, we would recall the following:

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a. Serious thought should be given – slowly but courageously – to the question of whether and how the law regarding laymen could be further developed (at least in the form of diocesan, particular laws). First of all, with regard to laymen who are engaged full-time in the governing bodies of Catholic Action. I have not been inspired in this by anyone else and am perhaps just constructing theories in my study. But it seems to me that in the long run we will have people of real greatness and initiative, men with ideas on these bodies, only when they are given a sector of activities, with its corresponding rights, for which they are themselves responsible and within which they enjoy real autonomy. If this be undesirable, then we should revert to the old methods which admitted only priests, together with housekeepers and sacristans (and possibly also auxiliaries taken from the ranks of the Religious), in the hierarchical apostolate. When we speak in this respect of a development of the law regarding lay people, we do not refer *in the meantime* (and perhaps not for a long time yet) to the drafting of laws with a multitude of paragraphs but, to begin with, only to the following: if someone is entrusted with a task, *he* should also be allowed to fulfil it. [351] It should be clear who is really competent for what. Higher authority should not intervene as soon as it disagrees in some vague way. In the normal case the responsibility and role of higher authority consists in putting the right man in the right place and then leaving him free to act. Any other attitude would be symptomatic of the Church being influenced by the totalitarian spirit of the age. Once relations between priests, bishops and laymen within the hierarchical apostolate are governed by the right outlook and attitude, and once this attitude takes ever deeper roots, it will perhaps be possible gradually to give a more precise *legal* formulation to everything involved in this; in this way we might then clarify the situation even where human limitations would otherwise prevent us from hitting on the right solution by mere improvisations. This applies also, *mutatis mutandis*, to the law concerning those laymen whose participation in the hierarchical apostolate by Catholic Action is not their principal function or their calling, but who are merely laymen. Their proper and essential apostolate in the world, in the place where they find themselves, does not permit of juridical formulation. Nevertheless, they have, or may have, certain tasks in and towards the Church which are not impossible even for a layman as such, since the tasks referred to are not their official function and calling, and do not change their situation in the world. We all want the layman to take a greater interest in many of the Church's concerns. He will do so once he sees that he is not merely expected to take an interest and share responsibility when it happens to suit the clergy, and that he does not need to become paralysed in mute and respectful passivity whenever the clergy happens to find this more convenient. What we have just said about the basis of such a law, regarding those who direct Catholic Action, naturally applies with even greater force in this case. Consider one example alone: responsible and conscientious laymen who are editors of magazines, should not have to ask themselves, as apprehensively as is sometimes the case, whether the opinions expressed in their periodicals are agreeable to those in high places or not. It would be good if one or other of the leading articles in *Wort und Wahrheit* in the last few years had been taken seriously, calmly and soberly instead of being merely treated as that kind of journalism which is used for the sheer sake of assuming an air of importance and of attracting attention.

b. Let us not impose an apostolate on the layman to which he is not suited existentially and to which in general he is not called. To assume [352] such responsibilities may appear heroic and fruitful – for a time; after that such undertakings are swallowed up. Better to take the longer but more effective road: let us form laymen so that they may be Christians in the place where they are or should be – in the world. It is there that they must bear witness to Christ by their life. If they do this, then they are lay apostles.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

As already announced in the Preface to the first volume of these *Theological Investigations*, the essays on the theology of the spiritual life were to follow in a separate volume. This we now present as the third volume of *Theological Investigations*. The author is very conscious of the fact that these essays are of very unequal value both as regards the subjects themselves and in the thoroughness of their treatment. Concerning the justification of the series as a whole, we would refer the reader to what has already been stated as reason for or in excuse of these volumes in our Preface to the first volume. All that remains, therefore, is to indicate the original sources of the pieces collected together in this volume. The list follows the sequence of this book. 'Reflections on the problem of the gradual ascent to Christian perfection', *ZAM* 19 (1944), 65-78; 'Thoughts on the theology of Christmas', *Wort und Wahrheit* 10 (1955), 887-893; 'The eternal significance of the humanity of Jesus for our relationship with God', *GuL* 26 (1953), 279-288; 'Reflections on the theology of Renunciation', *Orientierung* 17 (1953) 252-255 (= *Tijdschrift voor geestelijk Leven 9* [1953] 480-497); 'The Passion and Asceticism', *GuL* 22 (1954), 15-36; 'Reflections on the experience of Grace', *GuL* 27 (1954) 460-462; 'The Church of the Saints', *Stimmen der Zeit* 157 (1955/56), 81-91; 'Some thoughts on "a good intention", *GuL* 28 (1955), 281-298; 'The dogma of the Immaculate Conception in our spiritual life', *GuL* 27 100-108; 'The comfort of time', *Stimmen der Zeit* 157 (1955/56), 241-255; 'The Eucharist and suffering', *ZAM* 11 (1936), 224-236; 'The renewal of priestly ordination', *GuL* 25 (1952), 231-234; 'The meaning of frequent confession of devotion', *ZAM* 9 (1934), 323-336; 'Problems concerning Confession', *GuL* 27 (1954) 435-446; 'The apostolate of prayer', *Stimmen der Zeit* 152 (1953), 161-170; 'A spiritual dialogue at evening: on sleep, prayer, and other subjects', *Wort und Wahrheit* 2 (1947), 449-462; 'Priestly existence', *ZAM* 17 (1942), 155-171; 'The consecration of the layman to the care of souls', *ZAM* 11(1936), 21-34; 'The Ignatian mysticism of joy in the world', *ZAM* 12 (1937), 121-137; 'Priest and Poet', foreword to *La hora* [x] *sin tiempo* (poems by Jorge Blajot S. J.); '"Behold this heart": preliminaries to a theology of devotion to the Sacred Heart', *GuL* 26 (1953), 32-38; 'Some theses for a theology of devotion to the Sacred Heart', in J. Stierli, *Cor Salvatoris*, 2 imp. (Freiburg 1956), 166-199; 'The Christian among unbelieving relations', *GuL* 27 (1954), 171-184; 'On conversions to the Church', *Hochland* 46 (1953), 119-126; 'Science as a "confession"?', *Wort und Wahrheit* 9 (1954), 809-819.

Innsbruck, March 1956

Karl Rahner, S.J.

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1

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF THE GRADUAL ASCENT TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Throughout ascetic and mystic literature there are to be found 'divisions' of the way of the spiritual life, all of which amounts to an attempt to describe and distinguish from each other the stages through which man must pass on the way to Christian perfection. Thus, when about to speak here of the 'gradual ascent to Christian perfection', it might be expected that this would necessarily involve us in a description (in their material content) of the individual stages of this way to Christian perfection and that it would consequently be necessary for us to indicate in detail the norm according to which – by gradual ascent through these stages – the Christian eventually can be said to arrive at that point which represents the goal of his supernatural moral and religious life, i.e. the attainment of perfection in becoming more and more like Christ, and thus arriving at the reflection of the perfection of the Father in heaven, according to the command given us in the Sermon on the Mount. Yet, in actual fact, our reflections will be confined to the 'problematic nature' of this gradual ascent. We are not going to put forward some old or even a new division of the stages of the spiritual road; we intend merely to ask how and where such a division can be found, given that it wants to be able to claim that it corresponds sufficiently to the actual course of the spiritual life so that, conversely, it can also be normative for such a course.

First of all, then, it has to be asked whether there is in fact such a thing as a 'way' to Christian perfection. Is there really a gradual ascent to perfection? Or, to put it even more precisely, can one attain holiness as it were bit by bit by a continued, methodically planned effort, in such a way that at the end of this 'road' one really 'possesses' it – analogously to the way in which one gradually becomes rich by continued work and [4] ever new material gains – till eventually there remains at most the task of making sure that one does not lose this wealth again? This is no doubt more or less explicitly and consciously the kind of dominant conception normally had when one speaks in the usual sense of the way to Christian holiness. Of course, we do not mean to question even theoretically that there is a grain of truth in such a conception, that somehow it also sees and means something quite correct. Yet, as will become clear in the course of our reflections on this matter from the most varying viewpoints, this conception is not as self-evident and free of problems as would allow us to use it without difficulty and danger as the basic conceptual framework for the real question (not treated here), viz. the question as to how and in what ways the Christian becomes holy. The critique of this basic framework – which thus becomes the real subject of our reflections – may perhaps prove to be more than just a superfluous subtlety but rather a way of coming to closer grips, in one respect or another, with the question of what exactly Christian perfection consists in and what are the real 'steps' and 'ways' by which it is to be attained.

Is there in any sense a 'way', a stage-by-stage step-like ascent to holiness? This, and this alone, is the simple and yet difficult question we have posed ourselves here. It has already been said that we do not really mean to dispute or question the statement that there is growth in Christian piety or that there is an increase, a slow and gradual attainment of Christian perfection. Yet it will do no harm to make sure for ourselves from the positive sources of theology of the correctness of this statement in some sense or other, since a glance at these sources may serve to lead us into the whole problematic nature of this statement.

Scripture undoubtedly knows of a conversion, a *metanoia* (Mt. 3:2: Mk 1:15; Lk 5:32,

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etc.), the decision to follow Christ, the yes to his call to become his disciple, the basic will to fulfil the conditions laid down by Christ for the one who asks how one can become perfect, the *pistis* or whatever other name may be given in the New Testament to that decisive experience of return and of being born again. Yet in all this the New Testament patently presupposes that this decisive act of conversion is not something absolutely final, that the life which follows this act is not simply a merely uniform and unchanging activation of this basic attitude adopted once and for all, but that this attitude also grows and matures, advances and increases. For the New Testament recognizes that there are *nepoi* (1 Co 3:1; Eph 4:14; Heb 5:12,13) who at first cannot [5] stomach anything but milk and cannot yet stand solid food, and – in contrast to these immature beginners – the *teleioi* (1 Co 2:6; 14:20; Ph 3:15; Col 4:12; Heb 5:14), who are in the fullest sense *pneumatikoi* (1 Co 2:13,15; 3:1; 14:37; Ga 6:1) and who also possess *gnosis*. St Paul speaks of a growth in knowledge and in Christian life in general (2 Co 10:15, Eph 4:15; Col 1:10, 1 P 2:2; 2 P 3:18), of an 'attaining of the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ' (Eph 4:13); he is aware of a striving for gifts of grace which are not of the same importance and perfection, of ways of the Christian life of varying perfection (1 Co 12-14). Ideas like building, with materials of varying value, on the foundations of faith, the concept of differences in merit, of the distinction between works of absolute duty and acts of voluntary charity, etc., all presuppose equally that the life of the man endowed with *pneuma* is capable of growth and progress.

If we now take a closer look at these hints given by Scripture, two things will no doubt strike us in particular. Firstly, these scriptural indications remain characteristic of the whole history of the doctrine of the different steps in the spiritual life, although they are really anything but self-evident: for one thing, this doctrine of growth and progress does not in any way go beyond generalities even in the New Testament. Looked at as a whole, nothing more is really stated than the fact that there is such a growth and maturing process, and the command that the Christian must become more perfect in this way. There is a complete absence of any more exact definition of the stages of this ascent; no attempt whatsoever is made to give any real description of the characteristic properties of the individual stages or to arrange them one after the other in any determined order of sequence. Secondly, what also strikes us particularly is the fact that in St Paul this ascent, if we may put it this way, is orientated – even though not exclusively, yet at least predominantly – towards a 'gnostic' goal: the perfect man differs from the less perfect by his greater *sophia* and *gnosis*. This is noticeable both in the first Epistle to the Corinthians and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. True, with all its 'gnosis' colouring, the schema of spiritual ascent presented there undoubtedly does not envisage something merely rational and intellectualistic; the higher knowledge is a gift effected by the Holy Spirit. It is equally important to observe in this connection that it is precisely in the first Epistle to the Corinthians that love appears as ultimately the decisive factor and the only valid criterion for the ascent of the Christian in the mind of St [6] Paul. It is equally important to notice that the 'gnosis' colouring of the schema of ascent is imposed on the Apostle by the actual current of thought in this congregation for whom *gnosis* was the sought-after goal, independently of the mind of St Paul, so that this orientation of the way of perfection towards a more or less mystic *gnosis* must not be simply taken as the most central point for St Paul himself. Yet it nevertheless remains true to say that the directly tangible elements in St Paul point very strongly towards conceiving the way of ascent to perfection as an ascent to ever greater knowledge and experience of the secrets of God.

As already mentioned above, these two characteristics of what can be explicitly grasped in the New Testament concerning our question has also to a greater or lesser extent remained characteristic in the history of ascetics and mysticism. It naturally cannot be the intention of a short essay like ours to give a detailed account of the history of this theory concerning the divisions and steps of the spiritual life. We will merely draw attention to a few unconnected

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facts as an illustration of the sort of thing already observed in the Scriptures and this as a preparation for the objective problems which we will discover in the theory of the steps of the spiritual life.

In the history of this doctrine, too, there is to be found the same twofold characteristic: either the steps of the spiritual life are orientated towards and aimed at a mystical ideal of knowledge, or this doctrine never really gets beyond certain very formal divisions. The first time such a doctrine of the way of the Christian life was attempted in the patristic writings, viz. by Clement of Alexandria,[1] the goal of this ascent is the gnostic (once more in direct contrast to the ideals of the heretical gnosticism of the second and third centuries, an antitype meant to combat these ideals and to overcome them, and one which for this very reason has taken over the ultimate viewpoints of the whole conception from the opponents against whom it has to fight). The gnostic is the perfect man. This gnostic to whom Clement ascribes something bordering on a kind of omniscience, which can be conceived only with great difficulty as in any way reconcilable with the obscurity of faith, is distinguished in an almost extreme way from the simple believer. Virtue appears here almost as a mere presupposition and radiation of *gnosis*, and *gnosis* is *the* desired end to such an extent that the gnostic would prefer *gnosis* to salvation if, [7] *per absurdum*, he had to choose between the two. The 'way of works' (which later on came to be called the *vita activa*) is the necessary presupposition for the 'way of *gnosis*' (which later on came to be called the *vita contemplativa*), and really nothing more. In Origen[2] and even more clearly, unequivocally and rigidly in the Origenism of Evagrius Ponticus,[3] we then encounter the completion of this basic scheme of Christian life aimed at *gnosis*, a scheme which leans heavily on the ancient divisions of science and the first signs of which were already present in Clement: the spiritual life runs its course in two great stages, viz. practice and *gnosis*. The life of virtue as found in practical life is seen more or less clearly as a preparation for and as a 'gateway' to mystical contemplation. It is really conceived merely as the psychological training ground for *gnosis* (a training naturally based anthropologically on a metaphysics and theology), as a schooling for *apatheia*, as the process of divesting oneself of all passion, as a simplification and concentration of man until he comes to the point where he can contemplate God almost in an experience of identification of the *Nous* (freed from images and modes) with the divine Proto-monad which is the substantial *Gnosis* itself. Even love in this conception is at most the climax of the *praktiké* (almost reduced to another word for *apatheia*) but not really the summit of the *whole* spiritual life.

There is no need to go into the details of the division of the gnostic part of the way. Even the often subtle division of the *praktiké* is ultimately merely a division according to a more or less logical scheme of virtues, without giving the impression that this division provides a real reflection of a psychologically genetic sequence in the development of the spiritual man. In as far as it is possible to discover any theory of the steps of the spiritual life in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa,[4] it is again merely [8] a question really of the steps of the mystical ascent:

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[1] Cf. VilIer-Rahner, *Aszese und Mystik in der Väterzeit* (Freiburg 1939), pp. 63-71, 75 *sqq*. Also on this: W. Völker.

[2] Cf. Viller-Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 76 *sqq*.

[3] Cf. Viller-Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 99 *sqq*. Beyond this and very much deeper and more accurate: H. U. v. Balthasar, 'Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Ponticus', *Zeitschrift fur Aszese und Mystik* XIV (1939), pp. 31-47; and by the same author: 'Die Hiera des Evagrius', *ZKT* LXIII (1939), pp. 86106; 181-206. Here, pp. 95 *sqq*., the ancient schemata of the sciences, which are at the root of these divisions.

[4] Cf. Viller-Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-145. The literature mentioned here should be compared with: A. Lieske, 'Zur Theologie der Christus-Mystik Gregors von Nyssa', *Scholastik* XIV (1939), pp. 485-514; H. U. v. Balthasar, 'La philosophie religieuse de S. Grégoire de Nysse', *RSR* XXIX (1939), pp. 513-549, and by the same author: *Gregor von Nyssa, Der versiegelte Quell. Auslegung des Hohen Liedes* (Salzburg 1939); and *Présence et Pensée, Etude sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris 1943). Furthermore: H. C.

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the vision of God in the mirror of the clear soul, direct experience of God in the obscurity of boundless yearning. When after that there appears for the first time a scheme in the Pseudo-Denis[5] which competes with the scheme of Evagrius, the anonymous universal master of Graeco-Byzantine mysticism, the three ways which he teaches are the *via purgativa*, *illuminativa* and *unitiva* (*catharsis*, *photismos*, *teleiosis-henosis*; the term 'way' is not yet used by him). Yet even here – in spite of the essential difference between the mysticism of Evagrius and the Areopagite – the spiritual life in its growth is orientated just as clearly as before towards mystical *gnosis*. Any stages of the spiritual life which can really be distinguished in the concrete are found here also at most in so far as it is a question of growth in the mystical experience of God. The neo-platonic St Augustine[6] may be very far from a scholastic systematization such as is found in Evagrius and in the Areopagite: yet when he describes man's ascent to perfection, then he too uses as his basic scheme the neo-platonic ascent of the spirit proceeding from the manifold variety of the world to the luminous and yet unutterable transcendence of God. Or – foreshadowing another scheme which was then more fully developed during the Middle Ages – he looks at love, tries to describe its course of development, and then (in so far as there is any real systematization) he does not really get any further than making a purely formal division: initial, progressing, great and then perfect love, or love born, nourished, strengthened, and finally perfected. The treatment given by Gregory the Great,[7] the disciple of the even greater Augustine, is not much different.

During the Middle Ages,[8] a different division came into vogue, a division which no longer had this mystical orientation: *incipientes*, *proficientes*, *perfecti* (St Thomas, II-II, q.24 a.9; q.183 a.4). From the thirteenth century onwards, this threefold division of steps came then to be treated as running parallel to the threefold division of the Areopagite scheme. This is already clear in St Bonaventure.[9] This procedure can either mean that the *perfecti* are understood to be the mystics (viz. when the Areopagite [9] scheme predominates) or – when the other scheme predominates – that even the *via unitiva* is no longer taken in a truly mystical sense but becomes more an expression used to designate a high degree of union with God through grace and love. In 1687, Innocent XI safeguarded the Areopagite division against the Quietist Molinos (*Denz*. 1246). Since then frequent attempts have been made to deduce from this that the identification of these two divisions was thereby given ecclesiastical sanction. Yet as is stressed by Hertling,[10] for instance, no positive teaching can be drawn from this purely negative rebuttal of a vulgar attack by Quietism against the three ways of the Areopagite scheme ('. . . *absurdum maximum*, *quod dictum fuerit in mystica* . . .'). The Church's intention in this was merely to protect traditional ascetics against the temerarious attacks of the Quietists, without wishing thereby to teach positively that, for instance, the 'beginner' must necessarily be in the purgative way. Thus, as Hertling states explicitly, it is possible to maintain without fear of ecclesiastical censure that the parallelism between these two divisions is artificial in so far as it does not always correspond to experience.

We have traditionally, therefore, two different and separate divisions or stages. Of these, one is problematical because it takes it in varying degrees too much for granted that the goal of the spiritual life consists in a mystic state of union with God and because it moreover

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Puech, 'La ténèbre mystique chez Gregoire de Nysse', *Etudes Carmélitaines* XXIII 11(1938), pp. 49-52.
[5] Cf. Viller-Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 234 *sq*.
[6] Cf. Viller-Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 255 *sqq*.
[7] Cf. Viller-Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 270 *sqq*.
[8] Cf. for what follows: O. Zimmermann, *Lehrbuch der Aszetik* (Freiburg 1929), pp. 66 *sqq*.
[9] Cf. Zimmermann, *loc. cit*., p. 67, who refers to St Bonaventure, *De triplici via*. Differently Hertling, *Lehrbuch der aszetischen Theologie* (Innsbruck 1930), p. 148.
[10] L. v. Herding, *Theologiae asceticae cursus brevior* (Rome 1939), pp. 100 and 208. In his *Lehrbuch de aszetischen Theologie*, pp. 146 *sqq*., Herding had still defended a somewhat different opinion.

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considers this mystical state to be predominantly (at least fundamentally) a higher *knowledge*. The other division is no less problematical, for it really means precious little due to the fact of its being so formal and hence empty.

Of course, this is not meant to say that the division into 'beginners', 'those who have progressed' and 'the perfect' remains in this empty, formal state in ascetic literature. On the contrary, great efforts have been made to give these formal concepts a material content. We will have to say more about this in a moment when we come to the objectively problematical nature of our question.

The Spanish mysticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – especially in St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross – provides us with extraordinarily subtle and psychologically acute divisions, of great importance for mystical theology. Yet these divisions are really relevant only for the stages within the mystic way; they are a series of steps [10] within infused contemplation. The 'beginner', as he appears in St John of the Cross, is the person who psychologically and in the sphere of grace stands at the threshold of infused contemplation. This division, therefore, does not concern us directly in the present context.

It is, of course, obvious and requires only to be mentioned in passing that other divisions have also been given in the history of ascetics. Thus, there is often mention (among others, in St Bonaventure) of a threefold (or fourfold) supernatural *habitus*: the infused virtues, the infused gifts of the Holy Ghost, the beatitudes also conceived as a *habitus* (and the fruits of the Holy Ghost). Following on this, the different activations of these three different and higher or lower groups of 'habits' gave rise to a particular arrangement of the steps of the spiritual life.[11] Yet such divisions were far too much the product of a formal-logical systematization of separate traditional data to be able to count on surviving for any length of time.

Hence, these rather primitive indications concerning the history of the doctrine about the steps of the spiritual life really leave us with the following simple facts. There is first of all the fact that in some sense or other, and in some form or other, there must be something like a way to Christian perfection, a way which is formed by or divisible into different stages; for unless this be presupposed, the continual and always renewed attempt to define these stages in greater detail – as found in the whole history of the Christian religion – becomes absolutely incomprehensible and absurd. The other provisional conclusion is the fact that these concrete attempts to give a more exact description of these ways have not turned out to be particularly convincing. This will become even clearer when we now turn directly to the objective problems involved.

We again start with the almost instinctive, unreflected conviction that the Christian ought to *become* holy, that he in some way or other becomes this slowly, that he can become ever *more perfect*, that he is capable of growing in holiness and love of God, and that he moves himself towards a definite goal in his religion and moral life, a goal which is not a simple question of a goal not attained or not yet attained, but a goal towards which he really moves by approaching nearer and nearer to it. Yet as soon as we ask what this means more exactly, then our difficulties really [11] start. One could, of course, make the question simpler for oneself to begin with by trying to give more precision to this doctrine in the light of dogmatic teaching on the increase of sanctifying grace. The supernatural holiness of a man, one might say, is measured by the degree of sanctifying grace possessed by him. This grace can increase. It grows, in fact, by every supernaturally good work done in the state of grace and by every fruitful reception of a sacrament. One could furthermore draw the nowadays more

[11] A relic of this is still contained even today in the usual doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which conceives them as *habitus* to particularly perfect or even mystic acts.

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or less common – although not dogmatically defined – teaching according to which even the sinner who returns to the state of grace is thereby also given back that degree of sanctifying grace which he possessed before his loss of grace.[12] In addition, one could also take into consideration the equally common view in contemporary dogmatic theology, according to which the measure of sanctifying grace cannot really be diminished by venial sins, etc. One could then draw the conclusion from these presuppositions that the stage-by-stage process of becoming holy and perfect is nothing other than the continual increase in sanctifying grace which occurs inevitably (if we may put it this way) in the life of every Christian and which in reality is only differentiated in each individual Christian according to the '*tempo*' and intensity of this growth.

Yet, even abstracting from the really shattering problems inherent in such a quantitative, impersonal conception of grace, such an explanation of growth in perfection would not really be to the point for what is meant *here*, even though obviously there is also the question as to what relationship there is between this growth in 'ontic' sanctity and the growth in 'moral' sanctity referred to here. The reason for the fact that what is meant by our question is not covered by the conception just outlined, is that, in the matter occupying us here, it is obviously a question of moral sanctity and perfection in the realm of what can be personally experienced. According to what was said above about grace, there ought to be a very significant increase in grace in the course of a long Christian life. Yet we will not say of every aged Christian on his death-bed that he has become holy or that he has really covered[13] a great part of the way with which we are dealing here, and this in the realm of what we can experience, i.e. in a [12] 'pheno-typical' manner. Again, all this shows an at least apparent discrepancy between ontic and moral holiness at the end of a long life. This discrepancy is a real problem, for ultimately one surely cannot suppose such a discrepancy to be real, even on the supposition that man must still 'morally' catch up on his holiness in Purgatory (a holiness which endows him with his measure of grace) before he can enter into the enjoyment of the degree of beatitude given with this determined ontic holiness.

Let us illustrate this question once more as plastically as possible: an ideal seminarian or novice who makes the highest demands on himself develops in the course of his life into a very imperfect, embittered and loveless old parish priest or Religious, very much concerned with money matters and material enjoyment. He seems, therefore, to have become considerably 'less perfect'. We will suppose, however, that lie has not lost sanctifying grace; this grace, therefore, must inevitably have greatly increased during the course of his life. From the point of view of grace, therefore, he seems to have become more holy. How are these two conclusions to be reconciled? It is not our intention to go into the solution of this question to any great length. But the solution is no doubt to be found in the fact that in a more personalistic and hence more correct conception of grace, the degree of increase of grace in our example must not be overrated, in spite of the many 'good works' and the frequency of the reception of the sacraments which must be assumed in such a life. On the other hand, a more careful examination will show that there is moral progress even in such a life. For even such an 'imperfect' old parish priest or Religious – by successfully passing the test of the situations of his life (a test not yet imposed on the young seminarian or novice), and passing it without losing grace – has reached a moral maturity which the young man, in spite of his idealism, did not and could not yet possess, even though this moral maturity is not as great as it might have been in such a life in the nature of things and which, therefore, appears as imperfection when measured by the standard of what the old man ought to be. But let us

[12] Cf. further on in the present volume the essay entitled 'The comfort of time', pp. 141-157.
[13] Under quite a different aspect, this question is taken up once more in the essay: 'The comfort of time,' cf. pp. 141-157.

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leave this particular problem for the moment and start at another point.

One might try – and this is the usual approach in modern ascetic literature – to identify the different stages of the spiritual life with the grades of moral significance, dignity and perfection of the individual classes of moral acts. One starts from the assuredly not incorrect assumption that the particular classes of moral acts are of different value, 'meritoriousness' [13] and thus also of different 'perfection'. Avoidance of mortal sin as such will be achieved by acts (at least so one might think) which morally speaking are of little value, which (put in another way) realize a lesser degree of love of God than the acts and attitudes by which and out of which man also avoids venial sins as far as possible. The latter acts could again be thought to be surpassed in their turn by acts and attitudes by which man does what is only counselled: the free, more perfect acts – in short, works of supererogation. Presupposing all this, such and similar divisions of acts are then allocated in one way or another among the three aforementioned formal steps. Thus it might be conceived, for instance, that those in the grade of beginners (frequently identified with the 'purgative way') fight against (mortal or even already venial) sin by penance and mortification, and try to eradicate the roots of such sin which are concupiscence and pride; those in the grade of the more advanced try also to fight against venial sins, even the semi-voluntary ones, and seek to avoid imperfections; those in the grade of the perfect habitually carry out the counsels, always choose the more perfect and for love of Christ prefer the Cross, his renunciation and disgrace. According to this scheme, acts of prayer are then also frequently graded and divided among the three ways. Thus, discursive meditation is attributed to the first grade, affective prayer to the second, and the prayer of simplicity, acquired contemplation or in certain circumstances even infused contemplation to the third (viz. wherever mysticism proper is seen as a normal stage of development of the spiritual life).

It might seem that with this conception, which we have given merely in very rough outline and in a simplified form, the formal steps have now been given their proper content found lacking above. Yet, even conceding that the step-by-step way of the spiritual life sometimes or perhaps even often unfolds itself in the way indicated in this theory, it will nevertheless be basically undeniable that the identification of the stages of development of the spiritual life with the different objective values of the classes of moral acts is something artificial. To recognize the truth of this, it is necessary to reflect on the following: the stages of the spiritual life make sense (and the sense they are actually intended to make) only if it is presupposed that these steps in the development of the spiritual life are actually separate *from one another*, really follow *one after the other*, and that *those* phases which in this theory come *before* another, can also not be skipped over in practice . . . similarly to the way in which the [14] steps of the biological development of a living being follow one another in proper sequence, each clearly having its proper place in the total curve of life, and each later stage essentially presupposing the previous one. The phases of the spiritual life and the grades of perfection of the classes of moral acts are not the same. If this is kept in mind, then it will be seen to be artificial to apportion definite classes of moral acts according to their objective values to these stages of subjective development. For it is impossible to see, either in theory or in practice, why precisely the higher kind of acts should not be possible on the lower step of the spiritual life, and why an (actually or merely supposedly) lower type of act should no longer have basically that same decisive significance on a higher step of the spiritual life which it had on a lower step. Expressed in concrete terms, we would ask: why, for example, should not the 'beginner' in certain circumstances already accomplish the most heroic acts of pure love of God or perform the most outstanding works of supererogation? If he does this, is he still a beginner? If the answer is 'no', has he then simply jumped the grade of 'beginner', contrary to the laws of organic development, by a sudden heroic leap? If the answer is 'yes', why is he then still truly a beginner, when he does in fact practise heroic virtue – supposedly

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the characteristic of the grade of the 'perfect'?

This becomes a very real problem, for instance, in the case of 'juvenile saints', which term is not meant to refer to the sentimental figures of a pseudo-hagiography of most recent times, but to young people whose really heroic virtue has been acknowledged by the Church. Have such saints soared up more or less from the very start, and by a heroic flight, to the heights of heroic virtue, without really having first passed through the way of development signified by the steps of the spiritual life, and – presupposing the correctness of the view criticized here – have they thus soared up to the summit of this gradual way? Or have they nevertheless passed through this way of development in a more summary fashion which consequently is historically unverifiable or at least extremely difficult to grasp, so that this gradual passage has to be conceived as something more or less independent of the biological and personal graph of life? Or are they, in spite of their really heroic virtue, still beginners in the proper sense of the doctrine of the steps of the spiritual life, so that 'perfection' in the sense of this properly understood doctrine of the steps of the spiritual life cannot be identified with heroic virtue, as is in fact done by the view we are criticizing?

[15] In order to make some progress in solving these deep problems, we will – to begin with – introduce and to some extent explain a concept which seems to be important here, viz. the concept of 'situation'. If there are steps in the spiritual life, each of them really distinct from the other and having its own peculiar structure – and if each of them may either be missed altogether, or may be passed either badly, well or even heroically – then these steps must differ from each other by something which is prior to the moral quality with which they are lived . . . and this precisely is what we would call 'situation'. Life, it seems to us, is made up of a series of situations (in the main, dependent on one another up to a certain point), a series of tasks, each of which is different from the other with its own particular place in the course of life as a whole, each of them bringing with them a certain characteristic and ideal recipe as to how they ought to be mastered, and each of them being mastered in this or that way or not being fulfilled at all.

The factors which in each particular case determine the individual situations of life would seem to be the following: firstly, the vital situation together with everything belonging to it (a man's biological constitution, his particular biological phase of development: youth, maturity, senescence, illness and death); secondly, the external circumstances not completely under the control of the free decision of man, circumstances formed by the biological and historical environment of man (among which we may also include here God's sovereign intervention by grace, etc.); thirdly, earlier situations preceding the present one which are obviously also constitutive of the present situation, since in the case of each event every situation is somehow – and especially in the realm of the spiritual, personal reality – co-determined by what went before. In our case, this is not merely valid with regard to the *manner* in which the test of the preceding situation had been passed in the moral sense, but also with regard to the simple fact that the person has already lived previously in this or that determined situation. Someone, for instance, who has already experienced a great love, an extreme danger of death, etc., is a different person in any succeeding situation; by this very fact, the concrete situation too has itself become different from what it would have been if these preceding situations had not occurred, even prescinding from *the way in which* the person has passed through these preceding situations. Since, therefore, the preceding situations certainly always codetermine the next situation, the way in which this situation is to be [16] encountered – what is demanded of the person in this situation – is also co-determined by them. Thus, for instance (to go on immediately to the practical conclusion) someone who starts the spiritual life as a 'beginner' in old age, i.e. someone who decides to meet his situations in as perfect a way as possible, begins at quite a different point; his beginning is quite a different one from what it would be if he were to begin to be a 'beginner'

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in the spiritual life in his youth. He will at once and at the very beginning have to survive a situation at which the youthful beginner arrives only very much later on in his life.

If it were now to be possible – while taking into consideration the just-mentioned situational elements – to grasp and describe one or several typical ways in which these series of situations run their course in man's life, and if it were now possible to attribute the corresponding moral duties to each of the phases of such a series of situations, then we would have found the sequence or sequences of steps of the spiritual life for which we are looking. The simplest thing in all this – although even this has not yet been achieved sufficiently in ascetic literature – would be a differential psychology of the different age groups. Yet even this would have to be more than a merely biologically orientated differential psychology and would have to do more than just inquire into the reflex of the biological curve of life in the psychical life of man; it would have to be orientated also in a spiritual, personal direction, i.e. it would have to inquire whether there is not also a line of development through the different age-periods which, from a spiritual and personal point of view, is genuinely dependent on the difference of each person's experiences.

This differential psychology of age groups would be only one of the elements required for the construction of a typical line (or lines) of development necessary as a neutral substratum for the step-by-step development of the spiritual life. This element would be the easiest to determine because, compared with other elements, it is the most constant and uniform. The other elements (the typical course of external circumstances, the modification of every situation by what has gone before) are subject to much greater variations, even supposing that it is possible to work out types in their case. Thus it is obvious that it would be a very complicated and difficult task to work out a detailed account of such a typical course, a task which naturally cannot be accomplished here.

In order to provide a further clarification, we will look at the problems we have so far indicated from yet another point of view. The usual, [17] commonly accepted conception of the step-by-step development of the spiritual life presupposes that, in passing through this development, man grows in perfection, acquires an ever-increasing treasure of perfection and sanctity, and becomes 'more virtuous'. This conception is often expressed in such a way as to state that a person acquires many virtuous habits: the so-called 'acquired virtues'. This in its turn is explained as meaning that the person acquires a permanent inclination and facility in the further exercise of the particular acts of a virtue by frequent repetition of these acts. In such a conception, therefore, the process of becoming perfect consists in acquiring such virtuous habits. This seems also to explain how one can acquire perfection as a permanent possession: as a possession which one 'has' and which is always at one's disposal. Yet as soon as one asks oneself about how exactly the acquisition of such virtuous habits takes place and what is meant by it, the whole question becomes once more problematical.

There is indeed something like an inclination to and facility for certain ways of acting which has been acquired by the repetition of the corresponding acts. But such a facility and inclination must obviously be explained, at least to begin with, by the psychological laws of association, both in what concerns the intentional objectivity and the emotional reaction to this in such acts. To put it crudely and in general terms: the frequency of performance of a certain act leaves certain traces in the brain; the acquisition of such a habit, at least to begin with, is essentially auto-conditioning. This being presupposed, we should next pose the question, therefore, as to whether such firm associational complexes and trained reactions (no matter how useful they may be) cannot equally well be in themselves extremely harmful, to the extent in which they allow the originally genuine moral acts – which were truly a spontaneous and spiritual reaction to the moral value as such – to become a sub-personal instinctive reaction which no longer attains the proper moral nucleus of the object. The well-known picture of the old ascetic who has become 'hardened' in virtue, can properly be

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brought forward as an illustration here: the picture of a person who engages in countless moral ways of acting by force of habit, without seeming to realize these moral values in the truly spiritual and personal or genuine and original way which was originally intended in such behaviours.

Even in view of this question alone it again becomes to a certain extent a problem to know whether the possession of such acquired virtues is [18] really possession of something already genuinely and originally moral in itself. This is not of course meant to dispute the fact that it is useful and indeed necessary to acquire such 'virtues'. Yet surely their primary meaning is that this self-training, which allows moral acts to become instinctive reactions, takes pressure off the spiritual personal life of man, so that he becomes free to occupy himself with other, more important moral tasks and efforts; it does not mean, however, that these 'acquired virtues' by themselves give man a greater perfection in the moral field as such. Regarded from this point of view, therefore, the acquiring of 'acquired virtues' would not really mean the acquiring of perfection itself but rather the acquiring of the *possibility* of greater perfection. It would still remain to be seen, therefore, whether a person actually makes full use of this possibility or whether he considers himself to be dispensed from such a utilization on account of these acquired virtues themselves.

The possession of such an acquired virtue as the goal of the gradual approach to sanctity is of a problematic nature from yet another point of view. If this acquired virtue consists at least to begin with (i.e. understood empirically) in such associational traces, then it can also be influenced, increased and decreased by causes lying outside the sphere of properly moral decisions. Something, for example, which is acquired in the form of a habit in this direction by repeated moral conduct in the sexual sphere can in certain circumstances be attained also – as far as its empirically tangible effect is concerned – by bromides. Or, acquired virtues – as far as their empirical effect is-concerned (and this after all is the thing under discussion when it is a question of the facility and inclination for certain ways of acting) – are lost again by a *marasmus senilis*.

It can, of course, be objected (and to a certain extent, rightly) that behind this acquired virtue of the empirical ego – a virtue influenced by non-moral causes – there lies the acquired virtue of the intelligible ego which can be acquired only by moral behaviour and can be destroyed only by moral activity, and not by non-moral and non-personal causes. This may very well be correct.[14] There may indeed be such metempirical [19] virtues which belong to the realm of the spontaneity and intangibility of the noumenal ego. Yet they do not really help us in our question here. For, after all, the usual conception of the step-by-step development of the spiritual life presupposes that there is a kind of growth and enrichment in the realm of the *empirical* ego and its experiences. This is, however, rather obviously dependent on the indicated non-moral causes and circumstances (to which of course belong also heredity, the basic vital and psychical constitution, the '*complexio*' of old people, and everything which influences these things in the course of one's life). This, however, gives rise to the question: can whatever is dependent on non-moral causes be itself called moral, moral perfection, etc.? And if the gradual development of the spiritual life is to lead to the height and richness in really possessed perfection and sanctity, then can this step-by-step ascent be explained as a way to these 'acquired virtues' in the empirical sense of the word? Hence, if we are unsuccessful in explaining in this way the growth in the spiritual life (which

[14] It should be noted in passing that this whole problem was also seen by the medieval metaphysical psychology of the scholastics, when it was asked what the *species intelligibilis* is over and above the *species sensibilis* which is also necessary for the act of intellectual knowledge, and whether it continues to exist by itself and can remain significant for the intellectual life of man even when the *species sensibilis* is destroyed (at least by death). The same problem is envisaged in the question about the existence, extent and significance of a *memoria intellectiva* side by side with the *memoria sensitiva*.

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is presupposed for the construction of a gradual ascent), must we then drop the idea of a growth in holiness as something inconceivable? Must we fall back again on the doctrine of the growth in *grace* in man, or must we construct the concept of a gradual development in the spiritual life exclusively on the typical chain of situations referred to above, to the exclusion of the concept of an ever-*increasing* possession of holiness, or is there still a third way out?

The question thus posed could also be formulated as follows: can a moral act increase in intensity? Is this possible in the sense that the greater intensity of an act depends on the fact of there having been certain preceding acts, without this in its turn having to be interpreted according to the conception of 'acquired virtues', a conception which we have just rejected as being insufficient? If we formulate the question in this way, we do not fall back into that interpretation of the gradual spiritual ascent already dropped as unworkable earlier on, which assigns the various classes of acts of objectively lower or higher levels to the different stages of the spiritual life, We are immediately a long way from the conception which sees things as if, for example, the beginner just manages to avoid mortal sin, whereas the perfect man fulfils the non-commanded Counsels, etc. We ask rather (to remain as close to our example as possible and to express it in this concrete form), whether the [20] perfect man performs the *same* moral act differently from the way the beginner performs it, really meaning by this not merely the same act in respect of the externally tangible performance but the same act also with regard to its formal moral object towards which a position is adopted. Thus, we are asking, for instance, whether the beginner's act of pure, selfless love of God is different from that of the perfect man? We are not thinking here of a specific difference determined by those factors which distinguish the 'beginner' and the 'perfect' in accordance with the interpretation of the acquired virtues discussed above. If we may answer the thus understood question in the affirmative, then one could go on to ask about a law of stages according to which the increase in intensity of such acts takes place. Once this law has been discovered and has been combined with the previously postulated, typical scheme of sequence of situations, then this combination would at last give us the looked-for scheme of the way to perfection, which describes the *difference* of the single stages of the spiritual life in the chain of situations and which explains by the law of the increase of intensity how this spiritual way leads to ever greater *heights*.

The first question is, therefore, the following: can one and the same moral act – an act which is really the same in its objective intentional structure which is orientated towards a moral object as such – be of a different intensity subjectively? On the whole and going on their everyday experience, everyone would naturally answer this question in the affirmative. Yet it is of decisive importance to see *how* this difference in intensity is explained more in detail. For, wherever it is seen or experienced more or less explicitly as a difference in the ease with which the course of associations takes place – in what in the usual terminology of ascetics is called 'sensible' consolations or something similar – such a difference of degree would come to the same thing as the difference which we have just rejected as insufficient for explaining the possibility of growth. In actual fact we must distinguish between two quite different kinds of intensity in an act: an act or an experience can, for instance, be experienced as something very absorbing, something which occupies the whole of our consciousness, and yet at the same time it may be experienced as something very much on the surface compared with the central core of the person. Violent toothache is indeed experienced as a quite peripheral act which does not affect the core of the person, and yet it may greatly absorb the attention on this peripheral level. Hence we must distinguish [21] two quite different dimensions of intensity in the case of a human act: one of these is the measure of the greater or lesser personal depth of an act, while the other measures the intensity and density of the act on a particular personal level. The first of these dimensions – the dimension of the existential depth of an act – must not, of course, be mixed up with the objective dignity of a certain class

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of acts. An act of selfless love of God is always of the highest objective dignity. But it is quite a different question when we come to determine the existential depth in which the act is actually performed in a concrete case. It is also obvious (without our wishing to enter into this here) that there are very important and complicated connections between the two dimensions mentioned in the first place, however carefully they must be distinguished from each other. We also cannot enter into a discussion of the fact that there is a stratification of experiences even in the pre-personal sphere of man.

This beginning which we have perhaps made by pointing out this distinction, also already marks the point at which we must stop. There would now arise the question as to how this existential depth of an act can grow; whether, and how, man slowly gains the chance in the course of his natural and moral life to increase the radical existential depth of his actions; whether and how he manages to bring himself into play in *one* act and this with the *whole* reality of his spiritual and personal being, whether he manages to fulfil his own being right down to its deepest depths in one free decision, and what are the causes and conditions making it possible for him to do this. Only when this question has been clarified, would it be possible to describe the typical course of growth in a person's capacity to commit himself existentially. Only then would we be in a position to combine the typical chain of the situations of human life with this typical course of growth in man's capacity to commit himself existentially. Only then could we bring out the (certainly real) interdependence of these two series and thus arrive at the desired goal, viz. the understanding of the typical course of the spiritual life in its continual development into different and higher forms.

Nevertheless, our discussions have helped us to reach a jumping-off point and one which encourages us to take another look at our subject from a completely different point of view. There is evidently a development of man's capacity for an ever more total self-commitment by ever deeper personal acts. The impossibility of being able to commit oneself totally at every moment – the impossibility of a totally making-of-oneself [22] in every moment what one wants to be – is, however, nothing more than what is called concupiscence in the strictly theological sense of the world[15] (in contrast to the usual moral interpretation of this term). Hence, growth in this possibility is nothing other than growth in overcoming concupiscence. Thus our reflections lead us once more to the sporadic attempts[16] made in the history of Christian spirituality – attempts which have, however, never really been carried to a proper conclusion – to build up the step-by-step development of the spiritual life in a strictly theological manner. Such attempts are at work wherever the goal of spiritual development is seen to consist in a 'return to paradise' or in the attaining of a condition similar to that of the angels, and what has been said at least points to the kernel of truth in such a conception.

A further conceivable construction from theological materials in the narrower sense would be that of becoming more and more like Christ, of coming to act in accordance with the inner laws of his life. But such a conception leads immediately to the question as to what is the inner structure of Christ's life and what is, if we may put it that way, the developmental formula of that life. Thus, this attempt too faces us with a task which cannot be undertaken here.

Before concluding, we would like to refer explicitly once more to a question which we seem to have treated as of little importance until now. We refer to that conception of the gradual development of the spiritual life which orientates this development towards *mystical* experience and which, even in its pre-mystical stages, constructs this way in reference to this.

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[15] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Zum theologischen Begriff der Konkupiszenz', *ZKT* LXV (1941), pp. 61-80, reprinted and enlarged in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore 1960), pp. 347-382.

[16] Cf. A. Stolz, *Theologie der Mystik* (Salzburg) and by the same author: 'Das Mönchsideal der morgendländischen Kirche' in: *Ein Leib ein Geist. Einblicke in die Welt des christlichen Ostens* (published by the Abbey Gerleve, Münster), pp. 69-83.

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We have left this conception to one side from the outset, as being an explanation which would lead us away from our real question and task. This procedure was indeed justified. For, seen from an empirical point of view, the spiritual life of the great majority of Christians does not end up in mysticism (at least if we take mysticism in the sense in which it was understood by the classical Spanish mystics) and, in general, the view adopted by the New Testament about the way and goal of the spiritual life (e.g. in the Sermon on the Mount) does not at least give explicit expression to such an orientation towards mysticism. [23] Yet all this was not meant to dispute the fact that even such a mystically orientated construction of the steps of the spiritual life contains a kernel of truth. Let us suppose that the notion of mysticism were to be purified of ideas which originated more from a neo-platonic spirituality than from a Christian one and which still find strong echoes in the concept of mysticism even today. Suppose furthermore that the immense intensification of the existential depth of acts of which man is capable, were to be sufficiently recognized, an intensification which is directed towards something which one could in fact call mystical experience. Suppose finally that all the lessons of psychical training contained in the usual mystical doctrine were then utilized in this direction. Under these presuppositions the greater part of what is contained in the mystically orientated theory of steps could no doubt be taken up and introduced at the right place into that doctrine of the gradual spiritual way which we have had in mind here without being able to work it Out completely.

Finally, it should be pointed out very briefly that what we have called the law of the existential deepening of acts corresponds to what the general history of religion calls the mystical factor in religion, and that what we have called the chain of situations comes to the same thing ultimately as what in the general history of religion is called the historico-eschatological factor. Thus, the defects which we have discovered in the theories of the gradual course of the spiritual life current up until now could also be formulated in the sense that in this gradual course the historico-eschatological element has been forgotten more or less completely, and that the mystical factor (the only governing factor in these theories) has been conceived in a too intellectualistic manner. In the ultimate analysis both these defects are connected.

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[24]

2

THOUGHTS ON THE THEOLOGY OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas! One says the word almost a trifle despondently. Is it really possible to explain to someone today what is meant by it, to tell him what it means to *celebrate* Christmas? We are not thinking here of those who feel they cannot believe the Christian content of the doctrine to which this fact relates. We mean to ask rather whether *we* ourselves can celebrate Christmas, which surely means more than to believe this truth and then . . . leave it at that. Perhaps it would be better to rephrase the question and ask: *how* does one celebrate Christmas?

What is clear is that we do not really celebrate Christmas by giving presents, by putting up a Christmas tree, by making our home as cosy as possible or by other touching customs carried on in a mildly sceptical frame of mind. But what more is there? If, as Christians, we simply 'think' about the *doctrine* of the Incarnation of the eternal Word (even with good will and a desire to believe), then it is obviously not yet a Christian Christmas for us. Yet what more are we to do? Pray and attend Midnight Mass? But why should this make Christmas a properly celebrated Christmas when, after all, this 'celebration' takes place – at least, it is to be hoped – even at other times, daily or every Sunday?

It is, of course, impossible to give a 'recipe' telling us exactly how a Christian Christmas should be celebrated. Ultimately, everyone must find this out for himself or, better still, must pray for it to be granted to him as an undeserved grace. But perhaps . . . no, it cannot be done. Yet we can try; we will make an attempt to stammer out something like a recipe for it or at least to give a few pointers towards such a prescription.

Have the courage to be alone. Only once you have really managed to do this, and have achieved it in a Christian way, can you hope to give the present of a heart filled with the Christmas spirit – in other words, a gentle, patient, courageously collected, softly tender heart – to those [25] whom you are striving to love. (Even here it is necessary to choose one's words carefully.) *This* present is indeed something you should place under the Christmas tree, otherwise all other presents will simply be an unnecessary expense which could be incurred at any time of the year. And so for once try to endure your own company for a while. Perhaps you can find a room where you can be alone. Or you may know a lonely walk or a quiet church. Don't speak, then, not even with yourself nor with the others with whom we dispute and quarrel even when they are not there. Wait. Listen. You must not keep quiet in this way simply in order to be able to speak about it later on. You must enter into this silence in such a way as to be resolved never to leave it again, in so far as you really make the appeal to this silence and into this silent infinity your last word standing on its own account and not existing for the sake of anything else, something which no one else need hear apart from the one to whom it is really addressed. So: stop, be silent, wait. Do not cast furtive glances towards some strange mystical experience. Nothing but the dispassionate clarity of truth should appear in this silence, nothing but what is pure and silent. Do not express yourself. After all, you are to accept yourself (this after all is already almost more than merely a prelude to the soft song of the angels): you are not to empty yourself in self-accusation, nor to escape from yourself by too unconcerned a rejoicing, nor to enjoy your own self in a smug, small-minded way (for then you would have perceived nothing, neither of the celestial heights nor of the abysmal depths of your own existence). You must allow yourself to approach silently nearer and nearer to yourself: the past, the present and the future, in this moment of silence . . . all the waters of your life which flow away and run out and which are

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collected in the one basin of a heart aware of itself. Perhaps you will then begin to feel quite horrified by what you see. Perhaps the bitter waters of disgust, of hollowness, emptiness and boredom will rise out of the depths to the surface of your heart. Perhaps you will realize then – if you admit it honestly – how distant all those are from you with whom you are in daily contact and with whom you would ordinarily say you are united in love. Perhaps you find nothing in yourself then but weakness, wretchedness and other things from which you would rather escape into the business of everyday life, a daily life which in such an experience appears to you as the only attainable bliss (and where it then goes under the name of work, duty, reasonableness, a sensible outlook without any illusions and similar names). Perhaps you will not be aware of anything but an uneasy feeling [26] of emptiness and deadness. Endure yourself! You will discover how everything proclaimed in such a silence is as if encompassed by a nameless remoteness, as if suffused by something which appears like emptiness. It is not something one could chase away. It looks at us through everything, it embraces everything; frightened, one may try to force oneself to overlook it, yet one cannot remove it. It would still appear as the all-embracing, distant and yet all-pervading emptiness, even if we were to stuff the heart as full as possible with tangible things, with 'realities', even if we were to try to block out all the horizons with such 'realities' (in distinction to the mysterious spectre which we have in mind), so that they might somehow and everywhere catch the attention when we regard this emptiness. It is like a silence whose stillness cries out, like the strange feeling one has of being looked at without knowing from where (and yet by eyes which, almost as if blind, cannot be explained). It is something which is always already present in one's mind: as soon as one thinks of today, the thought of tomorrow already sneaks in; as soon as one looks at something, one already compares it, by contrast, with something still to be sought; as soon as one makes a decision, what is decided is already encompassed by the knowledge that it could also be different; as soon as one puts the beaker to one's lips, one already looks to the bottom and through it into the abysmal depths beyond. 'It' is the reason why we are nowhere completely at home, why we cannot be given over completely to anything we grasp, why our look and grasp find nowhere an absolute end where they would truly have arrived with no further need to look out through it and stretch out towards the undetermined. One cannot simply leave this 'it' be, as a mere side-effect, and because the mysterious and the nameless are best left alone. For without 'it', there would also be no space of the heart in which we can meet familiar things; without 'it', nothing could be put in its right place, freedom could not say yes *and* no; without 'it', there would be no true past, and no room for the future in the planning mind. Everything would break up into the gloomy narrowness of the animal moment and of a dead self-forgetfulness; everything would not encounter everything else in a different place in the vast expanse which, unlocked and hence overlooked, spreads out as something unspeakable. 'Your eye alone – monstrously it looks at me, infinity'. One must look at the invisible and let the silent speak in stillness. Do that, but be careful. Do not call it God. Do not try to derive enjoyment from it, as if it were a part of yourself. It is a mute pointer in the direction of God, something which [27] in its namelessness and boundlessness gives us a hint that God is more than just another thing, added to those with which we normally have to deal. It points to *Him*. Through it, He allows us to become aware of his presence, if we are quiet and do not take fright and run away from the mysterious being which lives and acts in this silence (even if our flight were to be to the Christmas tree or our dash towards sounder religious ideas, ideas which can . . . kill religion).

But, all this is merely the beginning, the preparation for your celebration of Christmas. If you manage thus to stay alone with yourself and to let the silence speak to you of the true God, then this loudly calling silence will become strangely ambiguous. This infinity, which silently surrounds you – does it repulse you and drive you back into your limited daily life? Does it bid you yourself to go away out of the silence in which it rules? Does it fall upon you

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with the merciless loneliness of death so as to make you run away from it into the more familiar sectors of your life, until it catches up with you in destroying you, in swallowing you up in death? Does it come to mean for you only a vast and distant sphere, within which those things with which you have always been familiar take on for the first time for you a clear and at the same time small appearance? Is it merely the judgement which, working from afar, arranges your little world and, by revealing its finiteness, judges it? Or is it that which waits until you are open *to its very self* as something approaching, coming, the promised beatitude? Can it approach you itself without your passing away, tenderly stealing into your heart without bursting it? Is it salvation or judgement? What would happen if it crashed down from its distant heavens on the little field of your life: would your sinfulness be dashed to pieces or would it be redeemed into freedom? Does the one whom this 'it' announces in trembling remain proclaimed as the eternally distant One or is he announced as the One who is coming? If you merely ask your heart alone, your lonely heart which looks into the distance, then it cannot give you any clear answer. The fear of death and the promise of infinity approaching in blessing are bound too closely together and are too similar to allow us to give our own interpretation of the infinity which encompasses us from a distance and is yet close at hand. It is not as if this infinity did not say anything. If it said nothing, then we would find it quite impossible to celebrate Christmas from our heart. It certainly tells us something, and even something quite exact: the message of Christmas told from within. For this message does not ring out merely (and not [28] even primarily) in the powerless words falling from our pulpits (almost like birds frozen to death and falling from the winter skies); this message is told us by God, at that point of the heart to which we should return; it is told us by the light of the Christmas grace which enlightens everyone who comes into the world. The message of the birth of the Lord would remain external, would be spoken only to the ear and in ideas, but would not enter into and be celebrated in the heart. The experience from within and the message from without come to meet each other, and where the one understands itself in the other there the celebration of Christmas takes place, since faith comes by hearing *and* by the grace which rises in the innermost centre of the heart. For this reason, it is the same also in the celebration of Christmas.

The message of faith which comes in the hearing of the word opens the eyes of inner experience so that this experience may have the confidence to understand itself correctly and to accept the sweet comfort of its uncanny mystery as the real meaning of this experience: God is really *close* to you – there where you are – when you have really found your way (and not just in concepts) into the openness to infinity possessed by the real man. Once this has happened, God's descent into the flesh will explain to you the secret, blessed meaning of the transcendency of his Spirit that is to be found in the event of Christmas. God's remoteness is the incomprehensibility of his all-pervading nearness, says the message of Christmas. He is tenderly present. He is near. He touches your heart softly with his love. He says: fear not. He is imprisoned within. We think he is not there, since there has not yet been a moment in our life when we have not already found him in the gentle sweetness of his nameless love as soon as we began looking for him. He is there like the pure light which, spread over everything, hides itself by making everything else visible in the silent lowliness of its being. Christmas tells you in the experience of solitude to: trust the nearness, it is not emptiness; let go and then you will find; give up and then you will be rich. For in your interior experience you are no longer dependent on the hard tangible phenomena which, by asserting themselves in themselves, achieve a rigid individualization and which can be fastened on precisely because they can be encompassed; you, however, possess much more than any such phenomena, for the infinite has become nearness. *This* is how you must interpret your interior experience; you must experience it in this way as the most solemn feast and celebration of the divine descent of eternity into time – of the infinite into the finite – [29] and of God's marriage with his

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creature. This feast takes place within you, even within your very self (theologians dryly call it 'grace'). It takes place within you when you are silent, when you wait and when in faith, hope and charity, you interpret correctly (i.e. in the light of Christmas) what you experience.

The experience of the heart (in spirit and in grace, and not by one's own power!) gives us the really true understanding of the Christmas message of faith.[1] Yet for this you must first of all take some trouble to understand the message of Christmas even in a conceptual way before you try to understand it better in the silent experience of your heart.

God has become man. Alas, we say this with such ease, without giving the matter much thought, and (even when we have drummed into ourselves the exact orthodox formulae) we will so easily and not even infrequently understand something Monophysite or Nestorian by it (and this not only those of us who are sceptical or have been 'demythologized'). We will only too easily conceive the man who has 'become' God (in this statement, 'God' is the subject and not the predicative term) as a kind of disguise, a livery of the 'good God' – so that basically God is after all merely the bare God, and one does not know whether *he* is really present where we are (and not merely his 'signal') – and then interpret this simple but false conception either in a Monophysite or in a Nestorian sense. It is not easy to give even a merely verbal indication of this suspended, incomprehensible truth (which precisely in this way is the firm reality). God is man: this does *not* mean that he has ceased to be God in the unconfined fullness of his divine majesty. God is man: this does *not* mean that the 'human' in him is something which does not really concern him at all, something which is externally manipulated by him as a mere tool, something which, because it remains 'unmixed' and thus has been merely 'assumed' (beside him, even though by him) or added, does not really express anything about him and merely brings us, not him, into evidence. God is man, this really tells us something about God himself. Because the human itself, affirmed by the fact that he pledges himself to us, is really and truly affirmed of *him* himself (although differently from his divinity), [30] this human nature is thus his very own reality in which *he himself* and not merely a human nature different from him comes out to meet us, so that, when one grasps this humanity, one has in very truth understood and grasped something of God himself. God's human nature must not be identified in dead conformity with God's divinity, nor must it be merely deposited beside God, like something dead which always simply falls back into itself something joined verbally to him by an empty 'and'. When God manifests his humanity, then (since it is not something abstract) it always meets us in such a way that *he himself* is there, since this full and genuine humanity always is itself precisely *because* it is *his* and *because* it is *human* in absolute purity and perfection and is precisely *his*. Because we merely place the divinity and humanity side by side in the incarnate Word of the Father (almost merely speak of them side by side and one after the other), because we merely place their unity and distinction side by side as two expressions, instead of understanding that they both arise from one and the same common ground, although this common ground appears to us only in the twofold expression behind which it hides itself as a mystery . . . because of this, we are continually in danger of missing the exact point at which the blessed secret of Christmas finds in our self-transcending existence the place to incorporate itself into our life and history as our salvation.

It would be good, therefore, if we would call upon the experience of our heart so that we might surmise blissfully what is meant by the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. It would be good if this took place in that stillness in which alone one is present to oneself in self-knowledge. Although this can never replace faith in what Jesus tells us about himself, yet we

[1] For the better understanding and orthodox interpretation of what follows, we would refer the reader to: B. Welte, 'Homoousios hemin' (in: *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, ed. by A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, Vol. III, Würzburg 1954, pp. 51-80) and (in the same collective work): K. Rahner, 'Chalkedon – Ende oder Anfang?' (pp. 3-49), reproduced in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore 1960), pp. 149-200.

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can contribute to this experience as something added to those concepts in which, since he did so in human words, Jesus has communicated the secret of Christmas – his secret – to us by sharing what is our secret, the secret of being man.

What are the facts? God is present to the one who is silent, who lets everything recede into his finite limitation and who looks towards its horizon in order to look beyond it despite the fact that there is not 'anything' to be seen there. But God is present first of all, and perhaps only, in a nearness of distance. He is present at a distance which would seem to be about to consume and destroy us when it comes near to us; at a distance which keeps us and all other things bound within the bounds of our finite being, our fallibility and possibility of guilt. And yet man is precisely [31] in this way open, one who does not possess within himself what he essentially needs in order to be himself. A stone could be expressed far more exhaustively than man by what it has and is within itself. Man can be expressed only by talking about something else: about God, who he is not. It is impossible to engage in anthropology without having first engaged in theology, since man is pure reference to God. Thus he himself is a mystery, always referred beyond himself into the mystery of God. This is his being; he is defined by the indefinable which he is not, but without which he is not even (nor realizes) what he is. If this absolute reference is closed to the sub-human, precisely because the latter is not spiritual, it follows that this reference is exactly the state man gets into when he does not want to bother about anything but himself: he wants to look at himself, and for this he cannot help looking into the mystery which he is not. Now, *suppose* that this reference and self-transcendence were to succeed *absolutely*, without the human thereby being cancelled out but rather being fulfilled, since after all it is this self-transcendence; *suppose* that this taking in of the infinite as the indefinable in man were to take place *fully*, not from a man who of himself would always be radically incapable of it (since, precisely in his transcendence, he always falls back again into his separating subsistence) but proceeding from God, i.e. *if* God's infinity were to come absolutely close by God's own initiative; *suppose* that man accepts it in such a way that what is accepted is thereby also preserved and yet is the presence and the gradual tangibility of what God knows of himself in his divine infinity and of what he says of himself in that unbounded freedom; *suppose* that this tangibility thus present were to be found where it can be alone, viz. in someone who, coming from the lowest unsubstantial, evolving fringe of created reality, is already always the absolute, though empty, openness of the world for the infinity of God, i.e. in man; *suppose* that we were to let this presentiment under the stillness of the heart lose itself into the boundless (where after all, in accordance with its nature, it wants to lose itself); *then* we would at least have a dim feeling for the direction from which comes the statement of the Christmas gospel: the Word, who was with God and who was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory.

We could and perhaps should say still more. When we speak in this connection of the assumption of a human nature by the Word of God, then (although perhaps we should not) we have already *pre*supposed man [32] and human nature as a possibility. We have conceived creation as a self-evident fact and God's becoming a creature as a subsequent event not at all self-evident but resting on that self-evident fact. What is quite correct in this attitude is the fact that God could also be the Creator without identifying himself with creation in the unity of a subject by his becoming man. It is correct that we are already living in the known creation when we get to know the mystery of the Incarnation. Yet it is possible to pose a question here: does not the *possibility* of a creation rest after all – at least in itself even though not immediately known to us – on the possibility of God's becoming a creature; does not the possibility of something being 'thrown' into the world rest on the possibility of a divine self-projection into finite reality (God, who in himself is always the absolutely full and complete Infinite Being, having no need of such a self-projection to be exercised), of a self-projection which is free but which expresses in freedom precisely what God is (always is):

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viz. prodigal love? If this is so, however (which cannot be explained in greater detail here), then it must be said more precisely that the world, as it actually is, exists because God is the prodigal who in fact squanders himself and that when he does *this*, then he is in the other into which he divests himself, in what we call a man – the absolute openness for God – and finally because God cannot divest himself in any other way than by creating what is capable of receiving him. When God 'lets *himself* go outside of himself', then there appears man – who for this very reason is pure openness for God – out of the very fringe of nothingness (i.e. of the material). When God expresses himself out of himself into the emptiness of the non-divine, when he engages in 'theology' outside of himself, then 'what comes out' is nothing else but anthropology engaged in by him in the Incarnation understood as his own self-expression; and for this theology, anthropology is not a pre-established vocabulary but one which springs from it. However true it is that this happens only by the fact that God creates this grammar of his self-expression out of nothing, this grammar – since it itself springs from this theology as such – can really also express God and not merely something else. And this something else in which God expresses himself is the human understood as the living, the 'self-moving', the freely God-related in the movement of the creature. For if creation in the real order of things occurs originally as a moment of that divine divestment into something alien which he must project for himself in advance so that he might have something into which he can really give himself away – and if creation is [33] nevertheless the calling forth of the real by God, who can make something more than any mere puppets which could no doubt assert themselves among themselves but not before God – then what is nearest to God, i.e. God in the flesh, must be the most powerful and the most alive, the most original centre of what is alive and of what is master of itself in the world, precisely because (and not, although) it is God himself. If we think as it were in the prolongation of our own spiritual existence which we realize in silence, we may get some idea of what it means that God has become man, and we may thus get a better understanding of the message of the faith. If such an existence were transferred *absolutely* to the infinite being; if it were taken over completely, while we always attempt in principle to come nearer to this goal without ever reaching it; if it were precisely by this fact the free and accomplished human reality: then it would be – what Jesus is; in this way we could be confident in our infinite movement that the Infinite is near to us in loving communication.

Perhaps we have been overmuch occupied with theology, and have given too little guidance for meditation, although we had intended to do the latter rather than the former. But let us return into the silence which, in the faith in the correctly understood Christmas message, is an existential experience of the infinite man (who can only thus experience himself as a creature!) and which tells us something which is the way it is precisely because God himself has become man. Even though we cannot, by mere reflection on ourselves, distinguish by ourselves the Christian determination of this existential experience from its natural being, since we can nowhere escape from the realm of grace and Christ and there experience a pure nature, yet we may and indeed must nevertheless say: we would also experience ourselves differently internally, if God had not been born as a man. If we accept the silent immensity – that immensity which surrounds us as something distant and yet at the same time near and overpowering – as a protecting nearness and a tender love which does not make any reservations; if we have the courage to understand ourselves in this way, which is possible only in grace and in faith (whether one knows it or not), then we have had the Christmas experience of grace in faith. This experience is very simple; yet it is the peace promised to men of good will who are pleasing to God.

If one comes from there and if this experience rises up out of the inner centre of the heart and finds its way into the manifold variety of external reality (since after all it understands itself also only because it has accepted [34] its own meaning in this way) then this experience

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must encounter in a historically tangible way the one towards whom it reaches out – illuminating and itself illuminated by him – Jesus, in whom the whole fullness of the Godhead is bodily present to us in the humility of our own nature. And it is present there in its historical reality, in his Word, in the permanence of his presence in that Church which in Holy Communion celebrates what he instituted by having him truly present in flesh and blood among those who partake in the celebration. Hence, any interior celebration of Christmas which attains the complete fulfilment of its own true nature, can only end there where – in the congregation of the Lord which possesses him and represents him for the world – the believer is given the body in which the Word became flesh and dwells among us.

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[35]

3

THE ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HUMANITY OF JESUS FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

I

When we reflect on the Sacred Heart devotion in theology, we try to determine the significance of the heart in general, and of the Sacred Heart in particular; we talk about how this Heart is the original source of all our Lord's saving actions, and perhaps consider the reasons why this heart considered in the totality of the person of Christ is worthy of a special, specifically articulated adoration and what this can mean for us. We overlook in this case, in our opinion, a question which is difficult and obscure not merely with regard to its answer, but also in the sense that it requires great effort to formulate and clarify it. This is the question (which will have to be explicitly clarified) as to whether the adoration we actually give does in fact reach what we call the heart of Jesus? To understand what is meant by this, it will be necessary to delve a little further into this matter.

A man has to deal with many things and persons, and has to deal with them in many different ways. He experiences the home and the country in which he lives, he experiences persons with whom he associates. He has also to do with God. It can perhaps be said that everything he has to deal with is in fact divided into two groups and ultimately only into two groups. In fact, we have even two different names for them: the world and God. The world, understood as the world around us, takes in everything which presents itself directly to us, everything which in its own being enters into the realm of our experience, quite of its own accord and in itself. God, on the other hand, is the one 'on the other side'; he is precisely the one who is known as the distant one, who is present through his not being given, who is present through his incomprehensibility and his silence. He has indeed addressed the Christian in His revelation; he has [36] made himself noticeable among us here below, even to the extent of the tangible flesh of his co-essential Son. Yet all these signs are always also precisely a challenge, *ut per visibilia ad invisibilium amorem rapiamur* (so that visible things may transport us to the love of the invisible). He does indeed sanctify and redeem the world – the world itself – yet in such a way that he bursts it open and invests us with the dynamic power (called supernatural love) to leap out in adoration into the darkness of his own light.

To come now to our first question: into which of these basic divisions belong the Saints, the angels, the glorified humanity of Christ, and his heart? Objectively speaking, they all belong to the world, in so far as this is understood as the sum total of what is created and in so far as we know anything about them by faith, experience or in any other way. But 'knowing about something' and 'really having dealings with something', 'really relating to something', accepting the existence of something by theoretical reason and existentially, i.e. associating lovingly with something, giving oneself to it, are two different things. In the second sense, these persons about whom we are asking where they belong, belong rather to God. They are found in our experience where God is; they come up precisely in our *religious* attitude, after all, and nowhere else. From the point of view of our experience, therefore, they do not belong to the world around us, but – since otherwise there would be no place for them at all – belong to God.

But here the difficulty begins and there arises the second question: can they belong to God? This is not as if we were questioning their existence. We are asking whether we attain them when we look for them in the direction in which we move religiously towards God. This

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again is not meant in the objectivist sense of asking whether they know anything about us, about those of our acts which are directed towards them, our prayers, etc. All this we presuppose as self-evident. What is meant, however, is whether *we reach* them by our acts, whether we not only know them theoretically but can also come to a realization of their existence in our association with them. Or is it perhaps so, that when we look for them in that realm beyond our experience where God is and where he must be if he is to be God at all, they as it were grow hazy from us and seem to be just sounds and names, seem as it were to dissolve (only for us, of course) within this all-devouring, nameless and uncharted darkness we call God?

Let no one say that this is just an artificial subtlety tortuously formulated; [37] after all – it might be objected – we do know that these persons and realities exist, that we can relate to them intentionally, and that this has a meaning and usefulness. Furthermore (so the objection might go on) the simple fact of the matter is precisely that we not only *can* do this, but also do actually do it: and you cannot argue with facts. Yet this is precisely the question: do we really *do* what we think we do? Or are the names of the Saints, of the Angels, of the humanity of Christ, just so many changing labels for us by which we – *quoad nos* – always mean only one and the same thing, which is conjured up by them, viz. God?

Let us not put this question as a theoretical principle for all times, but as a question facing us today! In this form it is not so easy to answer. The man of previous ages may indeed have had a very obvious capacity for thinking out such types of numinous powers and persons outside God, to such an extent that he was continually in danger of sliding into a theoretical or at least practical polytheism. But do we? Is it not precisely the reverse in our case? In our case, is not everything, which we conserve from the objective teaching of faith in this regard, reducible to different names always meaning the same thing, viz. God, the one and only being which has remained beyond our sensible experience of the world, and which is still left to us even after the disappearance of all other numinous realities? We should not be too quick to put our trust in the façade and traditional accoutrements of our piety. We should instead ask ourselves a few simple questions: who among us has ever really and genuinely realized in the *Confiteor* that he is confessing his sinfulness to Blessed Michael the Archangel, and that this really is not just a rhetorical amplification of a confession to God? Have we not really lost sight of our own deceased relatives? We pray for them perhaps, because this is the done thing and because we would otherwise have a bad conscience about it. But apart from that, if we are honest, they have ceased to exist for us. Yet ontologically and existentially this would not be possible if we really had that relationship to the saints which we think we have: for this rests fundamentally on that general relationship to those who have passed beyond. Let us take a look at an average theological treatise on the Last Things, on eternal happiness. Does such a treatise mention even a single word about the Lord become man? Is not rather everything swallowed up by the *visio beatifica*, the beatific vision, the direct relationship to the very essence of God which is indeed determined historically by a past event – namely the event of Christ – but which is not *now* mediated by [38] Jesus Christ? Does not this observation on the usual present-day theology (distinguishing itself in this from the old theology) show also that as far as our real capacity of realization is concerned, the whole world (in the objective sense) is inexistent and is as it were swallowed up as far as we are concerned (not in itself) by the blazing abyss of God, even when we do not admit it to ourselves and retain the opposite terminology, though almost in the same way in which we talk about Eros with his arrows? Who among the younger generation still really prays today to the Saints . . . to his name-saint, to his guardian angel? One perhaps still honours a Saint (this is something quite different), a Saint whom one knows about historically, in his historical reality, just as the pagans honour their historically great men. But is the now living Saint a realized, i.e. not merely theoretically accepted, reality for us side by side with and apart from God, a reality which has its own

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independent actuality, on whose good will something depends, with which one tries to establish personal contact, and which one tries to draw into one's really experienced world? Or does one merely use the word 'Angel' at one time, and Mary or the Sacred Heart or St Joseph at another time, and yet realizes in all this always the same thing, viz. the incomprehensibility and inappellable sovereignty of God to which one surrenders oneself completely, in fear and trembling and in love at the same time? Does not *this* and only this appear to us as *the* religious act, while everything else appears merely as a colourful reflection of the unchangingly One, as a prismatic refraction of the one white light of God, which in itself has no existence of its own? Why otherwise do we find it difficult today to believe in the legions of devils, and why do we prefer to speak abstractly about the 'diabolical', just as our pagan contemporaries – whom, behind a verbal façade, we often resemble much more than we should imagine – like to speak of the 'saintly' or 'the divine'? Why do we discover with surprise that one can observe a capacity for realizing numinous powers, gods and angels, in Hölderlin or Rilke, a capacity which we experience as stronger than our own? We *know*, for example, that the angels in Rilke are basically merely a literary ornament in comparison with the Christian belief in angels such as it should be. Yet we *feel* at the same time that these angels in Rilke are nevertheless stronger than in our faith as we actually exercise it.

Perhaps we understand now what is meant by our initial question about the Sacred Heart. This heart – if it is not turned into just another, more colourful word for God and for the incomprehensibility of his unbounded [39] love – is a *human* heart. It must not be extolled merely in the actions which at one time flowed from it. It must not be merely the object of a backward-looking adoration which refers to the historical Lord during his life on earth. This heart, which exists now, which no longer belongs to the world around us, which seems to be lost in the far distance of God. . . this heart is to be honoured, adored and loved. It is to be realized in our piety; it must not be merely a name, a part of the colourful reflection which accompanies the never-changing basic act directed towards God and towards him alone. Is it so self-evident that we will be successful in this? Again: the fact that this heart does actually exist, that we know about it and that we are capable of the theoretical discernment of its being worthy of adoration, that we *think* we adore it and *want* to adore it . . . all this is not yet an absolutely certain, affirmative answer to this question. All one needs do is to merely listen more closely some time to certain formulations occurring in the case of such a well-meaning and well-intentioned Sacred Heart devotion which, however, is actually a monotheistic adoration of God simply labelled with these words; one would then notice that such a question cannot be so easily answered in the affirmative. One could in such formulations simply replace the word 'heart' by 'Christ', and 'Christ' again by 'God', without anything being changed in the meaning or the essential intentionality of the prayer – a sign, that what is said is not realized in a seriously religious way.

The question we have posed, of course, changes at once into a practical question: if it is not a matter of course that the religious act attains the Sacred Heart itself, in distinction to God, *how* then can this be achieved? After all, we know from the outset that this represents a real task and that the attempt to *make* it successful is justified. For there must be a '*latria*' of the humanity of Christ and a veneration of the Saints and Angels.

II

In answering the above question, we have to put the most difficult part of it into parentheses from the start, viz. the question about the subjective side of the problem, about overcoming the shrinking of the existential potency of realizing genuinely numinous powers and realities which are nevertheless distinct from God. One might say: because we are no longer in danger

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of becoming polytheists, we are now in danger of no longer being able to honour created holiness and hence are also in danger of [40] allowing God to pale into an abstract postulate of the theoretical or practical reason, which is possibly still draped in Christian terms. But as we have said, we cannot treat here of the problem as to how this basically human, and in a sense pre-Christian, adventistic potency of attaining a realization of a genuinely and truly pluralistic religious 'beyond' with angels, saints, Holy Souls, and devils, can be awakened, nurtured and developed, and this precisely as a *human* capacity and as a natural potency. Such an existential 'midwifery' is a task which would overtax both our powers and the time at our disposal.

All we can do here is to try to contribute a little to the answer of our question, as far as the *objective* facts are concerned. Our contribution consists of two reflections: a universal and basic one on the relationship between created (numinous) realities and God in general, and the same sort of reflection on the humanity of Christ and his human heart in particular.

Our existential insensitivity and the weakness of our power of realization regarding non-divine realities which fall, or ought to fall, into the sphere of religious acts, is at least partially due to a false, basically unchristian, pantheistic or theophanistic conception of God. The true God is not the one who kills so that he himself can live. He is not 'the truly real' which like a vampire draws to himself and so to speak sucks out the proper reality of things different from himself; he is not the *esse omnium*. The nearer one comes to him, the more real one becomes; the more he grows in and before one, the more independent one becomes oneself. Things created by him are not *maya*, the veil, which dissolves like mist before the sun the more one recognizes the Absolute, i.e. the more religious one becomes. We do indeed feel this way, and it would be important to answer the question as to why we feel like this. But this basic existential condition, no matter how deep and even humble it may seem to be, is itself again a pride due to original sin and something profoundly unchristian. One loves 'the Absolute', but not God who is the creator of heaven and earth. Basically one hates created reality, since it is not the absolute in itself; one calls it the relative, the contingent, that which – in relation to God – is determinable in a merely negative sense, the mere limitation of being which in itself is infinite, which alone matters: and one forgets that precisely this conditioned reality is what is loved unconditionally by the Unconditioned, that it therefore has a validity which makes it more than something merely provisional – something which [41] dissolves in the face of God – and that this created unconditioned reality forbids us (in spite of all philosophy which, even in our case, is not yet sufficiently baptized) to evaluate it in a purely negative sense even in relation to God.

No one can say that these are themselves merely ontological expressions which are of no importance for the religious act. No, precisely when we come face to face with the Absolute by a religious act in the course of our existential realization – and if we do this in a *Christian* and not in a platonic sense (and in this context, even every form of Aristotelianism and every Western philosophy right up to German Idealism is still far too platonic) – *then* (and hence in the very heart of the religious act) we come face to face with that absolutely serious love of what has been created by that Love: the valid, eternal, living reality, that which truly is, precisely because – and not even though – it exists through this Love. We arrive at that which has a significance of its own, that which cannot be passed over, which is not simply already to be found *eminenter* in God (for otherwise he would not have loved it effectively and in a truly, creatively free way). When we come thus in a religious way to this God of the truly serious and unconditional love of created reality, however, then we must love him as he is, then we must not maliciously try to turn him in our religious act into someone he precisely is *not*, viz. into a God without a world. Instead, we must love everything loved by him with his love, and so must love it in that precise way – not as something provisional, as the cloud which, breaking up its contours, dissolves in the presence of the infinity opening up before us

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– but precisely as something valid in the sight of God, as something eternally justified and hence as something divinely and religiously significant before God.

A pluralistic world of the numinous finds its meaning and its justification in the sight of the God of Christianity. The effort of holding on to this truth is the effort of overcoming our unchristian outlook and of solving the *sinful* dilemma into which original sin throws us: God *or* the world. A polytheistic, or polytheistically tinged, enslaving veneration of the powers and forces of this world is merely the other side of the same guilty dilemma: the numinous nature of the world without the one, living God. But the opposite springs from the same cleavage: the God-lessness of the world. We today are in danger of honouring God (or at least of trying to honour him) and of letting the world itself be God-less. The Christian attitude, however, would be to honour the world as something [42] willed and loved by God, and to do this in a properly balanced way, since this love given to the world is itself of varying degrees; hence, it would be Christian to pay a truly religious veneration where the world has already found the finality of its eternal validity before God in the morning and evening summits of its spiritual history, i.e. in the angels and the saints. It should, therefore, be a task of theology to think much more deeply, and in a much more vital manner than it has done up till now, about why, how and in what dependence of the basic religious acts on God, what it calls *dulia* (veneration), in contrast to *latria* (adoration), is in truth a genuinely religious act, and how, as such an act, it can and must be exercised more independently and not merely as an act which simply resolves itself into the act of *latria*. Signs of the great difficulty of such a Christianization of the basic religious act directed towards God are to be seen even within the theory of Christian mysticism. This theory has always been tempted (even in St John of the Cross) to let everything in the mystic act disappear in the face of God, so that over and over again subsequent corrections of such a basic start on a pantheistic basis were found to be necessary to enable the mystic to hold on to the fact that he may and can still occupy himself with the humanity of Christ.

It can be seen, at any rate, that the question of whether one can still take other realities beside the reality of God seriously and realize them in a religious act is a question of the first order and importance in Christian thought. That it does not take on this importance in ordinary piety is no argument against this statement. Ordinary piety, for which God is after all *from the very start* one reality *beside* many others, naturally does not experience any difficulty in regarding St Anthony as a most noteworthy, important and effective figure, side by side with the Holy Ghost. But then, in this case, this does detract from God and from our true relationship to him who does not tolerate any strange gods before him (not even those in whose case one carefully avoids using the name of God). But when God becomes more and more truly God for us – the consuming fire, the simply incomparable, the one who in his grace has become near after being most radically distant – then only a mature Christian relationship to God would be still capable of recognizing and realizing in this burning flame and blinding light that this makes the rest of reality loved by him even more real, even more true and valid, and that in this boundless sea of fire of infinite degree everything is not destroyed but that in it everything finds its real life, not only in itself but also for us. Yet because [43] such maturity is also a beatifying task of our religious development in God's true grace, which always works differently from what we ourselves might imagine, it is our duty to make an effort to attain it.

Leaving creatures is the first and, for us sinners, always new phase of finding God. Yet it is merely the first stage. Service towards creatures, the mission away from God back into the world, may be the second phase. Yet there is still a third: to find the very creature itself, in its dependence and autonomy, *in* God, in the midst of the jealously burning inexorableness of His being-all-in-all; to find the creature even in the very midst of this – the small in the great, the circumscribed in the boundless, the creature (the very creature itself) in the Creator – this

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is only the third and highest phase of our relationship to God. For there we who have gone out from the world to God, return with him in his entrance into the world, and are nearest to him there where he is furthest away from himself in his true love of the world; there and in this we are nearest to him because, if God is love, one comes closest to it where, having given itself as love to the world, it is furthest away from itself.

This is the framework within which must be seen the special question of the honouring of Christ's humanity in general and of his human heart in particular. For, the fact that God himself is man is both the unique summit and the ultimate basis of God's relationship to his creation, in which he and his creation grow in direct (and not in converse) proportion. This positive nature of creation, not merely measured in relation to nothingness but also in relation to God, reaches its qualitatively unique climax, therefore, in Christ. For, according to the testimony of the faith, this created human nature is the indispensable and permanent gateway through which everything created must pass if it is to find the perfection of its eternal validity before God. He is the gate and the door, the Alpha and Omega, the all-embracing in whom, as the one who has become man, creation finds its stability. He who sees him, sees the Father, and whoever does not see him – God become man – also does not see God. We may speak about the *impersonal* Absolute without the non-absolute flesh of the Son, but the *personal* Absolute can be truly *found* only in him, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead in the earthly vessel of his humanity. Without him every absolute of which we speak or which we imagine we attain by mystical flight is in the last analysis merely the never attained, objective correlative of that empty and hollow, dark and despairingly self-consuming infinity which we are ourselves: the infinity of dissatisfied [44] finiteness, but not the blessed infinity of truly limitless fullness. This, however, can be found only where Jesus of Nazareth is, this finite concrete being, this contingent being, who remains in all eternity.

The decisive factor for the basic question of our whole reflection is, however, the following: Jesus, the Man, not merely *was* at one time of decisive importance for our salvation, i.e. for the real finding of the absolute God, by his historical and now past acts of the Cross, etc., but – as the one who became man and has remained a creature – he is *now* and for all eternity the *permanent openness* of our finite being to the living God of infinite, eternal life; he is, therefore, even in his humanity the created reality for us which stands in the act of our religion in such a way that, without this act towards his humanity and through it (implicitly or explicitly), the basic religious act towards God could never reach its goal. One always sees the Father only through Jesus. Just as *im*mediately as this, for the directness of the vision of God is not a denial of the mediatorship of Christ as man. One will have to say that, on the one hand, this truth of the objective and subjective mediatorship of Christ as man is hardly likely to be ever in danger of being theoretically denied by anyone who is a Christian but that, on the other hand, it has not yet by a long way been thought through and conceptually worked out as much as it ought to be. We reflect in most cases merely on the historical and moral mediatorship of the Son of Man during his life on earth. Consequently the humanity of Christ becomes unimportant in our average religious consciousness of faith. We still know somewhere or other in our conceptual knowledge of faith that there is this humanity and that it is blessed and glorified and in possession of the *visio beatifica*. One will perhaps give a pious thought to the consideration (not, of course, in dogmatic theology) that 'besides' the *visio beatifca* (in which every other knowledge and beatitude is given supereminently, so that one does not really see what else could still be of interest) one might still be able to derive an 'accidental' joy from the humanity of Christ in heaven. Yet where is the clear knowledge, expressed in ontological terms, of the fact that it remains eternally true to say that no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom he wishes to reveal it: he who sees him, sees the Father? Where is the clear consciousness that, here and now and always, my salvation, my grace, my knowledge of God, rests on the Word in our flesh? The

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fact that it is very difficult to formulate, prove and explain all this exactly and sufficiently clearly in metaphysical terms is no reason for [45] quietly passing over these things. It is easier to show with some semblance of truth that this is impossible. Yet, after all, this is the same for all truths of faith. Theologians are not immune from the danger of denying or silently suppressing truths of faith by means of rationalistic philosophical strategems, even when these truths are completely obvious in the Church's unreflected consciousness of faith without being already explicitly stated in 'Denzinger'.

Attempts to bring this truth into a clear light have already been made and should be further extended and deepened. The doctrine of the eternal liturgy and intercession of Christ in heaven is part of this. One should ask oneself whether, looked at from this 'existential point of view', the doctrine of the physical, instrumental causality exercised by the humanity of Christ for all grace, does not recognize a truth – although perhaps in a questionable way and one which has not yet attained its own particular presuppositions – a truth which must absolutely be preserved. Every theologian should allow himself to be asked: have you a theology in which the Word – by the fact that he is man and in so far as he is this – is the necessary and permanent mediator of all salvation, not merely at some time in the past but now and for all eternity? Does your theology really see him in this way, so that by being this God-Man he also is so bound up by his humanity with the religious act that this act goes (consciously or unconsciously) through this humanity to God, and so that this humanity is essentially and always the mediating object of the one act of *latria* which has God for its goal? It should be pointed out that this Christ-question concerning our basic religious acts does not signify merely that one can 'also' adore the One who has become man, and this 'even' in his human nature. Happily, this truth is to be found in every dogmatic theology. Yet unfortunately it does not say in every dogmatic theology that if the religious act really wants to reach God, it *always* and in every case has and must have exactly this 'incarnational' structure which must also have its subjective parallel to the basic objective condition: viz. that in the Incarnate Word, God has communicated himself to the world, so that this Word remains eternally the Christ. This incarnational structure of the religious act in general does not mean, of course, that this must always be something explicitly conscious or that, given the confined area of our earthly consciousness, it would be possible, beneficial and necessary to strive for such an explicit consciousness of passing through the Incarnate Word always and in every act.

[46] No one will expect us to work out this merely postulated theology in the present context. It is enough to have at least indicated that there can and ought to be such a theology. If this is so, however, then the question with which we began our reflections here can at least be answered a little further. If the 'Heart of Jesus' means the original centre of the human reality of the Son of God, then there must be a basic religious act which is mediated by and goes through this centre to God. Then 'the Heart' can and must not be merely a name and an empty word in this act, a word whose real content realized in a religious way would be the indefinable, nameless reality of God alone. This 'Heart' really means the human heart. *This* is what is really meant by it, to this our acts are really related, and it is really present 'for us' and not merely in itself. It is this heart in its finiteness, in the definable clarity of its love by which it is distinguished – though inseparably – from the mystery of divine love, which in itself can harbour in the abyss of its origin both grace and judgement, mercy and anger, and which becomes clearly love for us only once (and because) it has incarnated itself in the heart of Jesus, in the flesh of our flesh and in the finiteness of our existence. This is the heart which is meant: this heart itself, taken both as object and as goal, or better, as mediating centre, as the centre of mediation, through which all our movement must pass if it is really to arrive at God. *Ut apertum cor . . . piis esset requies et poenitentibus pateret salutis refugium . . .* (so that the opened heart . . . might be a resting place for the pious and be open to the penitent as

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a refuge of salvation . . .). Such words are not just vague pious phrases and sentimentalities; they form an absolutely exact statement which academic theology has not yet been able to surpass. The heart is not only the original centre of our Lord's human being, but even within this it is the centre of mediation, without which there can be no approach to God. It is this in such a way that human words become extremely inadequate here – one can never leave this entrance behind as a thing of the past. Rather, one arrives continually by continually passing through this mediating centre of Christ's humanity. This is analogous to the fact that we ourselves never cease being creatures even when we become partakers of the Godhead. One can be a Christian without ever having heard anything in human words about the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But one cannot be a Christian without continually passing, by a movement of the spirit supported by the Holy Ghost, through the humanity of Christ and, in that humanity, through its unifying centre which we call the heart.

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4

REFLECTIONS ON THE THEOLOGY OF RENUNCIATION

The theology of 'renunciation' (of detachment, of 'giving up'), with which we are here concerned, belongs in the framework of a theology of the Evangelical Counsels, i.e. if we understand 'renunciation' here as something common to all three Evangelical Counsels. Hence, by 'renunciation' we do not mean here just any kind of giving-up of some good, i.e. not just 'self-control' in general (for instance with regard to some subordinate tendency), such as must be demanded by any ethics. By 'renunciation' we understand here that particular radical renunciation which is expressed in the Evangelical Counsels understood as permanent forms of life. Of course, only the reflections which are now to follow can show us that this includes not merely a gradually increased renunciation (as demanded basically by any ethics) but something more than that.

Until we have determined the theological essence of this renunciation more exactly, it will be impossible to say whether *the* common element which is undoubtedly present in the Counsels (since they all 'renounce' something, whether it be riches, marriage or free self-determination), determines the *essence* of the Evangelical Counsels. A more detailed proof of what is simply stated here is not possible in as narrow a context as ours. Hence, all we can really do is simply to draw up certain 'theses', in the hope that they will be fairly evident even without our giving more detailed reasons for them.

I

1. Christian perfection consists simply and solely in the perfection of the love which is given us in Christ by the Spirit of God who is communicated to us in justification and sanctification. This love embraces God and [48] spiritual creatures in their union in the Kingdom of God. In this way it takes on a theological and – by its origin (i.e. Christ in the Church) and in its goal (i.e. the union of all redeemed in God) – an ecclesiological[1] character. In its nature of *super*natural love, this love takes hold of man and his world – a world caught up in itself (even though 'before' God) –and bursts them wide open, opening them out into the life of God himself, a life which has already arrived even though it is still hidden in faith. Supernatural love has consequently an *eschatologically* transcendent (supramundane) character. This character of love can be called transcendent in so far as this love is directed towards God, God as he is in himself as our supernatural goal and hence as transcending the world (and transcending also God understood merely as the cause of the world). This character of love is eschatological in so far as this love (although always already in the world *intuitu meritorum Christi*) is in the world only because and in so far as there will be the eschatological event of Christ in this world at the end of time. Hence, love has this character in an essentially sharper and more explicit sense (only) since the time when Christ appeared, as compared with the time before Christ, for only since Christ became man (died and rose from the dead) has the opening out of the world into God himself been *explicitly* revealed in words and only since then has it become a fact of salvation history in an *irrevocable* and

[1] Ecclesiological also in the sense that, in accordance with the visibly (sacramental)-invisible (mysterious) character of the Church, this love must have a historically visible, tangible character in the Church arising out of the nature of this love.

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historically *tangible* manner. As a response to God's redeeming love for the *world* in all its dimensions, this love itself is redeeming, conserving and saving, and so cannot have merely the character of a 'flight into God' but rather must be *cosmic* (mundane) in the sense indicated. Hence, even a human existence which is related to something meaningful in this world, if it is formed and elevated by divine love (I. 2) can become the exercise of *that* divine love itself, i.e. can become a part of the fullness of love. It is clear, of course, that – precisely because they are meaningful also in this world – *such* actions do not have an absolutely unequivocal function as intramundane indications and representations of love as an eschatological fact. Such actions are more likely to hide this character than proclaim it.

2. This love is both one particular exercise of human existence among others (a virtue among other virtues) and also the *total* exercise of human [49] existence in God's grace. In this second respect, all other virtuous exercises of whatever kind are 'means' of love. This is to say that they spring from it, are informed by it, signify its expression and constitute the outward form in which it shows itself as in its 'signs' and in its embodiment. The other virtues are the concretization of love in the (permanent) plurality of the manifold dimensions of human existence, so that love – differentiated and yet remaining itself – really appears in them and yet is not merely their sum, and hence can realize itself in them in *different* and changing ways without thereby necessarily having to lose anything of its own fullness and perfection. Everyone is called to love in Christ Jesus. With regard to the concrete realization in the medium of the manifold dimensions of human existence – dimensions which in their plurality enforce and permit a different formation of human life – everyone has 'his' own call, his 'calling'. This personal 'calling' cannot be adequately derived from general principles but rests on a proper, special calling.[2]

II

1. Renunciation in the 'supernatural order' (which has an essentially historical index; which, in other words, changes in the course of salvation *history* even with regard to its eschatological finality in Christ), as understood and practised by Christianity, cannot be adequately explained (and in its properly Christian nature cannot be explained at all) from the standpoint of a purely natural ethics. It is not in its profoundest nature a datum or demand of the '*lex naturalis*'. In other words, it cannot in its proper essence be derived as an exigency of or a training in the harmony of human nature. It cannot be explained as a 'tactical offensive measure' against concupiscence[3] (in as far as the latter appears – even according to the principles of a natural ethics – as the danger of offending against the natural moral law and as a moral point of emphasis). It may even be doubted whether in *this* respect – as measured by the 'normal' person – renunciation is the 'better' means for attaining the harmony of the natural desires under the command of the spirit. Hence it is no accident, and not merely indicative of human sinfulness and hard-heartedness, that renunciation (e.g. in celibacy) did not exist before Christ, but is clearly [50] deduced in the New Testament from the saving situation present only once Christ had appeared, and that, as imitation of Christ, it presupposes that the Lord whom we are to follow has appeared.

2. Since even renunciation is a virtuous attitude directed towards Christian perfection – an attitude which receives its ultimate characterization from love – the ultimate sense of renunciation must be determined from the side of love.

3. Christian renunciation in its real essence sacrifices positive values and goods of this

[2] Cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 257-234.
[3] Cf. on this the following essay in this volume, pp. 58 *sqq*.

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world. Indeed, these values (as will be seen even more clearly) are not merely pragmatic and vital ones with the nature of means to an end (*bonum utile*) but are also values which (in spite of their relativity and subordination under higher values) have a meaning in themselves (*bonum honestum*). For such values include the marital union and the freedom of development of human existence by being able to decide for oneself about the material presuppositions and autonomy of one's existence (i.e. riches and independence). In a purely natural order there would therefore be no other values for the sake of which they could be sacrificed. In such an order it could at most happen that the individual would be prevented by circumstances from actually attaining such a good (circumstances which include also the necessity of reaching a good which may in the concrete and in individual cases prevent the simultaneous attainment of some other good). This does not prove, however, that in such an order it would be permissible to actively sacrifice goods of such a high value without being exposed to the force of special circumstances. Every resentful devaluation of such goods which would try to devaluate these goods from an intramundane point of view as 'of little value', as 'dangerous' (for a natural ethics), or as 'common', is therefore objectively false, suspect in its secret motives in the light of depth psychology (as cowardice and incompetence in the business of living) and endangers the true sense and genuine exercise of Christian renunciation.

4. Christian love, in its cosmic form (I. 1), can also be exercised in the positive affirmation and realization of intramundane values (such as marriage, freedom, riches). There is, therefore, a Christian perfection in this world distinct from the practice of the Evangelical Counsels. When it is said that even the layman ought to have the 'spirit' of the Evangelical Counsels, then this merely means in fact that he ought to have the spirit of perfect love. *In so far as* the realizations of the Evangelical Counsels have their own nature (I. 2) (although love may inform them and make [51] them into an expression of its own nature), the layman does not have this 'spirit' and moreover should not have it. This does not yet touch the question as to whether every Christian life, in so far as it is approaching ever closer to death and hence to the experience of the contingency and questionability of all intramundane values, does not and must not necessarily open itself both in spirit and in fact to the Evangelical Counsels, if it wants to be perfect. Even less is it disputed that every Christian life must *also* include the exercise of Christian renunciation (in the sense with which we are concerned here) even though it is not included in it as an explicit form of life adopted by the Church, as is the case in the Evangelical Counsels. With these reservations, there can only be different shifts of emphasis between the different possibilities of the Christian life, although these shifts will be such (e.g. marriage, on the one hand, and ecclesiastically ratified abstention from marriage, on the other) that they will really represent particular, fixed forms of life.

III

1. When positive intramundane values of human existence are sacrificed (II. 4), then the only possible reason for this renunciation can be the choice of a particular expression of love (I. 2) which realizes this love precisely in the expression of this *renunciation* because and in so far as this love is supernaturally eschatological and as such is at the same time ecclesiastical (ecclesiological); and because *this* characteristic of the tangibility of the Church finds its expression precisely in the renunciation of a positive intramundane value and in no other way. This means:

(a) When we ask: how can man give expression to his love of God in the dimensions of the other virtues, precisely *in as far as* this love is eschatological – i.e. the love of that God who, in spite of his having come on earth, is still in the distance of faith and yet the love of

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that God of whose life the Church must partake precisely in as much as this life does not objectify itself in the world and its values – then the only answer can be that this is possible through the giving up of a positive intramundane value (to the extent in which such renunciation is precisely *not* a technical means to laying hold of some other intramundane value). For such renunciation is either senseless or it is the realized and combined expression of faith, hope and charity which reaches out towards God precisely in so far as he is in himself, and without any mediation of the world, the goal of [52] man in the supernatural order. It would be senseless if the giving up of a value were to take place for its own sake, for this is ontologically and ultimately impossible as well as being ethically perverse (i.e. considered as an attempt). Hence, a positive value can be sacrificed only for the sake of a higher value. It is presupposed, of course, that the renunciation of the one value and the attainment of the other are somehow objectively related. It is important to bear in mind, however, that this relation can be of many different kinds; we will speak of this later. If, however, unlike the case of sacrifices with an intramundane meaning and rational basis, this higher value cannot be experienced in its own intrinsic reality but must be believed and hoped for (in so far as it is already present in itself), then this renunciation of one value in favour of the other takes on a characteristic proper to Christian renunciation and to it alone: the giving up of a value which can be experienced in favour of a value possessed only by faith and hope, and this as a realizing expression of the love of God, in so far as this love is eschatological and not so much in so far as it is also cosmic.

Hence the question is simply: in what exactly consists the objective connection between renunciation of the intramundane value as such and the exercise of love (or respectively of the asserted function of the realization of love which is said to consist in renunciation)? Expressed differently and more simply: why, to what extent and in what way is renunciation a ‘means’ of love? To answer this question it is neither sufficient to appeal to the *difficulty* of renunciation nor yet to appeal (at this point of our reflections) to the example of Christ. The former is insufficient because the very point to be clarified is why precisely it should be meaningful for the objectively correct exercise of love to take something ‘difficult’ upon itself. For there are undoubtedly difficult things which, in spite of their greater ‘difficulty’, are not suitable to serve as material and tests of love. If one were to say simply that the meaning of what is ‘difficult’ lies in our case in the fact that one tries to overcome ‘dangers’ to love as it were by a frontal attack, then it must be said in reply that these ‘dangers to love’ must refer to the offences against the natural moral law (which has an intramundane significance), in so far as these offences are not only immoral in themselves but are also inevitably irreconcilable with divine love. But then this information results in the representation of the Evangelical Counsels as already capable of proof from the *lex naturalis*. Furthermore, is it really true that the Evangelical Counsels avoid these [53] ‘dangers’? It is of course true to a certain extent, but it is an equally simple fact that they create new dangers to morality. Hence, does their whole basis really consist in the fact of weighing up the increase and lessening of the dangers to natural morality one against the other and then of calculating from this *in summa* (with what enlightening reason?) a decrease of danger and hence an advantage in favour of the Evangelical Counsels? This does not dispute the fact that the Evangelical Counsels are ‘difficult’, that consequently they can be a ‘heroic’ product of love and hence can also be chosen as such a product. Yet such a possibility presupposes already (without first proving it) that the renunciation involved in the Evangelical Counsels makes sense and can be taken into account as a realization of love. The renunciation of one’s life, e.g. through suicide, would also be ‘difficult’ and hence would be most advantageous for the realization of love when motivated by this love – *if* it were permitted. Why, therefore, is the renunciation practised in the Evangelical Counsels intrinsically justified? It is not yet possible at this point to appeal to the example of Christ since by doing this we would simply be

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postponing the question: why did Christ choose poverty, celibacy and obedience? Which elements in these things make them suitable to serve as concrete realizations of his love for the Father?

The property suited to make renunciation the expression of love as an eschatological virtue is precisely its property of *renunciation as such*, in so far as it fulfils a representative function for believing love which reaches out in hope. This statement requires a more detailed explanation. God, as he is in himself and being as *such* the (supernatural) end of man, is to be loved in faith and hope. Hence, man's existential centre no longer lies in the realm of the tangible and the empirical. Only by supernatural grace is such an attitude ontologically and existentially possible. Hence, this transcendence beyond the natural realm cannot be accomplished by every act 'from below' or every act concerned with his essential natural and empirical elements. Every naturally good act, elevated by grace and informed by love, can *de facto* be a part of the realization of this divine love. *But* this love does not yet 'appear' in its transcendence in the naturally good act, even when this act has in fact been elevated and informed. This transcendence does not become visible in this act, and it is impossible to recognize it from this act. This act, precisely because it is morally good in the natural order, carries (in so far as it is something positive) its intramundane meaning, its justification and intelligibility in itself. For [54] this very reason it is silent with regard to a higher order and about any meaning and goal transcending the 'human dimensions'. Such a *positive* representation of love in its eschatological and transcendent function is absolutely impossible in the moral realm (i.e. in the realm where there is no question either of the revealing word of God or of the sacramental signs instituted by this word). To dispute this statement would come to the same thing as saying that the morally good act in the natural order has of itself a positive ordination to grace and divine love. Is then such a representation utterly impossible? No, it is possible in renunciation. For, precisely in its negative characteristics, renunciation is a profession of action in the tangible order, a profession of man's shifting the centre of his existence out of the world, since the renunciation of the highest positive values of this world is either meaningless and perverse within this world or must be regarded as the believing gesture of that love which reaches out beyond the world and its goods (even those of a personal nature).

The fact *that* one may understand renunciation as an expression of such a shift of existence can of course be explained only by a positive (general and individual) call by God, and this in view of the fact that even positive acts can be sanctified and hence renunciation cannot in any sense be called the sole possible form of realization of transcending love (even though it is its only form of appearance). God must give his special and express permission for this going beyond the world.

Seen in this light, the connection of this renunciation with death in general and our Lord's death in particular becomes quite clear. The basic readiness for God's higher provisions which may possibly make demands on us beyond ourselves and our nature, thus leading us into hidden and incalculable regions, finds in death the objective climax of the situation of obedience (of man, of our Lord). In death, man is really asked in the most fundamental manner whether he will allow himself to be disposed beyond himself into what is hidden and incalculable, and he thereby renounces himself. Christian renunciation is therefore a training ground for death in Christ understood as the highest deed of that radical state of submitting oneself to a higher will.

(b) If we were now to ask why God wills that this sign of the transcending eschatological love should be present through a renunciation which can no longer be justified by intramundane standards and hence that God permits and calls to such renunciation, then we come to the [55] ecclesiological aspect of this renunciation. The Church is the quasi-sacramental, visible sign of the eschatological presence of God's salvation in the world.

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Accordingly, God wills that she should tangibly manifest the eschatological transcendence of love which constitutes her inner life. This, however, happens *sacramentally* (above all) in the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, in which man baptized into the death of Christ proclaims this death until He comes again; and happens *existentially* in Christian renunciation. In so far as the latter is explicitly accepted as part of the overall picture in which the Church appears, it is called 'the Evangelical Counsels', understood as an explicit and permanent form of life in and of the Church. The Evangelical Counsels are therefore an inalienable and essential element of the appearance of the Church, in so far as she must represent tangibly and cause to appear what she lives interiorly: the divine love which transcends the world eschatologically. And conversely, attachment to the Church is essential to the Evangelical Counsels, since they exist precisely as the appearance of that principle which is proper to the Church and *thus* is shared by the individual. It follows from this among other things, however, that the concrete way of living the Evangelical Counsels must be fashioned in such a manner that they can also really and clearly exercise this sign-function in the particular concrete historical surroundings in which they are lived. The bourgeois, 'cotton-wool' way in which they are often 'discreetly' lived today in the Religious Orders, veils their meaning: which is to confess that the Church is not of this world and leads a life which, measured by all the perspectives of this world, is a scandal and folly. In so far as the love of God is lived 'in the world', it is the cosmic character of love which becomes effective (cf. I. 1). The deeds of man which have meaning for the world can appear *as* an expression and sign of love *as* something cosmic, however, only if they are done by men in the Church in loving union with those in whose renunciation love appears as something transcendent and eschatological. For of itself the intramundane meaningfulness of these works veils itself precisely by the fact that it is done out of love. Only in so far as those who exercise it participate in the visibility of the Church as a whole by their loving unity in and with the Church in which, through their renunciation, the transcendentally eschatological love becomes visible, are their works too made credible as acts of this love. And conversely, renunciation, too, is truly Christian only if it does *not* make out that it can by its own power conquer God in himself, and only if it shows itself [56] as an of itself merely empty (indeed, of itself and by nature alone, forbidden) gesture of the depleted heart which – in spite of all emptiness – is filled by God, out of pure *grace*, with God and his love, and indeed is truly emptied out only in this deed of God, so that the gesture of receptivity is already the effect of 'having received'. Renunciation, however, can take *this* form only if it does not profess itself to be the 'only right' way to God; in other words, only if it lives united in humble love with the 'worldly' people in the Church. The representative function both of the transcendent and of the cosmic character of love is possible only in the unity of the one Church in mutual, humble love.

2. One might also express what is meant here more briefly by saying that the *res* of perfection is always and everywhere and only the love of God and of one's neighbour in God. The quasi-sacramental sign (*quasi-sacramentum*) of this *res*, taken as something transcendingly eschatological in the Church, is renunciation (as a permanent form of life). The sign of the same *res* taken as something cosmic is the love-informed 'worldly' life of Christians in the Church. Both have their quasi-sacramental sign-function only in mutual relation to each other in the unity of the Church whose one life should appear in both states. Such a quasi-sacramental visibility of the life and spirit of the Church is demanded because the Church is to be the visible manifestation of Christ and of his spirit not only on the plane of worship strictly as such but also in the dimension of moral existence.

3. It can also be seen from this what is really meant by saying that the Evangelical renunciation is the better way to perfection and that it is what is 'better' and 'happier' (*Denz*. 980). For if, on the one hand, one were to say merely that the Evangelical Counsels are 'in

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themselves' the better means to the perfection of love and thereby conceives this means in immediate relation to love which after all is an action (indeed the highest action) and attitude of a person and his subjective holiness – and then, on the other hand, nevertheless adds immediately that the 'better means' for each particular individual could also be the opposite of the Evangelical Counsels – then it can no longer be really understood what is meant by an 'in itself better means'. A 'means' to an end is always something relative. The phrase 'in itself better', when referring to a means, can therefore only mean 'better' for man as *he* is or ought to be in the nature of things. This, however, would once more imply that the man for whom this means might not be the 'better' one in the concrete, is not [57] really man as he is or ought to be 'in the nature of things'. This is not something, however, which one would want to say of a man who does not choose the Evangelical Counsels, even though he is really striving for perfection. It follows from this, however, that the 'fact of being better' as applied to the Evangelical Counsels must be related to an object which is not directly love in so far as it signifies the subjective perfection of the individual. What this object is can easily be gathered from what has been said above, viz. the necessity for love to appear in the tangibility of the world, in so far as this love is an eschatologically transcendent and ecclesiological love. As a means of representing this love tangibly in the world and of giving it in this respect an ecclesiastical visibility, evangelical renunciation is better, and indeed in a certain sense (i.e. *in so far as* it is a question of a permanent representation in a state of life) the only 'means'. From this point of view (but only in this way) can it then be absolutely admitted that anyone accomplishing this representation (if he is not to lie) has existentially a new duty to an old love – imposed as a duty on all and thus 'in itself' an additional stimulus to this love lacking to someone else – and that therefore evangelical renunciation is in a certain respect also 'subjectively' the 'better' means to the perfection of love.

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[58]

5

THE PASSION AND ASCETICISM

Thoughts on the philosophico-theological basis of Christian asceticism

The purpose of the following reflections is to inquire into the nature and meaning of Christian asceticism. Those who despise and combat Christianity, regard asceticism – not without reason – as one of the characteristics of the Christian attitude to the world. They protest passionately against what is Christian because they see in this ascetic attitude a contempt for the world, unfaithfulness to and flight from earthly tasks, because they see in the ascetic life the disguised resentment of those who are incompetent in the business of living, of those who despise the world because they are too weak and cowardly to hold fast to it and to master it courageously in all its greatness and difficulty. Thus, if we want to know whether this protest is legitimate or not, then we must face up to the question as to what exactly is the nature of this Christian asceticism.

One thing can and must be said right from the outset – for even though it alone does not suffice for the answering of our question, it nevertheless must already be recognized as a fact by both sides, if the whole controversy is not to become sterile right from the start on account of hopeless misunderstandings – and this is that the Christian religion, in the first article of its Creed, professes a God who in loving omnipotence has created every genuine reality between heaven and earth, a God who wills and loves this earth because he has created the visible just as much as the invisible and who has said that everything is good. One should not act as if Christianity just barely acknowledges by this something which is obvious to every ‘normal and upright man’. The real man, through his experience of life, sees only too well that this earth is a vale of tears, and so it is only too necessary to keep on preaching to him most emphatically that this his impression cannot provide him with any comprehensive and [59] final formula about this earth and his life. The Christian Church, in the course of its long history, has too often had to combat gnostic, manichean and catharist pessimism about the world for it to be likely to lose the suspicion that the preachers of ‘world-devotion’ can only afford to sing their hymns to the good earth and to the courage for the life beyond because basically Christianity itself has by the great power of the Cross bound the demons of pessimism, of despair and weariness, even in the life of those who – in the name of the world – persecute Christianity. The Christian faith professes that man has an earthly task and that his fulfilment of this task has a fundamental significance even for his eternal salvation. No matter how decisive his attitude to the God of grace and of life hereafter may be for man’s final salvation – and however much everything earthly must be incorporated into this decisive task of man – this does not mean that the earthly is merely an intrinsically indifferent material as the setting and in the attainment of an ‘other-worldly’ goal. Even for the Christian, humanity, culture, the State, world history, etc., are not merely intrinsically indifferent opportunities which he uses to work out his eternal salvation: they are also valuable in themselves and willed by God, and must not be likened to the work of that Desert Father who made baskets during the day only to undo them again in the evening. All this must be clear and firmly accepted from the very start of our reflections. For it follows right away from this that Christian asceticism can never be a renunciation which is bound up with and supported by a false and cowardly minimization of the good it renounces.

If we are to be in a position to ask about the meaning of Christian asceticism, this asceticism must first of all be shown in its true colours. For not everything and anything

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going under the name of asceticism can in a true sense be called Christian. We will accomplish this our first task by attempting to describe the essential – or, more carefully expressed – a few essential types of asceticism which according to the evidence of the history of religion always keep reappearing. The problems associated with these types of asceticism will serve to show us slowly and step by step the properties of Christian asceticism and will help to prepare us for the discovery of the starting point of an explanation of their essential nature.

I

We believe that, prescinding for the moment from specifically Christian [60] asceticism, it is possible to distinguish three types of asceticism which we will call *moral*, *ritual* and *mystical* asceticism. This is not meant to imply either that it is possible to capture adequately in these three categories all the manifestations of those attitudes and actions of man which one might call ascetic, or that these three types should be clearly distinguished from each other, or that – because we distinguish them from Christian asceticism – they must therefore be already necessarily and always positively unchristian and ought therefore not to be found in a genuinely Christian attitude of man. This rudimentary attempt to distinguish the types of ascetical behaviour is for us simply preliminary practice for the real question and should be evaluated only under these presuppositions.

1. *Moral asceticism*

By this heading is meant that asceticism whose nature, in the normal, current apologetics of Christian asceticism, is commonly presupposed to be that of Christian asceticism. What is meant by it can be seen, for example, from the description of asceticism given by Ries in *LTK* I, pp. 748-749:

> Asceticism is the fight against all within us which comes from sin or leads to it; it is the holding down of all dangerous urges of nature within us, of everything sensual and self-seeking, so that the spiritual man may develop all the more freely. It consists furthermore in a certain amount of voluntary renunciation of what is permitted, in accordance with the principle that attack is the best form of defence, which is applicable in the realm of human propensities . . . Anything which stirs in our lower nature as an after-effect of original sin, anything which is diseased, corruptive and demonic in man, must be subjugated if the noble spiritual dispositions are not to suffocate under the pressure of the sense-life gaining the upper hand. The suppressive spell of the sensual must be broken, if the soul is to rise and develop the, full richness of the life of the spirit in faithful cooperation with divine grace.

It will undoubtedly have to be admitted that this is a true description of the average – I would almost say: bourgeois-Christian – conception of asceticism. And this conception makes it possible to make out a relatively [61] easy and harmless defence of asceticism as practised in the Christian religion. For who would wish to dispute the fact that the ‘spiritual man’ and the full richness of the ‘spiritual life’ are threatened and under pressure in us by what is cowardly, comfortable and ordinary, against which every man ought to fight by strict discipline and self-mastery, and by the exercise of courage and strictness against himself. It is possible to prescind in this description of asceticism given by Ries (which is merely the expression of the commonly accepted conception of asceticism) from the supernatural

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elevation of this phenomenon by grace, since the latter after all does not seem to modify it essentially on the level of what can be consciously experienced (especially since Ries evidently sees 'grace' here merely as an aid to moral activity, and more in particular as a helpful means of human moral activity – as *gratia medicinalis* – and not as the divinization of man by grace, i.e. as *gratia elevans*). We may furthermore prescind from the fact that it is taken rather too much for granted that the combative element in the spirit and the element to be combated in the sensual as the effect of original sin – seen somewhat primitively and more platonically than from a Christian point of view – lies in the 'impulses of our lower nature' (as if the 'noble spiritual dispositions' were not equally 'fleshly' in the Pauline sense). Prescinding from these two factors, then, it will be seen that what is essential in this description of asceticism is the fact that it is regarded as a pure means for a moral self-discipline with a view to attaining an undisturbed harmony between the different forces in man, i.e. as a means to the attainment of that '*mesotes*' which for Greek philosophy and for the average Christian humanism represents the essence of virtue.

Asceticism is in this view a means to virtue. Virtue, however, is conceived here from the point of view of the natural moral law which is based on the nature of man and which demands a harmonizing and a correct mutual ordering of man's powers. Asceticism in this sense is properly speaking a self-control, a training in self-discipline and moderation orientated towards a humanistically conceived development of the positive human being; asceticism in this sense demands, therefore, merely the renunciation of the morally unpermitted which would disturb the harmonious development of the essential dispositions of man willed by God and indicated in the nature of man. In so far as, over and above this, such an asceticism also renounces something permitted, this 'more' is seen exclusively as an educative practice, as a 'training', designed to enable [62] man to achieve the right balance of an evenly distributed humanity. In such an asceticism there is, therefore, no real sacrifice of any value which would represent something valuable also in the overall harmonious composition of the human reality of values. Abnegation in asceticism really always aims in this kind of asceticism, as described by Ries, at something which even empirically – precisely from the empirically obvious and comprehensible natural law, and thus measured by the whole nature of man – appears as something which is not a value. Such a 'positive' asceticism which is measured by the life of man as a whole – a life to be preserved in its integrity by the natural moral law even against those threats to right order in man which accompany man – this asceticism which renounces a lower value in favour of a higher but equally immediately tangible and possessed value . . . this is what we want to call moral (we could also call it humanistic) asceticism.

The question now arises as to whether this represents for us the properly Christian asceticism. This must be disputed. It is, indeed, self-evident that this moral asceticism is also of great importance for the Christian – whose duties after all also include the natural moral law – and that it is important for him even for the attainment of his eternal salvation. Even in view of the weakness and frailty of man which only a naïve optimism could overlook, such a moral asceticism is never a duty whose fulfilment Christian preaching could pass over as something self-evident. The Christian faith confesses that in the long run even this moral asceticism can be achieved in all its fullness by man only if God's helping and healing grace comes to his aid. Yet nevertheless this moral asceticism is obviously not yet the real central point of that asceticism which has actually been cultivated by the Christian religion. For – to start with the empirical sphere – one would obviously be subject to painful helplessness and to false interpretation if one were to try to interpret and justify, on the basis of this moral asceticism, the 'feats' and 'excesses' to be found in the history of Christianity. Any renunciation, mortification and penance to be found in the lives of the Saints can no longer be explained in its radicalism and terrifying extent simply as an attempt to preserve and develop

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'the noble spiritual dispositions against the pressure of an otherwise overpowering sensuality'. One must either regard such things as pious follies and private exaggerations, or trace them back to influences of a general spiritual history which really have nothing to do with the nature of Christianity, or – because these explanations do not do justice [63] to Christian asceticism – one must concede from the outset that what is in fact lived as Christian asceticism cannot be reduced to the common denominator of moral asceticism, but demands a different interpretation of its meaning.

Furthermore, moral asceticism, if it had to be looked upon as the adequate explanation of Christian asceticism, would also fail to do justice to that revealed and mysterious nature of Christian asceticism which must obviously attach to it by the fact that it is a central element of Christian being and life. For it is perfectly possible to justify moral asceticism in the eyes of the 'world' and independently of Christian belief. One could say, of course, that outside the Christian sphere, man is always in danger of underestimating the threats to his moral existence, those threats which in Christian teaching are said to be the consequences of original sin. According to Catholic teaching, the effect of original sin, in so far as it means a weakness and an endangering of man with regard to the natural moral law, does not constitute the nature of original sin (since the latter does not consist in 'concupiscence' but in the loss of man's supernatural union with God and of man's holiness). On the other hand, the fact (even though not the reason) of man's threatened condition on the natural moral plane is an object of human experience even independently of the faith. Thus, on both these counts, the moral asceticism demanded by this threatened condition of man, derives no specifically Christian character of mystery, comprehensible only by faith, from original sin understood as a mystery of faith; yet it would have to have this character of mystery if it wished to lay claim to constituting the specifically Christian element in Christian asceticism.

Of course, it will be possible to say that in Christian asceticism as such there takes effect a knowledge of the danger which man faces of losing himself on this earth and of regarding the world and the earthly task of man as something ultimate and final. Yet this 'dangerous condition' of man which may cause him to be deaf to the call of the living God to man, calling him to become united with him beyond any inner-human (even though found and guaranteed in the name of God) fulfilment, must not be confused with the threatened condition of what is humanly moral. In the latter, it is a question of danger to a value accessible to the empirical moral knowledge of man, a value which can be taken possession of in its own self. In the former, there is question of a value heard only in faith and possessed in hope. Whether and to what extent the threatened condition of [64] the other-worldly calling – which calls man beyond anything purely human in this world, even beyond the humanly moral – does in fact form the basis for a specifically Christian asceticism, may sometimes be still rather an obscure question. Nevertheless, it would seem to be quite clear from the empirical and theological point of view that the nature of specifically Christian asceticism cannot be exhausted simply in moral asceticism, and that its nature must be conceived from quite a different point of view than that concerned with the carrying out of man's objective, ordered structures, even in his free moral actions. Yet, at least, these conditions have already given us some indications of where we must start in our quest for the nature of Christian asceticism, viz. with the besieged condition of man, his calling to a life in divinizing grace or – we might also say – with the threatened condition of man's existential beliefs. Before going on from this point, we still have to look at the other two types of asceticism which are to be found in the history of religion and which, on the one hand, do not simply coincide with moral asceticism, and which also, on the other hand, must not be simply identified with Christian asceticism, even though they very often come into contact with it.

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2. *Ritual Asceticism*

For lack of a better word, we intend to use the phrase 'ritual asceticism' to describe a group of ascetical phenomena which (at least very often) are connected with worship and man's preparation for it, and which in some sense or other make man sacral, withdrawn from the profane, and in communication with God; in brief, they make him in some sense or other 'taboo', without it being possible to identify this property of being taboo – a property acquired, protected or manifested by asceticism – in an immediately tangible manner with a (in our current sense) moral quality of someone who is taboo. Under this heading must be included first of all the ritual sacrifice itself which is to be found in the lower natural religions and right up to the highly developed ritual and moral religions. For by this sacrificial cult, man always renounces some value or other which he had possessed and which he offers up on the altar or consecrates to the temple: food and domestic utensils, possessions and valuables, child sacrifices, human sacrifices, even going as far as suicide. Under this heading belong also ascetic prescriptions which are required for qualifying man to enter into contact with the Godhead in the ritual sacrifice: fasting, [65] sexual abstinence, avoidance of ritual impurity, etc. Ritual asceticism includes also all other prescriptions for man's conduct which have an ascetic effect and which are meant to make or keep him taboo, 'levitically pure', etc.

First of all, this particular kind of 'asceticism' obviously means that some sort of renunciation, abstinence, or sacrifice should take man out of the profane sphere and bring him into contact with the transcendent, 'quite different' power (God, Mana, Orenda, Tondi). It would seem to follow directly from this that the profane, the world, and the directly pleasurable merging with it is experienced in contrast to the sacral and the numinous, and that one thinks to approach more closely to the divine by such an 'asceticism' in the widest sense. The further interpretation of this type of asceticism is extremely difficult, and all we can really do in the framework of a short essay is to state a few conjectures.

To begin with, it is of course already questionable whether all those phenomena we try to include under this heading of ritual asceticism can really be reduced to one common denominator, or whether they must not rather be interpreted quite differently in each particular case. It remains furthermore questionable whether these practices and prescriptions are in any sense to be regarded as asceticism, i.e. whether the abnegation which they bring with them – at least in actual fact – really lies in the proper direction of the direct intention of these practices, or whether this abnegation represents merely an in itself non-essential by-product of an act which intends something quite other than elevating man into the sphere of the sacral and the numinous by abnegation precisely as such. This question is of course closely connected with the other question concerning the meaning of the ritual sacrifice itself: the sense of man's 'ascetic' action connected with the sacrifice ought surely to be modified, depending on whether one conceives the sacrifice – in the sense of an 'oblation-theory' – as an offering which consecrates and thus preserves the gift, or whether one conceives it – in the sense of a 'destruction-theory' – as a destructive offering. Thus, although most factors of this ritual asceticism will remain problematical, it will nevertheless be possible to conjecture that at least man tries, by worship and ritual asceticism, to enter into contact with the Godhead. The meaning of ritual asceticism will have to be sought in quite a different direction, depending on whether this attempt is intended to be interpreted as a mere gesture of the believing readiness of man to be given this contact with the Godhead as a quite [66] gratuitous grace from above, or whether it is to be interpreted as an act of man himself who on his own initiative attains contact with the Godhead by this ascetic sublimation of his own nature. In the first of these interpretations, we would have that in which we have to look for the nature of Christian asceticism or at least a kind of prototype of it, whereas in the second interpretation we would have a variety of that mystical asceticism of which we must now

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speak, i.e. the asceticism of a ritual mysticism.

3. *Mystical Asceticism*

Ascetic practices, like sexual continence, fasting, mortification of the flesh, certain breathing exercises, abstinence, vegetarianism, the wearing of penitential garb, prayer techniques, inner self-denial, keep on reappearing in the history of religion as a preparation and means for religious enthusiasm or mysticism in any sense whatsoever. This is what happens wherever monasticism appears: in Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese Taoism (which has developed a form of monasticism at least by infection from Buddhism). Yet even beyond this, there is asceticism even in early Islam and in the later Islamic Sufism, and even in explicitly dualistic religions as seen in certain varieties of gnosticism and in manicheism. Asceticism is to be found also in the history of Greek religions, with the Orphics and the Pythagoreans, and in general also in all Greek mystery religions, all of which to a greater or lesser extent demand a laborious and to some extent extremely rigorous way of personal asceticism before a person can be initiated into the mysteries. Under this heading belong also at least such phenomena in the realm of asceticism and mysticism within the Christian sphere as hesychasm, in which an ascetic technique extorts a mystical experience.

However varied the forms, techniques and the intensity of asceticism may be in these different forms of religion, and however little it may be possible to assert that every single form of asceticism practised in them must be reduced to the common denominator of mystical asceticism, it is at least often possible to see clearly in such forms that asceticism in these cases is a preparation of the subject for a mysterious experience of the divine. Asceticism is here not merely some sort of moral perfecting of man by which man renders himself ethically so pleasing to God that God gives himself to man as a grace in a mystical experience; here, explicitly or implicitly, the connection between asceticism and mysticism is established [67] directly. Here, asceticism already establishes the possibility of mysticism by the very psychological condition called forth by it (viz. dematerialization, concentration, simplification of the spiritual life, exclusion of the multiplicity of thoughts, giving up one's own will, etc.). The emptiness, the night, the freedom, the being dead to the world, to oneself and to one's own will, etc., are merely the reverse side of the being filled with the divine, of the rise of the unbounded light of the Godhead in the soul, of the rebirth to new life, etc. Asceticism is thus in this form the liberation of the divine in man, of the divine which in the last analysis, in spite of the so often expressedly gratuitous nature of every mystical experience, does nevertheless belong to the inner being of man. Of course, this mystical asceticism itself takes on a great variety of forms, depending on how the mystical experience is conceived. If, for instance, mysticism is the experience of the pure spirit, then asceticism becomes, of course, the extinction of the pathos of corporeality, as for example in Evagrian mysticism; if God, as the goal of the mystical experience, is conceived not merely as the being who absolutely transcends not merely the finite corporeal world but also the human spirit, then asceticism becomes love's ecstatic reaching out beyond anything finite into God's night, as for example in the Areopagite mysticism.

It requires no further explanation to realize that such a mystical asceticism, whenever it really corresponds to the interpretation just briefly outlined, contradicts the Christian message of the truly divine life given by a completely gratuitous grace out of God's sovereignly free love. But quite apart from this, it ultimately contradicts also the empirical situation of man seen from below. For this mystical asceticism, looked at more precisely, is a pretended mystical death consisting in man's losing himself in the God of mysticism, so that in this way man's real death may be overcome and dissolved. A closer analysis of the different forms of

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mysticism to be found in the concrete history of religions could in fact show that this mystic death has actually been understood as an autonomous overcoming of true death and as a dissolution of the situation of the human Passion: the autonomous ego in man, by autonomously giving up its finiteness, limitation and sensible nature by an ascetical act of renunciation, tries to liberate this ego (conceived as something divine) from the mere appearance of the finite which signifies suffering and death. Thus mystical asceticism becomes the claim to an autonomous overcoming of true death and the intentional dissolution of the Passion. It will be up to [68] the analysis of the nature of Christian asceticism to show more exactly how – in view of the existential seriousness of man's real death – this attempt at an asceticism of the autonomous divinization and liberation of what is really always already divine and not really threatened by the real death-situation of man, is uncovered as the pride of man wanting to be God, an attempt which is doomed to failure.

This being presupposed, it follows with regard to mystical asceticism that either such asceticism presents itself as an ascetical effort with the false pretention of overcoming death, or such a mystical asceticism is merely an existentially harmless phenomenon of psychological training for some kind of mystical experiences which together with this training are threatened and as it were put into parenthesis by the existentially more radical event of the real death of man which puts the whole man into question. Under both these suppositions, Christian asceticism in its basic nature cannot possibly be mystical asceticism especially since, being a participation in the Passion and death of Christ, it must undoubtedly be regarded from the point of view of the real passion and death of man.

II

We have tried in the first part of our reflections to overcome the danger of unthinkingly regarding any and every actually occurring asceticism as Christian asceticism. It would probably be possible now to determine the inner nature of Christian asceticism by starting from the negative definition given of it above. Yet we prefer to adopt a different method here; we are going to try to approach the nature of Christian asceticism by way of a related but broader concept, i.e. by way of the concept of Passion and death. The basic possibility, even though not necessity, of such a method can be admitted from the outset. For the inner connection between these notions can be easily understood both from a metaphysical and a theological point of view. Asceticism, understood as renunciation, abnegation, sacrifice of material, biological and similar values, merely achieves what Passion (in the widest sense) and death also demand of man. If, moreover, Christian asceticism wants to be the taking-up of the Cross of Christ, a partaking in the death-destiny of the Lord, and the existential outcome of being submerged into the death of Christ as effected sacramentally in baptism, etc., then it must be presupposed from the outset that Christian asceticism has a connection with the Passion and death of Christ and [69] hence with Passion and death in general. Hence, if we try to clarify the nature of Christian asceticism by starting with the notion of Passion, then the course of our reflections will take the following form: (1) we will reflect, by an existentially still neutral reflection, on the metaphysical nature of Passion and thus work out the inner unity of Passion and asceticism, and hence also the nature of asceticism, from a general and still formal point of view; (2) we will reflect on the Christian meaning of Passion (death) and thus arrive at an understanding of the specific nature of Christian asceticism, and (3) we will point out certain conclusions to be drawn from the insights reached.

1. *The nature of 'Passion'*

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We begin with a brief reflection on the nature of Passion. This, of course, does not, to begin with, refer to the Passion of Christ but to the inner characteristic of every human life in so far as it is characterized by what we normally call pain, suffering, anxiety, fear, death, etc. The reason why we are trying to understand this characteristic under the particular watchword of 'Passion' will become clear in a moment. If we wish to grasp the nature of the Passion as a strictly human reality, then we must not start from the categories of what is vital, pleasant, joyful, etc. It is, of course, true that in the concrete, suffering also always takes place in these spheres: there is a gradual deterioration of health, of the well-being of life, and a gradual decrease of joyful inclinations, a physical destruction; even psychic feelings of disinterest still belong into this sphere. Yet all these would be simply events taking place within a natural sphere – natural as opposed to personal – they would be events which, for instance, even an animal experiences. All this, however, becomes the 'Passion' only once it is experienced by a person. Any diminution of a natural condition of existence or activity only becomes 'Passion' when the nature thus diminished in being or acting belongs to a person. Where the person is, there is freedom; this means, however, that there is self-control over the person's own reality and that the person shapes his own being and life as a result of internal decisions. Every finite person, of course, has imposed on it the law of the direction in which these decisions should be taken, so that we must in this sense distinguish in each finite person between its nature (understood as that which is pre-established for free personal control and something which serves as the norm of this decision) and the person (understood as what this being in freedom makes of itself and as how it [70] wants to understand itself). This dualism of nature and person, of 'nature and existence' which is essentially insurmountable, cannot itself alone be the ontological ground of 'Passion' in the proper sense. For otherwise the finiteness of the person and the Passion would be identical, and we would be in the midst of a tragic anthropological metaphysics for which finiteness would always already be a falling away from what should be, a guilt, an atonement and something tragic. But this metaphysical dualism of nature and person becomes the ontological presupposition of possible Passion once this nature itself is open to an alien, external intervention. Hence, wherever nature (as distinct from person) can experience something external to it – something which comes towards it – there is also the possibility that this happening may run counter to the general inner meaning of this nature, that it may threaten, diminish or even destroy it. If this happens, then the finite person experiences not merely a possible opposition to the general inner direction of its nature – between 'essence' and 'existence' (which signifies the possibility of guilt and not the possibility of suffering) – but experiences a possible opposition between what is imposed on its nature from outside and the inner teleology of this nature, in so far as this is taken over and asserted by the person and by freedom. Mere nature cannot suffer, since it is always only a mere, as it were, uninterrupted part of the total reality and thus cannot experience the intervention of this total reality in itself as something surprising or as directed against itself. A purely finite person as such, however, cannot suffer either, since as such it does not yet need to have an *external* destiny which preexists its free decision, so that at most there may be suffering only in an analogous sense in its case, as a *result* of its guilty decision. Hence, suffering can only be found where a person, on the one hand, as it were pulls its nature together and sets if off against what is outside it and yet, on the other hand, experiences intervention from without in this nature comprehended in this personal way.

The metaphysical state of the possibility of an experience from without is called sensibility. Strictly speaking, therefore, passion is possible only in a person whose nature is sensible, i.e. a nature which from the outset provides what is alien and external to it with the conditions for possible influence. Put differently, only where there is '*pathos*' is it possible to find 'passion' as an autonomous phenomenon independently of guilt. This is a fact, therefore,

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which is immediately indicated as basically necessary by the twofold meaning of the Greek word '*pathos*'. Suffering, as an independent [71] phenomenon different from guilt, is therefore possible only where, on account of a nature capable of suffering, the person can experience an external fate running counter to the meaning-structure of its nature, either because this pposition concerns the pure nature, or because fate contradicts this nature in so far as it has already been existentially formed in a quite definite way by a personal decision.

What attitude, we may now ask, can a person adopt towards this fate which involves suffering coming from outside? We have said that there can be a Passion only where there is a person; in other words, that Passion is not possible in something which is purely 'nature'. Does this mean, then, that there also could be no Passion in the pure nature of man; in other words, does it mean that where the person accepts its nature – a nature subject to suffering – without contradiction, suffering is uncovered as a mere appearance, as error and illusion? One could conceive this uncovering of the illusion of suffering in two ways: either it might be achieved through an absolutely stoical withdrawal of the person from its nature – in such a way that the person leaves its nature to its fate in absolute indifference and apathy and thus is no longer affected by its fate and treats suffering as a merely biological happening – or it could be brought about by the person losing itself completely in the nature, eradicating the spirit as an enemy of the soul, of life and of nature, thus turning suffering into an equally valid phase in the nature's ups and downs between life and death, itself regarded as an equally valid polar opposition.

These attempts at overcoming suffering prove themselves unsuccessful in practice. For the finite person itself is at the same time always also a nature. There is no point in the concrete existence of man – call it spirit, *scintilla animae*, ego, autonomous subject, or anything else you like – which is not itself affected by the fate of the nature in the person. The finite person itself, precisely as a person, is affected by the fate of its nature, since the possibilities of personal existence always rest essentially on the possibilities of the nature and hence are themselves affected by the Passion undergone by this nature. This excludes, therefore, any possibility of finally and definitively overcoming suffering by referring the Passion back to mere nature and by making the person something absolutely autonomous and intangible. The person itself is and remains as such open to the world and hence to the Passion.

Hence there is essentially Passion as a personal phenomenon. This, however, represents the basic problem of the Passion, a problem which [72] from this metaphysical and existential point of view (one might also say from this 'purely natural' point of view in contrast to revelation and supernature) leads to an ultimate questionableness which in its content can no longer be solved by man 'from below'. For 'person' means existence, i.e. self-assertion, finality, eternity. 'Passion,' on the other hand, means ultimately death, and this death must really be regarded in this as a personal Passion and not merely as a biological event concerning only the 'body'. For death as the climax of the Passion is an event which concerns the *whole* existence of man and which puts this existence as a whole in question, an event which makes it completely impossible for man to dispose personally over himself and which, therefore, represents the highest point of man's subjection to the Passion. Thus there arises the great question as to how the one being of man can combine at the same time an absolute, active power over himself and the absolutely subject condition of man in death.[1]

[1] The phenomenon of death, understood as 'dying' (and not as 'being dead'), must not be passed over by merely looking at life before or after death. The question is rather how death, death itself, can be survived – death which completely robs the person of its mastery over self – when that which is to survive is itself struck by the total powerlessness which is death. It would be wrong, therefore, to try to avoid this basic, humanly insoluble problem by appealing to the 'immortality of the soul'. Not that the 'immortality of the soul', understood as the substantial continuance of a spiritual being, is to be doubted or denied. Yet by acknowledging this truth, nothing is gained in practice beyond the actual posing of this insoluble question. For, metaphysically speaking, nothing

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Every Passion is a moment in man's subjection to death, and this death, which is part of the necessary requirements for man as a person, puts the person as a whole in question. Hence, every Passion is an existentially exercised process by which man is brought face to face with his basic questionableness which he himself alone cannot solve but one with which he is presented by death.

Man can, of course (to use a 'Heideggerian' phrase) try to run away from the 'ontological structure of his being' ('*Eigentlichkeit seines Wesens*'), from this 'being made for death' which concerns the whole man. He can try to cover up this his death-situation by talk, by keeping himself busy, by immersing himself in the daily routine, by taking flight into the anonymity of 'everyone'; he can therefore also take the sting out of every [73] Passion – by trying as much as possible to avoid it, by taking flight into amusements, into harmlessness, into bourgeois optimism, by the soporific of a hope for improvement (of an individual or social kind) – and lie can cover up its character of the relentless approach of death and of a '*prolixitas mortis*'. But when man makes a personal, existential decision with regard to this death-reality of his human existence, then this decision can only consist in a 'yes' to this reality. For only by saying yes to it, can a free person turn a necessary fate externally imposed on him into a free act of the person itself. A 'no' would preserve the free power of the person over itself only if by this 'no' he were to succeed in excluding the imposed fate from himself as a person; in other words, only if by this 'no' he could turn death into a purely biological event which takes place within the a-personal nature without affecting the person himself precisely as a person. Total, free self-determination (and that means a person) and an imposed total fate (and that means the death of the finite, suffering nature of a person) can become one only by the person's turning its total fate into a personal deed by freely saying yes to it.

Thus, man practises asceticism in the proper sense whenever he looks his death-situation 'straight in the eye' by saying yes to it, whenever he personally says yes (for whatever reason) to this subjection to death and realizes this yes existentially – by voluntarily anticipating this dying which is realized bit by bit in the whole life – and whenever, over and above this, man makes sure of his existential seriousness and of the inner veracity of his preparedness for death by eagerly appropriating an increase of Passion as a moment of death, over and above what fate forcibly demands of him (it being presupposed that he is allowed this impatience with his '*eschaton*'). Asceticism, therefore, is nothing other than the personal, free grasping-of-his-own-accord of his necessary being-unto-death. What has been said, shows therefore the inner connection between Passion and asceticism. Passion and asceticism ultimately are nothing other than the two sides of the nature of one and the same phenomenon. Passion regards this phenomenon from the point of view of its fateful character and necessity – a character and necessity rooted in a nature subject to suffering – and asceticism regards the same phenomenon but from the point of view of the spontaneousness and freedom rooted in the person. Passion expresses the necessity of death in man taken as nature, whereas asceticism expresses the freedom of death in man taken as person.

[74]

2. *The Christian meaning of Passion and death*

Up to this point, asceticism has appeared to us as a personal, free anticipation of death seen as the necessary fate of man, so as to pass personally and successfully through it in a point-like,

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else or more is said by this than that the person is more than just a nature. But *how* this person with his nature threatened by and subject to death can actually assert himself *in* death itself, this precisely is something which it is impossible to decide from below, from man's position.

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suspended identity of 'must and want'. But the formal definition of asceticism thus reached by regarding it from the point of view of Passion and death is not objectively speaking an answer but a question, viz. the question as to how, and as what, death is to be answered in the affirmative. Only when this question has been cleared up do we really know how, and with what attitude, asceticism accepts this death fate actively and personally, and freely and of its own initiative makes it a law of human life. Thus, when we inquire here into the Christian meaning of asceticism, we are in fact asking about the Christian meaning of death.

We are asking about the Christian meaning of death because – and this is absolutely decisive for our reflections – it is impossible to ask about any meaning of death outside of revelation and expect to be able to give a clear, materially and practically significant answer. Death puts man's whole existence into question without being able to answer this question. In this way we arrive at the following existential situation: man must say yes to death; he thereby surrenders his whole being into the uncertainty of death. Hence, such an act can only be one of three things: it can be either an act of despair in the ultimate futility of being, *or* the act of embracing the whole of man's being, by which man is prepared to hear a possible answer to the question of death from elsewhere, the act of renouncing his whole being to obedience, letting the 'totally Other' do with him what He wills, *or* thirdly the act of faith in the answer to the question of death (an answer which has actually been given by God), an act of faith in the transmutation of man's radical situation regarding death, a transmutation brought about by the God of eternal life, brought about from above and quite beyond the reach and demand of man but granted by grace.

The first of these acts is the act of basic and radical unbelief which will not allow God to be greater than the intramundane possibilities of man; the second of these possibilities – looked at from the theological point of view – is the existential actualization of the '*potentia obedientialis*', i.e. the capacity of receiving grace and revelation. For such an actualization obviously consists in a total renunciation of all the intramundane possibilities of man in which the nature of man as a whole is obediently put [75] at the disposal of God's sovereign, incalculable freedom and providence. This, however, takes place in an existentially radical manner in death understood as the freely realized deprivation of power of the whole man, surrendering him to an absolute uncertainty which ultimately is nothing other than an 'always-being-greater' of the incomprehensible God, in his transcending of all intramundane possibilities. The third possibility indicated above is that of the man who has actually heard that revelation of which we will have more to say in a moment. The second and third possibilities are related to each other as the existential exercise of the *potentia* as such and the existential exercise of the grace-elevated act of this *potentia*. The relationship between these two possibilities is therefore particularly close, and consequently we can prescind here from the-in-itself-important question as to whether in the concrete there ever is or can be an existential affirmation of the '*potentia obedientialis*' purely as such.

Even Christian death remains essentially a Passion, i.e. a threat to the total situation of man which puts it into question, without the dying person being aware of the eschatologically gratuitous saving of his whole being as a reality directly tangible to his experience. This eternal life is believed in and hoped for, and it lies in the situation of faith and hope and of the 'not-yet-possessed' most of all where the whole human being to be saved escapes the personal mastery and possession by man most radically, viz. in death. Thus death – which can be both the situation of despair and the situation of man's resigning himself into the hands of the incomprehensible God – becomes also the existentially most radical situation of faith and hope. Dying – at least when it is accomplished in a personal way and by a yes given to the Christian revelation of life – is the most complete and definitive act of hoping faith, and this is the real meaning of Christian death. This alone should really lead us on to an immediate derivation of the meaning of Christian asceticism, for we have already indicated that

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asceticism is nothing other than a personal anticipation of the death-situation of man. Christian asceticism is therefore nothing other than an existential faith exercised in a Passion which can no longer be given any complete and positive this-worldly meaning. Yet, so as to make this clearer still, we will try to reach the essential structure of Christian asceticism from yet another, somewhat different angle.

In Christianity, i.e. in Jesus Christ, the living personal God has addressed man. Through this, a frightening fact has entered the life of [76] man, a fact which makes every attempt to achieve an internally closed, intramundane harmony of human existence in God impossible; this attempt obviously could not come to final fruition within this world even if there had been no revelation. Certainly, it is possible to come to know God even through his creation, i.e. from the world. But this knowledge has a peculiar, double character: on the one hand, we recognize God as the ground of the world, as the guarantor of its continued existence, as the ultimate background of everything encountered by us in the form of man and the world. We recognize God in all this, to the extent in which he can appear for us in the mirror of the world, so that it looks almost as if the world were the meaning of God, at least of that God who can show himself to us in the world (and to the extent in which he can thus show himself), in other words: that God whom alone we encounter as philosophers. On the other hand, we recognize him in this God-seeking of metaphysics as the free, personal God who is infinite himself, and hence as the God beyond every world and finite existence, so that the world does not really express what he is and can be in himself as a personal and free God. The world does not reveal to us the meaning of God. Thus, there is obvious already the essential failure of human metaphysics: it faces a free, self-contained person, i.e. the God who is enclosed in silence within himself – the *theos sigon*, as Origen called him somewhere. What this infinite God is in himself – and how this free, personal God perhaps and possibly wants to deal with us – this obscure question which however is decisive for our existence cannot be illuminated by the natural light of reason. Whether he wants to meet us, directly and personally, or whether he wants to be silent, what he will say to us if he wants to speak, all this is essentially a mystery for any metaphysics and for any effort of man's eros seeking for knowledge and rising from the world as its starting point. Hence, in the nature of things, all metaphysics should really end in an eternally vigilant readiness to listen out into the unknown in order to discover whether the distant, silent He wants perhaps to speak, in readiness to accept a perhaps possible possibility of a revelation. The existentially radical exercise of this readiness – which after all is not a matter of pure theory by an action of concrete life – would be precisely the personal acceptance of death, since in death every intramundane fulfilment comes to naught and thus in death there remains merely the despairing folding up of human finiteness into itself or the preparedness to accept the ultimate concrete meaning of life from above, from God.

[77] But will man be able to bear this *ecstasis* of his being, this waiting to see whether God wants perhaps to come? Will he not succumb rather to the eternal temptation of taking the world as the final revelation of God and thus of making God the meaning of the world in such a way that the world becomes the meaning of God? Has there ever been a philosophy outside Christian history which has not succumbed to this temptation, beginning with the Greeks and right up to Hegel? Was not God ultimately always the '*anima mundi*' for all these philosophies, the God who can live and work only in the world itself as its inner transfiguration, as its secret spark of the Absolute? Is not this eternal 'Fall' in the history of philosophy – and not merely in the realm of knowledge – the expression of what over and over again takes place existentially in the life of the unredeemed man, viz. to let God be merely what the world is, to fashion God in the image of man, to understand piety as a devout feeling about the world, to measure man's possibilities not according to God's possibilities but according to what man himself can of himself realize of these possibilities? Every form of

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idolatry is nothing but the concrete expression of man's existential attitude which builds on the decision not to let God be anything more than the original unity of the forces governing this world and the destinies of men. Even the philosophy of the Spirit, as expounded by Hegel, still adores an idol, viz. the absolute Spirit which becomes conscious of itself in man and in his natural development. The tragic-heroic philosophy of a Heidegger too has its idol: if man of himself alone exists only for death, then death must be the absolutely ultimate reality for this philosophy of a last resentment; since for this philosophy man's God must not be *more* than man himself, it adores death as its God and the highest reality for it is also the most empty; being and nothingness are the same.

But God is more than man, more than the world and its forces, and as this 'more-than-the-world' he has broken into the existence of man and has burst the world (that which theology calls Nature) wide open. He has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. This revelation has taken place in the twofold unity of the communication of supernatural being and of the word. The ultimate meaning of this revelation is the revelation of the δο&χα θεοῦ, of the majesty of God, by the fact of calling man out of the world into the life of God, who lives his personal life in impenetrable light as someone who is above all the world, as the triune God. In this way, God confronts man directly with a demand and a call which throws [78] man out of the course prescribed for him by nature, a course which would have spent itself within the horizons of the world.

Thus man's task and destiny becomes transcendent, with a transcendency which is always experienced somehow as a contradiction of nature and of the world, both of which are essentially possessed by the temptation to round themselves off within themselves, the temptation to perfect themselves – before God, indeed, as the ultimate ground and background – yet essentially within themselves; this is a temptation which cannot be overcome as long as man does not existentially and without falsification take upon himself that event which puts into question the intramundane rounding-out of the meaning of human existence as a whole, viz. death. 'Nature' (in the theological sense), i.e. everything finite which does not arise from and within the direct encounter with the free God who reveals himself by speaking to us, always has a tendency – prescinding from its death-situation (which of course is a quality of the total human existence) – to rest in itself and to maintain and perfect the closed equilibrium of its immanent system. Should God revealing himself confront such a nature, this immediately opens up the possibility of his giving orders to man, orders which are no longer simply identical with the voice of nature or '*lex naturae*'. Should God call man by this command of his revealing word to a supernatural, supramundane life, as has actually happened in the revelation made by Christ, then such a command always and necessarily breaks open the rounded, self-contained state in which the world would like to rest (because it retreats from death). Death is a degradation in which the world – even the good world, and even in so far as it is God's will and law – becomes something temporary, a second-rate thing, and subject to a standard which is no longer interior or proper to it. The act of existential readiness to this bursting open and degrading of the world must, therefore, come from below, from man, and this precisely at the point where the total condition of human reality is put into question by man himself, viz. in death. Hence, if the act by which man 'puts himself at the disposition of God' is called 'faith' – in so far as it accepts the new and welcomes God's life – then the same act – in so far as it makes everything intramundane radically relative and in so far as it means giving up one's own being to the life of God – is called death, which again must not be understood, of course, as merely a single event at the end of human life but as a situation which basically rules the whole life of man.

[79] This Christian situation of man's faith and death, however, opens up the possibility of sacrificing the world, of renouncing and fleeing it, of giving up its goods and values, a possibility which can essentially surpass anything which would make sense if these goods

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and values were thought of in the natural order, as the highest fulfilment of the task of his existence demanded of man. Hence, the sacrificing of the world which goes beyond what would make sense in a this-worldly, even though theocentric ethics, is the only conceivable confession man can make, as it were from below, by which he professes himself to the God of revelation who calls him beyond the world. For by this profession, man can confess existentially that God has shifted the centre of man's existence out of the world. Man is thereby able to confess that by a '*fuga saeculi*', he releases his intramundane existence in its immanent sense. He can confess, in other words, that man does not thereby run away from the situation of death – which in any case always terminates his intramundane existence – that he does not thereby misinterpret this situation and also does not try to conquer it within the framework of this world. Rather, he lets death remain the destroying Passion while freely taking it upon himself and achieving that fluid identity of 'must and want' in the God-given belief that the affirmation of life accomplished even in this freedom for death finds is fulfilment from above by free grace in the very life of God. All Christian asceticism presupposes the fighting self-control demanded by pure ethics, i.e. 'moral' asceticism (which does not necessarily mean that it must always and in every case 'accomplish' more than 'moral' asceticism, and also does not mean that the act of moral asceticism can never in the concrete have the nature of Christian asceticism). Thus Christian asceticism is nothing else but the anticipating grasp of Christian death understood as the most radical act of faith; it is, in the words of the prayer of the primitive Christianity of the Didache, a 'letting-the-world-go-by' so that grace may come. Thus Christianity is essentially a '*fuga saeculi*' because it is a profession of the personal God of grace freely revealing himself in Christ, of that grace which is not the fulfilment of the inner urge of the world towards its completion, even though it does bring about this perfecting of the world eschatologically by surpassing it. All concrete Christian asceticism is merely a realistic realization of such an essentially Christian flight from the world. Hence, even St Paul already equates baptism and faith with the idea of dying and sees every experience of suffering as a 'daily dying', a '*stigma Christi*', a bearing within oneself of the '*nekrosis Christi*'.

[80] Thus Christian asceticism is *more* than moral asceticism; and in a certain sense it is *less* than mystical asceticism, presupposing that we understand by mystical asceticism the attempt to force God by this asceticism to come into the world, an attempt, as it were, by man himself to force the divine to come alight in man. For Christian asceticism is the act of faith in the free God, a faith given from above. Mystical asceticism believes that, in a sense, the emptying out of the ground of the soul and its liberation from the world necessarily also brings with it the influx of the Absolute into this ground. Christian asceticism can be just as radical in its material contents as mystical asceticism, precisely because it is measured by death (and as a result it also has entered in the history of Christianity into the strangest amalgamations with mystical asceticism); it knows, therefore, that God's grace is free even if man ever managed to divest himself completely of himself into death. It is simply an act of faith in the *free* grace of God. Hence Christian asceticism is also – it itself – an act of faith in the God who is greater than asceticism, and hence it is also an act of faith in the fact that the free God can bless – and allow to become a step forward in coming before his countenance – even those human acts which do not already and of themselves bear this intrinsic meaning, like the dying involved in the flight from the world which makes sense only if it is a dying by which we enter into the life of God. Provided that man has once subjected himself to the demand of the self-revealing God in the ascesis of faith, God can graciously accept even man's service to the world (which, after all, is God's creation) as leading to Him who is beyond the world, so that man encounters the absolute God not only in his radical opposition to the world, not merely in the situation of death as such, but also *in* the world. Once man has placed himself below the Cross and has died with Christ, once he has entered into the

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obscurity of faith and into the ecstasy of the love of the distant God, then – in the specialized terminology of theology – every intrinsically good act (and therefore even an act which is already meaningful within this world) can be elevated supernaturally by grace in such a way that it reaches in its goal and meaning beyond its intramundane significance, beyond the '*ordo legis naturae*', into the life of God himself. This fact diverts the Christian flight-from-the-world of that hybris which would otherwise necessarily belong to it as the exclusive way to God: in his flight from the world to God by asceticism, the Christian must confess that it is also possible to reach the same transcendent God even through [81] the world, the God for whose sake – and in order to find him – the Christian has let go of the world. Anyone who is a virgin for God's sake must confess that matrimony is a sacrament; anyone living the *vita contemplativa* of withdrawal from the world, does so in a Christian way only if he realizes that God has also blessed the *vita activa* of the intramundane task and has elevated it to the divine life. Hence, in a Christian view, there is no absolutely clear, as it were quantitatively measurable relationship between asceticism which flees from the world and ascetic affirmation of the soul. The Christian will always have to exercise both of them in his life, in order to confess in both ways that God is greater than our heart, that an empty heart does not force him to come down and that a heart filled with splendour of God's creation does not by that alone already possess the true God. The concrete measure of asceticism and world-affirmation in each individual life will have to be determined anew in each case by what is called the guidance of the Spirit, vocation and destiny. In these factors God measures out to each person the Passion which he is to live together with his asceticism in a free, personal yes, so as to profess eternal life in faith through this death.

We have until now deliberately avoided taking the death of *Christ* himself as the starting point of our metaphysico-theological reflections. The reason for this has been that the 'death of Christ, understood as the death of the Son of God, i.e. of him who – in a true sense and in spite of his humanity which is capable of suffering – does already stand also beyond the natural and sinful world . . . that this death shows a characteristic which cannot apply completely and in the same sense to the dying and ascesis of the Christian. Yet objectively speaking, our reflections have reached the statement made by the Scriptures, that the Christian death, the Christian flight from the world and asceticism are the imitation of the Crucified and a participation in the destiny of death of the one whose whole structure of life is passed on to us by baptism and faith. For man's supernatural endowment with grace, from which we started in our last reflections, simply does not take place in just any, as it were indifferently objective decree of God in the form of a norm or law, but in the person of Christ in whom God, as the God of the supernatural life, enters into the world. Hence, everything which follows from God's will to give supernatural grace is a concrete consequence and effect of the person of Christ, the God-man. Christian asceticism, understood as an existential yes to the God of the supernatural life, is therefore a yes to [82] Jesus Christ and in particular, of course, a yes to that mode of appearance of grace in the world which unveiled itself directly for the first time in the fate of Jesus, leading him to the Cross and to death. To this extent this also states that Christian asceticism is a filling-up of the Passion of Christ, in so far as it is an act of faith in that event which was finally achieved in the Cross for the reconciliation of the world with God.

3. *Conclusions*

All that remains now is to add a few supplementary remarks and conclusions to the understanding of the meaning of Christian asceticism we have gained by what has been said.

(a) One most significant consequence, even for life in the concrete, follows immediately

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from the purely formal relationship between Passion and asceticism already discovered under I. above, viz. the (possible) voluntary nature of fateful suffering and the fateful nature of voluntary asceticism. This is meant first of all to explain that the Passion is to begin with and primarily a fate, an alien fate imposed from without, which falls upon man unasked, and that it always retains this character, even when the person accepts this fate in complete assent. For otherwise there would be no genuine Passion. Hence, the coincidence of 'necessity and voluntariness' must always be achieved anew, for it remains contingent and in an, as it were, suspended actuality. Consequently, this mysterious, paradoxical identity of 'necessity and voluntariness' in the Passion, an identity which is already asceticism, does not extinguish the necessity – and the fateful character – of the Passion. Even the ascetically, personally accepted Passion remains a hard and necessary Passion. Yet, as has already been said, it must be personally assented to and voluntary, and only where it is this can it be personally undergone. But then it is also already and immediately an act of asceticism, even when nothing more is renounced than what is demanded by fate. Yet from the inner relationship between Passion and asceticism there follows also the imposed character of voluntary asceticism. To begin with, asceticism is certainly a free action of the person himself, either because it freely assents to the imposed destiny, or because it even goes beyond this imposed measure of Passion by voluntary 'penance' and by 'self-imposed' asceticism. But this second kind of what alone in the ordinary sense is voluntary asceticism does nevertheless participate in the fateful and imposed nature of the Passion. For ultimately it is after all a free assent to *the* Passion and, even in its highest [83] conceivable existential measure, it can never attain the 'necessary' to such an extent that the latter would be truly effaced. For even where asceticism is a voluntary penance over and above the Passion which is imposed, it basically remains a training in the Passion, as it were a training in the existential seriousness and true affirmation of the Passion required of us. For, despite its voluntary 'surplus', the 'extra' of voluntary penance and renunciation – the voluntary withdrawal from the world – never attains the greater 'extra' of the necessary Passion. The unattainable and alone total renunciation and flight from the world is imposed on man as his lot and is called death. Hence, even voluntary asceticism must never lose the character of something imposed, of having to obey, of letting oneself be governed by a higher power, and of being called. This oneness of imposed suffering freely accepted and of free asceticism borne as one's lot shows itself also in the concrete religious experience in which these factors continually manifest themselves in a strict, temporal rhythm: suffering imposed by fate becomes the occasion for converting this suffering into free asceticism, and this free asceticism in its turn is, as it were, overcome again by the still greater need for renewed Passion.

(b) It also follows from what has been said that voluntary Christian asceticism requires a 'vocation' in some sense or other. For, in so far as this asceticism freely anticipates death and sacrifices certain values as an expression of faith in the life granted by God's grace from above – values which would be necessary for constituting a purely intramundane perfection (marriage, wealth, etc.) – it does something for which man requires authorization from God. For, no matter how obvious it may be *a priori* that such an ascetic sacrifice *can* be an expression of faith in the life of grace, this does not yet prove that such an expression is willed by God and can expect to be accepted by Him. The fact that asceticism is allowed (in so far as this asceticism goes beyond 'moral' asceticism) can therefore be known only from revelation; the 'counsel' to such an asceticism can be given only through revelation and can never be based simply on a natural ethics. The New Testament alone 'permits' this asceticism and 'calls' basically and for the first time to asceticism in the proper sense. The validity and correctness of its determined forms is, therefore, also basically subject to the decision of the Church. Even from this point of view alone, asceticism as a permanent form of life, as realized in the Religious Orders, is not a purely private matter but one for the Church to

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decide, and this not merely with regard to its forms of social organization [84] as such but also with regard to the asceticism itself as it is lived by the individual in these Orders. Hence, the life of consecrated virginity was already given official status in the ancient Church, even before this life became organized in the community of Orders. How this general vocation based on revelation becomes the special and concrete vocation of the individual is beyond the framework of our present reflections.

(c) In so far as God authorizes such a 'gesture' of faith in eternal life in a meaningful way only (everything considered) at that moment of the history of salvation in which salvation from above (i.e. grace) has entered into its eschatological stage of the parousia, Christian asceticism itself has an eschatological character: because with Christ the end of the ages has already begun and grace is already 'present' in a way in which it was not 'present' before Christ, man may now let go of intramundane values in order to lay hold of this grace by faith, values to which he would have had to hold on in those ages during which eternal life had not yet appeared among us.

(d) We have already pointed out the peculiar, 'partial nature' of Christian asceticism (if we may use that expression for what is meant here): Christian asceticism must never put itself forward as the exclusive way to the God of grace. The '*fuga saeculi*' is always mixed up with the love of the world which itself is conscious of being confirmed and eternally valid by the grace which transforms it. This 'partial nature' of Christian asceticism is not – as in the case of mystical asceticism (especially that in the dualistic systems) an unavoidable but reluctant concession to the force of external circumstances which make it impossible 'to live by asceticism alone'. Rather, this 'partial nature' of Christian asceticism is the outcome of the inner nature of things: Christian asceticism does not want to be 'one hundred per cent'. Hence there is no Christian form of life (not even the Religious life) which may be absolutely and exclusively based on the '*fuga saeculi*' of 'people living in the beyond'. For the Christian point of view, there is simply a 'more or less' according to the gifts of the individual and not a clear-cut 'either-or' between flight from the world and love of the world, both of which must be blessed by God if they are to be recognized by him as good – and both of which are blessed only if they give mutual recognition to each other. Hence, there also is no 'recipe' for the Christian life in practice, a single recipe for telling with absolute and eternal validity what must be the special gift of each individual: to leave the world so as to find God in faith and thus to receive [85] the abandoned world back again at some future date as a gift from God, or to love the world, loving its life and assenting in believing patience to its death and finding God in both, as a gift from God.

This impossibility of giving a theoretical definition applies not only to the 'law of life' of the individual Christian, but also to the 'gift' granted by the Spirit to the individual ages of the world and to the Church. Even in the latter case it is ultimately impossible to deduce laws; all that is possible even here is to perceive vocational imperatives. As to discovering what might be the imperative of our particular hour today, this cannot be the task of these merely theoretical reflections. But could not the Christian simply counter the wild protest that Christianity does not love the earth, with a benign smile and ask why those who protest do not reckon with the possibility that Christianity may perhaps be trying to love this world afresh with a powerful and intimate love of which those who protest are not even capable; after all, a person who can give his love freely is a person who loves most intimately and most loyally, and only he can give freely who is not obliged to give. Only the Christian, however, is in such a position vis-à-vis the world. In his asceticism he becomes free, not in order to wall up his heart but to give it away, to God and to the world.

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[86]

6

REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF GRACE

Have we ever actually experienced grace? We do not mean by this some pious feeling, a sort of festive religious uplift, or any soft comfort, but precisely the experiencing of grace, i.e. of that visitation by the Holy Spirit of the triune God which has become a reality in Christ through his becoming man and through his sacrifice on the Cross. Is it possible at all to experience grace in this life? Would not an affirmative answer to this question mean the destruction of faith, of that semi-obscure cloud which envelops us as long as we are pilgrims on this earth? The mystics do indeed tell us – and they would testify to the truth of their assertion by laying down their lives – that they have already experienced God and hence also grace. But this empirical knowledge of God in mystic experience is an obscure and mysterious matter about which one cannot speak if one has not experienced it, and about which one will not speak if one has. Our question, therefore, cannot be answered simply *a priori*. But perhaps there are steps in the experience of grace, the lowest of which is accessible even to us?

Let us ask ourselves to begin with: have we ever experienced the *spiritual* in man? (What is meant here by spirit is itself a difficult question which cannot be answered simply and in a few words.) We will perhaps answer: of course, I have experienced this and in fact experience it every day. I think, I study, I make decisions, I act, I enter into relationships with others, I live in a community which is based not only on biological but also on spiritual factors, I love, I am happy, I enjoy poetry, I possess cultural, scientific, artistic values, etc. In short, I know what spirit is. Yet it is not quite as simple as that. Everything we have stated is perfectly true. But in all these things the ‘spirit’ is (or can be) merely, as it were, the ingredient which is used for making this earthly life human, beautiful and in some way meaningful. Yet it does not follow that we have thereby [87] already experienced the spirit in its proper transcendence. This does not mean, of course, that spirit as such is to be found only where one speaks and philosophizes about the transcendence of the spirit. Quite the contrary: that would merely be a derived and secondary experience of that spirit which does not govern the life of man merely as one of its inner moments. Where then lies the real experience? At this point we would like to say from the very start: let us try to discover it for ourselves in our experience; and to aid this, one can merely tentatively and cautiously point out certain things.

Have we ever kept quiet, even though we wanted to defend ourselves when we had been unfairly treated? Have we ever forgiven someone even though we got no thanks for it and our silent forgiveness was taken for granted? Have we ever obeyed, not because we had to and because otherwise things would have become unpleasant for us, but simply on account of that mysterious, silent, incomprehensible being we call God and his will? Have we ever sacrificed something without receiving any thanks or recognition for it, and even without a feeling of inner satisfaction? Have we ever been absolutely lonely? Have we ever decided on some course of action purely by the innermost judgement of our conscience, deep down where one can no longer tell or explain it to anyone, where one is quite alone and knows that one is taking a decision which no one else can take in one’s place and for which one will have to answer for all eternity? Have we ever tried to love God when we are no longer being borne on the crest of the wave of enthusiastic feeling, when it is no longer possible to mistake our self, and its vital urges, for God? Have we ever tried to love Him when we thought we were dying of this love and when it seemed like death and absolute negation? Have we ever tried to love God when we seemed to be calling out into emptiness and our cry seemed to fall on

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deaf ears, when it looked as if we were taking a terrifying jump into the bottomless abyss, when everything seemed to become incomprehensible and apparently senseless? Have we ever fulfilled a duty when it seemed that it could be done only with a consuming sense of really betraying and obliterating oneself, when it could apparently be done only by doing something terribly stupid for which no one would thank us? Have we ever been good to someone who did not show the slightest sign of gratitude or comprehension and when we also were not rewarded by the feeling of having been 'selfless', decent, etc.?

Let us search for ourselves in such experiences in our life; let us look [88] for our own experiences in which things like this have happened to us individually. If we find such experiences, then we have experienced the spirit in the way meant here. For the experience meant here is the experience of eternity; it is the experience that the spirit is more than merely a part of this temporal world; the experience that man's meaning is not exhausted by the meaning and fortune of this world; the experience of the adventure and confidence of taking the plunge, an experience which no longer has any reason which can be demonstrated or which is taken from the success of this world.

Taking this as our starting point, we might realize the secret passion which lives in the real man of the spirit and in the saints. They want to savour this experience. In their secret fear of becoming bogged down in the world, they always want to make sure again that they are beginning to live in the spirit. They have got the taste of the spirit. While ordinary men regard such experiences merely as disagreeable although not quite unavoidable interruptions of their normal life – in which the spirit is merely the seasoning and garnish of a different life, but not the real life itself – the man of the spirit and saint have got the taste of the pure spirit. The spirit is, as it were, drunk by them pure; it is not enjoyed simply as the seasoning of earthly existence. This also explains their strange life, their poverty, their desire for humiliation, their yearning for death, their readiness to suffer, their secret longing for martyrdom. It is not as if they were not also weak. Not as if they too did not always have to return to the ordinariness of everyday living. Not as if they did not know that grace can also sanctify everyday and reasonable activities and can transform them into a step towards God. Not as if they did not know that we are no angels here, nor are we meant to be. But they know that man as spirit – precisely in real existence and not merely in theory – should really live on the border between God and the world, time and eternity, and they always try again to make sure that they are really doing this, that the spirit in them is not merely the medium of the human kind of life.

To proceed: once we experience the spirit in this way, we (at least, we as Christians who live in faith) have also already *in fact* experienced the *supernatural*. We have done so perhaps in a very anonymous and inexpressible manner. Probably we have experienced it in such a way even that we were unable to turn round – and did not dare to do so – to look the supernatural straight in the face. But we know – when we let ourselves [89] go in this experience of the spirit, when the tangible and assignable, the relishable element disappears, when everything takes on the taste of death and destruction, or when everything disappears as if in an inexpressible, as it were white, colourless and intangible beatitude – then in actual fact it is not merely the spirit but the Holy Spirit who is at work in us. Then is the hour of his grace. Then the seemingly uncanny, bottomless depth of our existence as experienced by us is the bottomless depth of God communicating himself to us, the dawning of his approaching infinity which no longer has any set paths, which is tasted like a nothing because it is infinity. When we have let ourselves go and no longer belong to ourselves, when we have denied ourselves and no longer have the disposing of ourselves, when everything (including ourselves) has moved away from us as if into an infinite distance, then we begin to live in the world of God himself, the world of the God of grace and of eternal life. This may still appear strange to us at the beginning, and we will always be tempted again to take fright and flee back into what is familiar and near to us: in fact, we will often have to and will often be

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allowed to do this. But we should gradually try to get ourselves used to the taste of the pure wine of the spirit, which is filled with the Holy Spirit. We should do this at least to the extent of not refusing the chalice when His directing providence offers it to us.

The chalice of the Holy Spirit is identical in this life with the chalice of Christ. This chalice is drunk only by those who have slowly learned in little ways to taste the fullness in emptiness, the ascent in the fall, life in death, the finding in renunciation. Anyone who learns this, experiences the spirit – the pure spirit – and in this experience he is also given the experience of the Holy Spirit of grace. For this liberation of the spirit is attained on the whole and in the long run only by the grace of Christ in faith. Where he liberates this spirit, however, he liberates it by supernatural grace which introduces the spirit into the life of God himself.

Let each one of us look for the experience of grace in the contemplation of our life, but not so that we can say: there it is; I have it. One cannot 'find' it so as to claim it triumphantly as one's own possession. One can only look for it by forgetting oneself; one can only find it by seeking God and by giving oneself to him in a love which forgets self, and without still returning to oneself. But one should now and then ask oneself where one has something like this destructive and, at the same time, vivifying experience, so that one might estimate how much of the road [90] still remains to be Covered and how far we are still from the experience of the Holy Ghost in our so-called spiritual life. *Grandis nobis restat via*. *Venite et gustate quam suavis sit Dominus*. We still have a long way to go. Come and taste how sweet is the Lord.

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[91]

7

THE CHURCH OF THE SAINTS

It is a strange thing, but if one takes a glance at an average modern dogmatic theology one will find it necessary to look in a great many different places for the doctrine on the Saints of the holy Church and of their veneration. Fundamental theology speaks a little in passing about the *holy* Church, of holiness as one of the marks of the true Church, and in connection with this perhaps speaks also of the Saints. In some other part of dogmatic theology, in connection with the question of papal definitions, we will find a treatment of the question as to whether the Church is also infallible in her canonization of Saints. This then leads to the further question as to how the Church can be infallible in such an act, since after all (it is objected) it cannot really be contained in the revelation closed with Christ and his Apostles that this or that person is a Saint, i.e. belongs to the number of the eternally saved. One frequently solves this problem by making use of the principle that besides 'divine' faith in the testimony of the true God himself, a testimony which the Church merely proclaims, there is also an 'ecclesiastical faith' directly based on the authority of the Church. But why – to be precise – the infallible teaching authority of the Church can be referred also to this particular object (and, for instance, not merely to the '*facta dogmatica*') is something which usually does not become very clear.[1] Somewhere else – usually in connection with the doctrine of the adoration due to Christ and the honouring of the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God – there will be a brief treatment of the veneration of the Saints. That the treatment of this question should be assigned to this particular place is ultimately due to the fact that most textbooks still lack any well-defined *dogmatic* tract on the Church in the right place within the whole framework of dogmatic theology, or that where there is such a tract its proper [92] object is merely taken to consist in most cases in the teaching and ruling authority of the hierarchical Church. A doctrine of 'the finally redeemed, holy members of the holy Church' thus finds no proper place in such a treatment.[2] In whatever place something explicit is said about the Saints, viz. after the doctrine of the adoration due to Christ, it is almost exclusively the teaching of the Council of Trent which is defended – presented as a polemical contrast to the teaching of the Reformers – viz. that it is good and profitable to honour the Saints and to ask for their intercession (*Denz*. 984). What the Saints are for us and for the Church, why they play a role in our Christian existence even beyond their intercession, all this is left rather unexpressed somewhere on the periphery of our consciousness of faith. The heading of this section of dogmatic theology is '*De* cultu *sanctorum*'; in other words, the question treated of is our veneration of the Saints and not the question of the Saints themselves. The latter is at most treated of indirectly, in so far as one speaks of them as the blessed in heaven, but not in their significance for the Church at the time when they were still pilgrims with us on this earth and gradually becoming Saints. It is easily seen, then, that this sort of treatment in our usual dogmatic theology cannot really give us any integrated idea about what the Saints really

[1] Cf. e.g. Lercher-Schlagenhaufen, *Institutiones theol. dogm.* I (Innsbruck 1939), n. 511. This is not the place to attempt to answer this question.

[2] In the systematic index to Denzinger, for instance, what is said about the '*cultus sanctorum*' (about the *cultus*, therefore, and not about the *sancti*), is put under the first commandment of the Decalogue. Yet there are already the beginnings of better arrangements; e.g. in L. Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Cork 1960), there is at least a dogmatic tract on the Church and *in this* (pp. 318 *sq*.) there is a paragraph on the veneration and invocation of the Saints. But even here the ecclesiological function of the Saints during their lifetime is somehow overlooked.

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mean to us. The greater part of this realization is *not* transferred from the exercise of the Christian and ecclesiastical life to the reflections of theology. Yet if theology has also a duty towards the Christian life, then this lack in theology is harmful to life.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH OF THE SAINTS

Perhaps the best way to find the right starting point for a very small sketch of a theology of the Church of the Saints is to ask ourselves why the Church has the power to canonize a person, i.e. is able after his death to declare with the infallibility of her teaching and pastoral authority that this person belongs to the number of those who are finally saved. This after all is not self-evident. Are we not told that we must not judge [93] anyone before the Last Day? It cannot be said that canonization is really authorized by miracles. For, while these miracles have a merely relative degree of certainty, the Church's declaration of sanctity is absolute, and so the miracles are not really suitable to act as the sole basis of such a judgement. Moreover, in certain circumstances the Church will do without the miracles in such a canonization process (*CIC* 2116 §2). It may be said, of course, that the Church has received her infallible authority for such a definition from her founder. But then the question arises: what is our source for such a statement? It may be quite logical to conclude: the Church honours the Saints, she is supposed to honour them and tells her faithful to venerate them, and hence she must be preserved from making mistakes in this clear veneration. Yet what is the source of our knowledge of the basis for this conclusion, viz. that the Church *is meant to* venerate the Saints and this not just in the way in which people rightly honour the great figures of their history and preserve their memory for future generations (taking the question aside from any absolute judgement about the metahistorical validity of this veneration)? When the Church declares someone to be a Saint, this is much more a necessary part[3] of the Church's realization of her own being, something which is really a part of her in her religious, Christian reality; this canonization process is moreover such that the Church's knowledge about the validity of her individual veneration has the quality of faith. The first of these characteristics is connected with the second. How could the Church be infallible in such questions if she could quite easily renounce the veneration of the Saints? She must obviously be able to judge infallibly because she simply must not avoid passing a judgement; this means, however, that the veneration of the Saints necessarily belongs to her life. But *why* is this so?

IN PRAISE OF GRACE

The only way to advance in this question is by the following reflection: the Church professes herself to be the holy Church. This profession is not left to her own choice. She cannot refrain from making this profession, as [94] it were out of modesty or in view of the sinfulness of her members. It is her duty, because she must profess God's grace. But when she does this, she must not merely praise God's salvific will by grace which is 'in itself' equipped to forgive and to sanctify. She must praise the grace which has had powerful effects, which has conquered, which has become real and manifest to us. Hence she must say: God really *has* redeemed, he really *has* poured out his Spirit, he really *has* done mighty things for sinners, he

[3] Whether this or that individual is venerated by the Church or an individual Christian as a Saint may be a matter of free choice (apart from absolutely central figures of salvation history such as Mary, John the Baptist, the Apostles). But this cannot be extended to the veneration of the Saints in general and as a whole, if only because of Lk 1:48; Ac 7:54-60; Heb 11/12; Rv 21:14.

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has let his light shine in the darkness. His light shines, it is visible, and there is a tangible assembly of those whom he has called out of the kingdom of darkness and whom he has brought into the kingdom of the Son of his love. Because the Church must praise *God's grace*, she must also profess herself to be the holy Church. This profession humbles her; for she always testifies anew by this against what she is of herself: the flock of the poor, the stubborn, the sinful, of those who of themselves are very obviously lost. Yet she may not on this account omit this profession. She must sing: 'You have loved us, O Lord, and redeemed us by your blood; you have made us to be a kingdom and made us priests to God your father' (Rv 1:5-6). She must not declare this merely as a *possibility* provided by God; she is no Pelagian for whom man's choice from mere, God-given possibilities would have to be the last word, and so she must testify to this as an event which has actually taken place. She must not behave as if it were in the last analysis still questionable or at least still a completely incomprehensible and hidden fact that God with his word of mercy has had the last word in the dialogue between himself and the creature, as if one could merely 'presume' that God has poured out his Spirit without giving any evidence at all of his mighty wind and his tongues of fire.

ESCHATOLOGICAL TESTIMONY OF FAITH

This hymn of praise to the grace of God in the profession made by the holy Church, a profession belonging to the innermost core of the Christian Credo, must now be clarified in its theological traits, and this from several points of view. This profession made by the holy Church is a profession of the *visible* Church. It is, of course, a profession of *faith*. Certainly, what is professed is *actually* seen, and acknowledged as seen, by the grace of God and in the light of faith (without thereby questioning the apologetic, faith-testifying function of the holiness of the Church as [95] a mark of the true Church of Christ). But this holiness of the Church is not by this fact something which is present merely as something absolutely beyond experience, as something merely believed to be present in a completely hidden way in the Church and contrary to all history and experience, merely believed to lie under the sole outward impression of the Church's hopelessly sinful state and failure, and yet believed by a despairingly paradoxical 'nevertheless'. This holiness makes the Church a *signum elevatum in nationes* (*Denz*. 1794); one meets her if one looks for her and wants to see her with a humble and open mind; she shines out, she proclaims herself in a real way, one can meet her. God's deed in giving his grace to man is witnessed in her works which are such that we can praise the Father on account of them (Mt 5:16); it is witnessed in its fruits which are love, joy, peace, patience, tenderness, goodness, faith, modesty, continence (Ga 5:22 *sq*.).

This manifested, 'proclaimed' holiness of the Church is not merely a pure 'facticity' which can be observed subsequently here and there and contrary to all expectations. It can be seen to be rather something which is ordained by God in his decrees. It is indeed always an act of man's free love and of the free obedience of his faith. But precisely this act is determined and given gratuitously by God; precisely this act is borne and guaranteed by the greater power of the grace of God, God who of himself no more allows the Church as a whole to break out of his love than out of his truth, not because man could not do so but because God grants the grace to the Church really to do freely what he wants of her; not merely her word and her objective preparations for salvation (preaching and the sacraments), but also her 'existential' being is intended to proclaim the final victory of grace, since in Christ on the Cross God has the last word in the dialogue between himself and the human race, and this word is the effective word of mercy. Hence the Church *must* in *all* ages proclaim – even though in a sense ashamedly, yet quite clearly – that she is the holy Church. She knows what she thus

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affirms of herself, not merely by her past experience of herself by God's mighty deed which has been promised to her by God's word before she had any – otherwise very problematical – experience, and which goes beyond and anticipates this experience. The proclamation of her own holiness is an eschatological statement of faith and not merely a kind judgement of history which condescends not to overlook the good which 'after all also exists' over and above everything ugly.

[96] Yet precisely in this way, this statement must be a concrete one. If the Church were simply to say that she is the holy one and mean by this simply that this has to be said in general – as it were, at random and without indicating anything absolutely definite, but simply because it is not very likely that God's word and grace should nowhere gain a real and final victory – then she would really have proclaimed grace and its holy law merely as a possibility and as a challenge, but not grace as the victorious power and the law as fulfilled by grace. In this case, she would after all be preaching a merely abstract 'idealism'; she herself would be an ideal and a postulate but not the God-given fulfilment which has already surpassed everything merely morally demanded, everything which merely ought to be. She would after all be merely the law and not the *pneuma* which is poured out. She herself would be on the side of the law which is the goad of sin; she would be merely on the side of those to be redeemed and not the tangible expression of the grace of redemption. If this were so, then the more the Church would speak about holiness – the clearer and more forcibly she would proclaim the mere demand for holiness – the more she would be the Old Testament synagogue of the law. Yet she is after all distinguished from the latter precisely by the fact that she does not proclaim the law as a demand (although she must do this also, since we, her listeners, are always in transition from the servitude of the flesh to the freedom of the Holy Spirit); rather, she proclaims the fulfilment of the law which has been accomplished in us by the grace of God. Hence, she must be able to state her holiness in the concrete. She must have a 'cloud of witnesses' whom she can indicate by name. She cannot merely maintain that there is a history of salvation (without it being known exactly where it takes place with real, final success), but she must *really relate* that very eschatological history of salvation which she is herself. The prize of her actual Saints belongs to her innermost being and is not merely something which she 'also' achieves 'on the side', something which has been inspired by a purely human need for hero worship.

The mission to praise the grace of God as something which has come and conquered contains the obligation of the Church to call herself the one who is holy throughout the ages, and to make this statement about herself in a concrete way as seen in the prize of the Saints given by name. The Church must, therefore, begin with Mary, the Protomartyr, and the Apostles; but she cannot stop there. She must [97] retain the power which was active in the primitive Church when she 'canonized' Our Lady, the Protomartyr and the Apostles, otherwise she would simply have been the holy Church at one time without *being* it still; she could no longer actually praise the grace of God, which has really been granted to her as something which saves and sanctifies.

THE SAINTS: CREATORS OF NEW CHRISTIAN MODES OF LIFE

Having reached this point, it can now be seen more clearly what is the exact function of the Saints in the Church. They are of vital importance for her constitution, not merely as successful products of the Church in her role as an institutional establishment of salvation, products who – brought to maturity by instruction and education, direction and means of grace – are, as it were, handed over as the completed end-result to the 'triumphant' Church. They belong, precisely as Saints here on earth, to the very essence of the Church; if she

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lacked her Saints, she herself would not be what she must be. The Church is not merely a saving institution and thus the teacher of truth and administrator of the means of grace, directed – as if to mere objects – towards those who do not administer this institution in an official capacity. If the Church were holy merely in her objective institutions, then she would be the Synagogue and there would be the danger (and, in the long run, the insurmountable danger) that the unholy sinners might turn the holy institutions into a weapon against God himself and that they might destroy these institutions together with the 'synagogue'. These baptized, sanctified men – who believe and love – *are* the Church (a platitude which, alas, is still not really understood and lived by the people of the Church today). This Church, understood as the people of God to which belong all those who are baptized and who have the true faith – this Church understood as the Body of Christ whose members are not confined to the office-bearers – must be holy, must represent in a historically tangible manner the victory of God's grace. It is certainly true that this happens already through all the 'saints' in the *biblical* sense, i.e. through all those who have been justified by faith, love and baptism, and who thus live a truly Christian life, since all 'saints' who have been called by God, who have come into his holy nearness and who have been claimed by Him as his property, form the assembled congregation of Christ, the holy Church. Those [98] whom we in present-day usage call Saints have in fact no special advantage in this respect over all those 'saints' in the biblical sense, i.e. in regard to formation of the holy Church as the historical witness of the holy and sanctifying God and his grace which has already and finally begun its reign. We can indeed say that these Saints in the modern, liturgical and canonical sense tower over all the other 'saints' – in other words, over us ordinary Christians – by their 'heroic' virtue, but that this virtue is something extraordinary and that therefore these Saints have an extraordinary task to perform as representatives of the holy Church. This is quite correct, but it is surely not enough. For where the Christian reality is present by the power of grace (which signifies an absolutely new beginning), everything which follows from this and grows out of it cannot signify anything more than a difference in degree as compared with the absolutely new being in relation to the one who has not been justified. The heroic nature of the virtues of the (canonized) Saints cannot *alone* explain their special task in the Church. But they undoubtedly have such a special task. For why otherwise can the Church exercise in their regard alone that authority and power of decision by which she reaches into the ultimate secrets of conscience and into the very depths of eternity, an authority and power of decision which she cannot exercise in regard to everyone who has passed over, signed by faith and who now rests in the sleep of peace? This surely cannot be explained simply by the fact that such a procedure would be too awkward and that it really does not benefit Christian existence – which must work out its salvation in 'fear and trembling' – if every Christian who has died a good death were to be 'canonized'. No doubt it is also not explained by saying simply that the Church would ultimately no longer be the believing, merely hoping Church who is still a pilgrim, if it were known with certainty of all those who have belonged to her right up to death that they have finally attained salvation. For it is, of course, true that – even if the general separation were to take place merely at the boundary of death, and thus in a way clearly recognizable for all others here on earth – then the Church would no longer be both the Church of Saints *and* sinners, the threshing floor covered with chaff and wheat, the net filled with good and bad fishes, and this in such a way that the division between the two is known by God and his angels alone. All this is true but does not itself explain why only a few ('heroic') Saints among the 'saints' in the biblical sense can and may be canonized. These must have a more particular task [99] than merely being 'especially excellent' cases from among the ordinary (average) 'saints'.

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But in what does the specific importance of (canonized or canonizable[4]) Saints for the constitution of the holy Church consist? To make any headway here, it will be necessary to note the following: we must not conceive the holiness of the Church and of the Saints merely as the complete fulfilment of an always equal and static, supernaturally moral debit which floats as an unchangeable ideal over the history of the Church and which is realized ever anew by new generations of the Church under her direction. The Church has a genuine history, a unique history of salvation and hence also of holiness. Even though the 'essence' of Christian holiness remains always the same, it does not simply always 'happen' in the 'same way' in each Saint. The differences between Saints (which no one would deny) are not merely sublime accidents of a merely temporal kind, which are of no consequence for the holiness itself which they realize. No, precisely these unique accidents of history, the 'individual factor', the 'physiognomic element' of the Saints enters into eternity with them, into that eternity which is not something purely abstract but the genuine and permanent, individual product of history. Otherwise there would be a '*cultus sanctitatis*' in the Church but no '*cultus sanctorum*', and one would have to recommend moral theology books for reading and not the lives of the Saints. Just as there is a real development of dogmas, i.e. a history of the appropriation of truth, so there is also a history of holiness, i.e. the always unique, unrepeatable history of the appropriation of God's grace and of the partaking of God's holiness. Hence, the true nature of Christian holiness cannot be clearly and solely deciphered from a Christian theology of essences or, even less, from a 'natural law' (with a supernatural goal), no matter how necessary and indispensable such philosophical and theological ethics may be. The nature of Christian holiness appears from the life of Christ and of his Saints; and what appears there cannot be translated absolutely into a general theory but must be experienced in the encounter with the historical which takes place from one individual case to the other. The history of Christian holiness (of what, in other words, is the business of every Christian, since everyone is sanctified and called to holiness) is in its totality a unique history and not the eternal return of the same. Hence [100] this history has its always new, unique phases; hence it must always be discovered anew (even though always in the imitation of Christ who remains the inexhaustible model), and this by all Christians. Herein lies the special task which the canonized Saints have to fulfil for the Church. They are the initiators and the creative models of the holiness which happens to be right for, and is the task of, their particular age. They create a new style; they prove that a certain form of life and activity is a really genuine possibility; they show experimentally that one can be a Christian even in 'this' way; they make such a type of person believable as a Christian type. Their significance begins therefore not merely after they are dead. Their death is rather the seal put on their task of being creative models, a task which they had in the Church during their lifetime,[5] and their living-on means that the example they have given remains in the Church as a permanent form.[6] Anyone who really understands what is meant by the history of the

[4] The following exposition is not meant to imply that everyone who has exercised the special task to which we refer will also be actually canonized.

[5] To repeat: a model is not merely the plastic representation ('case') of an abstract ideal, which already justifies itself in its abstractness, or of a general norm. The concrete picture is not a concept which has been illustrated for the ignorant, while the intelligent can live without pictures and models by the theoretical norms. The concrete model renders what is represented present for the first time to the others as something genuinely possible. The fact that the model itself is present is the undeniable miracle of the Spirit in the Church (similarly as in the other dimensions of the uniquely creative).

[6] We have here a similar case to that of the intercession and the communication of grace to us by the Blessed in heaven: it too does not signify any new (historical) initiative on the part of the Blessed, an initiative – that is – which would be independent of and externally added to their real, historical life, but objectively simply the permanent validity of their life for the one world in the eyes of God, a validity which God has conceived as an element of the one world of the spirit, of the ethical and of faith, at the same time as he willed this one world, in

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spirit and by the fact that the history of the Church (and of her holiness) is a unique and connected history will not object against what has been said that in this case the 'old' Saints are no longer topical. For the history of the spiritual means precisely that something *becomes* real in order to *remain*, not in order to disappear again, so that this permanence does not militate against the real becoming of what precisely was not always there already, and the becoming is the event of what is eternally valid and not of what is swallowed up again. The creative, first appearance of a historical form (and thus also, for instance, of holiness) just does not mean that the past of a spiritual history becomes thereby simply outmoded. (Plato has not ceased to be important for us [101] simply because we can no longer philosophize with him as if there had never been a Kant.) At most, the only truth in this objection would be the fact that even the creative models of our holiness have still a further history in the Church after their death, through the always new historical realizations of the holy in the Church. (Thus, for instance, even a dutiful son of St Francis can today no longer prescind 'romantically' from the fact that since the time of St Francis there has been an Ignatius; and even the sons of St Ignatius are not the guardians of 'final truth', for 'final truth' is not to be found in the history of holiness, i.e. in the historical validity of the life of Christ, since He too *lives* on even to the end of history.)

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SAINTS

When the Church canonizes, she says: this life which has been lived is genuine and full Christianity, although – no, because – the way in which such a Saint has lived is not at all self-evident: in the desert and quite 'unecclesiastically'; as an intellectually daring scholar; in humdrum conditions and within pitiful horizons; as a perfectly normal Central European, as a very 'egocentric' beggar (almost like any typical down-and-out); and in a thousand other ways which one never recognizes as Christian possibilities until afterwards, until after they have been lived in a holy way. For the most part, such things are recorded afterwards in the 'lives of the Saints' as at best merely proofs of the virtue of the Saints. For the rest, however, they are rendered harmless, or are deftly touched up, as if it were immediately evident that one can be a Christian, and even a saintly one, in *such* conditions. Yet in reality the way the Saint lived his life was an adventure, and an adventure whose 'rule' it was impossible to discover simply in any theoretical moral rule or in the rule of a Religious Order (alone), even though the Saint himself, in his humility and simple fidelity to the inner inspirations of the Holy Spirit, often was unaware how 'original' (in the truest sense of the word) and how unique he was (at least in this or that aspect of his Christian existence). How many Christians today realize clearly that Francis of Assisi managed to achieve what the Waldensians had in mind and what in their case was rejected (and quite rightly, since it was distorted) as unecclesiastical idealism? The clashes of St Ignatius with the Spanish Inquisition and his later fights for the characteristic ideal of his Order (even Pius V was still [102] trying to impose the communal choral Office on the Jesuits), the persecution – to the point of his ignominious and bitter confinement to the monastery – which a St John of the Cross had to endure, the inquisitorial process together with monastic confinement inflicted on Mary Ward, the very real danger of being put on the Index which threatened the holy Doctor of the Church, Robert Bellarmine (at the hands of Sixtus V, because he did not seem 'papal' enough) . . . such and many similar facts show that the style of Christian existence lived by the Saints and sanctioned by their holiness was not by any means self-evident to their contemporaries. Only someone who *from the outset* has tacitly lowered Christianity, with its exorbitant demands, to

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which each thing depends on the whole, precisely as it is.

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the level of the standards of the 'decent citizen' who is 'practising' can think that it is really quite obvious how a Christian should love and that consequently there is no need for the successful risk – a risk canonized by the Church precisely because it was successful – as the ones taken by the Saints who are our examples. Only someone who underestimates the ever new character of situations of history can imagine that he can be satisfied with Christ and imitation of him, arguing that all the Saints in their lives can express only a very small aspect of the one Word become flesh. 'Be imitators of me as I am of Christ' (1 Co11:1), say the Saints together with St Paul. The Church, by canonization, confirms their word, not so much or even principally in order to honour the Saints but because she thus finds her own task, her own nature, in so far as it has to be realized precisely here and now and then continuously maintained as thus realized.

It is possible – this is only to be expected – to object that the possibility of holiness seen as a continuing imitation of Christ – a possibility demanded 'merely' in a particular situation – can be found by 'me' just as well, since the Saints after all also found it for themselves. Yet someone who says this, would first of all have to deny the possibility of creative example even in Christ himself. Furthermore, such an objector would turn each person into an isolated individual. Everyone must, of course, realize his own holiness; even as a Christian, everyone must find 'himself' and not someone else (even if this finding consists in the loss of his soul which, however, is his own). To this extent, of course, the same thing as what we have just said of the Saints happens in every 'ordinary' person. But for this very reason, everyone in a genuine community of the Holy Spirit is dependent on the others and finds himself only by seeing himself in others. The Saints, however, are as it were the 'official', appointed [103] ways of the Church's discovery of herself which have become publicly historical and which have been consciously adopted by the Church. To the same extent in which there is a public and official sphere of and in the Church *and*, side by side with this, also a sphere which remains private – and in as far as neither of these spheres may resolve itself into the other – we also have a canonized sanctity, seen as a self-realization of the Church, and the 'unknown' saints. Since *this* distinction (and not really the holiness in this or that person) is a specific one, i.e. an essential one, we have the right to say that the canonized Saints have a specific task. It is neither their holiness nor necessarily its measure (compared with ours) which is essentially new and different, but rather the explicit, conscious self-discovery in the official, public sphere, achieved by the Church through the canonization of these Saints. This does not necessarily mean that this happens in the case of every 'saint'. The greatest part of holiness must take place in silence, in being taken for granted and in forgetting about self, so that even the right hand of the Church does not know what the left hand is doing. Yet, since the Church must nevertheless *know* that she remains in all ages the holy one who thereby praises the grace of God, she must also know explicitly about some saints, which means quite possibly (who can say?) that she does not know anything at all about many of her greatest glories.

THE CHARISMATIC ORDER

In his encyclical '*Mystici Corporis*', Pius XII has shown that Christ is permanently the Head and ruler of the Church, not merely by the fact of having given the Church her ordinary magisterium and the pastors who govern the Church by his commission and in his name. He also rules *directly* by Himself. He does this, in turn, not merely by enlightening and strengthening the ecclesiastical rulers, but 'especially in difficult times, he raises up in the bosom of Mother Church men and women of outstanding sanctity to give example to other Christians and so promote the increase of his Mystical Body'. There is, therefore, a driving

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force for the further development of life in the Church which does not originate from the official element but directly from Christ himself, a law of life which goes out from 'Christ in a mysterious way in his own person' and embraces the saints who hold no office and through them affects the others *and* the official element. Hence, there is (as Pius XII shows) a double [104] structure in the 'organic construction of the Body of the Church': that of the grace of the hierarchy and that of the 'charismatics', just as in a biological organism there is not merely *one* structure but several, which condition each other in a mysterious way. The official element lives also by the charisms of the saints, although it remains true that the saint remains subject to the official element (understood as doctrine and government). The government must have not only an object but also a dynamism which can be directed. Naturally, the holder of an office and the charismatic can also be united in the one person. There have been such particularly fortunate cases. But it need not be so and it has not always been so. Anthony the Hermit, Benedict, Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Margaret Mary Alacoque, Theresa of the Child Jesus and many others have all been of irreplaceable importance for the history of the Church and for the Church herself in their function of direct receptors of the impulses of the Spirit. As Catholics, we are – quite rightly – accustomed to think anti-Donatistically, i.e. to distinguish the office with its rights and the sacrament with its efficacy, from the personal holiness of the office-holder and of the minister of the sacrament. This is necessary for the individual events in the Church. The Church is not the community of Christians who are already recognized as predestined for salvation and who can be isolated as such. She is therefore the Church of sinners, of those who are *in via*, the Church of hope, of the secret of election kept concealed by God, and of the impossibility of anticipating the Judgement here on earth. Since, however, she must be the city set on a hill and the assembled flock of Christ – in other words, the visible Church – the validity of the office cannot be dependent in the individual case on the inner holiness of the office-holder. This truth in its turn, however, must not be allowed to cancel out the other truth, viz. that the Church is meant to be and to appear as the community of eschatological salvation and of victorious grace. Hence, at the decisive points of the history of salvation, i.e. for example and above all in Mary, the historical salvific function and holiness have fused inseparably into one. For this reason, the Church which is overpowered by God's grace whose coming is no longer left to human choice, *must* always have her Saints and always be, and profess herself to be, the Church of the Saints.

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8

SOME THOUGHTS ON ‘A GOOD INTENTION’

Writing today about ‘a good intention’ or, as it is also called, ‘a perfect intention’, it will not be possible to expect an immediate spark of interest, not even from Christians for whom the spiritual life still means something. One will necessarily give the impression of treating of something which only those can afford who ‘have nothing better to do’; one will have to be prepared to meet the objection that the man of today, in the hustle and difficulty of his life, cannot burden himself with such pious technicalities which only involve additional nervous strain. We will speak of other, more important misgivings in the course of our reflections.

I

1. *The Twofold Unity of Intention and Action*

Let us state first of all what is meant by ‘a good intention’. We are always doing something as long as we live. This means in most cases some external action: walking, reading, talking, shovelling coal, and many other such things. We do, of course, also have thoughts, inner feelings, ‘experiences’ and attitudes. But one thing cannot be denied: our life consists for the most part of actions which are performed *ad extra*, of activities in which man is occupied with something other than himself, actions by which he intervenes, and effects something, in the external world of things and fellow human beings. Without these activities man could not fulfil his life at all. He cannot live in pure inwardness. He cannot make himself a pure spirit. Even the internal is still achieved in the material of his external actions and of things and achievements to which these actions refer. Not only would this be impossible, even if he wanted to withdraw himself into his interiority, but he would soon notice that his inner experience would become thin and unreal, and that he would not be achieving [106] what he wants, viz. the intensification and deepening of his ‘interior life’. Hence he must have actions *ad extra*, and this is just as much part of his life – and more precisely, of his spiritual life – as the inner processes.

There are in fact *no purely internal* processes in a properly metaphysical sense. For everyday purposes it is possible to distinguish between internal and external acts. The former are those which others cannot see; one might almost define the matter thus and deduce from this that we are here concerned with a purely practical distinction. For what cannot be seen? Which of our internal conditions and decisions does not necessarily form itself into our corporeality? What element in them objectifies itself in no way at all? The answer is: none at all. Everything, even innermost human matters, are still corporeal, dependent on the material and thus on something already directed towards the external world, something objectified, something open to the grasp from outside (including even the truth drug and the methods of the bolshevists who successfully put the ‘right ideas’ into one’s mind by means of chemicals); everything in our innermost being is directed towards the outside and finds its resonance in the world of things. Yet the distinction between external and internal human acts is of great importance, not indeed in the sense of a division of two strictly separate classes but in the sense of a preponderance of the internal or the external, even though all human acts are both internal and external.

Hence, man objectifies himself and his inner outlook, his original free decision and attitude ‘*ad extra*’, into what moral theology calls ‘external-acts’. Indeed, he only achieves the

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internal exercise – at least in a really deep and genuine manner – when this exercise objectifies itself outwardly. The external activity is not always merely a subsequent announcement and a secondary consequence of this internal decision, but just as frequently (indeed in the last analysis, always, to some extent) it is that in which alone the internal act can be achieved and posited. Just as the body is not merely a later vestment and tool of the soul, but is that in which the soul itself can first of all achieve its own being, so it is also with man's activities: the external activity is also the condition of the internal, and not merely vice versa.

2. *The Ambiguity of the External Action*

In spite of what has been said, the external action is not identical with the internal act. One could say: the original freedom and the achieved freedom [107] have need of each other but they are not the same. The external action may be present even when the internal act is weak. Although it possesses corporeality which reveals the internal act, the external action nevertheless does not have an absolutely clear relationship to that internal act: the same thing in the realm of the external action may have a number of quite different origins, good or bad, existentially central or peripheral.[1] It is the same here as in the relationship between body and soul: the soul expresses itself in the body and at the same time veils itself in it; the face is the mirror of the soul and yet does not volunteer its secret. The external action may have arisen out of a certain attitude and may persist in itself (in its corporeal effects, in the lines of association, in the complexes, etc., which were created by this corporeality) or in the effect which it has had in the actual 'external world', while the inner intention which had given rise to it has long since changed. The inner frame of mind may really have intended something quite different from what was expressed in the external action. In addition, there is the fact that the reach of the plastic power of spiritual freedom into the corporeal reality (which itself reaches deep down into the so-called 'inner' reality) is rather limited and finite, so that for this reason alone one cannot clearly interpret from external reality what is, and is possessed, within. All this must be taken into account when one wants to know what is really meant by a 'good intention'.

If the external and internal acts are not simply the same, then it follows from this that nothing definite about the value of a man and his actions can be decided by the correctness of his external actions. Moral values must spring from the heart, from one's original freedom; only there is the source from which they can come. Only where, out of the very centre of its heart, the free spirit – borne by divine grace – makes a decision having its source in God and leading to God, does there come into being the action which can remain eternally. Hence, seen from this point of view, everything depends on the 'intention'; in the words of the majority of moral theologians: the external action has no morality of its own. The external action is also no clear criterion for this inner intention, in the sense of being able to see clearly from it what genuine or false motives are really present within. God sees the heart. Man always sees merely the [108] façade, no matter how thoroughly he practises depth-psychology or similar disciplines on himself or on others. For, whatever can be discovered objectively by these means is still not that original, consciously and objectively intangible centre of spiritual freedom[2] from which alone moral good and evil can proceed.

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[1] Cf. on this our few reflections in the essay: 'Guilt and its remission: the borderland between theology and psychotherapy' (in *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 265 *sqq*.).

[2] Although nothing can be subjectively culpable unless man has clearly recognized it as such and willed it really freely (which again can be done only knowingly), and although psychology and the scholastic theory of knowledge emphasize that one cannot have any greater subjective and objective certitude about anything than

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[109] 3. *The Ultimate Source of the Moral Act*

Yet it is true to say that the internal and external acts are not related to each other simply as cause and effect external to the cause. They are related as . . . soul and body, the soul being the form intrinsic to the body and intrinsically animating it, and the body being that in which the soul first achieves its own being. Hence the internal intention cannot do without the external act. But it follows from both statements just made that the internal intention cannot simply rely on being right simply because the external act is right, for this act is an ambiguous consequence of the internal act; however, the internal intention cannot declare itself to be disinterested in the external act (since God after all regards only the 'heart'), for it itself attains its own proper being only in the searching investigation of the external act. True Christian morality is therefore a balance between the internal intention of the heart and the external act, a balance which always goes from one to the other without resting or taking root in either one of them. It does not rest in 'interiority', for this can be extremely thin and empty and deceptive if it does not continually 'inform' itself anew and powerfully into very real deeds. It does not rest in external deeds either – as if ultimately and after all only such sturdy, honest and solid things mattered and not just 'feelings' and 'moods' – for all 'good works', no matter how good and right and beneficial they may be to one's neighbour, can also be empty of what alone endows them with true saving value, viz. the believing, hoping love of the heart. This love they cannot carry on their own; this love cannot completely enter into them, for it reaches out beyond every concrete act to the infinity of God in himself.

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about these immediate data of one's own consciousness, the Church and her theology, in accordance with the teaching of the Council of Trent, nevertheless holds fast to the truth that man cannot have any real and absolute certitude about the state of his own conscience and his state of grace. In the ultimate analysis, however, this uncertainty can be conditioned only by man's freedom and by his personal decision (about all other factors concerning the possession of grace it is quite possible to reach a reductively metaphysical certitude – of experience or of faith). Hence there is no other way, in our opinion, of solving the dilemma beginning to appear here between clear knowledge of the immediate data of consciousness, on the one hand, and the uncertainty of the same data (as conditions of the state of grace), on the other hand, than by distinguishing between a sphere of the reflex and reflexible data of consciousness and a sphere of the unreflected and to some extent also basically unreflectable realities of consciousness incapable of being objectified. In the latter we would include the proper and ultimate quality of a free decision with which man is so 'identical' that it cannot leave any room for him to give it adequate objectification, without it following from this that he in no way – or even in no *certain* way – knows about this quality. This is impossible because the free is precisely the conscious and because 'unconscious' factors cannot be considered when dealing with a free action *as such*. This is not the place to discuss what other 'objects' belong to this deeper sphere (a sphere which has hardly anything to do with the depth-consciousness of today's depth-psychology). The two spheres mentioned naturally are not separated from one another by a wall; they are ('spheres' is an image) real but 'really different' elements of the one consciousness which must not be imagined as the surface like a cinema screen, as if what is not objectively visible on it could not be in consciousness at all. Since there is an inner connection between these two 'spheres', there is a concomitant or subsequent possibility of reflecting on the free action, and hence also naturally the possibility and duty of a reflexly-considered morality which conforms to principles and is accountable to itself and to others. But this reflection and consideration does not completely catch up with what the individual does in the concrete. But in this sphere (and, in our opinion, only in this sphere) the individual does not really know absolutely exactly what he really does, although he must know it if he is to be responsible for his actions, and although he is in no way responsible for what he does not know at all. Hence, he must at the same time 'know' and 'not know'. But so that this may not simply be a cheap paradox, we must distinguish between these two spheres and must allot the knowing and not-knowing to them. We have spoken of this here since otherwise some of the things we will have to say in a moment would not be completely comprehensible.

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II GOOD INTENTION

1. *Task and Goal*

From what we have seen so far, a 'good intention' could be called: the practising effort to establish more and more perfectly the necessary unity between internal and external action, a unity always remaining a task to be achieved anew. This unity must be established in such a way as to make the external act always more concrete and perfect in this unity, by making it spring in ever-increasing purity and directness from the correct internal attitude and holding it, as it were, in its origin. On the [110] other hand, the internal attitude (in the sense of free act) must in this way become more and more genuine and true, by testing itself more and more in the material of tangible and hard reality and by embodying itself more and more into this reality in which alone it can be properly achieved.

Of course, an intention is 'good' and 'perfect' only when it is directed towards that good which avails unto salvation. Up till now we have merely spoken in general about the twofold unity between internal and external activity in general. What we have said up till now could basically also apply or be applied to morally bad internal and external activity. A good intention is one which extends into the external act in the sense of animating it and which realizes itself in it if it is directed to the good or the perfect. The question now is, when is this the case?

2. *Christian Motivation*

For the Christian, this question takes the following form: what are the presuppositions for the supernatural meritoriousness of an act? Do these include also a motive for acting which is taken from the realm of faith? Theologians generally answer in the affirmative, i.e. they are almost unanimously of the opinion today that a motive for acting which is taken from a merely natural morality would not make the act arising from it an act of Christian existence – an act 'done in the Holy Spirit', a supernaturally meritorious act – even if the person concerned were to perform this act as a Christian and as someone justified, in short: as someone who is in the state of grace. And this answer is quite right: grace, or the state of justification, is something which should pass into act and bear fruit. This fruit, however, according to the defined teaching of the Church based on the Scriptures, can only be found where God's Spirit is at work, where the Spirit 'urges', 'attracts', where He prays with us in his inexpressible groanings, where he pleads for the saints, where his unction teaches us, where he enlightens and inspires. Now, no matter how one may conceive the internal influence of God's *Pneuma* – and especially if one thinks of it as not purely unconscious but as enlightening from within and as a conscious inspiration – this internal influence of God's *Pneuma* cannot be thought of as simply independent of the word which is the message of Christ and which comes by hearing. If this word were in any way basically unimportant for salvation, and if internal grace and the consequent internal, supernatural elevation of our act were simply sufficient, then it would be difficult to see why there should be any [111] external, historically transmitted, preached message of salvation at all, a message which is entrusted to a visible Church and its authoritative magisterium. In that case, Christianity would be in the last analysis a mysticism of interiority and not also (equally essentially) a history, Church, word (which is different from 'experience' and interior states) and sacrament. In short, it must be maintained that an internal intention can be a good intention only when it gives saving significance to man's actions, when it is an intention which is an answer to the word of the historically communicated message accepted in faith. (We need not worry in this connection about how there can nevertheless be a possibility of salvation for

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those who seem to have at no time during their life come into contact with God's historically communicated word of revelation, and thus are quite unable to make its content the object of their outlook, attitude and intention. This question belongs to a different frame of reference.)

3. *Actual and Virtual Intention*

Those theologians who normally are more moderate than the ascetics and teachers of ascetic theology certainly emphasize that the motive of faith which must animate a man's view and intention if his act is to be a work of grace does not necessarily need to be as explicit and reflex as one might be inclined to think from the statement just made. As is well known, moral theologians distinguish between actual and virtual intention. The former is an intention by which one acts out of an explicitly and clearly, objectively comprehended motive, and in fact a motive which is explicitly conscious at the moment of doing the action for which this motive is to constitute the motivation. Someone, for instance, who feeling insulted by some injurious word were to pounce on the speaker – and this at the very moment of hearing this word – so as to avenge himself by a box on the ear, would be acting (i.e. in giving the box on the ear) from an *actual* motive of revengefulness. For at the moment of his action, this motive is explicitly and clearly present in his consciousness as the object of his knowledge and of his volition, and out of this motive thus present there springs the action concerned, viz. the box on the ear. A *virtual* motive is one which at the moment of the action concerned is not present explicitly and as an object of consciousness and yet has a truly causal influence on the action, even though it is comprehended only globally and is 'present' only on the periphery of consciousness or in some [112] similar manner. A mother, out of love for her child, washes its nappies. While she is washing them, she thinks perhaps only of nappies, or perhaps of preparing the meal which is to be ready in a couple of hours; she does not really think of her child. And yet, the love for her child, her concern for it, flows into this action; for she would not be doing it at all if she did not love her child. Our mental life is an uninterrupted stream of thoughts and impulses whose intentional objects may be present in the most varied degrees, whose individual elements condition each other, and which are dependent on previous objects, incorporate and then prolong previous elements by apparently allowing them to pass into the subconscious. Since the mother – we may say – has at one time had an actual loving intention towards her child, she is now washing the nappies, and this action is still the result and embodiment of that intention which she no longer has in any (very) actual sense; she has a virtual intention and viewpoint, and the action springing from this in its turn allows the renewed growth of that intention and viewpoint out of which it itself arose, and at a given opportunity brings the latter to the surface again as an actual intention.

This conceptual distinction does not solve every problem by a long way. It itself contains more problems than might be suspected at first sight. Nevertheless, we can understand what moral theology says fairly clearly: to make an action supernaturally meritorious, it is sufficient if behind the external action there is *virtually* a motive of faith, in the sense of an intention causing the action. In practice this means, therefore, that whenever a Christian does his duty in the external activity of his life, that which he does even in this realm is really Christian activity, provided it can honestly be said that he would not act 'in this way' if he were not internally adjusted to the truth offered him by the Christian explanation of existence, i.e. if this attitude did not determine his actions. This is valid even when, at the moment of performing the acts about which we are asking, he does not 'think of the good God' and so does not expressly envisage a motive of faith.

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III. THE PROBLEM OF GOOD INTENTIONS

1. *The Simultaneous Occurrence of Different Motives*

What has been said up until now appears to be perfectly comprehensible and also very comforting. But reality is not quite as simple as that. In [113] real life, we are not at all under the influence of 'chemically pure' motives, but for the most part are under the simultaneous influence of a great number of very different – and even morally very different – and contradictory motives. This is possible because, as we have already said, one can realize the same end for different intentions, and this not only one after the other but in such a way that one's action is at the same time the product of mutually contradictory impulses. It will certainly be possible to say in the metaphysical sense (without explaining this more in detail here) that when these different motives move the same individual simultaneously, then they cannot all start at the same point in the person; they cannot all then be the simultaneous expression of one and the same real core of the person: one motive will have its 'seat' more on the periphery and others more in the centre. Yet precisely because man is a many-layered being, precisely because he is not the abstractly formalized person one may so easily conceive him to be in moral theology, precisely because he is constructed as it were in layers starting at an interior core and becoming more and more external, and because (even free) activations can spring from many different layers (since formal freedom is not simply something situated 'in' the core of the person but also extends in a certain diffuse way over the whole person) . . . precisely because of all this, it is possible to do one and the same thing and yet have several, in themselves contradictory, motives and intentions for it. For instance, one can preach for the sake of the salvation of souls and at the same time do it out of conceit. One does not in this case preach only out of love of God and happen to be 'at the same time' – as it were, incidentally – conceited. No, what really happens is that the conceit is not merely 'kindled' by some action already perfectly determined out of pure love for souls even before this conceit, but that the conceit really co-determines and causes this sermon. Naturally, as has been said, this must not be understood as if both – the act of love of God and the conceit – could simultaneously produce the one act in such a way that both would arise equally *centrally* in the concrete. Otherwise it would be possible in certain circumstances to be simultaneously someone in mortal sin and someone who loves God and is justified.

2. *The 'Unknown' Nature of Many Motives*

This truth (which incidentally is easily understandable when we remember the existential plurality of the human being and, at the same time, the [114] interlacement of this same being in a single point, viz. in the 'heart' in the biblical sense) must again not mislead us into thinking that if one has a motive for one's action (*for*, and not merely *in*), then one certainly does not have any other motive for the same action – or into thinking that if one has an actual motive of which one is quite conscious, then one certainly has no other motive which could influence one at least virtually. All one has to do is to observe oneself a little more closely. It is after all precisely this which largely constitutes the obscurity of the moral situation of man. We act not only out of motives we know reflexly. There will certainly be, as it were, subterranean impulses for which we are *not* responsible, even though they very clearly help to colour our behaviour. Who has not observed someone else in love where he is not aware of the fact of his love determining his actions, done *expressly* out of quite *different* motives, yet this is so clear that even an external observer can notice it. But there are certainly cases where

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unconscious or subconscious, merely globally present and only virtually effective motives[3] – motives which are completely different from, and even contradictory to, the motive consciously 'put before oneself' – fall fully under the responsibility of man, either directly or indirectly, immediately or '*in causa*'. We cannot here explain and prove this last statement more exactly. No, one who has a real metaphysical understanding of the fact that the real freedom is situated originally in the core of the person, that it is 'identical'[4] [115] with the person and hence can never be brought completely to a reflexly present objectivity – no one who has ever noticed or heard anything about repression of guilt, who has experienced to what extent real decisions can happen apparently quite unconsciously and yet not for that reason without responsibility – will deny that even motives which, on the one hand, influence an action *ad extra* most essentially and yet, on the other hand, are present only on the periphery of consciousness or in a virtually effective way, may very well be the exercise or consequence of a free decision and hence be part of our moral responsibility. If this is true, however, then it is also true that our many-sided and heterogeneous moral intentions and motivation (our viewpoint) must be purified, and that this purification is our moral duty since we cannot regard ourselves from the outset as always and in general free from responsibility for these merely peripherally conscious, merely virtual motives and intentions.

3. *The Necessity of Purifying Motives*

At this point there arises the moral obligation of a good intention. For if what has been said is correct, then we can and must say: it is not enough to have a good motive in your external action and behaviour – a motive drawn from faith and one which you have freely and explicitly chosen for yourself – and you must not think in this matter that such a motive is 'virtually' present sufficiently in you by the very fact that after all you want to be a Christian and basically honour the thought of having to and wanting to lead a Christian life. Rather you must reckon with the fact that, even in such a basic attitude, the actual motives of your actions do not spring from this basic attitude alone but also from other attitudes which are not merely morally indifferent but of a morally poor quality. Hence you have the duty to concern yourself with the purifying of your motives. *How* a Christian fulfils this duty is quite another question and one which does not yet occupy us at this moment. Hence it still remains a perfectly open question as to whether the fulfilment of this duty does not to some extent go materially beyond what belongs to the duties of a Christian in the unanimous opinion of everyone, even independently of this, duty just mentioned. Nevertheless, it is important to begin with to see the duty itself: man who is supposed to live also reflexly (to a certain extent

[3] At this point we do not yet distinguish between motive and urge, a distinction we will introduce to some extent later on when it becomes necessary for our reflections.

[4] 'Identical' naturally is not meant in the sense of a formal Ontology and Logic, in which such a notion is '*in indivisibili*' (or at least seems to be for many: real differentiation is not after all basically a notion which is realized everywhere in the same way, so that the disparity of what is thus differentiated would always remain the same; something analogous must therefore also apply to the notion of the identical). We envisage here rather a fact which is also theologically important: freedom must have its seat so deeply at that point in the originally one nature of man which is the source and centre of man's capacities, that it is really meaningful and thinkable that, for example, the whole man may be implicated on account of a decision of this 'individual capacity' of the free will – and this even to the extent of total and final damnation – without being able to say: how can 'I' help it, why must 'I' suffer for the fact that my will was evil? In other words, the scholastic principle that *actiones sunt suppositorum* must not be read merely as an axiom of a formal Ontology but must be understood *analogously* so that it will be seen to follow from it that the ontological relation between a subject, on the one hand, and its capacities and acts, on the other, is a fluid one and that it attains its (finite) climax in the direction of an identity (which is really attained only in God) in the spiritual person and its freedom.

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and degree, since he is capable of this reflection), must count with the fact that not only his explicit and objective motivations determine the [116] moral quality of his actions but also other motives for which he is morally responsible, and thus even as a reflexly knowing person who elevates his motivation into the sphere of conscious, objective presence. He has furthermore the duty to care in advance for his life and even for his spiritual and moral life. He cannot understand his life, even mentally, as a merely external sequence of acts, each one of which stands quite independently within itself. For he will later on act *as* the one he now is and now becomes through his present free actions. This, however, is conditioned by the *whole* sum of motivations influencing the present act. Thus, every present moment already predisposes the future to a certain extent. Since man is and can be someone who reflects, and since he already uses up a part of his future at the present moment, man has a duty to purify his motives. For he cannot simply and in every respect disregard the semi- and peripherally-conscious motives which impel him subterraneously, simply because they are only such. They do after all help to condition the present and the future of his spiritual existence both of which it is his duty to care for, and they are not completely inaccessible to the exercise of his influence. But anyone who has the duty to care for something has also (in so far as it is subject to his influence) a duty to care for anything which co-determines the object of his immediate care.

The foregoing has simply served to express and prove in the abstract and somewhat awkwardly something which is quite self-evident, and yet it represents an important insight. The one man – and hence also the spiritual and freely responsible man – lives not only in the zone of the explicit and objective and, as it were, 'officially' given motives. He draws his life out of soil and roots whose quality he comes to recognize only slowly and never adequately. He cannot say that all this does not concern him, as if the 'this' and the 'he' were two distinct things and the 'he' can be held responsible only for 'himself', provided this 'himself' is strictly identical with this 'he'. One needs only to bring these abstractions down to the concrete a little in order to see their practical and yet not quite self-evident meaning. Who has not at some time been tempted to think (and the history of philosophy and of the spirit confirms this temptation): there is 'in' me a passionate nature, a concupiscence; but this as such is not 'me', for according to Catholic teaching it is precisely the area where one has not yet freely (i.e. through this 'me') agreed to it: it is still pre-moral and cannot qualify man as yet in a properly moral [117] sense. Hence 'I let it carry on', 'I let it be' and wait until it eventually quietens down by quite simply withdrawing 'myself' from it into the spiritual inviolability of my personal freedom; I simply do not have any positive responsibility for its shaping and formation. Such an opinion, if carried to its logical conclusion, would ontologically and ethically split up the one person; it would turn the relative plurality in man – a plurality which remains subordinate to and incorporated into the basic unity of his essential nature which, *as* the *one* nature, develops into the various body-soul dimensions – into an absolute plurality of things which influence each other only from without. That this whole set of problems has not yet been completely worked out in moral theology, can be seen for example from the very practical controversy still going on in moral theology about why, for what reason and to what extent a person is obliged to offer positive resistance to the disordered sensual impulses.[5]

To repeat: whether all this can be done quite easily in practice, whether too much reflection can be harmful, all these are different questions which are not yet answered in the negative by what has been said. What we have just said in principle about the duty of purifying one's motives and hence of practising good intentions, or – more precisely – of improving one's

[5] Cf. e.g. A. Vermeersch, *Theologia moralis* I[3] (Rome 1933), n. 68.

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real intentions, will become clearer and better understood once we unfold the practical applications involved in all this.

IV. GOOD INTENTIONS IN PRACTICE

1. *Choice of Motives*

(a) False attempts: There can be good intentions which are such only in appearance. Not because the object of these motives is not good, but because these motives do not really affect the action concerned but are entertained in the mind merely 'on the occasion of' the action without being grasped freely by the will, and thus do not co-determine the action. When I go in good spirits to lunch (I have looked forward for some time to that veal cutlet, letting myself sink blissfully, as it were, into the animal desire aroused by the lovely smell already filling the whole house), and I think then, while my mouth is watering as I sit with the veal in front of me: 'all to the greater honour of God', then . . . well, what is really [118] happening then? First of all, let it be recognized as absolutely praiseworthy that one does not forget God altogether in such a situation. Let it be recognized that such a 'good intention' can quite easily be a sign that this person, in his basic attitude and general make-up, is more than just someone concerned exclusively with animal pleasures. Yet, as the example presupposes, one will not be able to say that this pious thought really forms this act of eating. It is a pious thought 'on the occasion of' an action but not a motive or good intention of the act itself.

We do not wish to discuss here whether such an actual, very supernatural motivation directly related to such an, object is in any case meaningful and to be recommended. All that this example was meant to illustrate is that there are also merely apparently good intentions, even when they are apparently perfectly actual. The same is true, of course – only more so – of more virtual good intentions and motives which we would like to declare to be at the root of our daily actions so as to give them a higher moral value. It is quite correct that a basic Christian outlook *can* virtually influence the daily work of a person; it can condition it and thus give it a really Christian, religious significance even when one does not explicitly 'think of God' and even without 'making' a good intention. This does not mean, however, that this is always so, or that it is always the case to any great extent whenever a Christian lives 'in the state of grace' and does not explicitly intend something evil. It may very well be that the actual deeds of such a Christian are determined only, or almost only, by impulses which, if not sinful, are at least so very earthly and superficial that the life of this person is to a great extent dead from a spiritual point of view. It is also no use quoting the axiom against this that every free action of an individual in the concrete is either morally good or morally evil, and that there are no indifferent actions. For this axiom tells us nothing about the *Christian*, *supernatural* quality of every free act. In fact, if one really wanted to bring complete clarity into this question, one would have to think about whether it would not be necessary to suppose there to be, even on the side of a man's morally good acts, that non-gradual but essential difference which according to the common teaching exists between venial and mortal sins. One would then have to ask: if there are 'venial' and 'grave' acts even in the sphere of moral good regarded from an existential point of view (acts which, as has been said, are distinguished not merely by a *gradually* greater or lesser meritoriousness), then *which* good act can be qualified as 'grave', and in [119] what way does this distinction depend also on how and to what extent a supernatural motive (in other words, a good intention) really is an effective factor in the constitution of the act concerned? But all these are questions we cannot treat of here. A careful interpretation of the statement about the possibility of an act lacking supernatural motives even in the case of a 'good Christian' – even when he does not

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sin properly speaking – would have to reflect more deeply than happens in the normal moral theology on the inner unity of the spiritual and personal life of man in which – much more than appears in the usual morality of acts – everything is interwoven and where everything supports and is supported by everything else. One would have to see things as they are in the unity of the life of the spirit, where the past is always 'preserved' and always actuated anew in the present of the spiritual person. Yet in so far as an action can have a different plurality of motives which are not merely the totality of the person's past life plus his now freely adopted basic outlook in the depth of his central freedom, it can quite easily happen that something determines an action as its motive only apparently.

From this it also becomes immediately clear that the practice of good intention or the purification of motives cannot, after the manner of a psychotechnical training of attention, consist in thinking as frequently as possible of a supernatural 'motive' when doing some external action. Quite apart from the fact that such a procedure (similar to an indiscreet 'living in the presence of God') can have most harmful psychological effects on one's nerves, this *accompanying* thought is in any case far from being a motive or good intention. It *may* in certain circumstances be the beginning of the real thing. It may be that, when I 'remind myself of the presence of God' and actually 'offer up' to him everything I am going to do, these thoughts and these explicitly formulated (even though, to begin with, only conceived) attitudes may really influence and help to form the actual action. But it need not be thus. If they have no mutual connection springing from the nature of things, then in spite of all possible psychotechnical efforts in practising good intentions, this motive will remain simply unconnected and alongside the action, like a mere thought-ballast. It may still be true that even something like this is good and meritorious as an expression and realization of an honest, pious striving and that as such it will be rewarded by God; but it is not a good intention. It may also happen that such a merely conceptual effort even actually prevents the action being done in an objectively good way out [120] of its motives and prevents the motives which really influence it from being purified. If a nun thinks a thousand times a day, on the side and in the form of ejaculations: 'all for the greater honour of God', even then it is not yet guaranteed that her actual deeds are done for the greater honour of God: indeed, such a practice can be an obstacle to this.

Since even serious and sober spiritual writers like Otto Zimmermann,[6] for instance, speak about it, we would like to mention and question one other practice with regard to good intention. Zimmermann calls it the 'practice of signs or of coming to an arrangement'. What is meant by this is the awakening of an actual good intention, which says for example: every beat of my heart will be an act of love, etc. In this category can also be included formulae like: I want to love you (God) with the heart of Our Lady.[7] No one will want to deprive people who love high-flown language of the joy they find in such and similar formulations. Yet one will also have to say that the mere fact of telling God that every heartbeat, day and night, is to be a song of praise in his honour, does not make the heartbeat become any more of a song of praise than it has always been already. Such a declaration may be an expression of a grateful, loving attitude towards God, a declaration worthy of all praise. But it cannot bring about what it declares. It is not, therefore, a good intention in the sense in which we are speaking, viz. as having the job of internally forming an external action through and through and of itself growing by such an external action. Zimmermann says to begin with: 'The heartbeat certainly does not itself by this practice become a moral and meritorious action.' This is perfectly true. Yet when he then continues: '. . . but it nevertheless becomes consecrated to God and sanctified by this practice', then one does not see how the two parts

[6] *Lehrbuch der Aszetik*[2] (Freiburg 1932), p. 597.
[7] Cf. on this our criticism of certain statements in J. Suenens in *ZKT* LXXV (1953).

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of this sentence can go together or how the second part is true. What in fact sanctifies the heartbeat, if quite certainly the offering of it changes nothing in the least about it either physically or morally? Or when Suenens[8] says: 'The soul united with Mary has only to unite itself in her with this sanctifying will (of God). It needs to know no more. Each breath with Mary is a spiritual longing. It is a ceaseless communion under the thousand different forms of present duty to be done. What peace, what security, what surrender'; then one must say: all this is very nice and may indeed be quite true, *if* one is [121] already united with Mary by that 'union' which would have to be presupposed in order to allow these statements their validity. Even then one might ask whether every breath is an elevation of the soul. Be that as it may, it cannot be presupposed that the normal Christian has that union which would have to be presupposed, and even less that it can be produced by any – even honestly meant – offering or actual 'union' (which at best can only desire but not bring about this union with Mary). Desiring all these things and declaring that one would like them, does not make them come about. The practice of good intention can get along without such rhetoric.

(b) Objective motivation: From what has been said, it will be seen to be more advisable to cultivate those motives which are *internally* connected with the task to be carried out here and now. If one does not do this, then there is at least a great danger that the good intention 'awakened' in one's individual works will simply remain a well-meant but merely associated thought which does not exercise any formative influence on the action itself. This cannot be recommended even when such a motive appears to be very 'lofty'. Certainly the moral dignity of a motive is co-determined by its formal object, i.e. by what is intentionally and properly meant and willed, loved and sought. For a love is always worth as much as *what* is loved. But such a thing must not simply be thought but must be loved. And this loved object is a determining factor in such an act to the extent in which it is truly 'realized' interiorly. If, therefore, I think while doing some work such as sweeping out my room: I am doing this for the greater honour of the most Blessed Trinity, then this act will in actual fact be no better on this account in most cases than if I sweep the room because I want to do this small action out of a truly human desire to help (which is also a Christian virtue commanded by the gospels). For normally, neither this pious thought influences the work itself, nor (ordinarily and with us average Christians) is this thought about the glory of the Holy Trinity really genuinely 'realized' (however difficult it may be to say what exactly is meant by such a 'realization').

Hence, the work itself does not become better by such purely externally applied motives. Nor will the genuine, willed and loving grasp of the motive itself be really successful in the majority of cases by a merely conceptual grasp. Thus it will be better to develop the good intention out of the work itself and out of its inner meaning, even though – regarded purely objectively – the thus realized motives are not as sublime in the [122] scale of values as other motives. Only in cases where a high and non-objective motive is already very much alive – where it is not merely great and significant in itself but also is existentially grasped and takes hold of one in a really genuine and strong way for some other reasons with which we do not need to deal here – even such a 'thought' can, of course, be used as a motivation for actions which directly have nothing very much (although something) to do with this motive. Thus, to return to our previous example: anyone who is really filled in a highly personal way with a strong desire to intercede and atone for the souls in Purgatory – anyone who is really filled with this desire and does not merely say this to himself in self-deception – can also let the sweeping of the room, which is disagreeable to him, become something proper and Christian through an effective motive, actually offering it up for the holy souls. But these are exceptional cases, and ascetic theology should treat such things as exceptional cases.

The internal motive should be cultivated, therefore; one should allow oneself to be

[8] *Theology of the apostolate of the Legion of Mary* (Cork 1960), p. 37.

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educated to the right intention by the thing itself that is to be done. Not that one could let oneself drift along completely passively in this matter. One should really make an effort and train oneself to pay attention to the real Christian meaning of what one is doing and must do. One should learn to go out to meet one's daily work with such inner calm and composure – through previous silence, prayer and serious reflection – that one really knows what one is doing (from a Christian point of view), so that one learns to guard against allowing the meaning of one's actions to become falsified interiorly (through conceit, pride, obstinacy, etc.). If we let things themselves give us our motives in this way, then we will avoid that dullness and monotony of the interior spirit which is sometimes to be found in the pious. Such a monomania can be the sign of, and the inevitable price to be paid for, a certain type of holy geniality which has the right to be one-sided. Grignon de Montfort, for instance, is an example of this; he desires that everything be done and lived in as actual a regard to Mary as possible. Theoretically one can also say, of course, that such a motive does not of itself exclude our seeking even those motives which are inherent in the particular property of our individual acts and achievements. But, given the narrowness of human consciousness, this is true only theoretically. In practice, such a method would lead, in the case of most people, to an inner impoverishment of their religious life. Subsequently, when the first enthusiasm for [123] such sublime but somewhat monomaniacally grasped external motives has died down, there would remain less than if one had exposed oneself trustingly to the multiplicity and variety of motivations offered by life and its variety itself, and had tried to discover these motivations and to realize them interiorly. Ascetic instruction and guidance should pay careful attention to this.

There is not much sense in directing nuns, for instance, to 'offer up' their daily work for the foreign missions, if one neglects at the same time to lead them to a deeper, inner understanding of the special work of their calling which alone will enable that work to be really and permanently perfected. The same holds good for the proper appeal for the 'apostolate of prayer'; here too it will be necessary to watch these things, since even here there is the danger of missing out motivations arising out of the concrete nature of one's own task, in favour of motives which may indeed be very sublime (the growth of God's kingdom) but which in certain circumstances – since they are not very deeply rooted in the real day-to-day business of man – do not affect this daily business in any very formative way and are themselves in danger of dying again very quickly. This is not meant to dispute the fact that people who have a very dismal, dull and unpleasant daily routine, a routine which provides little opportunity for powerful motivation, can be uplifted and strengthened by motives and purposes of some other kind, even when these are, relatively speaking, far-fetched and of a (subjectively) somewhat airy ideality.

2. *The Purification of Motives*

(a) Distinction between motive and impulse: Anyone who cultivates good intentions, who watches his personal motivation, will soon discover that this always remains full of problems. He never knows quite exactly what 'spirits' are influencing him. He will find that there is always a great variety of these. He will try, therefore, to 'purify' his motives and intentions. But this is more easily said than done. It is not easy for two reasons in particular: frequently it is absolutely impossible simply to cut out and shut off undesired motivations, and it is not at all desirable and recommendable to eliminate a motivation (even though it is not intrinsically morally reprehensible) simply because it is not the highest possible. The purification of motives does not even seem at first sight to be always possible

Let us suppose, for example, that someone has a strong urge to acquire [124] knowledge,

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prescinding here from the fact of whether it is in itself morally good or not. Suppose that this person has become a priest in order to work selflessly for the salvation of men, but that he has been entrusted by his ecclesiastical superiors with the job of working in the field of scientific theology. He now feels himself inflamed and at the same time hindered by his thirst for knowledge in this his obligatory scientific work (for he wants to be a scholar for the love of men's salvation). It does not help him to tell him quite simply: the one does not exclude the other. Again, it does not help him to tell him: hitch the horse of your scientific enthusiasm to the cart of your pastoral intentions. For this man is asking himself precisely: what really is the horse, the cart, the means and the goal for me? His problem is not solved by the simple fact that, in his better moments, he gives the, as it were, 'official' explanation before the tribunal of his interior conscience, viz. that he is studying in order to save souls and that he is using his scientific interests merely as a gratefully accepted aid. For the question is whether what he desires on some level of his being is *really* true, since he cannot tell himself with absolute certainty whether this pious wish is merely a useful but somehow peripheral impulse whose proper direction is determined from quite a different side, or whether his zeal for souls is merely a façade hiding the kind of knowledge which only puffs one up. This no one can say for certain. What is more, the roles played by these individual factors in the total motivation of a person can change quickly or again slowly, and means and purpose can interchange places. Now: it is quite impossible for our theology professor to shut off this perfectly human urge for knowledge. He *cannot* do it even if he wanted to. If he were to succeed in this, he would be like a rider who does not mount the horse because he is afraid that it might carry him where he does not want to go.

It has been said, therefore, that anyone who wants to do what is right and obligatory merely for supernatural motives will do and achieve very little. Inclination and love for something – and also that motivation which is inherent in things themselves, and this even in the pre-moral sphere (such as in hunger and thirst, fear, the urge to imitate, the impulses belonging to the realm of the corporeal and the sexual, etc.) – are in general necessary also for the higher achievements of the moral order. For they exist because God has willed them, and this is why they make sense. Since, moreover, they are elements of the one whole man, these things also have a purpose for the whole and hence also for the 'higher' man. [125] Hence, just because it is false to say that the higher is simply a suspicious sublimation of the lower – just because it is false to say that the spiritual and moral achievements of man are merely more complicated variations of one's primitive desire – it is not necessary to deny that even the highest achievements and motivations have, and may have, their substructure. There is no harm in admitting that one may possibly pray better, in certain cases, after a cup of tea than without it.

If, therefore, such motives are not in any sense to be excluded, and if very often they cannot be excluded, what then is the position regarding the necessary purification of motives and the proper, practising cultivation of good and perfect intentions? One might say, of course, that urge and motivation must be kept apart. A motive is not an urge: the former is what is morally proposed in a free manner, the latter belongs to the morally still indifferent stratum of psycho-physical vitality. One might then say on the basis of this distinction that the morality of an action can be determined only according to the motives. If what is consciously and freely envisaged is in a certain measure striven for and attained by the force of the impulse, then this nevertheless does not destroy the motive and the moral quality of the action. This may be very true in theory, but it does not help us much in practice. One can eat, 'simply because one enjoys it' (and this without thereby overeating and making oneself sick). The question remains, therefore, as to what is the real motive in my particular case. We have already seen that the real motives (motives even in the terminology just suggested) need not necessarily be reflex and objects of consciousness.

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(b) Education through life: It can be seen that this purification can basically be undertaken only indirectly. Indeed, one might say that it *is* undertaken in us: it is a chance which life – or, better, divine grace and providence – must and does offer us if we are vigilant and faithful. For we cannot simply cut out motives and impulses just as we wish. We can do this to a certain extent; by directing our attention, we are able to alter the real state of the motives and impulses. What can be done in this respect should be done. But even where this is not possible, or where it does not lead to any clear-cut and complete success, we can still do something. We can try to strengthen our true and desired motives by prayer and contemplation, by reflecting on them and by giving ourselves up to them, by the repeated practice of directing our attention to them. But this teaches us – to begin with – only to be vigilant and careful, to be [126] prepared to act as far as possible out of these thus cultivated and more deeply rooted motives, even when other impulses fail, impulses which are either, morally speaking, indifferent or even dangerous, or at any rate not those really meant (i.e. from the core of the spiritual person). For precisely this is to be expected in many if not all cases; and this is the chance which we have said we must expect and that life would offer to us so that our motives may be purified and our intentions perfected.

This chance has something dangerous and bitter about it: suddenly we notice that certain impulses cease; 'healthy' ambition, the instinctive joy we feel in being with people, a joy which arises out of loving sympathy, the 'urge of knowledge' and a thousand other possible impulses which we ourselves cannot and should not cut off. The more someone has always taken the trouble to do justice objectively to the demands made on him by the objective structure of his external actions – the more, in other words, he has an inner motivation in the sense given above and not merely the motivation which happens to have been applied to a task from without – the oftener he will notice that to a greater or lesser extent there are situations in which (to put it crudely) he 'does not feel like it', but when it is nevertheless objectively demanded that the thing should be done even without feeling like it, i.e. more strictly, with purified motives. Life itself has then purified the complex of motives and urges, presupposing of course that one does not now fail to do what one has always done up until now. Of course, in such a case one would then also have to ask oneself seriously whether the 'official' motives were in fact the real motives before, and not merely a façade behind which lay hidden pre-moral or even immoral but basically freely accepted urges. We do not need to worry that such urges may be shut off by ourselves. For the moral attitudes and achievements demanded of us are structured in accordance with the objective moral motives, and the impulses springing from an ontologically and ethically lower stratum of man do not and cannot in the long run suffice of themselves for these higher achievements, no matter how useful they may be as the 'initial fuse' and however much they remain always necessary to some extent as the underlying basis for as long as we live in the body (after all, one can completely undermine even the most heroic virtue, as far as its external appearance or the external achievement is concerned, by 'injections' and similar means). Life itself and the reality involved regulate all this. Someone may notice, for instance, that he – as managing director – is always very kind to his charming lady-secretary, [127] and he may suspect that there is a certain latent sexual urge behind this in itself praiseworthy attitude (since he finds it much more difficult to be kind to others; even a St Dominic seems to have noticed this). It is not necessary for such a person to make a special effort to fight against this accompanying feeling (provided only that it does not induce him to do things which are against the law of God). In any case, how would he go about this? Such an attempt would either lead merely to the opposite attitude or would make it more difficult for him to be polite (if it were to succeed). But it is difficult enough for us to deal with the burdensome things in life. Life in its wisdom goes on by itself, so that our managing director will not be polite for very long *merely* for this somewhat suspicious reason. Meanwhile he should have learned to be polite

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in spite of it all.

(c) Orientation towards things instead of unmasking of self. If one works thus in the formation of outlook and in the cultivation of good intentions from the inner nature of the objective achievement, if one tries to cultivate the true and really intended motives so that they will be strong enough when they have to suffice on their own on some occasion, if life is given a chance to educate us by keeping ourselves open to this education by using the methods just mentioned, then it would seem to be superfluous and harmful for a normal person to devote great efforts to an exaggerated reflection and 'depth psychology' with regard to the world of his motives. It is true that we only know a very little about what is in us. We would be greatly shocked if we knew by what problematic urges our so praiseworthy actions are often supported. But of what use would it be if we did know all this? Hidden behind this psychoanalytical, distrustful self-analysis and unmasking of self, there would again be urges which we would not yet have uncovered, which would themselves have to be traced (so that we might know where we stand) and which would again be just as problematical as the ones already unmasked. No, this is not the way. In the long run, the only thing to result from such an unmasking of self (as carried on in many of our modern novels) would be a moral cynicism which thinks that it can see through everything as being hollow and base sensuality. One imagines oneself to be honest and forgets to make distinctions. One loses one's insight into the fact that the real moral motives of a spiritual, personal kind do not cease to be independent and significant – indeed, to be the deciding factor for the moral judgement of one's action – simply by our showing that they are not the only thing [128] in our actions and that they very often (or to a certain extent, always) require other urges and powers in order to assert themselves. It is better to try to purify and refine one's motives by looking away from oneself to things and by letting oneself be occupied by life, others and their needs. Then one can always say to oneself (when someone, worried by such distrust of himself asks whether he is in the state of grace): if I do my duty, if the external manifestation of my actions corresponds for a fairly long period to the objective exigencies of life, if my neighbour can be fairly satisfied with me, if – in short – my (external) actions are just, if I try at least in all this not to be a pharisee but to know and realize in my life that we are unprofitable servants even after having done everything demanded of us, if there remains an honest bit of dissatisfaction with myself and I am (really) prepared to let others tell me things . . . then I need not worry myself sick about the ultimate motives of my actions. Life is not arranged in such a devilishly malevolent fashion that the most nasty motives hide themselves for a long time behind an always good and – even to the attentive observer – faultless façade. This is not to say that everything will then be completely certain and above every genuinely Christian suspicion about oneself, and that then we do not need to pray any more: Lord, be merciful to me, a poor sinner. But we will then have done what we can reasonably be expected to do; to do more would really be less and would be an attempt to gain more independent certainty vis-à-vis God (even if it be merely the certainty of having unmasked oneself completely and unconditionally, whereby one merely robs God of the glory of being stronger and greater in us by his grace than even our own heart). In other words, there is an indivisible (although not mathematically determinable) yet real limit to the formation of motives and to anxiety about good intentions.

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[129]

9

THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Catholic Christians celebrated the year 1953-54, in accordance with the intention of their supreme pastor, as a Marian year which was to be dedicated in a special way to the remembrance of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (8th December 1854).

What are the 'religious values' of this dogma: this is what one would have asked thirty years ago, in the spirit of that period and according to the formulation of a well-known book of that time. We today have not perhaps so much courage as to attempt to measure God's truth by whether it seems valuable to us; we are inclined rather to suspect our own yardsticks. Nevertheless: even when one removes everything that is most questionable from this way of posing the question, it still remains true to say that a dogma is not only true but is also addressed *to us*. It is addressed to us, however, not merely because it is true but also because this truth is for our salvation. Of course, it is for our salvation also precisely because it is true. But it would be heretical gnosticism, or the false assertion that truth and salvation, faith and love are simply the same, to maintain that this truth is told us *merely* because it is true. We can – indeed we must – ask ourselves, therefore, what a revealed truth means *for us* over and above the fact directly proclaimed by it.

The simplest answer to this question, but an answer whose simplicity is at the same time our greatest difficulty, consists in saying that by knowledge of this truth we know 'more' about Mary so that we might *love* her more. This is quite a simple thing and for that reason very difficult for us who are so complicated. One must grasp or, more precisely, realize the fact that Mary exists, that she must be loved – in God, for his sake and for the sake of our salvation – that this love (of God and of everyone [130] whom he has created, redeemed and granted eternal life) is the most comprehensive and the only simply self-evident thing in the world (since it embraces everything incomprehensible). Anyone who has understood and realized this will no longer find any 'problem' in the 'significance' of the Immaculate Conception. For who would not be overjoyed at the privileges of a person whom he loves? Who will after that still look further for proof of the significance 'for himself' of recognizing such a privilege?

The lover finds joy in the loved one. One would be lost without this basic notion by which one gets away from oneself without returning again to oneself. Damnation consists in being able only to love oneself and hence in having to make do with oneself. But from a Christian point of view, there is true love of God only if this love wills everyone to be just as God has willed them, God who is all in all only when everything has found its final existence in his presence, and not in the sense of everything being consumed by him and by his absoluteness. We should have the courage to admit: if you as a Catholic Christian believe in this dogma and yet ask almost indifferently what this fact really has to do with you, then you merely prove to yourself that you are still a long way from being *that* Christian who loves God and his Saints out of self-forgetful joy for *them*, without being bothered about himself. In our concern about our own spiritual poverty and religious misery, we have to admit that the fact that the times from the twelfth century until the definition of this dogma had such a natural, almost fanatical devotion to the '*Immaculata*' was a good sign for these times. (This, of course, is not meant to imply that someone belongs to the good old times simply by the fact of aping the gestures and accents of that time in a stereotyped and dishonest way.) Only by an act of personal love of Mary in the Holy Ghost does the praise of her holiness, purity and

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fullness of grace become more than the extolling of abstract ideals simply labelled with her name. There is little use – and it simply arouses the obstinacy of those who are suspicious of any high-flown language and think of it as mere 'talk' – if one praises the supernatural privileges of the Blessed Virgin without being aware of the fact that such words can become fruitful only to the extent in which love grows at the same time, a growth which requires other inspirations besides the mere praise of the ideal privileges of the person to be loved. Thus, at the beginning and end of all praise of Mary and of all Marian theology, all one can really do is to ask one's hearer very quietly and simply to [131] pray for the grace to be able to love Mary. Precisely because previous generations already loved Mary, they could think quite unaffectedly and enthusiastically that all that is required in order to lead others to the love of Mary was to praise the ideal of the one who was pure, full of grace and immaculate from the very first moment of her existence. We should admit our poverty. One cannot miss out this step even in present-day circumstances. This step is the reason why it may not be so easy for us today to be 'full' of the truth expressed by this dogma.

This is the first but fortunately not the only answer to our question. Certain facts and structures of the one order of salvation which is also ours become particularly visible in the mystery of the Blessed Virgin. This is what we must talk about here, since one can say more about what is less important than about what is the most important point.

This dogma first of all and directly expresses the fact that a human being who is not a mediator but someone redeemed was without sin. All of us – including Mary – are redeemed. Hence, even her existence is constructed in 'counterpoint' to sin. In other words, there is no mere human being for whom sin, its kingdom and possibility are from the very start non-existent in such a way that his existence has no relationship to sin, either from God or from his own freedom, negatively or affirmatively. Even Mary is no exception to this. The beginning of her existence is redeemed, is gratuitously preserved from the power of original sin. This, considering her alone, would have to have been *her* sin also, since she too – born as she was here below – was a member of the human race enchained by this sin. Her temporal existence had to achieve itself – in spite of all freedom from concupiscence – as a committal to God in faith, in view of the possibility of the refusal of oneself in disbelief. Yet, however essentially the common factor of this possibility of guilt conjoins her to us, it remains true nevertheless that she was not subject to sin and that she did not sin.

Is this not a blessed truth? Of course, even here it must be possible to put ourselves on that common plane which belongs to the nature of love and of the proper achievement of human existence in order to experience the blessedness of this truth. Only someone who can be affected by the fact that somewhere someone has been good in a selfless way or has been cruelly tortured to death – someone or other whose existence does not attain the comfortable state of our life – only someone who can feel himself honoured or dishonoured in someone else (because he loves and not [132] because he lives in an egoism which relates even the most distant event to himself), only he can be startled deep down about the fact that there is at least one human being who began her existence in the light of God, someone who was able to bear this love without growing tired of it and without inflaming in this love the incomprehensible but always possible, and for us therefore incomprehensibly understandable paroxysm of rebellion against this love. There was someone for once who endured being out of the ordinary and for whom God never became ordinary. There was someone who could receive God's grace in overflowing fullness without keeping it. For once, the ordinariness of an average life was not the sign of its inner hollowness, but the simplicity in which appears the dignity of a regal person, and the unobtrusiveness which characterizes God's attitude to those whom he really *loves* and does not merely use as levers in his earthly history. In this one case everything was good from the pure beginning to the unending end: good, because it had a pure origin.

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Two questions arise at this point, however, questions which one should allow to be posed since they are apt for giving us a truly faithful understanding of the Immaculate Conception which will not degenerate into a rhetorically cheap enthusiasm.

First of all: is the difference caused by the Immaculate Conception between us sinners and Mary, really as great as has been made out? The Protestant polemic against this dogma characterized the controversy on this question, fought out between Thomists and Scotists in those days when the doctrine was still controversial, as a 'controversy about a few moments', since it is surely quite indifferent whether Mary was already preserved from original sin in the first moment of her existence or whether she was 'sanctified' very shortly afterwards. Of course, one can and would want to answer this to begin with by saying that it is not the length of time which matters but the question of whether Mary ever fell under the power of original sin and the dominion of the devil, and of whether the origin of her existence was in guilt or in grace. Yet this answer alone does not seem to be sufficient. For it is possible to counter with the further question as to whether *our* origin is *merely* in darkness. Is it not true even *for* us, even though not *of ourselves*, that everything – even disobedience and sin – is bound up in the mercy of God? Are we not also in the realm of Christ's redemption even from the first moment of our existence? Is not guilt – and in particular original sin – merely permitted, [133] in so far as it belongs to us, because God's mercy wanted it and knew that his yes and not our no should and would be the last word, the word which gives the ultimate meaning to every other word in the dialogue between God and man? Are we not speaking too apodictically of original sin when we speak of it as if there were no redemption, no reality of redemption which in spite of its historicity is *always* already given beforehand and does not merely represent a subsequent repair of a damage which has arisen quite independently in every respect of this restoration? Should we not speak more 'dialectically' of this original sin, in such a way that it '*would be*' most dangerous and inescapable, *if* the mercy of God in Christ *were not* most real? Are we not, even in original sin, the *loved* sinners, those whom God seeks out, those who are predestined as heirs? Is not the one statement: 'When as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us' (Rm 5:8), a statement about us ('for us') even in its second part, an expression which applies to us from the beginning just as much as the statement (Rm 5:19): by the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners? Hence, are we not *always* and from the beginning *redeemed* sinners? Thus, is it not ultimately only a question of whether we freely and believingly accept this redemption as a grace and thereby admit that of ourselves we are nothing but sinners? Can Mary do anything else?

At this point, orthodox theology and the Christian instructed in the Catechism will interject: you are obscuring distinctions, and even profound differences. Certainly, redemption is offered to us and is meant for us from the beginning. But it was really given to us only in baptism. Mary, on the other hand, really possessed it from the very beginning. In our life, redemption must first become an event in the sacraments and in faith, at a fixed historical moment *within* our life, a life which unfolds itself in time, and within an existence which 'in itself' has a different origin, even though this origin was also enfolded 'in God' by his mercy. In Mary's case, even her created origin was already redeemed and sanctified. Even this very fact has its effect in her life and brings about a difference between that life and ours. We remain justified men and sinners at the same time, in so far as we carry the burden of concupiscence and hence are never quite undividedly in freedom what we should be, viz. those who love out of the undivided power of the heart. We are those who sin daily, even though we do not cease to be in God's grace. Mary, on the other hand, is the undivided, the sinless, the Saint. Thus there is a [134] profound difference between us sinners and her, the Saint. Hence we ought to be seized by a pleasant shock that it once was different from what it usually is, that our melancholy experience which 'knows what is in man', is not after all the whole story.

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At this point, however, there arises the second question: is this melancholy experience of the miserable nature of man, of his gloomy sensuality, his empty superficiality and despairing sinfulness before God, really a *Christian* experience which finds relief only by the fact that at least in *one* case it has been different? Is not this experience precisely that *human* experience which is disavowed by God's word of grace? Not by being declared an error (as if, contrary to all appearances, man were after all basically good) but by the fact that God introduces *his* other, divinely true word into the truth of man (and man even thus only ventures to profess himself for some truth)? Put more simply: does the radiant truth of the Immaculate Conception mean to say that otherwise, apart from Mary's case, there is everywhere merely a dull mixture of light and darkness, of original sin and the subsequent, laborious but merely semi-overcoming of all damnation? Is Mary the undivided, because *we* are eternally the *divided*? Is she the accomplished work, the harmoniously achieved work, while we here below are always only the half-achieved and those who have been painstakingly saved just on the brink? Or does the Christian understanding of existence lie precisely in the fact that the bottomless perdition, which exists, is *completely* overcome by the immeasurable mercy of God? Is the forgiven guilt only half blotted out? Will those who find eternal mercy have still to think basically in sad resignation of their guilt, as if they had after all lost the greatest part of the possible fruits of their life?

Our guilt is inescapable, wretched and as such something radically evil and meaningless, something merely terrifying, petrifying and killing, and nothing in the world must lead the creature to think wrongly that guilt, on our part and of itself belongs to the secret meaning of creation, to the inevitable way in which good comes about. Seen in this light, it is frightful and terrible to have to admit: we are sinners, there is guilt in our life. But what about *forgiven* guilt? The guilt which *God* has utilized? Can or may one – after forgiveness and in view of this forgiveness – still say: it would have been better if there had been no guilt? Anyone who dares to answer with an unhesitating yes to this question could *either* merely mean by this that in itself sin . . . is sin and nothing else, the [135] mean, the senseless, that which in itself is also completely fruitless; *or* (if his yes were absolute) he would be premature and would endanger (it seems to us) the almighty radicalness of divine forgiveness which not only forgives and 'writes off' what 'can no longer be changed' but which can truly redeem the past. But (it will be objected) this overlooks the fact that God is free in the measure and degree of his communicated goodness, that he must not necessarily do the 'best', that the creature must accept in adoration, obedience, and only thus in beatitude, what is actually given to him, even though more could have been given, and that therefore a forgiveness of guilt remains grace and blessedness even if the preservation from guilt might have been a greater and more blessed grace. Hence it should not surprise us that this happily accepted forgiveness of committed guilt must always 'objectively' be accompanied by that sorrow which greets the one whom one would have and could have become if *only* one had not burdened oneself with guilt. Is this true? Is this truth really the whole truth? Is it the truth of *that* reality which *exists* when God – God and not man – has forgiven? Or is it merely the truth about a reality which *would have been* if there were no question of a divine redemption of guilt, or if God had forgiven differently from the way in which he has in fact forgiven according to his word, viz. abundantly and with the whole force of the personal love which belongs to God? Putting the question more pointedly: must one still be 'really' sad about the way in which happiness is dependent on the adorable providence of God (and on the creature's pleasure in it), on a God who in general wanted only those 'who just managed to be saved', i.e. 'just' in comparison to what would have been if we had not freely wanted to be sinners? If this is so, are Rm 5:20; 8:32; 11:32; Lk 15:22; I5:7 still completely true? May one weaken these statements of Scripture by reckoning the increase of grace proclaimed by these texts to be merely relative to a grace which might have been under *some* assumption *or other*

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but not under the one in which we and everything else would have been exactly as we are, with the one exception of sin?

If we are allowed this sacred optimism, if we are at least not forbidden by faith or some other reason to say: the forgiven guilt is really a *felix culpa*, a blessed guilt, however much we must guard against the threat of guilt, since otherwise we would make ourselves unworthy of obtaining forgiveness of committed guilt – if, therefore, the forgiveness of sin by God effects that we really are what we would have been or become [136] without sin – then the blessedness of being preserved from sin, which we acknowledge in veneration and astonishment to be the inconceivable privilege of her who was immaculately conceived, cannot consist merely in the fact that she is the pure and the perfect, while we are sinners whom God has just managed to save but only with a great deal of trouble. The *Immaculata* is not simply the ideal which we should have reached and which we salute from afar as something eternally unattained. The fact that we have started later than Mary and – differently from her – have often stumbled on the way, does not simply mean that we only half arrive, even we find the way home at all. It is obviously true that we – although this is often understood in the wrong sense – will have less holiness than the Blessed Virgin. But that is a different question altogether. What concerns us here in our question is whether no one of us ever quite reaches his own measure, the actualization of his potentialities, because of the fact that he has been a sinner, and this even in spite of the forgiveness of sin; what concerns us here is whether Mary is the only perfect one in this sense because she alone was conceived without the stain of original sin and because she alone among all purely human beings who perfect themselves in freedom was sinless. If it is permissible to answer no to this *particular* question, then devotion to the Immaculate Conception cannot consist simply in bitter-sweet joy over the fact that at least in one case God has achieved his work in the ideal manner.

If, however, this means in its turn that God has two very different ways to the same happy perfection, viz. the preservation from guilt and the forgiveness of guilt, then the question arises anew as to why God has willed the Immaculate Conception and what it means for us and for our piety. Of course, one might answer to begin with that if guilt is guilt, then the guiltless way to perfection is from God's point of view the objectively valid one, and hence a beginning in grace and continuance in sinlessness are the normal thing. The question posed would, therefore, become a question of why God has – in spite of this – permitted sin in us and why this is not fitting for Mary. Obviously, this is not the place to discuss the obscure mystery of why God allows guilt to exist. The fact too that Mary was preserved from personal guilt, since she is the Mother of Christ, does not for the moment require any further explanation. In such a case it is not just a matter of looking at the final result of existence, but it is a question of whether personal, committed and not yet forgiven guilt would be compatible with her dignity and position in salvation [137] history. The question with regard to Mary's beginning, i.e. the Immaculate Conception in the strict sense, is more difficult. Yet one can say: her predestination to grace and salvation – a predestination already given together with the predetermination of Christ (differently from us) – involves the fact that in her case the difference in time between the beginning of existence and the beginning of grace, such as it is to be found in our case, is quite senseless. For there is this difference in our case, not because we are to begin with purely children of wrath, but because it was meant to *appear* historically and in the temporal sphere that of ourselves we are only this and are children of divine love by God's grace alone, and that in our case it is not yet clearly and visibly decided for Christ's sake alone (as in Mary's case) what exactly we are.[1]

But this 'objective' answer to the question as to why there are two ways to one and the

[1] Cf. on this K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore 1961), pp. 207 *sq*.

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same blessed perfection, does not really meet the exact point in question here. When we ask about the 'what for' of these two ways, we are asking about what it has *to do with us*, with our piety and devotion, that apart from our way of becoming perfect (in our measure), blessed, guiltless and holy, there is also another way, viz. that of the Immaculate Conception. We have already seen that it is not sufficient to reply to this that the purpose is that we might have the comforting thought that everything would be all right some day. For we hope that even for us sinners *everything* will be all right. Something has obviously to be added to our answer. Is it not simply this: the fact that there is *our* way to beatifying perfection, is meant to show us and make clear to us that our salvation is God's grace, always and in every case grace *alone* (and hence not our good work performed by our own power); that there is *her* way, is meant to show and to make clear to us that our salvation (always and in every case) is only God's *grace* (and hence not also our guilt as something which remains a permanent component of it).

God's teachings are realities, God's theories are facts. In living contact with them (provided by word and statement, but even more by grace and genuine, spiritual co-existence which is more than mere conceptual 'knowledge'), we are taught by God. Hence, if HE wants to tell us: this perfection is me and not you, then he permits that our perfection springs from an origin – viz. from guilt – which makes it impossible to mistake what we are of ourselves for being and perfection. If, however, He [138] wants to tell us: your, yes even *your* perfection is light and not darkness, the pure and not the tragically torn-asunder, the whole and not what has just managed to get saved, then he creates the one who is immaculately conceived and immaculately perfected . . . by his grace alone.

One can know what man is only by looking at both the dead beginning and the living reality, the one in original sin and the Immaculate one, and only if one can look at both just as this difference is really separated in time: here in a man who, although embraced by the eternity of God's mercy, begins as a real sinner; there in a person who, although coming in time from Adam as someone requiring redemption, begins as someone really full of grace and thus standing from all eternity before God. Must we not look at Mary in order to understand that the pure light is the first and last even for the creature, so that we do not think in the end that in us – or even in God – something primitively evil, something dark and abysmal belongs to the very heart of the essence? Does not everyone who genuinely accomplishes this – who genuinely accomplishes the rapture of faith in the sound creature by God's full grace – look, perhaps without knowing it, at Mary in whom God has realized that which is the goal of the creature's movement of existence? Did not Mary – participating in our lot as sinners, in nescience, in pain, in standing at the foot of the Cross – look at us, so as to understand and realize that even her beginning in being and in light is grace and not some necessity of essence without which we could not conceive her? Are not we sinners also perhaps necessary for her in that incomprehensible necessity in which sin, which should not be, 'must' be? Is it blasphemous to think this, if it is true that she is the Immaculate through the Cross of her Son, the Cross which has been elevated by our guilt? This does not mean that we could be proud of this greatest of all the crimes of this earth. That would simply be blasphemy. But she who loves the Cross looks lovingly on those who have crucified her Son. Because she loves them, she sees in them what her appearance really says of God: that for no one, and hence not even for her, is there salvation apart from God. If she knows this in her first morning gaze into the heights, as she shines in the purity of her rising, then this is no reason for her not to recognize it also in her evening view into those depths of blindness and of guilt from which she is preserved and from which we are saved by the one grace.

Are there really 'substantial' ideals, i.e. those which, on the one hand, are not fabricated in the superficiality of an empty business and pretence [139] but which are genuinely accomplished, believed, yearned for, loved out of the very heart of existence, *and* which, on

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the other hand, exist *only* as mere 'ideals', as ghostly thoughts? A Christian may have the courage to give a flat no to this question. In that case he may, however, maintain boldly: if the belief in such a truth is lived out and suffered in the depth of the abyss of human existence (there where man is himself and God's Spirit is with him), then this act of existence relates not only to God, to the transcendent and all-supporting presupposition, the grace and last goal of this act; it relates to this real ideal even when man does not know anything of its pure realization and thinks that this ideal has 'existence' only in the yearnings of his enraptured heart and in the bitterness of his tears. If this be true, however, then it follows that if someone, in spite of the experience of his own sinfulness and of his origin in darkness, really believes from the depth of his spirit-filled existence that perfection is not divided but is a clear yes and clear light, and hopes that this perfection becomes his as a grace, then – whether he knows it or not – he has said yes to the created and redeeming beginning in pure grace, that beginning which is for all of us God's real pledge of what is thus believed and hoped for, and then he has – without knowing it – loved the Immaculate Virgin.

We, however, know this secret by name, a secret which is also that of our existence. If we really know Mary as the Immaculate Virgin, then we have not only loved and honoured someone whom one can 'also' love and honour, but then we have loved the created, unambiguous realization of what is essential for the exercise of Christian piety, viz. the yes to what is necessary for the radical overcoming of the condition out of which we came into what already determined the existence of the Blessed Virgin from the beginning right down to the last depth: God's grace. Anyone who knows anything about the history of the spirit and of Christian theology (and therefore has some idea of the dangers at the root of piety) must admit that it is always a terrible temptation for man to regard and affirm guilt and grace, light and darkness, as polar and inseparably mutually conditioning opposites of the one human existence, a temptation too, to regard anyone as 'naive' who has not understood this 'secret of evil'. Whoever lovingly honours the immaculately conceived Virgin is safe from this danger of piety. He belongs to the children of the kingdom of heaven, whose holy, matutinal naïvety understands that God's one blessed yes is earlier and later than every (after all, merely creaturely) no of man: earlier already in the world in Mary, the [140] Immaculate, and later but victorious in us. How could a Christian piety obstinately confine itself to a merely abstract realization of the fundamental truth about the undialectical pre-eminence of grace over guilt, when God has shown this truth concretely in Mary, the Immaculate?

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[141]

10

THE COMFORT OF TIME

Another year has passed. It makes you feel uneasy just to think about it. We seem to be so poor: the past is past and the future has not yet come. Does our life therefore merely consist in being that infinitely tiny point where what is not yet becomes what no longer is? In our imagination, which still preserves what has passed away and already anticipates what has not yet arrived, we seem to make this point much wider and call it our life, the present, which we are supposed to enjoy because the past is no longer ours and the future is not yet ours.

May one try to say a comforting word about this our temporality from the point of view of Christian dogmatic thought? This attempt to be made here is not meant to appeal to and proclaim the ultimate truths of the Christian faith, viz. the fact that we are travelling towards the eternity of God, that we profess 'eternal life', that we hold fast in faith to the validity of the spiritual person and the resurrection of the body as the comfort of the eternity of our life. Our subject here will be merely a small, particular question arising out of the exalted fundamental truths of our Christian faith, a question indeed about which theologians are not by any means agreed and one which in any case appears only in more detailed dogmatic works and even there only very much in passing. There is no harm, however, in stopping once in a while to think about this special, debated question. For if we do not look at it, then the doctrine of eternal life and of the immortality of the soul is very much in danger of implicitly but logically turning the life 'beyond' into a continuation of the life that precedes it, a continuation in which everything which has happened on this earth can happen once more, something for which we simply make a change of horses in death, so that the journey may continue; yet, from a truly Christian point of view, life does not continue but rather the eternity of unique time breaks in on us, that eternity where there is only 'harvest' and no [142] longer any 'sowing', where the eternity of time is revealed. The reason for this is that eternity is not an unforeseeable space which continues our time here on earth so that it may never come to an end, but is exactly what could and did become only in time by the fact that time passes away and by the fact that one stretch of time does not pass away into another but that time itself passes away.[1]

Our special problem is this: Catholic theologians pose the question about the 'reviviscence of merit', i.e. they ask themselves whether merits which had been won by someone in God's love while in the 'state of grace', who then lost this 'claim' to a reward in heaven by mortal sin, revive again when that person returns once more to the state of grace. Almost all aspects of this question seem at first sight offensive and provocative (or monotonous, depending on one's point of view). After all, even in our own circles one no longer likes to speak about merit (outside of dogmatic textbooks). Do our leading spirits write very much nowadays about mortal sin, about the loss of sanctifying grace, about the impossibility of gaining supernatural merit for oneself in this 'state' of sin and deprivation of grace? And yet: if what is meant by such words is true and if one understands what they are meant to tell us, then these subjects are surely not quite as unimportant as one might be led to think. But only when these subjects had been discussed and what is meant was really understood would it be

[1] In writing this essay, it must of course be admitted from the very start that it will not be possible here to develop those categories and general, existential and ontological insights which are a presupposition of the questions and reflections presented here and which would be necessary if the statements we will make were to be really 'proved'. But the kind reader will perhaps notice even without all this in what direction these reflections are 'going' and will sort out many a tacit presupposition for himself.

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possible to ask quite clearly whether as a matter of fact the merit which one has gained at one time while in the state of grace but thereafter has lost through grave sin understood as the loss of sanctifying grace, 'revives' again when one returns once more to the state of grace through penance and the sacrament. How strangely foreign this subject seems to be to the practical thinking of the world. 'What has it got to do with a comforting view of temporality? Does it not give the impression that one conceives man's moral life, indeed man's life of grace, in its enormous decisions before God, almost in the categories of a banker, with his balance of accounts, his well or badly invested stocks, his 'frozen' and again 'unfrozen' assets? Well, let us see.

[143] 'Merit' in the theological sense of the word means a property belonging to something given to us by God's grace and not a despotic claim on God acquired by man of his own powers. Merit means that God by his grace – a grace which redeems our freedom for the divine act of love – grants to us that what we do in time is intrinsically analogous to what is in eternal life, viz. a community with God in a true, inner participation in the divine nature which is really given to us, however much it always depends on God's free pleasure and on the immeasurable miracle of his mercy which can never be administered or calculated by man. Merit means eternity in time, the arrival in us of God's grace and of eternal life; it means that man has really been given grace and *is* holy through God's great mercy, and this in the whole breadth and depth of his being, and hence also in his freedom, in what exists because it is done with responsibility. Certainly, this liberated act of freedom endowed with grace is God's gift: it is a gift because he gave us the possibility, because he elevated the possibilities of a spiritual person to the possibility of acts of eternal life, a gift he himself grants so that (through him) we might really do in freedom what we can and should do (and both of these through him). Hence 'merit' does not praise us but him; hence, the dogma that man can gain supernatural merit if he is justified by God's grace and does in faith what God has commanded does not glorify man before God and vis-à-vis God, but rather extols God who not only deals with man as someone who passively receives but who effects the greatest act of man in man. All 'meritorious actions' are manifestations of the one, divinely effected gift of grace given to man; they let appear what is actually in man.

But by the appearance of 'what is thus', 'what thus appears' *becomes* more and more. Man can increase in supernatural merit. This means nothing other than that man is more and more, ever more deeply, ever more existentially seized by God's life and that this life claims him more and more in all the dimensions of his existence; this life becomes ever more deeply rooted in him, it integrates this possibility of his existence into a single, ever more complete and all-embracing act of man's whole belonging to God which is effected by the Spirit. Man who thus acquires 'merit' does not regard his own 'merits', he does not count them, for he is occupied with the very thing itself which is given in them, viz. with his neighbour whom he loves, with the task which he fulfils, with God for whom he longs. Since he is a creature, he testifies even by his anxious solicitude [144] about himself to the fact that only one is God. For only this God does not need to worry about himself. The creature, moreover, honours him even more when it works out its salvation in fear and trembling, when it thinks of itself (when it also thinks about itself so as always to forget itself again once it has gone out from this point; even in these things of the interior man we have here no abiding city), than when it acts as if it had already completely forgotten itself over God, as if it were no longer indebted for the point of departure from which it must proceed, since God and not merely the creature's self-seeking made it start there, viz. from itself. If someone acts properly, then he may think of his merit, but he must not forget that ultimately (which does not mean: only) one must love God and therein necessarily forget oneself if one wants to 'gather merit'. For the Christian will say with St Theresa of Lisieux (and hence this is not heretical but good Catholic thought): 'I do not want to gather merit for heaven . . . in the evening of this life I will appear

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before You with empty hands. For I do not ask you, O Lord, in any way to count my good works. Rather, I will clothe myself with your justice and receive from your love the eternal possession of yourself.' For only if one prays like this does one gather merit, and ultimately in no other way. For ultimately one can gather merit only in that love (this is what we mean when we speak of the 'state of grace') in which one does not want to gather merit but simply loves God himself and not oneself.

It thus becomes obvious that 'merit' is not merely and not even primarily a juridical concept but that it tells us something about the life and the free person of man as it has become through its life. If there is permanent merit, then this means that the life of man does not dry up in the emptiness of the past; man does not live his present merely in order to swallow up the possibilities of his future into something which has been. Merit is not merely a title of which God takes note. We ourselves are the book of life in what we have become; God's judgement is the unveiling of what we are, although it is indeed an unveiling which only God himself can undertake. If there is a Christian hope of eternal life, then this must include the fact that man lives differently in time than sub-human realities. The latter are driven through time; they become something new by losing just as much of the old as they gain of the new. Man as a person before God does not lose but saves his future by taking it up into the 'past' which is the permanent outcome of the present. The older we become, the surer we are that we truly are. It is perfectly true that one thing cannot be taken [145] away from us (and this is not only true in the paradise of remembrance), viz. what we were and hence are. It is becoming and not what has become which passes away. What perishes is not the secret extract of life but the process of its preparation. When this process, which we normally call our life, has come to an end, then the perfect has arrived and this is ourselves as we have become in freedom. It belongs, of course, to the order of original sin in human existence that this collected extract of our life is not simply available to our reflection and self-enjoyment. We experience ourselves always as the poor from whom the past vanishes, who forget, whose personality (laboriously acquired in life) is cruelly torn down again by physical processes which have little respect for the dignity of the thus (empirically) constructed personality. But this changes nothing – for the one who knows that spirit is more than the possibility of experiencing this spirit corporeally – about the fact that the history of the personal spirit is more and takes a different course than the 'history' of the material in which only exactly as much is taken over from the future into the present as is given up by the present to the decaying past. The person on this sinful earth achieves himself always (and always more and always more quickly) into a state where he is no longer master of himself. But this means precisely that what cannot be master of itself, viz. the achieved life, has not been able to take flight into the unreal nothing but retains final validity.

So long as this eternal element in us is still in the process of becoming, it remains an open question as to what it will be: either something freely given over to God in his grace or something refused to God and thus condemned to its own closed finiteness. This decision can take place at any moment in time, it can even change (as long as we still have room for freedom in the finite). But then such a decision (once it has really been taken) is on every occasion concerned with disposing the whole person, no matter how much the material of the life in which it is exercised may change. Such a decision does not only determine the disposition of the whole person (since it determines its eternal destiny as a whole and not merely a part of our existence, merely 'implicating' everything else); it also acts as the result of the always present totality of the person and thus out of the latter's previous life, because only the whole person can master the whole. It risks the life which has gone before; it works with the gains of its previous life. It may do this in a more or less intensive manner, i.e. it may win a greater or lesser amount of the personal reality which is still [146] possibility into the 'essence' of life preserved in the (apparent) past, but it cannot act other than as the act of

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the one (as such) who had lived this life up till now in 'this' particular way. In doing this, it may prefix a sign to this whole previous life which is diametrically opposed to the sign it had up till then; but even in this case it prefixes this sign exactly to what has been up till then. The intensity, the existential depth, the freely acquired personal characteristic, all of which have developed in one's life up till then, all enter as intrinsic elements into the new act of decision and put their stamp on it. In every moment of the free, personal achievement of existence, the past becomes an inner, essential principle of the present and its acts.

At this point, we are going to interrupt the course of our reflection for a moment. When theologians treat of the problem of the reviviscence of merit, their views diverge (on closer examination) into two directions depending on their view of whether merit revives according to the present intensity of the existential conversion which lets this merit revive again, or whether they revive simply according to the past degree of merit, so that (in this latter view) the new conversion would be merely the external presupposition for the possibility of making claim to previous merit before God. In the second case, the possibility of a full reviviscence of merit is not a particularly great problem (although, of course, the fact itself must still be proved, since it is presupposed that this depends ultimately on the free decree of God). But this conception is based on a very external, juridical concept of 'merit', a concept which we have really already refused to accept as in any way sufficient. Moreover, this view cannot really explain on what it bases its knowledge that such a reviviscence is not merely a juridical possibility in God's providence but is a fact (as this view maintains it is). For no one can say that the positive sources of revelation really prove this thesis directly and in a way which would exclude all possibility of doubt. But what intrinsic, objective proof could support this view, if there is no intrinsic connection between the depth of the conversion and the reviviscence of previous merit and if therefore no presence of the past in the present act of conversion demands the reviviscence of merit? In the first case, theologians seem more or less to deny a reviviscence of merit, or (since no one likes to deny this explicitly) seem to explain reviviscence in such a way that objectively speaking there is very little left of it; they seem to say that reviviscence means that eternal beatitude, which is measured by the depth of conversion and the merit [147] consequent on it, is 'also' the reward for previous merits. At any rate, theologians seem to be tacitly agreed in both these views – in spite of their difference of opinion on the possibility, fact, nature and degree of the reviviscence of merit – that if this 'reviviscence' is measured according to the existential depth and radicality (or the opposite) of conversion, then this can be maintained only in a very much weakened sense; for in such a case, the same degree of grace and subsequent glory would have been given even in accordance with this disposition alone, even if there had been no earlier merit. Thus, both parties presuppose that the earlier life in its permanent results which have entered into the actual reality of the person, is not an inner moment in the conversion and of its intensity.

But precisely this seems to us to be disputable. Even and especially where someone freely undertakes conversion, he does not act out of the abstract impenetrableness of a formal freedom but out of what he is, out of what he is permanently because 'this' is what he has been in the past. The conversion is the result of one's inner life. This is to be taken not in the sense that the conversion has to come because 'this' is how one was earlier on, but in the sense that this conversion, if it comes freely, will be 'such' as it is also because one was 'like this' earlier on. Thus, the past enters without fail into the present conversion, determines its characteristic depth and everything else of this nature. If this is correct, then it follows precisely from the (apparently more careful) position of those theologians who are not prepared to admit *a priori* a full reviviscence of previous merit but who – and, in principle, rightly so – want to tie this reviviscence to the depth of conversion, that a full reviviscence of this earlier merit can be supposed: the present 'disposition' necessarily contains the whole previous life (at least this), because one cannot turn the clock back; one's past is conserved in

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the present of the person out of which arises every act by which a person really decides about himself as a whole in freedom.

Hence we can say: your whole life remains always preserved for you; everything you have done and suffered is gathered together in your being. You may have forgotten it, yet it is still there. It may appear to you as a pale dream even when you do remember what you once were, did and thought. All this you still are. All this has perhaps been transformed (it is to be hoped) and incorporated into a better, more comprehensive framework, has been integrated more into a great love (indeed, the great love) and silent loyalty towards your God which was, remained and grew [148] throughout everything life did with you; but everything has remained in this way, nothing has simply ceased, everything which happened – as long as we are pilgrims of maturing freedom – can still be retrieved and transformed into the one action of the heart in what you do today: the good of your past life, by taking up once more in its proper nature what remained and what through sin became the power of evil; the evil, by taking the good – without which the empty evil cannot exist – out of this obstructing negation (the formal evil, as the schoolmen say, by declaring this formal evil to be pure negativity) and by opening it up to that breadth of freedom which really belongs to every genuine reality such as was concealed even in your evil actions, by opening it up to that breadth of freedom which belongs to the pure goodness of God. Thus you do not need to be anxious about your past life: neither on account of some good in it which has evaporated nor about something evil (if it has been redeemed); both are still there and really well there in your proper reality, i.e. in what is genuinely and personally real. Repentance is not escape but transformation. It is escape only from the fact that the guilty deed was not more, did not want to be more, than it was: hence, escape from what was death in it, not flight from the life which was also hidden in it. Life gathers more and more; it scatters only those who are unfaithful to the infinite God and his love, or – more correctly – it gathers even them, but not into the intimacy of God's love but into the dark, burning narrowness of the loss of all in one.

God has made the world and man better than we normally think. We can do *everything* wrong; but ultimately we *cannot* do wrong *in many different ways*. Reality is constructed in such a way that as a whole it finds salvation if it finds it at all. Ultimately, the successful final decision is also the comprehensive one. The river of life may take many a roundabout route; but when it arrives, it has lost none of its water (after all, where could the water have disappeared to, when the 'past' of the spirit ultimately is not what has happened but what has become and been preserved?); together with everything else, it flows into the sea of finality. It is also ensured that this blessed truth does not change into a cheap optimism of the superficial and the frivolous: no one knows whether in his case the whole perfection is also the beatifying perfection. Anyone who thinks he can make things easy for himself in life, since after all one has nothing to lose, must remember that he can lose everything in the way explained and that the radical nature of damnation is equal to that of beatitude, precisely [149] because the whole life is preserved by the fact that it brings itself out of an empty future into a past which, before God, is a valid present. The proverb 'All's well that ends well' expresses a much more profound truth than is normally intended by it. But we just do not know that everything will end well. We have to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, for we can only lose it completely or win it completely.

This does not, of course, obscure the truth of faith that everyone finds his own particular beatitude and – judged by the works which precisely he has done during this life – finds his measure of blessed completion which differs in greatness for each individual. For in this perfection everyone catches up with *himself*, with the talents (both natural and supernatural) God has given him, and is perfected according to God's plan who gives to each one as He wills. But it is precisely because we are what we are meant to be by God's will – because the measure of real possibilities possessed by each individual is ordained by God's sovereign

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providence – that we will be perfected and perfectly happy when we have caught up with these our possibilities; and when we have been perfected, then we have caught them up completely and not merely in part.

Since God gives us our merit by his grace, he can give it to each one of us differently and it remains different (compared with other individuals) even when God grants us by his grace that our merits correspond to the possibilities they have proper to each one of us. Hence, what has been said, does not deny the truth that everyone is rewarded according to his works. It simply says that these works in their very diversity – if this exists at all – correspond finally to the inner possibilities God has granted to each one in a different way.

What has been said so far has been concerned primarily and explicitly with the fact that those possibilities of our own, proper and individual existence which have been realized by us, cannot be lost to us even though we may have gone through a period of guilt, presupposing merely that we definitively rest this realized existence in God's love. But we think that we can say something even more explicit and far-reaching on the subject of the comfort of time than we have done so far. This is that if we save our existence into God's grace, then we save it completely. This is meant not only in the sense that nothing of what has once been realized is lost, but also in the sense that finally nothing of what has been offered to us as a possibility by God – of the possibility we ourselves have been – [150] remains unrealized. Thus we mean that if we are saved, then the person we have become is the full realization of the one we were able to be; there is nothing left over. In the end, the law according to which we began – if it is fulfilled at all – is fulfilled completely. Existence and idea coincide. Naturally certain possibilities remain unfulfilled in life. If one has decided for one thing in this life which is different from something else in a mutually exclusive way, and if this difference is also to enter into the permanent finality of life (if this life is not to be merely a good or bad piece of stage acting with a subsequent reward à la 'Everyman'), then one cannot have this other life even in eternity. To this extent, everything finite pays the price of its perfection by its 'renunciation' of something 'possible'. But such a 'renunciation' is without regrets; it is merely the price of perfection, without which it itself could not even exist. This is quite different from saying, however, that guilt which did not need to be, which as such can never be a necessary means to perfection, gives rise to a final loss of a genuine possibility. In this case, this existence would terminate in final sorrow because something would have been lost which really could have been, and not merely a 'possibility' which dies easily and with pleasure because it makes room for some other, genuine and accomplished possibility.

One might now immediately make the following objection to this thesis that in an eternity given as a gift of God's grace and believed in its promise, concrete being and existence really coincide, and that even in this sense all sin will really have been completely forgiven: the simplest Christian experience and appreciation of human life shows that one can at any moment fall short of one's own possibilities and leave unrealized in the individual acts of one's life what could be realized at this moment in the sphere of moral maturing. Hence – it might be objected – even the total result of a life which reaches its final stage with death might culpably fall short of what could have been achieved during it.

Yet there would seem to be a great deal to be said against this opinion; will the person I am really sorrowfully salute from afar and for all eternity the one I might have become? Has this sorrow disappeared from the beatitude of the perfect, just for the simple reason that he knows that he himself has been freely responsible for this eternal truncation and that God has therefore permitted it in his eternal salvific will, because he finds his joy more in God's will than in anything else? Will anyone dare to answer this question in the affirmative and believe that he has even then [151] conceived the beatitude of perfection in a happy enough way? Is it certain that what applies to the individual act and to the individual moment of life must also

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apply to the final totality of life? Is the whole of life merely the sum of its parts? Should one not have to say that one is still in time as long as unused possibilities are still available to us? For if eternity is not the unlimited continuation of time but the finality of what has freely come to be in time, then possible time would not yet be finished as long as there remain in a man open possibilities waiting for the perfection of eternity, or else these possibilities would have to be thought of as simply falling away empty in death (but how could this be thought, if these possibilities are really the person in the concrete, in so far as he himself is set as a task to his freedom which may either accept or deny it?). Certainly, a factual realization of existence always includes also an 'external' possibility, since man considered as a free being depending on a body must achieve himself in his freedom in a material which is given to him as something different from himself, i.e. as the world which surrounds him. But precisely this fact shows once more that it is always the same thing which happens even with different materials, viz. the taking up of a position towards oneself in the face of the absolute being and the absolute person whom we call God. Hence this same thing can take place completely and perfectly with regard to the most diverse material bases. If one were to deny this, then one could no longer (theologically speaking) admit properly that one can become perfect in different ways; the doctrine of the one Christian perfection of the one and always identical love of God in the different 'ways' and 'callings' (within and without the Evangelical Counsels, in the world, etc.) could no longer logically be held. It is undoubtedly true that even the concrete factors of life and of the different individual situations of life enter into eternity (the unique concreteness of our life is not – as in Hoffmannsthal's 'Everyman', or in the case of the reed-baskets of the Desert Fathers which they made and then undid again in the evening – merely the practice material which is thrown away again at the end and which is used over and over again for the same exercise). But this recognition surely does not exclude the other, viz. that with different materials of existence one cannot indeed make oneself exactly the same man in eternity but can achieve oneself as a perfect man who has completely caught up with himself. Apparently very little material is required for such total self-achievement. What we may sorrowfully be tempted to complain about as a poverty of opportunities for certain people (in the [152] case of those who died young, etc.), will have to be regarded rather as the normal opportunity, which has to be contrasted with the superabundance of different possibilities for others (those who live a long time and consequently with a great many existential opportunities), of which, however, they were not really able to use a greater number as genuine possibilities really and intimately belonging to them than those who apparently were offered only pitiful opportunities. We do not mean to raise the question here as to what happens to the innumerable human beings who have died at the embryonic stage, as to whether one can conceive in their case of a beatitude which is not also the result of their free action (in which case it would be quite false to say that what is granted to the one who has never acted himself is more grace than something he has done freely himself). In any case, reference to this obscure question seems to indicate that one must not overrate the significance of the difference in external situation for the proper achievement of man's existence. For otherwise it would be a strange arrangement of life by God, if in most cases of this free spiritual creature – which after all is called to realize its being freely – this realization did not come to its proper fulfilment. It is not necessary here to attempt to prove *philosophically* that there can be no spiritual creatures who, without any fault of their own, do not reach their proper perfection. It suffices if we approach the matter in this theological reflection from the angle of Christian hope. But we may then ask: is it true that because we are finite, the beatifying agreement with this finiteness (which undoubtedly belongs to the perfect happiness of the creature) is also already (without destroying perfect happiness) an agreement with the final lack of realization of my real possibilities, which after all are something quite different from those abstract possibilities which are merely the

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expression of my finite nature assigned to me by God himself? After all, the fact that no one fails to find perfect happiness simply because someone else has his own – greater – perfect happiness, is not yet an obvious explanation of the fact that one would not fail to achieve perfect happiness if *one's own* measure were to remain eternally unfulfilled. May we in a sense 'postulate' that God leads everyone in such a way that each one finds his complete perfection if he finds perfect happiness at all? On the other hand, seen correctly, this optimism is no licence for irresponsible optimism. For there is a Purgatory (to put it quite simply in Christian terms) and there is the danger of being lost for ever. Hence, no one escapes the necessity (now or later) of really having to catch up with himself by hard effort, so that [153] eternal life may really be the full result of time. If we remember that ultimately good and evil are distinguished not as 'more' and 'less' but as 'yes' and 'no' – even though the formally evil is a deficit in an existent – then it is not really so difficult to ensure that every life in the long run grows into the whole fullness of reality which is implanted in it. Thus, there only remains the question as to whether it fulfils itself in an absolute yes or absolute no to God. Hence, only these two possibilities and not merely shadowy forms of life are possible where the end has arrived in its complete finality. One may catch up with oneself more slowly or more quickly, more actively or more passively; but to remain for ever 'behind oneself' is a merely abstract possibility which does not seem to belong to the world and history of the personal spirit, a world and a history created by the God of beatifying perfection. Anyone who thinks differently seems to us to be thinking too much in terms of the experiences of the material world. In the world of the quantitative there certainly is more and less, and in it there cannot be anything which could not just as well be more, since in this world (as long as it keeps its proper form) perfection is impossible. But where there is spirit and freedom, there is final completion. This, however, is the perfect final completion.

Let it not be said, however, that Purgatory merely exists for the payment of the debt of punishment due to sin and that it does not really 'improve' man, since beyond the grave he can no longer grow in grace. Purgatory can be conceived absolutely as the integration of all the manifold dimensions of man into the one basic decision of man (which no longer changes after death). It would have to be proved, however, and should not simply be presupposed as an indubitable fact, that – because the individual act in the life of man can remain below the level of its possibility – this basic decision itself does not always find the measure proper to it even in the totality of life. If (it might just be mentioned) one allows the Thomistic theory its inner logical dynamism, then one will arrive at a view like the one we have in mind. For the basic decisions about the relationship towards God (and thus also about its measure) are not really built up of those factors which are present in the case of venial sin and of the corresponding existentially morally good, 'slight' acts. It is in the latter rather than in the former basic decisions as such (in so far as these are the result of a whole life) that the 'more or less' is at home. If it were to be objected against this that according to Our Lord's words, the love of God itself (and not just its other actualizing and concretizing [154] attitudes), and hence obviously the basic decision of life, happens more or less 'with all one's power and one's whole heart', then one would have to answer that this is undoubtedly true for the individual acts of such a basic decision, of such an '*option fondamentale*', which take place in the individual moments of life but the question is precisely whether in the case of a successfully achieved life (*if* it really is this), this basic decision must not necessarily have arrived at the very point which is demanded of it, viz. that God is really loved with one's whole heart. Or is God, even in eternity, satisfied with a love which is not 'of the whole heart'? If this is not so, then has one loved differently with one's whole heart than if one really used up the possibilities of such a love granted to us by God and his grace? Thus – when one loves in this way with one's whole heart – is one not then exactly in the position one should be in, viz. in the accomplishment of one's own existence, in completed

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perfection?

Before we bring our reflections about the comfort of time to a close, there remains one further question which must still be examined more explicitly than we have done so far: what is the real position of the evil acts in our life and of the 'works' which, although not evil and culpable in themselves, nevertheless happened during a period of our life which was dominated by a basic decision against God and which we qualify as a 'state of sin'? It is an obvious fact that every mortal sin as such, regarded in itself, tries to integrate the whole of life into a no to God and hence is in itself the most terrible thing a man can do. It is also clear that as a consequence, every such action certainly does not come up to the possibilities of spiritual, personal (supernatural) self-actualization which the person could have achieved had he not sinned. A Christian also cannot dispute the truth that there is no sin which may be done as something 'necessary' because it is thought that this is the only way one can become the sort of person one should and must be according to the inner law with which one set out. However much 'experience' may seem to contradict it, there is nothing in the world which could be so indispensable for one's own self-actualization that it could justify and give meaning to opposition to the holy will of God. Everything which signifies a fulfilment for man can be found on the way to God, even though this way may seem to lead only into the desolate and empty wastes of the kind of renunciation which makes man miserable. It is indeed true that the ultimate and the decisive arrives only when one sacrifices it. But is sin, as a concrete action, only sin and only empty meaninglessness simply because it is sin [155] and should not have been committed and because its goal could also have been reached in a different way? No Christian philosopher or theologian who does not want to become a Manichean can answer this question in the affirmative, even though moralists and preachers like to act as if they really wanted to give this answer. Sin can exist only because it is more and something better than sin, for otherwise it would be pure nothingness presenting no danger and amounting to precisely nothing. Even sin, therefore, is always a real piece of existential realization, of real self-fulfilment, a part of the way towards the real goal (however much the imagination baulks at this). One should indeed say that the deeper and the more radical sin is, the more the sinner involves and achieves his own person in this, and the more he must realize (even though in a radically false direction) the possibility of his existence. The wretchedness and profound shamelessness of sin lives on this real presence within it of the greatness of fulfilled human possibilities. The bravery, the prodigality of the heart, the courage to venture, and whatever else has to be carried out in sin so that it may even exist – and anything which must be realized to a greater extent, the greater the sin – all this could and should indeed have become reality even without guilt (although perhaps in another form and expressed differently). Yet this in its turn does not alter the fact that it has become a reality in the guilt. And so it remains. And so it really enters as a factor of the person's action into a new, good action, into the return to God and into justification. Hence one can certainly speak of a 'reviviscence' of the sinful past and not merely of a 'reviviscence' of meritorious actions which were once done in the state of grace and then were deadened by sin. Hence it is not as if the time of sin remained simply as an item appearing for all eternity on the deficit side. It is true, of course, that this time as such and regarded in itself will always be less than if it had been lived in faithfulness and love towards God. But we have already said that life as a whole cannot end thus if it ends at all completed. The end must be the full-filling in which even the loss of this sinful time is made up, in which this time, or what is positively good in it, is redeemed by the grace of God and elevated into God's life, and thus is integrated together with everything else into the blessed fulfilment which is without blemish. Seen in the totality of perfected life (when this beautifying fulfilment takes place), even the sinful time is not killed but redeemed and saved, and included in the mercy of God who does not save by merely obliterating but by setting free and by 'preserving in an elevated form'. The

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same, only more so, [156] applies of course to those acts of one's sinful life which in themselves are not bad actions but do not – to begin with – signify any exercise of the supernatural life, because they were not done in the grace of God: to the extent in which even the realizations of personal human history were expressions of the spiritual man, they too enter into that subsequent total supernatural fulfilment in which the whole man is completely brought home to God.

The comforting aspect of time! We do not lose anything but are always gaining. It is true that ultimately this is known only to the believer. But is it any the less true for this, and any the less the comfort of time? Life gathers itself together more and more, the more apparently the past lies behind us. The more it seems like that, the more we have in front of us. And when we arrive, we find our whole life and all its real possibilities, and the meaning of all the possibilities which had been given to us. There is not only a resurrection of the body but also a resurrection of time in eternity. This is not the remaining of an abstract subject, which continues to enjoy life, because it had at some time in the distant past behaved itself properly, but it is a changed and transfigured time. In it we are not, indeed, peasant or pope, poor or rich, but then one has not simply 'been' all this just to become something different now. One sees oneself completely now and is not merely someone receiving a pension for past services rendered, someone who now follows a different occupation. For in everything one has done in the past, one really did only one thing after all (even though it became part of a synthesis together with the many other things one did, a synthesis which characterizes it even in its fulfilment), viz. one tried to attain oneself completely, together with everything one had by nature and grace, and to make a complete transfer of this one total reality in believing love into the incomprehensible mystery of God. And this attempt has now completely succeeded. In all we experienced of it in our life, it always seemed to be successful only in part and bit by bit. We seemed always to land back again in ourselves, in our empty poverty, our total weakness and the miserable dilettantism of our love of God. What we seemed to have only succeeded with in a piecemeal fashion, even that seemed to be consumed again without trace in that demolition of our corporeal, earthly existence which we call our life proceeding towards death. But all this is only the darkness in which – as the common milieu of guilt and redemption, as the sphere of faith and despair – man must allow his life and himself to be hidden. Yet in it he is completely preserved. Eternity [157] does not, properly speaking, come after time but rather is the fulfilment of time. Our eternity ripens out of time as the fruit in which, when it has fully grown, everything we were and became in this time is conserved.

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[159]

PART TWO

The Sacraments

[161]

11

THE EUCHARIST AND SUFFERING

The subject of this essay may at first sight seem somewhat *recherché*, and yet really it is not. For there are in fact essential relationships between the fact that the baptized receives bread from heaven as the food of life and the other fact that he is called to share in the sufferings of Christ, and so it may be worth the trouble to investigate these relations a little.

There are three properties of the Blessed Eucharist which entail leading its recipient into the dark valleys of Christ's suffering: it is a sacrifice, it brings grace, and it binds its recipient ever more closely to the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church. These three allow the sufferings of Christ to flow over in a mysterious manner to the one who receives this Christ.

I

The Holy Eucharist is a sacrifice; in it we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ given and poured out for us. It is perfectly true, of course, that the Holy Eucharist is the wonderful presence of the glorified Christ who is beyond all suffering, and who can never die now (Rm 6:9) but sits in majesty at the right hand of the Father. Yet the Holy Eucharist is also a true, visible sacrifice whose purpose is to render present the bloody sacrifice offered once and for all on the Cross and to preserve the memory of this sacrifice until the end of time (Council of Trent, sess. 22, c. 1). The Council of Trent sees this relationship of the sacrifice of the Mass to the sacrifice of the Cross to lie above all in the fact that there is in both the same High Priest and the same sacrificial victim (sess. 22, c. 2).

It is the same High Priest who offers the unbloody sacrifice in the Mass and who offered himself on the Cross, and in both cases it is the same sacrificial outlook which gives the sacrifice its propitiatory value. Indeed, it [162] is one and the same unique inner act of sacrifice which makes the external happening on the Cross and in the Mass morally valuable, which propitiates God and brings man salvation and blessing.[1] For every moral action of Jesus had propitiating value before God's justice, in so far as it was already interiorly incorporated into the totality of a life of sacrifice whose climax was the voluntary sacrificial death on the Cross, and in so far as it formed a single, great totality with the death on the Cross. Thus every action, every piece of work, every attitude of Jesus drew life from his readiness for the Cross, was a part of the way up to the sacrificial altar of Calvary and thus was also pleasing to the Father. For this reason, this will to sacrifice was also included – suffused and united with the will to the Cross – when Jesus offered the first eucharistic sacrifice at the Last Supper and coupled with his command of the continuous renewal of this sacrifice by the Apostles and their successors also the interior will to sacrifice which sanctified all these visible sacrifices offered in his name in the course of time. This was all

[1] Cf. on this, K. Rahner, *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* (Freiburg 1951); *id*., 'Die vielen Messen als die vielen Opfer Christi', *ZKT* LXXVII (1955), pp. 94-101.

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the more the case because this sacrifice was to be the renewal and effectual application of the sacrifice offered on the Cross, because it is thus connected of its whole nature with the sacrifice on the Cross and because the grace and holiness distributed by it to man is precisely the grace and holiness merited on the Cross, i.e. merited by the sacrificial will of Jesus who was obedient even unto death. It is also, therefore, this sacrificial mind – which was in Jesus and which made his suffering on the Cross a world-redeeming action – which makes the unbloody sacrifice on our altars a sacrifice pleasing to God, reconciling heaven and earth and transmitting the grace of God's mercy to all those who assist in offering it with a devout heart.

Let us, however, take a closer look at the sacrificial disposition of Jesus himself. It is the will for the Cross, the obedience unto death, the voluntary sacrifice of his life by the one who has power to give his life or to keep it, by the one who gave it because this was his Father's will. It was therefore a will for sorrow, for the chalice of bitterness, for destruction, because God was to be glorified precisely by such a voluntary acceptance of suffering. We can just get an inkling as to why precisely such suffering and dying was the form of glorifying God surpassing all other possibilities and the one by which the only begotten Son of God [163] revealed his Father. Suffering and dying are the destruction of what is human; they are a task of one's own fulfilment, one's own pleasure and honour. But from man's point of view, such a task of self-affirmation shows – more than anything else – that all salvation comes from God, that it is not by elevating his own self and by perfecting his own being that man can find the God who without man's merit forgives the sinner and who calls man out of the sphere of his natural desire of perfecting self to the infinity of His own divine life. The new life itself is God's grace, is His gift. No amount of suffering, death, dark night and denial of the unruly will to live could have forced God to come down to man. But such active renunciation of one's own happiness as is contained in surrender to pain and sorrow is still the clearest practical confession of the fact that man, conscious of his own powerlessness in the face of the God of forgiveness and elevating grace, expects his salvation from above and not from himself and hence can and will sacrifice his ego and its values, those values which are powerless to procure his salvation. Such a will to sacrifice animated Jesus as he offered himself to God in order to win for us forgiveness and grace, and this one and the same will to sacrifice also makes Christ a victim pleasing to God when he offers himself ritually to God on our altars as the eternal High Priest: the will to die so that the Father may be honoured, and so that it may be made known that He is all in all, and man is nothing before him.

Furthermore, Christ is not only the same sacrificing priest in the Eucharist, with the same sacrificial intentions as on the Cross, but the Eucharist is also the same sacrificial offering as the one offered by the eternal High Priest in his bloody sacrifice. The sacrificial offering is Jesus Christ himself. The manner of offering indeed is different: on the Cross, the sacrificial offering was offered to God by the shedding of blood, here it is offered in an unbloody manner by the transubstantiation of the human gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Redeemer. Yet the Mass also refers this unbloody manner of offering back to the bloody sacrifice on the Cross. For Christ offers himself to the Father in the eucharistic sacrifice under two species: of these, by virtue of the words of consecration themselves, one contains the body and the other his blood – precisely so as to point to his bloody sacrifice in which his body was given for many and his blood was poured out for the forgiveness of sin. Thus the sacrificial offering of holy Mass is not merely in fact the same Christ who was sacrificed on the Cross, but he is a sacrificial offering here [164] which even in the manner of its offering still continues to announce the death of the Lord until he comes.

The sacrificial intention and sacrificial offering of the sacrifice of the Mass are thus submerged in the mystery of the Cross; they announce this mystery and speak of the death of the Son of God for our salvation.

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But this mystery of the Cross which mysteriously suffuses the celebration of the Mass is thus brought home to us not merely spatially and temporally but, far more than that, it takes hold of us who celebrate this mystery, it draws us into itself and subjects us to its unfathomable laws. For when (and this is true of all of us) we lend Christ, the eternal High Priest, our hands and voice so that he may offer the sacrifice of the New Covenant to the Father through us, then we cannot be his holy 'liturgists' other than by entering into the sacrificial outlook of Christ which alone gives value and dignity to this sacred action. When we sacrifice with Christ, then his inner mind, his resignation and readiness to suffer, his will for the cross and sorrow and death must take hold of us too, so that we do not merely take part in the external happening but also in his interior intentions, full of terror and sweetness at the same time, in the mystery of the Cross which animates this sacrifice. Furthermore: we are not merely Christ's co-celebrants who must enter into his desire for sacrifice. We also receive the sacrificed body and the blood of the sacrifice poured out for us, the sacrificial gifts themselves. If, however, this body and blood in their sacramental manner of existence still announce the death of the Lord, is it not inevitable then that this sacrament – if it effectively takes hold of us by its own power – should make us subject to the mystery it announces, which is the death of Christ? And if this food changes us into itself will we not then also have to learn to bear the signs which proclaim the death of Christ Our Lord, as do this bread and the chalice of salvation which we receive? It is impossible that the mystery of the suffering of Christ should not spread through the life of someone who partakes of the sacrifice and the sacrificial meal in which is renewed the memory of the suffering of Christ.

II

But let us pursue this relationship between the Holy Eucharist and the mystery of suffering in the life of the Christian still further. The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of the daily growth of grace, the sacrament of [165] the daily increase of that love which is poured out for us by the Holy Spirit; it is the sacrament which is meant to preserve, awaken and develop in us that divine life which was poured into us by water and the Holy Spirit in the bath of rebirth. Hence, if the Holy Eucharist is meant to be the increase of the life received in baptism, then it is clear that its manner of effecting this must be adapted to the vital laws of this divine life of grace and that it must develop this life in those directions in which this life had already been moving in germ.

These ontological and vital laws of the supernatural life of grace, however, include also the fact that this life is necessarily, one would almost say by an inner finality, also a participation in the suffering of Christ.

By baptism, we are drawn into the life-circle of Christ. For we live from that moment onwards by his grace, we are implanted into him as the vine branch into the vine, we live in him and out of him. Thus we belong to no one else more than to the one risen from the dead (Rm 7:4); we belong to Christ, as he belongs to God (1 Co 1:9). Consequently, we must also become conformed to the image of the Son of the Father (Rm 8:29), we must put on Christ more and more, as we have already done basically in baptism (Ga 3:27). Christ must more and more be formed in us (Ga 4:19).

This inner correspondence of Christ's life and the life of someone united with Christ is so great that St Paul also conceives the great decisive events of Christ's life as direct events in the life of the Christian or concludes from an event of Christ's life to some corresponding event in the life of the Christian. Thus, we have died with Christ, have awoken with him, have risen together with him, are transplanted with him into heaven (Ep 2:6; Col 2:12; 3:1). If Christ is risen, then according to St Paul it follows necessarily from this that we too rise from

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the dead (1 Co 15:13 *sqq*.).

What is valid in these general terms of the parallel between Christ's life and the life of the Christian is valid also, and, above all, of the event which stands at the centre of the earthly life of Jesus, viz. the Cross. Just as it was so very much the characteristic sign of the life of Jesus that one really knows Christ only as the Crucified (1 Co 2:2), so the life of those who are united with Christ by grace must be marked by the Cross. Conversely, all the suffering of the Christian cannot be regarded by him as natural misfortune or as the general lot of all human beings, but must be regarded simply as the consequence and expression of his Christian existence [166] and of his union with Christ by grace, and as a necessary stage he must go through before being glorified with Christ. Already in baptism, in the foundation of our Christian existence, we are seized by this mysterious law of the life of grace: in baptism we are buried into the death of Christ (Rm 6:3), we have grown together with him in the likeness of his death (Rm 6:5). Of course, in this 6th chapter of Romans it is also and perhaps primarily a question of the dying to sin, of a spiritual dying of the old, sinful man in us (cf. Rm 6:6; Ga 2:19; 5:24; Col 3:3) to make way for the resurrection of the new man created according to God in holiness and justice (cf. Ep 4:24; Col 3:10); but just as in Jesus himself sin was overcome and the new life of grace was founded precisely by his bodily suffering and death, so for the Christian, too, suffering and death are in the proper sense manifestations and means by which the growth and perfecting of the new life in Christ are achieved, and – since baptism – we are always submerged anew into the death of Christ. For if for St Paul all earthly, bodily dying (and hence all sorrow) is also an expression of the fact that man was subject to sin (Rm 5:12 *sqq*.; 8:10), then in those who are in Christ Jesus (and to the extent in which they are) and in whom as such there is no longer anything worthy of damnation (cf. Rm 8:1 and Council of Trent, sess. 5, c. 5), suffering and death no longer have the character of punishment in the proper sense but rather are a participation in the fate of Jesus and an effect of that living union with him which began in baptism. We are children of God filled with his Spirit; we are his heirs and co-heirs with Christ. Only we must still suffer with him, as St Paul says (Rm 8:17), so that we may be glorified with him. Thus according to St Paul we are given a part in the sufferings of Christ (2 Co 1:5); thus St Paul wants to participate in His sufferings and become like Him in death (Ph 3:11); thus the scars of his persecutions are for him the marks of the wounds of Christ (Ga 6:17); Christ is to be glorified in his body through life and through death (Ph 1:20). And because the life of Jesus is to be revealed in all men at some time, what St Paul says of himself must be true of all Christians: we always bear about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame. For we, the living, are constantly being handed over to the power of death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Co 4:10 *sqq*.). Just as Jesus was crucified in weakness, so we also are weak 'in him' (2 Co 13:4). Thus it is a grace not merely to believe in Christ but [167] also to suffer for him (Ph 1:29; 1 P 2:19, 20); thus it is a true calling to undergo suffering, following the example of Christ (1 P 2:20, 21), it is a partaking in *his* suffering and his disgrace (1 P 4:13; Heb 13:3), it is a result of the law that all those who wish to live piously in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution (2 Tm 3:10). For if the author of our salvation attained perfection through suffering (Heb 2:11; 5:8), can we who have put on this Jesus in baptism (Ga 3:28) think to come differently to perfection? It seems to have been part of a primitive Christian song – this 'true saying' transmitted to us by St Paul and which sounds like an anthem (2 Tm 2:11, 12):

If we have died with him,
we shall also live with him;
if we patiently endure with him,
we shall also reign with him.

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It is true, therefore, that as St Paul says in one place, we are 'appointed unto' suffering (1 Th 3:3); that because we have grown into Christ by grace, we also grow together with his suffering and death; that he must also be formed in us (Ga 4:19) as the crucified; that suffering and death are essential characteristics of Christian existence as such, necessary consequences and living manifestations of our being in Christ by grace.

The Holy Eucharist, however, as we have already said, is the sacrament of the constant growth and maturing of this life of grace; it is the sacrament which is meant to ensure that we live more and more 'in Him' and become ever more like Him. Must not the Holy Eucharist then draw us ever more deeply also into the mystery of the Cross of Christ? If the power of Christ's life with its vital laws brims over daily from the Sacrament of the Altar into our souls as if in ever new waves, is it not then a new submersion from day to day in the death of Christ? If grace and the Cross are so intimately connected because in Christ, the source of all grace, the Cross stamped itself on everything, then the daily increase of grace in Holy Communion can only unite us ever more deeply and fully with the Cross of Christ. Thus it is true in this also that – because it is no longer we who live but Christ in us – we are also crucified with Christ (cf. Ga 2:19). And if we receive the Holy Eucharist as a pledge of future resurrection and glory (cf. Council of Trent, sess. 13, c. 2), then it can also be truly said of its reception that if we have died with Him, we will also live with Him. The Eucharist, moreover, renews the memory of the [168] sufferings of Christ even by letting Christ's sufferings flow over to us together with grace.

III

But there is still a third factor which establishes a mysterious inner relationship between the Holy Eucharist and the Cross in the life of the Christian. The Holy Eucharist is also the sacrament of the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church. It is of course true that baptism already joins man to the Body of Christ, for we are all . . . baptized by the Spirit into one body (1 Co 12:13), says the Apostle; by the word of life in the bath of water, Christ has already formed the Church in all her glory, holiness and spotlessness (cf. Ep 5:26, 27). Nevertheless, the Holy Eucharist too is in a special way a sacrament of this Body of Christ. For, as the Apostle says, we are all one body, since there is only one bread and we all partake of this bread (1 Co 10:17). The sacraments after all cause the graces they signify as visible signs. But both the union of the many grains of wheat in the one bread and the communal eating from the one sacrificial table of Christ are signs of the unity and unitedness of the table companions of Christ among each other. Thus, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent, Christ intended the Holy Eucharist to be a sign of that one body whose head he is himself and to which he wanted us to be most closely conjoined as his members in faith, hope and charity (Trent, sess. 13, c. 2). Hence the Holy Eucharist must also increasingly cause such a unity of Christians in the one Body of Christ. It is not just by chance, moreover, that the oldest known Communion prayers of the primitive Church in the *Didache* implore precisely this unity of the Church, just as even today the *ordo* of the Mass still prays before the *communio* for the peace and unity of the Church. For if Holy Communion causes the fullness of the Spirit to increase in everyone, then it also binds together the members who by the one Spirit have become ever more closely conjoined into one Body. But the Holy Eucharist will not cause merely this kind of unity of the Mystical Body. For, such a unity of an organically arranged body is only possible if all the members obey the same laws of life and if each of them in their own place contribute to the building up of the whole body. The law of life of the Mystical Body of Christ demands, however, that this Body should be the

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fullness, i.e. the fulfilment and completion, the revelation of Christ himself in and through the whole of humanity, in which is to be effected through all peoples and [169] through all times that overflowing wealth of grace which lay hidden in Jesus Christ, the head of redeemed humanity. This spirit of grace works in all the redeemed to the building up of the Body of Christ until it reaches the full maturity of the manhood of Christ (Ep 4:13), until it is fully built up in love (Ep 4:16). But the things in which the Church is the fulfilment and completion of Christ include also his sufferings. For according to the Apostle's teaching, the sufferings of Christ too still lack something which it has been left to the Body of Christ, the Church, to fill up (Col 1:24). And rightly so, for if according to the teaching of the Apostle all the members suffer with it if *one* member suffers anything (1 Co 12:26), then how should the members be without suffering, when the head suffers or has suffered? Thus, just as Christ the Head could enter into his glory only through suffering (Lk 24:26), so his members too continue these sufferings unto glory, and he suffers in them until the end of time; his Cross is still mysteriously present where a member of Christ is crucified. Since they are, however, sufferings of the members of one body, these sufferings are not merely a blessing and grace for the individual person who suffers – since they are the effect of his personal measure of grace – but they also benefit and bless the whole Mystical Body of Christ, since they are also the effect of the law of life governing the whole Body. Hence it is true what the Apostle says: I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake; and what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church (Col 1:24). Thus it becomes possible to have a Communion of Saints in suffering for one another, so that one can say to the other: thus death is at work in us, but life in you (2 Co 4:12). By these sufferings we help to make the Body of Christ, the whole redeemed humanity, ever more like its head who is Christ the Crucified.

We have already seen how we are subjected to the laws of life of the Mystical Body of Christ by the Holy Eucharist, how by it we are drawn ever more deeply into the mysterious growth process of this Mystical Body. If, therefore, it also belongs primarily to these laws of growth that this Body must come to perfection by suffering, then the Holy Eucharist must also for this reason be a sacrament of suffering in Christ, of dying-with-him, and the Holy Eucharist will work ever more profoundly in us so that we, too, may make up in our flesh what is still lacking in the sufferings of Christ. Thus, the sacrament of unity and the bond of love (as St Augustine calls the Eucharist) is also the sacrament of the union [170] in suffering and the bond which unites all crucified members in the one work: to glorify God in Christ Jesus through the Cross throughout all the ages until the end of time.

It is, therefore, a holy reality of faith that the Holy Eucharist makes us partake in the sufferings of Christ, since it is the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary, since it communicates Christ's grace and since it is the sacrament of the unity of the Body of Christ.

At this point, we may possibly take fright at the thought of this connection between the sacrament of the blessed oneness of friends with Jesus and suffering, we may fear this declaration of readiness to suffer which is contained in every Holy Communion, we may feel something of the fear of Gethsemane in the face of that intrusion by the dying Jesus into the life of everyone who receives him.

We must not blind ourselves to the seriousness of this thought. But if we thus recognize the connection between the Eucharist and suffering, this does not mean that a person is mathematically hit by more sufferings the more frequently he receives Holy Communion. No, the measure of suffering appointed to us is God's disposing; it happens in accordance with the wise and inscrutable decrees of the one Spirit of God who distributes even these gifts of grace to the individual members of the Body of Christ, as he wills (cf. 1 Co 12:11). And this Spirit gives also the strength to bear each cross; together with the weakness of Christ, his strength also comes to dwell in us, and our weakness is given to us only so that God's

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strength may be perfected in us (2 Co 12:9 *sq*.). For when we are weak, then we are strong (*loc*. *cit*.).

We must not regard the relationships between the Eucharist and suffering so much as a mere measure of suffering. Something much more is meant by this: the Holy Eucharist should bring it about that the suffering and the Cross apportioned to us in God's wisdom and goodness become more and more attuned to the suffering of Christ, become more and more the suffering of Christ himself and are borne more and more in such a way that they are truly the continuation of the suffering life of Jesus. In this respect it will be a sacred comfort to us if we are always able to say to ourselves that what we are suffering is simply a participation in the life of the one whom we receive daily as victim and grace and as the bond of love. It is absolutely true to say that if we have died with him, we will also live with him (2 Tm 2:11). We share everything with him – both death and life – because we live in him through his Sacrament.

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[171]

12

THE RENEWAL OF PRIESTLY ORDINATION[1]

'I admonish thee to stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the laying on of my hands,' says the Apostle to his disciple Timothy (2 Tm 1:6).

I

'Renewal of ordination' may appear in its externals like a 'new invention', but in actual fact it is something deeply rooted in the faith. It is not merely based on the word of St Paul to Timothy. If this text were the only dogmatic basis for this idea and practice, it might appear to have weak foundations. For one might think then that St Paul was recommending nothing more to his disciple here than simply a new zeal in the exercise of his sacramentally given office. To understand the dogmatic meaning of the renewal of ordination (and thereby also the full meaning of the Pauline text), we must enlarge our inquiry.

Every sacrament as such is, from a fundamental point of view, merely the visible sacramental manifestation of a process of encounter between God and man by grace, a process which can take place even without the visible factor of that sign by which it becomes tangible merely spatiotemporally in the social order of the Church (even though the very thing which thus appears is itself called into reality by this visible manifestation in the sacrament). What happens between God and man by grace in the sacrament can and should also happen outside the sacrament in the intimacy of the heart, where God's self-communicating goodness and man's believing and humble receptivity meet each other; indeed, the [172] sacramental happening only has a grace-full effect in man, who is capable of deciding for himself when there really is this inner, personal meeting of God and man, which is indicated by the sacramental sign. Since this is so, there really is, for example, a 'spiritual Communion' in which Christians, without receiving the body of the Lord sacramentally, 'receive in desire the heavenly bread put before them and experience profit and benefit from it' (*Denz*. 881, Council of Trent). If, however, this can be said already of the sacraments in general and even of that sacrament which one can of its very nature receive every day *sacramentally*, then this must apply all the more to those sacraments which of their nature can be received only *once*, i.e. those sacraments which endow their recipient with an indelible spiritual character and which, therefore, cannot be repeated (*Denz*. 852, Council of Trent). Baptism, Confirmation and Priestly Ordination give man once and for all a very definite, permanent assimilation to Christ and a social connection with him as the head of the Church, and hence assign him his place in the social organism of the Church; hence they cannot be repeated in the visible sacramental (social) order of the Church. But this social, visible subordination to Christ as the head and the organic incorporation of man at a certain place and in a determined sphere of tasks in the Church takes place in *sacraments* and hence in *grace*-giving processes (and must happen in this way since the relationship to Christ and to his holy Church is the proto-sacrament, the sign of grace). Hence what happens in these sacraments is not merely a happening in the realm of the divine-*human* and of the *visible*

[1] What is said here of the sacrament of Holy Orders is valid also in a derived sense of the other two sacraments which can be received only once and which endow the soul with an inextinguishable character, i.e. Baptism and Confirmation. They too are capable of daily renewal.

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Church but at the same time is also a properly grace-full happening; it is the wonderful event of divine love by which God freely communicates his own being and three-personal life into the innermost being of man which opens itself out in a believing and loving yes, and this in such a way that this communication should and can be fruitful also precisely in the direction and sphere of life to which man was introduced by the sacramental process. This communication of grace, however, of its very nature is not a process happening only once but rather can be accepted in an ever more stepped-up, deepened, personal and intimate way. It can also be lost. It, therefore, does not possess that uniqueness and unrepeatable character which belong to the sacramental happening in these three sacraments which are sacraments of the incorporation into the visible Church. This communication can therefore be exercised and experienced anew in a 'spiritual', non-sacramental reception of the 'profit and benefit' of the particular sacrament.

[173] Where this happens in the case of the three sacraments referred to, it happens by virtue of the indelible character imprinted by these three sacraments.

The 'renewal' of these sacraments is therefore not a question of 'acting as if', it is not merely a pious, sentimental remembrance of the past, it is not an individual capricious attempt to do something similar in its subjective, merely human interiority to what one has also oneself done at one time 'at' the reception of a sacrament. It is rather a question of a true encounter with God by grace and of that same action of God in the inner man which was also the decisive factor in the sacramental happening and which can really happen even outside the sacrament. It is a question of one's own yes to this merciful deed of God's love in us, a yes which is said out of that real, spiritual and final character of our being which has been given to us in these sacraments and hence is a present reality in us. We can really celebrate our ordination day today and every day, not indeed '*in sacramento*', not in the sign, but in the truly present reality of what is signified, of the inextinguishable priestly character and the Holy Spirit of the priesthood given together with it and arising out of it. The hand of the bishop does not rest on us again every time, but what these hands have imprinted in us, neither time nor eternity can extinguish in us, and the Holy Spirit is always prepared to come over us in just as great a fullness – indeed, an even much greater fullness – as on that day when we were told: *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*; receive the Holy Ghost. We can celebrate our ordination day today just as much as then. In some cases, we may be able to do so even better today than then. For the God who himself is eternally young and who renews the inner (the spiritual) man from day to day in the daily dying of the old, merely natural (bodily and mental) man (cf. 2 Co 4:16), is eternally near to us in his unashamed love. If we have grown in knowledge and in love since that day when there happened to us in sign and in the reality of this sign what should happen to us anew today – even though not sacramentally (*in sacramento*) yet none the less really – in the intimacy of the heart seized by the sacramental grace, then there is also no obstacle on our part to the ever renewed granting of an ordination day, a day quieter and more restrained and yet more intimate and wonderful than the day of sacramental ordination in the springtime of our life. The renewal of ordination is not indeed an *opus operatum*, but it is truly an *opus operantis Dei et hominis ex opere operato*.

[174]

II

Such a renewal of ordination is *God's work* in us. This day of renewal is not merely a day of *our* good will, our resolutions, *ours* 'in spite of everything'. God's grace takes place in us just as on the first day, as long as we have faith and love. On the day when God called us and when he tore us out of the world to be his property and when he sent us out, as those set apart for him (cf. Heb 7:26), right into the midst of the world, our whole life was already present to

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the regard of his all-knowing love and of his loving knowledge. He already knew then about all of us, about what we have experienced and suffered only gradually since the day of our priestly ordination: the puzzle of our own being which is only completely unveiled to us once we have arrived at the end; our tasks, our work, the conditions of our age, our needs, our temptations, and even our darkest hours when we sinned. He has not made us priests, like someone who knows the beginning without having any idea of the end. He knew everything, and yet he placed everything precisely the way it is under the law of his priesthood. He has freely given us his Holy Spirit to help with everything, so that each one of us should become the very one whom God conceived and loved.

This Spirit which was 'poured out' in us on the day of our ordination is now also in us in the hour of the renewal of ordination. He wants to give himself even more intimately, wants to fill all the hidden chambers of our heart and the whole extent of our life even more intimately: the Spirit of the Father and the Son; the Spirit of rebirth and the divine sonship of men; the Spirit who is Lord also of this age; the Spirit who transforms the world into a great sacrifice of praise to the Father, just as we by his power change bread and wine into the body and blood of the one victim; the Spirit who convicts the world of sin, justice and judgement; the Spirit of witness to Christ; the Spirit of strength and comfort; the Spirit who pours out the love of God into our hearts and is the pledge and first-fruit of eternal life; the Spirit who alone still awakens new life out of sin and darkness and includes even sin in his mercifulness, and who transforms human perplexity into the calm wisdom of God; the Spirit whose gifts are love, joy, peace, patience, mildness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and continence; the Spirit of freedom and of courageous confidence; the Spirit who always changes everything and leads it into death because he is the infinity of life and thus can never rest in the frozen form [175] of a finite life which is not going to advance any further; the Spirit who in all this change and decay remains eternally and restfully the same; the Spirit who is victorious in weakness; the Spirit of the priesthood of Jesus Christ who transforms the helpless words of our preaching into the word and act of God, who lets the forgiveness on earth become reconciliation in heaven, who turns our gestures of blessing into Christ's sacraments, who, by consecrating the quiet half hour in the morning of our days, transforms it into the reconciling act of the Lord. This Spirit was the spirit of our ordination day, this Spirit is the spirit of our renewal of ordination. If he comes down into our life, then everything we are, do and suffer can be consecrated into a priestly life. For everything was seen and loved in advance on the day we became priests; hence, nothing can withstand this blessing and transforming action of God's love, if only we give it room, if only we say: do *thou* ordain us anew today.

III

Such a renewal of ordination is the *yes of our good will*. If God's grace ordains anew – if his charism, which is the Spirit of God himself, wants to become a new living fire in us – then our, alas, otherwise so problematic 'good will' may also find the courage for a new yes. Then, and for this reason, this day may also be a day of new 'resolutions', since all of them need only be a believing yes to God's action in our life. Such personal new beginnings are therefore no romantic dream which, in a festive hour, forgets what we have experienced, how we have failed, what we have suffered and what we have become since our priestly ordination; they are no flight into illusion. No, we summon up the whole of our past life into this hour and add the unknown, dark future to it, and yet say our yes which gathers together everything past and to come in order to give it to God, so that He may make it a priestly life. No matter what has already happened in our life: deep down, everything is still open and can

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still be fashioned into a priestly existence.

Are we concerned about the fruitlessness of our often so laborious efforts? In our yes, it becomes participation in the Gethsemane-anguish of the High Priest who redeemed the world. Are we perturbed by the grey sameness of our everyday life? In our yes, it becomes a part of the ordinary life of the one who was found like a man in everything. Do we experience a loneliness, which can make our eagerness for earthly fulfilment [176] so very hard and unbearable? In our yes, this emptiness of our heart becomes the wide vacuum filled by God's love. Our sins? In our concrete yes, which allows God to be greater than our sins, we learn the greatness of our office or reconciliation and compassion with sinners. Our lack of courage? Our yes turns it into a weakness which is simply the hiddenness of the sole victory of God. The inescapable darkness of the future? Our yes turns its burden into a proof of faith, for faith is truest when we believe in the love of the Father even in correction (cf. Heb 12:7-13). The particular duty within the sacerdotal sphere which is not 'in our line'? Our yes to this duty bursts wide open that 'diabolical circle' (as a modern psychologist has called it) in which we keep circling around ourselves in a self-seeking way, and renders us truly free for the first time. We can daily repeat with the Apostle (2 Co 3:4 *sqq*.):

> Such is the assurance we have through Christ towards God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything, as from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. He also it is who has made us fit ministers of the new covenant . . . Having therefore such hope, we show great boldness . . . Discharging therefore this ministry in accordance with the mercy shown us, we do not lose heart. On the contrary, we renounce those practices which shame conceals, we avoid unscrupulous conduct, we do not corrupt the word of God; but making known the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And if our gospel also is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing . . . we preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves merely as your servants in Jesus . . . but we carry this treasure in vessels of clay, to show that the abundance of the power is God's and not ours. In all things we suffer tribulation, but we are not distressed; we are sore pressed, but we do not despair; we endure persecution, but we are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we do not perish; always exposed to death in the midst of life for Jesus' sake, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Our ordination to the priesthood has established one final fact in our life. Whatever we do, we never escape this law of our life. Everything we do is unavoidably and inexorably either a yes or a no to this action of God in our life. Today, let us with all the power of the heart at our disposal give a pure, believing, loving, unconditional yes to this priesthood, a yes to everything it entails and imposes on us. This yes – even one already caused by God – is the condition and sign that God accomplishes his work in us, that he makes us anew today what we already are: priests of God.

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[177]

13

THE MEANING OF FREQUENT CONFESSION OF DEVOTION

How is it possible to give intrinsic reasons for making frequent 'confessions of devotion'? This is the question with which this essay will be concerned.

There is no question here, therefore, of proving that it is *possible* to have venial sins forgiven by sacramental absolution, and this even on their own and independently of the sacramental forgiving of mortal sins. This possibility can be presupposed here. On the other hand, the mere possibility of confessing merely venial sins does not yet explain why more *frequent*, e.g. weekly, confession of devotion fits, in an internally meaningful and harmonious manner, into the total organic structure of the spiritual life. For every vital function, besides its mere possibility, has also to be incorporated into and subordinated to the meaning of life as a whole. Thus it cannot be determined from the mere possibility of confession of merely venial sins alone whether frequent sacramental confession of venial sins can be harmoniously fitted into the correctly balanced construction of the practices of the spiritual life. The history of the confession of devotion shows that a truly spiritual life does not always and in all circumstances necessarily demand such a habit of confession, for the confession of devotion was unknown for several centuries. It will become even clearer that this question cannot simply be answered by the affirmation of the possibility of confession of devotion, when we come to discuss some of the actual attempts which have been made to prove it in this way.

One thing should be noted from the very outset: no eventual difficulty about the justification of frequent confession of devotion can arise from the assumption that the spiritual life – at least at a certain stage of its development – excludes frequent concern with one's own sinfulness. On [178] the contrary, the more genuine and the deeper one's spiritual life is, the more (and the more directly) it will grow out of the ultimate, basic fact of our being, and the more exclusively the religious activity of the person will centre round the truly decisive conditions of our life. But these conditions undoubtedly include the fact that we are sinners and that, precisely as a sinner, man is called by Christian redemption before the countenance of the triune God. If our life is adoration of the triune God, then surely it is always adoration of the God who has been revealed in the countenance of Christ, who was crucified for our sins. Christianity knows of no other God besides the God of the one who died for our sins. If our spiritual life is the working-out of our salvation in fear and trembling, then we can never forget that we are only saved in hope and that we still have to fight against the devil, the world and the flesh. If our spiritual life is God's grace and his works in us, then it is always a grace which was granted to the children of wrath without any merit on their part. If the life of a Christian is joy in the Holy Spirit, it is the joy of the redeemed who knows how to praise the mercy of the Lord all the better the more keenly he realizes his own unworthiness which has been visited by God's mercy. Hence the spiritual life does not merely pass through one particular period when man is filled with a sense of the seriousness of God's judgements on sin, but over and over again this life rises out of the dark depths of one's own powerlessness into the eternal light of merciful grace and we still pray before the Consecration and before Communion: '*ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi . . . jubeas*', '*et a te numquam separari permittas*'. Thus it is not the frequent concern with one's sinfulness which puts frequent confession of devotion into question. Yet this alone does not yet answer our question. The recognition that one is a sinner is not, after all, dependent on sacramental confession. A St Augustine was able to pray his *Miserere* on his death-bed without going to confession.

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At this point, one might ask oneself in general whether the attempt to discover the inner meaning of frequent confessions of devotion can have any success at all or whether the frequent confession should not rather be rejected as a false development of the spiritual life. Here and there, such a view has in fact been expressed during the last few centuries. Yet we must hold on to the possibility of justifying frequent confession of devotion, and this for reasons which are quite independent of whether a particular attempt at such an explanation of its meaning can be seen to be successful or not. These reasons lie in the approval and encouragement [179] given to confessions of devotion by the Church. This encouragement given to it by the Church carries theologically speaking such great weight, however, that confession of devotion cannot possibly be a false development in the history of the spiritual life. It will be sufficient here to refer the reader to the practice of the religious Orders and communities based on rules approved by the Church and to the prescriptions of Canon Law.[1] In addition, there is the explicit rejection of the 39th proposition of the Synod of Pistoia by Pius V: he rejected the disapproval of frequent confession of devotion expressed by this Synod, as presumptuous, pernicious and contrary to the practice of pious and holy people approved by the Council of Trent. Such a general, long-standing, obligatory exercise of positive actions in the whole Church cannot possibly be regarded as a false ascetic development. Such good and useful developments of the spiritual life in the Church are not refuted by proving what no one denies, viz. that for a long time they did not exist in the Church. The Body of Christ has to grow. The Spirit of God is always with the Church and the development of her spirituality; he was also – just as much or as little – with the spirituality usually referred to as ascetical, post-Tridentine or some other name, and which one is so fond of 'improving' by appealing to the good old days of the Church's piety. The individual believer always finds the Spirit of God most surely in the Church of his own day. Thus it cannot be a malformation of the spiritual life if the Christian, docile to the spirit of his Church, sees in frequent confessions of devotion a practice which fits harmoniously into the spiritual life in its ideal overall structure.

But which among the ultimate structural laws of the spiritual life can allow us to trace frequent confession back till it is seen as a normal manifestation of that life? This is the question which is not yet solved by what we have said. It naturally cannot be a question of something which would make this frequent confession absolutely necessary. For confession of devotion cannot be proved to be absolutely necessary for the maintenance or development of the spiritual life.[2] All that is required is a reason which [180] would make meaningful as a particular and special practice of the spiritual life.

The defence of frequent confessions of devotion has always drawn attention to particular characteristics of this kind of confession which might well lead one to suspect them to be suitable for that explanation of its meaning which we are looking for. These characteristics are above all spiritual direction, remission of sins and the increase of grace. These factors are certainly connected with confession of devotion. Yet it may be doubted whether they alone sufficiently explain confession of devotion as an independent function of the spiritual life.

To take spiritual direction first; it cannot be denied that a good deal of thorough spiritual direction adapted to the individual personality may be connected with a good confession of devotion, and this especially if one observes the special indications given by ascetic theology for the furtherance of spiritual direction (as, e.g., the declaration of the basic fault, of a

[1] *CIC* c. 595 § 1, n. 3: weekly confession for Religious, c. 1367, n. 2: the same rule for seminarians in episcopal seminaries; c. 125, n. 1: frequent confession demanded of all clerics; c. 931 regards confession twice a month as nothing extraordinary even for the ordinary faithful. In addition, cf. Pius XII's Encyclicals *Mystici Corporis* and *Mediator Dei*.

[2] Not even in the sense in which one tries to prove Holy Communion to be 'necessary in itself' for the preservation of the supernatural life.

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particular resolution and its carrying out). Some people may perhaps prefer such a form of spiritual direction arising quite naturally from the secret nature of this sacrament and the objectivity associated with it. Thus, under this aspect, one certainly need not regret the fact that the sacrament of Penance and spiritual direction have never been separated from one another in Western spirituality[3] in the way in which this was to some extent the case in the ascetic practice of the ancient Greek monks where the pneumatic, spiritual direction and the sacramental institution of confession had little to do with each other. By combining the two, spiritual direction will always preserve a certain sacramental consecration while the sacramental remission of sins will be preserved from becoming externalized. Indeed, once the inner meaningfulness of frequent confession of devotion is presupposed, there is nothing to stop the further supposition that the prescription of confession of devotion is one way among others in which the Church tries to accomplish the direction of consciences and of souls which seems necessary to her for certain categories of her children. In this sense, the advantages for spiritual direction may well be the extrinsic reason for the demand of frequent confession of devotion, but they are not by this fact alone the intrinsic reason for this demand. For one thing, a sufficient direction of consciences given exclusively in confession [181] will be rather difficult to achieve in many cases; in other words, some form of spiritual direction and advising will be necessary or, at least useful, outside the sacrament. But then it is difficult to see why it does not take place altogether outside confession. If confession of devotion is regarded too much from the side of spiritual direction alone, there will always be the danger of misunderstanding Penance in its sacramental character; there will always be a danger then of overrating its medicinal, psychological usefulness for the spiritual life, the danger that the priestly minister of a sacrament will be turned too much into a highly sensitive psychologist. Finally, and this is decisive, the usefulness or necessity for the spiritual life of advising consciences simply gives rise to spiritual direction as a useful or necessary function of the spiritual life but not to a sacramental happening.

With regard to the remission of sins as such,[4] the following reason makes it unfeasible to regard the remission of sins as the real reason which gives frequent confession of devotion its meaning: the venial sins of someone living in the state of grace are already remitted by imperfect contrition. Thus confession of devotion is always and in every case the sacramental remission of the guilt of venial sin already forgiven before by contrition; for without any contrition at all, forgiveness is impossible in the sacrament. Since, moreover, there is no duty to make such a confession, it is difficult to see how it can be based solely on an effect which is always and in every case already present even without it. Even if, following some theologians, one wanted to suppose without any very clear reason[5] that only imperfect contrition with a certain degree of intensity or arising from higher motives remits venial sins by itself and without the sacrament, this does not help us very much in our question. after all presupposes an earnest striving [182] for growth in the spiritual life and a certain degree of love of God, so that it will not be difficult in this case to awaken this higher imperfect contrition, provided there is some honest turning away from the venially sinful inclination.

[3] The efforts made by the new Canon Law to leave the job of spiritual direction as far as possible in the hands of the confessor in non-priestly religious communities also point in the same direction. Cf. *CIC* c. 530, § 1/2.

[4] I.e., if one prescinds from the fact that the remission of sins takes place precisely in a sacramental manner, and this by a sacrament which as such is directed in the primary and most characteristic intention of its meaning to the remission of sins. If, however, one includes these factors and asks oneself about the exact properties of a remission of sin precisely by a sacrament which has the direct purpose of doing this, then this investigation will lead one in the direction in which we are here looking for the solution to our question.

[5] *Plus minus non mutat speciem* is valid even in this case. Every truly perfect contrition effects a loosening of man from that sinful attachment which finds its expression in the particular venial sin repented of every such contrition is informed by the habitual love which lives as a presupposition in such a person. It is difficult to see why such a contrition should not remit venial sins.

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Thus, even presupposing this view, it never comes to a first remission of venial sins in practice and so our question remains unsolved. Furthermore, it is not only explicit contrition which remits venial sin but every practical supernatural activity of the justified does so, to the extent in which and in so far as it is of its nature opposed to the venial sin concerned and thus implicitly contains contrition for this sin. Hence, even our 'daily' sins can be remitted by many different means (Council of Trent, 14, 5). Moreover, the Holy Eucharist is 'the antidote which liberates us from our daily faults' (Council of Trent, 13.2). Thus it is the reception of the Holy Eucharist which, according to the teaching of the Church, seems to be the sacramental practice which causes the remission of venial sins in our life of grace.[6] Thus if we regard only the remission of venial sins as such, the overcoming of such merely retarding but not destructive interferences with the supernatural life of love would seem to be the task of the Holy Eucharist – a sacrament of the living, the sacrament of the life of grace which conserves itself and grows – rather than the task of Penance, which first and foremost is a sacrament of the dead, the sacrament of the reawakening of the lost life of grace. Hence the remission of venial sins as such does not suffice by itself to make confession of devotion comprehensible as a special function in the total life of grace.

Something similar is true of the increase of grace.[7] Even this important task of the spiritual life can be achieved in many different ways, and sacramentally especially by the Holy Eucharist; for, strengthening, increase and complete fulfilment of the life of grace, increase of habitual charity and awakening of actual charity are all among the first and most characteristic effects of the Holy Eucharist. It is true, of course, that every sacrament [183] – and therefore also the confession of devotion – increases grace. But since it has this effect in common with other activations of the spiritual life, this is not sufficient to assign confession of devotion its proper place, the place which justifies its position in relation to these other spiritual practices.

If the properties of the confession of devotion we have discussed so far have thus been proved to be insufficient for solving the question we have posed, this is in no way meant to imply that these properties do not in fact exist or that they may not serve as purposes or motivations of the one who confesses. All these effects are given together with confession of devotion; they are all significant and more decisive for our actions than that characteristic which we are now trying to prove to be what is specific to the confession of devotion. For, two different activations of the life of grace can agree in an objectively very significant (generic) effect (thus, e.g., one sick person may be restored to the life of grace by the Anointing of the Sick, while another may be restored by absolution: two sacraments with the same effect which is also objectively the most significant one) and yet must nevertheless be distinguished in the inner structure of their meaning by a specific difference, if we are to make them comprehensible as two different activations. In our question, it is ultimately not a matter of the specific difference of confession as such but of the essential characteristic of frequent confession of devotion as a special function among other activations (not merely of a sacramental kind) of the life of grace. It is quite true that this characteristic will necessarily have to follow from the nature of confession as a *sacramental* act of forgiving sins, *directly* ordained to the remission of sins, for this is precisely the characteristic by which the confession of devotion distinguishes itself from those other acts which can be presumed to be

[6] This can no doubt be said even if one does not assume that Holy Communion – presupposing the penitential attitude – remits venial sins directly and of itself, and not merely by stimulating personal, sin-remitting acts. For when the Council of Trent mentions the remission of venial sins as an explicit effect of the Holy Eucharist, it surely must be a question of an effect which belongs to it not merely in the way in which ultimately every sacrament forgives venial sins. On the other hand, one will have to keep firmly in mind that the remission of venial sins is not the primary and most characteristic intention of the meaning of the Holy Eucharist.

[7] Both as far as sanctifying grace and the right to helping grace are concerned.

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just as capable of taking over the function of remission of sins in the spiritual life as the confession of devotion. This specific property of confession, as distinct from other sin-remitting acts of the spiritual man, must therefore be the basis of the meaning which justifies the confession of devotion and its frequent use in the spiritual life.

But in what precisely does this special significance of the sacrament and of sacramental penance consist?

All sacraments presuppose in their growth a subjective, personal cooperation with grace. This personal activity of man – since it is supported by grace – already takes man away from himself into divine spheres; it [184] is in itself already divine life or at least has already a positive orientation towards this supernatural life. Already as such a supernatural activity and happening, the life of grace is primarily God's free, creative act, his work the act of his love, more than ours. To this extent, every supernatural work is already unique, independent, 'historical', and not merely an individual case of a clear general rule.[8] But in the sacraments, this historical character becomes still clearer.

The supernatural life of redeemed humanity becomes visible in historical uniqueness, in the here and now of the Church on this earth, just as it also entered historically into humanity by revelation. Thus, the supernatural life – which, at least in itself, seems to lie quite apart from the human, historical reality – appears supported by what is visible and human, brought down into the earthly point of time, dependent on worldly things. And this spiritual life could not come otherwise; or at least only in this manner of appearing is its proper being accentuated.[9] For this the supernatural character of our life from God means that this life is a freely creative, unique act of God, that it cannot be calculated by man and cannot be explained as a fulfilment or even an echo of merely human yearnings. On the contrary, by calling man to such a life, God has asked him to move out of the earthly spheres of his being and directs him beyond the paths prescribed for man by his own being. Such a vocation is therefore never simply given by the fact of man himself taken together with his inherent laws. Hence, such a calling does not come simply by the fact that there is a man; it is not simply the eternal universally binding, universally self-evident law of truth and goodness, but rather is a positive determination, a divine and incomprehensible 'free decision', i.e. the choice of God's freedom. If this is so, however, then such a revelation – if it takes place at all – can come only suddenly, here or there, at this or that point of history, so that there is not the same distance to the free God of supernature from every point of the being and history of man, both of the individual and of humanity as a whole. For He is a God who is merciful where and when He wills. To mention just one example of this [185] 'scandal' that the eternal salvation of man should be dependent on 'accidental truths of history': the cross which stood on the place of execution in Jerusalem in the year 33 according to our Western reckoning of time is the focal point of world history, and the bishop of Rome in Italy is the head of all those who will be saved. The pure 'Spirit', in contrast to history, is universal, is always equally near and equally distant, can be approached by anyone, can be reached equally quickly from every point of man's historical existence, floats as the realm of truth and goodness *over* history, giving meaning and value to everything historically individual and accidental. In Christian revelation, however, since there is question of what is gratuitous and supernatural, God and his salvation itself enter into history, become themselves historical, seize – not from above but from within – the fortuitousness of the historical here and now, blessing and judging man,

[8] For instance, grace can be 'forfeited' but not a natural 'truth'. A person's supernatural life, with its decisions, is always a dialogue with a free God whose decisions cannot be calculated or directed by man. Thus man's supernatural life does not simply become history by man's answer, but is already history in God's call.

[9] The first Vatican Council too derives the necessity of revelation from the supernatural nature of man's elevation by grace (sess. III, cap. 2). Revelation, however, understood as God's speaking to man, is necessarily a historical happening.

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so that the ultimate decision of man is not concerned with 'truth' or 'goodness' in the realm of the pure Spirit, but with Jesus of Nazareth. In the same way, and for the same reason for which revelation has come historically, redeemed humanity, the kingdom of God, and the Church too are visible and historical. And just as the Church herself is visible, so also are the manifestations of her life, her vital powers, by which she herself – the Body of Christ – lays hold of the individual in the power of Christ and draws him more and more deeply into the circle of her life. And just as in the Church, so the historical and visible nature of the sacramental events in which the stream of supernatural life is carried by the passing uniqueness of words and gestures – is also meant to reveal again and again that the grace of the new life is not owed but rather is unmerited, the free proof of God's goodness, that it proceeds from God and is not effected by man, that it is supernature and grace. This first property of our elevation by grace to the life-circle of God cannot be stressed better than by the fact that God's grace comes in a historically visible manner, that it encounters man in sacraments.[10]

What is true in this sense of the sacraments in general is true also of the sacrament of Penance in particular. God's forgiving grace comes to man by the decision of someone else, viz. the effective juridical verdict of the Church in her priestly representative. It is not the good, contrite man who causes the remission of sins, but God's free mercy. Although this is [186] true of every remission of sin, even of that caused by merely subjective although grace-elevated[11] contrition, this is nevertheless revealed more clearly in Confession since there remission comes visibly and historically, and this in such a way that Confession causes both remission and grace, which are different from and independent of the grace and remission merited by contrition. Furthermore, Confession by its innermost meaning is primarily and directly concerned with this remission of sins and hence the sacramentality of Confession emphasizes above all the gratuitous and supernatural nature of this very remission of sins. To this extent it is also distinguished from those other sacramental actions which are in fact connected with a sin-remitting effect, in particular the Blessed Sacrament. These other sacraments are primarily directed to something else; they are not primarily penance and remission of sins.[12] Hence they do not reveal this character of the supernatural, free act of God as expressed in the remission of sin as such.

Since the recipient of a sacrament should enter into the objective nature and sense of the sacrament, and indeed does so,[13] the 'meaning-content' of such a sacramental and in fact directly intended remission of sins will also make itself felt in the personal experience of the recipient and consequently also in the habitual spiritual outlook of the recipient. Every confession in its turning to the historically visible is a protest against every hidden rationalism of a humanitarian spiritual piety; it is an acknowledgement that ultimately our sins are remitted by God's act alone and that ultimately he, the free God of grace, can be found only in his historical revelation, in his visible Church and his visible sacraments.[14]

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[10] Not as if every grace – even the non-sacramental grace of the opus operands – were not thus the work of God and the expression of his free goodness. But this is more obvious in the visibleness of a sacrament, which causes grace of itself.

[11] This elevation, to which we cannot of ourselves contribute anything and which nevertheless is decisive, shows that even the 'merit' of contrition which causes forgiveness is itself again a gift from God.

[12] Since even the subjective outlook of the recipient must after all adapt itself more or less to this structure of meaning of the sacrament, what has been said applies also to the reception of a sacrament considered from the point of view of a spiritual experience.

[13] The absolute minimum of this 'entering into' is included in the intention and disposition of the recipient necessary for validity and dignity, without which the sacrament does not come into being even objectively.

[14] Without some sort of affirmation of such an element, there is no possibility of justification. For even when justification takes place without a sacrament, it always presupposes faith. The faith, however, means embracing a proper revelation (and not just a natural knowledge of God), i.e. a word by which God addresses man in a

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Thus, every [187] confession is an open acknowledgement of the fact that only in this way does man ultimately find a merciful, forgiving and justifying God. That such an attitude is of decisive importance for the formation of a Catholic spiritual life requires no further explanation. It follows from this that frequent confession of devotion is most useful for the development of such a spiritual life.

Two further facts are organically associated with this. All contrition which is accompanied by the confidence that it will find forgiveness is also always a radical, humble placing of the sinful man in the hand of the God of inscrutable judgements, before whose staggering holiness and justice man, who is weak and unprepared, is never sure of having found grace (cf. Council of Trent, 4, c. 9; c. 13-14). 'I do not judge myself. I have indeed nothing on my conscience, yet I am not thereby justified. He who judges me is the Lord' (1 Co 3:4 *sq*.). But even this handing over of himself by man to the judgement of the holy God is expressed and reveals itself most clearly when even God's forgiveness – since it is different from man's contrition – becomes audible: and in this way it is revealed that more is necessary than just contrition. Even then there still remains a basic uncertainty about this earthly judgement of God passed on man, so that the hope of forgiveness still remains associated with that fear which alone renders love and confidence in the Infinite and Incomprehensible reverential and genuine. But the earthly judgement of God shows at any rate that God's answer must be added to man's contrition, so that He may have the last word and man may bow humbly before His judgement.

Furthermore: we have already looked at the sacraments as visible expressions of the life of the visible Church into which, considered as the Mystical Body of Christ, the individual believer is incorporated.[15] Now, even though the merely venial sinner remains in this Body as a living member, yet every venial sin is in a true sense 'a spot and wrinkle' on the Bride of Christ. It is an obstruction to the love of God and as such it is also an obstacle to the free and radiant development in this member of the Church of that love which is poured out by the divine Spirit. 'If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it' (1 Co 12:26). Thus even venial sin is a spiritual injury, an injustice to the whole Body of Christ. This Body, however, is visible; it is a historical magnitude. Hence, if the [188] injustice done to it is to be repaired, then this could not happen more meaningfully and impressively than by acknowledging the sin before the priest, who is the representative of the community of Christ-believers, by having it forgiven by him and atoning for it by the penance imposed, in order to make reparation for the injury done to the Body of Christ. To this extent, confession of devotion is not merely a continued practice of the love of God but also a unique form of sacramental love of neighbour and a visible turning to the visible Body of Christ which is the Church.

Let no one say that this theory is too complicated to be meaningful for the spiritual life. Everyone, even the simplest believer, understands that it is something particularly salutary for him to encounter God's act of reconciliation visibly and audibly, when the visible redemptive act of the Cross reaches visibly and tangibly into the hours of his own life and into his ordinary life week by week, and when Christ's word of mercy – 'your sins are forgiven you' – remains eternally present not merely in its transcendent significance but almost in its earthly sound. For, just as this word spoken by Jesus is not simply an instructive statement of an eternally valid state of affairs quite independent of this word, but is the form in which – at the very moment it was spoken – the free act of divine forgiveness of sin took place, so also the words of absolution spoken by the priest do not simply 'declare' a philosophical truth about an always indulgent God, but they actually effect this not at all self-evident forgiveness

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historical manner. Furthermore, even grace has also an inner orientation to the visible Church.

[15] Cf. for the following: K. Rahner, 'Forgotten Truths concerning the Sacrament of Penance': *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 135-174.

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in the here and now in which they are spoken, so that this forgiveness remains eternally dependent on whether it really took place here and now in the words of the priest. The ordinary believer will not only understand this on account of the peculiarly tranquillizing and comforting nature of a grace which comes in this sacramental way, but also (the former is simply a consequence of this) because in this he always activates a basic characteristic of the Christian life, viz. the historical nature of God's desire to meet man. If the simple Christian seems to be less conscious of this, this is merely due to the fact that he almost automatically lives by the basic laws of the Christian faith and it is no 'scandal' to him that God's Son should have died for the salvation of the world two thousand years ago in Jerusalem and not at some other time or in some other place, or that God is closest to him when some priest – who, alas, has perhaps even the moment before shown little knowledge of psychology and little understanding for complicated souls – pronounces his *Ego te absolvo*.

[189] Though it may thus become clear that frequent sacramental confession, besides its objective and other effects, is also a training in a most basic Christian attitude towards God (and this towards the forgiving God), this does not of course make it possible to deduce *a priori* from its nature a mathematical rule as to its frequency. Any more exact determination of frequency is a matter for experience and positive law. There is no reason for doubting that the actual practice of the Church does as a general rule in fact hit the right measure. In individual cases it is recommendable to exercise a certain broadmindedness and latitude in applying such general rules regarding the frequency of confession to the individual circumstances and special needs of the penitent. For it must never be forgotten that there is no obligation of divine law to make a confession of devotion. No doubt there is also a frequency of confession which can no longer be justified for intrinsic reasons. In this matter, the principle 'the more the better' no longer holds. A sacramental judgement by God on the sinner of its very nature cannot be as frequent as, for example, the daily nourishment of the soul.

This clarification of frequent confessions of devotion does not of course say anything against the differences in attitude which this practice can have in different ways in the spiritual life of the individual, nor is it meant to deny that confession may be conducted and conceived in different ways according as to how the one Spirit of God may teach the different schools regarding the spiritual life.

That we might meet the reconciling God as often as possible in the way in which the God of 'un-owed' grace reveals himself most clearly: this is the meaning of frequent confession of devotion.

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[190]

14

PROBLEMS CONCERNING CONFESSION [1]

If people want to hear something about 'problems concerning confession', it is obviously presupposed that there are such problems. I take this presupposition of the organizers of this Congress seriously. A problem is not a didactic question whose answer one knows already from *Denzinger* and any textbook of moral theology. A problem is . . . a problem, i.e. a question for which one has no clear solution, no liberating and exhaustive answer. It is a question which even annoys certain listeners when merely put and expressed honestly, because they tacitly presuppose that basically everything is quite clear already and that anyone who has a *Denzinger* no longer walks *in umbris et imaginibus*, or that at least the theory is always perfectly clear even though the practical carrying out of clear principles sometimes comes up against the malice and stupidity of men. We certainly do not mean to align ourselves with those who prefer to fish around in the murky waters of questions and problems rather than in the clarity of answers, to those who are too lazy to listen to a clear answer and make it their own, or who think *a priori* that a hard answer is no answer at all. Yet it must not be maintained that one should pose a question only if the answers can be given immediately afterwards. For even a question not answered, if it is a genuine and honest question, is better than the dull stupidity of someone for whom everything is always quite clear.

So, we want to concern ourselves with problems. We presuppose in this that the clear answers of dogmatic, moral and pastoral theology – which exist and are more important than all our problems – are known and applied, including even those moral principles whose permanent [191] existence and validity must be defended especially today in the confessional. Anyone who wants to find out about these, should open any textbook or any of the many writings which rightly state, defend and give the pastoral applications of the traditional confessional moral theology, especially on sexual questions.[2]

I. CHANGES IN THE INSTITUTION OF CONFESSION

Presupposing, affirming and naturally accepting all this, we now want to turn to a series of problems. The best way to do this is to start from the fact that the institution of Confession, with all its substantial stability, has undergone many changes which have been so far-reaching that, if it were not a fact, most dogmatic theologians would *a priori* declare these changes to be impossible because they seem to go counter to the substance of the sacrament. But St Joseph did not build the first confessional. There were many centuries when there was no confession of devotion. A St Augustine never went to confession. There were centuries when the saintly bishops of Gaul preached that one should *do* penance but go to confession only on one's death-bed. There were Councils which warned against administering this sacrament to a young person in danger of death, since he might recover and might then find the life-long penitential obligations far too difficult. There were centuries during which

[1] The following essay was a lecture given at a small congress of pastoral theology. It has no ambitions to give the reader anything new on the scientific level. It intends to say things, however, which should be talked about repeatedly if they are to be taken notice of in everyday practice.

[2] Cf. among about the most recent work, Joseph Miller, S. J., *De usu et abusu matrimonii*, published in manuscript form by the Austrian Episcopal Conference (Innsbruck, Rauch).

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ecclesiastical reconciliation could be received only *once*. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and right into the thirteenth century, all theologians taught that this sacrament does not remit guilt before God but has other more secondary effects. Even St Thomas still took it for granted and even regarded it as a duty of the penitent that he should come to this sacrament already justified by contrition, just as St Albert the Great and St Bonaventure thought it to be imperfect if someone tried to gain indulgences instead of doing penance. It was not until the thirteenth century that there appeared the indicative formula of absolution and that a beautiful penitential liturgy was permitted to shrink to bare absolution. The existential religious accent of the whole of penance shifted in century-long stages from the practice of doing hard penances to interior contrition, to the ashamed confession, to the priestly absolution. During twelve or rather thirteen centuries the Church managed [192] without the explicit distinction (which seems of such capital importance to us) between perfect and imperfect contrition. Before the time of St Thomas, theologians declared the duty of annual confession (laid down by the 4th Lateran Council) to be obligatory even for someone who has no mortal sins to confess. St Thomas and later theologians, looking more deeply into the theology of all this, maintained the opposite; the normal practice keeps quiet about this declaration, so that even those of the faithful who are in the state of grace go to confession during the Easter period, often not so much out of insight into the inner meaningfulness of their action but more out of habit, compulsion and fear.[3] Whereas during the Patristic period, the sacrament of Penance could be received only once during the whole of one's life (and even then only in case of necessity), there were yet Provincial Synods during the Carolingian period which obliged everyone to go to confession three times a year. For St Bonaventure, the *Misereatur* was still the real formula of the absolution from guilt, and the *Ego te absolvo* referred simply to the remission of the punishment due to sin; with St Thomas, the *Ego te absolvo* is the sole, decisive formula for the remission of guilt. Right up to the high Middle Ages it was the predominant view that in case of necessity one must confess even to a layman (St Ignatius of Loyola still held this view).

All these facts are simply meant to prove one thing: this sacrament is alive. What is alive undergoes its changes even though its innermost essential form remains the same. It would be silly to try to conclude *eo ipso* from these changes that we might or should bring back an earlier outward form and arrangement in theory and in practice. The historically-minded person more and not less than anyone else knows the *falsehood* of the statement that just because something existed at one time, it can also exist again. But if the Church's institution of Penance is alive, it will also change again in the future, without losing its proper nature. These futures changes may take place more silently and be less noticeable in the external, institutional aspect of Penance than previous changes. But if they did not happen, then Christ's institution would have become fossilized and dead.

[193] Is it possible to guess in what direction such a development will take place? Are there reasons for such a prognosis, reasons arising both from what *should* be and from the observable tendencies of the past? Such questions are not merely a matter of idle curiosity, which fancies it can see through a brick wall. We certainly have neither the power nor the right to change any existing thing, either in theory or in practice, regarding the institution of Confession. For this we lack *de iure* the authorization and *de facto* we are too few for consciously, as it were *via facti*, advancing any development. *But*, on the other hand, there is

[3] This is not meant to dispute the fact (quite the contrary) that this custom is a good one in the pastoral sense, and it is to be hoped that it will always be kept. One needs only to imagine what would happen if it no longer existed: we would in practice return to the conditions of public ecclesiastical penance as practised in Christian antiquity and this would bring with it all the pastoral disadvantages which were tied up with this form of the sacrament of Penance. Cf. K. Rahner, 'Die Busslehre des hl. Cyprian von Karthago', *ZKT* LXXIV (1952), pp. 425 *sqq*.

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still a relatively great deal of scope for a very different way of handling this sacrament *within* the framework of the present-day teaching and practice regarding the sacrament of Penance and, on the other hand, it can be a good thing in the pastoral sense to make use of the thus offered possibilities within this framework in *that* direction in which the development is tending. For the history of this sacrament shows precisely that one can retard a necessary development to the detriment of souls, by traditionalistic slowness, by following in the mere routine of what has always been, as happened in the fifth and sixth centuries until at last the Irish-Anglo-Saxon simplicity in the new handling of repeatable private confession forced a change whose blessing we still feel today. At the present time, too, there seem to be such developmental tendencies, tendencies which are not quite conscious of themselves as yet or which, in some cases, threaten to go beyond the right mark. Where these tendencies are not clarified, they become dangerous. Where they remain unnoticed or are even denied or suppressed, they may paralyse or poison the desire for this sacrament. The question about the direction in which one may possibly conceive of a future development of this sacrament and suppose it to happen, provides us with the opportunity of describing the present-day problems of confession and, even if not to give an answer to them, at least to indicate the direction in which a solution maybe found. These problems of confession, it must be explicitly emphasized, are always simultaneously also problems of the right *education* for the proper reception of this sacrament, as well as problems about its administration and reception itself.

We would like to state the following thesis: the theory and practice of this sacrament will in future tend towards a *theologically fuller* and also *more personal* accomplishment of this sacrament. What this means and what consequences may be surmised from it, is what we must now show.

[194]

II. LEGALISTIC AND MAGICAL TENDENCIES IN THE PRACTICE OF CONFESSION

The ordinary man and hence the piety of the people (which can have good or bad effects even on the highest levels of theology) think and act (to a greater or lesser extent) legalistically, magically and according to taboos. These things are interrelated: they are all based on the fact that simple and childlike thinking does not make a clear enough distinction between the basic personal, *moral* exercise and its external objectification, while at the same time it regards God as one particular being among others, from whom one can save and shelter oneself. We do not mean to make an exact analysis here of the nature of such attitudes. Simply to give some practical idea or approximation of what is meant, we will mention a few examples at random, examples which are related sometimes more to the one, sometimes more to the other of the attitudes mentioned. We give these examples without comment.

According to a well-known moral theology textbook, it is necessary, with regard to the commandment of keeping the Sabbath Day holy, to distinguish as to whether one is writing notes or simply drawing lines for notes. According to this same textbook, one derives more benefit from three Masses attended simultaneously than from one Mass. There have been Saints who filled the chalice they were going to consecrate as full as possible, since they thought this would give more grace. The fear about interrupting the unbroken series of Gregorian Masses is not to be viewed very much differently from the fear of breaking the chain of chain-letters. Even today, casuistry gets so easily tied up in knots with regard to the Eucharistic fast (e.g. about when food is still a liquid), so that it becomes rather difficult to see the wood for the trees. For hundreds of years, nocturnal pollution was regarded *eo ipso* as an ‘impure action’. Everyone is familiar with the kind of casuistry connected with this in itself purely physiological process, beginning with the Fathers and right up to the *Missale Romanum* of today. How many taboo-like undercurrents are not present in the medieval

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casuistry regarding the lawfulness or unlawfulness (even to the point of mortal sin) of receiving the sacraments after having had marital intercourse the night before. In 1277, Bishop Stephen of Paris condemned the proposition: *Quod delectatio in actibus venereis non impediat actum seu usum intellectus*. St Bernardine of Siena (1443) says in one of his sermons that it is a piggish irreverence and a mortal sin if husband [195] and wife do not abstain from marital intercourse for several days before receiving Holy Communion. Even the *Catechismus Romanus* still properly prescribes a three-day abstention. During the Middle Ages, a woman who had died in childbirth was often buried in a special corner of the cemetery and without the usual honours. John Beleth permitted such a woman's burial in consecrated ground only if the child had first been cut out of the womb.

Even today there are still legalistic and magical attitudes and taboos which have arisen from such views and precepts, but they are getting fewer. Man has become more rationalistic even towards himself he is becoming more technological and profane; he is learning to differentiate more sharply between personal freedom and psycho-physiological mechanisms, between the genuine thing and what is simply 'put on' by training. Whenever such a person meets one of these attitudes we have spoken of, he protests; they appear laughable to him and as something unbecoming when it is a question of the real dignity of religious matters, or – even worse – he confuses the religious with such things and then rejects both.

Now, there is no doubt about the fact that even today such things still play a part in the popular practice of *Confession*. They still continue to have an effect; they are inculcated during youth and later on meet with protests and refusals, and so endanger the institution of confession in general. Who has not innumerable times experienced confessions which are simply rattled off which go simply through the catalogue of sins mechanically? Every priest has experienced confessions where underneath a personally perhaps quite innocent but terribly legalistic and magical attitude, the only thing that seems to matter is the sacramental event as such; confessions in which, if necessary, sins are invented so that there may be something to confess; confessions in which objective sins are treated in exactly the same way as subjective sins; confessions where the person believes that one should confess, for instance, having missed Mass even though one had been ill in bed and could not go to Mass; confessions where the person believes he is making a good confession, even though he is out to pull the wool over the confessor's eyes or to confess when there is as much noise in the church as possible. Everyone has experienced children's confessions and confessions during Missions which go with such speed that one really has to speak of a confession-factory and where – in the words of a Protestant, very well disposed towards the Catholic practice of confession – it really looks like a nail-punching machine with [196] nails flying out of it left and right at regular intervals. Have we confessors not often had the feeling already that one should, if possible, reduce the liturgy of confession even further to the absolutely necessary minimum, so that it might go even faster? Have we ourselves not too often confessed sins for which one can only manage to say one is sorry by some formalistic pettifoggery, 'sins' for which one cannot possibly be sorry because they are not sins, since in their case there cannot seriously be any question of a personal, free decision? Who has not at some time instructed penitents about the fact that something is not a sin at all, and then has nevertheless been given the impression that this does not make the penitent feel relieved but that he would rather confess the same thing again? How often do not people confess something 'just in case', so that God will not have anything 'on us', and as if one had to or could insure oneself against him, as though God could debit one with something when we ourselves did not recognize any clear duty?

If one analyses these and similar cases of legalistic, magical instincts in confession, one will find the following:

1. Confession is *reduced* to the absolution from sins given by the priest, together with the

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necessary presuppositions to the extent in which these are an absolute *conditio sine qua non* for the happening of the sought-after effect.

2. Confession is treated far too much as an objectively mechanical process (often by appealing to the fact that it is an *opus operatum*), the main thing in it being that there is the actual absolution.

The basic legalistic, magical instincts of man take effect in both these factors.

III. NEW TENDENCIES IN THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF CONFESSION

If our pastoral care is not to bring the institution of confession gradually into disrepute with the man of tomorrow – as being a legalistic, magical tool – then we must, as far as lies in our power, counteract these not infrequent misunderstandings, and take up the right attitude in our practice. We must see to it that this sacrament will be affirmed and accomplished in a theologically fuller and more personal way.[4]

[197] In practice, such a theologically fuller and more personal understanding of confession means the following:

1. The sacrament is an *opus operatum*. This precisely does *not* mean, however, that it achieves its effect by magic or automatically. The efficacy (‘*in actu secundo*’) of the sacrament is measured and limited by the dispositions of the penitent. This, however, includes also the fact that – where this disposition for the sacrament and through the sacrament, regarded quite soberly and honestly, does not *grow* – a more frequent reception of the sacrament has, practically speaking, only an insignificant effect, even when (from the point of view of a moral minimalism) the sacrament is not received sacrilegiously. Obviously, no useful purpose is served by, nor is there any sense in, reducing the frequency of confession. If we did nothing more than reduce this frequency, we would not gain anything by it and would simply be causing harm. We do not want to sanction spiritual sloth. For in reality, we do not take our daily examination of conscience nearly serious enough and do not try hard enough to overcome our weaknesses and sinful inclinations. But conversely it is also true that a mechanical (even though not sacrilegious) frequency, which is not combined with a personal growth of the inner man, is of no use either. The recommended frequency of the reception of the sacrament, must, therefore, be determined by the concrete possibilities at the disposal of the person who is seriously trying to achieve the sacrament in a really genuine personal manner. It is no attack on the *opus operatum* to say: even from the sacramental point of view, *one* good confession is better than three routine confessions. For the *opus operatum* is no patent, easy way of getting grace. It may quite well happen that a person requires a certain, even though relatively little bit of new life, new practical knowledge and experience to provide his personal efforts with material for existential realization. Let us not forget that, especially in the case of confessions of devotion, no sin is forgiven in the concrete by such a confession unless it is already blotted out *ex opere operantis*. Sins for which we are not really sorry are not remitted by the sacrament. This is a platitude which we priests and penitents forget only too easily in practice.

[198] We should rid ourselves of the tacit prejudice that the sacraments have been instituted by God so that we might make it easier for ourselves personally and subjectively and have less to pay. This is a prejudice which arises from the fact that modern theology (in

[4] Since we cannot here enter further and more deeply into the theological foundations of what is meant by this, we may be permitted to refer the reader to three of my own works: ‘Sackramentale und personale Frömmigkeit’, *GuL* XXV (1952), pp. 412-429; ‘Vergessene Wahrheiten über das Buszsakrament’, *GuL* XXVI (1953), pp. 339-364; *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* (Freiburg 1951). The first two essays appear also in: *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 109-174.

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contrast to the great theology of the Middle Ages) has *onesidedly* emphasized the doctrine that attrition, i.e. imperfect contrition, is sufficient for justification *in* confession but not *outside* of it. We do not dispute this thesis. Yet it is no justification for the above prejudice. Anyone who manages to have *attritio* will have no difficulty about having *contritio* (that is perfect contrition); the only difficulty about *contritio* is *attritio*, i.e. the real turning away from sin. In other words, the fact of receiving the sacrament in no way dispenses us from true repentance, especially since it does not dispense us from love – i.e. from the ultimate form which converts *attritio* into *contritio*. The sacrament has, of course, its own power. But, either we bring to it that contrition necessary for the remission of sins, or the sacrament can prove its power of remitting sins only by the fact that it offers us ourselves the *capacity* (freely to be accepted or rejected) of truly turning to God by repentance.

It would perhaps be a good thing if the word 'repentance' were to be avoided for the next fifty years; for today, repentance has come to be understood only too easily as a regret, a cheap desire that it might have been otherwise, just as one regretfully wishes things to be different which one cannot change in any way. If only, instead of saying: you must repent, one were to say: you must change your life, you must work hard and honestly on yourself and deny yourself so as to change your outlook, your attitudes and impulses; do not regret your actions but strongly and actively – if you honestly have the courage for this – disavow that outlook and those attitudes of yours which give rise to these actions of which you ostensibly repent; let us see actions which show that the hidden root-reason of your actions has changed. How can you actually deceive yourself into thinking that you have repented of that unkindness, if you simply . . . 'repent', say a Hail Mary as a penance and otherwise leave everything as it was, instead of doing something really good to the one you have offended? Do you really distinguish annoyance about the formal discrepancy between your actions and your official maxims (which is simply hurt pride), and the loving turning-towards genuine, understanding preference of what is better even though it hurts your egoism? Or why do you act as if you repented, when you do not really want to change [199] yourself and perhaps cannot even do so, at least not now and not in *that* point for which you supposedly are sorry?

Thus, we again and again investigate in our practice, from the point of view of the inner unity of our sacramental and personal action, as to what is the really appropriate frequency of receiving the sacrament. If young people are simply trained mechanically to make as frequent confessions as possible, and if they then make their confession in the manner normally or at least very often done, then they will stop going to confession when they grow up. And really they are quite right: done in this way, *such* confessions are basically simply pious legalism or magic. One might go on from there to ask what improvements could be made even technically with regard to school and similar mass confessions by having more confessors, possibly by having such confessions less frequently, spread over several days, etc. One might ask whether a communal preparation for confession or something similar might not help the genuine, personal accomplishment of this sacrament. As long as many of our young people go to confession under arrangements where it takes the least amount of time, this is a sign that there is still too much legalism and sacramental magic even today.

2. The sacrament should be experienced in a theologically fuller fashion. It is not just absolution in God's name. It is one of Christ's mysteries; in it takes place the judgement on us which on the Cross was passed on the sins of the world; in it takes place by anticipation the judgement of the future; it is a dialogue between God and man; it is liturgy; it is a profession of guilt committed against the holy community of the redeemed; the Church too, therefore, gives her freedom and reconciliation; she prays for me and solemnly gives me by this sacrament that renewed right to *her* grace and *her* intercession which she – the Church of sinners who are sanctified – offers daily to God in the sacrifice and in the prayers of all her saints. There ought to be in the healthy Christian a feeling for the fact that he is excluded

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from the sacred mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ and that he is admitted again, by the Church's lifting of the ban, into this her inner circle of salvation, that he is reconciled again with the altar, as one used to say. The sinner ought to sense that he professes to the holy Church, the Prow-sacrament of Christ – and not to a psychiatrist or an examining magistrate, an ecclesiastical police magistrate – because by this one orders one's relationship to the original source of grace; he ought to have a sense of responsibility towards this Church, of which [200] he is a representative: compromisingly by sinning, celebrating *her* liturgy himself as the liturgy of the Church of sinners, by confessing; one ought to feel something of the fact that only a baptized person can celebrate this sacrament. The sinner ought to have a feeling for the fact that he, as a baptized person whose sins have been forgiven after baptism, lives by this forgiveness off the whole Body of Christ, and by the prayers and penance of all the saints, and that our prayer after absolution, *Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, *merita beatae Mariae Virginis et omnium Sanctorum*,[5] simply expresses what has happened in the absolution, viz. that our repentance lives by the love of the whole Church.[6]

If repentance, as a part of the 'matter' of the sacrament of Penance, bears an inner orientation towards the absolution seen as an act of the Church done in the name of Christ, then we must not recommend and encourage prayers of repentance which even a Deist could say. Repentance must address itself to Christ, it must be the prayer of the baptized, of a member of the Church, of someone who experiences in himself the saving judgement of the Cross and who knows that salvation can only come from there. The content of the prayer of repentance ought to make it clear to the one who prays that his sins are remitted, not by his repentance as such but by God's grace, that the repentant sinner does not *have* to be forgiven (just because *he* has become better) but that *God* changes the heart and fills it with his Spirit. If this consciousness were absolutely alive, then it would also be much more obvious to the sinner that he, as a baptized person, must accept this deed, which God does in him, by the word of the Church. It is a great pity that, from an external point of view, the whole liturgy of the sacrament of Penance has shrunk to a few hastily whispered words. One need not be a liturgical romantic to regret this. For it is extremely important that man should personally accomplish out of the depth of his being what takes place sacramentally. For this, however, a genuine exercise of the liturgical elements of this sacrament is most helpful. Let us at least do the little which remains of this liturgy genuinely. Let us teach people that the sacrament is more than the juridical act of absolution. Where modern man does not see the specifically Christian and ecclesiological [201] nature of this sacrament, he will sooner or later get the idea that he can settle the question of his sins with God alone, if this is the sole meaning of the sacrament.

3. *The confession of sin*,[7] as a part of the sacramental sign, is orientated towards the words of absolution pronounced by the priest. It is necessary and essential, because in the really normal human case, the words of absolution must not fall into emptiness and into the indetermined, but ought to be knowing words, words in which the priest as a freely acting human person (which he is even when he acts at the behest of his Master) must know what he is doing, to whom and for what reason he speaks the word of free forgiveness. In this lies the real and decisive meaning and necessity of a confession of sins. It follows from this, however, that the priest is not an examining magistrate who has to discover a guilt of which the penitent is not aware or which he is suspected to be keeping quiet. Furthermore,

[5] 'May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the Saints, whatever good you have done and whatever evil you have suffered, gain for you a remission of your sins, an increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life.'
[6] Cf. P. Charles, 'Doctrine et pastorale du sacrament de pénitence', *NRT* LXXV (1953), pp. 449-470; for the above, esp. pp. 455 *sqq*.
[7] Cf. P. Charles, *loc. cit*., pp. 460-466. We give here a condensed summary of P. Charles' exposition.

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confession is not in itself, i.e. *of its nature*, a self-humiliation or an exercise of putting oneself to shame; it is not really a part of the penance. We must, therefore, take careful note of what P. Charles rightly tries to bring home to us: today (with the exception perhaps of school children, boarders and certain 'Easter confession merchants') only those still come to this sacrament who freely decide to do so. The penitent in certain cases may not know exactly how he is to express himself, the authority and greater knowledge of the confessor make him feel tongue-tied. Hence, if the confessor treats him like a suspected criminal, if he asks him questions whose justification the penitent does not understand, if he makes the penitent repeat what he has just said, then the priest does not act like the one he after all is, viz. the judge whose highest duty is to pardon, but instead he acts like a subordinate examining magistrate and thus falsifies the nature of this court of mercy. It may not be said against this that the priest must ask as precise questions as possible in order to be able to evaluate the guilt of the penitent. For it must not be forgotten that the confession of the penitent is not an object for examination. It is the matter and hence an intrinsically constitutive element of the sacramental sign and must be treated as such. We must never forget what Catholic tradition, to the great annoyance of the Jansenists, has always stressed: *malitia non apprehensa non contrahitur* (a non-apprehended evil is not attributable to us). Personal guilt, to the extent in which it must be confessed because it goes [202] beyond the general (original) sinfulness of every man, can only be committed *knowingly*. When a penitent has said what he regards as his guilt, he has sufficiently confessed *his* guilt. Further instruction – if it has hope of success – can be advisable or even obligatory only in the case where the confession reveals a grave error which could endanger the salvation of the penitent. How often (but, thank God, this does not happen too often) have not penitents stayed away from the confessional for a long time or even for a whole life-time, because they have been frightened away at one time by a lack of tact, by curious questioning, by an attitude of suspicious distrust or by a kind of spying attitude. That they should as a result, have stayed away is false; but false, too, was the behaviour of the inquisitorial confessor.

4. There is still one further question which belongs to this theological deepening and to the destruction of the magical outlook of our practice of confession. Seen superficially, this concerns the question of the imposition of a penance.[8] But in reality it goes much deeper than that. We have become accustomed to distinguish between the *reatus culpae* (the burden of guilt) and the *reatus poenae* (the burden of punishment). This is a correct but also dangerous distinction. For we then regard the burden of punishment as a purely juridical matter, after the manner of civil jurisprudence; we are then inclined to regard it as a punishment imposed merely externally by God, and one which can be remitted just as externally by absolution, for example. In this conception, the punishment is [203] settled up either now, by absolution, or later on in Purgatory. At any rate, in such a view one has really nothing to do here and now

[8] On this point, we find a not insignificant difference between the view exposed here and the view given by P. Charles in the aforementioned essay (pp. 466-469). Charles pleads for the correctness of the usual practice of the imposition of penance. We gladly admit that the practical conclusion following from his reflections is perfectly justified for the confession of devotion and in general for frequent confessions. The same cannot be said, however, for the imposition of a penance in Confession in itself and in general. His theoretical reflections, moreover, seem to be extremely questionable. It surely cannot be said that, because the imposition of a penance in the sacrament has an inner orientation towards absolution, it is merely an act of docility, subjection and adaptation to the Church and hence can just as well be achieved through a little prayer as through a real doing of penance. If the statement that God forgives us our sins and there is no business transaction with God in the sacrament were to prove anything against imposing heavy penances, then it would also make *every* imposition of penance, as understood by the Church, seem ridiculous. His appeal to the practice of the Church, finally, proves perhaps the concession we made above, a concession which arises Out of the nature of things. But it by no means proves that such a practice is always and in every respect correct. For in that case, what does the earlier, different practice of the 'Church' prove?

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with this burden of punishment. And the burden of guilt is taken away by absolution.

The average Catholic of today does not deny Purgatory; God forbid that he should. But to maintain that the average Catholic of our great cities still believes in it existentially would be just naïve optimism. It would be very interesting to know how many of us have ever honestly feared Purgatory. You will protest vehemently. But I do not believe such protests of most of our younger people today. How would it be, however, if we were to conceive the burden of punishment from a less external, juridical point of view? If we were to say: this *reatus poenae* is myself in reality, myself with my egoism, with my hardheartedness, my blasé attitude, my pharisaical outlook, my cowardice, with everything which is so very much identical with myself that I do not even notice how little I manage to get away from it and that everyone else but myself notices it. What torment, what unforeseeable spiritual development I will have to pass through before this is, or may be, changed, what deadly pains of spiritual development will have to be undergone before we reach something approximating to that perfection, that total integration of our whole being – with all its dimensions, urges and layers – into the one love of God, and that achievement of possession of the innermost centre of our being through free love of God, just as we conceive all this in the case of a mystic. What experiences would have to be made, what mystical journeys of the soul, compared to which the imagination of a Dante looks like a childish game. These are the facts. We, however, think that if someone lives a decent and Christian life, then he is juridically on the right side. He may indeed still get a few years in Purgatory. But even this is not all that awful in the last analysis, even if absolution does not preserve him immediately from it. At any rate, nothing much can happen. And then I, just as I am, will be in heaven.

The reality is different. This ego, with which I identify myself with such self-satisfaction, will never get to heaven. It is flesh and blood and these do not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Between the two, there is a dying and a transformation which is both God's deed in us and also our own deed for ourselves, the transformation and new creation of a man who is flesh and a sinner but must become *pneuma* and justice. And this God cannot and will not give us for nothing, this is not given us 'free' by [204] absolution. This also cannot be granted by absolution except *in such a way* that, through the official intercession of the Church, I am offered the grace by God to achieve this purifying and maturing process of the soul more quickly and in a more beatifying way (for, alas, how much is still left in me even after all the dross has been burnt away). But even then I am not spared the process. It must be achieved, together with its birth pangs and the deadly tormenting pains, either here or on the (so-called) other side which we call Purgatory, although without there being any longer any possible increase in my basic existential, supernatural attitude and depth, so that all there can be then is a maturing of what had already grown here below.

Seen in this light, the *reatus culpae* and *poenae* are brought much closer together. The forgiveness of sin is only the beginning (even though the-most decisive one) of this transforming process of man and leads finally to his complete deliverance from sin. And even this beginning takes place in *that* conversion whose continuation and completion cannot be spared to man – not even by absolution – and which we – from a juridical point of view – call the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. We calmly put off this conversion, which we must exercise ever anew in God's grace, until the time of Purgatory. We do this as if there will be time enough then for such 'extras'. In reality, however, this conversion is the only thing by whose seriousness and progress we can hope to gauge whether the beginning of this conversion – namely repentance – was even present, while we think all the time that repentance is very easy, presupposing merely that the urge to do the same again has been removed from us by such extrinsic factors as age or other circumstances of life, which suppression of urges or occasions we then call 'good resolutions'.

It is only when we look at things in this way that we can come to see the real meaning of a

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re-evaluation of the practice of imposing a penance.[9] Where a genuine conversion (a change of outlook or attitude) is needed, it is not merely a question of getting rid of some state of affairs which (in our present-day practice of penances) gives a slightly infantile impression and merely gives rise to the feeling that confession is an institution which lets one off extremely lightly. The reason for this practice is an externalized [205] conception of the burden of punishment. If only one understood what is really objectively involved in it, one would not leave remission to Purgatory or only to absolution; one would have doubts about repentance when the will to do penance is absent. We are all aware, of course, that this cannot be changed quite so easily from one day to the next. Yet one ought at least to recognize this state of affairs and to realize that anyone who sees no problem in all this, has a formalistic juridical conception of sin or thinks of the sacrament as something magical and mechanical. Such ideas, inculcated in the men and especially the youth of today (not by any explicit theory but by the far more dangerous implications of common practice), will later on have a destructive effect on belief in this sacrament.

5. If we carry out Confession with all our strength and in a more personal, more serious and more interior fashion, then we need not be afraid of the present-day competition of psychotherapy. If we act merely as machines for giving absolution, if we do not take man seriously and do not allow him to have his say, if we do not force him to take himself and God seriously or help him to find himself and to identify himself in a personal way, then these people will find that they are taken more seriously by the psychotherapist and they will go to him. We do not want to be psychotherapists in the confessional. This is not our job and would merely be silly charlatanism. We must simply be priests, but that wholly. We lend historical tangibility to God's effectively forgiving word in a personal happening; we are not applying magical machinery. We should even know when to regard a penitent as a patient for a psychotherapist and send him to one. But we possess one word which no psychotherapist can say: the word of God, which forgives sin. The psychotherapist says a word which is meant to cure illness; we say a word which forgives sin in God's sight. Even if we cannot remove the illness – heavy burden though it is in many cases – we can, however, take away the death in illness, the despair in it and the guilt. Yet, even though this is a deed of God, it nevertheless passes through the free faith of the patient sinner, through *his* penance. Only if we do not forget this and do not deny it in practice, does the psychotherapist not become our personal rival; only then does he remain the one who from time to time can give us welcome assistance, but for the rest has his own proper field.

6. The fight to remove the idea from people's minds that confession is the necessary preparation for the Eucharist and that the Eucharist is the reward for confession is not yet finally and everywhere won. The only [206] truth in this association is that the Eucharist is barred to someone who is conscious of a really subjectively grave guilt and who has not yet had it remitted even in the sight of the Church. This coupling, which unfortunately is always created anew by the conditions for indulgences, is serious because it either lessens the frequency of Communion or gives rise to a frequency of confession which can no longer be managed in a personal way and which leads to mechanical confessions. If the word 'rare' is understood correctly, i.e. relatively to the frequency of Communion, then it could be said absolutely that there should be rare but real confession and frequent Communion. In spiritual matters it is absolutely true that the cult of numbers is false and less can be more.

We suspect that many among you have been waiting patiently for us to come to the confessional problem which seems to you to be the real problem today: the treatment of those

[9] We are not speaking here of the weekly confession, for in this case the frequency proves in general precisely that the penitent concerned has the desire to work energetically – as far as in him lies – on his progressive sanctification. Hence in these cases one can be satisfied with the usual practice.

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sinners who not only are conscious of their guilt in the sphere of sexual morality and in the face of the objective norms of the gospel and of the Church, but who also hold that they themselves are fundamentally incapable of living according to these norms and hence do not think they can work up the necessary purpose of amendment required for absolution. But these questions would require a whole exposition to themselves, which we are unable to offer here. Perhaps it is good to be silent about these things for once. For otherwise the impression will gradually be given that these are the only confessional problems today. This, however, would be a false view.

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[207]

PART THREE

The Daily Life of the Christian

[209]

15

THE APOSTOLATE OF PRAYER

Do we Christians really believe in the power of prayer? Believe, that is, in its power on this earth and not merely in some distant heavenly dwelling-place of God? Is our thinking still sufficiently 'anthropomorphic' to make us dare to believe that we can by our bawling and weeping move the heart of God to intervene in this world? Or has our thinking become so abstract, so spiritless, that we will allow to prayer no other value than that of a 'tranquilizer', or recognize it as no more than an affirmation of our hope for a success beyond this life?

Yes, the prayer of petition is quite a problem. Its practice is now almost exclusively confined to ordinary people. It is found only where a 'primitive religiosity' holds sway, which – in the opinion of the more sophisticated – has not quite grasped the fact that we cannot ask anything of God, since he is in the ultimate analysis an inexorable Fate. These others, the clever ones, who do not form part of this folk with rosaries, pilgrimages, processions, and so on, become 'primitive' only when they have their backs to the wall. Then they will pray (species A); or, if they cannot bring themselves to do it even then (species B), they give way (quite rightly and quite logically) to despair. Should they unexpectedly get away with it (their life, their money, their health, and so on), then they will again give up praying (species A), or give themselves over to Existentialistic nihilism (species B). It is therefore from a Christian point of view quite right and just that, in the judgements of history, the 'sophisticated', the 'intellectuals', should have more prospect of making bitter acquaintance with the (allegedly) inexorable march of events than the little people who do not think it entirely superfluous and unintellectual to pray for their daily bread and other such earthly needs.

But seriously: do we or do we not believe in the flesh of the eternal Word of God? If so, then the true God must be capable of very human [210] feelings, and the earth with all that happens on it cannot be quite so unimportant to him. It is true that events here below may not always proceed very smoothly and peaceably (after all, that God did die on the Cross), but what goes on among us cannot be utterly unimportant. And if it is true that God is the Lord of the world, and that he has taught us the 'Our Father' with its petition for our daily bread and deliverance from evil, we must clearly assume that the prayer of petition addressed to this anthropomorphic and mighty God is a real power in this world. And here we can safely leave to one side all that the theologians have elaborated about the compatibility of the prayer of petition with the sovereignty of God, his absolute freedom and his changelessness. Even if one did not think or suspect that the theologians in these speculations were thinking a little too much in terms of the time 'Before Christ' and were not quite aware of the fact – naturally only in this particular speculation – that the Word of God became flesh, and that therefore he through whom everything comes into being has become very approachable and easily moved, this in any case is true and certain: there is a prayer of petition which speaks to God and is not a mere exorcism of one's own heart, but boldly and explicitly ventures to ask him for bread, peace, restraint of his enemies, health, the spread of his Kingdom on earth, and a host of such earthly and highly problematic things. That such prayer combines a great measure of 'self-

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will' (for one presents to Him one's *own* desires) with a supreme degree of submissiveness (for one *prays* to Him whom one cannot compel, persuade or charm, but only beg), that here there is a mingling and an incomprehensible fusion of the greatest boldness with the deepest humility, of life with death, this makes the prayer of petition in one respect not the lowest but the highest, the most divinely human form of prayer. Why else is the Lord's Prayer not a hymn but a sevenfold petition? There should be more stubborn and humble, more insistent and urgent supplication among Christians; supplication even for those things which appear to *us*, shortsighted though we be, of importance, even for that realization of God's Kingdom, such as we are necessarily led to imagine it. For, the prayer of petition, robust and straightforward, is a power in the world and in its history, in heaven and on earth.

Ultimately even the unbeliever would have to concede this, although theoretically he will deny it. For in practice he admits it. Let us imagine, for example, that a tyrant knew that all his subjects without exception intended to fall on their knees and beg God to free them from his tyranny, [211] and that they had solemnly assured the tyrant they would do nothing more to this end than pray. Would he for all that allow them to do it? He would try to prevent it. It is true he does not believe in the power of the Being to whom the prayer is addressed, but he believes in the power of the prayer, although this prayer itself only has power if there is faith in the power of the Being addressed.

On this point one could introduce a kind of transcendental deduction of the truth of prayer. That prayer exists is a fact. It is an unavoidable fact. It is efficacious. It is only efficacious where there is faith in the power of the Being to whom it is addressed and not merely in the power of prayer. Can there be a phenomenon which rests in principle (and not just in individual cases) on an illusion, while at the same time it is real and efficacious? No, for such a proposition negates itself, because (among other reasons) it could also be applied to the affirmation of this proposition itself. For every proposition presupposes that the attainment of a truth in a phenomenon of knowledge is not from the beginning an illusion. Everyone who admits this, and everyone must admit it, cannot justify either logically or existentially the fundamental and universal denial of that which is the condition of the efficacy of prayer, namely faith in the power (and therefore in the reality) of the Being to whom the prayer is directed.

And now, let us imagine for a moment that Christians were convinced of the need for prayer, no longer in a general and notional way, but in a really concrete and practical way, so that their conviction took on flesh and blood, as It were, and issued in action. Let us imagine they were convinced that this prayer must be at once very heavenly and very earthly, that is, it must understand the needs of earth in a very heavenly way, precisely *in so far* as in them the Kingdom of God is to be realized: and it must be understood, the Kingdom of God in a very earthly way, in so far as it means here and now the Church in our time, conversion, moral discipline, reverence for the name of God and of Christ in public life, active Christianity, and so on. Let us suppose for a moment that the Christians of today, those interested in their religion, in particular the more educated among them, were not merely to talk about the Mystical Body of Christ and discuss its theology but were to live this truth; that is to say, suppose it were actually to be borne in upon them with fear and trembling that we have to bear one another's burdens and that all of us are accountable before the judgement seat of God for the eternal destiny of one another. Let us multiply these delightful hypotheses and these blessed [212] dreams (one more or less hardly matters): suppose everyone were convinced, because he is very humble and therefore very realistic, that such attitudes cannot be allowed to remain only a distant ideal, permitting us to enjoy a spiritual pleasure at our best moments when we delight to feast upon our own sublime thoughts, but that they have to be put into practice, that they must be taken up anew each day, and that we have to allow ourselves to be reminded by *others* that we have need of certain gestures, certain usages,

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certain actions, in which these attitudes are already preformed and embodied; for they cannot be expected to well up out of the depths of the heart every day with power so fresh as to eliminate the need for such pre-formed and pre-established practices. Further, suppose everyone were convinced that prayer has to penetrate the whole of life, that we must pray at all times, that is to say that our will interceding with God in Christ for the welfare of all has to be a formative power in our daily life, that the prayer of the member of Christ interceding for the whole Church has to be transformed into a penitential life, into patience, love, fasting, alms-giving and into a courageous and joyful renunciation, which is able calmly to pass by many an 'enjoyment' and pleasure of life. Further still: suppose everyone were convinced that those who wield ecclesiastical authority are not just the supervisors of an immense apparatus, of an ecclesiastical bureaucratic administration, but the fathers of our souls, whose words direct us in a manner at once paternal and fraternal even in matters beyond obligation.

If all this were to become true, and it would be wonderful if it were to become true, what would happen? Many things, naturally. But here we have only to follow out the consequences in a particular direction. And these look like this: Christians would pray for the whole Church, that God might give her peace, might unite her and preserve her, might protect her against all the powers and forces of darkness, might make it possible for her children to glorify God in a peace such as the world cannot give. They would pray for the Pope, the bishops and priests (oh, they have such need of it), for all seekers after truth, for the whole of separated and divided Christendom, for Jews and Gentiles, for the poor and the sick, for refugees and prisoners. They would pray every day. They would understand their whole lives as being related to the bearing of others' burdens and to the care of those souls for whose actions and ultimate destiny they will one day have to render account. They would, in every pain of body and distress of heart and mind, declare like the Apostle with serene courage: [213] 'I help to pay off the debt which the afflictions of Christ leave still to be paid, for the sake of his body, the Church' (Col 1:24). They would no longer be content to pray in a merely general way for the Kingdom of God and its coming. Their heart would be as large as the world, and would yet be mindful of the most minute details affecting humanity and the Church in the drama of salvation between light and darkness: the refugees in Korea, the priests of God in the prisons and camps behind the Iron Curtain, the importance of the cinema for the education and the corruption of the masses, the frequented and the deserted paths of Christian charitable relief the silent despair of the lonely, who have lost God and man, and thousand upon thousand of other such things. They would gladly suffer themselves to be reminded by others of this or that intention. They would take up with a heart filled with self-forgetting love 'intentions' proposed for their prayers like the '*Oremus, dilectissimi nobis, pro . . .*' of the priest in the Bidding Prayers of the Good Friday Liturgy.

Such prayer would generate a power sufficient to transform their lives: their piety would become less egoistic and introverted. They would no longer be resentful if they themselves have to drink of that chalice of bitterness out of which all must drink the redemption of their being. They would then spontaneously begin also to *do* their part for God and his Kingdom; by witnessing to their faith, by helping their neighbour (one must first have sought him with the heart, that is in prayer, and then one's feet will also find him) and those far distant (in the missions) and so on. They would gradually begin to feel something of that exquisite impulse of love to consume itself in service and obedience for others, until it has entirely spent and emptied itself. And perhaps they would go on from this to acquire some understanding of the heart of the Lord, of the mystery of that love which wells up out of the impenetrable depths – out of what is called the heart – of him who is the Word of God in the flesh: inexhaustible, judging and redeeming, pouring itself out in fruitless generosity and so drawing everything gloriously to itself. They would then (still more slowly, almost timidly and humbly) dare to hope that something of the love of this heart, which moves the sun and the other stars

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throughout the universe, might seize and transform the meditations and aspirations of their own heart, which, alas, is of itself only inclined to evil; they would perhaps at the dawn of each day with recollected heart dedicate themselves, their life and the newly-given day to this love (or at least attempt to do so; [214] for the thing is of course not accomplished with the mere formula of such a dedication).

Would it not be good if there were many more such Christians to continue this apostolate of intercession, who at every hour of the eternal Good Friday of this world (since the Son of God is crucified continually in all his members, and together with him both those who say 'remember me . . .' and those who fail to utter this word) hear to some degree the rousing call '*Oremus*', bend the knee and pray for all the estates of the Church and all her needs, and who, when they hear the '*Levate*', go forth into life with a heart which has been filled with prayer of this kind?

Such an 'exercise' (particularly in its concrete form) would not by any means be the sole and exclusive method of procuring a happy spiritual life. For there are many paths into the Kingdom of Heaven. And in the house of the Father there are many mansions. But – and this is equally certain, although often forgotten – there is only as much true Christianity as there is dwelling in the heart love for God *and* for men in Christ Jesus and in the Church. And prayer is still more important than the Sacraments. For many a soul has been saved without Sacraments, but never without prayer. And the grace of God can never be merited, neither in its beginning nor in its end. But if it gratuitously precedes our action, then the first reaction it arouses is that movement of the heart which can be described most simply and accurately as 'prayer'.

But if prayer is that act in which man gives himself wholly to God, and if man is a being who can only exist by reaching out towards a You (or be condemned to be shut in himself), and if the invisible God becomes a You only where and in so far as one loves the You whom one sees, then prayer can only be true prayer where it is open and ready to embrace the other within that movement in which the whole person gives himself to God, that is where it is a prayer inspired by care for souls. (It is therefore quite all right if people learn to pray through each other: the mother through care for her child, and so on. And many a person has prayed, thank God, without knowing it, because his heart trembled with the anxiety of true love for another and he sent into the silent infinitude of God a general SOS which was only apparently undirected.)

Such prayer, then, which enfolds all others with oneself in the one community of sin and salvation, is a proceeding which is absolutely essential to Christianity. Consciously to see this happening and deliberately and expressly to foster it must therefore signify the accomplishment of an [215] 'essential Christianity'. And this is sufficient to understand the dignity of such apostolic prayer, without going so far as to assert that every practice of Christianity must begin at this point (to arrive at it is certainly indispensable).

Would it not be good if there were such Christians? Ought there not to be such Christians? Can we not expect there to be *such* Christians because – by the mysterious grace of God – in spite of every human indolence and stubborn resistance there are still *Christians* and ultimately Christians must be *such* Christians? There are such. That is a comfort. There exists such a mission (that is what 'Apostleship' means) to a prayer of ceaseless supplication for the Church and it is accepted and carried out. But this mission can be accepted by a greater number and carried out in a more faithful way. And this is what the 'Apostleship of Prayer' wants to help to bring about.

This is not the place to describe at great length the establishment of the 'Apostleship of Prayer'; its foundation in the year 1844; its development, its statutes and papal recommendations; its history, which even in Germany is not without honour, beginning with a prophetic paper by the great Görres in his old age as early as 1844; its present extent; its

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literature and periodicals ('Messengers') which, seventy-two in number in forty-five languages, have (it is still worth mentioning) a total annual printing throughout the world of about three million copies. These are things which must be said elsewhere.

But let us be honest. This is where the difficulties and secret resistance begin, because elevated pious theory is suddenly brought down to the practical; difficulties on two sides: for in this world even a 'good' thing always gives sufficient objective cause, both culpable and inculpable, to be regarded as a bad thing. Even the best things on this earth can only repeat the cry: 'Blessed is he who does not take scandal in me!' And we for our part should not be so arrogantly convinced of the rightness of our sensibilities that we ascribe without further ado every opposition which our feelings manifest against such pious practices of Church life to a movement of the Holy Spirit.

The educated man of today experiences an odd feeling when he hears of a 'pious union of the faithful' or, even worse, if he is urged to join it, if he finds it suggested to him that he ought to consider it important for his spiritual life to figure in a list of members (in a book or card-index). Will such people gladly take to doing, by praying in the prescribed form: 'All [216] for Thee, most Sacred Heart of Jesus', what they certainly can accomplish in its essential meaning in their own way? Will they really come into living contact with the great reality intended when it is proposed to them that they should pray: 'Divine Heart of Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer Thee all the holy Masses . . .'? Will such a person not begin to reflect and to ask what it can possibly mean, to offer all holy Masses through the heart of Mary to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, moreover to offer them 'with the intention with which this Heart offers them to the heavenly Father on our altars'? Will he not declare then, that all this is incomprehensible to him and appears far too complicated and distorted, and that he would much rather carry on taking his part in the celebration of the Eucharist by offering through the Son and in the Son that sacrifice of praise and of reparation in which he is again made sacramentally present by the Church, who gave himself to the Father on the Cross through his death? Will he not take fright when he hears of 'promoters', 'sections', 'Children's Eucharistic Crusades', 'Leagues of the Sacred Heart' and similar things? Will his timid and slowly-growing devotion and reverence for the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God not be subject to too great a strain, when it is called upon 'to take refuge in the Immaculate Maternal Heart of the Blessed Virgin'?

One can experience these and similar hesitations even in reading the official documents of the Apostleship of Prayer with all due respect. There is no sense in denying this. But they are not ultimately decisive. And therefore it is sufficient to have mentioned them. For they can all be sidestepped without attempting to discuss them in detail by answering the simple question: what does the Apostleship of Prayer as an organization (and not merely as a Christian disposition and way of life) in fact demand of anyone joining it? Initially and precisely only two things: the one very external and the other very central. The external: one has to be inscribed in the register of members. Naturally this is not the decisive element, for *ultimately* what is important is the prayer and those who pray, not their statistics. (Nevertheless, the statistics of the Apostleship of Prayer in the whole world comprise the names of thirty-five million persons.) And no-one should allow himself to be registered who is not honestly trying to make a reality in his life of the spirit and activity of the Apostleship of Prayer. Otherwise all lists are useless. But can the act of registration have any meaning at all? Certainly, for it is an act of witness. It is the embodiment of an inner yes, which is at the same time expression and strength of [217] this Yes. Love and reverence can glimpse in such a list much more than the concern of a bureaucratic administration which by a dreadful chemistry contrives everywhere to transform even the promptings of the spirit and the movements of the heart into regulations, lists and statistics. It can be regarded as a small part of that humble form of the servant, in which the grace of God and its working in the interior of man are made

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manifest externally and without which interior Christianity is only half-grown.

And then the interior thing: that one should begin the day by fixing one's heart and mind in that disposition which considers one's own life even in its most profane daily routine to be dedicated in Christ to the glory of God and to one's neighbour with whom we are joined for our common salvation in the Body of Christ which is the Church. (Whoever has tried this will know that it must be done verbally – which does not mean by means of a fixed formula – if the spirit is not to evaporate very soon.) *How* this fixing of one's intention in prayer is carried out in the individual case is not prescribed in any binding way in the Apostleship of Prayer. But whoever makes a habit of this daily re-orientation, whoever admits to himself with clear-headed courage that honest intention and changing moods do not coincide, that those free acts of the heart which must spring from the inmost kernel of one's being must yet be achieved and cultivated in daily faithful effort and repeatedly wrested from the soil, will gratefully and humbly allow himself to be reminded by others of his vocation to the responsibility of prayer; he will allow the Church to call out to him unceasingly the cue for new prayer, for example by means of the so-called 'monthly intentions' approved by the Pope for the Apostleship of Prayer. This is after all only a continuation of what is written of the first Pope and the Church of his time: 'The Church sent up prayers without ceasing for him to God' (Ac 12:5).

Whoever strives to form his spiritual life in this way and guide it in this direction, will also know that such a dedication of his day and of his life, if it is truly to be a work of grace and not of our own mood, has its beginning and its end in the sacrifice of the Son for the salvation of the world. He will take part in the offering of this one sacrifice by the Church as commissioned by Christ, as often as he has the opportunity, and he will receive the body of the Lord through which we are all one body, we who eat of this bread (1 Co 10:17). And as soon as he has discovered that the rosary can be the mystical prayer of daily life, as simple as it is sublime, and when his spiritual life has become wide and strong enough to [218] realize spiritually what is dogmatically evident, namely that the blessed Virgin has objectively for the individual a meaning corresponding to her unique role in the history of salvation, then he will gladly pray daily – as and when he has the opportunity – a part of the rosary as a small contribution to carrying out his vocation of prayer for the salvation of the whole world. (Naturally the development may be in the opposite direction: through the action, namely the praying of the rosary, one acquires the spirit which should animate this action.) If he takes the trouble thus to take part as often as possible in the celebration of the sacrifice of our altar, if he honours the blessed Virgin, then not only has he done the most necessary part (the daily attitude of prayer, the 'offering up'), but he has done everything which the Apostleship of Prayer demands of him immediately as a 'work'. For everything else is left by the Apostleship of Prayer to the still growth in grace of the soul itself. It is sufficient for it that one has made a beginning which is tangible, which can be planned, which can be 'resolved', which can be repeatedly renewed. But this kind of plan carried out with daily faithfulness is one of those little things which are seemingly nothing, but on which everything depends and from which the greatest consequences can flow.

The Apostleship of Prayer has of its essence a 'strong' and a 'weak' side. It is in its spirit and goal so essential and necessarily already bound up with every really Christian life that it might for that very reason appear superfluous as a separate organization. But this is precisely its justification. It aims at being a help, in itself very simple, to the practice of the essential attitudes of a genuine Christianity. Such help is always necessary. For we, are always Christians in the *community* of Christ. And therefore even the most personal and internal things have a social character from which they receive their support and encouragement. Such help is particularly necessary today. For man is today more than ever the product of his environment – even in religious matters. And when was prayer for the Church and the Kingdom of God ever more necessary than now, when, in the one history of the world which

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no longer permits any individual peoples to live out their own history independently, each one really and in the most evident way bears the burdens of others and each one can be affected by the salvation and the damnation of all?

If the one Holy Spirit is to move us all, and there is one body because we have been baptized by this Spirit into one body (1 Co 12:13) and if we must therefore – because we are members of the one body of Christ – [219] with one mind bear each other's anxieties, then everyone ought to pray for everyone else. Apostolic prayer is a Christian duty. That is why the Apostle says: 'Be watchful in prayer for all the Saints' (Ep 6:18). 'Only, brethren, I entreat you by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Holy Spirit, to give me the help of your prayers to God on my behalf' (Rm 15:30). So the 'Church Militant' can continually admonish her children, as St Paul did: 'Pray for us too; that God may grant an opening for our preaching the mystery of Christ' (Col 4:3); 'Dear brothers, pray for us' (1 Th 5:25)' . . . that the word of the Lord may run its course triumphantly' (2 Th 3:1).

Faced with the immeasurable vastness of the undertaking and the desperate minuteness (even incapacity) of human possibilities, the pastors of the Church must continually admonish the faithful in like manner. They, and indeed all those who possess the royal priesthood of all the faithful, should have ever before their eyes the example of St Paul's apostolic prayer (cf. e.g. Rm 1:10; 2 Co 13:7, 9; Ep 1:16 *sqq*.; 3:14 *sqq*.; Ph 1:9; Col 1:9-12; 1 Th 3:10-13; 2 Th 1:11; Heb 13:12 *sq*.). If the Church is beginning only now for the first time in the unified history of the world to become even in evident appearance the one World Church; if by that fact she is faced with quite new tasks and is forced (slowly, but for the short span of man's life very fast) to adapt herself to quite new and unaccustomed circumstances and duties and this in a situation beset by direst dangers both from within and without, then prayer has become for the Church, for the coming of the Kingdom, doubly necessary.

At a time when the first Christian community was forced to cry out: 'What a tumult among the nations, what useless murmuring among peoples. They arise, the kings of the earth, princes plot against the Lord and his Anointed', she had the courage to pray: 'See, Lord, how they threaten! Grant then to your servants to preach your word with all openness.' And in case it might be thought she did not have the courage to utter a prayer of a very 'this-worldly' character, she continued: 'Stretch out your hand, that in the name of Jesus, your holy servant, healings, signs and wonders may be performed' (Ac 4:25-31). 'Signs and wonders' could happen today too, if we would but realize and fulfil the 'Apostolate of Prayer' for the whole Church of God.

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[220]

16

A SPIRITUAL DIALOGUE AT EVENING: ON SLEEP, PRAYER, AND OTHER SUBJECTS

P. (*Priest*): Why, it's you! Good evening! How nice of you to show your face once more and come to visit this old hermit here. Why is it so seldom that you put in an appearance?

D. (*Doctor*): Well, it isn't as long as all that since I was last here. But you are quite right. Once in a while I enjoy escaping the madding crowd and yet being not alone. That is what has impelled me to come here tonight. Here there is company, and yet one can pass a tranquil evening. No need to fear being swamped by a flood of words.

P.: Take care! that is by no means so certain today. I read in the breviary today in a lesson from Job: '*Conceptum sermonem tenere quis poterit*'. And such a *conceptus sermo* is rumbling in me a little. For as I was gradually making up my mind to go to bed – you never know, do you, if you can in fact go to sleep – I pulled out as my bedside reading my beloved Prudentius and imbibed his '*Hymnus ante somnum*'. So he is to blame for a rather disordered meditation about sleep.

D.: Well, if you wanted to go to bed, my visit is inopportune indeed. No one should be deprived of the night, the best part of the day!

P.: No, no! I didn't mean it that way. It is true I was putting out tentative feelers towards coming to a decision to go to bed, but now you are equally welcome. – Please, take your usual seat. I may even manage to dole out to you a cigar, although they are so expensive and I am by nature mean. But I can apply to you on this occasion the mischievous exclamation of an old priest whom my father was visiting as a boy with his mother, as he loved to tell me: 'Help yourselves to food and drink! It isn't every day that you come here – thanks be to God!'

D.: And now I must turn the tables on you and say: talk away and let the *conceptus sermo* about sleep loose upon the world; it is not every day [221] that I sit here listening to you – thank God! I am quite eager to know what a theologian thinks about sleep. Up to now (one can of course blaspheme to one's heart's content in your presence, because you yourself do it with such relish) I always thought that theologians spread sleep chiefly by their speaking and writing. And now a theologian wants to spread himself *on* sleep. That is bound to be interesting, because I am sure that you have not been meditating on the physiology of sleep in mammals or the causes of sleeplessness.

P.: No, indeed not. Such things I leave without envy to you doctors and psychologists, and I take a certain malicious delight in watching you running around with water cures and chemical soporifics, desperately trying to cure the people of today from insomnia. You don't get very far, do you? And even the occasional apparent success is probably far from the reality of things.

D.:You are painting us blacker than we deserve. Today's doctors are never such out-and-out materialists as all that. That it is the whole man and not merely his body which is ill when

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he is unable to sleep, that this is rather a symptom of a deep-seated anxiety in him, that it means he is somehow unable to leave himself alone, and that all this is very significant for an understanding of the whole structure of his personality, that therefore this illness must be combated by psychotherapy or depth psychology, all this is known today even by us poor medical men, however much you theologians may despise us.

P.: That's all very well. It's true you have made progress and you must be sincerely congratulated for it. But just tell me: is this sleeplessness an illness from which a man has to be freed, or an illness precisely by means of which man as a whole (or however you want to express it) becomes healthy? Whenever one suffers from sleeplessness one naturally longs for sleep, but at the same time (and here the matter becomes a bit mysterious) one is also afraid of falling asleep. There is something dreadful about giving oneself up to sleep. And now of course the casters-out of this illness will spring to one's side and say: yes, that's right; but it is exactly this fear of yours that must be cast out – by the use of luminal or a lullaby or more recently of the incantations of modern magicians of the soul.

D.:Naturally anxiety must not be 'cast out' but resolved, if one is to get to sleep.

P.: But ought we then to sleep?
[222]
D.: But of course, otherwise we should become ill.

P.: Permit me to ask a somewhat sudden question (no suitable transitional thought occurs to me): did Adam in paradise also sleep? After all, he did not have to die (and sleep is often called the brother of death). And could it not be the case, for example (what is most improbable is often most true), that the longing to avoid death which remains to us from Adam as a sublime atavism expresses itself also as a resistance to sleep?

D.:Excuse me interrupting you. But I'm afraid you are beginning to indulge in Existentialist philosophy. A proper theologian like you really ought not to do such a thing. This is what makes contemporary theologians get on my nerves. I think I have a good idea where this is going to lead. The 'spirit' of man discovers it to be now beneath his dignity to drop off and (such a snoozing king on his throne is indeed a painful picture) abdicate, for His Majesty Spirit finds it necessary constantly to be on the alert and to rule the serfs over which he is placed (over the body, the senses, and the instincts); man becomes again a person who is in a position to dispose bf himself freely and continuously. I'm afraid you're going to let loose a bit of Existentialistic philosophy for a change on poor, harmless sleep and discover it to be problematical, because as a self-respecting philosopher one must discover everything to be highly problematical.

P.: You're on quite the wrong track! And yet I made it easy for you to get the drift of it all. You did not understand the hint about Adam. I put the question again: did Adam in paradise also sleep, or is sleep one of the consequences of the Fall? Don't cudgel your brain over this question! I don't in fact know the exact answer myself. But let's consider the matter together.

D.:It is sincerely to be hoped that Adam was allowed to sleep in paradise! It would be dreadful not to be allowed to sleep. There can surely be no more horrible form of death than to be forced to keep awake in such an inhuman way that one chooses as the only possible escape from the hell of wakefulness flight into the sleep of . . . death. Is it not the case that the brightness of the day's consciousness is delightful only because a gentle twilight can always

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carry it over softly into the gentle, tired stillness of sleep! Don't we renounce in sleep the clear sharpness of the light of day, the privilege of being autonomous persons who are thereby imprisoned within the confines of the consciously given, in order quietly to yield ourselves again to a life which is not ours but which in compensation [223] is wise and limitless, because it moves and acts in yon dark kingdom where every individual is ever caught up in the movement of the All? Is not anxiety then an indication that a man has no trust, that he fears this great reality before which he ought to relax and yield himself up, in the sure knowledge that existence is good and not a dangerous monster waiting to gobble us up if we don't look out?

P.: That was prettily put. Yes, this 'kingdom' into which we quietly slip in sleep may be described poetically in that way. A kingdom of still spaces, a region where everything has a hidden root, a dark ground out of which rises the sap of life, an earth out of which sprouts all the blossom of a true spirit, a kingdom of a thousand names: kingdom of the earth, kingdom of the soul (the soul, whose adversary is supposed to be the spirit, whereas in truth the latter is its fruit – and more than this), kingdom of gentle night, kingdom of a night more deeply conscious than day . . . No, please, don't be so poetical. I don't care much for that. We can understand each other as well without it.

D.:Very well, what is there to say about Adam's sleep?

P.: Precisely the question I am asking is this: was Adam able to move into this kingdom only by means of sleep? Or was this precisely one of the blessed gifts of paradise, that he could possess the shades fully while yet remaining completely awake, that he could with his eyes open descend to those roots of his being for him not obscure but incandescent, which continually suck new life from the blood-stream, the body and the earth, where individual life touches upon the life of all things? If this were the proper occasion, I should now embark upon a theological lecture about the extent of the freedom from concupiscence in the state of original justice, about that pure and bright interpenetration of nature and person, of spirit and besouled body. And we should conclude at the end that Adam did not sleep in a stupefied state as we do, but opened the innermost chamber of his spirit in some other way to the silent entry of those fairies which bring the nocturnal blessings of the kingdom of a thousand names to the spirit. But you would become impatient during this lecture and be annoyed at the recounting of the blessings of sleep in the state of paradise, of sleep with a waking heart, as we might call it, thinking of the mystical interpretation so familiar to tradition of the remarkable expression in the Canticle of Canticles: '*ego dormio, cor meum vigilat*', 'I sleep, yet my heart is awake!'
[224]
D.: Not impatient, no. I like listening to you theologians demonstrating by reference to Adam and the story of his origins what man would really be like if he had not been so unhuman as to want to be a mere man. But finally at the end of it all I would make this rejoinder to the theology of sleep in paradise: That's all very well; but the fact remains that today we car enter only with eyes closed (or even only in dreams) into this mysterious kingdom (which still appears to me generously blanketed in fog). And for this reason we simply have to sleep. Full stop.

P.: Now it's my turn to say: that's all very well, but are you quite sure that this land into which we move through sleep more than in our wakeful state – we are after all not completely excluded from it even then – is so exclusively a kingdom of quiet peacefulness and of benevolent powers? After all, the kingdom of a thousand names has in Scripture quite

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other names than those we gave it previously. Scripture calls it 'body, body of sin, body of death, body of flesh, body of baseness, creature subject to futility and the slavery of corruption'. This sounds a bit less poetical than before; but no doubt more realistic. And – go on, be shocked at my antiquated theology if you will – what if this kingdom is inhabited also by demons? Is that to be completely excluded? If death and sleep have something to do with one another – I agree that this 'if' is a trifle vague – then there could exist a being who has power over sleep, as there exists a being who has mastery over death, as we read somewhere in Hebrews. Perhaps this mysterious kingdom is peopled not only by fairies (it would have been better before to call them honestly 'angels') but also by demons, so that sleep too in its own way is a dwelling in 'darkness and the shadow of death'. Then the silly fear in the face of going to sleep with which we began would perhaps not be so silly after all? Lodged in the furthest corner to which soporifics and counting-up-to-a-hundred do not descend, would lurk the terror of losing consciousness before the *adversarius vester diabolus*, *quaerens quem devoret* . . . You are of course familiar with the prayer which we say from the breviary before going to sleep: *Sobrii estote et vigilate, quia adversarius vester diabolus tamquam leo rugiens circuit*, *quaerens quem devoret*. Normally we willingly let ourselves be overcome by sleep, don't we? But by the devil – that's another matter. But can it not be that these two are not necessarily and absolutely completely distinct and separate? I ask again: is it of this that one is terrified, without knowing it, when one has a sense of fear before going to sleep?

To formulate it again in a different way, you must admit this fact which [225] disturbs me about sleep: when we sleep, our spirit, our responsible personality, does not simply put up the shutters and say 'closing-time', after which nothing further can happen which is of any interest to it. No, rather it sinks down into that in us which belongs to us and yet lies before or beneath that sphere of reality around us over which we exercise immediately and 'despotically' responsible control. I have to express myself in this roundabout way, because we cannot call this infra-personal sphere, in the usual superficial sense, either simply 'body' or 'soul', for in the first case we still think even today of a physico-chemically constructed machine, and in the other – well, what exactly is 'soul' as distinct from the personal spirit? Certainly not something with which the body is not already connected. And other names which in these days are applied to this sphere are still too loaded with the interpretation which the inventors of these names have put upon it.

But let's not worry now about correct nomenclature. In any case, something happens to the spirit during sleep there below, more than in the waking state, and uncontrollably. For note well: when we wake up again, we are refreshed or perhaps not refreshed by our sleep, but in any case we are different. We are perhaps in a happier or more serious mood, or we have become much more indifferent about certain matters of yesterday, or we are charged with quite different motives; the whole atmosphere of our dispositions, which are unreflective and yet decisively intervene in our actions, is different from yesterday; thoughts occur to us which would not have occurred to us yesterday. After all, people often say that they first want to 'sleep on' some particular question. In saying this, they have observed what I am now talking about. I am only surprised that people so naturally assume that one always judges and acts better and more correctly if one has first 'slept on it'. Surely it is often the reverse: often one sleeps away the highest inspirations, if one first sleeps on them before acting in accordance with them and definitively making them one's own. In brief: the wellspring of our personal waking thinking and acting, to which we can never penetrate completely, is altered during sleep, and this in an uncontrollable way.

This is surely not something to be taken for granted and not quite without danger. We allow ourselves in sleep to be hypnotized to some extent by a 'something' which is wholly unknown to us, and to be given by it post-hypnotic commands for the day. I know of course (to carry the image a little further) that the hypnotizer cannot do with his victim [226] just

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whatever he wants. And so it is quite certain that if we go to sleep saints, we will not wake up criminals. But is it not possible that practically everything in our lives depends on almost imperceptible alterations in the presuppositions of our actions, imperceptible alterations of mood, of involuntary sequences of thought, and so on, that is on something which we cannot possibly even in our clearest moments of consciousness fully check and verify?

And I ask again, is this Something, to which we surrender ourselves in sleep, necessarily and in every respect trustworthy? Can one with complete confidence let oneself be 'hypnotized' by it in sleep and accept suggestive commands from it (if one may use such analogous expressions for once)?

D.:It is self-evident surely that one can and ought to do that, simply because no-one can deny that one must. Or do you suggest that one ought to attempt to do without sleep altogether? Would such a fearful sealing-off of the subconscious, even if it were possible, not be a worse disaster? And of course it is not possible. But that deprives the whole question of any object. In any case, during the day we are equally subject to impressions and influences which lie outside our control, which do not present written requests for permission to make an impression on us, which, because they alter us, that is, alter the given field and matter of our personal activity, make us also as persons continuously and without our consent other than we were.

P.: But that is not quite the same. During the day one accepts them with spirit awake. One can check them, resist them, transform them, interpret them ('pick them up') in one way rather than another, one can react, swiftly and adroitly. One can bring to bear on them what one is and wants to be, either to promote or to repel, but consciously and deliberately. One does first give them, if one must allow them entry, some previous code sign, if one is really awake – some people of course sleep with their eyes open – and only then do they obtain entry into us, provided that we have learnt to 'arise from sleep' in the sense meant by St Paul. But in sleep one is transformed before one opens one's eyes to the fact. Changes come about then, which after a long sleep present themselves as self-evident. One has already moved so far way from one's previous condition that it no longer presents itself as any problem to be precisely as one is. Have you yourself never experienced how during the night moods, [227] attitudes, states which we struggled to acquire and build up in full knowledge and painful effort during the previous day are washed away by the Something into which we so innocently allow ourselves to sink? One could say (allowing two parables of the Gospel to intermingle): during the night the devil comes and tears up the seed out of our 'heart' and when we wake up the weeds that he has sown are already quite sturdy and dominate the scene as though it could not be otherwise, and all the while we sleepers thought we could leave the good seed to grow by itself.

Let me add something about the dangerous Something we have been talking about which has just occurred to me. I know you will mutter all the more that theologians have always had the devil on the brain. But perhaps you too will discover that the experiences and opinions of the old theologians are worthy even today of a little bit of consideration. The old masters of matters ascetical and mystical – therefore the psychotherapeutic experts of olden days – as also the theologians of the Middle Ages said that devils have no possibility of exercising any direct influence on what is purely spiritual as such in us, but – surely something extraordinary for 'pure spirits' – the sphere of their immediate influence over us lies in the 'sensitive' part – we would say today in the subconscious life which is rooted in the corporeal.

By the way, we should see in such an affirmation not merely a somewhat degrading limitation of the influence of these spirits upon us (which applies by the way also to the good angels), but also an indication of the fact that they have, as 'basic elements of the world' as St

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Paul perhaps calls them (but certainly this would require an investigation all to itself) a relationship to this material world arising out of their nature, different from and yet similar to ours to the world, even considered as a whole, through our body.

If we were to think out more accurately these relationships of spirits to the world, we should understand better that this pancosmic relation to the world of such spiritual personal beings must not be thought of only as a sporadic, exterior action which proceeds from the free arbitrary choice of these spiritual persons, but as a happening which in its roots and foundations is prior to the concrete modification of it due to the freedom of spirits, and is consequently to be found (even though not patient of empirical verification by us) even where 'everything is proceeding normally'.

But I'm getting lost – and losing the thread of my discourse a little. [228] I only wanted to say this: if 'spirits' are from the start 'world-powers' and are by nature endowed with a relationship to the material cosmos as a whole, then the saying of the old experts in metempirical (and yet very tangible) realities that spirits can influence immediately 'only' the material side of man was the expression of a positive fact after all.

If the material cosmos is in a certain sense an expression, 'embodiment' (with all due caution and reserving the rights of a more accurate determination of the concept) of the natural essence of spirits, then the spiritual and personal character of these spirits must surely contribute in some way to determining this sphere. So it would not be in a merely poetical way that the fourteen little angels mentioned in the traditional children's song would stand around the bed, apart from the fact that they are angels and devils of very large format. Besides, if the most modern philosophy of nature is gradually rediscovering a problem of 'suffering' in the dysteleologies of infrahuman nature, this could perhaps be pointing in the same direction that I am thinking of: because the spirits are real principles in the world by their essence, their personal and therefore free nature must express itself somehow in the concrete state of the material world, even though it is in principle impossible for us men to demonstrate this experimentally, because a material thing can be given to us, even in the most refined experiment, only within this world, and can therefore never be examined in isolation from this influence.

D.:Excuse me, but I think we have gradually progressed a long way from sleep. And I fear (and I say this rather maliciously) that you will break your axle if you make a turn sufficiently sharp to bring you back to the subject of sleep from the point to which we have now wandered.

P.: It isn't as bad as all that. We will be back at sleep in a moment, if you don't go to sleep before that – something that I could not really take amiss. All that I actually wanted to say in that long speech is this: from what we have said (still, I admit, very vaguely) it follows that there is danger in sleep. For it is into that kingdom where the evil spirits have their abode that man allows himself to sink – in sleep.

D.:That's all very well. But I should like to make a few observations on all this. If I am to follow you to these theological heights, I must know a bit more precisely just how one is to conceive this alleged influence of the spirits. For otherwise one cannot really form a correct picture as to whether and how these demonic powers working upon the depths of the [229] unconscious can become dangerous. One could also object to your theory that you must logically allow good spirits as well to enter and depart freely in this subterranean realm of the human being. And if you do not reject this as sounding too banal, I would almost say that these good spirits ought to be able to keep the demons in hand, so that in fact one need not take very much interest in this conflict of spirits there below. Particularly since we already

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have our hands full with the 'discernment of spirits' during the day, where it really is necessary. For during the day there is no way of escaping the need to adopt an attitude towards one or the other kind of 'spirit', the good and the bad, but fortunately one is relieved of this obligation precisely when one gives oneself to innocent sleep. But leaving all this aside, my first and last objection remains: we are obliged (even on moral grounds) to sleep. Therefore it would be the wisest course to let the perilousness of sleep which you have so profoundly demonstrated rest very lightly on one's mind. Or do you not agree that the ascetic virtuosi of night-watching in the style of the St Anthony of Grünewald are more plagued by the devil than we who sleep and are afterwards fully rested?

P.: Stop, stop! No need to fear that my theological ontology of sleep (to give a simple opinion a solemn title) will provide the basis for an ethic of night vigils. Though as a matter of fact it would not be out of place to ask why this practice which was so much taken for granted in early Christianity (as in every religion worthy of the name) has today so much fallen out of use. But I think rather that one could deduce quite another maxim from this theory.

D.:And what would that be?

P.: That before sleep one should pray, one ought to pray really well.

D.: An unexpected consequence. Up to now I thought: if we were trained as children to 'say our night prayers well', the reason must be (if I have ever considered the matter at all) that underlying such a praiseworthy practice (which as a matter of fact – between ourselves – I have never completely given up) is the basic assumption that a common or garden Christian like ourselves, if he does not pray at night, does not pray during a normal working day at all. But he ought to pray. Ergo, at least in the morning and in the evening, when one can suitably cast a backward glance over the past day. But now you come along and make [230] out that night prayers are a kind of theological night hygiene of the spirit. That is a new and surprising idea for me.

P.: But no. I am talking about real prayer. Prayer to God, the true and personal God, prayer in the spirit and in absolute truth, not a little exercise in a self-imposed training programme before sleep or anything of that kind. For the whole power of prayer probably lies in faith. And, though the psychotherapists of today because of their in many cases scarcely surmounted relativism often forget or conceal this fact, faith is in the ultimate analysis only genuine when every 'as if' attitude is rejected, and that which I do is no longer merely an expression of my so-called 'conviction' (alongside of which other convictions may exist with equal right), not merely a psychological trick which is psychologically useful to me, but an unconditional commitment of the whole man to – well, precisely to that one truth which is genuine reality. Certainly I think that then, and only then, when such prayer is in reality prayer, does it fulfil also that other function which you have described somewhat profanely as a theologically motivated spiritual hygiene of sleep. And once this presupposition is verified, we can then inquire what prayer should be like, in order to be effectively at night a blessing upon sleep, an exorcism of its dangers.

D.: In what sense do you mean this?

P.: I mean it this way: this night prayer must naturally have all the qualities, all the psychological and theological presuppositions and structures which are proper to all prayer in

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general. And these need not concern us therefore at the moment. Although naturally they are important for night prayer like every other: as a surrender of the person to God, as an act of trust in the outgoing goodness of God, as a willing submission of all the experiences of the day to the 'order of eternity', and so on. But over and above this, in accordance with our considerations up to the present, prayer at night should evidently be not only – let us say – a daily prayer said in the evening, but in addition should be of such a nature as to be adapted, more than any other prayer, to the peculiar character of that 'kingdom' into which man in sleep finds his way, so that he 'arms' himself against the dangers of this region of life in sleep, in a sense exorcises and blesses it.

D: I don't think that we have established the peculiar character of this kingdom sufficiently clearly to enable us to determine exactly in what armour (which we are to be furnished with precisely through prayer) we [231] should commit ourselves to this danger-zone. For ultimately all you have established is that we are in this kingdom more exposed to the infiltrations and suggestions of demonic powers than in the consciousness of full daylight. What particular maxim on the subject of night prayer are we supposed to be able to deduce from this?

P.: To begin with, I must make one point before going any further. If, as you so rightly say, we are to determine what night prayer should really be like on the basis of the particular character of this kingdom, then we must not think exclusively about how subject to demonic influence this sub-spiritual layer of man's soul is. Because we must think after all of this demonic influence as itself subject to the structural laws of this layer in man. Now, and with this we are approaching more closely to an answer to our question, that which is characteristic of this zone (or whatever you want to call it) is the image. We have dreams during sleep, to begin with the illustration of this statement which lies most readily to hand. A C. G. Jung will try to discover the archetypes, the primordial and guiding images of this layer. This layer as psychic (and therefore somehow intentional) must have its objective correlative, and as psychosomatic, because rooted in the flesh, must have a concrete correlative, in a word, an 'image', an incarnate idea. That is why this kingdom is the kingdom of images, but a divided kingdom of images, for it is the common region of impressions originating in the good and evil powers of the spirit; it is the kingdom in which the eternal Logos became flesh and in which the Prince of this World strives to celebrate the 'epiphany' of his dominion. What 'moves' the soul in sleep – the soul become defenceless and open – even where there is no dream evidently to hand, are these 'images' which are formed there and so supply its guiding images to the personal consciousness throughout the day as well. Whatever may be the truth about the 'collective unconscious', in which the experience of humanity is supposed to be consolidated and preserved in the form of archetypes, of which the great images in myths and popular tales are supposed to be merely the echo in full consciousness, however wrong it may be to regard the true life of the spirit as a secondary function of these subterranean powers, of this subliminal soul, and however mistaken it would also be to elevate this kingdom of the deep into the ultimate reality and truth, since it is in itself deeply divided and has need of release from above – it remains true that the spirit of man draws its life also from this kingdom. And above all in sleep. And this because it is formed by these images.
[232]
D.: And evening prayer?

P.: If a man brings with him into his sleep good, genuine, holy images, if his power of imagination is already formed by means of the true archetypes of reality, archetypes blessed

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and redeemed, pure and radiant in the flesh in which the Logos of God was himself formed; if a man sinks into sleep like this, not formless (for the Christian has no need to become mystically formless in order to seize hold of God, since God has himself eternally assumed the form, the schema of man), nor in the chaotic distortion in which his daylight consciousness mirrors the lacerated reality of the world; then doubtless there will come to meet and greet him out of the kingdom of sleep in secret sympathy these images, which in reality he is bringing with him; then there is in him already a hidden principle of selection to determine what is to be allowed to pass from the depths of the soul into the soul which is left open. Those images which a believing man forms in himself when fully conscious call up out of the depths of his natural soul their own likeness. For indeed these Christian archetypes are really concealed in the depths of our 'natural soul' because we are redeemed not only from above but also from below by him who descended into the depths, and because there is in reality no such thing as a 'purely' natural soul, a soul in a state of purely natural innocence, because it is either saved or damned, or to speak even more correctly – after all it exists prior to the personal choice between the alternatives of salvation and damnation – it is both at the same time, the radical source from which both can well up, the might of darkness and the light of the morning-star which, according to Scripture, rises in . . . the heart.

The 'schemata of the power of imagination' (to speak in Kantian terms for once) don't consist merely in those harmless things which a rationalistic, unexistential psychology or metaphysic of the sensitive soul tells us about. They are not empty forms of space and time. Rather, they have a historical physiognomy which is in the last analysis Christian or demonic. Which of the two sets of images – which constitute reality – will in effect become efficacious in us depends too upon which the personal spirit in his waking state has chosen as his.

That is why our night prayer – and by that I don't mean any kind of prayer which happens to be said at night, but that attitude of prayer in which we in fact go to sleep – ought to be a quiet, untroubled, relaxed and recollected gathering together of those great images in which the supreme reality, that of God, has come near to us and impressed itself on this [233] visible world: the Son of Man, the Sign of the Cross, the Blessed Virgin, to name but a few which lie most readily to hand. Here it is not a question of a frivolous play of phantasy. Has not our phantasy too been consecrated down to the deepest roots of man since the eternal Word became flesh? And should the image, which faith creates out of this fact and in which it is concentrated and embodied, not be a kind of quasi-sacramental sign which sanctifies and blesses, guards and enlightens? In recommending this kind of 'imaginative' prayer, I naturally include under the heading of 'image' everything which belongs to the realm of sensibility, and not only what is ordered to the sense of sight, and therefore words, sounds, signs, gestures, in short everything in which the celestial spirit can be embodied, the nether depths of our being sanctified and the spirit of earth banished. The correct, calm and recollected signing of oneself with the sign of the Cross, the simple gesture of prayer, the words of prayer, if they are filled with simple greatness and concentrated reality, all these belong to that imaginativeness which – in my opinion – ought to be the characteristic precisely of night prayer, if it is to become an exorcism and consecration of that kingdom into whose power man surrenders himself in sleep.

D.: Yes, but does not all imagination, including that of the primordial images, ultimately remain in the realm of the 'as-if', of the unreal? And is not therefore the imaginative making-present of religious reality precisely a representation of a religious reality which is merely thought and not truly present? We must admit that it is difficult for the man of today not to treat his thought about something, and even more his imaginative representation of something, as that which is most unreal and unsubstantial.

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P.: It is precisely this which is so wrong, so dangerously wrong. That a thought, a mood, an inner love, an act of reverent adoration is more real, more enduring, of greater consequence, of greater validity than the explosion of a bomb or a pound of butter; that if such a reality appears to be 'unreal', ineffective in the realm of so-called tangible 'reality', it is only because the latter (not the former) is so very unreal that the true reality of the spiritual does not get a chance to make itself felt; it is this that the blind and deluded man of today must re-learn, before it is too late, before the organs designed to bring true reality to him have atrophied beyond redemption.

And as for representation by the imagination: the word 'imagination' [234] has today been hopelessly phenomenalized and relativized. What is imagined is today taken to mean what is 'mere imagination'. But what if the imagined reality is really there? Is there, because it exists, because it transcends time and space (and therefore cannot be ascertained by means of the apparatus employed in the investigation of the unreal, by what we call physics and chemistry)? And if we now imagine this existing reality, so that it is there for us as well, there for our heart and the last impulse of our nerves, imagine it because long before we created an image of it this reality caught hold of us and made us very really into its own image and likeness – is this then 'mere imagination', or is this process not rather a re-presentation of what is truly present, a mode by which the real is admitted into the sphere of consciousness, for there the presence of the utterly real gently pressing upwards from the depths usually desires to make itself known only if we grant it in simple and ready humility a sensible form? Grant it, not because it has need of it, but because otherwise it would disdain to force itself upon us, free beings, who are called to love?

D.: There occurred to me, while you were so eloquently defending the value and worth of the religious imagination, a certain parallel to the correspondence which you postulate in the religious realm between the images created by the imagination and the images impressed in a sense *a priori* on the deeper soul. When in everyday life we have fallen asleep with a 'problem' and in the morning have wakened with an inspired idea as to its solution, when, that is, something has continued to ruminate subterraneously on the question, then the question taken with us into sleep must also have worked selectively on the mass of our memorized information, which in relation to the particular question in view is in itself chaotic, and must have activated the relevant and therefore useful material and rejected the opposite. The good idea does need for its constitution new and well-adapted material over and above that given in the problem itself. It would therefore seem to be beyond dispute that there is in sleep the possibility of a selection within the mass of material in thought and image which arises from the depths of the soul. Therefore if there are such primordial religious images impressed *a priori*, then your theory is certainly acceptable.

P.: Yes, but of course I do not mean that there are finished, well-defined and in a sense already fixed and classified primordial images lying [235] about in the deeper soul as in a photograph-album. But I do think (as I have already said) that the 'schemata of the power of the imagination' have an *a priori* physiognomy already determined even from the religious and supernatural point of view, and which externalizes and expresses itself – at first, I am quite willing to admit, under the stimulus and with the material of experience – in what we may then call primordial religious images. But this is a question which we will not be able to solve tonight to the satisfaction of both of us.

D.: That is true. But there is another question I should still like to pose: you appealed at the beginning to the tradition of the so-called medieval psychotherapists in order to make more plausible your theology of the demonic depths of the sensitive subconscious. Now, is there

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also a tradition which emphasizes the importance of the imaginative in the grace before sleep – that is really what we ought to call the kind of night prayer which you have postulated?

P.: Well, there you have got me. That is a question one would naturally have to investigate. But my good Prudentius is still lying open. You must read sometime the *Hymnus ante somnum* – or get it translated for you. There he speaks of the two kinds of images which move the soul during sleep, there he speaks of how one ought to sign forehead and heart with the sign of the Cross. The Hymn boldly concludes with the words – just a moment:

Christum tamen sub ipso
meditabimur sopore.

That is, translated:

On Christ is our thought directed
Even in the midst of sleep.

The Ambrosian verse of the hymn at Compline will also be well-known to you:

Procul recedant somnia
et noctium phantasmata.
Far from us may evil dreams
And night's phantoms withdraw.

And to mention something else which has just occurred to me: in the Exercises of St Ignatius one of the essential parts of his schemes of meditation is the activation of the '*vista imaginativa*', which represents the [236] object of the meditation to the person in a great image. And this image is to be taken with one right into sleep so that it springs before the mind immediately in the morning. And it is surely not by chance that Ignatius places precisely in the evening the specifically imaginative way among his various methods of meditations, 'the application of the senses', where the so-called 'prelude' of the other ways of meditating becomes a complete form of meditation in itself.

But, as I have said, these are matters which ought to be further investigated: and for that there is no more time tonight, for it is getting late. And I have deprived you of what you came looking for, a quiet hour spent alone with another, in which there is little talk. *Mea culpa*. Next time you must do the talking.

D.: Not at all, this evening's conversation has been most instructive for me. How does the verse from Prudentius go? It could serve as the quintessence of our conversation, which I will have to think over again, if your theory is to become quite clear to me.

P.: *Christum tamen sub ipso*
meditabimur sopore.

And another quotation must go with it:

Ego dormio, cor meum vigilat.

Ah, yes, the heart! That truly never sleeps. And out of the heart, says Jesus, everything comes. Even and especially when one is asleep.

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D.: That is doubtless true. Good night, Father!

P.: Good night, my good friend. And . . . don't forget your night prayers tonight! You can say them before you have reflected and – let us hope – improved upon my theory.

D.: Good night again! Until we meet again!

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[237]

PART FOUR

The States of Life in the Church

[239]

17

PRIESTLY EXISTENCE

I. PRELIMINARY NOTE

Existence in the title of this paper is to be taken in the modern sense: the concrete being of the individual human person, each as such for itself, in so far as the man by his moral acts definitively disposes of it as a whole. Therefore 'Priestly Existence' poses the question whether the Catholic priesthood essentially influences in any way the existential condition of a man possessing it.

We say '*essentially* influences', because of course every 'vocation' ('*Beruf*'), in so far as it belongs to the concrete situation of an individual's life, at times makes certain demands which in the concrete can be fulfilled only by means of a morally qualified way of acting (this vocation demands loyalty, that punctuality, another tact, discretion, etc.), and therefore it has a positive existential significance of *some* sort, and a critical failure, even though 'only' in one's profession, can be of decisive importance by reacting on a man's whole existence. But an ordinary 'vocation' ('*Beruf*') in the civic sense of today (business man, teacher etc.) which rests on the *division of labour* in social life, because of this very fact does not affect the *whole* of existence, which is always something essentially indivisible; therefore, in the greater or lesser degree in which it is a definitely separate compartment of the total behaviour of a man, it does not merit consideration as an *essential* influence on human existence. In a sense it does not penetrate deeply enough into the 'core' of man's existence to give this as a whole a definite character which could be essentially distinguished from that of another profession.

On the other hand, there are 'vocations' (even if perhaps not such in the civic and social sense) which have an essential significance for existence and its characterization. And it follows from this, that when we ask whether this is applicable also to the priesthood, our question is not from [240] the beginning entirely meaningless. The ascetic (monk), for example, who makes of his Christian existential activity (his 'striving after holiness') immediately as such his vocation, or the married man who possesses his personality as a whole and not merely in one of its individual functions exclusively in the loving union with another person, both these have 'vocations' which involve an essential specification of existence. Our question therefore is whether the *priesthood* of the Catholic Church performs a function in the life of the priest which is in this sense essential – although always contained within the framework of universal human and Christian existence, or whether the priesthood of an individual priest seen from his point of view is a mere 'employment' ('*Amt*'), a separate particular function of his life, analogous to the particular civic professions.

At the same time it is to be noted that 'priesthood' will be understood in its *dogmatic* essence, as *universally* binding upon the whole Church as it was willed by Christ himself. It is important to emphasize this, because the Western Church admits to the priesthood only those who live a perpetually celibate life. If we suppose that this requisite perpetual celibacy is in its intrinsic significance the same as that of the ascetic (monk) and therefore even in the

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case of the 'secular priest' only the concrete expression of an ascetical attitude demanded of all, then the Western Church today in reality ordains to the priesthood, to express it in old ecclesiastical language, only the 'ascetics' living in the bosom of their communities, that is to say, those who have already adopted a quite definite existential condition. But since this conjunction of the condition of ascetic with that of priest, even though internally meaningful, is *not absolutely necessary*, as a glance at the married clergy of the Eastern Church shows, then in considering the concrete example of the Western priest we must carefully distinguish what he is as *priest*, which derives from the dogmatically necessary essence of the priesthood, and what he is as 'ascetic'.

The concrete essence of the priesthood to be determined from dogma is – at least at first sight – something highly complex; indeed, it appears to be constituted of elements that in their inner nature do not belong to one another at all. The priest of today is equipped with *cultic* powers (as sacrificing priest and mediator of sacramental grace) and is at the same time an *emissary*: apostle, teacher, authorized leader of the community. At first sight these two powers do not seem to be necessarily connected with one another.

[241] Already in the Old Testament the offices of priest and prophet were in most cases exercised by different persons or groups of persons, in fact these offices often stood to one another in their historical representatives in a relationship of hostility. In the New Testament the original separation of the two powers is still to be seen in this, that on the one hand the descriptive titles of the priestly offices derive from a completely non-cultic linguistic source (ministers, chiefs, elders, overseers) and on the other hand cultic names are attributed only to Christ and to the faithful in general (in their universal priesthood), and in the cult itself only the community as a whole appears expressly as its subject. Consequently, it ought at least not to be over-hastily assumed that the priesthood as it exists is an intrinsically simple, 'elementary' object. Yet until the elements of the priesthood as actually given are grasped in all their inner relationships and necessary connections it is quite impossible to decide whether they are to be taken into account in establishing the foundation of priestly existence, and, if so, which of them and in what way.

Yet even a casual glance at the Catholic idea of the bishop teaches us that the idea of an authoritative mission cannot be eliminated *a priori* as being of no consequence for the question of the existence of the *priest*, perhaps because the concept of the priest connotes only cultic powers and even today priests without apostolic duties (without a '*missio canonica*') are possible, e.g. priests who are monks. For according to the Catholic conception from the beginning – we need think only of the theology of episcopacy in Ignatius of Antioch – the bishop unites in himself both powers to such an extent and is still today as 'successor of the apostles' and as 'high priest' so much the bearer of both powers in one, that an orientation of our question deriving exclusively from the cultic element (a temptation of Oriental Theology both in theory and in practice) would be in immediate danger of distorting completely the essence of the priesthood and therewith of priestly existence.

The same would of course be true of the opposite ('Protestant') method, in which the 'pastor' is conceived only as 'preacher' within the universal priesthood of the people. In this case the danger would still be present even if this proclamation of the word were understood as authorized by Scripture or by a merely juridically conceived apostolic succession and for this reason as authoritative and demanding obedience. Thus before the question about the existential meaning of the priesthood [242] can be asked, we must elaborate the question of the proper nature of the priesthood.

II. THE ESSENTIAL STRUCTURE OF THE PRIESTHOOD

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1. *The Concepts of Priest and Prophet in General*

From the standpoint of the philosophy of religion and, at least to a certain extent, from that of the history of religion, there are two concepts that must be kept carefully distinct: priest and prophet.

Priestly activity is – considering it first from the point of view of pre-Christian religious philosophy – the visible, cultic expression (in *sacrifice* and *prayer*) of the inner religious attitude of man; it is accordingly in itself the making visible of a relationship to God established by *man* (although of course depending upon the universal relationship of creature to Creator originated by God). From this it follows that the priesthood belongs to the normal, enduring institutions of human life, that sacrifice (that is, priestly activity) could originally be carried out by every accepted authority in human society (patriarch, head of a family, chief of a tribe or clan, prince) and the priesthood, being organized on a social and even caste basis, could be bequeathed in a fixed order and handed down without diminution.

The office of *prophet* is the (real or supposed) locus of a self-revelation made by God, that is to say of a new relationship between God and man, which is established by God himself. While the priest is the making visible of man's word to God, the prophet is the making visible of God's word to man. In accordance with the incalculability of the free revelation of God which appears in history like a point – precisely because it does not spring from a necessity inherent in the essence of the world and consequently is not co-extensive with it – the prophetic office is not capable of being organized, cannot, unless magical corruptions have degraded it to the level of the soothsayer, be bequeathed or tied to particular classes. In contrast to the priesthood, which in virtue of its essence follows natural institutions, a woman can also be bearer of the prophetic spirit. While the priesthood can be handed down without diminution of its essence, the 'son of the prophet' is in principle not a prophet, but at the most the guardian and exponent of the word which has already proceeded from God through the prophet.

[243] We are not concerned to deny that in the course of the history of religion much cross-fertilization between priest and prophet has taken place. The clearest case is naturally that where the sacrifice itself is established in its concrete form by a special act of God through divine revelation. Also where magical aberration has reduced the priest to a magician and the prophet to a soothsayer, their offices coincide for all practical purposes. But strictly from the point of view of the philosophy of religion the two concepts should be kept carefully distinct: priesthood is in itself an expression of the attitude, determinable from 'below', which man by his 'nature' has to adopt towards God; the prophetic office is, where it is in fact realized, an expression coming from 'above' of the revealing word of God 'above' nature, and even where it is only supposedly given it is still an expression of man's willingness to listen to any message which might possibly proceed from God to man at a particular point of his history.

2. *The Transformation of the Concepts Priest and Prophet in the Context of Christianity*

These two concepts, however, now undergo a fundamental change of character as soon as we inquire into the meaning they are given in Christian revealed religion. On the *one* hand it will be shown that each now intrinsically qualifies and entails the other. This will give rise to that inner complementary relationship of the elements in the Catholic concept of the priesthood which we were unable to discover at the beginning and which is presupposed in the answering of the question which constitutes our real theme. On the *other* hand, these concepts in fusing with one another in this way in the context of Christian revealed religion will suffer a certain loss of power which gives rise to the question of the relationship of the universal

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priesthood to the official priesthood. When this question too has been answered, we will be in a position directly to attack our main theme.

(a) *The mutual conditioning and essentially complementary relationship of* (*cultic*) *priesthood and prophetism in the Catholic priesthood*. Christianity is firstly and fundamentally Christ himself. It is therefore in the first place a *salvation-reality* which is given in the order of human history in the fact that the incarnate Son of the Father became, in virtue of his personal dignity and his membership of the race of Adam, the head and [244] representative of the whole of humanity, and as such performed the act of worship of God and offered the absolute and final sacrifice which fundamentally redeemed mankind. The presence of this *fact of salvation* (as a unique, free, historical act of God himself) in human history is the foundation of Christianity. But this reality, in which Christianity first exists for us, is:

(i) posited by God himself. The crucial reality through which we reach God is therefore not *our* prayer and the offering made by *us* in so far as it is our own accomplishment, but an act of God himself, by means of which alone man is capable of positing an act which pays homage to God and sanctifies himself.

(ii) It is 'sacramental'; and therefore:

(iii) the Word is an essential constitutive part of it.

These last two points we must here explain in greater detail in themselves and in their mutual connection.

Through the incarnation of the Logos the salvific will of God became a genuine reality in the order of human existence. That is why man does not find God in any process of rising beyond this world, whether this be conceived in an idealistic, Gnostic, mystic or any other fashion; he does not find him in an abandonment of the sphere of his 'natural' existence (i.e. of his existence as always given), but only in a turning to Jesus Christ, that is to a reality within the sphere of his own existence and history, to Jesus in whom God himself came to man.

This salvific presence of God in the flesh, i.e. *within* human history – the perennial stumbling-block of all philosophy and autonomous mysticism – is nevertheless of such a kind that it is *not* immediately accessible to the grasp of human experience in its own inner *self*. This is excluded by the strictly supernatural character of the reality of this presence. But if it is not only to exist 'in itself' but also to be given 'for us', to be 'present', (and this is the only way for it to become a reality of *salvation*), then – apart from the corresponding subjective *a priori* of which man has need in order to grasp it: the grace of faith, and so on – its proper, inner, total essence must contain an element which makes possible the presence of something transcending human experience without making it necessary for this reality to appear in its own proper self: the *sign* which makes present for us what exists in itself.[1]

But for us only the *word* can be considered as constituting such a sign. [245] For all non-human reality – considered in isolation and apart from this supervening word which forms and interprets it – is out of the question as a sign indicative of the presence of a strictly supernatural reality, because such a non-human reality could function as a sign of this kind only in its *positive* being. But this would mean, in effect, that the natural being of a thing could have a univocal reference to a supernatural reality, and this is excluded from the beginning by the very supernatural character of that which is to be shown. Such a reference can be effected therefore only by means of the word. For only in the word is there the possibility of *negation* pointing to another reality. Only the supervening of such a negation can transmute a positive mundane thing into the sign of a supernatural reality. We conclude,

[1] Cf. for what follows: K. Rahner, *Hörer des Wortes* (Munich 1941), pp. 189 *sqq*.

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therefore, that among the intrinsic constitutive elements of the presence of a fact of salvation within *human* history – here in the first place the saving reality of Christ himself – must be numbered the *word* as sign.

This means in the first place that the Christian salvation-reality is essentially sacramental. For we may justly call sacramental all divine, supernatural salvation-reality which takes place in history and is therefore present to us only in *sign*. And this leads secondly to the conclusion, that the word belongs to the fundamental constitutive elements of sacramental reality, and this in such a way that the 'sacramental' function is inherent in the word when it first makes its appearance in the essence of Christianity. For if Christianity in its foundation and origin is not primarily the communication of truths (as true *propositions*) but the reality of the incarnate, crucified and risen Son of God, and if *this* fundamental reality (as salvation-reality for us in the order of our existence) includes the *word* as an intrinsic element, then this can only mean that in its first *Christian* application the word is *sacramental*: a sign in which the saving will of God is made present for us in our history.

The Christian word – or to express it differently: the word, in so far as it is Christian – is not primarily a discussion about something already given in other ways, not a means for reaching understanding between two persons about an object which each of them can attain in his own way, but a making present of the salvation-reality itself. As applied to Christ, this means that his revelation is not originally an imparting of true propositions, which perhaps no one would have thought of otherwise, but the self-revelation of his own being, a self-revelation by means of which he first becomes the Christ for us. Christian preaching (i.e. [246] the Christian word where it is not '*forma sacramenti*' in the usual sense) is therefore nothing more than the further exposition of, or preparation for, the strictly sacramental word: it is always founded upon this, indeed it is in the wider sense itself 'sacramental': the sign of the hidden and yet present salvation-reality of Christ, a sign which – in the case of the strictly sacramental word – itself brings about this presence.

From what we have said there follows the strict inner *unity* of the Christian priesthood, in other words the inner, essential belonging together of the elements of the Catholic priesthood: the inner complementary relationship and mutual conditioning of the concepts of (cultic) priesthood and prophetism.

The priesthood of *Christ* himself (to direct our attention to that for the moment) comprises both these elements in an interior unity. It is more than prophecy, revelation of the word, a mission to preach, because Christ as God-man is himself *the* decisive *salvation-reality*: mediator and therefore priest and victim. But because this salvation-reality is sacramental, that is, given to us only under its sign, it must authenticate itself in the word, it must make itself present to us through the word; it cannot as it were passively await our active grasping of it, but on the contrary must itself seize hold of us; it will thus of itself bring about the inner condition of its own possibility: word, preaching, the demand for obedience, in a word the prophetic apostolate. Prophecy and Apostolate – as a laying-claim to the obedience of the hearer of the message of truth – are an essential part of the priesthood of Christ, because this priesthood is on the one hand not brought into being from below, from man, but is a creative act of God himself, and because it is on the other hand sacramental, that is in need of a presence in the word.

The same is now true of the *official priesthood* in the Church. It, too, as the fullness of power to make present the salvation-reality of Christ in the sacramental word, is by its nature prophetic and apostolic. But since this cultic and prophetic fullness of power of the official priesthood is merely *subservient* to the unique priesthood of Christ and consequently appears in a peculiar way as enfeebled, the inner unity of elements in the official priesthood of the Church can be rightly understood only in connection with this 'enfeeblement' of the cultic priesthood and prophetism in the official ministerial priesthood of the Church.

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(b) *The enfeeblement of* (*cultic*) *priesthood and prophetism in the official priesthood of the Church*. We must note, to begin with, the eschatological [247] uniqueness and finality of the priesthood of Christ. The sacramental salvation-reality of Christ – in the Incarnation and the sacrifice of the Cross – is the one and only truly valid and final saving act of God in the world and therefore the one and only final mediation between God and man. In so far as it is final, that is, in so far as it cannot now be surpassed by any event whether initiated by man or by God, the history of salvation is in principle concluded; the end of time is here, the salvation-reality of Christ is eschatological.

The same is then true of the sacramental word in which this salvation-reality manifests itself: it participates in its eschatological and definitive character. It is impossible for a new word of God to supervene in the present history of humanity so as to surpass the former and render it transitory. God has spoken his last saving word belonging to the confines of present human history, of this aeon, as an element forming part of it, at a particular, determined spatio-temporal point within this history: in Jesus, in him and him alone as absolutely final. If he speaks again, his word is the dissolution of this aeon, or more accurately the revelation of the fact that it is already past.

Before we can utilize this insight to throw light directly upon the nature of the official priesthood, we must consider another point: the relationship of Christ to the Church. Since Christ is the historically sacramental salvific will of God and member of our unique humanity and is both definitively, with him the 'Church' is necessarily already given in principle, because there is always now present an abiding grace (Spirit) and an abiding, visible (historical) medium of this Spirit in the sphere of human history. Every man lives necessarily in an order of existence which includes the reality of Christ.[2] The order of human history to which Christ belongs is already 'Church'; not yet indeed in the sense of a visible society which continues the making-visible in Christ of the salvific will of God and which was authoritatively organized as visible by Christ himself, the society of those who have existentially ('believing') submitted to the demands made by this reality; but certainly in the sense that the *historical* order of man's existential decision has become, before any visible organization of the Church, through the Incarnation and the [248] Cross, already quite different from one in which Christ did not exist; we must say, therefore, that the visible organization of the Church does not first create this order but is called into being by it and is no more than its necessary expression.

This 'ecclesial' order must not be confused with a 'metahistorical' salvific will of God falsely conceived as intrinsically necessary, 'universal' (therefore abstract) and ideal; for in the first place the true salvific will of God is itself already a free act of God and thus a fact of divine history, and in the second it is through Christ as a human historical reality also a fact of human history. It was nothing less than this that the Fathers had in mind, for example, when they spoke of a marriage between the Logos and humanity constituting the Church by means of the Incarnation; or modern theology when it still says that there can be the grace of *Christ* (and not merely of God) even outside the Church although there is no salvation outside the 'Church'.

If the 'Church' is then, before being the visible social organization – even though this is its necessary expression – the social accessibility of the historico-sacramental permanent presence of the salvation-reality of Christ, a society founded in its essential features immediately by the mere existence of Christ himself, it follows that those who hold offices

[2] Cf. for what follows: K. Rahner, 'Membership of the Church according to the teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical "Mystici Corporis Christi" ', *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 1-88. Here (particularly in the third part) is explained more precisely what we understand by Church in inverted commas.

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within that visible social organization of the Church do not first create the 'Church', that is the possibility of the universal historical mediation of salvation, but presuppose it. They are therefore *never* 'mediators' in the sense of being empowered to initiate action as a 'middle person' between God and man, as though previously there had been a chasm which they are now for the first time bridging; they are merely the more concrete visible aspects, analogous to sacramental signs, of a 'medium' ('Church') between God and man already established by Christ – and by him alone! They only approximate again to the original sense of the word 'mediator' in so far as a deliberate and voluntary rejection of this visible manifestation would be equivalent to a refusal of the salvation-reality of Christ. The more accurate determination of the relationship between Christ – 'Church' (faithful 'laypeople') on the one hand and holders of offices in the Church on the other will be most easily grasped if we turn to consider the individual functions of the hierarchic priesthood.

(i) *Cultic* priesthood. It is the power continually to *make* sacramentally *present* the historical salvation-reality of Christ in its twofold meaning of [249] propitiation of God (sacrifice) and grace given to man (sacrament). It is a question merely of a *making-present* of the salvation-reality of *Christ*, because it possesses eschatological exclusiveness and finality and so no sacrifice and no grace is possible outside of it. Thus the cultic priesthood of the Church is only a ministerial priesthood for and in the priesthood and victimhood of Christ; it does not institute of itself the sacrificial worship and the sacrificial propitiation of God and does not produce the salvific will of God towards man, but merely makes all this present for us as an ever-new sacramental reality of our own lives. What is brought about in the sacrifice of the official priest is not his own disposition, displayed in the form of liturgical action, of adoring and self-sacrificing surrender to God – something of itself implied in the concept of 'priest' – but the sacramental making-present of the eschatologically final sacrificial disposition and sacrificial act of Jesus himself.[3]

This, however, involves a further weakening of the priestly character in the official priesthood; in so far as Christ himself has from the first offered his sacrifice as head of the human race, the sacrificial act of Christ rendered sacramentally present in the cult of the official priest 'belongs' from the first to the Church as a whole; consequently the official priest makes it present from the first as the sacrifice of the *Church*, he 'dispenses' to men the grace which belongs from the first not to him but to them. In so far as Christ has offered the sacrifice of the Cross as a sacrifice of humanity as a whole and as a consequence it belongs to everyone who is a member of it and so of Him, the universal priesthood of all the faithful is *anterior* to the official priesthood and not merely its weak reflection. This does not alter the fact that the right and the power of making this sacrifice sacramentally present is exclusively proper to the official priesthood alone – and this by the immediate will of Christ himself. But the official priest makes it present as the sacrifice of the *Church*, and consequently as regards the possibility of an existential appropriation of this sacrifice by entering in faith into the sacrificial act of Christ himself who offered his sacrifice *immediately for all*, the official priesthood has no advantage over the universal priesthood. This conclusion may also be derived from the fact that this existential appropriation has no immediate and indispensable significance for producing the sacramental re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ.

Yet this exercise of official cultic power must be called priesthood, [250] firstly in so far as (and only in so far as) the concept of 'priesthood' denotes immediately only the power to posit the *external* cultic action and not the possibility of producing the corresponding inner disposition, so that the priest is really 'offering sacrifice',[4] although his sacrifice is meaningful only as the visible expression of the sacrifice of Christ; secondly, in so far as the

[3] Cf. K. Rahner, *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* (Freiburg 1951).
[4] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Die vielen Messen als die vielen Opfer Christi', *ZKT* LXXVII (1955) pp. 94-101.

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making sacramentally present of the salvation-mystery of Christ (in sacrifice and sacrament) is not merely the sensible representation of its being always present already in a purely 'spiritual' way, but a liturgico-sacramental action which really makes present the salvation-mystery for us, a 'visible' and 'external' manifestation, in which what is 'invisible', 'internal' in the working of God's grace is itself first brought about. The priesthood of the official priest is accordingly purely a ministerial one both in relation to the active existential priesthood of Christ, and to the passive existential priesthood of the faithful, in so far as it makes a permanent sacramental presence possible to both.

(ii) *Prophetism* in Christianity. In so far as Christ is the eschatologically final revelation of God to mankind, in Christendom there can no longer be prophecy in the public historical sphere. For there are no longer prophets who are the focal point of a fundamentally novel intervention of God in the external history of mankind,[5] an intervention which would invalidate or radically transform the free action of God in the past. Hence there can exist in Christianity, when the question of an activity related to that of the prophets is raised, only the continuing witness to the revelation of Jesus, which in its turn is no more than the self-manifestation of his own salvation-reality in word. On the other hand, in so far as the enduring message of Jesus is an intrinsic element of the *permanent presence* of the salvation-reality of Christ in the world, it cannot be reduced to the level of a merely historical human memory of something said long ago: precisely because the revelation of God through the mouth of Jesus possesses an eschatologically definitive character, not only is it impossible for it to give way to a new word of God, it cannot even disappear so as to leave, as it were, an empty space, which, because it would leave itself open to a new revelation of God, would likewise negate the eschatologically definitive character of the message of Jesus.

[251] Consequently the word of Jesus continues to sound as it was spoken, that is to say not as merely *human* discourse 'about' something, but as the self-attestation of the historico-sacramental salvific will of God in Christ; it continues to sound therefore as the mode in which this salvation-reality is to bring its redemptive influence to bear upon man, and that means as accompanied and carried by the working of the grace of this reality.

This word is therefore pneumatic; in the first place, corresponding to its purpose, at least in him who *hears* it; it is a word listened to with faith in the Spirit of God, a charismatic, 'sacramental' word. But in him who speaks it, too, it is an operation of spirit, charismatic, at least in so far as it is a word which is meant to produce grace in the hearer. (Whether and under what conditions the uttering of this word redounds and is meant to redound to the salvation of the utterer himself, whether in other words it proceeds from a charism which has an existential significance for the speaker himself, will be discussed below under III, pp. 253 *sqq*.)

Therefore in so far as the preacher is merely the bearer of the reverberations of the message of Christ exclusively, he is no more than a 'son of the prophet'; but because it is a real *continuing* of this message itself in its own proper character, he is not merely a rabbinic scholar, not merely a theological expert, but a genuine 'prophet', if we understand by this word – for want of another – a man whose word is not merely a talking about the word of God, but a man in whose word the saving word of God itself makes contact with mankind.

From another point of view yet does 'prophetism' in Christianity reveal itself as peculiarly weakened. Christian faith is not merely a knowledge of certain objects accepted on the authority of God, but a knowledge of that reality in which we ourselves are, in Christ; existentially involved. Even in the knowledge of faith we do not progress beyond the bounds of what is significant for our existence. For the absolute necessity of revelation derives from

[5] For a discussion of the question of what is still positively possible in this regard, cf. K. Rahner, *Visions and Prophecies* (London 1963), especially pp. 18-30.

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the existence of a supernatural *order of being*. The revealed word therefore does not extend our knowledge of any objects no matter how knowable and in some respects worth knowing, but aids us towards a kind of 'self-understanding', that is towards a knowledge concerning the depths of our actual existence created by grace. Because we *are* ontologically children of God through the Spirit with Christ, the uncreated Son of the Father, therefore we must know about this being of ours and consequently about the mystery of God's [252] Trinity and the mystery of God in Christ. But in these mysteries is included the whole of revelation.

Now this depth of man's being of which he becomes conscious in faith – still prescinding from the question as to whether he is *fulfilling* it or not – is established by Christ alone even before a single word of our preaching reaches man. Therefore the preaching of the word in point of fact reaches a man who by his ontological status – which is not to say necessarily 'by an effective existential *assuming* of it upon himself' – already inhabits that order of reality which is announced by the message.[6] Only because the means of grace ('Church') already belong to his existence is he a potential hearer of the Christian message of faith. This latter is accordingly really an awakening, even though an absolutely necessary one, of that Christian self-consciousness which has already been in principle established in us with the 'anointing' which is in us. And so preaching does not bring to man anything new or strange which hitherto lay outside the sphere of his human concepts and symbols.

We do not of course imply in any way at all by what we have said that man could have an express conceptual grasp, such as is absolutely required for an existential disposition of himself, of these supernatural depths of his being even without the humanly accessible word of revelation coming from without and claiming obedience, merely by a reflex 'interpretation' of his religious experience. The intrinsically supernatural existential sphere of man is not authenticated for man's objective reflection expressible in propositions out of its own resources in the experience of man – that would be the Modernistic error which in the last analysis under-values the supernatural depth of this sphere – but its presence is testified to expressibly and univocally only in the spoken word of Revelation.

And yet it remains true that the proclaimed word is the attestation of a reality which, even prior to this word, has always belonged to the total reality and total potentiality of the concrete man as found in the actually existing order, has always belonged to it because Christ and therefore 'Church' is a reality in the concrete existence of every man. And so the prophetic word of the messenger of faith is certainly creative, because it brings about a growth of supernatural reality; but it is not the first intervention of it in the human order, on the contrary it presupposes it, because [253] it is always speech to someone who 'has ears', and must have, for *this* particular speech.

Let us summarize what we have said up to this point: the official priesthood of the Church is cultic-prophetic with an inner unity and essential complementary character of these two elements, such that the prophetic grows out of the cultic and first brings it to full realization. Thereby it is from the cultic and prophetic point of view true priesthood, because in its cult it does not merely 'symbolize' an absent reality, but really makes present something already made real by Christ, and in its real mission it speaks the real prophetic word of God and does not just proclaim its own opinion about religious matters. And yet both elements have, both towards Christ and towards the Body of Christ, a subservient function which presupposes the reality of Christ and of the Church: the cultic action is subservient both to the priesthood of Christ – in so far as it is simply the sacramental presentation of his eschatologically complete and definitive sacrifice – and to the existential priesthood of the faithful – in so far as by means of this presentation it makes possible the existential co-offering and appropriating of the sacrifice of Christ by the universal priesthood. The prophetic activity is subservient to the

[6] Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore 1961), pp. 319-346.

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prophet Christ – in so far as it propagates only *his* message, even though charismatically transmitted – and to the faithful – in so far as the word of Christ can be proclaimed by his messengers only in a realm which has already been enlightened by the prior light of the Logos.

III. PRIESTLY EXISTENCE

We are now in a position directly to tackle the question whether and by what means the office of priest as we have determined it provides a foundation for existence, in other words, whether and how it affects the *total* existence of man as such in a way to lend it a specific character.

But before we do this, let us briefly reject as impossible one way of solving this question which might occur to someone. One might be tempted, that is, to answer the question we have posed on the basis of dogmatic teaching concerning the *character* of Orders. But *a priori* we cannot expect this way to lead to our goal. For either we understand by the permanent, ineradicable character conferred by the Sacrament of Orders the priestly life and priestly powers – leaving aside the moral supernatural power given in addition by the sacrament to exercise this [254] office rightly for the salvation of oneself and others – and then we are merely posing in different words the same question we are asking here, whether and how the *priesthood* (the 'character') is existentially significant; for we do not have any theological right to connect the character only with the *cultic* and *sacramental* fullness of power of the priest to the exclusion of the apostolic powers; and the reason for this is, as we have shown already, that with the cultic fullness of power there is given already in germ a mission to the word – there is in fact as much need for a '*missio canonica*' for the actual exercise of the cultic office as for preaching, and *both* are 'valid' even without it, provided that the spoken word in cult and preaching is 'true'. Or else the character is conceived in a narrower sense as an inner 'indestructible' spiritual mark, but then we are able to say so little about it with theological exactitude and its determinations necessarily remain so restricted to formal generalities, if they are not to fall back into statements about the priesthood, that it will yield nothing useful for the answering of our question.

In the examination of our question, then, we may in the first place indicate some theological reasons which permit us to affirm the *fact* of an existential significance, even before we have uncovered the *reason* why and how it is so. The most essential of these theological reasons is simply the fact that the rite of conferring the office of the priesthood is a *sacrament*. The conferring of the fullness of power of an office and an official authorization on the one hand, and a sacrament as a conferring of grace on the other, are two events which at first sight point in quite different directions. Official power and official authorization connote in their general, formal concept the possibility of a man as a public person exercising a specific activity directed to the community: grace, on the contrary, the disposition of a person in his innermost existential kernel towards God and his own salvation. Therefore the conferring of both these in an inseparable union in the actual sacrament of Orders is explicable only on the assumption that the determinate, concrete content of that official power which is precisely *here*, in question essentially affects the existential kernel of the person concerned, since if *any* kind of meaningfulness of a 'calling' were sufficient for existence, than every taking up of any kind of profession would have an equal 'right' to be a sacramental sign of grace.

Now, if it is the case that, on the one hand, there are 'Vocational Sacraments', 'sacraments of a state of life' (Orders and Matrimony) and that, on the other, not every (stable) profession is such a sacrament, and if [255] further these two facts cannot be ascribed to a mere arbitrary

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disposition of God, then we can render a satisfactory account of them only by saying that taking upon oneself a profession is a sign of sanctifying grace in *all* those cases, but *only* in those cases, where a profession determines the sphere of existential life of the Christian in a new and specifically proper way.[7] This is in fact the case with regard to the one 'vocation' – if we leave out of consideration for the moment the priesthood – to which what has been said is applicable, namely marriage. It does not apply, as we said before at the very beginning, to the other 'civic' vocations; they are – from the Christian existential stand-point – only inessential variations of the one Christian being and life which was taken up with Baptism and Confirmation as characterizing sacraments, and not therefore new sacraments. Or – to look at it the opposite way – the vocational sacrament of 'ordinary' Christian life is Baptism-Confirmation.

The only 'vocation' which one might be tempted to regard as being of fundamental existential significance although no special sacramental equipment is assigned to it, is the ascetical life, the monastic state. (In fact it may be observed how there was a tendency from ancient times right up to the Middle Ages to accord a sacramental significance to monastic initiation, or at least to exalt it in terms reminiscent of the theology of baptism.) But one will have to say that the ascetic is only living out on the social level, both ecclesiastic and civil, that 'vocation', that eschatological calling, which was taken up at *Baptism* and which is lived equally by other Christians, though in a manner remaining more in the background and sociologically not so much in evidence.[8] The monk does not receive [256] in addition to his baptismal vocation a new vocation which would cast his baptismal vocation in a new mould – something which would demand a new sacrament, but lives in a certain sense and to a certain degree the universal baptismal vocation of every Christian, the life of the 'future' aeon, already here and now in a more open way without its being veiled by the demands of the aeon which is now externally present. The fact that the peculiarities of monastic life (e.g. initiation, renunciation of property, monastic dress, etc.) were viewed as parallel to the corresponding elements in Baptism, can therefore equally well be explained in this way. Monastic life is only a development of the baptismal life and therefore in spite of its necessarily existential, but not necessarily *new* existential, significance *not* a new sacrament. Hence we can say that the official priesthood as a vocational sacrament must have a necessary, new existential significance, before we know why it should be so, indeed even if the following attempt to demonstrate this reason should prove unsuccessful.

The attempt to demonstrate the existential meaning of the office of the priesthood will have to be carried out by asking *which* of the elements of the priesthood makes demands upon a man in such a way, and such a new way, that his existential condition is stamped with a specifically new character. It is *a priori* possible that either or both of the elements which we distinguished above in the priesthood should perform this function. But it should be obvious in the light of what we said above that the essentially complementary character of the two elements of the concrete official priesthood which we there established cannot be forgotten

[7] In itself, the question as to why certain callings are sacraments and why most are not could be approached from the side of the Church. One could say: a state of life is a sacrament only where it has a specifically proper and special role within the public life of the Church. For in this case such a state of life is a particular actualization (a fundamental fulfilment) of the essence and life of the Church herself, which as the basic sacrament, the foundational sign of grace in the world, establishes such a fundamental actualization of her own being as a sacrament. Such considerations are not intended to render superfluous the positive bringing into being of the individual sacraments by a constitutive act of Christ. But the merest glance at the sacrament of matrimony, at the question of how it can be known (even by the Church herself) that matrimony is a sacrament, shows that such fundamental considerations may not be rejected as superfluous speculations in favour of a theological Positivism. However, considerations leading in the direction of the Church are in the context of our present discussion too much of a digression.

[8] Cf. what we have said above (pp. 47 *sqq*.) in 'Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation'.

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even though we should come to the conclusion that only one of the two elements is existentially fundamental. In so far as the two elements are intrinsically connected they naturally both share in the existential significance of the priesthood, if such there be at all. Only in so far as the two elements can be distinguished at all is the question possible, to which of them is this significance to be attributed. And only in this sense should the 'one-sidedness' of what follows be understood.

It appears to us, then, that the *cultic* power of the official priest is not immediately as such existentially basic. In the first place we notice how little the exercise of this power is capable of occupying, even purely as regards time, the whole life of a man. But more important and more decisive as a point of departure for proving our assertion is the simple fact that the efficaciousness of the cultic powers strictly as such is absolutely [257] independent of the human, existential contribution of the bearer of those powers. We are not thereby denying in any way that the cultic act, even though it is in any case performed 'validly' independently of the 'worthiness' of the priest, does demand a corresponding existential attitude on the part of the priest, and this because the cultic act as such is after all brought about only by a free act of the priest ('*intentio*') and therefore it would be a self-contradiction if the meaning of this action pointed in a direction which did not correspond to that of the existential attitude of him who performed this action. But if the priest enters into the meaning of his cultic activity, then he assumes in fact that existential attitude which is proper to the *universal* 'existential' priesthood of which we spoke above. In more concrete terms: because he is offering the sacrifice liturgically as an official priest by a freely posited act of his, he must also enter into his official action with his inner personal dispositions; he must offer the sacrifice also as his own offering and must personally appropriate to himself in faith and love the sacrifice of Christ made present therein. But when he does this, he is only positing precisely that act to which *every* Christian is called. Existentially he cannot appropriate to himself the sacrifice as his own any more than an 'ordinary' Christian, because the sacrifice of Christ is intended for the whole Body of Christ in a way objectively prior to the commission given to the priest to render it present by his official act.[9] Hence the cultic power of the priest as such is a *new* obligation to bring to development the *old* 'vocation' given by Baptism and Confirmation; not a new obligation to a *new* vocation of existential import not previously possessed.

The case is quite otherwise with the apostolic, '*prophetic*' element in the priesthood. This involves a calling which lays claim (1) to the *whole* existence of him who is called and (2) in quite a new way.

1. It lays claim to the *whole* existence of the person. The work of evangelization, the actively challenging claim upon the obedience of men faced with the salvation-reality and message of Christ is a work which itself imposes no limits in the demands it makes upon the time and life of the apostle, though such a limitation is externally imposed by the practical necessities of life. But what is more important: the preaching of the Gospel demands, on the evidence of the Gospel itself, not merely as a matter of fact, the personal commitment of the apostle (his time, his work, etc.) but assumes this into itself as its inmost element. For the [258] preaching of the Gospel of Christ is not only an exposition of 'objective truths evident in themselves', in which the person should as far as possible be left out of consideration and certainly is of no consequence for the claim of these truths to credence, but depends entirely by reason of its own particular nature on the personal existential commitment of the preacher.

Even leaving aside for the moment the general question whether it is not the case that every existentially significant truth – even where it is not a 'truth of revelation' – cannot be genuinely transmitted from one person to another unless it is possessed by the teacher not merely intellectually as a proposition but as something existentially realized by him, this is at

[9] Cf. K. Rahner, *Die vielen Messen and das eine Opfer* (Freiburg 1951), pp. 72 *sqq*.

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any rate valid for the truth of the Gospel. For being hidden in itself it has to be shown as true and as rightfully claiming assent by the proof of the Pneuma and God's power (1 Co 2:4).

We do not intend to set out here the Biblical theology of the *Kerygma*, i.e. the preaching on the part of the emissary from God which claims assent in faith. But it would doubtless lead us to conclude that the proclaiming of God's message is essentially a speaking in the Holy Spirit and in the power of God, and that all prophesying and teaching is a pneumatic charism; and this not only according to the modern understanding of the ecstatic-charismatic where it bears the character of the extraordinary, but in principle always wherever it serves the edification of the Body of Christ. It would certainly appear further that the customary division between *gratia gratum faciens* – grace for one's own sanctification – and *gratia gratis data* – grace for the sanctification of others – a division which presupposes that a power given by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ can be completely without significance for the personal holiness of the person concerned, is in our case oversimplified and does not correspond to the scriptural conception.

What is charismatic in the preacher of the Gospel is for St Paul more than merely external jurisdiction and a juridically valid mission, but also more (because less!) than a wonderful gift for influencing others: it is for example a spirit of action, of love and of discipline (2 Tm 2:6-7). But if the charism of the Holy Spirit which is necessary for the preaching of the Gospel, and in which the preaching proves itself to be true and justified in claiming obedience is a charism sanctifying the preacher himself and therefore determining his existence, then this means nothing else than that the proclamation of the Gospel is essentially dependent upon the [259] evident fact that the grace which is preached is a reality in the preacher himself.

It is certainly true that preaching does not become 'wrong' but remains 'right' even if it is not an existential reality in the preacher. But the words in some way no longer flow at the level to which they are essentially ordered, they become unreal in contradiction to the innermost demand of their being, they become – to express it in modern theological language – like profane speech about Fundamental Theology or about Christian Religious Knowledge instead of a call to faith; words which are fundamentally no longer distinguishable from those of profane science, because while they can appeal to the logical faculty of the hearer, they cannot compel a decision of faith.[10]

The truth and the rightness of a proposition are after all not the same. The true proposition has *as such* (and not merely as a condition for action) a reference to the existence of the man; in the ultimate analysis this is so because there are no 'propositions in themselves', but they are always in their concrete presence an act of man: one has only to reflect on the fact, for example, that faith as an *intellectual* virtue has value for salvation. There exists not only an analogy of being, but also an analogy of truth, i.e. right propositions have within the sphere of rightness (by analogy with real existents within the sphere of being) a varying concentration of truth. And just as and because the analogous entitative power of a being is measured by the degree of its inwardness, of being present to itself, therefore of its existentiality, in the same way and for the same reason the concentration of truth in a true proposition is measured by the degree in which it affects the existence of a being.

This being so, there must surely be an analogous gradation in the existential commitment involved in the knowing and proclaiming of such intrinsically variable truths. The higher the

[10] It must be noted that in the foregoing we have indicated merely the *most basic* relationship. In fact the situation is somewhat more complicated: the 'unholy' preacher can still proclaim a 'true' and not merely 'right' word in so far as even he is still speaking in the name and in the domain of the 'holy' Church. But it remains true that the message of the Church would continue to be only 'right' and no longer 'true' if the Church could cease to be 'holy'. And this is also of fundamental importance for the existence of the one who proclaims her truth. Cf. above the article on 'The Church of the Saints', pp. 91 *sqq*.

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object known, the higher is the knowledge, the truth of it, and therefore the more this truth affects and demands existence. Where it is a question of the truth [260] of God as disclosing himself, we reach the supreme degree of the existentiality of truth. Where this truth is not spoken with the corresponding existential commitment – and what alone corresponds to it is an existence which had first to be made 'congenial' in its being to this truth by the communication of the divine Pneuma, so that such a commitment is always action in the Holy Spirit – all that then remains is the dead, humanly conceived body of this truth and what it possesses is 'rightness' in its assertion, but not the truth itself, in the meaning which it itself intends. At the moment when the Church as a whole in all her preachers were to cease to be holy, at that self-same moment she would also cease to be the 'true' herald of the truth. The truth of Christianity would have ceased to be. Hence the proclamation of the revelation of God, by reason of the specific concentration of truth in its content, demands as an intrinsic element the existential commitment of the proclaimer.

Certainly this *alone* does *not* yet mean that this existential commitment (the biblical faith) which is demanded of the proclaimer is something which is not to be found in the ordinary Christian. At this point we are maintaining only that, just as the Christian message is *heard* genuinely – as truth – only if it be not merely, as it were, 'tolerated' as being intellectually 'right' but also *believed*, in the same way *speech* too, the proclamation as such, must also be *faith*. Hence we have shown up to now only the existential significance of the apostolic element, but not yet its new existential significance.

2. This preaching of the Gospel involves a claim upon the preacher in his existence in quite a *new* way. The official priestly herald of the message of Jesus utters his word as one who alone is authorized to make present cultically the salvation-reality of Christ. And because of this, as well as by the mission which lies upon him from Christ through the apostolic succession, he utters his word not as one addressed by the Word of God; he does not bear witness to his *own* Christian life as such – even though this is for him and his hearers a *conditio sine qua non* of a due proclamation – but he speaks the word of Christ itself as such.

It is true that every Christian by his Baptism and his Confirmation is endowed with both the right and duty of bearing witness to his faith, and it may well be that by doing this, as for example in the primitive Church, he is contributing more to the spread of the faith than the official preaching of the faith by the bishops and the priests; but he is bearing witness immediately to *his* faith (and *thereby* of course to Christ!), and [261] this both by defending it when his Christianity is attacked, and by actively bearing witness to the faith that is in him on such occasions – but only then! – whenever and in so far as his existence in the word through family, friendship, civic community life, and so on, render this necessary. For the lay Christian must naturally 'give' himself in such situations as he really is, and he is in fact Christian. Therefore the apostolate of the layman is based upon his *own* Christian life and is determined as it were 'from below', i.e. from his situation *in the world*. The layman participates mediately in the official priestly apostolate as such, only in so far as he supplies the material means of life to those who 'live from the altar' and preach the message of Christ from it.[11]

By contrast, the official priestly emissary does not bear witness to his own Christian life – even though essentially *by means* of it – but immediately to Christ, and this not merely on the occasions when his existence in the world of itself demands this or makes it possible, but always and everywhere; he therefore reveals himself an emissary – in contrast to Christ and (in another way) to the layman – precisely wherever he has 'no business', because he has been sent there 'from above', by Christ and not by his own situation in the world. He must, then, always put up with the fact that he will be mistaken for an unstable and impertinent

[11] Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 319-352.

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fanatic interfering in the 'private affairs' of others.

But if it is indeed the case that, on the one hand, such a mission engages the whole existence of a person and, on the other, this mission and this engagement is not already given with the general Christian or human situation of his life, then a wholly *new* existential significance must be assigned to such a mission. In so far as this *new* 'engagement' which was not there before but which comes from his mission and his apostolate is a new engagement of his *faith* – that is to say of something he already possesses as a Christian – it is clear that the Sacrament of Orders is essentially based upon Baptism as the Sacrament of Faith. For the sake of simplicity we leave aside the question whether the charism of preaching is not *something* still more than merely the power to keep the faith as a preacher in this wholly new situation. This need-to-enter-into-action of faith in the essentially new situation of the emissary is here quite sufficient to demonstrate at least an initial new existential significance of the apostolate.

[262] In so far as this significance ultimately originates in the cultic because of the connection between cult and word (even though it only becomes fully itself in the apostolate), and the cultic power is according to the will of Christ a permanent, imperishable gift, this commission of new, necessary existential significance is a permanent one, that is to say a vocation. According to what we said above a vocation of this kind is a sacrament. And the contrary too is the case: the sacrament and priestly existence, which really as such has its essential individuality, rests immediately upon the character of the priest as an emissary, though to be sure in such a way that this mission in its turn is a moment in the official cultic priesthood.

A *confirmation* of this manner of supporting the existential character of the priesthood may well be found in the fact that the New Testament always, when it mentions an 'ethics' of the apostle-priest at all, derives this not from the cultic but from the apostolic element in the narrower sense. (Cf. the missionary discourses of the Lord; also Ac 20:18-38; 1 Co 2:1 *sqq*.; 3:5-15; 4:1-21; 9:10-23; 2 Co 1-7; 10-12; Col 1:23-2:1; 1 Th 2:1-12; the Pastoral Epistles; Heb 13:7, 17; etc.)

All this has of course only laid the *foundations* for answering the question as to the nature of priestly existence, that is to say, the direction has been established in which the essential characteristics of the priestly mode of existence must be sought.

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[263]

18

THE CONSECRATION OF THE LAYMAN TO THE CARE OF SOULS

The word ‘consecration’ always includes in its meaning two aspects: the receiving of a power and the receiving of a commission; a faculty and a calling. And so, being consecrated to the care of souls means at once that one can and that one ought to care for souls. The souls with which the care of souls is concerned are those of others: the relationship of one’s fellow man to God, his salvation and eternal destiny.

A priori, the very concept of such a care of souls embracing these two aspects seems impossible. The analysis of this difficulty will offer us the occasion for making clearer what a consecration to pastoral care must effect in one who ventures to undertake the care of souls. At the same time, we will be able to establish where in fact such a consecration takes place.

I

Human existence, wherever we may meet it, is always found to be existence in the world, is always necessarily being with others, community. But each community will also be different according to the particular spheres into which human life unfolds. It may be an external joining of forces for the acquisition of an external necessity of life: a *community of work*. Here men are brought together by their common external activity, by a third thing which is as yet extrinsic to man. The community of effort may consist in sharing in the creation of spiritual works of universal validity: science, art, law. These objective spiritual products are indeed as such independent of the arbitrary whim of the individual, and yet they do have a closer relationship to a man’s being, in so far as they can come into real existence only as sustained by the spiritual experience of the individual man, they strive for realization only in him. And so from them, and from [264] the work which they demand, arises the *community of spirit*. These spiritual products are communicated by means of speech. It is speech which first makes it possible to co-operate in the same spiritual work. Moreover, it brings man the possibility not only of pointing out such objective spiritual realities, such truths existing in themselves, but also of opening himself and revealing himself of giving to the spiritual insight of others the possibility of penetrating with comprehension into one’s own secluded, intimate interior. After all, only in speech (which does not necessarily mean sound) can the personal, spiritual countenance of a spiritual being be grasped, for this is always co-determined by liberty and therefore cannot be deduced from any other source. And so community of spirit can be extended by speech also into the community of those who reveal themselves by speaking.

Since such an unveiling of the inner secluded being of each person in himself avoids profaning the sacred character of the personal mystery only if it be offered and accepted in a love which makes of the two so much one that it is not an indifferent stranger who is allowed to enter into the sanctuary of one’s being, the community of those who reveal themselves to one another by the spoken word refers us of itself to the community of love and must be conceived as its development. Thus we have the third kind of community we must distinguish, the *community of love*. It is founded upon a kind of mutual sharing of one’s personal being, which is carried by love over into the other and intermingles with his. Here the basis of community is no longer a third term in which men meet one another: in the love of person for person they meet one another in themselves.

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But does this mean that in this highest form of human community man can carry his own being over into the inner sanctuary of the other to such an extent that he is able to surround with loving care everything there? Or are there spheres in man which are beyond the reach even of such love? Or, to ask the question this time from the viewpoint of the 'beloved': are there in him spheres whose essential meaning is such as to withdraw them from immediate, intimate sharing by another? Yes: death – to begin with the clearest case – is a matter for each in himself alone with no reference to anything outside him. Everyone must die his own death for himself in supreme loneliness. But if it be true that all life points of itself constantly forward to death, that it is all the time a process of dying, then clearly death is merely a more obvious indication that there is present in the [265] existence of every man a deeper region in which everyone is left to himself, a line of being pointing to himself alone. In death it just becomes unavoidably evident in all its clearness that everyone has to make something of himself, to do and to suffer something by himself alone. What region of being is it, then, which reveals itself in death, which issues in it as its ultimate conclusion, which gives itself its final mark and seal in it?

It must be something in which man has to do simply with himself as such, something which is strictly his own task, which he alone can fulfil and in which no one else can substitute for him. But this is the case only where he himself is, in the strictest sense of the word, the task, where he is at once doer and deed, where doing and what is done are the same and both identical with himself. This is the case with man's liberty, where with the whole force of his nature he gives its ultimate meaning and character to his whole being, where he forms his own existence into what he wants to be. Here he is essentially alone. For the doing and what is done are inalienably his, they are as much his own as he is himself. For his action is the forming of his eternal physiognomy, it is himself in his eternal uniqueness. And hence only he himself can ever perform this act of eternal destiny. Everything that is done to a man, everything that happens to him, remains subject to the ultimate pronouncement of his liberty, in which he is still capable of understanding and accepting his lot (what is done to him, what is allotted to him); so everything that remains on this side of that ultimate personal verdict is not yet what finally counts in man. Only to a being that is not free is its 'lot' really its destiny; for the free being his destiny lies in himself. The choice which God has put into our hands we cannot confide to the care of any other.

But when man with his whole being is called to a free decision about himself, he finds himself without intermediary before his God. For He is the beginning and end of this being, the norm of every decision, and also its ideal and exemplar, even when it is a case of that supremely personal actualization of the individual's being which is outside the uniformly regular and therefore not to be brought within the compass of any humanly accessible rule. Consequently, in such a case God is still always there. He is not alongside one like a second being. He it is in whom we live and move and have our being. Indeed, in Him alone do we possess in the first place that milieu and atmosphere which first renders possible and supports our innermost and most personal decision. This it is which is deepest and ultimate in us, and yet He is deeper than we are at our [266] deepest level. He is beyond what is ultimate in us. And therefore He – and He alone – is not someone who has to wait in trembling expectation upon that word and decision of a man by which he strives to understand and form himself. He is before us, his willing and acting are therefore also before the inmost decision of man. He does not superimpose Himself on an already constituted man; He is already involved in his very constitution by his knowledge and action. He guides the hearts of kings (and in matters of the heart all are sovereigns); He has mercy on whom He wills in order that this person may have mercy on himself.

On examination, the realm of free decision reveals that the impossibility of a direct care of souls is so radical that the attempt does not merely fail in practice, but becomes evidently

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self-contradictory. If salvation is always the fruit of a personal decision and everything outside this is not yet salvation and destiny, but at the most a lot which one merely suffers, then the attempted obtaining of the salvation of another is necessarily the obtaining of something which is not his salvation at all.

The impossibility which appears here stems both from an absence of capacity and from an absence of calling. Every influence brought to bear upon a man from outside founders powerlessly before that ultimate sanctuary wherein that which is meant to be influenced takes place. Indeed, the stronger such influence is, the more is it in danger of negating itself. It intends to be an influence in favour of liberty. The stronger it becomes, the more does liberty disappear. Yet it becomes efficacious only if the other himself opens the door of his own responsibility, freely corresponds with the 'influence' and freely introduces it into himself. Therefore if the 'influence' really enters into the ultimate decision, then it is always something dependent upon the person 'influenced' himself, something already transformed by him, therefore *his* own. To exercise an influence of this kind is of course a duty, but this duty is surely ultimately nothing else than the care we take that we 'do *our* duty', that 'we do what we can'; as for the rest, we say, it is 'his' affair and is a matter of indifference to us. So this care is not precisely care for the soul of the other (the 'rest' which is a matter of indifference to us is precisely this soul), but care to fulfil our duty: care concerning ourselves, self-care, not care of souls.

We appear then not only to be incapable of care of souls, but also not to be called to it. For though there might be such a thing as a calling to 'failure', there can be no vocation to what is self-contradictory. Further, we do not appear to be called to the care of others' souls for the more [267] profound reason that no one knows the living God in the heart of the other; each one of us is called to manifest Him in an utterly unique way in his own being as fashioned by his own decisions, yet as the ideal for this purpose He is known only to each one for himself and then only at the moment of decision.[1] For a decision is always something more than a mere application of universal laws and rules, even though it must be made in accordance with them. This being so, how could one person be called to 'care for' the decision, therefore for the 'soul', of another?

Is there then no such thing as care of souls? Is the soul of the other completely beyond our anxious care? Do we escape all responsibility for it, because we are not capable of nor called to, the care of souls? Do the wonderful words about the care of souls fundamentally only mean that a man must have a care for his own duty, for a duty does not and cannot penetrate to what is inmost in the other?

Indeed, there is a genuine care of souls, an anxiety for the soul of the other which is not merely anxiety for oneself as in duty bound to influence the other. Examining our difficulty will permit us to understand how it is possible.

We have already said that this inner inaccessibility of a man as freely deciding his own fate does not of its nature exist for God. Consequently, if we are to exercise any care for a man, then the shortest way into his inmost sanctuary will be that which leads through the infinitely distant God; any shorter route would in fact not get us there at all. In addition to the fact already mentioned, that God is the basic ground of every human decision, two things are required to make this possible: the man charged with the care of another's soul must first find the way to God, and then the way from God to the other. This is realized in the love which is poured out in us by the Holy Spirit, whom the Father has given us through Jesus Christ. A look at the effect of such love will make it clear that it does in fact travel this double road and that in doing so it does really go 'behind' the decisions of the man cared for.

The love which proceeds from God makes it possible to comprehend the decisions of the

[1] Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 217-234.

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other, in fact it is itself such comprehension.

Love 'knows' more deeply than knowledge itself. Knowledge always strives to get behind the object known, to 'get to the bottom' of it, to resolve it into its causes, its 'principles' or into the evident inner necessity [268] of its being. Where there are no such 'hidden roots', knowledge comes to a stop faced by a stranger, by itself alone it is incapable of receiving the other completely into the being of the knower, to become one with him. And this strangeness, this absence of further roots, this bare, uncomprehended fact is essentially what is first and last. The last is always the God who has freely created me at a particular time, and has freely acted with regard to me in such or such a particular way, and who would therefore remain alien and incomprehensible to me were I to meet him face to face merely by way of knowledge. It is only in and through love that this 'strange' element becomes understandable, capable of being accepted into me in a way leading to ultimate peace. In love one can ask no further questions, because love has its own light. In love all questioning is silenced. Is love unjustified in imposing silence upon all questioning? How could it be? But if on the other hand genuine questioning can be brought to silence only by an answer, then love must carry the answer within itself it must have its own intuition. Love is directed to the beloved precisely in his irreducible uniqueness, it is a giving of itself with its whole being (which is an eternal question) into the beloved You. Its own absolute character overcomes the absolute relativity which makes the appearance of every You so frighteningly foreign. And just as a decision, in spite of its unique and irreducible character, is quite clear to the one making it without its being reduced to something necessary, so it will be clear also through and in love to him alone who loves the person making that decision, because his being and his questioning now repose in the beloved and have no need of asking questions; in the other everything is quite clear and comprehensible. And so love sees clearly why the beloved God has dealt in this or that way with a particular man, with the clearness of an intuition born of loving prayer, which can never be converted into any other form in intuition. And when God acts, in a way which is free and not subject to retrospective explanation and brings it about that a man should make his own decision, then this adoring love understands why the man decides this way; this is an understanding which would not be possible at all directly from man to man, because our being does not permit of being directly transported into that region in the other where decisions are made.

It is of course true that genuine direct love from man to man has also the intention of embracing the beloved in his whole being, with his incalculable individuality, with his decisions, to 'take him as he is'. There alone [269] does true love begin. Otherwise one is loving only one's own ideal, and the other person only as object of, or means to, its realization; ii_1 other words one is loving only oneself. To this extent love already 'understands' the beloved and his decision in an 'evidence of love'. It loves the fact that he 'is as he is', 'it would not have him otherwise'. In such love the torment of the question arising from bare, irreducible factuality is resolved. But in so far as this love is directed immediately to the other person, it is, if it is not to become sinful, idolatrous love, bound to an indispensable condition; it is, therefore, almost against its nature which does not want to be bound by any condition or reservation, made relative. Whenever mistaken or evil decision is possible (and that is possible in the case of every man on this earth), love cannot love the other quite for better or worse, cannot simply love that 'he is just like that', cannot simply accept the other 'as he is'. In the face of sin there is no evidence of love. The contingent fact of free will, the shaft fatal to mere knowledge, certainly goads love to its noblest deeds. But sin as a contingent fact would be its own death if it were to make the attempt at it. It is true that the intention of immediate love too tends to include in its embrace the 'other in his decision'. But because it can neither take away this decision from the beloved, nor in any proper sense 'take care of it', nor assent to it without reservation, it fails in this ultimate

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attempt to embrace the other's being in his decision, it sinks back powerless in its attempt to love to the last. And because it is never given us to know with ultimate certainty what is the *right* decision, whether in our regard or that of the other (no one knows whether he or the other is worthy before God of love or hate) this love which desires to penetrate directly into the inmost sanctuary of the other, in order to understand in its love, must necessarily and in every case fail.

It is obvious that we are only able to cast ourselves lovingly into God and to attune ourselves to the free movements of his actions towards us because he himself transports us into himself, because he himself has given us the power to love him in the ultimate secret of his reality. This we can really love immediately, presupposing the elevation of our love by God, not merely because he has given us the power to love him as the triune God, but – and this is in the present connection the decisive consideration – because his decision, his freedom is always good. And so in the case of our love for God there is not present that alien reservation which attaches of necessity to every direct love for man. Love for God, for him who acts [270] freely with man, can be unconditional. Thus there really shines in it and for it the light of its evidence. We 'comprehend' God and his action, and in his action in which he concurs with the action of man we comprehend also the action of man, and through it the man himself in his free and unique character.

Further, love can be a participation in God's care for the salvation of the other. It can be this, because it is a love of the other for God's sake.

In general, to love someone 'for the sake of someone else' is no love at all. Love after all strives to embrace the person itself of the beloved, wants to be transported into the beloved, in order that *he* may be enriched thereby. That it should be 'for the sake of someone else' appears to redirect the love away from the 'beloved', to reduce him to the function of a means or passageway for love in the proper sense towards a third person, to attribute to him a value only in relation to the third person, and therefore precisely not in his supreme uniqueness, as is the case with true love. This 'for the sake of' may mean 'as coming from' or 'as directed towards' a third person. It is clear right away that love 'directed towards' a third person does not sincerely love him whom it traverses on the way to the third person. For true love considers the beloved always as its 'end-goal', not as its means of access (though this does not mean that it ought not always to be subordinated to a higher and more determining love). Whoever loves someone only because this love makes possible his love for someone else (by increasing it, by attesting it, by spreading it, and so on), does not love the first person in the sense of a truly genuine, personal love.

If love for a man for the sake of someone else means to love him with a love coming from someone else, so that the first is the true end-goal of the love and the other only the region, as it were, or the standpoint from which the love proceeds, then it is impossible to understand how one man can be for another something like a 'region of love'. He, though being another, a stranger, would have to make it possible for the ultimate; uniqueness of the beloved to be presented to the love, this uniqueness would have to have in him its reason and ultimate norm, if it is to be in a position to be loved with a love proceeding from him. But this is essentially never the case. Therefore it is true to say that one does not genuinely love a man, if one loves him for the sake of another man.

All this is no longer true if the 'other' is God. Love for a man for the sake of God does not lead out of the beloved man but into him. God is not [271] another 'alongside' man. He is what is most intimate, the essential kernel of the beloved being, he is within even the inmost, the least relative, the ultimate enclosure of man in himself. He sustains it in his unfathomable love and almighty power, to which even the sovereignty of every individual is still subject. From him one can love man, whose inmost inaccessible centre can only be reached from God. Whoever loves such a God, whoever casts his whole being into God, in love and

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adoration and submission (for if all love is already a humble inclining of oneself, then when directed towards God it becomes adoration and self-abandonment), is by that very fact in the innermost kernel of the loved man. He has penetrated behind the ultimate mystery of that man, because he has reached where God is. He can now truly exercise the care of souls, in union with God who alone can care for souls, for he has become one spirit with him; he can now hold in the anxiously attentive hands of love the very salvation of his brother, and not merely carry out a duty which he owes to himself. For he is united with God, who has power over souls.

And because this pastoral care takes place in an act of love for God, it bears all the characteristic marks of that love. That love is adoration, surrender of one's own will to God, confidence. And so the loving will directed to the salvation of the neighbour is an adoring self-surrender, confidence, prayer. It is the care of a man who in an attitude of humility implores the salvation of his brother, but who also knows himself to be bound by love to him with whom everything is possible, a bond which permits a man to reach out into the most intimate secret of another. It is just because the care of souls is thus essentially prayer, that pastoral love, particularly when it softly enters into that abyss where a man is alone with the God of his heart, remains humble and pure and leaves the other alone with the living God in spite of the loving proximity with him thus discovered. – And so all apostolate is in its deepest essence prayer. Therefore even every form of contemplative life can be pastoral; and all pastoral activity whatever its shape and form remains prayer of love to the God of all hearts.

Now we can understand why only he who loves God can love his brother, can be a pastor: because a direct love for a man cannot penetrate efficaciously and creatively to that point where the man is in reality and properly 'himself'. All direct love does not reach as far as the real self, to the 'soul' in the sense of the capacity to make a personal choice for salvation. For that is the true biblical sense of the word 'soul', and not [272] something like an interior room where thinking and feeling take place as opposed to the external happenings in the world. Therefore a true care of 'souls' is possible only through God.

We are now in a position to say where the consecration to the care of souls is produced. Fundamentally it is Baptism which consecrates us to it. Baptism is the pouring out of love for God and therefore consecration, power, and commission to pastoral care. And every sacramental increase of grace in Penance and Eucharist is a renewed commission to go forth and search out the innermost being of our brothers and lead them to God. Everyone who is baptized is consecrated a pastor.

II

But it is not as though this pastoral love lived only in the hiddenness of an ardent supplication for the salvation of the other. Out of the inmost recesses of a soul into which only God can make his way, it gushes up again actively into those domains which are accessible to all. It also travels upon the ways where men normally encounter each other; it can carry along with it all earthly loves and all earthly communities which it meets back to where it came from and where it properly belongs; it can make of every action among men an act of apostolate.

In this way the first community which we considered at the beginning, the community of labour, can become a pastoral activity. This community arises from mutual help and service in the material concerns of life. The whole of everyday life, which consists to a large extent in working together for the necessities of this earth, can be lifted up and consecrated, and by pastoral love become an apostolate. All the cares of daily life, all 'welfare-work', ought to become 'salvation-work'; it may usefully be directed to making possible a personal saving

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decision for God. Since all everyday activity is capable at this deeper level of being related to salvation, the love which concerns itself with the corporeal and material welfare of the neighbour can be elevated, consecrated, and transformed by the love which is directed to the salvation of the other. It is for this reason that all activity which can in any sense be called a work of Christian mercy, of charity, is in the profoundest sense pastoral work, care of souls.

In so far as this love which turns into 'charity' all merely human assistance is love of Christ, it is a continuation, a making eternal of the pastoral care of Jesus. Jesus confirmed his care for souls by miracles. And his [273] miracles were not mere philanthropic acts of the Almighty, but 'signs', witnesses to the reality and the activity of God revealing himself, therefore witnesses to his activity which was ultimately aimed at the salvation of souls; witnesses to his all-forgiving love, therefore witnesses of his care for souls. A ministering charity continues these miracles of Jesus, these signs, until at the end of time his invisible creative love has no longer any need for such external confirmation and testimony. An isolated act of charity as such will perhaps not be recognizable as a miraculous act of the spirit of Christ. But that this spirit of the love of Christ has never disappeared in all the centuries of Christian history, in all the periodic changes which normally overtake everything, even a 'spirit', but has on the contrary continued to bring forth new acts of love, this is an eternal miracle, an eternal witness to the pastoral care of Jesus. And whoever performs an act of ministering charity in the spirit of Christ inserts himself into this miracle, he bears witness to the fact that in Christ alone can salvation, can the 'soul' be found. When a Sister of 'Charity' spends a night at a sick-bed, when a mother washes nappies because in this way she is serving her child, a child with an eternal destiny, then this is pastoral love and a testimony to the pastoral love of Christ, and therefore doubly a care of souls.

The second community which we spoke of at the beginning is 'community in spirit'. It consists in each introducing the other into the realm of what is eternally true and good, in helping to make objective spiritual forms achieve a reality in men which they can recognize and love. This help is given principally in discourse, in the word. This community attains its highest form when it becomes a community with the God who unveils his being in his revealing word, when he communicates to us his inaccessible mystery. From what we have said it is clear that such a community in its deepest sense is possible only in love, i.e. when God communicates his secret not to 'strangers', but to his 'child', to someone who has already by grace been essentially admitted into his mystery, so that the word in which he reveals himself once again remains modestly confined within him. If such a community of knowledge concerning the personal mystery of God is only possible as ordered to the community of love, then conversely it is also a 'realization', a development of the community of love with God. It is because He loves us, because we are already one with Him in love, that God tells us who He is. The revealing word is an act of love, it issues from love and is proffered in love, it is a realization of love.

[274] Since the secret of a personality can never be open of itself, can never of itself be accessible to everyone from every side, the possibility of its being revealed will always and inevitably depend upon the revealing word of that personality. The personality of God has been revealed to us in his Word, which is Christ, and which he himself has uttered. This Word must be transmitted to all peoples in all times. To this each one of us, including the layman, is consecrated by the Sacrament of Confirmation. Confirmation confers on us the capacity and the commission to render witness to Christ, and to the triune God who has revealed himself in him. Every Christian – the mother who takes the child on her knee and teaches him his first prayers, the teacher who gives 'Religious Instruction', whoever proclaims his faith by a Sign of the Cross – is the ambassador of God, the bearer of the delightful and awesome secret of him who dwells in inaccessible light, whom none has ever seen. In each case God transforms the discourse proceeding from the mouth of man into his

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own Word.

Baptism appeared to us as a consecration to the care of souls because as the basic act of God's love it communicates to man his love for God, and man first achieves in this love the possibility of pastorally reaching his fellow man in the deepest roots of his being, in that depth where his being and his freedom are committed into the hands of God. Whenever a man, armed with this power, takes upon himself the care of another, then his care is a sharing in the loving care which God bears for the salvation of that other. But because God, moved precisely by his loving will for man, unveils his own being in the testimony of revelation, the testimony which man renders to revelation is, in virtue of the Spirit of Confirmation, an expression and extension of his pastoral love for his brother, an act of that love he bears towards God and which is his consecration to the care of souls. Having entered into the love of God, man is drawn out of the eternal distance of the God he loves back towards man, following out the direction of the love of God itself; together with God he pronounces the word of love in which God wills to express his love for man as far as the region of knowledge. The enlightening Spirit of Confirmation, the Spirit of Truth, is at its deepest a Spirit of love. And so our witness of faith is an act of love, a care of souls which finds in Baptism its deepest root and which receives in Confirmation the power to transform the community of love in God into a community in the one knowledge of the personal mystery of the Eternal.

And further: every discovery of the truth, in fact every step forward [275] in the realm of the spirit, be it in the way of truth or goodness or beauty, is a step nearer to the living God who is Spirit. For each time there is a further degree of liberation from the earth, from everything that is merely material. It is true that this world of the spirit is, in relation to the God of revelation, still 'world'. But the experience of its light and shade is capable of directing the soul to him who is beyond every world, of disposing it not to miss hearing, amidst the words of the world (even that of the spirit) and its rumours, the Word which may proceed – as it did in fact proceed – from beyond every world. For only he who has in some way heard the last word that the world has to tell him – and that is the word which speaks of the distant God beyond every world – has the ears to hear the first word of God when he approaches, should this God deign to come. And so every preoccupation with the realm of the spirit, every opening of ways into it, means clearing away obstacles in the way of God when he comes in his revelation. For this reason it can be elevated and divinized by the Spirit of light and love of Confirmation. Every occasion when a truth is passed on, every act of teaching, of exhortation and education, every conversation about what is true and good and beautiful, can be pastoral, can be a part of that proclamation of the faith to which the confirmed Christian is committed. And so all community of spirit can be inserted into the most intimate community of pastoral love and receive thereby its greatest profundity and most sacred nobility.

The third community of which we spoke at the beginning is the community of love between human beings. Although this community can take on the most diverse forms, its clearest expression is certainly to be found in the community of marriage, which may therefore be representative here of every community of love: two people give themselves to each other and to their child for ever in the highest community of which the power of human loving is capable, love of the person himself. Yet we have already shown that to such love, which aims at the whole being of the other, the direct path from one into the ultimate depths of the other remains barred. Reduced to its own powers alone, the love which dares all must in this venture sink back in impotence before the 'soul' of the beloved.

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, however, this love becomes capable of the supreme act of love in the love of God. The conjugal will of love in which two baptized persons give themselves to each other in the sight of the Church is a sacramental sign productive of grace,

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it engenders sanctifying grace, divine love. But this means that whenever two people by the [276] joyful Yes of their wedding-day pour out their being into each other, at the same time their being is drawn into an ever-greater loving proximity to God. By the grace of God, the way which leads to the beloved becomes a way leading to God, closeness to a human being brings about a growing closeness to God. But the way leading directly to God – this was the ultimate meaning of the first part of our discussion – is in its turn the shortest way, indeed the only way, into the ultimate depths of the beloved person, to that profundity where he is responsible for his salvation, a point to which we must penetrate if we want in our love to co-operate in his supreme good. That marriage is a Sacrament does not therefore merely mean that conjugal love is directed to God; it means rather that only then does it acquire its ultimate human profundity, because it opens up possibilities of love which are essentially inaccessible to a merely human love. Thus the Sacrament of Matrimony constitutes a new consecration to the care of souls because it is an increase of supernatural love for God and for men. In fact there is included in this consecration a special mission of the spouses towards one another. According to the teaching of the Church the Sacrament of Marriage has also as its purpose that the two partners should help one another 'more and more to form and perfect the inner man' in the image of Christ; indeed, if we consider marriage as a perfect community of life, then 'constant striving to lead one another to perfection' constitutes its true meaning. Hence the spouses have a special mission towards one another. Sacramental marriage, as an increase of divine love and a claim upon the graces proper to that state, entails the duty and the power of grace to perform this pastoral mission which are never lost to the married faithful; thus it is a new consecration to a mutual loving care for the perfection of souls *in Christo Jesu*.

Every Christian is consecrated to the care of souls by the love which embraces both God and man. And this mission has a twofold capacity in its zeal for the salvation of men: the Christian thus consecrated penetrates by his loving care and the power with which he is endowed into the lonely depths where an eternal destiny is fashioned, because in his love he has penetrated the even greater depths of God; and he goes forth into the whole wide world of human life right to the outermost peripheral regions, and even there is still consecrated to care for souls and their eternal salvation.

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[277]

19

THE IGNATIAN MYSTICISM OF JOY IN THE WORLD[1]

What is mysticism, and what is joy in the world (*Weltfreudigkeit*), and how far do these two human attitudes have something in common in the case of Ignatius of Loyola, so that one can speak of an Ignatian mysticism of joy in the world? These are clearly the questions brought to mind by the title of these considerations, and it may almost seem that the question thus posed concerns something not merely obscure but also in itself contradictory.

For what have delight in the world and mysticism in common? Does mysticism not mean God, and does joy in the world not mean world? And what do God and world have to do with one another in Christian mysticism, since for the Christian the world is in a bad way and he has heard the divine voice of free, supernatural revelation calling man out of this world into the life of God beyond the world? Surely for Ignatius, as for every mystic, those words of the first Ignatius are valid: 'Of no use to me are the frontiers of the world or the kingdoms of this present time. It is better for me to die into Christ Jesus, than to reign unto the uttermost ends of the earth.' Is not every mysticism an abandonment of the house of this life and this world and a stepping out into the night of the senses and of the spirit, in order, as all things fall silent and every star in the world is extinguished, in the dissolution of everything created with Christ crucified and abandoned, precisely in that way to become aware of uncreated being? Once more, what have mysticism and joy in the world in common? This is asked not in the sense of a harmless rhetorical question, where the [278] question disappears as soon as it receives an answer and that answer is explained. We are concerned here much more with a question which will be fully answered only when in the answer the question itself is transformed and given its correct meaning. For the question we contemplated above seems to assume at first sight that we know what joy in the world is. In truth, however, only the answer to the question can really tell us what we meant when we asked about the joy in the world in Ignatian mysticism. Certainly, this title will evoke this or that concept in our mind, perhaps something great and important. But how do we know that what we are understanding by it is that joy in the world which is that of the mystic? It is surely evident from the start that not every thinkable form of orientation to the world, acceptance of the world, delight in the world, or whatever one may call an attitude of readiness to enter into the world, into its beauty and its mission, in a loving and effective way – that not every thinkable form of such an approving reference to the world can be that of the mystic. What then is the joy in the world of the mystic, in particular of Ignatius? This much can surely be taken as evident through this simple consideration: our question can not be tackled by presupposing some particular conception of joy in the world which *we* import into it, and then seeing whether we can discover this joy in the world which is ours also in Ignatius. But whether we will by this means find the inner law of that life and the original spirit of his doctrine seems to be more than questionable. I fear that in the end we would merely have discovered our own spirit and its doubtfulness. This, then, is the only way which is open to us: to investigate the mysticism of Ignatius and to advance from it to an understanding of what at all can be meant by Ignatian and therefore Jesuit joy in the world.

[1] The formulation of this theme was determined by a request for a paper on the subject under this heading. It did not seem necessary to make artificial alterations afterwards in order to conceal this. The thoughts developed in this paper are closely akin to the theses discussed above in 'Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation' and 'The Passion and Asceticism'. This too could not be altered subsequently.

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I. THE MYSTICISM OF IGNATIUS

There are some words in which the knowledge, the hope and the love, the ideals of whole generations and centuries are gathered, words which attempt to say at once all that moves mankind, and which, because they attempt to say everything, are in constant danger of signifying everything and therefore nothing. Such words were, for example, in the history of Western man: Logos, Illumination, Spirit, Nation (*Volk*), and others. And among them also belongs the word 'mysticism'. This too is one of those words in which man seeks to comprise everything that he believes [279] and wants to be. It has a meaning for the composer of the Upanishads and for Lao-Tse, for Plotinus and the devout adherent of the Sufis, for a Gregory of Nyssa, a Paracelsus and a Goethe. But what meaning remains to this word, if it has something to say to all of these?

We are not going to attempt here to enunciate exactly what Christian mysticism is. This would involve expounding too many things which could neither be made comprehensible in a short treatment nor factually demonstrated. One would have to speak of the right method to adopt in one's approach, if one really wanted to discover what Christian mysticism is. One would have to ask whether there is a 'natural' mysticism and how (and even if) it is distinct from Christian mysticism (apart from the fact that those mystical acts whose specific essence is natural would be elevated by grace like other personal acts). One would have to ask whether supernatural mysticism may be found outside Christianity (and in what its supernatural character consists, a question which amounts to the same as the previous one). One would have to discuss the central phenomenon of Christian mysticism, which is today generally taken to be infused contemplation (and is probably distinguished a little too sharply from the other phenomena of ecstasies, visions and so on). One would have to ask whether the experimental contact with grace in infused contemplation (which one likes to regard as the essence of mysticism) is compatible with the theological data concerning the nature of grace, whether, in other words, a true experiencing of grace, in the strict sense of a grasping of the experienced reality in its proper intelligibility and its own being, is reconcilable with the fact that grace is necessarily and invariably also uncreated grace (where it is really entitatively supernatural) and whether such an experience would not be conceptually identical with the Beatific Vision. Theologically, therefore, the question would have to be posed, whether and how there can be any middle term between faith and immediate vision of God, and if not, how then mystical experience should be conceived so that it remains really genuine and yet falls unmistakably into the sphere of faith. It will be understood that we cannot enter here upon these and many other similar questions. Moreover, it is not here really necessary. We do after all possess a vague empirical concept of Christian mysticism: the religious experiences of the Saints, all that they experienced of closeness to God, of higher impulses, of visions, inspirations, of the consciousness of being under the special and personal guidance of the Holy Spirit, of ecstasies, etc., all this is comprised in our [280] understanding of the word mysticism, without our having to stop here to ask what exactly it is that is of ultimate importance in all this, and in what more precisely this proper element consists. In this sense we may now state that Ignatius was really a mystic.

There can be no doubt about that. With this bare statement we must here be satisfied. Not as though we had no historical information about his mysticism: we cannot of course use as a term of comparison our knowledge of the interior life of the great Spanish mystics Theresa and John of the Cross, nevertheless we are very well informed about the mystical grace-life of St Ignatius as well. A careful analysis of his Book of Exercises, of his autobiographical notes, of the fragments of his diary, of the information given by his trusted companions – by a Laynez, Nadal and Polanco – give us indeed a quite clear picture of his mysticism. But we

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do not want to tell here the story of his *pati divina*, as he himself called it. Neither its characteristics: his mysticism of Jesus and the Cross, his priestly liturgical mysticism, his mysticism of the Trinity; nor the history of his mystical progress: from the first visionary experiences in Manresa, his primitive Church, as he called this period, through the time in upper Italy whose climax was the vision of La Storta, to the Roman period, the time of his mystical completion, where he lives always in the presence of his God in a manner beyond the visionary, so that Laynez, the great theologian and trusted friend, can say of him: '*visiones omnes tum reatles . . . tum per species et repraesentationes iam transgressus versatur nunc in pure intellectualibus, in unitate Dei*'. Whoever knows but a little of the theory of Catholic mysticism will be able to gauge at least from a distance what these simple words of Laynez permit us to surmise of the long ascent of this mystic, until he entered into the simple, illuminated darkness of God: *in unitatem Dei*.

But we are not concerned to speak of these things here. For we have to treat of his mysticism here only in so far as it renders comprehensible the fact and the nature of that which we commonly call Ignatian joy in the world. When we seek to comprehend his mysticism under this aspect, then it is obviously no longer of importance to isolate that characteristic of mystic piety by which it is distinguished from a 'normal' piety and way of prayer, one which does not possess the characteristic of immediate contact with God in the same way and to the same degree as is met with in the experience of the mystic. Therefore as long as we keep in mind that the characteristic piety of a mystic is given a special depth and power by [281] the specifically mystic element of his piety, we may simply proceed to discuss the character of Ignatian *piety*, from which the fact and the meaning of its acceptance of the world will become understandable.

When we try to explain Ignatian piety under this aspect, then – so it appears to us – we have to lay down two propositions about it:

1.Ignatian piety is a piety of the Cross, and therein is revealed its inner continuity with the universal stream of Christian piety before it and so its Christian character.

2. Ignatian piety, because it is Christian, is directed to the God *beyond* the whole world, and it is precisely in the emphasis of this attitude that its peculiar character is to be found, as well as the foundation for the fact and the meaning of its joy in the world. We shall proceed in what follows to discuss these two propositions.

1. Ignatian piety is a piety of the Cross, like all Christian mystic piety before it. One would lay oneself open to the danger of completely misconstruing Ignatian piety, were one to overlook this first fundamental characteristic. We must take note of the fact that Ignatian piety is and intends to be primarily 'monastic' piety; 'monastic' not in a juridical sense, nor monastic in the external arrangement of the community life of his disciples, but 'monastic' in the theologico-metaphysical sense which constitutes the first and last meaning of this word. What we mean to say by that is that Ignatius in his life, in his piety, and in the spirit which he impresses upon his foundation is consciously and clearly taking over and continuing that ultimate direction of life by which the life of the Catholic Orders, the '*monazein*', was created and kept alive. Proof of this is the simple fact that he and his disciples take the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. And with them they necessarily take over the attitude of the *monachos*, of one alone in God far from the world. Ignatius stands in the line of those men who existentially flee into the desert in a violent *fuga saeculi*, even though it may be the God-forsaken stony desert of a city, in order to seek God far from the world. It is nothing but superficiality if one allows the difference in external mode of life between Jesuit and monk to mask the deep and ultimate common character which dominates the ideal of every Catholic Order.

What, however, is the monk? He is the man who has put on the pattern of Christ; the man in whose ascesis – poverty and virginity are the paradigms of this renunciation – the attempt

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is made, and should be constantly made anew, to allow that dying with Christ, which was in essence and in [282] principle brought about in Baptism, to become a reality throughout a whole life and in its complete significance. For the primitive Church, Christian perfection and martyrdom were practically identical terms, so that the martyr represents the first class of Saints, holy men are officially called even today 'confessors', and the only other official ecclesiastical category for Saints besides these is the 'virgin' – virgin because her being is in fact nothing else than the martyrdom of the invisible silent struggle and dying in herself. It is this spirit of the primitive Church which the monk seeks to carry further, and here the discussion about the empirical Connection between persecution and monasticism can be left aside as irrelevant. Thus the monk is the man who dies into Christ. He takes upon himself the Lord's renunciation, he is clothed in his garment, a fool for Christ's sake, the man for whom the enjoyment of the world has been submerged by poverty, earthly love by virginity, the secret blessedness of self-assertion by the denial of his will in the will of another; the man who still prays in the words of the primitive Christian prayer: ε0λθε/τω ξα&ριφ και∴ παρελθε/τω ο(κο&σμοφ ου[τοφ, 'may grace come and may this world pass away'.[2] The monk flees out of the light of this world into the night of the senses and the spirit, if we may apply these mystical words in this way, in order that grace and the mercy of the eternal God should come to him.

Did Ignatius perhaps intend and choose another life? He wants to follow the poor Jesus, the despised and ridiculed, the crucified. The height to which he wants to lead in the *Exercises* is the foolishness of the Cross.

> Lovingly let us direct our minds to this fact – for it is this which has great, even decisive weight before our Creator and our Lord – how much does all growth in the spiritual life depend upon our rejecting utterly and not merely half-heartedly all that is an object of the world's love and longing, and upon our accepting, nay, demanding, with the whole power of our soul that which Christ our Lord loved and took upon himself . . . Those, namely, who walk thus in the spirit and the true imitation of Christ have only one love and only one burning desire: to wear the robe and the sign of Christ out of love and reverence for him. If it were possible without offending the divine majesty and without sin on the part of another, they would wish of themselves to bear the suffering of insult and calumny and injustice, the treatment and the consideration which is shown towards fools. All this because they have only one desire: following and being conformed to Jesus [283] Christ, their Creator and Lord, wearing his robe and his mark, which he wore as an example to us for the sake of our salvation, in order that we might imitate and follow him in everything that our strength in his grace allows, him who is the true way leading man to life.[3]

Is such a spirit joy in the world, acceptance of the world? Howsoever this question may be answered ultimately, this much is in any case clear: Ignatius does not admit for himself or his disciples any joy in the world in which the world and God, time and eternity, are from the beginning reconciled in amicable harmony. In the case of Ignatius, then, there can be no question of an acceptance of the world by which man is in the first place and as a matter of course in the world, that is by which he takes his first stand in the world, in its goodness and its tasks, strives for the fulfilment of humanity within this world and then finally – and as late as possible after this – also awaits happiness with God, to guarantee which, over and above his obvious task in the world and a moral life, he has to fulfil a few other conditions of a rather juridical and ceremonial kind.

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[2] *Didache* 10.

[3] *Constitutiones*, Examen generale 4, 44.

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By saying that, have we not come to the opposite of the position we wanted to reach, to the *fuga saeculi* instead of joy in the world? And more important: what is the ultimate meaning, the metaphysical basis of such a flight from the world?

The answering of this question will be at the same time the way leading us to the fact and meaning of Ignatian joy in the world. The basis of flight from the world constitutes the intrinsic possibility of Ignatian acceptance of the world. And both are based on what we called the second fundamental assertion about Ignatian piety:

2. Ignatian piety is piety towards the God who is beyond the whole world and who freely reveals himself. In this – to repeat once more – is to be found at once the reason for flight from the world and the possibility of an acceptance of the world.

In order to achieve an insight into this characteristic of Ignatian piety, let us begin by grasping it from that angle from which our considerations up to this point have proceeded. And so we ask: what is the ultimate reason for Christian flight from the world, which has achieved expression in monasticism and also in Ignatian piety as a piety of the Cross?

The living personal God has spoken to man in Christianity, that is in Jesus Christ.[4] With that a frightening reality has entered into the life of [284] man, which renders impossible any attempt on the part of a human existence attuned to a world closed in upon itself to enter into God. Certainly it is possible to come to a knowledge of God from his creation, from the world. But this knowledge has a peculiarly double character. On the one hand, we acknowledge God as the ground of the world, as the guarantor of its being, as the ultimate background of everything we meet as man and world in its own reality. Thus we have knowledge of God in so far as he is able to appear to us in the mirror of the world, so that it almost seems as though the world were the *raison d'être* of God, at least of the God who shows himself and in so far as he can show himself in the world, of the God, that is to say, whom alone we meet as philosophers. On the other hand, in our seeking for God in metaphysics, at the same time as the fact that he appears to us as the ground of the world and the world as the meaning of God, we come to know him as the free, personal, in himself eternal being and thereby as the God beyond the whole world and all finitude, so that the world does not properly express what he is and may be as the personal and free and eternal being. The world does not reveal to us the *raison d'être* of God. But with that the human metaphysical question of God has already terminated in an essential failure: it is faced with a free Person closed in himself, the God who covers himself in silence, the θεο_φ σιγω~ν, as Origen once called him. And what this infinite God is in himself, and how this free personal God wants perhaps, as is possible, to deal with us, this question which for all its obscurity is yet decisive for our existence cannot be illuminated by the natural light of reason. Whether he wants to meet us immediately and personally, whether he wants to remain silent, what he will say to us if he does want to speak – all this is an essential mystery for all metaphysics, for every impetus of man's passionate desire to know which originates in the world. So in itself all metaphysics would have to conclude in an eternally watchful readiness of man to keep his ear cocked in case this distant, silent He should will to speak, in a readiness for the perhaps possible possibility of a revelation. But will man be able to endure this ecstasy of his being, this remaining on the look-out, to see whether perhaps God will come? Will he not rather succumb to the ever-present temptation of making the world the finally valid revelation of God, of so making God the *raison d'être* of the world that the world becomes the *raison d'être* of God? Was [285] there ever a philosophy in all history outside Christianity which did not yield to that temptation, beginning with the Greeks right up to Hegel? For all of this philosophy was God not always ultimately the *anima mundi*, the God who can live only in

[4] Cf. for what follows: K. Rahner, *Hörer des Wortes* (Munich 5942), and the articles above: 'Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation' and 'The Passion and Asceticism', pp. 47-85.

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the world itself as its inner radiance, as its secret lustre of absoluteness? And is not this original sin in the history of philosophy in the field of knowledge only an expression of that which happens constantly over and over again existentially in the life of man unredeemed: to allow God to be only what the world is, to make God in the image of man, to conceive piety as consideration for the world? All idolatry is nothing else than the concrete expression of that existential stand-point of man based on the belief that God is nothing other than the primeval unity of those powers which hold sway throughout this world and govern its fate. And even the most spiritual of philosophies in a Hegel still worships – so it would seem – an idol: absolute Spirit, finding itself in man and in the development of his being. The God according to our desires, according to our image and likeness, would be a God who had nothing else to do but let men increase and multiply, to bless them when they make the earth subject to them, who would be nothing but what we could know of him by natural means, who would therefore be nothing but the horizon remaining always in the distance, in which is unfolded the finite infinitude of man in accordance with his own proper law; he would be nothing but the divinity of the world. And it is then a matter of no consequence whether this God in our image bears the features of Apollo or of Dionysos.

But God is more than that. And as this more-than-the-world he has broken in upon man's existence and has shattered the world, that which theology calls 'nature'. He has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. This revelation has taken place in the dual unity of a communication of supernatural being and of the word. And the ultimate meaning of this revelation is a calling of man out of this world into the life of God, who leads his personal life as the Being exalted above the whole world, as the tri-personal God, in inaccessible light. God is thereby bringing himself immediately face to face with man with a demand and a call which flings man out of the course pre-established by nature, which he would have followed within the horizons of the world. This gives rise to a transcendence of man's mission and destination, which must necessarily be felt as somehow constantly standing in opposition to nature and the world in which the temptation to round themselves off in themselves is essentially inherent, [286] the temptation to seek completion, before God, it is true, as the ultimate ground and background, but yet essentially in themselves. 'Nature', that is everything finite which does not anise from, and in, immediate encounter with God as free and revealing himself in word, has ever as something rounded and completed in itself in a true sense the tendency to rest in itself, to defend and perfect the closed harmony of its immanent system. If God as revealing himself comes face to face with such a nature, then there arises the most immediate possibility that he might issue commands to mankind which are not at the same time the voice of nature, are not *lex naturae*. And if God calls man in this command of his revealing word to a supernatural, supramundane life, as has in fact happened in the revelation of Christ, then this command must always necessarily be a breaking-up of the roundedness in which the world seeks to rest in itself, and so it becomes a degradation, by which the world – even the good world, the world in so far as it is the will and law of God – is condemned to a provisional status, a thing of second rank, subject to a criterion which is no longer intrinsic or proper to it.

In this way, however, a sacrifice of the world, a renunciation, a flight from the world, an abandonment of its goods and values becomes possible, which goes essentially further than one that would be thinkable in any meaningful way if these goods and values in a merely natural order constituted the highest fulfilment of the existential task demanded of man. Indeed, such flight from the world is in this case not only meaningful, but also, at least to a certain degree, necessary. The obscurity of Christian faith is the essential and decisive beginning of it. A flight from the world of this kind becomes necessary because the need to take into account the possibility of a free act of revelation on the part of the personal God, which is a fundamental constitutive character of a finite spirit in any hypothesis, is transformed by the actual fact of such a revelation into the duty of living existentially the

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need of obedience *vis-à-vis* the God of revelation. But if we leave aside the acceptance without contradiction of the communication of supernatural life which takes place in revelation, the only thinkable response of man coming as it were from below to the God of revelation calling from far beyond the world is a sacrifice of the world to a degree which goes beyond any which is meaningful in an intramundane even though theonomous ethic. For man can only confess existentially that God has moved the centre of his human existence out of the world, if he negates his intramundane existence in its immanent [287] signification by a *fuga saeculi*. Thus all Christian mortification has from the beginning progressed beyond the struggling self-mastery of pure ethics – of course not by excluding it – it is already, as the primitive Christian *Didache* prays, *allowing the world to pass by* in order that grace may enter. Christianity is consequently in essence *fuga saeculi*, because it is the commitment to the personal God who freely reveals himself in Christ, the God of grace which is not the fulfilment of the immanent craving of the world for its completion, even though it brings this completion of the world about eschatologically in a supereminent way. All adherence to the Cross, which is proper to both monastic and Ignatian piety, is only a realistic putting into practice of such an essentially Christian flight from the world.

In these considerations we may appear to have digressed considerably from our topic. But it is not so. For we have already prepared ourselves, in this theological metaphysics which explains the first fundamental characteristic of Ignatian piety, the commitment to the Cross, for an appreciation of the significance of its second fundamental characteristic.

The God of Ignatian piety is the God of supramundane grace who deals with man freely and personally, and 'historically'.

There can be no doubting the proposition itself. For Ignatian piety God is the *Divina Maiestas*, the Lord on whose sovereign will everything depends, in face of whom it is not man and his longings and desires that come into consideration, but only what may please His Divine Majesty. Because he is the free being above the whole world, for Ignatius everything depends on how he has dealt with man historically, for only his free action in history can reveal to us what he is in himself and how he wills to be related to men. The meditation on the fall of the angels, on original sin and on the life of Jesus in the *Exercises* is ultimately based on such a picture of God. If the *Exercises* are one great inquiry after the most holy will of His Divine Majesty, then this will is not intended inasmuch as it manifests itself in the desires and the longing of one's heart, but it is that free will of God which is sought, by means of which alone God still disposes freely of man's judgement, man's will and man's heart. All the discernment of spirits – that most important part of the *Exercises* – is ultimately based upon it: in the last analysis it is not a discernment of the impulses of one's own heart on the basis of general moral criteria, but a listening to the word of command from God, the seeking and finding of the free decree of the will of the personal God for man in his concrete [288] situation.[5] And because Ignatius encounters this God in Jesus Christ, he commits himself to the Cross and to the foolishness of Christ. For all this foolishness of the Cross is for him only an expression and putting into practice of the readiness to follow that free God even when he calls us out of the world, out of its inner meaning and its light into his own light, in which it seems to us as though we were entering into the night.

However, it is precisely from this attitude, from such a picture of God and such a response of readiness for the Cross, that there springs that which is in reality Ignatian affirmation of the world and joy in it. And now we are in a position to grasp the fact and essence of it, now that we have brought to mind, at least in its most general outlines, the basic characteristics of Ignatian piety and mysticism.

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[5] Cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics', *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 2 17-234.

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II. THE JOY IN THE WORLD OF IGNATIUS

In order to penetrate the meaning of this joy in the world, let us begin once more with what we have said about the theological signification of Christian flight from the world in general. The *fuga saeculi* which belongs essentially to Christian existence appeared to us as the commitment to God, in so far as he is, as the being beyond the world, the inner centre and goal of our Christian existence; as the existential re-accomplishment of the shifting of the centre of our being into the triune God, a shifting already accomplished by the God of grace revealing himself. But this existential commitment can only be itself if it really acknowledges the God of *free* grace. And this means that it must, at the same time as it asserts the centre of our lives to be beyond the world, also acknowledge that this new centre of our existence is bestowed upon us exclusively by the free grace of God, and therefore not by the sacrificing flight from the world itself.

In this way, however, it becomes evident that Christian flight from the world is to be distinguished not merely from an ethic which is immanent to the world, even though guaranteed by its theonomy, and its demands for renunciation, in so far as it is a flight from the world in opposition to a mere domination of the world and of oneself, the Christian *fuga saeculi* is distinct also from every extra-Christian denial of the world which may perhaps be found in Orphic, Neo-Platonist, or Buddhist asceticism and mysticism. For all these forms of flight from the world do ultimately [289] regard the renunciation and annihilation which is begun by man, as it were from below, as being *the* means which of itself and with nothing further compels the awareness of the Absolute. All such annihilation is consequently only a way fundamentally parallel to, though leading in the opposite direction from, the way to an immanent divinization of the world. Renunciation, flight from the world, is for such non-Christian mysticism of annihilation in itself already the conquest of God. But Christianity acknowledges the free grace of God, that is a divine life in man which is first and last dependent upon the free, personal decision of God's love. Accordingly, Christianity is aware of the fact that not simply dying, renunciation, flight from the world of themselves can achieve possession of the Absolute, knows that asceticism of this kind is not the way in which admittance could be *forced* by *man* into the inner life of God. The Christian knows that his flight from the world is only an answering gesture, though a necessary one, when faced with the God who freely reveals and opens himself, who gives himself to us out of a voluntary love.

Since, however, the grace of God is in this sense free, the Christian knows, even in loving the foolishness of the Cross above everything, that the free God can bless and allow to become a step forward into his presence even those actions of men which do not of themselves already bear such a significance, as does the dying flight from the world, which is meaningful only where it is a dying into the new life of God. Provided that man has once submitted himself in faith to the claim of God revealing himself, God can accept in grace also his service of the world, which is, after all his creation, as a way to himself who is beyond the world, so that man encounters the absolute God not only in a radical opposition to the world, but also *in* the world. Once a man has placed himself under the Cross and has died with Christ, once he has entered into the obscurity of faith and the ecstasy of love for the distant God, then, to express it in the technical language of theology, every act which is good in itself, therefore also one which is already meaningful within the world, can be supernaturally elevated by grace in such a way that its aim and its meaning extend beyond the significance it has within the world, beyond the *ordo legis naturae* and into the life of God itself. This fact removes from Christian flight from the world that *hybris* which would otherwise be inherent

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in it as the exclusive way to God: in his flight from the world the Christian must acknowledge that one can also reach through the world this same God who is beyond it, to find whom the Christian abandoned the world to go [290] its own way. Whoever remains a virgin for God's sake must recognize that marriage is a Sacrament; whoever lives the *vita contemplativa* of flight from the world will only do this in a Christian way if he is vitally aware that God has also blessed the *vita activa* of work within the world and has raised it to the level of divine life.

It is only upon these deep foundations that there is built the Ignatian affirmation of the world.

That there is such a thing which can be designated by this title has always been seen, even though it has seldom been grasped in its true essence. Adaptation, the acceptance of the demand upon time, the fostering of culture, love for the sciences, acceptance of the humanism and individualism of the Renaissance, the cheerful brightness of Baroque, the avoidance of the external forms of monasticism, all this and much besides has been regarded – and rightly – as a sign of Jesuit affirmation of the world. But one has really grasped this phenomenon only when one is able to explain it as arising from *one* spirit: how this one spirit inspired those possessed of it in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries both to build Baroque churches with their joyous exuberance of a shining transfiguration of the world *and* at the same time to offer themselves for the distant missions in order to die agonizingly for Christ in the boiling fountains of Japan or the bamboo cages of Tonkin.

Ignatius approaches the world from God. Not the other way about. Because he has delivered himself in the lowliness of an adoring self-surrender to the God beyond the whole world and to his will, for this reason and for this reason alone he is prepared to obey his word even when, out of the silent desert of his daring flight into God, he is, as it were, sent back into the world, which he had found the courage to abandon in the foolishness of the Cross.

From this results the double characteristic which is proper to Ignatian joy in the world: the maxims of '*indiferença*' and of 'finding God in all things'. The first is the presupposition of the second.

Indiferença: the calm readiness for every command of God, the equanimity which, out of the realization that God is always greater than anything we can experience of him or wherein we can find him, continually detaches itself from every determinate thing which man is tempted to regard as *the* point in which alone God meets him. Hence the characteristic of Ignatian piety is not so much situated in a material element, in the promotion of a particular thought or a particular practice, is not one of [291] the special ways to God, but it is something formal, an ultimate attitude towards all thoughts, practices, and ways: an ultimate reserve and coolness towards all particular ways, because all possession of God must leave God as greater beyond all possession of him. Out of such an attitude of *indiferença* there springs of itself the perpetual readiness to hear a new call from God to tasks other than those previously engaged in, continually to decamp from those fields where one wanted to find God and to serve him; there springs the will to be at hand like a servant always ready for new assignments; the courage to accept the duty of changing oneself and of having nowhere a permanent resting-place as in a restless wandering towards the restful God; the courage to regard no way to him as being *the* way, but rather to seek him on all ways. Moved by such a spirit, even the passionate love of the Cross and of sharing in the ignominy of the death of Christ is still ruled by *indiferença*: the Cross, yes, *if* it should please his divine Majesty to call to such a death in life. *Indiferença* is possible only where the will to a *fuga saeculi* is alive, and yet this *indiferença* in its turn disguises that love for the foolishness of the Cross into the daily *moderation* of a *normal style of life* marked by *good sense*. Filled with such *indiferença*, Ignatius can even forgo manifestations of mystical graces – after all God is beyond even the world of experience of the mystic – he can forgo the mystical gift of tears

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because the physician wanted it – Saint Francis had angrily rejected precisely the same remonstrances of the physician.

In brief: such *indiferença* becomes a seeking of God in *all* things. Because God is greater than everything, he can be found if one flees away from the world, but he can come to meet one on the streets in the midst of the world. For this reason Ignatius acknowledges only one law in his restless search for God: to seek him in all things; and this means: to seek him in that spot where at any particular time he wants to be found, and it means, too, to seek him in the world if he wants to show himself in it. In. this seeking-God-in-all-things we have the Ignatian formula for a higher synthesis of that division of piety into a mystical one of light from the world and a prophetic one of divinely commissioned work in the world, which is customary in the history of religion. In that formula these contradictions are in the Hegelian sense 'resolved' ('*aufgehohen*'). Ignatius is concerned only with the God above the whole world, but he knows that this God, precisely because he is really above the whole world and not merely the dialectical antithesis to the whole world, is also to be found [292] *in the world*, when his sovereign will bids us enter upon the way of the world.

If we leave aside the somewhat excessively Greek colouring of the concepts, we can find the problem of the dialectic between flight from the world and acceptance of the world repeated in the dialectic between the two medieval Christian concepts of *contemplatio* and *actio*, of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*. *Contemplatio* is adherence to the God who is the goal of Christian existence, therefore to the God of a supramundane life. *Actio* is the fulfilment of one's duty within the world, including that of natural morality. This indication of the designation of these concepts allows us to understand the formula of Ignatian acceptance of the world which originated in the first circle of his followers: '*in actione contemplativus*'.[6] Ignatius seeks only the God of Jesus Christ, the free, personal Absolute: *contemplativus*. He knows that he can seek and find him also in the world, if this should please him: *in actione*. And so he is prepared in *indiferença* to seek him and him alone, always him alone but also him everywhere, also in the world: *in actione contemplativus*.

Here we must break *off*. We were unable even to touch on many questions which would have to be inserted in any closer investigation into what has been said, or which could follow as new questions as a consequence of what we have said. Thus we have not touched, for example, upon the question of the specific formation which the Ignatian basic attitude receives by its dedication to the apostolate in the service of the Church and her mission. We were likewise unable to discuss how this Ignatian outlook, which is after all primarily that of the monk, of the member of a religious Order, would present itself if it were transferred to the level of a properly lay piety.

In the midst of bloody persecutions and banished from the place of his labours, Clement of Alexandria wrote at the beginning of the third century his '*Stromata*'. And in such a situation of failure he gives expression in the Seventh Book to the wonderful thought that the perfect Christian must be κο&σμιοφ και∴ υ(περκο&σμιοφ: worldly and superworldly and both at the same time.[7] This phrase may act as an exhortation for our own attitude in these times: we are Christians, that is, we live out of the God beyond the [293] world and we live into him. In him is the centre of our Christian existence. Therefore that existence cannot be shaken, even if it appears as though the sun were indeed to set in the Occident. The Cross of Christ belongs to our Christian existence, and when we actually meet it in our personal life, in the fate of our people, when the hour of darkness appears to have descended, then this is not for us Christians a failure of our true life, but the distress which is necessarily felt by him who does

[6] Cf. E. Coreth, 'In actione contemplativus', *ZKT* LXXVI (1954) pp. 55-82.

[7] Cf. K. Rahner, 'De termino aliquo in theologia Clementis Alexandrini', *Greg*. XVIII (1937), pp. 426-431.

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not have and does not want to have a permanent abode here, because he is on the way to the God beyond all the fulfilment of this world, because he is a υ(περκο&σμιοφ. And yet according to Clement we should be κο&σμιοι: enter into the world and its work with the strength born of our superiority to the world, sent by him with whom we are united in the one mystical life. Κο&σμιοφ και∴ υ(περκο&σμιοφ.

To such an attitude Ignatian piety and mysticism can lead us. Ignatian affirmation of the world is not a naive optimism, not an installing ourselves in the world as though we had in it the centre of our lives. Ignatian joy in the world springs from the mysticism of conformity with him whom we have joined in the flight from the world contained in the foolishness of the Cross. But once we have found the God of the life beyond, then such an attitude will break out of deep seclusion in God into the world, and work as long as day lasts, immerse itself in the work of the time in the world and yet await with deep longing the Coming of the Lord.

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[294]

20

PRIEST AND POET[1]

The highest possibilities are as yet but promises. Otherwise that fulfilment for which we long in faith and hope would already be here. But because the end of all things is, according to the words of Scripture, already come upon us, our highest possibilities are not merely empty postulates and abstract ideals. They have already begun to exist. At least they are as it were making shy and not yet fully successful attempts to introduce themselves. But in the *fact* that this imperfect *exists* is contained the sure promise of a proximate fulfilment.

One of these highest possibilities is that one and the same person should be both priest and poet. Can these two vocations become one and the same? In this life of mere beginnings and vain efforts we scarcely dare to hope that the union of priest and poet should perfectly succeed. Certainly someone may be a priest and *in addition* also be a poet. But this is very far from saying that he is the one in the other and that both are in him the same. However, the fulfilment of the future towards which our pilgrims' way is leading assures us in advance that the perfect priest and the perfect poet are one and the same. Is there any better way of paying tribute to the verses which a priest has written on the priesthood, than by attempting to explain this?

I

To the poet is entrusted the word. Alas, that there should still be no theology of the Word! Why has no one yet set about gathering together, [295] like Ezekiel, the scattered members on the fields of philosophy and theology and spoken over them the word of the Spirit, so that they rise up a living body!

Even in philosophy there should be a discussion of the word. Our word is more than a thought: it is thought become incarnate. If it is true that body and soul exist in a substantial unity, as Scholasticism teaches, then the word is more than a mere externalization in sound, a signalling of a thought which could equally well exist without the accompaniment of this animal noise. As if the thought were a mere conventional signal in the brute spiritlessness of the animal and material world which we – spirits – are constrained to frequent! No, the word is rather the corporeal state in which what we now experience and think first begins to exist by fashioning itself into this its word-body. To be more precise: the word is the embodied thought, not the embodiment of the thought. It is more than the thought and more original than the thought, just as the entire man is more than, and more original than, his body and his soul considered separately. For this reason no language can substitute for another. In the same way one cannot give another body to a spiritual soul; not only would it express itself differently, but it would itself become other or else transform the body into which it was forced into *its* body. Men speaking different languages can understand one another and one language can be translated into another, just as the most diverse men can live together and even be born from one another. But this does not make languages into a row of external

[1] The following pages were first written as Foreword to the poems on the priesthood which Jorge Blajot, S.J., was to publish under the title *La hora sin tiempo*. This occasional origin of the article, here reproduced in its original form, may perhaps excuse the fact that the author makes a direct quotation from another essay of his own which is also reprinted below (pp. 321 *sqq*.) and that he has left this quotation unaltered here.

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façades, behind all of which dwells simply one and the same thought. The *noche* of a John of the Cross and the *Nacht* of a Novalis or a Nietzsche are not the same; the *agape* of the hymn in the thirteenth chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians and the 'love' of European peoples differ not merely in their 'application' . . .

There are words which divide and words which unite: words which can be artificially manufactured and arbitrarily determined and words which have always existed or are newly born as by a miracle; words which unravel the whole in order to explain the part, and words which by a kind of enchantment produce in the person who listens to them what they are expressing; words which illuminate something small, picking out with their light only a part of reality, and words which make us wise by allowing the manifold to harmonize in unity. There are words which delimit and isolate, but there are also words which render a single thing translucent to the infinity of all reality. They are like sea-shells, in which can [296] be heard the sound of the ocean of infinity, no matter how small they are in themselves. They bring light to *us*, not we to them. They have power over us, because they are gifts of God, not creations of men, even though perhaps they came to us through men. Some words are clear because they are shallow and without mystery; they suffice for the mind; by means of them one acquires mastery over things. Other words are perhaps obscure because they evoke the blinding mystery of things. They pour out of the heart and sound forth in hymns. They open the doors to great works and they decide over eternities. Such words, which spring up out of the heart, which hold us in their power, which enchant us, the glorifying, heaven-sent words, I should like to call primordial words (*Urworte*). The remainder could be named fabricated, technical, utility words.

It is true of course that we cannot divide words once and for all into these two categories. This division refers much more to the destiny of words, which elevates them and dashes them to the ground, which ennobles them and degrades them, which blesses them and damns them – just as in the case of man. We are not speaking here of worn-out words which are preserved, impaled like dead butterflies, in the showcases of dictionaries. We mean living words in their living being and movement, just as we utter them in propositions, speeches and songs. Words have their history too. And as in the case of the history of man himself, there is only one true Master of this history: God. In fact, he himself became the subject of this history when he spoke such words in the flesh of this earth and when he had them written as his own words.

Innumerable words, according to the use man makes of them, are raised up to the ranks of the one type, the primordial words, or – which is unfortunately mostly the case – slide down to the level of the other types, the utility words. When the poet or the poor man of Assisi exclaims 'water', what is meant is greater, wider and deeper than when the chemist, debasing the word, says 'water' for his H_2O. According to Goethe, water is like the soul of man . . . you cannot substitute H_2O for that. The water which is seen by *man*, which is praised by the poet, and which is used by the Christian in baptism – this water is not a poetic glorification of the chemist's water, as if he were the true realist. On the contrary, the 'water' of the chemist is much rather a narrowed down, technified derivation of a secondary kind from the water of man. In the word as used by the chemist, a primordial word has been fated to sink down to the level of a technical word of utility, and in its fall it has forfeited more than half its [297] being. In its fate is reflected the lot of humanity through thousands of years.

Let no one think with foolish superficiality that it does not matter whether a word has more or less content; that as long as one clearly knows *what* content a word and the concept it expresses have, everything is in order and one word is as good as another.

No, the primordial words are precisely the words which cannot be defined. They can only be taken apart by being killed. Or does someone think that everything can be defined? It cannot. All definitions have constant recourse to new words, and this process must come to a

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stop with the ultimate words, whether these are absolutely the last possible words or merely those which constitute in fact the final point of man's reflexive self-interpretation. And yet these ultimate words possess only that 'simplicity' which conceals within itself all mysteries. These are the primordial words which form the basis of man's spiritual existence! They are given him. He does not arbitrarily construct them, nor can he cut them up into convenient pieces, which is what is meant by 'defining'.

This is all very obscure, someone will say. Granted, thinking which divides and recomposes the pieces like a mosaic is clearer and more easily grasped. But is it more true, more faithful to reality? Is 'being' clear? But of course, says the shallow mind, that is being which is not nothing. But what is 'is' and what is 'nothing'? Whole books have been written, and from this ocean of words there has been obtained only a little jug of stagnant water.

The primordial words always remain like the brightly lit house which one must leave behind, 'even when it is night'. They are always as though filled with the soft music of infinity. No matter what it is they speak of, they always whisper something about everything. If one tries to pace out their boundary, one always becomes lost in the infinite. They are the children of God, who possess something of the luminous darkness of their Father.

There is a knowledge which stands before the mystery of unity in multiplicity, of essence in appearance, of the whole in the part and the part in the whole. This knowledge makes use of primordial words, which evoke the mystery. It is always indistinct and obscure, like the reality itself which by means of such words of knowledge obtains possession of us and draws us into its unsounded depths. In the primordial words spirit and flesh, the signified and its symbol, concept and word, things and [298] image, are still freshly and originally one – which does not mean, simply the same. '*O Stern und Blume, Geist und Kleid, Lieb', Leid und Zeit und Ewigkeit!*' ('O star and flower, spirit and garment, love, sorrow and time and eternity!') exclaims Brentano, the Catholic poet. What does this mean? Can one say what it means? Or is it not precisely an uttering of primordial words, which one must understand without having to explain them by means of 'clearer' and cheaper words? And even if one had explained them with the most scholarly profundity, would one not have to return to these words of the poet, to these primordial words, in order to understand, in order intimately and truly to grasp, what it was that the long commentary 'really' wanted to say? Blossom, night, star and day, root and source, wind and laughter, rose, blood and earth, boy, smoke, word, kiss, lightning, breath, stillness: these and thousands of other words of genuine thinkers and poets are primordial words. They are deeper and truer than the worn-down verbal coins of daily intellectual intercourse, which one often likes to call 'clear ideas' because habit dispenses one from thinking anything at all in their use.

In every primordial word there is signified a piece of reality in which a door is mysteriously opened for us into the unfathomable depths of true reality in general. The transition from the individual to the infinite in infinite movement, which is called by thinkers the transcendence of the spirit, itself belongs to the content of the primordial word. That is why it is more than a mere word: it is the soft music of the infinite movement of the spirit and of love for God, which begins with some small thing of this earth, which is seemingly the only thing meant by this word. Primordial words (as one might explain it to the theologian) have always a literal meaning and an intellectual-spiritual meaning, and without the latter the verbal sense itself is no longer what is really meant. They are words of an endless crossing of borders, therefore words on which in some way our very salvation depends.

> *. . . Sind wir vielleicht* hier, *urn zu sagen*: *Haus*,
> *Brücke, Brunnen, Tor, Krug, Obstbaum, Fenster,*
> *Höchstens*: *Säule, Turm . . . aber zu* sagen, *versteh's*
> *o zu sagen so, wie selber die Dinge niemals*

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innig meinten zu sein . . .

(. . . Are we perhaps *here*, in order to say, house,
Bridge, fountain, gate, urn, fruit tree, window, [299]
At the most: pillar, tower. . . but to *say*, please understand,
Oh to say, what the things themselves never
Intimately thought to be. . .)

(Rilke, *Ninth Elegy*)

Only someone who understands these lines of the poet has grasped what we mean by primordial words and why they have every right to be, indeed must be, obscure. This does not of course mean that one may drape one's own confused superficiality with primordial words of this kind to pass them off as profound, or that one should speak in an obscure way where one could speak clearly. It means only that the primordial words reflect man in his indissoluble unity of spirit and flesh, transcendence and perception, metaphysics and history. It means that there are primordial words, because all things are interwoven with all reality and therefore every genuine and living word has roots which penetrate endlessly into the depths.

There is one aspect of these primordial words which we must consider more explicitly than we have done so far: the primordial word is in the proper sense the presentation of the thing itself. It is not merely the sign of something whose relationship to the hearer is in no way altered by it; it does not speak merely 'about' a relationship of the object in question to the hearer: it brings the reality it signifies to us, makes it 'present', realizes it and places it before us. Naturally the manner of this presentation will be of the most diverse kinds, depending upon the kind of reality evoked and the power of the evoking word. But whenever a primordial word of this kind is pronounced, something happens: the advent of the thing itself to the listener.

Something happens not merely for the reason that man, as a spiritual person, obtains possession of reality only by knowing it. It is not only the knower who obtains possession of the reality known by means of the word. The reality known itself takes possession of the knower – and lover – through the word. Through the word the object known is transferred into man's sphere of existence, and its entry is a fulfilment of the reality of the object known itself.

Many a person will be tempted to think that being known is for the object a matter of indifference, which is attributed to it only externally. He will take this opinion to be a corollary of his unequivocal objectivism. To be sure he will grant that the world is real *because* it is known by *God* [300] and his love: in this one case reality is constituted by the very fact of standing within the sphere of God's light. Leaving aside the fact that even this truth can be considered too superficially, our 'objectivist' will deny that the case of the knowledge of reality by *other* knowers is in any way similar. It is of course true that the realities of this earth do not cease to exist, if no one apart from God knows them and recognizes them in his knowledge. And yet they are more fully themselves and arrive at the complete fulfilment of their being only when they are known and spoken by men. They themselves acquire, to use the expression of Rilke, an intimacy of being when they are known. Why?

Let us reflect upon this: does not everything have its being in the whole? Does not even Sirius in the gloom of the subspiritual already faintly tremble whenever a child throws its doll out of the cradle? Is not *each* person completely himself, entirely brought to that fulfilment which he should have and which God has eternally planned for him, only when *all* persons are made perfect in the Kingdom of God? Must not all individuals wait for their ultimate

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fulfilment upon the complete fulfilment of all things? Now, in the realm of the spirit is not the completion of the individual precisely the completion of his knowledge and his love? Therefore it is through them that the other is completed. The fact that I am known, recognized and loved, that is *my* completion. And this completion in knowledge and in love, in being known and being loved, is not merely a completion on the 'plane' of the 'intentional' but a fulfilment of the reality, of the being itself. For reality itself is, in the measure of its being, knowing and being known in unity. All realities sigh for their own unveiling. They want themselves to enter, if not as knowers at least as objects of knowledge, into the light of knowledge and of love. They all have a dynamic drive to fulfil themselves by being known. They, too, want to 'put in their word'. The word is their own fulfilment, in which they arrive at the point where all reality, because it draws its origin from eternal spirit, finds its ultimate home: in light. If these realities are persons, then this fulfilment will be realized in the exchange of the word of love which is mutually bestowed. If they are subspiritual realities, then they attain their salvation in the fact that they are lovingly spoken by all beings who are capable of knowing and loving – not by God alone.

Everything is redeemed by the word. It is the perfection of things. The word is their spiritual body in which they themselves first reach their own fulfilment. Hungering for knowledge and love, things pluck in their [301] spiritual word-body at the hearts of those who can know and love them. Invariably the word is the sacrament by means of which realities communicate themselves to man, in order to achieve their own destiny.

What we have said about the redeeming mission of the word is true in some way of every word. But it is especially true of the primordial words. We do not mean by this, of course, only single words, but all that is said by a man to bring things in a powerful and compact way out of that darkness where they cannot remain, into the light of man.

It is to the poet (*Dichter*) that the word has been entrusted. He is a man capable of speaking the primordial words in powerful concentration (*verdichtet*). Everyone pronounces primordial words, as long as he is not sunk completely into spiritual death. Everyone calls things by their names and so continues the action of his father Adam. But the poet has the calling and the gift of speaking such words in powerful concentration. He has the power to speak them in such a way that, by means of his word, things move as though set free into the light of others who hear the words of the poet.

The poet is not a man who in a superfluous, more pleasing form, in 'rhymes', in a sentimental torrent of words, says in a more complicated way what others – philosophers and scientists – have said more clearly, more soberly, and more intelligibly. To be sure, there are 'poets' of this kind too, who are no poets at all, but mere rhymers and versifiers. That is not to say that versifying is a craft to be despised; many a one who has succeeded in being a true poet has also used it extensively in his work. In the same way, there are second-rate philosophers and scientists who speak more extensively of what those, who are poets, philosophers and scientists all in one, originally brought to word for the first time. But that is something which must always be done anew.

On the other hand, wherever a primordial word is really pronounced, wherever a thing appears in word in its positive freshness there a poet is at work. It is a poet working there, even though his word may not be mentioned in the history of literature and even though he may consider himself to be merely a philosopher or theologian.

Poets are men who speak primordial words in powerful concentration. If they utter these words, then they are beautiful. For real beauty is the pure appearance of reality as brought about principally in the word. Principally in the word: we have no desire to say anything here against music. It is too full of mystery. Nevertheless, perhaps lovers of music who [302] are at the same time theologians might give a thought to the fact that God revealed himself in word and not in purely tonal music. But in heaven, they will reply, there reigns the sound of

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songs of praise and not merely the recounting of the glory of God . . . Be that as it may, the other arts can represent in the first place only what is apprehended and circumscribed. They can set out the image and the gestures. In saying this we recognize that it is precisely the infinity of God which the limited and formed, measured and enclosed, proclaims simply by its own good finite character. For this infinity is not simply the negation of the good finitude of the creature; otherwise it would be itself a bad infinite. It would be something endlessly flowing, unstable, vague and empty, the infinity of mere matter; not the radiant, intimate clarity of the absolute fullness of God, which appears to us precisely in the apprehended and formed reality of the creature. But among all the modes of expressing himself that man uses in all the arts, the word alone possesses something which is not shared by any other creation of man: it lives in transcendence. Were it not to sound *exclusively* negative, and therefore destructive, one could say that negation alone lives in it. The word alone is the gesture which transcends everything that can be represented and imagined, to refer us to infinity. It alone can redeem that which constitutes the ultimate imprisonment of all realities which are not expressed in word: the dumbness of their reference to God. For this reason the primordial word, before all other expressions, is the primordial sacrament of all realities. And the poet is the minister of this sacrament. To him is entrusted this word, in which realities come out of their dark hiding place into the protective light of man to his own blessing and fulfilment.

II

What is a priest? The names applied to the priesthood by the New Testament are concerned mainly with its external structure. The ‘apostle’ is the envoy, ‘bishop’ means supervisor, ‘presbyter’ elder. It is remarkable that Scripture characterizes the content of the priestly office only in this one respect: as ministry of the word (Ac 6:4). Even where the administration of baptism is particularly named as the commission given to the Apostles, it appears as the means to becoming ‘disciples’ of the new teaching of Christ (Mt 28:5 9). And St Paul puts his mission of proclaiming the Good News before the command to baptize (1 Co 1:17). Moreover, [303] baptism itself takes place ‘in the word of truth’ (Ep 5:26), in calling upon the ‘name’ of Christ (Ac 2:38 *sqq*.), in the ‘name’ of the blessed Trinity (Mt 28:19). May we not then describe the priest as the man to whom the word has been entrusted? Is he not quite simply the minister of the word? But of course we must state more clearly what word is here in question.

The word which is entrusted to the priest as gift and mission is the *efficacious* word of *God* himself.

It is the word of *God*. The priest is not speaking of himself. His way does not lead man, his world and the experience of this world in which man encounters himself, into the light of man’s consciousness of himself (*Beisichsein*). His word does not redeem, in the sense indicated above, the things of the *world* from their gloomy and blind darkness by orientating them towards man. The word of the priest is the word of God. It is spoken by God in the infinite *katabasis* of his self-revelation, and brings the inner and most intimate light of God into the darkness of man. It enlightens the man who comes into the world and admits God himself into man through the faith which it awakens. The word of God is the eternal Logos of God who was made flesh, and therefore could also and in fact did become the word of man. All the words of God previously spoken are only the advance echoes of this word of God in the world. So much therefore is the word possessed of divine nobility, that we can call the Son, the eternal self-comprehension of the Father, nothing else but the *Word*. It was precisely this person who is the *Word*, not another person of the most holy Trinity, who became in the flesh the word of God directed to us.

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If God wills to make himself known to the world in that which he is in his most proper, most free Self, beyond the realm of his creative power, he can do this in only two ways: either he seizes us and the world immediately into the dazzling brilliance of his divine light, by bestowing upon his creatures the direct vision of God, or he comes in word. He cannot come to us in any way other than in the word, without already taking us away from the world to himself. For he wants to give himself to us precisely as that which simply as the Creator of realities outside himself he cannot reveal. That is possible only because there is present something in the world, one thing alone, which belongs to God's own reality: the word, which sets the creature free from its muteness by pointing beyond the whole created order. In it alone lives in a conscious way that transcendence [304] which both negates and liberates. It alone is capable of making God present as the God of mysteries to the man who does not yet see him, in such a way that this presence not only *is* in us by grace, but is *there* for us to perceive. Thus the word, as the primordial sacrament of transcendence, is capable of becoming the primordial sacrament of the conscious presence in the world of the God who is superior to the world.

This word has been spoken by God. He has come in grace and in the word. Both belong together: without grace, without the communication of God himself to the creature, the word would be empty: without the word, grace would not be *present* to us as spiritual and free persons in a conscious way. The word is the bodiliness of his grace. This does not apply only, and in the perspective of our present life not primarily, to the sacramental word in the strictest theological sense. It already applies to the word of faith in general. This word is one of the constitutive elements of the presence of God in the world, which is not yet transfigured, and therefore dwells as yet in faith and not in vision. This word is necessary, if God is to mean more to us than the ultimate ground of extra-divine reality, if God is to be for us the God of grace who communicates to man his own intra-divine glory.

This word, which makes God present in the world as God, and not merely as ultimate cause of the world, is a free word. It is a free act of love. Therefore it cannot be discovered at all times and in all places in the world. It cannot be gained from the world. It is an event. It must be spoken: through Christ and – through those whom he sends. For the presence-to-us of the reality of the divine self-revelation as expressed in this word always remains dependent upon this word being spoken and repeated. If it cannot be spoken by Christ himself until the end of time, then it must be carried on by others. The others cannot take hold of this word by their own power, in the way in which one 'takes up' a theory which one has once heard and propagates on one's own account and at one's own risk. If it were so, how could they know that it has remained the word of God and not been transformed into a human theory, which suffocates the original divine word under a chaotic mass of human interpretation? How could one prevent the message, which is an event in history, from becoming mere theology about it? The word of God must 'run on', but it must be borne by those who are sent. We call the messenger and the herald of the word of God the priest. Therefore what he says is a [305] proclamation, a *kerygma*, not primarily nor ultimately a doctrine. He is handing on a message. His word, in so far as it is his word, is a signpost pointing to the word spoken by another. He must be submerged and unseen behind the message he delivers. As priest he is not primarily a theologian, but a preacher. And because there is preaching for that reason there is theology: not *vice versa*. For the same reason it is the preaching Church with her demand for faith which is the norm of theology: it is not the 'science' of theology which is the norm of an *haute vulgarisation* which could be called preaching.

The word whose proclamation Christ has entrusted to the priest is an *efficacious* word. It produces an effect. This is not primarily because it influences the salvation of him who hears and believes it. That comes in the second place. No, this word is efficacious because it is not merely discourse *about* something that would remain equally real and effective if it were not

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talked about. It can be said of the weather and of the moon that they would exist in any case even if poets did not speak of them and meteorologists did not publish weather reports (although even this is not entirely true). Here the case is quite different. For the salvation of God is love. But all love achieves its own fulfilment only if it is accepted and answered. It can be answered only in freedom. And freedom exists only where there is consciousness of spirit and wakefulness of heart. Because this is so, God's grace itself only reaches its own fulfilment when it is spoken. Then it is really *present*. It is present in virtue of being proclaimed. The word first translates the love of God into man's sphere of existence *as* love, to which man can respond. The word is consequently the efficacy of love. It is an efficacious word.

The efficacy of the word of God can naturally have very different grades and degrees. This depends on what kind of word of God is in question, how and by whom it is spoken. But wherever it is really a case of the word of God *itself* as a delivered message, there we are in the presence of the efficacious word: wherever, that is to say, it is not merely theology in an exclusively human sense which is practised, as a merely human reflection *about* the word of God. (We leave out of account for the moment the question whether theology does not cease to be theology, if it no longer speaks the word of God itself, aided by supernatural powers of grace and of the light of faith.) But the effective power of the divine word itself, which allowed God in expressing himself to 'pitch his tent' among us (Jn 1:14), is different. *He* has 'told us all' that he has [306] received from the Father, namely himself with Godhead and manhood, flesh and blood, with his life and death, with his short span of time on earth and the eternity which he acquired. But *we* have to speak him in many different ways. We cannot with all our words say him completely, although *he* has confided to us a multitude of words. Of his one glory we can say sometimes more, sometimes less. We have to speak him into the undelimited dimensions of human existence, into all the heights and depths of our life. The one white light from him must be refracted in all the prisms of the world.

There are many efficacious words spoken at the command of Christ. These words are of varying efficacy in themselves and in the men who hear them. When is the most concentrated, the most effective word spoken? When is everything said at once, so that nothing more has to be said, because with this word everything is really *there*? Which is *the* word of the priest, of which all others are mere explanations and variations? It is the word which the priest speaks when, quietly, completely absorbed into the person of the incarnate *Word* of the Father, he says: 'This is my Body . . . this is the chalice of my Blood . . .' Here only the word of God is spoken. Here is pronounced *the* efficacious word. Words can be spoken about higher realities, about the eternal mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. But these words themselves are only there 'for us', meaningful and of existential import, because the Son of the Father knows no other divine glory than that into which he has brought his and our human existence; because he has become man; because he has a body which was delivered up, and because he has taken on our blood which he shed for us. The greatest mysteries thus only exist for us because the mystery of the humanity and death of the Lord exists.

The most effective way of speaking about these mysteries, too, is by speaking effectively about the Body and Blood of the Lord. But it is the word of Consecration that speaks of this. It speaks in such a way, that what was spoken of is now present. Everything is then present: heaven and earth, Godhead and manhood, body and blood, soul and spirit, life and death, Church and individual, past and eternal future; everything is gathered together into this word. And everything that is evoked in this word really takes place: *mysterium fidei*, *sacrum convivium*, *communio*. In it God already becomes in reality, even if only under the veil of faith, all in all. Here there is not a discourse 'about' death and life. Death and life are proclaimed until he comes, and in coming bring us what is already [307] here and already

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celebrated in mystery: the handing over of the Son and with him of the world to the Father.

This efficacious word has been entrusted to the priest. To him has been given *the* word of God. That makes him a priest. For that reason it can be said that the priest is he to whom has been entrusted the word. Every other word that he speaks, that he reflects upon, that he theologizes over, that he proclaims, for which he demands faith, for which he is prepared to pour out his blood – every other word is only explanation and echo of this one word. In it the priest, his person wholly absorbed into Christ, says only that which Christ has said. And in it Christ has said only one thing: himself as our gift. Though the priest may make known mysteries as distant as the stars, in the depths of the divine being – he can do this because he can show under the forms of this earth him who came to us from those eternal distances as the Son of the Father and brought with him everything that the Father gives him from all eternity and ever continues to give; and he is present under the forms of this earth because over these humble signs there remains constantly poised the word: 'This is my body . . .'

If the priest preaches Jesus, his life and death, then what he says is not mere talk, because by his word he is present among us who lived this life and died this death for our salvation. If he preaches sin, judgement and damnation, he can only do this because he lifts the chalice of the blood which was shed for our sins, and because he preaches the death which was the judgement on our sins and our salvation. If he speaks of the earth, then he cannot forget that he lifts up the fruit of our poor fields and vineyards as a sacrament into the eternity of heaven. If he speaks of man, of his dignity and his depth, he alone can tell the real truth about man – '*Ecce homo!*' – and truly show the flesh of sin, which is laid on the altars of God in sacrifice.

It is with true consolation that we are able to maintain: the priest is he to whom the efficacious word of God has been entrusted. One might also say: the priest is he to whom the primordial word of God in the world is entrusted, in such a way that he can speak this word in its absolute concentrated power (*Dichte*).

III

Is the priest then simply *the* poet *tout court*? This cannot be answered with a simple 'yes'. For he is so much more than a poet. We would be [308] saying too little about him were we to call him simply the poet of the word of God. Too little, because he possesses his own proper name which is irreducible and cannot be replaced by any other word. His name is: priest. He may communicate his message with unconcern. Perhaps it is on his lips without having proceeded from his heart. Perhaps his life does not make a reality of what his word is saying. Nevertheless, he remains a priest, herald of the word of God in virtue of a holy mission. But one could not then call him poet any more. For one can be a poet only if the word of the mouth springs up from the centre of the heart. The poet says what he bears within him. He expresses himself in truth. And this expression itself is a part of what he is. On the other hand, one can say the words of God without expressing oneself. Not only the Donatism of the sacramental word in the strict sense, but every Donatism of the *kerygma* is false. That is a comfort. For now we, the hearers, can never become the slaves of the man preaching to us. It is *God's* word that is said by the priest. For that reason not every priest is a poet by the mere fact of speaking God's own primordial words. He says what is true; he speaks God's own truth. But this can happen without God's truth having become his own truth, the revelation in word of the very constitution of his own being. With a word of that kind poetic existence is not achieved. One has said less, less of the human, because more has been said, more of the divine.

The word of the priest is therefore never in danger, to the same degree as the words of other men and poets, of sinking from the level of a primordial word to the level of a merely

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technical word of utility, to the shallow talk and chatter of daily life . . . *Verbum Domini autem manet in aeternum*. Many a time from tinkling cymbal and sounding brass have rung out words which have penetrated like a double-edged sword into the hearts – of others. A proof that God remains God and victorious even in the powerlessness of the human word!

To be sure, this is not to deny, but rather to make quite clear, that the word of God in the mouth of a priest empty of faith or love is a judgement more terrible than all versification and all poetic chatter in the mouth of a poet who is not really one. It is already a lie and a judgement upon a man, if he speaks what is not in him; how much more, if he speaks of God while he is godless. What he says remains the word of God. But to him is applicable: *Ex ore tuo te judico, serve nequam*. Not only does one eat judgement to oneself, if one receives the body of the Lord unworthily; [309] one speaks judgement to oneself, if one offers to others unworthily the word-body of God in which he has also become incarnate.

To the true poet, according to Goethe, 'a God has given the power to say what he is experiencing', while others remain silent in their agony and in their bliss. The poet experiences the blissful, but also perilous, extremely perilous, pleasure of an aesthetic kind of identity between his being and his consciousness. He attains that coming-to-himself and being-with-himself which St Thomas calls the *reditio completa in seipsum*, not merely in the abstract concept in which the unpoetic, profane man knows about himself. He experiences it in that concreteness full of images which is in fact a poetic and concentrated expression where everything is given in one; spirit and body, what is far and what is near, what is infinitely profound and what is childishly clear. Oh what a sublime blessedness it is to be so reconciled with oneself, so near to oneself, so close to one's immeasurable remoteness; to be able to understand oneself, by uttering oneself, even while one appears to speak of something quite different!

That is the grace of the poet. The priest does not have it. Even if he speaks out of the innermost centre of his believing, loving heart filled with the Spirit, he is speaking the words of God. They come from an immeasurable remoteness: not that of the man himself, but the remoteness of God. And the God now in question is not he who is the archetype and first cause of the things of the world, the ultimate ground of the world and its mysterious radiance of infinity; it is the God who inexpressibly transcends everything that is or can be thought outside himself; it is the uncharted, terrifying remoteness of the God whose transcendence it is that cannot be expressed by what is created as such. Such are the words spoken by the priest. They do not reconcile him with himself, unless it be in the death of faith and then indeed in an eternal, not a merely aesthetic reconciliation. These words humble the priest. They demand too much of him. They are ever the judgement upon his sinfulness which is never completely done away with as long as we have to speak with human words about this thrice holy God. They pierce his heart like a sword, especially when he puts his heart into these words which his mouth is uttering. They unmask him. Not with that perhaps sublime, perhaps sometimes also masochistic self-unmasking of the poets, who yet attain in it, at bottom, a pleasurable unity with themselves: 'Look, there go *I*!' The words of the priest produce that unmasking which God alone can [310] bring about. It truly humbles us. It gives us, if we accept it in true self-denial, sober spiritual health.

We could go on at great length. Always and from every point of view it would be clear that the priest is not already a poet because he is a priest. He is always more and mostly less than a poet.

But having said this much, we may and indeed must acknowledge that it would be a realization of that which as yet we glimpse from afar, if a priest were also to be a poet, if a poet were allowed to be a priest, if the life of a priest and that of a poet were to intermingle and be woven one into another. With that we mean of course something more than a symbiosis between priest and poet; a priest could, for example, also be a – philatelist. There

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are scientists who in the morning celebrate Mass, and men like Richelieu who at midnight 'discharge' their Breviary obligation – for two days at a time. What we mean is that two modes of existence appeal to each other and mutually condition each other. The priesthood releases poetic existence and sets it free to attain its ultimate purpose. At the same time it discovers in the grace of poetic power a charism for its own perfection. Why the marriage of priest and poet would be a meaningful and happy one, we must now attempt to explain still more accurately.

IV

The priest calls upon the poet. It is true that the priest does not proclaim himself and man in a merely human word; he proclaims God and the God-man in the word of God. The priest does not point to his own heart, but to the pierced heart of the Son. He says '*Ecce homo!*' and indicates thereby not himself and his own figure, but him who alone can say who man is. But in pronouncing such divine primordial words the priest ought not to be tinkling cymbal or sounding brass (blaring loudspeaker, St Paul would perhaps say today). He should place the light of God, God himself on the altars of men's hearts. But this light burns with the oil of our hearts, until it has consumed them . . .

We Catholics can never be Donatists. But we are sometimes in danger, out of sheer anti-Donatism, out of sheer Objectivism, of forgetting an important Catholic truth: in spite of everything institutional, in spite of every *opus operatum*, in spite of every objective word, it is the Saints who sustain the Church. To say this does not mean to attempt to overthrow God and his indestructible power and might. For it is *he* who gives this [311] holiness to the Saints. He has said that his Church will always be the holy Church, the Church of Saints. And *this* holiness, the glowing heart, selfless dedication, the heroic throwing away of life, the divine impatience, the dark night of mystical suffering, the smiling love for a poor brother – all these glories of the Church are no less important, no less constitutive of her reality than the infallible truth of the divine word and the objective holiness of the sacraments. In fact, all these 'objective' realities are in the last analysis only there for the purpose of bringing into and maintaining in being the subjectivity of happily loving hearts. On the last day, out of all this objective reality, only that will be gathered into the eternal barns of God which entered into living hearts: truth and love, and both of these in the way that they are realized, appropriated, lived. Not love as a demand and a law: love only as happiness. Not the truth in propositions and dogmas, *in umbris et imaginibus*; the most intimate truth of deified hearts. God has promised to this Church of the latter days not only that error will never overcome it. He has given the same promise to the Church of Jesus Christ also as regards that love which preserves the ultimate truths.

The consequence of the thoughts we have indicated, and which would have to be accurately developed, is this: the priestly word demands of the priest – however much it is God's and not his – that he should speak it *through his existence*. It would be too little if one were to evaluate this statement in a merely moralizing way as a 'suitable' obligation of the priest. Certainly, one can fix one's attention exclusively upon the abstract essence of a 'truth revealed by God' and of a sacrament as a sign of grace effective *ex opere operato*. One could then think: the existential realization of what is proclaimed and of what is accomplished in the sacrament could after all be absent in the priest; it constitutes only one obligation, though a clear one, from God; the truth, however, still remains true, and the sacrament is still effective in its recipient. This anti-Donatist reference to the validity of the sacraments and of the truth in the priest who is unworthy as an individual is in itself correct. But it overlooks the fact that the individual, perhaps sinful, priest always speaks and acts in the name of the

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Church. He always has the Church as a whole behind him. He always lives and acts within her sphere of existence. What then: would it also be a matter of indifference for preaching and the sacraments if the Church as a whole were to fail in love and holiness? An Augustine would never have agreed with that.

[312] It can of course be objected that a proposition does not become false because it is stated by someone who does not believe it and who does not realize it in his own existence. But would it in all cases also remain a witness to the truth with a claim to credence, if the real bearer of this truth, who is always much greater than the individual priest, has existentially abandoned it? That is not possible. Moreover, it is not a matter of just any kind of truth here. It is a matter of ultimate, eschatological truth: the truth of an ultimate self-revelation of God. In it God lavishes himself. How can he risk manifesting this truth without damage to his ultimate glory? In the omnipotence of his grace God has pre-destined the freedom of men and of the Church as a whole really to accept his truth, God's love itself, in an equally loving way. (To be theologically exact, one would have to speak of *praedestinatio formalis*.) No, one can no longer say it is 'in itself' a matter of indifference to the truth of the word, whether it is proclaimed in this way or in that: by one who has himself accepted it, or by another. It is after all the truth of God's love as *proffered* that this word is proclaiming, and really nothing else!

What follows? The real bearer of the proclamation of the word is the Church. She is always the holy Church. Because of her holiness she is placed in the infallibility of God's grace, which yet leaves human freedom untouched, which indeed first allows it to be itself. The word of the Church, however, is the offer of love; it is the truth of the love of God as free and utterly self-giving. For *this* reason one is entitled to say that this word *must* be spoken in love, in a loving existential acceptance. This word *can* be entrusted to God *only* to the loving and holy bride of his Christ. But this necessity is not simply transferable to the individual who in the Church and on her behalf, speaks the word which tears open the heart of God like a spear. This remains undoubtedly the case. The individual is not, by the mere fact of being the priestly herald of this word, predestined to the salvation of love. He can pass on the amply filled word, the vessel of divine love, with an empty heart. But here we discover the deeper, inner reason for the duty of the priest to accomplish in faith and love the word of God that he speaks, and to proclaim it in *this* way. He is not expressing his own existence when he preaches the word of God. But he must express the word of God *with* his Christian existence. More precisely, the priest *ought* to do this, because the Church *must* do it. The priest ought to bear witness to the word of God by showing that he is himself possessed by the Spirit of God, and that the dynamism [313] of this Spirit – as St Paul says – effectively operates in his own life.

The word of God in the mouth of the priest wants therefore, if it is to be spoken rightly, to absorb and subject to itself the life of the priestly individual. It wants to be made manifest in him. But then it calls upon the whole man and lays claim to him with everything that is his. Then the herald of the word 'gesticulates' (a word of Kierkegaard's) with his whole existence. He strives only to communicate God's word like a faithful messenger. But if he really does this, then this will fill and consume his whole humanity which, in so far as it is redeemed, represents all that he preaches. The priest necessarily speaks about man from the standpoint of a man. This is not his first and last, not his proper word. But he must say this word *as well*, if he is to proclaim the word of God, which became flesh, as it wants to be and must be proclaimed.

But what man is there who can utter himself? Who from a man's standpoint can speak about man in a correct and appropriate way? Who has at his command in concentrated form (*verdichtet*) the full, primordial words of mankind? Who is capable of calling upon another man in such a way that he is roused in his inmost being, which he often does not know

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himself? Who can get through to the centre of a heart that may be lost and sinful – and yet must be reached if it is to attain redemption? Who can tell man his ambiguity in such a way that he perceives it? Who can do this, if not the poet? How too could God's answer be heard to the question which man himself is, if this question itself is only half or not at all experienced and suffered and lifted up to the light of the poetic word? Only a Protestant and a theologian of the most extreme dialectical obscurity could maintain that the divine, grace, redemption, and our new freedom, light and the love of God remain so much in the beyond that one can experience nothing at all of them in this world; that on the contrary all human discourse witnesses to the word and to the reality of God only by its character of absolute paradox.

But grace is *here*. It is present wherever we are. It can always indeed be seen by the eye of faith and be expressed by the word of the message. But it must also be really said, it cannot be simply shrouded in silence. That is why grace *appears* unfailingly in the fact that it lays claim to man and his powers, his thinking and loving. That is why too the light of grace shines also by burning the oil of this world. Everything in man should enter into the service of the divine life of grace. Must not he also, who is [314] capable of uttering man and by his utterance of calling up man and his powers and of leading him to himself in knowledge and action, must not the poet render his service to grace and its revelation in the word of God?

In fact, was not the herald of revelation, who touched the heart of man with his message, in the proper sense a poet? We must not maintain that all texts of sacred Scripture are poetry. That would not be true, if the word poetry is to be allowed to retain its usual sense. The word of God in its descent to the level of the human word has entered also those spheres where the laboured, humble, daily word dwells. One could adapt an old adage of the Fathers, and say that it had to assume everything which needed redemption. But daily life also forms a part of man, in which he effaces himself in all humility. The weariness of the small hours, in which man is banished from himself without being fully aware of his pitiable forlornness, is part of him. Therefore the word which he speaks in this his situation also forms a part of man as needing and meriting redemption. And for that reason the word of God has assumed this human word also. For all its truth and dignity, it can enter into the *kenosis* of the human word, into its baseness and banality. The word of God too can take on the form of a slave and be found as a human word of the street; simple, without pretension, almost worldly wise. In the Old Testament it can speak of the insoluble question and of the suffering of a man who has no answer. It can formulate counsels with the aged shrewdness of a very earthly experience of life. It can speak in the laboriously erudite language of theology.

No, thank God, not every word of Scripture is poetry. Thank God, we say, because we are not all, and not all the time poets. Yet the word of God should be able to find us always and be able to find each one of us. The word of God has no need to confine itself to calling into its kingdom only noble words. One could apply also to Scripture the words of St Paul, and say to human words what St Paul says to the Corinthians who had become Christians: 'Consider your calling, words of men! Not many of you are wise in the worldly sense, not many powerful, not many well born. No, what among you in the world is considered foolish, God has chosen so as to shame wise words; weak words, tired and old words, faded and worn out in everyday use. The words which are nothing, these God has chosen – in order to confound poetry. For no earthly word is to have any ground for boasting before God . . .'

Yet on the other hand what is poor has no special privilege before God [315] either. The words of daily life are not worthy of the Kingdom of God's word merely because they are poor and tired and have, as it were, run far away from their first origin. God has also called what is lofty and good, what is noble and splendid. Everything has been called to its salvation in Christ. The ability of speaking primordial words in poetic form, of saying words as glorious as on the first day, the word of the poet too is called into the glory and light of the

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divine word. In truth, is the hymn to charity which St Paul sings, not a poem? Must it not be ranked, even from a purely human point of view, with the most splendid words ever spoken by man? Anyone who does not feel the Parable of the Prodigal Son to be wonderful poetry understands nothing about poetry. At the most he can plead in excuse – with justification – that the tears he shed in hearing this read caused him to forget that the words which so touched his heart were also poetry. So humble was the grace of repentance that it made use of human poetry in discreet silence, in order to be effective. Is not the historical account of the first beginnings of the world and of humanity, and of the blessed state of innocence and the origin of sin also sheer poetry? Would this account not have been understood much better if men's hearts had preserved a little more sensitivity for the lofty poetry of it? Can this account not express the historical truth incomparably better than if a newspaper reporter had recounted the first beginnings? Is it necessary, in this connection, to praise the psalms? Is it necessary to call upon passages in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament or upon the high-priestly prayer of the Lord to demonstrate that poetry is found wherever the word of God itself utters its most profound words?

Has it not remained so? Perhaps it has not always been completely fulfilled, because everything on earth, even in the Church, remains partial until what is perfect appears. Yet it has been so. Are the verses of Thomas Aquinas at their most successful merely the putting into verses of something he says more clearly and more accurately in the articles of the *Summa*? Or do they not say, if not 'more' at least more originally, more pregnantly, and in this sense more truly, what those articles say? Is St Augustine in his 'Confessions', are John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, Newman in his sermons and verses, Thomas of Celano in his *Dies Irae*, Angelus Silesius, Dante, Brentano, Annette von Droste in many of her strophes, Luís de Leon and many, many others, poets or are they not? Are they merely poets *as well*? Have they just put incidentally and retrospectively into verse or some other artificial form of so-called poetry [316] what can equally well – if one is not so poetically sentimental – and even more clearly and accurately be said in 'prose'? Or is their poetic word more original and comprehensive, more alive than that of those theologians who are proud of the fact of not being poets? Yes, is it not time that we asked: what has become of the times when the great theologians also wrote hymns? When they could write like Ignatius of Antioch, compose poems like Methodius of Olympus, be carried away in hymnody like Adam of St Victor, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas? What has become of those times? Has theology become more perfect because theologians have become prosaic?

This remains true: wherever the word of God utters the sublime and pours it into the depths of the human heart, there too a human poetic word is to be found. And the priest calls upon the poet, that the poet's primordial words may become consecrated vessels of the divine word, in which the *priest* effectively proclaims the word of God.

V

The poet calls upon the priest. The primordial words which the poet speaks are words of longing. They say something in images, intuitive, concrete. But it is the concrete individual which points beyond itself, the near which suggests the distant. The words of the poet are like gates, good and strong, clear and sure. But they are gates into infinity, gates into the incomprehensible. They call upon that which has no name. They stretch out towards what cannot be grasped. They are acts of faith in the spirit and in eternity; acts of hope for a fulfilment which they can never give themselves; acts of love for unknown goods. Art, real art, is always more than just that. If ever art is pursued exclusively for the sake of the aesthetic, it ceases to be art. It sinks down to the level of a poisonous narcotic banishing the

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fear of existence. But that something more which belongs to it and from which it lives cannot come to art from itself. The openness to infinity which constitutes art does not itself give the infinite, it does not bring and contain *the* infinite. The poet is driven forward by the transcendence of the spirit. He has already been overpowered secretly and quite unknown to himself by the longing which the grace of the Holy Spirit has implanted in the human heart. So he speaks words of longing even when he speaks of the flowers and of the love of two human hearts. His words of nostalgia are stretched out in longing for an unsurpassable [317] fulfilment, for perfect love, for the definitive transfiguration of all reality. His word therefore calls up another word: the word which makes a response to this his word. It calls up the efficacious word which satisfies that longing; the word of God. Only where the intimate faith in the possibility of such an answer has been suffocated in the hellish agony of desperate disbelief, would the human poetic word also be dead. Only there, but there absolutely: idols are dumb, as Scripture says. And theology, on the other hand, means hymn-like discourse about God. Hence the poetic word calls upon the word of God, that is the poet calls upon the priest.

At first sight it might be thought that poet and priest can make contact by one of them uttering the (poetic) question, and the other the (divine) answer. Question and answer, poet and priest, would thus live from each other. But now, supposing that the priest proclaiming, the theologian in the full sense, himself becomes a poet, in order to communicate perfectly his message from above? Supposing that the poet, happily satisfied by the answer he has perceived to his question, himself tells what he hears? (How could he in any case ask the question since the birth of Christ as though he had never received an answer! Even the post-Christian unbelievers still compose poetry in such a way that one can convince them of having heard the answer.) Supposing that this happens: then – and what a blessed though rare occurrence – the priest becomes a poet and the poet becomes a priest. Such fortune is rare. If it happened often, there would be too much radiant beauty for our hearts. Even the Scriptures, the very words of God, only seldom speak in poetry. But occasionally it may happen. Then it is a grace. It proclaims that *everything* is redeemed. The primordial words of man, transmuted by the Spirit of God, are allowed to become words of God, because a poet has become a priest.

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[319]

PART FIVE

Devotion to the Sacred Heart

[321]

21

‘BEHOLD THIS HEART!’: PRELIMINARIES TO A THEOLOGY OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART

During Lent and Passiontide the figure of the suffering Lord determines the course of our liturgical and personal religious life. The mysteries of this season are so abundant and their richness so inexhaustible that the Church seizes upon one or two of those which make the meaning of the Passion especially clear and puts them before us once more during the remainder of the year. Among these is the mystery of the Lord’s heart, torn open and pouring out its life-blood. It is the most profound of all the mysteries of the Passion, in fact the source of them all. It can therefore scarcely be better described than by means of one of those words which form part of the basic assets of human language, and which attempt in a stammering way to make an inexpressible mystery capable of being expressed. Only a lover is able to pronounce the word ‘heart’ with understanding, and only one who is lovingly united to the crucified Lord knows what is meant when the ‘Heart of Jesus’ is spoken of. But even the word ‘heart’ itself opens up to the lover new paths for his love which can never love enough. Let us then for once discuss this word. May it open up for us the way into the Heart of the Lord which pours itself out in streams of blood.

It is intentionally that I speak of the ‘word’ heart, not of the concept. Naturally it is not only the outward sound that is meant: this after all sounds different in the different languages. But the word that we are to concern ourselves with does have this characteristic: that in its content the corporeal, the figurative and concrete side of the word and concept must be emphasized. And since we men always think in conceptual words and not in wordless concepts, and since we must – this side of any image-less and wordless mystical experience – even work out our salvation with them in faithfulness to the written word of God, the incarnate word of [322] the Word of God, we may be permitted to speak here directly of the word, and not of the concept.

There are words which divide and words which unite; words which explain the whole by breaking it up, and words which at once conjure up that whole and produce it in the listening person (not only in his intellect); words which can be artificially created by oneself and given an arbitrary definition, and words which are accepted, which were always given, which enlighten *us* and not we them, which have power over us, because they are a gift from God and not the products of man. There are words which delimit and isolate, and words which make a single thing transparent to the infinity of all reality; words which are clear, because they are shallow and without mystery; words which are obscure, because they evoke the over-brilliant mystery of the things expressed; words which are sufficient for the head, because they can be used to acquire mastery over things, and words which spring up out of the heart, prostrate in reverence and adoration before the mystery which overpowers us; words which illuminate something small, because they encircle with their light a part of reality, and words which make us wise, because they allow the manifold to harmonize in the one. The words which by their charm forge a unity, make reality first present to us, make us

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subject to them, spring from our hearts, come to us as a gift and transport us – these I would like to call *primordial* words (*Urworte*). The others could be called manufactured, technical utility-words. Naturally, words cannot be divided into these two classes once and for all. The division refers to the destiny of words rather than dividing them *a priori* into two already separate classes.

There are innumerable words which, according as they are used by man, ascend or more frequently descend from one category to the other. When the poet or St Francis exclaims 'water', he means something greater and more comprehensive than when the chemist, degrading the word, calls his H_2O 'water'. You cannot write H_2O for the water to which the soul of man is likened. Yet the water which is seen by man, praised by the poet and used in baptism by the Christian, is not a poetic glorification of the chemist's 'water', as though he were the true realist; on the contrary, the 'water' of the chemist is a narrowed down, technified and secondary derivative of the water of mankind. In the word as used by the chemist a primordial word has been fated – with a fate which contains that of humanity through millennia – to sink to the level of a technical word of utility, and in its fall it has lost more than half its content.

[323] *Heart is such a primordial word*. One should not approach it from the start with the enfeebled, limiting understanding of the anatomist, as though *he* had first to determine its meaning and one could at the most discuss afterwards whether such a meaning could be retrospectively revalued at a 'poetical' or 'metaphorical' or other transferred level. This word did not originate with the experience of the anatomist (not even the primitive one), but in the experience of man. It is a primordial word. It cannot be defined, cannot be composed of better known words, because its meaning is an original unity and totality. For this reason it occurs in all languages and belongs to the primitive patrimony of man's speech. It is one of the words in which from the beginning man has already ascended beyond the superficial experience of daily life (including that of anatomy and of purely physiological sensations of the body), without becoming abstract and losing touch with the corporeal and tangible. It is one of the words in which man, knowing himself, expresses the mystery of his existence without solving that mystery. When a man says that he has a heart, he has told himself one of the crucial secrets of his existence. For when he speaks in this way, he is speaking of himself as the one self-knowing whole, he is evoking the unity of his being which is *anterior* to the dichotomy between body and soul, action and thought, external and internal; he is evoking what is original in the genuine sense of the word, that in which the manifold of human reality is still freshly one, that in which, as Hedwig Conrad-Martius says, the whole (concrete) being of man, as it is brought forth and unfolded and flows away in soul, body and spirit, is taken and grasped and remains as one, as though knotted and fastened at its midpoint.

This unity of man, original, originating and holding together what it originates, is a personal unity, that is to say, one which knows itself, ventures forth and freely makes its own choice, which answers and – in love – affirms itself or denies itself. It is the point where man borders on the mystery of God, the point where man, whose own origin is from God, as God's partner either leaves himself and gives himself back to God in his original unity, or else blasphemously refusing himself to *Him* and turning himself downward, plunges into the void of his own damnation. Heart is that being which is freely bestowed and yet historically eventful, which man understands himself and affirms himself to be in the actions of his life, in such a way that he yet remains secluded from himself and others while his name remains known to God alone. Properly speaking, [324] therefore, only man has a heart. For God, as God alone, is the unity which possesses and maintains itself in eternal selfhood without having to go out of itself in order to find itself. The angels, it is true, realize an existence which is pre-determined for them, but in doing so they look upon themselves and consciously lead their acts back to their own origin. But man goes out and away from himself he must

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realize himself in something other that he has done and suffered, and can only in this way, in this other, looking away from himself become conscious of the wellspring and the unity of his being. And such a well-spring, from which the alien other really flows and which possesses itself only in the other, is called the heart. The animals remain for ever strange to themselves, and their own source knows nothing of itself but only of the strange other with which they make contact in so far as they have already forgotten themselves. For this reason, then, Heart is a primordial word of man's, uttered by man about man to his glory alone. If this word is applied to God and the angels, then one is transferring to a higher order what originally belongs to man alone.

Hence this word is in a supreme sense a primordial word: if man was destined to call everything by its name, if he liberates the strange object he encounters by his light and his love to its conscious being, then in such an encounter he becomes conscious of himself and in meeting himself in the other he comes to know that he has a heart. He meets the other precisely in order to grasp this and do it. And he becomes all that he is and should be only when he asks: 'Whose are you, my heart?'

A man therefore comes to a consciousness of the activating core of his being as one and whole, when he comes to a real understanding of what he is saying with the word 'heart'. Consequently the question cannot be asked whether, when we speak of the heart, we mean a muscle or something spiritual. For if the question is formulated in this way, one has already in the question moved away from that one source of the whole man which is precisely meant by his heart. All one can then do, with great trouble trying subsequently and too late to recover a more original understanding, is to attempt in one's answer to join together again what the falsely formulated question has torn apart. 'Head', for example, is neither the top of the body nor spirit, 'countenance' is neither character nor the bodily face, it is not a subsequent fusing together of these produced by poets, but the original unity in which being and appearance, truth and its manifestation, what is most internal and what is most external, what is [325] expressed and its expression, are still one. The same is true of the other primordial words of a totally human kind. 'Flesh', for example, in the Bible is not the biological body and afterwards perhaps something additional, but the whole man who is body in spirit and spirit in body and both in the one, namely in flesh.

And the same is the case with the word 'heart'. It is a word which, from the beginning and not subsequently, lies across a possible but subsequent distinction between body and soul. Because this distinction is one which in our reflex Western knowledge obstinately insists on intruding, we find ourselves, in this reflex knowledge, constantly faced with the question whether a heart denotes a physiological organ of the body or 'by transference' something spiritual, or with the question how it is possible to combine both meanings, whichever of the two meanings one makes the starting-point for such a combination. But the question is wrongly formulated, both when one thinks primarily of the physiological heart – for man as speaking from the source of his being and uttering primordial words is from the outset not the physiological body alone but simply man – and when one thinks primarily of the spiritual and subsequently symbolizes this by means of the corporeal heart – for the primordial words speak of the spiritual in so far as it is realized only in the flesh, in so far as it has its being only in appearance.

We must always keep this in mind; in the concrete living out of our existence we always experience ourselves as one human being, we never have either spirit or matter by itself. When we have experience of the body, it is an experience of the living body and therefore – we could almost say – of the soul in the condition of a spatio-temporal aggregate (which of course only partially expresses it). And the highest knowledge of the spirit, where it comes face to face with itself, is still corporeal and takes place in image, word, sound, and gesture. That is why in the Apostles' Creed we do not speak of the Beatific Vision but of the

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Resurrection of the Body, and in saying it we mean the one concrete salvation of the whole man. And that is why we speak of the heart, and not of a centre of the spiritual person. For this one complete man has an interior and an exterior, a source and what springs from it, a centre and a periphery, background and foreground. This dimensionality of the one human being, which is quite disparate from any distinction between body and soul, is experienced by man immediately in living out his existence. The original, background, unifying interior of his one reality (which interior [326] is still as much a union of body and spirit as he himself is as a whole) he calls heart, and thus he knows that he has a heart before he ever caught sight of what the anatomist calls heart, and when with a shudder he saw this 'heart' for the first time, he viewed this 'heart' too as the transparent appearance of the proper heart which he had always experienced, to a certain extent as the sacramental sign of the grace of possessing a heart.

This is all very obscure, someone will say. Certainly, a form of thinking which takes apart and puts together like a mosaic is clearer and more easily grasped. But it is not more true, that is more replete with reality. A form of knowledge which is faced with the mystery of the unity in multiplicity, of being in appearance, of the whole in the part and the part in the whole, and utters primordial words which are designed precisely to evoke this mystery, is difficult to grasp and dark, like the reality itself which gains mastery over us in such words and draws us into its incomprehensible depths. In primordial words of this kind spirit and flesh, meaning and its symbol, concept and word, object and image are still originally one (which does not mean they are simply the same). Blossom, night, star and day, root and source, wind and laughter, rose, blood and earth, boy, smoke, word, kiss, lightning, breath, stillness: these and a thousand other words of the original thinkers and of the poets are primordial words, and they are more profound and more true than the worn-out verbal coins of daily intellectual exchange which one often likes to call 'clear concepts'. In each of such primordial words a piece of reality is connoted, in which a door is mysteriously opened into the unfathomable depths of true reality in general; it is a word in which the transition from the individual to the infinite, in which infinite movement is already part of the content of the word itself. How could such words be unequivocally defined, when they are precisely words of that crossing of borders on which at some stage our very salvation depends?

> . . . *Sind wir vielleicht* hier, *um zu sagen*: *Haus*,
> *Brücke*, *Brunnen*, *Tor*, *Krug*, *Obstbaurn*, *Fenster*,
> *höchstens*: *Säule*, *Turm* . . . *aber zu* sagen, *versteh's*,
> *o zu sagen so*, *wie selber die Dinge niemals*
> *innig meinten zu sein* . . .
> (. . . Are we perhaps *here*, in order to say: house,
> bridge, fountain, gate, urn, fruit tree, window,
> at the most: pillar, tower . . . but to *say* please understand, [327]
> Oh to say, what the things themselves never
> intimately thought to be...)
>
> (Rilke, *Ninth Elegy*)

Only someone who understands these lines of the poet, understands what we mean by primordial words and why such words have every right to be obscure. This, it is true, does not mean that it is not possible for someone to disguise his own vague superficiality as deep thoughtfulness by draping it with such primordial words, nor that one ought to speak obscurely where it is possible to speak clearly. It means only that the first human concepts reflect the one man in his indissoluble unity of spirit and flesh. And such a word is 'heart'. In addition to the fact that it is used in the Scriptures and in the Church's declaration of faith, it

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already demands that humble reverence which man must have in the presence of such words, if he does not want to remain caught in arrogant blindness on the surface of reality.

Let us append two observations to this undefined definition of the word 'heart'.

First, 'heart' does not denote simply and immediately love. This inward-corporeal core of the personal being of man, which borders on the source of all mystery, can according to Scripture also be evil and the bottomless pit, into which the evil-doer who shuts himself off from love plunges. The heart can be empty of love, and even what can still be called love can be very peripheral. That the inmost core of personal reality is love and that love is in fact the inmost reality, this is experienced by man only in coming to know the heart of the Lord. 'Behold this heart, which has so loved men': this is not an analytical proposition, derived from the concept of heart, but the shattering consequence of a knowledge of the history of salvation.

Second, the representation of the physiological heart is a symbol of heart, as we have sought to explain the reality which this primordial word denotes, not a reproduction, a representation in the proper, photographic sense. But it is not an arbitrary symbol, not a conventional sign, but a genuine, original symbol, a primordial symbol (*Ursymbol*). If corporeity as such, forming part of the totality of an embodied person, is not an appendage to this person, not his container, but – in fact – his embodiment, in which all that the person originally is appears in such a way that without it the reality itself which appears would not be truly and completely what it is meant to be, then the corporeal heart is in this sense the [328] inner symbol (that is, a symbol lying within the symbolized object itself) of the heart of the person, a symbol which belongs as much to the reality it indicates as does the body to man, which belongs to it in a way similar to that in which the sacramental sign belongs to sacramental grace: one is never without the other, one is present in the other, is first fully itself in the other, and yet the two are not simply the same. But since a material picture of the 'heart' can reproduce in fact only the physiological heart, and this is a symbol and not a representation of the heart as the inmost core of the whole man (and not merely of his 'soul'), it is right and inevitable that this representation should be stylized, because in this way the symbolic character of the representation and of its immediate object is more evidently proclaimed than if the representation were to go out of its way to be as physiologically exact as possible.

There still remains to be answered one question which also belongs to these preliminaries to a theology of devotion to the Sacred Heart, the question concerning the *subjective* side (if so it may be called) of this use of the word 'heart'. Here is meant of course the heart together with the observable heart-symbol. To begin with, this question we have indicated may make understandable one objection. If up to now we have attempted to say what is meant by heart, why can this explanation not be made use of in order to avoid this word 'heart' altogether (oh, how worn-out and sentimental will this word appear to many!); and to speak more immediately with the words of this explanation of the reality which is meant? Certainly one can and indeed must speak of this reality also in this descriptive way: one cannot keep on saying simply heart, heart. After all, all discourse about metaphysical realities is carried on in a constant circular interchange of words, in which one luminous darkness must serve to throw light on another. For we speak about being itself with still other words, even though there is no word which lies beyond this one. But then, finite beings with finite speech, we must come to a stop. And then we say what we have already said at the beginning, and such words are then the beginning and the end of all discourse at the same time.

Primordial words of this kind, which stand and must stand at the beginning and equally at the end of all processes of explanation, are then only like a timid hinting at what we already knew and must know at the beginning if we are to be able to explain and communicate at all, because the speaker and the hearer already knew what the speaking and the hearing [329] was

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about. Such words do not say anything new, but rather the old which is eternally young, which is inexhaustible, and yet none of the explanations ever supersede the primordial words. These words cannot therefore be abstract, rarefied and sketchy words, they must, if they are to be the genuine beginning and the genuine end of all discourse, present the thing in its concrete, bodily, almost sensibly tangible plainness and formation, in image and its corporeal appearance.

And for this reason the word 'heart' is in the last analysis irreplaceable and cannot be circumvented by a more abstract form of words. A word of this kind surges up out of the depths of the embodied spirit, accompanied by the beat of one's own heart, by its faltering and its unceasing course, by the experience of a core of corporeity permeated by spirit; such a word is, as it were, realizable at the same time as it is spoken. That is why it wanders through the languages of all peoples, like an archetype from generation to generation, why it constantly surges up in dreams out of the primordial depths of man, from yonder region where everything is as yet together in one. Poets cannot speak otherwise when they become aware of the secrets of man and concentrate in a few magically evocative words the experience of life. 'Oh, holy heart of nations, Oh, Fatherland' (Hölderlin), 'Who has not sat in fear before the curtain of his heart' (Rilke), 'if bursting wide open our own heart were to slay us' (Rilke), 'uncountable existence flows out of my own heart' (Rilke), 'with thousandfold joy of love the sanctified feeling of your everlasting warmth penetrates to my heart, infinite beauty!' (Goethe), 'why do you not rest, you dusky heart' (Nietzsche), 'that my heart, sated with sweet playing, may die the more willingly' (Hölderlin), 'Lord, have mercy on me, that my heart may blossom anew' (Brentano) – in these and thousands of other ways the poets have mused on existence. They too cannot speak otherwise, because these are words which cannot be superseded. These words may be understood in a flat and sentimental way, but they cannot be replaced. They ought to be used sparingly, with discipline and reticence. They ought not to be spoken where something else is meant. But they remain irreplaceable. And such a word is 'heart'.

So long as man has a heart, he will have to speak of it with this precise word 'heart'. That is to say, always. He will always speak of the heart, whenever at once simple and wise he recalls himself from multiplicity to his one source. Always, whenever he gathers the permanent essence of his time into the eternity of his existence, he will say that he has stored it [330] in the storing-place of his heart. Always, when he renounces himself completely and utterly, he will say, 'I give you my heart'. Always, when he plunges down into the dark abyss of his being, it will seem to him that he is caught in the dungeons of his dead and empty heart. Always, he will sing simply, 'Go out my heart and seek for joy!' Always, he will glorify his restoration to grace as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit into his heart. Always, he who is slandered will comfort himself with the fact that God sees his heart. Always, men will hope that 'the morning-star will rise in the heart', always call those blessed who are pure of heart, always experience horror at evil gushing up out of the quarry of the heart, and always be happy that goodness can be preserved in the heart, always love those who are able to forgive from the heart, always be judged by this alone, whether they have loved with their whole heart, because on the scales of God only hearts have any weight.

We have been wandering around in the outer courts of the theology of devotion to the Sacred Heart. But we must know what heart means and what an immeasurable weight the word 'heart' already has in itself, if we wish to speak of the heart of the God-man and in adoration acknowledge his grace. Only then can one begin to say: 'Behold this heart!' Only then can it dawn upon us what it means when we hear the news: the eternal Logos of God has a human heart, he risked the adventure of a human heart, until, pierced by the sin of the world, it had flowed out, until it had suffered to the end on the Cross the uselessness and powerlessness of his love and had become thereby the eternal heart of the world. Since that

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moment the word ‘heart’ is not only a word which affects man in the core of his being, but a word which can no longer fail to take its place in the eternal praise of God itself and in it in the centre of it – denotes also the heart of a man. Many words will be reduced to silence because what they mean is not worth speaking about. But there are human words which, because they mean human things, can properly be said only in a human way. And if they mean something human which belongs eternally to God himself, then such human words are words of eternity which men can never cease to utter, either here or in eternity. And to these words of earthly beginning and eternal ending belongs the word which God will still say to us men in all eternity: ‘Behold this heart, which has so loved men’.

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[331]

22

SOME THESES FOR A THEOLOGY OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART

I. PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

1. *On the Theological Method*

(a) The question to be asked is not what, proceeding from abstract dogmatic principles, devotion to the Sacred Heart *could* be in itself particularly with reference to its object; but what in fact it does mean according to the *doctrine* and *practice* of the Church.

(b) Since the Sacred Heart devotion in the doctrine and practice of the Church both past and present manifests itself under many aspects and forms, no one has any reason or any right to impose on another a concept and a practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart which is one-sidedly restricted to one or other aspect or one or other form of this devotion.

2. *On the General Concept of 'Heart'*

(a) The meaning of a word can only be rightly determined if, from the very beginning, attention is paid to the *general a priori* within which a word is used (that is if the 'frame of reference' is rightly determined). So, for example, the medical man who always intends to understand by 'heart' (even though only 'primarily') the heart-muscle as an organ of circulation, should have his attention drawn to the fact that such an understanding is determined by the physiologist's tacitly assumed and restrictive viewpoint of the body as a material mechanism – an *a priori* which under certain conditions is quite possible, but is of itself arbitrary and a limitation on the outlook and from the start does not come into consideration in our question.

(b) 'Heart' in its original (and *not* subsequently derived or metaphorical) meaning is a primordial word (*Urwort*): it is not susceptible of a proper definition by the logical composition of 'better known' concepts, [332] and it is a word which (in its real sense) is so common to many cultures[1] (Semitic, Graeco-Roman, Western, Mexican, etc.), that in this sense too it may be described as a primordial word, so that it can easily be used in the vocabulary of a world religion. It lies in the language-sphere of *total*-human words (like, for example, 'countenance' as opposed to 'face', like 'hand' – which blesses, defends, threatens and so on – as opposed to the hand as a corporeal grab-instrument, heart as opposed to heart-muscle, and so on), that is to say, it lies in the sphere of those words which describe realities belonging to man precisely in so far as he is one whole (as a corporeo-spiritual person), which therefore cut across a possible (but after all subsequent) distinction between body and soul. Therefore the question whether 'heart' signifies 'primarily' a physiological part of the body or a spiritual reality is from the beginning a false one, and no matter how it is answered, it leads to unsatisfactory consequences which can then be avoided only by troublesome and forced *ad hoc* constructions: 'heart', 'head', 'countenance', 'fist', and so on, are precisely words which denote realities underlying the distinction between body and soul or (which is

[1] Cf. e.g. Kittel, *TWNT* III, pp. 60 *sqq*. ('Heart' in the O.T., for the Greeks, for the Hellenistic and Rabbinic Jews); A. Guillaumont, 'Les sens des noms du coeur dans l'antiquité', *Le Coeur*: *Études Carmélitaines* 1950, pp. 41-81. In the same issue of the *Études Carmélitaines* there are further articles on the concept of 'heart' in ancient Egypt, India, in Mohammedan devotion, in Mexico, etc.

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the same thing) arising from the original, real-ontological unity of both *as such*. *Because* man as a whole is in fact also corporeal, 'heart' connotes implicitly also the corporeity of the heart and to this extent also the 'corporeal heart', but it does this neither *in recto* alone, nor as (external) 'symbol' of something else signified *in recto*, but as an inner moment in a concept springing from man's unity as a whole.

(c) Heart as a total-human primordial word of this kind denotes the core of the human person which is original and inmost with respect to everything else in the human person, in which the whole concrete 'being of man, as it is brought forth and unfolded and flows away in soul, body and spirit … is taken and grasped (and remains) as one, as though knotted and fastened at its mid-point' (H. Conrad-Martius), at which therefore man is originally and wholly related to other persons and above all also to God, who is interested in the person as a whole and whose action in giving grace or guidance is therefore aimed at this heart-centre of man.

[333] (d) Consequently heart does not immediately connote simply love. For example, that the total-human personal core of the Lord freely willed to be 'love for us' is precisely the incomprehensible experience that we meet in him (and which is therefore rightly symbolized on its own by the wounds of the heart, blood and water, rays, cross, crown of thorns). For a heart can be loveless and love can be peripheral. That the inmost core of reality is love and that love is the inmost reality, this is something that man first experiences in coming to know the heart of the Lord.

(e) Of *this* heart the representation of the physiological heart is a symbol, not a reproduction, but it is a natural, not an arbitrary (conventional) symbol, because the physiological heart (by reason of the ontologically based symbolical character of the body in general for the body-soul totality of man) is the most evident symbol (to a certain extent psychologically capable of being experienced) for the corporeo-spiritual centre of the whole man. But because the image of the physiological heart (as such) is *only* symbol (not representation) of the heart as the inmost core of the whole man (not only of his 'soul'!) it can and *ought* to be stylized: it ought not to go out of its way to be as physiologically exact as possible, and it can be filled out by other symbolical additions (crown of thorns, cross, rays, location in the geometrical centre of man) especially when the love of the heart is to be symbolized. A representation of the Lord with his heart in the most 'natural' way possible (in which one as it were looks into the physiological 'inside' of the Lord) misunderstands the meaning of the symbol and distracts from its symbolical character. Representations of the heart (of Christ) *alone* are to be rejected on altars and are forbidden there by the Church (because here it is the person of Christ which must be represented as object of worship) but are otherwise thoroughly meaningful and unobjectionable.

(f) Heart as primordial concept, together with the graphic symbolical picture of the heart, has, because of its original, non-conventional character, the function of an 'archetype', in the sense of depth psychology.[2] This in itself is sufficient to show that we cannot forgo this symbol in favour of a more abstract way of speaking (as of the 'core of the person', of the 'interior', of 'love').

[334]

3. *On the Phenomenology of the Sacred Heart Devotion*

(a) In interpreting historical statements about the devotion to the Sacred Heart, as in all descriptions of religious and spiritual events, the following is to be observed: a distinction

[2] I have attempted to say something in a very simple way about the ascetical significance of such primordial images in my article, 'A Spiritual Dialogue at Evening', above, pp. 220 *sqq*.

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must be made between the practice of the devotion and its subsequent reflexive description. The former can, for example, be genuine, vital and profound, while the latter can yet leave much to be desired in exactitude, originality, and theological precision, and reflect a particular situation in the history of spirituality which is not in every respect permanent and must not necessarily be taken as normative for us in all circumstances.

(b) In accordance with the general rules for the interpretation and evaluation of private revelations, this applies equally in those cases where the devotion to the Sacred Heart is based upon such revelations and where these may be accepted as genuine and of divine origin.[3]

(c) If such historical forms of devotion to the Sacred Heart are to be taken over together with their modes of expression, language, and their style, it should further be noted that from a certain point of view (particularly in fact from the point of view of language and certain individual ideas) there are many devotions to the Sacred Heart: that of the mystic, that of the person deeply moved by his redemption, that of the genuine piety of the 'average' Christian, that of creative originality, that of a form in accordance with traditional norms, even one which contains a certain almost unavoidable dose of existential falsity sometimes going as far as actual pseudo-religiosity ('convulsion', mendacity, and pseudo-fervour). The discretion of a good religious pedagogy will note such differences and will observe them according to which group of persons is to be introduced to the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

(d) This discretion (in the form of 'discernment') is particularly to be observed with regard to the sexes, differences in age and national mentalities. Children will as yet be too immature for special devotion to the Sacred Heart. Expressions like 'Long live the Heart of Jesus' strike a German mentality as lacking in taste and consequently should be avoided among us.

[335]

4. *Some Preliminary Propositions from the Existential-Ontological Sphere*

(a) Honour given to a *person* is clearly to be differentiated from that given to a thing (picture, relic, institution, material circumstance of a person, official power of a person, and so on) and that to an idea (a principle, norm, and so on), and is ultimately determined by the essence of a person in general and the concrete individuality of the person in question in a particular case.

(b) Of decisive importance (from the point of view of the honour to be paid him) is the fact that a person does not merely have 'attributes' (which he is endowed with and which are unchangeable), but also (free) '*attitudes*' towards others which bear the character of freedom, historicity, actuality, momentariness, and unpredictability: these can be historically 'discovered' but never metaphysically deduced.[4] These attitudes of a person towards others (towards himself as another, towards God, towards other persons) exhibit a plurality. In this plurality of attitudes there exists a unity of form which merges the attitudes of the person into one structured, meaningful whole. The previously-given attributes of a person (prior to the free self-possession of the person by himself) are always in freedom taken over, 'understood' (in such or such a way), stamped by this unity. They can therefore be objects of reaction on the part of others in the concrete only *in so far as* they are so 'understood'; that is, for example, they can be honoured *in concreto* only in so far as they have undergone, through the attitudes of the person, a quite definite existential characterization, that is in so far as they have become an inner moment in those attitudes.

[3] Cf. e.g. K. Rahner, 'Über Visionen und verwandte Erscheinungen', *ZAM* XXI (1948), pp. 179-213; also *Visions and Prophecies* (London 1963).
[4] Cf. e.g. K. Rahner, 'Theos in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore 1961), pp. 79-148.

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(c) In accordance with the general concept of heart which we have delineated, it can be said that heart is the original, formative unity of the attitudes of a person. Only a person has a heart (animals have a heart-muscle), that is a core of 'existence', and his attitudes are cordial, that is they arise from a common, inmost central point which combines them all and impresses on them their ultimate meaning.

(d) Hence honour paid to a person is a consenting recognition of, an allowing oneself to be determined by, a loving response to the concrete reality, that is to the attitudes of a person, which have been discovered in their freedom, historicity, actuality, and unpredictable momentariness. [336] Honour paid to the heart of a person is honour paid to the person with respect to the original, inmost, formative centre of his attitudes.

(e) In the devotion to the Sacred Heart the proper and adequate 'object' is always the person of the Lord (cf. *Denz*. 1561; 1563). The fundamental structure of this devotion is therefore that of the cult of *latria*, because the person of the Lord is worthy of adoration. Hence those prayers too are Sacred Heart prayers in the proper sense, in which the person of the Lord is directly addressed (with the naming of his heart) (cf. for example the Prayer of Reparation of Pius XI for the Feast of the Sacred Heart) and not only prayers which address the heart itself directly. Such prayers are quite possible in accordance with the universal usage of human language ('sweetheart', for example, will be said even in profane life by a lover) and the practice of the Church. But ultimately they just as unequivocally mean the person of the Lord (particularly where acts of the person – 'have mercy on us' – are requested of the heart). As the expression of the language of highest fervour they must be used relatively sparingly and with discretion if they are to be genuinely meant.

(f) Accordingly, in devotion to the Sacred Heart the person of the Lord is given the cult of *latria* with reference to his 'heart', that is, to the original, inmost (total-human – therefore bodily-spiritual, and personal – therefore divine-human) formative centre of his attitudes towards us, which we have come to know in the history of salvation. But the ultimate discovery that we have made in this way is that this centre (this 'heart') is determined by the free, unfathomable Love which, as the inmost 'essence' of God, bestows itself upon us in free grace[5] and forms and combines all the attitudes of the Lord. In so far as the 'viewpoint' of the cult of *latria* directed to the person of Jesus is precisely the 'heart' as the inmost core of this person, the objection against the devotion to the Sacred Heart that one could equally well honour some other 'part' of the person of Christ (the face, the blood, the hand, and so on) shows itself to be mistaken from the very beginning. Even though these other devotions are meaningful or even approved by the Church, devotion to the Sacred Heart preserves in their regard its essential difference. The 'viewpoint' of *this* devotion to the person of the Lord is precisely that which is the inmost formative centre in this person in all his attitudes.

(g) While in the dogmatics of devotion to the Sacred Heart it is usual to distinguish between *objectum* (*materiale* and *formale*) *partiale* and [337] *totale*, it seems to us that in this special case this distinction has neither linguistically nor objectively much to recommend it. This distinction is unfortunate with regard to the '*material object*': in language (against its intention) it separates the heart and the person of the Lord too much; it objectively misconceives the character of the 'heart', which is not simply a 'part' in a whole, but the original centre of the whole, giving it its unity; it does not give recognition or expression to the character of the person as indivisible, in whom (in a way different from and more radical than things) the 'part' can be rightly seen only in the whole, because the 'part' is taken over and 'understood' by the personal centre, and the whole of the person can only be rightly appreciated from the 'heart-centre'. 'Heart' (so we would prefer to put it) signifies in the Sacred Heart devotion the 'whence', 'whither', the 'viewpoint' in the cult of *latria* offered to

[5] *Ibid*., pp. 117-124.

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the person of Christ. If as a result the Sacred Heart Devotion could be defined as 'the latreutic cult of the person of the Lord directed to his heart in so far as this is determined by the love of God lavishing itself on sinful men, by which God gives himself to the sinner', then it will again be apparent that devotion to the Sacred Heart does not necessarily exist only where the personified heart is itself addressed. Similar remarks must be made with regard to the customary distinction in the *formal* object of the Sacred Heart devotion in itself (total and partial formal object) and as opposed to the material object. In so far as the 'heart' of Jesus becomes a definite object to our knowledge through the freely bestowed love in which God communicates himself (and not merely his created gifts) to the fallen world, in this case of the Sacred Heart devotion the absolute and relative ground meriting adoration and the object of the adoration coincide objectively (even though not *formalissime*): the love of God bestowing itself from the personal centre of Christ is adored, and this same fact is also the motive why it is adored. Didactically, then, there is no reason, in explaining the object of the Sacred Heart devotion, for speaking at any length about a distinction of the formal object in itself and in relation to the material object.

II. ON THE QUESTION OF THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE SACRED HEART DEVOTION

1. It is theologically necessary and possible to establish the material content of the Sacred Heart Devotion from Scripture and Tradition (in the [338] Fathers and in the Middle Ages), both as regards the more precise content of the object of the Sacred Heart Devotion (the general concept of heart; the Biblical references to the heart of the God-man; his heart as source of life, as origin of the Church, and so on), as also what can be appealed to as honour paid to this heart.

2. Nevertheless this abstract, dogmatic establishment of the Sacred Heart Devotion and the proof of prescription are not a sufficient foundation for the Sacred Heart Devotion of today. The latter cannot forgo the claim to be based upon the 'private revelations' of Paray-le-Monial, or (if you prefer) on the reception (as a matter of historical fact occasioned by them) by the contemporary Church of the Sacred Heart Devotion of today (which has as such not simply always existed); the approval and acceptance by the Church of the Sacred Heart Devotion of today originating in Paray-le-Monial does not signify merely the formal approval of something always possible, but the new creation out of the always valid treasury of faith of something demanded precisely now by the historical situation of the Church. The proof of this proposition lies in the simple fact that the modern devotion to the Sacred Heart such as it now exists, notwithstanding its historical continuity right back to Scripture, has not always existed (the ecclesial-liturgical veneration of the Heart of Jesus; the concentration of certain dogmatic topics under the 'key-word' (archetype) of the heart; determinate forms of devotion to the Sacred Heart; emphasis on reparation in and with Christ) and this 'extra' demands its own justification. This justification of the 'extra' must however not merely justify its 'possibility', but must also be applied to the *de facto* present realization of this possibility. But this justification cannot in the nature of things be derived from dogmatics (Scripture and Tradition) *alone*.

3. A private revelation[6] as a mission to the Church signifies not so much an Indicative communicating something new (which would be difficult to reconcile with the essence of a private revelation directed to the *Church*), but an Imperative which, within the context of a

[6] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Les révélations privées. Quelques remarques théologiques', *RAM* XXV (1949), pp. 506-514; and K. Rahner, 'Der Einzelne in der Kirche', *Stimmen der Zeit* CXXXIX (1947), pp. 260-276.

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particular historical situation of the Church, points out a particular course of action from among the many possible according to the universal and public revelation as the one most urgently needing to be realized. The new [339] feature in such a private revelation consists therefore not in its particular material elements but in the imperative marking and shifting of accentuation within the possibilities of Christianity. An imperative of this kind is possible because, while in the *knowledge* of the faith many things at the same time can be true and good, in the *action* of the faith not everything that is true and good can be actuated at the same time, to the same degree and with the same intensity. Hence the private revelation as a mission to the Church can be conceived as a heavenly imperative interpretation of the particular situation of the Church at this time; it answers the question as to what is most urgently to be done *here and now* in accordance with the general principles of the faith. A private revelation corresponds accordingly in the sphere of the Church to that first and second moment of choice in the life of the individual of which St Ignatius speaks, and whose mode of choice can never be completely grasped by purely theoretical considerations alone, because while the universal can circumscribe the relevant individual it can never (at least in principle) precisely pick it out.

4. Hence the interpretation of such a private revelation must be carried out on the one hand in accordance with the universal principles of mystical theology, and on the other with regard to the historical situation of the Church and of the world into which it speaks its divine message.

5. The situation into which the message of Paray-le-Monial brings the interpretation of an existential imperative must not be seen as essentially or finally that of Jansenism. Jansenism as such and its world of ideas are too ephemeral for that. Also the message would first have become effective in a temporal situation which has no longer been determined by Jansenism; this is something that in view of the actual effectiveness of the message and the rule of the Spirit of God in the Church cannot be assumed. This message must therefore be intended for the situation of modern times in general (which first made its appearance with the French Revolution). This is a period which as a whole is characterized (in a still increasing measure) by the secularization of the world (of the State, of society, of commerce, of science, of art, and so on): what pertains to the Christian religion is losing to an ever-increasing extent its objectifications within the world, it becomes more plainly dependent upon the inner, most personal decision of faith of the individual (it is increasingly less the case that there is a Christian world which can carry along the individual to a large extent independently of his own decision); the individual (no [340] matter whether he makes his decision in a Christian or non-Christian sense) must live in a situation of an outer and consequently also inner ‘absence of God’, therefore in a situation which is characteristic in the life of Jesus of Gethsemane and Golgotha (Mk 14:32 *sqq*.; 15:32 *sqq*.), in a situation where life lies in death, where abandonment means the deepest proximity to God, where powerlessness is the manifestation of the power of God.

6. At this point the message of Paray-Le-Monial and its reference to a particular situation in the history of the Church becomes understandable (right down to its concrete forms: e.g. Holy Hour). It signifies inwardness, belief in the presence of the love of God in the seeming impossibility of its being discovered (because of the increasing sinfulness and Godlessness of the world, from which believers and unbelievers alike have to suffer), reparation. But the right interpretation of these three characteristic notes of the Sacred Heart Devotion of Paray (which they undoubtedly are from a historical point of view) also becomes evident. ‘Inwardness’ is not the individualistic luxury of a religious introversion, but the loving trust, with all the powers of man in spirit and action, in the power of God in the midst of a world in which love has ‘grown cold’ (at least in the sense of a widespread failure of the objectifications of this divine love in the sphere of ‘public life’ in the ‘world’), inwardness as

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a growing strong of the inner man in faith and love without the support of an external 'Christian society'; faith in the love of God in and in spite of the divine Judgement, under whose ire the history of God's dominion over the world seems to be in the process of entering into its hour of darkness (and in this the situation of world history and the 'interior' situation of individual souls seem mysteriously to correspond); expiation as a suffering to the bitter end of this Godless situation with and in the Son of Gethsemane and Golgotha, as a share in consummating the seemingly wasted love of Christ for the sinful world.

7. On this basis the question of the 'dependence on its time' of the Sacred Heart Devotion may be answered.

(a) Several aspects of the style of the Sacred Heart Devotion as usually handed on are dependent on its time in the sense that the lack of certain perspectives in this usual presentation of the Sacred Heart Devotion is explicable in terms of the theological and religious situation of the seventeenth century: the failure to integrate the Sacred Heart Devotion into a Trinitarian context (the Ignatian theology of the *Exercises* is here [341] in fact wider and deeper); a diminution of the living realization of the dogma that Christ is the *mediator* to the Father, who is from the beginning essentially situated on our side as well, so that the religious and kerygmatic *fundamental* formula is not: towards Christ, but with him and in him (in a *shared* accomplishment of *his* life and death) to the Father. But *these* ways of dependence on its time are not essential to the Sacred Heart Devotion and can be overcome without difficulty.

(b) The individual material elements of the devotion to the Sacred Heart are quite simply elements of dogma and in *this* sense the Sacred Heart Devotion is valid for all periods of Christianity. They are so significant and so obviously and naturally synthesized in the concept of heart that one can say: as there has always been a certain Sacred Heart Devotion since the most ancient times in the Church, so there will always be one.

(c) The specific Sacred Heart Devotion such as it was 'newly' promulgated at Paray-Le-Monial and taken over by the Church (particularly by Pius XI: *Miserentissime Redemptor*) is in a very positive sense relative to a situation. But since this 'situation' (in the sense indicated above) is going to exist for the foreseeable future, indeed is only slowly becoming fully apparent in all its breadth and weight, this devotion to the Sacred Heart is becoming more 'up to date'. If and where it (understood in its correct and profoundest sense) has suffered a set-back in recent times, this is not due to the fact that it is no longer 'up to date', but that such a set-back is either itself a sign of 'love growing cold' or is to be attributed to the fact that it was not rightly preached (because, although this was in no way authorized by its essence, a completion such as that indicated under (a) was excluded), or that one has indiscreetly tried to introduce it to people who must first come to understand the first steps in Christianity and who cannot yet bear the solid food of the mature (which is at the same time the most tender) (cf. Heb 5:6).

(d) Whether this situation of the Sacred Heart Devotion in the stricter sense will last until the end of time or not is something which it is not given to us to know. It is not for us to prophesy but to entrust ourselves in humility and willingness in *our* time to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Whoever possesses this humility and willingness can become an agent and apostle of the Sacred Heart Devotion without being possessed of the fanaticism of the 'definitive' and 'unsurpassable'.

[342]

III. ON THE INTEGRATION OF THE SACRED HEART DEVOTION INTO THE WHOLE OF (IGNATIAN) SPIRITUALITY

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1. In so far as the Sacred Heart Devotion honours the Lord who brings about and constitutes our salvation with reference to his *heart*, the Sacred Heart Devotion can rightly be called '*totius religionis summa*' (Pius XI). For this heart is in truth the 'centre': the centre of mediation, as that point at which and through which everything passes to the Father, the definitive centre. To this extent the devotion to the Sacred Heart is not simply a special form of devotion with a few distinctive practices in the prayers used, a form of devotion which could be omitted or replaced according to one's preference by some other 'devotion'.

2. Nevertheless the Sacred Heart Devotion must not be simply identified with the spiritual life as such, even where devotion to the Sacred Heart is not taken as a particular 'form of devotion', as particular exercises in prayer determined as to matter and time. For though the heart is the centre and source of the whole, it is not simply the developed whole itself. And from the nature of things we who do not proceed from the centre but only approach it gradually understand this unifying centre as a reality only when we have to some extent taken and constantly go on taking possession of the developed whole in its really different parts and aspects: the single and multiple realities of faith, the single dispositions, attitudes, virtues in their own inner structure and their own importance. Where this does not happen the Sacred Heart Devotion would ultimately have to be reduced to the thin abstraction of a vague cultivation of dispositions. The formation of a '*summa*' is in the true sense (which does not mean in a strictly temporal sense) the ultimate, the goal, not the way, because in fact it presupposes at least *secundum quid* the *summanda* and their religious applications. And taking possession in devotion of the 'summarizing' centre remains genuinely permanent only if we constantly go forth out of this centre into works produced by love: into a participation in the life of the Lord by appropriating his mysteries, in service of the Church, in love for man, in the accomplishment of the life and labour decreed for us by God. All this has a relationship to the heart of the Lord. Yet if one were to call all this activity itself also devotion to the Sacred Heart, then Christianity and Sacred Heart Devotion would be identified both in concept and in fact. This could only do harm to the [343] Sacred Heart Devotion; it would become so 'general' and 'wide' that its own proper nature would disappear in this vagueness and it would no longer be able to make its own special contribution and bring its own blessing to the spiritual life (which does not simply coincide with it).

3. Proceeding from this (1 and 2) we will have to say that an express and reflex and all-encompassing concentration of the whole spiritual life in the Sacred Heart Devotion (taking due account of II, 7a) is indeed *possible* (that would be a kind of Montfortism transferred to the Sacred Heart Devotion[7]), but it does not form part of the Sacred Heart Devotion as it is demanded of every Jesuit. In this respect full freedom must be reserved to the divine guidance of the individual and the stage of development of his spiritual life. This is applicable equally to the 'dosage' of explicit reference to the heart of the Lord in the spiritual life. The spiritual man never personally fulfils the whole of religious reality in its incalculable multiplicity and intertwined relationships completely, and certainly not at one time. Which religious realities he consciously assumes into his spiritual life and in what degree of intensity, for this there cannot be set up any exact objective which would be valid for all at all times. One can and must take care that certain most fundamental realities and truths (beginning with that which must be believed *explicite de necessitate medii aut praecepti*) are religiously assimilated and realized, and within the compass of these things the Sacred Heart Devotion will also have its place in a spiritual life such as is appropriate for a Religious. But even when this is presupposed, the most varied types of spiritual life (even of Ignatian and

[7] I.e. as Grignon de Montfort aims as far as possible actually and consciously to relate *all* activities of the spiritual life to the mediation of Mary.

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Jesuit stamp) are possible. And with it also the most diverse kinds, degrees and dosages of Sacred Heart Devotion within the whole of spiritual life, which may never simply and universally be identified with devotion to the Sacred Heart.

IV. ON THE 'OBJECT' OF THE SACRED HEART DEVOTION

1. The general concept of 'heart' which we expounded above is also that of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, for Scripture[8] and the teaching and practice of the Church assume, when they speak of the heart of Jesus, the [344] self-same total-human primordial word 'heart' as the inmost original core of the body-soul totality of the person.

2. The object of the Sacred Heart Devotion is consequently the Lord with respect to this his heart. From this it is easy to recognize both what is right and above all what is partially insufficient (merely the corporeal heart as 'symbol' of love), what is too abstract (the 'spiritual inner life of Jesus' alone), in many theories of the object of the Sacred Heart Devotion: these theories proceed either from a physiological concept of the heart (instead of a total-human one) or from an abstract-metaphorical one, which basically presupposes also that 'heart' is primarily a word 'properly' derived from the language of the physiology of the body and then is 'transferred' in a 'metaphorical' sense to the psychological inner life.

3. This heart of the Lord becomes visible in so far as that which gives form and unity to his relationships to us is his redemptive love, in which God gives himself with his inmost life in the Holy Spirit as a free grace: this enters into the history of the sinful world by that giving and gives itself precisely in that it suffers for this sin of the world unto death and endures its own rejection by sinful man, and precisely in this way remains victorious.

4. Because 'heart' signifies the centre of the entire person as a whole (and so cannot be reduced to one of the natural parts which go to constitute a human person or a divine person who is man), the love which is meant as the form-giving unity of this heart is *a priori* not merely the human love of Christ (as the actualization of a capacity of his human nature), but the divine-human love,[9] that is the divine love of the eternal Word Himself, which – and in so far as it is – is incarnate in the human love of Christ, as it brings about its historical presence and salvific single-mindedness in the sinful world, and so provides us with the pledge that it and not the just anger of God is the first and ultimate word of God to the world.

V. ON THE THEOLOGY OF 'REPARATION' IN THE SACRED HEART DEVOTION

1. In so far as in the Sacred Heart Devotion the Lord is paid the honour of *latria* with reference to the redemptive love of his divine-human heart, [345] this honouring essentially involves an equal sharing in the accomplishment of this redemptive love and in its fate in the world: reparation.

2. In the actual economy of salvation of sin and its conquest by the Cross of Christ (where sin was conquered by the Lord by the lovingly obedient bearing of precisely the consequence of sin, namely the distancing of the world from God and death), reparation for the sin of the world (one's own and that of others) consists primarily and essentially in the trusting, obedient and loving acceptance of a share in the fate of the Lord, in a taking upon oneself of the appearance of sin in the world: body, darkness, persecution, distance from God, death.

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[8] Cf. Kittel, *TWNT* III, 609-611; 614-616.
[9] Cf. Philippe de la Trinité, 'Du Coeur du Christ a l'Esprit d'amour' *Le Coeur*: *Études Carmélitaines* 1950, pp. 379-389.

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Verbal declarations of reparation (prayers of reparation) and the 'works of supererogation' as reparation are essentially (useful and indispensable as they are to a certain extent for every Christian and certainly for the Religious) only preliminary exercises and a training in faith and in readiness for that share decreed by God in the fate of the Lord, who having 'become sin' as the Lamb of God, takes away the sins of the world.[10]

3. All reparation, as a participation in the fate of Christ in faith, is thereby 'in Christ Jesus' participation in the fate of his Mystical Body for the salvation and blessing of this whole body.

4. In the 'flesh of sin' in which we live, every supernaturally good work has a 'penal' and thereby expiatory character. As long as this participation in the Passion of Christ is accepted faithfully and lovingly in his grace, every 'good work' has *eo ipso* an expiatory significance, so that it is not in itself a requirement for reparation that in such a work its expiatory significance should be explicitly intended. Where it is necessary to avoid a pseudo-religious introversion and hyperaesthesia (regarding pain and effort) in a certain type of 'sacrificial soul' it may in fact be advisable from the point of view of religious pedagogy that the formal viewpoint of reparation should not be drawn into the foreground of consciousness. The same is true wherever the virtues must still be acquired in their immanent objective sense and content. Like love, so expiation too can in a certain sense be regarded as the 'form' of all virtues (in the order of things since the Fall); but this does not mean (any more than in the case of love) that it should replace or absorb the other virtues: on the contrary, these latter must be understood and practised also in themselves. (This point, too, demonstrates the fact that the Sacred Heart [346] Devotion must not simply swallow up the whole spiritual life into itself.)

5. He to whom this reparation (of Christ as man and of man in Christ) is offered is the Father, or the Blessed Trinity, as the case may be. *To this extent* the modes of expression of a metaphysical theology can and must include the statement that Christ's reparation in this human nature is offered to himself as the eternal, co-equal Word of the Father (cf. the teaching of dogmatic theologians about the double 'moral' subject in Christ as expiator and as recipient of his own expiation). A consequence of this is the metaphysical-dogmatic justification of the mode of expression which is in fact to be found in the Sacred Heart Devotion (cf. the Prayer of Reparation of Pius XI: 'we offer to you [Christ] the atonement which you made to your Father on the Cross'). Yet one may legitimately ask oneself whether this way of speaking is advisable 'religio-pedagogically' and 'kerygmatically', for the language of prayer, particularly in the daily life of the Christian, should be not merely dogmatically correct, but also as simple and comprehensible as possible, and this in such a way that the *decisive* lines and fundamental perspectives of a realistically developed faith are plainly made to stand out and are not obliterated. (For example, it is dogmatically correct that Jesus as man can pray to the eternal Logos of the Father and does pray to him; nevertheless, kerygmatically it is certainly out of place in everyday speech to talk of Jesus praying to himself.) In this regard the mode of speech just named can certainly be described as not being a completely happy one in every respect, and it can in any case be said that it is not essential to the Sacred Heart Devotion and its prayers of reparation. The simple Christian will involuntarily gain the impression, even though it is an objectively false one, that the reparation which Christ offers to the Father is being arbitrarily 'readdressed' to become a reparation which is to be offered to Christ; that consciousness which is so utterly necessary for the simple Christian precisely for his 'co-reparation', that Christ is on our side as our *mediator* over against the Father, that he expiates with us and that we can make our 'reparation' for the sins of the world only *in* him and *with* him, this would almost inevitably

[10] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Passion and Asceticism', above, pp. 58 *sqq*.

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be obscured by a way of speaking of this kind if often repeated. Hence we do sufficient justice to the thought of reparation which is the basic element in the Sacred Heart Devotion, if we preach (and pray accordingly), that Christ as mediator has so made atonement to the Father (to the holy Majesty of the Eternal God) for our sins by his Passion and his death (the wages of sin itself), that he willed us to have [347] a share in him in the expiatory suffering for the sin of the world; we who play our part in the destiny of his love in the world are permitted to and must continue his Passion and death in the mystical body of the Church until the end of time; in the prayers of reparation we solemnly assure him that we want to enter with his grace in deed and in truth by our life and by our death into the sacrifice which he offered to his eternal Father as our eternal High Priest in the sacrificial love of his heart obedient unto death.

VI. ON 'CONSOLING' THE LORD

1. The thought and the practice in the devotion to the Sacred Heart ('Holy Hour') of wanting by our 'co-suffering' to 'console' the Lord (on the Mount of Olives and in his suffering in general) in his *human* grief over the sins and the ingratitude of a world which rejects his love requires today a particularly careful interpretation which is both dogmatically *and* religio-pedagogically correct, if the psychological and religious opposition against the Sacred Heart Devotion is not to be greatly reinforced.

2. Contemplation of the sufferings of Christ (and not merely prayer to the glorified Lord simply as such), and the most intensive possible making-present to oneself of the suffering and dying Redeemer which is so useful to it, undoubtedly belongs to the most important and indispensable 'practices' of the spiritual life, if this is to develop fully and inform the whole of life. This contemplation has therefore of its nature, viewed *psychologically*, the tendency to eliminate the 'time-differential' between the one who prays and the Passion of Christ. (We are prescinding here from *those* forms and effects of an elimination of time which are given in a visionary mystical experience in the strict sense.)

3. The real theological and religious significance of this time-surmounting representation on the Passion of Christ does not consist (to begin by speaking in general) in wanting to be an active participant in the represented happening, for example by acting upon Christ; this would not go beyond the sphere of a fictitious play of the imagination, which does not mean that it is to be rejected in principle, but that it should be relegated to the role of a psychological and (if used in right measure) innocent aid to that making-present of the mysteries of the life of Christ which is here properly meant. The theological and religious meaning of [348] this contemplative making-present is rather this: the contemplator clearly grasps *those* historical events (which as such are in the past) which on the one hand have made the Lord what he *now* is, and without which he would not be in this concrete being here and now ('he who is pierced', 'the Lamb that was slain', 'he who has learnt obedience by suffering', and so on, purely affirmations of the *present*) and in which alone on the other hand that 'law' can be read off which as the entelechy implanted in us by the grace of Christ and of his life should permeate our life and to which we must freely open ourselves.

A contemplation of the life and the Passion of Christ which makes them present can therefore not only as a matter of fact be combined with a prayer to the glorified Lord but joins up naturally in virtue of the direction of its own theological and religious meaning with *such* a prayer; only we must not forget that the glorified Lord is not merely the abstraction of a God-man without a history, but the one in whose concrete reality the most original source and the most real effect of his own history (in fact the 'heart'!) is an eternally valid present. But prayer to Christ cannot, theologically speaking, live *in principle* on the fact that we seek to

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prescind from his (the glorified Lord's) or from our own (*after* Christ) time-situation, in order to pray in contemplation of his Passion. Whatever then may be the psychological character of this prayer in point of fact (in view of the limitations of our consciousness), it will not be possible to propose as a positive ideal that we forget that it is directed in its objective theological structure to the glorified Lord. A 'Prayer to the Suffering Saviour' is, from the theological point of view, a prayer to Christ who has suffered, only it must be seen and realized at the same time that the 'having suffered' is a statement which expresses a very real present condition of Christ. An active consoling of the suffering Lord (as an alleviating participation in the Passion) cannot therefore be founded on the basis of the contemplative making-present of the Passion of Christ much as it may in fact have been psychologically excited to a large extent by such a representation (particularly in its visionary forms and probably more then by the theological foundations by which one has sought mostly *afterwards* to justify it).

4. It is correct to say (and here we come to the theory which is usually accepted today and is proposed in the Encyclical of Pius XI *Miserentissimus Redemptor*) that the Lord knew in his suffering, in virtue of his direct vision of God and of his infused knowledge, the atonement and [349] reparation and so the co-suffering of men of all times, therefore also of those who lived after him, and could by this knowledge draw from this loving share in his suffering consolation for his human heart. Therefore when we suffer with him 'today', this consoled him 'already then'. But before we declare ourselves content with this explanation of the 'consoling' of the suffering Christ, the following should be noted:

(a) It would at least also have to be expressly demonstrated and not simply presumed to be self-evident from the beginning, that the Lord in his suffering was in fact consoled by this knowledge which without any doubt was his, that is that in the divine direction of his human nature and its changing experiences in his human consciousness during his suffering he permitted the comfort of this his knowledge to have effect. (The appeal to the strengthening angel certainly does not exegetically prove it.) It could be asked whether the inconceivably dreadful and boundless depth of his inner suffering at the God-forsakenness of this sinful world did not exclude precisely the sight (as consoling) of his victory (which 'makes possible' and founds our 'consoling'), whether it is not even true that the sight of our 'good' deeds made him suffer almost as much in his torn wretchedness as the sight of our sins. For an infinite love is it not in a certain sense a disappointment even to be accepted and reciprocated in a very finite way?

(b) If something has 'consoled' the Lord in his suffering, then it is evidently *all* the works and acts done in his grace and love, and these in the degree of their supernatural worth and existential depth, and not only those where a conscious and formal intention directed to the consoling effect on the suffering Christ was present in the person performing them. If anything has consoled the Lord it is the whole sharing of the burden of the destiny of Christ in faith and obedience at all times and in all places by all men with his grace, and not only those dispositions and loving protestations which expressly had this in view. Indeed, these latter less so than the others. For this sharing of the burden, in so far as it is accomplished in the brutal daily round of life, on the one hand is the really perfect act of the following of Christ which calls upon the entire man to the ultimate power of grace and heart, and on the other often enough of its nature prevents a man from making explicit reference precisely to this temporal-psychological effect on the suffering Christ. The 'consoling' of the Lord is therefore not essentially dependent on its being consciously intended.

[350] (c) Moreover, the question can be asked whether the ordinary Christian in his normal (not mystical visionary) life of prayer can (or even should) leave out of consideration the fact that in the concrete (even in contemplating the Passion) he is after all praying to the glorified Lord, that in the face of his state of blessedness he can therefore no longer have the *intention*

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of wanting to console him, even though he *knows* that actually his present good work did really comfort the Lord at the time. Is this not expecting of the average Christian a complexity of psychological behaviour which he can carry out only with the greatest difficulty and whose ultimate result can be achieved equally well in a much simpler way? For what is ultimately of importance is suffering with Christ in the sense of freely and willingly accepting, by going out to meet sacrifices half-way, the consequences of Christ's law of life, not compassion in the sense of a sympathetic wanting to comfort.[11] The *historicity* of the Christian economy of salvation and so also the obedient allowing oneself to be put into one's own place in time without attempting to leap over it 'mystically', idealistically or in any other way, also belongs to the fundamental structure of the Christian life. Do we *have* to abstract, then, in our prayer (even if only in individual cases) from the fact that we are face to face with the glorified Lord (to be sure, with him who has suffered) who has now, as we pray, no need of our consolation? We are not thereby insinuating that the comfort is intended directly for the Lord in his condition *now* (which of course no one maintains), but only that where the Lord who is at present transfigured is placed before our eyes in prayer, the explicitly and formally intended act of consoling as a relationship which *wants* to be effective at a moment of his past (which as a suffering moment is in reality past) can be genuinely carried out only with the greatest difficulty.

5. From what has been said we may at least conclude that the explicit intention of consoling the suffering Lord should not be enumerated among the constitutive elements of the Sacred Heart Devotion or demanded of everyone devoted to the heart of the Lord. The exposition of the above-mentioned theory of the possibility of such consoling in *Miserentissimus Redemptor* may be understood on the one hand as an [351] explanation of the objective fact that Christ is consoled in fact by the co-suffering of his Mystical Body (even where this is not explicitly intended), and on the other as explanation of the possibility of an explicitly intended consoling if and when someone should be convinced of being able to carry this out in a genuinely religious way, without thereby necessarily saying that everyone should do this and everyone could do it genuinely. What is essential in the Holy Hour thus remains untouched: the contemplation of the suffering of Christ as the law of our own lives, the practice of and prayer for the grace of co-suffering with Christ, the accomplishment and practice of atonement in and with Christ. By these what is of importance is already in point of fact given in a simpler way: that the head of the Church, even in his earthly life, participated in all that has happened and will happen throughout the whole of history in all the members of his Body as in mourning so also in consolation.[12]

VII. THE PROMISES OF PARAY-LE-MONIAL

1. The promises of Paray are subject to the usual rules of interpretation of private revelations which means in practice: even though they are recognized as a whole as originating in a supernatural inspiration, critical caution is justified and the possibility of inaccuracies and errors in the transmission of the heavenly message by the holy seer cannot be *a priori* excluded.

2. In general with regard to these promises it should be noted that, looked at as a whole, they do not affirm or promise any more than what was promised to absolute faith by the Lord

[11] Cf. St. von Dunin-Borkowski, 'Leiden mit Christus', *Stimmen der Zeit* CXVI (1929), pp. 390-391. This little article is at least instructive in the matter of the psychological inhibitions which are felt in point of fact by even devout and well disposed people who are not at all one-sidedly 'rationalistic'.

[12] For an attempt to draw up such a form of Holy Hour, cf. K. Rahner, *Heilige Stunde und Passionsandacht* (Freiburg 1955).

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himself in the Gospel (Mt 17:20; 21:21 *sq*.; Mk 16:17 *sq*.; Jn 14:12 *sq*.; etc.). What is 'new' therefore in these promises is not exactly what is promised, but the circumstance that what are basically already evangelically promised objects are also promised to devotion to the Sacred Heart. Anyone who has a correct understanding of the Sacred Heart Devotion and practises it in the depth and absoluteness of faith which it involves will not find this 'new' element in these promises any particular problem.

3. These promises are therefore to be interpreted as a whole in exactly the same way as those which are promised in Scripture to the prayer of [352] faith: neither are technical directions for acquiring power over God and the unconditional sovereignty of his inscrutable will; they are given only to him who has surrendered himself (and in so far as he has) in unconditional faith and unquestioning love to the will of God as the absolute – and for us inconceivable – love.[13]

4. Regarding the interpretation of the so-called 'Great Promise' which is attached to the nine First Fridays, reference may be made to what, for example, is said by Richstätter.[14] Whoever is convinced that this promise, *exactly* as it has been pronounced, does not contradict experience or dogmatic principles (as Richstätter assumes) ought if he preaches it to preach it in such a way that it does not become for many a person the occasion, at least *after* the novena of First Fridays, of sinning by thoughtlessness or presumption against the mercy of God.

[13] Cf. for the problem of the prayer of petition: K. Rahner, *Von der Not und dem Segen des Gebetes*[4] (Innsbruck 1955), pp. 78-94.
[14] Cf. *Das Herz des Welterlösers* (Freiburg 1932), pp. 93 *sq*.

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[353]

PART SIX

Life in the World

[355]

23

THE CHRISTIAN AMONG UNBELIEVING RELATIONS

Anyone who has a knowledge of life and does not live in a milieu which one might call medieval will already be aware from the mere title of this essay what dark, confused and bitter questions it summons up. The Christian of today lives in a Diaspora which penetrates deep into the circle of his relatives.[1] Perhaps he is a convert and by that fact alone is singular among his relatives. Among his relations there are mixed marriages, perhaps among his brothers and sisters, perhaps even his own parents' marriage is such a one. He lives in a family circle whose members although originally Catholic, not only are not zealously 'practising', but if the truth is to be told have become completely without faith, sometimes to the point of being actively hostile, of officially leaving the Church. How many of us live thus isolated and as though lost, as though among strangers, divided from them in what is most intimate and ultimate. If these were people towards whom we were otherwise indifferent, with whom we had from the beginning nothing more to do than matters of profession, work, civil usage, then everything would be so much easier to bear; or better, it would only be the burden which weighs on our spirit and heart at the sight of how little the name of Christ is known and loved in the world after two thousand years. But these are persons who are 'related' to us, whom we love, to whom we are bound with a thousand ties of blood, of shared feelings, of life and destiny, of love, in many respects much more so than with those whom we call fellow members in the household of the faith.

[356] How many questions are involved in this situation, how much anxiety and pain! Are there tears more bitter than those shed by a Christian mother when her son renounces the faith of his fathers which is also hers? How does the heart of a mother not tremble when she asks herself whether it will be her belief or the unbelief of her surroundings which will triumph in the hearts of her children! How wounding can ridicule and mocking rejection be, when it comes from those whom we love (oh yes! unbelievers are not at all as refined in reality as they like to make themselves out to be in their official speeches about tolerance). What a heavy burden is often imposed by the conflicts between one's education in and loyalty to one's own family and the education in and loyalty to Christianity, to the Church and the fellow members in the household of the faith! How many are the particular agonizing questions which arise, which the moralist can perhaps answer easily enough in theory, but which remain obscure in practice! There is the observance of the Sunday and of Friday abstinence in a religiously divided family (where to yield, where to insist?), not to mention the difficult questions of Christian morality which may result in conflicts between married couples divided in their religion. What is a mother to say to her child, when the father does not take part in the celebration of his First Communion, for which she has prepared the child with strong faith and burning love? How should she feel when every increase of love on the

[1] In what follows we are thinking not so much of that confessional division where different Christian denominations are represented within the same family and each one takes his Christianity seriously. Yet it cannot be denied that a mixture of confessions is in not a few cases the expression of a religious indifference or a scarcely concealed scepticism on one side or the other.

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part of the child for his father (which she should of course want) is also an increase of danger for the faith of the child? What is a father to do, when his daughter marries without observing the prescriptions of the Church, when he cannot recognize this marriage as valid in the eyes of God? How is he to behave towards the relatives he acquires in this way? Where does discretion turn into cowardice, the courage of one's convictions into the obtrusiveness of a propaganda which has the opposite effect to that intended? How one can be tortured by the feeling that with these relatives whatever one does is wrong: one compromises the Church by one's own mistakes (which the others only too willingly ascribe to Christianity and not to Christians); one is importunate or cowardly; only too easily one falls into a mood of irritation with ecclesiastical authorities, priests, fellow members in the faith, because by their behaviour (real or imagined) they are bringing Christianity (that is, to be precise, in this case the all-conquering splendour of one's own convictions) into disrepute before non-Catholic relations; one feels embarrassment towards others with regard [357] to the popular manifestations of Catholicism (or of Christianity as it is practised in other, southern lands); one feels annoyance when one thinks of 'the others', of that hotchpotch of belief commonplace tradition, clerical primitiveness and doubtful political opinions which one discovers among one's 'own' people; one trembles already with apprehension when the other out of sheer boredom switches on the 'Catholic Morning Service' on the radio (what will it produce this time?); one feels glad and relieved when an ecclesiastic appears slim and has clean finger-nails; involuntarily one makes comparisons to see whether the good which is outside in science, art and brave and noble humanity, is also to be found inside sufficiently clearly to make everyone (that is everyone whom we know and love) notice it and admit that as Catholics we have not given up or been deprived of anything. In any event one needs thousands of reflections, justifications, and (at least inside oneself) speeches for the defence, in order to manage acceptance of the 'concrete Church', because one sees it and life in it inevitably also with the eyes of those who are outside and whom one loves so much that even though we are utterly and unconditionally Catholic we involuntarily react to all this also with their feelings (alas, that is something a normal Catholic from the good old days could not even imagine, and the majority of clerics still belong to them, unfortunately).

But the most obscure and difficult part of these relationships is the question of the eternal salvation of those whom we love. We would, after all, not be Catholic if we did not regard Christianity, the Church and life in her as God's gracious and compelling will for us and for them, if we did not acknowledge God's grace in the Church as 'necessary for salvation'; we would be frivolous, cowardly, superficial and loveless were we to act as though we had no duty of charity to take thought for the salvation of those to whom divine Providence has bound us. That means we have to bear the burdens of others. What burden is heavier than care and responsibility for eternal salvation? The others may laugh or be astonished ('what anxieties people create for themselves!'); but we cannot be among those who think that there is no eternal life, or that if there is, everything is bound to turn out well. If we – who are baptized, nourished with the body of the Lord, living in the community of God's calling, instructed by God's word, praying – are yet admonished to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, if we have experienced in ourselves how easy it is for a man to deceive himself and flee from his ultimate [358] responsibility, can we do other than think with holy fear also of the eternal salvation of *others*, can we then so easily reassure ourselves with the good faith of others?

It cannot be the purpose of a small essay to go into each of the questions already posed by the statement of the title. It must suffice to make a point here and there.

The first is this: we will have to make ourselves familiar with this Diaspora situation within the family. The time will not come again within the foreseeable future when a reference work will note in one family entry the religion of the whole family. Naturally we

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ought to strive for the religious unity of our families. But we are living in times when it can no longer be expected that this will in fact be the norm and in the ordinary way realizable. More than ever we will be strangers even among those whom we love. The words of the Gospel[2] about the division which Christ will introduce into families themselves (Mt 10:21 *sq*., 34 *sqq*.), about making a decision for him against one's own kinsfolk (Mt 10:37) take on again today their original hardness and practical significance without our having to extract from them an 'applied' meaning. This is not the place for investigating the reasons for this change from the point of view of cultural and social history,[3] in order to distinguish what is [359] in itself avoidable from the unavoidable in it. The fact remains. But a fact, when it stems from God (even though it may be the result of a fault), is always a challenge, a duty, and a grace. This is something we must come to see. At one time – as in the Breviary – the lives of the Saints began in an almost stereotyped form by saying that the Saint was born of 'honest and pious parents' and therefore quite naturally very early showed signs of holiness. And still today the fact that the parents are not Catholic is a canonical impediment to Ordination for a convert (*CIC* c. 987, 1). But two mutually exclusive things can yet both be a grace. It is difficult to be a Christian and a Catholic alone in a heathen or secularized family circle. But such Christianity is then never in danger of becoming or remaining the Christianity of a folk costume society (as it has been called). Christianity of such a kind will not confuse the light and grace of faith with a security which is no more than habit and the tendency to continue along the traditional path because that is the most comfortable. The Christianity of such an isolated person must be ever acquired anew, it must live by his own power, it cannot be the sociological effect of his surroundings. It will be more the fruit of exertion, trial and trouble, it will be a tree with fewer leaves and blossoms than the traditional kind, but it will have a deeper root, be more austere and more concentrated on essentials. It will be more personal and less institutional. It will have to distinguish more accurately and more sensitively what belongs to the essence of Catholicism from what in the way it is usually practised is merely the imprint of a particular people, region, or historical period of culture (simply because it cannot afford to hold a brief for all the rest in its family and circle of relatives). But is such Christianity, if and where it succeeds, any worse than medieval and Baroque Christianity, where for the first and last time the world itself was able to give the impression that one was a Christian merely by being like it? Or was one not a Christian even in those days only when one began to distinguish in one's hearing the word of God from the word of man, when one was obedient to the dictates of one's conscience, although (not because) Mr Everyman around one was of a different opinion?

Is not therefore the Diaspora-situation of a Christian today within his own family circle

[2] Cf. also Mt 7:6; 8:21 *sq*.; 10:21,35-37; 12:46-50; 19:29; 24:10; Mk 6:4; 10:28-30; 13:12 *sq*.; Lk 2:49; 4:23-30; 9:57-62; 14:26; 17:34 *sq*.; 18:29 *sq*.; 21:16; Ac 5:13; 16:1-3; 20:30; Rm 16:52; 1 Co 5:2; 7:12 *sqq*.; 10:25 *sqq*.; 15:29; Col 4:5 *sq*.; 1 Th 4:12; 1 Tm 6:1 *sq*.; 1 P 2:12; 4:4. It is remarkable that in the Apostolic preaching there is scarcely more than a passing reference to the question of what difficulties the individual Christian had to face in his own family and what moral problems arose from this. Apparently one must assume that in the majority of cases (in spite of the words of Jesus) it was the whole family that became Christian (Ac 11:14; 16:15,32 *sqq*.; 18:8; 21:5, 9; 23:16; Rm 16:10; 1 Co 1:11,16; 5:10,13; 7:13 *sq*.; 16:15) which is not improbable in the Orient and when the social Structure of that time is taken into consideration. In itself one might be tempted to think that in these texts the conversion to Christianity of a whole 'household' is specially mentioned because of its rarity. But in that case why is there so little mention of the difficulties which a conversion to Christianity within a heathen family must have caused?

[3] In an essay on 'The Prospects for Christianity Today' an attempt was made to show why, from the standpoint of the history of theology, it is not to be expected that the culturally and institutionally closed forms of Christianity in the West will continue in the form in which we are accustomed to them from medieval times. We must simply refer the reader to those considerations. They are equally valid for the religious structure of individual families and peoples. Cf. K. Rahner, *Das freie Wort in der Kirche. Die Chancen des Christentums. Zwei Essays* (Einsiedeln 1953), pp. 54-62.

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something quite 'normal' if viewed in the light of the essence of Christianity (which does not mean that the earlier was 'abnormal')? This Christianity is more personal, less dependent upon the institutional, the traditional, less conditioned by its surroundings. It is [360] therefore more in danger. Dangers ought not to be courted rashly by a weak man. But where they are a given fact they bring with them the assurance of God's faithfulness: in our case, that a Christianity will grow which is less bound up than it was before with religious elements from below, such as are given in the Middle Ages of every culture. If martyrdom represents the situation of the most extreme contradiction between faith and the world surrounding the believer, then the situation we are here discussing is the beginning or a type of martyrdom. But it is of martyrdom that Ignatius of Antioch has said (Rom 3:2) that only here does one begin to be in truth a disciple of Christ.

The second point we have to make appears to be this: the burden which has been laid on the shoulders of us Middle European Christians – as a grace – ought not to be thrown off by our severing our ties with our kinsfolk as far as possible. This *can* indeed be managed today. It is not at all difficult with today's loosening of family cohesion: one can quite early 'stand on one's own feet'; one earns one's own bread; one does not concern oneself very much even normally with one's 'nearest and dearest', and this lack of concern is in most cases mutual. But one ought to avoid doing this and so advancing the disintegration of the family because one is a Christian and the relatives are not. There may be extreme cases of such great danger and hostility that nothing remains except, like Abraham, to leave behind one's country, one's kinsfolk and one's father's house (Gn 12:1). But generally speaking one will have to beware that the offering of one's faith to God does not become the pretext for refusing to parents and relatives what is by nature their due according to God's will itself, that one does not do precisely that which Jesus reproves in Mk 7:9-13. The fact of an individual independently becoming a Christian out of an unchristian family in any case almost always presupposes an above average measure of autonomy and independence of thought and judgement. And then it easily comes about that this 'Protestantism' against one's relatives is extended – and now in the name of the new faith – to things which had been better preserved from it. It is for our present problem noteworthy that St Paul wants the community of marriage to be maintained where one partner becomes a Christian, and reserves the initiative for separation to the non-Christian party. It is clear that the Christian ought to give proof of himself as a Christian precisely by greater fidelity to the natural relationships in which the grace of faith coming from above found him (1 Co 7:12-16). The apostle fully expects [361] from this fidelity divine grace for the family, even where it has not, or not yet, become Christian (1 Co 7:14). The simultaneous demand of fidelity to the new divine call to faith and of fidelity to the Old Man may pierce one's heart like a spear; but this must be endured. Such a demand brings with it many conflicts and problems, the intricate casuistical solution of which is naturally not possible here. Where the heart is filled with both courage and selfless love, where it is not surprised at being blessed with the Cross of Christ (more than with his consolation), it will find the right way to take in these questions. Perhaps it will be laborious and require repeated efforts: but in this case, too, we are not bound to do more than patiently continue to labour at a task which is never finished.

Thirdly, we must add a hesitant word on the most obscure part of this whole question: our anxiety for the eternal salvation of those relatives of ours who do not share our faith and our Christian life. One might almost gain the impression today that we avoid this question out of embarrassment. One might gain the impression that we treat in the Catechism the subject of the Church as the exclusive channel of salvation and then silently pass these questions by in daily life, precisely where they become alive and concrete. And yet: 'How is it with my father who died without the Sacraments because he did not bother about such things although he was "as such" a Catholic?' 'How am I to think of my uncle who left the Church and remained

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outside it until his death?' How often are such questions and many similar ones secretly asked in the most diverse circumstances of life and frequently repressed with an embarrassed shrug of the shoulders.

One thing is immediately self-evident: in no case do we have a real and certain answer; in no case, not even in the case of the 'good Catholics' who died 'fortified with all the Sacraments of the Church'.[4] It is true that in the case of those who died with faith in the community of the Church and with loving hope in Christ (admittedly so far as *we* are able to judge, and this in itself is a doubtful matter) we write on their grave (as in the primitive Church) *N. N. in pace*. We write this, because we are called to [362] hope – for ourselves and for others. But this word of confident hope, which on the notifications of death sometimes acquires far too self-assured a tone, as though everything were not unmerited grace and incomprehensible compassion, is no forestalling of the judgement of God. All, including the good Christians, enter silently into the darkness of God, and no mortal eye follows them there on their way, no earthly ear listens in to the judgement of their eternity.

But this uncertainty for all can be contained within the hope for all.

Certainly the fact that someone – in a way that can be grasped by us – died in the peace of the visible Church is an additional ground for hoping that eternal peace is his, an additional ground which we do not have in the case of the others. We must accept this difference in silent humility: 'O man, who art thou, that thou wouldst dispute with God?' (Rm 9:20). And if one person on earth can with his entreaty stand by another who has already departed from this world, then his entreaty will perhaps be most real when this difference is silently accepted.

But we may, indeed we must, hope for the saving mercy of God for all others too. To begin with, the following is universally valid and today more urgently in need of being stated than ever: 'We must rest secure in the fact that no one is guilty of this fault (of failing to belong to the Church) in the eyes of the Lord, who is living in this state in invincible ignorance of the true religion. But who would presume to think that he was in a position to enumerate the cases where such ignorance could no longer be present, which are so different according to types and variations of peoples, lands, the predispositions of the individual, etc.'[5] This must be said not only with reference to distant heathen peoples and times. It may be true also of those who live among us. It is true that the Church is the '*signum elevatum in nationes*' which is of itself a motive of faith (*Denz*. 1794). But this does not mean that everyone living in its proximity is gravely at fault in failing to see it as the Ark of Salvation. Are we Catholics ourselves not often by our faults the cause of averting the gaze of others from the true nature of the Church? Every man, according to Scripture and the teaching of the Church, has sufficient grace to work out his salvation; everyone who has reached the possibility of moral choice accordingly forfeits his salvation always through his own fault alone, and everyone who finds salvation finds that salvation which is objectively that of the Church which, where it achieves its full empirical manifestation, is [363] developed into the visible membership of the Church.[6] But from all this it does not follow that *everyone* must have in every case sufficient grace, grace frustrated only through grave fault, to permit the

[4] We are leaving out of account the case of someone who is canonized. This is not the place for a theological justification of this 'exception'. It is certainly very comforting. For it is a most hopeful fact that there exists in the Church a declaration of holiness, but that in the Kingdom of God on earth there is no such thing as a 'declaration of damnation'.

[5] Pius IX, *Singulari quadam* (*Denz*. 1647).

[6] On the question in what sense everyone who attains salvation attains it in and through the Church even if he is not in a manifest way by external profession a member of the visible Church, cf. e.g. K. Rahner, 'Membership of the Church according to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical "Mystici Corporis Christi" ', *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 1-88.

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salvation which he has grasped hold of in faith and love, and which may be possessed prior in time to the visible membership of the Church,[7] to unfold in his case within his lifetime to a visible belonging to the Church. If one were to assert this, one would implicitly be saying that every adult who has lived for a considerable time among Catholic Christians and has not become a Catholic has been gravely at fault in not accepting the grace offered to him. But an assertion of this kind is indemonstrable and offends against the love and respect which we owe to the decisions of conscience on the part of others unless we have positive evidence of their fault. It is a theological truth that one can take hold of the one divine grace for one's salvation, without thereby having integrated it already in its total manifold embodiment into the full sweep of the concreteness of one's life.[8] It would be false to think that this process towards the fully developed acceptance of what is really already grasped was in every case capable of immediately working itself out in this world to the ultimate form of Christian life in all its dimensions. It may therefore very well be the case that someone has bowed before God in faith in some remote level of his conscience which is only with difficulty or not at all accessible to us and that the process of the unfolding of this saving event to full ecclesiastical Catholic Christianity has at some point, perhaps very early, come up against some insurmountable obstacle (in forms of thought, reactions of sensibility, habits, prejudices on both sides, etc.), so that in point of fact the person who in the core of his being is in a state of grace finds it impossible to realize that what he is meeting in such Christianity is only the embodiment in a more articulated and further specified form of what he already is in the depths of his being.

[364] Theologians ask themselves what is indispensable to this state of grace in the depths of the heart. They lay down, usually with reference to Heb 11:6,[9] conditions of such a kind that they may be regarded as certainly fulfilled by many who stand 'outside' the Church and Christianity, particularly when one calls to mind that according to the teaching of the Church's magisterium every really genuine moral choice which submits to the absolute demand of the moral order contains (at least implicitly) the acknowledgement and recognition of God,[10] and that there exists in Catholic theology an opinion, up to now uncontested, according to which the faith demanded (as distinct from a merely metaphysical knowledge of God which is insufficient for salvation)[11] is given in a sufficient degree whenever there is given an obedient disposition for faith, an attitude of faith and a readiness for faith, which is possible even where the object of revelation in the strict sense of the specifically evangelical message has not been arrived at.[12] If we keep all this in mind (which can here be only briefly

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[7] Cf. *Denz*. 796; 388; 413.

[8] There is, as we have already said, the *votum baptismi* (in certain circumstances present only implicitly) which can justify in faith and love before baptism. There is a forgiveness of personal sin committed after baptism before reception of the Sacrament of Penance. There is grace of Christ 'outside' the Church.

[9] 'for whoever wants to reach God's presence, must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him'. Cf. also *Denz*. 1172.

[10] Cf. *Denz*. 1290. The fact that according to this doctrinal declaration by the Church there is no moral obligation which is not related to God implies also the contrary: wherever a recognition of the absolute demand of moral value is really present there knowledge of God and a relationship to him is also existentially realized, even though the theoretical explanation of this spiritual process may be only incipient and unexpressed, and perhaps even co-exist with theoretical conceptions which are in contradiction to what has been existentially realized. There really are people who only think that they do not acknowledge God because they are unable to connect the traditional name (with its historical and subjective lumber) with the Inexpressible which they have come up against in the moral and spiritual decisions of their being.

[11] Cf. *Denz*. 1173 (Innocent XI 1679).

[12] We are speaking here of the so-called *fides stricte dicta sed virtualis*. Appeal is made on its behalf, not without reason, to Rm 2:12-16. Cf. the account given of the opinions of Vega, Dominic Soto, Ripalda, Gutberlet, Straub, Mitzka in L. Lercher/F. Schlagenhaufen, *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae* I (Innsbruck 1939), pp. 426-430.

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indicated), then we will not regard the virtues of the pagans as 'brilliant vices' merely because they have a natural goodness, though one preliminary to salvation in Christ and ultimately neutral with regard to it.[13] Rather, we will be able in many cases to leave open the possibility that we are dealing with really supernatural virtues informed by the grace of Christ and producing eternal life. Everyone who is saved is saved only through the grace of Christ. There is no work which [365] might be of use for eternal life unless it is accomplished in the grace of Christ. But this does not mean that all this happens only where the man himself expressly knows that it happens in the grace of Christ in the sphere of his objective, conceptually articulated knowledge. Wherever, therefore, we meet men in our surroundings for whose moral character we can only have the greatest esteem, then perhaps we are in the presence of men who simply do not know what power the grace of Christ and the holy power of God has already exercised in their being. Perhaps. But that is sufficient to make us full of trust and hopeful, for really we do not know decisively more even about ourselves, and yet we confidently continue to hope.

Perhaps in this connection we may also add the following: from our practice in catechism and confessional we are accustomed to understand the axiom '*bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quolibet defectu*' in far too simple and unjustly strict a way. Fundamentally it is correct: one can refuse God in *one* dimension of one's being and of the moral order (by a grave fault), and then the whole man is lost to salvation no matter what religious and moral partial values he may have realized otherwise in his being. But does this mean that the primitive conception is simply false, according to which in God's judgement good and evil works are weighed against one another on the scales, a conception which in itself and in its presuppositions helped to shape also in other ways the theological thought of the Fathers on many points. Is man ontologically and ethically really constructed in so loose and pluralistic a fashion in the carrying out of his existence, that one 'piece' of the man could be quite sound and another quite corrupt, and that then in the final result the whole would have to share the lot of the corrupt part? It will surely be more correct[14] (in spite of all the various species of virtues and vices[15] to conceive of man, where [366] he disposes of himself as a whole before God in freedom, as really stamping the whole of his being through and through[16] (which does not necessarily mean that he succeeds in this 'wholly' at every moment) and that ways of behaviour which contradict *this* decision in freedom do not possess that deep-rooted source in the innermost core of the person which is a prerequisite for an action which is also subjectively gravely culpable,[17] even though such a personally peripheral way of behaviour

[13] Cf. *Denz*. 1025.

[14] Cf. for the problems only touched upon here: K. Rahner, 'The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia', *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore 1961), pp. 347-382; 'Guilt and its Remission', *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 265-281; *Von der Not und dem Segen des Gebetes*[3] (Innsbruck 1952), pp. 98-111.

[15] This distinction does remain in the first place an objective one in so far as the particular act is specified by its object which differs in the nature of things. It also also remains a *subjective* one. For we are not denying that one can e.g. commit a sin against this commandment and yet keep the will to observe that one. But this possibility, which is in a way established by a momentary *cross-section* through the spiritual history of a person, does not necessarily mean that, in the whole history of a person's decisive choice in freedom (which history has a unity and a structure), good and evil lie alongside one another – indifferent towards one another and held together only by being contained within the same person's skin. The real fundamental decision of a person has rather the tendency to integrate into itself the life of the person in its entirety. Anyone who with St Thomas thinks of man as being in hell because he is obdurate and not as being obdurate because he is in hell, and who does not want to maintain at the same time that man could there still have individual (even natural) virtues, must understand what it is we are trying to say here.

[16] Or begins to transform in a particular direction, which inevitably, if no new decision intervenes, gradually becomes effective in the whole of the person.

[17] We must here point out a notable lacuna in the terminological range of tools at the disposal of the preacher.

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may be *objectively* of great and even the greatest gravity. If what we have said is correct, then we may surmise[18] and hope that when we meet a man who gives us the impression that in some particular point of the moral order, and this, be it noted, in the long term of his life and in a manner which in some way stamps him as a whole, has made a decision for what is good in an absolute way, then we have good grounds for surmising and hoping that those deeds and attitudes of his life which according to the Christian norm of morals and belief were objectively not right did not spring subjectively from that innermost core of the person and from that inner clearness and freedom of spirit from which alone can spring a fault which is also subjectively grave.

We cannot close this chapter without expressly touching upon a [367] particular question which is met with both in theory and in the bitterness of life only too often and too clearly: what is the situation particularly of those of our relations who were once Catholics and now no longer are or wish to be? Here there is surely a special problem going beyond the general problem of the possibility of salvation for a non-Christian. Does the Epistle to the Hebrews (6:4 *sqq*.) not say with frightening relentlessness: 'those who were once enlightened, who shared the heavenly gift and received the Holy Spirit, who tasted God's glorious word and the powers that belong to a future life, and then have fallen away, cannot possibly again be brought to conversion' (cf. also 2 Jn 9 *sqq*.; 2 P 2:20 *sqq*.)? Is it not stated in the teaching of the First Vatican Council (*Denz*. 1794; 1815) that Catholics who have once accepted the faith under the magisterium of the Church could have no justified grounds for giving it up or for calling it into doubt by withholding the assent of faith? We cannot here enter into the well-known controversy about the exact meaning of the canon of the Vatican Council, that is whether it is saying any more than that a Catholic cannot have any *objectively* justified motive for renouncing the faith, or whether it is in addition saying that such a renunciation could come about only with subjective fault, or whether the exact meaning of the definition contains something still further. All this we must leave unresolved here. We make only two comments to console those who – with good reason – mourn the loss of faith of a previously Catholic relative. Not that this consolation is meant to remove the mourning and the fear; not as though we did not have the duty of doing our best (if and in so far we are in a position to do so) to call the wanderer back into the Father's house he has abandoned. The question here is only whether while our mourning remains there does not also remain some room for hope for the eternal salvation even in these cases; whether one can say something more than the general principle that we ought not to judge anyone and ought to hope and pray for all. Two things may then be remarked in this regard. To begin with: even on the strictest interpretation of the above-quoted doctrine of Vatican I a quite definite and precisely understood possession of faith is presupposed[19] which is not certainly present without qualification in everyone who was once a Catholic.[20] There can be a form of being a Catholic (even where there has [368]

There are grave and venial sins. In the nature of things these are distinct in essence and not merely in degree. The reason for this distinction does not lie merely in the purely objective significance of the *ob*-ject (Gegen*stand*) of the two kinds of sin which varies quantitatively in different cases. The essential difference is also without any doubt founded upon the essentially different personal depth from which the particular act as related to the core of the person proceeds and, if maintained in its process from the person, moulds the person. If this is correct, then the same *essential* difference (not merely a difference of degree!) must in the nature of things subsist *also* between *good* acts. There are 'light' and 'grave' good deeds. A universally accepted terminology for this is lacking. This is the reason for our having to express ourselves in such a circuitous way.

[18] As regards the *individual* person, there can never be question of anything more than conjecture, even if the theory we have indicated is correct.

[19] The same is true, as can easily be gathered from the text itself, of Heb 6:4 *sqq*.

[20] Cf. Collectio Lacensis VII, 534 *sq*.: the explanation by the theologians of the Council that the Conciliar doctrine does not in any way condemn those who hold that in certain circumstances the conscience of a Catholic who is '*rudis*' may in particular situations fall into invincible error so that he joins a sect with a different faith

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been a relatively intensive practice of religion in youth) which is rather sociologically conditioned by one's milieu and is insufficient as the prerequisite for that qualified disposition of faith which the Vatican Council has in mind. It may therefore happen that a religious development does not in fact progress beyond a provisional stage as conditioned by the milieu and does not reach that personal maturity, that clarity of spirit and conscience and personal responsibility which are the pre-requisites for being able to speak of a gravely culpable renunciation of faith (as a sin against faith as such). Cases of this sort will today be more numerous than in the past. For the young person, even if he grows up in a 'good Catholic' family, is today exposed to so many inhibitions of religious growth, so many spiritual forms of resistance and anti-religious movements (conscious and unconscious), that in many cases it is questionable whether his Christianity (even if practised with interest in youth) has reached that depth of properly personal conviction which can be lost only by serious fault.[21]

A second consideration must be added. Let us suppose that in a particular case the Christian and Catholic conviction of faith has been lost in the period of transition between youth and adulthood by personal fault, whether this fault was directly against faith or whether some other sin (carelessness, indifference in the practice of religion, etc.) indirectly destroyed the attitude of faith. Let us now think of this person as having reached a mature age or being near to death. Are we then able to say that it is certain that this fault directly or indirectly against faith presupposed in an earlier period is repented of and so redeemed only if this person has found the faith again in *that* form in which it was once lost by him? This assertion cannot be proved. Rather, many cases can be thought of in which this is possibly and probably not the case. By this we mean that [369] every free act of choice (whether of a good or blameworthy kind) creates and posits objectifications of itself (habits of thought, lines of association, habitual modes of acting, complexes in feeling, lacunae of memory, etc.) which spring from the free decision and are its result, but which are yet distinct from it and therefore can continue to exist when the free decision in its original core in the centre of the person has ceased through a contrary decision. Moreover, we must also consider the following: there can be (according to the quite usual teaching of theology) a 'virtual', implicit repentance, that is, one in which the person does not directly fix his gaze upon his past action and renounce it as such, but without any such reflection on his past (because he does not think of it or does not explicitly recognize it any longer as sinful) he freely takes up an attitude towards moral good of such a kind that even without any express reflection his earlier attitude is in its essential core given up and rejected. How much of the growth in moral maturity and wisdom of years does take place in this form! If one takes these two things into consideration and in addition keeps in mind what we said above about the possibilities that can be surmised of a very inexpressible faith, then the case is at least thinkable where someone arrives in the depths of his conscience at renouncing his earlier fault and (in the case where he has really lost the faith as such) wins back a real attitude of faith, and is nevertheless unable to surmount the mountain of his acquired prejudices against ecclesiastical Christianity and remains with regard to it, in the manner of a person who has never been a Christian, in invincible error without (new) fault. Consequently we cannot say that where someone has once culpably lost his faith in the Church, we as third parties must assume as certain that he will attain salvation

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and thus – without any real sin against faith – becomes a material (though not a formal) heretic. It would, however, be mistaken and a curious over-rating of the significance for salvation of the value of civic and profane education, if one were to restrict one's search for the '*rudes*' here intended to those who are uneducated in the profane sense. We must rather think of a religious under-development which can be found as often, if not more often, among those who are educated as it can be found among 'simple folk'.

[21] Regarding the individual person it can naturally never be decided with certainty (especially not through a third party) which of these has been the case.

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only if he has returned to Christianity in the Church in a way visible to us.[22]

To many a person who in his, love wanted to hear as clear as possible an 'exoneration' of his relations who are far from him in faith, what we have said may appear a little round-about and laborious and therefore giving no particular satisfaction and relief. But we must not forget that God and his revelation tell us about the prospects of salvation for men above all what we have to know for *our* perspective, not what he sees from his all-embracing standpoint. But our perspective is that of the duty [370] to *work out* our salvation ourselves, to do what we have been called to do. For that reason the demand is made upon us to do in ourselves and in others everything to advance visibly the salvation of God in all its plenitude here below. Therefore for us the ways of mercy which God alone knows and which we have no need to know (because they concern his action not ours) remain in the dark. In fact we are told in the first place by God what *we* have to do. What effects his mercy has in the depths of conscience over and above this, without his salvation being developed even on this earth into the full stature of Catholic Christianity, about this he had no need to give us exact information. Therefore it remains true what Pius IX said:[23] 'When, freed from the bonds of this bodily nature, we come to see God as he is, then only will we realize how intimately and beautifully the mercy of God and his justice are bound together.'

Even though our trembling and fearful heart can rightly even now recount to itself so many grounds of hope for those who are near and yet so far from us, this does not give us any reason (where this hope is concerned with those who still live among us) merely to hope – and therefore remain comfortable in doing nothing. What is true with regard to the heathen in general is obligatory here too, and here especially: Christianity and full Christianity without any diminution or reservation is a grace and a promise of salvation. How could we dare to fail by *our* tardiness, timidity or indifference to bring this superabundant help and possibility of salvation closer to those whom we love? And even if we knew with absolute certainty that in their case as it is their ultimate salvation was already secure, this would not relieve apostolic zeal from all meaning and obligation in their regard. The Church and we in her do not have an apostolic mission towards others merely (and perhaps not even primarily) because these others might otherwise be lost, but because (even prescinding from this) God wills his Christ and his grace and truth and salvation to acquire visible and palpable form and presence in the history of mankind even here below. The historical Incarnation of the salvific will of God in Christ, Church, Word and Sacrament has sense and meaning in itself and not only as the instrument of the salvation of the individual in the hereafter. Only he who puts himself willingly and with self-sacrifice at the disposition of God's historical missionary apostolic calling has the right to hope (hope which quietens his heart fearful for well-loved persons) that God's mercy is victorious even where man himself experiences [371] only his powerlessness and defeat. *We* knock perhaps often enough in vain at the closed doors of hearts through which the Lord himself has entered long ago. And though it is a truth of faith that they will be opened to *us* and to the word coming to them from without only because God opens them from within, we do not need to think that he can be within only if these hearts are opened to that message from God which *we* bring. Whoever is honestly prepared to do that part among his relations which he really can do, and also to make the sacrifices which this will bring with it, such a person can do without all fanaticism and excessive zeal which do not really help to advance Christ's cause; he can also remain silent where talking would be senseless, can imitate the forbearance of God which patiently awaits its time, and can be sure of the fact that prayer, example and the patient acceptance of the Diaspora in his own family

[22] Hence we do not need to reflect *only* on the fact that in the last moments of a man's life, which are beyond the reach of anyone, there may still take place 'miracles of grace' and of the mercy of God.
[23] *Denz*. 1647.

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are more important means for caring for his relatives' souls than exhortation, preaching and similar activities of directly apostolic zeal. No matter how much the contrary may appear to be the case at first sight, in the *long* run a more courageous and more intense apostolate will develop where one is convinced that ultimately every apostolate is an uncovering of that Christianity which God in his grace has already hidden in the hearts of those who think that they are not Christians (and of course who are not Christians in the way in which God ultimately wants them to be), more than where one thinks that God himself has completely lost the contest because *we* have remained unsuccessful with his message in our way of delivering it.

It would be erroneous, against the Christian faith, and arrogant presumption on the part of a creature, were we to think that we knew that all men are saved. If the Lord in speaking of the Judgement always places before our eyes a dual destiny as the possible issue of our existence, then we are clearly bound – theoretically and existentially – to reckon with this double possibility. Every attempt, even an esoteric one, to advance an Origenistic doctrine of an *Apokatastasis* is fundamentally the assuming of a knowledge which is barred to the creature who must work out his salvation in time and not have certain knowledge of it. We have to work out our salvation in fear and trembling and leave to God his secret. If then we forgo both in our own regard and that of others the theoretical and reflective knowledge of what will be, we are also called upon to hope, firmly and unshakably, in the hope against all hope for ourselves and others. Then we may also *with hope* read what is written: 'God has [372] included all men in the rebellion, in order to include them all in his pardon' (Rm 11:32), even if we must leave it to God in the case of this word, too, *how* he alone is to fulfil it. The hope of salvation which we unshakably possess for all loved persons is after all not merely the arousing of the collective instinct of self-preservation, of an animal tribal instinct, but a Christian virtue, given from above by the Holy Spirit. For how could it be otherwise, if we are instructed in a commandment to love God and our neighbour as ourselves, and if we must hope for ourselves? May we not then hope that God, who has himself planted hope in our heart by his Holy Spirit, will not allow it to remain vain? Is something not possible to God even though it is as impossible to man as a camel passing through the eye of a needle (Lk 18:25-27)?

God has placed us in a period of time in which (by contrast with earlier times) there are Christians everywhere who at all times live in the Diaspora. That is our destiny and our mission. It 'can' not be otherwise, if Christ is to be the cornerstone and the sign of contradiction to the end. In a period in which his name has become everywhere a historical visible presence in the story of every people it 'can' not be otherwise than that the contradiction should be everywhere, since it can no longer be brought from outside by a 'hereditary foe' of Christians to peoples homogeneously Christian. Because Christ 'must' suffer and meet with contradiction, we live today in a Diaspora in the midst of our loved ones and neighbours. We must bear it in patience and faith, in responsibility and genuine care for the salvation of these others. We cannot think that we will remain faithful to Heaven by becoming faithless to God's earth. We may hope for all, unshakably and perseveringly, because God's mercy does not have any limit in our powerlessness. This Christian loneliness of ours among those whom we love will always pierce our heart like a spear. But salvation flowed out from a pierced Heart. And it was pierced by those whom it loved.

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[373]

24

ON CONVERSIONS TO THE CHURCH

Since there have been divisions and different confessions in Christendom, there have also been cases of persons changing over from one Christian confession to another, conversions and converts. These occur for the most diverse reasons and motives, and are consequently of many different kinds: conversions for merely social or political reasons, those arising from genuine religious motives, and those for which the former reasons provided the occasion but where the latter became gradually the content and real motivation. There are cases where the convert never in a really personal way belonged to his original confession or was already fully estranged from it, and therefore experienced his new Christian commitment simply as the beginning of his Christianity, and those where the new confession is arrived at precisely *as* the correction or completion of the Christianity accepted heretofore; there are on the other hand those where only the secession from the old, and not the accession to the new, is of real religious significance.

Conversions always made up a chapter which placed a considerable strain on the relations between the Christian confessions. For naturally every confession, in the case of a conversion to itself as long as the most superficial glance did not demonstrate the opposite, presupposed that it was the result of a work of the Holy Spirit bringing recognition of the objectively valid grounds for the truth, and made use of this as an argument in apologetics for the truth and divine origin of its own faith. The other confession on the other hand was then always tempted to impugn not merely the objective rightness of the motives for the conversion (which is natural), but also to do this with regard to the subjective honesty of the convert. But this is quite another matter. The right to this does not belong even to the Catholic *in concreto* (that is, regarding the concrete individual who is never transparent to another and therefore cannot be judged by him) *a priori* (that is, on the basis of fundamental dogmatic [374] considerations), not even on the basis of the doctrine of the First Vatican Council according to which no one who has accepted the true faith under the teaching authority of the Church can ever have a just motive for giving it up (*Denz*. 1815).[1]

Since the relationship between the confessions, at least with us in Middle Europe, has changed not insignificantly as compared with the period of the ‘Reformation’ and ‘Counter-Reformation’, this change makes itself felt also in the question of conversions and their evaluation. We must first, therefore, cautiously clarify the nature of the change which we have just indicated in so far as it is significant for our topic, and then see what conclusions one can be tempted to draw from it, and finally, what conclusions are in reality justified by it.

I

In earlier times (that is to say, in periods when heresies and divisions were historically short lived or were still young) the confessions faced each other in a way which was in every respect utterly hostile: for each the other was false, in violation of the essential meaning of Christianity and of the will of its Founder, and otherwise simply nothing. They had the

[1] Whichever one of the many interpretations of this canon is accepted as being the true one, none of them gives a third person the right to judge a particular individual who gives up the Catholic faith as being certainly guilty before God of a fault which is also subjectively grave.

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feeling that the opposition between them was something *new*, that there was nothing standing between them but the lack of good will or of insight on the part of the individual as such, since, apart from the difference of doctrine strictly as such, nothing divided them, and that this difference should not be, since it ultimately sprang only from the bad will of the heresiarchs (what else could be the reason for this *new* division?).

Today the situation is different: on the side of the Evangelical and Orthodox Christians there are men and at least officially tolerated theories maintaining that the Christian confessions are, in essentials, varieties with equal rights of the one Christian reality, so that union need really only consist in this being generally recognized and certain (in themselves unimportant) consequences being drawn from this relativism within Christianity.

Other Christians in all confessions and especially Catholics hold on [375] to the fact that essential matters divide the Christian confessions, that respect for the purity of the Gospel and for the will of Christ forbids one in conscience to regard the differences in doctrine as insignificant, and that we are and remain divided because God, faith and salvation would be denied, were one to unite without being at one on those points for the sake of which we separated.

But no matter how much the old opposition has remained in this regard, much has changed. We live in an opposition of Christian confessions which in this particular form could not have been conceived by the reflection of the old Church, the Middle Ages and the period of the Reformation, since it did not exist in this particular form at that time. This is something else that we ought not to forget when we explain, exactly as our fathers before us did, that we are separated and remain separated for the sake of the one truth of Christ. We are living in a situation different from earlier times. Let us describe it here from the viewpoint of the Catholic.

The Protestant communities have a long history. But this is not a fact which should be taken as being in the past as though the present situation of the Christians separated from us were the same for them as it was at the time that their forefathers separated from the Roman Church. Their history is a fact for them. Their lives proceed from it. Therefore they can never become Catholics as though they had never been non-Catholics. In history one can never in fact move backwards but only forwards. And the future is never the denial, the simple extinction or annulment of the past, but its continuation, the accomplishment of tasks which *it* lays upon its heirs, but precisely *today*. The Catholic, who is the Christian of historical continuity, ought to be the last to expect that when an Evangelical Christian becomes a Catholic this will be a *generatio aequivoca*. He knows that man is never an abstract logical apparatus, that the motives for his action can never adequately coincide with what the *reflective* reason grasps and expresses of these motives, that man comes into play and is committed as a *whole* precisely where it is a question of the highest insights and the most profound decisions. To the whole man (precisely because as a religious person he is more than the creature of a day, like certain flies studied by biology but with the addition of understanding) there belongs his history. This history of the Evangelical Christians need not and cannot be regarded even from the Catholic standpoint *merely* as a religiously negative quantity. That it is not such in its intellectual [376] and cultural aspects has of course never been seriously called into question by any Catholic (or has it?). But it is not such even in its religious aspect. Catholic apologetics are, it is true, always tempted to look upon the history of Protestant Christianity *merely* as the story of a successive dilution, of an ever-increasing loss of substance in what is Christian. We openly admit that precisely from a strictly theological standpoint (that is from a genuinely theological Church history, which has other norms and categories than a fundamentally profane history of the Christian religion) we cannot regard this way of viewing the matter as in every respect false; merely a simple reference to Mt 15:13 makes that impossible for us. If it is a tenet of a Church's faith that it

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alone is the Church of Christ, it is impossible for her to concede to another community that historical promise which is hers as the Church of Christ. Granted, the question remains how far this difference must become empirically evident, particularly for the view of profane history.[2] Over and above this, the Protestant Christian will view many things quite differently, namely as justified modifications within the Christian way, which appear to the Catholic as signs of decadence; we have all learnt from experience in the last decades that the sense of direction of Evangelical history does not point as unwaveringly towards ever greater Liberalism and Free Thought as we Catholics thought a few decades ago. (Certainly it is also true that many an Evangelical Christian perhaps spoke too triumphantly in the thirties of the final overthrow of Liberalism.)

Whatever may be the exact answer to this question we have touched upon, the history of non-Catholic Christianity is in any case even for the Catholic not *merely* a falling away from true Christianity by a progressive loss. In the course of a long history outside the Catholic Church, though it was not the case at the start of the division or only in connection with the heresy from which, at that time at least, it could not be separated, there have been actualized in theology, piety, liturgy, community life, art, genuine Christian potentialities which in *this* way, that is (expressed Scholastically) in this actuality, in this visible realization of an (in itself Catholic) potentiality, have not been realized with us in the Catholic Church, although they belong of themselves to the actual fullness of the [377] historical realization of what is Christian. A part of what the one Church is called to become, and also can become as the one Church, has attained its realization – at least temporarily – outside of her. This reality should and could be in the one Church, but in fact it is not. It appears to the Catholic and to the judgement of his faith mixed and amalgamated with attitudes, doctrines, precepts, etc., which he must reject as false; it is wanting in elements which are essential to the fullness of Christian existence, but the Catholic does not have for this reason either the duty or the right simply to assert that everything ‘over there’ which is not simply inherited ready-made from the time before the division is false, nor does he have to act as though all these new Christian elements ‘over there’ could be found realized and expressed to the same degree among Catholics. This is true even of matters proper to the faith as explicitly developed. When the Encyclical *Humani Generis* underlines the fact that the Scriptures are a source of the treasures of truth, which is far from having been exhausted because it is in fact inexhaustible (*Denz*. 2914), it is implicitly also saying that every faithful and enlightened exegesis, no matter where it is carried out, is able to lift the one permanent truth of God into the Christian consciousness of the faith from still new aspects, aspects which have not up to now been pointed out or seen in this express way. Who is there who would doubt the fact that Protestant exegesis has achieved this too?

II

We are under no illusion of having adequately described in what we have said the difference between the original and the contemporary relationship of the confessions. But perhaps what we have said will suffice for our purpose. What conclusion does it lead to in our question of conversions? (Again, we are speaking here of conversions to the *Catholic* Church.)

To begin with: what conclusion is it *not* possible to draw from what has been said, although it may appear a tempting one? Often a false conclusion is drawn. It is said that

[2] Nevertheless: if the Church regard her own history as a *motive* of faith in her divine origin (cf. *Denz*. 1794), we cannot assert that this, her uniqueness in comparison with other Christian confessions, is merely an article of Catholic faith contradicted by all the appearances.

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individual conversions are mistaken. One ought to work for and wait for the unification of the Christian communities in their entirety. Anything else is a flight from the historical situation in which we are now in fact placed: one is unwilling to suffer to the end the destiny of a divided Christendom because of a cowardly need for security for one's own part. One thus betrays also the historical heritage [378] of one's own religious past which it is up to us to bring with us as a contribution to the future *Una Sancta*. Fundamentally, then, conversion is desertion. Indeed, it is even a sublime perversion, since the convert wants on his own initiative to anticipate bringing into order what God alone can bring into order, the divided Church. Anyone acts rightly who becomes a rebel *in* his Church and while remaining in it, if he thinks that it is not embodying the will of Christ perfectly. Here and there it is also said (by those whose theoretical conviction is already entirely Catholic), that it is better to persist in the old Christian community in order to promote Catholic truth *within* it, until at least the 'holy remnant' can be guided into the Mother-Church in its entirety.

'What are we to say to such a conception? In the first place, whoever is convinced that the Church of Christ herself as such is divided (which for the Catholic is something different from a divided Christendom), whoever therefore believes that *all* Christian confessions are a long way from being *the* Church of Christ, or (which is the same thing in a milder form) that all together constitute the one Church (which is therefore after all fundamentally the one undivided Church of Christ), must think of conversion as being a superfluous passing over from one confession to another, which does not affect the real question (namely, the division or imperfectly represented unity of the one Church) and can only rest on very secondary grounds (social conditions, aesthetic needs, the desire for 'security' and so on). But whoever shares such a view can never himself become a Catholic. The Catholic Church dare not and cannot accept him. Converts who are merely 'impressed' by the 'uniformity', by the authority (in the last analysis only perceived in a profane sense) of the Catholic Church, her historical stability, her order and extensiveness and so on, are no converts at all. Every priest has the duty of refusing admission to the Church to people of this kind as long as they remain such.

But for the Catholic and for the genuine convert the question is posed in quite a different way. They are convinced that the one Church of Christ exists, that she is not a conglomeration of many Christian communities, that she does not still have to become one but is one, that she is identical with the Catholic Church (which does not mean that the *de facto* Catholic Church here and now is already identical with what *she* – but precisely she herself and not something else – should be according to the will of Christ). They are convinced that the Church is precisely not divided, much as they suffer at the fact that Christendom is divided. They [379] are convinced that the truth of Christ is not 'divided', that on the contrary where there exists a declaration of faith by the Catholic Church which makes an absolute claim to the obedience of faith on the part of Catholics and in so far as it does so, and where *this* is in real contradiction to the declaration of another confession, the Catholic Church alone thus undivided possesses and declares the truth of Christ. One can then still call this truth (if one so wishes) 'crucified', namely in so far as we Catholics do not *act* this truth, in so far as (although we have it and it is told) often we through our sin and spiritual sloth do not tell it in such a way that others can grasp it, and (as we have already said) in so far as this or that truth (which is not denied by us) may be more clearly formulated and proclaimed by others. But the truth cannot be divided in the sense of becoming error and no longer having a clearly determinable and unmistakable place anywhere in Christianity. Now, if anyone is convinced that the Roman Catholic Church is *the* Church of Christ, however much Christian reality there may be outside of her, that she proclaims the truth of Christ without error whenever she speaks in his name in a binding way, that furthermore whoever recognizes the Church as such must according to the will of Christ belong to her, and this also in the dimension of her social and historical external form which she received

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from her Founder himself, for such a person the answer to the question of conversion must turn out quite differently from the answer given above. There can be no question of desertion. For no one can be called a deserter who submits himself to the truth of Christ and strives to do his will wherever he recognizes it. It is not a question of a need for security which we feel in ourselves, but the simple acceptance of a security (if one wants to call it this) which is accorded us by the authority of the Lord in the Church, which if it exists (and this is the conviction of the Catholic and the convert) renders it meaningless and indeed perverse to want to live 'less securely'. The convert himself, after all, does not flee from the tragedy of the division of Christianity. Or does he no longer suffer over it, merely because he has become a Catholic? Must he not, now that he belongs to the old Church again, more than ever feel the weight of guilt of those forefathers, now become also his own, who once succeeded by their sin in deforming the old Church to such an extent that the appearance of right and – who can deny this *a priori* – subjective good faith could be with those who thought it a duty to seek Christ and his Church elsewhere? Nor does he deny his own historical past. For it is [380] exactly his conviction that it cannot signify a final end, that he must go beyond it, if he is genuinely to preserve it. Nor does he return home simply to *that* Church which his fathers once left, but into that Catholic Church which in point of fact would not be as it is if there had been no Reformation, into that Church which is to grow precisely also through his conversion towards that condition which according to God's design it will one day have, namely when it is the unity of the full realization of all that is Christian.

If *the* Church of Christ is to be found in the concrete in the Catholic Church and if according to the will of Christ it is necessary for salvation to belong concretely to this concrete Church (and without this conviction one is not a Catholic and cannot become a Catholic), then there is no longer any room for asking what consequences follow from this: whether by means of it anything else will be put in order; whether one could do more here or there; whether this or that is retained or lost which one could quite rightly in itself retain; there is only one thing to be done: to obey the will of Christ, unconditionally and without question. Naturally certain particular questions will remain open which, as will be readily understood, we cannot embark upon here, as for example the somewhat 'casuistical' question as to how long a person who believes in the Catholic Church and has recognized the duty of conversion may yet 'postpone' the actual conversion for this or that reason. All human activity has in itself and therefore also here a certain temporal latitude within which it can be activated without failing its time. Life can thus pose this practical question, the answering of which would here force us into too many digressive considerations. But in whatever way the casuistical answer may turn out in any individual case, one thing must remain clear: if the one Church of Christ already exists and it is objectively the will of Christ for every Christian that he belong to it, then if anyone has this conviction[3] he must enter the Church. If he does not have this conviction, then neither on the part of the individual person nor on that of the Catholic Church is there [381] present either a compelling or a justifying reason for conversion. What attitude other Christian denominations may take up towards conversions to them without this single conviction is something we can here leave out of consideration. A Catholic priest at any rate would have to say to a Christian who is thinking of becoming a convert: 'As long as you do not hold the Catholic Church to be the only means of sanctification in the sense we have described, you cannot as far as this Church is concerned

[3] Perhaps for the sake of accuracy we ought to add here that the conviction in question is that which a person must have (and is right to demand) where he has to make decisions affecting him deeply and in the whole of his being, a conviction, therefore, which has a greater content than a merely theological, rationally 'well-founded opinion' (cf. *Denz*. 1171). The conviction here in question is deeper and more comprehensive both in its penetration to the personal core of the individual and in its coming through the light of the grace of faith, which makes possible a clearer view of the motives of faith.

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become a convert to it, and as far as you are concerned (for you are after all a Christian) such a conversion would be desertion. But if you *have* achieved this conviction by the grace of God as a moment in your Christian faith, then you *must* become a convert. Then your conversion is no desertion but your duty before God and your conscience and a part of that history in which Christianity strives for unity. Since this history is always and essentially, in spite of all solidarity in fortune and misfortune the history of the decision of each individual conscience, and no one is released from the duty of obeying the call once it has reached him simply because others have not yet heard it, so you cannot put off this act of obedience for the reason that the community to which you have until now belonged has not performed it or because you may presume that it does not yet as a whole recognize this duty.' Any other attitude would amount to saying that the Church of Christ is the sum of the Christian confessions or has still to come into existence. In such questions one remains true to the future of one's stock, to the community from which one springs, to one's people, not by planning that future according to one's own ideas and wanting to calculate beforehand the historically correct point for one's intervention, but by obeying and trustfully obeying in such a way that by this obedience, like that given by Abraham, one best serves the brethren with whom one knows oneself to be intimately bound. If this were not so, we would all still be Jews or heathens. For becoming Christian was after all always a matter for the individual and wherever it really happened was never a collective act. But becoming a Catholic must rest upon a conviction of faith with regard to the Catholic Church which is qualitatively the same as the conviction of faith with regard to Christianity in general. Here, as there, there can be no waiting for the *Una Sancta* of all men or all Christians. This can only come about in so far as the individual does *not* wait.

[382]

III

Has, then, the changed relationship between the Christian confessions, with which we began, no significance at all for conversions? Indeed it has.

We have said that the convert is in many respects the heir of a past which must be valued as positively Christian. But this means that the convert should bring this heritage with him into the house of our common Father since by this means the Church can also become richer in Christian realizations. One should be able to notice that these converts were once Protestants. They should not regard their heritage merely as something past, but as charging them with a mission to their new Church. The Church is not simply a house and a regiment which remain the same whether many or few live in the house or are members of the regiment. She is the Body of Christ which itself grows when its members multiply, a Body which does not only give to its members but also receives from them. Just because we must concede to our separated brethren whom we must not judge that even before their conversion they were Christians and in good faith, it follows that, in the depths of their grace-filled being (because they were baptized and justified by faith and love) they already were in a radical and incipient way what they now become as converts in an express way in the dimension of the social visible nature of the Church. But this means that their conversion is (precisely in those cases where they were already really Christians, that is men who have staked their life and death upon Jesus Christ our Lord) a becoming conscious of what they already were. What they actually had to give up, namely the error which up to now separated them from the profession of the true faith and the unity of the Church, in so far as it did so, was even beforehand not the reality of their Christian existence but its hitherto unnoticed contradiction. It is this they give up. But they should as far as possible retain what they have themselves already inherited as Christian realizations and developed for themselves, even if and

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particularly if they should not find these realities in the same degree of clarity in the home to which they are returning. Why should they not be to their new brothers in the faith an example and a stimulus to reverence and love for Holy Scripture and the daily use of it? If it is true that particular peoples are called each in its own way and in its own special accentuation to live and represent the Christian virtues, why should converts from peoples which are still almost completely separated from the Catholic Church not be able to [383] insert a new trait into the picture of Christian life in the Church? If according to the words of Pius XII there should be and is a public opinion in the Church, why should converts (each in his place and in a way befitting him) not make themselves heard within the Church in order to give to the Church the advantage of the experiences of their Christian life before their conversion?

The change in the relationship of the Christian confessions to one another has for the convert still another side. One must in the first place call to mind that the convert does not join the Catholic Church 'in general and as a whole'. He meets the Church very concretely: in the priest and confessor whom *he* happens to meet, in the sermon which *he* happens to hear, in the community in which *he* must live. *This* Church he often cannot choose. She is in most cases simply given by force of circumstance. It is true that he always finds there also the grace of the Church as a whole, the foundation-pillar of truth, the office of Christ, the concrete word of forgiveness and the true body of Christ in the Sacrament of the altar. But in this concrete Church of his he not infrequently finds – this cannot be hidden under a veil of silence because it is true and it would be dishonest and cowardly to hide it – a Church which deprives him of much that he hitherto possessed, the continued possession of which his being a Catholic in no way forbids him to desire. Perhaps he comes from Church Services which together with complete poverty were yet rich in devotion reverence, and recollection, and now finds a Church Service where the most beautiful liturgy is 'got through' in a business-like and undevout manner. Perhaps up to now he has heard many sermons which were preached from a penetrating faithful meditation on the Word of God in a way close to and filled by the Scriptures, and he now hears in the Church, which he has acquired as the pearl of great price with so many sacrifices, sermons – such as are heard with us only too often. Perhaps he had nourished his spiritual life on the powerfully simple profundity of so many Evangelical hymns, and he must now live in a district where the Catholic hymn-book (sparingly and badly sung) is really much poorer in religious substance. Perhaps he hungers for a word – a good Catholic word merely expounding the Council of Trent – on God's grace as justifying us sinners without any merit on our part, for an echo of the '*tu* solus *sanctus*' of the *Gloria* of the Mass, for an explanation of the '*per evangelica dicta deleantur nostra delicta*' which we pray every day, and he hears, in the only place where *he* can hear, perhaps, too many moral [384] exhortations. The convert may easily be overtaken by a general feeling of homelessness. For the consciousness of being in one's religious home is not built merely upon the conviction of the truth of the Church as that founded by Christ. How many things in the Church, which fill the life of the Christian in the concrete, are of such a kind that they can be good, beautiful, in the true sense 'edifying', and yet are not necessarily so: they may easily be quite otherwise and so have an 'alienating' effect on those who are not accustomed to them from youth and come from another historical milieu. One who is in the religious sense an absolute beggar will find everything in the Church when he enters it to be fine and satisfying. But this is precisely what the convert is not, if he comes from a vital Protestant Christianity to the Church. He will in fact fail to find much in his 'concrete' Church which he is entitled to expect and search for and he will in fact lose many things which perhaps he has had up to now. He will comfort himself with the faithful consciousness that he has done what he had to do: to find Christ where he wants to be found, in his Church.

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[385]

25

SCIENCE AS A 'CONFESSION'?

What we have been doing or at least have tried to do on this day[1] has clearly been this: to establish the correct relationship between that which we know and that which we believe. We have done this by setting out from what we know, that is from the picture of the world presented to us by contemporary science. This process is quite legitimate, if only for the simple fact that we who are placed in our time and hence in its stage of understanding of the world cannot do anything else. But if this mode of procedure is not to give rise to the impression that it is the undisturbed, autonomous and self-sufficient fixed measure of everything else in this question we must at the end ask the opposite question as well, namely how this relationship of the scientific world-view and the divine truth of faith will look if examined from the standpoint of the truth of faith.

Man finds himself already placed in a world as soon as he begins to assume responsibility for his being. This world is not merely a world of facts, if only because facts are always given to us as known and therefore in perceptions and notions. The world in which we found ourselves placed as we began is a world of pieces of knowledge, opinions, conceptions, convictions and the norms and modes of behaviour resting upon them; it is a world already formed by the men who went before us, so that we began with a world-view handed on to us. It is always the case that we begin with not only a pre-given world as a thing, but with a pre-given world of the spirit. This spiritual datum, which we can never adequately nullify, is of a two-fold kind: a metaphysical datum and a historical datum.

A metaphysical datum: by this we mean that every possible attempt to build up a world-view by the experimental handling of things already [386] presupposes in the very first step a whole series of metaphysical, pre-empirical principles, which, being presupposed as universally valid, can to some degree he verified in an always particular experience but can never be properly demonstrated by means of it: that reality exists, that it always and everywhere obeys the principle of contradiction, that there obtains some connection and homogeneity between realities in spite of all differences, that everything has a sufficient reason, and so on. The reason and the evidence in justification of such *a priori* structures of thought and being are disclosed only to one who in a free act of confidence entrusts himself to them; there is no standpoint outside of them from which they might be judged.

But our intellectual beginning also sets out from a historical datum which we can never adequately escape by going back behind it. We always begin as individuals with a world-view already formed and handed on and not merely with metaphysical principles, even if we set out to substantiate and correct this world-view. Here too the starting-point is a previously determined law of our spiritual Odyssey. Even though we may revolt and protest against it, though we may look upon it with the greatest distrust, we are still not free from it; for even in the protest we are taking up an attitude to it, we are occupied with it and not with something else, we are protesting against something that we would not have to protest against if it did not exist. We would be able to build up an outlook upon the world which was absolutely independent of any other person only if we could succeed in bringing it about that we had never heard another person, that we had never spoken a language learned from others, that we had never read a book, and yet had advanced beyond the experience of a new-born infant or

[1] This article is the text of a discourse given to a small group of natural Scientists at the conclusion of their meeting together for the purpose of Christian recollection.

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of a wolf. No, man can in principle never adequately catch up with the presuppositions of his spiritual being, any more than he can, in spite of personality and freedom, go back behind his biological inheritance in such a way that it would no longer be the permanent basis for his self-determination, which is only possible as active because the biological system of his inheritance as passive is open upwards, that is it is multivalent. Man's world-view is essentially historical. This is equally true of the scientific world-view. For this, too, receives guidance a *priori*, not indeed primarily regarding its individual contents, but in the selection which it makes of its object out of a number of possible objects in itself much larger in the direction of its inquiries, and so on, and this *a priori* selective principle of natural science, which [387] science itself does not stop to examine since it is not one of its objects is itself historically conditioned. We can only discover what there is to be found in the direction in which the voyage of discovery set its course. The direction of the inquiring gaze, of the tentative sending out of feelers beyond the limits of the already known is not conditioned by the object (which is not yet grasped), that is to say not by the thing *concerning* which science discourses, but is determined by a previous decision which 'unscientifically' holds and upholds in its grasp the particular science and therefore cannot be made subject to critical examination by this science. Even the subsequent success of discovery does not justify the breakthrough of discovery. What has been discovered can never tell us what was overlooked and missed and whether what has been missed would not have been more important and even spelt salvation. Neither an individual nor a historical epoch can break out in all directions at the same time in order in this way to discover everything. Therefore every conquest is also at the same time a renunciation: every blessing a curse. And the only question is, what one can renounce in one's conquest without the renunciation becoming a *fatal* curse.

Man has, then, a world-view which has metaphysical presuppositions and which is historical, that is a sum of realities given to him as such in knowledge and activity which constitute in the limited and conditioned singularity of their combination the immediate context of his existence. On both grounds the truth of religion, that is the knowledge of the existence of God and belief in God's historical act of revelation in Jesus Christ, is *a priori* to a scientific picture of the world. Religious belief springs from a point of human existence which is more original than the point of origin of scientific reflection. Since the truth of religion, as we shall now proceed to show in more detail, is already in possession at that point in the existence of man where lie the presuppositions of science which it itself cannot go beyond, the world-view presented by science is not a court of appeal against religion. Certainly we must always insist on and work for the fact that there should be no double truths, that is truths contradicting one another, that genuinely sober, careful science conscious of its limitations and its hypothetical character does not contradict faith, that in the case of an apparent conflict both sides must seek in honest self-criticism where the reason for the apparent contradiction is to be found, but religion is not thereby simply at the mercy of science and its world-view. It is higher, because of an earlier origin, because [388] sprung from a more original act of existence. This we must now show more clearly.

Man in forming a view of the world knows that he is in this world-view finite, that is, that the finite presents itself to him against the background of an unending series of questions and possibilities. He has a relationship therefore not only to what is given and to what is immediately discoverable in the field already circumscribed by him – all of which together constitutes the world of his particular world-view – but also, indeed primarily and ultimately, to what does not belong to it, what remains distant, what is horizon and background of his world, which precisely as unseizable and unseized discloses the permanently limited and historical character of his world and its image. The inexpressible is the ground of his expression; that of which there can be no image renders possible his world-image. The objective ultimate ground of all reality, which is present only by precisely *not* being a part of

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our world-image, and which is the end-goal of our movement to acquire a view of the world, a goal essentially beyond the reach of our own power, we call God. That is why knowledge about God is from the beginning qualitatively different from the knowledge which strives after a view of the world. God is not a part of the world but its pre-requisite; he is not an objective piece of knowledge alongside other objects, but the endlessness always already present prior to the movement of knowledge, the endlessness within which it runs its always finite course. God is not the final hypothesis resulting from a sketching-in of a rounded picture of the world, he is on the contrary the single thesis which is posited with every hypothesis which we use to build up our picture of the world. For always, in every case of the positing of a picture of the world, prior to its construction in detail there is presupposed the fact that it is ruled by meaning, design, mutual relationship between the multiplicity of the things of the world which are combined for us into one structure, and so every world-view at the same time asserts an *original* meaningful unity which is prior to the multiplicity. Even beyond this, the recognition of the limitation and openness of a world-view on which all science lives and of its liability to critical questioning is itself only possible in virtue of the *a priori* implicit affirmation of an asymptotically approached, infinite being, whom we call God.

Thus all organizing of the world, all representing of the world, all grasping of the multiplicity of things in ah ordered whole, only takes place by means of a previous reaching forward to the unimaginable, the [389] unintelligible, to that which is not a part of the world and of the world-view but stands behind all multiple world-reality as an unintelligible endlessness not to be reached as a moment in the world and its laws, to that which we call God and which, since precisely as such a transcendent ‘Whither’ of knowledge of the world and ‘Whence’ of the world itself it cannot be thought of as a thing, must rather be thought of as a spiritual person, particularly since it is also the basic ground of similar personal realities in the world.

Christian metaphysics has always known about this transcendence of God and has expressly asserted it. It has always said that God is not a part of the world subject to experience and to calculation, not even its highest coping-stone. It has always known, therefore, that God does not form part of the world-view as its ultimate concluding hypothesis, but is for the world and its knowledge the *a priori* which precisely does *not* fall as one case within the system of laws of the world but is their presupposition; this presupposition cannot be directly envisaged by man’s reason, cannot be made immediately its object, but rather is always indirectly known as the unlimited to which the limited object points, as the unconditioned to which the experience of multiplicity and its conditioned nature points, without its being on that account given in itself into the grasp of man.

As we have said, Christian metaphysics has always known this. But paradoxical as it sounds, one must say that it has too little *lived* it. It was unable in earlier times to accommodate very expressly in a living way into the feeling and into the real process of existence what in itself it knew. For the world was small; or better, the world-view was so unassuming and easily surveyed that practically in every direction its limit was quickly reached; it was imaginatively constructed with its spatial and temporal dimensions in such a way that for concrete experience God became almost something like a part of the world, who was certainly in heaven, but in fact in the heaven which was a homogeneous continuation of the spatiality of the world; the world offered in its events continually, almost at every moment, happenings in which God seemed to be at work palpably as an object (*Sache*) and not merely as a transcendent First Cause (*Ursache*).

Today the situation has quite changed through the transformation and the inestimable deepening of our world-view. The world has become a quantity rounded in itself, which is not really open at various points where it makes a transition to God, which does not suffer at

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determinate [390] points observable by us the causal impact of God on it (if we prescind for the moment from the supernatural history of salvation), but only as a whole and very undemonstratively does it point up to God as its precondition. Because the world as a whole, while expressing *itself*, only speaks silently of God by leaving unsaid the ultimate word which is proper to it, it is possible to miss hearing this call of silence, it is possible to think that God cannot be found because one always encounters more of the world the further one's investigation penetrates into it. In reality, however, this experience is not the genesis of atheism, but the discovery that the world is not God. There was to be found towards the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries a theoretical and practical atheism which really was so unpardonably naive and so culpably superficial as to assert that it knew that there is no God. It did not produce any great intellects, and it belongs essentially to the past, even though it has only today become a mass psychosis and the dogma of a militant political *Weltanschauung*. The case is quite different with 'troubled atheism' if we may so call the phenomenon which we are contemplating. Alarm at the absence of God from the world, the feeling of no longer being able to realize the divine, consternation at the silence of God, at God's shutting himself up in his own inaccessibility, at the senseless secularization (*Profanwerden*) of the world, at the sightless and faceless materiality of the laws of the world up to the point where it is no longer merely a question of nature but of man – this experience, which imagines that it must interpret itself theoretically as atheism, is a genuine experience of deepest existence (even though a false interpretation is partially bound up with it) which the common thinking and speaking of Christianity is far from having learnt to take into account. Fundamentally, however, it is only the realization that God does not belong within the world-view, that the real God is not a Demiurge, that he is not the spring in the clockwork of the world, that wherever anything happens in the world which forms part of the 'normal' make-up of the world it is always possible to discover for it a cause which is not God himself. This realization, which corresponds only to a hypothetical atheism postulated for the purpose of the worldview, and which Thomas Aquinas has already materially established when he says that in the natural order of things God acts through causes distinct from himself, this realization of troubled atheism is fundamentally only the growth of God in the spirit of mankind. We now experience in a novel way and at an unprecedentedly radical level what we always [391] knew notionally with the First Vatican Council but always soft-pedalled, that God is inexpressibly elevated above everything that is or can be thought outside himself. If this is true – and it forms part of the foundations of the Christian faith – then he is elevated above every expressible statement of the world; he does not belong within such a statement; he can be spoken of only in a qualitatively different kind of statement. That this is so is realized by mankind today, since it has come gradually into possession of a scientific picture of the world which is as profane as the world which is not God, since he is inexpressibly elevated above it, so that there obtains no analogy between it and him which would not immediately reveal itself as surrounded by a still greater unlikeness. The truth of God and the view of the world are two things. We are just discovering today that one cannot picture God to oneself in an image that has been carved out of the wood of the world.

The academic of today has the duty which is at once pain and grace of accepting this realization, of not suppressing it in a hasty and cheap apologetic for an anthropomorphic 'belief in God', of interpreting it rightly, that is, of understanding that it has in truth nothing to do with atheism in the proper sense. Let us freely admit to ourselves the crisis of faith. It will do no harm. We cannot discover God ruling in this world of ours quite so naively as was done in former times. We cannot do this, not because God is dead, but because he is greater, more nameless, more in the background, more incomprehensible. God *is*: that is not a proposition which one can range alongside the other propositions which constitute science. God is: this proposition is more original than any meeting with the world because – whether

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we have heard it or missed hearing it – it is already stated when we begin in wonderment to ask in the sciences how we can intellectually organize the world in which we find ourselves in order to dominate it and snatch away from it a part of its dominion over us. But because the proposition 'God is' is of such an utterly different kind, because though it can be heard as pre-stated in all other propositions its sound can also by that very fact always be drowned by all these other propositions, since in our scientific-worldly-experimental knowledge its object makes itself known through that of other propositions, and never as such for itself and alongside of other objects, for that reason God is so far away. We are far away from him, because he is the unconditioned and illimitable, whereas we are conditioned and it is the lot of our knowledge to grasp by delimiting. The world-view and the [392] truth which is proper to it, specific, creaturely, finite, is the sum of what can be expressed, delimited, calculated; but the absolute truth that God is, is the affirmation that he is the incomprehensible whose extension does not fit into the system of co-ordinates and areas which we set up to express a tangible reality by catching it up in this net of limitation. Such knowledge cannot have the definition, the exactness, which is appropriate to that knowledge which builds up the world-picture of today. Not because the former is less certain and more vague than the latter, but because it is the knowledge which intends what cannot be defined, whose content masters us and not we it; in which we do not take hold but are taken hold of, in which is stated the only self-evident reality which is by that fact incomprehensible to us. If great spiritual processes have their meaning and their promise in spite of the fault and the foolishness of men, out of which they grow with one – but only one – of their roots, then the crisis of faith, the existential anguish of our time in case God should be lost to it, an anguish and a feeling which does not grow only out of the malice and superficiality, the pride and moral fault of men, also has its meaning. God becomes greater. He recedes into a distance which first makes it possible to glimpse his boundlessness. We Christians can be bound by a feeling of brotherhood, not to the militant atheists, but quite certainly to those who are agonized by the question of God, those who are silent, reserved, averse to noisy conviction: all of us have called upon the silent incomprehensibility of God with or without the name, both in us and in them the question of the most exact picture of the universe as a whole is not one that answers itself, they and we have experienced something of what we read in the Scriptures: 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'; we hold the opinion concerning them, since we have no right to judge them, that they only think that they do not believe; we know of ourselves that we rightly express what is present in them too in the centre of their spirit and the depths of their conscience without their being able themselves to articulate it conceptually, namely, that everything is encompassed, sustained, known by the knowing and loving, ineffable mystery which we call God. This is the truth of truths, the truth which makes us free; the truth which opens. Without it everything limited, every individual truth within the picture of the world becomes the prison in which man dies the death of an animal – although a clever one. This one truth leads indeed into the incomprehensible, the immense, into a dimension in which we are disposed and do not dispose, the adorers and [393] not the rulers; we are taken into a vastness in which we cannot by ourselves find our way, we are caught in the grip of a destiny which is not guided by us; but the courage, or better, the believing and trusting love which entrusts itself to such incomprehensibility is the act in which man assents to his own most intimate being without tremblingly failing in his speech before it, in which he assents to the endless possibility of endless reality.

Admittedly, when we have related, as we have done up to now, the view of the world and the truth of God by contrasting and connecting them, we have not said all, perhaps not even what is most decisive of all that as Christians we must say. For Christianity is of course not merely the silent honouring of a nameless God, it is tidings of God, word from God, a multitude of single, conceptually articulated propositions about God, it is history, institution,

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authority, commandment, manifold religious practice. Here, naturally, apparent antinomies and cases of conflict between the modern scientific picture of the world and this religion are more easily understandable and have more often come about than if it were only a case of a merely metaphysical belief in God, which is after all somehow abstract, and of today's world-view in relationship to it. For much as God's word is the word of God, much therefore as it is received at a point of existence which is prior to the scientific articulation of our empirical meeting with the world, and much as from this point of view it is consequently unassailable from the standpoint of a world-view, yet the divine truth of the word of God is still expressed by means of human concepts and words. But these are not only of exclusively metaphysical-metahistorical provenance, they are therefore not merely of that nature which is proper to those concepts (in spite of every kind of historical relativity) in which we articulate our knowledge of God which is metaphysical and prior to our world-view. They are in part really determined by our world-view. They work with representations derived from the field of man's *a posteriori* knowledge and therefore inevitably have a greater area of contact and friction with the world-view of the time than the sublime, but admittedly also very abstract concepts of a purely metaphysical theology (though of course the latter too can never manage without a perceptual clarification of a representational kind). To name a few examples, without desiring to deny the profound qualitative differences existing between them, we speak in revealed theology of the 'Son' of God, of the divine generation, of the anger of God, of the [394] appeasement of God, of heaven, of the descent and ascent of God, of the duration of existence in the next life, of the 'inpouring' of grace, of the union of two natures, of the substance of bread which is changed, of the causality of the Sacraments, of the infused habits of the theological virtues, of three persons and one nature in God, and of many other things in which the revealed word of God itself which has proceeded from him, as it cannot do otherwise, in human language, expresses whatever he wants to tell us about his own reality and his merciful deeds in our regard. As we have said, it is here that greater difficulties for the statements of faith result from the world-view of today than if it were a question only of our knowledge of the existence of God.

It is naturally not our intention here to expound the Fundamental Theology of the possibility and the fact of a revelation on the part of the personal, living God in Jesus Christ. There is no need either for us to go into the notorious tensions which in past centuries bedevilled the relations between Catholic dogmatic teaching and modern science, that is into the questions of the Copernican system, the age of the world, the theory of evolution in its application to man's body and similar questions. In matters of this kind the appearance of conflict between the two instances has in the meantime been removed, and these questions have therefore as such and as particular questions only the methodic interest of a warning against a mutual violation of frontiers. Accordingly we intend to make here only a few observations on the fundamental difficulty which we indicated above.

To begin with, one thing need cause us no surprise: as men of a period of late Rationalism in the West and of natural science and technology with its exactitude, we are today more sensitive to the analogy of all our concepts when they are applied to God and his truth and his salvific act than earlier, more primitive men were. We no longer, or not so easily, succeed in bringing out words like 'Jahveh roars', God 'repents', and many others which in the Old Testament rise quite naturally to the lips. We leave aside the question whether this fact is in all cases and in every respect an advantage. The diminution of graphic clarity of expression is a much greater danger than most people suppose. But in many respects the restrictive feeling of 'inexactitude', 'imagery' in all our talk about God, even as it is given in Revelation itself, is simply our condition – a condition which can also bring blessings with it. For to grasp God as the incomprehensible, inexpressibly transcending all our [395] affirmations, that is a grace and a blessing which is purchased at the cost of the desolation of wandering in shadows and

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images, as the great Newman had inscribed on his grave. But this fact is no reason for doubting the truth and importance of what is signified by these inadequate affirmations. What is known in this way is more significant than all earthly knowledge. To be able to stammer about God is after all more important than to speak exactly about the world. The greater part of the offence which the modern educated layman easily takes at such formulations stems – this must be stated honestly and bluntly – from his ignorance or his defective theological training. Christian theology, very much conscious of the analogous nature of its concepts, constantly renews its efforts to reflect upon what in the representational models used in such concepts can and what can not be transferred to the intended trans-empirical religious reality. Even though in the last resort it is impossible adequately to make this distinction and it remains an attempt similar to that of squaring the circle, yet the effort has not been without result. It would eliminate many of the difficulties which an academic may feel at theological formulae, if these academics really knew what the intellectual work of clarification done by theology had achieved in this direction. Admittedly, we must also add that not every cleric is a professional representative of such theology in a position to elucidate the matter. But then not every electrical engineer is in a position to give satisfaction on modern nuclear physics. With all due respect to recent science of this kind, the two-thousand-year-old theology of Christianity has also not been asleep. The academic of today should not imagine that on the average he poses questions on the meaning of the articles of faith or feels difficulties which have never before occurred to any of the theologians. Certainly he must keep in mind, even if he seeks information in the right places, that the mystery of God remains. That is of the essence of theology. It is not the unmasking of a secret, allowing it to become self-evident, but a glimpse into the bright obscurity of the divine mysteries, so that complete clarity would be nothing but proof that one had gone wide of the divine truth in favour of the easily understood error of a human rationalism.

Besides the analogical character which penetrates all human concepts when we speak of revelation, there is a further category of concepts and schematic representations which are bound up more closely with the scientific outlook on the world proper to an earlier age and which are consequently felt to be particularly inadequate today, so much so that a [396] current of contemporary Protestant theology believes it necessary precisely on this ground to demand a demythologization. When we say ‘God is in heaven’, ‘the Son of God came down on earth’, ‘he descended into the nether world, ascended into heaven’, when we read the apocalyptic descriptions of the end of the world as a universal conflagration, the falling of the stars onto the earth, and so on, when we hear the account of the creation of the world in Genesis, then clearly a picture of the world is being presupposed which is no longer our own, although it was in current use in theology right up to the eighteenth century. It is also not to be denied that Scriptural expressions, because they make use of this world-picture, were at first sight more easily assimilated by a naive outlook into the world-picture of those earlier times than we may succeed in doing today at our first attempts. This also makes understandable that naïve inner-worldliness of God of which we spoke already.

But this is no motive for requiring a demythologizing of such expressions. The reason is twofold: firstly, these expressions wholly retain their meaning even though the world-view on the basis and with the help of which they were once made has become obsolete. And secondly, this meaning is still that which was intended when they were made; that is to say, we are able to see that in principle even the original statements of faith did not identify the content of the expressions which they really intended to convey with the imaginative material derived from their picture of the world, and therefore did not mean to guarantee the truth of this world-view which they made use of in the formulation of such expressions. We can only indicate and demonstrate all this very summarily.

In the first place, it can and must be fully conceded that past ages did not reflect very

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attentively on the distinction in such statements between the content and the mode of expression. When it was said: 'ascended into heaven', certainly such an expression was understood unabashedly in the sense implied by the ancient picture of the world, in which it was possible to travel in a physically demonstrable manner from the earth to the heaven of the blessed on a path and with a movement in the order of our experience. But it was surely also realized, even if only at the periphery of consciousness, that a distinction could and must be made between the content and the mode of such expressions. For instance, the eschatological expressions which presuppose the ancient picture of the world are palpably made with such abandon and mutual incongruity [397] that certainly even man in ancient times knew and felt that not everything in them could simply be taken literally. Moreover, in the course of the history of dogma and of the Church nothing has ever been defined as content which would stand or fall with the ancient picture of the world. With a little reflection it is easily possible to ascertain a meaning in the old expressions which was always intended and is still valid and is independent of the change in the world-view. As, for example, the ancients knew that being seated at the right hand of God is a piece of imagery and yet has a meaning, we today can equally well recognize that the ascension into heaven does not signify a spatial alteration of place in our physical order and yet has a very clear meaning. We must freely admit that when they are interpreted within the world-view of today these expressions become, not indeed poorer in content, but poorer imaginatively than they were for ancient man, who could clearly picture to himself heaven and hell as places within his world-view. But there are two things we should not overlook: the increasing abstraction of theological discourse from pictorial representation is shared by religious reflection with all other scientific reflection, whose expressions in theoretical physics are becoming ever more abstract. And secondly, the existential emphasis of statements of faith interpreted in this unimaginative and non-pictorial way need not necessarily and in the long run be lessened. For this increase in abstraction is not only a loss but also a gain: the inexpressible greatness of God and of the existence of man as a spiritual person before the absolute God become indeed less imageful, but precisely as such more distinct. The danger of a naïve making-innocuous of religious realities becomes less. It is true the average collective consciousness of men must first become accustomed to the independent, powerful life of the truths of faith even in the new world-view in spite of a mutual incommensurability. Such processes take a long time. As regards the details of such expressions of faith which have lost the imagery which came to them from a world-picture once assumed as correct, it cannot be our task here to show in particular cases that the intended object has not suffered and remains fully within our grasp in its old sense. One would have to examine a large part of Christian dogmatics, which is at this moment of course impossible.

From the priority of origin of religion as knowledge of God and of the acceptance of the revealed word of this living God over the reflex scientific picture of the world, and from the situation of concrete historical [398] and metaphysical existence (even as spiritual) beyond the reach of scientific reflection, there follows a further conclusion, particularly for the academic, which we must now briefly consider to conclude our reflections.

Our intellectual ancestors in the nineteenth century believed that one could account for and fulfil one's existence exclusively from science alone, that is, they thought they were in possession of a science 'without presuppositions' of a reflex kind, of which the enlightened professors, the 'academics', were the managers. Science would suffice to determine what in the existence of man is of importance, and whatever could not be decided on its basis was by that fact unimportant, was merely the sum of inconsequential secondary matters which were 'inessential'. So it happened that at that time a renowned chemist declared chemistry to be his 'confession'. Now, whether the descendants of these people of science as a confession in our country or in America are willing to admit it or not, this attitude which was touchingly naïve

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and damnably arrogant at the same time is from a historical perspective in its death-throes. It has simply become evident that science as a foundation for existence is absolutely over-taxed, that a scientific world-view cannot project a picture of man, that the former is, in spite of all its objectivity, ultimately and at its profoundest dependent on the latter, that before and behind science stand metaphysics and faith as higher and more comprehensive powers, which in spite of the discernment which is theirs in their own way are also essentially dependent upon freedom and choice. If, behind the Iron Curtain, *Weltanschauung* for the sake of the State is fostered exclusively with the science of the nineteenth century (no matter how happy and pleasant that period was in many respects), the world will not overcome the unbelief of the East which is a religion and not a science. In itself it should always have been easy to see that man cannot live by science alone. Science is reflection: reflection is preceded by a metaphysical and historical *a priori* which inescapably guides it – always and necessarily. This *a priori* can never be completely caught up with. Therefore the reflection of science cannot be the one and only root of human existence.

But if this is so, then there follows with absolute necessity an imperative of the greatest moment: reflective science (which is good and willed by God) escapes becoming the poison of a directionless factual knowledge of everything, a curiosity diverting attention from the core of existence, a relativistic being-able-to-have-a-theory-about-everything, only when the root of original unreflective understanding of and consent to existence is [399] not only not cut off, but grows more deeply into the primeval soil of existence to at least the same degree as the neutralizing reflexiveness of the scientific outlook spreads itself upon the scattered breadth and multiplicity of what is scientifically discoverable in the world.

Permit me immediately to translate this axiom essential to human existence into the practical order. If the academic does not devote sufficient time and attention to the fundamental questions of his being, if he does not exist by meditating, praying, meeting the demands of the moral order in ascetical practices, renunciation, and self-sacrifice, if he allows himself to be seduced by the multiplicity of his knowledge and the practical utility of his information into becoming instead of a man the unintelligent-artful robot of his science dazzled into thinking that it would lead of itself to earthly happiness and so to the solution of all the problems of existence, then science and the whole refining process of consolidating the scientific picture of the world becomes for the academic a curse. He then knows all sorts of things, a vast multitude of things. He can do a thousand things which could not be done before. But he does not know himself and the absolute truth, and he no longer knows what is the purpose of everything that he can do. He is like the driver who by applying all his acumen increases the speed of his vehicle beyond all measure, and forgets in doing so where exactly it is that he is going. He is capable of believing that he can make do with this world-picture only if he takes up the short-sighted view that the mere satisfaction of vital drives can appease the metaphysical hunger of man. In reality, as experience proves, it is from the deadly monotony of a being exclusively saturated in this way that there arises the devilishness of desperation to the point of criminality. And don't forget: we are still living among late descendants of the nineteenth century who have not yet noticed the fact that they are living upon the remains of the spiritual riches of a religious and metaphysical age which their parents and grandparents disowned and lost and which cannot be won back by a devotion to the great times of a believing humanity, which is merely historicizing and fundamentally remains aesthetic. In this case too we do not remain without blame if we erect tombs to the prophets whom our fathers slew. Much more must one, perhaps in spiritual poverty, bitterness, in the trouble of a new beginning, of doubt and vexation, be oneself a man of faith, of prayer, of silence, of an unmistakable and sturdy religious practice (anything else remains after all in the ultimate analysis the self-idolization of a vague religious [400] enthusiasm), of moral effort, and one must have the courage for this no matter whether it is or

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is not already the fashion among the ordinary people in the academic world; one must have the courage to perceive that religious action should be looked for primarily not in the 'simple man' but in the academic man, because he has in the first place as a matter of life and death the right and the duty of being at home with the primary foundations of all reality, with absolute truth; one must find this courage not merely from considerations of the history of man's spirit, because without this renewal of original Christianity the West has no future; quite apart from this, one must find this courage because it is demanded of each one of us in his own singular unique existence which each one quite alone must very soon answer for before the judgement seat of God. Only then does it in the ultimate analysis have any meaning or any promise to build up a world-view by science. He who kneels in adoration directly before the absolute truth of God, accepting his word in faith even though it may proceed clothed in the flesh of this earth and in the shadows and similes of human words, is then entitled to arise boldly and confidently to state as his own creative truth in his world-view what absolute truth has told him through the world.

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PREFACE

This new volume of my 'Theological Writings' (*Schriften zur Theologie*) brings together the essays on dogmatic theology which I have written since the first three volumes appeared, that is, since 1956. The attention which was accorded to the three similar volumes which preceded it may be taken as sufficient justification for this new collection. It is given the sub-title 'More Recent Essays' to indicate that they cover the same general field of theology as the first three volumes, and that the present essays, as far as the contents are concerned, should be inserted *between* the essays of the earlier volumes. Since this could not be done, for technical reasons, and out of consideration for the owners of the first three volumes of 'Writings', these essays simply follow the earlier ones and appear as 'more recent' in time. Given the objective connexion which exists between dogmatic investigations and considerations on pastoral theology based on dogma, it is not surprising that some of the essays which I collected in my book *Sanding und Gnade*, *Beiträge zur Pastoraltheologie* (2nd edn., Innsbruck 1959) would have fitted just as well into this volume-and vice versa ('Mission and Grace: Contributions to Pastoral Theology'). The relevant pieces there are chiefly: 'Redemptive reality in created reality', 'The meaning of the individual Christian in the history of salvation', 'Thanksgiving after Mass', 'On Visits to the Blessed Sacrament', 'Primacy and Episcopacy', 'Dogmatic preliminaries for a proper discussion of the reform of the diaconate', 'On the theology of secular institutes'. Since it may help in judging the essays presented here, we give the list of the publications in which they first appeared, following the order of the present volume: 'Considerations on the development of Dogma', *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 80 (1958), 1-16; 'On the Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', in Siegfried Behn, *Beständiger Aufbruch* (Przywara-Festschrift, Nuremberg 1959), 181-216; 'Remarks on the dogmatic Treatise on the Trinity', *Universitas* (Festschrift für Bischof A. Stohr),1 (Mainz 1960), 130-150; 'On the theology of the Incarnation', *Catholica*, 12 (1958), 1-16; 'Dogmatic questions on Easter', in B. Fischer [x] and J. Wagner, *Paschatis Solemnia* (Jungmann-Festschrift, Freiburg 1959), 1-12; '*Virginitas in partu*: a contribution to the problem of the development of Dogma and Tradition', in J. Betz and H. Fries, *Kirche und Überlieferung* (Geiselmann-Festschrift, Freiburg 1960), 52-80; 'Nature and grace according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church', *Theologie heute*, ed. L. Reinisch (Munich 1960), 89-102; 'Questions of Controversial theology on justification', *Tüb. Theol. Quartalschr.*, 138 (1958), 40-77; 'On the theology of the Symbol', in A. Bea, H. Rahner, H. Rondet and F. Schwendimann, *Cor Jesu*, I (Rome 1959), 461-505; 'Word and Eucharist', *Aktuelle Fragen zur Eucharistie*, ed. M. Schmaus (Munich 1960), 7-52; 'The presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper', *Catholica*, 12 (1958), 109-128; 'On the Presence of Christ in Communion', *Geist und Leben*, 32 (1959), 442-448; 'Theological principles of the hermeneutics of eschatological assertions', *Zeitschr. für kath. Theologie*, 82 (1960), 137-158; 'The life of the dead', *Trier. Theol. Zeitschr.*, 68 (1959), 1-7; 'Theological remarks on the problem of leisure', *Oberrhein. Pastoralblatt*, 60 (1959), 210-218, 233-243; 'The theology of power', Männerwerk Köln, polycopied (1960), 16 pp.

Innsbruck, October 1960

Karl Rahner, S.J.

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PART ONE

Fundamental Theology

[3]

1

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA

If we are to address ourselves to the problem of the development of dogma,[1] the difficulty and importance of the question will be clear at once to all of us who are engaged with dogmatic theology. Our vocation is to treat of the dogmas of the Church. We have not merely to propound and explain them, to bring them within the range of the understanding of modern man; we have also the task of showing, as well as we can, that these dogmas of the Church are contained in the original revelation. For the Church and its magisterium recognize that they are not the mediators of a revelation which is now being granted for the first time. They do not look on their office as prophetic, but as one that has only to guard, transmit and explain the divine revelation which came in Jesus Christ at a given point of past history. Thus the function of the Church and the magisterium differs in quality from the process of the original revelation, though the task of the Church is not to be conceived as merely that of repeating the original revelation, and presenting it as something *once* uttered long ago. The Church presents revelation as something that takes place 'now' as it is uttered by the living voice and offers itself to be appropriated this day in the hearing of believers. Thus the Church and the magisterium distinguish their function – by differentiation, not separation – from the process of revelation itself, and see their function as that of teaching men authoritatively in each age. It is true that the very fact of the Church and the magisterium, once it has been recognized by faith, is the immediate guarantee of a legitimate connexion between the original [4] revelation and the pronouncement of the magisterium. But this does not render superfluous the efforts of theologians who are trying to demonstrate such a connexion. First of all, this connexion, according to the doctrine of Scripture and the Church is not absolutely transcendent with regard to history. It is found, at least to some extent, on the plane of the historical transmission of the original message and hence is still accessible to the historian, even though a comprehensive view of it, like that of all supernatural salvific acts of God, may be reserved for the believer alone. We could undoubtedly say: the connexion between the later dogmas of the Church and the original revelation is, on principle, a necessary subject in any comprehensive fundamental theology; but since it is concerned with the individual mysteries of faith, it must also be investigated by the dogmatic theologian and its study will be his contribution, so to speak, to fundamental theology. Secondly, this task has a special significance within theology. If the theologian must explain the doctrine of the Church as such and try to make it accessible to his contemporaries, so that they can assimilate it conceptually and existentially, one of his ways of explaining the dogmas of the Church will be to show exactly how they derive from the original revelation. For the meaning, implications and limitations of the derivative dogma can only be clearly seen when one constantly returns to its source, especially as the official magisterium of the Church always makes such an effort when propounding its doctrines, at least by having recourse to Scripture.

[1] This essay is the reproduction of a lecture given at Innsbruck, 3rd October, 1957, at a congress of German professors of dogmatic theology. The essay is presented in the form in which it was given. Hence no effort has been made to turn it into a learned piece of scientific research by the addition of references to other relevant literature, monographs, etc.

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But if one of the tasks of the theologian is to demonstrate analytically and synthetically the relation between Church dogma and the original revelation, then he has a further task which he cannot avoid. It is to reflect on the *formal* structure of such connexions in general; he must consider the development of dogma as a whole, and not merely the question of the derivation of any individual dogma from its original utterance.

We are likewise well aware of the difficulty of the task thus described. The question was indeed never totally absent from Church history. Theology was never completely without the theme of the legitimate mode of tradition, nor did systematic reflexion in scientific form on the nature of theology and the connexions between the articles of faith and the individual truths of faith ever die out altogether, especially when apologetics on behalf of Church dogma against the *sola Scriptura* doctrine of Protestantism made this question more urgent in itself. But in the form in which we have to take up the question today, it is still very recent and [5] hence to a great extent still lacks clarification. In its present form and urgency it can only have existed since the 19th century. For it is only since the rise of modern historical science and of historicism that we can measure really clearly the difference and the distance between the forms adopted by the history of the spirit in general and the history of religious assertions in particular. The heresies of liberal Protestantism and modernism on the one hand, with their denial of the identity throughout the ages of Church dogma, by an appeal to the results of the history of the human spirit and of dogma; the insufficiency of much current apologetics on behalf of this identity, on the other hand, conceding only a minor change in verbal formulas – both show how difficult and how little mastered the question still is. If one is honest one will hardly say that '*Humani Generis*' did more than accomplish one task, a primary one indeed, of the magisterium, namely to warn negatively against a historicist relativization of Church dogma. A really positive and progressive doctrine on the positive legitimacy of such development and its positive modes and possibilities, will undoubtedly be sought in vain in '*Humani Generis*'. The question is all the more difficult today, because we have experienced a remarkable change of fronts in recent years. In the 19th century, Protestant liberal theology reproached the Catholic Church with an unreal and fatal petrifaction of ancient dogma. Now neo-Protestant orthodoxy, with a renovated doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, charges the Catholic magisterium with an arbitrary search for novelty, which creates new dogmas without any foundation in Scripture. Hence while we formerly had to defend our maintenance of ancient Christian dogma, in fact and on principle, and our right to understand it today as it has been understood for fifteen hundred years, now on the contrary we have to uphold positively the right of dogma to undergo development. The question is therefore controverted on two sides: how namely authentic identity on the one hand and really genuine development on the other can be reconciled. The problem is undoubtedly very difficult, because it ultimately reaches down to the obscure depths of a general ontology of being and becoming, of the persistence of identity in change – and also comprises the general metaphysics of knowledge and mind, which frames the same questions in searching for truth, with regard to its identity and real historical involvement. On all these questions therefore we must confine ourselves to a few remarks, rather loosely put together, which are only meant as a basis for discussion.

[6]

I. DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA WITHIN THE SCRIPTURES

For apologetics, and for the understanding of the history and development of dogma in the Church it is of supreme importance to reflect on the fact that such a development can be already observed within the New Testament. As Catholic theology is normally studied, we are accustomed, apart from a very few particular problems (perhaps especially in Christology

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and – naturally – in fundamental theology), to accept unquestioningly the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, as an absolutely homogeneous and undifferentiated quantity, a sort of Summa of revealed statements all laid down at once, like a code of law or a catechism composed in one piece under the same enterprise. We have of course to some extent an indisputable right to this method, which then goes on to prove individual dogmatic assertions of Church doctrine by means of *dicta probantia* chosen more or less at random from the Scriptures. Scripture, the inspired word of God, is for us as a whole and in all its parts an unquestionable authority; we see each of its assertions as dogma and not merely theology, and take each of its assertions as a legitimate starting-point for our own theology. True as this may be, and correct as may be therefore the method in question in its positive bearings, it is none the less a one-sided view of Scripture and gives a one-sided method in our dogmatic work. Modern exegesis has taught us that we can no longer reasonably overlook the fact that within what we call one Sacred Scripture, and within the New as well as the Old Testament, the assertions undergo a history and a development. No doubt the contents of Scripture are all dogma, *quoad nos*, and not just debatable theology. But it is equally certain that we must affirm that much of this scriptural dogma, which has for us the quality of inerrant assertions of revelation, is itself derivative theology with regard to a more primordial utterance of revelation. We must not naively imagine that because of inspiration (which for that very reason is not to be confused with new revelation), each sentence of Scripture as such stems from a new original revelation, tributary only to an act of divine revelation which takes place here and now. Not every single sentence of Scripture was heard as it were on its own by a sort of direct telephone connexion to heaven. We may leave aside the difficult question, too little debated from fear of modernist ideas, of how an original revelation of God to the first recipients is to be conceived. But it is imperative to say that not every sentence in Scripture is this type of [7] original revelation. Many assertions, guaranteed as inerrant at once by the Church of apostolic times and by the inspiration of Scripture, are theology derived *from* the original revelation. Since this is so, and since this derivative theology within the Scriptures still makes the just claim on us to be accepted as obligatory doctrine of faith, while it is itself a stage of development with regard to its own origin, there is therefore in Scripture itself a real development of dogma, and not merely of theology. Thus the development of dogma within Scripture is the authenticated exemplary instance for the development of dogma in general, an example which is in itself obligatory for all who accept Scripture as a whole as authentic testimony of faith. St Paul’s doctrine, for instance, of the sacrificial character of the cross of Christ, of Christ as the second Adam, of original sin, many sayings about eschatology etc., much of the Johannine theology etc., are theological developments from a few very simple assertions of Jesus about the mystery of his person, and from the experience of his resurrection. One could be tempted therefore, simply because such assertions are the obligatory norm of faith for us, to regard them as having fallen straight from heaven, even as they stand. One could be tempted therefore to spare oneself the labour of reaching an exact understanding of them by referring them back to the original source of revelation distinct from them. But in the long run one would run the risk either of misunderstanding them, or of accepting them as a Summa of positively ordained truths of faith without any real internal connexions, and thus endangering their credibility to those who are without. Since however for the most part we are still unable to manipulate this multi-dimensional disposition of the truths of faith in our theology, these facts can scarcely yet be the exemplary instance which we can use to study the laws of the development of dogma.

II. *A PRIORI* RULES FOR THE FRAMEWORK OF DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA

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(a) In the last resort, the development of dogma is not a single process which can be adequately comprehended by formal laws. This first statement that we make may sound obvious. But it is important. The unfolding of the final divine revelation is a process. As a process through which the divine revelation passes it is unique. Therefore it has no *a priori* categories, distinct from itself and superior to itself and likewise adequately determining it. Unlike the processes of natural science, it cannot be [8] comprised under such formal laws as would enable us to predict properly any later phase. This follows from the nature of the case. If therefore the history of dogmas is constantly full of surprises, if no case is like another and each phase and the development of the different dogmas takes a different course, this is to be expected *a priori*. We cannot therefore demand that the development of one dogma will conform adequately to the laws of another and so for instance challenge the legitimacy of a given development by appealing to the contrast in another. This follows not merely from the nature of revelation and of its history, a unique history which runs only once between Christ and the end. It follows from the historical nature of the knowledge of truth in general. If man has a history, not only as a physical, biological living thing, but even as spirit, indeed, if it is only as spirit that he possesses a true history, it must be clear at once that this history takes in fact a unique course and is not the constant repetition of the same law. This must be true above all of the sublimest portion of the history of the human spirit, the history of divine revelation in the human spirit and the unfolding of this revelation. It would indeed be strange if there were a history of divine revelation – which no Christian can deny – and yet no history of the unfolding of this revelation and hence no development of dogma, with the uniqueness and unpredictability of such history. For revelation itself has a history, and necessarily so, not just because the speaker, God, can in his freedom act historically, but because the hearer, man, is a historical being. As long then as his history goes on, there must be a history of dogma, although revelation is closed, and in a very strict sense and for a very strict reason can be closed, though the history of man is not yet at an end. There is then no adequate formal theory of the development of dogma which would be in itself sufficient to permit a prognosis for the future. But in saying this we do not of course deny that there are certain formal principles with regard to this development, which follow from the nature of a historical and final revelation, just as much as does the principle enunciated above. Such principles may give rise to justifiable objections to possibly wrong developments in theology.

(b) The revelation in Christ is the final, unsurpassable revelation, which was closed with the end of the apostolic generation. This statement, so obvious in many ways, needs some further explanations, if the important consequences of this statement are to be grasped. The closing of revelation must be properly understood in two regards:

[9] 1. It is a closure, which in the last resort causes revelation to be closed, because this revelation is the dis-closure and openness for the absolute and unsurpassable self-communication of God to the created spirit. Revelation in Jesus Christ is not just the finite sum of finite single sentences, though the subject of these may be infinite. It implies the real, eschatological self-communication of God by incarnation, and by grace as glory already begun, to the created spirit. As we shall have to say more precisely later, grace and the light of faith are constitutive moments of the process of revelation even in so far as it is communication of truth, and so also in so far as it is *locutio Dei attestans*. This does not mean that revelation only becomes actuality as such in the individual believing hearers, in so far as they are such individuals. But it means that if the totality of the hearers and believers were to cease to be, revelation too, as final and eschatological, would cease to be. Where revelation is to be final and has to a certain extent no longer any future before it, it has to be accepted, that is, to be really believed. Otherwise the final judgment of God upon unbelief is come. A final and closed revelation, and a revelation whose destiny on the part of man is still in the balance, are irreconcilable concepts. A final revelation which is closed implies therefore in its

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concept Church, in contradistinction to synagogue, that is, the community of those who through a pre-defining grace of God have arrived at faith and are inescapably but freely comprehended in this salvific will of God. Such a revelation implies a believing Church which as a whole cannot fall away from the faith, though nothing can be said about individuals as such. (Here, by the way, is also the theological reason why the Church as the hearing Church, and hence also as the authoritatively teaching Church, is and must be infallible, though this cannot be said of the synagogue, which was however also a foundation of God's.) To have been closed is the property of the final, absolute and unsurpassable self-communication of God, as *such*, which provides for itself its believing acceptance. The closing of revelation is not the arbitrary ending of God's speaking, which could have gone on and only as a matter of fact fell silent after some chosen utterance. This must always be noted when we speak of revelation's being closed. It is man's being opened up for and into the real and not merely conceptual self-communication of God. And therein it has within itself, precisely because of this closure, which is dis-closure, its dynamism of inner development, and hence a dynamism of the development of dogma. A divine revelation which was not real self-communication [10] of revealed reality to the spirit of man himself, could neither be a true *self*-communication of God, nor be really conceived in earnest as closed. This is because a divine dispensation which was the pure decree, 'now he speaks no more', is basically an anthropomorphic representation of God. This is all the more true, because the concept of a personal utterance of God, though perhaps only recognizable to us after the event, cannot be in any way seriously and intelligently thought of, except where God wills to disclose *himself*. Everything else that God could otherwise say could come by way of the real creation of this communicated finite entity. Anything supernatural that could also be attained *per se* by natural means if God only willed it otherwise, would be an anthropomorphic non-concept. Hence this would also be true of a communication of truth which comes as a *locutio Dei attestans* though it could also have come otherwise.

2. On the other hand we must not overlook the fact that this revelation, which closes and discloses the infinite, has the human word as a constitutive element of its essence, as long as we are still on pilgrimage in time far from the Lord, and do not see God face to face. And we must also remember that even this immediacy which we await as the consummation will be an immediacy mediated by the Word of God become flesh. But since the human word and the finite concept remain a constitutive moment of the closed revelation, it is clear that this revelation would either not be closed, or not be constituted essentially in part by the human word, if the development which unfolds the original dogma were to ignore such earlier human concepts, if it did not also (though not only) come about by means of the human concepts in which the earlier form of revelation was uttered. What this signifies, and what are its consequences, can only become clear when we reflect later on the constitutive elements of revelation and dogma and are thus enabled to survey the causes and impulses which carry along together, and in the last resort indivisibly, the one development of dogma.

(c) The development of dogma is necessarily carried along, in an ultimately indissoluble unity, by all the elements which are constitutive of revelation and of the self-developing dogma. This statement can hardly be contested seriously in its formal generality. Dogma, or a dogma, is a unified entity which is constructed of various elements (to be mentioned at once more precisely). If dogma or a dogma develops, all the elements which go to build up such a dogma necessarily develop also. This is only possible however if a dynamic tendency to development is [11] innate in *each* of these constitutive elements themselves. We recognize of course also at the same time that the dynamic tendencies of each of these single elements can only be effective in the totality and must remain dependent on the unfolding of the whole. Hence any effort to explain the development of a dogma one single element of the dogma and its dynamism, any effort to reduce it to one such single dynamism of development, must be

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rejected out of hand as false and futile, like the opinion that one can succeed in explaining a *de facto* development of dogma without recourse to all these elements.

It may be that in the various instances, as we see them, the dynamism of development in this or that element of a dogma may stand out more clearly and be grasped more consciously; but it cannot be that any of these elements be missing. Any theory of the development of dogma which disregards or denies this simple fact, and would for instance try to attribute the development of dogma as such merely to the magisterium *or* to the inspiration of the Spirit *or* to the logical explication of the virtualities implied in the human assertion, is to be discarded at once as false. This likewise eliminates the attempt to suppose different vehicles of development in the individual instances, as if the various historical cases of a *de facto* dogmatic development could be thereby more easily described and justified.

III. THE CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS OF THE DYNAMISM OF DOGMATIC DEVELOPMENT

We have already said that the elements of dogma are also the constitutive elements of dogmatic development, in their variety and indissoluble unity. We must now mention individually these elements of dogma and dogmatic development – taking of course a selective view of such developments – and see what follows for a correct concept of the development of dogma.

(a) *The Spirit and grace*

God's self-disclosure in the human word of revelation would nullify itself if it were not bound up with the inner light of grace and strictly supernatural faith. If God were to speak of himself in so far as he is not revealed through his creation, which is distinct from himself, and use human words without the supernatural elevation of the hearer, his utterance would come only under the subjective *a priori* of the finite spirit as [12] such. And his utterance, if not simply nullified, would be necessarily degraded to an element of the self-understanding and the possibility of self-understanding of the mere creature. It would no longer be a real self-disclosure of God. For here too it is true that whatever is received is received according to the manner and nature of the recipient. It is also true here that knowledge is essentially a process of coming to awareness of self in him who knows. It is enlightened self-possession, so that everything that is received is grasped as an element of this self-accomplishment. Though man is undoubtedly, even as spirit in the natural order, absolute openness to being in general, and hence to God who is cause and principle of this spirit, still, if God's communication about himself were received without grace, it would only be grasped as a moment of this self-accomplishment of man within the world (even if it came as something infinitely open). Only where the act of hearing in what we call grace is really the co-accomplishment of an act of God in a strictly supernatural participation of God himself, and not merely of a quality *created* by him, can the divine utterance be strictly supernatural, that is, qualitatively supernatural in itself and not merely distinguished as regards the mode of communication from any communication made through merely created things. A divine utterance which is divine by reason of its own nature has no meaning unless it is directed towards a divine hearing. Part therefore of the expression of divine revelation is the Holy Spirit, as the strictly supernatural self-communication of God. He does not enter in merely as the guarantee of its correctness or as the originator of a process of efficient causality on the part of God which takes place *per se* in the region of the finite. He is there as the thing uttered itself and only with this can the human utterance be self-utterance of God. Here we have at once that infinite openness in the closed revelation, and the dynamism of self-development, whose only limits

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are in the *visio beatifica* itself. It is also true (and this is part of the fundamental dogma of a Christianity of the Incarnation) that this self-communication of God really takes place in the human word, and not merely on the occasion of it. Human words are not merely the external occasion for a pneumatic or mystic experience of transcendence directed towards the God who is nameless. Spirit and word can only be possessed in their indissoluble unity, undivided and inconfused. Hence the human word is open from the start to the infinitude of God. (This it is, in so far as it is natural, by virtue of its *potentia oboedientialis*, and so far as it is supernatural, by virtue of its being uttered by the [13] Spirit and by virtue of its elevation by the Spirit.) And the divine Spirit is given in and through this word, assumed by himself in his own infinity and concrete reality.

Here we have a very special and unique conjuncture which is usually overlooked in theology. There are two modes of knowledge in the region of natural knowledge. In the first, we have an actual experience of the reality in question, in itself or in its effects, and on this basis and in view of this we form our concepts and judgments in its regard. We then constantly start out from these concepts and judgments, to return constantly to the experience of the thing itself whence we are enabled to form anew our concepts and judgments and subject the previous ones to a critical investigation, because we can have the thing itself without any assertion about it. In the second, there exists a type of knowledge which does not possess the thing itself but relies on the assertion of another and so is unable to make direct experimental contact with the thing itself and make itself independent of the judgments communicated to it. The second is what happens in all that is called *testimonium*. Now, the Catholic, anti-gnostic and anti-mystical view of the reality and truth of divine revelation makes the first mode impossible. That is, we cannot make ourselves independent, in our pilgrim state, of the assertions made in the testimony to revelation. Further, we cannot – like the modernists – set up a wordless state of experience with regard to what is meant in faith, to derive thence new and original statements of revelation in the form of intellectual assertions. From all this the average theology of the schools concludes (without really thinking much about it) that revelation is to be conceived of in accordance with the second of the two modes of human knowledge mentioned above and will be mere verbal testimony, which only indicates something not truly possessed and does not impart the thing itself. That is precisely what is incorrect. In the word of revelation which comes through grace we have something intermediate and higher, between the two modes of knowledge named above: in the word the thing itself is given. Behind the verbal testimony of God in human concepts we cannot go, to reach a wordless possession and experience of the divine reality itself. That will only happen when the Word utters itself in the immediacy of the final fulfilment. All the same, we now have not only the utterance, but the thing itself: God's self-communication to the spirit in his own proper reality – which is already the homogeneous beginning of the vision itself.

[14] This of course can only be said if the Spirit who activates the supernatural hearing of the word of God is not merely a heavenly element of consciousness in the act of faith but really enters in as the light of faith. This does not necessarily mean that this light of faith must be present to the believing mind as a conscious datum and object, distinguishable from the other objects of consciousness. But there must be a genuine presence of the light of faith to consciousness, even though as a datum it is not in the state of an object or the object of reflection. If this is so – and against Molina and his followers, this will be maintained as obvious by the Thomistic school along with Suarez, following Scripture and tradition as yet unclouded by nominalistic thinking – then the Spirit cannot be imagined simply as the transcendent steersman of dogmatic development. He will be an intrinsic element of it, by means of the believing consciousness of the Church, the bearer of this development. In this pregnant sense, dogmatic development takes place 'in the Holy Spirit'. Where in explaining dogmatic development precisely as a process in the consciousness of faith in the Church, this

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element is not also considered and reckoned with, any explanation which claims to be adequate must necessarily go astray. No doubt in the explanation of dogmatic development this Spirit cannot be pointed to as an isolated element, perceptible of itself any more than the light of faith can be objectivated in the *analysis fidei*. But just as little as in the case of the *analysis fidei*, the impossibility of mastering consciously and checking such an element in a spiritual process does not mean that this element, integral to dogmatic development, is not present as a process of consciousness. With regard to the manner in which the Spirit is a datum in the development of dogma, everything could be said that also applies to the Spirit, grace, and the light of faith with regard to human consciousness. Hence we need not go into the matter more deeply here. It need not surprise us, if we take account of a formal metaphysic of knowledge in the finite spirit. For it would be a senseless rationalism (easily refuted by a transcendental deduction) to maintain that the finite spirit, while still in the stage of becoming and incompleteness, could or should only have the objects presented to its conscious reflexion as the elements of its knowledge, the logical grounds of its judgments and the motives of its action. Even in the region of natural knowledge, the unobjectivated and unattainable datum – thus however truly a datum – is the inviolable source, the broader horizon and the underlying principle of everything that we represent to our minds on the basis of any object [15] of which we make assertions – partly to admit the presence of that which disposes of us while being itself beyond all control, partly to hide it from ourselves and to hide ourselves from it behind the object.

(b) *The magisterium of the Church*

The word of God is always the word delivered by the authorized bearer of doctrine and tradition in the hierarchically-constituted Church. The element of being officially delivered, the reference back to an authorized teacher, the hearing of the word *from* this authoritative teaching person, belongs to the constitutive moments of dogma and hence also of dogmatic development. This is because dogma as such must be proclaimed by the magisterium, the teaching authority, in order that it can be believed *fide ecclesiastica* along with the Church, as a constitutive moment of the faith of this Church. Thus dogmatic development does not depend merely on the office, *in facto esse*. It also depends on the magisterium in its *fieri*. The development itself takes place in a constant dialogue of debate with the office. The unofficial elements of development (the charisma of the Spirit and the labour of theology) always anticipate the thought of the office and direct their thinking towards it. Since their thinking-out of dogma is always done *within* the hierarchically constituted Church, they always offer their thought to the authoritative teaching office. Even if it is ostensibly a matter of an individual stand-point in theology, they learn whether the authoritative office of the Church and the common consciousness of faith in the hearing Church as a whole can, in the fullness of its spirit, participate in the thinking-through of the individual line of theology, or rejects it as contradictory to its spirit. This is not the place to expound more precisely this ‘ecclesiality’ of the preaching of revelation and hence of dogmatic development. We should have to go back to the character of dialogue primordial to human knowledge in general. We should have to show further that – if one may say so – the *fides implicita* which gratefully and lovingly refers back its own belief to the faith of the Church, as to an element of its own critical self-transcendence, is a necessary moment of all faith, even if a *fides explicita*, without which moment faith’s confident knowledge of its own blessedness would not strictly speaking be at all possible. For a real critique of the subjective limitations and impotence of all knowledge, even of the knowledge of faith, is only possible in this outward-looking self-renunciation. This is a critique which – at least when implicitly reckoned with and present as [16] an attitude – alone allows any knowledge to be really quite true, because it abandons itself to the greater truth and the more comprehensive reality, whose adequate subject can only be God

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and the salvific nearness of God to us, that is, the Church. Other questions could be answered with regard to this ecclesiality of dogma and dogmatic development, where it would be seen that concrete ecclesiality always necessarily includes reference back to the teaching office of the Church.

The magisterium therefore belongs, in the manner just outlined, to the indispensable elements of the vehicle of dogmatic development. But it is just as true that it is not in itself alone the adequate cause. It has essentially the function of preserving and distinguishing. Further, as history shows, it only promotes the development of dogma when the movement has already been launched by other factors. It is dependent – not for the authority of its decisions, but for the presence of an object on which it passes judgment – on charismatic movements in the Church and the reflexions of theology. In spite of all its authority, assistance of the Holy Spirit and even – in certain cases – infallibility, it comes, and must come, to its decisions in a deliberate, free, rational and hence morally responsible act. Hence, previous to the act which is its own justification because it relies on the assistance of the Holy Spirit, it is so much in need of conscious and rationally comprehensible justification that the assistance of the Holy Spirit will always be directed to seeing that this – let us say – human conscientiousness and justifiability of the official decision will not in fact be wanting. Therefore the magisterium cannot make the work of theology and the rational justification of a new dogma superfluous; it cannot replace them, nor does it desire to do so. It is true that for individual theologians, as for the simple faithful, an official decision of the Church is a fact so founded on the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the Church that it cannot be adequately resolved into other previous data, and so to a certain extent be rendered superfluous. But it is equally true that a decision of the magisterium cannot by itself be the adequate cause of dogmatic development, or the justification demanded of theologians for its legitimacy. If one were to say simply and solely: a legitimate development of dogma has taken place here, because the Church has given a definition, one would indeed have given the individual theologian an adequate reason *that* he should accept the fact of the legitimacy of this development and presuppose it in his reflexions. But one would not have given an adequate answer to the question *why* this undoubtedly legitimate [17] dogmatic development is in fact now legitimate. With such an authoritative answer, one would have failed to describe the actual process of such a development as it really happened historically, and one task of theology would be left undone. One would have also failed to render explicit the intrinsic and unquestionably possible grounds for the legitimacy of this development. Nor would one have brought these grounds to that degree of perceptible objectivity which is quite possibly superior to that which was immediately and clearly attainable in the pre-history of the definition. For a definition does not need to have brought its motives and justifications to the highest possible degree of explicit consciousness, at the very moment that it is given, any more than this is necessary elsewhere in human decisions which can be quite reasonably upheld.

One might be inclined to say of certain definitions (e.g. the Assumption of the B.V.M.), that here in fact nothing can be done in the line of rational argumentation or historical proof for explicit conscious faith in the event dating from apostolic times, on close examination, and that basically only reasons of congruity can be adduced which when looked at in the light of day and judged honestly, prove nothing. One might be inclined to say that the magisterium alone brought forth from the *depositum fidei* the newly defined truth, in a manner absolutely unamenable to all rational understanding, and that a sober theologian, averse to all pious enthusiasm, could not see at all how this truth was contained and implied in the ancient truths. But if one said so, one would be ascribing to the magisterium a role in dogmatic development which cannot belong to it and which it never claimed for itself. One would, basically, atomize the faith into a sum of individual statements, with no unity except in the

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formal authority of the magisterium. One would thereby make these atomized sentences even more faceless and unintelligible, even less assimilable, because in fact they can only have their true meaning in the totality of faith and of the reality which is the object of faith. One would reduce faith to a formal obedience, though it is more than that, since it is a contact in grace with the very reality believed by faith. One would reduce in fact the historically attainable continuity of *traditio* – which is also a continuity of content and has always been held to be such – to a continuity of the formal authority of the magisterium. One would in fact be denying that revelation was closed in Christ and that the function of the magisterium is restricted to the preservation and unfolding of this revelation. The magisterium, so understood, would be proclaiming new revelations with each new definition. [18] However, it is not the wish of the magisterium to see instead of us what we do not see. It does not fetch for us out of the *depositum fidei* what we would be quite unable to bring out along with it. Rather, we see along with it and explicitate along with it. It always has recourse to theology and theology has recourse to it. One is never the substitute for the other, and the importance of the one is never increased by lessening the importance of the other.

(c) *Concept and word*

It is one of the constitutive elements of divine revelation that it is given in human word and concept. In so far as this human word is spoken by the Spirit and listened to in Him, it is necessarily referred and intrinsically open to the infinite mystery of that truth which is identical with the reality of God and can only be communicated along with the communication of this reality in itself. In so far as this word is spoken by the magisterium of the Church, it always has a validity greater than the inner intelligibility of this individual word when taken by itself, though less than that authority and validity, comprehensive because open to infinity, proper to the word in so far as it is the flesh of the Spirit of God himself, who imparts himself to the hearer in the word. In so far as this word is the word of the Church (in its magisterium), it points on to the general understanding of the Church and has also therein a dignity and validity which surpasses the inner light of the individual word in itself and in the merely human understanding of the individual hearers.

All this, however, cannot hide the fact that this word itself is purely a genuine human word and is only competent to make God's word present to us, as long as the human word remains such, with all the elements and consequences of coming from the human mind. It is as in Christology: the divinity grows in equal, not inverse, proportion to the humanity. The adoption of human reality for the manifestation of God is what really redeems and frees the human element and brings it to its highest actuality – to which it is orientated by its nature, even though only as *potentia oboedientialis*. Hence too it follows that development of dogma must also take place essentially in the dimensions of human concepts and words. Of necessity, dogmatic development corresponds to what usually takes place in the explicitation of human thought and knowledge, though it is not confined to such processes. We can say at once that on the level of the human words and concepts of revelation, dogmatic development can [19] and must make use of all the modes and means by which human knowledge unfolds itself elsewhere. Once we have designated human knowledge which is aware of its justification as a process of man's *ratio* – a terminology which best fits Church usage, since for very basic reasons the magisterium rejects a fundamental plurality of faculties of knowledge – we cannot but say that dogmatic development always and necessarily possesses a rational dimension. Hence, if one takes theology as the rational reflexion of faith on itself and its objects, one must also say: dogmatic development necessarily takes place in the form of the development of theology. Indeed, we have already said that the magisterium is in fact always dependent on theology, as one of its sources, for its decisions. In saying this, we reject as inadequate both a mystical and an authoritarian theory of development. Even in dogmatic

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development, neither charismatic inspiration nor authoritative decision makes the rational effort of theology superfluous. Rather, they work through this theology and pervade it. One had of course always been aware that a new dogma must be in accord with the ancient *depositum fidei* on the conceptual level. Theories that see in dogmatic development the conceptual explicitation of something already implicitly contained in another assertion; questions as to what explicitation of the formally or merely virtually implicit can be defined as *fides divina* or *fides ecclesiastica* – all presuppose the conviction that dogmatic development cannot take place without clarification of human concepts apropos of the dogma. It is however necessary to stress this obvious point. True, what has been said up to now does not define in any way the *exact mode* of such conceptual explicitation in dogmatic development. It is still an open question whether we can be content with the usual explanations given in scholastic theology, which tries to justify this explicitation on the basis of a formal logic of concepts and syllogisms. But we must not lose sight of the fact that there must be an objective connexion between the ancient *depositum* and a newly defined dogma, on principle, and that this connexion must be demonstrable. To renounce this would be to postulate in fact, even though one avoided saying so, new official revelations in the Church which would go beyond the apostolic *depositum*.

Here and there one gets the impression that the search for such rational explanations has been abandoned, wordlessly, and that theologians are ready to renounce such connexions in the theory of dogmatic development. There are various reasons for such defeatism within a rational [20] theology. One proceeds perhaps from the false supposition that such a rationally demonstrable connexion must be able to explain and justify all and everything in dogmatic development. In doing so, one wrongly makes the rational process of explicitation the only element in dogmatic development, which of course it is not. Or one exaggerates the certainty that can be asked of such examples of explicitation. But suppose someone only admitted a theological argument from the implicit to the explicit as certain when it is in fact understood by everyone and when its stringency is denied by no one. By only accepting such an argument, he would be using a terminology which is completely alien to the Church, because the Church designates as rationally intelligible and certain a number of proofs which are contested, not accepted, by numberless people. Further, he would logically be denying that there can be any certain rational knowledge at all, because there is practically no item of knowledge which is contested by nobody, and hence he would have to say that certain knowledge does not exist. The mere fact therefore, that explicitation-arguments for a new dogma are contested by some or many theologians as not being stringent or certain, is far from being a proof that no one has succeeded in demonstrating in fact, with sufficient certainty, the connexion between the ancient *depositum fidei* and a truth to be newly defined or indeed already defined. A theologian can have the right, and indeed in certain circumstances even the duty, of declaring his arguments to be clear and certain, even when his colleagues refuse to applaud. For in such cases one may not suddenly demand more stringency and certainty than can be achieved, according to Church doctrine, in other theological or philosophical considerations which the Church qualifies as certain. No more certainty then is demanded for the processes of explicitation that can for instance be attained for the proof of the existence of God, the freedom of man, the necessity of confession or for transubstantiation – which last truth can indeed be known, according to the doctrine of the Church, from other data of Scripture. Hence one will at least warn people to be careful, if they are tempted, for instance with regard to the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption and so on, to deny to theological arguments the sort of certainty which alone – but really – must be demanded on this level.

All these problems have perhaps been unnecessarily aggravated by the effort to base the rational stringency of such processes of explicitation too quickly and too one-sidedly on the

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formal syllogistic logic of the [21] Scholastics. For 'rational', in our world of concepts, does not merely mean an intelligibility and certainty founded on insight into the validity of a syllogism or on the purely intellectual analysis of a concept. As we have already said, to restrict rationality to these matters would be at the very least contrary to the usual language of the Church. If, in other words, one only allowed rational certainty to be present where a new truth of faith is deduced by a simple syllogism from two revealed premisses, there will of course be hardly a single instance of a dogma's being unfolded on the level of concepts and judgments. But then one ought to be honest and cease to claim that dogmas defined in ancient times have a greater evidence and certainty with regard to their derivation from the assertions of Scripture than the newer dogmas. For instance, the sacramental nature of marriage has been a dogma for seven hundred years, but is no more stringently deducible from Scripture on these terms than, say, the dogmas of 1854 and 1950. Further, even in the region of natural knowledge it is wrong to confine certainty only to places where the stringency of a syllogism is invoked. I know, and I know with certainty, that my mother will not poison me, as long as her mind is in any way sound. And this certainty is undoubtedly rational, because according to ecclesiastical, scholastic and a just and preferable terminology no faculty gives more certain knowledge than precisely this rational one. This certainty as to my mother's behaviour can be called rational, and this massive rational certainty can be explained very subtly and circumstantially for the whole length of a dissertation. No doubt such a commentary is intelligent and indeed to some extent necessary, but it will never exhaust, never quite catch up with, the massive original and thoroughly rational certainty. Indeed, its very point will be to enable man to achieve unhesitatingly and intensively this primordial, unreflective and massive but none the less rationally certain knowledge. It will make this knowledge easier for him and give him the courage not to remain prisoner of rationalistic inhibitions and scrupulosity, but to dare boldly to achieve a genuine certainty and a rational insight. For free decision and insight are precisely not in contradiction with each other but are complementary moments of spiritual knowledge and certainty.

There is then in any case a rational certainty which is not properly syllogistic and which cannot be comprised under that head except imperfectly, though no doubt a transposition into such terms is useful and indeed to a certain extent necessary. Why then should not this rational [22] certainty, in its primordial form, not be found also in theology? Why may we not consider the work of reflective theology as the necessary though always inadequate reflection of the mind of the believing Church on a primordial rational certainty by which it knows the connexion between an old and new utterance of dogma? Given such theological labour, and supposing it has been carried out with the utmost strictness and honesty, but also in an inner, sympathetic contact with the object and the primordial truth, why should it not be qualified as certain knowledge? For we may not forget that this certainty lives by reference to that more primordial certainty and is always sustained by it. Rational reflexion does not really create that certainty for the first time, since it rather lives by that certainty. But it can help it to mature, just as the flower lives by the root, and yet the root still depends on the flower.

In this connexion it is perhaps in order to say a word about the notion of the argument from congruity. The theologian's task with regard to revelation is to expound and clarify the inner meaning and the mutual connexions of revealed truths whose revelation is already established. Considerations which serve this task may be designated as arguments of congruity. Such considerations can of course rely from the very start on assured knowledge of the revealed nature of the truths whose meaning and harmony are taken as themes of study. Medieval theology had no doubt such considerations in mind for the most part, when it put the question: *utrum conveniens est* . . .? – Is it congruous? Here in consequence the question of the stringency of such considerations plays only a subordinate role. It is different with considerations which are meant to lead to conclusions not yet guaranteed as revealed by the

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magisterium. Here the notion of the 'argument from congruity' can only lead to difficulties which could easily be avoided. For if in such cases one designates such considerations as arguments of congruity it means strictly speaking that the argument shows that *if* God had in fact done this or that, he would have acted *reasonably*. But the expression also implies that the fact of his having so acted is not established and is not made any more certain by the argument. In other words, by using such an expression one qualifies the argument as completely insufficient for the actual end in view, and thus one rules out from the start all theological effort at such an unfolding of the dogma. But in doing so, one creates difficulties which in reality do not exist at all. For what is the true state of affairs? Such considerations, if made seriously, precisely and with all desirable rational conscientiousness, [23] are always in the nature of a proposition – if one may say so – put before the magisterium and the understanding of faith in the Church as a whole. The question of what rational certainty is attached to such theological considerations apart from this essential element, the orientation of the thought *to the Church as a whole*, is undoubtedly a subordinate one. For it arises only from the abstract isolation of one element, the rational one, from the totality of theological thought. The only meaning of such a subordinate question would be to sharpen one's own private theological conscience and to prevent one's being superficial and easy-going with one's own theological work, that is, with what is laid before the general consciousness of the Church. But if this process of isolation and the questions arising from it are disallowed, there is no correct sense in which the argument in question can be qualified as 'of congruity'. For such a qualification evaluates the thing in question before it has reached the full perfection of its own being. But the argument, by the nature of things, is only complete when it is accepted by the universal consciousness of faith in the Church, which alone is competent to pronounce the true verdict on it. It is not from individual theologians but from the universal faith of the Church that the qualification is to come, in a process that may last for centuries, either through a definition, or through disregard of these considerations, so that the question raised by these considerations of theologians is left open. It is quite possible that such theological considerations contain elements of certainty and stringency which cannot be made clearly objective by the syllogisms and conceptual analyses of the individual theologian alone, but only in connexion with the sense of faith of the Church. Hence if one starts by qualifying a certain theological consideration as merely an argument from congruity, the books are closed before they ought to be. Or at least one gives the impression that the act of the magisterium and of the sense of faith, consequent to these theological considerations, has basically nothing to do with those considerations but produces something quite new, in a sort of *generatio aequivoca*, on the *occasion*, at most, of these considerations. But in fact, what the magisterium and the Church's sense of faith do is to give objective clarity to a stringency which resided in these considerations themselves, though this *immanent* stringency in the process of theological development is first brought to conscious objectivity through the qualification granted by the Church – which however is not a substitute for such stringency. In other words, to qualify a theological argument as merely [24] congruous, simply because its stringency can only be recognized, fully reflectively, by the Church as a whole, would be to mistake the true nature of theological thought and to split up something which must indeed be composed of different elements but at the same time is always one in this plurality.

(d) *Tradition*

As the fourth element of a truth of faith and hence of dogmatic development we must expressly underline the process of 'being handed on'. A divinely revealed utterance is essentially something that takes place when person speaks to person, since divine revelation, being strictly supernatural, is essentially the self-disclosure of God. From the very start therefore, and by their very nature, revealed truths are truths which are spoken to someone.

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This handing on of revealed truths is therefore also valid for the dogma of the Church. This element of being handed on, constitutive in the *traditio*, which is the handing on to truth and reality together, brings with it basically at once the development of dogma. For such a *traditio* takes place at a given moment of space and time, is necessarily historical, and absorbs the recipient and his historical uniqueness, which is also a property of his knowledge, into the process of *traditio* itself. In other words, anything said to anybody, if it is really to communicate, also of necessity implies that what is said undergoes a history in the utterance; it is not a mere repetition of the same thing. This is not of course to maintain that the assertion does not remain the same, in the sense of an evolutionist theory of dogmatic development contrary to the doctrine of the first Vatican Council. But if we start from this consideration we can make it clear – just as from the *a posteriori* data of Scripture – that every kerygma, by the very fact of its being proclaimed, undergoes development, and therefore, since it must remain revealed kerygma which calls for faith, gives rise not merely to theology in history but to dogma in history and hence to dogmatic development.

One might then ask oneself what direction must necessarily be taken by this development, which is already contained in the initial stage of the dogma. Such a question could only be answered by taking into account all the other elements which we discover in dogma. We have said above, under (a), that the Spirit, grace and the light of faith are one of the essential elements of dogma and therefore of its development. If one could enquire, more closely than is possible here, into the way in which this [25] element affects the whole grasp of dogma, we should have to deduce that the light of faith, brought by the Spirit and ultimately identical with him, is the *a priori* within which the individual objects of revelation are grasped. This is comparable to natural knowledge, where being in general is the *a priori* horizon in relation to which the spirit in its transcendence grasps each object and first makes it truly intelligible. From this we are to expect *a priori* a two-fold movement within the development of dogma. The infinite breadth and intensity of the supernatural *a priori* must necessarily lead to a constantly increasing articulateness in the *unfolding* of the objects comprised within its horizon. In the confrontation and synthesis between the formal *a priori* and the *a posteriori* object of faith, the object is necessarily displayed ever more fully in its virtualities. For each *a posteriori* object of faith is grasped *as* a moment of the movement of the spirit towards the one self-communication of God, which is not merely grasped in the act of faith as a statement *about* a future thing, but actually takes place in that act. But since each truth of faith is in this way a moment of this movement towards the unifying self-communication of God, which is absolutely unified and utterly intensive, the assertion can only function when it is open to more than it contains, to the whole, in fact. But it is only open – unless it is to fulfil this demand by the mere extinction of itself in the mystic darkness of the silent mystery in general – if it unfolds itself in a greater fulness of assertions, through which it is referred ever more fully to revelation as a whole.

The theology of the increasingly lucid *analogia fidei* is therefore not just the result of an ingenious formal logic which constantly produces new combinations, constantly finds new cross-references and connexions and deduces consequences from them. The theology in question is rather legitimated by the connexion that exists between the comprehension of an individual truth of faith and the enveloping *a priori* (given in its own reality in grace) of its comprehension in true faith. This divine *a priori* of faith inaugurates the unfolding of the ancient *depositum fidei* from its virtualities. Thus the dynamism of dogmatic development aims at an ever fuller expression of the individual dogma. It is expansive. But we must likewise expect, by virtue of the same origin, a dynamism that runs counter to this. For the formal *a priori* of faith, in contrast to the natural transcendence of the spirit and its *a priori* relationship, is not a formal abstract *a priori*, founded on the potentiality of the developing spirit and its openness; it is not merely an *a priori* of possibility. It is in fact the real [26]

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intensive fulness of what is meant in each individual object of faith, and that not merely in notion or idea, but in the reality itself, which is none other than the triune God in his real self-communication.

In the act of faith therefore, in the utterance and the hearing of revelation, a synthesis takes place between this *a priori* and each individual object of faith. But then such a synthesis must also launch the dynamism in the direction of a constantly progressive concentration of the variety of the contents of revelation upon this *a priori* unity which is intended in all this variety. Dogmatic development must also contain a dynamism of compression and simplification, tending towards the blessed darkness of the one mystery of God. It is not at all as if dogmatic development must always move in the direction of multiplying individual assertions. Just as important, indeed, strictly speaking still more important, is the development in the line of simplification, towards an ever clearer view of what is really intended, towards the single mystery, an intensification of the experience in faith of what is infinitely simple and in a very essential sense obvious. The more clearly the ultimate themes are disentangled from the variety of the assertions of faith, the more clearly they are grasped through acceptance of the individual assertions, the more 'dogmatic development' do we have. In practice, the former of these dynamisms will be sustained more by popular piety and by the magisterium, which is responsible to it on justifiable pastoral grounds. The latter contrary, dynamism, will be sustained in practice primarily, though not solely, by the esoteric studies of theology itself. Theology at present however, in our non-authoritative opinion, should not be confined to the service, however justifiable, of popular piety, which strives inevitably and justifiably after the greatest possible diversity, and necessarily explains to itself the fulness of divine reality by a constantly increasing number of particulars. Theology today might well take up more intensively the other charge that falls to it, and in practice, to it alone: the reduction of the multiplicity of faith's assertions to their ultimate structures, in the intelligence of which under certain circumstances the all-embracing and overwhelming mystery of God is more powerfully present for us today than where the spirit only enlarges upon the variety of the individual assertions and further distinctions among them. To use a comparison and meet the facts at the same time one might say: there is a theology of the commonplace in the supernatural by which one tries to find God in a constant multiplication of newer and more distinct particulars. But there is also a theology of the 'mystical' or the [27] silent mystery, in which as in mysticism proper, the particulars are lost to sight as though at night, so that the one totality may become more powerful. One might well think that the second, which demands of theology just as much precision and discernment as the first, is too little practised today. It exists however in the form of a need, mostly not quite conscious of itself, even in the theology of de-mythization.

(e) *The acknowledged presence of dogma*, AS *dogma*, AS *revealed by God*

Where a dogma is present to the full extent of its being, it implies that the conscious faith of the Church, definitively instructed by the magisterium of the Church, holds it *as* revealed by God. This further element of dogma is now to be considered in relation to the development of dogma. The special quality of this element is that dogmatic development precisely consists of the fact that this element becomes a datum of consciousness: the Church becomes aware that it enunciates a given truth as something revealed by God. But this datum *of consciousness* – and this is what ultimately constitutes the whole difficulty of the development of dogma – was not always present. It is probably better to formulate it in this manner than to put the matter more crudely and to say that the Church once did not believe a certain truth and only grasped it later. For, looking more closely and deeply into the matter, and distinguishing between an explicitly articulate and a more undifferentiated presence of a divine revelation, one would say more correctly: the Church was not always *consciously* aware that it possessed

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something as a divine truth in its sense of faith, while it was in fact always present to the Church. However that may be, we have in any case to reflect on the fact that such a conscious datum, which was not always present, does enter into the development of dogma. We come now to the really problematical point. The question is; how does this entry take place? How does the Church suddenly notice, as we may say, that the assertion on which it had been brooding in its consciousness perhaps for centuries is held by it with the unconditional assent of faith? If one simply answered the question by saying: it does so because the Pope or the Council defines this truth, the question would merely be transposed. It would then be: in what circumstances and on what evidence has the Pope the right to define something? The question remains even on the unquestionable supposition that the Pope, *when* he defines something, defines correctly. The formal legitimacy of the act whereby he defines is the guarantee of the correctness of his definition *quoad nos*. But [28] it is not the objective or the conscientious justification of the papal definition for the Pope himself. But suppose one answers the question as follows: the Pope recurs to tradition to assure himself of the justification of his definition, the old question arises once more. How can the justification be found in tradition since by hypothesis this tradition, coming *before* the definition, does not contain the element of conscious knowledge of the revealed nature of the proposition to be defined? One might say: yes, this element was already there, because – as was established in fact before the definition by the Pope's questioning the episcopate – this truth was already believed in the Church *as* something revealed by God, though not of course on the basis of a decision of the extra-ordinary magisterium. But then the question has been changed back once more into its earlier form: how then did the transition take place from a state of belief in the Church, in which a certain proposition was already held, but *not yet* consciously grasped *as* something revealed by God, to a state of belief in which this is the case? In other words, the problem remains the same in any case: how and on what grounds and with what right does the believing mind of the Church take the step from a stage in which it possessed a truth without having *consciously* recognized it as revealed by God, to the stage of making such an assertion? One might think to answer this question adequately by the sole reference to the rational validity of the arguments dealing with the connexion between the ancient *depositum fidei* and the new proposition, no matter how one conceived of this rational recognition in detail. But then logically one would have to admit that the certainty of the conclusion of this rational argument is itself dependent on the certainty of the argumentation. Therefore it can never lead to the certainty of faith itself, and the Church cannot rest adequately its absolute, irrevocable decision on such a certainty. One could of course reply by saying: this rational argumentation (in the broad sense of which we have spoken earlier and which has not been expounded more precisely here) is not meant to justify in any way the absolute nature of the definition or of the faith, but only the right of the Church to such a definition or an act of faith in which a proposition is really grasped *as* something revealed by God. But then we should have to ask again: first, how can one recognize a 'right' to such an assent, when the recognition of this right is still not the adequate justification of what really takes place in such an assent? Secondly: how does this assent come about if it contains something more definitive and absolute, and to some extent [29] at least, something more in the line of contents than can simply be derived from the process of explicitation alone?

To put this more concretely and so to repeat once more the two questions: first, explicitation cannot prove the new doctrine, which is only now to be held *as* revealed, *as* definable, with the stringency and certainty which are contained in the act of explicit faith and the definition. Explicitation cannot in fact make this claim nor indeed *may* it make it, because otherwise the remaining motives of faith and its responsible causes would be rendered superfluous. Faith would not be the work of the Spirit and the definition would not come about under the assistance of the Spirit. How then does the Church which believes or

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the Pope who defines know that they can believe and define? Where do they get the right to do so? The question is not to be over-simplified or made too easy. There are of course certain definitions, or at least there seem to be, where it is clear that the extra-ordinary magisterium only laid down once more, by a definition, something that had already been taught as revealed by the ordinary magisterium and had been believed expressly by the Church. In such cases the novelty is justified by the fact that it is basically only a repetition of the old, the defence of what was already present. But in putting our questions, we are thinking of all the cases where by hypothesis the matter is otherwise, where namely the definition or the faith of the Church intervenes for *the first time* and does not merely confirm or defend what was already acquired. By what *right*, consciously known and demonstrable, does the transition take place from the stage in which a proposition is not yet held as certainly revealed by God to the stage where it is accepted as certainly revealed by God? With this the second question becomes clear: *how* is the transition made from one stage to the other? And it is clear that this passage is the decisive problem of dogmatic development, much more than the question of the content, when the implications of an ancient dogma are unfolded.

But when we look closely at the matter, the question is seen to be an ancient one, a problem known to every theologian, though it has undoubtedly special modifications by reason of the fact that here it is a matter not of the faith of the individual but of the whole Church. We are all aware of the question of the transition, and the justification of it, from a qualitatively lower to a qualitatively higher level of knowledge in the birth of faith in general, in the case of the individual. When someone begins to believe, we have to ask: what exactly happens, and by what right [30] does the former non-believer begin to believe? The first answer that the traditional theology of the schools will give is that he has grasped the *praeambula fidei*, the rational foundations of faith, in one way or another, and to a degree which is sufficient in his regard. Thus he knows that he has the right and the duty to believe: he has seen the credibility and the *credentitas* of the faith. Hence he believes, hence he freely decides to believe. But here a theology which goes somewhat deeper will have to say that while accepting this answer we must not overlook the qualitative difference between a rational proof of credibility, with all its problems, doubts and obscurities (no matter how much absolute or relative ‘certainty’ is and must be ascribed to it), and the total, absolute commitment of faith. The same problem is posed us as we discovered in the Church’s development of dogma: the problem of the passage from the stage of not believing or not yet believing to that of belief. We can therefore assert that dogmatic development brings us back to all the problems, theories, differences of opinion and open questions which we meet in the *analysis fidei* when treating of the origin of faith in the individual. And everything said there can be repeated here. The leap to faith from its necessary presuppositions is the very same there as here, fundamentally. There are two aspects in official Catholic doctrine on faith with regard to its origin. On the one hand, it teaches the necessity of rational presuppositions which can be consciously grasped, and that there is a connexion between these and the faith. It defends them against theories that make the faith irrational by denying such presuppositions and leaving the faith to rest entirely on itself. On the other hand the same Catholic doctrine maintains that there is a qualitative difference between faith, which is an act of God-given grace, even in the zone of consciousness, and its presuppositions, which are rational. The same two aspects recur in our present question. We are also entitled therefore to break off the discussion of the problems posed by dogmatic development and to content ourselves here with having reduced our present question to the more general one. It is indeed enough, because the more general question is in fact a recognized subject of theological study and is clearly envisaged by it, while the question as posed by dogmatic development is probably not so clearly seen. Still less has its identity with the more general question been fully worked out.

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Two things only must be remarked in conclusion. The first concerns a still more general case, which does not indeed solve the problem, but shows how real it is, since the occurrence in question is so real and [31] unavoidable. Wherever a decision is freely taken the following case arises. On the one hand, the decision must be preceded and justified by an insight into its meaning, its rights and its duties. On the other hand the decision itself, once it is made, possesses its own evidence, which is intrinsic to it and is only attainable in the decision. In other words, no decision is merely the execution of the judgment. It is also the coming of the light which alone can justify it in the measure in which it feels it must be justified in its own eyes. There is a mental clarity which does not precede the decision but can only be attained in the decision itself, though it does not follow at all that the process is 'irrational' or that it renders superfluous the previous rational considerations which should lead to a correct decision. A metaphysic of freedom and of love would be needed to propound and clarify the matter. This would give us an element of a general existentialist ontology which could be applied to the special question we are dealing with – one which has a great need of such an existentialist ontology.

The second is this: there is a two-fold reason by which it can be shown that in our particular question we have a less acute form of the general problem of how faith arises from rational pre-suppositions without being in homogeneous continuity with them. It is because we are dealing with the *whole* Church and with a faith that grows *out of faith*. We are dealing with the faith of the whole Church. First of all, it may be affirmed *a posteriori* that up to this a papal definition has never been given where the object of the definition was not already in fact believed by the Church as a truth of faith. We will not now go into the question of whether that must be so on principle. The '*ex se infallibilis*' of the doctrinal authority of the Pope has not yet settled the matter definitely. For this doctrine only means that the papal decision does not need the subsequent assent of the Church for its validity and that the fulfilment of the conditions necessary for the decision – there are such things! – is not the subject of an examination by others, as if the validity of the papal decision depended on their verifying the conditions. If then one were to say: the Pope defines on principle only what is already believed *as* a revealed truth in the Church, one would not offend, given the distinctions just made, against the doctrine in question. However, we leave this question aside for the moment. In point of fact, at any rate, the actual faith of the Church as a whole was ascertained before, for instance, the Assumption was defined, by the questionnaire sent to the bishops by the Pope before his definition. [32] Hence this definition at least could be given in view of the faith already there, which recognized the truth to be defined as a revealed one. And it will undoubtedly be difficult to find a clear and convincing example of a different procedure, in point of fact.

Thus, in many cases at least, the faith of the Church with regard to a revealed truth as such intervenes prior to the act of the extra-ordinary magisterium, and hence (in connexion with the ordinary magisterium) in the form of an almost imperceptible growth and ripening of this specified consciousness of the faith, as it 'comes to itself'. The Church as a whole considers a thought which grows out of the whole content of its faith: it ripens, it merges ever more fully with the whole, while the Church lives it and perfects it. And so the Church of a certain day, if we may say so, finds itself simply there, believing in this special manner. This is not surprising. As we have already indicated, all decisions are preceded by preliminary decisions, attitudes and so on; in all decisions there are motives and urges at work, which are not themselves the object of a conscious choice. No wonder then that the same thing should happen with the Church. The interesting thing is that this passage in the development of dogma from groping to grasping, from thinking to the assent of faith, is attributed first and foremost – at least in the cases accessible at once to us – to the Church as a whole. This is easily understood. For the Church is what is ultimately intended by God by the hierarchy and

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its authority. It is the totality of all the God-given guidance, impulses and tendencies in historical development – whereby it would be against the doctrine of the Church to suppose that all these divine movements were always primarily introduced into the Church by means of the hierarchical office. The whole Church is therefore also the easiest place to imagine the quiet transition from one stage to another, of which we have spoken. All we have to do is think of the opposite case. Certain moral and theological pre-suppositions must be available to the Pope when he defines – and it is morally certain that he has them, because the opposite is no doubt excluded by divine providence, along with the possibility of error. How is he to have them in practice, unless he can have before his eyes a truth already present in fact to the faith of the Church, in conjunction with the *magisterium ordinarium*? It other words, how else is he to have sufficient human certainty that what he is about to define is contained in the *depositum fidei*? One might say that some other sufficiently certain theological judgment would be enough, for instance, that on [33] various grounds, something was implicitly contained in the heritage of faith. But in point of fact it is unthinkable that this would be discovered for the first time at this precise moment by the Pope. And so the theological reason which the Pope has must also be known and active elsewhere in the Church. Who is to prove that it has not already in fact enabled the whole Church to see the implicit truth as something revealed by God, without any papal definition? Anyone who feels that the importance of the doctrinal authority of the Pope is threatened by such considerations is not thinking correctly. Before all paper definitions, the whole Church probably already believes clearly enough the doctrine about to be defined. And this fact, which has impressed itself slowly and without flourish of trumpets on the believing consciousness of the Church, is probably even the justification of the contents of the definition, though not of course the formal juridical legitimation of the moral right of the Pope to define the doctrine. But such assertions do not restrict the importance of the doctrinal authority of the Pope. For it is undeniable that such acts of the extra-ordinary magisterium also retain their sense and importance where a truth is already *de facto* explicitly believed in the Church, as revealed by God, under the influence of the ordinary magisterium, including that of the Pope. We do not maintain that the faith of the Church prior to a papal definition has no connexion with the ordinary magisterium. On the contrary, it is precisely when this faith grows and ripens under the guidance of the ordinary magisterium, even where this does not make itself heard clearly by exercising its supreme authority, that the importance of the magisterium, working in harmony with the faith of the listening Church, is all the clearer and greater. The ordinary magisterium, in papal encyclicals, addresses etc, makes a decisive contribution to the ripening and the self-awareness of the believing consciousness of the whole Church. But this process of ripening, as history shows, is more manifold, multi-storied, organic and harmonious than it would be if reduced, as some might imagine, to what survives in a methodical, juridical formalizing of the process: namely the authoritative decree and its obedient acceptance. Further, the faith of the whole Church, existing prior to the definition, does not by any means imply that every individual member already explicitly believes the proposition in question as something revealed by God. It only means that this faith exists in the Church as an attribute of this moral person which is the Church as a whole. The function of the papal decision is precisely to ascertain this [34] faith and so to impart this general faith of the whole Church to those who do not yet believe. The Pope is the point at which the collective consciousness of the whole Church attains effective self-awareness, in a manner which is authoritative for the individual members of the Church. This does not of course mean that the individual is only bound to obedience when he has positively verified the fact that the Pope actually exercised this function as he gave his definition. The mere fact that a legitimate Pope has made a formal definition in the legal way is enough to tell the individual that the Pope has in fact exercised this function. But he does exercise it. He does so, because it is as member of the Church that

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he is Pope, and it is as member of the Church, on behalf of the Church, that God confers upon him his authority, and because it is the Church ultimately that must be indefectible. Hence the exercise of this authority – especially where it takes place in the service of dogmatic development – rests upon a clarification of the believing consciousness of the whole Church: just as much as it calls for such a development and brings it to its definitive self-understanding.

All that we have just said in this context comes down to this: because, and in so far as, the *whole* Church is the bearer of dogmatic development, the problem of the transition is somewhat easier than in the case of an individual coming to believe, though the fundamental difficulty remains. In addition, there is a second reason for the easing of the problem, which we shall only indicate here. In the Church, it is a matter of reaching certainty about the revealed nature of a given proposition, on the basis of revelation already believed, starting from other propositions already held by faith. It is not a matter of the complete transition from unbelief to faith, as in the case of the individual which is usually analysed in the *analysis fidei*. I am well aware that what I have said leave many questions of dogmatic development untouched. Above all, we seem to be now once more at a time when we should look more closely into the questions which were central to previous investigations into this theme, the questions namely about how precisely development takes place on the level of human concepts and propositions. One should have to ask what is the true process of the logic of invention (in contrast to the logic of syllogistic verification) both in general and in the field of theology and reflexion on the faith in particular. One should have to ask what are its laws, what are the influences to which it is subject, etc. We shall not be able to make ends meet, if we are confined there to such primitive concepts [35] as are usually applied (formally or virtually implicit etc.). However, we cannot go into this now. All I wished to do here was to show that prior to the usual questions, there are certain questions that need to be better clarified: the question of dogmatic development within Sacred Scripture; the question of a really adequate grasp of all the elements of propulsion and guidance which are to be considered in dogmatic development, none of which is to be overlooked if a theory of development is not to be one-sided or to lead us into straits; the question of the inner connexion between the problems of the *analysis fidei* and the development of dogma; the question of the necessary rational connexion between the ancient *depositum fidei* and a new dogma; the question of the indisputable importance of theology within the development of dogma; the question of the course of development taking a two-fold direction. These and similar questions, which we have touched upon, would have to be solved, if we are to come to a concept of dogmatic development which corresponds to the historical facts as well as to the consciousness of the Church. For we know that in such development the faith of the Church remains the same, at one with what it received as the assertion about the absolute revelation of God, which is Jesus Christ our Lord, he who was crucified and rose again.

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2

THE CONCEPT OF MYSTERY IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

I. FIRST LECTURE

We shall try to indicate in these three lectures the fundamental role played by the concept of mystery in dogmatic theology. The first lecture will be an introduction to the set of problems here envisaged; the second will discuss the notion of mystery to which these problems point; the third will apply this notion to the Christian mysteries as they are presented in Catholic theology and show that these mysteries, though spoken of in the plural, are really only so many facets of the one mystery with which the Christian revelation confronts mankind.

The question is of importance in apologetics. The world in which man lives today seems to him a closed system, sealed off to a certain extent from God, a universe of unthinkable extent and variety, largely impenetrable and fully determined by its own laws. If God is not actually depersonalized, his government of the world is less easily thought of than hitherto on the analogy of the action of someone in this world. God has become more transcendent, and his name simply stands for the unfathomable mystery which lies behind all accessible and definable reality. The world has become less divine, and, by the same token, less important. Its processes are no doubt felt to be inevitable, but not as numinous – much rather as contingent and changeable. But if God is thus nameless and remote, and the world and everything within it profane, provisional, and replaceable, only at an immense remove the work of God's hand and the reflexion of his being: then man's sense of his own existence sets him a strange and oppressive problem. It is no longer so easy for him to see a definitely constituted religion, with its thousand and one truths, customs, prescriptions, and rules, as the concrete obligation of God's will and the necessary institution for his salvation. He finds all this so anthropomorphic and concrete that it is hard for him to realize that this multiplicity [37] of details constitute God's way, and indeed the necessary way, of communicating himself to man for man's salvation.

Dogmatic theology poses the same problems, and perhaps most acutely. As long as men find it a highly complicated collection of arbitrarily linked assertions, their readiness to believe will be inhibited. And this is not because they abhor the incomprehensible. They may be rationalists with regard to a world in which they see nothing numinous, but merely the raw material for science and technology. But that does not mean that they are nothing but rationalists. They are much less so than their forefathers of the 18th and 19th centuries. They sense and revere the nameless and inexpressible. And for that very reason, they find a complicated dogmatic system too knowledgeable by far, too clever, rationalistic and positivist, too ready to lay down the law. They are not much impressed when the theologian appeals to a positive decree of God at every point where his dogmatic theology seems to be at a loss, and goes on from there to construct a world of faith held together only by such decrees, which are now christened mysteries. Men find the mystery of God so all-embracing that they cannot easily bring themselves to accept a multitude of mysteries which look very much like the complications of human reasoning which has tied itself up in knots.

It is therefore a very existential problem, when we ask how *the* mystery stands to the many mysteries of Catholic faith and doctrine and whether the whole field of mysteries can be understood as a real unity, without of course trying to reduce all mysteries to one, rationalistically. Is Christian doctrine, where it covers real mysteries, really a highly complicated system of orderly statements? Or is it rather a mysteriously simple thing of

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infinite fulness, which can be propounded in an immense variety of statements while its mysterious and simple unity remains unchanged? So that man, faced with this multiplicity of assertions, need not be the victim of modernistic simplifications of religion if he finds himself as he really is, the being in face of the nameless mystery which he adores: *Adoro te devote, latens Deitas*.

We start with the conventional notion of mystery as given in the current manuals of dogmatic and fundamental theology. It cannot be our task here to outline the history of the notion, and hence we do not deny that it may once have been richer and more profound than it now appears in the theology of the schools. But when we are trying to see all the [38] problems which the notion presents today we may restrict ourselves without injustice to the average concept as proposed in the schools. There is all the less reason for quarrelling with this procedure because it can be shown that the notion of mystery as now proposed in fundamental and dogmatic theology, is more or less that of the first Vatican Council, which did not go beyond the usual problems of the schools, at least consciously and expressly.

How is the notion of mystery understood in the schools? We begin by noting three remarkable points. First, mystery is regarded from the start as the property of a statement. Then, there are mysteries – in the plural. Finally, this multiplicity of mysteries is comprised of truths which are *provisionally* incomprehensible. Of course, in the language of the Church and of theology, the object expressed by the truth, the thing to which the statement refers, is also called a mystery. This is obvious, and we do not doubt it in the least. But in the ordinary terminology, it is the truths or statements that have the quality of mystery, even though this stems from the object to which they refer. It is the *truths* that are mysterious. This is clear at once from the fact the notion of mystery is orientated from the very start to the '*ratio*'. It is something mysterious *to reason*. No one asks whether the relationship which is thus used to clarify the notion is not too narrow and superficial. Without bowing the knee to irrationalism, and without restricting in any way the 'essential role of *ratio* in religion and theology, we can still ask whether the precise nature of '*ratio*' itself is quite so clear and obvious, and if not, whether such a concept may be used to determine the notion of mystery. And may there not be a more primordial unity of the spirit, whatever its name, prior to the division into the 'faculties' of *ratio* and *voluntas*? – an authentically scholastic question. (cf. St Thomas, S. th., I, q. 16, a. 4) – and may not this primordial unity be the reality to which the mystery is directed and related? In other words, perhaps the will and its freedom have the same essential relation to the mystery as the *ratio*, and the mystery to them, when they are considered in their original state of unity with the *ratio*. Would it be then correct to assume that mystery and mysterious truth are one and the same thing?

Now in the terminology of the schools, mysteries are affirmations whose truth can be guaranteed only by a divine communication and which do not become perspicuous even when communicated by divine revelation but remain essentially the object of faith. This notion of mystery corresponds exactly to the standard notion of revelation, which, in [39] contrast to the biblical theology accepted by Catholics and Protestants, is taken to be the communication of truths, that is, true statements. Revelation is of course and involves essentially the communication of truths. But if we take our concepts from the history of revelation and biblical theology, we shall have to add that it is by his *action* upon us that God imparts truths to us. The wider concept is that of a revelation which is action and event. This follows at once from the fact that in the actual order of things revelation, even as the communication of truth, only comes to us as the salvific action of God's grace in which he must first bestow on us the capacity of hearing his word of revelation and in which he imparts to us the reality of which the word of revelation speaks. The reality is spoken of only in the grace by which the reality itself is communicated, and revelation only expounds it and makes

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it the object of consciousness. Revelation is not a preliminary substitute for the thing, as if for the moment we had only a message 'about' the thing and not the thing itself.

Revelation, however, as ordinarily discussed in the schools, is purely a verbal communication and the concept of mystery is likewise referred from the start to statement and assertion, which are then distinguished from the truths of natural reason which can be 'seen', 'comprehended' and 'demonstrated'. Thus the special nature of these truths is measured not by the '*intellectus*' which forms a primordial unity with the will, but by the '*ratio*', which in Vatican I and in theology is taken to be something well known and easily understood, and as the self-explanatory criterion by which these truths are to he measured. Hence it is said that these truths are not accessible to reason, that they surpass the created intellect (D 1796) and that they remain obscure 'as long as in this mortal life' we are on pilgrimage far from the Lord' (cf. D 1676, 1796). The silent presupposition throughout is that we are dealing with truths which should strictly speaking have come within the scope of reason with its power to see and *comprehend*, but in this case do not meet its demands.

The pronouncements of the magisterium in the nineteenth century, and the ordinary theology of mystery, do not go any closer into the notion of this '*ratio*' to which certain doctrinal statements appear mysterious. But its meaning may be gathered from the pronouncements of Pius IX and the Vatican on mystery. It is the faculty which of its very nature is orientated to 'evidence', insight, perspicuousness and strict proof, and seeks a very definite relationship between the mind and its [40] object: the sort of knowledge which was the ideal of the 18th and 19th centuries and stems basically from the ideal of modern science. Now Vatican I and the theologians of the time and after it, do not say that this concept of *ratio* is a relative one, which needs itself to be critically examined, or is too restricted for the character of personal communication which is proper to revelation. They take the concept for granted and go on to affirm that mysteries exist and to define them as well as they can in terms of this problematical norm. In the same way, they take it for granted from the start that if there can be any one such truth which falls within the scope of conceptual assertions, that is, of clear-sighted reason, and yet does not quite meet the demands of reason, there can be *many* such truths or mysteries.

And so the mystery is likewise regarded as, strictly speaking, merely provisional. It is a matter, or so it would seem, of truths obscure and impenetrable for the moment but which will be clarified later on and so finally be adequate to the demands made by human reason for insight and perspicuousness. Both Pius IX and Vatican I state without qualification that these mysteries exist for us 'as long as in this mortal life we are on pilgrimage far from the Lord'. The nature of the mystery as well as its duration are limited to some extent by the *visio beatifica*. With these elementary indications we have not of course exhausted the theology of the schools on the notion of mystery. Much more could be said even on these problematical points, but this is enough for the moment to arouse our astonishment.

So far we have seen that in Vatican I and current theology the criterion of mystery is the *ratio*. Since this criterion is applied to mystery and its nature defined by it, mystery is understood as a statement and therefore as something that can obviously occur in the plural. In the light of this criterion it is also understandable that mystery is given a purely negative definition. It is a truth which cannot for the moment be raised to the level of perspicuous insight which is proper to the *ratio*. It is a truth obscure and veiled, accessible only to faith but not to reason. Theologians are of course prepared to admit that a mysterious truth of faith concerning an important reality is better and more significant than a perspicuous truth of reason concerning some unimportant earthly matter. But the (negative) act by which the more important truth is attained is less highly esteemed than the other.

But what happens when just doubts arise as to the adequacy of the [41] notion of *ratio* presupposed by the theology of the 19th century in its definition of mystery? What if we must

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take *ratio* itself as basically a spiritual entity of absolute transcendence and therefore as the very faculty by which the presence of the mystery is assured? What if we must take the mystery not as the provisional but as the primordial and permanent, so much so that the absence or disregard of mystery, preoccupation with the seemingly known and perspicuous proves to be the provisional, which dissolves before the gradual revelation of the abiding mystery, as such, to the finite reason? What if there be an 'unknowing', centred on itself and the unknown, which when compared with knowledge, that is, with any knowledge not really aware of itself, is not a pure negation, not simply an empty absence, but a positive characteristic of a relationship between one subject and another? What if it be essential and constitutive of true knowledge, of its growth, self-awareness and lucidity, to include precisely the unknown, to know itself orientated from the start to the incomprehensible and inexpressible, to recognize more and more that only in this way can it truly be itself and not be halted at a regrettable limit? What becomes then of the standard notion of mystery? Can it be evolved *primarily* with reference to reason, the faculty of seeing the evidence of individual truths? Can it be regarded as a merely provisional *deficiency* in a truth? And can there be many mysteries?

It is in fact remarkable that in general the theology of the schools does not confront the notion of mystery with the doctrine of God's abiding incomprehensibility even in the *visio beatifica*, a doctrine obvious in itself and dogmatically assured. God remains incomprehensible, and the object of vision is precisely this incomprehensibility, which we may not therefore think of as a sort of regrettably permanent limitation of our blessed comprehension of God. It must rather be thought of as the very substance of our vision and the very object of our blissful love. In other words, if God is directly seen as the infinite and incomprehensible, and if the *visio beatifica* must then be the permanent presence of the inexpressible and nameless: then, since to possess the absolutely simple in its immediate presence makes it impossible to distinguish between what one comprehends of it and what one does not comprehend, vision must mean grasping and being grasped by the mystery, and the supreme act of knowledge is not the abolition or diminution of the mystery but its final assertion, its eternal and total immediacy. And the concept of mystery receives a new content, which does not contradict the standard notion but becomes for [42] the first time authentic and primordial. It is no longer the limitation of a knowledge which should by right be perspicuous. It is an intrinsic constituent of the very notion of knowledge, and the old, traditional criterion of mystery is basically reduced to a defective mode of a knowledge which is essentially orientated to the mystery as such.

We meet the same type of problem if we take the nature of spirit as our starting-point. Spirit is transcendence. Spirit grasps at the incomprehensible, in as much as it presses on beyond the actual object of comprehension to an anticipatory grasp of the absolute. The 'whither' of this anticipatory grasp – which in the act of grasping the individual and tangible attains the all-embracing incomprehensible – may be called obscure or lucid. Its reality, indescribable because non-objectivated, may be experienced as a divine darkness, or greeted as the light which illuminates all else, since the individual object of knowledge is only present and definable in relation to it. But in any case, this nameless region beyond all categories, on which the transcendence of the spirit lays hold without comprehending, is not an accessory or a preliminary sphere of darkness which is to be gradually lit up. It is the primordial and fundamental which is the ultimate transcendental condition of possibility of knowledge. It alone makes categorical clarity possible in the distinct knowledge of contours.

If then the reason which gives shape and contour to the object lives by the indefinable; if the lucidity of the spirit comes from its being open to the divine and truly super-luminous darkness – what are we to think of mystery? Can it be regarded as a defective type of another and better knowledge which is still to come? Is *ratio*, understood in the standard sense, just

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incidentally and secondarily the faculty of mystery, precisely because of its almost too taut tension? Or is it, in spite of the obscurity cast by the standard terminology, the very faculty which is originally and basically the faculty of mystery, and only derivatively *ratio* in the ordinary sense of the word, as supposed by Vatican I and the theology of the schools?

We are met by the same challenge when we consider the nature of spirit as being *one* in the '*perichoresis*' (circumincession) of knowledge and love. The positivism which places knowledge and love merely *de facto* beside one another in an unreconciled dualism must be excluded. For one thing – no one knows why – the same existent thing is both knowing and loving. Hence, in spite of a real multiplicity of faculties and acts, this one [43] being must have a primordial and total relationship to itself and absolute being: a basic act, whose components are the interrelated and interdependent acts of knowing and willing, of insight and love, as we call them empirically. But this must ultimately mean that while guarding the distinction between knowing and willing, we must understand the act of knowing in such a way that it will explain why knowledge can only exist in a being when and in so far as that one being realizes itself by an act of love. In other words, the self-transcendence of knowledge, the fact that it comes to be only *in so far* as it passes over into something else, must be understood in this way: knowledge, though prior to love and freedom, can only be realized in its *true* sense when and in so far as the subject is more than knowledge, when in fact it is a freely given love. This is only possible if knowledge is ultimately a faculty ordained to an object attainable only because the object is greater than the faculty. And what but the incomprehensibility of mystery can be such an object of knowledge, since it forces knowledge to surpass itself and both preserve and transform itself in a more comprehensive act, that of love?

It is the mystery that forces knowledge either to be more than itself or to despair. For as distinct from love it is the faculty which grasps the object to submit it to its *a priori* laws, the faculty of weighing and judging, of seizing and comprehending. But in so far as the reason is more than reason, when it is understood as a potentiality only to be actuated in love, then it must indeed be the faculty which welcomes the greater sight unseen, the faculty of simple rapture, of submissive dedication, of loving ecstasy. But this it can only be if its most proper object is that sovereign and all-embracing exigence which cannot be mastered, comprehended or challenged: in a word, the mystery. And mystery is not merely a way of saying that reason has not yet completed its victory. It is the goal where reason arrives when it attains its perfection by becoming love.

This consideration is not an attack upon a well thought out Thomistic intellectualism which is also Christian. For such intellectualism cannot deny that man as spirit is ultimately *one*, and that its plurality is therefore only intelligible by reason of a prior unity: *non enim plura secundum se uniuntur* – the multiple is not one by virtue of that by which it is multiple. So there must be one last key-word which conjures up the essence of man, not two or three. And this Thomist intellectualism cannot deny that in Christianity the last word is with love and not knowledge. For we are not saved by knowledge but by love, and this can only mean that the [44] act of loving can be the entrance-fee to a life whose essential perfection is centred on something else than that by which it was attained. If one really wishes to be true to Thomist intellectualism, one must understand the intellect in such a way that love is the perfection of knowledge itself. If so, the object, even initially, must contain something which constrains knowledge to become love, under pain of betraying its own nature. Merely to say that love is aroused when the intellect discloses the goodness and appetibility of the object, would be to fail to establish a true perichoresis and to leave the two faculties without any fundamental unity. For, to use the language of St Thomas, either the truth would then be the good of the intellect, or the intellect's function would merely be to propose an object to be loved by the will, the intellect as such being unable to function further on the object. But then of course

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the question would arise as to how the intellect could even know the good as such, if it cannot as such be comprised by the formal object of the intellect. The mystery, being essential to the 'object' to which the intellect is primarily ordained, forces it either to consume itself in protest or to transform itself in the self-surrender by which it accepts the mystery as such, that is, in love, and so to attain its proper perfection. Thus the nature of spirit also shows that mystery is not just a provisional limit of thought, as it usually appears in the theology of the schools.

These are merely the most general and formal aspects under which the problems posed by the standard concept of mystery may be envisaged. Much more could be said on particular points, but we restrict ourselves to the following brief remarks. There is nothing in the concept of mystery as usually put forward in theology which assigns it essentially to the *religious* sphere, which seems however to be its proper place. Mystery is usually defined as a truth which one could only hear from God, that is, from another, and as a truth in which the inner compatibility of the terms is not perspicuous either before or after revelation. But it makes no difference to the truth of a statement and my acceptance of it, whether the truth is presented to me by an encounter with the thing itself or by a communication from another. To learn certain truths, it may be necessary that they be communicated to me by another; and it may be impossible to deduce the truth of an affirmation by inspection of its contents. But this does not really prove that the truths in question are of such a nature that they are entitled to the name of mystery. We do not hold that two terms are certainly and finally non-contradictory simply because we do [45] not see any trace of an eventual contradiction, that is, we do not hold the rationalistic view that a mere lack of contradiction in concepts is proof of a real ontological compossibility. There are therefore many items of purely positive knowledge where the *de facto* compossibility of the terms is known directly or indirectly, but without any really clear insight into the ontological compossibility and without any note of mystery being attached to them. Neither lack of insight into the compatibility of the terms nor the circumstance that they must be communicated by another makes a truth a mystery, nor does a combination of these factors.

This can hardly be gainsaid. For otherwise, to take an example, the statement that there was a river XY in Australia would be a mystery, because not being an Australian, I can only know about it if I am told. Or again, the statement 'It is possible to have a mountain of gold as big as the Matterhorn' would be a mystery, because I might well deny that the ontological possibility of this affirmation is really known and evident. Or at least the statement, 'In Australia there is a mountain of gold as big as the Matterhorn' would be a mystery for me. But this does not really make sense. Such concepts miss the actual phenomenon of 'mystery'.

And the distinction between natural and supernatural mysteries does not take us any further. For the so-called natural mysteries, when regarded clearly, are either not real mysteries at all, or they raise again the question of what makes them mysterious. Is the note of mystery sufficiently justified by the fact that they need to be communicated by another or that the compossibility of their terms is not apparent or by both together? But in any case there are many assertions which on close inspection fulfil exactly the conditions laid down by the standard definition of mystery and which still do not necessarily have that character of the *numinous* which is ascribed to the mysteries of faith in the strict sense. We are not therefore bound to say that the ordinary definition of mystery is positively wrong. But we can say that it does not work out clearly the difference between such statements as are normally termed 'natural mysteries' and the 'mysteries strictly so-called', which must obviously be kept well apart from 'natural mysteries'. The difference cannot originally be constituted by the simple fact that they derive from different sources. The nature of the truth and our relationship to it need some other foundation than the fact that the real mysteries must either be revealed by God or remain entirely unknown. We should at least be told why some truths can be known

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only by revelation and why this confers on the truths [46] *themselves* a character which does not belong to the 'natural mysteries', explaining why the *mysteria stricte dicta* are not constituted as such by the mere lack of positive insight into the compossibility of the terms. For, as we have said, the same impossibility of insight exists also in a whole field of statements which derive either from experience or from a communication which is not a divine revelation.

And the case is not really advanced if we say that the *mysteria stricte dicta* surpass even the angelic reason. Even if we prescind from the fact that we should be told expressly and clearly why this is true even of the loftiest created intellect imaginable – and so given a definition of mystery based on the special nature of the truth itself and not on its *de facto* relationship to various sorts of intelligences – my own relationship to a truth said to be a mystery is in no way altered by the fact that it remains a mystery even for another and perhaps higher intelligence. We have not explained why and in what sense something is a mystery to me, simply by saying that it is also incomprehensible to others.

Further, the ordinary concept of mystery, starting as it does always with mystery as a statement, gives no idea of why the communication of the mystery must always be a *grace*. But obviously there must be some relationship between the mystery and its communication to a subject elevated by divine grace, who responds to the mystery under the inspiration of grace. One relationship, as Vatican I says, is that the revelation of mysteries in the form of truths is necessary if man is called ontologically to a supernatural goal: grace demands the communication of mysteries. But we must go on to affirm that the relationship also exists the other way round. The communication of mystery can only take place in grace; mystery demands, as the condition of possibility of its being heard, a hearer divinized by grace. But this relationship is obscured in the ordinary definition, which does not make it clear why a truth in which the actual objective connexion of the terms and the compatibility of the concepts involved can be known only from revelation, while remaining otherwise inaccessible to man, can and may be imparted only in grace. To say that this holds good only for the divine mysteries, and not for other such statements would be to admit implicitly that by demarcating the *mysteria stricte dicta* from so-called perspicuous truths nothing has been said about the real nature of the mysteries.

The problems raised by the ordinary concept of mystery, which starts with the proposition and so with propositions in the plural, can be seen [47] still more clearly when we reflect on the silent pre-supposition that there can be *many* propositions in the nature of *mysteria stricte dicta*. From the ordinary standpoint there seems to be no possible doubt about it: if there can be any mystery at all – which may be granted for the moment – why could there not be many such? Why can there not be many propositions whose correctness can be known only by revelation and which remain obscure even after revelation?

However: a multiplicity of mysteries presupposes that each proposition has its own distinct content. They cannot all affirm the same thing, if they are really to constitute a number of propositions, each existing in its own right and different from the others. But if they are to have a really different content by which they are distinguished from one another *as* mysteries, then their sphere of reference can only exist where such primordially distinct contents, that is, distinct realities, occur: in the non-divine sphere. Even if we admit that man cannot express the absolutely simple reality of God except in plural terms, the basis of the mysteriousness of such a plurality of affirmations about God would still remain the same. It would still be the essentially mysterious Godhead of God. And the question would still be, whether the one and the same godhead of these many mysteries could really be the objective basis for *so* primordial a plurality and differentiation as is pre-supposed in the ordinary concept of mystery: a concept which more or less silently assumes that God could reveal as many mysterious propositions as he liked.

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Let us suppose on the other hand that the multiplicity of mysteries was based on the multiplicity of really distinct and therefore created realities. The question then arises whether there can ever be a reality among created beings which by virtue of its natural constitution strictly as such can supply a proposition which is really a mystery. This question must be answered with a decided negative in any truly Thomistic metaphysic of being and spirit. By its very nature, any created reality must be such that some ontologically comparable intellect could be ordained to it: and for such an intellect, it would not be an absolute mystery. In other words, if being and consciousness, as Thomistic epistemology holds, grow in the same measure, there can be absolutely no created reality which would not be all the more conscious, all the more intelligible to itself all the less a mystery to itself, the higher the level of its being. Mystery can therefore only exist where it is a matter of the relationship of God, strictly as such, to the created intellect. The multiplicity of divine mysteries, such as is [48] silently presupposed, cannot therefore rely on the multiplicity of created realities. But then the real question is whether a plurality of mysteries is possible in the naive form of the concept as taken for granted in the conventional treatment of mystery. Must not a multiplicity of mysteries, if it is to be shown to be *possible* with its essential *limitation*, be derived from the notion of the one single absolute mystery, which is the one God as related to created knowledge?

II. SECOND LECTURE

Our first lecture has not taken us very far. All we have achieved is the conviction that the question of mystery is more obscure than is suggested in the ordinary treatises of fundamental and dogmatic theology. And some relevant questions have been posed. In the present lecture we shall call on the philosophy of religion and then cast further afield into theology, our primary aim being to work out a notion of mystery which may indeed raise new problems for the theology of mystery but at the same time offer a starting-point from which its own questions may be answered. Our aim will be to clarify the notion of mystery in its essence, and in its capacity of including the mysteries. The second lecture therefore simply inquires into mystery.

The first stage of our undertaking will be concerned not with the mystery in itself, understood either as a thing or a proposition, but with the subject who is confronted with the mystery. This we are justified in doing because mystery is always understood as something relative, something which is mysterious *to* a given finite intellect: the silent presupposition being that God cannot be ‘mysterious’ to himself since he is noesis noeseos, thought of thought, the absolutely clear self-awareness of the absolutely ‘illuminated’ being. We could indeed ask whether it is totally acceptable and correct to understand God’s knowledge simply as the absolute perspicuousness of absolute being. We could ask whether this does not set up, quite unintentionally of course, a fiat and comprehensive knowledge as the divine ideal, a knowledge which is really almost a grasping at the void, because it would take place without any anticipatory grasp of an incomprehensible infinity. We could ask, in other words, whether ‘mystery’ as such, which suggests of course primarily some created condition, may not also imply something positive which does not appertain to the perspicuous intellect but to the mystery in contradistinction [49] to such an intellect, and so as such must belong *eminenter* to God. We might therefore ask whether the character of mystery does not appertain to God’s knowledge, essentially, in a pre-eminent and analogous sense, and how we are to conceive of this character. However, we leave this question aside, and simply suppose, as we have said above, that a mystery always regards a finite subject, from which we deduce that it is right and possible to begin the explanation of mystery with the subject *to* whom

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some reality or the truth expressive of it is a mystery. We inquire therefore into man, as the being who is orientated to the mystery as such, this orientation being a constitutive element of his being both in his natural state and in his supernatural elevation. This is probably the only way to show that the mystery is of itself no merely provisional element of obscurity in a reality or proposition, to be dissipated in time, but always and essentially determinative of the necessary relationship intervening between the created spirit and God. Man, made for mystery, must be such that this mystery constitutes the relationship between God and man, and 'hence the fulfilment of human nature is the consummation of its orientation towards the abiding mystery.

To reach an understanding of these statements, which already point to the conclusion, we begin – proceeding for brevity's sake on a number of assumptions – with the finite spirit's transcendence, which is directed to absolute being. We may fittingly suppose that man in his knowing and willing is a being of absolute and unlimited transcendence. All his spiritual acts, no matter what their object, are founded on this transcendence, which is a reaching forward of knowledge and will. We have only to ask now what this means for our present question. Obviously, this transcendence can only be described by an assertion – also obliged to express itself in objectivating categories – about the 'Whither' of this anticipatory grasp which exceeds all determinate objectivations. And again, this 'Whither' of transcendence can only be spoken of in terms of experience of transcendence as the limitless openness of the subject itself. Act and its finality, in this basic transcendent act, can only be and be understood as a unity. It is also obvious that the activation of this transcendence as such is always something other than its objectivated description, which is always a matter of subsequent reflexion and never really comes abreast of it. Finally, it is also obvious that the most primordial, underivative knowledge of God, which is the basis of all other knowledge of God, is given in the experience of transcendence, in so far as it contains, implicitly [50] and unobjectivated, but irrecusably and inevitably, the 'Whither' of transcendence, which we call God.

With this very primitive outline of our presuppositions we now ask how precisely this transcendent experience is accorded its 'Whither', meaning always the totality of such experience, in love as well as knowledge. We speak of a 'Whither' of transcendence not to be as devious and circumstantial as possible but for two reasons. One: if we simply said 'God' we should always have to fear a misunderstanding, namely that we meant God as he is spoken of in an objectivating set of concepts, whereas the whole point here is that 'God' is known through and in this transcendence previous to such concepts, even where the object of knowledge is something finite. In other words, since we mean God as he is implicitly known in everything (in quolibet, as St Thomas says), and not as he is explicitly known and subsequently described, we cannot simply say God. Two: if we called the 'Whither' of transcendence 'object', we should conjure up the misunderstanding that it was an object such as is present elsewhere in the act of knowledge, and that we were dealing with the Whither of transcendence as if it were expressly objectivated by secondary reflexion upon this immediate transcendence. But we are speaking of the Whither of the original act of transcendence itself. We may now take up the central point of our discussion.

The Whither of transcendental experience is always there as the nameless, the indefinable, the unattainable. For a name distinguishes and demarcates, pins down something by giving it a name chosen among many other names. But the infinite horizon, the Whither of transcendence cannot be so defined. We may reflect upon it, objectivate it, conceive of it so to speak as one object among others, delimit it conceptually: but this set of concepts is only true, and a correct and intelligible expression of the content, when this expression and description is once more conditioned by a transcendent act directed to the Whither of this transcendence. One can only speak correctly of God when he is conceived of as the infinite. But he can only be grasped as such when we return to the transcendent illimitation of every

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act, since merely to remove the limits of the finite as such is not enough to bring about an understanding of what the absolutely and positively infinite means. All conceptual expressions about God, necessary though they are, always stem from the unobjectivated experience of transcendence as such: the concept from the pre-conception, the name from the experience of the nameless. The pre-conception given [51] in transcendence is directed to the nameless: the condition which makes the names of God possible must itself be essentially unnamed. We could call him (if we wished to give such a title to what is meant) the nameless, that which is other than all finite things, the infinite: but we should not have thereby given him a name, merely said that he has none. We have understood the designation 'nameless' only when we have recognized it as radically and primordially different in its uniqueness from all other designations. Thus the pre-conception is also directed towards the indefinable. The horizon of the transcendent, since it is of immeasurable extent and thus provides the situation for the individual objects of knowledge and love, does indeed always differentiate itself essentially from all that comes within it as conceptual object. And so the distinction between God and all finite beings is not only clearly called for: it is even the condition of possibility for any distinction at all, both between objects in general and the horizon of transcendence, and between object and object. Human knowledge, as it forms its concepts and so makes distinctions, always presupposes, unwittingly or not, the primordial distinction between the absolute Whither of transcendence, absolute being, and all beings – otherwise there could be no distinction between beings. But it is precisely here that absolute being appears as the indefinable. For since it is the condition of possibility for all categorized distinctions and divisions, it cannot itself be distinguished from other things by the same modes of distinction. The horizon cannot be comprised within the horizon, the whither of transcendence cannot really, as such, be brought within the range of transcendence itself to be distinguished from other things. The ultimate measure cannot be measured; the boundary which delimits all things cannot itself be bounded by a still more distant limit. The infinite and immense which comprises and *can* comprise all things, because it exists only as infinite distance behind which there is nothing, and in relation to which it is indeed meaningless to talk of 'nothingness': such an all-embracing immensity cannot itself be encompassed. So this nameless and indefinable being, distinguishing itself only by itself from all else, and thus holding all else at a distance, the norm of all complying with no norm distinct from itself, this Whither of transcendence is seen as absolutely beyond determination. It is only there in so far as it determines all, and is not only physically but logically beyond any determination on the part of the finite subject. For at the very moment that the subject uses its formal logic and ontology to specify this nameless, indefinable, all-defining Whither [52] of transcendence, to try to catch it as it were in the net of concepts, this never quite successful capture takes place once more by means of the pre-conception of what is to be determined. The measure is therefore measured by the self-same measure that is to be measured. The measure is there, it offers itself to be used, it is there as the obvious and unquestionable measure. We can hardly avoid the impression of being able to judge this measure like any other object. We feel we can use the general norms of logic and ontology which we have at our disposal to determine the special individual object of a specific science (called of course theology) – the object being 'God'. But this is false. Ontology is not a science distinct from natural theology. Ontology with its corresponding logic is not a science in which an object is defined by *a priori* norms, axioms, co-ordinates and so on, as if its only proper scope were to provide this object with a place within its systematic *a priori* where it shows itself as it is in itself. On the contrary, ontology is that mysterious event in which the primary measures or principles show themselves as immeasurable, and in which man *knows* himself to be measured. The Whither of transcendence is at no one's disposal, it is that which disposes of us silently and ceaselessly at the very moment when we begin to dispose of anything, when we make a

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judgment on something and try to submit it to the *a priori* laws of our understanding. So the Whither of transcendence is there in its own proper way of aloofness and absence. It bestows itself upon us by refusing itself, by keeping silence, by staying afar. To make this clearer, we must of course reflect upon the fact that in our normal experience we possess the Whither of our pre-conception only in the form of the condition of possibility of the grasp of the finite: in our normal experience at any rate we are never granted a direct view of it. It is itself present only as the Whither of the transcendence itself, which is enough to eliminate all forms of Ontologism. The Whither is not experienced in itself, but only in the subjective transcendence and it is known only unobjectivatedly. And its presence in transcendence is the presence of a transcendence which is there merely as a condition of possibility for a categorized knowledge and not of itself and by itself alone. Thus the Whither of transcendence is only there in the form of a distant aloofness. It can never be approached directly or experienced immediately. It is there only by referring us to something else, something finite, which is the object of direct regard.

The Whither of transcendence can further be designated as the holy, [53] when the transcendence is regarded as that of freedom and love. For the Whither of an absolute transcendence of freedom, the nameless being which is at the disposal of none and disposes of all, which rules over transcendence by being loving freedom, is uniquely and precisely that which we can call ‘holy’ in the strict and original sense. For how should one name the nameless, sovereign beloved, which relegates us to our finitude, except as ‘holy’, and what could we call holy if not this? Or to what does the name ‘holy’ belong more primordially than to the infinite Whither of receptive love which before this incomprehensible and inexpressible being becomes trembling adoration? In transcendence therefore is found, in the form of the aloof and distant which rules unruled, the nameless being which is infinitely holy. This we call mystery, or rather, the *holy mystery*, to recall more expressly that freedom is transcendent with regard to knowledge. Every experience of transcendence is primary, non-derivative: and this same quality of the non-derivative, the non-deducible, holds good for all that is met with in it. For the transcendence and its content has nothing prior to itself: it is there in all other experiences as the condition of their possibility. The determination of its Whither imports no concepts from elsewhere from outside, to the object, but derives from the original object itself. With this experience of transcendence and its Whither one must either reject a given determination as completely unfitting and a misinterpretation of this experience: or one must concede that it is the original site and source for the intelligibility of this determination. There can be no doubt that the designation ‘mystery’ is called for here, and if so, this is the key to the primordial understanding of the word. We must experience here what mystery is, or we shall never understand it in its true and perfect sense.

If we have thus arrived at the primordial concept of mystery, it cannot of course have brought us to a definition of the nature of mystery. The mystery is as undefinable as every other transcendental concept, which only really display themselves in the original transcendental experience. But it is no doubt clear that in the experience of this transcendence, its Whither, absolute being, shows itself in such a way that it is the mystery pure and simple, because of its namelessness, sovereignty, illimitation, its unchallengeable mastery and direction of all knowledge and freedom. In other words, we have here the primordial experience of what we call mystery. Man is therefore, because his real being, as spirit, is transcendence, the being of the holy mystery. Man is he who is always confronted with [54] the holy mystery, even where he is dealing with what is within hand’s reach, comprehensible and amenable to a conceptual framework. So the holy mystery is not something upon which man may ‘also’ stumble, if he is lucky and takes an interest in something else besides the definable objects within the horizon of his consciousness. Man always lives by the holy mystery, even where he is not conscious of it. The lucidity of his

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consciousness derives from the incomprehensibility of this mystery. The proximity of his environment is constituted by the distant aloofness of the mystery: the freedom of his mastery of things comes from his being mastered by the Holy which is itself unmastered.

If man himself is therefore to be understood as the being of the holy mystery, it also follows that *God* is present to man *as* the holy mystery. The attribute of holy mystery does not belong accidentally to God like a qualification which could just as well be applied to any other reality. We only grasp what is meant by God when the attribute of holy mystery is seen to belong to God solely and primarily, according to which he is there as the Whither of transcendence. He would not be God if he ceased to be this holy mystery.

The nature of the mystery is therefore somehow involved in the question of the subject to whom the mystery is given. But before we inquire further into the mystery, we shall take man once more as the subject of our considerations, this time considering him as the spiritual subject deriving from the mystery, but in so far as this subject is seen as elevated by grace. Since our time is so short, we shall endeavour to make our point as briefly as possible, and simply take for granted here certain theological truths, which could of themselves be derived from a more basic and transcendental procedure.

Man, elevated by grace, is the spiritual being which is ontologically directed to the beatific vision. Grace, being strictly supernatural, is ultimately the beatific vision or its ontological presupposition. If then grace orientates its spiritual subject towards an immediate grasp of God, where knowledge of God no longer comes through objects and categories derived from created things, this essential quality of grace cannot mean that this immediacy eliminates the transcendental necessity whereby God is essentially the holy mystery. We already pointed out in our first lecture that God remains incomprehensible in the beatific vision, and that this incomprehensibility, because of the absolute simplicity of God and the relationship between knowledge and love in the creature, cannot be just [55] a marginal negative phenomenon of the intuitive knowledge of God. The knowledge of the incomprehensibility of God must rather be one of the positive attributes of such intuitive knowledge. The beatific vision is not contrasted with pilgrim knowledge of God in the way that knowledge of the revealed and hence perspicuous is contrasted with that of the concealed and hence only vaguely suspected. The contrast is between immediate sight of the mystery itself and the merely indirect presence of the mystery after the manner of the distant and aloof. Grace does not imply the promise and the beginning of the elimination of the mystery, but the radical possibility of the absolute proximity of the mystery, which is not eliminated by its proximity, but really presented as mystery. Pilgrim man, still a stranger to the vision of God, can be deceived about the character of absolute mystery in God, because he knows the holy mystery only as the distant and aloof. When he sees God, God’s incomprehensibility is the content of his vision and so the bliss of his love. It would be a foolish and anthropomorphic misunderstanding to think that the proper object of vision and bliss was something perspicuous, comprehensible and perfectly well understood, merely surrounded as it were by an obscure margin and a limit set by the finitude of the creature who must resign himself to this. What is comprehended and what is incomprehensible are in reality one and the same thing. The incomprehensible has of course its positive side. It has a blessed content which can be known even though it cannot really be expressed. Otherwise the incomprehensibility of God would be only a blank unintelligibility, the mere absence of a reality. But the knowledge in question would not bear on God if he were not grasped precisely as the incomprehensible. Knowledge as clarity, sight and perception, and knowledge as possession of the incomprehensible mystery must be taken as the two facets of the same process: both grow in like and not in inverse proportion. Grace and the beatific vision can only be understood as the possibility and the reality respectively of the immediate presence of the holy mystery as such.

When we described the nature of the holy mystery, as present to our transcendence, we

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said that this presence of the mystery has the nature of the distant and aloof. The holy mystery is accessible only in our experience of subjective transcendence, and only in so far as this transcendence acts as the condition of possibility of an objectivated knowledge according to categories. If these two elements of the distant aloofness of the holy mystery are eliminated: if therefore the Whither of our transcendence is [56] no longer known merely as an overtone as it were of our subjective transcendence but experienced in itself, and if the experience no longer takes place as the condition of possibility of knowledge of categorized objects; and if such experience is possible – which we do not prove *a priori* but presuppose as guaranteed by revelation: then the holy mystery no longer manifests itself as a distant aloofness. But that does not mean that it no longer is a mystery. On the contrary, the mystery is there and most truly itself, radically nameless, indefinable and inviolable. Grace is therefore the grace of the *nearness* of the *abiding* mystery: it makes God accessible in the form of the holy mystery and presents him thus as the incomprehensible. In the vision of God face to face which grace makes possible many mysteries are indeed removed. But this only means that what they express is manifested in its own being and substance, is experienced therefore in itself and must no longer rely for its manifestation on the word that does duty for it and the authority of the recognized spokesman and prophet. Nonetheless, these mysteries remain mysterious and incomprehensible. They do not lose their mystery and become perspicuous. They can still not be resolved into something distinct from their content from which the content could be deduced and so made ‘intelligible’. The Trinity for instance is not ‘clearly understood’ in the vision – it is contemplated as the divine incomprehensibility; otherwise it would not be identical with God who is identical with his incomprehensibility. If the incomprehensibility of God is the definitive blessing, the alpha and omega of reality, behind which there is nothing, and before which there can be nothing – precisely for him who has before him this incomprehensible God – then grace is also the grace of no longer being able to be deceived about the incomprehensibility of God, of no longer being misled into thinking it only provisional. It is the grace of loving the divine darkness without reserves, the divinely-given courage to enter this bliss which is authentic and unique, and to enjoy it as the nourishment of the strong. As long as we measure the loftiness of knowledge by its perspicuity, and think that we know what clarity and insight are, though we do not really know them as they truly are; as long as we imagine that analytical, co-ordinating, deductive and masterful reason is more and not less than experience of the divine incomprehensibility; as long as we think that comprehension is greater than being overwhelmed by light inaccessible, which shows itself as inaccessible in the very moment of giving itself: we have understood nothing of the mystery and of the true nature of grace and glory.

[57] In the course of these considerations, which began with the recipient of the mysteries in his natural and supernaturally elevated transcendence, we have had to mention most of what can be said of the mystery in itself, as far as it can be dealt with in this our second lecture. We need not come back to them again. We shall only make a few complementary remarks about the subject of the mystery in itself. If what has been said hitherto has been rightly understood, and if the following statement is taken up correctly, then we can and must say that the mystery is, in its incomprehensibility, the obvious thing. If the Whither of transcendence is that which by disclosing itself gives transcendence its reality; if transcendence is the condition of possibility of all spiritual understanding and insight; and if the Whither of transcendence is the holy mystery: then the holy mystery is the one thing that is self-explanatory, the one thing that is its own self-sufficient reason, even in our eyes. For all insight is based on this transcendence, all light on this orientation towards the inexpressible darkness – if this is how one wishes to term the bright incomprehensibility of God. Looked at more closely therefore, the mysteriousness of this Whither is not just the contrary of the self-evident. An object of knowledge can only be *self*-evident to us if it stands

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on its own. But whatever is 'conceived of' only becomes understandable – though not really self-evident – when it is reduced to something else, resolved on the one hand into the laws of thought and on the other, into the elementary data of the senses. But in this process it is thrown back for its explanation and intelligibility either on the mute opacity of the purely sensible, or on the chiaroscuro of ontology – and so on the mystery. The understanding arrived at is therefore based on the unique self-evidence of the mystery. Hence it has always been familiar to us, and we have always loved it. Nothing is more familiar and obvious to the alerted spirit than the silent question which hovers over all that it has attained and mastered – the challenging question, humbly and lovingly accepted, which alone makes it wise. In his heart of hearts, there is nothing man knows better than that his knowledge, ordinarily so-called, is only a tiny island in the immense ocean of the unexplored. He knows better than anything else that the existential question facing him in knowledge is whether he loves the little island of his so-called knowledge better than the ocean of the infinite mystery; whether or not he will concede that the mystery alone is self-evident; whether he thinks that the little light with which he illuminates this little island – we call it science – should be the eternal light which [58] shines on him for ever (which would be hell). And here we must say at once, since the opportunity may not occur again later, that if the mysteries of Christianity (in the plural) are to be really mysteries, or better, are to be correctly grasped as mysteries, their explanation must carry with it the self-evidence of the mystery, for which men today have undoubtedly an inward understanding. They have been badly explained if they only give the impression of far-fetched concepts and hair-splitting. The mystery is self-evident. That it is unattainable has already been said. Existentially, and for a theory of knowledge, it is at once a menace to man and his blessed peace. It can make him chafe and protest, because it compels him to leave the tiny house of his ostensibly clear self-possession, to advance into the trackless spaces, even in the night. It seems to ask too much of him, to overburden him with monstrous claims. It forces upon him the dilemma of either throwing himself into the uncharted, unending adventure where he commits himself to the infinite, or – despairing at the thought and so embittered – of taking shelter in the suffocating den of his own finite perspicacity.

But the mystery is the sole peace of him who trusts himself to it, loves it humbly, and surrenders himself to it fearlessly in knowledge and love. The mystery is eternal light and eternal peace. The Greek Fathers did not under-estimate the glory and the light of the beatific vision, and they did not really adhere to Platonism (an intellectualism which could only think of the incomprehensible as something provisional) when they praised the abiding mystery as blessedness. According to the Areopagite, when we reach the highest stage of life and knowledge, we enter into the darkness in which God is; according to Maximus the Confessor, not to know is the supra-rational knowledge; according to St Gregory of Nyssa, to enter the holy of holies is to be encompassed by the divine darkness. This way of understanding man and his happiness is on the contrary truly Christian, since it reconciles radical creaturehood with absolute immediacy to God, making God's incomprehensibility the blessedness of man and not the limit of his happiness, and seeing man as made for the one abiding mystery. So too we read in St Thomas (de Pot., q. 7, a. 5): *ex quo intellectus noster divinam substantiam non adaequat, hoc ipsum quod est Dei substantia remanet nostrum intellectum excedens et ita a nobis ignoratur et propter hoc illud est ultimum cognitionis humanae de Deo, quod sciat se Deum nescire, in quantum cognoscit illud quod Deus est omne ipsum quod de eo intelligimus excedere*. ('Since our mind is not proportionate to the divine [59] substance, that which is the substance of God remains beyond our intellect and so is unknown to us. Hence the supreme knowledge which man has of God is to know that he does not know God, in so far as he knows that what God is surpasses all that we can understand of him.') Since the reason for saying that the climax of our knowledge of God is knowledge of our ignorance

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also holds good for the beatific vision, there is no reason for not applying this principle to the knowledge Of God in the beatific vision. If St Thomas is not misread as though he said that with regard to God, the object of knowledge is different from the object of lack of knowledge – making as it were two distinct objects – the quotation speaks profoundly – and dialectically. It affirms that even in the beatific vision that which is known of God is known as the incomprehensible. The ultimate of human knowledge of God is attained only when its character of mysteriousness is most forcibly displayed: supreme knowledge is knowledge of the supreme mystery as such.

But a new type of problem now arises from the nature of the mystery as so delineated. Mystery is already there with the very essence of the natural and supernaturally elevated being of man. The primordial mystery is already there. This one mystery dominates the first effort of the spirit as well as its final fulfilment. It seems then that the Christian mysteries (in the plural) cannot be essentially new and higher mysteries, compared to the primordial mystery, but at most, secondary derivatives of it. Their very multiplicity seems to imply that they must be mysteries in the form of determinate assertions which are clearly distinct from one another. If so, if they have the character of mystery at all, it seems as though they possess it at best only in a secondary and derivative way. For the mystery which is the vehicle of all distinct and articulate truths must possess the character of mystery in a more primordial sense than the truths of which it is the vehicle and which are only intelligible within its horizon. Single truths, even if they contain mysteries, enter as such, and as differentiated from one another, into a system of co-ordinates which alone makes possible such a localization and differentiation. But the system of co-ordinates itself is, as we have shown, only a norm because it is based on the one original and immeasurable mystery, from which it seems to follow that no individual mystery can represent a heightening of our relationship to the original, comprehensive and immeasurable mystery. Thus the basic difficulty of such concepts comes to light. It is brought up by Goethe and modernism and every mystical ‘night of the soul’ religion, against a [60] doctrinal and institutional religion with truths and special rites: that a silent reverence for the nameless seems to have left behind any relationship in terms of individual truths, even if these truths contain mysteries. Individual mysteries no longer appear mysterious in the original sense of the word, because they do not seem to leave the mystery to subsist as it is, but claim to know something definite about it which will satisfy curiosity. In any case, the self-transcendence of the many mysteries by which they merge in the mystery, remains so unclear, and is so little stressed in the theology of the schools, that one is inclined to think that where they are eliminated, they disappear in comprehension, and not in adoration of the abiding mystery. And hence it comes about, be it said incidentally, that contrary to the biblical data in St Paul, faith is never considered as something that abides (in its inmost kernel), but only as something transitory: ‘*donec peregrinamur a Domino*’. How then do the mysteries of Christianity, in the plural, stand to the mystery of which we have spoken up to this? This is the question which remains for the third lecture.

III. THIRD LECTURE

The second lecture yielded us a concept of mystery which, as we should like to believe, is more primordial than the concept usually used in the ordinary dogmatic and fundamental theology. Not in the sense that it contradicts it. But the mystery envisaged by both sets of definitions has a more original and fundamental relationship to man as a whole, in the unity of his faculties that is, to knowledge and the freedom of love, than the standard concept presents. Our notion further says that God himself is holy mystery, so essentially and

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perpetually, that this mysterious Whither of transcendence, mastering, unmastered and holding sovereign sway, can be given the name of God – as indeed the name of God is the nameless infinity. We may have given the impression that so far all that has been achieved is a merely natural concept of mystery derived from a philosophy of religion. It could be objected that as a purely philosophical concept it was not at all apt to describe the true nature of mystery in the strict theological sense. And on the other hand, the question already came up in the second lecture as to whether in this concept of mystery – which may be called 'absolute' in the most radical sense, because whether far or near it can never be eliminated – the theological notion of a multiplicity of mysteries was not already excluded. The question was whether there [61] could be mysteries in the plural at all in face of the one unresolvable mystery, and whether, if there could be many mysteries, these could have real relevance for the fundamental act of religion, the adoring acceptance of the sway of the mystery in dedicated love.

However, the last lecture has already provided us with some means of transposing our philosophical concept of mystery into the region of the theological. For we considered the recipient of the mystery in so far as he was ordained by grace to the beatific vision. With regard to this subject, and hence theologically, we have shown that as such, in so far as it is ordained to the beatific vision, it is the subject made for the absolute proximity of the mystery and so is the being made for mystery, because grace and vision do not remove the absolute mystery. On the contrary, it is in the immediate present vision of God that the incomprehensible mystery of God is most forcibly evident. God is no longer simply and solely the God of the aloof and distant mystery. But as the God of the absolute proximity of self-communication he is indeed the God whose name is the holy mystery. It cannot therefore be said that our concept, taken initially from the philosophy of religion, bars the way to transposing the notion of mystery into theology. The philosophy of religion, conceiving of God as essentially and perpetually the holy mystery, can of course offer no grounds for a philosophical proof of the possibility of the beatific vision and hence of grace and the supernatural order in general. Need the holy mystery remain always the unattainable Whither of transcendence, given only in the experience of finite categories, that is, always mediated by the finite? Or can it communicate itself, as such, immediately to the creature, while still of course remaining essentially a mystery? These are questions which the creature can never answer and which the philosophical concept of mystery cannot solve. The answer can be given only by revelation, and this revelation cannot be confined to words, but must be also the giving of grace, as an inner, objectless though conscious dynamism directed to the beatific vision. This could lead us to a further consideration, if we took up the point conceded in the discussion that there exists another mystery besides the one already spoken of: the possibility of an absolute *self-communication* of the mystery, by which it enters into a radical proximity. Starting from the mystery of the absolute self-communication of the holy mystery, one could then try to reach directly the mysteries which the Christian faith as such believes in. And in fact this way is undoubtedly practicable. One could try to show, in spite of all [62] the deadly dangers seemingly involved, that all other mysteries are already implicitly given, if it can once be supposed that the possibility of the absolute proximity of the holy mystery in a direct way had been revealed. And even if this effort could only be effective by presupposing the truth of the mysteries so explicitated; if therefore it offered and could offer no Christian theology based uniquely on the one revealed truth of the possibility of the beatific vision – still such an effort would have its point. For it is *a priori* quite conceivable that essential connexions can be recognized as strictly necessary, even if we do not succeed in deducing one element from another. And even if it were impossible to deduce the other mysteries from the radically immediate proximity of the holy mystery, a process which we shall not investigate here, still, the delineation of the connexions in question would be of

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fundamental significance.

But in keeping with the type of problem to which the second lecture led up, we take here a rather different starting-point for the considerations which follow. Let us remind ourselves once more of the problems in which we became involved in the second lecture. We have already pointed out that creation strictly as such can contain no absolute mysteries. It is true that all beings, and above all the created spirit in its transcendence towards absolute being, partake of the mysterious character of God, in so far as all beings are referred to God, and cannot be adequately understood without this relationship and hence without the term of this relationship. Thus J. Pieper is perfectly correct when he sums up the doctrine of St Thomas on this point by saying that all beings are inscrutable and unfathomable, because they are creatures. Since they are the *result* of the creative knowledge of God their reality and objective truth has such infinite ramifications, essential to an adequate knowledge of them, that comprehensive knowledge of even the tiniest of them is possible only to God himself. Thus all understanding of any reality whatsoever is in the last resort always a '*reductio in mysterium*', and any comprehension which is or seems to be devoid of the character of mystery, is only arrived at through the unspoken convention that this '*reductio in mysterium Dei*' should be excluded from the start. However, this silent disregard of the '*reductio in mysterium*' can be objectively justified, since the proper object of categorized knowledge on the one hand, and the Whither of transcendence on the other, give rise to two essentially different types of data for the spirit. And once this 'abstraction' is presupposed, it is absolutely true that in the region of the finite as such, there can be no absolute mysteries [63] among the objects of categorized knowledge. Only God as such can be truly a mystery for the created spirit. Here arose the question of whether and in what sense the Christian faith can speak of mysteries in the plural, and how we are to think of the necessary unity which these mysteries form with each other and with *the* mystery, the notion of which we have been developing.

If we then begin, not with the notion of mystery which we have arrived at, but with the Christian mysteries in the plural, the first question will naturally be what mysteries of this nature are actually envisaged when revelation in Jesus Christ is understood as the revelation of *mysteria stricte dicta* – in other words, how many such mysteries are there and what they are. It is permissible to think that current theological teaching is not particularly concerned with these questions, which are nonetheless important. This lack of interest is due to something which makes it to some extent understandable. For when we ask what and how many are these *mysteria stricte dicta*, we really do not mean to deny that everything real and true in the Christian faith partakes in some way of the mysterious character of the mysteries of which we speak. To deny it would be to maintain that there was no intrinsic connexion between the various Christian truths and realities. So if there are any mysteries, the *whole* Christian message will be determined to some extent in all its elements by the character of mystery, and it becomes understandable that no particular attention is paid to the question of what truths are really '*mysteria stricte dicta*' and how many of them there are. But the question still has its importance, especially if it is understood as the search for a given number of mysteries, which can be neither greater or smaller. A faith which believes in the absolute self-disclosure of God face to face cannot imagine that God, if he wished, could constantly bring forth from the treasury, so to speak, of his truths and realities, new mysteries which surpass the understanding of man. It is impossible that the vision should reveal God under aspects which were hitherto completely unknown, just as it is impossible that God, when seen face to face, should still keep concealed within himself definite truths and realities which he absolutely refused to reveal and impart. For this reason alone the notion of an unlimited series of different mysteries is unthinkable. Each mystery is indeed of unfathomable depth and infinite extent. But *because* each of them signifies the infinity of

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God, which is contemplated as such in the beatific vision, their number cannot be indefinite. The question of the number of the mysteries has nothing [64] at all to do with mathematical enumeration, any more than the question of the number of persons in the Trinity opens up a series of numbers which is then extrinsically and arbitrarily terminated.

Let us begin by trying to answer our question rather from the *a posteriori* point of view, that is, by considering the general and traditional doctrine of the mystery. We can certainly affirm that according to the general teaching of theology the mystery of the Trinity and that of the hypostatic union certainly belong to the *mysteria stricte dicta*. We are also certainly entitled to say (and it also follows from what was said above) that the mystery of the *visio beatifica* and hence that of strictly supernatural grace are also among the *mysteria stricte dicta*. The reason for this statement will at once be apparent. We need not give here a categorical answer to the question as to whether ordinary theological teaching admits other mysteries besides the three named, when the usual concept of *mysterium stricte dictum* is taken as the starting-point of this question. We can leave this question open to a certain extent, because there are in fact – apart perhaps from the mystery of the Eucharistic transubstantiation and presence of Christ, hardly any truths of which it is affirmed that they are *mysteria stricte dicta*, and (what is of course important here) cannot be understood as the necessary and intelligible consequence, as we see it, of the three already named. If we take for instance the mystery of original sin, it is comparatively easy to reduce this 'mystery' to the mystery of the supernatural sanctification of man by grace prior to his personal decision. Hence such a 'mystery' does not extend the provisional canon of the three mysteries. If one considers the mystery of transubstantiation, one would have to ask whether such a change of being is conceivable or not apart from the case of Christ, that is, independently of a *unio hypostatica*. If the question were answered in the affirmative, one could ask in turn how it could be proved that the transubstantiation of one purely natural reality into another was certainly a *mysterium stricte dictum*. It is probably impossible to give a positive answer to this question. According to our earlier considerations, which went to prove that there could be no *mysteria stricte dicta* in the region of created things as such, the possibility of transubstantiation in the purely natural order being a strict mystery must be denied. But if transubstantiation is only conceivable at all on the basis of the hypostatic union (which seems theologically more reasonable, just as the contrary seems devoid of theological proof) it follows at once that even if transubstantiation were a strict mystery, it would be so as a necessary [65] consequence of the hypostatic union. Thus once more our canon of the *mysteria stricte dicta* would not need to be enlarged. Obviously, all positive institutions and decrees of God with regard to Church offices, sacraments and history of salvation can only be called mysteries of faith in so far as they come from a free personal disposition of God: they cannot be deduced *a priori*, but must be received as facts from the word of divine revelation and left as such. Thus they are not *mysteria stricte dicta*. The mysteries of soteriology can undoubtedly be reduced to the mystery of the Incarnation; all we have to do is to suppose something which again is not strictly a mystery: that the Word of God took on a nature from among the human race which, by the creative will of God, shared in solidarity one common history of salvation and disaster; and that this human nature of Christ was willed (as is obvious) as something to be actualized, and hence as freely accomplishing the human destiny of life and death. With these presuppositions, which are not strict mysteries, the whole doctrine of the redemption follows from the mystery of the Incarnation. We have thus listed *a posteriori* all the truths of faith which come in question as *mysteria stricte dicta*. And there are only three which can seriously be considered as such according to the teaching of theologians: the Trinity, the Incarnation and the divinization of man in grace and glory.

If we then ask *why* these mysteries are to be called *mysteria stricte dicta*, we must begin by dividing them into two groups: the trinitarian mystery of God in itself, and the mysteries of

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the Incarnation, grace and glory, in so far as these last deal with a relationship of God to the non-divine. It is not necessary to dwell on the proof that the mystery of the Trinity is a *mysterium stricte dictum* in the ordinary sense of the term. For if any real mysteries are possible at all, they must exist in the immanent life of God himself. If God himself were not a mystery, he could not give rise to any and hence there could be no mysteries at all. When we then examine theologically the two other mysteries (or three, if we distinguish grace from glory) we note at once that they have a common element, which links them together, marks them off sharply and clearly from all other relationships of God to the non-divine, and also makes them intelligible as a closed duality. For both mysteries involve what we call in scholastic theology a quasi-formal causality on the part of God, in contradistinction to his efficient causality. By means of his creative *efficient* causality (which is of course of an absolutely unique and divine type) God brings into [66] existence that which is absolutely other than he. In what we call incarnation, grace and glory, God does not create *ex nihilo sui et subjecti* something different from himself, but imparts himself to the created nature. What is given in grace and incarnation is not something distinct from God, but God himself. He does not use the creature to impart himself, as when it points to God by its created reality: God imparts himself immediately of himself to the creature. This can be seen at once with regard to the incarnation, on which there is no need to insist here, but it can also be proved with regard to grace and glory. It is true that medieval theology concentrated on created grace when treating of the doctrine of grace, and that this approach still influences – through the Council of Trent – the modern theology of grace, whose positive utterances are rightly tributary to it. However, in its ontology of the beatific vision, medieval theology developed very clearly the doctrine that the vision can only come about by a self-communication of the divine essence, strictly as such, to the creature, and that this self-communication of God by means of a type of *formal* causality is the ontological presupposition for the proximity and immediacy which the *visio beatifica* implies, as a conscious process. But if this is true of the *visio beatifica*, it must be also true of grace, according to the teaching of Leo XIII and Pius XII: grace is the supernatural elevation of man and the formal beginning and ontological prerequisite of the vision. Hence in the doctrine of grace also, the central element is the 'uncreated grace', which is the immediate self-communication of God in quasi-formal causality in contrast to an efficient causality. This distinction between efficient and quasi-formal causality in God is the clear basis of the essential and radical distinction between the natural and the supernatural. And this is not difficult to understand. A reality which is not God himself, and does not exist as consequence of such a self-communication (as created actuation by uncreated act), which is therefore simply a created entity, cannot be supernatural in the strictest sense. For such a reality can as such not be a created substance: the question of its gratuitousness could have absolutely no meaning, since there would be no recipient of the gift distinct from the gratuitous gift. And an additional accidental determination which would also be a purely created one cannot be absolutely supernatural. For it is ontologically quite arbitrary to postulate the logical repugnance and impossibility of a created substance which would not be naturally on the same level of being as the supernatural accidental determination in question. A possible determination of a subject, [67] where the determination is finite and created, can always be ordained to a possible substantial subject, *from* which it flows as its normal determination. And again, where this ordination of such a subject to such an 'act' is basically impossible, this must be taken as proving that this 'act' is uncreated. It is simply contradictory that something should belong completely to the order of creation, by being created, and still belong to the strictly divine order, by being strictly supernatural. Supernatural reality and reality brought about by a divine self-communication of quasi-formal, not efficient type, are identical concepts. Hence the *possibility* of such self-communication of God to the creature is what constitutes the theological mystery in these two

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mysteries. They are *mysteria stricte dicta*, because it is only through revelation (understood as salvific event and word in an indissoluble unity) that we can know that such a thing is actual and possible. The possibility of the finite being endowed with the infinite – which is not imparted and represented by a finite gift, through the possession of which alone one 'partakes' of God – constitutes the incomprehensibility of incarnation and of grace. One can leave the question of whether the *finitum* is *capax infiniti* in the obscurity of a separate discussion about the communication of God through a created gift and a communication through an uncreated gift. And then it is easy to answer the question in the affirmative. But when we really take up the question of the self-communication of God, strictly as such, which must take place by means of quasi-formal causality, we find ourselves faced with the absolute mystery, since then God as his own very self must penetrate into the non-divine region of the finite.

Here God communicates himself in his own person to the creature, as absolute proximity and as the absolute holy mystery. We can therefore affirm at once with certainty that the two mysteries of incarnation and grace are simply the mysteriously radical form of the mystery which we have shown to be the primordial one, from the point of view of philosophy of religion and also of theology: God as the holy and abiding mystery for the creature, and in both these cases, not in the guise of distant aloofness but in that of radical proximity. After all that has been said, there is no need to dwell on this, with regard to grace and glory. But we must still say a word on the hypostatic union. We must omit here the question of a more than formal parallelism between the incarnation and grace and glory; we do not enquire into the intrinsic connexion between the two mysteries. Does the vocation of all men to supernatural fellowship [68] with God in grace and glory follow from the hypostatic union of a human nature and the Word of God, on account of its belonging to the same humanity? And again, is this elevation to grace and glory only really possible on the basis of the hypostatic union? Are these two *mysteria stricte dicta* not merely formally alike, but basically once more a unity: the one self-communication of God to the creature, which is essentially the act whereby God goes out of himself into 'the other' in such a way that he bestows himself upon the other by becoming the other? These are questions of the reduction of the two mysteries to their original onto-logical unity which we shall not further develop here. If any one is inclined to reject the whole idea out of hand, he need only be asked how he then conceives of the permanent significance of the humanity of Christ, eternally united with the Word, with regard to salvation and glory; or again, can he seriously think that the humanity of Jesus is now only the private concern of the Word of God himself, once satisfaction for sin has been made on the cross by means of it.

On the other hand, we must still say a word about the fact that the hypostatic union too is the self-communication of God to the creature, precisely in so far *as* he is the holy mystery. We must go beyond a merely ontic understanding of the hypostatic union to try to reach an ontological one. And then we must say at once that the substantial unity of the Word of God with his human nature is such that the human nature in question is primarily constituted by God's giving himself to that which is other than himself: he constitutes this created being by taking it up *as* a *spiritual* one. Hence the union itself essentially comes about, as fully itself, in the human knowledge of the created spirit about its unity with the Word. Hence the presence of the Logos to the human soul in the beatific vision should not really be taken as a mere supplement to the hypostatic union: it is essentially an ontological element of the union. No objection to this statement can be drawn from the fact that we too, who are not hypostatically united with the Logos, will also have the beatific vision. All that follows in fact is that we can only have this vision in its immediacy, in so far as it is mediated by the hypostatic union of the human nature of Jesus with the Logos of God. Hence the hypostatic union necessarily fulfils its own being in what we call (in neo-Chalcedonian terminology, if

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you like) the inner divinization of the human nature of Christ in grace and glory. But then it follows that the self-communication of God even in the hypostatic union is essentially the self-communication of God to [69] the creature, *in so far as* he is the holy mystery and is the holy mystery in radical proximity. For it is in this way that he is present even in the *visio beatifica* of the created spirit of the Logos.

This truth could of course be arrived at in another way, and one more in keeping with the nature of the matter in question. One could start from the self-transcendence of the created spirit and show that its supreme culmination, even if never attainable by human effort, is to be found in what we call hypostatic union. Since we cannot develop this line of thought here, we must at least refer to the work of Bernhard Welte in the third volume of H. Bacht and A. Grillmeier on the Council of Chalcedon. There the considerations which we cannot go into here are developed boldly, but in a completely orthodox manner. Let us suppose then that the hypostatic union can be shown to be the most radical form of such created self-transcendence, unattainable from below, but fulfilling pre-eminently the nature of transcendence. It follows at once that the hypostatic union is not a mystery *beside* the mystery of the absolute proximity of God as holy mystery: it is this mystery itself in an unsurpassable form. It is the absolute ontological and existential self-surrender to the holy mystery which God is. And this self-surrender is the proper reality of God himself, in which the Word of God, as the out-spoken mystery, is itself the answer.

We may now take up once again the first of the *mysteria stricte dicta* which we mentioned. We can only give the briefest outline of what should be said on this point, and more in the form of a thesis than in that of a proof. When we consider the *de facto* development of the doctrine of the Trinity at the stage of its gradual revelation and at the stage of theological reflection on this revealed mystery, and when we reflect above all on the unsurpassable moment of this revelation given in the New Testament itself, we can certainly affirm: God has given himself so fully in his absolute self-communication to the creature, that the 'immanent' Trinity becomes the Trinity of the 'economy of salvation', and hence in turn the Trinity of salvation which we experience *is* the immanent Trinity. This means that the Trinity of God's relationship to us *is* the reality of God as he is *in* himself: a trinity of persons. Would this be Sabellianism and Modalism? Only if we ignored completely the radical character of disclosure in the hypostatic union and in grace; only if we do not regard the 'modality' of God's relationship to the supernaturally elevated creature as the way God is 'in himself'; only if we suppose God [70] to be so untouched by this relationship to the creature that its manifold nature – as in creation and the natural relationship of God to the world – would constitute no distinction in God, but leave the distinction entirely on the side of the creature. It follows that in thinking of the Trinity we may start without misgivings from the experience of Jesus and his Spirit in us in the history of salvation and faith: the immanent Trinity is already contained therein. It is not a reality confined so to speak to its purely doctrinal expression. The immanent Trinity as such confronts us in the experience of faith – a constitutive component of which is indeed the concrete word of Scripture itself. The absolute self-communication of God to the world, as the mystery which has drawn nigh, is Father as the absolutely primordial and underivative; it is Son, as the principle which itself acts and necessarily must act in history in view of this free self-communication; it is Holy Spirit, as that which is given, and accepted by us. Since this 'as' which is used in relation to us really speaks of the self-communication of God *in himself* this trinity appertains to God in himself – it signifies a distinction in God himself. And since in both these cases of the communication of God it is a matter of God himself and not of two created things produced by efficient causality, it must always be a matter of the one and the same God. God as the unoriginated origin of the supernatural self-communication, God as the principle itself acting and expressing itself in the world, God as the God who has come to us, been imparted to us and accepted

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by us, possess the one and the same nature. And they are distinct from one another, since otherwise the difference in the absolute self-communication to the creature would be found *only* in the creature, and there would be no question of a difference in the self-communication of God.

But this identification of immanent and salvific Trinity has of course a two-fold presupposition. Firstly, the relations of the three divine persons to man in grace are not simply appropriations. Each divine person has his own proper relationship to man in grace, even though each of these relations presupposes and includes the others. But this first presupposition is today no longer unusual in theology, and is in fact gaining ground. It is closer to the assertions of Scripture, if indeed it is not their only objective interpretation; it is favoured by the doctrine of the Greek Fathers; and above all, the immediate vision of the divine persons as such in the *visio beatifica* cannot be really explained ontologically without it. For the vision of God, and hence of the three divine persons as distinct, is determined [71] by the ontological quasi-causality of *what* is to be seen, which forms a sort of '*species impressa*'. Hence there must be an ontological relationship of man to the three divine persons as distinct (and vice versa), which is not the consequence but the presupposition of knowing them. But that which is common to the three divine persons cannot be the ontological presupposition of their being known as distinct by the subject who knows and contemplates. The second presupposition for the identification of the immanent and the salvific Trinity is this. *Only* the Logos has such an immanent relationship to the other divine persons that he can be the one who can assume hypostatically a created reality and hence be the essential and irreplaceable revealer of the Father. For if each divine person could become incarnate, the Logos precisely could not appear as himself, as this particular person of the Trinity, in the personal manifestation of God in the economy of salvation. This second presupposition has indeed been rather abandoned and unknown since St Augustine. But it was taken for granted in theology before St Augustine and is accorded at least great sympathy, by St Bonaventure for instance. It is perfectly biblical. For the Logos is called Logos in Scripture in such a way that it can only cause great difficulties if we try to detach the immanent character of Word from the salvific. But in any case, the opposite of this second presupposition has never been proved. Every possible proof relies on the supposition that what *one* divine hypostasis can do must also be possible to each of the others. But this apparently obvious consideration is in fact a major fallacy. It proceeds entirely from the basically false supposition that what we call 'hypostasis' in God, three times, represents a *general* concept. The truth is however that what we call hypostasis in God is precisely that by which each of the divine persons is uniquely distinct from the other two, and is absolutely nothing else. It is therefore completely impossible to conclude from what one hypostasis in God can do, to what another must be able to do. We are therefore perfectly entitled to identify the immanent and the salvific Trinity. And this is the only way to prevent the doctrine of the immanent Trinity from appearing as a mere piece of subtle dialectic in a purely formal reconciliation of one and three.

Thus the first of the three mysteries which we have named, the Trinity, appears – if we may say so – as the God-ward aspect of the two absolute self-communications of God in the hypostatic union and in the grace which grows into glory. The truly immanent 'in itself' is identically the two-fold 'for us' which, because it is really self-communication of God in [72] formal causality and not natural efficient causality, must be something of God himself.

If what we have just said, giving indeed only the briefest of indications, is really true, we may draw the following conclusions with regard to the main theme. The three mysteries, the Trinity with its two processions, and the two self-communications of God *ad extra* in a real formal causality corresponding to the two processions, are not 'intermediate mysteries'. They are not something provisional and deficient in the line of mystery which comes *between* the

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perspicuous truths of our natural knowledge and the absolute mystery of God, in so far as he remains incomprehensible even in the beatific vision. Nor are they as it were mysteries of the beyond, which lie or lay still further on behind the God who is for us the holy mystery. But they signify the articulation of the one single mystery of God, being the radical form of his one comprehensive mysteriousness, since it has been revealed in Jesus Christ that this absolute and abiding mystery can exist not only in the guise of distant aloofness, but also as absolute proximity to us, through the divine self-communication. The mysteries of Christianity, in the plural, can be then understood as the concrete form of the one mystery, once the presupposition is made – which can however be known only by revelation – that this holy mystery also exists, and can exist, as the mystery in absolute proximity. This of course we only know in so far as this absolute proximity has already always been granted us in the concreteness of the incarnation and grace. To this extent, the thesis here put forward does not necessarily include the affirmation that we could start with the abstract notion of the absolute proximity and self-presentation of the holy mystery, and deduce from it the incarnation and the possibility of a divinization of man by grace. The abstract notion of the absolute proximity and self-communication of God, if it is to be ontologically valid and not merely a logical and notional possibility, is and can only be attained in the experience of the incarnation and grace. But in this way it is still possible to recognize that these mysteries are really intrinsically connected, in their character of communication of the absolute proximity of the primordial mystery. And thence it can be shown (though we cannot go into it now) that the canon of the three absolute mysteries, first arrived at by an *a posteriori* listing, is on principle incapable of further extension. There are these three mysteries in Christianity, no more and no fewer, and the three mysteries affirm the same thing: that God has imparted himself to us through Jesus Christ [73] in his Spirit as he is in himself so that the inexpressible nameless mystery which reigns in us and over us should be in itself the immediate blessedness of the spirit which knows, and transforms itself into love.

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[75]

PART TWO

De Deo

[77]

3

REMARKS ON THE DOGMATIC TREATISE 'DE TRINITATE'[1]

I

In a collective volume, produced in honour of a former professor of dogmatic theology who is now the occupant of the see of St Boniface in Mainz, there is one theme at least that should not be omitted, the doctrine of the Trinity. Bishop Stohr himself has written several studies on the theme, which are still of the highest value today.[2] This is a consideration which suggests the theme, though the theme itself is rather terrifying: for the supreme mystery is also the most obscure. And the history of the theme could give the impression that the formal explanation of the formulation has reached a point which might seem almost unsurpassable, signalling something like the end of the story: since the Council of Florence there has been no official doctrinal declaration by the Church in which the magisterium might seem to sanction a real progress in the understanding of this mystery.

Much has been done no doubt since then in the line of research into the history of this dogma, from Petavius and de Regnon to Lebreton and Schmaus – to name only a few of the distinguished names in this chapter of the history of dogma. Still, one has to admit, with astonishment perhaps and a little resignedly – or is this being too pessimistic? – that research into the ancient history of the dogma has, at least for the moment, [78] not stimulated many impulses which would carry the history itself any further. Here and there in religious literature one may undoubtedly see that efforts have been made to link Christian piety more expressly and more vitally with this mystery.[3] Theology too[4] has shown instances of writers who are more consciously and keenly aware of the obligation of presenting the doctrine of the Trinity in such a way that it can become a reality in the concrete religious life of Christians – one thinks of the dogmatic theology of M. Schmaus and of the writings of G.

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[1] Some points in this essay coincide even in their formulation with the article 'Dreifaltigkeit' by Henri de Lavalette in the *LTK* III[2], 543-548. The friendly exchanges of ideas which preceded this article of the *Lexikon* justifies the similarities.

[2] Cf. A. Stohr, *Die Trinitätslehre des Hl. Bonaventura* (Münster 1923); 'Die Hauptrichtungen der spekulativen Trinitätslehre in der Theologie des 13 Jahrhunderts', *TQ* 106 (1925) 113-135; 'Des Gottfried von Fontaines Stellung in der Trinitätslehre', *ZKT* 50 (1926) 177-195; *Die Trinitätslehre Ulrichs von Strassburg* (Münster 1928); 'Der heilige Albertus über den Ausgang des Heiligen Geistes', *DTh* 50 (1932) 109-523.

[3] We give as examples: V. Bernadot, *Durch die Eucharistie zur Dreifaltigkeit* (from the French) (Munich 1927); E. Vandeur, 'O mein Gott, Dreifaltiger, den ich anbete', *Gebet der Schwester Elisabeth von der Heiligen Dreifaitigkeit* (from the French) (Regensburg 1933); C. Marmion, *De H. Drieëenheid in ons geestelijk leven* (Bruges 1952); Gabriel a S. Maria Magdalena, *Geheimnis der Gottesfreundschaft*, 3 vols. (Freiburg 1957/58).

[4] Cf. P. Laborde, *Dévotion à la Sainte Trinité* (Pamis – Tournai 1922); M. Retaillau, *La Sainte Trinité dans les justes* (Paris 1923); R. Garrigou – Lagrange, 'L'habitation de la Sainte Trinité et expérience mystique' *RT* 33 (1928) 449-474; M. Philipon, 'La Sainte Trinité et la vie surnaturelle' *RT* 44 (1938) 675-698; F. Taymans d'Eypernon, *Le mystère primordial. La Trinité dens sa vivante image* (Brussels 1946); A. Minon, 'M. Blondel et le mystère de la Sainte Trinité', *ETL* 23 (1947) 472-498; J. Havet, 'Mystère de la Sainte Tminité et vie chrétienne' *Rev. Dioc. Nam.* 2 (1947) 161-176; F. Guimet, 'Caritas ordinata et amor discretus dans la théologie trinitaire de Richard de Saint Victor', *Rev. M. A. Lat.* 4 (1948) 225-236; B. Aperribay, 'Influjo causal de la divinas personas en la experiencia mistica', *Verdad y vita* 7 (1949) 53-74; G. Philips, *La Sainte Trinité dans la vie du chrétien* (Liege 1949); H. Rondet, 'La divinisation du chrétien', *NRT* 71 (1949) 449-476, 561-588; K. Rahner, 'Dreifaltigkeitsmystik', *LTK*[2] III, 563f.

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Philips. One notes also in the history of devotion[5] that in spite of a mystical cult of the [79] supremely one, undifferentiated and nameless God of this mystery, the mystery has not remained the preserve of abstract theology. There has also been, no matter how rare and diffident, a true mysticism of the Trinity. We may mention in this matter St Bonaventure, Ruysbroek, St Ignatius of Loyola. St John of the Cross, Mary of the Incarnation, perhaps Bérulle and some moderns such as Bl. Elisabeth of the Holy Trinity and Anton Jans.

But this does not hide the fact that Christians, for all their orthodox profession of faith in the Trinity, are almost just 'monotheist' in their actual religious existence. One might almost dare to affirm that if the doctrine of the Trinity were to be erased as false, most religious literature could be preserved almost unchanged throughout the process. And it cannot be objected that the *Incarnation* is such a theologically and *religiously* central element in Christian life that on that account the Trinity is always and everywhere irremovably present. For when the Incarnation of God is spoken of, theological and religious intention is today concentrated on the fact that 'God' has become man, that 'a' person of the Trinity has assumed flesh – but not on the fact that this person is precisely that of the Word, Logos. One could suspect that as regards the catechism of the head and the heart, in contrast to the catechism in books, the Christian idea of the Incarnation would not have to change at all, if there were no Trinity. God, as one person, would have become man, and the average Christian who professes faith in the Incarnation does not go any farther in his express understanding of the doctrine. There are probably several modern, scientific and extensive Christologies which pay no particular attention to *which* precisely of the divine hypostases has taken on human nature. The average theological text-book today operates in fact with the abstract concept of a divine hypostasis – a concept which is however a [80] very analogous and precarious unity. It does not operate with the concept of exactly the second person in God as such. It asks what it means that God became man, but not what it means in particular that the Logos, precisely as himself in contradistinction to the other divine persons became man. And this state of affairs is not at all surprising. For since St Augustine, contrary to the tradition preceding him, it has been more or less agreed that each of the divine persons could become man. From which it follows that the Incarnation of the second person in particular

[5] In St Bonaventure, for instance, on account of his exemplarism, where his metaphysical revaluation of the *cause exemplaris* which put it on the same footing as the *cause efficiens* and *cause finslis*, helped him to overcome to a great extent the notion that the world itself could contain nothing trinitarian, strictly speaking, because it was created by efficient causality in an action belonging to God as one. Cf. also: L. Reypens, 'Le Sommet de la contemplation mystique chez le B. Jean de Ruusbroec', *RAM* 3 (1922) 250-272; 4 (1923) 256-271; A. Ampe, *De grondilijnen van Ruusbroec's Drieëenheidsleer als onderbouw van den zieleopgang* (Tielt 1950); *idem*, *Kernproblemen uit de leer van Ruusbroec* II-III (Tielt 1950/51); *idem*, *De mystieke leer van Ruusbroec over de zieleopgang* (Tielt 1957); St Axters, *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in cit Nederlanden* II (Antwerp 1953); L. Reypens, 'Dieu (Connaissance mystique)', *DSAM* III, 883-929; P. Henry, 'La Mystique trinitaire du B. Jean Ruusbroec', *RSR* 40 (1951/52) 335-368; H. Rahner, 'Die Vision des hl. Ignatius in der Kapelle von La Storta' *ZAM* 10 (1935) 37-34, 124-139, 202-220, 265-282; J. Iparraguirre, 'Vision ignaciana de Dios', *Greg*. 37 (1956) 366-390; Efrén de la Madre de Dios, *San Juan de la Cruz y el misterio de la Santissima Trinidad en la vida espiritual* (Saragossa 1947); P. Blanchard, 'Expérience trinitaire et vision beatifique d'après S. Jean de la Croix', *Année théol*. 1948, 293-330; J. Klein, *L'itinéreire mystique de la Vénéreble Mère Marie de l'Incarnation* (Rome 1937); M. Philipon, *The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity* (Westminster, Md. 1947); H. Urs von Balthasar, *Elisabeth von Dijon* (Cologne 1952); T. Mandrini, 'Una nuova mistica Carmelitana', *Scuola Catt*. 69 (1941) 425-432; A. Jans, *Ein Mystikerleben der Gegenwert*, ed. M. Grabmann (Munich 1934). We cannot discuss here the relevance of the ancient *devotion* to the Logos, as distinct from speculation about the Logos (beginning with Origen), or of the cult of 'divine wisdom', as found for instance in H. Suso, L. Blosius and C. Druzbicki. Cf. W. Völker, *Des Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes* (Tübingen 1931); A. Lieske, *Die theologische Logosmystik bei Origenes* (Münster 1938); B. Krivocheine, 'The Holy Trinity in Greek Patristic Mystical Theology', *Sobornost* (winter 1947/48) 529-537.

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throws no light on the special character of *this* person within the divine nature.[6]

It is not surprising therefore that piety draws no more in fact from the doctrine of the Incarnation than that 'God' became man and finds therein no clear assertion about the Trinity. And hence the existence of a clear and conscious faith in the Incarnation is far from being a proof of the fact that the Trinity means something in the normal piety of Christians. And there are other consequences, which show once more how popular piety is reflected in dogmatic theology, and how little the contrast is felt to the fixed, sacral formulas of the ancient liturgy. Theology for instance almost takes it for granted that the 'Our Father' is directed in the same way to the Holy Trinity, to all three divine persons, without any basic distinction whatsoever; that the sacrifice of the Mass is offered to all three divine persons in the same way;[7] that the ordinary contemporary doctrine of satisfaction (and therefore redemption), with its theory of a double moral person in Christ, conceives of an act of redemption which is directed essentially in the same way to all three divine persons; that this doctrine need pay no express attention to the fact that the satisfaction was given precisely by the Word incarnate, and not simply by the *Deus-homo*; that therefore one could imagine another divine person as man offering a *satisfactio* [81] *condigna* to the triune God; and that indeed, we could conceive of such satisfaction even if there were no question of the Trinity as the condition or presupposition at all.[8]

In the same way, the treatise called '*De gratia Christi*' gives a doctrine of grace which is in fact monotheistic and not trinitarian, from the *consortium divinae naturae* to the *visio beata essentiae divinae*. It is affirmed, of course, that the grace was 'merited' by Christ. But as this grace is explained at best as the grace of the '*Dei-hominis*', not as the grace of the Word incarnate as Logos, and as this grace appears only as the restoration of a grace which in its supralapsarian condition is mostly treated merely as *gratia Dei*, not of the Word, and still less of the Word to be made flesh: the treatise on grace is only very vaguely a theological and religious introduction to the mystery of the Trinity.[9]

The same anti-trinitarian timidity affects theologians when treating of the relationship between man and the three divine persons which is set up by grace. Exceptions like Petavius and Thomassinus, Scheeben, Schauf and so on merely confirm the rule. It is always taken to be a relation founded on 'created grace', a grace brought about by efficient causality, and the relationship is merely 'appropriated' in a different manner by each of the three divine persons. The sacraments and eschatology are naturally treated in the same way. In the doctrine of creation also, as treated today, the Trinity is hardly mentioned – in contrast to the way it was handled by the great theologians of former times like St Bonaventure. This silence is supposed to be justified by the doctrine that the works of God *ad extra* are performed so much in common by the divine nature that the created world can bear in itself no real sign of

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[6] There is something strange here. All discussion of the Trinity must stress the fact that in God the hypostasis is that by which Father, Son and Spirit differ, and that wherever there is unity in the three, there is absolute numerical identity, and hence that the concept of hypostasis, when applied to God, is not a general and univocal concept which is predicated of all three persons in the same way. But then this concept is used in Christology as if it could be taken for granted that another divine hypostasis could also exercise a *functio hypostatica*, with regard to a human nature. One should at least *ask* whether the particular relative subsistence, in which Father and Spirit are distinct from and not identical with the Son, might not prevent the exercise of such a *functio hypostatica* (though it does not, in the case of the Son).

[7] The author recalls with some remorse that he felt twenty years ago that he had to take M. Schmaus to task for not accepting this assertion as obvious in his dogmatic theology.

[8] In the hypothesis of a two-fold moral person in a substantial personal unity, if there were only one person in God he could still enter upon a hypostatic union with a human nature and so make satisfaction to himself.

[9] The Trinity is not considered at all in the famous constitution of Benedict XII on the *Visio Beatifica* (*Denz.* 530). It speaks only of the 'divine essence', to which the most intimate personal act, that of self-disclosure, is attributed. But is this sufficiently explained by the themes of the immediate context?

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the divine inner-trinitarian life. Without of course saying so expressly, theologians consider the ancient classical doctrine of the *vestigia* or *imago Trinitatis* in the world more or less as a pious speculation, to be indulged in when the essential doctrine about the Trinity has been learnt elsewhere. Such speculations are not considered to add anything important to what is already known independently of the Trinity or of created reality.

[82]

II

As a result of all this, the treatise on the Holy Trinity remains rather isolated in the structure of dogmatic theology as a whole. To put it crudely (and of course with some exaggeration and generalization): once this treatise has been dealt with, it does not recur again in dogmatic theology. Its general function with regard to the whole is only vaguely seen. The mystery appears to have been revealed merely for its own sake. Even after the revelation, the *reality* of the mystery remains entirely centred on itself. Statements are made about it, but the reality itself has really nothing or almost nothing to do with us ourselves. We might summarize the average theological opinion as follows, without fear of being charged with exaggerating: in Christology, only one hypostatic function of 'one' divine person is considered and it could just as well be exercised by any other divine person; the only thing considered important in the concrete for us is that Christ is 'a' divine person, and which he is does not matter; in *Dc Gratia*, only strictly appropriated relationships are considered between man and the divine persons; objectively, only the efficient causality of the One God is considered; and this is as much as to say soberly but expressly that we ourselves have really nothing to do with the mystery of the Trinity, beyond receiving some revelation 'about' it.[10]

The only objection to be considered is that it will be our blessedness later on to see this triune God face to face, which means being 'absorbed' into the inner divine life itself, and so attaining our most real perfection, and that this is the reason why the mystery is already revealed to us. But then we must ask how can all this be true if one denies any ontologically real relationship between man and each of the divine persons, and confines it all to appropriations. We must ask whether the vision even of the supreme reality can really make us blessed when, as in the supposition which we are criticizing, it is considered to be absolutely *unrelated* to us [83] in the real ontological order.[11] The appeal to the beatific vision therefore must be answered either with the challenge to draw the full and final conclusions from the position, or with the question as to whether we are not dealing with something more than mere knowledge about something absolutely unrelated. For if it were something absolutely unrelated, it would remain as isolated from our existential knowledge of ourselves as the treatise on the Trinity does, in today's theology of our pilgrimage, from the other dogmatic treatises in which we learn something about ourselves, to the real benefit of our salvation.

These considerations will help us to understand some other features of modern theology. It

[10] We prescind here (because the opinion which we are attacking also does so) from the fact that real 'knowing', understood in the radical metaphysical sense, implies the most real relationship possible to the object known, and vice versa. But if the full logic of the axiom were applied to the question at issue, it would be seen that the revelatory communication of the mystery of the Trinity ultimately implies and presupposes a real ontological communication of the revealed reality *as such* to man. It cannot therefore be envisaged in the way that the opinion in question sees it: as a purely verbal communication, which does not change the real relationship between the giver (*as* triune) and the hearer.

[11] This formulation does not touch on the question of whether God has any 'real' relationships *ad extra*. We can prescind from this question here. 'Real and ontological', as predicated of each of the divine persons with regard to man, need be understood here only in the analogous sense (with regard to the 'reality', not the special nature of the relationship) – just as the Logos, for instance, has himself a real relationship to his human nature.

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is now generally taken for granted that the treatise *De Deo Uno* must be divided from and placed before *De Deo Trino*. This approach, which has been in use for a long time, was recently defended as obligatory by J. M. Delmau (PSJ, II^2, 15f.) and others. There are only a few honourable exceptions, such as M. Schmaus and A. Stolz. One cannot however appeal to tradition for the now standard division and order of the two treatises. It only came into general use since the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard were replaced by the *Summa* of St Thomas. One could however follow Scripture and the Greek Fathers and understand ο(θεο/φ primarily of the Father, without letting the word stand exclusively for the Father. Then the trinitarian structure of the Apostles' Creed, seen in the light of the Greek theology of the Trinity, would rather suggest that we begin with the Father and use this first chapter of theology to treat also of the 'essence' of God, the Godhead of this Father. It is worth noting that the Master of the Sentences, for instance, subsumes the general doctrine about God into a doctrine of the Trinity – a point which Grabmann counts as one of the 'main errors' of the Lombard. And the Summa of Alexander Halensis likewise makes no clear distinction between the two treatises. This is only done by St Thomas, for reasons which have not yet been clearly explained. St Thomas does not begin with God the Father as the unengendered origin in the Godhead, the origin of all reality in the world, but with the nature common to all three persons. And the procedure became well-nigh universal. Thus the treatise on the Trinity [84] comes to stand still more in a splendid isolation, which brings it into a still greater danger than that of being found without interest for religious existence: it looks as though everything important about God which touches ourselves has already been said in the treatise *De Deo Uno*.

Possibly this division and order of the two treatises goes back ultimately to the Augustinian and western conception of the Trinity, even though this Augustinian concept had not the same predominance in the high Middle Ages which it was later to gain. Here, in contrast to the Greeks, one begins with the one single nature of God as a totality, and only considers him *after that* as constituted by three persons – though this involves a constant (and necessary) effort to avoid posing the '*essentia*' as a 'fourth element' previous to the three persons. It would be more biblical and Greek to start from the one absolutely unoriginated God, who is still the Father, even when it is not yet known that he is the Begetter and Spirator, because he is known as the unoriginated hypostasis, who may not be thought of *positively* as 'absolute', even when he is not yet known expressly as relative. But the starting-point of the Latins in the Middle Ages was different. And so it is possible to think that the Christian treatise *De Deo Uno* can and should be placed *before De Deo Trino*. But then one really writes, or could merely write, a treatise '*De divinitate una*', since the unicity of the divine being justifies this procedure, and make it very philosophical and abstract in development – which is of course what happens – with very little concrete reference to the history of salvation. It deals with the necessary metaphysical attributes of God, and not very explicitly with the experiences of the history of salvation which have come from God's freely adopted relations to creation. But if one referred to the history of salvation, one could scarcely avoid noticing that one was constantly speaking of him whom Scripture and Jesus himself calls Father, the Father of Jesus, who sends the Son and gives us himself in the Spirit, his Spirit. But if one begins with the basic notions of the Augustinian and western approach, a non-trinitarian treatise *De Deo Uno* comes apparently automatically before *De Deo Trino*. But then the theology of the Trinity cannot but give the impression of being able to make merely formal assertions about the divine persons, with the help of the notions of the two processions and the relations. And even these assertions seem to deal with a reality entirely centred on itself, a Trinity which is not opened to anything outside, and of which we, the outsiders, only know something through a strange paradox.

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[85] Efforts are undoubtedly made, in an Augustinian 'psychological' theology of the Trinity, to fill out the contents of the formal concepts[12] of *processio*, *communicatio divinae essentiae*, *relatio*, *subsistentia relativa*. But one must admit in all honesty that this way does not take us very far. This is not to say that such a psychological doctrine of the Trinity is only sheer – and not even successful – theological speculation. We can certainly say that the two divine processions, whose existence is guaranteed by revelation, have something to do with the two basic acts which we know belong to the spirit: knowledge and love. For this there is a foundation in Scripture. But though the basic starting-point of the Augustinian psychological doctrine of the Trinity is certainly valid, we must also point out its limitations. If one avoids artificial '*eis-egesis*', reading things into biblical theology, a frequent fault of scholastic theology in this matter, one finds that the biblical foundation is restricted to the fact that in the dispensation of redemption the divine knowledge is displayed as revealing itself and the divine love as giving itself in personal communication. When theology loses sight of this scriptural connexion, the Augustinian speculation on the Trinity is inevitably brought up against the well-known difficulty which always seems to render futile this marvellously profound type of speculation. One begins with a concept of knowledge and love taken from natural philosophy and uses it to develop a notion of the word and of the 'weight' of love; but after applying these speculative concepts to the Trinity one has to admit that they do not work: for the good reason [86] that knowledge and love remain 'essential' concepts. One cannot and may not evolve a 'personal', 'notional' concept of the word and of the 'weight' of love on the basis of human experience. For then the Word of knowledge and the Spirit of love would demand that a Word and a Spirit should proceed from them, again as persons.

All this does not indeed imply that it is always a mistake to divide the treatises *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* and discuss them in the usual sequence. Even if it is done on the unjustifiable grounds that the division and order in question follows the process of the history of revelation itself, because it progressed from the revelation of the nature to that of the persons,[13] the treatment can simply be regarded as a pedagogical one and not a matter of principle. The important thing after all is *what* is said in the two treatises and what connexion is made between them in the usual division. The point of our present remarks was simply to note that in the present division and order of the treatises, their unity and interconnexion is not well enough worked out. This is clear at once from the totally unquestioning way in which it is supposed that this division and order is obvious and necessary.

There is another phenomenon which is no doubt connected with this way of sealing off the

[12] It must however be conceded here that when Greek theology was most flourishing, among the Cappadocian Fathers, it seems to have been almost more formalistic than the theology of the Trinity in St Augustine – in spite of a starting-point for the doctrine of the Trinity which was taken from the economy of salvation and was directed towards the world. How is this to be explained? Was it not because the Greek Fathers thought of the Trinity as so clearly 'salvific' that they rightly felt that the *whole* of their theology was a treatise on the Trinity? Their treatise on the Trinity was not meant to portray the whole doctrine, but simply its formal, abstract side. And this was not really intended to be a discussion of each of the three divine persons. It was merely the solution of a problem secondary in the mind of the Greeks, that of the unity of the three persons, who appeared as distinct in theology *and* redemption. Should we not therefore say that the West took over the formal portion of the theology of the Trinity from the Greeks and made it *the* (whole) doctrine of the Trinity – since its soteriology retains only the dogmatically unavoidable minimum of the theology of the Trinity? Is not this why western theologians were forced – in contrast to the Greeks – to fill out this almost mathematical and formalistic theology by giving it more substance and content from the 'psychological' doctrine of the Trinity as developed by St Augustine?

[13] It would be at least equally true to say that the history of revelation first shows God as an unoriginated person in his relation to the world, and then progresses to the revelation of this person as the origin of an immanent vital process from which persons proceed.

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doctrine of the Trinity and leaving it in the air, so to speak. It is the general anxiety to eliminate all efforts at demonstrating analogies, presentiments and preparations for the doctrine outside Christianity, even in the old Testament. It would not be much of an exaggeration or simplification to say that the main interest of ancient apologetics against pagans and Jews was to find as many traces of the Trinity as possible before the New Testament and outside Christianity, at least in the elementary stage and in privileged spirits. The faith of the patriarchs of the Old Testament knew something of it, and St Augustine admitted, with a magnanimity which would cause scandal nowadays, that the great philosophers had some such knowledge. In recent Catholic apologetics, the normal thing is to reject sharply any effort at discovering presentiments of this mystery outside the New Testament. And this is unquestionably logical. For if this theology does not admit the Trinity, as a reality, into this world and the history of salvation, then it is to say the [87] least unlikely that even the slightest knowledge of it should be found there. Hence before the question is asked *a posteriori* whether such traces exist or not (a question which of course cannot be answered affirmatively *a priori*), it is tacitly assumed, more or less, that there *can* be no such traces. There is at any rate very little inclination to give *positive* value to hints and analogies in the history of religion or in the Old Testament. Practically all the emphasis is placed on the difference between the doctrines inside and outside of Christianity.

III

The very isolation of the treatise on the Trinity proves at once that something is wrong the thing is impossible! For the Trinity is a mystery of *salvation*. Otherwise it would never have been revealed. But then it must be possible to see why it is a mystery of salvation. And then it must be possible to show in *all* dogmatic treatises that the realities of salvation with which they deal cannot be made comprehensible without recurring to this primordial mystery of Christianity. If the intrinsic connexion between the various treatises does not constantly appear, this can only be a sign that in the treatise on the Trinity or in the other treatises attention has not been paid to the points which show that the Trinity is a mystery of salvation in our regard and hence confronts us wherever our salvation is spoken of – that is, in the other dogmatic treatises.

The basic thesis which constitutes the link between the treatises and shows the reality and not just the doctrine of the Trinity as a mystery of salvation for us may be formulated as follows: the Trinity of the economy of salvation *is* the immanent Trinity and vice versa. This assertion must be explained, proved as far as possible and applied to Christology, so that its importance for the latter may be clearly seen. These tasks are so much interwoven and condition each other so thoroughly that they must be undertaken together and not one after another.

The Trinity of the economy of salvation *is* the immanent Trinity: this assertion is a defined truth of faith at one point, in one case,[14] for Jesus is not simply God in general, but the Son; the second divine Person, the Logos of God is man, and he alone. So there is at least one ‘sending’, one presence in the world, one reality in the economy of salvation which is [88] not merely appropriated to a certain divine person, but is proper to him. Thus it is not a matter of saying something ‘about’ this particular divine person in the world. Here something takes place in the world itself, outside the immanent divine life, which is not simply the result of the efficient causality of the triune God working as one nature in the world. It is an event

[14] At only one point, however, in one single case, which is therefore not enough to justify our calling the whole thesis simply a truth of faith.

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proper to the Logos alone, the history of one divine person in contrast to the others. (This is not changed by saying that the causation of this hypostatic union is the work of the whole Trinity.) There is an assertion with regard to the history of salvation which can only be made of one divine person. But if this is true *once*, then it is always *false* to say that there is nothing in the history or 'economy' of salvation which cannot be predicated in the same way of the triune God as a whole and of *each* person in particular. And the converse is also false: that in the doctrine of the Trinity, meaning what is said of the divine persons in general and particular, there can only be assertions which describe the immanent divine life. And it is certainly correct to say that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be adequately distinguished from the doctrine of the economy of salvation.[15]

The importance of this consideration for the question in hand is often diminished or obscured in theology by three different lines of thought, which must first be examined, before the significance of the sure starting-point in dogma can be expounded in relation to the more general thesis.

We begin with the best known, most comprehensive and most radical difficulty. It is that the appeal to the hypostatic union, though based on a reality dogmatically certain, must be disallowed, because it does not and *cannot* deal with a case or instance which falls under a general principle and relationship. The statement about the hypostatic union gives absolutely no right even to consider that it may be used as a paradigm for [89] similar assertions which would as it were open up the Trinity *ad extra* and allow the conclusion to be finally drawn that the 'economic' and immanent Trinity is identical. The reason for rejecting the Incarnation as an 'instance' of a wider relationship is said to be simple and stringent: that everything is strictly identical in God, except the opposition in the relationship of origin which forms the persons. Consequently, any one divine person can have a special relationship to the world, in contrast to the other divine persons, only by means of a *hypostatic* union as such – because only in such a union can what is strictly proper to him, his being a person, the hypostatic function, be actualized '*ad extra*'. But since there is only one hypostatic union, that of the Logos, and since any *special* relationship of any divine person can only be hypostatic the truth of the Incarnation cannot give rise to any more general principle – even with regard to possibilities, the possibilities of hypostatic union in other divine persons.

It is not our task or intention here to give a strict analysis of this basic difficulty, in the form in which it has been urged in recent years, especially by Paul Galtier,[16] against the acceptance of other than appropriated relationships between man and the divine persons through grace. This subject has been treated so thoroughly that nothing new and nothing better can be said about it in the framework of this short essay. Suffice it to say that we think the refutation of the objection as given for instance by H. Schauf,[17] is adequate enough. To

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[15] One cannot escape this conclusion by the would-be clever scholastic reference to the fact that the hypostatic union does not bring about any 'real relation' in the Logos himself and hence that nothing in the order of salvation can be predicated of the Logos as such, as touching the Logos himself. Whatever is the exact meaning of the axiom of scholastic metaphysics, that God has no 'real relations' *ad extra*, the truth remains – and it must be taken as the decisive norm for this axiom, and not vice versa – that the Logos himself is really and truly man, he and only he and not the Father and not the Spirit. And hence it remains eternally true that if everything that is to be affirmed truly and permanently of the Logos himself is to be included in a doctrine of the divine persons, then this doctrine itself implies an assertion dealing with the order of salvation.

[16] P. Galtier, *L'habitation en nous des trois personnes* (édn revue et augmentée: Rome 1950).

[17] H. Schauf, *Die Einwohnung des Heiligen Geistes* (Freiburg 1941); cf. also Ph. J. Donnelly, 'The Inhabitation of the Holy Spirit. A solution according to de la Taille', *TS* 8 (1947) 445-470; J. Trütsch, *SS. Trinitatis inhabitatio apud theologos recentiores* (Trent 1949); S. J. Dockx, *Fils de Dieu par grâce* (Paris 1948); C. Sträter, 'Het begrip "appropriatie" bij S. Thomas', *Bijdr*. 9 (1948) 1-48, 144-186; J. H. Nicolas, 'Présence trinitaire et présence de la Trinité', *RT* 50 (1950) 183-191; Th. J. Fitzgerald, *Dc inhabitatione Spiritus Sencti in doctrine S. Thomae Aquinatis* (Mundelein 1950); P. de Letter, 'Sanctifying grace and our union with the Holy Trinity', *TS* 13 (1952) 33-58; F. Bourassa, 'Adoptive Sonship. Our union with the divine persons', *TS* 13 (1952)

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say the least, it has not been strictly proved by Galtier and the theologians who share his theory that a special hypostatic relation must be strictly a hypostatic union. Positive arguments [90] against such an identification will occur later in our considerations.[18] Hence we maintain: in principle, the Incarnation can undoubtedly be taken as a dogmatically certain 'case' of a special relationship of a divine person to the world in the order of salvation. With this at least not radically impossible relationship we have the possibility of a real communication of the whole Trinity as such to the world in the process of salvation. Thus we have the identity of the immanent Trinity with the Trinity of the economy of salvation.

The second difficulty, which is to some extent opposed to the first, has already been touched on. It is that if one admits that each divine person can enter into hypostatic union with a created being, then the fact of the incarnation of the Logos really reveals nothing about the Logos himself, that is, about his proper immanent divine being. Basically the Incarnation only means for us, in this view, the experience of God as a person in general – something already known anyway – but not that of a personal God differentiated according to the proper nature of the Trinity. We *know* (from communications made about it in the form of truths) that it is precisely the *second* divine person who exercises a hypostatic function with regard to the human reality which can be met with in Jesus. But everything there met with and experienced would be exactly the same as it is at present, if another divine person formed the subsistence of this human reality. The tangible reality of salvation undoubtedly gives a glimpse of the Trinity in the words used in the process, where Jesus speaks of the Father, and of himself precisely as 'Son': but the reality is not attainable in itself, because what happens in the order of salvation could have happened just as well to any other divine person. The event itself, being only the neutral vehicle of a revelation given in words and not a trinitarian revelation in actions, tells nothing of the inner-trinitarian divine life.

[91] We have already indicated how this supposedly obvious principle affects the development of Christology. But is it correct to affirm that *each* divine person can become man? Our answer is that this pre-supposition is both not proved and false. It is not proved: the most ancient tradition, before St Augustine, never thought of the possibility and really pre-supposed the contrary in its theological reflexions. The Father is by definition the unoriginated who is essentially invisible and who shows and reveals himself only by uttering his Word to the world. And the Word, by definition, is both immanently and in the economy of salvation the revelation of the Father, so that a revelation of the Father without the Logos and his incarnation would be the same as a wordless utterance. But the pre-supposition is also false: one cannot deduce from the mere fact that one divine person became man that this 'possibility' exists for another. Such a deduction supposes: 1. that in God, '*hypostasis*' is a univocal conception with regard to the three divine persons; and 2. that the unbridgeable difference between the way each divine person is a person – which is indeed so great that it is only the loosest of analogies that allows us to apply the same notion of person to all three – does not stand in the way of the other two persons entering into a hypostatic union with a created reality, by virtue of their own special and unique way of being a person, in the same

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309-335; P. de Letter, 'Current Theology. Sanctifying grace and the divine indwelling', *TS* 13 (1953) 242-272; Ph. J. Donnelly, 'Sanctifying grace and our union with the Holy Trinity: A Reply', *TS* 13 (1952) 190-204; F. Bourassa, 'Présence de Dieu et union aux divines personnes', *Sc. Eccl.* 6 (1954) 3-23.

[18] The procedure should be carefully noted: the argument is purely *negative* to begin with, namely that the argument of Galtier, etc., is not clearly convincing. We do not therefore *positively* affirm that it can be deduced from the fact of the incarnation as such *alone* that there could be other similar cases where the really immanent Trinity could enter into such an economy of salvation. (Otherwise we should be contradicting ourselves. For we shall have to say at once that the incarnation of the Logos does not allow us to conclude to the possibility of the incarnation of other divine persons.) Only when the theological reasons have been given to show that there are other cases of such a compenetration of immanent and salvific Trinity, can it be shown that the incarnation is a 'case' of such identity.

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way as the second person did. But what is supposed in 1. is false and what is supposed in 2. is not simply proved.[19] The thesis which we here oppose is false. For if it were true, and if it occurred anywhere except on the fringes of theological thought and were really taken seriously, it would throw the whole of theology into confusion.[20] There would be no longer any real and intrinsic connexion between the mission of a divine person and the immanent life of the Trinity. Our sonship in [92] grace would have absolutely nothing to do with the sonship of the Son, since it would have been absolutely the same if it could have been based on any other incarnate person of the Godhead. There would be no way of finding out, from what God is to us, what he is in himself as the Trinity. These and many other similar conclusions which would follow from the thesis in question are quite contrary to the inner movement of Sacred Scripture. This can only be denied if one does not submit one's theology to the norm of Scripture but only allows it to say what is already known from one's scholastic theology and dissolves the rest away in clever and cold-blooded distinctions.

All this could and should be proved in detail. Here we must confine ourselves to affirming the contrary thesis. But since the thesis we reject cannot claim to be obligatory in dogma or theology, it is legitimate in the context of a short essay simply to state that we reject it. In doing so, one is surer of remaining within the framework of what has really been revealed than with the opposite thesis. One has a theology which neither expressly nor silently – which is far more dangerous – counts on an ostensible possibility of which revelation says nothing. One abides by the truth that the Logos is such as he appears to be in revelation: as *the* revealer of the triune God by virtue of the personal being which is proper to him alone, as Logos of the Father and not as *one* of the possible bearers of revelation.

The third difficu1ty,[21] which gives the second its full force, is as follows: if the human nature of the Logos is seen only as something self-contained, something constituted by its own rounded-off being, created according to a plan or 'idea' which of itself has nothing to do with the Logos, or at least nothing more than other possible created beings: then this nature subsists in the Logos, of whom this natural reality and its acts may be truly predicated as his own; it can be formally – but, only very [93] formally – said that the Logos is 'present' and 'active' in the world and its history by means of this human reality. But this whole reality really 'betrays' nothing of the Logos himself as such. He displays only the universal traits, those which are 'human' in any case, or at the very most he displays *through* this reality something miraculous and superhuman, by means of preternatural traits which can be observed in him but which do not belong otherwise to human nature. But universal human nature as such would not display the Logos as such. All he would do would be to show himself therein formally as a subject of action. And thus an immanent trinitarian reality

[19] To deny that the Father or the Spirit could become man would be to deny a 'perfection' in them only if it were certain that such a possibility really exists for the Father or the Spirit and *hence* is a 'perfection'. But this is precisely what is not established. To proceed from the Father is for instance a perfection for the Son as Son. But to conclude from this that the Father as such must also possess this perfection would be sheer nonsense. But since the hypostatic function *ad extra is* the divine hypostasis in question, nothing can be deduced from the function of *this* hypostasis with regard to another hypostasis – even though our abstract general concept of subsistence points to no contradiction in the notion of the Father's giving subsistence to a human nature.

[20] We have already indicated at the beginning of this essay that it is taken for granted almost without a word and has considerable influence, so that it may be said to be an anonymous but very effective factor.

[21] This difficulty is mostly present 'anonymously' in theology. It is difficult to formulate it clearly, though it is probably behind all the Christological debates which still exist today in Catholic Christology – as for instance in the difference between Chalcedonism and neo-Chalcedonism. The question is the following: is the humanity of the Logos simply an alien element which has been assumed, or is it precisely that which comes about when the Logos ex-presses himself in the region of the non-divine? Is the content of the incarnation (that is, *what* the Logos becomes) to be explained on the basis of human nature as already known – which therefore does not become any better known by the incarnation – or is human nature, to be *ultimately* explained on the basis of the self-exteriorizing self-expression of the Logos himself?

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would have gone out of itself, in the real economy of salvation, only as an empty formality. Something already known but non-trinitarian would have been created and assumed *in this form*, as something already pre-supposed, logically and objectively, if not in time. But under such circumstances one could not really say that the Logos has gone out of his immanent divine unrelatedness and has shown *himself* through his humanity and *in* his humanity. Likewise, it would not be really possible to say: he who *sees* me, sees *me*. The most one could have seen of the Logos as subject, when one met the humanity of Christ as such, would have been the formal, abstract truth of his role as subject.

Here then is the question: how are we to take the non-confusion α∴σνγξυ/τωφ of natures which is affirmed by the Council of Chalcedon? Does it mean that the human nature of the Logos has no other relationship to him than that of any creature to its creator, apart from the fact that it formally subsists by the Logos? The human nature is indeed 'affirmed' by its subject, but this subject does not really affirm *itself* in it! Possibly the difficulty has never been fully brought to light in the reflective consciousness, but it remains vaguely and therefore all the more effectively and disturbingly at the basis of every Christology. It is still more impossible to give here a proper account of the correct answer, as we see it, to the question here proposed. All we can say is, no, it is not like that: the basic relationship between the Logos and the human nature assumed in Christ is not what the difficulty in question says. The relationship between the two is more essential and intrinsic. Human nature in general is a possible object of the creative knowledge and power of God, because and in so far as the Word is essentially the expressible, he who can be expressed even in the non-divine, being the Word of the Father, in whom the Father can express himself and – freely – exteriorize himself, and because, when this takes place, that which we call human nature comes into being.

[94] In other words, human nature is not an outward mask that is assumed (the προ/σωπον), a dress uniform concealing the Logos while he makes gestures in the world. It is, by virtue of its origin, the constitutive real symbol[22] of the Logos himself, so that we can and must say of its ultimate ontological Origin that man is possible because exteriorization of the Logos is possible. We cannot discuss the thesis more closely here, and still less prove it. We must refer to recent works which consider this question either explicitly or in substance.[23] But if the answer to the question is as we have suggested, we can affirm vigorously and without any silent reserves What Jesus is and does as man, *is* the self-revealing existence of the Logos as our salvation among us. But then we can really say, in the full sense of the words; here the Logos with God and the Logos with us, the Logos of the immanent Trinity and the Logos of the economy of salvation, *is* strictly one and the same.[24]

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[22] On this concept, see my essay, 'On the Theology of the Symbol', pp. 221-252 of this volume.

[23] The following works call for particular attention here: B. Welte, 'Homoousios hemin' in *Chalcedon heute* III (Wurzburg 1954) 51-80; K. Rahner, 'Current Problems in Christology' in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore Md. 1961) 149-200; K. Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Symbol' (see note 22); K. Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation' in this volume, pp. 105-120; F. Malmberg, 'Der Gottmensch', *Quaestiones disputetae* 8 (London).

[24] This sameness – since we are not dealing here with the formal subject of the Logos in the abstract but with the concrete, incarnate Logos – is that which Ephesus and Chalcedon express as at once 'inconfused and unseparated', and hence not the sameness of a lifeless identity, where nothing can be distinguished because everything is always the same. It is the sameness in which the one and the same Logos is *himself* in the human reality, because nothing alien (human nature) has been attached to him as an addition – if it were, this 'union' could not really be thought of as a union, but merely as the juxtaposition of two realities. The Logos constitutes the other as the other, *because* he thus constitutes and expresses himself. The difference must be thought of as an inner modality of the unity itself. And hence we are to understand that within and 'without' the Trinity, the sameness is direct and immediate, not resulting from the denial of another reality, but the supreme form of true sameness.

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The Trinity of the economy of salvation *is* the immanent Trinity – that is the statement which we have undertaken to explain here. We have now shown that this axiom is verified in at least one case which is dogmatically incontrovertible. But that this case is really a precedent or instance can only be proved when we reflect on the doctrine of grace. This is a case of non-appropriated relationships of the divine persons to the justified. The problem and the different opinions to which it has given rise among theologians are well known and need not be expounded again [95] here. But in any case, and to say the least, the thesis of proper, non-appropriated relationships is a free theological opinion and not in conflict with dogma. We pre-suppose it here,[25] and merely try to develop the well-known and widespread – though not undisputed – doctrine in the line of our thesis.

The thesis, which we pre-suppose as justified here,[26] is, when understood rightly and taken seriously, not a piece of scholastic subtlety but a simple and straightforward statement. It is that each of the three divine persons communicates himself as such to man, each in his own special and different way of personal being, in the free gift of grace. This trinitarian communication (the 'indwelling' of God, the 'uncreated grace', to be understood not merely as the communication of the divine 'nature' but also and indeed primarily as communication of the 'persons', since it takes place in a free spiritual personal act and so from person to person) is the real ontological foundation of the life of grace in man and (under the requisite conditions) of the immediate vision of the divine persons at the moment of fulfilment. This self-communication of the divine persons obviously takes place according to their personal proprieties and that means also according to and by virtue of their relation to one another. If a divine person were to communicate himself otherwise than in and through his relationship to the others, to set up his own special relationship to the justified (a reciprocal one), this would mean and pre-suppose that each single person (precisely as such, in so far as he is distinguished by reason from the one and the same nature) would be something absolute and not merely relative. The true foundation of the doctrine of the [96] Trinity would be abandoned. But this means further: these three self-communications are the self-communication of the one, God in the threefold relative way in which God subsists. Hence the Father gives himself, to us as *Father*, that is, in and by the very fact that being essentially himself he expresses himself and *thus* imparts the Son as his own personal self-disclosure:[27] and also in and by the very fact that the Father, and the Son who receives all from the Father, affirming themselves in *love*, inclining to themselves, coming to themselves, impart themselves in loving acceptation, that is, as Holy Spirit. God's relationship to us is three-fold. And this three-fold (free and unmerited) relationship to us is not merely an image or analogy of the immanent Trinity; it *is* this Trinity itself, even though communicated as free grace. For what is communicated is precisely the triune personal God. And the free communication in

[25] Here we note one point only. If one applies the medieval theology and its classic ontology of the beatific vision to the incontestable truth of the vision of the divine persons as such, this thesis cannot be logically denied with regard to the vision. And then it must also hold good for the grace of justification, which is the ontological basis and formal beginning of the immediate vision of God. We have therefore an immediate vision of the divine persons, which cannot be thought of as mediated by a created 'species impressa', but only by the actual reality of the object contemplated itself which imparts itself in real quasi-formal causality to the subject, as the onto-logical condition of possibility of formal knowledge. But this implies necessarily a real and ontological relationship of the subject to each of the persons as such in their real proprieties. This point was perhaps not considered attentively enough by medieval theologians, but it is certainly a consequence of their theological principles with regard to the vision.

[26] Further support for the thesis will be adduced later, even if only in outline, when we consider the actual history of the revelation of the Trinity.

[27] The self-communication of the Father as he 'speaks out' the Word into the world means the reciprocal unity of the incarnation and the bestowal (*in grace*) of this Word on (believing) men. That this is so and how it is so, we cannot show further here.

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grace to the creature, *if* it takes place, can only come about after the manner of the two immanent communications of the divine essence, from the Father to the Son and the Spirit. Any other communication could not impart that which is here imparted, namely the divine persons, since they are absolutely indistinguishable from their own proper mode of communication.

We can now consider the relationship between immanent and salvific Trinity the other way round. The one God imparts himself as absolute self-utterance and absolute gift of love. This communication – the absolute mystery, which is only revealed in Christ – is however *self*-communication. God does not merely give his creature a 'share' 'in himself' (indirectly) by creating and donating finite realities through his all-powerful *efficient* causality: but he gives *himself*, really and in the strictest sense of the word, in a *quasi-formal* causality.[28] But this *self*-communication of [97] God to us has, according to the testimony of revelation in the Scripture, a three-fold aspect. It is a self-communication in which that which is imparted remains the sovereign and incomprehensible, and which even as something received continues to be unoriginated and not at the disposal or within the grasp of anyone. It is a self-communication in which the God who reveals himself 'is there',[29] as self-expressive truth and as free directive power acting in history. And it is a self-communication in which the God who imparts himself brings about the acceptation of his gift, in such a way that the acceptance does not reduce the communication to the level of merely created things. But this three-fold aspect of the self-communication must not be considered, in the dimension of the communication, as a merely *verbal* development of a communication which is of itself undifferentiated. In the dimension of the economy of salvation, the distinction is truly 'real': the origin of the self-communication of God, his radically self-revealing and self-expressing 'existence', the acceptance, which he himself brings about, of the self-communication, are not simply one and the same thing which is merely described by different words. In other words, according to the self-understanding of the experience of faith, as attested in Scripture, the Father, the Word (Son) and the Spirit – no matter how infinitely inadequate all these words are and must be – indicate a true difference, a double mediation within this self-communication.

But again, this two-fold mediation by Word and Spirit (as shown ever more clearly and irrecusably in the history of the self-revealing self-communication) is not a mediation on the plane of the created, where God would not be imparted really as himself. According to the testimony of faith, the salvific self-communication of God is really three-fold, and a Sabellian view of the economy of salvation is false. And again, the modes of being whereby God comes to us are not created intermediaries or powers of this world Such a basically Arian view of God's gift would eliminate all real self-communication and reduce the eschatological event of salvation in Christ to the level of a series of provisional and incomp1ete mediations,

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[28] It follows as a formal axiom that if the difference present in something imparted by God, as such, is *only* on the side of the creature, there can be no question of a self-communication, in which there is a real difference in that which is imparted as such, therefore 'for us', God must then be differentiated 'in himself', without prejudice to his unity (which is then characterized as that of the absolute 'essence'), and this differentiation is characterized as the relative mode of the relationship of himself to himself. We may therefore affirm: if revelation (*a*) attests a real *self*-communication, and (*b*) declares that this self-communication contains differences for us (appears as mediated, but not by a mediation of a purely created type, which would destroy its character of real self-communication), then distinction and mediation is *eo ipso* affirmed of God as he is in himself and of himself.

[29] It must not be forgotten that the concept of the 'Word' is to be taken in its fullest Old Testament sense, i.e. as the powerful and creative word of God expressing itself in action and decision; the word by which God declares himself, through which he is present and active – so that there is never any question of a merely self-contained and theoretical discourse. Looked at in this way, the unity of God's 'Word' is far easier to comprehend when it has become flesh and is exercising its power and judgment over the hearts of men.

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such as prophets and servants of the Lord, angelic powers or [98] descending emanations of the Gnostic or Neoplatonic type. Thus the real communication, divine in nature, which takes place in the dimension of salvation must also *be* a real communication in God's own immanent life. The 'trinity' of the relationship of God to us in the order of the grace of Christ is nothing else than the reality of God as it is in itself: a 'Trinity of persons'. This would be Sabellianism or modalism only if the character of self-communication were ignored in the 'modality' of the relationship of God to the supernaturally elevated creature who shares by grace in God's own reality. But in uncreated grace and the hypostatic union, this modality is the very way in which God is 'in himself', and we do not consider that God is so little involved in this relationship that the 'difference' – as in creation and the natural relationship of God to the world – implies no distinction in God himself but leaves it rather on the side of the creature.

What then does it mean for the treatise *De Trinitate* if the identity of the salvific and the immanent Trinity is pre-supposed, or confirmed in the course of the treatise?

When entering upon the doctrine of the Trinity, we need not hesitate to appeal to our own experience of Jesus and his Spirit in us as given in the history of salvation and faith. For here the immanent Trinity itself *is* already present. The Trinity is not merely a reality to be expressed in purely doctrinal terms: it takes place in us, and does not first reach us in the form of statements communicated by revelation. On the contrary, these statements have been made to us because the reality of which they speak has been accorded to *us*. They are not made to be the touchstone of faith in something to which we have no real relationship, but because our grace and our glory cannot be disclosed to us except in the statement of this mystery. Both mysteries, that of our grace and that of God in himself are the same fathomless mystery. The treatise on the Trinity should never lose sight of this. It is the existential interest of the mystery for salvation that gives the treatise life and driving force, as it also provides the true key to its understanding. If our basic thesis is rejected, the Trinity can *only* be something to be revealed in purely conceptual statements, by a revelation given in words in contrast to a revelation given in God's salvific action towards us: and it will remain such as long as we do not have immediate vision of it as it is in itself absolutely.[30] And the treatise becomes as abstract and remote from life as it is in many books. [99] And the proof from Scripture inevitably becomes a method of subtle dialectics which draws conclusions from individual texts and builds them into a system which makes one ask whether God has really revealed us such far-fetched things in so obscure a way that it needs such complicated explanation.

If on the other hand we recognize that the Trinity itself as such is really possessed by us in the historic experience of salvation and grace which is given in Jesus and the Spirit of God working in us, we can always envisage the doctrine by having recourse to this experience. And there should be no treatise on the Trinity in which the most that is done for the doctrine of the 'sendings' is to put them into a relatively incidental or supplementary scholion at the end. Every treatise should be built up from the start from the 'sendings', even if for didactic reasons they are only treated explicitly at the end or perhaps even reserved for other sections of dogmatic theology. Indeed, the more boldly the treatise is aligned with the economy of salvation, the more likely it is to say the needful about the immanent Trinity, and make the truth really part of an understanding of the faith which is at once theoretical and existential.

The treatise can then trace the history of the revelation of this mystery. Whether this is done expressly or implicitly is a secondary question belonging to pedagogy, which we can omit here. It has been the custom of theologians in recent years to be very downright and uncompromising in their rejection of the older ideas that some sort of belief in the Trinity

[30] Presupposing that the vision, when so understood, implies no intrinsic contradiction or that none is apparent.

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existed even before Christ. A more qualified judgment should now be possible, and if applied to the treatise on the Trinity, should allow of a better understanding on the ancient tradition and the history of the revelation of this mystery.[31] The whole of the Old Testament is pervaded by the basic theme that God is the absolute mystery which no one can see without dying. Yet it is this very God *himself* who acts in history and converses with the Fathers. But this revelation and self-presentation in the Old Testament is done above all by the 'Word', though it appears also as the Angel of Yahweh, etc. This 'Word' at once makes God present in power and also merely represents him, as does the 'Spirit' which enables the word to be understood and proclaimed. Where Word and Spirit do not exercise their sway, Yahweh has withdrawn from his people; and when he renews his mercy towards the 'holy remnant', he sends the [100] prophets with his word in the fullness of the spirit. (The sapiential literature merely applies the same basic concept to law and wisdom, though in a more individualistic way, which is less impregnated with the dynamism of history.) God is present in the unity of Word and Spirit.

In principal, there is no precise and permanent difference between the three elements. God's presence by the Word in the Spirit must be different from himself, the eternal mystery: and yet it cannot be other than himself something that would stand before him and veil him. If the *absolute* nearness of the God 'who comes' is to be realized with regard to the covenant in which he really and truly imparts himself to his partner, then the dynamism of this historical process leaves only two courses open. Either the Word of God and the Spirit just disappear as created things, like the many prophets and their many words, in face of the unsurpassable and overwhelming presence of God himself, which is now revealed as the secret object of all partnership with God at all times. Or these two 'communications' remain, and are then at once revealed as being themselves truly divine, that is, as God himself, one with and distinct from the God who is to be revealed, in a unity and distinction which therefore belong to God himself. On this basis, the Old Testament must be understood to contain a genuine secret pre-history of the revelation of the Trinity. And this pre-history – which no one can totally deny – no longer gives the impression of dealing with antique concepts which are suddenly used in the New Testament, and still more in early Church history, to make assertions utterly remote from their genuine contents. When the unity of the salvific and immanent Trinity is thus invoked, another danger may be banished which, when all is said and done, remains the real danger of the doctrine, not so much in the abstract theology of the schools as in the average understanding of the normal Christian. It is that of a crude tritheism,[32] not of course explicit but nonetheless very deeply embedded, [101] which is a much greater danger than a Sabellian modalism. It is undeniable that the doctrine of the three persons in God evokes the almost unavoidable danger, which is usually countered far too late by express correctives, of thinking of three different consciousnesses. The danger is increased in the usual scholarly approach to the doctrine of the Trinity. It begins with a concept-of 'person' taken from experience and philosophy and develops it independently of the revealed doctrine of the Trinity and the history of its revelation. The resulting notion is then applied to God and used in the proof that three *such* persons exist in God. The treatise

[31] Especially in the actual history of the *concepts* which underwent a real historical process as they gradually and correctly took on a trinitarian meaning.

[32] There is in fact a dilemma which we must make constant efforts to avoid. The ordinary religious consciousness may ignore the Trinity, as we remarked at the beginning of this essay, and replace it by a pure, undifferentiated and lifeless monotheism. Or again, it may try hard to grasp the doctrine of the Trinity and then fall into a tritheism, which is only verbally avoided by a profession of faith in the oneness of God (which is of course never denied). It suffers from the lack of a mediating principle, which allows us to think of the intrinsic unity of the one and triune God, not merely in the formal, static abstract, or as 'God in himself', but also in the concrete and as 'for us': that is, as a reality which allows itself constantly to be vitally realized in us (that is, as the mystery, which bestows itself on us through the Word in the Spirit and as Word and Spirit).

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then generally goes on to reflect on the relationship between unity and triune 'personality' in God, during which no doubt the needful is said about the more exact and correct understanding of these three 'persons'. The process is a sort of after-thought, in which – without, to be sure, admitting it – one makes the necessary modifications and restrictions with regard to the concept of person with which one began this spiritual Odyssey in the ocean of the mystery of God. But in all honesty, one must ask oneself with some embarrassment at the end what right one has to call the surviving remnant of the triune 'personality' in God a person, if one has had to eliminate from these three persons precisely what one began by thinking of as person. And then, when the more subtle distinctions of theology have been returned to oblivion, one notices that one is probably back with the false and basically tritheistic position, in which the three persons are thought of as three personalities with different centres of action.

But why not operate from the very start with a concept and a word – call it 'person' or anything else that seems fitting – which can be more easily adapted to the matter in hand and can render it with less risk of misunderstanding? This is not to affirm with Karl Barth that the word 'person' is not apt when speaking of the reality in question and that it should be replaced by some less ambiguous word in Church terminology. We may however concede that the development of the word 'person' outside the theology of the Trinity, after the definitions of the fourth century, took a very different direction from its originally near-Sabellian tone. It developed the existential meaning (as in Hermes) of the ego which is opposed to every other person in independent, proper and distinctive freedom. The ambiguity of the word was thereby increased. However, there it is, sanctioned by the usage of more than fifteen hundred years, and there is no other word which would be really better, more generally understandable and less exposed to misconceptions. We must therefore [102] continue to use the word, even though we know there is a history behind it and that strictly speaking it is not altogether suitable to express what is meant and has no great advantages. But if one is definite and systematic in approaching the mystery of the Trinity from the stand-point of the economy of salvation, there is as little need to operate with the notion of 'person' from the beginning as in the history of revelation itself.[33] Starting from the presence of God the Father himself, communicated in the economy of salvation through the Word in the Spirit, one could show that the differentiation in the 'God for us' is also that of the 'God in himself', and go on simply to explain that this three-fold quality of God in himself may be called triune 'personality'. Thus we shall on principle confine the notion of 'person' in this context to what may be affirmed of it from this starting-point, which is that offered by the testimony of Scripture. All difficulties would not disappear, because in non-theological contexts the concept of person today has in fact another meaning. But the difficulties could be rendered less acute and the danger of a tritheistic misunderstanding lessened.

Finally, this approach to the mystery would allow us to re-state the question of the relationship, connexion and difference between the two treatises *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino*. It is not so easy to distinguish them as it has been supposed to be since St Thomas set the example. For if the title *De Deo Uno* is taken seriously, we are not dealing merely with the essence and attributes of God, but with the unity of the three divine persons. It is the unity of Father, Son and Spirit and not merely the unicity of the godhead, the mediated unity, of which the Trinity is the proper fulfilment, and not the immediate unicity of the divine nature which if considered as one numerically is of itself far from providing the foundation of the

[33] The concept of person in this connexion is sanctioned by the magisterium. But this does not necessarily mean that it must be the *starting-point* of all theological considerations. It can also be the point at which one arrives after re-tracing in theological thought the development of revelation and of the doctrine of the *Church*. And precisely because one re-traces *this* development, one never emancipates oneself for a moment from the doctrine and magisterium of the Church.

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three-fold *unity* in God. But if one begins with the treatise *De Deo Uno* and not with *De Divinitate Una*, one is concerned at once with the Father, the unoriginated origin of the Son and the Spirit. And it is then strictly speaking impossible to place one treatise after the other in the disjointed fashion which is still so common today.

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[103]

PART THREE

Christology

[105]

4

ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION

This is an effort to meditate a little on the mystery which we call the mystery of the incarnation of the Word of God. It is the very centre of the reality from which we Christians live, of the reality which we believe. For the mystery of the divine Trinity is open to us only here; only here is the mystery of our participation in the divine nature accorded us; and the mystery of the Church is only the extension of the mystery of Christ. Since our faith is contained in this conjunction of mysteries, we should meditate on this centre of theology and of Christian life, and often speak less of a thousand other things. For this mystery is inexhaustible and in comparison with it most of the other things of which we speak are unimportant. It is a gloomy sign in theology and Church preaching that when we speak of the all-embracing mystery we do little more than repeat, somewhat tediously, what has already been said. But the truth of faith can only be retained by continuous new efforts in its regard. Here too it is true to say that one can only possess the past by making the present one's own. The only consolation for this deficiency in theology is the fact that there are men who in life and death are united with the Lord in faith – hope and love.

Let us put the simple question: what do we Christians mean when we profess our faith in the incarnation of the Word of God? That is what we must try to say in ever new ways. It is the whole task of Christology, which will never be completed. We put this beginner's question, knowing well that it alone is more than enough to engage us for the brief period of an hour. And we put it in this way, because we reserve the right to be a little arbitrary in selecting this or that fraction from the whole answer which we cannot give. And we shall rather pre-suppose throughout the answer of the magisterium than repeat it in express terms. This does not mean that the ancient formulas which answer the question are eliminated or discarded as antiquated or even false. God forbid! The Church and its [106] faith are always the same throughout their history, otherwise we should have an atomized history of religion composed of event after event, but no one history of the one Church and the abiding self-same faith. But since this one identical Church had and still has a history, the ancient formula is not merely the end. It is also the starting-point of a spiritual movement of departure and return which is our only guarantee – or better, hope – of having *understood* the *ancient* formula. For no understanding is possible anywhere if what is understood remains fixed and frozen and is not launched into the movement of that nameless mystery which is the vehicle of all understanding. If this is true in general, that is, if all our insight means being open to the incomprehensible mystery – which is not just the provisional remainder of what is to be grasped, but the condition of possibility of grasping and comprehending anything, the all-encompassing incomprehensibility of the Whole, no matter how it is named – then it is not surprising that it should be true above all when we are attempting to understand the tangible destiny of the incomprehensible Word.

The Word of God became man. To understand this statement, we must, in the brief time at our disposal, deny ourselves all consideration of the subject of the statement, the Word of

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God as he is in himself, about whom this statement is made. The procedure, though here unavoidable, is very dangerous. For one could well miss the meaning of the incarnation if one's ideas about the 'Word of God', who became man, are very vague. Since the time of St Augustine it has undoubtedly been customary in the schools to take it for granted that any one of that non-numerical three, whom we call the persons of the one God, could become man, presuming he willed to. On this supposition, the Word of God in the statement made above does not mean much more than any divine subject, a divine *hypostasis*: 'one of the Trinity became man'. On this supposition therefore one needs to know only what is proper to the divine 'Word' himself. Nothing more is needed to understand the sentence. But if one follows the pre-Augustinian tradition and has doubts about the pre-supposition in question, it will no longer be so easy to give up trying to understand the predicate in the light of the subject of the sentence. For if it is of the essence and meaning of the Word of God that he and he alone is the one who begins and can begin a human history; if indeed God's way of owning the world is that the world is not only his work, a work distinct from him, but becomes his own reality (as the 'nature' which he has assumed or [107] the '*milieu*' necessarily adjoined to that nature): then it could well be that one only understands incarnation when one knows what precisely *Word* of God is. And perhaps one only understands well enough what Word of God is, when one knows what incarnation is. But we lay aside – at least for the moment – this consideration. As the starting-point in our endeavour we take the predicate of the statement which we are going to consider.

I

The Word of God became *man*. What does it mean: 'became *man*'? We are here omitting entirely the question of what it means when we say that this Word 'became' something. We are considering only *what* it became: man. Do we understand that? It could indeed be affirmed that 'man' is easily the most intelligible element of this assertion. Man is what *we* are, what we experience every day, what has been tried out and interpreted a billion times already in the history to which we belong, what each of us knows inside himself and outside himself in his environment. One could go further and say: This is so well known that we can recognize its basic constituents and distinguish its essential contents from accidental modifications on the one hand and from an ultimate self-hood on the other. We can then give the name of 'nature' to the ultimate constituent and content and say that that is 'what' it is. Thus our assertion will mean: the Word of God has assumed an individual human nature and so has become man. But do we really know from what has been said what man is and so what 'human nature' is? Of course we know a lot about man. Every day the most diverse sciences make assertions about him, and all arts speak, each in their own way, about this inexhaustible theme. But has man been yet 'defined' by all this? To define something, to give a delimiting formula which will sum up adequately all the elements, is only possible when we are dealing with an object composed of elements which are themselves ultimates and understandable in themselves, that is, which are now and by their nature limited.

We omit the question as to whether a definition in the strict sense is ever possible on these terms. At any rate, it is impossible for man. Man is, one might say in way of definition, an indefinability come to consciousness of itself. Much *about* him can be defined, at least to some extent. He can also be called χωον λογικο/ν, *animal rationale*. But before one rejoices [108] at the simple clarity of this 'definition', one should ask oneself what λογικο/ν really means. But then one launches into an ocean which is literally boundless: for one can only say what man is by expressing what he is concerned with and what is concerned with him. But that is the boundless, the nameless. Man is therefore mystery in his essence, his nature. He is

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not in himself the infinite fullness of the mystery which concerns him, for that fullness is inexhaustible, arid the primordial form of all that is mystery to us. But he is mystery in his real being and its ultimate reason, in his nature, which is the humble, conscious state of being referred to the fullness, the form of the mystery which we ourselves are. When we have said everything about ourselves that can be described and defined, we have still said nothing about ourselves, unless we have included or implied the fact that we are beings who are referred to the incomprehensible God. But this reference, which is our nature, can only be conceived and understood when we allow ourselves freely to be grasped by the incomprehensible, ratifying the act which while remaining inexpressible is the condition of possibility of all intelligent expression.

Our whole existence is the acceptance or rejection of the mystery which we are, as we find our poverty referred to the mystery of the fullness. The pre-existent object of our acceptance or refusal, of the decision which is the deed of our life, is the mystery which we are. And this mystery is our nature, because the transcendence which we are and which we accomplish brings our existence and God's existence together: and both as mystery. And here we must always remember that a mystery is not something still undisclosed, which is a second element along with what is grasped and understood. This would be to confuse mystery with the still undiscovered unknown. Mystery on the contrary is the impenetrable which is already present and does not need to be fetched: it is not a second element unmastered only provisionally. It is the indomitable dominant horizon of all understanding, that which makes it possible to understand other things by the fact that it is silently there as the incomprehensible. Mystery is therefore not something provisional which is one day to be done away with or which could in fact be non-mysterious. It is the propriety which always and necessarily characterizes God – and through him, us – so much so, that the immediate vision of God which is promised to us as our fulfilment, is the immediacy of the incomprehensible. It is precisely the removal of the illusion that our lack of total comprehension is only provisional. For in this vision we shall see by God himself and not merely [109] by the infinite poverty of our transcendence that he is incomprehensible. But the vision of the mystery in itself, accepted in *love*, is the bliss of the creature and really makes what is known as mystery the burning bush of the eternally unquenchable flame of love.

What point have we reached now? We have come closer to our theme. If this is human nature, we begin to understand more clearly – always of course within the framework of the basic mystery which is God and we – what it means to say: God takes on a human nature as his own. The indefinable nature, whose limits – 'definition' – are the unlimited reference to the infinite fullness of the mystery, has, when assumed by God as *his* reality, simply arrived at the point to which it always strives by virtue of its essence. It is its *meaning*, and not an incidental activity which could perhaps be left aside, to be that which is delivered up and abandoned, to be that which fulfils itself and finds itself by perpetually disappearing into the incomprehensible. This is done in the strictest sense and reaches an unsurpassable pitch of achievement, when the nature which surrenders[1] itself to the mystery of the fullness belongs

[1] This 'act' of self-surrender is of course primarily the 'act' of the Creator in making human nature, and not something done 'accidentally' by man as a creature in his *actus secondus* deriving from his own decision. In the relationship however which exists between man's being as constituted by God and man's own action which derives from this being, we recognize the former through the latter. The action is consequent upon the nature, in such a way that (unlike that of sub-spiritual beings) man is called in his action to confront his nature, cause it to 'come to' itself and realize itself. Thus between the nature and its spiritual self-realization there ensues a unity, which (though not simply an identity) is not brought out well enough by the formal ontological 'unity' of substance and accident alone. To understand this properly, it must always be borne in mind that what God produces as the source of the proper activity of the spiritual creature (the 'physis' in the original Aristotelian sense) is precisely not a 'thing' with static 'qualities' which are 'just there' passively. It is a substance in action, an 'actus', which for this very reason, expands in the activity proper to itself and in which this divinely-created

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so little to itself that it becomes [110] the nature of God himself. The incarnation of God is therefore the unique, *supreme*, case of the total actualization of human reality, which consists of the fact that man *is* in so far as he gives up himself. For what does the *potentia oboedientialis* mean for the hypostatic union? What does it mean when we say that human nature has the possibility of being assumed by the person of the Word of God? Correctly understood, it means that this *potentia* is not one potentiality along with other possibilities in the constituent elements of human nature: it is objectively identical with the essence of man. But once this is understood, it is impossible to contest on grounds of scholastic theology that one is justified in describing this essence in such a way that it appears precisely *as* this potentiality. And that is precisely what we have tried to indicate in the simplest possible outline.

This effort does not mean, 1. that the possibility of the hypostatic union can be strictly perspicuous as such *a priori*, that is, independently of the revelation of its *de facto* existence. And it does not mean, 2. that such a possibility must be realized in every man who possesses this nature.

1. The transcendence of man makes it clear that it would be wrong to define him, to delimit and put bounds to his possibilities. At least a hypothetical extension and culmination of the possibilities given with his transcendence are justified. But any type of fulfilment whatever remains within the bounds of the hypothetical as long as (and it will undoubtedly be impossible here) it is not proved that the transcendence would lose all meaning if it did not find precisely this fulfilment. And this transcendence means being immeasurably open with regard to the *freedom* of the mystery, and being utterly abandoned to the necessity of allowing oneself to be disposed of. We can therefore deduce from the transcendence no exigency of such fulfilment. And hence a strict knowledge of its possibility, including aspects which perhaps remain hidden to us, is not possible.

Hence it follows, 2. that the potentiality need not be realized in every man. And the fact of our being simply creatures, the fact of our sinfulness and of our radical peril, shows us, when our situation is brought to light in the word of God, that the possibility has not in fact been actualized in us. And yet we can say: God has taken on a human nature, because it is essentially ready and adoptable, because it alone, in contrast to what is definable without transcendence can exist in total dispossession of itself, and comes therein to the fulfilment of its own incomprehensible meaning. [111] Man has ultimately no choice. He understands himself as a mere void, which one can encompass only to note with the cynical laughter of the damned, that there is nothing behind it. Or – since he is *not* the fullness which can repose contentedly in itself – he is found by the infinite and so becomes what he is: one who never succeeds in encompassing himself because the finite can only be surpassed by moving out into the unfathomable fullness of God.

But if this is the essence of man, he attains his supreme fulfilment, the gratuitous fulfilment of his essence to which through his own ways of perfection he is always tending, only when he adoringly believes that somewhere there is a being whose existence steps so much out of itself into God, that it *is* just the question about the mystery utterly given over to the mystery. He must believe that there is a being who is the question which has become unquestioning,

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basic act realizes itself. Hence there is no other way to express this fact than to say that the spiritual being ‘gives itself, away from itself’, primarily in the act as which God creates it. The abysmal perdition of the creature which refuses to give itself to God can only be truly seen under this aspect. Otherwise there would only be an ‘accidental’ change ‘*in* it’, which would leave its nature basically intact, so that it would he really surprising that it perishes, and not merely the evil ‘in it’. The ‘existential’ self-dedication which is accomplished in the human spiritual nature of Christ corresponds in intensity to the basic act as which the nature assumed by the Logos was created by God as assumed: from the point of view of the nature, this substantial acceptance is substantial self-dedication.

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because it has been accepted as his own answer by him who answers. And then we may perhaps say that it is not so strange, since this strange element already floats before the mind of man in the pure mystery of his primordial understanding, along with the perfected whole. The more difficult question is *how* and *where* and *when* one may give an earthly name to him who is such a being. But if one seeks *him*, to whom one can bring the eternal mystery of the pure fullness of one's own being for fulfilment, one can see very simply, if one seeks 'quietly', that is, in meekness and with the eyes of innocence, that it is only in Jesus of Nazareth that one can dare to believe such a thing has happened and happens eternally. The rest of us are all farther from God, because we always have to think that we are the only one to understand ourselves. But he *knew* that only the Father knows his mystery, and so he knew that only he knows the Father.

To avoid misunderstanding, we must note that the Christology outlined above is not a 'Christology of consciousness' in contrast to an onto-logical Christology affirming the substantial unity of the Logos with his human nature. It is based on the metaphysical insight, derived from a strict ontology, that true being is the spirit as such itself. It tries to formulate the necessary ontological counterpart to the ontic statements of tradition, so that we may reach a better understanding of what is meant, and in order that the true traditional affirmations do not give the impression that God has wrapped himself in the disguise of a human nature which only clings to him exteriorly and has come to his earth to set things right because they could not be managed from heaven. And there is [112] another remark to make. It might be imagined that this God-becoming-man takes place as often as men come into existence and that the incarnation is not a unique miracle. This would imply that the historicity and personality in question was reduced to the level of the nature which is everywhere and always the same: and this would be nothing short of mythologizing the truth. It would also ignore the fact the humanity of God – in which he is there as an individual for each individual man, not having come to divinize nature – can be and is *in itself* [2] favoured with nothing essentially more or less in the line of closeness to and encounter with God, than that which is in fact provided for *each* man in grace: the beatific vision.

II

The Word of God has *become* man: this is the assertion which we are trying to understand better. We take the word 'become'. Can God 'become' anything? This question has always been answered in the affirmative by pantheism and all other philosophies in which God exists 'historically'. But it leaves the Christian and all really theistic philosophers in a difficult situation. They proclaim God as the 'Unchangeable', he who simply *is* – *actuus purus* – who in blessed security, in the self-sufficiency of infinite reality, possesses from eternity to eternity the absolute, unwavering, glad fullness of what he is. He has not first to become, he has not first to acquire what he is. And precisely because we have received for our part the burden of history and change, as a grace and a distinction, we necessarily proclaim *such* a God, because it is only because he is the infinite fullness that the processes of spirit and nature can be more than the pointless self-awareness of absolute emptiness which collapses into its own void. And hence the acknowledgement of the unchanging and unchangeable God

[2] The words 'in itself' should be noted. All Catholic theologians are familiar with the view that the hypostatic union of the humanity of Christ with the Logos has as a necessary consequence the *intrinsic* divinization of this human nature. Though it is a consequence of the hypostatic union which is morally and indeed ontologically necessary, it is distinct from the union, and through it alone is the humanity of Christ sanctified and divinized 'in itself' – and (though in a unique measure of intrinsic holiness) is precisely that which is to be bestowed on all men as grace of justification.

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in his eternally perfect fullness is not merely a postulate of philosophy, it is also a dogma of faith. Nonetheless, it remains true: the Word *became* flesh.

[113] And we are only truly Christians when we have accepted this. It will hardly be denied that here the traditional philosophy and theology of the schools begins to blink and stutter. It affirms that the change and transition takes place in the created reality which is assumed, and not in the Logos. And so everything is clear: the Logos remains unchanged when it takes on something which, as a created reality, is subject to change, including the fact of its being assumed. Hence all change and history, with all their tribulation, remain on this side of the absolute gulf which necessarily sunders the unchangeable God from the world of change and prevents them from mingling. But it still remains true that the Logos *became* man, that the changing history of this human reality is *his* own history: our time became the time of the eternal, our death the death of the immortal God himself. And no matter how we distribute the predicates which seem to contradict one another and some of which seem incompatible with God, dividing them up between two realities, the divine Word and created human nature, we still may not forget that one of these, the created reality, is that of the Logos of God himself. And thus, when this attempt at solving the question by the division and distribution of predicates has been made, the whole question begins again. It is the question of how to understand the truth that the immutability of God may not distort our view of the fact that what happened to Jesus on earth is precisely the history of the Word of God himself, and a process which *he* underwent.

If we face squarely the fact of the incarnation, which our faith testifies to be the fundamental dogma of Christianity, we must simply say: God can become something, he who is unchangeable in himself can *himself* become subject to change *in something else*.[3] This brings us to an [114] ontological ultimate, which a purely rational ontology might perhaps never suspect and find it difficult to take cognizance of and insert as a primordial truth into its

[3] One can confine oneself to saying that the created thing is the humanity of the Word in itself, and that therefore something has happened, a change has taken place. But if one sees the event as taking place only on this side of the boundary which separates God and the creature, one has seen and said something which is true, but missed by a hairsbreadth and omitted what is really the point of the whole statement: that this event is that of God himself. This has not yet been expressed if one speaks for instance merely of the 'inconfused' human nature! To call it then a 'change' does not really matter: it is a reality (namely, that God *himself* has become flesh, through the fact that something has taken place in this human dimension), even though one fights shy of the term 'change'. If we do call it a change, then, since God is unchangeable, we must say that God who is unchangeable in himself can change in another (can in fact become man). But this 'changing *in* another' must neither be taken as denying the immutability of God in himself nor simply be reduced to a changement of the other. Here ontology has to orientate itself according to the message of faith and not try to lecture it. The formal truth of the oneness of God is not denied by the doctrine of the Trinity. But this oneness, such as we can conceive it (and which is a dogma) cannot be used to determine what the nature of the Trinity may be. So too here. We must maintain methodologically the immutability of God, and yet it would be basically a denial of the incarnation if we used it alone to determine what this mystery could be. If, to expedite the mystery, one transferred it into the region of the creature alone, one would really abolish the mystery in the strict sense. For in the finite alone as such there can be no absolute mysteries at all, because one can always conceive a finite intellect proportionate to any finite thing and able to fathom it. The mystery of the incarnation must lie in God himself: in the fact that he, though unchangeable 'in himself', can become something 'in another'. The immutability of God is a dialectical truth like the unity of God. These two truths only – *de facto* – retain their validity for us when we think at once of the two other truths (of the Trinity and the incarnation). But *we* cannot and may not think of either as prior to the other. We learn from the doctrine of the Trinity that radical unity (as we might conceive it, were our thinking it out not dominated from the start by divine revelation) is not an absolute ideal. Even in the Most High it is a Trinity because he is absolute perfection. In the same way we learn from the incarnation that immutability (which is not eliminated) is not simply and uniquely a characteristic of God, but that in and in spite of his immutability *he* can truly *become* something. He himself, he, in time. And this possibility is not a sign of deficiency, but the height of his perfection, which would be less if in addition to being infinite, he could not become less than he (always) is. This we can and must *affirm*, without being Hegelians. And it would be a pity if Hegel had to teach Christians such things.

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most basic and seminal utterances: the Absolute, or more correctly, he who is the absolute, has, in the pure freedom of his infinite and abiding unrelatedness, the possibility of himself becoming that other thing, the finite; God, in and by the fact that he empties *himself* gives away *himself*, *poses* the other as his own reality. The basic element to begin with is not the concept of an assumption, which pre-supposes what is to be assumed as something obvious, and has nothing more to do than to assign it to the taker – a term, however, which it never really reaches, since it is rejected by his immutability and may never affect him, since he is unchangeable, when his immutability is considered undialectically and in isolation – in static concepts. On the contrary, the basic element, according to our faith, is the *self*-emptying, the coming to be, the κε/γωσιφ and γε/νεσιφ of God himself, who can come to be by *becoming* another thing, derivative, in the act of constituting it, without having to change in his own proper reality which is the unoriginated origin. By the [115] fact that he remains in his infinite fullness while he empties himself-because, being love, that is, the will to fill the void, he has that wherewith to fill all – the ensuing other is his own proper reality. He brings about that which is distinct from himself, in the act of retaining it as his own, and vice versa, because he truly wills to retain the other as his own, he constitutes it in its genuine reality. God himself goes out of himself, God in his quality of the fullness which gives away itself. He can do this. Indeed, his power of subjecting himself to history is primary among his free possibilities. (It is not a primal must!) And for this reason, Scripture defines him as love – whose prodigal freedom is the indefinable itself. What then is his power of being creator, his ability to keep himself aloof while constituting, bringing out of its nothingness, that which in itself is simply something else? It is only a derivative, restricted and secondary possibility, which is ultimately based on the other primal possibility – though the secondary could be realized without the primal.

It follows – and this truth is now situated on a profounder level than before – that the creature is endowed, by virtue of its inmost essence and constitution, with the possibility of being assumed, of becoming the material of a possible history of God. God's creative act always drafts the creature as the paradigm of a possible utterance of himself. And he cannot draft it otherwise, even if he remains silent. For this self-silencing always presupposes ears, which hear the muteness of God. Though we cannot go into it here, this truth might be the key to understanding why precisely the Logos of God became man and why he alone become man. The immanent self-utterance of God in his eternal fullness is the condition of the self-utterance of God outside himself, and the latter continues the former. It is true that the mere constitution of something other than God is the work of God as such, without distinction of persons. Yet the onto-logical possibility of creation can derive from and be based on the fact that God, the unoriginated, expresses himself in himself and for himself and so constitutes the original, divine, distinction in God himself. And when this God utters himself as himself into the *void*, this expression speaks *out* this immanent Word, and not something which could be true of another divine person.

And now we can understand better what it means to say: the Logos of God *becomes* man. There are of course men who are not the Logos himself. There could of course be men, if the Logos had not become man. The lesser can exist without the greater, though the lesser is always [116] founded on the possibility of the greater and not vice versa, as an unworthy, resentful and proletarian type of thinking would have it, all too often and readily – a type of thinking which from sheer force of habit makes everything grow out of a lower stage. But when the Word becomes man, his humanity is not prior. It is something that comes to be and is constituted in essence and existence when and in so far as the Logos empties himself. This man is, as such, the self-utterance of God in its self-emptying, because God expresses *himself* when he empties himself. He proclaims *himself* as love when he hides the majesty of this love and shows himself in the ordinary way of men. Otherwise his humanity would be a

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masquerade in borrowed plumes, a signal that tells of the existence of something but reveals nothing of what is there. That there are other men, who are not this self-utterance of God, not another way of being God himself, does not affect the issue. For 'what' he is is the same in him and us: we call it human nature. But the unbridgeable difference is that in his case the 'what' is uttered as his self-expression, which it is not in our case. And the fact that he pronounces as his reality precisely that which we are, also constitutes and redeems our very being and history. He says openly into the freedom of God what we are: the truth in which God could express himself and expose himself to the empty nothingness which necessarily surrounds him. For he is love, and therefore necessarily the miracle of the possibility of the free gift, or better: as love, he is the incomprehensible obvious.

We could now define man, within the framework of his supreme and darkest mystery, as that which ensues when God's self-utterance, his Word, is given out lovingly into the void of god-less nothing. Indeed, the Logos made man has been called the abbreviated Word of God. This abbreviation, this code-word for God is man, that is, the Son of Man and men, who exist ultimately because the Son of Man was to exist. If God wills to become non-God, man comes to be, that and nothing else, we might say. This of course does not mean that man is to be explained in terms of his ordinary everyday life. It means that man is brought back home to the region of the ever incomprehensible mystery. But he is such a mystery. And if God himself is man and remains so for ever, if all theology is therefore eternally an anthropology; if man is forbidden to belittle himself, because to do so would be to belittle God; and if this God remains the insoluble mystery, man is for ever the articulate mystery of God. He is a mystery which partakes for ever of the mystery on which it [117] is founded, and must always be accepted in blissful love as the undecipherable mystery, even in the eternity where the provisional is past and done with. For we may not think that we could completely understand God's expression of himself outside himself, which is man, so that it, and we too, could become tedious to us. We do not think that we could see what is behind man except by seeing through him into the blessed darkness of God himself and then really understanding that this finite being is the finitude of the infinite Word of God himself. Christology is the end and beginning of anthropology. And this anthropology, when most thoroughly realized in Christology, is eternally theology. It is the theology which God himself has taught, by speaking out his Word, as our flesh, into the void of the non-divine and sinful. It is also the theology which we pursue in faith, unless we think that we could find God without the man Christ, and so without man at all.

We could still say of the creator, with the Scripture of the Old Testament, that he is in heaven and we are on earth. But of the God whom we confess in Christ we must say that he is precisely where we are, and can only be found there. And though he still remains the infinite, this does not mean that he is 'also' that and different elsewhere. It means that the finite itself has been given an infinite depth and is no longer a contrast to the infinite, but that which the infinite himself has become, to open a passage into the infinite for all the finite, within which he himself has become a part – to make himself the passage and the door, through whose existence God himself became the reality of nothingness. In the incarnation, the Logos creates by taking on, and takes on by emptying himself. Hence we can verify here, in the most radical and specifically unique way the axiom of all relationship between God and creature, namely that the closeness and the distance, the submissiveness and the independence of the creature do not grow in inverse but in like proportion. Thus Christ is most radically man, and his humanity is the freest and most independent, not in spite of, but because of its being taken up, by being constituted as the self-utterance of God. And the humanity of Christ is not the form in which God appears, in the sense of a vaporous and empty apparition which has no validity of its own in comparison with and in contrast to what is manifested. Since *God* himself 'goes out of' himself, this form of his existence has the

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most radical validity, force and reality.

We must therefore regard as heretical any concept of the incarnation which makes the humanity of Jesus only a disguise used by God to signal [118] his challenging presence. And it is *this* heresy, which was rejected by the Church in its struggle against docetism, Apollinarism, monophysitism and monotheletism, and not the truly orthodox Christology, which is today felt to be mythic and is rejected as mythology. It must indeed be conceded that such a mythological understanding of Christology can be implicit in the minds of many Christians, in spite of their professed orthodoxy, and inevitably calls forth the protest against mythology. The idea exists that God disguises himself as a man, or that needing to make himself visible, he makes gestures by means of a human reality which is used in such a way that it is not a real man with independence and freedom, but a puppet on strings which the player behind the scenes uses to make himself audible. But this is mythology, and not Church dogma, even though it may be a fair description of the catechism in many Christians' heads in contrast to the printed catechism. And one might go further and ask whether the would-be demythologizers of Christianity have not precisely the same idea of Christian doctrine as the pious and myth-minded Christians, though *both* know the orthodox formulas. And it may be that some non-Christians are thus led to rely on a cryptogamous heresy of Christians in their effort at demythologizing, thinking all the while that it is a dogma of Christianity.

We must on the other hand consider something which may make it more tolerable to listen to many docetic and monophysite overtones in the way some Christians speak of the incarnation. Many of those who reject the orthodox formulation because they misunderstand it, may still make a genuine existential act of faith in the incarnation of the Word of God. If one looks to Jesus, to his cross and death, and really believes that there the living God has said his last word, decisive, irrevocable and hence comprehensive; if he really believes that there God redeems him from the imprisonment and tyranny of the existentials of his blocked, guilty and doomed existence: he believes something that can only be true and real, if Jesus is what the faith of Christianity confesses. Whether he knows it consciously or not, he believes in the incarnation of the Word of God.

This is not to deny the importance of the formula which is objectively correct and which forms the ecclesio-sociological basis of the faith held and pondered in common. But only the heretic (not the Catholic) – one who identifies a genuinely heart-felt faith in the redeeming truth with the profession of the orthodox formulas of the Church – can deny *a priori* that there can be true faith in Christ even when the correct formulation [119] of Christology is rejected. In living out one's existence, one cannot adopt existentially every position which is conceptually thinkable. And therefore: whoever accepts Jesus as the ultimate truth about his life, and confesses that in him and in his death God says the last word to him, by which he lives and dies: such a one accepts him thereby as Son of God, such as the Church confesses, no matter how unfortunate or even false may be his own theoretical and conceptual formulation of the faith whereby he directs his existence to Christ. Moreover, Christ has confronted many who did not know that they were laying hold of him and casting themselves into his life and death to find there happiness and redemption: they did not know that they were meeting him whom Christians rightly call Jesus of Nazareth. Created freedom is always the risk of the unknown which, heeded or unheeded, lies within the known object on which the will is set. That which is *absolutely* unseen and *wholly* other is not appropriated by the free act, when it aims at definite and limited objects. But that does not mean that what is not expressed and formulated is necessarily quite unseen and unsought for. And the grace of God and Christ are in everything, as the secret essence of all eligible reality: it is not so easy to grasp at anything, without having to do with God and Christ – one way or another. Anyone therefore, no matter how remote from any revelation formulated in words, who accepts his existence, that is, his humanity – no easy thing! – in quiet patience, or better, in faith, hope

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and love – no matter what he calls them, and accepts it *as* the mystery which hides itself in the mystery of eternal love and bears life in the womb of death: such a one says yes to something which really is such as his boundless confidence hopes it to be, because God has in fact filled it with the infinite, that is, with himself, since the Word was made flesh. He says yes to Christ, even when he does not know that he does. For he who lets go and jumps, falls into the depths such as they are, and not such as he has himself sounded. Anyone who accepts his own humanity in full – and how immeasurably hard that is, how doubtful whether we really do it! – has accepted the Son of Man, because God has accepted man in him. When we read in Scripture that he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law, this is the ultimate truth, because God himself has become this neighbour. He who is at once the nearest to us and the farthest from us is always the one person who is accepted and loved in our nearest and dearest.

Man is a mystery. Indeed, he is *the* mystery. For he is mystery not [120] merely because he is open in his poverty to the mystery of the incomprehensible fullness of God, but because God uttered this mystery as his own. For supposing God wills to speak himself out into the void of nothingness, supposing he wills to call out his own Word into the mute desert of nothingness – how else could he do it than by creating the inward acceptance of this Word and by uttering his word to be accepted? And so it is all one: the self-utterance of God's Word and its acceptance. That this takes place at all is a mystery. A mystery is something that is totally unexpected and incalculable, something that is at once blissfully, mortally amazing and yet obvious – but obvious only because in the last resort the mystery makes the conceivable understandable and not vice versa. And so the incarnation of God is the absolute and yet the obvious mystery. One could almost think that what is strange, historically contingent and hard about it is not the thing in itself but the fact that the obviously absolute mystery has taken place precisely in Jesus of Nazareth, there and now. But when the longing for the absolute nearness of God, the longing, incomprehensible in itself, which alone makes anything bearable, looks for *where* this nearness came – not in the postulates of the spirit, but in the flesh and in the housings of the earth: then no resting place can be found except in Jesus of Nazareth, over whom the star of God stands, before whom alone one has the courage to bend the knee and weeping happily to pray: 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us'.

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5

DOGMATIC QUESTIONS ON EASTER

The title of this short essay should be taken seriously. It puts *questions* and gives few answers. And the answers themselves should really be taken as questions: it is only to avoid tediousness that they are not all put in the interrogative form. The dogmatic theologian must ask himself new questions about Easter in his present studies. For when he looks up the dogmatic text-books of today[1] and sees what the dogmatic theologian has to say as a professional on the theology of the resurrection, he has to confess somewhat regretfully that apart from some distinguished exceptions, of which there are naturally a few, at the present time very little is said about this fundamental event of the history of salvation. And that is not because there is little to be said about it. For it cannot be that dogmatic theology has nothing to say on the subject. It can only be due to an accident of history and a shortcoming in the fulfilment of the task that every text-book today offers a long treatise on Good Friday and disposes of Easter in a few lines. But if dogmatic theology is to say more about the Easter event and so help to build up faith among men, it must first be clearer about what it should speak of in this curtailed treatise. The first thing therefore that the theologian must do is to ask himself some questions. And some of these questions are presented here. They do not of course appear here for the first time. They are in fact questions which the faith and theology of the Church as a whole have [122] always been answering in chorus. It is however the task of man and of the theologian in particular to repeat the old questions in a new way, so that they may really have a new and vital understanding of the old questions.

The reasons why the theology of the resurrection as a whole has gone through such an astonishing process of shrinkage are undoubtedly very numerous. Our first task should be to ask what these reasons are, because an illness can only be cured as a rule when its causes are diagnosed. One reason is undoubtedly this: at the end of the 18th century, apologetics and fundamental theology were separated from dogmatic theology and became an independent science, whose object was to give the reasons for Christianity in general, and not just defend Catholic against non-Catholic Christianity. It followed that fundamental theology justifiably claimed the resurrection of Christ as the most important proof of the divine mission of the *legatus divinus* who founded Christianity. This makes it understandable, though not justifiable, that the dogmatic theologian should have gained the impression that everything important about the resurrection was already said by his colleague in fundamental theology. He thought then that in view of his chronic shortage of time for lectures, and the lack of space in the text-books, he could dispense himself from taking up the theme again and giving it full treatment. But in doing so, he forgot that fundamental theology cannot envisage at all the true content of the resurrection, since it views it only from the formal and hence standard viewpoint of miracle, as the attestation of a divine mission.

The dogmatic theologian could perhaps think that dogma had no more to say about the

[1] Compare for instance the recent text-books of L. Ott and J. Solano, which are really excellent on the whole. L. Ott, *Grundriss der Dogmatik*[4] (Freiburg 1959) gives a page and a half (232f.) to this point, which are almost completely taken up with the apologetic aspects of the resurrection. Its soteriological import is given seven lines: the resurrection belongs to the perfection of the redemption and is the exemplar and pledge of our own bodily and spiritual resurrection. A few lines (234f.) on the soteriological import of the Ascension do not alter the situation. J. Solano, *Summa Sacrae Tkeologiae per Patres S.J. Facultatum Theol. in Hispania Professores* III[3] (Madrid 1956) offers a Scholion of less than a page to discuss the resurrection, in a Christology of 329 pages.

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resurrection than to affirm its reality, and perhaps to add that it is the transfiguration of the body of Christ and therefore something which Christ could claim to have merited – although he was *comprehensor* from the start through his immediate vision of God. If so, he does not need to go much beyond what has been said in fundamental theology. Further, the dogmatic theologian may succumb to the view that all that is to be said specifically about the risen and glorified Lord will be presented in eschatology in general, where the resurrection and bodily glorification of all men is spoken of. But one need do no more than leaf through a work of biblical theology, such as that of Durrwell,[2] on the [123] resurrection, to realize that Scripture does not allow us to say as little about the resurrection as is usually said on account of this strange division of labour between fundamental and dogmatic theology.

But the real reasons for the shrinkage in dogmatic theology lie deeper and are older. In contrast to St Thomas, and to Suarez, for instance, in post-Tridentine theology, the modern theology of the schools has become accustomed, without much misgiving, to pass over in silence the various mysteries of the life of Christ as a whole, apart from the incarnation and the crucifixion. They are omitted from Christology and left entirely to exegesis and pious reflexion. It is no wonder then that the mystery of the resurrection knew no better fate. But if we ask why these mysteries of the life of Christ, the circumcision, the baptism, the temptation, the transfiguration and so on, hold so little interest for the dogmatic theologian, we come closer to the profound reasons for the wilting of the treatise on the resurrection. The ultimate reason for this general phenomenon is surely the fact that occidental theology adopted a purely juridical interpretation of the redemption and of the meaning of Christ for salvation, apart from his role as teacher and founder of a religion and a Church. If God only confers salvation upon us because having demanded a *satisfactio condigna* for the guilt of mankind, he prepared it for himself in the death of Christ on the cross, all other events of the life of Christ can naturally only be regarded as mere preparatives for this salvific action of God, which is formally concentrated on the cross alone. The one decisive event is Good Friday alone, as such. One can no doubt still pay tribute to the older liturgical tradition and celebrate Easter as the chief feast of Christianity, but the real 'feast-day' of Christianity is Good Friday, and the crucified, the man of sorrows, is the object of piety, love and contemplation.

This juridical theory of satisfaction starts from the silent presupposition, that God could have taken any work of satisfaction done by the God-man, no matter what, once it is dignified by the value of the person who does it, and fixed it as the work of redemption; and that in fact he decreed to choose the death of Christ on the cross. Everything then follows naturally from this silent presupposition. Easter is really only interesting with regard to the private destiny of Jesus. It can have no real significance with regard to salvation. It may be honoured at best as a confirmation of the fact that our interpretation of Good Friday is correct. When Protestant Christians make Good Friday the chief feast of the [124] liturgy and when a Rudolf Bultmann in his work of demythologizing appears to look away from Easter, to concentrate his theology, and the faith, exclusively on the cross: these are all consequences, though perhaps of the most radical type, of the 'juridical decree' theory of redemption. It is a theology which can probably be traced back from St Anselm through St Augustine to the beginnings of a specifically western theology in Tertullian and St Cyprian. It looks on the incarnation – not of course consciously, in a rigidity which would be almost on the way to becoming heretical – as really nothing more than the setting up of the subject, who, when he wills to, and when his act is reckoned by God as man's accomplishment, can make an equivalent satisfaction for the

[2] F. X. Durrwell, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (translated from the French) (London & New York 1960); cf. also J. Schmitt, *Jesus ressucité dans la predication apostolique* (Paris 1949); further literature on the dogmatic aspect of the resurrection is given in the *LTK*[2] I, 1035, 1041, where Protestant literature is also given.

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insult offered to God by men's sin. Consequently, it is also only natural that western theology should declare that the incarnation of the Logos was only willed by God in view of the obliteration of sin. It is likewise understandable that western theology is slightly embarrassed when it has to answer the question as to what function the risen and exalted Lord still has. The happiness of his humanity in heaven seems after all to mean no more than his own personal bliss.

The Thomistic doctrine of a permanent and 'physical' mediation of grace allotted a function to the humanity of Christ after his resurrection. But the doctrine remained so obscure, and was so constantly controverted,[3] that it could exercise no really formative influence on Christian life and piety. Theological speculation on the blessedness of the individual was based entirely on the concept of the immediate vision of God – *nulla mediante creatura in ratione obiecti visi se habente*, Denzinger 530. There seemed to be no room here for the humanity of Christ, so this type of speculation also made it difficult to assign a permanent salvific function to the glorified Lord. The constant intercession of the risen Lord (cf. Jn 14.2f.; [125] 14.16; 16.7; Rom 8.34; Heb 7.25; 9.24; 1 Jn 2.1), and the bliss of conversing with him in his humanity, appeared almost as an anthropomorphism. It is no wonder that the piety of the West, refusing of course to abandon Christ and not finding sufficient satisfaction in the earthly life of Jesus, concentrated on the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Here he was close to Christians. J. A. Jungmann has traced the disappearance of the mediatory function of Christ in salvation, which naturally obscured above all the meaning of Easter, to the struggle of the West against Arianism. It made Christ simply 'God with us', and Christ's role of mediator with the Father had necessarily to recede into the background. This would agree with what has been said above, since the decisive element in the western theory of redemption is simply the dignity of the divine person, so that the peculiar inner-trinitarian relationship of the Son to the Father plays no indispensable and necessary role.[4] This again accords well with the basic attitude of western theology, which, in contrast to the earlier tradition, has taken for granted since St Augustine that each divine person could appear hypostatically in the world, so that the mediation of the Logos within the Trinity is not really continued in the sending of the Son into the world.[5] And one could go on to ask whether this curtailment of the mediatorship of Christ since St Augustine is also connected with the anti-Arian polemics of St Augustine.

No doubt the struggle with Arianism affected all these questions, and so also contributed to the minimizing of the resurrection in theology and piety. But it is far from explaining adequately the historical phenomenon in question. A disciple of Jungmann, H. J. Schulz, has published an interesting book[6] in which he asks why in the East, according to the testimony of the liturgy, an intense devotion to Easter, with cosmic overtones, could be cultivated along with an equally emphatic stress on the divinity of Christ in the same liturgy, which however

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[3] Cf. Th. Tschipke, *Die Menschheit Christi als Heilsorgan der Gottheit unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lehre des hl. Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg 1940); D. van Meegeren, *De causalitate instrumentali humanitatis Christi iuxta D. Thomae doctrinam* (Venlo 1939); L. Seiller, *L'activité humaine du Christ selon Duns Scot* (Paris 1944); J. Backes, 'Die Lehre des hl. Thomas von der Macht der Seele Christi', *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 60 (1951) 153-166. A purely moral causality of the humanity of Christ after his resurrection is not a new act of his free will and hence can only be the permanent validity (morally) of the redemptive act of his earthly life. It offers therefore no solution to our problem. See further: K. Rahner, 'The eternal significance of the humanity of Jesus for our relationship with God' in *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore, Md. 1967); J. Alfaro, 'Christo Glorioso, Revelador del Padre', *Greg*. 39 (1958) 222-270.

[4] Since western theology holds fast to the view that the redemptive sacrifice is also offered to the Logos himself, it has to suppose a double moral 'subject' in Christ, a concept which would allow any other person of the Trinity (or a merely monotheistic God, who becomes man) to make such satisfaction.

[5] Cf. e.g. M. Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des hl. Augustinus* (Münster 1927).

[6] H.-J. Schulz, 'Die "Höllenfahrt" als "Anastasis" ', *ZKT* 81 (1959) 1-66.

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also allows the strict mediatory function of the man Christ with regard to God to recede to a great extent into the background. Schulz thinks that the answer to the question is to be found in the phenomenon of neo-Chalcedonian theology. In other [126] words, the Christology of St Cyril of Alexandria, while upholding of course the orthodoxy of Chalcedon with its emphasis on the non-confusion of the two natures in Christ, stresses more clearly than pure Chalcedonism the divinization of the creature by the Godhead who assumed it. It could therefore be more amenable to the notion that the cosmic process of divinization inaugurated by the incarnation could bridge the gulf between God and the creature, and attain its definitive triumph in the resurrection of Christ.

Schulz' theory is attractive. It answers a question which can in fact be only clearly formulated when one already has this key-word 'neo-Chalcedonianism' in mind, as the possible answer. But we must proceed carefully, and ask is this answer really correct, and above all, is it adequate. One could begin by putting a sceptical counter-question. Can such a subtle nuance in Christology, of which we are only now beginning to be aware, be invoked as the explanation of the important and palpable difference which exists between the piety of the East and the West with regard to Easter? And there is a further question. Was there not something objectively like neo-Chalcedonianism in the Christology of the West also, as a result of its marked anti-Arianism, and why had it not the same effect as Schulz supposes it to have had in the East? One could also ask whether neo-Chalcedonianism was not a result rather than a cause, stemming from a basic religious and theological attitude of the East which is lacking in the West. It manifests itself in the East in the strong devotion to Easter, which cannot but be absent from the West, even if a certain neo-Chalcedonianism of a conceptual and theoretical type can be found in western theology. Indeed, it is probably true that the theology of redemption was already different in the East and in the West, at a time preceding the differentiation in Christology. In other words, the West was thinking in juridical and moral terms before the $_5$th and 6th centuries. But in the East, while the significance of the cross was not lost sight of, the redemption was felt to be a real ontological process which began in the incarnation and ends not so much in the forgiveness of sin as in the divinization of the world and first demonstrates its victorious might, not so much in the expiation of sin on the cross as in the resurrection of Christ.

Clearly, there are already enough questions to be asked even with regard to the history of the dogmatic theology of Easter and its influence on piety. The few we have touched upon were chosen because of their [127] bearing on the shrinkage of Easter theology and piety in the West. Nothing at all has been said about the history of the individual truths present or called for in such a theology of Easter.

We add some questions about the content of the Easter dogma to the historical questions discussed above. The correct starting-point for a genuine theology of Easter is probably a correct understanding of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, that is, a true theology of death. And this means that the theology of the West need not deny its past to win a larger future for the theology of Easter. It only needs to enquire more profoundly and intensively into a question which has always engaged its attention, the death of Christ. We shall try here to indicate some questions which tend {n this direction. First of all, one should begin with the nature of the death and not merely enquire into the painful sufferings which preceded the death. It is almost automatic in the theology of the death of Christ and its soteriological significance to discuss the mortal suffering and to treat the death itself as the almost happy ending of the suffering to which attention has been confined. But then theology is discussing a subject, called the death of Christ, which is really not essentially different from any other possible work which Christ did or could have done during his life. And then its significance in the work of salvation can only be assessed in moral categories. But then one has missed the death by a hairs-breadth. And probably justifies the oversight by saying that the theology of

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the salvific significance of Christ's death needs an object of moral value. Such is said to be absent from the death of Christ as such, in which he only passively undergoes the separation of soul and body, but is said to be found in the 'bitter sufferings' before it, since they alone provided Christ with the opportunity of exercising obedience and love. But before one settles for this, and actually abandons objectively the theology of the death of Christ as such, though perhaps not expressly, one should ask whether one has a correct concept of death at all, such as can make room for a theology of the death of Christ and open up new horizons.

For death[7] cannot perhaps be adequately described merely as the 'separation of soul and body'. Strictly speaking, regarded in the light of the process itself, though it is the climax of the extreme weakening of man's powers and his helpless collapse under the nameless mystery of [128] existence, still, it is also the supreme act of man in which his whole previous life is gathered up in the final decision of his freedom and mastered, so that he ripens for his eternity. If so, the human death of Christ is not just one moral act among others, performed in the moments preceding his actual death. It is of its nature the totality of the life of Christ in act, the definitive act of his freedom, the complete integration of his time on earth with his human eternity. All we can do here is point enquiringly to this truth. But if it is so, then the resurrection of Christ is not another event *after* his passion and death. In spite of the duration of time which intervenes, which is anyway an intrinsic component of even the most unified and indivisible act of spatio-temporal man,[8] the resurrection is the manifestation of what happened in the death of Christ: the imposed and enforced handing over of the whole bodily man to the mystery of the merciful loving God, by the concentrated freedom of Christ as he disposes of his whole life and existence. In this way, Good Friday and Easter can be seen as two aspects of a strictly unitary event of the existence of Christ which are essentially related to one another. And one need no longer have the impression that Good Friday could really retain it soteriological significance, as satisfaction for the insult to God's majesty, even if no Easter followed. But once this illusion has been eliminated, the soteriological significance of Easter can be seen to go far and essentially beyond its apologetical value and Jesus' personal blessedness. A piece of this world, real to the core, but occupied by the pure and sovereign power of the dispassionate freedom of Christ, is surrendered, in the total self-mastery which can be achieved by fallen man only in the act of death, to the disposition of God, in complete obedience and love. This is Easter, and the redemption of the world.

The resurrection of Christ is essentially, and not merely through being juridically accepted by God, the event in which God irrevocably adopts the creature as his own reality, by his own divine primordial act, as he had [129] 'already' done in the incarnation of the Logos. It is likewise the event in which God so divinizes and transfigures the creature that this glorification is accomplished as the total acceptance of this divine assumption by the freedom of the creature itself. But we must bear two things in mind if we are to understand this assertion. One is that this total acceptance of the divine assumption by the free creature must necessarily be death in an infralapsarian order of things, where death is the birth of life set free. The other is that the world is such a unity, physically, spiritually and morally, that the decision of the man Christ, as a real component of the physical world, as a member of the biological family of humanity (born of a woman as a child of Adam), as a member of the

[7] See on the following K. Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*. *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 (London 1964).

[8] A scholastic philosopher who has pondered the nature of the (temporal and spatial) continuum, should not find it hard to understand that a thing or process is not at once independent and distinct because it follows another in time. These moments can be temporal moments in a strictly unitary process, which though prolonged in time, cannot be disjointed as a being. The moments of a being (or at least of a process) do not need, in order to be one, to be simultaneously co-existent at any arbitrarily chosen point of time. We may recall here that even modern physics seems to admit ultimate atoms of time even for physical time, which are not really divisible although they 'last' and so seem to consist of still smaller parts.

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human community in its history of light and shadow, is ontologically, and not merely by a juridical disposition of God, the irreversible and embryonically final beginning of the glorification and divinization of the *whole* reality. This is not to deny, but rather to affirm positively, that the unity of the world in all its dimensions and Christ's real ontological participation in this world is freely constituted by God. But then he does not just assign the world a juridical status in his mind. He creates its real, intrinsic and proper structure.

The notion of sacrifice may also throw light on what has been said. It is of the essence of sacrifice, and not just a more or less certain consequence extrinsic to its being, that it is accepted by God. That is why it needs the authorization of God, the appointment of a priest. God himself creates the possibility of men offering in such a way that their offering is accepted. A sacrifice only really exists when man's gift has really left the sphere of the profane and has entered that of the sacred, has become the 'possession' of God and has passed over to his exclusive disposition. Sacrifice and accepted sacrifice are one and the same thing. And where the sacrifice is offered not just by means of cultic symbol, but 'in the spirit and the truth', that is, where the intention expressed by the cultic sign, the total dedication of human reality to the absolute disposition of God's holiness, is truly effected: the acceptation of the sacrifice, which is of its essence, cannot be a juridical friction. It must be a reality. The proffered gift, which is the man himself, in all its dimensions, in its whole concrete reality, must be at the absolute disposition of God who has graciously accepted it. To be accepted totally and definitively, without restriction or reserve, by God who reveals and communicates himself: that is nothing else than being transfigured in the whole bodily reality, that is, being raised up from death and finally exalted. Hence the sacrifice of Good [130] Friday is only really consummated as a sacrifice when it is the sacrifice accepted in the Easter event. During the three days of Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, the one, self-same, total event of salvation is accomplished in a sacred memorial (*anamnesis*), and it remains strictly one even though it continues in order to be itself.[9]

And now theology must look backwards to the question of the essence of the incarnation, to pose it anew and more deeply, so that in its light, the life of Jesus, its salvific value and so the resurrection may be more clearly understood. And it must look onwards to the question of the fact and meaning of the permanent, consummated – not 'ended' – mediation of the exalted Lord as he exercises this function for all men and for all eternity.

The first question might be put as follows. Can we understand the incarnation, the assumption of human reality by the Word, and the essence of this reality itself in such a way that the event of the incarnation is seen from the very start not just as the adoption of a fungible, statistical reality, but as the acquisition of a time, a history, a life-giving death by the Logos himself? So that in virtue of the inmost essence of the incarnation, seen itself as a formally salvific act, the one event composed of death and resurrection is implied and accepted? The history of man, his free action, and the absolute climax of his freedom are not to be considered as accidents attached to the unmodified substance of a nature conceived of as one thing to be registered among others. It must be regarded as the self-realization of a being which only attains its own reality in such a process of freedom, which is therefore not to be regarded so much as a 'faculty' which man 'has' as the power of free disposal which one is,[10] in order to be able to bring one's own imposed being, as itself to its proper

[9] Cf. on this point M. de la Taille, *Mysterium Fidei*[3] (Paris 1931); *Elucidatio* XII-XV, 131-180.

[10] This is of course to be understood with the reserves which are always to be made in such statements when we are speaking of a finite being and not of the absolute God. But again, once this distinction is made, we must not overlook the fact that the 'act' of a sub-personal being has essentially a more extrinsic relationship to the nature of this being than in the case of a being which is aware of itself and realizes itself in freedom. In this case, the being is entrusted to itself. Though it cannot use its freedom to 'destroy' itself or eliminate itself, the free act still affects the nature in such a way that it is not merely the subject of the act, but becomes in a certain sense the

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fulfilment. [131] From this point of view, the event of the incarnation is more closely and essentially allied to the fulfilment of the human life which is taken on, than if it is regarded as the setting up of a human subject, within whose life this or that event is afterwards added in.

With the correct interpretation of the death of Christ in mind, we can also look forward to what comes 'after' death. It is not to be regarded as an event prolonged in time and attached merely to the event of the death. It is the fully self-matured finality of this temporal life itself which has been fulfilled most really by death itself.[11] But if so, the Lord who abides must have a real salvific function which abides, otherwise no such salvific function can be ascribed to death itself. Death ends time by being its consummate validity and therefore eternity. Hence what follows 'after' death (and resurrection as essential element of *this* death) is precisely the definitive thing which took place in death. And vice versa: what now takes place is definitive and hence what is truly and eternally real and effective. The life of the exalted Lord is not the personal recompense for something which he did in his earthly life and which merely has 'consequences' which now persist in themselves after their cause is past. It is the very reality of the soteriological significance of his temporal life, accepted by God, set free to work, and actually effective.

We must of course ask ourselves how precisely this effective reality of a soteriological nature may be more adequately conceived of. How for instance is one to explain the fact that the humanity of Jesus retains its significance here and now, precisely where the infinite reality of the eternal God presents itself to the vision of the blessed to be enjoyed by them? One would have to show, in other words, that in the incarnation, and in the resurrection which is its consummation, the transfigured human reality of the Logos remains truly and perpetually the mediator to the immediacy of God. One would have to show that the essence of the supernatural grace bestowed upon creatures, given in the hypostatic union and essentially deriving from it[12] and not elsewhere, implies an immediacy which [132] has a certain ontological presupposition, which may be indicated by the concept of a mediated immediacy. For immediacy is always immediacy to something. The need for a certain manner of being or condition, etc., in the term to which something is to be immediately related, is not a contradiction of this immediacy but its necessary pre-supposition. Hence, for instance, all theological tradition, including the Council of Vienne, postulates the *lumen gloriae* as the presupposition for the immediate vision of God, and does not feel that this concept is contradictory to the immediacy, though this *lumen* is considered to be a created

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act itself. Man for instance does not merely commit evil actions: he himself becomes evil by these actions. And vice versa, where a free spiritual being is willed and accepted, the self-realization as such is willed and accepted, and not merely 'made possible' and (eventually) foreseen.

[11] Cf. on this point e.g. K. Rahner, 'The Life of the Dead' in this volume pp. 347-354.

[12] There is in fact reason to think that the connexion between incarnation and uncreated grace, in which God bestows himself supernaturally on man, is not merely *de facto* but essential. As regards the hypostatic union, this statement will hardly be contradicted by theologians. All will concede – to avoid falling into an unavowed Nestorianism and contradicting the real intention of the Christology of St Cyril – that the human nature of Christ must also be intrinsically divinized by what we call sanctifying grace. But then one must also note that this human nature is essentially part of mankind (as may be shown by a transcendental deduction from man's character as partner in a dialogue and as member of a family community) and hence cannot ultimately (as nature!) be withdrawn from its solidarity with the one human nature as a whole. We can then understand why the divinization of the human nature of the Logos by grace necessarily implies the call of all men to supernatural fellowship with God. And hence it is not too daring to suspect that there is also a necessary connexion from the other side: if there is to be grace as, a supernatural participation of man in the inner life of God through God's real self-communication to man, there must also be incarnation (where both are free because they are one consistent thing, and the necessity is the necessary consequence of something in itself free and necessary). But to make this quite clear, we should have to show that the hypostatic union is the necessary mediation of the immediacy which exists in the immediate vision of God, the supreme actuation of grace. But this demonstration cannot be attempted within the limits of this short essay.

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reality. It admits therefore to the immediacy of God, it is sheer openness, it is that strictly supernatural created thing which in contrast to the natural order, and in *consequence* of a strictly formal and not efficient causality on the part of God, refers of itself to God as the infinitely remote ground of its being but, further, gives God himself absolutely, because it exists only through the absolute self-communication of God.

This leads to the question of how the *lumen gloriae*, which admits to the immediacy of God, is related to the glorified humanity of Christ, for which we have also claimed the function of perpetual mediation of the immediacy of the vision of God. This function must exist, if we are really to affirm a perpetual function of mediatorship in the God-man, and if it is not to be excluded by what is after all the essence of salvation and supernatural bliss, the immediate vision of God. The risen and exalted Lord must be the permanent and ever-active access to God, which is always being used anew and can never be left as something passed over and past. He must always show the Father. Only when we have understood [133] this, have we understood Easter as it is: the consummation of the world which gives access to God, who is really all in all through the Easter event, which has already begun but is still reaching completion in us.

When these considerations, which have been put here in the form of questions, have been really exactly answered, a more exact insight must result into the relationship between Easter as event and the fact of Christ's being risen (to indicate briefly what we mean). The relationship between an event and its effects, between a process and its results is not always the same. The event in which something eschatologically final comes to pass is infinitely closer to the result than an event which produces something which then continues to exist in the same process of time in which it came about. In the former case, the result does not go 'on', but *is* definitively what happened there. And in such a case, the event cannot recede into the past: it cannot become merely something that has been there, because the state of having been something only ensues when what remains takes on a new and different future, which is no longer that which came about by the event in question. A closer exposition of these observations must lead to the insight that the Easter feast refers to the event of Easter in an *anamnesis*[13] or memorial which really celebrates it, since the event has remained present in an ontologically unique and unsurpassable manner. But this again determines the unique character of the celebration itself. *Anamnesis* and that which is made present by it in its celebration condition each other reciprocally. On this basis one might show how every eucharistic celebration is essentially an Easter feast, not merely because it refers back to a 'past' event, but because it is the presence of that which came to be at Easter, to be finally the validity of the event itself. And then the feast of Easter would be merely a higher degree of expressiveness of what is always celebrated in the Eucharist in veritable *anamnesis*: the one event composed of the death and resurrection of Christ, which is of course past in the physical world (cf. Rom 6.9; Denzinger 2297) and which indeed had really to pass, in order that the definitive could come and stay, but which 'remains' in what is proper to it and *hence* can be enacted in its celebration.

[13] Cf. A. Darlapp 'Anamnese', *LTK*[2] 483-48.

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6

VIRGINITAS IN PARTU

A contribution to the problem of the development of dogma and of tradition

It is well known that the question of the meaning and bearings of the Mariological doctrine, which is traditionally summed up as the doctrine of the '*virginitas in partu*', has recently been posed anew by the book written by A. Mitterer.[1] An (unprinted) Innsbruck dissertation by W. Zauner (*Untersuchungen zum Begriff der 'Virginitas in partu'*, Innsbruck 1955) expressed cautiously worded agreement with the theory of [135] Mitterer, though following a quite different method, more critically speculative and more concerned with the history of dogma.

Mitterer does not take as his starting-point the traditional content of the title '*virginitas in partu*', as understood in fact in theology. He uses modern science to make a close analysis of the concepts of motherhood and virginity, in a way which must be called *a priori* from the point of view of theology and its data. On the supposition that full motherhood and full virginity are to be ascribed to Mary, according to the testimony of faith, Mitterer's analysis of the concepts leads him to the conclusion that full motherhood includes the processes which are denied it by the traditional interpretation, on the grounds that they are excluded by the '*virginitas in partu*' – the opening of the genital passages, the breach of the hymen, the birth-pangs. He holds that full virginity can be preserved, hence even '*in partu*', when these processes take place,[2] because they have nothing to do with the concept of bodily virginity. Accordingly, the miracle of the '*virginitas in partu*', according to Mitterer (who maintains both the virginity and its miraculous character in the case in question), is not concerned with the actual manner of the process of birth and its consequences;[3] the miracle consists of the

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[1] *Dogma und Biologie der Heiligen Familie* (Vienna 1952). For comment on Mitterer's position see H. Doms, 'Ein Kapitel aus den gegenwartigen Beziehungen zwischen Theologie und Biologie', *Th. Rv.* 48 (1952) 201-212. W. Dettloff, 'Virgo-Mater. Kirchenväter und moderne Biologie zur jungfräulichen Mutterschaft Mariens' *Wi. Wei.* 20 (1957) 221-226; For other recent discussion of the question see (apart from text-books of theology and Mariology in general) H. Koch, *Virgo Eva – Virgo Maria. Neue Untersuchungen über die Lebre von der Jungfrauschaft und Ehe Mariens in der ältesten Kirche* (Berlin-Leipzig 1937); J. C. Plumpe, 'Some little-known early witnesses to Mary's Virginitas in Partu', *TS* 9 (1948) 567-577; H. Rahner, *Die Marienkunde in der lateinischen Patristik*: *Maria in der Offenbarung*, ed. by P. Sträter (Paderborn 1947) 137-182; J. Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Marienkunde in der Patristik des Ostens*, *ibid*. 85-118; Ch.-G. Le Jouassard, 'Marie à travers la Patristique' in H. du Manoir, *Marie. Etudes sur la Sainte Vierge* I (Paris 1959) 69-157: J. Auer, 'Maria und das christliche Jungfräulichkeitsideal. Eine biblisch-dogmatische Studie', *GuL* 23 (1950) 411-425; G. Soll 'Die Mariologie der Kappadokier im Lichte der Dogmengeschichte', *TQ* 131 (1951) 288-319; 426-457; G. Miegge, *La Vergine Maria. Saggi di storia del dogma* (Torre Pellice 1950); J. Guitton, *La Virgen – Maria* (Madrid 1952); A. Garcia ' "Integritas carnis" e "virginitas mentis" in Alano da Lilla', *Mar* 16 (1954) 125-149; G. M. Roschini, *La Madonna secondo la fede e la Teologia* I (Rome 1953); M. Balagué, 'La virginidad de Maria', *Cultura biblica* 11 (Seville 1954) 285-292; Th. U. Mullaney, 'Mary Ever-Virgin', *Am. Eccl. Rev.* 131 (1954) 159-167, 256-267; Ch. Donnelly, 'The Perpetual Virginity of the Mother of God', in E. Carol, *Mariology* (Milwaukee 1954) 228-296; G. Owens 'Our Lady's Virginity in the Birth of Jesus', *Marian Studies* 7 (1954) 43-68; A. M. Sancho, *La virginidad de Maria Madre de Dios. Estudio historico-teologico del dogma* (Madrid 1955); J. Rózycki, 'De Beatae Mariae Virginitate in Partu', *Coll. Theol.* 27 (Warsaw 1956) 439-467.

[2] Mitterer is correct in saying that its absence is not an unambiguous proof of virginity. If for instance a child is conceived by means of artificial insemination and the birth takes place by means of a Caesarian operation, the mother retains the traditional signs of *virginitas in partu*, but there is in fact no question of *virginitas in partu*.

[3] For Mitterer, these constitute the signs of true motherhood for a mother who has given birth to a child, and hence must not be treated as indifferent or worthless. Mitterer also correctly emphasizes that according to

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fact that in this birth, which took place according to the natural processes, the natural presupposition is lacking, which it should have had in the natural order of things, and for which the normal birth is the unambiguous sign: the conception of the child from the man. Mitterer therefore holds that the '*virginitas in partu*' is not a separate process, but simply the application of the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary to the birth. And this has a sense, because normally the birth is the decisive criterion which excludes full virginity. The meaning usually given to '*virginitas in partu*' is said to betray too much pre-occupation with the hymen, growing out of other times and cultures, to endanger true motherhood by having logically to deny the [136] mother any active part in the process of child-birth, and to eliminate all pain, though Mary did not escape suffering elsewhere.[4] As far as we know, only a few authors, apart from W. Zauner, have given unmistakable, though cautious assent to the theory of Mitterer (cf. L. Ott,[5] W. Dettloff, H. Doms). Others, like J. de Aldama,[6] expressly reject the theory.

Here we offer some observations on the problem which has thus been re-opened. They do not aim at being more than marginal notes. They do not uphold any set thesis and they do not take sides for or against other opinions. They only claim the right to be more modest in a brief essay than a dogmatic theologian is allowed to be when he has to present a definite and well-rounded thesis in a dogmatic text-book or in a complete treatise on Mariology, and to give the doctrine of the Church clearly, exhaustively and sifted out from mere theological propositions. Since we are dealing only with marginal notes, the order in which they appear is also unimportant.

I

In recent Catholic theology one can note a certain tendency, independently of Mitterer, Ott and so on, to be more reserved when giving the theological qualification of this doctrine, and above all, when determining the contents of it. J. B. Heinrich, for instance, with Th. Specht, and among recent authors L. Lercher and F. Dander maintain that the bodily integrity of the Blessed Virgin during the birth as defined doctrine, understanding this integrity in the traditional way.[7] But F. Egger, H. Hurter, M. Glossner, Ch. Pesch, J. Pohle-J. Gummersbach, F. Diekamp-K. Jüssen [137] etc, qualify this '*integritas corporalis*' only as '*de fide*'.[8] J. de Aldama[9] assesses it as '*de fide divina et catholica*', but expressly declares that he prescinds from any precise explanation of the '*integritas corporalis*' which is asserted. L. Ott uses the

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Scripture (Lk 2:6) and tradition Mary is mother in the full sense of the word, and hence actively gave birth to her child in a truly human process.

[4] One could point to the fact that pious meditation thinks of the new-born *child* as capable of suffering and actually suffering, just as Scripture and dogmatic theology do in general in combating Docetism as contrary to the faith. If so, how can one refuse to ascribe to the child the 'pain' of *being born*, without the risk of Docetism? And then how can one deny that there was likewise 'pain' (in the theological and biological sense) when Mary gave birth, such as is normally to be found in the process of birth in the present biological (infralapsarian) order of things?

[5] L. Ott, Grundriss der Katholischen Dogmatik (Freiburg [3] 1957) 247f.

[6] J. de Aldama, 'Mariologia', in *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* III (Madrid [3] 1956) 392.

[7] J.B. Heinrich, *Dogmatische Theologie* VII (Mainz 1896) 402; Th. Specht, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* (Regensburg [3] 1925) 380; L. Lercher, *Inst. Theol. Dogmat.* III (Barcelona [4]1945) 288; F. Dander, *Summarium Tract. Dogm. De Matre-Socia Salvatoris* (Innsbruck 1952) 8.

[8] F. Egger, *Enchiridion Theol. Dogmat. Spec.* (Brixen [9]1928) 511,; H. Hurter, *Theol. Dogmat. Spec.* II (Innsbruck [7]1891) 512; M. Glossner, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* I (Regensburg 1874) 104; Ch. Pesch, *Compendium Theol. Dogmat.* III (Freiburg [5]1935) 101; J. Pohle-J. Gummersbach, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* II (Paderborn [10]1956) 390; F. Diekamp-K. Jüssen, *Kath. Dogmatik* II (Munster [10]1952) 382.

[9] J. de Aldama, *op. cit.* 394.

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qualification '*de fide*', but gives the statement the meaning already mentioned, which is *essentially* more restricted. B. Bartmann[10] likewise qualifies it as '*de fide*', but for all practical purposes really gives up all effort to determine the exact content of the phrase. But he adjoins a warning against docetism and contests the parallel often drawn by Fathers and theologians between the processes of the resurrection and the birth – entrance or exit through 'closed doors'. M. Schmaus[11] takes the same line: the assertion is a truth of faith, it means primarily 'bodily integrity', but 'we are not in a position to decide what is the essence of bodily integrity as understood by revelation'.

Here the question arises as to which statement is more important: that one must maintain the 'bodily integrity' as a matter of faith – and that therefore the concept is bound up with a certain content, which one must know to be able to believe it – or that we do not know what constitutes bodily integrity. But the first statement undoubtedly possesses more normative force, as Schmaus too certainly holds. Hence a *certain* determination of the content of the phrase, 'bodily integrity' cannot be eliminated as radically as Schmaus thinks, though he may be correct in thinking that the delimitation of the concept can only be carried out on a restricted scale. But then the question arises, *why* this, no doubt relative, reserve in determining the content of the concept is on principle not merely justifiable, but demanded, when theological tradition on the whole gives little sign of such reserve.[12] The truth is that a certain reserve is called for both with regard to the qualification and content of the '*virginitas in partu*', in spite of all the respect due to a theologically binding tradition in this [138] matter, which exists alongside of what is dated and lacking authority. One cannot seriously maintain, with Scheeben, that the doctrine is already expressed in the Apostles' Creed.[13] If it is supposed to be expressed simply in the '*semper virgo*' of tradition and of many official utterances of the magisterium,[14] we must first ask whether the magisterium, in designating Mary by this title, wishes to define also the content of the title itself. But above all, we must point out that the precise content of the '*virginitas in partu*' which is perhaps included in the title still remains an open question.[15] It is true that the Synod of Milan, under St Ambrose, also condemned Jovinian for denying the virginal birth of Christ, which St Ambrose certainly took to be 'the retention of the virginal bars in the genital parts'.[16] But this is only a local

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[10] B. Bartmann, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* I (Freiburg [8]1932) 425.
[11] M. Schmaus, *Kath. Dogmatik* II/2 (Munich [5]1955) 171, 176.
[12] See for instance the pages devoted by F. Suárez to the question of the after-birth at the birth of Jesus: F. Suárez, *De mysteriis vitae Christi*, disp. V, sect. 2 (Op. omn, XIX, 83ff.); disp. XIII, sect. 1, (Op. omn. XIX, 212ff.).
[13] As St Ambrose first tried to argue, quoting the '*natus ex Maria Virgine*': St Ambrose *Ep*. 42:12 (*PL* 16, 1128). Cf. M.J. Scheeben, *Handbuch der kath. Dogmatik* II (Freiburg 1933) 939. So too St Augustine, cf. Note 31, p. 142.
[14] Cf. e.g. *Denz*. 13, 201f., 214, 255f., 344, 429, 462, 735, 993; John II, *Ep*. 3 *ad Senat. Const*., Mansi VIII 803 E ff.
[15] It is not enough to say that the expression must be understood in the general sense in which it was used in ecclesiastical terminology at the time when it was used by the magisterium. This hermeneutic principle is correct fundamentally. But it cannot be applied to this case. For a number of examples can be adduced from tradition where the *virginitas in partu* implied by *simper virgo* was in fact understood only *ratione conceptionis*; there are examples which show that the perpetual virginity was sometimes only understood as the exclusion of all sexual intercourse; it could be shown that even where a miraculous child-birth was in question, the notion of what took place in the process was far from uniform. Once a concept has come into use in tradition and the magisterium (as α)ειπαρθε/νοφ was, as for instance in the *Symbolum Epiphanii*, at a time when the exact meaning of *virginitas in partu* was far from clear or well established), its continued use to express truths of faith is not in itself enough to prove that it can or ought sanction all the precise shades of meaning that may have been attached to it later in theology and piety, even though such *de facto* meanings were very widespread.
[16] St Ambrose, *De institut. virg*. cap. VIII, 52 (*PL* 16, 320): '*Porta igitur Maria . . . genitalia virginitatis claustra non solvit*'. Cf. Ph. Friedrich, 'St Ambrosius von Mailand über die Jungfrauengeburt Marias (virginitas

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synod, and it would be difficult to prove that the condemnation of Jovinian[17] amounts to a positive sanction of everything that was in the mind of his opponent, St Ambrose, on this matter. Siricius himself does not mention the point under the heads of the accusation which he drew up against Jovinian and sent to [139] St Ambrose. Hence the Roman synod of 390, which condemned Jovinian, cannot be invoked as an authority on this point.

St Leo the Great writes, in the *Epistola dogmatica ad Flavianum*, *cap* 2: 'Her virginity was intact when she brought him forth, just as it was intact when she conceived him'.[18] But the statement of itself has not, of course, the same dogmatic weight as the letter has when dealing with the precise point of controversy against Eutyches. Further, though the virginity at the birth is taught, nothing is said as to what precisely it implies. St Leo does not go beyond the '*semper virgo*'. In the letter of Pope Hormisdas,[19] the traditional doctrine is undoubtedly re-affirmed. But there is of course no question of a definition here. It is merely the repetition and transmission of the traditional doctrine. The Lateran synod of 649, under Martin I, which dealt with monotheletism, says in c. 5 (Denzinger 256) that the '*semper virgo*' also '*incorruptibiliter genuisse*',[20] just as she conceived without man's action, and was to remain a virgin after the birth. But here it must be said at once that this synod did not acquire the rank and importance of a general council in the mind of the Church as time went on. Though a certain tendency could be noticed, which sought to range this synod as the sixth general council after the earlier five, this place was in fact reserved for the council of 680.[21] The main reason for promulgating the canon was the fact that the monophysites and the monothelites had appealed to the '*virginitas in partu*' to establish the complete domination of the Word over his body, such as the doctrine of the one nature and the one *energeia* implied, as they saw it.[22] The orthodox declared on the contrary that Christ was really born in the body, otherwise docetism, with which the monophysites were reproached in the question, could not be avoided. It was for this reason that the '*virginitatis integritas*' had to be a miracle.[23] The Latin '*incorruptibiliter*' is meant to render the Greek α)ψθο/πωφ. The content of this '*incorruptibilitas*' and the '*virginitatis integritas*', of which Martin I spoke in his explanatory discourse to the council, the denial of '*solvere virginitatem*', is not exactly determined. No doubt the Pope thought of the content in the terms which were then [140] already current, especially as the parallels with the risen Lord's leaving the tomb and Christ's walking on the waters also recur at this point. On the other hand, the Pope stresses against the monophysite Theodore of Pharan, that the child was not born '*incorporaliter*' and not '*abs que corporeo tumore*' (α)ο&γκωφ) and that Christ did not pass through Mary as through a fistula, in the Apollinarist sense.[24] He even appeals to St Gregory of Nazianzen, who held that Mary was subject to the νο&μοφ κνη&σεωφ.[25]

It is not easy to say how the Pope considered that these disparate elements of his thought were to be combined clearly and without tension. But one may draw the conclusion that no strict explanation and dogmatic determination of any more precise content was intended, and hence we may say: a local synod repeats incidentally the doctrine of the perpetual virginity,

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Mariae in partu)' in *Festgabe für A. Knöpfler* (Freiburg 1917) 89-109; J. Huhn, *Das Geheimnis der Jungfrau-Mutter Maria nach dem Kirchenvater Ambrosius* (Wurzburg 1954) 110-226.

[17] W. Hailer, *Jovinianus, die Fragmente seiner Schrifien, die Quellen zu seiner Geschichte, sein Leben und seine Lehre* (Leipzig 1897) 127, 151-158.

[18] Mansi V 1370 A.

[19] Epist 79 (*PL* 63, 514C) '. . . *matris vulvam natus non aperiens* . . .'

[20] In connexion with a general summary of the faith, chs. 1-5.

[21] Cf. E. Caspar, 'Die Lateransynode von 649', *ZKG* 51 (1932) 75-137.

[22] Cf. Mansi X 961 C, 965 E (giving the opinion of the Monothelite Theodore of Pharan on the birth of Christ).

[23] Mansi X, 963ff. (the discourse of Martin I at the Synod).

[24] Mansi X, 966D.

[25] Mansi X, 968A.

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against the background of the interpretation then current, without wishing to give a doctrinal definition of the exact content of this interpretation. Indeed, we may note the clear consciousness of the need of avoiding the danger of docetism in this question, and of preserving the truth of the real motherhood and birth. It is remarkable that in 675, at the first synod of Toledo (Denzinger 282), the '*partus Virginis*' is spoken of in such a way that its miraculous character – in spite of the quotation from St Augustine, who clearly takes the side of the traditional thesis in his own special context – is based really on the virginal conception alone. When Sixtus IV (1476) and Paul IV (1555)[26] stress the perpetual '*virginitatis integritas*', even '*in partu*', as Paul IV says, they merely re-affirm what must be held as the dogmatic kernel of the tradition, that Mary is ever virgin, and they avoid any more precise determination of the content of the assertion. The same is true when Pius XII ('*Mystici Corporis*') says: 'She brought forth Christ in a marvellous way'.[27]

In view of the magisterium therefore, the marked reserve of recent theology, with regard to the qualification and the determination of the content of the doctrine, is quite understandable. There is no question of an express definition. If one wishes to qualify the doctrine as '*de fide*', which is quite justifiable, in view of the fifteen hundred years of the doctrine and the ordinary magisterium of the present day, one will have to emphasize at the same time that this does not solve the question of the exact determination of the content of the doctrine. For one could use a more precise history of the doctrine to prove that the determination of its [141] content is not so uniform and clear, and not always so free from misgivings that one could simply say: the careful, somewhat vague and generalized assertion of the '*virginitas in partu*' in the ordinary magisterium, in the present state of the pronouncements of the extraordinary magisterium and in the average preaching of the faith, means precisely what is said more exactly and in detail in the Fathers and theologians, and in much edifying literature.[28] The doctrine as it strictly is, and the authority it carries, are not always presented in such a way that they are expressly and consciously distinguished from a given set of images, which are used to couch the doctrine which is specifically taught. Can it be proved in detail that the tradition[29] in question lacks from many points of view the purity, clarity, firmness and unquestionable intrinsic theological foundation, which would enable us to declare it simply, wholly and without nuances a sheer, pure *traditio divino-apostolica*? Such a proof, to be completely convincing, could be given only by an exact and critical history of

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[26] *Denz*. 734, 993.
[27] *AAS* 35 (1943) 247.
[28] One must be very careful with such arguments, as may be seen from the doctrine of the formation of Adam from the dust of the earth. Here too a tradition of two thousand years' duration expressed a permanent truth in a definite, concrete imagery, distinct from the truth implied and not a permanent form, which was not however distinguished by tradition from the truth implied.
[29] Tradition, *historically* speaking, is simply the concrete sum of the theological propositions to be found in the Church, along with their transmission, in so far as the ordinary or extraordinary magisterium has not discounted such propositions as not permissible in the Church. This tradition contains, without precise, conscious and official distinction both the *traditio divina-apostolica* and the *traditio humana* (theological views and efforts and opinions of profane, human origin), which are propagated together. It may indeed be said that whatever is preached (even without the intervention of the extraordinary magisterium, over a long period) expressly, clearly and universally as *certainly* part *of the faith*, does in fact belong to the *traditio divina-apostolica*. But it cannot be said that only such things are part of it, nor that everything is proved to be *traditio divina-apostolica* simply because it has been in fact unchallenged in the (whole) universal tradition and been generally held to be correct. There can be a *traditio mere humana* which is universal, of long standing, and universally held in the Church, and it need not be always expressly and consciously marked off and distinguished from the *traditio divina-apostolica*. If the magisterium does not note this difference at a given point, this does not mean that it does not exist. Such conscious demarcations have a real history. To prove that they did not exist earlier is not a proof that such distinctions are not objectively justified. Cf. *Die mündliche Überlieferung. Beitrage zum Begriff der Tradition*, H. Bacht, H. Fries, J. R. Geiselmann, ed. M. Schmaus (Munich 1957).

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the doctrine,[30] which clearly cannot be attempted here.

[142]

II

If a professor of dogmatic theology wants a clear, telling and easily managed example of the history and development of dogma, which he can use as a model by which to demonstrate to his pupils the problem of such development, he has one here, which could hardly be bettered. The example is remarkable in many ways. We first have the impression that this doctrine can be traced back explicitly and immediately to the apostolic preaching. St Augustine[31] had already presented the matter in this guise, and even referred the doctrine to an express communication of the Lord.[32] But then we see that this is historically impossible. We come inevitably to the conclusion that we are dealing with a strictly theological process of explanation, though the later doctrine is qualified as '*de fide*'. If we pursue the history of this explanatory process more closely, we see that the first beginnings of the process are more or less buried in obscurity, and that *in part* they were conditioned *de facto* by pressures which were not theologically irreproachable – though the final result is not open to doubt. It would be seen that these pressures, exactly as today, do not always come primarily from the magisterium and the learned theologians. We could use this model to study something which is not always clearly kept in mind even today in dogmatic theology as it is actually practised, namely that the so-called argument from tradition and the Fathers can have two meanings, which are essentially different:

(a) The dogmatic meaning, that is, it undertakes to prove that something was taught by the Church and believed in it at a given time *as* divine revelation, and that it is therefore binding on us today also. Here, as a matter of principle, it does not matter *what* particular period of time is involved in the proof, how near this period is to the apostolic age, and whether the conviction of faith in a given age can be proved, by *historically* clear and tangible data and testimonies, to derive immediately and explicitly from the Apostles.

(b) The meaning in the history of dogma, that is, it undertakes to prove – a task which is one of the tasks proper to dogmatic theology itself – that (and in what manner) the doctrine in question stems from the apostolic [143] preaching, and can be traced back to it historically. This it does by proving that the doctrine was already directly and expressly proclaimed, though perhaps in another formulation, in the apostolic teaching. Or it can prove that the doctrine, being implicitly contained therein, has grown out of the apostolic doctrine, by a legitimate historical, logical and theological process, as its authentic development.

These two points of view are not usually kept apart in text-books of dogmatic theology when dealing with the doctrine now in question. They thus give the impression that the apostolic origin of the doctrine has been proven *historically* (and not merely dogmatically) when explicit statements of the Fathers can be adduced in its favour from the 3rd century on. One often has the impression that such dogmatic text-books suppose that the gap between us and apostolic times has been bridged historically, if one can produce texts of the Fathers for this doctrine from the beginning of the 3rd century. There are of course exceptions, but most theologians pay too little attention to the background of the text in question, its spiritual *milieu* and its real bearing.[33] This typical example could provide an opportunity of practising

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[30] At least when we prescind from the indirect argument which is considered equivalently in Part II.

[31] St Augustine, *Sermo* 296, ch. 1 (*PL* 38, 999); *Sermo* 225 (*PL* 38, 1073) *Enchiridion* ch. 34 (*PL* 40, 249). Cf. Ph. Friedrich, 'Die Mariologie des hl. Augustinus' in the *Festschrift K. Adam* (Düsseldorf 1952) 213-224.

[32] St Augustine, *In Jo. evang. tract* 91, n. 3 (*PL* 35, 1862).

[33] The average text-book of dogmatic theology does not make it at all clear that the text constantly quoted from Clement of Alexandria, which figures as one of the main witnesses in this question, is more of a difficulty than a

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how to use these tools of research.

And here perhaps it is permissible to make a point which can serve as an example, one which the author finds a certain satisfaction in making in this volume in honour of J. R. Geiselmann to which he contributes this modest essay. As is well known, J. R. Geiselmann has re-opened and re-kindled the old question and controversy between Catholics on the relation of Scripture and tradition.[34] It is not our intention to take up a set position of our own in this essay, with regard to the controversy. But we cannot refrain from making a few remarks. H. Lennerz[35] has written an essay on the subject in which he flatly rejects the position of Geiselmann. The main reason for the rejection seems to be, when very simply formulated: there are many truths which are to be considered revealed [144] truths of faith and yet are not expressed in Scripture and cannot be deduced from relevant statements in Scripture. Therefore tradition *must* be a material source of revelation *beside* Scripture, and the '*partim – partim*' in the declaration of the Council of Trent,[36] though it was omitted and replaced by '*et*', remains the obvious and unavoidable meaning of the declaration. This essay, as we have said, is not the place to investigate whether there are in fact such truths of revelation which cannot be derived from Scripture. We cannot therefore deal with the pre-supposition and the main interest of Lennerz' position.[37] But in this context we may [145]

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proof. We shall have to come back to this later.

[34] J. R. Geiselmann, 'Das Konzil von Trent über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift und der nicht geschriebenen Traditionen. Sein Missverständnis in der nachtridentinisch Theologie und die Überwindung dieses Missverständnis', in *Die mündliche Überlieferung. Beitrage zum Begriff der Tradition*, by H. Bacht, H. Fries, J. R. Geiselmann, ed. M. Schmaus (Munich 1957) 223-206.

[35] H. Lennerz, 'Scriptura sola?' *Gr*. 40 (1959) 38-53; 'Sine scripto traditiones' *Gr*. 40 (1959) 624 – 635.

[36] *Denz*. 783 'Recipiuntur libri sacri et traditiones Apostolorum'.

[37] I have tried to explain elsewhere why the fixing of the canon by the Church cannot be considered as a 'case' of a more general law and relationship, cf. *Über die Schriftinspiration*. *Quaestiones Disputatae* (Freiburg ^{2}1959) 42-45, 80-84. The other examples and cases adduced by Lennerz are at least open to reasonable doubt as to whether when correctly interpreted, with due and precise attention to the substance of the doctrine, they cannot be deduced from Scripture, that is, from the total meaning of the Christian message contained in and attested by Scripture, when truly lived and adequately interpreted. Why cannot this be true of the sacramental character and similar doctrines? And why did the Fathers always search hard for such a derivation in their theology, considering tradition rather as a proof for the correctness of this derivation than as simply an independent source of such truths? This leaves untouched, as we have said, the essential point of difference between Geiselmann and Lennerz. We may however make one remark, even if strictly speaking we do not decide here whether tradition is an independent and materially important source of revealed truth *apart* from Scripture, or not. Even if one adopted Lennerz' thesis with regard to the interpretation of Trent, one could always say that justice has been done to it by the acceptance of the canon on the basis of tradition alone, even though one might deny that this was a case capable of being applied more extensively. And one could still maintain the position (which need not be contested even by a Protestant theologian today) that tradition as such, that is, in so far as it obviously preceded Scripture, as apostolic kerygma, and continued after the coming of Scripture, did not of course cease, in its fundamental formal character, to testify to this apostolic *content*, and that such tradition is still valid today and hence must be accepted *pari reverentia*. And one can still ask whether this tradition really contains things which are not also really contained in Scripture, and whether one is forced by Trent to draw this further conclusion (which is not expressed but must be at best deduced). One may still doubt it. What is meant, for instance, when the Church declares that Scripture is also the 'ultimate foundation' for the Assumption of Mary? It is hard to conceive of any truth which is less directly and explicitly in Scripture than this. It will therefore be difficult to find cases where tradition must have a larger role to play than here. And yet even here Scripture is the ultimate foundation. But something can only be the foundation of a given truth when this truth is *contained* implicitly in this 'foundation'. For it will be hard to indicate any other sort of foundation which can be seriously called a foundation. The fact that a truth (or truths) does not contradict another set of truths, or is compatible with them, etc., does not permit one to affirm that the former have the latter as their foundation. But what other types of connexion between Scripture and the dogma of the Assumption can we think of except these two possibilities (implication or compatibility of a negative type)? But if one cannot call the second type 'foundation', only the first in fact remains: implication. But if it is true in this case, what truths (apart from the fixing of the canon) can be named of which one would be *obliged* to say that they are certainly not contained in

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refer to the typical instance we are dealing with and call attention to the following points.

Lennerz' position would be attractive, because it simplifies the problem, if it were really true, as Lennerz supposes far too optimistically, that the truths whose derivation from Scripture Lennerz casts doubts on, could be traced back with ease and certainty to apostolic times, as explicit doctrine, by a procedure based on proofs from the history of dogma. But this is precisely what one may doubt, and the doctrine we are now dealing with is an instructive example. For what has been gained when one has made a 'cross-section' of dogma from the faith as firmly held in a given period, and so proved *that* the doctrine *must* be of apostolic origin? Much, no doubt. But the dogmatic theologian still has the task of making an overall survey of the history of dogma to show *how* and *why*, even historically speaking, the doctrine in question is of apostolic origin. Merely to appeal to tradition – in the dogmatic sense of a dogmatic argument – does not help him at all. He has to show that either (a) the doctrine was explicitly asserted in the apostolic age itself or (b) it must have been at least implicitly contained in the assertions of the time. It is not a sufficient proof of (a) to show for instance, as is the case of the doctrine now in question, that it is clear in the 3rd century. For simply to say that tangible proofs are lacking earlier, because the literary tradition is too fragmentary to follow, but that they *must* have existed, is to replace work on the history of dogma by a dogmatic postulate – even though it is perhaps correct.[38] But such a postulate would be quite wrong, when it could be [146] shown, with more or less historical certainty, though possibly only indirectly, as in the present case, that the missing historical links with the apostolic times can never have existed at all. This can be done when it can be shown that the first actual historical testimonies are of such a nature that earlier testimonies of the same type cannot have existed before them.

But if it is then postulated, in accordance with the second procedure described above, that there were other truths in the apostolic preaching in which the doctrine in question must have been *implicitly* contained, because there are no earlier explicit testimonies available or because they cannot have existed: by what right – and with what hope – does one postulate that the apostolic tradition really contained more than is still available to us, when the Scripture as a whole is examined carefully and searchingly enough? The first two centuries are too well known to us for anyone to make out a plausible case to the effect that certain truths were then *universally* presented in the *official* preaching of the Church, as matters of faith, which, through an accident of history, are no longer accessible to us. If more historical testimonies to the apostolic doctrine had come down to us, we should certainly have a more detailed and plastic image of the doctrine, but not really something which would be a new addition to our previous knowledge and not deducible from it. And in this connexion there is something else which we must not overlook. It would be no help dogmatically if in the question we are dealing with for instance, we had a statement from a Father of the Church from the middle of the 2nd century instead of from the beginning of the 3rd. If the Father did

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Scripture? In a word: Lennerz must be asked whether in his opinion it is a truth, certainly defined, that there are truths of faith – apart from the canon – of which a theologian is obliged to say *positively* that they are *certainly not* contained in Scripture, either implicitly or explicitly. And he must further be asked, what is the point of this statement, supposing it must be made, if up to the present there has never existed a consent in the Church, as to *what particular* truths are involved, and whether he believes that agreement will ever be reached on this question.

[38] Correct however only when it is *certainly* proved that the doctrine in question could not have been present merely implicitly in former times and hence must always have been transmitted explicitly. But such a proof is scarcely possible in any concrete case, and always probably relies on theoretical presuppositions about the nature and possibilities of the development of dogma, which again can be contested (relying for instance on the assertion that *only* a metaphysically necessary deduction from two *revealed* premises can be taken as a revealed truth, and hence that where such a deduction cannot be demonstrated, the truth in question must always have been *explicitly* present, if it is to claim later to have been revealed).

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not do us the pleasure, which is more than unlikely, of declaring expressly and solemnly that the doctrine in question was of apostolic origin and of absolutely universal authority in the Church, the Father's statement would only tell us that the doctrine is contained in tradition, but not that it certainly belongs to the *traditio divino-apostolica*. And that is the important point.

But this can only be ascertained when it is proved that the truth stands [147] in a (sufficiently) necessary relationship to those truths of faith in which we are already sure that they were authoritatively preached from the beginning as explicit elements of revelation. But all such truths are to be found in Sacred Scripture. (There is nothing in all this which allows us to under-estimate the irreplaceable function of tradition, as the objective and material aspect of the living magisterium. This should be obvious and does not need to be expounded here. It can be read up in Geiselmann himself.) Hence Lennerz' position has not in fact the dogmatic advantages which Lennerz claims for it in contrast to the thesis of Geiselmann. A dogmatic *and historical* proof from tradition, if worked out honestly and carefully, offers in fact as many difficulties as a proof from Scripture, especially with regard to those truths of faith, which do not occur in Scripture in the 'way' in which they were later formulated. This observation can be illustrated precisely by the typical case we have in mind. And this brings us back to our original theme, to examine it more closely.

How does our doctrine stand with regard to all the points of view and all the questions which have suggested that it can be used as a typical case by the dogmatic theologian when he is studying the actual history and development of dogma? We call attention to one point only, which seems to us to be decisive in the matter: it is the first visible trace we have of the explicit doctrine of the '*virginitas in partu*'. If we do not presuppose what is to be proved, and so do not read a '*virginitas in partu*' into the 'born of the virgin' (because it can be understood of a virginal birth by reason of the conception, and was so understood originally),[39] the first [148] testimony, if we leave the apocrypha aside for the moment, is in Clement of Alexandria.[40] Writing towards the end of the 2nd century he affirms that 'some say' that Mary was 'found to be a virgin' after she had given birth and been safely delivered, but that 'most still' hold for a perfectly normal birth. This testimony is very precise and all its elements are to be studied carefully. Clement obviously knows that the assertion has a *history*.

(a) Clement, who is pleading *for* the '*virginitas in partu*', concedes that it was more or less

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[39] Hence St Ignatius of Antioch (*Ep. Ad Smyrn.* 1, 1, in *Die Apost. Vater*, ed. J. A. Fischer [Darmstaddt 1956] 204) is not a witness to our doctrine, especially as St Ignatius is here interested specifically in the reality of the birth as against Docetism. He says (*Ep. ad Eph.* 19; *op. cit.* 157) that the mystery of the birth of Christ was hidden from the devil; but he does not say why or in what regard. If St Ignatius held that the position of Jesus as ξυ/ριοφ remained hidden throughout all the moments of his life, and that contrary to the opinion of the Docetae, *all* the stages of the bodily existence of the ξυ/ριοφ were mysteries, the meaning of the passage is quite clear, without its including a special miracle *in partu*. Neither is St Justin (*Dial.* 84 [Otto 303f.]; cf. also *Dial.* 67 [Otto 237]) a witness for the *virginitas in partu* except *ratione conceptionis*, as is clearly shown by the context of the explanation of Isaiah 7:14. And neither is St Irenaeus (c. 890) (*Epideixis* 2, 14: TU, ed. A. von Harnack-C. Schmidt III [Leipzig 1907] 59) – against Bardenhewer, Plumpe, etc. – since, though he cites Isaiah 66:7, he sees the text as fulfilled by the 'unhoped-for and unexpected' event of the birth alone, as is also shown for instance by his *Adv. Haer.* IV, 33, 4 and III, 19, 3 (Harvey II, 259 and II, 90); he does not appeal to any particular circumstances of the birth. In *Adv. Haer.* IV, 33, 11 (Harvey II, 266) all that can be said is that everything is obscure: who is meant (the Church or Mary or both) and what is meant (the 'pure opening of the womb' tells rather against than for virginity in the birth). We need not give here the literature on this much-discussed text (cf. N. Moholy, St Irenaeus. The Father of Mariology. Franciscan Marian Congress [Burlington 1952] 129-187.

[40] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom* VII, 16, 93, 7 (Stählin III, 66:20ff.):

)Αλλə,ω(φ ε)/οικεν, τοιφπολλιφ και∴ με/ξρι νυν δοκει η(Μαρια_μ λεξω_ ει)ναι δια_ τη_ν του παιδι/ο υ γε/ννησιν ου)κ

λεγω_: και∴ γα_ρ μετα το_ τεκειν αυ)τη_ν μαιωθεισαν, φασι/ τινεφ μαρθε&νον ευ(πεθηναι.

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unknown (explicitly) earlier on, that 'even now most people' reject it and only 'some' hold a different opinion. We may therefore affirm that round the beginning of the 3rd century there is no question of a universal doctrine of the '*virginitas in partu*', much less of its being obligatory in the Church. But the doctrine is already known, indeed, making progress, but it is still a minority doctrine. If it had always been present, in the state of explicit profession, since the apostolic tradition was in force, the situation described by Clement would not have been possible. And when Clement appeals to the opinions of others, it is only to support his own opinion. To put it in modern terms, he knows only '*sententiae liberae et disputatae*' in the matter. His testimony is likewise completely in accord with what we know otherwise. It accords with the fact that Tertullian[41] does not really attack the '*virginitas in partu*', but, without any misgivings,[42] takes the opposite opinion for granted,[43] and goes on, with the help of a crude description, to defend the true birth [149] of Christ against Marcion, as something which is of the essence of Christianity. (Origen too, at the beginning, agrees that the womb, etc., were opened at the birth. He sees no contradiction with the perpetual virginity of Mary, which he so often stresses.)[44]

(b) What are we to think of the 'some' upholders of the '*virginitas in partu*' in the other sense, of whom Clement speaks? They are the apocryphal histories of the Infancy,[45] which must be dated before Clement, probably about the middle of the 2nd century: the Protoevangelium of James,[46] the *Ascensio Isaiae*[47], the *Odes of Solomon*[48] and (perhaps) the eighth *Sibylline Oracle*.[49] This is not the place to analyse this literature with regard to its antiquity, tendencies and theological level, or to give a more precise exegesis of its testimonies to the virginal birth. But we may undoubtedly say that they all have an unmistakably docetic[50] tinge in this matter: the birth as such, which is asserted by St Luke, is passed over (the child is simply there), or more or less clearly replaced by another process (a luminous cloud which condenses into a child). The child takes its mother's breast, but merely so as not to be recognized.[51]

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[41] Tertullian, *Adv. Marc*. 3, 11; 4, 21 (*CSEL* 47, 393; 47, 488); *de carne Christi* 4; 23 (*CSEL* 69/70, 596; 69/70, 247).

[42] Though he is undoubtedly familiar with the *nove nasci* with regard to the virginal conception.

[43] There is nothing to suggest that Tertullian was in the least conscious of coming into conflict with anti-Gnostic and anti-Docetic Christians, or of starting a controversy within the Catholic Church. All he does is to emphasize against Marcion his concept of the true, human birth of Christ, to which he adheres unquestioningly as an anti-Docetic Christian.

[44] Origen, *Hom. 14 in Lc* (*GCS* 9, 100).

[45] More exactly, the circle in which this literature arose.

[46] Translation of the Protoevangelium Jacobi, by O. Cullmann, 'Kindheitsevangelien', in E. Hennecke, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, 3rd, completely revised edition by W. Schneemelcher I (Tübingen 1959) 277-290. Cf. L. M. Peretto, *La Mariologia del Protoevangelo di Giacomo* (Rome 1955). – It is quite possible that Plumpe (p. 572) is correct in thinking that the purpose of the Protoevangelium is not merely edification, but that the two women (the midwife and Salome) who quarrel about the virgin birth, represent the two parties in the debate, of which Clement tells us. 20, 4 (Hennecke 89f.) perhaps concedes that the virginal birth had been unknown up to this.

[47] J. Flemming-H. Duensing, 'Die Himmelfahrt des Jesaia', *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, ed. E. Hennecke (Tubingen 2 1924) 303-314.

[48] Translation of the Odes of Solomon by H. Gressmann in Hennecke, 455f.

[49] J. Geffcken, 'Christliche Sibyllinen', in Hennecke 475f.

[50] It may at least be suspected that the Odes of Solomon show in general Gnostic tendencies, so that the otherwise harmless text (Ode 59) at any rate belongs to the same literary genre as the other texts. It is not quite clear what is meant by παρτηενικο_φ τοκετο/φ in the eighth Sibylline oracle.

[51] The content of the doctrine also varies to some extent in these first testimonies. n the Protoevangelium, Mary has birth-pangs, which is why a midwife is wanted. The most important thing is the integrity of the genital passages. The Ascension of Isaiah also mentions this, but adds, for the first time, that the birth was painless. Hence there is no midwife. The Odes of Solomon mention only the painlessness of the birth.

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[150] (c) Clement's testimony also fits in with the observation that, according to all reasonable expectations, a really apostolic *explicit* tradition is most unlikely in this matter. Is it psychologically probable that Mary herself would have given information about the intimacy of child-birth? It is probable that Mary alone, and not Jesus himself, who is the source for the history of the infancy of Jesus,[52] as recounted in Luke and Matthew, which she probably told after the death of Jesus. But it does not by any means follow that she also gave an account of the much more intimate details which did not concern Jesus directly, unlike his virginal conception. And even if she had done so, we could not say we knew the exact contents of the narrative, which, as a record of an actual experience, would of course have to have been based on actual details. For when the question of the process of the birth of Jesus is first audible, the information given is anything but uniform and does not give the impression of going back to the concrete narrative based on the experiences of an eye-witness. The infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, in spite of the emergent interest in biography which is apparent in them, in contrast to the body of the gospels, and in spite of being based on special sources which are not simply identical with the apostolic message of salvation (which begins with the baptism when it tells of the life of Jesus, Ac 1.21f.; 10.36ff.; 13.24ff.), are genuine Christian theology of revelation and present the message of salvation. This is because they are still genuinely linked with the kernel of the Gospel message. But even if this is so, we may not overlook the fact that these narratives are already definitely marginal. It is therefore historically most improbable that there were other explicit and authoritative[53] accounts in circulation which dealt with the details of the history of the infancy.

If this supposition is correct, the starting-point of all discussion of the '*virginitas in partu*' must be as follows: the doctrine of the '*virginitas in partu*' must be considered, in theological method, as contained only implicitly at first in the apostolic deposit. If – and in so far as – the later explicit preaching of the faith does not provide a sure dogmatic proof of a more copious, detailed or definite content to the doctrine,[54] we can only [151] take as dogmatically binding what can be deduced by explicitation from the explicit apostolic tradition. The testimonies must of course be carefully and methodically weighed, and as much as possible in the light of the whole heritage of faith. Anything that cannot be proved, according to the criterion of apostolic tradition, to be implicitly contained in other truths, may not be maintained as binding in faith. Once the content of the doctrine has been thus determined, anything else that occurs in the line of concrete details in the *de facto* theological tradition of the doctrine, in Fathers and theologians, must be considered as free theological propositions, or as free interpretations of what is strictly meant by the doctrine – as long as there is no *strict* dogmatic proof that the content of the doctrine, in so far as it is binding in faith, is really wider. And then the more detailed concept of the content which occurs in the Fathers and theologians would really be sanctioned. But, as we have said, we do not think that such is really the case in point of fact.

We cannot properly justify this assertion here, because the proof would demand a precise and complete history of the whole doctrine of the '*virginitas in partu*'. But we can at least give some indications. We have already mentioned the reserved attitude of the magisterium,

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[52] Cf. P. Gaechter, *Maria im Erdenleben* (Innsbruck 193) 75.

[53] If we do not make these presuppositions, a (hypothetical) explicit testimony of apostolic times would leave us at a loss (unless it came from Mary herself): how could one know that it was true?

[54] If this were in fact the case (though we hold that the case is unreal), it would not prove that the basic principle just put forward must be false. As with other doctrines of the Church which were only made explicit later, it is quite possible that the individual theologian has simply not yet in fact managed to actualize sufficiently by theological methods the theological virtualities which are present in the *depositum fidei* of the primitive Church and were made explicit in an instinctive and general way by the sense of faith of the whole Church. Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Development of Dogma' in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore, Md. 1961) 39-77; 'Dogmenentwicklung', *LTK* III^2, 457-463; *Considerations on the Development of Dogma*, in this volume 1-35.

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and also the growing cautiousness of present-day theologians. We must keep clearly in mind the reality of the birth of Jesus from Mary, understanding it actively and passively. We must note that two passible human beings are concerned, and that passibility is a truth of faith, of soteriological significance. From the point of view of method, it must be noted that the reality of the birth, which is a truth of faith, is the critical norm for the doctrine of the '*virginitas in partu*', rather than vice versa. It follows from all this, that it is not so easy to give the second doctrine a content which will do justice to the first. Many elements in the de facto tradition must certainly be rejected as theologically unsound, e.g. the parellels drawn with the resurrection. There is much in the tradition which reveals problems which were not solved, but buried gradually in silence. Ratramnus [152] of Corby asks, for instance (PL, 121, 82), is it possible to understand virginity at the birth as the 'integrity' of the genital passages, if the reality of the birth demands that the child must pass through the normal channels to see the light of day – unlike the resurrection, which had no fixed route. The question had already been touched on by St John Damascene (PG, 94, 1161), but it can hardly be said that an intelligible answer was ever found. Many Fathers emphasize expressly that the *manner* of the birth remains a mystery; so, in the East, St Athanasius,[55] St Gregory of Nazianzen,[56] Amphilochius of Iconium,[57] St John Chrysostom,[58] Proclus[59] and St Cyril of Alexandria;[60] in the West, St Jerome[61] and St Augustine[62] among others. One may well ask how this is possible, when writers like St Ephraim,[63] St Epiphanius of Salamis[64] and Zeno of Verona[65] claimed to know the manner of the birth even in the most indiscreet details, and indeed must have known it, on the supposition of a direct and explicit tradition coming from Mary and Christ. The fact that the '*virginitas in partu*' is declared to be a miracle does not make the thing itself, that is the manner of it, very mysterious. What of the real process of birth itself, when for instance St Gregory of Nazianzen,[66] St Epiphanius[67] and Zeno,[68] and later, the theologian Paschasius Radbertus,[69] in express terms, reject an after-birth as unfitting? The exact content of the doctrine is not given quite uniformly. St Athanasius,[70] St John Chrysostom,[71] Proclus,[72] [153] Hesychius,[73] St Cyril,[74] St Hilary,[75] Zeno,[76] St Jerome,[77] St

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[55] *Expos*. *fidei* I: PG 25, 201.
[56] *Orat*. 40, 45: *PG* 36, 424 B.
[57] *Orat*. *in occ*. *Dom*. 2: *PG* 39, 48 B
[58] *In nat*. *Christ*. *diem*: *PG* 56, 388.
[59] *Sermo de S. Clem*.: PG 65, 845 A.
[60] *In Jo*. *Ev*.. 1: *PG* 73, 21 B.
[61] *Hom*, *in Jo*. *1, 1-14*: *G*. *Morin*, *Anecdota* III, 2, 390, 16.
[62] *Ep*. 137, 2, 8: *PL* 33, 519.
[63] Assemani II, 266 A-C, D; II, 422 F; cf. L. Hammersberger, *Die Mariologie der ephremischen Schriften* (Innsbruck 1938) 47ff.
[64] *Adv*. *haer*. c. 78, 79: *PG* 42, 700-756.
[65] *Tract*. II, 8, 2f.: PL II, 414 A-417 A.
[66] *Orat*. 40, 45: *PG* 36, 424 B.
[67] *Adv*. *haer*. II, 2 (Anaceph.): *PG* 42, 879 A. But in *Adv*. *haer*. III, 2, 19: *PG* 42, 730 C, Epiphanius seems to admit that the opening of the womb would not be contrary to virginity.
[68] *Tract*. H, 8: *PL* II, 415.
[69] *De part*. *virg*. 2: *PL* 120, 1385.
[70] *Ep*. *ad Epict*. 5: *PG* 26, 1060.
[71] *In nat*. *Christ*, *diem*: *PG* 56, 388.
[72] *Orat*. I, 10: *PG* 65, 691 A (though here Proclus, like Epiphanius, does not hesitate to combine the *claustra virginitatis* with the statement: *naturae quidem portas aperuit ut homo*, connecting the virginal integrity expressly with Christ *ut deus*).
[73] *Hom*. *IV de S. Maria Deipara*: *PG* 93, 1466.
[74] *Adv*. *Anthropomorph*.: *PG* 76, 1129 A.
[75] *De Trinit*. III, 39: *PL* 10, 87 A (where some see in the controverted phrase *ipsa de suis non imminuta* the first western testimony for the *virginitas in partu*, though *De Trinit*. II, 24-26: *PL* 10, 66 A-68 seems rather to testify

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Ambrose,[78] St Augustine,[79] Rufinus,[80] Gaudentius,[81] St Maximus[82] and St Gregory the Great[83] speak expressly of the integrity of the hymen or the genital passages. But only St Ephraim,[84] St Epiphanius,[85] St Cyril,[86] Zeno,[87] St Maximus,[88] and St Peter Chrysologus[89] mention the painlessness of the birth. And only St Gregory of Nazianzen, St Epiphanius and Zeno (see above) mention the absence of the after-birth. St Ephraim, Amphilochius, St John Chrysostom, Proclus, Hesychius, Theodotus and St Cyril do not mention the matter at all, but none of the Fathers concedes it expressly. It is interesting that St Ephraim, in the 'Parable of the Mussel'[90] is so intent on preserving the reality of the birth that he even thinks of a sort of *restitutio in integrum*, after the birth has taken place in the normal way. It is also remarkable that St Jerome is the first to reject expressly one of the oldest sources for the doctrine of the virginal birth, the apocrypha (cf. for instance, the story of the mid-wife).[91] As in the case of the Assumption, the apocrypha were in fact the first 'source', in the sense of an initial theological reflexion.

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III

If it is methodologically correct in the present question to treat the '*virginitas in partu*' as a truth only implicitly contained in the apostolic preaching (contrary to what might appear at first sight), then the question arises as to *where*[92] this doctrine is to be found implicitly. On this point too, where of course a clear idea of the dogmatic development of this truth is decisive, we can only offer a few observations, which do not claim to give a comprehensive answer to the question.

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to a natural birth: '*Dei igitur imago invisibilis pudorem humani exordii non recusavit, et per conceptionem, partum . . . omnes naturae nostrae contumelias transcurrit . . . Quia ornnia continet, humani partus lege profertur*').

[76] *Tract* II, 8, 2: PL 11, 415 A.

[77] *Comm. in Ez.* 44, 3: *PL* 25, 430 A; cf. J. Niessen, *Die Mariologie des hl. Hieronyrnus* (Münster 1913) 141-144.

[78] *De inst. virg.* 8, 53 PL 16, 320 A B.

[79] *Ep.* 137, 2, 8: *PL* 33, 519.

[80] *Comm. Symb.*: PL 21, 349.

[81] *Sermo* 9: *PL* 20, 900.

[82] *Sermo* 53: *PL* 638.

[83] *In Evang. hom.* II, 26, 5: *PL* 76, 1197.

[84] Assemani II, 266 C.

[85] *Adv. haer.* I, 2, 20: *PG* 45, 438.

[86] *In Lc.*: *PG* 72, 489 C.

[87] *Tract.* II, 8, 2: *PL* 11, 417.

[88] *Hom.* 5: *PL* 57, 235 C.

[89] *Sermo* 117: PL 52, 520.

[90] Assemani II, 266 C; cf. P. Krüger ('Die somat. Virginitat der Gottesmutter im Schrifttume Ephräms des Syrers': *Alma Socia Christi* V, I: *Acta Congr. Mariolog.-marian.* Romae 1950 (Rome 1951) 46-86, who does not go into the statement in the parable of the mussel.

[91] *Contr. Helv.* 8: *PL* 23, 192; *Comm. in Mt* 13:50: *PL* 26, 84. On the parallel drawn between the *uterus clausus* and the 'closed gate' of Ezekiel, see A. Kassing, 'Das Verschlossene Tor, Ezk 44:1-3,' *Wi. Wei.* 16 (1953) 171-190.

[92] For our purposes and the limited scope of our investigation we may be permitted here simply to interrogate the rest of Mariology as a whole with regard to the origin of the *virginitas in partu*. It is of course possible that by doing so we shall take as premises for our doctrine certain Mariological statements which again need to be based on the primary data of apostolic Mariology, to satisfy the demands of history of dogma. And thus it would be true to say that we are merely transposing the problem elsewhere. But when properly viewed, the problem then becomes quite naturally part of certain doctrines which cannot be made the theme of our present study, though of course they must be part of a general Mariology.

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(a) In spite of the reserves made above, Mary is a real theological theme of the apostolic preaching, and not merely an unavoidable detail in unintentional but unavoidable biographical notes about Jesus. This is clear from the theology of St Luke and from the Apostles' Creed. This apostolic Mariology contains a basic concept, not very consciously formulated perhaps, but still real, and capable of offering matter for reflexion. This is not the place to discuss how this basic concept should be more precisely formulated.[93] At any rate, Mary is~ a person who as such is part of the history of salvation. Our salvation therefore depends in part on her. Her motherhood is free, completely human, not merely biological and so sub-human. And in this motherhood, by the power of the free, gracious and divinely-initiated coming of the Logos as our unique salvation, this eschatological salvation was freely accepted for Mary and for us all. Thus Mary herself became, as this final salvation became flesh 'out of Mary', the perfected prototype of the redemption and of the absolute new beginning [155] in flesh and spirit.[94] No matter what further precisions are given to this picture, we may be sure at least of one thing: that the active birth (the act of giving birth) is not simply a biological event which is merely a fractional happening within the sphere of a human being, and which could then be the same even in people who were inwardly different. It is much rather, and must therefore be considered, an act that involves the *whole man* and will express the totality of the human person in question in the way in which it is done, suffered and experienced.[95]

Once this concept of the active birth as something involving the whole man is presupposed,[96] the following formal, theological and anthropological proposition may clearly be formulated at once: that in Mary, the active birth corresponds to her nature. But since her whole reality is a unique and miraculous work of grace, the same holds good *eo ipso* of her act of child-bearing. This of course brings us for the moment only to a formal delimitation of the special nature of the birth. However, it brings us at once to the fundamental justification of a theological assessment of the birth. And it also allows us to ask whether we have attained a correct concept of the '*virginitas in partu*' only when the content has been expressed unambiguously in material and biologically concrete terms. And it may also suggest that whether we approach the concept from the point of view of the history of the dogma (which began as a truth merely implicit in the original revelation), or whether we approach it from the [156] point of view of Mary's nature[97] (which certainly expresses itself in her way of

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[93] Cf. e.g. B. J. Bover, 'El principio mariologico de analogia', *Alma Socia Christi* XI, 1-13 (*Acta Congr. Mariolog.-marian*. Romae 1950); K. Rahner, 'Le principe fondamental de la théologie mariale', *RSR* 42 (1954) 481-522 (Engl. tr. *Theological Digest* 4 (1956) 72f.); P. Sanchez-Cepedes, *El rnisterio de Maria. Mariologia biblica I*: *El principio fundamental* (Santander 1955); P. Mahoney, 'The Unitive Principle of Marian Theology', *Thomist* 18 (1955) 443-479; C. Dillenschneider, *Le principe premier d'une théologie mariale organique* (Paris 1955); A. O. Patfoort, ' "Le" principe premier de la Mariologie?' *RSPT* 41 (1957) 445-454.

[94] As thus radically and perfectly redeemed, she is the 'immaculate conception', as a radically new beginning in spirit and flesh she is virgin mother, in such a way that (as being perfectly redeemed) she is totally given to this function in the history salvation for all her life, so that person and office are one.

[95] And possibly also the impotence of the person to master events exterior to his person and to build them into the totality of a being which understands itself to be free, to make them part of his authentic 'existence', to 'understand' them in the light of the kernel of his being, 'know what to do with them', express himself in them and stamp them with his character. Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia' in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore, Md. 1961) 347-382.

[96] Mitterer's mistake, formally speaking, is that he works only with a circumscribed, biological notion of birth, and so finds himself faced from the start with only two alternatives. He must indicate and admit certain material peculiarities of a miraculous nature for the birth; or he can point to no peculiarities (at least in the formal process) which would differentiate this birth from others. He is then forced to find a difference (which on account of tradition he cannot totally deny) which is totally derived '*ab extrinseco*', from the virginal conception in fact; but the birth as such – which is what tradition is thinking of after all – must be kept really distinct from the conception.

[97] By 'nature' we mean of course always the whole, concrete, unique, natural and supernatural, personal and

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giving birth), no direct statement as to its material content may be expected at all, on principle. If these misgivings are justified by the very nature of the matter, then the fact that the doctrine is only formally determined, and cannot at once be translated into sturdy propositions readily accessible to the imagination, is not an argument against our view, but rather tells in favour of it. In any case, we have not yet reached the final stage in the clarification of the formal statement.

(b) One could of course object at this stage of the proceedings that the perspectives here opened up allow us to appreciate the fact that Mary's act of giving birth is indeed *Mary's* as such, 'Marian', we may say, but do not help us to understand how it is virginal. We must ask in return whether we are clear about what virginal means when applied to the birth. The presence or absence of pain has undoubtedly nothing to do with virginity (– whether there were in fact pains or not may be left a completely open question). But no one can seriously maintain that the notion, at least, of 'bodily integrity' has anything to do with virginity, except in so far as this is connected (also) with sexual intercourse, but not as it is connected with birth.[98] Hence '*virginitas in partu*' appears as at least a highly problematical notion when the concepts are analysed. In any case, the process which the traditional doctrine takes to be the concrete *content*, cannot be derived from the (logically anterior) concept of '*virginitas in partu*', which can only be regarded as a subsequent and not very happy summary of what one knows of the process from other sources. Thus the question arises as to what is the consistent objective basis from which the details in question could eventually be determined.

A close analysis of tradition reveals very soon that the train of thought [157] is not: Mary is a virgin in the act of giving birth; but the concept of virgin obviously implies certain factors; these factors must have been characteristic of the birth. The patristic teaching may often give the impression that the argument proceeds on these lines. But that is an illusion, arising from their pedagogical methods of instruction. For one has only to ask how it could be known that Mary was, in this sense, 'virgin' at the birth. Can it be seriously maintained that the content of the doctrine (no matter how envisaged) is deduced from the logically anterior revealed abstract notion of virginity? Or is the content of the concept in fact established by arguments 'from what is fitting', that is, not from the formal concept of virginity, but from the dignity of the divine motherhood, etc? In view of all this, one can easily assert that the objection, which is apparently so clear, is really unjustified.

And with this in mind, one may also answer the difficulty by pointing out that in the statements in question 'virgin' stands simply for Mary in her whole reality. Mary is 'the virgin' during the birth: and this means precisely what we said above, that the child-bearing of the Blessed Virgin corresponds to the unique and marvellous figure of the Blessed Virgin as a whole in her God-given role in the history of salvation. We do not need to confine ourselves to this provisionally formal statement of the nature of the birth, though one could already say at this point that we have attained a certain understanding of tradition, formal though it be, and hence an 'intelligible' content for the doctrine – even though we did not succeed in completing it with more material details.[99] And hence we ask: what particular

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ecclesial reality of Mary (as element of the economy of redemption). But if this nature is essentially mystery, one reason for which is the dialectical duality of the attributes of Mary (who is of the race of sinners – and beginning of the new redeemed creation; who is under the law of suffering and everyday life – and freed from the concupiscence of the flesh, etc.), we should not expect her child-bearing to be described in the undialectically smooth and clear terms, lacking all touch of mystery, which some 'pious people' seem to think is the most pious and orthodox theology.

[98] Here Mitterer is quite right at the start. His position only becomes questionable when it presupposes, more or less silently, that if the peculiarities attached to the birth by tradition cannot be deduced from the objective notion of virginity, they are at once excluded.

[99] It seems to us that this consideration provides us with some sort of answer (if only a formal one) to the

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elements in the general mind of the Church can be drawn on, in order to reach a still more concrete picture of the doctrine?

One element must certainly be considered: the 'integrity' of the Blessed Virgin, that is, her freedom from concupiscence. We must proceed carefully here, for many reasons. First of all the doctrine of the integrity of Mary is no more express and tangible in the apostolic tradition as such than is the doctrine which we are discussing. Consequently, the methodological observation made above is to be kept in mind here. But though this difficulty of method and therefore of fact is to be carefully noted, one can still say: the detailed explicitation of a general concept of the nature of Mary and her place in the economy of salvation may not have reached a [158] given statement by a transition which seems to us today to be the almost indispensable link.[100] But this does not prove that when we use this transition we do not interpret correctly the faith of the Church, even of the ancient Church.[101] But there is still another difficulty which must be clearly envisaged, if we are not to draw false conclusions from the notion of freedom from concupiscence. Such integrity must be understood essentially, as indeed in Jesus Christ himself, as 'infralapsarian'. This does not diminish it. It rather reinforces it, but still it must not be understood automatically in the light of paradise and Adam. It must be understood in the light of Christ. And then it appears as the power of full moral integration of the whole being (here exposed to *suffering* and *death*) into the personal decision.[102] What this warning implies will be at once clear.

Biblically, our proposed view may be stated as follows. The actual manner of child-bearing appears, according to the testimony of Scripture (Gen 3.15) as a process which combines with its positive, human, God-given structure and meaning, the stigma of sin and death, which are the usual powers of the world,[103] and affect everything in it.[104] But if Mary is [159] the mother of the redeeming Word of God, if her child-bearing, the act of the immaculate, is part of the new beginning of the world, then the birth cannot carry this stigma; this birth must be 'different'. Since she is not subject to concupiscence, she integrates the passive elements of her life entirely, though in an infralapsarian way, into the basic decision of her personality.

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question which we did not deal with at the beginning when presenting the doctrine of M. Schmaus.

[100] Something of the sort is an everyday experience in profane matters; the spiritual unity of consciousness contains many objects which are more or less consciously present, and also contains the connexions between these objects, which are likewise known either expressly or in a general way. In other words, there can be a genuine discovery of the truth, where the result can appear clearly before all the objective reasons are seen with the same clearness, even though they had been subjectively at work. And the subjective efficacity of such objectively efficacious reasons cannot be denied on the grounds that a quick, spontaneous discovery of the (correct) result, which seems to omit the objectively valid process of thought, was *also* in fact stimulated and enlightened by subjective preferences and attentiveness and the spiritual attitudes of the times in question, which cannot claim permanent validity. The human aspect of the development of dogma can undoubtedly show such traits.

[101] In a comprehensive Mariology we should have to show that as understood by the ancient Church, Mariology contained the doctrine of her integrity, and why it did so. But here again, integrity must be correctly understood, not as miraculously paradisaical, but as 'infralapsarian'. And we should have to show how even if grasped only in a general and inarticulate way, it could help the doctrine in question to be expressly stated.

[102] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia' in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore, Md. 1961) 347-382. And then, going more deeply into the question, J. B. Metz, *Der Begriff der Concupiszenz bei Thomas von Aquin* (Munich 1961).

[103] But in the most profound and central processes (always when seen as involving the whole man) this law of sin and death takes on its sharpest and most challenging outlines. And this is most precisely true of the act whereby man emancipates himself for a new and responsible life of his own, and asserts himself against the law of death, which he himself set up. Cf. K. Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*. *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 (London ^{5}1964).

[104] The theological meaning of the expression must be formulated in this way because if one concentrates too directly and materially on the 'birth-pangs', one could get the impression that the text of Genesis was meaningless, since such pains are not always felt and it is morally lawful to try to avoid them.

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She can turn what she has to submit to into the pure expression of her active decision. Thus she undergoes the passive adventure of child-bearing in a way different from other human beings, who always experience what the life-forces of the world inflict upon them as something alien and restrictive, which works upon them to the detriment of their freedom. We must not leap to the conclusion, in the light of Gen 3.15, that this birth was therefore free from pain. This formula may well suggest itself to someone who feels that he has the whole of tradition behind him, and indeed that he could arrive at this conclusion from the starting-point which has been developed here. But he still must ask himself does he knew so exactly what pain is, and when and in what measure pain is really an expression of sin and not that of a healthy nature and an exuberance of life. Does he know well enough how pain is constituted, with its purely physiological components *and* its basic spiritual attitude, so that he can be asked how he understands painlessness, in view of the complexity of the concept of pain? Has the physiological element been changed, or the personal interpretation, which is an *intrinsic* element of the pain which is experienced? He must ask himself whether for instance a pain which serves life[105] can, from the anthropological and theological point of view, be simply ranked with pain caused by hostile attack and [160] moral misdeeds.[106] Has he paid enough attention to Jn 9:1ff. in *this* connexion? Has he considered well enough that painless birth need be anything but a miracle? And has he considered that Mary's integrity is infralapsarian, that is, that it works in and through the law of suffering and pain, on which the Christian doctrine of Mary as Queen of Martyrs and mother of sorrows, who passed through death to her glory, is perfectly clear?

We cannot simply conclude however from these considerations that Mitterer is right and that we should definitely attribute birth-pangs to Mary. We could even say it follows certainly from our basic principle that the subjective experiences of Mary at the birth were different from those of other human beings. It may be objected that this element of a beneficent process can only be felt as painful by a human being who is subject to concupiscence, because only such a one will feel the apt experience as contradictory to his basic attitude, and hence painfully and strangely unintegrated. But if one is thinking in these terms, it can and must be said that Mary felt no 'pain' at the birth – but nothing will have been decided thereby about the purely physiological side of the process. For no matter how this aspect is thought of, the decisive point is always how this element is integrated with her personality and attitude as a whole, where it receives its final determination. Since the whole person of Mary was essentially different, through the miracle of grace, the whole, and hence every element of her child-birth, even as such (and it was a truly human type), was different from that of sinful mortals. But if we bear this principle in mind, we can understand how prudent one must be, to say the least, if one tries to depict this 'otherness' in detail. One finds oneself forced to maintain dialectically opposed positions at one and the same time: a really new beginning, in the midst of the old, which is being truly and patiently taken over in the flesh and the spirit – this is the criterion of the salvific economy of Christ in general. It is difficult, if not impossible, to balance out both sides correctly. This is also true of Mary as

[105] St Thomas, for instance, undoubtedly gave such pains as such an interpretation which was physiologically wrong, when dealing with our question (*S. Th*. III q. 35 a. 6; III q. 28 a. 2; cf. also *S.c.G*. IV c. 45). He thought they came from a violent opening of the genital passages and a lesion of them. They are of themselves, in reality, a normal accompaniment of the mother's action, as she expels the child by compressing the womb. They are intrinsically closer to the active child-bearing, which may not be denied in the case of Mary, than was hitherto thought. Hence in former times it was easier to deny their existence, without further ado, than it is today.

[106] Mitterer, to my mind, overlooks this essential distinction when he appeals to the birth-pangs of Mary to make the concept of 'mother of sorrows' at once intelligible. Theologians exclude, for instance, all 'sickness' in the case of Jesus (but when is one 'sick'?), though they do not wish to deny his suffering – and this is interior, though caused by external assaults which are hostile to life and contrary to the moral order.

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she gives birth to the Lord.

And there is another difficulty which must be noted in this connexion. [161] Hesychius of Jerusalem seems to have been the only writer in the patristic age who referred expressly to Gen 3.16 in *this* context.[107] This observation of W. Zauner may be correct. But we can safely say that wherever the Fathers speak of the pangs of birth as something that ought not to be, and hence foreign to Mary (though they do not forget that Mary had to suffer otherwise), these pains are viewed in the light of their general interpretation of human existence: all these experiences are seen as a sign of the sinfulness of human existence. For what other reason could they have for denying that Mary suffered these pains? Perhaps because they were 'unpleasant'? But then they would have had to exclude them from all other situations of her life. Or perhaps because pains were not quite fitting at a *joyful* birth? But then why did the Fathers not have recourse to Jn 16.21? And then they would have had to deny that the child suffered the pain of being born, the misery of the stable, etc – which, at least for the most part, they did not do. It is therefore safe to consider that the background of their theological propositions was their understanding of Gen 3.16, even though it is not cited expressly. Since the sinful flesh is redeemed in this birth (cf. also Jn 1.13), since a new beginning is made here, the Fathers could justifiably think that it was not the same as other births. And hence they deny the 'pain'. They may have drawn their conclusions without enough theological nuances and without all the necessary care, still, they base their considerations on the same principles as we have tried to enunciate more specifically here.

(c) What are we then to think of the other details with which tradition tried to render the difference in Mary's child-bearing? We have already remarked that one is not obliged to accept at once all such elements of tradition as definitely dogmatic and certainly binding. But leaving this consideration aside, the question arises once more: what is really included in the concept of 'bodily integrity' and what does it imply? If it is considered as a revealed concept, anterior to the individual details, it will be difficult to say what it really implies and whether the usual conclusions drawn from it really follow. Is, for instance, the normal expansion of the genital passages in a completely healthy birth to be considered a breach of 'bodily integrity'? Will anyone have the courage to maintain this categorically? Are any of the processes of normal birth to be placed under the rubric of 'injury' or 'damage' (*corruptio*)? And if so, what has been damaged? The 'virginity' or a bodily 'integrity', 'soundness'? All this is very [162] problematical, and can hardly be a pointer to the concrete details which we are looking for, as should be clear from the general trend of the discussion in Mitterer and in these pages.

Some theologians may firmly reject all these efforts, and take up the stand-point that the usual details indicated by tradition (painlessness, non-rupture of the hymen, '*sine sordibus*' – by which the Fathers meant above all the after-birth) cannot seriously be deduced from any other source, and still hold that they are data which must be accepted as a matter of faith. But then they must be consistent and say: they have been explicitly revealed in these terms, and have only been summed up subsequently in the general notion of 'integrity' – of virginity, of body, etc. But what theologian would be ready to make such an assertion today? How would he then explain the hesitations and variations of tradition when indicating such details? Can it be really true that the item usually named in the third place, the '*sordes*', was explicitly revealed? And why should this be in a less privileged position? And does one not come then to a docetic idea of the birth? Why should other physiological processes, such as the signs of pregnancy, the giving suck to the child, etc, which tradition has no hesitation in ascribing to Mary, be considered less 'unfitting'? But if the '*sordes*' are conceded, why should the other two elements be in a stronger position, either from the nature of things or from tradition? If

[107] *Hom. de S. Maria Deipara* IV: *PG* 93, 1454.

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we consider all these difficulties and unsolved problems, it is impossible to say that we are clearly faced with the necessity *either* of being able to deduce (and deducing) the concrete details from our initial principle *or* of giving up this principle as insufficient and not doing justice to tradition. Hence we by no means affirm, with Mitterer, that these particularities never existed. All we say is this: Church doctrine affirms, with the real substance of tradition, that Mary's child-birth, as regards both child and mother, like the conception, is, in its total reality, as the completely human act of this 'virgin', in itself (and not just by reason of the conception, as Mitterer says), an act corresponding to the nature of this mother, and hence it is unique, miraculous and 'virginal'. But this proposition, which is directly intelligible, does not offer us the possibility of deducing assertions about the concrete details of the process, which would be *certain* and *universally* binding.

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[163]

PART FOUR

The Doctrine of Grace

[165]

7

NATURE AND GRACE[1]

The discussion of the theme 'nature and grace' is generally left nowadays to a very small circle of specialists. But at least they come back to the theme again and again, and do not just talk about it when it cannot be avoided, as in the theology of the schools. The theme is passionately debated. There is no general agreement and the controversy is obviously more than a scholastic exercise. We can be glad of this. For since the controversy between Catholics and reformers grew sterile and died away in the 18th century, and since the traditional scholastic theology came once more into its own in the neo-Scholasticism of the 19th century after the meagre efforts of the 'Enlightenment' period, the general impression was that the books had been closed on the theme of 'nature and grace' by general consent, and that anything worth knowing about it was more or less already known.

If we now try to give the average concept of nature and grace in post-Tridentine and neo-Scholastic theology, it must be remembered that we are always talking about the *average* approach. No one denies that the theology of today is the heir to all the ages of theological thinking. Nothing is ever quite forgotten in the Church. And the explicit assertions of theology always contain inexhaustible riches of implicit meanings which are part of the whole, even though not immediately seen. It would therefore be easy to impute injustice and distortion to the description of the average way of understanding a question in the current theology of the schools. But such average concepts do exist. And sometimes they affect the life of the Church more than the sublime insights which are the possession of the few.

[166] What then has been the average concept of the relationship of nature and grace in neo-Scholasticism? To see the peculiar elements of this concept, which was not strictly speaking clear to the theologians themselves, we must start by discussing a position which is apparently only a marginal one in the doctrine of supernatural grace. This grace by which man is justified, and by which he is enabled to perform salutary acts, was taken to be something totally beyond the region of consciousness. In itself this is merely a scholastic opinion, which was always in fact disputed. For Thomistic theology always maintained that a supernatural act had a formal object which could never be attained by a purely natural act. But the opposite opinion was predominant in the schools and determined the average mentality: supernatural grace is a reality of which one knows something through the teaching of faith but which is in itself completely inaccessible and gives no sign of its presence in the conscious, personal life of man. Once taught of its existence by faith, man must of course refer to it, take care to possess it (by moral acts and the reception of the sacraments), treasure it as the divinization of his being and the pledge and presupposition of eternal life. But the space where he comes to himself, experiences himself and lives, is, as regards the data of

[1] The bibliographical notes can obviously offer only a very limited and inevitably arbitrary choice from the theological and historical literature on the dogmatic doctrine of grace. In general, we must confine ourselves to a choice from the literature of the last two hundred years.

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consciousness, not filled by this grace. His experience of his spiritual and moral acts in their proper reality (in contrast to their proposed objects, which are distinct from the acts) remains exactly what it would and could be, if there were no such thing as a supernatural 'elevation' of these acts. Thus grace, of itself, according to this very common opinion, is a superstructure beyond the realm of consciousness, with regard to the mental experience of the moral being, though it is of course a conscious object of faith and acknowledged to be the most sublime and divine element in man, his only salutary possession.

This view also seems to be the only possible and the obvious one. One can know nothing of one's state of grace, or at most, one can make deductions about it, more or less probable, using certain indications. But one does not 'notice' grace at all, or at the very most, only some of the 'healing' graces which help to fulfil the natural law and are of themselves natural aids. Simple experience and the teaching of Trent[2] (Denzinger 802; [167] 805; 825; 826) seem to confirm this opinion which anyway presents itself as the obvious one. Once it is accepted, the region where we know ourselves as active spiritually and morally seems to be naturally identifiable with the dimension of 'nature'. Indeed, this state becomes the very definition of what we mean by nature: that which we know about ourselves without the word of revelation – for that is nature and *merely* nature. And vice versa; nature alone and its acts are the components of the life which we experience as our own. We use the elements of natural concepts, attitudes etc, to construct the acts in which we refer ourselves by our intention to the realities of the revealed mysteries of God, acts which we know to be 'ontologically' elevated to the supernatural plane – but only 'ontologically'. Supernatural 'enlightenment', moral 'impulse' and 'inspiration' to good acts, the 'light' of faith, the breath of the Spirit and other similar concepts from Scripture and tradition (the unction, the signing of the Spirit etc.), are reduced either to this purely entitative elevation of our natural moral acts, or to a natural influence of a psychological type – which is however considered to be providentially directed to our supernatural salvation. In a word, the relationship between nature and grace is conceived in such a way that they appear as two layers so carefully placed that they penetrate each other as little as possible.

In the same way, the orientation of 'nature' to grace is conceived of in as negative a way as possible. Grace is, it is true, an unsurpassable perfectioning of nature; God as the Lord of this nature can command man to submit to his *de facto* will and to be receptive to his grace, which direct man to a supernatural life and end. But of itself nature has only a '*potentia obedientialis*' to such an end, and this capacity is thought of as negatively as possible. It is no more than non-repugnance to such an elevation. Of itself, nature would find its perfection just as readily and harmoniously in its own proper realm, in a purely natural end, without an immediate intuition of God in the beatific vision. When it finds itself in immediate [168] possession of itself – as is part of the essence of the spirit, '*reditio completa in seipsum*' – it meets itself as though it were 'pure nature'. According to the well-known axiom (which is a matter of opinion), it is distinguished from pure nature only '*sicut spoliatus a nudo*'. And this 'state of being despoiled' is silently considered as a merely extrinsic element with regard to the absence of sanctifying grace: a deprivation due to a divine decree (which demands the

[2] Cf. for instance: A. Stakemeier, *Das Konzil von Trient über die Heilsgewissheit* (Heidelberg 1947); V. Heyneck, 'Das Votum des Generals der Konventualen Bonaventura Costassiaro vom 26 Nov. 1546 über die Gnadengewissheit', *Franz. Stud.* 31 (1949) 274-304, 350-395; Fr. Buuck, 'Zum Rechtfertigungsdekret. Die Unterscheidung zwischen fehlbaren und unfehlbaren Glauben in den vorbereitenden Verhandlungen', Fr. J. Schierse, 'Das Trienter Konzil und die Frage nach der christlichen Gewissheit' both in: Georg Schreiber, *Das Weltkonzil von Trient* I (Freiburg 1951) 117-167; G. M. Lachance, 'L'homme peut-il savoir, qu'il a la grâce?' *Rev. Univ. Ottawa* 24 (1954) 65-92; M. Guérard des Lauriers, 'Saint Augustin et la question de la certitude de la grâce au Concile de Trente' in *Augustinus Magister* (Congrès International Aug. 1954), *Communications* 2, 1057-1067; L. M. Poliseno, 'I Carmelitani e la certezza dello stato di grazia nel Concilio Tridentino', *Carmelus* 1 (1954) 111-145.

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possession of grace) and to an historical fact of the past (the guilt of Adam). But we do not usually think that the lack of grace might be different in the two cases, that of pure nature and that of fallen nature.

This popular view cannot be absolved from a certain 'extrinsicism', as it has been called, if it can be shown that all the data of official Church teaching on the relationship of nature and grace can be maintained untouched even if the relationship is held to be closer than it is described in this current opinion. And it cannot be denied, though it is distasteful to some to admit it, that the current view is not without danger in practice. For if it is correct, the known spiritual life of man must take place within the region of his pure nature, which has two sectors: the 'purely natural' which is totally confined to its own dimensions, apart from an 'elevation' which is outside consciousness, and then a number of acts of knowledge which are (subjectively) composed of purely natural elements (in matters of the spiritual as such) and are referred to the supernatural only by their objects (by faith, by a pure intention etc.). If this is true, then it is not surprising – though not of course justifiable – that man should take very little interest in this mysterious superstructure of his being. After all, he does not find grace where he finds himself, in the immediate activation of his spiritual being. And one could have the impression – not objectively justifiable – that something originally called grace had come to be considered, in the course of the medieval evolution of dogma, as an act produced by nature's own capacity (e.g. its possibility of loving God above all things); after which, to conceal the process, this same act was once more placed above nature as the 'supernatural'. And then this supernatural was displaced into a region beyond consciousness, as an unconscious modality of what was spiritual and moral in nature, so that it was very hard to say what use it was at all. Let us think, for instance, of the distinction (correct in a certain sense) between a natural and a supernatural 'love of God above all things'. How are these two acts to be distinguished *as acts of love*, *that is*, *spiritually*, if the supernaturalness of [169] supernatural love *only* consists of its entitative 'elevation'? Is it *totally* misguided, to see modern naturalism as having *some* connexion with this theory? Is it quite wrong to suggest that the modern lack of interest in the supernatural can only have developed on the basis of such a view of grace, which must be to some extent nominalist?

The correctness or adequacy of the standard view is now once more the subject of theological debate, for many reasons.

One is *philosophical*. It is the contribution of a school of scholastic philosophy which is linked with the work of J. Maréchal.[3] In his intellectual and transcendental dynamism, Maréchal considers man (as spirit, i.e. in his 'nature') in the inmost heart of his being as '*desiderium naturale visionis beatificae*' – to use the words of St Thomas. This desire is conditional and so there is no necessity for the actual call to the vision by grace. But it is a real longing for the absolute being and one which is present in every spiritual act as its *raison d'être*. Without being expressly and conceptually present, it is the *a priori* condition of all knowledge where a finite object is grasped. Thus the return to the doctrine of the natural desire for the immediate vision of God in Maréchal shows at once how an apparently minor thesis in St Thomas becomes the essential and central concept for the understanding of a spiritual nature. It is understandable that the theology of the 1930's was much pre-occupied with the question of how this *desiderium naturale* in Maréchal and his followers was to be understood and whether it was compatible with the Church doctrine of the supernatural

[3] In this short theological essay, we do not give a bibliography of this philosophical trend, which has been of great importance in the confrontation of scholastic philosophy with modern philosophy. A large proportion of present-day Catholic philosophy is tributary to a greater or lesser degree to the doctrine of Maréchal. We may think of the work of A. T. G. Hayen, A. Grégoire, G. Siewerth, Max Müller, J. B. Lotz and many others.

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nature and gratuitousness of the immediate vision of God.[4] At any rate, there was an increasing understanding of the [170] view that man's orientation, as spirit, towards God was not merely something that was 'also' present in man, but that man's ordination to God, even though an implicit and *a priori* transcendental, makes him what he experiences himself to be, something that he can deny and repress only at the cost of sin, because even then it is affirmed in every act of his spiritual existence (though only as an implicitly transcendental *a priori*).

From the point of view of *history* of theology,[5] new approaches were [171] opened up by research into the history of theological reflexion on the supernatural and how it is distinguished from the natural. Theologians came to recognize that the present theological

[4] See for instance B. E. Brisboir, 'Désir naturel et vision de Dieu' *NRT* 54 (1927) 81-97; H. Lennerz, 'Kann die Vernunft die Möglichkeit der beseligenden Anschauung Gottes beweisen?' *Schol*. 5 (1930) 102-108; 'Ist die Anschauung Gottes ein Geheimnis?', *Schol*. 7 (1932) 208-232; M. Corvez, 'Est-il possible de démontrer l'existence en Dieu d'un ordre de mystères strictement surnaturels?' *RT* 37 (1932) 660-667; R. Garrigou-Lagrange, 'La possibilité de la vision béatifique peut-elle se démontrer?' *RT* 38 (1933) 669-688; further literature in *Bull. Thom*. 1932, n. 743-769; 1933, n. 896-907; *Bull. Thom*. V (1937ff.) n. 632-643; n. 728; P. Descoqs, Le mystère de notre élévation surnaturelle (Paris 1938). Further literature in Z. Alszeghy, *Greg*. 31 (1950) 444-446. This whole complex of questions also brings up the question of whether a finality ordained to God such as Maréchal accepts, could at least demonstrate the possibility of the beatific vision. We cannot go into this question here.

[5] We can refer here only to a small selection of the literature of the last twenty-five years, omitting biblical theology, because it has had unfortunately little influence on the whole on the dogmatic theology of the schools. We list first the book of H. Rondet, which gives a survey of the whole history of the theology of grace, then some works on patristic theology, and then the history of the dogma of grace in medieval and modern times. H. Rondet, *Gratia Christi. Essai d'histoire du dogme et de théologie dogmatique* (Paris 1948); H. Rahner, Die Gottesgeburt. Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen der Gläubigen' *ZKT* 59 (1935) 333-418; E. Mersch, *Le corps mystique du Christ* I-II^2 (Louvain 1936); A. Lieske, *Die Theologie der Logosmystik bei Origenes* (Münster 1938); J. Gross, *La divinisation du chrétien d'après les pères grecs* (Paris 1938); A. Lieske, 'Zur Theologie der Christusmystik Gregors von Nyssa' *Schol*. 14 (1939) 408-514; J. Loosen, *Logos und Pneuma im begnadeten Menschen bei Maximus Confessor* (Münster 1941); A. Mayer, *Das Bild Gottes im Menschen nach Clemens von Alexandrien* (Rome 1942); H. U. von Balthasar, *Présence et Pensée. Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris 1942); J. B. Schoemann, 'Gregors von Nyssa theologische Anthropologie als Bildtheologie', *Schol*. 18 (1943) 31-53, 175-200; J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris 1944); H. du Manoir, *Dogme et spiritualité chez S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris 1945); P. Galtier, *Le Saint-Esprit en nous d'après les pères grecs* (Rome 1946); A. Lieske, 'Die Theologie der Christusmystik Gregors von Nyssa', *ZKT* 70 (1948) 49-93; 129-168, 315-340; J. Grabowski, 'St Augustine and the Presence of God', *TS* 13 (1952) 336-348; E. Braem, 'Augustinus' leer over de heiligmakende genade' *Augustiniana* I (1951) 7-20, 77-90; II (1952) 201-204; III (1953) 328-340; IV (1954) 196-204; H. Merki, 'Ομοι/ωσιφ θεω|~~ *von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Freiburg/Switzerland 1952). H. Doms, *Die Gnadenlehre des seligen Albertus Magnus* (Breslau 1929); J. Schupp, *Die Gnadenlehre des Petrus Lombardus* (Freiburg 1932); F. Stegmüller, *Zur Gnadenlehre des jungen* Suarez (Freiburg 1933); F. Stegmüller, *Francisco de Vitoria y la doctrina de la gracia en la escuela salmantina* (Barcelona 1934); F. Stegmüller, *Geschichte des Molinismus I*: *Neue Molinaschriften* (Münster 1935); E. Köster, *Die Heilslehre des Hugo von St Viktor* (Emsdetten 1940); H. Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris 1944); R. C. Dhont, *Le problème de la préparation à la grâce. Debuts de l'école franciscaine* (Paris 1946); M. Flick, *L'attimo della giustificazione secondo S. Tommaso* (Rome 1947); Z. Alszeghy, 'La teologia dell'ordine sopranaturale nella scolastica antica' *Greg*. 31 (1950) 414-450 (with wide survey of the literature of the last decades); S. Gonzalez Rivas, 'Suarez frente al misterio de la inhabitacion' *Estud. Eccl*. 24 (1950) 341-366; J. Auer, *Entwicklung der Gnadenlehre in der Hochscholastik mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Kardinals Matteo d'Aquasparta*, I (Freiburg 1942), II (Freiburg 1951); A. M. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik* Part 1, vols. I-II, *Die Gnadenlehre* (Regensburg 1951-1952); H. Lais, *Die Gnadenlehre des hl. Thomas in der Summa contra Gentiles und der Kommentar des Franziskus Sylvestris von Ferrara* (Munich 1951); J. Alfaro, *Lo natural y lo sobrenatural. Estudio historico desde santo Thomas hasta Cayetano* (*1274-1534*), (Madrid 1952); O. Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux XII et XIII siècles*, I, II, III, 1-2, IV, 1-2 (Louvain 1942-1959); W. A. van Roo, *Grace and Original Justice according to St Thomas* (Rome 1955); Z. Alszeghy, *Nova creatura. La nozione della grazia nei commentari medievali di S. Paolo* (Rome 1956).

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concept of the supernatural (and so the concept of nature in contrast to the supernatural) was the result of a slow development, and that it only came very slowly to be applied to the various individual theological questions – such as the necessity of internal and strictly supernatural grace for every salutary act; the possibility and the limits of the distinction between naturally and supernaturally moral acts; the distinction between supernatural actual grace and habitual grace; the exclusion of a positive preparation for justification by moral acts not activated by strictly salutary grace; the possibility of a purely natural final happiness of man etc. It may be said on the whole that all these developments were legitimate and evolved correctly from the initial data of revelation strictly speaking. It may therefore be said that the development was not an aberration. It may also be said that it was so far advanced in St Thomas that one can see in him the direction of later evolution – which does not mean that it had reached with St Thomas the stage verified in Cajetan and after Trent. But the course of the development is now clear enough to show that we may not read into earlier theologies all the insights and concepts of a later time. And once this piece of this history of dogma has been acquired, one is once more in the situation of being able to ask oneself whether part of the price of progress was not the loss of some valuable insights of earlier times and so whether one must not try to win back some of the gains that were once the possession of theology.

It may well be that some studies of the history of dogma exaggerate the [172] difference between the medieval theology of grace, above all that of St Thomas, and the post-Tridentine. It may well be that the 'Augustinian' theology of grace as taught in the 17th and 18th centuries contain certain elements which cannot be held today, even though Benedict XIV defended them against the charge of crypto-Jansensism. But once the nuances of a spiritual development have been noticed, once it has been understood that this history cannot simply be divided into the story of an unchangeable truth, always clear and never contested by a truly orthodox theologian, and the story of a merely wicked and heretical doctrine: then a historical survey will be more than a mere account of how we have now reached the definitive and unsurpassable results of the theology of today. It will be the re-discovery of themes which were once well-known but have today been forgotten by a conventional theology which is always liable to take the handiest and simplest form of a doctrine as the criterion of truth and sacred tradition. And then one sees – to take some examples from the question which interests us here – that the concept of the *desiderium naturale in visionem beatificam* in St Thomas is not just a piece of historically explicable atavism going back to an age when theology was not so clear about the supernatural and gratuitous quality of the vision of God (as St Thomas himself was); that the reluctance to admit a strictly supernatural actual grace (along with the habitual) is not merely due to a stubborn blockage of thought, which could only be brought slowly to see that a salutory act preceding justification, and still impossible without grace, necessarily demands such a grace;[6] that one can still learn something from St Thomas about the compenetration of sacrament and personal act, which has been either almost forgotten or over-simplified in later theology; that medieval theology had a greater and profounder idea of 'uncreated grace' than the post-Tridentine theology of the schools, which derives the 'indwelling of the Holy Spirit' more or less exclusively from 'created grace' and is too much inclined to consider the latter as *the* grace, strictly speaking, in its reaction against the Reformation.

[6] For St Thomas, the really 'preparatory' acts before justification are essentially acts of the 'taking over' of justification, which are already done with the grace of justification; *hence* he did not need to pay much attention to preparatory acts which also precede justification temporally; he can therefore tell *us* something new, and not just we him.

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The third impulse for re-opening the question of the relations of nature and grace comes from the revival of dialogue with Reformed [173] theology.[7] By the nature of things, this theology has to put itself this question, though from other viewpoints. And it has done so once more: with regard to the Bible, with regard to Luther, with regard to its debate with modern humanism and an Anglo-American optimistic view of the world. So it had to ask itself: what then is man, if he is a sinner, how far does he remain a sinner when he is justified? The ancient doctrine of the Reformers is maintained, that there is absolutely no good in man, which serves his *salvation*, without grace. But the question really only begins with this statement, which if properly understood, is also affirmed by Catholics; and this opens up new possibilities of discussion with Catholic theology, which have been to some extent exploited. And Catholic theology in turn, though only in the case of a few theologians, has felt itself impelled to ask once more what true interests the Reformers represent and how such interests may be better catered for among Catholics. It is a matter of asking how Christocentric is the whole actual world and order of salvation; of proving that the supernatural character of grace does not mean that man is in fact a closed, self-contained and finished system, which he can work out in his 'natural' existence, while grace is a sort of pure superstructure imposed on it, but leaving the lower element unaltered in itself; of considering whether and in what sense a Catholic understanding of the axiom '*simul justus et peccator*' might be found; of giving full value to the existentialist, actualist and personalist elements which are implicit also in the traditional Catholic concept of grace and are capable of clearing up the misunderstanding, that an 'entitative' and 'habitual' infused grace implies an unjustifiable distortion of the biblical concept of grace.

That the mentality of the *present day* must be an effective stimulus to theology does not need much proof. After the synthesis of the diversity of reality, a unified view of man is sought for. Thought is 'existential'. One strives to 'experience' the reality of grace precisely there where one lives one's own existence; and so one tries to see supernatural – and not just medicinal – grace as the activation and the force of concrete existence. [174] In keeping with other tendencies in the spirit of the times, one tries to see grace as something more than the presupposition and content of individual salvation. More conscious effort is made to reflect once more on the ecclesiological aspects of the doctrine of grace, on grace in the history of salvation outside Christianity constituted as a Church, on the possibility of grace and its most sublime manifestations in the world of non-Christian religions.

If we now indicate some of the 'results' of these theological efforts, we are of course not speaking of 'results' which have already been officially recognized or become simply '*sententia communis*'. The development of Church doctrine does not go so fast, especially as today the immediately topical questions, especially of morals, and Mariology, claim more attention than such deeper questions of theology, which inevitably need a long time to mature. All we can attempt to do here is to indicate very vaguely (more is impossible here), with reference rather to the doctrine itself what are the essential lines of development in these theological efforts.

[7] We mention here only a few Catholic works on the matter: H. U. von Balthasar, 'Deux Notes sur Karl Barth', *RSR* 35 (1948) 92-111; J. Hamer, *Karl Barth. L'occasionalisme théologique de Karl Barth. Etude sur sa méthode dogmatique* (Paris 1949); H. Volk, *Emil Brunners Lehre von dem Sünder* (Münster 1950); H. U. von Balthasar, *Karl Barth, Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie* (Cologne 1951); A. Ebneter, *Der Mensch in der Theologie Karl Barths* (Zurich 1952); H. Küng, *Justification* (London & New York 1964).

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One may well think that the question of 'uncreated grace' may be taken further.[8] In the encyclical '*Mystici Corporis*' Pius XII indicated that there [175] were open questions here, which were deliberately left open by the magisterium. If, as Pius XII emphasizes, grace and glory are two stages of the one divinization of man; if, as classical theology has always emphasized, glory means a self-communication of God to the created spirit which is not a created quality or entity distinct from God, produced by efficient causality, but God's imparting himself to man by means of quasi-formal causality: then this notion can be applied far more explicitly to grace than has been customary hitherto in theology. 'Uncreated grace' will then no longer appear to be merely a consequence of the creation of 'infused' habitual grace, regarded as a 'physical accident'. It will be rather seen as what is truly central in grace – which will explain much better the strictly mysterious character of grace, since a purely created entity, strictly as such, can never be an absolute mystery. God communicates himself to man in his own proper reality. That is the mystery and the fullness of grace. Starting from here, it will be much easier to find the link with the mystery of the Incarnation and that of the Trinity.

It seems indeed to be true that the opinion maintained by Petavius, Scheeben and others, each in their own way, is gaining ground: that grace founds a relationship between man and each of the three divine persons which is not an appropriation, but something proper to each divine person. If one supposes that the immediate vision of God can only be based on a quasi-formal self-communication of God in vision, and not (adequately) on a created quality in the spirit of man; and if one recalls the obvious truth, that each of the three divine persons is the object of immediate intuition in his personal propriety: then that entitative (ontic) quasiformal communication of God, which takes the place of a *species impressa* as the ontological foundation of man's possession of God in knowledge, must include a non-appropriated relationship of each of the three divine persons to man. On this basis, the relation of the 'immanent' to the 'redemptive' Trinity could be thought out anew. And the supreme mystery of the Christian faith could appear more clearly as a reality with which man has to do not merely conceptually (and through the incarnation of the Logos) but also really, in the exercise of his life of grace. It could be seen that God is not only trinitarian in himself, but also communicates himself in a trinitarian way, in grace, which means more than efficient causality on the part of God in the line of *creatio ex nihilo* outside himself – though it remains true that where God exercises *efficient* causality, the work is to be attributed to the whole Trinity as one single cause. [176] One may and perhaps must go still further. As a rule, the connexion

[8] On the whole question of uncreated grace and the appropriated or non-appropriated indwelling of the divine persons we mention a few recent works: H. Kuhaupt, *Die Formalursache der Gotteskindschaft* (Münster 1940); H. Schauf, *Die Einwohnung des Heiligen Geistes. Die Lehre von der nichtappropriierten Einwohnung des Heiligen Geistes als Beitrag zur Theologiegeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der beiden Theologen Carl Passaglia und Clemens Schrader* (Freiburg 1941); Ph. J. Donnelly, 'The Inhabitation of the Holy Spirit: a solution according to de la Taille', *TS* 8 (1947) 445-470; J. Trütsch, *SS. Trinitatis inhabitatio apud theologos recentiores* (Trento 1949); S. J. Dockx, *Fils de Dieu par grâce* (Paris 1948); C. Sträter, 'Het begrip "appropriatie" bij S. Thomas', *Bijdr*. 9 (1948) 1-41, 144-186; J.-H. Nicolas, 'Présence trinitaire et présence de la Trinité', *RT* 50 (1950) 183-191; Th. J. Fitzgerald, *De inhabitatione Spiritus Sancti doctrina Sancti Thomae Aquinatis* (Mundelein 1950); R. Morency, *L'Union de grâce selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montreal 1950); P. Galtier, *L'Habitation en nous des trois personnes* (Rome 1950); H. P. C. Lyons, 'The Grace of Sonship', *ETL* 27 (1951) 438-466; C. Kaliba, *Die Welt als Gleichnis des dreieinigen Gottes. Entwurf zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie* (Salzburg 1952); P. de Letter, 'Sanctifying Grace and our Union with the Holy Trinity', *TS* 13 (1952) 33-58; Ph. J. Donnelly, 'Sanctifying Grace and our Union with the Holy Trinity. A Reply', *TS* 13 (1952) 190-204; F. Bourassa, 'Adoptive Sonship. Our union with the divine persons', *TS* 13 (1952) 309-335; P. de Letter, 'Current Theology. Sanctifying Grace and the Divine Indwelling', *TS* 14 (1953) 242-272; F. Bourassa, 'Présence de Dieu et union aux divines personnes', *Sc. Eccl*. 6 (1954) 3-23; K. Rahner, 'Some Implications of the scholastic concept of Uncreated Grace' in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore Md. 1961) 319-346.

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between the Incarnation and grace is thought of as merely *de facto*:[9] God has in fact decreed that the order of grace should depend on the Incarnate Word. It is implicitly supposed that things could be otherwise. But is this supposition clear and certainly correct? Both the order of grace and the Incarnation derive from God's free grace. But does it follow that both these objects of God's gracious will, in both of which he communicates himself, as himself, *ad extra*, though in different ways, are really *two* different acts of his freely exercised love? Is there anything in Catholic principles to prevent us taking the Scotist point of view and considering the primal act of God, in which everything else is in fact given, as the self-exteriorization of God who is the love which gives itself in the incarnation? And then the order of grace would already be instituted, which would (probably) be unthinkable without such a decree of God with regard to his personal communication. Are there any valid arguments against the position which holds that the *possibility* of creation rests on that of the Incarnation, even though the fact of creation (as nature) does not necessarily imply the actual realization of the self-exteriorization of God in the Incarnation? Let us assume this position, which is recommended by its lofty simplicity, not to mention its more positive support in the Logos-theology of pre-Nicene and pre-Augustinian theology. Then grace has a much more radically Christological character. The Logos who has become part of the world is not merely the *de facto* mediator of grace by his merit – which only became necessary because Adam had cast this grace away – he is also the person who by his free Incarnation creates the order of grace and nature as his own presupposition (nature) and his milieu (the grace of the other spiritual creatures). This would enable us, as we have already said, to reach a deeper understanding of the immanent Trinity. The Logos would not be merely one of the divine persons who could become man if they wished: he would be *the* person in whom God communicates himself hypostatically to the world. The Incarnation would mirror the personal propriety of the second divine person, the Logos as such. The Trinity of the economy of redemption would enable us to have some insight into the immanent Trinity. This is not impossible, [177] because the axiom that the efficient causality of God *ad extra* is common to the one God without distinction of persons cannot be applied to this quasi-formal causality. This invites us to re-consider the speculation of pre-Nicene theology and of the Greeks in general. It will appear that on this point St Augustine had too little understanding of the most ancient theology, which held that it is the Logos who appears and must appear if God wishes to show himself personally to the world.

With a more exact concept of 'uncreated grace' in mind, we can also see more clearly how the Catholic theology of grace, on its own proper principles (grace is not just pardon for the poor sinner but 'participation in the divine nature'), can go beyond the notion of a *merely* entitative, created state and the merely 'ontic' and non-existential element of a 'physical accident'.[10] Grace is God himself, the communication in which he gives himself to man as the divinizing favour which he is himself. Here his work is really *himself* since it is he who is imparted. Such grace, from the very start, cannot be thought of independently of the personal love of God and its answer in man. This grace is not thought of as a 'thing'. It is something that is only 'put at man's disposal' in that act of 'letting oneself be disposed of' which is the proper gift of the freest grace, the miracle of love. Ontic categories are only maintained here (even by Catholics) because and in so far as a Catholic philosophy does hold that the real (and what could be more real and effective than the love of God?) must be thought of as 'real' and 'being', that the highest must be expressed in the most abstract words, and that therefore the act of divine love towards us – God's act, not ours, though enabling us to act,

[9] Cf. N. Sanders, 'Een bovennatuurlijke orde mogelijk zonder Christus?' *Stud. Cath.* 29 (1954) 152-158; K. Rahner, 'Thoughts on the theology of Christmas', in *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore 1967); *ibid.* 'The eternal significance of the humanity of Jesus for our relationship with God'.
[10] J. Auer, 'Um den Begriff der Gnade', *ZKT* 70 (1948) 341-368.

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and not just submit – previous to our act, must be considered as that which renders possible our moral and religious decisions. It cannot therefore be expressed except in categories of being such as state, accident, habit, infusion etc. Such expressions are not confusing if properly understood, and they need not distort one's view of the fact that grace is always the free action of divine love which is only 'at the disposal' of man precisely in so far as he is at the disposal of this divine love. One must indeed always remember that God is not diminished by our becoming greater. And in the last resort, Christianity is not the religion whose basic attitude is fear of its going to our head – and not into our grateful heart – if we extol the greatness to which God has raised man in order that he might praise God. This is true of Mariology. And it is also true of [178] grace, of which Mariology is merely the most beautiful part of the doctrine.

This grace affects our conscious life, not just our being but our existence. The Thomistic doctrine[11] of the specific object of the act entitatively elevated to the supernatural, an object which, as formal, cannot be attained by any natural act, must be fully considered once more and again be given a predominant place. For in such a context 'object' does not mean 'something present like other objects, distinguishable from them and placed beside them by reflexion'. A formal object is neither a datum of knowledge nor, an abstract and merely consequent summing up of what is common to many individual objects. It is the *a priori* horizon given in consciousness, under which, in grasping the individual *a posteriori* object, everything is known which is grasped as an object strictly speaking. If we understand aright the old scholastic doctrine of the formal object as the *a priori* 'light' under which and in which all single objects are grasped, no one can object to the old Thomistic doctrine of the formal supernatural object by appealing to 'experience', which is supposed to know nothing of such a formal object – meaning in fact material object! It must only be noted that the *a priori* formal object of an act is not the same thing conceptually as a formal object which is clearly *distinguishable* by reflexion from another formal object. For a metaphysics of knowledge, there is no great difficulty in recognizing that transcendence towards being in general, the natural openness for being as a whole, cannot be clearly distinguished in subsequent reflexion from the supernatural transcendence, the openness of the soul informed by grace, which is directed in all its supernaturally elevated acts towards the God of eternal life, towards the immediate experience of the (triune) absolute being. And this is true although both modes of transcendence, the formal object of the natural spirit and the formal object of the supernaturally [179] elevated spirit, are both given in consciousness. Such considerations, taken from a metaphysics of the spirit, though barely indicated here, show that the ancient Thomistic doctrine is perfectly defensible.

It has in its favour that it is a transposition into metaphysical and theological terms of a conviction which is voiced in the Scriptures. Let us take the doctrine of Scripture as it is, honestly and without prejudice, and without correcting it in the light of the silent presupposition that it cannot have said something, because this something is supposed to be impossible. Then we must say that for Scripture, the communication of the Spirit (the divine *pneuma*) is not just a trans-conscious entitative 'elevation' of the conscious moral acts of man, which remain existentially the same and are only changed extrinsically by the *fides ex*

[11] There is no point in quoting here the text-books which deal with this question. We only remark in passing that this question is also of great importance in the problem of the foundations of faith. Cf. for instance A. Lang, *Die Wege der Glaubensbegründung bei den Theologen des 14 Jahrhunderts* (Münster 1950); F. Schlagenhaufen, 'Die Glaubensgewissheit und ihre Begründung in der Neuscholastik', *ZKT* 56 (1932) 313-374, 530-595; G. Englhardt, *Die Entwicklung der dogmatischen Glaubenspsychologie in der mittelalterischen Scholastik vom Abälardstreit bis zu Philipp dem Kanzler* (Münster 1933); R. Aubert, *Le problème de l'acte de foi* (Louvain [2]1950). Cf. also K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the experience of grace' in *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore, Md. 1967).

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auditu. It is 'life', 'unction', 'consolation', 'light', the inexpressible co-intercession of the Spirit, *pneuma* which is more than *nous*, an inward attraction, testimony given by the Spirit etc. It would be well if the doctrine of Scripture were carefully examined in the light of this scholastic controversy. If this were done, one would gradually rid oneself of the unavowed opinion that in an objectively serious and religiously important question one is already certain *a priori* that no more light is to be had from Scripture if the subject is controverted in the schools, because otherwise the question would have been settled long ago. Once all the schools are of the opinion that supernatural actual graces are to be described as 'lights' and 'inspirations', this doctrine of tradition must be taken seriously. It may not be so interpreted in anti-Thomistic teaching that nothing of it in fact remains. For an entitatively elevated act which remains from the point of view of consciousness a natural act, cannot be characterized as an inward illumination and inspiration without doing violence to language. The fact that the anti-Thomistic (Molinist) thesis still holds on to this characterization and tries to do justice to it, shows how strongly tradition is convinced that the act due to supernatural grace is even spiritually different from the natural act. The difference is felt to be conscious and existential, and not confined to an entitative modality.

Here we must note something else, which should be borne more clearly in mind than is usually the case. Acts inspired supernaturally by grace are not confined to the justified. There are stirrings of grace which precede the act of accepting justification in a free act of faith and love. There is also grace outside the Church and its sacraments. The offer of grace to a man who has reached in his spiritual development the immediate [180] possibility of an existential decision is not intermittent, restricted to some very definite occasions and 'actual' in this momentary sense. There is no stringent theological reason for thinking it should be so. 'Actual' means that grace is given prior to an existential decision, as an 'offer' and 'possibility' (of a free salutary act). In this sense, the moral freedom of man to dispose of himself always exists in the prior possibility of supernatural acts, a possibility effected by grace.[12] If this is so, then we may say that the supernatural transcendence is always present in every man who has reached the age of moral reason. That does not necessarily mean that he is justified. He may be a sinner and an unbeliever. But where and in so far as he has the concrete possibility of a morally good act, he is in fact constantly within the open horizon of transcendence towards the God of the supernatural life, whether his free act is in accord or in conflict with this prior state of his supernaturally elevated spiritual existence. *If* in every moral act he takes a positive or negative attitude to the *totality* of his *de facto* existence (a supposition whose reality we need not examine here): *then* we must say: every morally good act of man is, in the actual order of salvation, also in fact a supernaturally salutary act. We should *then* have arrived at the well-known point of view maintained by Ripalda. This conclusion need not terrify us. First of all, the thesis of Ripalda, though rarely maintained, is exposed to no theological censure. And secondly, one could still hold the basic position outlined here, even if the supposition which brought us to the thesis of Ripalda were contested, which would avoid the position of Ripalda. However that may be, the notions which we have outlined show clearly that it is quite conceivable that the whole spiritual life of man is constantly affected by grace. It is not a rare and sporadic event just because grace is unmerited. Theology has been too long and too often bedevilled by the unavowed supposition that grace would be no longer grace if it were too generously distributed by the love of God! Our whole spiritual life is lived in the realm of the salvific will of God, of his prevenient grace, of his call as it becomes efficacious: all of which is an element within the region of our

[12] Under the necessary external presuppositions, hence the external possibility of faith, where however we must note that in the theory of Straub, everyone who has come to the use of moral reason can possess it, at least as *fides stricte dicta sed virtualis*.

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consciousness, though one which remains anonymous as long as it is not interpreted from without by the message of faith. Even when he does not 'know' it and does not believe it, that is, even when he cannot make it an [181] individual object of knowledge by merely inward reflexion, man always lives consciously in the presence of the triune God of eternal life. God is the unexpressed but real 'Whither' of the dynamism of all spiritual and moral life in the realm of spiritual existence which is in fact founded, that is, supernaturally elevated by God. It is a 'purely *a priori*'. Whither, but always there, present to consciousness without being in the nature of an object, but nonetheless there.

We do not need to insist on the existence of such an *a priori* of a supernatural nature in spiritual existence, even though it can only be clearly expounded and translated into objectivated knowledge in the light of the word of revelation which comes from without. It manifests itself as the mysterious activation of individual and collective spiritual life in countless ways, which would not exist if this mysterious activation and dynamism were not at work. It follows that even outside the process of official revelation the history of religion is not merely a product of natural reason and sin. Precisely in its consciously tangible results, in its objective spirit, it is the product of the natural spirit, grace and sin. Thus when man is summoned by the message of faith given by the visible Church, it is not the first time that he comes into spiritual contact with the reality preached by the Church: such conceptual knowledge of it is not primary. The call only makes him consciously aware of – and of course forces him to make a choice about – the grace which already encompassed him inarticulately but really as an element of his spiritual existence. The preaching is the express awakening of what is already present in the depths of man's being, not by nature, but by grace. But it is a grace which always surrounds man, even the sinner and the unbeliever, as the inescapable setting of his existence.

We are now in a position to face the real problem[13] of 'nature and [182] grace' in the strict sense and to pose it properly. It is clear that by living out his spiritual existence, man always attains his 'nature', even in the theological sense, where this concept is opposed to that of grace and the supernatural. For in every question which he poses about himself, in every

[13] We can offer here only a somewhat arbitrary selection from the controversial literature which grew up, above all, around the historical and theological writings of H. de Lubac. We include some essays which deal with the doctrine of the encyclical *Humani Generis*, since it is well known that the encyclical takes up a position on this matter. Other works dealing with *Humani Generis* are listed, e.g. in the *Revista Española de Teologia* 11 (1951) 173-176; 311-339. We recall therefore: H. de Lubac, 'Remarques sur l'histoire du mot surnaturel' *NRT* 61 (1934) 225-249, 350-370; J. Martinez-Gomez, 'Notas sobre unas notas para la historia de la palabra sobrenatural', *Arch. T. Gran.* 1 (1938) 57-85; H. de Lubac, *Surnaturel. Etudes historiques* (Paris 1946); H. Rondet, 'Nature et surnaturel dans la théologie de St Thomas d'Aquin', *RSR* 33 (1946) 56-91; C. Boyer, 'Nature pure et surnatural dans le "Surnaturel" du Père de Lubac', *Greg.* 28 (1947) 379-395; G. de Broglie, *De fine ultimo humanae vitae. Pars prior, positiva* (Paris 1948); H. Rondet, 'Le problème de la nature pure et la théologie du XVI[e] siècle', *RSR* 56 (1949) 80-121; H. de Lubac, 'Le mystère du surnaturel', *RSR* 36 (1949) 80-121; Ph. J. Donnelly, 'The gratuity of the beatific vision and the possibility of a natural destiny', *TS* 11 (1950) 374-404 (with literature); W. Brugger, 'Das Ziel des Menschen und das Verlangen nach der Gottesschau', *Schol.* 25 (1950) 535-548; M. J. de Guillou, 'Surnaturel', *RSPT* 34 (1950) 226-243; R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza. Analisis historico y metafisico de un concepto* (Madrid 1951); G. Weigel, 'Historical Background of the Encyclical *Humani Generis*', *TS* 12 (1951) 208-230; G. Weigel, 'Gleanings from the Commentaries on *Humani Generis*', *TS* 12 (1950) 520-549; J. Simon, 'Transcendence et immanence dans la doctrine de la grâce', *Rev. Univ. Ottawa* 21 (1951) 344-369; L. Renwart, 'La "nature pure" à la lumière de l'encyclique *Humani Generis*', *NRT* 74 (1952) 337-354; E. Gutwenger, 'Natur und Übernatur', *ZKT* 75 (1953) 82-97; H. U. von Balthasar–E. Gutwenger, 'Der Begriff der Natur in der Theologie', *ZKT* 75 (1953) 452-464; J. Ternus, 'Natur-Übernatur in der vortridentinischen Theologie seit Thomas von Aquin', *Schol.* 28 (1953) 399-404; M.-R. Gagnebet, 'L'enseignement du magistère at le problème du surnaturel', *RT* 53 (1953) 5-27; L. Malevez, 'La gratuité du surnaturel', *NRT* 75 (1953) 561-586; K. Rahner, 'Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace' in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore, Md. 1961) 297-317. R. Bruch, 'Das Verhältnis von Natur und Übernatur nach der Auffassung der neueren Theologie', *Th. Gl.* 46 (1956) 81-102.

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judgment where he contrasts himself with an object and grasps it in the perspective of an unlimited transcendence, he experiences himself as something which he must necessarily be, as something that is a unity and a totality which cannot be dissolved into variables, which either is there as a whole or is not there at all. He grasps his metaphysical being: spirit in transcendence and freedom. And on the basis of this initial transcendental analysis of what is implicitly asserted about man in each of his human acts, much more could probably be affirmed as 'essential' to him: his existence in a world, his having a body, his belonging to a society of his fellows. In a word, there is such a thing as a metaphysical knowledge of man, his essence and nature, by the light of his reason, which means here primarily independently of the word of revelation; but it also means knowledge through the means (his reason) which is itself an element of the essence so grasped. But it also follows from the theological data already given that this *de facto* human nature, as it knows itself here, and in view of all its experiences (especially when this human experience [183] is viewed in the light of the whole history of mankind, where alone its development is fully realized) cannot and need not be considered as the reflexion of that 'pure' nature which is distinguished in theology from everything supernatural. Our actual nature is *never* 'pure' nature. It is a nature installed in a supernatural order which man can never leave, even as a sinner and unbeliever. It is a nature which is continually being determined (which does not mean justified) by the supernatural grace of salvation offered to it. And these 'existentials' of man's concrete, 'historical' nature are not purely states of being beyond consciousness. They make themselves felt in the experience of man. By simple reflexion on himself, in the light of natural reason, he cannot simply and clearly distinguish them from the natural spiritual activity which is the manifestation of his nature. But once he knows from revelation that there is an order of grace, not due to him and not belonging to the necessary constitutives of his being, he becomes more cautious. He must allow for the fact that much of his concrete experience which he is almost automatically tempted to attribute to his 'nature' may perhaps in fact be the effect in him of what he must recognize as unmerited grace in the light of theology.

This does not mean that he is now quite ignorant of what is natural to him. The nature of a spiritual being and its supernatural elevation are not opposed to each other like two things which lie side by side, so that they must be either kept separate or confused. The supernatural elevation of man is, though not due to him, the absolute fulfilment of his being, whose spiritual quality and transcendence towards being as such prevents its being 'defined', that is, 'delimited' in the same way that sub-human entities can. For these are 'defined' by the fact that it is their essence to be restricted to a certain realm of reality. (It is therefore impossible, for instance, for them to be 'elevated' to a supernatural fulfilment: such an elevation would destroy their being which is essentially limit.) The 'definition' of the created spirit is its 'openness' to being as such: as created, it is open to the fullness of reality; as spirit, it is open to absolute reality in general. It is not therefore surprising that the grandeur of the (varying) fulfilment of this openness (which does not of itself imply necessarily an absolute and unsurpassable fulfilment and yet, as absolute openness, still has a sense without such fulfilment) cannot be recognized at once as 'due' or 'undue'. And yet the basic essence of man, his nature as such openness (transcendence) can be perfectly well established. The initial elements of such fulfilment are already present: the experience of [184] infinite longings, of radical optimism, of unquenchable discontent, of the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, of the radical protest against death, the experience of being confronted with an absolute love precisely where it is lethally incomprehensible and seems to be silent and aloof, the experience of a radical guilt and of a still abiding hope etc. These elements are in fact tributary to that divine force which impels the created spirit – by grace – to an absolute fulfilment. Hence in them grace is experienced *and* the natural being of man.

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For the essence of man is such that it is experienced where grace is experienced, since grace is only experienced where the spirit naturally is. And vice versa: where spirit is experienced in the actual order of things, it is a supernaturally elevated spirit. As long as we confine our considerations of the relationship of nature and grace to the most general formalities, the question offers no particular difficulties, though the spiritual nature is only found in a supernatural order and the spirit as 'pure nature' is never met with. But let us ask more precisely what is now, in the concrete and in particular, natural to this nature, and what is real in it and expected of it, just because it is a nature elevated to the supernatural order. Let us ask, for instance, whether the resurrection of the body appertains to any form of the fulfilment of man as a spirit-person, or is it something that is only a consequence of grace. Or let us ask how we are to think of the fulfilment of pure nature in the concrete. Then we find ourselves faced with questions which could only be answered if one could make experiments on pure nature and draw up a concrete teleology on this basis.[14] But in reality all such efforts fail to go beyond an essentially formal teleology of a 'natural' type, which, as was obviously to be expected from what has been said, is merely the concrete supernatural teleology rendered in an abstract, formal way. It follows therefore from these considerations that the great theologians of the middle ages did well not to cudgel their brains too hard about natural beatitude. There is in fact no such thing, and further, the result would be basically only a formalizing abstract set of concepts derived from what theological teleology knows in fact as the supernatural end, (and which is not very helpful); and again, where it tries to be concrete or becomes so unwittingly, it borrows illegitimately from the theology.

[185] In point of fact, such a 'pure' philosophy of the essence of natural man is also unnecessary. When one speaks to a non-believer, one has only to take care that no premises are derived from the historical word of revelation, as long as the interlocutor does not admit its existence. When in such a discussion an item of man's experience of himself is appealed to, one will simply have to note what the non-believing partner accepts of such experience. If he refuses it at a given point, it may be because he is incapable of having a certain legitimate 'natural' experience, either because it has not been properly demonstrated to him or because in spite of the demonstration he does not consciously follow it (though he has the experience). Or it may be that one has in fact appealed to an experience of grace which the other has not had clearly enough for him to understand the argument drawn from it (though he has had it to some degree, according to what has been said above). Since both cases can arise, and since even Christians find it hard to distinguish one from the other, because a 'supernatural' argument can be quite meaningful and successful even with an unbeliever (where an argument from the word of revelation is not possible): the question of whether a metaphysical (that is, pre-theological) argument starts in fact from 'pure' nature or actual nature is of little practical importance.

The concept of pure nature is legitimate. If someone affirms: I experience myself as a being which is absolutely ordained for the immediate possession of God, his statement need not be false. He will only be mistaken if he maintains that this unconditional longing is an essential element of 'pure' nature, or if he says that such pure nature, which does not exist, *could* not exist. Where man knows of the *visio beatifica* by the word of revelation, and experiences it as the marvel of the free love of God in his longing for it, he has to say that it is not due to him (by nature), even as an existing nature – so that the gratuitousness of creation, as a free act of God, and grace as a free gift to the creature, as something already existing, are not one and the same gift of God's free act. To say this is to recognize implicitly the concept

[14] If there can be any such thing, given the endless openness of this nature – and if every such concrete end is not either a finite perfection freely decreed by God but not deducible *a priori* from the nature, *or* its absolute fulfilment.

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of 'pure nature'. And it is not an empty concept of otiose theological speculation but a concept which, in the long run, is the necessary background against which one recognizes that the beatific vision is a gratuitous grace, not merely not due to man as a sinner, but not due to man even as a creature.

Even when the gratuitousness of grace for human nature as such has been recognized, it is still helpful to try to work out more clearly how [186] human nature is ordained to grace, as a *potentia oboedientialis*. It is not necessary to take this *potentia oboedientialis* as more or less just a non-repugnance, which would be the extrinsicism of which we have spoken already. To be ordained to grace, and to be so constituted that there is an exigency for grace which would render the whole ordination to grace futile if grace were not actually imparted, are by no means the same thing. Spirit, that is, openness for God, freedom and conscious self-possession, is essentially impossible without a transcendence whose *absolute* fulfilment is grace. Still, a fulfilment of this sort is not owed to it, if we suppose that this conscious possession of self in freedom before God is meaningful in itself, and not just as a pure means and a mere stage on the way to the beatific vision. This supposition arises from the absolute (not 'infinite') value and validity of every personal act, in itself. If it be granted, it follows that there can be no spirit without a transcendence open to the supernatural; but spirit is meaningful, without supernatural grace. Hence its fulfilment in grace cannot be demanded by its essence, though it is open for such grace. Once this is clear there is nothing to prevent us – as for instance, an apparent danger of failing to recognize the supernatural and gratuitous character of grace – applying it clearly to the supernaturally – orientated transcendence of the spirit and working it out as rigorously as possible.

Man is only really known in his 'indefinable' essence when he is understood as *potentia oboedientialis* for the divine life and when this is his *nature*. His nature is such that it must look to grace for its *absolute* fulfilment, and hence, as regards itself, it must reckon with a *non-frustrating* absence of an absolute fulfilment. One can even try to understand the hypostatic union in the line of the absolute fulfilment of what man means strictly speaking. Such considerations, which aim at the closest possible combination of the doctrine of grace with a metaphysical anthropology, and try to see the higher as the gratuitous fulfilment of the lower,[15] are not just amusements for a leisure hour. In the long run, it would be impossible without them to arouse the existential interest of man in that mysterious life which is given with supernatural grace. Further, such an exposition of the content of the concept of *potentia oboedientialis* must not [187] be confined, as it too often is, to man's *knowledge*. If, according to Scripture, God is love and not 'thought of thought', no understanding of man and of the absolute fulfilment of his being (by grace) can succeed, unless man is considered as freedom and love, which again may not be considered just as a by-product of the act of knowledge.

In the light of what has been said up to this, it is no great loss if the analysis of man as *potentia oboedientialis* is not a 'chemically pure' presentation of pure nature but is mixed up with trace elements from actual nature, and hence from its state of grace. Who can say that the utterances of earthly philosophy, even of a completely non-Christian or pre-Christian type, are merely the voice of pure nature (and perhaps of its guilt)? May they not be the sighing of the creature, secretly moved by the Holy Spirit of grace, which longs for the glory of the children of God and already unwittingly feels itself to be such a child of God?

Much more could be said on the subject of grace in present-day theology and of what it ought to be. One could speak for instance of grace in its relationship to the Church,[16] on the

[15] Fulfilment and gratuitousness in one, in a truly differentiated world constructed hierarchically without discontinuity (and such is the construction of the world where differences derive from the One), are characteristic of the relationship between two realities.
[16] H. de Lubac, *Catholicisme. Les Aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris 1938).

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social significance and bearings of grace, which in the current manuals of theology is considered in a perspective which is strangely narrow. One could refer to the newly-opened discussion of the relationship between grace and the personal action of man. But space forbids us here.

Tiny advances or displacements in the field of scientific theory often begin by being impossible to evaluate. Such changes may appear at first as pastimes reserved to the leisurely keen-wittedness of scholars. But when one considers that such new acquisitions then become part of the general consciousness and so become the automatic presuppositions of action, one can perhaps recognize that much may depend on them, and sometimes everything. This is also true of theology. It is very strange. But we Christians often seem to be completely unconvinced of the power of thought with regard to our Christian faith, and to be very doubtful that 'theory' can bring about very practical effects. That is why we often prefer to think over Church politics, social questions, methods of propaganda and so on. That is why living theology is so little esteemed. Many people in the Church have the impression that it merely casts useless obscurity on truths that have long been clear, that it generates unrest and distracts from more important matters. Such people miss the point, [188] that a living, questing, questioning theology is working today for the preaching of tomorrow, so that it can reach the spirit and heart of man. Such theological work may often seem fussy and futile. It is nonetheless necessary. Even though the heart and grace remain the one thing which is irreplaceable.

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8

QUESTIONS OF CONTROVERSIAL THEOLOGY ON JUSTIFICATION[1]

The book which we shall discuss briefly here is important enough to justify further study of it. But as it is already well known in its main outlines, we may be permitted to confine ourselves to a few remarks on some questions raised by it. So we suppose that its contents are known. The remarks which we have to make should not give the reader the impression that the most important points in the book have been singled out. That is not the case at all. Thinking as we do, as we shall shortly explain, that we do not understand Barth's doctrine better than Barth, and that Küng propounds on all essential points a doctrine of justification which is in accord with Catholic doctrine, nothing very note-worthy can be said here on the actual theme of the book. Our considerations are therefore *marginal* notes with regard to the object and contents of the book, and we wish them to be understood as such.

I. BARTH'S AGREEMENT WITH THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

Küng gives a picture of Barth's doctrine of justification (pp. 21-101; cf. also 253ff.). In the second section he also gives the Catholic doctrine of justification (pp. 105-276). In this second section he is undoubtedly interested in working out as far as possible those aspects of the Catholic doctrine which must be of primary importance for an accord with Barth. In doing so, Küng undoubtedly includes theological propositions which are not simply taken for granted in conventioned Catholic theology – which does not mean at once that they are contested. We shall have [190] occasion to speak of the most important of these propositions. Küng has every right to use them. If we voice now and then a mild wish for greater clarity and less ambiguity, as can be done with regard to even the best theological works, this is no reason for doubting the orthodoxy of the general presentation of the Catholic doctrine of justification in Küng. Its orthodoxy has also been attested by Bouyer, de Broglie, Ebneter,[2] Stirnimann and many others. If Küng gives more space to truths which Barth misses in Catholic doctrine, than to those which are known to Barth, the procedure is understandable, given the object of his discussion. His point is to show that those very truths which Barth finds lacking in the Catholic position are actually held in it, the truths which he declares must never be given up if the gospel is to be maintained. Küng is not open to the reproach of having suppressed or minimized for the sake of his thesis those Catholic truths which seem at first sight unpleasant or misleading to Protestants. He tries to explain them and make them intelligible. And this is the task of controversial theology, which is not allowed to attribute

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[1] Remarks about the book of Hans Küng, *Justification. The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (London & New York 1964).

[2] Cf. e.g. A. Ebneter in *Orientierung* 21 (1957) 157: 'We may say in general that Küng's presentation gives the orthodox doctrine as taught by the Church'. Similar positive verdicts (from J. Aranguren, H. Fries, N. Greitemann, R. Grosche, J. P. Michael, W. Seibel, E. Stakemeier, W. H. van de Pol) are to be found in H. Küng, 'Rechtfertigung in katholischer Besinnung', *Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung* 125 (1957) 619-621, 637-639. Stirnimann too may be taken as a friendly witness, in so far as he 'stresses very clearly' (*Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 4 [1957] 321f.), that 'the most important reserves' which he makes 'are concerned with questions which are dealt with "intra muros"'. It seems to me however that Küng deserves more good will, a more sympathetic understanding and a juster and more balanced consideration of all the elements in his presentation than he finds, to my mind, in Stirnimann. But Küng has already expressed himself sufficiently on this matter.

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either stupidity or malice to its opponent. On this basis, all that is left is to explain one's own doctrine better, more comprehensively, more fully, from new standpoints and in other contexts and another vocabulary, in the hope that the intelligent and benevolent opponent may understand one's real meaning and can agree that it is correct. If one does not take this course, one has really renounced any effort at dialogue, even though one does not admit this officially.

Küng therefore presents much of the Catholic doctrine of justification from stand-points other than the usual ones. He says some things expressly which are elsewhere skipped as being 'questions in themselves'. This is not only his right but his duty in controversial theology, provided that [191] he says nothing that may not be said in the Catholic Church, and is not led by a false eirenism to pass over in silence what must be said in the Catholic Church. But Küng has fulfilled these conditions. When his business brings him to make use of theological themes which are not simply doctrines of the magisterium, he is also within his rights. He can think that they are attested in Scripture or tradition and that they could contribute helpfully to the image of the Catholic doctrine of justification which non-Catholics might find convincing. But more important still in this connexion is a reason which may be looked on as basic: may it not be that a truth (a defined one, for instance) will only appear intelligible and acceptable to a non-Catholic when it is enunciated in conjunction with a truth which is not defined, which is indeed perhaps controverted? If one starts by accepting the formal teaching authority of the Church, there will be no problems in this matter. But things are different in controversy with Protestant Christians. It is the other way round: they often have difficulties in accepting the formal authority of the magisterium, because they have difficulties with doctrines taught by the magisterium. To overcome *this* inhibition, it may be quite necessary existentially in controversial theology to have recourse to assertions and theological propositions which are *not* official teaching, in order to make defined truths more assimilable. It may be necessary to use mere theology in order to proclaim dogmatic truth.[3] How could one for instance give an intelligible account today of the Catholic doctrine on original sin, without stressing and developing the theological proposition about the analogous character of this sin in comparison with personal sin? This is actually the only way even for Catholic theologians to learn something from theological controversy. We are often too little ready to learn, and that is why we are so little successful in teaching. We have to emphasize this, in order that what follows may be understood correctly.

Now Barth declares in his accompanying letter (pp. 11-12), expressly and almost solemnly, both that Küng's presentation of the doctrine of [192] justification is correct, and that he could accept the presentation of the doctrine which Küng puts forward as the Catholic one.[4] On the second point Barth makes the reservation that Catholics have to decide whether what

[3] It is not really unfortunate that now and again the main witness adduced is a relatively 'lone' theologian, whose authority will not tell particularly with the reader who is not already convinced of the correctness of the proposition in question. And there is likewise no strict principle which enables us to say that a view for which one can quote a Catholic theologian who has not been officially challenged, is thereby proved to be at least tolerable '*intra muros*'. But in any case, Küng mostly quotes so many good authorities, that he must be said to have proved that the propositions which have no official standing can still find a place in Catholic theology.

[4] This second point, to my mind, was not given its due weight in Ebneter's article. For if we bear it in mind, it will not do to put a question-mark after Küng's presentation of Barth's doctrine by appealing to Barth's dogmatic theology – which again needs interpretation. To be able to question Küng's conclusions, one would have to explain how it was that Barth could declare himself to be in agreement with Küng's presentation of Catholic doctrine (put forward as agreeing with Barth's), though Ebneter admits that this presentation is correct. If one refuses to admit that there is agreement, as Küng aimed at proving, there is only one answer left: Barth read this presentation of Catholic doctrine with so much good will and through such strong Barthian spectacles, that he simply read his own doctrine into it – in other words, he must have completely misunderstood Küng. This is not *a priori* impossible. But it would need to be proved very exactly and seriously. And meanwhile we must presume the contrary.

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Küng puts forward as his own view is really the Catholic doctrine of justification. This reservation can be catered for. Küng's presentation is Catholic. Not in the sense that everything it says is defined or universal doctrine, but in the sense that none of it is in contradiction to any doctrine of the magisterium. More one cannot ask. Otherwise all a Catholic theologian could do would be to recite word for word the Council of Trent, which is obviously not all that can be asked of him. For it follows from the nature of things and from the history of Catholic theology that as soon as a Catholic theologian takes it upon himself, at his own risk, to explain and expound what the Church teaches, he must inevitably go beyond the doctrine to be explained and make affirmations with which not everyone will agree fully. To my mind, the most one could object to in Küng's presentation of the Catholic doctrine is that some elements of it could be 'misunderstood' and are therefore 'dangerous' and so on. In answer to this one can only ask in return whether they *must* be misunderstood – and affirm that they need not be – and whether the supposed 'danger' is really greater than that which terrifies the pure and simple 'orthodox', whose great fear is that they may not meet with agreement from the other side. Or – for heaven's sake – has contradiction from the other side become the unambiguous criterion of our having kept to the truth and of having enunciated it in the best possible way?

This two-fold agreement on the part of Barth is astonishing. It seems to me that it should have been greeted with greater surprise and joy than it has been hitherto, as far as I know. Barth is not simply *the* Protestant [193] doctrine of justification. Here (p. 276) Küng in fact exaggerates a little at the end of his book. Schlink, for instance, whom Küng cites (p. 275) as contesting a merely imputed righteousness, would still maintain that he could not accept the Tridentine doctrine of justification. But is not this agreement still amazing and something that can stir the heart and the spirit? Barth is not just anybody in Protestant theology. And he says: You give a hundred pages to my doctrine of justification; the presentation is excellent and completely acceptable. And I have no difficulty in accepting what you put forward as the Catholic doctrine. Is this something easily imaginable? Or is it evidence of a development which strengthens our Christian hope, which God's commandment obliges us to have, that it is *possible* to advance in matters of the unity of the Christian faith? It is simple and comfortable to remain 'sober' and 'realistic' in these matters and not to let oneself 'be excited' – because after all, everything remains the same. But it would be more Christian to allow oneself to hope, to give God thanks, that everything is not at a deadlock, and to deduce from this event that it is worth while working for a real understanding in controversial theology.

We should not be too quick to say that this consent is only 'verbal'. It is restricted, to be sure, for the moment in any case to *one* point, the doctrine of justification, and Barth is separated from us in the faith by enough other things (original sin, doctrine of election, sacraments, Church, papacy, Mariology, etc.), as Küng indeed recognizes. And undoubtedly Barth's theology has a certain 'slant' (as Küng notes (pp. 270-272) and remarks on expressly), which can lead to dissent not only in these points, but also in the doctrine of justification itself. No doubt certain statements of Barth need to be interpreted with benevolence – but what theologian or Father of the Church can do without it? – and to be considered in the light of his doctrine as a whole, if they are to be given a Catholic sense. One can certainly ask whether we (and Barth himself) are not bound to understand his doctrine of justification otherwise than Küng and Barth himself do, if they think it out with reference to certain other positions of Barth, his doctrine of predestination, for instance, and develops it consistently on such lines. However, one could just as well put the question the other way round and correct Barth's other positions in the light of his doctrine of justification; in a theology which stems from copious use of Scripture texts and tries to take all their assertions

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seriously, there is – happily – no systematic principle which [194] claims to be so primary and unique that everything else is reduced to a dependent function of it.

All this is true, but it does not give us the right to speak of a merely verbal consent. It is not our intention to debate with experts in Barthian theology whether Küng's interpretation corresponds exactly and in all regards to the objective contents of Barth's Church dogmatics. That would be too difficult a task, which must be left to the experts in this field. It is enough for the non-expert and more important objectively, as we shall shortly have to show, that Barth himself considers that Küng renders his views correctly and in *both* parts of his book. And the layman has only to add finally that it is Barth who must know best what he really means. We can believe him and register the fact gladly and thankfully, even though we know that it is far from making Barth a Catholic. In contrast to this, it is in any case a secondary, if not superfluous, matter,[5] to point an accusing finger and say: yes, there and there Barth has said something which is inconsistent with that! Why should Barth not have understood better what he really meant, as he was reading Küng? Why should such a progressive piece of controversial theology not have offered him formulations in which he sees his interests clearly served, and which in the eyes of Catholics avoid the dangers which made us anxious about the previous formulations of Barth? Is an agreement arrived at in such a way merely verbal? We do not of course mean to say that those who claim to understand Barth better than he does himself are *only* seeing ghosts. They see dangers which are really present in Barth. But there is something else that we must remember here, and the fundamental importance of such considerations is so great that we are justified in dwelling on them for a moment. It is that we cannot pursue controversial theology merely in terms of objective truths, that is, we cannot confine our debate with our Protestant brethren to the subject of the Church, the papacy and the magisterium, until agreement is reached *on these points*, on the plea that any other agreement must be precarious and hedged about with reserves, as long as there is no agreement about these formal criteria of orthodoxy. For the truth is, as we have said, that the existing [195] disagreement about these formal criteria lives (to some extent), psychologically and historically, from dissent with regard to other matters. If this is so, then when conversing with Protestants, we are exactly in the position that a Thomist and a Molinist would be in during their debates, if they did not know all the time that they both owed allegiance to the one Church and its magisterium. The Molinist could always say to the Thomist: yes, you accept verbally the freedom of man under grace; but if you were really serious about it and really understood what it meant, you could not defend the *praemotio physica*. And the Thomist could always say to the Molinist: yes, you hold verbally the efficaciousness of grace even with regard to freedom, and you reject verbally the semi-Pelagian position. But with the *scientia media* you maintain positions which nullify in fact these verbal concessions. And each of the two would declare that though there were two aspects to his doctrine in each case, he refused to allow himself to be faced with the dilemma of having to choose between the two aspects of his doctrine, or to pick out one aspect as more decisive, or as more important if he had to make a choice between them. He would insist that he cannot give up either aspect of his position. To put it more generally: wherever an agreement is reached between two men, who have come to this agreement from *different* directions,[6] and when this consent is not based on a third element, that of formal authority

[5] We still of course have the task of reading Barth critically, of noting inconsistencies, etc. The fact that he declares a certain presentation of the Catholic doctrine of justification to be acceptable, obviously does not mean that every single sentence which he wrote down previously must be beyond suspicion. But we have the right and even the duty of interpreting favourably, as far as possible, his individual statements and lines of thought.

[6] This coming together from *different* sides, which is still noticeable in each of those who have reached agreement, is in fact the destiny which weighs down the finite spirit in its search for truth, since it inevitably has different perspectives even when it is looking at the same truth and reality. And since this always makes itself

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which both have accepted prior to the debate, the consent is always and essentially precarious and threatened, and can always be called in question. Indeed, the fact of consent can never be established with absolute certainty, because every *formula concordiae* aimed at establishing that the parties have agreed in fact and not merely in words, needs in turn a *formula concordiae* for the *formula concordiae* and so *ad infinitum*. For this reason, to say that agreement is merely verbal is absurd. The *process of agreement* upon truth always takes place on common sociological ground between men, and if it is reached *there*, it is reached in fact. But it is reached *there*, when it is reached in words and statements, (verbally, if one wants to put it that way), which are employed by men who listen carefully and speak circumspectly.

[196] We cannot ask such men to try to see into the inmost depths of the spirit of others, where only God can see and tell what they are 'really' thinking. In a controversial theology in particular the danger could arise that a too neurotic fear of not being perhaps 'really' in agreement 'in depth' could disrupt the unity which is possible. Such fears then give rise to those strange efforts (noticeable in the theology of controversy) to find new sets of ever more subtle formulae and nuances so as to prove the existence of mutual dissent. This procedure is found necessary at points where our ancestors of the sixteenth century, less subtle in their phraseology, would have registered a disagreement which everyone could recognize and express – or would have simply reached an agreement. We have now reached a point in many items of controversial theology where only the finest theological eloquence can manage to show the initiates (not the normal man) where the real difference is to be found. In such cases (there are of course many others of a different type) it would be better and more Christian to admit that one is in agreement or could perfectly well be; just as Barth has done, courageously and soberly. To have the right to live in separate Churches, one would have to be sure (to put it crudely for once) that one is clearly in disagreement about the truth. It is not enough not to be quite sure of being really in agreement, or of what the other exactly means or of having understood him quite correctly. This principle results, to my mind, from the Christian duty of unity in one Church and from the essential impossibility of an *absolute* certainty about an *ultimate* inward uniformity of conviction. Absolute certainty about *one's own inmost* orthodoxy in the sight of God (which would be the presupposition of such absolute certainty) seems to me to be as impossible and as un-Catholic as absolute certainty about one's own justice in the sight of God. And perhaps the formulas of union of ancient times, which were drawn up apparently rather artificially and as a matter of politics, were not in fact the worst. The artificiality of an apparently merely verbal unity is often the only thing possible for men who are placed before the incomprehensible mystery. They must try to find a formula which allows both sides to retain what they consider as indispensable in the controversy and in the act of union; and one which obliges both sides to see and to express the truth which each had overlooked in the position of the other, or if not overlooked, had not seen clearly enough to recognize that it had been preserved.

It would therefore be wrong to add to every formula of agreement: [197] keep on asking questions, and divergencies will show, which were only masked by the very general formulations. As if such suspicions could not be occasioned by every agreement among Catholics! Or would it not be said today that Galtier and Parente, for instance, conceal very important 'divergencies' under the same Chalcedonian formula? Even among us Catholics there should he a limit to cross-questioning, if one wishes to avoid discovering all sorts of differences in matters on which we wish to be and must be and *are* at one. In spite of the fact that the abiding truth is always liable to being corrupted by and *in* finite man, men can be

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felt, unity and truth, if it is really to be seen and made permanent, must include love, humility, mutual tolerance and patience.

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really at one. This of course we cannot dwell on now, as an exact proof of it is a matter of the philosophy and theology of human knowledge. Not everyone who could fall has in fact fallen, even though his genuine proneness to falling could be demonstrated. In the same way, an erroneous opinion is not held by everyone of whom it could be proved that from his mentality, from his loosely formulated premises, from his placing of emphasis, that he was liable to fall into the error in question. Least of all should one use a hyper-intelligent dialectic to force him either to overcome positively at once the peril of his presuppositions, which he often cannot and is not obliged to do, *or* to acknowledge the full-blown error.

It may be thought on the other hand that without at least the formal authority of which we spoke earlier nothing more than a verbal agreement could be possible. But this would be to overlook two things. Firstly, formal authority as such and union under it can indeed promote and guarantee agreement on a given matter, but cannot replace it in essential things. Union is not possible simply on the grounds that one accepts in common the same formal authority *a priori*, if it is accepted simply as a formal authority – to some extent, simply by *fides implicita*. Secondly, we do share with Barth a common authority, Scripture. Why should we not feel at one, where, having accepted unreservedly the *same* testimony of Scripture, we permit ourselves to think that we have come to an agreement about its interpretation. The Church has a common official teaching, but there are also several different explanations of it. Only the naive who have not understood them can separate these explanations cleanly and wholly from the general doctrine binding on all, and so find it no problem but simply obvious that we should be united ‘on real matters’. But if these different schools come from very different directions and even had ancestors ‘tainted with original sin’, called heretics, why should Barth’s [198] doctrine be only admitted to be above suspicion, when its origin could no longer be recognized?

The fact remains, as we think, that Küng’s book has achieved an astonishing result: the consent of a great Protestant theologian to a presentation of a doctrine of justification which must be considered as capable of and needing improvement on certain points, but which cannot be designated as un-Catholic. One can be a Catholic and hold this doctrine of justification, which Barth has declared to be the same as his own. Barth cannot therefore affirm that it is the doctrine of justification which prevents him from being a Catholic, as long as Küng’s presentation has not been condemned by the Catholic magisterium as un-Catholic on some essential point, or as long as it has not been rejected by Catholic theologians as clearly contradicting Catholic doctrine. Barth asks does Küng’s presentation really render the Catholic doctrine. The answer must be the counter-declaration that an official approbation of this rendering is not to be expected but that neither is it necessary; one could be of Küng’s opinion and remain in full and positive agreement with the Church and its official doctrine. For it is not at all likely that the limits set by the magisterium (‘definitions’) in its defensive statements of a truth, will express adequately all aspects of the truth as it exists in the mind of the Church. Nor are they meant to spare the individual Christian the trouble of trying to understand the truth and so forming his own theological opinion.

II. MINOR POINTS OF CRITICISM

We have already said that we have no doubts about the orthodoxy of Küng’s presentation of the Catholic doctrine of justification. But this does not mean that there are no questions to be asked and no objections of a minor nature to be raised on some particular points. It would be foolish to take this to mean that we are half-way to withdrawing our general verdict. Orthodox theology can occasion such questions and misgivings, as is shown by the differences of opinion which exist among theologians. And often enough the unquestionable

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orthodoxy of a manual – where it does not simply repeat Denzinger – means no more than that although one could put critical questions, one has given up doing so either from boredom or routine. But when someone begins to do theology on his own, in a dialogue with a new and serious opponent, the reader finds that [199] the old becomes young and that he is listening hard, putting questions and forming objections. Some of these are presented here. They are all concerned with the Catholic doctrine, not with the exposition of Barth's position.

(*a*) *Justification and sanctification*: *faith and love*

One may readily concede that Scripture makes a distinction between justification and sanctification: it uses distinct terms for the two and so makes the distinction in the same perspective as that in which it sees the one salvation of the sinner by grace. Küng proves this directly from Scripture and can appeal to important Catholic exegetes. We may also readily concede to Küng that it is not unjustifiable (*if* and *in so far* as the above distinction exists) to see *faith*, in contradistinction to love, as primarily ordained to justification. We can then speak in this definite sense of 'justification' by *faith* in a way in which we cannot speak of justification by love. Further, to avoid any misunderstanding of Küng, we must expressly emphasize the fact that where he attributes man's justification to faith (justification here being very pregnantly distinguished formally, not materially, from sanctification), he speaks expressly of living faith, of *fides formata* (p. 250f.; 252), of faith to which love is inwardly present, and that hence his doctrine is irreproachable. But still this chapter of Küng's book leaves something to be desired. And one feels that even if these desires were met with, one could still understand Barth and go to meet him as far as possible (even as far as consent). To begin with, it does not seem to me to remain always clear in Küng as in Barth, whether justification and sanctification are two aspects of one and the same process, *or* two *stages*, one after the other. It seems to me that according to Trent and its ordinary interpretation in Catholic theology and also according to the Scriptures, one must speak of two sides of one and the same process, *not* of two phases one after another – at least if we understand justification not as the 'objective' process of 'redemption', but as that real, efficacious absolution from sin, which makes the individual righteous when he believes (in the Pauline sense) and is baptized.

Justification may be understood (as in Barth) as that objective and *real* transformation of the existential situation of each (and of 'all') which is already realized by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ (prior to a subjective decision (faith) and a sacramental conferring (baptism) in the individual). Then of course justification may be seen as [200] a special phase of salvation which precedes the event in which man consciously and really ratifies and makes his own this existential situation, which was created for him without his doing by Christ alone. What the second phase is to be called *in this case* (simply 'sanctification' or 'subjective' justification-sanctification) would be a further question. In any case Küng (like Barth) is quite right to avoid strange nominalistic ways of speaking, in spatial categories, and not to restrict to subjective redemption the real importance of redemption in Jesus Christ for the individual. No matter how one forms the ontological categories and concepts which may help one to grasp the matter clearly, there can be no doubt about the thing itself. Prior to any subjective attitude, man *is* really different (from what he *would* be as mere creature and mere sinner), because redemption has taken place in Christ, because God loves him in Christ as long as he is on pilgrimage: so much so, that for all eternity, even in his damnation, man remains determined by this 'is'. This 'is' which determines him for ever is not procured by faith and love. He rather 'takes cognisance' of it through faith and love, accepting it of course and ratifying it existentially, so that through this act, something happens in him which means his salvation, because if he 'took cognisance' of it with refusal or indifference, this same reality, this 'is', would mean his damnation. If we call this 'is' a

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supernatural existential we could say: prior to any subjective appropriation of salvation, man is inwardly determined by a supernatural existential, which consists of the fact that Christ in his death 'justified' sinful man before the all-holy God. Anyone who finds such terminology painful, need only think of the following in simple scholastic terms: if through faith bestowed by grace and through love man *can* be subjectively justified before God, and if this 'can be' obviously *precedes* the act of (subjective) justification, then this 'can', this potency, is *his* on the one hand, hence 'intrinsic' to him (no matter how much it permanently depends on the grace of God); and it is still something on the other hand which is not due to him by 'nature', but only comes to him by the death of Christ. This *intrinsic* ability, necessarily prior to the subjective appropriation of salvation of which it is the vehicle and in which it becomes one's own, can be simply called the supernatural existential of being (objectively) redeemed or of being (objectively) justified. Difficulties can really only arise where one thinks that man ceases to be at the point where his skin forms a limit, and that everything is extrinsic which cannot be localized imaginatively within this sack of skin; or when one thinks [201] that complicated words are being used for something obvious which every Christian knows and which could be put more simply. There is good reason for putting it so, because it is the only way of making it clear in theological concepts, though it is of course always known by the *genuine* Christian: the fact that the event of the subjective justification of the individual is really and most intimately connected with Christ and his cross. It is not simply a subjective conversion to a God who by reason of his metaphysical goodness has to be gracious in any case, if we ourselves are only interested in it. This is the only way to make it clear that the death on the cross is not merely a historical matter, but that it is now the essential vehicle of my salvation, since God has done something *to* me *in* Christ before I do anything. All this is correct and of decisive importance. And it may and can be said that the supernatural existential of being justified (objectively) by Christ before God precedes the subjective appropriation of salvation – which of course also brings about supremely 'objective' relationships.

But – to return to the actual question – if one is speaking of the *subjective* justification of the individual by faith and baptism, justification and sanctification can only be considered as two *sides* or aspects of one and the same process. The two concepts can still be *formally* different in content, so that one need not be able to say formally the *same* thing of justification and sanctification. And this formal distinction need not be an otiose matter of pure hair-splitting. And in fact it is not. For if one distinguishes different aspects in one and the same reality, for the sake of our necessarily manifold knowledge, though these aspects cannot be separated in the thing itself then and only then does one gain a full view of this reality. One can respond to it fully by a multiplicity of attitudes, which are distinct from one another and must be so, and can only be so when the *difference* of the inseparable aspects are seen in the one thing. Thus, for instance, justice and goodness are inseparable aspects in God. But I must distinguish them to be able to respond realistically to the one reality of God by a multiplicity of acts which correspond to each different aspect: for instance, by fear of God and by confidence, which are not the same thing. But if justification and sanctification are merely different aspects – not different succeeding phases – of the same process (and are really such!), then I can ordain a particular human act specifically to justification, in so far as it is brought about by God, and another to sanctification, in so far as this is also God's action on me. If one liked, [202] one could put it this way: justification takes place when one knows and makes one's own the efficacious absolution of sinners which is the work of God alone in Christ. It may then be rightly said to take place precisely in 'faith', because this is the terminology of Scripture and clear expression is thus given to its character of being mere acceptance of the act of God on man – this acceptance remaining of course an action brought about by God as the deed of man. It is thus distinguished from a work accomplished by man,

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in which man produces something (autonomously in the Pelagian sense or by grace in the Christian sense) which claims to be valuable before God (wrongly or rightly). And in view of this, there is no harm in refusing to say that justification (formally as such, i.e. in so far as it can be distinguished from sanctification) takes place through love (formally as such, in so far as it can be distinguished as one aspect of one total act of the process of justification from other aspects, faith and hope).

However: if justification and sanctification are only two aspects of the one process, love must be included in this process as much as faith. Hence it seems to us that Küng leaves himself somewhat open to misunderstanding when he speaks at times as if love, in the faith *that justifies*, is present merely in embryo or initially, or as if it is not really a presupposition for the one process, of which one aspect is in fact justification.[7] On the contrary, faith, in so far as it justifies, is a faith informed by love, where love itself must also be fully present, if the process is to be one of justification. Further, one should not try to prove the immediate relationship of justification-faith (in contrast to sanctification-love), by ranging love among (grace-inspired) 'works'. Theologically speaking love is no more a work than faith. One may, with a perfect right, not only distinguish faith from the Pharisaically autonomous works of a total or partial ('synergistic') *self*-justification before God; one may also make a justifiable distinction between faith and work[8] brought about by grace as fruit [203] of the Spirit, where God favours us so that we can bring forth fruits of eternal life worthy of praise and reward. And in *this* sense we may say with St Paul and the Council of Trent that we are justified by faith and not by works, because according to the Council *nothing at all* (not even faith) which precedes justification (and sanctification) merits this justification (and sanctification), since such fruits and works can only be produced by one who has been changed from death to life, from being an evil tree to being a good tree. But even under this aspect, love, as the way in which justification and sanctification take place, belongs to the side of faith and not of works. Not only because in justification as such itself, which has no works by reason of which it is given, love is already there, whereas the supernaturally meritorious works only follow justification (and sanctification). But because love, as much as and even more than faith, is a process in which man looks away from himself, forbidden to envisage any merit (even if objectively some has been placed therein), and gives himself totally and without reserve to God for his own sake (and not for ours) – because God gives himself to us in grace and therein, by communicating to us the Spirit of his love, first makes it possible for us to leave ourselves.

'Works', even those which do not try to be self-justification before God, but which are the gift of God who grants to his beloved child the possibility and the reality of works valid before him and his judgment, are different from this love. To put it in scholastic terms: by (good) works (in so far as they can and must be distinguished from love as such), I mean the finite moral good, which is aimed at in love set free by God himself, in which I may and must love myself; by love I mean God himself (as in faith), as he has given himself to me by his act in Christ, and only so. Hence this love is precisely the truest climax of what takes place in faith. It is not something which comes after faith, like a work. It is radical, loving and total

[7] Thus Küng says (249) that as regards justification 'man has no other recourse than to place his whole trust in the Lord'. Either that is too little, because if man is to be justified, he must love, or one must make the sentence mean in fact that only he who loves puts his whole trust in the Lord.

[8] When Küng, appealing to St Thomas (238f.) says that not only are the works of the ritual law excluded from justification in faith, but also the works of the decalogue, his statement is correct but would have benefited by more precision. The works of the decalogue are of a two-fold kind which are to be sharply distinguished: the effort to accomplish such works autonomously, by one's own strength, and without grace, - and the works of the decalogue as fruit of the Holy Spirit. One cannot simply say that both types of works of the decalogue are excluded in the same way, though this may be said of both types with regard to the process of justification, in the sense of *Denz*. 801.

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capitulation of man before God. It can only be accomplished by man when he gives up the sinful fearfulness of his self-centred autonomy to see and accept the fact that God loves him and has accepted him in Christ: which leaves him culpably stupid if he does not dare to orientate his love away from himself. Catholic dogmatic theology recognizes no love of God except where this act itself is an act of faith [204] (formally or *eminenter*), because the higher and more complete activity of the one Christian existence includes the partial activity or aspect and preserves its formal nature – which cannot be said of every 'work' as such. It seems to us to follow from what has been said that the subjective attainment of salvation is justification as forgiveness of sin and sanctification as inward quickening in one act with two distinguishable formal aspects. And in the adult, this single process is so determined by faith (with hope and contrition) and love, that these two aspects of the subjective appropriation can be ordained to the two other aspects of salvation (as an act of God). But in this one process, love plays as decisive a role as faith. It is not merely required to be there 'in embryo', but has the peculiarity and uniqueness, in contrast to all other modes of behaviour, that it contains the whole in itself and is not merely a partial element of the whole. To maintain that the sanctifying process of justification embraces faith and love as *aspects* of the one process is not of course to deny that given the temporally and materially pluralistic constitution of man various acts are possible, which do not bring with them this event of justification as such and as a whole. Still, these acts are already orientated to it under the impulse of grace, and among these acts there can be found a 'faith' which has not yet transformed itself into love and so, being *fides nondum caritate formata*, does not yet justify. It may be pointed out that the doctrine of Trent on the temporal and historical plurality of preparation for justification (under the impulse of a grace already becoming efficacious) is far from proving that one should be able to indicate existentially the moment of entry into justification for the individual. It may be pointed out that the doctrine of the possibility of faith's remaining in spite of the loss of grace, as proposed by Trent, is primarily a distinction of principle with regard to the nature of things. It does not decide whether in practice in very many or in most cases mortal sin is not also a sin against faith. After all, the outward confession of faith and a certain psychological readiness to believe and to be influenced by the preaching of faith are no sure proofs that man believes in the depth of his being by a faith inspired by grace. And it is certain that for a more penetrating 'psychology', these Christian attitudes, in spite of their plurality, are more closely linked together than a happy-go-lucky everyday experience thinks. Hence most sins are committed because one does not sincerely believe, and vice versa, every sin by its very nature tends to fulfil itself in unbelief. All this is true, yet according to Trent one cannot deny on [205] principle (nor does Küng of course) that faith can exist as the initial working of grace and yet of itself not justify. The inevitable consequence is clear: when speaking of the one process of justification-sanctification, one cannot push love so completely to one side as Küng seems to do at times.

(*b*) *Faith as an act inspired by grace*

We may here call attention to something which links up very fittingly with the question which we have just treated. Küng (like Barth) is very interested in proving that faith, which is the presupposition of (subjective) justification, is truly not a 'work' and not a 'merit' with regard to justification. To make this – quite correct – point, Küng has recourse, or so it appears to me, to the notion found in Barth that one must distinguish[9] between an act of faith

[9] One can and must of course distinguish, with Trent to which Küng appeals (248), between the act of faith which disposes to justification and the infused virtue of faith. But this distinction does not simply mean that the former is purely human and the latter given by God. The act is as radically a gift of God as the infused virtue – which are distinguished not by their *cause* but by their *duration*, as *actus* and *habitus*. But if this is clear, I find the argument put forward (249) to explain why the act of faith can do as little as any other human act for

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which man makes as the condition of justification, and a faith which *God* brings about – which latter, (am I right?) Küng then identifies with the 'infused' habit of faith (255). Granted this distinction it is of course clear that the faith which man has in a very human way [206] and in merely a human way, cannot be a 'work' which can claim justification as its reward; even though it is active and free, it is really only man's allowing the divine action to happen to him. It seems to me however, that this is not a very happy way of speaking, and not a very good explanation of what is to be maintained, namely that the grace of justification is absolutely beyond all meriting. I even find that the ordinary Catholic text-book way of talking is better suited to Barth's purposes than the formulas given by Küng. Küng (p. 258) rightly rejects any 'synergism' in grace, which would make God and man pull at the same rope and each credit himself with half the achievement. But if one rejects such synergism – and the Catholic doctrine of grace is not a synergism of this type, in spite of the '*cooperari*' of Trent – one should also not distinguish between a divine and a human faith, as if they were two different realities. The very faith which man has as his own free human act is the faith which God gives us in his action upon us, because he can give to the creature not only its passively accepted determinations, but the free act of its 'yes' to the grace of God; not only the offer, but the acceptance of the offer is entirely the grace of God. And since the acceptance is free, the very freedom of this acceptance is once more the gift of God. And every Catholic theologian, including Küng of course, knows and confesses – the Molinists too, for that matter – that God's grace is the *natural* basic possibility of the acceptance, inasmuch as the power to accept is created by God out of his free bounty, and – as Küng would rightly add (cf. sect. III, below) – this faculty is only preserved in sinful man because he has been created in Christ and redeemed by him. The *power* to accept is God's free gift: it is the possibility of an act which really *corresponds* to the call of God's personal self-disclosure, of a supernatural salutary act, as we say. It can therefore be only fully constituted by prevenient grace, which alone makes man truly capable of believing in a way which is for his salvation. Beyond this again, the acceptance of justification is the gift of God, according to the universal doctrine of theologians, absolutely decisively – a point that Küng does not stress enough against Barth, though it seems to clinch the matter: not only the *possibility* of the acceptance, in all its components, but the free actuation itself of this possibility by man, that is, what the actual act adds to the power of acting, is again the free gift of God. He acts through what Catholic theology calls the necessarily efficacious grace of God, in contradistinction to 'sufficient' grace, which gives the full power, but not the actual free act. [207] Every Catholic theologian confesses that the salutary *act*, even in the extra element which distinguishes it from the God-given *power* to make a salutary act, is once more the free gift of the grace of God which cannot be merited. Hence likewise man's faith itself is the pure grace of God; in so far as it precedes justification, it is not merely not something which could

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justification, somewhat hard to follow: namely, that it cannot *cause* justification because it is itself an element of the justification which *God* works in man. We shall discuss expressly in the next pages the sense in which Trent says (*Denz*. 801) that faith does not bring about justification. We must however admit explicitly that in another context (e.g. 244) Küng speaks of 'God's justifying grace which overcomes and gives life to these human acts', or can say that human acts 'must cling to and be informed by the reality of grace given ("infused") by God in Christ' (249). But Küng goes on to say – though primarily as a rendering of Barth's position, which however is obviously accepted – 'The *believer* [so he does believe!] is wholly dependent on God's action which allows a new state of existence to become real in him and only thus makes him capable of the *true* [hence obviously different from the preceding!] faith necessary for justification' (my italics). And then one has once more the ambiguous impression, that an effort is being made to construct a purely human faith (beside another which is of a divine type), to be able to say more easily that it does not justify, that it has merely a 'cognitive character'. From the point of view of the Catholic doctrine of grace, one should really say that a human 'faith', which is not itself the work of God's grace, is not even a correct 'recognition' of the objective redemption (the objective 'justification' in Barth's terminology): it would not only not be 'creative', it would not even be 'cognitive'.

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merit grace (because it is 'human'): it is itself a grace bestowed by God. The question therefore cannot arise, as to whether it could merit grace, because it is itself a grace.

Here we can see once more what we may rightly concede to Küng in the previous question. The act, which following Scripture we call 'faith' consists precisely of the fact that it accepts itself directly for what it is: the free grace of God. One could almost say: the act inspired by supernatural grace, in so far as it understands itself directly and explicitly as the act *of God* which justifies man is faith (*fides caritate viva*). For *in itself*, the gracious and gratuitous character of an event or of a gift received is not diminished or weakened, if it is understood as the *effect* – and hence 'merited' – of a previous act which is itself a pure grace of God's absolute and gracious initiative alone. In the eyes of a Catholic theologian, it does not derogate from the graciousness of the order of salvation, it merely describes in juridical terms (which are also found in Scripture) what Scripture likewise depicts as growth and development and fruit-bearing of a God-given life, if an act inspired by grace is called 'meritorious', with regard to an act which stems from it or with regard to an 'increase' of grace. (From a certain point of view, every subsequent act and all 'increase' of grace are linked to some extent to grace which is absolutely gratuitous and unmerited; and furthermore, *every* salutary act and hence perseverance in 'increased', 'habitual' grace depends immediately and ever anew on each new efficacious grace. Thus all depends on something absolutely 'actual', the ever new event of God's goodness and favour, which as such cannot be merited at all.)

Yet Catholic theology affirms with the Council of Trent that even this faith which leads to justification in no way merits this justification, even though it is a gift of God's free grace: such is the anxiety to remove the notion of merit all the way from this faith right up to justification. When therefore it is kept in mind that 'human' faith itself is a work of divine grace, we have undoubtedly an even stronger assurance against the idea that the faith which leads to justification is another sort of 'work' which could merit salvation – a stronger assurance than it seems to me is given [208] in Küng's presentation.[10] This would also make it clearer, why Catholic theology is not in danger of holding a doctrine of an apocatastasis or of reducing faith to a mere act of recognition – which is ultimately of no importance whatsoever for the decision which God has taken in Christ alone. Faith itself is the grace and act of God in Christ, not merely the 'objective' justification (redemption) by God alone as it is taken cognisance of in faith. If this faith itself has real significance for salvation, the 'triumph of grace' (to use G. C. Berkouwer's terms) is not thereby diminished. For grace itself triumphs in the same way in the 'objective' and in the 'subjective' sphere, because it supports the *whole* reality of man's salvation, which, being in the created order, is constituted by a polarity of two mutually irreducible realities: by the conditions of and the room for and the previous possibility of freedom in the creature on the one hand, and by the act of freedom itself on the other. But both components are the result of grace, each in its own way; in both grace triumphs. But to say that grace is deprived of its full triumph where it is not accepted – that is forbidden to man. All he could say in this case would be that *man* does not gain his only possible victory, which is to allow himself to be given gifts by the love of God. Whether in the sight of God, and for him, God's spurned love has not conquered, or whether it

[10] It would not then be necessary to insist so anxiously, as Küng appears to do (253, 246), that faith is merely the condition, not the cause of justification. It may be safely considered as *that through which* God works in us in his act of justification. When we have put it this way, it remains equally clear that faith does not merit justification. Küng himself speaks boldly – in his interpretation of Barth, 82f. – of the 'creative power' of faith, which faith itself receives from God. But it is precisely this faith which we mean when we speak of the faith of man who is to be justified; and the act of faith which man freely makes is precisely the faith which God brings about in us.

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celebrates its most incomprehensible triumph – what creature can tell, as long as we are on pilgrimage far from the Lord?

(*c*)

There are *other themes* on which Küng stimulates us to think further and more carefully, and to which he contributes a mass of material from all corners of theology and its history, so that his book is often a useful work of reference. We mention only some of them here, without any further comment: biblical terminology and its normative character – the fact and its limits (pp. 116-118; 123; 180ff.; 195f.; 206); the nature and meaning of [209] tradition and ecclesiastical definitions for theology[11] (pp. 116-124); the Catholic sense of '*simul justus et peccator*' (pp. 231-242); the concept of 'reward as grace' (pp. 263ff.);[12] the relationship of the Logos become man to all time (the pre-existence of the *Verbum incarnandum et incarnatum*) (127-138; 277-288); the effort to go beyond the controversy between Thomists and Scotists on the motive of the incarnation (pp. 127-150; 169-171); the exact interpretation of some canons of the Council of Orange (pp. 176-178; 186; 188); the sense in which the acts of sinners and unbelievers can still be said to be good (pp. 186-188);[13] the biblical and [210] ecclesiastical terminology of freedom, *liberum arbitrium* etc. (pp. 181-185); sin as always an act against Christ[14] (pp. 172f.); the Catholic understanding of '*sola fide*' (pp. 243-256).

III. CREATION AND CHRIST

We come now to a further point, which is perhaps the most interesting in Küng's book. We said at the start that Küng has a perfect right, when seeking agreement with his interlocutor, to appeal to theological propositions which are not express doctrines of the magisterium, the only condition being that they do not contradict such doctrine. This procedure is now

[11] One must also note the explanations which Küng has added in his answer to Stirnimann, *Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung* 125 (1957) 619-621.

[12] We permit ourselves to remark here that these explanations (following J. Schmid and G. Didier) do not seem to us to be among the clearest things that Küng has written. We hold with Trent that every 'work', since it means bringing forth fruit by the action of God, is in the same dimension as the coming blessed life of the same children of God. And hence we continue to think that there is no real difficulty in calling this work a beginning and a cause, and hence objectively, 'from outside' as it were, a meritorious thing with regard to the 'reward in heaven'. This objective connexion results simply from the nature of things, which is that of sowing and harvest. A completely different question is whether this objective connexion of merit and reward may be made the first and last *motive* of the Christian life. As every Catholic schoolboy should know, this question is to be answered with an unambiguous No. Every Christian should know that no one can be saved unless he loves God first and last, and makes this the attitude which encompasses his existence and into which all others must be integrated. But when and in so far as one loves God, one cannot seek in such an act one's merit and one's reward. An act which would do so would not be an act of love. But besides love, in the wide field which it sustains and leaves free, there are and must be, on account of the plurality of man as a creature, other acts and attitudes of man; and the acceptance of this plurality can be an act of the humility of man's love, which is not of course the simplicity of God and hence is not absolutely 'love'. This is not denied when we assert the necessary primacy of love which does not seek the reward which is actually there. Is one therefore bound to say, in order to avoid being a Pharisee, if one is considering matters objectively, that is, not giving motives, that even justified man 'always falls short of the task proposed to him'? His real 'task' was always to allow himself to be surpassed by the demands of the love of God, but to be humble and loving and joyful therein; his ultimate 'duty' was to act, not from duty but from love. His merit (in the objective sense) is precisely in the act of love, which seeks for no reward. But such 'merit', bestowed on him by God's grace, is objectively and truly valuable in heaven.

[13] The statement (180) that 'the majority of Catholic theologians' now concede that there is *de facto* 'no purely natural good acts exist in fact' is undoubtedly somewhat of an exaggeration. Most theologians today would still maintain the contrary against Ripalda and Vasquez. Whether they or the few who are on the other side (Schmaus, for instance) are right is of course another question.

[14] But one can hardly appeal (163) to the Church's rejection of the '*peccatum philosophicum*' to prove this.

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followed by Küng at one point where it is very noticeable. We devote some consideration to it here, not to dispute the theological proposition, but to look for some further light on it.

The thesis is that the actual order of creation (of man and the world) is founded even as a natural order on Christ (the *Verbum incarnandum et incarnatum*) and reposes on him, so that the world even in its natural state is in fact everywhere and always a Christian thing, even though it is possible to some extent to 'prescind' from this, and (another) world without Christ is possible. From this the conclusion is drawn, for instance, that all sin is against Christ, that the conservation of the natural state of man as something capable of salvation is already the grace of Christ. Otherwise sin by its nature would have cast man down to absolute ruin, through death to the 'second' death or through total annihilation. But it was caught up by the mercy of God because it was committed in the order of things belonging to Christ and remains involved in it. Hence too the natural and yet Christ-borne realm being the place of this sin automatically absorbs its consequences. The 'nature' of man which is still present and capable of salvation in the sinner is not 'the *remnant* which survives unharmed in sin', but the beginning of salvation constantly renewed by God's goodness in Christ, against sin and its universally destructive tendency. This new beginning stems from the unrepentant loyalty of God towards his covenant, which has ordained all creation from the start to his absolute yes' to Christ. This eternal affirmation upholds everything from the beginning and can maintain even a given temporal event eternally, as when it envisages the temporal and spatial [211] determinations of the eternal Logos in the flesh. It follows, for instance, that free will, in so far as it survives after sin according to Trent, is not merely a natural, neutral good (lacking only what it should have, its supernatural elevation) but actually a grace of Christ. It only remains because God's merciful loyalty to his covenant in Christ, which upholds everything, even the actual creation, continues to preserve it. Otherwise it would have been buried at least in the damnation of the absolute impossibility of doing otherwise.

This, we hope, is an objective summary of Küng's opinion. We need not dwell on the fact that it goes very far to meet Barth's concept of the priority of the covenant to creation and of Christology to any form of anthropology, nor on the fact that it could actually take the inability of the sinner to do anything of himself for salvation, even further than the Reformers. We have called this theory a theological proposition. But that does not mean that it is no more than an arbitrary hypothesis,[15] without hints or testimonies of it in tradition. On the contrary, Küng can adduce a very impressive body of support from Scripture and

[15] Stirnimann rejects this as 'pure speculation', which even reminds him 'in a way, of Gnosticism', but this verdict is quite unjust. It is not very difficult to admit that the whole '*de facto*' order of things (in contrast to another possible one: Stirnimann objects at once to the expression) is not foreseen and decreed simply by the '*Deus unus*' of metaphysics and of a treatise '*De Deo uno … et creatore*' drawn up only on metaphysical lines in which the '*Deus unus*' appears as the cause and the end. And it is not difficult to admit that the present order depends on the Word by which all things were made, and exists *because* this Logos wished to communicate *himself* (in incarnation and grace) to uncreated being, so that in this sense he is really the 'ground of being' of *all* created reality (the other expression to which Stirnimann objects). This is all that is necessary for Küng's position, and this is all that he actually affirms in his thesis. And it is enough to enable him to draw the consequences with regard to sin and soteriology against which Stirnimann protests. I hold that it is incorrect to say that sin could have as its consequence the annihilation (instead of the damnation) of man, if its effects were not arrested by the mercy of God in Christ. Küng leaves the question open in the last resort. But is it *certainly* false and dogmatically untenable? It is not incompatible with the natural immortality of the soul. But if one leaves the question hypothetically open, a good Thomist would not find it so bad 'to go on to the annihilation of the whole cosmos'. Without spirit, the material world would have no meaning. See also A. Grillmeier in: *Fragen der Theologie heute*, edited by J. Feiner, J. Trütsch, F. Böckle (Einsiedeln 1957), 270: 'The recognition of the fact that the *locus classicus* for the *praedestinatio Christi*, Col. 1:15ff., speaks of the incarnate Word (and hence that what is said there about the pre-existing Logos must not be separated from what is said of Christ as man) provides a strong biblical foundation for the concept (that our history and creation in general is absolutely Christocentric)'.

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tradition. All one [212] can say is that anyone who opposed the thesis would not be attacking a doctrine so clear, express and universal that he would have to expect an immediate protest from the magisterium. One can undoubtedly differ from Küng on this point without fear of contradiction from the official voice of the Church, and to this extent at least Küng's thesis is *his* opinion, and therefore a theological proposition which will be accepted by those who find his arguments convincing. Given the possibility of growth in the knowledge of the faith and in the sureness of our knowledge with regard to what belongs to divine revelation, to qualify a thesis as a theological proposition (*quoad nos*) does not imply that the statement in question is of itself and objectively to be excluded from the truths of revelation. Küng's effort to prove that the substance of his thesis is found in Scripture and is therefore part of revelation is perfectly legitimate, and is not in conflict with the qualification which we have attributed to it.

We shall not here discuss the basic position itself, that is, the fact of the actual creation in its entirety and not merely supernatural grace being based on Christ, and we shall not examine the arguments for the position and so on. We accept the position as a hypothesis. Taken in general, it is certainly not open to reproach in the name of certain truths of faith; it even appears to us – if we may say so, without offering any proof – correct on the whole and theologically demonstrable. Our purpose here is rather to ask whether the fundamental thesis gives adequate support to all that Küng deduces from it. To explain what we mean, we must take up another point.

Is it true that the statement, God could have created a world without Christ had he willed to, he could have created spiritual beings without the grace of his self-communication and divine sonship, *merely* a statement about a *possible* world which does not in fact exist, and which therefore is without importance for us and our statements about the actually existing world? Or is something significant with regard to the religious understanding of our actual situation, something important theologically, given expression in this form of statement, which seems so abstract and hypothetical? The latter is true. Why? Because it is a way of expressing the fact that we who exist, and are realized (in our 'nature') receive grace once more – as grace, as free benevolence, in our present state. It is not true, as the 'new theology' was tempted to say from time to time, that everything is grace, because everything has been given freely by God, or because everything that is or will be is eventually given in fact to [213] *sinners*. What is called 'supernatural grace' in Catholic doctrine is something uncalled-for with regard to our present *de facto* permanent condition (our 'nature'), even prior to sin. It is not merely free with regard to our 'non-necessary existence' and God's free, uncalled-for decision to create us. If then the term of reference itself 'nature', is totally free, in so far as nature has no 'right' to be called into existence by God and God does not owe it existence, a similar state exists once more *within* the whole of *de facto* human nature: nothing is due to it, there is a complete lack of rights and claims as regards any endowment with the divine life, any personal self-communication of the triune God, so far as existing human nature is concerned. This created being must not only say: I am something freely instituted by God, but: God disposes of me freely. This is important, because on the one hand, given the inner coherence of the various elements of the nature of an existing being, the case in question does not arise for all the elements of such a being. Many must be considered as existing in combination only as the result of the *one* disposition of the rational action of God. The personal self-communication of God on the other hand, if justice is to be done to its nature, must not appear as something inevitably instituted with the creation of man of itself. It must appear as the free gift of incalculable grace even to man in so far as he has been constituted. The mere creation of man is as it were a transcendent free act of God, the anonymous miracle which is always man's background. *Within* his life, however, another miracle is to take place, that of the historical self-communication of God, which to some extent is not anonymous but

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falls under categories. But if the formal gratuitousness as such of this event were to be placed on the same level as the 'grace and favour' of creation (or as a gift given to a sinner *qua* sinner) this self-communication would no longer be that miracle of unfathomable benevolence which it is felt to be in Scripture (though this cannot be demonstrated here).

This must be remembered, if Küng's theologumenon is to be correctly assessed and interpreted, according to the terms in which we have set it out, correctly, as we hope. What we have just said does not make it necessarily untrue. We can say at once, even bearing in mind what has just been said, that the creation of 'nature' takes place in Christ. There is no difficulty in thinking that the first, primal and comprehensively eternal will of God is his own self-expression, through which the Logos of God comes to exist in the emptiness of the non-divine, and that in *this* act of [214] will God wills the humanity of Christ and hence creation in general as its setting. There is no basic difficulty in thinking that the *de facto* creation takes place as the presupposition which God creates simply because he, the eternal, decrees to have a history, that of love giving itself – a covenant: and that hence he wills, in this eternal decree, the natural creation as it actually is; and that he wills it, because once it exists by virtue of *this* will, it can never be excluded from this covenanting will of God, which also upholds it as the presupposition of this irrevocable covenant. There is no difficulty likewise in saying that sin denounces and destroys the covenant with God, so far as this lies within sin and its unnaturalness, that it does all it can to hurl creation and man into absolute destruction, since it contradicts what upholds the natural creation in the existing order of things. And this affirmation need not be complicated by the question as to whether the immortality of the human soul is 'natural', that is, resulting from its nature without a new intervention of grace, or not. For it is quite thinkable in Catholic theology that the unnaturalness of sin, in its radical monstrosity and mysterious irrationality can be directed with absolute hostility against something that is natural, and drive something destructively into its definitive unnaturalness – an unnaturalness which consists precisely of the fact that it is *definitive* in its radical self-negation. Sin would cease to be serious and would become triumphant before God, if the sinner could really escape into simple non-being.

But it must be remembered just as clearly that this original, eternal, comprehensive and all-important covenanting will of God, intent on his supernatural self-communication must bring about this distinction and this bent within the structure of the creature.[16] God can only impart himself, and will to impart himself, by creating something for whose very existence this communication is a pure grace. In view not only of the [215] possible but of the actual creature as such, God owes it to the sheer sovereignty of his love not to make the creature the *pre*supposition of this act of most personal love, except in such a way that even when created and instituted it must receive as free grace that for which in fact it was created. And hence one has to say that it could have been created without this communication.

If this nature exists without grace and justification, when and in so far as it is sinful, its further existence as something that can be saved from damnation is indeed a grace, since it is due to the decree of God to impart himself, to uphold his covenant, to be incarnate in Christ. In the actual order of things, this is true even with regard to continued existence as a man. But this 'grace', whereby this nature continues to exist on account of Christ, is not simply the

[16] Küng (137) does indeed speak of a 'double gift' (creation and creation in Christ). But he does not seem to have made it quite clear that the first gratuitousness is not simply that of a possible order of things, but that both are found differentiated in the actual world, even though the second encompasses and sustains the first, but without eliminating the first as differentiated from the gratuitousness of the specifically supernatural order. The theme is indeed intoned (169, 170) in so far as it is affirmed that this grace of Christ, which is given with the preservation of creation, is 'grace (in the widest sense)', 'grace (in an all-encompassing sense, not in the sense of "justifying" grace)'. But it is not only barely touched on, it is also not very happily formulated by the use of 'justifying' grace as its opposite (instead of: supernatural grace of salvation).

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same grace as the divine self-communication itself. Before and after sin, there is the same discrepancy between the two graces as between natural creation and God's self-communication to it, as between nature and supernatural grace, as between creation and covenant. This can perhaps be seen most clearly from the fact that the 'grace' of the conservation of natural man in and in spite of sin, remains ambiguous in itself and for us. It remains an open question, which we can never answer, even if this state of continued existence became entirely transparent to us. We can never know whether the sparing and preservation of the sinner is for judgment or for a new salvation, whether we use it aright or pervert it by sin, which one can never do with grace strictly speaking. If this split did not exist within the one concrete human being, if even 'in Christ' our nature was not still ambivalent – as real grace never is – it would be incomprehensible that creation could really *not* believe and that unbelief could be more than merely apparent – or ultimately quite harmless. A subject whose being or nature was grace in such a way as grace is just grace, would be, even as a subject, the pure affirmation of God, and could do nothing else but ratify the affirmation of God in Christ: it would have to believe. And since the subject is real and therefore very 'objective', without this objective inclination in human nature, there would be no difference at all between objective and subjective redemption, there could be no possible contrast between the two dimensions which would be more than apparent. Not only are there grades[17] of 'being in Christ' (p. 148f.), there are also [216] essential gradations in the gratuitousness of grace itself. An example of the first case would be the permanence of the free will in a sinner. It can be called a 'grace' in Christ, because it is willed and preserved *by reason of* the divine decree with regard to God's self-communication in Christ and with regard to the forgiveness of sins which is already predefined in that decree. But these two reasons are *different* from this free will, which in *itself*, strictly *as* such, even in the present order of things is a 'grace' of creation, but not '*in itself*' a grace of Christ. An example of the second case would be the communication of the Holy Spirit, which is *in itself* grace in the strictest sense. If the higher makes the lower its presupposition, as the condition of its own possibility, the lower does not cease to be lower than the higher. The grace of the strictly supernatural procures for itself the grace of creation as its own presupposition on a lower level, maintains and animates it by virtue of the stronger will of God with regard to the higher grace: but it still leaves it as the lower grace.

From this we can understand why ecclesiastical terminology, in spite of or in consequence of the Council of Orange, does *not* use the word grace to designate the human nature which survives in sin, free will and so on, when it speaks of justification and the like.[18] Everything exists in Christ; there are degrees in this 'everything'; Küng rightly stresses the two things. But – a point which Küng seems to me to bring out less clearly – the existence which the degrees have in Christ is of different kinds. The lower 'degree' only has its existence in Christ, the higher 'degree' consists essentially of the self-communication of God in Christ. This implies fundamentally and radically an essential difference from merely 'having existence', even though once more the mere 'existence' is given in the actual order of things because God decreed to impart himself. To work out more clearly this distinction, which has been barely indicated here, we should not begin by taking 'nature' as a fixed and obviously settled concept as mostly happens in the Catholic theology of the schools, and hence, in spite

[17] It is also emphasized (272) that the mystery of creation is never to be placed 'on a par with' the mystery of the incarnation.

[18] This is even truer of the use of 'natural' and 'supernatural'. The being of man itself has, in the actual order, an inevitable orientation towards God's strictly supernatural grace (a supernatural existential); but to designate it then as in itself 'supernatural' instead of 'natural' can only lead to hopeless confusion and blur beyond recognition the objective distinction between nature and grace. Hence this seems to be more than 'a semantic and therefore a secondary question', as Küng affirms (138).

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of all mutual reassurances on the part of Barth and others, gives the impression of something which remains untouched by [217] sin and the loss of grace. We must begin with man as a unity and totality, willed by God in Christ and for the sake of Christ, called to the covenant and to immediate fellowship with God and of himself sinful. And *then* we must show that the Catholic distinction between nature and grace within *this* one actual man is demanded by *this* starting-point, to the praise of the sovereign grace of God – and not because the 'natural' remains intact in any case.[19]

The notion of such gradated grace is no stranger to scholastic theology and is even quite normal as a matter of terminology. Theologians have been long accustomed to the concepts of entitatively and modally supernatural. And on the question precisely of whether fallen man as such can keep the natural moral law wholly or in part, they make use of the concept of a 'medicinal' or 'healing' grace, which is on the one hand 'entitatively natural' and on the other, since it is given by God, in spite of the unworthiness of the sinner, in view of the supernatural end, and for the sake of Christ, is said to be *quoad fontem et finem* supernatural in its modality. This distinction may seem at first sight a little extrinsic and arbitrary, and rather in the nature of a concession to popular religious speech, which gives the name of 'grace' even to the external helps provided by God, such as good dispositions, absence of temptation etc. But this classic distinction can be given its profoundest and final justification if we use the point developed by Küng. Since everything is created in Christ and for him, and since from the start 'nature' is always and irrevocably conceived by God as the presupposed condition of possibility of grace strictly speaking, nature itself cannot be entitatively supernatural grace. But it is *always* and *necessarily* endowed with a supernatural finality in its existence, in its conservation in spite of sin, in all the helps provided by God, even on the natural level, for the conservation and development of its existence. It is modally supernatural. The unity *and* difference of nature and (entitatively supernatural) grace, precisely from the point of view of gratuitousness, result from the same principle. Hence nature is not simply and non-dialectically non-grace. It is not something which – in the actual order of things! – rests on its own foundations and is sufficient 'for itself', even without grace. It is not the substructure which could exist even without the superstructure, but the lower, which though the presupposition of the higher, still depends on the higher, because in the last [218] resort all depends on the highest – who freely willed to be the love that imparts itself.

We asked at the beginning of this section whether in view of the precisions which we have tried to indicate, Küng's basic thesis could be still equal to the task for which it is used in his book. His point was to show that the Catholic doctrine of the persistence of man's being and power of choice (the permanence of his God-given 'nature') by no means involved the autonomy and indifference of this nature with regard to grace and the covenant, as Barth thought. We must now sum up and answer this question. Even when we keep clearly in mind the distinction between nature and strictly supernatural grace in man as be now exists, it remains possible – even using traditional terminology – to consider the existence, conservation and activity of fallen, though redeemable, nature as grace, in the actual order of things. This is because the origin, existence and one end of *all* this, which preserves even the natural from radical damnation is to be found in God's absolute and irrevocable will that the Logos should become man as a member of the one, though sinful, humanity. This 'grace' is conceivable as the deficient mode of the grace which must presuppose this 'grace' as the condition of having anybody at all who can be endowed with grace.

[19] Cf. for instance the indications given in my article 'Anthropologie' (dogmatic) in *LTK*[2] I, 618-627.

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[219]

PART FIVE

The Sacraments

[221]

9

THE THEOLOGY OF THE SYMBOL

From its beginnings to the present day,[1] the theology of devotion to the heart of Jesus, as understood by the simple faithful, by the theologians in their discussions and by the magisterium in its pronouncements, teaches that the heart of the Lord is a *symbol*[2] of the love of Christ. Whatever answer is to be given to the question as to what is the proper object of this devotion, what is the relationship of the physical heart of the Lord, as object of devotion and as symbol of the [222] object of devotion, to the love of Christ, which is certainly implicated in the object of this devotion; the word symbol cannot be avoided in the theology of the devotion. It indicates a component without which the nature and meaning of devotion

[1] Here too there has been a certain change. An equally ancient tradition, which is now falling into the background (it is not mentioned for instance in '*Haurietis aquas*') takes the heart also to be the 'seat' and 'organ' of love or of the life of the soul in general. Thus the translator of Origen, Hieronymus, speaks of the *principale* (το_ η(γεμονικο&ν) *cordis Jesu*, because according to Stoic doctrine, followed by Origen, the η(γεμονικο&ν has its seat in the heart. Cf. K. Rahner, *RAM* 14 (1934) 171-174. On βλэ, καρδι/α, as seat of physical life and of the life of the soul in general in the Old Testament, among the Greeks, and in the New Testament, see Kittel, *TWNT* III, 609-616; see also *Etudes Carmélitaines*, *Le Cœur* (Paris 1950). But even here we should ask how far this description of the heart as the seat and organ of the inner life of the soul is already to a great extent to be understood 'symbolically' (even though it is prompted by physical feelings in the heart during strongly emotional experiences), and hence means ultimately the same thing as we express by speaking of the heart as a 'symbol'.

[2] So for instance (if we prescind from the middle ages) in the more recent forms of devotion to the heart of Jesus: in G. I. Languet (Hamon IV, 83); in J. Croiset (1895 edition, Montreuil-sur-Mer, p. 5): '. . . *il a donc fallu trouver un symbole*; *et quel symbole plus propre et plus naturel de l'amour que le cœur*?', before this, however, we read (p. 4) that the heart is '*en quelque manière et la source et le siège de l'amour*', as L. Galliffet and P. Froment (Hamon III, 389; IV, 44) took it to be, about the same time; this was contradicted by Benedict XIV (*De servorum Dei beatificatione* IV, §2, c. 31 and 25); in Pius VI (*Epist. ad Scip. Ricci Episc*., 29th June, 1781); in Leo XIII (Encycl. '*Annum Sacrum*', 25th May, 1899: '*inest Sacro Cordi symbolum atque expressa imago infinitae Jesu Christi caritatis*' *AAS* 31 [1898-99] 649); Pius XII ('*Haurietis Aquas*' *AAS* 48 [1956] 316, 317, 320, 327, 344: '*naturalis index seu symbolus caritatis*; *signum et index divini amoris*; *naturalis symbolus*' are the expressions used); among theologians, as for instance Franzelin (*Tractatus de Verbo incarnato*[5] [Rome 1902] 469-473), Lercher (*Inst. Theol. Dogmat*. III[3] [Innsbruck 1942] 247-255) and in the other classical works on devotion to the heart of Jesus, which we need not indicate here. We should note, however, as regards the use of the word 'symbol' in this doctrine: a. on the whole, the general sense of the word symbol is hardly clarified in this context. When, for instance, '*Haurietis Aquas*' speaks of a '*naturalis symbolus*', we need understand no more than a symbol which comes to mind spontaneously and as it were, of itself. The expression gives no grounds for an exact and positive determination of the concept, such as we shall give here. There will of course be no contradiction between the two concepts. They will be related to each other as any other current concept in everyday language is to an attempt at a metaphysical explanation of it. b. Similarly, as regards *how* the heart is symbol of the love of Christ, and how these two elements are related to each other with regard to the object of devotion to the heart of Jesus, theologians are not unanimous. We shall not discuss the point here. At the end of our considerations, we shall take up the theory of Solano and others who do their best in fact to exclude the notion of 'symbol' from the theology of devotion to the heart of Jesus.

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to the heart of Jesus cannot be properly understood. But this calls for a more precise statement about what a symbol is in general. For it is not true, as is often thought, that the word 'symbol' has in general a clear and definite meaning in every instance and that therefore if there is any difficulty in understanding the assertion; the heart of Jesus is the symbol of the love of Christ, the difficulty does not come from the word symbol at least. An enquiry into the general sense of the word 'symbol' will show however that the concept is much more obscure, difficult and ambiguous than is usually thought, so that one of the tasks of these considerations must be to show that it is wrong to take the concept as an obvious one. This will in turn allow us to state clearly what it really means or can mean to speak of the symbol in the theology of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Such investigations, at least in this context are almost entirely lacking. If then the effort raises many problematical and unsolved points, the fair-minded reader will not be surprised.

I. THE ONTOLOGY OF SYMBOLIC REALITY IN GENERAL[3]

[3] We cannot attempt to give here even an approximately exhaustive *bibliography* on the philosophy and to some extent on the theology of the symbol. We shall merely list some works, very arbitrarily chosen indeed, which may give the uninitiated reader some idea of the variety of philosophical effort with regard to the concept of the symbol.

J. Volkelt, *Der Symbolbegriff in der neuesten Aesthetik* (Jena 1876). Fr. Th. Vischert, *Altes and Neues* (Stuttgart 1889), from which the essay 'Das Symbol' is re-printed in *Deutscher Geist, ein Lesebuch aus zwei Jahrhunderten*, 2 vols., S. Fischer Verlag (Berlin 1940) 726ff. R. Hamann, *Das Symbol* (Diss. Berlin 1902). M. Schlesinger, *Grundlagen und Geschichte des Symbols* (Berlin 1912). E. Brunner, *Das Symbolische in der religiösen Erkenntnis* (Tübingen 1914). R. Gätschenberger, *Symbola. Anfangsgründe einer Erkenntnistheorie* (Karlsruhe 1920). F. Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten* (Regensburg 1921). R. Otto, *Das Heilige* (Breslau ^{6}1921). E. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, 3 vols. (Berlin 1923-31; Freiburg ^{2}1954). H. Schreiner, *Geist and Gestalt* (Schwerin 1926). R. Guardini, *Von heiligen Zeichen* (Mainz 1927). O. Casel, 'Kath. Kultprobleme', *Jb. f. Liturgiewissensch*. 7 (1927) 105-124, O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship* (London & Westminster, Md. 1962). *Blätter f. d. Philos*. 1 (1928): No. 4 as a whole treats of the symbol. E. Unger, *Wirklichkeit, Mythos, Erkenntnis* (Munich–Berlin 1930). P. Tillich, *Religiöse Verwirklichung. Aufsätze* (Berlin ^{2}1930) 88f., 'Das religiöse Symbol'. R. Winkler, 'Die Frage nach dem symbolischen Charakter der religiösen Erkenntnis', *Christentum und Wissenschaft* (1929) 252 ff. W. Müri, *Symbolon. Wort- und sachgeschichtliche Studie* (Bern 1931). F. Weinhandl, *Über das aufschliessende Symbol* (Berlin 1931); reviewed by M. Radacovic, 'Zur Wiedergeburt des symbolischen Denkens', *Hochland* 29 (1931-1932) 494-505. K. Plachte, *Symbol und Idol. Über die Bedeutung der symbolischen Formen im Sinnvollzug der religiöse Erfahrung* (Berlin 1931). C. G. Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (London & New York 1959). C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types* (London & New York 1923). R. Scherer, 'Das Symbolische. Eine philosophishe Analyse', *Phil. Jahrb. d. Görresges*. 48 (1935) 210-257. K. Bühler, *Ausdruckstheorie* (Jena 1936). H. Noack, *Symbol und Existenz der Wissenschaft. Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung einer philosophischen Wissenschaftslehre* (Halle 1936). G. Söhngen, *Symbol und Wirklichkeit im Kultmysterium* (Bonn 1937, ^{2}1940). G. Söhngen, *Der Wesensauf bau des Mysteriums* (Bonn 1938). J. Maritain, 'Sign and Symbol', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1 (1937). W. M. Urban, *Language and Reality* (London 1939), ch. 12, 'Religious Symbols and the Problem of Religious Knowledge'. W. M. Urban, 'Symbolism as a Theological Principle', *Journal of Religion* 19 (1939) No. 1. G. Thomas, 'Myth and Symbol in Religion', *Journal of Bible and Religion* 7 (1939) 163-171. O. Doering–M. Hartig, *Christliche Symbole* (Freiburg ^{2}1940). E. Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief* (London 1938). M. D. Koster, 'Symbol und Sakrament', *Die neue Ordnung* 5 (1947) 385 ff. T. T. Segerstedt, *Die Macht des Wortes. Eine Sprachsoziologie* (from the Swedish) (Zurich 1947). K. Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit* (Munich 1947). K. Jaspers, *Philosophie* (Heidelberg 1948). St. V. Szmanski, *Das Symbol* (Diss. Innsbruck 1947). E. Gombrich, 'Icones Symbolicae. The Visual Image in Neo-Platonic Thought', *J. Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 11 (1948) 163 ff. H. Friedmann, *Wissenschaft und Symbol* (Munich 1949); the same, *Epilegomena* (Munich 1954) 130-155 'Die symbolnahen Begriffe'. J. S. Bayne, *Secret and Symbol* (Edinburgh 1949). H. Schmalenbach, *Phénomenologie du signe*: *Signe et Symbole* (*op. coll.*) (Neuchâtel 1949). H. Ording 'Symbol und Wirklichkeit', *Theol. Lit. Z.* 3 (1948) 129 ff. M. Heideggar, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a. M. 1950). E. Biser, *Das Christusgeheimnis der Sakramente* (Heidelberg 1950); 'Das religiöse Symbol in Aufbau des Geisteslebens', *Münch. Theol. Z.* 5 (1954) 114-140. J. Münzhuber, 'Sinnbild und Symbol', *Z. Phil. Forsch.* 5 (1950) 62-74. J. Daniélou, 'The Problem of Symbolism', *Thought* 25 (1950) 423-440. Th. Bogler, 'Zur

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In the short space at our disposition, we must renounce the attempt to approach the question proper from the point of view of history of [224] philosophy and the human understanding of existence in general. There would be many points to be considered: the usage and history of the word symbol and kindred words; how its changing meanings are related to the original radical meaning which made such changes possible; the meaning and history of concepts which point linguistically and objectively in the same direction: ει]δοφ, μορφη/, sign, figure, expression, image, aspect, appearance, etc. We must omit all such historical preparatives which lead up to the actual question, though we thereby risk overlooking many relevant questions on which light could be thrown by the history of the problem. We take up the matter in hand therefore without preparing the ground beforehand.

1. Our first statement, which we put forward as the basic principle of an ontology of symbolism, is as follows: all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily 'express' themselves in order to attain their own nature.

We should already be dealing with merely derivative modes of symbolic [225] being if we started with the fact that two realities, each of which is supposed to be already constituted in its essence and intelligible of itself, 'agreed' with one another on a certain point, and stated that this 'agreement' made it possible for each of them (more particularly the better known and more accessible of the two, of course) to refer to the other and call attention to it, and hence be used by us as a symbol for the other, precisely by reason of the 'agreement'. Symbols would then only vary, and be distinguishable from one another, by the degree and precise mode, of this subsequent similarity between the two realities. Since in the long run everything agrees in some way or another with everything else, to start the analysis of symbols this way would make it impossible to distinguish really genuine symbols ('symbolic realities') from merely arbitrary 'signs', 'signals' and 'codes' ('symbolic representations'). Anything could be the symbol of anything else, the orientation from the symbol to the thing symbolized could run the other way round or be determined merely accidentally, from a view point extrinsic to the matter itself by the human observer, who finds one aspect more telling than another. Such derivative, secondary cases of symbolism do of course exist, so that it is not easy to say where the function of being merely a sign and indicator so predominates over the 'function of expressiveness' that a symbol loses its 'overplus of meaning' (Fr. Th. Vischer) and sinks to the level of a sign with little symbolism. The margins are fluid. One

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Theologie der Kunst', *Liturgie and Mönchtum* 7 (1950) 46-63. A. Brunner, *Glaube und Erkenntnis* (Munich 1951); the same, *Die Religion* (Freiburg 1956). M. Eliade, *Images and Symbols* (Paris 1952). M. Thiel, 'Die Symbolik als philosophisches Problem und philosophische Aufgabe', *Stud. Gen*. 6 (1953) 235-256. H. Looff, 'Symbol und Tranzendenz' *Stud. Gen*. 6 (1953) 324-332; the same, *Der Symbolbegriff in der neueren Religionsphilosophie und Theologie* (*Kantstudien*, Cologne 1955). H. Meyer, 'Symbolgebilde der Sprache', *Stud. Gen*. 6 (1953) 195-206. J. Pieper, *Weistum*, *Dichtung*, *Sakrament* (Munich 1954). F. Kaulbach, *Philosophische Grundlegung zu einer wissenschaftlichen Symbolik* (Meisenheim 1954). R. Boyle, 'The Nature of Metaphor', *The Modern Schoolman* 31 (1954) 257-280. L. Fremgen, *Offenbarung und Symbol* (Gütersloh 1954). G. Mensching, 'Religiöse Ursymbole der Menschheit', *Stud. Gen*. 8 (1955) 362-370. A. Rosenberg, *Die christliche Bildmeditation* (Munich 1955). E. Przywara, 'Bild, Gleichnis, Symbol, Mythos, Mysterium, Logos', *Archivio di Filosofia* 2-3 (Rome 1956) 7-38. K. Kerenyi, 'Symbolismus in der antiken Religionen', *ibid*., 119-129. A. Grillmeier, *Der Logos am Kreuz* (Munich 1956). F. König, *Religionswissenschaftliches Wörterbuch* (Freiburg 1956) 849-851. G. van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion* (Tübingen ^{2}1956). K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore Md. 1967): 'Priest and Poet', 'Behold this heart', 'Some Theses…'; the same, 'Der theologische Sinn der Verehrung des Herzens-Jesu' in *Festschrift zur Hundertjahrfeier des Theol. Konvikts Innsbruck 1858-1958* (Innsbruck 1958) 102-109. M. Vereno, *Vom Mythos zum Christos* (Salzburg 1958). B. Liebrucks, 'Sprache und Mythos: Konkrete Vernunft', *Festschrift E. Rothacker* (Bonn 1958) 253-280. G. Kittel, *TWNT*, *eidos*, II, 371-373; *eikon*, II, 378-396; *morphe*, IV, 750-760. *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, IV, 625-627.

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need only recall that our numbers once had a religious and sacral character. Indeed it often happens that in a vocabulary more attentive to history of art and aesthetics 'symbol' represents a very derivative case of the symbolic. It is a feature of such terminology that the symbol (an anchor, a fish and so on) indicates a lower degree of the symbolic than for instance a religious image. We shall not discuss these matters further now. Our task will be to look for the highest and most primordial manner in which one reality can represent another – considering the matter primarily from the formal ontological point of view. And we call this supreme and primal representation, in which one reality renders another present (primarily 'for itself' and only secondarily for others), a symbol: the representation which allows the other 'to be there'.

To reach the primary concept of symbol, we must start from the fact that all beings (each of them, in fact) are multiple,[4] and are or can be [226] essentially the expression of another in this unity of the multiple and one[5] in this plurality, by reason of its plural unity.[6] The first part of this assertion is axiomatic in an ontology of the finite. Each finite being as such bears the stigma of the finite by the very fact that it is not absolutely 'simple'. Within the permanent inclusive unity of its reality (as essence and existence) it is not simply and homogeneously the same in a deathlike collapse into identity. It has of itself a real multiplicity, which is not merely a mental distinction and division extrinsic to the reality and only due to the limited intelligence of the external and finite observer, who only explicitates for himself the absolutely simple fullness of the being in question by using several terms (presuming that it would be thinkable at all under these circumstances).

In saying this, however, we do not mean to assert that an intrinsic plurality and distinction must *always* be merely the stigma of the finiteness of a being. We know, on the contrary, from the mystery of the Trinity – we are doing theological ontology, which need not be afraid of adducing revealed data: that there is a true and real – even though 'only' relative – distinction of 'persons' in the supreme simplicity of God, and hence a plurality, at least in this sense. Let us now further consider – in keeping with a theology[7] of the 'traces' and 'reflexions' of the inner-trinitarian plurality – that it is quite thinkable that the pluralism of the finite creature is not merely a consequence and indicator of its finiteness, as a merely [227] negative qualification, but also a consequence – even though not naturally recognizable as such – of that divine plurality which does not imply imperfection and weakness and limitation of being, but the supreme fullness of unity and concentrated force: then we may say candidly, though also cautiously, that being is plural in itself and formulate this as a general principle without restrictions. On this supposition, we do not need to take it as merely part of the ontology of the finite as such. Even where it is applied to a plurality of the finite as such, we can take it as an assertion which understands even the plurality of the finite as an

[4] We choose here a method which will bring us to our goal as easily and quickly as possible, even though it simplifies matters by presupposing ontological and theological principles which would have to be demonstrated, not supposed, in a properly worked out ontology of the symbol. However, in view of the reader who is primarily envisaged here, these presuppositions may be made without misgiving.

[5] We say very vaguely 'one'. This 'unity' of a moment in a being can of course again only be envisaged analogically, in comparison with the unity and totality which is predicated of the Being which is totally one and yet plural in itself.

[6] We do not wish to anticipate here the question as to whether the one moment, in relation to the other within the one plural being must necessarily have a *formally* expressive function (for instance, to use the theological formula of the Trinity, must proceed from the other moment '*in similitudinem naturae*'), or is only *de facto* 'expression' and displays a 'likeness'. Even in the second case, the important point remains, that the likeness is originally constituted as an inner self-realization, and *qua* distinct, is an inner moment of the abiding unity itself.

[7] We may mention a modern effort in this direction, inspired by present-day philosophy, the book of C. Kaliba, *Die Welt als Gleichnis des dreieinigen Gottes. Entwurf zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie* (Salzburg 1952), which, in spite of the misgivings it arouses on particular points, takes up a theme which is unduly neglected today.

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allusion – disclosed only in revelation – to a plurality which is more than an indistinguishable identity and simplicity. We should of course have to think of it so, if even our sublimest ontological ideals were not further directed by the self-revelation of the God who is still loftier than these ideals, and who by thus surpassing our always approximate metaphysical ideals comes once more, suddenly and strangely, that is, miraculously and mysteriously, close to us. It is therefore true: a being is, of itself, independently of any comparison with anything else, plural in its unity.

But these plural moments in the unity of a being must have an inner agreement among themselves on account of the unity of the being, even though the plurality of moments in a being must be constituted by the reciprocal diversity of these moments. And they cannot have this agreement as the simple juxtaposition, so to speak, of moments which are there as such originally. This would imply a denial of the unity of the being in question: unity would be the subsequent conjunction of separate elements which once stood only on their own. This would be to betray the profound principle of St Thomas: *non enim plura secundum se uniuntur*: there can be no union of things which are of themselves multiple. A plurality in an original and an originally superior unity can only be understood as follows: the 'one' develops, the plural stems from an original 'one', in a relationship of origin and consequence; the original unity, which also forms the unity which unites the plural, maintains itself while resolving itself and 'dis-closing' itself into a plurality in order to find itself precisely there. A consideration of the Trinity shows that the 'one' of unity and plurality, thus understood, is an ontological ultimate, which may not be reduced to an abstract and merely apparently 'higher' unity and simplicity: it cannot be a hollow, lifeless identity. It would be theologically a heresy, and therefore ontologically an absurdity, to think that God would be really 'simpler' and hence more perfect, if there were [228] no real distinction of persons in God. There exists therefore a differentiation which is in itself a 'perfectio pura' and which must be taken into consideration from the very start of a theological understanding of being. It is not provisional, but something absolutely final, an ultimate of the self-communicating unity itself as such, which constitutes this unity itself: it does not half destroy, so to speak, this unity. Being *as* such, and hence *as* one (*ens* as *unum*), for the fulfilment[8] of its being and its unity, emerges into a plurality – of which the supreme mode is the Trinity. The distinct moments deriving from the 'one' which make for the perfection of its unity stem essentially, i.e. by their origin in and from another, from this most primary unity: they have therefore a more primary and basic 'agreement' with it than anything produced by efficient causality.

But this means that each being, as a unity, possesses a plurality-implying perfection – formed by the special derivativeness of the plural from the original unity: the plural is in agreement with its source in a way which corresponds to its origin, and hence is 'expression' of its origin by an agreement which it owes to its origin. Since this holds good for being in general, we may say that each being forms, in its own way, more or less perfectly according to its degree of being, something distinct from itself and yet one with itself, 'for' its own fulfilment. (Here unity and distinction are correlatives which increase in like proportions, not in inverse proportions which would reduce each to be contradictory and exclusive of the other.) And this differentiated being, which is still originally one, is in agreement because derivative, and because derivatively in agreement is expressive.

That that which is derivatively in agreement, and *hence* one with the origin while still distinct from it, must be considered as the 'expression' of the origin and of the primordial unity needs some further explanation. The agreement with its origin (by reason of its

[8] '*For* fulfilment' can and must be in some cases (e.g. the Trinity) understood also as '*on account of* its being perfect'. What is common to both cases is that the other which is constituted in an act of self-realization (*actus, resultatio, processio*) necessarily belongs to the perfection of the agent.

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derivation) of that which is constituted as different within the unity is at once, in a certain sense, the constitution of the derivative *as* an *expression*. For there is an agreement which is explained by the relation of being originated. We may therefore prescind from the question as to whether we must always consider such a derivation as the formal constitution of the agreement as such and hence whether we must always think of it formally *as* expression.

[229] Whether and when and why this is so in certain cases may be left without misgivings to a special ontology concerned with certain spheres. We shall meet such cases in the (second) theological consideration of the matter. But prescinding from this question, we may already affirm: every being as such possesses a plurality as intrinsic element of its significant unity; this plurality constitutes itself, by virtue of its origin from an original unity, as the way to fulfil the unity (or on account of the unity already perfect), in such a way that that which is originated and different is in agreement with its origin and hence has (at least in a 'specificative', if not always in a 'reduplicative' sense) the character of expression or 'symbol' with regard to its origin. But this brings us to the full statement of our first affirmation: being is of itself symbolic, because it necessarily 'expresses' itself. This affirmation needs some further explanation in the light of what has been said, and then its applicability to some well-known themes must be demonstrated.

Being expresses itself because it must realize itself through a plurality in unity. This plurality is often, and in many respects, an indication of finiteness and deficiency, but it can also be something positive, of which at least a 'trace' remains even in the plurality which is given formally with the finiteness of a being. The self-constitutive act whereby a being constitutes itself as a plurality which leads to its fulfilment or rather (in certain circumstances) which is a reality given with the perfection of the being, is however the condition of possibility of possession of self in knowledge and love. *In tantum est ens cognoscens et cognitum*, *in quantum est ens actu*. This statement also holds good of course if inverted: the degree of '*reditio completa in seipsum*' is the indication of its degree of being. 'Being present to itself' is only another way of describing the actuality, that is, the intrinsic self-realization of the being. But then it follows that a being 'comes to itself' in its expression, in the derivative agreement of the differentiated which is preserved as the perfection of the unity. For realization as plurality and as possession of self cannot be disparate elements simply juxtaposed in a being, since possession of self (in knowledge and love) is not just an element, but *the* content of that which we call being (and hence self-realization). And it comes to itself in the measure in which it realizes itself by constituting a plurality.[9] But this means that each being – in as much as it has and realizes being – is itself [230] primarily 'symbolic'. It expresses itself and possesses itself by doing so. It gives itself away from itself into the 'other', and there finds itself in knowledge and love, because it is by constituting the inward 'other' that it comes to (or: from) its self-fulfilment, which is the presupposition or the act of being present to itself in knowledge and love.

A symbol is therefore not to be primarily considered as a secondary relationship between two different beings, which are given the function of indicating one another by a third, or by an observer who notes a certain agreement between them. The symbolic is not merely an intrinsic propriety of beings in so far as a being, to attain fulfilment, constitutes the differentiation which is retained in the unity, and which is in agreement with the original originating unity and so is its expression. A being is also 'symbolic' in itself because the harmonious expression, which it retains while constituting it as the 'other', is the way in

[9] These considerations are not open to the objection that, if correct, they could deduce the Trinity from purely rational philosophical considerations. For their starting-point (which is not capable of proof by purely philosophical arguments) is that there is a plurality even in the supreme Being, without detriment to his unity. Hence our considerations presuppose the Trinity. They do not prove it, but use the knowledge of it given in revelation as the starting-point of ontological theological considerations. This is a perfectly legitimate method.

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which it communicates itself to itself in knowledge and love. A being comes to itself by means of 'expression', in so far as it comes to itself at all. The expression, that is, the 'symbol' – as the word is now to be understood in the light of the foregoing considerations – is the way of knowledge of self, possession of self, in general.

This is the only starting-point from which one can arrive at a correct theory of the symbol in general, where the symbol is the reality in which *another* attains knowledge of a being. On strictly scholastic terms, knowledge of a being by another is not the process which only takes place in the knower, and hence depends only on his potency and actuality, being related to an 'object' which persists completely unaffected in its own proper reality. On the contrary, the knowability and the actual knowledge of a being (as object of knowledge) depend on the degree of actuality in the thing to be known itself: *ens est cognitum et cognoscibile, in quantum ipsum est actu*. But then it follows: if beings are of themselves symbolic, in so far as they realize themselves in a plurality, and possess themselves in this derivative agreement of the 'other' with its primordial origin, the same holds good for the knowledge of these beings by others. A being can be and is known, in so far as it is itself ontically (in itself) symbolic [231] because it is ontologically (for itself) symbolic. What then is the primordial meaning of symbol and symbolic, according to which each being is in itself and for itself symbolic, and hence (and to this extent) symbolic for another? It is this: as a being realizes itself in its own intrinsic 'otherness' (which is constitutive of its being), retentive of its intrinsic plurality (which is contained in its self-realization) as its derivative and hence congruous expression, it makes itself known. This derivative and congruous expression, constitutive of each being, is the symbol which comes in addition from the object of knowledge to the knower – in addition only, because already initially present in the depths of the grounds of each one's being. The being is known in this symbol, without which it cannot be known at all: thus it is symbol in the original (transcendental) sense of the word.

We must now confront the notion of symbol thus arrived at, with some well-known data of scholastic philosophy, so that it may be still more easily understood. It would call for too wide a sweep through the history of philosophy, if one were to try to illustrate what has been said by showing the whole extension of the concepts of *eidos* and *morphe* (in the *philosophia perennis* from the time of the Greeks to the classic age of scholastic philosophy). If we could follow these lines, it could be shown that the two extremes of this extension, the manifest, visible 'figure' on the one hand (*eidos* and *morphe* together), and the 'essence' which gives rise to the figure on the other hand, make up together the full sense of one concept. For how does the figure-forming essence of a being (material, to start with) constitute and perfect itself? It does so by really projecting its visible figure outside itself as its – symbol, its appearance, which allows it to be there, which brings it out to existence in the world: and in doing so, it retains it – 'possessing itself in the other'. The essence is there for itself and for others precisely through its appearance – in the 'analogous' measure, of course, in which a being is there for itself and for others according to its own measure of being.

A deeper understanding of Thomist ontology is then possible. For it is clear that St Thomas[10] recognizes the most diverse forms of the 'self-realization' of a being, which cannot be subsumed under the denomination of transitive efficient causality. The notion of *causa formalis* must be mentioned at once in this context. The 'form' gives itself away from itself by imparting itself to the material cause. It does not work on it [232] subsequently and 'from outside', by bringing about in it something different from itself and alien to its essence. The 'effect' is the 'cause' itself, in so far as the cause itself is the reality, the 'act' of the material cause, which is becoming its own 'potency'. But when the formal cause is such, it is not simply such as it must be considered to be previous to its actual formal causality. For there

[10] For the following, see K. Rahner, *Geist in Welt*[2] (Munich 1957).

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are, according to St Thomas, 'forms' which are not exhausted in their formal causality, because they are not completely 'poured out' on their matter; their primordiality is still 'reserved'. Hence not every form realizes its being by emptying itself fully and giving itself as act away to the other that consumes it (the '*materia prima*'). The difference between form and its actual formal causality need not be merely mental, even though this difference cannot be thought of in the same way as that between a substance conceived of as static (having already come to be from its formal causes) and its accidental 'second' act. The giving of the form by the formal cause, the '*formatio actualis*' of the potency by the (substantial) form, 'brings about' that which is formed, the actual thing (where it does not matter to us here what forms this process takes, once we distinguish between the dimension of substance and the formally quantitative being in time and space). This external manifestation of the substantial form or cause is indeed, according to the basic doctrines of scholasticism just alluded to, different from the form as such. But it still manifests this basic form in this very difference: it is a symbol which is created by that which is symbolized as its own self-realization. In this differentiated 'symbol' that which is symbolized is present, the form itself (creating the 'ontological-symbolic' difference between symbolic reality and symbolic representation), since it brings about the 'other' which it forms, in as much as it imparts to it the reality which the form itself has.

But apart from the concept of formal causality, there are other concepts of Thomist ontology which belong to the sphere of the self-realization which is a self-proclamation and hence – in the broadest but original sense – constitutive of a symbol. Here the concept of 'resultance' should be noted. St Thomas does not merely think of a finite being as a reality simply complete, constituted by God in its essence and faculties. He does not merely see it as a passive and static reality, which then sets a number of accidental acts, of an immanent or transitive nature, which emanate indeed from the substance by efficient causality and to this extent 'determine' it, but leave it untouched in its inner nature. He also recognizes an [233] inner self-realization of the total essence itself (dependent of course on the creative activity of God), prior to its accidental 'second' acts: a self-realization which objectively and conceptually, according to St Thomas, cannot be simply reduced to formal and material causality, as this is usually understood in the traditional philosophy of the schools – and can still less be subsumed under the categories of the ordinary (second) 'activity'. Thus St Thomas recognizes, for instance, a 'resultance', an 'out-flowing' of the faculties from the substance. Thus for him the essence as a whole builds itself up – for the faculties belong to the totality of the essence, in spite of their being accidents; the substantial kernel emanates into its faculties and only thus attains its own possibilities; it finds itself – since it must be spiritual etc. by projecting from itself the 'otherness' of its faculties, which according to St Thomas is really distinct from the substance.

It does not follow at once from the fact that the 'other' results within the unity of the same being, for the achievement of the essence, that we have in it an intrinsic and connatural symbol as a moment of the self-realization of the being in question, or at any rate, we shall not pursue the thought further now. It is enough to have proved, from the theory of the emanation and 'resultance' of a faculty, a power, an accident, that the starting-point for our proffered theory of the symbol is perfectly Thomist. We shall only pursue this line of thought in one direction. According to St Thomas, we must also suppose the process of 'resultance' in the formation of a given quantity as such (with spatially limited dimensions) and as vehicle of other qualitative proprieties in a material being. When the substantial 'form' – 'pouring itself out' – gives itself to *materia prima* (which is the ontological basis of spatiality, though itself without any determinate dimensions), the determinate quantity is brought about in this communication, really distinct from the substance (composed of *forma substantialis* and *materia prima*) and from the reality which comes from it. This quantity, which today we

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would call the given, concrete spatio-temporality, or spatio-temporal figure, with its further given qualitative determinations (which are however based on this spatio-temporality), is, according to St Thomas, to be definitely taken as the 'species',[11] the outward form, aspect and figure, which the basic substance [234] provides for itself, to fulfil itself, to 'express' itself and to manifest itself thus. The 'species' of the material thing is undoubtedly the symbol - brought about by the essence, retained with the efficient cause in a differentiated unity, constituting the necessary 'communication' of the self-realization – in which the material being possesses itself and presents itself to view, in the varying forms proper to its being. In the case of the species of material things, we have in St Thomas – on this definite level of being and with the presuppositions which it entails – all the elements which we have worked out for the original concept of symbol in a more general ontology of multiple beings; the formation of the symbol as a self-realization of the thing symbolized itself, the fact that the symbol belongs intrinsically to what is expressed; self-realization by means of the constitution of this expression springing from the essence. There is another doctrine in scholasticism which can also be adduced to confirm the concept of symbol given above, of which we shall speak more fully in another context: it is the doctrine which holds that the soul is the 'form' of the body, the body being the expression of the basic spiritual reality of man.

To sum up and propound once more the results arrived at up to this, we may invert the first assertion which we put forward as the fundamental principle of an ontology of the symbol, by affirming as a *second assertion*:

2. The symbol strictly speaking (symbolic reality) is the self-realization of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence.

Where there is such a self-realization in the other – as the necessary mode of the fulfilment of its own essence – we have a symbol of the being in question. One might ask for whom does this self-realization in the other express the being and make it present, and who possesses the being in such a symbol – the being in question itself or another; one might ask in what (essentially different) degrees and in what ways this self-realization in the symbol and this presence are realized, in a self-discovery which is really knowledge and love or in a way relatively deficient compared to this. But these are secondary questions which, in comparison with these two first principles, enquire into distinctions which are secondary in relation to this general ontology of the symbol. They arise because the concept of a being is 'analogous', that is, it displays the *various* types of self-realization of each being, and being in itself, and hence also the concept and reality of the symbol are flexible. But because these are necessarily given with the general concept of beings and being – as the [235] 'unveiled' figure of the most primordial 'truth' of being – the symbol shares this '*analogia entis*' with being which it symbolizes.

II. ON THE THEOLOGY OF SYMBOLIC REALITY

If what has been said up to this is correct, it is only to be expected that no theology can be complete without also being a theology of the symbol, of the appearance and the expression, of self-presence in that which has been constituted as the other. And in fact the whole of theology is incomprehensible if it is not essentially a theology of symbols, although in general very little attention is paid, systematically and expressly, to this basic characteristic. And again: since a simple listing of dogmatic assertions throughout the whole field of

[11] The theologian is most familiar with the word from its use in the theology of the Eucharist, where this terminology has also become part of the vocabulary of the magisterium (*Denz.* 626, 676, 698, 876, 884, etc.).

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theology shows how much need it has of the concept of symbol and how much it uses it (no doubt in the most diverse acceptations and applications), the necessity of our general ontological considerations is confirmed once more from another direction.

We shall of course have to be content with a few indications. The attentive reader, especially if trained in theology, will not have failed to remark that the thought of the mystery of the *Trinity* was the constant background of the ontological considerations. The freedom of our method has already allowed us to appeal expressly to this mystery. We used it to show that a plurality in a being is not necessarily to be considered as a pointer to finiteness and imperfection, and that therefore a general ontology – which only speaks of beings strictly as such – may very properly start from the fact that each being bears within itself an intrinsic plurality, without detriment to its unity and perfection – which may eventually be supreme – precisely as the perfection of its unity. Hence an ontology confined to a particular field and likewise a theology may well ask what this means with regard to the symbolic nature of individual beings.

When we were working out the ontology of the symbol, we took no great pains to formulate it so that it would be immediately applicable to the theology of the Trinity in blameless orthodoxy. Even now we shall not try to establish expressly the convergence of this ontology and the theology of the Trinity (especially the theology of the Logos). It is enough for our purpose to point out very simply that the theology of the Logos is strictly a theology of the symbol, and indeed the supreme form of it, if we keep to the meaning of the word which we have already worked out, and do not give the term quite derivative meanings, such as the [236] ordinary language of popular speech attributes to it. The Logos is the 'word' of the Father, his perfect 'image', his 'imprint', his radiance, his self-expression. Whatever answer is to be given to the question of how binding the psychological theory of the Trinity, as put forward by St Augustine, may be – whether the Father utters the eternal Word *because* he knows himself or *in order to* know himself, two items at any rate must be retained. One, the Word – as reality of the immanent divine life – is 'generated' by the Father as the *image* and *expression* of the Father. Two, this process is necessarily given with the divine act of self-knowledge, and without it the absolute act of divine self-possession in knowledge cannot exist. But if we retain these two elements, which are traditional in theology – not to give them a higher qualification – then we may and must say without misgivings: the Father is himself by the very fact that he opposes to himself the image which is of the same essence as himself, as the person who is other than himself, and so he possesses himself. But this means that the Logos is the 'symbol' of the Father, in the very sense which we have given the word: the inward symbol which remains distinct from what is symbolized, which is constituted by what is symbolized, where what is symbolized expresses itself and possesses itself. We omit the question of what this means – prior to a theology of the Incarnation – for the understanding of the Father and his relation to the world. If, following a theological tradition which began only since St Augustine, one simply takes it for granted that *each* of the divine persons could set up, each for himself, his own hypostatic relationship to a given reality in the world and so could 'appear', then the fact that within the divinity the Logos is the image of the Father would give the Logos no special character of symbol for the world, which would be due to him alone on account of his relationship of origin to the Father. The Father could also reveal himself and 'appear' without reference, so to speak, to the Son. But if one does not make this pre-supposition with St Augustine, which has no clear roots in the earlier tradition[12] and still less in Scripture, one need have no difficulty in thinking that the

[12] Here the opposite opinion was practically unanimously held. Cf. e.g. M. Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des hl. Augustin* (Münster 1927) 20 ff.

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Word's being symbol of the Father has significance for God's action *ad extra*, in spite of such action being common to all three persons.

It is because God 'must' 'express' himself inwardly that he can also utter himself outwardly; the finite, created utterance *ad extra* is a continuation [237] of the immanent constitution of 'image and likeness' – a free continuation, because its object is finite – and takes place in fact 'through' the Logos (Jn 1:3), in a sense which cannot be determined more closely here. But it is not our intention to go into this difficult subject here. But it has to be mentioned, even if only in passing, because we could hardly omit this link between a symbolic reality within and without the divine, since it has also been noted to some extent in tradition.

If a theology of symbolic realities is to be written, Christology, the doctrine of the incarnation of the Word, will obviously form the central chapter. And this chapter need almost be no more than an exegesis of the saying: 'He that sees me, sees the Father' (Jn 14:9). There is no need to dwell here on the fact that the Logos is image, likeness, reflexion, representation, and presence – filled with all the fullness of the Godhead. But if this is true, we can understand the statement: the incarnate word is the absolute symbol of God in the world, filled as nothing else can be with what is symbolized. He is not merely the presence and revelation of what God is in himself. He is also the expressive presence of what – or rather, who – God wished to be, in free grace, to the world, in such a way that this divine attitude, once so expressed, can never be reversed, but is and remains final and unsurpassable.

But there are some comments to be made on the generally accepted dogmatic teaching which is here presupposed. They have not the same degree of certainty in theology, but they seem necessary if we are to have a proper understanding of the Incarnation in a theology of the symbol. If we simply say: the Logos took on a human nature, considering this defined doctrine of faith as the *adequate* expression of what is meant by the dogma of the incarnation (though such a description of the hypostatic union makes no such claim), the full sense of the symbolic reality, which the humanity of the Logos represents with regard to the Logos, is given no clear expression. For if the humanity which is assumed is considered only as that well-known reality which we know in ourselves, and which is only very generally 'image and likeness' of God; and if this humanity is supposed only to subsist in a static, ontic sense, that is, as 'borne' and 'taken on' by the Logos: then the humanity has no doubt the function of a signal or a uniform with regard to the Logos, but not in full truth the function of such a symbol as we have developed above. The Logos would make himself audible and perceptible through a reality which was of itself alien to him, had intrinsically and essentially nothing [238] to do with him, and could have been chosen at random from a whole series of such realities. No matter how close we consider the union between the speaker and his means of communication – the union is in fact hypostatic – it would not change the fact that the sign and that which is signified are really disparate, and that the sign could therefore only be an arbitrary one. Or we could put it more exactly: the assumed humanity would be an organ of speech substantially united to him who is to be made audible: but it would not be this speech itself. It itself would only tell something about – itself, it could only tell about the Word in so far as the Word used it to form words and direct actions which would divulge something about the word by their meaning and their marvellous quality. It is not surprising that a theology with these unavowed, unconscious but effective presuppositions should in the concrete make Jesus the revelation of the Father and his inward life only through his doctrine but not through what he *is* in his human nature. In such a position, the most that could come in question would be a revelation by means of his (virtuous) actions.

To continue on these lines, and to give greater clarity to the inexhaustible content of the truth of faith which expresses the incarnation, one could take up here the Thomistic doctrine, that the humanity of Christ exists by the existence of the Logos. But when putting forward

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this thesis, one should be clear that this existence of the Word is again not to be thought of as the reality which – merely because of its being infinite – could bestow existence on any thinkable 'essence', as if it could offer any essence a ground of existence which in itself was indifferent to this essence rather than that or to which manner of existent being arose thereby. The being of the Logos – considered of course *as* that which is received by procession from the Father – must be thought of as exteriorizing itself, so that without detriment to its immutability in itself and of itself, it becomes *itself* in truth the existence of a created reality – which must in all truth and reality be predicated of the being of the Logos, because it *is* so. But then, starting from these Thomistic principles, we arrive at considerations and insights which show how truly and radically the humanity of Christ is really the 'appearance' of the Logos itself, its symbolic reality in the pre-eminent sense, not something in itself alien to the Logos and its reality, which is only taken up from outside like an instrument to make its own music but not strictly speaking to reveal anything of him who uses it. However, these considerations have already been put forward in an earlier chapter on the mystery of the incarnation. [239] We showed there that the humanity of Christ is not to be considered as something in which God dresses up and masquerades – a mere signal of which he makes use, so that something audible can be uttered about the Logos by means of this signal. The humanity is the self-disclosure of the Logos itself, so that when God, expressing himself, exteriorizes himself, that very thing appears which we call the humanity of the Logos. Thus anthropology itself is finally based on something more than the doctrine of the possibilities open to an infinite Creator – who would not however really betray *himself* when he created. Its ultimate source is the doctrine about God himself, in so far as it depicts that which 'appears' when in his self-exteriorization he goes out of himself into that which is other than he. However, we must refer to the earlier chapter for these considerations.

It follows from what has been said that the Logos, as Son of the Father, is truly, in his humanity as such, the revelatory symbol in which the Father enunciates himself, in this Son, to the world – revelatory, because the symbol renders present what is revealed. But in saying this, we are really only at the beginning of a theology of the symbol, in the light of the incarnation, not at the end. For in view of this truth, we should have to consider that the natural depth of the symbolic reality of all things – which is of itself restricted to the world or has a merely natural transcendence towards God – has now in ontological reality received an infinite extension by the fact that this reality has become also a determination of the Logos himself or of his milieu. Every God-given reality, where it has not been degraded to a purely human tool and to merely utilitarian purposes, states much more than itself: each in its own way is an echo and indication of all reality. If the individual reality, by making the all present, also speaks of God – ultimately by its transcendental reference to him as the efficient, exemplary and final cause – this transcendence is made radical, even though only in a way accessible to faith, by the fact that in Christ this reality no longer refers to God merely as its cause: it points to God as to him to whom this reality belongs as his substantial determination or as his own proper environment. All things are held together by the incarnate Word in whom they exist (Col 1.17), and hence all things possess, even in their quality of symbol, an unfathomable depth, which faith alone can sound. It would be well to explain all these abstract statements in detail, by applying them to individual realities – water, bread, hand, eye, sleep, hunger and countless other affairs of man and of the world which surrounds him, bears him up [240] and is referred to him – if one wished to know exactly what theology of symbolic reality is based on the truth that the Logos, as Word of the Father, expresses the Father in the 'abbreviation' of his human nature and constitutes the symbol which communicates him to the world.

When we say that the Church is the persisting presence of the incarnate Word in space and time, we imply at once that it continues the symbolic function of the Logos in the world. To

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understand this statement correctly, we must consider two points. One, where a reality which is to be proclaimed in symbol, is a completely human one, and so has its social and existential (freely-chosen) aspect, the fact that the symbol is of a social and hence juridically determined nature is no proof that the symbol is merely in the nature of arbitrary sign and representation, and not a reality symbolic in itself. Where a free decision is to be proclaimed by the symbol and to be made in it, the juridical composition and the free establishment is precisely what is demanded by the very nature of a symbolic reality in this case and what is to be expected. A *non*-existential reality cannot express itself in this free and juridically constituted way, where the symbol is likewise a symbolic reality which contains the reality of the thing symbolized itself, because it has realized itself by passing over into the 'otherness' of the symbol. This would be contrary to the nature of the non-existential reality. But exactly the opposite is true when it is a matter of something which has been freely constituted by God himself and which has a social structure. When such a reality renders itself present in a freely constituted symbolism formed on social and juridical lines, the process is merely what its essence demands and is no objection to the presence of a symbolic reality.[13] But the Church, even as a reality tributary [241] to the Spirit, is a free creation of the redemptive act of Christ and is a social entity. When therefore it is constituted along juridically established lines, the result does not contradict the fact that it is the symbolic reality of the presence of Christ, of his definitive work of salvation in the world and so of the redemption. Secondly, according to the Church's own teaching, especially as voiced by Leo XIII and Pius XII, the Church is not merely a social and juridical entity. The grace of salvation, the Holy Spirit himself, is of its essence. But this is to affirm that this symbol of the grace of God really contains what it signifies; that it is the primary sacrament[14] of the grace of God, which does not merely designate but really possesses what was brought definitively into the world by Christ: the irrevocable, eschatological grace of God which conquers triumphantly the guilt of man. The Church as indefectible, as Church of infallible truth and as Church of the sacraments, as *opus operatum* and as indestructibly holy as a whole, even in the subjective grace of men – by which it is not merely object but even motive of faith – really constitutes the full symbol of the fact that Christ has remained there as triumphant mercy.

The teaching *on the sacraments* is the classic place in which a theology of the symbol is put forward in general in Catholic theology. The sacraments make concrete and actual, for the life of the individual, the symbolic reality of the Church as the primary sacrament and therefore constitute at once, in keeping with the nature of this Church a symbolic reality. Thus the sacraments are expressly described in theology as 'sacred signs' of God's grace that is as, 'symbols', an expression which occurs expressly in this context.[15] The basic axioms of sacramental theology are well known: *Sacramenta efficiunt quod significant et significant*

[13] A profane example: when two spouses say their Yes before the legitimate authority (ecclesiastical or civil), this external, freely spoken word, which is to be uttered with certain formalities, is the symbolic reality. It is not a subsequent and extrinsic sign, which merely refers from outside to the 'thing' (the inward consent). The consent is given in the audible expression, so much so, that the intended effect (the permanent marriage bond) cannot be realized without this audible expression. The expression and the thing expressed really are related here like body and soul. They form an inner unity, where both elements are interdependent, though each in its own way. Still, this symbol, under which the thing symbolized is realized and made present, is something freely and juridically constituted. Hence whether a '*signum*' (*arbitraruim*) is a symbolic reality or the merely extrinsic representational symbol of a reality, cannot be decided by the mere fact that it is 'arbitrary'. This characteristic can actually be demanded by the nature of the thing symbolized, without detriment to the reality of the symbolism.

[14] Cf. O. Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt 1953). The Church is of course the 'primary' sacrament in relation to the single sacraments, not to Christ. Cf. K. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*. *Quaestiones Disputatae* 9 (London & New York 1963).

[15] Cf. e.g. *CIC Decret*. *Gratiani* III *de consecratione* II, c. *Sacrificium* 32 (ed. Friedberg I, 1324).

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quod efficiunt. If these axioms are taken seriously, they point to that mutually supporting relationship which in our notion of the symbol intervenes between it and what is symbolized. Hence too in recent times theological efforts have been multiplied[16] which try to explain the causality of the sacraments in [242] terms of the symbol. Theologians try to show that the function of cause and the function of sign in the sacraments are not linked merely *de facto* by an extrinsic decree of God, but that they have an intrinsic connexion by virtue of the nature of things – here, their symbolic character, rightly understood. *As* God's work of grace on man is accomplished (incarnates itself), it enters the spatio-temporal historicity of man as sacrament, and *as* it does so, it becomes active with regard to man, it constitutes itself. For as soon as one sees the sacraments as the action of *God* on man – even though it takes place through someone who acts as 'minister' by divine mandate and gives body to the action done to man and so renders it concretely present and active – then the question no longer arises as to how the sacramental sign 'works on'[17] God, and it is no longer possible to ask whether this sign produces grace by 'physical' or 'moral' causality. For at no stage can the sign be seen apart from what is signified, since it in understood *a priori* as a symbolic reality, which the signified itself brings about in order to be really present itself. But we can on the other hand see that the sacrament is precisely 'cause' of grace, *in so far as* it is its 'sign' and that the grace – seen as coming from God – is the cause of the sign, bringing it about and so alone making itself present. So the old axioms receive their very pregnant sense; *sacramenta gratiam efficiunt*, *quatenus eam significant* – where this *significatio* is always to be understood in the strict sense as a symbolic reality. So too: *sacramenta significant gratiam*, *quia eam efficiunt*. In a word, the grace of God constitutes itself actively present in the sacraments by creating their expression, their historical tangibility in space and time, which is its own symbol. That the juridically established structure of the sacraments does not run counter to this view of the sacraments as symbolic realities has already been explained equivalently, when the same objection was eliminated in the question of the Church as symbolic reality of the grace of God.

Further indications of the prevalent structure of Christian reality as a unity of reality and its symbolic reality must be omitted here. They can only be presented adequately when the bodily reality of man, and so his acts in the dimensions of space and time, history and society, are conceived [243] of as symbolic realities embodying his person and its primordial decisions. This would be the real starting-point for reaching an understanding of the historically attainable life of the Church as symbolic embodiment of the Spirit of God and of the inner history of the dialogue between God's free love and human freedom. The result of this would be to show that no adequate treatise can be written '*De Gratia*', unless it contributes to the theology of the symbol in the Christian history of salvation.

We call attention only in passing to the theology of the *sacred image* in Christianity.[18] An exact investigation into the history of this theology would no doubt have to call attention to a two-fold concept of image which is presented by tradition. One is more Aristotelian, and treats the image as an outward sign of a reality distinct from the image, a merely pedagogical indication provided for man as a being who knows through the senses. The other is more

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[16] Cf. esp. H. Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentale Heilseconomie* (Antwerp 1952); 'Sakramente als Organe der Gottbegegnung', in *Fragen der Theologie heute* (Einsiedeln 1957) 379-401. L. Monden, 'Symbooloorzakelijkheid als eigen Causaliteit van het Sacrament', *Bijdr*. 13 (1952) 277-285.

[17] Where, for reasons that are good in themselves, one rejects a 'physical causality' (of instrumental type), one soon finds oneself embarrassed. In the ordinary notion of the relationship between sign and grace, the sign almost necessarily becomes a '*titulus juris*' to grace with regard to *God*: it becomes a sort of 'causality' of the sacramental action directed towards God.

[18] For the literature on the distinction which is only outlined here, cf. A. Grillmeier, *Der Logos am Kreuz* (Munich 1956) and *LTK* II^2, 458-460, 461-467 and note 3 above.

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Platonic, and in this concept the image participates in the reality of the exemplar – brings about the real presence of the exemplar which dwells in the image. The ultimate reason why theological explanation of the image can vary so widely is the principle which we have already adduced; that there are in fact 'symbols', images, which are of the nature which is ascribed to sacred images in a more strongly Platonist theology. The only question is whether sacred images in the strict sense – statues and pictures – may be explained without more ado in terms of the symbol of the primordial type which we have discussed; or whether such images belong to the class of derivative and secondary symbols, which of course exist, as a result of relatively arbitrary arrangements and conventions. The question is further complicated by the fact that the images which portray the incarnate Logos and his saints – in contrast to God the Father, the 'invisible', and to some extent the angels – depict the human body, of which we shall have to say later that it is the natural symbol of man. It is not surprising therefore that ancient theology and that of the Byzantine Church should also have made this distinction between God the Father or the Trinity and the incarnate Logos when justifying the use of images, and did not consider everything as equally capable of being portrayed. However, we cannot go into this here. This set of questions was recalled only to indicate that a theology [244] of symbols could find in the Greek theology of images support and confirmation for its more general considerations.

It might be thought that *eschatology* would be the part of theology which treated of the final disappearance of the sign and hence of the symbol, in favour of a naked immediacy of God with regard to the creature – 'face to face'. But this would once more be a position – this time with regard to eschatology – in which the symbol is considered as an extrinsic and accidental intermediary, something really outside the reality transmitted through it, so that strictly speaking the thing could be attained even without the symbol. But this presupposition is false, and it is still false with regard to eschatology. For the true and proper symbol, being an intrinsic moment of the thing itself has a function of mediation which is not at all opposed in reality to the immediacy of what is meant by it, but is a mediation to immediacy, if one may so formulate the actual facts of the matter. In the end, of course, many signs and symbols will cease to be; the institutional Church, the sacraments in the usual sense, the whole historical succession of manifestations through which God continually imparts himself to man, while he still travels far from the immediacy of God's face, among images and likenesses. But the humanity of Christ will have eternal significance for the immediacy of the *visio beata*.[19] The incarnation of the Logos may well be considered as the indispensable presupposition for strictly supernatural grace and glory,[20] so that the gracious freedom of God with regard to these two realities does indeed remain, but remains a freedom. And the dependence of the self-communication of God to the created spirit in glory with regard to the incarnation does not indicate a merely moral relationship, arising from the fact that the incarnate Logos once 'merited' this glory for us in time. The relationship is a real and permanent ontological one. If we accept this proposition (which cannot be propounded more fully now), it implies that what has been affirmed of the symbolic function of the incarnate Logos as Logos *and* man, also holds good for the perfected existence of man, for his *eschata*. Eschatology also teaches us about the symbolic reality which conveys to us the immediacy of God at the end; the Word which became flesh. [245] We sum up the result of this second stage of our considerations in some affirmations:

[19] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The eternal significance of the humanity of Jesus for our relationship with God' in *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore, 1967); J. Alfaro, 'Cristo Revelador del Padre', *Greg*. 39 (1958) 222-270.

[20] This statement cannot of course be demonstrated here. We ask the reader simply to accept it as at least a possible theological proposition.

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3. The principle that the concept of symbol – in the sense defined in nos. 1 and 2 – is an essential key-concept in all theological treatises, without which it is impossible to have a correct understanding of the subject-matter of the various treatises in themselves and in relation to other treatises.
4. The principle that God's salvific action on man, from its first foundations to its completion, always takes place in such a way that God himself is the reality of salvation,[21] because it is given to man and grasped by him[22] in the symbol, which does not represent an absent and merely promised reality but exhibits this reality as something present, by means of the symbol formed by it.

III. THE BODY AS SYMBOL OF MAN[23]

This preliminary draft and outline sketch of a possible theology of the symbol in general is still to be completed by some considerations on the body as the symbolic reality of man, in keeping with the general theme of [246] which the theology of the symbol forms part. It is not the intention of this essay to investigate the relationship between the heart of the God-man and his love. This question concerns directly the meaning of the word 'heart' in devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the dogmatic enquiry into the object of this devotion. Hence it lies outside the scope of this essay. But in a general theology of the symbol which is meant to be a preparation for a theology of devotion to the heart of Jesus, we may be allowed to say something more explicit about the theology of the body as symbol of man. These considerations will bring us automatically to the threshold of the real theology of devotion to

[21] Here we need not dwell on the fact that all mysteries of salvation in the really strict sense, and hence salvation itself, always consist of a self-communication of God by a type of quasi-formal causality, in contrast to the efficient causality whereby God creates *ex nihilo sui et subjecti* something distinct from himself. So in the hypostatic union, in uncreated grace (which in alone grace attains its true being, though sanctifying grace also implies in its concept a 'created' grace: cf. K. Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie I*[3] [Einsiedeln 1958] 347-375: 'Zur scholastischen Begrifflichkeit der ungeschaffenen Gnade'. English translation, 'Some Implications of the scholastic concept of Uncreated Grace' in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore, Md. 1961) 319-346), and in the quasi-formal causality which the divine essence exerts in the *visio beata* on the spirit of man (as *quasi-species impressa*).

[22] The free acceptance by the spirit of man is also a *totally* human act, which is therefore also a bodily one and hence also takes place in the symbol; and so the act is also historical and social and hence also 'ecclesial'.

[23] Some bibliographical references from the most recent literature on the subject: L. Klages, *Grundlegung der Wissenschaft vom Ausdruck* (Leipzig [5]1936). Ph. Lersch, *Gesicht und Seele* (Munich 1932). A Gehlen, *Der Mensch. Seine Natur u.s. Stellung in d. Welt* (Bonn [4]1950). H. Plessner, *Lachen und Weinen. Eine Untersuchung nach den Grenzen menschlichen Verhaltens* (Sammlung Dalp 54, Berne [2]1950). A. Wenzl, Das *Leib-Seele-Problem im Lichte der neueren Theorien der physischen und seelischen Wirklichkeit* (Munich 1933). M. Picard, *Das Menschengesicht* (Munich [3]1929); *Grenzen der menschlichen Physionomie* (Zurich-Leipzig 1937). V. Poucel, *Mystique de la terre*, vol. 1, *Plaidoyer pour le corps* (Le Puy 1937). J. Bernhart, J. Schröteler, H. Muckermann, J. Ternus, *Vom Wert des Leibes in Antike, Christentum und Anthropologie* (Salzburg 1936). K. Rahner, *Hörer des Wortes* (Munich 1941) 175-189; the same, *Geist in Welt* (Munich [2]1957); the same, *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore, Md. 1963), 265-281, and III (London & Baltimore, Md. 1967) 'Priest and Prophet' sections 1 & 2, and '"Behold this heart": Preliminaries'. B. Welte, *Die Leiblichkeit des Menschen als Hinweis auf das christliche Heil*: Beuroner Hochschulwoche 1948 (Freiburg 1949) 77-109. M. Reding, 'Person, Individuum und Leiblichkeit', *Tüb. Th. Quartalschrift* 129 (1949) 195-203. W. Brugger, 'Die Verleiblichung des Wollens', *Schol.* 25 (1950) 248-253. G. Trapp, '*Humanae animae competit uniri corpori* (*S. Th.* I, q. 51, a lc). Uberlegungen zu einer Philosophie des menschlichen Ausdrucks' *Schol.* 27 (1952) 382-399. L. Binswanger, *Grundformen und Erkenntnis des menschlichen Daseins* (Zürich [2]1952). G. Siewerth, *Der Mensch und sein Leib* (Einsiedeln 1953). W. Stählin, *Vom Sinn des Leibes* (Stuttgart [3]1953). *Anima* 9 (1954) 97-142, special number on the body. C. Tresmontant, *Biblisches Denken und hellenische Überlieferung* (Düsseldorf 1956) 62-77. J. B. Metz, 'Zur Metaphysik der menschlichen Leiblichkeit', *Arzt und Christ* 4 (1958) 78-84.

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the heart of Jesus. This third part of our considerations takes up a subject which is a relatively minor part of the subject-matter already treated, and which has been touched on already, at least implicitly. But the attention given to this special subject is demanded or at least justified by the general theme of the book.

That the body can and may be considered as the symbol, that is, as the symbolic reality of man, follows at once from the Thomist doctrine that the soul is the substantial form of the body. When we do not take just any scholastic doctrine on the relationship of soul and body – all scholastics affirm, along with the Council of Vienna, that the soul is 'form' – but the strictly Thomist one, then the above affirmation is clear. For if we ascribe to the body an actual being, a positive content, which is *prior* to the reality of the soul, it would be impossible to see why *this* bodily entity should be still the expression and so the symbol of the soul. At best, we could call 'expression' what the soul, by means of its 'information', [247] makes of this prior entity which perseveres in its previous reality. At the very most, something in the body could be symbol of the soul, but not the body as such and as a whole. But man, strictly speaking, according to the clear doctrine of Thomism, is not composed of a soul and a body, but of a soul and *materia prima*. And this matter is of itself the strictly potential substratum of the substantial self-realization of the '*anima*' (which is its 'in-formation' in the metaphysical sense), which by imparting itself thus gives its reality to the passive possibility of *materia prima*, so that anything that is act (and reality) in this potentiality is precisely the soul. It follows at once that what we call body is nothing else than the actuality of the soul itself in the 'other' of *materia prima*, the 'otherness' produced by the soul itself, and hence its expression and symbol in the very sense which we have given to the term symbolic reality. This is not the place to defend this Thomist concept, which alone can guarantee the strict unity of man and the real humanness of his body, against the empirical objections which seem to prove that the material reality of the body has a greater degree of independence and a proper reality less tributary to the soul. But the '*forma corporis*' is polyvalent with regard to the accidental determinations of the body. Hence *which* precise possibilities *of its own* the soul realizes may well depend on the prior determinations of the concrete matter, precisely when all the determinations of the actual body are constituted by the soul. Once this is understood, one will see no insuperable objection in the ordinary difficulties brought up against the doctrine of the '*anima unica forma corporis*'. Hence we may formulate in our theory of symbols:

5. The principle that the body is the symbol of the soul, in as much as it is formed as the self-realization of the soul, though it is not adequately this, and the soul renders itself present and makes its 'appearance' in the body which is distinct from it.

A genuinely Thomist natural philosophy would however have to complete this strictly axiomatic statement by adding an essential complement, which is important in our particular context. We could formulate this addition as the sixth principle of our set of themes: in this unity of symbol and thing symbolized, constituted by soul and body, the individual parts of the body are more than mere pieces put together quantitatively to form the whole body; they are rather parts in so special a way that they also comprise in themselves the whole, though this is not true in the same strict way of each of the individual parts.

[248] This supplementary statement must be explained to some extent. To make its understanding easier, there are several points which may be made. It is well known that in every human expression, mimetic, phonetic etc. in nature, the whole man is somehow present and expressing himself, though the expressive form is confined to start with to one portion of the body. Medical science which is concerned with the whole man, even when it does not try precisely to be 'psychosomatic', knows that it is never merely a particular organ that is sick, but always the whole man, so that the condition of the whole man is manifested in an organically localized illness, just as it is also to some extent determined by the illness. This is

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so true, that in psychogenic illnesses of the body, the most diverse illnesses of different organs can substitute vicariously for one another. It has always been more or less clearly known that the axiom: the part is only understandable in the whole, and the whole is in each part, was true above all of the human body. The axiom is represented even in Scripture, 1 Cor 12.12-26. In the light of this immediate experience, the scholastic doctrine, that the soul is fully present in each part of the body, being simple, comes to have a fuller and deeper meaning. It is not just that the simple substantial principle of a quantitatively extended entity must inevitably be as a whole in every part of this entity. The assertion also means that this substantial 'presence' of the soul implies that it determines and informs each part *as* part of the *whole*. And this once more cannot merely mean that the part is ordained, as regards its physiological function, to the service of the whole. It also implies that in a mysterious concentration of the symbolic function of the body, each part bears once more within itself the symbolic force and function of the whole, by contributing its part to the whole of the symbol.

But this propriety of each part of the body must be placed squarely in the perspective of its ontological origin: it must be seen as coming from the originating principle of the body and its parts in their unity and arrangement, that is, from the soul. And this 'soul' once more must not be understood – quite unscholastically – as a fragmentary portion of the whole man. It is the one originating source of the whole man, which explicitates itself in what we know as 'powers', faculties and acts of the soul (understood now empirically in the concrete), and which expresses itself in what we call the body of man (understood as animated by the soul). And this prior ontological unity of the whole man also appears in each part of the body; as the unity unfolds, it projects its proper manifestation, [249] its symbol, into the part in question and thus possesses itself there as a whole, though not totally. This symbolic relationship of the part of the body to the original whole, from which the part derives, may vary in intensity in different parts of the body, but it can never be entirely absent wherever a given part is substantially informed by the soul. No doubt a material reality is either informed by the spiritual soul or it is not: from the purely abstract viewpoint, the actuation is '*in indivisibili*'. Yet differences clearly exist in the various 'parts' (organs, etc.) of the body with regard to their power of expression, their degree of belonging to the soul, their openness to the soul. We may therefore say that the organs privileged in this respect are those which according to the data of empirical observation are of irreplaceable value for the survival and perfection of the whole. It is a moot point whether biological and physiological necessity corresponds to symbolic function in like degree in the various parts, and the question is probably to be answered in the negative. But a proper answer would call for very difficult researches and considerations, involving questions of historical evolutionary descent, which cannot be undertaken here. But if we are right in what we said about the presence of the whole in the part and therefore about the symbolic function of the part, then we are also justified in saying that a word used to designate part of the human body (head, heart, breast, hand) in a symbolic sense, does not signify only the part as such, that is, as a quantitative, material piece of the whole body: it always signifies the one whole, composed of the symbol-generating origin and the material piece of reality which, as portion of the whole, single and symbolic body, bears within it under a certain aspect the symbolic function of the whole body.[24]

All discussion of the object and meaning of devotion to the heart of Jesus should take place in the perspective of a theology of symbolic reality. Such a theology has not yet been written, and the foregoing considerations do not replace it. Their only aim was to show – and this has

[24] That is why we have tried to define the whole matter in hand in an analysis of the nature of the 'primary word'. Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore, Md. 1967); *Mission and Grace* III (London & New York 1966) 193-210.

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perhaps been achieved in spite of their brevity and other defects – that such a theology of Christian symbolism could and should be written, because reality in general and above all, Christian reality is essentially and [250] from its origin a reality to whose self-constitution the 'symbol' necessarily belongs. There may be still a long way to go from such an insight to the full understanding of the devotion to the heart of Jesus. But it would be a way which would lead to a deeper understanding of this devotion.

We refer in conclusion to one more point, which may help to show how directly the ideas here put forward are connected with a theology of devotion to the heart of Jesus, no matter how much is still to be done in detail for the exploitation of the general theology of the symbol.

A large number of present-day theologians determine the object of devotion to the heart of Jesus as follows. They presuppose 'a broader but proper sense of the word heart' in general, and then take it that the word designates 'the whole subject of the inner life' (including in fact the bodily heart), the '*cor ethicum*', the '*principium fontale et subjectivum vitae interioris moralis*' (so Lempl, Noldin, Donat, Lercher, Solano, etc.). Hence these theologians often reject the idea that the bodily heart of Christ is revered in so far as it is the 'symbol' of the love of Christ (as Nilles, Franzelin, Billot, Pesch, Galtier, Pohle-Gierens, Scheeben, etc., put it, in contrast to the other concept of heart). This older view – whether it means that the bodily heart is revered because it is the symbol of the love of Christ, or that the love of Christ is adored 'under' the symbol of the heart of Christ – involves, according to Solano, etc., a division of the single object of the devotion to the heart of Jesus, as it is found in fact in the practice of piety and as it is expressed in the teachings of the magisterium. The unity of the object is said to be saved only by over-subtle explanations.

Hence the first-named group of theologians reject more or less definitely the expression, that the heart is the symbol of the love of Christ. So for instance Solano, who does so most clearly.[25] But then this view is confronted with a difficulty; even the most recent pronouncements of the magisterium have no difficulty in speaking of the heart as the 'symbol' (so '*Haurietis aquas*'). Hence Solano is forced to explain; '*Encyclica "Haurietis aquas" terminologiam "Symboli" quidem conservat, nec tamen putamus hoc magisterii documentum subtiliorem hanc questionem voluisse tangere, quae et solum modum concipiendi spectat et a recentissimis auctoribus diversimode iudicatur*' ('The Encyclical retains the term "symbol", but we [251] do not think this document of the magisterium wished to deal with the more subtle question involved here, which has to do only with the manner in which it is understood and which is solved in different ways by modern authors'). There is no great objection, from the point of view of the formal principles of interpreting documents of the magisterium, to this way of solving the difficulty in Solano's position, which is supported by serious arguments, by the texts of the ecclesiastical devotion to the heart of Jesus, and by recent authors. But it is a pity that one should feel bound to come into conflict, apparently at least, with the terminology of the Encyclical, for the sake of this good position. In reality, the apparent contradiction arises only from the fact that Lercher, Solano etc. consider only the concept of symbol where the symbol and the thing symbolized are only extrinsically ordained to one another. But if one presupposes the concept of symbol as it has been developed in these pages, and applies it to the (bodily) heart of Jesus, it follows at once that one can accept the position of Lercher, Solano, etc., and still have no difficulty in speaking of the 'heart' as a symbol, as the Encyclical does. In a real theology of the symbol, based on the fundamental truths of Christianity, a symbol is not something separate from the symbolized (or different, but really or mentally united with the symbolized by a mere process

[25] Cf. Patres S. J. . . . in Hispania Professores, *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* III (Madrid [3]1956) 224f. (n. 542f.); 237 (n. 566).

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of addition), which indicates the object but does not contain it. On the contrary, the symbol is the reality, constituted by the thing symbolized as an inner moment of moment of itself, which reveals and proclaims the thing symbolized, and is itself full of the thing symbolized, being its concrete form of existence. If this concept of symbol is presupposed, then 'heart' means exactly what the authors in question mean by their broader but still proper concept; the inner centre of the person, which realizes itself and expresses itself in the bodily existence. And one can still describe the bodily heart as symbol of the whole (since it is an inner element of this whole) and hence retain the terminology of the Encyclical. When understood in a sense which it does not impose but still leaves free, it is quite adequate to the matter it deals with.

We note on the other hand that in medieval tradition and in St Margaret Mary, 'heart' is used spontaneously in the broad sense; it does not designate simply the 'bodily heart', nor does it designate simply the 'inwardness' of Christ in the metaphorical sense. It is used as a 'primordial word' of religious speech, and signifies from the start the unity of both – a unity which has not to be created subsequently, as when an object is [252] linked to a sign exterior to it as its symbolic representation. The unity is more original than the distinction, because the symbol is a distinct and yet intrinsic moment of the reality as it manifests itself. But then this older terminology is perfectly justified by the ontological and theological considerations which we have put forward. And this is the only way by which devotion to the heart of Jesus can escape the otherwise fatal question, as to why one cannot revere the love of Christ, to which one has after all immediate access, without making a special effort to think expressly of the 'bodily heart'. Reality and its appearance in the flesh are for ever one in Christianity, inconfused and inseparable. The reality of the divine self-communication creates for itself its immediacy by constituting itself present in the symbol, which does not divide as it mediates but unites immediately, because the true symbol is united with the thing symbolized, since the latter constitutes the former as its own self-realization. This basic structure of all Christianity, which a theology of the symbol should investigate, is found once more in the devotion to the heart of Jesus, and is its perpetual justification.

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10

THE WORD AND THE EUCHARIST

This investigation is entitled 'The Word and the Eucharist', meaning the question which is usually discussed under the more general heading of 'Word and Sacrament', and it is an invitation to treat the general question in the perspective of the sacrament of the altar. But the wider question and its solution cannot be simply taken as known. And the problems in question have only been given notable place in Catholic theology quite recently, while a unanimous answer is still lacking. It seems then that we should first treat the general question and then institute the more particular enquiry about the relationship between the word of God and the central sacrament of the Church. This gives us the headings for the two parts of our investigation.

I. THE WORD AND THE SACRAMENT IN GENERAL

When we discuss the relationship between these two things, the word in question is of course the word of God, as it appears in the preaching of the Church. The word of God is thus displayed at once as a word which is also the word of man, on the lips of men who are charged by the Church to deliver this word to men. But the Church, though preaching by divine command, is always likewise the hearer – even in those to whom the word has been entrusted for preaching – and hence the believer. Thus the word of God always comes as the word that is *heard* and *believed* the word that is preached and attested because believed. Thus it is always praise of God directed to God, who gave this word to the Church to be at once heard and preached by the Church.

When the word is thus understood as the word of God on the lips of the Church, the Church which believes and praises, preaches and has authority, the question arises at once of how the word stands with regard to the sacraments in the Church. The reasons are both intrinsic to the case [254] and conditioned by the situation. First, the intrinsic reasons. As soon as one asks oneself what this word of God in the Church precisely is, how it works, how God speaks in it, whom it addresses, what it should accomplish in the hearer, what speakers and hearers it presupposes and constitutes, a number of affirmations must be made – on the basis of Scripture and by the nature of the case – which, as we shall see later, have an astonishing similarity, to say no more, with the affirmations generally used to describe the sacraments. And this is the real reason for enquiring into the relationship of word and sacrament. They are so like each other that one cannot but ask what is the reason for their similarity and what is the possibility of making a distinction between them in spite of, or indeed because of their similarity and its cause. Otherwise there can be no real theological understanding of the matters in question. Then there is another reason. Word and sacrament constitute the Church. Or to put it more exactly: the power to preach the word of God by the authority of God and of his Christ, and the power to administer the sacraments to men are the two basic powers of the Church which are constitutive of its essence. We need not here go into the well-known controversy as to whether two or three basic '*potestates*' are to be distinguished in the Church: the *potestas ordinis* and *iurisdictionis*, or the power of teaching, governing and sanctifying. In any case, the power of the sacrament and the word characterize fundamentally the nature of the Church. But these two powers cannot simply exist side by side, without relation to each other, if they constitute the one Church as the one presence of

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the one salvation in the one Christ. Thus ecclesiology itself poses the question of the relationship of word and sacrament. And finally, the question is suggested by the teaching on the sacraments. We are accustomed to consider the 'word' as a constitutive and indeed the formal, that is to say, decisive element of the sacramental sign. If we are not to remain on the surface of things, we cannot treat this word, which occurs in the middle of the sacramental action itself as of no particular import: it must be the word addressed to us by the authority of God himself, the word which Christ himself speaks in us and through us, the word which is active and effective of what it signifies because it is his word, the word which renders present what it proclaims. Here again it is impossible to avoid the question as to how this word is actually related to the authoritative word of Christ which is heard elsewhere in the Church.

In view of all this, it is really astonishing that we Catholics provide no [255] space, no systematic place for a theology of the word in the average theology of our schools, in the Latin manuals, etc. We speak in fundamental theology or apologetics of the magisterium of the Church, of the powers which the Church received from Christ as it was made teacher of revelation. But this section of fundamental theology proceeds to speak directly only of the Church. The word of God is discussed only *in obliquo*. But even here the word is always restricted silently, and hence all the more effectively, to a matter of doctrines. It is the word which *teaches* something, the true and binding word 'about' something, the word which makes a statement about something. It is not treated as the word in which the reality itself draws nigh and announces itself and constitutes itself present. Thus the treatise on the magisterium of the Church cannot be considered as fully equivalent to a treatise '*De Verbo divino*'. Even less is said of set purpose in the treatise on the sacraments in general, about the relation between word and sacrament. Thus a theme which appears to be highly relevant has remained to a great extent unnoticed in the Catholic theology of the last few hundred years.

The present situation of Catholic theology seems however to be changing all this. There are many reasons for the new approach, which can only be briefly signalled here. Present-day preaching is in such straits that it feels the need of a theology of preaching and not merely of counsels of a psychological and pedagogical type bearing on rhetoric and homiletics. But a theology of preaching cannot but force us to take up a theology of the annunciation of the word of God. Biblical theology has ceased to regard itself as the mere transmitter of proof-texts for the theses laid down by the theology of the schools. As it listens more attentively to Scripture itself, it can no longer overlook the fact that the Old Testament and above all the New have more to say about the living, efficacious, mighty and creative word of God than the standard theses of the theology of the schools has grown accustomed to say about it. It is significant that in the index to Denzinger, for instance, there is no section on 'The Word of God': the section '*De Revelatione*' is too much concerned *a priori* with doctrine to be considered an equivalent. We note here the same phenomenon which may also be observed in fundamental theology: in contrast to present-day Protestant *and* Catholic biblical theology, revelation is always taken in the theology of the schools as a purely doctrinal revelation couched in statements, not as a revelatory action and event, in which God acts creatively to bestow grace upon men, uttering [256] his word in it and for it, as in inner moment of this action on man – or in which, to put it biblically, the action is the word, because God's word must produce what it says.

So too the present-day discussion on grace is leaving aside a too material concept of grace to stress its personal element – primarily understood as the uncreated self-communication of God – and is thus finding an approach to the word of God and a more comprehensive understanding of it, regarding it as the means whereby a person discloses himself and freely imparts himself to another. Further, as the theology of the Greek Fathers comes into its own, the incarnation itself is being regarded as a moment of the redemption, and not merely as the act whereby someone is placed in a position where he can be redeemer, if he wills and

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dedicates himself to the task by a completely new act, so to speak. Thus the advent of the incarnate Logos of the Father is being almost inevitably seen as the most radical case of a salvific, creative word of God in general, which calls for a theology of the word of God as a soteriological entity in general. This would be even clearer, if the incarnation of the Logos were not regarded as the incarnation of just any one of the three divine persons, so that any other of them could just as well have become man, but as the incarnation of the Word precisely and exactly *as* such, since on account of his inner-trinitarian propriety it is precisely he who becomes man and who alone can do so.

The closer communication which exists once more today between Catholic and Protestant theologians also forces us to re-consider a theology of the word. Catholic theology, no more than the magisterium, has never been able to accept the formula, that the fellowship of Protestant Christians constitutes the Church of the word while we Catholics are the Church of the sacraments. Among the Protestants of the centuries since the Enlightenment, preaching (thanks to a genuinely Protestant impulse) was almost everything, and the sacraments almost just something like an appendix to the preaching of the pure doctrine, a relic explicable as no more than a traditional survival. And for all practical purposes, Catholics mostly regarded all preaching merely as the unavoidable preparation for the sacraments (and Christian life), while the sacraments were taken to be totally different from the word, since of course they contained no ‘teaching’ ‘about something’. But Protestant theology is now beginning to take the sacraments seriously again, and to see their essential and irreplaceable significance for Christian existence. And we Catholics are reflecting more [257] expressly on the fact that we are the Church of the word of God, which does not merely mean that the Church is God’s class-room where Christians are taught how to behave if they are in fact to receive the sacraments and lead decent lives.

What is desired therefore is a theology of the word in which its essence as word of God in the Church is clearly brought out. All we shall be concerned with here is to note the characteristics of the word which are of immediate significance for the intrinsic relationship of word and sacrament. Even in this restricted field, it is obvious that we cannot really develop the theology of the word here and establish it from theological sources. We shall only try to draw up a list of theses in which at least the most important points are stated, and then indicate where perhaps the theological foundation for the theses in question may be found.

1. The word of God is uttered by the Church, where it is preserved inviolate in its entirety, and necessarily so, in its character of the word of *God*. This statement should be clear. To deny it would be to deny the essence of the Church, in which and through which (and not passing by it) Christ makes his message contemporary to all ages as the word of God, the Church through which he is present to us in his own mission.

2. This word of God in the Church is an inner moment of God’s salvific action on man. Salvation is indeed the work of God, but this work of God is not totally identifiable with the word of God which comes in human words, in so far as it comes in human words. For God’s salvific action on man is not merely a forensic imputation of the justice of Christ. And it is not merely the announcement of a purely future act of God. Nor is it constituted merely by man’s faith, however this is to be further interpreted. It is a true, real, creative action of God in grace, which renews man interiorly by making him participate in the divine nature – all of which, being the condition of possibility of a salutary action on the part of man, is prior, at least logically, to such *action* of man. But this act whereby man is created anew by God through his prevenient gift, cannot take place, in the case of a man actively exercising his personal freedom, without man’s personally participating in this new creation in faith, hope and love: indeed, man’s act is an intrinsic moment of the whole process. This follows at once from the fact that not only the grace of divinization, but even the *acceptance* of this gift must

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according to all theological sources be characterized as grace. Hence the acceptance of the divine gift of justification is itself part of the gift, in so far as this [258] grace works as efficacious grace to bring about the act of acceptance in its entity and works as elevating grace to bring it about in its quality. It follows that the free, personal consent must be brought about as such by God, that is, as a spiritual, personal act, as an act which knows itself as an act of acceptance. But this prevenient grace of God, which constitutes man's act in its reality and bestows on it its quality, is to be qualified as enlightenment and inspiration according to the theological sources. Hence it is by definition 'word', that is, spiritual self-communication of God to the creature, especially as this grace is not this or that created reality, but the real self-communication of God in 'uncreated' grace and – at least according to Thomistic doctrine – every entitatively supernatural grace creates a conscious condition of consciousness in man by means of its supernatural formal object, which cannot be brought about by any purely natural object. But this inward self-communication of God, 'verbal' though it is in itself, cannot alone be adequate for the normal and fully developed act of its acceptance. Of itself it would remain to a certain extent merely a transcendental, unobjectivated knowledge of this gracious act of God on man, which could not be brought into the region of reflective consciousness. That might be enough, under certain circumstances, for a salutary act (even as an act of faith with regard to a 'revelation'), a point we shall not deal with here: but this inner word of grace alone cannot make it possible for man to have a developed, objectivated, fully conscious understanding of himself as the believing recipient of the divine self-communication. For if the verbal communication of God was already complete in the inner word of grace, in the 'illumination' by interior grace alone, then man would always and essentially accomplish his salvation only in the non-reflective, unobjectivated transcendence of his being, while the dimension of worldly objects and categories remained outside the scope of salutary acts, and man would be claimed by God only in the 'fine point' of his soul, in his secret profundities, but not in the whole width of his being with all its dimensions. Or if not, man would already be absolutely certain of his state of grace and ultimately of the *visio beatifica*: because he could develop merely from the depths of his conscious grace the whole content of this blessing, since the adequate presentation of the inner divinization to consciousness is by definition '*visio beatifica*'. Further, if things were so man would not be claimed by the event of salvation in his social dimension. But if man is essentially and primordially a being in a community, even in the dimension of the [259] individual salutary decision, then knowledge of his grace cannot be adequately given by his inner experience of grace alone: it must also come to him from without, though not exclusively, from the world, from the community, from the history of salvation which is a social event historically transmitted. But this means that the proclamation of the word of God, that is, the word in so far as it is conveyed by the *historical*, external salvific act of God as an intrinsic moment of this act and by the community of believers, belongs necessarily to the inner moments of God's salvific *action* on man.

3.As an inner moment of this salvific action of God, the word shares in the special character of the salvific action of God in Christ (and the Church). To understand this statement, we must recall the essential connexion between the inner word of grace and the external, historical, social ('ecclesiastical') word of revelation. Both are essentially connected and are still ordained to one another, even where there is (perhaps) in fact a separation between the two of them in a given individual destiny – a point which cannot be dealt with here. The external, historical word expounds the inner one, brings it to the light of consciousness in the categories of human understanding, compels man definitely to take a decision with regard to the inner word, transposes the inner grace of man into the dimension of the community and renders it present there, makes possible the insertion of grace into the external, historical field of human life. And on the other hand: it is only the inner grace, as light of faith and inward

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connaturality with God, that makes it possible for man to hear the external, historical word of God strictly *as* the word of God, without subjecting it to the *a priori* of his own human spirit and thereby debasing it. In a word, for the full normal accomplishment of the personal self-disclosure of God to the personally actualized man, the inner word of grace and the external historical word come together, as the mutually complementary moments of the one word of God to man. From which it follows that this one word is in itself an action of God on man in grace, an element of his revelation in acts. Hence it participates inevitably in the character of the salvific action of God on man in Christ. Assertions about God's salvific action on man are of their nature assertions about the word of God – understood as two-fold in the unity of the inner and the outward word. On this basis, the next thesis can be understood as the development of the thesis just put forward.

4. This word of God (as inner moment of the salvific action of God on [260] man and so with it and because of it) is the salutary word which brings with it what it affirms. It is itself therefore salvific event, which, in its outward, historical and social aspect, displays what happens in it and under it, and brings about what it displays. It renders the grace of God present.

To prevent the reader rejecting the thesis at once, on the ground that it is exactly the definition of a sacrament, we must anticipate our next thesis to some extent. There it will be said that the actual effectiveness of the word of God is essentially variable, and hence the nature of the word of God in the thesis just stated is defined according to its most intensive realization as it well may be, without denying or obscuring the fact that this realization can take place at a very low potential – which is the usual basis on which Catholic theology considers the word of God in the Church. But it will also be said that the full and adequate realization of this definition of the word of God will prove to be what we call sacraments in Catholic theology. For the moment then let us proceed to outline and explain our justification of this definition of the word of God in the Church as the presence of the act of God's salvation of men in the Church. Taking for granted the proof to be given later, that the proposed definition of the word of God in general will not do detriment to the nature, particularities and special position of the sacraments, the word of God itself will here be explained as the word which displays itself effectively, as the presence of the action of God on man.

First however an explanation of the logic of the matter. Two things can exist side by side, each being by its essence a completely different entity. And the nature in each case can be to some extent statistically fixed and unchangeable, so that it exists in the way it is and must be according to its essence, or it cannot exist at all. But an essence may also be intrinsically changeable; the same essence (being, for instance, life, spirit, dignity, beauty and so on) can be realized in ways which not only differ specifically, but are only analogously alike. In this case it is perfectly justifiable and methodically unobjectionable – though perhaps not always strictly called for – to describe the thing in question in terms of the supreme term of the analogy, its highest form of realization (if this is accessible and known), and to take the other, secondary attributions as *deficient* manners of the realization of the thing in question (supposing, of course, one can explain how and why such deficient realizations of the essence came about). This is to be borne in mind in what follows.

[261] We have now to prove that the word of God, in its full, original sense, is not to be taken as a set of doctrinal propositions 'about something': it is not just the intellectual description of something which exists and is available completely independently of this doctrinal instruction. It is a revelatory, actualizing word, in which and under which alone the thing designated is present, in a reciprocal relationship of such a kind that the word is formed by the thing which thus comes, and the thing comes by making itself thus audible. Proof of this may be offered in very different ways.

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The first and decisive proof would be that the sacred scripture of the Old and New Testament understands the concept of 'the word' in this way. It seems to me possible to affirm that present-day biblical theology teaches this thesis expressly, though it does not seem to trouble itself much about the question of how the thesis can be reconciled with the doctrine of the magisterium on the sacraments. The word of God – on the lips of the preaching Church as elsewhere – is not '*didache*', (teaching), from beginning to end, but proclamation in which the arrival of the thing proclaimed itself takes place. It is the mighty, creative *dabar* (word), of God to man, the way in which the reality which is being proclaimed discloses itself, and thereby and thus becomes present to us, coming forth itself from its divine concealment and coming where *we* are for the very first time. Detailed proof of this may be omitted, since this view is that of Catholic biblical theology at the present day, to say nothing of Protestants.

But even if the dogmatic theologian does not find the biblical theology of the exegetes entirely convincing, he has data of his own, in a form readily available even in the theology of the schools, which can explain this thesis of the revelatory efficacity of the word of God. Every dogmatic theologian is actually familiar with the matter in question, even though in other terms, at least when he starts with the hearing of the word in faith. We all say that the message of faith, the proclamation of the word of God, is directed to believing ears, and is only fully intelligible there. But such hearing in faith can only take place in the connaturality with the word of God which comes through grace. This grace of hearing in faith and love and of responding in a fully human way is not just any aid which is given to produce finally a merely human act: it is the acceptance of justification in the self-communication of God which takes place by virtue of the *reality* here present by its being proclaimed and accepted. Hence at least [262] the message heard in faith is for every dogmatic theologian not just the hearing of a statement about something, but the reception of the reality itself about which the audible statement is made – the reality which causes its communication to be heard and lovingly believed. But since the message of faith is preached by God's authority and command, to summons man imperatively and demand from him, in the name of God, a faith which he can only have by God's grace, the message is in itself a clear assurance from God that he is offering the possibility of faith and hence the reality of what is believed, which he desires to give as truly as he offers it. For if t is true that God never refuses the grace for a salutary act, where he demands the salutary act as the moral duty of man, it is also dogmatically certain that where the moral obligation of faith arises from the preaching of the faith, and in so far as it arises, grace too is offered, which is the reality of what is preached. Thus the word of God, as preached and imperative, is the coming of what is preached, as the possibility of the acceptance of the reality itself which is preached. We need not dwell on the fact that in this preaching it is never a matter of just individual truths of a historic nature on their own. All the individual truths are uttered and held as elements of the one announcement in which God proclaims his own self-communication to the world and to each individual in Christ Jesus. And thus of course the last foolish objection is excluded, which says that everything that is preached does not itself become reality in the hearer as he hears the word which discloses it. For the one, actual, permanent reality of salvation which implies the individual elements is in fact uttered: offered in the word, it is really present and accepted in the hearing of faith and love, and in it everything historical and purely objective belonging to it which is a moment of this real salvation; anything else is actualized only in so far as it is the presupposition and historical condition of this reality.

With this we must end the very summary outline of the possible proofs of this thesis. It is in itself very obvious. However, in Catholic theology it is mostly dealt with under other headings and in other perspectives, and hence at first sight the thesis may appear strange and unusual. Let us take just one example to clarify the matter. A sinner hears the authoritative word of the Church calling him to repentance. Can we say that if he hears and accepts this

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word of God through the Church in faith and love, the event of God's offer of the grace of repentance infallibly takes place in him – though of course there is no absolute certainty about the *de facto* [263] fulfilment of these conditions, any more than there is about the necessary dispositions for the sacraments? Can we say that then there is infallibly a repentance which on account of the universal salvific will of God is not just the subjective attitude of the man on the human plane, but God's action on him, which consists of the fact that in the communication of sanctifying grace, which is fundamentally God himself, God himself is accepted as he who confers salvation? This can and must be affirmed. It is basically no more than a simple truth of our faith. But this means that in this efficacious preaching of the word of God, that which is preached takes on the character of an event. It means that the grace of God is not merely spoken of but takes place as an event in this utterance. The word which speaks of grace and grace itself must then always be distinguished as moments of a total process, because they do not simply coincide, any more than the efficacious sacramental sign is simply identical with the grace which it signifies and produces. But this does not change the fact that word and reality, in contrast to ordinary human speech, are essentially related to one another and form a unity. The word of preaching is the efficacious proclamation which brings about what it speaks of, the grace announced: it is truly word of life, creative word of God.

5. To avoid misunderstandings, however, we must at once add another thesis: this word, which is in the nature of an event and an exhibition, takes place in the Church in essentially varying degrees of concentration and intensity. The concept of word of God in the Church which we have arrived at is analogous: it is capable of and subject to inner changes. This is something with which we are all familiar, if we consider this word with regard to its summons to *belief*. From *this* point of view we are all perfectly familiar with the intrinsic changeableness of the concept. We all affirm that all words of truth in the Church have not the same binding force. They have not all the same absolute character. There are words of truth in the Church which demand from man the absolute assent of his faith and hence are also absolutely linked with the reality of the matter attested. But there are also words in the Church which certainly mean to make a statement, impart truth, present realities to men's minds, but still do not claim and guarantee this ultimately indissoluble bond with the thing intended. They claim our assent in certain circumstances, and rightly so, because without them the truths affirmed absolutely would not be assimilable in the actual exercise of the knowledge of truth. But they are assertions where the Church does not actualize and exercise fully and [264] entirely its character as the definitive eschatological presence and disclosure of truth – does not pledge its official teaching infallibility, as we say. We are used to giving norms for distinguishing between one word of truth and another, precisely because we rightly see the two in the *one* perspective. They are not simply disparate attestations of the truth. They are analogous modifications of the one word of truth, which in the first case attains a full and radical realization of its essence, but in the second appears to some extent in a provisional, secondary, subsidiary and deficient guise, in which it serves, makes possible, prepares for and protects the first truth in question. Thus as regards the word of God in the Church, we are quite familiar with the analogous nature of this concept, which lends the essence of the word an inner mutability. But we must say the same of the word of God as the revelatory presence of that which is announced in it. The coming and presence of God in his word in the Church as he proclaims himself is not always simply the same. There are degrees. And we know these degrees, since we say for instance that one has the grace of infused faith and another has also the grace of infused charity and so justification itself. By speaking in this way, we make distinctions, though in other words, between the degrees of God's self-communication to men, or of the existential acceptance of this self-communication by men. And these are in fact degrees of how the word of God makes the reality present. The reality in

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question always strives for a single, all-embracing goal: which is that God should bestow himself totally on man, in man's total acceptance, through and in love which justifies, of this self-surrendering love of God. But this single and absolute goal of grace is only reached by stages in finite man who is involved in history and so attains only by a gradual process the single totality of his life. (The coming of justification is a historical process, which post-Trindentine theology was correct in considering a matter of phases, unlike the medieval doctrine which saw it more statically – though our present-day theology is now in great danger of reducing the whole process to a mere temporal succession of disparate single acts, which would be to atomize the process.) And the same historicity and phased activity is also to be predicated of the word of God. It can realize its essence only in a historical process, it is not always and at every moment fully its whole self: it grows, it *becomes* what it is and must be, it can have its deficient, provisional and preparatory phases and moments. It is not possible here to depict the causes and types of the inner changes in the being of the word [265] of God in the Church and in the process of Christian existence, to measure so to speak the extent of possible variation in the forms taken by the word of God. Various elements contribute to determine the actual degree of concentration and intensity of the word of God in each case, and hence that of the coming of what is preached and the certainty of this efficacious presence alike. Since it is essentially a matter of the word uttered in the dialogue between God-Christ in the Church on the one hand, and the human hearer on the other, both sides share in these moments: the difference in the content of the utterance; the consequent difference in its importance; the varying degrees of commitment on the side of the Church; the essential difference of the existential import of the situation on the side of the hearers, where this word is uttered as God's word and redemptive answer to the given situation; the difference in the ecclesiological importance of this dialogue between the Church (as bearer of the word of Christ and abiding presence of his word of grace in the world) and man as member of this Church, a difference on which again depend in part the varying degrees of commitment of the Church in the proclamation of this word; the difference in the concrete recipients of the word – as for instance when the Church as a whole or an individual in his most intimate and unique quest of salvation is addressed, or again, when neither is in question, but something provisional and intermediate, through which the word inevitably becomes something like pure teaching; these and other elements, which would have to be worked out, make for the inner variability of the one essence of the word of God in the Church.

In the light of the foregoing, it might perhaps be possible to work out a fundamental analysis of the meaning of the many different expressions used in Scripture to designate the word of God. They all point to the one essence of this word, but signify this essence in its inner changes: to speak prophetically, to teach, to exhort, to instruct, to edify, to console, to persuade, to announce, to transmit, to recall, to utter the (sacramental) word of life, to judge, to give testimony, etc. But we cannot go into this here. We turn at once to the supreme and most intensive realization of the essence of the word, the sacramental word. Hence our next thesis is as follows:

6. The supreme realization of the efficacious word of God, as the coming of the salvific action of God in the radical commitment of the Church (that is, as the Church's own, full actualization), in the situations decisive for the individual's salvation, is the sacrament and only the sacrament.

[266] Before we try to explain this thesis and indicate its justification to some extent, some preliminary remarks are called for. To begin with: an authoritative and effective word, which brings about something real (as for instance in worldly matters, the official promulgation of a law, the last will and testament, etc.), is by nature completely dependent on its being couched in the form ordained by the ultimate author of its efficacious character. If something of a

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doctrinal nature is to be imparted which is independent of the means of communication, the validity of the communication need only depend on the fact that the matter is correctly expressed and proposed intelligibly to the hearer. More is obviously demanded in the case of a 'practical', operative word which not merely affirms something but constitutes it. And this overplus can be determined, not merely by the nature of things, but also by the positive institution of the speaker from whom the constitutive force of the word is derived. Further: we are accustomed when speaking of the sacraments to distinguish between the word and the element, or in hylomorphic terms, between matter and form. But this distinction, correct though it be in itself, ought not obscure the fact that both elements, the word and the sacramental action, participate in the symbolic character of the sacrament and hence in its quality of being *word*. The sacramental action too has the character of a word. It designates something, it expresses something, it reveals something that is of itself hidden. To put it briefly, it too is a word. Hence it is not at all surprising that the distinction between matter and form, action and word, can be applied only very artificially in some sacraments. In the sacraments of penance and marriage there are only words. The sacramental sign consists solely of these words, which is not contrary to the nature of the sacrament, because its nature is to be an efficacious sign, an expressivity which produces and presents what is rendered perceptible. Thus it is perfectly legitimate and objectively perfectly justifiable to subsume the whole sacrament under the concept of the efficacious *word*. In some sacraments this efficacious word must be pronounced in a form which includes the element of the ritual action. This is due to the positive decree of him who institutes the efficacious word. One can of course ask what are the intrinsic reasons why in these cases, by the will of Christ, the significant word should have this still more bodily form. These reasons must surely be important and easy to find and will ultimately stem from the incarnational character of Christian salvation as a whole. But this does not change the fact that basically a [267] sacrament is and remains an efficacious *word*. For signs and words, from the metaphysical and theological point of view, are of exactly the same nature: especially as in all the sacraments we have signs which, in so far as they are sacramental, always go back to a positive institution of Christ. In this sense they are not simply an intrinsic echo of the thing which is rendered audible. They are all freely created signs, in the same sense that 'words' are, which are not merely signs of the thing, but likewise always signs of the free personal self-disclosure of a person, in contrast to things, which have always automatically made themselves known and cannot be closed in on themselves. In other words: since grace is the free personal self-communication of God, its divulgation is always free and personal and hence essentially word. Thus the whole sign of grace, no matter what form it takes, must partake of the character of the *word*.

In the relationship of matter and form in the sacraments, we must not overlook the following: it is not true and it cannot be true that the material element in the sacrament (water, ablution, etc.) is decisive. The ultimate reason for this is easily seen. One could formulate it as the following thesis: in the case of strictly supernatural realities (which ultimately consist of the gratuitous, personal and radical self-communication of God in his own trinitarian glory), a purely natural thing in the nature of an *object* can never function as a sign in such a way that the supernatural reality could be attained through it alone. Whenever a reality of the world is to be sign, indication and historical presence of a strictly supernatural reality, it can be so only when the spiritual, transcendental ('subjective') openness and orientation of man, pointing beyond the finite to God himself becomes an intrinsically constitutive element of this sign. But this implies that supernatural reality can display itself only through the medium of the human *word*, as long as it cannot present itself in its own proper reality, which is basically in the immediate vision of God. For a more exact proof of this thesis I may perhaps be allowed to refer readers to the discussion in my book 'Hörer des

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Wortes' (Hearers of the Word). In any case, it is all to be found ultimately in the first Vatican Council, session 3, chapter 2, where it is taught that a divine revelation in *words*, in contrast to the natural revelation through created things, is absolutely *necessary*, if man is ordained to a *supernatural* end. Man can therefore be informed of this end only by the word, not by means of natural objects. It follows that in the manifestation of grace which is called the sacrament, the word is necessarily and inevitably the [268] decisive element: an objective element in the nature of a thing only enters this manifestation of the supernatural in so far as it is absorbed into this utterance in the word.

Hence there can be no objection, at least on principle, to the effort to determine the nature of the sacraments from their quality of 'word'. The only question is whether such an effort can succeed in delimiting, 'defining' their essence in contradistinction to other words in the Church. The effort is made in the thesis here put forward.

But before we try to explain the thesis itself, we must consider briefly some efforts which show a certain similarity to our own, because these definitions too start from the insight gained by biblical theology into the character of event and efficacity belonging to the word of God in the Church: and thus they are faced with the problem which is otherwise not felt very keenly in Catholic theology – how the sacraments are to be distinguished from the word of God elsewhere, since God's word after all is absolutely efficacious of itself. The difficulty which all these efforts have to meet, and ours too, is the doctrine of the Council of Trent. Omitting all reflexions on the theology of the word, which is rather surprising, in view of the Protestant doctrine, the Council declares that the sacraments (and eventually, the desire for them) are the source of the grace of justification, and hence are absolutely necessary (*necessitate medii*), where this doctrine, taken in the strict sense, is no doubt to be understood rather *sensu exclusivo* than merely *sensu positivo*. (Cf. e.g. Denzinger 843a: all true justice begins, grows and is restored through the sacraments.)

It is true that according to the mind of the Council, apart from the question of the efficaciousness of the word of God in general as a salvific event, its statement about the exclusiveness of the sacraments is to be taken *cum grano salis*. For the Council mentions for instance a growth in grace which can be merited apart from the sacraments, which is a growth in the grace of justification. The Council mentions actual graces which precede sacramental justification. And when it says that under certain circumstances the sacrament can be replaced by the desire for it, it certainly does not – as St Thomas would – affirm that the sacrament works by anticipation. It ascribes this justifying effect to the subjective faith and love of man himself, making the desire only an implicit condition, as all theologians unhesitatingly affirm since Trent. In this they follow Scotus, and show perhaps too little hesitation and too little sense of the problem, [269] but in any case they do not come into conflict with Trent. However, where this 'non-sacramental' justification takes place, even though including the desire of the sacrament, faith remains the root and foundation, as the Council itself says. And as faith comes from hearing the word of God, the Council and its doctrine provide at least a start for a theology of the word of God, where it is itself a salvific event and not merely an instruction about the possibility of such a grace acting upon man.

Nonetheless, the question still remains from the Council of Trent, as to how a theology of the intrinsically efficacious word can be reconciled with the doctrine of the sacraments as the efficacious signs and words of grace. The efforts of recent theology to solve the question, which we barely indicate here, must not be considered false in what they positively affirm. But to my mind they are not quite adequate. Wilms, for instance, distinguished word and sacrament as one would infallible *truth* and *operation* of grace. But this is precisely to renounce once more the biblical notion of the efficacious word. Others say that the word apart from the sacraments produces its effect ex *opere operantis*, while the word in the sacraments does so e*x opere operato*; others say that the former produces only actual grace,

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while the latter confers sanctifying grace, or that the former arouses the disposition, while the latter gives grace to the man so disposed, the former proclaims the coming of grace, the latter effectively gives it. Such distinctions are to be found for instance in Victor Warnach, Hänsli, Betz and others. We are not at all, as we have said, interested in rejecting the positive elements contained in these positions. All we think we should do is to make some remarks which will show how problematic these distinctions are.

It has already been said that justification can take place in a salutary action even outside the sacraments – through the necessary intervention of the word of God – and that in such cases the *votum sacramenti*, the desire, is the condition but not the cause of it, according to the general opinion of theologians. This alone makes it impossible to ascribe to the word of God outside the sacraments merely actual grace, to the exclusion of sanctifying grace. The interpretation of the relationship between word and sacrament thus criticized may perhaps be further defended by saying that 'non-sacramental' justification always tends by its whole nature towards a tangible sacramental realization of this justification and only finds its true completion therein: but this, while correct and of decisive importance, is already to go beyond the principles of the theory, in question. [270] Further, it must not be thought that the distinction between *opus operatum* and *opus operantis* can be presupposed as something quite obvious and perfectly clear in such efforts to solve the problem. For the meaning of *opus opera turn* is not at all very clear. If one simply says that *opus operatum* is the operation which produces grace in virtue of Christ, without merit on the part of the agent of this operation or on the part of the subject on whom it is performed: then we must recall that all grace comes by the power of Christ, and that there are non-sacramental occasions on which grace is given without any merit, as is the case with every prevenient actual grace. And here it should be noted that it would be quite wrong to say that because each sacrament confers a specific grace, the effect of the sacrament is only habitual grace, as if actual grace could not be an effect of the sacrament as such. It must also be noted that according to the ordinary doctrine of theologians, there can very well be an *opus opera turn* which is not at once a sacrament. Thus the notion of *opus operatum* alone is not of itself adequate to demarcate a sacrament in contrast to anything else. Or at any rate, some further criterion must be invoked when such a distinction is made. If the infallibility of the effect is stressed in the notion of *opus operatum*, we have to point out first, that this infallible effect, in spite of being ascribed to the sacrament 'taken on its own', is in fact, according to the Council of Trent, bound up with a condition in *actu secundo*: the (varying) dispositions of the recipient. And this readily intelligible fact is not altered because the condition is not precisely the cause of the effect in question, but merely the condition necessary for it. Further, there are still other cases where, by the free disposition of God, grace is infallibily connected with some action which still remains a mere pre-condition, to the exclusion of merit, as for instance purely petitionary prayer as such for something which makes certainly and unconditionally for supernatural salvation and the glory of God. Such prayer is certain of its effect, according to the express promise of Jesus, whose words it is not our business to modify. Why is this not an *opus operatum?* After all, it is a word to which infallible efficacity is ascribed by Christ's promise; and a sacramental sign, the prayer at extreme unction, for instance, can take the form and the formal sense of a petition to God. It may be suggested that we must take all these elements together – primarily therefore the absence of merit, the infallibility of effect, relation to sanctifying grace – to have the concept of *opus opera turn*. But the question still remains as to whether these characteristics cannot also be found united outside the sacraments, [271] and above all, as to how this combination is to be given a unified basis so that finally the real essence of an *opus operatum* and hence of a sacrament – when the other conditions are fulfilled – may be understood. However, these remarks must now suffice as critical notes on the present-day attempts to solve the question of the demarcation, as between the efficacious

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word of God in the Church in general, and the efficacious word of God which we have precisely in the sacraments. We now come to the explanation and the outline proof of the thesis proper.

In its positive sense it really hardly needs to be proved. The sacramental word is so unquestionably the supreme form of the efficacious word of God that the tendency in Catholic theology is rather to make it the only efficacious word. The word in the sacrament – along with the ritual action as an element of the whole speaking sign – is clearly efficacious, effects what it signifies, is uttered by the authority of Christ, is the word which undoubtedly represents the supreme exercise of the authority of the Church and hence also its supreme moment of self-realization, brings about the decisive thing in the history of the individual's salvation, first and second justification. Hence this word is certainly the event in which God imparts himself in his own reality and majesty as eternal salvation as he justifies and sanctifies man. It is certain that no higher form of God's efficacious word is conceivable. Thus the only question about the thesis here proposed is whether the sacraments can be clearly and sufficiently distinguished from other forms of God's efficacious word, and whether the nature of a sacrament can be sufficiently clarified under this aspect. Some further remarks are called for on these questions.

First, an indirect answer may be given: anything that can be said of a sign may also be said under the heading of 'word'. If Catholic theology usually uses the notion of sign to determine the nature of a sacrament and mark it off from other things, the same process should also be possible when dealing with the 'word'. The only question is what specific notes must be attached to the generic concept of 'sign' or 'word' so as to reduce this genus to the species 'sacrament' and so determine the essence of the sacrament. That these features include the mission of Christ, authority from him, the fact that the word is uttered and the sign performed in his name is an obvious truth which sets no problems. In the classic definition of the sacraments the generic concept 'sign' is specified by the addition of the difference: (*signum*) *efficax gratiae – ex opere operato*. The same formal process of logic could also be applied to the concept 'word' and the [272] sacrament could be defined: the word of Christ on the lips of the Church, which confers grace e*x opere operato*. But even when we prescind from the fact that this traditional definition of a sacrament already raises difficulties, quite apart from the considerations which we have put forward, new problems arise from what we have said under thesis 4, which make the definition of a sacrament harder to deal with. We can no longer maintain that the conferring of grace can be ascribed only to the sacramental word in the strictest sense, since we are bound to ascribe such efficacity – even though in varying degrees – to *every* word which God utters, even when he does so through the Church. And hence we cannot take the concept of '*opus operatum*' to be so obvious and so clear in itself that we can use it at once as the *differentia specifica* in our definition. Nonetheless, it is still possible to affirm: if, starting from our basic principle – the concept of the *efficacious* word of God in the Church, which is variable in its efficacity – we succeed in giving a description or demarcation or definition of the concept '*opus opera turn*' and insert this 'definition' in the required definition of a sacrament, instead of the mere phrase '*opus operatum*', we have certainly arrived at what we sought. The definition would then be traditional, because it only expresses more exactly what is asserted in the standard definition, by giving the words sign and *opus operatum* a clearer sense. And such a definition will likewise be found capable of distinguishing the sacramental word from other forms of the efficacious word, because it describes the special form of its efficacity, which belongs only to the sacramental word, in such a way that this description coincides with that of the *opus operatum*. This is precisely what we have sought to do in the statement put forward above. Let us look at it in detail.

In the statement in question we indicated two features which when taken together constitute, to our mind, the objective content of the concept *opus opera turn* in its unity: the

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word as the fullest actualization of the Church in its absolute commitment, and the word spoken in the decisive situations of human salvation.

To understand why these two features when taken together cover in fact the concept of the *opus operatum* and indeed determine it more exactly than is usual, we must reflect on the nature of the Church as the primary sacrament. Unfortunately, this can be done here only extremely briefly. The Church, in its concrete reality, is the permanent sign of the fact that God does not merely *offer* the grace of his self-communication but that in the triumphant efficacity of his grace – efficacious in formal [273] pre-definition with regard to mankind as a whole and the Church – he also powerfully brings about the acceptance of this offer. Grace is not merely in the world; it is not merely there as an offer: since Christ and through Christ it is also in fact triumphantly there. It is not just that the world *can* be saved if it wills, it *is* in fact saved, as a whole, because God brings it about in Christ that the world does will to be saved. It is the redeemed, not just the redeemable world. In and through the eschatological triumph of grace the destiny of the world as a whole is already decided. The history of salvation is not yet closed for the individual as such and the knowledge of his future, but as a whole the history of salvation is already decided positively. And of this eschatological situation of the history of salvation, as already basically decided in the positive sense, the Church, as historically visible, is the sign, the historically audible word which proclaims this victory and in which this victory constitutes itself present in the world. And the Church is such in her unfailing truth and her inexhaustible saving powers, as well as in the unconquerable subjective holiness of her members as a whole. Both elements are there, and not by an arbitrary disposition of God, though such a two-fold disposition did not exist, for instance, in the Old Testament: they are there because with and through Christ the kingdom of God is there in the world, really and invincibly, and the Church is the abiding presence of this very Christ; they are there in the incarnational reality of the Church, as the historical sign and word of this victory which is already definitive. Since the Church is the presence of Christ in the world, as the eschatologically definitive salvation and the definitively triumphant grace of God, the Church visible, its historical tangibility, its character of being the word proclaiming salvation, is definitive and eschatological. But this means that the reality of the Church has the character of a sign, definitively and inviolably, finally and for ever. The pre-Christian, Old Testament, and other non-Christian manifestations of God's salvific dealings with men in the realities of accessible history could be rendered ineffective by men's disbelief, their refusal to hear – as is still possible today with regard to individual words of God to individual men. More than that, they could void themselves, lose their character of efficacious promise of God's salvation; they could be abolished and hence always existed as the crisis of a history of salvation that was still undeclared, merely provisional and the shadow of reality. They were never valid except in so far as they went beyond themselves to point on [274] to the future: they were the coming, not the presence, of the grace of God.

The Church is of itself the final, irrevocable, eschatologically permanent word of salvation to the world. In it God has of himself uttered permanently his word of grace to the world, his last irrevocable word, which is no longer open to change in the dialogue of a history still running its course. And thereby he has declared that this is his last and efficacious word, not the word that judges and rejects. And hence the Church is the primary sacrament, and the treatise '*De sacramentis in genere*' is a treatise on the genus, the origin and root of the sacraments, and this is the Church. (This could give us, incidentally, a new and broader basis for discussing the old question, so difficult historically, of the institution of all the sacraments by Christ himself: he instituted the sacraments, which are not attested by any express texts of Scripture, by instituting the Church; and he instituted the sacraments which were explicitly instituted, *as* moments in the institution of the Church, as is perfectly clear from all the three sacraments in question.) And now the concept of *opus operatum* may be envisaged in its real

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origin. This concept cannot be defined simply by saying, in formal juridical terms of a decretal theology, that such a process is efficacious of itself and without merit on the part of the subject of the process. For there are other processes, as we have already said, of which the same may be said. But the *opus operatum* is to be taken as the supreme degree of the Church's actuality, as the act of its self-*realization* – and as such, much more proper to its nature as a society than if the *opus operatum* was something static and substance – like, less dependent on an act being done. It follows at once that such an act participates in the nature of the Church, as described when we said that it was the final, unvoidable and intrinsically definitive sign of God's absolute self-bestowal on the world in his triumphant grace. And precisely the same may be said of the basic acts of the Church. Where it actualizes itself in an ultimate commitment of its being towards an individual, becoming for him the aforesaid merciful word of God in the concrete critical situation of his salvation, hence the final efficacious word, no longer provisional and conditional in a dialectical dialogue: this is precisely what we should describe as an *opus operatum*. The *opus operatum* is the eschatologically unconditional word of God to man, which is no longer in the balance and in danger of being abrogated by a new and different word in the history of salvation. The *opus operatum* is the eschatologically efficacious word of God, as the [275] absolute self-realization of the Church, according to its essence as the primary sacrament.

Though this is a self-realization of the Church in its primordial sacramental nature, by means of an absolute engagement, as the definitive manifestation of God's grace in history, it is by the nature of things subject to certain conditions, some of which are intrinsic, others dependent like the Church itself on the free decree of Christ. It depends on intrinsic conditions: because this absolute self-realization of the Church with regard to the truth of the word which constitutes this self-realization, is clearly only possible where it is a matter of the whole Church's being committed to this truth. And where it is a matter of the efficacity of a word which of its nature is mostly or always directed to the individual, such an absolute commitment is only possible where the individual is envisaged in situations decisive for his salvation, and not in cases which represent insignificant factors compared with the totality of the Christian existence of the individual. (It is the same as in moral theology: a radical *subjective* decision is only possible with regard to '*materia* objective *gravis*'.) This does not mean of course that we are now enabled to deduce the seven sacraments purely *a priori*. It can be demonstrated that the group of seven is not purely arbitrary, that it is not just as easy to imagine that there could be substantially more or fewer sacraments. Such positivism in theology would already be suspect from its inevitable *consequence*: that it would call for proof in each sacrament of strict, verbal, explicit institution by Christ. And this is not only historically impossible, it must be rejected as historically improbable. But this again does not mean that it must be possible to deduce the sacraments *a priori*, individually and as to their fixed number. Nor do we mean this, when we say that each sacrament is an act of the absolute self-realization of the Church in an absolute commitment. The Church itself in its concrete reality is the free institution of Christ – with regard to the time and place of its origin, and hence with regard to many other things which do not simply stem from its essential nature of being the presence of Christ as eschatological salvation in the world. And thus its nature, in its actual concrete realization, cannot be wholly and definitely deduced from its basic, abstract concept. We may and must be simply prepared to accept *a priori* the basic acts which the Church recognizes as corresponding to its essence individually and exactly and retains as such in its understanding of itself. Our definition of a sacrament may not be objected to on the grounds that other such absolute acts of self-realization [276] are thinkable, or that some sacraments cannot be so easily identified as such acts. By the nature of things, there must be a certain margin of freedom in marking the frontier between the absolute and the non-absolute acts of self-realization, we have to register *a posteriori* what is

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outside the boundary, when dealing with particular questions when marking this frontier. It is nonetheless clear that initiation (in its two-fold character of baptism and confirmation) and reconciliation (of the sinner, with the holy Church and with God) are such basic acts, both for the Church itself and in the history of the salvation of the individual as such in and in face of the Church. If in *these* cases the Church could not realize itself absolutely as the primary sign of the eschatological grace which is historically tangible in it, then it could never do so and it would not be that sign. If man exists essentially in society, if therefore his social nature is of significance for salvation, and if for the Church itself this society is of significance, both on account of its fruitfulness and on account of the marriage partners: then marriage is an essential moment in the life of the Church, which becomes manifest in an essential way in the marriage of its members. It is decisively represented by marriage, and it appears there as itself in a historically tangible manifestation which attests the Church. Hence marriage must partake of the absolute character of sign which belongs to the Church, that is, it must be a sacrament. Whether this consideration is of itself stringent or not is a matter of indifference. In the course of its history, basing itself on biblical data, the Church has recognized marriage as a sacrament. And it did so, because marriage represents the love which unites Christ and the Church, and such a sign cannot be an empty one in the New Testament. It recognized therefore marriage as a sacrament, because it has a symbolic relationship to the Church itself, and therefore because the Church finds itself once more in marriage. And thus our basic observation on marriage is proved correct, and again, the correctness of the observation is confirmed, even if it were not simply stringent as the individual theologian's private considerations, outside the self-understanding of the Church. That the installation of an office-bearer in the Church can and must be thought of as a radical situation in the Christian existence of the individual – in so far as he appears, so to speak, on the side of Christ as opposed to the Church – as well as in the self-realization of the Church, in so far as it gives itself this leadership, seems obvious enough. And so too is the sacramental character of this action, in virtue of our fundamental principle. As we shall [277] speak of the Eucharist in particular in the second part of this study, there remains only the anointing of the sick. Without weakening its true sacramental character, one may find it possible to take it – like confirmation in relation to baptism – as a development of the comprehensive sacrament of the forgiveness of sins in the Church with regard to its sinful members. There is much to be said for this point of view, and it means that there need be no particular difficulty in deducing this sacrament from our basic principle. Since the sinful member of the Church has sinned against the essence of the Church as a *holy* society and hence as witness to the sanctifying grace of God in the world, every time the Church absolves him from his sin, it realizes its own essence in fundamental fashion. For the Church is the presence of God's grace of pardon. If then the anointing of the sick, in view above all of the epistle of James, chapter is taken as a sacrament of the forgiveness of sins, in a particularly urgent situation to be sure – how close to one another the two sacraments were felt to be is still palpable in Origen – its sacramental quality is relatively easy to deduce from our basic principle (in so far as such a thing, as has been said, may be readily demanded). If however one is determined to keep the sacraments of penance and extreme unction clearly apart, then one must stress the fact that a decisive situation exists, for the individual and for the Church, wherever the imminent danger of death places a member of the Church in the decisive crisis. It is at least very probable that here the word of grace on the lips of the Church must have an absolute seriousness. These considerations should suffice to understand the anointing of the sick in the perspective of our basic principle.

Granted this principle, namely that the sacraments are basic acts of the self-realization of the Church with regard to individuals at decisive situations of their lives, we can understand the character of these processes as *opus operatum*, and likewise, because the Church is

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instituted by Christ as the primary, permanent sign of his triumphant eschatological grace in the world, their sacramental character. Thus our description of the sacraments as efficacious words of God is justified, once it is supposed that it can be satisfactorily shown that other processes in the Church, which, are not sacramental, do not also fulfil this definition and hence prove it to be false or insufficient. As regards this last requirement, we saw that all other acts in which the Church realizes its being as the permanence of the (basically) efficacious grace of God's word in the world, are insufficient. Either they are not directed to the individual in this decisive way, or they [278] do not find him in a situation decisive for salvation, or at least not in a specifically new one – the result being that such processes need not be taken as real sacraments, since they need be no more than concomitant, introductory or complementary aspects of a sacramental process. Or again, they are not processes which signify precisely grace as such, or they cannot be considered as the Church's absolute commitment, as the radical self-realization of the Church in its character of primary sacrament. We cannot be asked to prove that it is absolutely *impossible* that further sacramental processes should exist. Hence it is enough to maintain, for the rest of the proof, that no one can name a process in the Church outside the seven sacraments which fulfils clearly and definitely all the conditions of a sacrament named in our definition. If one lists the processes found in fact in the Church – which we may be excused from doing here – one will always find that some or at least one of the above conditions and criteria are lacking. Our definition can therefore be taken as correct until proof of the contrary.

The considerations which we have put forward are of course no more than cursory indications. We should above all have proved more clearly, fully and definitely that our view of the essence of the Church as the eschatological sign of salvation leads to a basic understanding of the *opus operatum* which is an improvement on the usual one – though it does in fact contain, on the basis of our principle, all that is indicated elsewhere as characteristic of the *opus operatum*. But this cannot be undertaken now.

But before ending this first part of our considerations, there is perhaps one task which should be performed more explicitly. This would be to show, as is indeed yet to be done in this discussion of the sacraments, what was in fact the starting-point of our considerations. It remains to be shown that the efficacious word of God does exist in the Church outside the sacraments, and that this word does not first become efficacious and does not only appear as the presence of God's grace in the Church, when it becomes sacramental in the strictest sense. We must make at least some observations on this question. Every word of God on the lips of the Church, which precedes, accompanies and follows the sacramental word of the Church, must always and everywhere be considered as ordained to this sacramental word. For God does not say all sorts of things to men, and his words are not a miscellany of disconnected subjects. In the last resort he utters only one thing, which is himself as eternal salvation in the Spirit of the incarnate Logos of God. And hence the diverse words have [279] all an intrinsic connexion and derive their sense and value from this one concentration of meaning, which comes to a climax in the sacramental word. And hence so far as it is within the whole, each word of God in the Church takes on, in keeping with its significance within the whole, the character – analogously and in a lower degree – of the one whole word of God. As we indicated at the start, there exists between the sacramental word of God in the Church and the other words of the Church's preaching, the same relationship as between the process of sacramental justification and the non-sacramental. There is one sacramental process of justification, and it is necessary to salvation. But the Church and the theologians have never maintained, at least not since the early middle ages, that there could be no non-sacramental justification, because otherwise the value and necessity of sacramental justification would disappear. It cannot be said that from the point of view of history of dogma and systematic theology the question of the relationship between these two 'ways' of justifications has been

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solved wholly satisfactorily. But the basic lines of a solution are clear enough, and they are the same as in our own question of the relationship between the sacramental and non-sacramental word of efficacious power in the Church. We must not start by taking the two things as independent and disparate juxtaposed realities: they are phases and moments of the same process. The one, complete, efficacious word of God's salvation has its history and therefore its phases; each phase shares the being of the whole, the *whole* reality is truly present and effective in each phase. But this does not make the succeeding phase superfluous and meaningless. On the contrary, it is what really demands it, because it is only in the fully-formed, historical and tangible whole, that is, in the sacrament, that the essentially – envisaged whole, the decisive moment, reaches its full 'manifestation' – a manifestation which is of the essence of the thing in an incarnational structure of salvation. A process as a whole, since it pervades all phases and yet is only fully present in the whole, can display a sort of shift in the phases: in the 'reviviscence' of a sacrament which has been unworthily but validly received, we have the historically tangible event of salvation *before* grace; in justification preceding the sacrament, the situation is reversed – because the thing essentially envisaged is already there, before its historical sacramental manifestation has been fully expressed, when it is called sacrament. This second case is so normal, starting in Scripture with the case of Cornelius and going on into the sacramental theology of St Thomas, without prejudice to the [280] necessity and meaningfulness of the sacrament, that St Thomas even held that it formed a binding rule. And yet St Thomas never doubted for a moment the sense and necessity of the sacrament. But all grace has an incarnational structure. All acceptance of the grace is an acceptance in faith, in hearing, of the word of God, which is uttered interiorly or externally or in both ways. Hence all phases of such a salvific process have basically the same structure. They are phases of the self-realization and historical self-presentation of the one and the same essence of the one efficacious word of God, which, where and only where it attains under God and Christ its unambiguous, historical and ecclesiological presence, its embodiment and eschatological absoluteness, is called sacrament. But because the word reaches its supreme degree of actualization in the sacrament, while always aiming at this degree, it is inchoate everywhere in this quality of efficacious word. It can have a lesser degree of efficacity, because its content is too specialized, or because it is existentially addressed to a man only under a particular aspect, or because it is from the start only the setting and accompaniment of the sacramental word – and so on.

The following point must finally be noted, if our thesis is to be understood correctly. If the thesis is correct, then it is clear from the start that the sacramental word and the word uttered in the preaching of the Church are similar and dissimilar in *all* elements which characterize the word of God. Hence in what we have said up to this, we do not claim to have analysed, noted and distinguished all the elements of the word of God which can possibly be thought of and which are theologically important for our special question: the word as statement and as event, the word as part of a dialogue, the word as eschatological word, the word as participation in the incarnation and the redemption on the Cross, the word as anamnesis, as prediction, as affirmation and as promise, as call and answer at once, as interior and exterior word etc. In these and other aspects the non-sacramental and the sacramental word both agree and differ. And since we have not analysed these various aspects in detail, the theory which we have proposed is only a formal draft of a solution, it does not really state the full contents of the solution. The agreement and disagreement touching each of these moments of the sacramental and non-sacramental word would have to be precisely considered, before it could be said that the proposed theory had been to some extent properly developed. Thus it is not against what is positively implied in the results of O. Semmelroth's work, for instance, on our problem. He maintains [281] that the strictly sacramental word is more closely connected with the answering word of mankind in Christ on the cross (since the sacraments are specially

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related to the work of the cross, while the cross is not only the event of the word of God to man, but also man's answer to God in the dialogue: mankind, summed up in Christ, accepted God's offer of himself in the incarnation). The non-sacramental word in the preaching of the Church is said to be a continuation of the coming of the Logos of God into the world, as the offer of God to mankind. The distinction is undoubtedly correct. But it seems to me to be only one of the many distinctions between the two forms and phases of the one word of God. And it also seems to me that in this theory the non-sacramental word, in spite of the stress laid on its efficacity, is seen too much as doctrinal (even though the element of event is included). Hence the theory seems to overlook to some extent the fact that we find in the Church, in the real preaching of repentance for instance, a non-sacramental word, in the nature of doctrine and in the nature of event, which refers men to the event of the cross and hence does not derive entirely from the incarnation.

II. WORD AND EUCHARIST

We shall now try to apply these general considerations to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

It should be clear at once that all that has been said hitherto comes here to an unsurpassable climax. The Eucharist is 'word': because here the incarnate Logos of God is himself present in his substance; because here the absolute proclamation of the whole mystery of salvation takes place: there is the anamnesis, in which the event of God's giving himself to the world and the acceptance of this gift on the cross of the Son becomes actually present among us, sacramentally, in the space and time we live in; and there is the anticipation, sacramentally, of final salvation in the *pignus futurae gloriae*, because here the *death* of Christ and his *corning* are exhibited and proclaimed; and because here we have the supreme selfrealization of the Church. For here the Church realizes itself in an absolute commitment which not merely regards the individual: the Church itself, as the community of salvation, actuates itself supremely in the sacrifice and meal of the Eucharist. There is no need to develop this further here. But if all this is true, then the Eucharist is not only the supreme case of those acts of self-realization of the Church which are called sacraments, [282] it is the real origin of all other sacraments – which again are so much the self-realization of the Church that all other words and actions of the Church have essentially the functioning of serving these acts of self-realization, and are only really justified and intelligible in the light of the sacraments. And then we can say that the Eucharist is simply the word of God in the Church which supports and conveys all other words, which forms the centre whence all the reality of the Church derives its meaning. The Eucharist is the word of the Church absolutely. As the Council of Trent says, it renders present not merely the grace of Christ but the source of grace itself it is what the Council had chiefly and most intensively in mind when it anathematized those who taught that all the sacraments of the Church were of equal dignity. It is the word through which the triumphant and divinely-accepted act of redemption is present as an actual reality. It is the word which when uttered and heard in faith, alone gives full reality to what the Church is: the presence of Christ and his redemption in the world. All other words, sacramental and non-sacramental, must therefore be considered merely as exposition and application, preliminaries and echoes of this word, which makes the crucified and risen Lord and his whole work of salvation present in the Church. All the teaching of the Church merely points to this event, which is present and permanent in the word of this sacrament. All the words of the other sacraments merely distribute and bring down to concrete situations the reality and the presence which is here in its totality. All words of command, exhortation and correction can aim only at one thing: that man should come there, and come with a mind to believe and accept in love what is here present in sacred solemnity: the gift of God to man in

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him who gave himself up for us. It is indeed possible, and perhaps only too often a reality, that man's acceptance of the incarnate and crucified Logos, with the ultimate decisiveness which brings salvation, takes place *outside* the Eucharistic celebration. But even here it takes place by virtue of the event which constantly procures for itself in the Eucharist a new manifestation and presence in the midst of the Church, and imparts itself invisibly to all by becoming sacramentally visible here.

But here in fact the temptation might arise, to see in the Eucharist the strongest 'No' to all that has been said up to this. It could perhaps be urged that the Catholic piety of the West has implicitly felt the difficulty since the end of the tenth century. While in Protestant piety the Church is the sacred place where the word of God is efficaciously preached, in [283] Catholic piety, more or less since the time of Berengarius, the Church is the place where the sacrament is mutely and apparently wordlessly present, as the silent presence of the Lord. And so this very sacrament brings up once more the old question as to whether there are, as Thomas à Kempis says, simply *two* tables in the Church, one for Scripture and one for the bread of life; and whether it remains an open question, how these two tables, which seem to be so different, are ultimately related to one another; and whether there is really a choice between being the Church of the word or the Church of the sacrament.

But it can be seen at once that these questions are based on misinterpretations and stunted versions of Catholic doctrine. The Eucharist is in all truth the sacrament of the word absolutely, the absolute case of the word anywhere. To understand this properly, we must bear in mind that according to the Council of Trent, Christ is present by virtue of the *panis vinique benedictio* (Denzinger 874), the consecration (Denzinger 876). No doubt the Council of Trent does not emphasize very expressly the *permanent* importance of the word pronounced over the bread and wine, as a constitutive element of the visibility or historical perceptibility under which Christ is present. But its importance is recognized in so far as the Council emphasizes expressly (apart from the places noted above) that the body and blood of Christ are present '*vi verborum*' (Denzinger 876; 1921). And it also appears from the fact that the Augustinian definition of a sacrament is acknowledged without any difficulty as applying also to the Eucharist (Denzinger 876), while this definition expressly names the word as an element of the sacramental symbol. Further, the Council of Florence says expressly in the *Decretum pro Armenis*: *forma huius sacramenti sunt verba salvatoris, quibus hoc confecit sacramentum* – '*the* form of this sacrament is the words of the Saviour by which he instituted this sacrament'. Here it must be emphasized from the scholastic point of view that the '*forma*' is not primarily the *efficient* cause of the sacrament, but a permanently constitutive element of the sacramental sign itself. The words of consecration are not the means whereby the sacrament came to be '*in fieri*', to continue to exist apart from these words. They are an element of that by which the sacrament exists and abides. It is only because they permanently refer back to the words of consecration that the species of bread and wine constitute the sign which indicates and contains the presence of Christ. If we say that Christ is present under the species, we can also say that Christ is only present [284] through the permanent validity of the anamnesis, the words of consecration pronounced over the bread and wine. The species would not really be sacramental species if they were not being constantly determined by the words of consecration, the words of explanation, which are pronounced over them. We must avoid taking too materialistic a view in this matter. A sign is by nature a properly human reality; it can therefore be constituted not merely of material entities – and this is true also of the sacraments – but also by specifically human realities, such as the permanent validity of a statement. These are not ideas put forward just to suit this particular thesis. They are good ancient scholastic tradition. Compare for instance Ch. Pesch: *num verba sint forma constitutiva huius sacramenti. Species eucharistiae per se non significant quod continent, i.e. Christum, nisi in quantum ad hanc significationem determinatae sunt per verba. Neque enim*

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intelligimus has species esse consecratas et significare Christum, nisi in quantum scimus circa eas prolata esse verba. Unde relatio signi est in speciebus, ut sunt determinatae verbis et hoc sufficit ut verba dicantur in genere signi constituere hoc sacramentum (Praelectiones, VI, n. 785) ('Are the words the constitutive form of this sacrament? The Eucharistic species do not signify what they contain, Christ, except in so far as they are given this signification by the words. We do not know that the species are consecrated and signify Christ except in so far as we know that the words have been pronounced about them. Thus the species contain the relation of sign, in so far as they are determined by the words. With this it can be said that the words, being in the nature of a sign, constitute this sacrament'). Pesch then cites Suarez (Disp. 42, sect. 7) and de Lugo (Disp. 1, sect. 4 and 5). We can therefore say that the eucharist too as a sacrament is in the nature of a sign. The explanatory words of Christ are not merely the efficient cause of this sign, but an intrinsic constitutive element of it. If the sacrament of the altar, in consequence of its character as food, is a permanent sacrament, then it must also be permanent *in genere signi* – with all the constitutive elements which go to make up the sign. But if the explanatory words are a constitutive element, they must also be considered permanent, even though they are ended as a sound. There is no difficulty here. A word in its *human* reality is not completely dependent on and just merely co-existent to its sound in the physical world. A word of love, a promise, a threat still exist after their audible expression has passed away. And thus the words of consecration remain as an element of the sacramental sign even 'after' the actual [285] moment of consecration, which was the reason for their being uttered, but not for their being permanently in existence. And so the Eucharist, even as a permanent sacrament which is 'reserved' in its special place, is constituted by the explanatory words of the Lord on the lips of the Church. The Eucharist is and remains the presence of the Lord through and under the efficacious word, which has two components: the purely material one, indeterminate in itself and needing to be determined, of the physical species of bread and wine, and the more spiritual one, formal, determinative, clear, clarifying and declaratory, that of the explanatory words of the Lord. And both are needed – both having the character of a sign and hence of a word – to form the one sign in this sacrament, through which he that is signified is present.

We may even go a step further. The word of God in this final, definitive age of Christ is the triumphant word which – freely, of course – is heard because God has so uttered it in the power of his grace that it is really heard. For the Church is the community of believers to the end, and as a whole it is also subjectively holy, and hence truly believing. In this reciprocal relationship of efficacious word of God and the effective hearing of the word effected by God himself, both realities are ordained to each other in such a way that one may safely say: if one did not exist, the other could not exist either, that is, be what it is. In other words, the word of the sacrament of the altar, which means the presence of the Lord, is supported by the faith of the Church, which hears this word and so really confers on it its true reality, that of the powerfully triumphant word – just as on the other hand the faith of the Church in the Lord present in the Eucharist is supported entirely by his word, under which he is present. We are not speaking of course of the faith of the individual as the individual. The presence of the Lord is independent of this. The Reformation doctrine which maintained that the act of faith alone constituted the presence of the Lord was false and heretical as applied to the individual; but it can have a good Catholic sense when said of the Church as a whole. If it were not, by the triumphant grace of God, always the believing Church, it would not be the word which it is, triumphant, eschatological and efficacious, nor would it then be the word which is the triumphant eschatological presence of the Lord. It must always be remembered that the Church is not just the resultant sum of its fallible and possibly unbelieving individuals, but the efficaciously predestined community of those embraced by the grace of God, without whom the Church would not be what it is – [286] though it is likewise not just this. We have

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therefore a perfect right to say that the Lord is present in the absolute word of the Church, heard and believed in the Church, the word which proclaims the death of the Lord till he comes again: and in and with him his redemption is present, as something granted to mankind absolutely and definitively, though the individual as such must still work out his salvation in fear and trembling.

The efficacious word of the Mass, being the proclamation of the death of Christ, is the primary kerygma. And every other efficacious word becomes so in the Church because it participates in this kerygma in such a way that the whole force of this primary kerygma can already be embodied in the participation, and for this very reason this mere participation is intrinsically ordained to be absorbed into the Eucharistic kerygma, to find there its full manifestation. It could be said that we find the same relationship existing between the objective word and the sacrament as Catholic theology has always seen to intervene between the actual reception of a sacrament, of the Eucharist in particular, and the desire or *votum* of a sacrament. In the desire of the sacrament, the whole power and reality of grace can already be there: one need only recall for instance the doctrine of Trent on spiritual communion, which is not make-believe and the mere longing for something not there, but the reception of the grace of the sacrament even without the sacramental sign. But the *votum* is precisely the *votum sacramenti*, and it is supported by the grace which provides itself with its most unambiguous eschatological presence in the history of salvation by means of the sacrament, and which is only fully itself when it has provided itself with its complete historical figure in the public life of the Church.

If we are correct in the way we have determined the relationship of the Eucharist and the other sacraments to the word, there can be no question of dividing up and distributing the effects of the two entities as between word and sacrament. Grace is always there in the form of the word: grace is present always and everywhere from beginning to end, from the first word of preaching to the sacrament inclusively, in the form of the word. And this one word of grace and this one grace in the word has its own proper stages as the word of God, as the word accepted existentially in faith, as the word of the Church. And where this word attains its absolute climax, as the incarnational and eschatological word of God, and absolute self-expression of the Church as a whole and as directed to the individual, the word of the Eucharist is heard.

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[287]

11

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The theme to be treated is the presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to Catholic faith in contrast to Lutheran Protestant faith.[1] The theme seems to me to be very difficult. Not merely because I am not an expert on this subject. Not merely because the question touches a central mystery where the lack of personal commitment would endanger or render impossible the understanding of what is taught and professed, while personal commitment makes it more difficult for us to understand one another. The particular reason which makes this theme seem very difficult for me is quite different, and I should like to state it at the very beginning, even at the risk of making my – our – position more difficult with regard to our Protestant brothers. The reason is that it is not at all easy to say what we teach in this matter. This statement may seem surprising; it seems to be quite improbable in the light of the clear, sober and realistic language of the Council of Trent. Our forefathers and indeed the vast majority of present-day Catholic theologians would be puzzled if they heard this statement, especially as in contrast to other points of doctrine, the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament did not cause the Council Fathers much difficulty at Trent. They merely repeated, as was in itself the right thing to do, what the Church had already been saying for many hundreds of years before them when such discussion arose, in the same explicit formulas. But it still seems to me difficult today, to say what we really profess and what we do not profess. Why that is so or at least why it appears so to me will appear later. But the fact that it is so – if it really is so – is a heavier burden for the Catholic than for the Protestant theologian. For past confessions of faith are normative for his faith –and his [288] theology – in a much more absolute sense than they are for Protestant theologians. As long as he can distinguish clearly and articulately the simple language of the faith and creeds of his Church from further theological theories and opinions about the dogma of the Church, the task of the Catholic theologian is simple. But when it is not so easy to distinguish the explicit dogma in terms of what is binding on the Church from the theorems of theology, his task is harder, both in itself and in its controversial elements. It is not that he doubts in the least about the binding quality of the doctrine of the Church, but because he finds it heavy going to repeat it exactly. Anyone who doubts that this is possible must have the fixed opinion that all pronouncements of the magisterium must, because they are binding, possess the supreme degree of intelligibility of unvarying quality – which would still be something different from rational perspicuousness and intrinsic evidence. This is not true. A new age, a new historical situation, can make a doctrinal proposition seem clearer or more obscure *quoad nos*, by the simple fact that it puts it into a new context of knowledge – even if one felt sure of how it was understood earlier, even when one accepts it fully as valid for oneself, and even when one puts it into practice without difficulty in the exercise of the Christian life. This seems to me to be the case with the theme which is now in question. It seems to me therefore that there is nothing for me to do except to state clearly the nature of this difficulty, even though it is primarily a problem within Catholicism and makes our position more difficult in face of Protestant theologians. This is all rather obscure, but it will become clearer. In other words, I am concerned to say, right from the start, that I do not consider it the task and the duty of a Catholic theologian to act as if everything were perfectly clear, as if the firmness of his assent to the doctrine of his Church depended on his having the answer to all questions.

[1] This section is the text of a lecture addressed to Catholic and Protestant theologians. No effort has been made to change the original style.

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We divide our remarks into three sections:
1. Preliminary remarks.
2. The doctrine of the Council of Trent on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
3. What remains obscure and open?

1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

1. I must renounce any effort to give a survey of the history of the dogma of the real presence and of the development of the doctrine. In this context [289] the effort would only lead to facile simplifications. It is true that here as elsewhere it is important for the Catholic theologian to trace the historical way to the express formulation of the faith which the Church – his Church – professes. But the ultimate foundation of his assent to this faith is not the fact that he can prove historically the legitimacy of this historical way. Hence a purely descriptive method which merely registers opinions cannot at once be considered unjustifiable in a given context. This is all the more true, since the Catholic theologian cannot admit that a later certainty and a later clarity in Church dogma is illegitimate or subject to possible revision, simply because it did not always exist.

And we shall likewise omit discussion of certain themes, which are connected with our actual question but are still not identical with it: the question of the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist, the questions connected with the two-fold nature of the species, the question of reception *sub utraque specie*, the more precise questions about the presence of Christ in the sacrament which arise from the divisibility of the species – the breaking of the bread, the drinking from one chalice. The omission of the controverted question of the *sacrifice* of the Mass – and hence the question of the presence of the sacrifice of the *Cross* in the Eucharist – has been agreed on already.

2. Another preliminary remark is called for. It concerns a basic attitude to the theme, which results from certain theological *a prioris* in general.

(a) In the doctrine of the Eucharist, a Catholic cannot make the silent presupposition that a dogmatic assertion can only refer to something which lies as such beyond the region of human experience. In other words, an assertion cannot at once be rejected as a dogmatic assertion, as a truth of faith, simply because the objects within its scope are not really removed from human experience. The empty grave, for instance, is the object of an assertion of faith and not mythology, though the empty grave is in principle within the scope of non-religious assertions. Truths of faith cannot be so restricted, in principle at least, with regard to their objects, that the possibility of contact with profane knowledge can be excluded a priori, so that nothing can result from them for the region of the profane. I can never say, for instance, that the historical existence of Jesus is in principle of no importance for the Christ of faith. Hence for instance, if the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist contains metaphysical implications, the Catholic theologian can never see in this the *a priori* proof that he has trespassed beyond the bounds of a truth of faith. Since [290] God in his act of salvation and revelation has *also* intended the reality in which we usually live, though not this alone, and since he intervenes in it and transforms it, a basic historical or metaphysical scepticism, an absolute discontinuity, postulated *a priori*, between truths of faith and other assertions is inacceptable. This general principle must be stressed as a preliminary to our particular question, since otherwise the impression might easily arise, unavowed perhaps but hence all the more forceful, that the Catholic dogmatic assertion about the real presence, on account of the ‘realism’ with which it speaks of a tangible reality, goes beyond the bounds of any possible dogmatic assertion – that it postulates a ‘miracle’. This is the first point.

(b) On the other hand, we must also affirm the following: in view of the bearing of a truth of faith on salvation, and of the fact that it is directed to all men and that its real content must be understood at all times, it is *a priori* improbable – more we may not say – that a dogma can only

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be formulated and understood in dependence on a well-defined philosophical system. It is not clear, of course, in such a statement, what we are to understand by a philosophical system, where it begins and where it leaves off. It cannot be said that every concept which is not immediately traceable to the most primitive experience is at once so much of a philosophical product that there could be no question of it in a truth of faith, or that it could not be implicitly guaranteed as correct by a truth of faith. Catholic theology – I state this merely as a fact, without any polemical purpose – will never allow itself to appeal easily and quickly to what is paradoxical and not amenable to logic. But if that is so, if one is steadfast with regard to the mystery, and if one really tries to be guided by the facts, one cannot simply avoid all the rational consequences of the immediate truth of faith, or leave them aside as of no interest even for the defence of this truth. Nonetheless, it has proved true again and again – and most controversies within Catholic theology derive from this fact – that the truths of faith do not clearly imply any particular philosophical system, which would then be imposed as binding by the magisterium on account of this implication. Hence just as we Catholic theologians cannot practise *a priori* a non-metaphysical dogmatic theology, so too we need not expect *a priori* that dogmatic theology will provide us with any particular metaphysical system – an Aristotelian hylemorphism for instance in the present question. With this – I should almost like to say, unhappily – we have gained no clear and handy principle, which will enable us to steer a smooth course [291] between a theology devoid of ontology and a theology transformed into a metaphysics: but at least we have been warned against both.

2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT ON THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST

We shall omit, as we have said, the presentation of the Catholic doctrine of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and simply present the doctrine itself according to the most express declarations of it in the Council of Trent. We may remark here that the history of the discussions of this point at the Council is not very enlightening and helpful. Hence this too we omit here.

1. The Council confesses the real presence of Christ in the sacrament.

(a) As regards the *presence* as such, the formulation varies. The Council speaks of a '*contineri*' (Denzinger 874), of a '*sacramentaliter praesens sua substantia nobis adesse*' (l.c.), of a '*suum corpus praebere*' (Denzinger 874; 876; 877), of an '*in Eucharistia esse*' (Denzinger 876), of a '*sub speciebus existere*' or '*contineri*' (Denzinger 876; 885), of an '*esse in sacramento*' (Denzinger 886) and '*in hostiis remanere*' (Denzinger 886).

This '*contineri sub specie illarum rerum sensibilium*' is characterized as a '*vere, realiter ac substantialiter contineri*', (Denzinger 874; 883) and contrasted with a '*tantummodo esse in sacramenta ut in signa vel figura aut virtute*' (Denzinger 883).[2] This '*realis praesentia*' (Denzinger 874, title) is described as one which we '*vix verbis exprimere possumus*', but which is to be affirmed in faith; it is distinguished as a sacramental mode of existence from the '*modus existendi naturalis*' which belongs to the exalted Lord in heaven (Denzinger 874). For the fact of the real presence, the Council appeals to the words of Christ in the Synoptic gospels and in St Paul, which are supposed to show clearly that Jesus' words had their proper sense and not a figurative or metaphorical one, and hence that he really gave his Apostles his real body and blood. This is said to have been the constant doctrine of the Fathers and the unanimous interpretation of the Church. More precise general reflexions on the nature of this presence are not given.

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[2] The encyclical *Humani generis* (*Denz.* 2318) condemns as erroneous the opinion by which '*realis Christi praesentia ... ad quendam symbolismum reducatur, quatenus consecratae species non nisi signa efficacia sint spiritualis presentiae Christ: eiusque intimae coniunctionis cum fidelibus membris in corpore Mystico*'.

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[292] (b) The whole Christ is present, and wholly present under each species: his body and blood *vi verborum* of the consecration, but the whole Christ with body and soul, humanity and divinity, because he is the man transformed and raised from the dead, who is no longer subject to the separation of body and soul in death, and because a separation of humanity and divinity is impossible on account of the hypostatic union (Denzinger 876). Hence the real presence is affirmed, without distinction, of 'Jesus Christ true God and man' (Denzinger 874), of his body and of his blood (Denzinger 874; 876), of the *totus et integer Christus* (Denzinger 876), of body and blood along with soul and divinity, of the 'whole Christ' (Denzinger 883; 885).

(c) Christ is present by reason of the *panis vinique benedictio* (Denzinger 874), the *consecratio* (Denzinger 876). The permanent significance of the word which is pronounced over the bread and wine, as a constitutive element of the visibility under which Christ is present, is not stressed very explicitly by the Council. But it is affirmed in so far as – apart from the words just quoted – the Council expressly emphasizes that it is '*vi verborum*' that the body and blood of Christ are present (Denzinger 876; 1921), while the whole Christ is there *concomitanter* (l.c.). It is also affirmed by the fact that the Augustinian definition of a sacrament is recognised unhesitatingly as applying to the Eucharist, since this definition states that the word is an element of the sacramental symbolism. And the *Decretum pro Armenis* of the Council of Florence(Denzinger 698; cf. 715) says expressly: *forma huius sacramenti sum verba Salvatoris, quibus hoc confecit sacramentum*, where it must be emphasized, precisely from the scholastic point of view, that '*forma*' does not indicate primarily the efficient cause, but a permanent constitutive element of the sacramental sign. It is only by their being constantly referred back to the words of consecration that the species of bread and wine constitute the sign (*symbolism* in the Augustinian sense) which indicates and contains the presence of Christ.[3] The sign of the presence of Christ, the notification of the real presence, is therefore the one sign composed of the empirical [293] perceptibility of bread and wine and of the word, which is pronounced over them in obedience to Jesus' command for the anamnesis, by ordained representatives of the Church, with the intention of performing the act which the Church is charged to do. (As regards the 'intention', cf. Denzinger 424; 672; 695; 854; 860; 1318; as regards the priest, Denzinger 424; 430; 574a; 715). Part of the constitution of the sign, under which alone Christ is present, is the relationship of the bread and wine to a meal, their character of nourishment. Clearly as the Council rejects the doctrine that Christ is only present '*in usu, dum sumitur*' (Denzinger 886; 876), it concedes just as readily that this sacrament was instituted by Christ '*ut sumatur*' (Denzinger 878). Bread and wine are anthropological realities and concepts, and as such they are essentially related to consumption, to *usus*. And they are only the sign of the real presence of Christ in so far as they have this relationship. But since the character of nourishment is prior to the consumption strictly as such – it is not constituted by the latter, but it renders the latter possible – and because Christ affirmed that what he gave was his body (Denzinger 876), before the Apostles ate of it, Christ is present before the actual *usus*. But this does not deny, but rather affirms, that the sign of the presence of Christ is the blessed food as such. The more clearly therefore the reverent adoration of Christ in the sacrament is referred back to the eating of the body of Christ, the more Eucharistic piety corresponds to the full truth and reality of the sacrament.

(d) Granted the suppositions made above, the real presence is there independently of the faith of the individual priest or communicant, so that even the sinner or the unbeliever receives the body of the Lord, though only sacramentally and not spiritually, that is, when the objectively real event of the reception of the body means judgment for him (Denzinger 881; 880). Hence the

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[3] Cf. Pesch VI no. 785: '*num verba sint forma constitutive huius sacramenti; species eucharisticae per se non significant id quodcontinent, i.e. Christum, nisi in quantum ad hanc significationem determinatae sunt per verba. Neque enim intelligimus has species esse consecrates et significare Christum, nisi inquantum scimus circa eas prolata esse verba. Unde relatio signi est in speciebus, ut sunt determinatae verbis et hoc sufficit ut verba dicantur in genere signi constituere hoc sacramentum*' (cf. Suarez, disp. 42 sect. 7; de Lugo, disp. r sect. 4·5).

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reception of the body, though of course it does not set up a reciprocal physical influence between the body of Christ and the communicant in the realm of experience as such (cf. Denzinger 546),[4] is characterized as 'sacramental and real',[5] and not merely as 'mentally spiritual' (*spiritualiter*) (Denzinger 890), though the Council [294] itself calls the sacrament a '*spiritualis animarum cibus*' (Denzinger 875), and it was recognised in the debates of the Council that the phrase '*manducatio spiritualis*' could have an orthodox sense (D.Th.C., V 1327).

(e) If we prescind for the moment from the question of '*in usu – ante usum*', it seems to me that with regard to the real presence in the sacrament itself, otherwise than with regard to transubstantiation, there is no essential difference between the Catholic and the Lutheran faith. For the Lutheran confession also teaches a real presence, by which Christ is 'truly, really, vitally' present in the sacrament; it uses '*vere et substantialiter*' to characterize this presence, it rejects the '*in figura*' (*figurate*) or the mere '*in virtute*' just as much as Trent. It further seems to me to be of decisive importance that the Lutheran confession, like the Council of Trent, appeals for this to the fact that this confession relies on the unambiguous words of Scripture, and on the faith as it is accepted in the whole Church.[6] It also rejects expressly the idea that *fides* brings about the real presence (*Solida Declaratio*, VII, 10, 121), it holds that even unworthy unbelievers really receive the body (l.c., 12, 123). It is the doctrine of the Sacramentarians and not of the Lutherans, that there is no essential difference between the word about the heavenly Christ and the *sacrament* of Christ present among us here (SD, VII, Introduction): '*edere corpus Christi*' and '*credere in Christum*' are not the same. Hence there is a real presence of an objective nature, which is prior to faith's reception, faith's appropriation of the sacramental happening. One could put it this way: the true body of Christ is not merely received '*vere et substantialiter*', but it is there and is given and thus received. '*Sentiunt et docent cum pane et vino vere et substantialiter adesse, exhiberi et sumi corpus et sanguinem Christi*' (SD, VII, 14) (cf. also the '*vere porrigi etiam indignis*', contrasted with the '*vere sumere*'; l.c., 16).[7] It seems to me incorrect to try to water down this consent (partial though it is) between Catholics and Lutherans by invoking a dissent which is supposed to go deeper, as for instance in the general notion of sacrament, the meaning of faith etc. For this consent is attached by both sides to something that precedes all theological back-[295]grounds and *a prioris* in all good theology: the word of Scripture and the consent of the Church and its tradition.

I find it therefore incorrect to interpret the real presence in Lutheran doctrine[8] in such a way that the body of Christ is said to be already present everywhere and at all times, on account of the permanent actuality of the sacrifice of the cross and/or the ubiquity of the body of Christ – so that all that remains to be done is to 'distribute the ever-present gifts'. No, even according to the Lutheran confessions, an event takes place: the body of Christ which is not always already present becomes present through the words of the anamnesis of the Lord's Supper. Lutherans and Catholics are at one in affirming that the coming to be of the presence is in the nature of an

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[4] The '*hoc est substantive et essentialiter, non autem quantitative vel qualitative vel localiter*' of the formula of union put forward by the Lutherans at Marburg could be subscribed to by Catholic theologians (cf. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisehlutherischen Kirche,* published by the Deutschcn Evangelischen Kirchenausschuss [Gottingen [21]952] 65, n.r),

[5] This corresponds to Luther's '*ore edi et bibi*' (*Solida Declaratio* VII, 32: *Die Bekenntnisschriften* … 982), to the '*naturale corpus*' (l.c, 33).

[6] *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae* 10 (*Die Bekenntnisschrifien* … 247/48).

[7] We should also note what '*usus*' really means in the Lutheran vocabulary: the whole liturgical process, not the *sola manducat lo quae ore fit* (*Solida Declaratio* VII, 85 f.). Luthcrans take it for granted that Christ must be adored in the Eucharist *in usu* (*Solida Declaratio* VII, 15, 126). The concept of *usus* in *Denz.*, 876 seems to be narrower.

[8] As in the latest essay by Regin Prenter: 'Das Augsburgische Bekenntnis und die romische Messopferlehre', *Kerygma und Dogma* I (1955) 42–58, esp. 55.

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actual happening. Otherwise there would be no point in the Lutheran restriction of this presence to the '*usus*'. Nor in the linking of this presence to bread and wine. Nor in saying that the unbeliever eats the body – 'eating and drinking with the mouth'. Luther teaches expressly in the large catechism for instance, that the word must take place or the element remains a mere element, but that the sacrament only becomes the body and blood of Christ when the word is spoken.[9] One may call the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation a 'miraculous transformation' (of which more later), but it seems to me certain that to make the real presence of Christ the 'universal presence' of a 'love not bounded by space' is Calvinist at the very best: it is not Lutheran (against Prenter). There would have been no need in this position to appeal to the omnipotence of God and the marvellous nature of the happening, as Luther does (in the large catechism). Luther's effort to bring in the doctrine of the divine ubiquity to explain the real presence of the body of Christ is a theological after-thought, which should not be used as the invariable starting-point to explain and restrict the view which Luther wished to have maintained with regard to the sacrament, because the explanation should be brought into line with what is to be explained, and not vice versa. Hence the 'multiple presence at will' of Chemnitz ('*ubicumque velit*'; SD 29, 78, 92) is a more correct (though restrictive) interpretation of Luther's doctrine than the absolutely universal presence of the human [296] nature of Christ, as found in Brenz and the *Formula Concordiae* (803, ll. 11 and 18) and in the quotations from Luther in the SD, 81 ff.

2. The Council confesses that the real presence of Christ in the sacrament comes about by transubstantiation.

(a) The meaning of this affirmation is expressed as follows (Denzinger 877): *conversio totius substantiae panis insubstantiam corporis Christi ... et totius substantiae vini in substantiam. sanguinis eius, quae conversio convenienter et propria a sancta catholica Ecclesia transsubstantiatio est appellata*.[10] In the corresponding canon (Denzinger 884) this *conversio* is called *mirabilis et singularis*, and then further interpreted (the expression 'accident' from scholastic philosophy being avoided) by being said to take place '*manentibus dumtaxat speciebus panis et vini*'.[11] This is not the first time that the expression *transsubstantiatio* occurs in documents of the magisterium. Berengarius' confession of faith at the Roman Council of 1079 mentions a '*substantialiter converti*' (Denzinger 355), and the term *transsubstantiari* is used to describe the process by Pope Innocent III (Denzinger 416); *transsubstantiatio* is mentioned in the profession of faith drawn up by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215 – *transsubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem*, Denzinger 430) and that of the Second Council of Lyons (1274, Denzinger 465 – *quod in ipso sacramento panis vere transsubstantiatur in corpus et vinum in sanguinem Domini nostri Jesus Christi*).[12] The definition given in the Council of Trent is taken almost word for word from St Thomas, Ill, q. 75, a. 4.[13]

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[9] The *Solida Declaratio* VII, 10, 121 is even clearer, as is the *Formula Concordiae* VII *Negativa* XI (*Die Bekenntnisschrifien* … 1014, 802): the body of Christ is present, *ubi coelna Domini celebratur*.

[10] The same definition in the Tridentine profession of faith (*Denz*. 997) and *Denz.* 1469 (Benediet XlV's profession of faith for the Orientals) and *Denz*. 1529 (against the synod of Pistoia).

[11] Elsewhere too the word 'species' is always used: *sub specie illarum rerum sensibilium* (*Denz*. 874), *sub panis et vini specie* (876), *sub alterutra specie* … (876), *sub specie panis* (877), *sub unaquaque specie* (885). But the expression *vini accidentia* is already found in a brief of Innocent III (416) and later in the condemnation of Wycliff by the Council of Constance (582); *species pani set vini* however in the fourth Lateran Council (430) and in the *Decretum pro Armenis* (698). (All numbers refer to *Denz*.)

[12] Further texts *Denz*. 544: *transsubstantiatio*; 581 against the affirmation of Wycliff at Constance: *substantia panis ... et substantia vini ... remanent in sacramenta altaris*; the same in *Denz*. 666; *Decretum pro Armenis* A.D. 1439, *Denz*. 698: *substantia panis in corpus Christi … convertuntur*; *Decretum pro Jacobitis* A.D. 1442, *Denz*. 715: *transsubstantiari*; *Denz*. 1529, against the Synod of Pistoia of A.D. 1794.

[13] Luther, however, is still wrong, when he ascribes the formation of the concept of transubstantiation to St Thomas (M. Luther, *Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe VI, 456[36]). The expression comes from the theology of the 12th century (Magister Roland, about 1150; Stephen of Toumai, about 1160; Petrus Comestor 1160–1170).

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[297] The Encyclical *Humani Generis* states disapprovingly that some Catholic theologians had voiced the opinion that the doctrine rested on the out-moded concept of substance and needed to be corrected (‘*transsubstantiationis doctrinam, utpote antiquo notione philosophica substantiae innixam*’, Denzinger 3018) – in the sense of a purely spiritual presence of Christ. Since the dogma of transubstantiation, even in its explicit formulation, has stood for centuries in the faith of the Church, the Church would have had to deny its own being, as it understood itself to be, if it gave up this doctrine. While the Council of Trent had had to struggle to find the correct expression for its faith in such matters as inherent righteousness, certainty of salvation and so on, it was otherwise with transubstantiation. There was no real debate about it at the Council. The Council regarded this doctrine as something definitive, on which there could be no going back.

(b) The Council finds proof of this doctrine[14] in the fact that Christ declares that what he offers (the Apostles) under the appearance of bread is his body. This means that if the words of consecration are to be taken in their strict and literal sense, and if they bring about the event of the presence of the body of Christ, then what Christ offers his Apostles is not bread, but his body. This statement, as it stands, must be accepted by all who refuse to give a vague, figurative meaning to the words of Christ. Hence we frequently find in the Lutheran confessions of faith the words ‘*panem esse corpus Christi*’ – and not first and last ‘*porrecto pane simul adesse et vere exhiberi corpus Christi*’[15] or the like. But if what Christ gives [298] his Apostles is his body, and if we must really and truly take it, without misgivings, that what our *experience* knows apart from our faith in the word of Christ is the same as before: then this two-fold premise, if it is not to be voided in one direction or the other, can be expressed by saying that what is given is really and truly the body of Christ, under the experimental reality (but only this!) of bread. If – borrowing an obvious terminology but not adopting its proper meaning – I call the proper, definitive and true reality of a concrete ‘substance’[16] the species (appearance,

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[14] Cf. J. A. de Aldama, *De S. Eucharistia*[2] (Madrid 1953) 294 no. 105; ‘*nota: argumentationem totam* [on transubstantiation] *fieri ex veritate verborum ... sc. nisi admittatur transsubstantiatio, veritas verborum Christi salvari non potest*.’ This argument is said to be certain, at least along with the declaration of the Church. And apparently (*ut videtur*) also independently of it. After the Council, the opposing view of Scotus(?), Durandus and the Nominalists (*DTC* V, 1305f.), namely that transubstantiation cannot be proved from the words of Christ, is said to be no longer tenable.

[15] Concordia of Wittenberg, 1536, no. 2 (*Die Bekennmisschriften* … 65); Grosser Katechismus, *De sacramenta altaris*: ‘*quomodo panis et vinum Christi corpus et sanguis esse possunt*’; this is the more original formula, compared to (*ibid*.): ‘*corpus et sanguinem ... in et sub pane* …’. This is also recognized in the *Solida Declaratio* VII, 34/35 (*Die Bckenntnisschrifien* … 983): the words ‘*sub pane, cum pane, in pane*’ are to explain ‘*panem ill coena esse corpus Christi*’. The *Schmalkaldlan Articles* III, 6 (*Die Bekenntnisschrifien* … 450): ‘*de sacramenta altaris statuimus panem et vinum in coena esse verum corpus et sanguinem Christi*’ (In the German text: *Vom Sakrament des Altars halten wir dass* [*unter*] *Brot und Wein im Abendmahl sei der wahrhaftige Leib und Blut Christi* … [under the bread and wine is the true body and blood of Christ]’. The ‘under’ is therefore an addition or correction in the manuscript: *Die Bekenninisschriften* ... XXIV; contemporaneous but secondary).

[16] Cf. F. Selvaggi, ‘Il Concetto di sostanza nel Dogma Eucaristico in relazione alla fisica moderna’, *Greg*. 30 (1949) 7–45. We read p. 13:

> *E’ ovvio che nella definizione conciliare il termine sostanza deve essere preso in primo luogo in questo significato volgare, vago ancora ed indeterminato, secondo il quale la sostanza del pane è semplicemente il pane, ciò per cui il pane è realmente pane, ciò che si richiede per la verità della proposizione: questo è pane ... Che la sostanza sia* ens in se et per se subsistens, *come rileveremo meglio in seguito, e una determinarione filosofica aggiunta a1 significate puramente volgare, e non richiesta dal senso della definizione ...*

He goes on to say (17) that there is no apodictic proof to be drawn from the definition, that the species is a *realtà oggetiva* and (really) distinct from the substance. This is said to be only the *interpretazione piu naturale delle formule del Tridentino*, but not part of the dogma, merely the usual common doctrine of theologians. There is, he says, even less reason to count the other elements which Aristotle and St Thomas include under substance and accident (*ens in se subsistens and ens in alio*) as part of the dogma.

He says that modern science forbids us to speak as St Thomas did of a substantial form of bread which informs the mass of bread and gives it its substantial unity (42).

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look, understood as an objective but partial and particularly prominent reality); and if I see the species as the way the reality presents itself to a particular standpoint, but not as it is criticized and disclosed in its relativity from the true and absolute point of view – in this case, the word of God; then it can be said that what is given is not the substance of the bread, but the substance of the body of Christ under the species of [299] bread. If one also considers that the giving has the character of an event, that it includes or presupposes a happening, in other words, that it was not always true that this was the body of Christ, then one can and should express the matter as follows: what is offered to be eaten, the body of Christ under the species of bread, has come from the substance of bread by a change and transformation. One may call this a 'miraculous transformation' but still, transubstantiation is merely the exact form of the statement which is to be – logically – justified, and in which the Council sees the basis for the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation: that that which Christ gives his Apostles is his body, this and nothing else. If one said that what Christ gives his Apostles is bread and his body, understanding by bread, in a sort of positivist empiricism, the experimental reality strictly as such and nothing else, one would have said nothing contrary to Catholic dogma. At the most, one would not have covered it entirely. It is only when one says that the 'substance' of bread is there along with the substance of the body of Christ that one would be in formal contradiction to the Catholic dogma. But one would also have said something about which experience gives no information, and on which the words of Christ give no instruction, but rather say the contrary. For if what is given is *also simply* bread, hence bread from *every* aspect, hence the substance of bread – substance in the sense given above, which will be further developed, but not in the metaphysical sense of a given philosophical system – it would not be the body of Christ, but bread. And the bread could be called body only by the metonymy of taking the container for the contained, a metonymy unknown to tradition – and not suggested by the nature of things. But if one once accepts such a metonymy, a purely figurative and symbolic interpretation can no longer be excluded. The statement, of course, in the restricted sense first quoted above, would not be false, but it would say less than the Tridentine dogma. And one cannot say that one is rightly content with this modest formula, which simply couples extrinsically the word of Christ with the testimony of our limited, positivist experience. For this would mean that what is given is the body of Christ under the 'bread' in the merely empiricist sense. But then the question is inevitable: can this way of understanding bread in an empiricist and positivist sense be affirmed as absolutely as when we speak of bread in the language of everyday life, and mean bread which is also objectively and in itself nothing else but bread and is entirely bread? If the answer is yes, then the apparently modest statement of faith [300] and positivist experience would be the equivalent of maintaining two substances; and every connexion between the appearance of bread and the body of Christ would be eliminated, though there must be one, if that which is given in the form of bread is to be truly the body of Christ. If one does not say (at least silently) that the substance of bread has ceased to be, then one speaks of bread (in the empiricist sense), in so far as it has absolutely nothing to do with the presence of the body of Christ. But it can no longer be said of such 'bread' that it is the body of Christ.

(c) Up to the present, we have merely been trying to explain the reasons given by the Council for transubstantiation. This effort has already involved us rather deeply in the explanation of this Catholic dogma and the delimitation of its meaning. We have not in fact been able to avoid a particular interpretation of the meaning and its demarcation, for which we

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If, he says, we follow modern physics when speaking of physical change, and call it a change which can be described by a *definizione operativa*, that is, one that can be registered by a series of at least conceivable experiments, transubstantiation is evidently not a physical change (44). In this sense, the dogma of the Eucharist is outside the scope of physics and scientific criticism. The Councils of thc Church never intended to define the scholastic theses of substance and accident. But the Church has made it sufficiently clear that it is fully in accord with this doctrine, which cannot be denied without temerity (44–45).

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ourselves must take responsibility and where it is not certain that all Catholic theologians will agree with me. Some further remarks are called for on the meaning and limits of the affirmation which speaks of transubstantiation, even though this must be on our own account and at our own risk, and even though it means anticipating to some extent the subject matter of the third part of our investigation. If I go rather far afield, I can only ask to be excused. There is no other way of explaining what I mean.

First I should wish to make a conceptual distinction of a fundamental nature, which I shall make use of later. I should like to distinguish between a logical and an ontic explanation of a matter, and try to explain this distinction. The logical explanation of a statement about a given matter would be a statement which makes the statement to be explained clear, that is, more definite and unmistakable, by interpreting it on its own terms, that is, without appealing to matters distinct from the matter to be explained. The *logical* explanation – to put it crudely for the moment explains by giving precisions, but does not affirm anything else in explanation of the matter in hand. Hence the conceptual tools used for the explanation can be deciphered in the matter itself and derived from it. This would still be the case if the verbal terminology used in the explanation were actually derived from somewhere else, provided that it were understood – implicitly or explicitly – that the terminology thus used was intended only in the sense, scope and implications which result from the matter to be explained itself. I suspect that we have in theology many such logical explanations of originally dogmatic statements. That it is sometimes, not always, so, may perhaps be indicated by the fact that the more [301] *precise* declaration and interpretation of this declaration may vary widely among theologians, so much so, that one must ask oneself what is really held in common about the objective content of the dogma, when the further explanations differ so widely. I must forbear to give examples. But I may say in passing that the efforts of Catholic theologians to give an ontic explanation of the dogma of transubstantiation are profoundly different, and that this seems to me to indicate that the dogma of transubstantiation itself is a logical explanation of the words of Christ, not an ontic one, such as is attempted in the various free opinions put forward by Catholic theologians in the further explanation of transubstantiation. But more of this later. The *ontic* explanation of a statement about a given matter would be the explanation which asserts something else than the matter in question, but something which is capable of rendering it intelligible, and so preserving it from misunderstandings, by giving for instance indications of its cause, of the precise, concrete way in which it came about and so on. I have explained the darkness before my eyes ontically when I connect the statement, ‘it grows dark before my eyes’ with the switching off of the light or a physiological atrophy of the nerve of sight.

It should then be clear at once, that for the proper understanding of a logical explanation the retrospective reference to the assertion to be explained always remains necessary. For it is always a matter of the same content, and in the cases met with in theology, this is never accessible independently of the original formulations which are to be explained. Hence it seems to me that the ancient dogma of the Church about the hypostatic union of the two natures in the one person of the Word is an example of such a logical explanation of what is said in the Scriptures about Jesus Christ. One remarks in fact that when one tries to grasp the meaning of nature and hypostasis, in so far as they are really distinct from one another – which is the only way that these concepts are useful in the doctrine of the hypostatic union – one constantly has to have recourse to statements such as are made of Christ precisely in Scripture. The ontic explanation however (as the little example given above shows) is not confined to the matter to be explained but exists in its own right, because it in fact expresses another content. We cannot go into further particulars of the question here: but in spite of the constant retrospective reference in the logical explanation to the statement to be explained, a reference from which it derives its vitality and without which it perishes in empty [302] verbalism and a conceptual rationalism without content, the logical explanation is of supreme importance. Everyone knows

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why basically, everyone uses this sort of explanation. Anyone who studies biblical theology for instance tries to say exactly what Scripture says, and yet cannot simply repeat the words of Scripture. The difference between Catholic and Protestant theology here seems to me to be only this – an essential one, to be sure – that for the Catholic theologian the logical explanation of the words of Scripture by the Church can become a definite truth of faith, while on principle for the Protestant theologian it remains – theology, which is always subject to revision in the opposite sense. We may remark in passing that though the logical explanation can become unchangeable dogma for us, our explanation still shows that a qualitative difference remains as regards Scripture. Both for its validity as binding in faith, and for its content and meaning, such a formula always remains bound to the word of Scripture (or primitive tradition), just as of course the word of Scripture only remains living and judging when it constantly finds its way into each changing historical situation through dogmatically binding explanations (of a logical type).

Presupposing this distinction, I should like to put forward the thesis that the dogma of transubstantiation (in so far as it is really strict *dogma*) is a logical and not an ontic explanation of the words of Christ taken literally. This of course must be properly understood. It does not imply that the statement about transubstantiation is not concerned with any objective reality as to its content. It does of course affirm a reality. It intends to say exactly what Christ says: that what he gives is his body and no longer bread, though bread had been there, because his declaration effectively changes the reality and produces what it affirms: the reality of the body of Christ instead of the substance of the bread. I call the doctrine of transubstantiation logical on account of its relationship to the words of Christ, which are to be explained and guarded against all misunderstandings that would weaken or deny their sense. By this I mean that the doctrine of transubstantiation tells me no more than do the words of Christ, when I take them seriously. The function of this doctrine is not to explain the real presence by accounting for how it takes place, so that the manner of its coming, understood in itself as another process, .would explain how the real presence came to be. Transubstantiation, as a dogma, means more than just any sort of a real presence, but it does not affirm anything more than the real presence which is there when what is given [303] is understood as the presence of the body of Christ. It is a way of formulating the truth that the body is present, and it is correct and significant so far as it explains and defends that truth. But it is not an explanation which reduces the truth to something else which could be grasped in its own distinct content. This thesis does not mean that the dogma so understood, and thus limited to its defined sense, has not further implications which in certain circumstances may also be made explicit in theological reflexion. The further explanation of the dogma of transubstantiation as given by theologians in books and class-room does in fact go beyond what is certainly defined in the dogma, and tries to turn the logical explanation of the words of Christ into an ontic one. This or that attempt may be, at least to some extent, the common doctrine of the schools. Possibly some element of such an attempt may be so strongly supported by stringent reasoning and the universal consent of theologians that it cannot be positively called in doubt without temerity (as we say). It may be that the Church rejects a particular effort in the line of a further ontic explanation of transubstantiation and the words of Christ which are given logical precisions thereby, as denying or endangering its dogma. But all such efforts of scholasticism in their various forms (reproduction, adduction, pure conversion and so on), presupposing the standard metaphysics of substance and accident accepted by this scholasticism – and which I for my part find quite correct – and other attempts of the same kind which are rather based on a Cartesian or a dynamic notion of material being, are explanations which are not to be identified with the dogma. This rests solely on the words of Christ, and implies only the possibility of what is implied in these words of Christ: it does not imply other matters which can only be known by presupposing a given philosophical system. Since it is not always easy to keep the two matters clearly apart, differences of opinion may occur among Catholic theologians as to what on the one hand is precisely and clearly implied in the dogma of transubstantiation (because implied in Christ's words) and therefore belongs to the dogma, and

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as to what on the other hand only belongs to the theological explanation of the doctrine in terms of a given philosophical conception. But that the two things must be distinguished on principle is undoubtedly accepted by all Catholic theologians. The dogma therefore, with regard to its sense *quoad nos*, is to some extent blurred round the edges: but this it shares with all human utterances, even those of Scripture. I can understand a text of Scripture quite well and accept it unconditionally, and still be in the dark [304] as to whether this or that is implied in its meaning and hence affirmed along with the truth.

What is the *proof* that the doctrine of transubstantiation intends to be no more than a logical explanation, in our sense, of the words of Christ? It seems to me to be the fact that *on the one hand*, the Council declares that this doctrine is derived from the words of Christ.[17] Hence one can say that it can imply no more than what results from these words. This is not however a clear proof of the thesis put forward. It is possible *a priori* that a statement could be deduced from another, the content of which is not the same as the first. But if one notes *on the other hand* that apart from the meaning of the dogma so postulated and defined, the further theological explanation displays either merely verbal agreement or a lack of unity; and if one notes that the theologians state expressly, as a principle, that a distinction must be made between the content of the dogma as such, and its theological explanation with the help of certain metaphysical presuppositions: it all adds up to the correctness of the thesis.

If this thesis is presupposed, we can only repeat what we have already said about the meaning of the dogma of transubstantiation. How substance is to be understood dogmatically in the strict definition of the Council, what species (appearance, figure) means here, is to be derived from the statement itself which is to be explained. In an adequate and comprehensively valid statement of reality, therefore where God speaks or where man may rightly speak on his own behalf, substance is that which makes it objectively true that a certain thing pointed to and distributed is either really bread and bread alone, or is not bread, but the body of Christ. The species is the empirical appearances of a thing, as it presents itself to us, but not as criticized from a higher, more comprehensive, 'truer', standpoint. In this sense of the words we say: out of the substance of bread, while the mere species of bread remains, the substance of the body of Christ has come to be. The Catholic magisterium (in '*Humani Generis*') has recently rejected various efforts on the part of some Catholic theologians which looked for an easy solution, by interpreting away rationalistically the concepts of substance and species, giving a much too intelligible distinction between concrete reality and religious interpretation. The former became a parallel to accident, the latter to 'substance' and [305] transubstantiation was made very understandable, much too understandable. This will not do, because in the Catholic understanding of the faith, it is impossible to evaporate either the substance of bread or the substance of the body of Christ by idealizing them as some sort of realities only in the world of meaning and interpretation. Christ speaks in the dimensions in which he very concretely gives food to his Apostles, that food being his body. But even this most recent rejection of an incautious effort to interpret the doctrine of transubstantiation has in no way expanded the strictly defined dogma of the real presence of Christ and of transubstantiation. It still has the simple meaning which we have ascribed to it.

(d) Why the Lutheran confession of faith rejects transubstantiation while affirming the real presence I have not been able to see. In the Schmalkaldian Articles it is rejected as 'cunning sophistry'.[18] In the *Formula Concordiae* it is rejected as papistical, without any further reasons being given. In the *Solida Declaratio*[19] of the *Formula Concordiae* it is rejected only in a passing

[17] According to de Aldama, it is no longer possible to hold, with the nominalist theologians of the late middle ages, that transubstantiation can be arrived at except from the words of Christ.

[18] *Die Bekenntnisschriften* ... 452.

[19] *Ibid*., 977, 983.

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reference. But we may perhaps find here (983) an explanation of the negative attitude, because the Protestant doctrine of the union of bread and body is seen as an analogy to the doctrine of the two natures in Christ – though here it must be emphasized that the *Solida Declaratio* itself has to allow for the difference between a hypostatic and a sacramental union, and does so candidly. The third place where the *Solida Declaratio* speaks of the matter[20] likewise offers no further explanations. In the Confession of Augsburg and in the Apology the question is, as we know, evaded, and even the Refutation of the *Confessio Augustana* refers rather timidly to the fact that the doctrine of transubstantiation should be added to the teaching on the presence of the *Confessio Augustana*. No doubt there were several motives at work in the rejection. Some of the scholastic speculation with regard to transubstantiation may have been identified with the defined dogma, so that the dogma itself especially from the point of view of a Protestant understanding of faith and theology – could have been taken to be 'cunning sophistry' and hence contested. One might also ask whether a more modern and positivist concept of reality did not play a part when it was maintained that the bread remained as it was before, hence that the substance of the bread remained. The rejection of the adoration offered to Christ in the sacrament outside the 'usus and the rejection of medieval devotion to the Eucharist may also have affected the issue, though there is no stringent [306] logical connexion between the two matters. The appeal to Scripture (1 Cor. 10.16; 11.28), where Paul calls the Eucharist 'bread' is probably a Scripture argument produced as an after-thought, because there is no reason why St Paul should not have called the Eucharist bread, either by reason of the species or by reason of its character as 'heavenly' food, whether there was transubstantiation or not. Perhaps the objection raised most recently by Prenter, that the Catholic doctrine involves a 'miraculous transformation', points after all in the right direction, to the ultimate source of all disagreement. I say what I mean in frankly polemical terms and hope to give offence to nobody: it is an effort to confine the action of God to the purely divine sphere; it does not intervene to change anything where the things of the world are – the bread, morals, the grave and so on. It remains somewhere beyond the experience of unbelief, which is quite true, but it also remains outside worldly reality itself; God's in his heaven; but nothing happens where the bread is. But then to my mind it would be more logical to say: Christ is present only in faith, indeed only through faith. It would then not be just an accident that on the whole the doctrine of Zwingli or Calvin has prevailed to a great extent with regard to the Lord's Supper. But this does not prevent us from being glad of the amount of agreement which exists between the Lutheran and the Catholic doctrine.

3. WHAT REMAINS OBSCURE AND OPEN?

I mean among us Catholics. And here I must be brief.

1. To begin with, the controversies in the schools about various Catholic efforts to express the dogma more exactly and give it an ontic explanation remain open and obscure. It is quite impossible even to list them briefly. But from various points of view, they are in themselves not unimportant. For their being tolerated in the Church, that is, the fact that the magisterium sees no threat to dogma in them, in spite of their mutual opposition, shows that one must really make a distinction in this question between theology and metaphysical ontic explanation on the one hand, and dogma and (logical) explanation on the other, so that really the most that is left open is where exactly to draw the line between the two. These scholastic controversies need a good cleaning, to rid them of the dust of the school-room, and little has been done in this matter. When properly understood and sincerely debated, they are concerned to a great extent [307] with matters which could be important for the understanding of the dogma itself. The

[20] *Ibid*. 1010.

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adductionism of Bellarmine and the view defended for instance by de la Taille with reference to St Thomas, have as their foundation or as their consequence a very profound difference in the real nature of 'presence' in the real presence; the 'spatiality' of this presence is conceived very differently in each case. These questions could still be of interest to controversial theology in inter-denominational discussions. But first Catholic theologians must learn to see the theological importance of such ancient controversies between the schools in a new light.

2. A clearer line of demarcation must be drawn in our question between the dogma and the theological propositions. The difference is no doubt recognised as a matter of principle. But in actual practice, the explanation of the dogma becomes the theology of the schools, without much notice being taken of the change. I do not think that every manual of theology announces at once like Selvaggi when it comes to the notion of substance, that '*ens per se et in se subsistens*' goes beyond the popular notion as given in the definition of Trent. The effort at demarcation which we have made cannot claim to enjoy universal support, and still less, that it could not be better and clearer, even if one is convinced that an absolute delimitation, which is clearly made in conscious thought, is quite impossible, given the structure of human knowledge.

3. A more precise definition would also be very desirable for the concept '*substantia panis*'. Not only is it not quite clear what is the popular concept of substance, in contrast to a strictly systematic one in philosophy, but it is not quite clear what '*substantia panis*' means. Here we meet with obscurity, precisely when one keeps to the theology of the schools and does not take the popular notion of substance as described above, but follows a procedure, justifiable in itself and perhaps logically stringent, and thinks of it as the '*ens per se et in se*' of scholastic philosophy as most, if not all, Catholic theologians do. For then it must be said that the substance of bread, as envisaged by St Thomas and the Fathers of the Council – envisaged, not defined – does not exist. One may be convinced of the permanent validity of the metaphysical concept of substance, one may hold that this concept can be defended in a transcendental *a priori* methodology against all empiricism as a condition of possibility of any true affirmation. But still one can no longer maintain today that bread is a substance, as St Thomas and the Fathers of the Council obviously thought it was. One can only regard a morsel of bread as an agglomeration [308] of substances and we do not know in which elementary particles the notion of substance is verified, and in what particular fashion this concept can be imagined as verified in material beings, in view of the lack of sharp distinction between one particle and its surroundings, its 'field', etc. One could of course say that these questions made no difference to the dogma or to its ordinary metaphysical interpretation in the schools. One could say that if there is substance at all (and it is still certain that there is, even when the most modern physics is supposed, when this does not cease to be physics to become a mere positivism, not just methodologically but in objective content), and if there is an agglomeration of *substances* in bread (which may also be taken for granted), then there can be a transubstantiation of the substance of bread in the metaphysical sense (which goes beyond the necessary meaning of the dogma). It would be transubstantiation of the agglomeration of substances which we call bread, and hence theology would be justified in holding on to its ancient position, unaffected by the changes in modern science. We do not intend to challenge this answer. But one may perhaps doubt whether it is adequate.

First of all, it would be interesting to hear more precisely from the theologians who give this answer, what are the hermeneutical principles of conciliar interpretation which allow them to reach their *agglomeratum substantiarum* from the '*substantia panis*' of the Council. What is to prevent our saying that the Fathers of the Council thought of bread as one substance, and hence this is what they defined and hence this is what also exists? Is not this the procedure used in other cases where the assertions of a Council are interpreted? What then are the exact hermeneutic principles which must necessarily be deduced from such observation of the actual interpretation of conciliar statements? And then there is the question of the content: is the agglomeration in question, being an agglomeration of *substances*, of such a nature that one can say that the bread

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ceases to be when the substances in question cease to be? To put it another way: in our present-day understanding of the nature of bread (as manifested precisely in the doctrine of the agglomeration of substances), is not bread an accidental combination of elementary particles, of such a nature that it is precisely this accidental combination, under a typically anthropological aspect as such, which constitutes the nature of bread? Is this nature really gone, and has its disappearance become intelligible, when the substantiality of the elementary particles ceases? It is easy to understand that a man ceases to be a man when his substantiality [309] ceases; but that something the precise essence of which is the accidental constellation of elementary substances ceases to exist, is less obvious. To put it again in another way: the being of bread appears to us today to be in the dimension which in scholastic terms would be called that of the *species* of empirical, anthropomorphic appearances; hence the being of bread does not appear to be affected at all when a change takes place in the metempirical dimension of the substantiality of the elementary particles. In my opinion, the explanation of the dogma in the logical sense, as given above, is completely unaffected by these questions. But the general scholastic theory of transubstantiation does not seem to escape all difficulties and questioning by its standard answer, which we anticipated above, to the difficulties raised against the scholastic notion of substance.

4. A further question is this: normally, scholastic works on dogma begin the treatise on the Eucharist with the real presence, and then come the sections on the sacrifice and the sacrament, in this order or the reverse. But in any case the section on the real presence is put at the start of the whole treatise *De Eucharistia* as the first and most fundamental part. This is explicable on formal and on apologetical and polemical grounds. But one must not try to dissemble the fact that this method has its disadvantages. It automatically puts the real presence in a perspective in which the local presence of Christ (to put it that way for once) is the main centre of interest and everything else is derived from this. I mean that we Catholic theologians have something to learn from the '*in usu*' doctrine of Protestant Christians, without denying the teaching of Trent. '*Institutum est . .. ut sumatur*' (Denzinger 878). To put it another way: the first truth of the Eucharistic doctrine is, 'This is my body', not, 'Here I am present'. The second statement is contained in the first, but does not exhaust its content and its point. Just like the Bible, the doctrine of transubstantiation should be a sort of barrier against taking the 'presence' as the first and fundamental concept in this treatise. It is not because Christ is present that we offer him as our sacrifice and receive him in communion, but the other way round. And hence one could ask oneself whether one could not formulate and clarify the basic statements on the Eucharist in such a way that while the real presence is clearly recognizable, the character of sacrifice and of food is primarily and comprehensively stated, and at the same time, the character of event which belongs to the process. This is not just idle hair-splitting. It has been said somewhat maliciously that the popular understanding of the Mass is that people [310] think of it merely as the consecration of the host in the morning for 'Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament' in the evening. This is an exaggeration which still contains a correct and important observation. Could we not find a more fundamental theological principle for the real presence, as we must call it, which would of itself bring out the true nature of this 'presence', namely that it is the presence of the sacrifice and the food? Does not a more comprehensive and unprejudiced biblical theology point perhaps in this direction? Could we not achieve in this way a clearer link between the real presence, and the Eucharistic adoration of the Lord implied therein, and the original reception, the '*usus*', which would make it possible to distinguish more exactly between the legitimate Eucharistic worship outside the Mass and certain unhappy developments? It cannot be denied that many late medieval or baroque forms of Eucharistic worship are in fact being pared down, with the official but discreet help of the Church.[21] What are the theological principles on which these moves are based?

[21] There are, for instance, the numerous 'expositions' during and outside Mass. And then again, there is a tendency for the Mass to absorb other forms of divine worship.

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5. The *history* of the dogma which we are dealing with has been comparatively well investigated. The patristic and medieval material is ready. Could not a new effort be made to see whether the somewhat lifeless account of the past, in which everything is brought down to the level of the conventional theology of today, could not be turned into a really vital quest for the truth? I do not mean that what has now become clear, what has since been 'defined', should become obscure again. But is there not more to be gained in the line of a profounder insight into the mystery of the Eucharist than we now possess explicitly, from a well-intentioned rekindling of the antagonism – not contradiction – between the transformism of St Ambrose and the very realistic symbolism of St Augustine? Is it for instance a clear and vital reality for our average popular piety that for all the reality of the presence, the reception of the body of Christ is only *res et sacramentum* for something that is in essential respects higher and more comprehensive, the union with Christ which takes place in grace and faith and love? That the real reception of the real body of Christ in the sacrament is only the sign and the means, and hence sacramental sign, for this unity, which is the decisive thing? This fact is in itself obvious to theologians. Is justice not done to 'it in ordinary piety, [311] simply because it seems somewhat incidental and because piety always reduces theology to primitive concepts? Or is it not because theology speaks in such a way that this supremely important truth, so strongly emphasized by St Augustine, has been pushed somehow into the penumbra of theological consciousness and outside the range of piety, so that communion with the Christ who suffered and the proclamation of his death has become a friendly state visit accompanied by tokens of grace and favour, but which has nothing to do with the history of the death and resurrection or the eschatological future of the meal in the final kingdom of God?

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[312]

12

ON THE DURATION OF THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AFTER COMMUNION

A short essay which I wrote on thanksgiving after Mass[1] was greeted in a very friendly and grateful way. Many readers had the impression that an answer had been attempted to a question which is often put but not always well answered. Disagreement was expressed by some with regard to one point only in the essay. It was apropos of the statement: 'One should be careful to avoid the style of the old-fashioned instructions on holy communion and not to say that the reason for thanksgiving is that Jesus Christ is "still" really present in the communicant after communion' . . . 'all these assertions are false or at least not sufficiently well founded in theology'. We may therefore be allowed to make some remarks here in explanation and justification of this statement.

To begin with, it is quite understandable that in an essay concerned with a matter of the spiritual life this thorny theological question could not have been avoided. In pious books and religious instruction thanksgiving is often based on the continuing real presence of Christ after communion. The writer has a vivid memory since his childhood of the story of how a saint sent two acolytes with burning candles after a communicant who had left the Church immediately after communion. And those who think they must challenge the statement in question appeal to the fact that 'all' theologians hold the opinion which is here rejected as unproved or false. If then the reasons for thanksgiving are discussed at all, it is impossible to avoid opening up this dogmatic question, even though it looks rather strange in an essay on ascetics. For the precise question is this: how can the meaning and justification of thanksgiving be presented theologically in such a way that the reasons are really valid dogmatically [313] and not just pious-sounding talk? This example, not very important in itself, shows finally how readily questions of the spiritual life can in certain circumstances bring up difficult questions of dogma and how it is not always possible, with the best will in the world, for ascetics and mystics to confine themselves only to the theses of dogmatic theology which have been defined by the magisterium or are otherwise beyond doubt.

In the comments made on the essay, it was surprising to find that the opponents of the thesis in question did not take the trouble to discuss the arguments which, as the writer thought, dealt at sufficient length with the reasons for the thesis. But in theology too it is incorrect to dismiss the unusual in favour of the cherished old opinions without giving any reasons.

It is not true that the appeal to the fact that practically all theologians (which we readily concede)[2] have been of the opposite view proves at once that their thesis is certain and that the contrary is temerarious. A common opinion of theologians – and there cannot be question of more than this in the present case, even when presented in the light most favourable to the adversaries – is only binding on an individual theologian when it is put forward by all theologians as *binding* or when they link it so closely to assured truths of faith that its denial would endanger these truths which are the basis for the opinion. There can be no question of this in the present case. For the theologians start from a principle which we do not deny or call in doubt, one on which on the contrary we are in entire agreement with them, and which

[1] Cf. K. Rahner, *Mission and Grace* I (London & New York 1966) 280-305.

[2] We may leave it an open question as to whether all of them really do. It seems that F. Hürth-P. M. Abellan think otherwise: *De sacramentis* (Rome 1947). They *distinguish* the ending of the presence by *consumptio* (i.e., *per modum cibi vel potus sumi*) and by *corruptio*; according to the common opinion, there can be only one reason, the *corruptio* in the physico-chemical sense.

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is the only one to which they can and do appeal in this matter: the principle that the real presence of the body of Christ lasts as long as the Eucharistic species exists.[3] This is the principle from which they start. Their deductions are correct if and in so far as they can really be derived from this principle. But if the interpretation of the principle is so incautious and inexact that deductions are drawn which do not follow from an exact interpretation of the principle; and if it can be [314] shown that there are understandable but still incorrect reasons why this inexact interpretation of the basic principle should hold the field and lead to wrong conclusions: it will then be clear that a simple 'consequence', even if shared by many or all theologians for a long time, cannot claim to be accepted on dogmatic grounds.

The insufficiently exact interpretation of the common principle, which led to unproved or false conclusions, has to do with the concept and reality of the Eucharistic species. And the reason which makes this inexact interpretation understandable is the medieval concept of nature. Let us consider. The Council of Trent still speaks without misgivings of *the* substance of *bread* and wine. Every theologian now concedes, especially if he is explaining transubstantiation in the traditional sense against more modern attempts at explanation,[4] that in the case of the bread, in the individual species, we have not a single substance as in the case of the really primary particles of matter or other parts of nature such as man, beasts, etc., but an agglomeration of several substances. If one thinks out this difference in approach – which leaves the dogma as such certainly untouched – one sees at once that the older opinion had no occasion to, and could not, distinguish clearly and consciously between bread as an *anthropological* entity and bread as a physico-chemical body. Bread, though prepared by man, was considered without conscious reflection as a natural body such as occurs elsewhere and was interpreted as a single substance. One recognizes today that bread is a typically anthropological entity. Physically and chemically bread is no real substantial unity, but an accidental agglomeration of many combinations of atoms and molecules, united physically only by a very extrinsic, accidental and almost local concentration. Humanly speaking, however, and hence sacramentally, this formation is a unity, an intelligible unity, created by man, and possessing such unity only in relation to him, within the sphere of his life and action. Hence it is clear that the real presence of Christ only lasts as long as this *humanly* intelligible unity of 'bread' exists. No theologian can question this in principle. To make the point clear, let us consider for instance the following cases or possibilities. There is radio-active carbon in all wine. Transubstantiation is to be predicted of every particle of carbon with its *whole* reality as long as it is part of the consecrated 'wine', since it is part of the transubstantiated 'substance' of the wine. But this atom is sending [315] out a ceaseless stream of beta-particles, which somehow participate in the substantiality of the whole reality.

But as soon as they leave the field of the 'wine', they no longer belong to the wine, and so no longer to the reality 'under' which Christ is really present. Or again, if one made a molecule of some substance radio-active, so that it remained in principle recognizable, and added it to the wine to be consecrated, this molecule – supposing it was not an absolutely foreign body with regard to wine, but for instance a molecule of alcohol – would also be consecrated and hence also transubstantiated. If this molecule, which is still recognizable, were removed from the field of the wine – it does not matter whether the procedure is possible or not, technically – Christ would no longer be present under it, though chemically and physically nothing had happened but an accidental change of locality in the molecule. This is so obvious, that it is now even possible and quite easy technically to separate such a tiny quantity of 'wine', by a purely quantitative division, that there can be no question of

[3] We may remark in passing that even this principle is given a prudent qualification by theologians, since the Council of Trent only defined the real presence before consumption, *Denz*. 886, 876; the principle is qualified by J. A. de Aldama for instance as merely '*sententia theologorum communis et certa*'.
[4] Cf. my essay: *The presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper* in this volume pp. 287-311.

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wine any longer in the ordinary sense of human language. The real presence of Christ then ceases under this tiny quantity, though it is chemically exactly the same as the larger quantity from which it was taken. The tiny quantity needs only to be so small, for instance, that it can no longer be seen. Hence St Thomas sees quite correctly (III, q. 77, a. 4) that a purely quantitative reduction of the species of wine can prevent one calling it wine any longer – though chemically it remains 'the same' as before for a long time – and thus the presence of Christ ceases. Hence St Thomas correctly denies (III, q. 77, a. 8c) that a small amount of consecrated wine still indicates the presence of Christ if it is mixed with a large amount of non-consecrated wine. 'This' concrete consecrated wine no longer exists as something separate and distinguishable from the human point of view, even though 'physically' and 'chemically' it exists in exactly the same way as before. On the other hand, leavened and unleavened bread are considerably different from the purely chemical point of view, but from the ordinary human view-point, which is all that matters here, both are bread and hence *materia consecrabilis*. These cases and possibilities show that 'bread' is not a purely physical and chemical reality, but a sensible reality belonging essentially to the realm of man and hence having properties which cannot be comprised by chemical terms and hence can disappear – so that something ceases to be bread – even though in the field of physics and chemistry as such nothing 'essential' has been changed.

[316] St Thomas was therefore quite correct (the example was referred to in the first essay) when he said that the presence of Christ ceases if the bread is ground down: dust is in fact not bread in the human sense of the term. St Thomas looked on such pulverization as a sort of substantial change even in the physical world, which it is not. But St Thomas recognized correctly that dust is not bread, even though in chemistry or physics it is still exactly the same as bread. Hence the presence of Christ also ceases. (This, incidentally, ought to be noted by priests with scruples, who are so over-anxious that they can never purify the paten well enough.) Hence the principle remains: only where the species of bread is present and remains present can we speak of the real presence of Christ. But this general principle must be made more precise. The species of bread, as a sensible reality, can also cease to be, without any essential physical and chemical change, that is, when bread ceases to be 'bread' from the merely human and not physical aspect. Chemists of the food industry could certainly produce something which was chemically and physiologically 'the same' as bread, but which could not be considered as *materia consecrabilis*. Even a larger amount of water or an extensive dehydration, without any 'essential' chemical change, could turn bread into something else, a sort of porridge for instance. It follows that what constitutes bread is not just properties, qualities and circumstances within the categories of today's physics and chemistry, but in addition, qualities that lie outside this field. And then once more it follows that something can cease to be bread if these other proprieties disappear.

The question then remains: can bread, once it is *eaten*, still be regarded as species in human estimation, that is, as bread? It should already be obvious that the question cannot be answered by demanding that bread must be chemically changed, in terms of organic chemistry, if it is to be regarded as something other than it was before. If such a change occurs, it is of course a sign that the bread is no longer there. But if there is no such change, that does not prove that in human estimation the bread is still there. Chemical change is a positive criterion, but by no means the only one. Hence at least one may not draw the conclusion: bread after being eaten remains 'the same' (chemically) in the stomach for some time, hence the presence of Christ continues. It was only because theologians were not accustomed to distinguish clearly enough between bread as a physico-chemical reality and bread as bread, that this over-hasty conclusion was drawn. We now assert on the contrary: bread once eaten is [317] not a human reality, whose meaning is that of food, of being eaten. And from this we deduce that the presence of Christ no longer persists. It is to be noted in this

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view that not everything which can be taken into the stomach and there have a nourishing effect is, according to general human estimation, food in the sense in which it is to be understood here. Other-wise bread reduced to powder would still be bread, and a species introduced into the stomach by a tube would have to be called the reception of the Eucharist, which cannot be proved, to say the least, and is hard to reconcile with the prohibition of the Holy Office of 27th January, 1886, forbidding this practice. We can only call bread or food something which a normal man under normal circumstances is ready to eat by the normal process of eating. Here again it is not a matter of chemistry but of ordinary human usage, just as in the question of what wheat is *materia consecrabilis*, what matters is not the secrets of scientific botany and the theory of evolution but ordinary human language. And thus we can safely say that bread once eaten is no longer food, no longer bread, and hence no longer the sign of the presence of Christ. In the '*defectus circa missam occurrentes*' in the Roman missal, provision is specifically made (X, 34) for a vomited species not being eaten again, if it is nauseating. But can something which is not expected to be eaten, at least under certain circumstances, be regarded as 'food', as 'bread'? In practice under certain circumstances people follow a praiseworthy 'tutiorism' in sacramental matters which allows for the continuing presence of the body of Christ. But this is not an objection against our explanation of the question of principle.

The opposite view leads to awkward consequences, which show that the theory of the continuing presence has very frail support. First of all, it would leave one at the mercy of the experts in physiology and chemistry. It would be for them to judge how long the presence of Christ remains. But this is unacceptable. If it be said that the normal human view of the non-expert is quite competent to judge the matter of the presence of bread, we should have to answer: 'What standards does the ordinary man use to tell if something is bread or not?' If he says: 'It is chemically the same as it was before', he submits himself, whether knowingly and willingly or not, to the verdict of the scientists. If he says, 'That is what I am accustomed to eat as bread; that is the sort of thing I eat; that is my normal and natural food', he affirms implicitly that bread once eaten is no longer bread. This sort of thing is not eaten, because it has already been [318] eaten and hence is not suitable for consumption. Further, this view leads, at least with psychological necessity, to the opinion, shared no doubt by great theologians, that the sacramental effect of the sacrament *ex opere operato* can still increase as long as the species is still in the stomach. As we already remarked in the first essay, this view cannot be proved; and it is incorrect, because it is the eating and not the presence of the species in man which is the sacramental sign. But in any case, if one maintains that food once eaten is still bread, and so Christ is still really present for some time in man, one should be able to indicate some way in which the process is *salutary*. Otherwise the assertion of the continued presence of the body of Christ in the stomach of the Christian would be quite pointless, since without such a salutary effect it would be merely a corporal, local presence, such as unbelievers and unbaptized can have – if they are near the tabernacle or have gone physically to communion. But if such a salutary effect were ascribed to the local presence so affirmed, it would be quite logical to wish to have the species so efficiently turned out that it remained as long as possible. And then the question would arise, which finally only the physiologist could answer, as to how long this beneficent presence is prolonged; and the duration of thanksgiving would have to be measured by the length of the resistance of the species in each case. In a word, once one has begun to think in the terms suggested by this theological hypothesis, one comes to strange conclusions, which can only be dealt with by common sense. And it would be better then to start with the simple truth that bread ceases to be bread by the very fact of its being consumed, which ends the real presence of Christ like any other circumstance that eliminates bread as a human species. This is the only thing which makes it understandable that it is precisely the *eating* of the body of the Lord, and not the fact

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of its having been eaten, the action of eating and not the process of digestion is the sacramental sign of grace. But this again is quite intelligible: only the human act as '*actus humanus*', not the physiological process as '*actus hominis*' is admissible as a sacramental sign, since only a human act can also be an act of acceptance of the grace offered under this act and be a confession of faith and a personal proclamation of the death of the Lord.

The resistance offered by a rather confused piety to these truths, which are really obvious, comes ultimately from the fact that a clear enough distinction is not made between the presence of Christ through his Spirit in the depths of man's being (in his 'heart'), and the bodily presence of [319] Christ in the sacramental sign and hence in the eating. This latter type of presence is not the higher and sublimer, the goal and reward of Christians, but the sign and the means of the permanent presence of Christ through the Spirit, which is indicated and increased by this sacramental sign. Christ really comes to us and stays with us through this sacrament. But this permanent presence, to which the reception of the body of Christ under the species leads, does not consist of the further presence of his body within the Christian for a few minutes longer. It is the continued and ever more profound presence of the Lord in the Spirit, in the truth, without which even his flesh profits nothing, as the Lord himself says. The climax of holy communion is this personal communication in the Spirit. And this event does not become greater and more magnificent if one maintains without any real proof that its *sign*, which is purely a means, still persists when the eating of the consecrated food is over and done with.

A piety which does not quite know what it is doing finds itself here in a strange confusion. It considers the moment of communion as the time when the Lord *begins* 'to be there', to hold audience so to speak, so that one can now start to talk to him in a way which even the justified Christian living in his grace could not do up till then, because the Lord was not 'there'. But again, this piety does not mark the departure of the Lord, who after all has to go away, if he is only 'there' for a time. It does not reflect on this. After some time, the pious Christian ends the audience so to speak of his own accord, without asking himself does this leave the Lord standing there, so to speak, or is the audience at an end because the Lord has departed once more. The theological theory which maintains that this presence only ceases after some time, when the species ceases to exist in the stomach, is a learned theory, which does not in fact occur in the normal life of piety. Otherwise one would have to ponder much more exactly on *when* the ending of this presence takes place, something to which the normal Christian obviously pays no heed. To put it another way: in the standard view, the coming of Jesus *and* his going should be equally remarkable events, to which the pious act of the communicant should be directed. But there is no question of this. But this shows that there is something which has not been thought out properly. Of itself, the matter is clear and simple – if the standard view is not presupposed. The sacramental sign brings about an increasing coming and going of the Lord in his Spirit and in his grace, by the eating of the true body of the Lord. This is the permanent fruit of the sacrament, which is *not* [320] withdrawn by Christ's going away again. But this shows that a *continued* bodily presence, which is only ended after a certain time, contributes nothing to the meaning of the sacrament. For the simple reason, that it would then simply be withdrawn again. Of course, if communion is regarded as admission to an audience which would not be possible otherwise, and if thanksgiving after communion is explained on this basis, one will have to attribute decisive importance to the length of such an abiding presence after communion. But then one has abandoned the only view of this sacrament which can be verified dogmatically, that it means union with Christ through his (increasing) grace of the Spirit. If the bodily presence of Christ was the primary *effect* of the sacrament – in view of an audience – and not merely the sacramentally efficacious sign of the real effect, the pious Christian would inevitably have to attach supreme value to retaining the bodily presence of Christ as long as possible.

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Significantly, such is not his attitude. It was the task of the first essay to show that even so, thanksgiving after communion is right and necessary, as well as the adoration of the Lord in the sacrament. And thanksgiving is perfectly possible without our presupposing a prolongation of the real presence of the body of Christ after communion.

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[323]

PART SIX
Eschatology
13

THE HERMENEUTICS OF ESCHATOLOGICAL ASSERTIONS[1]

To give a brief lecture on the dogmatic principles governing the hermeneutics of eschatological assertions in the Bible and in the preaching of the Church is to undertake a task which is clearly too great to be performed in such a short time. What we have to say will be judged more favourably, we hope, in the light of these circumstances.

The question here posed is important for theology in many regards. To begin with, it may be said that it has hardly ever been dealt with explicitly in Catholic theology. The question could not of course have ever been *totally* neglected. Eschatological assertions are constantly made in the preaching of the Christian faith and in theology; either they are taken from Scripture or a foundation for them is sought in Scripture. But (formally at least) they may not be absolutely identical with the eschatological sayings of Scripture or of the original apostolic tradition; they may be interpretations of these sources, which translate their words into another world of concepts, transpose them to make them fit into another picture of the universe. If so, the whole process, which has been going on as long as Christian preaching and theology existed, must have been guided by certain hermeneutic principles, used to some extent consciously in the execution of this task. And of course some sort of general hermeneutics always existed. But in the long run, neither the special hermeneutics applied unconsciously, nor the principles of hermeneutics in general, could be adequate to the task.

And they do not render our present [324] effort superfluous, where we try to grasp consciously and formulate expressly some theological principles for the hermeneutics of special eschatology. It is possible for someone who has never studied the science of logic to think in fact more logically than the logician by profession. But this does not make reflex thought on logic superfluous. It is the same with an explicit hermeneutics of eschatological assertions in relation to a hermeneutics which remains implicit. The idea that such hermeneutics has been sufficiently catered for by hermeneutics in general rests on the false and primitive conception, that the eschata form a world like any other, so that knowledge of them – in spite of its being determined, like other knowledge, by the object itself – presents no particular problems apart from those of the knowledge of theological realities in general. But it cannot be said that an explicit and more or less specific hermeneutics for eschatological assertions is part of the normal study of Catholic theology. Dogmatic treatises on eschatology omit this question completely. With regard to their object, they are all still in the stage where philosophy was when it still looked on its task as a purely objective metaphysic of objects, without a theory and metaphysic of knowledge, that is, before the turn to the subjective at the beginning of modern times.

We need not delay on the proof that such a situation cannot be allowed to continue. The change in cosmology from ancient to modern times certainly presents a deep-seated problem for eschatological assertions. But the task thus imposed cannot be satisfactorily accomplished by taking eschatology as an objectivating treatise on the eschata, and then, when it makes

[1] The text of this short essay is that of a lecture given by invitation before the Catholic faculty of theology at the University of Bonn, i$_3$th January, 1960. It was not possible to change the text itself without giving the subject a completely new approach, which was out of the question at this stage. We have therefore tried to clear up certain misunderstandings and obscurities of the unavoidably brief text by adding a few notes. We may refer for a general survey of the whole subject to *K*. Rahner, 'Eschatologie', *LTK* 111^2, 1094-1098.

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individual assertions about particular eschatological realities, beginning to think out each particular assertion, asking how it is compatible with the views and opinions which are held today about the universe and its future. What is needed is a fundamental consideration of the type of knowledge possible in such assertions, a verdict on the nature and bearings of such assertions with regard to theology and profane knowledge. The whole controversy which arose with regard to the notion of 'demythizing' shows that there is a real problem here, the question namely of what is the meaning of eschatological assertions in general, what they are really concerned with, how far they are part of a truth of faith, how and on what basis such assertions in Scripture are to be interpreted. Here a question has undoubtedly been posed in Protestant theology, which Catholic theology is far from giving its due attention.

The correct method which would normally be called for by our task [325] would be, at least to begin with, that of *biblical* theology. That is, we should ask what are the principles of hermeneutics suggested by Scripture itself, where it makes eschatological assertions. We should listen carefully to these assertions; we should compare the various sets of concepts, disparate at certain levels, which lie behind the assertions; we should enquire precisely into their real origin, their *Sitz im Leben* or social setting, which in this case would really be the absolutely primordial experience of revelation, compared with which all other eschatological assertions are derivative and explanatory[2] – and are meant to be so; we should meditate on and compare the various eschatologies which are to be found in Scripture itself; we should apply the principle of the *analogia fidei* to biblical eschatology; we should investigate historically various eschatological notions, images, motifs, etc.; and then it would be quite possible to take the guiding line of the biblical assertions on eschatology and deduce certain principles, which will be those by which Scripture itself demands to be interpreted in these passages. In the short time at our disposal, it should be obvious that we cannot take this way, if we are to reach any conclusions. We must therefore adopt the method, in itself more problematic,[3] of basic dogmatic considerations. In doing so, we must simply suppose that the results of this method would be confirmed by a hermeneutics derived directly from biblical data, or at least would not contradict such an *a posteriori* hermeneutics. But these preliminary remarks must suffice, even though they have neither described exactly the method to be pursued nor justified it *a priori*. We turn therefore immediately to the actual question.

[326] *Thesis 1*. The Christian understanding of the faith and its expression must contain an eschatology which really bears on *the future*, that which is still to come, in a very ordinary, empirical sense of the word time. An interpretation of the eschatological assertions of Scripture, which in the course of simply de-mythizing it would de-eschatologize it in such a way that all eschatological sayings of Scripture, explicit or implicit, only meant something that takes place here and now in the existence of the individual and in the decision he takes here and now, is theologically inacceptable. This first principle needs no long explanation. It cannot be doubted that the doctrinal preaching of the Church intends to make assertions about future events which are still to come in time. In this sense too it is 'prophetic'. And the

[2] This does not of course mean (in so far as we are dealing with Scripture) conclusions and explanations which have no binding force. All we mean is that Scripture itself contains theology, that is, new conclusions are drawn from the first, primordial and irreducible truths of revelation, new connexions between them are noted, etc. These conclusions (being those of inspired Scripture and of the authentic bearers of revelation) are absolutely binding on us and are perfectly entitled to be called 'revealed'. But to see exactly the meaning of such derivative (though binding) assertions and their bearings, to know what is *not* intended in certain cases, to see what questions are left open, it can be very helpful, and indeed necessary, to note how these assertions themselves are arrived at, what they articulate and explain without meaning to go any further. The logical process of their derivation can explain and limit more precisely the actual content of their affirmation.

[3] This method is not of course 'problematic' because and in so far as it is dogmatic, in this case, 'systematic' – but because in this question it is hard to say in any particular case whether and bow far such systematic considerations can lead to a result.

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Catholic theologian cannot doubt that such assertions are not merely the expression of the *present-day* sense of the faith in the Church, but that this present interpretation must be held definitely and absolutely as that of the permanent and unchangeable faith itself. A later interpretation which would de-eschatologize it is radically excluded according to the Catholic notion of faith and doctrine. It is sufficient to note this fact here, since we are dealing with the dogmatic principles of hermeneutics. But we may add that the self-understanding of Scripture itself, no matter how existentially interpreted, undoubtedly excludes such an elimination of eschatology. It is not merely contrary to the professed faith of the Church, it is also contrary to Scripture.

Thesis 2. The Christian understanding of the nature, life and personal being of God takes his 'omniscience' not merely as a metaphysical axiom, but as a strict truth of faith, and makes it include God's knowledge of future events. in so far as this knowledge embraces the realities of the world and mankind, there can be no denying or doubting, in metaphysics or theology, the fundamental 'abstract' possibility of the communication of such future events: they are known by God and they are human, and hence do not of themselves in principle go beyond the capacity of human understanding.[4] Thus there is a principle which dominates all that we are [327] going to say: the principle of open-mindedness which has to reckon with the fact, along with the first Vatican (Denzinger 1784; cf. '*Humani generis*', Denzinger 2317), that man, as partner of the living God who can reveal himself, may not restrict beforehand the scope of God's possible word. Man may use no a *priori* to set up his own bounds, beyond which God neither may nor can reveal anything still to come in the future.[5] Nothing of what we have to say may be considered as a law by which man controls what God may reveal to man about the future. In a Catholic explanation of the hermeneutics of eschatology it must also be remembered that prophecy, that is, the prediction of the future, has always been seen in Catholic tradition – under certain conditions[6] which need not be discussed [328] here – as a

[4] This condition is to be noted, since it is important for the following considerations. It is not enough to appeal to the omniscience of God in itself, to explain that God can reveal future events to man. It must also be possible to affirm that such communications are also possible with regard to man, that is, that they do not surpass his powers of understanding. It is not simply true that anyone can be told anything. Such a process may break down not merely because of the knowledge (or ignorance) of the speaker, but also because of the receptive capacity of the hearer. Hence it is at once clear that there are some types of knowledge, certain degrees of clearness and intensity of knowledge, with regard to future events, which are not accessible to man in his present situation (if this is not to be radically transformed by such revelation). The axiom, *quidquid recipitur*, *ad modum recipientis recipitur*, remains true here. The situation of the hearer forms an a *priori* law for the possibility of his hearing; the act of understanding, while it remains 'objective' and true, is also determined by the structure of the hearer, which is finite and conditioned. Not everyone therefore can hear everything. This is very true, and it is at the basis of the following considerations (Theses 3ff.), but here in Thesis 2 the first thing to note is that it still does not place any absolute limits on God's power of communicating in whatever way he wills such future events as have to do with man. Such events, precisely *because* they are human, cannot be simply beyond the powers of his understanding, though to say this is not to prejudge the nature of this understanding and its limitations.

[5] This is not of course to decide whether and to what extent such a communication implies, and brings about, a real and existential change in the human situation and the constitution of being, as its presupposition. A strictly supernatural revelation (supernatural as regards its object) presupposes for instance (in a really Thomist metaphysics of knowledge – one not spoiled by nominalism) that the reception of the supernatural revelation is also a subjectively supernatural act, that is, inspired by divine (indeed uncreated) grace. But since man, in face of God, cannot determine to what extent he can really be created anew by God (which is possible in spite of the permanence of his human nature, since this nature, while remaining human, is always *capax infiniti* [at least *in potentia oboedientiali*]): he cannot for his part determine a *priori* what he can hear from God and what he cannot. Hence the theses which follow do not lay down a *priori* laws as regards to what is possible in itself and in general; they provide a norm which is itself already based on what God has *defacto* instituted in the concrete order of his salvific action.

[6] With regard to future events, a genuine clairvoyance may be possible, without implying a miraculous divine revelation and prophecy strictly speaking, but which can be recognized by its peculiarities as a natural phenomenon. See e.g. K. Rahner, *Visions and Prophecies*, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 10 (London & New York

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divine prerogative, and, where it occurs, as a proof of God's action in fundamental theology (cf. for instance Denzinger 1790 (Vatican I); 2145 (Anti-modernist oath)). When therefore in what follows the import of eschatological assertions and their implications for the future are to some extent restricted, we are dealing with a restriction which follows in fact from the history of salvation and affects only ourselves: it is not an absolute metaphysical restriction of the knowledge of God or of his power of revelation which follows from the nature of God.

There is no contradiction between an absolute, unconditional openness for any possible word of God, no matter how unexpected, no matter how incalculable, and the holding of concrete principles of interpretation, derived from the actual word of God, which deal with a given set of divine utterances. If one confined oneself to the principle that no restrictions or conditions could be imposed upon God, even with regard to his speaking of the future, it could very well happen that the sovereign freedom of God in eschatological discourse could in fact be restricted in the light of certain presuppositions, all the more fraught with dangerous consequences because unavowed. And such interpretation could restrict the admitted freedom of God's utterances, and our own absolute readiness to hear them, much more than if one offered principles for the interpretation of such utterances, derived from the word of God as actually spoken. Express principles, being matter of reflex thought, can be confronted again and again with the word of God and so subjected to criticism. It is the sort of thing which occurs in other places of theology also: whoever rejects *metaphysical* considerations and principles in theology, as being incompatible with the word of God and his sovereign dominion, does not in fact set himself free for the unchallenged lordship of the word of God, hut becomes the slave of unspoken and hence more dangerous metaphysical prejudices. Let us suppose for instance that someone reads the eschatological assertions of Scripture like someone trying to reconstruct as exactly and vividly as possible some past event, by combining a set of fragmentary pieces of information into a sort of mosaic – more or less the usual procedure of our eschatologies, especially those of the more popular type – then he is unwittingly using a concept of man and his existential situation which is not only false, but certainly misses the real sense of the eschatological assertions of Scripture. This sort of reading of eschatological assertions as pre-views of future events de-eschatologizes man himself: it makes of him a being who in the here and now of his *present* existence is [329] unaffected by the future, because the future is only what is yet to come from a distance, and no longer that which is at hand in its futurity. The eschatological message becomes a statement which does not touch us at all at the moment, because it refers unambiguously to a later time in the distant future and to nothing else. If we lack an *a priori* horizon of an explicit nature, we do not allow Scripture to say what it really wishes to say, without reading things into it beforehand, but we make its statement non-existential from the start. Hence, in spite of our acknowledging that God knows everything, including the future, and that he can enunciate *everything* if he pleases, we must try to define an *a priori* sphere for eschatological assertions, a framework within which they are to be understood.

Thesis 3. The sphere of eschatological assertions and hence of their hermeneutic is constituted by the dialectical unity of two limiting statements (of which the second is closely connected with our first thesis, but must none the less be repeated once more here).
(*a*) It is certain from Scripture that God has *not* revealed to man the day of the end.[7] This does

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1963). It is to be noted that accounts of the future which are to be explained by parapsychology, and prophecies which are not really miraculous, do give the impression of reportage – fragmentary, to be sure, and arbitrarily selected and restricted.

[7] Texts like Mk 23:32 belong in any case, even purely historically, to the basic elements of Jesus' teaching. Cf. also Rev. 1:7. We cannot of course here deal with the question of how this ignorance of the 'Day' is to be reconciled with the 'imminent expectation' and the naming of the signs by which the beginning of the end of the world is recognizable.

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not merely mean that physical time extends into a future where we cannot fix a date for the end and fulfilment. It is not just that we do not know exactly *when* the end comes; it is not just the moment of its arrival which is 'not yet exactly' revealed. The truth is that the end has for us a character of hiddenness which is essential and proper to it and effects all its elements.

This is already implied by the Christian existentials of faith and hope: without this character of hiddenness in the fulfilment yet to come, faith and hope would not be what they are and must be if Christian. And again, if faith and hope are to exist, they demand that the future be essentially concealed. How then are we to reconcile the announcement of the *eschata* with their hidden character? It will not do to say that we know some things about them from revelation but not others. We cannot make a material division between what is revealed and what is hidden. It is precisely the *eschata* which have been announced that are hidden, and again, the announcement takes the hidden out of the region of what is merely unknown, absent and disregarded, but brings it into the region of what is present, *as* the hidden, unmistakable, [330] overwhelmingly menacing and irresistible. It is no longer a case of what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve for, but it still does not become something calculable and hence manageable, which ceases to be dangerous because we know 'what it is all about'. The revelation of the eschatological shows it precisely *as* a *mystery*. It is not possible to ask here what are the *a priori* conditions (of transcendence and freedom) which are to be supposed and may be supposed in man's spirit and existence, so that the hidden, precisely as such, does not disappear and become nonexistent, but can be present as the unmistakable menace, *as* the unexpected, *as* the obvious which is the incomprehensible miracle. We cannot here consider more closely why the hidden can thus be present as the coming and the coming as the hidden, in God's word of revelation. We must be content to postulate here, as a hermeneutic principle and an objective truth, that it can only be true that we do not know the Day of the Lord, if God's revelation makes the future the unmistakable and the incomprehensible, the mystery of God permanently close, menacing and promising.

More than ever, revelation is not the bringing of what was once unknown into the region of what is known, perspicuous and manageable: it is the dawn and the approach of the mystery as such. It is absolutely essential for the eschatological to be hidden in its revelation. And this follows, as we have said, from Scripture itself. This already provides us with a very essential criterion for distinguishing genuine eschatological utterances, if not always by their form, at least by their content, from apocalyptic ones. It may therefore be said that wherever we have a prediction which presents its contents as the anticipated report of a spectator of the future event – a report of an event in human history which of itself excludes the character of *absolute* mystery and hence deprives the eschatological event of its hiddenness – then a false apocalyptic is at work, or a genuine eschatological assertion has been misunderstood as a piece of apocalyptic because of its apocalyptic style and form. We have therefore to investigate *how* it is possible that an assertion can bring the future into the present in such a way that it retains a very specific character of hiddenness when it comes with threat or promise into our existence.

(b) The second element which constitutes and defines the sphere of eschatological assertions and hence their hermeneutic, is the essential historicity of man. If man is a being involved in history, which means more than a merely external temporal succession such as holds good for physical objects, he cannot understand himself in any given present [331] moment without an aetiological retrospect towards a genuinely temporal past, an 'anamnesis', and without prospect of a genuinely temporal future. His self-understanding embraces beginning and end of his temporal history, both in the life of the individual man and of humanity.[8] Anamnesis

[8] Cf. e.g. A. Darlapp, 'Anfang', *LTKI*^{2} (Freiburg 1957) 525-529; 'Geschichthichkeit', *ibid*. 1V^2 (1960) 780-783 (with the literature indicated there); 'Anamnese', *ibid*. I^2, 483-486.

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and prognosis are among the necessary existentials of man. They may be present in the guise of indifferent forgetfulness, but they cannot be absent. Man possesses himself, disposes of himself, understands himself, in and by the anamnesis by which he retains his past and the prognosis by which he lays hold of what is to come. In eschatological thought, by virtue of the manifold strata of man's being, the future is present in various ways, corresponding to the plurality of man (in being, time, etc.). But if eschatological thought is concerned with *salvation*, and salvation is the fulfilment of the *whole* man and not just of some dimensions, then the thought of the fulfilment of certain elements, or better, the fulfilment of the one man under all aspects of his single, total and yet plural reality, cannot be absent. The prognosis must be concerned with the whole man according to all the necessary assertions which are implied in the plurality of his being and which cannot be reduced to one another. The reference to a real future yet to come, involving all the aspects of man's being, may be omitted; or it may be eliminated in favour of an existential actualism in the course of an ostensible 'de-mythization'; or it may be forgotten that man has a physical, spatio-temporal, bodily existence, even in matters of salvation and that the nature of man and of his one and total fulfilment must also be envisaged in the light of these things. But if so, man and his self-understanding have been really mythologized, because his linear direction in time towards what is still to come in time, and hence the dimension of his historicity, has been omitted. And since it is there that he works out his salvation with his God, his salvation would not take place where we really are. But if the presentness of man's being is his being referred to futurity, the future, remaining the future as such, is not just something spoken of in advance. It is an inner moment of man and of his actual being as it is present to him now. And so knowledge of the future, in so far as it is still to come, is an inner moment of the self-understanding of man in his present hour of existence – and *grows out of it*. Of this we must now speak at greater length.

[332] *Thesis* 4. If what has been said in a and it is correct, that is, if such real future is known and present, but as something hidden, we are to expect – under the reserves made in Thesis 1 – that the content of this knowledge, no matter whence it comes, which is part of the present constitution of man, is the element of the future yet to come which is necessary to *present* existence. Knowledge of the future will be knowledge of the futurity of the present: eschatological knowledge is knowledge of the eschatological present. An eschatological assertion is not an additional, supplementary statement appended to an assertion about the present and the past of man but an inner moment of this self-understanding of man. Because man is, by and in being orientated to the future, he must know about his future. But in such a way, that this knowledge of the future can be a moment in his knowledge of the present. And only thus. This alone is sufficient to give the content of eschatological knowledge the character of hiddenness. If it were an account of the future anticipated and 'fore' – seen as it is in itself, then the future, as the fulfilment of what is *human*, could not really have the character of hiddenness and mystery. It could be marvellous, unexpected and amazing, just as if someone were to fore-tell that I should one day be emperor of China. But it could not be mysterious and hidden if it were described in terms of its own phenomena, created ones, even in the state of their fulfilment.[9] But if this knowledge is: 1. a moment in the self-understanding of the present of man, which self-understanding is a constitutive moment of

[9] It might be objected that the future is hidden in any case, because the final state of fulfilment is very difficult to imagine, no matter how and whence knowledge of it is arrived at. But then we must answer that as the state of *our* fulfilment, a future fulfilment can only be grasped if it has an intrinsic relation to our nature as we know it now. Otherwise the fulfilment would remain alien and unintelligible. But if the intrinsic nature of the fulfilment is presupposed, and if its proper phenomena are supposed to be described on the basis of the future, it can no longer have the character of being hidden. If described in these terms, it must either be totally perspicuous and intelligible, or at least existentially (in this case, as a matter of faith) completely uninteresting for us at present.

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the being of man as person and spirit; and 2. if this self-understanding essentially bears on freedom, risk and abandoning oneself to the uncontrollable:[10] then this known futurity necessarily shares the character of this existence, as something moving into the unforeseen.

[333] To expound a little further what we have said, we should have to say with regard to the content of such eschatological assertions that the future must be:

(a) something impenetrable and uncontrollable, since this alone leaves room for freedom – the true freedom of the creature, which must believe, hope, dare and trust, go out of itself, entrust and surrender itself to the uncontrollable.

(b) This future must be really there, that is, it must be looked forward to, something must be said of what is still to come. Existence must be really 'ex-sistent' in its regard – must step out of itself into the future in its reality and hiddenness; the future must be a real moment of the actual understanding of existence possessed by man. He may not think of himself as possessing himself merely by reason of his purely present state, or by reason of his own, calculated plans, to be fulfilled by his own power. All this must be kept permanently part of the acceptance of being disposed of by the incalculable, uncontrollable force of the future, a future which belongs to God and to him alone. All that can really be said about this future is that it can and must be the fulfilment of the whole man by the incomprehensible God, in the salvation hidden in Christ which is already given us. The formal concept of the finalizing fulfilment of the whole man – without which there can be no question of a real eschaton – is filled out, with regard to the individual, and with regard to humanity, the context in which alone salvation has meaning, by the Christian revelation of the eschata. But this only says that fulfilment is the perfection of the salvation already assigned and granted by God in faith to man and humanity in Jesus Christ.[11]

Thesis 5. If the thesis of 3(a) and 3(b) can be assumed, something may be [334] said about the source, the background of these eschatological assertions. We may at least presume that man's knowledge of the future still to come, even his revealed knowledge, is confined to such prospects as can be derived from the reading of his present eschatological experience. And thus we can understand that the progress of eschatological revelation in the pre-Christian and Christian revelation up to its climax in Christ is *identical* with the progress of the revelation of the actual history of salvation, that is, with God's actual action on man at any given moment. Thus the climax of eschatological revelation is necessarily what it actually is: that God has revealed to man his trinitarian self-disclosure and selfcommunication in the grace of the crucified and risen Lord, a revelation already actual, though still only in faith. Eschatology is therefore not a pre-view of events to come later – which was the basic view of false apocalyptic in contrast to genuine prophecy. It does not draw on future events, accessible because God is 'already' contemporary to them, in a metaphysical doctrine of the being and knowledge of God, and so can already speak of them. Eschatology is the view of the future which man needs for the spiritual decision of his freedom and his faith. It derives

[10] The chief reason why this is outside our control and prevision is the free disposition of the incalculable decree of God in his sovereign action, and not just the fact that man cannot foresee his own free action before it is done, and before it has exercised itself on its incalculable material in the world.

[11] We cannot of course attempt to prove here (though some indications on the matter will be given later on) that all eschatological assertions taught and held by the Christian faith can in fact be understood as developments of this one truth. But the end which brings the individual, man and the world in general to a close is precisely the completion of the beginning which came about with (the risen) Christ, and it is no more than this. This final consummation, as the end of all history, does not derive from another event which is still to come: the beginning, which is Christ, is the sole and adequate law of the end, and hence the fulfilment bears in all things the traits of this beginning. If this is understood, there will be no difficulty in accepting the statement made above. All one has to do is to test it by its opposite and ask oneself are there any obligatory truths of faith which are clear in content, and whose content cannot be reduced to this basic principle. If this can be rightly denied, the correctness of the basic principle is sufficiently demonstrated.

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from the situation in the history of salvation brought about by the event of Christ, which is the aetiological source of knowledge. It looks forward to the definitive fulfilment of an existence already in an eschatological situation. It enables man to take the enlightened yet daring decision of faith where all is open but dark. And thus the Christian can accept his present as a moment of the realization of the possibility established in the beginning (which is ultimately Christ), a moment of the realization of the pre-established future which is already present and definitive in secret. And this future proves to be salvation, if it is accepted as the doing of God whose times and ways are incalculable, who alone disposes. For thus the scandal of actual redemption being actually contradicted (by a world in sin, the divisions of the peoples, the discrepancy between nature and man, lust, death, the lordship of powers and forces) is borne in patient hope, as participation in the triumphant and redeeming cross of Christ. Our present thesis does not deal with the contents of the eschatological assertions which have just been outlined, nor with their future exposition. The decisive point of the thesis is rather that the assertion or revelation concerned with the present situation of Christian existence is not completed by an *additional* and quite different communication about the future: the assertion in question is already this communication. The [335] Christian who accepts the revelation of Christ knows – in order to know Christ and *because* he knows him – that fulfilment is that of Christ, apart from which he really knows nothing about it. To put it another way: the Christian man knows of his future in as much as he knows of himself and his redemption in Christ through divine revelation. His knowledge of the *eschata* is not a supplementary piece of information added to dogmatic anthropology and Christology, but simply *their* transposition into the guise of the fulfilment. But such an anticipatory outline of one's own Christian existence in the light of its future fulfilment remains a strict revelation, because this interpretation which throws light on human existence is a revelation which takes place in the word of God. But it is precisely in what man hears from God as the disclosure of the truth of his existence that the revelation of the future takes place and vice versa. And both take place in the same measure and degree as this interpretation of man by God advances *in* the history of man, and hence unsurpassably in Jesus Christ, in whom God has given himself definitively and unsurpassably to man, as man's salvation. Christian anthropology and Christian eschatology are ultimately Christology, in the unity (where alone they are possible and comprehensible) of the different phases of the beginning, the present and the completed end. The mode of revelation, the source of the revelation of the future (the eschata) must be a forward-looking draft of existence orientated to the fulfilment of the end of time. Otherwise the object of revelation would be the future as directly seen and decreed in itself by God, described so to speak in a narrative which moves backwards from the future into our present. But then it would be impossible to explain what the essential, divinely guarded mystery of our open and unforeseeable future could be. And we could not explain how and why the future could remain, in fact and in principle, 'open' in such an account and not lose this essential character, when presented by the clairvoyance of such predictions. Nor could we explain why the account is clearly couched in imagery which is not derived from the phenomena of the future in itself, and does not claim in any way to be so. That the Scriptures have no such intention follows from the fact that these imaginative portrayals[12] of Scripture

[12] The content of the assertions in the various eschatologies of Scripture, the meaning which they intend to convey and express, can of course be made consistent. But this is not true of the imagery as such by means of which the matter is described. There are many popular eschatologies of later Christian times which start with the silent presupposition that the eschatological images (coming on the 'clouds of heaven', the sound of trumpets, opening of graves, gathering in the valley of Jehosophat, being carried up in the air to meet Christ, the stars falling on the world, the general conflagration, etc.) are indications of the actual phenomena of the future eschata and hence the account given by a spectator of these future events. The phenomena are made to fit in with one another by the silent omission of part of the data or by ranging the events arbitrarily one after the other.

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cannot be harmonized with one another, and [336] hence they cannot be meant as elements of the phenomena of the future reality itself. The *Sitz im Leben*, the setting of eschatological knowledge, the real original source of eschatological assertions is therefore the experience of God's salvific action *on ourselves* in Christ. It may be said in general that the event of revelation, the action of God on us in history, is the experience of his action on us in the grace of Christ. It is not merely and not primarily the communication of truths (even though this experience of God's action on us includes the *word* as an intrinsic element). And this is also true of the revelation of the eschata: they do not reach us in a discourse about the future still to come, but in an action, in which God has already really begun them in us. And so we can only speak of this beginning by describing it *as* a beginning which wills to fulfil itself and therefore brings with it the knowledge of this fulfilment (even though as something hidden).

If we hold fast to the principle that there is knowledge of the eschata only in the knowledge of the presence of salvation in Christ, we should be able to exclude in consequence *both* a false apocalyptic understanding of eschatology such as is found in certain sects and often colours Catholic theology of eschatology, *and* a totally existential 'de-mythizing' interpretation of such assertions. For we must not forget that man exists in real [337] time, which runs on to a future still really to come, and that he lives in a world which is not merely abstract existence but has many dimensions, all of which must attain salvation, including the non-existential, including the temporal one of profane succession. If we think of a concrete and not an abstract existence; if we recognize that the existential present of man is a concrete existence – embracing therefore all the dimensions of his being, including his involvement in the non-existential reality of the profane world; if one recognizes that salvation cannot be a determination of any one particular dimension of man, because that would be a really misleading mythologization: then it is possible to say even in Catholic theology that there can be no eschatological assertions which cannot be reduced to the assertion concerned with Christian existence as it now is. But a view based on such presuppositions would not be de-eschatologizing, but – to risk another neologism – de-apocalyptizing. This is necessary on principle, and also for the sake of a credible attestation of the Christian message today, to eliminate the many misunderstandings of biblical and ecclesiastical eschatology current on a popular level. It cannot be said that the task has been sufficiently explicitly envisaged and carried out in all circles of Catholic theology.

To sum up briefly what has been said, we may say that biblical eschatology must always be read as an assertion based on the revealed present and pointing towards the genuine future, but not as an assertion pointing back from an anticipated future into the present. To extrapolate from the present into the future is eschatology, to interpolate from the future into the present is apocalyptic. The eschatological assertion is part of man's nature and when it is concerned with the present as revealed by God's word, is Christian eschatology. The apocalyptic suggestion is either phantasy or gnosticism; it does not merely suppose, as Christians also must, that the future only exists in the inaccessible mystery of God as such,

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We can see, however, from the tortuous nature of such misplaced harmonizations, and from the simplicity with which Scripture uses the most diverse imagery from very different sources, without much regard for the various assertions, that Scripture has no intention of describing the actual phenomena of the eschata themselves. (This does not necessarily mean that the sacred writers themselves distinguished very consciously and expressly the nature of their assertion from such ways of describing things.) But if biblical eschatology were an account derived from the future (instead of being a view of the future seen from and *by* the present), it would be impossible to understand why it does not describe things as they are experimentally and palpably 'in themselves'. If someone said that it was of course impossible, because we lack at present the necessary concepts and categories, he would be conceding, unwittingly or not, what we affirm. For all that can be and is in fact said of the eschata, on the presupposition now made, is precisely what can be said *by reason of* the presence of the eschaton which has already come, which is Christ.

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which remains within the light inaccessible; it also unwittingly supposes that the future already leads of itself a supra-temporal existence, of which history is only the projection on the screen of worthless time, and that time is not the real ground from which the eternal validity of man emerges, but a nothingness which is unmasked and really eliminated in this gnostic contact with the true reality, called apocalypsis.[13]

[338] *Thesis 6* This basic principle of the hermeneutics of eschatological assertions leads to further consequences, of which some are adduced here, to show somewhat more clearly the meaning and the bearings of this basic principle. The indications given do not follow any very exact systematic order.

(a) If eschatology, with regard to its content and certainty, derives from the assertion about the salvific action of God in his grace on actual man, and if its norm is to be sought in this assertion, it follows that the eschatology of salvation and of loss are not on the same plane. We may say at once, on the basis of our principle, that we cannot now avoid speaking of the two-fold end of history with regard to the individual and the whole of humanity. This eschatology tries to describe our situation in terms of its present intrinsic possibilities as they look to the future. It does no more than this. And the two possibilities must and truly do remain existentially open for man, who is a pilgrim, and makes, and can only make, his free decision in view of what is open and unforeseeable. It follows that true [339] eschatological discourse must exclude the presumptuous knowledge of a universal apocatastasis and of the certainty of the salvation of the individual *before* his death,[14] as well as certain knowledge of

[13] This is not the place to examine at length the obvious objection, that Christian eschatology is preached above *all* by *Jesus*; that he possessed the beatific vision and infused knowledge; and that he therefore knew the eschata in such a way that he could speak of them as they are in themselves, and not merely as he knew them in the light of the present situation of salvation (even though it was an eschatological one). Suffice it to say that even if we concede the supposition without any nuances (though Jesus' knowledge, as here presupposed, may be so unique that it cannot be as readily translated into terms understandable by us as is commonly taken for granted), we may still simply deny that Jesus did in fact all that he *could* have done. (The basic necessity of such a distinction cannot indeed be denied by any theologian, once such knowledge on the part of Jesus is presupposed, when Mk 23:32 is considered. For then Jesus declares expressly that he says *less* than he knows and *can* say.) To put it another way: the actual eschatological preaching of Jesus is quite understandable as a prediction about the completion of what Jesus proclaims about himself and his mission in the present. For the content of Jesus' eschatology surpasses the eschatology of his times only in one point, which is however decisive and transforms all the rest: namely, that he himself in person is salvation and judgment, at the present moment, in a way that can never be surpassed. And hence he will be so also at the end, which however is described in terms of the usual contemporary eschatology. Jesus' prediction of the fall of Jerusalem is again a question which, being concerned with knowledge of events which are qualitatively *within* history and *within* the world, must be distinguished from the question of his knowledge of the absolute end of all things. Furthermore, it is quite possible to ask oneself whether the fall of Jerusalem, 'the State which was a Church', was not simply the logical conclusion, to Jesus' mind, from the rejection of his Messianic mission to this sacral and political institution. He could therefore have foretold its fall as such a logical consequence, especially as one must historically take into account the possibility that some of the formulations of this (genuine) prediction may have been influenced in the Synoptic tradition by the actual experience of its fulfilment.

[14] There is a problem here, of course, with regard to the mystical experience of 'confirmation in grace', such as is narrated in hagiography. We cannot of course go into the problem here, and we must confine ourselves to the following remarks. It must first be asked whether this mystical assurance of salvation really claims to be endowed with the *absoluta et infallibili certitudine* (*Denz*. 826), *cui non potest .subesse falsum* (*Denz*. 802); or whccher theologically speaking it is a 'certainty' (even though mystically transfigured) such as is always proper to Christian hope. It must further be asked whether 'death', as the decisive caesura in the history of salvation (and hence in knowledge of one's own present or future salvation) must always necessarily coincide with the moment of time when biological life ceases. When we think of those who are victims of total mental alienation but whose biological life continues, the usual identification becomes doubtful. If one may question the identification, our principle can be referred to the impossibility of knowledge of future salvation which precedes death as the caesura in the history of *salvation*. In this sense, the mystic in question may be regarded as dead so to speak as regards the history of salvation, and he may be conceded such absolute knowledge without detriment

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a damnation which has actually ensued.[15] But since eschatology is arrived at on the [340] basis *of grace* now given, and since this grace, in Christ, is not merely the offer of the bare *possibility* of salutary acts, but must be acclaimed as triumphant, because rendered efficacious by God: the Church can and the Church must – in spite of pilgrim man's uncertainty of salvation – firmly proclaim that martyrs and some other men who have died in Christ have attained salvation. But it cannot allow itself a corresponding affirmation about the certain and actual damnation of other men. Thus Christian eschatology is not the parallel prolongation of a 'doctrine of the two ways' (which is rather Old Testament than Christian) to reach the two termini of these two ways. Its central affirmation is concerned only with the victorious grace of Christ which brings the world to its fulfilment, though couched indeed in terms which safeguard God's mystery with regard to individual men as still pilgrims and do not say whether the individual is included in this certain triumph of grace – or 'left out'.
Hence on principle only *one* predestination will be spoken of in a Christian eschatology. And it contains only *one* theme which is there on its own behalf: the victory of grace in redemption consummated. Possible damnation can only be spoken of, but must be spoken of, in so far as, and only in so far as it is forbidden to man to take the sure triumph of grace in the world as providing him himself with already fixed and acquired points in his estimation of an existence which is still to be lived out in the boldness of freedom. Catholic theology has always rejected as heretical the doctrine of the double, antecedent and parallel predestination to glory *and* to damnation. It should consider that this also has consequences for the correct outline of an eschatology which does not really contain, except perhaps in books, two similar and equally well justified chapters on heaven and hell.

(b) All eschatological assertions have the *one* totality of man in mind, which cannot be neatly *divided* into two parts, body and soul.[16] All [341] eschatological assertions merely

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to the truth in question. If this solution seems too daring or forced, one can rest content with the first of the solutions indicated. Even the certainty of salvation claimed by mystics cannot invalidate the principle.

[15] The possible objections to this statement are of course well known. But the following position is undoubtedly tenable. Neither the doctrine of the Church in tradition and the extraordinary magisterium nor the teaching of Scripture compel us certainly to affirm definitely that at least some men are certainly damned, whether they can be named or must remain anonymous. On the contrary, all the eschatological assertions of Church and Scripture can be understood (without prejudice to any future judgment of the Church) as affirming that damnation is a genuine and inevitable possibility for the pilgrim. So too J. Loosen writes (*LTK* 1^2,711f.): 'We must *clearly* reckon with the fact that men *can* be lost. But revelation leaves us ignorant of whether some are *in fact* lost, and whether they are few or many.' Anyone who claims to know more and thinks that this makes the decision to be taken here and now more serious, makes the question existentially less serious. For he transfers it into the region of generalities. But it is really most serious and urgent when each one puts it to himself, when each one says of himself alone: '*I* can be lost'. But then he must say this in the context of Christian hope and affirm: 'I *can* be lost, and I *hope* that I shall be saved'. And if this dualism which can never be eliminated or outgrown remains the most profound truth for each single individual, why should he know more about others, about others for whom we are to have as much hope as for ourselves, and whose destiny cannot really be more indifferent to us than our own? It would be wrong to appeal here to the fate of demons. For it would have to be proved that their situation with regard to salvation was the same as our own and that the difference in nature was unimportant in the matter – which is certainly impossible to prove. In saying this, we have not finished with the task of *detailed* exegesis, which must discuss various texts of the magisterium and of Scripture and show that the opinion here put forward is in accord with the texts in question. It is evidently impossible to do these studies here. But what has been said should indicate the guiding lines for detailed exegesis: in spite of all their concrete vividness, the eschatological assertions, taken as a whole and in the light of the *analogia fidei*, are meant to give a striking perspective of a possible future (not a backward reflexion from it), with which pilgrim man must clearly and inevitably reckon, in this age and situation where his decision must be made.

[16] Man consists of 'body and soul'. But in Thomist metaphysics, which are perfectly justifiable, one is bound to say that man consists of *materia prima*, and of *anima* as *unica forma* and *actualitas* of this *materia prima*, so that 'body' already implies the informing actuality of the 'soul' and hence is not another part of man beside the soul. And body and soul, if the doctrine of *anima-forma-corporis* is really understood and taken seriously, are two meta-physical principles of one single being, and not two beings, each of which could be met with

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repeat, transposing into terms of fulfilment, what dogmatic theology says about the one man in question. Hence eschatology cannot but be marked by the same two-fold dualism which is unavoidable in anthropological assertions about man who is always one. It must be a universal and an individual eschatology, because man is always both individual and member of society and neither can be completely absorbed in the other, nor can everything be said about man in *one* statement alone. It must speak of man as personal spirit and as corporal being and hence express his fulfilment as spirit – person and corporal being:
but the two assertions cannot be adequately reduced to one in which they could be absorbed; and the two assertions cannot envisage objects which are *adequately* distinct from one another. Eschatology is concerned with the fulfilment of the individual as individual spirit – person which comes with death as the end of the individual history. Eschatology is also concerned with the fulfilment of humanity in the resurrection of the flesh as the end of the bodily history of the world. But in each case it is concerned in a different way with the *whole* man. It cannot be read as two sets of statements about two different things, each of which can simply be taken separately. And yet the two sets of statements do not simply mean the same thing, so that one set could be eliminated in favour of the other as being for instance either too mythological or too philosophical. Since this irreducible dualism in eschatological assertions, deriving from the nature of man, is already palpable in Scripture, and could throw light on the possibility, meaning and limits of a doctrine of an intermediate state and hence on the precise meaning of 'purgatory' – which we cannot now [342] discuss more closely – it could therefore also be shown that the realities behind the concepts of the intermediate state and purgatory, and the ensuing development of dogma, must be regarded as quite legitimate and biblical.

(c) There is no point, on our principle, in creating a fundamental, absolute opposition and antagonism between an imminent and a distant expectation of the *parousia*. If the true and original source of eschatological assertions were an account of the future still to come as it is in itself, one should have to ask oneself why the length of actual time between Now and Then is not given more definitely, since the reporter of this pre-view must know how far off this future still remains. But if eschatology is the assertion about present salvation as it tends to the future fulfilment which is and must be essentially hidden, it must be essentially 'actualist' and hence an imminent expectation. But it must likewise be a distant expectation, since it is the orientation of the present towards the incalculable future under the impact of the future salvation. All eschatological assertions must be seen in the light of this basic hermeneutic principle. If they are not really 'actualized' and existentialized as an imminent expectation properly understood, they will be regarded, unwittingly or not, as curious inside information about something really indifferent, something with which one has nothing to do since it only comes much later without affecting the present. If on the other hand they are so thoroughly existentialized and actualized that the whole future already takes place as and in the present, if the necessary process of actualization makes one lose sight of the genuinely temporal future which as such remains a dimension of man, then in fact man is mythologized, because the down-to-earth factor of time is denied him, a sober fact which is also part of his salvation. Thus we have gnosticism, because this knowledge has let us into the secret and we already

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experimentally. However, even if we prescind from all this, we must at any rate affirm that every *assertion* about the body (as the reality of man) implies an assertion about the soul, and vice versa. I asserts at least the transcendental relationship of each 'part' to the other, which relationship cannot be understood unless its term is also understood. If these obvious matters are not borne in mind in all anthropological assertions, 'body' and 'soul' are taken to be two entities which are only subsequently combined in unity – a unity which cannot then be really substantial; and though one may verbally profess the philosophical and dogmatic doctrine of the soul as the form of the body, one has really lost sight of it, though the soul is the form of the body by its inmost essence and is so, in order *to be spirit*.

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possess the ultimate and the real.

(d) Our basic thesis therefore is that it is *from* the present experience of salvation that the genuine future yet to come is known – as a preliminary outline helping us to understand properly the present. But this experience of salvation, the adequate source of eschatological assertions, is faith in the incarnation of the Logos, in the death and resurrection of Christ, as the historical events which are permanent, definitive and unsurpassable because God has communicated himself to the world in them wholly and therefore unsurpassably. It can therefore also be said that *Christ* himself [343] is the hermeneutic principle of all eschatological assertions. Anything that cannot be read and understood as a Christological assertion is not a genuine eschatological assertion. It is soothsaying and apocalyptic, or a form of speech which misses and misunderstands the Christological element, because couched in a style and an imagery borrowed from other sources. It is therefore read in the light of the *terminus a quo* of its origin and not of the *terminus ad quem*, which is Christ, and the result can be either that these misunderstood texts are accepted as Christian truth or rejected as erroneous, so that the true sense of these texts is lost as well.

(e) There are certain formal principles of the theology of history which may be invoked here: 1. that history is directed towards a definitive end; 2. that it reveals an antagonism; 3. that the temporal, the historical, is always ambiguous; 4. that the forces at work grow radically stronger; 5. that the forces and epochs of the history of salvation and catastrophe are represented by concrete persons; 6. that sin is encompassed by the grace of God, etc.[17] With these principles in mind, we can derive from our experience of Christ all that can and may be said objectively in the Catholic theology of eschatology. We can say that time will have an end, that towards the end the antagonism between Christ and the world grows fiercer,[18] that history as a whole ends with the final victory of God in his grace, that this consummation of the world, in so far as it is the incalculable act of God's freedom, is called God's judgment, in so far as it is the fulfilment of the salvation already real, victorious and definitive in Christ, is called the return and the judgment of Christ. In so far as it is the fulfilment of the individual, who cannot be wholly absorbed and lost in his function as moment of the world, it is called the particular judgment. In so far as the world is not just the sum of its individuals, it is called the general judgment. In so far as it is the fulfilment of the resurrection of [344] Christ, it is called the resurrection of the flesh and the transfiguration of the world.

Thesis 7. Our basic principle provides a fundamental criterion to distinguish between form and content in the eschatological assertions of Scripture and tradition. This does not mean that such a distinction could make a perfectly adequate and definite distinction between 'thing' and 'image'. This is impossible, if for no other reason than that no assertion about the thing is possible without some sort of image, and in this sense a 'myth'[19] can only be replaced

[17] This enumeration of examples of such formal principles of the theology of history does not claim to be complete, or to offer the best and compulsory distinction between these principles. However, in the light of these principles, the subsequent statements in Catholic eschatology would undoubtedly be seen to be highly intelligible, and to derive from the material principle of this eschatology, which is Christ. Here it is to be noted that these formal principles are not to be taken merely as formalizing statements of the individual material utterances of eschatology. They can be perfectly well understood in the light of the history of salvation as realized up to the present, and in the light of its orientation towards the end, which it clearly displays.

[18] Cf. e.g. the article 'Antichrist' (R. Schnackenburg-K. Rahner-H. Tüchle) in *LTK* I^2, 634-638.

[19] 'Myth' is to be understood here, of course, in a very broad sense – which is in fact objectively correct. It is an assertion about something (which may also be an event of the past or future) in which a set of concepts and imaginative elements are used, which cannot simply be derived from the thing in question, and are still necessary for the *conversio in phantasma*, without which, according to St Thomas, even the most abstract concepts are impossible. It might be objected against this definition of 'myth' that then every statement about something which could not be imagined in its proper phenomenal reality would also be a 'myth', though perhaps in an abbreviated and customary form, so that it was no longer consciously recognised as such. Or it

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by another, but not by language utterly devoid of images. And here of course one will not be so naïve as to think that the thing had once been thought of without images but that this lofty concept had then been clothed in 'imagery' for the sake of the weaker brethren. Thought is always image as well, because there is no concept without imagination. So too in St Thomas Aquinas, who maintains that there is no concept without a *conversio ad phantasma*, that is, a concept must be exteriorized and embodied in the imagination and the image, and hence too in 'picturesque' language. It is never then a matter of aiming at a language devoid of imagery and hence when dealing with eschatological assertions of trying to rid oneself of the picturesque diction to reach a sphere where the thing itself appears as it is in itself in its pure objectivity: there is no way of discarding the imagery, the indirect allusion, the mere convergence of diverse elements. But if several assertions, with their permanent element of imagery, are brought into relationship with each other – as can and should be done, in the light of our basic [345] principles, with dogmatic anthropology and Christology on the one hand, and eschatology on the other – the relationship between form and content in any given assertion will be fluid: the term of the analogy to which such an assertion points will be recognizable as the consciously ensuing difference between form and content, though it remains impossible to disentangle it completely. And hence the thing intended will be conceivable under a new form of expression, though formulated once more in a new type of imagery. We cannot say however with certainty that the new assertion, more abstract for instance or more immediately Christological or more formally anthropological, *adequately* renders the real content of the assertion which has been translated and interpreted. And so it must always remain connected with the ancient assertion, and every eschatology, no matter how modern, always remains a retrospective interpretation of the old, not a new and better assertion which replaces the old. But an approximate line can be drawn in this way between the form and content of an assertion, at least as regards the question as to whether something is to be so strictly attached to the *content* that a denial of it would have to be treated as contrary to the common faith held by the Church on the basis of Scripture, and so could and should be rejected as heretical. Where the line cannot be clearly drawn between content and mode of assertion in an eschatological assertion of Scripture or tradition, a minimizing interpretation can only be contested when it can be proved that such a restriction also meant in fact a restriction applied to the assertions which are at the base of eschatology, the assertions of Christology and dogmatic anthropology.

All that we have been able to say here amounts only to a thesis. A strict proof of the thesis has still to be given, and it should be in the following form. The dogmatic theologian must submit his sources and methods to a strict, critical examination and then ask himself what assertions are binding in eschatology. He must then see if and how he can reduce these assertions to a small number of basic assertions, of which it can be shown that his eschatology as a whole is the development and consequence. He could then ask whether it can be proved that these basic assertions are elements of his dogmatic Christology and anthropology, where the latter hive merely been voiced in terms of the fulfilment of their content. If the answer is in the affirmative, then in view of the fact that the theologian, by virtue of his principles, has already comprised and applied the assertions of Scripture in his

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could be said that this would be the case at least when the notion was not confined to static imaginative elements of expression, but also displayed movement and events. But then the objector should be asked whether there were convincing reasons which would prevent one from conceding this 'objection' as justified, without misgiving and embarrassment; and how he himself would give a clearer distinction between 'mythical' discourse and that which is not supposed to be such, if he bears in mind with St Thomas (and Kant) that there are no concepts without imagination, and hence that the richest concepts cannot exist without a correspondingly rich imaginative content.

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dogmatic eschatology, it may also be said that the [346] eschatological assertions of Scripture are and intend to be (at least in what dogmatic principles establish as affirmed for certain) no more than such assertions of Christology and anthropology in terms of the fulfilment. But then this affirmation could once more be transposed into a basic *hermeneutic* principle which allows us to give the same meaning to biblical and dogmatic eschatology, where up to this it has not resulted clearly and unambiguously from the immediate meaning of the statements in question. Since this, the real proof of our thesis, cannot be worked out here, we may close with a rejoinder to those who are inclined to question the thesis here put forward. ‘What are the clearly established dogmatic assertions which cannot be taken in this sense? I do not know of any.

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[347]

14

THE LIFE OF THE DEAD

The faith and the theology of the Catholic Church deal with the definitive state of human existence, attained and not ended by death, from a two-fold point of view, based on the limits which philosophy and revelation set one another. It is not easy therefore to present briefly the doctrine of faith and the theology which interprets it further, though not with the same binding force. This difficulty is reinforced today by the necessity of avoiding clearly and from the very start the impression that when we affirm that in death man does not perish but is transformed into a new manner of existence, we are not speaking of a rectilinear continuation of man's empirical reality beyond death. Of itself this idea provides a harmless, useful and almost unavoidable framework for the explanation of what is really signified, but it mostly creates today more difficulties than aids and so can lead people to reject the reality as well as the imaginative framework as impossible and incredible.

When therefore we speak of the dead who live, we must first say what is meant thereby, or rather, what is not meant. We do not mean that 'things go on' after death, as though we only changed horses, as Feuerbach puts it, and rode on. It is not a continuation of the peculiar distraction and vagueness of temporal existence, which is an openness always in need of new determinations arid hence basically empty. No, in this regard death puts an end to the *whole* man. To think of time as simply lasting beyond the death of man and of the soul in this time, so that time is renewed instead of being absorbed into the definitive, is to cause oneself insuperable difficulties, with regard to the concept and the existential achievement of the Christian thought. But if one thinks that death is the end of everything, because man's time does not really go on, because what once began must sometime end, because finally time spinning itself out into infinity, the empty endless pursuit of the new which annuls the old, is really impossible and would be worse than hell: then one is the victim of the [348] conceptual framework of our empirical time, just as much as if one considered that the soul 'went on'. In reality, it is *in* time, as its own mature fruit, that 'eternity' comes about. It does not come 'after' the time we experienced, in order to prolong time: it eliminates time by being released from the time that was for a while so that the definitive could come about in freedom. Eternity is not an immeasurably long-lasting mode of pure time, but a mode of the spirit and freedom which are fulfilled in time, and hence can only be comprehended in the light of a correct understanding of spirit and freedom. A time, such as that of the beasts for instance, which is not pregnant with these things, does not bring forth eternity. But when we try to think of man's spiritual and free existence as something definitive, we have to extract the notion from time, and we are almost forced to portray it as unending duration. To overcome this difficulty we must do what is done in modern physics and learn to think unimaginatively and to this extent perform a process of 'de-mythizing'. We must say: through death – not after it – *there is* (not: begins to take place) the achieved definitiveness of the freely matured existence of man. What has come to be is there as the hard – won and untrammelled validity of what was once temporal; it progressed as spirit and freedom, in order to be.

But how do we know that such things happen, arising from the evanescence of time, which we are and so bitterly experience? At this point of the question 'dogma and theology import into Catholic doctrine that two-fold unity of revelation and human knowledge to which we alluded in the beginning. To have anyone at all open to the message of the gospel, to 'get there' at all with the special nature of the Christian promise, the word of God in revelation summons man to a clearer and more decided act of the self-understanding which is found

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nearly everywhere in human history when man ascribes further life to the dead in any form whatsoever. But can we, of ourselves, echo today this conviction of the survival of personal existence in spite of biological death – calling it metaphysical knowledge or religious conviction or ethical postulate or what you will: the name does not matter for the moment? I am convinced that we can, if our mind is alert and our heart humble and wise, and if we accustom ourselves to seeing what the superficial and impatient cannot see – not that this blindness is a proof of the non-existence of what they cannot see.

To begin with: why are all those who love greatly, humble and good, [349] as though radiant with the brightness of something inexhaustible and indestructible, to the heart of which they see in the great moments of their love? Why is a radical moral cynicism impossible to man where he has found what is truly his own? And compared to this authentic thing, must not cynicism be incorruptible truth and honesty, if the authentic can simply vanish in the void of nothingness? And if it be said: whoever thinks of such things in his authentic acts, in his great and unconditional acts, in his love, in the radical doing of his duty, has not understood the authentic, but missed it, the answer is: at such a moment, one cannot think of the authentic as perishing with time, because it is not temporal. For why should the authentic not be truly able to experience itself as it really is? Why does not the last loyalty capitulate before death? Why does true moral goodness not take fright at the apparent hopelessness and futility of all its efforts? Why does moral experience distinguish clearly between goods which are only beautiful because and as they pass away, and the good as such, where it would be blasphemy to fear satiety and hence to wish the good were transient? Is not this the great wisdom which we long for and revere: the tranquil brightness of that fearless peace, which can only reign in him who has nothing to fear? Does not he who really faces his end *calmly* show that he is more than time, which would have to *fear* its end if it were only time, because empty nothingness can never be the goal of action? And on the other hand, is it not this which is really deadly painful in death: that in its dark, inflexible ambiguity it seems to deprive us of that which had ripened in us to the experience of immortality? It is only because we have become immortal in our life that death with its menacing and impenetrable mask of destructivity is for us so deadly. A beast dies less of a death than we. These and similar experiences would be impossible if the reality which we experience were, of its nature and essence, something that perished, something that wished to be no more.

As in all questions of this type, personal attitude and decision goes hand in hand with metaphysical insight of an objective nature. This is not surprising, since the most profound, the most valid, the ‘objective’ truth *must* be the freest. Hence it is best in such questions to appeal at once to the spiritual experience where both are involved at once: metaphysical insight, which is not however a neutral lecturer on theories, but an act accomplished by man in the authenticity of his unique personal existence.

This happens in the moral decision. What takes place? The agent [350] constitutes himself as having a valid end. In this decision the subject is immediately presented, in his being and his act, as something incommensurable with passing time. The subject’s decision must of course have been strong and pure, if subsequent, articulate and hence thematic theorizing reflection is to grasp later what is constituted in the decision: the valid, which soars above time, as time falls away into what is no more. There are perhaps men who have never so acted, or who acted with insufficient alertness of spirit, and hence cannot follow us here. But where such a free act of lonely decision is done, in absolute obedience to the higher law or in radical love of another person, something eternal happens, and man becomes immediately aware of his validity as something born of time but taking place outside its mere onward flow.

There is no really thinkable sense in which this primordial, immediate presence of the eternal in the absolute value of moral decision can be called in doubt by saying that man only

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thinks that it is so. It is just as impossible as it is to doubt the absolute validity of the principle of contradiction by dismissing it as a merely subjective opinion or as valid merely in the precise moment in which it is affirmed, since it is affirmed in the very act of doubting its validity, as the very basis of the possibility of doubt itself. So too with the moral decision. If in the free moral decision the subject utters a No of doubt before the absoluteness of the moral law or the dignity of the person, the very fact that this negative decision is *absolute* constitutes once more the affirmation of what it doubts. Freedom is always absolute. It is the Yes that knows itself and risks all and wills to be forever valid. Its self-affirmation as 'now and forever valid' *is* spiritual reality, not just a questionable opinion about a supposition and a concept. It is the very reality by which all others are to be measured but which cannot itself be measured by the flow of physical time. To put it more concretely and also in terms of Scriptural thought; if one who had to live his moral existence before God and in the light of his absolute claim could flee into the radical void of the mere past and be submerged in its nothingness, he could really escape God and the absolute claim of his will: he could escape from what is present in moral decision as the unconditional and inescapable. The nothingness of the sheer past would be a rampart to protect the arbitrary choice against God. But the moral decision affirms precisely that it is just as impossible to be radically and destructively arbitrary as it is to deny the radical difference between good and evil in the act of decision – a difference which would cease to be [351] absolute if it could be thought of as existing for the moment only and then no more. In the free act of absolute obedience and radical love, the act is willed *as* opposed to the mere momentariness of the present, and its supra-temporal truth can only be doubted from outside, not in the act itself. If the act were really no more than a moment of fleeting time, this fact would not be intelligible even as opinion and imagination, because even the imagined semblance needs some foundation, and time could not present the appearance of eternity, the semblance of eternity could not exist at all, if time did not live by eternity.

No, where man is 'self-collected', where he possesses himself and risks himself in freedom, he does not scatter a series of wasted moments, he gathers time in a validity which is ultimately incommensurable with the mere external experience of time. And this validity cannot be grasped in its genuine and primordial sense by the notion of *continued* duration: still less can it be swallowed up by the ending of what is merely temporal in us.

But if immortal man thus claims against time's mere dissolution that which is valid in his personal existence, it is only God's word of revelation which tells him clearly what is the actual concrete meaning of his being. It makes him experience his possible eternity for the first time, by revealing to him the *actuality* of eternity. The fulfilment revealed in the gospel message is manifold in content: eternity as the fruit of time means to come before *God* either to reach pure immediacy and closeness to him face to face in the absolute decision of love for him, or to be enveloped in the burning darkness of eternal god-lessness in the definitive closing of one's heart against him. Revelation, building on the grace of God and its power, presupposes that *every* man, no matter how his ordinary life appeared on earth, achieves so much spiritual and personal eternity in his life, that the possibility inherent in his spiritual substance is realized in fact as eternal life. Scripture knows of no life which is not worthy to be definitive, it does not recognize any life as superfluous. Since God knows each man by name, since *everyone* exists in time before the God who is judgment and salvation, *everyone* is a man of eternity, not just the enlightened spirits of human history. Further, the theology of St John makes it clear that the existence of eternity is seen as inserted in time, and that hence eternity grows out of time and is not just the after-thought of a reward appended to time. The *reality* of the blissful life of the dead is described in Scripture by innumerable images: as rest and peace, as a [352] banquet and a state of glory, as being at home in the Father's house, as the kingdom of the eternal lordship of God, as the fellowship of all who have been perfected

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in bliss, as the inheriting of the glory of God, as day without night, as satisfaction without satiety. Throughout all these words of Scripture we sense the same thing: God is the absolute mystery. And hence the consummation, the absolute nearness to God, is itself an ineffable mystery to which we go and which the dead who have died in the Lord have found. There is not much we can say. But it is the mystery of unspeakable *bliss*. No wonder then that the sheer silence of bliss cannot be heard by our ears. And finally: revelation tells us that the *whole* of the unity of temporal man is given its definitiveness, so that it may also be called the resurrection of the flesh. And this doctrine of Scripture is not merely enunciated in words: it is experimentally seized in faith as a dawning reality in the resurrection of the Crucified.

In the Christian doctrine proposed by the Church of the 'immortality of the soul' and of the 'resurrection of the flesh' the whole man in his unity is always envisaged. This affirmation does not deny or call in doubt that there is a differentiation intrinsic to the definitive state of man which corresponds to the justifiable distinction of 'body' and 'soul' in his makeup. But if as cannot be doubted, the 'resurrection of the flesh' in the creed of the Church means the definitive salvation of man as a whole, then the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, being a truth of faith and not just a philosophical tenet, is also concerned in fact with such a life, such a 'soul' as for instance Jesus placed in the hands of his Father as he died. Hence this assertion is also directed to the *whole* reality and meaning of man as he depends on the creative and life-giving power of God, *whereby* of course it refers also to what the philosopher as such may call soul in contrast to body, with a destiny which he may try to' trace after death. It would indeed be the moment to, ask the philosopher what right he has to follow the fate of an isolated element of the whole, and not rather investigate the destiny that would transfigure the one, whole man; though perhaps indeed the philosopher, for his own part, would not dare to call this unimaginable but hoped – for transformation of the whole, valid and permanent, the 'resurrection of the flesh', and would still be inclined to give the name of 'soul' to what has become definitively and permanently sensible in the whole, regarding it to some extent as an extract of corporeal being which has become definitive in death.

There is this further difference between what the *Catholic* faith has to [353] say of the dead and the belief of most Protestant Christians. It maintains firmly in the doctrine of purgatory that death does indeed make definitive the freely matured basic attitude of man, which again is purely, by the grace of God, since this finality is good. But it also maintains that the many dimensions of man do not all attain their perfection simultaneously and hence that there is a full ripening of the whole man 'after' death, as this basic decision penetrates the whole extent of his reality. Such a difference of phasing, which results from the plurality of man's structure, is in fact also to be seen in the contrast between the fulfilment of the individual in death and the universal consummation of the world, between the finality achieved by man in death and the clarification and perfection of this fulfilment which is still to come in the transfiguration of his bodily existence. Since it cannot be denied that there is an 'intermediate state' in the destiny of man between death and bodily fulfilment, unless one holds that what is saved is not what was to be saved, there can be no decisive objection to the notion that man reaches personal maturity in this 'intermediate state'.

There is no place in Catholic Christianity for intercourse with the dead as individuals, such as spiritualism aims at. This is not because the dead do not exist, not because they are really separated from us, not because their fidelity and love, made perfect before God, does not watch over us, not as if their existence were not truly embedded by death above all in the silent, secret ground of our own existence. But *we* are still creatures *in time*. And hence, unless God has wrought the miracle of a special revelation, as in the resurrection of the Lord, if the reality of the living dead as individuals were to be transposed into our concrete world, they could only appear as *we* are, not as *they* are. And in fact spiritualist seances display the

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spirit of the *earth-bound*, with their crude ideas and manias, not the tranquillity of an eternity filled by God. And it is always possible – as we are perhaps only beginning to suspect – that in such efforts at contact (where it is not simply a matter of objectivating our own dreams) there is a strange shift in the dimensions of time, where we do not meet *the* dead as they are *now* before God and in the definitive kernel of their being, but' their as yet unredeemed and limited, confused and obscure past, which – still perhaps not totally accomplished – is then once more transposed into the categories of our own world. No, we meet the living dead, even when they are those who are loved by us, in faith, hope and love, that is, when we open our hearts to the silent calm of God himself, in [354] which they live; not by calling them back to where we are, but by descending into the silent eternity of our own hearts, and through faith in the risen Lord, creating in time the eternity which they have brought forth for ever.

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[355]

PART SEVEN

Christian Life

[357]

15

POETRY AND THE CHRISTIAN

One would have to be a poet to say anything significant on the subject of 'Poetry and the Christian'. For the poet, one may think, is certainly the first commissioned to speak on poetry. But one can console and encourage oneself when one begins to speak of this subject without being a poet, with the thought that the poet speaks to others, and hence to the non-poets, and hence that they too come of themselves into relationship to poetry and poets, and must know what poetry is about. And one can be consoled and encouraged by the truth that the believer, who is led by the Spirit of God, may judge all things, as the Apostle says. Theology as reflective faith cannot be completely alien to what fills the lofty hours of man and so must be gathered home to God as a whole, since the one seed sown by the one God must ripen in all the diverse fields of the world.

We should like however to bear in mind in the course of these considerations that the starting-point is a *theological* one. And we should also wish to remain conscious of our limitations as a layman in the field of poetry. Hence we do not start from where one should really begin, with poetry itself, but from theological reflection on man as he should be if he wishes to be a Christian. We simply ask therefore whether such a man – unwittingly or not looks out for something which is afterwards seen to be poetry, and is there a preparation which he must undergo to be or become a Christian, which turns out to be a receptive capacity for the poetic word.

Before we begin, we must also note that we are not speaking of art in general, but only of the poetry of words, first of all because even this narrower field presents obscurities enough, and then because Christianity, as the religion of the word proclaimed, of faith which hears and of a sacred scripture, has a special intrinsic relationship to the *word* and hence cannot be without such a special relationship to the *poetic* word.

[358] What does Christianity demand of a man, if it is to become a reality in him? When we try to answer this question, we do not mean that Christianity, that is, the grace of God, has just to wait for the presence of these requisites in man, can only investigate whether they are there or not. Certainly not. The grace of God creates these requisites for itself, it is the cause of their being accepted; it is the gift which is God himself, and it is the gift of accepting the gift which bestows itself. But the grace of God does not only start to work for the first time, when the word of the gospel reaches man through the official preaching. It precedes this word, it prepares the heart for this word by every experience of existence which takes place in the life of man. It is, in diverse ways of course, secretly and powerfully active in what we call human culture, because humanism itself, wherever it exists, wherever it still exists, revives, proves itself true and displays itself radiantly, would not exist at all, if the secret grace of God did not anticipate its own manifestation in the word of the gospel. And hence when we enquire into the humanist presuppositions of Christianity and its preaching, the question is again praise of the grace of Christ and is not to the prejudice of its might and

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guardian force.

The first requisite for man's hearing the word of the gospel without misunderstanding it is that his ears should be open for *the* word through which the silent mystery is present. More indeed is expressed in the word of the gospel than we grasp wordlessly, than we can also master without words. For in this word comes what is incomprehensible, the nameless, silent power that rules all but is itself unruled, the immense, the abyss in which we are rooted, the overbright darkness, by which all the brightness of each day is encompassed, in a word: the abiding mystery which we call God, the beginning who is still there when we end. Now, strictly speaking, every word that is really a word, and strictly speaking, only the *word* has the power of naming the nameless. No doubt, the word expresses, designates and distinguishes, demarcates, defines, compares, determines and arranges. But as it does this, he who has ears, he who can see (here all the senses of the spirit are at one) experiences something totally different: the silent, mystic presence of the nameless. For that which is named is conjured up by the word. And so it advances from the encompassing, quiet and silent source from which it arises and where it remains secure; that which is described and distinguished by the word, by the distinctive name, combines with the other as it is distinguished from it, [359] in the unity which comprises the comparable and akin, and so points silently back to the one origin, loftier than both, which can indeed preserve both unity and distinction in one. The word puts individual things in order, and so always points to a fundamental background order which cannot itself be ordered but remains the perpetual *a priori* antecedent to all order. One can miss all this when one hears words. One can be deaf to the fact that the clear spiritual sound can only be heard when one has first listened to the silence beyond each distinct sound, the silence in which all possible sounds are still gathered up and at one with each other. One can disregard one's own comprehensive hearing, by allowing oneself to be enslaved by the individual things one hears. One can forget that the small, limited region of the determinative word lies within the vast, silent desert of the godhead. But it is this nameless being that words try to name when they speak of things that have a name; they try to conjure up the mystery when they indicate the intelligible, they try to summon up, infinity when they describe and circumscribe the finite; they try to force man to allow himself to be gripped, as they grip and grasp. But man can be deaf to this eternal meaning of temporal words, and still grow proud of his stupid, unreceptive hardness of heart.

Hence words must be spoken to him, which are such that he recognizes that they are uttered by those whom he must take seriously, and that he sees that these words call upon him to decide whether he dismisses them as meaningless or strives to listen to them long enough in truth and love – till he understands that their whole meaning is to utter the unutterable to make the nameless mystery touch his heart gently, to make the unfathomable abyss the foundation of all that the foreground supports. Christianity needs such words; it needs practice in learning to hear such words. For all its words would be misunderstood, if they were not heard as words of the mystery, as the coming of the blessed, gripping, incomprehensibility of the holy. For they speak of God. And if God's incomprehensibility does not grip us in a word, if it does not draw us on into his superluminous darkness, if it does not call us out of the little house of our homely, close hugged truths into the strangeness of the night that is our real home, we have misunderstood or failed to understand the words of Christianity. For they all speak of the unknown God, who only reveals himself to give himself as the abiding mystery, and to gather home to himself all that is outside himself and clear – home to him who is the incomprehensibility of silent love. Yes, he who would hear the message of Christianity must have [360] ears for the word where the silent mystery makes itself unmistakably heard as the foundation of existence.

The second requisite for the hearing of the Christian message is the power to hear words which reach the *heart*, the centre of man. If God as the mystery wishes to enunciate himself

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in the words of Christian revelation, the word will aim at the *whole man*, because this God wishes to be the salvation of the whole man. The word seeks him out at his original unity, out of which the multiplicity of his existence grows and in which it remains comprised: the word seeks the *heart* of man. And hence the words of the gospel message are necessarily words of the heart: not sentimental, because that would not be heart to heart; not purely rational words of the intellect, since this can be understood merely as the faculty which grasps and masters the comprehensible, and not as the primordial faculty which allows itself to be gripped and overwhelmed by the incomprehensible mystery and is therefore called the heart for preference, if one is thinking of this primordial faculty of the inmost spirit of man. Thus, to be a Christian, one must be capable of hearing and understanding the primary words of the heart. And these are not merely concerned with man's scientific rationality and his dispassionate pseudo-objectivity. They are not just sign-posts for the biological will to live and the direction of the herd – instinct. They are so to speak sacral, even sacramental: they help to effect what they signify and penetrate creatively into the primordial centre of man. This capacity and readiness must be developed by practice, so that the primary words do not glance off the shell of preoccupations, are not choked in the indifference and cynical nihilism of man, are not drowned in chatter, but like a lance piercing mortally a crucified man and opening up the sources of the spirit, may strike the inmost depths of man, killing and bringing to life, transforming, judging and graciously favouring. We must learn how to listen under the severe discipline of the spirit and with a reverent heart which longs for the 'striking', word, the word that really strikes us and pierces the heart, so that mortally stricken and blissfully surprised, the heart may pour the libation of the muted mystery which it concealed, into the abyss of God's eternal mystery and so, being freed, find blessedness.

The third requisite for the proper hearing of the message of the gospel, which we choose to mention here out of many others, is the power of hearing the word which *unites*. Words distinguish. But the ultimate words which call to the all-pervading mystery and reach the heart, are [361] words that unite. They call to the origin and gather all into the unifying centre of the heart. Hence they reconcile, they free the individual from the isolation of his loneliness, they make the whole present in each one; they speak of *one* death and we taste the death of all; they voice one joy and joy itself penetrates our heart; they tell of one man and we have learned to know all men. Even when they speak of the dire loneliness of a man uniquely isolated, they notify the hearer of his own isolating loneliness and point to the one sorrow of all and their one task, which is that they still have to seek the true unity of many divided hearts. Thus the authentic words unite. But one must be able to hear them, otherwise one cannot understand the message of Christianity either. For it speaks only of one thing, the mystery of love, which wishes to strike home to the heart of man as judgment and salvation: a love which is not a feeling but the true substance of all reality as it strives to manifest itself in all things. Only when one can hear the secret sound of unifying love in sundering words, has one ears to perceive truly the message of Christianity. Otherwise Christianity too is only a distraction beating on the ear with a thousand words that tire and stupefy the spirit, because it is asked to accept too much that fits in nowhere, which means death to the heart, because it ultimately loves only one thing, it can hear only one thing, the word of union which is God himself, who unites without dissociating.

The fourth and last requisite for the hearing of the message of the gospel which we shall mention here, is the capacity of recognizing the inexpressible mystery *in* the word which speaks of its bodily form, inseparable from the word but not confused with it: the power of becoming aware of the *incarnational* and incarnate incomprehensibility, of hearing the Word become flesh. And in fact, if we are Christians, and not just metaphysicians delving into the obscure grounds of being, we must remember that the eternal Word, where the obscure but personal unoriginated origin indicated by us as 'Father' in the godhead expresses himself

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absolutely and knows himself eternally, has become flesh and dwelt among us. The *Word*, where the unoriginated mystery is in possession of itself, the infinite Word which has none other beside it because it alone of itself says all things that can be said: this has become flesh, and without ceasing to be all has become this particular thing, without ceasing to be always and everywhere expresses itself 'here and now'. And therefore and since then and in this Word made flesh the word of man has become full of grace and truth. It is not just a sort of silently signaling [362] finger, pointing away from what it delimits and illuminates into the infinite distance, where the incomprehensible dwells, silent and unapproachable: the incomprehensible itself, as grace and mercy, has entered the human word. In the region encompassed by the human word, infinity has built itself a tent, infinity itself is there in the finite. The word names and truly contains what it apparently only hints at by a silent signal, it brings on what it proclaims, it is the word which really only attains the full realization of its being in the sacramental word, where it really becomes what God's grace made it as he uttered his eternal Word itself in the flesh of the Lord.

And therefore the Christian must be open to the grace bestowed on the word in the Logos who became man. He must be schooled in the mystery of the Word which through the Word made flesh is the embodiment of the infinite mystery and no longer just a pointer pointing away from itself to the mystery. Deep down within the narrow earthly well of the human word the spring that flows for ever gushes forth, the flames of eternal love leap out of the burning bush of the human word. This propriety of the word, in its true and full reality, is already grace in the word, and the power of hearing such a word in its true sense is already grace of faith. But ever since the human word has existed as the embodiment of the Word of God which abides for ever, and ever since *this* Word has been heard in its permanent embodiment, there is a brightness and a secret promise in every word. In every word, the gracious incarnation of God's own abiding Word and so of God himself can take place, and all true hearers of the word are really listening to the inmost depths of every word, to know if it becomes suddenly the word of eternal love by the very fact that it expresses man and his world. If one is to grow ever more profoundly Christian, one must never cease to practise listening for this incarnational possibility in the human word. One must have the readiness and the capacity to find *permanently* the whole in the individual, one must have courage for what is clear and definite, in order to become aware of the inexpressible, one must bear and love the candour of what is close at hand, to be able to reach what is far away, but still not vague and without binding force.

What then is the word which the Christian must have the power, the practice and the grace to hear, if he is to be able to hear the Christian word of God's message? He must be able to hear the word through which the silent mystery is present, he must be able to perceive the word which [363] touches the heart in its inmost depths, he must be initiated into the human grace of hearing the word which gathers and unites and the word which in the midst of its own finite clarity is the embodiment of the eternal mystery. But what do we call such a word? It is the word of poetry; this power to hear means that one has heard the poetic word and abandoned oneself to it in humble readiness, till the ears of the spirit were opened for it and it penetrated his heart. It may be that the poetic word, if it is to be – itself, must do more than fulfil the conditions which we have described as the proprieties of the word we sought. This may be so simply because we are perhaps obliged to ascribe our four characteristics to every word of Scripture – even though in very different degrees – and not every word of Scripture can be called a poetic word in the Strict sense. However that may be, it can hardly be denied that these four characteristics belong essentially to the word which claims to be of poetic rank and dignity. And more we need not be able to say here. And so it is true that the capacity and the practice of perceiving the poetic word is a presupposition of hearing the word of God. No doubt grace also creates this presupposition for itself, and no doubt there are many men

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whose ear and heart are open for the seminal poetry of eternal existence only in the Christian message itself. But this does not alter the basic truth we have arrived at, that the poetic word and the poetic ear are so much part of man that if this essential power were really lost to the heart, man could no longer hear the word of God in the word of man. In its inmost essence, the poetic is a prerequisite for Christianity. It cannot be objected that there are enough true Christians who have no truck with the Muses. The artistic endowments of Christians can vary: not every Christian who can find the four aforesaid characteristics in large measure in the Christian word, is thereby a great poet. He need not even have much understanding of poetry.

All this is possible, because he may lack other faculties which the poet and those open to poetry possess. But if the poetic word evokes and presents the eternal mystery which is behind expressible reality and in its deepest depths, if it speaks of individual things in such a way that all is gathered and condensed in it, if it is a word which goes to the heart, or if, without being a poetic word, it conjures up the inexpressible in its utterance, if it fascinates and sets free, if it does not speak about something but creates in its utterance what it calls: can a man be fundamentally unreceptive to *this* word and still be a Christian? He is perhaps almost [364] incapable of experiencing this poetic word except where it is more than mere human poetry, in which man speaks from his own heart of what he is, and in which as he speaks he hearkens to the murmur of the world. He can perhaps only hear the poetry of existence in the word in which it is uttered by God himself in his own words. ‘But even then man hears and utters words in which the most secret essence of the poetic word, still lives and works or is surpassed. In any case, poetry is one way of training oneself to hear the word of life, and again, when a man learns to hear truly the word of the gospel in the depths of his heart, as the word which God himself bestows, he begins to be a man who can no longer be totally unreceptive to every poetic word.

What does this mean for us today?

(a) Poetry is necessary. All that can be said of humanism in general holds good for poetry, as a work creatively produced and creatively received. In periods when humanism and poetry seem to be dying, buried under the achievements of technological skill and suffocated by the chatter of the masses, Christianity must defend human culture and the poetic word. They live and die together for the simple reason that humanism, which is also poetic, can never be separated from Christianity, though they are not the same thing. Humanism too lives by the grace of Christ, and the Christian thing contains the human as an essential element within its own being, though only part of it. If it is true that the message of the gospel will not perish till the end of time, then our faith is also true, that there will always be men whose hearts will be open to the inexpressible mystery which is love, become flesh in the word of man, which gathers and unites all. If such a word is promised perpetual struggle, amid dangers unrelenting in their terrors, but likewise abiding victory in victorious abiding to the end, then the poetic word is also promised ever new victories in endless struggle. The poetic word will never fail, because it grows out of the divine word which bears within it the inmost essence of the poetic word. We Christians must love and fight for the poetic word, because we must defend what is human, since God himself has assumed it into his eternal reality.

There is no way of deducing a formula from this essential propriety of Christianity, which will tell us exactly what the poetic element, which we can never renounce, must look like. Man undergoes the changes of history and so does his poetry. And no one need fear history less than the Christian, who must take history more seriously than any one else, since [365] it bears his eternity in its bosom. And hence the Christian, when he acclaims the perpetuity of human culture and so of poetry, can never make his homage go only to the poetry of yesterday and the day before. He will wish the poet to say frankly what he finds in us, and to divine what the future brings, so that he may be the poet of his own new age, of *its* pain, of *its*

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happiness, of its tasks, its death and of eternal life. Here too there is only one way for us to be conservative if we are Christians. We must go to the Mass of life as we go 'to the Mass of the altar, and count the solemn memory of our origin and our past among the essential components of our existence – but in such a way, that we go therein to meet the unique future that calls us, knowing that God's future is our origin.

(b) One can of course be a good fellow and 'a good Christian in the common – place sense of the term and still be a miserable poet. But really great Christianity and really great poetry have an inner kinship. They are certainly not the same thing. Man's question and God's answer are not the same thing. But great poetry only exists where man radically faces what he is. In doing so, he may be entangled 'in guilt, perversity, hatred of self and diabolical pride, he may' see himself as a sinner and identify himself with his sin. But 'even so, he is more exposed to the happy danger of meeting God, than the narrow-minded Philistine who always skirts cautiously the chasms of existence, to stay on the superficial level where one is never faced with doubts – nor with God. And hence the question of what is the proper educational reading for the immature is again an important matter to be discussed on its own merits. But the mature Christian will welcome all really great poetry openly and without embarrassment, reverently and with a love that is perhaps grieved and compassionate: because its' subject is man, man redeemed or in need of redemption and capable of redemption, and so in any case it takes us beyond the two-legged creature which pre-occupies us only too often and too long in our everyday life, a creature somewhat cleverer than the beasts and therefore less certain of himself. The more deeply great poetry leads man into the abysses which are the foundation of his being, the more surely it forces him to face those dark and mysterious acts of human self-realization, which are shrouded in the fundamental ambiguity in which man cannot certainly say if he saved or lost. It is no accident, but in the nature of things, that great human poetry is obscure, and mostly dismisses us with our question unanswered, as to whether it was the mystery of grace or of perdition that was played out and described in it. And how [366] else could it be? Poetry must speak of the concrete, it cannot take abstract principles and make them dance like puppets. But the individual and the concrete is a mystery which will only be unveiled by the judgment, which is God's and God's alone, but which the poet presents *as mystery*. Hence his poetry cannot be so simply and clearly edifying as some bad pedagogues would have it be, for the sake of their sheltered pupils. If we are not Manicheans, we know as Christians that really great guilt is terrible, because it is great and because it is guilt, but that it can only be great because some very great human qualities have found themselves and come to light in it – because evil as such is nothing. We recognize that God suffers sin to exist and be great and powerful in this world, and hence that it is not so easy to confine the great types of humanity to the saints. We Christians, as the Apostle says, cannot go out of the world, but must have fellowship with unbelievers and lechers (1 Cor 5.1-15), though not of course such as we have with our brothers in the faith. When then we come upon real poetry, and not the sort that parades empty unbelief and immorality under the pretext of writing poetry, it is not only not forbidden it is even imperative that we should take it seriously and carefully, even though it does not conform to the moral standards of Christianity, and we have not to pass judgment on 'those that are outside'. There is such a thing as anonymous Christianity. There are men who merely think that they are not Christians, but who are in the grace of God. And hence there is an anonymous humanism inspired by grace, which thinks that it is no more than human. We Christians can understand it, better than it does itself. When we affirm as a doctrine of faith that human morality even in the natural sphere needs the grace of God to be steadfast in its great task, we recognize as Christians that such humanism, wherever it displays its true visage and wherever it exists, even outside professed Christianity, is a gift of the grace of God and a tribute to the redemption, even though as yet it knows nothing of this. Why then should we not love it? To pass it by indifferently would be to despise the grace of

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God. (c) At one time writing and printing were laborious, time-consuming and costly. Writing and printing were confined to what was to some extent important. Today the book and the printed sheet are comparatively cheap compared to the rest of the cost of living. A thing unknown as late as the eighteenth century, there exists today not merely a copious literature to satisfy the needs of technology, science and society but a printed record of all the foolish and empty chatter which inevitably fills the daily round.

[367] We have a literature which is no more than talk at the street-corners of everyday life, just printed gossip, mostly with illustrations. Our reactions to these productions should be just the proper behaviour of Christians with regard to the talk and chatter of everyday life. The Christian will distinguish the banalities of everyday life from the lofty and sacred utterance of poetry, and preserve this distinction of rank sensitively and strictly and try to educate others to this discernment of spirits. He will keep everyday life in its place, even when it is put down in print, and tolerate it within its proper bounds, because the Christian knows that ordinary life can and must go on. And he will fully recognize that the serenely gay, the redeemed, the frankly joyful, has its place in great poetry. He will not think that it only begins when guilt and distress, tragedy and dire torments come upon men. For the Christian can be *resolved* to recognize that an ultimate seriousness can be simple, relaxed, sweet and joyful, in the joyous seriousness of the children of God. He knows that the blessed freedom of heaven is really the only serious thing, much more serious than hell.

Poetry and the Christian. We have really said very little about this lofty theme. But if what we have said has achieved only one thing: if it has aroused or strengthened, in the Christian and especially in the Christian educator, a sense of responsibility for poetry and its meaning, we have done enough. How far the grace of God has gained mastery over us we cannot tell directly, because it is in itself invisible and intangible. Apart from having confident faith, there is practically only one thing that we can do here: it is to ask ourselves how far we have become men. One way, though not the only way, of knowing this is to see whether our ears are opened, to hear with love the word of poetry. And hence the question of how we stand with regard to poetry is a very serious and strictly Christian question, and one which merges in the question of man’s salvation.

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[368]

16

THEOLOGICAL REMARKS ON THE PROBLEM OF LEISURE

The theologian, in my opinion, can only ask questions about the subject of the five-day week which is discussed here. They are questions which he puts to the representatives of the other faculties, especially those of philosophy, sociology and medicine, questions which must be answered for him before he can form his own opinion as a theologian.

For the real point at issue is not at all clear, or not clear enough. At first sight it seems simple enough: five days work and two days recreation, which we can afford because even so we produce enough, and which we must allow ourselves, because our five-day effort is so severe that we need two days' relaxation to make up for it. The facts could be described and justified in this way, and it could be thought that with this the essential had been said.

But the issue is in fact much more obscure. And the theologian can only ask to have the issue put more clearly, because he himself is not competent to clarify it in his capacity as theologian. But he can at least say what are the points which do not seem to him to be particularly clear and what he wants to know to be able to consider the issue as a theologian, in the light of the word of God. It is only in this sense that I shall try to discuss the matter. And now let us face the obscurities of the issues To begin with, has enough been done to clarify the concepts which are used in this question? It is a matter, as we have said above, of the correct proportions of work and recreation at the present time, as indicated by the conditions of our own day. But what is meant by work in this formulation? And if this concept needs to be clarified, the same would be true of recreation, because it is clearly to be understood in our context as a contrast to work. But in my opinion, there can be very different ways of looking at work, so that the problem of the correct distribution of 'work' [369] and 'recreation' presents no clear concept. It is not at all clear what the process in question means, namely that one receives today as much money for five days of a given activity as one formerly received for six. It is not at all obvious that the process described in such neutral terms, a process which undoubtedly exists, can be described as a change in the proportions of work and recreation. What we mean by this will be clearer at once, when we ask ourselves what 'work' really means in the context in question.

I

Work and recreation were concepts comparatively easy to understand in primitive human relationships. The mere biological effort to stay alive demanded certain human activities, which occupied a considerable measure of time. This activity was called work. Because it lasted a considerable time, and used up much strength in the direct physiological sense of the term, this 'work' was followed by a time in which such work could not be done, because it was night time and because physical exhaustion forted man to a (relatively unambiguous) interruption of activity, to go to sleep and otherwise rest himself. This second period was called rest, recreation. The time not taken up by sleep was naturally filled with occupations and activities which formed a very clear and obvious contrast to work. When it was possible to sustain life without any particular effort, it followed at once, with an almost logical necessity, that no work had to be done or was done. But these primitive notions, which have of course been somewhat schematized here, are no longer ours. We give the name of work to a large number of occupations which do not serve, at least immediately, the sustentation of

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life biologically. A professor of pure mathematics 'works' according to our present estimation and is paid for his work. But our recreations on the other hand can be very strenuous activities. In our leisure time, when we are not 'working' we go in for mountain-climbing, for instance, which is much more strenuous than the rounds of a working postman, but we call mountaineering recreation and not work. We must clearly make distinctions in the notion of work which are blurred in popular speech. We must then note:[1]

[370] 1. The notion of work in *political economy*. A crude definition of this could be given by simply saying that work in this sense is every activity by which money is earned in the present-day order of society and economics. In this sense the artist works, and the pure scientist who has an official capacity. And the very same activity can be called work or recreation according to whether it is paid or not. A professor for instance of the local history of the Tyrol is paid for work which an inspector on a railway might do as a hobby and call a recreation for which he would like to have more leisure. A reconsideration of the relationship between work and recreation – understanding by recreation any activity for which one is not paid and which being economically unproductive for the agent has in general other positive values for him, as he would otherwise omit it can pose a two-fold problem:

(a) If a man is, as we suppose, also occupied in activity during periods when he is not paid for it, *why* is he not paid? If this 'foolish' question is answered by saying: because in such periods he does nothing which is useful for the general economy, no real answer has been given to the question. There are many activities which are economically useless, that is, do not contribute either directly or indirectly to the production of consumer goods biologically necessary, and which are still paid for. A researcher in the field of Sumerian history is paid even in Russia, but he is not economically productive. One could force matters somewhat and try to see his activity as productive by saying that it is biologically and materially useful to play and do useless things for the sake of physiological recreation. But then one must admit that it is right to ask why it is not for all the activities that one pursues, but only for a given sector, obviously demarcated very arbitrarily, that one is rewarded with money which will enable one to acquire goods of economic value. Furthermore, payment is certainly made in modern society to reward people for not 'working': the non-working pensioner, who is still able to work but is paid by the state, is, strictly speaking, paid to give up taking part in work which serves the immediate production of goods, because a sufficiency of such goods can be produced without his participation. It would only [371] complicate the organization of production if he tried to participate. Such people are therefore given a share of these goods, on the condition that they do not share in the production. If we start therefore with the notion of work as used in political economy, that is, as paid activity, it is not clear how we are to undertake to make an intelligible distinction between work and recreation. Everything can be paid for and much is in fact paid for which under other circumstances is looked on as recreation and is not remunerated. Hence one could take the five-day week as a combination of payment for work and for renunciation of work, on the grounds that sufficient goods are produced even when one refrains from producing, so that in fact all claims are satisfied. One could even come to the conclusion that in our present social and economic system, everyone is really paid basically for his *whole* activity (composed of so-called work and so-called recreation). It would only be by reason of a technical manipulation of this payment that a

[1] We omit the purely formal concept of work, in which only the 'transitive' character of work (or rather, of much work) is emphasized. Work does indeed often mean the activity of man which is applied to an external object and has a result which is in the nature of an object. But this formalistic concept is not practical here, because there are many leisure activities which are just as transitive. And again, there are many human activities which are so strenuous and well-directed that they can rightly claim the title of 'work', though they cannot be considered transitive, or can be said to be so only very artificially. Some people spend their leisure fussing about trifles, but others do real 'mental work'.

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rather arbitrarily chosen *section* of the whole activity is used as a norm for fixing the amount of this payment. In Germany and Russia, for instance, the state pays in fact for the whole of a student's studies, more or less. What is it that the student is at: work or recreation? And if his activity can only be subsumed with difficulty under one or other of these concepts, what is the student really doing, and how are work and recreation to be defined, when we suddenly find that it is impossible to distribute neatly the whole life and the whole activity of man between them?

(b) There is a second question which comes up in the purely economic view of work, if the notion is to be chemically pure, as it were, when taken as a basis for discussing the five-day week. Why should there be any curtailment of the time of activity for which one is paid, or which is used as the standard to determine one's share in the economic goods of society by means of money payments? Two answers to this question suggest themselves at once. (We leave aside the answer that shorter hours of work can be helpful in a crisis, especially if there is danger of an economic depression, since they facilitate the widest possible distribution of the whole volume of work available. We leave this answer aside, because shorter hours are not a very apt expedient in a crisis, and after all, economic problems as such can never be really solved by doing less work. We also omit the consideration that shorter hours may be regarded as a way of re-distributing national income; such consequences can be only secondary, and not the real aim and object of curtailment of working [372] hours, since the desired result can, and if necessary should, be achieved otherwise.) The two really possible answers contain many questionable and obscure elements. It could be said that working hours must be shortened, because work is too strenuous today, because if prolonged to a greater extent (than in the five-day week) it is on the whole injurious to health. There may be a good deal of truth in this. But have the facts in question been proved? And what should be the nature of recreation if it is supposed that (always, on the whole) present-day work is so strenuous that if prolonged beyond forty-five hours a week it is harmful to health? Recreation would have to be taken in the form of the greatest possible cessation of activity, and hence in its most primitive sense. But that is not in fact what is meant, when the five-day week is demanded. The time is wanted for a very intensive activity, and not primarily and strictly for rest in the physiological sense. In contrast to the 'regenerative' function of leisure, which Marx still envisaged in view of the alienation induced by work, we hear today more and more of the 'suspensive' and 'compensatory' function of leisure, as it has already been designated.[2] One might try to evade this objection by saying that present-day work is primarily *felt* psychologically to be tiresome and repugnant, hence proves to be *psycho*-somatically unfavourable, and must therefore be relieved by a period which is found more agreeable in spite of the activity practised in it. But then the question arises as to whether present-day work *must* inevitably be felt so disagreeable. Could not this verdict on work as an unpleasant and tiresome burden be eliminated otherwise than by shortening the distasteful activity? And without such a reversal of attitude [373] towards the remunerated activity, would not even

[2] Cf. J. Habermas, 'Arbeit und Freizeit', in *Koncrete Vernunft, Festschrift für E. Rothacker* (Bonn 1958) 224: 'But today the average working hours are not so long, and, except in certain fields, they do not result in such bodily exhaustion, that leisure must be devoted primarily to the recruitment of physical strength in view of work. Instead of the regenerative function, we have today two other complementary functions of leisure which we call suspensive and compensatory. In one case, leisure is devoted to a type of work in which the alienation, abstractness and irrelevance connected with everyday work is suspended. This "work", so to speak, is meant to restore the freedom, the sense of reality and balanced achievement which is missing in daily work. One is not content with its defects, and tries not just to compensate for them, but to suspend them in the strict sense. Leisure promises a genuine fulfilment, which has nothing to do with substitutes for contentment. In the second case, leisure is devoted to something quite unlike work, which compensates for the psychic exhaustion and nervous strain which are the consequences of work. It really tries to fill a void and provide relaxation which have nothing to do with the beneficent tiredness which follows well-arranged work.'

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shorter hours still appear far too long?

One could also ask was it really true, that present-day work is more strenuous and tiresome than in earlier times, and a greater threat to health. This may perhaps be true in many regards, especially on account of the monotony, the extensive specialization of work at a conveyor-belt, and on account of the accelerated rhythm – real factors which certainly make work hard nowadays. But one could no doubt answer that manual work precisely has been made easier in many respects by the introduction of machinery and hence that it is not so easy to say whether the total amount of hard work involved is greater than it was hitherto. Thus the first answer to the question we have put is not sufficient on its own, and a *second* must be sought for which will be better or supplementary.

The second answer will be as follows. Even in previous times, men found the work which was generally paid for, to be hard and tiresome, and they always renounced it as soon as they could have without it the standard of living which they wanted or thought attainable at the moment. And since we can now produce the desired volume of material goods, thanks to technical improvements, by a less amount of tiresome activity (called work), it is quite understandable that we should not 'work' for a longer period and try to ensure, by means of a just regulation of working hours, that all should receive their fair share of this volume of goods which is sufficient for all. In a word: the cake today is big enough to go round even if shorter hours are worked. It would be pointless to prolong beyond what is necessary an activity which men always find tiresome.

But this answer too poses its problems. Is it true that the volume of goods foreseen as the result of shorter working hours is fully sufficient for everybody, if we look beyond a rather arbitrarily defined economic unit and think of the undernourished three-quarters of humanity? Can the free world and Christian Europe refuse to put this question, when the communist ideology is quite clearly determined to ask it? To put the matter figuratively in terms of the individual: can one say, I have planted enough potatoes when I have enough for myself though my neighbour through no fault of his own has none and I could plant more if I wanted to work more, as I very well could? Could it not be our human and Christian duty, as well as one of enlightened self-interest, to develop the underdeveloped parts of the world, which is only possible when we do more work than is necessary to produce the volume of goods which we [374] ourselves directly consume? Or can we still answer the question with a confident affirmative, if we ask for a universal five-day week on the grounds that even then we do not ourselves directly consume everything that we produce? And then there is another questionable element. Will all the people who live under an economy which has introduced the five-day week be content with the volume of national production limited in this way? Will the individual be contented with the share of the national product which has been allotted to him in view of his hours of work, or will all the individuals and so the people as a whole seek to increase the amount of goods by working outside official hours, because in fact they will only be contented by the amount of goods which can be produced by longer or the longest possible hours of work? In other words, will there not be a sort of 'black' work done in fact in the so-called leisure time? Will not these actual working hours bring down the value of the official working hours in the long run? Will not the monetary value of the official working hours tend to fall in the direction of the so-called minimum subsistence level? Is it really to be expected that men will in fact work shorter hours for a benefit in terms of money, when they are physically able t work more and this extra work is rewarded with economic benefits? One can doubt it, or at least that it will happen on a large scale. If it were to be realized on a large scale, two conditions would be necessary. Men must be able to earn so many material goods in their official hours of work that they already approximate closely to the upper limit of consumption and of material luxury that is physically possible. There are indeed cases where men renounce work which is physically possible, because even without

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this work they do acquire what they in fact want.[3] [375] Such people are not only found in Naples with its *dolce far niente*, but also under certain circumstances in America, where a less well-paid subordinate post is preferred to a very exacting executive post, though the latter is better paid because it is very strenuous. But one can doubt whether there are already many such cases or whether they will soon be very numerous. Most men feel that there is a very considerable difference between the amount of material goods that they would like to have and the amount they actually dispose of. The urge to do extra work will probably be felt for a very long time, where the possibility of such remunerative extra work exists. How and why should society suppress this possibility, when it limits the official working week to five days? If it cannot or will not do this, the five-day week will end up as the norm of the minimum wage for subsistence level. And the hobby of previous leisure hours will be transformed one way or the other into an economically useful supplementary job. Or – the second condition – men would have to be idealistic enough to use their leisure time to do things that are not economically profitable. They would have to be ascetical enough to abstain from economically rewarding work in their free time and devote themselves to values which, because they do not serve biological subsistence in any way, are not rewarded by money. But will very many men devote themselves to such values in the near future? Will very many men be capable of doing it in the near future, to an extent which will in fact occupy most of the longer leisure hours available to them? And if they were, or would be so in the future, could not all activities which did not immediately serve biological sustenance be left unpaid, even such as were rewarded before – poetry, art, science and so on? Could not such people be obliged to do economically useful work? After all, this would no longer take up so much time that they could not devote themselves to such higher values (in their leisure hours!) – in a society where other people were doing the like in their free time, also unpaid. We should then logically arrive at the communistic ideal, according to which everyone should perform real manual labour, that is, economically useful work, because in any case everyone has enough time for other things, and it is impossible to see why one should be paid for something for which another is not paid. Thus the problem of shorter working hours is not solved in terms of political economy by saying that the loss will be compensated for by more intensive work, by rationalization of methods of work and by more capital investment, by which the efficiency of work is improved. For the question [376] remains as to whether men as a whole will be contented with the volume of production thus arrived at, even when they could increase the volume by possible extra work. And there is also the question as to whether more intensive work would not mean that the shorter working hours were only an apparent success, at least to some extent, in biological and human terms. Anyone who denies this, who maintains therefore that intensive work is biologically and humanly *easy* would have to explain why work which has become so easy needs to be shortened.

Thus the economic concept of work as paid activity leaves the theologian unclear about many things which he should know about the five-day week, if he is to judge this claim in the light of the eternal nature of man and of God's commandment.

2. A *medical* concept of work should be considered. In this sense, all activity which

[3] It must not be forgotten that for all practical purposes there was a five-day week in the middle ages. The Decretals of Gregory IX in 1234 already counted about 85 non-working days, including Sundays. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century there were more than a hundred free days in some dioceses, not counting the holidays observed in particular places. Clearly, there was either no *wish* to increase the amount of economic goods by longer working hours, because people were content (on idealistic grounds) with the little that was produced. Or with the techniques, etc., then available, there was no *possibility* of increasing notably the volume of goods produced beyond the quantity which was in fact attained. Either or both of these factors together were responsible for the five-day week. But the example shows in any case, be it remarked in passing, that one must be cautious about saying that most people would not know what to do with so much free time. Even in times when it was harder to find things to do outside work, the five-day week was apparently found desirable.

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reduces the physiological capacity of man for action is work. The opposite notion, recreation, means all activity or interruption of activity which increases this physiological capacity for action. In this concept of work it does not matter whether an activity which represents work is economically useful or not, whether it is usually paid or not. Here then the question is whether the five-day week aims at lessening work understood in this sense, why it aims at this and whether it achieves this end. How problematic all this is, has really been pointed out already. We have already asked whether it is correct that such a reduction in working hours is medically necessary, on the grounds that it can be proved that the average job today is too strenuous and that the same amount of work as hitherto cannot be done without detriment to men's health. Is it correct that the too great strain imposed on present-day man by his work, supposing for the moment that it exists, would be relieved by a five-day week? Could not this objective be better attained by other means? By different methods of work, for instance, or by less broken-up periods of leave? Does the supposed strain imposed by present-day work really affect all the work which is to be shortened by the five-day week, or only certain classes of work? And if it only occurs in some, why are the same shorter hours claimed for all types of work? Or if modern man is really over-strained, does the supposed strain really ensue from the trade or profession he is paid for, and not in fact from other factors of modern life? Could it not come from the pace of life in general, the importunity of the amusement industries, the mismanagement of his life, the universal noisiness, the distance he has to travel to work, the disturbance of the [377] biological rhythm of his life by the inappropriate timing of his work (as in night work), a stronger feeling of insecurity and menace in his life, the loss of an absolute meaning for his existence? Would work be still found over-exacting medically if these other unfavourable factors of present-day life could be removed? And are not they the first things to be eliminated? If these harmful factors are not eliminated, as they cannot be for the moment, can they be compensated for by a reduction of working hours (which is not to be declared impossible without more ado, since such reciprocal compensation between favourable and harmful elements can very well exist in the biological sphere)? Or will shorter working hours really leave man all the more exposed to the harmful elements of modern civilization, since the working hours are perhaps the very time when he leads the most rational sort of existence from the biological point of view? Is there an optimum relationship between time and intensity of work and an optimum of production in a given time-unit which being of course different from each type of work, would have to be established separately in each case? Why is work now harder, as it is affirmed, than in earlier times? Is it perhaps that modern work makes more demands on the nerves and senses and is no longer so much a matter of mere muscle? Is the undue strain which present-day work is said to impose on the biological constitution of man fundamentally psychosomatic in origin, that is, physiological in effect but psychic in cause, so that we should examine the personal attitude of man and modern society with regard to work, especially manual work? And if it were found to be so, at least in part, would the psychogenic damage to the biological factor in man be prevented by a mere shortening of the hours of work? Or should not other means be introduced to attain the desired effect, factors likewise psychogenic in nature? Another attitude to work? Other opportunities of success in work? Other possibilities of promotion? A different organization of leisure and not just its prolongation? A different social estimation of some types of work? A change in the environment? If the working hours are found to be so exhausting, why are so very few ready to purchase a reduction of working hours by taking less pay, though most workers avoid unhealthy work, even though it is better paid?

The medical concept of work poses questions which need to be answered by the other side, before the theologian can go beyond a few general principles and say something from his own point of view which may help with the problem of the five-day week.

[378] 3. The *anthropological*, human concept of work. This is harder to explain than the

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two previous concepts. There is still another aspect of work, which is not properly to be referred either to the economic usefulness of the product in terms of money or to the lessening of physiological capacity, and hence not to be referred either to the opposing concepts implicitly contained in these, unpaid activity and physiological recreation. We may approach the question this way. Let us prescind from the rhythm of the physiologically exacting effort of sustaining and protecting biological life and from the consequent interruption of this effort necessary for the recuperation of physiological strength. Is there still a sort of two-phase rhythm in human life, in a primordial, existential sense, to whose two components the words work and recreation could be ordained, and from which we could deduce the strict sense of the words, such as stems primordially from the nature of man? To understand this question, we must consider such notions as leisure, recreation,[4] play, liturgy, creative thinking, poetry and art and similar concepts. Such things cannot really be fitted smoothly into our earlier concepts of work linked with leisure and work linked with recuperation. Leisure can be physiologically very exacting, the actuation of human nature in play or liturgy can be very exhausting, and both can even be paid, at least in certain forms of society and political economy. We can even apply here the words of the Bible, that the labourer is worthy of his hire, though no one calls these acts of human self-realization work, or at least thinks of them as essentially characterized by their economic or physiological aspects, even though under these aspects they might be classified as work. But such activities cannot be essentially described as unpaid leisure or physiological recuperation simply because one is not ready to call them work. The decisive point in this context is as follows. What we call creative and recreational leisure (in our sense of time given up to 'the Muses') is only one side of the realization of human existence, which is opposed and complementary to another side, which we must designate in its primordial human sense as work. And here the notion of work too does not coincide with the meanings of the word we have met with previously. It points to that dimension of human nature where man, left to himself, is responsible for [379] disposing of himself. The leisure of the Muse is free fall, the unplanned and unpredictable, confident surrender to the uncontrollable forces of existence, waiting for the irruption of the incalculable gift, the reception of grace, the aimless but meaningful hour. Man's existence must know such hours. But not only these. It must also contain plan and calculation, deed and performance, conquest and accomplishment, the effort to implement the project. Both must be there: leisure and – how else can we call it briefly and clearly? – work. But both mean primarily and primordially not two periods of time in human life, but simply moments in a man's self-realization which exist only in their relation with one another and are the primary constituents of human existence itself. Every human activity which involves the whole man in any way and to any degree is both work and leisure. It is freedom which is receptive, disposal which is disposed of responsibility which surrenders itself something done which is undergone, expression of the impression, action as reaction and vice versa. But since man's existence is truly temporal, since he attains his being in time, the dialectical moments of his plural, unified being explicitate themselves also in a temporal succession: each has its own proper and possibly distinct way of manifesting and exteriorizing itself. Hence, on the analogy of the receptive freedom which is its origin, we call the time when the Muse of leisure predominates in man's existence, free time or leisure, which when emptied of meaning appears as boredom in all its forms. And on the analogy of the self-determining freedom which is its origin, we call the time in which the working element of his nature and existence predominates, his work. Both are then primarily formal concepts, which have still

[4] Leisure can mean 'free time for recreation' in the sense of recuperation of strength. In the following, it stands for free time given a meaningful content in the sense described, in the text, including the time after 'work' which may give the feeling of relaxation. (Part of the original German note is concerned with distinction between two German words and is therefore not translated. – Tr.)

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to be filled out with their analogous content, because leisure and work can realize themselves, each in its own way, at all levels of human life and existence, provided that the whole man can really constitute and achieve himself on any such level, in any such region.

If the supra-temporal and transcendent reciprocal relationship between these two essential moments of man's being, leisure and work, is taken seriously, it is not surprising that leisure and work can and must be mingled in the most diverse ways and combinations in one and the same human activity. Sport, for instance, is a very peculiar mixture of leisure and work, when the whole man is active on the level of the physical.[5] In the dance and other similar forms of play, the element of leisure will [380] predominate on the same physical level. Pure science with no practical end in view can be predominantly work or leisure, according to whether positive plan and calculation or receptive inspiration is the major factor. These two primordial modes of human action, though they never appear separately, chemically pure, so to speak, manifest themselves differently in the successive stages of man's time. One period, as we have said, will appear predominantly as the time of unplanned, creative leisure, another as that of forward-looking, purposeful work. This distinction is valid not merely in the sphere of mental or indeed religious activity, nor is its application confined to the heroes of humanity. It holds good, with the necessary modifications, for all the acts of human existence, for the total experience of man, from his bodily activity to his religious act, though it is ultimately only possible – in spite of the analogy to human play seen in the animal's pleasure in the merely tentative exercise of its functions – because man is spirit, but precisely a spirit which can and must perform its bodily activities spiritually.[6] The possibility, however, that the element of leisure and the element of work may appear as either simultaneous or successive activities in human existence, is itself subject to the changes of history. According to man's historical situation, work and leisure will be more of a single act or appear as separate activities. And these historical differences can again vary widely. Some sort of recurrent rhythm of work and leisure always existed.[7] Play, pageantry, worship, etc. (as leisure activities) have always existed. But man's work, by virtue of its concrete nature, could of itself contain much that was in the nature of play and leisure, so that the need of setting apart separate times for the element of leisure was not felt as in the case of work more or less unadulterated. The [381] collecting of fruits at a primitive stage of culture, hunting and even primitive war and primitive agriculture could contain so many elements of 'leisure' or could adopt them without interfering with 'work', that the desire and the need for separate times of leisurely activities could scarcely be felt. Work itself contained the unexpected and unplanned – for; it was always open to the novel intervention, it did not of itself prescribe a fixed rate of procedure. It could easily be adapted to men's moods, they could sing at it, talk to each other, sit more loosely to it by taking short rests or performing civic or religious rites and so on. Work has become essentially less leisurely today with the coming of technology.

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[5] Cf. H. Plessner, 'Die Funktion des Sports in der industriellen Gesellschaft', *Wissenschaft und Weltbild 9*(1956) 262-274.

[6] K. Rahner, *Geist in Welt* (Munich [2]1957).

[7] Cf. J. Huizinga, *Homo ludens*. *Versuch einer Bestimmung des Spielelementes der Kulter* (Amsterdam 1939). G. Bally, *Vom Ursprung und den Grenzen der Freiheit*. *Eine Deutung des Spiels bei Mensch und Tier* (Basel 1945). H. Rahner, *Der spielende Mensch* (Einsiedeln 1952). D. Riesmann, 'Beobachtungen zum Wandel der Mussegestaltung', *Perspektiven* 5 (1953) F. Klatt, *Die schöpferische Pause* (Vienna 1952).
J. Pieper, *Musse und Kult* (Munich 1955); L. Rosenmayr, 'Die Freizeit in der modernen Gesellschaft', *Wissenschaft und Weltbild* 8 (1955). M. Scheler, 'Arbeits- und Bevölkerungsprobleme' in *Schriften zur Soziologie und Weltanschauungslehre* II (Leipzig 1924). F. Giese. *Phiosophie der .Arbeit* (Halle 1932). Georges Friedmann, *Der Mensch in der mechanisierten Produktion* (Cologne 1952); *Die Zukunft der Arbeit* (Cologne 1953); V. Blücher, *Freizeit in der industrialisierten Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart 1956). J. Pieper, 'Arbeit, Freizeit, Musse' in *Weistum*, *Dichtung*, *Sakrament* (Munich 1954). H.Schelsky, *Die sozialen Folgen der Automatisierung* (Düsseldorf 1957).

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Not because it has become really more strenuous. To a great extent it is not more strenuous, at least if measured in terms of immediate changes in metabolism. But still, in the properly human sense of the word, it has to a great extent become mere 'work'. Its rhythm is imposed and directed by the physics of the machine, not by the psychology of man. To a great extent it is a fully planned work which allows of no surprises, which is carried out strictly according to rule. And since the rule is based on a far-reaching division of labour, it only claims very limited dimensions of man's existence, and it allows him an immediate experience of the full human meaning of his work – which is still there of course – only in a very restricted measure. (Mothers once knitted stockings for their children; a factory worker in America now makes stockings for strangers in Norway.) The disappearance of the leisure element from the mechanized and automated work of today makes it necessary that more time should be provided for leisure activities, whether or not modern work is physiologically very strenuous or leisure activity very refreshing. This then is the basic justification of the trend towards the shorter working week: the proportions of the elements of leisure and work in economically profitable work have been altered by mechanization. This does not deny that the shift is also medically disturbing and that shorter hours cannot also be claimed on these grounds. The imbalance of the human relationship between work and leisure brought about by the mechanization of work can be psychically disturbing and so be registered by somatic medicine also.

This analysis is not an attack on mechanization. But mechanization makes it necessary to organize a new equilibrium between the element of work and the element of leisure.[8]
[382] For, from the very start, these two moments of human activity were different. It was always necessary to aim at, and to restore continually, the proper balance of the two, both within the one activity and by means of a recurrent rhythm. And from what we have said it should also be clear that it is not just wrong, and something to be resisted at all times and in all circumstances, when after a five-day week people look for other work on Saturday. This work, even though it is economically productive and financially profitable to the worker, can still retain somehow the character of the voluntary, the hobby practised with pleasure, the improvised, the helping hand, the task that can be dropped at any time. And so it can very well fulfil the function of leisure in the life of the ordinary man, even though purely physiologically it may be to some extent strenuous. It can still be a time when man can find himself by means of his leisure, recollecting himself within his primordial freedom and in a confident surrender to the unforeseen.

II

The foregoing considerations have perhaps also provided us with a starting-point for the question of how the problem of the five-day week is to be seen in the perspective of human history as a whole, and what is its place in that history, which has itself too an intelligible rhythm. One could of course say that this problem is merely an element in the history of mankind once it has entered the mechanized age of the first and second industrial revolution – a problem that necessarily arises when mankind can use classic techniques, microphysical forces, automation and cybernetics to produce the necessary goods of the economy much more quickly than before. If the potential for a quicker production of such goods grows more quickly than the demand for these goods, even with an increase of population and higher standards of living, the time of activity allotted to these goods must necessarily be shortened

[8] Cf. J. Bodamer, *Gesundheit und technische Welt* (Stuttgart 1955). F. Dessauer, *Streit um die Technik* (Frankfurt a. M. 1956). F. Pollock, *Automation* (Frankfurt 1956).

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and the time of work must be cut down. But there is more to it than this. Nothing has been said of the nature of technology, which has been introduced as the principle to explain everything in this answer. And it is not clear what this reduction in working hours means for man himself. Only the mechanism of the situation has been explained. And this only helps to explain the meaning of it for man, if we think that work is fundamentally something to be avoided as much as possible, so that every reduction of working hours is self-explanatory. We must therefore look further.

[383] Man is a strange, paradoxical being. He is a spiritual subject which comes to itself in knowledge and freedom. It is not merely a function of a greater whole, one of the channels of a more comprehensive process. Man really acts and determines himself in an irreducible uniqueness: he is a doer and not just something done. And the self-same man forms a unity, which can never be completely resolved in reflexion, with a wider material and biological context, to which he belongs even with his subjectivity; and in this sense he is also a product of his environment, a function of a more comprehensive cosmic whole. He therefore possesses himself and at the same time belongs to others, he is free and yet only free within a limited field of prior possibilities, so that with regard to his resulting freedom it is impossible to say clearly and definitively what is a manifestation of his freedom as such and what is a consequence of the limiting factors in the field of his freedom. Man thinks and acts in terms of categories and in terms of transcendence at once, in an *a priori* synthesis which is always achieved but never fully analysable. His bodily nature is always determined to some degree by his spirit, and no spiritual activity can be found in him which is not also determined to some degree somatically. Being a free, personal spirit, he is never merely a function of society, and yet being a corporal being, he never has an individuality which is absolutely unrelated to society. He is always at home with himself, but he can never see himself except through the objectivations of his spirit: in the corporeal word, in the objectivated thought of his science and philosophy, in his artistic work. He is unique and irreplaceable, but can only find himself when he forgets himself in the love of another to whom he turns. One can try to eliminate the essential pluralism of man's one being either by reducing it to separate and contradictory elements, to the detriment of its unity; or one can treat the two moments as mere appearances of the one thing and try to reduce them to a material or spiritual monism. But then the great anthropological heresies arise, and man's misunderstood being is in immediate danger of self-destruction.

True as it is that this indestructible pluralism in man's one being is always essential to him and was always there wherever a man and not an animal existed, it is also true that this permanent and essential propriety of his being has and must have its history. For man is precisely the being whose acts do not merely proceed from his nature as a permanent invariable. Man is concerned with his own being as he knows and loves, he is dealing with himself: his own being is handed over to him. He cannot [384] indeed really create or destroy, since he is a finite subject and hence finite freedom: he is a creature and in the act of eliminating himself he constitutes himself once more in his being. But that is why he is still dealing with himself, and the object of his free personal subjectivity is precisely this subject itself. And that is why these irreducible moments of his being which we have spoken of have their history in their mutual relationship. But since man throughout his history is spirit, and spirit becomes aware of itself, the history of these two moments is at least in part known and judged: it is a history wrought and reflected upon in freedom. The history of the finite spirit is thus the history of the subjectivity of man as it constantly becomes more aware of itself as its experience of being inexorably disposed of is constantly heightened. It is both: the growth of self-emancipating subjectivity, and the growth of the experience of man's being disposed of as a creature. For the greater his freedom (mental and physical) with regard to the objective world, the stronger can and should be his transcendental experience of his dependence on the

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absoluteness of God. And so too clearer reflexion on himself will become in like measure the experience of the bottomless and impenetrable strangeness of the subject itself – which is far from possessing itself fully and having itself completely at its own disposal, because it is strengthening its rule over things other than itself and emancipating itself from them. However, we cannot pursue here this aspect of the history in question. In our present context the other aspect is more important.

Man becomes more and more of a subject. He becomes more and more what he always was: he who disposes of himself and his world. He fulfils increasingly the word that stands at the beginning of Scripture, that he should subdue the earth, that is, everything he meets with as a free subject. As it presses in upon him and determines him, he gradually makes it the matter of his own active determination. In the course of history, man has taken his own bodily nature and his environment, and changed it from being a mere brute fact used as it was to sustain life, into material which he first moulds and then uses as he decides, so that his means of sustenance are the product of his subjectivity. In doing so, he remains of course not only dependent on God, being a constituted subjectivity in face of the absolute, but also on the existing world, being intrinsic to it and working on categories. But he modifies this dependence, in as much as his immediate environment is something which he has changed and made artificial in the positive sense of the term. And it is more and more true [385] that even nature left in its natural state has been *deliberately* left so. It is essentially therefore just as artificial as the artefact which has been produced by the spiritual subjectivity of man. Now the aim of this transformation of the environment as it is pressed into service for the biological sustenance of life is not merely to maintain the subject in existence. It also aims, with increasingly more success, at relieving the subject of burdens: he needs to spend less and less of his subjective effort on the task of assuring his biological existence. The subject wishes to be the subject of its acts, that is, free. It is an intrinsic moment in the self-discovery of the subject that he should be freed from absorption in the sheer biological sustentation of existence. The reduction of the hours of work, in so far as work is understood only as an activity directed to sustaining life, is therefore an element of the growing subjectivity of man. For there are certain constants in his biological life – which is essentially less changeable than other elements in man, though it too is not an invariable – which condition and demand very precise means of sustenance and hence very precise activities. These are an element of man's bondage, from which his subjectivity gradually tries to free itself.

We can thus recognize that the shortening of the time of work is part of the history of man's self-discovery, in which the relationship between subjectivity and objective inclusion in a non-subjective whole is gradually and constantly being shifted in favour of the subject. But this does not answer the real question about the meaning of the reduction. For freedom is only explained when we know what man is set free for, what is the range and value of the possibilities opened up to man when he is released from the necessity of a given form of behaviour. The free space newly created cannot be filled up arbitrarily, since the arbitrary is irrational. If man were set free to live at his own sweet will, he would soon flee this freedom to return to a necessity which he finds understandable. And we do in fact see that when man is set free into a vacuum, so to speak, he does not know what to do with his freedom and escapes from it back into work again, as the one analgesic against empty boredom. And the economic utopianism of materialistic communism would be revealed as the illusory void which it is at the moment the longed – for freedom was achieved. No one would know how to use it. No one can, if he has decided that material things and economic goods are the only true reality. For then he cannot really wish that the material, biological and economic element should decrease to make way for an ever increasing measure of freedom, since [386] that would be to want the real to yield to the unreal. The only reason why this is not yet apparent in communist systems is that there is still so much to be done in the line of political economy

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and because all the time available can be employed to serve the universal spread of communism and the orientation of the under-developed portions of mankind in this sense. The vacuum of its freedom has not yet been created. But what is the meaning of this freedom?

It can take two directions, as transpires from the nature of the process of emancipation itself. The possibility of working less while the need for economic goods for biological sustenance remains unchanged or even grows, is something that stems from the spirit. The spirit alone is inventive, it alone can create techniques, it alone can feel itself as a biologically defective being when compared to animals, and still as spirit master the world around it. But by creating techniques and so ridding itself of the necessity of working long hours for the sake of economic goods, the spirit is necessarily working for itself. It wishes to free itself to 'come to itself', to act according to its real nature. This should not be taken to mean that the ideal of the spirit is abstract thought. Being human spirit, it is in its most primordial reality embodied spirit, which therefore realizes itself subjectively by creating objective, manifest cultural goods in time and space. But its object is to realize itself, which it does not, as such, in sustaining biological existence as such. But here too the spirit makes its contribution, because it is not just a being moved by instinct, which could afford to maintain biological life without spirit.

And biological sustenance itself is in the service of the personal spirit of man, since the spirit, living a biological life, can only realize itself with the help of biological elements. Since this is so, the personal spiritual element of man can also be activated in economically profitable work. Man as personal spirit does not first start to exist where tiresome, planned and economically profitable work leaves off – as Christianity always knew and emphasized against the low esteem for manual labour in antiquity and in liberalist circles. But the spirit only attains the proper heights and depths of its express self-realization in non-biological terms where it is no longer a mere means of sustaining biological life but where man exercises an activity which no longer has *any* immediate material usefulness. If man questioned the justifiability of all such acts and did his best to exclude them in favour of an exercise of the spirit ('technical intelligence') which was confined to technology and economics and [387] avoided or tried to avoid anything 'useless', he would be denying that he was spirit and treating it as a mutation of the animal's instinct for biological self-preservation. The shortening of the time for economically profitable work is therefore the self-discovery of the spirit to fulfil itself in acts of no economic value. It is a moment of the emancipation of the spirit as it realizes itself as itself in a domain beyond that of economics and material things. This act of spiritual self-realization is still prior to the possible and justifiable distinction between (spiritual) work and leisure, which we have proposed above. For the spirit as such, and beyond the domain of the economically profitable, can realize itself purposefully and according to plan – in an activity which is not a leisure one, if you like. One could for instance work strenuously and methodically, according to an exact and purposeful plan, at excavating Hittite monuments. One would then be outside the domain of economic and biological tendencies, and therefore filling the free time gained by the reduction of working hours by that which gives sense to this emancipation. But one would still be 'working' in the sense of work as an activity distinct from leisure. If then we understand as 'spiritual work' a work of the spirit which has no economic ends, it may be affirmed that the real point of shorter hours is the spiritual work and the spiritual leisure of man; it is not really and primarily 'recreation' in the sense of recuperating biological and psychical strength; nor is it 'pleasure', even when this is understood merely as biological well-being, even in complicated and highly organized forms of the enjoyment of vitality. The leisure and working activities of man can of course take very different forms. It is far from being proved that what we now call science is the most essential form of the self-realization of the spirit. It is just as

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likely that it can take place outside the field of the 'speculative' in the modern sense. Love, fellowship, joy, the dance, music and art in general and many other things offer similar possibilities, for which man should be set free by a curtailment of working hours. Such spiritual activity in the line of work and of leisure can also of course take very different forms in various individuals, corresponding to their level of intelligence and culture – culture here being understood as human culture, not as intellectual learning. (Here begins the real problem of popular education, which is not solved by providing 'extension' or 'extra-mural' courses to popularize academic learning.) It is not within the scope of these considerations to develop and expound more precisely the content of such spiritual work and leisure (which may he successive [388] or unified operations). We call attention in conclusion to one point only: Spirit is essentially transcendent spirit, transcendence orientated to the mystery of absolute being. It is because it is transcendent in this way that it is spirit at all. If it emancipates itself by the provision of free time, it must also set itself free from the explicit development of the 'transcendental' as such. Otherwise it has not understood why and for what it has set itself free at all. But when the concrete transcendental is explicitated and articulated in knowledge and free decision – we have religion. And hence it must be affirmed – no matter how surprisingly pious and old-fashioned it may sound – that the liberation of man for his express spiritual existence as such is also liberation for a more intensive religious existence.[9] And here too we must affirm that whoever does not understand this, does not understand why and for what the spirit provides itself with free time apart from its time given to the service of biological sustentation and the production of material goods, and does not content itself with detaching itself from such service merely in the ultimate objectives of its action. One should not try to predict the future, because such prophecies are nearly always wrong. But without trying to foretell what men in fact will do, one may risk an assertion about what they are expected to do from the nature of things. It would be as follows. In earlier times it was taken for granted that men devoted to religious contemplation were allowed to share – by alms, foundations, etc. – in the benefits of the economy, even though they took little or no part in this production. In earlier times – and not only in Christianity – it was expected and considered right that the aged or certain classes should opt out of economic life to devote themselves to religious leisure. Under the new regimes of the future with their shorter hours of work, something of the sort can and must exist once more, under new forms and in greater measure. There should be men for whom society provides the possibility of a contemplative religious life, even though their contribution to the economy is slight. Why should this sort of thing be unthinkable except for scientific work and leisure, which is in fact now carried out with state backing without anyone's finding it objectionable? There is really no reason why a professor who is engaged on research into the latest species [389] of ant should be subsidized by the state rather than a Carmelite nun who makes the adventure of mystical contemplation and love of God the content of her life. Here we may remark incidentally that this provides us with a starting-point for explaining why under certain circumstances the artist should be supported by the state, even if his creations would not gain him a living on the art market. In both cases – that of the contemplative religious and that of the artist – there remains the question, which we omit here, as to whether it is due and proper that the state itself should provide subsidies out of taxation or whether some other way of allowing them a share of the national income would be more fitting.

After this incidental remark, let us sum up the essential. Man as personal spirit strives by nature to free himself from the domination of the purely economic factors and biological self-

[9] On the theology of work see: S. Weber, *Evangelium und Arbeit* (Freiburg 1921). P. Doncoeur, *L'Evangile du travail* (Paris 1940). M. D. Chenue, *Pour un théologie du travail* (Paris 1955). H. Ronder, *Die Theologie der Arbeit* (Würzburg 1956).

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preservation which is imposed by the constants of physical life. The time thus set free is a time for (spiritual) work and for leisure, both in their mutual co-penetration and unity and in the recurrent rhythm of successive periods in which the two possibilities of human, spiritual activity occur – an activity already freed from the search for the necessities of life. This activity – of a leisure and a working type – can be concerned with the categories of the human world: the provision and use of objective cultural goods and man's existence in the world in his encounters with his human environment. It can also be concerned with the transcendental – with religion and everything that is to be associated with it (metaphysics, art in so far as it bears on the ultimate mystery of being, etc.). It could happen that mankind achieves this emancipation much faster than the great majority of its members develop the capacity of filling this freedom with its true content. If one thinks of the under-developed regions and peoples, such misgivings are in themselves groundless. But the various portions of humanity develop at different speeds and it could happen that one portion gathers experiences for another – and should pay tuition fees. It may happen that mankind will in part create expedients, because it has not yet learnt how to use this freedom rationally. If one remembers that there have already been expedients which though fully non-productive in themselves were designed to conceal unemployment and to provide unemployment pay in an ostensibly satisfactory way, one will not find our supposition as absurd as it looks at first sight.

Such considerations show us what a fundamental problem it is, to disclose the sense of existence in such a way that man knows what to do [390] when his growing mastery of the necessities of life makes it more and more possible for him to 'come to himself'. If in this self-discovery he finds things empty and meaningless he will take to flight. Either he will return to economically profitable work for its own sake (the flight of communism), or to keeping himself busy and merely distracted (the substitute with which the West makes do for the most part). How many sacrifices will it cost, how many false starts must be made, till man learns to 'do something with' the free time of freedom which he is beginning to win for himself, and for which the five-day week is only a symbol?

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[391]

17

THE THEOLOGY OF POWER

The 'theology, of power' as the title of an essay can hardly mean anything except that we must try to consider the meaning which the concept of power takes on, when it is viewed in the light of the reality of God as known in Christian and Catholic teaching. Such a confrontation must be possible, if for no other reason than that we use the concept of power in the very first articles of the primitive Christian creed, when we call God the 'almighty'.

With this we have already mentioned something which is two-fold in its unity, and which brings us at once to the heart of the problem of human power. Power is clearly something which comes from God and testifies to him in the world, since a reality which we meet with in the world and which we call power is attributed to God himself even though in a super-eminent sense. And at the same time, power is transferred into the region of those mysterious divine powers which are somehow reserved to God alone, can be understood only in terms of the godhead, and can never be autocratically and independently usurped. For we call God *the* mighty, the almighty he who alone is really mighty, and we remember that power ceases to be itself if it is fundamentally only partially powerful, half powerless and not able to claim to be alone all-powerful.

But before we proceed further, there are some preliminary remarks to be made about the ambiguity of the word power in our own experience in the world. The world and man are both multiple realities, each manifold in itself. For this reason alone power is not a univocal concept. To begin with, we understand power, very generally and vaguely, as a certain self-assertion and resistance proper to a given being and hence as its innate possibility of acting spontaneously, without the previous consent of another, to interfere with and change the actual constitution of that other. It follows at once that *all* beings, simply because they exist-in themselves and in contrast to others – inevitably have power in a certain [392] sense and to a certain degree. And the nature of this power changes essentially according to the *specific nature* of the being in question, according to the *region* and dimension where there is this possibility of bringing about change, and according to the *means* used to bring about such a change in another or its ambit. Hence it is perfectly reasonable and correct to speak of the power of knowledge and of doctrine, of the faith, love, courage, prayer and so on. For each of these acts of man affect the situation of another previous to his giving his consent and change it at least in certain respects and to some degree – and so they exercise power. Indeed, the dimension amenable to such an act, and perhaps only accessible to such an act, can, under certain circumstances, be of a higher degree of being and of dignity than another. And then the act in question will be 'power' in a much sublimer sense and with much more real significance – within the degrees of analogy of the power of beings in general – than another possibility which can only act on a lower dimension of being and dignity in another man (or being). Hence the power of prayer, for instance, or of humility understood as the courage to do what is purely moral though apparently powerless, is on a higher degree of being, of a higher moral and ontological rank than for instance the power due to the possession of the atomic bomb – whether the so-called realist, who is only a short-sighted fool, admits it or not. This of course does not decide the question as to whether one could or should renounce the lower form of power, simply because he possesses the higher or acknowledges it.

When however in the following pages we speak of power, we mean, when treating of the proper subject of these considerations, only one very particular type of power, which is, so to speak, limited to a certain region. It is the power which could also be called *force*. It uses

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physical means – means which do not address themselves to the insight and freedom of the other – when it intervenes in the sphere of another, to act on it and change it without its previous consent. It is this type of power that we shall discuss. It presents us with the problem that is so oppressive today: that of physical force, which limits freedom, which disregards the decision of others to force facts into their existence – and for these reasons is often called brute force. We shall ask how it is to be judged in conscience, in the sight of God, what it really is and what it is for, whether it may exist or must exist, what are its limits, what are the dangers it brings with it, what are the ambiguities it entails. Let us insist once more: the power of which we *now* speak is not the only, the most noble or the mightiest force. Truth [393] and love, acknowledged, affirmed and offered, are truly more real and nobler forces. They really do have of themselves the character of power and not just because for instance they can be used and mis-used for ends concerned with the exercise of physical force. It could indeed be shown that those who are blind to this reality and efficacity of knowledge and love, who have no understanding of the genuine force of the offer of truth and love to the freewill, who believe that this 'ideology' (as they will term it) is powerless against the physical and physiological, actually display themselves as worshippers of brute force and basically as hopelessly unrealistic men. But we cannot discuss *this* now, and we take up immediately the subject of the lowest form of power, physical force, as already defined, which often enough is popularly supposed to be the only form of power.

The *first* theological thesis which we must propose with regard to this type of power is the following. This sort of power ought never to have existed. In the actual order of salvation, as it is and as it was originally willed by God, it stems from sin. It is one of the forms in which guilt manifests itself. The justification of this statement, in the light of a Catholic and not merely Protestant understanding of man, can only be outlined here. Man of himself should be in a state of 'integrity' – free from concupiscence. What we mean is this. As we now know the constitution of man, he finds himself unable to integrate fully and clearly the whole reality of his existence, in all its dimensions, into the decision of his freedom. He experiences a dualism between what he wishes to be and what he really is. In his free decisions he never fully captures and masters himself. On the contrary, he is continually being affected by powers and forces from outside himself, which affect him *contrary* to his free decision and so make him 'suffer'. This experience of concupiscence and passibility is a form of manifestation of sin (though the expression 'manifestation of sin' is not to be confused with 'sin itself'). This is true also according to the Council of Trent, even though it attacks an interpretation given to concupiscence by the leaders of the Reformation, which describes this condition as being of itself not merely the consequence and manifestation of guilt but as itself sinful. It is only in such a condition of human existence, in the dimension of concupiscence and passibility, that physical force is meaningful and conceivable. It is merely an element of this condition, which Christianity considers the consequence of sin. In a world with the gift of 'integrity' freedom would absorb the whole being of man. There would be nothing that was not either a manifestation of this freedom [394] or fully malleable for this freedom as its completely pliable and obedient material. In this world, where the free decision would hold good, an action upon another which by-passed his knowledge and his freedom and did not invoke them, would be a violation of this freedom as such, and hence irrational and immoral, and hence impossible: it would even cause the impassible to suffer. Of course, even in a paradisiacal order of things power would exist as a possibility of physical effectiveness, societies would be formed and hence there would be superiors and inferiors, direction and law. But all power would address itself to the free decision in an appeal to insight and love, and it *could* do so, because the decision would never be wanting. Hence it would not be physical force in the sense given above of the ability to intervene in the sphere of another, disregarding his will and the justice of such an intervention.

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The consideration outlined above is not just a utopian denigration of power by a comparison with the unreal conditions of a paradise which no longer exists and which many will be tempted to see as merely the wishful thinking of man projected back into the past. The doctrine that concupiscence is the consequence of sin and the corresponding estimation and interpretation of power have a very important sense. For it follows that the Christian understanding of power is that though it will never be totally eliminated in this world, where there will always be sin and concupiscence, it is still something to be overcome, something that is or ought to be abolished and left behind (prescinding for the moment from the fact that in the general history of the world, according to the Christian theology of history, sin rather becomes more radical than harmless in the course of history). In the Christian view, concupiscence is not simply something permanently the same. It is not simply a constant which operates and dominates unchangeably as an existential in human existence. Stemming from a primordial historical event, it is itself a changing historical entity. It is gradually to be overcome, it is something to be fought against by means of spirit, love and grace. Though man's task is endless, though he fails at it again and again till victory is bestowed on him as grace in the coming of death and resurrection, man is a being who is to integrate his whole self more and more, including his material element, into the God-ward decision of his freedom under grace. This is true of the individual in the particular history of his life. It is also true of society in the general history of mankind. Any effort in this direction which succeeds even partially – insight, morals, public order, culture, humanism [395] or whatever we may call it – is essentially an effort to suppress the use of physical force, to restrict the field in which it is justified. Anyone who thought that force was the surest and simplest way, who held it was the most real thing and basically the only reliable thing, who would make no attempt to abolish it and go beyond it, would be a secret heretic who had fallen away from the truth of Christianity, since he would refuse to admit that this force stems from sin and should therefore be conquered with it. Thus the concept of force is seen at once to contain a dangerous and ambiguous element. It is possible and even justified in a world of blindness and passion, where men are not free and not penetrated by divine truth: but it is only so, because it is itself also a manifestation and consequence of the sin to which it answers. It follows at once that if it is to be used at all (of which we shall speak later), it can only be *rightly* used by someone who is aware of its danger and ambiguity, who knows that it is in a way really using Beelzebub to drive out the demon, and that here the barrier to the sin of another can, by virtue of the origin of this type of power, only too easily and automatically become the concrete form of his own sinfulness. We shall have to say as we go on that this physical force is also a reality of God's creation, willed by him and not merely entrusted to man, but imposed as a duty on the representatives of God. But in any case, we may never forget the full truth about it to which Scripture and the Church testify. In the actual order of creation and salvation, force is the result of sin and hence its manifestation (though not necessarily sin itself), and a temptation to sin, just as much as sickness, non-integrated passion, death, error is not personally blameworthy. They are all real existentials in human existence, which are 'natural' indeed, but still should not be there, according to Christian doctrine. In spite of their being natural and apparently to be taken for granted, in spite of their seeming to derive merely from the bodily nature of man, they are powers which it is the duty of the Christian to overcome and which can be rendered totally impotent only by the gift of the eschatological grace of God. Hence if a Christian simply had no misgivings or reserves about force, he would be either foolishly naïve or he would betray himself as the guilty lover of this fallen world of sin. However, we can only say more about this matter when we have made our other assertion about power – an assertion without which we would not have the Catholic statement, which is the comprehensive one.

The second theological assertion is this: power, including physical [396] force, is (although

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stemming from sin, manifesting it and tempting to it) is not itself sin but a gift of God, an expression of his power, an element of the reflexion of God in the world. We are speaking, be it noted, precisely of physical force here as well – of coercive force, the force of might which goes into action of its own accord, unasked, even against protest, which intervenes in the sphere of another to change it and at times (because it is basically the same thing) to restrict it – without having been filtered, as it were, through the free consent of the other. It is of this that we say – having to bear in mind of course the compatibility of this thesis with the first – that it is not sin but that it is of itself a gift bestowed by God and a charge imposed by God. It can of course be abused, it can of course do harm, such great harm indeed that God can only answer it with eternal damnation, since it is used sinfully and guiltily. But it has this in common with everything created, everything that is not God: that all is ambivalent, everything is subject to perversion and misuse, and hence too of course power. But just as creation as such is not sin, just as that which is not God is not sin by the very fact that it is not God, similarly it cannot be said of power that it is sin. Of itself it is good, good in the true but ambivalent sense in which something is good, which is not itself faith and love coming from the grace of God and hence not in itself capable of being perverted. But why should we affirm that power comes from God and is good, like the good things of creation which can be a gift and a charge from God, which can offer the possibility of serving him, and which it may even be our duty to use? To begin with, such power is one of the existentials of man's existence, which cannot be eliminated from the nature of man on earth. For the sphere which represents the sum of the given possibilities of the free self-realization of man is the place where freedom is exercised. And as the space of freedom, it is the *condition of possibility* of freedom. But it is a space shared in common by *many*. And hence this very exercise of freedom – being that of a creature, depending on pre-requisites, as the freedom of a material, inter-personal and communicative being – is at once a restriction of the space of another's freedom, essentially and inevitably. No one can act freely without impinging on the sphere of another's freedom without his previous consent – without doing 'violence' to him and using physical force, in a metaphysical but very real sense. The freedom of one, when exercised in the one sphere of existence and freedom which is common to all, is necessarily violence towards others. One need not always feel it to be so, and one does not [397] feel it because one is accustomed to it. But that does not change the facts. The bodily nature of man and its supporting environment are always involved in his free decision, which is therefore a physical act. But he thereby impinges on the sphere of others, previous to their consent, because physical space is strictly common to all, and if there are any sections marked off in it, this is already due to free acts and mutual agreement. But such intervention in the sphere of others is the essence of physical force. Hence its exercise is unavoidable, and man could only renounce it totally and on principle by simply leaving this common space of freedom by death – and even the act of dying would again be an alteration of this space of existence and freedom which is common to others.

We can do no more here than pose the question, which our time does not allow us to answer properly: how then, in view of the transcendental necessity of force for the exercise of freedom, is a form of human existence at all thinkable in which things would be otherwise, since one's own freedom is exercised at the cost of the ambit of others' freedom? How is an order of existence without power and force at all conceivable, such as we started with in our first thesis – where it was the presupposition of the assertion that physical force is in the nature of a consequence, manifestation and temptation of sin? Whatever be the precise answer to this question (to which we shall return implicitly later), we must here repeat that this transcendental necessity of force, the condition of possibility of created freedom, is therefore to be described as natural and willed by God. It is not intrinsically sinful.

In other words, we have here the same truth in Catholic theology which is expressly stated

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in it with regard to suffering and death. We say that force would not have existed in the original, sinless order of things willed by God, and at the same time we declare that it is natural in itself, created by God. Natural does not of course here mean simply the same as the obvious and unquestionable. The natural which we are dealing with here can be problematical, dangerous and obscure, even calling forth protest and resistance from man. For man was really destined and remains destined to a higher form of existence, and as son of God, called to the freedom of the children of God, he is determined by the supernatural existential of the order of grace and must always long for an existence in an order of things where his self-determination from within in sheer freedom is all. Force is said to be 'natural' in this context because it is not [398] in itself at once contradiction and sin against the will of the Creator, because it is only when measured against a higher reality and a transfigured existence that it seems that it should not be, and because, not being of itself sinful, it can have the ambivalence which enables it to be taken up and absorbed by a higher power, that of grace and faith, and so become a manifestation of this grace and faith and hence of salvation. It is imperative to understand this second thesis properly. When we say that power is in itself a good gift, a favour and hence a charge given by God, and that it remains so, even though it is only a 'natural' reality, qualitatively different from grace, justification and salvation, in faith and love: we do not thereby affirm that such a reality is an obviously intelligible one. Though it is accessible to reason in its nature and justification, and though it is inserted as part of the whole into the one, supernatural and comprehensive order of existence which alone is valid, it is not a reality which is totally perspicuous and without embarrassing difficulties. Though it is fundamentally intelligible 'in itself', the Christian and the non-Christian cannot in fact come to an understanding about this 'natural' reality, if the latter really shuts himself off from the light of faith and grace. For a reality, though it may be declared to remain the same, is in fact altered when it appears as part of a different general order of things. And on this comprehensive system of reference, within which alone the concrete nature of power can be adequately understood, the believer and the unbeliever (who is really and not merely supposedly so, even with regard to power) are not at one. The believer will regard this power as created by God, and hence as not immoral in itself. He will accept it and use it, almost as though it were a burden – as something which the Christian uses as though he did not use it, because it passes away with the figure of this world (1 Cor 7.31f.). He will likewise recognize it as something created by God as part of his way, and as a means to that supernatural self-communication of God in grace which is the one total goal of the spiritual creature and which must be striven after if even nature is to remain true to its being in the long run. All that needs to be said, therefore, is that what we naturally recognize as an unavoidable necessity in the living of human existence is regarded in Christian and Catholic theology as created by God and of itself not sinful. It is therefore something permissible, and indeed imperative, in the life of the justified. And this thesis is not excluded by our first. For in Catholic theology, something can be natural and created by God, even though non-activated [399] in the higher order of man's original state of innocence, because its activities and functions were suspended and surpassed by the higher grace of integrity – and hence even though when it appears in our fallen state it is likewise a manifestation of the general, inherited situation of guilt.

Having established this theologically, we can proceed to evaluate power as a reality of experience, in the light of natural reason. Nor need we now fear that such considerations may arouse misgivings, as if they could turn out to be a presumptuous self-interpretation of man and his possible modes of existence, which under certain circumstances could not survive the judgment of God in revelation and faith, but would have to be rejected as the ratification and self-justification of man in an absolute, salvific sense. Power *exists*. And it rightly exists, because it is the condition of possibility of freedom. Power and freedom are mutually and

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dialectically interdependent. Freedom is of itself the higher, because it is characteristic of the spirit. Physical power is in itself the lower, because it is, even though inevitably, in itself a material thing and hence narrows the range of freedom. The rights of freedom, which as such, in their *formal* essence, demand that force be absent, and the rights of power are rights which exist together. They are not of the same rank, and hence when they clash, they are to be judged and applied according to their rank. But their diversity cannot be reduced to a single higher principle within human existence, any more than the ontic dualism in man whence they spring, the dualism of spirit and matter, of freedom and bondage to the necessary pre-requisites of this freedom, of individuality and the social reality of man which is rooted in the material. Just as this ontic pluralism is permanent and must always be taken into account, so too the pluralism of these two principles. They have an order of rank, but neither can really be deduced from the other – even though their transcendental unity is founded on the unity of man's being. They cannot be *objectively* 'absorbed' into a higher principle, of which they would be the application. The principle of the absolute renunciation of force would not therefore be a Christian principle. It would be a heresy which misunderstood the nature of man, his sinfulness and his existence as the interplay of persons in the *one* space of material being. An order of freedom would be misunderstood, if it were taken to be an order of things in which force was considered reprehensible on principle. A fundamental and universal renunciation of physical force of all kinds is not merely impracticable. It is also immoral, because it would mean renouncing the exercise of human freedom, which [400] takes place in the material realm, and hence it would mean the self-destruction of the subject who is responsible to God. One cannot make it a principle to avoid the use of power and force, in order to preserve oneself from sin, on the grounds that they are essentially a defilement and inexorably and always lead to sin. The real question in a moral theology of freedom is this: in what way, and in what proportions in each concrete case, and with what perpetually revised safeguards, can the right of legitimate power to alter and restrict the freedom of the individual (and of his free fellowship) be reconciled with the higher right of freedom, and with the right of the individual to a real, concrete and permanent sphere of freedom? Since the sphere of individual freedom is a variable quantity, and since the tasks of the legitimate authorities, for the sake of which they hold power, are themselves subject to historical change, this reconciliation is not something that can be fixed and firm once and for all: it must be constantly searched for anew. And hence comes, at least in the worldly sphere, the inevitability of a struggle for power. In the order of things in which we live, there is a genuine and *materially* irreducible pluralism of representatives and rights – rights, that is of both the upholders of freedom and of the holders of power. These representatives have not merely the right, but at times even the moral duty, of insisting on their respective rights. But it is not to be expected, given the fallibility of man, that both parties will agree in theory on the definition of their rights, even though there is no subjective fault on either side. Thus a state of tension between both parties cannot always be avoided. There will be no objective norms, formal or material, and no higher personal instance with superior power (and right) to decide, which could avoid or exclude at once the cases of conflict which are at least subjectively present and cannot be solved on a theoretical basis. Christian morality, convinced of the incorrigible fallibility of man, recognizes that conflict cannot always and on principle be avoided. There will be cases where might decides the issue with (at least formal) moral right, because force is used by the holders of power, in good faith at least, for a morally justifiable end – even though the moral justification of the end is contested by others. There are therefore real cases, where the concrete right lies subjectively and in practice on the side of the stronger might – where, to put it the other way round, subjectively and in practice the stronger might is also right. This does not mean that it always does what is objectively right, or that it is not obliged to aim at the objective moral good in its goal – in so far at least as the

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wielder of [401] power can grasp subjectively the objective rightness or wrongness of his goal and can fulfil his duty of being objectively informed before setting his subjective sights. But might can be right at times, in the sense that a ruler can have the right to use force to attain an end which to the best of his knowledge is objectively right – even if those who suffer from this use of force deny that the goal is good and hence hold that the use of force is immoral. Power, which on principle always had to wait on the consent of those affected by it, would not be power at all. An order of society which demanded such consent on principle would be a utopian caricature of democracy, an anarchy where might would be much more aggressively brutal; and such a society has never in fact existed.

When we affirm that in actual life conflict and struggle are not always avoidable, we have not of course decided in any way what forms of resistance are morally permissible in a given historical situation. Nor have we indicated what forms of force are immoral, even when used by the stronger party in a legitimate struggle for a goal held subjectively at least to be justifiable and desirable, though contested by others. Some forms of force may be disproportionate to the justifiable end in view. In this fallen and sinful world the use of force should be held back, restricted and humanized as much as possible. But there will always be a struggle, which will always be denounced as unjust and brutal *by* one side, because it is rooted in the nature of the present constitution of man's existence, since it is only by putting forth his strength that man is free and erring. To recognize this fact is not to give free rein to the brutality and moral irresponsibility of power and its wielders. On the contrary, if this situation is envisaged with the relentless realism of Christianity – from which all utopianism shies away – there is more hope that the immoral use of force can be less easily disguised under a pretence of moral justification. It is true here as elsewhere that the lie, which surely exists, never has more chances and more appeal than where people act as if it did not exist. The intransigent pacifist is a greater threat to peace than those who reckon with the existence of force and its inevitable exercise, and therefore treat it as something real and indestructible, something that can be only *asymptotically* moral, but hold that it is governed by the moral law and conjures up the danger of mortal guilt. I say only *asymptotically* moral for as long as men can err, even with the best will in the world, as long as there is no universal court of appeal in the world which can guarantee in all cases the objective justice of the end pursued by force, there will [402] always be, even apart from the use of force for subjectively wrong ends, instances of force being used in good faith for objectively immoral ends. And thus even men acting in good faith will be acting objectively immorally. We must further consider that as human existence becomes more complicated in the course of its history, all human relationships will become more manifold, less perspicuous and at the same time, of greater consequence. The possibility of error, and at the same time, the necessity of far-reaching exercise of force will be greater. It is then possible to think that the asymptotic approximation of the use of force (even that which is subjectively good) to that which is also objectively just will probably not become closer, but rather inevitably less. And this in spite of the fact that historical 'evolution' always means the creation of objectivated moral ideals which did not exist previously in the affliction of man. All that has been said can really be found in the simple truth that might is a real, characteristic and natural creation of God. Since it is a creation of *God's*, it is not at once simply sinful and anti-god. Because it is a *characteristic* creation of God's, it cannot be suppressed while this world lasts, it cannot be eliminated. At most, it can change its forms and manifestations in a long process – a process in which might again has a history, since it enforces this process of change. Because it is a *natural* creation, it can be used for good ends and can be perverted to serve sinful ones.

Thus we can arrive at a third theological thesis on power. In the actual order of things, its exercise – at least on the whole – is not irrelevant to salvation: it is a process either of *salvation* or *perdition*. This is true in a very radical sense. Some preliminary remarks are

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necessary, before we explain the meaning of this thesis. We assume – even in this thesis – as absolutely unquestionable that might is to be regulated by the norms of the natural law, since it is part of the natural creation. We also assume that this natural law can of itself be known by man's natural reason, without recourse to the strict word of revelation in Christianity. Hence it should be possible to reach agreement about these norms even with those who do not take their stand on Christian revelation – without prejudice to the reserve which we have made with regard to the practical difficulties of sinful man in knowing the exact norms of natural morality without the help of revelation. Further, we prescind from the question controverted in Catholic theology, as to whether in the actual order of salvation there are in fact human acts which are merely in accordance with the natural moral law, without therefore being new sins, and also without implying [403] at once strictly supernatural salutary acts of grace and faith. Let us simply suppose here – though it does not favour our subsequent considerations – that such purely natural good acts can and do exist, that they do not stem from grace and faith and are not therefore salutary acts but are done by men who keep the natural law of their being, in human freedom, by virtue of their natural moral insight. But even in this hypothesis we must note that according to Catholic theology, divine revelation and also the grace of Christ are morally necessary, if mankind as a whole is to have clear and certain knowledge of the natural moral law, without admixture of error, with regard to practical moral norms and not just with regard to the most general principles of morality. According to Catholic doctrine it is impossible to fulfil for long the natural moral law as a concrete whole, without the help of divine grace. This special divine help, without which the substance of the natural moral law cannot be kept *for long*, may be safely called grace of Christ, so that its acceptance – a point that we cannot now go into – also implies love. The act of fulfilling the natural law which is performed with such help must also be regarded as a salutary act strictly speaking. It represents an event in the actual Christian order of salvation. To avoid misunderstanding, we add that this affirmation can leave it a perfectly open question, as to whether this grace of Christ must be and is known consciously by man *as* such *grace*. The statement in question remains true even if we suppose that the grace of God in Christ often does its humanizing and salutary work of giving a supernatural finality to human action, even where man is not consciously aware of it in any objectivated and articulate way – where there is in fact a Christianity which remains as it were anonymous. But even with this reserve, it may be safely said in theology that the whole of the free action of man, in its substance, in its real and radical decisions and in the long run, is either a salutary act inspired by faith, or sin, even where it seems to be only a matter of natural morality. Let us assume this truth and apply it to the use of force.

Power is not just *any* element in human life. It is (taking the word in a broader sense than we do elsewhere, but still letting it include our narrower sense), along with sexuality, indeed even more than this, perhaps one of the most fundamental forces in our existence. And it is not just something of limited and localized importance in human life: it pervades the whole, it is not merely something which occurs from time to time. And for both reasons it is one of the acts, in a very special way, which [404] man cannot properly perform in the present order of sin and of Christ, without the holy and elevating grace of Christ, without faith and love. It is one of the acts in which salvation or damnation is decisively achieved. This may all seem for the moment a rather abstract and formal deduction. But if we look even a little more closely at the matter in question, it is easy to see the gist of these abstract theological affirmations. What happens when might is exercised? Something concrete and individual is given reality, without the consent previous of another person, in the sphere of his being. But such a thing is essentially very terrifying. For the concrete, in spite of our meeting with it every day, is always both a marvel and a terror when it is brought about by us ourselves. It did not exist, and it cannot be reduced totally, in its concrete and imprescriptible individuality to necessary

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principles, to a perspicuous necessity. It does not exist of necessity, it need not have been. But once it is there, it can no longer be really cancelled, since the single process of historical events is irreversible. It is one of the beings that are, though it does not contain in itself the cause of its existence, which it derives only from the force exerted by the free agent. And this entity which asserts itself so obscurely, brought about by a free act of power, is now inserted into the existence of *another* where it expands, changes the whole sphere of his existence, imposes on him unasked – for laws of action and decision, unintelligible because (ultimately) with regard to their nature and their being rather than not being, there is no key to them except the will of the other – who is a stranger. The free agent who uses force spreads himself so to speak beyond himself and there are really no limits to this expansion, because it takes place in the wholly universal and common and unlimited medium of the material principle. Everything that takes place here has an immense chain – reaction as its consequence, even if in the unity of general history the effects of one particular cause cannot be distinguished from those of others. May one do this sort of thing? Can man find it justification and consolation enough in this concrete decision, if he is told that he cannot do otherwise, that he is still affecting the destiny of others even if he refrains from acting, to avoid sharing responsibility and perhaps guilt? Is not something done here, which strictly belongs to God: to determine the field' of freedom before it has given its verdict? There is this also for us to bear in mind as Christians. All freedom has an eternal validity and an eternal destiny. In this eternal result, all freedom, in spite of the initiative allowed it in Christian doctrine (contrary to many views such [405] as are expressed for instance in the 'Jedermann' of Hofmannsthal) also receives its determination from the matter and the field upon which the free act works: these are not finally eliminated as the unimportant material which freedom took up incidentally and let drop again. It is therefore clear that power acts in combination with this eternal freedom and contributes to the eternal result of the freedom of another. He is for ever not just such as he willed to be, but also such as he became through me, the other. May one do such a thing? What an enormous task is imposed on man, simply by the fact that he has power to act on the freedom of man! What a temptation that must be! From the Christian point of view it is not enough to say, as an abstract idealism usually does, that even in chains man is still free. That may be true in a certain sense. But in chains one cannot do precisely *the* definitive free act which one would otherwise have done: under the brain-washing and the incalculable influence of propaganda, of the imperious spirit of the age, and all other forces, one cannot, even if one remains free, do precisely what one would have done if the field of freedom were wider and different. And the free acts done under such conditions are not merely sloughed off by the agent, because he remained free or because in his freedom he could not act otherwise. It is precisely because he acts as a free agent, because he was not simply not responsible for his acts, that he absorbs into himself these presuppositions of his freedom which another has brought about, and for this very reason the free person is marked for ever with the traits imposed on him by force. Under these conditions, what should have happened is clear. The wielder of power should have canvassed those who were at its mercy, he should have done his best for his part to eliminate the results of his power on others, he should have tried to replace them more and more by the inner law from which the other is approached. He should have considered his power a challenge to himself, to be overcome by the higher power of love, of knowledge, of the good and rational embodied in himself. It is only under these conditions that he can really dare to impose on others, as their eternal destiny (or a component of it), a contingent and accidental concrete element which the free use of his power has brought into being and inserted unasked as something definitive into the sphere of another's existence. It is only when he feels his power as something provisional, as a charge imposed on the mighty themselves, as the bitterness and humiliation of his reverence and love for the mystery of the *individuum ineffabile* in the person of the other, that he can use his

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power [406] aright. But who can claim that he does so? Who can deny that he is a sinner? Who can maintain that in practice the mightier is always the wiser and the more loving? Who can maintain that what is well-meant is also good, simply because the intention is good (and who can be sure of this?). The exercise of power is thus only too often sinful, subjectively and objectively. It is used in order to rule, and not because one wishes to serve; it is used as a means of self-assertion and not as the sword of God with which one is entrusted. Rulers deceive themselves and believe that they are in the right because they are in power; they claim they have the better arguments because they have reduced the others to silence. They are tempted to claim their rights by force, where justice itself would have enforced their claims, if they themselves were more just: but it is simpler and easier the other way. They are tempted to look on the *de facto* possession of power as at once the divine legitimation of it, as though it were true that God was always on the side of the big battalions. One is tempted to regard the mighty as the sole repositories of truth and the genuine reality and its future, and finally as the viceroys of God, while those who have lost power are thought to have been deprived of the one way of making history – whereas in fact they are empowered and charged to prove that men believe in the superior power of truth and love, even where they seem to perish, conquered perhaps by might. Power is something to be gradually modified and absorbed by love, like concupiscence and all its consequences. It should be used to bring about its own abrogation, though this is only absolutely possible eschatologically. It should be the agent of its own elimination – which is possible in itself since it is God's creation and not of itself sin, which alone cannot have in itself the power to conquer itself. But it becomes something that tries to maintain itself definitively, and the mighty becomes someone who tries to remain what he is, who refuses to recognize that it is only by overcoming himself perpetually that he can legitimate what he now is – and may 'still' remain, if he constantly conquers himself to make room for the coming of the pure and blessed freedom of all. Power becomes sin. And it can demonstrate better than anything else what is the true nature of sin: the desire to be like God, the 'no' to service, the installation of self-will and the finite as the absolute, power for power's sake, which is sin.

But this same power, which can be temptation to sin and embodiment of sin, and inevitably is so if it is not redeemed by real faith and true love, can also be a manifestation and a concrete embodiment of true salvation, [407] something not merely neutral but truly Christian and salutary. Not merely in the sense that something done with the right attitude and intention can be called good by reason of this inner attitude. The exercise of power can have a closer relationship to Christian existence. For power can be used, so to speak, not *because* 'I' have it but *although* I have it. It can be used by him who wields it as something imposed upon him. It can be humiliating and exigent from the start. For wherever it is exercised, its consequences remain unforeseeable. To be effective it always needs powers and forces, instruments and helpers, which must have their own proper structure and nature if they are to be of use. And the more they are used, the more radically they are put to work, the more fully they follow their own laws and thwart the plans of the mighty that use them. The more the ruler goes out of himself to intervene in the world of others, the more he must entrust himself to entities which even if they are only his material, oppose to him their own proper and ultimately indestructible being: he must entrust himself to relationships which he cannot ultimately supervise. Never did the might of the mighty bring them solely and clearly what they *planned*. The leader was always the follower as well, and his mightiest and best-planned deed was at the same time also the most unforeseen, which recoiled upon the doer and became his undreamt-of destiny. The proud and foolish do not recognize the intrinsic limitations of their power, they do not note perhaps its inner self-destruction or they learn to know it only too late, when they meet it as the damnation which guilty power prepares for itself. But the wise man knows the intrinsic weakness of its might, he accepts it as it is given,

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he does not really grasp it himself because he knows that whoever seizes it roughly must be deceived and blinded by power. For then it makes men blind, because men drunk with power can no longer see what reality really is. And the reality which has been ignored takes a terrible revenge: it cannot be totally mastered by power, because power itself, to be mighty, needs servants which it cannot itself replace: men, truth, loyalty, kindness, the quiet humility of the laws of sub-human reality, etc. These servants of power can be misled and misused by it, but only really in that narrow marginal region where they themselves still retain their own nature when they oppose themselves to power. This marginal region is very limited and does not last very long, even though all the cruelty of human history finds room in it. He who is wise and loving knows this well. He does not fly from power if it puts itself in his hand, he may even try to seize it if [408] he sees it is being misused by others and if he feels truly creative force stirring within him. But he knows the tragic nature of power, its limitations and shortsightedness. It cannot long remain the same, because even the exercise of power for its own sake must set itself a goal, or at least must pretend to have one which has value and dignity in its own right. And hence sooner or later, this lie must be taken seriously, the goal attains a validity of its own and deprives the mighty of his power or even transforms him.

Further, the man loving and wise who is also powerful, is always struck and humbled by the dignity of the free men with regard to whom he exercises his power. In face of the others, he is like the surgeon faced with the patient who is seemingly at his mercy, but who has more power over the surgeon than he over the sick man, even if he uses his knife unasked and with the severity of genuine love. He exercises his power conscious that what he does remains subject to the dialectic of history, never fully succeeds, is always somewhat thwarted, and is always intrinsically part of that life which bears death within itself and wills to bring it forth as the fruit of life, without which all life remains barren. Only he who uses power in this way redeems it and sanctifies it. Only he who strips it of its power, by accepting the weakness of the cross, futility and death as salvation: only he who is ready to fail, even when he fights bravely, confidently and remorselessly, struggling even for power – he alone does not sin when he exercises power. For to use it without faith is to misuse it. It may not be said, nor can it be proved, that such misuse is present at every moment of such use of power. But power only exists when it takes in a life and a *period* and takes solid form. And here the statement is true. But faith – as it applies to our question – means acceptance of death and futility as grace, promise and eternal life. And the opposite is also true: the exercise of power can be such faith. Not simply and not even principally because the world belongs to God the Father almighty, because it should be in his service with all its parts, because power too is created by him and can serve him. Such a theology, based only on the order of creation and the natural law, would in fact be blind to sin and would not have passed through the mystery of the death of Christ. It would not be a *theologia crucis* and hence would not be truly Christian. Such an exercise of power, transformed by faith in salvation out of the depths of futility, is therefore not hesitant, half-hearted or cowardly. On the contrary, it is free even in face of death and hence it can [409] dare all for which it can be responsible to God. It can defy superior force, because it still accepts even ruin as victory.

There are very many nuances in the Christian understanding of power. It cannot simply refuse to recognize power, because it is a creation of God. But its attitude to it cannot simply be positive without more ado, because as it now is, it exists only in the fallen world of sin and darkness, as it did not exist in the beginning and as it will not be at the end. Thus this might itself has the character of endurance, impermanence, decay and transition which Christianity attributes to this aeon – where we live on the understanding that it has already been ended by the coming and eternal aeon of Christ. The Christian cannot simply accept power naïvely as merely an obvious existential of human existence. For it exists *either* as the embodiment of sin, egoism, rebellion against God and the worldly impatience of unbelief, which refuses to

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accept the promised glory simply as eschatological gift of the power of God, but uses its own might – and hence inevitably brutality and cruelty – to try to force that glory down into this aeon itself and bring it under its laws; *or* it exists as the effort of faith which knows that power is always unreliable and unrewarding, but accepts it obediently as a task from God, as long as he wills.

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PREFACE

This new volume of my *Theological Investigations* collects together those dogmatic reflections which I have published since the appearance of the first four volumes of these 'Investigations', i.e. since 1960. Although it does not represent any attempt at publishing some sort of 'Collected Works', the concept 'dogmatic reflections' has intentionally been taken in a wide sense: theology must serve the proclamation of the gospel, and it usually advances only when it springs from the exigencies and aim of this proclamation - in other words, when it does not experience pastoral-theological influences as to any extent lessening its scientific rigour.

The present volume is dedicated in gratitude to the Society of St Paul and in particular to its leading members. In their company I have once more experienced during the course of this year that 'a faithful friend is a stout shelter' (Ecclus 6.14).

Innsbruck, October 1962

Karl Rahner S J

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[1]

PART I

QUESTIONS OF FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL METHOD

[3]

1

THOUGHTS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF BELIEF TODAY

I would like to try to say a few words about the possibility of belief today. I mean the possibility of belief in the infinite, unspeakable mystery we call God – of belief in the fact that this infinite mystery, as *our* mystery, has communicated himself to us absolutely, and has come infinitely near to us, in Jesus Christ and his grace, even when one does not realize it and thinks oneself to be falling into the dark abyss of emptiness and nothingness – of belief in the fact that the legally constituted established community of those who confess the grace-giving nearness of God in Christ for the salvation of the whole world is to be found in the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. Much could be said about the possibility of such belief today. I can only make a few remarks about it. And I do so with the ever-present fear that I may not say exactly what would be decisive in giving the courage of his belief to the individual listener. I sincerely want to speak with all honesty. I also earnestly want to avoid confusing this plain honesty (which is of obligation) with a cynical bitterness which is (as conscience testifies) a danger in any heartfelt concern – in fact, the danger that one no longer recognizes that whole truth which only a calm and humble heart is allowed to approach.

The belief of which I wish to speak is belief in the real sense of the word; it is, therefore, belief engaged in by personal decision, with power to bring about a change of heart, and not a belief arising merely out of middle-class convention and social antecedents. Hence the question as to what prospects this belief may have for the future can really be answered only by asking what possibilities it has today in one's own life. The future we are asking about in this connection grows out of the individual decisions which today make us answerable for our existence.

The fact that what I have to say is also meant to be an academic [4] lecture (which is what I have been invited to give) causes me a certain amount of embarrassment. For I do not wish to give an erudite lecture but would rather try to say something more simple and, in my opinion, more important. For if there is a time when academic learning must take second place, then it is when we have to speak – falteringly – of God. And so I hope I may be forgiven if these words do not bear any very great resemblance to an academic lecture.

Where are we to start when it is a question of stating and showing that one may have the courage of one's belief? If it is impossible to say everything, then we must choose and also determine our starting-point somewhat arbitrarily.

I begin with the fact that I have – quite simply – always been a believer and that I have met with no reason which would force or cause me not to believe any more. I was born a Catholic because I was born and baptized in a believing environment. I trust in God that this faith passed on by tradition has turned into my own decision – into a real belief – and that I am a Catholic Christian even in my innermost being. This, in the last analysis, remains God's secret and an unreflected reality deep down within me which I cannot express even to myself. I say that – in the first place – I, this believer, have not encountered any reason which could cause me to cease being what I am.

I understand that one would have to have reasons for changing in a way contrary to the

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pattern according to which one has set out. For anyone who would change without such reasons – who would not even be willing in the first place to remain true to the situation in life in which he has been placed and to the definite commitment of his spiritual personality – would be a man falling into emptiness, and no more interiorly than the shadow of a man. If a man does not want to abandon his very self, then he must basically regard what is already there as something to be taken over and to be preserved until he has proof of the contrary. One can live and grow only out of those roots which already live, and precisely as they live – only out of that beginning in which one places one's original trust in life. What is transmitted to us may have provided us with lofty and sacred values; it may have opened up infinite vistas and taken hold of us by an absolute and eternal call. This alone, in the form of unreflected experience and simple practice without deceit or doubt, may not yet represent in the face of critical conscience and questioning reason any expressible and reflected proof of the simple truth of this tradition. One thing, however, has [5] always remained clear to me – in spite of every temptation against the Faith which I, too, believe I have had to undergo – one thing has supported me as I kept fast to it: the conviction that we must not allow what has been inherited and transmitted to be consumed by the emptiness of the ordinary, of a spiritual indifference or apathetic and sombre scepticism, but at the most only by something stronger, something which calls us to greater freedom and into a more inexorable light. Inherited belief has certainly always also been faith tempted and liable to temptation. But I have always experienced it as the faith which asked me: 'Will you too go away?' and to which I could always merely reply, 'Lord, to whom shall I go?'; I have always experienced it as the faith, powerful and good, and the only possible reason permitting me to give it up would be the proof of the contrary. And nobody – nor even my experience of life – has furnished me with this proof. I realize that such a proof would have to go very deep and would have to be very comprehensive. There are, of course, many difficulties and many bitter experiences for the soul in life. But it is quite clear that no difficulty could claim consideration as a reason against my faith unless it were equal to the dignity and deep-rootedness of what it is trying to threaten and change. There may be many intellectual difficulties in the realm of the particular sciences – such as the history of religion, scriptural criticism, the early history of Christianity – for which I have no direct and – in every respect – satisfactory solution. But such difficulties are too particular and – compared to the reality of existence – too slight objectively speaking to be used as the basis for decisions about the ultimate questions of life; they are not weighty enough to be allowed to determine the whole, unspeakably profound depths of life. My faith does not depend on whether exegetes or the Church have or have not already found the correct interpretation of the first Chapter of Genesis – on whether some decision of the Biblical Commission or of the Holy Office is the last word in wisdom. Such arguments, therefore, are beside the point from the very start. There are, of course, other temptations, which go deeper. But these are the very ones which bring out true Christianity, provided one faces them honestly and, at the same time, humbly. They reach the heart, the innermost centre of life – they threaten it and confront it with the ultimate questionableness of man as such. But precisely in *this* way they can be for man the labour-pains of the true birth of Christian existence. The argumentation of human existence itself makes man feel lonely, as if placed into emptiness, as if [6] involved in an infinite fall. It delivers him up, as it were, to his freedom – and yet he does not feel assured of this freedom. It makes him feel as if surrounded by an infinite ocean of darkness and an immense unexplored night – always merely managing to survive from one contingency to an other. It leaves him fragile, poor, agitated by the pain of his contingent nature. Always it leaves him convinced once more of his dependence on the merely biological, on ridiculous social elements and on the traditional (even when one contradicts it). He feels death living within him in the midst of his life. He feels how death is the final limit, beyond which he himself cannot pass. He feels the ideals of

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his life grow weak and lose their youthful lustre. He experiences how one becomes weary of all the smart talk on the fairground of life and of science – even of science. The real argument against Christianity is the experience of life, this experience of darkness. And I have always found that behind the technical arguments levelled by the learned against Christianity – as the ultimate force and *a priori* pre-judgement supporting these scientific doubts – there are always these ultimate experiences of life causing the spirit and the heart to be sombre, tired and despairing. These experiences try to objectify themselves and to render themselves expressible in the doubts of scholars and of the sciences, no matter how weighty these doubts may be in themselves and however much they must be taken seriously. For this very experience is also the argument of Christianity. For what does Christianity say? What does it proclaim? In spite of the complicated appearance of its dogmatic and moral theology, it says something quite simple – something simple which all particular dogmas of Christianity articulate in some way (though perhaps it is seen to be simple only once these are given). For what does Christianity really declare? Nothing else, after all, than that the great Mystery remains eternally a mystery, but that this mystery wishes to communicate Himself in absolute self-communication – as the infinite, incomprehensible and inexpressible Being whose name is God, as self-giving nearness – to the human soul in the midst of its experience of its own finite emptiness. This nearness has become a reality not only in what we call ‘grace’ but also in the historical tangibility of the One whom we call the Godman. In these two ways of divine self-communication – both by their radical, absolute nature, and by reason of the identity of the ‘existence-in-itself’ of God and his ‘existence-for-us’ – there is also communicated, and thus revealed, to us the duality of an inner-divine relationship: in other words, what we [7] profess as the trinity of Persons in the one Godhead. Man, however, experiences these three absolute mysteries of the Christian Faith (i.e. the Trinity, the Incarnation and grace) by his inescapable experience of the fact that he is grounded in the abyss of the insoluble mystery, and by experiencing and accepting this mystery (this is what we call ‘faith’), as fulfilling nearness and not as a burning judgement, in the depth of his conscience and in the concreteness of his history (for both are constitutive elements of his existence). That this radical mystery is nearness and not distance, self-surrendering love and not a judgement which casts man out into the hell of his own nothingness – this man finds difficult to accept and to believe. It may appear to us as a light almost darker than our own darkness. Indeed, it may take, and in some sense consume, the whole power of our soul and heart, of our freedom and our whole existence, to accept it. And yet, is there not so much light, so much joy, love and glory, both internally and externally, in the world and in man, to make it possible for us to say that all this can be explained only by an absolute Light, Joy, Love and Glory – by an absolute Being and not by an empty nothingness which cannot explain anything – even though we cannot understand how there can be this our deadly darkness and nothingness if there is the Infinity of Fullness, albeit as a mystery? May I not say that I am right to hold on to the light (even though it is faint) rather than the darkness – to the happiness rather than the hellish torment of my existence? If I were to accept the arguments against Christianity to which human existence gives rise, what would they offer me for my existence? The valour of the honesty and the glory of the resolution to face up to the absurdity of human existence? But can one think of these as great, as obligatory and glorious, without implying once more (whether one really knows it or not, wan& to or not), that there is something which is glorious and worthy of esteem? But how could this be, in an abyss of absolute emptiness and absurdity? In any case, anyone who courageously accepts life – even a shortsighted, primitive positivist who apparently bears patiently with the poverty of the superficial – has really already accepted God. He has accepted God as he is in himself, as he wants to be in our regard in love and freedom – in other words, as the God of the eternal life of divine self-communication in which God himself is the centre of man and in which man’s form is that of

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the Godman himself. For anyone who really accepts *himself*, accepts a mystery in the sense of the infinite emptiness which is man. He accepts himself in [8] the immensity of his unpredictable destiny and – silently, and without premeditation – he accepts the One who has decided to fill this infinite emptiness (which is the mystery of man) with his own infinite fullness (which is the mystery called God). And if Christianity is nothing other than the clear expression of what man experiences indistinctly in his actual being – which in the concrete is really always more than just spiritual nature but is spirit, illuminated from within by the light of God's gratuitous grace – what reason could I have then not to be a Christian? For when man accepts himself in this way wholly and entirely, he accepts this light (i.e. he believes) even though he does so unthinkingly and without expressing it. Thus, what reason should I have for not being a Christian, if Christianity means taking possession of the mystery of man with absolute optimism? I know of only one reason which weighs heavily on me – the despair, the lassitude, the sin I experience within me. This is the only reason which oppresses me – the crumbling away of human existence in the grey scepticism of our daily life, when we can no longer even raise a protest against mere existence, but just leave the tacit, infinite question which we ourselves are, well alone – a scepticism which cannot stand or accept this question but avoids it by losing itself in the wretchedness of everyday life. This is not meant to deny that even everyday existence lived in the quiet honesty of patiently doing one's duty can also be a form of 'anonymous' Christian living. Indeed, many a one (if he does not sceptically or stubbornly raise this way of living in its turn into an absolute system) may in actual fact grasp Christianity more genuinely in this way than in its more explicit forms which can often be so very empty and be used as a means of escape before the mystery instead of openly facing up to it. Nevertheless, the abyss opened up by the above reason could paralyse the infinite optimism which believes that man is a finite nature endowed with the infinity of God. If I were to give away to this argument, what could I put in the place of Christianity? Only emptiness, despair, night and death. And what reason do I have to consider this abyss as truer and more real than the abyss of God? It is easier to let oneself fall into one's own emptiness than into the abyss of the Blessed Mystery. But it is not more courageous or truer. This truth, of course, shines out only when it is also loved and accepted since it is the truth which makes us free and whose light consequently begins to shine only in the freedom which dares all to the very height. Yet this truth is there. I have called out to it and it has declared itself to me. [9] This truth gives me what I must give to it, that it may be and remain the happiness and strength of my human existence – it gives me the courage to believe in it and to call out to it when all the dark despairs and lifeless voids would swallow me up.

I see thousands upon thousands around me – I see whole cultures, whole epochs of history around me, before and after me – who are not explicitly Christian. I see the approach of times in which Christianity will no longer be a matter of course in Europe and in the whole world. I know all that, but ultimately it cannot really trouble me. Why not? Because I see everywhere a nameless Christianity, and because I do not see my own explicit Christianity as one opinion *among* others which contradict it. I see nothing other in my Christianity than the explicit recognition and home-coming of everything in the way of truth and love which exists or could exist anywhere else. I neither hold non-Christians to be more stupid than I am nor as having less good will than I have. If I were to fall into an empty and cowardly scepticism on account of the variety of philosophies of life, would I then have a better chance of attaining to the truth than if I remain a Christian? The answer must be in the negative, for even scepticism and agnosticism are only two opinions among others – in fact, the most cowardly and empty of all. They do not provide a way of escape from the multiplicity of philosophies of life in the world. Even 'refraining from making any decision regarding a philosophy of life' is a decision – and the worst at that.

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Furthermore, I have no reason for regarding Christianity as one philosophy of life among others. Try to understand exactly what Christianity means! Make comparisons! Listen carefully to what Christianity has to say! Hear its message most exactly but also listen with all the breadth of the spirit and the heart. If you do this you will never hear anything elsewhere which is good, true and redemptive, which illuminates man's existence and opens up his reality into the infinity of the divine mystery – anything which is to be found in some other philosophy of life – which is not to be found also in Christianity. You may indeed hear something elsewhere which appeals to you, spurs you on, broadens the horizons of your mind, enriches and enlightens you. But all this is merely something transient which does not solve, and does not mean to answer, the ultimate question of human existence in view of death, and something which has its place also in the wide range of Christian existence, even though it has perhaps not been very [10] much cultivated by Christians up till now. Or it is something which you will recognize as a part of authentic Christianity, if only you will study this Christianity more exactly and go more deeply and courageously into it. You will perhaps discover in the process that your conceptually reflex Christianity will never actually succeed in forming a complete and achieved synthesis of all these recognitions, experiences of life and realities of art, philosophy and poetry. Yet you will never discover any final and insurmountable contradiction between legitimate experiences, recognitions and things which make you happy, on the one hand – and authentic Christianity on the other. And this fact is quite sufficient. For in this sense you may be Christian and 'pagan' at once. It would after all be uncatholic to assert that there is only *one* source of experience and knowledge, when Christianity teaches a genuine pluralism (submitted to God) which ultimately is not absolutely controllable by man – and when consequently the synthesis of plurality and of human existence must always remain an uncompleted task in the short span of this life. You have, therefore, the right and the duty to hear Christianity as the universal message of truth which nothing can confine and which says 'no' only to the negations, but not to the genuine affirmations, of other outlooks on life. Give ear to Christianity as the universal message, as the one which 'gathers up' ('*aufhebt*') and thus preserves everything else. Listen to Christianity as the message which does not forbid anything except man's shutting-himself-off in his finite nature, except man's refusal to believe that he is endowed with the radical infinity of the absolute God and that the *finitum* is *capax infiniti*. I know this message of the infinity and the absolute truth and freedom of Christianity is often interpreted by its rabbis and scribes – with their miserable hearts – as a theology which must maintain its place beside others laboriously and by disputation with them – as a theology which loses itself in endless controversies and which merely consists in the dialectical opposition to some other opinion or form of experience. But do not let yourself be troubled by this wretched state of theology! Christianity is infinitely broad. For Christianity, among all religions, says the least in detail since it always says the one thing – but this with all the radiant splendour of truth and with the last ounce of that courage for living which only God can give – the absolute fullness itself, incomprehensible and nameless, infinite and unspeakable, has without diminution become the interior splendour of the creature, if only the creature will accept it. Hence, we [11] Christians do not regard non-Christians as those who, because they are less intelligent or more evil-willed or unhappy, have accepted error as truth. We regard their case as something not at all surprising in a world of history and becoming in which the 'final' is still on the way to perfection: – we regard them as those who have already been touched (or at least can be touched) in the depth of their being by the infinite grace of God in virtue of his universal saving purpose. They are merely those who are already being asked by God's eternal grace whether they will accept God, but who have not yet come to a reflex consciousness of what they already are: – men called by God, the God of eternal, triune life. If we are already aware of this, if we have already heard the news about what we and they are – which is given to us

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in the form of the human words of official revelation – then this is a grace we cannot yet attribute to these others. And this grace imposes a terrifying responsibility on us who must be now all the more freely what we necessarily are: – men sought by God. But this can certainly be no reason why we should not already be Christians explicitly and officially – simply because others are still only Christians anonymously, perhaps only in the sense of one who has been asked and not yet as one who has become a Christian in the reflex categories of an explicit profession of faith.

It is, of course, impossible to deduce *a priori* that God himself wished to enter into the world in a most radical and personal way, and that the idea of the Godman – which can be understood from this as being the at-least-hypothetical extension of man's being (understood as the empty openness to the infinite being of God) – became fact precisely in Jesus of Nazareth under the Emperor Augustus and Pontius Pilate, in this particular place and not somewhere else, at this particular moment in time and not at any other. Indeed, this concreteness – one might almost say concreteness *as such* and historical '*a posteriori*' – are proper to Christianity. But even beforehand – before any *a-posteriori* proofs of the evidence Jesus of Nazareth gave of what He is and the wonderful testimonies He gave us for this – it is easy to believe in Jesus as the Son of God (if one may think of anything so great as 'easy' – because where there really *is* love, the most difficult seems easy). Why? For one thing, this doctrine of the Hypostatic Union, understood in its truly Catholic sense (i.e. according to the teaching of Chalcedon), has nothing mythical about it. It is clearly not mythology to say that God's infinity is given to me in the absolute transcendence of [12] the spirit, and that – since something is real according to the measure of its being by itself and by the absolute infinity of being – this presence of God is more actual and real than the reality of any finite thing. No more is it mythology to say that self-transcendence (which in us consists in principle always merely in becoming and beginning) has reached an absolute and unsurpassable climax in a determinate man, who is an absolutely real man in every way – a man with a human consciousness, with free will and historicity, who worships and obeys and experiences the torments of death; in whom God's communication of himself to the spiritual nature of the creature took place in a unique and unsurpassable manner. It is not mythology to say: – there is a man by reason of whose existence I may dare to believe that God has promised to give himself irrevocably and finally to me; there is a man in whom God's absolute promise to give himself to every spiritual creature, and the acceptance of this promise by the creature, are both proved and rendered credible to me without ambiguity, irreparably and in a manner I can understand. If, however, one can really understand *this* proposition in its full ontological import, then one has given expression to the Hypostatic Union and yet has understood it as a realization – a realization which of course is unique and does not take place in any other instance, and which is God's doing – of what is meant by being a man as such. The mystery and divine freedom in the effecting of the Hypostatic Union do not thereby disappear. But it does thereby lose every taste of the mythical and it no longer gives the painful impression that it is a question of something analogous to Greek or other legends, to anthropomorphisms, according to which God, Infinity, the Incomprehensible, has made use of the livery of a human form in order to make, as it were, a second attempt to achieve what he had been unable to do as the ruler of the world at the creation of the world.

Furthermore, it must always be borne in mind that for a really Christian doctrine of the relationship of the world to God, the autonomy of the creature does not grow in inverse but in direct proportion to the degree of the creature's dependence on, and belonging to, God. It must, therefore, be borne in mind that Jesus is most truly and most independently man, that he has descended into the most profound depths of human reality, has most truly died and remains most decisively man, precisely because his human nature is most radically assumed and precisely because it belongs to the eternal Logos. Thus, if what we have [13] just now

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been able merely to indicate is true – viz. that there certainly is an idea of divine humanity which is given together with the nature of man and his self-transcendence (even though this idea has perhaps come into its own in point of time only after the experience of the Incarnation), and if man understands himself best when he grasps himself as the *possible* self-expression of God which has become actual in the man Jesus, then it is no longer so difficult to recognize the actualization of this possibility in Jesus and no other. For where else is there a man in the clear tangible light of history who has ever made any claim that this event has taken place in him? Where is there anyone who by his human life, death – and, let us add, resurrection – and by the love numberless men have shown him, could give us the courage and the spiritual justification to make this claim – if it is not the Jesus of the Bible? Is it not true that I know myself to be the partner in an absolute, mutual self-engagement between God and the spiritual creature? Why should I not then acknowledge – if everything points to it and nothing militates against it – that this partnership of mutual self-engagement is so radical in Jesus from the very start that the human side belongs to God not only distantly, as to the Creator, but also to God as the One who gives expression to himself and that the answer to God given in him is once more the Word of God himself – and that it is precisely in this way the most autonomous answer of man as a creature? Where apart from Jesus could I find the courage for such a belief – a courage which I want to have, and am permitted to have, because it springs from the depth of the experience of transcendence when filled with God's grace? If there must be an omega-point on which the whole history of the world converges – and if, on account of the experience of my own nearness by grace to God, I may expect that this omega-point already exists (to use Teilhard de Chardin's terminology) or at least that it cannot be presumption to look and ask whether it is not already present in history – must it then seem absurd to me to find it in Jesus of Nazareth? Does it seem absurd to find it in the One who even in death committed his soul into his Father's hands – in the One who convinced precisely because he did not need to discuss wise problems of a philosophy of life – in the One who knew all about the *mysterium* in itself, about the consuming Judgement, the death of man and his abysmal guilt, and yet called this *mysterium* his Father and us his brothers? Is it absurd to find the omega-point in Him who knew himself to be quite simply the Son and his death to be the reconciliation [14] of the world? No one can be forced by arguments to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the absolute presence of God. This belief is free, if only because it is belief in something historical and contingent. Anyone, however, who will accept ideas seriously, and as existentially true, only once they have become flesh and blood, can surely believe in Jesus of Nazareth – when he finds in the flesh that which is the most blessed project of the highest possibility of man, in the light of which one really begins to understand what ultimately is meant by 'man'.

One further aspect of this idea of the Godman and the fact of Jesus should be mentioned here. On the one hand, since he is God's pledge to the world and the acceptance of the world into God himself in person and as a person, he is certainly the unsurpassable and final event, the eschatological event. No other religious experience – no other prophet can come after him who could surpass him – nothing whereby something new or better could replace the old can now take the place of what has gone before – otherwise he would not be the Godman. How indeed could this be possible? There are after all two unsurpassable words and realities which consequently converge: there is man – the infinite question – and there is the infinite Mystery – the infinite and absolute answer by remaining a mystery: there is man and God. Hence the Godman, is unsurpassable; a new prophet *cannot* achieve any more, can at best fall below the answer which the Godman is, or simply copy it. Yet through this unsurpassable, real formula of the world, of its meaning and its task, the world and history have reached their proper purpose (even in a conceptually and historically tangible way); but they have not come to their end in the sense that they cannot really have a history any more with regard to what is

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worth considering and doing. On the contrary, history (which after all should take place in knowledge and freedom) has now acquired *its* proper principle – it has experienced the central event of what is to come and has recognized its proper, infinite destiny as one which is already present within it as its own. Thus, history really only begins now – the unforeseeable, adventurous, incalculable history (incalculable, naturally, even with regard to its end). But it is a history which knows itself safe in God's love – a history which has already overtaken all His judgements and which may think of itself as glorious and victorious in spite of all the terrible things which have already happened and will still happen during it, and which will perhaps even increase apocalyptically. And [15] the end of this history – which is supported by the Godman and is bound together in him, the absolute Mediator – is the absolute nearness to God of all those spiritual creatures who are saved, and their final, and utter immediacy to God, in the same way as this immediacy also constitutes of its nature the inner divinization of the Godman in his human reality. All this makes it quite clear that the goal and meaning of the incarnational unity is the direct union of the spiritual creature as such with God. It makes it clear that we are all conceived in very truth from the outset as the brethren of the Godman. The unique nearness of God and man in the Godman, therefore, cannot properly be conceived in this its first beginning as a negation of the nearness of the other spiritual creatures to the absolute Mystery. It must be conceived as the basis and the already radically realized pledge of the nearness of spiritual creatures to this Mystery. We may, therefore, speak of a true God-humanity as applicable to the human race as a whole.

There is, however, a further hindrance and danger to faith besides the deep bitterness of human existence and the great variety of philosophies of life in the world. I am referring to the assembly of believers itself – the Church. She is indeed the holy Church, even in the view of any unprejudiced student of history. She is the sign which, lifted up above all nations, bears her own testimony to her divine origin and life by her inexhaustible fruitfulness for all holiness. But she is also the sinful Church of sinners, the sinful Church, because we her members are sinners. And this sinfulness of the Church does not merely mean the sum total of the, as it were, private faults and failures of her members, including even those who bear her highest and most sacred offices. The sinfulness and inadequacy of the members of the Church have their effects also in the actions and conduct which, in so far as they take place within the sphere of human experience, must be designated as the actions and conduct of the Church herself. Sinful human nature, insufficiency, finiteness, shortsightedness, a falling short of the demands of the times, lack of understanding for the needs of the times, for her duties and for the trends of the future – all these most human characteristics also belong both to the office-bearers and to all the members of the Church and they also take effect by God's permissive will in what the Church is and does. It would be silly self-deceit and clerical pride, group-egoism and cult of personality as found in totalitarian systems – which does not become the Church as the congregation of Jesus, the meek and humble of Heart – if it were to deny [16] all this, or tried to hush it up or to minimize it, or made out that this burden was merely the burden of the Church of previous ages which has now been taken from her. No, the Church is the Church of poor sinners; she is the Church which does not have the courage to regard the future as belonging to God in the same way as she has experienced the past as belonging to God. She is often in the position of one who glorifies her past and looks askance at the present, in so far as she has not created it herself, finding it all too easy to condemn it. She is often the one who, in questions of science, does not only proceed slowly and carefully – intent on preserving the purity of the Faith – but also often waits too long and who, in the nineteenth and twentieth century has sometimes been too quick to say 'no' when she could have pronounced a 'yes' earlier than she did – with, of course, the necessary nuances and distinctions. She has quite often in the past sided more with the powerful and made herself too little the advocate of the poor. Often she has not proclaimed her criticisms of the powerful

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of this world loudly enough, so that it looked as if she were trying to procure an alibi for herself without really coming into conflict with the great ones of this world. She often places more value on the bureaucratic apparatus of the Church than in the enthusiasm of her Spirit; she often loves the calm more than the storm, the old (which has proved itself) more than the new (which is bold and daring). Often in the past, she has in her office bearers wronged saints, thinkers, those who were painfully looking for an answer, and theologians – all of whom wanted merely to give her their selfless service. Often before, she has warded off public opinion in the Church, although according to Pius XII such public opinion is essential to the well-being of the Church. Not infrequently she has mistaken the barren mediocrity of an average theology and philosophy for the clarity of a good scholastic tradition. She has often shown herself more in the role of an anathematizing judge to those outside her fold, to the Orthodox and Protestants, than in the form of a loving mother who meets her child half-way – as far as she can possibly go – in all humility and without being controversial. She has frequently failed to recognize the spirit which is really her own when, as is its way, it has breathed where it would through the alleys of the history of the world and not merely through the sacred halls of the Church herself. Often before, she has let herself be pulled down by heresies and other movements – contrary to her proper nature and the fullness of her truth (although without ever denying that truth) – to the level of [17] the onesidedness of her opponents. And often in such cases she has represented her teaching, not as the more comprehensive 'yes' to what was the 'proper' and latent meaning of the heresy, but rather as what appeared to be a purely dialectic 'no' given to such a heresy. According to every human estimation she has missed many a golden opportunity in the achievement of her task, or has wanted to seize it when the kairos for it was already past. Not infrequently, while being under the impression that she was championing the lofty inexorability of the divine law (which is certainly her sacred duty), she was really acting like a common, nagging governess, trying narrow-mindedly and with too average an understanding of human existence to regulate life by the typical 'Examination of Conscience' (*Beichtspiegel*) still found in devotional prayer-books which might have been suitable for the famous 'Lieschen Müller' in the even tenor of the provincial town of the nineteenth century. She has too often asked merely for well-ordered good breeding which never puts a foot wrong, instead of asking for a mind with high ideals, a loving heart and courageous life. To many minds she has not been able to give an authentic enough account of herself for people to see guilt and dark fate existing only outside her. All this is true. All this represents a temptation to faith, a burden which may impose itself on the individual and almost stifle him. But first of all, are we ourselves not part of this burden which weighs on us and threatens our faith? Are we not ourselves sinners too? Do we not also belong to the tired grey company of those in the Church who obscure the light of the Gospel by their mediocrity, their cowardice and their egoism? Do we really have the right to cast the first stone at the sinful woman who stands accused before the Lord and is called the Church – or are we not ourselves accused in her and with her, and delivered up to Mercy for good or ill? And furthermore, we surely know that reality and truth can be achieved only on earth, in history and in the flesh and not in an empty idealism. Surely we know today more than ever before that man finds himself only in a hard and clearly demanding community and that any kind of solipsism – every attempt at self-preservation by the precious, self-cultivating individual – is an ideal of the past which in any case was always wrong. Knowing all this, only one way is left open to modern man – he must bear the burden of the community seeing it in the true way, the real freedom of the person and of truth. Regarded in this light, the Church of sinners may indeed remain a heavy burden to us, but she will no longer be a scandal to us which [18] destroys our courage of belief. Finally, we seek God in the very flesh and bones of our existence. We must receive the Body of the Lord. We want to be baptized into his death and be included in the history of the saints and great souls who loved

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the Church and remained loyal to her. One can achieve all this only if one lives in the Church and consequently helps to carry her burden – the burden which is our own. As long as the sacrament of the Spirit and the Body of the Lord is celebrated in her, all human insufficiencies are after all passing shadows which may frighten us but cannot kill. Our love, our obedience, our silence and our courage, where necessary, profess our belief in the true Church and her spirit of love and freedom to the official representatives of the Church, as did Paul to Peter. And these are much holier and hence always much more powerful realities in the Church than all mediocrity and all the traditionalism which will not believe that our God is the eternal God of all future ages. Our faith can be tempted by the concrete form of the Church – it can mature by it and does not need to be killed by it, unless we have already let it die beforehand in our own heart. It is difficult to judge one's own times. But I am of the opinion that the young people of today do not have an easy task. For there is one thing which is particularly difficult for them to understand, and yet it is essential that they should: they must learn to distinguish real Christianity, real faith in Jesus Christ, his Kingdom and his redeeming grace from things about which one is free to hold many different opinions and about which one may have to fight many hard, bitter and tragic battles to reach a decision – matters of science, culture, of the rebuilding of life in this world, of politics, matters concerning social conditions, earthly freedom, Europe's mission, Germany's place in the *one* world-history which is now beginning. Not that the two have nothing to do with one another. They are very much connected – if only because every man will be asked before the tribunal of eternity how he has fulfilled his very much earthly task and mission. Above all, the layman is a good Christian only if he loves the earth, man and his history, and only if he also hears in its call to him the call of his God who has created heaven and earth. But however much the teaching of Christianity embraces also an order of this earth, of the people – a social order and an order of history – it nevertheless is a fact that it is quite impossible to deduce a *clear* imperative for the shaping of the future in this earthly sphere from the message of Christianity *alone*. It therefore follows from this that even Christians may disagree amongst [19] themselves – and disagree violently – about the things of this earth, about matters regarding the actual form political, public and social relations should take. They may disagree about the proper division between freedom and order, about the concrete pattern of tolerance, about the goals to which a people's march of history should be directed, about the analysis of the present situation and the conclusions to be drawn from it – and nothing may be left for them but to fight against one another with whatever lawful weapons God has given the human spirit. It is simply not true that we Christians and Catholics must or could always be at one in everything, or that the official Church could impose an obligatory norm on everyone about everything. It is true that the Church, in the person of her actual representatives, can be shortsighted and can go beyond what is justifiable by the true norms of Christianity and before the tribunal of history. Because such cases are always and everywhere possible, because we can and must expect this to happen in any age and any situation – since the members of the Church are finite and sinful – I am of the opinion that it will also not be possible to preserve the youth of today from such situations even in the present age. This is precisely the reason, however, why today's youth has the duty to put up calmly with such possible conflicts, in all patience, fairness, love for the Church, love for men of the Church, even when they are in disagreement with us on many points. The young people of today have a duty to avoid losing sight of the kingdom of God in their concern with their earthly duties: they have a duty to realize that one does not win a true future by disavowing the genuine past – and to grasp that even today the West has still the earthly and Christian mission to take the old truths with it on the way into the land of a better, freer and greater future. They have a duty not to let themselves become embittered or to lose courage, and a duty to reconcile the freedom of the children of God, the responsibility to one's own conscience and one's own

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mission and task, with obedience to the Church and the patience which can wait until the new age bears abundant fruit also in the Church. The youth of today must realize that the seed must die in order to bring forth fruit, and it must have the courage to overcome error by love. Anyone who lives his commission for the future in this way in the Church will bear with the historical face of the Church, without finding it an insurmountable temptation to faith. It may be that the official Church faces one with the dilemma to fall away from the Faith or to outgrow oneself and to practise a greater humility, a [20] holier justice and a stronger charity in silence and patience than what we can learn from the living example of the official representatives of the Church. Why should not such a situation be possible? And why should we not be able to endure it? If we dare to rise above ourselves in this way and to die as the seed in the soil of the Church and not as a revolutionary outside her gates, then we will notice that only such an action can truly liberate us and bring us into the infinity of God. For faith – which is demanded of us even in this Church – is the action which, gifted to us by God, accepts the infinite mystery seen as the nearness of forgiving love; this cannot happen without a dying which engenders life. In this acceptance, however, is contained the whole Christian life in its proper and blessed essence. To dare such faith is possible even today. Indeed, today more than ever before.

Yet when all is said and done, only he will understand this message of the possibility of Christian belief today and tomorrow who not only listens to it but also practises it and gives himself to it in his very existence by prayer. This means having the courage to speak into that silent immensity which yet lovingly embraces us – with a will to trust oneself to it and with the belief that one has been accepted by this Holy Mystery we call God. This one achieves by taking pains to remain true to the demanding voice of conscience, by facing up to the questions of life, to *the* one silent, all-embracing question of one's existence, and by not running away from it but calling to it and addressing it oneself, opening oneself to it and accepting it as a mystery of infinite love. Let no one say that it is possible to live the teaching of Christianity only if one is already convinced of it, and that consequently one cannot prove the truth in *this* way. For we are all already disposed. And there is no man who is not already in some way or other a Christian in that reality which precedes his freedom and with which he can never quite catch up – which can never be utterly destroyed by this finite freedom. Man is always already a man of yearning, of love which still remains – a man who in his innermost being takes after all more pleasure in the truth than in lies, who still sees differences since even the worst positivist and the most sceptical materialist does not succeed in not seeing and hearing some demand and call somewhere in his life. He may not yet be a fully-grown Christian who has become reflexively conscious of himself – a Christian who has already in full consciousness accepted his pre-given Christianity in reflex freedom. But he cannot bring it about that the dynamism both of his human nature and of the grace of God does no [21] longer orientate him to the Christian life. Hence, when we say that one should learn from the experience of one's life whether Christianity is the truth of life, this does not demand anything which is beyond us. It simply tells us: ally yourself with what is genuine, with the challenging, with what demands everything, with the courage to accept the mystery within you. It simply tells us: go on, wherever you may find yourself at this particular moment, follow the light even though it is as yet dim; guard the fire even though it burns low as yet; call out to the mystery precisely because it is incomprehensible. Go, and you will find – hope, and your hope is already blessed interiorly with the grace of fulfilment. Anyone who sets out in this manner may be far from the officially constituted Christianity; he may feel like an atheist, he may think fearfully that he does not believe in God – Christian teaching and conduct of life may appear strange and almost oppressive to him. But he should go on and follow the light shining in the innermost depth of his heart. This path has already arrived at the goal. The Christian is not afraid that he will not arrive, even though such a questioner

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and seeker did not succeed during his lifetime to give perfect expression to his anonymous Christianity in the explicit Christianity of the Church, and to integrate it into that explicit Christianity. It is no philosophical but a Christian truth that the one who seeks, has already been found by the One for whom, perhaps without knowing his name but with hopeful courage and sincerity, he searches. How blessed all this is; it is not so easy to run past the infinite Mystery, which embraces us in silent love, as the sceptic and the atheist, as well as the narrow-minded amongst Christians, may think – for they think of God too much in the image of their puny heart. But precisely because he silently embraces everything, because all paths lead to him, in whom we live, move and have our being, who is near to all of us, who bears and embraces everything and himself is not embraced or surpassed by anything – for that very reason Christianity and its belief are the simplest and most self-evident. This is true especially since the Christian Faith says nothing more than that we have been called into the immediacy of the mystery of God himself and that this mystery gives itself to us in unspeakable nearness. It tells us simply that this nearness has been revealed and consummated as something irrevocable in the Son of Man, who is the presence of the eternal Word of God among us. The Christian Faith merely announces to us that, in this finality of God's pledging himself which has become flesh and history, all those who have heard this pledge also in the historical [22] and social dimension are called to the community (called 'Church') of those who wait in unity, truth and love – and in the celebration of the death of their Lord – for the *epiphaneia* of what already is: God, all and in all.

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2

THEOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The question we wish to pose here is whether there is already a theology to be found in the New Testament itself, and – if this question must be answered in the affirmative – what significance does this have for the task of present-day theology?

If the question posed is to be answered correctly, we must first of all be clear about what is to be understood by 'theology' in this context. There can be no question here of giving an exhaustive definition of this notion. Nor can we be concerned with the problem of whether one can speak of theology in several different senses to be carefully distinguished from one another, even abstracting from the notion of 'natural theology' and restricting oneself to that theology which refers to Christian revelation and which tries to be 'ecclesiological'. Let us, therefore, state quite simply at this point that we understand by theology, at least in this context, a form of knowledge whose content and certitude do not arise directly from the original event of revelation which depends on nothing else for its content and evidence. By theology we mean knowledge which, although it does indeed in some way ultimately come from this original event indirectly or derivatively, yet arises directly rather from a thought process and a religious experience which is not simply identical with the mere hearing of the revelation as such. We do not maintain that such a definition is complete but just that it is sufficient for us in the meantime. Indeed, it certainly presupposes that we have or may have sufficient understanding of what we have just now called the immediate and original event of revelation. We cannot enter into this question here. It will, however, suffice for our purposes to state the following: the event of revelation of an original kind which is referred to here means the direct effecting by God of a kind of knowledge with a determined content in such a way that the content of this knowledge is clearly grasped and is experienced as being clearly and indubitably communicated by God, and yet that [24] this determined content is known only in this way because the event of revelation is effected by God directly with a view to this knowledge itself. How does this event take place? To what extent is it an interior and immediate intellectual illumination, and to what extent can it take place in the form of an experience of a divine revealing act? How far is the evidence of divine self-revelation obtained by interior spiritual events? Or does it require external attestation by miracles even in the case of the original bearer of revelation? How are we to conceive these miracles with regard to their function as criteria of the divine origin of a revelation? All these are questions which will not occupy us here. It suffices for our purpose if we distinguish this original revelation from ideas which are derived *from* such an original experience of the actual event of revelation itself and which build on it indeed but are not identical with it. Whether, why and in what sense such mediated knowledge can under certain circumstances still be called revelation in a proper sense will be discussed later on. There is at least no possible doubt about the fact that there is such a distinction and that it is justified. All the content of any theological reflection which has taken place, or is taking place, anywhere in the history of theology, has on the one hand the intention of building on the data of revelation, of starting from and returning them, of explaining and developing them, of relating them to the totality of the one system of human consciousness and knowledge, etc. And, on the other hand, it does not lay any claim to having been received from God himself in a direct event of revelation in such a way that it would be the direct result of this divine activity in its content and correctness. If we give the name of theology quite simply to any such theological reflection understood in this way, in distinction to original revelation which builds no longer

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on something else, then the question arises: is there already theology in the writings of the New Testament – or is the latter in all its statements merely the objectification of an original event of revelation?

At first sight it might seem clear that this question must be answered in the negative. Holy Writ is inspired in all its parts, it is in everything it really states the object of faith and the norm of this faith in all its propositions. In other words, it is revelation and not theology.

But let us take a closer look before accepting this information as final. No Catholic theologian will dispute the fact that there are dogmas in the Church which as such are true statements of revelation and thus can and must be believed with divine and not merely ecclesiastical faith [25] – and which yet do not in themselves spring from an immediate event of revelation but are deduced from, or explained by, one or several propositions of original, or more original, revelation. We are not debating here about the conditions, presuppositions and limits under which such derived propositions still have the quality of 'being revealed by God', nor are we debating about the cases in which this is no longer possible (although even in these cases these propositions are perhaps absolutely certain and definable by the Church). It is quite enough for us in the present context that there are such derived propositions of faith in the pronouncements of the magisterium of the Church, i.e. propositions of which it *cannot* be said that they originate directly and as determined propositions from a divine revelation or that they are in the first place communicated knowledge dependent only on itself. There are truths of *faith* which are recognized as such by the Church because and as they are referred back to other truths of revelation in which they are 'implicitly' contained. Any development of dogma which is more than just history of theology would otherwise be impossible. For the history of dogmas means neither the history of a merely human effort of understanding concerning an always constant content of faith, nor the mere history of different formulations of the one truth which is always there as it were naked and independently of these formulations in which it is given, but which is now presented in different, changing verbal garbs simply by reason of some whim or on account of external circumstances in the history of the spirit. The history of dogmas is really a history of faith – of the same faith which always remains, which no longer experiences any real increase from outside. But it is a *history* of faith itself in which something happens which was up till then not given 'in that way'. The new justifies itself always and only through its origin from the old; the new truth is the old truth and not a truth added to the old one from outside. But it is a *new* truth in so far as there is given a statement which is presented as a proposition of faith itself only now and never before. And this newness of what is given only now can refer both to the content and to the reflected comprehension of the certain fact of its having been revealed as such. But precisely because the new truth of a revealed proposition proves itself to be the old truth by reverting to the old, already always known and understood truth of faith, it tells us that it does not spring from a new divine revelation existing dependently but that its hour of birth, its moment of revelation is the same as that of the other truth [26] which itself is already the original revelation of God, resting on no other event of revelation, or stemming in its turn, as far as its own origin is concerned, from an original revelation of God. In brief, if there is any real history of dogmas, then there is a type of revelation which is not simply in itself original and yet is revelation, i.e. the word of God, which demands our faith infallibly and demands faith in the real sense of the word.

Once more, this is not the place for answering the question as to *how* this is possible – in other words, how a word derived from the word of God can still keep the quality of the word of God itself. This is a difficult question which certainly cannot be answered simply by the explanation given by the previously common textbook theology of the development and progress of dogma, viz. by maintaining that a new dogma says exactly the same in different words and that the communicated content is utterly and without any change whatsoever

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identical with the old content and therefore that it is for that precise reason the word of God. No – for instance, in the teaching that the sacraments are seven in number, that marriage has a sacramental nature, that the divine Persons have the nature of subsisting relations, etc., etc., expression is given to realizations in the form of dogmas which as such just were not there in earlier times – they have developed and yet were not given in any new revelation. They exist as the result of the real history of the old truth and are *therefore* and in *this* sense identical with it and share in its characteristics as the word of God, but they arise from the old source of a divine communication and not from a new one. And this communicated truth must have such a history. For since it is a truth heard and believed in a human manner (and only as such is it also the truth spoken by God), it must have a history. And a history in the realm of the spirit and of the person is always a history of a true becoming in the constant sameness of one and the same historically existing truth. As we have said, the more exact forms, conditions and causes of this becoming and of history with regard to any truth in general and with regard to a revealed truth, a word of God, in particular, cannot concern us here. All theories of the development of dogmas and of the history of dogmas are nothing other than attempts to give a more exact answer to this question of how a really new truth can be the old truth. The variety of such theories which have not yet by any means arrived at a *sententia communis* in theology, however, shows precisely by the fact of there being so many theories [27] that it is true to say that Dogma as such can have a history. And this not only after the manner in which one normally tacitly conceives of the 'history of divine revelation' passing through the Old Testament *into* the New Testament, viz. in the sense that at different points in time new divine overtures are made which each time communicate new statements of the truth, each with their own proper moment of birth – but also in the sense that the truth, once communicated, has itself again its own history which does not necessarily lead it out of the sphere of divine revelation but which is itself the unfolding of that history.

If this historical character of revealed truth cannot be disputed in its general terms, and if this truth remains the same even in its new historical forms, then we can now pose the question as to whether there already is such a history of the original revealed truth even within the New Testament since in it there arise new developments of this truth which nevertheless lay claim to the quality of the Word of God without thereby demanding a proper origin of fresh revelation for themselves. The phrase 'within the New Testament' is meant here to indicate: already during the period of the New Testament, at the time of the Church of the Apostles, at which time, according to every theological conviction, revelation was still taking place (since it is declared to have terminated only with the 'death of the last Apostle') – so that such a derived but real revelation took place also (not 'only') at the time of the primitive Church and was proclaimed by the Apostles and by others appointed by them to proclaim the Christian message. But 'within the New Testament' is also meant to signify: while the writings of the New Testament itself were coming into existence – so that such developments in the field of the history of dogmas take place and become tangible in these writings themselves.

Our question can and must be clearly answered in the affirmative. It may first of all be asked: if we find this event in the later Church, why should it not have taken place also in the primitive Church? The inner power of development, the dynamism of self-explanation which is present within the truth and especially within a divine truth, cannot surely have been less at the time of the primitive Church than later on. After all, God did not need to do something at this stage by his own new initiative which the truth revealed by him could do itself. Of course, this would always take place (just as later on) under the continuous saving providence and the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and in accordance with a spiritual situation once more embraced by his [28] will and wisdom – so that God really does not act 'less' when he expresses his truth in this way by an immanent unfolding of what has already been

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communicated than when he communicates it originally – he acts *differently*. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that one cannot hear a truth – with understanding – without taking it in or assimilating it, without confronting it with the rest of what is already present in one's mind and consciousness, etc. In other words, the simple act of hearing and receiving, and the act of reflection are not at all acts and phases of a mental process of understanding which can be adequately distinguished from one another and arranged in temporal sequence one after the other. Thus theology, in as far as it is a condition of simple hearing, begins already in the first moment of hearing itself, and then it cannot but continue on and unfold itself.

In actual fact, if we read the New Testament itself attentively and without any prejudice, we will see that there is theology going on there. It would be absurd to try to reduce the whole difference between for example the theology of the Synoptics or of the Acts of the Apostles and that of St Paul to the intervention of a new, direct revelation of God. No, the men of the New Testament ponder and reflect on the data of their faith already known to them; they have 'problems' which they solve for themselves to the best of their ability in a theological reflection; they have heard objections which they answer and which give them new realizations of knowledge; they have different spiritual and theological origins, and these assert themselves in their perspectives of expression, in their choice of ideas, in the accentuation which they give to their exposition. They have personal experiences of life which they had first to gain, which were not always available to them and which now influence their theological thought and demand new answers on the basis of their old belief. Their teaching is different; this does not mean that it is contradictory. It would be impossible to speak of a theology of St Paul or the Johannine writings if they did not contain precisely – theology, human effort, human reflection, fermentation by a definite individuality and historical situation (of the Jewish environment, of the continuing activity of the baptist movement, of Hellenism, of the pre-Christian Jewish and pagan gnosticism). The authors of the New Testament obviously do not receive an answer to all these questions simply by ever new, separate revelations from God (in the sense of 'thus speaks Jahweh'). Rather, this answer is the result of their theology, of their own reflection on the basis of the last [29] original data of revelation and of the most original recognitions of faith. This reflection (where it expresses itself in the New Testament understood as writing) is directly or indirectly the reflection of the authoritative messengers of Christ who have true authority to teach – it is a reflection which has the assistance of the Holy Spirit; this reflection is justified by its purely objective result, by its method and formal characteristics, by what we call 'Inspiration' (which after all is not necessarily the communication of a new, until now absent body of knowledge, to the inspired author); the result of this reflection remains properly speaking the word of God, on account of the authority of the authors and by reason of Inspiration. But there is this theological reflection in the New Testament, and it does not destroy the quality of the word of God in its expression; but it does mean that not everything which is said in the New Testament is based on a separate, new and autonomous event of revelation.

One might be afraid that these statements express and emphasize what is only too obvious. But when one looks at the work actually being done in Catholic theology even at the present time and notices, or thinks one notices, that in spite of this the proper conclusions are not being drawn, or at least are not being drawn clearly and precisely, from this simple fact, then one begins to have doubts again as to whether the simple principle of there being theology even already in the New Testament is after all as obvious as it ought to be or might be. We therefore pose the question as to what conclusions follow on this principle. We do not mean to develop these at length here but intend merely to name a few of them in brief outline.

First of all, since we can observe theology in the New Testament absolutely *a posteriori* and are not dependent for the establishing of this fact on the other insights which we have also made use of here, we may begin with by stating the following: since there already is

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theology in the New Testament which nevertheless is dogma, *such* theology can also be found in the Church of later ages. Protestant theology is largely (tacitly or explicitly) based on the axiom that there is indeed a significant history of theology even after the New Testament but not a real history of dogmas in which dogmas come into being of a type which impose an absolute obligation of faith and which possess finality: which obligation and which finality can be revised only in a forward direction' (in the sense of a better and more adequate form of expression) and not 'in a backward direction' (in the sense of [30] casting doubts on their truth), and all having to be submitted again to the judgement of the New Testament which may perhaps disallow them. Against this position we may now state quite positively that if there is a theology in the New Testament which gives rise to dogmas binding in faith and not merely to theological opinions, then such a theology is also to be found outside the New Testament in the later ages of the Church – for the reasons and requirements are the same in both cases. Naturally, the New Testament considered as a period and especially the written word constitutes a norm for all later periods in so far as there is given in it the one foundation which is the permanent norm and the basis which must support the Church at every later date, as well as all later faith and every later theology; for this foundation is not just any collection of particular truths but a historical event of salvation (to which belongs also the formation of the Church herself). But this does not exclude the possibility of a process of developing new *dogmas* in the later history of the faith on this basis of the New Testament. If the 'making the faith one's own' is historical – and how could it be otherwise – and is not merely theological reflection on a consciousness of faith, then there must be a history of dogmas since this is nothing other than the history of the particular form of the absolute consent of faith at any particular time, made on the grounds of the one permanent divine revelation as it has been given once and for all in Jesus Christ and as it must remain in every situation of history – an actual event in the consent of faith and not merely of simple theology.

If there already is theology in the New Testament which, although a binding expression of revelation taken as the Word of God, is not an original event of revelation, then it must be possible in principle to get some idea as to *where* approximately the line of demarcation runs in the New Testament between the content of the original expression of revelation and the theology based on revelation. The fact that this question is hardly posed explicitly in Catholic theology shows that evidently the simple thesis expressed here has not been stated clearly enough in spite of its being so obvious. It can naturally be only a question of an *approximate* demarcation. Since the whole of the New Testament in all its parts and declarations is equally binding on later theology (even though in each case obviously with that particular binding force which is claimed by individual assertions in the New Testament itself), this matter of demarcation cannot be a question of [31] providing us with a criterion as to which assertions of the New Testament are binding, 'Christ-compelling', or as to which correspond to the inner Canon of Scripture and which do not. And since it is extremely difficult in principle to determine the demarcation between an assertion stating something 'in other words' and an assertion which in relation to the original assertion is new and says something new – as is shown by the fact of all the differing theories about the development of dogma with their distinction between the formal and virtual inclusion, etc., of one declaration in another – the demand for such a demarcation cannot have the intention of establishing completely unmistakable limits. This cannot be the case particularly because a formulation of what is an original assertion and what is a derived assertion of revelation necessarily implies in both cases a comprehending interpretation of both classes of assertions by the one who makes the demarcation – in other words, because it itself implies theology again. Nevertheless, it is completely possible to pose the following question: what does that look like which is the real basic content of Christianity and can therefore be grasped as true when (and in as far as) it

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signifies a divine proclamation beyond which it is absolutely impossible to go? And what in the revealed Word of Scripture can itself be already conceived as 'unfolding', as a theological interpretation of these original, basic data with the help of the concepts, images and viewpoints which either grow out of the whole complex of problems of the basic data themselves or were already given as means of expression and as stimuli to theological reflection in the religious environment of the New Testament itself? Let us suppose (which certainly is not a strict hermeneutic principle but merely a sensible working hypothesis) that all the Christological and Soteriological declarations of the New Testament without exception go back to the declarations made by Jesus about himself and his Person (seeing these, it is true, in the light of the paschal experience) and that they do not contain beyond this any element which, in addition to the self-testimony of Jesus, would itself have to go back once more to a new content of a proper revelation. We may then ask, for example: what is the historical self-expression given by Jesus about himself which forms the basis of all the Christology and Soteriology of the other writings of the New Testament? No one with a Catholic understanding of Fundamental Theology will be able to say that such a question is impossible, unanswerable or not Permissible and that one cannot go back beyond the Christological and [32] Soteriological faith of the Apostles and of the writings of the New Testament. If there is a Fundamental Theology in the Catholic sense, a Theology which ultimately, therefore, springs really from a historical assertion made by Jesus about himself or goes back to it (which comes to the same thing), then this question is completely legitimate and necessary. But in most cases this question is only posed quite incidentally.

This demand is not merely a demand of the historically curious, in order to know how everything has come about. Such a demarcation, the explicit and (as far as possible) clear consciousness of such relations of dependence and the sequences of origin in the case of the individual statements of the New Testament, has a much more essential function. For knowledge of these connections can serve to determine much better and more clearly the meaning of any statement, what it is really meant to convey, and the limits of what it is meant to convey. When one can tell the source *whence* a New Testament author actually learned what he is saying, then one can express much better what he wants to say. For then one can say in a case of doubt that he does not wish to say any more than the source of this declaration really warrants. This method, however, is not proposed as a critical principle which one could apply in order to reject the binding force of some statement of the New Testament whose meaning is already determined by some other source or simply by the wording itself. If this meaning is definite, then the dogmatic theologian can do nothing else but agree with the New Testament author even though he does not see how the supposedly original data of revelation really supply the meaning in this case, or is unable to give the sources from which the New Testament author actually knows what he is saying. But there are undoubtedly cases where the meaning of a statement, its scope and its limits, are not clear. In such a case it is an absolutely justifiable method to try to determine the exact meaning of the doubtful statement (or of a thought-complex which has to be interpreted) by asking oneself, 'from where' does the 'theologian of the New Testament' develop his thought? – what was the basis of his theological reflection as regards premisses and self-evident presuppositions? – and by then asking what results from this and what does not. And if this meaning of the statement, determined from its source, is not repudiated by the meaning of the statement already fixed from elsewhere, then one is absolutely justified in saying that this meaning determined from the source is also the [33] real meaning, and that in a doubtful case the real meaning also does not go beyond the meaning so determined. It is not possible here to give clear examples. But it is undoubtedly hermeneutically absolutely permissible – with careful use of the 'economy principle' – to presuppose that, for instance, St Paul had no more original revelation-data at his disposal for his doctrine of original sin than what is

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sufficiently available from the Old Testament and the rest of the Soteriology of the New Testament. It may then, however, be quite legitimately asked: what results from these original data? One can and must naturally answer this question (as is often necessary also elsewhere in the deeper questions of philosophy and theology) by as it were reconstituting the theology of St Paul. Obviously such a deduction can gain greater certitude by the fact that St Paul has thought it out for us in a binding way than if we had to think it out ourselves for the first time. But if we are thus to reconstitute pauline thought genetically, then (it would seem to me without my being able to give detailed reasons for this here) one would arrive at an originally pauline doctrine of original sin which makes a clearer connection between the first sin and personal sin than that of which St Augustine was aware: there would result an interpretation of the doctrine of original sin which would from the very start look on quite a few things differently from St Augustine, and quite a few important points would be brought out in it which in the traditional teaching on this matter (still far too dependent on St Augustine) are still incorporated too much as supplementary matter. But we cannot here do more than barely indicate the fact that this method can be fruitful.

There is a point at which modern Catholic exegesis and biblical theology uses the method just proposed, although under different catch-words. But as yet Catholic dogmatic theology in its inner-dogmatic work has hardly followed it at all in this. Present-day Catholic exegesis and biblical theology ask themselves very consciously indeed, when dealing with the words of Jesus, as to what in their formulation could be taken as the original word spoken by the historical Jesus himself – and what in such formulations (in the way they are 'beamed', in rendering the scope explicit, in drawing contours, in the conceptual material they use, etc.) is already formation of 'primitive-Church-theology' (*Gemeindetheologie*), correctly understanding the latter of course in a Catholic sense, viz. as the theology of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* of the primitive Church, based on the Apostles who [34] were able to further the faith as the teachers of the primitive Church community authorized by Christ and under the assistance of the Holy Ghost – and not as an ultimately anonymous theological speculation which is not directed or guaranteed from any quarter. This is not meant to say simply that in every case, every word of Jesus itself seen historically must already be by itself an original event of revelation. But the closeness to such an event of revelation is at any rate so great in principle that the nevertheless conceivable distance which can sometimes still exist even in this case, is nearly always negligible – at least as far as the sayings of Jesus about himself are concerned, although (and this must not be overlooked) he presumably used theological concepts for this whose form and import had already been determined previously, and not merely theologically neutral concepts of a general human kind. In the eschatology of Christ there is already after all so much which is historically established from elsewhere that one can surely speak already of a theology of Christ which adds *one* thing and nothing more to the already traditional eschatology. Of course, it thereby revolutionizes the traditional eschatology fundamentally, for the one thing it adds is the fact that Christ himself is the pivotal point of world history, the Saviour in person and not merely a prophet. And so, for the reason just indicated, not every word of the historical Jesus can be identified with the notion of an original revelation (although it must certainly also be taken into consideration that Christ's absolute and original consciousness as the Son – direct vision of God, in the language of theology – must give to *all* his declarations a breadth of understanding which in its turn gives every one of his sayings, even if they are derived, an originality which cannot be surpassed). Thus in practice the labour of the exegete and biblical theologian, differentiating between the words of the historical Jesus and the work of 'primitive-Church-theology', does after all come to the same thing in many cases as what we have demanded here under the title of a method of differentiation (and not of separation). This work of differentiation which is undertaken by the exegete seems at first sight a superfluous method

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for the work of dogmatic theologians, since they do after all listen to the whole of Scripture with all it contains as the inspired and infallibly true Word of God, and since it does not seem to be essential for them to know where the exact wording of a statement comes from – whether it comes from Jesus himself or from 'primitive-Church-theology' (which already interprets the words of Jesus theologically [35] in the whole context of the Christ-faith). But when it is a question of the exact, and perhaps otherwise very difficult to determine meaning of one of Christ's words in the Gospels (and there can easily be cases of this), then this distinction can become very significant indeed, even for the dogmatic theologian. For example, whether texts like Mt 10.23 or Mk 9.1 are to be regarded as said by Jesus himself or not, 'just' as they are written, is not simply indifferent for their meaning. For even though these words must be regarded as inspired and inerrant under both presuppositions, the choice between these two possibilities is not unimportant for the exact determination of their meaning. In the case of eschatological statements particularly, in order to determine their meaning exactly, one should inquire very closely into the original source of such statements. The same holds good, for instance, for the trinitarian formula in Mt 28.19. If this is already the reflection of the trinitarian theology of the primitive Church (*Urgemeinde*), then we must simply seek for the meaning and scope of this formula from this point of view. In this case it would not then be permissible to presuppose that the meaning of this formula should be interpreted as it were in the light of Christ's direct vision of God. Rather, it would have to be asked what moved the theology of the primitive Church to name the Father, Son and Holy Ghost in a baptismal formula. This would first of all demand an interpretation of this triad in the sense of the economy of salvation, and only then could one arrive from this at the immanent Trinity, with quite a few precisions which without the realization of this starting-point could not perhaps be attained so clearly and at the first attempt. And we could go on multiplying such examples of the objective usefulness to hermeneutics of the principle laid down above.

If this distinction were strictly carried through, it could provide us with an even more basic benefit. Who has not had the impression that the New Testament, and even more so the dogmatic theology taught in our textbooks, present a bewilderingly complicated system of assertions, a colossal complexity of statements, viewpoints, connections, distinctions, of opposing, often hard to harmonize movements of thought whose synthesis calls forth even more complicated distinctions? It must, of course, be quite clear from the start that the truth which tries to embrace and express (even if only from afar) the infinity of God and the incalculable variety of the world and of saving history *cannot* be so simple that its expression would not of necessity overtax [36] our powers. A system which would in a few formulas give the complete solution to everything with regard to the reality intended in the act of religion would by its simplifying simplicity and clarity already carry the stigma of falsehood within it. And yet, the message of the Gospel is addressed to the average man, it wants to help him to endure the hard struggle of his short life; the message of the Gospel is not meant to be the material on which man practises his dialectic acuteness of mind. Above all, the man of today gets the impression that one should be able to recognize in the true message of God that it testifies to the incomprehensible mystery we call God – that it does not claim to 'have got to the bottom of it' but, on the contrary, that it faces man inescapably with that greater God, with His mystery as such, in order to force him really to come out of himself and to transcend himself in that act which we call faith, adoration, surrender, love, etc. Reflection on the Christian message may be necessary and profitable *qua reflection*, i.e. as theology it may be complicated, subtle, abstract and in some way or other a secret science of an esoteric kind which is accessible only to the specialist. This is perhaps unavoidable, and the 'simple Christian' should not be too hasty in voicing cheap protests against it. Such a complicated theology may even have an indispensable function to perform by seeing to it that the message

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of the Gospel, the kerygma itself, is not reduced to a too simplified, 'enlightened' and utilitarian level in the unfathomableness *necessarily* belonging to it. But precisely this theology must not conceive the kerygma as theology *ad usum delphini*, as popularized theology, in the way microphysics is explained to the man in the street in our illustrated magazines. The simple message of the Gospel, the kerygma itself must in its simplicity be the difficult, that which is nearer to the meant reality, the unfathomable and that which overtaxes the mind and heart, in spite of and because of its simplicity. The reflected system, as opposed to the kerygma, must always appear as something secondary and derivative because the kerygma, fully and properly understood, is not the more primitive language for this matter, but the meant reality and its experience itself, and therefore it can never be attained by the reflection of theology. For the kerygma, properly understood, is not an additional discourse about something, but is the reality itself. For in contrast to reflecting theology it is completely 'there' and properly received only when it includes the grace with which it is proclaimed and heard – only when it calls up the transcendency of man itself which is divinized by grace and [37] plunged into the reality of God himself i.e. the transcendency of man which is not there in words but in the experience of 'daily life', in the experience of love, death and the inescapable encounter with the mystery in whose unfathomableness everything is founded and whose night alone illumines every superficial brightness of human existence. But this kerygma (if it really is itself and not devitalized theology) is precisely in this way necessarily simple, for ultimately the simplest is also the most unfathomable and vice versa. Obviously this kerygmatic testimony to the mystery of the Godhead in which God gives himself and saves us, and which is aimed at in the Christian faith and made 'present' by the actual message of faith, has necessarily its own temporal modes, its own physiognomy bound up with different situations; for it must attain man in the concrete, just as he is. Let us note in parenthesis that it should not injure the dignity and permanent significance of Holy Scripture to take this historically, situationally conditioned physiognomy even of Scripture (which distinguishes and does not belittle it) more clearly into account, and hence to acknowledge more readily to ourselves the difficulty which it presents to us, the men of a different age. For our difficulty is to understand the meaning of Scripture as intended for us, and to make it really our own. And this we must do wherever we are placed in the cruelly sober reality of our actual life, and not somewhere up in the clouds where we escape from this reality into a romantic ideology which, when all is said and done, is merely an aesthetic enchantment deceiving us into thinking that we will derive the true comfort from Scripture which is really contained in it. If we were really proceeding along the right lines, then surely our word should reach more people today than it actually does. And so, even though this time-index of the kerygma may not be overlooked (or better, so that it may not be overlooked), it must always be asked again what is in actual fact the message, the meaning in our complicated theology. This must not be understood in the sense of a latitudinarianism or modernism, as if the answer to such a question were to determine what might be omitted without endangering the 'substance' of Christianity, or what might be excluded from the requirements of faith as of little importance. That would obviously be heresy. For, after all, God's simple and immense mystery displays itself – its very self – in everything said by complicated theology, and it would consequently be also injured in itself if one were to give up part of its self-explanation, But it must be proclaimed as kerygma and not as [38] complicated theology, as primary and not as a simplified derivative of theology. And the Catholic doctrine of the '*fides implicita*' (which in the old days was an abomination to Protestant ears), and the question in theology as to what must be believed explicitly *necessitate medii* and *praecepti* and what not, are not in the last analysis casuistic questions looking for as easy a requirement for faith as possible. Rather, these questions are animated by a correct and most important conviction as to the fact that faith as such always only attains its true nature when it is a surrender to the

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incomprehensible God, an acceptance of the Unmanageable, a possession of the Incalculable – a real possession (and that is what is really meant by *fides implicita*). In these questions arises the conviction that the real possession of revealed reality does not always necessarily grow, but can even diminish with the growth of the conceptual unfolding of what is attained in the actual act of faith, For the act of faith does indeed attain what is meant through conceptual objectivity (to any extent whatsoever), yet not *in* it but rather in the experience of the divine grace of faith, in the light of faith, which is both the basis of faith and the actual object of faith; the grace of faith which is uncreated grace – the triune God himself – and as such also the content of faith possessed in the act of faith itself, It is therefore absolutely legitimate to ask about the nucleus of faith, about the right way for the kerygma to represent the meant reality conceptually, so that the act of listening acceptance of this kerygma, i.e. faith, may be as radical existentially and as much united in grace with the matter referred to as possible. This question is, however, most closely connected with the other question to which our present little reflection is devoted.

Naturally, the question just posed can be brought nearer to an answer in a way other than by the answer to our own question in the present investigation which has to try to uncover the genetic structure of the New Testament statements by *a posteriori* observation. One can also attempt to answer as well as possible the question just posed above by a more speculative process. One can more or less say in this connection that the real nucleus of Christian revelation, the unity of the mysteries in the strict sense, can be understood in the sense that the absolute mystery of God did not intend to be present to us merely as someone judging from a distance. Rather, God wished to give himself in an absolute, radical self-communication by grace as the innermost kernel of our existence and, precisely thus, as the permanent [39] mystery always coming nearer for the acceptance in love. One could show – even though only subsequently on each defined and believed mystery of Christianity – that the three great Christian mysteries (the Trinity, Incarnation and Grace-Glory) can be understood as necessarily mutually connected articulations of the one basic mystery of our concrete existence, viz. that the mystery is quite simply that which has become near in grace and which as such should be accepted in faith and love. It may be that such a simplifying perspective is typically modern. We do not mean to dispute that this is so. No one will surely doubt the fact that the particular manner in which modern man experiences God is existential (and not merely theoretical, as it always was), that modern man experiences God as the Unspeakable, the Incomprehensible. And so it is only right to look at the simple incomprehensibility and the incomprehensible simplicity of the whole Christian message from this point of view. But if, as we have done in the present investigation, one poses the question about the difference between the kerygmatic and theological content of the New Testament, without answering it in content (since we were here concerned merely with the lawfulness of this question), then one may conjecture that the question thus posed, and the other question briefly indicated above both in itself and as regards its answer, converge in their conclusions, if they do not in fact become simply identified. For one thing must be noted: the distinction we have made here between original revelation and theology based on it (even though this theology is binding and revelation *quoad nos*) cannot ultimately be taken to mean that there simply are statements in the New Testament which are mere and (*sit venia verbo*) 'chemically' pure objectifications of the original event of revelation and nothing else, and which are in no way already theology. We have after all stressed the fact that the hearing of a revelation as such is already part of human activity and thus does necessarily imply theology. No doubt, the actual event of revelation in man begins also so 'profoundly' in his innermost centre (and indeed all the more so the more it is precisely revelation of the divine self-communication of divinizing grace and basically means nothing else than this whenever it has attained its climax and fulfilment), that every conceptual objectification of what is thus

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communicated is secondary in comparison, even though this objectification is also utterly willed in itself by God and guaranteed in its rightness (by a public revelation, in which this revelation must be passed on to others besides the direct bearer of revelation). One can get [40] a clearer idea of what is meant by this from the example of the mystic. As is well known, a clear distinction must be made in mystical experience between the actual experience of God in the core of the person and the conceptual communication, interpretation and reflex objectification of that experience which the mystic undertakes for himself and then also for others with the aid of concepts, means of understanding, etc., available to him from elsewhere. Even though there is an essential difference as regards the divine guarantee for this conceptual objectification between the official public revelation and a mystical 'private revelation', it is nevertheless quite justifiable to conceive the actual and original central experience of the original bearers of revelation in the original event of revelation analogously to this central mystical experience. For grace, understood as the supernatural self-communication of God, is also light (light of faith, *illustratio et illuminatio mentis et cordis*), as the old theology had always acknowledged, since the New Testament teaching about the light, the unction, the experience of the *dynamis* of the spirit, the unspeakable groans of the spirit, etc., would simply be unintelligible without such a conception. Hence the simple inner bestowal of grace is already a kind of revelation, even though it only comes to its full being in the form of public and official revelation meant also for others, in the divinely guaranteed objectification of what is already contained in it but only as something which cannot be reflected on by man. This fundamental revelation in grace must, however, lie at the basis even of the original event of revelation in the case of revelation simply so called. This is because by definition there cannot be any higher form of revelation (before the Beatific Vision) than the self-communication by God in grace, with the result that this must also be at the basis of what is normally called revelation. The latter is then, of course, accompanied by a moment of official objectification, of conceptual representation and of binding concern to everyone, and extends to all the dimensions of human existence (both individual and social), all of which is not yet characteristic of the basic revelation by grace in the depth of the human being as such. If this is so, then it is easy to understand that this original process of revelation, which even in Scripture comes before theology, cannot be sought in, and simply identified with any particular objectification in chosen statements of the New Testament. It lies at the basis of these statements but is not identical with any determined, conceptually objectifying statements, even though these are the absolutely binding, and properly [41] communicating objectification of the original event of revelation for us. If we bear this in mind, then we will he able to understand that the question about the pre-theological, kerygmatic content of the New Testament in distinction to the theology of the New Testament, and the question about the kerygmatic nucleus of the message of the New Testament to be proclaimed by us, are very closely connected. Of course, there is no way of *talking* about both these realities having to be distinguished from reflex theology except again in concepts, in more theology. But it is important for theology to understand that one of its own essential questions is to explain that it itself is not the original basis of Christian existence, just as metaphysics is not the original basis for intellectual existence, although both of them belong necessarily to human and Christian existence.

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[42]

3

WHAT IS A DOGMATIC STATEMENT?[1]

What is a dogmatic statement? This is the question I have been posed and which I am expected to answer in the framework of what is laid down in Catholic theology. It is a difficult question to expose and answer even for the simple reason that, as far as I know, it is hardly ever explicitly posed in this way in the usual Catholic textbook theology. Of course, the ecclesiological part of Fundamental Theology always includes a treatise on the Church's magisterium, its bearers and the binding force of its declarations – showing clearly the various grades of obligation imposed – as well as a treatise on the *loci theologici* and the primacy of Holy Scripture, the inspired Word of God. Also, we are once again beginning to reflect more deeply and exactly, and making the various delicate distinctions required, on the relationship between the *magisterium* and Scripture; there are signs that at last, after too much mere denial of Protestant theology, we are slowly developing something like a theology of the Word. In this connection reflection on the difference between Kerygma and Dogma, between the word of the magisterium and the real proclamation of the joyous, saving message of the Lord is gradually beginning. Yet it cannot be said that one has only to open a textbook to find there a clearer answer to the question as to what is a dogmatic statement. To this extent it is also clear that this subject is not already known and directly elaborated as a controversial theological theme, however much one may suspect *a priori* that any attempt to answer this question will once more bring to the fore all the doctrinal differences between Protestant and Catholic theology concerning the *magisterium*, [43] its relationship to Scripture, etc. Consequently, all I can do is to try to collect the *membra disiecta* of such a doctrine about the nature of a dogmatic statement from all the corners of Catholic theology. And *it* remains to be seen how far this is successful or to what extent I overlook many subjects connected with this question.

I presume that this question is meant in such a way that its answer must also draw the dividing line between a dogmatic statement and an utterance of the proper, direct kerygma. In Other words, I presume that it is meant to make it quite clear whether, how and why there are intrinsically different forms of expression and speech in the realm of ecclesiastical Christianity, *one* of which is then called a dogmatic statement in the strict specific sense. But evidently, therefore, this distinction to be made within the language of faith of the Christian in the Church, and of the Church herself in her official representatives, cannot be the sole subject of the reflections required here. It is expected (I presume) that a dogmatic statement will not be only definitively distinguished from the kerygma and from proclamation and preaching in the strictest theological sense of these words, but will also be compared with ordinary statements (even those concerned with religious matters, if there are and can be such statements); in other words, it is presumably expected that what is shared in common by Kerygma and Dogma (up to and including theological statements) will be contrasted in this respect with ordinary discourse. In so far as a dogmatic statement must be most strictly distinguished from a kerygmatic one, a sufficiently clear demarcation is thus given between a dogmatic statement and *that* sort of statement which is to be found in Scripture. Of course, in this connection we must not overlook the fact that even Scripture does not simply express the

[1] The present essay was originally a lecture given at a specialists' meeting of the Protestant-Catholic ecumenical movement. Consequently, the fact that it was originally given in the framework of a report (which it was not thought desirable to extend subsequently) will explain the fragmentary nature of the various parts of its exposition.

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most original revelation (in such a way that this is the original happening of this revelation as an event), but that there certainly is also that kind of theological reflection in Scripture which is not directly kerygma but rather (one might say) typical theological reflection. For all this finds a place in the Catholic conception of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, since this conception does not exclude the possibility of essentially different literary forms within the one Word of God. Let this suffice as preliminary 'method' reflections on what exactly we are supposed to be talking about here. I will try to fulfil my task in a series of theses, adding a certain amount of explanation in each case.

1. A dogmatic statement is one which claims to be true even in that [44] formal sense which we are familiar with from ordinary everyday language and knowledge. Even a dogmatic statement should fulfil all those inner structures and laws which do or can belong to an ordinary statement: it is related to the person who makes it, has logic, its conceptual elements have their historicity, it is embedded in a historical and social fabric, contains different literary forms, presupposes those unreflected elements common to listener and speaker without which there would be no possibility of mutual understanding at all. Such and similar structures of a natural, ordinary statement must also be found in a dogmatic statement. Obviously we cannot develop these structures in greater detail here, for their reflex, explicit exposition – which is hardly ever undertaken in theology (which is not always too good) – would demand much more time and energy than are at our disposal. The thesis itself which we have formulated follows in its Catholic understanding not only from *a posteriori* experience of the fact that things are as the thesis states – in other words, that even in the expression of Christian proclamation and theology it is a question of human words and all that implies – but it follows also from the Catholic understanding of the relationship between nature and grace. This would be the point in theology where it would be easiest to find out something to help us with our Catholic understanding of the nature of a dogmatic statement in so far as it is also (but not only) a natural statement. But precisely from this point of view it would probably have to be asked and seen whether the Protestant view on the relationship between sinful creation and redeeming grace does not also have its repercussions in our present question. We would have to inquire into the question as to whether there is not (or whether we should not expect) a controversial-theological difference between the Catholic and Protestant conception even with regard to the natural, basic structures of a dogmatic and also kerygmatic statement. But perhaps in this sphere the difference has not been worked out consciously enough from the basic understanding of the relation between nature and grace which underlies it. Within the realm of Catholic thought itself we will, however, have to say that, in Catholic theology's reflections on the nature of the Word, the aspect of this Word which is determined by the sinfulness of man is hardly touched on. And yet it should touch on this. Much more should be done than simply to make a general statement about the clouding of the human mind as a result of original sin, and about the moral necessity of revelation for (clear and certain) knowledge of those truths which [45] in themselves are open to natural human knowledge on the religious and moral plane. For these statements should not merely be used to determine the characteristics of human knowledge *apart from* revelation. They should be used also to inquire into the peculiarly 'infralapsarian' nature of human knowledge and expression *within* the realm of revelation and of the faith of the Church. Is it not Catholic doctrine that the justified man too, even though he is not *simul iustus et peccator* in the Protestant sense, still remains always co-determined by his origin from the state of sinfulness? In other words – using this particular formulation – can the *simul iustus et peccator* not be understood in an absolutely correct Catholic sense? If this is so, then it should not be interpreted merely as a determination of the *moral* dimension of justified man, but should be understood also as a determination of the 'noetic' element in man, and this precisely also as a determination of the true reality of the justified man in his faith. This

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divine truth is after all embodied in the natural spirituality of man – yet not in an abstract, neutral spiritual nature and noetic of man, but in a nature and noetic burdened with original sin and to be redeemed by the grace of Christ. But I cannot really find any information in the explicit subject matter of present-day Catholic theology, as to what precisely is meant in this connection by what we have just stated in a formal, abstract way. And yet, unless one favours the strange opinion (which is really senseless although probably tacitly very widespread) that human discourse and propositions cannot have any other properties than those of truth or error, one cannot brush aside the question as to whether dogmatic statements do not also bear the signature of guilty man in the state of original sin by the simple expedient of pointing out that since such statements are true, they are by this very fact already utterly withdrawn from the realm of sinful flesh. For God's truth has also in reality incarnated itself into this flesh of sin, if what our first thesis affirms quite innocently is true, viz. that dogmatic propositions are inevitably also propositions of a natural, noetic nature, and if it is true that this nature, too, like all natures, is not an abstract one (in the way it originates as itself from the hands of the creator) but a concrete and thus infralapsarian nature which bears the stamp of the guilt of man. One need only ask oneself whether a statement though in itself to be qualified as true cannot also be rash and presumptuous. Can it not betray the historical perspective of a man in such a way that this perspective reveals itself as an historically guilty one? Cannot even a truth be dangerous, [46] equivocal, seductive, forward – can it not manoeuvre a person into a position where he must make a decision for which he is not fitted? If such and many similar questions which could be asked are not to be rejected from the outset, then it becomes clear that even within the truth of the Church and of dogmatically correct statements it is absolutely possible to speak sinfully, with a sinfulness which may be either individual, or of humanity in general or of a particular period. Once again, it would be impossible to say that Catholic theology has given a great deal of thought up till now to this question which is not really so unimportant in itself and is of great interest also in the theology of 'concrete' nature in the infralapsarian order. If I were to ask myself, therefore, as to what within Catholic theology are the essential *basic* structures of this infralapsarian order of nature which are to be found also in every dogmatic statement, I would have to confess my ignorance and could merely make a guess unsystematically at some of these particular characteristics. But all this is not meant to obscure the more fundamental insight which our first thesis is intended to express:– a dogmatic statement has (like a kerygmatic one) also a natural substratum which makes such a statement analogous to ordinary statements and which is the *potentia obedientialis* even in a positive sense for the real nature and meaning of dogmatic statements as such. As has already been said, it is not possible to develop all these natural properties of a human statement precisely in so far as they are necessarily rediscovered in a dogmatic statement. All we want to do is to give a few more indications here.

First of all, a dogmatic statement is meant to be a true statement by the very fact that a human statement has this intention and makes this claim. It intends a definite objective content which has its own existence opposite the speaker – it is not merely the publication of a subjective state of the speaker; it does not ultimately wish to objectify the subjectivity of the speaker but rather to bring the objectivity of the matter referred to nearer to the listener and thus to subjectify in this sense. In as far as these dogmatic statements to a great extent do not refer simply to objects of direct sense experience and are also not concerned simply with one's own spiritual experience, such statements can only be analogous, i.e. they point to the meant object with the help of positive representations and point the way to surpassing those representations by transcendence and negation. They do this, however, in the consciousness that this transcendental way of surpassing the original data [47] does not lead simply to absolute darkness and the nameless. For even what is unexperienced still has an objective likeness to what is experienced, and the transcendental affirmation of a similarity of analogy,

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in spite of the greater dissimilarity which obtains between divine and finite reality, belongs to those original intellectual data which are implicitly reaffirmed in every affirmation and negation. Under these presuppositions a dogmatic statement involves also the fact that not all dogmatic statements can be equally true or false. In other words, it involves the recognition that it is completely possible to pose the question of truth in this objective sense with regard to such statements and that not all statements are equally true or false simply because they refer to what is beyond sense experience. This will probably seem quite self-evident to the normal Christian. But if one thinks along the lines of absolute modernism (as understood in Catholic theology) or of absolute existentialism, then one ought to see in the truth of a dogmatic statement the final success in representing the subjective and always unique religious experience aptly – which means then, however, representing it productively both in an inward and outward direction. One may indeed have varying degrees of success in this, but this success can never be opposed to non-success in the same way as is the case between a logical affirmation and negation and between truth and falsehood as such. Certainly, a dogmatic statement must be allowed to have all those possibilities of ordinary statements, possibilities which exist in its case on account of a difference between the truth which is grasped in a properly personal act and that truth (or error) which is present in the objective-conceptual statement of that unobjectified, pre-conceptual truth – implied transcendentally or in some other way – and which is grasped in a personal, spiritual act. This pre-conceptual, pre-propositional knowledge, which may be true even though the conceptual-objective expression is false (the converse is of course also true), is, without detriment to its property of being non-propositional, an absolutely objective knowledge which refers to an object which stands quite independently of the exercise of this knowledge. The fact that this peculiar tension between what is meant and what is said (if we may put what we are trying to say in this, though perhaps misleading way) which is present in ordinary knowledge can be also present and indeed present above all in a theological statement, follows not only from the universal validity of our basic thesis but also from many other, specifically theological reasons. It follows from the possibility of being a person [48] who really believes in Christ even where, judging merely from the objective meaning of an objectified statement, there seems only non-belief. It follows finally from the impossibility of knowing reflexly with absolute certainty the reality of one's own or someone else's belief, even though one seems to hold fast absolutely – according to the testimony of one's reflection – to the statement of faith declared to be absolutely true. It is not possible to enter further into this problem which we have just indicated.

2. A dogmatic statement is a statement of faith. In our fifth thesis we will indeed have to separate and distinguish the dogmatic statement from a direct and original kerygmatic statement. This must not prevent us, however, from qualifying the dogmatic statement in the stricter sense as also a statement of faith. A dogmatic statement, whenever it is genuine and lives up to its true being, is thus not merely an ordinary statement about some theological object (about something to which the Christian faith itself referred originally) but is also even in its execution – in as much as it is the self-accomplishment of the subject – an exercise of faith. In other words, it is a statement of faith not only in as far as it is *fides quae creditur* but also in as far as it is *fides qua creditur*. Catholic theology usually expresses what is meant here by stating that theology is not in fact merely an exercise of the *habitus fidei* purely as such but an exercise of the *habitus scientiae* which is however permeated and supported by the *habitus fidei*, so that theology always is and must be '*fide illustrata*' (Denz 1796: 1st Vatican Council). Because, and in so far as, faith is always the listening by a concrete human being to the Word of God, the real fact of having heard, the success of the listening to the Word of God which is actually present only when it is heard and understood, can always happen solely in a simultaneous understanding of faith, i.e. in a confrontation (which

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naturally admits of many degrees) of God's message with what man already is, with man in so far as he is a spiritual being and with the man as he is listening to this message. Since the analysis by the hearer of what he is told is an inevitable moment in the process of hearing itself, and since utter non-understanding destroys even the hearing itself, a certain degree of theology belongs as an inner moment to hearing itself, and the mere hearing in faith is already a human activity in which man's own subjectivity, together with its logic, its experience, native concepts and perspectives, already enters into play. What we call theology and hence dogmatic statement in the strict sense is therefore merely a further [49] development, an unfolding, of that basic subjective reflection which already takes place in the mere obedient listening to the Word of God, i.e. in faith as such. From this it follows, however, that dogmatic reflection and its statement can and must never separate themselves completely from the source from which they spring, i.e. from faith itself. This refers always, as has been said, not merely to the object of faith but also to its exercise. The latter remains the basis and support of the dogmatic statement as such itself. Self-evident as what has just been said may seem to be, it must nevertheless be admitted that it is in fact not really self-evident in Catholic theology. For one may hold-in company with not a small part of post-tridentine theology – that grace, in so far as it is strictly supernatural, is something of which we cannot at all be conscious. And in this case one will be of the opinion that the 'light of faith', even where one retains this expression, really means either that purely non-experiential, supernatural elevation of the spiritual acts of man by which these acts become saving acts, or that empirically exterior instruction by historical revelation whose fact and content (since these two are inseparable) can be grasped also by purely natural, speculative and historical reasoning. In other words, if one denies that the supernatural saving acts have a formal object which cannot be grasped by any natural act, *then* the object of theology (as even that of faith) can in principle be grasped also by purely natural reason in exactly the same way as by believing reason. The unbeliever will not in general actually occupy himself with such propositions, since they do not interest him. But, presupposing the theory about the nature of the grace of faith just indicated, he can basically do so just as well as the believer, and he grasps exactly the same when he occupies himself with these statements as the believer. There could, therefore, be a dogmatic statement which would be a statement of faith in its object but not in its exercise. *Against* this conception, which in a nominalistic and rationalistic fashion removes the actual supernatural nature of faith (which, of course, it does not deny) into a dimension conceived purely objectively and conceived as a state beyond consciousness and situated outside the exercise of the spirit as such, we hold fast to the thomistic doctrine of the proper formal object of the act elevated by grace and adhere to the doctrine of the proper light of faith and the incommensurability of faith with an ordinary act referring to some religious matter. It must then, however, be truly said that even where it is a question of pure 'listening to' and stating God's [50] message in Christ as such, and where it is a matter of a dogmatic statement in the sense of a self-justifying reflection (and in this sense a matter of theology), it is always still a question of a statement of faith, an exercise of faith. As soon as this is no longer the case, there may still indeed be science of religion, but not theology. It may be – indeed it is a fact – that this difference is not properly speaking subject to conscious *reflection* and that, therefore, the profane student of religion and the Christian theologian seemingly meet on exactly the same plane and hence are distinguished from each other merely by the existential acceptance and non-acceptance of that about which both of them speak to one another. But in actual fact this is merely apparent. In fact this existential acceptance or refusal opens up or shuts out the whole view of the reality, even though it seems that the profane theoretician of religion can know and say just as much or as little about Christianity as the believing theologian. It is not easy to make it reflectively clear *why* this is nevertheless not the case – *how*, in the case of apparently similar propositions

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formulated by both, the profane scientist really misses the whole point and does not really express it at all, although he reads the dogmatic statements of the theologian and thinks he understands them; and even though it is impossible to prove on the plane of objective concepts as such that he has not really understood at all. The truth of the matter is that this incomprehension goes deeper and is rooted at the point where knowledge is activated in the exercise of the person accepting grace, and before it is on reflection expressed in propositions. It must, of course, be noted also with regard to this conception that it is not as if the unbeliever were simply one without the grace for Christian understanding, 'pure nature' (in the Catholic theological sense). He, too, comes under the influence of the grace which seeks and enlightens every man; hence, in any case, he sees more than would be seen by someone without grace, even though he does not want to see what he sees and even though he 'represses the truth' and pushes it aside. He, too, stands therefore under the light of grace – although by self-closure from it. And to this extent there is after all a difference between the statement of the theologian and that of the profane, unbelieving theoretician of religion. (Of course, it must once more be noted in this connection that nobody can say absolutely in practice who among the speakers belongs to the one or the other category.) If it is correct to say that the dogmatic statement, even where it is already real theology, is and remains a statement of faith not merely [51] with regard to its object but also in the subjective act as such, then the dogmatic statement is determined by all the theological characteristics of the *fides qua creditur*. This would again provide the starting point for the development of a whole theology of the dogmatic statement. And again we must state that this is not possible here. At any rate it follows from this beginning that even a dogmatic statement still participates in its own way in the expressed profession and praise of the message Christ has given us about himself and which leads us to him – in the expression of that message listened to and accepted. The dogmatic statement leads towards the historical event of salvation, in spite of all its conceptual reflection. It renders this event present by confessing that it is brought about by it. It does not merely speak 'about' this event but tries to bring man into a real relationship with it. And despite all its abstractness and theoretical, reflective nature, it is essentially dependent on the fact that this not merely theoretical but also existential and supernatural relationship of the whole man to the historical event of salvation – and not merely to some proposition about it – is really preserved and that the theological statement, even in its theoretical-reflex character, is *ex fide ad fidem*. Since we cannot do more here than to indicate the *locus theologicus* of the question about the nature of a dogmatic statement – which is the same as the nature of the act of faith – we will now pass on to the further determination of dogmatic statements from a different angle. Before doing so, let us merely note that until quite recently the theological description of the act of faith itself regarded the latter far too much and almost exclusively from the point of view of the theological nature of the dogmatic proposition. If there is more concern in Catholic theology today with trying to bring out other moments of the act of faith than merely the holding fast to a proposition guaranteed by the authority of God, then it will no doubt be easier in future to clarify the proper characteristics of the theologically dogmatic statement by contrasting it with the act of faith as such. We will then have to avoid the danger, it is true, which might incline us to make a separation out of the distinction, to the detriment of both the act of faith itself (whose theoretical aspect might become obscured) and of the theological statement (whose property of referring back to the act of faith might disappear from view).

3. A dogmatic statement is in special measure an ecclesiological statement. Already the act of faith and the kerygma of Jesus Christ himself have an ecclesiological aspect which is essential to them. [52] Proclamation and belief take place in the Church, since she is (in an indissoluble union with the personal uniqueness of the individual and his decision of faith) the object of the redeeming, saving act of God and of the faith itself. For the act of faith is by

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hearing and remains dependent on the testimony of the message of Christ and this testimony takes place in the assembly of believers, originates from it and is destined for it. The dogmatic statement, however, is ecclesiological in an ever more special manner and measure. For theology, in so far as it is distinguished from the original message and simple faith, arises precisely because there is and must be the Church. Since belief must take place in the Church, from the Church and towards the Church, there is theology. Presumably there would, of course, be theology even if the individual had an absolutely individualistic history of salvation and faith, i.e. if the latter were possible: the message which he has heard and always hears anew, would be in continuous dialogue with the rest of his experience of life and would always have to be heard anew in relation to the rest of this spiritual history. And since his experience of salvation has a *history* both in itself (naturally it has this too) *and* through the continual encounter with the rest of his *historical* reality, there would already be theology in this way. For theology is the historical permanence of a revelation existing in ever new encounters and transforming everything into itself, with a spatio-temporal position in time. Suppose there were no eph'hapax of the event of saving history, that there were always just revelation and never any theology related to a localized event of salvation but not identical with it. Then, if there were no theology, the saving history which takes place but once would not be capable of really reaching later humanity in a saving way. Or at least later humanity would not be reached by it in the whole breadth and extent of its existence – anyone living later on would have to strip himself of his own historical uniqueness and seek to enter into a relationship with this past event of salvation in the form of the abstract man-in-himself. This consideration shows by the way (to make this already explicit here) that theology and a non-binding opinion resulting from a merely subjective reflection on a saving event or a proposition of the original revelation are not the same. For, particularly if theology is to be the absolutely obedient confrontation of one's own existence with the kerygma of salvation found in the unique person of Jesus Christ, it must be able to carry the obligation of faith in itself. It must be possible to have a theology which is authoritatively binding. Wherever [53] it does not (yet) possess this character, this is not because theology *cannot* have this character but because it is itself still in the process of finding itself and of accomplishing what it means to accomplish, viz. of being the concrete form of faith in a new spiritual situation. But however much there is and must already be theology on account of the individual history of the faith of individual men, theology has still a particularly *ecclesiological* character. For in the Church men must believe in common, profess in common and praise God for his grace in a tongue which can be spoken by all. And this must always be done anew at each moment. Confronted with a common spiritual situation which, being common, must always be grasped and understood again in common, the traditional message must always be grasped anew in common. There must be theology in the Church for which the Church herself is responsible. It will, of course, always be due also to the initiative of individuals, since this is the only way in which there can be history and the life of a community. But even theology and theological statements by the individual always address themselves to the Church (explicitly or implicitly). Such a statement by the individual is always a question posed by the individual to the Church as to whether she can make this statement her own or at least can support it as being a possible statement in the one Church. Apart from this always ecclesiological theology of the individual, and superior to it, there is the theology of the Church in which the Church as a whole engages in theological activity through the bearers of her established *magisterium*. This means that here the Church reflects on the message – given by and received from Jesus Christ and transmitted in the belief of the primitive Church – in relation to each particular, historically conditioned situation and based on her consciousness of faith and its original source. She reflects on this message and proclaims the one permanent faith anew in the form of this new theological reflection, in such a way that this faith retains and acquires once more

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as inevitable a presence as possible for the one who hears the message of the Church to make a decision. This theological form of the proclamation of the Church is theology, for this proclamation always retains its reference to another *norma normans* to which it knows itself bound and which it wants merely to interpret, viz. the message of the first witnesses of the Lord, the faith of the primitive Church in the normative, concrete form in which it is found in Holy Scripture. And precisely this theology is a real proclamation of the faith which demands obedience, in so far as [54] the Church claims and can claim in her *magisterium* that this her message constituted in this way (i.e. become theology) *is* (and does not merely speak about) the here and now valid form of the Word in which God has spoken to us in our heart. In this connection, too, it must again be stated that all we can do here is to determine the *locus theologicus* which could be the starting point for an essential determination of the nature of the dogmatic statement. For nothing very precise is said about the dogmatic statement simply by calling it ecclesiological. It would still be necessary to develop what exactly is meant by this. This again is impossible here.

Only in one regard should we make at least an attempt to clarify our meaning. Since a dogmatic statement – this is the way I would formulate it – has an ecclesiological character, it always signifies inevitably a communal *linguistic* ruling on terminology which, on the one hand, can be obligatory and, on the other hand, must be taken into account in any interpretation of the declarations made by the Church, and which must not be mistaken for the thing itself or respectively must not be confused with a statement which can be made only by starting from the thing itself. Let me explain myself and the sub-thesis I have just formulated. I regard this thesis as important, particularly because it is not reflected on in the usual theology of the *magisterium* and its binding force, and because this oversight leads to unnecessary misunderstandings in the internal Catholic teaching practice and in controversial theology. The reality referred to by theological statements is of incalculable richness and infinite fullness. The terminological material available for characterizing this reality is extremely limited. It remains limited even when it grows in the course of the history of concepts and terms. It remains particularly limited when, and because, it is a question of that store of terminology which can be used for a theological statement for it ought to be brief, understandable by all and accommodated to the consciousness of faith of a wider audience. With this very limited material of communally usable concepts, we must keep open the view into the infinite fullness of what is meant by faith, and with it must be expressed the infinite fullness and differentiation of the matter under consideration. Such a limited terminology can never be adequate for what is meant. We do not, however, intend to think here about why and how one can be conscious of this inadequate relation between the statement and what is meant by it when the reality itself can be laid hold of only in the word itself and not side by side with it or beyond it. [55] What we are concerned with here is the following: the word which is inadequate for expressing the thing – always, solely, inevitably and most frequently indeed, in its communal use – brings out certain characteristics of the matter referred to and equally inevitably leaves other characteristics in the background. It creates new relations to certain other matters, and equally does not bring out certain existing relations with other realities of the faith. The historically conditioned, limited terminology lends historical finiteness, concreteness and contingence to the statement of faith itself, particularly in its theological form. Added to this there is the fact that it is basically impossible to furnish every time an absolutely unequivocal, reflectively expressed definition of associated terms, together with the terminology used. For theology cannot take its departure, like geometry, from a finite number of axioms which can be strictly defined in concepts used by them (quite apart from the fact that even these sciences are not absolutely successful in this). This is the reason why ecclesiastical declarations of doctrine, ecclesiastical statements of dogma, also contain implicitly a determined terminology about which one cannot pose the question of truth but at

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the most the question of aptness. Of course, those who teach and define are not always conscious of this; indeed, most of the time they are not conscious of it and *cannot* even be conscious of it in an adequately reflective way. Here and there, but only right at the fringes, this problem is recognized in some way in Catholic theology. This is the case, for instance, when it is said that the Church calls the event taking place at the Lord's supper '*aptissime*' transubstantiation, or when Pius XII defends the aptness of many of the scholastic concepts which we may not presume the Church will ever abandon again in the future, although we know that they are of historical origin (Denz 2312). But the problem we have referred to here is felt very much in the Church's teaching practice. When it is taught (to give at least a few examples) that man is already a sinner by descent from Adam, the word 'sinner' is used very much in an analogous sense which differs most essentially from the sinfulness brought about by one's own personal decision. This is dealt with at length by scholastic theology in the treatise on Original sin. But in the concise formulation given by the Church, which states that man is a sinner by reason of his origin from Adam, the merely analogous nature of this term is not made explicit. It is not treated by itself as a special theme and is not clearly present in the reflex consciousness of faith in the majority of Christians. Theologians [56] for the most part forget it since their theology too is very much reduced in normal practical life to the catechetical, undifferentiated elements of the usual statements made by the Church. Anyone who is really conscious of what analogy means in such a case understands also that one could equally well say in the nature of things and *in abstracto* that man is not a sinner through Adam – without necessarily teaching something thereby which is objectively contradictory to the Church's teaching on original sin, since such a statement in a different terminology would merely dispute that man is a sinner by his origin from Adam in the *same* sense as he is by his own decision. There are indeed some examples which show that the Church has not only gradually given different nuances to her terminology here and there, but has even changed that terminology in the strict sense (without making any change in what is meant by it). The augustinian terminology, for instance, which at one time was the terminology of the Church with regard to the sinfulness of every act done by someone in the state of original sin, was implicitly abandoned through the declarations of Pius V. St Augustine could and had to say – and the Church of his day also said so as part of her teaching – that every non-justified person in the state of original sin sins by every one of his acts; in the language of the post-tridentine Church we may no longer formulate the matter in this way, although it can be shown that these opposing formulations do not contradict each other in what they mean – even though this must not be allowed to obscure the fact that even such a change in terminology is extremely significant in the field of theology and the history of thought. There are many such determinations of terminology contained implicitly in definitions. For instance, the Church's teaching on the Trinity *as a whole* requires a conception of 'person' in *this* connection which (if one is honest) has relatively little to do with what one understands by this word in other connections. And yet this word says what is meant, and it is not permissible within the Church's teaching to express the matter intended by completely circumventing this concept and word, although a terminology such as would be proposed by Barth in this matter might not perhaps be liable in itself to more misunderstandings though perhaps different ones. When the Holy Office declared recently that only a consecrating priest can concelebrate, this was more a determination of terminology than a dogmatic statement clarifying the matter itself. This is at least true in so far as this declaration does not explain what is meant by concelebration. [57] Thus, this particular statement practically came to this that one may only call that way of celebrating Mass a concelebration in which several priests pronounce the words of consecration together. This leaves it open, however, whether or not a priest who celebrates Mass together with other priests without co-consecrating in this way can nevertheless exercise his priestly function as such in some other way. Let us take another,

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better-known example: the question as to who according to Catholic teaching possesses membership of the Church is for the greater part a matter of linguistic determination of terminology. '*Mystici Corporis*' reserved the term of 'Church membership' to Catholics. Today those concerned with the teaching authority of the Church seem rather to be inclined once more to describe that reality as membership of the Church which is already given by baptism alone. The interesting thing about this is merely the fact that nowhere in these declarations of the Church's *magisterium* is this question seen explicitly as one of terminology but that this matter is taught with the impression and presupposition that one is speaking about the reality itself. It must moreover be noted in this connection that this terminology is inevitably exposed to continual historical change. This historical change has indeed itself been influenced by the *magisterium* of the Church which has to a certain extent helped in directing its course, has arrested it and to a certain extent has diverted it – and rightly so – into other paths. But it must also be remembered that this historical process of change in terminology cannot be completely steered by the authorities of the Church's *magisterium*, not even in the ecclesiastical field. This process therefore takes place independently, at least partly so, of the official Church and her conscious regulating power, and this fact implies in its turn the duty (and the right) of the Church to take account of this terminological process going on independently of her. This she can do in a great variety of ways into which I do not wish to enter here. But it can happen for these reasons that the Church does not take these changes in terminology clearly and decisively enough into account. As a result there may arise theological controversies both within the Church and with non-Catholic theology which do in fact rest basically on a mutual misunderstanding of terminology. Hence it may also happen – speaking from the Catholic viewpoint – that a Catholic theologian remains obliged to use an officially adopted terminology even though he cannot blind himself to the problematic nature of this terminology, its misleading nature, its lack perhaps of [58] perspectives which are of essential import and similar limitations of such, as of any, terminology. This again is not meant to say that the theologian takes up a passive attitude towards these regulations of the language of theological terminology undertaken by the Church. No, wherever he is engaged in a living theology by looking at the reality itself, the theologian contributes also actively (even though perhaps almost imperceptibly) towards the continual historical changes of the terminology of the Church. And conversely, by keeping in this process to the Church's rules of language in his statements, he enters into the communal, historical conditionality of the particular consciousness of faith existing at the time – a conditionality which at the same time (if it is accepted and endured) keeps the individual view open to the Church's consciousness of faith as it also expects that renunciation of the individual without which there can be no unity of truth and love in this world.

4. A theological statement is a statement which leads into the *mysterium*. This, too, is meant to refer for a start to a characteristic which the theological and dogmatic statement has in common with the direct, kerygmatic statement. If the kerygmatic statement, with and in spite of all its determined and indispensable content – which belongs to it and rightly so, if only because it always refers also to a historical event within the human dimension – is already a statement which directs its hearer beyond himself into the mystery of God as it is in itself, then this is true also of the dogmatic statement since the latter must never abandon its original relation to the real kerygmatic statement of faith. The dogmatic statement – it is true – is a reflected statement in which man (if we may put it this way) is also explicitly alone with himself in his own process of knowledge and not only alone with the thing. And so the dogmatic statement can only be what it must be if it does not forget that the object to which it refers is only properly known when it is grasped as something infinite and incomprehensible – as a permanent mystery – in the very act of taking hold of its finite concept. The dogmatic statement must not forget, therefore, that for this very reason its object is given not only in a

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concept but also in the effect of God's touching man both by lifting him up and by his grace which goes beyond any conceptual procedure. The dogmatic statement – like the kerygmatic one-is basically possessed of an element which (in the case of intramundane categorical statements) is not identical with the represented conceptual content. Without injuring [59] its own meaning, the represented conceptual content is in this case merely the means of experiencing a being referred beyond itself and everything imaginable. That this reference is no mere empty, frustrated desire to transcend, that it is not simply the formal horizon for the possibility of objective conceptualization, but, the way in which man really moves towards the self-communication of God as he is in himself – is brought about by what we call grace, and is grasped and accepted in what we call faith. We do not refer here to the *concept* of transcendence or the *concept* of grace, but to these realities themselves. Naturally, these realities do not permit of any simple objective presentation in the dogmatic statement; it cannot be determined objectively whether they have come into play in the dogmatic statement itself. The theologian himself can only be told repeatedly that what enters into his conceptually composed statements as such is not everything that should be present in them. It can be indirectly tested by critical conjectures as to this or that indication, whether there is the spirit as well as the letter and – besides talking about the matter – also the matter itself. Seen in the totality of what is said, and taking a deeper view, certain signs offer themselves for a distinction of spirits, indicating whether someone merely mentions the fact that he is concerned with a mystery when in reality he manipulates his concepts and statements as if they were the reality itself and not merely signs which speak most clearly and perceptibly when they silently refer the believing man beyond themselves into the impenetrable light of God himself. These criteria have not yet been properly developed in Catholic theology. (We prescind here from the subject of analogy which is itself most frequently misunderstood inasmuch as the analogous concept is conceived as an odd hybrid between an univocal and an equivocal concept, i.e. as something derived, in contrast to which the univocal predication is the more original and proper – when in reality the radical openness of the movement of the spirit in analogy really makes the spirit a spirit.) The theories of paradox, of dialectic discourse and of the merely indirect discourse – and presumably not without some justification – have not found any real echo, and have certainly not established their right being at home, in Catholic scholastic theology. As far as the doctrine of analogy is concerned, we will have to admit if we are honest that was E. Przywara who first elevated it from being a modest study somewhere in logic or general ontology to being a really important nodal point of theological discourse. And it is still far from having [60] been developed to the point where one could say in this respect that its meaning has been generally understood. This is clear from the fact that it is not yet agreed as to whether this doctrine is what Barth used to describe as something specifically Catholic and absolutely to be denied, or whether this analogy is the name given by Catholic theology to something which is recognized by everyone as an essential characteristic of theological discourse (although perhaps under different names), and which for us signifies a first starting point for what is of importance here, viz. the fact that the theological discourse does not only speak about the mystery but that it only speaks properly if it is also a kind of instruction showing us how to come into the presence of the mystery itself. At any rate – to be more concise – one must not imagine that one has already arrived at the reality in theological dogmatic discourse when one possesses its conceptual term. This term is mystagogical quite apart from its function of substituting for the reality and of being its image. Over and above this, it invokes the experience granted by grace of the absolute mystery itself, to the extent in which this mystery communicates itself to us in that grace which is the grace of Christ. Yet once more it cannot here be more than a question of announcing a theme and of pointing out regretfully that it is not a subject found in scholastic theology – by which we naturally do not mean that it is found nowhere in our

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theological tradition.

5. A dogmatic statement is not identical with the original Word of revelation and the original statement of faith.

Perhaps I am only now coming to the subject I have been expected to treat of and so cannot deal adequately with it at the end of a long lecture. But in the Catholic understanding of theology and faith, of scriptural and dogmatic statements, this relationship is extremely many-sided, entangled and very difficult to express merely by a nice distinction. Hence, what we have said so far has also been a necessary preparation after all for the section on which we are about to embark, i.e. the section about the distinction between the original proclamation of revelation and the original statement of faith, on the one hand, and reflex dogmatic statements on the other. We find the prototype of the first kind of statement in Scripture, although we should perhaps note that even here there is once more the distinction between the original event of revelation with its direct testimony, on the one hand, and on the other hand the reflection on it found in Scripture. If we are to contrast the dogmatic statement with the statements of Scripture – [61] and we are absolutely justified in doing this – then we must now proceed to work out the differences between the two. This is not as easy as it might seem at first sight. After all, we have already said that even the dogmatic statement is supported objectively and subjectively by faith. We have already seen that it remains a statement and an act of faith and is therefore qualified in exactly the same way by the *magisterium* of the Church even though it is not always and in every case the statement of a binding explanation given by the *magisterium*, but may also be the statement of a *quaestio disputata* – for even then it still tries to look to the Church's consciousness of faith as a whole and even in this case knows itself to be dependent on the Church's *magisterium*. And conversely: there is no *proclaimed* revelation except in the form of a *believed* revelation. A *believed*, i.e. heard, revelation, always already includes also – in so far as it is a revelation understood, accepted and assimilated – a synthesis of the Word of God and the word of a particular man which *he* in particular can and indeed must speak in his historical situation and from his particular standpoint. Every Word of God which is spoken by men is already, therefore, to a certain extent a reflected word, and to that extent also already a beginning of theology. The difference between the original kerygma and a dogmatic statement, therefore, does not lie in the fact that in the former there is as it were the pure Word of God alone and in the latter only human reflection. If this were the case, then there could be indeed merely non-binding theological discourse talking round about this Word of God, but not a statement of faith which though different from the original Word of God is yet absolutely binding and through which the Word of God, as announced originally, receives its real binding presence in the course of history. There could only be a history of theology in this case and not a history of dogmas. The fact that the latter exists can be explained only because the original statement of faith already includes that moment of genuine human reflection which makes it legitimate and necessary and which continues to be effective and to unfold itself in later theology. What has just been said – it must be stressed once more – is valid also of Holy Scripture. Thus, even in the simplest kerygmatic statement there is already a beginning of theology; and this theology, understood as reflection and as derived from the most direct experience of revelation, is undoubtedly already given an extensive place in Scripture. It is regrettable that Catholic theology hardly reflects on this in fact. One practically never asks oneself about the source from [62] which the author of certain parts of Holy Scripture has received what he says. One does not reckon with the undoubtedly real possibility that even a scriptural statement can already be secondary in relation to another such statement – that it can be derived from this other statement. One puts every Scripture text on the same plane of meaning and treats it as an entirely original datum which has sprung absolutely directly from the revelation of God and cannot be derived from anything else. And yet no one can seriously

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deny this other possibility in principle; it is a real possibility, for we can already observe a development of dogma within the New Testament. And to take such possibilities into account in practice could contribute a great deal to the exact determination of the meaning of certain texts of Scripture.

And yet there is an essential difference between a theological statement (even in its binding form of a real testimony of faith and of actual proclamation) and the original testimony of faith to which *quoad nos* Scripture as a *whole* does after all belong. The reason for this lies in the peculiar and unique position of Holy Scripture. Revelation has a history. Christian understanding, however, means by this first and last that there are certain quite definite events fixed in place and time in which this revelation (which is determined for all later ages) takes place in such a way that later ages remain permanently bound by this historical event, and that they really attain this divine revelation only if and in so far as they refer back to this historical event of revelation. Hence there are certain events and statements for future ages (statements which in their turn belong to the constitutive elements of these events themselves) which form the enduring and unsurpassable *norma normans*, *non normata* for all later dogmatic statements, viz. none other than the original statements just mentioned. Even if and when these statements have *also* all those elements which we have elsewhere attributed to dogmatic statements, they nevertheless have one thing no other statement has – they belong to that unique historical event of salvation itself to which all later proclamation and theology are referred. They are in this very definite sense more than theology, and even more than absolutely binding theology. They are not merely any statement of faith but here that statement which remains the permanent ground of all other, future statements – they are what is handed down and not the unfolding tradition of what has been handed down. It is true, of course, that the latter statement of the already derived and standardized type is a form and aspect of the original statement, without [63] which later Christians could no longer hear and repeat that original statement obediently without becoming unhistorical and unecclesiastical. It is true, in other words, that the later Christian will always hear the original statement in terms of its later statement by the Church's *magisterium* and consciousness of faith. Yet he really hears that original statement of faith itself, not although but precisely because he hears it by means of the present Church. For the *ultimate* guarantee of being able to hear the original statement is not the historical skill of man, (i.e. his 'being able to understand' historically in matters of revelation and faith), but the exercise of faith in community with the present-day Church. But as has been said, it is *thus* that the *original* statement of faith is heard, and this statement remains a moment in the historical event of salvation to which all ages, past and future, remain constantly referred. It can therefore be merely a question of the form in which this original statement of faith, understood as the *norma normans*, *non normata*, is given to us today, both in binding and non-binding statements of faith. We do not intend to answer this question by a theological deduction, although this would presumably be possible. Our question can be answered by saying quite simply that the original statement of faith understood in this way is given to us in Holy Scripture. We are quite justified in making this assertion even though we do not commit ourselves regarding what has been and still is (today more than in preceding centuries) a controverted question in Catholic theology, viz. the question as to whether Tradition – which according to the Council of Trent is a norm of our Faith and of the Church's proclamation of doctrine-is basically and abstractly speaking a source of the material content of the faith in addition to Scripture, or whether it is only a formal criterion for the purity of the faith, after the material content of the apostolic proclamation had settled adequately and objectively in Scripture. The reason for our being justified in making the above assertion is quite simple. For, even if we suppose that there is another source *besides* Scripture which serves as testimony for of certain material contents of the faith not found also in Holy Scripture, this other source known as Tradition would

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nevertheless be such in fact as to contain only the testimony (guaranteed by God as pure) of the actual apostolic traditions in accord with revelation and unmixed with human tradition. For it goes without saying: revelation, right from the very start of the historical movement of revelation, was accompanied by human, theological reflection, by non-binding [64] *theologumena*, by purely human knowledge and opinions and by errors. It is not indeed necessary to dispute the fact that the Church can distinguish, within the mixed up mass of what is human and what is divine in Tradition, between that which really represents a handing on properly-so-called of the original tradition and the rest which cannot make any such claim. One will absolutely have to concede this instinct to her because of the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised to her. But this does not yet answer the question as to *how* the Church makes this necessary distinction, a distinction always necessary if the revealed truth is always to be recognized *anew* by the Church and she nevertheless knows herself always bound to the original revelation. Let us suppose that the Church is able to do this by the light of faith granted to her or by an instinct of faith alone, without any extrinsic criteria. Let us suppose, furthermore, that the Church simply adopts this critical distinction with regard to the literature passed on to her from the apostolic age – in other words, that she says where, in this literature, she recognizes the genuine objectification and the pure expression of her faith, and that she says in what other literature of this age she does not recognize this. Then, even under these presuppositions, she would delimit precisely *that* pure objectification of the original apostolic testimony which we call Holy Scripture. Yet, be this as it may, Christians are agreed (at least in essentials) about the fact that the pure (even though absolutely historical) written objectification of the apostolic kerygma *is* given to the Church in Holy Scripture – no matter what may be said about the just mentioned *a priori* considerations. Otherwise the Church would not possess any such objective norm when she wishes to determine by the gift of distinction what in the concrete totality of her actual Tradition is actually tradition of revelation and what is merely human tradition which has also existed from the beginning of the Church. There is, therefore, a *norma normans*, *non normata*, and this norm is identical with Scripture and it alone. This is primarily a norm for the consciousness of faith of the Church as a whole and for the Church's *magisterium*, but not for the individual (much less for his fight against the consciousness of faith of the whole Church attested authoritatively by the *magisterium*). And to this extent the original word of revelation and of faith in – and of – the Church is essentially distinct from every later, theological statement of – and in – the Church, even though the latter be a kerygmatic testimony of faith, something demanding the assent of faith, [65] and not merely a theological reflection. Hence, one could say that the theological word is *only* a theological word, in as much as it is not the word of Scripture. Naturally, even the statements of scriptural exegesis and biblical theology are merely theological statements, even when they deal *with* the words of Scripture. It would naturally be also still possible and necessary to make explicit, and to give reasons for and to estimate the significance of, a distinction within the theological word which we have up till now always only mentioned in passing and presupposed. We mean the distinction which is based on the fact that there is, *on the one hand*, a dogmatic statement made by the Church in her ordinary and extraordinary proclamation of doctrine, which demands obedience and faith – and this right up to the real, absolute assent of faith but also below this-even where such an absolute consent of faith is not demanded of him, or at least not demonstrably so – in the different degrees in which the individual Christian and theologian knows himself to be bound by the proclamation and teaching of the Church – and that there is, *on the other hand*, the merely private word of the individual theologian. The borderlines between these different kinds of theological statement are fluid. This is so even merely because the theologian, even in his private statements, if they are truly dogmatic, wants still to refer himself to the Church's consciousness of faith. For under certain circumstances he has the absolutely correct

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impression (based on sufficient grounds) that he does after all factually reproduce the teaching of the ordinary *magisterium*, i.e. of the normal proclamation of faith, and that he addresses himself by his statement to his hearer in such a way that he directs him to the faith of the Church and gives him sufficient certainty to respond on his part to the thus attained belief of the Church not only theologically but believingly. Even where in actual fact a statement is proposed as a *quaestio disputata*, or a *sententia libera* – and this fact is even explicitly stated – such a statement, if it is to remain theological at all, can only be meant in the sense that it wants to ensure or facilitate the grasping and assimilating of properly dogmatic statements of faith at least for the one who pronounces it and, in the form of an offer, for the one who hears it. For even free theological opinions cannot seriously find their sole meaning in being simply additional knowledge with regard to the real content of the faith. Whether there is in this sense a real deductive theology attaining absolutely new knowledge and declaring it not to be part of the content of the Faith and non-binding is certainly something doubtful [66] which should at any rate make one ask more earnestly the question whether, if there were such a thing, it could still be theology. The theologically decisive function of the theologically free statement is surely that of helping us to see better and to confess what we really believe – of being a help, in other words, for faith itself. It must not be overlooked, moreover, that it is quite impossible for the individual, here and now, to make everywhere an absolute and adequate distinction between the proper content of faith and a merely theological, free opinion. It must not be forgotten that even the definitions of the Church are understood by everyone especially when they do not reflect on it, *also* by means of their total consciousness and hence also by theologically free opinions. What has been said so far in connection with this fifth thesis of our lecture does not imply that everything has thereby been said concerning this distinction between a kerygmatic and a dogmatic statement of faith. Up till now we have reflected mostly (not only) on the difference between an original statement of faith and a theologico-dogmatic statement dependent on it and based on it. Naturally, within this category of derived, theologico-dogmatic statements, there is once more a distinction between the statement which professes and refers to the reality itself entrusts itself to it and praises it – and the statement in which the first ray of reflection is directed onto one's own knowledge itself. And this distinction has its ultimate, ontological basis in the nature of human knowledge itself in as far as the latter is always *both* direct and reflex, in itself and in the other and in as far as we can never adequately overcome this dualism. Hence there are dogmatic statements which by first intention are directed to the reflex self-possession of knowledge about something – and dogmatic statements which regard the reality itself. And both these kinds of statement are never absolutely separable from each other, in spite of and with all their differences.

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[67]

4

EXEGESIS AND DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

What this essay is intended to convey, refers not only nor even primarily to the academic question about the relationship between the two sciences of exegesis (and biblical theology) and dogmatic theology. Rather, this essay has arisen from the impression that there exists a certain estrangement within Catholic theology between the representatives of these two disciplines. It seems to us that not a few of those engaged in either of these fields of Catholic theology regard each other with a certain distrust and indeed irritation. The dogmatic theologians seem here and there to be under the impression that the exegetes are very little concerned about that theology to which the dogmatic theologian knows himself in duty bound, that theology which deals also with those questions which form the object of exegesis (in the widest sense of that word). The exegetes, on their part, seem here and there to be of the opinion that dogmatic theologians want to tie them down to things which are not objectively justifiable, and this because these theologians do not take sufficient note of the advances made by Catholic exegesis in the last decades.

It is not our intention here to give a more detailed description of the tension we have just indicated or to give documentary proofs for it. After all, this is a matter which has not as yet been clearly expressed in books and other printed forms. Up until now, this tension has manifested itself more in conversation, talks and lectures – right down to clerical chit-chat (which of course also exists). If we were to go into these things, we would lose ourselves in the undergrowth of personal strifes, sensibilities and polemics. This is senseless and is of no use to anyone.

On the other hand, if this supposed tension is not merely the product of a frightened phantasy, and if it is not to grow gradually into something seriously harmful to scientific thought and to the Church, then it will he advisable to make a few basic reflections on the relationship [68] between dogmatic theology and exegesis, and to do this quite soberly but also quite openly. For we do not improve things or remove them from the scene by hushing them up.

It is quite possible that some people might get the impression from this exposition – contrary to the author's intention and to the actual state of affairs – that Catholic theology in Germany is in a bad way either in an objective or personal sense, or that the author is merely forcing matters into the public eye. Yet even such possible misunderstandings are no valid reason for omitting these reflections. Even correct and important arguments can be misunderstood.

We also do not mean to comment by means of these reflections either directly or indirectly on the shameful article by A. Romeo against the professors of the Pontifical Biblical Institute[1] which has been so injurious to the dignity and esteem of Catholic scholarship. In so far as the article indulges in casting unworthy suspicions particularly on German exegetes, the 'brume nordiche' (the thick fog from the North) – a 'kind' reference to German Catholic exegesis which even amounts to an explicit castigation of German Catholic exegetes – we

[1] A. Romeo, 'L'Enciclica "Divino afflante Spiritu" e le "opiniones novae" ', *Divinitas* IV (1960), pp. 387-456 (cf. *Herder-Korrespondenz* XV [1961], p. 287); 'Pontificium Institutum Biblicum et recens libellus R.D. A. Romeo', *Verbum Domini* XXXIX (1961), pp. 1-17; J.-M. le Blond, 'L'Eglise et l'Histoire', *Etudes* CCCIX (1961), pp. 84 *sqq*.; cf. also L. Alonso-Schökel, 'Argument d'écriture et théologie biblique dans l'enseignement theologique', *NRT* LXXXI (1959) p. 337; *id*., *Probleme der biblischen Forschung in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Welt und Bibel) (Düsseldorf 1961).

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intend merely to state one thing here in passing. German Catholic exegesis when it is suspected of heresy and unecclesiastical sentiments, rightly feels it as an odious disparagement of its honest work and thought for the Church. One can be perfectly orthodox even at a distance of several hundred kilometres from Rome. We would think that even the Catholic dogmatic theologians and the bishops will show their solidarity with the German exegetes by decisively and clearly refusing to accept such unqualified and wholesale accusations. But as already stated, this somewhat shameful topic is not what we want to talk about here.

If we discuss difficulties soberly and without trying to be controversial but starting from what is basic, then this is not to be taken as a proof that Catholic exegesis is in an alarming state or that those who [69] call for the Church's thunderbolt of excommunication are right after all. Conversely, of course, it does not mean either that one should act as if there were no problems or difficulties at all.

Strangely enough it will be found, however, that at the present time the underlying problems which give rise to these reflections lie in the New Testament field rather than in the Old Testament. Thirty years ago the situation was still quite the reverse. Our reflections are, therefore, concerned principally with those questions regarding the New Testament which should be discussed more explicitly and openly among exegetes and dogmatic theologians. Some of what will be said may give the impression that it is the talk of someone who thinks he knows better and who is appointing himself as arbitrator. If this be so, the kind reader should ask himself whether this impression could have been avoided other than by leaving the matter well alone. Should he be of the opinion that such a course would have been still worse, then he must simply try to put up with his unpleasant impressions as unavoidable side-effects of an otherwise necessary business.

When we declare our opinion to all interested parties without fear and quite freely, we claim nothing more, it would seem to us, than the right of any child in the house of its father. A child does not need to be afraid to express his humble and respectful opinion to his parents. We claim nothing more than the right which is involved in the necessity of a public opinion in the Church, the absence of which – as Pius XII has explicitly declared[2] – causes great harm to pastor and flock alike.

The arrangement of the present reflections is quite simple: we will turn our attention first to the exegetes, then to dogmatic theologians, and will conclude with a few additional considerations.

To the exegetes: *a word from the dogmatic theologian*

Dear confreres and honourable colleagues: permit me to express the Opinion that you exegetes do not always have sufficient regard for us dogmatic theologians and our theology. If I make somewhat sweeping statements, please do not take this amiss. Anyone who is not in fact affected by this does not need to take it as meant for him.

[70] Yet it does seem to me that you exegetes forget sometimes that you are Catholic theologians. Naturally you intend to be this and, of course, you are. Naturally, I do not have the slightest intention of expressing the unjust suspicion that you do not know – or do not intend to observe – the Catholic principles governing the relationship between exegesis and dogmatic theology, faith and research, scholarship and the Church's *magisterium*. Yet you are only human, and sinners, like all other men (even dogmatic theologians). Hence it may

[2] Allocution to the participants of the International Congress of the Catholic Press, 17th February 1950, AAS XLII (1950), pp. 251 *sqq*.; cf. Utz-Groner, *Soziale Summe Pius*' XII, 2151/2152.

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after all happen to you in the everyday practice of your science that you do not pay enough attention to these principles. This does in fact happen sometimes. You may forget – though not deny and exclude in principle – that you are engaged in a subject which is an integral part of Catholic theology as a whole and which must, therefore, observe all those principles which are in fact proper to Catholic theology.

For this reason, Catholic exegesis is a science of faith and not merely a science of language and of religion; there exists a positive relationship between your science and the Faith and *magisterium* of the Church. The teaching and directions given by the *magisterium* do not represent merely a negative norm for Catholic exegesis – a limit beyond which one may not go – if one wishes to remain a Catholic. They form much more an inner, positive principle of research for the work of exegesis itself. This is true, even though we must always distinguish clearly – and we will have something to say about this in our word to the dogmatic theologians – between those elements in the work of exegesis and in biblical theology which are the result of a philological and historical method as such and those which are not. However little it can be stated more exactly here what it means in practice when we say that exegesis is a properly theological science, with all that entails, what we have said remains true.

It is, however, quite easy to grasp all this in a few of its external manifestations, as also to grasp the fact that you are not always sufficiently conscious of it nor alive to it. I have the impression that you often work quite happily as pure philologists and ordinary historians. And then, when this leads to difficulties and problems in the field of dogmatic theology or in the consciousness of faith of your young theologians or the laity, you are quite content to declare: – this has nothing to do with 'us' – this is a matter for the dogmatic theologians, let them work out how to deal with it. No, dear confreres – dogmatic theologians ought not to complain if you make work for them nor should they be annoyed [71] by this. But you yourselves have also the essential duty to show how, or respectively to positively ensure that – without forcing matters and in all honesty – the results of your work are really and truly compatible with Catholic dogma and also (at least in principle) with those parts of the teaching of the Church which have not been solemnly defined. For you are Catholic theologians. You have exactly the same responsibility with regard to the teaching of the Church and the faith of the simple believer as has the dogmatic theologian. Please be not offended when I say that one may sometimes get the impression that you are not always sufficiently conscious of this your responsibility and that *it* gives you almost a twinge of malicious joy when you can make real or apparent difficulties for us dogmatic theologians. One sometimes gets the sneaking suspicion that you consider it to be the height and hallmark of the genuineness and true scientific nature of your science to be able to discover difficulties.

You must be critical – inexorably critical. You must not 'arrange' dishonest reconciliations between the results of your researches and the Church's teaching. You may quite rightly announce and honestly express a problem where necessary, even when you cannot yet see – and with the best will in the world cannot yet see – any clear, positive solution to the problem of how the teaching of the Church's *magisterium* (or what is regarded as such) can be reconciled with the real or supposed results of your scientific inquiries. But you should regard this as the true summit of your science only once you have really fulfilled your whole task. It is part of this task – part of your exegetical Catholic duty – to make manifest the harmony between your results and the Church's teaching and to show how these results lead naturally and as its genuine expression to the Church's teaching. Of course, not every single exegete needs to do this every time (it is impossible nowadays to get along without 'division of labour' and specialization) – but you should be much clearer than sometimes you appear to be about the fact that this is basically part of the exegete's task.

What happens in practice? When you simply leave the work of bridging the gap between

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exegesis and dogmatic theology conveniently to us, and we poor dogmatic theologians want to take up this work (and have then to concern ourselves also with exegesis, since a bridge crosses from one bank to the other) then you are the first to shout – admit it – that we dogmatic theologians understand nothing about exegesis, and that it would be far better if we left it alone rather than [72] dabbling in it in a clumsy sort of way! Who then is to do this job which must be done? You behave rather strangely sometimes in this matter. On the one hand, you complain that too little attention is being paid to the Scriptures, that there is too much scholastic theology and not enough biblical theology. But then, when it comes to the point where it would be necessary to show how and where in the Scriptures the Church's teaching finds its expression or at least its ultimate basis, you begin to excuse yourselves and declare that even with the best will in the world you cannot find anything in the Scriptures which would serve as a basis for the teaching of the Church – for example, the Church's teaching on certain sacraments or on certain Marian dogmas. This, you say, is simply something for which Tradition and the *magisterium* alone are responsible. Is it not often your own fault then that some theologians speculate up in the clouds, when you suddenly give up all claim to any biblical foundation for truths which also belong to your Catholic faith? What source has Tradition then for such truths? After all, you are the very ones who, as historians, have least of all believed in subterranean channels in Tradition when something in the first centuries could not in your judgement be proved to be contained either explicitly or implicitly in the Church's public consciousness of faith. The *magisterium* on the other hand is the bearer of a truth of faith – the bearer of a possible explication – but not a material source of a truth of revelation. In other words, if a proposition which the later *magisterium* has declared to be revealed is not explicitly taught during the first centuries by the Fathers of the Church (in documents still accessible to us) – and if it can be made clear historically that this proposition was also not explicitly taught by 'word of mouth' (since otherwise its absence in the literature handed down to us could not be explained) – then the proposition in question must be contained implicitly in the teaching of Holy Scripture. And in this case it is part of the exegetes' duty to make their contribution of biblical theology, so that the dogmatic theologian may be in a position to show in an exegetically unobjectionable manner, that, and how, the particular proposition is contained implicitly in Scripture. Do you not have a duty, therefore, to fulfil those tasks which are really yours and not to be too quick in palming them off on someone else? Do you not barricade yourselves too quickly in certain cases behind the declaration that an exegete has simply to discover the immediate meaning of the words of Scripture and that everything beyond that is no longer part of his job?

[73] Furthermore – please do not be offended – but I sometimes get the impression that you are rather afraid to give a basic exposition of your exegetical principles themselves (i.e. those principles which are not purely dogmatic but which grow in their concreteness out of the work of exegesis) and that you are rather afraid to prove their agreement with the principles of the Church's *magisterium*. I am well aware of the fact that this is not easy. In certain circumstances one may even have to say quite simply in the course of such work that this or that declaration made by the Biblical Commission at the beginning of the present century appears either out-dated now or seems still valid only after making certain necessary, fine distinctions. But you must have the courage for such 'dangerous' work. For this work must be done. Only you can do it, since you do not really believe us 'systematic' and dogmatic theologians capable of the exact knowledge of individual problems of exegesis without which such principles remain too general, too equivocal, too inexact, and of too little value for practical application. You have such principles. Yet you submerge them in particular instances of exegesis. The layman in the exegetical field (including the dogmatic theologian) is rather puzzled when he looks at your particular examples of exegesis and their results. He asks himself how this or that interpretation (exegesis) tallies with the inerrancy of the

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Scriptures and the *canones* laid down by the *magisterium* regarding the meaning of certain scriptural texts. He wonders how the *genus historicum* of parts of Scripture can still be maintained, he wonders what is the position as regards the pseudonimity of parts of Scripture, whether anything like this can be admitted as possible in principle even in the New Testament, how one squares all this with the decrees of the Biblical Commission, etc.

I am beginning to be impolite. Permit me, however, to make a further, rather malicious remark (since I willingly concede that the converse could be said also about the dogmatic theologian). It would be much easier – and not harder – for your exegesis sometimes if only you had a more exact knowledge of scholastic theology and if this theology had not sometimes, as in the case of certain representatives of your noble and sacred science, sunk to the level of a half-forgotten science, long gone out of practice. It seems to me, for instance, that exegetes would be able to speak even more dearly and in an even more balanced way than they actually do about the scriptural teaching on merit, on the one hand, and on the gratuitous nature of beatitude, on [74] the other, if they were even more clearly aware of the scholastic doctrine about the relationship between freedom and grace and understood that doctrine to the furthest limits to which it can be taken. Such a scholastic doctrine is simply another form of biblical theology using a different set of concepts. If one did not think in terms of a doctrine of the Trinity as being presumably very primitive (I hope I may be forgiven this example which is simply meant to allude to an outstanding recent work of exegesis[3]), one would have no cause to assert that no real doctrine of the Trinity is to be found in St Paul. (Where else, in any case, would we find this doctrine in the New Testament, if it is not even to be found in St Paul? Presumably always in that part of Scripture on which one is not working at the moment.) If one realized fully what is implied in the teaching of scholastic theology about the merely relative difference of the three persons – a distinction which it is almost no longer possible to grasp – then one would also be capable of finding this degree of distinction in St Paul's teaching (although of course in different words), since he too does not simply use '*kyrios*' and '*pneuma*' as two words meaning absolutely the same thing without even the hairbreadth of a distinction.

One may possibly have misgivings as a Catholic theologian about certain non-defining doctrinal pronouncements of the Church's *magisterium*. But in such cases one should state this explicitly and give explicit reasons for it. It is not right, however, to rid oneself of the problem by simply shrugging one's shoulders and passing on to the business of the day. In many cases, the apparent, greater or lesser contradictions in the light of the pronouncements of the *magisterium* which seem to appear almost incidentally in the course of the work of exegesis will in reality be purely a matter of terminology. This can happen even in quite unexpected circumstances where at first sight it might seem to be a most dangerous business. In such cases, however, the exegete should also make the effort to keep before his eyes the manner of speaking adopted by the *magisterium* of the Church and to explain why there is no real difference between these declarations and his conclusions. It is not at all easy to say, for instance, what is an 'error' and what is not – even merely considering the formal meaning of such a notion – what 'error' looks like and what meaning 'error' is normally presumed to have. Hence, when the exegete admits an 'error' somewhere in the New Testament, he may mean something which, expressed [75] differently, is objectively true and undeniable and which no dogmatic theologian may or will deny, just as he cannot deny those papal encyclicals which exclude every error from the Scriptures. Thus, the exegete maintains in such a qualified sense, for example, that a certain statement in Scripture – e.g. that Abiather was high priest when David ate the loaves of proposition (Mk 2.26) – is an 'error', if this statement is taken apart from the literary form of the Scriptures in which it is embedded and

[3] lngo Hermann, *Kyrios und Pneuma* (Munich 1961).

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if it is separated from the frame of reference which gave rise to its expression and is read on its own: this the exegete has every right to do.

No true knowledge is really a 'retrenchment' – even though it may at first have a disillusioning effect and cause certain difficulties which must be overcome. Yet it is much better if even the layman recognizes that you are building up and not merely tearing down – that you are furthering the knowledge of the life of Christ and do not merely prove that, from a historical point of view, there is much which we do not know quite as exactly as had previously been supposed. It must be quite clear that you do not merely preserve those facts of the life of Jesus, of his self-consciousness and awareness of his mission, which cannot be abandoned for dogmatic reasons and which are quite indispensable to the dogmatic theologian in Christology and Soteriology – but that on the contrary you also use the methods of historical knowledge to throw more light on these facts and to defend them. For then dogmatic theologians will easily understand that you are right when you do not conceive every word of Jesus in the synoptics as if it were a sort of 'tape-recording' or shorthand report of the very words of the historical Jesus; they will easily understand that on the contrary you rightly reckon with the fact (and not only in general and theoretically) that the theological interpretation of apostolic times is already at work in the handing down of the words of Jesus, giving them its own precision and adapting them already to the special circumstances of the assembly.

I know, you are quite used to all this – for you there is absolutely no problem any more in this. But not everyone is in that position. You must make allowances also for the 'weak in faith', for those who are slow to understand. You must take pains to make even these understand that you are constructive and not destructive. You must teach your young theologians in such a way that they themselves do not suffer any harm to their faith and that, when they become curates, they [76] do not imagine that their main task is to proclaim exegetical problems from the pulpit which they themselves have perhaps only half understood – and which they oversimplify and then proclaim to people even less prepared for such things who are then left amazed and upset.

There would also be no harm if you were to reflect here and there with greater accuracy than hitherto perhaps as to which *a-priori* principles of dogmatic and fundamental theology even you must observe in this 'inquiry into the life of Jesus' so that the Jesus of your synoptical studies bears some historically still verifiable relationship to the Christ of faith. (Of course these *a-priori* principles must be very carefully interpreted and conceived, and must already be given those nuances, both in their scope and binding force, which are required in view of the problems of your own exegesis.) You do not need to engage in any 'Chalcedonian' Christology in your work of exegesis itself. But those statements which the historical Jesus has made about himself must be objectively the same (at least together with the paschal experience) as what dogmatic Christology knows about Jesus. It is also absolutely permissible to determine the literary form of the synoptic and Johannine accounts of miracles more exactly and to maintain that the general declaration to the effect that these are historical accounts is still too vague (especially when this is applied to individual accounts). Even you might, however, find it useful and liberating in certain circumstances to reflect with greater theoretical exactitude on what a miracle is meant to be in view of its nature as a recognizable fact. You too should not give the impression that you are of the opinion that it is impossible to know historically from the Gospels that Jesus actually performed such miracles (and especially the miracle of the Resurrection) which even today are still of importance for the authentication of his mission. If you have any understanding of the principles of fundamental theology (and this can surely be taken for granted), then you will make it clear to your hearers that the Resurrection of Jesus is not merely the object but also the reason of faith in Our Lord. Nobody will reproach you with seriously overstepping your boundaries if you yourselves

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explain to your hearers why and how both are simultaneously possible and correct.

One last point: it is an unjust practice, wronging both you and Protestant theologians, to accuse you of having adopted this or that from Protestant exegesis. For what does this prove, if it is true? Nothing at all. For Protestant exegesis – there should really be no [77] need to emphasize this fact – can arrive at true conclusions. If this is so, it is only right therefore to adopt these conclusions. And if they are false and so cannot be accepted? Then one must reject them by giving objective proofs of their falsehood – not by simply condemning them as being Protestant theology. Yet even though all this is true, should you not avoid giving the impression sometimes that a Protestant thesis is right away more probable in your eyes simply because it has sprung up on the soil of Protestant exegesis and not originally on Catholic soil? And should you not bear in mind also that Protestant theology often approaches Scripture with a philosophical bias and not with an objective method which has grown out of the work of exegesis itself?

To the dogmatic theologians: a word from a colleague

I do not want to tread on anyone's toes – I must speak in general terms, for only then can I speak objectively to the many very different individuals. Hence I will address myself. Any one of my highly esteemed colleagues in dogmatic theology may take from it whatever may rightly apply to himself. When this is not the case, let him pity me while I teach myself. Thus, dear friend, be honest – you know less about exegesis than you should. As a dogmatic theologian you rightly claim to be allowed to engage in the work of exegesis and biblical theology in your own right, and not just to accept the results of the exegetical work of the specialist. For it is your job as a dogmatic theologian to use all available means for listening to the word of God wherever it is pronounced – and where better than in Holy Scripture? But then you must perform the work of exegesis in the way it has to be done today and not in the way you used to do it in the good old days – or better, not only in the old way. Your exegesis in dogmatic theology must be convincing also to the specialist in exegesis. This is true even though he has to grant you the right to put certain questions to Scripture which he himself is not necessarily concerned with-even though you can be quite sure that this or that particular exegete will not agree with you in every detail and will put forward his rejection of your interpretation in the name of exegesis itself (instead of in the name of his exegesis). But if you want to be able to speak the language of the exegetes, then you must really know how to employ their tools and you must really have felt the weight of their reflections and problems. Otherwise you may find that you pass over their questions by making too [78] simple a distinction. (An example of this would be when we talk about '*scientia non communicabilis*' in order to explain the statement made by Jesus that the Son of Man does 'not know' [Mt 13.32] the day or hour of the Last Judgement.) And if you are honest, you must admit that you really have no explanation for texts like Mk 8.39 (there are those standing here who will not taste of death before they have seen the kingdom of God in all its power) and Mt 10.23 (the Son of Man will come before your task with the cities of Israelis ended) – and that you will be only too glad if the exegetes find an explanation, even though it may perhaps seem too daring to you. And do not forget – in your case such a question emerges only very late on and only on the fringes of your 'system' and of your consciousness. Consequently, it cannot have the same weight for you as it has for the exegete. For him such a question arises very early on and hence with quite a different force for the intellectual organization of his consciousness.

Be patient with the exegetes. Since a modern science is so vast and its methods so complicated, it is extremely difficult nowadays to understand enough of another science to be

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able to join in its thought. Quite often we merely think we understand something about it. Yet one would have to have worked a long time on it even just to understand something about it. It is not enough to have taken cognizance of the question and the objection of the exegete in the form of a short '*obiectio*' in a scholastic textbook – such a matter has to be studied carefully in the long monographs written on it by the exegete. How many dogmatic theologians are still able to do this today? It will be almost impossible purely on account of the time and energy required for it. So, be at least careful. Do not merely cite a number in Denzinger or a sentence from an encyclical, and do not say: that cannot be true!

You must not complain that the exegete pays too little attention to your criteria, norms and sources and leaves you to worry about establishing the connections with his field, as if this had nothing to do with him – if you yourself take up the same sort of attitude towards him. Remember, you are working with the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant word of God. The exegete, however, even *qua* exegete, is – may and must be – concerned also with fundamental theology. Therefore, even though what we have said above about the theological nature of his exegesis is true, the exegete has the right and the duty to do the work of the historian of fundamental theology in connection with the New Testament, precisely if and because he should be a [79] Catholic theologian who may not simply start from the bare and unproved act of faith. Hence, he does not always need to begin by simply presupposing the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture in every case. If be did this, then he would be a bad theologian, since he would be denying that there can be fundamental theology in the Catholic sense. Thus, he must also examine his source, viz. the New Testament, in his role of historian. Even in this role he must admit that the synoptics are historically trustworthy sources in essentials at least. Of course, this statement about the synoptics being historically reliable sources of our historical knowledge of the life of Christ does not by any means give us a really exact definition of the literary form used by the synoptics. This statement alone is not sufficient to allow us to pass an unequivocal judgement on what is really expressed in each single sentence for, what we today take at first sight to be a historical memorandum may not perhaps be so in the sense of modern historical writing. The really important thing, however, is the fact that the exegete may and must work on questions concerning the handing-down of the New Testament even prescinding (methodically) from the inspired and inerrant nature of the Scriptures. For then, even though he may already hold fast to the substantial historicity of the synoptics on the profane historical plane, he has not only the right but also the duty to refrain from judging from the very start that all statements in Scripture are equally certain historically. Were he to do this, he would by this method change over from fundamental theology to dogmatic theology. Such a procedure, far from being an advantage would be a mistake. Hence, even when the synoptic writer makes an individual statement which he himself expects to be understood as a historical Statement (which presumably is not at all always the case), the exegete and inquirer into the life of Jesus must not declare every such statement to be equally certain and true in the historical sense. Whenever it is unequivocally certain that the synoptic author wishes to state something as an historical event – meaning by that what we mean today – the exegete who works in terms of fundamental theology may not of course say that the synoptic author certainly errs in this case; yet as a fundamental theologian he need not say either that the synoptic author is certainly right in this. Not only may he-but he must – speak with greater nuances than we who are dogmatic theologians rightly do in our subject. If we dogmatic theologians are convinced that we must maintain Christ's direct vision of God during his earthly life (since this is the binding, [80] though not defined, teaching of the Popes since Benedict XV), then you also have the duty to show the exegete how such a doctrine can be really and truly reconciled (and not just by playing with words) with the impression which the exegete gets about the historical Jesus in the synoptics. You would have to show more clearly than you

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usually manage to do that you are quite familiar with the difficulties besetting your friend the exegete, and that you have a fairly good idea of how to employ his methods and know how to value the results of his work.

You have an easier task than your colleague who works in terms of fundamental theology. You can use every word of Scripture right away as an equally inerrant and inspired word in your dogmatic proofs. You need not ask first about its origin, or whether it is, just the way it stands, an historically speaking absolutely certain word of Jesus or has already been co-formed by the theology of the primitive Church and the authors of the New Testament. You need not ask whether it belongs to the very first, original data of revelation or whether it is already theology derived from these original data by the Apostles (naturally in a correct and infallible way). You are quite entitled to proceed in this way, although it should be pointed out in passing that it is not quite the ideal method even in dogmatic theology – for the more exact interpretation of a text does seem after all to depend also on the answer to questions which must be the concern of the textual critic and of the exegete who takes the historical strata of tradition into account. Would it, for instance, do any harm if it were noticeable in your scriptural proofs for the dogma of the Trinity that you are familiar with the questions of the historians about the command 'to go out' (Mt 28.16-20) and that, since no absolute dogmatic impossibility forbids it, you are quite unprejudiced about the possibility that the trinitarian formula put into the mouth of Jesus was nevertheless conformed by the theology of the primitive Church?

There are many problems belonging to dogmatic theology as such which the theologian could and should pose, since their solution could help to open up things and make them easier for the exegete. For example, one might ask in dogmatic theology how the apparitions of the risen Lord could be conceived more exactly from the very nature of the matter, since – this is the important point – he no longer belongs to our world of appearances and experience, and his experience must therefore be quite different from that of let's say, the risen Lazarus. One would perhaps find in this case that the vacillations in the description [81] of these apparitions in the accounts of the paschal events are to be expected from the very nature of things, and that they do not need to be 'touched up' artificially. Starting from the intrinsic problems of the doctrine of the Trinity and of Christology, we dogmatic theologians could express many things more clearly right from the very start and thus make it easier for the biblical theologian to understand that biblical theology and scholastic dogmatic theology are indeed talking about the same thing. It would presumably be possible, for instance, to express what is meant by the theology of the Trinity even without continually repeating merely the formulae about 'person' and 'nature'. It would no doubt be possible to show that the entitative Trinity and the Trinity of revelation are so connected that as soon as one gives correct expression to the Trinity of revelation (as the Scriptures do), one has already affirmed also the entitative Trinity. It would be quite possible to develop a 'Christology of ascent', of the encounter with the man Jesus, with a very existential and ontological basis. Such a Christology would be much more akin to the viewpoint of the synoptics and of the Acts of the Apostles in this matter than if one merely pictures a Christology of the assumption of a human nature by the descent of the Logos. In a really metaphysically understood doctrine of the direct vision of God possessed by the soul of Christ even during his life on earth, it would presumably be possible to render the nature of such a basic condition very well intelligible (although it is not of itself a theme of discussion), in such a way that the exegete could understand that this scholastic doctrine really does not deprive him of the right to look in the life of Jesus for a genuine development, a real dependence on the religious environment of his time and the unexpected turn of events. Would it not be worthwhile, for instance, to think about whether in certain circumstances a particular kind of nescience might not be more perfect than knowledge, since it is perfectly characteristic of the freedom of the creature

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(which Jesus too possessed and exercised as one who truly adored and who was obedient to the inscrutable will of the Father)? After all, when the creature makes a decision it launches itself into the openly unknown and it properly 'knows' something as it really is only when it accepts it lovingly as something unknown. Why do we dogmatic theologians not reckon more clearly with the psychologically and existentially or ontologically quite self-evident fact that 'knowledge' is not at all an unequivocal term but that a man may actually have essentially different kinds of 'knowledge' which are not [82] in the least mutually interchangeable – so that one may really know something in one way and not know the same thing (even as far as oneself is concerned) in another sense? If one is radically united with God, then one knows 'everything' by this and knows it all in the depths where this reality is experienced, without necessarily knowing or even wishing to know it in that dimension of the human soul in which one has definite, individual knowledge expressed in properly coined propositions (knowledge which would in certain circumstances merely make the silent oneness with the real and one truth impossible or would at least disturb it). Why then should we dogmatic theologians restrain exegetes from saying in a true sense (without of course covering even then the totality of Christ's reality) that Jesus did not know certain things – since he himself has said so (Mk 13.32) and we do not have any real reason to try to explain such statements away by clever distinctions?

We frequently are in possession of very correct and, in a sense, metaphysical principles in theology. We do not take notice, however, of how wide and spacious they are and all the things which can be accommodated in them. We do not make it clear enough to the exegetes who work in an *a-posteriori* fashion that they need have no qualms about starting from the individual facts discovered by their researches into the life of Jesus; there is nothing wrong in their finding a real living human being with a history, and they must never pass him by – and yet they will realize that their hands have touched the Word become flesh. We tacitly assume that the Resurrection was indeed a great miracle which attests Christ's mission, but that – if God so wished – this miracle could have happened to any other man, quite independently of the 'first-born' Son of Man and his Resurrection, by a resurrection not to an earthly life (as in the case of Lazarus) but by a resurrection to a real, total consummation of life. Is this tacit supposition as clear as we assume it to be, and is it really true? Or could one not say, after reflecting more exactly and deeply on this matter, that the Son of God must necessarily be the beginning of absolute salvation (which is not merely a stage on the way but God's absolutely final and unsurpassable salvation in person, and which only exists and shows this through the Resurrection as such) in the sense of the Christology of Chalcedon? Could one surmise that a 'functional' Christology does after all contain the traditional ontological Christology, if only it is thought through radically enough to its proper conclusions? And yet, if such a 'Christology of function' were completed in this way while at [83] the same time preserving what is proper to it, would it not help many a man of today by pointing the way to the Christian faith, a way which, for fear of what appears to him (quite unjustifiably) as 'mythological' in it, he would not find otherwise? Would it not be possible to eradicate in this way quite a few monophysite tendencies in Christology (not, of course, in the official dogmatic theology but only in that of individual Christians), which on closer examination see nothing more in the 'human nature' of the Logos than a sort of livery or puppet for God, something which is directed only towards us and not also in dialogic freedom towards God? Would this not help us to understand better that a 'Christology of Resurrection' is not necessarily absolutely false, even though it does not seem to bother much about referring itself to the self-expressions given by Jesus himself during his lifetime when trying to explain his being, and simply looks to the Resurrection by which Jesus becomes 'Lord'? Should this not give us a greater understanding of the tendency of present-day exegetes (including Catholics) to see everything in the light of the paschal experience and to conceive the words

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and deeds reported in the life of Jesus as already interpreted in this light? Of course, we will have to be careful about this: we cannot dispute – and in any case have no historical reasons for disputing – any self-testimony of Jesus to his being during his historical life which contains his ontological divine sonship, provided that we do not maintain that such a self-testimony must already have employed a more or less direct '*communicatio idiomatum*' or have worked with almost Chalcedonian concepts.

If only we dogmatic theologians would always bring out the value of our good, established scholastic doctrine about the merely analogical nature of original 'sin' right at the beginning of our treatment of original sin, if only we made it clear in this way that man can as it were 'ratify' original sin by his own personal sin – then it would no doubt never have happened that our exegetes still thought even a few centuries after Erasmus that they had to defend the augustinian interpretation of the '*in quo*' (= Adam) in Rom 5.12. They would then have been able to recognize sooner that it is quite possible to interpret Rom 5.12 as speaking – in accordance with the simple meaning of the words – about the guilt of each individual human being, without thereby having to hold that nothing at all is to be found in this chapter about original sin correctly understood.

Yet probably, if we are to do justice to the exegetes, the most [84] important thing for us dogmatic theologians is to recognize that the qualification 'historical' as applied to an account, even when it is correct, is in many cases far too vague. The expression 'historical account', as applied to the New Testament and in particular to the synoptics, does not mean that Christ's discourses for instance, are more or less just 'tape-recordings' which have at most been shortened by 'editing'. As a dogmatic theologian, one is almost ashamed to have still to make an explicit statement of this attitude. Yet our work in dogmatic theology always gives rise again to such a mentality and to the tendency to think along those lines-even though we have long ago recognized its falsehood at least theoretically. We cite Christ's words as proofs, and so we always tend almost automatically to fall back into the opinion that these words of Jesus must have been spoken by him exactly as we quote them – exactly as if we had been there and had heard these words ourselves. And yet there is no literary form of the historical in the New Testament such as to guarantee this. While the dogmatic theologian concedes this fact in the abstract and in a rather off-hand way, it is the daily bread of the exegete who has to reckon seriously with it – for it is a fact which can be shown by many examples and which should also be taken systematically into account even when it is not immediately evident from a comparison of the synoptic accounts. No wonder that the exegetes and we find it difficult to understand each other.

It would be wrong to suppose, however, that everything is crumbling and that there is no historical certainty left when one proceeds soberly and courageously from the fact that historical criticism must reckon with the possibility that the accounts of the words of Jesus given by the synoptics contain changes made by oral tradition or clarifications due to some specific theological angle and that even these accounts may contain glosses which are not explicitly indicated or may have been coloured by certain graphic and dramatic expressions, etc. More precisely – if the individual parts of the Gospels have had a normal history before becoming part of the Gospel (as the history of literary forms has rightly taught us), then we must be prepared to find, on comparison of the individual parts with each other, that they will not always have exactly the same historical literary form. We must reckon with the possibility, for instance, that it is not as certain from the historical point of view of fundamental theology that Jesus was ever in Egypt or that he was crucified in Jerusalem. None of this is in any way directed against the authority of the accounts – for these accounts [85] themselves by their very nature admit of such a question. They do not claim in any way to be a kind of 'police-report' painfully recounting 'nothing but' the historical events observed by everyone.

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Of course, the fact of being prepared to reckon with such a possibility does not yet answer the question as to where, when and to what extent it is actually realized in the case of the individual accounts of the words and deeds of Jesus. It is the task of a legitimate historical criticism of the New Testament to determine all the particulars actually existing within the framework of possibility. Although such criticism does make the work of the dogmatic theologian 'more difficult' on many occasions, it does also quite frequently facilitate it. If one can, for instance, interpret the proviso in Mt 5.32 (everyone who puts away his wife [setting aside the matter of unchastity] causes her to commit adultery) as being a gloss introduced into the text by the casuistry of the primitive Church, then this makes things much easier for the dogmatic theologian than would be the case if even this clause must be regarded as coming really and directly from the mouth of Jesus. It is absolutely possible to make it easier for the dogmatic theologian to bear such heavy 'crosses' as the already mentioned texts in Mk 8.39 or Mk 10.23 (even though it is impossible simply to eliminate them, on account of the inspiration and inerrancy of the whole of Scripture), if one uses historical criticism to point out that Jesus himself could not simply have spoken 'thus' (i.e. giving such at least apparent precisions of time). The work of the exegete as well as of the dogmatic theologian is made much more laborious as a result of such presuppositions regarding the possibility of historical criticism. But this does not yet prove that one could spare oneself this labour by means of simpler principles.

As already said, it is not as if one ended up no longer knowing what really happened historically speaking. One is left in doubt about many things. Yet one can still know enough to hold on to those facts in fundamental theology which are the basis of the Church's teaching on the person and the work of Jesus. Indeed, one can have a historical certainty of these facts which is real certitude. But such a certitude must not be confused with the absolute certitude of metaphysics or of faith (each in its own way). And, of course, an exact epistemological analysis of when and why such historical knowledge can be called 'certain' in spite of its multidimensionality and difficulty is not at all easy. It is the same when a layman in the science of history is faced with the laborious reflections of a historian about what exactly were the facts [86] of Caesar's campaign in Gaul – his head will probably be reeling too. He gets the impression that in the end we really do not know any longer whether Caesar was ever in Gaul at all. Such historical 'dizziness' is understandable, even though it is not justifiable on that account alone. The same is true of the work of the exegetes, presupposing of course that they work conscientiously and do not imagine that their main job is to destroy what had been supposed to be certain; we presuppose also that even in their work of exegesis they remain believing theologians and that given this (although such a presupposition may not of course enter as a material premiss into fundamental theology itself), they have a better chance to work in a correct historical manner than someone who is blind to what is announced here, viz. the miracle of God's grace fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But what reason could we dogmatic theologians possibly have for denying that these presuppositions do exist in the case of our exegetes? We do not need to accept their individual conclusions simply by a blind trust in the wisdom of the specialists. We have the right and the duty to do the work of exegesis for ourselves as far as we can and wish to, and to check quite calmly the discoveries of the exegetes. But we do not have the right to succumb to the temptation, peculiarly our own, to act (in most cases only unconsciously) as if even their method itself must be flatly contradicted.

It is quite a different matter to ask what significance the correct and matured results of such an exegesis can or cannot have for the pulpit, for instruction purposes and for religious edification. In the pulpit one quite rightly proceeds from the presupposition of the sacred nature of the Bible (which is precisely what the exegete who works in terms of fundamental theology may not do, at least not in the same sense). A sermon from the pulpit has, therefore,

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a different basis than the professor's lecture to a class specializing in exegetical studies. Hence, much of what exegesis is concerned with from the point of view of fundamental theology does not belong in the pulpit even though the faithful have the right to expect that the proclamation of the Word does not contradict the certain conclusions of exegetical research. Age and level of education will determine in each case the extent to which lectures and articles (rather than sermons) should be used to introduce the faithful to the problems of fundamental theology in exegesis. It must always be remembered, however, that preaching is the proclamation of the Word of God and is meant to serve the edification of the faith.

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Some additional considerations

Dogmatic theologians and exegetes must understand that they are not the masters but the servants of the *magisterium* which Christ has entrusted to Peter and the Apostles, and not to professors. Yet not only Hegel but even the professors know that God has so arranged things in this world that the master has also need of the servant and is dependent on him in spite of his being the master.

This servant of the Church's *magisterium* has need of the Church's trust. He requires that scope of trusted freedom without which the servant cannot fulfil his humble but necessary task.

Nowadays, ecclesiastical science and especially exegesis has not merely to carry out those scientific tasks which interest the scholar. It must fight side by side with everyone else in the front line of the Faith and the Church; it must enlighten modern man as to the possibilities of faith; it must teach, fortify and comfort the intellectuals of our time. The intellectual of today is the spiritual child of historicism and the natural sciences – a terribly sober, careful and disillusioned man – a man who suffers from God's remoteness and silence (as he does in fact experience this). This is the kind of man with whom the Church must concern herself. For this is the man of today and tomorrow. It is easy to confine one's proclamation of the Faith to other types of people – to people who come from other intellectual and sociological strata, who are more easily 'believing' – to simple, humble folk who have not really been affected yet by the intellectual atmosphere of today – people who still have strong social ties, who for whatever reason always push intellectual problems aside or perhaps solve them in their own, and in certain circumstances, very uncatholic way and yet do not allow themselves to be disturbed by this in their official 'attachment to the Church'. The Church must concern herself with the real intellectual of today – she must not abandon him in his characteristic distress and willingness to believe. Anyone who does not recognize this crisis of faith, does not understand the real problems of today. These problems do exist. And consequently ecclesiastical science has no right to work on the 'closed shop' principle, but must think of the people of today. If it does this, however, then it will not be able to bypass questions which are difficult and dangerous. It will have to look for solutions which are new and untried, since it simply is not enough just to repeat the good well-tried truths, or even to formulate them in a new didactic or psychological garb.

[88] It may be that the ultimate problems of the faith are not decided on the plane of individual questions and problems in theology. But many of these questions, about which today's intellectual who has not been trained in theology gets the impression that they have not been answered – that theology has no honest and simple answer, is beating about the bush and forbids honest discussion – do create a situation and intellectual atmosphere which could be fatal for modern man's will to believe-especially when on top of everything else the ultimate and basic decisions of life weigh heavily upon him. He requires a clear and intelligible answer from ecclesiastical science on these individual questions. He wants to

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know what is the position as regards evolution, what the Church has to say about the whole question of the history of religion, what is the lot of the innumerable non-Christians, why we must have (allegedly) so few and then only problematic miracles today when we are told of so many more wonderful and convincing miracles in ancient writings, what is the exact nature of the immortality of the soul and its proof. Even when such and innumerable other questions are not formulated explicitly (out of lassitude and a fear of endangering even the little bit of faith one has still managed to salvage and wishes to keep), they do nevertheless form the mental situation in which the intellectuals of today – and their number is increasing every day – do in fact spend their life and from which they cannot escape. To this kind of question belong also the questions occupying exegesis and biblical theology, i.e. questions about the historical reliability of the Scriptures (including the New Testament), about the credibility of the miracles recorded in the New Testament, about the possibility of verifying the Resurrection of Jesus historically, about the apparent or real discrepancy between the different accounts of the Resurrection, about the relationship between the teaching of Jesus and the theology and practice of the world of his time, etc. If exegesis were to try to avoid such and many similar questions, it would be guilty of not doing its duty. Such questions are difficult and 'dangerous'.

The Church has always acknowledged the fact that there are, and indeed must be, schools and different trends of theology. From a purely logical point of view, the mutually contradictory propositions of these schools have been objectively dangerous to faith in certain circumstances, since both propositions of two schools contradicting each other cannot be true at the same time and under the same respect. But it has rightly been felt that this danger to faith was not subjectively [89] dangerous; one knew that each of these schools really conserved, and intended to conserve, those basic principles in such questions which needed to be conserved. It was, therefore, quite right to let theologians dispute among themselves. The Church did not interfere, but left them freedom – to the greater benefit of theology.

In questions which impose themselves on theology today, one cannot really avoid thinking about and trying out solutions which are not immediately seen to be clearly reconcilable with the binding teaching of the Church. One cannot always give an answer to such questions which will be so 'certain' that there will be no doubt or argument whatsoever. It will often gradually become clear whether such an answer is unobjectionable from the Church's point of view. As far as possible such questions should be discussed first in specialist circles before they are thrown open to the general public. This is quite a good principle – only, even with the best will in the world, it cannot always be observed. For there are very many questions which have not yet been purified and settled by the specialist theologian and yet are already questions for the man of today and not merely for the specialist. In such cases one cannot simply console these people by telling them to wait until one has won through to a '*sententia communis*' in 'specialist circles' which will be acknowledged as such by all theologians and by the *magisterium* of the Church. It is necessary to give an answer now, and to give it in such a way that even the non-specialist can recognize it as an answer to his questions. In certain circumstances, such an answer may later on be seen to be absolutely false – perhaps because it was too brief or because, even with the best intentions of the theologian concerned, it may objectively contradict some principle laid down by the Church's *magisterium*. Such an answer may also be perfectly true and even mature, and yet it may not be clear that in this matter certain non-defining pronouncements made by the Church's *magisterium* are in some need of revision (which is not merely possible but has quite often happened in fact in the past). It may be that, seen from an ecclesiastico-sociological angle, even a true but novel view requires a certain 'period of incubation' until people have become used to it and have come to experience in practice and psychologically that it is perfectly reconcilable with the old faith of the Church. The Church's *magisterium* has undoubtedly the right and the duty to watch

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over such a process of searching and groping and of discussion (i.e. serious discussion on which something really depends); the *magisterium* [90] has undoubtedly the right and duty to keep such processes and discussions within bounds and to halt tendencies which are certainly and clearly going in a heretical direction. All this is self-evident for every Catholic theologian. Certainly no Catholic theologian will hold that every measure taken by the Church's *magisterium* is wrong or unjust simply because it is hard and bitter for this or that theologian.

Nevertheless, this period of questioning, of discussing and of searching, must not simply be passed over and replaced from the very outset by decisions of the Church's *magisterium*. According to Catholic teaching the *magisterium* is the sole authority capable of giving a decision binding in conscience in matters of theology even on the specialist theologian. It is not, however, the only authority capable of explaining open questions. Such explanations require reflection and discussion by theologians. Theologians are not merely a necessary evil in the Church or a debating society for their own amusement. They fulfil an indispensable function which has its own value. This fact is not cancelled out by the possibility that the highest teaching authority and scientific competence may be united in one person. The theologians are necessary in the Church; they must discuss, and must discuss questions today in answer to which they may have to 'venture' untried, dangerous opinions – opinions which will perhaps eventually turn out to be unacceptable and un-Catholic.

We trust that it is unnecessary to spend time in emphasizing that this is no charter for foolish opinions or opinions which any theologian worth his salt can recognize immediately as theologically untenable. (It is of course also clear from the theoretical point of view of scientific method – and it should be stated quite plainly – that it is impossible to give a formal principle according to which one could determine immediately and beyond any doubt the boundary between matters which can rightly be left open to discussion and opinions which must be rejected of their very nature. Thus, taking a risk is never quite avoidable when deciding according to the best of one's knowledge and conscience for either side. The Church's teaching authority may stop or forbid something at first which later on turns out to be a view which can be discussed after all – and the individual theologian may represent some opinion as tenable when it is really untenable from the very start and is therefore contradicted immediately by the Church's *magisterium*. In the face of such limitations connected with the fact that man is a [91] creature and therefore finite, there is only one remedy – humility, patience, love.)

Everything said so far is really quite obvious. It has been said not because one could seriously be of a different opinion but because we wish to tie it up with something following from it which is perhaps less obvious and yet seems important as well as true. Let us suppose that theologians are discussing some really ticklish problem in exegesis imposed on them by modern developments. It may be the duty of the exegete and of the dogmatic theologian in such cases to speak in such a way during the discussion as to declare the opinion of another theologian to be irreconcilable with this or that principle laid down by authoritatively taught Catholic theology. This declaration may be right or wrong – but it must be possible to express such an opinion. It is not sufficient to say simply that the other theologian has after all the necessary knowledge to recognize such a discrepancy himself and so, if such a discrepancy really existed, the other theologian (who after all is a Catholic) would not have expressed this opinion. No, it is quite possible for a theologian to say something with the best of intentions which, viewed theologically and from the Church's point of view, is in reality objectionable but which he does not always immediately see to be such.

It may happen, however, that a theologian is in a position to, should and wishes to take a stand against another theologian by using these weapons which he has every right to use and may even in certain circumstances be obliged to use-and yet he foresees that this would have

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the result of putting the other in immediate danger of ecclesiastical censure, of the prohibition of the book in question or of his removal from the Church's *magisterium*. In such a case he would probably decide – with harmful results for the whole matter – not to employ these quite legitimate and indeed necessary weapons against his colleague. He would probably remain silent, talk round about the matter and give utterance to his view only in lectures. Yet this would not serve the cause of truth, and great harm would be done to the fraternal candour which should reign among Catholic theologians. One cannot say in such a case that by expressing his opinion, the other has only himself to blame for exposing himself to the danger of measures being taken by the Church authorities. The colleague who thinks about combating the view of the other can quite honestly be of the opinion that his opponent is an outstanding theologian, that his expressing his [92] own view, even though not accepted, will advance the matter under discussion, and that his opponent is an absolutely faithful son of the Church. He may, therefore, be seriously of the opinion that his opponent should be preserved from falling under the Church's censure, although he utterly rejects his view and would dearly wish to combat it. If he must now fear that by reason of his denial of his opponent's opinion the latter is exposed to the danger of censure by the Church, then he will naturally be careful not to express his view in the form indicated. He does not wish to be responsible for such a censure. Such an attitude is quite understandable and perfectly honourable.

Yet such a silence or toning-down can only be harmful to the cause of truth. For it prevents necessary discussion and even fails to protect Catholic teaching in certain cases – a function which does in part pertain to the duties of the theologian. It would force the Church authorities to take over a function which the theologians themselves should normally exercise – it would push theological discussion out of the public forum of periodicals and books into a sort of 'underground movement' of parties disputing with each other merely verbally.

What has been said is not meant to suggest that the Church authorities simply accept blindly the verdict of one theologian against the opinion of another – or that they are doing something unnecessary or unjust when they undertake such a censorship. Yet it will not be possible either to say that unnecessary and unjust measures are always and *a priori* excluded – that they have never been used in the past. If, however, it is not *a priori* impossible that rash, objectively unjust or too severe measures might be used – or merely measures detrimental to the greater good which all desire to serve – then the theologian may also fear that such measures might actually be used. If he were to get the impression that something like this could easily happen, then he would be careful that this should not happen to one of his colleagues. This would paralyse discussion, and problems would remain unsolved. For censorship can at best block a wrong road – it does not thereby open up the right road.

Given this situation, one may come to the conclusion that, although the Church's *magisterium* has every right (and sometimes is forced) to take such measures against theologians who express their opinion in free discussion out of an honest sense of responsibility as regards their duty as professors, this should happen only rarely and then with great care and only after all the circumstances and exonerating reasons have [93] been examined. Otherwise such interference will impede the necessary function exercised by theological discussion in the Church – to the detriment and not to the advantage of the Church's teaching. Such measures must not tacitly proceed from the principle that every false doctrine which is not explicitly condemned by the Church's *magisterium* will keep on spreading unchecked and can never be overcome by a clarifying of the question by purely theological means. If such measures of ecclesiastical censure occurred too often and too hastily, this would quite unintentionally give rise to the opinion in theological circles that a view is already accepted as reconcilable with the Catholic faith simply because it has not been immediately objected to by the *magisterium*. If, on the other hand, the *magisterium* did not object at all in an individual case – since it cannot happen in each case – then the

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theologian would be all the more afraid to express a contrary opinion. He would be under the impression that his disagreement must be false since otherwise the Church authorities would already have had to condemn this opinion. This in its turn would force the Church authorities to act more quickly so as not to create the false impression that this or that view may be held by Catholics. The necessary function of Catholic theology would be paralysed. Under the tacit presupposition that a non-defining pronouncement of the *magisterium* can in the final analysis be improved upon, the situation would become even more confused: one theologian would not speak because he fears the Church's censure and the other would not speak because he does not wish to call down such a censure on a third; if the Church's *magisterium* were to speak in such a case, its teaching would be accepted as something binding merely on the plane of Church discipline and not on the plane of infallible teaching – and this would he silently circumvented whenever possible.

What has been said just now is not meant to describe an actually existing alarming state of affairs. It is simply meant to give an analysis of a possible psychological set-up which might operate if the Church authorities were to put too little store by the positive effects of discussion among theologians, and if they consequently imagined that they must take measures to intervene in discussions as quickly as possible.

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[95]

PART II

QUESTIONS ON THE THEOLOGY OF HISTORY

[97]

5

HISTORY OF THE WORLD AND SALVATION-HISTORY

The subject I have been asked to deal with is: history of the world and salvation-history. So many questions and concerns can be covered by this heading, that I doubt whether I will manage to hit on the particular ones with which I am perhaps expected to deal. All that I can hope to do is to select, from the vast field covered by this subject, a few questions which seem to be of some importance to a Catholic theologian. We will formulate what can be said in this way in a few quite simple theses, and will then clarify these a little.

1. Salvation-history takes place within the history of this world. Salvation is indeed what finally brings the whole man to his perfection, salvation can ultimately be granted to him by God alone, and salvation is not yet achieved and at best must yet become. It is impossible simply to encounter this salvation somewhere in the world. Indeed, it would be an absolutely fundamental heresy for any already given condition in the world, or any condition which man himself can realize by his own planning and action, to be regarded by man as his salvation, i.e. as what is really meant by salvation – the final and the beatifying. Salvation, understood as an absolutely transcendent mystery – as that which comes from God and is outwith our control – is one of the most basic concepts of Christianity. Accomplished salvation is in no sense a moment in history but rather the culminating cessation of history. It is not an object of possession or a produced effect but rather an object of faith, hope and of prayer. By this fact alone, all utopian conceptions of salvation-in-this-world are to be rejected as doctrines meriting Condemnation. History is by this fact declared to be the realm of the Provisional, the unfinished, the ambiguous, the dialectical – and any attempt to seize salvation in this world and to find completion in the history of the world as such would itself remain a moment in history – [98] part of what is evil, godless and vain in history – and would itself give way to other history coming after it.

And yet a Catholic-Christian theology of history cannot but say that salvation-history takes place within the history of the world. This means several things. First of all, salvation for the Christian is not a future which is simply still to come and which has not yet started at all since, when it does come, it will absorb the history of the world into itself. No, salvation takes place now. Man receives God’s grace in the sense that grace is something which is already given to him now, something which he accepts and something which changes him interiorly. And since this grace is basically God communicating himself to man, it is not merely something provisional, nor is it merely a means to salvation nor a substitute for salvation. Grace is really this salvation itself, for it is God himself in his forgiving and divinizing love. Salvation-history within the history of the world means furthermore that this self-communication of God – which is the communication of salvation as such – takes place in the form of that free acceptance of this communication which we call faith, hope and charity in the freedom of man. And this man’s free surrender of himself to God who communicates himself to him is not merely an esoterically confined happening in the life of

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man. Of course, since faith is meant to include all human dimensions in this salvation – so that nothing in man may stand unrelated outside of salvation – this faith (by which salvation is accepted) may and must indeed render itself consciously and socially tangible in the very ground of man's existence in profession of faith, in worship and in the Church. Yet this acceptance of salvation in freedom, takes place just as much with reference to the material presuppositions of man's freedom in which that freedom is accomplished. Real freedom of the spirit, in this world of the God of grace and of Christ, is always freedom with regard to salvation or damnation and cannot be freedom in any other way. Yet, precisely this freedom of the corporeal, social and historical creature which is man is always and necessarily a freedom which is exercised through an encounter with the world – the community and environment in which man lives; its nature combines both that of transcendental freedom and of a particular category of freedom. Hence the freedom of acceptance or refusal of salvation occurs in all the dimensions of human existence, and it occurs always in an encounter with the world and not merely in the confined sector of the sacred or of worship and 'religion' in the narrow [99] sense; it occurs in encounters with one's neighbour, with one's historical task, with the so-called world of every-day life, in and with what we call the history of the individual and of communities. Thus salvation-history takes place right in the midst of ordinary history. Man works out his salvation or damnation in everything he does and in everything which impels him. Everything in the history of the world is pregnant with eternity and eternal life or with eternal ruin.

There is yet a third factor to be brought out with regard to this inclusion of salvation-history within profane history – a factor which is more characteristic of the Catholic understanding of this relationship than the first two we have mentioned. As we will have to state at much greater length later, the content and reality proper to salvation-history do indeed lie hidden in profane history, since immediately tangible historical events and realities do not of themselves give us any clear clue, as they themselves can be of a saving or a damning nature. These events and realities do not of themselves betray whether here and now something saving or damning is taking place in them. *Yet* this concealment of salvation-history in an ambiguous and undefined profane history, which cannot be simply interpreted or 'judged' as a saving history, does not mean that salvation-history is enacted solely in an individual, transempirical history of the individual existent, of conscience and of absolutely intangible faith. It does not mean that salvation-history takes place behind a profane history which goes its own quiet way and is quite indifferent to it, simply in the form of a supra-history or history of faith. It is true that profane history in *general* and on the *whole* is ambiguous and cannot of its nature be interpreted with absolute certainty in questions regarding what part of it is salvation and what damnation. Profane history will reveal itself clearly in this respect only in the Last Judgement, which itself is not a moment of history but rather the final unveiling of history. But all this does not mean that this profane history does not become transparent here and there and does not within its own sphere draw man's attention here and there by signs and references to the question of faith and salvation and orientate the answer to this question in a particular direction. Salvation-history, which of its nature is a hidden history, works itself out in the dimension of profane history in which it takes place. God, who grants salvation, addresses man within the profane dimension of history. He does this through the prophets who interpret the inward [100] history of grace and revelation by their words giving it a socially tangible form and authenticating this by those empirical facts, called miracles, which precede faith and justify it in a this-worldly manner before reason and moral responsibility, even though they cannot and are not intended to produce this faith. But above all, the history of this world has become transparent in regard to salvation (in a way which cannot be surpassed in this world) through the Christ-event in Jesus of Nazareth – through his resurrection and by the proof of the Spirit bestowed by him. In

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other words, the same man who in his whole and entire being is faced with the decision regarding salvation in his historical existence has ultimately only one history, in the sense that there are no isolated sectors of his existence which are in no way co-determined by the history of grace and faith (or vice versa). And this one history is not so uniform and homogeneous as to make salvation and God's action always and universally so clearly present in it that a profane zone of history could no longer be experienced at all or that the genuine decision of faith would no longer be possible; for if this were the case, then, no matter where man turned in such a history, he could not avoid encountering God and his offer of salvation everywhere with equal inevitability. In all this it can be left an open question here as to whether the eyes of faith alone can see this salvation-history shining through profane history in such a way that it is also accepted. In any case, the whole of profane history is disturbing, reproachful and disappointed even in its own sphere, and anyone who asks for salvation and reckons with the possibility of a personal self-exposure will find that profane history contains hints and 'signs' telling him where this salvation has taken place in his own history and where it is to be found. Salvation-history takes place within profane history.

2. Salvation-history is distinct from profane history. We have already had to enunciate this second thesis in explanation of the first. We must now reflect more explicitly and exactly on it.

(a) Salvation-history is distinct from profane history, firstly, because profane history by and large does not permit of any unequivocal interpretation with regard to the salvation or damnation taking place within it. Salvation and damnation are events of profane history, for wherever men achieve themselves in freedom, they stand before God and decide their salvation. If this were not so, then their activity would not be free in the real metaphysical and theological sense. For, freedom means man's self-determination in the face of God, whether he actually [101] understands it explicitly in this way or not. But this saving or damning characteristic of the historical free decisions of man remains hidden. It does not of itself become an historically tangible fact. For a free action becomes 'historical' in the strict sense only once it is objectified in such a way as to be explicitly expressed in words as an object of human intercommunication in the various forms of the objective spirit in science, art, society, etc. Of itself, however, the saving or damning character of a free human act cannot become objectified, and therefore historical, in this sense. This is impossible for several reasons. The ultimate quality of freedom cannot become the object of reflection. For the motives – adopted in freedom and accepted as effective motives – which determine the moral and religious quality of freedom are not simply identical with the conscious motives adopted in their conceptual explicitness. Man always acts from a knowing and self-possessed basis of his freedom, a basis which cannot be accounted for simply by representational and moral reflection. For, the content of consciousness is greater and wider, deeper and more original than the sum total of what is known. Even consequent reflection is itself again an act which – reflectively – cannot outstrip its own limits. By this token, therefore, every form of reflection itself is a merely provisional, inexact account which only approximates to the totality of the basis and motivation of freedom but never catches hold of it completely. If this is true of the moral reflection of the individual subject of freedom on himself, it is *a fortiori* true also of the objectifications of his moral decisions in words, purporting to communicate him to others, as well as in the various forms of the objective spirit. It is undoubtedly possible to recognize in many cases, with sufficient certainty, whether these objectifications are in accord with an objective moral norm or not. But it is impossible to derive any real certainty from them about the moral quality of the innermost free decision a person makes with regard to God. And hence it is also impossible to do this in respect of the question as to whether this or that historical act is an event of salvation or damnation. By looking at the reality of history

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as it offers itself to reflection and objectifies itself in word and deed and only thus becomes historical in the strictest sense, one can surmise, hope or fear – but one cannot judge. The history of the world is riot itself the judgement of the world, no matter how true it is that this judgement really takes place in that history. Furthermore, salvation is not to be found in the finality of the free decision of man, if this is taken to mean that man simply creates [102] this salvation himself by his free decision. Salvation is God communicating himself – it is his free act, which is God himself – since there is no salvation in the real order apart from God himself. This God, in his free communication of himself, in the grace-giving gift of his own eternal glory, must indeed be accepted in freedom, even though this acceptance is itself once more an act of that human freedom which in turn is a gift of God himself, granted to man by God's communication of himself. But the God who communicates himself can only be experienced in his own reality by a direct experience without the veil of faith covering up this reality. God's very own reality can only be experienced in the direct vision of God – in an event, in other words, which is the achievement and in that sense the cessation of history, and not a moment in history – which is the fruit and not merely the maturing of that fruit. For these two reasons – i.e. the freedom of man and the gift of salvation by God – the event of salvation is indeed contained and achieved in profane history and yet is not present historically in its quality of saving event as such but is rather believed or hoped for. By and large, profane history does not of itself offer us any certain interpretation regarding salvation or damnation. Man works out his history, and it pertains to the inscrutable counsels of God alone to judge this otherwise unjudged history. History carries its eternal content into the silent Mystery – it itself cannot enjoy that content. And this is the first aspect under which salvation-history and profane history are distinct.

(b) If we were to regard salvation-history only from the viewpoint emphasized up till now, it would still always be co-extensive with profane history, for the latter would then represent the undeciphered and indecipherable salvation-history. The only difference between salvation-history and profane history would then lie in the fact that the one is judged and the other is not. They would be formally but not materially distinct from each other. There is in fact a reality and concept of salvation-history and even revelation-history (and our first task now will have to be to work this out more clearly) which is not indeed formally identical in this sense, though materially coextensive, with the reality and concept of the profane history of the world. And so, before we can work out a material difference between salvation- and revelation-history in the narrowest sense of the word and the history of the world, we must first of all consider – or rather emphasize more explicitly – this material identity of a general revelation- [103] and salvation-history and the profane history of the world. It is part of the Catholic statement of Faith that the supernatural saving purpose of God extends to all men in all ages and places in history. Everyone is offered salvation, which means that everyone, in so far as he does not close himself to this offer by his own free and grave guilt, is offered divine grace-and is offered it again and again (even when he is guilty). Every man exists not only in an existential situation to which belongs the obligation of striving towards a supernatural goal of direct union with the absolute God in a direct vision, but he exists also in a situation which presents the genuine subjective possibility of reaching this goal by accepting God's self-communication in grace and in glory. Because of God's universal saving purpose, the offer and possibility of salvation extend as far as extends the history of human freedom. But furthermore, this offer of the supernatural elevation of the spiritual reality of man enabling him to move by his spiritual and personal dynamism towards the God of the supernatural beatifying life is not merely an objective state of being in man which could be thought of simply as something beyond consciousness. Grace, being supernaturally divinizing, must rather be thought of as a change in the structure of human consciousness. This does not necessarily nor always mean that consciousness is given new proper objects which were until

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then unknown to it. But the 'formal object' (as scholastic theology is in the habit of saying), the horizon within which the normal, empirically experienced realities of consciousness are grasped, and the ultimate orientation of consciousness are changed by grace. This supernatural horizon is not necessarily such that it could or ought to be made an object of reflection in itself or that it ought to be taken out of the context of and distinguished from the transcendental horizon (of the experience of being) natural to the intellectual consciousness of man. For there is no question here of an individual, changeable datum of consciousness, but rather of the *a-priori* horizon of consciousness – and this *a-priori* formal horizon, within which the intellectual life of man is enacted, is always present in everyone. This horizon is not as such an object, but an unobjectified horizon within which the spiritual existence of man takes place. Yet precisely as such, it is unsystematically and unreflectedly and indeed for the greater part 'unreflectably' conscious – conscious but not known. It is that inexpressible, nameless and – precisely as such – present ordination of man in knowledge and freedom to something which is beyond anything assignable, which [104] does not declare itself after the manner of an individual object but is as it were silent and yet by that very fact all the more all-embracing and operative in everything. It is the dynamism of the spirit's transcendence into the infinity of the silent mystery which we call God – -the dynamism which is really meant to arrive and to accept, and not merely to be the eternally approaching but never quite arriving movement towards the infinity of God; it is meant to reach the infinity of God, since God gives himself to it of his own accord and in such a way that he has already even now entered freely into this movement of infinite transcendence itself as its innermost moving-force and *raison d'être*. If this is so, then this supernatural elevation of man which is granted by God's universal saving purpose already has of itself the nature of a revelation. Of course, it is not of its own nature alone a revelation in the sense of a propositionally expressed communication about some particular, definite individual object. It is, however, a revelation in the sense of a change of consciousness (although not a change of knowledge), which originates from a free personal self-communication of God in grace. It is, therefore, absolutely legitimate to call it already a revelation, especially since it already communicates or offers in an ontologically real sense as 'grace' something which also ultimately constitutes the whole content of divine revelation contained in proper propositions and human concepts, viz. God and his eternal life itself which, as God's self-communication in grace and glory, is the salvation of men. If man accepts this his supernaturally elevated transcendence – this supernatural horizon and hence this divine revelation in the self-communication of the one revealed – then he exercises, even though as yet in a very unsystematic manner, what in a Christian sense can certainly be called faith. It follows then that there is a history of salvation, revelation and faith which co-exists with the general profane history. We have called his the general salvation- and revelation-history so as to distinguish it from that other salvation- and revelation-history with which we will have to deal more explicitly in a moment. Of course, as we have already indicated briefly above, the notion of 'history' contained in the concept of the general salvation- and revelation-history must be understood in a wide and (if you will) watered-down sense. We can call it a history of salvation and revelation because it is a matter of real decisions and free acts both on the part of God and on the part of man; it is a matter of mutual, personal communications which are performed concretely in and on the material of profane [105] history. But we can apply the term 'history' to this general salvation-and revelation-history only in a wider sense. For strictly as such and by its *a-priori* transcendental tendency, it does not as yet appear in those objectifications in word and objective cultural values which make it possible to have direct intercommunication between men, to have a concrete community of men and to have reflexly apprehensible knowledge about the relation to empirically experienced and communicable realities – and which in short represent history in the fullest sense of the word. This does not mean, however, that the general salvation- and

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revelation-history belongs to an absolutely metaempirical sphere which is in no way connected with the tangibility of normal history. The basic condition or horizon in the line of grace of which we have spoken and which is the foundation of the fact that there is a general salvation- and revelation-history at all times and even outside the Old and New Covenants will make itself felt in the concrete history of men. It will influence the concrete forms of religion, of man's self-knowledge, of his philosophy and morality, even when this horizon as such cannot (or at least not easily) be made the object of reflection in conceptual purity and sureness of truth. There is a unity in the dimensions of human existence – the whole man is called to salvation – and there is an inner dynamism of grace by which it becomes effective in a healing, sanctifying and divinizing way in all the dimensions of man. It is therefore to be expected, furthermore, that this divinized ground of man will everywhere and always (although with varying force and very differing success) try to become the object of reflection, driven to this by the very dynamism of grace under a supernatural, saving providence of God. It is to be expected that it will try to objectify itself in explicit expressions of religion, such as in the liturgy and religious associations, and in protests of a 'prophetic' kind against any natural attempt by man to shut himself up in the world of his own categories and against any (ultimately polytheistic) misinterpretations of this basic grace-full experience. We cannot in the present context go into the details of this inter-action between profane history and general salvation- and revelation-history. But if this were possible, we could no doubt show that a Christian understanding of the universal saving purpose of God, and of the nature of supernatural grace, would enable us to gain a far more positive understanding of the explicit, reflex and socially constituted general history of religion which after all co-exists with profane history. [106] This would show us that it is absolutely possible to conceive of a religion before Christianity even apart from the Old Covenant – a religion quite legitimate in the eyes of the saving providence of God, i.e. positively willed by providence even though it might inseparably contain certain elements not willed by God. Thus, the Old Testament (as against the New) might be conceived in many respects as a divinely interpreted model of pre-Christian religion rather than as an absolutely and in every respect unique and incomparable quantity. We must, however, pass over these considerations here, even though they would greatly contribute to the elucidation of the question about the relation between profane and saving history. We will therefore return now to the consideration of the question as to why and in what respect salvation-history and profane history must be distinguished.

(c) Salvation-history and profane history are distinct because God has interpreted a particular part of this profane and otherwise ambiguous history by his word (which is a constitutive element of salvation-history itself), by giving it a saving or damning character. Thus he has distinguished this particular part of the one history from the rest of history and has made it the actual, official and explicit history of salvation. This explanation of the difference between the two histories may seem rather surprising at first. It may be thought that surely salvation-history in the strictest sense is to be found in the Old Testament and at the moment when Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, came onto this earth, and when miracles occur – in brief, wherever God acts within history and accomplishes his actions on man. Yet, our thesis becomes immediately understandable if we ask ourselves about the reason for the presence of God's deeds in the history of men, and about the reason why God's actions enter into the properly historical dimension. For we still have to answer that it is through the word. A miracle would be merely an extraordinary and inexplicable event which would tell us nothing – even where, and precisely where, it refers to an empirically tangible and verifiable state of affairs – if it did not occur in connection with a word-revelation which is authenticated by it and which, in its turn, gives the miracle its basic meaning; the word-revelation makes the miracle basically comprehensible and gives point to its role as a sign indicating something. To the extent in which the real historical content of the Old Testament

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is not uttered and does not consist in the Word itself, the Old Testament can quite properly be regarded as the [107] natural saving providence of God or as God's saving providence intended for and accorded to all peoples. In other words, we can conceive God as Lord of a national history which becomes an event of salvation only once it is clearly interpreted by the word of the prophets as corresponding or contrary to the will of God. And with regard to Jesus Christ, his Incarnation or hypostatic union is naturally a fact which is more than a human word; but it finds its inner, necessary and co-constitutive continuation in the absolute human consciousness in Jesus of being the Son of God – and it would not be present for us in our historical dimension (precisely because of its peculiar characteristic as an absolute transcendent mystery) without the self-revelation of Jesus in his human words. Having said all this, we do not mean to maintain that salvation-history is nothing but the divine Word in human words. Such an assertion which would identify the history of salvation with that of faith and which would reduce the history of faith to a purely existential actualism is not intended by what we have said. What we do say, however, is that the saving acts of God as such become present in the dimension of human history – in other words, become themselves historical-only when the word which expresses and interprets them is added. This is therefore not a word added externally or subsequently, which is pronounced about something already tangibly present in the realm of human history even without it; rather, it is an inner constitutive element of God's saving activity considered as an event of human history as such. Hence, wherever profane history is clearly interpreted by the word of God in history as to its saving or damning character – wherever God's actions in general salvation-and revelation-history are clearly and certainly objectified by the word of God – and wherever the absolute, unsurpassable and indissoluble unity of God and the world, and its history in Jesus Christ, become historically manifest by Christ's testimony to himself in the form of words – there is found the special, official history of salvation and revelation, immediately differentiated and standing out in relief from profane history. For the interpreting and revealing word of God, which constitutes the official and special revelation- and salvation-history as distinct from the general salvation- and revelation-history, does not occur always and everywhere but has its special place in time and space within history. Nor does it clearly interpret the saving or damning character of all early history but leaves large tracts of it unexplained although it does provide rules of interpretation regarding [108] this profane history (with which we will have to deal later on) to aid the believing and hopeful ventures of the historically existing man. This setting into relief of saving history from profane history has itself a history all its own. It has not been equally intense and clear in all ages. Nor could it be. For by the general history of grace, salvation and revelation, real salvific activity becomes co-existent with the -history of the world and takes place within it at all times and everywhere. For this reason salvation-history is always also the hidden foundation of profane history which also manifests itself in the latter in ever new forms: the religious element is everywhere the meaning and root of history and is never merely the most sublime flower of a merely human culture which is the word of men; it is already propelled from within by God-effected grace and co-determined from within by the proper, general salvation-history. Wherever the latter reveals itself so clearly that it begins to become itself historically tangible in word and in the objectifications of the spirit of history, there the general salvation-history begins to pass over into special salvation-history: one does not know exactly whether this or that man is a religious thinker and a religiously creative man or already a prophet; one asks oneself whether this or that religious experience is the mystical expression of man's search for infinite transcendence or already the mysticism of the experience of grace which carries the dynamic urge of the soul into the divine life; one is not quite sure whether this or that element of worship, religious institutionalization or custom is merely permitted, encouraged, or positively willed by God so that it may be the historical embodiment of that orientation

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towards God which is characteristic of the deepest reality of man and without which no one finds his salvation. We know that the Old Testament as a whole, with its great men of God and with all that has objectified itself in the holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, has been acknowledged by God as something really willed by him and as his own preparation for salvation – in other words, we know that it was real salvation-history within and delimited from profane history. Yet in the Old Testament, too, the dividing line between saving and profane history is still very fluid: it was only with difficulty that men in Old Testament times could distinguish between authentic and false prophets. For the prophets appeared only sporadically, and there was as yet no institution which could act as a final court of appeal endowed with an absolute discernment of spirits which could have distinguished on every occasion between genuine prophets, legitimate [109] religious renewal and criticism, on the one hand, and false prophets and developments perversive of religion, on the other. The Old Covenant, taken as a whole, could have fallen away from its mission, and from being an authentic, official and historical tangible manifestation of the saving purpose of God for the people of Israel: it could have become an empty sign, an illegitimate usurpation of the sign of God's grace in the world. Nor do we maintain that God did not make arrangements for the historically tangible salvation of other peoples, analogous to the arrangements of the Old Testament. Of course, it remains the privilege of Israel that its tangible and to some extent distinct salvation-history was the immediate historical prelude to the Incarnation of the divine Word, and that this history of Israel alone was interpreted authoritatively by the word of God in Scripture in such a way that it was thereby distinguished from any other profane history (which also always contains religious elements), and that only thus it became the official and special salvation-history in distinction to profane history. Only in Jesus Christ did the divine and the human reach an absolute and indissoluble unity; only in the self-revelation of Jesus is this unity also historically present; only now is this saving history clearly and permanently distinguished from all profane history, and everything, such as the Church, the sacraments and the Scriptures, which follows from this Christ-event and which participates in its own way in this unsurpassable finality of the Christ-event, participates also in its distinction from profane history. Here in Christ and in the Church, saving history reaches its clearest and absolutely permanent distinction from profane history and becomes really an unequivocally distinct manifestation within the history of the world, thus bringing the general salvation-history to self-realization and to its historical reality in word and social structures within the history of the world. By this very fact, this distinct salvation-history of an explicitly verbal, social and sacramental kind is also something destined for all men of every future age. It intends to gather into itself the whole general salvation- and revelation-history and to represent it historically within itself, it *strives* therefore to coincide with the general salvation- and revelation-history and thus also with profane history, although it knows quite well that these two can never be fully identified in history but only in the culminating dissolution of history.

3. Salvation-history explains profane history. This is the third point we wish to make here about the subject under discussion. This [110] statement means two things. Firstly, salvation-history is an explanation of profane history because, in the form of general salvation-history, it represents the most profound character and basis of profane history, and because, in the form of official and special salvation-history, it manifests this ultimate character of all history in the revelation in which salvation takes place and at the same time shows itself historically. Secondly, salvation-history presents us by its word with an interpretation of profane history. These two aspects of the above statement do not require separate consideration.

(a) Salvation-history sets itself into relief from the history of the world – it demythologizes, undeifies the history of the world. Creation and history are not yet salvation. Salvation is God and his grace, and God's grace is not simply identical with the reality which is engaged in

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evolving history. Just as Christianity strips the world of divine attributes firstly by showing that it has a created nature essentially distinct from God and secondly by prohibiting any conception of the world which regards it simply as the corporeal aspect of the gods, so it is also with history. History is not simply the history of God himself – a theogony – and so does not find its ultimate basis in itself and is not self-explanatory. History is not the judgement of the world but is something created, finite, temporal and essentially referred to the Mystery which is other than itself. The 'Kronos' and 'Ananke' of history are not gods. Man has been thrown out into this undeified world. He does not merely live in salvation-history. He is a Christian and works out his salvation and this precisely by taking upon himself the soberness of the profane which is not yet itself salvation. Salvation-history creates its own presupposition by the very fact of turning the profane, the ambiguous, the God-veiling – in a word, the world and profane history – into the climate of faith and probation. It is true that salvation-history is silent about profane history, leaves its questions open ones and lets the cockle grow with the wheat without trying to make any clear-cut distinction between them. There is a way in which Christianity declares itself incompetent as regards worldly matters, the State and politics, economic matters and all other cultural affairs. At first sight, all this may appear to anyone who thinks he can deal with the world on his own as an all too desirable modesty. Yet in reality, this dualism between State and Church, science and theology – in short, between Christianity and the world together with its history – has another quite different side to it. We refer to the fact that God leaves [111] history to its own devices; he leaves it to journey into the indefinite, to make its own attempts, to be responsible for its own 'planning', and he leaves it the possibility of losing its way and of tragically destroying itself, etc., even where people are not disobedient to the word of God and his commandments. Salvation-history, therefore, tells anyone who is looking for salvation to go out into profane history too – this history which remains a dark, unexplained and incalculable task – and tells him to hold out there, to prove himself there, to believe that life has a meaning even though this remains unexplained and precisely in this sense to accept God as his salvation. In short, salvation-history, by bringing out the distinction between profane history and itself, sends man out into a demythologized world which is not so much the realm of the rule of the gods, but rather the raw material for the task imposed on man – for the task which indeed man, the *homo faber*, actually and legitimately imposes on himself – only to know that, when he has fulfilled this task, he has still not gained salvation for himself by his own powers, but receives it as a gift from God, since it is more than the world and history.

(b) Salvation-history interprets the history of the world as something antagonistic and veiled. Precisely because salvation is not simply the immanent fruit of profane history, Christianity is sceptical towards profane history. It lets man go out to his worldly task, because it is precisely in the obscurity and ambiguity of this earthly task that man must work out his salvation which is by faith. Yet for Christianity this very task in the world is something which will always remain unfinished and which will ultimately always again end in failure. For as far as the individual is concerned, this task always finds an absolute limit in death, in the same way Christianity also shows that death is to be found even in the midst of universal history. This implies a futility arising from the fact that what can always be planned only partially will always remain incalculable – a futility which always springs afresh out of man's evil heart, even over and above the inherent tragedy of everything finite. Christianity knows no history which would evolve of its own inner power into the kingdom of God itself and it does not really matter whether one conceives this kingdom as the realm of the enlightened mind, or of the fully civilized man, or of the classless society or in any other way whatsoever. The opposition between man and woman, the intelligent and the stupid, the rich and the poor, war and peace, rulers and subjects, and any other ineradicable antitheses of existence, [112] may take different forms, may become more refined and more bearable; the

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effort to humanize these oppositions may even be a duty for the human race and one which is imposed on it and whose fulfilment is to a certain extent even forced upon it by the exigencies of history. Nevertheless, the oppositions will always remain, they will always weigh heavily on man and will always renew the pain and bitter melancholy of human existence. Indeed, in Christian eschatology, these terrestrial antitheses, this combat between light and darkness, good and evil, faith and unbelief, are known to take on ever acuter forms. Of course, this combat which is actually part and parcel of salvation-history will never be such that the human combatants engaged on either side of this fight would identify themselves or could be identified with absolute goodness or absolute evil. No one but God can ever distinguish these ultimate fronts of salvation-history adequately, for they will always cut through the parties engaged in these combats in the history of the world as well as the individuals concerned. Yet according to Christian eschatology, the decisions taken in salvation-history will be enacted in ever clearer forms and signs; they will fashion their own embodiments and expressions in the most profound depths of existence within the history of the world, even though the final judgement, which will make a clear distinction between the wheat and the cockle within these objectifications, belongs to God alone. Christianity denies that the history of the world is progressing towards eternal peace-although this does not mean that war, which will always be with us, must necessarily be one fought with halberds or atomic bombs. Christianity knows that all progress in profane history is also another step towards the possibility of greater dangers and ultimate ruin. History will never be the place for eternal peace and shadowless light – rather if this life is measured by the absolute demands which God has empowered man to make or, indeed, which man has a God-given duty to make, it will always be the land of death and darkness.

(c) The history of the world is an existentially devaluated (*depotenzierte*) history in its Christian interpretation. We must be careful in our evaluation of profane history. The Christian is certainly not such a one as has a merely private concern about his salvation that he can settle down in some dead corner of the history of the world and seek his salvation there-quite unconcerned about the passage of the history of the world – in a flight from the world which in the last analysis is [113] quite impossible. It may be winter in the history of a people, or in some other kind of historical form. It may be impossible in some particular period of history to achieve anything lofty or great, things to which one would otherwise be in duty bound. A man may perhaps even recognize this and *hence* know himself to be released from such a duty. There may be quite legitimate withdrawals from public life, from politics and the market-place of an impoverished age; indeed, in certain periods this may be the only possible way of existing for a wise, honest and courageous person, for not even he is capable of everything, nor is he bound to consider himself capable of it. Yet all this does not mean that the Christian may in principle withdraw from history. He has a duty towards history, he must make and suffer history. He can only find the eternal in the temporal. Yet this again does not mean that the temporal and the eternal are simply the same. And to this extent the Christian has the right and duty to make history something relative and – in a true sense-to devaluate and disarm it existentially. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger or nakedness, or danger or the sword? . . . I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord – says St Paul. But this means that every significance proper to the history of the world is always already outdated for us, not indeed on our account but on account of God in Christ – always presupposing that we have taken refuge by faith in this outmoding of history by God in Christ. Neither death nor life, neither things present nor future possibilities are the ultimate, the finally significant, that which is salvation. Hence the Christian is told over and over again with regard to the

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history of this world and its incalculable possibilities and tasks: what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but suffer the loss of his own soul? *This* flight from the world, which sees the significance of empirical history as something relative, is part of what is meant by being a Christian. It is no stoic ataraxy, no cowardice or cynicism. It is the faith which knows that entry into God's eternity can be gained through all the exits of the history of the world and through every rise or fall, provided only that one accepts God's salvation in faith – which one can do under any of the forms of profane history. That which often seems to be a somewhat narrow-minded, self-centred anxiety about [114] salvation in the life of the Christian – this attitude of someone trying to salvage his soul out of the chaos of the times – is in fact (wherever it is the action of a true Christian) the attitude of a magnificent superiority of the faith over the world, such as is given expression in the text of St Paul quoted above. It means that the true Christian can take history seriously because he knows it to be already overcome by Christ. The history of this world is devaluated in a Christian sense, because salvation can take place in all its most contradictory forms – and at the same time this history is increased in value since in it can truly take place the limitless salvation, the eternal and lasting salvation, which is God himself.

(d) For Christianity, the history of this world is a history interpreted in a Christo-centric sense. This is really just a summary of what we have been saying. The world is the world created for the eternal Logos – by him and for him. The world and its history has been designed from the very beginning with a view to the Word of God become flesh. Since God wished, because he is Love, to express himself in his eternal Word, the world exists, and exists complete with the difference between nature and grace, and thus between salvation-history and profane history. For this very reason this means that this difference is enveloped by Christ and by God's absolute self-expression which takes place in Christ. Hence the history of the world too – and precisely in its profane nature – is a part of the pre- and post-history of Christ. Natural history in its material content and in its living form is the sphere which God puts before the finite spirit as the condition of its possibility – as the presupposition which transcends itself into the realm of the finite spirit by the dynamism of the absolute Spirit. So also the totality of the history of the world is the presupposition God has provided for salvation-history as the condition of its possibility transcending itself into it. Thus the history of the world is the sphere and the pre-history of the history of Christ, which is, since he is engaged in history not indeed as someone who needs to be but as the Love who surrenders himself, the history of God himself. That, however, which embraces world- and salvation-history in their unity and diversity, is the most real history of all.

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6

CHRISTIANITY AND THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS[1]

'Open Catholicism' involves two things. It signifies the fact that the Catholic Church is opposed by historical forces which she herself cannot disregard as if they were purely 'worldly' forces and a matter of indifference to her but which, on the contrary, although they do not stand in a positive relationship of peace and mutual recognition to the Church, do have a significance for her. 'Open Catholicism' means also the task of becoming related to these forces in order to understand their existence (since this cannot be simply acknowledged), in order to bear with and overcome the annoyance of their opposition and in order to form the Church in such a way that she will be able to overcome as much of this pluralism as should not exist, by understanding herself as the higher unity of this opposition. Open Catholicism means therefore a certain attitude towards the present-day pluralism of powers with different outlooks on the world. We do not, of course, refer to pluralism merely as a fact which one simply acknowledges without explaining it. Pluralism is meant here as a fact which ought to be thought about and one which, without denying that – in part at least – it should not exist at all, should be incorporated once more from a more elevated viewpoint into the totality and unity of the Christian understanding of human existence. For Christianity, one of the gravest elements of this pluralism in which we live and with which we must come to terms, and indeed the element most difficult to incorporate, is the pluralism of religions. We do not refer by this to the pluralism of Christian denominations. This pluralism too is a fact, and a challenge and task for Christians. But we are [116] not concerned with it here. Our subject is the, at least in its ultimate and basic form, more serious problem of the different religions which still exist even in Christian times, and this after a history and mission of Christianity which has already lasted two thousand years. It is true, certainly, that all these religions together, including Christianity, are faced today with an enemy which did not exist for them in the past. We refer to the decided lack of religion and the denial of religion in general. This denial, in a sense, takes the stage with the ardour of a religion and of an absolute and sacred system which is the basis and the yard-stick of all further thought. This denial, organized on the basis of a State, represents itself as *the* religion of the future – as the decided, absolute secularization of human existence excluding all mystery. No matter how paradoxical this may sound, it does remain true that precisely this state of siege in which religion in general finds itself, finds one of its most important weapons and opportunities for success in the fact that humanity is so torn in its religious adherence. But quite apart from this, this pluralism is a greater threat and a reason for greater unrest for Christianity than for any other religion. For no other religion – not even Islam – maintains so absolutely that it is *the* religion, the one and only valid revelation of the one living God, as does the Christian religion. The fact of the pluralism of religions, which endures and still from time to time becomes virulent anew even after a history of two thousand years, must therefore be the greatest scandal and the greatest vexation for Christianity. And the threat of this vexation is also greater for the individual Christian today than ever before. For in the past, the other religion was in practice the religion of a completely different cultural environment. It belonged to a history with which the individual only communicated very much on the periphery of his own history; it was the

[1] The following expositions are the notes of a lecture given on the 28th April 1961 in Eichstätt (Bavaria) at a meeting of the 'Abendländische Akademie'. No attempt has been made to enlarge these notes here, although a great deal in them remains extremely fragmentary.

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religion of those who were even in every other respect alien to oneself. It is not surprising, therefore, that people did not wonder at the fact that these 'others' and 'strangers' had also a different religion. No wonder that in general people could not seriously consider these other religions as a challenge posed to themselves or even as a possibility for themselves. Today things have changed. The West is no longer shut up in itself it can no longer regard itself simply as the centre of the history of this world and as the centre of culture, with a religion which even from this point of view (i.e. from a point of view which has really nothing to do with a decision of faith but which simply carries the weight of something [117] quite self-evident) could appear as the obvious and indeed sole way of honouring God to be thought of for a European. Today everybody is the next-door neighbour and spiritual neighbour of every one else in the world. And so everybody today is determined by the intercommunication of all those situations of life which affect the whole world. Every religion which exists in the world is – just like all cultural possibilities and actualities of other people – a question posed, and a possibility offered, to every person. And just as one experiences someone else's culture in practice as something relative to one's own and as something existentially demanding, so it is also involuntarily with alien religions. They have become part of one's own existential situation – no longer merely theoretically but in the concrete – and we experience them therefore as something which puts the absolute claim of our own Christian faith into question. Hence, the question about the understanding of and the continuing existence of religious pluralism as a factor of our immediate Christian existence is an urgent one and part of the question as to how we are to deal with today's pluralism. This problem could be tackled from different angles. In the present context we simply wish to try to describe a few of those basic traits of a Catholic dogmatic interpretation of the non-Christian religions which may help us to come closer to a solution of the question about the Christian position in regard to the religious pluralism in the world of today. Since it cannot be said, unfortunately, that Catholic theology – as practised in more recent times – has really paid sufficient attention to the questions to be posed here, it will also be impossible to maintain that what we will have to say here can be taken as the common thought of Catholic theology. What we have to say carries, therefore, only as much weight as the reasons we can adduce, which reasons can again only be briefly indicated. Whenever the propositions to be mentioned carry a greater weight than this in theology, anyone trained in theology will realize it quite clearly from what is said. When we say that it is a question here of a *Catholic* dogmatic interpretation of the non-Christian religions, this is not meant to indicate that it is necessarily a question also of theories controverted among Christians themselves. It simply means that we will not be able to enter explicitly into the question as to whether the theses to be stated here can also hope to prove acceptable to Protestant theology. We say too that we are going to give a dogmatic interpretation, since we will pose our question not as empirical historians of religion but [118] out of the self-understanding of Christianity itself, i.e. as dogmatic theologians.

1st Thesis: We must begin with the thesis which follows, because it certainly represents the basis in the Christian faith of the theological understanding of other religions. This thesis states that Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other religion beside itself as of equal right. This proposition is self-evident and basic for Christianity's understanding of itself. There is no need here to prove it or to develop its meaning. After all, Christianity does not take valid and lawful religion to mean primarily that relationship of man to God which man himself institutes on his own authority. Valid and lawful religion does not mean man's own interpretation of human existence. It is not the reflection and objectification of the experience which man has of himself and by himself. Valid and lawful religion for Christianity is rather God's action on men, God's free self-revelation by communicating himself to man. It is God's relationship to men, freely instituted by God himself and revealed by God in this institution. *This*

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relationship of God to man is basically the same for all men, because it rests on the Incarnation, death and resurrection of the one Word of God become flesh. Christianity is God's own interpretation in his Word of this relationship of, God to man founded in Christ by God himself. And so Christianity can recognize itself as the true and lawful religion for all men only where and when it enters with existential power and demanding force, into the realm of another religion and – judging it by itself – puts it in question. Since the time of Christ's coming – ever since he came in the flesh as the Word of God in absoluteness and reconciled, i.e. united the world with God by his death and resurrection, not merely theoretically but really – Christ and his continuing historical presence in the world (which we call 'Church') is *the* religion which binds man to God. Already we must, however, make one point clear as regards this first thesis (which cannot be further developed and proved here). It is true that the Christian religion itself has its own pre-history which traces this religion back to the beginning of the history of humanity – even though it does this by many basic steps. It is also true that this fact of having a pre-history is of much greater importance, according to the evidence of the New Testament, for the theoretical and practical proof of the claim to absolute truth made by the Christian religion than our current fundamental theology is aware of. Nevertheless, the Christian [119] religion as such has a beginning in history; it did not always exist but began at some point in time. It has not always and everywhere been *the* way of salvation for men – at least not in its historically tangible ecclesio-sociological constitution and in the reflex fruition of God's saving activity in, and in view of, Christ. As a historical quantity Christianity has, therefore, a temporal and spatial starting point in Jesus of Nazareth and in the saving event of the unique Cross and the empty tomb in Jerusalem. It follows from this, however, that this absolute religion – even when it begins to be this for practically all men – must come in a historical way to men, facing them as the only legitimate and demanding religion for them. It is therefore a question of whether this moment, when the existentially real demand is made by the absolute religion in its historically tangible form, takes place really at the same chronological moment for all men, or whether the occurrence of this moment has itself a history and thus is not chronologically simultaneous for all men, cultures and spaces of history. (This is a question which up until now Catholic theology has not thought through with sufficient clarity and reflection by really confronting it with the length and intricacy of real human time and history.) Normally the beginning of the objective obligation of the Christian message for all men – in other words, the abolition of the validity of the Mosaic religion *and* of all other religions which (as we will see later) may also have a period of validity and of being-willed-by-God – is thought to occur in the apostolic age. Normally, therefore, one regards the time between this beginning and the actual acceptance or the personally guilty refusal of Christianity in a non-Jewish world and history as the span between the already given promulgation of the law and the moment when the one to whom the law refers takes cognizance of it. It is not just an idle academic question to ask whether such a conception is correct or whether, as we maintain, there could be a different opinion in this matter, i.e. whether one could hold that the beginning of Christianity for actual periods of history, for cultures and religions, could be postponed to those moments in time when Christianity became a real historical factor in an individual history and culture – a real historical moment in a particular culture. For instance, one concludes from the first, usual answer that *everywhere* in the world, since the first Pentecost, baptism of children dying before reaching the use of reason is necessary for their supernatural salvation, although this was not necessary before that time. For other questions, too, a correct and [120] considered solution of the present question could be of great importance, as for instance for the avoidance of immature conversions, for the justification and importance of 'indirect' missionary work, etc. One will have to ask oneself whether one can still agree today with the first opinion mentioned above, in view of the history of the missions which has already lasted

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two thousand years and yet is still to a great extent in its beginnings – for even Suarez himself, for instance, had already seen (at least with regard to the *Jews*) that the *promulgatio* and *obligatio* of the Christian religion, and not merely the *divulgatio* and *notitia promulgationis*, take place in historical sequence. We cannot really answer this question here, but it may at least be pointed out as an open question; in practice, the correctness of the second theory may be presupposed since it alone corresponds to the real historicity of Christianity and salvation-history. From this there follows a delicately differentiated understanding of our first thesis: we maintain positively only that, as regards destination, Christianity is the absolute and hence the only religion for all men. We leave it, however, an open question (at least in principle) at what exact point in time the absolute obligation of the Christian religion has in fact come into effect for every man and culture, even in the sense of the *objective* obligation of such a demand. Nevertheless – and this leaves the thesis formulated still sufficiently exciting – wherever in practice Christianity reaches man in the real urgency and rigour of his actual existence, Christianity – once understood – presents itself as the only still valid religion for this man, a necessary means for his salvation and not merely an obligation with the necessity of a precept. It should be noted that this is a question of the necessity of a *social* form for salvation. Even though this is Christianity and not some other religion, it may surely still be said without hesitation that this thesis contains implicitly another thesis which states that in concrete human existence as such, the nature of religion itself must include a social constitution – which means that religion can exist only in a social form. This means, therefore, that man, who is commanded to have a religion, is also commanded to seek and accept a social form of religion. It will soon become clear what this reflection implies for the estimation of non-Christian religions.

Finally, we may mention one further point in this connection. What is vital in the *notion* of *paganism* and hence also of the non-Christian pagan religions (taking 'pagan' here as a theological concept without any disparaging intent) is not the actual refusal to accept the Christian [121] religion but the absence of any sufficient historical encounter with Christianity which would have enough historical power to render the Christian religion really present in this pagan society and in the history of the people concerned. If this is so, then paganism ceases to exist in this sense by reason of what is happening today. For the Western world is opening out into a universal world-history in which every people and every cultural sector becomes an inner factor of every other people and every other cultural sector. Or rather, paganism is slowly entering a new phase: there is *one* history of the world, and in this *one* history both the Christians and the non-Christians (i.e. the old and new pagans together) live in one and the same situation and face each other in dialogue, and thus the question of the theological meaning of the other religions arises once more and with even greater urgency.

2nd Thesis: Until the moment when the gospel really enters into the historical situation of an individual, a non-Christian religion (even outside the Mosaic religion) does not merely contain elements of a natural knowledge of God, elements, moreover, mixed up with human depravity which is the result of original sin and later aberrations. It contains also supernatural elements arising out of the grace which is given to men as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ. For this reason a non-Christian religion can be recognized as a *lawful* religion (although only in different degrees) without thereby denying the error and depravity contained in it. This thesis requires a more extensive explanation.

We must first of all note the point up to which this evaluation of the non-Christian religions is valid. This is the point in time when the Christian religion becomes a historically real factor for those who are of this religion. Whether this point is the same, theologically speaking, as the first Pentecost, or whether it is different in chronological time for individual peoples and religions, is something which even at this point will have to be left to a certain

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extent an open question. We have, however, chosen our formulation in such a way that it points more in the direction of the opinion which seems to us the more correct one in the matter although the *criteria* for a more exact determination of this moment in time must again be left an open question.

The thesis itself is divided into two parts. It means first of all that it is *a priori* quite possible to suppose that there are supernatural, grace-filled elements in non-Christian religions. Let us first of all [122] deal with this statement. It does not mean, of course, that all the elements of a polytheistic conception of the divine, and all the other religious, ethical and metaphysical aberrations contained in the non-Christian religions, are to be or may be treated as harmless either in theory or in practice. There have been constant protests against such elements throughout the history of Christianity and throughout the history of the Christian interpretation of the non-Christian religions, starting with the Epistle to the Romans and following on the Old Testament polemics against the religion of the 'heathens'. Every one of these protests is still valid in what was really meant and expressed by them. Every such protest remains a part of the message which Christianity and the Church has to give to the peoples who profess such religions. Furthermore, we are not concerned here with an *a-posteriori* history of religions. Consequently, we also cannot describe empirically what should not exist and what is opposed to God's will in these non-Christian religions, nor can we represent these things in their many forms and degrees. We are here concerned with dogmatic theology and so can merely repeat the universal and unqualified verdict as to the unlawfulness of the non-Christian religions right from the moment when they came into real and historically powerful contact with Christianity (and at first only thus!). It is clear, however, that this condemnation does not mean to deny the very basic differences within the non-Christian religions especially since the pious, God-pleasing pagan was already a theme of the Old Testament, and especially since this God-pleasing pagan cannot simply be thought of as living absolutely outside the concrete socially constituted religion and constructing his own religion on his native foundations – just as St Paul in his speech on the Areopagus did not simply exclude a positive and basic view of the pagan religion. The decisive reason for the first part of our thesis is basically a theological consideration. This consideration (prescinding from certain more precise qualifications) rests ultimately on the fact that, if we wish to be Christians, we must profess belief in the universal and serious salvific purpose of God towards all men which is true even within the post-paradisean phase of salvation dominated by original sin. We know, to be sure, that this proposition of faith does not say anything certain about the *individual* salvation of man understood as something which has in fact been reached. But God desires the salvation of everyone. And this salvation willed by God is the salvation won by Christ, the salvation of supernatural [123] grace which divinizes man, the salvation of the beatific vision. It is a salvation really intended for all those millions upon millions of men who lived perhaps a million years before Christ – and also for those who have lived after Christ – in nations, cultures and epochs of a very wide range which were still completely shut off from the viewpoint of those living in the light of the New Testament. If, on the one hand, we conceive salvation as something specifically *Christian*, if there is no salvation apart from Christ, if according to Catholic teaching the supernatural divinization of man can never be replaced merely by good will on the part of man but is necessary as something itself given in this earthly life; and i1 on the other hand, God has really, truly and seriously intended this salvation for all men – then these two aspects cannot be reconciled in any other way then by stating that every human being is really and truly exposed to the influence of divine, supernatural grace which offers an interior union with God and by means of which God communicates himself whether the individual takes up an attitude of acceptance or of refusal towards this grace. It is senseless to suppose cruelly – and without any hope of acceptance by the man of today, in view of the enormous extent of the extra-

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Christian history of salvation and damnation – that nearly all men living outside the official and public Christianity are so evil and stubborn that the offer of supernatural grace ought not even to be made in fact in most cases, since these individuals have already rendered themselves unworthy of such an offer by previous, subjectively grave offences against the natural moral law. If one gives more exact theological thought to this matter, then one cannot regard nature and grace as two phases in the, life of the individual which follow each other in time. It is furthermore impossible to think that this offer of supernatural, divinizing grace made to all men on account of the universal salvific purpose of God, should in general (prescinding from the relatively few exceptions) remain ineffective in most cases on account of the personal guilt of the individual. For, as far as the gospel is concerned, we have no really conclusive reason for thinking so pessimistically of men. On the other hand, and contrary to every merely human experience, we do have every reason for thinking Optimistically of God and his salvific will which is more powerful than the extremely limited stupidity and evil-mindedness of men. However little we can say with certitude about the final lot of an individual inside or outside the officially constituted Christian religion, we have [124] every reason to think optimistically – i.e. truly hopefully and confidently in a Christian sense – of God who has certainly the last word and who has revealed to us that he has spoken his powerful word of reconciliation and forgiveness into the world. If it is true that the eternal Word of God has become flesh and has died the death of sin for the sake of our salvation and in spite of our guilt, then the Christian has no right to suppose that the fate of the world – having regard to the whole of the world – takes the same course on account of man's refusal as it would have taken if Christ had not come. Christ and his salvation are not simply one of two possibilities offering themselves to man's free choice; they are the deed of God which bursts open and redeems the false choice of man by overtaking it. In Christ God not only gives the *possibility* of salvation, which in that case would still have to be effected by man himself, but the actual salvation itself, however much this includes also the right decision of human freedom which is itself a gift from God. Where sin already existed, grace came in superabundance. And hence we have every right to suppose that grace has not only been offered even outside the Christian Church (to deny this would be the error of Jansenism) but also that, in a great many cases at least, grace gains the victory in man's free acceptance of it, this being again the result of grace. Of course, we would have to show more explicitly than the shortness of time permits that the empirical picture of human beings, their life, their religion and their individual and universal history does not disprove this optimism of a faith which knows the whole world to be subjected to the salvation won by Christ. But we must remember that the theoretical and ritualistic factors in good and evil are only a very inadequate expression of what man actually accomplishes in practice. We must remember that the same transcendence of man (even the transcendence elevated and liberated by God's grace) can be exercised in many different ways and under the most varied labels. We must take into consideration that whenever the religious person acts really religiously, he makes use of or omits unthinkingly, the manifold forms of religious institutions by making a consciously critical choice among and between them. We must consider the immeasurable difference – which it seems right to suppose to exist even in the Christian sphere – between what is objectively wrong in moral life and the extent to which this is really realized with subjectively grave guilt. Once we take all this into consideration, we will not hold it to be impossible that grace is at work, and is even being [125] accepted, in the spiritual, personal life of the individual, no matter how primitive, unenlightened, apathetic and earth-bound such a life may at first sight appear to be. We can say quite simply that wherever, and in so far as, the individual makes a moral decision in his life (and where could this be declared to be in any way absolutely impossible – except in precisely 'pathological' cases?), this moral decision can also be thought to measure up to the character of a supernaturally elevated,

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believing and thus saving act, and hence to be more in actual fact than merely 'natural morality'. Hence, if one believes seriously in the universal salvific purpose of God towards all men in Christ, it need not and cannot really be doubted that gratuitous influences of properly Christian supernatural grace are conceivable in the life of all men (provided they are first of all regarded as individuals) and that these influences can be presumed to be accepted in spite of the sinful state of men and in spite of their apparent estrangement from God.

Our second thesis goes even further than this, however, and states in its second part that, from what has been said, the actual religions of 'pre-Christian' humanity too must not be regarded as simply illegitimate from the very start, but must be seen as quite capable of having a positive significance. This statement must naturally be taken in a very different sense which we cannot examine here for the various particular religions. This means that the different religions will be able to lay claim to being lawful religions only in very different senses and to very different degrees. But precisely this variability is not at all excluded by the notion of a 'lawful religion', as we will have to show in a moment. A lawful religion means here an institutional religion whose 'use' by man at a certain period can be regarded on the whole as a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and thus for the attaining of salvation, a means which is therefore positively included in God's plan of salvation. That such a notion and the reality to which it refers can exist even where such a religion shows many theoretical and practical errors in its concrete form becomes clear in a theological analysis of the structure of the Old Covenant. We must first of all remember in this connection that only in the New Testament – in the Church of Christ understood as something which is eschatologically final and *hence* (and only for this reason) 'indefectible' and infallible – is there realized the notion of a Church which, because it is instituted by God in some way or other, already contains the permanent norm of differentiation between what is right (i.e. willed by God) [126] and what is wrong in the religious sphere, and contains it both as a permanent institution and as an intrinsic element of this religion. There was nothing like this in the Old Testament, although it must undoubtedly be recognized as a lawful religion. The Old Covenant – understood as a concrete, historical and religious manifestation – contained what is right, willed by God, *and* what is false, erroneous, wrongly developed and depraved. But there was no permanent, continuing and institutional court of appeal in the Old Covenant which could have differentiated authoritatively, always and with certainty for the conscience of the individual between what was willed by God and what was due to human corruption in the actual religion. Of course, there were the prophets. They were not a permanent institution, however, but a conscience which had always to assert itself anew on behalf of the people in order to protest against the corruption of the religion as it existed at the time, thus – incidentally – confirming the existence of this corruption. The official, institutional forms known as the 'kingdom' and the priesthood were so little proof against this God-offending corruption that they could bring about the ruin of the Israelitic religion itself. And since there were also pseudo-prophets, and no infallible 'institutional' court of appeal for distinguishing genuine and false prophecy, it was – in the last analysis – left to the conscience of the individual Israelite himself to differentiate between what in the concrete appearance of the Israelitic religion was the true covenant with God and what was a humanly free, and so in certain cases falsifying, interpretation and corruption of this God-instituted religion. There might have been objective criteria for such a distinction of spirits, but their application could not simply be left to an 'ecclesiastical' court – not even in the most decisive questions – since official judgements could be wrong even about these questions and in fact were completely wrong about them. This and nothing more – complete with its distinction between what was willed by God and what was human, all too human, a distinction which was ultimately left to be decided by the individual – was the concrete Israelitic religion. The Holy Scriptures do indeed give us the official and valid deposit to help us differentiate among

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the spirits which moved the history of the Old Testament religion. But since the infallible delimitation of the canon of the Old Testament is again to be found only in the New Testament, the exact and final differentiation between the lawful and the unlawful in the Old Testament religion is again possible only by making use of [127] the New Testament as something eschatologically final. The unity of the concrete religion of the Old Testament, which (ultimately) could be distinguished only gropingly and at one's own risk, was however the unity willed by God, providential for the Israelites in the order of salvation and indeed the lawful religion for them. In this connection it must furthermore be taken into consideration that it was meant to be this only for the Israelites and for no one else; the institution of those belonging to the Jewish religion without being of the Jewish race, (i.e. of the proselytes) was a very much later phenomenon. Hence it cannot be a part of the notion of a lawful religion in the above sense that it should be free from corruption, error and objective moral wrong in the concrete form of its appearance, or that it should contain a clear objective and permanent final court of appeal for the conscience of the individual to enable the individual to differentiate clearly and with certainty between the elements willed and instituted by God and those which are merely human and corrupt. We must therefore rid ourselves of the prejudice that we can face a non-Christian religion with the dilemma that it must either come from God in everything it contains and thus correspond to God's will and positive providence, or be simply a purely human construction. If man is under God's grace even in these religions – and to deny this is certainly absolutely wrong – then the possession of this supernatural grace cannot but show itself, and cannot but become a formative factor of life in the concrete, even where (though not only where) this life turns the relationship to the absolute into an explicit theme, viz. in religion. It would perhaps be possible to say in theory that where a certain religion is not only accompanied in its concrete, appearance by something false and humanly corrupted but also makes this an explicitly and consciously adopted element – an explicitly declared condition of its *nature* – this religion is wrong in its deepest and most specific being and hence can no longer be regarded as a lawful religion – not even in the widest sense of the word. This may be quite correct in theory. But we must surely go on to ask whether there is any religion apart from the Christian religion (meaning here even only the Catholic religion) with an authority which could elevate falsehood into one of its really essential parts and which could thus face man with an alternative of either accepting this falsehood as the most real and decisive factor of the religion or leaving this religion. Even if one could perhaps say something like this of Islam as such, it would have to be denied of the majority of religions.

[128] It would have to be asked in every case to what extent the followers of such religions would actually agree with such an interpretation of their particular religion. If one considers furthermore how easily a concrete, originally religious act can be always directed in its intention towards one and the same absolute, even when it manifests itself in the most varied forms, then it will not even be possible to say that theoretical polytheism, however deplorable and objectionable it may be objectively, must always and everywhere be an absolute obstacle to the performance in such a religion of genuinely religious acts directed to the one true God. This is particularly true since it cannot be proved that the practical religious life of the ancient Israelites, in so far as it manifested itself in popular theory, was always more than mere henotheism.

Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that the individual ought to and must have the possibility in his life of partaking in a genuine saving relationship to God, and this at all times and in all situations of the history of the human race. Otherwise there could be no question of a serious and also actually effective salvific design of God for all men, in all ages and places. In view of the social nature of man and the previously even more radical social solidarity of men, however, it is quite unthinkable that man, being what he is, could actually achieve this relationship to God – which he must have and which if he is to be saved, is and must be made

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possible for him by God – in an absolutely private interior reality and this outside of the actual religious bodies which offer themselves to him in the environment in which he lives. If man had to be and could always and everywhere be a *homo religiosus* in order to be able to save himself as such, then he was this *homo religiosus* in the concrete religion in which 'people' lived and had to live at that time. He could not escape this religion, however much he may have and did take up a critical and selective attitude towards this religion on individual matters, and however much he may have and did put different stresses in practice on certain things which were at variance with the official theory of this religion. If, however, man can always have a positive, saving relationship to God, and if he always had to have it, then he has always had it within *that* religion which in practice was at his disposal by being a factor in his sphere of existence. As already stated above, the inherence of the individual exercise of religion in a social religious order is one of the essential traits of true religion as it exists in practice. Hence, if one were to expect from [129] someone who lives outside the Christian religion that he should have exercised his genuine, saving relationship to God absolutely outside the religion which society offered him, then such a conception would turn religion into something intangibly interior, into something which is always and everywhere performed only indirectly, a merely transcendental religion without anything which could become tangible in categories. Such a conception would annul the above – mentioned principle regarding the necessarily social nature of all religion in the concrete, so that even the Christian Church would then no longer have the necessary presupposition of general human and natural law as proof of her necessity. And since it does not at all belong to the notion of a lawful religion intended by God for man as something positively salvific that it should be pure and positively willed by God in all its elements, such a religion can be called an absolutely legitimate religion for the person concerned. That which God has intended as salvation for him reached him, in accordance with God's will and by his permission (no longer adequately separable in practice), in the *concrete* religion of his actual realm of existence and historical condition, but this fact did not deprive him of the right and the limited possibility to criticize and to heed impulses of religious reform which by God's providence kept on recurring within such a religion. For a still better and simpler understanding of this, one has only to think of the natural and socially constituted morality of a people and culture. Such a morality is never pure but is always also corrupted, as Jesus confirmed even in the case of the Old Testament. It can always be disputed and corrected, therefore, by the individual in accordance with his conscience. Yet, taken in its totality, it is *the* way in which the individual encounters the natural divine law according to God's will, and the way in which the natural law is given real, actual power in the life of the individual who cannot reconstruct these tablets of the divine law anew on his own responsibility and as a private metaphysician. The morality of a people and of an age, taken in its totality, is therefore the legitimate and concrete form of the divine law (even though, of course, it can and may have to be corrected), so that it was not until the New Testament that the institution guaranteeing the purity of this form became (with the necessary reservations) an element of this form itself. Hence, if there existed a divine moral law and religion in the life of man *before* this moment, then its absolute purity (i.e. its constitution by divinely willed elements alone) must not be made the condition of the lawfulness of its [130] existence. In fact, if every man who comes into the world is pursued by God's grace – and if one of the effects of this grace, even in its supernatural and salvifically elevating form, is to cause changes in consciousness (as is maintained by the better theory in Catholic theology) even though it cannot be simply *as* such a direct object of certain reflection – then it cannot be true that the actually existing religions do not bear any trace of the fact that all men are in some way affected by grace. These traces may be difficult to distinguish even to the enlightened eye of the Christian. But they must be there. And perhaps we may only have looked too superficially

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and with too little love at the non-Christian religions and so have not really seen them. In any case it is certainly not right to regard them as new conglomerates of natural theistic metaphysics and as a humanly incorrect interpretation and institutionalization of this 'natural religion'. The religions existing in the concrete must contain supernatural, gratuitous elements, and in using *these* elements the pre-Christian was able to attain God's grace: presumably, too, the pre-Christian exists even to this day, even though the possibility is gradually disappearing *today*. If we say that there were lawful religions in pre-Christian ages even outside the realm of the Old Testament, this does not mean that these religions were lawful in *all* their elements – to maintain this would be absurd. Nor does it mean that *every* religion was lawful; for in certain cases several forms, systems and institutions of a religious kind offered themselves within the historically concrete situation of the particular member of a certain people, culture, period of history, etc., so that the person concerned had to decide as to *which* of them was here and now, and on the whole, the more correct way (and hence for him *in concreto* the only correct way) of finding God. This thesis is not meant to imply that the lawfulness of the Old Testament religion was of exactly the same kind as that which we are prepared to grant in a certain measure to the extra-Christian religions. For in the Old Testament the, prophets saw to it (even though not by way of a permanent institution) that there existed a possibility of distinguishing in public salvation-history between what was lawful and what was unlawful' in the history of the religion of the Israelites. This cannot be held to be true to the same extent outside this history, although this again does not mean that outside the Old Testament there could be no question of any kind of divinely guided salvation-history in the realm of public history and institutions. The main difference between such a salvation-history and that of the [131] Old Testament will presumably lie in the fact that the historical, factual nature of the New Testament has *its* immediate pre-history in the *Old Testament* (which pre-history, in parenthesis, is insignificantly brief in comparison with the general salvation-history which counts perhaps a million years – for the former can be known with any certainty only from the time of Abraham or of Moses). Hence, the New Testament unveils *this* short span of salvation-history distinguishing its divinely willed elements and those which are contrary to God's will. It does this by a distinction which we cannot make in the same way in the history of any other religion. The second part of this second thesis, however, states two things positively. It states that even religions other than the Christian and the Old Testament religions contain quite certainly elements of a supernatural influence by grace which must make itself felt even in these objectifications. And it also states that by the fact that in practice man as he really is can live his proffered relationship to God only in society, man must have had the right and indeed the duty to live this his relationship to God within the religious and social realities offered to him in his particular historical situation.

3rd Thesis: If the second thesis is correct, then Christianity does not simply confront the member of an extra-Christian religion as a mere non-Christian but as someone who can and must already be regarded in this or that respect as an anonymous Christian. It would be wrong to regard the pagan as someone who has not yet been touched in any way by God's grace and truth. If, however, he has experienced the grace of God – if in certain circumstances, he has already accepted this grace as the ultimate, unfathomable entelechy of his existence by accepting the immeasurableness of his dying existence as opening out into infinity – then he has already been given revelation in a true sense even before he has been affected by missionary preaching from without. For this grace, understood as the *a-priori* horizon of all his spiritual acts, accompanies his consciousness subjectively, even though it is not known objectively. And the revelation which comes to him from without is not in such a case the proclamation of something as yet absolutely unknown, in the sense in which one tells a child here in Bavaria, for the first time in school, that there is a continent called Australia.

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Such a revelation is then the expression in objective concepts of something which this person has already attained or could already have attained in the depth of his rational existence. It is not possible here to prove more exactly that this fides *implicita* is something which [132] dogmatically speaking can occur in a so-called pagan. We can do no more here than to state our thesis and to indicate the direction in which the proof of this thesis might be found. But if it is true that a person who becomes the object of the Church's missionary efforts is or may be already someone on the way towards his salvation, and someone who in certain circumstances finds it, without being reached by the proclamation of the Church's message – and if it is at the same time true that this salvation which reaches him in this way is Christ's salvation, since there is no other salvation – then it must be possible to be not only an anonymous theist but also an anonymous Christian. And then it is quite true that in the last analysis, the proclamation of the gospel does not simply turn someone absolutely abandoned by God and Christ into a Christian, but turns an anonymous Christian into someone who now also knows about his Christian belief in the depths of his grace-endowed being by objective reflection and in the profession of faith which is given a social form in the Church. It is not thereby denied, but on the contrary implied, that this explicit self-realization of his previously anonymous Christianity is itself part of the development of this Christianity itself – a higher stage of development of this Christianity demanded by his being – and that it is therefore intended by God in the same way as everything else about salvation. Hence, it will not be possible in any way to draw the conclusion from this conception that, since man is already an anonymous Christian even without it, this explicit preaching of Christianity is superfluous. Such a conclusion would be just as false (and for the same reasons) as to conclude that the sacraments of baptism and penance could be dispensed with because a person can be justified by his subjective acts of faith and contrition even before the reception of these sacraments. The reflex self-realization of a previously anonymous Christianity is demanded (1) by the incarnational and social structure of grace and of Christianity, and (2) because the individual who grasps Christianity in a clearer, purer and more reflective way has, other things being equal, a still greater chance of salvation than someone who is merely an anonymous Christian. If however, the message of the Church is directed to someone who is a 'non-Christian' only in the sense of living by an anonymous Christianity not as yet fully conscious of itself, then her missionary work must take this fact into account and must draw the necessary conclusions when deciding on its missionary strategy and tactics. We may say at a guess that this is still not the case in sufficient measure. [133] The exact meaning of all this, however, cannot be developed further here.

4th Thesis: It is possibly too much to hope, on the one hand, that the religious pluralism which exists in the concrete situation of Christians will disappear in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, it is nevertheless absolutely permissible for the Christian himself to interpret this non-Christianity as Christianity of an anonymous kind which he does always still go out to meet as a missionary, seeing it as a world which is to be brought to the explicit consciousness of what already belongs to it as a divine offer or already pertains to it also over and above this as a divine gift of grace accepted unreflectedly and implicitly. If both these statements are true, then the Church will not so much regard herself today as the exclusive community of those who have a claim to salvation but rather as the historically tangible vanguard and the historically and socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christian hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible Church. To begin with, however much we must always work, suffer and pray anew and indefatigably for the unification of the whole human race, in the one Church of Christ, we must nevertheless expect, for theological reasons and not merely by reason of a profane historical analysis, that the religious pluralism existing in the world and in our own historical sphere of existence will not disappear in the foreseeable future. We know from the gospel that the opposition to Christ

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and to the Church will not disappear until the end of time. If anything, we must even be prepared for a heightening of this antagonism to Christian existence. If however, this opposition to the Church cannot confine itself merely to the purely private sphere of the individual but must also be of a public, historical character, and if this opposition is said to be present in a history which today, in contrast to previous ages, possesses a world-wide unity, then the continuing opposition to the Church can no longer exist merely locally and outside a certain limited sector of history such as that of the West. It must be found in our vicinity and everywhere else. And this is part of what the Christian must expect and must learn to endure. The Church which is at the same time the homogeneous characterization of an in itself homogeneous culture (i.e. the medieval Church) will no longer exist if history can no longer find any way to escape from or go back on the period of its planetary unity. In a unified world-history in which everything enters into the life of everyone, the 'necessary' public opposition to Christianity is a factor [134] in the existential sphere of all Christianity. If this Christianity, thus always faced with opposition and unable to expect seriously that this will ever cease, nevertheless believes in God's universal salvific will – in other words, believes that God can be victorious by his secret grace even where the Church does not win the victory but is contradicted – then this Church cannot feel herself to be just *one* dialectic moment in the whole of history but has already overcome this opposition by her faith, hope and charity. In other words, the others who oppose her are merely those who have not yet recognized what they nevertheless really already are (or can be) even when, on the surface of existence, they are in opposition; they are already anonymous Christians, and the Church is not the communion of those who possess God's grace as opposed to those who lack it, but is the communion of those who can explicitly confess what they *and* the others hope to be. Non-Christians may think it presumption for the Christian to judge everything which is sound or restored (by being sanctified) to be the fruit in every man of the grace of his Christ, and to interpret it as anonymous Christianity; they may think it presumption for the Christian to regard the non-Christian as a Christian who has not yet come to himself reflectively. But the Christian cannot renounce this 'presumption' which is really the source of the greatest humility both for himself and for the Church. For it is a profound admission of the fact that God is greater than man and the Church. The Church will go out to meet the non-Christian of tomorrow with the attitude expressed by St Paul when he said: What therefore you do not know and yet worship (and yet *worship*!) that I proclaim to you (Ac 17.23). On such a basis one can be tolerant, humble and yet firm towards all non-Christian religions.

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7

CHRISTIANITY AND THE 'NEW MAN'

The Christian Faith and utopian views about the future of this world

Christianity is a religion with an eschatology; it looks into the future; it makes binding pronouncements about what is to come both by explaining what will come and by looking on these future events as the decisive guiding principle of action in the present. Indeed, Christianity declares that with the Incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ, the last age has already begun, that the future has already been decided as to its final sense and content and that now it only requires that what is already and remains be revealed. Christianity no longer knows any ultimately open salvation-history but declares that – since the coming of Jesus Christ who is today, yesterday and in all eternity – the end of the ages is really already present and that we live, therefore, in the last ages, in the fullness of time. One thing only remains for us and that is to await the coming of the Lord in glory, even though – reckoned in earthly measurements of time – this period of waiting may appear long to us and even though thousands upon thousands of years on this earth may pass through this one moment of the silence of the end of time before the real and ultimate end finally dawns. Christianity understands itself as the religion of the future, as the religion of the new and eternal man.

Christianity cannot be indifferent, therefore, in the face of an interpretation, planning and utopian ideal of the future which originates outside her and which tries to determine man's present attitude in view of his future. It cannot be doubted, however, that the spiritual situation of man today is essentially determined by the blue-print of the new man of the future. The man of today feels himself to a larger extent to be someone who must overcome himself in order to prepare himself for a new and quite different future. He feels himself to be someone Whose present can be justified only as the condition of his future, [136] though this future which justifies him is not conceived – eschatologically – as the gift of God dissolving temporal history but as something which man himself creates and conquers for himself. Hence, the question as to how these two conceptions of the future are related to each other is an unavoidable and, for the Christian, an absolutely decisive one.

Before tackling this question directly, we must make at least some attempt to give a clearer picture of modern, extra-Christian thought concerning the future, so that we may know with what we are really comparing the Christian eschatology. Naturally, the 'picture of the new man' can be sketched here only in its most formal traits. Yet this picture of the new man cannot be simply presupposed as known at least not from *those* points of view which must be our special concern here. We presuppose in this that this 'new man' is already present today in his beginnings, in the sense that, to some extent at least, his further developments and final form can already be divined. Furthermore, in describing the new man, we are not concerned with laying down a binding, systematic view of the characteristics exposed.

The man of today, and even more so the man of tomorrow, is the man of a history unified the world over, the man of a global space for life and hence the man of a world in which everyone is dependent on absolutely everyone else. The 'United Nations' organization is a small indication of this. And the boundary lines drawn by the various 'curtains' today do not limit the meaning of what has just been said, for one's enemies are usually 'closer' to oneself – in the sense of being more decisive for one's own destiny – than one's friends. Whereas in the past (prescinding from the only hypothetically and approximately ascertainable beginning

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of the human race) the history of individual peoples, and hence of individuals, was more or less clearly divided up by historical vacua – thus, for instance, what was happening at the time in the empire of the Incas was quite immaterial to the history of fourteenth-century Europe – today, all the histories of different peoples are part and parcel of the one, real world-history. The 'field' which determines the fate of the individual today is, not merely physically but also historically, the whole earth. The present and the history of individuals has become the present and the history of all, and vice versa.

The man of today and tomorrow is the man of technology, of automation and cybernetics. This means, in our present context, that man [137] is no longer (or at least no longer to any large extent) the man who simply lives out his existence according to the given pattern of nature in an equally pre-existent environment, but someone who fashions his own environment. Man now inserts an external world made by himself in between himself (eking out and asserting his existence both physically and spiritually) and 'Nature', i.e. the physically and biologically tangible environment which is the condition for man's own existence. It is of course true that there has never been a man without any culture, a man – in other words – who was able to live like an animal in the sense that his struggle for existence (by procreation and upbringing of offspring, protection against the dangers of his environment, etc.) was related immediately to a purely pre-established reality, as in the case of the animal. But in the past, culture, understood as something external, has on the whole consisted merely in such slight modifications of man's natural environment as this environment itself permitted: it consisted merely in the *utilization* of animals and plants in a certain systematic way, without any deliberate transformation of nature in the inorganic and organic world in the light of freely chosen ends and under rational control. Life today, which has been thus transformed, always and everywhere manifests the reason why such a transformed life in an environment determined by ourselves is possible: the modern rationality of Western man, his calculated planning, the disappearance of the feeling of awe which used to be inherent in the experience of the world itself, and the 'profanation' of the world turning it into the raw material of human activity, an idea which – starting with the Western world – has become the determining presupposition of any consideration of the *raison d'être* of the whole world and of humanity.

The man of today is not, however, merely the man of the rational calculating creation of his own space of existence – the *homo faber*. Unlike the man of previous ages (especially since the start of the modern fashion of 'turning in on the subject') the man of today is not merely the man given to that sort of rational reflection on himself in which (at least at the first and important appearance) the object of reflection is not altered by the fact of reflection. Rather, he is someone who applies his technical, planning power of transformation even to himself – someone who makes himself the object of his own manipulations. He no longer simply takes stock of himself, but changes himself, he contents himself neither with steering by his own history [138] merely the alteration of his sphere of existence nor with the mere actualization of those possibilities which have always offered themselves to man in his commerce with his fellow men both in peace and j in war. The subject is becoming its own most proper object; man is becoming his own creator. It does not matter in the meantime that for many different reasons and in many different respects these possibilities of a planned self-alteration and adaptation are as yet relatively few. The important thing is that man has thought of the idea of such a transformation, that he already sees possibilities of realizing this idea and indeed has already begun to realize it. Against this background must be seen the Freudian depth-psychology, birth-control, human eugenics, the transformations of man, based on Pavlov's psychology, which override the free judgements and decisions of man in the Communistic world and which are practised – in somewhat more careful doses – even in the West (one need only think here of the techniques of propaganda, advertising, etc.).

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This man of the unified, planetary living-space which is to be extended even beyond the earth – the man who does not simply accept the world around him but creates it and who regards himself as merely the starting point and raw material for what he wants to make of himself in accordance with his own plans – has for these very reasons the impression of standing at a beginning, of being the beginning of the new man, conceived as a kind of superman who will show clearly for the first time what man really is. What comments are to be made on this ideology of the new man, if the situation and programme just described are looked at from the point of view of the Christian faith?

I

Christianity has no predictions to make, no programme and no clear-cut prescriptions for the future of man in this world; it knows from the very start that man does not have them either and that he (and hence also Christianity itself) must therefore go unprotected into the dark venture of his intramundane future. The eschatology of Christianity is no intramundane utopia, it sets no intramundane tasks and goals. As a consequence, the Christian is not given any concrete directions for his life in this world as such, which could relieve him of the anguish of planning the future and of the burden of his passage into the dark unknown. He has the moral law of nature and of the [139] gospel. But he himself must convert these general principles into concrete imperatives which themselves are not merely applications of these principles to a static material of moral action with which he has to deal, but also represent decisions about some definite plan of action and about the choice of different possibilities – none of which can be clearly deduced from these general principles. By the fact that man changes himself and his environment – and by the fact that, since paradoxically but truly this planning does not make all this any the less unpredictable but rather increases the uncertainty in equal proportion to the extent of the planning, these alterations themselves have in their turn the character of something unpredictable, of trial and a wandering into the uncertain – ever new and surprising tasks are imposed by very reason of the principles advocated by Christianity, tasks which earlier Christianity could not have dreamt of and which require a long, laborious process of acclimatization for the Christian and the Church before they can be mastered at all.

Yet it is not as if this passage into the unpredictable future were unimportant for Christianity itself and of no significance for Christianity both as a Church and as the Christian life of individuals and nations. Truly realized Christianity is always the achieved synthesis on each occasion of the message of the gospel and of the grace of Christ, on the one hand, and of the concrete situation in which the gospel is to be lived, on the other. This situation is always new and surprising. Consequently the intramundane and Christian task of the Christian is really and truly a *problem* whose solution must be looked for laboriously amid surprises, pains, fruitless and false steps, false detachment and restoring, timidly conservative reserve and false fascinations with novelties. Thus the Christian too may stand frightened and fascinated before the future of intramundane tasks opening out before him. He too may feel himself called to action and to criticism, in brotherly union with all those others who salute this future and who know themselves called to bring it about. Since the mastering of the intramundane situation represents a task (in so far as this is possible for man) which is also really Christian – because eternal life must be effected in time – it is sadly perhaps possible to show that the Christians of this day and age occupy themselves far too little with the programming of man's future in this world, as if this did not present any problems or could safely be left to the non-Christians.

It is indeed true, and a fact of decisive importance, that the gospel [140] does not offer or intend to offer any ready-made plan for the future and that the Church cannot give us any

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clear-cut and binding ideas about such programming. But this in no way means that *every* programming for the future – whatever it may be – can be reconciled with the Christian spirit and life and with the nature of man of which Christianity is the custodian. Hence, it does not mean that even in their practical life Christians have no duty or obligation with regard, to such practical programming. It is absolutely possible for Christians to have a task as Christian individuals which the Church as such does not have. And it may seem that Christians do not have a clear, courageous and infectious enough conception and love of this planning of the future and of these demands – which go beyond the abstract principles of the unchanging gospel – and that they merely seek to defends the spirit of the gospel by a *defensive criticism* of the dangers of plans for the future and of intramundane ideologies.

Nevertheless it remains true to say that the Christian as such is not given any clear prescriptions by the gospel as to how the future is to look or will in fact look. He is a pilgrim on this earth, advancing into the uncertain and going out to venture in brotherly union with alt those who plan the future of this world, and he may quite legitimately feel proud of being that creature who plans himself and of being the place (called 'spirit' and 'freedom') where the great world-machine not only runs its course in exalted clarity but also begins to steer itself.

II

Christianity draws man's attention to the fact that, while he is under the impression of standing on the threshold of a new and unheard-of future, this future too will constantly lead him back to himself as finite creature he is. This future, planned by himself and to be bull by himself, is inevitably finite for the Christian, he already recognizes, experiences and suffers it as something finite in advance. In other words, the future too is built out of materials with definite structures whose finite nature also sets internal limits to the possibilities of future and renders them finite. Man does indeed over and over again express surprise at how he has underestimated his own possibilities at how the world is greater than he had thought, at how new avenues open out to possibilities which he had up until now regarded utopian. Certainly it is dangerous in many respects to declare something [141] to be impossible; for many times in the past such declarations have been the beginnings of successful efforts to make the impossible come true. Nevertheless, man is not and will never be the Creator who creates omnipotently out of nothing – he is and will always be the creature who creates out of himself and out of the already existing realities of the world around him. And he and the reality surrounding him have structures and laws; these already existing realities, together with their determined structures, form the *a-priori* law of what they can become.

These essential structures are not – this modern man has learnt and this also differentiates him from the man of earlier ages, including the Christian Middle Ages – a static barrier which prevents any genuine process of becoming and change and being-changed. These essential structures are most certainly endowed with an inner dynamism towards development. But precisely in this way they also form the law according to which this development takes place and the horizon within which the history of this development runs its course. And no matter how much this course may take us into the boundless, there are twists and turns in it which betray the finite and created nature of this course of becoming, the becoming to which it remains necessarily subject. There are many such *a-priori*, inevitable elements in the finite nature of man. There is his spatio-temporality: even if man should conquer a new part of the world for himself outside his earth (and if we stop to think, are we not still very far from this being true?), he will always face the immensity of the universe as someone who begins his short span of existence from the earth and not from anywhere else. Then there is man's biological constitution together with all the limitations this entails: the different stages of life, his dependence on nourishment, the finite nature of his brain – the

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store-house of his activities – which provides the basis for what he can really experience and by which alone in the final analysis, all other (artificial) stores of usable content become really interesting for him, in the same way as someone finds interest Only in *those* books of a library which he reads (and not in those which he can read) or at most in those which he could read *without* having to give up the reading of others. And finally there is the limited nature of his life which ends in death.

This brings us then to the most irrevocable and clearest limit of man: he dies, he has a beginning and an end, and this means that absolutely everything which lies within these 'brackets' is under the [142] relentless sign of the finite. We are able to prolong human life and in fact have already done so. But what a laughable alteration would it really be if we were all to become 120 or 180 years old? Who has ever claimed or prophesied that he could do more? And who – even if he were to give but a little thought to such a utopian idea – could even merely hope or wish to live for ever in the kind of human existence which is the only one given to us? The *inner* finiteness of human existence would turn the *external* endlessness of life into utter madness – into the existence of the eternally wandering Jew – and into damnation, since what is unique in a finite sense is impressive and sweet only if, and because, it is not always available; a time which I could really have to infinity whenever I liked condemns the content of each moment to absolute indifference, since it is absolutely repeatable. And then: what significance does it have for *me-I* who will die – if I could help to make it possible that at some future date a man may be bred who will never die any more? None whatsoever! But we will have to come back to this point later on.

No, the message of Christianity about the finite and created nature of man remains true even today. And the more it might be possible to achieve what today lies still in a utopian future, the less could this achievement blind us to the finiteness of the achieved or deaden the pain of this finiteness. This is all the more true since it is an unproved supposition that the possibility and the pace of new developments experienced by us today could never be followed by a certain phase of, stagnation, or that the time of pre-planned and self-directed development – once started – must unceasingly flow on in ever greater acceleration to ever new shores. It is just as possible that the development may, as it were, stagnate again (although this time on the higher level reached by then) just as it did in many earlier centuries as far as the progress of technology and the external style of living was concerned. And since society is always and inevitably composed of individuals; (it being quite indifferent for this whether one adopts an individualist or Communist view of the exact relationship between the individual and society), the finiteness we have spoken of determines not only the' existence of the individual as such but permeates right through the life of society.

Since society cannot pass on culture by biological heredity, it must to a great extent always begin again at the beginning. No matter how, cunningly exact and comprehensive our planning may possibly be, it [143] will never be adequate but will always produce surprises and failures, for a finite consciousness inevitably contains more objectively unreflected elements than elements which have been fully reflected upon. This is so even simply because the act of reflection cannot itself be reflected and yet a great deal regarding its content depends on it and on its characteristics. Indeed, it may be that there is an absolutely finite optimum of what can be planned. All planning must work with unplanned factors; the proportion between the unplanned factors, which are of practical importance for the result of the plan, and the planned factors and their certainty for the planned result is variable; it can easily happen that the more complicated plan which is calculated to avoid more mistakes, works out worse in practice than the simple plan which works with less explicit factors. To put it more simply still: even the culture and civilization of society, which is seemingly growing into infinity, will always remain conditioned by the individual – in other words, by the finiteness of his consciousness, by the limited number of individuals and the finite nature

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of the life of individuals. And so this culture and civilization remain finite.

It can happen, of course, that this finiteness does not appear – at least not explicitly – in all its existential radicality in the consciousness of the individual and in the commonly expressed opinion of a group or of an age, etc. Perhaps the movement is experienced enthusiastically as a movement into infinity even on account of its very presence alone, for the simple reason that one has overlooked the fact that a movement – even though its limitation is not clearly experienced – never attains anything beyond what is finite, and because one has not adverted to the fact that an infinite potency does not by any means promise an infinite act. In any case, this intoxicating experience of infinity will always end up in cruel disillusionment – at the latest in death. And the pretension to infinity found in man – which according to the teaching of Christianity stems from the infinite promise of grace – will always weigh up again what has been, and what can be, achieved in this world and will always find it to be of too little weight.

III

Christianity knows an individual and existential notion of time which those who dream up a future paradise on this earth do not possess, and the lack of any such notion shows the latter conception [144] to be insufficient. Let us take a closer look at this. It is said – and no doubt rightly – that the future has already begun. It is said, both in the West and in the East, that we are moving towards a glorious age: man will conquer outer space, there will be enough food for everyone, there will no longer be any underdeveloped and undernourished countries, everybody will have what is required to fulfil his needs, class-distinction will be abolished. The Christian must not indeed act as if all these plans for the future are proved wrong simply by his declaring sceptically that paradise is not to be found in this world. Anyone who simply counters such ardent dreams of the future with sober scepticism is – presumably – not experiencing hunger, is not at present in danger of cancer and hence is not particularly interested in finding the means by which medicine may at last conquer this disease. Yet the Christian is right in the long run when he points out that this happy future has not yet arrived, that he himself will not be alive to experience it and that he cannot agree that the question of *his* existence is solved by saying that it will be solved for others in the future.

The fight for a better future does consciously or unconsciously live on an evaluation of man, and even of the individual, which attributes an absolute value to man as a spiritual person. And this is quite right. For why should someone living today sacrifice himself for someone in the future if the future individual is just as insignificant as the present-day individual is thought to be, and if the present-day individual could be sacrificed precisely because he is insignificant? The Communist who today sacrifices himself in true freedom and quite unselfishly for those who will come after him, affirms by this very fact that he, as a person, and those future persons have an absolute value, whether he admits this explicitly to himself or not. Anyone who affirms someone else to be of absolute value does the same for himself. He does not consider himself to be necessary in his biological existence, but he does acknowledge himself to be necessary in the dimension in which he takes the decision of self-sacrificing affirmation, viz. as a free, personal spirit. Any conception which regards the future as something which does not simply come about by itself but must be conquered by sacrifice, acknowledges implicitly what Christianity affirms explicitly: the future of the human, spiritual person in no way only lies in *that* future which will be present at some later date but is the eternity which is brought about as the result of the spiritual act of the person.

Christianity is quite right in saying that there is a personal, existential [145] time which is the coming to be of the unconditioned finality of the free decision and of existence – and which works in time by overcoming merely continuous time. All ideologies concerned with

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the future which declare that the future which is yet to come in a *temporal way* is something absolutely inevitable and not something to be merely overcome in the same way as the bare present must be overcome, borrow this notion of the absolute nature of the future from that future which is really absolute, viz. the future of the free person. This future of the free person will not come later on but is present in the spiritual person and his free act; it realizes itself in the sphere where life – open to the unbounded in its linear temporal nature – is brought to an end by biological processes. If every existing thing were completely subject to that time, whose every moment is indifferent since it passes away into an equally indifferent later moment in time which in turn unmasks its own insignificance by disappearing once more in the next moment, then we would have no reason for preferring a future to the present which is no longer the future of the one who has this preference. The present is necessarily the only true and valid reality for someone who is simply passing away, if indeed he ever becomes at all conscious of himself and of his transitoriness. Only if there is a future of the personal individual spirit is there any real sense in fighting for a better future in this world for those who will come after us.

It is clear from these few cursory remarks that Christianity has a notion of time in its teaching on the individual and freely achieved finality of the person, which goes beyond the notion of time employed by any ideology and utopian view which – concerned only with this world and its future – thinks of time purely as a sort of line passing into what is yet to come. 'The Christian notion of time goes much further, for it provides whatever is genuine and morally justified in these ideologies about the future with the only foundation which will really hold water, and opens up a supra-mundane and supra-historical 'future' for man which is above the eternal flux of time, viz. eternal life which finds its temporal expression and proof in time and which is the only future which has really already begun even now, in every present moment of the free decision of believing love.

IV

[146] Christianity has already surpassed all ideologies about the future and all utopias in a completely different way still, viz. by its teaching on the Incarnation of the eternal Word of God and the universal salvation already ushered in by this event. It is first of all very striking how pale and shallow everything becomes when those who believe in an intramundane future (conceived as a beatifying paradise and as the triumph of successful man thus bringing nature to its own proper completion) are asked to explain what this future they are striving for will really look like. We will be able to circumnavigate the moon and will perhaps be able to land on Mars; Russia will have surpassed America's meat production; no one will suffer want any more; there will be enough time and money to give everyone the best education possible and to offer him all the cultural goods he desires, etc.; everyone will have everything he needs. And so the catalogue goes on. But one gets the impression that all this is not very much different from what is already possible and in part already normal even today – in other words, that the 'new man' will look hopelessly like the old one.

In contrast to this (not in the sense of mere contradiction but of a message regarding a completely new and different dimension of human existence) Christianity proclaims that man can have a direct encounter with the Infinite and the Absolute – with the One who from the outset surpasses everything finite and who is not constituted piecemeal by finite moments of progression. Christianity proclaims that man's business is with God himself, it tells us that this unspeakable mystery we call God does not merely remain the ever-distant horizon of our experiences of the transcendent as well as of the finite, but that the Infinity as such can also descend into the heart of man which is 'finite' in such a way that it can nevertheless be given

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the grace of this unspeakable Infinity. Christianity proclaims that we will come face to face with the Infinity of absolute Reality, with the inaccessible Light and the Incomprehensible who is infinitely beatifying life. It proclaims that this personal Infinity has already begun to assume the finiteness of the spiritual, personal world of man into his eternal life by the fact that Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God has already made this finite quest for the infinity of God (i.e. human nature) his own and has replied to it with the answer of the eternal Word.

Christianity teaches that God has already broken up the world and [147] has already opened up an exit for it which leads into his own Infinity, even while the world still pursues its course along the interiorly crooked paths of its finite history – even while it is still subject to change by the fact that it can' only replace *one* finite thing with another finite thing which, even though it may be better than what had gone before, will always remain both a promise and a disappointment and nothing more for that spirit who recognizes and suffers his finiteness. In the actual world, creation no longer means merely the bringing into existence of something out of an infinite foundation and the perpetual keeping of this originated reality distant from its incommunicable source, but means rather the production of the finite as something on which the Infinite lavishes himself in the form of Love.

This history of the infinite endowment of the creature with God's reality is indeed primarily the history of the personal spirit and certainly takes place primarily as the existential history of faith across the temporal progress of the history of the material cosmos. Yet this fulfilment of the finite by the infinity of God does nevertheless refer to the whole of created reality. Christianity knows no history of the spirit and of existence which could be conceived simply as overcoming and repulsing the material, and for which the history of the cosmos would at most offer the external stage on which the drama of the personal spirit and his divine endowment would enact itself in such a way that, when the play is over, the players would leave the stage and would leave it dead and empty and abandoned to itself. After all, the history in which God himself takes part by entering personally into it is the history of God's becoming *flesh* and not only the coming of a merely ideological spirit. Christianity professes belief in the resurrection of the body and means by this that in the last analysis there is only *one* history and *one* end of *everything*, *and* that everything reaches its end only once it has taken possession of God himself. Christianity, indeed, only conceives and knows a matter which is different from spirit and out of which the spirit cannot simply develop as the very product proper to that matter, as is taught by dialectical materialism. Yet Christianity knows only a matter which is created and exists from the very start *by* the Spirit who is called God and *for* the spirit called man, in order to make spiritual, personal life possible and to act as a basis for such a life. The spirit is not a stranger in a spiritless world which follows its own paths quite unconcerned about this spirit, but rather this material world is the corporeal presence of the spirit, the extended [148] being of man, and has therefore ultimately the same end and destiny as man. Even in eternity – when the spirit will be fully achieved – the material world will be the expression of this achieved spirit and hence will participate in the final state of this spirit in – as we say – a 'glorified' manner. Hence we profess that the end will be a new earth and a new heaven.

We cannot say very much about this achieved, final state of the bodily, mundane spirit: and this precisely because every intramundane' achievement could only be an achievement constituted of finite elements, and so not at all an absolute achievement. Precisely because God's message has given us the boldness to believe in an infinite achievement, the only way we can in principle describe this consummation in its material content is to say that God himself will be this consummation. And since God, the Infinite, is the mystery which can be named and called upon only by a *via negationis* and by pointing silently beyond anything which can be put into words, we can speak of this consummation only negatively in images and likenesses and in speechless reference to absolute Transcendence. Our consummation,

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therefore, is not fitted to become the subject of party tirades, of glowing imagery, of plastic description or utopian conceptions. And when the man of today reads the old descriptions of this consummation which were less burdened with the images of an apparently intramundane utopia but employed an apocalyptic rather than a properly eschatological imagery, he will feel less at ease in all this than the man of previous ages. He will 'demythologize' in a manner both justifiable and necessary if he is to be truly orthodox. This does not mean, however, that he has thereby in any real sense moved further away from an understanding of the reality itself. On the contrary, he knows that the truly infinite nature of his consummation is something unspeakable embracing all the dimensions of his being (but each of them in its own way) and that it – precisely *qua* achievement by God and in God himself – is something unattainable by man himself, something given to him as a gratuitous gift of pure grace.

By the fact that this coming of God himself is the true and the only infinite future of man, Christianity has always already infinitely surpassed all intramundane ideologies and utopias about the future. The infinity of this future which is already beginning embraces all intra-mundane futures: it does not exclude them, nor does it make them unlawful (as long as they are mindful of their limitations as created [149] forms). Again, it is not as if the man who believes in the coming $_0$f God's future can no longer acknowledge himself to be called to co-operate in working for these intramundane futures; and his supramundane, eschatological outlook does not necessarily have to dampen his inner urge for such co-operation. Even if we leave it an open question whether God does not in fact realize certain things (which he wishes to be achieved in the world) through the *guilt* of men and not through the actions of those who love him, it must still be said in principle that the Christian is absolutely justified and qualified – and indeed to a certain extent obliged – to take an active part in working for the progress of the human race and thus of the world, by developing his own immanent powers and those of the world. For the consummation to be brought about by God does not, in the last analysis, expect a dead but a living humanity which has gone to its very limits and so is burst open by salvation from above by developing its own powers. For man's finiteness and the essential tragedy and fruitlessness of all human history, inherent in all finite development, becomes manifest more relentlessly in this way than it would in a purely static world.

V

However much the Christian – the man of a divine future – is a citizen of the world to come and not merely the child and supporter of the present world, and however great the development of this world into the unlimited may be thought to be, the Christian must nevertheless live at present in this world which is always a world of a future already begun: a new world full of earthly goals, tasks and dangers. It would be a complete misunderstanding of everything that has been said so far, if one were to think that a Christian may withdraw into some dead corner of world-history, as it were, or that he is someone belonging historically or socially to that class of people to be found in every history and development, i.e. the people of yesterday who are no longer really attuned to the times – the adherents to what is over and done with – the conservatives who weep for the good old days.

It cannot be denied, of course, that the good Christian Christianity often gives this impression. It is true that Christianity has not been given any guarantee by God that it will be unable to sleep through the Present. Christianity can be old-fashioned, it can forget that the old [150] truths and the values of yesterday can be defended only if and when one conquers a new future. And it has actually to a great extent fallen into this error, so that today's Christianity often gives rise to the painful impression that it is running mopishly and in a disgusted, critical mood behind the carriage in which the human race drives into a new future.

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One gets the impression that God's immense revolution in his history, in which he lets the world burn up in his own infinite fire, rests on the shoulders of people who really put their trust in what has proved itself in the past, although this is ultimately also only of this world and hence brittle, ambiguous and transitory, just like what is still to come in this world. Why are Christians so often to be found only on the conservative side? They really would not be forced to subscribe to other people's plans for the future if these are Unchristian and inhuman. But then they ought also to have their own list of imperatives for the next couple of centuries and not just for eternity – and not merely general principles which they declare to valid yesterday, tomorrow and always.

All these facts do not need to be covered up but can be admitted without any qualms. They do not alter the *principle*, however, that the Christian can truly achieve his own proper Christian being completely and fully only if he lives evidently and unconditionally in the present and in the future, and not merely in the past. This does not mean that someone who is going to build a new future in this world has already lived and proved his Christianity by this fact alone. But it is part the convictions of a full Christian life that the Christian faith an, morality are in fact, and of necessity, exercised by using the concrete raw materials of human existence and not in some other, extra-worldly sphere. It belongs to these convictions that these raw materials of Christian self-realization consist in the whole reality of the world created by God. This, however, makes the task of the Christian one which he does not freely choose himself but one which is pre-arranged for him – in short, the concrete existence, the historical hour, into which he is placed. He may and indeed ought to be able to master this task in a different way from the non-Christian. Yet he must fulfil this task and no other. Wherever and whenever one does not want to face up to one's own peculiar situation in one's own particular age but tries instead to take refuge in a world of yesterday – a dreamt-up world, a dead corner of history, a social set-up which was alive and powerful yesterday – one not only falls down on one's earthly task but [151] in such a case Christianity itself suffers both from the artificiality of this existence and the false pretences of the fictitious.

The fact that being a Christian imposes a task within the world does not mean, of course, that 'official' Christianity (i.e. the Church herself) must therefore take it into her own hands to develop and advocate a concrete programme for an intramundane future derived solely from principles which Christianity alone must advocate. It is impossible to stress that intramundane cultural affairs are relatively autonomous in their own sphere (to stress, indeed, that the Church today must inevitably live in a pluralistic society and cannot under any consideration lay claim to any immediate and direct ruling power in 'mundane' matters) *and* at the same time to bemoan the fact that the Church has nothing very clear and stirring to say about the future now dawning and about the way it should be shaped. But Christians themselves must surrender themselves to the future and regard it as their most proper task, even though this may expose them to uncertainty and risks. Christian lay people, in particular, are not merely organs for carrying out the instructions given by the official hierarchy of the Church, but must themselves try to discover God's unique will for them and for their times.

This again does not mean, however, that the official Church in the most strict sense, i.e. the Church in her own inner life, does not have any tasks arising precisely out of this situation. On the contrary, the Church has many such tasks. She ought to think a lot more about how she can arrange her life and message so as to avoid creating *more* difficulties than is necessary for the man of today and tomorrow – for the men of tomorrow who already live today. The Church is still far from having accomplished this task, and this not only because this task is ever new and must always be solved anew. The Church has also a lot of ground to make up as regards what she has failed to do in the last one and a half centuries. For during the modern age which is now coming to an end, her thinking and feeling, and her familiarity

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with the situation, have not kept pace sufficiently with modern developments; during this period she has become more of a conservative power defending herself than was right.

By the fact that she is in arrears with her accomplishment of old tasks, the Church has naturally become overburdened in the fulfilment of her present tasks. There are many new tasks for her in Church life and worship, in the reform of the liturgy, in the adaptation of the [152] way of life of the Religious Orders, in the courage to express the old truth in a new way in theology, in the reform of Canon Law. She ought to be reflecting on the problems posed for her by our modern pluralistic world and society, such as the problems arising out of the debate with other religions (or rather, out of the loving attempt to understand them), problems arising in connection with the formation of a type of Christian who can survive and endure the unavoidable and permanent secularization of the world of today, or in connection with the activation of a public influence suited to the society of today and tomorrow. She should be making her presence felt in this sense through organs which meet the demands of the present and the future, by stirring up courage for planning such as is taking place today (in contrast to previous ages) in all the other dimensions of human existence. She should be presenting the demands of Christian morality in such a way as to make it apparent that they are not incomprehensible imperatives imposed from outside but rather the expression of what is objectively right. She should be establishing a relationship between the clergy and the laity which corresponds to the present condition of lay people and which, while conserving the permanent structure of the Church, does not confuse it with an old-fashioned patriarchism and does not buttress it with taboos about authority which can be safely 'demythologized' even within the Church.

If, at the end of these reflections, we now take another look at the[1] brief and formal portrait of the ideology concerning the future discussed at the beginning, it may be in place here to point out the following: the Christian is completely capable of regarding the planetary unification of world-history under a positively Christian aspect – indeed, from an aspect necessarily demanded by Christianity. In other words, if the universality of the Church is to be or become something real, and is not to be merely something belonging to the basic definition of Christianity, then this can be achieved by Christianity in the concrete only in, together with and by the creation of this globally unified history. The Christian will not be surprised to learn, therefore, that this fusion of the history of every nation into one had its real starting point in the very birth of Christianity and in the place where Christianity first took roots in the world and in history, viz. in the Western world. If this world and history of the future is a world of rational planning, a demythologized world, a world secularized by the creature in order that it may serve as the raw material for man's activity, then [153] this whole modern attitude – no matter what particular elements in it we may be able and ought to criticize – is basically a Christian one.

For in the Christian outlook – and only in this outlook – man has become the subject which Western man has discovered himself to be; only in Christianity and by its teaching about the radically created nature of the world as something confided to man to serve as the raw material of *his* activity and as something which is not more important and powerful than man but is meant to serve and is created *for* man, could there spring up that attitude to the cosmos which demythologizes it and which legitimizes the will to control the world. In a metaphysical and theological (Christian) sense, man has always been for Christianity someone who has control over himself and over his own final destiny. If we consider the doctrine of freedom and of absolute responsibility for self – and the doctrine stating that the particular fate (and eternity) of each individual person is the result of his own free acts – then it becomes clear that the possibility gradually dawning on man today, viz. the possibility of making himself the object of his planning and formation, is merely the echo and particular application of that deeper self-responsibility which Christianity has always acknowledged

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man to possess and which it has always steadfastly refused to relieve him of since it has always regarded it as his own – sometimes painful – burden.

In the last analysis, therefore, the spirit of the approaching future is not at all as unchristian as the pessimists and the timid often think. Christianity has always been the religion of an infinite future. When Christianity tells us that the future which it professes has always already surpassed all the ideologies concerning the intramundane future of the new man – and when, *even though* in a critical spirit, it examines and tones them down, demythologizing them also so to speak – then it does this out of a truly Christian, eschatological spirit and not out of a spirit of static conservatism. In this way, Christianity makes man morally responsible to God in his justified desire for an intramundane future – to be created by man himself in unlimited development – and opens this desire to the infinite life of God. This is the life of which it will always remain true (and of which it always becomes true anew) that it has been promised to us as our most proper future by grace.

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[155]

PART III

CHRISTOLOGY

[157]

8

CHRISTOLOGY WITHIN AN EVOLUTIONARY VIEW OF THE WORLD

The subject to be discussed here is: 'Christology within an evolutionary view of the world'. This discussion will therefore be concerned with showing how one statement can be or is fitted into a complex of other statements; it will not be concerned with each of these statements themselves. This makes it clear right away that the problem posed here is neither the exposition of Christian and Catholic Christology itself nor the exposition of what is described – even though vaguely – as the evolutionary view of the world. It is here rather a question of the possibility of correlating these two views. For our present purposes, we will simply presuppose that there is such a thing as an evolutionary view of the world, even though this is neither self-evident objectively nor unobjectionable from a methodological point of view. Having boldly presupposed this, we will inquire as to whether Christology fits into such a view, and not vice versa, although the converse would also be a possible question – and indeed in itself the better and more radical one. Once more: we are not going to attempt to give an exposition of Christology itself and to unfold it theologically, nor will we try to prove that Jesus of Nazareth laid claim to what we subsequently explain in theological language as metaphysical sonship of God, Incarnation and Hypostatic Union, or that this claim of his can be made comprehensible as a legitimate (i.e. believable) claim. All this is presupposed here or will be treated from a different point of view. Furthermore, when we speak of the 'inclusion' of a doctrine in a 'view of the world' – of Christology fitted or fitting into the evolutionary view of the world – we do not mean by this that the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation can be deduced as a necessary consequence and as a demanded extension of the evolutionary view of the world (this would be an extreme which we do not envisage) – nor do we mean by it that the doctrine of the Incarnation does not [158] directly contradict, either simply in an objective sense or in a logical sense, any certain knowledge and scientific conclusion contained in this view of the world (which would be the other extreme, which it would be easy to prove but which would not be particularly significant and so is not sufficient for us).

If we did mean the former, then we would be making an attempt at constructing a theological rationalism – an attempt to transform faith, revelation and dogma into philosophy – which, of course, is not what is intended here. If on the other hand, we were to aim simply at the other extreme, then we would be discussing something which is not really a problem at all and so would be achieving too little. For even if the doctrine of the Incarnation of the divine Logos is seen as a doctrine not directly denied by the present-day evolutionary view of the world – or is seen as a doctrine not invalidated by propositions contradicting it on purely logical grounds – it would still be experienced as something foreign in the mind of man. For a man disposed to think in terms of the evolutionary view of the world would in this case experience the doctrine of the Incarnation as something quite unrelated to his other thoughts and feelings; if such a man were or is nevertheless a Christian for some other reasons, he

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would then be forced to think along two completely unrelated lines of thought. Hence – while not, attempting to make the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation a necessary and inner moment of the present-day view of the world, of its way of thinking and the present-day feeling of life – our task lies precisely in not only removing formal logical contradictions (or better: in showing that no such contradictions exist, particularly not where they seem to appear) but in bringing out clearly the inner affinity of these two doctrines – a sort of similarity of style – and in explaining the possibility of their being mutually related. Of course, in a short lecture like this, there cannot be any question of considering the *general* problem of a certain sameness of human perceptions in one period or in one individual – which is a problem concerning the possibility of a kind of common *style* of thinking or of one thought-form which gives a common pattern to many perceptions of quite different material content – although, of course, there would be many obscurities and important points to be considered even in this general problem. For the rest, what exactly we do and do not intend to do should become clearer as we actually proceed in our attempt to answer our question. Given a certain previous understanding of the problem posed, however, [159] the difficulty, laboriousness and breadth of this problem will also appear quite clearly. Everything with which the Society of St Paul[1] concerns itself seems to enter into this question: all the questions concerning the reconciliation of the Christian teaching and interpretation of existence with the present-day way of living, thinking and feeling, are necessarily concentrated in our problem; all the objective and historical difficulties brought to mind by the phrase 'Christianity and the contemporary spirit' enter also into our question. For our question concerns the most central and most mysterious assertion of Christianity but an assertion which at the same time refers to a reality said to belong precisely to that dimension with which the man of today is most familiar on the scientific, existential and affective plane, i.e. the dimension of the material world and of tangible history. In short, our question concerns an assertion of God's presence (i.e. God as he is meant in theology) in precisely *that* dimension where man feels himself at home and in which alone he feels himself competent, viz. in the world and not in heaven. This makes it again quite obvious that it cannot be our job here to speak of the most general questions and difficulties connected with the reconciliation of the Christian religion and modern thought (no matter how fundamental these questions may be). It is quite obvious that we must confine ourselves to dealing with the special questions posed by our subject, even though we are quite aware of the fact that modern man's sense of bewilderment and astonishment when faced with the doctrine of the Incarnation is perhaps due in great part to his feeling of strangeness in the face of metaphysical and religious statements in general. But enough of introduction.

We must, however, add a few preliminary remarks about the plan of our reflections. We will start with the present-day evolutionary view of the world, presupposing rather than describing it. We will ask first of all, therefore, about the connection made in this view between matter and spirit – in other words, about its view of the unity of the world, of natural history and the history of man. All this will of course be treated only very briefly, touching only on those connections which – if we may put it this way – are 'common to all Christian thought' and 'general theology'. To put it in another way: we will try to avoid those theorems with which you are familiar from your study of Teilhard de Chardin. If we arrive at some of the same conclusions as he [160] does, then that is all to the good. Yet we do not feel ourselves either dependent on him or obligated to him. We want to confine ourselves to those things which any theologian could say if he brings his theological reflection to bear on the questions posed by the modern evolutionary view of the world. This means, of course, that we must put up with a certain abstractness which will perhaps disappoint the natural scientist

[1] To whom this whole Volume is dedicated. – Tr.

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a little. For it would be quite understandable if the latter expected more exact details than we will actually give, about a certain homogeneity between matter and spirit. He would probably expect us to give details based on those findings of natural science or their evaluation to which he is accustomed. If (like Teilhard) we were to do this, however, our reflections would not only have to lay claim to such scientific knowledge – which we poor theologians can after all gather only very much at second hand – but we would also have to contend with all the drawbacks which are inevitably connected with such evaluations of the results of truly scientific inquiries, i.e. with evaluations which are not entirely undisputed. We have quite enough difficulties of our own, however, arising out of the philosophy and theology of these questions.

Following on this, we must then pass on to a second consideration and try to see man as the being in whom the basic tendency of matter to find itself in the spirit by self-transcendence arrives at the point where it definitely breaks through; thus in this way we may be in a position to regard man's being itself, from this view-point within the basic and total conception of the world. It is precisely this being of man, seen from *this* view-point, which – both by its highest, free and complete self-transcendence into God, made possible quite gratuitously by God, and by God's communication of himself – 'awaits' its own consummation and that of the world in what in Christian terms we call 'grace' and 'glory'.

The first step and definitive beginning, and the absolute guarantee that this ultimate and basically unsurpassable self-transcendence will succeed and indeed has already begun, is to be found in what we call the Hypostatic Union. At a first approximation, this must not be seen so much as something which distinguishes Jesus Our Lord from us, but rather as something which must happen once, and once only, at the point where the world begins to enter into its final phase in which it is to realize its final concentration, its final climax and its radical nearness to the absolute mystery called God. Seen from this viewpoint, [161] the Incarnation appears as the necessary and permanent beginning of the divinization of the world as a whole. In so far as this unsurpassable nearness by complete openness takes place precisely in relation to that absolute mystery which is and remains God – and in so far as this final phase of the history of the world has indeed already begun but is not yet consummated – the course of this phase and its end-result remain shrouded in mystery. Hence the clarity and finality of Christian truth consist in man's unflinching surrender to the Mystery: it is not clarity in the sense of a clear view over a certain partial element of the world and of man. These then, in preview, are the steps in our considerations which we want to embark on together as far as strength of mind and heart – and time – will allow. If these steps are fairly successful, then – it seems to me – we will have covered what was intended to be our subject here. The extent of our success will depend, of course, on how far the immensity of our subject, its unaccustomed nature, our lack of practice in this kind of subject and the ridiculously short time of one hour will permit us to succeed.

I

I. The Christian professes in his Faith that all things – heaven and earth, the material and the spiritual world – are the creation of one and the same God. This does not simply mean that everything *in* its variety stems from *one* cause, which – since infinite and omnipotent – can create the most varied things. It means also that this variety shows an inner similarity and community: that the contents of this variety must not be simply regarded as essentially different or even contradictory but rather that this variety and difference be seen to form a unity in origin, self-realization and determination, in short: *one* world. It follows from this that it would be quite wrong and unchristian to conceive matter and spirit as realities simply

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existing side by side in the actual order of things while being really quite unrelated to each other, the spirit in its human form having – unfortunately – to utilize the material world as a kind of exterior stage. A Christian theology and philosophy deems it self-evident that spirit and matter have more things in common (to put it this way) than things dividing them.

2. This 'community' shows itself first of all – and at its clearest – in the unity of man himself. According to Christian teaching, man is not an unnatural or merely temporary composite of spirit and matter but [162] is a unity which is logically and objectively prior to the diversity of his distinguishable elements, so that the properties of these elements are intelligible only when the elements are understood precisely *as* elements of the *one* man into which this originally one being of man necessarily spreads and unfolds itself. This helps us to understand that, ultimately, we know what matter and spirit are only by starting from the one man and hence from his one self-realization, and that we must therefore conceive of them from the outset as mutually related elements. To this corresponds also the Christian doctrine which tells us that the consummation of the finite spirit which is man must be thought of only in terms of the one (however 'unimaginable') consummation of his *whole* reality and that of the cosmos; yet the materiality of man and of the cosmos – however impossible we may find it to form any positive image of a perfect state of materiality, and however little this is required for being a true Christian – must not be simply eliminated from this consummation as if it were a merely temporary element.

3. Natural science, taken by itself as merely one element of man's one and complete knowledge, i.e. ultimately the knowledge of himself in his basic orientation to the unutterable Mystery, knows a lot 'about' matter, i.e. it defines ever more exact relationships of a 'functional' kind between the various phenomena of nature. Since, however, natural science does its work in methodical abstraction from man himself, while knowing a great deal *about* matter it cannot know matter *itself* even though this knowledge about the functional and temporal relationships of its isolated object does in the end lead it back again to man himself in an *a-posteriori* manner. This is really quite obvious: the field, the whole as such, cannot be determined by the same means as those used for the determination of its parts. Only in relation to man is it possible to say what matter is – and not vice versa, what spirit is in relation to matter. We have said in relation to '*man*' and not in relation to '*spirit*'. The latter would be something quite different – it would again simply be that platonism which is likewise contained in materialism. For materialism, like platonic spiritualism, believes that it has discovered a jumping-off point for its understanding of the whole and its parts: but this is done quite independently of the understanding of man as the one totality in which alone these two elements of spirit and matter can be experienced in their real nature. Starting from the original self-experience of the one man, however, it can be said that spirit is the one man in so far as he becomes conscious of himself in an [163] absolute consciousness of being-given-to-himself. This man does by the very fact that he is always already referred to the absoluteness of reality as such and to its one root (called God), and by the fact that this 'return to himself' and his 'being referred to the absolute totality of all possible reality and its root' mutually determine each other. This 'being referred to', however, is not like a possession of the known which has an emptying effect by its very power of penetration. It should be characterized rather as the process of being lifted out of oneself and being drawn into the infinite mystery. This process of being 'abducted from oneself' is therefore such that it can be genuinely undergone only in loving acceptance of this mystery and within the unpredictable designs God has for us – in that freedom which is necessarily given together with this transcendence over oneself and everything individual. To the extent in which man is *matter*, he grasps himself and the environment necessarily belonging to him in so far as the act of this return to himself – in the experience of his orientation to a mystery which must be accepted lovingly – always and primarily takes place only in an encounter with the

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individual, with what shows itself spontaneously and with the concrete which cannot be disposed of but is given unavoidably (though only to a limited extent). As matter, man experiences himself and the world he directly encounters precisely in so far as he is a fact, someone who is added to, someone who is pre-defined for himself and who as such is someone not yet fully penetrated; and precisely in so far as, in the midst of knowledge (understood as self-possession), there stands what is alien and each individual, something foreign and something unaccountable to himself. Matter is the condition of possibility for the objectively 'other' which the world and man are in their own eyes. Matter is the condition of what we experience directly as space and time (precisely when we cannot objectify this for ourselves); it is the condition of that otherness which estranges man from himself, which forms the requirement for the possibility of a direct intercommunication with other spiritual existents in space and time – i.e. in history. Matter is the basis for the pre-required existence of the 'other' considered as the material of freedom.

4. This condition of mutual relatedness between spirit and matter is not simply a static condition, but has itself a history. Man, considered as a spirit becoming conscious of himself, experiences his pre-established nature in otherness; he experiences his self-estrangement as something having temporal duration and as belonging to [164] natural history; he comes to himself as someone who has already existed in time both in himself and in his surroundings (which also belong to him and his constitution). And conversely, this temporal materiality understood as the pre-history of man considered as reflex freedom must be understood as being orientated to the history of the human spirit. This last point should be expressed a little more exactly. Without separating them from each other, we have tried to understand spirit and matter as two correlated elements of the one man, elements which are inseparable from each other and yet are not reducible to each other. This irreducible pluralism of elements in the one man can also be stated in such a way as to express a difference of nature between spirit and matter. To make this distinction is of paramount importance and significance, for only in this way do ones eyes remain open to all the dimensions of the one man in all their immense and indeed infinite extent. But, as we have already pointed out, this difference of nature must not be misunderstood to mean that these two elements are opposed in nature or absolutely different in nature or indifferent to each other. Starting from this inner interrelation between these two factors and concentrating on the *temporal* duration of this relationship between these two factors, it may be said without scruple that matter develops out of its inner being in the direction of the spirit. But we must not leave the question there – we must go on to make this statement a little clearer still and defend this way of speaking by making it intelligible. First of all, if there is any 'becoming' at all (and this is not merely a fact of experience but a basic axiom of theology itself, since man's freedom, responsibility and perfecting by his own responsible activity would otherwise have no real meaning at all), then 'becoming' in its true form cannot be conceived simply as a 'becoming *other*' in which a reality becomes different but does not become more. True 'becoming' must be conceived as something 'becoming *more*', as the coming into being of more reality, as an effective attainment of a greater fullness of being. This 'more' must not be imagined, however, as something simply added to what was there before, but, on the one hand, must be something really effected by what was there before and, on the other hand, must be the inner increase of being proper to the previously existing reality. This means, however, that if it is really to be taken seriously, 'becoming' must be understood as a real self-transcendence, a surpassing of self or active filling up of the empty. This notion of active self-transcendence – self-transcendence by which [165] an existing and acting being actively approaches to the higher perfection still lacking to it – must not, however, turn non-being into the very ground of being and turn emptiness as such into the source of fullness – in other words, we must not violate the metaphysical principle of causality. Consequently (and I am merely summarizing very

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briefly all the extensive considerations which would be necessary here) this self-transcendence cannot be thought of in any other way than as an event which takes place by the power of the absolute fullness of being. On the one hand, this absolute fullness of being must be thought of as something so *interior* to the finite being moving towards its fulfilment that the finite being is empowered by it to achieve a really *active self*-transcendence and does not merely receive this new reality passively as something effected by God. On the other hand, this power of self-transcendence must at the same time be thought of as so distinct from finite, acting being that it is *not* permissible to conceive it as a constitutive principle of the *essence* of this finite being achieving itself. For otherwise, if the absoluteness of being – which gives efficacy to a being and empowers it to be effective – were to constitute the nature of the finite acting being, then this being would no longer be capable of any real becoming in time and history, since it would already possess the absolute fullness of being as something absolutely proper to it. These reflections cannot be developed further here; above all, it cannot be explained here how the experience of spiritual transcendence, understood as the movement of the evolving spirit, directly shows this dialectic as something experienced. In other words, it is impossible to explain here how being is both absolutely the most interior and yet the most foreign factor of this movement and how, in this dialectic of its relationship to the finite evolving spirit, it can support the whole of this movement and yet allow it to be the movement of this spirit itself. We must content ourselves with stating the thesis that the notion of an *active self-transcendence* (in which the 'self' and the 'transcendence' are to be taken equally seriously) is a necessary notion in our thought if the phenomenon of becoming – which is possible, since it exists – is to be saved. Let us simply remark in this connection that this notion of self-transcendence includes also transcendence into what is substantially new, i.e. the leap to a higher *nature*. To exclude the latter would mean emptying the notion of self-transcendence of its content; it would mean that one could no longer evaluate certain phenomena with an untroubled mind, e.g. such notions as the procreation of a [166] new human being by the parents in what appears at first sight to be a merely biological event. An essential self-transcendence, however, is no more an intrinsic contradiction than (simple) self-transcendence, as soon as one allows it to occur in the dynamism of the power of the absolute being which is within the creature and yet is not proper to its nature – in other words, in what in theological language is called God's conservation of the creature and his concurrence with its activity, in the inner and permanent need of all finite reality to be held in being and in operation, in the being of becoming, in the being of self-becoming – in short, in the self-transcendence which belongs to the nature of every finite being. Given, however, that this notion is a metaphysically legitimate one, and that the world is one and thus has one history, and that in this one but not always already all-comprehensive world everything is not always already present from the very beginning – then there is no necessary reason for disputing the fact that matter has evolved in the direction of life and of man in that self-transcendence whose notional content we have just now been trying to bring out. This is, of course, a question of an *essential* self-transcendence, for we do not mean to deny or obscure in any way the fact that matter, life, consciousness and spirit are not the same thing. Quite the contrary. But precisely this difference, this essential difference, does not exclude development, if there is becoming and if becoming does or can mean a really active self-transcendence and if self-transcendence does or can mean at least *also* a self-transcendence of nature. And what is grasped in this way, as logically possible by an *a-priori* reflection, is also confirmed as real by better and more comprehensively observed facts. It is not merely a question here of an inner solidarity of spirit and matter. We must also take into consideration the known history of the cosmos as it has been investigated and described by the modern natural sciences: this history is seen more and more as one homogeneous history of matter, life and man. This one history does not exclude differences of nature but on the contrary

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includes them in its concept, since history is precisely not the permanence of the same but rather the becoming of something entirely new and not merely of something other. These differences of nature also do not exclude the fact of there being one history, since history itself results precisely from an essential self-transcendence in which what was previously, surpasses itself in order to dissolve and conserve itself in very truth in the new which it itself has effected. [167] In so far as the self-transcending always remains present in the particular goal of its self-transcendence, and in so far as the higher order always embraces the lower as contained in it, it is clear that the lower always precedes the actual event of self-transcendence and prepares the way for it by the development of its own reality and order; it is clear that the lower always moves slowly towards the boundary line in its history which it then crosses in its actual self-transcendence – that boundary line which is only seen to have been clearly crossed from the vantage point of a clearer development of the new condition, without it being possible however to give an absolutely clear definition of this line itself. Of course, these are all very abstract and vague statements. Naturally, it would in itself be desirable to show more concretely what common traits are to be found in the evolution of material, living and spiritual beings – to show (more exactly) how the merely material is a prelude in its own dimensions to the higher dimension of life, and how the latter in its dimension is a prelude to the spirit in its ever greater advance towards the border line to be crossed by self-transcendence. Certainly, if we really postulate a unified history of all reality, it would be necessary to indicate which permanent formal structures of this total history pertain in common to the basic constitution of matter, life and spirit, and how even the highest (even though it is *essentially* new) can still be understood as a change of something previously existing.

But all this would lead the theologian and philosopher too far afield from his own sphere and would necessitate his developing these basic structures of the one history by the more *a-posteriori* method proper to the natural sciences and with the aid of concepts such as are developed by Teilhard, for instance. Obviously this cannot be the task of the theologian – and particularly not in the present context. It should be noted here, however, that the theologian not only can admit (even in the case of all material reality) an analogous notion of self-possession – which finds its fullest natural expression in consciousness – but also as a good thomistic philosopher he really *ought to* admit it. For what he as a thomist calls the 'form' in every being is for him also essentially the 'Idea'; and that reality which we call the 'unconscious' in the ordinary and – in its place – quite correct sense, is from the metaphysical point of view the kind of being which possesses only its own 'Idea'; it is something which, being caught up in itself, has only itself and its own 'Idea' and hence – is not conscious. Seen in this way, it [168] becomes understandable even from the thomistic point of view that a really higher, more complex organization can appear also as a step towards consciousness, and finally towards self-consciousness, even though self-consciousness at least does include a real essential self-transcendence of the material as opposed to its previous condition.

5. If man is thus the self-transcendence of living matter, then the history of Nature and spirit forms an inner, graded unity in which natural history develops towards man, continues in him as *his* history, is conserved and surpassed in him and hence reaches its proper goal with and in the history of the human spirit. In so far as this history of Nature is dissolved in man into freedom, this natural history reaches its goal in the history of the free spirit. In so far as the history of man always still includes the natural history of living matter, it is always still supported – even in the midst of its freedom – by the structures and necessities of this material world. Hence, in so far as man is not *only* the spiritual *observer* of nature – since he is a part of it and must precisely continue its history too – his history is not only a history of culture (in the sense of an ideological history situated above natural history) but is also an active alteration of this material world itself. Thus, man and nature can reach their one

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common goal only by activity which is spiritual and by spirituality which is activity. It is true, of course, that precisely because this goal corresponds to the transcendence of man into the absolute reality of God who is the infinite mystery – and because it consists in the infinite fullness of God – this goal itself remains hidden and unattainable for the natural powers of man. It can be reached only by accepting the fact of its being hidden and withdrawn. In so far as this history of the cosmos is the history of the free spirit, this history – like that of man – is posed in freedom as guilt and trial. In so far as this history of freedom, however, always remains based on the pre-determined structures of the living world, and in so far as (as the Christian professes) the freedom – history of the spirit is enveloped by the grace of God which perseveres victoriously unto the good, the Christian knows that this history of the cosmos as a whole will find its real consummation despite, in and through the freedom of man, and that its finality as a whole will also be its consummation.

II

[169] Before we can even think of connecting these initial assessments and basic conceptions with Christology, we must first try to state more exactly what stage the world has reached in man.

1. First of all, it must be stated that – despite the wonderful results and perspectives of his science – even the modern natural scientist still remains to a large extent confined within the limits of a pre-scientific as well as pre-philosophic and pre-theological outlook. For very often he still maintains even today that it is a peculiarly characteristic part of the spirit of the natural sciences to regard man as only a weak, fortuitous being exposed to a Nature quite indifferent to it and passing its existence in this world as a kind of day-fly until it is swallowed up again by a 'blind' Nature which had produced it quite by accident in one of her careless moods. This contradicts not only metaphysics and Christian thought but also natural science itself. If man exists, if he is the 'product' of Nature, if he does not come onto the scene just at any time at all but at the end of a development which, at least partially, only he can steer by going out to meet this his producer and by himself objectifying and transforming it – then Nature does become conscious of itself in *him*, then Nature is planned for him, since 'chance' is a word without any real meaning for the natural scientist who concludes from the result to a movement orientated towards it. If things are not regarded in this way, then there is right away no sense in seeing the history of the cosmos and that of man as *one* history. One would sooner or later fall back into a platonic dualism. For a spirit who is thus regarded as a chance stranger on earth, will not for long let himself be despised and reproached as being unimportant and powerless. If the spirit is not regarded as the goal of Nature – if it is not seen that Nature found herself in him, in spite of all the physical powerlessness of the individual man – then the spirit will after a while be regarded more and more as merely the opponent of Nature who exists quite apart from it.

2. The characteristic which becomes reality in man, which reaches finite reality in him and into which matter transcends itself, is first of all the fact of being present to oneself and of being referred to the absolute totality of reality and to its first ground as such. There then flows from this the possibility of a real objectification of individual experience and of the individual object, which thus becomes capable of being separated from any immediate reference to man in his vital sphere. If this is seen [170] to be the end of the history of the cosmos, then it can be said absolutely that the established world finds itself in man, and that in man it makes itself its own object and is no longer referred to its ground merely as presupposed behind it but rather as an imposed task before it. This assertion is not invalidated by the objection that such concentrations of the spatio-temporal dispersion of the world into

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itself and within its foundation are present in man only in very formal, almost empty beginnings, and that this could be conceived to be present in nonhuman spiritual persons (monads) which would be much better suited to accomplishing this, without being – like man – subjects of the totality and self-presence of the world in such a way that they have to be at the same time also a part – factor of this world. Such beings may exist. The Christian is even sure that they do exist, and calls them angels. But precisely this concentrating, synthesizing – even though still very much incipient – self-consciousness of the totality of the cosmos in the individual man is something which can occur many times over (and each time in an absolutely unique manner), particularly if it springs from a part-factor considered as a spatio-temporal individual magnitude of the cosmos. Hence one cannot say (especially when one bears in mind the uniqueness of each act of freedom) that this cosmic self-consciousness need not be given in man or can be given only once. It occurs each time, in its own unique way, in each individual man. The one material cosmos is, as it were, the *one* body of the *multi*farious self-presence of this self-same cosmos and of its orientation to *its* absolute and infinite foundation. Even though this cosmic bodily presence of the innumerable personal self-consciousnesses in which the cosmos can become conscious of itself begins to appear (like man's own bodily presence in the narrower sense) only very tentatively in the self-consciousness and freedom of the individual human being, it is nevertheless present in every man as something which is intended to be and can become actual For in his corporeality, every man is an element of the cosmos which cannot really be delimited and cut off from it, and in this corporeality he communicates with the whole cosmos in *such* a way that through this corporeality of man taken as the other element of belonging to the spirit, the cosmos really presses forward to this self-presence in the spirit. This self-presence of the cosmos in the spirit of the individual man, which is still in the process of becoming and in its very initial stage, has its still-continuing history; this history is still taking place in the internal and external history both [171] of the individual and of humanity as a whole, in the act of thought and in the self-present external act, both individually and collectively. We are certainly again and again under the impression that nothing final will ever come of this unnecessarily long and laborious process by which the cosmos finds itself in man. For this process seems always to dissipate itself again, and instead a kind of hidden contrariness against self-consciousness – a kind of will to the unconscious – seems always to assert itself again. But once we presuppose that evolution proceeds in the final analysis in a one-way direction and ordination (and that anything else makes the notion of evolution quite unthinkable from the outset since something which simply wants to return again to the beginning and has no other tendency at all, would not have left this beginning in the first place), then this process by which the cosmos gradually becomes conscious of itself in man – in the individual totality and freedom which each individual realizes – must also have a final result. The result seems to disappear and dissipate itself, it seems to fall back into the misty beginnings of the cosmos and of its dispersion, only because we who exist at this *present* determined moment in space and time are quite incapable of experiencing the final coming to itself of such a monadic unity of the world and the uniqueness of the fully grasped totality of the cosmos at our particular point in space and time. It must however exist. In Christian language we usually call it the immortality of the soul; it must, however, be clearly seen here that this immortality, if it is properly understood, is precisely a (formal, and of itself empty) finality and consummation of this very process by which the cosmos finds itself, and hence must not be confused with the escape of a spiritual soul – an alien in this cosmos – from the totality of that world which is always also material (and is so precisely in the service of the spirit) and has always had and still has also a material history.

3. According to Christian teaching, this self-transcendence of the cosmos in man towards its own totality and foundation, which has itself a history, has really reached its final

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consummation only when the cosmos in the spiritual creature, its goal and its height, is not merely something set apart from its foundation – something created – but something which receives the ultimate self-communication of its ultimate ground itself, in that moment when this direct self-communication of God is given to the spiritual creature in what we – looking at the historical pattern of this self-communication – call grace and glory (in its consummation). God does not merely create something other than [172] himself – he also gives himself to this other. The world receives God, the Infinite and the ineffable mystery, to such an extent that he himself becomes its innermost life. The concentrated, always unique self-possession of the cosmos in each individual spiritual person, and in his transcendence towards the absolute ground of his reality, takes place when this absolute ground itself becomes directly interior to that which is grounded by it. The end is the absolute beginning. This beginning is not infinite emptiness or nothingness, but the fullness which alone explains the divided and that which begins, which alone can support a becoming and which alone can give to that which begins the real power of movement towards something more developed and at the same time more intimate. But by the very fact that this movement of the development of the cosmos is thus carried along both from the outset and in all its phases by the urge towards ever greater fullness and intimacy and towards an ever closer and more conscious relationship to its ground, the message which says that there will be an absolutely direct contact with this infinite cause, is already given in this movement – not indeed as something which must necessarily be recognized from this movement in all its phases, but at least as something which can certainly be more and more approximately envisaged as the absolute goal of this development. If the history of the cosmos is always basically a spiritual history – the desire to become conscious of itself and of its cause – then the direct relationship to God in his self-communication to his spiritual creature, and in it to the cosmos in general as the goal which corresponds to the meaning of this development, is basically an indisputable fact, provided that this development is allowed to any degree at all to reach its own absolute goal and is not merely moved by it as something unattainable. We, as single and physically conditioned individuals, experience only the uttermost beginning of this movement towards this infinite goal. Yet we are after all beings who, even in that consciousness with which we engage in our physico-biological fight for existence and for our earthly dignity, live and act (in distinction to the brutes) out of a formal anticipation of the whole. We are those even who in the experience of grace experience the event of the promise of the absolute nearness of the all-founding mystery (even though this experience an unobjectified one). And this fact gives us the right to that courage of faith in the fulfilment of the coming history of the cosmos and of individual cosmic consciousness, which consists in the direct experience of God as he communicates himself in a most real and unveiled manner. [173] Such a statement also implies naturally and most radically in the very nature of things the preservation of the ineffable mystery which reigns over our existence. For if God himself, the inexpressible infinity of mystery, is and becomes the reality of our perfection – and if the world understands itself in its most proper truth only when it commits itself radically to this infinite mystery – then this message does not merely say this or that, sayings which stand as *one* content of expression *among* others, and fall under a common co-ordinated system of concepts. Rather, it states that before and behind every individual thing, which has to be incorporated into an over-all order and in view of which the sciences engage in their search, there always stands and is already presupposed the infinite mystery – and it states that in this abyss, the origin and the end are the beatifying end. Man may feel irritated by a seemingly excessive demand and may declare himself to be uninterested in this abyss of the beginning and the end – he may try to take refuge in the comprehensible clarity of science, regarding this as the only sphere of his existence suited to his powers . . . yet the question of the Infinite is one which envelops man and is one which alone answers itself. Even if he were capable of

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it on the surface of his objective consciousness, man may not and cannot leave this question unsolved in the all-supporting and all-nourishing depths of the really spiritual person. For this question exists: there is nothing which could answer it from outside but rather it is a question which answers itself when accepted in love. It is a question which moves man; only when he concerns himself with this movement which belongs to the world and to the spirit, does he become really conscious of himself, of God and of his goal in which the beginning is given directly.

III

Only in the light of all we have seen can we now determine the place of Christology in this evolutionary world-picture.

1. We presuppose, therefore, that the goal of the world consists in God's communicating himself to it. We presuppose that the whole dynamism which God has instituted in the very heart of the world's becoming by self-transcendence (and yet not as that which constitutes its nature) is really always meant already as the beginning and first step towards this self-communication and its acceptance by the world. In exactly what way are we then to conceive this self-communication of [174] God to the spiritual creature in general and to all those subjects in which the cosmos becomes conscious of itself, of its condition and of its basic cause? To understand this, it must first of all be pointed out that these spiritual subjectivities of the cosmos signify freedom. We can only state this baldly here and must abstain from going into the transcendental reasons for it. Once we presuppose this, however, we presuppose also that this history of the self-consciousness of the cosmos is always necessarily also a history of the inter-communication of these spiritual subjects. For the fact that the cosmos becomes conscious of itself in the spiritual subjects must mean above all and necessarily that these subjects – in which the whole is present to itself each time after the manner proper to that subject – become more closely associated with each other, as otherwise the 'becoming present to itself' would separate and not unite. God's self-communication is, therefore, communication of freedom and inter-communication between the many cosmic subjectivities Hence this self-communication necessarily turns in the direction of a free history of the human race, and can only happen in *free* acceptance by these free subjects and in a *common* history. God's communication of himself does not suddenly become uncosmic – directed merely to an isolated, separate subjectivity – but is given to the human race and is historical. This event of self-communication must therefore be thought of as an event which takes place historically in a specifically spatio-temporal manner and which then turns to every-one and calls upon their freedom. In other words, this self-communication must have a permanent beginning and must find in this a permanent guarantee of its reality so that it can rightly demand a free decision for the acceptance of this divine self-communication. (In this connection it should be mentioned briefly that this free acceptance or refusal on the part of individual free beings does not really determine the actual event of self-communication but, more exactly, only determines the attitude adopted by the spiritual creature towards it; of, course, normally only that is called self-communication which is accepted freely and hence beatifies, i.e. only the successful, accepted self-communication of God.)

2. From this there follows first of all the explanation of the notion of Saviour. We give the title of Saviour simply to that historical person who, coming in space and time, signifies that beginning of God's absolute communication of himself which inaugurates this self-communication for all men as something happening irrevocably and which [175] shows this to be happening. This notion does not imply that God's self-communication to the world in its spiritual subjectivity begins *in time* only with this person. This does not need to be the

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case at all; it can quite easily be conceived as beginning before the actual coming of the Saviour, indeed as co-existent with the whole spiritual history of humanity and of the world- as was actually the case according to Christian teaching. The historical person whom we call Saviour is that subjectivity in whom this process of God's absolute self-communication to the spiritual world is *irrevocably* present as a whole; through him this self-communication can be clearly recognized as something irrevocable, and in him it reaches its climax, in so far as this climax must be thought of as a moment in the total history of the human race and in so far as this climax is not simply identified with the totality of the spiritual world subject to God's communication of himself (which is a different, though absolutely legitimate notion of the climax of the divine self-communication). For, in so far as this self-communication must be conceived as free on the part of God and of the history of the human race which must accept it, it is quite legitimate to conceive of an event by which this self-communication and acceptance attains an irrevocable and irreversible character in history – an event in which the history of this self-communication realizes its proper nature and in which it breaks through – without it thereby becoming necessary that this history of God's self-communication to the human race has already simply found its end and conclusion both in its extension and in regard to the spatio-temporal plurality of the history of humanity. It must be noted in this connection that this moment in which the irreversible character of this historical self-communication of God becomes manifest refers equally to the communication itself and to its acceptance. Both these factors are included in the notion of the Saviour. In so far as a historical movement already lives in virtue of its end even in its beginnings – since the dynamism of its own being desires its end, carries its goal in itself as that towards which it is striving and really unveils itself in its own proper being only in this goal – it is absolutely legitimate, and indeed necessary, to think of the whole movement of God's communication of himself to the human race (even when it takes place during the time *before* the event which makes it irrevocable in the Saviour) as something based on this event – in other words, as something based on the Saviour. The whole movement of this history lives only for the moment of arrival at its goal and climax – it lives only for [176] its entry into the event which makes it irreversible – in short, it lives for the one whom we call Saviour. This Saviour, who represents the climax of this self-communication, must therefore be at the same time God's absolute pledge by self-communication to the spiritual creature as a whole *and* the acceptance of this self-communication by this Saviour; only then is there an utterly irrevocable self-communication on both sides, and only thus is it present in the world in a historically communicative manner.

3. Seen in this light, it now becomes possible to understand what is really meant by the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union and of the Incarnation of the divine Logos and how, following quite naturally from what has been said, it fits into an evolutionist view of the world. In the first place, the Saviour is himself a historical moment in God's saving action exercised on the world. He is a moment of the history of God's communication of himself to the world – in the sense that he is a part of this history of the cosmos itself. He must not be merely God acting on the world but must be a part of the cosmos itself in its very climax. This is in fact stated in the Christian dogma: Jesus is true man; he is truly a part of the earth, truly a moment in the biological evolution of this world, a moment of human natural history, for he is born of woman; he is a man who in his spiritual, human and finite subjectivity is just like us, a receiver of that self-communication of God by grace which we affirm of all men – and hence of the cosmos – as the climax of development in which the world comes absolutely into its own presence and into the direct presence of God. Jesus is the one who – by what we call his obedience, his prayer and the freely accepted destiny of his death – has achieved also the acceptance of his divinely given grace and direct presence to God which he possesses as man. All this is Catholic Dogma. If one is not to fall into a false belief or heresy, one must

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not think of the God-man as if God or his Logos had put on a kind of livery for the purpose of his saving treatment of man, or as if he had disguised himself, as it were, and had given himself merely an external appearance to enable him to show himself in the world. No, Jesus is truly man. He has absolutely everything which belongs to the nature of man; he has (also) a finite subjective nature in which the world becomes present to itself and which has a radical directness to God which, like ours, rests on that self-communication by God in grace and glory which we too possess. It must also be underlined in this connection that the statement of God's *Incarnation – of* his becoming [177] *material – is* the most basic statement of Christology. This is not self-evident. This was not at all in keeping with the 'tendencies of the day' and the spirit of the age in which the dogma of the Incarnation was defined. If a God – who, as spiritual transcendence, is conceived as simply and absolutely superior to the material world – draws near to the world in order to save it, then he must be conceived as a God who, as a spirit, draws carefully nearer to the spirit of the world from outside, meets the *spirit* and finally, if at all, also takes effect in this way – psychotherapeutically as it were – for the salvation of the material world. And this was in fact the view adopted by the most dangerous heresy against which primitive Christianity had to fight, i.e. the view of Gnosticism. Christianity, however, teaches differently. According to Christian teaching, God takes hold of the world in the Incarnation and in the fact of the Logos becoming part of the material world – or better – precisely in that one point in which matter becomes present to itself and the spirit has its own being in the objectification of the material: in short, in the unity of a human nature. In Jesus, the Logos bears the matter just as much as the soul, and this matter is a part of the reality and the history of the cosmos. Theology even stresses the fact that in that phase of the human existence of Jesus during which, on account of his death, there existed a different relationship between his 'soul' and his 'body' than during the period of the biological life familiar to us, the relationship of the Logos to his body did not become any looser on account of this greater distance between body and soul. The divine Logos himself both really creates and accepts this corporeality – which is a part of the world – as *his* own reality; he brings it into existence as something other than himself in such a way) therefore, that this very materiality expresses *him*, the Logos himself, and lets him be present in his world. His taking hold of this part of the one material-spiritual world-reality may quite legitimately be thought of as the climax of that dynamism in which the Word of God who supports everything, supports the self-transcendence of the world as a whole. For we are quite entitled to conceive what we call creation as a part-moment in that process of God's coming-into-the-world by which God actually, even though freely, gives expression to himself in his Word become part of the world and of matter; we are perfectly entitled to think of the creation and of the Incarnation, not as two disparate, adjacent acts of God '*ad extram*' which in the actual world are due to two quite separate original acts of God, but as two moments and phases in the real world [178] of the unique, even though internally differentiated, process of God's self-renunciation and self-expression into what is other than himself. For such a conception can certainly appeal to a most ancient Christian tradition of 'Christocentricity' as found in the history of Christian theology, and it does not deny in any way that God *could* have created a world without an Incarnation, i.e. that he could have denied the final climax of grace and Incarnation to the self-transcendence of the material in the spirit and towards God by His own dynamism inherent in the world (without thereby becoming constitutive of its being). For every such essential self-surpassing always stands in a relationship of grace – the unexpected and the gratuitous – to its lower stage, even though it is the 'goal' of this movement. But we have run ahead of the actual course of our reflections. At this stage we are merely concerned with understanding that the Saviour, whom we comprehend as the climax of the history of the cosmos, is indeed the climax of this history itself (but of course within that climax of history itself which allows the whole world of the

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spirit to transcend into God) and that the Christian dogma of the Incarnation tells us exactly this: Jesus is truly man with everything this implies, i.e. with man's finiteness, his being-in-the-world, his materiality and his participation in the history of this cosmos which leads him through the narrow gates of death.

That is one side of the question. Now we must look also at the other side. We have already said that the very event of salvation must take place in the world and in its history in such a way that God's self-communication to the spiritual creature becomes something definitive and irrevocable and becomes present in such a way that this self-communication of God to spiritual creation is seen to be given in the light of a unique, individual history. If we presuppose this, however, as the 'normal' consummation of the history of the cosmos and of the spirit, without implying that this development must *necessarily* go this far or has already done so, then we must say that this limit – notion of the Saviour implies that notion of the hypostatic unity of God and man which constitutes the real content of the Christian dogma of the Incarnation.

This is perhaps the point where we reach the real crux of the problem which runs through the whole of our reflections. And so we must not rush on but must exercise a little patience. We want first of all to clarify a little more what exactly we are *asking* now. It seems to me that we should have no particular difficulty in representing the history of [179] the world and of the spirit to ourselves as the history of a self-transcendence into the life of God – a self-transcendence which, in this its final and highest phase, is identical with an absolute self-communication of God expressing the same process but now looked at from God's side. This final and absolute self-transcendence of the spirit into God must, however, be conceived as something which happens in all *spiritual* subjects. In the nature of things, one could of course think that a real self-transcendence does not take place in every 'specimen' of the original state but only in a certain few, just as in the biological evolution there survive, side by side with the new and higher forms, certain specimens of the lower forms from which the higher are derived. But in man's case this is not rationally conceivable, since man is 'by nature' and by his very being the possibility of transcendence become conscious of itself – the self-conscious reference to the absolute and the knowledge about the infinite possibility. If the accomplishment of this final self-transcendence is granted generally (i.e. to other similar spiritual subjects), then it can hardly be refused to such beings in individual cases. But be that as it may, the Christian revelation tells us that all men are offered this self-transcendence as a real possibility of their individual existence, one to which they can close themselves only by guilt. Hence, in accordance with the characteristic of the spiritual being, the end taken as the perfection of the spirit and of the world must be regarded as something intended for *all* spiritual subjects. And in so far as Christianity understands grace and glory as the direct self-communication of God, it also professes this insurpassable consummation to belong to *all* men (and angels). How then does the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union of a determined *single* human nature with God's Logos fit into this basic conception? Is this to be conceived merely as a *proper*, still higher stage of an essentially newer and higher kind of divine self-communication to the creature, which this time is given only in one single 'case'? Or is it possible to conceive that, even though this Hypostatic Union is given only once in its essential characteristics, it is nevertheless precisely the way in which the divinization of the spiritual creature is and *must* be carried out if it is to happen at all? In other words, is the Hypostatic Union a higher stage in which the gift of grace given to the spiritual creature is surpassed (even though it is also 'conserved') or is it a peculiar moment in this process of the granting of grace which cannot really be conceived without this Hypostatic Union taking place on account of it?

[180] We hope that the significance of this question for our subject as a whole is clear. For if the Incarnation is to be regarded as an absolutely proper and new rung in the hierarchy of

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world-realities which quite simply surpasses all the world-realities given so far or to be given in the future yet without being itself necessary for these lower stages themselves, i.e. without being the condition and possibility of the general granting of grace to the spiritual creature, then this could mean one of two things. Under this presupposition, either the Incarnation could still be seen as the climax surpassing all the other world-realities arranged in ascending layers, so that it could be positively fitted into an evolutionary world-view – or both thoughts must be abandoned, i.e. it could no longer be thought that the Incarnation of the Logos is the climax of the development of the world, towards which the whole *world* is orientated even though it remains free in grace – and it could also no longer be thought that the Incarnation fits into an evolutionary picture of the world. But it is almost impossible or even absolutely impossible to see how one could understand the Incarnation as a higher or even the highest stage in the reality or development of the world in *such* a way that it also appears as the goal and end of this world-reality, without the aid of the theory that the Incarnation is itself already an intrinsic element and condition of the general gift of grace by which God gives himself to the spiritual creature. The Incarnation would, of course, always appear as the highest stage in this world-reality because it is the hypostatic unity of God and a world-reality. But this does not yet make it intelligible as the goal and end, as the climax which can indeed be envisaged from below but always only as some-thing unreachable. This seems possible only by presupposing that the Incarnation itself is to be made intelligible *in* its uniqueness and *in* the degree of reality given by it (in and not despite this uniqueness) as an intrinsic and necessary element in the process of God's giving himself in grace to the world as a whole and not only as an actually utilized means for this process (this no Christian can deny) which could quite easily have happened in some other way, a way in which it would not be shared in itself by the Incarnation as such.

The theologian who puts this question in this way can first of all take note of the fact that the Hypostatic Union takes effect interiorly *for* the human nature of the Logos precisely in what, and really only in what, the same theology prescribes for *all* men as their goal and consummation, [181] viz. the direct vision of God enjoyed by Christ's created human soul. This same theology emphasizes the fact that the Incarnation occurred 'for the sake of our salvation', that it does not give any real increase in reality and life to the divine nature of the Logos, and that the prerogatives which accrued interiorly to the human reality of Jesus on account of the Hypostatic Union are of the same essential kind as those intended by grace also for other spiritual subjects. This fact alone should make us careful in answering the question posed. Theology has already tried to clarify this problem for itself by asking the in itself, of course, unreal question as to what, for instance, would have to be preferred if one had to choose: the Hypostatic Union without the direct vision of God or this vision of God – and decides for the second alternative. It can be clearly seen from this also how difficult it is to determine more exactly the relationship between the kind of consummation which the Christian faith professes to be common to all men and the unique consummation of human possibility (in the sense of *potentia obedientialis*) which we profess by the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union. And yet such a more exact definition of this relationship is demanded by the question we have posed ourselves, viz. whether we can, must or may think of what we call the Incarnation of the Logos as the manner in which the divinization of the spiritual creature in general is realized, so that we implicitly envisage this Hypostatic Union at the same time as we see the history of the cosmos and of the spirit arriving at the point at which are found both the absolute self-transcendence of the spirit into God and the absolute self-communication of God to all spiritual subjects by grace and glory. Hence the thesis towards which we are working purports to show that, even though the Hypostatic Union is in its proper nature a unique event and – when seen in itself – is certainly the highest conceivable event, it is nevertheless an intrinsic factor of the whole process of the bestowal of grace on

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the spiritual creature in general. Why is this so? We have already pointed out that, if this total event of the divinizing sanctification of humanity attains its consummation, it must be a concrete, tangible phenomenon in history (in other words, it must not suddenly become a-cosmic) and hence must be an event in such a way as to spread out spatio-temporally from one point (in other words, it must not destroy the unity of mankind and men's essential community and intercommunication but must on the contrary come into existence Within these very factors); it must be an irrevocable reality in which [182] God's self-communication proves itself not merely as a temporary offer, but as an absolute offer accepted by man; it must (in accordance with the nature of the spirit) become conscious of itself. Whenever God – by his absolute self-communication – brings about man's self-transcendence into God, in such a way that both these factors form the irrevocable promise made to all men which has already reached its consummation in this man, there we have a hypostatic union. When we think of 'hypostatic union', we must not simply remain attached to the imagined model of any sort of 'unity' or connection. To grasp the proper nature of this particular unity, it is also not enough simply to say that, on account of this unity, the human reality must also be attributed in all truth to the divine subject of the Logos. For this is precisely the question:– why is this possible, and *how* are we to conceive this unity which justifies such a statement of the 'communication of idioms'? This 'assumption' and 'unification' has the nature of a self-communication; there is 'assumption' so that God's reality may be communicated to what is assumed, viz. the human nature (and in the first place the human nature of Christ). But this very communication which is aimed at by this 'assumption' is *the* communication by what we call grace and glory – and the latter are intended for all. It must not be objected that *this* (latter) communication is possible even without a hypostatic union, since it does in fact occur without it in our own case. For in us this communication is possible and effected precisely by this union and acceptance as it occurs in the Hypostatic Union. And, theologically speaking at least, there is nothing against the assumption that grace and hypostatic union can only be thought of together and that, as a unity, they signify one and the same *free* decision of God to institute the supernatural order of salvation. In Christ, God's self-communication takes place basically for all men, and there is 'hypostatic union' precisely in so far as this *unsurpassable* self-communication of God 'is there' irrevocably in a historically tangible and self-conscious manner. Once more we ask: why? Apart from the case of the Beatific Vision (and perhaps even this is no different in this respect from other cases, but we cannot deal with this here), every self-manifestation of God takes place through some finite reality – through a word, an event, etc., which belongs to the finite realm of creatures. As long as this finite mediation of the divine self-manifestation, however, is not in the strictest sense a divine reality itself, it is basically transitory and surpassable (since it is finite) and is not in this [183] finiteness simply the reality of God itself, and thus can be surpassed by God himself simply by positing a new finite reality. Hence, if the reality in which God's absolute self-communication is pledged and accepted for the whole of humanity and thus becomes 'present' for us (i.e. Christ's reality) is to be really the final and unsurpassable divine self-communication, then it must be said that it is not only posited by God but is God himself. The pledge itself cannot be anything else than a human reality which has been absolutely sanctified by grace. For a mere word would not be the actual event of self-communication but would merely tell us about it: in other words, it would not be in any sense (since the event itself in its openness, and not a word *about* it, is the primary proclamation of itself) the *actual* and really primary communication addressed to us about this self-communication made to us. If this is so, and if this pledge must be truly and absolutely God himself, then it must be a human reality which belongs absolutely to God – in other words, exactly what we call 'Hypostatic Union'. Hence, if we may put it this way, the Hypostatic Union does not differ from our grace by what is pledged in it, for this is grace in

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both cases (even in the case of Jesus). But it differs from our grace by the fact that Jesus is our pledge, and we ourselves are not the pledge but the recipients of God's pledge to us. But the unity of the pledge, and the inseparability of this pledge from the one who pledges (indeed, pledges *himself to us!*) must be conceived in accordance with the peculiar nature of the pledge. If the real pledge made to us is precisely the very human reality itself which has been given grace and in which and through which God pledges himself to us in his grace, then the unity of the one who pledges and the pledge cannot be considered as a merely 'moral' one – as for instance the unity between a human 'word' (or something similar which is merely a sign) and God – but must be conceived as an *irrevocable* unity between this human reality and God making a separation between the proclamation and the giver of this proclamation impossible – which, in other words, makes of the really humanly proclaimed and the pledge given to us, a reality of God himself. And this is precisely what is meant by hypostatic union. It means this and, properly speaking, nothing else: in the human reality of Jesus, God's absolute saving purpose (the absolute event of God's self-communication to us) is simply, absolutely and irrevocably present; in it is present both the declaration made to us and its acceptance – something effected by God himself, a reality of God himself, unmixed and yet inseparable [184] and hence irrevocable. This declaration, however, is the pledge of grace to us.

It is of course impossible here to pursue this initial consideration any further and to unfold the whole of Christology from this initial insight: an insight which would give us a much better understanding also of the rest of Christology. The time at our disposal is far too short for this. But such a study would show us that the genuine and properly understood doctrine of the Hypostatic Union has nothing in common with mythology. It would become clear that the monophysite interpretation of Christology adopted unconsciously and implicitly – and for that very reason all the more effectively – by many Christians, is really a misunderstanding.

IV

In conclusion, let us merely add a few remarks which will help us, at least to some extent, to round off our subject.

1. Up till now we have simply tried to fit Christology into the framework of an evolutionary world – view of a cosmos which evolves towards that spirit who attains absolute self-transcendence and perfection through and in an absolute self-communication given by God in grace and glory. Hence we have not so far spoken yet of guilt and redemption, i.e. liberation from sin. And yet the perspective of redemption and remission of sin is the perspective which would show us the Incarnation of the Logos in its clearest light. Does this mean that we have after all deviated in some unlawful way from the traditional Christology? We must at least make a few brief remarks concerning this question. It should be stated, first of all, that there is quite a long established school of thought among Catholic theologians (usually called the 'Scotist school') which has always stressed that the first and most basic motive for the Incarnation was not the blotting – out of sin but that the Incarnation was already the goal of the divine freedom even apart from any divine fore-knowledge of freely incurred guilt. This School holds therefore that – seen as the free climax of God's self-expression and self-effacement into the otherness of the creature – the Incarnation is the most original act of God anticipating the will to create and (presupposing sin) to redeem, by including them, as it were, as two of its moments. In the light of this conception – which has never been objected to by the Church's *magisterium – it* is therefore impossible [185] to say that the view of the Incarnation proposed by us could arouse some real misgivings on the part of the *magisterium*. In the Catholic Church it is freely permitted to see the Incarnation first of

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all, in God's primary intention, as the summit and height of the divine plan of creation, and not primarily and in the first place as the act of a mere restoration of a divine world-order destroyed by the sins of mankind, an order which God had conceived in itself without any Incarnation. It would be heretical, of course, to deny that the reality and the actual event of the Logos becoming a creature signify also the victory over sin. But this proposition itself does not determine its own 'place-value' (to put it this way) and it can be shown, as we will indicate in a moment, that the proposition concerning redemption from sin can be deduced quite freely, and without forcing things at all, from our own systematic starting-point. Secondly, the unity of the history of the spirit and of matter – of the one corporeal and spiritual cosmos – which was our starting-point, need not and must not be misunderstood to mean that freedom, guilt and the possibility of ultimate perdition by final, self-willed self-closure to the meaning of the world and of its history have no place in this unity. It need not and must not be misunderstood to mean that in such a conception of the world guilt could be nothing more than a kind of unavoidable difficulty which is all part of the development and is included dialectically from the outset as one of the factors of this process. It is also well-known that Teilhard has been reproached with rendering sin harmless in this way – a re-proach which H. de Lubac has surely invalidated most lucidly in his most recent book about Teilhard. If such an evolutionary world-view is properly understood, there is no real need to reproach it with this. The cosmos evolves towards the spirit, transcendence and freedom, it evolves in a really essential self-transcendence towards the spirit, the person and freedom. In that moment in which spirit and freedom have been attained in the cosmos, the history of the cosmos receives its structures and its interpretation from the spirit and from freedom and not from matter, in so far as the latter is still in a pre-spiritual way the otherness of the spirit as such. (And this is then true also of the whole cosmos, including its material part, a fact which a purely idealist world-view is completely incapable of explaining; and so by this very fact it reveals its insufficiency for the requirements of Christian theology.) But wherever there is freedom in and before the reality of the cosmos as a whole, and in a transcendence towards God, there can also [186] be a guilt and freedom which closes itself against God: there can also be sin and the possibility of perdition. Whether, and to what extent, this possibility and its actualization are once more conquered by the greater freedom of God in his grace, is a different question again. In any case, it may not be said that freedom and a genuine guilt which can no longer be blotted out by man can have no place in such a conception of the world. Once we have presupposed and emphasized this, it is possible to understand, precisely on the basis of our conception, that in a history which, through the free grace of God has its goal in an absolute and irrevocable self-communication of God to the spiritual creature – in a self-communication which is finally established through its goal and climax, i.e. through the Incarnation-the redeeming power which overcomes sin is necessarily found precisely in this climax of the Incarnation and in the realization of this divine-human reality. The world and its history are from the outset based on the absolute will of God to communicate himself radically to the world. In this self-communication and in its climax (i.e. in the Incarnation), the world becomes the history of God himself. And so if and in so far as it is found in the world, sin is from the outset embraced by the will to forgive and the offer of divine self-communication becomes necessary. For, since on account of Christ this offer is not conditioned by sin, it becomes necessarily an offer of forgiveness and of victory over guilt;' indeed, sin is permitted merely because, being finite human guilt, God knew it to remain always, imprisoned within his absolute will regarding the world and his offer of himself. This possibility of forgiveness does not originate from man – from 'Adam' as such or from the human' stage of history as such – but comes from that power of God's self-, communication on which, on the one hand, depends the development of the whole history of the cosmos and which, on the other hand, becomes historically tangible from the outset in its own identity

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and which, by establishing its own goal, becomes manifest in the existence and existential realization of Christ. And this is the meaning of the proposition which states that we have been redeemed by Christ from our sins. This already becomes clear by the fact that this very decision of God, to give existence to Christ and his saving work, is the basis of this saving work and is not dependent on it; properly speaking, it is not Christ's action which causes God's will to forgiveness, but vice versa, and this redemption in Christ (one might also say: in view Christ) was already effective from the beginning of humanity. Added [187] to this is the fact that according to Catholic teaching the 'redemption' and destruction of sin must not be understood as a merely moral or legal transaction, or as a mere acquittal from guilt, or as a mere non-reckoning of guilt. It is the communication of divine grace and takes place in the ontological reality of God's self-communication. It is, therefore, in any case the continuation and accomplishment of that existential process which consisted from the very beginning in the supernatural pardoning and divinization of humanity. If it is supposed that this original pardoning of humanity's sin existed and continued to exist not merely as a demand but as an effective force because, and in so far as, it was from the very beginning orientated towards the Incarnation and God's self-communication to the whole human race (and not because it had begun in 'Adam'), then we have formed the idea of the Christian redemption in such a way that it follows of itself from a Christological evolutionary conception of the world. For in this way the original pardoning became of itself also the victory over sin – the obstacle to this self-communication – as soon as this obstacle appeared by man's free choice during the history of the carrying out of this self-communication.

We do not mean to give the impression that we have sounded all the depths and breadth of a harmatology and soteriology by these brief pointers. All we have intended to indicate by our remarks is how redemption incorporates itself into the developed ground – scheme of a Christological evolutionary world-view.

2. We must touch here on a further question. We have, one might say, projected the idea of a possible Incarnation from the formal scheme of a world-evolution which reaches its climax in God's communication of himself. Naturally, the historical nature of human and also meta-physical knowledge permits us in actual fact to formulate such a formal scheme with such clarity only because we already know about the fact of the Incarnation, all of which is possible only *post Christum natum*. This is not however really very surprising. Even a metaphysical reflection always involves 'bringing in' an experience already had. The transcendental scheme of man as a free being, for instance, is transcendental in an *a-priori* way and yet is in fact dependent in its accomplishment on an actual experience of freedom. But there is one thing which cannot be accomplished even in this way, viz. the proof that this transcendental scheme of a possible Incarnation has in fact been actualized precisely in Jesus of Nazareth – in him and only in him. The *idea* [188] of the God-man and the acknowledgement of Jesus and of no one else as the one, unique and real God-man are two quite different perceptions. Only this second perception, which is one of faith, makes one a Christian. In other words, one is a Christian only once one has grasped the uniquely concrete fact of this particular man, and once it has been grasped as God's absolute expression of himself and as God's pledge of himself to you and me. The fact that the salvation of man does not depend merely on the idea but also on the contingent, concrete facts of real history – that belongs to Christianity. But this again shows the significance of all our considerations. Within our briefly outlined ground-scheme in which the spirit is not something alien in the material world but is the factor by which this bodily reality itself becomes present to itself, all that has really to be made clear is that only a concrete bodily reality – and not a universal idea – can really save and be eternally valid – and that Christianity cannot really be an 'Idealism' if it is properly understood. The act of grasping the concrete reality of this determined man and seeing that it is the reality of the saving God-man is other and more than the *a-priori*

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projection of the idea of a God-man conceived as the basic ground of a divinized humanity as a whole and as the basic ground in which the world reaches God himself. But it is no longer the task of our present reflections to show *how* by his historical experience and his faith man comes to the knowledge of faith that in the very person of Jesus of Nazareth the history of the world has reached – not indeed its full and absolute perfection but its unsurpassable final phase of perfection. All we can do here is to draw attention to this further question.

3. A correctly understood incorporation of Christology into an evolutionary world-view must also stop to think about the *point in time in* this one, complete world-history at which the Incarnation took place. Even the theological reflection of the early ages of the Church already found difficulty in answering this question. On the one hand, it regarded the coming of Christ as the end, and as the arrival of the last ages of world-history, as the last hour pointing directly to the end of all history and to an early return of Christ – in short, it saw the coming of Christ as the beginning of the end. On the other hand, the Incarnation and Christ's victory appeared to this reflection as the beginning of a new epoch, as the foundation of a Church which is to expand only slowly in an unforeseeably long history, and as the beginning of a leavening process within the very matter of world-history, [189] a raw material which only this divinization of the world-which seems to begin in Christ – can change from an unformed material into the form God really intends it to have. Under both these aspects, however, the field of vision of early Christianity was very limited with regard to both the past and future temporal extent of the history it had to interpret in its theology of history. And in both cases this was due to the very limited spatio-temporal horizon of its own historical existence. Today we believe that we know a history of humanity which stretches several hundred times further back into the past than had been imagined in the old days, and we get the impression that, after a very long and up till now almost stagnant starting period, humanity has a history before it, a history whose future in this world has only just begun. Hence, whereas previously one had the impression that God had entered the world through the Incarnation of his Word in the evening of world-history, we now get the impression that (in terms of large periods) he came approximately at the moment when the history of man's active self-possession and of his knowing and active self-steering of history was just beginning. Someone recently estimated the total number of human beings who have lived on this earth up until now to be in the vicinity of seventy – seven milliards; this would mean, therefore, that in perhaps a thousand years from now (which is but a tiny fraction of the total time man has lived on this earth) more people will have lived *after* Christ than before him, and this proportion would then increase ever more rapidly so that Christ would recede further and further towards the beginning of humanity. The really important theological factors in this question may perhaps be expressed briefly as follows:

(a) It is certainly true that Christ is the beginning of the end (it being quite immaterial in this respect as to how long the history of the human race will last and as to what results it will still produce). This is true in so far as in Christ there has basically and irrevocably arrived the event of humanity's radical self-transcendence into God, and in so far as – understood as promise and task of humanity – this event cannot in the very nature of things be surpassed any longer by any further and higher self-transcendence of history. To this extent is the *telos* of all previous ages present in Christ (1 Cor 10.11), and in a way which is unsurpassable.

(b) On the other hand, nothing in this properly eschatological interpretation of the saving period of the New Testament which began [190] definitely and finally with Christ prevents us from seeing this Incarnation also as the start of other, even intramundane ages of humanity, at the very beginning of this epoch. This means that – beginning with Christ and including also the modern age and the future planetary age, with its higher social organization, an age in which man will gain ever greater control over nature and regulate it more and more, instead of just serving it – the history of the West can be regarded as one

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which in certain not unessential aspects, and viewed from within the world and history without falling into a Communistic utopianism, is only beginning to be that epoch towards which the past life of humanity has been striving and in which humanity is discovering itself actively and not only contemplatively, really and not merely aesthetically – thereby also permitting the world to discover itself.

It is absolutely legitimate to regard this new period as one whose ultimate reason is to be found in the faith of Christianity. For only the demythologization and secularization of the world which not only actually takes place but is willed and carried out by Christianity has turned the world into a material which man himself can manipulate technologically: and only through the Christian message concerning the final self-transcendence of the spirit by grace into an absolute God who is totally distinct from the created world, has cosmocentricity been turned into an anthropocentricity. Viewed in this light, it is perfectly meaningful and understandable that the Incarnation stands at the beginning of this first really all-human period.

4. This leads us immediately to our final consideration. Christology both constricts and frees all intramundane ideological and utopian views of the future, in so far as the dogma of the Incarnation of the Logos does not contain any definite mention about the future course of intramundane history, in so far as it declines to accept any kind of chiliastic view, and in so far as it has already gone beyond the whole history of the world and its future (without wishing to imply that it has declared it to be futile or indifferent) no matter how man may shape it by his efforts in this world. For in the very nature of things, the being directly present to the absolute and infinite mystery of God has necessarily already surpassed any particular form of intramundane achievement of man, including the human achievements of the future, however great they may be expected to be. Christology frees these views, since it does not wish to enter into competition with, or become a substitute for, such intramundane planning of the future, but leaves the latter to [191] do its own work with regard to determining the duration and content, the planning and the incalculable challenge of the particular matters of man's future. It liberates it because this doctrine of the Incarnation does not deny, but includes the fact that man can realize his transcendental future, his attainment of God in himself, only by means of the material of this world and its history, i.e. also by exposing himself to, and either holding his own or failing in, this intramundane future with both the happiness and death necessarily attendant on it. To this extent, the promise of a supra-historical consummation in the absoluteness of God himself – a promise given together with Christology – does not diminish man's task in this world but provides it with its ultimate dignity, urgency and danger. Because man cannot effect his salvation apart from his worldly task but only through it, the latter attains its highest dignity, honour, danger – point and ultimate significance by this very fact. Through this task man also accepts the salvation which is God himself in his absoluteness and immediacy; time and space are the space of time in which the true eternity matures as their fruit and permanence. At the same time, however, Christology also binds all intramundane categorical projects and ideologies concerning the future. These are never salvation itself but are always only the material which man uses to exercise his openness in order to accept salvation from God's hand, since this salvation is God himself whom man does not create but always finds already there in the ground and abyss of his existence. Thus Christology sobers down and subdues man's own plan of action for the future. The future which man creates by his own action is never the only factor justifying man as he really is. For man is always already justified by God through the decree by which God in his holy, incomprehensible and unspeakable infinity pledges himself to man so that every action of man, right down to the last, consists in the acceptance of God's action on him. But in the long run, this sobered and subdued intramundane will for the future is the more fruitful for the future. In this way, man is not tempted to cruelly

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sacrifice the present for the future; he does not need to become brutal so as to take eternal peace by brute force; he does not need to let everyone be submerged in a sterile equality when he does not wish anyone to feel himself worse off than anyone else. If Christ is the decisive existential factor of man's life, then man will experience the unrest caused by the infinite extent of a divine future whose greatness overshadows every age and temporal deed; then is there peace, since the real, ultimate and infinite salvation [192] is then already known and accepted as something present and as the gift given to man's action of faith, and does not require to be taken forcibly by the desperate and at the same time ridiculous over-exertion of man for the future; then is the dignity of the individual protected, since then he does not find the sole justification for his existence in using it up for the benefit of individuals of a future still to come, but also remains safe as an individual of eternal worth – safe in God and in his love; then is the community also justified and established with absolute validity in the face of this individual and his eternal dignity, for one cannot find the salvation of Christ unless one loves one's brothers and sisters-Christ's brothers and sisters; then is despair redeemed, for every fall into the abyss of the unspeakable and incomprehensible in spirit and life means falling into the hands of the one whom the Son addressed as his Father, when in death he commended his soul into his hands.

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[193]

9

DOGMATIC REFLECTIONS ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS OF CHRIST[1]

The subject of this modest and brief guest-lecture is to consist of a few dogmatic reflections on the human self-consciousness and knowledge of Christ, and so it does not require any long explanations of the problem concerned.[2] Theological tradition attributes [194] a knowledge to Jesus as man which embraces and exhausts all past, present and future reality, at least to the extent in which these realities are related in some way to Christ's soteriological task; thus the encyclical '*Mystici Corporis*', for instance, attributes to Jesus an explicit knowledge about all men of all ages and places.[3] This theological tradition furthermore attribute to Jesus – from the very first moment of his human existence – the possession of the direct vision of God as it is experienced by the blessed in heaven. Such statements sound [195] almost mythological

[1] The following exposition forms the text of a guest-lecture given on the 9th December 1961 before the Theological Faculty of Trier. Cf. Karl Rahner, 'Current Problems in Christology' in *Theological Investigations* I (London 1961), esp. pp. 168-174, which corresponds to Karl Rahner, 'Chalkedon – Ende oder Anfang' in *Chalkedon* III (Würzburg 1954), pp. 3-49.

[2] Of the older literature, where it is not merely a case of the corresponding section in the Christologies, we would mention:
F. Brunetti, 'La science infuse du Christ', *Revue des sciences ecclésiastiques* I (1903), pp. 20 *sqq*., 100 *sqq*.
B. M. Schwalm, 'Les controverses des pères grecs sur la science du Christ', *RT* XII (1904), pp. 12 *sqq*., 257 *sqq*.
A. Chiquot, *La vision béatifique dans l'âme de Jesus-Christ* (Brignais 1909).
J. Maric, *De Agnoetarum doctrina* (Zagreb 1914).
E. Schulte, *Die Entwicklung der Lehre vom menschlichen Wissen Christi bis zum Beginn der Scholastik* (Paderborn 1914).
E. Schulte, 'Vom Kampf urn das Wissen Christi', *Theologie und Glaube* VII (1915), pp. 392-398.
F. Diekamp, 'Über das Wissen der Seele Christi', *Theologische Revue* XIV (1915), p. 108,
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[3] *AAS* XXXV (1943), p. 230; *Denz* 2289.

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today when one first hears them; they seem to be contrary to the real humanity and historical nature of Our Lord. At first sight they seem to be in complete contradiction to statements in the Scriptures which speak of a developing consciousness in Jesus (Lk 2.52), of a Master who professes ignorance of decisive matters precisely in the soteriological field (Mt 24.36; Mk 13.32) and a Master who is stamped with the spirituality and religious spirit of his age (as is being shown ever more clearly by modern research), so that one almost gets the impression that the only original thing about Our Lord is himself together with the unique combination of environmental influences which, of course, are to be found in every human being. The usual dogmatic theology found in textbooks tells us that we must differentiate between infused knowledge and acquired knowledge (the latter not being contradicted by the former). It tells us that we must think of Our Lord voluntarily and intentionally lowering and adapting himself to his environment, and that we must distinguish between direct and indirect knowledge. But all the time one has the feeling that such information is artificial and improbable, indeed one gets the impression that these explanations achieve only a verbal harmony between the historical and dogmatic statements about the consciousness of Jesus. Our present subject belongs, therefore, to those questions about which one cannot deny that a certain tension exists between exegetes and dogmatic theologians, a tension which is for the most part 'resolved' by the exegete not 'bothering his head' about the dogmatic theologian,[4] and vice versa. Thus the controversy between them does not become manifest, simply because they try to formulate things in such a way that they do not come into open and formal conflict with the conception held by the other discipline, the net result being that one fails to do justice to the question itself. Nevertheless, discussions in the most recent literature on this question show that the desire for an honest exchange of views between the two disciplines, and for new solutions to this problem, is not universally lacking. As examples of this, I would refer the reader to the book written by my colleague Gutwenger[5] [196] which contains the previously mentioned bibliography on this matter, and the Conference of French theologians held at the Dominican House in Eveux which was devoted to Christology and at which our subject was the main topic of discussion. It should also be mentioned at least in passing that there is also an internal dogmatic problem in the theology of recent years concerning the '*Io di Cristo*',[6] Christ's consciousness and his self-consciousness as a creature whether in the

[4] Cf. e.g. Otto Karrer, *Neues Testament, zu Mk 13,32* note, p. 152: 'Even the Son does not yet have the Beatific Vision of God during the time of his pilgrim experience on earth in the way in which he has it sitting at the right hand of the Father.' Present-day exegetes like J. Schmid pass over the dogmatic question arising at this point.

[5] E. Gutwenger, *Bewusstsein und Wissen Christi* (Innsbruck 1960).

[6] Cf. on this question, and hence on the more recent literature about our whole subject:
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form [198] of neo-chalcedonism or a purer Chalcedonian Christology, or from the view-point of an *Assumptus-Homo*-theology or a so-called 'Basly-Christology'. A. Haubst gave us a good survey of all this a few years ago,[7] so that we do not have to enter explicitly into this whole group of questions occupying current theology. Finally, it should just be emphasized at the beginning of our reflections that these reflections are intended to be purely dogmatic. Hence we have neither the intention nor the competence to carry out a work of exegesis. The only thing we intend to do in this respect is to offer the exegete a dogmatic conception of

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[7] R. Haubst, 'Probleme der jüngsten Christologie', *Theol. Rev.* LII (1956), pp. 146-162; *id*., 'Welches Ich spricht in Christus?', *Trierer Theol. Zeitschrift* (Pastor bonus) LXVI (1957), pp. 1-20.

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Christ's self-consciousness and knowledge which will perhaps make it easier than it has been in the face of previous conceptions for him to admit that this conception is compatible with his own historical findings. We say: that it is 'compatible'. For this is all that is required. It is not demanded of the exegete that he himself, with his historical methods or with a biblical theology based directly on the texts, should be able to arrive at dogmatic statements about the knowledge and self-consciousness of Jesus. These dogmatic statements are indeed ultimately based on what Jesus said about himself, in so far as what we call the Hypostatic Union of the Logos with a human nature in Jesus Christ is [199] ultimately based on Christ's own statements, at least in the light of the paschal experience: in other words, in so far as it has a foundation in the New Testament and in so far as this doctrine of the Hypostatic Union is the basis of the dogmatic statements about the self-consciousness and knowledge of Jesus. This very fact shows clearly, however, that these statements can no longer be non-mediate theses of the exegete himself. Hence, when we make a dogmatic statement about the knowledge and self-consciousness of Jesus, right -away our only intention relative to the exegete is to arrive at a view compatible with his findings, and to do this as well as we possibly can – but nothing more. For to do more is neither necessary nor possible. Of course, this does not as yet settle the question as to whether the New Testament Christology – in so far as it is different from the statements made by the historical Jesus about himself – already contains statements about the knowledge and self-consciousness of Jesus, including the direct vision of God.

After these few preliminary remarks, we must try to get as directly and as quickly as possible to the very heart of our question, and this by refraining from reminiscing on the history of dogmas and of theology. Such reminiscences could not in any case be presented with the necessary accuracy in the brief space of one hour. What will be said in no way claims to be a binding theological doctrine. It is not intended to be anything more than a conceivable theological conception which is not opposed to the declarations made by the official *magisterium* about our question. It is simply meant to be a theological conception which seems to make sense because it seems to prove itself to be deducible from dogmatic presuppositions which are certain, a conception which without forcing things is compatible with the historical findings of the researches made into the life of Jesus. Since we are going to propose a positive solution which does not alter anything in the declarations made by the *magisterium* even where these have no absolutely binding authority (i.e. are not dogmatic definitions), this also saves us from discussing the question of the exact theological note given to this traditional doctrine in the declarations of the Church's *magisterium*.

In preparing for our reflections proper, it should be stated first of all that knowledge has a multi-layered structure: this means that it is absolutely possible that in relation to these different dimensions of consciousness and knowledge something may be known and not known at the same time. We state this because one gets the impression that the [200] explanation of the knowledge of Christ usually starts with the tacit presupposition that man's knowing consciousness is the famous *tabula rasa* on which something is either written or not, so that this simple 'either-or' is the only possibility with regard to the question of something being written or not written on it. Yet this does not correspond to the facts. Human consciousness is an infinite, multi-dimensional sphere: there is reflex consciousness and things to which we attend explicitly; there is conceptual consciousness of objects and a transcendental, unreflected knowledge attached to the subjective pole of consciousness; there is attunement and propositional knowledge, permitted and suppressed knowledge; there are spiritual events in consciousness and their reflex interpretation; there is non-objectified knowledge of a formal horizon within which a determined comprehended object comes to be present, and this sort of knowledge is an objectified, conscious *a-priori* condition of the object comprehended *a-posteriori*; and finally there is the knowledge about this object itself. All this is really self-evident and yet has not been considered sufficiently when thinking

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about our present question. In the discussion of our problem, one has always known, of course, that there are different kinds of knowledge, and one has distinguished between infused and acquired knowledge with several sub-distinctions in each of them. Yet in this connection one has always more or less explicitly looked upon these different kinds of knowledge as different ways of gaining objective knowledge, rather than regarding them really as different ways of knowing a reality, i.e. one has considered them as different ways in which things come to be written on the *tabula rasa* of consciousness but not as totally different ways in which a reality can be present in the multi-dimensional space of consciousness. It cannot be our job to draw up an empirico-psychological or transcendental scheme of these different ways in which something may be present in consciousness. The point just touched on is merely meant to indicate the fact of this multiplicity of *possible* forms in which a reality can be present in consciousness. Our remarks were not intended to give an exact analysis of the mutually distinct ways of being conscious of something, of having knowledge or of being known – it was not our intention to analyse such basic j states and conditions.

There are just two things to which we would draw further attention. Firstly there is among these forms of knowledge an *a-priori*, unobjectified knowledge about oneself, and this is a basic condition of the [201] spiritual subject in which it is present to itself and in which it has at the same time its transcendental ordination to the totality of possible objects of knowledge and of free choice. This basic awareness is not knowledge of an object, and normally one does not concern oneself with it. Reflection can never quite lay hold of this basic condition even when it makes an express effort to do so. The conceptually reflex knowledge of it, even when it is present, is never this condition itself but is always supported by it in its turn and for this reason alone never gets an adequate grasp of this basic condition. Furthermore, it is not necessary that the reflection on this basic condition should succeed; it may perhaps even be impossible, and its never quite successful exercise may depend on the external, historically contingent data of external experience, on the conceptual material offered from elsewhere and on its historical character. Ideally, of course, the theses just formulated should be proved exactly and in detail, but this is quite impossible here. But we may get some understanding of their meaning and truth simply by reflecting on the fact that spirituality, transcendence, freedom, the ordination to absolute being found in every, even the most commonplace, act of man which is concerned with any indifferent matter of his biological self-assertion, are not indeed given as a theme or an object, and yet are nevertheless really conscious data. Indeed, they are the most primitive of the data of consciousness, possessing transcendental necessity, and of an all-embracing significance: a significance which nevertheless can only be caught hold of in themes or objects with the greatest effort and then only in a long history of the spirit, hidden beneath the extremely changeable history of terminology and only with very mixed success and the greatest differences of opinion as to their interpretation.

The second preparatory remark consists in a critique of the Greek ideal[8] of man in which knowledge is simply the yard-stick of human nature as such. In other words, a Greek anthropology cannot but think of any ignorance *merely* as a falling short of the perfection towards which man is orientated. Nescience is something which has simply to be overcome, it is not regarded as having any possible positive function. Anything which through nescience is not present is simply something which fails to take place, but this absence is not seen as an opening out of space for freedom and action, which can be more significant than the mere presence of a certain reality. Living at the [202] present time, we cannot think as undialectically as that about knowledge and ignorance. And we have objective reasons for this. It is impossible here to develop the positive nature of nescience – of the '*docta*

[8] Cf. on this Gutwenger, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

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ignorantia' – in every direction. We would merely draw the reader's attention to the following fact. A philosophy of the person and of the freedom of a finite being, a philosophy of history and of decisions, could undoubtedly show with comparative ease that the fact of challenge, of going into the open, of confiding oneself to the incalculable, of the obscurity of origin and the veiled nature of the end – in short, of a certain kind of ignorance – are all necessary factors in the very nature of the self-realization of the finite person in the historical decision of freedom. It could be shown quite easily that freedom also always demands the wisely unobstructed area of freedom and its willingly accepted emptiness, as the dark ground of freedom itself and as the condition making it possible. In other words, there is certainly a nescience which renders the finite person's exercise of freedom possible within the still continuing drama of his history. This nescience is, therefore, more perfect for this exercise of freedom than knowledge which would suspend this exercise. There is, therefore, undoubtedly a positive will for such a nescience. That there is a place for nescience is always already affirmed and this precisely in the will for absolute transcendence into the infinite and incomprehensible being as such. And in so far as the nature of the spirit is directed towards the mystery of God – in so far as all the clarity of the spirit is founded on the ordination to the eternally Incomprehensible as such, and this even still in the *visio beatifica*, which does not consist in the disappearance of the mystery but in the absolute nearness of this mystery as such and in its final beatifying acceptance – it becomes once more manifest, from the point of view of the final perfection of the spirit, that one must be very careful when one is tempted to qualify nescience as something merely negative in man's life. Whether this consideration has any contribution to make to our subject – and if so, what contribution – is something which will become clear only later on.

We come now very quickly to the very heart of our reflections. These reflections are of a dogmatic kind. Hence we ask: for what reasons must one, together with Catholic text-book theology and the *magisterium*, ascribe to Jesus even during his life on earth the kind of direct vision of God which is the basis and centre of the beatific vision – of God enjoyed by the blessed in heaven? If we put the question this [203] way, it is because we wish to indicate even in the way we put the question, that right from the beginning one ought not to speak here of a 'beatific vision'.[9] For one thing, it is far too easily taken for granted as self-evident that direct contact with God must always be beatific. Without necessarily adopting the Scotist view about the manner of beatitude, it may nevertheless be asked why absolute nearness and immediacy to God, understood as the direct presence to the judging and consuming holiness of the incomprehensible God, should necessarily and always have a beatific effect. Furthermore, is it certain that what is meant, in the tradition of theology, by the consciousness of Jesus is really intended to convey an idea of beatitude by direct union with God over and above this union itself? In view of the data provided by the historical sources regarding Christ's death – agony and feeling of being forsaken by God in his death on the Cross, can one seriously maintain – without applying an artificial layer – psychology – that Jesus enjoyed the beatitude of the blessed, thus making of him someone who no longer really and genuinely achieves his human existence as a '*viator*'? If one may reply to these questions in the negative, then the problem occupying us at present is simply a question of determining what valid theological reasons could be brought forward to convince us that we are quite correct in attributing a direct union of his consciousness with God, a *visio immediata*, to Jesus during his earthly life, but this without qualifying or having to qualify it as 'beatific'.[10]

[9] As I already emphasized in *Theological Investigations* I (London 1961), pp. 170 sq., note 3. I am delighted to be able to refer the reader to Ratzinger who agrees about this in reference to the same reflection by Gutwenger (p. 90): cf. *Münchner Theol. Zeitschrift* LXXX (1961), p. 80.

[10] The '*beata'* in Denz 2289, or the '*beati*' in Denz 2183, may without question be understood as a specifying and not as a reduplicative qualification. For the fact that Jesus was not simply as blessed on earth as the Saints in

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It will probably be possible to preface this more specific question with a preliminary reflection. We will be able to divide the possible answers basically and in accordance with the facts of the history of theology into two groups. The first group of answers (naturally of many different shades) will attribute this direct union to Jesus because, and in so far as, it starts from the principle that, even on earth, Jesus [204] must have had all those perfections which are not absolutely incompatible with his earthly mission, especially if this perfection can be proved to be – or at least probably be – a help or a more or less necessary presupposition for his teaching authority. In this group of answers therefore, this *visio immediata* is really an additional perfection and gift granted to Jesus, a perfection which is not ontologically bound up with the Hypostatic Union but which at the most is connected with it by a certain moral necessity, just as for similar reasons Christ is for instance credited with infused knowledge, etc. This group of answers to our question is then, of course, more dependent on an appeal to the testimony of the Scriptures and of Tradition than is our second group which it will be discussed in a moment. For a *legatus divinus* claiming divine authority, a prophet, is absolutely conceivable even without a *visio immediata*. Furthermore, the principle that Jesus is to be credited with all those perfections and privileges which are not incompatible with his mission (for there are such, as e.g. freedom from suffering), finds itself faced with the question as to whether this *visio immediata*, which is practically always regarded as beatific, is not itself incompatible with the mission and life of Jesus on earth – a question which, in view of the historical evidence of the life of Jesus, could be answered in the negative only with many reservations and obscurities. Beyond this, howl ever, one will have to say that the backing which must be found in Tradition for this sort of reply does not represent too solid a prop, especially when one takes into consideration the Greek concept of self-evidence of quite a few tacit presuppositions in this tradition, presuppositions which are human and not dogmatic. If one appeals simply to the teaching of the Church's *magisterium*, then the dogmatic theologian must be reminded of the fact that it is his very task to show how, and from where, the modern *magisterium* has taken its teaching, since it does not receive any new revelation but only guards and interprets the apostolic tradition and hence must itself have objective reasons for its interpretation of this apostolic tradition. Thus, recourse to the teaching of the Church's *magisterium* does not suffice, especially since this doctrine has never up until now been proposed as defined and hence binding dogma, and since its content can still be given essentially different interpretations. Even seen in this light, the first group of answers – the extrinsicist theory (to call it that) – has not a great deal to recommend it.

The second group of answers regards the *visio immediata* as an intrinsic [205] element of the Hypostatic Union and hence regards it as simply given bound up in this Union and as something which also cannot be abandoned. Thus in this view, it is not at all necessary to find a proper direct proof for this in the tradition of all ages. Furthermore – and this is a decisive point for our reflections – it follows in this view that this vision can be determined more exactly from the nature of the Hypostatic Union, in such a way that the consequences of this nature for the *visio beatifica* must also be affirmed, and whatever does not follow from it must also be denied theologically, whenever one cannot support it by any other certain and theologically binding additional tradition, which presumably will not be the case.

We must now explain the meaning of this second answer more fully and – for reasons of time – this will have to be done in as brief a speculative reflection as possible, without even attempting to find any confirmation of it in the history of theology. We start then from the axiom of the thomistic metaphysics of knowledge according to which being, and self-

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heaven cannot really be denied. To maintain this would be the same as the heretical denial of his sufferings which were not merely physiological.

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awareness, are elements of the one reality which condition each other immanently. Hence, something which exists is present to itself, to the extent in which it has or is being. This means that the intrinsically analogous and inflective nature of being and of the power of being, is in absolutely clear and equal proportion to the possibility of being present to oneself, to the possibility of self-possession in knowledge, and the possibility of consciousness. Let us presuppose this axiom – without being able to develop its meaning and justification more exactly here – and let us apply it now to the reality of the *Unio hypostatica*. The Hypostatic Union implies the self-communication of the absolute Being of God – such as it subsists in the Logos – to the human nature of Christ which thereby becomes a nature hypostatically supported by the Logos. The Hypostatic Union is the highest conceivable – the ontologically highest – actualization of the reality of a creature, in the sense that a higher actualization would be absolutely impossible. It is the absolutely highest manner of being there is apart from God's. The only other form of being which might be comparable with it, is the divine self-communication by uncreated grace in justification and in glory, in so far as both forms of being do not come under the notion of an efficient causality but rather of a quasi-formal causality, since it is not a created reality which is communicated to a creature but the uncreated being of God himself. In as much as the Hypostatic Union involves an ontological '*assumptio*' of the human nature by the [206] person of the Logos, it implies (whether formally or merely consequently need not be investigated here) a determination of the human reality by the person of the Logos and is therefore at least also the actualizing of the *potentia obedientialis*, i.e. of the radical capacity of being 'assumed', and hence is also something on the part of the creature, particularly since – as is stressed by scholastic theology – the Logos is not changed through the Hypostatic Union, and anything happening (which is the case here in the most radical way) takes place on the side of the creature. But according to the previously stated axiom of the thomistic metaphysics of knowledge, this highest ontological determination of the created reality of Christ (i.e. God himself in his hypostatic, quasi-formal causality), must of necessity be conscious of itself. For, according to this axiom, what is ontologically higher cannot be lower on the plane of consciousness than what is ontologically lower. Thus,) given that this self-consciousness is a property of the human reality, then this ontological self-communication of God is also – and, indeed, specially and primarily – a factor in the self-consciousness of the human subjectivity of Christ. In other words, a purely ontic *Unio hypostatica* is metaphysically impossible to conceive. The *visio immediata* is an intrinsic element of the Hypostatic Union itself. What has just been stated is simply intended to indicate what is meant here and thus to indicate the general direction which the second group of answers tends to follow in solving the problem stated at the beginning. What we, have said is not meant to imply, however, that all this would not have to be explained at much greater length and with far greater precision than we have been able to do here.

We also do not mean to imply that the recognition of the fact of the *visio immediata* as an intrinsic element of the Hypostatic Union could not be reached in some completely different way. It would be possible to arrive at the same conclusion, for instance, by basing oneself on the profound reflections made *by* Bernhard Welte in the third volume of the work on Chalcedon, under the title of '*homoousios hemin*', where he shows how in an ontology of the finite spirit the Hypostatic Union is the most radical (gratuitous) actualization of what is implied in the nature of a finite spirit as such. After that, it is easy to see that such a Hypostatic Union cannot be conceived as a merely ontic connection between two realities conceived of as things, but that – as the absolute – perfection of the finite spirit as such – it must of absolute necessity imply a (correctly understood) 'Christology of consciousness'; in other [207] words, it will then be easily seen that only in such a subjective, unique union of the human consciousness of Jesus with the Logos – which is of the most – radical nearness, uniqueness and finality – is the Hypostatic Union really present in its fullest being. If one

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conceives of the relationship between the Hypostatic Union and the *visio immediata* in this way, it is not at all necessary that the latter should always have been attested explicitly by Tradition or Scripture, whereas the Church's teaching on this reality acquires nevertheless a necessity and binding force which is greater than if it were proved with the help of merely morally certain arguments of convenience.

Deriving this doctrine in this way will also give us an insight into *how* this direct union of Christ's human consciousness with God is to be conceived. When we hear about Christ's direct vision of God, we instinctively imagine this vision as a vision of the divine essence present before his mind's eye as an object, as if the divine essence were an object being looked at by an observer standing opposite it, and consequently as if this divine essence were brought into Christ's consciousness from without and occupied this consciousness from without and hence in all its dimensions and layers. Once we have adopted this imaginative scheme (naturally we do not do this reflectively, but for that very reason this schematic representation determines our notion of the vision of God all the more profoundly) then we pass equally unconsciously and naturally to the thought that this divine essence offering itself and viewed in this way as an object of vision from without, is like a book or mirror offering, and putting before Christ's consciousness, more or less naturally all other conceivable contents of knowledge in their distinct individuality and propositionally formulated possibility of expression.

But then we have arrived at the problem with which we started: can such a consciousness have been that of the historical Jesus as we know him from the Gospels – the consciousness of the one who questions, doubts, learns, is surprised, is deeply moved, the consciousness of the one who is overwhelmed by a deadly feeling of being forsaken by God? Precisely this schematic image requiring an immediate conscious union with God and forcing itself upon us as if it were self-evident is not only not demanded but is also proved to be false if we start (as we have tried to indicate briefly above) from the only dogmatic basis we have for the recognition of the fact of this conscious, direct vision of God. For it follows from this that the direct presence to God, considered as a basic [208] condition of Christ's soul, must be thought of as grounded in the substantial root of his created spiritual nature. For this direct presence to God is the plain, simple self-awareness – the necessary self-realization – of this substantial union with the person of the Logos himself . . . this and nothing more. This means, however, that this really existing direct vision of God is nothing other than the original unobjectified consciousness divine sonship, which is present by the mere fact that there *is* a Hypostatic Union. For this consciousness of divine sonship is nothing more than the inner, onto-logical illumination of this sonship – it is the subjectivity of this objective sonship necessarily present as an intrinsic factor of the actual objective condition. But for this very reason, this awareness of sonship, which is an intrinsic element of the objective sonship, must not be conceived as a being-faced-with an object-like God to which the intentionality of the human consciousness of Jesus would then be referred as to the other, the object facing, it. This consciousness of sonship and of direct presence to God (which is not something merely known by starting from outside it, but consists in a direct presence to God which is at once – and absolutely identically – both the reality itself and its inner illumination) is therefore situated the subjective pole of our Lord's consciousness. The best and objectively most correct way of understanding it is to compare its characteristic nature with the intellectually subjective basic condition of human spirituality in general. This basic condition of man – his, spiritual nature, his transcendence and freedom, his unity of knowledge and action, and his freely activated understanding of self – is consciously present in him not only when he thinks about it, when he reflects on it, when he forms propositions about it, or weighs up the various interpretations of this reality. Whenever and wherever he is and acts as a spirit – in short, wherever he occupies himself intentionally with the most commonplace external realities –

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this 'looking away from himself' towards external objectivity rests on this unformed, unreflective, perhaps never actually reflected knowledge about himself; it rests on a simple self-awareness which does not 'reflect' or objectify – itself but which-looking away from itself – is always already present to itself by way of this apparently colourless, basic condition of a spiritual being and by way of the horizon, within which all traffic with the things and notions of daily life takes place This inescapable, conscious and yet in a sense not – known state of being lit up to oneself, in which reality and one's consciousness of reality are still unseparated [209] from each other, may never be reflected upon; it may be given a false conceptual interpretation; it may be – and indeed always is – attained only very inadequately and never completely; it may be interpreted from the most variant possible and impossible view-points, using the most assorted terminologies and systems of concepts, so that man may systematically tell himself what he has already always known ('known' in that unformed attunement which is the unembraceable ground of his whole knowledge, the permanent condition of the possibility of all other knowledge, its law and gauge, and its ultimate form). This all-pervading basic condition is present and is conscious even in a person who declares that he has never noticed it.

To this innermost, primitive and basic condition on which rests all other knowledge and activity, there belongs in Jesus that direct presence to God which is an intrinsic subjective element of the hypostatic 'assumption' of the human spiritual nature of Jesus by the Logos. And this conscious, direct presence to God shares in the characteristics of the spiritual, basic condition of a man, for it belongs to it as an ontic factor of that substantial basis whose self-presence constitutes this basic condition. This direct and conscious presence to God must not be understood in the sense of the vision of an object. This fact does not make this direct presence any the less ontically and ontologically fundamental and unsurpassable. But it means that this direct presence is the same kind of presence as is meant by the '*visio immediata*', except that it excludes the element of 'standing opposite' an object, an element which is usually associated with it as soon as one forms an image of 'vision'; we can quite rightly speak of a vision even in this case, as long as we exclude from our notion of vision this particular element of an objective, intentional counter-pole. A direct presence to God belongs to the nature of a spiritual person, in the sense of an unsystematic attunement and an unreflected horizon which determines everything else and within which the whole spiritual life of this spirit is lived. This direct presence to God belongs to the nature of a spiritual person as the ground which, though not allowing us to grasp it completely in a reflex manner, is nevertheless the permanent basis for all other spiritual activities and which, on this account, is always more 'there' and less objectively 'there' than everything else. This presence belongs to the nature of a spiritual person as the tacit factor in self-awareness which orders and explains everything but cannot be explained itself, since a basis is always the clear but inexplicable factor. To make all this still [210] more precise and more intelligible would require further development and proof of this doctrine of the spiritual, unformed and non-conceptual and non-objectified basic condition of a spirit. It would then be possible to say – and it would be more understandable – that this is also precisely the way in which we must conceive the direct and personal presence of the Logos to the human soul of Jesus. Since this more general task cannot, however, be carried out any further here, we must content ourselves with these modest pointers to a conceivable understanding of the absolutely immediate nature of the fact that the Logos is consciously communicated to the spiritual human nature of our Lord.[11]

[11] We must, therefore, also abstain from dealing explicitly with the controversy between Galtier and Parente (and hence also with the famous emendation of the Encyclical '*Sempiternus Rex*', between the time of its publication in the Osservatore Romano and its official publication in AAS XLIII [1961] p. 638), and the literature connected with it. This controversy refers to the unity and twofold nature of the Ego-consciousness of

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We must, however, explain briefly a few further conclusions to be *drawn* from this at least briefly outlined theory, which will lead us back to the series of problems with which we started these considerations. If we take what has just been said above about the characteristic nature of Christ's conscious, direct presence to God, and connect it up with what was said in our first introductory remark, then we may say that the basic condition of direct presence to God is not only reconcilable with, but moreover demands, a genuinely human spiritual history and *development* of the man Jesus. After all, this basic condition is itself of such a nature as to demand a fixed form and a spiritual, conceptual objectification, without it itself having such a form as yet, though leaving all the necessary free room for it in the *a-posteriori*, objective consciousness of Christ. In spite of man's always already – given basic condition *as* a spiritual being, and in spite of the attunement (*Gestimmtheit*) which is always present in the very ground of his existence (but which has nothing at all to do with a 'mood' or '*Stimmung*'), a man [211] must first 'come to himself', i.e. only in the course of long experience can he learn to express to himself what he is and what indeed he has always already seen in the self-consciousness of his basic condition. In other words, just as there is this objectively reflexive process of becoming conscious of what has always been already understood consciously but without knowing it and in an unsystematic and unobjectified manner, so it is also in the case of Christ's consciousness of divine sonship and his basic condition of direct presence to God. This consciousness in Christ realized itself only gradually during his spiritual *history*, and this history does not consist only, or even first and foremost, in being occupied with this or that fact of external reality but consists rather in the never quite successful attaining of what and who one is oneself, and this precisely as what and whom one always already possessed oneself in the depths of one's existence. Hence it is absolutely meaningful, and no cheap trick of a paradoxical dialectic, to attribute to Jesus at the same time an absolute, basic state of being directly present to God from the very beginning and a development of this original self-consciousness of the created spiritual nature being absolutely handed over to the Logos. For this development does not refer to the establishment of the basic state of direct presence to God but to the objective, humanly and conceptually expressed articulation and objectification of this basic state; this basic condition is not a fully formed and propositionally differentiated knowledge, nor is it an *objective* vision.

These two notions are not merely not mutually contradictory – they demand each other of their very nature. For it is in accordance with the nature of spiritual, personal history itself, and its whole content, that a basic state should tend to communicate itself to itself, and in a spiritual being the explicit knowledge of its own constitution can always understand itself only in the form of an interpretation and articulation of a basic condition which always supports it again, which can never be fully attained by it, and which consists in the most secret and innermost self-illumination of a spiritual reality. We can, therefore, speak without qualms about a spiritual and indeed religious development in Jesus. Such a development, far from denying the fact of his absolute, conscious and direct presence to the Logos, is based on this fact and interprets and objectifies it. Such a history of the self-interpretation by a spirit of his own basic condition obviously always occurs in his encounter with the whole gamut of his own external history of [212] self-discovery in his surroundings, and in the whole history of his associating himself with his own age. That which was always already present to itself, finds itself in this material. It is therefore absolutely legitimate to try to observe in what pre-established conceptual form and in – what eventual development, to be built up without bias

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Christ and the theory put forward by Galtier as to how the man Jesus knows about the Hypostatic Union. It can merely be mentioned briefly that whereas in Galtier's theory Christ knows about the Hypostatic Union because he has the *visio*, in our theory Jesus has the *visio*, because he has the Hypostatic Union and the intrinsic element of this Union, viz. the basic condition of direct presence to God.

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and *a-posteriori* historically, this systematizing self-realization of the God – man's basic condition – of Christ's direct presence to God and of his divine son-ship – actually took place from the very beginning. It is absolutely – legitimate to desire to see which of the notions prescribed by his religious environment Jesus actually used in order to express slowly what he had always already known about himself in the very depth of his being. In principle, at least, such a history of his self-declaration has in no way to be interpreted merely as a history of his pedagogical accommodation, but can quite legitimately be seen also as the history of his – own personal self-interpretation of himself to himself. For this does not mean that Jesus 'discovered something' which he did not know in any way up until then, but it means rather that he grasped more and more what he already always is and basically also already knows. It is not the task of dogmatic theology (which in this question is to a certain extent – *a-priori*) but of the *a-posteriori* research into the life of Jesus, to determine whether anything can be said in particular about this history and – to determine the actual course of this history. If this research proceeds properly, it will not find anything – at least in its *a-posteriori* materials – which contradicts such an original basic condition of absolute, direct – presence to God. Perhaps it would even arrive historically at the recognition that the unity of this history of Christ's self-consciousness – its – inner uninterrupted, clear and unshakable nature – can be explained sufficiently only on the basis of this basic condition even when, historically speaking, the individual factors of the conceptual materials and of the general background of this self-consciousness can or could be derived to a larger extent from Our Lord's religious environment.

What has just been said may suitably be followed by a brief remark about Christ's 'infused knowledge'. Gutwenger has tried to show that there is no constraining theological reason for assuming such knowledge – to exist side by side with the direct vision of God and acquired knowledge. Hence it will be quite permissible, for instance, to refuse to accept Ott's qualification of Christ's having such infused knowledge as being *sententia certa*. As far as I can see, the theological discussions of Gutwenger's work have not brought forward any objections against [213] his opinion on this particular point. If one starts from the direct presence to God taken subjectively and understands it as the ultimate basic condition of Christ's consciousness in such a way that it must of its very nature and by a historical development seek to translate itself into an objective knowledge, then it is possible to see implicit in this circumstance the factual content of what is meant by the theory of an (at least habitual) infused knowledge in Christ, and it is then possible to let the whole question rest there. For it is not necessary to conceive of the infused nature of this knowledge as something constituted by an immense number of individual '*species infusae*', but it could be conceived as an *a-priori* basis for a knowledge developing through the encounter with the world of experience.

It might be objected against the theory just outlined, that it certainly asserts that Christ's self-consciousness was radically in the direct presence of God from the very beginning, but that it also teaches that there was a proper history and development at least in the dimension of the conceptual reflection and objectification of this original basic condition, and that this necessarily implies phases in which certain objectifications, developments and expressions of this basic condition were not yet present – in other words, that there was nescience in this sense and in this dimension. We would grant that this kind of initial nescience existed, but would absolutely deny that there are declarations by the Church's *magisterium* or theologically binding traditions which do not allow us to accept such a nescience. In fact, it must be said that – if the doctrine of the true, genuine human nature of the Son as essentially similar to our own is not to be degraded into a myth of a God disguised in a human appearance – such a historicity and 'coming from beginnings' in which what was yet to come (precisely because it was historical) was not always already present, must necessarily be

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attributed to Jesus. The Church's doctrinal pronouncements command us to hold fast to the direct vision of the Logos by the human soul of Jesus. They do not, however, give us any theological instructions as to what precise concept of this vision of God we must hold. It is perfectly permissible to say that this unsystematic, global basic condition of sonship and of direct presence to the Logos includes implicit knowledge of everything connected with the mission and soteriological task of Our Lord.[12] In this way one will also do full justice to the marginal [214] and incidental declarations of the Church's *magisterium*[13] which point in this direction, without having to suppose for this reason that Jesus possessed a permanent, reflex and fully-formed propositional knowledge of everything after the manner of an encyclopedia or of a huge, actually completed world-history. These remarks will help us to understand what was really meant by our second introductory remark, viz. that not all or any knowledge at any moment of the history of existence is better than nescience. Thus, freedom in the open field of decisions is better than if this room for freedom were filled with knowledge of such, a nature as to suffocate this freedom. It cannot simply be retorted against this consideration that the same reasoning would then have to be valid also for the proposed basic condition of direct presence to God, and that this proves our reasoning to be absolutely false, since it is impossible to show it to be valid in this dimension. For this basic condition is precisely that knowledge which, rather than cluttering up, opens up the room for freedom. For the transcendence into God's infinity (no matter how exactly it is to be conceived, i.e. whether it is~ as in our case or as in that of Christ) is precisely in its infinity the necessary condition for freedom; the transcendental anticipation of all the possible objects of freedom is the very basis for freedom, whereas the objective perception of every individual object right down to the last detail would be the end of freedom. In this connection it may perhaps be observed, finally, that this general conception would also enable us to give a clearer explanation of the eschatological consciousness of Christ.[14] This consciousness does not consist in the prophetic anticipation of the 'last things', but consists in projecting these 'last [215] things' from what Christ knew in his basic condition of divine sonship and direct presence to God. He knows the 'last things' and knows them in so far as, because, by the fact that, and in the way that he knows himself to be the Son of God and to be in the direct presence of God: in this direct presence he knows them absolutely, and in the objective translation of his basic condition he knows them in the way and to the extent in which this condition can be given such a historically conditioned and *a-posteriori* expression with regard to this particular question.

Let us close this whole consideration by formulating a kind of thesis:

The dogmatic theologian and also the exegete are not permitted to doubt the binding, although not defined, doctrine of the Church's *magisterium* which states that the human soul of Jesus enjoyed the direct vision of God during his life on earth. But to begin with, this does not mean that the exegete engaged in the work of fundamental theology must or even can positively take this theological doctrine into account. Furthermore, it is a perfectly theologically correct interpretation of this direct vision of God to understand this vision, not as an extrinsic addition to the Hypostatic Union, but as an intrinsic and inalienable element of

[12] We are of the opinion that in this way justice is done to the explanation of Denz 2184. For one will not be able to say that this text commands us to be of the opinion that Jesus had the same kind of knowledge of everything which God knows by the *scientia visionis*. This is quite inconceivable and is already excluded by the impossibility of a *comprehensio* of God by the human soul of Christ (S. Th. III, q. 10, a.1), since the comprehension and non comprehension of God is also of significance for the kind and depth of t knowledge of the rest of the possible objects. Once the difference of kind is clear, however, then it will also be clear that Denz 2184 must be interpreted carefully and with reticence.

[13] Cf. e.g. Denz 2289. It must always be remembered that the presence a loved person in consciousness can be conceived in many different ways.

[14] Cf. Karl Rahner, 'Theologische Prinzipien der Hermeneutik eschatologischer Aussagen' in *Schriften zur Theologie* IV (Einsiedeln 1960), pp. 401- 428. (*Theological Investigations* IV [London/Baltimore 1967].)

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this Union, since – after all – it is held to be necessary to understand the Hypostatic Union itself ontologically and not merely ontically. It is then legitimate to be of the positive opinion that such an interpretation can understand the vision of God as a basic condition of the created spiritual nature of Jesus, a basic condition which is so original and unobjective, unsystematic and fundamental, that it is perfectly reconcilable with a genuine, human experience; there is no reason why it should not be perfectly reconcilable with a historical development, understood as an objectifying systematization of this original, always given, direct presence of God, both in the encounter with the spiritual and religious environment and in the experience of one's own life.

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PART IV

ECCLESIOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

[219]

10

REFLECTION ON THE CONCEPT OF '*IUS DIVINUM*' IN CATHOLIC THOUGHT

In this brief investigation, we wish to try to suggest a conceptual 'variation' (to put it this way) on the theme of in contrast to the '*ius ecclesiasticum*', a variation which may perhaps be found to be in itself conceivable without destroying the notion of a genuine 'divine law', while being at the same time applicable to the reality of historical development and indeed explaining the latter less artificially.

The significance of the 'divine law' for Catholic Canon law is well known; at many points the Catholic constitutional law of the Church and Catholic sacramental law declare a certain norm to be of divine positive law, a norm which is unalterable and which neither flows from natural law nor is simply a positive decree of the Church herself: as e.g. the Papacy, the episcopal monarchical constitution of the Church, the fact that the sacraments are seven in number, the obligation incumbent on the baptized person to submit his mortal sins to the Church's power of the keys, etc. Such and similar rights and duties in the Church – rights and duties which take many forms – are declared to be of divine law; they are traced back to a positive ordinance of the founder of the Church, an ordinance which – because it comes from him – is by this very fact declared to have been instituted as a permanent feature of the Church and to be an ordinance which even the highest authority of the Church cannot repeal. It is a well-known fact that the difficulty of this concept lies not so much in the concept itself but in the particular institution of the Church in which it is declared to be realized. The difficulty lies in the question as to whether the laying down of some particular 'divine law' can be proved historically. Protestant Church law has in many cases disputed that Christ instituted a particular divine law and has refused to accept the proofs brought forward by Catholic dogmatic theology and Canon [220] law since they are inconclusive.[1] And even the more recent, less 'sectarian' historical studies, take up position largely on the side of those who dispute such a 'divine law' in the case of many of the ordinances of Catholic Canon law. Certainly, the fact of there being disputes does not of itself furnish a conclusive argument against the Catholic conception. This is especially true because no one could, seriously and as a matter of principle, be of the opinion that the fact alone of two views having opposed each other for a fairly long time, without one of them being able to dispatch the other from the scene, proves that neither view can bring forward any objective and compelling proofs in its own favour. For it does remain true, after all, that the objectively compelling proof is not necessarily also the psychologically successful one. Extremely optimistic defenders of the democratic principle may perhaps think so. Actual reality, however, seems to persuade us differently. Nevertheless, a profound difference of opinion over many centuries must itself have an objective reason, even though this may not necessarily be the whole reason. What

[1] On the doctrine of the *ius divininum* (and of its renewal) in Protestant Church law, cf. above all Erik Wolf, *Ordnung der Kirche* (Frankfurt 1961), pp. 458-469, and Art. '*Jus divinum*', RGG³ 111 (1959), Sp. 1074 sq.

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this means is that – with regard to many of these ordinances – it will not be easy for Catholic theology and Canon law to prove the existence of the '*ius divinum*', since history does not readily provide absolutely compelling arguments in these matters. The formal, basic difficulty is always the same in all these cases: the current statement of the 'divine law' as verified in a certain regulation sees this regulation in a fully developed state in the concrete, and in the wide range of the applications and consequences of this statement which states this regulation to be of 'divine law', etc., so that it is quite true to say that in certain periods of the Church this regulation or statement of law is not tangible 'in this form'. And what is cited by Catholic dogmatic theology as being the original 'germ' and the earliest form of this regulation or of this consciousness of law (e.g. also corresponding statements in the Scriptures), is far too equivocal to allow us to identify it in any compelling way with the later institution or legal proposition in its clearness and significance. Even when it is possible to show a material historical continuity between the earlier and later form, it is always still questionable whether the earlier form (e.g. the position held for a time by Cephas in the church at Jerusalem) appeared in its day with the claim [221] of being valid for all time and of being unchangeable law. One will often say in such cases that in the primitive Church and her life, the Catholic 'divine law' current today was perhaps a *possibility also* actually adopted but that it did not as yet appear there as a clear *reality* besides which there were even then no others equally valid; and thus this particular institution cannot be proved to have been one which did not merely appear as a fact (as, for example, the command that women must cover their heads during divine worship) but also as a fact with the claim of being final and unchangeable. The historian of dogma and of law, who has no 'confessional axe to grind', will perhaps get the impression that he can discover the beginnings of the most varied developments in the early and earliest times of the Church (developments towards a more collegial or more monarchic, more charismatic or more institutional, more local or more supra-regional form, etc.). He may perhaps form the impression that he can regard it as a matter of historical chance which of the many, originally projected possibilities actually gained acceptance, and that such a 'historical selection' can in no way claim to be of obligation – in the sense of being the will of the founder – for all future ages.

At this point, we may be permitted to introduce two subsidiary remarks. Firstly, even the Catholic dogmatic theologian and canonist knows that not *everything* relative to the concrete historical form in which such a *ius divinum* appears or appeared in its own time or in another age, is already of divine law simply because the divine law is only actually real and properly effective in this particular time – determined form in which it appears at its particular time. This is certainly a difficult epistemological problem; in accordance with good scholastic teaching, a metaphysical being or a notion can be known only by a '*conversio ad phantasmata*', by a return to the 'image'. The metaphysical structure is always grasped only by way of a concrete model. This is true even though both are not the same and even though the metaphysical being can also be real in a different concrete sphere. One may define the concept of 'private property' in an extremely metaphysically abstract way. One may try to purify this concept of all elements of historical conditioning and chance. Theoretical considerations in the field of the metaphysics of knowledge may lead one to say most generally and abstractly that the concept and the image do not coincide. And yet, in the concrete and in one's own historical Situation, one can think of 'private property' – and use it as a blueprint [222] for life in practice and in the reality of life – only if one thinks of it in the concrete, in an image which one can no longer adequately distinguish in the concrete case from what is meant by the concept proper. For this again would be possible only by the return to another schematic image. And a historical and metaphysical critique of a schematic image – by which the concept referred to is distinguished from this image as something different – again takes place only in a return to *another* schematic image which – when unreflected –

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again exposes and subjects to its historical conditioning even the critic of the particular historical form of a metaphysical nature. This is also true in our present case. The 'divine law' can never be 'imagined' other than in its historical form. Historical criticism compares one form with another and thus legitimately proves the historical conditioning of the one form, that one form which must be conceded precisely by someone who says that this 'divine law' has existed in the Church from the very beginning (since precisely he more than all others must maintain that this divine law still existed even though in a form which was doubtlessly different from its present-day form). Hence historical criticism must not maintain – at least not in principle – that such a law either must have existed even in earlier times in its present-day form or did not exist at all. This tacit presupposition is the basis of many historical proofs of the non-existence of a currently claimed divine law: according to this presupposition, nature and form are simply identical. Yet there can be identity of nature under different forms. Anyone who denies this in principle denies (at least in the questions which concern us here) the permanent nature of the Church (and this even the Protestant dogmatic theologian and canonist will not do, no matter how formalistic he may be in his reading and interpretation of the Scriptures) or he must affirm the sameness even of the form of this nature, an affirmation which is contradicted by experience. Furthermore, one could prove to him that in the latter case, he tacitly formalizes and 'typifies' the old form of the nature until it can be made identical with the current form. It is certainly true that one will only really be able to explain the phenomena of the Church and of her life in history if one is able to conceive at the same time of the identity of nature throughout the historical variation of its form and the difference of form in spite of the same nature (of the divine law). Of course, this statement merely poses the problem but does not solve it. For the question now is, how are we to conceive a change of form which, while leaving the [223] nature untouched, yet can really be conceived in the way in which, according to the testimony of history, it obviously took place? It is precisely the object of this essay to make a little contribution to this question: but only a very small contribution which does not venture to solve the whole problem.

This brings us to our second subsidiary remark. When we said just now that it is quite impossible to make an *adequately* reflected and material distinction between the nature and the concrete form in which this nature realizes itself, this was in no way meant to imply, of course, that such a distinction cannot be made in any way whatsoever, or that it is not a task to be faced ever anew by theology and Canon law. On the contrary: the always new, always more clearly posed and answered question about the distinction between the nature and its historically conditioned form belongs even with regard to questions about the divine law in the Church to the most basic tasks of dogmatic and canonical Ecclesiology. One may perhaps be of the not too unreasonable opinion that more could be done than has in fact been done on the Catholic side to answer this question. How little, for example, is said nowadays about the question as to what should be the actual form today of the balance between the primatial and episcopal structure of the Church, both of which are declared to be of divine law by Catholic Ecclesiology. This can only be remedied by a really accurate description of the relationship existing today between these two structures, by an ecclesiologico-sociological analysis of those causes of this present-day form which are not to be found merely in the *ius divinum* of these two structures, and (because the problem cannot be solved without it) by an ever new, dispassionate comparison between the current form and the many earlier forms of this relationship. Such a comparison presupposes for the Catholic historian of dogmas and laws – *qua* Catholic – knowledge of what he has to expect and what it is not necessary for him to expect *a priori* with regard to the permanence in nature throughout the changes of history. (This applies to him even in so far as he proceeds methodically *as* a believer and does not regard this *a priori* as a check on, but rather as a sharpening of his capacity of gaining historical knowledge, since it gives him a greater inner sympathy with the object to be known

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– a sympathy which is a presupposition of all really objective knowledge – whereby the Catholic researcher is not only permitted but basically even offered an apologetic historical investigation, i.e. an investigation which does [224] not already proceed from the *a priori* of faith.) This question cannot be simply dismissed by the statement that he must expect that the one and the same nature of the Church – a nature which Catholic Ecclesiology declares to he *iuris divini* – was always already present, and that lie can (presumably) also discover this one nature *a posteriori* in history. This question cannot simply he dismissed by stating that he may dispassionately expect (since the Church is a historical immensity) that a not insignificant change of form will be connected with this permanence of nature. For the historian always meets the nature only in its actual form. Thus the question arises as to what in the concrete form he must recognize as 'essential', i.e. as '*iuris divini*', and what not. After all it is not as if the only answer to this question were: – anything which was recognized even in those days *as* being *iuris divini*. This is a very analogous situation to the history of dogmas in general.

It is rightly said in Catholic dogmatic theology that only what tradition has always handed down as divinely revealed – whether it be in an explicit statement or implicitly contained in another statement explicitly handed on by Tradition – can be defined as an absolutely binding statement of faith. The difficulty about this proposition is that, for instance, the statement to be defined here and now may indeed have been always or for a long time expressed in tradition but without any previous explicit qualification *as* a statement revealed by God and binding in faith, and that moreover it may have been stated among a great number of propositions without any clear distinction from other statements which certainly cannot claim to have been divinely revealed. How, then, can one recognize the revealed character of the earlier statement, if in the past it did not carry – at least in a clearly recognizable manner – the mark of revelation, and if this recognition as revealed must not nevertheless be the consequence of the present definition but rather the presupposition of the lawfulness of this definition, at least for the Church's *magisterium* itself?

This same question arises also with regard to the *ius divinum* in the Church. It is not fully answered by showing that such a statement of law or such an institution obtained previously. The question is: did this *divine* law, even in those days, make the binding claim to be the *divine* law – and if this was not the case or cannot be proved to have been the case as clearly as is to be desired – how, then, can one recognize that it is not merely a law in fact applied but was instituted by the founder of the Church as an unchangeable law binding on all later [225] ages? Even if one can or could appeal to the fact that the Lord of the Church has commanded something like this, this does not mean that the question has been clearly answered. For one just cannot seriously maintain that all the ordinances given by Jesus or by one of the Apostles lay claim to being a binding law for all time. As they stand, the different regulations in Mt 18 about fraternal correction, for instance, are surely tacitly abrogated as outdated (even if one says that, in different circumstances, their spirit is preserved in new and different forms); the precept about women covering their heads is also not a norm of divine worship binding today. The division of the different kinds of authority belonging to the Church into *those* offices which exist today may reasonably be regarded as not simply binding for all times, even when this division goes right back to apostolic times. Could the Church, for instance, discontinue the diaconate as a sacramental step in the hierarchy which is *iuris divini*? If one feels that this must simply be denied, one could ask whether the Church has not long ago begun to discontinue it, as far as the thing itself is concerned and not merely the title and legal fiction, even though (in the Latin Church) she is perhaps thinking again today about reintroducing even the separate reality of the diaconate. In brief, one cannot simply maintain that every legal reality of apostolic times, or legal realities which can appeal to a declaration made by Jesus or the Apostles, are by this fact alone of divine law. If this

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cannot be presupposed, however, then a *ius divinum* does not so easily follow from an *a-posteriori observation* of the legal structures of the primitive Church, even when the change of the form in this particular structure since that time is said not to have been so very great. Hence the question remains: how does one recognize in such ancient legal structures the characteristics of a *ius divinum*, when they did not state this explicitly at the time? To what extent can the idea (nature) and the form be separate from one another without losing the real, historical existence and continuity of a legal reality *iuris divini* in all ages of the Church? In other words, what change of form can one expect at least without having to say right away, as a Catholic, on account of the permanence of the *ius divinum*: it cannot have been this way, because this or that must always have been so already since it is recognized as divine law by the present-day Church?

This is the question to which the following consideration tries to give a partial answer. We readily admit from the start that our consideration may be of interest only to Catholics since, at least to begin [226] with, it simplifies and clarifies a problem which only the Catholic is faced with (in this particular way). Whenever it is denied right from the outset – by appealing to the facts of history – that this or that legal reality, which the Catholic declares to be of divine law, existed in the apostolic Church, it is of course at once superfluous to try to grasp the idea of a possibly very great change in form which nevertheless does not destroy the continuity of nature and so leaves open the possibility of maintaining a *ius divinum* with regard to the legal matter in question. But perhaps the notion we are going to develop will not be without some interest even to someone who disputes its application to the particular cases envisaged here. Space and competence do not permit us to make use of the historical materials themselves in developing the carefully defined concept of the divine law we are going to propose. It must also be emphasized very clearly that we are not particularly concerned with providing any real proof of the fact that this concept of a possible species of divine law is actually realized in a particular historical structure (for instance, in the papal primacy of jurisdiction or in the monarchic episcopate, etc.) or that the development of such determined institutions can certainly only be explained by applying this notion. Naturally we have definite historical facts in mind. The proposed concept, after all, is not meant to be merely a speculative possibility or a play on words. But a proof as to whether, where and how this concept is to be found in concrete historical structures and developments will nowhere be given by this investigation of the concept. If there are vague allusions to historical matters, this is meant in the sense of a clarifying illustration without maintaining at the same time that the illustration corresponds with certainty to historical reality. We will construct our proposed concept synthetically by a series of individual considerations.

1. The historical development of a historical structure is not necessarily reversible simply because the development in question is a state which did not always exist. There are one-way historical processes which are no longer reversible. This is true even if these processes were not necessary, i.e. even when the preceding state was neither a fact nor a necessity which was bound to lead to the state in question. If we take this statement in its most general sense, then it is no doubt a self-evident statement for any historical thinking which really considers something existing historically, i.e. something which has a history in the sense that this history is essential to it. We take the [227] liberty not to give any further proof for this statement in the present context. Yet this statement is not simply a self-evident truth for our consideration, a truth on which one need not waste words. For one can surely question whether the average Catholic jurisprudence does not overlook or tacitly deny it in the matters which concern us here. For one may get the impression that the dogmatic and canonistic ecclesiastical jurisprudence tacitly starts from the thought that what can be ascertained only as something which has developed at some point in the history of the Church – at a later point in time and not already in the apostolic age – shows itself, even by this fact alone, to be

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changeable and at least in principle to be reversible. If the general statement made above is correct, then this tacit presupposition is at least unproven and at least may not be presupposed as self-evident. For surely it is *a priori* absolutely conceivable that even juridical realities may belong to such historically developed and yet irreversible factors of a one-way history. The contrary would at least have to be proved first, since the above statement proceeds from the universal nature of historical reality and thus includes also juridical reality, at least until the contrary is proved. This is true especially since any structure with a real history is essentially (even though perhaps not exclusively) of a juridical nature. Such a structure – if it were always reversible – would have to be either unhistorical (or respectively its juridical nature would have to be untouched by its history) or this itself legal history could only be of a very peripheral kind. But a law which is 'historical' only in the sense of being reversible in any direction of its development one cares to choose, basically could not be anything really present in historical reality. For – no matter how paradoxical this may seem at first sight – a law, if it is to be the law of a real history and in a real history, does not become more valid and real by the fact that it knows of no history. The more unhistorical it is, the more unreal it will also he. (Nor is this contradicted by the properly understood doctrine of the 'natural law': for this doctrine takes for its basis the nature of man, a nature which has a true history, even though it always remains metaphysically the same. This metaphysical identity does not itself exclude but, on the contrary, includes a history which co-determines this nature as such, because the spiritual history of persons is not an accidental layer surrounding an unchanging nature but is the very history of this nature, especially since the nature of individual human beings receives an eternal determination from this [228] history and will always exist only in this way – either saved or damned.) Hence we regard this proposition as at least meaningful and conceivable: even a genuine history of law can be one-way and irreversible within the history of man; basically, therefore, there can be legal creations which, although they come into being at some point in time, can nevertheless be valid for all time and can be a now inseparable element of a historical structure. Whether, where and how this statement can be shown to be verified in concrete reality is something which we cannot and need not investigate more closely here. Suffice that we have at least indicated a basic logical possibility.

2. There are processes within a historically existing reality which at least can be recognized as legitimate by the nature of this existing reality, even though they spring from a free decision and even though these processes and decisions cannot be proved to be the only possible ones, and hence cannot be proved to be the only obligatory means for the nature of the historically evolving reality. In order to get a clear idea of what this statement means, let us take the concrete example of an individual, spiritual and freely acting person. Such a person can make decisions. These decisions may determine this person's fate and history at least for a long time ahead. These decisions may be physically free and – measured by the moral norm binding this existing being – one can recognize them as not offending against this norm. For this they do not need to be such as to be simply binding in a determined historical situation of this individual by reason of his nature and its essential norms. It suffices that these decisions conform to the nature of this existent and to the norms to which such an existent is subject; in short, it is quite sufficient if they are *one* of the possible fulfilments and realizations of nature for this existent. No one who believes in the physical and (at least partially existing) moral freedom of a person, will be able to deny that there are such decisions: decisions, that is, which are in conformity with nature but not of the necessity of nature (either physically or morally). Naturally non-necessary decisions can be such either in themselves or *quoad nos* i.e. not recognizable by us as anything more than non-necessary decisions which nevertheless are in conformity with nature. Both of these are fundamentally possible, even though this does not permit us to deny that there is a very great objective

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difference between decisions which are merely in themselves in conformity with nature and those which we cannot see to be anything more than this. Yet we may lump [229] both of these in themselves quite different kinds of decision, under the one concept. This is quite legitimate for the following reason: it may quite easily happen that in most cases (indeed, in a strict metaphysics of knowledge, perhaps in almost all cases) it cannot be recognized whether (in itself) the fact that a certain decision is in conformity with nature, is such *only quoad not* and in reality hides a necessity of nature (or respectively, announces it in this conformity to nature) or whether it is really merely a question of *de facto* conformity to nature. This concept of a 'decision in conformity with nature, even though not in itself or *quoad not* of the necessity of nature', can also be applied – beyond the field of the individual, physically free person – to historical structures of a more complex nature. Even a society, a State, a Church, etc., can be the subject of such decisions of either kind. To the extent and in the way in which we can attribute a free decision to a moral person (we are not going to treat here how and to what extent we can attribute it) – since this is certainly possible in some meaningful way or other – we can also predicate the possibility of such acts of a moral person. Nobody can seriously doubt this. For it is undoubtedly possible to bring forward examples of decisions made by a State, etc., which are genuine expressions of the historical 'physiognomy' of this structure, and which correspond to or contradict its historical 'mission' and perhaps its right constitution, etc., without it being necessary to say in the former cases that such a collective structure could be or was able to decide only in this way in the situation concerned.

3. It is possible to conceive of such a historical decision – a decision in conformity with nature even though not necessary by nature – which is both of a juridical nature and itself creative of law (in the sense of proposition 1), and irreversible. Anyone who admits our first two propositions will not really be able to object to this third one. For there is no reason which could prevent the combination of the idea of the first proposition with that of the second. On the contrary, if and where a law is irreversibly established (and if the historical structure establishing it is not to annul itself or to become rigidly fixed and so tend to destroy itself by such an establishing of a law), the irreversible establishment of the law must be understood to be at least in conformity with nature, even though it need not always be of the necessity of nature. For otherwise it is impossible to make it intelligible *why* such a positive, irreversible institution of law should be irreversible. In itself, it is quite possible to conceive that such an [230] irreversible juridical decision and establishment is also of the necessity of nature. For it would be unhistorical to think that what is necessary by nature in an existent must therefore also have been actually present from the very start, and hence that the mere fact of something appearing at a later point in time by being (explicitly or implicitly) established as a law, already proves that it Was not of the necessity of nature, and that in such a case it can therefore be at the most a question of whether this decision can be seen as something in conformity with nature or as something contrary to nature. Of course, whatever belongs necessarily to the nature of a spiritual, personal being in the physical or social order must always have been already present in some way or other as soon as the nature in question was present. The basic nature must contain within itself whatever belongs necessarily to that nature. But the question is how it must or also must not contain it. It is certainly possible, for instance, to characterize the faculty of sight, the capacity to laugh or the capacity to make contact with the surrounding world by free decisions, etc., as being of the necessity of nature, or as belonging with absolute necessity to the nature of man. And yet one will not be able to say that these necessities of nature are present in the embryonic stage of a human being in the same way as later on, nor will it be possible to say that what is added in this way later on must no longer be designated as being 'necessary to the nature'. A nature fulfils itself and evolves out of the basic condition in which what evolves and appears was undoubtedly already contained, but contained precisely after the manner of the basic condition and of

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possibility; what thus evolves is precisely its nature and not something added to this nature afterwards as something indifferent to the nature. If this is basically correct, then it must be said absolutely that something which appears later on can still be something necessarily belonging to the nature. Since, however, the sheer beginning and basis of a reality cannot be attained directly in itself (at least not in most cases or for the most part) and since what is contained in this basis appears only in the achieving of the nature, in the appearance of what evolves from that basis, it is not so easy to judge as to whether something which is historically established later on belongs necessarily to the nature or is merely in conformity with the nature and as such (for this or that 'reason) irreversible.

4. An irreversible, law – establishing decision of the Church which is in conformity with her nature (which corresponds legitimately to that [231] nature) can be regarded as '*ius divinum*' when it took place at the time of the primitive Church. Much in this proposition requires explanation. Thus, first of all, the notion of 'primitive Church' in its particularly pregnant theological sense. We might also have called it perhaps the 'apostolic age'. In any case, it means that age during which – in the Catholic understanding of faith – the time and history of New Testament revelation was still open. For, however much the Apostles and the authors of the written New Testament are in the last analysis ambassadors and witnesses of the word of Jesus and of *his* history, the Catholic understanding of faith has never doubted for one moment that we must basically count with the fact that the Apostles were not merely the first generation of those who pass on revealed truth – the first link of Tradition – but are also to be regarded as vessels of revelation, in any case in the sense that we do not have first to question critically what they say as to whether they transmit by this the teaching of Jesus or merely communicate their own 'thoughts'. However much one may ask oneself in the field of fundamental theology and in the history of dogmas as to what, for instance, is the 'source' of St Paul's knowledge of what he says – in other words, however much one may try to understand his teaching as his 'theology' (i.e. as the legitimate unfolding of the simple message of Christ himself) – it remains true that the message of the Apostles is for us still an 'event of revelation' and not merely the authoritative transmission of this message. In accordance with this realization, the Catholic understanding of faith is accustomed to express this fact by saying that with the death of the last Apostle the official Christian revelation is closed, and that from then onwards the task of the Church is merely to protect this completed revelation – to proclaim it, interpret it, guard it against error, unfold it as required by the spiritual situation of a particular age – but not in the proper sense to 'increase' it further. Conversely, however, this means that the Church supposes that revelation still took place during the apostolic age and that this era of the occurrence of revelation must not be simply regarded as already closed with the death or Ascension of Jesus. We would prefer to speak of this period in a theological sense as the age of the primitive Church. However much it is true that the Apostles (the Twelve, with Peter and Paul standing in a relationship difficult to define but one with which we are not concerned here) played a leading and unique role during this period, we would prefer to call it the 'primitive Church' rather than the 'age of the [232] Apostles'. For, on the one hand – as is shown by the writings of a Luke and of a Mark or by an Epistle to the Hebrews – there are other vessels of such a revelation (and inspiration) besides the actual Apostles in the strict sense of the word, and the fact is not altered by saying that they are this as pupils of and as commissioned by the Apostles. It is true that – understood as a historically temporal process by which the full belief in Jesus as the Son of God, as the Christ and only Redeemer (together with everything this implies) becomes conscious of itself – the whole process of revelation is to be conceived as being already supervised and turned into norms by the actual Apostles in a 'magisterial', authoritative sense even during this period of the primitive Church, and as being valid and lawful only in conjunction with them. (In this sense, the old tradition that Mark wrote the Gospel according

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to St Peter, Luke the Gospel according to St Paul and that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote it in the name and by order of St Paul, has an absolutely true and real meaning.) Yet all this does not deny, but reaffirms, the fact that it was not simply the Apostles alone who were themselves the vessels of the process of revelation still going on in the primitive Church. This is particularly true since the opposite view would again leave us faced with the question as to what 'canonical' position St Paul holds in relation to the Twelve, and whether even he, as a vessel of revelation, does not himself prove the view we have just expressed, viz. that not only the Apostles are vessels of revelation, since he can no longer be called an Apostle in the strictest sense (realized only by the Twelve). Moreover, it is presumably indicated that one should not terminate the age of the primitive Church too absolutely with the physical death of the last Apostle. For if one understands this *terminus ad quem* too chronologically then one will affirm implicitly that it is absolutely necessary and certain, for instance, that the Epistle to the Hebrews, the second Epistle of St Peter and the Gospel according to St Luke, were written before the death of the last Apostle. It will be much more prudent and objective not to declare this categorically but to leave it an open question. The meaning of the proposition that the New Testament revelation was concluded with the death of the last Apostle is thereby nevertheless retained: the first generation of the Church provided the authoritative 'beginning', the permanent norm, the all-supporting foundation and the unsurpassable law, for all subsequent Christianity. For it bore in its womb the one who is the absolute Word of God in the flesh, [233] and this 'his' age – an age necessarily belonging to him and an age whose faith in his message and reality is still constitutive of this message itself – remains the kairos which will never be replaced. This, then, is what we mean by the primitive Church, when we say first of all that Law-establishing, irreversible decisions in conformity with the nature of things can have been made in her. This proposition is nothing more, to begin with, than an application of the thesis stating that the age of the primitive Church was still the age of active revelation, and not merely an age of the transmission of revelation. It is possible, of course, since even legal propositions can be part of the contents of such a revelation. This is primarily simply self-evident for the Catholic understanding of faith. For if there is any law at all in the Church which can be called divine law (i.e. legal propositions or at least – and this even a Protestant canonist will not deny absolutely – facts and perceptions which of themselves demand a law of a very special kind), then this means that such a law is 'revealed' since it is not intended to be merely natural law but the spiritual law of the Church herself historically instituted by Christ. If revelation only terminates at the end of the time of the primitive Church, at the end of the apostolic age – and if we must not terminate this time before that – then we have the right and duty to expect also to find revelation of juridical norms during this period, and this during the whole of this period. The above – mentioned first part of our proposition would still be a completely self-evident truth for the ecclesiologist to this extent. But it signifies more than what we have so far indicated.

Our proposition implies primarily a definite, possible conception of the nature of revelation as it appears on the basis of human experience. Revelation appears as 'decision'. In the Catholic theology of the schools, the word 'revelation' is only too easily and almost instinctively associated with the image of a kind of purely passive hearing of a proposition communicated word for word. Revelation may indeed be conceived in this way, but it does not need to be. The fact, for instance, that a gospel is inspired, depends also on the real decision to write it, a decision belonging to the particular evangelist who no doubt experienced the writing as his own spontaneous decision. Of course, it is quite correct to say that the quality of this decision must be known from elsewhere. But where the event can be known only from revelation itself with regard to its inner characteristics, its positing may also be thought of as a moment in the process of revelation itself.

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[234] For it proclaims itself by itself, it reveals *itself even* though its most proper, intimate quality (as, for instance, its 'being inspired') cannot be recognized by this alone but can be grasped only in a wider context. This does not, however, detract from the fact that the process of writing a gospel belongs itself to the factors concerned with the revealing of its inspired character, especially since everything belonging to this revelation as its constitutive element must not be conceived as the simple communication of a proposition about its inspired nature. The process is far more complicated than that; it certainly contains elements which are in their turn processes and realities – and not directly propositions about such processes and realities[2] – in which we can read the fact of inspiration, presupposing certain other revealed propositions. For it is impossible to discover or postulate with historical probability anywhere in the apostolic age propositions testifying directly to the fact of something being inspired. If, as in the view of quite a few theologians, the primacy is indissolubly bound up with the office of the bishop of Rome, and if the primatial See cannot legally be transferred by a later holder of primacy to a different See (*de jure* and not merely *de facto*), then this circumstance (pre supposing other more general propositions) is obviously brought about as well as revealed by St Peter's decision to go to stay permanently in Rome. Why should we not, on the one hand, regard the election of Matthias and his co-optation into the apostolic college – in short, his belonging to this college – as revealed and, on the other hand, regard it as brought about by the decision to choose him and indeed revealed *in* this very decision? Events can certainly have the character of a definite material revelation; this presupposes merely that they take place, as it were, in the field of men who already have a certain amount of knowledge of revelation and thus in the light of such knowledge are in a position to judge such an event, and the determined quality of the event which can be known only through revelation. It is not then possible to say that only the material principles are revealed and not the quality of the event which is known with the help of these principles. At least one will not be able to say this as far as the apostolic age is concerned. For if one regards the quality of the event concerned to be revealed, if it is realized (at least [235] by the Apostles) not on account of a completely new and proper initiative of revelation on the part of God but with the help of these universal principles, and if these principles alone – as merely universal propositions – do not in any way provide us with this insight into the quality of the event concerned, then the event itself must quite simply be regarded as playing a role in its own revelation. It reveals itself. Free events, therefore, can certainly have the character of revelation in the age of the primitive Church. They are human decisions, and in them precisely is accomplished God's will to reveal, a will which desires, brings about and reveals this event in all its characteristic nature in and through this freedom of decision pre-defined by this will. Hence, if it is said that this and that particular fact was realized by a free decision of the Apostles, then this does not deny the revealed character of this fact though it was brought about by a free decision, but it does give rise to an idea of the *way* in which this revelation took place in the particular case, at least if we presuppose this free decision to be desired by God in a free and formal pre-definition. This does not yet tell us *what* particular quality in a law-establishing decision taken in the primitive Church is revealed by this decision within the totality of the primitive Church (and within the totality of her knowledge about herself). We will have to treat of this later on. At the moment, it is important for us to see something else with regard to this decision, a decision to which we attribute the possibility (but not always and necessarily the fact) of being a process of revelation: we must see that such a law-establishing decision can quite easily take the form of a choice between *several* possibilities. The establishing of a law can quite easily have the character of a

[2] Cf. on this: K. Rahner, *Über die Schriftinspiration* (Freiburg 1959). (English translation: *Inspiration in the Bible*, Quaestiones Disputatae I [Edinburgh/London 1961].)

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selective decision between several possibilities presenting themselves. The other possibilities neglected in favour of the one chosen, may be not merely physically but also ethically and juridically possible; the establishment of the law may be truly a decision. Hence, if it may or might be possible to prove that within the primitive Church there were different possibilities of constitutional and juridical concretization of the Church, possibilities which are still recognizable even to the regard of the historian – if it could be shown that certain absolutely different 'modes' of a possible evolution of the constitution and of the law offered themselves at that time – then this certainly does not mean that the actual decision (e.g. in the direction of a monarchical episcopate in distinction to a more collegial constitution) must be contrary to nature merely because it [236] chooses *one* possibility instead of another. It is not necessary, therefore, to imagine the situation of the primitive Church either as if, right from the start and at every moment, the juridical decisions appearing during this period were present as the only *possibility*, or as if even after such decisions the different possibilities must necessarily still have remained rightful possibilities which could be realized later on. Hence if one should, for instance, get the impression as a historian that all the different 'constitutions' of the later Christian confessions were already in some way and to a certain degree present and prefigured in the primitive Church, then this is no argument (at least not one which is decisive by itself) for saying that this multi-potentiality of the primitive Church system must always remain even later on as a legitimate possibility. It is quite possible that the Church took an irreversible decision (since this is basically possible) and decided in favour of a certain possibility, and that this decision should then remain binding on later ages. To begin with, all that this demands is that one can prove that such a decision was not contrary to but in conformity with nature of things. This is true even if it is at least not immediately comprehensible that this actualization of one possibility before others, understood as an irreversible process, was necessary with a necessity of nature. Such a process is at least thinkable: the Church (within the period of the primitive Church, being the time of the still-occurring revelation) decides in a process of juridical concretization and by an irreversible decision establishing a law in which particular direction and manner, out of all the given possibilities, she wants to actualize her own juridical nature.

If, and in so far as, such a decision can be regarded as a process of revelation (as has already been shown to be the case) then there arises the question as to what exactly in this process of decision has been revealed by it (within the known, total situation of the Church). First of all – given the presupposition that such a selective, law-establishing process did occur in the primitive Church – it can certainly be said that the legitimacy of this decision, its conformity to nature, is revealed. So much may be said to start with in any case. The primitive Church was fully capable of being convinced in connection with such a process that she had properly fulfilled and developed her nature, or at least had not done anything contrary to it, even though other possibilities of decision might 'of themselves' also have been open to her [237] Pope's basic right and authority to decide, and in certain circumstances even infallibly, about whether, for instance, the constitution of a particular religious Order is a legitimate way of genuinely following Christ – a way which substantially is in sufficient conformity with the Gospel – then we must *a fortiori* acknowledge the right and authority of the apostolic Church (under its legitimate ruling power, whatever this may have been at that time) to recognize that a certain constituted nature given by her to herself is in conformity with her original law, i.e. that this constitution is a legitimate mode of her realization of herself in conformity with her nature. She must be able to do this. For, on the one hand, she *must* act and fulfil her nature in a completely *determined* manner. And, on the other hand, being the Lord's saving community fulfilling itself in this way because it is eschatologically indestructible, she must have the consciousness of her substantial identity with the Church of Christ and with her own beginning. Hence she makes this decision *as* something legitimate,

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she makes it in her role of *primitive Church*, she makes it with the consciousness of being and remaining the norm and standard for all times, she therefore expects the recognition of this lawfulness even from her later generations, and she reveals the fact that this decision is in conformity with her true nature. To conceive the process of the law-establishing decision in the primitive Church as a process of the revelation of the lawfulness of this selective decision causes no theological difficulties. Is it possible to go further (a second step) and make it intelligible that in the occurrence of this process the irreversibility of this decision, and hence its permanently binding character for all later generations of the Church, is also revealed, notwithstanding the fact that this decision originated out of a multivalent situation of the concretizing self-realization of the primitive Church? This question may rightly be answered in the affirmative. To begin with, it must be emphasized (in conformity with what has been said previously) that the irreversibility of an action and decision is not something particularly strange and surprising, but rather is exactly what one should expect in the light of the nature of freedom. The primitive Church (as can be shown *a posteriori*) continued to take juridical decisions with the consciousness that these were final decisions binding on all later ages. A case in point would be when St Peter baptized without demanding of the pagan recipient of baptism that he pass through Judaism and its practice of circumcision in order to become a full member of the Church.

When the Catholic theologian of the later Church acknowledges the [238] Church. It is possible to say that such a decision was required by the nature of things and necessarily flows from the belief in the redemption by Christ alone. But it nevertheless had to be taken, and it was deduced from what the Apostles must always have known already about Jesus Christ and his significance for salvation. For, in the abstract, it would have been conceivable that, for example, circumcision could be kept as an element of the initiation rite and indeed could be just as obligatory as the continued use of the Old Testament, without thereby necessarily denying the pure redemption by Christ. This is clear from the fact that – if the abrogation of the law of the Old Testament followed necessarily simply from the nature of Christian Redemption – a continued observance of the Old Law by the Jewish Christians would have had to be contrary to the Christian law even during the period of the primitive Church. Hence, a decision to abrogate the practice of circumcision may be regarded as necessary by the nature of things, once this decision has been taken, but it need not necessarily have been so before this decision was taken, and at least need not have been recognizable as such *from* the previously given nature of Christianity. It will not be easy to find any sure support in the New Testament for simply presuming that there was a special revelation which not only contained a demand to renounce circumcision, but also contained an explicit revelation of the intrinsic necessity of such a renunciation. For St Peter and St Paul give much more the impression of arguing in favour of their decision from the conformity of this renunciation to the nature of things and from the superfluous nature of the imposition of a further burden, rather than basing themselves on the fact that, apart from these considerations, they had simply been forbidden by God himself to demand circumcision. Thus one may surely suppose that in this case it was a question of a decision of the primitive Church – a decision in conformity with the nature of things – which claimed to be irreversible, even though this may still not answer the question – *as to how* exactly the Apostles and the apostolic Church recognized this irreversible character of their decision. One may say that they acted thus, and so declared by this action itself that they regard their decision – which has been proved to be in conformity with the nature of things – to be irreversible. And then (to begin with, in this example) even this factor can be regarded as revealed, using the same formal reasoning which we employed above with regard to the lawfulness of such a law-establishing decision.

[239] Such a selective, historical decision of a juridical nature, which is made in conformity with the nature of the Church and which reveals itself as such and as an

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irreversible decision in the primitive Church by a proper revelation, may rightly be called '*iuris divini*' in its creation of law. In other words, at least to begin with, *ius divinum* can be thought to come into existence in the primitive Church by the fact that there occurs in the primitive Church a decision (formally pre-defined by God) which is in conformity with her nature but which (at least *quoad nos*) is not *a priori* recognizable as being intrinsically necessary, a decision which selects one of the many possibilities offering themselves in the nature of things (at least apparently) for shaping the constitution of the Church and of her law. This sort of thing can undoubtedly be more easily incorporated into the totality of the historical development of the primitive Church. For it does not presuppose that such a creation of law, as it were, simply falls from heaven without finding any support in the milieu and in the juridical ideas and possibilities of this environment of the primitive Church. And even it can still be regarded absolutely as divine law. For nothing more is necessary for this than the divine revelation of a juridical reality belonging to the Church which remains obligatory for all succeeding ages of the Church and which is withdrawn from any change by the later Church. Our conception of a decision made by the primitive Church in conformity with her nature and made irreversibly – a decision which is revealed in both of these respects – satisfies these demands made on a *ius divinum positivum* in the Church, even if it is conceived as having originated out of a greater number of juridical possibilities which were in themselves present and 'available' and thus are still historically tangible. The revealed character of such a *ius divinum* does not exclude the observable nature of its development from empirically verifiable tendencies and causes which were in a kind of competitive combat with other existing tendencies of development. Even the divine law of the Church is a divine-human law. Even the life of the law, and hence also of the divine-human law, is a one-way history in which (similar to the phylogenesis and ontogenesis of the living being) the concrete form of the law develops out of a necessarily multi-potential system by progressively determining what is to be realized out of the great abundance of the potential. As long as this process takes place within the primitive Church in the strictly theological sense of the word, it can perfectly well (which does not mean that it absolutely must [240] in every detail of development) belong in its individual elements to the constitution of the Church in conformity with revelation – to the constitution of her nature itself – although, of course, it can be this only as a consequence of the basic nature given by Christ and his salvation. The freedom and contingency of these steps of development – which, being (physically and morally) free steps, presuppose the plurality of other possibilities and which, therefore, not only permit us to see such a plurality but almost demand that we dig for them – are no argument against their being willed by God or against the *ius divinum* resulting from this development.

As we stressed already at the beginning of these considerations, it has not been our concern to prove the real existence in the primitive Church of a divine law understood in the way suggested but, in spite of references to examples from this period, our intention has merely been to give plausibility to the fact of such a concept of divine law understood in an evolutionary sense. It will be the task of the exegete, of the biblical theologian, of the historian of dogmas and of the historian of Canon law, to judge whether the suggested concept will help them in any way when – on the basis of the fundamental Catholic conviction about the continuity of nature of the present-day Catholic Church with that founded by Christ and with the primitive Church – they attempt to make it historically clear how the nature of the present- day Church was already contained in that community of Jesus existing after his Ascension, and when they attempt to make it clear that it was contained there as the form we must preserve in the community of Christ's faithful founded by himself. If they do not need such a concept, and if there are 'easier' ways of proving the binding continuity of the present-day Catholic Church with the primitive Church – a proof which, it

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must be remembered, has to be developed in a historical way by a Catholic understanding of an ecclesiology conceived from the point of view of fundamental theology, and not merely presupposed by belief in the self-evident character of the Catholic Church – then the notion offered may be reproached with being a superfluous subtlety. But perhaps one or two Catholic historians of Canon law may nevertheless get the impression that in this way the dictates of his historical and his dogmatic conscience can be more easily reconciled with each other than in the case of a notion of divine law in which this law is indeed established by God at a certain point in time but has no history itself in any way.

[241] 5. It must not be said that it is *a priori* and certainly impossible to ask the question as to whether there can be a *ius divinum* which is decided on by the post-apostolic Church by an irreversible decision in conformity with her nature. This is the final proposition which we wish to put forward here. By it we simply mean to invite further reflection. Nothing more. This proposition merely states that one ought not to be too hasty in refusing to consider from the very start the question of the development of a post-apostolic *ius divinum*. It states no more than that. It in no way decides the question as to whether such a law is conceivable, much less whether there has ever actually been such a law. It is easy to understand why there is perhaps more sense in at least putting this question, no matter how it may finally be answered. There are undoubtedly constitutional and legal 'crystallizations' (understanding this term in a completely positive sense) which can be conceived as having still taken place in the age of the primitive Church (e.g. the development of the monarchic episcopate as distinct from a collegial government of the individual congregation, which cannot easily be demonstrated to have been impossible at the moment when Christ left his Church or to have been made impossible by anything Christ said about his Church). Can this, however, be said with certainty and in a historically verifiable way about all factors which according to Catholic conviction belong to the divine law of the Church? This question is not in any way meant to be answered in the negative, nor is such an answer even 'tentatively suggested' here. After all, there is again a big difference between whether someone speaks as a believer and says that all the elements of the divine law must have been established at least formally (explicitly or at least implicitly) during the apostolic age (as otherwise they could not be *ius divinum*) or whether someone speaks historically and says that the presence of all these elements in the primitive Church cannot be proved historically. And the individual Catholic historian is certainly not bound by his faith to maintain that he personally has fully succeeded in giving a historical proof for each of these elements. At least in this sense, a Catholic historian can also say: I cannot discover all the elements of the *ius divinum* (e.g. St Peter's absolute primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church in the full clarity and comprehension of the Vatican definition) to be already present in the primitive Church. (One will surely be unable to doubt that, for instance, the consciousness of faith with regard to the primacy of the Roman Pontiff was still very [242] indistinct and to a certain extent 'fluid' in the Church at the time of Cyprian.) In view of these facts, one cannot esteem it an a *priori* superfluous question to ask whether one could perhaps expect there to have been a development of constitution and of law even in the early Church which, on the one hand, took place *after* the time of the primitive Church (in the manner indicated briefly above) but which, on the other hand, can nevertheless still be called divine law. No doubt, this question is more difficult to answer, and has more reasons against it, than the thesis relating to the primitive Church. For in the primitive Church there still occurred revelation even after the Ascension of Our Lord; precisely this, however, can no longer be affirmed of the post-apostolic era. The new question posed seems by this fact to have already been decided in the negative: divine law requires to be revealed, no matter how one may envisage this revelation taking place. Revelation was closed at the end of the era of the primitive Church. Ergo . . . But let us be careful. The theological doctrine of the schools clearly supposes that there are decisions taken by the

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magisterium of the Church which relate to facts of post-apostolic times and yet are infallible. Are these doctrinal decisions the revealed word of God in the proper sense? Most modern theologians deny this and – in order to explain why such a doctrinal decision made by the Church can nevertheless be infallible (e.g. regarding the correctness of a canonization, or the morally unimpeachable nature of a certain constitution of a Religious Order, the fact of a modern philosophical system being irreconcilable with the Christian faith, the meaning of a proposition in a theological treatise, etc.) – they introduce the concept of 'ecclesiastical faith' in contra-distinction to 'divine faith' in the actual word of God which He himself has spoken and directly attested to be true by His own authority. By 'ecclesiastical faith' one believes in an infallible word which is not formally the word of God itself but which one believes in view of the (of course divinely guaranteed) authority of the Church, so that this word, even though infallible, is not to be regarded as divine revelation. Even today there are, however, quite a few Catholic theologians who, without outside objection, reject the concept of *fides ecclesiastica* as a wrong notion which has no basis in older tradition. These theologians must, therefore, by this very fact think of all those propositions, which they regard as infallible declarations by the Church's *magisterium*, as also divinely revealed propositions. And they must see *how* they can explain the fact that something [243] which in its historical existence appears only after the time of the primitive Church, may be revealed by God (e.g. that Eugenio Pacelli was a rightful Pope, on which proposition depends, for instance, the binding power of any infallible definition given by him). How they explain this can no longer detain us here. All that we will say is that, if one presupposes the possibility of this theory and perhaps even confirms it by facts which no theologian can deny, then it is not necessary to regard a historically later, post-apostolic event as being certainly and simply outside the object of revealed faith. Once we presuppose this, and once we suppose furthermore that there could be irreversible juridical decisions in conformity with the Church's nature even in the later history of the Church (and this fact does not of itself require to be disputed *a priori*, since even the history of the Church after the primitive Church is still law-establishing, historical and irreversible, with the result that such a possibility of an irreversible decision does not of itself need to be disputed from the very outset), then it is perhaps not quite so self-evident as it would appear at first sight that no *ius divinum* can be established by a later decision of the Church since it can no longer have the character of a divinely guaranteed revelation. If in certain circumstances the completion of revelation with the death of the last Apostle does not prevent the possibility of recognizing with revealed certainty the character of a later, post-apostolic event as something which is revealed by God, then something similar could perhaps also be supposed to be the case with regard to an irreversible establishment of law by the Church selecting and deciding from a plurality of possibilities in conformity with her nature even if this decision only occurred later on in history. But as has already been said, we do not mean to answer this question here. All we have said and meant to say about the question here was merely to note that one should not decide too quickly and unreflectingly on a negative answer.

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[244]

11

ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE COUNCIL

The Pope has announced a Council of the Church for this year, an ecumenical Council of the holy, Catholic, apostolic and Roman Church. It is therefore right for us Catholic Christians to focus our attention on, and prepare our hearts for, this Council; for it is our Council, and its resolutions will in certain cases have profound effects on our own lives and certainly on the life of the Church.

This Council could be envisaged from many different points of view. We could ask ourselves to begin with (and this would seem to be the most obvious view-point at first sight) as to what problems this Council will be concerned with, and turn our attention to these. But in practice this is not a question which those of us who have not been intimately associated with the preparations for the Council can answer. It is probably no exaggeration to say that never before has there been a Council whose theme has been as veiled and unknown, at least for the outsider, as the theme of the present Council. For up till now there has practically always been a quite definite, external occasion which had clearly brought about the calling of a Council: a dogmatic controversy, or a question of ecclesiastical politics.

Today we know merely that the Council has been called and that it is going to be concerned with the renewal of the Church, a task so broad and indeterminate as to belong to every Council, and hence it does not really tell the outsider anything. The ecumenical intention which was in the foreground when the Council was first announced, has since been made more precise by our being told that this intention is to be achieved by a renewal of the Catholic Church herself and not really by direct discussions with the Christians of other denominations. Hence this ecumenical determination of the Council cannot tell us very much about the objective theme of the Council either. Thus, all one can really say is that the Council's theme will, on the one hand, consist of all those problems which are experienced sufficiently universally [245] in the Church and, on the other hand, in all those problems which, in the mind of both those who have called the Council and those who will take part in it, are to be tackled precisely by a Council and not in some other way; this description of the theme of the Council, of course, does not get us very far.

The above remarks are not meant to be anything more than . . . remarks. For the nature of a Council does not give us the right to demand that it should always have a very concrete and urgent cause. This cannot even be deduced and demanded by the 'extraordinary nature' of a Council. For we will see that a Council, if regarded from the point of view of the nature of the Church, is not such an extraordinary thing as might appear at first, and indeed could be conceived almost like a constituent assembly as distinct from an ordinary parliament. Yet it follows immediately from the simple fact of the subject matter of this Council being unknown to us that we must adopt a different course if we are to get some ideas about this Council. Hence the title of our reflections: On the theology of the council. We are going to ask ourselves exactly what a Council is when seen in the light of Catholic doctrine. This and nothing more is our question. We will see, however, that this will result in insights which are of the greatest importance precisely for this particular Council and for our attitude towards it, insights which are of greater importance than an attempt to be as 'topical' as possible in our reflections.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

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If we really want to understand the nature and task of a Council, then we must concern ourselves more particularly with the nature of the Church and with what the Church is according to the Catholic understanding of faith. Starting from the motive which inspires us here, we can make the following statement in this regard: the Church is at once constituted and ruled by the college of bishops with the person of the Pope at their head. This institutional, hierarchical constitution of the Church in *official functions* does not, however, exhaust the nature of the Church, since this nature includes also a truly charismatic, non-institutional and juridically not clearly controllable element.

The Church as an official institution

[246] The twofold statement just made must be explained a little further. The Catholic Church does not simply understand herself as a democratic or charismatic association formed from below, an association of people in whom the faith in the message of Jesus has become actual and who, subsequent on this individual event of faith, can form an association and hence can both determine the structures and forms of this association according to their own personal likes and dislikes and change them in accordance with the absolutely free changes of history. Rather, the Church is a society instituted authoritatively from above by Christ himself by the appointment of the episcopal college with Peter at its head, a society which has a divinely given title to man's obedience, faith and incorporation, and a society whose basic traits of constitution, law and division of powers, in spite of many changes of detail, are determined by Christ's instituting will. According to Catholic teaching, therefore, the bishops as successors of the Apostles – with the Pope as successor of St Peter at their head – are those invested and authorized by Christ to preach the gospel in a way demanding obedience, to dispense the sacraments in a proper and effective manner and to sustain the visibly constituted unity of the Christian life; in short, they are the vessels whom Christ has given the teaching, priestly and pastoral powers since (and in so far as) they derive their powers in a legitimate and juridical manner from the apostolic college and Peter, its head, by a real – both formal and material – uninterrupted apostolic succession.

The collegial structure of the official institution

In this connection we must note the following: the episcopal college must not be regarded as the subsequent summation and only secondary union of the individual bishops seen as the individual successors of individual Apostles. As against the Church as a whole, the episcopal college and its powers in its collegial but true unity precedes the individual bishop and his rights. The individual bishop is a bishop in so far as he is a member of the collegial unity and thus shares in its functions in and towards the whole Church. The fact that a certain man is a member of this college may indeed be recognizable by the fact that he has been legally assigned to administer and rule a well-defined [247] diocese in the Church as its local Ordinary. Prescinding from subordinate questions of detail, this assignment may indeed be the normal, concrete way in which someone is admitted into this college. But this does not in any way alter the more basic fact that the collegial unity of the whole episcopate under the one successor of St Peter (i.e. the Pope) is an objectively and juridically Superior entity as compared with the territorial limitation of the rights of the individual bishop and his territorial function. Hence, the nature, meaning and right of the whole episcopate is not the subsequent adding together of the nature, rights and meaning of the individual episcopate of each

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individual bishop. Only in this way, for instance, does it become intelligible why – according to Catholic teaching – the total episcopate may have absolute infallibility of teaching under certain presuppositions, a fact which could never be explained by the mere adding together of each individual bishop's teaching authority as such which is something fallible. This shows, therefore, that a bishop possesses rights and duties towards the *whole* Church not merely subsequent on and consequent to his territorially limited, individual authority, but prior to it, even though always only as a member of the collegially formed total episcopate.

Conviction about this fact – a fact which has not yet been thought out in theology right down to its last detail – finds its most tangible expression in the doctrine of the ordinary teaching authority of the episcopate as a whole, an authority exercised under and together with the Pope. According to Catholic teaching, the teaching authority and power of the total episcopate does not merely exist when the latter joins together in a Council and thus forms a corporate unity, nor is it merely the ordinary teaching authority of the Pope during the periods when there is no Council, but there is always and at all times an ordinary *magisterium* of the episcopal body, even outside a Council, an ordinary teaching authority exercised with and under the Pope. This fact shows (especially keeping in mind the infallibility of this teaching authority – the same quality of infallibility as that of the Roman Pontiff) that the episcopal body always already possesses a real unity, that it is always already a unified subject of rights and duties and that it does not merely become this by gathering together for a Council. The episcopal body as a whole, together with and under the Pope, is already a true, juridical subject by divine law and institution even before it comes together at a Council. Even outside the Council, [248] the episcopal body has the duty, right and capacity to act as a collegial unity, especially when – and because – (as in most cases) it uses this its possibility, given to it by its nature and by its unity in the Pope, through the personal summit and representation of this permanent unity, i.e. through the Roman Pontiff. This fact, understood correctly, does not destroy the active unity of the episcopal body – a unity which the latter always possesses – but emphasizes this unity and permits it to remain permanently actual. This does not imply, of course, that this capacity for action of the one episcopal body is actualized and manifested only in the actions of the Bishop of Rome. We cannot give a closer analysis here of the thousand different ways in which the episcopal body has acted in the history of the Church both in the actually united teaching, direction and ruling undertaken by the individual bishops throughout the world, and in the effecting of this unity through a continual 'give and take' between the individual bishops and the Roman Primate. But these different ways do show that – however little the details of its juridical reality, unity and the juridical structures of its action had been thought out by theology – the episcopal body has always existed and acted in the Church as a real and truly collegial unity.

Primacy and Episcopate

In such short expositions as ours it is impossible to describe the exact relationship of the episcopal body to the Pope. It can be said right away, however, that it is a Catholic dogma that this universal episcopal body possesses the highest powers in the Church only in so far as it itself forms a unity under and with the Pope. Hence the universal episcopal body is not the collegial governing body of the Church independently of or in opposition to the Pope, but only in so far as it itself is given its unity by the Pope as its own personal head. It is true that in this way, as indicated by the doctrine concerning the highest teaching authority of the episcopal body, the episcopate as a whole possesses the highest power in the Church and is responsible to no one else but God, even though it does not possess it as an authority in distinction or in opposition to the Papacy. There is no authority on the same or on a higher

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level which, after thorough investigation of some matter, could give a decision on its formal or material lawfulness; there is no other authority where the only safeguard against misuse [249] of its power lies in the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit and no other which is no longer subject to any canonically tangible restrictions or courts of appeal. According to Catholic teaching, it must be said furthermore that the Roman Pontiff can personally exercise (in so far as he is Pope, it is true) those rights which belong to the episcopate as a whole with the Pope at their head, i.e. the highest jurisdictional and teaching power in the Church, and that he therefore also possesses these rights over the individual members of the episcopal body. Thus the Pope is the supreme head of this collegial depositary of the highest authority in the Church – one who can act by himself – and he does not require any special, legally controllable delegation for this from the college of bishops, since the college of bishops itself is only a subject of rights, capable of exercising authority in and over the Church, in as much as it is formed into a unity in the Pope.

However true it is, therefore, that the Roman Pontiff really possesses in his person the highest power in the Church, this does not mean that the episcopal body as such could be abolished by the Pope, or that this body is merely the executive organ of the papal power and this merely by participation in the papal power. In fact, it will be possible to go further than the above – stated proposition expressing the Catholic conviction of faith about the existence of an episcopate by divine right in the Church. It will be possible to say that even where the Pope acts in his own person and out of the fullness of powers belonging to him in person, he acts *as* the head of the episcopate as a whole. For the above proposition does not mean that the Pope requires a legally verifiable commission from the body of bishops understood as a legal subject distinguishable from him and his power. We may therefore say that in the Church there is *one* supreme holder of the fullness of powers communicated to the Church by Christ, viz. the episcopate as a whole (under and together with the Pope) which is a collegial entity and which from the very outset cannot be separated into two different holders of powers, one of which could be opposed to the other as a delegating, controlling and limiting power. The Pope, however, is the head of this subject of collegial unity, a head capable of acting by itself without this subject itself being a separate reality distinct from the Pope. The Pope, even when he acts '*ex sese*', does not on this account cease to be the summit of the college in this action, even though he has a further episcopal jurisdiction over every individual [250] bishop (taken as an individual member of this college) and even though he himself can determine the exact form of his action for it to become the action of the head of the episcopate as a whole, and is not bound by any determined, juridically examinable form for his action to be that of the head of the Church and of the episcopate as a whole.

The one ruling power in the church

Once the relationship between the episcopate as a whole and the Pope is conceived in this way, there is no longer any question about whether there is one bearer or two inadequately distinguishable bearers of supreme power in the Church, when we understand this question in this connection to concern both the relationship of the Primacy to the episcopate as a whole and the relationship of the Pope to the Council (which is usually taken to be the only question). We need not say that there is only *one* such bearer in the sense that the Pope communicates his power or some other power to the episcopate as a whole. Nor need we say (and this would in any case have to remain very obscure) that there are two inadequately distinguishable holders of supreme power in the Church, viz. the Pope by himself and the episcopate as a whole together with and subject to the Pope. It is logically quite inconceivable that in one and the same society there could be two supreme authorities, each endowed with

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absolutely all the rights and full powers of this society. This becomes no less impossible by thinking of these two authorities as merely inadequately distinct from each other. In so far as they would nevertheless be distinct in such an explanation, the problem would still remain. Hence, theologians like Salverri, for instance, say quite rightly that it is logically much clearer and simpler to hold that there is only one supreme authority in the Church, viz. the authority of the Pope and that a Council derives its authority from him (whatever may be the more exact explanation of this derivation). Should one, however, really make the Pope in this way the sole bearer of supreme power – without seeing him in this precisely *as* the head of the college of bishops – then (as Salverri himself admits) it would no longer be really possible to account clearly for the completely universal and traditional doctrine, expressed also in canon law, which states that a Council possesses the highest power in the Church. For by definition, a power communicated by one office bearer to another in a society cannot be the highest [251] power in this society but must be a derived and hence not the supreme power.

We can avoid all these difficulties by stating that there is *one* supreme and highest bearer of the supreme and highest power in the Church, and that this is the collegial body of bishops formed into a unity in and under the Pope, and that this one supreme holder of authority is capable, in accordance with the nature of a college, of adopting *different* ways of acting without thereby destroying the unity of the acting subject. Thus it can exercise its authority either in the Pope acting as the head of the college or in some other way in which the collegiality of the one college becomes more directly and tangibly apparent, i.e. by a way of acting which is directly composed of the action of individual bishops. But the *a-priori* unifying function of the Pope is still operative even in this second way (viz. in so far as these bishops are in themselves and in their action ‘at peace and in communion with the Apostolic See’) and even this way does not produce a merely subsequent adding together of the actions of individual bishops.

The charismatic element in the Church

Before we apply these considerations of constitutional law to the Council, we must go on to consider the second part of our initial proposition. Only when we have done justice to this part, too, can we safely understand the nature of a Council and evaluate it correctly, both positively and negatively, in the light of what we have just said. We said at the beginning that the institutionally hierarchical constitution (i.e. the episcopate as a whole united in Peter) does not exhaust the nature of the Church understood as the divinely directed government of the faithful, but that the charismatic element, which is to be distinguished from this institutional element, also belongs to the nature of the Church. The great fullness and permanent finality of the powers instituted by Christ in the offices of the Church-powers which are to be handed on in a juridical manner by apostolic succession – might lead the student of the nature and constitution of the Church into the error of thinking that the whole life of the Church exhausts itself in the exercise of these powers of teaching, of dispensing the effective signs of grace and of ruling, on the one hand, and the exercise of faith, reception of the sacraments and their grace and obedience to these powers, on the other hand. Or at least he might think that everything else which [252] perhaps exists in the Church does not properly concern the Church as such but remains in the private sphere and forms part of the personal history of salvation of each individual.

One might get the impression that every guiding influence, every impulse of God and of his saving activity relative to the Church must always and exclusively be given through these hierarchical powers, through their possessors and their activity, as if every divine influence

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were exercised through the Church's hierarchy and as if *only* the particular divine influence exercised on *it* (the hierarchy) were a direct, and essentially always direct influence. Yet this is a totalitarian, bureaucratic conception of the Church, which, though it will find an echo even in the minds of many superiors and subjects within the Church herself, does not correspond to the Catholic truth. There is also a free, charismatic element in the Church and this also belongs to the Church herself. Not only are God's influence by grace, God's giving of grace to the individual and the sacramental communication of grace all clearly distinguished one from the other in Catholic teaching: not only is it true that certain extremely important saving or damning influences exercised by God on the individual both within the Church and outside her extend far beyond the sphere of the sacramental communication of grace through the Church in her *potestas ordinis*: but it would moreover be nothing less than heretical to subscribe to the view that God exercises his action on the Church in Christ only through the medium of the hierarchy and no one else, so that the hierarchy alone possesses an (all-round) direct relationship to God. God has not abdicated in the Church in favour of the hierarchy. The divine Spirit blows through the Church in other ways besides the beginning of the activity which rests in the highest authorities of the Church.

There are the charismatic effects of the Spirit in the form of new insights, new forms of the Christian life for new decisions, on which depend the fate of the kingdom of God – effects of the Spirit which take root in the Church wherever the Spirit himself desires it. He can give even the poor and the little ones, the women and children, the non-officials – in short, every member of the Church and not merely the members of the hierarchy – a great or small task in God's kingdom, a task given for the Church and to the Church. The nature and existence of the Church is bound up with the existence of the free charismatics – an existence guaranteed just as necessarily and to the same extent by the Spirit promised to the Church as is the existence of [253] the hierarchy – and thus these free charismatics must live in peace with those who hold office, and the latter must use the charism of the distinction of spirits in order to test, regulate and make use of the powerful action of the Spirit for the benefit of the whole Church. But the official element in the Church must never think that everything depends on it alone and that it is in autonomous and sole possession of the Spirit in the Church. It must never regard those members of the Church who have no official function as members whose sole function is merely to carry out those commands and impulses which can alone be given by the officials in the Church. The Church is not a kind of totalitarian State on the religious plane. The Church must not imagine that everything functions best in her when everything is as far as possible directed in an institutionalized manner and this from the very summit of the Church, when obedience has become the virtue which completely replaces everything else, including all individual initiative and any questioning about the urgings of the Spirit and individual responsibility – in brief the virtue which replaces completely any idea of an independent charism coming directly from God. No, there are things in the Church which cannot be planned, which cannot be institutionalized and which are unexpected, and hence there is a genuine history in the Church which is more than merely the carrying out of an always already known plan of God's house. There is a charismatic element in the Church, as part of the Church, and only complete with this element is the Church what God wants her to be and what she also always will be through His Spirit.

The official and the charismatic element

It is of course clear that not only is it difficult to distinguish between the official function with its charism (we can call it a charism quite correctly) and the free charism, but that even

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an office-bearer can be the bearer not only of the existentially fully received fullness of the charism of his office but also of very essential, free charisms most important for the salvation of the Church and for the accomplishment of her task. The office-bearer and the free charismatic can in a sense be united in one person. This has often been the case in the past and is something most desirable even though it is sometimes not without its dangers. But in spite of this frequently existing union in the one person, such a union cannot be brought about forcibly and cannot be established by [254] official action (at least not to any great extent and then only in a particular way made obvious in the history of the Church). To try to establish an absolute personal union of both these charisms in the *one* bearer, and to do this always and everywhere, would be a foolhardy attempt and one doomed to failure. God does not desire that the office-bearer in his Church should always and everywhere be also the highest bearer of the Spirit, or that the highly endowed charismatic should always and on this account alone be entrusted also with the highest official functions in the Church. Again, the union and fusion of these two elements is not to be found either in the official function as such or in the free charism as such, but in God alone and in that guidance of the Church which in the last analysis He does not share even with those who are charged with the direction of the Church. For even the latter are led by God without being asked and without possibility of appeal, and even they cannot *a priori* and into the bargain universally determine the course of their directing activity.

If this is so, however, then the Christian must neither expect nor demand that the charismatic element, necessarily found in the Church, should be adequately represented by the official element in the Church. It would be an unjust accusation against the official element in the Church, and would betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the Church, if one were to presuppose tacitly in one's actions and judgements that the official element in the Church has fulfilled its duty once it has, as it were, absorbed all the charismatic elements into itself and then radiates and realizes them in its own decisions. The Church is seen correctly only when she is seen as the unity of official and charismatic functions adequately administered by God alone; what belongs to and is the task of either of these two kinds of function cannot be demanded completely of the other function.

All this has to be stated if we really want to understand what a Council is and what we may or may not expect from it.

THE COUNCIL AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

The Episcopate as a whole

To start with, what was stated in the first place above permits us to understand the nature of a Council. According to the declaration of the Code of Canon Law, a Council possesses the highest authority in the [255] Church. This states a fact of divine law in the Church and is not merely a constitutional paragraph of an ecclesiastico-human law from which the Church or the Pope himself could dispense. A Council (presupposing it has been legitimately convoked and properly constituted) is not a new and previously non-existent corporate association of individual bishops, a corporate body whose rights and powers must first be newly created, either by new legislation, or by papal investiture, or by a combination of the rights of each individual bishop as such. Rather, a Council represents a meeting together of the highest collegial subject of that fullness of authority which always already exists in the Church; a coming together of a collegial subject of the highest power in the Church, a subject which was already in existence before and indeed has already always exercised this power. Hence it is not a matter of a new subject of powers coming into existence, but merely of an old subject

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exercising its old and permanent power in a different way. This enables us to understand why the calling of a Council is purely a question of whether it is deemed necessary, why there is no necessity to hold Councils regularly and why there have been, and there presumably will also be in future, long periods when no Council was or will be held; as well as why *once* it does meet, a Council has the highest authority in the Church. For what emerges and acts in a Council already exists and acts at other times, i.e. the one episcopal body which is the one collegial seat of government in the Church, in unity with and under the direction of the Pope.

The episcopate as a whole, complete with its permanent fullness of authority, can act in a conciliar manner, but does not need to do so, since it can also exist and act in other ways. If it does act as a Council, then in acting in this way it has the same powers and rights which it has at other times, viz. the power of infallible teaching (under certain presuppositions and conditions which we will not go into here), the powers of a supreme law-giver, and the supreme power of government. It means, therefore, that in this case the ordinary *magisterium* acts in an extraordinary manner, and that it can in this sense be called the extraordinary *magisterium* – but in both cases the subject is the same. And when the episcopal body meets in a Council, it can appeal only to those powers which it always possesses. The new *manner* of acting does not give it any new powers.

[256]

Representation of all the faithful

Naturally, the official element in the Church, instituted by Christ, is also the representative of the Church in general in such a meeting in Council, i.e. a meeting of the majority of the whole episcopate in one place with the purpose of acting in common in the *particular* manner determined and made possible by direct contact in one place. In other words, it represents *all* the faithful in the way in which the official element in the Church does this also at other times; not as the representative of the whole people of the Church democratically commissioned by the totality of the faithful, but representing this people as the pastors of the faithful who have been given their mandate and powers by Christ. Yet this does not make these pastors forming the episcopal body any less but rather even more truly the real representatives of the people of the Church. We abstain here from going more deeply into the question as to whether, in what sense and in what way the pastors of the Church meeting together in a Council have such a ‘materially democratic’ duty even at a Council as would oblige them to act in such a way as to be capable of representing by their actions the cause of all the members of the one Church and to act in a true sense in the name of the people of the Church; also whether they have the duty to attend – as it were – to the common good of the Church and hence to the legitimate wishes and tendencies of the people of the Church. In any case, there exists so close a bond between the pastors and the people of the Church – a bond of union created by God himself and one which is objective and guaranteed in its effects by the Spirit in the Church – that the pastors assembled in Council are in a true sense also the representatives of the whole Church and of all her members. After all, it is not as if the Church, understood as the people of the redeemed and of those who believe in Christ, only begins to exist through the effort of its official representatives, as in the case of the adherents of an ideology or the members of an association who are recruited only by those officially appointed for this task and who are formed into an association by the free decision to recruit made by the founder-members. Both the office-holder and the individual believer are preceded in the same way by God’s absolute, pre-ordaining decision to establish the Church as the community of believers; they are both preceded by the redemption, thus also by the objective sanctification of humanity in Jesus Christ and [257] his redemptive act, and by humanity consecrated as the people of God.

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God's saving action, which is the real basis of the Church and which precedes man's will to community and the existence of an official institution, creates both faith (at least in the office-bearers themselves) and the official institution equally originally and correlates both these realities in an ultimately inseparable unity. This is seen both by the fact that faith is directed towards the common and ordered profession of this faith and originates from hearing the accredited message from the mouth of those authorized to proclaim the gospel, and by the fact that this ecclesiastical office can only be found in someone who first of all (even though he himself be the Pope) professes the true faith at least in the public juridical dimension; for these reasons faith and office can never exist absolutely apart (even though for understandable reasons of juridical stability the authority of the individual office-bearer in the Church is not dependent on his *inner* state of faith). This means, however, that the office-bearers are themselves necessarily believers, at least in the social dimension of the external profession of faith; they themselves, to be capable of being office-bearers, must belong to the believers, to those who listen and obey; they and the people of the Church are not simply opposed to each other as the ruling body and the subjects, or as those who give commands and those who receive them. Both stand before God as believers *and* obedient subjects, as those who are grounded on the one basis which is Jesus Christ and his redeeming act; they are already united as brothers and sisters and possess Christ's grace even before this unity of the redemption and of faith is organized, in accordance with the will of Christ, into the individual functions of the one body of Christ; there are, therefore, also charisms of the office of teaching and of governing which do not belong to everyone in the same measure. Hence, even without any democratic authorization from below but precisely because they are given their office by Christ within the one already existing Church to which all Christians belong as members of the one Body of Christ and this not merely as subjects, the rulers of the Church are always, and especially at a Council the representatives of the Church and of all her members. Even though we maintain that the hierarchy naturally represents the whole people of the Church, this does not yet mean, of course, that this basic representation cannot appear in many different ways and cannot be carried out in the most diverse manners . . . better *and* also [258] less good ways. Much less do we deny that one can rightly have opinions today about how and in what way even the influence of the people of the Church could and should make itself felt at a Council – a way absolutely reconcilable with the divine constitution of the Church and with the power of ruling which belongs to the episcopate alone. In this respect it is not necessarily true that every actual practice of the Church's hierarchy must necessarily be equally ideal and suited to the circumstances of the times.

The Council and the charismatic element in the Church

But the important thing for the purpose of our reflections is to see that a Council is of its very nature the concrete way in which the whole, always existing *official* element of the Church (i.e. the whole Episcopate) can exercise its functions. We say: the Episcopate as a whole. For a Council is nothing other than the coming together in one place of the whole episcopate with the intention of acting as the whole episcopate in the exercise of the powers always belonging to the episcopate as such. It follows from this, however, that a Council does indeed represent the episcopate as a whole, together with the Pope as its head, and also the Church as a whole both in so far as she is always and permanently represented by the episcopal body and in so far as she is united in this body into one, acting social subject but that it does so only in so far as all this is the case. This also means, however, that it cannot be demanded and expected of a Council that it should be, as it were, the acting subject and representative of all the charismatic elements in the Church. Anyone who expects or demands

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this, acts stupidly and is unjust to the Council. This may appear to be a very abstract and far-fetched principle. But in reality it is a very practical and concrete maxim.

Thousand upon thousand of demands are made on the Council and many things are expected of it. If one examines the majority of these demands and expectations, it will become clear that people expect a Council to deal with an enormous number of desires and debatable matters, so that it would take a monster Council of unforeseeable length to discuss and decide on them all. But not only that; it also becomes clear that very often these wishes and demands contradict each other and are very often desires which have grown out of typically Central European conditions and mentalities, and are not at all suitable [259] for the other parts of the universal Church, but at best should be dealt with by particular laws (for which, it is true, there should be more room in the Church than there is at present). Finally, it becomes clear also – and this is decisive for our reflections – that at least at the present moment in the history of the Church and of her development, many of these wishes are the object of charismatic efforts, of the movement from below supported by the divine Spirit, of projects as yet unofficial and of enterprise which has still to prove that it comes from the divine Spirit, but not things that the Church as an official and juridical institution (i.e. the episcopate as a whole) can reasonably be expected to consider in a Council in general or at any time or even just at the present time.

This affirmation does not in any way decide either positively or negatively the question as to whether – on account of the partial failure of the charismatic element in the Church, or on account of a partial 'extinction' of the Spirit in the Church by the official element, by suspicion, overmuch timidity, excessive enslavement by what is common tradition in life and doctrine, quite possibly by culpable 'false developments' – there might be a state of affairs in the Church of which we cannot absolutely approve, a state of affairs which, absolutely speaking, should not exist (anyone who would simply deny the possibility of such a state of affairs would dispute the very meaning and reason for a Council), a state of affairs which cannot simply be made to disappear from the face of the earth by a Council and conciliar decrees and which while it persists simply does not as yet permit the Council to use certain, in themselves quite conceivable, possibilities of conciliar self-reflection and decision. As to whether earlier charismatic movements and developments, if sufficiently present, could have created sufficient presuppositions for a Council to take official, juridical decisions at the present time – presuppositions which are not present – is quite a different question again and one which we cannot answer here. One certainly should not regard the whole history of the Church – as some do today – as constituted only of false decisions and developments, of mistakes, missed opportunities, suffocated charismatic outbreaks, lazy compromises with the world, or dour self-closure to modern times. For such judgements misunderstand and overrate the possibilities and value of historical knowledge; such judgements are often unjust and foolish, and confuse the inevitable tragedy of every historical development with guilt the Church could and should have [260] avoided. Nevertheless, there can be false developments leading to relatively static conditions in the state of the Church at any particular time, at her mental and spiritual level and in her charismatic energy, or leading to atrophy, false developments which are presuppositions at present unalterable by a Council while being the *a-priori* limits of its possibilities. But quite apart from all this, it is in any case true that a Council represents the official element of the Church – and only to this extent does it represent also the Church – and hence its possibilities and task concern what belongs to the official element and not what belongs to free charisms in the Church.

This does not mean, of course, that the official elements do not need to or may not pay attention to the charismatic elements in the Church and should not take them into consideration, and that – even in this limited sense – a Council has nothing to do with the free charisms in the Church. Just as there always exists a close, inner order and a mutual

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relationship of dependence between the institutional and the charismatic structures in the Church, so a Council is naturally required to give due consideration also to the charismatic element in the Church, to presuppose it, encourage it, respond to any stimuli which may have matured from it, etc. But a Council cannot replace the charismatic in the Church, nor can this be demanded of it. At a Council, the official element can also try by every legal endeavour – by decrees, ordinances, doctrinal decisions, etc. – to elevate and clarify the doctrinal, disciplinary and spiritual state of the Church, but in no sphere of the Church's thought and life can it replace the living government by the Spirit in the Church; the Spirit does not necessarily govern her in such a way that the real initial ignition of new charismatic impulses must or even simply could come from the official element in the Church. The following considerations must now be understood in the light of these fundamental reflections.

Expectations from the Council

It would be impossible to expect from the Council that it will proclaim basically new insights into the doctrines of faith. This statement is naturally not meant in the sense that anyone would think or wish that a Council could proclaim anything else but the truth of the revelation of Jesus Christ as it has always been proclaimed by the Church. But in view of the present state of the world and of history, [261] of the problems which have already come to the fore and all the new problems which are still appearing – in view of the mentality of positivistic, scientific and industrial man, a changing mentality and one which is affecting the whole world with enormous rapidity – it is surely conceivable and desirable that the gospel be preached in a new way. It is surely conceivable and desirable that the truth might be expressed in such a way that as a result of a thinking through anew of the old eternally valid truth of the Christian revelation, the truth would come to be formulated in the light of the mentality of the man of today, in a manner which from the very outset would take both modern man's initial understanding and his difficulties in understanding into consideration as something obvious, so that the eternal truth of Christ is put before man in such a way as to present no more difficulties and obstacles than is absolutely unavoidable when the lofty truth of God seeks entry into narrow-minded, prejudiced and sinful man. Yet one must recognize quite soberly here that one cannot expect very much in this respect from a Council in the situation in which we find ourselves today. In keeping with its nature, the official element of the Church, even when it is the *magisterium*, must adhere to what is commonly taught, to what has been tried and what has already found universal acceptance. The *magisterium* as such can only employ formulae to which we have become accustomed and which have been proved to be lawful by the tried tradition of recent decades or centuries.

Any wishes one might have concerning a modern proclamation of the gospel and of the faith of the Church should have been addressed to the theology of the last few decades or centuries. This theology has of course made quite considerable efforts to express the revealed word in a manner adapted to the times and in a manner which is existentially 'acceptable'. But we would be indulging in an unjustified optimism and mutual flattery (not uncommon although unintentional, even among theologians) if we were seriously to maintain that, by and large, modern theology is possessed of that strictly scientific yet equally charismatic verve which would make its declarations as truly actual and convincing as they should or might be in light of the truth that God's word and Christ's truth are the salvation yearned for by every age.

Many people undoubtedly will not be pleased to hear this, and our having stated it does not mean that we think that we have done better ourselves and so can afford to criticize. The fact, however, that Christianity all over the world is today for the greater part on the [262] defensive, must at least be partially due to the fact that the preachers of the Christian message

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do not proclaim it as it ought to be and could be proclaimed. This does not necessarily imply guilt on the part of the preachers of the gospel, even though this should not be excluded (for why should the office-bearers in the Church be allowed to imagine that they are anything else but poor sinners and indolent servants of God?). But if, as the Church teaches, God's gospel is clear and radiant in itself, and suited to the intelligence of every man in all ages, and if we do not have any right to regard the majority of men as either exceedingly stupid or malevolent, then there is nothing left for us preachers and theologians of the Church but to admit that obviously we have not yet learned to proclaim God's gospel in such a way as not to obscure it in its radiant brilliance by our manner of proclaiming it. Whether or not we feel this ourselves does not change the fact of the matter. It must be so, and this especially when we do not experience it so ourselves and are of the opinion that it is impossible to pass on God's message in any better way than we are doing.

Theology and the average proclamation from our pulpits and in the schools being what they are, it cannot seriously be expected – without becoming unjust to a Council and its possibilities – that there will be any essential difference in the Council's theological decrees from what is true of present-day theology in the schools, in the pulpit and in theological books. (This is true especially if a Council is to be of short duration and if the main work has to be done by the self-same theologians who represent that theology of the Schools of which no one can say that it could not be much more in keeping with the times.) We must expect good, carefully thought out, thoroughly debated doctrinal decrees. But it will be as well to say without any false optimism and quite soberly that we cannot expect any doctrinal decrees which will make the non-Christian sit up and take notice to any particular extent and which will fill the minds and hearts of Christians with a completely new and unusual light. To demand this would be quite out of keeping with the nature of a Council in present-day circumstances. The *magisterium* cannot replace the charism of theology and it is not its job to do so. If this charism is weak today, then this will manifest itself also in the doctrinal decrees of a present-day Council. Indeed, in accordance with what is reported to be one of the intentions of the Holy Father, one may perhaps even hope that there will not be too many definitions. When a Council does not meet with some [263] definite, already currently discussed question of a doctrinal kind in view (and this is obviously not the case today, since this Council has not been called to settle newly arisen and disputed questions which are giving rise to the danger of a new, not yet condemned heresy) then there is the danger (humanly speaking, for who can tell?) that one may, as it were, *search* for an object of a doctrinal kind for the Council, an object worthy of such a Synod, and that one may suggest certain doctrinal definitions for voting solely in order that the Council may show itself to be important and great in this sphere.

Such a temptation is humanly too natural for it to be held to be impossible from the very start. I suspect that not only Luther but even Catholic Christians have sometimes thought that the fifth Lateran Council had much more important issues to settle (issues which it left unsolved, however) than the definition of the natural immortality of the human soul, however true this proposition is. The few neoaristotelians condemned as a result of this definition were not the real danger threatening the Church at that time. The prelates at that Council should have looked for that danger much nearer home. The heresies which threaten the real substance of Christianity today are not those basically harmless, even though perhaps really erroneous and (regarded purely logically) very substantial errors to be found here and there perhaps even among Catholic theologians. Real positivism; latent and cryptogamic materialism; the inability to realize that the non-empirical is real; the feeling that the mystery which we call God is present only by its 'absence' and is too great to be honoured by anything but an anxious silence; sentiments deeply rooted in the spirit, which cannot be attained by the purely logical, about the relativity of everything human and hence also of

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everything religious, sentiments which arise in view of the unconquerable pluralism of present-day cultures and in view of the territorially and historically immeasurable variety of religious appearances and the unforeseeable nature of future developments, in the conviction that we have still great new phases of development in front of us – all these real or partial 'heresies' have not yet been sufficiently systematized in theology and have not yet been sufficiently 'worked out' (theoretically and existentially) as to enable the Church's *magisterium* to formulate the truth against them so as to lighten the mind and heart of the Christian in a way the usual teaching has not managed to do up till now.

Precisely because this cannot and must not be demanded of the [264] Council, one would hope that the Council will not try by a lot of (obviously true) definitions to create the impression that it nevertheless wants to do this job. May we say quite frankly that – always speaking humanly, and answering to human and (before the final decision of the Council) lawful and indeed demanded considerations – it would be highly inopportune if some particular theological controversies were to be decided conciliarly in this Council, controversies which came up for discussion under Pius XII, such as those about monogenism, the fate of infants dying without baptism, the evaluation of psychoanalysis, or this or that other question which has been quite sufficiently evaluated by Pius XII in '*Humani generis*'*?*

With regard to matters concerning more directly Church discipline, the Council will undoubtedly be able to and probably will take certain quite important decisions. In this field there are many questions which have been broached from many quarters and for a long time now, questions which fall directly under the competence of the official functions of the Church even in their conciliar form of action and which (since they directly concern the law of the Church) can be solved by them alone and this even at this date. We have in mind questions about the relationship between religious associations and the bishops, questions about a certain decentralization of the Church into greater territorial units (not simply into small individual dioceses as such which today are after all no longer viable structures with regard to many ecclesiastical questions), a decentralization which in no way contradicts the fact that it is in many respects imperative for the Church in this age of world – unity that there should be an increased unity and responsibility of each part, each diocese, etc., with the Church as a whole. We refer also to questions of a greater openness towards the non-uniate oriental Churches and the Protestant Christians, questions of the possibility that ecclesiastical structures which desire to unite with the Catholic Church may be able to preserve the genuine tradition of their past in a kind of 'rite'. We are thinking of questions concerning a more courageous simplification of the Church's penal laws and of her other canonical forms. We envisage questions concerning the recognition of many things which have already been set in motion by the liturgical movement but which have not yet been completely carried through by the liturgical reforms of the last two Popes: questions such as those concerning the restoration of the diaconate in keeping with the times, questions of adapting the laws of the Eucharistic fast and of [265] fasting and abstinence in general to life as it is today (if indeed it is still thought possible to deal with this by universal legislation). Such and similar questions have presumably a much greater chance of being solved by this Council, partly because they are simpler, partly because they have no special, already present 'charismatic' presuppositions and partly because the understanding required for a definite solution can be presupposed to exist already in the whole Church.

No doubt one can suppose also that among such solutions which lie within the direct competence of the official function of the Church and which are possible solutions for that function even at the present stage, there will be or may be those which at first sight appear to be very harmless, self-evident and not very far-reaching solutions but which in reality can have an as yet incalculable effect on the future and on the outlook of men within the Church, an effect which perhaps cannot even be estimated by the very authors of any such decrees

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concerned with Church discipline, the liturgy, educational discipline or pastoral matters. What consequences, for instance, could the decrees about the oriental Churches have in the long run, decrees which will do justice to the wishes of the Uniates, if they are to be capable of serving at some future date as the model for other great sections of the Catholic Church in Africa, Asia, etc., sections which have a cultural character all their own and which in the long run it will no longer be possible to subsume under the Western-Occidental and Latin Church?

But even in this sphere one will have to guard against expectations which cannot but do injustice to the Council. Even the best and wisest decrees are no real substitute for the Spirit. Even a well-meaning decree about the reading of the Scriptures and the use of Scripture in the Liturgy, in theology and in Christian life cannot produce a love for the Scriptures or a 'biblical movement' such as still remains to be desired in the Church since it does not yet exist. With regard to the adaptation of religious communities to the present day and age (which may also include a more tangible opposition to the 'spirit of the world' than is usually the case at present) a Council cannot really express much more than a few wishes and recommendations and a few skeleton rules, without conveying directly either the spirit or the *concrete* ideal which will produce results. Who has not experienced at some time that some legislation about studies remains a dead letter which is carried out externally so that one can dispense oneself from the spirit of the law? Hence, we must not expect miracles from a Council even with regard [266] to Church discipline in the widest sense. The man of today who has learned to distinguish even an ideal law from reality can precisely on this account become unjust and bitter in the face of a legislating assembly. He immediately expects from it the ideal reality which it cannot provide, and he condemns the law or disparages it because, to begin with, he does not even always believe it unreservedly possible that the legislators take the ideal words of the law as seriously as they sound.

We have perhaps strayed too far from a theology of the Council in general into the practical details of the coming Council. Perhaps we have ventured rather too pessimistic or sober prognoses which, if at all, can be substantiated only very vaguely. The brief outlines just given are not intended in any way to state or even suggest that the coming Council has no great and realized tasks to perform. On the contrary. This Council has great tasks before it, tasks indeed which it can fulfil and which we are absolutely confident will be fulfilled. The purpose of our whole reflection has simply been to ask ourselves quite soberly and on the basis of a dogmatic consideration of the nature of a Council in general as to what can be expected from a Council and what it would be dogmatically unjustified and unjust to expect from a Council. Anyone who regards the task which thus remains for a Council as something unimportant cannot appeal to these reflections; he underestimates this realizable and real task of a Council, and will not find any support for his judgement here.

How many Councils there have been which apparently were not able to master their task. The disturbances caused by Arianism, which the first ecumenical Council was intended to overcome, really came into their own only after the Council was over. After the Council of Chalcedon, the monophysite heresy began to flourish all the more. Neither of the Union-Councils of Lyons and of Florence effected any real union. Neither Constance (nor Basle) nor the Fifth Lateran Council brought about the necessary reform of the Church in head and members which would have helped to prevent the Reformation before it became acute. Hence no Christian is bound to expect a heaven on earth from a Council. Even after the Council, the Church will still be the Church of sinners, of pilgrims and of those who must search laboriously, the Church which always obscures God's light again by the shadows cast by her children. All this is no reason for not having a Council or for expecting nothing or too little from it. Here [267] too God's power will become mighty in our weakness. Much may be decided which God will then change in his own way into grace and blessings for the Church and humanity. Man and the Church must do all that lies within their power. They must sow

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and plant in patience. It is wonderful that even in the Church and for the Church all increase comes nevertheless from the hands of God and that we can hope for this without any merit on our part.

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[268]

12

THE THEOLOGY OF THE RESTORATION OF THE DIACONATE

The following systematic exposition of the doctrine of the diaconate in the Church – its meaning, its justification and the reasons for advocating the restoration of the diaconate, including the manner in which this restoration might roughly be conceived – presupposes certain investigations on the diaconate from the point of view of biblical theology, history and the *magisterium*, and does not intend to repeat these here. It is nevertheless obvious (in the light of the essential methodology of Catholic theology) that systematic investigations in Catholic theology cannot be anything else but the systematization of what is known from historical revelation and therefore by means of the historical studies of theology and the doctrinal definitions of the Church's *magisterium*. Should the reader, therefore, ask for proofs in the course of our explanation – proofs which are not explicitly given here – then we would refer him tacitly but emphatically to the other chapters of this book.

I. CONCERNING THE LEGITIMACY OF THE QUESTION ABOUT THE RESTORATION OF THE DIACONATE

(a) The problem of the legitimacy of the question about the restoration of the diaconate refers to the question as to whether it is in any way justifiable and has any sense in practice to make the possibility of the restoration of the diaconate in the Latin Church the subject of an investigation which is not purely theoretical and has some practical significance. For one might be of the opinion that the prevailing practice in the Latin Church today, and what the Church does and avoids as a result of it, is itself already a compelling argument for the view that this practice is not merely one among many possibles but is also the best possible one, since it has been formed by the experience [269] of many centuries and since its untroubled acceptance over many centuries has been considered something self-evident by the Church. It might seem, therefore, that it is no longer possible right from the start to pose any serious practical question regarding some other, opposed practice. This is the reason why this first Section will attempt to give a systematic explanation on this point of the legitimacy of posing our question at all.

(b) Presuppositions for the answer of this first question.

(i) The diaconate is a part of that office or '*ordo*' which Christ gave to the Church when he founded her; the diaconate as an ordination, or transmission of an office, belongs to those rites for the transmission of office which Christ instituted in and for the Church by a proper *sacrament*, no matter how we may conceive this institution more exactly.[1] The sacramental nature of Orders in general, and also the sacramental nature of the Order of the diaconate in particular, can be presupposed here as proved from the positive sources and the doctrinal pronouncements made by the Church's *magisterium*. As far as the sacramental nature of the diaconate is concerned, the present thesis is at least '*sententia certa et communis*'.

(ii)The proposition concerning the sacramental nature of the diaconate refers to the ordination-rite for this office (together with its powers and duties), an office which has been called the diaconate and has existed and been exercised under this name from the very

[1] Cf. K. Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg 1960), pp. 85-95. (English translation: *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae IX [Edinburgh/London 1963].)

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beginning in the Church, i.e. from apostolic times right up to the present time. It is indeed true that the more exact conception of the office going under this name, with its duties and its rights, shows quite considerable differences in various periods and regions of the Church. Yet anyone desirous of affirming not merely verbally but in very truth that the diaconate is a sacrament given to the Church by Christ will have to concede that all those who possessed this office in apostolic times and this for longer periods and in wider regions of the Church were real deacons, in spite of and with the greater or lesser differences in the office actually exercised by them; he will have to concede furthermore that those who held office under the name of deacons received their powers by a real sacramental ordination. The quite considerable differences in their official duties do not pose any real difficulty even as far as [270] the unity and sacramental nature of this office and of its rite of transmission are concerned. For in spite of their differences, all these official duties coincide in the fact that, on the negative side, they do not include any rights pertaining to the real power of ruling in the Church and consequently also do not include the proper function of the priestly office which consists in the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice, while on the positive side they signify all those activities which assist the actual leaders of the Church in the fulfilment of their *own* office as such. In other words, the historically speaking very different functions of deacons are nevertheless of the one nature, viz. to help those who direct the Church, an assistance which does not usurp or replace the function of these leaders but supports its exercise by those who actually direct the Church herself. All assistance of this kind can basically be a factor in the office belonging to deacons and can, therefore, be rendered possible by that grace which is or can be given by the sacramental ordination of deacons. Even though in this way all such assistance falls both in the nature of things and as a matter of principle into the sphere of the diaconate, the Church can (as she actually did) lay special emphasis on one or other of these ways of assisting as the needs of the times may demand or take it out of the sphere of the powers of the diaconate given by the sacrament or leave it in that sphere – as it were – but keep it dormant (as she in fact did, for instance, in the case of certain powers of other grades of orders, such as a simple priest's power to confirm). All this leaves the nature of the diaconate intact, on the following three conditions:

There must remain the one function of assisting those who direct the Church in a task proper to these 'directors': a task which consequently belongs to the office-holders in the Church in contrast to the layman.

This office of assisting must basically and in itself be intended as a *permanent* task, since it would not be reasonable that a diaconate, whose sacramental nature and whose character cannot be lost, should of itself be given as a function conceived from the very start as something merely transitory.

This office of service and assistance must in fact be of fairly great importance since, according to the testimony of the history and practice of the Church in all ages, lesser degrees of such assistance have always been given in the Church, either permanently or in passing, by men who were neither called deacons in the strict sense of the word [271] nor were appointed and equipped for such an assisting function by sacramental ordination.

(iii) The diaconate *can* indeed be a 'step' by which someone ascends to the priesthood, at least in the *particular* sense that, as is proved especially by the teaching and practice of the Latin Church, the Church transmits a higher office to someone only after she has given him the lower office of the diaconate. This practice, however, is not essential but rather accidental to the diaconate; it is in principle based rather on the common human circumstance that the good exercise of a lower function often shows that the office-holder concerned is suitable for a higher function and thus can be called to this higher office. For the practice of the ancient Church proves that the diaconate was in no way merely regarded as a step on the way to the priesthood but rather that it was looked upon as a positively permanent office in the Church.

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This can also be seen from the very nature of things. If their characteristic function is properly understood, an office and a task which are necessary for a society and which are differentiated in this society from other offices are not just a step towards a higher office but can certainly be given to someone without thereby also transmitting to this office-bearer the capacity and the right of passing on to a higher office. Indeed, it may be that the nature of such an office is so different from that of another that the efficient exercise of the one does not yet prove to any appreciable extent that the holder is suitable for another higher office. It is in this light that we must interpret the proposition stating that the diaconate is the step by which one proceeds to the priesthood. If all this proposition is meant to state is that the Latin Church does not in fact ordain anyone to the priesthood unless she has first ordained him deacon, then this is a self-evident proposition. It would be an absolutely false proposition, however, if it is meant to imply that in the very nature of things the Church can ordain someone to the priesthood only after his ordination to the diaconate, as if the latter were a necessary presupposition for ordination to the priesthood (just as Confirmation presupposes Baptism), or that the diaconate is of its very essence the human testing of the moral and religious suitability of a candidate for the priesthood, or that someone can be suited for the diaconate only if he is also suited for and called to the priesthood. For the office of presbyter can be given validly even without previous ordination to the diaconate. This affirmation does not, of course, say anything against the present-day practice of the Church – a practice [272] established in law – of only ordaining deacons to the priesthood. The hitherto existing practice of leaving only a very short interval of time between ordination to the diaconate and ordination to the priesthood does not give the impression that the diaconate is a means for testing the suitability of a candidate for the priesthood. The official duties of a deacon, properly and fully understood, are so different from those of a priest that suitability for the diaconate does not of itself signify any suitability for the priesthood, and thus this also need not be demanded of the deacon as such. To this extent the diaconate does not have of its very nature the character of a step to the priesthood, except in the sense that (for reasons to be given later) the priesthood includes the powers of the diaconate '*eminenter*' and that, in fact, only those who are already deacons are ordained to the priesthood.

(c) The question about the restoration of the diaconate understood in this way (i.e. the question as to whether it is possible and advisable to restore the office and the transmission of the office of deacon in the Latin Church without the persons. so ordained being ordained from the outset precisely as candidates for a later ordination to the priesthood) is a legitimate question for the following reasons:

(i) First of all, it would be wrong to maintain that the Church's present-day practice and legislation concerning the diaconate conceived merely as a step to the priesthood are absolutely universal. For the practice and legislation of the Latin Church does not by itself constitute the practice of the universal Church. In the Uniate Oriental churches there has been tip to this day a diaconate which is more than merely a step to the priesthood. If one keeps this fact in mind and does full justice to it, then the practice of the Latin Church can at the most be taken as an argument for maintaining that at certain times in certain circumstances a diaconate considered merely as a step towards the priesthood was a possibility and perhaps also opportune. The Latin practice, however, proves neither that it is the only possible or lawful one, nor that it is and will remain the most opportune practice for all future ages and circumstances.

(ii)The fact that this practice endured for centuries likewise does not prove that it is to be advocated for the present age and for all future) ages. As we know from Church history, there have been many practices and customs in the Church which were fairly universal and of quite long duration without it being possible to conclude from this fact to their observance also in other and later ages and circumstances.

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[273] The practice of admitting the laity only rarely to the Eucharist, and only under conditions unnecessarily difficult to fulfil, existed for centuries. For centuries during the patristic age, there was a practice and precept in the Latin Church by which certain sinners were admitted only once to sacramental ecclesiastical penance. For centuries there was a practice of granting indulgences for gifts of money to pious purposes. For many centuries it was not necessary for the validity of a marriage that it should be contracted in the presence of a priest. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that the present-day practice concerning the diaconate has developed, without much thought and without any really explicit decisions, from historical conditions which no longer necessarily apply today. Basically, even within the present-day legislation of the Latin Church, a deacon need not be *ipso facto* debarred from the exercise of the powers and rights of his diaconate, if, after his ordination, he does not allow himself to be ordained to the priesthood; this fact is further proof that at best the present-day practice can be put forward only with extreme caution and many reservations when one is arguing about the best and most recommendable practice and legislation for the Church of today. Hence, even in practice it is really possible and legitimate to pose the question about the restoration of the diaconate in all seriousness.

2. REMARKS ABOUT THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL OFFICES IN THE CHURCH

(a) As has already been said, we presuppose that positive theology has proved with regard to the diaconate that the ordination to the diaconate is a sacrament in the sense of being part of the sacrament of Orders in the Church. This, however, does not as yet provide a sufficiently clear explanation of the relationship between the diaconate and the priesthood, a clarification which however is the necessary presupposition for any really adequate answer to many questions necessarily connected with the problem of the restoration of the diaconate. It is impossible, therefore, to avoid this question about the exact relationship between the priesthood and the diaconate completely, however much in this answer will remain uncertain and debatable for lack of magisterial pronouncements and on account of the obscurity of the history of the primitive Church.

(b) In view of the account of the election and constitution of the [274] Seven (even if we want to or must understand them as deacons), and in order to do full justice to the considerable differences in structure of the ‘churches’ in apostolic times, as well as for other reasons which cannot be explained here, it will be impossible to suppose that the tripartition of this office in the Church (i.e. the episcopal office, the sacerdotal office and the office of deacon) goes back directly to the explicit will of the historical Jesus before or after the Resurrection. This does not deny the *ius divinum* of these three kinds or steps of this office. We will be perfectly free to suppose that Jesus instituted this office in the Church and gave it to her even with regard to these three steps *in the sense* that he gave the apostolic college with St Peter at its head all those powers and faculties, duties and rights, which are either given necessarily (even without explicit declaration) together with the nature of the Church founded by him or which have also been explicitly declared to be such by him (e.g. with regard to the power of constituting certain sacraments); we will be quite free to suppose that with this institution of the Church as a perfect society, this office has also been given the right to transmit the power of office, to other later bearers of this office, in accordance with the practical needs of various places and times, either completely or merely to a certain limited degree.

The Apostles obviously already made use of this possibility in the primitive Church, at least in the commission they gave to the Seven (who clearly were not given all the powers

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and responsibilities of the Apostles themselves), in the commissioning of deacons who clearly did not possess all the powers proper to those who in this connection are called ε0πι/σκοποι, and in the commissioning of a supreme collegial or monarchic authority in the individual 'congregations' during the lifetime of the Apostles, which supreme authority was obviously not given the fullness of the powers of an Apostle in the proper sense. The variability of such partial transmissions of offices in the primitive Church surely shows that the Apostles were conscious of the fact that they were not bound by any fixed stipulations made by Jesus regarding this distribution of the one total office present in and given to the Church by Christ in accordance with her nature, at least not by any stipulations beyond the appointment of the apostolic college with Peter at its head and the continued existence of this college through the authoritative transmission of its permanent powers. The same thing will then apply also to the official transmission rite of such an office. Basically the transmission of an office in the Church is a sacrament [275] at least where it concerns that office in its innermost being as sanctifying rather than sovereign power, and it remains sacramental, even if only part of this one office in the Church is transmitted, as long as the Church does not have a contrary intention in transmitting such a part-office of lesser extent (always under the general presuppositions, of course, which must necessarily be present for the existence of a sacrament, presuppositions arising either out of its own nature or out of the presuppositions of the intention in sacramental distribution as laid down by the Church herself). It is easy to see from this that, to start with, the consecration of a bishop must be regarded absolutely as a sacrament (in spite of the medieval attack on this proposition), presupposing of course that it is not to be supposed that all the *potestates ordinis* are already given by ordination to the priesthood but in a 'tied up' form which is 'untied' in a liturgical manner only by the sacramental of an episcopal consecration. It also becomes clear from the above consideration that the transmission of that part of the Church's office which is certainly the office of the priest communicates such an important part of that office in the Church that even this partial transmission of an office preserves the fundamental character of the Church's transmission of office in general, viz. its sacramental nature. This explains also why Tradition has always credited the ordination of a deacon with a sacramental nature. It makes us realize that the medieval theory of the sacramental nature of the subdiaconate and of the Minor Orders is not necessarily false, and that conversely the currently almost common conception of these Orders can nevertheless be also correct, since it ultimately depends simply on the will of the Church whether or not she only associates a very modest part of her universal office, and the official rite of its transmission, with her will to administer a sacrament.

(c) What we have seen so far already enables us to make certain important statements with regard to the diaconate. In our apologetics concerning the restoration of the diaconate, we must first of all be careful (if what has just been said is true) not to proceed too simply and without sufficient qualifications from the fact that the diaconate as found in the Church is a sacrament. This thesis is indeed correct, in so far as the actually administered ordination to the diaconate is undoubtedly a sacrament. The diaconate is also certainly a sacrament willed by God *in so far as* the Church can give a separate transmission of the limited part of her office given in the diaconate and can transmit [276] this part also by a sacrament. It is probably not absolutely certain, however, that the Church *must* always adopt such a tripartition of this office for all times, and so could not simply abolish the diaconate, i.e. could not transmit these official functions in such a way that they would always be given to a determined subject only together with the priestly powers. It is of course quite conceivable (and we have no intention of denying it here) that the tripartition of this office which was made by the Apostles themselves during the apostolic age (even if it was not explicitly prescribed by Christ himself) nevertheless binds the later Church absolutely and that in this sense the diaconate is therefore *iuris divini* not only in content and possibility but also in its

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separate existence from the priesthood.[2] But since this cannot be maintained with absolute certainty, it is also impossible to state absolutely and categorically that the separate existence of the rights and duties of the diaconate in a separate office was laid down by Christ and thus binds the Church for always. It cannot be demanded categorically by this fact alone that the real diaconate should be restored, simply because the Latin Church is thought to be only fulfilling this obligation in appearances, as it were, by its particular form of diaconate as merely a fleeting step leading to the priesthood and not an office which endures and is really exercised in its own right. We will see later on that one can still appeal for the restoration of a really exercised and sacramentally administered diaconate even without using this over-simplified argument. Furthermore, we have already touched above on the fact that it is quite conceivable that at one time the official powers of the Minor Orders and of the subdiaconate used to be transmitted by a sacramental ordination, without it being necessary to hold for this reason alone that the constitution of these offices should still be a sacrament in the Church even today. It is impossible at least in principle clearly to exclude that possibility since there are also other similar cases which at least may be interpreted in this sense. For instance, the possibility of the Apostolic See giving a simple priest the faculty of confirming and perhaps even the faculty of ordaining priests can at least be interpreted in this way, without anything being essentially altered by the fact that in both cases it is presupposed at the very least that the subject invested extra-sacramentally with this new faculty must [277] be an ordained priest. For it could equally well be conceived in other cases that baptism (or Confirmation) are sufficient presuppositions for the possibility of a similar extra-sacramental transmission of the official powers of the Minor Orders and the subdiaconate, even though these can be given also by a sacramental rite; in short, it is quite conceivable that the manner of transmission depends to a certain extent on the will of the Church. We do in actual fact see that, particularly in the case of the diaconate, such a possibility must be taken into account. For it will hardly be possible to point to any function of the diaconate which the Church could not in any way bestow by an extra-sacramental authorization, and yet no one can dispute the fact that the ordination to the diaconate, by which such powers are actually conferred, is a sacrament. We must, therefore, basically recognize the fact that there can be offices in the Church which can indeed be conferred by a sacramental rite but which do not necessarily need to be conferred in this way, so that the exact manner of conferring them (whether it be sacramental or non-sacramental) depends on the will and the (implicit or explicit) intention of the Church. The recognition of this fact is not merely negatively significant for the question of the restoration of the diaconate by pointing out that one must not be *too* quick to conclude immediately from the possibility of a sacramental conferring of an office to an absolutely strict obligation on the Church to transmit the office concerned in a sacramental manner. Such an immediate inference is valid only for the totality of such transmissions of this office in the Church, in as much as one can certainly say with absolute certainty that the Church does not have the right to abolish altogether the sacramental transmission of an office, i.e. the sacrament of Orders. But this is surely all we can conclude from the above. There is, however, also a positive side to this recognition which gives us an argument for the restoration of the diaconate. For if the above recognition is correct, then the way is absolutely open to us to reckon with the possibility that the office of deacon can exist also in a form in which it is not conferred in a sacramental manner. It is, in other words, the duty of theologians to have a look around the Church to see whether this office does not already actually exist and is not already actually exercised there as an office distinct from the priesthood, without it being also conferred for this reason alone by a sacramental rite. This is

[2] Cf. on this difficult question, my Essay in the jubilee volume for Erik Wolf (Frankfurt 1962): 'Über das ius divinum in der Kirche' (p. 277 in this volume).

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a genuine possibility especially because, according to what has been said previously, it cannot be postulated *a priori* that such an, as it were, anonymous [278] deacon must already possess absolutely *all* those faculties which the Church grants at present to her already sacramentally ordained deacons (e.g. the right to administer solemn baptism and the right to distribute Holy Communion). For if, as we have said, the Church has the fundamental right to use her own discretion in giving someone a certain share in her universal office, then such a determinate participation can in certain circumstances still fulfil the nature of the diaconate even if certain particular powers are not included in this participation. It will soon become clear what exact significance these reflections have for our question concerning the restoration of the diaconate.

3. QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE OPPORTUNENESS OF THE RESTORATION OF THE DIACONATE

(a) A more exact definition of the question.

It will be useful to make the question of the opportuneness of the diaconate more precise, since it can be posed in different ways and since the precision given to this question here does not in any way that it can be posed meaningfully *only* in the way it is posed *here*. It would be quite possible, for instance, to pose this question also with regard to the restoration of an independent but exclusively celibate diaconate, or with regard to the restoration of a diaconate with a predominantly liturgical task, or with regard to the restoration of a diaconate which equally refers from the outset to the whole Church. It is not our intention, however, to pose this question in any of these ways, since the point at which this whole problem touches most closely on life today demands that we pose the precise question we are goings, to ask here. This will become still clearer in the course of our later reflections about the opportuneness of the restoration of the diaconate. We are speaking, therefore, about a diaconate which:

(i) is transmitted by the already familiar sacramental rite, i.e. the sacramental ordination to the diaconate, and

(ii) is not merely a step to the priesthood.

The question about the restoration of the diaconate is posed in this respect in a positive but not exclusive sense. This means: we do not maintain that a permanent diaconate distinct from the priesthood is *alone* to be recommended and *alone* makes any sense, and that consequently any form of diaconate intended as a step towards the priesthood should be rejected. We therefore exclude right away the question [279] as to whether or not the Church should also (even though not exclusively) keep to the present-day practice in her education and sacramental commissioning of her priests of the Latin rite. It is reasonable to expect that the Latin Church will continue even in the future to ordain only deacons to the priesthood, and that she will also continue to maintain the previous canonical norms and obligations of the diaconate in those cases where the diaconate is conceived and accepted right from the start as a step to the priesthood. The question about the restoration of the diaconate does not at all concern itself with this other question, since we presuppose here from the very start that, side by side with a permanent office of deacon which is not to be thought of as a passage to the priesthood, there can also be – and it is sensible and advisable that there should be – a sacramental diaconate which serves as a step to the priesthood. For in this way it will be impressed on the future priest that his office is not merely the office of the ‘elders’ or of the director of a congregation, but also the office of the deacon, since the higher office in the Church also includes at least the obligation to do all in one’s power to see to it that the office in the Church is given and exercised in all its fullness and in its fullest sense. Understood in

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this way, however, it includes also all those functions which are proper to the deacon. The point of the diaconate conceived as a stepping stone to the priesthood would also become clearer in such a case if the future priest were to exercise his diaconate for a longer period and in a really practical way, as a catechist, as a helper in the Caritas organization, etc., thus giving assistance to the ordinary care of souls and being really tested (at least to some extent) as to his suitability for the priesthood. But as stated, our question here concerns the restoration of a permanent diaconate which does not act as a step to the priesthood, and takes this question in a positive yet not in an exclusive sense.

(iii) We are going to pose our question primarily as a question about a diaconate without any obligation of celibacy. In this respect, too, our limited but practical problem is meant in a positive and not in an exclusive sense. This means that we do not dispute the fact that the question of a sacramental and permanent diaconate can itself be posed meaningfully even if such a deacon were to be given the obligation of celibacy. It is also obvious that, if there can be and indeed should be married deacons in the Church, this does not exclude the possibility of deacons who have a proper obligation to celibacy and who are ordained deacons on this presumption; this refers not only to [280] those deacons who receive the diaconate as a stage on the way to the priesthood but also to other cases. Why, for instance, should it not be just as possible for a member of a religious Order or of a secular institute to be ordained deacon, as it is for a married man: given, of course, that the usual presuppositions for the reception of sacramental ordination to a permanent diaconate are fulfilled? If we pose the question about the restoration of a diaconate without obligation to celibacy, this not only leaves these questions quite open (or better, given an affirmative answer to the question of the possibility of a married diaconate, these other questions will *eo ipso* and *a fortiori* be answered in the affirmative), but also leaves it an open question under what precise conditions and presuppositions the Church may wish to and should confer the sacramental diaconate on a married man. It would also be conceivable, for instance, that the Latin Church might adopt a similar practice in this respect to the custom already existing in the Eastern churches, with regard to the ordination of a secular priest in other words, it is quite conceivable that she might be prepared to confer the diaconate on someone already married, but permit marriage to someone who was ordained deacon while still unmarried only on condition of his returning to the lay state, thus ensuring (if for instance, a longer period is laid down between marriage and ordination to the diaconate) that only those will be admitted to the sacramental diaconate who have been sufficiently tried while still in the married state. All these questions are left open here. The basic question concerns married deacons, however, since this is the only real way today of giving a sufficiently real meaning to this whole question. For it cannot be expected that the number of deacons would increase sufficiently for the accomplishment of the present-day mission of the Church, if the question about the restoration of the diaconate is not posed and positively solved as a question about the possibility of married ordained deacons.

(iv) When we pose the question about the opportuneness of restoring the diaconate, this does not implicitly presuppose that this opportuneness must necessarily be equally great in all parts of the Church, and that if this question of opportuneness is answered in the affirmative in principle the diaconate must therefore be restored in an equally real manner in every part of the Church. Even if we do affirm in principle that it is opportune, it still remains absolutely possible that in certain parts of the Church, where the social and pastoral conditions [281] are simpler than elsewhere and where there is a sufficient number of priests, the old practice will continue. Such a difference in practice in the different parts of the Church is quite conceivable since such a difference actually already exists if one does not simply identify the Catholic Church with the Latin part of the Church, and since there follows from the basic considerations already given the conclusion that the segmentation of the one office in the

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Church may be determined in its concrete realization by those concrete circumstances of the Church which in fact are not the same in the individual parts of the Church. Even supposing that the basic question is answered in the affirmative, it can easily be seen that the details of such a restoration in individual parts of the Church will have to be worked out by Canon law, leaving it to the larger individual parts of the Church (such as, for instance, an ecclesiastical Province or a national episcopal conference of larger countries) to decide whether or not (and to what extent) such a permanent diaconate should be restored in their part of the Church.

(b) The basic starting point for a correct answer of the question.

If one wishes to pose this question correctly both in theory and in practice, and if one wishes to establish the presuppositions for a legitimate answer, then it must be borne in mind that as a matter of fact the office of deacon already exists in the Church. This is true even though in the Latin Church of the last few centuries this real and permanent office has not actually been conferred by a sacramental rite and perhaps does not contain all those powers which, according to current Canon law, belong to a sacramentally ordained deacon and which would really be desirable for the actual office of a deacon. If we are to pose this question correctly, we must always remember the distinction and right relationship between the office and the sacramental transmission of this office. These are not identical entities, nor are they – as we have seen above – absolutely inseparable entities, at least in the case of the diaconate. They are mutually related realities in the sense that the sacramental rite of the transmission of the office receives its ultimate justification from the office and not vice versa. As stated above, no matter how true it may be that in certain circumstances there may be an office in the Church which can be, but is not necessarily, transmitted sacramentally, the ultimate reason for the opportuneness of a sacramental transmission of office will always be the opportuneness of the office itself. For a rite for the transmission of an office – a rite which is a sacrament – is not intended to be anything else than the [282] sacramental conferring of the office itself and the sacramental distribution of the grace required for this office. Hence, of its very nature, the transmission of office finds its ultimate significance and reason for its opportuneness in the office itself. If, however, the question about the restoration of the sacramental ordination to the diaconate is to be posed legitimately and with any meaning at all, then it becomes necessary to consider the opportuneness of the office of the diaconate, since we must first of all clarify this question before there can be any real sense in posing the question about the opportuneness of a sacramental transmission of this office.

The question of the opportuneness of the office of the diaconate itself however, can be posed in two ways. Either we ask about the opportuneness of an office which does not exist, or we answer the question about the opportuneness of the office by showing explicitly that this office does already exist, and that it exists precisely because it is useful and necessary in the Church. After that we can then proceed from this fact to bring out more clearly the special significance of a, sacramental transmission of office. We can in fact adopt the second course. In other words, we proceed from the fact that the office of deacon actually exists to a sufficiently large extent in the Church or at least in many larger parts of the Church and thus shows itself to be meaningful, useful and indeed necessary. It is quite easy to substantiate this statement in the light of the basic description of the nature of the office of deacon just given above (and as seen also in its history). It is certainly true that in the Latin Church only sacramentally ordained deacons possess the powers of administering solemn baptism and of distributing Holy Communion in the ordinary course of events. But it would be arbitrary and objectively unjustified to conceive these two powers as the real nature of the diaconate: as if this nature were present only when these powers are present. These two powers do not have any essential superiority over any others, if only because no one can dispute the fact that the Church could, if she wished, confer these two powers even without the sacramental ordination. The remaining duties of proclaiming God’s word, of fulfilling important

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administrative functions as auxiliary organs of the bishop, of teaching Christian doctrine to the rising generation, duties of catechesis of adults, marriage instructions, even – in exceptional cases – of looking after a parish which is without a priest, duties of directing Christian organizations and clubs, etc., all these are certainly factors just as important in extent and depth [283] for the total office and commission of the Church as are the specifically liturgical functions which one may not indeed exclude from the basic elements of the office of deacon and yet must not raise either to the exaggerated position of the universal and most central essential element (even though the objective order and connection of the individual functions in the ideal nature of the diaconate may still remain completely open, and even though there can be no objection to the view that this ideal and full nature of the diaconate may in a certain respect be centred on the deacon's function at the altar).[3] The false emphasis laid on the liturgical functions of the deacon, which gives the impression that one can be a real deacon only by those functions and by them alone, probably stems from that strange and subconscious dread of a certain physical contact with the Eucharist, a dread which forgets that the ordinary Christian's contact with the Eucharist by his reception of it is no less in reality than the contact permitted to the deacon.

Keeping these considerations in mind, we need have no hesitation in making the following quite definite statements:

The office of the diaconate exists in the Church, and this even (if not almost exclusively in reality) outside the ranks of ordained deacons. For there are full-time, professional catechists, full-time and professional 'welfare-workers' (in the widest sense of the word), who have taken on the full-time job of fulfilling the Church's mission of charity, who give lifelong service to the hierarchy and who certainly think of the job for which they have been explicitly commissioned by the hierarchy as fulfilling an essential task for the Church. This is a task which belongs not only to the Church in general (so that it can be fulfilled from the outset and quite obviously even by lay people) but belongs quite [284] peculiarly and specially to the office-bearers of the Church, to the hierarchy as such, so that this charitable work really possesses the formal nature of a real diaconate. There is in the Church a full-time and professional administration which represents a real auxiliary function for the fulfilment of the task of the hierarchy as such. We can speak of an office of deacon at least where these functions are exercised, to a fuller extent, by an explicit commission received from the hierarchy, under the immediate direction of the hierarchy and as a direct assistance to the task of the hierarchy, as a permanent and enduring function – even in those cases where this office has not been transmitted by sacramental ordination. This is true especially because this assertion does not deny that the determination, limitation and exact organization of such offices could be undertaken in a more ideal fashion – in other words, that it would be quite consistent with the nature and meaning of such actually existing offices – if the Church, by her decrees, were to give them this or that further power which would clarify the significance and, for instance, the ultimate source of the already existing powers, i.e. their relationship to and ultimate connection with the altar. The starting point of our reflections on the opportuneness of the restoration of the diaconate is therefore to be found in the thesis that the

[3] Cf. my Essay 'Priesterliche Existenz' in: *Schriften zur Theologie* III (Einsiedeln 1960 4), pp. 285-312. This Essay works out the connection between the priesthood and the sacramental, liturgical function and shows also the function of the prophetic as a factor on which the existence of the priesthood is founded. This could be applied analogously to the connection and difference of the functions of the diaconate. No matter how much the liturgical function, properly and fully understood, may be the starting point and source for the whole nature of the diaconate, the charitable and kerygmatic task of the deacon too, in their unfolding of the total content of the Mystery of the Altar, are not merely secondary consequences of this essential basis but are themselves essential factors of the diaconate on which its existence is based. (*Theological Investigations* III [London/Baltimore 1966]).

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concrete office of deacon which is to be restored already exists in the Church, even though only anonymously and without any exact canonical delimitation. This gives rise to the following conclusions:

Firstly, all that remains now to be asked concerns the opportuneness of a *sacramental* determination of these already existing offices, and secondly, this question is to be posed only where these offices exist or should exist in view of the requirements of the pastoral situation in a particular part of the Church. If we pose our question in this way, then it will be clear from the outset that the desire for the restoration of the diaconate is concerned only with those parts of the Church where, by reason of pastoral needs, this office exists or ought to exist; this desire does not demand a diaconate simply for the sake of having ordinations to the diaconate. Hence we are not really concerned with introducing any new office, but only with the restoration of the sacramental conferring of an office which basically already exists though in an anonymous way.

The precision thus given to our question is obviously not meant to dispute the fact that, by restoring the sacramental transmission of this office, the office itself can be made clearer and more permanent, and [285] that the faithful can thereby be given an increased appreciation of this office and that the determination of the functions and powers of this office can thereby be widened. It is particularly important to stress this, since the reasons for the opportuneness of the sacramental conferring of the office can quite correctly be based on the needs discovered in pastoral theology (such as the lack of priests, the significance of this office, etc.) although these reasons do not directly prove the opportuneness and importance of the transmission of office but rather the opportuneness and importance of the office itself. Nevertheless, these pastoral reasons for the office, even where the office itself already exists, are also reasons for the opportuneness of the restoration of the sacramental transmission of the office, and this precisely because a sacramental transmission of office (as distinct from a non-sacramental transmission) can make the faithful more aware of the significance of the office itself, and can increase the attraction, propagation and appreciation of the office itself for and among the faithful.

(c) The reasons for the opportuneness of the thus understood restoration of the diaconate.

(i) As already said above, there are many reasons which can be put forward for the restoration of the diaconate even in the sense defined here, and even though they prove directly the opportuneness of the office and only indirectly the opportuneness of the sacramental conferring of the office. Everything has really been said already about these reasons in many different ways and at different places in this book. Hence, all we really need to do here is just to say a few words about these reasons: the lack of priests which forces us to transfer many of the functions previously exercised by priests to others who should nevertheless belong to the clergy; certain new needs of the care of souls growing out of the social and cultural situation which cannot be supplied by the priests alone, even with the assistance of the specific apostolate of the laity (Apostolate of Catholics) and of Catholic Action in the strict sense; the dignity of certain offices existing in the Church which are not specifically sacerdotal offices but should nevertheless be recognized and honoured by being given sacred Orders; the possibility of winning a considerable number of men through a sacramental diaconate for the specific tasks of the Church's hierarchical office, men who do not feel themselves called to a celibacy based on spiritual reasons, without it being necessary to abolish the obligation of celibacy for priests; the possibility of relieving priests of many of the [286] tasks of the hierarchical (and not properly lay) apostolate which do indeed belong to the hierarchy as such and hence both theoretically and in practice cannot simply be delegated to lay people, and yet are of such a nature as to distract priests from a specifically priestly spiritual life and from a specifically priestly care of souls. As has been said, we do not intend to develop these various reasons further here since this has already been done elsewhere and

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also since they are not the real, ultimate dogmatic proof for the opportuneness of the restoration of the sacramental diaconate.

(ii) The decisive reason consists in the fact that (I) the office already exists, (2) a sacramental transmission of this office is possible and (3) such a transmission, at least where the office exists, must be regarded basically and from the outset, if not as something necessary yet as something fitting and opportune. After what has already been said, the only point in this fundamental argument which really requires further explanation is the third one. God can certainly give the holder of an office the grace undoubtedly required for the carrying out of an existing office – a grace which in such a case is salvific not only for the office-bearer concerned but also for the Church herself – even if this office was not transmitted to the holder by a sacramental ordination. So much is self-evident, especially since according to the common opinion the highest office in the Church – the primacy of the Pope – does not require any new sacramental ordination and yet undoubtedly requires the highest and most comprehensive grace of office which in this case is not a sacramental grace even though it has sacramental roots, if you like, in the episcopal office of the Pope. Whenever there exists an office in the Church which is necessary or useful to the Church, such an office necessarily participates in its own way, and of course to a different extent and in different degrees of urgency, in the assistance by grace which God has promised to the Church for her continued existence and life. The assistance of grace must also take sufficient effect, by reason of the eschatologically indestructible character of the Church, even though this fact alone does not provide any absolute guarantee that this grace intended for the Church will become effective in a particular individual office-bearer. To this extent, the office in the Church – quite apart from whether or not it is conferred sacramentally – is itself already a tangible way in which God promises a grace of office even if this office is not conferred sacramentally; the office itself is an element (if we may put it this way) of that proto-sacrament which is the Church herself, in so [287] far as she herself is in her nature and existence the eschatologically final tangible form of God's salvific purpose for the world. Seen from this point of view, it is certainly true that we must not exaggerate the importance of a sacramental transmission of office (e.g. of the diaconate) for the holders of such an (explicit or anonymous) office of deacon. Seen in this light, it is also possible to find a certain justification for the Church's present practice in this matter which in the light of what has just been said need no longer be condemned as a totally regrettable and almost no longer explicable false development.

Yet it remains true to say that when the office and the divine assurance of the grace necessary for fulfilling the office can be given in a sacramental manner (and if this is meaningful and practicable) then they should be given in this way. This is certainly a governing principle of the Church's practical attitude in her sacramental practice in other respects. Theologians do not maintain, for instance, that Confirmation or Extreme Unction, Confession of devotion or frequent reception of the Eucharist, are based on any absolute divine obligation for such sacramental actions. This implies, therefore, that absolutely speaking, the graces which can be received by such a reception of the sacraments can be received also in a non-sacramental way, since neither the increase of sanctifying grace nor the specifically sacramental graces must be conceived as if they could be obtained only by receiving the sacraments, and yet can be not merely very beneficial for salvation but in certain circumstances may even be necessary for salvation. Yet the practice and teaching of the Church in such cases is directed towards encouraging such a reception of the sacraments as something most salutary. It would be contrary to the Church's outlook, for instance, to discourage so-called Confession of devotion on the basis that the graces given by it can be obtained just as well by some other means (such as prayer, examination of conscience, mortification, etc.). As far as is humanly possible and genuinely practicable, it is obvious that even those graces are to be given a sacramentally tangible form and presence in the life of the

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individual and of the Church which are not bound up with a sacrament either by the nature of the grace concerned or by a divine ordinance (as in the case of baptism by water and of sacramental confession in the case of mortal sins) which imposes a positive obligation to receive the sacrament. All this follows simply from the basic structure of the Christian order of grace. This order is the order of the Word of God *become man*, the order of the Church, and of the eschatologically [288] indissoluble union of the pneuma and the ecclesiological corporeality of the Spirit. The office and the grace of office belong together in the eschatological situation of the Church, in which the tangibility of the Church and of her possession of the Spirit in its totality can never be again torn apart; the grace of office, since it is the grace of God become man and the grace of the visible Church, always presses of its very nature towards some concrete tangible form and sign. Consequently it can be said just as fundamentally that whenever the sacramental communication of grace is within the bounds of human possibilities and of what can reasonably be done, then it should be permitted to take place; in these circumstances, such a sacramental communication of grace is basically to be recommended and is opportune, and such a statement of its opportuneness cannot then be countered with the objection that one could after all receive these graces even without the sacrament.[4] Even though this statement regarding the possibility of obtaining the grace concerned may be perfectly correct, it simply cannot be used as an argument against the sensibleness and opportuneness of a sacramental communication of this grace. Otherwise the *only* counter – argument against the arguments purporting to show that baptism by water is superfluous would be to appeal to an arbitrary, positive decree of God. We do not attribute any special force in this argumentation to the fact that the sacrament of the diaconate imparts an indelible sacramental character which cannot be received in any other way; after all, the significance and desirability of such a character *qua* '*sacramentum et res*' ultimately depends entirely on the significance and desirability both of the full power belonging to the office and of the grace of office, for which the character is a (positive but in our case not absolutely necessary) title.

Such an argumentation based on the nature of an office, of a grace of office and the possibility of the promise of such a grace by a sacrament, includes also the assertion that considerable existential effects will accrue from the facts and associations aimed at in this argumentation. This means that it is to be expected that someone who is given an office and God's promise of the grace of office in a sacramental manner will accept this office and grace of office in a much more radically existential manner, on account of the solemnity, uniqueness and indestructible [289] effects of such a sacramental transmission of office, than if he were given more or less the same office and grace in a different way. This is true especially because the grace of the sacrament is as such and of its very nature capable also of bringing about or deepening the personal acceptance of it in those who do not close themselves to it; in other words, given the necessary presuppositions, the sacramental grace itself extends and deepens the dispositions which are required for it.

In summary, it can be said quite simply that there exists in the Church a sacramental, grace – effecting rite of transmitting the office of the diaconate, at least as a possibility *iuris divini* in the Church; the office to which this sacramental rite of transmission is objectively adapted already exists in the Church to a sufficient extent and in a sufficient manner; there is a general law of the nature of the sacramental order of grace which states that a sacramental rite which is possible should also be really applied to the communication of grace signified by it, wherever and whenever this communication is demanded; an office existing in the Church (even though to some extent only anonymously) requires the help of God's grace for its

[4] Cf. on this my Essay 'Personal and sacramental piety', in: *Theological Investigations* II (London 1963), pp. 109-133, where what has been said here in thesis form is developed more in detail.

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exercise, for the salvation of its holder and for the benefit of the Church. It makes sense, therefore, to recommend that this existing office should also receive the grace necessary for it through the existing, sacramentally effective rite, and that the rite should not be employed simply for someone who either does not exercise this office or who (in so far as he does exercise it) receives the necessary grace for it from the Order of the priesthood or who, as the holder of this office, tries to gain the necessary grace for his office in an exclusively extra-sacramental way. Hence, if a certain sacrament is possible in the Church, and perhaps even necessary (in the common opinion) then basically speaking all objections against the opportuneness of its existence on the basis that it has to be realized by ever new ordinations must be rejected as false and deceptive from the very start. Whether we presuppose that the Church must or merely can, according to Christ's will, establish the diaconate as an office separate from the combined office in the Church alters nothing as far as the stringency of this consideration is concerned. For if the diaconate taken as a 'grade' of the combined office is a reality which must exist in the Church *iure divino*, then it is self-evident that the obligatory existence of this Order is not fulfilled merely by the diaconate as it exists in the Latin Church today, where it is not very far removed from being a legal fiction, since in this part of the Church there is an ordination [290] administered for an office which as such is almost never exercised in virtue of this ordination and which in this form has in any case no real significance in the Church. If the necessity and meaning of the sacramental transmission of an office must be justified by the office itself, then the office itself must have a significance in the Church which can really justify a sacramental rite; the diaconate which exists through the ordination actually administered in the Church today does not have this significance, and the actually existing and significant office of deacon in the Church lacks this ordination. Supposing, however, that the Church has the legal possibility but not the obligation *iuris divini* to give this sacramental ordination to the diaconate, then the right of not making use of this possibility can be explained and justified only if it can be proved that in present-day circumstances the Church can and does do without this separate office, and that she therefore is also quite right to omit the sacramental rite of the transmission of this office. But there is no possible proof for this. For the Church has actually got this (albeit un-ordained) office and this demonstrates its necessity. The real non-existence of the diaconate in the Latin Church also cannot be remedied by simply obliging the future priests to exercise their diaconate for a somewhat longer period and in a more concrete manner before their ordination to the priesthood by helping as catechists, for instance, or as assistants in the parishes (by a 'diaconate year' or 'holiday diaconate'). For even so the Order of the diaconate would still be regarded as a mere step to the priesthood – and this is objectively false. Even under these circumstances, those who are actually engaged professionally and full-time in genuinely fulfilling the real tasks of the diaconate would still be deprived of the sacramental communication of the necessary grace of office; in other words, they would be deprived of a sacrament which of its nature is intended for them and does not really signify the sacramental communication of grace for the period during which someone is being tested as to his suitability for the priesthood. The simultaneous existence of a currently existing office and of the sacrament giving the grace primarily destined for this office (and which at the most is only secondarily intended also as a step to the priesthood) provides a basic argument for the opportuneness of the restoration of the diaconate as a sacrament. Fundamentally, therefore, it is not a question of comparing and weighing reasons for and against opportuneness; rather, as a result of a more profound theological insight into the nature of the diaconate both as an office and as a sacrament and into [291] the historical conditions of the development which has led to an actual emptying-out of the sacrament of the diaconate, it is simply a question of squaring this with the basic fact that a possible and actually existing sacrament of ordination to an office must be given to those who have this office.

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(iii) In any case, there are no serious objections to the opportuneness of such a restoration. After all, any fears of serious unsuitability will not arise on the grounds of the sacramental rite of the transmission of office but will at most be due to the office thus transmitted and existing in certain persons. This is really obvious and needs no further proof. The office of deacon does, however, already actually exist in the Church (even though without ordination) and its existence and the growth of its scope and of the numbers of those exercising it shows that the inconvenience, the harm and danger which might give grounds for maintaining that the restoration of the diaconate is inopportune are not any greater in this case than is usual with any office administered by men. If such a good and useful office which has not caused any inconveniences through its holders hitherto comes now to be conferred by a sacramental rite of transmission of office, then this cannot bring about any hitherto unknown harm and dangers. One thing, of course, is true; a sacramental ordination to the diaconate makes the ordained office-bearer a member of the clergy, both from a dogmatic and a canonical point of view. But someone thus ordained is a cleric precisely to the extent of the function and power which he already possesses even now (prescinding from a few liturgical powers which do not make any essential difference here). Hence, if these powers and functions did not cause any inconvenience when invested in a non-cleric, why should it be otherwise when they are invested in a cleric?

The question as to whether the existence of *married* clerics would give rise to difficulties and dangers in the Church will be treated separately.

(iv) Our basic argumentation proceeded from the fact that the office of deacon already exists in the Church and that the ordination to this office should be given precisely to this already existing office (or one which should he created by reason of the necessity of the office itself) since this also already existing ordination rite exists for this very purpose. This argumentation does not mean, however, that the opportuneness of such a restoration can be proved *only* under the presuppositions laid down by us. Even someone who is not prepared to admit that [292] the office of a professional, lifelong catechist, or of a social welfare worker, etc., is basically already the office of a deacon, can still prove that the restoration of the diaconate is justifiable. For even he can appreciate that, if the significance of one of Christ's sacraments in the Church is properly evaluated, it will be seen quite clearly that it was not instituted nor does it exist simply as a (very unreal) prelude for those who will be ordained priests a few months later and who after that do not exercise this office as such any longer (an office for which they received a sacred Order) to any great extent and in any explicitly realized way. If one presupposes the existence of this sacrament in this way (as we have also done, of course, in our basic argument) then it also becomes clear that we can confine ourselves in all our considerations here regarding the restoration of the diaconate to the question of the male holders of such offices which we regard as belonging fundamentally to the diaconate. The question as to whether and why sacramental orders are reserved to the male sex – and this even in their lowest 'grades' and in spite of the existence of an institution of deaconesses in the early Church – does not need to occupy us here, since the only problem concerning us here is to determine to whom in the Church it makes any sense to give that sacrament which already exists at the present time and which as such is given to men only.

4. DIACONATE AND CELIBACY[5]

[5] It is not our intention here to treat of all the aspects of this question. This question is discussed more fully in A. Auer's contribution to the collective work *Diaconia in Christo*, edited by K. Rahner and H. Vorgrimler (Freiburg 1962), pp. 325-339.

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We have already stated above that the question about the restoration of the diaconate is really practical and significant only if it also at least includes the question of the restoration of a sacramental diaconate for married men. For many, the latter question contains the strongest emotional and practical difficulties against the desire for such a restoration. In order to get a clear idea of this question, it must first of all be pointed out once more that the question of celibacy or non-celibacy must riot be regarded in view of the sacramental ordination to the office, but in view of the office itself. Wherever celibacy is thought to be necessary or most desirable, the demand for celibacy must be deduced either from its intrinsic significance for the Church or from a consideration [293] of the office as such with which celibacy is to be associated. That celibacy has an intrinsic significance for the Church, is neither disputable nor does it require any further explanation and proof here. A celibacy which is immediately and of itself alone significant for the celibate and for the Church (as lived in the communities which practise the Evangelical Counsels) is from the very outset excluded from our discussion. In our present context it can only be a question of determining whether the office of the deacon, like the priestly office, has such an inner affinity with celibacy that, as in the case of the Latin priestly and episcopal office, the Church deems it advisable and feels it justifiable to demand celibacy also of the deacons (no matter how precisely this mutual affinity is to be interpreted: whether it be by the nature of celibacy itself or by pastoral consideration, or in view of the service of the altar, etc.). If one bears the distinction of office and of the rite of the transmission of office clearly in mind – and if one is quite clear in one's mind about the fact that in the very nature of things a rite of the transmission of office can 'demand' celibacy only if the office to be transmitted demands it – then it will be easy to answer the question with which we are now concerned. For the Church shows by her practice that she does not see any very close and necessary connection between the office of deacon and celibacy. For this office exists and is transmitted in the Church without celibacy being demanded. For, those men and office-bearers in the Church in whose case the desirability of a sacramental transmission of office is indicated here are *de facto* for the most part married men, and neither the official Church nor people in the Church have ever maintained or felt any incompatibility or inconvenience in the co-existence of this office and marriage in recent centuries or at the present time.

Thus, if properly posed, this question does not inquire whether, in contrast to previous practice, one should from now on stop imposing the obligation of celibacy on anyone who is to be ordained a deacon. For the candidate for ordination with whom we are concerned here is not someone who wants to become a priest and someone on whom – basically for this and no other reason – the Church already imposes the obligation of celibacy at the time of his ordination to the Sub-diaconate; he is a candidate to whom the Church is to give the sacramental ordination for an office which he already has as a married person, which has been transmitted to him and which he exercises as a married person. Hence, from an objective and not merely verbal point of view, there is [294] no question here of annulling any previous law existing in the Church today; for, the deacon who exercises his own particular office as a permanent job in the Church no longer exists, and has not existed for a long time now, in the Church (or at the most exists only '*per accidens*', viz. when someone, in accordance with can. 973 §2, advances no further than the diaconate oil his way to the priesthood, and yet is not laicized). The answer to the question as to the fundamental necessity of imposing the obligation of celibacy must be sought by asking whether these deacons, who exist in as far as the nature and the office of the diaconate are concerned even though they are not ordained deacons, should have the obligation of celibacy newly imposed on them, contrary to the previous practice of the Church who up till now has given what in fact is the office of the diaconate to married people. Once this question is put properly in this way, it immediately becomes evident that it must be answered in the negative. Marriage has a

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greater inner affinity with the office of deacon than has celibacy, since the deacon in his specific, official function is quite clearly the link between the clergy and the altar, on the one hand, and the world with its Christian task, on the other; up till now the Church has not demanded celibacy for this office, and such a demand also does not follow from ordination. Why should there then be a demand for it now, a demand which in practice would to a large extent prevent the new realization of the diaconate, since in this case most of those who are deacons in fact would, and would have to, give up any claim to the official ordination which is due to them, and the few among them who already live a celibate life for other reasons (especially in religious communities) would not be able to supply that additional number of real deacons which the present-day pastoral situation of the Church demands? It must always be borne in mind in this connection that in a true theology of marriage, marriage must really and truly not be regarded as a mere concession to human weakness (a conception attempted over and over again by an almost manichaean intellectual undercurrent in the Church) but must be seen to have an absolutely positive and essential function, not only in the private Christian life of certain individuals but also in the Church. Marriage, understood as a sacramentally consecrated union, is both in and for the Church the concrete and real representation and living example of the mystery of Christ's union with the Church. Hence, marriage fulfils an absolutely necessary function in the Church and for the Church herself. How, then, should marriage be less advisable for [295] the office of deacon? A deacon may see his marriage rather as an essential factor for his duties as a deacon, since a Christian marriage has precisely this function of testifying to the powerful influences of grace for the Church. Since, in the case of the ordained diaconate being retained also as a step to the office of the priesthood, the formation and task of the deacons going on to the priesthood and of those who remain deacons will be different and separate from the outset, and since both these different kinds of deacon and the faithful will be clearly conscious of this very difference, it cannot seriously be feared that we might arouse opposition to the celibacy of the diaconate as leading to the priesthood by appealing for married deacons. Nor need we be afraid that the position of these married deacons might be used to relax or attack priestly celibacy. If there were any danger of this happening, then the existence of married priests in the Eastern Uniate Churches should also be a danger to the celibacy of the priests in the Latin Church, or serious difficulties should arise from the co-existence of celibate bishops and married priests in the Eastern Churches. Furthermore, none of the faithful in the Latin Church have any difficulty in seeing that celibacy has a special affinity with the priesthood as such, and they certainly distinguish the duty and dignity of deacons so clearly from the duties and the dignity of the priest that they will neither get the feeling that if deacons married, then the priest should also be allowed to marry, nor that deacons should be celibate because the priest is celibate. Certain emotional restraints and difficulties (as, for instance, in the case of receiving Communion from a married deacon) have no real objective basis and will quickly disappear when people get used to things, just as certain emotional qualms about a reception of Communion not preceded by a longer period of eucharistic fast have disappeared.

That the Church's feelings too have always made a distinction in this question between the priest and the deacon is shown by the fact that the right to marry has been restored in many cases and with comparatively little difficulty to deacons who have been laicized, whereas the laicized priest is usually refused this permission. Although the permission to marry will certainly avoid considerable difficulties and burdens for the deacon, difficulties and burdens which would occur if celibacy were demanded of him, it need not be denied that marriage also presents certain difficulties and dangers for the exercise of a diaconate worthy of this office. Nevertheless, in view of the specific function of the deacon [296] which directs him to go out into the world, these difficulties and dangers are certainly considerably less than if celibacy were demanded. These difficulties and the danger of harmful results for the Church

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could be lessened even further if canon law were to offer a fairly wide and practicable possibility of laicization for deacons, to be given either at the request of the deacon himself or at the instigation of the bishop. As has already been emphasized, the recommendation of a diaconate together with marriage is naturally not meant to suggest that *only* married deacons should be bearers of an independent and permanent office. There is nothing to stop the Church from ordaining to the diaconate even those who either have already taken the obligation of religious celibacy upon themselves for some other reason (as, for instance, in religious communities) or who undertake this obligation in connection with their ordination to the diaconate and by an explicit declaration before the Church. It has also been stated already that one might consider the possibility of combining ordination to the diaconate with marriage only in the case of those who are already married and who have already proved themselves by their Christian married life and their previously exercised functions of the diaconate to be suitable candidates for the reception of this ordination. Only, in such a case, one ought not to drag out this testing period for too long; considering the professional character of the diaconate, this period could no doubt be fixed approximately in accordance with what is demanded in this respect from candidates for the priesthood. For even the ordination to the diaconate is not, after all, a reward for a diaconate already exercised for almost a whole lifetime, but is the communicating of grace for the exercise of an office which is still to be carried out.

5. OFFICE AND GRACE OF OFFICE

It will be useful to give a few further systematic reflections about the office and the grace attached to the office, both separately and in their relations to one another.

(a) It is clear from history and also from the declarations of the Church's *magisterium* and Canon law how widespread and intrinsically diversified the office of deacon is. It has also become clear from history that the conception of what actually is the very heart of the essence of the diaconate has been, and has remained to this day, comparatively fluctuating and contradictory. It is probably not to be expected that the [297] Church herself will make any real declarations in the coming Council about the question of a basic, unified essential structure of the office of deacon. This question will presumably always remain a disputed question among theologians. Nevertheless, it will surely be possible to base oneself on the fact that, judging by the declarations of current canon law, the liturgical function will not be lacking even in the essential picture of the future deacon, however much it must be left an open question to what extent in individual cases and details the regulations (which perhaps will not necessarily be uniform in all parts of the Church) will or will not draw on the future holders of a permanent diaconate for the carrying out of liturgical functions (e.g. for assisting at marriages, distributing Holy Communion, etc.). In the same way, one will have to hold it to be an indisputable fact that this future ordained diaconate will not be limited to these liturgical functions but will have wider and important tasks and powers in the Church and in her pastoral practice. Given these two presuppositions, there then arises the speculative question about the mutual relationships between these many different liturgical and extra-liturgical functions which are all part of the one diaconate.

To begin with, it is (naturally) obvious from the history of the diaconate, from the similar practice of the Church with regard to the priesthood and from the basic possibility (explained above) of dividing and accentuating the different parts of the collective office in the Church, that there can be different types or distinct forms of the one complete diaconate. This means in practice that, without prejudice to the unity and uniformity of the office of the diaconate, the focal point of the task of a deacon may at different times lie in different directions, and

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that on this account the candidates for such an ordained diaconate may also be able to approach this one office and calling in the Church from comparatively very different directions. In other words, even in any future practice and legislation of the Church, there will presumably be no deacons who would – in principle and permanently – want to exclude the liturgical commission and obligation, although it can be left an open question as to whether or not such an intention and legal determination on the part of the Church would nevertheless be in itself possible. This does not, however, exclude the possibility that the focal point of the life of such a deacon might be in the work of the Church's Caritas movement, or in the administrative sphere of the Church. And in principle there are many other conceivable functions [298] apart from those just mentioned, functions which determine the concrete form of the diaconate (without it being necessary or possible to enumerate them here) provided only that these functions are part of the Church's official functions as such, and that in the service and diaconia of the episcopal and sacerdotal office there is fulfilled the task belonging to the hierarchy as distinct from the laity in the Church. It will moreover be possible to say that one can quite properly centre all these different tasks on the Altar, if we may express the referred – to connection and inner unity of these many-sided tasks of the diaconate in this way. It will not be necessary to say that the liturgical function of the deacon is the real, proper function of his office, whereas all his other functions are just secondary, 'part-time' functions. Such a statement surely contradicts the early history of the diaconate; it would surely bring us back again to that conception which has led to reducing the scope of this office, the very thing we should be trying to overcome today; it would also be wrong for the very reason that these liturgical functions do not in practice and in the concrete presuppose ordination with any greater necessity than do the rest of the deacon's functions (or do so at most only *iure humano* in Canon law).

On the other hand, the equally necessary character of the kerygmatic, charitable and administrative functions of the deacon for the essence of the diaconate does not prevent us from regarding them as functions which basically are really already given together with his duties connected with the central mystery of the Church which is the Eucharist. For the Eucharist is not only the sacrifice of Christ offered to God and the sacrament of the individual encounter with Christ and of private satisfaction; rather it is the event in which the nature of the Church itself comes to be actually realized in the most intensive way, the event in which the Church becomes herself and comes to be present in her most profound actuality at a certain point in space and time.[6] Here in the anamnesis of the death of Christ is the effective pronouncement of the Word of God which at best can really only be interpreted when proclaimed and taught.[7] Here the unity of the Church is achieved in its most intensive way in the sacramental symbol and the love of Christ. Hence, if the deacon shares in a special way in the Eucharist understood [299] as the central self-realization of the Church, and if he does this as the helper of the episcopal or priestly representative of Christ Who is the Head of the Church, and as the representative of the people and as the interpreter of the sacred mystery for the people – and all this as a permanent function – then the deacon cannot in principle withdraw from those functions of the Church by which she gives an exposition, in her sacred teaching, of the anamnesis of the Redemption and by which her unity in faith, hope and charity, celebrated in the Eucharist, is spread by her – through the direction of the faithful and through Christian charity – over the whole of man's life. Seen in this light, it becomes understandable how these different basic functions of the deacon, however distinct they may appear at first, form a unity among themselves, and proceed from and return to the central

[6] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie der Pfarre', in: H. Rahner, *Die Pfarre*² (Freiburg 1960), pp. 27-39.
[7] A more detailed exposition of this will be found in my Essay 'Wort und Eucharistie', in: *Schriften zur Theologie* IV (Einsiedeln 1960), pp. 315-355.

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mystery of the Eucharist. Thus also makes it understandable that the old controversy about whether the diaconate is a more spiritual or a more profane office in the Church is really due to a misunderstanding. The proclamation of the word and the realization of love which are sacramentally present in the Eucharist are not profane realities in life, but are a self-realization and an actualization of the holy Church, in so far as she is holy in the actual reality of life in which man's salvation must be effected.

(b) It is not easy to delimit the task of the deacon from the tasks and possibilities a layman possesses in the Church by his lay apostolate and his participation in Catholic Action.[8] This is difficult even from a purely extrinsic point of view, since it is really impossible – from a purely material point of view – to mention any function of the deacon which even an 'unordained' layman could not fulfil, provided merely that he has been given the necessary authorization by the Church. This is true even of the deacon's liturgical functions. Yet this fact is not really surprising and does not represent any real problem peculiar to the diaconate as such; it is a question already raised by the Church's official functions as a whole. One can, of course, say that there are certain individual powers and tasks belonging *iure divino* only to ordained office bearers (the power of consecrating in the celebration of the Eucharist, the power to ordain priests, the power to administer Confirmation and the Anointing of the Sick, the giving of priestly absolution). [300] It would be completely wrong, however, to try to say in principle that these tasks and powers alone characterize the Church's office and that everything else (prescinding perhaps from strictly jurisdictional acts) is *eo ipso* a merely lay task and power. Rather, the hierarchical office includes the power of proclaiming the gospel and also the exercise of Christian *Caritas* in a way specific to this office as such, even though – on a superficial viewing – the material realization of such hierarchical tasks may not appear to be very much different from the words and deeds of a layman witnessing to Christ's gospel and love. Even though this formal distinction may not be immediately clear, it nevertheless exists. The layman's task as such, for instance, will be to bear witness to the truth and love of Christ by his words and deeds only in *that* situation of his life which is proper to him by reason of his human natural existence. The holder of hierarchic powers and tasks, on the other hand, will have to bear witness to and proclaim the gospel even outside his proper 'place' determined by his human and natural existence. He will in a real sense, be an 'ambassador', an 'α)πο&στολαφ', who by his divine mission is sent out of his own personal situation in order to carry the gospel 'in season and out of season' into strange places (which is just as possible and necessary in the 'home missions' as it is in the 'foreign missions'). Similarly, the attestation of the *Caritas Christi* will be a task of the Church's official function in the measure, urgency and concrete manner by which this *caritas* appears as the direct act of the 'visible Church' as such and no longer merely as the fulfilment of the general Christian duty of Christian love of neighbour. We do not claim that by these few allusions we have made a sufficiently clear and exhaustive distinction between the characteristics of these tasks of the official element of the Church and those of the laity in the Church which may – materially speaking – appear to be almost identical. But this difference does exist, because there is a difference *iure divino* between the hierarchy and the people of the Church (in spite of the universal priesthood of all believers) and because this difference cannot be confined to the few powers of the *potestas ordinis* which we have actually mentioned or to the *potestas iurisdictionis* in the strictest sense.

If this difference exists then this means, however, that all the tasks and powers of a deacon are characterized by the general characteristics of the tasks and powers of the Church's hierarchical office as distinct from the tasks and powers of lay people. That this fact is not

[8] This question is taken up once more in P. Winninger's chapter, with special reference to the situation in France and the very active Catholic Action in that country: Diaconia in Christo (Freiburg 1962), pp. 380-388.

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very evident [301] in the practical administration and consciousness of the Church today, is due to the fact that nowadays certain tasks and powers are fulfilled by lay people as a lifelong profession (and not merely as a spare-time job and by reason of a passing, accidental need), tasks and powers which basically belong to the hierarchy as such and as a whole and which in the past, if they had been performed professionally and permanently, would have stamped those performing them as members of the clergy, so that the Church would also have confirmed this membership by ordination. Hence, the circumstance that – to the superficial observer – most of what this future 'absolute' deacon will be doing, could also be done by laymen, does not, on closer analysis of this activity, speak for its truly lay character, but rather for the demand that such an office-bearer ought to be given that ecclesiastical and, in certain circumstances, sacramental ordination which exists or existed in the Church precisely for these offices. The fact that the boundary between a lay task and a hierarchical one is somewhat vague (in the 'downward' direction) is due to the nature of things and merely proves the inner unity of the official element and the people in the Church relative to the task of the Church which after all is one and the same in its concern for the Kingdom of God. Empirically speaking and in practice it can always be said, however, that whenever someone performs a task permanently and professionally, and whenever this is a task which the higher office (i.e. the bishop and the priests) recognizes and exercises as an intrinsic element of its own task or as an indispensable, direct and in itself significant auxiliary function of that task, this person is in principle performing a clerical office.[9]

On this basis, it is absolutely feasible to draw a basic distinction between the office of the deacon and the task of the lay apostle, and to prove the demand for the restoration of the ordination to the diaconate.

(c) In this connection, we must also say a word about the relationship of the diaconate to the priesthood and consequently of the deacon to the priest. Here too there are certain obscurities in the traditional conception. It sometimes looks as if the diaconate and the simple priesthood are two co-existing extensions of the one episcopal office (even though they are not simply of the same rank and of equal dignity), so that the deacon cannot really appear as an auxiliary to the [302] simple priest; at other times – and this is probably the clearer and more widespread view – there appears the conception that the deacon is simply the helper of the priest, and this in such a way that even the simple priesthood possesses *eminenter* all the rights and powers of the diaconate and the diaconate can only be regarded as an extension and auxiliary organ of the simple priesthood. If our reflections in No. 2 above were correct, then the question as to which of these two conceptions is in fact the right one (which is sometimes more than a purely theoretical question) can really be decided only by an actual decision of the Church, in the knowledge that the Church could in certain circumstances have decided differently. For if the Church can, under the necessary presuppositions, divide her collective office according to the concrete pastoral needs in the Church at any particular time, then she can in principle do this by separating two co-existing offices from her collective office, so that then neither of these offices would possess the powers of the other, or she can separate a higher and a lower office in such a way that the higher would include the powers of the lower. It is sometimes not so easy to tell which of these two possibilities has in fact been realized in the consciousness and intention of the Church. We have already pointed out, for instance, that one may possibly suppose that even the simple priesthood may of itself include the powers of confirming and of ordaining priests in its *potestas ordinis* (although these will in most cases be present only in a 'dormant' state), powers which are certainly contained in the episcopal office. One should also consider the question as to whether a

[9] Cf. for this my Essays on the subject of the layman in the Church, indicated by the Chapter 'Laie und Ordensleben', in: Sendung und Gnade (Innsbruck 1961³), pp. 364-396.

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deacon, who is consecrated a bishop '*per saltum*' without previous ordination to the priesthood, also receives the priestly powers solely by this episcopal consecration. On the basis of these and similar reflections it should be possible to draw the conclusion that many, if not all, things regarding the constitution of the scope of an office depend on the actual will of the Church. Hence, given that certain powers are different of their very nature, they may indeed be conferred separately, but they need not be. Consequently, the answer to the real question about the relationship of the diaconate to the priesthood cannot be simply deduced from the abstract nature of these two realities but only from the question as to which powers the Church in fact wishes to confer by this or that ordination and which not. If, however, the question is posed in this way, then it will be impossible to doubt that in her ordination to the priesthood the Church does not presuppose the ordained to possess the [303] powers of the diaconate in such a way that, if he did not already possess them on account of his ordination to the diaconate then he would not receive them by this ordination to the priesthood. This follows, as has been said, not only because it is not easy to see from what has just been shown under (a), why a priest should not already be commissioned and obliged to the self-realization of the Church in teaching and in charity by his duties at the altar, since these tasks seem to result of themselves from the full nature of the Eucharistic celebration, but it follows also from the Church's own free intention which, in the case of an ordination to the priesthood *per saltum*, has never yet maintained that such a priest is incapable of exercising the powers of the diaconate. Even so, such a consideration may not be absolutely compelling on the purely speculative level, for one cannot assert that the powers of the diaconate can be conferred only by a sacramental ordination; yet, when looked at in the whole setting of real life, the above fact nevertheless shows the intention of the Church outlined above, since the Church has never appealed to her right to transmit the diaconate extra-sacramentally when it was a question of the possibility of a priest's exercise of the functions of the diaconate without actual ordination to the diaconate; instead, the Church has always explained her conception and intention regarding this fact by maintaining that the priest can do *eminenter* what the deacon is capable of doing. Hence, it will have to be said that by the priestly ordination actually dispensed by her, the Church intends to constitute a priest who is always also, at least *eminenter*, a deacon, whether or not he has been specially ordained deacon beforehand.

This, however, does not yet provide a clear explanation of the relationship between priest and deacon which is in question here. All that it tells us is that every priest is also a deacon, but this does not as yet really tell us anything clearly about the intrinsic relationship between the specific powers of the deacon and the specifically priestly powers. We also cannot simply presume with regard to this question that the different functions and powers of the diaconate must all have the same relationship to the specific nature of the priesthood. It may be true, for example, that the priest *qua* priest, and hence *qua* mystagogue of the celebration of the mysteries of the Church, has a more essential and a closer relationship to the task of teaching than to the charitable task. This would be true particularly if it were conceivable in the nature of things that the Church either confers priestly powers on a priest without thereby obliging him to a different form of *caritas* than that to [304] which any Christian is obliged, or entrusts a deacon with the performance of charitable works which as such are an obligation of the hierarchical Church; in other words, even when such a separation is not undertaken, the emphasis within a commission which in itself embraces several powers, may nevertheless be very different. Consequently, and in spite of what has been said up till now, it is not absolutely impossible that a deacon may, for instance, be the organ of the collective episcopal power with regard to the charitable works of the Church with an emphasis and explicitness which are not present in the actual office of an individual priest in the service of the bishop. For the rest, it will in practice depend on the actual will of the bishop whether he associates a

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deacon and his task more directly with himself or whether he wishes to see the task of the deacon as a direct help for the simple priest (the parish priest). The fact that the ordaining Church recognizes that the powers of the deacon are also contained in the priesthood as such and intends to confer them by the priesthood does not in practice exclude the possibility of associating the deacon directly to the bishop as his helper.

(d) There is not much to be said here about the grace of office of the diaconate. The powers given by an office and the grace attached to an office for the exercise of the office – an exercise which sanctifies the office-bearer himself – are certainly realities distinct from each other yet mutually related to one another. The ordination itself naturally cannot directly – by the very act of ordination – give the grace of office demanded by a lifelong exercise of this office. The ordination must be understood rather as the divine (sacramentally tangible) promise of the help of grace which, by reason of this promise, God is ready to give in the course of the life of the office-bearer, and which he will give to the extent in which the office-bearer opens his soul more and more to this grace by trying to do justice to his office with the help of divine grace. As regards the grace of office itself, everything to be said about the effect of divine grace in general applies also to this grace in particular. Furthermore, whatever applies to all the sacraments which have in any way a constituting character (i.e. Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders and Matrimony) applies also in this case: it is possible to allow for their graces to revive, and it is possible to deepen these graces.

[305]

6. FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME DIACONATE

Any discussion of the restoration of the diaconate will have to consider also the question as to whether these deacons (especially the married ones) would be meant to practise their diaconate as a full-time occupation – in other words, as priests and bishops do in normal circumstances – or whether this ordained diaconate should be a kind of part-time job for men who for the rest of the time follow a normal secular occupation and, as it were, conceive their diaconate as an intensified activity of the lay apostolate or of Catholic Action which has been given a special character by ordination. If we are to expect any kind of clear answer to this question which undoubtedly is also of practical importance, then we must first of all distinguish our concepts. For, as far as the concept of ‘vocation’ is concerned, we must distinguish between a vocation in a metaphysical and theological sense and a vocation in the ordinary economic sense. St Paul, for instance, was a tentmaker in the ordinary economic sense, i.e. he was forced to devote a great deal of his time to this trade in order to give himself an economic basis for existence. By his inner attitude, however, he was an apostle and nothing else, i.e. his apostolic vocation and task was the only real, personal motive force of his whole life; it formed his life, it was the only guiding line of his actions, everything else was subordinated to it, and even his economic vocation, by which he earned his bread, served this other vocation and nothing else, no matter how time-consuming it may have been. His apostolate, if we may put it this way, was not a spare-time job, it was not merely a hobby or just an additional though extremely ideal occupation transforming his life, but the real existential, formative principle of his life, even though it may of necessity have taken up less of his time sometimes than his trade of tent making. A religious task and purpose does not *eo ipso* become the life-giving formative principle of a vocation in the metaphysico-theological sense, simply because it is objectively on a higher level than what constitutes a secular, economic vocation. Someone who, for example, is a research chemist by the whole inner inclination of his personality, can nevertheless be an extremely zealous worker in Catholic Action as a lay apostle; he can in certain cases play an important role in a parish; he may indeed recognize and acknowledge the purely – objectively higher value of his religious

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purpose as compared with the ideals of his vocation as a chemist; nevertheless, he will be a chemist by profession even in a [306] metaphysico-theological sense, and not an apostle. For, in spite of everything and having regard to the whole of his personal life, his job as a chemist is the essential law of his life (understanding, of course, that this does not refer to the general formative principles valid for every human being and every Christian, but to his professionally specifying formative principles). Conversely, a member of a secular institute, for instance, if he understands his life according to the Evangelical Counsels properly, will have to interpret his secular occupation as a means of realizing those specifically religious and apostolic purposes which are proper to such a secular institute; in a metaphysico-theological sense, such a member (even if he is a research worker) will, therefore, have a spiritual and not a worldly vocation, even when – in a secular, sociological sense – he does a secular job. Of course, it also follows from what has been said, that the transition from one of these notions to the other will be quite vague in the hard realities of life. It is clear that in the individual concrete case, it will perhaps be difficult to determine the boundary. Indeed, in the history of a particular life, a part-time occupation may become a real vocation in the theological and existential sense, and what was previously a vocation in the metaphysico-theological sense may deteriorate to being a job in a merely economic or perhaps secular sense, i.e. to being a 'job by which one gains one's living'.

If one makes this fundamental distinction, then one will presumably be able to say: only where the diaconate is a vocation in the theological and existential sense in the life of a certain person should the Church ordain that person by the sacrament of the diaconate; where, on the other hand, in spite of the inner understanding and serious idealism with which they are exercised, the functions of the diaconate are merely something like an idealistic spare-time occupation which does not really constitute the inner structural principle of a person's life, such a person performing the activities of the diaconate should not be ordained deacon by the Church. This principle surely follows from the fact that an ordination, especially by the character given by it, is meant to stamp a person permanently and completely and should claim the whole person, with all his internal and external powers, for such a permanent commission and authorization of service in the Church. If this principle were to be basically disputed, then it would also be no longer possible to explain why the Church does not normally want the priest to be burdened with some other civil job but wants him to live [307] by the altar. In view of this fact, the ordained deacon must fundamentally be someone who normally receives his livelihood from the Church in basically the same way and with basically the same 'titles' as Canon law envisages for the priest. Of course this does not tell us anything about the extent to which this normal case will be realized at a particular time and in a particular country. It does not determine whether the exceptional cases (as was already true at the time of St Paul) will not sometimes become the 'normal' practice, i.e. whether ordained deacons, as well as priests, must not in certain conditions work for their living by a bread-winning job. Yet even in this case they would be, and would have to be, men whose personal life is completely formed by their vocation as deacons, their vocation in the theological sense. In other words, ordination to the diaconate cannot be given as a kind of reward or decoration for a zealous apostolate. This again does not mean, however, that it is inconceivable that in certain economic and social conditions, where those who are anxious to do creative work can and do leave their bread-earning jobs in good time, there will be a noticeable increase in the number of those who regard and choose the diaconate as a genuine vocation in the theological sense. The mere fact of more advanced age is no real obstacle to this.

7. REMARKS ABOUT CERTAIN PRACTICAL NORMS FOR THE RESTORATION OF

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We intend merely to indicate these norms here in so far as they more or less represent self-evident conclusions from our previous fundamental reflections; in this way we should be in a position to show to some extent that even in practice such a restoration of the diaconate is not really as revolutionary a measure as might be thought at first. It must be understood, of course, that such norms can have legal validity only if they are laid down by the ecclesiastical authorities.

(a) The canonical and liturgical laws regarding those deacons who accept their office and ordination with the declared intention of becoming priests can quite easily remain as they have been up till now. It is not the task of these reflections to examine whether a practical, longer interval between the time of ordination to the diaconate and ordination to the priesthood would be advisable and practicable for the training and testing of candidates for the priesthood. Since in the Latin Church the candidate for the priestly office makes a sworn declaration [308] before reception of the subdiaconate, to the effect that he knows the obligation of celibacy and wishes to take it freely upon himself, there can be no doubt about which of the two classes of deacon someone belongs to, especially since the candidates for the priesthood who become deacons receive a religious and theological training which is completely different in content, place, etc., from the training of the 'absolute' deacons (to coin a phrase). If one leaves the diaconate as a step in Orders towards the priesthood, then nothing at all needs to be changed in the canonical legislation for the priesthood, and the candidate for the priesthood is made to realize with sacramental clearness that his office, too, since it includes the diaconate, is a service and not a lording it over others. It becomes clear to him in this way also that he must regard the 'absolute' deacons as his true brothers in the spirit, appointed for the same unique task of the Church as his.

(b) All our previous reflections started from and were directed to the fact that the sacramental transmission of the office of the diaconate should be used whenever this office already exists more or less explicitly (even though perhaps not in all its functions and powers) and that we should not create more or less artificial offices which are not demanded by the needs of the care of souls but are created simply in order to be able to confer an ordination to the diaconate. It cannot be doubted, however, that the offices presupposed for the restoration of the ordination of deacons do not exist to the same extent, with equal significance and in equal numbers in different parts of the Church. And furthermore where they do not exist, they are presumably non-existent partly because they are not really required (since there are, for instance, sufficient priests who can easily and without special difficulty fulfil the tasks of the diaconate together with their own); on the other hand, these offices may indeed be absent partly also on account of a certain atrophy in the Church's pastoral care which really requires these offices but simply has not yet developed them to a sufficient extent. Such a situation certainly makes it desirable that the centralized, universal ecclesiastical legislation concerning the restoration of the diaconate should be merely a skeleton legislation making it possible to administer such ordinations where the actual existence of these offices would make such a procedure reasonable and desirable. Such a legislation should advise and facilitate the establishment of such offices where the situation of the care of souls demands it and where the possibility of an ordination to an office would make it easier to give these offices [309] to suitable candidates. It should be legislation, finally, which does not make the restoration of the diaconate an obligation for regions where the situation does not warrant it and where this restoration would have no real meaning if it were carried through. A merely skeleton legislation, which would leave room for a genuine differentiation in the Church in accordance with the religious, pastoral, cultural and historical situation, would reasonably and homogeneously fit into that general tendency in the Church

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(in accordance with the principle of subsidiary functions valid also for the Church) which desires to introduce a certain decentralization in the Church wherever the objectively existing or desirable difference of the individual parts of the Church obviously calls for such decentralization. The most suitable subjects for such differentiated and independent practices with regard to the ordination and utilization of deacons presumably would not be so much individual dioceses but rather certain wider ecclesiastical configurations, such as an Ecclesiastical Province or the totality of dioceses in a country, so that a Metropolitan or a National Conference of bishops would be the proper legislator (with the approval of the Apostolic See) for such particular regulations.

(c) Such a skeleton legislation issued by Rome could give the holders of particular rights in the Church (perhaps with certain conditions to be worked out in more detail) the right to ordain men to the diaconate without obligation to celibacy, provided they have proved themselves by a Christian life put to the test and by a 'professional' exercise (cf. No. 6) of an important part of those tasks which, according to the Church's tradition, constitute the office of deacon (i.e. liturgical, teaching, charitable, administrative functions, in which connection it should be noted that such a candidate of an ordained diaconate need not have exercised all these functions in actual fact, but may have specialized in one of them as his main task). Before ordaining anyone, the bishop must be convinced that the candidate for ordination to the diaconate has the desire and firm purpose to exercise this office for life, as a member of the clergy but without a desire to become a priest, and that he has the necessary physical, mental and religious qualifications for this. If the candidate is already married, then the bishop must of course also take his Christian conduct of marriage into consideration when judging his suitability. It will probably also have to be part of this skeleton legislation to decide whether the ordination of an 'absolute' deacon should be administered to someone already married (if he has [310] not accepted the obligation of celibacy by ordination or by membership of a religious institute) or whether ordination to the diaconate can be given even to a suitable candidate who is still unmarried but does not wish to renounce the right to marry. Perhaps the question is not so urgent in practice because it can be expected in general that a candidate for ordination to the diaconate who has already been tested for a longer period (which is necessary) and who is likely to think about getting married, will be already married by the time the longer trial period of his training and testing in the exercise of his vocation is over, a period which must be demanded in any case. Certainly, it has been said else – where that this trial period should also not be stretched out *too* long, if we are not to contradict the whole meaning of such an ordination. No matter what may be the exact details of this skeleton legislation, a certain elasticity in its application to territorial and personal circumstances will be advisable, in the same way as it has already been done in the case of the legislation regarding the priesthood (dispensation from the statutory age for ordination, etc.). This skeleton legislation will have to incorporate also some general rules about the possibility and manner of laicization of such ordained deacons. It will be advisable, for various practical reasons, not to make withdrawal from *this* clerical station too difficult, whether the first move be made by the deacon himself or by the bishop (both of which must be open possibilities). This outline – legislation must naturally also occupy itself with the celibate 'absolute' deacon, since he too is a possibility. With regard to the obligation to celibacy in this case, the legislation will either have to state what is already (or perhaps will be) the canonical rule with regard to the celibacy of deacons going on to the priesthood, or what is right where there is some other reason for the celibacy of such a deacon, viz. on the grounds of his obligation as a member of a religious society or secular institute. To this extent it will be quite easy to lay down rules for the celibacy of such a deacon.

(d) The deacon thus ordained will surely also have the right, at least basically, to exercise those liturgical functions which belong to him according to can. 741, 845 §2, 1147 §4, 1342

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§1, of the CIC, and will have this explicit and unreserved right even if he is married. It must be left to the Church's legislative activity and presumably to her universal legislation to decide whether these liturgical powers should be extended still further and should be made more precise by a universal ecclesiastical legislation (whether they should be extended, for instance, to the [311] right of assisting at marriages, to wider powers for blessings for all things permitted to the priest, to the power of giving Benediction). The diaconate will, however, gain in significance, in estimation and pastoral usefulness, if the legislation is magnanimous and broad-minded in this respect. After all, even this skeleton legislation can make provision for the individual Ordinary to promulgate more exact regulations regarding the use of these liturgical powers, even though in certain cases this may mean limiting these powers to some extent in practice. It is taken for granted that in these liturgical functions the deacons will be bound by the liturgical laws (e.g. with regard to liturgical dress) just as the rest of the clergy.

(e) An elastic, general legislation of universal canon law will probably not be able to go further in its decrees about the exercise of the office, about dress and about the married deacons' way of life, than stating that they must in all these respects follow the directions of their Ordinary. But with regard to these directions to be given by the Ordinary, we will once more have to remind ourselves of the fundamental principle that it is the *office* and not the ordination to the office which must be the basic norm for all these directives. Hence, the manner of life which up till now has been recognized and encouraged by the Church authorities as corresponding to the office must also correspond to this office even after ordination. This applies also, for instance, to the question of lay dress of such an office-holder according to the customs of the particular country. These ordinances must therefore not be an external and mechanical transference of the laws applicable to the conduct of the bearers of higher Orders.

(f) The canonical obedience towards his bishop, to which the ordained deacon is obliged as a member of the clergy, embraces:

(i) The obligation to exercise his office as perfectly as possible on the lines laid down by the bishop, i.e. that office which the person concerned exercised in the service of the Church even before his ordination to the diaconate and which was meant to be sanctified and perfected by this ordination. This canonical obedience at least need not contain the obligation to exercise a totally different kind of diaconate from the one for which the person concerned was trained and in which and for which he was ordained;

(ii) The obligation to exercise the liturgical functions of a deacon, when and in the measure to which the bishop deems this necessary for an ordered and fruitful care of souls;

[312] (iii) The obligation to lead a life in keeping with his ecclesiastical office and ordination. For the rest, the norms of this canonical obedience will have to be conceived analogously to those of the canonical obedience of the priest, with obvious modifications which will be, necessary in the nature of things.

(g) The livelihood of a deacon in the service of the Church (again. in accordance with our basic reflections) will first of all be that which the Church (the bishop or the parish) had already given and was obliged to give to such a deacon on account of the office he exercised even before his ordination. It is clear that the Church's obligation to see to the deacon's maintenance is increased by ordination and by the fact that the ordained belongs to the clergy. The formally juridical part of the Church's obligation to look after the maintenance of the deacon can be carried out in accordance with the '*titulus canonicus*' of the other Orders. It is understood that this maintenance which the Church owes to her ordained deacons within the limits of her possibilities includes also the maintenance of the deacon's family in accordance with what is fitting for the station and purpose of his vocation.

(h) The training of an 'absolute' deacon.

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The general, skeleton legislation will no doubt have to lay down certain guiding lines also for the training of 'absolute' deacons, without thereby doing violence to the great difference of conditions in different countries and hence of the actual characteristics of the deacon's service in these different countries. In this sense it would have to be demanded that the formation of such deacons correspond to the following principles:

(α) The deacon must receive a general religious education corresponding to what is customary and possible in the case of an educated Christian layman in a particular region.

(β) He must receive the schooling and formation demanded by the needs and possibilities of the particular region for the carrying out of the office he exercises or should exercise even apart from ordination to the diaconate (e.g. the office of welfare worker, social worker, catechist, ecclesiastical administrator, etc.). It is not necessary, therefore, that this professional training should be the same for all deacons. On the contrary, it will be desirable that this formation should be very specialized but thorough so that as a result of this formation the later professional activity of such a deacon will vindicate itself on its own merits and not merely by the ordained character of the person concerned. It follows [313] from this that at least this part of the general formation of a deacon will demand different training schools and cannot be given uniformly to all deacons. This will not necessitate the establishment of a very complicated, new training machinery, since no new offices and hence no new training institutes need be created; it will be quite sufficient to utilize and eventually adapt to one's higher purpose those training facilities which even now serve the purpose of preparing candidates for their different occupations. If the future ordained deacon is to engage mostly in catechetical tasks in the Church, then he must of course be given a thorough theological training, a training which must more or less correspond to the training demanded of a priest engaged in the care of souls (according to the rules and customs of the particular country). A more detailed treatment of this question will be found elsewhere in this book. The general schooling (secondary school, etc.), demanded and sufficient in the institutions concerned with this vocational training, should also be demanded and suffice for ordination to the diaconate.

(γ) This formation of the deacon will also have to include a fairly long period of exercising his particular office in the service of the Church before ordination. It would perhaps be more desirable to determine the age for ordination of the absolute deacon on this basis, rather than simply demanding systematically a certain fixed age for this. If, for instance, someone has exercised his diaconate outstandingly well for three to five years after thorough training (and has thereby automatically reached the age at which the Church confers even ordination to the priesthood) then there should be no reason for not conferring ordination to the diaconate.

(δ) Finally, there should be an additional, brief but thorough period of instruction and practice in the liturgical functions which are part of the deacon's duty. The question as to whether it would be possible and desirable to train all the different categories of deacons in common as far as this part of their training is concerned is something which will have to be decided in accordance with the different conditions in different countries. During the whole training (i.e. both the more vocational and the liturgical training) the corresponding religious and Spiritual instruction and formation of the candidates for the diaconate must also be looked after. This part of the training could be conceived analogously to the formation given to candidates for the priesthood by the Spiritual Director.

(i) Since presumably any skeleton legislation issued by Rome could [314] say very little about the actual life of ordained deacons both 'on duty' and privately, it will be the task of the bishop to help the ordained deacons by suitable norms and recommendations to ensure that their personal, human and religious life will correspond to their spiritual station and their office in the Church, that marriage may harmoniously fit into, and positively advance, the mission given to them by the Church and that they may foster that unity and co-operation

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among deacons and with the priestly pastors of souls which are so necessary both for the fulfilment of their task, and to ensure that the unity and co-operation between deacons and priests are made evident and the characteristics of the office of the deacon come to be clearly distinguished from the priestly office. Above all, it will have to be recommended that the deacon should assist at the daily celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and that he should make a regular habit of meditative reading of the Scriptures.

(j) In accordance with the proper nature of the different Orders in the Church, it seems less suitable – and indeed superfluous – to demand reception of the Minor Orders as a condition for ordination to the diaconate in the case of 'absolute' deacons.

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[315]

13

SOME REMARKS ON THE QUESTION OF CONVERSIONS

The question of individual conversions is one of the problems connected with the ecumenical movement. We are simply going to make a few remarks about this question here, remarks which in no way claim to give an adequate treatment of this difficult subject. The selection of these remarks has been fairly arbitrary, and the apparent one-sidedness of their perspectives must not be misinterpreted as a basic outlook.

The Catholic Church claims to be the true Church of Jesus Christ to the exclusion of all others. Since, in the case of adults, conversions to Christianity as a religion of personal faith cannot ultimately come about except by the free decision of each individual, the Church – being the true Church of Jesus Christ – cannot give up her claim that she can and must oblige the individual to join her by his free decision. In principle, even the fact that such a decision would have to go against the whole outlook of his people, his generation, his relatives, the trends of the situation of his own mental development, etc., would not be sufficient to release the individual from the obligation of this free decision. Nor does the fact that the individual concerned is already a Christian excuse him. All these factors may indeed affect the practical application of the general principle in different ways, but they can never annul the principle as such. Ecumenically speaking, it is, of course, particularly important that the claim of the Catholic Church is seen to refer fundamentally also to the other Christians and does not excuse them because they are already Christians. The ecumenical movement as such, in so far as it tries to bring about a *rapprochement* and ultimately a union between the Christian communions as such, can and indeed must – in trying to serve this important and legitimate goal – give up trying to canvass in its work for individual conversions. For no individual effort, and no organization serving an individual [316] goal, can dispute the right or obligation of some other effort or some other goal just because it is not included in its own aims. It is also quite possible that in the person of her official representatives who are responsible for the totality of her tasks and obligations and who plan accordingly, the Catholic Church may give less encouragement to certain tasks in favour of a legitimate general aim. In view of man's finite nature and the plurality of his tasks, such preferences are essentially and indeed physically quite unavoidable and hence also quite legitimate in the moral sense. To this extent, even the official leadership of the Church (and not merely the ecumenical movement) could give somewhat less attention to the demand made on the individual non-Catholic Christian to become a Catholic (i.e. to the efforts for conversions) than it does to more general ecumenical endeavours. But fundamentally, the Catholic Church must claim not only the right but also the duty to concern herself with individuals as such, and hence also with the individual non-Catholic Christian, with a view to making them members of the Catholic Church. This is particularly true since the Catholic Church regards herself not as an important promoting agency for salvation but as necessary for salvation.

This is not the place to try to explain the meaning and limits of this notion of the necessity of the Church for salvation. But the notion itself must be mentioned here, since presumably many other Christian communions and individual non-Catholic Christians today no longer attribute this necessity-for-salvation to their own communion as such (i.e. in so far as it is distinguished from any other Christian communion). The old Reformation communions did indeed profess themselves to be necessary for salvation (and this not only with regard to the essential, universal Christian truths and sacraments); they thus transferred the inherited teaching of the old Church about her necessity for salvation to themselves and hence

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proclaimed their teaching within a Catholic ethos of a claim to absoluteness. Many of the present-day non-Catholic communities of belief however, would presumably no longer make this claim either in theory or, at least, in practice. To this extent they should really have a fundamentally different attitude to the work of winning converts for their own communion from the attitude found in the Catholic Church. If one regards the individual Christian denominations merely as different manifestations of the one Christianity – manifestations which all have basically the same right to man's adherence, even though they are not all equally successful manifestations [317] – then there is no intrinsic reason why they should assume an absolute right and a heavy responsibility for the gaining of converts, a reason which does, however, exist in a Church which fundamentally and in line with her own proper conviction of faith does not recognize such equal rights in other Christian communions. Such Christian denominations could and indeed should perhaps renounce their endeavours to make converts in this age of the ecumenical spirit. For they could and indeed should concentrate all their efforts on the winning of converts among the pagans as well as on general ecumenical endeavours. In any case, the different attitude of the individual Christian communions towards convert work is based on this deeper difference. Sometimes this difference may surprise other Christians and they may feel it as an obstacle to the ecumenical dialogue; they may be tempted to interpret the Catholic Church's desire for converts as something un-ecumenical. Whenever this happens, non-Catholic Christians must try to understand that this desire for 'proselytes' is based on the Catholic Church's claim to be absolute and that they will just have to accept this as a fact, just as they must accept everything else which separates them from the Catholic Church. (Of course, this leaves untouched the question of the actual manner of such efforts to make converts. These may still be loveless, intolerant, unfavourable to the higher aim of the ecumenical movement as such and hence may appear to be unjustifiable even from a Catholic point of view.)

In so far as this very general principle signifies an objective obligation on the part of the individual non-Christian to become a Catholic (i.e. to be 'converted') it should be interpreted in the light of all the principles of Catholic ethics concerning the gravity of an obligation: the difference between the objective obligation and the subjective 'realization' of such an obligation, the different way in which one is obliged by a prescriptive and a prohibitive commandment or by a commandment of natural law and one of divine positive law, the reasons and causes which hinder the subjective recognition of an objective obligation and which excuse the non-fulfilment of a commandment, and other similar part-principles.

In this respect, the scientific insights and the experience of Christendom with regard to what causes the lack of such a recognition of the obligation of conversion have undoubtedly increased a great deal as compared with the first centuries after the Reformation. We living [318] today have come to realize the immeasurable subjective conditioning of the knowledge of the individual, especially in questions concerning his view of the world – in other words, especially in existentially radical questions concerning the whole man. This understanding authorizes us and our duty obliges us, on the one hand, to presume 'good faith' in our fellow men unless we have strict proof of the contrary. Thus we are no longer inclined today to deny good faith to all 'educated' non-Catholics who, although they do in some ways come into actual contact with Catholics and the Catholic Church, nevertheless do not become Catholics. This may seem an obvious platitude to most of our contemporaries – even to Catholics and present-day theologians – a truth which even the Pope himself practises by the unaffectedly friendly reception he gives to non-Catholic Christians (which was probably not the case in this particular way in earlier centuries): but this now self-evident truth was not by any means self-evident even only 150 years ago, and even today is still not so in Latin countries. The present author himself can still remember vividly a conversation with an old parish priest in Lower Bavaria who took it for granted that a Protestant theologian cannot possibly adhere to

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his beliefs in good faith, since he is surely in a position to recognize the truth of the Catholic Church. In Boswell's 'Great tour through Germany and Switzerland', an Englishman describes a meeting with a Jesuit in the year 1764 at Mannheim. To the Anglican, the Jesuit appears very well educated, very charming and open-minded. But when the Englishman tells him that he is a non-Catholic and adds that he hopes the Jesuit would not count him among the damned on this account, the latter declared: 'It may sound hard, but it is absolutely necessary for me to believe this to be the case. The extenuating circumstances present in the case of a poor country yokel are not valid in your case. You are educated.' We today can no longer think in such a naive way. For in the face of the great number of non-Catholics and their close contact with the Catholic reality, we would either have to doubt the good faith of so many people (for which – if we do not think jansenistically of man – we have no reason and no indications from experience) or we would have to doubt the universal salvific will of God and think, again jansenistically, that God would refuse these people the grace of salvation (i.e. even merely sufficient grace) without any guilt on their part, a grace necessary for the fulfilment of an obligation present not only objectively but also subjectively. But [319] if we can no longer say this today after the manner of post-Reformation polemics, then there naturally arises the question – a question which to date has probably received only a very general and formal skeleton answer – as to how the concession of *bona fides* (at least fundamentally) even in the case of non-'*rudes*' (to use the theological terminology of Vatican I) can be reconciled with the doctrine that the truth and the binding claim of the Catholic Church are recognizable by clear rational and historical arguments as *signa certissima et omnium intelligentiae accommodata* (Denz 1790), since this quality of the perceptibility of Christian revelation is also explicitly referred to the Catholic Church as such (Denz 1794). This question is a particularly difficult one because the judgement of the objective knowability of the Christian revelation and of the claim of the Church refers not only to the quality of the arguments '*in se*' but also to their suitability and their effectiveness in relation to actual people. This really gives rise to the following question: How could these arguments be regarded as *omnium inteilligentiae accommodata* if in actual fact they have so little success even in cases where they seem to be present to the judgement and conscience of non-Catholics (since the litter do come into contact with the Church who is herself declared to be an argument of her own credibility [Denz 1794]) – unless we presume that there is bad faith on the other side?

We have not posed this question here in order to answer it, for this is not our present task. We have posed it for another reason which is of importance for the question of conversions itself. For this whole problem at least shows that there are a great number of psychological influences which can obscure the knowability of the Church's claim in the concrete case. These influences must not be conceived as being effective merely on the individual, for they are also of a general kind and they concern and essentially constitute the concrete milieu of whole ages and peoples. We may even go on to add a twofold observation in this regard.

Firstly, the period (taken very loosely) between the time when the denominational boundaries began to become increasingly blurred in Central Europe (i.e. since the beginning of the nineteenth century) and the present-day era of mass population movements and massive changes in political structure is identical with the period which saw the spirit of the age growing more and more anti-Christian and threatening all Christian denominations without distinction. This is not [320] self-evident but, once realized, it does give us a partial explanation as to why the historically and existentially tangible presence of the Catholic Church in the concrete environment of the non-Catholics does not really have the effect one might expect when one thinks of the Catholic Church as the *signum levatum in nations* – as the witness to her own divine institution – and hence expects that in the nature of things she will have little proselytizing effect only where she is not present with sufficient historical

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concreteness in the environment of a people. Ultimately the same cause (viz. modern society) has given rise to two effects which practically cancel each other out in terms of the Church's power of attraction for prospective converts and which leave the actual state of affairs the same as it was at the time of the denominationally committed individual States: a far-reaching, firmly established situation of inter-denominational relationships altered only by the common losses of all denominations to this 'neo-paganism'. The greater contact between different denominations has not itself altered anything.

Secondly, this common situation of all Christian denominations *vis-à-vis* 'neo-paganism' also signifies in actual fact a weakening in one's sense of the religious existential urgency in the question of which denomination one ought to belong to: one experiences one's own Christianity as a secure and personally won possession of immeasurable significance, compared with which the denominational differences are subjectively (and objectively) of lesser importance, all of which can be said even if one does not falsely reduce these differences to nothing. A person may be subject to many situational factors and other elements of psychological motivation: these influence his personal decisions by determining the number of existential possibilities worthy of serious consideration in such a way that the possibility of conversion, for instance, is no longer a serious possibility worthy of one's consideration, and this even before it comes to a moral decision and without any question of moral fault (and we must suppose this to be the case, if we do not wish to deny today that the majority of Christians in our parts who do not become Catholics, are in good faith). If this is so, then it is naturally also true that a great number of such subconscious motivations enter also into the process of actual conversions. We must be clear about this fact: the sum total of the factors actually affecting a person in a free decision is certainly not identical with the sum total of the explicitly and consciously grasped, and as such freely [321] willed, motives. Just as a person cannot reflectively exhaust something he perceives – since every reflection requires another new series of perceptions, reasons and logical operations which themselves (since otherwise we would have to postulate a regression to infinity) are not reflex-so it is also and even much more so, in the case of free decisions. This applies, of course, also to the decision of conversion. It can happen – in this case just as much as in others – that in certain circumstances a third party has a much clearer idea of some part of the unreflected background and motivation of a conversion than the person concerned himself: the subjective soil, the emotional basis, on which such a decision is actually built up, can be much more tangible to the external observer than to the convert himself. The soil in which a conversion grows may be a strong aesthetic need (among other things, of course) which certainly is also normally present; a person may get the stimulus leading to conversion because he experiences a strong personal tie to a proselytizing Catholic; he may be someone whose strong critical tendency gives the impetus to his adopting a critical attitude towards the actual condition of his previous church; it may be that someone would never have got the idea of conversion if he had not suffered very great personal disappointments in his own communion, even though these themselves have objectively nothing or only very little to do with the question of truth. Such and innumerable other motivations which are not all systematically thought out by the convert may form the impetus for a conversion (just as they may also impede it, and this as equally unsystematic limitations of the existentially really present question). This does not, of course, argue in any way against the objective foundation of a conversion. A person may perfectly well understand the theorem of Pythagoras, for instance, even though he or others say to themselves that he would never have comprehended it if he had not got the urge – for quite different reasons than interest in matters of geometry – to become absorbed in the objective proof of this theorem. Yet even from this point of view, the question as to the moral correctness and obligation of a conversion in a concrete case is a much more difficult question than is commonly supposed, even when the convert is not

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conscious of any reprehensible motivation (such as worldly motives of honour, consideration for one's marriage partner, one's career, etc.) and when the objective reasons for the conversion seem to be grasped purely in their doctrinal, reflex conceptuality. We know that no Christian can [322] say *with certitude* that he has really acted for *those* particular motives – and that *those* motives were certainly the interior and moral form-giving factors – which he has consciously represented to himself and which he has tried to aim at, for otherwise he would know with certitude that he is in the state of grace when he makes an act of faith, hope and charity in accordance with their perfectly exact and objectively correct formulation by the theologians. In the same way, a convert can never tell with absolute certitude whether the explicit motives of his conversion – about whose correctness there can be no doubt – are in his actual case also the real, actual underlying factors of his act, the factors which determine the moral quality of his act, or whether the latter are not really contained in those subconscious motivations on which he cannot adequately reflect. But what about the case where another person – for example, the one who is giving the instructions – has reasons to doubt whether the prospective convert's motives are really pure? It cannot be said that such a case is impossible. It also cannot be said that such a case can always be solved by appealing to the prospective convert himself. Even when an embittered, dogmatic kind of person, who has had a rough time in his previous religious communion, is made aware of the peculiarities of his disposition and is shown that they may possibly influence him very strongly, he will naturally declare that all this does not make any difference to his intentions. Must the other person believe him in every case? In many cases, like the priest who often has to assist at marriages whose motivation and future stability he has reason to doubt, he will have to endorse the conversion. But there can also be cases where a person who is in a position to encourage a conversion, if he *wishes*, can ask himself whether he should not rather refrain from doing so, or at least be free to refrain, when he has reason to suppose such underlying motivations. In a marriage, for instance, it is in certain circumstances easy for one of the partners to stimulate the other to conversion. Should he do this, if he has on the whole the impression that the whole mental and religious make-up of the other is simply not suited or prepared for a real, existentially religious conversion (even though there would never be any question of a dishonest conversion)? Can one really say that in the concrete conditions of man's life, such a change of outlook and such a preparation and cultivation of the conditions of soul necessary for a conversion are always really possible in the limited time available and in the given circumstances? If they are not, must one nevertheless [323] still encourage such a conversion? To answer this question, we must first of all make a further distinction.

A conversion has a twofold meaning. The objective belonging to the Church has a meaning in itself. And the belonging to the Church means both in itself, and in view of the Church's truth and means of grace, the objectively greater possibility of salvation for men, which gives conversion its subjective meaning, i.e. its meaning in view of the salvation of this individual. Both these 'values' are at the root of the divine command of belonging to the Church. Even the first-mentioned value. For in the order of the Incarnation, and hence of the historical and eschatological tangibility of the salvific will and of grace (which we call the Church), God wills the Church as a visible society even before the question arises as to whether the chances of salvation for a determined individual are thereby increased in the concrete or not. If one did not affirm this, then it would be rather difficult to give any clear explanation of the theological reasons for the Church's missionary mandate, right and duty. For it would then always be possible to say that in view of God's universal salvific will, every person – even if he is not a member of the visible Church – is given a chance of salvation, and this chance is not any smaller essentially than it would be within the Church, for perhaps the greater chance of salvation which in itself is given within the Church is balanced out by the greater responsibility one then has by the fact that a subjectively greater burden rests on those who

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are better instructed and who recognize stricter moral demands. Hence, if the missionary mandate is not to be based on a purely positive divine command without any intrinsic justification, then it will be necessary to find the reason for this missionary mandate in a meaning and value to be found in what is historically tangible and hence in the growing Church. But, of course, even the second above-mentioned value of a conversion is of essential importance to it. It is quite clear that the value of a conversion based on the first point of view is not such that it could in no case take second place in favour of some other value as a result of a (here possible and meaningful) weighing of values. For example, the baptism of a child would certainly not be a moral duty if it were bound up with grave danger to the life of the baptizer. Such a baptism could be postponed in this case (taking the case of a child not actually dying).

The objective belonging to the Church, which represents a value in itself, is not in every case a value which cannot be displaced by some other value. But as far as the [324] other, more subjective aspect of a conversion and of belonging to the Church is concerned, the following point must be borne in mind. With regard to this aspect, the value concerned is essentially determined in the concrete by the question as to what extent a certain person is reasonably judged to be actually in a position of accepting and subjectively realizing the saving goods offered to him by membership of the Church. In this regard there are, however, very great differences between individuals, social groups and particular ages. We must not have any illusions about this: the average man in the Church 'realizes' subjectively only a very small part of the actual possibilities and realities of salvation at his disposal within the Church. If we take a realistic view, we will see that his knowledge is very limited (at least concerning those religious truths which he has managed to salvage for his actual life from what he was taught at school). He will not know much more than a few basic truths: that God exists, that He is the guardian of the moral order, that we have been redeemed by Christ, that there is a Judgement and eternal life. Nobody can doubt that, if these 'basic truths' of the Faith are to some extent seriously realized in practice, then we have a 'good Christian'. No one can seriously doubt that in very many individual and social situations it can be said with sufficient moral certitude that, as far as one can judge from the empirical appearances of life, this or that person is in fact unable to rise above this level (which, of course, does not give us any grounds for an adequate judgement about the ultimate state of a man before God). The same is true of the use of the 'means of grace' offered by the Church. It is indeed true that the Catholic Christian, who does not oppose himself explicitly to the Church, will make use of these means of grace to a certain extent; he will assist at Sunday Mass and he will receive the sacraments now and then. But if one inquires into the results of the sacramental life in the light of the experience of a dispassionate pedagogy of popular religion, one will find it difficult to maintain that it is certain that they are greater on the whole than the results which would be achieved by a religious education for ordinary people relying more on the subjective means of grace; the latter, after all, are undoubtedly also important and indispensable occurrences of the process by which divine grace becomes effective and is acquired, and not merely subjective human events prayer, listening to the Word of God, repentance for sins, keeping the Christian commandments, trying to achieve a spiritual 'awakening' and conversion, the impression made [325] by the good example of the Christian life of others, etc. Thus, all things considered, there arises the question as to whether, with regard to the subjective aspect of conversion, the real Christian 'success' is actually very great in many cases. This is not meant to pass judgement on any particular conversion. In this question, one must not refer oneself to any conversions with which one is familiar. Whenever these conversions take place with an extraordinary religious seriousness (as in the case of many of the conversions we are used to, which take place very spontaneously and very little through any special 'propaganda') even the 'subjective success' of the Church membership of

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such converts is, of course, very great and no doubt clearly justifies such conversions on this account alone. But given the case that a priest, thinking about a non-Catholic with whom he is in close contact, says to himself: If I wanted to, I could win this person for the Church; I could presumably influence him in the given circumstances in such a way that he would become a Catholic, of course with all the seriousness possible in such a case. But I would have to say to myself that the individual concerned – by his natural dispositions, by his mental and spiritual past (in so far as the actually possible religious instruction of the prospective convert probably would not be able to alter the influences of the past to any considerable extent), by his occupation, his possible interests, etc. – is in such a condition that in practice he could at best 'realize' as much, but not more, of the Christian possibilities of the Catholic Church as he is already doing in his present Christian situation. In other words, even after conversion, he could probably realize only those 'basic truths' of Christianity which are already known to him even now and which even now he puts into practice; he could live only as much pf the inner life of grace through reception of the sacraments and by his subjective religious life as he has actually already realized even now (though by more subjective means). In such a case one must surely ask oneself: does the subjective side of such an actually possible Catholic Christianity surpass a non-Catholic Christian life so decisively that this consideration demands going to great pains for the conversion of a Christian, or is this not the case? If one does not think in too much of a purely objective and almost magic manner – in other words, if one is quite clear about the fact that the significance of a conversion has its limits even in its objective aspects, and if one understands clearly that it cannot be taken for granted that in the case of many Christians their properly realized Christianity [326] would be realized any differently in the subjective sense by a conversion – then it will be absolutely possible to ask: are there situations in which the Church does not indeed renounce her fundamental rights to conversions (and does not intentionally keep the universal, and hence Catholic, gospel from anyone) but in which, in view of the limited powers and means at her disposal, she may say to herself that it is not a very urgent matter to direct her efforts towards making converts among other Christians? Fundamentally it will be possible to answer this question quite soberly with a yes. There *can* be such situations. But this is in no way meant to insinuate that the Church must, on account of these considerations, change her strategy and tactics with regard to her missionary work among non-Catholic Christians, either in our own or in other countries. On the contrary: here at home, those who become converts will in general be people to whom these considerations do not apply. And yet it would seem that these considerations are of some practical significance. If we are quite honest and dispassionate about this and see things as they are, then we will have to admit that in Central Europe the efforts directed towards making converts among Protestant Christians are practically nil. It is indeed one of the particularly emphasized official duties of a bishop to encourage efforts in this direction. But, if we may put it quite bluntly: We do not believe that mid-European bishops in general expend a great deal of time and effort in the fulfilment of this duty. But precisely this sober statement of the facts now no longer shocks and scandalizes in view of the above considerations. This attitude is quite right on the whole, no matter how much it may perhaps surprise and dismay a Spanish Catholic, for instance. For he will probably be of the opinion that the Catholics of Central Europe should go to battle against the Protestants (at least) with the sword of the Spirit, in order to spread the Church, and that they ought to gain very swift and important victories if they are at all zealous, in view of the convincing evidence of Catholic truth, especially since today – with the disappearance of the Protestant State – the external obstacles to such a re-Catholicization have also to a great extent disappeared. In view of the forces actually at the disposal of the Church, the actual tactics of the Church with regard to the encouraging of conversions in our countries will however have to be justified on the whole in the light of our considerations.

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It also follows from these considerations that we Catholic Christians [327] cannot rightly and with a good conscience hope for substantial losses within Protestant Christianity. We do not refer here to *numerical* losses of members of non-Catholic denominations, even though we should deplore even these as a very painful injury to ourselves also, if they are losses to present-day neo-paganism. For from whatever quarter modern non-Christianity may draw its adherents, its growth is always a threat even to Catholic Christianity, an injury done to the name of Christ and to the power of the gospel. How could we Catholics experience this with anything but deepest sorrow and pain? But we refer here to the *inner* loss of substance, loss of the clear profession of the traditional Truth which is really common to all Christianity. For centuries it was part of the stock-in-trade of Catholic polemics with regard to Protestant Christianity to prophesy that it would soon be 'sold out'; it was usual to develop the consequences of the basic principles of heresy so logically as to show that these logical consequences must very soon be clearly, completely and finally realized in the reality of life. These prophecies have still not been fulfilled, however, even after four hundred years. And it does not look as if they will be fulfilled in the near future. Periods of 'liberalistic' and 'enlightened' thought causing substantial losses in Protestant Christianity have been followed by quite powerful movements in the opposite direction. It is moreover true that the Catholic Church, in her official nature, has indeed resisted the attacks of the anti-Christian modern spirit most staunchly and impressively, and yet it cannot be said that Catholic Christianity as such has suffered less substantial losses during the last one hundred and fifty years than Protestant Christianity. Even in Latin countries, which have a more Catholic set-up, the number of really believing Catholics is just a small minority. And Catholic countries are, if anything, in greater danger from the organized godlessness of Bolshevism than Protestant countries. We may try to explain this fact by reasons lying outside the denominational sphere . . . the fact nevertheless remains. Communism was almost victorious in Spain. Today, Italy and South America are special hopes of Communism. We mention all this here merely to point out that, in view of this state of affairs, we do not have the least reason for regarding the loss of substance within Protestant Christianity with the feeling that all this is merely something inevitable and something we have long foretold, or even to regard it with a kind of malicious joy at other people's misfortune. The gain does not belong to the Catholic Church but to [328] neo-paganism. It would be insane ecclesiastical politics to think that the others' loss in this matter is our gain. According to human estimation (in the supposition that one could do anything else ultimately than to hope for God's victory in Christ even when this seems beyond hope in human estimation), one would have to say that the whole of Christianity will either live or die together. Whether, how and when the unity of Christendom will come, we do not know. But one thing we do know, to hope for its coming through the external or internal bankruptcy of a part of Christendom would be engaging in stupid and shameful politics, building on the catastrophes of others. This means in its turn, however, that we ought to help each other to extend our common ecumenical efforts in an attempt to preserve each other from internal and external losses of substance. Why could we not help and instruct each other in the question as to how one can speak effectively and convincingly today to those who think they cannot be Christians? Why could we not instruct each other as to ways and means of proving Christianity to them, a Christianity which after all is common to us all in its most essential points? Why should not Catholic exegesis, here and there, be able to help its Protestant counterpart to be critical without 'demythologizing' everything to such an extent that Christianity simply disappears? Could not Protestant exegesis perhaps preserve some of our Catholic exegetes from making mistakes in Catholic exegesis due to their exuberance in making up for the lack of scientific research in the past, the same mistakes which Protestant exegesis made in the past and which it has since then overcome? Could we not exchange our pastoral experiences in missionary work in the present-day

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technological mass society? One does not get the impression that Catholic pastoral theology takes much notice of its Protestant counterpart. And the converse is probably just as true. Yet it cannot be said that we could not learn anything from each other. Here and there we have already done so, as, for example, with regard to the 'academies'. We could learn something from each other even in dogmatic theology. For there are already common viewpoints in Scripture studies regarding truths which do not in any way belong to controverted theological points. The language of each theology could learn from the other: for quite frequently each of them has in its own way certain traditional forms of expression which make it seem dead and out of date and which thus increase the difficulty of preaching the gospel to the present age. All these reflections may seem to have [329] nothing to do with our present subject. Is it not a fact that the realistic possibility of gaining converts from Protestant Christianity, correctly understood, is such that it is actually secondary as compared with other tasks, and that both sides should agree on the slogan: Let us help each other to win the fight against this new paganism and let us look for 'converts' among those who today no longer have any real, actual connection with the Christian churches. Here is a wide field for missionary work, big enough for all denominations; here it could then show itself which is the stronger force. Such an orientation of one's efforts could perhaps have another effect as well: without prejudice to the actual question of truth, a great deal of what separates the Christian denominations, and keeps them separated, is not so much the theological differences but the whole way of life, the historically conditioned form of piety, the contradiction in the *ius humanum* of the respective systems of Canon law, etc. Even the dogmatic differences are, after all, seen subconsciously against the background of *these* other separating differences. One knows (on the basis of this 'lived' difference which one finds obvious and indisputable) that one is separated, and so one's theological endeavours are subconsciously aimed at also discovering this lived and seemingly indisputable separation in theology, so as to justify it from that point of view. So it happens that the theological controversies sometimes give the impression that one is actually *looking* for a difference by ever more subtle distinctions so that one may not need to unite. Of course, this is not done on purpose, but it is nevertheless a real thought mechanism and instinct: conclusions are proved of whose correctness one is already certain, viz. by the very fact of separation; this is an existential correctness which is 'evident' from the difference of life and not really from the difference of theology. If only Christians of all denominations would make intense efforts to rechristianize neo-paganism, all the different denominations would perhaps have to develop a style of Christian life, of theological language, etc., in dealing with the same 'material' of men, a style which on account of the sameness of 'material' would be largely the same (in spite of the different denominational starting points) and which therefore would lead to closer contact between the denominations themselves in the actuality of their real life, feeling and thought. This could then be extended to the theological talks which would then have more hope of success. If, for instance (to take just one example; one could of course also develop useful applications for the other [330] side), the Catholic Church in Latin countries would really actively and successfully concern herself about the industrial mass society and its neo-paganism, both of which exist in an ever-increasing measure even in these countries, this presumably would automatically give rise to an image of the Catholic Church in these countries which would make it easier for a mid-European Protestant Christian to rediscover his own Christianity in this Christian and ecclesiastical life.

The question of the religious obligation of a conversion is quite frequently tied up with the question of the time interval permissible in conscience between the time of realizing one's obligation to become a Catholic and the actual fulfilling of this obligation. After all, there may be various reasons for wanting to be permitted to postpone one's conversion for a while, even after one has seen it to be one's duty. In accordance with what was stated at the

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beginning, it will have to be said first of all that the recognition of the truth of the Catholic Church and of her institution by Christ basically brings with it also the obligation to join the Church. This obligation of the individual does not in itself cease on account of the advantages one may hope for from one's ecumenical activity within one's previous religious communion-advantages, that is, for the unity of Christianity as a whole. This is true, not merely because these advantages will in most cases be extremely problematic and because such hopes can very easily be just wishful thinking, especially since such crypto-Catholics are usually listened to less than those who are clearly professed Catholics. But the fundamental reason why the individual obligation of conversion remains even in such a case is because any basic recognition of the justification of such tactics of deferment would objectively have to end up in a denial of the obligation to conversion of the individual *qua* individual in favour of the sole obligation of seeking a social union of the Christian groups among themselves. Such a thesis would, however, turn the individual as such into an absolutely and exclusively dependent functionary of the Christian community; it would make the communities the sole bearers of religious decisions, all of which constitutes a conception which must be absolutely rejected. On closer reflection, there are certainly very difficult problems in this connection, at least with regard to those Christian communions which from a Catholic point of view must be regarded as schisms, and not as real heresies, and this merely in so far as they are schisms – or, respectively, take effect as schisms – in the consciousness of faith of each individual.

[331] Will it not have to be said in this case that the practice of the Catholic Church has up till now presupposed that, if the leaders of the Eastern churches were to unite with Rome, the members of their flocks would also, by that very fact, be united with Rome? Does this not mean, however, that we recognize these pastors to have a certain authority over their flocks by right? Under *this* presupposition, can an individual Christian leave the question of the removal of the schism to the head of his church and acknowledge him to be solely responsible in this matter? Or is every schism also at least an implicit heresy, so that the general principles concerning the individual's obligation of faith and of profession of faith also apply here in some way? But why, in this case, does tradition distinguish between schism and heresy even to this very day? No matter what may be the answer to this question which must remain unanswered here, it is clear in any case that, as far as heresy is concerned, we cannot accept the sole principle of a communal solution to the split in Christianity, nor therefore any other principles and practices which implicitly come to the same thing as this other principle. A postponement of one's conversion, until the moment of Union, as a matter of principle, is to be rejected. Yet this provides us only with a very external framework for the question about the timing of a conversion. For the Christian, even once he recognizes the necessity of the Church, has undoubtedly quite a considerable interval to play with as far as the fulfilment of his obligation to join the Church is concerned. For there is a long time given even for the catechumenate of the unbaptized, where things are really more urgent than in our case since then it is a question of receiving baptism which is necessary for salvation, whereas in our case it is a question of a Christian who is baptized and who already to large extent has those means of salvation at his disposal which will also help to support his later life. It is no good pointing out that the catechumen is not yet sufficiently instructed. For the reception of baptism at least would not require instruction lasting several years. And to point out the other reasons for such a catechumenate lasting for years proves exactly that there can be reasons for a relatively long postponement of the actual entry into the Church. Hence, it would have to be proved that a prospective convert could not have any such reasons. That his reasons are different from those of someone seeking baptism does not make it impossible for him to have legitimate reasons. Since the objective importance of belonging to the Church probably does not carry much [332] weight in certain individual cases, it will be necessary in such cases to

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evaluate, as best one can, the concrete subjective importance of full membership of the Church (for, after all, the non-Catholic Christian already belongs to the Church in certain respects). If there can be no question of any serious threat to his personal salvation in the actual case, one will no doubt be able to make a fairly broad judgement as to the moment when his obligation to full membership of the Church becomes acute 'here and now'. This is especially true when the fact that someone postpones his decision and waits before taking the final step cannot be taken as a sign of any basic denial of his obligation to join the Church. In the case where a prospective convert, although officially belonging to a Protestant denomination, really comes rather from neo-paganism, it may happen that his getting used to a really lived Christianity in general – a stage which can already be combined with a great deal of Catholic 'practice' (assistance at Holy Mass, participation in Catholic life, etc.) – may take quite a lot of time, and in such a case this may be justified in the same way as a long catechumenate. It is difficult to see in itself why the Church could not treat such a Christian, who is on the way to conversion, in the same way canonically speaking (i.e. as regards ecclesiastical burial, etc.) as she treats a candidate for baptism.

There is still another question which can profitably be posed today with regard to the possibility and moral lawfulness of conversions, viz. the question about the subjective capability of grasping the objectively sound reasons for a conversion, or respectively for the legitimate claim of the Catholic Church to being the only true Church of Jesus Christ.

This question has already been touched on above. But we wish to reflect on it once more for its own sake. Everyone engaged in controversial theology today knows how difficult it is to give the non-Catholic a clear rational and historical understanding of the reasons for the obligation of conversion, in such a way that they convince those who have not already decided (for whatever reasons) to become Catholics. The question of the history of religion, of biblical theology, of Church history and Church law, which have to be explained and answered in the course of such a task (or which would have to be explained and answered in the case where one is encouraging a conversion which has not already taken place 'existentially' for non-scientific and non-theological reasons) are objectively so difficult (as [333] is shown by theological controversies among specialist theologians on both sides) that one might ask oneself whether the normal non-specialist in this field can in the average case come to an objectively well-founded and unequivocal judgement, presupposing that such a non-specialist has only a limited amount of time and capacity-for-learning to give to such questions. If this is doubtful, then we have here a further justification for holding back in our zeal to make converts in this manner, in cases where the individuals concerned have not already decided to become Catholics for some other kind of reason. This question shows the necessity and justification for proper ecumenical efforts: a goodly section of Christians can, as it were, come to a reasoned judgement about where the true Church of Christ is to be found only with the help of the collective reflection of a whole church and not as individuals. We need not be surprised at this statement. For St Thomas Aquinas this is valid even with regard to the simple knowledge of God, which is certainly easier than forming an opinion in controverted theological questions. One would have to go even further, and ask whether in one's teaching of converts (i.e. converts of one kind or another) one ought not to prove the moral and theological lawfulness of their decision by considerations of an *indirect* and *global* kind, considerations which can to a large extent and quite legitimately avoid the series of problems connected with individual controverted questions of theology. Let us explain a little further what is meant by this. Is it being too daring or sceptical to maintain that (while admitting that the Primacy can be objectively proved by means of an exact biblical theology) it is not really quite honest to pretend to a simple convert that this proof is simple and easy to grasp, that all one needs to do is to quote Mt 16.18, give a few easily understandable explanations of this text, and then the matter will be quite clear? Surely, one must say quite

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honestly that such a method of controversial theology cannot really be permissible when dealing with a prospective convert (even when it eventually has its intended effect), since it does not provide him with a real, objectively justified (and in itself possible) insight into the solution of the question (nor one which is capable of being this in the time available and under the given presuppositions) and yet pretends to give such knowledge. Thus there arises the question as to how we might solve such individual theological questions in an *indirect* but lawful manner and so be able to create the fundamental theological presuppositions for an acceptance [334] of the Catholic Church. To do this is surely possible. We might, for instance, develop the thought that in accordance with the whole incarnational structure of the salvation brought by Christ, the Church founded by Him must be a historical reality and hence a reality possessing historical continuity, and that it cannot be a merely ideological structure which, as it were, would always come to exist anew and thus, as something new, would simply replace the previous ecclesiastical structure by a *generatio aequivoca*. We might stress furthermore that, under this presupposition, the Catholic Church with her properly tangible apostolic succession, must be presumed to be the legitimate Church of Jesus Christ, at least as long as it has not been proved without any shadow of doubt that she has betrayed and abandoned the Spirit of Christ and the fundamental doctrines of the primitive Christian Church: in other words, that on account of the continuity of the Catholic Church, a continuity which is historically clearer than that of the Reformation churches, the burden of proof for the idea of a 'renewed foundation' must lie with the representatives of the Reformation which was a new foundation of the church. These proofs, it might be said, will obviously not be forthcoming, however, especially since at least the possibility of a basic denial of fundamental Christian doctrines can be clearly seen in the Protestant communions. Such an approach would make it possible to give objectively legitimate reasons of fundamental theology for the obligation of conversion, without having to go into individual theological questions of controversial theology, questions which are quite beyond the normal convert and which we could treat only in an unobjective and superficial manner. If this can be said, however, then it shows once more what we have already observed implicitly: to be psychologically effective, such argumentation presupposes the Catholic Church to have an empirical form which 'makes it difficult' for the non-Catholic Christian (if we may put it this way) to have involuntary and subconscious inhibitions against the alternative that 'one' could actually be a Catholic. He may, however, associate the image he gets from experience with a certain clericalism, with an uncomprehended liturgy and with many other things comprehensible to someone of a Latin culture, but not to a Central European . . . with a centralization difficult to put up with, etc. If this image offers him right from the start so many unreflected, in themselves, quite inconclusive and yet psychologically effective grounds which already suppress any really practical question of the [335] possibility of becoming a Catholic, then of course even the just suggested, indirect and presumptive argument for a Christian to become a Catholic cannot unfold its effectiveness. We can only hope and pray that those in authority in the Church will learn to understand even more how great a responsibility they have as regards the picture presented by the Church to the world, even in those respects where it is no longer a question of something morally bad by the standards of theoretical ethics. For something can be good or possible in itself and yet it ought not, in certain circumstances, to be imposed on someone else as an unnecessary burden. If one examines the image presented by the Church in this light, then there arise serious questions.

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[336]

14

DOGMATIC NOTES ON 'ECCLESIOLOGICAL PIETY'

If the dogmatic theologian were merely to develop an all-round view of his ecclesiology then he should really have a great deal to say about the subject of an 'ecclesiological piety' (whatever exactly may or should be understood by this notion). Although this is not immediately evident, there are real statements of *faith* about the Church and not merely about God and *His* relationship to us, a relationship which remains hidden and intangible within him; there are realities, in other words, which only faith can grasp but which nevertheless are not the reality of God (anyone who cannot feel any surprise at this fact has not really understood very much about the radical nature of faith as something incommensurable with any other kind of information). The Church is one of those believed and believable realities, i.e. realities to which is related the most absolute form of 'taking something seriously' and of total engagement, that act of grasping the measure without measure, that act of being circumscribed by a horizon which is not surrounded by anything else as *its* dimension; in short, what we call faith. And so there is an ecclesiology in dogmatic theology as such. Hence all the dogmatic theologian really needs to do, if he wants to treat of our subject, is to unfold his ecclesiology and to examine its content with a view to discovering at once its significance for our piety and the way in which these truths must be 'realized' subjectively. And which of the truths of ecclesiology could be insignificant in this respect if they are believed and believable, i.e. if they are the object of that mysteriously unique act which we call faith, without which all piety would necessarily become mere empty and worthless show, just a pious atmosphere of self-indulgence which is not worth talking about?

But before we can even go on from here to think things out, the dogmatic theologian contradicts himself (and contradicts perhaps even more the feeling of post-Tridentine Catholics and above all the feeling [337] of the nineteenth century which is still very much alive today) by pointing out that the Church is indeed an object of one's faith, but that one does not believe in the Church, a most important distinction already made by the Apostles' Creed and yet one which is not always quite obviously and clearly respected in the practice of piety.

Once more: before we can reflect on *this* distinction, we must first of all reflect on something which concerns the Christian even more immediately in his relationship to his Church than the question as to whether and to what extent he (rightly or wrongly) as it were 'personifies' and 'hypostasizes' the Church and thus behaves towards her in a way which destroys the difference between the belief *in* God and the Church as an object of belief. The dogmatic theologian should indeed stick to his last and not play the historian of the spirit and the philosopher of culture. But perhaps he does after all observe correctly that the Church has become a kind of collective person for the modern Catholic (especially in the nineteenth century), a moral person which he honours, loves, trusts, defends, of which he is proud, in which he feels safe, and which appears incomparably nobler, purer, mightier and more indestructible to him than any other reality in this world: which appears to him, in other words, as the real Incarnation of everything that is true, good and promising. It might be said, of course – and quite rightly at first – that it has always been like this, that this has been an essential element in the attitude of Catholics from the very first days of Christianity when (even more than now, and in an almost gnostic sense) people were inclined to conceive the Church as one of the primeval heavenly powers and aeons and when they certainly spoke of 'Mother' Church without whom one could not have God for Father, the one Ark of salvation,

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the Bride of Christ, the new Eden and the Queen who stands by the side of the Saviour. All this is perfectly true. Yet there are overtones in the modern awareness of the Church which are neither dogmatically self-evident nor present in all past ages (and it must be remembered in this connection that the dogmatic theologian has also the right to address his critical questions to the actual, unreflected, uncritical awareness of the Church in past ages, and that consequently this question addressed to the present-day awareness will not be made to appear unjustified by the mere fact that one could pose the same question to previous ages). In order to see this it need only be borne in mind that the Catholic of today still thinks of himself primarily as someone who professes himself [338] to belong *to* the Church, as someone who defends her, who feels himself her 'child', but who does not really see himself as her member. It is true that a lot has been said in the past few decades (and this is praiseworthy and good) about the Mystical Body of Christ, and in this connection there naturally appears also the doctrine that every Christian is a member of the Church. Yet as soon as this truth goes beyond the fact that every Christian shares in the blessings of the Church and has also the responsibility to stand up for her in his life and apostolate (all of which can be understood even by the 'child of the Church'), then the membership of the Church becomes an abstract, and no longer a religiously realized notion. For how many Christians are there today who feel themselves to be members of the Church in *such* a way that they experience themselves in the concrete – with all they are, do and suffer – as an element of the Church herself? Who, after all (except perhaps with regard to external persecutions), experiences the Church as the pilgrim, as the one who searches laboriously and who is often restless, or as the sinful Church of sinners; who has any clear experience of the difference between the Church and the looked for, yearned for, prayed for Kingdom, awaited with almost despairing patience, this kingdom of God which the Church simply does not yet constitute but for which she is the beginning, the genuine promise, the sacrament and not the clearly manifested reality itself? Yet the Church ought to appear also (and not only) as all these things to someone who recognizes *himself* as her *member* and who at the same time undergoes the bitter experience of being himself a pilgrim far from home, someone who gropes restlessly in the dark, a sinner. Of course, not every attribute of the individual Christian can be predicated of the Church as such, simply because this Christian is her member. But is this a sufficient reason for thinking that the Church is no longer also the sinful Church[1] (in spite of her permanent holiness on account [339] of her saving possessions and the 'subjective', existentially lived holiness of many of her members who, without being distinguishable from the rest, do not allow the eschatologically victorious grace of Christ to escape them)? Does the fact that the Church can never end up outside the truth of Christ mean also that she proclaims this truth with that power, in that topical and always freshly assimilated form one might hope for and which would make it truly salutary? Is it really always and clearly the case that – by transforming this truth, by opening it out into the infinity of God, by applying it comfortingly and in a redeeming way – she allows this truth to become most intimately united with that immeasurable, impetuous, entangled and yet so glorious chaos of perceptions, questions, conjectures, intellectual conquests, abysmal perplexities, which we call the 'world picture', the world outlook of modern man? Do we not frequently (contrary to the meaning of the gospel truth) purchase the permanence of the gospel message in the Church at the price of guarding scrupulously against exposing ourselves to this 'chaos' (out of which the world of

[1] Cf. K. Rahner, *Die Kirche der Sünder* (Freiburg-Vienna 1948) and the famous address by Hugo Rahner at the Cologne '*Katholikentag*' in 1956: *Die Kirche, Gottes Kraft in menschlicher Schwachheit* (Freiburg 1957). Without being indiscreet, we may recount a small anecdote in connection with *this* address, since it is typical of what we are talking about here. Pius XII read the above-mentioned address afterwards without any objection and yet also without being particularly affected by it, so that one of his closest collaborators told the author: 'Yes, he is indeed much closer to the Church triumphant.'

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tomorrow will be born) or, at best, by meeting it purely defensively, trying merely to preserve what we have? Is there not also this side to the Church? Can we say all this complainingly only of the *human beings* in the Church, when the Church is not an other-worldly aeon but the 'mass of believers' and hence also of the weak in faith? Is it not part of the correct picture of the Church to recognize this too, to take this scandal into consideration and to believe that it is permitted and 'must' be endured because things are not really meant to be so glorious in the Church? The fact that the Church recognizes herself as the guardian of the natural law and of the law of Christ does not by a long way mean that her faithful may not to a large extent be groping in the dark and disagree with each other about *how* these correct principles may and must be translated into those concrete, clear and practicable imperatives which are required over and above the correct principles themselves if one is to pass from thought to powerful action. The fact that the Church is always the Church of Saints does not yet ensure that these Saints will always exist, work and witness in the forum where the history of the world is being made, or that they are in the right place even only to a limited extent which God might permit even though His Church is not to be the Church of the mighty ones of this world. Hence, to a large extent, it would be absolutely conceivable for the individual Christian – precisely because he sees himself as a [340] *member* of the Church – to experience his own lot as that of the Church. By thus transferring the existential factors of his own existence to the Church, he would not need to lose sight of the fact that the Church is . . . the Church of Christ. On the contrary: she is the Church of Christ, precisely by reason of the fact that God's incarnate, forgiving grace has taken hold of human beings like ourselves – and precisely as we experience ourselves to be, with all our constantly mortally – threatened burden of existence – and has fashioned them into the Church. Would it then involve even the slightest dogmatic falsehood if the individual Christian were to see the Church precisely in the light of the experience of his own existence, viz. as the community of those who, although sinful, do not deny their guilt but hasten with it to the grace of God? Would it be dogmatically false for the individual to see the Church as the community of those who acknowledge that they are indeed nailed to the *cross* of their existence, but nailed there together with their crucified Lord . . . to see her as the community of the perplexed who nevertheless by faith redeem their darkness by advancing into the mystery of God... to see her as the community of those who have the courage to confess: my God, why hast thou forsaken me, and who, having said this, nevertheless commend their souls into the hands of the Father, even though it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God? Why, then, should not the Christian feel himself to be a member of the Church in the sense that he experiences his own experience and fate as the experience of the Church and as the fate endured in her by faith, so that precisely this experience characterizes his Church for him? For precisely *by the fact that* death is accepted in obedience, that the light of God is believed in darkness, that uncertainty is simply entrusted to the mystery, there comes into existence that community of believers which is and, by the grace of God, will always remain the Church. For she is never merely the external society organized and guaranteed by God in Christ; rather, this external society is always merely the social appearance and the sacrament of that mysterious community of those who truly believe and whom God's unrestrainable action of grace has made into true believers. But will it be possible to say that the Christian of today sees the Church though not entirely yet at least 'also' from *this* side? He sees her as the teaching Church and not as the Church which needs to believe; he sees her as the Church who stands in the light and dispels darkness, but not as the Church which patiently [341] endures darkness; he sees her as the goal of the works of God and not as the means to the future achievement of the purposes of God; in short, he sees her as the Queen and Mother, but not as the multitude of those who are like himself and who precisely in *this* way (and in no other) know themselves to be safe in God's grace. There are probably few Christians who would formulate all this as Bernhard Martin has done and who

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would experience it directly as an absolutely legitimate awareness of the Church: 'I am certainly grateful for having found my way into the Church or (which deep down comes to the same thing) for having been led into her, but I did not then nor do I now intend to feel "at home" on earth, not even within the Church.' How could such an experience of 'having here no lasting city' (even within the Church) be uncatholic, when the Church to which we belong is the Church *on pilgrimage* and we – the members of this Church – are suffering, erring, searching members, still hoping for what shall be, which alone is the finally valid reality?

It will perhaps be possible to make the meaning of all this a little clearer by expressing it in terms of dogmatic theology. The modern Catholic lives, one might say, according to the awareness of the Church expressed in the first Vatican Council. The characteristic quality of this awareness lies in the fact that the particular emphasis of this awareness (and not, of course, its exclusive content) is on the Church regarded as an empirical motive of credibility and not on the Church as an (in itself hidden) object of faith. We do not mean to say that there is no such thing as the Church understood as a motive of credibility for the fact that God has spoken in and through her, or that this aspect had been completely outside the religious consciousness of Christians in earlier ages (the 'see how these Christians love one another', and the ecclesiological, triumphal self-consciousness that the new generation of men has become tangible, as found in the writings of Minucius Felix, in the Epistle to Diognetus, in Tertullian, etc., are very old indeed). But to the religious consciousness of the Christians who are 'still' modern the Church is nevertheless to a marked degree a Church whose empirical appearance convinces people of her nature, and only to a very small extent a Church whose nature is believed 'in spite of' her appearance. The concept of the Church as a motive of credibility and the concept of the Church as the object of a necessarily difficult faith which consumes the whole power of one's heart and which is possible only by the miracle of grace, are strangely [342] intermingled. Nowadays one almost gets the impression that she – the Church – is the point at which one can almost physically lay hold of what one believes: 'Behold a house full of glory . . .'. One is very little aware of the fact that her empirically identifiable 'properties' and 'notes', and her believed and known properties (even though both are in part called by the same names) are not absolutely identical. What, for instance, would an *empirical* Catholicity mean (especially today, when for the first time there are also other organizationally constituted world – and life-systems of world-wide nature and power even apart from the Church), if one were not permitted to *believe* that really and truly all men have their place in her great variety, since her space is not her own but that of God? What would the unity of teaching and organization mean to us ultimately, if we could not *believe* (which does not mean 'experience') that in and beyond this (i.e. beyond the formulae and every form of organization) the very truth and reality are possessed in common in the faith which follows on the Spirit, and that in and beyond this all hearts are one, hearts which seem to be so unspeakably lonely? What would be the value of any empirical moral achievement in the Church (even to the extent of martyrdom) if one were not permitted the courage to *believe* that in the midst of all this, God's Holy Spirit achieves *his* work and pours out his love i.e. (himself) into these hearts, so that when one really gets down to analysing this moral achievement in its very depth, one really falls, not into the emptiness of man, but into the abyss of God? What would be the use of an empirically identifiable 'apostolicity' of the Church and of every uninterrupted hierarchic succession if we did not have the *belief* that this two-thousand-year-old Church has preserved the intangible fullness of her beginning, and has preserved it against every deadly expression of historical transitoriness? Yet does not modern awareness of the Church see the (genuine) visible 'glitter' of the Church and her believed glory too much as one and the same thing and does it not almost overlook the 'ontological difference' (based on the fact that the one – even though God-effected – is something finite and the other is God's absolute nature itself)? But might we not perhaps venture the paradox

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that, the more the Church is the community of those who *believe contra spem in spem* that God has done great things in them (i.e. of those who believe precisely because they accept the servant – form of the Church and help to endure it patiently to the end), the more (and really only thus) the Church will also become – [343] precisely in this way – that *signum elevatum in nationes* of which the first Vatican Council speaks so triumphantly? It will be difficult to maintain, however, that such dogmatically absolutely possible – indeed latently always also lived – aspects of the Church and of ecclesiological piety are very much to the fore in the modern awareness or that they have been made the subject of a great deal of systematic theological thinking.

We must now return to the beginning of this reflection. What import does it have for ecclesiological piety that one believes in God but not *in* the Church, and that the Church is merely an object of one's belief? This circumstance must mean something for ecclesiological piety, for after all, Christian piety is nothing other than belief becoming active in love. When we say that God is not merely the object of our belief but that we moreover believe in God, we mean by this that the act of faith does not stop at a proposition which is held to be true (because it 'agrees' with reality – a reality, however, which one possesses only in so far as one masters the proposition concerning it, which is a finite and inadequate expression of it) but that it encounters and possesses what is believed or, more correctly, the one who is believed. And it does this in a twofold respect: firstly, in so far as in the act of faith (seen from our side) there occurs that peculiarly *personal* act of relatedness in which the knower and the one who affirms is not aware of *himself* by knowledge 'about something' but which is a relatedness in which he really reaches beyond himself, bursts open and transcends himself, and so passes beyond reflection and 'mediation' and finds the courage to hold on to the 'reality' itself (which is a person), a relatedness in which the knower does not, in order to make sure, return to himself with consequent suffocation within himself in the interior business of reflection. Secondly (and this is more important) in so far as the act of faith is an act of grace (and grasps itself precisely as such and *thus* gets away from itself), it is supported and effected by the reality of the one who is the object of the act of faith. For 'grace' (understood as 'supernatural', 'infused' virtue) is not just any 'assistance' for some other, intrinsically still purely human act. In spite of all its 'createdness' (i.e. in spite of God's real transforming arrival in man himself) grace is in ultimate truth God himself communicating his own reality (although as the infinite mystery) to his creature; in this way and by this fact, God makes the act of faith possible and supports it, so that *that* which is believed is in [344] very truth the ground of being for the act of faith. Hence, one believes in very truth . . . 'into God'. And this certainly can be said of faith only in relation to God and not of any other reality which is believed: not even of the Church. Only further reflection will show the exact meaning of this difference, although this will require patience.

It is, of course, theologically speaking absolutely possible to say that the Church is in a certain respect the *ground* of faith and that she supports the faith of the individual. In a certain sense this is even easier to understand today than ever before. For precisely *if* faith goes 'into God' – because it becomes faith precisely and, properly speaking, only by the fact that the absolute, limitless Mystery who embraces our being from all eternity, communicates himself to the finite creature in an unspeakable nearness of forgiveness and beatitude and does not remain in the frightening splendour of unapproachable light which unmasks us as pure darkness and expels us from his sight – would we today have the courage to believe this on our own account, if we could not believe and hope it also for *everyone*? We today (even though we let God . . . be God and adore his decrees as both incomprehensible and irreversible) cannot feel so 'aristocratic' (or naively egotistic?) as to be able to hope or fear less for others than for ourselves. Hence, we can only hear the message telling us that the incomprehensibly remote, infinite Mystery wishes to be absolutely near to us for our

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beatitude, and realize that it is said to each one of us, if we hear it as the message addressed to *everyone*, if we really believe in the 'universal salvific will' of God and if we have no more fears for others regarding its 'conditional nature' than we have for ourselves. Because this message is addressed to everyone, we (each individual ego) dare to hear it as addressed to 'me' and are not afraid that it might be the most terrible misunderstanding with which my crazy self-delusion has ever deceived me about myself. I may and must think only the best of others, I must hope for the Infinite for them, I may not have a low opinion of *them*, for then I look down on them and fall into the deadly state of hatred (since hatred is already present whenever there is not infinite love). Thus, when we believe today, it always happens in the midst of that unnumbered and truly all embracing throng of those to whom we firmly believe the same word is addressed and for whom we firmly hope that they may hear this word unto salvation. We always believe in communion with all those who are addressed by God, who listen and who believe, and hence also [345] we always believe in the Church. For we understand the Church, when we believe, *in this way*, viz. as the historically and socially constituted assembly of those who have the courage to believe, who as it were confess to one another the secret enormity of the faith living in the ground of their being, and who – by professing, praying, celebrating and rendering present the very basis of their courage, viz. the Death and Resurrection of Jesus – give one another courage to make this daring, absolute claim to infinite grace. Thus faith comes through the Church, and the Church through faith. *To this extent*, the Church is also the ever-supporting ground of faith, a ground which faith – being the grace of God and thus the Original, the Ultimate which presupposes nothing – prepares for itself. This does not, of course, by any means say everything that should be said if we are to get a completely clear idea of why and to what extent the Church is the ground of faith. She is this also because she passes on the message of Christ, and this from Christ, by her teaching and in her faith and thus (and thus alone) brings together the whole fullness of what is believed, which alone makes faith to be faith. For faith must never be understood as a merely formal 'attitude' (no matter towards whom); it is the laying hold of a reality whose truth depends entirely on the fact that this very reality itself (and ultimately this is God's grace) is grasped in a knowing – believing way. In and by this the Church is the ground of faith even in her teaching authority. This is true not merely with regard to what is explicitly and authoritatively taught by her or what is obediently accepted (this factor is already constituted by the Church understood as the authorized messenger of Christ's word), but also in another respect which is most frequently overlooked. Faith is really faith in something certainly taught, only by the fact that in and through this, faith is the overcoming of self by entering into the unspeakable mystery of God. To this extent, the explicit faith (strange as this may sound) lives by the *fides implicita* and not merely vice versa. This process of bursting through what is grasped by faith in word and proposition and of thereby passing beyond it into the Incomprehensible (which is greater than our comprehension in faith) and into the Mystery to which our 'mysteries of faith' point (i.e. the Mystery contained in them only in so far as they point to it and away from themselves) and with which they wish to put us into contact, is not the regrettable 'deficiency' of propositions which 'really' and in their 'positive content' should not have this obscurity. The Mystery [346] is precisely what matters, the real 'positive content' of these propositions, the permanent and unsurpassable element. For when one day these propositions will give way to the direct vision of God, the Mystery will not disappear but will then appear for the first time and for ever, and will then become completely immeasurable: the incomprehensible God who, precisely in the *visio beata*, remains the Incomprehensible and Who is seen as *such*. If the knowledge of faith is not ultimately a possession but a 'being possessed', not a disposing but a being disposed, if it is a surrender to the Mystery in itself and not merely a holding-on-to certain not fully penetrable propositions in which one could at least hold on to what is comprehensible in them then it is a

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fact that the knowledge of faith is as it must be here, but conviction of that fact cannot be achieved simply by a formally empty leap away from the propositions into the Mystery (which would again be simply the enjoyment of one's own power of self-transcendence); this conviction can be achieved only by surrendering one's faith into the faith of believers in general and taking this as the norm of one's faith, and this particularly if the individual has not yet in any way made this faith explicitly or consciously his own. Explicit faith is always also faith which from the outset inserts itself with silent obedience into the faith of the Church – the greater, far more comprehensive and manifold faith of the Church – the faith which, to be itself, has been given the scope of the whole time of salvation (and this right up to the final consummation) for its history, experience and development. We can certainly expect modern man to show understanding for this 'ecclesiological character' of faith.

It is certainly true that the almost deadly feeling of the relative character of all knowledge and of all religious convictions, the feeling that it all depends on one's perspective and historical development (a feeling encouraged by the present-day *reflex* consciousness of the great number of religions, Christian denominations, religious convictions and theological schools) must not be allowed to turn modern man into a relativistic sceptic or agnostic, who simply falls silent, turns away his face and lets the unexplorable have the mastery over him. But one thing will become vividly clear to the man who has this experience, and this is the realization that the real communication between men in the truth – a truth which must exist if the desire for truth is not to be a completely idle claim doomed to failure – cannot be present only where and because men agree with one another on [347] certain formulated principles, even though such an agreement is necessary as a manifestation, confirmation and means of another, deeper communication. There must be a deeper more realistic union in truth which however is not merely something postulated ideologically: the union which takes place when man's knowledge – by willingly and obediently passing beyond itself – reaches its ultimate reality by surrendering itself to the greater mystery called God, the union which is achieved in a historically *real* way and also manifests itself in this way, whenever man surrenders himself to the universal belief in its historical and concrete form, i.e. the faith of the Church. The believer realizes that he *really* believes (i.e. that he bursts through his knowledge and passes into the uncomprehended Comprehending Being) by believing with the faith of the Church and by surrendering himself to the faith of all the witnesses beginning with Abel the Just right up to the last believer at the end of time. Thus, modern man in particular – in his sober, painful experience of the historical and conditional nature of his own knowledge and of the knowledge of each individual – experiences the Church as the community of believers; this is a community in which each individual (even the one who is actually teaching, since even the correct teaching he proclaims at any particular moment is never an adequate expression of the faith of all believers in all ages) is both humbled and liberated by the faith of all those with whose exercise of faith he communicates mysteriously and yet (in his obedience to the Church) soberly and firmly, both by his obedience in faith towards the faith of the Church and by the one, common possession of what he believes by the grace of faith which is itself a matter of faith. He is humbled, because no one can achieve the fullness of the whole faith by himself and merely as an individual. He is liberated, because – in spite of his very 'subjective' knowledge of faith – the fullness of faith and the full reality of what is believed are his in the Church of believers. In *this* way the believer may also hear the actual official proclamation of doctrine as embraced by the whole faith of the Church (for these two are not identical) and, over and above this, of all true believers (in so far as they are not yet members of the visible Church) and hence also as introduced into the believed reality itself, which is the infinite mystery of God. This is not surprising, for the believing Church (a concept presupposed by the right distinction between the teaching and the listening Church, and one which must not be shortsightedly identified with the 'listening [348] Church') always

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believes 'more' (not in a quantitative sense but in intensive nearness to the reality accepted by faith) than the teaching Church. If this were not so, then either there could be no progress in the development of dogma in respect of what is defined by the *magisterium*, or there would have to be a further public revelation after the close of the apostolic age from which such new decisions of the *magisterium* could be drawn. The content of such new definitions was, therefore, already present before the definition, and this precisely in the greater faith of the believing Church. Yet we must not imagine all this as if every and each element thus present in this exercised faith of the believing Church – a faith which embraces the faith of the individual and the teaching of the extraordinary *magisterium* as well – urgently requires formulation in a doctrinal proposition issued by the *magisterium* and that in this way the juridical, official teaching reflection will gradually catch up with this all-embracing faith of the Church. This is not so, for the simple reason that this all-embracing faith of the believing Church is itself still growing in a certain respect and manner (without thereby contradicting the fact that revelation 'closed' with the death of the last Apostle). For the 'closing' of revelation with the 'death of the last Apostle' does not imply an arbitrary fixing of the boundary for what is revealed, as if there were a further field of possible but not actually realized divine communications. It means rather that this is the completion of divine revelation, because it is the absolute and unsurpassable self-communication in grace and glory and *hence* cannot be surpassed to any essential degree (unless it be when the present condition passes into the vision of glory). But precisely this self-communication of God can be accepted ever more radically in a 'subjective' sense. If this were not so, then the grace of faith could not grow (which no theologian would dare to affirm) or at least this growth would have no significance for the appropriation in faith of what is believed (which is equally unthinkable). This genuine and continuous growth in faith is conceivable and is an increase in 'knowledge' quite apart from whether or not one thinks it possible that the teaching of faith formulated in propositions by the *magisterium* grows by ever new propositions. There is not only growth by articulate increase of analysis (and this is practically the only way in which one almost involuntarily understands the development of dogma) but also growth by silent synthesis. It can be seen from this that faith today – precisely where the 'credere *in* Deum' [349] becomes clear to it over and above the '*credere Deum*' and the '*credere Deo*' – makes the believer aware in particular of the presence of the Church as the wider congregation of believers, not merely as the messenger and guarantor of an (always again only individual) faith, but as the subject to whom the '*individuum*' who experiences his historical finiteness even in his faith, entrusts his faith.

Yet, according to dogmatic theology (going back now to the beginning of this reflection for which the last few pages have been merely a limiting digression) this faith is not a '*credere in Ecclesiam*' but only a '*credere Ecclesiam*'. This fact is of the greatest importance for the 'ecclesiological piety' of today (or perhaps only of tomorrow?). The personal entrusting of each other to each other, which is included in the '*credere in Deum*', cannot be applied to the Church. However much we may and must 'personify' the Church, however much she may be more than just the numerical sum of individual Christians, however much she is a reality which is not only a juridical reality or fiction, an ideological structure, or a 'moral unity' – the Church as such is not a person, i.e. the Church, in so far as she must be distinguished from real individual persons, cannot be conscious of herself, cannot justify herself, cannot decide, nor is she eternal.

The Church, therefore, cannot give herself in that personal surrender of which a real, self-disposing person is capable, and as such she also cannot receive such a surrender. If love, respect, loyalty, etc., mean first and foremost a relationship between real persons, then man and Christ can have love, respect and loyalty towards the Church only in a derived, secondary sense. Or, alternatively these attitudes towards the Church are ultimately (in so far as they are

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not directed to God himself) attitudes towards the persons who form this Church. *These* are loved in the Church because, and in so far as, they are such in God's supernatural providence that they form the Church. This does not mean, however, that 'ecclesiological piety' dissolves itself in a nominalistic way into a merely ideal collective sum of attitudes of one Christian towards other individual Christians. For these individual Christians are 'individuals', 'single ones' and, each one of them, uniquely individual persons, precisely in the absolutely irreplaceable and inalienable uniqueness of their spiritual existence *in so far as* they love and accept one another, and in so far as they open themselves toward one another and are one with each other in the one truth and love (through the real self-communication of God in grace and Vision). [350] Spiritual 'individuality' and spiritual 'community' are realities which grow in direct and not in inverse proportion to each other; they are realities which mutually condition each other. Hence, someone who loves the individuals in their irreplaceable uniqueness, loves them also in their mutual unity, and hence also in the ultimate depth and radicality of this unity, and thus in the ground of *this* unity which is the Spirit of God, and he consequently loves them also as the Church. Added to this there is the fact that even these attitudes which are directed first and foremost to persons, and only *thus* also to the Church, are a '*credere in*' only in so far as they are supported and exploited to their ultimate depth by the personal faith and love towards the personal nature of *God*. Hence, even though one may say quite truly to someone: 'I believe *in* you' as a child of God, as someone redeemed, as someone called to salvation – and imply that in this movement of faith one attains the Church as well – yet even this 'I believe in you' which – within the Church – one person can, and indeed must, say to another in a certain sense, must be based 'on the still more original 'I believe in you' which God and man say to each other in the grace of 'divine' faith (in quite a different way, of course, since the dialogue of the supernatural saving event does not take place between two equal partners; but there is a possible analogy here, since there is an absolute and personal self-communication and surrender to the other person on both sides). Hence this faith is even more truly a faith of the Church rather than a faith 'in the Church'.

This does not merely provide us with a useless and somewhat subtle distinction, although it may appear so especially to someone whose analysis of faith usually overlooks the depth of the augustinian distinction between '*credere Deum – Deo – in Deum*'. This distinction is presumably of greater significance for present-day 'ecclesiological piety' than it ever was before. The man of today (or tomorrow) has the experience of having the Church as an object of his faith but not of believing *in* the Church, i.e. he experiences her as the object but not as that ultimate ground of faith which for faith considered as a personal act (which completely engages the whole person of the believer) can only be the person 'in whom' one believes. The fact that this experience is pressing and oppressing, really follows already from what has been said before. Whenever the qualitative difference between the empirical experience of the Church as an extrinsic motive of credi*bility* and the *supernatural* experience of God's testimony to himself as an inner [351] motive of faith becomes radically clear to the Christian – and how could this not be actual to the Christian today with his empirical experience of that Church which is his destiny, i.e. with his experience in which he (also) experiences the Church just as he experiences himself in his frailty, as someone exposed and threatened – then the Christian can no longer subjectively overlook the objective difference between the Church as a motive of credibility and the Church as an object of faith. The Church is an object of his *faith* because he believes *in* God. The Church thus becomes 'for him' also an object sustained by his faith, something which he upholds with the last ounce of strength in his heart and by the pure power of grace, even though he does not see in her what he believes of her. We are merely repeating a truth here which has been stated many times before, but it is a truth which must be repeated in this connection: in modern society which is in every

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respect a pluralistic society, the Church is no longer a sociologically obvious reality, something which supports everything from without, or something which, as a dimension of existence independent of the individual and his decision, is simply a quite obvious, pre-established reality. Of course, the Church exists and remains even if 'I' do not believe, for God's effective and eschatologically victorious grace will always see to it that there are men who believe in Jesus Christ and who profess this faith in unity, order and love. But in contrast to previous ages, the Church today remains *for* '*me*' *in particular* only when I believe. She really shows herself again more clearly, more painfully, more challengingly than ever before since the time of Constantine's Empire Church as what she always was and will be: the Church of believers, the Church which exists because she is the object of faith, and is the object of faith by the fact that one believes in God through Jesus Christ. One should not be shocked by this way of putting it: the Church exists because she is the object of faith. Naturally, she remains even if an individual, even if many individuals do not believe. But she would no longer exist if she were not believed at all. By the very fact that this faith is always effected anew by God's grace – by the fact that it is effected absolutely by pre-defining, effective grace and that therefore there is not merely (in the Old Testament sense, one might say) the organization and the sign but also the animated body of Christ and effective, fulfilled sign – by and through *this* very fact God 'preserves' the Church, and not merely by the sociological continuance of the juridical Church organization (which is certainly also absolutely willed [352] and effectively caused by God's providence). All this is really quite self-evident. But the Christian of today experiences this obvious truth more clearly than in the old days. And this is an essential part of his ecclesiological piety today: the Church is the object of his faith; in his faith, and in the faith of many, the Church herself (in her inner pneumatic being) really becomes a reality. And this Church-forming faith of the Church takes place in the faith *in* God (*in Christo*), in the total self-surrender of man to the personal Mystery which – infinitely distant and yet having come unspeakably near through grace – reigns over and right through man's existence.

It is perhaps possible to clarify from a different point of view what we mean here by this self-evident, always valid and yet surprisingly new trait of modern ecclesiological piety. Who has not, heard of St Augustine's saying (and perhaps even repeated it) that he would not believe the gospels if the authority of the Church did not move him to do so. Now, we do not mean to dispute the fact that one can give a correct meaning to this statement: the Church herself can be an extrinsic motive of credibility for faith in general (but not an internal motive of faith) in the case of many individuals, as has already been said; the Church, by her teaching authority – once she has become an object of faith in her authority as a divine institution – can and will be for everyone the mediatrix of divine revelation and an argument for the event of revelation, in the case of many particular propositions of faith which without her would not be attained in their exact content; all faith, as has already been said, acknowledges itself to be faith in the Church and of the Church. But speaking purely in terms of fundamental theology, i.e. theoretically – and today no doubt also existentially in the case of most people – it is a fact that the Church is not the first object of faith; belief in her rests on a faith (and its motives of credibility) which does not refer to the Church but to Christ and to God. Since the Church is also attained by means of this latter faith, she is also an object of faith. Hence it cannot be said either in theory or in practice (at least in most cases) that one believes in the Gospel simply because the Church is the object of one's faith. Rather (in spite of what St Augustine says) the Church is an object of one's faith because one believes the Gospel. Thus, every fundamental theology develops first the doctrine of Christ in his function as '*legatus divinus*' *before* going on to the treatise on the Church. Man entrusts himself to the Church because Christ, the One sent by God, has founded the [353] Church and has passed on his authority and power to her office-bearers. The ethos of augustinian ecclesiological

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piety – which conceived things as if the Church were simply and by direct 'grasp' the object first grasped and understood by Christian faith and that in this grasp everything else is attained – is therefore only partially true objectively speaking, but not only this, it is also not (any longer) subjectively characteristic of present-day ecclesiological piety. The Church is an object of our faith, we might say, but we do not believe (so much) on account of the Church.

The dogmatic theologian of today can envisage ecclesiological piety from still another, quite different point of view. Putting it very pointedly and perhaps exaggeratedly, one might say that the Christian of today experiences the Church not so much as the society of the heirs of salvation but rather as the historically and sociologically tangible vanguard of the heirs of salvation. Naturally, the Church is the Ark of salvation, the people of the redeemed, the community of those called to salvation. Obviously, it is just as valid today as it was in the days of the Fathers to state that 'outside' the Church there is no salvation, that the Church as well as baptism is an intrinsically necessary means for salvation and not merely necessary for salvation on account of an extrinsic precept. But with regard to this dogma stating that the Church is necessary for salvation *necessitate medii*, the consciousness of faith possessed by this very Church has passed through a very long and significant development the result of which is of most practical significance today. The Christian has a clear understanding today of the universal salvific will of God. He has grasped the fact that grace does not become grace simply because it will be given only to a few, and that it remains the miracle of an unfathomable favour even if it is offered to everyone, and even if it were to or does (who can say?) become operative in everyone. He knows that baptism attains an elementary, though very indistinct, visibleness even in the desire for baptism and thus can become effective (as faith and love) even before this freely accepted dynamism of grace has taken on a concrete form in the social, public structure of the Church as sacramental baptism of water. He knows that that innermost attitude and act of faith which becomes the whole basis of one's existence – in other words, the attitude and act by which a person opens himself up in the very depth of knowledge, hope and loving acceptance towards the 'revelation' which takes place as an event in the act of divine self-communication [354] and which by this act of grace also changes the consciousness of man, albeit perhaps only in a very unobjectified way – can in certain circumstances take place also in a way in which the conceptually objectified content of this consciousness draws very little or almost nothing (or even nothing at all?) from the explicit or anonymous stream of divine verbal communications within the official history of salvation, without such an attitude thereby necessarily ceasing to be 'faith' in the theological sense. The man of today knows that he may hope courageously that very many people may find salvation through such faith, even if they have never during their whole life become members of the Church understood as the external juridical structure of the Church (which nevertheless belongs also to the nature of the Church in her role of providing the 'dimension for salvation'). However much he must fear for himself, and hence also for everyone else, that he may be lost – and must fear this with all the seriousness of his existence openly submitted to the hidden judgement of God – he is nevertheless confident that he may be permitted to hope for the victory of grace for everyone; he hopes this particularly since, as a Catholic Christian, he knows through the doctrine of 'Purgatory' (however much it may need to be interpreted more exactly) that the history of the world tangible *here* below is not simply and absolutely identical with what (as a basis and cause of finality) precedes eternity finalized in God's judgement. And this attitude, this hope is indispensable for the Christian of today. Unlike the Christian of earlier times (unlike even the great heart of a St Augustine, not to mention the puny, the self-righteous and the egotistical), he can no longer simply think that *he* himself has the good will, the faithfulness towards conscience and the readiness to obey God's call unconditionally, and that the others, who do not belong visibly to the Ark of the Church, do not have this attitude. He can no longer think in this way, even if he were to add

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the thought that his faith and good will are a gift of grace given to him without any merit on his part (and that God has obviously refused this 'effective' grace to the others, in the mysterious ways of predestination). He is not naively convinced of the good will of others, but the reason for this is the fact that he takes a most critical view of his own good will. He cannot do anything else but allow others just as much chance of good will and obedience to conscience and to the Word of God speaking through it; he cannot do anything else but grant them this chance even if up till now or right up to their death this presupposed, presumed and hoped [355] for good will has not in their case led to official membership of the Church. He cannot act differently even for the simple reason that he knows that this official membership of the Church – even when it is supported by a 'good will' whose truth and existential genuineness, however, will always remain uncertain even in one's own mind – is not yet a guarantee for what it actually means and announces (like the sacramental sign which may be a fruitful sacrament or – who knows – a merely valid and sacrilegiously received sacrament); in other words, he knows that official membership of the Church is no guarantee that such a member belongs to the hidden multitude of those whom God alone knows and to whom God has given the gift of believing in Him and of loving Him in obedience to his word promising to give himself to them in his whole reality and glory.

The man of today can no longer think differently, and this even for a very simple reason which was not present previously. In previous ages, the different groups of 'world views' were on the whole at that time distinct groups even from national, cultural and geographical, sociological and historical points of view. And each of these groups, thus distinguished from one another in this 'intramundane' sense, had its own common world-view or soon settled down to such a common view after a short, critical period of combat. Consequently faith was also a simple sociological phenomenon, and so someone of a 'different Creed' or the unbeliever was also looked upon simply as the stranger who was already incomprehensible even by reason of all his other peculiarities of life, and often even as someone culturally inferior to oneself. Thus one would not be surprised that he did not have the right faith and one was quite prepared to assume without any qualms that he lacked the true faith on account of some guilt on his part and . . . that he would be lost through a just judgement. If one went to battle against the unbeliever not simply with the weapons of the spirit and of love, but also with physical force then the opponents were clearly the enemies of God, the 'unbelievers', the arch-enemies of Christianity, of truth and morality, and one could not really 'realize' that these others were also human beings who loved, were kind and faithful, who 'meant well' just as much as anyone else, who felt themselves unjustly attacked by the Christians, and who really thought that they were serving God when they said 'no' to Christianity. Today, the 'unbeliever' is the neighbour, the relative, the human person on whose honesty, reliability and decency one must rely just as much as on the corresponding qualities [356] of one's fellow believers (in which process one sometimes gets the staggering impression that one can rely much more on the former than the latter). Today every Christian experiences how only too often people persevere in the religious convictions into which they were born, and that they do this with utter peace of conscience and inner peace of mind – almost as a foregone conclusion – even though they live in close proximity to Catholics and the Church, at least in their ordinary life. Indeed, must this not be said to be the normal case, if one understands by 'normal' the greatest number of actual cases, and if one hopes optimistically, on account of the universal and serious salvific will, that these appearances are not simply deceptive, and that most people do not live contrary to the dictates of their conscience during the whole of their life? We are not going to argue about the point here as to how this fact can be reconciled with the truth that the Church, with her truth and grace, is the path to salvation intended by God basically for all men, one to which they are also obliged and which in itself is possible for them. The only question here is how the Catholic, who believes the Church to be the

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universal path to salvation for everyone and who at the same time holds fast both in theory *and* in his practical hope to the certainty of God's *universal* salvific will, can come to terms with what he experiences in the above sense, viz. the existence of the pluralism of world-views, a pluralism which cannot be overcome in the foreseeable future, and which exists even precisely where people of different outlooks meet one another peaceably in the same sector of human existence and where they are no longer historically and sociologically separated from one another from the very outset, to such an extent that this does indeed explain their disagreements and yet does not give rise to any practical problem for each particular group.

The answer to this question can surely lie only in the following fact: the Catholic must experience and see the Church as the 'vanguard', as the sacramental sign, the historical tangibility of a saving grace which goes beyond the sociologically tangible and the 'visible' Church, i.e. the grace of an anonymous Christianity which 'outside' the Church has not yet come to itself but which 'within' the Church is 'present to itself', not because it is simply not present outside but because, objectively speaking, it has not yet reached full maturity there and hence does not as yet understand itself in that explicit way and reflex objectivity of the formulated profession of faith, of the sacramental objectification [357] and of the sociological organization which are found within the Church herself. The Christian, in other words, will not regard the non-Christian (to facilitate matters, we leave the problem of the non-Catholic Christian out of consideration) as the non-Christian who, because he is not a Christian, finds himself outside the stream of salvation. Rather (if it is true that Christianity is salvation and that in the matter of salvation, God does not suddenly allow 'good will' to substitute for the real thing, for basically this would destroy the doctrine that the Church and grace are necessary means for salvation and not merely necessary by precept), the Christian will regard the non-Christians as anonymous Christians who do not know what they really are deep down in conscience, by grace and by a possibly very implicit yet true realization of what the Christian too realizes, even though the Christian knows what he is doing in this regard even in the objective reflex form of his consciousness. There can be no doubt about it: even this knowledge – this explicit, propositional, 'confessionally' formulated faith which also makes it possible and obligatory that there should be a sociological institutionalization of those who believe in this way – is a part of full Christianity; it is a grace which in its turn facilitates and ensures that what is professed in this way, is really present in the depth of human existence and of conscience. There can be no doubt about the fact that the Catholic feels and praises his explicit membership of the Church as an unmerited grace, as his good fortune, and as the promise of salvation (and indeed rightly so); but he also knows at the same time, in great fear and trembling, that the greater grace brings with it also greater dangers, that more is demanded of those to whom more is given, and that he does not know whether he is reaching the standard required of him and not of others, and that even here it may be true what Our Lord said: viz. that many will come from the East and from the West, and will feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom will be put forth into the darkness outside (Mt 8.11 *sq*.). But because the Christian hopes also for the salvation of the others, because he knows enough theology today to be able to see that he *can* hope for this since he can understand how one can be a Christian (i.e. a person living by the grace of God and of His Christ) even when one does not know the name of Christ or thinks one has to reject it – because of all this, the Christian can see himself and those who are Christians by name, i.e. the Church, only as the vanguard of those who are marching along the [358] roads of history into God's salvation and into His eternity. The Church is for him, as it were, the uniformed part of God's soldiers; she is for him that point at which the inner being of the human – divine existence appears also historically and sociologically (or better: where it appears most clearly, since for the enlightened view of faith, God's grace does not lack all visible presence even outside the Church). He knows that the morning light

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on the hills is the beginning of the day in the valleys, and not the day above which judges the night below. In view of the Christian doctrine that there is no absolute principle of evil – that evil is the perishable, that the unique God is good and wills also the good of the world, that the real is also the good and hence a true realism must think well of reality – the Christian knows that it would be blasphemy to think that ultimately it is easier to do evil than to do good, that evil and not the good is installed at the very roots of 'dispassionately' and realistically fathomed reality, and that evil enjoys a longer life than the good. He knows that it is the creature's pride and not his humility which thinks in this way . . . which thinks that it can emancipate itself from God at least in doing evil, which in reality is just a stupid lie. The Christian knows that it is precisely the achievement of his existence which is demanded of him, to believe in the light while still in darkness, to believe in beatitude while still in pain, to believe in the absoluteness of God while in our state of relativity. He knows that in its history revelation has unmasked our sin for us merely in order that we may believe in the forgiveness of God (for guilt by itself we could have experienced already in our pain, our death and our desperate state). When St Paul (Rom 9-11) sees the disbelief of the Jews as something transitory, this is not yet sufficiently explained by holding that only the Jews living later on will come to believe but that those living earlier on have remained unbelieving (for only an unchristian collectivist could have such a naive conception). The faith of the people of Israel which is to appear later on in history (which for us is – even later on – no tangible, certain predestination to salvation for the individual) must be a sign of the fact that God has had mercy on this people even earlier on but in an intangible manner (again without implying anything certain about any particular individual). For otherwise why should Israel as a whole be called by the faith of its later period and not by the unbelief of its earlier period? How could it otherwise be preferable to say that Israel as such will be found by God's grace, than that Israel has closed herself against God?

[359] Hence, the Christian looks calmly and fearlessly into the world, into the world of a thousand opinions and views of the world. He does not need anxiously to consult statistics to see whether the Church is the greatest world-view organization or whether her numbers are keeping pace with the growth of the world population. He will indeed look into the world with missionary zeal. He will bear witness to the name of Christ. He will wish to share his grace with others, for he possesses a grace which these others lack . . . *still* lack. But he knows that if he remains calm and patiently zealous, then his zeal will have the greatest chance of success. He knows that he may imitate God's patience (which, according to St Paul, has a positive salvific character and not the character of a judgement). He knows that God has willed this world just as it is, because otherwise it would not be. He knows that even the merely 'permitted' is permitted only as an element of what is divinely willed (and not merely permitted) and that this willed reality may and must be hoped for not only as the revelation of the justice of God, but also as the revelation of God's infinite goodness to men. He goes out boldly and full of hope to meet as brothers even those who by their 'world-view' do not wish to be his brother. Yet he sees in them those who do not know what they really are, those who have not yet seen clearly what presumably they nevertheless accomplish already in the deepest dimension of their existence (to such an extent that one has the duty to presume this hopefully and that it would be loveless to take them for less . . . for, may I as a Christian simply presuppose, without any reason whatsoever, that the other is without grace?). The Christian sees anonymous Christianity at work in the other in a thousand different ways. When he sees him to be a kind, loving person who is faithful to his conscience, then he will no longer say today: these are merely 'natural virtues'. After all, such virtues exist ultimately only in the abstract. He will no longer say that these are certainly only the 'glittering vices of the pagans', as St Augustine said. Rather he will think: there is the grace of Christ at work even in someone who has never yet explicitly called upon it, but

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who nevertheless has already yearned for it in the inexpressible and nameless longing of his heart; there is someone else in whom the inexpressible groanings of the Spirit have already called upon and prayed for that silent but all-governing secret of existence which we Christians know to be the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Take a Christian seeing the 'pagan' dying with resignation. He notices how the other lets himself fall resignedly in [360] death into the bottomless abyss which he has never yet fathomed (since he would have to be infinite to be able to grasp God), and this as if it could not be otherwise (and yet it could be different, since one can use the last remaining ounce of the energy of one's whole clenched existence for one last, absolute protest and in one absolute, cynical doubt). He notices how the other professes in this no longer articulate willingness that this abyss is the abyss of the meaningful secret and not of damning emptiness. In this case the Christian sees in such a dying 'pagan' the one who has been nailed to the saving cross of existence at the right hand of Christ, and this reality – the personally accomplished and accepted reality of this dying person – speaks without words: Lord, remember me when thou shalt enter into thy kingdom. Why should it not be so? The pure transcendence of man which is no longer used as a means to assert his earthly existence, but which is accepted and endured, can surely be elevated by grace so that, having been freed from its deviation into the infinite, it becomes a dynamic urge directed towards the God of eternal life, in so far as God is in his very own, communicable and communicated reality, the goal and end of the supernatural destiny of man. Into the bargain, since – according to good thomistic teaching – this all-surpassing and liberating orientation of the spiritual transcendence of man by grace also changes the horizon (the 'formal object') of spiritual realization, even though it does not represent any objectively new object, it is also materially a 'revelation' and hence, if accepted, is also faith. Why then should not the fact of a person's obedient and loving entrance into the uncontrollable infinity of his transcendence – into which one does not enter in the measure of one's comprehension of it but in the measure in which one is uncontrollably comprehended by it – be more possible than *merely* a spiritual and natural transcendence? Why should it not be in fact the dynamic force which, by God's action within us, carries us into the life of God? And why should it not suffice that man accepts this dynamic urge by the fact that he willingly lets the Incomprehensible, in His incomprehensible way, do with him what He wills? (Must it be specially emphasized that this acceptance must be conceived as naturally containing all the demands of natural and supernatural ethics? Of course, this must be conceived in such a way that – as the experience of pagans and also of Christians shows – the right orientation towards God can be 'subjectively' achieved in practice even where there are most important errors with regard to individual material norms of morality.)

[361] Hence, in his preaching of Christianity to the 'non-Christian', the Christian will not proceed so much from the idea of wanting to convert someone else into something which up till now he has not been at all, but rather he will try to make him more conscious of what he is. Naturally, he will do this, not because Christianity is – in a modernistic sense – merely the conscious realization of a natural religious need, but because God in his grace and on account of his salvific will has long ago offered the reality of Christianity to man, and because it is absolutely possible and probable that man has already accepted this reality, without being conscious of that fact. These, therefore, are the presuppositions under which the Christian of today and tomorrow will see and experience the Church. Not indeed as the exceptional, and as something which asserts itself only with difficulty, not as one of the many 'Sects' into which humanity is divided, not as one of the many factors of a pluralistic society and of a pluralistic mental outlook of humanity. He will rather see and experience it as the tangibility of something which already unites men internally as the historical constitution of what is universal and what (in spite of being quite freely established by God, yet being established precisely by *God* and not by some particular finite being) is really quite self-evident. The

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Christian of today and tomorrow will see and experience the Church as the genuine representation of the nature of man as planned by God (the 'historical' nature of man, to which belongs also his supernatural calling), as the sacrament of a grace which – precisely because it is offered to everyone – presses towards its sacramental, historical appearance even where the sacrament is not yet present, and which precisely in this way is never absolutely identical with its effective constitutive sign but rather promises – precisely by the sign which it renders present and by which it is rendered present (both are to be affirmed) – that it is powerfully at work *everywhere*. If the history of mankind is one in which everyone from Abel right down to the last man is connected and in which everyone means something for everyone else throughout all ages and not merely for those living at the same time and place on earth, then the Church is the leaven not only when we can see with our own eyes that she has taken hold of part of the rest of the flour and thus has herself made *it* part of the fermenting mass, but always and for each and every age, and especially also where the flour has not (yet) changed into the leavened dough in a way tangible to us. The Church will appear to such a Christian precisely as the promise made to the [362] non-Christian world, and this not merely to the extent and only when this world itself has already become the Church. The promise is not merely the promise of the growing conversion of this world into the Church, but it is the promise of a possibility for the world to be saved by the Church even where it does not itself already become that Church which can be experienced historically.

All this is true even for the simple reason that the Church is after all also the promise of salvation for that world which lived and died before her time. For if Christ, in and through his historically tangible nature (and not merely as the eternal Logos of the world) is the salvation of all men – even of those who lived before his time (and lived for hundred thousands of years in an unpredictable, laborious and dark history quite incomprehensible to itself) – then this is valid in due proportion also for the Church. When we ask: what reveals the fact, and whereby it is promised to the world of all ages in a historically clear way and with accomplished objectivity that the world is subject to the mercy and not the angry judgement of God, the only answer we can give is that this is due to Christ alone and to his Body which is the Church. If, however, we accept and agree without difficulty that the Church was the effective sign set up for the salvation of earlier ages – a salvation belonging to these times before Christ and the Church without manifesting itself as (even though it was) a salvation coming through the Church – then it should not be surprising for someone who knows this, that the times after Christ lie in the dimension of the Christian and ecclesiastical salvation even when they have not yet become part of the Church in a tangible, sociological sense. After all, if it is true that the Church will always remain the sign of contradiction right to the very end, then this means, in a different terminology, that the Church seen sociologically will always be one single entity within a world which itself will always remain pluralistic in its world-views. Knowing this, therefore, the Christian works for the 'victory' of the Church in the knowledge that the Church will in truth never be absolutely victorious during the age of this world (which he knows, not from scientific forecasts of world-history but from the Word of God himself). If he nevertheless does not stop hoping that the whole world might one day be consumed into the pure flame of the love Of God since ultimately the world itself is driven on by God's overpowering love for it in Christ, then he cannot see this Church otherwise than as the promise that, in the midst of the contradiction of the world [363] against God, her deeper 'yes' to God will nevertheless be achieved by the superior force of God's grace. He will not see the Church as one camp to which is opposed the camp of evil on an equal footing, equally powerful and absolute (and both of them merely embraced by the non-revealed purpose of God who has basically kept the ultimate meaning of this drama an absolute secret). He will see the Church as the perceptible form of that 'yes' which he hopes God too has spoken in answer to, and through, the 'no' of the world, a 'yes' which remains

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victorious and which has long ago surpassed the 'no' of the world. Ultimately (it is different in the meantime) he will always refuse to consider the Church as a proposition which is in contradiction to what is really and most profoundly meant by the propositions of the others, so that he would ultimately have to choose between the two. He will frequently and patiently, modestly and self-critically (since even the knowledge of the Church must always grow further) say 'no' to the propositions of the others, but simply in order to say 'yes' to what they really mean by them. He will understand the Church in her true nature as that comprehensive 'yes' of God to the world in which God (i.e. the One apart from whom there can only be . . . nothing) promises Himself victoriously to this world. He will understand more and more that one can really only oppose an empty 'no' to this 'yes' of God, a 'no' whose emptiness manifests itself ever more clearly, and that even this 'no' finds its source of life and power in the partial or complete 'yes' to be found within it or at the back of it and which belongs within that 'yes' which is the Church. Does all this take the sting out of sin, error, darkness and the danger of eternal damnation in the world? Let no one assert this. It is simply not true for the man of today. After all, it is not as if this optimism of faith (which is not the optimism of middle-class security or an 'enlightened' optimism) comes easy to modern man. He does after all experience darkness, he does after all suffer to the very point of physical dangers to his very life from the pluralism of this world. There has probably never been a man who has been as little convinced of his own goodness than is modern man. Everywhere modern man feels his brittleness, his threatened existence, the possibility and probability that his most sacred idealism might one day be unmasked (and rightly so) as being simply fear, a vital need for security, cowardice, lack of vitality. He experiences his finite nature and his poverty, his threatened nature and unfathomable doubt. If he is nevertheless obedient to God's [364] word and sees the best and the holy in man – if he believes (and how difficult this is) that man is a child of God, beloved of God and worthy of an eternal life which already acts and grows within him even now – then he will not get above himself and adopt an 'enlightened' attitude by regarding what has been promised as if it were his own secure, self-evident nobility. And if he finds it easier to think more optimistically of others than of himself, then this optimism will always find its limit and correction in this endured pessimism about himself, as well as finding there the means for making sure that his optimism will never go too far. The man of today may safely think optimistically of others. This is almost the only means which helps him not to despair of himself. He almost finds it easier to think highly of himself simply because he regards it as a moral duty and a deliverance of his existence to think well of man in general, and hence cannot do otherwise than to include himself, almost contrary to his experience, in this estimate. If, however, he must think in this way of man in general because it is the liberation of his own existence and the way in which he can find hope for himself (which, after all, is his Christian duty), then he cannot possibly see the Church as the exclusive host of those who are alone predestined. He must in this case experience the Church as the promise given to the others, as the manifestation of what these others are (and if this is not 'certain' with regard to these others – well, it is also not certain that those who are inside the Church belong to the camp of the chosen). In this way, it also becomes less of a vexation that so few in the world belong to the number of the Christians of this Church: the symbol of the mystery of the light shining in the darkness may be only a very modest one which may almost be overlooked; the message of what is to come (and this is the Church) cannot be the reality of what is to come; the Church in time is not as great as the eternal kingdom of God.

We do not claim that what has been said here raises *all* those points regarding 'ecclesiological piety' which, on the one hand, belong to the enduring elements of dogmatic Ecclesiology and which, on the other hand, are the most apparent ones in the ecclesiological piety of today or tomorrow. But it would seem nevertheless that the points we have

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mentioned do belong to those we are looking for: the Church of those who, as sinners, accept by faith everyone's existence in its ordinariness and burdensomeness, so that we experience our own fate as the fate of the Church and experience ourselves in *this* way as her members; the [365] Church who is an object of faith because we believe *in* God, and whose actual condition must not be identified with what she believes; the Church who is the promise of salvation even for that world which has not yet recognized itself explicitly as a part of the Church.

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[366]

15

LATIN AS A CHURCH LANGUAGE

Pope John XXIII's *Constitutio Apostolica* '*Veterum Sapientia*' has once more focussed the attention of theologians on the question of Latin as a Church Language. We will try in the pages that follow to look at the whole question of Church Latin under all its different aspects *sine ira et studio*. It is not our intention to write a commentary on the above-mentioned Apostolic Constitution. The brevity of this document alone makes it impossible to regard it as an adequate basis for a treatment of this problem. There are far too many questions, only touched on or even completely bypassed by this document, which must be posed explicitly in our present context. Hence, since there is no question here of a commentary on the papal document, our exposition must not be taken as a criticism of this document. Of course, it is also true that the question we have posed ourselves cannot be treated objectively without taking this Apostolic Constitution into consideration. Hence – with all the respect and frankness which must be shown towards such a Church document – we will inevitably have to point out any possible misunderstandings concerning this Constitution or any too strict interpretations of such a text. Our exposition divides itself quite naturally into four parts. The first part offers certain reflections on in general. The three subsequent parts treat of Church Latin as the language of the Liturgy, as the language of Church authorities and administration, and as the language of the ecclesiastical sciences.

Since we will be speaking exclusively of, the question of the value of a classical education based on knowledge of Greek and Latin and the question of the possibility or practical impossibility of using Latin as a common international language in the secular sphere (as in earlier centuries) will not fall within the actual scope of these reflections, and will be only very briefly touched on in

[367]

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

I. On the Theology of a Church language

If one wishes to say anything really valid about a language in the Church and about the unity of language in and for the Church, then one would really have to base oneself both on a theology of language in general and on a theology of the Church. In other words, one should not in such a case plunge immediately into a consideration of the dignity of Latin, its significance in the history of culture, and the practical necessity of a unified language in the Church. While we are on this subject, we wish to state right from the start that obviously it is not one of the charisms of the Church's *magisterium* as such to be able to give a correct estimate of the cultural values of Latin, since these advantages of Latin are neither explicitly nor implicitly an object of revelation. Hence, declarations of the Church which argue for the particular suitability of Latin as a Church language by bringing out the intrinsic advantages of Latin, carry as much weight as belongs to the high human authority of the Church's powers and are an expression of the pastoral power which thereby explains and justifies the rightness of its decrees about Church Latin. It is clear that the fact of its being based on the pastoral power certainly permits us to draw the conclusion that Latin must be suitable as a Church language even as to its objective quality, but not really that it must of its nature be more suitable than any other language; for the ordinances of the Church's pastoral office can

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indeed under the necessary presuppositions (their universality, the seriousness of their obligation, etc.) claim to be good thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, but cannot necessarily and to the same extent demand to be regarded as theoretically better than some other possible ordinance.

Let us return to the beginning of our reflection: the dignity and usefulness of Latin do not provide us with a sufficient starting point for a theological statement about a Church language. To find such a starting point, one would have to start with certain theological sources and try to determine from the standpoint of salvation history and of revelation the real function of human language and the multiplicity of human languages in the Church. It goes without saying that we can give only a few modest indications of all this here. Even according to what we know from revelation, language as such is associated [368] exclusively with the nature of man. Because he is what he is, man speaks and he alone is capable of speaking. Indeed, it is precisely by speaking that he fulfils his human nature, for this nature consists in more than an interior and free self-consciousness; furthermore it does not merely consist in the experiencing of a world with which he comes into contact and in whose possession he possesses himself but also signifies the possession and realization of his surroundings in an I-Thou communication which can be had and realized only by the use of a real language. This shows right away that language is not so much a supplementary means of human inter-communication, a means which can be replaced by something else, but that, even though it must be realized in a historical manner, it is a constitutive element of human nature to such an extent that we cannot really conceive man without it. Hence, the question about the language of man in the concrete touches directly on his existence and is, therefore, also governed by the norms of the natural law, so that there is, for instance, a right to one's mother tongue which does not come under the competence of any civil or even ecclesiastical decrees. According to the Scriptures, the multiplicity of languages is a given factor along with the multiplicity of peoples and with the separation and historical interrelation of individual national histories. To this extent, the pluralism of languages in the world has the same properties as the pluralism of peoples: the multiplicity of peoples and languages is the manifestation of God's positive will giving expression to the glory of his creatorship by this multiplicity of peoples, and yet at the same time it is also an expression of the sinful cleavage of man and of the salvific providence of God who, by this antagonistic pluralism of peoples, prevents any total rebellion of the one human race against God. Two consequences immediately follow from the fact that the human race, thus constituted in multiplicity and torn apart by guilt (both of which is given objective expression by the plurality of languages), is to be reunited by the one redemption of Christ and in the one Church. On the one hand, it cannot be the task of the Church to destroy the plurality of peoples and languages, as it were, by becoming an earthly City of God and by adopting a unified language which suppresses every other language, for this would be a denial of that order of creation in which the multiplicity of peoples and languages has certainly a positive function to fulfil. On the other hand, the Church in her nature as a saving force for a world fallen into sin and discord, certainly has the task of manifesting by what she is and through her [369] life the unity of the human race split up into different peoples, and of manifesting it in the one Christ and in the one salvation He offers to all. How this, as it were, dialectic task of the Church must and can be accomplished anew, is shown by the example of the first Pentecost where the nature of the Church was historically manifested for the first time. In the event of Pentecost, according to the testimony of the Scriptures, the united representatives of the Church (i.e. the Apostles) speak in their ecclesiastical unity about the same unique salvation in Christ but in the different national languages. The pentecostal miracle of tongues is to begin with what is truly a charism given to the representatives of the Church and not merely something which takes

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place in the listeners to the sermon of Pentecost preached by the Apostles.[1] The actively proclaiming Church is the Church which speaks the many languages of many peoples and which, without losing her unity in the object and exercise of that word, is also sent out by a divine charism into the pluralism of languages without being permitted or forced to fear that she will thereby lose the oneness of her message either in its object or exercise. The permanent unity of the kerygma of the Church embraces and affirms the permanent plurality of the many languages and peoples. The fact that the power of the Spirit overcomes the dividing plurality of languages while at the same time preserving that plurality, provides us with the ultimate theological explanation of the nature of the language of the Church.[2] People of different nations do not receive the charism of all understanding any one language of the Church in a phonetic and historical sense, but rather the Church is given the commission and the ability of telling everyone of the one salvation of Christ in her capacity as the one channel for the salvation of all, without being ultimately dependent on a single human or sacred language.

[370] Consequently, the Church of the Apostles entered into the *koine* without worrying anxiously about preserving the language of Jesus and of the Old Testament, but spoke Greek so that the Word of God found in the New Testament is not rendered in the sacred tongue of the Old Testament (although the Church was quite well aware of the essential importance of her origin from the Old Testament as a criterion for the lawfulness of her mission). She spoke in the language spoken wherever she carried the message of Jesus, and this not only inevitably during the first period of missionary work among the various peoples, but always and everywhere and thus even where it might have been possible in given circumstances to impose one sacred language of worship. This too is why we do not find any desire in St Paul to justify the use of a language in divine worship which would not be understood by the participants (cf. 1 Cor 14.1-25). He refuses to accept ecstatic speaking in tongues during divine service, at least when there is no interpreter present, by pointing out firstly that the listeners will not understand anything and so will be forced into the role of an uninitiated barbarian and secondly that it is better to speak ‘five’ comprehensible words in the assembly of the whole Church than ten thousand words inspired charismatically by the Holy Ghost but not understandable by others. Yet this sober realism does not make him a purist either: The people say ‘Amen’, ‘Alleluia’ and ‘Maran atha’.

In view of this attitude of the growing Church towards the pluralism of languages – an attitude which stems from a simplicity ultimately based on theology – one will have to be careful not to go too far in one’s desire to attribute a providential significance to Latin and its particular characteristics. The Church does not take up the languages of the peoples in whose region she comes into existence because she discovers in them any particular property and preferable suitability different from any other language, but only because she is immediately convinced of the necessity of speaking in the tongues of the peoples to whom she is sent, because she knows that she can proclaim the one salvation in all these languages and because she realizes that she can and must speak in the language of the Parthians, Medes, Phrygians and Arabians, just as much as in the language of the *advenae Romani* (cf. Ac 2.9 *sq*.). Undoubtedly, every language has its special advantages as compared with others, even presupposing that they are compared with each other on the same historical level of

[1] Cf. A. Stolz, ‘Theologie der Sprache’, *Benediktin*. *Monatschrift* XVII (I935), pp. 121-135 French translation: ‘Théologie des langues’, *Vie spirit*. LI (1937), pp. 86-107.

[2] Cf. H. Schmidt, *Liturgie et langue vulgaire* (Rome I950), who concludes his exposition of the discussions at the Council of Trent about the language of the Liturgy with the affirmation: ‘Ce qu’on appelle “unité de langue” dans l’Eglise n’est au fond qu’une uniformité. La vraie unité se compose de beau-coup d’éléments, tenue ensemble par un lien surnaturel d’esprit et de matière dans le Christ . . . L’uniformité ne serait qu’un signe de la faiblesse humaine qui ne permet pas de maintenir l’unité dans la diversité’ (p. 192).

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development. But each language, in comparison with others, has also its disadvantages. To [371] deny either of these facts – in other words, to try to ascribe only advantages or disadvantages to one language as compared with others (always presupposing, of course, the same stage of development, which is not always true of every language at every moment of its historical existence) – would simply be a naïve nationalism. Just as there is no people which in its historically concrete nature and of itself is simply *the* people or to be preferred before all others as 'God's own country', so the same must also be said of every language.

One can, therefore, quite legitimately point out certain advantages of Latin which, other things being equal (and only then), make this language particularly suitable for use by the Church and suitable for what she wants to say. One can also regard these advantages as grounds for the providential nature of the practical utilization of this language in the mouth of the Church (as the *Constitutio Apostolica* and many earlier papal documents rightly do). But such advantages do not signify any absolute prerogative of one language over others, since the other languages do not indeed possess these particular advantages but do possess other advantages which in the ultimate analysis could make them equally, though differently, suitable as a language of the Church. Should anyone seriously want to dispute this simple reflection, then we would have to ask him what reason he could possibly have for disputing the equally great suitability of Hebrew or Greek, since God, after all, spoke his own Word to us in these languages and not in Latin.

Thus it can be completely denied that Latin possesses any really unique and special quality which, more than any other language, makes it of its very nature suitable to be the language of the Church. This is especially true since (just as in the case of the special qualities of individual peoples) any language, and hence also Latin, could be shown to have special characteristics which would be an obstacle to the proclamation of the Word in such a language. The fact that Latin has actually come to be preferred as the common language of the Church, is not ultimately due to any special intrinsic superiority of Latin, but is due to the historical factors of the Church's origin. For in God's providence, the Church began in certain cultural surroundings, and this fact must be understood and accepted as simply a free act of God's will, since even in such matters God's choice is a grace which ultimately needs no reason on man's part.[3]

[372] It may undoubtedly also be said that injudicious talk about Latin as the language of the Church would, not without reason, leave itself wide open to the reproach that it presupposes a clerical notion of the Church in which the Church becomes identified with the clergy, and the mass of the faithful are regarded simply as the object of the Church's saving care. If, however, all baptized Christians are members of the Church and together form the Church, then a language which at best is spoken only by the clerics of the Church, can be labelled as the language of the Church only if one takes great care not to lend even involuntary support to a concept of the Church which should really have been surpassed by now as a result of Pius XII's Encyclical '*Mystici Corporis*'. Even paying all due respect to the lasting core of truth in particular declarations made by certain synods during the nineteenth century,[4] it will be possible to say that such declarations [373] are merely further

[3] Fr. Lepargneur, 'L'universalité de l'Eglise romaine', *Eglise vivante* XIII (1961), pp. 403-416.
[4] Austria:
Vienna 1849 (*Collectio Lacensis* V 1363a);
Vienna 1856, Conv. Epp. Austr. a. 1856 (*Ibid*., V 1261c);
Vienna 1858, Decr. Conc. prov. Viennensis a. 1858 tit. VI cap. 2 (*Ibid*., V 202a);
Gran 1858, Decr. Conc. Strigonien. a. 1858 tit. VI 5 (*Ibid*., V 61a);
Prague 1860, Decr. Conc. prov. Pragen. a. 1860 tit. I cap. 9 (*Ibid*., V 431c);
Kolocza 1863, Decr. Conc. prov. Colocen. a. 1863 tit. IV cap. 3 (*Ibid*., V 664d).
Germany:
Cologne 1860, Decr. Conc. prov. Colon, a. 1860 tit. II cap. 26 (*Ibid*., V 368a).

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evidence (although not exclusively so) of the Restoration politics which were manifesting themselves at that period in the attempts to encourage the neo-gothic and 'nazarene' tendencies and a certain type of neo-scholasticism conditioned by the spirit of that age, in the defence of the monarchies, in too great a conservatism in the face of newly awakening social movements, in hypersensitive reactions against the efforts of pastoral reform during the period of [374] Enlightenment, and in too high an estimate of a historically conditioned form of the Roman Liturgy.[5]

2. Latin as the common language of the one Church – in general

Even though, in a theological sense, the only language of the Church is the unity of the proclamation of the one salvation by the one, and permanently one, Church – and this precisely in the multiplicity of languages – this in no way denies the fact that it is extremely useful and right, and indeed almost inevitable, that there should be one and the same common language in the one Church. It is of course true that all languages are languages of the Church when they serve the profession of the faith of the Church, when they manifest the inexplorable calling of the Spirit in the hearts of Christians and help the worship of a Christian church in a particular locality. For these languages are then used legitimately for the self-realization of the Church by the members of the Church and by .her official

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Holland:
Utrecht 1865, Conc. Ultraiect. a. 1865 tit. IX cap. 2 (*Ibid*., V 915b).
England:
Westminster 1859, Conc. Westmonaster. tit. II decr. 14, 7 (*Ibid*., III 1018d-1019a).
USA:
Baltimore 1886, Acta et Decreta Conc. plenarii Baltimorensis III a. 1886 (Baltim. typis J. Murphey et Soc. 1886) Decr. tit. V cap. 2, 167s.
France:
Paris 1844, Litterae synodal. IV (*Coll*. *Lac*. IV 86d);
Paris 1849, Conc. prov. Paris a. 1849 tit. IV cap. 1 (*Ibid*., IV 29d);
Rheims 1849, Conc. Rhemens. a. 1849 tit. 18 cap. 2 (*Ibid*., IV 152d-153a);
Avignon 1849, Conc. prov. Avenion. a. 1849 tit. X cap. 1 (*Ibid*., 360d-361a);
Lyon 1850, Conc. prov. Lugdun. a. 1850 Decr. 26, 7.8 (*Ibid*., IV 485d-486a);
Aix 1850, Conc. prov. Aquens. a. 1850 tit. IX, cap. 4, 13 (*Ibid*., 1000c);
Bourges 1850, Conc. prov. Biturícens. a. 1850 tit. III (*Ibid*., IV 1108c);
Bordeaux 1850, Conc. prov. Burdigal. a. 1850 tit. V cap. 4, 3.6 (*Ibid*., IV 595b; 596a);
Sens 1850, Conc. prov. Senonens. a. 1850 tit. IV cap. 5 (*Ibid*., IV 906c);
Auch 1851, Conc. prov. Auscitan. a. 1851 tit. III, cap. 3, 186 (*Ibid*., IV 1208b);
Bordeaux 1868, Conc. prov. Burdigal. a. 1868 cap. 10, 6.7 (*Ibid*., IV 846b; 847a).
Italy:
Meeting of the Bishops of Umbria 1849, Consess. Epp. Umbr. a. 1849 tit. IX (*Ibid*., VI 761b);
Meeting of the Bishops of Sicily 1850, Congreg. Epp. Sicil. a. 1850 tit. I cap. 2 (*Ibid*., VI 813c);
Pisa 1850, Act. Synod. Conv. Pis. sess. IV cap. 1, 4 (*Ibid*., VI 230c);
Loreto 1850, Conv. Epp. Lauret. a. 1850 art. 3 (*Ibid*., VI 793a);
Ravenna 1855, Conc. prov. Ravennatis a. 1855 pars IV cap. 6, 3 (*Ibid*., VI 201c-202a);
Urbino 1859, Conc. prov. Urbinatens. a. 1859 Adlig. IV, I (*Ibid*., VI 99a-d);
Venice 1959, Decr. Conc. prov. Venet. a. 1859 pars II cap. 16 (*Ibid*., VI 315c).

This collection of references is taken from the Essay by R. Herkenrath, 'Die Sprache der Theologie', ZKT XIII (1889), pp. 597-630, which provides a good description of the state of the problem at the end of the nineteenth century (with valuable references to the older literature).

The study of the Provincial Synods shows that, besides the predominance of Latin countries (France alone has more entries in this list than all the non-Latin countries taken together), there is also a corresponding decrease in the demands and the justifying reasons for the use of Latin (cf. R. Herkenrath, *loc*. *cit*., pp. 601-605).

[5] Cf. J. A. Jungmann, 'Liturgische Erneuerung zwischen Barock und Gegenwart', *Lit*. *Jahrbuch* XII (1962), pp. 1-15.

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representatives, and no discussion about the language of the Church should ever forget or obscure this fact. But in spite of the plurality of local churches, and within that very plurality of peoples and their languages, the Church is one in origin and of her very nature even in the historical sphere. The churches in particular localities and in individual situations of history always combine to form the one Church. This unity is not merely the unity of the same, all-governing divine Spirit, nor merely a unity of the same 'ideology' (or better, of the Faith), but is also a unity of a historically tangible perfect society, the unity of the Church's authority in the one supreme Pastor of the Church and in the unity of the college of bishops indissolubly united with him, also a unity of active love among all the members of the Church scattered all over the world and finally a unity of mutual participation in worship. Such a unity in the historical, social and liturgical dimensions can hardly do without one common language. It may be that – to begin with – this unity, which can never be achieved in all these dimensions except with the help of human speech, is achieved by the very fact that the same person who accomplishes and mediates such a unity speaks several languages. But with the spread of the Church into many lands and languages, it will become almost self-evident that the realization [375] of this unity will also require a gradual formation of a common language.

It is not the task of the present investigation to determine the many *a-priori* conceivable ways in which such a common language can overcome the continuing plurality of languages in the Church in order to realize more clearly the unity of the Church. Here we need merely establish the historical fact that such a common language was formed in the Church, that this language is Latin and that consequently this language is suited for the afore-named purpose. The fact that this common language was actually developed – since it was the only language of cultured Western society on that cultural level required for the life of the Church – and the fact that, since the Eastern Schism, the realm of the Roman Catholic Church did actually (though regrettably) coincide with the Western and thus the Latin cultural sphere, explain indeed why and how Latin, and not some other language, became almost inevitably the one common language of the one Church, yet these are not the decisive factors. The fact that this language of the Western sphere of culture which is also the realm of the Church of Christ, has rightly remained the common language of the one Church right up to our own day, finds its justification in the simple fact that the Church as such requires a common language, even though – and especially when – Latin is no longer the language of the one culture of a unified Western world and when, even in practice, the Church is no longer identified with the geographic boundaries of the Western world. Only if things are seen in this light, will it be possible to give a really pertinent answer to the question as to why the Church can in a true sense regard Latin as the language of the whole Church, even though historically speaking, the separated and Uniate Eastern churches have never known Latin as the language of their own cultural environment and yet are, or at least can be, equally rightful members of this one Catholic Church. Even for them Latin can be regarded as practically the only suitable common language in the universal Church, since Latin must be looked upon as the only possible common language in practice – not, ultimately, because of its history in the earlier Church but on account of the necessity for a currently practicable single common language. This does not deny, of course, that as far as the relationship of the Latin Western Church to the Latin language is concerned, the dignity and historical significance of Latin for Western culture as such is an added factor, over and above the other [376] aspect of the necessity of a unified common language in the whole Church.

The Western, Latin Catholic has therefore a twofold relationship to the Latin language: for him, as for all Christians of the one Church, Latin is both the present-day common language and also the language of his historical past in a more restricted sense, and hence a language he will love and cultivate even on this account as the living ground of his own history. This second circumstance is almost completely absent in the case of the Eastern churches, and

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even in the age of the world-Church just beginning, this circumstance will not be present for the peoples of the Far East and of Africa to the same extent as it is for the Westerner. Yet Latin can and will remain the most suitable common language for everyone, for one cannot in practice imagine any better one. For the Church has no plausible reason for creating or using an artificial language such as Esperanto; there is also no reason why she should adopt one of the major living universal languages, such as English, as her own common language for international communication. Neither of these possibilities is indicated, since an artificial language could not serve the Church's purposes better than the old language of her past, a language already adapted to the Church's needs, and since a modern universal language has less prospect today of being gladly and successfully employed as the common means of communication by all nationalities in the Church than for instance French or English had one hundred years ago.

If the one Church requires a common language of communication more or less in all ages and for very practical reasons, then this is even more necessary today than ever before. For the multiplicity of nationalities and of cultures in the one Church, which is now preparing to be a really universal Church, is greater today than ever before in her history. It is more than ever necessary today that the whole Church should act as one in a concrete and historical manner, that she should have one global plan of action for the missions, that each of her members should help the other in a really practical way, etc. It might be objected against this, that the history of individual nations is becoming more and more intertwined into one world-history, no matter how great the inner conflicts of this history may be; yet at least up till now, this fact has not produced any really effective, unified language of communication. Instead, the understanding between people of different languages has been effected in different ways: either by utilizing the [377] possibilities of easier and quicker translation from one language into another, or by using the language of a few world powers as international languages of communication. But such aids used in the concrete situation of a world-history becoming more and more unified, are stopgaps and nothing more; as against this, there already exists one common language in the Church and this language does not offend any sense of national equality nor the sensitivity of any people:– a language which has developed historically, a common language which does not have to be invented or discovered first but which requires only to be preserved, fostered and developed. What reason could one give, therefore, for renouncing this already existing common language?

While remaining quite calm and sober about it, it will certainly be necessary to be quite clear and precise about whether Latin is and will be such a common language of communication in the Church of the present and of the future. But that is all. The arguments brought forward by the humanists of the Renaissance and later on, and even during the nineteenth century – arguments by which they sought to show that Latin has an indispensable formative value for Western man (and perhaps this is still valid even today for a man of Western culture) – cannot be made to apply to those of other cultures who will enter into the Church in the present or some future age. Should one try to apply these arguments for theological reasons (and other reasons are right away questionable) then one would have to draw the logical conclusion and demand Hebrew and Greek just as much as Latin for Western Christians, for they too are essential languages of the Church's past. Latin does not have an indispensable and irreplaceable value for those in the Church who belong to other cultures; for them it is not a formative value pertaining to their own immediate historical past, but is rather (*sit venia verbo*) an ecclesiastical Esperanto which they will learn gladly and willingly out of love for the Church and her unity. For them, however, Latin has then only the limited, albeit genuine, significance belonging to such a common language, but it cannot be expected to fulfil the function of a spiritual foundation out of which grows one's own, permanent culture.

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It might be objected that both by the entry of new peoples into the one Church and by the intertwining of all national histories into the unity of present-day world-history, the Western past has become an important element even in the history of these new peoples in the Church and that therefore Latin too should mean more to them than [378] just some kind of Church Esperanto. In answer to this objection it must be said that we can to a certain extent agree with what this objection states, but that all this does not involve any very great practical effect even for the majority of the educated in these new nations, since the same argument could also be used to prove the opposite, viz. that the non-Western cultures too have today become a factor in the Church and in the present-day situation of the Western world and yet the great majority of educated Westerners do not conclude from this that they should on this account start studying Sanscrit, for instance, or classical Chinese.

There is one more point which should be noted with reference to this reduction of Latin to a mere, albeit practically indispensable, language of communication in the Church, something which brings out this reduction even more clearly. In the history of the Western world, Latin was for centuries the only language sufficiently developed to be able to serve all the religious and ecclesiastical needs of Christianity, even within the confines of one single nation. Even for each individual nation, Latin was the living language of education and of the educated, and other languages had not yet attained the same level of historical development. Today all this is quite different.[6] As we will show in detail later, the languages of modern cultures – at least of Western culture – are all in a position to be in every respect the languages of present-day science, culture, poetry and education, and also of the Christian religion in each of the nations concerned. Whether one likes it or not, this means that Latin has thereby lost some part of the significance it once had. The Western man of today – even if he is a very emancipated, educated person – will in the concrete exercise and live his Christianity through the medium of his mother tongue, and moreover he can do this without conflict, which was not yet possible for such a person a few centuries ago. Thus, even from this point of view, Latin has necessarily and unavoidably become a secondary language of communication, a kind of Church Esperanto. But the necessity for Western man to remain rooted in his own history – this anamnesis of his Latin past imposed as an obligation on Western [379] man – is a factor of his cultural life and not directly of the life of the Church as a whole and of the Christian as such. Yet it will always be necessary for the Church and theology to remain rooted in their past, and this fact does not imply any different kind of relationship for the Western Christian, as well as for the other Christians of the East and those of the future Church, than the relationship which the Church has towards her Hebrew and Greek past. Even a highly educated African theologian of the twenty-first century will have to understand something about Greek and Hebrew, since otherwise he will not be able to return to the very sources of the original revelation, and as a theologian he will also have to have the same relationship to Latin. Yet all these necessary requirements are basically no different and of no greater urgency and extent than those which present-day Western theologians acknowledge with regard to Hebrew and Greek. Taken as a whole, this changes nothing about the fact that in the Church of the present and – even more so – of the future, Latin has and will continue to have merely the function of a secondary language of communication, i.e. the function of a kind of Church Esperanto. In this way, and to the extent of this function, however, Latin has ever new and responsible tasks imposed on it, tasks which must receive ever new solutions.

[6] This is overlooked when it is pointed out that Latin has undergone a Renaissance three times already (as is done also in the '*Ordinationes*', AAS LIV [1962] p. 340). Furthermore, it can be said that the revival of 'classical' Latin in the Renaissance itself was the beginning of the death of Latin as a really living, developing language.

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3. Latin as a 'secondary' ('dead') language

There is yet another fact to be considered before we can apply our previous reflections about Church Latin to the different spheres of the life of the Church in which Latin serves, and should continue to serve, as the language of communication within the Church. We mean the fact that Latin has become a 'dead language'. We might perhaps avoid using this particular expression, and perhaps we even should avoid it, since it seems to have a pejorative or reproachful ring about it. But the question of terminology does not affect the fact of what is actually meant by this expression. The Latin which is spoken – and must continue to be spoken – in the Church, is no longer the spoken language of any people anywhere in the world; it is no longer a language in which a people lives its ordinary life and develops its culture. If the latter is said to be a 'living' language, then Latin is a 'dead' language, which is in no way meant to deny that even the dying of this language or (if you prefer) its transformation into the modern [380] Romance languages, took a long time and did not happen everywhere at the same time and, in particular, happened much later in certain educated circles than in the life and everyday routine of the masses, so that, e.g., in the Middle Ages Latin could still be regarded as the living language of the clergy, who alone were educated. Be that as it may, today Latin in its strictly defined sense is everywhere and on all cultural levels a dead language. Let us nevertheless avoid this word and say rather that Latin has become a 'secondary' language today. Of course, in so far as it can still be adapted to modern needs and in so far as it is still of practical use as a language of communication in the Church – even though perhaps this cannot always be achieved easily and even then only in a secondary sense, given its dependence on modern languages (which dependence we will have to define more exactly) – there is really no reason why we should not call Latin the *lingua ecclesiae viva* (Veterum sapientia n. 6).

Whether we call it dead or secondary, clearly neither of these expressions means that Latin cannot develop any further. The defenders of Latin often praise it as an unchangeable language, as is the case also in the afore-mentioned Apostolic Constitution. This immutability is regarded as rendering Latin particularly suitable for use in the Church, and is usually explained by the very fact that Latin is no longer a living language; since it is no longer subject to the historical changes of a people, being a dead language, it is also unchangeable. It will certainly have to be conceded that the suppleness of Latin has certainly greatly decreased in comparison with modern living languages. But it cannot be seriously maintained that this language has become strictly and fully immutable. Indeed, it must not be maintained:– for as soon as this language becomes really and completely unchangeable and no longer changes in its linguistic material, it will become largely unsuitable precisely for its intended function in the Church. After all, it will always be necessary to express new realities of thought, of religious achievement, of the encounter with a changing secular world, realities which did not exist in the old days or at least which man never consciously and systematically reflected on in the past. A language which has to cater for all this, must change and develop. It must form new words, and the mentality of those who use it will inevitably influence the whole character of this language, even far beyond the mere formation of new words, just as the Latin of the Church (particularly in the Middle Ages) was inevitably and quite rightly different from the Latin [381] used at the time of Cicero and even of Leo the Great (and this not only with regard to the growth of its store of words).

John XXIII's Apostolic Constitution shows also that the Church does not seriously regard the language she wants to speak today as absolutely immutable. For one of the things demanded by this Apostolic Constitution is precisely a kind of Academy of Church Latin, in order to develop the Latin language and make it as suitable as possible for its use in the Church today. But – and this is the decisive point – this praiseworthy and necessary

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development of Latin which might make it look like a living 'language', and to a certain extent does indeed achieve this, is a secondary development, i.e. a development which will always and inevitably be dependent on the historical development of a modern language. No matter how highly one may esteem Latin and no matter how confidently one presupposes that Latin will be fostered and utilized to the fullest extent desired by the Church, it will not be possible to banish the fact that modern languages are at the basis of the intellectual, cultural and social life of present-day humanity. No matter how ideally Latin maybe fostered, modern philosophy, the legal and political sciences, the social sciences, natural sciences, historical sciences and poetry – in brief, the whole intellectual life of modern man – will be carried on almost entirely through the medium of modern languages. The man of today will take hold of the reality of his existence, in all its encounters and historical changes, through the medium of his mother tongue. Even at best, Latin will always be a translation from those languages in which man's direct and original relationship to the world occurs today and will continue to occur in the future.[7] For this reason and to this extent, present-day Latin as distinct from the Latin of earlier times and perhaps as late as the eighteenth century (though this in a different sense) is a secondary language. Its present and future history and development depends on the extent in which the vocabulary of modern languages develops. There is and in practice never will be anyone who, for instance, makes progress in the modern natural sciences by first thinking things out in Latin. No one will any longer start by posing the burning social and economic questions, or questions of technology and of the mental mastery of the deeper problems of human existence, in Latin or really [382] independently of some modern language. At best one will still be able to express in a Latin translation what has already been experienced, thought and grasped and communicated to others through the medium of one's mother tongue. In actual practice, there will no longer be anyone who, apart from the official liturgy, will speak to his God in prayers coming from the heart and yet couched in Latin terms; there will be no one who will say the words of love, of enthusiasm and of poetic praise of existence in anything else but in a modern language.

We may regret the fate of the great Latin language, but no one can alter it. The Christian who believes in the workings of divine providence in the history of nations and who knows that in God's positive plan there are meant to be many peoples speaking many different languages will have the least cause of all to want to turn back the clock of history in this respect. Latin has become a secondary language, and only if this fact is clearly presupposed can one seriously think about the role Latin can still play in the Church. Yet if one presupposes this fact unflinchingly, then two things will become clear. On the one hand, Latin cannot be called the language of the Church if this is to be understood in its ultimate and fullest sense, for the language of the Church is the fullness of the living languages of the nations united together in the unity of the Church and the power of the Holy Spirit, languages in which these nations originally fulfil their life even before God. On the other hand, there must be a common international language in the Church for practical reasons, a language which, as long as there are several original languages, cannot be anything but secondary. Given this, however, and in so far as Latin is such a secondary language, Latin is absolutely suitable for being this international language particularly of the Church and has no really serious rivals for this function, so that we simply have to see to it that, since this common language is necessary in practice, it is properly mastered within the framework and for the uses which apply to a common language.

[7] All attempts to form new Latin words prove this indirectly. Cf. e.g. A. Bacci, *Lexicon corum vocabulorum, quae difficilius Latine redduntur*³ (Rome 1955).

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4. *Latin as an essential part of a classical education*[8]

There is not very much we can say about this subject here, not because this question is unimportant or outdated, but precisely because [383] it is in itself so important, extensive and widespread that it would require a whole chapter for itself. This subject has frequently[9] been treated of in the declarations of the Popes during the last hundred years or so, right up to John XXIII, especially in connection with the question as to the form a classical education should take in the curriculum of our Junior Seminaries. In this connection it has been emphasized over and [384] over again how extremely important Latin is for that general education which is an indispensable preparation even for the future cleric. Not only have these declarations stressed the usefulness of Latin for clerical studies as such, but they have also emphasized its purely formative value in itself. According to the most recent Apostolic Constitution, these declarations made by the highest teaching office of the Church and again underlined by this Apostolic Constitution itself – by reference to CIC can 1364 and to an Apostolic Letter by Pius XI dated 1.8.1922 (AAS XIV [1922] 453) – are applicable also to the training of so-called 'late vocations'; Latin, seen as part of the classical education of the future cleric, will certainly be of special importance for late vocations. For later on these students are to have a special relationship to the sciences of the spirit and above all they will have to be able to think historically, since this is a mental attitude of such importance that nothing else can replace it for an educated Christian and especially for a theologian. Thus the Church quite rightly is courageous enough even today – in this age of the natural sciences, of technology and of polytechnic education – to demand and provide an all-round training, especially for her future clerics, which will make them familiar with the works of the real history of the spirit. Apart from Greek (cf. Veterum sapientia n.7), however, Latin is still of the highest value and usefulness for this purpose.

Of course, even in this respect, one will have to see things as they really are,[10] and this in a

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[8] This question is hotly disputed within the framework of the general problem of present-day humanism. We offer a very modest selection from the numerous publications of the last few years.

W. Rüegg, *Humanismus, studium generale und studia humanitatis in Deutschland* (Genf/Darmstadt 1954);
L. Kneissler, *Das humanistische Gymnasium im Zeitalter der Technik* (Vienna 1954);
J.M. Hoek, *Grieks-romeinse cultuur in de moderne samenleving* (Antwerp 1955);
R. Meister, 'Von der Wiedergeburt des klassischen Altertums zur Konstanz des Humanismusproblems', *Anzeiger der Österr. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.-hist. Klasse XCII (1955),pp. 209-220;
F. Else, 'The classics in the twentieth century', *The Classical Journal* LII (1956); pp.1-9;
W. Schadewaldt, *Sinn und Wert der humanistischen Bildung im Leben unserer Zeit* (Göttingen 1956);
C. Schmid, *Das humanistische Bildungsideal* (Frankfurt o. Main 1956);
F. Schabel, *Das humanistiche Bildungsgut im Wandel von staat und Gesellschaft* (Munich 1956);
W. Richter, *Die alten Sprachen in der neuen Welt* (Göttingen 1957);
H.Kanz, 'Der Bildungswert des Lateinischen und die moderne Pädagogik', *Gymnasium* LXIV (1957),pp. 424-444;
J. Ferguson, *Roma aeterna. The value of classical studies for the twentieth century* (Ibadan [Nigeria]1957);
Ch. O. Brink, *Latin Studies and the Humanities* (London 1957);
Bildungsauftrag und Bildungspläne der Gymnasien (Berlin-Göttingen-Heidelberg 1958)
A. Willot, 'Humanisme et langues vivantes', *Les Etudes Classiques* XXVII (1959),pp. 174-186;
W. Kaegi, *Humanismus der Gegenwart* (Zurich 1959);
W. Jaeger, *Humanistische Reden und Vorträge*² (Berlin 1960);
H. Becher, *Das Ringen der Gegenwart um den Humanismus* (Frankfurt/M. 1960)
S. Sinanoglu, *L'Humanisme à venire* (Ankara 1960);
K.J Vouveris, ο9 'Ελληνικο_φ α)νθρωπισμο_φ ση/μεπον (Athens 1960);

[9] Cf. e.g *Enchiridion clericorum* n. 461-465; n. 594 *sq*.

[10] In 1959, the FIEC (Fédération Internationale des Associations d'Etudes Classiques) submitted a report (which had been in preparation since 1956 as a result of many enquiries) to UNESCO. This report, dealing with the significance of the classical languages for present-day culture (*Le rôle de la culture classique et humaniste dans*

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twofold sense. First of all, even clerics belonging to the Western European and American culture cannot do without a formation which will make them educated men of *their* own time and culture and in the way education is understood at the moment. They must be capable of conversing on an equal footing with those academically qualified in their particular cultural surroundings and so [385] must have attained their level of education. Hence, the education of these clerics must not be confined to a 'classical education' in the strict sense (as was the case until towards the end of the nineteenth century) for otherwise they would be traitors to their own calling. Thus, even strictly ecclesiastical institutions which are meant to provide a general secondary education in order to prepare future clerics or other students for higher studies on a university level must of necessity and to a large extent take into consideration the normal curriculum followed in State schools (which does not mean that they must follow it slavishly) while at the same time fulfilling the creative and only rarely accepted task of giving a lead in the further development of these teaching plans in the spirit of a true humanism. Thus, since the normal education of man today includes also a formation in the natural sciences and in technical subjects (however the ideal balance between natural science – and technical subjects – and the classical subjects may be conceived), the intensity and success of the encouragement given to the study of Latin will quite simply have to be less for the average secondary school pupil than in previous ages. For there comes a point beyond which one cannot prolong the secondary school period; one can only get so much material into a certain period of training, and the study of natural science cannot be postponed entirely until after the secondary school period; and in any case even these subjects – if they are properly done – can be of great significance for the formation of man as such.

In the second place, we must here consider the fact that the Church has entered into the age of a world-wide Church within the one world-history. Certainly, this means that the history of Western culture, with all its educational values, has also become a factor in the history of the nations. Furthermore, it certainly means also that the history of revelation and of the Church, together with their various languages, becomes a task for those non-Western nations who are now slowly coming into the Church, bringing their own history with them. Nevertheless, it remains true to say that in future it will not be seriously possible to expect the peoples of Asia and Africa to have exactly the same relationship to Latin as the peoples of a Western culture. The hellenistic-roman culture need not, and cannot, be regarded by them as the real soil out of which their own culture has grown in the same direct way as it is regarded by the peoples of the Christian West. For them Latin will on the whole remain something like a Church [386] 'Esperanto', and the educational values of hellenistic-roman antiquity will form a permanent reality in their cultures at about the same remove as the cultures of the Near East (including Israel and the Hebrew language) are from our Western culture.

II. LATIN IN THE LITURGY

We will speak only very briefly here about the question indicated by this sub-title, for enough has been said about it in the field of pastoral theology and of liturgical studies during the last few decades;[11] moreover, the afore-mentioned *Constitutio Apostolica* does not concern itself very closely with this special question, as no doubt it did not wish to anticipate

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la vie culturelle d'aujourd'hui), showed a retrogressive movement. Cf. references in the following periodicals: *Estudios Clàsicos* III (1956), pp. 485-490; *L'Antiquité Classique* XXVII (1958), pp. 395-398; *Siculorum Gymnasium* XII (1959), pp. 216-220; *Anzeiger für die Alterstumswissenschaft* XIII (1960), p. 189. UNESCO has announced a comprehensive publication of this report.

[11] For the older literature cf. H. Schmidt, *Liturgie et langue vulgaire* (Rome 1950), p. 12 note 3. For the most recent literature cf. A.-G. Martimort, *L'Eglise en Prière* (Paris 1961), p. 142.

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the discussions and decisions of the coming Council on this matter. When this Apostolic Constitution lays down (in n.2 of the practical ordinances at the end) that the bishops must watch that in their part of the world nothing will be written against the Latin language either as a scholastic language or as a liturgical language, this ordinance obviously refers only to attacks on Latin made by *novarum rerum studiosi*, *praeiudicata opinione*. Hence, this ordinance obviously does not wish to forbid the objective and dispassionate discussion of a question which after all is subject to changing times and to the development of the historical situation . . . as long as this discussion is engaged in with the necessary respect towards the decrees of the Apostolic See; this cannot be the intention of the above ordinance, particularly since such a subject belongs undoubtedly to those matters of public opinion in the Church whose absence, in Pius XII's words, would be harmful both for the pastors and for the flock.[12] Furthermore, it must undoubtedly be admitted without discussion that the modern languages cannot be completely excluded from the official liturgy of the Church. There are many obvious reasons for this, such as the fact that the proclamation of the Word of God must be an integral part of the liturgy in its fullest sense, that the sacrament of Penance, for instance, cannot be properly administered without the use of modern languages, the fact that the Church has already in many respects permitted the inclusion [387] of modern languages at least in the modern rituals,[13] and the fact that ultimately even those people's services, processions, etc., carried out with at least episcopal authorization, can properly be included under the concept of the liturgy – even in the strict sense – and yet are quite inconceivable in practice if they had to be carried out exclusively in Latin.

Once one is clear in one's mind about the fact that at a closer view the liturgy of the Church has never been, nor can ever be, carried out purely in Latin, then the only serious problem can be that concerning the proper proportion of Latin and modern languages in the liturgy. This presupposes, of course, that there are no good reasons for wanting to exclude the use of Latin from the Liturgy of the Latin Church, although it is to be freely admitted (as can be seen from the practice and law of the Uniate Eastern Churches) that the principle of celebrating the whole liturgy in a modern language must not be decried from the very outset as a basically uncatholic principle. Thus, since within the radius of the Latin sector of the Roman Catholic Church it is simply a question of the correct distribution of Latin and the vernacular in the Latin liturgy (a distribution corresponding to the demands of the times), this question appears immediately as a question of prudent evaluation based on considerations springing from pastoral theology. Basically, however, such questions are not of the kind which admit from the outset of only one solution; rather, they are questions which, after very prudent and exact weighing of all the reasons for and against a certain solution, demand a freely voluntary solution, since in the realm of the contingent and of the historical, free choice and decision must find their rightful place. Such a decision which chooses from among several basically lawful possibilities is, of course, in this case a matter for ecclesiastical authority. Hence we have no intention here of going into the details of the question of Latin as a liturgical language. These details, belonging mainly to the sphere of pastoral theology, are [388] far too many-sided to allow of an objective treatment here.[14] All

[12] *Osservatore Romano* of 18.2.1950.

[13] Cf. esp. the letter of the Internuncio to the bishops of India of 8.7.1949 (A. Bugnini, *Documenta pontificia ad instaurationem liturgicam spectantia* 1903-1953 [Rome 1953], pp.173 sq.).

Also: Card. P.-M. Gerlier, 'Les rituels bilingues et l'efficacité pastorale des sacrements', *Maison-Dieu* XLVII/XLVIII (1956), pp. 81-97. (This is a report of the congress of Assisi, Sept.1956); H. Schmidt, *Introductio in liturgiam occidentalem* (Rome 1960), pp. 159-164.

[14] Cf. e.g. H. Schmidt, *Liturgie et langue vulgaire. Le problème de la langue liturgique chez les premiers Reformateurs et au Concile de Trente* (Rome 1950); P. Winniger, 'Langues vivantes et liturgie', (*Rencontres* LIX) (Paris 1961).

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we mean to do in this Section is merely to make a few modest remarks on this whole complex question.

First of all, it must be pointed out that even in this connection there neither is nor can be a sacred language for Christianity in any absolute sense. The notion that a certain language has an advantage – for whatever reason – over any other, as to its power of intercession, its power of entering into communication with the divinity and of making God listen to our petitions, or its having some sort of magic effect which makes it preferable to others, is a false notion and something quite unchristian and, if taken seriously, leads to the same thing as what is called superstition in Christian morality. This is not meant to dispute the fact that different ways of saying things cannot vary as to their psychological suitability for appealing to man as *homo religiosus* even on the deeper levels of his being, and that in this sense not every way of saying things must be equally suitable as a liturgical language. Yet fundamentally all languages are equal before God, just as in the new dispensation different peoples do not have any special rights before God above any others. This principle is indeed something quite self-evident and cannot really be disputed within a Christian framework. But one may sometimes get the impression that the defenders of a sacred language start from the tacit presupposition that this or that people has a privileged position before God, so that the use of its language is to be preferred before any other when it comes to choosing a liturgical language.

It follows furthermore from this that, within the realm of highly developed national cultures, we may quite rightly include the use of Latin as a liturgical language under the question of the use of an international language. This may seem rather strange at first sight and may provoke opposition, yet it is perfectly true. Latin is indeed often advocated as a liturgical language on account of its unchangeable nature and its clarity. But when we examine the matter more closely, we will find that this is not really a conclusive reason. After all, for the greater part of its history as a liturgical language in the Church, Latin was still a living language and indeed a primary and not merely a [389] secondary language. It was, therefore, in no sense an unchangeable language. On the contrary, the meaning of its concepts has undergone very profound changes, and has been shown quite clearly by recent investigations into the linguistic history of liturgical languages.[15] *Refrigerium*, *sacramentum*, *consortium*, *commercium*, *oblatio*, *gratia*, *devotio*, *pietas*, etc., have passed through great changes in the history of words, and these historical periods have left their mark, almost like significant fossils, on the actual language of the Latin rite, so that the terminology of the Latin liturgy is not at all as unchangeable and clear as some apologists of liturgical Latin have tried to make out.

Conversely, it must be added furthermore that, fundamentally speaking, it is not really true that modern languages seriously endanger that clarity which should certainly be aimed at, as far as possible, in a liturgical language. The clarity of the language of religion is much more

[15] Cf. (*inter alia*) the works of the Nijmegen school, esp. those of Christine Mohrmann:
J. Schrijnen, *Charakteristik des altchristlichen Lateins* (Nijmegen 1932); H. Rheinfelder, *Kultursprache und Profansprache in den romanischen Ländern* (Florence 1933); H. Janssen, *Kultur und Sprache* (Nijmegen 1938); M. A. Sainio, *Semasiologische Untersuchungen über die Entstehung der christlichen Latinität* (Helsinki 1940); M. M. Müller, *Der Übergang von der griechischen zur Lateinischen Sprache in der abendländischen Kirche* (Rome 1943); Th. Klauser, 'Der Übergang der römischen Kirche von der griechischen zur lateinischen Liturgiesprache', *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati* (Studi e Testi CXXI) (Vatican City 1946), I, pp. 467-482.

G. Bardy, *La question des langues dans L'Eglise ancienne* I (Paris 1948); Chr. Mohrmann, *Latin vulgaire. Latin des chrétiens*, *Latin médiéval* (Paris 1955); *idem*., 'Die Rolle des Latein in der Kirche des Westens', *Theologische Revue* LII (1956), pp. 1-18; *id*., 'Le latin médiéval', *Cahiers de Civilisation médiéval* (Poitiers 1958), pp. 265-295; *id*., *Liturgical Latin* (London 1959); *id*., *Etudes sur le latin des chrétiens* I (Rome² 1961), II (Rome 1961) (with a detailed bibliography); A. Quacquarelli, *Retorica et liturgia antenicena* (Rome 1960); W. Dürig, *Imago. Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie und Theologie der römischen Liturgie* (Munich 1952); *id*., *Pietas liturgica. Studien zum Frömmigkeitsbegriff. . . der abendländischen Liturgie* (Regensburg 1958).

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necessary for man and for his religious instruction than it is for God, who easily understands the really intended meaning of what is said. If we were seriously to deny modern languages the possibility of theological exactitude, since supposedly they are not sufficiently unchangeable, then we would really be maintaining that it is impossible [390] for the *magisterium* – which has been given the authority for this – to make any sufficiently clear pronouncements about the Church's dogmas of faith in a modern language. But this is absurd. And so, when Pius XII declared in '*Mediator Dei*' that the Latin language of the liturgy is an effective protection against any corruption of the primitive teaching,[16] this is indeed quite correct when understood in a positive sense. But it neither signifies that such a means has an absolutely guaranteed effect in this direction, nor that such a means is absolutely indispensable for the desired purpose; in other words, even a modern liturgical language will not necessarily lead to a corruption of the Church's teaching, as long as she watches with sufficient care over it.[17] For if Pius XII's words meant anything else, then there could be no case at all in which the Church could permit the use of a modern language in her liturgy. Yet, immediately after the above-mentioned statement, Pius XII says that she can do this if she considers it a good thing.

Added to this there is the fact, as had been said, that both within and outside the liturgy, the Latin language has had a very chequered career during its long history (one need only think of words like *persona*, *natura*, *transubstantiatio*, *naturalis*, *supernaturalis*, *sacramentum*, *character*, *mysterium*, *attritio*, *peccatum*, etc.), and that it obviously cannot be expected (a point to be treated in greater detail later on in Section IV) that this history of the Latin Church language has now come to an absolutely final stop. Yet all this is no reason for maintaining that Latin does not have any advantages in respect of its 'unchangeableness' and clarity as compared with modern languages. But such advantages cannot be a really decisive reason for choosing Latin as a liturgical language, since it is relatively easy to compensate for these advantages by the Church's *magisterium* keeping a close watch over the liturgical texts (just as the *magisterium* watches over Catechisms and other official religious publications in the vernacular). No doubt these advantages are also offset by certain disadvantages of considerable weight in the sphere of pastoral theology, such as for instance the fact that the majority of those taking part in the liturgy do not understand the liturgical texts, and this at a time when the efforts not only of the [391] liturgical movement but also of the official Church authorities themselves are pressing for a *participatio actuosa* of all the faithful in the Church's worship.

If one takes all these points into consideration, it will be seen that the real reason to be seriously adduced in favour of keeping Latin as the language of the liturgy must be the unity of the language of worship for the many linguistically differentiated peoples; in other words, the real reason must be that a common spoken language proves itself meaningful and useful even in this sphere, by providing a language which, although not indeed the basis of the unity of the faithful of different languages, nevertheless manifests, encourages and to a certain extent preserves this unity from the dangers of national tensions. It also follows from this, finally, that the viewpoint justifying the use of Latin as a liturgical language is not of such absolute and exclusive weight that it must necessarily exclude every use of modern languages in the liturgy. After all, an international language such as we understand it here, presupposes the plurality of living languages and intends merely to overcome their unavoidable disadvantages and difficulties without destroying this plurality itself. If the voice of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit is a sacred language in every tongue, since it

[16] AAS XXXIX (1947), p. 545.

[17] This is after all no less inapplicable to translations of the Bible into modern languages, theological publications and catechisms. Cf. furthermore P. Winninger, *Volkssprache und Liturgie* (Trier 1961), 2nd Chapter: 'Die Reinheit des Glaubens' (pp. 87-103).

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penetrates right into the heart of God, then it will also be possible to use a modern language for the Church's worship (always presupposing that the Church has given her official approval for this) wherever the meaning and purpose of a common language of communication are no longer applicable or are clearly not as great as the spiritual profit to be derived from the use of the vernacular. This, however, is the case in the liturgy (analogously to the sermon in the vernacular) when the Church's divine service of the Word addresses itself directly to the understanding of the faithful participating in the divine worship and when this is the whole purpose of some part of the service. Thus, when the Church reads the Holy Scriptures to the people, and when this is precisely part of the divine service itself then – being a constitutive part of the service – it should be done in the vernacular of the faithful. This means, however, that those who officially carry out the liturgy, should read the Holy Scriptures as part of their liturgical function itself and not merely afterwards by an activity which already no longer belongs to the liturgical action as such. The desire for the Church's authorization of this principle is so universal today among liturgists, pastoral theologians and those engaged in pastoral work, that [392] we may surely be allowed to expect that the recommendations of the Liturgical Commission and the decrees of the Council based on these, may bring about such authorization. This seems to be the least one might expect at the present time when we have reached the stage of culturally fully developed modern languages and when we are in an age when every believer is required to make ever new, personal decisions of faith and to participate most intensely – *participatio actuosa* – in divine worship. This moreover does not offend against the general principles of Latin as the universal common language even in divine worship. For the desired principle is but a practical application to the Scripture readings of the principle by which the sermon is delivered in the vernacular, since both of them together form a unity and are addressed to the very same audience and for the same purpose, viz. the believing, personal realization of what is celebrated in the liturgy. If one were to object that this could give rise to the question as to which of the languages spoken by a linguistically mixed congregation are to be chosen for these vernacular readings, or that all this might cause dissensions among those belonging to different language groups, then it must be pointed out in answer to this objection that the readings should be given in exactly the same language as the sermon in the service concerned, and that this need not cause any more fear of serious difficulties than arises from having the sermon in a particular modern language in such a divine service.

What has just been said about the Scripture readings will no doubt be applicable also to certain appeals and exhortations addressed as part of the liturgical function to the faithful in general (e.g. during the Ordination to Major Orders) as well as to certain chants which, in the original intention of the liturgy, were expressly meant to be chants of the whole people.[18] It is surely also correct to think that the exact proportional distribution between Latin and vernacular in the liturgy should correspond to the concrete situation in the various greater regions of the Church and that it should be the task of the episcopal conferences concerned to determine the actual demarcation between [393] the two with the permission of the Holy See and in accordance with the general norms of the universal Church.

III. LATIN AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE LANGUAGE OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The necessity and utility of Latin is seen most directly in the administrative field of the

[18] Cf. the conclusions of the Missionary liturgical Congress of Nijmegen which are even more drastic with regard to chants; cf. the report 'Mission und Liturgie', edited by J. Hofinger (Mainz 1960), p. 17. These conclusions were accepted without change by the Missionary Catechetical Congress of Eichstätt in 1960. (cf. *Teaching All Nations*, ed. J. Hofinger [London 1961], pp. 392 *sq-tr*.)

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universal Church as such, which for our purposes here must be taken to include also the exercise of the Church's teaching office by the Pope over the universal Church. Accordingly, the practical use of Latin as the universal language of communication is an actual and indisputed fact in this field. The papal or conciliar doctrinal decisions of the Church's *magisterium* addressed to the whole Church, the universal canon law of the Latin Church as found in the CIC, papal Encyclicals to the whole Church, decrees of Roman Congregations which are not indeed addressed to the whole Church but are more or less based on the universal law itself formulated in Latin, such and similar declarations will be given in Latin (as one would expect) even today and in the future just as in the past. Any other procedure is inconceivable in practice. Here then is the most obvious field for a common universal language in the Church, which in the concrete means Latin.

All this is really quite self-evident, but in view of the modern conditions, problems, etc., envisaged by these decrees, it does involve the necessity of quite considerable care and development[19] of Latin, both on the part of those who issue such decrees and especially on the part of those who are meant to understand them properly. Viewed in this light, this self-evident principle is seen to be extremely important, a fact which also makes the intention of the new Apostolic Constitution perfectly understandable. All priests, at least of the Latin part of the Church, should surely understand at least as much Latin as is required for an exact and evident understanding of the Latin words used by the [394] central authorities of the Church. Yet it has to be admitted with regret that this is no longer everywhere the case. For, if one takes a sober look at the conditions in practically all European countries (not to mention non-European countries), it will be impossible to guarantee today that every parish priest finds it really easy, for instance, to read the Latin text of a papal Encyclical and to understand every word of it. This fact is actually very regrettable, since a knowledge of this official international language used by the ecclesiastical administration is not merely desirable but could also be achieved (even in the most realistic view of the limited possibilities) as long as there is good will. Just as one may say quite truthfully that the Protestant churches certainly achieve a sufficient standard in the training of their ministers as to enable their bearers of ecclesiastical offices to read the New Testament in Greek with a certain fluency, so one may just as truthfully say that a Catholic priest must be able to understand the Latin pronouncements of his universal ecclesiastical authorities and that this ability is attainable without other, even more important and essential tasks in the training of the future priest necessarily having to suffer thereby.

Of course, we should perhaps add right away that the carrying out of the young theologian's obligation and training in speaking Latin is obviously a good way of ensuring that he will be able to understand the Latin decrees of the official Church authorities without much difficulty. Yet this itself is still not a strict proof that such fluency in speaking Latin must be necessary and indispensable for this reason alone. A well-educated Protestant theologian will certainly be able to understand New Testament Greek and the Latin of St Augustine's 'Confessions' without too much bother, and yet normally in our part of the world he will not be able to speak either Greek or Latin. Whether there are other reasons for encouraging and training the whole clergy to become proficient Latin speakers, will have to be considered in a different context. Yet even the usefulness and necessity of Latin as an international administrative language of the Church has its limits. While as late as the nineteenth century, the decrees of diocesan, provincial and national synods and similar

[19] Classical scholars are most intensively occupied with this question, especially after the two congresses on living Latin (1956 and 1959, cf. note 23 below). The same purpose is served by the *Certamen Capitolinum* (*Concorso internazionale di prosa latina*) which was issued for the 13th time in 1961 by the *Istituto Romani-Ufficio Latino*, Rome. Information about periodicals appearing in Latin will be found, e.g., in a discussion in the *Anzeiger für die Altertumswissenschaften* XI (1958), pp. 233-238.

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declarations of local law were still given in Latin, this is quite rightly no longer the case today. Today, for instance, directions concerning particular laws, and pastoral instructions, in German dioceses are given in German both in the codes of such laws and in diocesan instruction sheets, and the same is true also in France, to mention but one other example. No one will seriously [395] wish or expect that such a development should be reversed again. For there can be no sensible reason for such a course. These norms are addressed only to people who speak one and the same language. They are in any case originally thought out and conceived in the mother tongue and not in the secondary language of Latin, and they are much more comprehensible in the modern tongue to the people to whom alone they are addressed. Hence, there can be no reason whatsoever for saying these things in Latin. On the contrary, such cases should provide good opportunities for perfecting the modern languages with a view to a more dignified and powerful way of expressing religious matters and a greater exactitude of theological and legal concept.

The case just mentioned is not the only one which throws light on the limits of Latin as a common ecclesiastical language. A missionary in the mission field, for instance, or a native priest living outside the Western cultural sphere, must develop his mother tongue as well as having (even purely as an educated person) a good knowledge of at least one of the international languages in common use. Even with the best intentions in the world, it will be impossible to consider imposing an obligation on such a missionary or native priest to explain a complicated marriage case, or socio-political case, etc., to a Roman Congregation in Latin. In such cases, even with all the good will in the world and considerable knowledge of Latin, he will surely find it much easier and will express himself more clearly in the modern language he knows and uses as the normal means of communication, and he will surely be able to expect that such international modern languages are sufficiently understood in Rome to make it possible to understand him in such a language. Furthermore, a case like the Encyclical '*Mit brennender Sorge*' shows that in very important cases, when he is addressing himself to a single nation, the Pope can speak to them directly in a modern language, without subtracting from the weightiness of such a declaration.[20] Again, no one will regret the fact that Pius XII used one of the modern languages for a great many of his Allocutions concerning important matters of moral theology and certainly aimed ultimately at teaching the whole Church. In spite of the universal purpose envisaged by such Allocutions, the audience to whom he had to speak in a modern language was not merely an accidental decor or back-cloth which could just as well have been done without.

[396] Even in other respects, we may quite soberly recognize limits to the use of Latin as an ecclesiastical administrative language, limits which can hardly be expected to be changed today in favour of Latin. Even in future, unless it concerns a particularly important matter, communications between different Roman ecclesiastical administrative authorities will to a great extent be carried on in Italian, just as it already is today. As is shown, for instance, by '*Mater et Magistra*', it will be impossible (at least for certain subjects even in the case of solemn papal declarations in Latin) to dispense completely with a *first* draft in a modern language. In such cases it will then perhaps be also quite legitimate to return to this first draft in a modern language when looking for an objective interpretation of such a Latin document. One can even imagine ecclesiastical assemblies of very high authority – including even an ecumenical Council and its preparation – in which Latin will not necessarily and in every case be the universal language of the proceedings,[21] but in which the difficulty of conducting one's deliberations in several languages will be overcome by some other means, as in similar

[20] Pius XI even wrote an Encyclical addressed to the Universal Church in Italian: *Non abbiamo bisogno* (AAS XXIII [1931] , pp. 285-312).

[21] Ximenez spoke in five languages besides Latin at the IVth Lateran Council so as to be understood by everyone. Cf. Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte* V, p. 875.

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secular proceedings (such as by simultaneous translation into modern languages, etc.).

IV. LATIN AS THE LANGUAGE OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL SCIENCES

The consideration of Latin as the language of the ecclesiastical sciences is logically divided into the question about Latin as the language of research in the field of theology as a whole and the question of the use of Latin in the teaching of theology in the training of future priests. Our question can be logically divided in this way, even though it is quite clear that the dividing line between research and teaching is quite vague, since, e.g., in certain circumstances new lines in even scientific research can find their first expression in theological textbooks intended for teaching purposes. Nevertheless, research and teaching are distinct from each other (even though mutually dependent) to such an extent that the question about Latin is not quite the same in each case.

[397]

1. Latin as the language of present-day theological research

The question as to whether present-day theological research can or should continue to use Latin as its language, is not easy to answer. If we first of all take a look at the actual situation, we will find that everything points rather to a negative answer to this question. Not only in Protestant theology but even in Catholic theology, Latin has almost completely disappeared as the language of research. There are still one or two theological periodicals which, side by side with theological research articles written in modern languages, include also an occasional article in Latin (but even then not as a regular practice), an article which can be qualified as a scientific contribution to research. But by far the greater part of the almost innumerable scientific periodicals in the field of theology appear practically exclusively in modern languages. It is impossible to furnish statistics here for the present-day proportion regarding the use of Latin and of modern languages in the field of properly scientific research. Yet the fact just stated cannot really be seriously disputed.

The same holds good also in the realm of the publication of scientific theological books. We prescind here from scholastic textbooks, for they are not included in our question here, although we are quite willing to concede that even such schools books are not always merely for the exposition of traditional teaching but may sometimes also put forward new scientific conclusions and this for the first time, all of which could happen even in school books written in Latin. Thus we can state without hesitation that in the field of Catholic theology at the present time (i.e. at least during the present generation), the production of books which, on the one hand, put forward new scientific conclusions for the first time and, on the other hand, are written in Latin, has for all practical purposes ceased completely. It might be possible to point to one or two exceptions, but in this case the exceptions really prove the rule. If I were asked which theological work written in Latin within the past generation ought to have been read by every theologian in the field of the new and actively researching theology, then I know of only one really indisputable example, viz. '*Mysterium fidei*' by M. de la Taille.[22] There may be one or other Compendium in the field of Canon law (something more, therefore, [398] than what is required for the first elementary classes in theology) which has been written in Latin even during the past decade or so; it may still be possible to name a few books in Dogmatic and Moral theology similarly written in Latin (e.g., Vermeersch, Dieckman, Lange, etc.); there may be a few books which still use Latin in a way similar to

[22] Paris 1921; 3rd enlarged edition Paris 1931.

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certain classical scholars who even today still sometimes write in Latin in the Introductions to their publications of the texts (e.g. Stegmüller's '*Repertorien*'). Yet all this does not alter the fact that modern theological research published in books, uses modern languages and no longer Latin.

This is true in all sectors of theology, and not only in those sectors in which this is tolerated without contradiction even by the enthusiastic advocates of Latin as an academic language – as in the field of pastoral theology, Church history and patrology. It is true also in those fields of theology which traditionally are regarded as the most central. With ever-decreasing exceptions, only modern languages are used nowadays in proper dogmatic monographs and in monographs in the field of the history of dogmas of any scientific standing and written in book form. The '*Cursus Sacrae Scripturae*' is a thing of the past, and even the great works of Catholic exegesis – in the vanguard of modern research – are written in French or some other living language. The living liturgical sciences no longer write in Latin. Modern languages have the monopoly whenever Moral theology rises above the level of a scholastic textbook, as in the case of Häring or Tillmann, and even more so in the case of proper monographs in moral theology. Obviously the same applies, but only more so, in such fields of theology as pastoral medicine (cf. e.g. Niedermeyer), psychology of the moral life, archaeology, the history of ecclesiastical art, hagiography and ecumenical theology (Christian philosophy will have to be treated separately in a moment). There can be no doubt about the fact that, as a language of theological research, Latin has disappeared for all practical purposes.

Of course, not every actually existing fact is also justified, although – particularly in the sphere of the Christian life, just as elsewhere – one must have a certain respect even for mere facts and must presume that they are also legitimate. Hence, even with regard to the present fact, it is basically a question of whether this represents a state of affairs in the ecclesiastical sciences which can and ought to be abolished, or whether we may regard this state of affairs as unchangeable and legitimate. Even a brief reflection will show that it would be wrong to try [399] to reverse this stage in the development of the ecclesiastical sciences within the realm of research.

We have shown in the first Section of our present considerations that, on account of the historical development of the present-day life of the spirit, Latin has become a secondary language. This precisely applies also to Latin understood as the language of the theological sciences, and it means that today Latin can no longer be considered to any great extent as a language for proper theological research.

We say that Latin has become a secondary language in the field of the theological sciences. What is the reason for this? In confirmation of this thesis, one might first of all point out that even scientific research – in spite of its sober objectivity – is an essential factor in the whole intellectual realization of man's existence but that this realization originates in the very heart of man and this can be reached originally and primarily only in the mother tongue. We should have to point out that even science, if it is to be properly integrated into this realization of existence by the spirit of man, must be thought out originally and primarily in the mother tongue, and this especially where it develops in a living manner, i.e. in the sphere of research. Yet if it were to be carried through with precision, such a reflection would lead us too far into the field of the philosophy of language, of the relationship of language to actual knowledge and of the relationship of the sciences to man's existence. Hence we refrain here from giving this more profound proof for the original relationship of scientific research in general – and hence also of scientific theology – to the living mother tongue, and will confine ourselves to a simple and practical reflection. All the present-day theological sciences have to rely so much on the closest contact with the profane sciences and on the most intensive encouragement given to them, that without these modern sciences – both in themselves and in their function – the theological sciences could not be what objectively they should be for the Church's pro-

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clamation of faith.

Anyone doing research into the history of the Church and of her dogmas is absolutely dependent on the closest contact with the history of lay life, the history of the spirit and history of philosophy. A moralist and canonist cannot do without modern jurisprudence, psychology of the moral life and the social sciences. The historian of dogmas must know something of the history of natural religion. The fundamental theologian, more than anyone else, must be in touch with [400] the history of religion, with modern philosophy, current natural sciences, the methodology of the historical sciences, etc. Present-day exegesis is no longer conceivable without modern philology and Protestant exegesis. Pastoral theology would be an impossibility nowadays without knowledge of the modern social sciences. In these and many other ways not mentioned here, theology is dependent on a great number of modern sciences, their methods and their results.

This fact does not mean a degrading or erroneous dependence of theology on these sciences, in the sense of being subordinated to them. Theology as a whole, especially in its central disciplines, cannot and does not intend to be anything other than scientific reflection on the proclamation and life of the Church as they always are and must be in all their elements especially today in the present spiritual situation. Yet if theology, even in its scientific research, has the task of serving the self-realization of the Church both in her teaching and in her life, then theology cannot really fulfil this task if it refuses to face up to the present-day situation of the Church in all the spheres of the spirit and of life. Yet such contact of one science, called theology, with the present-day living reality of the spirit, can take place only by means of the other sciences which reflect the same current spiritual situation as that of the Church. These sciences, however, are human realizations of existence which take place in fact and also legitimately through modern languages, so that an artificial scientific language can never be the original means for the exercise of these sciences.

In any case, the Christian and the Church of today are faced with the fact that, with the relative autonomy of the various fields of profane culture, the profane sciences as such on the one hand are being carried on outside the sphere of theology and on the other hand are acting as factors in the mental life of the present-day world, in the characteristic situation of this world differentiating it into peoples and languages. Hence it is unavoidable that even the theologian of today, precisely if he wishes to serve the living research of his own science, must always live also in the realms and by the spirit of these profane sciences; in other words, it is unavoidable that he should live, think and research through the medium of modern languages.

In addition, it would be a naive and clerical conception if theological science intended to address itself exclusively to the clergy . . . even though this were only when it poses new questions, when it researches and forms itself ever anew in the men of today. It would be naïve and [401] would underestimate the intellectual vitality of the educated laity in our day and age, if it were seriously thought that theology is an object of interest for the educated laity only in its popularized form or when it simplifies matters as in the catechism. In an age when philosophy as a proper science is no longer merely a science for clerics, scientific theology as such must also be a matter for the educated Catholic and hence must be capable of being this. Thus, theology will only be what it should be when it comes to live in direct dialogue with the man of today and with his sciences, sciences which man works out in his present-day language. This dialogue is so essential for a living theology that, without injury to their relative independence, these naturally profane sciences are also inner, subordinate elements of theology itself.

This will also explain the fact with which we started. Modern theology in her research speaks the languages of the present, not because it has suddenly become too lazy to speak Latin, but because today even thinking in theology is no longer possible except in modern

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languages. This theology which inevitably lives and thinks in the dimension of the present-day spirit, may then be translated into Latin, and such a translation may succeed, although only with difficulty. Yet such a Latin theology (i.e. research theology) can only be secondary, since Latin even on this level can only be a secondary language which survives and develops only by contact with the history of modern languages and their developing terminology.

At this point, it may prove useful to take up once more the assertion that Latin is unchangeable and therefore desirable as the language of theology. Let us ask first of all: can theology be unchangeable? The only possible answer to this question is surely that theology should and can always be to the highest conceivable degree in possession of that truth with which it is concerned, i.e. the truth of divine revelation, which has indeed its own history (and even for this reason alone is not simply unchangeable), but which proclaims God's truth without deception, a truth which is always valid. But this is no reason why theology should be absolutely unchangeable, in the sense that it must always repeat the very same propositions. If every science, including metaphysics, has a history, and if this history is even today no more closed than it was in the past, then man's searching spirit will necessarily be faced with ever new questions, new realities will open themselves to his reflex and systematic understanding, and there will [402] inevitably be new concepts and also a continuous, unavoidable and legitimate development of vocabulary. All this applies therefore also to theology, as is proved also by the history of this science. This being so, theology cannot make do with a store of concepts and with a vocabulary acquired once and for all and closed thereafter. Hence, it would be naive to think that the conceptual tasks of theology did indeed develop slowly in the past (which cannot be denied except by someone completely ignorant of the history of dogmas) but that they have now arrived at an absolutely unsurpassable peak, so that from now on they will no longer have any real history but must now persevere unchanged in the perfection they have now attained. This is not true. The terminology and hence the vocabulary of theology are part of history and will remain so even in the future, as has also been proved over and over again by the pronouncements of the Church's *magisterium* right up to this very day, since they too must reach for new concepts, and hence new words which as such did not exist previously, in order to be able to say what has to be said.

This certainly does not mean that the history of the language of theology must have the same rhythm of development as the profane sciences. Theology may quite legitimately be more conservative and may – in accordance with the characteristic property of its object – change and perfect itself more slowly. But to deny its historical character would be to declare it dead. Hence, to expect theology to make do with a now utterly unchangeable language would imply a declaration of its unhistorical character and thus of its death. It is after all quite obvious that theology, even when it is and means to be absolutely orthodox, always keeps step with the rest of the history of the spirit and hence also with the history of the language of this historical spirit. It picks up concepts and hence also words from the terminology of present-day history of religion, the philosophy of existence, psychology, the philosophy of history and the social sciences, and uses them to express its ever-present object in new ways (although always within the limits of the old truth). Theology uses these concepts and this terminology to bring to light certain new relationships existing among these objects themselves and also between them and profane reality, in order to make this object assimilable for someone who can grasp this object by faith only if it is first of all brought into a reasonably adequate spiritual association with those realities of man's spiritual existence which constitute this existence before he hears and accepts [403] the message of faith. All this however can be thought and spoken of originally only in modern languages.

The fact that the new research theology uses modern languages in contrast to the Latin of the theological sciences of the Middle Ages and the baroque period is not simply an evil

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whim of modern theologians but arises from the nature of things. Since during the Middle Ages and right up to modern times, Latin was a living language for the educated even in profane subjects – a language which established the contact with the reality to be examined, and this originally and not merely in a secondary manner – Latin was also the language of theology, but as a living and hence changing language and not as an unchangeable language. Latin also had, therefore, to cease being the language of research theology at the same time (or perhaps somewhat later) as it ceased to be the original and primary language of the new successful sciences in general.

It must be emphasized once more that even these reflections do not give rise to any objections against the possibility that, even today, at least in the sphere of theology,[23] Latin could or even should still be a secondary language of communication between theological scholars. Of course, the procedure at scientific theological congresses will presumably begin and continue to be the same on the whole as is normal at other scientific congresses: every scholar speaks in one of the current international, modern languages and is understood by his learned listeners in that language. Yet nevertheless, it would certainly be desirable if Latin, at least in the sphere of theology, could remain one of these international means of communication or even – within certain limits – were to become so again to a greater extent. Anyone who has taken part in international theological congresses and conversations [404] will confirm the fact that even in this sphere Latin an still play a useful role and can still facilitate the exchange of ideas between theologians of different languages.

2. The use of Latin as a teaching language for theology

This presents a somewhat different problem from the one we have just discussed. To begin with, it cannot be doubted that Latin offers certain positive advantages as a language for teaching theology, at least in certain subjects such as dogmatic theology, exegesis, moral theology and Canon law. After all, the budding theologian should be brought into close contact with the history of theology. He is supposed to acquire a real understanding of the pronouncements of the Church's *magisterium*, i.e. an exact, certain and easy understanding; he ought to learn to read the pronouncements of the Church's *magisterium* on doctrinal matters and on ecclesiastical discipline with ease and quite independently of any translation. In accordance with the particular office and task which he will have to exercise and perform later on by his own personal activity, he should be able to understand and to speak Latin as the common language of communication within the Church. All this will no doubt be achieved in very great measure by the fact that Latin is the language of theological teaching during the time of training of the young theologian. Indeed, one may quite rightly be of the opinion that no other means can serve equally well for reaching this goal. Furthermore, no one will deny that to a certain extent Latin as a teaching language serves to clarify concepts, to avoid idle chatter, to school oneself in abstract and precise thinking and to have the courage of sober objectivity.

Of course, one will also have to be careful not to overestimate these advantages. It is

[23] Even among classical scholars efforts are being made to obtain a unified language for scholars by a revival of Latin. This has led to a discussion about the principles of the introduction of new words into Latin with a view to adapting this language to the needs of our times, the simplification of Latin grammar without falsifying it, the unification of the pronunciation and also questions of teaching Latin. Two '*Congrès pour le latin vivant*' (Avignon 1956 and Lyon-Villeurbanne 1959) have concerned themselves with these problems. Yet even here it was impossible to do without modern languages, as will be seen from a reading of the acts of these congresses (*Premier Congrès pour le latin vivant*, Avignon 1956; *Actes du Deuxième Congrès pour le latin vivant*, Avignon 1960).

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possible to blether even in Latin. The preciseness of Latin tags can quite often be merely apparent and may simply be a result of having become used to them; translation of Latin theological treatises into a modern language can sometimes show that the apparent clarity and precision has to be paid for by formalistic emptiness. Conversely, if one really takes the trouble, a modern language can be just as strict, clear and unbending, as can be seen for instance from the clear expression given to the present-day sciences or jurisprudence in modern languages. There are quite sufficient instances in all sciences where a modern language shows itself more pliable and exact than [405] Latin (how, for instance, could we express the quite considerable difference between community and society as adequately and with the same precise conciseness in Latin? Or the difference between 'existential' (*existential*) and 'ontological' (*existentiell*), and so on?).

Be that as it may, Latin undeniably has considerable advantages as a scholastic language over modern languages for teaching purposes. We should not find it too difficult to admit this and should leave those who defend Latin as a scholastic language every right and freedom to point out these advantages and to name still more advantages. Yet this does not solve the problem of Latin as a scholastic language. The way life is, not every possible and conceivable advantage worthwhile aiming at, can be achieved in the one concrete reality together with all the others. Every concrete decision in human affairs has its advantages and disadvantages. And no discussion as to which of several possible decisions is the right one or at least the better one in the concrete case should quietly pass over the disadvantages of a choice by a one-sided extolling of its advantages. Such a discussion can take place only if one looks soberly at the advantages and the disadvantages of a certain decision, all the while admitting that certain advantages can necessarily be obtained only by means of certain disadvantages. So it is also in this case.

Latin as a scholastic language would have very great disadvantages particularly if it were the sole scholastic language used in theology or in certain subjects of theology to the complete exclusion of all other languages. Those who champion Latin as the scholastic language among the Latin peoples may perhaps feel the weight of these disadvantages less than the Christians and theologians of the German, English and Slavonic nations and, even more so, of those outside Western culture. This is even more true if, and in so far as, the religious and ecclesiastical life in these Latin countries takes place in a certain clerical isolation, on account of a certain autarchy and distrustful withdrawal from the rest of the cultural life of these peoples. Yet these disadvantages do exist and must not be overlooked. The truths with which theology is vitally concerned must not be taught and thus passed on to the future priest as a merely indifferent series of concepts which is merely aimed at his mind and rational intelligence. While preserving their completely scientific objectivity, these truths – even more so in theology than in any other science, and precisely to make it possible for theology to be a distinctive science – must be taught to the listener [406] in such a way that the whole being of man is called upon, in such a way that this teaching goes to the heart and reaches the deepest strata of the human person and becomes most intimately fused with the whole existence of the listener with all its religious and profane dimensions and experiences. There can be no doubt about the fact that this will happen more easily and effectively if theology is presented in the mother tongue of the listener, presupposing certainly that such a presentation is not merely a kind of colourless translation from the Latin (as was the case in quite a few of the theology textbooks of the nineteenth century, even though they appeared on the surface to be written in a modern language). The mother tongue establishes a much closer contact of mind, temperament and manner of experience between the theological material taught and the rest of the internal and external world of experience of the listener, since he always already encounters this world through the medium of his modern mother tongue.

I have frequently asked priests who had been saying their breviary in Latin for many long

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years (and had understood perfectly well what they were reading), whether the language, the usages, the thought processes and associations of the psalms really had had any noticeable effect on them in their sermons in the vernacular or in their personal, informal prayers. I have asked them whether certain phrases from the psalms had sprung to their lips as spontaneously as, e.g., certain phrases of the New Testament which they had already read many times in their own mother tongue (under the regrettable presupposition, for this experiment, that even in the vernacular the psalms are read very much less than the New Testament). Every time I received the honest answer that, in spite of the long hours spent in saying the breviary in Latin, the psalms had had practically no effect on their own spirituality and religious language. Who will not readily admit that for someone who does not live alone in a ghetto and exactly like a monk in the world of the Latin liturgy, a Gelineau psalm sung in French will reach far deeper strata of his being than if he simply recites the Latin psalm? Anyone who would fundamentally deny such an observation would also logically have to assert that – even presupposing a knowledge of Latin – man's most personal and spontaneous prayer even in a most critical existential situation – could be said in Latin without his experiencing any abatement in existential intensity. How many would be seriously prepared to assert this?

Furthermore, theology should be taught to the young theologian in [407] such a way that he will be able to preach it later on, that his proclamation adapts itself quite naturally, genuinely and easily to the spiritual situation of his audience, and that his proclamation awakens, as it were automatically, all the associations of ideas in the mind of the listener who is to be addressed, so that the message of the preacher really 'reaches' his hearers. Can one leave this translation from the Latin scholastic language (if this is presupposed as normal) into the language of his own present to the listener to theology lectures himself? Would not such a translation be very clumsy and barren, just like the German, the French or the English of those nineteenth-century school books which pretended to be written in a 'modern language'? Would it still be really possible to avoid the danger of the listener shelving his Latin scholastic theology in his later priestly activity and looking for his theological 'provender' exclusively in the literature of '*haute vulgarisation*' which appear in his own mother tongue? It cannot be denied that the Latin language of the schools also has its disadvantages in the religious and apostolic field, disadvantages which are all the greater, the more it is true that the present-day religious and pastoral situation demands the most personal assimilation and proclamation of the truths of the faith, since today without them the environment itself no longer sustains the priest sufficiently in a personal and missionary sense.

The difficulties and hence the disadvantages of Latin as a scholastic language become all the greater, the closer the relationship and contact in the nature of things between the theological subject-matter and the immediate day-to-day reality that is grasped by means of modern languages alone. It may be that for practical reasons one is forced to give the lectures in all disciplines in Latin (as, for instance, in the Roman theological colleges). This, however, is certainly no reason for trying to prove, even in theological colleges where the audience all speak the same language – and prove it even in subjects closest to present-day life – that ultimately even these subject-matters can be expressed in Latin, viz. by forming Latin expressions which can be understood exactly only when one adds the modern counter-expressions in brackets. Hence, right away it can only be a question of whether or not dogmatic theology (together with fundamental theology), exegesis, moral theology and Canon law should be taught in Latin.

Before attempting to answer this question, it will be well to round off the statement of the problem itself by saying something about [408] Latin in philosophy as part of the training of

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the clergy. This too is not a simple question.[24] There is, of course, the study of philosophy intended as an introduction to theology. Such a study clearly is not really intended to be, nor can it be, anything more than a modest preparation for theology itse1f i.e. a study, as it were, providing the formal tools with which theology works, together with a few, basically popular philosophical expositions on the existence of God and a few fundamental theses of anthropology and of ethics. One should also not be under any delusion about the fact that a great number of our clerical students are not at all capable of more than such a philosophical introduction to theology, bearing in mind the time allotted for its study and all the other subjects which must necessarily be taught even during the period intended for philosophy, as well as their intellectual capacity of comprehension. This is not derogatory of the dignity and depth of theological studies. It is just that the individual disciplines of human knowledge have taken on such proportions nowadays and each of them has become so difficult that only a few minds can still even as much as approach to an exact and independent knowledge of more than a single science. After all, one does not reproach the representatives of the individual natural or human sciences today (even though they certainly have an affinity to philosophy) with not being professional philosophers as well.

This is not the place to explain how the curriculum should be arranged so as to satisfy the distinction, connection and simultaneous existence both of such a philosophical introduction to theology and of a proper training in philosophy as a specialized subject for certain students within the whole framework of the study of theology. We would simply express the opinion in passing here that this could presumably be arranged in such a way that the introductory philosophy course could even serve at the same time also as the basis for the specialized philosophical training of the theologian who is to be fully trained as a proper philosopher. As we will see in a moment this has its advantages also for the solution of the question we have asked ourselves here.

[409] The same principle as that still to be established for dogmatic and moral theology will naturally also apply to the language of this introductory philosophy course. This is quite obvious from the very purpose of this introductory course, for this is the very place where the student can and should gain practice in the specialized scientific terminology required for the study of theology. Within the limits and with the precautions in and with which the afore-mentioned theological subjects should be taught in Latin (as we will show later on), the same is true also of the basic course of philosophy. This itself immediately provides also a very useful introduction to and practice in the understanding of the Latin of ancient and medieval philosophy as well as of the theological sources and of the pronouncements of the Church's *magisterium*.

This fact undoubtedly accounts also for the regulation laid down by the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries in the appendix to Pius XI's Apostolic Constitution '*Deus scientiarum Dominus*', art. 21 (AAS XXIII [1931] n. 268), viz. that, in the institutions referred to by this Constitution, the *philosophia scholastica* must be taught in Latin. The word '*scholastica*' clearly shows that it is not demanded that philosophy and the history of philosophy as such must be taught in Latin. Even the form of Christian philosophy developed as part of modern philosophy can, of course, still be called 'scholastic' in so far as it keeps alive what is valuable in medieval and baroque scholastic philosophy as an essential part of its inheritance, but it would be more correct to call this 'Christian philosophy'. For a philosophy formed, for example, in a positive encounter with modern philosophy by philosophers like Sertillanges, Maritain, Maréchal, Mercier, Blondel, Gilson, Geyser, G.

[24] One should recall, for instance, the grave crisis caused at the *Institut supérieur de Philosophie* at Louvain when in 1895 Latin was prescribed as the language for lectures. Cf. L. de Raeymaeker, *Le Cardinal Mercier et L'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de Louvain* (Louvain 1952) and the title-word 'Mercier': LThK² VII, p. 306.

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Marcel, Marc, Siewerth, M. Müller, Olgiati, Söhngen, Hayen, de Finance, de Waelhens, A. Dondeyne, de Raeymaeker, etc., has quite rightly assimilated so many elements of modern philosophy and this in such a positive way that it cannot be given the same label as the medieval philosophy of Christians without danger of misunderstandings.

Hence, when the above-mentioned ordinance demands Latin for the '*philosophia scholastica*', this term may quite objectively be reserved to that philosophy which serves as an introduction to theology, or respectively to the simultaneous basic course of the specialist Christian philosophy of today. As far as the language of the formation in the actual specialized philosophy is concerned, however, it will be perfectly [410] possible to be of the opinion that it must take place in modern languages. Genuine, living and independent philosophizing is one of those basic intellectual human fulfilments which man, as already mentioned above, can accomplish originally and genuinely only in his mother tongue. The same thing as applies to the historical sciences in general applies also to the history of philosophy: they are nowadays taught through the medium of modern languages alone and there is no real possibility of changing this state of affairs. Furthermore, in spite of the irreplaceable significance of medieval philosophy, the greater part of philosophical writings in classical and modern times, and at present, is such that the philosophical literature in Latin represents only a very small fraction of all the philosophical documents of humanity with which the young specialist philosopher must establish a living and personal contact.

We Christians above all must not regard the modern philosophers simply as our enemies, whose works – like explosives – must be touched only very carefully and with great distrust. We must enter into open and brotherly dialogue with them and must learn and discover ever more from them that, since the birth of Christ, it is no longer possible to philosophize except under the star of the incarnate Word of God. The specialist philosopher must learn during his training period to speak the language of the philosophy of our age; he must learn to converse with the philosophers of our day in such a way as to be understood by them and in a way which does not make his own philosophy appear as the product of the spirit of a clerical ghetto. All this is possible only if the specialist philosophy proper is taught in a modern language. We see in actual fact that the Christian philosophers of today – even those among them who are clerics – write at least their really scientific works in their modern mother tongue. During the time of his training, the budding specialist philosopher as such must not simply be confronted with a Latin textbook *ad usum Delphini*, but must also become acquainted with those works which directly manifest the living force of present-day Christian philosophy. These works (like the technical language of any science) call for special efforts and cannot be understood simply by knowledge of everyday language, just as a Greek shoemaker could not understand the language of Aristotle without some training. Such an initiation into the philosophical terminology of the present, however, can be offered only in living teaching through the medium of the same language.

[411] We must now return to our real problem, viz. the question as to which language should be used for the teaching of dogmatic theology (including fundamental theology), exegesis, moral theology and Canon law. All other subjects are already excluded from this question by reason of our earlier reflections, since these other subjects are from the very outset too close to the reality which can be genuinely and originally presented only through the medium of modern languages, and since (this fact must not be overlooked) they have not generally had a Latin history of their own during the Middle Ages and in the baroque period, so that in their case there is no question of betraying the past if they are taught in a modern language.

In the preceding reflections we have already outlined the advantages and disadvantages of teaching the above-mentioned subjects in Latin. There are indeed advantages and disadvantages. This is not likely to be denied either by the advocates of Latin as a teaching

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language or by the advocates of a modern teaching language. If we consider this fact soberly and honestly, then it will be seen that, on the one hand, the solution to our problem involves a decision which ultimately must be taken by the supreme authority of the Church and, on the other hand, that it does not provide us with definite proof that any particular measure is clearly and in every respect the ideal one. Such a decision should be taken or, if already taken, should be carried out with careful consideration of all the advantages and disadvantages which argue in favour of one or other solution; in other words, even the attempt at an honest compromise should be considered, for this may in such cases be really the best solution since after all it will usually be quite possible to find ways and means to combine the advantages of several 'uncompromising' solutions while at the same time avoiding the opposite disadvantages as far as possible. If, to begin with, we take a look at the already actually promulgated Church legislation on this question, then the following will have to be said:

In the CIC, Latin is laid down as a subject to be taught as part of the curriculum of the Junior Seminary, over and above the mother tongue (can 2364, n.2); hence, the normal curriculum of secondary education of anyone wanting to study theology later on contains Latin as one of the subjects to be taught. The same is stressed also in other declarations made by the Church's *magisterium*. This norm is, of course, still in force even today, so that all over the Catholic world the student starting the study of theology will have to make up this part of a [412] classical education if Latin has not been taught sufficiently in the secondary school preparing for university studies. This is obvious: a theological training, such as is necessary for the priest, is quite unthinkable without a knowledge of Latin.

This does not yet, however, answer the question about Latin as a language for the teaching of theology. The CIC does not give any norm for this question. Such a norm for the teaching of theology in universities and proper theological faculties is provided in the rules for implementing the *Constitutio Apostolica* '*Deus scientiarum Dominum*' laid down by the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries in article 22 of these rules (AAS XXIII [1931] 268); this article demands that . . . *Sacra Scriptura*, *Theologia dogmatica*, *Theologia moralis*. . . *CIC*. . . *tradantur lingua latina*. It can be seen from this ordinance that the Church certainly does not demand the use of Latin for the teaching of every subject included in the academic course of theology. Even though exegesis falls within the demand for Latin here, yet while the ordinance is naturally still legally binding (in so far as it has not been abrogated by a lawful contrary custom or by an implicit or explicit dispensation), this fact does not prohibit our drawing attention to a certain change in the situation of scriptural exegesis during the last generation and pointing out the desirability of dispensing exegesis from this obligation. The fact that John XXIII's Apostolic Constitution formulates this norm about Latin as the teaching language for theology in quite general terms may be taken as an indication that it is to be interpreted as a general repetition of the already existing ordinances on this question and not as a stricter application of them, since otherwise such a change of earlier laws would surely have been explicitly stated.[25]

There are, of course, a few other although comparatively old decrees on the use of the Latin language, which refer above all to the teaching of theology in a more non-academic form in the ordinary seminaries throughout the world. Thus, e.g., in a Letter of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries, dated 1.7.1908 and addressed to the universal episcopate (Enchiridion Clericorum [Rome 1938] n.821); in a circular of the Consistorial Congregation sent to the bishops of Italy and dated [413] 26.4.1920, which demands Latin as the teaching

[25] The same is also no doubt true of the '*Ordinationes*' appended to this Constitution, at least as far as the Latin school-language in theological subjects is concerned. One might at most point out that these '*Ordinationes*' demand, besides Latin for lectures, also Latin exercises, examinations and textbooks (III Art. II §3, §5; IV Art. II §4, §5).

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language for dogmatic theology (Enchiridion Clericorum, n.1107), for exegesis (*loc. cit.*, n.1109) and moral theology (*loc. cit.*, n.1110); in a note of the Congregation of Seminaries, dated 9.10.1921, which describes the use of Latin in the philosophical formation of clerics as 'fitting' (*loc. cit.*, n.1128) and which makes the same careful statement about dogmatic theology (*loc. cit.*, n. 1134); then in a Letter of Pius XI to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries, Cardinal Bisleti, dated 1.8.1922 (*loc. cit.*, n.1154) in which it is stated, without making it any more precise, that the *maiores disciplinae* must be taught and studied in Latin, including also *scholasticae disputationes*; in a Letter of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries to the North American bishops, dated 26.5.1928, which demands Latin as the teaching language for philosophy, theology (no doubt meaning dogmatic and moral theology) and Canon law (*loc. cit.*, n.1235). It can be seen from these proclamations that, whenever they are given to individual countries, the normal ruling is adapted in view of different conditions. It will also be noted that these ordinances are already comparatively old for the settling of a question whose solution must necessarily be strongly influenced by the changing times, and that nowhere in these ordinances is it demanded that Latin should be used as the teaching language for the whole of theology and in all its subjects.

As already mentioned, we must – in interpreting this legislation – observe the general principles of such interpretation, just as in any other case. There may be a legitimate contrary custom;[26] human laws, even those of the Church, do not oblige in the case of grave disadvantages arising from various circumstances unforeseen by the legislator, which can quite easily be the case in our question here; there may be explicit or implicit dispensations or particular decrees of the Church to the contrary. Thus, for instance, it can be pointed out that, in view of the fact that German is the teaching language in the German universities and that in Germany the theological faculties belong to these universities, all subjects are taught in German there and this practice is legitimate, if only because it has been implicitly permitted by the Church's permitting these theological faculties to belong to the State universities, a practice which has been sanctioned by a long and [414] indeed many centuries old custom without objection from the Church authorities.

In view of this legal position, a compromise will no doubt be the best solution for the Church in general even from a purely objective point of view, in the sense that dogmatic theology, exegesis, moral theology and Canon law should be taught basically in Latin, and the other subjects in the mother tongue. These particular subjects have such a long Latin past, and are so directly related to the Latin pronouncements of the Church's *magisterium*, that it is completely and indeed objectively defensible to demand Latin as the language in which they are to be taught. Yet one must also see the disadvantages of such a ruling quite soberly and try to counter them by various suitable measures. Hence, even with regard to these subjects, it will be legitimate to hold that a partial employment of the mother tongue is not only quite permissible but even necessary, even though the 'substance' of the teaching in these subjects is to be done in Latin. Introductions to these subjects and excursions within these subjects by means of the history of dogmas and of laws, ethical psychology, pastoral theology, ascetic theology, etc., will best be given directly in the mother tongue. Thus, the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries declared explicitly under Benedict XV (Enchiridion Clericorum, n. 1102) that the demand of Latin as the teaching language need not prevent the professor from following up his Latin exposition by a recapitulation of his thoughts in Italian in order to increase the understanding of what has been taught; the same Note (*loc. cit.*, n.1107) also provides explicitly, as far as dogmatic theology is concerned, for the interpretation and translation of scholastic concepts and formulae into the modern idiom. Similarly, norms of the

[26] CIC can. 5 can presumably be used as a norm for interpreting certain expressions used in the '*Ordinationes*' (*quavis contraria reprobata consuetudine*; III Art. II §3).

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Holy Office sent to the bishops (16.5. 1943) demand that professors of moral theology must inform their students of the vernacular expressions, concepts and principles of sexual ethics (*Periodica de Re Morali, Canonica, Liturgica* XXIII [1944] 133). Accordingly, at least in France, there are here and there scientific works in which the method of such a double language is employed.[27]

The question about the scholastic language in exegesis is a particularly difficult one. On the one hand, wherever present-day exegesis is to be carried out and taught in a really scientific manner (which should [415] really be always the case), it has become a very complicated and typically modern science with a philological basis. Thus exegesis has become a science with so many technical terms – a science in such close and unavoidable contact with Protestant exegesis and its modern literature and moreover with such a very desirable orientation to real life, towards the witnessing of the Gospel in preaching and the utilization of Scripture in one's own spiritual life – that it is very difficult indeed to imagine a Scripture lecture which (unless it is absolutely necessary) is given only in Latin and yet still satisfies the demands of present-day exegetical work. On the other hand, the Church's decrees right down to the *Ordinationes* demand Latin as the teaching language in exegesis (wherever there is no special law to the contrary). In support of this one can adduce all those reflections which argue in favour of Latin as the teaching language in theology in general, if one regards exegesis mainly as biblical theology and if, in spite of its independence, one does not wish it to be cut off entirely from scholastic dogmatic theology (which unfortunately has sometimes been desired as a reaction against a biblical theology which simply furnishes dogmatic theology with the *dicta probanda*). Thus one will have to strive for a sensible balance. The Church's decrees about Latin in exegesis will have to be respected. But one will not necessarily have to extend these decrees to the side-subjects of exegesis, such as biblical grammar, semantics or any other purely philological systematization, archaeology, history of biblical times, etc., quite apart from whether these subjects are given as an independent course of lectures or whether they must for practical purposes be taught within the main course of lectures. For the rest, the same as has been said with regard to theology in general will have to be said also regarding the task of the professor towards his students in view of having to give them a really vital and completely human assimilation of the matter of the particular subject with which he is concerned.

The disadvantages of Latin as a teaching language can furthermore be counteracted by making provisions for free discussion between teacher and students, by the composition of little practice essays, the holding of actual seminars, etc., all in the mother tongue. If, in addition, the students are given guidance in familiarizing themselves with essays and books of current theology written in modern languages, then it may surely be hoped that this will compensate so largely for the disadvantages of teaching these subjects in Latin that the quite considerable [416] advantages will prevent any harm coming from the disadvantages and will have a beneficial effect. Thus, the theologian trained in this way will have a direct and genuine relationship to the great works of the past in these theological subjects, to the present-day pronouncements of the Church on doctrine and discipline, as well as being able to use Latin sufficiently in the international commerce of the Church; he will be able to understand and speak the common language of the Church.

Everything which has been said about Latin as the language of oral teaching, applies *mutatis mutandis* also to the textbooks used in this teaching. It is desirable that there should continue to be such textbooks either written purely in Latin or written in several languages (in the sense indicated above). This does not exclude the possibility, however, that there may

[27] As, for instance, Pedro Descoqs, *Institutiones metaphysicae generalis*, tom. 1 (Paris 1925); *id*., *Praelectiones theologiae naturalis* I. II (Paris 1932/ 35).

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also be theological textbooks exclusively in modern languages. Even when such a modern textbook is, or is going to be, introduced as the official textbook for the teaching of clerical students, such a book must not contradict the meaning of the principle which demands Latin as the teaching language in these subjects. But such a modern textbook could – precisely in this way – supply the desirable completion and translation of the Latin lectures. It need not necessarily be regarded as excluding the simultaneous use of a Latin textbook, especially since even today the Latin text of St Thomas' *Summa* must still be regarded as the class text for the speculative part of dogmatic theology (at least for the formal academic lectures), and hence no modern dogmatic textbook can completely supplant the Latin textbook.

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[417]

PART V

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

[419]

16

SOME THESES ON PRAYER 'IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH'

1. *The nature of prayer in general*

Prayer is an act of the virtue of religion, i.e. an act of an intellectually endowed creature by which the creature turns towards God by acknowledging and praising His limitless superiority explicitly or implicitly and by subjecting itself to that superiority (in faith, hope and charity). Hence, prayer is an act by which (a) man as a whole 'actualizes' himself and (b) by which this thus actualized human reality is subjected and, as it were, surrendered to God.[1]

2. *The value of prayer in general*

As a consequence of the above, this act of prayer depends in its nature and value on two factors: firstly, it depends on the nature and dignity of this actualized and, as it were, God – surrendered human reality, and secondly, it depends on the intensity and existential deep-rootedness with which the one who prays can 'hang on' to God by such a surrender of himself. Even though this intensity itself depends again on the grace of God – who draws the one who prays to Himself in different ways and to a different extent – this drawing-near-to-God of the one who prays is actually effected by God by the fact that God allows man this greater or lesser *active* possibility of coming to Him precisely through the greater or lesser actualization of himself and of his surrender (for grace is precisely grace of *acting*, as a more remote or proximate active potency by which the creature depends on God). Hence, the nature and dignity of prayer depend on the particular way and measure in which the individual is able to come nearer to God.

[420]

3. *The increase of the* (*external*) *glory of God*

To make what follows later on intelligible, we will preface what will follow with a few remarks about the *gloria Dei externa formalis*. Scholastic theology rightly distinguishes between objective (i.e. material) and formal giving of glory to God. Every creature gives objective glory to God in so far as it *is* and thus reflects something of the perfection of God. God is given formal glory when the rational and free creature acknowledges the infinite superiority of God in loving freedom. This formal and 'subjective' glory can be given to God only by human, and indeed morally good, acts (i.e. *actus honesti*). For, these alone acknowledge the infinite holiness of God and honour God in the way He necessarily wishes

[1] LThK I^2, pp. 256-259: 'Akt, religiöser' (J. B. Metz).

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to be honoured by creatures. Every other perfection, and hence the whole external objective (i.e. material) giving of glory, is directed solely as a means and presupposition to this external formal glorification. Objective glory may indeed be given without giving any such formal glory (as ft is in fact given both by the world which does not obey God as it should and by the damned); yet even in this case it subserves those beings who truly give formal glory to God, since there has never been and never will be a world in which there are no creatures who give formal glory to God, and since the actually existing world is such (i.e. a world in which formal glory is given to God) not merely by reason of the *voluntas Dei consequens* but also of the *voluntas Dei antecedens*. Furthermore – and above all – a rational creature cannot lawfully strive to give merely objective glory to God without directing it to the giving of formal glory, since this creature itself has been created and is ordained to give formal glory to God and thus would deny its own end if it intended to give merely objective glory to God.

This results in a principle which is most important for our whole question: all those acts of man (no matter which ones) which are not absolutely good in the natural and the supernatural sense (morally and – at least implicitly – religiously good), must be counted among those things which give only objective and material glory to God and thus are subject to the principle established previously regarding the giving of purely objective glory to God.

It follows from this that acts by which a sinner or unbeliever *either* administers sacraments *or* says prayers – as prescribed by the Church – purely objectively (i.e. without any real devotion, even though with [421] external attention) *or* exercises some authority given in the Church, do indeed give objective glory to God, in as much as (precisely as acts, i.e. prescinding from the sinfulness of the act) they are willed by God just like anything else either directly created by God or brought about by God with the aid of some other creature; yet it cannot be said that such acts give formal glory to God or even increase God's formal glory, or that the spiritual creature should strive for these acts as such or that they are willed by God for their own sake. Such acts may nevertheless be signs objectively manifesting the effective will of God (as happens, for instance, both when a sinner performs acts of ecclesiastical power and also in the case of the positing of sacramental signs). They are thus acts which are effective instrumentally by virtue of a cause which already exists independently of them; this cause manifested by these signs – viz. the created will of Christ which instituted the powers of the Church and the sacraments – gives formal glory to God, but these acts themselves do not of themselves constitute a new value affecting God, for *such* a value is given only in acts which give formal glory to God.

All this indicates[2] what has to be said about the effectiveness of prayers which are said (and to the extent in which they are said) 'in the name of the Church' and to which some theologians[3] ascribe effectiveness by reason of this ecclesiastical commission *alone*. Of course, if and in so far as such a prayer is said without any inner devotion at all, it may still be regarded *quoad substantiam* as fulfilling the obligation of saying the breviary or as accomplishing a blessing prescribed in the Ritual or some other sacramental or liturgical function. Hence, even such a prayer is, in this sense, said 'in the name of the Church' and so is also an objective sign of those pious prayers which by formal divine predefinition will always and infallibly exist in the Church in the sense of prayers which are holy even subjectively. In so far as there is such a sign, the disposition of a pious person to whom, for example, such a sacramental is administered by an impious priest, can therefore be directed by this sign to the attainment of the fruits of *this* pious request made by the Church (since his disposition has been increased by this [422] sacramental). Only in this sense can it be said

[2] What follows immediately after this has been added merely to throw more light on the principle just stated, and will in part be explained again and applied further at the appropriate place later on.
[3] Cf. e.g. B. H. Noldin/G. Heinzel, *Summa Theologiae Moralis* II[31] (Innsbruck 1957), n. 754.

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that even the impious liturgical action of a priest bears fruit. Yet even though this prayer itself is said in the name of the Church, it does not produce any new 'supplicatory value' before God, since this could be produced only by acts which give formal glory to God and since even the Church herself, in so far as she is the cause of such a value, does this through these acts of *real* prayer, which prayer is in fact never lacking to the Church. Hence, on the supposition that *neither* the priest (who, for instance, administers a sacramental) recites the appropriate prayers with real devotion *nor* the believer (to whom this sacramental is administered) hears these prayers devoutly, then this 'prayer' is simply an insult to God, even though it can still be called a prayer 'in the name of the Church' in the above – mentioned sense.

4. *The nature of prayer, in so far as it takes place by supernatural sanctifying grace*

As can be seen from what was said in the introduction, the dignity of Christian prayer is measured by the dignity of man who has been elevated to the supernatural order and has been divinized by sanctifying grace. This nature of man divinized by grace is actualized by the acts of the theological virtues which are exercised in prayer and is, as it were, surrendered to God and actually (and not merely habitually) united with Him in this way. Thus it follows that in the present order of salvation in which man must and can strive towards a supernatural goal, only *such* a prayer merits eternal life *de condigno* and only a prayer aroused and animated by supernatural – sanctifying or at least actual – grace can be called a salvific act.[4] We cannot conceive of any greater dignity than this or even comparable with this *ex aequo* (apart from the Hypostatic Union), this dignity arises Out of man's sharing in the divine life, and nothing greater than that can be conceived in the realm of creatures. This divinization consists ultimately in God's communication of himself through uncreated grace and it actualizes itself – in the one who prays – by those unutterable groanings (Rom 8.26) with [423] which the Holy Ghost himself divinizes this prayer in the hearts of the justified. There may indeed be ontological realities and hence values which, on the one hand, when regarded in themselves, must be called *true* values and which, on the other hand, are different from this value of divinizing (i.e. supernatural grace as such) and divinized being, since they are separable from this value of an absolutely and substantially supernatural reality and yet can be added to this value. These propositions, however, arise from a purely theoretical and speculative way of looking at things. For, if someone intentionally and freely strives for that value which surpasses every other value in dignity[5] – i.e. the value of grace in the strict sense – then he must not indeed deny or exclude any lesser values which may be added to this dignity of being a child of God; he may even be helped by what is of lesser value, as a secondary aid, in striving towards that most sublime good.[6] But he cannot, in his practical and 'existential' evaluation, strive for that lesser value as an 'end in itself'; for it is impossible to attain *two fines principales* (i.e. main or primary ends) with the same act; moreover, it would be blasphemous to have less regard for the dignity of prayer arising from grace than for the dignity given to prayer, for instance, by some ecclesiastical mandate.

[4] From now on we will consider only the prayer of the justified, i.e. the prayer of the child of God in the state of grace, a prayer which is therefore a meritorious work *de condigno*. We prescind, therefore, from the prayer of the sinner which is said while in the habitual grace of faith and of hope or by actual grace, and is meritorious *de congruo*.

[5] Even true 'values', such as the value of a commission or of delegation by the Church authorities, are – as such – values surpassed absolutely by the dignity of divinizing grace, of divine childhood, etc.

[6] So that indirectly, for example, this delegation given by the Church authorities influences the intensity with which someone realizes the dignity of his divine childhood in prayer.

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What has been said about the dignity of prayer is equally applicable to its *efficacy*, since the latter is measured by the former, prescinding from that inscrutable divine providence by which God remains absolutely free in his gifts and hence even doubly so in the granting of prayers as such, i.e. in so far as prayer calls upon the free mercy of God and does not appear before God as a demand for a reward. Hence God is not under any obligation towards man or the Church.

5. *Increase in the value of prayer*

Since the grace which divinizes man is capable of increasing, the dignity, merit and pleading power of prayer increase in the same measure as grace. Hence, if (conversely) the dignity and efficacy of [424] prayer are to be increased, this can be achieved only through an increase in sanctifying grace. The latter can also be brought about by prayer itself (apart from the reception of the sacraments and the performance of meritorious acts). In the case of zealous and intensive prayer, the increase of grace and of the value of the prayer itself are in reciprocal proportion of causality, for any potency is itself increased by act, and when the potency increases the act itself also increases. Among the aids and impulses by which the zeal and intensity of prayer can be increased, there is to be counted (*suppositis supponendis*) the consciousness of being commissioned and juridically obliged by the Church to say a certain prayer. But the mere fulfilment of the obligation of the breviary by someone who is not in the state of sanctifying grace and who performs no *inner* act of *religio* by some (actual) grace does not have any value *before God*, even though the commandment of the Church is perhaps still fulfilled by this merely external recitation and hence this prayer can still be said to have been said 'in the name of the Church'.[7] Should it be objected that the Church's law about the recitation of the breviary demands that it be carried out meritoriously and in the state of grace, then this would merely reinforce and certainly not alter our statement. It must not be forgotten in this connection that by reason of the formal predefinition by which God wills his Church to be always holy even subjectively, there will always and everywhere be a sufficient number of those who in fact perform the Church – imposed duty of prayer in the state of grace, and so the outcome of this commission given by the Church will in general also be able to exist before God. Yet all this does not dispute but rather confirms the fact that the dignity of the prayer commissioned by the Church is ultimately based on the dignity of grace and does not have any other, different source.

6. *The prayer of the just, in so far as it takes place in and through the Church*

Man's divinization by the created and uncreated grace of Christ at the same time – and in equal proportion and measure – brings about a union with Christ as the Head of his Mystical Body which is the Church. The sharing in the divine nature and the union with Christ are simply two inseparable aspects of the same process of justification. One of these concepts can be replaced directly by the other. Hence, [425] what has been said about the nature and value of supernatural prayer can also be deduced from the union with Christ of the praying believer. In so far as this union with Christ by grace includes a union with the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church, this value of prayer can rightly be called a consequence of the union of the praying person with the Church.

This raises a difficulty which, even though it is for the most part a terminological and not

[7] Cf. note 4 above; note 9 below.

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an objective difficulty, must nevertheless not be underestimated but must rather be carefully examined. In more recent pronouncements made by the *magisterium*, we are commanded to identify the terms 'Mystical Body of Christ' and 'Catholic Church'.[8] If we keep to this terminology, then only those people can be said to 'say prayers' in and with the 'Mystical Body of Christ' who are also 'visibly' members of the Church (i.e. by baptism, external profession of the true faith and subjection to the authority of the Church), but not those who do not belong to the visible structure of the Church, even though they are justified (and perhaps even baptized).[9] Nevertheless even such justified pagans and baptized non-Catholic Christians of good will (who for this reason may be regarded as justified) belong in *some* true sense to the Church. For if it is ecclesiastical Nestorianism to enumerate only those marks within the total concept of the 'Church' which belong to the social and external structure of the Church and to leave the inner 'animation' of the Church by the Holy Spirit out of this concept, then it cannot be said that those are absolutely outside the Church who possess this Spirit and hence are governed by that supernatural 'formative principle' which – if it attains its full effect – forms members of the visible Church. In this way, what has perhaps already been effected by this formative principle in the heart, viz. the union with Christ and hence also with his Mystical Body, is allowed to become 'historically' tangible, i.e. to become visible in the spatial and temporal order and in human society. This applies even more truly to [426] the justified non-Catholics who have received valid and fruitful baptism. Hence, although they are not simply visible members of the visible Church, their prayers (in the absolute sense, i.e. judging prayer by its *ultimate* measure of dignity and worth which is grace) also possess the same dignity and the same value as the prayer of those who are members in the strict sense. For the prayer of the *latter* receives its highest and most important dignity from that grace and that union with Christ and his Mystical Body with which even these justified non-Catholics are gifted, and does not receive its dignity precisely from their juridical and external union with the Church. Hence we must not deny that even the prayer of those who are justified but 'outside' the Church has that dignity and value which we ascribe to the prayer of Catholics. In any case, the following must be noted with regard to their prayers: if their interior prayer (which in itself is supernatural and must be activated by grace if it is to be such a supernatural prayer) becomes visible externally (even in a cult which in itself is erroneous), then this prayer bears witness – in so far as it is supernatural – not to a false religion but basically to the Catholic Church; just as in the case of that valid and fruitful baptism which is administered outside the Church and yet is administered only apparently within the non-Catholic religious communion as such.

The unity of the person who prays and of the visible Church as such does not of itself and directly give this person's prayer any higher supernatural value over and above the value belonging to every prayer said by someone in the state of grace (and who *ex supposito* possesses the same measure of sanctifying grace). But the visible Church membership as such for many reasons bring a positive influence to bear on the value of prayer. For there can be no doubt about the fact that the visible and hierarchical Church as such contributes in many ways to the transmission and increase of the divinizing grace of man: by guidance, admonition, prescriptions, communal prayer, the sacraments, good example, the visible and hierarchical Church influences the granting and increase of grace (both as part of and outside of prayer itself) and in this way influences also the value prayer has before God.

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[8] Denz 2319; Encyclical '*Mystici Corporis*', AAS XXXV (1943), pp. 193 *sq*.

[9] Such a case is obviously possible. For there are those who are justified by the (even implicit) *votum* of baptism (Denz 413; 796; 807; 849; 898; 1031; 1677; Letter of the Holy Office to Cardinal Gushing, *American Ecclesiastical Review* LXXVII [1952], pp. 307-311). Cf. also: A. Card. Bea, 'Il cattolico di fronte al problema dell'unione dei cristiani', *La Civilta Cattolica* CXII, 1 (1961), pp. 113-129.

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7. *Prayer in common*

(a) *Firstly*, the *communal* prayer of the faithful of its very nature realizes and makes explicitly visible one of the essential traits of *all* [427] Christian prayer, viz. the fact that the one who prays must necessarily be united with Christ and the Church, and hence with everyone animated by the same Holy Spirit. For this reason, and on account of Christ's promise (Mt 18.19 *sq*.), communal prayer possesses a special efficacy. In practice, such a prayer has this special efficacy because – of its very nature and on account of the special actual graces granted to it by reason of Christ's promise – such a prayer is likely to be performed with much greater zeal and hence out of the increased sanctifying grace of each person praying (with that reciprocal causality of prayer as an act of grace and grace as the power constituting the measure of this act: cf. n.5 above). Since – on the one hand – the community as such is not a physical subject capable of receiving sanctifying grace, and since – on the other hand – the real value of prayer is measured exclusively by sanctifying grace and the intensity of the realization of this grace, it is impossible to find any other explanation for the special dignity of community prayer, if one is not to elevate social structures arbitrarily to the status of hypostases.

(b) *Secondly*, there is another reason why the *communal* prayer of the faithful receives a special efficacy from the Mystical Body of Christ. God pursues individuals with his desire for their salvation, by regarding, willing and achieving their salvation in so far as they are members of the congregation of those who are to be saved and whom He has chosen, by eternal pre-election, to form his eternal Kingdom and the Mystical Body of Christ (i.e. the Church triumphant) in the unity and harmony of this community and in the diversity and mutual dependence of its members. In so far as these individuals are members of this Kingdom of God, which has already begun here on earth in the form of the pilgrim Church and which nevertheless embraces all the elect, God grants them actual (efficacious) graces for prayer (naturally always according to His pleasure whereby He himself establishes this eternal Kingdom in its manifold variety). Hence, every individual depends on *everyone* else in his prayer (which, when it takes place, always takes place by reason of efficacious graces). This is indeed true of every prayer. But, since this dependence becomes particularly perceptible and manifest in *communal* prayer, and since precisely for this reason Christ promised special graces to this kind of prayer, communal prayer receives many graces from the Mystical Body of Christ from the very fact that it itself is realized and manifested by the praying community. What we have said here applies in the very nature of things to *every* [428] prayer of those who believe in Christ which is performed lawfully in common, and does not apply only to that prayer which takes place by a special commission given by the hierarchical Church.

8. *Prayer as an act of the Church*

There are two extremes in this question which must be carefully avoided: on the one hand, there is the danger of hypostasizing the Church herself in her nature as a community of many substantial beings, as if she herself were a substantial existent; on the other hand, there is the danger that this unity of the Church and her members might be underestimated, as if this one Church were not a true reality but merely a fiction.

(a) There are several ways of speaking of an act of the Church.

(i) We may rightly call it an act of the Church when a person exercises either the *potestas iurisdictionis* or the *potestas ordinis* in the visible Church. The greater the particular power

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and the more absolutely it is exercised, the more truly can we call an act flowing from the *potestas iurisdictionis* or *ordinis*, an act of the Church herself. The act, formally taken and as such, does not proceed from sanctifying grace, since even a sinner who possesses this power in the Church can exercise it. Such an act is an act of the Church as a visible and hierarchical institution. For even though it is physically the act of a single person, the act of this person is rightly called an act of the Church herself, since he does this act precisely *in so far as* he is one of the bearers of those powers which Christ has given to His Church as such. Derived from this, as it were, even those acts may in a secondary sense be called acts of the Church which are done by a simple member of the Church in so far as he is carrying out a commission given to him by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, for by such a commission the Church becomes in a sense the source of this act and so the act can in some way be ascribed to the Church herself.

(ii) Yet it is not only the act of a person who has such a sacramental or juridical power in the Church which can be called an act of the Church. Any saving act of any member of the Church can be called an act of the Church in a true sense; for, such an act springs from grace, grace which always has an ecclesiological character; such an act too has always a positive effect on the whole Mystical Body of Christ and (by its, albeit humble, contribution) transforms the visible Church into [429] that sign set over the nations (Denz 1794) in which form the Church herself is also a witness to her own divine origin. For every saving act is in its own way a contribution to that inexhaustible sanctity and fruitfulness in everything good[10] whereby the Church becomes that sign. It is clear from this declaration of the first Vatican Council that the Church ascribes to *herself* all the supernatural meritorious actions of individual Christians as testimonies to her holiness. The same follows from the doctrine of the so-called 'treasury of the Church' (Denz 550-52; 740a 757; 1541) which is formed by the merits and. atoning acts of Christ and of all the just. For if these acts were not in a true sense acts of the Church, the combined meritorious and atoning value of them all could not constitute a 'treasury' over which the Church herself can dispose, since in this matter she disposes not over something which does not belong to her but precisely over something which is *her own*. Hence, all acts of Christians performed in the state of grace must undeniably and in a true sense be, and be called, acts of the Mystical Body of Christ. For all Christians, and not only those who direct the Church, are members of the Church understood as the Mystical Body of Christ. Since, however, the acts of the members are fundamentally acts of the body itself and since in general there are no other acts of the Mystical Body apart from the good works and prayers of the faithful, these acts are rightly called acts of the Mystical Body. And since the Body of Christ and the Church signify the same thing, the meritorious acts of the faithful in the state of grace must be regarded as acts of the *Church* herself. This applies *a fortiori* to those acts which explicitly exhibit a social character. But this distinction between merely 'private' and explicitly 'social' acts is not an essential one. For in the Kingdom of God there are no acts which are simply 'private' or merely 'individual' before God. If this were not so, then the Church would either have to be identified with the hierarchy – despite the fact that in reality even lay people are members of the Church and not merely objects of the pastoral care exercised by the clergy – or we would have to deny this Church every act in so far as she is also made up of lay people. Yet both of these conceptions are false.

(iii) If we now compare the two kinds of acts of the Church enumerated under (i) and (ii), then the following has to be said: the acts of the hierarchy (of the clergy) are in different ways but totally orientated towards calling forth, directing and intensifying those acts which are [430] performed by the members of the Church out of the divinizing grace of Christ. These

[10] Denz 1794.

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hierarchical acts are indeed performed in the name of the Church (and of Christ) but are intended for the purpose of preserving and furthering the supernatural life of Christ in the members of the Church. This is seen most clearly in the case of the sacraments: the administration of the sacraments undoubtedly stands out most clearly among those acts performed by the Church's hierarchy in the name of the Church and of Christ, and performed precisely as acts of this hierarchy of the Church. But this whole administration of the sacraments attains its goal only in the faith and love of the individual members of the Church to whom the grace for this their divine life is given through the sacraments. With regard to the value of both kinds of acts [cf. (i) and (ii)] both in themselves and in comparison with each other, we would remind the reader of what has already been said above.

(b) Thus it follows that:

(i) Every supernatural *prayer* which has its source in the grace of Christ and hence takes place within his Mystical Body (even when it appears externally as a 'private' prayer) can rightly be called an act of the Church. It is not necessary for this that the prayer should be explicitly and concretely commissioned by the Church's hierarchy. As the Church has declared that all holy activity and suffering of her members (who believe in Christ) must be ascribed to her and is a manifestation of her own holiness and fruitfulness, so the same must be said in particular of the prayer of the faithful.

(ii) The same (in a greater measure but not of a specifically different kind) must be said a *fortiori* of the *communal* prayer of the faithful and even of that prayer which, according to the strictest concept of the liturgy commonly accepted today, can be called 'non-liturgical'.[11] For in every such communal prayer there appears visibly what belongs to the nature of every prayer, viz. the fact that it is performed by the grace of the Mystical Body, that in it – effective in the nature of things – the real basis of this prayer gathers strength and grows, i.e. the union between the person who prays and Christ and the Church, on account of [431] the grace of Christ, and that the common fruit of this prayer, which strengthens this union with Christ and the Church, necessarily also accrues to the whole Church. Hence, communal prayer is rightly considered as the act of the *Church* beneficial to the Church. Since this follows from the very nature of things, it is not required that this communal (and also lawfully performed) prayer should be expressly commissioned by the Church's hierarchy. Hence if (We need not speak about this here) only that communal worship of God by the faithful which has been explicitly ordered and juridically regulated by the highest authority is called 'Liturgy',[12] then it may be maintained quite simply that even the 'extra-liturgical' communal prayer of the faithful can and must be called an act of the Church.

This act of the Church is not given any *higher* dignity before God by an explicit liturgical commission from the Church, for there is no greater dignity than the one given to prayer by the Holy Ghost with his unutterable groanings. In the regulation of the liturgy, the explicit commission by the Church is ultimately meant to ensure that this communal prayer of the faithful takes place *actually*, in a *dignified* manner and *frequently*. Hence, liturgical prayer is not really a greater and more intensive act of the Church as such, in so far as the Church is the Body of Christ animated by the Holy Spirit, but is over and above this an act of the Church, in so far as she is a visible and hierarchical society; the act of a subject which is performed by order of some social authority, is rightly attributed to this authority and thus to the society which is based on this authority, and so becomes *its* act. This does not question but, on the contrary, confirms the fact that *those* acts performed by the members of a society

[11] Cf. CIC can. 1257; Denz 2298; Encyclical '*Mediator Dei*'; cf. on this: A. Stenzel, 'Cultus publicus: Ein Beitrag zum Begriff und ekklesiologischen Ort der Liturgie', ZKT LXXV (1953), pp. 174-214; C. Vagaggini, *Theologie der Liturgie* (Einsiedeln 1959), pp. 28 *sqq*.; J. A. Jungmann, *Der Gottesdienst der Kirche* (Innsbruck 1955), pp. 1-8; J. H. Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy* (Noire Dame, Indiana 1960), pp. 24 *sq*.
[12] Denz 2298.

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which can be exercised only under the explicit direction and guidance of the authority of that society (as, e.g., the sacrifice of the Mass understood as the highest act of worship of the whole Church) are *necessarily* regulated by the laws of the society concerned, e.g. by the liturgical laws of the Church and of her highest authority. But there is even in this case a *twofold* reason why this worship can be called an act of the *Church* herself: the ultimate, deepest and most sublime reason is to be found in the fact that the sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated (naturally under the necessary direction of the priest) by the faithful who are united by the grace of Christ in the one Body of Christ and who, on the basis of this union, offer this sacrifice of Christ as their own; the other, extrinsic and secondary reason lies in [432] the explicit (and in this case necessary) liturgical authorization of the Church. The first reason goes right back to the invisible unity of all the faithful (which unity is also one of the constitutive elements of the Church herself), the second reason regards the external and 'visible' (social) unity of the faithful. The latter is to the former as the sacramental sign (*sacramentum*) is to the sacramental grace (*res sacramenti*). Furthermore, if the Church herself commands and orders certain prayers by her commission and her laws, then one can know *more certainly* with regard to them than in the case of so-called 'privately' arranged prayers that, even in their 'objectivity' (i.e. in so far as one prescinds from the good subjective intention of the one who prays), they are 'objectively' pleasing to God. Just as, for instance, an unworthily performed or received sacramental rite remains an objectively valid promise of grace on the part of God, so the external act of prayer commanded by the Church remains objectively lawful and is recognized as such, all of which cannot be affirmed with the same certitude of private prayer even regarding it merely from its objective aspect. But the whole of this objective lawfulness is ordained to the subjective act of the one who truly ('interiorly') prays by the grace of God and this lawfulness attains its real goal only in such a prayer 'in spirit and in truth'. This *objective* value of strictly liturgical prayer can never, purely as such, replace that value of prayer which God ultimately intends, viz. the value springing from a pure and humble heart. This objective value does not in itself alone constitute a legitimate goal for a human act.

We know indeed that the Church's *magisterium* has on several occasions in recent times attributed 'a greater force and power[13] to liturgical prayer than to private prayer, and has said: 'It is true that liturgical prayer, being the public prayer of the august Bride of Christ, is superior to private prayers'.[14] Our statements do not dispute this fact. We have already pointed out above that it is possible to distinguish a twofold value in prayer. Furthermore, it must be noted that the comparison made by the *magisterium* between 'private' and 'liturgical' prayer refers to that 'liturgical' prayer which is in fact carried out by those members who are in the state of grace; this means, however, a liturgical prayer which also possesses *that* most sublime value which [433] we have ascribed to prayer on account of supernatural grace. To *this* both supernatural and liturgical prayer is rightly ascribed a greater dignity than to private prayer which, being 'private', does not have that additional value belonging to liturgical prayer by reason of the Church's commission and liturgical law. But this added value possessed by liturgical prayer, when regarded by itself alone, is incomparably less than the value belonging to prayer which (and in so far as it) takes place in the Holy Spirit. We have already emphasized above that the 'existential' (if we may put it this way) power and efficacy of this ecclesiastical delegation as such must not be overestimated in the case of prayer. For if someone prays in the Holy Spirit, he prays from a motive of love, i.e. on account of the in itself lovable goodness of God, and orientating himself entirely to the glorification of God he places himself before the infinite majesty of

[13] AAS XXVIII (1936), p. 19: Pius XI in the Encyclical '*Ad catholici sacerdotii*'.
[14] AAS XXXIX (1947), p. 537: Pius XII in the Encyclical '*Mediator Dei*'.

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God himself. All this takes place in every act of someone who prays and hence necessarily orders and, as it were, 'hierarchizes' also the orientation and motives of this prayer, since someone who prays is a member of the Church in *every* prayer and not merely in liturgical prayer, for only as such a member may he approach the throne of grace. Thus, in comparison with the ultimate reason giving prayer its dignity – viz. the Holy Ghost Himself, Who is the gift given to the just and Who in His prayer intercedes for him with God – the value of the *juridical* mandate given by the Church must be regarded as absolutely subordinate and secondary in the midst of the full light of the purposes and motives of supernatural prayer, motives which are nevertheless present on some level of consciousness or other to the one who prays.

9. *The notion of* 'opus operantis Ecclesiae', *as applied to prayer*

What has been said up till now will also explain the correct meaning of the notion '*opus operands Ecclesiae*'[15] which is said to be only verified in prayer said in accordance with the liturgical laws laid down by the Church.

(a) Any prayer can (*firstly*) be called *opus operantis Ecclesiae* if, and in so far as, it takes place at the command and in accordance with the liturgical norms of the hierarchical Church, even though – when it is [434] said by an impenitent sinner – it does not possess any meritorious power and none of the value of formal glory given to God. In the eyes of God, this prayer as *such* has no value over and above the value of formal glory given to God which, as a necessary holy value, is always already present in the Church, even though it is an *opus operands Ecclesiae* in the sense just mentioned. Of course, even such a prayer can be and remain an *objective* sign of that continuous intercession (and can be called, precisely as such, an *opus operantis Ecclesiae*) by which the Church, in the person of her just and her Saints, always intercedes for all her members by the meritorious prayers that are said in the state of grace; all the members of the Church can always appeal to this intercession even in their private prayers. But this sign as such does not increase the power of this uninterrupted prayer of petition, as would happen if this official liturgical prayer were performed by someone justified. The intercession of the Church which is always present in the Church by reason of divine predefinition and divine efficacious grace, is always available to everyone (properly disposed) for whom such a prayer is said even if said by a priest who is without grace or has absolutely no religious interest in what he is doing (when, e.g., he recites a blessing from the Ritual without any devotion), but this intercessory power of the Church does not come *from* this performance of prayer by this impious priest. If and in so far as, a person to whom, for instance, a sacramental is administered by such a priest, is in fact (which is easily possible) brought to greater devotion than before, and hence to better dispositions by this objective sign of the continuous and unfailing intercession of the Church (which in no way takes place only through strictly liturgical prayers), then *this* person gets more benefit from the unfailing intercession of the Church, to which he appeals at least tacitly by the sacramental thus received, than if he, for instance, had appealed to this intercession of the Church merely in his private prayer before God, although this too, as has been said, is always open to him as an effective means. If we were to ascribe any efficacy to these prayers taking place as an *opus operantis Ecclesiae* independently of the devotion of the one who prays *and* of the one for whom they are performed, then this would be the same as maintaining (even

[15] C. Vagaggini, *Theologie der Liturgie* (Einsiedeln 1959), pp. 86-91; J. H. Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, Indiana 1960); cf. against this: J. A. Jungmann, ZKT LXXXIII (1961), pp. 96-99.

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though perhaps not in so many words) that this is an *opus operatum*,[16] and [435] indeed even more than a sacrament[17] (since it would mean maintaining an effect of grace without any presupposed disposition – in short, a 'magic' effect) both of which are false.

(b) If (*secondly*) the prayer actually takes place in the state of grace, then it can be called an *opus operantis Ecclesiae in so far as* (although this cannot be determined with absolute certainty in any particular concrete case of prayer) this prayer (which always – at least implicitly – intercedes for everyone in the Church) springs from that formal, predefined and efficacious grace by which God achieves his will, that will which absolutely and efficaciously desires the Church as a whole to be infallibly holy even in the subjective sense – and *in so far as such* a pious prayer increases the so-called 'treasury of the Church' which must not be limited to acts of satisfaction for temporal punishment. One must, therefore, be careful not to ascribe to prayer – by appealing to the term '*opus operantis Ecclesiae*' – a true and proper value before God on account of the Church's commission alone, a value which in reality belongs to prayer only if it is performed in grace. For even in this case we must not mistake the sign of the reality (i.e. the impious prayer, even though it may in part be called *opus operands Ecclesiae*) for the reality itself (i.e. the prayer performed in the state of grace) whether it be performed 'in the name of the hierarchical Church' which commands it, or whether it be performed as a 'private prayer'.

10. *The prayer of the Breviary in particular*

What we have said applies also to the recitation of the breviary. If, and in so far as, someone who believes in Christ says the breviary piously while in the state of grace, then he prays – even without any special commission – in, with and for the Church and performs an act which can rightly be called an act of the Church (understood as the Mystical Body of Christ). This applies *a fortiori* also to the breviary [436] said in common, even without any special commission from the hierarchical Church. The Church's explicit authorization qualifies such recitation in addition as an 'act of the Church' even in the dimension of the *visible society* of the Church; but this additional qualification neither constitutes this prayer in the first place as an act of the Church nor gives it a higher value than that already belonging to it by the union with Christ through grace. Hence, the mandate given by the Church authorities to say the breviary – a delegation which exists in the case of those in Major Orders and of (many) Religious – adds an obligation to this prayer but does not in any real sense alter or increase the innermost nature of this prayer. Hence it is unnecessary that any such explicit delegation should be added whenever it is in fact impossible to impose a new obligation or when this is inadvisable in a case where no increase in frequency or intensity of prayer could be hoped for from this.

11. *The Mass celebrated in the name of the whole Church*

There has always been a dogma of faith in the Church to the effect that every Mass (even a

[16] Especially since a prayer, taken formally as such, can be a sacramental sign (e.g. in the case of the anointing of the sick).

[17] For the sacrament itself depends in its actual effect on the disposition of the recipient which is its condition and material cause. To overlook this fact, makes it all sound like 'magic' and would lead quite rightly to justified objections by the Protestants, objections which were already taken into consideration by the Council of Trent (Denz 741; 797; 799; 849). This would apply even more so if one were to ascribe power and efficacy to liturgical prayer independently of the disposition of the person who prays.

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so-called 'private Mass') is an act of worship by the *Church* and not merely by some private person (e.g. the priest himself as an individual and private person). It is, however, doubtful as to what is the exact sense in which this is to be understood. First of all, it is obvious that every act of worship offered by any member of the Church in the state of grace is a meritorious work full of blessing (by increase of grace) for the one who performs this act, and so on this account contributes also at the same time to the good of the whole Mystical Body. It is clear, furthermore, that those who assist at Mass receive *ex opere operato*, *by* the fact of their assistance, certain actual graces by which the very act of worship of the participant is increased both with regard to its dignity and with regard to its supernatural merit. This applies all the more truly to the acts of worship performed by those who are at the same time united for the celebration of the same sacrifice and who offer a particular sacrifice of the Mass by these acts. If, and in so far as, we prescind from this value and effect of every Mass (including even its 'social' effect), then it cannot be said that the individual Masses bring about a *new* 'value' distinct from that infinite value of the one bloody sacrifice of Calvary which is rendered present here and now by the Mass, i.e. of that one bloody sacrifice of Calvary which is contained in the Mass, and which is, as it were, put before God [437] by the Church in the sacrifice offered by the faithful celebrating it, that sacrifice whose power is offered by God as a grace to those of the faithful who celebrate the Mass – a power which causes its actual effects in them *in actu secundo*, when and to the extent in which the faithful are capable of these effects by their (growing) dispositions. For, although the individual Masses are so many acts of Christ himself[18] in so far as He, the High Priest, commissioned the Church at the Last Supper to offer up Christ in His (Christ's) own name to the Father by a liturgical act, the glorified Christ in heaven does not perform any physically new acts in the Mass, acts which would be multiplied by the many liturgical sacrifices of the Church. Thus, in view of the meritorious and redeeming act of Christ which glorifies God, the value of the Mass is not added to the value of the bloody sacrifice, but rather the Mass offers this unique and infinite value to God and channels it to men. If, and in so far as, there is any additional *new* value in the Mass which benefits the whole Church, then this arises from the acts of sacrifice in so far as they are acts both of the priest who celebrates the Mass meritoriously and also of those who are present at the Mass. For these are acts which glorify God in so far as, on the one hand, they originate in the power of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary and, on the other hand, are distinct from Christ's act on the Cross which was offered to God the Father for all eternity; and so, these acts are really increased by the number of Masses. In so far as they are supernaturally meritorious acts of several people, viz. of those who celebrate the Mass, they benefit the whole Mystical Body of Christ. Hence, every Mass benefits the whole Church. This is the only basic way in which the individual Mass benefits the whole Church. For one must not imagine that every Mass is offered 'in the name of the Church' in the sense that the *whole* Church is the *immediate* subject which offers by this act or receives by it the fruits of the Mass. The eternal and infinite value of the *Sacrifice of the Cross* concerns *directly* and permanently *all* men, but most of all those who have been baptized and hence the *whole* Church; but precisely this value is, as it were, offered *sacramentally* by, and applied to, *those* who are present when this efficacious *sign* of that bloody sacrifice is constituted, i.e. the sign which takes up a certain limited place in space and time.

[438] Just as a sacrament as such (in so far as it is distinct from the *res sacramenti*, i.e. grace) can be directly applied only to someone who coexists with this sign in space and time, so it must also be conceived in the case of the sacrifice of the Mass as such, i.e. in so far as it

[18] Cf. e.g. the Allocutions by Pius XII, 31.5.1954 and 2.11.1954, AAS XLIX (1954), pp. 313-317; 668-670. On the interpretation of these texts, cf. K. Rahner, 'Die vielen Messen als die vielen Opfer Christi', ZKT LXXVII (1955), pp. 94-101.

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is to be distinguished as a sign from the reality signified, viz. the value of the sacrifice of the Cross itself. When it is said in certain older sources that the Mass is offered in the name of the Church and that the Church celebrates the sacrificial meal, this is to be understood as referring to the local 'church', as is often the case even in St Paul. For precisely that 'multitude of the faithful' who celebrate a certain liturgical sacrifice, or that 'holy people' of whom the Canon of the Mass speaks as really and liturgically present, are rightly called a 'church' since this multitude performs the highest act of sacred worship which God has bestowed on the *whole* Church.[19] Hence, the whole Church appears 'here and now' in the action of a particular congregation which celebrates the Mass, and so takes on a concrete and historically tangible form. In this sense alone (apart from that other sense of which we have already spoken) is it true to say that the 'whole' Church celebrates each Mass, but this must not be understood as if the whole Church were the direct subject offering the concrete liturgical sacrifice or as if *all* the members of the Church were just as directly beneficiaries of the fruits of the Mass as are those actually present at the celebration of a particular Mass.

[19] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie der Pfarre', in H. Rahner, *Die Pfarr*^{2} (Freiburg 1960).

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17

THE 'COMMANDMENT OF LOVE IN RELATION TO THE OTHER COMMANDMENTS

No one will dispute the fact that the commandment of love has a special position among the other commandments. It is called a 'commandment' in the New Testament and is thereby seemingly treated as one among many other commandments. Yet the New Testament also states that it is *the* ('first') commandment, that on it depend the whole Law and the Prophets (Mt 22.40) and that anyone who observes this commandment has fulfilled the whole law (Rom 13.10). Consequently, this commandment while remaining one particular commandment yet also must sum up all that is meant by all the commandments. It will not be possible to say that this commandment is simply a collective name for all the other commandments, in the sense – which is true – that one already loves God when one simply observes the other commandments, and that the love of God is merely another name for one's readiness to do the will of God expressed in different particular ways in materially distinct commandments. It cannot be correct to say that the other commandments are merely partial formulations of the one commandment of love of God and of neighbour. If this were the case, then Fénelon and Quietism would have been right in maintaining, or at least seeming to maintain, that there is only one really moral attitude, viz. the attitude of pure love of God, and that every action whose intention is directed to some other 'value' – to the salvation of one's own soul, the avoidance of punishment, the unfolding of one's own personality, etc. – is in effect already immoral. Thus we are faced with a peculiar dilemma: love is everything and yet not everything; where there is love, there is everything, and yet there are other values besides love which must not be excluded from the realm of what is moral. One cannot solve this dilemma by saying that love is the virtue which one can possess (according to any one of its essential characteristics) only if one also possesses the others, [440] although conversely one can have the other virtues (as moral attitudes and even – at least in the case of faith and hope – as 'infused' supernatural faculties) without possessing love. It is indeed clear that it can be said that real love is present only if one is prepared to do the will of God in everything, and to fulfil the whole of his commandments. Yet this once again turns love (even though in different words) into the collective formula for all moral attitudes; one simply decrees that there is no love where one is not ready to do the will of the beloved in everything. But is this so obvious? It will, of course, be said in defence of this doctrine that while it is possible to have the feeling of love even without this decided readiness to do God's will in every respect, this feeling quite simply is not genuine or effective love. One may say this, but could not the same be said also of every other virtue? Could one not say also that purity without love of neighbour is not genuine purity but simply a proud fear of opening oneself in love to the other? Could it not be said also that truthfulness without love is merely an arrogance which believes that it is above such things as being considerate to oneself and others, or that it is merely self-assurance which, therefore, is in a position to be 'brutally' honest? Could one not say that justice which is not love, misses the whole point of what justice really is, viz. not a balance within a world of objective goods, but a real respect of man, and might it not be said that such respect can after all be shown in the true and real sense only through love, since anything else would not be the value-response due to the *person?* Could one not say even more generally and fundamentally that every moral value is ultimately a personal value, for only the person can be the basis for absolute values, since the *bonum honestum* is that value which is primarily and solely founded in the person (according to the axiom: *ens et bonum convertuntur*), and since each higher value can only be based on

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an *ontologically* higher being? The value-response due to the person, however, is simply love and nothing else, since every other evaluation lowers the value of the person. One might try to counter this argument by pointing out that the person is after all a multidimensional being and hence can be viewed from different and quite distinguishable points of view and can be responded to in its multiple forms of value, and that it is therefore also possible to take up different moral attitudes towards the person, without all of these attitudes being that of love.

Yet this in its turn could be countered by asking whether these different partial aspects of man, precisely as *such*, can still represent [441] *moral* values, since one or two of these aspects certainly do not. If one says that these partial aspects are moral values in so far as they remain orientated towards the *whole* of the person (i.e. 'human nature' considered as the proximate basis of moral values), then it would have to be replied that this may be quite correct but seems to prove exactly the opposite from what it is intended to prove. For if a human part-value is a moral value only when it remains referred to the whole of the human person and only when it is affirmed as a value thus referred, then this obviously means that a value-response to a human part-value (i.e. an individual virtue) is a virtue only if it is based on a moral affirmation of the whole human person, in the form such an answer should take in relation to this person as a whole. It would then have to be asked: is this response to the human person – a response corresponding to the person as a whole – anything else but love? Hence, after all, is not then a value-response and therefore a virtue conceivable only as a part – factor of the one love? Does it not seem, therefore, as if love not only includes every other virtue but also that every virtue includes love? Thus, are we not still in the same position we are trying to avoid, viz. being faced with the proposition that there is no real plurality of virtues?

If we are to get any further in this question, we must take a wider view and start from a different point altogether. For, as long as we regard the virtues only statically in their 'nature', they do in fact implicitly contain each other, always presupposing that we see their *full* nature in its *adequate realization*. But precisely this realization of nature has its own history – it 'becomes' – and is not always fully given; a virtue realizes itself only gradually and thereby, it is true, realizes also – love. Morality is the free personal acceptance of one's own pre-established nature, confidently coming to grips with one's own dynamic reality in all its united though multiple dimensions and precisely coming to grips also with that nature which realizes itself only when it turns lovingly to another person and when it accepts its own nature as the nature of the mystery of love. This acceptance does, however, have its history; it is not present all at once (as in the case of the angels), but is temporal and becomes. This means, however, that something already 'is' at a particular moment in time and can already be described in its nature; it means that there already is 'something realized' which nevertheless comes to its *proper* completion only in the completed whole of which it is but an element. We must not [442] overlook the mystery of the temporal moment in the history of a temporal being: in order to be a moment in a whole history, it must itself be 'something' . . . it cannot be nothing, but must have a 'nature' (in the widest sense of the word). Yet again precisely the same moment must not exist simply for itself, cannot be adequately intelligible by itself, must point away from itself, must transcend itself, must be such that it only attains its own full and final nature (although it already has one) when it enters as a moment into a greater whole and thus becomes once more different in *itself* as a moment of this greater whole: this is the mystery and the dialectic of the individual temporal moment in a history which is one, and the dialectic mystery of the part in the whole. (If, however, one were to rely merely on this last viewpoint of the part in the whole, then it would have to be investigated to *what extent* the individual virtues can be regarded as part-factors of the one virtue of love considered as a whole, and to what extent they can nevertheless appear even outside this whole.)

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If we now apply this, in itself obvious, insight to our present question, then it must be said that man's existential acceptance of his own nature has a history; man always discovers new dimensions of his own personal nature (and in the same way and at the same time necessarily discovers such different dimensions of the personal reality of others). Whether the 'route' for this journey of discovery of one's own reality is necessarily in all cases and for every individual of the same and recurring kind, or whether it is different for each individual, or whether there are certain basic avenues in the historic-temporal succession of the existential comprehension of such human values – all this is outside of our present investigation. In so far as such comprehensions of these multiple human values follow on one another, a person may already have come to a self-realization with regard to *one* virtue and may already have acquired this one virtue before he possesses another one. But in so far as this kind of acquisition by man of a *moral* value is as such conceivable and possible only *as* it is carried out and understood as a temporal moment in a movement tending towards the total acceptance of the whole personal being of man, this 'already' acquired individual virtue becomes perfect only once it is really integrated into the totality of the acceptance of one's own nature, i.e. love. Hence, every virtue which is not love may be regarded – in so far as it tends towards love – as a moment in the movement towards it, and only in this way can we speak of it as a *moral* virtue; or it may [443] be regarded as a moment in and of love, and only to this extent is it complete in its own nature. Yet love is not, on this account, the collective formula for the individual moments of man's historical self-realization, i.e. of those individual moments preceding love and integrated into it. Love indeed necessarily absorbs all the preceding moments into itself because – as moments of such a self-realization – they are necessarily present in the one total attitude of which this self-realization consists, since the temporal nature of a personal spirit does not consist of moments which pass away and fall back into the emptiness of what has been; but are rather moments which become in order to exist and remain in the one unified total attitude of the person. But love is not the end of the integration of these partial moments of man's self-realization; rather, love is this self-realization itself as such and as a whole, without this wholeness being merely the sum-total of moments. Where the person completely possesses itself, completely pledges itself and engages itself totally in its freedom, there is found love, for all this can be done only through love. In love, the person realizes itself completely, and by love, everything which had already happened previously in the spiritual history of the person's gradual self-discovery is accomplished and integrated in this one act; but this totality is more than just the sum of the preceding moments: it is simply love and nothing else, an act, therefore, which cannot be described by any other reality, because by definition it is the sole complete self-realization of the one person in its very unity; this one person in its turn must not be conceived as being built up from individual moments, and so love has nothing by which it could be explained except the one person who himself however, only learns who and what he is (as a whole person) when he loves.

Of course, this does not mean that love, considered from a temporal point of view, can be thought of merely as coming at the temporal end of the history of the whole person. There is an '*engagement*' which is present totally and yet can have a subsequent history. Love may already be present and yet may still have the task of realizing itself. The temporal nature of man necessitates not only a gradual temporal approach to love in successive stages, but necessitates also the kind of historical nature of love itself to be in successive stages. Love may already be present – it may, in other words, already be man's 'commitment in freedom' in the very core of the person – and yet the integration of all the dimensions and capacities of man, his love of God with [444] his whole heart and might, may still be a task not yet completed by this man. The objection put forward above against the possibility of any other virtue being really a moral virtue without already being love was a basic realization of the

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necessary connection between the historical nature of man (and hence also of his virtue) and the self-transcendence of the individual virtues into the whole of man's self-realization (called love). To this extent it was quite right: the full nature of any virtue even as such exists only once it has fulfilled and lost itself in love. The concept of the 'fulfilled nature' of a virtue is certainly somewhat obscure and vague. Yet, if we do not wish to do harm to the fitting description of reality as it really is in its becoming, then we must be careful not to face this concept with the dilemma that a being either is or is not, and that there is no third possibility. An embryo is also already a human being, human nature is already 'present' in the three-day-old human embryo; a beginning has been made which is irrevocably the beginning of a human being, and is this and nothing else. Yet man is nevertheless a being having eyes and capable of singing, a being which loves, and it cannot be said that these possibilities have nothing to do with the nature of man. The nature of the embryo is intelligible – even though it is a reality by itself – only in and in view of what it is yet to become. Potency is not only prior to act but is an active potency only in its active intentness towards act, and this dynamism of the full development of nature is something without which potency itself cannot be understood. This dynamism itself however, can be grasped only from the point of view of full act and the full realization of the nature. Hence, the notion of a full realization of nature (which must not be understood in a quantitative and additive sense) is a necessary one. Hence it can also be said that it is possible to find human self-realization in a stage in which it is not yet fully present (although the real movement towards full self-realization has already begun and we therefore find ourselves already in the moral sphere), and then we are dealing with man's individual virtues which are not the same as love. This human self-realization can also be viewed as full self-realization (even though still continuing historically) which indeed 'engages' man completely, and then we have love.

What has been said can be clarified further under different aspects. It is possible to *object* against the Catholic teaching that there can be mere 'attrition', by pointing out that even merely 'imperfect contrition' [445] requires a serious and unconditional will to observe God's commandments in future. Without this 'resolution', there cannot even be mere attrition. God's commandments, however, include also that of the love of God. Hence, anyone 'arousing' imperfect contrition, must have the desire to love God. It follows then that the actual decision to love God ('in future') is already love. For it is indeed possible to distinguish between the real readiness to do something and the actual doing of it in the case of material production, but not in the case of an inner attitude. The desire for such an attitude and the attitude itself are one and the same thing. It might be added furthermore: how often do not confessors and spiritual directors tell their penitents and disciples that anyone *wishing* to love God, loves Him already. If the above reflection were perfectly correct, then it would follow that there cannot be any imperfect contrition which is not also necessarily perfect contrition by love, and the opposite impression would be created merely by the fact that the love which has not yet been accomplished in attrition (i.e. accomplished in an explicitly 'awakened' act of love) is confused with love itself, although one is quick to emphasize in other cases that what matters ultimately is not such 'aroused' acts of the three theological virtues formulated in a certain way, but rather the genuine attitude of these virtues themselves which may quite easily be present even in a less explicit manner, as the inner formative principle of the concrete actions of life, i.e. as accomplished in the concrete material of existence. It is surely essential to dispose of this difficulty, for the presupposition that there really is such a thing as attrition in the concrete is surely quite correct, even though the transition from imperfect contrition (which is nevertheless true contrition) is probably much easier and more obvious than has been supposed in the theological controversies between contritionism and attritionism. It would seem that the only way to dispose of this difficulty is to concede that faith, imperfect contrition and other preparatory acts for justification, are

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really a beginning of love – the beginning of love itself – and a process which by its inner dynamism itself tends towards actual and achieved love (and which in real life is frequently this accomplished love already) but that for the very same reason, such a beginning and such a dynamism need not necessarily have reached their goal to such an extent that this beginning itself can always and in every case already be called after this its natural goal. Contrition understood as an unconditional acknowledgement of the holy God [446] and of His will (and this belongs also already to attrition, no matter what may be the reason or motive for which the act is done) already means taking up position towards a value and – if it reaches its latent goal – is precisely an acknowledgement of the absolute goodness of God (understood as the goodness of a person) and thus becomes love, if it reaches the goal towards which such an act is already tending. Hence, the only possible answer to the above objection will be to point out that wanting to love God can certainly already be love and in fact will be this in many cases, and in any case is always on the way to being it, but that it need not necessarily have already arrived at actual love. For, given the historical nature of man and the plurality of his values (each of which points beyond itself to the totality of these values, but each of which – unlike the value of God – is not already the totality of all values) such a process of development makes a beginning possible, a beginning which is not yet formally the same as the end of which it is the beginning. It is imperative to conceive the virtues from the very start as an internally connected history of a realization of nature, not overlooking the fact, of course, that in a spiritual history the earlier phase remains 'preserved' and actualizes itself ever anew with regard to the object corresponding to it. Only in this way can we do justice to what is valuable in the difficulty discussed here and, at the same time, understand that nevertheless it does not prove what at first sight it seems to prove, viz. that there can be no moral attitudes (in this case, attrition) which are not already love.

If we pursue these reflections a little further, it will also become possible to uncover the deepest reason for this unity of the history of moral values. Scholastic theology rightly stresses the fact that the individual virtues are differentiated by their different 'formal objects'. But the 'formal object' of love is not merely one differentiated *alongside* the other formal objects of the other virtues. The formal object of love is of a peculiar nature; it is at the same time identical with the *a priori* horizon of the will and with that of freedom in general. For it is the *absolute* being in its nature of absolute value (and this as a person) and this precisely is not a specific value *alongside* other such specific values, but is the real basis and source of all values, embracing all other values. Thus, all other values in their specific categories are included within the dynamism of that movement which is directed to the transcendental ground of all values, i.e. the absolute value as such. This absolute value – considered in this sense as a 'horizon' and as the [447] *terminus ad quem* of the intellectual and voluntary anticipation in which every object and thus every single value is grasped – is not always already the 'formal object', especially since even as such it must be freely willed if it is to constitute a moral act qualified by it. But it is precisely the same value as that towards which love as such also tends. One may say quite correctly that love is not just any particular intentional tendency, specified in any kind of way, towards some object or person; rather, the love with which we are concerned here, i.e. the love of God, is the free and (in some way or other) explicit acceptance of that basic movement of freedom as such which is at the root of everything else. If, and *in so far as*, the free acceptance of a specific, morally lawful individual object is already also an implicit acceptance of the transcendental basic movement towards the foundation of all freedom, then every moral decision is already love. If, and in so far as, freedom is possible as an affirmation of a particular value by registering an ultimate 'no' to this transcendental basic movement of the spirit which, as the 'nature' of the spirit and of its freedom, is always present (and without such a contradiction there would be no possibility of sin at all), then it becomes clear that the affirmation of a particular value

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by virtue of the transcendental movement towards the absolute value, is not always already (and we may add: not always already from the very beginning of the movement) necessarily a free affirmation of this absolute value, i.e. is not always already a love of God. The simultaneous presence of both can be understood only if it is presupposed that this dialectic (i.e. 'already love' and 'not yet necessarily love') which is present in the peculiar relationship between a specific formal object and the transcendental horizon, is the description of the historical nature of moral freedom and of the *development* of love.

At this point we may be permitted to add a note on the history of theology, even though space does not allow of a more precise proof from the historical sources. It seems to us that Thomas Aquinas placed that total 'commitment' which we call 'love' at the very *beginning* of human self-realization. His reason for this seems to be that he cannot conceive a spiritual movement of freedom except in virtue of an original orientation to the goal as such, which original choice of the goal – in distinction to the means and the step by step movement towards the goal – is simply the love (or the refusal) of the absolute Good and Being which supports the whole movement of the Spirit.

[448] This probably explains the noticeable lack of interest in St Thomas for a more exact psychological description of the various stages of the process of justification. This would also explain the presupposition on which his whole theology of justification is based, viz. that the acceptance of justification is exercised by virtue of the grace of justification and so is fundamentally a momentary event which itself does not admit of a temporal duration. St Thomas is certainly also aware of acts preceding justification in time. But can it be said that the acceptance takes place *contrary* to the basic conception underlying his theology of justification? How can it otherwise be explained that he succeeds only with difficulty to find even the grace for these saving acts preceding justification to exist in a temporal sense, that grace which sustains the saving act and permits us to interpret it in an antipelagian sense? Modern theology, since the later Middle Ages, has in this connection quietly and – it would seem to us – rather too self-evidently presupposed a temporal succession of acts in the process of justification, and has presupposed for this a strictly supernatural, *merely* actual grace which turns these acts into saving acts, without demanding that these acts themselves must already proceed from the grace of justification and thus be already love. Whenever one regards love as just another particular task *beside* others – a task which is perhaps more difficult and can be undertaken only on condition of being ready to fulfil all other obligations – it naturally represents no difficulty to think of this virtue as one which is fulfilled *after* a whole series of other fulfilled obligations and tasks, since the most difficult task is usually left to the end of the total achievement (and one involuntarily thinks of justification as having its place in the series of divine virtues even in a temporal sense, without worrying too much about whether this objective series must necessarily always be also a temporal series). If love, however, is seen simply as the total act of self-realization and commitment, then the question becomes more difficult: must not such an act be necessarily exercised – at least in the form of an '*engagement fondamental*' – at the very *beginning*? Must it not be the first total act of man's taking possession of himself by his freedom, even though it will perhaps still be a somewhat formal act and will have to be filled in content in the course of history? Must it not be man's original attitude which then determines the ultimate direction and quality of individual part-acts performed in the course of existence? This original attitude may indeed be changed by these acts, since [449] every later act can always be another such *engagement global et fondamental*, but it does nevertheless stand at the beginning of the history of each individual man, just as original sin also was not merely the first act of the history of humanity but was that 'beginning' which, as the all – determining horizon of the history of the freedom of the human race and as the 'setting out' point, belongs at the temporal beginning of history. In such a conception, the individual virtues in their very individuality can no longer be

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understood as anything more than particular interpretations and expressions of the one basic virtue of love (the *mater et radix* of all virtues, as St Thomas puts it), the other virtues being individual virtues in so far as they do not fulfil the whole of the ground on which they all necessarily stand from the very start. Of course, if this were so, how could it still be possible to think seriously of a faith which is no longer love, the possibility of which is nevertheless presupposed as quite self-evident by the Council of Trent (Denz 800, 808, 838)? Does not the doctrine of the essential distinction between mortal and venial sin mean also that a man not only does not always commit himself totally but also that he can exercise the act of freedom involved even in venial sin (or in a good act of the same peripheral personal nature as venial sin) even *before* the free decision by which the person commits himself wholly, although not necessarily totally (since both the good and the evil act – in the sense of a real personal self-commitment – are 'difficult' to attain)? For why should it be unthinkable that an 'easy' act, which surely exists, is exercised before every 'difficult' decision, since man is certainly an historical temporal being? Why should there not be such a groping 'preliminary practice' for the real total self-realization, a 'training period' in which man already has certain moral experiences which are a necessary presupposition for his realizing sufficient matter to make it seriously possible to speak of a real self-commitment? Certainly, such a conception would still mean that such a total commitment of himself would still have to be conceived as taking place comparatively early on in the history of the individual; it would still mean that this global commitment – in its role of the 'form' of further decisions – would also codetermine the moral quality of those acts which, since less total, would have to be referred to as the act of an individual virtue or even merely as an 'easy' act. This would mean that, before justification by love, it may be presumed that a virtue need not indeed be necessarily qualified as a morally 'easy' act. Yet this act would nevertheless have to be [450] existentially less radical in some sense (and not merely in the sense that before love it has not yet matured to the real essential fullness of its nature) than if it had already to be somehow thought of as co-informed by that existential radicality which obviously can be realized only in love, since the quality of the act and its existentially radical nature – or the kind and density of the existence of the act – are certainly not simply mutually independent entities. It would seem to us, therefore, that contemporary theology, by dispassionately making room for a temporal series of moral acts which only gradually lead to love, has made real progress.

Modern theology has thereby reached a really much more serious consideration of the historical dimension than was the case with St Thomas. Yet, on the other hand, St Thomas in particular has every right to warn us in this question against conceiving this successive nature in too primitive a way (and the average moral theology today urgently requires correction on this point by St Thomas). While holding fast to the now normal representation of the '*processus justificationis*', it is also very important to realize that the basic decision of love is not just something which is also due at some time or other ('*saepius in vita*') but that, by the very nature of personal reality, it characterizes rather that beginning of man's spiritual history which, as a genuine source, continues to govern the development of this historical life of the spirit into the individual virtues. This fundamental decision of love alone gives these virtues their whole, otherwise impossible, deep-rootedness in the core of the spiritual person and thus helps them to perfect their own essential nature, a perfection aimed at by them of their own, already given nature.

It remains nevertheless true even in this explanation that the individual virtues can exist as other virtues besides the virtue of love, not only because there is a plurality of moral values based on the many-sided nature of man, but also because man – in his free realization of himself as a person – can realize and accept these individual values in temporal succession and can already recognize and affirm their particular nature without having already realized himself completely in the one love. This does not dispute but rather includes the fact that

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these individual virtues themselves attain the fullness of their nature in love; in other words, they are really informed by love when it is present and thus are changed within themselves and only thus become 'living', as pointed out by the Council of Trent (Denz 800, 838).

The mutual relationship between love and the other virtues can be [451] regarded from quite a different aspect still. If we disregard certain of the other virtues (such as the virtues of religion and reverence) which have a particularly close relationship to love, then it must certainly be said that the other virtues and commandments demand certain tangible achievements or the omission of certain actions, concrete realities which therefore can be accomplished to the full and whose accomplishment can be checked. The fulfilment of a real obligation of justice, the obligation of being truthful, the observance of certain norms of sexual behaviour, even the fulfilment of an external obligation of worshipping God, are all (even though in very different ways) *concrete* achievements whose fulfilment can really and obviously be achieved, proved and checked. In these cases it is a question of commandments which primarily and of their very nature (i.e. precisely in so far as it does not dissolve itself into personal love in the full realization of the nature) do not demand man himself but rather demand certain achievements from him. There is only one 'virtue' which asks man for himself – really himself wholly and completely – and this is the virtue of love and it alone; all other virtues only 'participate' in this nature of the one love, in so far as they are destined, even though out of their own nature itself, to be more than just themselves.

This, however, brings to light a most fundamental difference between love and the other virtues. For love cannot be performed or negotiated. It is never simply present but is always on the way to itself. Whereas the other virtues, as it were, transcend themselves, love is always present only in its transcendence into its own nature. For it is absolutely false to reduce love to the mere fulfilment of the other commandments. Such a fulfilment may, under certain pre-suppositions, be a very good criterion as to whether love is present, but it is not love itself. Moreover, love itself is of its very nature measureless. It must be love with all one's might, with all one's heart and spirit. As long as we are pilgrims here below, we never 'have' *this* love. For who can honestly say that he loves God and his neighbour with *all* his heart? Moralists make subtle distinctions about this in order to bring out the fact that one can love even now, in a determined moment of one's still temporally unfolding existence, just as the Gospel demands it: with all one's heart. But whatever may be said about these distinctions, ultimately this whole ethical system trying so desperately to be absolutely objective cannot avoid admitting that if someone were to refuse point blank any willingness and any attempt to love God more [452] than he does now, then in such a case there would no longer be any love at all. Moralists today usually express this admission by saying almost unanimously that the striving after perfection is a duty imposed under pain of grave sin on every man and not just on certain categories of people, even though the manner of realizing this obligation (for instance, by fully determined means, such as the Evangelical Counsels, or by other forms of radical renunciation) does not simply thereby fall under this duty itself. Yet what else is this obligation to strive after perfection but the duty of a greater love then one actually possesses? What else is it but an admission that one only achieves the love one ought to have by admitting that one has not yet attained that love to which one is obliged? This unique characteristic of love is not destroyed or 'dulled' by admitting with the moralists that one also has a duty for the future which one has actually to admit now; but precisely as a duty for later on this commandment of greater love is always valid but not 'for always', i.e. for every moment. For the readiness of really becoming freely involved in a development and a dynamism towards a later condition is surely something quite different from someone admitting today that he must pay his tailor bill tomorrow, which today he is still able to leave quite unpaid. He must start out *today* on the adventure of a love which not until tomorrow will be what it should be tomorrow because, and if, he has really opened himself to it *today* in

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an inner readiness which he could refuse, in which latter case love would not become tomorrow what it ought to become then, because it was not today what it ought to have been today. Love today is, therefore, what it should be today only if it acknowledges today that it is something of which more will be demanded tomorrow. It is true love even for today only to the extent in which it reaches out to become more than it is today, only if it is really on the way and forgets what it is now, reaching out for what lies ahead of it (cf. Phlp 3.13).

If this is the nature of love, however, and if this love alone – as the full and unsurpassable realization of nature – brings the other virtues to their own final achievement, then this introduces a characteristic into Christian ethics which we half or completely overlook both in our scientific ethics and in our average sermons: it is really quite impossible to say exactly what is really demanded by the Christian moral law. It can indeed be said that what is demanded is love. But this love itself does not represent some assignable performance [453] which could be accurately determined; rather, it is that which every man becomes in the irreplaceable, characteristic way of his own unique realization of nature, something which is known only when it has been accomplished. This is not meant to imply that there is no universal notion of love at all, no notion whose content could be based on the proposition stating that man has an obligation to love God, and that therein consists the real fulfilment of the whole divine law and of all the commandments. Yet man is nevertheless obliged to love God with his *whole* heart. This one heart which man has to engage – the innermost centre of his person (and on this basis also everything else found in the individual) is something unique: what it contains within its uniqueness, what is engaged and given gratuitously in this love, is known only once it has been done, when the person has really caught up with himself and hence begins to know what is in him and *who* he is in the concrete. By this love, therefore, man embarks on the adventure of his own reality, all of which is at first veiled from him. He cannot comprehend and evaluate from the very start what is actually demanded of him. He is demanded, he himself is staked in the concreteness of his heart and of his life lying still before him as an unknown future and revealing – once it has been accomplished and only then – what is this heart which had to wager and expend itself during this life. With regard to every other achievement we can know what is actually demanded of us. In all such cases it is possible to make estimative and comparative judgements to ask oneself whether the stakes and the gain are worthwhile, in these cases one can find something else to justify the effort demanded, viz. a result distinct from the effort, a result which proves the effort to be sensible and justifies it. This is impossible in the case of love. In this case, love itself is its own justification, but really only once it has been accomplished to the very end and with one's whole heart and with all one's might. For only then does it make sense. If it were not done radically and *completely*, then it would be senseless, since a carefully checked and measured love which basically closes itself to any greater love simply ceases to be love. And when love is not itself, then it becomes senseless, because it no longer has any true nature; in such an event it becomes more senseless than the other moral efforts and virtues which after all are still meaningful when measured by the particular reality out of which they arise and to which they answer, even though they have not yet been integrated, together with their particular dimension [454] of human existence, into the totality of the human person and its total act which is love.

It follows from all this that this strange, incomprehensible love – which can be experienced only in the movement of an unconditional and trusting surrender of oneself to the unknown – is the real concern of Christian morality, seeing that all the commandments find their ultimate meaning in love alone and that love only is itself once it encompasses the whole man with its generosity and enabling him to love with all his might. Would not many a casuistic judgement, when applied to the concrete circumstances of the human life of the individual, take on quite a different appearance from what many a moralist would conceive, if we did not

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simply ask (in accordance with the formal axioms of the individual moral systems) whether and to what extent one is bound by a definite, certain or merely probable law, but if we asked (which perhaps cannot be asked by a universal ethics but could be asked by the individual in the decision of his actual conscience) whether this or that is not necessary or obligatory by the very fact that in such a case this concrete person would be basically refusing to obey the greater demand which is an essential part of love, if he were to close himself to this or that determined demand either of freedom or of the law (both of which are possible)? Would this not clarify what – without falling into a heretical situation ethics – has been called 'individual ethics'? For, could it not be that this love, demanded of everyone *without limits and reservations*, does not indeed demand this or that definite effort in the abstract (i.e. by reason of a universal morality of nature) but that a particular realization is absolutely necessary, not indeed by reason of the extremely abstract notion of love in general but in view of a determined love belonging to the individual nature of a concrete person? Could it not be that one should on this account be even more careful before declaring this or that manner of life and particular attitude towards another human person as offending against prudence, custom or what is normal? Should this not make us more careful before refusing to accept this manner of life and attitude as the concrete manner of realization of this person's own existence, if one were always to ask oneself whether this or that manner of acting, which might perhaps seem strange and unusual at first sight, might not be the only manner in which the person concerned can exercise his immeasurable love? It has always been recognized that the aristotelian theory of virtue as the happy mean can be [455] applied to the Christian doctrine of virtue only by greatly forcing it and by giving it a different interpretation. Does this not become still clearer if one clearly understands the boundlessness of love that ultimately is the only measure of the Christian doctrine of love? Perhaps this is also the point where the Christian doctrine of law is most clearly seen to merge into the Christian doctrine of grace, the point at which it becomes clear that the teaching of the Synoptics on love as the perfection to be achieved by man, is identical with the Pauline teaching on morality and sanctity, given gratuitously by grace in the holy *pneuma* of God? After all, this love which consists in venturing into the boundless, is (to be still more precise) not merely a readiness for the boundless, in so far as the depth of one's heart can be sounded only by the venture itself and in so far as in it must be accepted the unforeseeable nature of any future situation in which this love will have to be exercised and which itself will enter into this love. The immeasurable nature of love and of its situation includes as an essential element also the unforeseeable character (as far as they are concerned) of the admission to the love of God and of one's neighbour, which itself is again an essential element of the depth and radical nature of one's own love. Love of God and of the other man is determined by the degree of depth and absoluteness to which the love of God and of the other person admits us. Of itself, all love is ready in its immeasurable nature to accept all love offered by the other, and to perfect itself in this acceptance. Consequently, morality and the fulfilment of the law always consist in one's readiness to allow oneself to be loved by God in the full measure and with all the demands on one's own love that is determined by God's love, and to enter into the experience of the radical and profound nature of this love which comes out to meet us. To this extent, all love of God is a readiness for the supernatural community of life, while this in its turn means nothing else than the most radical intimacy of God's love for us in which his most absolute divinity is communicated to us. If, therefore, we are asked in the 'synoptic' sense to achieve a love which in its own boundlessness is to accept the boundlessness of God's love for us and thus is to be so radical as to claim in very deed every last ounce of its unreserved energy, then this means that this love really demanded of us as a response to God's absolute love, is love sustained by God's love itself, i.e. a love made possible by God's self-communication. This means nothing other, however, than that this our love of God [456] has its real ontological

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basis in God's love for us, i.e. in His communication of Himself in grace. Because of its radical nature which really lays absolute claim to all its willingness, the love demanded of us in the Synoptics is *per definitionem* the love which *realissime* comes about through God's love, i.e. the love which communicates God himself by grace. This, however, is precisely what St Paul says. His idea of morality as compared with the morality of the pharisees is the pneumatic morality of the pure reception of what is demanded of us, since it is the morality of boundless love as an answer to that absolute and irrevocable love in which God's innermost *Pneuma* gives himself gratuitously to us. Since we must give ourselves and not something else, and must give ourselves as a response to God's own giving of Himself to us, it follows that what we have to give is a pure gift from God.

The basic meaning of the Christian ethos is not that we must respect objective material norms which God has imposed on reality. For all these material norms become real norms only once they become the expression of the very structure of the person. All other structures of things are placed *below* man. He may alter them, he may twist them as far as he possibly can, he is their master and not their servant. The only ultimate structure of the person which expresses it perfectly is the person's basic capacity for love, and this capacity is boundless. Hence man too is boundless, every sin is ultimately merely the refusal to trust in this boundlessness; sin is the lesser love which, because it refuses to wish to become greater love, is no longer love at all. Naturally, in order to know what is really meant by this, man requires objectifications and these he meets in the form of the plurality of commandments. But everything which thus comes to light in this plurality of commandments, is an objectification or part-realization or preliminary onset of love, love which itself has no norms by which it could be measured. One may speak of a commandment of love as long as one does not forget that this law does not command man to do something or other but simply commands him to fulfil himself, and charges man with himself, i.e. himself as the possibility of love in the acceptance of the love in which God does not give something but gives Himself. Can this commission still be called a commandment? Whatever may be the answer to this question, the commission of love is a commandment which can be called this only analogously when compared with the other commandments. If the other commandments [457] command something, then one becomes free *of* them by fulfilling them. This commandment commands the freedom *to* love. Hence, this commandment can really exist only because God is prepared to give what he commands and because he has always already given what he commands. The grace of love is not a power given for the fulfilment of a law which precedes this fulfilment; rather, the law is given because love is already there as a possibility to be liberated and to be aroused in order to fulfil itself, and because the will of God is already present in the world, that will which presents this possibility with its realization.

All this will perhaps help us to reach some kind of conciliatory understanding of the Catholic-Protestant doctrinal disagreement about the nature of the justifying act as such. The teaching of the Council of Trent declares that faith (of course, in the sense of the word as understood by the Council) does not justify by itself, although it is recognized as the beginning and root of justification. Protestant teaching declares that faith (naturally understood in *their* sense of the word) is the sole act by which God's justifying grace is accepted. Even prescinding from the explicit question of whether there is no real dis-agreement – as seems to be the case – on this point because the same word 'faith' is used in different senses, the following can be said in the light of our present considerations: Faith *as* a 'different' 'virtue' from love is not indeed the whole of man's grace – supported attitude towards God and hence cannot by itself constitute the process of justification. For, since man is free in his actions, the acceptance of justifying grace can undoubtedly occur only by an act which is the actualization of the possibilities given by the grace of justification. In other words, this acceptance can take place only in an act which in its nature corresponds wholly to

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the accepted divine life (even though it does not necessarily correspond totally to it, since this accepted life is to develop further). But clearly – and this the Protestant theologian will certainly not be able to dispute – love of God and neighbour also belongs to that possibility for which man is liberated by God's justifying grace. If this possibility is accepted, then this can happen only in and subject to the totality of the process of justification. To this extent, the teaching of the Council is absolutely correct. Yet we may pose the question: when is there that supernatural moral attitude which signifies justification once it has fully realized its own nature, and what name are we to give to that beginning which, as long as it is not suffocated [458] contrary to its own nature in the realization of its nature, already signifies justification? – and then we can answer this question unhesitatingly (even after the Council of Trent) by saying: faith. For it may be said without hesitation that no other beginning (than faith) can be named by Tradition, i.e. no other beginning which lies *before* this beginning and yet already contains the whole of what is called justification within it as a beginning (and only thus), and this is a fact about which Catholic and Protestant theologians are agreed. Furthermore, no Catholic need dispute the fact that faith, if it is really what it should be and confides itself to the spiritual dynamism of freedom thus begun (and this it must do if it is to be true faith), can be destroyed only by a process of suffocation directed against the full realization of faith's own nature. In this sense, a Catholic need not hesitate to concede that we are justified by faith. Finally, it must be remembered also that evidently individual men cannot do anything else than characterize on their own account the whole of their natural and supernatural realization of existence in accordance with that factor which they experience most intensely for some personal or general historical reason, that factor which this particular individual or age experiences most clearly and most radically as the deciding factor of the whole Christian existence. It is quite possible, however, that in one case this factor may be love, while in another it may be faith and in yet another it may perhaps be hope or may have to be described in some other way altogether. Particular periods and individuals have different 'catch-words' which express for them the whole characteristic of their existence, even though this catch-word determines and clarifies the whole only in a certain direction. Such a characterization becomes false only when it really identifies this isolated factor with the totality of this one realization of man's nature in which every factor should over-come itself by entering into the whole.

This last statement is still valid (although not in exactly the same sense) even in the case of love. For even love – if it is to achieve itself completely in the multidimensional creature – must 'humble itself' and once more divide itself and enter into the different moments of moral existence which as such are not love. For, otherwise, love itself would not be what it must be, even though it is the whole of human and Christian existence, according to the terminology used by Jesus and Tradition, a terminology not absolutely alien to St Paul either. In a language which, in accordance with the style of a particular period, [459] proclaims the summons to this total realization in such a way that the particular age understands what is 'really' meant by it, this totality may also be called upon by a different name when using an existential terminology, as long as this other language can make itself comprehensible to the universal Church. If someone preaches that everything is faith, he is not necessarily saying anything wrong. He may mean by this that anyone who has found the real beginning in faith, will also find completion. He may wish to say that faith is the clearest characteristic and the most difficult element of the whole of Christian existence. He may say that even love is really love only when it is a believing love. When in the Church the imitation of Christ is characterized as poverty, or renunciation or service, etc., it is just one further example of the same, basically possible freedom of an existential terminology. This is not surprising, for the totality called love means the fullness of God and of man. This fullness, however, is infinite and hence almost nameless. It will always be called love right to the end. But it itself

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demands the other names and is demanded by them.

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[460]

18

THE SAVING FORCE AND HEALING POWER OF FAITH

The question to be treated here could be called even more simply: ‘Faith and illness’. That this subject is an objectively real one will be seen from a brief look into the New Testament. Again and again we are told in its pages of miraculous cures performed by Jesus and the Apostles, and very often faith is even explicitly associated with this healing as its condition: If you have faith, all things are possible (Mk 9.19 *sqq*.); Great is thy faith, let your wish – for a cure – be fulfilled (Mt 15.28); Your faith has helped you (Lk 17.19); Do you believe that I can do this? (Mt 9.28); Let it be done to you according to your faith (Mt 9.29). In these and similar ways, the New Testament over and over again sees a connection between faith and the healing of illness. After all, this attitude led to the sceptical expressions about ‘faith that heals’.

What then is the truth about this healing power of faith? Even among those who call themselves Christians, there are widely different opinions on this point. They range from the opinion that faith has no more to do with the cure of illness than any other form of psychological suggestion, to the opinion of that Christian sect (called ‘Christian Science’) for whom the healing power of faith has more or less become the real centre of their belief. Consequently, we want to try here to work out an answer to this obscure question, an answer which is based on the *whole* of the Faith.

To begin with, the Christian faith is not indifferent towards illness, as if it were of no importance or had no meaning within the context of Christian existence as such. Rather, faith looks on illness, clarifies and incorporates it into its interpretation of the whole of existence. Illness in its concrete happening – as it is experienced by a particular person – does not necessarily arise out of the individual guilt of this particular sick person himself. Jesus expressed himself explicitly against such an [461] interpretation if taken as a general one valid in every case (Jn 9.2 *sq*.), even though he is not at all blind to such a connection in certain concrete individual cases (Mk 2.5; Jn 5.14). In this way, he has really already defended himself against the tendency to be met with in modern medicine – at least in certain of its aspects, viz. that illness is always and everywhere, or at least to a great extent, merely a sign and expression of psychic conflicts or even of guilt deep down in the core of the person. There are such illnesses. But not every illness is the expression of the individual guilt of the sick person. Hence, illness in the concrete – in the form in which it is actually experienced – can have something of both. Illness thus becomes a puzzle for which there is no complete solution. There are two factors which always appear in illness in the concrete, and both of them in a unity which can never be adequately dissolved: the fate imposed on man and which falls upon him suddenly and unasked, and man’s original act by which he understands himself and by which he affirms himself as the deed of his own freedom. In the latter case, man creates illness or accepts the imposed illness into himself in an absolutely definitive manner, takes up position towards it and thus transfigures it by what he himself is in freedom, i.e. in guilt or in obedience, towards God. Hence, faith will first of all see in illness that which constitutes the being of man in general, viz. his exposed condition, his freedom and his ultimate indeterminability by anyone else but God. Faith knows furthermore, however, that all illness – even that illness which is not due to any individual guilt and which is borne in a holy manner – is a sign of the sin in the world in general. In the last analysis, there is illness in the world only because there is sin in the world; illness is the bodily presence and appearance of guilt; sin is the ultimate reason for illness, in so far as ‘guilt’ does not refer to

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the particular decision of the individual but to the supra-personal power – the existential – under which we all begin our existence, even though this existential originally arose out of the free decision taken at the very beginning of the history of humanity.

But the same faith also knows something else about illness: as we experience daily, illness is a stage in that continuous dying in which man lives and which reaches its climax and end in death. Gregory the Great calls illness the 'prolongation of death'. Yet death is not merely the wages of sin but also the manner in which we were redeemed, the manner in which the person who dies in obedience, accepts and finally makes his own the death of the Lord which is redemption. Thus, the [462] suffering of illness also has this function in man's life. Whenever this suffering is undergone in faith, obedience and the willingness proper to the creature (and this, properly viewed, is a factor within illness itself and not merely an external attitude towards it), then it is a life-long practice for that readiness for death in which the Christian believingly accepts his liberating death. Thus in the Christian view, in so far as illness precedes even man's taking up of position (analogously to death), illness is of a most profoundly dialectic nature; it can be both a manifestation of *sin* and a manifestation of *redemption*; it can be the visible sign of an unbelieving despair in which the person of man slowly disintegrates, as well as the tangible sign of faith which, by its obedient acceptance of death as it announces itself, turns this fate of the 'body of sin' (Rom 6.6) into the carrying out of redemption and into a dying with the Redeemer. From a medical point of view, i.e. in an already particular viewpoint, human beings get indeed the same illnesses. From a more personal point of view which considers the whole man and bears in mind his supernatural salvation, illnesses which seem the same, are quite different in reality, according to whether they are suffered in faith or in unbelief, taking faith here not merely as the intellectual assent to propositions, but as the real acceptance of that love of God which communicates itself in a mysterious way in the inalienable form of the fate of one's own body and soul.

Only seen in this light, is it possible to understand what is the real and ultimate nature of the saving power of faith. In the Christian understanding, faith is always and in every case a saving power. The reason for this is that faith changes illness – understood as a happening in the whole man and not merely on the biological level as such – from being an occurrence by which the guilty degradation in unbelief becomes visible, into an occurrence of suffering and of overcoming sin by dying with Christ. By believing obedience towards the God who disposes of everything, the prolongation of the 'first death', the forerunner and onset of the second and eternal death (to use biblical language: Ap 2.11; 20.6-14; 21.8), is changed into a prolongation and maturing of *that* death by which one surrenders oneself into the eternal life of God. It is merely a secondary question as to whether or not the external appearance of illness, with which the art of medicine is or can be generally concerned, is changed by this determination of illness. Of course, anyone who as a sick person desires absolutely nothing else but that health with which he is quite rightly solely concerned cannot understand that the [463] illness of the believer and the illness of someone who is truly unbelieving (for many only think they are) are really intrinsically different. The inability to understand this (to put it in another way, which will show quite clearly the stupidity of this attitude) is to be found in those sick people who never want to die, and hence simply suffer death under absolute protest, i.e. in the unbelief that death is absolutely senseless: in those who in sickness never and in no way take into account that by illness God offers them the acceptance of death as their manner of accepting the gift of eternal life. Only someone who unreservedly accepts God the Creator and the Redeemer knows that faith is in any case a saving force for the, utterly human, reality of illness.

This saving power of faith can manifest itself only by converting the sick person's (unbelieving) protest against death as something senseless, into the readiness for death as a redeeming gift of God who by it grants him the real and perfect life. After all, we have

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already seen that death, and hence illness understood as the threat of death, is a manifestation of sin and guilt, i.e. of the guilt of the race or, in addition, also of the guilt of the individual. Hence, when faith encounters illness, its transforming power can in certain circumstances have an effect also on the restoration of bodily health since, and in so far as, the apparently merely natural, earthly health is nevertheless a sign, a pledge and a prelude of the absolute health of eternal life. After all, according to the New Testament, we must not think of the present and of the eschatological state of existence as absolutely and completely separated and successive states. The powers of the future aeon already penetrate the present aeon: everything belonging to this world which is in any respect healthy, alive, good and true, ultimately – according to the Christian understanding – flows from that source which brings forth eternal life and which creates in those apparently profane matters the presuppositions for the communication of the eternal divine life, so that the things of this world carry within them the reflection of the eternal world. This is why Jesus himself regarded his cures of the sick as a sign of the arrival and the beginning of the visible dawning of God's reign. He did not regard the miracles he performed merely and primarily as formal testimonies to the validity of his mission. Rather, he saw in *what* thus happened – in the recovery of health itself – the resplendence of the Kingdom of God in which God really makes everything whole and brings it to completion: the *one* whole man, body and soul. Thus, [464] whenever the faith, by which God's reign comes and is accepted, meets illness, it corresponds absolutely to the inner relationship of both, that this meeting can lead to an overcoming of illness experienced already here and now, i.e. to a cure in the medical sense. This does not mean that faith can conquer illness only in this way. If faith were to be understood as present only if the illness is fully overcome by it, then it would no longer be that unconditional surrender of man to God's absolute providence by which every single providential act – whether it kills or restores life – is accepted as the coming of eternal love. Hence, healing power (in certain cases even in a medical sense) belongs only to *that* faith which does not merely strive for an earthly bodily cure but intends to adopt a point of view by which man rises absolutely above any ideas of illness or bodily health as absolute values. But the *possibility* of manifesting itself in a special way also in bodily health pertains to the nature of saving faith.

It is not easy to determine exactly *how*, in an empirical sense, the saving power of faith has an effect on illness. It does not always have to be in the same way, if we look at this matter from the point of view of its immediate appearances. There is certainly a way which may be qualified as 'psychological' (at least at first sight) for which one may adduce certain analogies from outside (or sometimes even merely apparently outside) the proper field of faith. Faith can have a calming effect, it can make a person feel quite cool and collected, internally free and relaxed. The believer knows himself to be safe and secure in God's hands; he is no longer faced with the absolute dilemma of conquering illness in an absolutely definite way or of succumbing to it; as a result, he becomes relaxed in his desires and is freed from inhibitions; the cramp of efforts and the fear of absolute defeat in his attempts to maintain existence disappear. All this can undoubtedly have a healing effect, if there is such a thing as psychosomatic medicine, wherever this kind of medicine can be effective and to the extent in which it can be effective. We know indeed that even saints can be ill and that even the process of becoming a saint can endanger health, just like *any other* very great spiritual and personal effort endangers the unimpaired, harmlessly vital state of man. But whenever the believer is someone who believes completely – in other words, whenever he has let go of himself from the innermost centre of his being and freedom and fearlessly handed himself over and entrusted himself – and thereby also his fears and cares and thus his illness – to God, his illness, even when it remains, [465] loses its inescapable senselessness and thus is provided with the best presupposition for overcoming it.

This 'psychological' explanation of the *manner* in which faith can have an effect on illness

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does not explain very much and certainly not everything. This is true even simply because the word 'psychology' covers in this case a great variety of intrinsically different factors. For peace, ease of mind, resignation, confidence and similar psychological states are themselves again of the most different kinds and themselves extend once more through the most different sectors of man's being, beginning with the realm of the most primitive psycho-somatic mechanism right up to that inner depth of the spiritual person where freedom, transcendence into the Absolute, grace and decision and thus faith are really situated. Hence ease of mind, confidence and similar terms mean very different things in these different spheres, and the somatic effect exercised by such psychic processes is not really explained by saying that faith gives rise to an attitude of calmness, confidence, etc., and that this has a healing effect or at least an effect conducive to healing. For precisely this faith and the attitudes associated with it are not at all such an undifferentiated happening as the simple words used for them might seem to suggest. In so far as psychological happenings and attitudes, taken as the concrete events of each particular man, in spite of all their 'explicability' always retain precisely as such and here and now a final irreducible element, any psychological explanation of these happenings within the soul and of their effect on the somatic element does not mean any exclusion of grace. For, apart from everything else, the fact that this psychological attitude may have succeeded here and now even though, in spite of all our extremely clever psychology, it could also always fail, and even though even the cleverest psychology can never grasp or control the totality of all the factors involved really adequately and clearly – this very fact makes it quite legitimate for the believer to regard the success of his spiritual attitude as a divine grace, no matter how well planned and organized that successful attitude may have been. Thus, in the case of faith, even this saving effect of faith – no matter how psychological an explanation may be given – remains nevertheless the always incomprehensible grace of God.

When we speak of the ways in which faith can become empirically health-giving, there is one way which must not remain unmentioned, a way which has played quite an important part in the Christian [466] tradition and in the life of the Church, i.e. miracles. Jesus himself, as we said at the beginning, associates healing, miracle and faith. It is of course impossible in as short an exposition as ours to show at length the problems, the nature and meaning, possibility and intelligibility of what in the New Testament and in Christian language is called a miracle and a sign. We can merely give a few indications of all this here.

First of all, it can be seen from what has been said up till now, why the authentic Christian miracles consist for the most part of cures. After all, miracles are meant to be signs, not merely of the power and authorized mission of the miracle worker but also of the content and the nature of his mission, i.e. signs which make free faith possible without making it necessary. For both these purposes, however, spectacular physical events (the 'signs from heaven' refused by Jesus in Mk 8.11 *sq*.) are unsuitable. The miracles of healing, on the other hand, allow the meaning of the divine act to appear clearly within experience: the salvation of the whole man, right from the innermost centre of his being and hence starting from faith; they do not necessitate but call upon the free decision of man, so that the best miracles (if we may put it this way) are not the 'most massive' but those with the greatest intensity of meaning. Of course, their recognition and acknowledgement presuppose that man approaches them with a synthetic outlook which seeks their meaning and which perceives a meaningfulness, in the concreteness of this event in relation to himself and to his total question of existence, a meaningfulness which he, if correct, must then interpret as the word of God addressed to him and not merely as a coincidence. Seen in this light, it is not particularly good if right from the start we remove these miracles of healing effected by faith from the total context of human history into the isolation of the selective approach of such natural sciences as physics and medicine and then ask from within this artificial state of

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isolation whether or not the laws of nature are 'suspended' in the case of these miracles. The gospels and Christian history do indeed record a sufficient number of exactly observed and authenticated miracles of bodily healing which even the natural scientist ought to recognize as inexplicable by his laws, i.e. if he does not from the outset deny all miracles on the basis of some philosophical prejudice or by going beyond the principles of his method. Yet ultimately it is not really the most important thing about a miracle and its acceptance whether the natural scientist can or cannot positively show that in the case of a particular miracle a law of nature has been suspended, or at [467] least what is meant by such a law here, or whether he simply leaves the matter as something he cannot explain and then regards this inexplicability as something merely temporary from his methodological standpoint as *such*. For, in the first place, one need not necessarily speak of a suspension of the laws of nature and yet may accept the miracle, viz. if one presupposes (what is really self-evident) that every determined level and order of being is from the very start open towards a higher level and order and can be incorporated into it, without its own laws thereby having to be suspended. The laws of two-dimensional space are valid also in three-dimensional space, even though they are given quite a different meaning there. It is true that biology, for instance, is a sphere of a higher order in which there are phenomena which do not exist in physics and chemistry, without it following from this that the laws of inorganic matter must necessarily be suspended in biology. Similarly, the world in its material content must be conceived as open from the outset to the reality of the spirit and of faith seen as the total act of the innermost core of the spiritual person, and must be conceived as open to the reality of God. Hence the higher dimensions of the whole of reality come to appear in the lower dimensions of this reality by transforming them, but in such a way that the lower dimensions are preserved at the same time as the meaning and nature of the higher reality become visible within them.

What then is the truth about the saving and healing power of faith? This power does exist because, and in so far as, faith lays hold of the whole man. The faith which places the whole of reality obediently at the absolute disposal of God, becomes in this readiness for life and death the truth and the deed which lays hold of the healing salvation of God. God's grace promises its power to the whole man, in his body and soul, and if it here and now heals in passing, it is essentially intended to make it credible for man that it will heal and transfigure him finally when his consummation dawns in the passing of life through death. Thus, when Our Lord said to the Samaritan who alone among the ten who had been cured, came back to thank Him: Arise, go thy way, for thy faith has saved thee' (Lk 17.19), this contains the twofold and, in the last analysis, the only meaning of: your faith has healed *and* has saved you; it has granted you both the cure and salvation. Is there any greater healing power than the saving force of faith?

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[468]

19

WHAT IS HERESY?

I. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS HERESY

The history of Christianity is also a history of heresies and hence also a history of the attitude towards heresy taken up by Christianity and the Church, a history which consequently also includes a history of the concept of heresy itself. All religions which have anything like a well-defined doctrine (i.e. all religions of higher cultures) experience differences of opinion about their teaching and about the religious sociological structures supporting these different doctrinal opinions. To this extent it might be said that the *eidos* of heresy is to be found in all of the more highly developed religions. Yet one will have to be careful: for it has been maintained that religious wars are to be observed only within the realm of Christianity. No matter how much this affirmation may have to be distinguished and in whatever way this asserted fact may have to be explained more exactly (and much about it may have very little to do with Christianity as such), this questionable statement nevertheless does make us take note of something: Christianity alone provides the presupposition for a perfectly specific understanding of heresy, viz. a radical, quite definite ethos of truth, and so the real nature of heresy is really to be found only within this framework.

Two factors probably specify the ethos of truth referred to here: the consciousness that there has been a divine revelation of truth at a perfectly determined point in space and time and that it has taken place as an event in perfectly determined people and through them alone – and the consciousness that this truth is itself significant for salvation. Combining these two factors, it may be said to be the historical form of an absolute truth of itself significant for salvation. To make it clearer why and how this leads to a definite concept of heresy and correspondingly to a definite relationship to heresy – both of which belong specifically [469] to Christianity (seen as a whole) – we still have to give a more exact explanation of what we have just stated.

We must first of all reflect on revelation understood as an event by Christian understanding. We prescind here from the question (however important and even decisive it may be in other respects) as to whether and how the substance of the Christian message comes from within (i.e. by the offer of grace as a result of the universal salvific will of God) but in an unreflected manner, without being clearly expressed in propositions, and thus comes really close to *all* men even where they are only attained by a historical revelation which is not clearly determinable. Even when this is the case, it nevertheless remains true to say that, according to Christian understanding, this hypothetically accepted and admitted communication of truth 'from within' finds its explicit expression and clearly authentic conceptualization (which makes it once again more unmistakably applicable in the concrete forms of life) in absolutely definite points of space and time in history: through the prophets, through Jesus Christ, through the Apostles, through authorized and accredited announcers and interpreters of God's truth proclaiming God to man in the free self-opening of His being and will themselves unattainable by men through their own efforts.[1] The fact that, here and

[1] When one remembers that this self-opening and communication of God takes place just as essentially in what Christian theology calls the 'participation in the divine nature' by the grace of justification, then it would perhaps be safer and more exact to formulate the above statement as follows: . . . proclaiming God to men in the divinely authorized, humanly communicated side of His free self-opening of His being and will, themselves unattainable by men through their own efforts.

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now, in the name of God, the word of *God* issued forth clearly and with a demand of obedience, and then always still goes forth yet further while always remaining new, this is already – even before any consideration of the actual content of the message – the basic factor in the understanding of the Christian truth. The referring back to this event as such and to the authority announcing itself in that event belongs, therefore, to the nature of Christian truth. Christians may fight among each other as to *who* exactly is the bearer of this eventful witnessing to the truth, but as soon as the referring back is overlooked, there no longer is any Christian understanding of truth. Whenever differences are seen as merely different opinions about mere 'content', any one opinion can never experience the other as a 'heresy' in the [470] proper sense of the word. Only where there is on both sides the basic desire to refer back to this event and to the authority manifesting itself in it, is it possible for both sides to regard each other as 'heretics', i.e. as those who – against their will – break off the genuine and clear relationship to this authoritative event (which they still hold on to in itself) in their difference of opinion about objective content.

Thus, heresy is always a doctrine which, contrary to intention, threatens the whole of one's spiritual existence, in so far as this existence is based on the reference to the one complete event of revelation which even the heretic affirms. Where this affirmation no longer exists, it is also no longer a question of heresy. Such an opinion (from the Christian point of view) would be apostasy from Christianity itself. Because, and in so far as, this kind of point of reference, from which the many propositions were received and towards which they remain referred, hardly exists outside of Christianity as something essential to a particular religion, this means that there cannot be any real heresy in these other religions, nor any real feeling against the heretical, such as there is in the Christian religion. Heresy is possible only among brothers in the Spirit. These are possible, however, only where there is some real common basis within the religious sphere explicitly binding them together. Among such brothers, however, heresy (i.e. something more than just differences of opinion on unimportant matters) can be present only when one or both parties holding different opinions objectively destroy and thus (at least) subjectively endanger the ultimate basis of Christianity and of its unity. We will have to take a closer look later on at what follows from this for the nature of heresy and for one's attitude towards it.

Before doing so, we must reflect on the other point already mentioned. As we said, if there is to be any question of heresy, then it must be a matter of a *truth* which, precisely *as* truth, is significant for salvation. If we are to realize that this proposition is not at all self-evident, we must reflect here on one of the most profound changes in the spirit of the last three centuries, a change whose advent is perhaps only now becoming quite clear at the very time when it is already on the way out. What does the average contemporary European feel about truth, especially religious truth and the truth expressed in the form of a 'world view'? His attitude might be defined in the following terms: Outside the field of the simple, brute facts of direct sense experience which can be observed anew at any time by experiment, there are only [471] theories and opinions . . . nothing else. These opinions may be correct in different degrees; one opinion may have a greater chance than the other of 'coming closer' to reality and hence to the real truth, but more than this sort of approximation is never possible. The mode of this 'outlook on the world' is radically, individually, socially and historically conditioned, and hence relative. In any case (and this is the decisive point), the particular *content* of such an opinion is of no importance (i.e. of no importance before the judgement seat of God, if there is such a thing) for the absolute 'moral' evaluation of the one who holds this opinion, since it may be supposed that everyone has formed his opinion with the best will and conscience. Certain people will indeed concede that it is in itself and in principle conceivable that someone may be *guilty* of a false opinion (because he has been guilty of not informing himself sufficiently, and of stubbornly shutting his mind to what is more correct and

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adequate). But even in such a case they would hold that what endangers salvation and characterizes man *absolutely* is not so much the missing of the truth and thus of reality in their determinate content, but the immoral cause of this failure; the ultimate qualification of a person, it would be held, can never be made to depend on *what* is the content of his opinions. This, it is held, is surely an immediately evident fact: men (even the most decent among them) hold the most different opinions and this even on the (in themselves) most important questions. Hence – so they would say – it is obviously absurd to regard someone else as a scoundrel simply because he is of a certain, i.e. different opinion.

Thus, the recognition of truth as such, in so far as it is determined by its definite content, has moved from the centre of human existence to the periphery of man's concern, and has come to be counted among such things as one's colour of hair, one's tastes and one's race, on which man's absolute qualification cannot be made to depend. People would concede (as far as one reflects on it) that certain errors, even though they are adhered to without guilt, can nevertheless have fatal *consequences*; it will be conceded, for instance, that an innocent error about the right of way on the road may cost one's life. But precisely this is what is different in the absolute, final accounting for everything; for this, the only thing that really counts is surely 'how well one has meant it' and not *what* one meant. Since (this is the basis tacitly presupposed as self-evident) one can have good reasons and hence a good conscience for any opinion, it is not necessary either for us or for God to judge as [472] to *what* opinion one has held, when it comes to the full judgement, 'as long as one has been a decent fellow'. The fact that one might possibly be able to judge this precisely on the basis of *what* opinion one has held, is a possibility to a large extent excluded from modern consciousness. Democratically speaking, every opinion has to begin with the same right to be held as any other. (Why this proposition, considered as a 'rule of the game', must not in its turn be disputed is something about which 'one' does not usually think very much). The cognoscitive content (to express all this a bit more theologically) is no longer important '*de necessitate medii*' for salvation; only the moral quality of gaining it, i.e. its '*necessitas praecepti*', is of universal importance.

Thus according to this opinion, God sees to it (even though not for this earth, yet for the whole course of the world and for eternity) that nothing can ultimately go wrong through error as such. This opinion is based on a strange subjectivist idea of 'interiority': reality is 'outside', 'thoughts' are only 'inside' and are not the real thing; only reality can be harmful; yet thoughts 'about reality' do not produce a real and essential contact with reality for, after all, reality is not changed by this: such contact can be effected only by what reality does to one apart from one's own thoughts about it. The fact that in the nature of things one enters into quite a definite relationship with realities precisely by what one 'thinks' about them, and that they themselves thus become different for oneself according to how one thinks 'about them', is a fundamental truth about the real nature of one's knowledge which has largely been lost to present-day consciousness. It is precisely this present-day opinion about the ultimate indifference of truth that is rejected by Christianity, and this rejection is the second reason for the Christian attitude of rejecting an error only *as* an error. It is a *fundamental* fact for the Christian understanding of existence that there is truth which can be missed only in a culpable manner. This proposition (it seems to us) has become so obscured even among Catholics (for reasons to be mentioned later) that we must start by giving at least some proof to them and this under their presuppositions. Only once this has been done, can we try, on the one hand, to dispel as far as possible modern scandal over this proposition and, on the other hand, to understand on this basis the anti-heretical attitude of Christianity (and thus the nature of heresy itself). Catholic Christianity teaches that no one who has reached the use of normal reason, can find his true and real salvation without a correct faith in the true revelation [473] of God. This statement refers to proper theological faith in the real truth of God's revelation. It is not our intention here either to make this proposition more precise or to prove it more

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exactly. We presuppose it as something incontrovertible for a Catholic Christian. What is important here is that this proposition implies the above-mentioned basic principle regarding the essential significance for salvation of the knowledge of truth as such; for this proposition states that finally and decisively (also, although not exclusively) – with the deadly earnestness of any question of man's ultimate destiny – what we are concerned with is *what* one believes, whether one has grasped the true fact, by recognizing the genuine reality in truth, that what matters is not merely good will, a noble effort and a decent attitude, but whether one has in fact recognized and grasped the absolute reality itself since salvation itself consists in this grasp which is essentially also (although not merely) a recognition.

Before getting up in arms against this thesis with a protest against 'Greek intellectualism', it would be well to reflect on whether if one thinks it so imperative to reject this Christian doctrine one only proves by such protests that one has not yet really understood what recognition means. Naturally, this thesis presupposes that there is a basic fulfilment of human existence, a depth of human existence (which is not always or everywhere attained), in which knowledge and decision, truth and goodness are no longer separable, but where only the true possesses goodness and where only the good cannot land outside of truth. Yet precisely this original basic act (in which knowledge achieves its full nature by saving itself, and thus preserving itself, within the decision of love, just as the converse is also true) is still an act of the knowledge of truth and significant for salvation, in so far as this act is (also) precisely this because the truth itself belongs to the highest moral goods and hence morality (if it is not to empty itself out into a pure formalism, or merely a search into the manner of 'how' one does something, it being quite indifferent *what* one does) fails itself if it does not find the real truth (and not merely a well-intentioned opinion).

Naturally, Christianity has always already asked itself during its reflection on theology about how this basic conception of the decisive salvific significance of the truth as such is reconcilable with the observation that people seem to be disagreed about the most important questions of truth, at least if one does not have the courage to regard [474] all those who do not explicitly recognize the official Christian truth as being already lost on this account alone. It is not to be denied, first of all, that many Christians, starting from this Christian concept of truth, have had the 'courage' to maintain precisely this; even as St Francis Xavier still told the Japanese whom he wished to convert that obviously all their ancestors were damned in hell. Even St Augustine ought to have given this answer according to his theology, and right up to our own day this attitude was part of the fundamental outlook of Christian missionary work among the heathens. But it must not be disputed that one need not have this 'courage', indeed one may say that a Christian today, in the present state of the development of dogmas and of the Christian consciousness of faith, is no longer *allowed* to have this absolute courage from a Christian point of view. Theology has reflected a great deal on the question about why and how one can defend the above proposition about the salvific nature of truth as such, without having to demand this courage for a cruel pessimism about the salvation of the majority of people. Usually theologians used the information (by appealing, for example, to Heb 11.6) that this absolute seriousness of decision regarding the (revealed) truth is present only when we come to the ultimate and most fundamental truths. Thus, anyone who denies or does not know that God exists as the guardian of the moral order, was held to be certainly deprived of that faith, understood as the possession of truth deciding one's salvation. Yet, it was held, it is quite obvious that this primitive truth can easily be discovered and that it can be missed (at least in the long run) only by one's own fault (and thus, after all, the only thing that matters ultimately would be the moral factor as such). Other truths, however, can be missed or remain unknown (without moral fault) without this fact alone making all saving faith impossible. No matter how important and true this information may be, it alone will no longer be sufficient today to reconcile modern man with the thesis stated above. For, on the

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one hand, the experience of the most radical differences of opinions among men has become still more pronounced and widespread (even the enlightened monotheist can no longer be thought of as someone not seriously threatened by a wider reduction of faith) and, on the other hand, the man of today – no matter how egoistic he may be in actual life – experiences an almost irrepressible feeling of solidarity with all men; he does not believe in, and does not desire for himself, a heaven from which he sees others excluded, others whom he does not seriously regard as worse than [475] himself and who nevertheless are not given more or less the same chance of gaining salvation as himself. Hence, it will undoubtedly be necessary today to add to the previous information that in certain cases someone may be perfectly capable of attaining and affirming a truth even as such in the depth of his realization of existence, even though he thinks that he must deny it in the explicit form of his concepts or does not know anything about it explicitly. In other words, there may be those who think they are atheists while in actual fact they affirm God (for instance, in the unconditional decision to look honestly for the truth, or in being faithful to the absolute declarations of conscience), just as, conversely, there are Christians who on the plane of theoretical concepts affirm God's existence and yet deny Him in the core of their freely understood existence.

Whatever may be the truth of all this, and however we may solve the inevitable questions arising out of the above thesis (which is not part of our subject here), the basic Christian conception mentioned must not be denied or endangered: truth as such is – even here on earth – so fundamental for existence and for salvation that it must be attained and accepted here below, if man is to find salvation at all. If we make an ultimate distinction between the possession of truth and morality (religiosity) – in other words, ethicize truth and intellectualize the ethical, then this will make the statement under consideration more understandable to the man of today but will not and must not deny it. One can say to a man of today that someone who truly affirms the good does not basically miss the truth, since he affirms the decisive truth at least implicitly together with his affirmation of the good. But this also means conversely that anyone who is really indifferent towards the truth as such and hence does not attain it at all fails absolutely to attain the good.

All this had to be said here (and had to be defended against contradiction) so that the Christian attitude towards heresy might become intelligible. This attitude is sustained by the basic conviction that truth as such is significant for salvation and (we may add right away, since it comes to the same thing) by the conviction that the discovery of the truth or the failure to find it has a fundamental moral quality, all of which is a basic conception difficult to grasp for the man of today. Of course, when we say 'the man of today', we would probably be better to say 'the man who still belongs to the present age because he is really the man of yesterday'; for there is obviously no danger of splitting [476] truth and morality in this way within the Eastern Communist understanding of human existence: anyone who theoretically does not toe the party line and who does not keep to the truth of the collectivity adopted by the leaders of the State shows himself by this very fact to be morally decadent and consequently is treated on account of his 'views' in exactly the same way as a thief or a murderer is treated in the West. (The Christian ought to be very careful not to protest against the false and primitive application of this basically true insight attained in the East by adopting an outlook which is Western and false).

Only in this way can we understand – which does not necessarily mean justify or regard as justifiable even in the future – the manner in which Christianity has reacted against heresy in the course of her history. Certainly, the history of the persecutions of heretics, of the Inquisition and of the internal Christian 'wars of religion', is a terrible chapter in the history of Christianity, full of horrible events which must not be defended, least of all in the name of Christianity. Yet one can get an objectively and historically just 'and understanding (although not approving) comprehension of this history of the Christian attitude towards heresy only if

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one recognizes and adapts to oneself even in this matter the outlook permanently and basically essential to Christianity and one which can never be relinquished; the falsehood of heresy is a much more absolute threat to human existence than all other happenings against which the use of force will be felt to be justified even by modern man (unless he advocates absolute non-violence which even Gandhi and Nehru never defended or at least never actually realized). For the Christian of earlier periods, the person who professed heresy was not the holder of a different opinion about which one could have a quiet chat, as if the character of real human existence which is possible for all in common and only in common, were not in any way seriously affected by these opinions; for him the heretic was someone who by his views was mortally dangerous to more than physical life and earthly welfare, viz. directly to eternal salvation.

Anyone who has no understanding of this ethos of truth – anyone who has no sense of the deadly earnestness of a decision about whether this or that proposition is true – will also not be able to understand the Christian evaluation of heresy. The Christian judgement of heresy does not deny that in certain circumstances a person who explicitly rejects a particular truth may possess this truth implicitly (just as the converse is also possible), nor does it maintain that the question whether there can [477] in principle be any Christian and moral use of force against a false doctrine and – if yes, when and within what limits – is already fundamentally and exactly answered. But in this Christian attitude towards truth it is realized that in the matter of truth as such (not merely and not even primarily with regard to its possible consequences distinct from it, as e.g. in the case of wrongly or correctly diagnosed illness) it is a matter of life and death here below and in eternity, and not merely a question of opinions which one could discuss in the course of a pleasant conversation. Moreover, since Christianity is of the conviction that this absolute truth which is salvation has communicated itself in a final concrete way wherever there is Christianity (in Jesus Christ, in Scripture, in the Church, in the faith of this Church which can be brought to a definitive self-consciousness in the final pronouncements of the *magisterium* of this Church), Christianity – it may quite rightly be said – is most sensitive towards any heresy raising its ugly head among Christians. For here is lost that absolute truth which already existed in a historically clear manner of expression. Here it is not merely a question of endangering what is provisional, what is as yet undetermined or what has not yet reached its goal, but of endangering again or of having already lost what had actually been finalized. Paganism may be seen as a possibility and preliminary of Christianity, as the advent of Christianity, and consequently one may be inclined to judge it lightly; seen as something provisional and as the lesser, it does not indeed involve any danger for the Christian (as long as it does not itself employ force), for in this case the Christian can simply regard himself as someone who has gone further, as superior and as being on a higher level of religious ‘development’. But all this is quite different in the case of the heretic: he has not merely not yet arrived; he leaves the goal and pretends that by doing this he alone possesses it. Christianity therefore finds it more difficult to credit *him* with good faith than to grant it to an unbeliever who has not yet been a Christian. The unbeliever shows himself to be a victim of a generally sinful history of humanity which has not yet reached its goal. The heretic, on the other hand, has enjoyed the gift of the promised truth. In view of this experience, how could the heretic be guiltless in being incapable of distinguishing true from false Christianity? He is the most dangerous person of all: he combats the real and final truth of Christianity in the name of Christian truth itself.

As can be seen, Christianity has its own proper relationship to error [478] when it arises in its own midst, a relationship peculiar to Christianity alone. Furthermore, this error itself has a nature which cannot simply be reduced to the common denominator of all opinions on religious matters which are rejected as false by some other religious communion. Heresy is rather the (objective) self-failure in existence precisely where it is already absolutely

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'present' as a divinely effected existence, under the proselytizing and misleading appearance of its exercise. Naturally, all this would be much simpler and more proof against the mis-understanding of heresy as a merely indifferent, incorrect and Un-ecclesiastical opinion on religious questions, if the same Christianity could at the same time maintain that every objective heretical error is always and in every case also subjectively culpable in the actual individual professing it and that it therefore is also really a subjective lapse from the absolute truth involving as a consequence the loss of salvation. The anti-heretical ethos of Christianity is primarily directed against the case when error as such has also been subjectively realized, grasped and welcomed into the very core of existence; in other words, it is directed against the religious error which represents a danger to salvation (and means the destruction of salvation). We cannot even at this point treat systematically of the long over-due question as to whether and how this kind of error can actually exist at all, i.e. how an act of real knowledge can be free in itself and thus can itself come under a moral qualification. For this seems at first sight to be an impossibility: conscious error – one might think – is uncovered, overcome and no longer acceptable error, while unnoticed error *as such* cannot be so freely accepted that it can make the act of acceptance morally worse. Yet we will have to stick to the fact that the true and the good, knowledge and freedom, are so closely connected at the very roots of their existence that one can find their one meaning only by taking both of them together, i.e. a truth which is accepted as a value, and conversely: knowledge which is gained only as a free decision and which can precisely in this way reach its true objectivity. Yet Christianity can never basically start from and take for granted the tacit and unspoken yet widespread opinion that all agree it to be something immediately obvious that anyone making a statement which is false in its objective wording, 'deep down' means the right thing and the same as oneself, and that differences, of opinion are right away and always simply differences in terminology due to difficulties in understanding each other which do not really in any way affect one's real convictions in their [479] profoundest nature. No, the attitude of Christianity (whenever it is realized in the proper way) is of the same dialectic nature as the matter itself to which it refers: the affirmed proposition (the proposed theory) and what is really meant by it, and the basic conviction which really grasps the real meaning, are not simply identical; it may happen that the person who expresses a false proposition has nevertheless grasped the truth in the depth of his morally purer understanding of truth. Hence, such a person is to be tolerated as someone innocently in error, and his error should also be gently tolerated as a bad formulation of a realized truth.

But this difference is not a complete separation and certainly does not mean a relationship of mutual indifference and independence between the formulated proposition and what is 'actually meant' deep down in the person, between the value of the expressed opinion and the value of man himself. The ultimate judgement on the relationship between these two factors in the concrete case – as to whether, since they are not simply identical, they stand in a contradictory or synonymous relationship to each other – belongs neither to the outsider nor to one's own self-reflection (the so-called 'good' conscience and 'honest conviction') but principally to God alone. Yet (if we may put it this way) the proclaimed proposition is nevertheless the 'sacrament' of the inner attitude, of the actual encounter with that truth which does not merely have some loose connection with salvation but *is* this salvation itself. Hence, the erroneously expressed proposition is indeed the most terrifying possibility of that threat and temptation of the evil realizing of error in the very depths of man's being by which man accepts the unreality and the lying appearance as his truth and reality and thus becomes corrupted. Hence, one cannot simply tolerate the bald erroneous proposition with mildness; one cannot simply regard it as one of the possible starting points of a calculated approach (in an eternally open dispute) in which it is ultimately indifferent for the infinitely distant final result, which (more or less distant) approach-value one has used as one's starting point. No,

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for Christianity, even that error is hideous which does not yet ring out clearly like the last judgement for the person in error himself, for Christianity, even such a proposition is separated by an (objectively) infinite distance from the truth and is not merely a somewhat more badly formulated truth than the propositions of authentic Christianity. Even though it may be very difficult to decide in the case of particular propositions, propositions which do not [480] deal with simply verifiable empirical matters, when and why they are not merely inadequate and misleading formulations and one-sided illuminations of the matter, but are simply so erroneous that all the force of anti-heretical hatred must be brought to bear upon them. Yet the fundamental difference must remain, if life is not to become a harmless game and an endlessly babbling chatter.

There is still another aspect of this anti-heretical attitude of Christianity to be considered: the Christian does not deem himself to be more intelligent than others; rather, he regards himself as a sinner and believes that, just like the first, this second self-evaluation also extends into and has an effect on the dimension of knowledge, especially since stupidity and sin are not without very essential mutual relations. Yet because of this the Christian looks upon heresy as an actual temptation, seduction and delusion, from which he does not feel himself immediately immune. He knows, therefore, that his instinct for the real truth can become blurred and confused; he knows the temptation of the modern, of the (too) sweeping and handy solution, the allurement of novelty; he feels in himself the enemy within, which will treacherously meet half-way the untruth coming from without. Hence, he cannot simply adopt a superior and mild attitude and go out in sovereign impartiality to encounter those theses which, when proposed to him, endanger his conviction of faith. Or – to put the same thing more psychologically – precisely because he knows that his actual conviction, since it is that of a corporeal creature, is exposed to thousands of non-logical influences and is not by any means built up exclusively by habit, mass instinct, subconscious imperatives, etc., he cannot treat heresy as he would treat a scientific theorem which one discusses in the friendly neutrality of a scientific debate. Naturally this distrust of oneself and of the powers of darkness, which hold secret sway in error, can also lead to wrong reactions: it may lead to narrow-mindedness, witch-hunting, to the rejection of insights which are right and important. Such mistaken reactions may achieve the very opposite of what was intended; they may further error without wanting to, because they lend it the appearance of narrow-mindedly persecuted truth or because they prevent or delay the solution of questions without which error cannot in the long run be held in check. Yet basically this mistrust is justified because it corresponds to the legitimate Christian self-evaluation of the person who knows that, just like any other sin, error possesses a seductive power in this world. In this sinful world, the ‘defence instinct’ has a certain [481] priority (for man’s reaction) over the respect and regard for the ‘Unqualified objectivity’ of thought (although this too is a Christian virtue).

II. THE TRADITIONAL NOTION OF HERESY AND OF THE HERETIC AND THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF THIS NOTION

We are now in a position to understand and critically evaluate the traditional notion of heresy. This intermediate consideration will form a transition to the last section of our present investigation which deals with the change in form undergone by heresy and with cryptogamic heresy[2] within the Church herself.

[2] We have translated ‘*kryptogame*’ by ‘cryptogamic’ throughout this Chapter, since this botanical term seems to render most accurately the meaning intended by the author. The term is used of a plant having no stamens or pistils and therefore no proper flowers. *Tr*.

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In the juridical realm of the Church, a heretic is defined as someone who, after baptism and while retaining the name of Christian, pertinaciously denies or doubts any one of the truths of divine and Catholic faith (CIC can. 1325, § 2).

Hence, to be a heretic in the sense of the terminology used by the *magisterium*, one must first of all be baptized. Even by this fact alone, heresy manifests itself as an event within Christianity itself, it manifests itself as an opposition not from without, on the part of those who have never yet accepted the message of Christianity in profession of faith and sacrament, but as an opposition from within, from the very midst of Christianity itself. Even here there already appear certain questionable elements. Is the heretic who has never been a Catholic, even though he has been baptized – in other words, someone who has never belonged to the true Church and her common faith in the unity of the consciousness of faith in its social constitution – really a heretic in the same sense as the Catholic who becomes heretical? Can his heresy ever call forth the same protest by the Church, the same attitude of radical opposition and defence against the inner danger to her own existence, as is pronounced against those who themselves and of their *own* original initiative left the Church by separating themselves from her? Certainly, formal (i.e. subjectively culpable) and material heretics (i.e. those who are guiltlessly caught up in error) are distinguished and one could say that those described above are material heretics, while the latter are formal heretics, and that by this conceptual distinction the difference [482] we have just pointed out is fitted into neat categories. Yet basically this is not true. For it is quite possible (even in spite of the true statement made by the 1st Vatican Council, Denz 1794[3]) that in the sphere of Church statistics, some of those who belong to the Catholic Church in the 'visible' dimension and who profess the true faith, *innocently* err from the Church and hence are also merely material heretics, with the result that the two distinctions do not coincide in actual fact. Hence, in practice, it will not be permissible to regard the just mentioned difference as unimportant (and we should also try to determine it terminologically): heresy, as it now arises within the Catholic Church and thus separates itself from her, is something different from the (now historical) heresy of those who have never belonged to the Church and hence cannot really reject the Church and her possession of truth in the same way as those who at one time experienced it in the concrete (or could have experienced it).[4]

Nevertheless, these two kinds of heresy agree in the fact that the name of Christian is retained by both ('*nomen retinens christianum*'), in contrast to apostasy.[5] This is a peculiar factor within the definition of [483] heresy and of heretics. Further, the presupposition implied by this is not immediately self-evident. For this factor seems to presuppose that one does not necessarily either fall away '*totaliter*' (like the apostate) from Christianity nor possess it to the fullest extent. For the *attitude* of faith (and thus the virtue of faith as a

[3] Cf. on this J. Trütsch, Art. 'Glaubensabfall', LThK[2] IV, pp. 931 *sqq*.

[4] Of course, if one supposes that there are also Catholics whose relationship to the Church and to the truth proclaimed and lived in her is or was as unexistential and external as the relationship of born non-Catholics to the Catholic Church – as a result of bad instruction, excess of various other environmental influences, mediocrity and superficiality of Church life surrounding them – (and this case cannot be thought *a priori* as impossible) then the difference worked out above becomes untenable in these cases. It is then a case of Catholics of whom one can indeed say with regard to their official registered status that they are Catholics, but not that they have certainly accepted this status '*sub Ecclesiae* (as a grace-giving and salvific institution) *magisterio*' (Denz 1794). In this case the referred to difference between non-Catholics by birth and 'Catholics' who have become heretical will certainly be at least insignificant.

[5] It may help the reader to understand what follows if we preface it with a short explanation. Moralists emphasize (and quite rightly, judged by their standards and criteria) that there is no specific, but at most a gradual, difference between the sin of apostasy and that of heresy, since both cases represent a denial of a truth revealed by God. Yet there are very basic differences, as will be shown by the reflections which follow. The problems arising from these differences makes it necessary to get a better grasp of the nature of heresy.

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divinely effected, habitual faculty given by grace) is indivisible: one cannot possess only half of it as far as its proper nature is concerned. Why and how can there then nevertheless be men who are still Christians and yet no longer have this one indivisible faith? Can there really be such men when it is a question of a *culpable* denial or doubt of a truth of faith, or is this impossible in such a case, i.e. is a formal heretic always necessarily more than a heretic and hence an apostate? Does the definition of a heretic therefore refer after all merely to material heretics, i.e. to those who inculpably (even though decisively, '*pertinaciter*') dispute a certain truth of faith and who, since they do this without guilt, retain the basic attitude of faith and hence do not reject the Christian faith deep down where it is merely a question of a simple Either-Or? Or does the '*nomen retinere christianum*' refer to the purely external state of affairs, in other words to the question of whether or not the heretic concerned still wishes to call himself a Christian and of whether or not he still holds one or other of the doctrines which are usually regarded as specifically 'Christian' in the normal sense of the term. Yet where, under this presupposition, are we to draw the line between specifically Christian and non-Christian truths? (One will not, for instance, want to call everyone who is barely a theist and no more, a mere heretic even if he would still like to call himself a Christian, since in his opinion the 'essence of Christianity, consists merely in a mild belief in God.)

The vagueness of this essential characteristic of heresy does not indicate the question to be one of mere theological subtlety. This is not so even for the simple reason that this is the basis for the dilemma as to whether the Church can refuse the name of Christian to someone in certain circumstances even when the person himself calls himself a Christian and lays great store in this designation. This question will find an objectively correct solution only when and by the fact that the criterion for this distinction between the 'partial' and the 'total' is seen neither exclusively in the realm of the inner attitude of faith nor exclusively in the deposit of specifically Christian doctrines. If the question of the inner attitude were to be completely excluded from the criterion, then it really could no longer be understood why the greater [484] or lesser amount of Christian propositions still conserved could decide such an important distinction as that between heretical Christians who are still Christians and apostates who no longer are Christians; for it is difficult to indicate exactly when the residue of convictions still shared with Christianity – a residue regarded and evaluated purely in itself – is no longer enough for the 'Christian name'. Yet if one were to make the criterion to consist in the inner attitude alone, then it would no longer be possible to make a distinction between a heretic and an apostate in every case, since there are undoubtedly cases when, in spite of just as complete a loss of a true attitude of faith (as in the case of the apostate, i.e. as a formal heretic), a particular person is nevertheless generally regarded as a mere heretic and not as an apostate. Hence, the correct interpretation of the obscure definition will have to say that heresy (in contrast to apostasy) is to be found wherever, on account of the greater amount of still professed Christian truths (which possibly are also still believed with at least human faith), there is a good deal of probability and (to a certain extent even legally important) presumption that such a person still attains also the one salvific reality in truth (signified both by what is still adhered to and by what is denied) in the truths to which he still adheres.

Of course, this still leaves us with a rather vague boundary line between heresy and apostasy and with a very great uncertainty about the result of the material adherence to the (relatively still) great number of Christian truths. The distinction between heresy and apostasy is indistinct because no one can really say *exactly* what degree of adherence to certain truths of faith still entitles one to use the name of Christian.[6] Indeed, it would be

[6] If one wanted to answer this question very systematically and fundamentally – i.e. if one wanted to draw a (theoretically) clear line of demarcation-then it would be necessary to say that a person is still a Christian if he affirms those truths which one must believe either *necessitate medii* and/or *necessitate praecepti*, in order to be able to 'believe' at all. Yet, no matter how true this answer may be in itself, it can again be disputed whether one

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possible to show that such a dividing line, [485] making a clear-cut material distinction in both directions, presumably just does not exist.[7] Conversely, with regard to the outcome of real faith, even an adherence to a great number of Christian truths is uncertain, since even in such a case there may be an inner negation of the whole signified *reality* of faith; for otherwise it would not be possible to lose faith and justification through negation of one single (and thus, in certain circumstances, one sole) truth of faith. Yet one will nevertheless be able to say that, if the unfolded fullness of articulated truths of faith is to have any significance at all for a successful inner attitude of faith – a possibility which cannot reasonably be denied (although faith, grace, justification and thus the whole reality of faith referred to, may already be present even when there is merely belief in the existence of God: Heb 11.6) – then it cannot be denied that basically and *ceteris paribus* one must give a greater chance of real existential belief and thus of attaining the *whole* reality of salvation (in grace) to someone who adheres more explicitly, more clearly and in a more articulate way to the greater part of the Christian propositions of faith and who still aims explicitly at the Christian reality which he has encountered historically and which he calls 'by name' (whereby he has a real relationship to it which is still – in part – independent of the fact as to how he interprets this reality). Such a person must be called a heretic in distinction to an apostate for whom such a chance is indeed possible but at least is no longer present in a measure clearly perceptible to us.

These problems of the '*retinere nomen christianum*' give rise to two further considerations: one about the possibility of apostasy or mere heresy in an existential environment influenced by the Christian tradition, and the other about the inner essential ambiguity of heresy and of the heretic.

First of all: if the distinction between an apostate and a heretic consists properly speaking in the (even though) fluid and not absolutely [486] clear, yet important, distinction within the 'continued adherence' as regards the question as to how much chance and hope there is of awakening and exercising the *whole* faith (with the cryptogamic regaining of the whole reality of salvation under the contrary appearance of heresy) – and if one does not think in a too obviously individualistic manner in this matter, but sees the sociological components in every man's fulfilment of existence – then we may pose the question as to whether (not thinking here in the sense of the terminology of Canon law but in a theological sense) there can be anyone in a historical environment formed by Christianity who is more than a heretic – in other words, an apostate. It should be noted that in the case of a heretic, it does not matter whether or not he possesses justifying faith and hence that contact with the reality of salvation which brings salvation. He may be as far away from the faith in this respect as the apostate, since he may be unbelieving in the personal and supernatural sense even though, in the purely human formation of his theological conviction, he still shares many propositions of faith (as such, i.e. as individual propositions) with the Christian. The criterion for the distinction between the heretic and the apostate, therefore, does not consist in the kind of existential effect the adherence to propositions actually has on grace and faith, but the kind of effect they *can* have in the nature of things. If this is remembered, then it will become clear

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is still a heretic or already an apostate if one also rejects truths which must certainly be believed explicitly *necessitate praecepti*, what kind of explicitness is demanded (this again is by no means a clear concept), and above all what truths are essentially required for Christian faith, i.e. are to be believed explicitly *necessitate medii*, which is a well-known point of disagreement in scholastic theology.

[7] For anyone who is of the perfectly defensible opinion that an act of Christian, supernatural and hence (presupposing love of God) justifying faith is possible in certain circumstances even if this act of faith includes only the existence of God as the guarantor and ultimate explanation of the moral order (whereby it is in certain circumstances possible also to make very mild, and thus optimistic, demands on the necessary explicitness of such an act), cannot, properly speaking, indicate any real limit of faith which, if transgressed, would make one cease to be justified, apart from a real (and existentially realized) denial of God itself.

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that one of the differences between heresy and apostasy – a difference which is perhaps still quite important in practice but which theologically speaking is not an essential one – consists in whether a person accepts certain (specifically Christian) propositions by an in itself purely *human* conviction,[8] or whether these propositions are present for him only as co-determining factors of the spiritual situation in which he inevitably finds himself. Where, when and as long as someone lives unavoidably in an environment which in a thousand ways (even though perhaps quite anonymously and unsystematically) is co-formed by Christianity and by the reality manifesting itself in the (rejected or still accepted) Christian propositions of faith, such a person has always still a chance of coming perhaps quite unconsciously into contact with this reality [487] and of (perhaps quite unsystematically) becoming a Christian. This process is not essentially different in the theological sense from the one in which someone takes hold of the full nature of faith and of the reality of salvation by surrendering himself to the inner dynamism of certain Christian propositions to which he had previously adhered in a merely human formation of opinion. In the one case he surrenders himself to the force of the propositions of his environment – to the external, 'public' opinion – and in the other case, to the force of the propositions of his inner, private opinion.

Hence, only where the defection can take place in such a way that the person who defects leaves the historical environment of Christianity altogether – and no longer (as far as the historical dimension is concerned) has to be in a dialogue of 'yes' or 'no' with Christianity – only then would there be a *pure* case of apostasy. Whether there *can* be such a case in those cultures which were at one time Christian, is a question of fact *and* of basic principles of theology; moreover, it is inevitably perhaps a question which today is already outdated by events. For if there is today anything like a unified planetary civilization, i.e. if today the elements and structures of every culture with their history have become – even though up till now still in different degrees of intensity – co-determining factors of this unified planetary civilization and thus of all individual cultures of the world, and if Christianity continues to exist in the world at all, then no one at all in the world today (although of course, in different but on the whole growing degrees) can withdraw himself from the outset from the dialogue with Christianity (no matter what may be the outcome). To this extent, therefore, no one can any longer live in a purely withdrawn, apo-static relationship to Christianity, but is forced to contradict it by explicitly separating himself from it by heresy. In a theological understanding, everything non-Christian and all non-Christians are somehow moving into a permanent and unavoidable role of explicit opposition towards Christianity and thus precisely of being orientated towards it. For gradually Christianity is coming to belong everywhere in the world to the roots of that (universal) history in which one still remains rooted even while in opposition. Seen in this light, we are completely justified in preferring to call the present-day world – terminologically – heretical rather than apostatical. The modern world remains compelled to carry on a dialogue with Christianity and cannot avoid the fact that in its self-realization the 'Christian name' always comes into the picture again, [488] even when this world avoids reflecting on how much of the material of its historical form (with which it necessarily always has to come to terms again) is Christian. This of course presupposes conversely that present-day Christianity begins to have no longer any real 'paganism'[9]

[8] To which these propositions are not of themselves ordained, since of their nature they are meant to be heard by the properly supernatural faith in which the whole reality of faith and hence (at least implicitly) the objectively inseparable totality of the propositions of faith must and is always accepted indivisibly.

[9] It must not be forgotten that since Old Testament times 'peoples', the 'pagans', were not separated and defined merely by a religious but by a cultural and sociological difference. Medieval, like modern Christianity (right up to our own day), always encountered the 'pagan' also as someone living in a different historical and cultural sphere, i.e. as someone who rejected Christianity 'from outside', and not 'from within', by a being and action which Christianity also could not help experiencing as something 'alien' and outside its sphere of existence.

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outside it, as something simply unrelated and completely separated, but that it must find in it a partner for dialogue in the common historical situation and existence, a partner who more or less has the characteristics of a heretic.[10]

More important still, however, is the second consideration, viz. the ambiguity of heresy and of heretics resulting from the 'retention of the Christian name'. Before we explain what is meant by this, it will be necessary to refer to a phenomenon which is of basic importance for what follows, viz. the unity of the reality of salvation and hence the unity of the doctrines of faith. The doctrines of faith understood as propositions are not merely kept together by the formal authority of a God who reveals them all and who proposes them all to man with a demand for his faith: they have an inner objective unity; they belong together and they describe one and the same reality of salvation under different aspects. Certainly, this one reality of salvation is not a uniformity; it is certainly the unity of a personally, spatio-temporally, etc., multi-dimensional plurality, so that the connection between these different realities (God, Christ, grace, saints, sacraments, Church, ages, places, etc.) is partly a necessary one and partly a freely established [489] connection. Yet they nevertheless have a real unity; they belong together, refer to each other, depend on each other, explain each other and form a unified meaningful whole.

It follows from this that anyone who really grasps one of these many realities in knowledge and in love, will also be drawn by this knowledge into the dynamism connected with the objective unity of this many-sided and yet one reality of salvation: one perception points to another, provides practice in the understanding of another, teaches the understanding of the meaning and of the spirit of the whole and thus prepares for the understanding of another part; every question which is imposed by some perception leads inevitably beyond the individual reality into the whole of reality. Furthermore, there is the fact that in each individual recognition of faith there is at work (at least in the sense of an offered saving grace) the one grace of God which as one and the same grace signifies the essence of the whole reality of salvation (since it is the self-communication of the divine Trinity in Christ) and thus has an inner relationship of nature to all saving realities and their knowledge. If this is right, however, then it must be said that everyone who picks and chooses heretically and thus does not accept the whole reality of salvation and yet ('*retento christiano nomine*') adheres to an important part of it, is in an indefinable, undecided ambiguity of existence, which really can exist only if and in so far as, this existence is still in an unfinished process of becoming. In so far as someone refuses heretically, he offends objectively (and possibly also subjectively) against the faith as a whole, not only because he contradicts the formal authority of the revealing God who guarantees the revelation as a whole, but even more essentially by the fact that in denying a truth he surrenders himself to an immanent logic of knowledge attached solely to the state of things which must eventually lead to the denial of the whole of revelation. Even though he does so explicitly to begin with only when confronted with a certain truth which he uses as the material for the exercising of his attitude, he nevertheless adopts an attitude which in its final and fully matured realization (even though he does not know and notice it as yet) must necessarily lead to the denial of the whole truth of revelation. Yet the converse is also true: in so far as he adheres to essential truths of Christian revelation, the opposite process is also operative in him; he is set on a course leading towards the whole of Christian truth. Hence his situation is ambiguous.

Precisely this fact, however, is now undergoing an ever accelerating change: the historical spheres of existence are overlapping, and this changes also essentially the character of the encounter between Christianity and the non-Christians. The latter, even though they remain non-Christians, cease to be simply those who up till now have not been touched by Christianity. They become – if one may formulate it in this way – unbaptized heretics.

[10] This is connected with the fact that the differences between 'foreign' and 'home' mission, 'paganism' and 'neo-paganism' are becoming more and more blurred.

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[490] It may be that the heretic arrives by this grace at a really supernatural affirmation of faith in those Christian truths to which he adheres, and in this way (i.e. by the objective logic of these truths and by the *grace* of this act) he may grasp implicitly the *whole* reality and truth of Christianity theoretically and in practice; his heretical convictions, on the other hand, may only be 'opinions' (i.e. '*opinio*' in the thomistic sense) which he indeed holds and which he does not see to be irreconcilable with the act of his knowing, appropriating and existentially much deeper personal faith, but which are existentially much more peripheral, uncertain and temporary than the person concerned may realize. If such is the case, two things must always be remembered.

Firstly: The understanding of and adherence to all these many propositions which a person thinks he sees to be true, does not have exactly the same nature logically and existentially with regard to each particular proposition. Man (ultimately by reason of the bodily, physiological and sense conditioning of his knowledge) is that being which can adhere to the contradictory and to the opposed. Yet this does not mean in its turn that these contradictory propositions could be affirmed simultaneously in strictly the same kind of acts. Rather, the truth of the matter is that such propositions have a different position and rank in the structural reality of the logical and existential 'system' of a man, and this must be so, for otherwise this logical and existential 'schizophrenia' of the normal person would be quite impossible (this does not mean, however, that these different value levels of the different propositions must be consciously grasped by the person). One proposition will be a proposition affirmed with utter determination as a strict 'judgement' and will be made the real fixed point from which all one's other propositions (in so far as they can be surveyed) take their focus; other propositions will simply be mere 'opinions', hypotheses and speculations, as long as there is nothing better, and always ready to be corrected and to be abandoned. Between these propositions there exists the same effective logical and existential relationship as there can be between a man's moral acts: he loves God from the very core of his free being ('from the heart') and yet commits peripherally a venial sin which contradicts his basic decision but this only because it is after all in the objective, intentional sense (*i.e. quoad materiam*) and existentially (in the centrality of the act) of less qualitative weight than the basic act which it contradicts.

[491] *Secondly*: Even heresy itself includes once more a dynamism towards the whole Christian truth, although not of course in so far as heresy is simply and formally error and nothing else. But error never exists in this abstract pure form in concrete heresies, in the actual way in which they are affirmed. Heresies which become historically effective and powerful are not simply mere propositions arising from stupidity, obstinacy and bad information; rather, they are supported by a genuine original experience formed by some reality and truth. It can easily be the case – and even will be the case in most instances – that this reality and the truth contained in it (even though it is not denied and is always also seen and expressed in some way) has not yet been seen and experienced in orthodox Christianity in the same explicit and passionate manner and with the same depth and power of vision as the historical error imposed on and demanded of someone who subsequently realizes this genuine experience in the form of error. Just as evil lives by the power of the good and can always be willed only by force of the desire for that good which is the permanent residue in evil and without which it could not even be evil but would simply be nothing (which cannot be willed at all), so it is also in the relationship between the affirmed and experienced truth and the really achieved error. Even error lives by truth. Great, complete error has inevitably a great content and a powerful internal driving force, both of which urge it on towards the *one* truth, to the truth which the heretic has perhaps already actually attained in that Christian truth which he explicitly professes by his retention of the Christian name.

Yet the opposite may also be true: error may be the real, central and basic act of the heretic

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and the real systematizing principle of his total mental system, while the still retained Christian truths ('*nomen christianum*') are still present merely as peripheral 'opinions', continually in danger of being recognized as contradictions to the basic theoretical and practical tendency and hence in danger of being 'revised' and excluded. In spite of the truths of Christianity still adhered to as 'opinions', the intended reality is lost completely and the person is left without grace; it is pushed out by the heretical error introduced existentially and radically into the very centre of the person.

This ambiguity can never be overcome by *reflection*. If this were not so, then the person would know with absolute certainty whether he really believes or not. To know this, however, is never granted to reflection, just as one can never have absolute certainty about whether [492] one is justified. Reflection (i.e. the objectifying, propositional self-expression) never adequately attains the person as what he is and what he realizes of himself by his immediate outward-directed actions. This cannot happen by the very fact that the act of reflection is itself once more an act which forms and alters the person and which alters the system by attempting to objectify and determine it. Hence this ambiguity itself is part of a constant process (in the individual as well as in the social history of heresy): the deciding centre of the person can constantly be shifted and gradually stray away from the true Christian propositions, held on to as its real truth, to the heretical errors, and equally vice versa. One can never say with *absolute* certainty whether a heretic exists within the truth in spite of his heresy, on account of the Christian truths to which he adheres, or whether in spite of these truths, he actually is in error on account of his adhered to heretical propositions. This ambiguity cannot be resolved; one cannot say what is the actual position, for this historical process itself never stops but is always on the move, and every determinable moment of this history may already be surpassed by the next, if it is fixed in a pronouncement. An error can already be paralysed for a long time and be excluded from the basis of the spiritual person, even though it is still adhered to and defended in its propositional, theoretical formulations with a great deal of verbal subtlety. And conversely, a seemingly small error (small, that is, in comparison with the great mass of true propositions adhered to) can already have infiltrated mortally into the core of the spiritual person and hence have become the true, all-embracing, although still not fully effective norm of the relationship of the person to the whole of reality. This can be the case even though the person still adheres to a great many truths basically and objectively irreconcilable with this error and even though this collection of truths has the necessary appearance of being correct and all-embracing with the result that the deadliness and the heretical isolation of error remains hidden to the reflection of both the heretic and of others.

III. THE CHANGE IN FORM OF HERESY

Our reflections about the problems arising out of the traditional notion of heresy and of the heretic have provided us with certain preliminaries to help us with our understanding of a phenomenon which we want to call the change in form of heresy.

[493] Before going on to develop these preliminary aids to an understanding of this change in the form of heresy, we must first reflect on a certain characteristic of our present-day intellectual situation which in its present-day manner and extent was unknown to previous ages, viz. the great amount and variety of experiences, of knowledge and of sciences, which can no longer be comprehended or mastered by any one individual and which precisely *in* this unmastered state (however paradoxical this may sound) co-determine the spiritual situation of the individual. Of course, man has never lived simply on the basis of what he knew or even of what he had systematized by reflection. To *this* extent the spiritual situation

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of the man of today is not really different from what it was in previous ages: the space of his spiritual existence and its structures (understood as pre-established *a priori* elements of his thought, decisions and actions) are co-determined by what he does not know and hence also cannot and need not be responsible for, but which nevertheless belong to the forces of his spiritual existence. But in the past, these powers were not perceptions, theories, opinions and postulates of *men* themselves, but objective data: soil, race, talents and so on, things therefore which on the whole still possessed the innocence of having been created by God. Whenever, in the past, certain spiritual human realities belonged to these powers of existence, they were fundamentally comprehensible to the individual; everyone could learn and know them for himself, could take up a position towards them, could balance them among themselves and could bring them together into a system for which he himself was responsible. Anything he was unable to learn in this way, did not affect him essentially in his spiritual existential situation. Whatever he did not know, even though it was something knowable, did not take place in his life considered as a whole.

Today all this is different. We live in an age where everyone's knowledge has concrete consequences for everyone else – in other words, is 'present' as a power of his own existential sphere for everyone else – and yet can no longer be known by each individual. Have we adverted sufficiently to this peculiarity of the situation of every person? The known world, the world of knowledge, of experiences or theorems, hypotheses and claims on one's attention, has become pluralistic[11] in a [494] way which was not the case in the past. Naturally, even in the past not everyone knew everything which 'was known', i.e. by others. But it was basically possible for him to learn it; the amount of material to be known could still be comprehended; it was possible to learn more or less everything during a few years of study at the 'University' (where the *universum* of knowledge was really available), at least all that was of basic importance for the whole world of the known and did not merely signify some detailed knowledge necessary only for some special professional function within society but not for the construction of the 'world-view' as a whole. For anyone who could not learn in this way, the things to be learnt which he did not learn, simply did not exist for him in his own world: any anthropological reality which really occurred in the world of a shoemaker during the Middle Ages was also understood by him; and whatever he did not understand, did not happen in *his* world.

Today the reality of man has become pluralistic. No one can hold his 'system' to be even approximately identical (even only materially) with everything that is to be known about it. We come to a limit: the sum total of what an individual has the time and is physically capable of knowing and assimilating, and the whole field of what is known, can no longer be even approximately equated to each other. Naturally, one tries to overcome this difficulty: intermediaries are introduced and teams are formed; every science in fact always succeeds anew in achieving a break-through to some sort of systematic knowledge which simplifies the whole of the knowledge of a science again and makes it more manageable. Yet all this does not fundamentally alter the fact that the individual himself can no longer administer the whole of the knowledge which supports him and which helps to determine his existence (and this even as a spiritual person and not merely in his physical, biological and external social

[11] We must refrain here from reflecting more exactly on the existential, ontological and always already present basis of the *possibility* of this plurality: on the circumstance that man never possesses a knowledge which originates from *one* original source and from *one* original systematic design alone; rather he has from the very outset a plurality of experiences which encounter each other only *a posteriori* in a historical process of reflection and which must first of all be synthesized in a never finished process. This has always been the case. But what is new is the fact that the plurality of possible experiences has increased to such an extent that today no single individual can any longer even come near to having personally and fully even merely the experiences of those with whom he comes into direct contact in the biological, sociological and (which is decisive) spiritual sense.

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reality). As has been said, if this knowledge – possessed by others but which can no longer be mastered by [495] the individual – did not play any part in his own existence, then everyone could just forget about it, just as it was quite indifferent for the life of a Bavarian farmer in the year 1400 (as far as *his* life was concerned) whether or not he knew to what dynasty Thutmosis II of Egypt belonged. If this unknown and unknowable knowledge were simply of an innocent factual nature like the (equally unknown) functioning, for instance, of the peristalsis of the intestines, then one could surrender oneself to it with childlike trust and just let it go on in its natural way. But this knowledge is not knowledge of indisputable facts and of so-called results of scientific investigations (which the man of the nineteenth century trusted much more naïvely than the thirteenth-century theologian trusted the Bible). This unaccounted, unmastered knowledge is an amorphous (and yet immensely efficacious) mass of real results of scientific investigations, of theorems, hypotheses, postulates, wishful thinking and utopias, of one-sided tendencies, dark inclinations, in which are involved good sense and simplicity, every human dimension, guilt, the powers of darkness and divine inspiration from above. The whole of this world of the spirit created by man himself takes on concrete form in technology, discoveries, sociological institutions, influences brought to bear on people's attention by advertising and a thousand similar realities which have become again physical, and this world is present everywhere 'in the atmosphere' of the spiritual situation of every person. Of course, within this amorphous mass of the 'objective mind' there are always again beginnings of certain structures – islands of meaning – just as at the commencement of a process of crystallization, the first crystalline systems shoot through the mother-lye like a shaft of lightning. But such formations remain islands of meaning within an amorphous mass to which new materials are added faster than their organization can progress.

It is no real comfort (and a false sedative, current among Christians) to say about this situation that we do at least know the 'principles' and general norms of the mental penetration, mastering and synthesis of the whole of this formless *materia prima* of the spirit: the principles of logic, ontology, the natural law, social teaching, etc. This information could be a *complete* comfort only for a rationalist, i.e. for someone who thinks that the universal, *a priori* principles are really presented to him in their unchangeable purity in the face of the world of an always incomprehensible experience. In reality, the adequate understanding of these principles themselves becomes conscious only at the end of a slow process, [496] in the encounter with the material of historical experience which is to be structured and mastered by these principles. The incomprehensible immensity and growing pluralism of experiences, which are no longer possible for any single person, obscures even these principles and makes them more difficult to manage. No matter how great their permanent, *a priori* validity may be, they reveal their *absolutely exact* meaning – what they imply, exclude, forbid, etc. (and it is the exact meaning which matters) – only by being brought into contact with experience. Experience, however, is pluralistic, and so pluralism is insurmountable. The new situation referred to here can be seen in the frequently deplored fact that there no longer is any unified terminology, that there is a babel of languages, and so on.

The cause of this confusion of languages is found in the experiences of the many[12] which

[12] The pluralism of experiences does not exist merely (to state this explicitly) in the physical, biological world – i.e. in the natural sciences whose results can no longer be surveyed by a single individual – but equally in the experiences of the sciences of the spirit. No one, for instance, can any longer have a living contact at first hand with the whole extent and breadth of the history of philosophy or with the whole of the wide-open history of cultures, of the political life of nations, of music, of law or of other human realities. Each person knows merely different sections of all this. The difference of experiences creates human beings who find it much more difficult than before to make themselves understood and to communicate with each other. Basically, this state of affairs cannot be overcome, no matter how much it may be possible to improve it.

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are simply no longer reconcilable in one individual. These experiences explain also how one cannot expect any basic improvement in this state of affairs, no matter how useful, worthy of pursuit and even practicable partial improvements may be. In the past there used to be a fairly unified terminology in the realm of the sciences of the spirit, since the contemplated material, the imaginative models and the examples could be and were the same for all, and because their distribution of weight, impressiveness, etc., were approximately equally great or at least showed only individual differences (or belonged to social structures which from the outset and for other reasons – as, for instance, because of separated cultural spheres – never even entered 'into dialogue' with one another and hence could not cause any linguistic confusion). It must always be remembered in this connection that this insurmountable pluralism of our experiences of the world is not [497] one whose individual moments are separated by a mental and cultural no-man's-land wedging itself in between individual social levels, cultures and peoples, but that it is a pluralism in *one* and the same spiritual world in which live the many members of the one planetary world-civilization, of the classless society and of all possible technological and sociological concretizations of these structures of the pluralistic, objective mind. Hence, everyone is embraced, sustained and co-formed by a spiritual world of man for which he himself can no longer be responsible in his own knowledge and decision in the way in which in the past a person could make his spiritual world his own 'possession'.

The basic characteristic of the situation of the man of today must now be related to the ambiguity of Christian existence which we discovered when thinking about the classical notion of heresy. To enable us to do this, it will be necessary to point out yet another circumstance which up till now has not been mentioned explicitly. The ambiguity of the situation of the heretic is indeed particularly pronounced and disturbing (in his case) when measured by the critical standard of the true Christian believer and when seen from his point of view. But it is really something which is also found in the case of the orthodox Christian. As has been said already, no one can know with absolute and reflex certitude whether he really believes. For no one can give a final account as to whether the propositions of faith which he is certainly willing to accept as his own, are also accepted by him in his free theoretical consciousness with such depth and existential power of free decision (and without such a free 'agreement' there can be no faith, but at the most a sympathizing with recognized propositions) that these propositions have a sure theoretical and practical validity governing all those other norms and ideals which everyone also inevitably possesses.[13] The undoubtedly existing subjective system of values which one freely constitutes for oneself is not fully subject to absolutely certain reflection. Yet if one were to objectify everything which is present in a person and even in the most orthodox – all his judgements, prejudices, attitudes, preferences and opinions (and all this *also* always and ultimately not something which can be analysed and seen to be the [498] consequence of free decisions and not merely something independent of them and preceding them) – then there would also appear 'propositions' (side by side with the propositions of objective faith) which are objectively heretical (even though they are never explicitly pronounced by this person in this objectified way). Even in the case of the orthodox Christian, neither he himself nor anyone else could decide with absolute certainty whether these 'heresies' are for him merely 'opinions' incapable of destroying his existentially radical decision in favour of the truths of faith, i.e. his real 'assent of faith' (as an existentially 'weighty' act), or whether on the contrary these convictions of faith remaining untouched *qua* 'opinions' (and no matter how much they coincide objectively with the whole of Christian doctrine) are nevertheless merely residues and a façade, behind which lurks quite

[13] There is not and cannot be any life of the spirit which, in a purely 'fideistic' way, is nourished and sustained *merely* by the motives of revelation and their continuance. The experience of the individual – even considering him as an individual – is pluralistic both from the direction of revelation and of the world.

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a different (equally theoretical although not as clearly reflex and formulated) world of freely accepted convictions.

After these preliminary reflections, we are now in a position to state and explain our theses about the change in form of heresy. We can formulate this as follows: there is far more 'cryptogamic' heresy today than ever before. This cryptogamic heresy exists also in the Church, alongside her explicit orthodoxy. This kind of heresy has an essential tendency to remain unsystematized, and this fact constitutes its peculiarly and extraordinarily dangerous nature. Christianity's attitude of anxiety, watchfulness and touchiness with regard to heresy – an attitude essential to Christianity – ought nowadays to be directed above all against this cryptogamic heresy. This is extremely difficult especially because this kind of heresy is to be found also in the members of the Church, and because it is very difficult to distinguish it from legitimate tendencies, from the justified spirit of the age, etc.

One might start with the fact that cryptogamic heresy exists today to a far greater extent than ever before, and try to deduce this thesis in an *a priori* theological manner. One could say, to begin with, that there 'must' always be heresy (in the sense of a 'must' of salvation history, where it exists in spite of the fact that it 'should not' exist), and this as a possibility which cannot be so foreign to the Church from the very outset as to ensure that the Church Christian as such could not even be seriously threatened by it. One could next point out that the development of the Church's consciousness of faith has gradually made the norm of faith itself – in all its formal, juridically clear structures – an object of faith, that this development has come to a certain completion [499] in the definition of the Pope's infallible teaching primacy, and that therefore there can no longer be any doubt or uncertainty (as there was in earlier ages) as to whether or not an *explicit* doctrine belongs to the Christian Church. Then, combining both these considerations, it would follow that the kind of heresy which even today is a danger for the Christian in the Church and yet 'must' exist, must and does in fact take on a less explicit form, i.e. takes on the form of cryptogamic heresy, whereby it presents a smaller surface for attack by the *magisterium*, and so has a greater chance of being dangerous within the Church. Even on this basis, one could already point to certain manifestations within the most recent history of the Church since the time of Modernism, manifestations which could clarify this understanding of the existence and nature of cryptogamic heresy that we have gained in an *a priori* way.[14]

But we can also use an *a posteriori* approach to come to an understanding of the nature and existence of cryptogamic heresy. For this we must combine what we said about the pluralism of the uncontrolled powers of the spiritual existence of each individual (a pluralism which the individual can no longer catch up with or overcome in any adequate and full sense) and what we saw about the ambiguity of each individual's existence in faith (the possibility of being a latent unbeliever). The man of today lives in a spiritual existential environment which, as an individual, he is unable to measure fully and for which he cannot take complete responsibility. This existential environment, however, is undoubtedly also co-formed by attitudes, doctrines and tendencies which must be qualified as heretical and as contradicting the teaching of the gospel. All these heretical elements which thus co-determine the existential environment of each individual, do not necessarily need to objectify themselves in theoretical propositions. This will indeed happen quite frequently, but is neither necessary nor decisive. Actual behaviour, concrete measures, etc., can be determined by a heretical attitude, without this attitude formulating itself reflexly in abstract doctrinal propositions. It is sufficient if it realizes itself in the concrete material of life. It must be noted in this connection that these material objectifications (in the practical sphere of one's life, of one's style of life, of morals, customs, actions and omissions, of emphases, of stressing some

[14] Cf. K. Rahner, *Gefahren im heutigen Katholizismus* (Einsiedeln[3] 1955), pp. 63-80.

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aspects and of playing others down) are particularly and equally [500] suitable both for objectifying and for hiding the basic heretical attitude. For often, viewed purely in the abstract, they are not clearly conceivable *only* as objectifications of the heretical spirit, if we prescind from their (often difficult to measure) intensity, their place within the totality of spiritual existence, and so on. The reverence shown to the human body, for instance, and the idolization of the body are difficult to distinguish one from the other in their tangible manifestations, especially in situations where there is a certain 'need to make up for' a lack of realization in the Christian evaluation of the human body in the past. Hence it becomes doubly difficult both to decide whether such an evaluation of the body is still Christian or already heretical, and also whether the seemingly Christian protest against such tangible manifestations is really an anti-heretical Christian attitude or whether it arises out of an old, historically conditioned understanding of human existence which, because of its long association with real Christianity, appears as something Christian itself though in actual fact it has perhaps been very much influenced by latent heresies of previous ages. Yet if – on the one hand – a heresy although very latent nevertheless exists, and if – on the other hand – it co-determines modern man by reason of the insurmountable pluralism of his spiritual existential environment, and does this precisely in such a way that one does not take up any reflex and systematic position towards it, and indeed is not even capable of doing so (explicitly), then we have the phenomenon which we refer to as cryptogamic heresy.

It must be noted in this regard that this notion – like the traditional notion of heresy – may well leave it a completely open and abstract question as to whether this heresy is present in a 'formally' or merely 'materially' reflex manner (even though naturally not in a reflection on its heretical content as such) or merely in an unreflected exercise; in other words, whether it is present as a dangerous peripheral 'opinion' or as the basic existential act in the very centre of the person. We may say for the time being that everybody today is infected with the bacteria and virus of cryptogamic heresy, even though he does not on this account have to be qualified as having become diseased with it. Everyone conforms at least unconsciously, and at least in the form of peripheral 'opinions', to the peripheral existential attitudes of his surroundings, attitudes which originate from a basic heretical attitude and in which there is sufficient '*materia gravis*' to constitute actual heretical attitudes. We can all only hope (but not know with absolute, reflex [501] certitude) that these heretical or pseudo-heretical attitudes, practices, motivations, etc., present within us, have not already become part of the structure of our basic decisions (in a reflex, theoretical manner) but that these decisions also correspond in fact to the systematically and explicitly approved norms of the gospel.

This cryptogamic heresy lives also in the Church. After all, the Church is not a substantial entity over and above the community of Christians but is 'the throng of the faithful' themselves, without prejudice to the fact that this 'people of God' is constituted socially in a sacred society, is governed by its office-holders and is led by the Holy Spirit. The Church understood thus as the mass of the faithful lives on in this even spiritually pluralistic world of technology, of modern mass society, of unified planetary civilization, of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of thought, of propaganda – in brief of all the characteristics which today qualify each individual's sphere of human existence. This Church lives therefore in an heretically or crypto-heretically structured world of cryptogamic heresies. Hence her members cannot help being infected also in a cryptogamic heretical way. For the Church is the Church of sinners, and it is an unquestionable fact that mutually contradictory principles can co-exist (even though on different levels of existential assent) in the same person, especially when we consider that they are to a certain extent not even explicitly formulated and do not need to be so formulated in order to be effectively present. This kind of heresy may be present in any member, even in those belonging to the hierarchical leadership of the Church. After all, there is no principle in the Church which would make it impossible for

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there to be unbelievers even among the members of the hierarchy, although this would be in a hidden way and without their admitting it to themselves. This unformulated, cryptogamic heresy does not need to be formal, culpable heresy. Particularly today, the elements of a person's spiritual sphere of existence are (less frequently than before) elements which have been passed by the explicit and reflex censorship of the theoretical and personal responsibility of the individual. Naturally, the Church always defends herself even against this cryptogamic heresy in her midst. The Church as a whole – in her members who pray and carry their cross, in her poor and in her forsaken (and yet patiently enduring) members, in brief in all her great and small, known and unknown saints – lives the true and unfalsified gospel over and over again in such depth, existential decisiveness, genuineness and purity, that it is certain that she will [502] not succumb to the heresy in her midst. Even though she is the Church of sinners, she is also – by the power of God and by that unconquerable grace of Christ promised to her as a whole which embraces all the weakness of man – the unconquerably holy Church and the Church who stands fast in the truth. This undoubtedly means not only that by her proclamation she always bears witness to God's truth as against the (explicit or latent) heretical error of the 'world', but also that she truly 'realizes' this truth testified to by her in the personal 'assent' of many (even though not all) of her members. She does this in such a way that even though cryptogamic heresy may indeed always remain present as a mortal danger to each individual in the Church, this heresy does not become so powerful in the Church as a whole as to make the Church pay merely lip-service to the gospel, when interiorly she has become heretical and has thus fallen away from this truth.

This also helps to make the second thesis understandable: this cryptogamic heresy exists also in the Church in and together with her explicit orthodox beliefs. The fact of belonging to the Church and of explicitly declaring oneself for her teaching is not an absolute and mechanically effective protection against heresy. Even in the Church, everyone is asked by God individually in his own, inalienable conscience as to whether deep down, underneath the outward appearances of orthodoxy (which can deceive not only others but even oneself), he is not unconsciously a heretic in the sense of cryptogamic heresy. For this is perfectly possible. One must not try to water down this statement by saying that the phenomenon referred to is simply a question of the well-known fact that someone may in his *practical* life offend against his theoretical principles, and that thus theory and practice may not conform to each other. Of course, this phenomenon also exists, and it is not always easy to distinguish it in the individual case from what we mean by cryptogamic heresy and its danger within the Church. There is an implicit, unformulated falsification of the standards of value themselves (and not merely a practical offending against right standards recognized as valid in themselves). This unformulated falsification of the standards of value themselves, this cryptogamic heresy – which naturally seems at first sight to be more active in the field of moral norms while it leads to the treating of the other norms of faith, which do not seem to be directly relevant to morality, merely with an existential indifference and with an uninterested acceptance – can certainly be accompanied by a verbal orthodoxy and a frightened, 'correct' care [503] never to express 'views' which might come into conflict with the official norms of faith. It must be emphasized once more: there can be, not only 'practical' heresy, but also theoretical heresy, i.e. proper heresy (even though cryptogamic), under the appearance of orthodoxy. This phenomenon must not be confused with the (also occurring) phenomenon of conscious hypocrisy in faith for social or other similar reasons. In *that* case, the secret heretic (or apostate) is reflexly conscious of his lie; in this one, the heretic deceives himself (and not primarily others), for this self-deception is a constitutive element of the phenomenon of cryptogamic heresy in the form in which it can and really does occur in the Church, so that no one is proof against this heresy by his well-intentioned belonging to the Church and by his explicit profession of her doctrine.

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The implicit nature of heresy in the member of the Church finds a strange ally in the man of today, in his reluctance to let himself be tied down to concepts in religious questions. The man of today is more likely to discuss quite freely the most intimate details of his sex life with a psychoanalyst than to carry on a 'religious discussion' with someone else from whom he cannot hope to get absolute agreement right from the start (since he is, for instance, the official representative of the Church), a discussion which prescinds entirely from himself and is concerned with purely theoretical matters. There may be many reasons for this strange phenomenon (at least in Central Europe): God's 'absence' as considered by modern philosophers (and not merely in fashionable talk), the feeling of insecurity in all these matters in view of the disruption in the world and in our time, caused by the incalculable number of religious world-views and standpoints – disruptions which each individual encounters in his own personal life with a sharpness and forcibleness unusual in previous ages – and above all, the feeling of the immeasurable distance between religious expression in human concepts and the reality signified by it, a feeling which is in itself quite correct and positive and is experienced almost as something killing all true dialogue. Whatever may be the precise reason, it remains an undeniable fact that the man of today finds religious and theological reflection very difficult, and clear formulations of matters of faith are inclined to impress him as impious, smart and typically clerical. This need not yet be accompanied in any way by a flight from the institutionally constituted practice of religion or even from the Church. On the contrary, this reticence in the face of clear concepts may quite easily [504] result today in an instinctive attempt to avoid any conceptual formulation of religious matters as far as one's own existential attitude is concerned and hence may precisely in this way lead to a certain tolerance towards the traditional, conceptually formulated doctrine of the Church in the feeling that in any case one could not say 'it' any better, so that, as a result of this reticence which has become almost a taboo, even educated people will nowadays frequently allow themselves to hold on to the most childish formulations of faith. This attitude, however, becomes then the reason why one's heretical attitude does not become a theoretically expressed and exactly formulated heresy (as it did in the past): one lives in heresy but shrinks from formulating it as a 'system of doctrine' and from placing it before the Church for mutual discussion. One lives, for instance, in a religious, metaphysical agnosticism, yet timidly avoids maintaining that the first Vatican Council was wrong in teaching that man can recognize God's existence by the light of reason. One prefers not to ask about what is and what is not the real meaning of this statement made by the Vatican Council, one does not formulate and thus also does not come into conflict with formulae. Yet one is nevertheless a cryptogamic heretic in this case right in the midst of the Church, and this perhaps in spite of a not insignificant 'practice' of one's religion.

This already explains also the next, previously stated proposition: cryptogamic heresy is not merely *de facto* a reflexly non-articulated heresy, but also has a positive tendency to remain such. Certainly man has basically the impulse (one of the most essential existentials of his existence) to give an account of himself to himself, to objectify what he is and to retrace what in the first place is merely actual (both in being and in action) to the necessary grounds of nature. But man has also the opposite impulse, and this not merely because of more general considerations such as the fact that fundamentally reflection never fully attains the whole of man's spiritual existence and man is always more (even spiritually and personally) than he explicitly says of himself in propositions gained by systematic reflection, or the fact that there is the phenomenon of self-deceit, of repression, of the false 'good conscience', etc., all of which is conceivable only if there is such a contrary basic impulse. There are also special reasons in this case for this phenomenon of a positively holding on to the unreflected state of this basic heretical attitude. We have already mentioned one of these reasons: the dread of religious reflection in general. But there are still other reasons for this.

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[505] One of these reasons is a certain strange good will towards the Church which is to be found in many educated people of the twentieth century, a good will greater than in the nineteenth century. This good will cannot be explained as it could be at that time – if it was still present at all – by a certain social link with tradition; it has quite different roots today (roots which in themselves, however, have just as little to do with a genuine religious decision as the aristocratic and bourgeois, social and religious traditionalism of the last century). In contrast to the age of self-conscious individualism and liberalism, the man of today no longer has as much confidence in his own opinions; above all, he is no longer convinced of the possibility of founding a religious community on such a private opinion, without thereby losing oneself in a hopeless sectarianism and religious fanaticism. If, however, one does not have much confidence in one's own opinion and is indeed very little convinced that someone else will be right (in this case, the authority of the Church) yet has nevertheless the more or less clear feeling that the religion (which one wants) must somehow entail also a religious community, then one will find that the easiest way to 'solve' the problem posed by these three positions is not to let it come to a conflict in the first place: one does not articulate one's sceptical or otherwise heretical or pseudo-heretical attitude, and thus 'manages to get by'. Furthermore, one perhaps adapts oneself in such a way that quite instinctively one carries on a certain formation of groups[15] within the universal Church, establishes a kind of special 'chapel' within the big Church, where one is 'amongst kindred spirits' and where therefore there is less danger from the very outset of subjects coming up for discussion which might force one to abandon the attitude of 'letting sleeping dogs lie'.

The actual tactics adopted by cryptogamic heresy in order to *remain* latent, vary in different cases. Frequently,[16] they simply consist in an attitude of mistrust and of resentment against the Church's *magisterium*, [506] that widespread feeling of being controlled in a suspicious and narrow-minded way by the Church's *magisterium* in one's research and teaching, the opinion that one just 'cannot say what one thinks' (and deems it quite legitimate to think in 'good' conscience). Does one not here and there come up against the attitude that (at least among friends) one can say more than one could write? Or one is given the impression that one ought to be glad that this or that is being said by Protestant theologians outside the Church and that one must read it in their works, since it is dangerous to say it oneself. One may sometimes get the impression that the theoretical opinion of a theologian hides itself behind the forms and figures of his historical investigations in order to make itself known without becoming tangible. Is there not here and there something like an esoteric doctrine which is handed on orally? Is there not unformulated heresy which avoids definite theses, which works merely with omissions and one-sided perspectives, and which in the wrong spirit by-passes the thesis and goes straight into the practical field? Is something like this not present when, for instance, one assiduously avoids using the word 'hell' and where there no longer is any mention – or at least only with a great deal of uncertainty and embarrassment – of the Evangelical Counsels, vows and the Religious state, unless there is no other way out? How often do preachers, talking to educated people in our part of the world, still speak to their audience about temporal punishment, indulgences, angels, fasting, the devil (or at most speak only of the 'demonic' in man), of Purgatory, of prayer for the Holy Souls, and similar old-fashioned things? Whenever someone advises us to preserve our 'inner freedom' and 'to continue to live positively in the Church while treating the Confessional as

[15] This of course does not imply anything against the legitimate formation of groups in an open and confident relationship to the whole Church and her hierarchical leadership. Every religious Order, for instance, with its own proper spirit different from other Orders, is also such a formation of groups which makes the individual's life in the universal Church more bearable.

[16] We repeat, in what follows, a few pages which we had already written earlier on, viz. in *Gefahren im heutigen Katholizimus* (Einsiedeln[3] 1955), pp. 75-78.

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something which in fact is not competent for us as long as it administers the sacrament of forgiveness in the service of the Moloch of legalism',[17] then this is a recommendation to practise such cryptogamic heresy and, with rather strange irony, it may affect especially those who are most proud of the untroubled orthodoxy of their time-tested views and doctrines: heresy in the garb of indifference.

God's truth is always one, always remains the same and is final; it is proclaimed by the *magisterium* of the Church. Whenever and wherever this *magisterium* has stated this truth entrusted to it by Christ, and has stated it in a form binding on the conscience of the believer, then this truth is true and valid in this form for all times; in [507] such a case, theology and the proclamation of the truth will always refer back to these formulations of revealed truth formed in the course of the history of the Church, with the assurance that the intended truth has really been correctly stated in these formulae (however true it may be that every formulation of the truths of the faith – since it is expressed in human words – never corresponds fully to the object referred to and so, at least in principle, can always be replaced by an even better and more comprehensive one); in such a case, an intellectual and conceptual formulation is never merely a subsequent reflex of an experience of faith which of itself would be a-rational (as is maintained by the modernistic understanding of the intellectual element of faith). Yet this divine truth expressed in human words is not given to us so that it may simply go on being repeated with everlasting monotony in the textbooks of dogmatic theology. No, it is meant to bring about a living encounter with man in the concrete, to enter into his mind and heart, by becoming flesh and blood, and to bring man to truth. For this, however, it is necessary that man makes it his own ever anew. Man, just as he is formed by his age, his experiences, his fate, his spiritual situation which is not merely the situation of ecclesiastical Christianity but is also the situation of his age in general, must hear this divine message ever anew in the whole of his characteristic situation. And since the faith of man cannot be constituted by a message which might be heard but only by the message which is actually heard – and since the truth of revelation cannot and will not exist on earth in an external 'in itself' of eternal validities, but only in its actually 'being believed' – the pure, eternally unchanging truth of the gospel must, for this very reason, bear in every age the imprint of that age within the concrete realizations of its knowledge and acknowledgement.

If it does not bear this imprint, or at least does not have it to a sufficient extent, then it does not thereby become less time-determined or more universally valid, but rather merely bears within itself the spirit of a bygone age to which one has become accustomed and which, on account of its age and well-known form, is wrongly regarded as the expression of the eternal validity of the truth of the gospel. In such a case, this freezing of the form in which the truth of the gospel is expressed, is itself nothing else than a dangerous symptom of the indifference towards the truth of the gospel under which a period suffers, whether it knows it or not, and a symptom of the lack of a power of appropriation and practical assimilation from which such pure [508] 'traditionalists' suffer. Who would doubt the fact that this kind of heresy exists even in our own age, a heresy in which dead orthodoxy is merely the result and expression of an inner indifference towards truth, in which one lets something endure because basically it is so indifferent to oneself that one shrinks even from the effort of getting rid of it or of disputing it?

Anyone who thinks that all this has been stated to lead to a sniffing around for heresies in every corner and to starting a hunt for concealed heretics, has misunderstood what has been our intention in all this. We have drawn attention to the signs of the actual presence of such cryptogamic heresies simply as an *a posteriori* confirmation of the *a priori* thesis that there must be such a change in form of heresy today. Anyone who wishes to draw practical

[17] Thus in E. Michel, *Die Ehe* (Stuttgart 1949), p. 128.

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conclusions from this theological speculation, should first of all fear this danger in himself and try to avoid it. For a mere desire for orthodoxy and for submitting obediently to the *magisterium* does not yet protect a person completely against heresy in the sense intended here.

From what has been said, it follows inevitably that the Church's *magisterium* can undertake only relatively little with the means used up till now, when it wishes to combat this danger of cryptogamic heresy. It can proclaim the truth; it can itself bring heretical tendencies to a conceptual formulation (as was done for the first time in Pius X's Encyclical on Modernism) and then condemn it in this form. It can do very little, however, against silent heresy itself it is to a large extent helpless when faced with a heresy which gives open expression only to correct propositions and keeps quiet about those which do not suit it; it is to a large extent helpless in the face of the heresy of indifference and of theologically sterile integralism. The *magisterium* lives today even inevitably under the temptation of aggravating the difficulty, and this indeed for the same reason which has caused the change in form of heresy. For, since today (especially since the time of the Vatican Council) it has become aware of its own authority which is now acknowledged most reflexively as an object of faith, the *magisterium* may be tempted more than ever before to suppress heretical lines of thought merely by its formal authority without seeing to it that they are also overcome from within the inner nature of the matter itself. Thus there arises the temptation to combat heresy, as it were, merely through administrative channels (by placing certain works on the index, by removing suspect lecturers, etc.) instead of combating it in the [509] proper manner of the *teaching* office, i.e. by a positive formulation of the true teaching so that error is really 'uprooted'. The *magisterium* may be tempted to command people to hold their peace and to keep silence, without saying or letting there be said also just the right word, and saying it or letting it be said in such a way that it is not merely actually true but also enters into the understanding and heart of men. As stated, this is not an insurmountable temptation, but it does exist (without necessarily being realized) and it is part of the situation of change in the form of heresy, since this danger springs from the same causes as this change in form itself. For instance, was there not silence for too long about certain questions of biblical theology during the period of modernism?

At any rate, there is a greater danger today than previously that where theological theses and opinions which seem questionable or immature, are too hastily suppressed by the *magisterium*, the heresy is not killed but simply takes on a new form and thus becomes even more 'resilient' against the measures taken by the Church's *magisterium*. For it seems to us that the development of the Church and of her formal teaching authority as a proper object of faith 'must' give rise to a form of heresy in the Church which was unknown in the past to the same extent.

The fight against this heresy of cryptogamic attitudes must, therefore, be carried on especially by the conscience of the individual. Where heresy does not objectify itself in theses but remains an unformulated heresy and hence one which is not put up for discussion and one which takes on the appearance of unquestionable inevitability, it becomes – and this in Christians who after all wish to be such – almost something like a sneaking heresy of false emphases. This means that all or most of the postulates of today or tomorrow will have something absolutely true or defensible or historically inevitable about them, even to the extent in which they signify a getting away from the style of life of earlier and even Christian generations. It is possible to make quite a legitimate demand for (or simply to realize tacitly in the concrete shaping of one's, life) a greater tolerance than in the past, a more liberal attitude to the body and to sex, a greater understanding for social questions, more emphasis on the principles of an existential ethics and on the individual decisions of conscience, a greater distinction between the theological proposition in its historical and hence conditional

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'garb' and what is actually meant by it, a more liberal attitude towards the [510] modern world in general, etc. All this can indeed be advocated in such a way that one cannot be convicted of explicit heresy. Yet one may nevertheless be guilty of a cryptogamic heresy in all this, simply by the (although unverifiable) erroneous balancing of all these things.

'Balancing' may not sound very good and may give a primitive impression. One might say that the problems have not been thought through very well, for otherwise this idea that it is all a question of the right balance just would not arise. There are certainly plenty of cases where a problem cannot be solved by a compromise, by a certain give and take, by avoiding 'exaggerations' on both sides or by similar attitudes and measures, but where it can be solved only by working out exactly and clearly *one* principle in the light of which the right way of acting can then be clearly determined. Yet it still remains true that man, being finite and multidimensional, is unavoidably forced to act out of a plurality of principles which he *cannot* 'elevate' into a higher principle (by reconciling their content in a positive way) so as to give all his actions this one higher principle as their guiding principle and thus man would not require to respect several principles at the same time. Hence the problem of 'right balance' – i.e. of simultaneously and genuinely respecting several demands whose *content* cannot be reduced speculatively to a unique, higher court of appeal (of principle, of authority, etc.) – is an unavoidable human task which basically cannot be solved adequately (i.e. rationally and without consideration of historical factors) on the theoretical plane but only on the plane of practical life which cannot be fully theorized; in other words, this problem cannot be solved by science, but only by prudence and wisdom. Hence, cryptogamic heresy – especially when it wants to remain latent – likes to be a heresy of false emphases, of exaggerations, of one-sideness, but of course of false emphases etc., which can be proved only with difficulty, or even cannot be proved at all on the theoretical plane, and which consequently cannot be branded by the *magisterium* of the Church, or can be branded by it only with great difficulty, only very much later and only in extremely general terms (which no one feels are meant for him).

Who can, for instance, say exactly where the modern craze about sport starts to become a cryptogamic heresy in the form of a wrong balance between character training and body worship, i.e. the heresy of the implicit idolization of the human body? General warnings about this matter will simply make each adherent of this heresy (wherever it [511] is present) think that they are meant only for someone else who is engaged in this idol worship in a still more one-sided and radical manner, or that a reactionary office bearer who is still living in the past, is using such warnings to throw suspicion on the sensible sports activities of today or to persecute it because he regards it as something unchristian. This whole situation is made even more difficult by the following circumstance: modern heresy, even where it expresses itself theoretically, will today have already expressed itself far too much in a great number of people and their experiences to appear very 'undialectic' and 'one-sided' in its formulation. When it declares its true meaning and praises its own particular idol, it will put forward the necessary provisos, counter-balances, restrictions, etc., so that innocent people will be deceived only too easily and will get the impression that this is a balanced system. Today, every systematic praise of sport as a *god* (to keep to our example) will also offer up a little incense to the 'spirit'. Materialism will emphasize that it must be understood in a 'dialectic' sense, so that the denial of the spirit, which is certainly part of materialism, is not at all so easy to prove. All this shows the importance today of accentuation, the proper balance and emphasis, and the difficulties facing the Church's *magisterium* in trying to fulfil this task. In this matter, the individual Christian is set and called to a task and responsibility which no one else can accomplish for him. The practical balancing in one's concrete attitudes of life cannot be fully determined theoretically. Yet it can be false and heretical, and the Christian is not relieved of his responsibility of having done something heretical in this sense, simply because

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he has not heard any objection from the *magisterium*. For instance, may it not have been true that, in the nineteenth and in the first part of the twentieth century, the *magisterium* stressed the justification of patriotism *and* the incorporation of this principle into higher norms, and that the individual Christians did not deny this dialectic doctrinal pronouncement theoretically, but in practice engaged nevertheless in a heretical nationalism, against which the *magisterium* – which is concerned with theoretical norms – did not and could not protest in any clear manner, with the result that the individual Christians – since they themselves were not watchful and sufficiently critical of themselves – thought that everything was in perfect order (apart from certain exaggerations by . . . the others)? Today, the question of building up atomic stock-piles provides us with an example of a question which theoretically must always end up simply in a [512] weighing of pros and cons, beyond which even the *magisterium* cannot and must not go, and so this whole question (when it comes to the historically concrete question of deciding on a course of action) remains really an open question and yet is a question of *conscience*.

This watchfulness and mistrust in the face of cryptogamic heresy which must be the inalienable task and duty of each individual, since they cannot ever be taken completely off his shoulders by the *magisterium*, are of course *not* to be understood as the task of the individual conscience of each person – of his existential morality – in the sense that everyone lives in isolation and by himself as far as this task is concerned. The finding of concrete imperatives (which go beyond the dialectic of mutually balanced principles and which make clearer demands) is something which can take place also in the public forum of the Church, e.g. in the formation of a charismatically inspired ‘public opinion’. Every great Christian movement, all the various spheres of life, can be understood in this sense and could therefore be brought forward as examples of what is meant here. The decisive factor, however, even for the always new and living formation of such attitudes against cryptogamic heresy in the Church, will always be that grace of God which gives the individual an insight into cryptogamic heresy and inspires his decision not to allow himself simply to ‘be conformed to this world’; against this conformism St Paul has already warned (Rom 12.2).

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TRANSLATORS' NOTE

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Karl-H. Kruger

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PREFACE

In due course, there *now* follows here a sixth volume of my *Theological Investigations*. Among these essays there are several until now unpublished. For this publication the essays printed here have been looked over once more to correct mistakes and stylistic and suchlike imperfections. As compared with their original form, the essays ‘The Episcopal Office’, ‘The sinful Church in the decrees of Vatican II, and ‘Anonymous Christians’ have been enlarged by the addition of longer preliminary remarks, supplements or other insertions. Detailed notes of where the various items first appeared will be found at the end of the book.

Munich, September 1965

Karl Rahner, S.J.

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[1]

PART ONE

Christianity in the Present Age

[3]

1

THE MAN OF TODAY AND RELIGION

By giving these reflections the title 'the man of today and religion', immediate reference is made to a much wider question than can be dealt with really objectively in a short essay. The critical but sympathetic reader of what follows should therefore keep in mind that *in magnis voluisse sat est*.

The first and rather more introductory point we would like to make is that the man of today is never *merely* a man of today. This is indeed something he must not be. The quality – however elusive – which characterises contemporary man, is not and must not be thought or lived as the whole of his humanity, no matter how much it does give its own particular stamp to everything in it. You may say that this is a platitude, and yet it is more than that. Man has an infinitely profound yearning for unity. And rightly so. This is why he is always in danger of oversimplifying, in danger of wanting to design everything in his life from one *single* angle and of wanting to determine everything as a function of one single, definite entity which is familiar to him and controllable by him. This is true not only in the theoretical sphere but also in the realm of practical action. Thus contemporary man is in danger of wanting to be nothing but a man of today. What, for instance, we call the 'manager type', is not from a more profound point of view the person who works himself to death, for there has always been this type of person either of necessity or by choice. At a closer look, one will find the 'manager' in an existentially ontological and really ethical sense wherever someone can no longer think of anything in his life except as a derived function of his enterprises, whenever he simply identifies his life and his enterprises. This must inevitably lead to a perversion of the remaining realisations of his life, even when they are still present in a material sense and even when there still remains everything belonging to the life of man. Thus, for example, marriage, art, even religion, friendship and everything else in the life of [4] man can become the means of the representational forms of an enterpriser's existence; they can be lived, consciously or not, as the continuation of business life as such; the person can become quite blind to the meaning of these other realities of human existence and all these other realisations can come to bear no more pregnant and justifying meaning in themselves than the limits of what they signify for business and its undertakings. When this happens and when it is really true that an individual 'lived completely for his business' – as is often stated in death notices in this or some such stupid phrase – then there occurs a narrowing, a disappearance of the meaning of human life which becomes fatal for man. To be sure life today, constructed as it is through and through in a technological and scientific way, can presumably provide more in terms of total human fulfilment of existence than was possible in many occupations in the past; for it demands more in total human realisation – in other words, more in the creative, artistic and political fields, wider horizons, more understanding for new research – than most previous occupations. Yet it remains true that man precisely as he is today and man as such cannot be simply equated. The courage necessary to put up with this pluralism and to accept it quite naturally, the courage not to think (in the words of an old mystic) that one can attain everything 'in one go' – this belongs

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to the basic conditions of an authentic and healthy human existence. Since the part always lives by the whole and yet never is the whole, the modernity of a man always exists by reason of the total human fulfilment of life. In this way, the will or the desire to be nothing but precisely a man of today and tomorrow, is not only truly inhuman but actually – whatever may be the judgement of shortsighted experience – harms a man's authentic 'being-a-man-of-today'. It is simply a characteristic of the mysteries of a finite existence that every part of it is different from every other and yet cannot exist without the other and remains dependent on it.

Thus, when in what follows we inquire into the relationships between religion and the specific 'todayness' of man, there is from the outset no intention of suggesting that this particular quality alone could provide a sufficient and acceptable basis for a man's religion. If man were no longer authentically and fully a man – a poet, a lover, a man who faces up to the ultimate mysteries of existence which are called finiteness, dread, the beatitude of beauty, death and whatever other name may be given to all the powers of a full human existence – he could neither in the long run be a real man or a true *homo religiosus*. Religion in particular – this authentic [5] relationship to God the absolute, all-supporting and all-saving mystery of existence – is not just a particular area of human existence but rather at once its original and once more all-unifying unity, and hence draws its life also out of the totality, out of this one, still-to-be-unified existence. In every case where a man of today, in this his peculiar situation, is tortured by the impression gained from his experience of life that his being a man of today turns him, consciously or unconsciously, into an a-religious person, he should be asked to begin by asking himself whether he is not already more basically too little of a human being and too much merely a 'manager' (in the existentially ontological sense indicated above), someone who no longer wants to do more than one thing and yet seeks this one thing within the context of what is available, can be done and planned in this world instead of looking for it in the unspeakable mystery of God, the silent and unmanageable, who disposes over us.

1. These preliminary remarks had to be made so that what follows would not be misunderstood. We will now ask (from a very general theological point of view) in what exactly this 'modernity' consists, so that we can then consider what relationship to religion is given thereby in the man of today himself. To answer this question, let us state and then explain the following perfectly simple proposition: man today has clearly and definitively entered in his historical development into the phase of a peculiar creativeness and has become the rationally planning master of action and power both with regard to himself and with regard to his environment. This proposition is not meant to express the deepest and most original characteristic of the man of today, nor is it meant to imply that there was no creativeness in art, word and spirit, previous to this which might have realised this concept in an even more radical sense than is meant here. It suffices for our purposes if from this new type of creativeness referred to here we attain a generally comprehensible understanding of the religious situation of the man of today.

What, then, is meant *here* by the creativeness of the man of today? Man lives in an environment, he is always a being referred to the other – to the other with which he associates, which he accepts, on which he depends. Up till now, this reality surrounding him and sensibly supporting him was called 'nature'. Of course, man has always intervened in this nature. He did not stand still in the course of his history at the 'collector stage'; he very soon came to live no longer merely off what nature offered him but tamed the beasts, cultivated the land in a certain systematic way, invented, [6] built houses and constructed tools for himself. Yet until very recently everything he thus created remained as it were implanted in the always still open realm of nature which man always encountered directly, to which he felt himself exposed and entrusted, with regards to which he felt himself near to its being though it remained quite independent of him. *Nature*, therefore, was for him something majestic

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which held sway and was powerful, something clothed directly with the simultaneously repelling and attracting splendour of the *numinous*, that which according to its own law nourishes, preserves, is wrathful and destructive. This meant also, however, that the rule of God (i.e. the real God) and the rule of nature were experienced and undergone in a peculiar unity. In it, He spoke; in it and through it both His grace and anger became in themselves tangible. The weather, the plague, lightning, the newly appearing springs, earthquakes, such and a thousand other happenings – in the very uncontrollable-ness and unforseeableness of their appearance and disappearance – were almost directly experienced as expressions of God's action on man itself. For such a man, in the sphere of open anti uncontrollable nature, natural history and the divine history of salvation and damnation were really *one* or were at least fused into one another practically without any clearly distinguishable boundaries. Of course, even in this world of open, near and uncontrollable nature there was the commonplace and familiar, the predictable; already in the Old Testament we find here and there events which show that man recognised differences and degrees in his world of numinous nature conceived as the presence of direct divine rule, and that he did not experience everything with absolutely *equal* urgency as God's insurmountable power. Yet there really was no concept of a nature whose strict laws, to which one knew it was bound itself, could be ingeniously derived so that, armed as it were with this law stolen from nature, one could attack nature itself, force it, and emancipate oneself from the brutally unyielding character of these laws when directed against man, and thus in effect subjugate nature. Even for a religion which did not mistake nature for God – a religion which recognized the sun, the moon and the stars and even more so the elements of this earth as God's creatures, and did not simply experience them as appearances of God . . . even for such a religion, nature was nevertheless the viceroy of God and man had no choice but to show humble and silent obedience or to use prayer to beseech the Lord of this nature, he who reigned over all.

Today all this has changed enormously. Whether one wants to characterise [7] this change as an essential one or merely as one of degree depends on the conception intended by such words and on the viewpoint from which one regards this change; this is not something, however, we wish to treat of here. This change, which in its essentials is connected with modern natural science and with this science's turning in towards the subject in philosophy at the beginning of the modern period, is certainly much greater than is commonly realised by Christians; furthermore, it will go on developing immensely in the coming ages of technology on the plane of microphysics and with the help of automation and cybernetics, and it will go on changing man's consciousness very much more. Of course, even today, there is still an open and uncontrolled nature in the existential sense of which we have just spoken. But in the attitudes of contemporary man, this nature has already become something like a residue, an island of folklore from past ages. I do not maintain that it is really this, but it is felt like this. Even the objectively justified change in man's relation to nature is without doubt immense. There is still the weather which we cannot control, but we no longer starve when the harvest is destroyed by bad weather in some particular region. We still fall ill, yet we now have exact conceptions of diseases and their laws; we can fight against them and have at least doubled the average life-expectancy of man. We no longer live *in* nature; we are *changing* it. We are no longer just thinking subjects distinguished intellectually and in a religious sense from sub-human nature, creatures who feel themselves superior to it in the awareness of a direct relationship to God, the Lord and creator of nature; this nature has been 'degraded' to being the matter and tool of man's creative activity even in its physical reality and even down to the brutal reality of everyday life. Wherever we turn in our sphere of existence, we encounter first of all for long stretches a nature made by ourselves and not the objects made by God. We encounter *our* light, our new materials, the means of locomotion invented by *us*, the plants and animals bred by *us*, and this today no longer as lucky coincidences of almost playful

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experiments but as the result of rational planning which coldly and almost arbitrarily determines its own goal and then commands that this goal be achieved. The tirades which one reads everywhere today on the subject of space-flight may in many cases be inspired by a childish imagination; they may often depict a still very Utopian and perhaps for all times unrealisable future. Yet it remains nevertheless a terrifying thing that one can today shoot a lump of earth formed by human hands at the goddess [8] Selene of the Greeks – the moon which, according to scripture, God set in his heavens as the light of the night. It remains something terrifying that one now simply experiences this moon as a lifeless ball made up of the same materials as are found on this earth, whereas previously (and this is still the case in the world-picture of the New Testament) the moon belonged to a sphere whose inhabitants were not subject to any temporal corruption or change and in which bodies moved fatelessly along their celestial orbits in an unchangeable, soft harmony with themselves. For contemporary man, nature is no longer the lofty viceroy of God, one which lies beyond man's control, but instead has become the material which he needs so as to experience himself in his *own role of free creator* and so as to build *his* own world for himself according to his own laws. Of course, it is true that this material of human creativeness has laws proper to itself which still weigh heavily on man. It is true that this human creativeness consequently subjects itself whether it likes it or not, to what is alien and given to it; it is not pure creativeness as we acknowledge it of God; it does not come completely from within and it is not simply a law unto itself; it does not evoke matter and form out of nothing, and hence this creativeness of man, which has to deal with the laws of matter, is naturally also in every case a growth in obedience and 'servitude' in the face of an alien law . . . but it is creation in a knowing, willing and mastering sense, a creativeness which forces nature into its own service.

This fact, however, means that man is delivered in a real and not merely figurative sense into his own hands; the world surrounding him is of his own making, and what he encounters first of all in this environment is himself. We cannot enter further here into this change, this subjectification of man within the real, directly experienced world. We do not dispute the fact either that different men arrive in very different measures at this experience of the peculiarity of the man of today – of his rationality, his technology and cybernetics, his active creativeness – according to differences in occupation, age, breadth of immediate surroundings and culture and according to the different degrees of courage with which they allow or, on the contrary, suppress this experience. We do not dispute the fact that clerics in all denominations make this experience slowest and most reluctantly of all, a fact that follows from the blessings and dangers of such a 'spiritual, religious life'. But, on the whole, it is inevitably true in an ever increasing measure that the man of today and tomorrow is the man who has really become a subject: a man who is responsible for himself [9] not merely in a theoretical, contemplative sense but in real practice; a man who has carried through the Copernican revolution from 'cosmocentrism' to 'anthropocentrism', not merely as a thinker and not merely in his religious attitude but in practical life itself. He plans, he is in direct contact with that form of science which is not content merely to contemplate the world aesthetically and philosophically but reflects (even in its theoretical branches) on how one can master and overpower nature and force it to give up into our possession the secret and law of action. He determines new goals and tasks, he freely invents new needs which he himself creates and promises to fulfil. If we look at the art of the so-called manipulation of man, at advertising and at propaganda, he is in danger of regarding even *man* himself simply as material which he forms according to his own intentions and self-chosen ends. In practice and experience, he really stands in the realm of nature as in a quarry or on a building site on which must first be constructed the world in which man wants to live as in his own world, the world in which he encounters once more his own reflection: he is *almost* like his own creator

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and God.

2. Before we go on to ask what this experience of creativeness and hominisation of the world of man involves for a relationship to God and hence religion in general, it is necessary to make a further observation on the twofold level of the history of the spirit and of theology, viz. that the development described above is something inevitable and, in the last analysis, such a development corresponds to the nature of Christianity itself. Any romantic yearning for pure nature, for its numinous rule, its pristine beauty and fruitfulness, is and remains romanticism. For even where we protect nature – where we establish national parks and lay out lawns, guard against river-pollution and try to prevent the extermination of whales – the nature which thus survives is once more a nature *we* have freely chosen not to destroy, one laid out by us, our garden and not nature in the raw. Even this nature, therefore, is no longer the one in which the ancients lived as part of the whole, but a nature made by us, artificial nature, a nature which is a refined art and which once more reflects the image of man. This development is inevitable. There is no need to ascribe to this development the meaning given by the Marxist ideology, nor does one need to have very triumphal and happy sentiments about it. It exists and will continue to exist. Man, having once discovered this possibility, will never now give up being the master: a master and creator of his own world, who has to fight furiously, suffer a thousand defeats, and yet wins [10] more and more new intoxicating victories over nature with a view to its subjugation. What is even more significant is that this development, when looked at from an ultimate viewpoint of the history of the spirit and the nature of Christianity, is not something which has arisen in spite of contrary or parallel to Christianity, even though this truth – by a gentle irony of God – is recognised consciously last of all by the churchman. Rather, this development springs from the very nature of Christianity itself and is a necessary moment in its own history. This is not altered by the fact that we can discover this connection only once this new phase of history has already begun, and that we have not really foreseen it. It is not altered by the fact that we have often experienced this history in practice merely in fear, uneasiness and petty complaints, not wanting to understand that it was a matter of the history of Christianity's own reality, of a historical phase which this Christianity did not indeed always possess (otherwise it would not after all experience and suffer history) but which nevertheless belongs to the unfolding and realisation of its own, essentially historical life. Nowhere more than in the Christian religion is man the free partner of God, so much so that he does not passively undergo his eternal salvation but must *achieve it in freedom* (even though this achievement considered as his free act is given to man by God, his creativeness and grace). Right on the first page of God's sacred book we read: 'subdue the earth'. The Christian could not and did not need to foresee what tasks and history was hidden in these words. But man, understood in a Christian sense, is someone who is conscious of being in a most radical way a subject of freedom and directly present to God. Man in the Christian sense is someone who has really understood that nature, which means everything surrounding him, is not God but merely a creature of God which is lower than man who is a partner of God himself. The Christian is someone who knows that in man himself, and only in him, has the world become – in the incarnation – God's very own history. He knows therefore that he, man, stands over against this creature on the side of God and that he therefore cannot really regard it quite simply as God's deputy in relation to himself but rather that he himself has in the God-man become God's deputy towards nature. This man and Christian, I say, had one day to come to discover that this basic Christian relationship to the world and nature is not only realised in the interiority of faith, conscience and prayer, but also in and by means of the world itself, in an act of insight by means of worldly science and the consequent action of subjugation of [11] nature. Thus the Christian can also see this necessity and the Christian originality of this development perfectly well as a task demanded of him by his Creator and grace-giving partner.

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3. What, then, does this characteristic of the contemporary human situation mean when looked at from the point of view of its religious relevance? This is the question we must ask ourselves now; in it alone our whole reflection really reaches its decisive subject.

To begin with, it must be stated quite soberly, courageously and honestly that at first sight and when first experienced, this situation represents a great difficulty and a very far-reaching burden for the religious relationship of man to God. God – so it would seem at first sight – has actually become more distant for man since nature seems to have been 'degraded' by the action of man into becoming the material for his own creative acts. Through the discovery of its manageable and manipulable laws, the world has certainly come to be at the disposal of man, but precisely by reason of this fact it appears as a thick wall separating man from God. It seems that man only discovers in nature, and in what he makes of it, a 'world': the laws of matter and his own image. Of course, one can always say: precisely this world is the one created by God, the laws man discovers are those imposed by God and indeed what man does himself, he does by virtue of his spiritual and free nature created and called by name by the same God. But all this, however true it is and remains, in no way alters the fact that this world has become *more godless*. What happens in it, is no longer experienced – at least no longer as immediately and massively – as the action of God in and on the world. Miracles are no longer encountered every day, the extraordinary has now become almost exclusively the province of science which is asked to explain it and thus bring it down to the ordinary. The misery of this world is not felt as a challenge to prayers of entreaty to the Lord of nature but rather as a challenge to an even more determined combat with the powers of nature until these have been conquered or tamed and contained. The world remains 'demythologised', secularised and hominised even though this by no means signifies that it has been humanised since, even out of this hominised world, there can rise once more the spectre of the inhumanity of man himself in the face of the devastation of nature by ABC-weapons and similar horrors. But this concept of a '*demythologised*' and *hominised* world implies to begin with an inevitable distancing of God, a paling and incomprehension of the idea of God, an exiling of God from the world [12] and a decategorising of God. Anyone who is unwilling to acknowledge this fact in view of his own experience, must allow himself to be asked whether his experience of God is really so strong or whether it is merely a friendly relic from earlier ages which has been passed on to him by tradition, just as even the most modern capitalist still decorates the walls of his modern villa with the pictures of his forefathers. He must allow himself to be referred to the modern, world-wide atheism and the (at least apparent) disappearance of the capacity for religious realisation which reveal in social extension and in macroscopic enlargement what he does not see or simply does not wish to see in his own individual experience, perhaps on account of its very limitations. In this respect it is also no use saying that besides and far above nature we have God's directly revealed word in the scriptures. Long before we can even begin to *hear* or *read* this Word, we are already imprisoned in this world of today, as sceptics and rationalists, people brought up on scientific and historical derivations and explanations. We experience even the scriptures at first as an echo of a long-lost world, as an expression of a world-picture no longer familiar to us. Only with great effort and much spiritual pain and heart-searching can we manage to produce a successful translation of the scriptures into our own language, that it might no longer appear to us merely as a document of a past and perished age in the history of religion.

If it is true, however, that this European profaneness of the world is an inevitable fact, itself of *Christian* origin, a fact which today – in the age of the *one* political world, of assisted development, rationalisation and technologisation of the whole world – has become the fate of all men and peoples, then this profanity of the world which seems to make the world godless and God world-less, must after all have a *positive* meaning and must be an undeniable *religious task*. This is in fact the case.

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First of all, the world of men, even today, remains ultimately an uncontrollable world whose future is dark and unknowable. In making this statement, we do not mean so much that even today the material of creative man imposes laws and limits on this man, that even today he does not yet dominate this world. We do not mean to merely say that even today the material of human creativeness is still brittle and hard, that man ultimately still eats his bread by the sweat of his brow, that he cultivates earth which is full of thistles and thorns. Even though this really characterises the whole of man's creativeness right down to its very roots and to its proudest heights – a characteristic quality which [13] discloses this *creativeness* as something belonging to the *creature* and makes it suffer under the weight of creaturehood – we do not even merely mean that today, as always, this modern titan is a poor mortal in all his Promethean pride; that as someone dying alone and miserably even in modern clinics, he still experiences as he has always done the radical and ultimate 'no' to his absolute autonomous power. Though he be banished to his lonely death, which no one may disturb, far away from his own in a clinic with all the latest comforts for dying, he always remains the individual, one whose place can be taken by no one else precisely *in such a sense* that he cannot gain comfort or satisfaction about his lot from the thought that others after him, bearing the torch of proud progress and titanic development, will carry on the course for this in each case ends in death.

Over and above all this, we mean something quite different here. We mean that the uncontrollable and fate itself arise once more out of what man controls and plans, that things are such that man experiences his own orientation as something he himself cannot control, not only in unmastered and open nature but also just as much in his own creations.

In point of fact, are not man's proudest and best thought-out plans even today always also the march into an unforeseeable, *unplanned future* full of surprises? Does not man feel himself today more than ever before exposed to an existential anguish which proves that his planned and directed action is always and even more than ever before changed into the unforeseen suffering of a dark fate? Is not his freedom, which seems to have itself under control, always the daring of an obscure futurity, the exposing of oneself to something still to come which remains unknown? Have not even the communistic planners of a rationalised future of Utopian glory ever seen no more at best than the development of the next few years? And is not this inevitable, since every act of freedom in its objective nature faces once more the obscure freedom at least of those who hold power on this earth in the succeeding age – those who understand precisely these plans and planned realisations as once more the material *for* decisions to be treated in a purely arbitrary manner – those who out of a thousand possibilities (which grow in numbers the more powerful and free man becomes) arbitrarily choose *one*?

Indeed, man continues to live in the land of the *uncontrollable*, and out of an uncontrollable nature has come a world of man which he has indeed made himself but which by this very fact becomes even more threatening, [14] more uncontrollable and more sinister. The free man experiences himself in his very freedom as someone condemned to freedom, as someone who freely inaugurates the uncontrollable. He may still be intoxicated to some extent with the emancipation which he has won for himself *vis-à-vis* a *nature* which was impinging directly upon him and threatening him. He will soon notice, however, and experience more and more – and the wise have already had this experience even today – that his creative freedom experiences *itself* as a freedom which is disposed and dares to advance into the immeasurable darkness. Yet to whom should man confide this disposed being, from whom is he to accept it, where can he know his daring freedom to be safe, this freedom which falls into obscurity? If the secret – the absolute, silent and infinite secret – no longer comes to him so clearly and directly from his natural surroundings, it now breaks out of his own being. We call this secret *God*. The more we become what we are – the free and powerful, the

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masters of the world – the more we look to him in whom this disposed and never self-possessed mastery can be confided . . . and that is God. If the fear of freedom is not merely theoretical but becomes practical fear, then a certain realisation rises for the wise man of today out of the ground of freedom – slowly and quietly, but more powerfully than ever before – the realisation of the disposed nature of existence before God. This happens precisely when this disposed being is no longer mediated by the dispensation of nature but has become more directly present to God than ever before since it is experienced in that freedom itself which seems to be disposing and not disposed.

Furthermore, the more powerful man becomes and the more he subjugates nature to himself, the greater becomes his *responsibility*, the more radically he is delivered up to himself, the more his possibilities reach beyond his own individual circle into the fate of more and more people, and the more everyone becomes gradually but in very truth responsible for everyone else. It has been said often before that the moral progress of humanity has not kept up with its scientific, technological and civilising progress, that man becomes more and more the barbarian who can produce nothing out of the possibilities of existence apart from destruction, threats and superficiality. It has been said often before, but does that mean it is true? The watchful and knowing man at any rate can draw completely new experiences of the *burden* of responsibility and of the *seriousness* of life out of his situation of creativeness with regard to a subject nature and out of his real and not merely theoretical personalisation. [15] After all, it is not really as if the man of modern science and technology must necessarily and inevitably be the less humane and the less moral man. At a closer look, the feeling-for-life of the modern scientist and technologist gives rise just as much if not more than ever before to an attitude of objectivity, humility, responsibility, sobriety, of simple and silent seriousness, which in a way are the human counterpart to the quiet, exact objectivity of fully automated works in which, despite the absence of human beings, there are invested immense human qualities. In fact, a genuine relationship to God is realised, even though perhaps quite unconsciously and reticently, precisely where new virtues arise out of this new situation or where virtues can be or actually are newly developed; this relationship is realised wherever man discovers that he has more responsibility because he and the world around him are left more than ever to his own decisions, when freedom is experienced as responsibility (and where it otherwise punishes itself with the absurdity of self-cancellation); it is realised, whenever such a responsibility is really accepted and when this accepted responsibility is absolute (and then only is it what it should be), as inescapable and eternally valid. This is because the last, absolute reason for all responsible freedom and power – for that unspeakable, silent listening as to how we should act responsibly – is called God. And when we speak of God, we mean precisely that being whom we encounter – even when we do not name him and shyly look away from him – when we see the power and extent of our real freedom bear down on us as an immense burden and when we do not cowardly run away from this truth of our existence.

A third factor should be mentioned regarding the question as to how the contemporary creative situation of man develops and renders present in our life the correctly understood, purified and matured religious element. We have spoken of the secularity and ‘demythologisation’ of the world. It is quite true that the man of the past was more exposed to nature than we are. But nature was for him at the same time ‘mother nature’ of whom one could expect (if we may express it this way) the caprice of mildness, of gay surprise and of indulgence. It was easier than today to have the courage to invoke coincidence and to trust in ‘luck’, the goddess *Fortuna* with her cornucopia. Of course, even today chance still belongs to the unavoidable factors of human existence and this element of chance suddenly appears even in the midst of the most precise calculations of the natural scientist and the technologist, like a cruel caprice or the whimsical [16] gamble of a goddess, bringing destruction or

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blessing. But on the whole, the world of man has become *sober*, *objective*, and to some extent depersonalised (one might almost say: precisely because man, the person, has subjected himself to it). The world which man has constructed for himself is hard, schematic and impoverished since it has been constructed by a very finite being who must economise because his life is so short. Yet man is sensitive to all this just the same. Whence otherwise the romantic dreams and the yearning after the old, gay fullness of a lost nature? Thus man suffers under the secularity of his world, under its hardness and impoverishment, under its rational exactness, all of which he finds it very difficult to soften. If, however, we could investigate this phenomenon of man's suffering under a self-constructed world and of the reason for this suffering in his own world more exactly, then it would become clear that the reason for it is the finite, mortal nature of man, his limited nature, his fear because of his limitations, a fear which he then impresses today also on his world and which he finds reflected in his own creations. The hard, impassive reality ofihis world – the new cruelty which he cannot help communicating to his own world (and even though it is his) so as to enable it to survive and not collapse – would then appear simply as just another, new and changed *form of his mortality* and of his exposure to death. It would become clear that all this is part of that *prolixitas mortis*, that continuing presence of death in the midst of life in all the dimensions of man, with which the ancient thinkers about man and his death were already familiar. It can then be said, however, with all truth that – for the Christian – this accepted, never-ending suffering of this hard, stark, exact world which man has created for himself as the objectification of his own finite freedom, is in very truth a participation in the death of Christ. It is not merely a case of our even today having still to undergo death at the end of life and of this *death* being existentially still as hard as in the old days. No, this death of man – the ever-present, secret essence in all life itself – has entered also into those possibilities of human existence which the man of today has conquered for himself for the first time. Such a death, and above all the Christian nature of such a death, may be very anonymous; the stupid and dull may merely suffer it without recognising it, when they imagine they are merely living their life and think that death does not come until afterwards, at some distant date in the future. The wise man of today knows that in life he is always dying, and also that he comes face to face with this death in the sober hardness [17] of the world, a world which he has created for himself in order to make life easier for himself in his exposure to an inhuman nature, and which now appears itself as the pain which he must cause himself so as to be able to go on existing. If however, he accepts this pain and the death which resides in all – even modern – human existence as such, then this existence enters into the saving death-agony of the redeemer, whether man be conscious of it or not. For this death of the Lord is precisely *the* death, i.e. the fate inescapable for man becomes a victory because it itself has been assumed by God himself.

Furthermore, we have already indicated previously that, in spite of all sinful and unbelieving distortions, the structure of our age is in its basic traits not only not unchristian but has ultimately been created by Christianity itself. Christianity demythologises the world and makes it the material of the human person: because only thus does man become completely what he should be, viz. the free, self-responsible subject before God (and this even in the realm of his 'belonging-to-the-world' and in his exposure to nature), and because only God dawns so completely on man as the one He is for the Christian. For the Christian, God cannot be regarded as the creator who realises himself first of all in his world, giving it his splendour for this purpose; rather, he is the one who lives above everything which is or can be thought to be outside him, infinitely exalted in his own but for us inaccessible, eternally promised glory. It follows from this, however, that the positive *creative relationship to the world* – in the way in which contemporary man is beginning to experience it and as it shows itself in anyone who 'undertakes' something, who 'gets to the bottom' of the world

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and its reasons so as to dominate it – can be experienced and accepted quite impartially in the man of today, the 'entrepreneur', as a factor in the correctly understood Christianity. Of course, Christianity is critical and sober even in this feeling-for-life. But this is so because it is sober, sceptical and watchful with regard to *everything*, since everything can become a curse and serve as an excuse and means for the pride of a man who closes himself against God. Yet Christianity has no reason for being more critical and careful about this particular feeling-for-life than it was about the good old days. The old *and* the new world belong to the 'wicked' world. But this is no more true of the new than of the old; although this is not meant to deny that, where the possibilities for man's action in the world grow enormously, sinful activity too can take on apocalyptic proportions, and that the Christian [18] – the only courageous and true sceptic in a world full of intramundane analgesics of existence stemming from liberal or communistic origins – must honestly take account of the actual existence of *such* sin. Yet, why should the experience of creative power, creative responsibility, creative planning almost into the realm of the immeasurable and utopian, be less becoming for a Christian than the existential understanding of previous ages? If the world is a world of becoming that originates from God; if in man and in his creative act within the world it only attains what it has always been, and it is always meant to be in its origins from God; and if this world of becoming, with all its finiteness and transitoriness and guilt, is a world which in the God-man reaches eternally into the very life of God himself and has become *his* history . . . then it is impossible to see why the Christian should face the new age as one more dangerous for him than previous ones, a situation about which he as a Christian can only be happy with a bad conscience or a situation which can only lead him away from God and not closer to him. The Christian can get tied up in this world. Yet surely he discovers God only if – radically – he walks its ways right to the end, and not at all if he does not enter these ways and instead takes refuge in a time which no longer exists or which is gradually disappearing. If it is true, as Claudel has said, that man must not be dead so that God may live, if God's glory can only ultimately grow in the world if man's glory grows in it, if our ascents and not *merely* our falls praise and confess Him, if He has created not only the heavens but also the earth . . . then, though this alone does not indeed make the mere existence of this world created by man to be as such a service of God which must be rendered to God by the spiritual creature . . . but it means it is part of it.

4. Two things must be added. Firstly, it must be stated even more clearly than we have up until now that (to use a phrase of E. Schillebeeckx's) this profane world in its undiminished profaneness is not indeed a sacralised world yet nevertheless – at least in the Catholic understanding of the world – it is a sanctified one. What we call grace – innermost divinisation of the creature from its very roots and its openness to the immediacy of God himself – does not merely begin at the same point as does the explicit message of faith, Church, sacrament, worship or the written Word of God. All these explicitly sacral elements are rather the necessary, divinely disposed, reflex realisation of that divinisation of the world freely caused by God's favour yet truly caused by him, in which God has always already accepted and sanctified the whole world in all its [19] dimensions. This sacralising appearance of the secret acceptance of the whole world is certainly itself a moment and a historical phase of this sanctification of the world from its very origins. But appearances and what appears, sacrament and grace, are not the same. This grace-caused sanctification of the profane world which – precisely because it is sanctified by grace – must remain profane (since the grace of God must still hide its victorious power so as to leave room for man's freedom), always remains until the end of its history in permanent opposition to guilt, and thus the world in its concrete constitution remains always the humanly inexplicable unity of God's 'yes' and man's 'no'. God has, however, given his effective yes to the whole world in its innermost depths from the very beginning, and hence – and not out of itself alone – the

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world falls everywhere into the abyss of the secret of his love, whenever it follows its path to the very end. The Church with her Word simply proclaims that God's grace is more powerful than man's guilt. This does not mean that the Church and the sanctified world are identical in their extent, mission and success. It may be difficult to discover the silent mystery of the absolute nearness of God in this world of today . . . but it is everywhere and continues to the end.

Secondly, in her relationship to the sanctified but not sacralised world, the Church is still very much in a state of becoming. This is so theoretically because she is only beginning to learn the theological dialogue with the existential understanding of the man of this world, and because her theology – even at the Council – was, and inevitably had to be, still much more a working out of the latent possibilities of her own past than new beginnings on the soil of contemporary man. It is so also in practice, because the Church can still give up quite a lot of historically sacralised ground which she has in the past rightly cultivated but which does not belong to her for ever, and because the Church as an institution must still learn in many ways that she can no longer *directly* administer ethically and religiously all the questions and answers which arise or are looked for in the realm of the creative possibilities of this day and age. Such a reflection on the eternally old and new gospel in dialogue with the new world and such an emancipation of the world into things proper to it which cannot be administered by the Church as an institution, do not in any way signify a capitulation in the face of an autonomous understanding of existence of the man of today nor a retreat from a merely profane world into a merely sacral realm. The gospel promises its last mystery of salvation [20] even in time to come to a world always sanctified by God, a mystery which it can forget or culpably suppress. Christians too, as distinct from the official element of the Church, are always called upon and called in grace to be both in the world and above the world. This is so because these positions are not the same and yet both reach their fulfilment oniy in the other, even when no one can administer the unity of both by further planning. Nevertheless the glory must be given – in the renunciation of the power over this unity – to God alone.

Hence (and in this way we take up again one of our initial reflections in a more extended form), the experience of the creative power of man, the experience of the withdrawal of the self-created world into a new sphere beyond the power of man, the experience of the staggering responsibility of creative man, the experience of the repelling hardness and sobriety of the new world and finally the just mentioned experience to the effect that the worldly creativeness of man can never adequately determine his life and that he can therefore never be a mere 'entrepreneur' . . . all these experiences and attitudes remain together for the one man in his existence in a pluralism impossible for him to administer. He experiences himself as the one who has never only one task, who can never invest his life only in one ideal, who must 'go out' to many things and who can never realise as something calculated and dominated by him the sum total of these his attitudes so as to enjoy himself in the achievement of such a synthesis. Man experiences himself in this undominated pluralism as a mere project, as a task, which recedes all the more from man into mystery the more he achieves the reality of his life. Once more man actively discovers in this experience what is really meant by 'God'. God is that mystery of infinite, unspeakable, saving fullness which has summoned forth man's beginning, holds together his uncontrollable manifoldness and guarantees it in its unity; he is that mystery which takes up that fulfilment of existence which escapes man himself, if only it has been willingly aimed at with a view to this mystery.

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[21]

2

A SMALL QUESTION REGARDING THE CONTEMPORARY PLURALISM IN THE INTELLECTUAL SITUATION OF CATHOLICS AND THE CHURCH

It is true, and indeed obvious, that it is a bad thing to be one of those people who are always merely proposing questions and then leave the answers to others. Such people, who are always simply bringing up 'problems' which they declare to be insoluble, think they are wiser than others . . . yet in so far as they do not feel sufficient responsibility to contribute to the answer as much as they have the courage to pose in the question, they ultimately belong merely to the category of children and fools, one of whom can put more questions than a hundred wise men can answer. Nevertheless, it is allowable from time to time to put forward a question without immediately providing an answer to it. This can happen above all when the clear formulation of the question, one which otherwise disturbs the intellectual life of the man of today only vaguely and unconsciously, is itself already a first step towards an answer. A further point to be noted is that when one states that something is 'new', was not 'like this' before, then such a statement can be correct and indeed of the highest significance even though a metaphysician who explores man's being may maintain that this was 'really' always so. To this metaphysical statement one can then reply: yes, perhaps, but it is nevertheless 'essentially' very much a matter of the degree to which this was the same yesterday and today. The reason for saying all this will become clear to the reader in a moment.

A STATEMENT OF THE SITUATION

Many realisations, proofs, solutions of questions, etc., are basically necessary to lay the rational, apologetic foundations of the Catholic [22] world-view related to the Christian faith: that there is a God, that there is more than just matter, that there is a spiritual soul, that determinism is not right, that Jesus of Nazareth has declared himself to be the Son of God, that he founded a Church, that he was not mistaken about the end of the world, that St Peter was not merely a sort of 'caliph' for a time in Jerusalem and then disappeared again, that Pope Vigilius did not solemnly approve a heretical formula, that . . . etc. The point we are trying to make is that such and a thousand more facts, questions, problems, solutions and difficulties are significant for a 'world-view'. But each is so in a different way and to a different extent and yet each in some way and indeed many to a very high degree. Not all the insights and problems of men and their sciences are like this.

It is certainly often difficult to say whether something is significant or not in a 'world-view' sense. Is, for example, the question of the continuous expansion of the cosmos significant or not in a 'world-view' sense? Has quantum physics something to do with the faith or not? Nevertheless, there are questions which are irrelevant for a world-view. For example, the question about the development of the fashion of wearing beards among the Sumerians, or the fashion in Egypt under the fifteenth dynasty. There are a great number of such questions and bits of knowledge which are irrelevant for a world-view. The development of the modern sciences and arts during the last few hundred years tends in a sense precisely towards the creation of a kingdom of the spirit, of truth and culture, of the beautiful and the interesting. This kingdom, however, is on the one hand a creation of man and, on the other hand, it is irrelevant for a 'world-view'; it is 'profane', i.e. something which had scarcely any existence previously because man was occupied either with 'transcendence'

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(as one is accustomed to say nowadays) or with the simple assertion of biological existence, these two spheres touching directly on each other.

This brings us to the real statement: in previous ages (until roughly the end of the nineteenth century) an educated person could *himself* have at least an approximate over-all view of the whole field of insights and questions relevant to a world-view and given or imposed as tasks on his age; he was thus able, as it were at first hand, to form more or less adequately *direct* judgements about world-view questions. Nowadays, however, the number of such questions has grown to such an extent that no individual can personally enter into a direct contact with the *whole* mass of such questions, methods, insights, difficulties, and so on. It should be noted right away in [23] this connection that in matters of a 'world-view' it is *not* possible in the very nature of things (at least not in the same sense or in the same way and to the same extent as in the 'profane' sciences) to have teamwork and simply to take over the results achieved by others. In Christian circles and in the affairs of the Church, however, there is not yet a willingness to face up fairly and squarely to this fact.

We are forming experts in the Church for everything and anything, and if possible investigating all questions significant for a world-view with the help of such experts, in the fields of the natural sciences, sociology, the political sciences, the science of statistics, cybernetics, logistics, etc. This is all very good and praiseworthy. But all these efforts do not alter the fact just stated. The world-view expert in the field of sociology has no idea and *cannot* have any idea of the problems of the investigation into the life of Jesus. The ecclesiastic who knows something today in the field of palaeontology (unless he is a genius of the dimensions of an archangel) will certainly be a greenhorn (even though he may not know or admit this) in the field of real theology and philosophy, even though he is a priest and has completed his philosophical and theological studies in the seminary. It just cannot be otherwise. Today, every science – even in what is significant for a world-view – is so many-sided and difficult, so complicated in its methods, so vast in its field of research, that at best a single person may still understand something of *one* science while being and remaining a dabbler in all others. Furthermore, if one has no illusions and does not underestimate the situation, one will realise that all these sciences are such that their 'results' apart from the research and efforts leading to these results can be communicated only in small part, or even not at all. Only in a manner bordering on the laughable can the physicist still tell a layman what has emerged from his researches. One has to travel the road oneself in order to reach the goal in any real sense . . . and it is precisely this that is impossible today, or at least is possible only to a very small extent.

All we have to do to realise this is to enter properly into genuine conversation with a scientist engaged in a subject different from our own. Depending on his temperament, he will be more or less happy to tell us something of his problems and the results of his science . . . but he will never get the impression that I, the other, could talk with him on equal terms about the relevance of his science for a world-view. The modern brain specialist will always get the impression that I, who simply have [24] not studied the physiology of the brain for twenty years, could not possibly appreciate the real weight of his world-view problems and the real extent of his results, no matter how intelligently I try to join in the conversation by using my general, formal philosophical training. He need not even necessarily be right in this impression, but he gets this impression and cannot free himself from it. He has studied brain-physiology for twenty years, and this fact is itself simply a . . . fact, making him a man with a different outlook from mine quite independently of any objective or logical validity of his knowledge and arguments. The bare fact of his long, 'one-sided' studies, from which he can never abstract since otherwise he could not achieve what is demanded of him in his own special field, makes him a conversational partner of a type that did not exist among the educated of previous ages when they talked to each other. This mere fact makes him

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incapable of being a philosopher or a theologian, even though he may be interested in philosophy or theology 'on the side' and as a hobby; it makes him – even by the mere pressure of the multiplicity of his associations, complexes of feeling, etc. – quite a different sort of man from what I can ever be, and this necessarily so. In the old days everyone knew or at least was capable of knowing roughly the same sort of things, and in cases where this equality was not present right away it could at least be established in principle in a short time. Furthermore, any differences between the concrete experiences of different people which could not be overcome, were also quite unimportant for a world-view.

The example just referred to also applies, of course, in reverse. Which theologian has not at some time had the feeling in conversation with natural scientists that it is simply impossible to find the sufficiently exact 'wave-length' in the other which would be necessary if he is really to understand what one is talking about as a theologian? Who has not at some time, in conversation with the average doctor, in practice capitulated when faced with the blockage – almost inevitably brought about by medical studies – of the really and existentially necessary openness to certain aspects of moral questions in the field of medicine? The strangest experience of all, however, is to find that ecclesiastics and theologians – who are deputed as it were to be the representatives of the Faith and the Church in the camp of the other contemporary sciences, so that they are taken there as the experts and confidants of both parties – usually become just as exclusively interested in the other 'subject' as the other representatives [25] of these sciences. They do not, of course, normally cease to be good Christians and priests but they usually become just as one-sided in the field of their science, just as method-obsessed representatives of their profane sciences as all the others.

So it happens, for example, that a Teilhard de Chardin is recognised by theologians as a natural scientist but not as a philosopher and theologian, whereas the natural scientist will think of him as a theologian who has not quite managed to keep up to date with the most recent findings of the natural sciences. Thus it happens (to give another example) that ecclesiastical explanations which are worked out by theologians and which deal with matters belonging in the first place to the profane sciences, are often felt by the representatives of the particular subject to be indeed well-intentioned yet not quite up to date. One need only think for example of the allocution of Pius XII to the astronomers or certain declarations about psycho-analysis, etc. Furthermore, all these strange relationships cut both ways. The natural scientists, too, often imagine they are 'strong' in philosophy or theology, and so make painfully insufficient contributions in these fields when they enter into questions of a world-view. Far from taking offence at this, we must even demand it, since they should be interested in such questions.

These relationships obtain not only between philosophy and theology, on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other but they exist also, for example, between philosophy and theology themselves. Philosophy is no longer such today that it would be possible to train a young and gifted candidate for the priesthood to become a philosopher within two to three years, so that he could seriously understand the problems of the philosophy of today and be able to take part in real philosophical discussions. It cannot even be said that this is still possible at least with regard to questions in philosophy which are relevant for a world-view and for faith. It is all the more impossible if one means by this a formation on the basis of real philosophy such as it is practised today. (Whether it is possible to bring the young student of theology in contact with these questions of philosophy in some other way, and what form this process would take, is quite a different question and precisely the question we are posing here.)

The same is true of the historical sciences which deal with questions and answers relevant to a world-view. The average theologian of today cannot really be trained to be a specialist in questions of the science and history [26] of religion, the history of the Near East, biblical

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criticism, the relationship of primitive Christianity to its Jewish and Greek environment, investigation into the life of Jesus, etc. etc. Whatever is true about the practical incommensurability between various sciences which can no longer be overcome directly, such as we have seen to exist between the natural sciences and theology, is equally applicable here. It is not a question here, it must be remembered, of *contradictions* between the answers obtained by theology, as well as faith, and by these sciences. Our question goes beyond such a possibility and the task of removing such apparent contradictions. Our question concerns the impossibility of even acquiring the minimum of direct acquaintance with these other sciences and their questions and findings as would seem to be necessary 'in itself' for a theologian and his problems in constructing a world-view. If I do not happen to be a specialist in exegesis, can I really take part in a discussion of even such a simple and small question as, for instance, the one regarding the meaning and range of Mt 16:18? Yet I should be able to do so even as a simple theologian and not just as an exegete, since it is after all a question of the highest significance for any world-view.

What can an average Catholic parish priest seriously say today to a biblical expert on the Protestant side? A little example like this may help to compare the situation of today with that of the sixteenth century, and help us to understand what our statement really means. We might express the assertion we are seeking in a different somewhat mathematical form, and say that the total number of possible and necessarily relevant problems and insights necessary for a world-view to be found in any sphere is so great today in contrast with previous ages, that a single person trying to acquire direct knowledge and come to terms with the matter as a whole can no longer master it all in a single lifetime and integrate it into a world-view.

As has already been said, this assertion has nothing to do yet with the question about whether and to what extent these sciences result in particular conflicting situations amongst themselves. Our assertion is significant even apart from this possibility and refers to a completely new intellectual situation for the man of today whether such apparent or real conflicts take place or not. It means, even in this more limited\sense, the assertion of a pluralism in the intellectual world of today; a pluralism that can no longer be overcome by any positive and direct integration of all our knowledge and problems into a unified world picture. Unlike the [27] case of the purely natural sciences where one can advance further and further even though no one any longer understands everything, the integration we speak of – if it were actually to take place – would be possible only in the minds of many individuals as such, for the transference of knowledge in this field into an objective scheme (e.g. into an apparatus, etc., constructed by others and then merely used by me, etc.) cannot be still admissible when used as a conveyance of knowledge.

THE QUESTION

If the individual person in spite of all this is to be capable of accepting responsibility and making decisions with regard to a world-view, then the question must be faced as to how this can be done if the above description of the situation is correct. One cannot simply say that this situation has always been the same in the last analysis, since even previously no man – being finite and having only a limited time and possibilities – has ever, on the basis of the total problems and insights relevant for this, made an absolute decision about his world-view and his faith. In the past he did not have as great a number of such problems in practice; at the most, so many problems were merely an objective possibility. Today, however, there is this great number of problems and insights relevant to a world-view but they are dispersed in many different minds without any one of them being capable of collecting them together even approximately (as was the case in the past) in his own mind; in all this the individual (and this

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is equally important) *knows* it as a fact for himself that he will never be able to catch up not only with all the knowledge in itself *possible* but even with what is merely actually available. Hence the question is, what is he to do in the present, no longer reversible situation? What *indirect* methods are conceivable for mastering this situation? Is there anything like a general ideological probabilism? In other words, is it possible to transfer *mutatis mutandis* what has commonly been said up till now about the indirect solution of a problem in moral theology by the moral system of probabilism to the mastering of a universal situation in this matter of a worldview which, on account of the insurmountable intellectual pluralism of today, can no longer be worked out directly or in an adequate way?

It must not be objected that these great questions of a world-view ought necessarily to be capable of a direct and certain solution, since this is implied in the teaching of the Church about the rational and certain [28] demonstrability of the credibility of the Christian and Catholic faith and of our duty to believe. Christianity certainly can be rationally demonstrated. For God (and this is part of the Christian faith itself) has ultimately called all men to this Christian faith; he cannot and will not call them to this by overriding their rational insight and morally-based freedom; they must therefore in principle be capable of reaching certain knowledge as to the credibility of Christianity. But must this knowledge be completely direct knowledge consisting in an immediate working out of *absolutely all* pertinent questions? How could one prove this *a priori*? Even in the past (this nobody can deny) there have been quite a number of '*rudes*' (simple, uneducated people) who were or became Christians and to whom no one would seriously ascribe a direct or even merely proximately adequate knowledge of the objectively sufficient reasons of fundamental theology. Why should this state not become more general especially since in it there simply comes to light and is brought directly into consciousness what has always been part of subjective exercise of fundamental theology even among the 'educated' and well-informed individuals of the past (even though they might be unaware of it), viz. that in its *subjective* exercise it corresponded only very approximately to what it should really be objectively.

One might counter this by saying that in the past the fundamental theology of the educated nevertheless reached a sufficiently *objective* certitude based on this or that particular reason. Such reasons would be the convergence of probabilities, the moral justification for accepting the insurmountable historical conditioning of perspectives, the inescapable selection of matter for exact examination, the legitimate and justifiable fact of allowing other in themselves equally important viewpoints and problems to recede into the background, etc. But by saying this, one would already be involuntarily going on to reflections which, precisely in view of the contemporary intellectual situation of the unmasterable pluralism, would have to be developed more explicitly and exactly. These reflections could then show that one need have no worry in admitting this situation and need not dispute it at all, since it can be overcome indirectly by the very basic reflections and methods which are the subject of our present inquiry. Even the *rudis* of the old fundamental theology attained, in *his* analysis of faith and from among the apparently sufficient reasons which seemed to be all that was at his disposal, objectively valid reasons for his judgement of credibility; or at least he did have reasons [29] which – even though it was not easy for this kind of analysis to say what they consisted in – legitimately sufficed for man's making a moral decision. This situation has now quite simply become a more generally and explicitly conscious one: it becomes necessary in this intellectually plural situation of today to develop more exactly the reasons for saying that man can have the right and duty to believe even *before* he has adequately worked out the actual problems of fundamental theology.

There is no doubt that such an objectively exact and existential exposition of these reasons would have a liberating effect for the willingness-to-believe of many Catholics. They suffer almost universally under the apparent dilemma that, on the one hand, they live in a milieu of

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men who have a different world-view and yet, on the other hand, they are neither in a position nor willing to deny to these men either the same intelligence or the same honesty which they ascribe to themselves. How can a Catholic in this situation reach an objectively justified judgement of credibility when he cannot regard non-Catholics as either more stupid or as having less good will than himself and when he cannot say either that they have simply and in *every* respect come less into contact with those objective reasons which support his own rational judgement of credibility? I say, simply and in every respect; for it may certainly be possible to regard this or that element of proof in his fundamental theology and in his preambles of faith as having affected the Catholic more than the non-Catholic. As against this, however, the Catholic will have to suppose that certain counter-reasons have remained more unfamiliar to him (even though he may suppose that they will not be objectively stringent), objections which are objectively and existentially more familiar to the non-Catholic or non-Christian simply on account of these historical contingencies and coincidences of his own, for him inevitable, starting-point.

One cannot say with regard to this reflection that a realised, objective reason, by its stringent evidence, destroys all counter-reasons right from the start, even when these have not yet been examined. This may be true in the case of metaphysical reflections but such an argumentation is surely very questionable in the case of historical reflections. A historical fact and the certainty based on it is after all composed of a great number of factors which can only offer a real, direct historical certainty when all these factors have been combined and thoroughly examined. If one wanted to bring forward good reasons against this conception, they would [30] undoubtedly bring us back once more in the direction of the question posed here and the answer to it; they would almost inevitably point in the direction of the moral and ethically sufficient certainty of a converging although incomplete proof by induction, a position which Cardinal Newman was the first to develop in these questions and one which has not really been accepted yet in the schools, although the opposition to this part of his teaching is gradually dying down.

Together with the question which we have said can only be posed here without being answered, we are also faced with the question as to what method can be adopted in conversation of an apologetic and missionary kind with the contemporary ‘unbelievers’. It is not true that – at least in the field in which the unbeliever feels at home scientifically speaking, and especially when the Catholic partner in conversation is not himself also a ‘specialist’ in the same field (and how could one manage always to get together only specialists on both sides for a conversation?) – the direct ‘attack’ leads to unending debates conducted with ever greater subtlety, without any final result being achieved in the limited time available for conversation? *How* can one in such conversations get round the impossibility of finding a definitive answer to the contemporary problems in the field of history, textual criticism, philology and exegesis? *Way* is this possible? How and why is it possible to appeal to an existential wholeness in man – and this in a perfectly rational way – which would make it comprehensible that one can possess the totality of faith without having synthetically built up this totality, with its rational reasons of credibility, out of all the factors involved in this totality but lying beyond our actual calculations?

Posing the question in this way in view of the after all fairly new intellectual situation of the man of today, is of course not meant to imply that the traditional fundamental theology, apologetics and apologia has not provided us with any elements for an answer. After all, we have just pointed out one such starting-point in the traditional *analysis fidei* with regard to the ‘*rudes*’, and no doubt there are many others. The contemporary situation does nevertheless pose the question more sharply, it does signify a more general need and demands that one sees the question more clearly and concerns oneself with finding a clearer, more comprehensive and usable answer.

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3

REFLECTIONS ON DIALOGUE WITHIN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

I have been given the great honour today of receiving the Reuchlin Prize of the town of Pforzheim, this festivity being at the same time in memory of the great humanist, i.e. the human man, Reuchlin. In the past, this prize has been bestowed on representatives of the arts and sciences of widely different stamp and outlook, while I myself have the honour of being a theologian in a philosophical faculty. For all these reasons I am inclined to think that the very general question about dialogue in a pluralistic society must be a question within the sense of this hour.

We live in a pluralistic society. The phrase 'pluralistic society' is a rather ugly one for which I can unfortunately offer no better equivalent. The statement itself – that we live in such a society – is by now a platitude which one would rather not repeat. Nevertheless we must ponder a little on it at the beginning of our reflections for the apparently commonplace is what is truly mysterious and dangerous. If we intend here to reflect a little on pluralistic society, then our regard must not be directed towards the social institutionalisations in which the different attitudes, convictions and orientations of men living together embody themselves and thus try to make themselves felt, in which they achieve power and in which they reach their goals . . . in other words, our regard must not be directed towards the churches, denominations, parties, associations of mutual self-interests, and similar institutions. It must be directed rather to what lies behind all these, what merely makes its appearance in these social institutions. In other words, we must direct our regard towards the pluralism of the attitudes, convictions and orientations of men themselves. In this pluralism of 'views' (if we may summarise everything meant here in this one phrase), a view may be in fact particular without wanting to be anything more or it may be in fact particular, i.e. not shared by all, while [32] *wanting* to be *universal*, i.e. while making the theoretical demand and having the practical goal of wanting to win over *everyone* to its view. An essentially particular view implies only at most *theoretically* the problem as to whether such a particularism in the very nature of the view can be meaningful in certain cases, i.e. whether this moderation does not slowly kill the view itself; *in practice*, it implies the problem of a 'technical' harmonisation and compatibility of the social materialisations of such an essentially particularised view in the activities of one society. The real problem of the pluralism of views, however, arises where actually particular views must in principle claim universal validity if they do not wish to destroy their own very existence. To take an example: a Mozart- and a Hindemith-society, an association of entomologists and a society of friends of the Aquarium, each represent a particular view and do not in any way claim to desire to win the interest of everyone. On the other hand, Christianity, a Christian denomination, the ideology of the 'Humanistic Union', a party of militant dialectical materialism – if they are not to deny their own nature – feel themselves endowed with a claim to truth and called to a mission which is directed to all inasmuch as each is basically a universal view and in fact a world-view. The doctrine, however, which teaches that there cannot be any such view in principle, that such a universalist claim must from the very start be always and in every case false, would itself be precisely such a universal view with very practical consequences.

If we presuppose that there are meant to be such actually particular views which are universal by their basic self-understanding and claims, and that they are meant to live together and enter into dialogue with each other, then there arises the one, many-sided

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question: is such a dialogue possible, what is its nature, how must it be conducted? We will attempt to say something on this old and ever new question, and this will itself be dialogic since obviously dialogue about dialogue must he, even if not in practice yet at least in theory, the first subject of conversation among those who, holding different views themselves, regard the dialogue between different views as a vital necessity and who recognise the acknowledgement of this necessity itself as a factor in their own view.

That such a dialogue must be free, is something we will presuppose here rather than expound. It means that this dialogue must from the very start renounce any use of force in its various explicit or anonymous forms in society. By force is to be understood everything here which tries to [33] influence a view and the internal or external attitudes of men without appealing in this to the individual insight and free consent of the other and without basically and really allowing the other person at least the inner and also external possibility of saying no to the view which one wants to mediate and transmit. When we say that the dialogue must from the very start renounce force, this is neither meant to imply the utopian thesis that every form of force is immoral in every case, nor is it meant to veil the fact that even at this stage there already appear many obscure questions which we cannot go into here: questions like the right to defend by force the freedom of one's own opinion against assaults on one's own attitude; the safeguarding, by force if necessary, of a necessary public order even against those who violate this order by appealing to the freedom of their own opinion and even when one admits that the public order itself does not possess any absolutely fixed boundaries and is subject in its concept and extension to historical evolution; the problem of force which is inevitably given together with every necessary and unavoidable institutionalisation of a particular view, no matter how tolerant it may be; the problem of force (in this basic sense) in relation to minors, those in need of education, in whose case there is always also a factor of 'breaking in' by force, and so on.

The problem on which we are reflecting does not therefore concern the renunciation of force by the different views but their dialogue itself. One might think that there is no problem left once the 'world-views' renounce force. For, given this renunciation and given that every 'world-view' wants to pass of its very nature from being an actually particular view to being also an actually universal one, there remains no other means open to it apart from the mission by talk and the attempt to convince, in short . . . dialogue. It is not however quite as simple as all that. For, is all talk which seeks to enlighten and convince the other without using force already a dialogue or is it not simply preaching and propaganda? Is not dialogue based on the renunciation of any attempt to 'convert' the other, on a renunciation therefore which is profoundly contrary to the nature of a world-view which makes absolute and universal claims (no matter which one does this)? Yet again, if this were so, would not dialogue then become a harmless exchange of opinions which right from the start does Hot mean to say anything essential or binding to the *other*? Does not such a dialogue become then merely a better means of conversation, making no demands on anyone, for a tea-party? Is the dialogue which is meant here [34] merely a pedagogical aid by means of which one person leads someone else through questions to his own opinion, somewhat in the style of what is usually understood by 'socratic dialogue'? But will genuine universal views wish to conduct dialogues with each other *in this sort of way*? If the dialogue is entered with the foregone conviction that one will not 'agree' anyway, is it worth while in that case to start the dialogue at all, or can it then be anything other than the somewhat laborious means of expressing the desire that one wants to get along well with one another in spite of one's differences of opinion? Does dialogue receive its meaning and its weight only from the at least hoped for and possible final agreement, or does it – without of course simply giving up this goal – carry its meaning and dignity in itself even before this goal is reached and in a certain independence of it, as a dialogue still going on and unfinished? Is there something like an

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unending dialogue which is meaningful even though it never comes to a conclusion in the realm of final and yet tangible 'results' but merely has an 'eschatological' hope and therefore meaning?

Before we proceed to try to say a little directly on these knotty and obscure questions, we should reflect a little on the situation of contemporary world-view dialogue since this will make us understand a little better the radical sharpness of the contemporary question and thus see the real problem precisely. One can probably say quite rightly that the situation of universal outlooks and world-views facing each other in dialogue has really come about only today in *our* historical hour. It is not surprising, then, that the catchword 'dialogue' has only been explicitly pronounced for the first time in an official pronouncement of the Catholic Church in our days. Of course, there has always been proclamation, mission, preaching, religious conversation – even in literary form – beginning (within Christianity) with the *Dialogus cum Tryphone* of St Justin and the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, but not until now has there ever been an age of dialogue. Up until now certain homogeneous social structures were always very quickly formed in which there reigned only *one* world-view which pushed any differences there still were out of the public social dimension or made them relatively unimportant and basically 'particular' views. Homogeneous social structures always arose which existed and lived separated from each other either by force or by a mental and cultural no-man's-land. It must also be remembered that the extent of knowledge and of problems present in such homogeneous, closed spiritual landscapes was such that the individual was still able on the whole [35] to survey and manage it, so that the one same thing was still really communicable to others and could in fact still be possessed by many together. There simply was no really pluralistic society. In such social structures with their homogeneous world-view – whether they were States or closed cultural areas – there was then preaching and educational communication of what was universally binding, and perhaps conversation among friends about the more exact interpretation of what was binding on all, but no dialogue between *different* world-views; at the most there was missionary activity which was able to make use of the difference in cultural level between the missionary and those being evangelised and thus was able to appear as a one-way proclamation but not as a dialogue. Today all this is quite different. Peoples and cultures are no longer separated by a historical and cultural no-man's-land; what there is of different universal views and their social representations is now pushed and pressed together into the one space of the one only now really beginning world-history; and all this since the individual spaces which were up till now homogeneous in their world-views had lost their *internal* homogeneity simultaneously and by reciprocal effect with the development of this one world-history by the rational, technological world civilisation and European colonialism. For better or for worse, everyone has become everyone else's neighbour. If, therefore, one does not want to hold the absurd opinion that the existence of man can be regulated and preserved in the same living space independently of his views and opinions – in other words, that culture is not at all important for life on the biological and civilisational, social plane of human existence – then in that case dialogue between world-views becomes possible and indeed necessary for life. No world-view in this unity of the spiritual-personal *and* bodily-social existence of man can possibly renounce objectifying itself bodily and socially into that spatio-temporal, social space of human existence which is common to everyone; it cannot possibly withdraw itself any more into an 'interiority' which has nothing to do with anyone else. Today, furthermore, it is also no longer able to conquer the bodily and social sphere of existence for itself alone. The universal views confront each other in the same historical space of existence and *remain* so confronted. Dialogue then becomes the only possible mode of co-existence, a mode which did not exist before and one which will remain; for the world-views can never separate again into different historical spaces nor *may* one destroy the other by force nor does it even have any chance of

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doing this, nor finally [36] is there any chance (for a reason to be touched on later) that one will dissolve all the others by pure conviction (especially since the Christian theology of history itself does not envisage the total intramundane victory of its world-view).

But is such a dialogue possible? Will it not fail by reason of intrinsic meaninglessness? A radical meaninglessness seems to annul it from within. In a real world-view dialogue, which therefore has neither an experimental scientific knowledge which exhibits the object directly and with evidence nor a basically particular view on the object, each world-view *must* try to 'convert' the other partner; it must try to get the other to accept its world-view and yet has not got any prospect of doing this – or at least can no longer begin and continue the dialogue *today* with this prospect – since perhaps a few people can be convinced but the overall state of the world-views engaging in dialogue is not thereby significantly changed; such 'conversions' are still possible but will come from each side to the other. The dialogue seems to become senseless, therefore, on account of its hopelessness at the very moment when dialogic becomes necessary in a pluralistic (and permanently pluralistic) society.

The alternative, however, that dialogue in a permanently pluralistic world becomes senseless either because it must remain without success or because it annuls the universal demands of a world-view, is not really true.

Even the essentially universal outlooks and world-views are subject to the law of history. They have a particular point of departure, a finite inherited vocabulary, a *difference* between what is really meant but merely formally anticipated – as it were abstractly presupposed without any concrete experience – on the one hand, *and*, on the other hand, what is concretely realised, i.e. what is experienced, the particular historical conception and view in which they render present what they really mean. Even an essentially universal world-view can acknowledge this its historicity, the incompleteness of the existential and historical realisation of its basic project, without denying its own principles. In fact, it is only by thus recognising its historical origin from a particular, finite past and its orientation towards a still outstanding self-realisation in the future, that it can lay claim to universal validity and does it and justifies its universality. It belongs to the nature of a universal world-view to appeal to its own future and to accept its own eschatological character which calls its own present before the tribunal of self-criticism and places it under the judgement of the future. The basic universality and openness [37] towards its own expectantly and hopefully anticipated future do not contradict each other. Where this openness is not present, there is proof that the claim to universality is illegitimate from the very start. This lack would freeze such a world-view in its unhistorical nature so that it would then certainly be quite incapable of dialogue and would simply drag out an existence for a time carried along by the changes of history as a relic from the past. If, however, a world-view recognises itself in this sense as one which opens out into the future, then it will be capable of dialogue; a dialogue has meaning for it, even before it ends – in a utopian or asymptotic manner – and this meaning lies in its victory and in its transition from the actually particular to an *actually* universal validity. After all, the world-view itself learns from and enriches itself in this dialogue; in this never-ending dialogue, it catches up more and more on its own possibilities; it can recognise and realise itself more and more by means of and in the partner of this dialogue and in this way it learns for the first time what it had already always known. The only presupposition is that it does not simply identify its own present historical stage with its absolute being and with the *entire* historical commission of its evolution . . . though it does not necessarily do this even when it posits itself basically as a truth for everyone and universally. All that has to be presupposed is that the world-view is *nor* committed to the conviction (which is not demanded by its nature) that in dialogue it is met merely by a partner of conversation who is intent on nothing but a flat denial of everything that it itself maintains as its own truth. This situation of flat opposition between saying yes and no to the same proposition, which is presumed to be understood in the same

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sense by both sides, is of course to begin with and indeed over and over again present in the dialogue situation. Yet this opposition is not the only thing which characterises the dialogue situation, least of all in the situation of a pluralistic society. For, where the right or wrong of such apparently diametrically opposed propositions (e.g. God exists; there is no God) cannot simply be verified like an experiment of natural science by being able to produce the object, it is always a question of concepts and propositions with a long history of comprehension and interpretation which can never be made definitive; it is always a question of meanings which are always already known and yet must ever be looked for and sought after anew. What is meant by freedom, person, God, love, moral obligation, salvation and so on, is always something at the same time both well-known and unfathomed; it [38] is always known and always questioned. It is precisely in such always known and always unfathomed matters, at which one always arrives without ever fully comprehending them, that historically and thus always particularly constituted men arrive – or perhaps do not arrive or perhaps not completely – at a conclusion in different ways and each in a way ordained for him. This is then the mystery of their ultimate personal decision which ultimately is not subject to their own reflection or the judgement of others. World-views and universal outlooks are distinguished by differences in interpretation, conceptual articulation and theoretical objectification of this envisaged, attained or existentially missed arrival at the ultimate all-comprehending but never comprehended reality, and these differences form precisely the object of their dialogue. Thus object remains significant and necessary, since even the conceptually reflex interpretation of the ultimate and most original experience of the whole can be absolutely significant for the existential success of this most original experience. Hence, in the first place, we must *not* say that the seemingly contradictory differences of the objectified propositions are really certain and always represent exactly the same absolute contradiction in man's existential realisation as the contradiction which appears at first sight. Someone who denies God, for instance, perhaps merely denies something which does not exist even in the opinion of the theist who really understands his theism or who – in dialogue with the atheist – comes to understand it properly for the first time or at least more properly and radically than he had done up to that moment.

Secondly, it is possible in a dialogue slowly (and perhaps merely asymptotically) to take hold of the historical, individual and collective experience which is perfectly legitimate and from which the other arrived at his 'viewpoint', even though in the judgement of his partner he has interpreted it wrongly or inadequately in the reflex interpretation of his world-view. Victory over his own narrowness is in any case promised to the one who really and truly enters into dialogue, even though lie is convinced that his own proper principle, with which he must always still catch up but according to which he has started out, will be preserved and prove itself, even when he cannot hope that the dialogue will produce an agreement in his empirical sphere of life which can objectify itself in an institution. Even someone who professes an absolute viewpoint can realise that he is still 'on the way'; but he follows his path only if he enters into dialogue, opens himself out, allows himself to be attacked by [39] others, is willing to *learn* even when he teaches and apparently is merely seeking to defend his own position and trying to make it 'come out on top'. Only once a partner in a dialogue knows for certain that through the dialogue he has completely appropriated the *whole* existential experience out of which his partner expresses his propositions and opposition, can he presume to say with certainty that not only what the other says but also what he really means to say in the world-view dialogue is false or already positively and completely included in his own view in the sense in which it is really meant.

This total inclusion of the existential experience of the other is far less completely possible, not merely in principle but also in practice, than ever before. Even in Humboldt's time it was still possible to be of the opinion – and with very good reason – that an educated person

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could positively and personally know all that happened and offered itself in his own existential space of existence by way of experience and knowledge relevant to a world-view. In such an age and under such a presupposition, it was easy to have dialogue if one had it at all; prescinding from the *completely* individual character of the intellectual life of the other, one was able to presuppose in a dialogue (and one did in fact presuppose) that one understood the statements of the other not only in a scientifically and socially manipulable sense but also in the sense really intended, i.e. as objective realisation of the real original exercise of existence and as the manifestation of the free truth of the person. Today things are much more difficult for us in a dialogue. The intellectual and scientific knowledge with which we are faced today is so differentiated and so impossible to survey that humanity and society as a whole have become immeasurably more knowledgeable while the individual, relative to the whole of this knowledge, has become ever more 'ignorant' since he personally can grasp less and less of this continually growing mass in his own individual consciousness. This is so precisely because the intellectual, the educated person must of necessity be more and more a specialist who only knows more and more in an ever-diminishing sector of the total field of knowledge (and thus moves towards that vanishing point where the individual knows everything . . . about nothing). Yet dialogue can be conducted only by individual consciousnesses, and it is – unfortunately or thanks be to God – not to be expected that it will ever be possible to introduce an electronic 'brain' (who would be able to programme it?) into a dialogue involving world-views, a dialogue which is always concerned with the whole of [40] reality as such; it is not to be expected that this would ever become a possibility for overcoming the contemporary situation of dialogue in which, from the very start or in the end, no one *can completely* possess all the knowledge relevant to a world-view possessed by the other, at least not in an actual and explicit way and in its concrete, material contents. The dialogue of *today*, therefore, is not only characterised by the fact that the partners in this dialogue hold different views and represent opposite viewpoints, but even before this by the fact that no one any longer knows or *can* know everything his conversational partner knows. This makes dialogue more difficult today; but it also gives it a meaning even before any agreement is reached, viz. that one can learn an infinite amount from each other; one will never reach a point where one can learn no more, but one can also never again say that one cannot learn anything more from dialogue with the other than the mere fact that he subscribes to a view which one holds to be false oneself and which one simply accepts with a shrug of the shoulder as an incomprehensible fact. Today more than ever before, every world-view consi4ering itself to be universal can experience and acknowledge itself as infinitely open towards the material fulfilment offering itself to it through dialogue in that knowledge and experience of the other which one cannot possess for oneself except by the knowledge of the other opening itself in dialogue.

There can and must be dialogue today. This does not mean a cowardly, relativistic dialogue in which the partners no longer take their own convictions seriously and thus cannot really talk in any true sense because they have nothing to say to each other. It means dialogue in genuine freedom and not merely in that 'toleration' and co-existence where one puts up with one's opponent merely because one does not have the power to destroy him. It must be a dialogue in which one risks oneself; an essentially universal world-view asserted absolutely must be especially capable of this and is allowed of its essence to do this. After all, it can make such a universal claim only if it opens itself to everything and also tries in this way to discover the basis of the 'no' of the opponent within itself; it can make such a universal claim only if it knows that it overcomes this basis within itself by a fuller 'yes' only by facing up to it and by thus putting itself at risk. Dialogue must be on its guard against idle talk and non-involvement. The finite man in dialogue must have the humility and courage to choose his partner since he cannot talk with everyone if his dialogue is not to degenerate into empty

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chatter; he may even reserve the [41] right and indeed the duty to himself of breaking off a *particular* dialogue (but not dialogue *as such*) when, even after the strictest self-criticism and a *last* (and not just penultimate!) refusal to judge the other person, he feels himself obliged to the view that he is not being met by the goodwill on the other side which is the necessary presupposition for every dialogue. A Christian will conduct his dialogue with the seriousness of knowing the danger that his own dialogue may be marred and rendered a social lie by the guilt of his arrogance, obstinacy, false self-assurance and violent aggressiveness; he will always recognise himself also as a sinner and will therefore submit his own part in the dialogue to the judgement and mercy of God. The Christian knows that love alone is the highest light of knowledge and that what St Paul says about love must therefore also be valid of *dialogue*: 'If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing' (1 Co 13:1). He knows that one should be able to say of one's dialogue what the Apostle says of love: in true dialogue one is patient, kind, never jealous, never boastful or overbearing, never deceitful, never seeking one's own; in true dialogue one never becomes embittered, never bears ill-will for a wrong suffered, hopes everything, suffers everything; for one knows, even in the conviction of one's own truth, that one sees as in a mirror darkly and in puzzles. Even the dialogue between world-views which consider themselves absolute can and must be based on the knowledge that there is an unbridgeable gap between the conviction objectified in propositions – which is the only plane on which one can directly conduct a dialogue – and the conviction implied in the unreflected immediate exercise of existence itself; in other words, it can and must be based on the knowledge that even the truest conviction objectified in propositions and doctrines is not yet a guarantee of one's 'being in the truth' of existence, and that behind what one judges to be the falsest theory can be hidden the 'being-in-the-truth' of the man who accepts his existence silently but nevertheless genuinely; or to use St Augustine's formula regarding the Church: some think they are 'inside' when in terms of their own truth they are really 'outside', and some consider themselves or are considered to be 'outside' when in reality they are 'inside'. Only if the dialogue of the 'head' is inspired by this respect for the *mysterium ineffabile* of the 'heart' which only God sees, is the dialogue as it should be if it is to be able to stand before conscience and God.

Such a dialogue must bear the motto of St Anselm of Canterbury: [42] *consideratio rationabiliter comprehendit incomprehensibile esse*: reflection comprehends rationally that the incomprehensible exists and holds sway. One must speak clearly and simply – in short, reasonably – in dialogue, because only in this way can one speak *with each other*. But the dialogue must remain surrounded by that silent respect for the fact that what is being spoken about transcends by far everything that is said: the man who, as Pascal says, infinitely transcends man, and his secret which is God. Thus dialogue must remain enclosed by the silence in which man puts up with himself and accepts himself in the incomprehensibility of his existence whose depth is God. Moreover, this dialogue with all its learnedness, uncompromising thought and sharp definition of standpoints, must be a dialogue of love even when one modestly keeps silent about it. It must and can be this. Why should it not be possible? If God commands us to love our enemies, then he surely has also told us by this that even the most difficult dialogue must still be supported by love. But love has then already unified. Hence every true dialogue is merely the infinite effort which tries to ensure that in the splendour of the expressed and mutually possessed truth there may also *appear* what can already be present in the depth of the heart, as long as we really desire it: the love which alone is believable.

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4

IDEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY

The subject of this evening's reflections is 'Ideology and Christianity'. We intend to ask first of all what is to be understood by 'ideology' in the present reflections; after all, this notion is not so clear (and is not defined in exactly the same sense by everyone) that it could be simply presupposed here as something already known. In the second part of our reflections we will then go on to ask briefly about the reasons for the opinion that thinks of Christianity as an ideology and then rejects it simply because it is an ideology. A third part will then attempt to make it clear that Christianity is not an ideology and hence cannot be rejected on that ground. In the fourth and last part of our reflections, we will draw certain conclusions from the basic thesis of our third 'movement'.

1. What is meant in these reflections by 'ideology'? This is the first question we must ask ourselves. It is not possible here to describe the origin and history of the concept of ideology. This concept indeed is used in that history in so many different and contradictory ways that nothing else is left to us but simply to give a brief definition – with an eye, no doubt, on this history – of what *we* mean here by ideology. This definition naturally is not to be understood as an arbitrary one but as an objectively philosophical definition. Ideology, it must be emphasised right away, is understood here in a negative sense. In other words, it is understood as an erroneous or false system which must be rejected in view of a right interpretation of reality. We can prescind in this from the question as to whether the false 'system' is clearly constituted by theoretical reflection or whether it represents more an unreflected attitude, in the sense of a mentality and arbitrarily and freely created mood. It remains a completely open question here, of course, as to where this sort of ideology is to found in the concrete; in other words, whether, for example, every metaphysics is to be understood as an ideology in this sense. What, [44] however, distinguishes such an ideology in its essence from simple, basically open error, is the voluntary element of closure by which the ideology understands itself as a total system. To this extent, ideology is then a fundamental closure in face of the 'wholeness' of reality, one which turns a partial aspect into an absolute. Bearing in mind common usage, one would have to complete this abstract description of the nature of ideology by pointing out that – in so far as reality as a whole can demand recognition from man – the conversion of a partial aspect of reality into an absolute takes place with a view to practical action, and thus usually takes the form of a basic determination of political activity; indeed, in its ultimate intention, it will try to determine the norm for the whole life of a society. From this point of view, ideology could also be defined with R. Lauth as a pseudo-scientific interpretation of reality in the service of a practico-social orientation which it is meant to legitimate retrospectively. This formal definition of the nature of an ideology, regarded as a definitive erection into an absolute of a partial aspect of the whole of reality, makes it *a priori* possible to recognise a threefold form of ideology. This is not meant to imply that these three forms are ever realised in a pure state and completely separated from each other but that there is in a real sense an ideology of immanence, an ideology of 'transmanence' and an ideology of transcendence. We will now give a short explanation of this division.[1]

Ideologies of immanence convert certain finite areas of our experiential world into absolutes and regard their structures as the law of reality as such. This group embraces the

[1] Cf. on this J. Splett, 'Ideologie und Toleranz', *Wort und Wahrheit* XX (1965), pp. 37-49.

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greater part of what is normally referred to as ideology: nationalism, the ideology of 'blood and soil', racialism, Americanism, technicism, sociologism and of course that materialism for which God, spirit, freedom and person signify just empty talk in the real sense of the term. The opposite of the ideology of immanence – an opposite we often fail to recognise immediately – is the ideology of 'transmanence', i.e. supernaturalism, quietism, and certain forms of utopianism, chiliasm, indiscreet 'brotherhood', etc. In this kind of ideology, the ultimate and infinite – that which permeates and governs all areas of reality – is turned into an absolute (or better, perhaps, is totalised) in the sense of cheating the relatively ultimate finite reality – that which is already always given and accepted – out of its relative [45] rights; the relatively ultimate is passed over and one tries to project and manipulate it purely from the standpoint of that absolutely ultimate reality: this is the typical danger for the philosopher and the religious person. The third form of ideology is called the ideology of transcendence. This tries to overcome the first-mentioned forms of ideology but in its turn hypostasises in itself, as the only valid thing, the actual empty formal process of surmounting what is meant by the first two forms of ideology. In this case, what is immediately given in experience is devalued negatively into historism, relativism, etc., and what is properly transcendent is experienced merely as something which refuses to communicate itself, as something unspeakable. From this stems the ideological programme of unrestrained and so-called 'openness' for everything and anything, an attitude which timidly avoids any clear engagement in anything definite, with the result that such a professedly typical Western attitude is then brought face to face with the demands of a Western ideology; in this lies the ever new attraction for Western intellectuals of that communism which demands 'engagement'.

2. The reproach is made against Christianity that it too is such a negative ideology. Before we can reflect on this claim and on the reason why this reproach is quite unjustified, it will be necessary to reflect at least briefly on the reasons which can provide apparent justification for the interpreting of Christianity as an ideology.

(a) First of all, this reproach can appear to be justified from the viewpoint of either an unreflected attitude or the explicit position of a general scepticism and relativism. There is an attitude which, for whatever reasons of a personal or scientific kind, immediately identifies experience and reality with the type of experience and reality which can be directly proved by natural science and this in a strictly technical way; it regards every other reality and experience simply as a freely exchangeable, i.e. ideological, superstructure of the true reality of so-called exact empirical science; metaphysics is experienced by it as merely a matter of personal opinion and of completely free conceptual composition, a point of view based on the indemonstrability of its objects in an experience which has been narrowed down right from the outset by the principles of natural science. Wherever we find such an attitude, it is only possible for Christianity to be experienced from the very start as merely an ideology. In the last analysis, it is quite immaterial to such a view what reasons one may give in explanation of the origin of this ideology: whether one regards it [46] as the opium of the people or the product of a particular social structure, as a utopian over-elevation of human existence or as the effect of an unquenchable desire for a comprehensive interpretation of the meaning of existence, a desire which simply gives rise to ideologies.

(b) A further reason for interpreting Christianity as an ideology is to be found in the historical fact that Christianity has often been used – sometimes in a revolutionary manner but mostly in a conservative and reactionary way – to justify social, economic, political, cultural and scientific conditions which cannot claim permanent validity. Whenever Christianity is abused in this way – which is often hardly avoidable and which abuse in most cases can only in fact be overcome by a slow historical process – it is in fact turned into an ideology, and such a conservative ideology has very often been quite rightly attacked

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precisely *as* an ideology, and this in the name of Christianity. If real Christianity itself had to suffer in the process, then this was the fault or the tragic misfortune of the representatives of Christianity and the Church who provided the occasion for mistaking Christianity for an ideology such as would have to be overcome.

(c) An even greater and more subtle danger of mistaking Christianity for an ideology lies, however, in the necessity of having to objectify the real nature of Christianity – the incomprehensible mystery of the transcendent God and of his salvation in absolute, forgiving self-communication – through categories and historical, institutional, sacramental and juridical forms in the human word of revelation, in the sacramental sign and in the socially constituted condition of believers. Such a categorising objectification of God's actual divine self-communication, which takes hold of man from his transcendental origin, is necessary. Man necessarily lives his uniquely original being and his eternal destiny as a historical being in spatio-temp oral history. He must live in this way and cannot find his own being either in a merely interior inwardness, mysticism or purely negative turning-away-from his historical existence. These objectifications are necessary, they are the body in which the spirit achieves and finds itself. But they also necessarily obscure the real meaning of Christianity, they make it ambiguous and render it liable to abuse and constriction. Thus, having turned immanence into an ideology, they continue always to provide the temptation and occasion for radically committed Christians to tend both towards the ideology of 'transmanence' and towards the ideology of transcendence; both then get confused with the real nature of [47] Christianity and thus expose Christianity itself to the reproach of merely being an ideology,

(d) A further reason for the danger of regarding Christianity as an ideology lies within the actual contemporary pluralism of world-views, which in its turn is a cause of that sceptical relativism which we referred to as the first reason for confusing Christianity and ideology. If the man of today, starting from natural science, is naturally inclined to presuppose the universal validity of real truth for all men as the obvious ideal and norm, and if, in his fundamental democratic sentiment, he is inclined to grant in principle just as much intelligence and goodwill to everybody else as to himself, then he must inevitably be surprised and disturbed by the fact that men are so completely disunited in their world-views and this even with regard to the comprehensive interpretation of the meaning of existence. He is then in danger of jumping to the conclusion that all knowledge which goes beyond the sphere of exact scientific and universally acknowledged insight is a non-binding mental fiction which at most can be granted subjective significance; and, since Christianity is contradicted in the same way, he will then be tempted to range Christianity among such world-view fictions and ideologies and to grant it at most in our lives a greater degree of subjective affinity.

3. Having thus enumerated in rough detail the reasons one might have for evaluating Christianity as an ideology, we now come to the third 'movement' of our reflections and with it to the central question as to why Christianity is not an ideology. An adequate answer to this question would of course coincide with the proof that Christianity has a legitimate claim to declare the truth about the whole of reality and to be the absolute religion or (if one shrinks from the word religion in this context) to fulfil what human religion of itself seeks for in vain. It is obvious that such a proof cannot be offered in the short space of one hour. We would have to raise too many questions and speak about too many things. We would have to speak about what in this connection is really meant by truth and absolute validity; we would have to ask how man can – in any case – find entry into God and his revealed Word; we would have to ask what is and what is not really declared by this message, what in this message is image, symbol and cypher and what intended content, reality and truth. It is obvious that these and many other necessary questions cannot be posed and answered here. It can be merely a question here of picking out a few factors within Christianity, or ideologies, which

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differentiate [48] Christianity from what is particularly characterised and stressed by the word 'ideology' in an erroneous system. Everything that follows, therefore, must be understood in the light of this preliminary qualification.

(a) First of all, one must make it clear that it is really impossible to suspect Christianity of being an ideology by the mere fact that it makes absolute declarations with the claim to truth, in the perfectly simple and ordinary sense of this word, i.e. because it makes declarations which can be called 'metaphysical': since, on the one hand, they are declared with an absolute claim to truth and, on the other hand, cannot be directly verified as valid on the empirical plane of natural science. Anyone, of course, who holds that every 'metaphysics' is false or non-demonstrable cannot consider authentic Christianity, even as understood by itself, as anything but an ideology; he may then perhaps go on to reflect – in what would be an existentially irrational way – on why this Christianity can and should nevertheless have an essential significance for his life; he would then of course be overlooking the fact that such a reflection of an irrational positing and ideologising of life would itself imply a metaphysics, even though it be a bad one. What has been said here is not, of course, meant to imply that the knowledge of faith and philosophical metaphysics are the same in their basic structures and merely differ with regard to their declared objects. It is true, all the same, that the Christian declaration of faith and metaphysics do coincide with regard to the just mentioned claim to truth, so that where the possibilities of a metaphysical declaration are denied in principle and from the outset, Christianity too can only be accorded the rank of a subjective ideology. For in this view, a subject before whom such an absolute claim to truth can be announced and to whom it can be imparted, just does not exist; in such a view, only individual men exist, individuals who try to make their existence a little more bearable and dignified by such mental fictions. Hence, in defence against the reproach that Christianity is an ideology, it must in the first place be emphasised here that metaphysics must not be suspected from the outset and in every case of being an ideology. This is shown by the very fact that the proposition stating that every metaphysics is in the last analysis a non-binding ideology, is itself a metaphysical proposition, whether it be expressed reflexedly with theoretical universal binding force or is implied in the attempt to live life free from metaphysics (by an absolutely sceptical '*epoché*' regarding all matters beyond the immediate brute experience of life and natural scientific knowledge). Relativism and scepticism, whether [49] they be theoretically formulated or non-theoretically attempted in life, are metaphysical decisions. Metaphysics is inescapably given together with man's existence. He always interprets his existence within a horizon of *a priori* pre-decisions which have already preceded this experience and embrace it. True and genuine metaphysics goes further and – precisely speaking – only consists in reflection on those transcendental, inevitably given implications which actually bear their evidence and certainty already within themselves and are necessarily posited together with every intellectual and free exercise of human existence. Metaphysics, as reflex knowledge, does not produce these implications itself but simply reflects on the implications there and so renders them systematic; it is therefore a systematisation of a transcendental experience which, as the unsystematic ground of every empirical experience and understanding of truth, essentially transcends the latter in insight and certitude. This metaphysics can therefore unashamedly admit the unfinished nature of its reflection, the necessity of always beginning it anew and its imperfection; and yet it can say quite confidently that its meaning, i.e. the transcendental experience itself, is still the common property of all men open to the truth; it shows itself as such even in the plurality of metaphysical systems, even where these systems appear totally contradictory to the superficial regard of the ordinary man and even of the bad historian of philosophy, and thus gives the impression of being merely mental ,fictions and arbitrary subjective assumptions. Only someone capable of utter silence and absence of any thought, i.e. someone capable of

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living in a purely animal immediacy to his biological existence and who therefore would not even know anything about this his metaphysical suspension of judgement (in other words, someone who would not exercise it at all), would be really free of metaphysics and could avoid the claim of being made for absolute truth. If, however, there can be a metaphysics, at least in principle, which cannot be simply disposed of as an ideology from the very start, then *a fortiori* Christianity cannot be rejected as being an ideology simply because the horizons of its declarations of faith do not coincide with primitive, factual everyday experience and the experience of the empirical natural sciences. The fact of a pluralism of world-views cannot be a legitimate reason for dismissing every world-view (in so far as one wants to subsume metaphysics and the Christian teaching of faith under this title) as being a mere ideology. Precisely this attitude would itself go beyond the objects of individual empirical experience and their functional connections and [50] would make experience as a whole – which as such is not an object of experience – the object of a declaration which by definition would then itself be an ideology. The right relationship to the pluralism of world-views and metaphysical systems cannot consist in a flat suspicion of every world-view as mere mythology; it can only consist in an attitude which carefully and critically examines, holds itself open to further knowledge and modifications of previous knowledge, is modest, tries to discover the transcendental experience in all the 'systems' put forward, and yet has also the courage to make decisions, to commit itself with the quiet assurance that absolute truth is already reached even in an historically conditioned, finite, incomplete, still open declaration . . . even though this absolute truth always ultimately remains that unspeakable, holy mystery which can no longer be confined in any system superior to it and manageable by us. When and where metaphysics understands itself in the last analysis as that rational, or better, intellectual introduction into the attitude of openness as adopted towards the absolute mystery, an attitude which always holds sway in the ground of our intellectual and freely responsible existence but for this precise reason must not remain indifferent in itself for man, then metaphysics loses its appearance of being merely an ideological fiction, even when confronted with the pluralism of world-views of our existence. This pluralism of world-views destroys in reality only the rationalistic presumption of any false metaphysic which might maintain that in it man can grasp the totality of reality right down to its last bases and so manage it in his own system, instead of – as in life – being struck dumb in reflecting on the implications of the ground of total reality by which one is seized.

(b)Proceeding from this, it can be seen under a still wider aspect that Christianity is not an ideology. We have already said that the basis of all metaphysically valid knowledge of truth is transcendental experience (even before any objective individual experience), an experience by which man is always already referred to the unembraceable totality of reality and into its very ground, that ground which is that always already present holy mystery which removes man into the distance of his finiteness and guilt . . . and which we call God. This transcendental experience possessed in knowledge and responsible freedom is again unsystematically also the basis, necessary condition and horizon of everyday experience and as such is the first and proper 'place' for the reality of Christianity, and this without prejudice to its historicity and history about which we will have [51] to speak later. Christianity cannot be an ideology because, on the one hand, this experience of transcendence, being the introduction to an absolute sacred mystery which is no longer grasped but which on the contrary lays hold of one, makes every ideology transcendent by its own transcendental necessity in so far as such an ideology turns a certain limited intramundane area of experience into an absolute. On the other hand then, in so far as Christianity is not abbreviated in any way and represents in its teaching the right interpretation of this transcendental experience as it really achieves itself in its own, unabridged being, Christianity signifies in its reality precisely this adequate transcendental experience. Thus Christianity

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cannot be an ideology. This is not the place to ask in what sense such a starting-point for the understanding of Christianity is to be found, and what effect it has, in Rudolf Bultmann and others. Can we not say that the reality of Christianity is what Christians are accustomed to call grace? Is grace not the self-communication of God to the finite creature, the direct presence to God, the dynamism directed towards participation in the life of God who is above every finite and mortal creature? Does not grace signify that man, in spite of his finiteness and guilt, is superior to all worldly powers and forces, even when he suffers under them to the bitter end? Is not this grace always offered to all men on account of God's universal salvific will and is it not effective in everything even when man closes himself to it in free guilt? Taking all this together, it means surely that man is someone who is borne by God himself and is driven towards direct presence to God in the very ground of his personal being. In other words, what we call grace, is the real truth and the property, freely given by God, of the transcendental experience of the openness of the personal spirit to God. If Christianity in its proper being signifies grace, and if grace is the innermost possibility and reality of the reception of God's self-communication in the very ground of human existence, then Christianity is none else but the deepest reality of the transcendental experience, the experience of the absolute and forgiving nearness of God himself who is distinct from and above all intramundane reality and yet is the one who in this very way (even in this absolute nearness) remains the holy mystery to be worshipped. If, however, this is the proper nature of Christianity, then every ideology has already been surpassed and thus because every ideology is concerned with what is verifiable in intramundane experience, whether this refers to blood and soil, sociability, rational technologisation and manipulation, the enjoyment [52] of life or the experience of man's own emptiness and absurdity, or whatever else, and it posits this as the basic condition of human existence. Christianity declares these powers and forces, the masters of unredeemed existence, not merely theoretically but absolutely basically to be worthless idols which must never become our masters; it declares that man has in the ground of his existence always already overcome these powers and forces in grace, and that the real question is whether he assents in his free actions to this his transcendental openness to the immediacy of God through grace, which is eternal life; his free action itself originating once more from the power of this grace. Since, therefore, the basic fulfilment of Christianity finds its point of insertion in the very midst of man's transcendentality, a transcendentality which always rises above any intramundane ideology (even though merely or rather precisely because it is a transcendence towards the absolute mystery of God in his absolute and forgiving nearness), Christianity is from the outset no mere ideology. At least, it is not an ideology of immanence. The transcendence referred to here, however, is not an externally superadded dimension to the realm of man's intramundane existence. Hence it cannot be regarded as a subsequent ideologisation of human existence, as if it were superfluous for the fulfilment of human existence in the world.

(c) Christianity, however, is also at the same time essentially a history, since it directs man's attention towards spatio-temporally fixed events of human history understanding them as saving events which find their unsurpassable summit, centre and historical measure in the absolute saving event of Jesus Christ. If this history itself is part of the nature of Christianity, and not just an accidental interchangeable stimulus of that transcendental, supernatural experience of the absolute and forgiving nearness of the holy mystery which overcomes all intramundane forces and powers, then Christianity appears clearly as the negation of every ideology of transmanence and transcendence. (This must not be understood as the annihilation of transcendence, but must be seen as the negation of the ideologisation of transcendence into a bare and empty formalisation of genuine transcendence.) Two things will have to be understood if we are to be able to think of this concept. Firstly, it will be necessary to make clear the inner connection between the genuine and unsurpassable

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historicity of Christianity in its turning to history regarded as a real event of salvation and the transcendental nature of Christianity understood as the openness by grace to the absolute God; in other words, it will have to [53] be shown that genuine transcendentality and genuine historicity determine one another and that man by his very transcendentality is referred to real history, a real history he cannot 'annul' by *a priori* reflection. Secondly, it will have to be understood that by the genuine imposed nature of real history, man is empowered and indeed bound to take things really seriously even in his profane existence and to be really involved in the external historical reality, even where he recognises and experiences by suffering the contingency and thus the relativity of this historical reality. As regards the first question, it must be said straight away that the correctly understood history of man is not an element of mere chance imposed on man in addition to his existence as a being of transcendence but that it is precisely the history of his transcendental being as such. He does not live out his existence orientated to God in a pure or even mystical interiority, in some sort of submersion running away from history but lives it out precisely in the individual and collective history of his very being. Hence Christianity can still be seen to consist absolutely in the grace-constituted transcendental being of man and yet still in very truth be the actual history in which this being is achieved and which confronts man himself in spatio-temporal facticity. Truly there is then a history-of-salvation of the human word in which the divine word gives itself; the Church furthermore is truly the assembly of salvation and the sacrament, even though all these historical objectifications of man's absolute depth-of-being open to God's grace only have and retain their own nature when all these historical manifestations appear as what they are, namely as instruments of mediation and signs pointing to the incomprehensibility of a God who communicates himself in all truth and reality to man through these signs so as to become directly present in an absolute and forgiving manner. If and as long as these historical mediations are really mediations to the presence and acceptance of the mystery of God, and while retaining their relative nature yet prove themselves even in this way as unavoidable for the historical being of man in this aeon before the direct vision of God is reached, history and transcendence will never be subject in Christianity to an ideology of immanence, i.e. to the idolisation of intramundane powers, or to an ideology of transmanence and transcendence, i.e. to the idolisation in empty, formal abstractions of man's transcendentality by grace. Two further points must be noted in this connection. Firstly, the historicity of man, understood as mediation of his transcendental being elevated by grace reaches its unsurpassable climax in [54] Jesus Christ, the God-man; in him God's promise of himself to the world, its historical mediation and its acceptance by man have become absolutely one in a union which is not fusion and yet eliminates separation; thus this represents the historically unsurpassable eschatological communication of God to man himself through the history of grace in the world (without it being thereby possible simply to identify in some monophysite sense the historical mediation of God and God himself); man can and must accept this mediation-by-immediacy to God as something quite irreplaceable, by humbly accepting it in his own transcendentality by grace as something which is historically ordained and freely contingent. Man's reference to this historical mediation of his own grace inserted in the ground of his being does not take place merely or in the first place by a theoretical, historical knowledge about these historical events of salvation, a sort of knowledge which could be suspected as an ideology; it is given in an immediate, realistic manner which, through the living unity of the history of salvation, through the Church (which is more than just the subsequent totality of the theoretical opinions of those who agree), through sacraments and worship, through what we call anamnesis, tradition, etc., bursts open any merely theoretical information. Because man is mediated to the historical event of salvation and this mediation does not take place merely by way of theoretical information – since he experiences this mediation as the event of his own

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transcendental and supernaturally elevated being – he has always gone beyond the three above-mentioned basic forms of ideology. Secondly, it must be stated here that the necessary historical mediation of transcendentally established grace also draws the Christian's attention to the fact that he can and must also take his 'profane' history absolutely seriously. He does this not by turning it into an ideology and by thus erecting it into an absolute, but by the fact of experiencing it as the concrete expression of the will of God who posits it in freedom: thereby he both removes it from himself as the conditioned and historically contingent and lends it the seriousness proper to the situation in which an eternal destiny is decided before God. The consequences of this for a serious approach to history which avoids erecting an ideology will have to be mentioned again later on.

(d) There is a fourth point to be stressed against the thesis that Christianity is an ideology. Ideologies mutually exclude one another in their doctrine and intention and are nothing more than the factor by which they negate and fight each other, since what is in fact common to them [55] exists in a sense in spite of the ideological theory and not because of it. Christianity, however, includes in its teaching what we will simply call 'anonymous' Christianity. Christianity does not restrict that which constitutes its most proper reality, viz. forgiving and divinising grace, to the circle of those who explicitly acknowledge the reflex and historical, instructive objectification of this ubiquitously active grace of God, in short, the explicit Christian doctrine and its bearer, the Church. Christianity, therefore, in view of the universal salvific will of God and the possibility of justification even before reception of the sacraments, includes its doctrinal opponents in its own reality and hence cannot even regard them as opponents in the same sense as ideologies do and must do. Ideologies, if they are tolerant (which cannot be completely reconciled with the nature of an ideology) may indeed accept their opponents in so far as they are human beings or have some other neutral common basis. But no ideology can admit that what is really meant, what is specific in its own position, can be conceded to its opponents on the plane of theoretical reflection and social constitution. An ideology cannot admit a third possibility outside itself which could bring about this community of reality before and behind the differences of its reflex explicitness. An ideology can never be greater than itself, whereas Christianity is more than itself precisely in the sense that it is the movement in which man surrenders himself to the unmasterable mystery and in so far as, fixing its regard on Jesus Christ, it knows that this movement actually finds the sheltering nearness of this mystery.

4. We wish now to add some of the consequences of our basic thesis to the aforegoing fundamental reflections on why Christianity is not an ideology.

(a) Christianity is not an ideology. From its nature and reflex doctrine about this its own reality, we could certainly derive general norms about God-conformed human activity, even in the sphere of the profane world, norms whose ultimate import is to preserve the openness of man to the God of absolute and forgiving nearness, and this in all dimensions of human existence, i.e. not limiting faith to a particular human existential dimension but making it the inner, formal law of man's whole life. But these general norms, in so far as they are contained in the message of Christianity and are proclaimed in the Church by her magisterium, leave room for imperatives and programmes which are determined by situations and history. Two conclusions follow from this. On the one hand, the [56] Church as such cannot become the direct and, as it were, official bearer of such concrete imperatives or of such concrete, history-forming guiding ideas; she cannot tell the Christian concretely in his individual and collective history what he must do exactly here and now; she cannot relieve him of the burden of the daring historical decision and its possible failure, and she cannot preserve him from the fact that history frequently gets into impossible situations. In other words, the Church must defend herself against becoming an ideology, if this is understood in the sense of a historical guiding idea which believes that if it is to have any real historical impact it

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must assert itself absolutely. On the other hand, the refusal by the Church to becoming an ideology in this sense does not mean that the Christian as such has no obligation in his individual and collective decision, and by reason of his Christian responsibility, to decide on some definite concrete imperative for the here and now and to bear the burden and risk for actions subsequent on such a concrete imperative. If his transcendentally Christian being realises itself in its history, and this in all its dimensions, then, even though the Church as such cannot furnish him with them, this quite simply entails the necessity and duty of finding concrete imperatives of his historical action in the midst of Christian existence. The Christian accepts this Christian responsibility for concrete decision in his historical situation; he takes this responsibility seriously as being obedience to the absolutely binding will of the living God; yet he does not turn this decision into an ideology since, without holding everything to be relative in a quietistic or sceptical way, he always lodges his decision again within the providence of the incontrollable Lord of history, in whose grace the success and failure of this decision can be saved and become availing unto salvation, and who can expect other decisions in conformity to his will from other ages and indeed enable men to take them.

(b) If Christianity is not an ideology – if, in other words, the imperatives and concrete decisions about intramundane actions and positions which Christians may and must have, must not be turned into an ideology – then there must be tolerance among Christians as an expression of the necessary avoidance of particular ideologies in the Church. Such tolerance is necessary because it is not to be expected that this choice of concrete imperatives, this interpretation of the historical moment and the decision for a particular path of history, will always be seen to be the same for all Christians. The struggle between such different decisions will be utterly [57] unavoidable even among Christians; it cannot be avoided by any purely theoretical debates since this would presuppose that, at least in principle, the concrete imperatives for the here and now can be derived from universal principles and from a purely statistical, neutral analysis of the particular situation; such a possibility is a rationalistic error, since every decision for a concrete action adds a non-derivative factor to the *a priori* intuition of essences, viz. the choice of concrete existence from among many possibilities. Precisely because we cannot avoid a struggle, i.e. a real competition between opposite tendencies of realisation beyond the plane of the purely theoretical, there must necessarily be among Christians and in the Church what is meant by tolerance: understanding for the other's position, fairness in battle even when it is conducted seriously, that rare unity in determination with which one fights for one's own position, and the readiness to allow oneself to be defeated and to remain in the totality of the Church which decides differently.

From what has been said above about anonymous Christianity, as being the very opposite to an understanding of Christianity as an ideology, it follows then that there must be a similar attitude of positive tolerance towards non-Christians; this tolerance distinguishes the firmness and missionary zeal of the Faith from the fanaticism which is and must be characteristic of an ideology because only by such fanaticism can an ideology safeguard its strict boundaries against the greater reality surrounding it; Christianity in contrast is of its very nature commanded to look for itself in the other and to trust that it will once more meet itself and its greater fullness in the other.

(c) Naturally, Christianity must always be on its guard against the danger of misunderstanding itself as an ideology. It comes to the same thing in the end whether this happens in an ideology of transmanence or one of transcendence, or whether a particular position and decision – which in itself may be perfectly correct for a certain temporal situation and which at this time may be accepted in practice by the whole of Christendom – comes to be turned into an absolute ideology and to harden into a particular, reactionary ideology. Christianity is not – as it were – preserved from the outset from such dangers and it also cannot say that it has never and nowhere fallen into them. Everything as such which is

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purely doctrinaire and institutional offers no guarantee against such ideological fossilisation, especially since the protest against it can in its turn be made absolute in the form of an empty ideology. The Christian [58] has the quiet confidence that God's pure and gratuitous grace will always prevent the danger of Christianity being turned into an ideology. Christians may be disunited in the question as to where precisely this invisible grace of God inserts itself concretely into his Church and as to what exactly belongs to that which both preserves this grace in his Church and saves it from becoming absolute in an ideology . . . but Christians are united in the actual trust which they place in this grace. In the last analysis it is also the grace of preservation from an ideology which is nothing other than man's turning himself into an absolute.

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5

MARXIST UTOPIA AND THE CHRISTIAN FUTURE OF MAN

The subject I have been given could be formulated as 'the Christian doctrine of the future of man'. It could also be expressed more polemically as the difference between Christian eschatology and intramundane utopia. Two preliminary remarks should be made as to the treatment of this subject. Firstly, it will be impossible to deal here explicitly with the humanly Christian experience of God as such. We must presuppose this subject here. This presupposition can, of course, be made in such a way that it is shown at least implicitly that the question about man's absolute future includes at the same time the question about God; in other words, that the man who opens himself to his absolute future, experiences also what is really meant by the word of God; it remains a secondary question whether he makes use of this word or not, whether or not he explicitly reflects on this unity of the absolute future and God. Secondly, since even the description of Christian eschatology already goes far beyond the possibilities of a brief paper, we can only touch marginally on what we have just called the intramundane utopia in contrast to Christian eschatology. Hence we will not treat of the question, but leave it open to discussion, as to whether the Marxist expectation of the future is the direct contradiction of the Christian teaching about the absolute future of the individual man and of humanity as a whole; whether, in other words, they contradict one another directly *or* whether the Christian doctrine about the future basically only fills an empty space left in the nature of things by the Marxist expectation of the future, since it merely envisages a possible, genuine, intramundane, and foreseeable future which can be described in categories and which can be planned; this latter would mean that the Marxist denial of the Christian future, which of course does exist, is merely an external and separable addition to the blueprint of this intramundane future. Although there is really only [60] one thing to be said on this point, viz. that God is present for us as the absolute future, this one thing can only be said in a series of consecutive expressions. It follows from this that every expression only becomes completely comprehensible when taken in conjunction with all the others and that we must therefore ask the listener to be patient and to wait until the end.

1. Christianity is a religion of the future. It can indeed be understood only in the light of the future which it conceives as an absolute future gradually approaching the individual and humanity as a whole. Its interpretation of the past takes place in and through the progressive unveiling of an approaching future, and the meaning and significance of the present is based on the hopeful openness to the approach of the absolute future. After all, Christianity understands the world within the framework of salvation *history*; this means, however, that properly speaking and in the last analysis it is not a doctrine of a static existence of the world and of man which, remaining always the same, repeats itself in an of-itself-empty period of time, without actually progressing; rather, it is the proclamation of an absolute becoming which does not continue into emptiness but really attains the absolute future, which is indeed already moving *within* it; for this becoming is so truly distinguished from its yet-to-come future and fulfilment (without implying pantheism, therefore) that the infinite reality of this future is nevertheless already active within it and supports it as an inner constitutive element of this becoming, even though it is independent of this becoming itself (and in this way every form of primitive deism and any merely external relationship of God and the world are eliminated from the very start, and the truth *in* pantheism is preserved). The real nature of man can therefore be defined precisely as the possibility of attaining the absolute future, i.e. not this or that state which is always embraced and thus made relative again by some other

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and greater future still to come and yet imposed as a task, which would then also be recognised as such a relative future. Christianity, therefore, is the religion of becoming, of history, self-transcendence, and of the future. For Christianity, everything given is something imposed as a task, and everything is understandable only by what is yet to come. The tending towards a still outstanding future has indeed its own measure and a nature behind it which projects a horizon of the possible in front of it, and also a law in accordance with which it takes up position. But since the absolute fullness of the divine reality is [61] the ultimate reason, and since this very God who starts everything by giving himself as the end is the ultimate goal, any understanding of being and nature conforms to reality only if it seeks to understand in the light of that future which unveils the beginning for the first time.

2. Christianity is the religion of the *absolute* future. We have really already indicated the meaning of this in the previous paragraph. Man (and humanity) is the reality which knowingly and willingly is always ahead of itself, the reality which constitutes itself by projecting its future, or better, by projecting itself (i.e. its nature) towards *it* (or, since it is a question of the projecting of the *absolute* future which *per definitionem* cannot really be planned and formed: lets this future approach him). If this is so, then the decisive question for a metaphysical anthropology will be whether the future, towards which man projects himself, is merely a categorial future, i.e. one whose single and distinct, and therefore spatio-temporally bound elements form this future in combination (possibly planned and manipulated, possibly also always more complex), so that being something finite, it is always still basically encompassed *by* a further empty future possibility, *or* whether the unsurpassable, infinite future as such comes towards man and hence the possible space of the future and the future in the present become identical.

With regard to this question, Christianity opts for the second possibility: the absolute future is the true and real future of man; *it* is a real possibility for him, it is offered to him, it is something coming towards him, it is the future state and its acceptance is the ultimate task of his existence. Since the only way in which man can be concerned about a feasible future which has a spatio-temporal point and which is constructed out of the partial elements of his world, is by passing beyond it into the basic totality of unbounded possibility, man's intramundane care always contains (at least implicitly, and often perhaps also deliberately pushed aside) the question about the possible encounter with this infinite totality as such; in short, with the absolute future. Christianity answers this question in the sense that this absolute future is not only the always still absent condition of the possibility of a categorised intramundane planning of, hoping for and attaining of the future, but also becomes as such the communicated, attained future of man itself.

Christianity therefore poses man the *one* question as to how he wants basically to understand himself: as a being only acting *in* the whole but having nothing to do with the whole as such, even through projection [62] towards the whole as an asymptotic horizon is always the condition of the possibility of his knowledge and action; or as a receptively acting being *of* the whole, a being which has something to do even with this condition for his knowledge, action and hope as *such* and which allows this totality, the absolute future itself, to approach it and to become an event for it in the action by which it creates the future within the bounds of this totality. This ultimately is the only question posed by Christianity. It follows from the very nature of the totality of the absolute future that this totality cannot really become the object of a proper classification or of a technical manipulation, but remains the unspeakable mystery which precedes and surpasses all individual cognition and each individual action *on* the world.

A mere glance at the current concepts of Christian dogmatic theology in which this thesis of Christianity as the religion of the absolute future is expressed, will show us that Christianity really understands itself in this way. Absolute future is just another name for

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what is really meant by 'God'. For the absolute future by its very concept cannot exist as a future which is manufactured out of finite, individual material and by classifiable combination; but it cannot be a merely empty possibility in the sense of being the not-yet-real, even when seen as the end and warrant of the dynamism of the world's and man's movement into the future, or as the sustaining hope; if it is the sustaining ground of the dynamism towards the future, then it must be the absolute fullness of reality. In point of fact the absolute future understood *in this way* is precisely what we call God. Conversely, from what has been said, there follows a twofold conclusion concerning God. Firstly, it follows that he is known precisely *as* the absolute future; in other words, he is not one object among many others with which one is concerned as individual objects within the unbounded system of co-ordinates of knowledge and planning action for the future, but rather is the ground of this whole projection towards the future. Knowledge of God is therefore always included when man projects himself towards the future, especially when man gives no name to this whole but tries to leave it unspecified. Secondly, God – understood as the absolute future – is basically and necessarily the unspeakable mystery, since the original totality of the absolute future, towards which man projects himself, can never really be expressed in the precise characteristics proper to it by determinations taken from intramundane, classifiable experience; thus he is and remains essentially a mystery, i.e. he is known *as* the essentially transcendent, of whom it is of course said that, understood [63] precisely as this mystery of infinite fullness, lie is the self-communicating absolute future of man.

Both these characteristics of the knowledge of God give rise to the possibility of atheism. Atheism is possible because, firstly, it is always possible for man's knowledge-by-categories to refuse to enter into the transcendental conditioning of its own possibility. It is possible, secondly, because the confrontation with the fundamental mystery can always be declared to be something which is destroyed in its nature when it takes place in religion, for religion necessarily makes use of categories and social forms. It is possible, finally, because man can be an atheist in so far as he denies or doubts that God himself can become man's own absolute future and hence can be of the opinion that he has at any rate nothing to do with such a God.

If the absolute future of the world and of man is thus called God in Christian terminology, the event of its happening, sent to us by God, is called the definitive immediacy of the world to the self-communicating God. In a somewhat intellectualistic terminology, it means the direct vision of God, i.e. the direct presence of the world in its highest point, viz. man, to the absolute but communicated mystery. What Christianity calls grace, is nothing other than the self-communication of God, the absolute future, at the stage in which the history of its approach and acceptance is still going on. What is called the incarnation of the divine Logos in Jesus Christ means nothing other than that in Jesus this self-communication of God, the absolute future of the world, comes into such historical presence, objectively and for us, that it becomes credible as something given, irreversible and comprehensible by the categorising experience of humanity *as such*. But God, the definitive immediate presence to him, grace and Jesus Christ, embrace the whole of the salvific reality confessed by the Christian faith. Yet since all these words declare only the one thing, viz. that the world – by the very fact of being really saved – has an absolute future and that its becoming attains its goal only in God's absoluteness, we are justified in saying that Christianity is the religion of the absolute future.

3.Being the religion of the absolute future, Christianity has no utopian ideas about a future in this world. It does indeed declare that for each individual it is decided with his *death* whether or not he has opened himself *by* the deed of his life to the absolute future of God. But with regard to the collective history of mankind as such, it has no indication to start with [64] about how long this collective history will last in this world. It also remains neutral,

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moreover, with regard to the material *content* of this future. It does not set up ideals for the future with any definite content; it makes no prognoses in this matter and does not oblige man to any particular goal regarding his future in this world. Any future which is planned by man and is to be produced by the intramundane means at his disposal and which is posited as an *absolute* beyond which there is nothing and there is nothing to be expected, would be rejected by Christianity as an expectation for the future which only amounts to utopian ideology.

Christianity would reject it as an ideology whose nature consists in turning a particular, individual reality of the pluralistic world of our experience into an absolute, fixed point; it would also reject it as utopian because in the long run it is individually and collectively impossible to confuse an intramundane and therefore finite future – no matter how concrete it may be – with the absolute future, or to forbid man to inquire beyond this finite future when, having recognised it to be finite, he always situates it in any case within the wider framework of infinite possibilities. Where one abstains, however, from turning an intramundane future into an absolute in such a utopian-ideological way, Christianity does not remain merely neutral with regard to any sensible planning of the future in this world but takes up a *positive* attitude towards it. The rational and actively planning construction of an intramundane future, the greatest possible liberation of man from the dominion of nature, the progressive socialisation of man for the attainment of the greatest possible scope for freedom, are regarded by Christianity as part of the task demanded of man by his divinely willed nature, a task to which man is obliged and *in* which lie fulfils Ins real religious duty, viz. the openness of freedom in believing hope for the absolute future.

In so far as the basis for the *absolute* value of each man is provided in Christianity solely by the absolute future of every man, a conviction emerges from this which in its turn provides the firmest and deepest basis for the intramundane concern for the future, having for its aim as perfect a social order as possible. In Christianity, the love of God and the love of man signify the *one* commandment and the one accomplishment of authentic Christianity; love of God does not imply some sort of ideological extra, added to the real accomplishment of existence, but implies the accepting, hoping openness to the total meaning of human existence and to the absolute future; and this precisely where this concern no longer [65] permits the active construction of a purely intramundane kind of future. It follows then that by this one commandment and by this one accomplishment of human existence we are given a proper statement also of the innermost dynamism of the intramundane change of man and of his social situation, without Christianity thereby becoming a contradiction of or competitive to intramundane planning of the future. Christianity itself has no intramundane utopian view of the future. It leaves all objective planning of the future free and rejects only – but radically – every ideological utopian view of the future in which the absolute future is confused with an intramundane and categorisable future and in which the ultimate future of man is seen to consist in something less than the unspeakable, sacred mystery of the absolute God who out of sheer grace communicates himself to man and who with a view to this communication has made the dynamic the ultimate meaning and motor of the history of the world and of humanity.

4. Even though it is the religion of the absolute future, a religion which remains neutral in the face of the individual and collective aims of man and leaves them free, Christianity has an inestimable significance for this movement towards genuine and meaningful earthly goals. Christianity, it is true, does not maintain that only *its* followers can serve this earthly future objectively and with the involvement of the whole man. This would be no more true than to say that it regards itself as the sole genuine bearer of such intramundane aims for the future or that it disputes the fact of having been in quite a few cases an actual obstacle to such efforts on account of the historico-ecclesiastical forms in which it has manifested itself. There are obviously men who – without being manifestly Christians – spend themselves in selfless

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service for the welfare and social development of man. Christianity, it is true, maintains by its very teaching about the oneness of the love of God and of neighbour that whenever someone serves man and his dignity lovingly and in *absolute* selflessness, he affirms God at least implicitly and also works out his salvation before God by his affirmation of absolute moral values and imperatives . . . but it does not maintain in any sense that this is possible only in someone who is explicitly a Christian.

Nevertheless, Christianity even taken as the thematically explicit religion which sees God as the absolute future, has great significance for intramundane society and its goals. By its hope for an absolute future, Christianity defends man against the temptation of engaging in the [66] justified intramundane efforts for the future with *such* energy that every generation is always sacrificed in favour of the next, so that the future becomes a Moloch before whom the man existing at present is butchered for the sake of some man who is never real and always still to come. Christianity makes it comprehensible why even *that* man preserves his dignity and intangible significance who can no longer make any tangible contribution to the approach to the intramundane future. Christianity lends ultimate radical significance to the work for this intramundane future: it declares in its teaching on the unity of the love of God and of neighbour that the positive relationship to man is an indispensable, essential element and the irreplaceable means for the relationship to God, the absolute future (and 'salvation'). If, however, this man who is to be loved cannot exist except as someone who makes projects with a view to his future, then this means that the love of God understood as the love of neighbour cannot exist without the will to *this* man and hence also to his intramundane future. This does not ideologise this will or estrange it from itself, but merely makes it explicit in its absolute dignity and in its radical nature as an obligation.

5. Christianity, understood as the religion of the absolute future, will always remain.

(a) It will remain. No one will be able in the long run to deter man from taking himself seriously. The more 'rational' man becomes in the history of humanity, the more he is conscious of himself and the more he experiences himself in his completely personal uniqueness, freedom and dignity. The more important and demanding society appears to him, the more the individual will grow in significance. Otherwise society itself would inevitably degenerate into a herd of insignificant beings. The dignity of society, the radical seriousness of the tasks and demands imposed by it, increases rather than diminishes the dignity and radical seriousness which the individual owes to himself and to every other individual. Even from this point of view, he will experience his absolute uniqueness more rather than less keenly in future. The freer man becomes of the fetters of nature, the more he becomes conscious of himself and free for and towards himself. No economic change and no social system will be able to prevent man from knowingly experiencing his death as a boundary and from putting himself as a whole in question.

One cannot deprive man of the question about himself as a whole and about the meaning as such of his existence which is no longer orientated [67] towards the functional connections of the individual moments of his world and existence but towards the meaning of the *whole*. He may then declare that he has no answer to this question; he may perhaps try for *this reason* to declare this question itself to have no meaning. But the question will always pose itself again; it will always be and at least remain there as a question to be always explained *anew* as meaningless. Thus there will also always be men who have the courage to respond to this question with the answer of the religion of the absolute future. Such men do not say that they have an answer to the question about the one total meaning of human existence and the world on *that* plane on which the content of the answer could be shown to exist in this world *alongside* other realities of experience. They say rather that the one ground of the whole variety of reality – the one ground which in itself anticipates everything – always and necessarily is and remains an incomprehensible mystery when regarded from the point of

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view of the plurality of these empirical realities.

They believe, however, that God sends himself precisely in this way to men as the absolute future for man, and that he can and must therefore be named and expected by man. This is what they understand by religion. Religion for them is not the solution of those questions arising in this world, as it were functionally, *between* individual realities in their mutual relationships; it is the solution of the question which refers to the *whole* of these many different realities. Since this question will always remain, religion too – Christianity – will always remain, since its nature consists precisely in not confusing the question of the world with the question *in* the world.

(b) This permanent religion will always remain as an institutional religion. Since man must *also* accomplish, in a reflex way, even his transcendental relation to the one totality of his existence, his world and his future, he has to accomplish it also in conceptual categories, in concrete actions, in the social order, briefly: in a Church. He cannot do it in any other way. If, therefore, the religion of the future is to be present always, then it will always be there as a social quantity. This quantity in its historical concreteness will always depend *also* on the profane order of secular society. Since Christianity has no concretely binding view of this profane society and is also incapable of prophesying about it, it cannot make any prediction about the *concrete form* of its own socio-ecclesiological structure of the future.

Since Christianity – however much it knows itself to be the religion [68] which in itself is meant for all men – knows in the *very* nature of things and in its *eschatology* that it will be a controversial and even rejected institution until the dawn of the absolute future itself, this reason alone suffices to prevent it from counting on ecclesiastical and secular society ever becoming even merely materially identified. It itself is after all the socially organised community of free belief in the absolute future, of a belief therefore which is necessarily based on the individual decision of each person. Hence it cannot expect in any way that all men will ever *in actual fact* belong to it. Since the earthly future of mankind, however, tends more and more towards a social organisation of mankind as one and as a whole, and not to historically and geographically limited cultures particular to each individual people, a situation is rapidly approaching when everyone will be the neighbour of everyone else. This means that in future there also will be no more *homogeneous* regional strata and societies in the Christian sense. In the historical and social unity of the one humanity, Christianity will therefore be everywhere as well as being everywhere merely a part of humanity, since presumably embracing only a minority.

It is, therefore, in the interests of Christianity itself to be able to live in freedom in a secular society which itself intends to be pluralistic in the religious field and which creates or at least permits the possibilities and presuppositions for this; this does not decide anything about the extent to which a society must presuppose or create an intramundane homogeneous 'world-view' for its own continued existence. A society of the future can support such a religious pluralism all the more easily as it will certainly not wish to aspire seriously to an absolute uniformity even as an ideal in so far as an *intramundane* ideology is concerned, since such a uniformity would mean the end of history. Every theory about a future within this world which as such does not wish to annul history must, therefore, necessarily develop a theory of legitimate intramundane and, in this sense, democratic pluralism. It must therefore inevitably make room of its own accord for there being *those* in this future who, professing themselves as such, wait hopefully for the absolute future.

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[69]

PART TWO

Questions of Fundamental Theology

[71]

6

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

The overall theme of this symposium – even though it is historical – permits also of a systematic view. In this hour's talk, we mean simply to consider a small *part* of this total systematic view, viz. the relationship between theology and philosophy. This means more precisely that we are going to ask about how and why revelation and reflection on it (which we call theology) leave room of *themselves* for a philosophy, understood as an independent and basic science and *as* a condition of the possibility of theology. For, if the relationship between the two is not seen simply as one of peaceful co-existence or as the encounter of two sciences alien to each other by their very origins and merely having an ultimately common source in God, but is seen rather in the sense just indicated regarding the question posed, then the connection between the question about the relationship between philosophy and theology and the overall theme becomes immediately evident. If theology of its very nature presupposes philosophy as a condition of its own possibility, and presupposes it as an independent basic science, then it is quite possible that Western philosophy – in so far as it corresponds to and obeys this its basic origin – should be both the harbinger and forerunner of what the West is even now still charged to give to the world: the message of Jesus Christ, the divine Logos in the flesh of the world. It is quite possible then that it should also fulfil this commission precisely by turning to men in the world on their own ground, which is philosophy itself representing man's own understanding of himself.

It is all-important, therefore, to attain the envisaged unity and diversity of philosophy and theology, and this precisely as originating from theology itself. If this attempt is successful, then it will no longer be necessary to speak directly about the connection of this reflection with the overall theme itself, for this will then be perfectly evident.

It is not my intention to conjure up anew the controversy about the [72] possibility and nature of a *Christian* philosophy, a controversy which – while renewing even earlier problems – has been carried on in the last few decades. In referring to this question, we are trying to come to the real point right away. Whatever may have been the results of the controversy just referred to, it will surely be impossible to deny that the opinion of a basic strangeness existing between philosophy and theology still prevails among Catholics. One stresses with the Vatican Council the duality of knowledge by natural reason and by revelation supported by grace; it is said that these two cannot contradict each other because they both have their ultimate source in God, the One Truth; it is denied that philosophy and the philosopher (if he is a Catholic) can emancipate themselves completely from the higher norm of revelation and of the Church's magisterium, but one adds immediately that it is simply a question here of a *norma negativa*. One stresses the necessity and significance of philosophy within theology itself; one also points to the in fact very varied stimuli for new themes which theology has offered to philosophy in the Christian sphere, yet these stimuli are allowed validity in most cases only as a kind of external growth-stimulant for a development which after all only philosophy can give itself. All in all, philosophy and theology are simply

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conceived as two basically different sciences and this conception is more or less presupposed as self-evident. Philosophy 'is simply there'; one has it, engages in it, knows what it is, and so this structure, whose difference one declares to be 'natural', comes face to face with theology; they meet one another like two people who did not previously know one another, who are unrelated and will now try to see whether – even after all this time – one could not combine together in a tolerable symbiosis.

What is then, in reality, the truth about this relationship?

This question is ultimately only part of a much greater theological question about the relationship between nature and grace. In saying this, however, we must add right away that nothing much is gained by making this statement, since the relationship between the *latter* two factors is no clearer. It is important just the same not to overlook this greater problem when dealing with the smaller.

Starting from this, it can be said to begin with that just as the concrete reality of grace includes nature as an inner moment within itself so also in our question . . . philosophy is an inner moment of theology. Grace is not a thing, but a particular condition of a spiritual person (really of this [73] person *himself* even though not owed to him). As the determination of a subject, it is – as such – formally distinct from this subject, in fact in no way owed to it. But it can also exist *as* this determination of this subject, as a particular manner-of-being of this spiritual person. It can exist and be understood in this way only in the sense that through it the *person*, i.e. 'nature', exists, viz. exists *in this way* and is understood as being in this way. Fulfilment in grace is necessarily also fulfilment of the natural person. In *this* sense, therefore, the latter is an inner moment of the concreteness of grace, just as potency is the potency of *act* and act is the act of the *potency*, and both therefore mutually embody one another in the concrete so as to exist and to exist as such themselves. Grace exists by affecting a spiritual, personal substantiality, by being the divinising condition *of the latter*, and hence presupposes and incorporates into itself the whole reality of this person as the condition of its own possibility and makes it part of the factors of its own concrete being.

This is also the way in which we must understand the relationship between revelation and theology, on the one hand, and philosophy, on the other. First of all, revelation understood as something heard and believed, is necessarily also already theology. It may be only the rudimentary beginnings of theology, but it really is already theology. After all, revelation – wherever and indeed because it is taken as historical and propositional revelation – is heard by a human being who already knows other things besides this revelation, a revelation which does not occur always and everywhere but only here and now. But the hearing of a message by someone who already has other knowledge can only be possible – since it takes place in the unity of this one person – in confrontation with this other knowledge, however undefinitive this confrontation may be; it is hearing by means of categories already possessed from elsewhere, a reception within previously given horizons, however much these horizons themselves may be altered by this hearing; in other words, it is already an active effort of thought by man; in short, it is theology, however much this theology may in certain circumstances be thought of as being subject also to the direction and control of the original process of revelation. Such theology, however, being a necessary and unavoidable element of the hearing of revelation and hence of revelation itself necessarily implies philosophy, i.e. a previous, transcendental as well as historical self-comprehension of the man who hears the historical revelation of God. Whether or not this self-understanding may already be [74] called philosophy in the technical sense is quite immaterial in the final analysis, as long as one admits that even philosophy in the strictest sense cannot be anything other than the methodically exact, reflected and most expediently controlled representation and articulation of this original and never quite attained self-understanding. In other words, anyone who admits that in the unity of the one subject, every bit of knowledge is also the function of

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every other part of knowledge possessed by this subject, and who does not maintain by this that every knowledge has to do with revelation (a point to which we will have to return), must admit that revealed knowledge is also the function of philosophy, given that philosophy is understood as the basic formula of man's self-understanding in so far as the latter is not simply itself an effect of revelation.

If, however, this relationship of dependence is not to detract from the dignity and autonomy of revelation and theology, then it can be understood only in the sense that revelation is the highest entelechy and norm of this knowledge, unified in the unity of the one subject and thus presupposes this different 'philosophical' knowledge – precisely *as* a different kind of knowledge – as the condition of its own possibility. Only under this condition is it possible to avoid the dilemma of considering revelation either as being dependent on a knowledge different from it or as having to be quite independent of philosophy. This is especially true since the inner objective reconciliation and the original unity of what remains indifferent in knowledge cannot be brought about by the simple expedient of falling back on the one objective source of both kinds and powers of knowledge.

This brings us to a problem which we cannot really consider in its *formal* nature more exactly, viz. the general question as to whether and how a being can presuppose another being – precisely in so far as it is *another* – as the real condition of its own being, and thus presuppose itself, and whether and how the other – precisely as other – can be the inner condition of an existent (without reducing this to the category of the relationship of efficient causality) and how one can recognise this kind of thing. We intend to leave this problem to one side and will turn again to our own more limited question. That something like philosophy is an inner moment of theology (and therefore also of revelation), poses no difficulties in itself, since every being can be conceived as constructed of different constitutive elements and hence one moment of theology might very well be called – philosophy. The difficulty, however, is to understand [75] the fact that, and the way in which, theology distinguishes this moment within its own being as something other than itself and at the same time introduces it into its own autonomous being; this being the only way in which it can make it a real condition of its own being. The difficulty in all this lies in the fact that the indispensable *ancilla theologiae* can be such only if it is at the same time *domina* in its own house without the role of *ancilla* being simply a part-time job alongside the principal job of being master, and that this mastery is possible only through the services to theology rendered as *ancilla*. What is the reason for this?

We can make this clear by a series of connected theological reflections. We must first of all fall back again on the relationship of nature and grace, and ask: why cannot the reality called 'nature' be conceived simply as an inner moment in the concrete relationship to God, which is known as the order of grace, in such a way that if it is not given grace, it must always be thought of as always and completely meaningless and hence simply sinful? The answer is: because grace, understood as the absolute self-communication of God himself must always presuppose as a condition of its own possibility (in order to be itself) someone to whom it can address itself and someone to whom it is not owed; which therefore means also someone who can be thought of without contradiction even apart from this communication. Accordingly, it must be said that since revelation is a moment in this free self-opening-out by gratuitous grace, it presupposes as a condition of its own possibility the one to whom this revelation remains unowed; revelation taken as the gnosis of the child adopted gratuitously by *grace* presupposes the servant as the condition of its own possibility. God has created the servant only in order to make him his child; but he was able to create the child of grace, in distinction to his only-begotten Son, only by creating the addressee without claim to sonship, i.e. the servant. In the same way, God has willed the truth of philosophy only because he willed the truth of his own self-revelation, i.e. the absolute, beatifying truth which he is himself and

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which for us is the vision which is the nearness and not the distance of the absolutely Incomprehensible. He could, however, only will precisely this divine truth which is given out and away from himself, as the truth which is a gratuitous grace and is expressed in and out of love. For this reason he had to create the one from whom he could keep this truth a secret, i.e. the philosopher who, because he himself experienced God as the one who conceals himself could accept revelation from him *as a grace*. What we [76] call revelation, therefore, is not something added which – simply resting in itself and self-evident – is presupposed by a spiritual nature and its self-understanding. Rather, the spiritual nature is the necessary condition presupposed by revelation *itself and* set free *so that* revelation can be what it is, viz. the grace which is the personal and free self-communication of God. The statement that the covenant includes creation and that the latter does not simply precede the former in time, can be understood in a perfectly correct sense which does not destroy the real Catholic meaning of the distinction between nature and grace but rather makes it possible and indeed provides the basic reason for it. Since the self-disclosure of God in a personal revelation and as a free act of love can appear only to someone who understands himself and who thus disposes autonomously over himself revelation presupposes a clearly distinguished, free philosophy as the space for its own possibility. This reflection could be supplemented by a glance at the fact that this revelation, since it is to be responded to by free faith, must also be able to exist in the mode of rejection, and that it itself can create *this* its own possibility only if the 'disbelief' does not thereby simply cancel itself out but still remains nature and self-consciousness which can explain itself philosophically.

The question about the temporal succession of (revelation) must be distinguished from these essential relations between revelation and philosophy (understood as the other-than-itself presupposed by revelation itself). The essential relationship envisaged here can exist even though there is philosophy *before* revelation *in time*, for the temporal succession is precisely the historical manner of appearance of this essential relationship. Even what is earlier in time can be and can become precisely *because* it is the condition of the possibility of what comes later in time, for both come about because they are supported by the one God who simply wants one thing, viz. to communicate himself; hence two factors must be posited, viz. the constitution of the hearer *who is to be given the grace* of the message and the message itself. These two must be distinct if the message is to bean act of the free love of the personal self-communication of God. The autonomy of the spirit as 'nature' is the condition of the possibility of that obedience by which alone revelation can be accepted as it should be, viz. in the free acceptance *of grace*.

We cannot show here, of course, what exactly is to be understood – from the point of view of philosophy itself – by the thus postulated freedom of that autonomous philosophy which is introduced by revelation [77] and its theology into this freedom in order to serve them. We cannot show here how this autonomy is to be conceived more exactly, so that it can be the autonomy of a ε)πιστη/μη πρω&τη without endangering the ultimate originality and independence of revelation and faith and without subjecting these, contrary to their nature, to *its* law. Instead, we would simply refer the reader to J. B. Metz: 'Theologische und metaphysische Ordnung', *ZKT* LXXXIII (1961), pp. 1-14.

The unity of philosophy and theology within their theological distinction is much closer than has been suggested in our reflections up to this point. To see this, we must attend to the difference between general salvation- and revelation-history, on the one hand, and the special and official revelation-history expressed in concepts and words, on the other hand, which alone is usually called revelation-history. Anyone who believes in the universal, serious and efficacious salvific will of God towards the whole of humanity and this to include even infralapsarian mankind – and anyone who believes in this salvific will as a supernatural, gratuitous order of salvation and as the basis of the one supernatural goal of man – cannot

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seriously dispute the fact that salvation-history (as the accepted or rejected, but real offer of God's self-communication to man) is co-existent with the whole personal history of mankind; in other words, he cannot seriously dispute that salvation-history and world-history are not indeed absolutely identical but nevertheless coincide in space and in time. But anyone who as a good thomist holds fast to the principle that the supernatural gratuitous elevation of man by the grace of salvation (whether accepted or rejected) is an elevation to a new formal object of the spirit which is unattainable by any merely natural act – i.e. an elevation to a new, even though perhaps permanently unthematic horizon, within which every spiritual existence takes place – cannot really deny that the universal salvation-history co-existent in space and time with world-history signifies also in a true sense a co-extensive universal *revelation-history*, if it is permissible to give the name of revelation even to the simple opening out of an *absolute* horizon of spiritual existence by the free act of God's self-communication. If this is so, then it follows that what we normally call revelation and revelation-history is in reality the conceptually concrete, propositional and divinely controlled '*thematisation*' of the universal gratuitous revelation and its history achieved by God through his witnesses and miracles, and not the first most original or slowly generalised revelation-history which could be contrasted only [78] to the so-called *natural* revelation-history. If there is indeed a universal, supernatural salvific will of God, then there is a revelation-history which is co-existent with the history of mankind and hence with the whole history of religion. This general revelation does not occur directly by way of the objectivity and conceptuality constitutive of the 'thematic content' of human words, but by a change in the unthematic horizon and in the basic condition of the mind of the person, a change which necessarily takes place on account of the accepted or rejected supernatural grace. The reflection on, and thematisation and interpretation of this supernatural basic condition, in which the absolute mystery is experienced as the absolute, giving nearness, may not be possible at all up to a certain point by man's unaided powers; it may have a long history; the way in which it is directed or furthered by God, and guaranteed by prophets and miracles, may not be the same everywhere; it may often be mixed up with false interpretations, a fact which proclaims the helplessness and the guilt of unbelief or of any proud wanting-to-be-like-God by one's own powers. Yet the effects of the supernatural basic condition of man – understood as an existential signifying revelation and given by grace – are unavoidably being produced wherever man lives his life under that grace which calls him whether he is conscious of it or not and whether he listens to it or deliberately and disobediently turns a deaf ear to it. It follows from this, however, that in the present, universal order of salvation which actually concerns all men in all ages, that self-clarification of man's existence which we call philosophy, can certainly be 'pure' philosophy in a particular sense; namely in the sense that it does not take any of its material contents and norms from the official, socially constituted and hence ecclesiastical, special and thematised revelation; it is not true in the sense that the unthematic illumination of human existence, out of which it draws life and which it never adequately catches up on or can replace, *only* contains elements arising out of the *natural* being of man.

The depth of the human abyss, which in a thousand ways is *the* theme of philosophy, is already the abyss which has been opened by God's grace and which stretches into the depths of God himself; and this precisely when and where the philosophising man cannot attain this fact of his spiritual existence by exact reflection, when and where he cannot distinguish nature and grace in the accomplishment of his spiritual existence.

It follows from this, however, that where the official, explicit Christian revelation presupposes philosophy as the condition of its own possibility, [79] and brings it into its freedom, this in no way takes the form of a positing of the *pure* possibility but inevitably takes place in the form of a philosophy already actuated to some extent by Christianity. This

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is so not only when men engage in philosophy who are explicitly conscious of being Christians but also when those men philosophise whom we might call anonymous Christians (and this applies in principle to all men who do not explicitly call themselves Christians). The anonymous Christians – whether they know it or not, whether they distinguish it from the light of their natural reason or not – are enlightened by the light of God's grace which God denies to no man. From this point of view, it is correct to say that in every philosophy men already engage inevitably and unthematically in theology, since no one has any choice in the matter – even when he does not know it consciously – whether he wants to be pursued by God's revealing grace or not. Only we Christians are on the whole too blind or too lazy to recognise this latent 'Christianness' in the history of human existence, of religion in general and of philosophy. Unconsciously we are often guilty of living in the selfish narrow-mindedness of those who think their knowledge is more valuable and more blessed with grace if it is possessed only by a few; we rather foolishly think that God himself only makes an impression on men with His truth when *we* have already made an impression on them with our thematic and sociologico-official and explicit form of this truth.

Before thinking this out further, it must be remembered also that the philosophy of the West has been freed to live its own life in a thousand different explicit and historically tangible ways by Christian revelation and theology. This is well known and has been stated often. Yet it is perhaps well to acknowledge that this does not happen only in patristic and medieval philosophy but also in modern philosophy right up to the present day. The philosophers themselves may often have been only lukewarm Christians or no Christians at all; their philosophy in its propositional results (which are not indeed the be all and end all of philosophy) may often have to be rejected in the name of Christianity; yet the questions, the development of themes, the opening up of new horizons in all this dialogue contain many more Christian elements than we faint-hearted Christians – if we serve more the letter than the spirit of a Christian philosophy – would be prepared to admit. One could say quite rightly that the turning from a cosmocentric objective philosophy of the Greeks to the anthropocentric transcendental philosophy of the [80] moderns is perfectly Christian in principle and basically already begins with St Thomas; it would be quite true to say, therefore, that the ecclesiastical 'philosophy of the schools' has still much to catch up on and to save with regard to what has been developed apart from it, though without being fully conscious of itself, as a partial realisation of what in fact is possible only in the *kairos* of Christianity and yet is still genuinely independent philosophy outside the orthodoxy of the magisterium.

After these reflections, we now go on to presuppose that the Church – and secondarily, by derivation from her, the Western world – still have the historically unfulfilled and still valid mission and commission to proclaim Christ's revelation to the whole world and to the future, globally unified history. What follows then – under this presupposition – from what has been said up to this point, with regard to the philosophy of the West?

1. First of all, the West need not abandon its own synthesis of theology and philosophy in favour of an attempt to hand on the, as it were, naked message of Christianity without the so-called 'overlay' of Western philosophy. This need not happen because there can be no proclamation of revelation without theology and no theology without philosophy. One can only spread abroad what one has heard . . . but whatever is to be spread abroad, is heard only in the measure of its acceptance within the whole of one's own spiritual existence. An unphilosophical theology would be a bad theology . . . and a theology which is bad, cannot render its necessary service to the proclamation of revelation.

2. This does not mean, however, that the Western world should be simply allowed to extend its traditional philosophy in a traditional way into a world-philosophy, perhaps even with the tacit view that a philosophical garb which has become unfashionable with us, will still be

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good and modern enough for the barbarians. This philosophy is necessary and useful for the proclamation of Christianity precisely if it is adequate enough for the really sufficient hearing of revelation by *ourselves*. This is so, however, only if we attain this philosophy anew in and out of our own actual spiritual situation, which really is ours here and now, and thus when it is not merely 'the handed-down' but a creatively and newly fashioned philosophy. After historism, and in the age of microphysics and cybernetics, of a history which is becoming planetary and in an age or a more deeply structured society, etc., *our* own existential situation that is to be illumined by philosophy is different from what it was before; and hence [81] our philosophy too must be different. This includes even the philosophy by which, in the evening of its existence, the Western world must deliver the gospel message.

3. Furthermore, this situation which is also the *kairos* of our philosophy today, embraces also encounter with the existence and hence with the explicit or implicit philosophy of those to whom we, in the evening of our history, may and must still bring the ever-young message of the Lord. The listeners change the situation of the speakers, and this even in favour of the *Christian character* of our own situation as philosophers. As we have said already, there can be no philosophy which could be simply a-Christian. The Western message of Christianity, even by means of the philosophy which precedes and accompanies it, has also undoubtedly the task of furthering the philosophical self-understanding of the non-Western world and of helping it to become more conscious of itself and free itself both from error and the abbreviation of its self-interpretation. Yet, since the Western world, during its wanderings into strange lands while carrying Christ's message, always encounters a world in which Christ's grace has long been at work even though not called by its own name, the reverse must necessarily also happen if everything runs its proper course: the anonymous Christianity (i.e. humanity and endowment with grace) of non-Western philosophy can bring to light and eradicate abbreviations of its Christian nature in the explicitly Christian philosophy of the West; it can liberate latent possibilities of its nature which even Christian philosophy, in spite of its name and of its inherent possibilities, and even as a specifically Christian philosophy, has not caught up with. In brief, the proclaiming West can itself become more Christian and more philosophical by having to listen in order to become comprehensible. Whether and to what extent there thereby arises anything like a common Christian world-philosophy – or whether and how national and historical individual and incommensurable traits may unfold themselves in multiple philosophies which need not necessarily contradict each other and yet may he multiple – all this depends on the question (which we cannot enter into here) as to whether and how the unity and interlacement of the until now separated historical spheres will produce a homogeneous and yet still and indeed even more differentiated world-culture.

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[82]

7

A SMALL FRAGMENT 'ON THE COLLECTIVE FINDING OF TRUTH'

If a human community has no longer any common possession of truth, then both it and the individual would be destroyed, i.e. degraded to a merely biological and physical level, a level on which alone man (taken as an individual and as community) cannot exist. In man, seen as the being of inescapable reflection, reflection itself belongs also to the conditions of his material and biological existence. His 'ideology', therefore, is just as much the 'substructure' as the 'superstructure' of his human existence. A common truth (understood at least as the common basis for the validity of the 'rules of the game' of interpersonal activity) is also always present at least in an ultimate basic 'store', since this is already implied in the existence of language, without which man cannot live. Words, which are used in relation to someone else, always presuppose a common valid meaning; at the very least – in the most extreme case – in the words by which one person maintains that there is no such meaning and by which it is understood by another person, or by which the denial of someone else's proposition is communicated to him. Even someone who says that every language is related to a finite system of reference and is valid only within this system, communicates with this other person by this statement, especially if it is heard by the other and is accepted by him (and this is the intention of this statement); he communicates with the other in the permanent openness of what is unspeakable and hence present, in whose presence he achieves the knowledge of the invincible finiteness of his system of reference and of his language and by which – without destroying this finiteness – he has nevertheless already crossed over it.

If, therefore, it is a question of the attempt at a collective finding of truth, or of a 'dialogue' which seeks agreement and unity, of discussion, debate, conflict of opinion – and ultimately all these terms mean the same [83] thing – then this attempt does not start off from absolute zero. This beginning does not necessarily have to take place in a formulated, explicit series of propositions. Not every dialogue by which a truth is sought begins like a Catholic Council with a presupposed and explicitly formulated profession of faith which becomes lost on the wings of a hymn into the incomprehensible nature of God and which serves as the starting-point from which each and every person, together with all the others, tries to find the collective truth. It need not always be like this, and this simply because, even in the just-mentioned case, the newly sought collective truth is precisely the better understanding of that common possession of the truth; hence its starting-point and goal strangely coincide. If one were, however, simply to presuppose in any attempt at a collective finding of truth that one does not yet possess any common truth, or that the other person is simply and purely in error, then one could not even begin. At least an unadministered, not yet counted capital of common convictions is invested in every dialogue.

The question of the collective finding of truth, of course, presupposes that there is such a finding which is possible only in such a dialogue. There is no dialogue in the research laboratories of the modern exact sciences. There one merely points out certain facts to one another, facts which everyone can see for himself the object itself does not exist in dialogue as such. Here, however, we are referring to the fact that there are truths to be found which are present only in the process of the collective finding of truth and which only thus begin to appear. There are such truths, even though too indiscreet a conception of the objectivity of truth (even that which is sought in dialogue) may give the impression that even the dialogue is merely one – basically replaceable – way of drawing attention to the intended truth, so that one may then equally well associate with it on one's own and in silence. The dialogue whose

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object is meant here is concerned with man himself. But man is himself only by being someone who lives, someone who cares about others, someone who opens himself, who accepts absolute responsibility for and before the other, the place in which the whole gathers together and thereby reveals itself – by rejecting and accepting at the same time – as what is different from that which simply collects together. This man, therefore, neither finds himself ultimately by specialised scientific and technological examination or by lonely self-reflection, because what is attained in these ways is either (in the first case) merely something *about* man, or because [84] (in the second case) man is blinded or becomes dumb concerning himself since he has no longer anything to which he could contrast himself. This does not apply, of course, to the case in which he calls upon and thus turns to that incomprehensible breadth itself which he knows is always embracing him by supporting and differentiating him, since it is the very condition of the possibility of his coming to *himself* and not merely to something about himself. It is true, in other words, of all cases except in the case where man prays – whatever name he himself may give to the acceptance of this governing power of the all-embracing mystery of his existence – but this merely reinforces what we have said, viz. that the finding of the truth of man takes place in dialogue; it really *is* a collective seeking for truth and does not merely use dialogue as a help.

If our first two reflections just briefly indicated are correct, then the collective finding of truth can really and ultimately consist only in the fact that a person makes an effort in such a dialogue to recognise as his own the community which he presupposes and this in the way in which it is given in others; conversely, it means that the person lets the other recognise this community as his own just as it is given in himself and is brought before his own and the other's consciousness in the dialogue. Dialogue, therefore, presupposes and seeks unity, and lives in a genuine tension between both these attitudes.

A dialogue concerned with the collective finding of truth can create an agreement: one agrees on a formula. This formula has its own significance because a reflex (i.e. formulated) self-understanding is itself a moment in the totality of man's personal, spiritual self-possession; man lives out of its never adequately administered fullness (and history), and is all the time striving towards that silent and yet – *dum silentium tenerent omnia* – self-communicating and original fullness of reality which we call God. Yet, since man only possesses himself in his original self-understanding – which he is but cannot administer as he wills – by attributing something of it to himself and to others, the formula is important and essential for the whole (and especially the intellectual) life of man. Moreover, since man always exists only by being open to dialogue with others, the common formula – or the 'confession of society' by which it is supported – is a goal of the dialogue for the collective finding of the truth towards which one ought necessarily to strive. If we were no longer to strive for it, there would no longer be a dialogue, since a mere 'understanding' of someone else's opinion of making of one's own opinion understood, already necessarily [85] includes a moment of approval (at least in the sphere referred to here), an approval which wants to widen and deepen itself. But this attempted and attainable formula, being embraced by an existential questionableness which can never be completely overcome, is always at the same time open also towards the future. The remaining paragraphs will explain what this means.

The formula is never the thing itself and remains inadequate in comparison with it. Even in the case of the objects of a dialogue, it is never possible to say that one is speaking about *one* thing and is leaving everything else to one side, as if one could ever express the former adequately and could thus reach complete agreement for all time about it, having 'polished it off', so to speak. It may be said quite correctly of abstraction that '*abstrahentium non est mendacium*' but the more personal a reality is, the more it is true that the reality of one thing is inextricably bound up with other things, the more proximate becomes the danger of an abstraction being substituted (even though unavoidably) for the understanding of what is

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abstracted, and the more is one forced by the particular into the unsurveyable whole. This also makes even the best formula all the more inadequate, precarious and provisional in view of an all-embracing insight – or of another formula which gains new insight but only at the price of a new obscurity which represents the absence or recession of a previous clarity. It follows from this that someone who thinks he possesses a clear insight (and is even quite justified in thinking this), must nevertheless ask himself whether he has not unconsciously gained it too easily and at the price of no longer seeing it in its – for us painful – surrender to the incomprehensible mystery from which an individual real truth can no more free itself than the individual existent can free himself from God. Anyone who does not understand the clear formula, or feels himself impelled to reject it as false, must ask himself whether he does not reject it because he expects too much of it, proudly and impatiently demanding that it should say everything at once. In general, any agreement on a formula, whether one adverts to it or not, is also necessarily a fixing of *terminology*, which is an act of voluntary and practical decision and not merely of seeing something to be so in theory. This decision may then be made by an official authority (for instance, a Council of the Church or a Politbureau) or may be the result of no official decision but rather simply the spirit of the age. Out of the infinite variety of realities, the word selects a certain number and summarises these in a definition. It [86] will always be possible to summarise and define these things in a different way and to emphasise other aspects while letting others recede into the background. It will always remain possible to form concepts which would force one to turn the main clause of a formula into a marginal reference and, vice versa, to turn what was admitted incidentally and subsequently, or what was merely not denied into the content of the explicit main statement. Such determinations of terminology will always be basically changeable, and every dialogue looking for understanding contributes consciously or unconsciously to this change. Thus, every dialogue demands a ready obedience in the speaker with regard to this kind of linguistic regulation, in so far as an in itself infinite dialogue (i.e. one which conjures up the infinite) must always be broken off again and again in time and yet is expected (at least in certain circumstances) to have reached a uniting formula by the time it is thus broken off for the time being. Understood wisely and lovingly, it never closes the openness for a more comprehensive or better future formula, nor does the dialogue – simply because the right formula has ~to be narrowly hedged around – cease to be a sacrament of initiation into the nameless mystery which all formulae must serve.

Furthermore, the formula seen as the result of a collective finding of truth, remains burdened with a never adequately resolved existential questionableness: when the dialogue ends – for the time being – nobody can have the absolute assurance that both sides really understand it in the same ‘subjective’ sense. A formula of exact science, because it is understood in the same way by all parties, can be confirmed by each ‘participant in the dialogue’ (if this phrase is still applicable in this case), using it in such a way that there is brought about one and the same physical effect (the machine, bridle, explosion, etc.) which faces the ‘partners-in-dialogue’ as one and the same ‘third term’. In the case of formulae which are meant to express the whole of man, including the mystery which surrounds him, this kind of ‘objectification’ is not possible. The intended reality, as something possessed by everyone in common, is present only in the formula, i.e. in an inter-human manner. What is held directly in common, therefore, is the statement and not the understanding of it. That this understanding of the common statement is the same, is not absolutely guaranteed even when there is complete agreement about the formula. This is so even for the simple reason that the sum total of all the individual and historical presuppositions of the understanding of words and sentences [87] is different, and at the same time is never so adequately reflected upon that even on this one could come to some explicit understanding. This questionableness of the agreement reached is so self-evident for the Christian understanding of the faith, for instance,

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that one always knows that the explicit acceptance of a common formula of belief provides no subjective and absolute person-to-person certitude as to whether the person concerned is really a believer. In addition, it must be remembered that the achieved and mutually accepted formula is never so 'clear' that it brings its own absolute understanding with it and that it cannot be given nor indeed require any further interpretation. Thus it can be said there is probably no formula of faith in Christian theology, for instance, which is not interpreted differently by the different theological 'schools', without it being thereby permissible to say that this means that there is no common understanding at all of such a formula; then, on the other hand, one cannot say either that these different interpretations by different schools are simply extrinsic additions to the formula which do not touch the formula itself. This is the case even by the mere fact of the mediate, inter-personal meaning of a formula; it is all the less possible, therefore, to know absolutely whether the subjective understanding of such formulae in its personal achievement coincides in the partners in a dialogue. Every formula receives its *total* meaning from the *total* system of reference of each speaker. These systems as a whole can no longer be adequately compared.

Yet formulae and agreement on them are necessary and meaningful. This seemingly so very precarious agreement can exist by reason of the basic intellectual confidence that man in his imposed and supporting self-understanding cannot *simply* 'fall out of' the truth. The truth shows itself to have a certainty sufficient for the continuance of intellectual existence by the mere fact that the real life-together in all dimensions, the common celebration, cult, personal love and other active fulfilments of human and *inter*-human existence – which rest on the realities meant by the formulae – actually succeed. The truth is, therefore, ultimately sufficiently sure of itself because *these* formulae are ultimately simply initiations into the acceptance of the mystery which governs everything in unspeakable nearness, this mystery which, as it were, manages to force its way through even the chinks in the falsely, crookedly or only half understood formula, into that central core of man in which he achieves himself in freedom, where he is so much at one with himself that he posits [88] himself but can no longer step back from himself theoretically, and where he expresses himself but does not make a statement about himself. Yet Christianity at least knows that man in his freedom can open *or* close himself to this permanent, inescapable nearness of the absolute mystery (given by the transcendence of the spirit and grace together), and that the decision on this question of eternal life or eternal death is *also* inevitably conditioned by the reflex understanding of this situation, i.e. also by the formula. Hence Christianity and, before and together with it, all wise and experienced humanity, acknowledges the significance even of the formula for 'existence' itself; it does not therefore permit the agreement of men either as an ideal to be sought for only in the biologico-technical dimension of man, i.e. in 'peace' on this plane, or as an ideal to be thought of as banished into the realm of an absolute, subjective loneliness and thus to be misinterpreted to mean a merely absolute, asymptotically envisaged ideal.

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[89]

8

SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY

1. *The notion of scripture*. Because the entire self-disclosure of God is given in Jesus Christ in the form of the final and eschatologically victorious salvation of the whole human race, salvation-history has entered its eschatological phase. This phase can only be succeeded now by the cessation of history itself when this salvation – which has already taken place – becomes revealed in the direct vision of God and established by the irrevocable transfiguration of the world in the resurrection of the body. For this reason, and in this sense, is God's revelation closed; and all official and general salvation- and revelation-history has entered into a stage which can no longer be surpassed. Anything that happens from the time of Jesus Christ – the crucified and risen Lord in whom this final salvation took place and became manifest – must have the character of anamnesis, of being knowingly and existentially (believingly) referred back to this all-opening and already all-embracing beginning of the end which is given in Jesus Christ; and this even in spite of the length of time and the greatness and depth of the historical 'material' by means of which this final understanding of human existence at the end of time must develop, prove itself and become conscious of itself by continual growth.

For this to be possible, it is presupposed that this beginning remains ever-present even in that same dimension (although not only in it) in which the Church herself exists (as the enduring form of the salvation of Christ in this final age), i.e. in the dimension of the explicit profession of faith, of the faith conceived in ideas, of a common norm of faith obligatory on all, of the possibility of an *inter*-humanly verifiable reference back to this permanent, normative beginning of the final age which will no longer be succeeded or surpassed by any new beginning in salvation-history. The pure objectification of this eschatological beginning of the end, i.e. the 'primitive Church' – an objectification therefore which forms an absolutely normative *norma non normata* – is called 'scripture' in the [90] just mentioned dimension. By inspiration scripture became the work of God precisely in its role of the objectification of the faith of the primitive Church understood as the permanent norm of the faith of all later Christian ages, and this as a pure norm; in the face of this norm, any really critical distinction of spirits (regarding what in this reality comes from the Spirit of God and what is merely human invention) is no longer necessary or permitted, even granted the recognition of the contingent nature of the historical and the realisation that so much in the historical is capable of, and indeed requires, developing and unfolding. It should be noted in passing that this shows us the theological meaning of the inerrancy of scripture; scripture is the *norma non normata*, and it must be *such* that it can be this: being a work of God it is absolutely inerrant. This formal statement, however, still leaves open the question as to whether the scriptural writers ever meant to make any absolutely firm, declaratory statement which does not lie within this very proclamation of the Christian salvation, though including everything which according to scripture itself belongs to this and not what is included in it according to our own standard applied to scripture in an *a priori* manner. The declaration of the Church's magisterium to the effect that one must not limit the inerrancy of scripture *a priori* to its teaching about religious truths (DS. 3411, 3650, 3887) is of course formally correct; but it does not tell us anything about *what* the scriptural writers really wanted to say unambiguously and in a declaratory manner in every material respect and what they did not mean to assert in such a way.

Since the primitive Church always professed herself to be the true successor to the Old

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Testament and always held the history of the Old Testament to be her own pre-history, knowledge about the authentic pre-history is indeed a factor of the primitive Church herself; hence this knowledge – and consequently also the pure objectification of this knowledge, which is the Old Testament understood as an inspired book – are also part of the normative elements of the later ages of the Church.

2. The nature of *theology* and what functions it performs in the consciousness of faith of the individual and of the Church, must be treated under this catchword of 'theology' itself. Here it is only important to emphasise that theology is not merely a scientifically methodic reflection on the Church's consciousness of faith but also an intrinsic element of this consciousness of faith itself. It is this in such a way (even though, of course, in a greater or lesser systematic 'scientific way') that this very [91] consciousness of faith itself unfolds itself with the assistance of this reflection (called 'theology'), becoming more reflexly conscious of itself and so becoming capable of leading to new explicit definitions and 'new' propositions of faith. All this is really self-evident. The Church's consciousness of faith must not be something purely abstract and unhistorical, but must constantly refer to the particular mental situation of the believers; in a word, even without prejudice to the permanent truth and closure of revelation, it must be something historical which is not merely accompanied by a history of theology but which itself forms a real history of *dogmas*. If this is so, then this history of the consciousness of faith must include all those factors which belong to the historicity of intellectual phenomena and hence must also include reflection. Hence, for a Catholic understanding of faith (which is characterised by the possibility of an evolution of irreformable 'new' dogmas), theology is ultimately not merely the non-binding human reflection – of an always reformable kind – on an unchangeable phenomenon without a history (e.g. a sacred scripture understood in this way); rather, it is the way in which an absolute history of faith takes place, a history which is irreversible and opens only into the future.

3. *Theology and scripture*. This history of faith, by reason of theological reflection as one of its moments (but not the only one, and in a Christian respect not even its most decisive one), remains nevertheless bound to its beginning, to the revelation of Jesus Christ in the apostolic age, in the pure form and as the *norma non normata* in which it has objectified itself in scripture. We may indeed even say (even though the inner Catholic theological discussion on this question has not yet come to a definite conclusion) that theology is referred to scripture as its only *material*, absolutely original and (*quoad nos*) *underived* source. Of course, scripture is known to us as such only in so far as it is handed down in the living, 'oral' tradition of the Church as something inspired and as the *norma non normata* of the Church's faith, since it is the pure objectification of the permanently authoritative conviction of faith of the apostolic Church. To this extent there is, of course, *one* dogma which the scriptures assert only in so far as they are a moment of the Church herself and not in so far as they are (also) something facing the ecclesiastical consciousness of faith. We refer, of course, to the dogma about sacred scripture itself, about its inspiration and the extent of the Canon of scripture. Yet this relationship between scripture and oral kerygma which follows in the nature or [92] things at least does not *need* to be universalised, since it is quite clear why it *can* be a unique relationship. Conversely, there is probably no dogma of the Church of which the Church herself has declared infallibly that it is known to her only through oral tradition (as a clearly distinct material source) *in such a way* that there is no basis at all for recognising it in scripture.

There is also no *consensus* among theologians as to whether and above all as to which dogmas of such a kind could be named. After all, such a 'tradition' should not merely be something postulated *by* the existence of the dogma (a tradition postulated by a theologian because he maintains that in his opinion this dogma cannot be derived from scripture and is

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not implied in it). Such a 'tradition' ought to be historically tangible for us, and this in such a way that it can be traced back to the apostolic age itself. Only in this case can the appeal to tradition do the job which belongs to it and which exists as the proper task of historical theology (even when a dogma or the definability of a proposition can be recognised without it by recourse to a unanimous consciousness of faith of any – even today's – epoch of the Church). This task of tradition and historical theology is to show *how* one of today's dogmas goes back to the consciousness of faith of the apostolic Church. It will, however, be possible to say that in practice and in fact, the extra-biblical attestations of the Church's faith – at least during the first two centuries – do not furnish any contents which, on the one hand, are clearly to be designated *as* proper convictions of faith and, on the other hand, must be described as having absolutely no basis in scripture. In other words, the postulate of a materially richer tradition as opposed to scripture, by which fact tradition could become an independent material source of faith for *us*, is of practically no use at all. If we were inclined in different cases to trace later dogmas back to the apostolic tradition by appealing to oral tradition, then such a procedure will be no more successful and no more convincing in the concrete than if we were to look for the 'ultimate foundation' of such dogmas in scripture. If exegetes do not think they are able to do this in this or that case, then it would have to be asked whether this apparent inability does not arise out of an inexact knowledge about the dogma concerned or whether it is not possibly conditioned by a biblicist positivism which is tacitly presupposed as the method to be used and which underestimates the possibilities of a legitimate unfolding of biblical data. It must be remembered in all this, of course, that there is a great difference between [93] the degree of certitude with which an individual theologian or exegete, on the one hand, and the Church's total consciousness of faith and the ecclesiastical magisterium, on the other hand, undertake such an explication of original biblical data. We may therefore state quite confidently that for theology, scripture is in practice the only material source of faith to which it has to turn as being the absolutely original, underived source and *norma non normata*.

All this in no way excludes tradition from its role as something indispensable to theology. Tradition, if and in so far as it is an attestation to the Church's consciousness of faith and of the teaching of the magisterium, always remains an authentic norm for the individual theologian's interpretation of scripture. It is after all the living self-understanding of the Church and hence also the living, permanent understanding of the scriptures, since the self-understanding of the Church always refers back to its own past and hence to the authoritative and unsurpassable self-understanding of the primitive Church which is given in its pure objectification in scripture. Thus scripture is always (explicitly or implicitly) read together with tradition; this is not as if tradition were trying to replace scripture (because it has already read it adequately and once and for all) nor as if scripture were trying to replace tradition. Nor is the ecclesiastical magisterium even in the least extent excluded or unjustly hemmed in in its function, by our description of scripture as in practice the only material source of the Church's consciousness of faith, one which no longer requires any further norm but is in fact the norm of everything else. The Church's magisterium after all is in no way a source of the content of faith since it receives no new revelation but simply has to safeguard and expound the *depositum fidei*. It has, therefore, a conserving, distinguishing and binding function with regard to the property transmitted by scripture and tradition (tradition understood as the expounding transmission of scripture) to the belief of the later Church and presented to the individual believer with a demand for his faith, but it does not create any new contents. As far as these contents are concerned, the Church of a particular age – just like the individual believer – is dependent on scripture and the tradition which continues to attest it, even though the fulfilment of this duty of referring back to scripture is not dependent for validity on the confirmation by the individual believer as if he were thus giving it its obligation.

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Seen in this light, it is possible to make clear the unique position of [94] scripture in theology. It is indeed true that wherever the living faith of the whole Church (in whatever form) attests itself with regard to a truth understood as revealed by God and demands the individual believer's absolute acceptance of this attestation, there is also a guarantee that this demand is justified and that it is a matter of a truth really revealed by God. The actual proclamation of the Church, however, does not and cannot adequately separate ideas, propositions, etc., which it holds on to with absolute assent and obligation of faith, from those concerning which it does not demand this absolute assent of faith (*fides divina et catholica*) or does not yet demand it, or is not yet quite clear about the possibility of such a demand – and those propositions which represent merely a human, theological opinion; in other words, it does not distinguish exactly between a *traditio divina* and a *traditio mere humana*. It often does separate them and indeed very precisely . . . but it would be impossible for it to distinguish always and at every point, with absolute reflex exactitude and unambiguous certitude, between the content of faith and its merely human interpretation. This is absolutely impossible. Every drawing of boundaries results again in new propositions, in more numerous and more intricately differentiated propositions. These may give the impression for the moment that 'everything is now clear', and they certainly do clear up a little further, and this for all future time, those questions which one had posed before such a defining determination of boundaries. Inevitably, however, they evoke new questions and new needs for an even more reflex or different distinction between what is really said in the new proposition and what is not really implied by it; although it was reflexly clear to the actual authority to what extent its own understanding and its horizons of comprehension did or did not really and fully coincide in its actual declaration with what it really meant to teach authoritatively.

All tradition is always a unity of divine and human tradition, a unity which cannot be absolutely thought out to the last detail. Every phase of the development of dogmas and of the history of theology confirms this fact. Every concrete tradition demands, therefore, a criterion for the theological reflection concerning it and appealing to it, a criterion about what in its concrete reality can really be addressed as *traditio divina* and what can only have the value of *traditio humana*. The actual tradition does not of itself clearly bring this distinction with it, especially in cases where one is looking for clarification about a proposition which may possibly be definable as a truth of faith and which until now in tradition [95] has not been explicitly put forward *as* such a truth, and also in other until now debated questions which are to be clarified by the magisterium. On the other hand, this distinction is not given at all in scripture: it is (if we may put it this way) pure *traditio divina*. Scripture can, therefore, function as (at least one) criterion for this division within the rest of tradition (which does not, of course, exclude the possibility that such a process of clarifying distinction may take a long time, since the employment of this criterion does not happen like a physical chain of events or a merely logical operation, but is itself history).

Scripture, like any other human truth, is naturally also characterised by historicity; it uses a whole way of conceiving things which was already present before it arrived on the scene and which need not be simply and under every respect the best way for what is to be expressed in scripture. It sees the truth which it attests from certain aspects and viewpoints which are not the only possible ones. Its statements may in many respects have a historically conditioned format. The scriptures propose a truth which will have a further history, in fact the history of dogmas. There are, of course, other possible or actual writings of the apostolic age apart from scripture. Not every part of the New Testament is older than some other actual or possible non-canonical writings of Christian content, and these writings are not necessarily distinguished with regard to their canonicity or non-canonicity simply through their writers, since even the writers of the New Testament were not always apostles. The scriptures,

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however, are the pure objectification of the divine, humanly incarnated truth; the knowledge of the divine truth has in them indeed a divine-human origin, but not, as can be the case in 'unpurified' tradition, in the sense that one would have from the very start to exclude certain human elements so as not to miss the truth even in its beginnings. Hence scripture is indeed something which has to be expanded in theology in the spirit and under the direction and guarantee of the Church and her magisterium, though this interpretation is not really a critical procedure applied to scripture but rather to the reader. Even the magisterium which interprets scripture authoritatively with the assistance of the Holy Spirit does not thereby place itself above scripture, but under it; it knows that *scripture*, understood as something effected by the Spirit and read by it with the assistance of the Spirit, tells *it* what is right. Thus scripture remains the *norma non normata* for theology and for the Church.

4. *Biblical theology and dogmatic theology* (and other types of 'systematic' [96] theology). What we have seen so far will help us to look at the position of biblical theology in relation to dogmatic theology. On the one hand, dogmatic theology (and precisely from the starting-point given here) cannot renounce engaging in biblical theology itself. If dogmatic theology is the systematic, reflex listening to God's revelation in Jesus Christ (and not merely a theology of conclusions *from* the already *presupposed* principles of faith taken as premisses, such as medieval theology understood itself in theory and contrary to its actual practice), then it must above all engage in this reflex listening to revelation where it finds the most direct and ultimate source of Christian revelation, viz. in scripture. It naturally always reads scripture under the direction of the magisterium, since it reads it in the Church and hence always already instructed by the Church's actual proclamation of faith, i.e. by the magisterium. To this extent, theology always reads scripture with an already given knowledge which in this form is not to be found simply in scripture,, since the theologian must always be already engaged in theology under the inspiration of the Church's actual consciousness of faith and since there has been a real development of dogma.

Nevertheless theology has not simply the imposed task of expounding the actual teaching of faith of the ecclesiastical magisterium, understood as something which can be legitimated by scripture, by subsequently finding the *dicta probantia* for the Church's teaching in the scriptures. Its inter-dogmatic task goes beyond the task thus conceived (although this is often unfortunately far too exclusively its practice), and this in a twofold respect with regard to scripture. It must not be overlooked from the very start that the actual Church is herself always the Church who reads, proclaims and commands others to read the scriptures. In other words, it is not as if only that belongs to the actual teaching of the Church's magisterium which is taught in the Church in councils, encyclicals, catechisms, etc. Scripture itself is also always actually proclaimed officially in every age. If, therefore, the actual teaching of the Church is assigned to the dogmatic theologian as the direct object of his reflection, scripture too is thereby assigned to him as the direct object of his dogmatic efforts. Hence, scripture is not a *fons remotus*, i.e. merely that source to which the dogmatic theologian eventually retraces the Church's teaching, but the precise object with which he has to occupy himself directly, since he really cannot ultimately distinguish scripture as 'another' object and source from the actual teaching of the Church. Furthermore, the theological [97] occupation with God's revelation as found in the actual proclamation of the Church and the magisterium, and in the Church's consciousness of faith of one's own day, must lead back to scripture even where this proclamation is no longer identical in the present-day Church with the reading of scripture. The full understanding of present-day teaching always demands a renewed return to the source from which, according to its own testimony, this teaching is derived, i.e. a return to the teaching whose exposition and actualisation it itself means to be, in short a return to the scriptures.

Biblical theology, therefore, is an intrinsic element of dogmatic theology itself; it is not

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merely one element among others in 'historical' theology but an absolutely outstanding and unique element of dogmatic theology. Yet this is not meant to dispute the fact that biblical theology may also quite legitimately and for various reasons establish itself as a proper science in the whole complex of theology. This is, even for practical reasons, perfectly in keeping with its proper status, since in the concrete a dogmatic theologian can only very rarely be as expert an exegete as he would have to be if he wanted to administer biblical theology on his own. Furthermore, the outstanding position proper to biblical theology within dogmatic theology in distinction to its other efforts (patristic theology, medieval-scholastic and modern scholastic theology) is brought out better if biblical theology is not practised only within dogmatic theology. Perhaps, as a result of the reform of ecclesiastical studies, we may some day get a special subject in which biblical theology is carried on, not as a mere continuation of normal exegesis nor as a mere element in dogmatic theology, but as a science on its own which represents the correct mediation between exegesis and dogmatic theology.

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9

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

The occasion for this treatment of the question of 'scripture and tradition', is the discussion of it which has already begun at the Second Vatican Council. You will know from your reading of the daily Press that during its first session the Council was presented with a draft dogmatic decree entitled 'The Sources of Divine Revelation'. Although this schema did make certain statements about the relationship between scripture and tradition, this relationship itself did not represent the real and central theme of the draft. The question had not yet really been systematically formulated in the Council debates on this whole schema. Yet it may be supposed that even such individual questions as this were already appearing in the background of the Council Fathers' deliberations, and that perhaps even this very question of the statement in the draft decree about the relationship between scripture and tradition had an influence on the very critical attitude adopted by the Fathers towards this draft. As you know from the daily Press, this critical attitude finally led to a rejection in practice of this draft.

How this question will be treated further later on, what the Council will finally teach on this question, whether the Council will even answer it by an authoritative statement, all these questions we cannot yet answer today. It may quite well be that this question will in the end be left open by the Vatican Council as being still too theologically imprecise.[1] Nevertheless, you will see even from this very brief background history of our common reflections that this subject, on the one hand, is in no sense a particularly central and important theme for the Council as such and that, on the other hand, it nevertheless can demand a certain interest from those who are in any way interested in the themes of the Council. Seen purely from the dogmatic point of view, this question of the relationship between scripture and tradition is undoubtedly a very important and significant [99] subject, since the question about the source of the individual Christian's knowledge, and above all about the Church's own knowledge, about the divine revelation made in Jesus Christ, is undoubtedly one of the basic questions of Christian theology as such.

We do not intend in this lecture to enter directly into the question as posed in the Council but want to attempt, to the extent in which this can be done in such a short time, to introduce you from a Catholic point of view into the actual objective problem at stake here.

First of all, a few – but really only a few – very modest indications about the history of this problem. Most recently there have appeared two important works on the subject by J. R. Geiselmann in Tübingen and by Johannes Beumer in Frankfurt o.M/St Georgen;[2] in these works, the historical materials about this question of the relationship between scripture and tradition are spread out exactly and in great detail, so that I can simply refer you to them and limit myself to a few remarks and indications which are simply meant to serve as an introduction to our real problem itself.

Let us begin with the notion of tradition. Tradition means transmission: something is transmitted by one generation to another. When we speak of tradition today in Catholic theology then, by a curious and not at all self-evident narrowing-down of this notion, it is almost unconsciously taken for granted right from the start that it refers to a teaching-

[1] In fact this is what happened. – *Tr*.

[2] Cf. J. R. Geiselmann, *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition*, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 18 (Freiburg 1962) (English Translation: *The Meaning of Tradition*, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 15 [Freiburg & London 1966] – *Tr*.); J. Beumer, 'Die mündliche Überlieferung als Glaubensquelle', *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte* 1/4 (Freiburg 1962).

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tradition: some teaching is handed on, in certain circumstances authoritatively; a certain magisterium with a definite teaching authority proclaims a particular proposition which is communicated to the generation of the day in such a way that even the next generation is thereby taught authoritatively and thus a dogmatic proposition is handed down from generation to generation. There is, of course, such a notion and it is quite a legitimate one, but we only really come closer to the real mystery of Christian tradition when we begin by widening this notion or, respectively, when we come to its proper root.

After all, what ultimately is Christianity? Undoubtedly, it is God's truth which is proclaimed to us. Yet precisely this revelation of the divine, [100] saving truth is not a proclamation which occurs primarily in doctrinal propositions or catechetical texts. It is a proclamation in events. What is proclaimed in Christianity is not a general, necessary, abstract truth which could be attained equally well from any point in history because it shines forth in eternal sameness and clarity in the heaven of ideas; no, Christianity is primarily the event in which God in his grace acts on us. It is a free event, an event of his powerful love, an event which cannot be derived from anywhere else but must be experienced in its free historical reality and which therefore has also to begin with a perfectly determined spatio-temporal situation in the history of man. Revelation in the proper, original sense is the revealing *deed* of God in historical concreteness, in historical spatio-temporality; this does not exclude but in fact includes the fact that the Word belongs to the constitutive elements of the act of revelation *itself*. It follows then that, if such a saving event takes place at a perfectly determined point, if the Word becomes flesh precisely of the Virgin Mary, in Jesus of Nazareth, if we are redeemed into the glory of God precisely by the fact that this particular man hung on the cross at a particular point in time and in a particular place, under Pontius Pilate, then this saving event must come towards us from this particular point in time and place if it is to reach us not only in the depths of our grace-filled being beyond all our own historical experience but also in the dimension of our spatio-temporal historical life; it must, as it were, move through this spatio-temporality of the historical existence of humanity and in this way come towards us. Hence, the concept of *paradosis*, of *traditio* or handing-down – from a biblical point of view – has its ultimate and deepest meaning and reality not so much in the handing down and transmission of *propositions* but in that *paradosis*, handing-over or transmission in which the Son of God become man, the divine Logos in the flesh, always hands himself over and delivers himself up to us anew in the celebration of the sacred mysteries, the Lord's Supper of the Church, in the Eucharist, proceeding from the event of the Last Supper (in union with his death). This is the event in which tradition primarily takes place, in which the once-and-for-all salvation-event of the death and resurrection of Christ delivers itself ever anew to men in their humanity while always going on and extending further. In so far as and because such a real tradition of the event of revelation to all times obviously and necessarily includes also the Word as a constitutive element of this saving reality itself, its handing on to man and its reception by man – and this of necessity in view of the [101] nature of the event of revelation and in view of the recipient of revelation – then the fact of God's historical, saving act continuing to hand itself over and delivering itself up to all generations is also necessarily a tradition of the Word. This after all is why the sacraments, through which the saving reality communicates itself to men, are saving signs which take place n the Word, and why words are constitutive elements of these saving signs themselves. Since the saving event, which is the act of God in man, takes place once and for all in history and yet this unique event wants to hand itself over historically to all men, and since such an event in its origin and arrival always necessarily takes place with us in words, *traditio* is also tradition in the usual sense of that word today.

Having seen this, we must now take a further step. The saving event on which our life, death and eternal hope rest is called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Word of God who has

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appeared among us in the flesh, found in all truth as a man like ourselves, who like us was born and died. Since this reality which wants to hand itself on is the reality of the eternal Logos of God himself and hence is the unsurpassable, permanent and no longer replaceable eschatological event of salvation, it is obviously and necessarily the kind of event which does not transmit itself in such a way that it could really annul itself in its true reality in this tradition; this is of course the way other historical events continue to be effective but only by annulling themselves in a sense and being replaced by something new or revolutionary, by something which ushers in a new aeon. It follows from this, however, that Jesus Christ – not only in an abstract sense but in his concrete appearance, his particular concrete time, just as he is – is also the absolute norm for every future tradition since he is the absolute reality. This self-tradition of Jesus Christ in his being, his actions, his death and resurrection, and so in everything – and hence also in his words to humanity – is such a deliverance of himself that it must necessarily attest itself in the Word, in the authoritative word of those whom we call apostles; it follows directly from the fact of Jesus Christ and his concrete appearance which cannot possibly be derived any further, that this deliverance of himself takes place first of all in the spoken word, in the living word in which one person encounters the other, by which a person opens himself, his person, his freedom, his decision, his love towards another human being, and so is available for the other. It naturally follows from this that now, in this completely comprehensive sense, the *traditio Jesu Christi* in his reality, action and word is an oral tradition and [102] that as such it is an absolutely normative and permanently eschatological tradition. This tradition, heard, accepted and believed in his own day (understood in a wide sense, of course), means the community of believers who have directly experienced Jesus Christ at least in their own contemporaries, and who have received this word and testimony of Jesus Christ directly through the living word of the very witnesses who saw and heard him; in short, it signifies the Church. The Church, taken as the apostolic Church of the first generation, of the apostles themselves, is nothing other than the really heard and absorbed *traditio Jesu Christi* to humanity. This Church – and this follows from everything we have said – is obviously the normative norm for all subsequent ages. What was heard, celebrated, received and believed there, is and remains the standard which must be handed on, since it is the eschatological saving event of Jesus Christ himself and since we are speaking here in the true sense of the primitive Church. The Church – we may say quite correctly – in so far as it has Jesus Christ in her midst, i.e. the Church of the apostles, is what is handed on. She is handed on, of course, not only in her teaching but in what the Church is herself, what she believes and celebrates, the Church in her sacraments, in her concrete life, her experience, her Lord's Supper and of course also in the reflex expression of what she has heard and what she lives herself, in the word of the apostles.

We know – quite apart from whether we can prove it more precisely metaphysically from the nature of man – that this apostolic Church, understood as the permanent, insurpassable, normative measure which hands itself on in reality and in word to all future ages, has objectified itself, has settled down, made itself concrete and has expressed itself in what we call Holy Scripture. We have to ask: where does the apostolic Church become tangible for us in its own reality, its own faith, in so far as this tangibility is to be based on human possibilities and means? In reply to this, question we may and must say at least once in a positive, if perhaps not yet exclusive sense: she is tangible in the sacred scriptures. There the apostolic Church interprets itself for later ages. There is written what she has said, and what she has believed and lived, in a way which is still tangible and readable for us today.

If what we have just said is fairly correct, then it can also be understood from the outset that this word of sacred scripture is always the word of the living Church which makes things concrete and that it necessarily continues to be supported by the living self-tradition of the Church as it goes [103] forward into its future; in short, that it continues to be borne by the

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living witness of the tradition of this Church herself. This Church brings the sacred scriptures and offers them as God's scriptures to future generations. The reality of Holy Writ with regard to its inspiration and its scope, its canon (as it is usually called in theological terminology) continues necessarily, and in the very nature of things, to be borne by living tradition, i.e. simply by the living existence of the Church which possesses sacred scripture as its own book and which carries it through the ages, attesting its nature and its scope, all of which in the last resort cannot be known from any other source than precisely this living witness of the Church. If, therefore, we understand tradition in this wide, complete and original sense which we have just tried to indicate, then what follows is really quite clear. On the one hand, holy scripture is itself a result and a mode of the tradition in which the saving event of Jesus Christ is received and handed on in the Church; it is also a mode of tradition and an objectification of tradition, one which always remains attached to the total process of this – if you like – even oral, i.e. living tradition of the Church.

Up to this point, in our opinion, there cannot be any doubt among Catholic Christians and theologians and this in accordance with the teaching of the Church, and we believe that today, even though perhaps with difficulty, agreement can be achieved to this extent even with Protestant Christians. But this does not yet give us a clear picture of the special internal Catholic problem of the relationship between scripture and tradition. There now arises the question: does the oral tradition go beyond scripture merely in so far as it supports the scriptures, or does this so-called oral tradition have material contents over and above its witness to scripture, contents which are in *no* way attested in scripture as such? Unfortunately, I cannot put this somewhat tricky question in much simpler terms. If (in order to clarify the question a little further) we ask the ordinary theology of the last centuries within the Catholic Church, then it undoubtedly looks as if scripture and tradition were two tributaries flowing in a somewhat parallel manner and bringing us materially different contents of the faith, so that one can perhaps, to begin with, find and determine certain truths only in scripture and then other truths – and this is the real crux of the problem – only in oral tradition. The question therefore is whether this concept of the relationship between scripture and tradition is correct. Before we start thinking about this question and [104] try to work out an answer, we must first clarify matters still more precisely in three respects.

First of all, for the individual Christian as such, the Church's living witness of faith, i.e. the witness of the Church's authoritative magisterium, is undoubtedly a doctrinal norm which in his Catholic understanding he cannot replace by scripture. In other words, if we may on this occasion more or less identify the magisterium and oral tradition by a somewhat inexact use of words, then we can and must say that one cannot abolish a *formal* authority of tradition in favour of scripture. This follows quite logically for the Catholic understanding of faith even from the mere fact that scripture itself must be attested by the Church as being her own objectification, the objectification of the apostolic Church, for otherwise there could not be any certainty about its inspiration and canon.

Secondly, it is also self-evident for a Catholic understanding that even starting from scripture as such, there is a true development of the Church's teaching which cannot be merely the development of an ecclesiastical theology but absolutely speaking is also in certain cases the development, unfolding and clarification of the dogmatic teaching of the Church, of the real faith of the Church. The dogmatic teaching of the Church and the direct word of the scriptures are not simply identical for the Catholic understanding of faith, not even when – as we can perfectly well suppose – this whole dogmatic teaching of the Church rests on scripture. In other words, a formal authority of tradition and at least an explicative function of 'tradition' in relation to sacred scripture is self-evident for the Catholic understanding of faith.

Thirdly, in so far as even the attestation of the nature of scripture takes place through

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tradition, tradition in the Catholic understanding of faith is also, at least in this respect, a constitutive material source and norm for faith. The question about the relationship between scripture and tradition, which has occupied Catholic theology especially during the last twenty years, is a question about whether over and above this formal authority and even constitutive function of tradition, we must accept a further, material insufficiency of scripture with regard to its contents and as compared with tradition, or whether one can deny this without coming into conflict with the Catholic principle of tradition.

If, in view of the question clarified in this way, we look into the history of the Christian self-understanding, we will have to say on the whole that we cannot find any really clear traditional answer to this precise question. [105] In other words, a clear, fully thought-out, universally accepted answer to this precise question is not to be found in the tradition of Catholic theology but that – in so far as one can find any answer at all to the thus formulated question – different opinions and conceptions have been held right up to the present day. This is due first of all to the fact that this question was simply not posed in the past with the precision we have just tried to give to it. It was asked for instance, in a very general way, whether tradition contains things which are not to be found explicitly in scripture. When this question was then answered by an 'obviously yes', this is really no answer at all – neither in a negative nor in a positive sense – to the question just posed by us. Obviously, in our opinion, every Catholic Christian must say that tradition contains matters which are not immediately tangible in holy scripture, viz. at least the very fact of scripture, its inspiration and its scope itself. Yet an answer formulated in such a general way does not answer precisely the question as to whether there are other such matters over and above those mentioned in this answer. The question, however, is not usually given this precision. In addition, there is a second reason for our not being able to expect a clear, unambiguous, generally accepted answer in the average history of theology to the question we have posed above. A really reflex, historical understanding for what we today call the development of dogma and the history of dogmas did not exist in Catholic theology – again on the whole – before the nineteenth century and indeed, for understandable cultural reasons, could not exist. Now, wherever the question and the knowledge about genuine historical development of the Church's consciousness of faith are not seen clearly and with all the possibilities inherent in such a development, our question also cannot really be answered either in one way or the other. Of course, there have always been theologians – for instance, in the Middle Ages – who say that holy scripture obviously cannot be materially all-sufficient on its own, for there is this and that matter which is not contained and cannot be found directly in holy scripture. Nevertheless such theologians just did not know as yet what immense possibilities of development can and must be possessed even by a truth such as those found in scripture, if we are to give any even approximately theological explanation of the development and history of Christian dogma and of the Church's consciousness of faith. The theologian who (often even still today) has the impression that tradition must be called upon as a substitute for an apparent insufficiency of holy scripture, had (and has) in most cases also [106] no conception of the number of matters contained in today's consciousness of faith which are also not immediately tangible in the earlier tradition of the Church. In other words, he usually has, in addition, no conception as to the fact that even under the presupposition of a material independence of oral tradition, the problem does not really become any easier, since even today's sharper historical consciousness finds it no easier in practice to retrace to an earlier tradition of the Church contents of today's consciousness of faith which cannot be easily traced back directly to holy scripture. In other words, the appeal to oral tradition for explaining why this or that modern dogmatic proposition can be traced back to the divine revelation of the apostolic age, does not in fact lead more easily to a conclusion than when the other 'party' (if we may put it that way) tries to trace these modern truths of faith back to

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scripture. These are the reasons, it can be said, why the investigation of tradition does not throw a great deal of light on the answer to our precise question. It will not be possible to speak of a really clear *consensus unanimis* in one direction or the other either in the patristic age or in medieval times right up to the Council of Trent. It will be perfectly possible, however, to say that there was in the old Church and also in the theology of the Middle Ages, e.g. in St Thomas Aquinas, a real living consciousness of faith with regard to the surpassing importance of holy scripture and its basic function for *every* belief of the Church. It will be entirely possible, therefore, to deny that the old tradition before the Council of Trent is a really theologically qualified testimony for the opinion that the so-called oral tradition hands on material contents which belong to the faith of the Church, to the apostolic deposit of faith, and yet are in no way contained in the scriptures. Such a *consensus* with regard to a thus understood significance of oral tradition, in the sense of a particular material source of faith beside scripture – such an unambiguous tradition – does not exist before the Council of Trent. We will then have to say furthermore that the Council of Trent did not give a decision on this precise question even in the polemic contrasting of the Catholic Church with the Protestant principle of *sola-scriptura*. The Council of Trent says nothing more in its binding statements than that scripture and tradition are norms of the Church's faith and that in *this* respect (but not in every respect) they must be accepted and respected *pari reverentia*. *How* scripture and tradition are related to one another, however, and what exact relationship they have with regard to their formal authority – and with regard again to their [107] material limitation relative to the attestation of the nature of scripture itself, on the one hand, and the attestation of the material contents of faith, on the other hand – all these are questions about which the Council of Trent did not say anything and indeed did not wish to say anything and about which it has intentionally, one may rightly say, chosen a foundation which leaves this question open. We will not be able to doubt or dispute the fact that in post-Tridentine theology the main trend of thought has been to maintain, on the basis of an anti-Protestant front, that there is not only the truth of the inspiration and of the canon of scripture but that there are also other truths of faith which are not to be found in scripture, so that for them oral tradition is a materially distinct source of faith. It cannot be said, however, that this question was really posed even after the Council of Trent with the precision which we have just attempted to develop; nor can one say that the theological tradition of the schools and this theological trend are something binding, nor that during this time the question was answered unanimously in favour of a wider idea of the material insufficiency of scripture. Only most recently, in the last ten or twenty years, has this question come up again for debate, especially in a controversy between Joseph Rupert Geiselmann and the Roman theologian Lennerz, and later on in a wider discussion among other theologians; and it has been shown that in this question Catholic theology is not in agreement. I would think, therefore, that it must be expected that, given the present state of the question, the Second Vatican Council will also be unwilling to answer this question.

I would like, however, to try in the last part of our reflections to bring forward certain reasons for our not needing to accept – not even from a Catholic point of view – a constitutive material function of tradition which goes beyond the testimony of the nature of scripture; that we can say conversely, therefore, that it is entirely possible to formulate a Catholic *sola-scriptura* principle with regard to the Church's deposit of faith, *provided* that we understand this in a Catholic sense and therefore understand it to involve also an authoritative attestation and interpretation of holy scripture by the living word of the Church and her magisterium, and an attestation of scripture itself and its authoritative interpretation which cannot be replaced by scripture itself. If these two – not limitations but precisions arising out of the nature of things – are borne in mind then, I think, one can perfectly well speak of a Catholic *sola-scriptura* principle; this is always presupposing, of course – and this

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must [108] be stated once more – that one does not interpret this principle of the *sola-scriptura* in an unhistorical and petrifying sense as meaning a prohibition of a living development of the faith of the Church. If, however, these three conditions are observed, then it seems to me that there can be a perfectly correct Catholic principle of *sola-scriptura*.

First of all (this is, of course, an extrinsic reason and one which theologically speaking does not carry much weight), we have a duty towards the experience of faith and the theology of our Protestant brethren to take the Protestant principle of *sola-scriptura* as seriously as possible; after all, it is backed up by a genuine religious experience and, in my opinion, even a genuine theological tradition going back into the Catholic past. We must therefore take this principle so seriously that, as long as we are not forced by any real Catholic truths of faith to deny it, we ought to fight to be able to understand and accept it in a Catholic sense. This is not an inner-theological objective reason; yet, in our own Christian situation of today, it is an extremely serious consideration. We have no right and no duty to see separating trenches between us and our Protestant brethren where we are not absolutely forced to see them. In this respect, I would say, the *sola-scriptura* principle with the given precisions (and not really limitations) is not a principle against which we must necessarily protest.

There are, however, also inner-theological objective reasons which argue for a correctly understood adequacy of holy scripture. To begin with – to return to something already touched on in passing above – the theological situation, i.e. the theological possibility for the Catholic theologian to prove that the faith of today's Church is all part of the apostolic deposit of faith, is not made any easier by supposing a material 'plus' in oral tradition over and above scripture. Why? There is certainly the feeling (behind the defence of such a material 'plus' of tradition beyond scripture) among many Catholic theologians even right up to the very present that we could not prove the Catholic, now already defined truths of faith to be contained in the apostolic tradition without this thus understood principle of a 'plus' of tradition. Now, it is quite immaterial as to which truths of faith we might mention here, whether it be the possibility and necessity of infant baptism, or the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven, or the sevenfold number of the sacraments, or the sacramentality of marriage, or certain principles of moral theology, or that in spite of Our Lord's words one may under certain circumstances [109] seriously swear an oath, etc. In all these cases one gets the impression among these theologians that such truths, which cannot be doubted by a Catholic by reason of the magisterium, could not be traced back to the apostolic tradition if one had to trace them back to scripture. This is the really live reason why many Catholic theologians dispute a principle of *sola-scriptura* even when understood in a Catholic sense.

But what is the real position? I think that with regard to the matter just indicated, an overestimation (if one may put it this way) of oral tradition as opposed to scripture does not really help at all. It does indeed go without saying for any Catholic theologian that, if the Church's actual consciousness of faith as it is *today* testifies and firmly holds to a truth *as* really believed with divine faith and as an apostolic tradition and declares it to be such by an infallible pronouncement by a pope or a Council, then in virtue of the indefectibility of the faith of the Church this conviction must be true even when the individual theologian or believer has not yet proved this truth historically and has not yet made it explicit. Yet even in the case of such a *dogmatic* evaluation of the present state of the Church's doctrinal proclamation and hence of oral tradition, the Catholic theologian obviously still retains the right and beyond this the *duty* to show *historically* how the Church's dogma as believed today has come down to us from the apostolic age in a genuine, historical tradition and development. This historical proof of the origin in the apostolic age of a content of the faith of today's Church – a proof which is even obligatory on the Catholic theologian – does not in fact become any easier by trying to trace it from an oral apostolic *traditio* rather than from holy scripture, and this for a quite simple reason. It is quite feasible to say that we have no

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material theological sources from (let us say) the first three centuries, i.e. sources which while being materially and at the same time theologically binding, go beyond *those* contents which are also attested for us in holy scripture. This means, however, that whenever we now profess something explicitly which we do not find expressed explicitly in scripture, we are also unable to prove this explicit contemporary truth to be something explicit in the rest of the tradition of the first two or three centuries. In other words, we have in any case to fall back on a process of explanation whose exact nature, possibilities, limits and scope I naturally cannot develop more exactly here. The appeal to an oral tradition does not, therefore, ease the work of the Catholic theologian in the face of his historical and historico-theological conscience. This basically means that the driving [110] force of the theory just mentioned does not really exist by any objective right.

Furthermore, if (which we are at the moment again unable to do) we bring the fact of the inspiration of scripture into closer connection with the fact that holy scripture is the normative objectification of the normative faith of the apostolic Church, then it really follows from this that this scripture must also be sufficient – if this is to have any meaning at all – wherever a contrary inadequacy does not follow from the *nature* of things. Put differently and quite simply, this means that if God has in fact really worked the miracle of scriptural inspiration and of a divine scripture, then he cannot – apart from the attestation of this miracle itself – let certain truths of the Church not be attested in scripture, since this scripture was inspired precisely in order to attest the truth of the apostolic Church for later generations. Scripture – to put it in a different way again – cannot indeed really attest itself by itself, but if it is there at all and is meant to be inspired divine scripture, then it must attest every other part of the faith of the Church. Otherwise one cannot really see why there should be this whole miracle of divine inspiration and of divine scripture; one could not understand either why otherwise there would not enter into the one and homogeneous reality of the Church's faith a difference which one does not understand and which is unbearable. After all, the doctrine of a material inadequacy of scripture over and above its attestation of itself would mean that there would be truths in the Church's faith which would be explicitly or implicitly pronounced by the divine word of scripture itself and hence would have quite a different dignity and power to convince than other truths, and besides this there would then be other truths which would indeed appear also with the claim of being divine revelation and yet would not have this origin and dignity of being directly attested in the Word of God itself, this, however, is a conception which one cannot really seriously carry through.

One will no doubt be allowed to say, furthermore, that the teaching concerning a continuing material inadequacy, looked at basically, has far too doctrinaire and positivistic a conception of the content of faith proclaimed by the Church. There are, of course, many truths of faith; obviously one must not glance over the material plurality of these truths of faith in any existential or demythologising sense, as if wanting to remove all this so as to reduce the whole faith to some sort of abstract formality. Of course there are things which God must say positively and [111] whose propositional truth is known to us, since and in so far as they are attested by the Word of God; yet this one whole truth of faith has an internal homogeneous character, an inner unity and inner mutual consistency in the plurality of truths of faith. The faith which we believe and live is not a collection of propositions arbitrarily brought together, a collection which is held together only by an abstract, formal authority of the revealing God; rather, these truths together really form an inner unity, they belong together, each refers to the other, and the faith in any one of them is always merely faith in one aspect of the one truth, and is always possible only in the one totality which is comprehended in its historical development through the ages by the one living consciousness of faith of the individual and of the whole Church. If one really has a living understanding of the unity of the reality of faith and of the object of faith, then it becomes rather absurd to say

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that this whole faith of the Church is largely attested by scripture (which no one can deny) but that this or that particular proposition is, as it were, so different from the totality attested in scripture that one must absolutely derive it from a completely different source.

No, the one consciousness of faith of the Church, supported by the Spirit of God, embraces the inner unity of the reality of faith and distributes and unfolds this one faith from the one centre. This unfolding is a historical process but it always returns again to its origin, viz. the faith of the apostolic Church which has been deposited in the divinely inspired scriptures. This objectification can come down to us only in the tradition of the Church, in which it hands on its own reality, the body of the Lord, and hence also his truth. This reference back to scripture is possible only in the self-accomplishment of the Church in which this scripture attests itself, but this also means conversely that this self-attestation of scripture in scripture and with scripture has really objectified itself – apart from the process of the self-attestation itself – in scripture itself and that, therefore, it is quite possible in this sense to have a Catholic principle of *sola-scriptura*.

In a word, the unity of the object of faith, the inner interconnection of the many God-revealed truths, makes it at least unlikely and ultimately impracticable from a religious point of view simply to presume two materially different sources of faith, two means of transmitting the faith, one of which is called ‘scripture’ and the other ‘tradition’. In view of their origin, of the divine life delivered in grace to men, of the way in [112] which the word-tradition has been deposited in sacred scripture, of the necessary attestation of scripture through the living Church, these two realities belong much more closely together than the somewhat comfortable and primitive theory of two materially different means of transmitting the faith would admit.

This is the point with which I wish to close. May I say: pray God’s Holy Spirit to help the Church, in true self-restraint, to leave this question open in the Second Vatican Council; nothing more is needed. We theologians who desire this will then be quite content. Precisely from our point of view, we simply cannot expect or want to expect that the Church should go beyond this present stage of her consciousness of faith and take sides with us. It will be quite sufficient if the Church says again what she said in the Council of Trent: scripture and tradition are Catholic elements of the one *traditio fidei*. Then we theologians and the future consciousness of faith during the next decades or centuries can think about how the more exact relationship of these two realities is to be determined on the basis of the ultimate understanding of faith. Let us hope this is what will happen.

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[113]

10

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTEMPORARY INTELLECTUAL FORMATION OF FUTURE PRIESTS

There is no doubt that for us in Central Europe (and in the world as a whole) there exist – or at least should exist – serious and unresolved questions and difficulties regarding the right theological training of future priests in keeping with the intellectual situation. The conciliar schema '*De institutione sacerdotali*' is so brief (about 130 lines altogether) and must therefore remain so much on the level of generalities that one may not indulge in the pleasant deception that the questions referred to here will be solved by it, especially since theological studies as such are merely touched on in thirty-seven lines.

When the present author tries to put forward a few reflections on this subject here, he takes up anew a subject about which he has expressed himself before, but without success, many years ago.[1] His hopes of finding [114] more interest or even agreement this time are therefore more than modest. Furthermore, he is very conscious of treating only a very small part of the whole many-sided matter and that, therefore, even for this reason alone, he may not imagine that he can put forward any concrete plan. He hopes, however, to touch on a central point of the whole problem.

PRESUPPOSITIONS

We will be concerned here about the right foundation of the first theological training of the pastoral priest. In order to grasp this properly, four points above all must be noted to begin with.

The pluralism of sciences in general and of theological sciences as such in particular
Under this title, it is first of all necessary to see and understand soberly a previously quite unknown situation in the history of the human mind; we refer to today's situation in which the individual sciences – including the theological sciences – have found such an extension of their problems, materials and complexity of their methods that the individual man – to put

[1] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Der Theologe. Zur Frage der Ausbildung der Theologen heute', *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck [3]1961), pp. 334-358 (originally: *Orientierung* XVIII (1954), pp. 149-152, 165-168; also Italian in: *Missione e grazia* (Rome 1964), pp. 505-540; English translation: *Mission and Grace* II (London & New York 1964), pp. 146-181). Cf. also Georg May, 'Die Ausbildung des Weltklerus in Deutschland', *Tüb. Th. Quartalschrift* CXLIV (1964), pp. 170-215; J. Allendorff, 'Zur Wissenschaftlichen und aszetischen Ausbildung unserer Theologiestudenten', *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift* CXI (1963), pp. 305-309; F. Klostermann, 'Überlegungen zur Reform der theologischen Studien', *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift* CXII (1964), pp. 273-313 (where further bibliography will be found). Cf. also Card. Franz König, 'Theologisehe Fakultat', *Wort and Wahrheit* XX (1965), pp. 329-341. In the meantime, public and private discussion of the thoughts proposed here has begun. It is not surprising that in these discussions individual thoughts have become separated from the context of these reflections and have come to stand on their own feet. This is true above all of the idea of the 'Basic Course'. I can only draw attention once more to my exposition. It would still be premature at present to enter into the questions and hesitations put forward in letters, orally and also in published form. There remains even apart from this the main danger of the present efforts of reform, viz. that they might not preserve that absolutely necessary patience required for any process of maturing. Post-conciliar work will perhaps leave more room and time for common dialogue and discussion. In the last analysis, however, the present outline can be made clear only through a concrete plan of a 'basic course'. (Note added at the time of the inclusion of the essay in this volume.)

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it maliciously – only really knows something about less and less, since he understands more and more about less and less. Today one can at most know something in one discipline or in one small sector of a subject; only in this sense can one be a specialist today who is able to appreciate seriously the questions and answers of a particular discipline and who can take part in its discussions and pass critical judgements. All honour to the teamwork and co-operative effort of many sciences in the practical field! Naturally even a theoretical 'synthesis' will always remain a task of the sciences among each other; in the realm of the natural sciences there may even be synthesising results and successes which suddenly simplify many things again so that they can be mastered by the mind of the individual. All this does not change anything, especially in the realm of the sciences of the spirit, in the basic situation indicated above, particularly since teamwork [115] in these sciences is in the very nature of things confined within very narrow limits. The insights of the sciences of the spirit cannot be communicated by means of material apparatus or definite formulae without one having to know their proof oneself, but must either be found together with their proofs in one and the same mind or be simply non-existent for it. One can, of course, let oneself be instructed in a popularising manner by the specialist, let us say, about nuclear physics or the history of Tibetan medicine . . . but then one can not only not take part in discussions but also cannot permit oneself to make any objective and at the same time personal judgement about these things.

All this may be of little importance in many branches of science since in them one need not have any judgement of one's own. But what about the case where a personal decision in life is unavoidable and yet it becomes less and less possible even for the 'educated' person, who inevitably becomes less and less educated all the time, to have a reflex, scientific basis for this decision? This might be the case, for instance, in politics, economics, and in the profession of a religious creed. The situation we have in mind here applies also in the realm of a 'world-view'. Let us not have any pious illusions: one may have been engaged in theology for forty years and yet be no longer able to take part in the discussions of central questions (as they are treated in contemporary work and with modern methods), questions which from a reflex fundamental-theological point of view are of basic importance. If, for example, I am a dogmatic theologian and am proficient in this field, how can I possibly imagine nowadays that I could scientifically form an independent, competent judgement in accordance with the principles and methods of modern exegesis – a judgement which I have myself critically examined and proved – about the meaning and scope for the 'primacy text' in Mt 16:18? This is perhaps still possible today for an exegete, but it certainly is no longer possible for a dogmatic theologian; even the exegete can do this only after long study which by far exceeds the normal period of training for the average priest today. Yet the question just mentioned is of basic importance within the perspectives of the fundamental theology practised even today. This means, then, that in modern scientific work and its methods, it is no longer possible for the young theological student to construct a fundamental theology for himself for which he could be held responsible before the tribunal of his knowledge of the truth – a fundamental theology which is [116] reflex and gained by a scientific method – if one understands by fundamental theology and its work what one must understand by it in accordance with the evidence of its textbooks.

The young student of theology would have to be a historian of religion, a philosopher of religion, an exegete and many other things, including the unlimited specialisations which each of these disciplines has once more gained for itself. He cannot be or become this. It is of no use to him to present him with the results of these sciences in a basically popularised form (in the way in which one tells a non-physicist about the results of nuclear physics). His situation is after all quite different from that of the 'layman' who lets the specialist tell him something about nuclear physics and accepts it on faith; the young theologian should not

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accept this basis of his faith provided by fundamental theology 'on faith', relying on the authority of the specialist; rather, he should know and understand it and make it his own as a specialist in his own right. Unlike the natural scientist, he is faced with 'results' which are and remain disputed in these theological sciences and sciences of the spirit, whether we regard Catholic theology on its own or in company with the many theologies and philosophies of today. He is left standing helplessly before its problems without being able to say to himself that he could and may work out a position for himself by independent judgement, a position which he can then also defend responsibly when others do not hold the same position. The usual fundamental theology with its philosophical and historical branches has not indeed been abrogated in itself (as a justified and necessary science and method); it will and must go on. But it has been taken *ad absurdum* if and where it intends to be the scientifically reflex basis of the faith for the young theological student, which is something it had until now always clearly intended to be in the business of theological training. Of course, basically it had to be said even previously that such a scientific foundation of the faith was never intended or able adequately to work up and catch up with the existential, pre-scientific basis of the faith in the presence of the individual's conscience about truth, that the ground of the personal faith of each individual always contained more than what it was possible to objectify in scientific reflection. Nevertheless, what has been until now traditionally called fundamental theology, in the sense of a reflex question about the foundations of the faith, can no longer be achieved by the reflex, systematic provision of reasons for the faith in the time available in practice to any individual. Where it is possible here and there (which [117] we do not mean to deny), it happens because the professor involuntarily changes the until now usual subject matter and method and, perhaps without being fully conscious of it, follows a path about which we can only speak here later on in our discussion.

This is the reason why contemporary textbooks of fundamental theology, although really better in themselves and not worse than previously, make a terrible impression on today's young student of theology. How, for instance, is he to get a scientifically reflex conviction from it about the 'historical Jesus' – the founder of the Church, the person who instituted the Last Supper, the risen Christ and so on – in such a way that he clearly understands this kind of proof on his own and critically without being (since he cannot be) an expert in the Jewish theology of the time of Jesus, a Qumran specialist, a form-historian, a historian of ancient religions and many other things besides? If he honestly becomes at least conversant with the contemporary problems in all these questions, must he not get the impression of always remaining a pitiful amateur, supposing that he is expected to work out for himself the basis of the faith in the usual way of a slow synthesis which should lead bit by bit through the most complicated philosophical and historical researches which he cannot and does not know how to carry out himself? Will he not basically – perhaps quite unconsciously but nevertheless effectively – adopt a Protestant attitude in order to carry on, and will he not also see it implicitly at work in his teacher: instead of looking for a 'rational basis for faith', why not take the 'existential', absolute leap into faith?

It will have to be stated later on why the outlined situation does not affect only fundamental theology but also dogmatic theology (and hence also that exegesis which does not intend to be merely philosophical and historical, and concerned with the history of religion, but means to make a positive and effective contribution to the construction of a basis for the faith, i.e. to be a dogmatically fruitful exegesis leading to the understanding of the Church's contemporary teaching of faith). Presupposing this, however, it must be said that the necessary and unavoidable pluralism of today, and the enormous branching out and deepening of problems in the sciences in general and also in the theological sciences in particular, mean that the theological subjects at their core (fundamental theology, dogmatic theology, and dogmatically interested exegesis) become unsuited to constituting in

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themselves and directly that theology which is [118] to communicate a first basis for the faith and a first systematic construction of the knowledge of the faith to the young student of theology.

The existential situation of the young theologian

Even a mere thirty years ago, what was the situation when a young man started his theology? Usually (granting exceptions and individual critical cases brought out by the study of theology) the young theologian came to his study of theology with a firm, and on the whole unproblematic, substance of faith. The family and the rest of the surroundings of his life (for the most part a peasant or small artisan milieu), which had on the whole remained homogeneous, had already given a fairly firm foundation to the young personality even before he started his study of theology. The theological science which he then heard and studied was able to cement and deepen but was not really required to build up the personal substance of faith; this was present already and theological reflection did not change it very much; hence, the personal spiritual life also was not very much influenced by the study of theology. The science was too often simply a hurdle of things to be learnt, a hurdle which one had to pass in order to be admitted to Orders; it was a superstructure and not a foundation, a training for one's calling later on and not (or only very remotely) a formation of one's own religious personality which was dealt with rather by the ascetic training of the seminary. In the case of a student with good capabilities, it was therefore also possible to engage in theology with that dialectical unconcern and subtlety which was very often met with in neo-scholasticism: there was no need for science to provide a completely basic mastering of existence with all its distress and in its threatened nature, since this distress and threatened condition were not really felt; thus it was possible to do theology speculatively or historically (according to one's bent and talent) with a touching lightheartedness and in the spirit of a theological *art pour l'art* attitude, such as one can still find frequently among theologians of Latin countries who write long dissertations about whether Mary already knew about the mystery of the Trinity when still in her mother's womb!

Today – again on the average – things have changed. The young theologian (above all the talented one, but not only him) suffers from a real poverty of faith. He has grown up in an absolutely pluralistic milieu. He no longer has convictions of faith accepted as foregone conclusions in such an undisturbed manner as in the past, attitudes which were conditioned [119] rather by tradition and milieu than by the grace of faith. He has a threatened, attacked faith: threatened and attacked on all levels of his existence. This does not stand in contradiction to his interest in the world of the Faith nor to his religious vocation; both of these may be given an impetus precisely by this distress of faith. Yet if one looks at the situation soberly and honestly as it is, then one will have to say that today the young theology student necessarily looks for a fundamental basis and strengthening of his faith; he necessarily and rightly demands from his theology something different than what was demanded by the theologian of earlier generations; he does not look for an intellectual superstructure on top of the already unquestionably possessed faith of his youth and of his Christian surroundings which are firmly based in tradition, but rather for the reflexly responsible substructure of a threatened conviction of faith in the midst of surroundings indifferent to belief or unbelief for this is the inescapable milieu of his believing existence and of its permanent questioning. He does not normally bring this basis with him from the junior secondary school. The religious instruction in senior secondary schools is accorded too little time, and suffers from the milieu of pupils who frequently just sit through it and are not really interested in religion; attention to it is hampered by the encyclopedic variety of other school subjects. Rectors of seminaries would have a tale to tell about the primitive theological knowledge of young people entering our seminaries today.

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Seen from this point of view, the questionableness of the traditional fundamental theology becomes even more acute for the young theologian. That kind of fundamental theology tries to build up a basis of faith by undertaking to work out positively and directly all 'in themselves' pertinent questions of the philosophy of religion and history, questions which in themselves and objectively, purely in the nature of things, have to be answered for a rational justification of the faith. This, however, is impossible for the young theology student of today, at least in the short time available for his studies and in view of the immensely complicated nature and material and methodical difficulty of all the questions to be treated in fundamental theology. Yet he requires such a foundation for his faith with quite a different urgency and necessity than was the case with the young theologian of earlier times for whom all this was a theoretical and not an 'existential' matter, so that it was not at all as important for him to what extent such a merely theoretical science, which removed all 'methodic doubts', 'appealed' to him and agreed with him. The dilemma [120] can no longer be overcome by improving the didactic element in the question of fundamental theology. To repeat, we do not question here or even dispute the fact that there are teachers of this theological science who actually solve this problem and offer their young theologians the answers which they must look for and find in this science today. What we say is that if such a professor is successful in accomplishing this task, then (quite apart from whether he clearly knows it or not) he has turned the traditional fundamental theology into something else, the nature of which we will have to reflect on more particularly later on. What he offers is certainly no longer a fundamental theology in the old sense even though of course many individual themes of the old fundamental theology and this new science – which is still trying to find its proper character – may be the same materially. The old science, however much it remains right and necessary, of its very nature is not in a position to offer by its method and general subject matter the reflex, concrete foundations for the faith of the young theologian which for him are a matter of life and death. To give another example, we need only look at normal day-to-day practice in exegesis and biblical theology as it really is, viz. as an inner moment of an historically orientated fundamental theology: the exegete loses himself in his problems and when it comes to the question of faith, he refers his students to the faith already provided elsewhere or to the magisterium, or (where he does more, i.e. does want to contribute something positive to a fundamental theology) he actually becomes 'apologetical' but with a bad conscience, giving himself and others the impression of 'oversimplifying the problems', of watering down the difficulties and of no longer facing up honestly to the non-Catholic exegesis of today. How, for example, can one communicate to the young theologian the problem of the 'historical Jesus', of his relationship to the 'Church', of his 'eschatologism', in such a way that he gets a 'scientific', independent insight into this and thus gains rational and historical '*praeambula fidei*'?

The level of intelligence of the theological student

Of course, even today, there is still great talent among theological students entering our seminaries . . . yet we could be deceiving ourselves if we were to close our eyes to the fact that their percentage has decreased in comparison with the past. The trend of the highest intelligences does not lead to theology today. We need not be unhappy about this: the suitability for the calling of theologian and future priest – quite differently from [121] that of the nuclear physicist or aeronautical engineer – is more directly co-determined than in other callings by other factors besides intelligence; by such factors as a desire for selfless service, love of men, a well-balanced character, the inner relationship to the world of God, etc. Such a person, even though he may not be a genius, can later on as a priest be important even to the intellectual who is superior to him in intellect, since even for the intellectual the ultimate problems of life neither arise nor are solved simply in the sphere of the reflecting reason.

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Nevertheless, we must not overlook, simply because it is embarrassing to admit such a thing quite realistically, a fairly substantial lowering of the level of intelligence among the general run of today's theological students. One must also see then, however, that the formative situation of the young theologian has become considerably more difficult than in the past: he is intellectually less talented than before and is faced with a scientific task which has become enormously more difficult than in the past. How then is he going to be able to accomplish this task? He will inevitably get the feeling that too much is demanded of him, and this feeling gives rise to a bad conscience and represents a grave danger to the joy in his calling. There must be a healthy balance between what is demanded and what can be accomplished. If at the same time what has been said above is true, then this healthy balance can no longer exist today unless it is supposed that the previously greater talents were not by any means exhausted by the previously smaller task, a point which obviously was not noticed in the past. As those of us who are familiar with this situation know, it follows that the examination of the theologians (apart from the few doctorate examinations) are made much easier than they should really be in view of the highly scientific nature of the lectures and seminars. Even this consequence shows once more in the concrete that there is a disproportion between the average intellectual level and the science which is offered to the young theologian who is therefore not really able to cope with it taking into account what it is and what he is.

Orientation towards practical pastoral care

In itself, there is of course nothing in the strictest science of theology which could not be made fruitful directly or indirectly for pastoral work in the concrete. This is even true simply because the pastor should be concerned also with those who are highly formed scientifically in any discipline whatsoever. It is, however, clearly presupposed for such an [122] apostolate that the theologian has been able to acquire any of these sciences in such a way that he can dispense them as something belonging to him personally. Form-history, for example, could certainly be useful for exegesis in his preaching, provided he has really been able to gain an inner understanding of it and has acquired the independent capacity of using such understanding. But can he really have this? For a great part of the theology taught and offered to the young theologian, this question may be answered unhesitatingly in the negative.

This is not meant as a plea for a merely practical, 'unscientific' formation of the future priest as a subordinate, routine ecclesiastical functionary. Yet if what we have said is true, then it means that in the contemporary scientific situation and given the personal position of his faith, the young theologian in great part is not offered that scientific knowledge which he will need for his pastoral work later on. This is true even for the simple reason that his later care of souls is essentially conditioned by his own personal capacity to believe, a capacity which, however, does not receive that help from the theological science of today which it requires. I am fully aware of the fact that such statements run the danger of paralysing the young theologian's determination of will and patience to 'get down to' this science and to study industriously, even though he cannot yet estimate fully how he might be able to 'use' and 'apply' later on what he is learning just now. Yet these statements must be made. It is true, and we must find remedies for the fact, that our young theology students are not being sufficiently formed for their future pastoral activity in a manner suited to their own potentialities. Theology is becoming more and more 'scientific'; it develops in accordance with the immanent laws of science 'in itself'; it branches off into ever new subjects and is concerned with many matters which previously were left to practice and experience; it proliferates its subject matter so that it can no longer be taken in by one person on his own; in short, the study of theology at the present moment is structured as if it were intended to train future professors of theology. Nothing is changed in this by the fact that similar problems are appearing also in other faculties and that the tension between the university as a place of

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research and as the bearer of vocational formation is in itself an important and healthy characteristic of German universities which is copied also by other places of theological formation, sometimes in a praiseworthy manner and sometimes badly, without any proper goal of formation being thereby reached.

[123]

THE BASIC THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINE

What is meant here by this heading has often been attempted under different names without anything ever becoming quite clear as to the proper nature of this discipline. One has demanded a kerygmatic theology for the formation of the future pastor of souls, with the simple theoretical intention of putting this kind of theology side by side with scholastic theology and making it in practice the formative or basic training for the future priest. This theory itself became tied up with too many problematic epistemological theories; it did not seem to do sufficient justice to the strict and sober scientific nature of even a basic training and seemed to contain too many misconceptions about the kerygmatic origin and orientation of every true theology. Consequently, this programme did not appeal very much.

Prescinding from such theories, the demand has often been made for a basic course of theology which would be intended primarily for *all* theologians or just for the future pastors of souls (not including those students destined for academic work later on); such a course would be clearly orientated towards future pastoral care and should be adapted to the intellectual capacities of the students, leaving the introduction proper to real scientific work and research to other and 'higher' courses not meant for all students of theology. Yet even these efforts have always been strangled at birth. The suggested structure cannot be incorporated into the usual framework of lectures as it has always existed in the universities. It was feared that it would mean a debasing of the greater mass of theology students who would appear to be branded by this suggestion as a herd of lesser talents. There was uneasiness also about a possible lowering of the intellectual standard in the formation of theological students. The impression was current that such a basic course could be nothing other than a primitive, watered-down version of the theology offered to and required from theological students till then, all of which of course was not calculated to arouse any great enthusiasm for such an idea. No one wanted a theological 'polytechnic' or 'junior secondary course' of theology in place of an academic formation (and thus one did not recognise either that in fact one had not been achieving anything more than such a theological polythechnic even on the academic level, a fact which becomes particularly obvious at examination time). The fundamental difficulty experienced, even though only vaguely, in connection with such [124] suggestions, consisted in the fact that one could only picture such a basic course as something derived from the procedure, content and method of what had been done before and hence could not help regarding it '*ad usum delphini*'; as simply a different version of what had gone before.

This 'basic course'[2] of theology, however, is recognisable in its essence from the

[2] We should be conscious of the danger of misunderstanding this initially indispensable concept. It is not a question of an introduction to some other discipline from which this introduction might borrow its meaning, method and standards (even though in a somewhat simpler, popularising manner). Rather, we are dealing here with an absolutely autonomous discipline, a discipline which is to be justified more exactly in what follows from the point of view of scientific theory; nevertheless, it is a discipline which – without detriment to its scientific character – can serve as a theological 'basic course' for the young theologian, and this out of its own most proper nature and not merely by an introductory adaptation of this science for 'beginners'. This basic discipline, therefore, is *not* a matter of what one has been doing until now under the title of an 'introduction into Catholic theology', of a 'theological introduction' or of a kind of 'theological encyclopedia'. It would be possible, of course, to take this old discipline which is hardly taught any more and transform it (there actually

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presuppositions we have reflected on above without having to be conceived as a popularised and watered-down version of the traditional fundamental theology (and dogmatic theology), and this in such a way that this course is seen to be an answer to the questions we have posed.

It must be possible to give an introduction into the nature of Christianity and of its truth which is not identical with fundamental theology such as it is in fact understood today (and which is in itself also justified in the nature of things).

This means to say that there is a basis for faith (naturally understood with all those more precise interpretations and reservations which are what is meant in the Catholic understanding of faith by such a rational justification of faith, but which is something we need not enter into here)[3], because even today there is a real exercise of faith and this cannot pass muster before the moral conscience of truth without having been rationally justified. Hence also, such a basis for faith cannot simply be in its origins the subsequent result of a methodically reflex, scientific reflection, even [125] though it always of course contains such reflex moments right from the start, moments which are not far removed from a properly scientific and methodical reflection.

This originally unreflected but 'lived' justification of faith, such as it is to be found today in the average believer within the contemporary intellectual situation on the 'academic' intellectual level, must now be brought out and reflected on in a strictly methodical, scientific manner.

This grounding of the faith on the level of the pre-scientific and also of the scientifically reflex datum is not simply identical with the grounding given by the traditional fundamental theology. It is obvious that many of the themes and proofs of the traditional fundamental theology cannot be found in this new approach even in a pre-scientific, unreflected manner and that nevertheless this grounding of the faith is existentially authentic and sufficient, since otherwise it would be impossible for the exercise of the faith to be existentially authentic and sufficient. This, naturally, is not meant to dispute the fact that many of the contents, themes and methods of this grounding of the faith (on both levels) do coincide materially with the contents, themes and methods of the usual fundamental theology. The basic difference, however, remains: basically the old fundamental theology reflected scientifically on everything which is actually and objectively given as content and reasons in the total statement of the Faith. The new 'fundamental theology', conceived as a 'basic course', reflects scientifically and basically on what – at the same time less and more than the object of the old fundamental theology – must be given in the pre-scientific existential basis for the faith of the educated man of today (if faith is to be 'reasonable'), on what is given (since there is reasonable faith) and what is sufficient (although this grounding-of-the-faith of today does not and cannot contain many of the things which are – and rightly so – the object of the traditional fundamental theology).

This new 'fundamental theology', if properly carried out, can perfectly well fulfil the concept of a strict and objective science. 'Science' is had when a legitimate question is posed and answered with all methodical precision and clear reflection. The question, however, about why (and what) I believe as a man of today and as a Christian, is such a question. Only at a superficial glance do this question and its answer coincide with the whole range of problems dealt with by the traditional fundamental theology; for, as has been said, this question, in view of the fact that my faith is already well-founded, is not intended to furnish an initial basis of [126] faith (not even from a methodic point of view) but rather intends to

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are tendencies in this direction) in such a way and so basically as to give rise to something like the basic discipline envisaged here.

[3] This proviso must not be overlooked. This is not the place to describe the nature and limits of this 'rational basis for faith' more exactly and to defend it against the kind of rationalistic interpretation which, since the nineteenth century, was (and still is) met with only too often in Catholic fundamental theology.

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raise this real and existentially already given basis to the level of 'scientific' reflection. Hence this question means to ask only about what is given here and now (even though frequently only very implicitly) as the basis of faith. It must also, therefore, ask about many things which were not asked in the old fundamental theology or were even directly covered up as questions there (e.g. even the precise question as to why I can rightly believe even before having directly mastered and worked out many of the philosophical and historical problems of the old fundamental theology; the many questions which are imposed on us by today's 'world-view', although they are not made explicit in the traditional fundamental theology). Further reflections are required and useful to explain what is really meant by this 'basic course' envisaged here for today's training in theology, this course which we have provisionally called the 'new fundamental theology' for want of a better term. Naturally, even the reflections which follow cannot here be carried to the point of giving an exact and detailed programme for this 'basic course'. Still, we can advance a little further than we have done so far in the description of what we mean.

The traditional fundamental theology is not very well adapted for an existentially successful grounding of the faith of the kind which has been demanded, and this above all because it develops the proof of the event of revelation proclaimed by the Church in a purely formal manner and without the material contents of what is revealed itself. In other words, normal fundamental theology proves the actual occurrence of revelation and the existence of its magisterial transmission and bearer. What is revealed, however, does not interest it and is left to 'special dogmatics'. This itself could already bring us to ask whether existence and content of revelation are really as indifferently separate as is surely presupposed by this method. Is it not rather the case (at least in the concept of an eschatologically completed revelation, with which we are after all concerned since there was no fundamental theology before this stage of revelation-history) that these two moments mutually condition one another and render one another intelligible? Thus, for example, it can be seen that there really is revelation and that it has real existence only if one looks at what is revealed, viz. the absolute self-communication of God. Quite apart from all this, the man of today (at least at some time in his life) experiences the question about the actual communication of a divine [127] revelation as a real question, not so much from the point of view of its abstract concept (such as: '*locutio Dei attestans*') but from the point of view of its content; this is the point of view which makes revelation-history problematic for him. Anyone, for instance, to whom the 'idea' of an incarnation of the divine Logos, of a unique historical God-man, appears to be an unrealisable myth, will discover a sufficient number of not at all insignificant reasons within the research into the history of the historical Jesus for disputing that Jesus intended himself to be understood as such a metaphysical Son of God. In short, 'fundamental theology' is an inner moment of dogmatic theology itself since the latter must prove the internal credibility of the content of revelation just as much as fundamental theology must prove the credibility of the event of revelation in its abstract concept, and since both these tasks are for the man of today mutually demanded by and inextricably interrelated in the reflex proof of his faith. This does not mean that there cannot and must not be a special dogmatic theology in which this aspect of fundamental theology recedes into the background and appears only on the fringe, a dogmatic theology whose proper task consists in a more precise rational examination of the statement of faith and of the way in which it can be traced back to the 'sources of revelation'. It does mean, however, that the 'basic course' we are looking for – since it is the scientific reflection on modern man's basis for the faith as it is lived existentially today – must reflect on the proof of the content of the faith; this proof is in no sense exhausted by simple reference to the statement that the historical revelation has taken place and that this or that is contained in it. All this shows, however, that this 'basic course' of a new fundamental theology is also in strict unity a basic course on the fundamental statements of faith

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themselves. It is also one, therefore, with a basic course of dogmatic theology, in which the full norm of the structure of absolute revelation and the ultimate themes of its expression mutually mirror and illuminate one another and render one another credible. It must again be emphasised, however, that the exact proof of the possibility of such a course cannot be given here. This would mean carrying out this basic course itself . . . which cannot reasonably be expected here.

We would like at this point to return to a reflection which was briefly indicated above so as not to obscure the structure of the proof that a new 'fundamental theology' is necessary. The possibility of a 'new fundamental theology' is based on the fact that the extent of the contemporary, [128] existentially and unreflectedly exercised reasons for faith does not coincide with the range of reasoning which is systematised in the usual fundamental theology; instead there is an 'overlap' on both sides: much of what is of decisive significance for the exercise of the faith today does not become explicit in today's fundamental theology; many things are very central in it (and this quite rightly since they are worthy of questioning) and yet are not in question for an existential grounding of faith or at least are things merely peripheral to it, since they cannot really be worked out in a properly exercised, reflected existential grounding of the Faith (corresponding to the amount of time available, talent, etc.), given the pluralistic complexity of the theological sciences; in any case, they need not be worked out in the 'new fundamental theology' since they do not belong to the essential points of any prereflexive existential basis of the Faith. There is this diastase. Even previously, every '*analysis fidei*' had already been aware of this question at least on the fringe of its reflections, when it asked why even '*rudes*' can believe in a rationally justified manner, even though they understand little or nothing of the usual fundamental theology. Given the modern 'progress' of the theological sciences, one has simply to admit quite soberly that the individual is becoming more and more of a '*rudis*' in the face of these sciences taken in their totality and complexity; the more he studies, the more he comes to see how he can really understand little or nothing of many of the problems of this fundamental theology in his own tiny mind which cannot be switched off or replaced, and when the time and energy available are so limited. In many particular cases he will say: I believe this simply because it too belongs to the content of my Christian and ecclesiastical faith, although 'in itself' it is also an object of fundamental theology (and hence can be 'known'). This can be the case even in very important matters.

But, you may ask, what remains of the reasons for his faith in such a situation? For the man of today, there is a certain canon of reasons for the possibility and duty of his faith. To reflect on these, and only on these, and this in their unity, coherence and possibility of achievement, is the task of the 'new fundamental theology'. This reflection does not need to be conceived in a modernistic sense as a reflection on a merely 'irrational' need for faith, but it is certainly a reflection on an original ground of faith. Part of this reflection almost from the outset is also reflection on the fact that man can and indeed always must legitimately achieve his existence [129] believingly in an existential decision before he has adequately worked out and become conscious by reflection of the reasons for his decision. These reasons include a transcendental anthropology regarding the dependence of man on history and the possibility of salvation history. These reasons will certainly contain also certain historical elements, given a Christianity which is really met by God in the history of salvation. If, however, there is faith today and, included in it, a rational basis, then the immediate historical reason of faith in its existential exercise certainly cannot in individual cases lie directly and indisputably in those proofs with which the historical theology of the life of Jesus, of his self-knowledge, etc., is concerned. The experience of the spirit concerning the concrete reality of the Church and within the concrete reality of the Church is also a historical experience which can be reflected on and which, while it does not play any part in the old fundamental theology

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(despite Dechamps and Vatican I), is part of the central subject matter of the 'new fundamental theology'. This does not deny the fact but rather includes it (although as background and not as the direct ground of faith in every particular situation and for every particular believer) that this historical experience refers back to its historical origin and renders it credible.

Since it reflects on the really existentially exercised and possible grounds of faith today, such a 'new fundamental theology' ought to be to a great extent 'transcendental', i.e. it ought to reflect on the conditions within the believing subject which make it possible to realise the contents of faith. Modern dogmatic theology frequently retreats too quickly into a dogmatic positivism: this or that proposition is simply revealed and hence it is guaranteed by the authority of God revealing. This then is often taken to mean the same as stating that it is to be found in Denzinger. Often dogmatic theology does not pay sufficient attention to the fact that there is already theology within the sources of revelation, i.e. in the Old and New Testaments. It can be asked (and today it must be asked) whence and how the bearers of revelation (the prophets and scriptural writers) know what they say; it can and must be asked how and why what they say can often be quite simply traced back to a few quite simple basic assertions, while the multiplicity of dogmatic propositions appears as the theological development (even though guaranteed by revelation) and as the articulated interpretation of these basic assertions. If this were asked and one therefore 'reduced' the multiplicity of dogmatic propositions (without impoverishing their content) to a few basic mysteries of [130] revelation, then one could get a much clearer view of the correspondence in these basic mysteries between the formal being of revelation as such and its Christian 'content'. A 'transcendental' proof makes it possible for the 'new fundamental theology', however, to pass over many (even though not all) of the historical proofs with which the usual fundamental theology had to concern itself; furthermore, it would make it possible to develop the central themes of dogmatic theology in one go and thus reflect the total grounds on which a contemporary conviction of faith actually rests.

THE BASIC THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE WHOLE OF THEOLOGY

The position of philosophy

Whenever one thinks seriously about the theological formation of the future pastor of souls, the function and position of philosophy appears as a difficult problem. According to the official instructions of the Church on Catholic theological training, the course of theology proper is supposed to be preceded by a course of pure philosophy. One can agree with this when and where there is time for at least a two or three year course of philosophy. Such a course, however, presents its own problems in view of the difficulty of presenting a philosophy which is really up to date, with all the difficulties involved in this, to students who for the most part do not have any philosophical bent. Things become even more problematic if, as is the case in Germany, one simply presents the theologians with a kind of introduction to philosophy lasting only one or two terms with an hour or so a week, a preparation which at the most can only very vaguely claim to be philosophy. The whole study then either degenerates to a merely formal exercise in a few concepts originally of a philosophical kind which will be needed later on in theology, something quite unattractive and without any hope of kindling any philosophical Eros, or one gives a genuine course of philosophy which most of the students are incapable of following.

In this situation, it would seem, to begin with, to be much better to do philosophy within the initial fundamental-dogmatic course; this is basically what was done in the Middle Ages.

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Philosophy is then studied within the reality towards which the student of theology has an authentic personal relationship; more and more basic philosophy can be demanded [131] of him in this basic course than has been the case in our normal practice until now; no philosopher can seriously maintain that one cannot genuinely philosophise in this way (for otherwise a St Augustine or a Pascal would be without any philosophical significance); 'pure' philosophy can then still be taught – and indeed more profitably – in the later years of the course. Through the basic course one could then philosophise first of all in the area in which the real existence of the young theology student is grounded. Does a Christian have to be ashamed, or even merely regard it as unphilosophical or hold it as something not sufficiently 'without presuppositions', if philosophy is for him to begin with the exact, methodically precise reflection on his real and full exercise of human existence, so as – later – to release the 'pure' philosophy from this starting-point out of the whole of Christian existence into its authentic freedom as the presupposition presupposed by theology itself? A philosophy for theologians, which would be taught after this basic theological course of 'fundamental-theological dogmatics' (as we may also call it), would at any rate arouse more interest and would have a greater chance of success than the rather impoverished philosophical introduction which most frequently is given today at the beginning of our theological studies. It would then also be easier to recognise who among our theological students is suited for such a 'pure' philosophy, and the real professors of genuine philosophy would find more joy in such students than is normally the case in the early terms.

'*Old*' *and* '*New*' *fundamental theology*

It should be stressed once more that a partial material identity between the traditional fundamental theology and special dogmatic theology, on the one hand, and the here outlined basic course of 'fundamental dogmatic theology', on the other hand, is not only not denied but appears as a quite self-evident fact. This basic course, however, has a really proper 'formal object' and within this a principle of choice and structure by which it is clearly distinguished from the other disciplines referred to. It is the scientifically exact and methodical reflection on the reasons existentially effective today for faith in the real event of Christian revelation and its central contents; this reflection makes the basis a datum by looking simultaneously with it at the reality grounded by it and by thinking about the possibility of its existential realisation.

[132] '*Mystery of Christ*'

We read in No. 12 of the Conciliar schema of Vatican II, '*De institutione sacerdotali*': *Studia vero ecclesiastica inchoentur generali introductione in mysterium Christi, quod totam generis humani historiam afficit, in Ecclesiam iugiter influit et in ministerio sacerdotali imprimis operatur*.[4] The author does not wish to maintain that this simple but profound statement simply and directly expresses what he has tried to indicate here as the basic and naturally also central discipline of theological instruction. Yet it will no doubt be possible to say that if this *generalis introductio in mysterium Christi*, understood as the beginning and basis of the whole of theology, on which, as the text immediately continues, the other disciplines are to be centred, is not to be merely pious talk which simply fishes a few bits and pieces out of the material of the traditional theological disciplines and then at best presents them simply in the manner and with the method of these known disciplines (the well-known

[4] 'Ecclesiastical studies should begin with a general introductory course into the mystery of Christ, a mystery which affects the whole history of the human race, influences the Church continuously and above all becomes effective in the priestly ministry.' Although this text is not yet final, the definitive text will no doubt express materially the same thing. (This it in fact does. – *Tr*.)

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danger of the usual 'introductions') – and if this *introductio generalis* is understood on its own (as it must be) after the original manner of scientific theory and not merely in a pedagogico-didactic way – then nothing else will remain but to understand the *introductio generalis* demanded here in the sense in which we have understood the basic theological science we are looking for: as the basic and central discipline of theological formation. If attention is paid in this basic course to the fact that it is a question of the possibility of the existential exercise of faith today and therefore concerns precisely those who can attest this faith in the name of the Church, then the *mysterium Christi* is seen automatically as the mystery operative in the priestly ministry, without this aspect simply degenerating into a small, individual dogmatic or edifying point which would really have little to do with an *introductio generalis* to the whole of theology. The transcendental reflection on the conditions of the possibility of faith – which must always also reflect on the ultimate reason for this faith, viz. God's self-communication in grace understood as a permanent existential dimension – shows immediately and in an original manner that the *mysterium Christi* suffuses and finalises the whole history of mankind, so that this supernatural [133] transcendentality appears ever more clearly in history until it finds its highest and unsurpassable manifestation in Christ.

Unity of formation

Every formation, if it is to have that unity which alone can be formative necessarily and in a genuine sense, must have a central discipline towards which the multiplicity of subjects is orientated as to their preparation, articulation and sequence. This is true above all of theology, the highest science of the spirit. It has often and rightly been said today that the study of scripture is the 'soul of theology'. Yet in the concrete and quite unavoidable practice of the contemporary introductory science and exegesis, it will be quite impossible to say in any practical sense that exegesis can be the central discipline of theology. Exegesis carries on its business today, even on the Catholic side, in such a way that the kerygma of today's Church and the teaching of the magisterium are in practice no longer anything more than merely a *norma negativa*; until the results of exegesis have been translated directly into the kerygma of today and into the personal substance of faith, it requires such a great deal of 'translation' work in view of the distance between scripture and the spiritual situation of the man of today, that this work cannot in practice be done to any sufficient extent by exegesis itself. In those cases in which exegesis and biblical theology do such work of 'translation' in a most praiseworthy and successful manner today, this work (even though it may still be called exegesis) is bound up and shot through with so many philosophico-theological reflections that it is no longer distinguishable in principle from the kind of work dogmatic theology ought to be doing today. This, however, shows clearly that 'pure' (i.e. principally historically and philologically orientated) exegesis is indeed a very important and indispensable discipline in theology, but that it cannot be the central discipline in which the decisive act of theology is achieved, viz. that listening with all one's spiritual powers to the revelation of God, in such a way that this revelation will make a direct impact on the conscience of faith of the man of today.

There is no basic reason in principle, however, why dogmatic theology as such should be denied the dignity of such a central discipline within the sphere of the theological sciences. It may, therefore, quite rightly claim this dignity. Nevertheless, it can be said, on the one hand, that it is so much divided up in its present-day business (and not without reason) into [134] historical inquiries (i.e. exegesis, history of dogma and of the magisterium) that it finds it very difficult to achieve a synthesis which brings revelation to be heard directly and enables it to be accomplished. On the other hand, the envisaged basic discipline of a 'fundamental-theological dogmatics' intends to be truly dogmatic theology; it tends to be this in a way

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which will bring the unified whole of the message of faith in its basic structure and credibility to the level of scientific reflection, so that one need have no qualms about granting it the dignity of the desired and necessary central discipline. If a genuine '*introductio generalis*' is given only when one starts to grasp the whole out of its radical unity, then this '*introductio generalis in mysterium Christi*' is also at the same time and necessarily the central discipline of theology, and the individual tracts of special dogmatic theology can then be regarded as its branches (at a second remove). Other theological disciplines have from the very start no claim to be considered as the central and unifying discipline. Granted that there has to be such a central discipline in theology which synthesises everything else, and this in the very nature of things and for didactic and pedagogical reasons, then it would seem that we have such a discipline in this basic course of fundamental dogmatic theology. This – without ceasing to be theology and science by being the systematic reflection of this kerygma –would then also border most immediately on the one salvation-kerygma of the Church.

Further practical considerations

We will now try to round off our considerations. The fundamental-theological dogmatic basic discipline envisaged in its scientifico-theoretical and theological form would be intended as the basic course for all theologians. This would presumably make it superfluous to pose the question as to whether one would have to institute two parallel courses (one 'academic' and one 'seminaristic') in the central subjects according to the difference in levels of intelligence and in view of differences in the eventual work to be done once the theologians have finished their studies. The basic course we have in mind obviously must and can correspond didactically to the average level of intelligence of the students, so that its *niveau* will have a certain variation in scope. It can, however, be given as the same for all: being a basic course, it addresses itself to listeners who are all beginners, its theme is directly and in practice of the highest importance and urgency for all, and it leads at the same time into questions [135] which are so profound and have to be explained in such a scientifically exact manner that even the more talented students will not find it monotonous. Given the obscurity still remaining with regard to such a new basic discipline even after these explanations, it is of course rather difficult to say what length such a course would have to be in order to achieve what it has in mind. It can be supposed, however, that three to four semesters of four hours per week would be sufficient and necessary, plus seminars arising out of this subject.

Given real co-operation, a common understanding of the nature of this new basic discipline and an objectively common basic conception (especially regarding the general philosophical aspects and contents of this discipline), there shou1d be no basic difficulty about several professors dividing the lectures between them. If it were possible (which it is not within the present context) to give a more exact outline of the content and the course of this basic discipline, then it would presumably become even clearer that it is objectively and technically possible for several lecturers to divide the work between them without any damage being done to the unity of this discipline. In more modest circumstances, of course, even one professor alone must be in a position to present this discipline.

Basic discipline and other subjects

Naturally, even in this conception, other 'subjects' besides this basic discipline would have to be studied from the very beginning, and these would step into the foreground 'optically' and in terms of time. We cannot, treat here of the problem (which is not merely a didactic but also very basically a scientifico-theoretical one) as to what should be the exact objective division of theological subjects and how time and labour should be divided among lectures, seminars and private study. At any rate, the cancer-like growth by which ever more new subjects arise within the framework of theological studies and fight over the time available for lectures, is a

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great evil which can be overcome only by really keeping in mind the inner unity and structure of the one theology. Still, given that there are these subjects in sensible division and order according to rank and weightiness, they should be grouped meaningfully around the basic discipline. Introductory sciences to the Old and New Testament, exegesis and biblical theology, should accompany the course of the basic discipline from the very beginning. In order that not too many different subjects have to be taught in the first terms, the bible-sciences should be given [136] plenty of room during these terms. It would be conceivable that during the first four semesters there would also be a course in Church history, taken as the other part of historical theology. After completion of the basic course, and in a kind of second phase of studies, the emphasis would shift to special dogmatic theology (together with the history of dogmas) and moral theology. A third phase of studies would be given over to practical theology (canon law, liturgy, pastoral theology, ecclesiastical sociology, etc.) and to 'pure' philosophy in which, if properly carried out, certain essential aspects of the basic course would automatically be repeated but on a deeper level. We have already touched on the question as to how individual themes of the traditional fundamental theology would be treated in so far as they are outside the subject of the basic course. It should be remembered in this connection that many of these themes can perfectly well be incorporated into special dogmatic theology as long as it can be presupposed that this dogmatic theology offers a sufficient ecclesiology.

As far as existing university regulations and distribution of professorial chairs is concerned, the suggested structure of theological studies need not encounter any insurmountable obstacles. The incumbent of a chair of fundamental theology, without in the least coming into conflict with his teaching commission, could understand and teach his fundamental theology in the sense of this 'new fundamental theology'. We would like to repeat an old wish in this connection: that the theological colleges of the religious orders, which are much freer in law and in organisation than the State or episcopal institutions and hence have the duty and right to be more elastic and open to new experiments than the latter, ought to have the courage to look for new ways of theological formation and not merely to copy often rather pitifully – the theological faculties of the universities. Perhaps they could try out in practice whether the idea proposed here has anything to recommend it.

Theology and the spiritual life

The basic course, with all its soberness and scientific strictness necessarily proper to it, might nevertheless be suited for building a bridge between the science of theology and the spiritual life of the young theology students. The gap between these two sectors of their life is for the most part extremely wide, indeed far too wide. Such an *introductio generalis in mysterium Christi* could make it clear to the young theology students that [137] it should also help them to reflect on the significance of his spiritual life, so as to foster it, and to remember that this science is acquired personally only if it is supported by a religious exercise of what is reflected on in it. If this basic course is really taught the way it should be, then it should not be necessary, as has been considered in various quarters, to have a longer ascetical preparation before starting theology, a sort of 'novitiate' for the theology students going on for the secular priesthood, intended to make them more suited to reap the benefits of theology and to overcome the danger of the disintegrating process of mere problematising in theology. If something like a 'novitiate' is held to be important, it could perhaps come in rather later (in the actual seminary, in prolonged retreats, etc.), once the theology students have reached a certain theological maturity. A real contact between the 'fundamental theologian' and the 'spiritual director' could be very useful for both of them.

Lay theologians

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One could now go on to consider whether such a basic discipline as we have tried to outline would not be suited also to act as the basic course of the 'lay students' who are studying at the university in preparation for becoming secondary school teachers later on and who, besides their particular secular subjects, are also taking theology in their course so as to be able later on to teach religion in the schools. It will be impossible to deny that their training for teaching religion in secondary schools is often quite pitiful. In most cases they are of course quite unable, in view of their other studies, to give as much time to the study of theology as a normal theology student who is going on for the priesthood, and yet they will later on be able to teach in a way not permitted to every curate. It would, therefore, be of advantage both for them and for their future pupils if their training could at least show a certain compactness and emphasis on the most decisive questions. It would seem, therefore, that the basic discipline outlined here could be of the greatest benefit to such lay theologians.

No matter how one may judge the value of the reflections expressed here, one thing at least should be recognised: the question of improvements in the study of theology is not merely a pedagogical, didactic and organisational one. It must not be presumed that we already know quite evidently and clearly what 'subjects' make up theology and that it is merely a question of a somewhat greater co-ordination and balancing out [138] of these subjects among themselves. Before any such practical considerations, there is a scientific theoretical question which itself is again merely the formal aspect of the question as to what is the real meaning of theology and what it must be all about. As long as one is busy merely organising, no satisfactory answer will he found to the question about the right structure of theology.

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[139]

PART THREE

Theological Anthropology

[141]

11

THE SECRET OF LIFE

It is really perfectly obvious that in a general discussion about the nature of life, the theologian too should make his contribution. In his realm, too, the word 'life' is a key concept which he cannot do without and towards which his most immediate sources, namely the writings of the Old and New Testaments, draw his attention most forcibly over and over again.

I

Before we turn to the actual theological concept of life, we will attempt to make a few remarks on the question of the possibility of theology taking up a position towards the biological concept of life. Almost everyone in Catholic scholastic philosophy is a supporter of vitalism, i.e. the doctrine which teaches that life is based on a substantial form or entelechy (or whatever else one might call this principle) which is irreducible to the physico-chemical and its inner possibilities. Naturally, one emphasises in this connection also the substantial unity of this principle with matter, its correlative ontological principle. Scholastics have therefore welcomed the revival of this so-called vitalism in biology, as for instance in Driesch, and have appropriated its arguments. In this way one also feels in agreement with a basic conception which endows biology with the dignity of a basic science and thus does not in practice think of biology as merely an extension of biochemistry and hence of 'inorganic' chemistry and physics. Also, it must not be overlooked that this neo-scholastic zeal to defend a certain form of hylemorphic vitalism had a certain element of theological pathos. Below the surface there was no doubt the impression that in vitalism one possessed certain outer defences for the bastion from which one defends the dignity of man against materialism. But, prescinding from the question about the possible meanings and reasons vitalism in all its [142] different forms might have objectively and on its own basis of natural philosophy, it will have to be said that the question of vitalism is in no way directly relevant to a Christian world-view and theology and that Christian dogmatics can therefore remain neutral on this matter. If we prescind for the moment from man as such, the Old Testament makes rather a radical connection between biological life and the 'earth', regarding the former as a product of the latter, even though only under the creative 'breath' of God which, however, must not be confused with a new created substantial principle. Today's basic Christian conception of the world, of its history and its relationship to God, thinks of God in the realm of nature as the creative, dynamic ground of a development which (at least if one is thinking of man) does indeed recognise factors of essential self-transcendence into something radically new under the creative dynamism of God; it does not, however, understand God as the categorial cause which intervenes at certain points in the time and space of natural history without any created causality being operative at all, and which *in this way* makes natural history progress by something which is in no way any longer also the result of the world-causality itself. The fact

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that man cannot be reduced to anything merely material and biological is safeguarded, without injury to his real connection with the total biological evolution, by man's knowledge 'from within' about his absolute transcendentality, his spirituality and freedom, even before he has understood anything about the mere biosphere and its relation to the inorganic world. The self-transcendence of the inorganic into life (always supported by the creative but transcendent, uncategorised dynamism of the absolute being of God) may be seen and acknowledged. Whether it implies a hylemorphism in the classical sense or whether it can at this point of transition be interpreted in another quite different sense, is a further question that is very difficult to answer. The vitalism of neo-scholasticism itself has left so many open questions with regard to its more exact interpretation, the nature of what it calls the 'entelechy', its precise relation to matter and its individual origin, that even for this reason alone it cannot have any dogmatic and apologetic significance for theology and Christian anthropology. This does not yet represent any judgement about its truth content. It merely tells us that vitalism is not a theological question as long as it refers merely to the biological sphere as such. The above-mentioned 'outer defences' may in themselves represent an absolutely correct position, but they are unnecessary [143] precisely *as* the 'outposts' of Christian anthropology against materialism.

In these few words everything that theology as *such* has to say on the subject treated so far at this congress seems to us to have been said. Hence, the theologian may now turn his attention immediately to the question dealing with the notion of life recognised by theology as applicable within its own field.

II

This theological notion of life is, of course, connected with the ordinary experience of life. It could not possibly be otherwise, since it is quite impossible to have absolutely different and completely new basic concepts in theology if theology is to be in any way capable of making itself understood by man in his existence which is always in the world. This ordinary experience of life, however, is that of the living man as such himself. The Old Testament in particular is indeed aware that animals too are living (it hardly reflects in this connection on plants); often it even regards human-animal life with an almost terrifying naivity from the same point of view, both with regard to the earth which supports this life and also with regard to the sovereignly vivifying or destructive God . . . but when it comes to the question as to what scripture thinks about ordinary 'life', then it casts its regard on man and on him alone.

The most exciting thing about this notion of life from a theological point of view is that it has its own history within the history of revelation. This history starts off from the concrete experience of human life and death and in the end arrives at that 'life' which we still confess today at the end of the Credo as 'eternal life' and which, therefore, has become one of the most decisive key-concepts of the Christian revelation and faith. This does not mean that the original concept of life has at some time been 'transferred' and 'metaphorically' applied to a completely different situation, so that the new reality is simply somewhat similar to and comparable with the original meaning of life. No, what is referred to even in the last stage of this conceptual history is the originally signified thing itself~ the genuinely experienced life. Yet precisely in this conceptual history, which constitutes the progressive self-unfolding of the original thing itself the depth and radical nature of the original experience become [144] ever clearer: the life lived by man in his unity and as a whole is the becoming, the preparatory stage of eternal life, if it is understood not merely as one but as a whole in its complete perfection of being. It can easily be seen that it is not a question here, biblically speaking and in a Christian sense, of the history of a pictorial metaphor or analogy but of the historical

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unfolding of the always one and same reality. The 'eternal life' we profess is also the 'resurrection of the body', i.e. the perfection of life, which was the starting-point of the history of this concept. The beatific, perfect community-with-God of personal human existence which we profess in hope, is also the perfection of the life which we experience bodily here below and which we must slowly pass through and experience in all its human breadth and depth. This does not mean, of course, that 'life' is the only possible key-concept for the perfection of man and hence for an anthropology. Starting from this concept, the personal, free, responsible and dialogic aspects of this life remain somewhat unexpressed. Hence this concept must always be seen in unity with other central concepts which call upon the whole of the self-understanding of man in accordance with revelation, such as the 'kingdom of God', 'community', 'knowledge face to face', 'love which remains for ever'. Yet it is nevertheless characteristic of the scope of the concept of life that the concept '*ruach*', *pneuma*, spirit, which appears above all in the New Testament as the divine good of salvation, is ordained from the very outset to the concept of life and thus is associated with the history of the latter. '*Ruach*' is the divine life-giving force and thus becomes slowly and more profoundly understood as God's power and the content of *eternal* life, as the holy *pneuma* of God himself which in *this* way powerfully fills man with grace right up to the transfiguration of the body (1 Co 15:45; Jn 6:63; 1 P 3:18) as πνευ~μα τη~φ ζωη~φ (Rm 8:2).

This concept of life starting from man and his experience – and understanding what the scriptures say[1] about the *unity* of the one man which does not permit of any dualistic separation into two independent substances – certainly envisages also the concrete earthly side of (human) life: the man who yearns for 'length of days' (Ps 21:5; 91:16; 119:17, 37, etc.; 143:11), for 'good days' (Ps 34:13), associated with peace, joy, happiness, fruitfulness of the land, health, and abundance of children. [145] Already however this earthly life, accepted and defended in unashamed affirmation of life, has an inner theological depth in scripture; it comes from God who is absolutely alive (Ps 18:47), it is awakened by him who is the 'fountain of life' (Ps 36:10) by his '*ruach*' (cf. Ps 104:30; Is 42:5), so that this life is always experienced as dependent on God, and as transient in spite of all the inner vitality and autonomous power of man. Seen in this light, it becomes understandable that the bodily life of man is experienced from the start as incorporated into the personal, dialogic history of salvation and damnation which takes place between God and man. Even the earthly life is not seen as a neutral, profane matter but as the appearance of the salvation of Yahweh and of man's peace with God in obedience to his commandments (Dt 4:1, 40; 5:30; 6:18; 8:1; 11:8 *sq*.; 30:15-20; 32:46 *sq*.; Ps 37:9, etc.). It is indeed true that in many places in the Old Testament death is accepted unproblematically and in silent, unquestioning obedience, presupposing merely that one may be permitted to die 'in old age and when tired of life', contemplating the gift of posterity, and not having to experience the end of this life before one's time and violently. If one wants to do justice to the *whole* expression of the Old Testament and the New Testament, it must be said nevertheless (if we may formulate it in this way) that man cannot ultimately see death except as something that should not be, as something that does not belong to God's original idea of man and which therefore can originate only in the guilty separation of man from the God of life at the beginning of his history. Thus it happens that life and death take on a radically theological meaning, that death becomes the appearance and the judgement of sin, and that the history of salvation and damnation becomes clarified as the battle between life and death. It must always be remembered in this connection that man is such a unified being for scripture as a whole that

[1] Cf. for the Old Testament texts: H. Fries, *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* II (Munich 1962), pp. 25-27.

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scripture cannot limit the absolute claim to life, which constitutes the depth of his existence, to man's 'soul', as if the history of his life and death were merely the history of the relationship of an 'immortal' soul to God. There is always reference to the one, whole man who fulfils his ultimate living nature in corporeality. Hence the motto for the *victory* of the one life which he experiences bodily but also simultaneously as the personal history with the living God, is not the immortality of the soul but the resurrection of the body where, however, for this very reason the 'body' does not refer merely to the biological dimension of man but to the whole man in his mortal nature and the radical desire for life awakened in him [146] by the *pneuma* of God; in this resurrection, it is just as much a question of the 'soul' having to be saved out of the destroying separation-from-God of the 'underworld' (*scheol*) as it is of his corporeality being given back to him. This view of the eschatological saving good of life in the resurrection of the body is therefore a view of the total finality of the one, whole man who perfects himself in free dialogue with God; it is a view which comes through ever more clearly in the history of revelation (having started in the Isaiah-apocalypse [Is 25:8; 26:19 *sqq*.], it asserts itself in Dn 12:2; 2 M 7:9 *sqq*.; 12:43 *sqq*.; 14:46). It is perfectly true, however, that this view accompanied reflection on the fact that this bodily eschatological life must be accomplished by passing through the radical transformation of death, thus does not represent a return to an earthly bodily existence and hence can no longer be 'imagined' (1 Co 15). Wherever the history of the theological concept of human life in its wholeness has reached its climax, this life disappears, transforming itself radically and thus withdrawing into the unspeakable mystery of God. Yet the whole man hides himself into this mystery, 'body' and 'soul'. Precisely in this way man, as it were, returns to his initial experience of 'life'. The last is still the first. He has no longer any right not to take anything about himself seriously; he may not, for example, regard his human 'biosphere' as something merely provisional which he must simply leave behind or could possibly reject when the perfect state dawns. The final 'transformation' of history is the salvation of everything, even of matter, even of the bodily life, but it is of course a salvation into the mystery of God

On the one hand, man knows about God only by experiencing how God acts in him and thus knows of 'God in himself' because God in Himself gives Himself in self-communication by grace. On the other hand, man's experience of himself in the history of salvation offers him 'life' as the beginning *and* end of his self-experience, as the key-word (darkly and in metaphors, of course) for the whole of his own existence. This being so, it is understandable that he is right in saying of God: He is *the* living being. He is 'living', not merely because he is 'the fountain of life' for us, as we read in Ps 36:10, and because all living creatures owe their existence to the '*ruach*' of God (Ps 104:30; Is 42:5): this must always be seen, even at this stage, to mean that it is not a question here of a mere retracing of our life to its ultimate cause but is also a question of the statement that our life remains continuously subject to the sovereign providence of God, of Him who is, who takes and who gives life (Rm [147] 4:17; 1 Tm 6:13; Jn 5:21; 6:57; Lk 12:20; 2 Co 1:9; Jm 4:14 *sq*.)[2] He is also not merely the Living Being in contrast to 'dead' idols, i.e. God who works of himself and is experienced as working in distinction from the idols which man creates for himself and in which he wants to experience himself as a 'creative ideologist'. God is living in himself, he is life. He is this, first of all, because the radical affirmation of life, such as man experiences it ever more clearly both as an individual (in the experience of the spirit) and collectively in the history of salvation and revelation, implies a basic indestructibility and absoluteness which, absolutely and quite apart from the dialectic counterpoint with death, can belong only to the eternal God who therefore is alone the absolutely Living One. He is χω~ν (Rm 9:26; Mt 16:16; 26:63; Ac

[2] Cf. for the New Testament texts: *TWNT* II (Stuttgart 1935) (English Translation: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* II [Michigan 1964] – *Tr*.)

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14:5); he has life in himself as its source (Jn 5:26), lives eternally (Rv 4:9 *sq*.; 10:6; 15:7), he alone has α&θανασι/α of himself (1 Tm 6:16); life itself is so much the property of God as such that God is introduced on oath by his highest property, viz. life (Nb 14:28; Dt 32:40; Rm 14:11) and that even man swears by this highest possible good, viz. by God's life (Jg 8:19; Rt 3:13; 1 S 19:6; Jr 5:2); He *has* life originally and before his creation of the world and salvation (in him, the divine Logos, 'was' the life, says St John in his prologue 1:4) and hence he can give it to us by the fact that this Logos comes into the world and into the death-destined '*sarx*' of our existence and thus this divine life itself appears to us as the 'light' (Jn 1:5), truth (Jn 1:14) and 'love' which he is himself (1 Jn 3:1; 4:7-21 *sq*.; 2 Co 13:11). This inner aliveness of God unfolds itself for us in α)λη&θεια and α)γα&πη, and these two sides of this life to which no further, equally original sides can be added on the basis of the New Testament, refer back to the mystery of the Trinity of the one God in which the Father (itself a concept in the meaning-range of life) who is life (Jn 5:26), generates a Son as Logos (Jn 1:1) to whom the Father communicates life (Jn 5:26), and from whom proceeds a Holy Spirit (1 Co 2:10 *sq*.) who knows the depths of God and who is the Spirit of Love (cf. Jn 6:63: πνευ~μα και∴ ζωη& as the one good of salvation in the words of Jesus to the believer).

Seen in this light, the *Christological* side of the New Testament concept of life also becomes intelligible. In Jesus Christ, God with his whole *self*-communication becomes historically tangible for us and is rendered [148] present in his irreversible victory. If, however, God is life itself *in se* and *quoad nos*, the 'life has appeared' in Christ (1 Jn 1:2); he is the Logos of life (1 Jn 1:1), the life-giving *pneuma* (1 Co 15:45), the α)ρξηγο_φ τη|=φ ζωη&φ (Ac 3:15).[3] When, therefore – in one of his emphatic, high-priestly I-am-expressions which are the parallels to the 'I-am(there)-who I-am(there)' of God (Ex 3:14 *sqq*.) – the Johannine Jesus wants to say who he is in himself and for us (both of which coincide), he can say simply: 'I am the Life', 'I am the resurrection and the life' (Jn 11:25; 14:6), just as his absolute 'I am He' (Jn 8:24, 28, 58; Mk 6:50; 13:6; Lk 21:8) can be clarified by 'Truth', 'Way', 'Bread of Life', 'Light of the World'.[4] Thus 'Life' in St John can really be seen as the comprehensive salvation-concept[5], containing everything brought by the Saviour of the world; thus St John speaks thirty-six times of life, of 'eternal life', and emphasises that this 'life' is granted even now to those who believe and love (Jn 3:36; 5:24; 6:53 *sq*.; 1 Jn 3:15; 5:13; Ep 2:5), even though it is still hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3). This Christ is not merely life for us; he has himself participated in our history which goes through death into life, so that the statement regarding the resurrected Christ: 'he lives', is the very centre of the Christian proclamation (Mk 16:11; Lk 24:5; Ac 1:3. Rm 6:10; 14:9; 2 Co 13:4).

III

Let us look back once more and in the process translate what we have said into a language which is perhaps more directly the language of today and which draws our contemporary understanding of the world even more clearly into the understanding of what has been said. The contemporary world-picture is characterised by a pre-decision for unity and development; it sees matter, life and spirit as held together in one single history of evolution. Such a concept is not necessarily false as long as it remains discreet and realistic and does not

[3] *TWNT* II, 866
[4] Cf. on this *TWNT* II, 866, 871; *LTK* VI, 855/856.
[5] Cf. especially F. Mussner, *ZΩH. Die Anschauung vom 'Leben' im 4. Evangelium unter Berücksichtigung der Johannes-Briefe* (Munich 1952). Further bibliography above all in *LTK* VI, 856. Cf. also H. Schlier, *Besinnung auf das Neue Testament* (Freiburg 1964), pp. 260 *sqq*., 278, etc.

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play down essential differences within this unity. Actually, the idea of evolution does not exclude but includes an [149] essential self-transcendence[6] continually going on within it, since otherwise nothing would ever really become new. This self-transcendence has been conserved in some sense even within dialectical materialism under the idea of the 'qualitative leap'. The Christian philosopher and the Christian theologian will always conceive this self-transcendence, by which a being surpasses and 'elevates' itself into something essentially higher, as happening under the dynamism of the divine being and under the continuous divine creative power. Under this presupposition, however, evolution and essential self-transcendence (seen as the manner of the former) is an absolutely possible way of conceiving matter, life and spirit as one connected reality and history and even to regard the divine self-communication to the rational creature by the grace of God's *pneuma* as the highest, freely given unsurpassable step and phase of this one evolution. In such a pre-decided world-picture, *that* concept will be most easily suitable for understanding the content of the one evolving history which (a) expresses the reality in which it is given to us most immediately within this whole unity, and which (b) always makes what precedes and what follows this reality still comprehensible by means of this one history. Such a reality is 'life', as we experience it in our own human life. Starting from this life, which is most close to us, is the most likely way of rendering matter and sub-human life intelligible, and this concept is also, as shown by the Bible, the creed and dogmatic theology, suited for expressing the ultimate good of salvation, the perfection of man in God himself. It now becomes clear also that the concept of life actually enables us to have a continuous even though, of course, also gradual and analogous understanding of this one history of created reality.

We should look at life as a form first of all from the point of view of an inner unity and in a heterogeneous (i.e. physico-chemical and spatio-temporal) manifoldness which is not simply co-ordinated but hierarchically subordinated. Add to this the fact that this form has an 'interiority' which governs and preserves, as from a central point, the self-construction, self-preservation and relation to the environment, which at the same time separates and opens itself for the rest of the surroundings in a final and [150] spontaneous relationship, and which conserves itself, incorporates, causes itself to appear in the whole and in all the parts, has the source and end of self-movement within itself and has a living-space and inner time-form all its own. Looking at life in this way, we will get a description of (to begin with, biological) life (without going into the distinction between animals and plants) which can be used as a model for understanding both higher and lower reality: i.e. the one whole being and history of experienced reality.

To begin with then, we can understand inorganic matter as the first elementary step, as a collection of instruments, as a kind of vocabulary of biological life, as a boundary condition and value, and at the same time as a 'deposit' for life. 'Dead' matter is then the asymptotic zero-condition of life in which the interiority and openness-to-the-other of life approaches equally to the lower boundary-value; the individual material thing is *apparently* quite open to the totality of material reality, since it is a pure function of the whole and is completely tied up in the causal chains external to it. Yet precisely in this way it has no true openness for the whole or reality; it exists merely as a moment of this reality itself since it has not (yet) that interiority and that concentration in itself (at least as 'form') *vis-à-vis* the whole (at least of an environment) which characterises the living; it is lost in the other and hence in this absolute self-alienation it is also incapable of experiencing the other as such; it is not truly 'open'

[6] On this concept, cf. more closely and in detail the next chapter in this volume which tries to provide a speculative basis for these theses expressed here. Cf. also P. Overhage-K. Rahner, *Das Problem der Hominisation* (Freiburg ^{2}1963) (English translation of part of this work: K. Rahner, *Hominisation*: *The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem*, Quaestiones Disputatae [Freiburg & London 1965] – *Tr*.)

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since it is not interior to itself. It has already, nevertheless, at least the passive possibility for such an interiority and openness, a possibility which grows in the same measure as it can be built up into heterogeneous systems which, if the 'miracle' of self-transcendence towards self-possession and self-assertion should happen to them, signify precisely the interiorised form of the organic. Put in a different way, one could say and in this hit on the interconnection and distinction of the inorganic and the living in one blow: when the heterogeneous material system, built with a view to a unified, prescribed effort (at least of self-preservation) appropriates its orientation as such to itself, i.e. interiorises itself then we have something living.

Starting from the concept of life, it is quite possible to understand the spirit and person as the radicalisation and self-surpassing of life. The environment becomes simply the world, interiority becomes existence as a subject, assimilation of the environment by assimilation of nourishment becomes appropriation of culture and the machine, all through harmonisation [151] of the environment beyond the properly biological sphere; interiority of consciousness becomes self-consciousness; finite openness to the environment becomes infinite transcendence towards being as such. It must be remembered in all this that we know of no personal subjectivity in our experience which is not in itself biologically alive and which does not presuppose itself as its own condition; it must be remembered that the fact of having to allow itself to be encountered which belongs to the 'other' of the world, which is essential for commencing finite subjectivity, is precisely the nature of the biological, of the sensibility of the spirit *per definitionem*. It must be noted that this is not contradicted by the Christian doctrine of the angels, since even they can be perfectly well conceived as mundane and cosmic beings, so that materiality and biosphere are merely different words for the sphere of the necessarily receptive spirituality and for inter-subjectivity.

Seen in this light, the unity of nature of the finite, even though also transcendentally and infinitely open spirit and of matter is once more confirmed. Biological life and spiritual life have something in common in that they both constitute the unity of the one human life which is biological and sensible *so as to* be capable of being spiritual; even if the biological existed for itself alone, it would therefore remain valid that the openness towards the 'other' grows in the same measure as, and not in inverse proportion to the degree of self-possession and self-direction arising out of an inner unity. Where the openness of such life becomes unbounded and there thus appears the inner unity in the form of self-disposition, proper subjectivity and freedom, there is the real life of the spiritual person. Even this is always still 'life' in the genuine 'biological' sense, a life which man has not simply 'in addition' side by side with his life as a spiritual person but rather as the inner, necessary moment of the life of the spiritual person itself. Hence his spiritual life in his transcendence towards meaning in general, towards the world as such and its secret ground (God), is still always supported by corporeality, by *environment*, by spatio-temporal encounter, by sense experience, by witness, bodily intercommunication, and sociability. In short, it is true that the spirituality of man is and remains life in the very hard and sober everyday sense, and conversely, that his life is always and everywhere opened towards the breadth of the spirit. In him it is impossible to live the biological life itself without the personal life, nature without culture, and natural history without the history of the spirit. Since, however, this inner unity of life is given in the [152] form of *bios* and of spirit in that biological life constructs itself in a directly recognisable way into an ever greater and more complex interiority and into an ever wider environment (and both at once), it can be said without hesitation – presupposing any *essential* self-transcendence to take place under the divine dynamism – that life, transcending itself unfolds itself in the history of nature into spiritual life itself.

According to Christian teaching, this one life finds its highest summit in the self-communication of God. God is not only the ground and innermost dynamism of this one

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history of nature and the spirit. He is also its goal, not merely as the asymptotic final point towards which this whole movement is orientated but also in the sense that he gives himself in his most personal, absolute reality and infinite fullness of life, to the life of man as its innermost power (called grace) and as its innermost goal which communicates itself in its own proper reality. This is a sovereignly free, unowed self-communication but is as such the final fulfilment of life, because that towards which life is opened now becomes also its innermost ground and most interior possession, since the world of life becomes the life of life itself: *vita aeterna*. Even here, this life of man does not leave behind or reject the corporeality of the one being of man as if it were something non-essential. Whether one's biological side can still be called 'biological' when man is perfected in God is ultimately an indifferent question. The whole man (and hence also his spirit) will be changed. The whole man (and hence also his corporeality) will be saved. That we cannot imagine the preserved salvation of the bodily man is not surprising: the whole glorified man is withdrawn from us in the absolute mystery of God.

The self-communication of God, however, together with the divine Trinity given with it and with the historical appearance of this self-communication in Jesus Christ, constitute the whole of what Christianity professes and hopes for, and towards which the Christian lives. Because and in so far as the possession of this divine self-communication can be understood as the highest, most absolute stage of life, Christianity can be understood quite correctly as the teaching about life as such, as the profession of God, the Living and of eternal life. For this reason, we always conclude the Credo with the words: *et vitam aeternam*. *Amen*.

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[153]

12

THE UNITY OF SPIRIT AND MATTER IN THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH

The subject of the following reflections is: the unity of spirit and matter in the Christian understanding of faith. We say 'in the Christian understanding of faith' so as to emphasise from the very start that this is neither a controversial theological subject disputed among the Christian denominations, nor a properly philosophical investigation and far less still a political controversy. This is true even though it will be shown that it is necessary to think also along theological lines and to employ philosophical concepts if one wants to make it clear what one really believes and what not. Of course, the posing of the question is co-determined by the fact that there is today a world-wide materialism which disputes the foundation of the Christian faith. Christianity must think its positions through anew in the face of such an opponent, an opponent who must not be underrated in so far as the precision of his philosophical argumentation is concerned, an opponent who at least apparently can call up even in us Christians of today an experience of the absence of God, of the necessity and at the same time rational transparency of the evolution of the material world even when taken as the basis of consciousness and of human society. In the face of such an opponent, Christianity has no reason and no right to act as if every question raised by today's materialism has already been completely worked out and answered simply because there has always been materialism. The present reflections are intended to be a very modest contribution to this debate. As has been said, they are based on the conviction that we Christians have an absolute duty and right to face up to certain basic attitudes of the man of today, and quite simply to assimilate them, and that, as long as we do this properly, we become better Christians with a more Christian faith. The ultimate reason for this is that the basic [154] structure of the contemporary understanding of the world is not at all as unchristian as its overhasty and illogical interpretation of itself in materialism, but that in the ultimate analysis it has grown out of Christian roots. It is, of course, quite unavoidable in such an attempt that certain things which are said will appear to the decided Christian as a false or dangerous or superfluous concession to the opponent, and that to such a Christian the simple, solid and bitter contradiction of materialism appears as the only proper attitude that has any hope of success. Such a person should reflect as to whether, even in the judgement of those who believe in God's providence in the history of mankind and in the light of the Logos who enlightens all men, such a world-wide materialistic outlook so widespread in the West as well as in the East can contain only error and guilt. Christianity and its theology must certainly be on their guard against making lazy compromises with false philosophical systems and with the spirit of the age in which also the powers of evil and sinful darkness are always at work. A real theology must not, nevertheless, refuse to learn anew and must not think that it itself in its existing form does not bring with it clouded and one-sided elements, elements which originated in the unchristian spirit of earlier centuries and which have not become Christian simply because we have become accustomed to them and so do not clearly experience their contradiction to basic Christian positions. This short contribution cannot, of course, enter directly into the further question of God's existence and its philosophical knowability. It is simply intended to give an outline, in the first part, of the immediate data of the Christian proclamation which presents us with a unity of spirit and matter. In the second part, then, we will try to communicate a few theological reflections which, arising out of the immediate data of faith, pointed out in the first part, attempt to clarify the meaning and scope of this unity of spirit

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and matter.

I

The Christian faith recognises a unity of spirit and matter by their very origin, in their history and in their final end.

1. The Christian faith recognises a unity of spirit and matter on the basis of their origin in so far as it professes that this origin is one and the same for both, viz. the infinite, absolute and one reality of Him whom we call God. In making this assertion, we must first of all be quite clear [155] in our minds that when we speak about God, we do not mean something which is already known to us before our experience of the material world and of the spirit; God is not a reality which is already open to us in its existence and nature even independently of the spirit and of matter as if *because* we already know God, we would also say of him (almost as an afterthought) that he has also created the material world and that reality which we call spirit: it being quite indifferent, to begin with, how we determine its relationship to what we call the material world and it being also indifferent as to what exactly we mean when we speak of matter and the material world. We mean by God rather that absolute mystery which, whether we want to or not, we always associate at least implicitly in our spiritual encounter or the world with the presupposition and ground of objects and subjects. In the assertion of the Christian faith expressed above, God therefore stands as the ground and all-embracing, pre-given unity of the experience of the spirit and the material world in their unity. It is therefore precisely asserted in this proposition that we do not merely postulate God as the creative cause of two completely separate realities but that, because we have already discovered an original reference of both realities to each other as something given in our experience, we call him one and the same cause of matter and spirit. Without such an ultimate affinity of spirit and matter in the unity of a real and meaningful, even though analogous concept of being, and without the experience of the unity of spirit and matter in the very act of human knowledge, man could not come to recognise that these seemingly so opposed and disparate realities have their one origin and source in the one God and that both are upheld by the permanent actual power of that infinite and necessary being whom we call God. As the history of philosophy and of the attack on the Christian dogma of creation shows, this affirmation about God, the Creator of matter and spirit, is not absolutely self-evident, no matter how originally it is not only a dogma of faith but also a basic proposition of human existence as such. Again and again, matter has been experienced as something dark, anti-divine, obscure or chaotic; again and again, it has been seen as something which stands in contradiction and bitter combat against the spirit understood as the true image and representative of God in the world, a combat which constitutes the history of nature and of the world. Again and again, Christianity has protested against these conceptions as incorrect and hasty interpretations of human experience and, even though not everything in this falsely interpreted [156] human experience was wrong, has condemned them as error and heresy. Matter itself together with everything meant and implied by it, has its origin in the same ultimate ground from which arises the created spirit. Matter itself even in its finiteness, temporality and spatio-temporal differentiation and in its history and its distinction (even though not contradiction to) the spirit arises out of God's creative act itself. This act reaches directly to matter itself so that it is equally directly present to God and is not really a kind of more distant, secondary product of an evolution in which merely the becoming of the spirit itself is thought to have been inaugurated by God. Matter is good; it expresses its origin in its own way and, if the gnostic error is to be rejected that there is a tragic inner contradiction within God himself it cannot therefore ultimately be the opponent to the spirit. If it is

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frequently added to this statement of faith about God, the Creator of spirit and matter, that God the Creator of 'heaven and earth' is himself spirit, then this statement, which of course bears a correct sense, must be understood carefully. God, in the Christian metaphysical understanding, is not a part of this world but rather is its all-embracing ground directly bearing all its differentiated realities; He is not simply the unity of all realities brought about by the parts of the world, but the previous ground of the possibility of this unity, the ground which therefore also exists before this duality of subjectivity and objectivity which we call spirit and matter. God's 'spirituality' is therefore from the very start of a qualitatively different kind from that to be found within the world; the latter is what is different from matter, that which presupposes but does not create materiality, whereas the former is the ground of spirit and matter in the world, the ground which has an equally immediate relationship to both. This ground is called 'spirit' only because the 'spirituality' experienced by us rightly appears as the higher reality within the world. This intramundane spirituality already includes the transcendental and conscious relation to that ultimate ground which bears all being in its own and which we call God. The 'spirit' therefore (by this intentional infinity) does not positively include in its nature the negativity of the simply, absolutely and in every respect, finite and hence can be more readily used to characterise God than the materiality of the individual, and in every respect finite, thing. To what extent, apart from this, materiality – even as such – can also be used for an analogous understanding of God, even though naturally not in exactly the same way as the spirituality of the transcendental subject, can only be ultimately [157] explained more exactly once we have clarified the precise relationship of created, worldly spirituality to matter. If this were to or does result in the conclusion that created spirituality is quite unthinkable without reference to materiality as a condition of its possibility – even though this relationship must be conceived differently for different kinds of spirituality – then it would or will become very clear that (and why) the characterisation of God as a spirit is to be understood only very analogously and can really only be made by always taking one's starting-point for knowledge of God as a spirit simultaneously *per viam negationis et eminentiae* also from matter. This is, however, something we cannot yet speak about. At any rate, the Christian dogma of the creation of 'good' matter and of spirit and the rejection of any kind of dualism and gnosticism which see matter as something a-divine or anti-divine and anti-spiritual, means also the affirmation of an innermost and ultimate unity and relationship of spirit and matter. As to how more precisely this relationship and unity between spirit and matter are to be conceived, the Christian dogma of creation – purely in itself – does not say very much but the subject does nevertheless represent a decisive challenge to thought about how, even in their history and their goal, these realities belong together.

2. Spirit and matter have a unity in their history. Regarding this fact, it is not possible here to give more than a few hints. These indications, however, show that the basic Christian conception of the non-divine reality rejects any ultimate, radical dualism of spirit and matter. Indeed, if one wanted to conceive the material world in its physical and biological sphere as a kind of neutral stage on which is enacted the history of spiritual persons, of their culture, salvation and damnation and the process of their eternal perfectioning, one cannot even do justice to the Christian understanding of faith; the conception referred to here means that this 'stage' itself would remain untouched by these spiritual events or that the history of nature itself would be merely accidentally and in addition, as it were, the scene of such a history of the spirit. Such a conception, obviously, will always try to break through again on account of the pluralism of human experience. Naturally, it will always seem to man time and time again as if the process of nature is uninterested in man and his history and as if man is a stranger within a natural history, a stranger who plays a very brief role in this history in order to retreat as quickly as possible out of this world into the realm of the pure spirit, of the beyond

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and of God, while the history of nature, untouched by all [158] this, continues its iron march. Of course, the basic Christian assessment regarding the unity of the history of matter and spirit has not yet been thought through in all its aspects, either with regard to the inclusion of the history of nature in that of the spirit or conversely with regard to the cosmic conditioning and significance of the history of the spirit for the history of nature. The fact that a lot remains still to be done in this respect is not really surprising: man's reflection cannot really run ahead of actual history in its real concreteness.

Nevertheless, the ultimate basic assessment of a true unity of spirit and matter in their history is given quite clearly as a fact of experience. We do not intend, to begin with, to develop it speculatively with a view to presuppositions and consequences which are not, or at least are not yet clearly present, in the explicit consciousness of faith of Christianity; we simply mean to point out here a few indications for this unity of history of spirit and matter which are inevitably tangible in Christian dogma.

In so far as this is possible even within the establishment of these explicit statements of faith, we must first of all remove a difficulty, a difficulty which repeatedly tries to force its way through against a clear and consequential conception of this unity. The Christian faith speaks of the existence of angels; these are characterised in a platonic formula as 'pure spirits'. From both these facts there then arises the impression in the average, ordinary understanding of faith (which must not be simply identified with the dogma) that there is a created kingdom of finite spirits which carries on its own history quite independently from the material world and its history; and that this shows that spirit and matter are only very partially connected with one another even within the realm of created reality. On this basis, it is then almost inevitable, psychologically speaking, that one ends up with the conception of the world as the merely accidental and ultimately superfluous scene of an itself again also matter-less history. It is here unfortunately impossible to say anything sufficiently adequate either about the dogma or the theology of the angels. It is even more impossible here to attempt to show that the dogma of the angels has nothing to do with the almost fairy-tale, mythological and – for contemporary man – unimaginable conception of the angels current among ordinary people. Here it can merely be a question of showing briefly, first of all, that the Christian doctrine of angels contains quite sufficient elements which permit and indeed urge the inclusion of the angels and their history in the history of the cosmos. Theologically [159] speaking, it is an absolutely controverted and open question as to whether or not the creation of the world coincided in time with the creation of the angels. If one justifiably allows the creation of the spiritual world of the angels to coincide with that of the material cosmos (of course, always in the sense in which the positing of the temporal world by a non-temporal cause can be conceived to take place at a 'point in time'), then the space of time of spiritual and material history is the same at least from this point of view. Furthermore, the theological data (into which we need not enter here in detail) show that the history even of the angels and the history of the world are at least interlaced in many respects. The common goal of both is the eternal kingdom of God; the granting of grace to men as citizens of the material world and to the angels is the same; in the Christian teaching the angels, whether they are to be thought of as good or bad, certainly exercise functions in this world; in particular, since they reach down to or into the material world, these functions must ultimately be based in the nature of the angels; the angels can be understood quite correctly, even according to scripture, as cosmic (even though personal) powers of the order of nature and of its history; Christian theology has always seen the object of the personal decision of personal spiritual powers, called angels, to lie in Christ and in his salvific function for the history of mankind and hence of the material world. If one looks at these data, it will be quite legitimate to be of the opinion that, first of all, the doctrine of the angels understood as 'pure spirits', no matter how materially correct, unjustifiably lends too much support to a platonic

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and non-Christian removal of the created spirit from this world. Furthermore, it will have to be said that the angels, in spite of their differences from man, can be conceived in such a way that, in their own way and of their own most proper and original nature, they are powers of the one and hence also material world to whose material nature they are genuinely and essentially related. It may rightly be said, at any rate, that the Christian teaching about the angels does not basically bar the way to a decided and consequential conception of the unity of spirit and matter in their common history. Since ultimately we really know very little that is certain about the angels and demons, we have the perfect right after what has been said to look at the unity of spirit and matter as we experience it directly in the history of man and also as interpreted in a way compatible with revelation, and to look at this unity as paradigmatic in principle for the unity of spirit and matter in the created sphere as such.

[160] Seen in this way, a basic unity of the history of spirit and matter is no problem for Christian theology. Man in the Old Testament writings is very undualistically and unplatonically a unity in his being and history, and the world is seen from the very beginning as an environment intended for man. Man comes quite unashamedly from the earth and is therefore seen even in scripture, without detriment to the fact that he is also known to be the spiritual, responsible partner of God, called directly by God, as (to express it in a more modern idiom) the product of the material cosmos, without scripture thereby allowing this one man in the paradoxical duality of his origin to break up into two quite independent realities called spirit and matter. Consequently, for the Old Testament writings in particular, the whole man is made to suffer by death; the earthly spatio-temporal life is the life of the personal spirit for whom no other life, either before or after this life of material spatio-temporality, is available for the shaping of his freely achieved finality; and the fulfilment, to which man looks hopefully, is not a liberation of the spirit into an existence removed from matter but is The ‘resurrection of the flesh’, i.e. a fulfilment of human existence in which, even though in an unimaginable manner, the one whole man composed of spirit and matter reaches his perfection. Consequently, the whole turning away from God at the beginning of the history of mankind took place within the material of the world and the autonomous mastery over intramundane goods, and not in a corruption of an a-cosmic relationship of man to God. Consequently, the Christian commandments are never concerned with a merely interior ethics of intentions but contain concrete material demands which always are also aimed at the mastering of tasks of the one, bodily and hence also socially-bound man. Accordingly, what we call Christian redemption is achieved in the acceptance and patient bearing of what is also a biological happening in death. Accordingly, the climax of salvation history is not the detachment from the world of man as a spirit in order to come to God, but the descending and irreversible entrance of God into the world, the coming of the divine Logos in the flesh, the taking on of the material so that it itself becomes a permanent reality of God in which God in his Logos expresses himself to us for ever. Accordingly, the salvation history of the individual, however much it means a unique personal decision in every case, always rests in the Christian sense on the will of God for a united humanity, for the covenant, for the social communication and tangibility of salvation both in the spatio-temporal history of the Church [161] and in tangible sacraments and social institutions. Always and everywhere, man is regarded by Christianity, precisely in the history of his relationship to God, as a bodily, material and social being who can always only have this relationship to God in this the material constitution of his existence. By the very fact that he is always the theo-logical and theo-nomous being only by being the cosmic being, it is already implied that his history – understood as the history of a direct relationship to God, the origin of all reality, and as the history of a material being, i.e. of a being which cannot be thought of other than as a factor in the cosmos (even though it signifies a personality and hence the unique totality of this world itself in each individual) – is always also the history of

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the material world itself and vice versa. The unity of spirit and matter – since each in their own way have a history – is itself a historical reality; it develops, it reaches its decisive stage in man and achieves itself in the fulfilment of man. Spirit and matter have a unity in their history which grows and furthermore (as will have to be explained more in detail in a moment) both historical processes reach their completion in one point.

3. In consequence of what we have seen, the Christian message also knows of a unity of matter and spirit in its achievement and goal. To begin with, the Christian faith knows nothing about the fact that what we call matter and experience as such belongs to a merely provisional period of the history of the created spirit and freedom, a period which must in the end be definitely surpassed. Matter for the Christian mind is not a watchword for a limited period but a factor in perfection itself. In the main, it is perhaps a merely platonic and not very Christian prejudice that finds it easier in the case of the limited created spirit than in that of matter to conceive of a state of perfection in which history in its spatio-temporal extension into finality is left behind. This perfection for the world as a whole is also not the final point which can be planned and achieved from the side of the world itself, a final point which would he a factor in history itself; rather it is the stopping of this history, foreseen in faith and hope, by God's deed itself by whose power the world surpasses itself and thus enters into its goal. Yet precisely this means that this fulfilment cannot be concretely imagined either for the material world or for the spirit but must for this very reason be simply thought of as the fulfilment of that world which we experience concretely, the world in its unity constituted of matter and spirit in one united – which does not [162] mean 'uniform' – history. Hence Christian eschatology does not know merely, or even first and foremost, the atomised salvation of each individual for himself in the beatitude of his own soul, but rather the kingdom of God, the eternal covenant, the triumphing Church, the new heaven and the new earth. No matter how many figurative elements all these expressions may contain, however much all these propositions of faith must be understood in their merely analogous meaning, they always contain the basic conviction that the material world in its history and the history of the personal spirit in man find their goal in one and the same point and that, because they are borne along by this dynamism to the one goal, they constitute a genuine unity with one another.

II

The facts which we have so far simply collected together from the theology of the faith must now be thought through in the second part of our reflections so as to reach a conclusive and basic understanding of the unity of spirit and matter. Of course, such a philosophising systematisation of these data of faith and the dogma itself are not one and the same thing. The systematisation works necessarily with extrapolations and various auxiliary suppositions which, not even for the believer, are covered by the dogmatic teaching. It is sufficient for such a systematisation if, after having been judiciously unified, it does not come into contradiction with itself or with the actual doctrine of faith.

1. Regarding the difference of spirit and matter. Up till now we have spoken a great deal about the unity of spirit and matter. In all we have said, unity has never meant uniformity, but has simply envisaged the fact that in the realm of the one and yet pluralistic reality of the world, in so far as it is distinct from God its absolutely one ground, what we call spirit and what we call matter are at least in the actual order of reality irreversibly related to one another and that together, in spite of their differences, they constitute the one reality of the world, and that they do not exist merely one beside the other as if enclosed merely by an empty space. Before we try to consider this unity of spirit and matter more systematically and in detail, we

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must first of all refer explicitly to the difference of spirit and matter. The Church's magisterium emphasises in the general doctrine of creation, in the doctrine of man in general and in view of the question of hominisation, that spirit and matter are not [163] the same, that the spirit is not simply the secondary product of matter as such, something which can be derived from it; it emphasises that man, because he is a spirit, takes up a metaphysically irreducible position in the cosmos and that therefore his origin in his spirituality cannot be simply out of matter as such, but that as a spiritual person, i.e. in view of his 'soul', he is directly referred to God as to his source. The Church's magisterium does not really define the concepts of spirit and matter employed in such statements, but rather presupposes them as known. Even this fact gives rise to tasks of a basic kind for a systematic reflection on the difference and unity of spirit and matter. If these statements are to be understood properly, it will be necessary to know what spirit and matter really signify. Only then can one understand the statement that spirit and matter are not the same; only then can one understand the statement correctly, i.e. without falling into an absolute dualism which would no longer be capable of understanding spirit and matter as a unity in origin, history and goal. Even though it requires a further interpreting reflex articulation, what is meant by spirit is an *a priori* datum of human knowledge; it is only from this *a priori* datum that we can determine metaphysically what is really meant by 'material' and 'matter'. It would be an unmetaphysical and, in the bad sense, materialistic prejudice to think that man is occupied first of all with matter, that he knows exactly what it is and must then subsequently, laboriously and most problematically discover 'spirit', and hence that he can never quite know whether what is meant by this cannot be reduced ultimately again to matter, with which he deals primarily and with full questionless knowledge. In reality, the primary thing with which man deals is himself understood as the one who deals with something other than himself, viz. the world, both in knowledge and in action; in other words, man in a unity and distinction from the knowing subject and encountering object, where the unity, distinction and inexchangeability of these elements are equally original. When a materialist says that there is only matter, he has merely to be asked what exactly lie understands by this matter which he maintains is the only reality, in order to recognise that within a materialistic system, in which that which originally and alone gives being and norm lies outside the unity of subject and object, the first and last statement of such a system has no definable meaning at all. Truly scientific expressions are always limited to stating merely functional connections between different factors: if there is A, then B takes place. If everything is matter, then it [164] becomes scientifically inexpressible and indeterminable what this 'everything' is, i.e. what matter is. By definition there cannot be anything by which this 'everything' in its intended sense could be determined as a function of something else. The attempts to define matter as everything could only end up in declaring the pure formalism of the network of functional declarations as the 'essence' of this 'everything', which would be a most idealistic interpretation of the nature of matter. It would at least throw up the question as to whether this nature is simply the *a priori* structure of the knowledge of the knowing subject and thus has nothing whatsoever to do with 'reality in itself'. Or, the nature of this matter might be said to consist in the purely empirical data of experience as such, data which are said to be ordered by these mathematicised functional relationships without being completely reducible to them. This, however, would be even less of a statement about *the* matter, since these purely *a posteriori* and empirical data are precisely as such different from one another, *as* such do not represent anything 'unified', and hence of themselves do not permit any statement about matter *itself*, much less permit the thesis that there can only be exactly the same matter as what we have experienced until now. The proposition, therefore, that everything is matter has no positive meaning in the mouth of a purely scientific materialist, since within his system and with his method, it is basically impossible for him to say what he understands by matter.

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Hence, if the statement that there is only matter is to have any meaning at all, it could only refer to the pure postulate and heuristic principle that an absolute and completely irreducible plurality of absolutely and, in every respect, disparate realities which cannot be reduced to any common denominator but which at the same time are said to be objects of the one possible knowledge of one and the same man, is from the very outset a logically and objectively impossible conception and metaphysical non-sense. This principle is perfectly correct. If, however, it is formulated in the way just indicated, then 'matter' is objectively identical with the concept of 'being'. It would be possible in itself to adopt such an identification without thereby asserting anything absolutely false, since this principle states nothing further than that there is only being, and that at least a few statements can be validly made in common and for every being about absolutely everything that can be thought. One could even try positively to recommend this initial terminological definition by pointing out that even for a Christian philosophy, in distinction to platonic and idealistic [165] philosophy, what can be expressed by sense experience, and in this sense the material, is what man encounters first in his knowledge, that which he rightly regards, therefore, as the starting-point of his knowledge and as the model of the possible objects of his knowledge. It would nevertheless have to be said against this recommendation that it must first of all confine itself clearly to the postulating and heuristic principle, and that there remains perfectly reconcilable with this principle the possibility of differences within this one 'matter' by which the individual realities within the one 'matter' are differentiated from each other in such a way that they cannot really be reduced to each other; this, of course, still leaves open the question as to whether the unity of these irreducible, essentially distinct realities is a unity in principle or in fact, however this is to be conceived, a merely logical unity. Secondly, one would have to oppose to this recommendation of the principle in question the fact that what is really given first of all in human experience is not the material in and for itself but the unity of relation of one questing subject, within a boundless horizon of questioning, with a self-manifesting, sensible, *a posteriori* object which is contained within the transcendental horizon but is not deducible from it. This original reality of experience, therefore, is the unity itself. It does indeed already betray and affirm the inner reference, relationship and unity with the subject and object in spite of and indeed within their very difference, and hence gives us also the right to bring the subject and the object under one common concept and word. This original reality in its unity does not, however, permit us – after the manner of a pan-psychism or of a dialectical materialism or of a consequential psychophysical parallelism – to postulate such a unity of relation of a subject-object kind for everything itself individual which is met within this unity, since this would obviously initiate a meaningless regress to infinity or would cancel out again the difference of subject and object to be found in this unity. From the point of view of the first assessment, especially in view of the historically loaded nature of words like 'matter', etc., it is not advisable to subsume the subjectivity which is met with in this unity under the word 'matter', since the equally originally discovered difference in this unity between the subject in its unbounded transcendence and the merely encountered object would at least be obscured. The refusal to use this terminology is, therefore, not a pre-decision in favour of a platonic conception of the spirit as something simply opposed to matter or something completely alien to it. It is also far from being a pre-judgement [166] about whether in the 'world', i.e. within the space of possible experiential individual objects, there can be objects which can be absolutely and in every respect exempt from all the 'material' laws which we discover in our empirically experienced reality of a material kind, or whether this is unthinkable. Even if we postulate a consequential and necessary correlation between spirit and matter within the space of the world, this does not yet make us materialists in the sense of an interpretation rejected by Christianity. We have already said that God, the cause of every reality divided into the distinction of subject and object, i.e. of spirit and

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matter, transcends this intramundane distinction of spirit and matter. We have also pointed out already that the Christian doctrine of the angels does not permit us to conclude necessarily that there are created spiritual realities which have absolutely nothing to do with matter. The exact nature of matter, therefore, is not at all as immediately evident as it might seem at first sight. The spirit, however, is already posited with the question about it and is already experienced in its nature; its meaning can be deduced from the question itself by a transcendental deduction. What matter is in general and on the whole, is not a question for natural science as such but a question of ontology on the basis of an existential metaphysics; such an ontology can answer this question because it already knows what spirit is and thus on the basis of this metaphysical experience of the spirit can state what the material as such is, viz. that which is closed in its individuality to the experience of the transcendence of being as such. On this basis also, it must then be made clear that 'spirit' cannot basically be deduced from any combination of the material, however it might be conceived, i.e. from something cut off from itself and its reference to being as a whole, and that therefore there exists an essential difference in this sense between spirit and matter.

2. The unity of spirit and matter. We have seen that it follows from the origin of human knowledge that spirit is a proper, original reality which cannot be derived from anything else and can be understood and approached only in its own proper experience, and from which alone it can be said what matter in itself really is. We have also seen that for an existential ontology and metaphysical anthropology it is consequently quite clear from the very start that the very question about a possible deduction of the spirit from matter has no meaning, since one would he trying to deduce what is logically and ontologically prior from what is posterior in both these senses and would be of the opinion that what is [167] anterior for the temporal series must by this very fact also be the onto-logical ground of what is later and sparser in the spatio-temporal order. All this, however, does not yet exhaust the question about the relationship of spirit and matter. This relationship must be determined not only negatively but also positively. Now, when treating of the question of the essential distinction between spirit and matter, we have already hinted that such a distinction cannot be conceived nor may even be merely legitimately conceived theologically as simply an absolute metaphysical separation of the two realities. If spirit and matter are said to be found in mutual correlation in one and the same original experience, then they cannot be absolutely separate from one another. This is so not only because they can be apprehended only by being brought together under definite formal principles by this one apprehension, but also because apprehension – properly understood – is not merely the ideal cognisance taken by a knower of an object which stands over against this process of apprehension in a completely external and unconcerned manner; it rather presupposes the real communication between reality and the capacity to apprehend for the possibility of apprehension or is in actual fact, at least in the original form of apprehension, i.e. of knowledge not mediated by any other, such a communication and such a real process of events: the object communicates itself in a real, ontological process and builds itself really and ontologically into knowledge. If this is to be possible, however, then there must be an inner relationship between the knower and the known, even when the known is something 'material'. This reflection is also in no way weakened by saying that something material is not grasped by the spirit but primarily by man's sense perception. If sense perception is to be recognised as a material and yet conscious reality, then this already admits in principle what is at stake here. Moreover, sense perception is to be understood merely as the condition for the possibility of spiritual knowledge which the latter creates for itself by distinguishing it from itself, and thus asserts once more the 'relationship' between spirit and matter. The classical theological and philosophical tradition of Christianity has in fact always recognised this relationship and mutual correlation of spirit and matter and has always (often under heavy struggles of thought) repeated it again and again. In the Christian conception,

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matter is retraced in its whole nature and being to the creative act of God who is called Spirit. The emphasising of the creation of matter also implies of course that the reality of matter does not simply, as in a [168] pantheistic view, flow from the being of God (which, however, is equally denied of the created spirit) and cannot be simply interpreted as an expression or as a part of the reality of God. Nevertheless, the origin and what develops out of it, even taken as something created, cannot be simply and completely separate and dissimilar. This is all the less so since this materiality is created by God from the very start for the sake of and in view of the spirit and thus, even from the point of view of finality, matter cannot rest incommensurable beside the spirit. Christian philosophy and theology rightly dispute that God 'could' create a material world on its own, since this would be quite meaningless. They must then, however, recognise the really 'meaningless' as the ontologically impossible, since the distinction between a physical and a merely moral impossibility is a stupid anthropomorphism when applied to God. Thus matter and the material are thinkable for a Christian theistic philosophy and theology only as a factor connected with and directed towards the (finite) spirit. Hence it will not be permissible to say that Christians are merely interested in bringing out the difference between spirit and matter and that they have overlooked the inner ontological essential relationship and the relation of mutual conditioning. What we call material has always been seen, at least in thomistic philosophy, as a limited and in a sense 'frozen' spirit, as limited being whose being as such, i.e. prescinding from the real negativity and limitation of this being (commonly called *materia prima*, which of itself does not signify any positive reality), is exactly the same being which outside such a limitation means being-conscious-of-itself, knowledge, freedom and transcendence towards God. This limitation in material being, of course, its not-becoming-conscious-of-itself in transcendence towards absolute being, is of a metaphysical kind that is constitutive of the essence. In other words, it must not be imagined that this inner, real negativity belonging to the nature of a particular material being considered merely as such can be overcome by this being of its own power and that it could thus change itself into spirit by a merely intramundane process of becoming. Since this inner negativity, in so far as this being is merely material, is the activity of the transcendent causality of God and thus belongs to its nature, all its activity is always and from the very start and necessarily imprisoned by this limitation that is imposed by God as the basis of its nature. Its action moves, therefore, on the ground of this negativity, a negativity which consequently can never be overcome effectively by this being itself. There is therefore no independent leap [169] from the material into the 'noosphere' by any means belonging to its essential constitution or by any power inherent in the essence of the material being. This unlimiting of the limited (called matter), however, does happen in the spirit, and this above all where the spirit itself enters so closely into materiality that it differentiates it from itself *and* keeps it as a factor of its own becoming as a spirit, of its becoming-conscious-of-itself, viz. in man. What is thus lifted out of its negativity in and by the spirit is precisely the spiritual reality and positivity of the material, and not just anything ultimately which would be known in its objectivity as alien to the spiritual; on the contrary, it is a moment of the spirit and of its fullness of being itself. Only in this way is it possible even in a Christian philosophy to explain the Christian dogma which tells us that the spiritual soul (precisely as spiritual) is the form of the body; for thomistic philosophy this ultimately means that every reality in man, including even every positive material reality, is the reality and expression of his spirit. Thus the bodily nature of man is necessarily a factor in man's spiritual becoming; it is not something alien to the spirit, but a limited moment in the achievement of the spirit itself. This is valid then even of the rest of the material world, particularly since this must be conceived from the start as the environment and as the broadened corporeality of the spirit. Ontologically it is quite indifferent in this whether these realities – in this purely external-temporal aspect – present themselves as existing simul-

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taneously or as following one another in time. This is true especially since it has not yet by any means been established that God could also have created the material world without the inner necessity of simultaneity and unity with those spiritual beings whom we call 'angels'; with regard to the angels, we have already said that it is an absolutely open question whether they too are not of their very nature necessarily related to matter, without their having to be bodily beings on this account in the same way as human beings. It has also been said in the first part of these reflections that the spirit (at least in its finite form) can never be conceived in the Christian sense in such a way that it must move away from anything material in order to become perfected, or that its perfection actually grows in proportion to its distance from matter (which is the eternal temptation of a false platonic interpretation of Christianity); the spirit must only be conceived in the sense that the finite spirit searches for and finds itself through the fulfilment of the material itself. Today, from a Christian interpretation of the present experience of man, we can say [170] perfectly well that this perfect achievement of the spirit takes place in a turning towards the material world, and this not only in a theoretical sense but also by an active transformation of this world, in which man is no longer merely an object but also becomes an active subject in the real history of nature. All this holds water only if – from the point of view of the essence of both – spirit and matter do not simply exist side by side as alien to one another. If, however, matter is interpreted as frozen spirit, i.e. interpreted spiritually, then this also necessarily implies a highly 'material' explanation of the finite spirit. This becomes clearest if we think once more about the incarnation of the divine Logos. A Christian theology and philosophy which does not wish to subject this basic truth of Christianity to the suspicion of mythology, must ask itself today why precisely the Logos who is infinite becomes material when he steps out of himself into the sphere of the finite and when he wishes to make his own being appear in this sphere and its history, and why, even in the consummation of this his finite appearance, he does not strip off this materiality but retains it eternally. A more precise philosophical reflection on this basic dogma cannot stop at the statement that the Logos has 'assumed' this or that finite reality and presuppose in this that the peculiarity of what is thus 'assumed' is already something firmly established in itself and requires no further explanation, something which ontologically precedes the 'assumption' (which in a purely external, temporal sense is of course quite correct). We must remember rather the Augustinian recognition that the creation of what is thus 'assumed' is only a movement in the 'coming-to-appear' of the Logos in his own being, a moment in his self-expression projected into the dimension of the finite. This means, however, that the matter which is 'assumed' and which remains valid even in the appearance of the Logos as such, must be regarded (if and by the fact that the Logos even as such brings himself to appear and shows himself in the otherness of the extra-divine and finite) as the appearance of the Logos, i.e. of the spirit, and as an essential moment in what becomes. Matter is, therefore, the openness and the bringing-itself-to-appear of the personal spirit in the finite world and hence is from its very origin related to the spirit, is a moment in the spirit, and indeed a moment of the eternal Logos as he freely but in fact exists, and this for all eternity. This is not meant in any way to turn matter idealistically into spirit, for by the same statements the spirit is equally originally 'materialised'. It comes to be seen, rather, that spirit [171] and matter cannot, like any two objects of our individual experience, be thought of as existing side by side in alien disparateness from one another. Objects of our experience are dull facts existing side by side in all their difference. Spirit and matter, even though distinct from one another, must rather be thought of – as in the first original experience – as factors of created reality indissolubly referred to one another. Thus the Christian can only really be a materialist and a spiritualist at the same time if these two words are meant to indicate that spirit and matter are not ultimately words referring to particular regions of the total reality, regions which lie side by side, but refer to factors which wherever encountered, though essentially different, are

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everywhere correlative constitutive moments of the one reality.

3. Regarding the unity of the history of the spirit and of matter: the two realities we are looking at in their mutual relationship and unity are not static realities but created being in becoming. They have a history and develop. The concept of historicity is a most profoundly Christian concept. That the world has a history in a unique, irreversible and orientated flow is already, at least with a view to the history of mankind, a fundamental assertion in the Old Testament. Furthermore, Christianity knows a divine providence, a community of all men in origin, determination and goal, a fullness of time, a history of God's revelation, the God-man seen as the centre and climax of history, it has hope seen as one of the basic conditions of Christian man, it has the eternal kingdom of God in which, at the end of history, God is all in all; to this extent, history, historicity, time, development (in the widest sense of the word) – even for the New Testament and Christianity as such – belong also to the basic categories of existential understanding. The explicit recognition that nature itself also knows development and hence, in its own way, history, may not yet be clearly tangible in the Old and New Testaments, especially since the work of the six days at the beginning of scripture belongs rather to the means of representation than to the content itself of what is stated. Since, however, scripture and the Christian understanding of faith recognise at the very least that the world was created for the historical existence of man, that it is changed by the activity of man himself and that it enters into the completion of the history of mankind by participating in it, the developmental character of even the extra-human world and nature has at least an inner relationship with the basic convictions and categories of Christianity and, as soon as the natural experience of man has recognised the [172] becoming and development in nature as the environment of man, it can easily be assimilated into a Christian world-view. In accordance with the essential difference between spirit and matter, the developmental character also is naturally different in each case, but this need not be discussed more closely here. In accordance with the mutual reference, relationship and unity of spirit and matter in the one world of creatures, the becoming and development of spirit and matter are also intertwined with and conditioned by one another.

Up to this point, there is no special problem with regard to the developmental nature of spirit and matter in general. The real problem, as it occupies the minds of men today, becomes visible only once we reflect on the fact that the spirit, in the sense of proper self-consciousness and freedom, only appears or at least seems to appear at a very much later point in time in the world of our experience than the material world and the sequence of its development. One could indeed, from a Christian point of view, point to the angels as both personal beings and cosmic potencies and thus raise the question whether there has ever really been, even in a merely temporal sense, a spiritless and merely material world or whether the Christian doctrine of the angels does not imply the spiritual orientation of the whole history of nature. Still, we are going to prescind from this question here, even though – in view of the supra-individual structure of the biosphere inexplicable by purely physico-chemical elementary data – one can perhaps raise the question as to whether such an entelechial formation of nature and its history is an hypothesis which lies absolutely beyond natural human experience. We limit ourselves, therefore, to taking as the starting-point of these reflections the affirmation that the human spirit came into being only at a very late point in time and presumably also at a very limited point in space within the history of nature. Thus there arises the question whether the history of nature and the history of the spirit do not merely form a unity if and in so far as both are already presupposed as given but also form *one history*, i.e. in a sense still to be determined more exactly, the spirit itself may be regarded as the result of the history of nature when it has arrived at a certain point of its history, or whether this is quite irreconcilable with a Christian understanding of the distinction between spirit and matter and of the creative relationship of God to man being in

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an absolutely special sense. This is the question with which we must now deal. In answering it, in the framework of a modest lecture like the present, we [173] must of course take certain things as already proved and accepted, matters which in a different context would themselves have to form the object of philosophical and theological reflection. One of these propositions which must be presupposed here is obviously and above all the assertion that all reality experienced by us is grounded in its existence and nature, in its becoming, activity and self-achievement, in an absolute being which we call God and which is the original creative and always active ground which posits everything in its own being and activity. Another of these presuppositions (which we have earlier on tried to clarify at least briefly) is also that concerning the essential difference between spirit and matter.

It seems that, with this assertion of the essential difference between spirit and matter, the newly posed question is already answered in the negative. It is also conceded that the average theological interpretation of the dogmatic statement that God is the direct creator of man's spirit understood as the constitutive element essentially different from the material, also already signifies a negative answer to the newly posed question. Since, on the one hand, the spirit cannot be simply regarded as the immanent product of material development and evolution, it originates from a new creative initiative of God; this is an absolutely indisputable fact for a theist with regard to the world as a whole and hence does not present any special difficulties even as a new and absolutely original initiative.

Yet, for a Christian, the question now posed need not be decided in the negative as quickly as it appears to have been from what we have just said. First of all, it is not at all as straightforward even for the Christian understanding of the relationship between God and the world as already built up by Thomas Aquinas in his teaching that God as creator of the material world is the transcendental ground of everything but not the categorial and spatio-temporally localisable cause for a determined individual thing and indeed is seen to be working rather through 'secondary causes' in this respect. There are difficulties even for this Christian understanding if the coming into existence of the individual spiritual souls at particular points in space and time were in no way the result of the world and of its natural development due to secondary causes and if, as it were, God's creative activity could be grasped '*in vacuo*' and in a 'worldless' sense, so that God's causality would be an activity in the world *beside* other activity of creatures, instead of it being the ground of all the activity of all creatures. Furthermore, the negative answer to this new question [174] corresponds little with the non-dualistic basic outlook of the Old Testament in which the one man is a being of the earth and the result of the creative act of God, without scripture – in order to make this comprehensible – dividing man into a being originating directly from the earth and a soul coming directly from God alone. Furthermore, this division of man into a part which is the product of the evolution of the world and into another which must be kept away from such evolutionary thought, looks too much like a compromise to the feeling of the modern natural scientist, a compromise which seems rather to belong to the bad variety of compromise rather than to the good. Finally, such a negative answer which divides man into two parts only related rather too extrinsically to one another, and an answer which does far too little justice to the real essential unity of the constitutive elements of man, makes it difficult to understand what after all is today an observed fact in paleontology, viz. that man has a long preparatory history which, in ever higher steps of living forms endowed with psychic life, at least leads very closely to him.

In order to make any progress in this question and to reach a positive answer under quite determined presuppositions and with conceptual precision, it will to begin with be necessary to clarify here somewhat abruptly the notion of active self-transcendence.

(a) There is becoming, and this becoming is ultimately not just the merely spatially, temporally and quantitatively transformed combination of basic elements which remain

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statically the same, but is the becoming of something really new which has an intramundane origin and yet is not simply the same as that from which it originates. Becoming is, therefore, always and of its very nature a self-transcendence of the cause, effected by the lower itself, it is an active surpassing of self. It is unfortunately impossible here to bring out clearly the transcendental source of a genuinely metaphysical concept of cause and becoming; this source lies in the movement of the spirit itself experiencing itself as the most radical case of the surpassing-of-self in its transcendence to being as such.

(b) Thus, real becoming is not just duplication but a surpassing of self in which what becomes really becomes more than it was and yet this 'more' is not simply something added to it from outside (which would cancel out the notion of genuine intramundane becoming). If this is so, and if such becoming in which more comes into being is to have a reason for this 'more', then this effectively becoming self-surpassing can only take place [175] by the fact that the absolute being is the cause and basic reason for this self-movement of what becomes, in such a way that, on the one hand, this self-movement has this basic reason within itself as an inner moment of the movement and thus there is true self-transcendence and not merely a passive 'being-surpassed': yet, on the other hand, it is not for this reason the becoming of the absolute being since this, even as an inner moment of the self-movement of the self-transcending development, exists at the same time feely and untouched above what becomes, moving it without moving itself. It follows precisely from this, however, that movement does not cease to be self-movement when it becomes self-transcendence but that precisely in this case it attains its proper nature. Since every finite causality works in virtue of the absolute being within the finite and this always and essentially, so that the finite being has its own being and activity precisely through the existence of the absolute being within it, we can and must grant causality to the finite being; even causality for what is more than itself and towards which it surpasses itself. Within these metaphysical presuppositions, and given certain precisions, it can be said without qualms that a finite being can bring about more than it is. A denial of such possibilities can only basically make sense as an attempt to emphasise and clarify that such an active self-surpassing by something finite in its active development cannot take place except by the power of the absolute being seen as the absolute act which without thereby becoming a constitutive element of the finite being itself, is interior to the finite being in its becoming and activity.

(c) Thus the nature of each particular being with whose transcendence we are concerned is not the boundary of what can happen in this self-transcendence, but it is an indication that (i) something becomes and must become out of a limited potency, something which is not always realised already, i.e. an indication of something still having to become and that (ii) without prejudice to the real self-transcendence of the point of departure of the movement, i.e. the nature of the being moving itself, always remains also the limiting law of what can directly come out of it. The point of departure, even though it is surpassed, can very well be an indication of the goal towards which the transition is orientated and an indication of how far it can go directly. Presupposing this, however, the ontologically valid concept of becoming understood as really active self-transcendence also implies the basic possibility of going beyond oneself by surpassing one's *nature*. This can be said already because for a thomistic [176] metaphysics different essences, in spite of their essential difference, are to be conceived as different grades of the limitation of being and not as absolutely disparate magnitudes. A lower being in its positivity is not, therefore, a disparate opposite of a higher being but merely a relatively narrower limitation of being by this lower being in relation to a higher one. Hence, when it surpasses itself in the process of its becoming, in the sense of a self-transcendence beyond its own being, then this does not mean the positing of an absolutely separate and essentially alien existent in the sense of a simple *generatio aequivoca*. Rather, it is immediately clear from this thomistic starting-point that the new

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existent can and must preserve within itself as its own proper characteristics, all the positive realities of the nature of the old existent from which it originates. All this does not exclude but, on the contrary, includes the fact – even in such an essential self-transcendence – that the point of departure of this kind of self-transcendence, i.e. the proper nature of what becomes by thus surpassing itself is the *a priori* limiting law for what can come to be here and now. Becoming, therefore, understood as an essential self-transcendence in virtue of the absolute interior but supra-essential being, does not exclude but rather includes the question about the precise sequence of the stages of this becoming which is unlimited in the forward direction. What and how things in such an evolutionary series can come in direct sequence one after the other, can only be determined in an *a posteriori* manner and is in the nature of things a difficult question. Precisely in the case of an essential self-transcendence, the notion of surpassing oneself always means a partial non-continuity which cannot and may not be avoided if we are not to deny basically genuine and qualitatively new becoming of being. On the other hand, the limit of what can become, which is given together with the finite nature of what becomes by transcending itself, demands that the non-continuity is not conceived in too wide a sense; indeed, it signifies the heuristic postulate requiring us to keep the 'leaps' as small as possible and the transcendence as fluid as possible, without of course intending thereby to give an 'explanation' of the higher development in which the essentially new would be explained away. Hence, if such an essential self-transcendence cannot be directly observed, it will never no doubt be completely possible to pass beyond a duality in one's methodic position: one will without qualms take into consideration all such 'leaps' and such self-transcendence to a new metaphysical being and hence will not at all demand an absolute continuity (which would be a metaphysical [177] nonsense), while one will still continue to go on looking for new intermediate steps which will create more fluid transitions.

Given the ontological and Christian legitimacy of a self-transcendence, even one which goes beyond nature, and granted that the description of spirit and matter presented so far is held to be correct in its basic outlines, then it can also he said without hesitation that a development of the material in the direction of the spirit and the self-transcendence of the material into the spirit is, both philosophically and in the Christian sense, a legitimate conception. We have seen that becoming is really self-transcendence, and this in certain cases even towards a new nature even though this happens, of course, by the power of the dynamism of the absolute being, all of which, however, in its turn does not deny the fact that this is a question of a genuine, active *self*-transcendence. We have seen furthermore, that matter and spirit are not simply disparate things but that matter is, as it were, 'frozen' spirit whose only meaning is to render real spirit possible. Finally, we have seen that the spirituality of the creature always remains spirituality in materiality right up to its absolute perfection. Given all this, a development of matter in the direction of the spirit is not an impossible notion, presupposing merely that the notion of development is understood in the sense of that essential self-transcendence under the dynamism of the absolute being which we have briefly tried to outline. If, under the movement by the absolute being, there is any becoming at all in the material world by which the material surpasses itself, then – since this absolute being is spirit, self-possession and freedom – this self-surpassing can take place only in the direction of the spirit. The history of nature and the history of the spirit can be seen as *one* history without having thereby to deny the essential gradation of the world and of its development, and without having to embed the development of nature and the free personal history in dire opposition to one another. The highest grade of all productive becoming is the human spirit and matter tends towards it as towards its final principle of nature and form, for man is the goal of all generative becoming. This statement is already found in St Thomas Aquinas (*ScG* III, 22). Matter and spirit have a unity in their starting-point, in their history and in their goal. Both of them remain eternally valid before God and form for ever, now and in the state of

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perfection, the mutually correlative, non-separable constitutive elements of the one created reality.

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13

THEOLOGY OF FREEDOM

We have been asked to say something here about the theology of freedom. The lack of space available will not permit us to make a survey of the dogmatic and theological history of the doctrine of freedom. For the same reason it will also be impossible to collect together more precisely the theological statements about the nature of freedom as found in the theological sources of the scriptures, tradition and the Church's magisterium. Both of these things are impossible here. We must therefore be satisfied with giving a synthesis of what arises objectively from revelation about the nature of freedom.[1]

Even though man exercises them unsystematically in every one of his acts, he becomes only slowly aware of the systematic and objective nature even of his essential characteristics in the course of his individual and collective history. Hence, the history of salvation and revelation (including the history of Christian theology) is also a history of man's systematic reflection on himself as a free being. Thus it is not as if man always already knows adequately and systematically what human freedom is and uses this concept, always already given, in the expression of revelation and theology without changing and deepening it. The average scholastic theology may often give the impression that this is what man does but in reality it is not true. Obviously we cannot here give even a [179] brief account of the history of the Graeco-Western notion of freedom, but it is worth mentioning that even the real freedom of choice as such – i.e. the freedom which consists not only in the fact that man cannot be forced from without but also in that a free decision about himself is demanded from him which, therefore, is rather a demand and a task than freedom – can alone already be seen quite clearly in Christianity. Only in Christianity is each person completely unique and of eternal value – in God's personal love for man – and hence a personality which must be accomplished through the highest personal responsibility and hence in freedom.

The history of revelation has entered into its final, unsurpassable eschatological phase in Jesus Christ. The intramundane finality of this phase is not merely the actual way things are (because God does not want to reveal anything new any more) but is already given with the newer being of this phase itself, since – basically – it can only be surpassed by the direct vision of God. Given all this then, this characteristic of the history of revelation in Christ must also be applicable to the self-consciousness of man as a being of freedom: freedom as it is continually, creatively granted to man by God is not one of the 'objects', with regard to which a neutral freedom of choice is activated among other things, but the one who in this absolute act of freedom first appears to man and in whom alone the nature of freedom itself attains its full essential achievement.

I. FREEDOM IN THE THEOLOGICAL SENSE IS FREEDOM RECEIVED FROM AND DIRECTED TOWARDS GOD

[1] For a more detailed exposition of what can often be merely indicated here, it may be permitted to refer to the following essays of the author in previous volumes of 'Theological Investigations': 'Freedom in the Church', II, pp. 89-107; 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, pp. 235-263; 'The Theology of Power', IV, pp. 391-409; 'The "Commandment" of Love in relation to the other Commandments', V, pp. 439-459; also (certain thoughts have been taken over from this too) to J. B. Metz, 'Freiheit – theologisch', *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. by H. Fries (Munich 1962), I, pp. 403-414; 'Freiheit als philosophisch-theologisches Grenzproblem', *Gott in Welt* I (in honour of K. Rahner) (Freiburg 1964), pp. 287-3 14.

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It would be a complete misconception of the nature of freedom to try to understand it as the mere capacity of choice between objects given *a posteriori*, among which, besides many others, there is also God; so that God would only play a special role in the choice made by this freedom of choice from among these many objects on account of his own objective characteristics but not on account of the nature of freedom itself. Freedom only exists – as was seen explicitly already by St Thomas – because there is spirit understood as transcendence. There is unlimited transcendence towards being as such and hence indifference with regard to any particular, finite object within the horizon of this absolute transcendence only in so far as this transcendence in every individual act concerned with a finite object is directed towards the original unity of being as such. Moreover, [180] this indifference exists only in so far as this act of transcendence (considered as the ground of every category of behaviour towards a finite subject and also towards the infinite represented in finite concepts) is supported by a conditional opening and extending of the horizon of this transcendence starting from itself, and of its goal, which we call God.

Freedom, therefore, has a theological character not only when and where God is represented explicitly and side by side with other objects in the objectivity of categories, but always and everywhere by the nature of freedom itself since God is present unthematically in every act of freedom as its supporting ground and ultimate orientation. When St Thomas says that God is recognised unthematically but really in every object, then this applies equally to freedom: in every act of freedom God is unthematically but really willed and, conversely, one experiences in this way alone what is really meant by God, viz. the cognoscitively and appetitively incomprehensible orientation of the one original transcendence of man unfolding itself in knowledge and love.

The orientation of transcendence cannot be mastered but consists in the infinite, silent mastery over us in that moment and indeed always when, by making a judgement on it, we begin to master something by making it subject to the laws of our *a priori* reason. It is not given merely as the *goal* of transcendence itself (which means that, since this goal is not experienced in itself but is only known unobjectively in the experience of subjective transcendence, every thesis of ontologism is already avoided from this point of view alone) – and its presence, furthermore, is the presence of such a transcendence that it is always given only as the condition of the possibility of a knowledge in categories and not by itself alone. One can never go directly towards it. One can never reach out to it directly. It gives itself only in so far as it directs us silently to something else, to something finite as the object of direct vision.

It is decisive for the Christian understanding of freedom, however, that this freedom is not only made possible by God and is not only related to him as the supporting horizon of the freedom of choice in categories, but that it is freedom *vis-à-vis* God himself. This is the frightening mystery of freedom in its Christian understanding. Where God is understood in categories as merely one reality among others, as one of the many objects of freedom of choice - understood as a neutral capacity which is arbitrarily occupied with this and that the statement that freedom of choice is choice even with, regard to God would present no particular difficulty. [181] That freedom, however, is freedom *vis-à-vis* its all-supporting ground itself, that in other words it can culpably deny the very condition of its own possibility in an act which necessarily reaffirms this condition, is the extreme statement about the nature of created freedom which in its radicality leaves the usual neutrality of categories far behind. It is decisive for the Christian doctrine of freedom that this freedom implies the possibility of a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ towards its own horizon and indeed it is only really constituted by this. This is true not merely and not even primarily when God is given and represented systematically in concepts and categories but also when he is given unsystematically but

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originally in our transcendental experience as the condition and moment of every activity directed towards the contemporary world in which we live. It is true in this sense that we meet God everywhere in a most radical way as the most basic question of our freedom, in all things of the world and (in the words of scripture) above all in our neighbour. Why then, more precisely, is the transcendental horizon of freedom not merely the condition of its possibility but also its proper 'object'? Why do we not act in freedom not merely towards ourselves, our surroundings and the people around us either in conformity to reality or in a destructive way within that infinitely wide horizon of transcendence from which we freely confront ourselves and the world in which we live, and why is this horizon itself also the 'object' of this freedom in our yes or no to it in itself? This horizon is once more *per definitionem* the condition of the possibility of saying no to it. This means that in such a 'no' it is unavoidably negated as the condition of the possibility of freedom and is also at the same time negated as an unthematic 'object' or even (in explicit or practical 'atheism') as a conceptually mediated object. Thus, in the act of the negating freedom there is present a real, absolute contradiction in the fact that God is affirmed and denied at the same time; in it this ultimate monstrosity is both withdrawn from itself and, by the fact that it is necessarily made objective and mediated in the finite material of our life in its temporal extension, made relative by being introduced into temporality. The real possibility, however, of such an absolute contradiction in freedom cannot be denied, though it is indeed disputed and doubted. This happens in ordinary everyday theology whenever it is said that the only thinkable mode of freedom is that the infinite God in his objectivity can only evaluate a little 'bending' of finite reality, the offence against a concrete and merely finite natural structure, for what it is, viz. something [182] finite; he therefore cannot evaluate it by an absolute prohibition and an infinite sanction and cannot characterise it as something directed against his own will as such. The 'will', against which such a sin really offends (such a theology would say), is after all the finite reality really willed by God, and to suppose an offence against God's will over and above this is to falsely turn God's will into a particular category of reality alongside the finite thing which is willed. Yet there is the possibility of a free 'no' towards God. Otherwise freedom would basically have no real orientation to the subject (of which we will have still to speak explicitly), i.e. the fact that freedom is concerned with the subject itself and not just with this or that thing. Let us grant that the act of freedom is really concerned with the subject itself, since this subject is transcendence. Let us grant furthermore that the individual intramundane beings encountered by us within the horizon of transcendence are not events within a space which remains untouched by what is in that space, but are the historical concreteness of the encounter and projection of this source and goal that support our transcendence. In this light freedom towards the encountered individual beings is always also a freedom towards the horizon, the ground and abyss, which allows them to present themselves to us and lets them become the inner moment of our receiving freedom. In so far as and because the horizon cannot be indifferent to the subject understood as a *knowing* subject but is systematically or unsystematically that with which this knowing transcendence is concerned, particularly if this '*ad quem*' is not its explicit object, to that same extent and for the same reason *freedom* – even though it is always exercised on the concrete individual things of experience and through this becomes what it is – is primarily and unavoidably concerned with God himself. Freedom in its origin is freedom of saying yes or no to God and by this fact is freedom of the subject towards itself. Freedom is either indifferent to this or that, the infinite repetition of the same or of the contrary (which is merely a different kind of the same), a freedom of eternal recurrence, or the same 'wandering Jew', or it is necessarily the freedom of the subject towards itself in its finality and thus is freedom towards God, however unconscious this ground and most proper and original 'object' of freedom may be in the individual act of freedom.

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We must add a second reflection to this, a reflection which alone brings to light the ultimate theological reason for freedom as freedom towards God, but one which can only be briefly indicated here. The supernatural [183] and historical concreteness of our transcendence is never given as something merely natural but is always embraced and taken up by a super-natural dynamism of our spiritual being which tends towards the absolute nearness of God. In other words, God in the concrete is not present merely as the horizon of our transcendence, one which always withdraws itself and refuses to give itself; rather, understood as this horizon, he offers himself to be directly possessed in what we call divinising grace. Given all this, the freedom in transcendence and in the yes and no towards the ground of this transcendence is given a directness towards God by which it becomes most radically capable of saying yes and no to God as such. This happens in a way which would, of course, in no way be already given by the abstract formal concept of transcendence directed towards God as the merely distant and repelling horizon of our exercise of existence and it is such that it cannot be derived from this concept alone.

II. FREEDOM AS TOTAL AND FINALISING SELF-MASTERY OF THE SUBJECT

Freedom, as we have said, cannot be viewed in a Christian sense as an in-itself neutral capacity to do this or that in an arbitrary order and in a temporal series which would be broken off from outside even though, from the point of view of freedom, it could go on *ad infinitum*; freedom is rather the capacity to make oneself once and for all, the capacity which of its nature is directed towards the freely willed finality of the subject as such. This is obviously what is meant by the Christian statement about man and his salvation and damnation when he, the free person, must answer for himself and the totality of his life before the judgement seat of God, and when the eternally valid sentence about his salvation or damnation in accordance with his works is passed by a judge who does not regard merely the appearance of his life, the ‘face’, but the freely governed core of the person, the ‘heart’. It is true that man’s formal freedom of choice and decision is more presupposed in scripture than used as an actual theme. It is true also that the explicit theme in scripture, especially in the New Testament, is for the most part the paradox that man’s freedom, while remaining responsible and without being destroyed, is enslaved by the slavery of the demonic powers of sin and death and to some extent even of the law, and must first of all be liberated to make way for an inner inclination towards the law (we will discuss this later). Yet it cannot be [184] doubted that for scripture both the sinful and the justified man are responsible for the actions of their life and to this extent are also free and that freedom, therefore, is a permanent constitutive of man’s nature. The proper nature of freedom, however, appears precisely in so far as freedom is the basis of absolute salvation and damnation in Christian revelation, and this finally and before God. For a merely profane everyday experience, freedom of choice may appear merely as the characteristic of the individual act of man, which can be attributed to him in so far as it is actively posited by him, without this positing being already causally predetermined and in this sense forced by some inner condition of man or some external situation. Such a concept of freedom of choice atomises freedom in its exercise and thus distributes it exclusively to the individual acts of man, acts which are only held together by a neutral, substantial identity of the subject and of the capacities positing them all, as well as by life’s external space of time. Freedom in this sense is merely freedom of acts, imputability of the individual act to a person who remains neutral in himself and hence (as long as the external conditions are given for this) can always determine himself anew. Once we see in a Christian sense, however, that by his freedom man can determine and dispose himself as a whole and finally, the idea of responsible freedom is changed and deepened immensely. This

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means that man does not merely perform actions which, though they must be qualified morally, also always pass away again (and which after that are imputed to him merely juridically or morally); man by his free decision really *is* so good or evil in the very ground of his being itself that his final salvation or damnation are really already given in this, even though perhaps in a still hidden manner. Freedom is first of all 'freedom of being'. It is not merely the quality of an act and capacity exercised at some time, but a transcendental mark of human existence itself. If man is to be really and finally able to be master over himself, if this 'eternity' is to be the act of his freedom itself, if this act is to be really able to make man good or bad in the very ground of his being, and if this goodness or badness is not to be merely an external, accidental event happening to man (so that this act would merely, contrary to its goodness, draw something which remains good into damnation), then freedom must first of all be thought of as freedom of being. This means that man is that being who is concerned in his very being about this being itself, he is always a being who already has a relationship towards himself, a subjectivity and never simply a nature; already a [185] person . . . never just 'something there' but always already 'for himself', 'existing'. Nothing happens to this being which does not affect its relationship to itself in some way, or if it does, it becomes subjectively and salvifically significant only in so far as it is freely 'understood' and subjectively taken over by the free subject as such in a quite definite way; its 'ego' cannot possibly be passed over, it simply cannot be turned into an object and can never be replaced or explained by something else, not even by its own reflex representation of itself, it is genuinely original, never based on something else and hence cannot be derived from or proved by anything else. Its relationship to its divine origin must never be interpreted according to the notion of causal and formal relationships of dependence as operative in the categories of the realm of our experience in which the source keeps and binds and does not set free, and in which therefore independence and dependence grow in inverse and equal proportion. Man, by his freedom of being, is always the incomparable being who cannot be adequately classified into any system and cannot be adequately subsumed under any one concept. He is in an original sense the untouchable, but therefore also the lonely and insecure, a burden to himself, who cannot by any means 'absolve' himself from this once-and-for-all lonely self-being and who can never 'unload' himself on others. Hence, freedom is originally also not primarily concerned with this or that which one can do or not do; freedom is not originally the capacity of choosing any object whatsoever or the ability of adopting an individual attitude towards this or that; it is rather the freedom of self-understanding, the possibility of saying yes or no to oneself, the possibility of deciding for or against oneself, which corresponds to the knowing self-possession, the understanding subject-nature of man. Freedom never happens as a merely objective exercise, as a mere choice 'between' individual objects, but is the *self*-exercise of the man who chooses objectively; only within this freedom in which man is capable of achieving himself is man also free with regard to the material of his self-achievement. He can do or omit this or that in view of his own self-realisation that is inescapably imposed on him. This self-realisation is a task he cannot avoid and, in spite of all the differences within the concrete material of his self-achievement, it is always either a self-realisation in the direction of God or a radical self-refusal towards God.

It must of course be realised that this basic nature of freedom is achieved over a whole period of time and that the total project of human existence, [186] one's own total self-understanding or '*option fondamentale*', frequently remains empty and objectively unfulfilled. It must be borne in mind that not every individual act of freedom has the same actual depth and radical nature of self-disposal and that, although each individual act of freedom wants to venture total and final self-disposal, all such acts always enter into the totality of the one, total-act of freedom of the one, whole temporally finite life, precisely because each one of these acts is exercised within, and receives its weight and proportion

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from, the horizon of the whole of human existence. Correspondingly, the biblical and Augustine concept of the heart, the concept of subjectivity in Kierkegaard, the notion of '*action*' in Blondel, etc., shows understanding for the fact that there is such a basic act of freedom which embraces and shapes the whole of human existence. This act is indeed realised and can be exercised only by means of those individual acts of man which can be localised in space and time and which can be objectified with regard to their motives. Yet this basic act cannot be simply identified by an objective reflection with such an individual act; it does not represent either the merely moral sum-total of these individual acts nor can it be simply identified with the moral quality of the last of the free individual acts exercised (before death). The concrete freedom of man by which he decides about himself as a whole by effecting his own finality before God, is the unity in difference of the formal '*option fondamentale*' and the free individual acts of man no longer attainable by reflection, a unity which is the concrete being of the subject of freedom having-achieved-itself. In all this, to emphasise this once more and explicitly, freedom – precisely speaking – is not the possibility of always being able to do something else, the possibility of infinite revision, but the capacity to do something uniquely final, some-thing which is finally valid precisely because it is done in freedom. Freedom is the capacity for the eternal. Natural processes can always be revised again and directed along a different path and are therefore for this very reason indifferent. The result of freedom is the true necessity which remains.

III. FREEDOM REGARDED AS A DIALOGIC CAPACITY OF LOVE

This self-perfecting of freedom into the eternal 'moment' is, as we have said, its self-realisation before God. Freely posited salvation or damnation, consisting in the gaining or loss of God, must not be understood as a [187] merely external reaction of a judging or rewarding God but is itself already performed in this freedom. Freedom, if it is to be able to effect salvation or damnation and hence the determination of the whole man, of itself brings into play the whole man with his mutually interactive relations to his origin and future. Freedom is always self-realisation of the objectively choosing man seen in view of his total realisation before God. In this way, considered as the capacity of the 'heart', it is the capacity of love. This answer is not so self-evident if we ask: what is the basic act of man into which quite absolutely he can synthesise his whole nature and life, the act which can embrace everything and incorporate everything within itself, everything which goes under the name of man and the life of man, happiness and despair, everyday life and starlight hours, sin and redemption, past and present. Yet this is really the case: the love of God, and this love alone, is capable of embracing everything. It alone places man completely before the one without whom man would be merely consciousness of radical emptiness and nothingness; it alone is able to unite all man's many-sided and mutually contradictory capabilities because they are all orientated towards that God whose unity and infinity can create the unity in man which, without destroying it, unites the diversity of the finite. Love alone allows man to forget himself (what a hell it would be if we were not able to do this in the end); it alone can still redeem even the darkest hours of the past since it alone finds the courage to believe in the mercy of the holy God. Love alone reserves nothing to itself and therefore can also decide about the future (which man, in the anxiety about his finiteness which must be used sparingly, is otherwise tempted to save up). Because it loves the one who has never regretted the venture of such a world of guilt, malediction, death and fruitlessness, love can also love this earth together with God. Love of God is the only total integration of human existence, and we have only grasped it in its dignity and all-embracing greatness if we have understood it to be this and once we suspect that it must be the content of the moment of eternity in time

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and hence the content of the eternity with God himself which is born out of it.

This love is not a determined, assignable performance which one could define exactly, but rather that which every man becomes in the irreplaceable characteristic of his always unique realisation of nature, something which is known only once it is accomplished. This is not to say that there is in no sense a universal concept of love, as seen in the statement that man is [188] obliged to love God and to say that the whole divine law consists in this. Man is, in spite of all this, obliged to love God with his *whole* heart . . . and this one heart which man must stake, the innermost centre of his person, is something unique. What it bears within itself in its uniqueness, what is staked and given away in this love is known only once it has been done, at the stage when man has really caught up with himself and thus knows what is in him and *who* he is in the concrete. In this love, therefore, man enters into the adventure of his own reality, an adventure which to begin with is veiled from him. He cannot survey and evaluate from the very start what is really demanded of him. *He* is demanded, he himself is ventured, he in the concreteness of his heart and his life which, only when accomplished, reveals what this heart is that had to venture and squander itself in this life. In the case of all other efforts, we may know what is really demanded of us. It is possible to gauge, compare, ask oneself whether the stakes and the gain are worth it. One could justify such a demanded effort by something else, by a result which shows it to make sense, but in the case of love this is impossible. Love itself is what justifies love, but this only in any real sense when with the whole heart and with all one's might it has been carried to the very end.

The Christian ethos does not basically consist in the respecting of objective norms imposed by God on reality. All structures of things are *lower* than man. He can alter them, bend them as far as possible; he is their master and not their servant. The only ultimate structure of the person which manages to express it completely is the basic capacity of love, and this is without measure. Thus man too is boundless. Every sin is at root merely the refusal to entrust himself to this boundlessness; it is a lesser love which, because it refuses to become the greater, is no longer love at all. Of course, so as to know what this means, man requires objectifications which he encounters in the multiplicity of commandments. This is true but everything which thus appears in this multiplicity of commandments is the objectification or partial accomplishment or preliminary beginning of a love which itself has no norm by which it could be measured. One can speak of the 'commandment' of love as long as one does not forget that this 'law' does not command man to do *something* but imposes a person as a task on himself, that person who can love only by accepting that love belonging to God in which God does not give something but himself.

God, however, in spite of – no, because of – his absoluteness is no [189] impersonal 'It', no asymptotic stationary take-off point of the transcendence and love of the spiritual person but the 'living God' in whose regard every action of man is essentially a response to his call. This ultimately is the basis of the historicity of the person. The historicity of man can only be taken perfectly seriously once man knows himself to be exposed in something *essentially* (and not merely *de facto* and *per accidens*) indisposable; in other words, when he understands himself as someone existing within the sovereign freedom of God against which there is no appeal. This essential reference of human self-understanding to God's freedom and the thereby given 'essential history together with God' is ultimately nothing else but the anthropological expression of the fact that everything created remains always actually dependent on God. This is so since it means man remains dependent on God in that self-understanding which characterises his human *existence*, i.e. that he can never build God into this self-understanding as a disposable element. The experience and affirmation of inexhaustibility, of the mystery of God and of his freedom belong to the human self-affirmation as a creature. Man, therefore, accepts that dependence of a creature proper to him by the fact that he does not simply interpret himself in his self-understanding as something

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which is definitively available of itself (*after the manner of* 'pure nature', for instance) but rather patiently awaits a *historical* interpretation by God.

In this historical interpretation there becomes concrete what has been said above about the interpretation of the transcendental and categorial exercise of freedom. Human freedom, even in the case when it prepares to be directly and explicitly freedom *vis-à-vis* God, is always freedom with regard to some category of object and *vis-à-vis* some intramundane Thou, since even *such* an act of an explicit yes or no towards God cannot conduct itself directly in relation to the God of original, transcendental experience but only to the God of explicit, conceptual reflection, to God in the concept and not directly and alone to the God of transcendental presence.

God's Word, if it is to take place in intramundane tangibility, can only be spoken by man as a finite word. It is equally true '*in converso*', 'in the opposite direction', that the relationship to God in its directness is necessarily mediated by intramundane communication. The *transcendental* opening out requires a *categorial* object, a support as it were, so as not to lose itself in empty nothingness; it requires an intramundane Thou. The original relationship to God is . . . love of neighbour. If man becomes [190] himself only by the exercise of love towards God and must achieve this self-mastery by a categorial action, then it holds good – and holds good perfectly in the order of grace – that the act of love of neighbour is the only categorial and original act in which man attains the whole of the concretely given reality and finds the transcendental and supernatural, directly experienced experience of God.

The historicity of dialogic freedom, however, becomes even clearer in this relationship with one's fellow men, by the fact that it is not merely concerned with the sovereign God but also with the uncontrollable decisions relating to one's surroundings, and by the fact that it is determined by them and must in the concrete decide itself in determined situations.

Freedom, then, is not merely the capacity of knowing principles but is also the call to obey 'imperatives', to make decisions, decisions which cannot be derived from universal norms and eternal laws (although they may not contradict them) and yet do not leave man free to choose in any way he likes but rather make a total demand on man . . . out of the situation of his 'hour', of his call.

It is impossible here to develop a logic of the concrete understanding of what should be done at each moment, an ethics which does not simply stop at the rejection of situation ethics but reaches towards a genuine individual ethics. It must suffice simply to mention it . . . and to point out that only such an understanding can preserve the mystery of freedom.

IV. THE MYSTERY OF FREEDOM

Freedom is a mystery first of all because it comes only from God and is directed only towards God, who is essentially the incomprehensible mystery which as such is precisely the source and goal of freedom as such. The ground of freedom is the abyss of the mystery, which can never be conceived as that original datum of our transcendental experience in knowledge and freedom which in its self-evident and permanent incomprehensibility is the reason for the possibility of understanding every individual reality as such which it meets within this horizon.

We must abstain here from going on from this starting-point to pose the epistemological question about the real knowableness of freedom. Freedom is not a datum of any empirical psychology. Such a psychology can merely determine functional interconnections of individual facts within the horizon of experience as a whole, whereas freedom previously [191] to such an experience of objects is always already grasped as the form of transcendental experience as such by the fact that the subject knows itself to be incapable of being turned

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into an object and thus knows itself to be free.

This radical mysteriousness of the freedom of the subject continues also into the free act of the subject as such. The individual act of freedom participates in the mystery of its origin and goal and in so far as it can never be absolutely objectified in its freedom and hence also never in its ethical quality. This characteristic does indeed already arise directly out of the strictly subjective nature of freedom, but is also emphasised explicitly and objectively in the statements of revelation. These statements contain an ultimate non-objectifiability of freedom and of the free, concrete decision. The total decision by which man decides definitively about the whole of his reality, i.e. posits this totality itself in its freely determined finality (and an individual act can be called really and completely free only in so far as this happens), is a total decision that according to revelation belongs to the judgement of God alone. Man does indeed come ever closer to his finality in freedom and as a *conscious* subject, but he cannot once more objectify this result of his freedom for himself, i.e. judge himself and even less others in their total quality before God. The *Catholic* doctrine of faith declares that man cannot, while still a pilgrim on earth, have an absolutely certain judgement about his state of justification or eternal salvation. Even the *Protestant* doctrine of justification is not ultimately at variance on this point (in spite of all controversies) since, even for the Lutheran doctrine of justification, absolute fiducial faith always remains subject to temptation. This means also, therefore, that man cannot adequately reflect objectively and with absolute certainty on his free decisions. It means that freedom is really subjectivity and that subjectivity is in itself and in its self-presence a more original reality than individually existing objects which can be clearly determined by a previously conceived co-ordinate system of universal ideas. *In* the deed of his freedom itself man knows who he is and wants to be in freedom but precisely this knowledge is strictly identical with himself and hence he cannot separate this knowledge from himself as something objective and manipulable and so once more say clearly to himself what he declares himself to be in his freedom towards God. This declaration which he is himself disappears for him, as it were, into the *mysterium* of God. An absolutely certain, propositionally objectified declaration about a man's [192] exercise of freedom in a determined act located in space and time is basically impossible for this man with regard to himself and even more so for others. This does not indeed mean that freedom and responsibility are in no way realities to be found within the space of human experience and reflection and in the realm of inter-subjectivity. Freedom, even as the concrete total self-determination of the free subject about itself in the direction of finality, always takes place by means of a pre-given particular category of material; subjectivity and the person always fulfil themselves in the natural. This shows the created nature of human freedom. It is equally clear that man, without injury to the impossibility of an *adequate* self-reflection, is always also the reflecting, the self-objectifying being who places himself under the norms of universal validity. It is a Catholic and also, in view of the material ethics of the Bible, a completely biblical doctrine that it is not merely possible to develop *formal* principles of the subjective exercise of freedom of the subject with regard to its correctness or wrongness but also absolutely material norms of an objective and universally valid kind with regard to the right or wrong exercise of this subjective freedom within the categories of the nature of man and of his world. It then becomes self-evident that man is empowered as well as obliged to make a certain reflex and objectified self-judgement about his moral condition, i.e. to make a judgement with regard to the presence, rightness or wrongness of his exercise of freedom in a particular material act. This understanding of oneself which one can pronounce to oneself and examine critically, and in view of which one can attain a certain valid result, is qualified precisely by the characteristics of the pilgrim existence of man in this life, in which freedom is still at work and hence every trial is itself once more an act of freedom which cannot be adequately examined by reflection. It is a real knowledge which gives *that* kind of 'certitude'

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which can be given within the space of the historical and of freedom: as a demand to place freedom itself under obligatory moral norms. One has the right and duty to include this knowledge about oneself and ultimately also that about others in the calculations of one's life and of one's active decisions and actions, since otherwise one cannot exist and since absolute abstention from such judgements would not avoid the risk of such judgements but would itself be once more a free decision full of risk. Yet this judging, deciding, risking, objectifying knowledge about freedom does not understand itself as something final, absolutely certain and beyond appeal. In this objectifying knowledge, and in his reflex self-understanding [193] which is once more an act of unreflected freedom, man accepts himself and, precisely as the one who understands himself in this way or that, he makes himself answerable to the mysterious judgement of God that takes place in a hidden way in the unreflected act of his freedom. Freedom is mystery.

V. CREATED FREEDOM IN AN UNAVOIDABLE SITUATION OF GUILT

The freedom of man is indeed free self-realisation into finality. Yet in spite of its peculiarly creative character, it is a *created* freedom. This can be seen from two facts. In its transcendental nature this freedom experiences itself first of all as borne and empowered by its absolute horizon, an absolute horizon which it does not form but by which it is formed. The transcendentality of the spirit must not be conceived as residing either in the knowledge or in the freedom of love as if the spirit projects and determines its orientation or 'goal' by itself. Its 'goal' itself, in the peculiar manner of something withdrawn, opens itself of itself to the knowing and willing spirit (without – as has already been said – this implying that open realisation maintained by ontologism); the goal is experienced within the realisation of spiritual existence itself as the real moving force; the active self-projection of the spirit towards its goal and its future is experienced as taken up by the goal which opens itself of itself and over which the spirit has no control since he does not grasp it fully but is rather constituted by it as something lying beyond it. The characteristic of the transcendentality of freedom, understood as freedom borne and empowered by its goal, right away indicates the created nature of this freedom of which freedom is directly conscious in its exercise. In so far as this empowering of freedom, towards the absoluteness of being, is experienced as the empowering by grace to the absolute *nearness* to this goal – in its direct self-communication (called divine grace) – the character of created freedom comes through more strongly and clearly through the empowering self-opening of this goal (even though this experience can be made clearly objective only through its interpretation in the supernatural revelation of the Word and by faith).

The experience of the created nature of freedom is shown secondly by the fact that this freedom, understood as a self-disposing by the subject towards finality, is necessarily mediated by an environment and inter-subjectivity which of themselves are *a posteriori*, uncontrollable and [194] ultimately unplanned. Man always exercises his original freedom towards himself by merely accepting and passing through the history pre-given and imposed on him. Freedom is the free answer of yes or no to necessity and once more experiences in this its created nature.

According to Christian teaching which is contained above all in the implications of the doctrine of original sin and concupiscence, the fact that created freedom is conditioned by situations and that it only becomes conscious of itself by going out into the world is characterised by the fact that this situation is always and unavoidably co-determined by guilt. The doctrine of sin at the very source of the common history of the world and of humanity and the doctrine of concupiscence signify that there is never a situation and material for

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man's freedom (if this situation and material are regarded adequately and without any arbitrary abstractions) which is not right away, even before each person's own positive or negative moral decision, co-determined by the guilt in the history of mankind, and that it will never be possible – right to the end of history – to eliminate completely this mortgage of guilt that is objectified in the situation of freedom.

In so far as freedom must always objectify itself in an alien material in order to find itself, it becomes alienated from itself. As has already been shown, it can never look at itself so clearly in what it has done for its own self-realisation in the material of the situation as to be able to recognise in this exactly and with absolute certitude what it is in itself, viz., the yes or no to itself and to God. This can be seen to be true even by the mere fact that there is no objectification of which one could say with absolute certitude that it could only have arisen in its concreteness out of freedom and not by natural necessity. Being created and mediated freedom, this freedom necessarily becomes in an ultimate sense ambiguous in its objectification; it therefore becomes a mystery to itself and as such it must surrender itself to God. This characteristic of ambiguity in the objectifications of freedom is heightened by the circumstance that the material imposed on freedom and entering into its exercise is always already co-determined and formed by guilt from the very beginning of the history of the spirit. The freedom of the individual, of course, can still understand this material co-determined by the guilt of others (which does not remain external to the free act) either in the sense of ratifying the guilty determination of this material as the embodiment of its own 'no' to God, and thus make it the objective manifestation of its own guilt, or by suffering [195] and overcoming it as a participation in the Cross of Christ with its 'yes' to God. Yet precisely this ambiguity of the imposed situation and its material for freedom makes the original free act once more something which cannot be absolutely understood, a mystery for freedom which cannot be solved; it veils within the unsearchable judgement of God the meaning and quality of the individual life as well as of the history of humanity as a whole.

VI. FREEDOM AS LIBERATED FREEDOM

In so far as freedom is always and in every act freedom directed towards the mystery of God himself (that mystery by which it is supported and empowered), the act of freedom is always essentially the act of man's self-surrender to the uncontrollable providence of God and in this sense it is always essentially a trusting venture. How God transmits himself to this freedom which if it does not want to refuse itself to him must entrust itself absolutely to him in its venture into the unpredictable, it can appear only slowly in the history of the self-experience of this freedom. This whole matter becomes even more acute on account of what we have called the guilt-situation of freedom. Even though according to Catholic teaching human freedom was not destroyed by original sin, yet it was profoundly 'wounded' by it; hence, even though God's promise does not need to create it completely anew, it certainly does require his loving assistance. The injured freedom must (freely) *accept* this help and yet is not capable of this acceptance by its own power. Even for this it must be liberated by the 'prevenient grace' of the unsearchable decision of God who when he 'wants to show mercy does so, and when he wants to harden someone's heart does so' (Rm 9:18) but of whom we are bound to believe at the same time that 'he wants everyone to be saved' (1 Tm 2:4).

God has manifested this final, irrevocable decision to liberate freedom in his Son. Hence the history of the experience of freedom with God is – by his will, against which there is no appeal – salvation- and revelation-history; it is the experience achieved in Jesus Christ that God has given himself to the freedom of man as the absolute nearness and as the ground of

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the free acceptance of this nearness in what we call divinising grace. God has surrendered himself in his innermost divinity to the freedom which surrenders itself into the unforeseeable ways of God; God is not [196] merely the distant horizon towards which man projects his free self-understanding as to something always distant but He has become in absolute immediacy the space and 'object' of this exercise of freedom. This exercise of freedom made possible and elevated in Christ is that liberated freedom which St Paul proclaims as the 'freedom of the children of God', the real Christian freedom. The love of the Father which has been revealed in the Son (Jn 8:36) become flesh, the aletheia, makes us free (Jn 8:32), because where His *pneuma* is, there is freedom (2 Co 3:17). This freedom is a freedom from sin (Rm 6:18-23; Jn8:31-36), from the law (Rm 7:3 *sq*.; 8:2; Ga 2:4; 4:21-31; 5:1, 13) and from death (Rm 6:21 *sq*.; 8:21): from sin, in so far as sin is in a thousand different ways the free achievement of self-assertion in oneself and in the world without openness towards the love of God; from the law, in so far as the law, although it is the holy will of God, becomes the thorn of his own self-assertion against God or before God for the man without grace (whether this man be wounded or self-gloriously fulfilled in his work); from death, in so far as death is merely the phenomenality of guilt. Man makes this freedom which is and is given by Christ his own by the fact that, obedient to the call of this freedom (Ga 5:13), man subjects himself by faith (and its tangible sign which is baptism) to that happening which breaks open the prison of the world: the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son.

It has also been revealed in this experience of freedom that man's no to God, as far as the whole history of human freedom is concerned, was permitted by God in His yes to His own self-communication to created freedom and that it remains embraced by this yes of God which remains victorious in the history of salvation as a whole. The freedom of man is liberated into immediacy to God's own freedom of being. It receives the power for its highest possible act, one which is rooted in its formal being but is not demanded by it. The freedom towards God and originating from God as the source and future of freedom, and the freedom that is seen as the dialogic capacity of love, is achieved in the highest imaginable form of these aspects: as the freedom which is taken up by God's self-communication in personal love and which accepts God himself so that the horizon and object of this love liberated for itself are identical.

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[197]

14

GUILT - RESPONSIBILITY – PUNISHMENT WITHIN THE VIEW OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

The subject of this chain-lecture is 'Guilt – responsibility – punishment'. No one, however, will take umbrage at the theologian if he changes the sequence of these three themes and speaks about responsibility – guilt – punishment, for he unlike the jurist does not look at these themes from the point of view of the penal significance of his knowledge and judgements but from the point of view of the original nature of things. It is obvious, after all, that there can only be guilt in the theological sense where there is freedom and responsibility, no matter how obscure to begin with the notions of freedom and responsibility and hence also of guilt may be. Under these presuppositions, we would like first of all to make a few preliminary remarks on the method to be adopted in the theological treatment of this subject. The Catholic theologian will certainly include responsibility – guilt – punishment within the sphere of his questions and declarations even in the sense in which they enter into the realm of the life of the ordinary citizen, that of jurisprudence, that of ordinary inter-human relationships and that of the humanistic appreciation of man and his deeds. The Catholic theologian is of the opinion that the divine revelation which he tries to follow in his thought in no way merely makes statements about a realm of objects which lie absolutely beyond human experience but that it throws light and passes judgement on the concrete world in which man lives his concrete existence. Hence, Catholic theology basing itself on divine revelation – also claims the right, for instance, to make statements about historical events; it also claims this right with regard to those ultimate essential structures of man which would belong to his competence even [198] if there were no divine revelation and no vocation of man to a direct, 'supernatural' partnership by grace of the individual and God: essential structures from which we derive the so-called natural law which is the unchangeable moral norm for man. From this it is self-evident for Catholic theology that, out of its most proper source of knowledge and with its specific methods of knowledge, it also makes statements about responsibility, guilt and punishment even in the sense in which these notions are understood in the realm of ordinary life, and that it does not simply connect contents with these concepts which from the very start have nothing to do with the ordinary understanding of these particular concepts. Thus it is also understandable that even in every theological statement there is and must be presupposed a pre-theological, profane understanding of these provisional concepts. If we did not know at all by pre-theological knowledge what is meant by freedom, responsibility, guilt and punishment, it would also be completely impossible to have any theological understanding of these concepts. It is not a simple matter of revelation and its theological reflection simply constituting anew the ultimate, basic conceptual elements even of the language of revelation and of theology; rather, the language of revelation always picks up concepts already known in the ordinary sphere even though these concepts can also then be given a more profound, changed or new meaning by the fact that they are put in a new context. From what has been said it follows that, on the one hand, we must here presuppose a pre-theological understanding of the concepts to be dealt with and that, on the other hand, we must show what new and deeper content these concepts attain within the theology and its decisive statements and, finally, how from this starting-point theology clarifies and judges the profane use of these concepts by affirming them positively and also putting them critically into question. This closed circle of a pre-theological and general human understanding of these concepts, of a metamorphosis of these concepts by

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their being drawn into a theological context, and of a critical theological clarification of their profane use, must (as far as is possible here) determine all our reflections.

II

We start with a theological reflection on the concept of responsibility. Responsibility, in the sense intended here and in the only sense in which it [199] can be the basis for the theological concept of guilt and punishment, presupposes freedom as the characteristic of acting being in general and as the property of that particular way of acting for which the acting being is supposed to be responsible. Whether a different concept of responsibility is possible in the nature of things or not – such as, for instance, in the administration of justice or under the presupposition of a psychological or theological determinism – need not concern us here. For Catholic theology, at any rate, responsibility and freedom are mutually clarifying concepts (at least terminologically), both of which appeal in the same way to the experience of the human subject in its actions. Hence, if we wish to know what is meant by responsibility in the theological sense, we must always, without having to try anxiously to keep the concept of freedom and responsibility strictly apart, look at the same time at the phenomenon of the experience of freedom and its theological interpretation.

From our introductory remarks it already appears that Catholic theology presupposes quite freely that we always already know what freedom and responsibility are even before theology starts to undertake the task of describing this pre-theological general human and profane knowledge about freedom and responsibility and to investigate the history of man's self interpretation in the history of the more precise understanding of these concepts. The understanding of these concepts in the history of man's self-interpretation has no doubt a long and variable history to which also belongs precisely the history of revelation and of Christian theology. Christian theology nevertheless presupposes a permanent nature in man which is preserved throughout the whole history of mankind even though it only becomes gradually conscious of itself in that history. It therefore presupposes also a permanent common knowledge about responsibility, even though this too has its own history. Otherwise, all men could not really be the subject and object of the one divine salvation on the part of one and the same God in Jesus Christ within one unified history of salvation. For this theological reason and not merely for lack of time it will perhaps be permissible here simply to presuppose this pre-theological knowledge about freedom and responsibility. In this connection it should merely be noted (without going into this more deeply here) that it is quite possible to presuppose in a Catholic theology that an authentic, even though provisional experience of freedom and responsibility which has not yet quite caught up with its true nature, [200] is quite conceivable and something which really occurs; this is an experience in which the reference of freedom and responsibility to God and his law – however much it must be implied – need not yet be the subject of explicit reflection; it is therefore perfectly possible in certain circumstances to have an atheistic ethics of freedom and moral responsibility and that this can, precisely in a Christian understanding, be the source of a genuine and original understanding of what is really meant by God and the divine law.

Thus we simply presuppose this pre-theological, ordinary human understanding of freedom and responsibility, and ask ourselves what new and deeper interpretation these concepts undergo when they are brought into a theological context. We will first of all try to determine very simply the theological locus of the interpretation of these concepts and will then ask ourselves what results from this for the deepened understanding of these concepts. As far as the theological locus – understood as the origin and horizon of the understanding of these concepts and of the reality meant by them – is concerned, we may perhaps put it quite simply

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as follows: man disposes over the totality of his being and existence before God and this either towards Him or away from Him. Man does this in such a way that his temporal decisions determine the eternal finality of his existence either in absolute salvation or damnation: on account of his freedom, man is responsible for his eternal salvation or damnation. The meaning of this simple statement must now be unfolded so as to show what it involves for the nature of freedom and responsibility. Yet let it be stated in advance on this subject (since we will have to pass this over later on) that the experience of freedom and responsibility illuminated by revelation experiences and knows this freedom precisely as a gift of God's grace both in its basic condition and in its proper exercise. From the outset, therefore, it understands freedom as an autonomous self-possession of man before or even against God, but not in the sense that God's grace and mastery and the responsible exercise of freedom are realities encroaching on each other – in the sense, for instance, of a Pelagian synergism – as if they were realities of which the one could assert itself or grow only at the expense of the other. The divine freedom and mastery are experienced from the outset as the reason for the possibility of the creature's responsibility and freedom, so that both grow in equal and not in inverse proportion. Having stated this in advance, it must now be said what is meant more exactly by freedom considered as the whole [201] subject's capacity and necessity of being responsible itself with regard to final salvation and damnation before God. This is obviously what is meant by the Christian statement about man and his salvation and damnation if he must, and must be able as a free person, to answer for himself and the whole of his life before the divine judgement seat and if the eternally valid sentence concerning his final salvation or damnation is passed according to his works, on the part of a judge who does not regard the mere appearance of life, the 'face', but the freely disposable core of the person, the 'heart'. It is true that man's formal freedom of choice and decision is more presupposed than treated of as a proper subject in scripture. It is true also that the explicit subject of scripture, and especially of the New Testament, is to a great extent the paradox that man's freedom, while remaining responsible and without being destroyed, nevertheless falls under the slavery of the diabolical powers of sin and death and to some extent even of the law, and that freedom must first of all be freed by God's grace for its real task of loving God in an inner inclination towards the law. Yet, although all this is true, it cannot be doubted that for scripture, the sinful and the justified man are both responsible for their life's action before God and hence are also free . . . at least to the extent that the freedom of choice is a permanent constitutive element of human nature. Its true nature, however, is made to appear for the first time precisely in so far as in the view of Christian revelation this freedom of choice is the basis for salvation or damnation, and this finally and before God. For to a merely profane experience this freedom of choice may appear merely as the characteristic of the individual human act which is imputable to man only to the extent in which it is actively posited by man himself, without this being causally determined beforehand and in this sense forced by an inner condition of man or by an external situation preceding the active decision. Such a notion of freedom of choice distributes freedom in its exercise exclusively and in an atomising fashion over the individual acts of man which can thus be held together only by a neutral, substantial sameness of the subject positing them all and by life's external space of time. Freedom in this experience is, therefore, only the freedom of acts, the imputability of the individual act to a person who in principle remains neutral and hence can always determine himself anew (as long as the external conditions for this are still present). Yet, seen from a Christian point of view, the idea of responsible freedom changes greatly and becomes immensely deeper when it is seen that man can determine and decide about [202] himself as a whole by his freedom, and this with finality, and that he therefore posits acts which must not merely be qualified morally and then pass away again (being imputed to him thereafter only juridically or morally), but that he really and truly *is* so good or evil in the ground of his

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reality itself that in this way his final salvation or damnation is already given (even though perhaps in a still hidden manner). Freedom is then seen to be first and foremost freedom of being. It is not merely an act which is sometimes posited in its exercise, but a transcendental characteristic of the being of man itself. If man is really to be able to decide finally about himself if therefore eternity is to be the act of his freedom itself, if this act is not to be able to draw something which remains good, contrary to its goodness, into a ruin which simply contradicts this permanently good reality, if therefore freedom is to be able to make man really good or evil in the very depth of his being, and if this being good or evil is not merely to be an external accidental condition of man . . . then freedom must first of all appear as freedom of being.[1] This means that man is that being who is concerned in the depths of his being about this being itself, the being which always has a relationship to itself, which is a subject and never merely a nature, which is always already a person, never simply there but always already personally existent. In this being nothing happens to him which does not touch his relationship to himself. His 'I' can never be jumped over, it can never be turned into a mere object, can never be replaced or explained by something else, not even by its own reflex representation of itself. It is authentically original, not based in its turn on something else, and hence also cannot be derived from something else or be justified in view of something else. Man, by his freedom of being, is always the incomparable who cannot be pigeon-holed in any system or completely subsumed under any idea. He is in an original sense the untouchable, and also the lonely and exposed individual, someone who is his own burden and who cannot 'absolve' himself by any device from this unique, lonely self-being. Freedom also, therefore, is not originally and primarily concerned merely with this or that which it can do or not do. Freedom of choice is not primarily the ability to choose any object whatsoever or to choose any particular attitude towards this or that; it is [203] the freedom of self-understanding, the possibility of saying yes or no to oneself, the possibility of deciding for or against oneself which is parallel to the knowing self-consciousness and the knowing subjectivity of man. Freedom never occurs merely as an objective exercise, as a choice 'between' individual objects, but as the self-achievement of the objectively choosing human being, and only *within* this freedom in which man is master over himself is he then 'free' also with regard to the material of his own self-realisation that is inescapably imposed on him. This self-realisation is an unavoidable task and, in spite of all the differences in the concrete material of this self-achievement, it is always a self-realisation towards God or a radical self-refusal with regard to God. The salvation or damnation that consists in the gain or loss of God posited in freedom (we will have to return to this more at length later on) must not be understood as a merely external reaction of a condemning or rewarding God but is itself seen to be already achieved in this freedom. Freedom is therefore capacity for wholeness; if it is itself to be able to effect salvation or damnation, i.e. the determination of the whole man, then it must of itself bring into play the whole man in his origin and future and this within the interplay of his relationships to himself the world and God. Freedom is always the self-fulfilment of the objectively choosing man in view of a total achievement, a total disposal of his existence before God. It must certainly be remembered for this that in many cases each envisaged total project of existence, one's own total self-understanding, the '*option fondamentale*', remains empty and objectively unfulfilled. It must be remembered that not every individual act of freedom has the same actual depth and radical nature of self-disposition. It must be realised that, although every individual act of freedom intends to venture a total and final disposal of oneself each of them always surrenders itself into the

[1] The author gratefully uses here and in what follows the exposition of his good friend J. B. Metz, as found in: H. Fries, *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* I (Munich 1962), pp. 403-414 (article entitled 'Freiheit, theologisch'). Cf. now also 'Theology of Freedom' in this volume, pp. 178 *sqq*.

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whole of the one and complete act of freedom of the one human, temporally finite life precisely because each of them is accomplished within the horizon of the whole of existence and receives its weight and proportion from this. Accordingly, the notion of the heart as conceived within the biblical and Augustinian mould, the notion of subjectivity in Kierkegaard, the notion of '*action*' in Blondel, etc., all show understanding of the fact that there is such a basic act of freedom which embraces and moulds the whole of existence. This act does indeed realise itself and can only be achieved by means of the individual human acts which can be placed in space and time and can be objectified with regard to their motives, yet it cannot be simply identified [204] by objective reflection with such an individual act, nor does it represent the merely moral sum total of these individual acts, nor finally can it be simply identified with the moral quality of the last of these posited free individual acts. The concrete freedom of man in which he decides about himself as a whole before God by the realisation of his own finality before God is the unity in difference – which can no longer be reflected upon – of the '*option fondamentale*' and the individual free acts of man, a unity which is the concrete being of the free subject which has fulfilled itself.

The subject of freedom is responsible because in freedom the subject as such, really itself and not just something belonging to it, is responsible to itself. It cannot exculpate itself by throwing the blame on something other than itself and God could be defined precisely as the one who can give freedom in this sense without thereby being the limitation of this freedom, as is the case with anything falling into the category of cause.

There is a still further peculiarity of-this responsible freedom in the theological sense to be brought out. It does indeed already arise directly out of the strict subjectivity of freedom, but it is also explicitly and objectively emphasised in the statements of revelation; we refer here to the impossibility of any ultimate objectification of freedom and of the concrete free decision. The total decision in which man finally disposes of the whole of his reality, i.e. posits this totality itself in its freely determined finality, is according to revelation subject to the sole judgement of God. Man does indeed mature in freedom, i.e. he brings his finality to maturity as a conscious subject, but he cannot once more objectify *this* result of freedom to himself, i.e. judge himself or others in their total quality before God. In so far as the Catholic dogma of faith declares that man in the state of pilgrimage is denied any absolutely certain judgement about his state of justification or his eternal salvation – and in so far as the Protestant teaching on justification also ultimately and on this point does not contradict this (in spite of all the controversies) since even for the Lutheran teaching on justification fiducial faith always remains subject to temptations – it is also stated by this that man cannot objectively and adequately reflect on his free decisions with absolute certitude. He knows in the act of his freedom who he is and wants to be in freedom but precisely this knowledge is about him himself and hence he cannot detach this knowledge from himself as something objectifiable and manipulable [205] and thus once more tell himself clearly what he declares himself to be in his freedom before God. This declaration which he is himself disappears, as it were, into the *mysterium* of God.

It must now be remembered, however, that for a Christian understanding this freedom is precisely the proper nature of freedom in general even where it is not seen in this systematic theological form; for there really is no peculiarly civil-profane freedom and, side by side with it, theological freedom before God but the latter signifies the true nature of the former. If this is correct, however, then it follows absolutely necessarily that a completely certain statement about the realisation of a man's freedom in a determined, spatio-temporal act is basically impossible. This does not indeed mean that freedom and responsibility are in no way matters which are found within the space of human experience and reflection and in the field of human inter-subjectivity. After all, we have already indicated that the concrete total self-disposal of the free subject over himself always takes place in a pre-given, particular category

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of material and that subjectivity is achieved in the realm of nature. It is equally clear that man, without prejudice to the impossibility of an adequate self-reflection, is always also the reflecting, self-objectifying being who puts himself under universally valid norms. It is a Catholic doctrine and, in view of the material ethics of the Bible, also a completely biblical doctrine that it is not merely possible to develop formal principles of the subjective exercise of freedom but also material, objective and universally valid norms for the right or wrong exercise of this subjective freedom in the categorised material of the nature of man and of his world. From this standpoint it is then, however, obvious that man not only has the power but also the duty to make a certain reflex and objective judgement about his own moral state, i.e. with regard to the fact and rightness or wrongness of his exercise of freedom, in a particular material act. This self-knowledge which one can communicate to oneself, and which one can examine critically and with regard to which one can come to a certain final conclusion, characterises precisely the property of the pilgrim existence of man in this life in which freedom is always still at work, and hence every examination is itself once more an act of freedom which has not been and cannot be adequately examined consciously. It is a real knowledge, it gives certitude, and one has the right and duty to take account of this self-knowledge, and ultimately also of the knowledge about others, in the calculations of one's life and of one's active decisions [206] and actions, since otherwise one cannot exist at all and the complete abstention from such judgements does not even avoid the risk of judging but would itself be once more a free, risky decision; yet, this judging, deciding, risking knowledge is not to be taken as final, absolutely certain and beyond appeal. In it man accepts himself in his own self-understanding and hands himself over – precisely as the one who understands himself in this or that way – to the mysterious judgement of God.

In this way, man's judgement about the existence and the quality of a free decision in his own case or that of others is, even in ordinary social life, accorded its full character by theology and thus not merely on account of a sceptical or careful psychology. Scripture and tradition presuppose that there is the possibility and necessity of such judgements. Man, if he wishes to live and act in a Christian manner, may not simply take refuge in that scepticism that is so easily aroused today psychologically which maintains that basically one knows nothing about the freedom and responsibility of a particular person in his particular actions. Otherwise, for example, the Church could only lay down general principles about good and evil in her internal ecclesiastical discipline but could not, for instance, put an ecclesiastical ban on the individual action of a particular person or give the individual person material and yet binding precepts for his conduct in the concrete. Yet, on the other hand, man must know in accordance with the same attitude of the Church that these judgements, which he cannot avoid and which have absolutely practical consequences for him, are provisional judgements subject to the final pronouncement by God, that they are risky judgements for the very person who passes them, so that the correct and false judgements of man, the exercise of and abstention from a judgement must once more be submitted to God's pronouncement of judgement. In view of their results one may apply the name of moral certitude, in contrast to metaphysical certitude or some other label, to these reflected and critical judgements. The fact remains that man is basically obliged to reach a reflex and knowing decision with regard to the existence and quality of his exercise of freedom and that nevertheless this decision itself, and not a sceptical abstention, is the expression of one's self-commitment to knowing freedom in God.

Before we apply what has been said about freedom and responsibility to the concept of guilt, we must finally make a further, additional remark [207] about the theological concept of freedom and responsibility. Even, and perhaps especially, the theological concept of freedom and responsibility is subject to an inner variability and gradation in freedom and responsibility. It is not only everyday life, psychology and jurisprudence that know about the

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different degrees of responsibility and freedom. Theology too knows it, and knows it from her own point of view. This is not self-evident. Such a conception finds its place quite easily, of course, in a purely formal psychological notion of freedom of choice: the sovereignty of the subject in his free decision about opening itself actively towards the motives trying to move him is determined by causes pre-existing the free decision. The number of thus offered possibilities for freedom is always finite, can be very limited and thus can so hem in freedom materially without destroying it formally that it becomes almost or even absolutely nil, since in a concrete case there may no longer be a plurality of motives among which one could choose. The problem of degrees of freedom and responsibility becomes much more difficult from the theological point of view. Freedom in the theological sense has, after all, shown itself precisely in its initial step as that surrender of the subject to itself by which it can decide about itself as a whole definitively for or against God. Given such an initial step, the notion of freedom seems really to be *in indivisibili*, and it seems to be impossible to have a 'more-or-less' with regard to freedom, since the subject either decides or does not decide about itself as a whole definitively and hence the concept of the totality and radicality of the subject's being affected by his free decision does belong to the nature of freedom. In fact, it will have to be said also in view of this basic theological starting-point (which remains completely unsystematic in Catholic moral theology) that the decision of freedom which takes place in the *whole* of a life, does not actually admit of degrees, that in it the subject has decided completely about himself and that the possibility of freedom which was imposed on the individual subject is really completely converted into this definitive decision. This does not imply (so as to meet at once a likely dogmatic objection against this thesis) that the manner and degree of perfection of each individual must be the same and equally great if these perfections are compared among themselves. Every man, if the thesis referred to is correct, does indeed use up and exhaust all the possibilities granted to his freedom. Since, however, the freedom of the creature is always the freedom of a subject predetermined in itself in its peculiar nature in view of these predetermined, finite and different realities for [208] different individuals, such a formal equality in the totality and radicality of every fulfilment of life does not signify equality of the result of the finality of the exercise of freedom since after all the predetermined, finite and differentiated material enters as a constitutive element into the finality of this result. Hence it will not be permissible to dispute this thesis of the formal equality of the intensity of everyone's total, free fulfilment of existence from the basic theological starting-point of freedom, especially since otherwise it would be impossible to make it comprehensible how by this freedom in time the *whole* man could be brought *definitively* to salvation or damnation if as a result of such a free decision there still remained open and unused possibilities in both directions. Theology does not prevent itself nevertheless by what has been said from gaining the insight into a gradation of freedom and responsibility as we know them from life, psychology and jurisprudence. Indeed, as has been said, it demands such a gradation by its own principles. First of all, there is no need to dispute, on account of the basic theological principle, the fact that the objective material offered to freedom by the inner dispositions of man and the external situation in which the personal decision of freedom, understood as self-mastery over oneself, realises and must realise itself, can be finite, variable and greater or less. This can, however, go so far that, for example, the material offered for a concrete free choice embraces only objects which are completely evil and forbidden according to the standards of objective morality. In such a case, we could at times no longer talk about freedom of choice and imputability according to the *a posteriori* criteria of everyday life and of psychology, although it could always still remain open whether there could not be a decision for or against God even with reference to such material. Furthermore, it must be noted that the characteristic of the total decision about the *whole* of life cannot be simply ascribed wholly and without reservation to the individual

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act within this life, in so far as this act can and must be regarded as merely a part of the whole life and it is ultimately impossible for the subject to make an adequate judgement about its relationship to the one totality of the decision about life. Since, for theological reasons, an adequate and definitive self-estimate remains denied to the subject, it is impossible to unconditionally attribute the radicality and totality belonging to freedom in principle to the individual act taken as a merely partial quantitative factor of the whole of life, and this impossibility is not necessarily merely an external gnoseological moment but is an inner [209] moment of this act itself. It may be merely a partial moment of the whole, total decision about life in the form of a preparation for it or as a merely particular manifestation of the total decision which has already taken place in the depth of the free subject. In contrast to the usual conception in Protestant theology, Catholic theology emphasises that even where freedom is really given in a formal sense, the difference in the radicality and totality of free acts can be not merely gradual but so essential that two acts no longer coincide univocally with regard to their freedom, responsibility and disposal over the subject, but can merely be placed under one common *analogous* concept of a free act. Catholic theology is aware of the difference between mortal and venial sin. In the former, when it is really subjectively present, there is a real decision of the subject about his salvation before God, and to this extent it realises the proper theological nature of freedom (even though such an act has its finality only in the totality of the decision about life and from the '*option fondamentale*'). In the latter, i.e. in venial sin, there is still indeed freedom in the formal sense of an active choice between two possibilities but this in such a way that a real self-disposal of the subject with regard to its goal and hence the totality of its existence does not take place. We cannot enter here into the theological reasons for this difference and into its ontological presuppositions in the nature of the spiritual-corporeal man. We simply wished to point out this distinction so that it will become clear that theology is also conscious of the essential gradation of freedom and responsibility for *inner* theological reasons.

III

What has been said about freedom and responsibility must now be applied to the concept of guilt.

Before doing this, however, it must at least be noted briefly that precisely for theological reasons and not merely for reasons taken from a metaphysics of freedom, the objectively and subjectively morally right action of freedom and the objectively and subjectively wrong and reprehensible free decision may not be regarded merely as two equal, co-existent species of realisation of simply one and the same nature of free action. The bad act of freedom does not merely fail to attain the object properly associated with it, viz. the good, what is proper to nature and [210] what is willed by the absolute will of God; it also fails to attain the most proper and innermost nature of freedom itself, since the morally evil realisation of freedom is also indeed a free but evil, unsuccessful realisation of freedom itself because God has not created freedom as the possibility of the creative positing by a subject of what is good and evil but as the possibility of creatively positing what is good; hence freedom fails also to attain itself, which indeed it 'can' do, when it is bad freedom. In addition there is the fact that in every space in which God has already freely decided on the victory of love and salvation, then – previous to any created freedom but without cancelling it out – the bad decision of freedom and human evil, in spite of and indeed within its simultaneously heightened radicality and dangerousness, is subject to a peculiar powerlessness which makes it once more impossible to regard the evil decision as an equal realisation of freedom and responsibility on the same plane as the free decision for good.

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With this reservation it must be said, however, that guilt regarded theologically is primarily and in its most proper essential ground the total and definitive decision of man against God, the self-understanding of the subject in the 'no' against his supporting ground and this *vis-à-vis* the horizon within which it is accomplished inescapably in 'yes' or 'no'; guilt in this sense is theological and metaphysical suicide but one which does not thereby allow the subject to escape from itself into nothingness. The Christian teaching about guilt considered as sin contains the possibility, which always existentially threatens man's existence, of such a radical self-denial in self-closure before God. That this is at all possible brings us to that *mysterium iniquitatis* which man can indeed experience in the depth of his conscience but from which he always runs away again by all the means of self-deception, displacement, excuses and by utilising the in themselves legitimate means of psychology wherever he does not allow himself to face up to this most impossible possibility of his existence by the testimony of revelation. Of course, this capacity, this possibility of denying sin and guilt understood in this way, has its reason once more in the fact that man simply cannot always and everywhere bring the totality of his existence under the control of freedom in the concrete partial exercise of his spatially and temporally extended existence and that he is thus capable of real sin before God in the full sense. Since he cannot in principle attain an adequate objectifying judgement about his own decision of freedom – since he cannot really judge himself – he also [211] does not even have the last word about his own guilt, and precisely this constitution gives him – from a theological point of view – the last, never surpassable possibility of doubting or denying the realisation of something like guilt in man. In addition, there is the fact that, in the sphere of the eschatologically victorious grace of God in Christ, guilt can only in truth be experienced as an already disarmed guilt even though it must be left an open question as to whether the freedom of the individual does not intend to remain in that empty helplessness of guilt which attaches to it since the time of Christ and which constitutes both its ultimate disorder and its ultimate horror. There can be and there is in fact guilt in the just mentioned theological sense according to the testimony of revelation in history even though we should be permitted to hope that such guilt will be eventually overcome in all men.

This theological nature of sin is realised – *if* it is realised at all – in those shapes and forms which we usually qualify as guilt even in the ordinary everyday sense. This brings us to the question about the more exact relationship between guilt in the theological sense and guilt in an ordinary sense. First of all, it must be repeated once more that in spite of its all-embracing character and in spite of the impossibility of localising it at any particular point of existence in space and time, the absolute definitive 'no' of the whole of existence towards God takes place for reflex consciousness in perfectly determined, concrete acts of life. Sin takes place in sins. Sin does not take place in a merely transcendental interiority of a noumenal subject but in the works of the flesh which are obvious and tangible: in fornication, indecency, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, feuds, wrangling, jealousy, bad temper, quarrels, disagreements, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies (Ga 5:19-21): in actions which, as St Paul says, exclude from the inheritance of the basileia. All this is, at least to begin with, quite understandable: man as spirit is not an abstract subject but an embodied, historical spirit who achieves his transcendence precisely by means of the material of the world, of its bodily corporeality and history, and this in such a way that, as is shown by the Christian doctrine of the eternal value of the 'flesh', this material is not merely (as, for instance, in Hofmannsthal's '*Jedermann*') the always external opportunity for proving a formally good will, but itself enters as an intrinsic constitutive factor into the permanent validity of this free act of the subject. If, however, the relationship between guilt in the theological and in the ordinary sense is [212] to be defined exactly, it must not be overlooked that it is not given to man to pass any ultimate judgement about guilt before God in the form of a reflected objective

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statement either in his own case or in that of others. Hence it is impossible, even from the objective material, the spatio-temporal tangibility and the objective quality of human action, to get any clear idea for such a definitive judgement about such a really existing guilt before God. This means that in principle an action may be objectively bad and yet may not be a realisation of guilt in the theological sense, and that someone may realise his 'no' against God in a form which from the point of view of an objective impersonal ethics gives rather the impression of being the fulfilment of a divine commandment. We cannot avoid this basic and ultimate ambiguity of all concrete actions of a man with regard to the question of the presence or absence of guilt by taking refuge in the classic distinction between intention and external acts (achievement). This distinction certainly exists, as is shown even by ordinary everyday experience in which a good intention is often carried out by objectively wrong means or, vice versa, a bad intention unintentionally achieves something objectively good. The intention, however, in so far as it is said to be identical with the real total being of man before God and hence, when bad, is supposed to signify real guilt, cannot be adequately objectified by objective reflection, and all in it that is really applicable for an objectifying judgement is precisely the 'external' action; this presupposes, of course, that one understands by 'external' (as one must, metaphysically speaking) everything and anything basically accessible to an objectively working reflection or science, so that even the 'inner' but conscious motivation, etc., also belongs to this external action, since even all these elements still lie within that indissoluble unity of the subject and its decision which cannot, be adequately reflected on. To this extent is it possible to speak in an ordinary, expressible and demonstrable sense of guilt but only in that provisional open sense in which man can and should have a reflex objective knowledge of his free decisions and active responsibility. This knowledge about guilt and responsibility in the ordinary sense cannot, on the one hand, bypass an ultimate relation to guilt in the theological sense as something completely irrelevant for its own understanding, since even freedom and responsibility in an ordinary (and in any designable genuine sense) is impossible without some reference to transcendence, real subjectivity and hence reference to God (no matter what one may call this transcendence and its final point of reference). On the other hand, [213] however, this ordinary knowledge about guilt is naturally dependent on criteria which are not of a directly theological kind and it is interested in factors of this freedom, responsibility and guilt which are of an intramundane character; in the case of judging the free action of someone else, this ordinary knowledge about guilt is even more difficult and problematical with regard to the certitude and clarity of such a judgement than where a subject reflects on his own freedom, responsibility and guilt, and hence one requires also much stricter standards than for judgements about oneself if one is to draw any practical conclusions for such a judgement about others.

It cannot be the task of a theologian here to develop the principles according to which practical life, e.g. juridical practice, judges the question of imputability or non-imputability. It can and must be said, however, from a properly theological standpoint, that even for theological reasons (since man could not otherwise be a subject who decides about his salvation at all) the existence of a formal freedom must basically be presumed until the contrary is proved, even though such a presumption must be employed most carefully as soon as it is a question of seeing this basically existing freedom of being of a subject realised in a particular individual act and thus of also recognising guilt in an individual act, even if this is only in the merely provisional sense and does not anticipate God's judgement which alone makes such a judgement even possible. Even for psychological, 'internal' reasons, the concrete act may be in no sense or only in an essentially diminished sense a realisation of basic freedom and it may be that the imposed choice of material possibilities for freedom was already so limited that the act which must be qualified as objectively bad is no free act at all

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in an ordinary sense because this objectivity which alone is of ordinary interest and which in the particular case was an offence against the intramundane and civil order was in the concrete the only possibility of acting open to the subject. On the other hand, theology will always have to remind the person, who necessarily and rightly judges in the ordinary sense, that it is true even in the secular sphere that no matter how conscientiously a sentence may be passed, it will necessarily bear that ultimate uncertainty which necessarily attaches, and this for theological reasons, to the theological sentence of guilt imposed on man, since ultimately the material presupposition for guilt is the same in both sentences; after all, proper freedom even in the secular sphere is freedom precisely by reason of the transcendence by which man disposes over [214] himself as a whole before God for salvation or damnation. No matter how much ordinary life must judge, the words of the Sermon on the Mount are paradoxically addressed to it also: 'Judge not, that you may not be judged.'

For lack of time, we simply refer the reader back to the more general descriptions of freedom and responsibility for what should be said further about guilt from a theological point of view.

IV

We now come to the notion of punishment. This notion is, of course, very important even in theology, a theology which cannot give up the idea of God as the founder and guardian of the moral order, the sanction of the moral order, forgiveness, damnation, etc., and hence also the concept of punishment for the freely culpable offence against the divine law. Yet it must also be admitted that the concept of punishment in theology has still to be thought through very much more exactly. For when it comes to the theological concept, the model of punishment in its secular and juridical uses always pushes itself too quickly and automatically into the foreground; God's punishment is understood too hastily and univocally in the sense of the punishment imposed on offenders against the civil order by civil, secular society. Once this happens, ironically, the content and validity of the secular concept of punishment is – quite unintentionally – given inversely that sovereignty and religious absoluteness which basically pertain only to punishment in the theological sense. To see what is really meant by this methodological difficulty, we need only reflect on a factor which necessarily belongs to punishment in the civil and secular sense, and to ask ourselves whether this factor also pertains to punishment in the properly theological sense, to the divine punitive sanction for the definitive 'no' of man against God. It is characteristic of punishment in the secular sphere that it does not result directly from the nature of human guilt itself but is imposed from without on the lawbreaker by a new and proper act and decision of the other, i.e. the civil society of the State, and that therefore guilt and punishment are not merely formally but also materially and really distinct from each other. Yet it can now at least be asked seriously on the theological plane whether what is meant theologically by divine punishment, damnation, etc., must really [215] necessarily be conceived of as an external, *additional* punishment or whether this can be doubted without injury to the Christian dogma. We think that the latter is quite possible.

Three points must be remembered in this connection. Firstly, personal freedom of its own nature means to be and under certain presuppositions also is a definitive decision of an irrevocable kind – that, in other words, the obduracy of the sinner must be conceived, with Thomas Aquinas, as an inner moment of the reprobate's own free decision and not properly speaking as the moment of his punishment as such. Secondly, a man's free decision takes effect, and must take effect, in dimensions and strata which, on the one hand, really belong to man and yet, on the other hand, are not simply identical with the subject of freedom in its

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subjective origin and thus can still assert themselves as consequences of true guilt in the whole man even when the free decision as such has been revised. Thirdly, on account of the continuing mundaneness and corporeality of man, the subjective decision which enters into the whole reality of man always and necessarily encounters the obstacle of the objective structure of these media of personal decision and hence necessarily creates suffering for itself. If we keep these three points in mind, then there will no longer theologically speaking be any insurmountable obstacles to the thesis maintaining that all divine punishment is a connatural consequence of guilt flowing from the proper nature of guilt and need not be specially added by God: and that therefore God is the punisher of sin by having created the objective structures of man and of the world. It is impossible for us here either to describe this thesis more in detail or to defend each part of it or to prove its reconcilability with certain particular propositions of the traditional and binding Christian dogmatics. The thesis itself, however, had to be stated here because, if it is correct, it will be seen that the characteristic of human punishment in the civil field precisely must not and cannot appeal to the parallel of divine punishment but that its justification – which ought to be absolutely indisputable – must be made theologically credible from some other source. One cannot, to put it in ordinary words, tacitly or explicitly think that prisons and death sentences must be justified simply because a hell or other divine judgements exist. The characteristic of human punishments consists precisely in the fact that the evil, which punishment is and must be if it is to be true punishment at all, does not flow connaturally and simply of itself from the evil of guilt but that the person who punishes adds the evil of punishment [216] to the evil of guilt and that one can therefore ask how one can overcome one evil by creating another. It will be seen, therefore, that the moral justification and the moral boundaries of civil punishment must be derived from elsewhere. This means also that from a Christian and theological point of view one must take care not to ascribe a properly retributive character to human punishment simply because this is certainly one of the characteristics of divine punishment. The vindictive character of divine punishment is simply objectified and given in the indestructibility of the concrete nature of man and of the world, in their absolute validity (at least in the spiritual subject), so that what we intend here is already given when we say that the dignity and sovereignty of the moral law in itself and as such already demands punishment for the one who dares to offend against this law. Human punishment, however, precisely has not got this vindictive character arising out of the nature of the clash between reality and guilt. If it is to be attributed to it, nevertheless, then this would at least have to be proved on its own and based on objectively different reasons. In the concrete, the Christian will therefore also be quite justified in saying that the meaning, purpose and limits of punishment in civil society are derived from the right and duty of civil society to maintain the objective order of society: in other words, that the moral fault of a man is to be punished only when and in the measure that it is a question of the defence of the common good. At least in practice, punishment in the civil order must be regarded – even from the viewpoint of these theological reflections – as a self-defence of society against the encroachments of the individual and thus can and ought to confine itself to this self-defence even though such self-defence against someone in whose case subjective guilt can be presupposed with sufficient moral certitude takes other forms and has wider limits than merely that of self – defence against someone who without subjective guilt offends against the objective goods of society. This also makes it comprehensible why we cannot demand too absolute a certitude in the case of civil punishment with regard to the presence of guilt. For if an, as it were, collective scrupulosity were to bring it about that the safeguarding purpose of punishment which is always and even of its very nature prophylactic were no longer attained, then this would destroy the very meaning and purpose of punishment in the civil order. A certain sober calculation of they risk involved with regard to the ‘justice’ of the punishment is perfectly

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permissible since without it the secular purpose of punishment cannot [217] be attained at all and since an absolute certitude about the subjective guilt in the proper, which means also theological, sense is unattainable for man. The time available is too short to treat of the question as to what conclusions might be drawn from these general reflections regarding the problem of the death penalty.

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[218]

15

JUSTIFIED AND SINNER AT THE SAME TIME

In the Church, and indeed in Christianity, everyone must learn from everyone else; everyone testifies to the gift of grace which has been granted to him, to the Christian experience which he has, so that the spirit and heart of others may be enlarged in order to experience the riches of grace more deeply and fully. There is, therefore, not merely an ecumenical dialogue in the field of dogmatic theology, of the constitutional life and practical activity, but also in the field of the spiritual life. Indeed, it should be there above all. In this field, in the original Christian experience, there seems to be – beyond all merely external critical positions which have given and still give occasion for division – the vital point for the separation and also the possibility of an encounter which would prepare for the unification of Christendom. Only if we understand one another in the direct exercise of Christian *existence itself* is there any hope that the reflex expressions of this exercise, i.e. the dogmatic theologies, may be brought to coincide in unity.

One of the basic religious experiences is undoubtedly the experience that we are sinners but that we may also at the same time console ourselves about being justified before God in Christ. Whether we Catholic and Protestant Christians understand one another on this point is a question on which depends the richness of the Christian experience of grace in our mutual communication and learning as well as the possibility of our ecumenical dialogue. It must indeed be admitted and this has been expressed in sober honesty most recently, especially on the Protestant side, that man today is no longer terribly bothered about the question as to how from being a sinner – which he does not think he is in the first place – he becomes someone justified before God and finds a merciful God. Yet if the man of today suffers rather from the agony of existence, its darkness and worthlessness than from guilt, and if he tends to ask how [219] God justifies this situation in the face of agonised man rather than to ask how he can go on existing before God, this sums up precisely what is a common concern of all Christian denominations: for *all* Christians have to confess that man is a sinner and is justified by God's grace alone. *All* Christians have therefore the task of asking themselves *how* they can fulfil this fundamental task *vis-à-vis* the spirit of this age. The old inter-Christian controversy about the nature of justification and of the state of being justified before God is indeed given a new angle through this, viz. the angle of the search for the right way of proclaiming this in the present age (which is no longer that of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation); yet it is not thereby outdated or without importance. Also there are still sufficient Catholic and Protestant Christians for whom the question about the nature of justification is absolutely central, even prescinding from how the answer to this question can be proclaimed in a way which will do justice to the present age. There seems to be a mutual dependence between both these points of view from which this question can be looked at, so that one must perhaps say: only if the separated Christians can make the 'pagans' of today understand that the problem is not how God can exist before man but how man can exist before God and through God alone, will Christians then also understand each other in this question of justification. *And*, vice versa: only if Christians agree on this question, will they also find the right way to give a convincing witness of their experience of justification in the face of the spirit of their age.

What the Reformation formula about the experience of justification can tell us Catholic Christians is a genuine question for our spiritual life and not only for our theology.

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I. THE REFORMATION FORMULA

Reformed Christianity was, in the deepest and most radical sense, a Christianity of the frightened conscience of the sinner before God. It believed – quite rightly – that one can become and be a Christian only if one capitulates radically before God. When man begins to realise the infinite sanctity and justice of God, then he becomes most profoundly the frightened sinner. He cannot be saved of himself and by his own power. Grace, justification and salvation arise from God's mercy alone. Man is always and everywhere dependent on this justifying mercy of God. This [220] is the correct starting-point for the Protestant formula: '*simul justus et peccator*'. This man of the Reformation always stands and continues to stand as a sinner *vis-à-vis* God. If he looks at himself, his dispositions and works, then always lie can only tremble before the infinite judging holiness of God, since he falls infinitely short of God's total demand and always experiences himself again as a sinner. He does indeed hear of God's grace in the message of the gospel: in the doctrine of baptism and justification by faith. He has been justified by God in spite of his sinful condition, he has been saved by Christ's redemption and has been made a sanctified and well beloved child of God. Yet when man looks at himself again, he recognises himself always and permanently as a sinner. When he hears the absolving word of God and believes in it, when he accepts justification by grace, he knows himself to be justified, although not by his own deed but by the unfathomable and unmeritable grace of God. Thus he reaches the conviction that the ultimate and most basic Christian experience consists precisely in this fact that he is at the same time a sinner and justified before God. He does not baulk at this paradox. He thinks that only this twofold statement about man can really express the true Christian understanding of man. The sinner who remains a sinner before God down to the last fibre of his conscience, stands startled before God because he does not consider himself to be of any worth at all, does not place any trust in himself and finds nothing good in himself which he could maintain before God and by which he could protect himself before God. Yet, in an immense venture of faith and hope, and in an unlimited trust in the message of God, he knows that he is justified.

Reformation Christianity says that treason is committed against the real Christian understanding of man whenever any attempt is made to soften this paradox. Man always comes from himself as a sinner to God. If he looks at what he is of himself, then he will see himself as a sinner completely at the mercy of God's judgement. Of himself he cannot bring any claim before God on the basis of which he could be saved by God. Out of this abyss of an almost hellish despair and in pure faith in the grace of God, trusting in nothing else, man knows that he has been saved.

In the course of the history of Reformed Christianity, the elemental power of this experience was able to weaken. The radical consciousness of being a sinner over and over again fell into the danger of disappearing. Man in his humanistic mollification felt himself to be a being who takes [221] it for granted that he lives under the sky of a loving Father. Again and again, however, Reformed Christianity awakened to the consciousness that the essence of Christianity and of Christian existence consists in the paradox of this formula: 'Justified and sinner at the same time'. Only where the radical experience of permanent sinfulness is combined with the consciousness given by faith of being nevertheless someone justified by the saving deed of God, is one a Christian, in the faith in this alone, i.e. in an ever new leap away from oneself, in an ever new capitulating admission of being a sinner.

It should be noted that we have intentionally taken some trouble to understand the Reformation formula and have tried to avoid simply registering a formal logical and very easy Catholic protest against this formula. We have intentionally avoided characterising

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justification by God as something merely extrinsic, 'forensic', as a pure 'as if'. This we have done because all these subsequent theological interpretations, both on the Catholic and on the Protestant side, can only obscure the original starting-point of this formula.

II. THE CATHOLIC REJECTION OF THE REFORMATION FORMULA '*Simul justus et peccator*'

In what then does the Catholic 'no' to this formula consist?

(a) Justification as an event of salvation-history creates something new which cannot exist 'simultaneously' with the old state. Salvation-history is a really genuine history, not only as total history in the order of objective salvation but also as the individual history of salvation. This means: something happens and takes place here which is now but was not before. Since this history is an action of God on man, it knows real caesuras, revolutions, genuine new creations. It *becomes* something by the power of God which once did not exist in this man. '*See, I make all things new*'; '*See, a new creation*'; '*The old is past, the new has come to pass*'; '*You were dead and are now created anew in Jesus Christ*.' Even in the history of the individual it is therefore a question of genuine saving events and not only of an ever growing consciousness of something always remaining the same and always true, even though it remains true that this becoming conscious, made possible and supported by God's grace, is a moment in this history and not just a moment of coming to know which remains external to it. Hence Catholic theology must emphasise that [222] everything does not always exist in its fullness at the same time but rather that something new enters in which may not be placed under a permanent 'at the same time'; a simultaneity in which a permanent dialectical relationship between equally necessary existentials of human existence would be revealed.

(b) Since justification is decisive1y God's deed, the reality of justification and the experience of justification do not necessarily coincide. According to Catholic teaching, God's deed is the decisive factor in justification and not the deed, the experience or the faith of man. The question, therefore, about the sense in which man is justified before God, cannot be judged solely from the point of view as to how and to what extent the divine deed is experienced by man. Experience of faith in the everyday sense of the word 'experience' (if we prescind, therefore, from an 'experience' – which may exist – in which man experiences precisely his inclusion in the unreflectable depths of the mystery of God) and reality of faith do not coincide and this precisely because God's own power alone is the really effective and decisive factor in the justification of man. For Catholic theology and the Church's magisterium, therefore, the declaration as to what actually happens in justification cannot be made simply from the *experience* of justification alone. The experience of justification and of faith, in so far as it is given in *propositions* for the experienced man himself and for others, can never catch up with the whole depth and radicality of the divine saving deed exercised in man, once we presuppose that God's deed effects the reality of justification. So as to give God's grace and power the glory, the Catholic doctrine of justification will always emphasise that we become and are God's children through God's grace, that in justification the Holy Spirit is given to us, that we *are* the temple of God, sons, anointed and beloved of God through God's grace. This reality is not merely an ideological fiction, not merely an 'as if', but the true reality of man himself. Justification, understood as God's deed, transforms man down to the deepest roots of his being; it transfigures and divinises him. For this very reason the justified man is not 'at the same time justified and a sinner'. He is not simply, in a merely paradoxical and dialectical suspense, sinner and justified at the same time. By justification, *from being* the sinner he was, he becomes in truth a justified man which he was not before. He ceases in a true sense to be a sinner. The Catholic doctrine of justification believes that

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only in this way does it do justice to the real historicity of the event of salvation, [223] to the real primacy of God's deed in man, to the difference between the experience of salvation and the reality of salvation, and to the intrinsic veracity and validity of God's action on and assurance to man which grasps man interiorly and changes him. On this basis, the Catholic and anti-reformation attitude and teaching at the Council of Trent rejected the formula '*simul justus et peccator*' because this formula with its simultaneity of justification and sinfulness fails to understand the real nature of Christian justification. At the very least, the real becoming, the becoming new, the inner justification by God's act on man does not become sufficiently clear in this formula. This is *one* aspect of the Catholic position with regard to this formula.

Catholic theology, therefore, rejects the formula 'just and sinner at the same time' because it does not render the state of man in an objectively correct and adequate manner. The ultimate, basic formula of human existence is not a suspended dialectic between sinfulness and holiness. Man has really crossed the boundary of death. In the ultimate view, in view of God's action which has become effective in him, man is no longer sinful and justified at the same time, but justified and nothing else.

III. THE PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD CATHOLIC 'YES' TO THE FORMULA '*Simul justus et peccator*'

The rejection of the Reformation formula is a basic one in so far as it has to describe that 'in itself' and that 'objectivity' which is effected by God himself and on which we must and may rely more than on our own 'subjectivity'. Even our true 'subjectivity', when it achieves its ultimate being, is the letting-oneself-go towards a reality which we can no longer survey or administer and which we do not appropriate to ourselves but to which we become appropriated as to the mystery of God himself. *If* justification has really taken place, then this man is no longer a sinner but the justified and sanctified man.

(a) *Uncertainty of salvation*

Can the individual, however, maintain with absolute certainty about himself that *he* is really someone justified and that, precisely because he is this, he is no longer a sinner? According to the teaching of the Council of Trent there is no absolute individual certitude about salvation. Let us [224] not misunderstand this teaching of the Council of Trent. It does not say that man must live in a trembling, cowardly fear about his salvation, a fear which mistrusts God himself. Rather it means that man must look away from himself towards God's unspeakable grace. He should *trust* that, in the midst of the experience of his inner weakness and poverty, he always is nevertheless in all truth the much loved child of God borne by the grace and mercy of God. He must possess the joy, the confidence and the all-conquering hope of the saved. It is a great sacred duty to leap over his own continuously experienced wretchedness by the virtue which we call Christian hope and to trust in God's unfathomable mercy. Man cannot indeed qualify, in any objectified way such as is possible for dogmatic faith, the reality expressed in the statement: I am clearly and certainly justified. He must not take up the attitude of someone who takes possession of himself absolutely, who examines himself through and through, who draws up the complete account of his own existence and is perfectly sure of himself. He must not have this attitude, but this does not mean that he should and indeed may be cowardly, restless, fearful and distrustful towards God. On the contrary, he must really deliver himself up to God with a firm hope, and this by passing over everything he experiences about himself and of himself, precisely because, in spite of the experience of his own uncertainty about salvation, he must trust in God with complete

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generosity and as a foregone conclusion. This courageous and unconditional hope imposed on him demands precisely that he must not twist the attitude of complete confidence in God's grace into a theoretically reflected certitude of salvation. This precisely would make him again independent of God, and, on account of the certitude of its expression, would dispense him again from this complete confidence in God. Since, however, man cannot attain absolute certitude about his own salvation of a believable, theoretical and objective kind in the act of hope, it follows that even for this reason he always knows himself to be a sinner. It follows from the impossibility of an absolute, radical self-assurance that he always experiences himself again as a sinner, as someone threatened and unsure, and that he may not push this experience to one side as something of no account and theologically irrelevant, but merely in the hope in which he takes the leap away from himself towards God must he overcome it and by this very fact always accept it again. Even though Catholic theology cannot accept the abstract ontological and objective formula of '*simul justus et peccator*', this formula [225] is nevertheless justifiable if it is understood as the expression of the experience of the individual person. Even though he must and may hope with all firmness that he is personally justified before God, he must at the same time fear, in spite of and within this hope, that he is a sinner.

(b) *The sinfulness of man through 'venial' sins*.

Since the time and in the words of St Augustine, the Church emphasises 'not merely humbly', 'but in all truth', that man is and remains a sinner. This teaching also has not been cancelled out by the Council of Trent's declaration that in a certain sense the formula '*simul justus et peccator*' is not right. Yet how can the justified be and remain a sinner if he remains at the same time in the state and attitude of the justified? Every Catholic will answer this by saying that, even while remaining someone justified, he keeps on committing 'venial sins' and hence must always fly again as a sinner to the forgiving grace of God.

The Catechism and theology state that the justified who commits sins remains in the state of sanctifying grace as long as he does not sin mortally in an objective and subjective sense. Although this statement is perfectly correct, it must be understood very discreetly. It is in fact much less simple than would appear to the average Catholic consciousness. Certainly, many think, one is always still a sinner to some extent. One commits one's daily faults, omissions, the small offences against God's law and will. For this reason one must acknowledge oneself to be a poor sinner. Yet such an understanding of the doctrine of the distinction between mortal and venial sin and the reconcilability of the state of grace with venial sins and venially sinful attitudes surely essentially underestimates the real depth, threatened condition and darkness of Christian existence.

According to Catholic teaching, there is really a both objectively and subjectively radical difference between mortal and venial sin. In biblical terms, there are sins in the existence of the justified, the beloved child of God, which do not destroy this child relationship; there are also, however, sins which – if they are really committed with the necessary clear knowledge, consent and responsibility – exclude from the kingdom of God, as St Paul says, and from the inheritance of heaven and make man a child of the wrath of God, as long as lie obstinately remains in this state of sin. Yet, however justified this doctrine of the objective distinction between mortal and venial is, we must not abuse it to turn Christian existence into something completely harmless. We say far too easily that venial sin does not [226] destroy grace, that it does not annul justification and does not condemn and damn man. After all, these are only moral weaknesses, little shadows over our relationship to God, small imperfections which do not change the real basic attitude of man to God. In so far as it is really only a question of venial sins, it is possible to say this, even though only with very serious reservations. But do we know exactly that our supposedly merely venial sins are really just venial sins? Naturally one can say that certain happenings in our life, regarded simply in themselves and measured

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by objective norms, are really only venial sins, as for instance some unfriendliness towards our neighbour, a lack of devotion in our prayers, a little impatience; these are undoubtedly things which can indeed weigh upon Christian existence but which on the other hand may not and cannot rob us of the joy of being redeemed, of the grace of being safe in God and of our sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Lapses of everyday life are certainly in this sense objectively venial sins.

It cannot be denied, however, that it is a onesidedness in Catholic moral theology and confessional practice to regard each of the individual events of our moral activity on their own, almost in an atomised fashion. We often overlook in this way the total structure of our moral position, our ultimate attitude towards God, and our basic religious condition. Man does not posit individual acts on the basis of the substantiality of a soul of a purely objective kind, individual acts which he strings up on the thread of external time, but rather the one whole man lives out of a basic outlook which is either directed towards God or is turned away from Him. This ultimate, decisive and all-informing basic outlook is, nevertheless, not at all so easily open to man's reflection. Indeed, it simply cannot be *adequately* reflected on, since otherwise it would be possible to have that reflected theoretical certitude of salvation which according to the Council of Trent is denied to the Christian. We can look at the individual acts of our life but we cannot throw a glance directly on the ultimate source of these acts in our heart. Seen in this light, the question about venial sins takes on quite a different seriousness than we are perhaps inclined to think. Could not this or that apparently harmless unkindness towards our neighbour, when regarded in itself, be deep down merely the distant echo and summer lightning of an ultimate and basic egoism which in the end is really mortal? Could not such an attitude of egoism which perhaps does not express itself at all in any externally very ugly deeds which would be very objectionable even according to a civil moral code, be exactly [227] what we call a mortal sin? Could it not be that the coolness of our religious life, this easy and apparently harmless indifference towards God, although it does not really manifest itself in clear acts and activities, arises nevertheless from an ultimate, free, terrible, mortal indifference and coldness towards God? And this is after all quite different from a venial sin. It certainly does not mean an individual action associated with a determined point in the time and space of our life. May it not, however, signify an ultimate lost condition, an ultimate and basic 'no' to God? And this would be precisely what we in fact call a state of mortal sin. In this way we could point out still other things which in appearance are merely so-called venial sins but which in reality are the concealed and dissimulated signs of the ultimate, mortal turning away of man from God which man does not admit to himself and which he has exercised as it were anonymously and with the left hand and yet has done in the depth of his freedom. Since, however, we always go on commiting venial sins, must we not then be frightened and ask whether we are not sinners in a far deeper and more radical sense, i.e. men who in the depth of their heart do not want to have anything to do with God, even though externally and in a thin bourgeois sense they still want to be pious and decent people who 'keep their plate clean'? This would put quite a different face on the doctrine that every man is a sinner at least in so far as he commits venial sins. On the other hand, this does not mean that we must think of ourselves as lost, as excluded from the kingdom of God and deserted by the Spirit of consolation, even though we trust in God's grace with an honest heart and always turn again to God. The conception that we are sinners takes on a new appearance only in the sense that we must ask ourselves fearfully whether we who hope to be God's beloved children must not always also fear again that we may be something quite different, as long as the basic roots of our heart continue to bring forth fruit which is not really the fruit of the Spirit.

Thus the teaching of the permanent sinfulness of man by venial sins represents a continuous question for us as to what we really are deep down. We must always answer this question in a

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positive sense, placing our hope in the grace of God but we can never do this proudly and self-assuredly with a theoretical certitude of salvation.

Hence we must somehow pass beyond the distinction between mortal and venial sin, however much it is materially and objectively correct, since it cannot be carried through completely in concrete reflection on [228] our own existence. On the one hand, we are in fact sinners who hope always to be allowed to escape again out of their sinfulness into the mercy of God. On the other hand, there is justice, and if it is really in us through God's grace, it is always also threatened and tempted and hidden from us.

The doctrine of permanent, habitual justice through infused sanctifying grace must not be understood as if this justice were a purely static possession or static quality in man. Rather, this justice is always tempted and threatened by the flesh, the world and the devil. It is always dependent again on the free decision of man. In spite of its character of a state it is suspended, as it were, on the point of the free grace of God and on the point of man's freedom. The grace of justification must always be accepted and exercised anew again, since basically it is always given anew again by God. This permanent condition of grace is always exposed to the freedom of man. The freedom of man in its turn can accept and preserve God's grace only in and through the free grace of God which God has granted and must grant to us ultimately without any merit whatsoever on our part. Since our justice is always under attack, it must always be given to us anew by God's favour and grace. It is therefore also the ultimately indisposable justice. Certainly we believe in God's salvific will . . . but this salvific will, when referred to and having become effective in each of us, is the immense and incomprehensible miracle of God's absolute favour. Man's free 'yes' to God's liberating grace is itself once more a gift of God's grace. Thus we must declare our own freedom to be once more a grace of God, a freedom which is not only a capacity for acting in a salvific way but also an act which really opens itself towards God. Of ourselves *alone* we cannot do anything at all which could make God direct his grace towards us, for our prayer for grace is based on unasked for grace which must give us both the power to pray and the act of praying itself. God must always anticipate us with his grace. Even when we think we are doing, and actually do, the most personal and original things, we experience precisely in this the earlier and more powerful deed of God in us. Of ourselves we are always sinners. Of ourselves we would always turn away from God if God's grace did not anticipate us. In view of the completely uncontrollable grace of God, of tempted justice, uncontrollable justice, we are always sinners. In this sense, it is possible to find an always true and decisively important Catholic sense in the formula 'Just and sinner at the same time'.

[229] (c) *Man the pilgrim is just and sinner at the same time*

Even when justified, man remains a pilgrim. As such he has not only an external space of time to live through, but he is 'on the road'. In his personal history of salvation lie is in search of something permanent, indestructible and final. We are on pilgrimage in the faith. We possess God only on the ground of hope. We reach out in hope for what is to come, that which is not yet given to us. Thus possession is given by hope, and by this same hope possession is also withdrawn from the free direct grasp of man. By our free personal history we must first catch up with what by God's deed which justifies us we already are. We are pilgrims in faith and hope, in ever new temptations and trials, by always accepting God's grace anew in freedom. We come from Adam and the land of darkness and look for the eternal light and bright perfection. Since the one great movement of our existence Out of our lost condition towards God always still carries within itself the source from which this movement originates, we are 'just and sinners at the same time' by being sinners in the state of becoming who are still in search of perfection. This does not mean, as has already been said, that these two things, remaining always the same, confront one another in a simple static

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dialectic. Yet the concrete salvific activity of man is always simultaneously characterised by the starting-point from which we came, by our own lost condition which we have left behind, and also by the goal which we already possess in hope but towards which we also still reach. Here is realised the being-by-becoming of the creature. One can only recognise created man in his historical being-by-becoming, in his tension between beginning and end, by pointing to the beginning and the end. Every moment of this becoming is characterised by both, since this movement has an *a quo* and an *ad quem*. Seen as a future citizen of eternal glory, man always moves between the beginning and the end. This 'at the same time' is not a simultaneity of beginning and end, but an 'at the same time' in the tension between both.

Thus the Reformation formula of the *simul justus et peccator* – if only the factors of a Catholic 'no' to this formula remain clear – has a perfectly positive meaning for Christian existence. The Catholic Christian especially should not interpret himself as the 'good man' who basically and really, unless he steals silver spoons or poisons his neighbour, lives from the very start as a good man in grace, so that, as modern sentiment often maintains, it is really God who must justify himself before man and [230] explain why there is so much suffering, darkness and confusion in the history of the world. The Christian must have understood that of himself he is nothing but nothingness and that left to himself he is nothing but sin. Wherever he discovers something good in himself, he must acknowledge it as a causeless free grace of God. Hence even the Catholic Christian should not spread out his justice before God. He should rather from day to day accept his justice, which in fact divinises him, as an unmerited gift of God's incalculable favour. If he wants to express this by saying that he is always and of himself a poor sinner and always someone justified by God's grace as long as lie does not close himself to this grace of God by disbelief and lack of love, then he is quite at liberty to do so.

Even Catholics like St Theresa of the Child Jesus have done this. When they dared to stand before the countenance of God, they came of and for themselves with empty hands and confessed themselves like St Augustine to be sinners. In this consciousness of their own sinfulness they discovered in themselves that miracle which means that God fills our hands with his glory and makes our heart overflow with love and faith. Anyone who confesses that of himself he is a sinner, experiences precisely in this that grace of God which really and truly makes him a saint and a just man. Then God absolves him from all sin so that he is really and in truth, to the last root of his being, a holy, just and blessed child of God.

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[231]

16

REFLECTIONS ON THE UNITY OF THE LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR AND THE LOVE OF GOD[1]

Your Association has given itself a strangely adventurous and at the same time sacred task: it has the audacity to try to organise what cannot really be organised, to try to give to what is always new a permanent presence and to try to keep in the public eye what is hidden, what God alone sees and estimates. After all, it has only one real object – to love our neighbour in deed and in truth. You want to love by giving real help, but a help which is not merely an organised effort and effect of socio-political organisation but which in truth remains love. Such love, however, where it truly exists and remains and *thus* really supports the social efforts between men – even though these efforts can also exist, be demanded and organised 'without real love – is not the function of secular society but itself constitutes a completely new society of men even where it has no name; it allows the eternal kingdom of God to begin in secret and is the miracle of the birth of eternity. Yet for this very reason this venture is strangely adventurous and daring. According to the Apostle, it is completely possible to give all one's goods to the poor and yet lack charity. This means surely that no matter how important and wonderful, and how 'useful' socio-political action may be, it alone does not yet represent what is precisely the decisive factor of this undertaking; by this kind of action alone – without this mysterious love – your 'Association' would sink to the level of a function of secular society and would become *that* which belongs to the age of a world which passes [232] away. Hence, however much such love as is meant to govern here must think about how it can avoid the danger of becoming an empty feeling and nothing but talk and become a tangible helping action, we must also inquire here about what love is in itself. Even though we know basically what love is only by the fact that it takes place and thereby forgets to ask about itself, there is nevertheless – according to scripture – the Word, which commands it to act in God's name; hence there is also the responsible right to reflect about love itself, even though such reflection – unlike the commanding and promising word of love which goes out from the altar of the highest event of love, the cross – cannot bring with it the power of grace for that which is ultimately itself.

We intend to inquire into charity here by reflecting on its unity with the love of God. Precisely what is not meant, however, is that charity loses itself in the depth of the love of God by dissolving itself or by becoming unimportant as such, or that two ways of fulfilling human existence, although each could be understood and carried out on its own, become subsequently associated. In the case of this unity the important thing is to understand rather that the one does not exist and cannot be understood or exercised without the other, and that two names have really to be given to the same reality if we are to summon up its one mystery, which cannot be abrogated.

Active love as the illuminating situation of modern man's existence

The question about the essential unity of love of God and neighbour which alone brings it about that the two 'commandments' are equal (Mt 22:39) and the realisation that on both together hang the Law and the Prophets (Mt 22:40), is more urgent today than ever before

[1] In this essay, the author takes up in greater detail and more exactly reflections which he has used for the question of the veneration of the Saints (cf. *GuL* XXXVII [1964], pp. 325-340, on the question of possibility). Cf. also: K. Rahner, 'The "Commandment" of Love in relation to the other Commandments', *Theological Investigations* V (London & Baltimore 1966), pp. 439-459.

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both for the living action and the theoretical reflection which is carried by that action and at the same time necessarily illumines it. To get some idea of this urgency, we need only take a look at the situation of contemporary philosophy. There is talk of the end of metaphysics; it seems that, in some mysterious and profound sense, we are also already questioning again the transcendental philosophy of the pure subject, with its openness to the Absolute (in the form of the epoch-making conversion of the Greek cosmocentricity into a Christian, modern anthropocentricity), whose meaning and also permanent significance is only being slowly assimilated by Christian philosophy and so will also no doubt be preserved by this in [233] its permanent meaning. Sociology is making an attempt to replace metaphysics or to convert philosophy into an ontology of intercommunication. The orientation of the philosophy of cognoscitive transcendence towards a beyond which is always valid seems to want to turn in the direction of hoped-for future events; action is not now experienced as the derived consequence of knowledge but rather knowledge is seen as the event of self-consciousness which dwells only in action itself. The God of the beyond of the world is suspected to be a non-verifiable ghost which must be laid, since he does not exist there where we experience, achieve and suffer ourselves and where we suffer *ourselves* in solitude as the only real bottomless abyss. One tries by thought and action to demythologise everything and to destroy taboos in everything until the only thing left is what seems to survive all this: the incomprehensible something which is experienced as the absurd something which one would like to honour by shocked silence, or as the honest and bitter minimum of everyday duty in the service of others, if one is still inclined to act on and talk about an 'ideal' at all.

Be that as it may, it must be placed over against the words of the gospel and the liberating grace of the living God or over against a sector which retains the courage not to despair and to withstand the impatient disappointment regarding every naturally always finite formula of human existence. Yet if Christianity is not to be merely 'objectively' right but is also to say something right by its judgements to the man of *tomorrow* who must understand himself *where* and *in the manner* in which – after all – he exists, then it must obviously be made comprehensible to him that the *whole* truth of the gospel is still hidden and in germ in what he finds most easily as a deed and then as truth, viz. in the love of one's neighbour. If Christianity is faith, hope and charity, and if these three are not realities added to each other externally, each with a different origin and a different nature, but if love is rather the one word for the perfection of the one reality which we signify by these three names, then love could be the valid topical word for today which calls the whole of Christianity in the man of tomorrow into the concreteness of life and out of that depth into which God (and not ourselves) has immersed it by his offer of grace, the grace which He is Himself. This presupposes, however, that it can really be said seriously that the love of God and the love of neighbour are one and the same thing, and that, in this way and in this way alone, we understand what God and his Christ are, and that we accomplish what [234] is the love of God in Christ when we allow the love of our neighbour to attain its own nature and perfection.

Love of neighbour understood as love of God: *The declarations of scripture*

The realisation we are groping to reach, if we examine it honestly and soberly, is not as directly and clearly attested in scripture and tradition as one might think. They speak after all of *two* commandments (Mt 22:39; Mk 12:31), of the second of which it is said merely that it 'resembles' the first. Nevertheless, the two together are valued in the Synoptic tradition as the life-giving (Lk 10:28) epitome of the Old Testament revelation in the scriptures and the prophets (Mt 22:40), greater than which there is nothing (Mk 12:31). Furthermore, in this Synoptic theology of love, it certainly must not be overlooked that in the eschatological discourses about the Judgement, love of neighbour is given in St Matthew as the only explicit

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standard by which man will be judged (Mt 25:34-46), and that the cooling down of *this* love is represented as the content of 'lawlessness' among the afflictions of the last days (Mt 24:12). In addition, there is that puzzling saying in the Synoptic tradition that what is done to the least of his brethren is done to Jesus, a saying which cannot be explained by an arbitrarily altruistic identification which according to many commentators Jesus himself undertakes as it were merely morally and juridically in a mere 'as if'. The understanding of this text must certainly first of all proceed from the absolutely unique position Jesus attributes to himself as the Son as such, as the presence of God and of his *basileia* among us, and must in general try to bring out clearly the unity of *this* Son with man. If we do this, we will no doubt be led back again to the doctrine of the mysterious unity of the love of God and of neighbour and to its Christological basis and radicalisation. This doctrine becomes most radical (though without any explicit reflection on this fact) in St Paul: love of neighbour (understood as the sovereign commandment: Jn 2:8) is declared to be *the* fulfilment of *the* law (Rm 13:8, 10; Ga 5:14), and hence as the 'bond' of perfection (Col 3:14) and as the better 'way', i.e. as the Christian form of existence simply and finally (1 Co 12:31-13:13). In St John, we find then a first reflection on the justification of this radical elevation of the love of neighbour to being the totality of Christian existence, a radical elevation which otherwise might appear to be a pious exaggeration, as it is in fact watered down in the reflective processes of the Christian exhortation to virtue to the point that love of neighbour is a [235] single part of the Christian demand without which, in spite of its difficulty, salvation is lost. According to St John, we are loved by God (Jn 15:12) and by Christ *so that* we may love one another (Jn 13:34), a love which is the *new* commandment of Christ (Jn 13:34) which is his specifically (Jn 15:12) and which is the command imposed on us (Jn 15:17). Thus for St John the consequence of this is that God who *is* Love (1 Jn 4:16) has loved us, not so that we might love him in return but so that we might love *one another* (1 Jn 4:7, 11). For we do not see God – he cannot be truly reached in gnostic-mystic interiority alone, in such a way that he would *thus* be really attainable by love (1 Jn 4:12) – and hence the 'God in us' by mutual love is the God whom alone we can love (1 Jn 4:12), to such an extent that it is really true and that, although it is usually not at all clear to us, it is a radically convincing argument for St John that 'a man who does not love the brother whom he can see, cannot love God whom he has never seen' (1 Jn 4:20).

Many things remain undefined and unclear in the explicit wording of this attempt to make the concentration of the whole Christian relationship to God in the love of our neighbour comprehensible. Is perhaps even here the love of neighbour still merely the 'proof' of our love of God simply because God, who is to be loved, has given us precisely this commandment to love our neighbour; and is, therefore, its fulfilment merely the best touchstone for us as to whether we are serious about the love of God, the whole matter resting ultimately nevertheless in two different partial fulfilments of Christian human existence and in two commandments? Is the word about the brother whom we see and about God whom we cannot see, merely – after all – a simple *argumentum ad hominem*, an inference from the easier (which has not been achieved) to the more difficult (which will then certainly and *a fortiori* not be fulfilled)? Or may we take the words of St John absolutely seriously, so that the 'God in us' is really the one who alone can be loved and who is reached precisely in the love of our brother and in no other way, and that the love of neighbour encounters the love of God in *such* a way that it moves itself and us with it, closer to the brother near by and attains both itself and the peak of perfection in the love of this brother, i.e. specifically as love of neighbour, and brings us to God and his love by the love of our neighbour?

Even though we cannot give a sure answer in the purely exegetical sense to this question of biblical theology, theological reflection in [236] tradition gives us a little more courage to answer it in favour of the second part of the above alternative, i.e. in the direction of a radical

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identity of the two loves. It must be noted in this connection that while, on the one hand, even this theological tradition with its theologumena does not give us any absolutely convincing solution to this problem yet, on the other hand, it does bring data of biblical theology[2] into play for our question which are not given their full effect in *these* texts or scripture itself which touch precisely on our question.

The teaching of theology

The tradition of the schools in Catholic theology has already held fast for a long time and this unanimously to the fact that the specific Christian love of neighbour is both in potency and in act a moment of the infused supernatural theological virtue of *caritas* by which we love God in his Spirit for his own sake and in direct community with him. This means, therefore, that the love of neighbour is not merely the preparation, effect, fruit and touchstone of the love of God but is itself an act of this love of God itself; in other words, it is at least an act within that total believing and hoping surrender of man to God which we call love and which alone justifies man, i.e. hands him over to God, because, being supported by the loving self-communication of God in the uncreated grace of the Holy Spirit, it really unites man with God, not as He is recognised by us but as He is in Himself in His absolute divinity. Three things must not be over-looked in connection with this thesis of scholastic theology which identifies the love of God and neighbour at least in their supernatural potency of the one infused supernatural theological virtue of *caritas*. (1) Scholastic theology does *not* overlook (in principle quite correctly) the fact that such a *caritas* can be also a mere impulse for certain modes of relationship to others by personal love which are not themselves formally acts of charity but merely its *actus imperati* restricting themselves more to a merely human dimension. (2) Scholastic theology, when giving a more precise interpretation of its radical thesis, will presumably often fall short of it, especially when it tries to give reasons for it; it will realise this thesis and will give reasons for it in such a way that it really remains a thesis in words only, and it will not really catch up with the existential, ontological presuppositions of this thesis. (3) If scholastic theology were [237] asked explicitly whether this identity is absolutely valid, it would no doubt answer that every act of charity towards our neighbour is indeed formally, even though perhaps only implicitly, love of God since the act is done after all by definition ‘for the sake of God loved with a supernatural love’; but scholastic theology would probably deny that conversely every act of the love of God is formally also a love of neighbour (even though it naturally includes also the *readiness* for this). Above all, most theologians today would still shrink from the proposition which gives our fundamental thesis its ultimate meaning, its real clarity and inescapable character, viz. that wherever a genuine love of man attains its proper nature and its moral absoluteness and depth, it is in addition always so underpinned and heightened by God’s saving grace that it is also love of God, whether it be explicitly considered to be such a love by the subject or not.

Yet this is the direction in which the understanding of the thesis of identity as it is meant here leads us, since we hold it to be objectively correct and of basic significance for the Christian self-understanding of the future. What is meant by this requires a more detailed even though unavoidably still very summary explanation.

Love as a reflected and explicit mode of action and as an unconceptualised transcendental horizon of action

If we are to keep our ideas clear and avoid the most gross misunderstandings of the envisaged thesis from the very start, it is first of all necessary to distinguish in a human spiritual act between its explicit object represented in a determined concept and category, which is

[2] For example, when scripture declares that the love of neighbour is supported by the same *pneuma* (Ga 5:22).

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envisaged in a systematic way both by the intellect and will, on the one hand, and the *a priori* formal object, the transcendental horizon or 'space' within which a determined individual object is encountered, on the other hand. The transcendental horizon is, on the one hand, the subjective possibility for the individual object to show itself at all; it is, as it were, the system of co-ordinates within which the classified object is given its place and which makes it comprehensible. On the other hand, the transcendental horizon is that which is itself given only in the encounter with the object of a concretely historical experience (it itself in transcendental experience), which of course does not mean that this experienced transcendental horizon of the categorised individual experience must be for this reason already systematically, explicitly and objectively represented and named. [238] The latter is, of course, not usually the case. Indeed, even where this transcendental horizon of objective knowledge is reflected on and where it is therefore systematised, conceptually represented and named, and hence is itself made the explicit object of knowledge, this happens once more in virtue of this same horizon which as such must once more be given in an unconscious manner. The representation of its concept cannot dispense with this horizon itself in its unconscious exercise.

This distinction being presupposed, it must be said, of course, that not every act of the love of God is also a formal act of love of neighbour, if and in so far as the love of neighbour means an act in which our neighbour is envisaged and loved as the conscious object in its categorised and conceptual representation. If one relates oneself explicitly by prayer, trust and love to God, then this is in *this* sense an act of love of God and not an act of love of neighbour. Moreover, measured by the object, such an act of love of God has, of course, a higher dignity than an act of reflected love of neighbour. Yet where the whole 'transcendental' depth of interhuman love is realised and represented (which, as has been said, *can* at least be *caritas*, as is quite certain from tradition), there such a love is also necessarily a conscious love of God and has God as its reflex motive (even though this is of course true once more in very different degrees of clarity). In this case our neighbour, and he himself, must then also be really loved and must be the formal object and motive of this love, no matter how one may explain the unity of the two then given motives. (The neighbour, through God's love for him, is 'one' with God, etc.) Yet this still leaves open the other question which also occupies us here, viz. whether all interhuman love, provided only that it has its own moral radicality, is also *caritas* (i.e. love also of God), since it is orientated towards God, not indeed by an explicitly categorised motive but (and this is the question) by its inescapably given transcendental horizon, which is given gratuitously by God's always prevenient saving grace.

The anonymous 'Christianity' of every positively moral activity

A second preliminary remark must therefore be made: we presuppose here in what follows a theological opinion[3] which is not indeed commonly [239] held in Catholic theology but which has a sufficiently serious basis to allow it to be presupposed here, even though it is impossible here to develop this basis. This opinion states that wherever man posits a positively moral act in the full exercise of his free self-disposal, this act is a positive supernatural salvific act in the actual economy of salvation even when its *a posteriori* object and the explicitly given *a posteriori* motive do not spring tangibly from the positive revelation of God's Word but are in this sense 'natural'. This is so because God in virtue of his universal salvific will offers everyone his supernaturally divinising grace and thus

[3] Cf. on this, e.g., K. Riesenhuber, 'Der anonyme Christ nach K. Rahner', *ZKT* LXXXVI (1964), pp. 286-303; A. Röper, *Die anonymen Christen* (Mainz 1963); K. Rahner, *Zur Theologie des Todes*[4] (Freiburg 1963), pp. 79-86 (English translation: *On the Theology of Death*, Quaestiones Disputatae 2 [Freiburg & Edinburgh-London 1961] – *Tr.*).

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elevates the positively moral act of man. Furthermore, the thereby already given, supernaturally transcendental even though unconscious horizon of the spirit (its *a priori* orientation towards the triune God of eternal life) includes an element of (transcendental) revelation and possibility of faith which also gives such an act that sufficient character of 'faith' necessary for a moral act being a salvific act. This opinion states, therefore, that wherever there is an absolutely moral commitment of a positive kind in the world and within the present economy of salvation, there takes place also a saving event, faith, hope and charity, an act of divinising grace, and thus *caritas* is exercised in this, a fact which still remained an open question above. There is a possible logical but not a real distinction between a moral act and a salvific act. Yet all this does not mean that we have proved our proper basic thesis about the strict mutual identity of the love of God and the love of neighbour. It still remains questionable whether such love of neighbour is just *any* one of the moral acts among many others of equal rank which we must interpret as saving acts, or whether this love has a special, all-embracing position within the whole of morality, in such a way that it must be taken as the basis and sum total of the moral as such and hence – when divinised by grace – can be regarded as *the* saving act of explicit love of God in the sense that even conversely every act of explicit love of God is truly and formally (though in a sense still to he determined more exactly) love of *neighbour*.

Love of neighbour as the basic moral activity of man

It is the second part of this alternative which must be affirmed. Love of neighbour, even and especially if we regard it to begin with as a *moral* phenomenon and do not yet ask about the theological virtue of charity at all, is not to begin with just any of the many co-existing morally right [240] reactions of man towards his own reality and that of his surroundings, but is the basis and sum total of the moral as such. Why and in what sense is this so? In the external multiplicity of his surroundings man encounters at a first glance a colourful, apparently arbitrary, juxtaposed variety of objects towards which his moral activity too can be referred in each case and which – as is shown, for instance, by the systematisations of special ethics – are then subsequently and somewhat arbitrarily collected together and ordered in groups. Yet still, the world encountered by man (we prescind from God at this point) is in many respects more originally *one* world of man. This is already seen to be true by the fact that the true and proper surrounding of man is his personal environment. This environment of persons is the world through which man finds and fulfils himself (by knowledge and will) and … gets away from himself. From a personal and moral point of view, the world of things is of significance only as a factor for man and for his neighbour. This follows first of all from the *a priori* structure of the one whole man (in knowledge and will), a structure which imposes a unified law of its possible knowledge on the external variety of possible objects and which thus systematises this variety as it is known and willed. Knowledge is, however, of its nature a 'being-within-oneself', or rather a return to one*self* and freedom is not simply the capacity to do this or that but (formally) a *self*-disposing into finality; the subject (from a formal point of view) is always concerned with itself. Hence it must necessarily be the secret *a priori* law imposed on the multiplicity of the possible objects for man that they can be concerned with and be ordered for man's knowledge and freedom, precisely in so far as they can serve this 'being-within-*oneself*' and this self-disposal. It follows from this, however, that the world of things can be a possible object for man's concern only as a moment of the world of persons. In the traditional teaching this is seen also in the axiom: being and the good are identical; the objective *moral* good is given in a *personal* being; thus a good which is not the person or something referred to the person as such cannot be regarded as an objective value of moral action. Nevertheless it must be added immediately that this formal nature of knowledge and freedom, understood as self-possession

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and self-deed, refers to the *formal* nature from a certain point of view and must not be misunderstood in an egocentric sense. Materially – even merely on account of the mundaneness and *a posteriori* historicity of man – the *a posteriori* object is the necessary mediation of the knowing subject to itself and so, presupposing [241] what has just been said, the known personal Thou is the mediation, the 'being-within-oneself' of the subject. This condition is even clearer and more radical in the case of freedom: the free self-disposal, when morally right and perfect, is precisely the loving communication with the human *Thou* as such (not as mere negation of nor as something different from the 'ego' which wants merely to find *itself*, even though in the other). Yet since knowledge (being itself already an act) attains its proper and full nature only in the act of freedom and therefore must lose and yet keep itself in freedom in order to be completely itself, it has a fully human significance only once it is integrated into freedom, i.e. into the loving communication with the Thou. The act of personal love for another human being is therefore the all-embracing basic act of man which gives meaning, direction and measure to everything else. If this is correct, then the essential *a priori* openness to the other human being which must be undertaken freely belongs as such to the *a priori* and most basic constitution of man and is an essential inner moment of his (knowing and willing) transcendentality. *This a priori* basic constitution (which must be accepted in freedom, but to which man can also close himself) is experienced in the concrete encounter with man in the concrete. The one moral (or immoral) basic act in which man comes to himself and decides basically about himself is also the (loving or hating) communication with the concrete Thou in which man experiences, accepts or denies his basic *a priori* reference to the Thou as such. Everything else is a factor in this or a consequence of it or an impulse towards it, but in the present order of salvation, i.e. one having a supernatural goal, *this basic* act is, according to what has been said, elevated supernaturally by a self-communication of God in uncreated grace and in the resulting basic triune faculty of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, whereby theological love necessarily and of its very nature integrates and saves faith and hope into itself. Hence the one basic human act, where it takes place positively, is the love of neighbour understood as *caritas*, i.e. as a love of neighbour whose movement is directed towards the God of eternal life.

Love of neighbour as man's manifestation of his wholeness and essence

The reduction of the spiritual knowing and willing reality of man to that love of his neighbour which is *caritas*, when seen as man's basic act, does not of course limit this act to the obviously and transparently ordinary [242] everyday events but, even if we prescind to begin with from its theological aspect, gives this act a quality of mystery. When we say that a self-understanding of man – understood as the assembling of his knowledge and as the free self-determination of man with a view to finality – takes place in the act of loving communication with the Thou (in this and in nothing else) so that everything else is a moment, presupposition, initial stage or result of *this*, then we also say of course *eo ipso* and conversely that the whole incalculable mystery of man is contained and exercised in this act of love of neighbour; it means that *all* anthropological statements must also be read as statements about that love which is not merely a 'regional' happening in the life of man but is the whole of himself in which alone he possesses himself completely, meets himself completely and falls into the ultimate abyss of his nature.

His corporeality, his temporality and historicity, his final incapacity to catch up with himself by reflection, the unfathomable and adventurous character of his existence, the anticipation of his future in hope or despair, the bitter impossibility of his perfecting and fulfilling himself and the disillusion proper to him, his continual confrontation with the nameless, silent, absolute mystery which embraces his existence, his readiness for death which after all can also be seen – in a very peculiar way – as the basic act of existence … all

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these together are necessarily also the essential traits of *love* for another person. The love of neighbour is not something which everyone always already knows reflexly in the depth of his being; rather, it is that which is sent to man only through the experienced and suffered wholeness of life and still remains even then, indeed especially then, a nameless mystery. It would be necessary to show by an empirical and descriptive phenomenology of love, responsibility, loyalty, venture, and of the unfinished and eternal quality inherent in love, what breadths and depths are implied by love of the Thou, how man really experiences in it who he is, how the 'no' to it imprisons the *whole* man within the deadly lonely damnation of self-created absurdity, how the totality of reality, which freely gives itself and is accepted and understood as the blessed incomprehensibility – which is the only self-evident thing – opens itself only if man opens himself radically in the act of love and entrusts himself to this totality. It would be necessary to show more empirically than is possible here what is the mutual relation of dependence between the transcendental openness and readiness for unlimited communication with the Thou, on the one hand, and the concrete encounter with the [243] concrete Thou, on the other hand. This would make it more comprehensible that in the act of love for another, and in it alone and primarily, the original unity of what is human and what is the totality of man's experience is collected together and achieved, and that the love for the other concrete Thou is not just something which also exists in man among many other things but is man himself in his total achievement.

If it would thus become clearer by the description of love of the other Thou that this love is really the fulfilment of the total and hence also spiritually transcendental nature of man, then it would also become easier to grasp that it occurs in the present economy of salvation only in the form of *caritas* for *caritas* means nothing else than the absolute radicality of this love in so far as it is open to the immediacy of the God who communicates himself under the form of grace.

Normally speaking, we merely say quite abstractly in our teaching on grace that the absolute, infinite transcendentality of the spirit is the '*potentia oboedientialis*' for grace and that it is liberated by grace – in its infinity which of itself belongs to this transcendentality – from being the *mere* condition of the possibility of grasping a certain categorised object to being the possibility of immediate presence to God as he is in himself. This declaration, however, would have to be made concrete in the knowledge that from a more concrete point of view this *potentia oboedientialis* is precisely the transcendentality towards the other who is to be loved and who first of all is one's fellow man. Even by theological reflection we must arrive at the point where we can say: if in the present economy of salvation and on account of the universal salvific will of God *every* radically free moral act becomes a saving act through grace and is thus orientated towards the immediate presence to God (as has already been said), then this must be true *a fortiori* of the basic moral act which integrates everything, viz. the love of our neighbour. Even though this the supernatural nature of a saving act cannot be grasped reflexly by an arbitrary introspection alone[4] (but this is to be ascribed to that systematisation into themes which takes place precisely in man's history of salvation and revelation), it would nevertheless be possible to show, by [244] such a phenomenological description of the empirical, authentic love of neighbour, the elements in it which are elevated and liberated by grace to their absolute perfection and which are then also experienced as such unsystematically. Furthermore, it is not the place here to describe the different concrete forms of love of neighbour. Suffice it to say explicitly here that, even when we are talking about *caritas*, it must always be a question of real love and that it is therefore

[4] The supernatural character of the saving act is also not simply what is beyond consciousness, as is held by a nominalistic tendency in theology even to our own day (outside the thomistic school). Cf. on this: K. Rahner, 'Gnadenerfahrung', *LTK*[3] IV, pp. 1001 *sq*.; K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore 1967), pp. 86-90; J. Alfaro, *LTK*[3] IV, pp. 207 *sq*.

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not just a matter of fulfilling a commandment which guards and defends the other against our brutal egoism; 'love for God's sake' – to be precise – does not mean love of God alone in the 'material' of our neighbour merely seen as an opportunity for pure love of God, but really means the love of our neighbour himself a love empowered by God to attain its ultimate radicality and a love which really terminates and rests in our neighbour.

The encounter of the world and of man as the medium of the original, unobjectified experience of God

We must now finally give thought to an objection against any thesis which understands the love of neighbour as the one all-embracing basic act of human existence, viz. that the *religious* act directed towards God is the basic act of human existence or at least stands equally entitled and equally original, indeed with higher rank, beside the act of loving communication with another person. This objection is, however, a misunderstanding. It must be noted first of all that, at least for the original experience of God, God is not one 'object' besides others either objectively speaking or in the subjective intentionality of man (in knowledge and free action and their unity). God is not an object towards which the intentionality of man can be directed in the same fragmentary and particular way as it is towards the multiplicity of objects and persons encountered within the categories of intramundane experience. God is not originally given in the way in which – as if by chance, externally and without it having to be thus by the nature of human intentionality – a flower or Australia are 'given'. We must not consider man as unconcerned about God until he systematically conceives the notion of God as one reality 'besides' others and this in the merely dividing distinction from these other realities. In the original act which precedes all reflex systematisations, God is always given as the subjectively and objectively all-bearing *ground* of experience, a ground which is beyond this world; he is therefore given indirectly in a kind of boundary experience as the origin and destination [245] of an act which is objectively directed towards the world and which, therefore, as will have to be said more in detail below, is a loving communication with (or 'no' to) the Thou in the world. God is primarily and originally given in (or as) the transcendental, unclassified horizon of the knowing and acting intentionality of man and not as an 'object' represented by an idea within this horizon. Moreover, even where God is made the subject of religious and Christian reflection – hence, where and in so far as (over and above such a philosophico-religious reflection) He is given (transcendentally) in the 'horizon' of the spirit opened up or maintained in its absolute manner by divinising grace (as the goal of this transcendentality which transmits itself supernaturally) and where he speaks himself (in categories) through the revelation of the Word in salvation history, and where in both these ways he becomes a 'partner' in a personal and direct relationship between himself and man – this revelation of grace and the Word and the real self-communication by grace always happens *vis-à-vis* and through man who is already 'in the world', i.e. who is given to himself in freedom by entering in love into the world around him, and by personal encounter and communication with the Thou of intramundane experience.

The (naturally and supernaturally) transcendental experience of God which is also the necessary presupposition of the historical revelation of the Word and both is and remains its supporting ground, is possible only in and through man who has *already* (in logical priority) experienced the human Thou by his intramundane transcendental experience (of his *a priori* reference to the Thou) and by his categorised experience (of his concrete encounter with the concrete Thou) and who only *in this way* can exercise the (at least) transcendental experience of his reference to the absolute mystery (i.e. God). The classical thesis of scholastic theology (against ontologism and the innate idea of God) which maintains that God can be known only *a posteriori* from the created world, does not ultimately mean to imply (if it is properly

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understood) that man merely comes upon God like any object given to him purely accidentally (e.g. this flower or Australia) with which he might just as well not be concerned (from the point of view of the *a priori* structure of his knowledge) but it does mean that the transcendentally original *a priori* experience of his original reference to God and thus of God himself (an experience which must in some measure also be objectified in categories) can be made only in an always already achieved going-out into the world which, understood [246] as the world of man, is primarily the people *with whom* he lives. Precisely because the original reference towards God is of a transcendental kind and hence does not fall into any category but is given in the infinite reference of the spirit of man beyond every mere object of his personal and material surroundings, the *original* experience of God (as distinct from his separating representation in an individual concept) is always given in a 'worldly' experience. This, however, is only present originally and totally in the communication with a 'Thou'.

Since every conceptual reflection on the transcendental conditions of the possibility of knowledge and freedom is itself based once more on these same conditions, then even the *explicit* religious act in which God becomes the reflex theme of knowledge and love is once more underpinned and taken up by that act which offers a transcendental, inclusive experience of God (of a natural-supernatural kind) and this *by the fact* that this act – in our turning towards the people we live with, and therefore in our explicit communication with them – lets us also experience unreflectedly the transcendental conditions of this act (i.e. the transcendental reference to God and the transcendental openness to the human Thou).

The act of love of neighbour is, therefore, the only categorised and original act in which man attains the whole of reality given to us in categories, with regard to which he fulfils himself perfectly correctly and *in which* he always already makes the transcendental and direct experience of God by grace. The reflected religious act *as such* is and remains secondary in comparison with this. It has indeed, as has already been said, a higher dignity than the reflected act of love of neighbour, if and in so far as the latter is measured by the particular explicit, conceptually represented object of the act in question. Measured by its 'horizon' or its transcendental possibility, it has the same dignity, the same 'draught' and the same radicality as the act of explicit love of neighbour, since both acts are necessarily supported by the (experienced but unreflected) reference both to God and to the intramundane Thou and this by grace (of the infused *caritas*), i.e. by that on which the explicit acts both of our relationship to God and of our love of neighbour 'for God's sake' reflect. Yet this does not alter the fact that the primary basic act of man who is always already 'in the world' is always an act of the love of his neighbour and *in this* the original love of God is realised in so far as in this basic act are also accepted the conditions of its possibility, one of which is the reference of man to God when supernaturally elevated by grace.

[247]

Love of neighbour as the primary act of love of God

We are now in a position to give a direct answer to the basic question of our whole reflections. This was the question about the identity of the love of God and the love of neighbour. More exactly, it was the question about whether the love of neighbour understood as *caritas* is ultimately only a secondary moral act (one among many) which more or less proceeds objectively from the love of God as an '*actus imperatus*'. In other words, does the love of neighbour have God for its 'motive' (just as in the explicit love of God) in such a way that this love of neighbour really 'loves' God alone and hence, in accordance with the will of God who is really loved, is well disposed towards its neighbour and does good to him? *Or* is there a more radical unity between the love of God and of neighbour (taken as *caritas*) in such a way that the love of God itself is always also already love of neighbour in which our neighbour is really loved himself? We can now answer: the categorised explicit love of neighbour is the primary act of the love of God. The love of God unreflectedly but really and

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always intends God in supernatural transcendentality in the love of neighbour as such, and even the explicit love of God is still borne by that opening in trusting love to the whole of reality which takes place in the love of neighbour. It is radically true, i.e. by an ontological and not merely 'moral' or psychological necessity, that whoever does not love the brother whom he 'sees', also cannot love God whom he does not see, and that one can love God whom one does not see only *by* loving one's visible brother lovingly.

Finally, we would simply draw the reader's attention to the fact that we should really go on to reflect now explicitly on the 'Christological' and 'eschatological' aspects of this situation. If in 'recent times' (and only then) one has learnt to see and love the Father whom one does not see in the man Jesus whom one does see, then the unity of the love of God and of neighbour on which we have been reflecting becomes even more radical from a Christological and eschatological point of view and thus reaches its climax; thus the man Jesus takes on and continues to have an eternal significance for our relationship to God right into the 'direct' vision of God.

The relationship to God through man is thus not merely a 'mediation' in time but also in eternity, and therefore the same is present 'subjectively' as is present 'objectively' through the never reversed acceptance of humanity by the Logos. Unfortunately we cannot enter further into this [248] here, otherwise it could also be shown how a love of neighbour which has reached an absolute (supernatural) perfection of being also includes Christology.

The topical significance of the love of neighbour for modern man's knowledge of God

This whole laborious reflection may appear as if it only considers something which, if true, is valid *always* and everywhere (at least in the Christian order of salvation). This is quite correct yet our reflections have particular significance for the historical 'moment' in which we live *today*. A natural-supernatural knowledge and love of God of an existentially authentic kind, in which the reality of God is truly experienced, is in the very nature of things an act which can only be posited by man as *a whole*. Everything he is and with which he is concerned must be included in this, otherwise the absolute ground of reality, the ground of the knowing and acting spirit, would not be encountered in it and God would not appear in it as God, as a Person, as Freedom and as absolute mystery. This reality, however, which achieves itself as a whole towards God, has nevertheless different aspects in different periods for the man who fulfils himself historically, privileged aspects under which it presents itself and transmits itself to man. Each epoch has different 'catchwords', 'primitive words', under which the one totality of the experience of God is summoned up and comes towards us anew out of the totality of our experience of reality and of ourselves.

Already in scripture, and then also in the course of the history of faith and salvation, there shows itself a variety of such catchwords which always mean and imply the whole and yet appear at the same time as many *different* gateways which form *the* particular approach to this whole according to the spirit of each particular age or as particular characteristics of the Christian religious experience of particular men. For St Paul, for instance, the 'catchword' is 'faith', but this is not the same for everyone or every age, even though no one can come to God without faith. It could be asked whether the trilogy of the three divine virtues does not *also* already indicate a sphere of such a change of 'root terms' for a religious experience in a particular period, just as the key-word for everything in St John is not faith but love, while the Synoptics replace even this by 'conversion' (*metanoia*). Today, at any rate, when by reason of its enormous numbers, its concrete unity and in its necessarily new social [249] forms, mankind must learn to love completely anew or go under; when God opens out anew as the silent incomprehensibility so much so that man is tempted to honour him now simply by silence and nothing else and when all atheism, which today really exists for the first time, is simply the mistaken adolescent form of this opportunity and the temptation given to us as

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regards God's incomprehensibility; when an extremely worldly world is coming into being, a world which man creates for himself and which ought not indeed be sacralised but which must be experienced and acted in the depth *sanctified* by God, i.e. opened towards him … at the dawn of such a new epoch, 'love of neighbour' might easily be the root-word which really moves people and the key-word for today. Nevertheless, if we want to say today that anyone who loves his neighbour has fulfilled *the* law as such – namely that if we love one another, then God's final salvation is within us (as one might translate 1 Jn 4:12) – then we must understand absolutely fundamentally why the love of neighbour, provided it is genuine and accepts its own proper incomprehensible being to the very limit, already contains the whole of Christian salvation and of Christianity. This must indeed still be unfolded in that complete fullness and breadth which we know and preserve, but whenever someone loves someone else truly and 'to the end', it is already grasped in its original root.

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[251]

PART FOUR

Contributions to a Theology of the Church

[253]

A. THE PILGRIM CHURCH

17

THE CHURCH OF SINNERS

The topic of the ‘Church of Sinners’ usually receives a very cursory treatment in Catholic dogmatics. In truth, there are more important and more glorious things to say about the Church. Perhaps the reason why the Church as a Church of sinners does not appear very much in the forefront of theological interest lies in the fact that it is only too clearly a matter of everyday experience. Nevertheless this topic is materially of the greatest importance in our doctrine about the Church, not only because we are here concerned with one of the most agonising questions of ecclesiology which persistently recurs throughout the history of dogma, but also because it is a question of such consequence for the individual’s life of faith. Ultimately, however, the question acquires importance because it is not intended as a question of everyday, superficial experience, but as a dogmatic one, that is to say as a question which has to be answered in the light, not of human experience, conceited, questionable, and distorted by sin, but of God’s revelation.

We said it was here a matter of an agonising question which persistently pervades the whole history of dogma. Christianity has always declared, ‘I believe in the holy Church.’ Again and again in the course of history the question has arisen where this Church is to be found which so confidently declares itself to be a holy Church, therefore the Church illuminated by the light of God’s own holiness. Again and again, on the basis of this article of the Creed, the concrete Church has been rejected as sinful; again and again some new Church has been founded as the true and holy one, and declared to be the true Church of God and of his Christ. Already Tertullian maintained that the universal Church of his time was not the true Church of the Spirit and of spiritual men but a house of whores, [254] because she did not cast adulterers out of her communion once and for all. Somewhat similar was the thought and teaching of Montanism and Novatianism in the third century, of Donatism in the time of Augustine, of Messalianism and other heretical movements within monasticism, movements like that of the Cathari, of the Spiritualism of Joachim of Fiore, of the Spirituals among the Franciscans, of the Hussites in the Middle Ages. All of them wanted a ‘holy’ Church instead of the unholy Church of their time. And even the Reformers of the sixteenth century, who were so insistent in teaching the sinfulness and corruption of all men, made a large part of their attack on the Catholic Church consist of diatribes against the corruption of the papacy and the unholiness of the Church in general.

In the life of the individual, too, the experience of the unholy Church nearly always plays a significant role in his inner struggle to come to terms with his faith. Whenever complaints are heard against the clergy, what else is usually the matter of reproach, but that their lives contradict what they preach? Is anything repeated more frequently than that church-people are no better than others, that the Church too has failed? And these reproaches and the troubled temptations against faith that arise from them have, from the purely human point of

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view, a certain amount of right on their side. There stands the Church, and she declares herself necessary for salvation, she comes to us in the name of a holy God, she declares herself to be in possession of all truth and grace, she claims to be the one ark of salvation among the flood of sin and corruption, she believes herself commissioned to convert and save all men. And this very Church which comes to us with such claims, why, look at her! – so they will say – look how she seems to use two different yardsticks: she proclaims to poor, troubled humanity the Sermon on the Mount with its 'impossible' demands, but her official representatives seem to let these demands rest very lightly on their own personal shoulders. Don't they all seem to live pretty comfortable lives? Aren't they often avaricious or arrogant or overbearing? Isn't there a continuous succession of scandals, even in the ranks of her religious orders, who after all are supposed to be striving for holiness and perfection? Are the bad popes a mere catch-phrase or aren't they a historical fact? And haven't even her holiest things been continually misused in all sorts of ways for sinful purposes: the confessional and the sacraments in general, the papacy used for transparently political purposes, and so on? That we are all human – [255] so this plaint or complaint continues – that is not to be wondered at; and that the men of the Church also, even her official representatives, are human and sinful, that too is in itself nothing to cause surprise. If this were all, then it would admittedly be quite unjust to comb through the corners of Church history in order to lay bare the sins of the Church. But – the Church puts herself forward as being something essentially greater than a merely human organisation in which it is unavoidable that things often happen in a human and too human way. She claims to hold the place of the all-holy God in the world, to be the holy Church; she goes so far as to assert that her 'extraordinary holiness and inexhaustible fruitfulness in all that is good' is in itself a powerful and permanent motive of credibility and an irrefutable testimony to her divine mission.[1] It is precisely here that the contradiction is to be found: if the Church were more modest – so goes the eternal objection of unbelief – then one could be mild in one's judgement of her and forgive her everything that one forgives in oneself. But because she declares herself to be holy, she must also permit her life and her history to be measured by standards that are higher than the merely human. And what then? Is not then the claim to holiness which she puts forward a singular presumption which proves precisely the opposite of her inordinate claim?

We said our topic is of importance from quite another point of view as well. For us the question is not at all one of how we as Christians who believe in the holiness of the Church manage to deal with our *purely human* experience of the unholiness of the Church. Rather, the question asked is a dogmatic one: namely, what does Revelation itself have to say about the unholiness of the Church? In other words, we are not concerned with listening to the voice of outraged humanity, (perhaps we know better now than did earlier times that this kind of 'public opinion' even when fairly unanimous is a highly doubtful matter, and that usually each one finds in his experience whatever corresponds to his expectations); we are concerned with examining the self-witness of the Church regarding her own unholiness. For the fact that she is a Church of sinners is itself a piece of the Church's consciousness of her faith. Because if someone with an all too superficial optimism were to hold the Church to be completely 'holy', the Church would not say, 'Thank God! here at last is someone who holds me in just esteem!' No, she would on the contrary have to say to him, 'You are a heretic, and the truth about me [256] is not to be found in you; your mildness is of the Evil One, and you have not grasped what the Spirit of God thinks either about the holiness which he has really bestowed upon me, the holy one, or about the holiness which I, the unholy Church of sinners, do not possess; you do not have in you that holiness which you should have, otherwise you could not think that you had found it in me, any more than someone has it who disappointedly

[1] First Vatican Council, Sess. III, cap. 3, cf. DS 3013.

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arraigns me for not in fact possessing it.'

Accordingly there are two things in question: The Church of sinners, and sinful man before the holy Church of sinners.

I

The Church of God and of his Christ is a Church of sinners. What is meant by this will be explained in two groups of ideas: sinners in the Church, and the sinful Church.

1. *Sinners in the Church*

It is an article of faith that sinners are members of the Church. Even sinners who are destined to be lost can truly and really belong to the Church. This is a truth of our faith which the Church has constantly taught, in patristic times against Montanism, Novatianism and Donatism, in the Middle Ages against the Albigenses, against the Fraticelli, against Wyclif and Hus, and in modern times against the Reformers, against Jansenism and the Synod of Pistoia. The proposition that sinners, those deprived of grace or those foreknown by God as destined to be lost, are not members of the Church is a formal heresy which has been definitively condemned by the Church.

And let us not be over-hasty in asserting this to be a self-evident truth which could only be doubted by an idealistic visionary. It is not at all a self-evident truth. All that is self-evident is this: there exists a socially recognised 'religious association' called the Catholic Church, to which belong according to the register papers not only those who can be said to be in a very civic and superficial sense 'respectable people', people who have 'no previous convictions', people who can be set up as examples of virtue, people who can even (if one wants to use such a high-sounding title) be described as 'saints'. This is certainly very much self-evident; but it in no way penetrates to the real meaning of the word 'Church' in this Catholic dogma, nor to what meaning is here attached to the word 'sinner'. [257] For the word 'Church' signifies in this connection the visible presence of God and his grace in this world in sacramental signs, it means the historical embodiment of Christ in the here and now of the world until he comes again to 'appear' in the glory of his Godhead; 'Church' signifies here what is human, which while it is really distinct from what is divine is yet inseparably united with it. And 'a sinner in the Church' does not here signify a person who has been in conflict with the police (this can happen occasionally even to the dearest friend of God), but 'sinner' in this article of the faith signifies a person who is in reality devoid of God's grace, a person who is wandering far from God, a person whose destiny is perhaps moving with fearful consistency towards an ultimate eternal damnation. And *this* sinner belongs to *this* Church: he is not merely entered in her official register but is her member, a part of the visible presence of God's grace in the world, a member of the Body of Christ! Is this perhaps something self-evident? Is this something which is already unmistakably and without difficulty a matter of our experience? Or is this not rather a truth which in sheer incomprehensibility far outstrips anything which unbelievers can bring forward in their accusations against the Church and their protests at her unholiness?

Yet it is this revealed truth which is clearly taught in scripture and tradition. The kingdom of Heaven is like a net which hauls out of the sea of the world good fish and bad. Only on the shore of eternity at the end of time will the angels of judgement separate the evil from among the good and cast them into the furnace (Mt 13:47-50). At the wedding banquet of the kingdom of Heaven there will also be found seated among the guests those who have on no wedding garment and who will at the end be bound hand and foot and cast out (Mt 25:1-13). There are 'brothers' who by their disobedience to the Church ultimately become as the

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heathen and public sinners (Mt 18:17). Even the servant who has been set over the household of his lord can be condemned (Mt 24:45-51).

The apostles, too, bear witness to the doctrine contained in these images used by our Lord: there are sinners in the Church, people to whom the Spirit says, 'I know your works; you have the name of being alive and yet are dead' (Rv 3:1 *sq*.). This is the terrifying part of it: one really has the name of being alive and yet is dead.

The Church of the first centuries found it difficult enough to grasp this truth of faith without trembling, and even as late as St Augustine, who by his struggle against Donatism has become for the history of dogma of [258] the greatest importance in this question, it is not always altogether clear whether in his theory of the wheat and the chaff and of the intermingling cities of Jerusalem and Babylon he unequivocally and definitely regards the dead members as true members of the mystical Body of Christ, or whether he merely means that while the borderline between the two cities is always undoubtedly there, it will be revealed only at the end of time. As regards this matter the Church's consciousness of her belief has subsequently been clarified in the course of time towards the full truth of faith that there are sinners, and that they belong to the Church. There is within the Church sin and failure. And those who sin and fail form a part of the embodiment and manifestation of that divine salvation and that divine grace which we call 'Church'.

It is true that this 'belonging of the sinner to the Church' must be viewed from another side as well, that is, it must be negatively delimited, for the sinner does not belong to the Church in the same full sense as the justified person.

To begin with, it is surely self-evident that one can and must speak of a membership of the Church in all the directions and dimensions into which the Church herself extends, and that consequently whoever does not belong to the Church in *one* of these dimensions cannot be regarded as her member in the *full* sense. Now both Leo XIII in his encyclical *Satis Cognitum* (1896) and Pius XII in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* (to indicate only the more recent expressions of the Church's magisterium) emphasised that it would be an ecclesiological Nestorianism and a rationalistic Naturalism if one were to see in the Church nothing more than an external, juridical organisation, merely a visible society, a 'confession' in the civico-social sense of the word. She is much rather the living Body of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit of God, to whose reality belong divine life, grace, and the power of the future aeon. But since the sinner does not possess this Holy Spirit, it is self-evident that he does not simply belong to the Church in the full sense of the word 'Church' which we have indicated. This proposition in no way contradicts the propositions we set out above from the doctrine of the Church which simply declared the sinner to be a member of the Church. In those propositions the word 'Church' is in fact taken in the sense of the external society; for only on this supposition can the absence of an inner state of grace in the sinner be without effect on his membership of the Church.

That this concept of the Church does not contradict the teaching of [259] Leo XIII and Pius XII referred to above is certain from the following considerations.

The Church has, to a certain extent, a sacramental structure. But in a sacrament we must distinguish between the sacramental sign as such (and the conditions for its 'validity') on the one hand, and the sacramental sign in so far as it is really the cause of sacramental grace and filled with it, on the other. The two concepts must he kept carefully distinct; for it is possible to have in certain circumstances a 'valid sacrament' which in point of fact does not cause any grace in the recipient of the sacrament. Now in a certain sense the Church is the basic sacrament (*Ursakrament*); hence in her case we must make a distinction between her visible appearance as a body in so far as this is a sign of grace, and this visible appearance in so far as it is a reality filled with grace, and accordingly also between a (merely) 'valid' and a 'fruitful' membership of the Church. The sinner has the first kind of membership of the

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Church, but not the second. But by making this distinction the continuing membership of the sinner in the Church is not being reduced to a harmless formality of an external, juridical kind. It is true that the sinner still belongs to the visible appearance of the Church, but his visible membership of the Church has ceased to be the efficacious sign of his invisible membership of the Church as a living, holy community. In a certain sense the sinner has turned this sign into a lie (rather like someone who receives a sacrament validly but unworthily); for he has robbed his continuing membership in the Church of all the meaning and effect to which it is by its entire nature ordered: the inner, living union of men with God and with each other in the Holy Spirit.

2. With this we come to establishing the express point which this doctrine primarily enunciates in all its clearness: *the Church is sinful*. After what we have just said it is already impossible to maintain any longer as consistent with the faith that there are admittedly sinners 'in' the Church as an external confessional organisation but that this fact tells us nothing about the Church herself. For we have already seen that these sinners, according to the teaching of the Church, are real members, parts, and therefore integral pieces of the visible character of the Church herself. We must now elucidate this a little further.

In order to see our way more clearly, we must keep in mind two things. If we were merely to say, 'Certainly there are sinners in the Church, but this fact has nothing to do with the real Church', we would be assuming [260] an idealistic concept of the Church which from a theological point of view is very questionable. 'Church' is then an idea, an ideal, an ought-to-be, something to which appeal can be made from the concrete reality, something which is meant to be reached only asymptotically, as it were, by slow approximation. That is something which we can of course always love, to which we can fearlessly commit ourselves; it is something untouchable, beyond the reach of the wretchedness of daily life. But this is not really the meaning of the theological concept of 'Church'. In this latter concept the Church is something real: it is the one and only Church which exists and in which we believe, in all cases always including the visible and juridically organised assembly of the baptised, united together in the external confession of their faith and in their obedience to the Roman pope. And it is precisely of this Church that it is impossible to say that she has nothing to do with the sins of her members. Obviously she does not approve of sin; obviously there will always be within her ranks men (and perhaps many men) whom we must call, in some real sense of the word which we need not discuss further here, holy men. But if she is something real, and if her members are sinners and as sinners remain members, then she herself is sinful. Then the sins of her children are a blot and a blemish on the holy mystical Body of Christ itself. The Church is a sinful Church: this is a truth of faith, not an elementary fact of experience. And it is a shattering truth.

Furthermore, we must consider a second fact. If what we said is true, then it is also self-evident that the official representatives of the Church, those men whom a superficial theological consciousness especially among the Catholic laity likes to regard exclusively as 'the' Church (as though the laity, too, were not the 'Church', as though they represented merely the object of the Church's ministration, an error emphatically opposed in Pius XII's encyclical on the Church), that those men too can be sinners, and in fact have been and are in a very noticeable way. But then it is again even clearer that the concrete Church is sinful (and once again, only in the concrete is she the 'Church'). For it is surely beyond dispute that the sins in question do not occur merely in a realm of the 'private life' of these ecclesiastics, but may also influence very substantially their concrete mode of action as official representatives of the Church. When the Church acts, gives a lead, makes decisions (or fails to make decisions when they ought to be made), when she proclaims her message, and when she is obliged to proclaim it in accordance with the times and historical situations, then [261] this activity of the Church is not carried out by some abstract principle and not by the Holy Spirit

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alone, but rather this whole activity of the Church is at the same time the activity of concrete men. And since they can in fact commit sin, since they can he culpably narrow, culpably egoistic, self-satisfied, obstinate, sensual or indolent, this sinful attitude of theirs will naturally affect also those actions which they initiate precisely *as* ecclesiastics and in the name of the Church as acts of the concrete Church. There exists no dogma according to which the assistance of the Holy Spirit which always remains with the Church would limit the effect of the sinfulness of the men who administer the Church to their purely private lives and not permit it to have any influence on those events which must be characterised as unmistakably acts of the Church, if the concept of the Church is not to evaporate into the abstract ideal of an invisible Church. It is true that the Christian's conscience can, if he thinks himself capable of attempting it, discover such motivations; he can also, indeed he *must*, refuse obedience in a case where he is commanded what is sinful, but he cannot withdraw himself from obedience to the Church as long as he himself is not commanded to do anything sinful (even though he may think that the command springs at least partially from sinful narrowness, obstinacy and love of power), and above all – and this is here the only point – he cannot dispute the fact that such actions of ecclesiastics are actions of the Church. This means it must be conceded that the Church can be sinful in her actions. It goes without saying that this happens in opposition to the impulse of the Spirit and the norms and laws always proclaimed by the Church. But this is surely what is so great about this *faith* in the sinful Church, that she can really do all these things and yet (unlike all human organisations falling away from their original ideals) remain the bride of Christ and the vessel of the Holy Spirit, the only means of grace, from which no one can separate himself by appealing to her own ideal, accusing her of no longer being what she 'once' was (she never was it), or what she ought and claims to be.

Of course we hasten to add that it is not as though the Church were the pure paradox of a union of visible sin and invisible grace. She is holy because she is constantly in a vital contact with Christ the source of all holiness; she is holy, because her whole history with all its ups and downs is constantly pressing forward in the power of her living source, the Holy Spirit, towards that ultimate day to which all her truth, her law and her [262] sacraments are ordered, towards that day when God himself will appear unveiled in his world. She is and remains infallible whenever she makes a solemn dogmatic decision under precise conditions which we need not here further determine. Her sacraments are independent of the worthiness of their ministers, they have an objective validity and efficacy, they are holy and make holy. She never falls victim to the temptation of accommodating to the weakness and mediocrity of men the truth and the norms which her very human preachers proclaim. (How far from self-evident is this miracle of the power and the grace of her holy Spirit; yet it is ever renewed through the centuries!) At all times in a sinful world she has championed the holiness of God and of his Christ, and if we had really grasped how easily man tends to regulate his principles according to his deeds, we would recognise in the eternal 'contradiction' between the holy preaching and the all-too-human life of the preacher of the Church's gospel not so much a stumbling-block as a demonstration of the effectiveness of God's Spirit in a holy Church. The Church is also really so holy in so many of her members, and this holiness can be ascertained even empirically, that for the man of good will, enlightened by the grace of faith, even her outward appearance bears all the marks of a constant motive for faith and an irrefutable witness to her divine commission. In a way which is not at all self-evident but extraordinary, she has really been in all ages the eternally fruitful mother of saints, the holy Church, the bride of Christ, whose appearance even now holds out for the man of faith the promise that she will one day be the bride able to enter without spot or wrinkle the wedding feast of the lamb – on that day when the light of eternal life will reveal what in reality she *is* even now under the appearance of the woman of sin.

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But all this does not give the Church or us her children the right to put a gulf of arrogance and superiority between her and the sin which is not only in the world but also in the Church and through which she herself is really sinful, and this in a way in which she alone can be sinful (even where she is much better than those who are outside); for site alone can distort by her sin the eternal visible presence of Christ in the world which she is and so wrap a shroud about him – and do this in the face of men who must seek him as a matter of life and death!

If then holiness *and* sin co-exist in the 'image' presented by the Church (and the Church is essentially 'image', a sign making historically accessible the grace of God in the world), this is of course not to say that sin and [263] holiness in the Church have the same relationship to the hidden essential purpose of the Church and therefore belong to her in the same way. The holiness made tangible in her history is an expression of what she is and will remain infallibly and indestructibly until the end of time: the presence in the world of God and of his grace. The Church is always something more than an association, more than a 'juridical Church' and confessional organisation, because the Holy Spirit has indissolubly united himself to her. And this Holy Spirit of God, in himself hidden, recreates over and over again in the palpable holiness of the Church a visible manifestation of his continuing presence capable of convincing the world. In this holiness – not in sin – are we given 'phenotypically' the inner glory which constitutes the permanent heritage out of which her whole character is fashioned. By contrast with all other historical structures, including the 'Church' of the Old Testament, this bodily manifestation of the Church cannot be so distorted by sin that the life-giving Spirit would abandon her or be unable any longer to be historically manifested in her. For the power of death will not overcome her (cf. Mt 16:18). On the other hand, the sin in the appearance of the Church is indeed really in the Church herself in so far as she is essentially 'body' and a historical structure and in so far as in *this* dimension there can be sin. For the existential source of sin, in which it fundamentally subsists, the 'heart', does lie deeper and further than the level of the historical and the social into which it must of course always necessarily erupt when accomplished and where it becomes the sin of the Church. But this sin in the Church is not a revelation of what the Church is in her own, proper, living roots, but on the contrary a contradiction veiling it from view; it is in a way an exogenetic illness in the bodily nature of the Church, not an endogenetic hereditary flaw in the Church herself (even though sin always betrays 'what is in man'). For sin strictly as such is always a contradicting of God and his Christ, who being himself without sin has expiated sin and overcome it, a contradicting of the Spirit of God through whom he has sanctified his bride in the word of life by the baptism of water. Sin is therefore also a contradiction of what the Church is. No one can sin in order to allow God's grace to appear more abundantly and more clearly (cf. Rm 3:5; 6:1), a truth which threatens to be obscured by a dialectical and gnostic kind of mysticism of sin which has been surreptitiously disseminating itself today even among Catholics. And therefore the Church is not sinful in order that God's grace might be revealed more abundantly; sin remains in her a reality [264] which contradicts her nature; but her holiness is the manifestation of her essential being.

It is true that we must make two qualifications in this proposition in order to avoid the appearance of allowing the logical distinction of concepts (which is also an expression of the real situation) to break up the sombre and salutary combination of reality.

First, in the concrete order of salvation whose first and last focal point is the cross of Christ, even the suffering consequent on a sin once it has been committed, the utter absence of remedy from a human point of view, the inconsolable fear which it produces, the earthly darkness which often allows the sin and the suffering consequent upon it to intermingle indistinguishably, can become the manifestation of the cross of Christ in the world and a sharing of its burden: the manifest consequence of sin can in Christ become the conquest of

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sin. When the Church suffers under sin, she undergoes redemption from her fault, for she suffers her fault in Christ the crucified, particularly since sin, in so far as it exists not in the hidden 'heart' but in the world and so in the Church, while it is sin (because the 'heart' must realise its own action always in the world if it is to exist) is equally already the consequence of sin (because the embodiment of the real and hidden evil in the heart) and since it is carried out as such in the Church gives the Church the possibility of expiating and conquering it. Hence if we encounter sin in the Church we should not forget this. We do not usually take scandal at *sin* in the Church but at the *consequences* of such sin. We are offended, for example, by the 'hardhearted clergy' not usually because they are empty of love before God, but because they give nothing to *us* or because their 'failure' humiliates *our* pride in the holy Church, as whose members we appear before the heathen, and brings *us* into disrepute in the eyes of those who are without. Why do we not love the Church in such a way as to suffer humbly and silently the ignominy of her sin? This would make her holy much more effectively than our protests against the scandals in the Church, no matter how much they may often be called for and however praiseworthy they may be, and no matter how little the protester should be reproved by anyone who has not previously gone into himself upon the protest, confessed his sin and striven to better himself.

Secondly, if sin in the Church is 'merely' a contradiction of her Spirit, a distortion and illness in her image, this does not make of sin something harmless. For the Church is meant to be the manifestation of God's [265] grace and holiness in the world; she is meant to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. But sinners in the Church make of this figure an expression of the evil of their heart, they make of it a 'den of thieves'. This frightful truth remains, however much it must also be said that sin and holiness in the image of the Church do not have the same relationship to her inner 'truth'.

II

We come now to our second question: *sinful man before the holy Church of sinners*. We are not asking, 'why and in what sense is this Church of sinners at the same time the holy Church?' For this question was dealt with at least by way of general indications in what we have just said. The other question seems to us to be more important at this point, namely the question how we ourselves, the children and members of this Church, come to terms with the fact of her sinfulness. More precisely, what must be our own attitude in order that this eternal scandal of the Church does not become a scandal for us but rather an edification of our own Christian life and so contribute for our part also to the building up of the Church?

Once more, this Church as she is in the concrete is *the* Church, the only Church, the Church of God and of his Christ, the home of our souls, the place where alone we find the living God of grace and of eternal salvation. For this Church is one with Christ and the Spirit of God – not confused with them but inseparable from them. From this Church there is no escape which could lead to salvation. One can flee into a sect or something similar. There one may be less burdened and molested by sin, by narrowness, by scandal. One can then have a magnificent alibi to show that one has nothing to do with 'this' Church; perhaps one is nearer to one's ideals, but not nearer to God. Nor can one appeal against the concrete Church to another ideal; for there is only that ideal which has been eternally identified with this Church and eternally lives in her, and from which one falls away oneself if one separates oneself from the unity of this Church, from her love, her faith and her obedience, in favour of a self-made ideal. It is not possible, so to speak, to want to found the Church anew by a kind of *generatio aequivoca*; for she has been founded once and for all by the one Lord. From her one can flee to her by complaining, weeping, beseeching in anger, accusing in zeal, but one

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can never be right in fleeing away from her; one can never abandon her [266] without losing to the same degree that which one professes to want to save.

Every spirituality, no matter how deep, which can no longer bear both the figures of the Church as virgin and as woman of sin – in humility and love, with the forbearance and the patience of God – reveals itself after a short period as fanaticism, as the spectre of a spirituality where man in the end remains caught up in himself. One must also give up the illusive desire of continually distinguishing 'accurately' between the 'divine' and the 'human and all-too-human' in the Church. To the extent that the Church herself does this (and she is here in reality broadminded and honest enough, if only we listen attentively to her), we too have the perfect right to lay claim to the freedom of the children of God in theology, in Church art, in practical life, in our method of prayer and our way to God, and no one, as Pius XI said with reference to theological opinions, ought to demand more of us than the Church, the mother of all, really (and not just presumably) demands of all. The more closely we get to know this Church, her life and her teaching, and the more open and unprejudiced is our attention to her directives, the more we will also note how wide this Church is and how much she frees us from ourselves to lead us into the breadth of God, even where she appears to impose limits and speak hard words. But if we begin to distinguish beyond the distinction of divine and human which she herself makes, where can we find an authentic criterion for our distinction? What guarantee is there, that we are not falling victim to our own narrow taste, that we are not rejecting the Holy Spirit (even if only in a particular sphere) when we attempt to trim and to purify the human element in the Church, or when we believe that we must discover and remove abuses and false developments?

Nevertheless, even assuming this primary and fundamental attitude, the honest Christian will see sins and shortcomings, scandals and failures in his Mother. And if he is really a Christian and if his eye and heart have been schooled in the inexorable demands of the gospel, for him perhaps more than for others does the question arise, can he deny the existence of the sins, should he cover them up or minimise them? No. He will of course as a mature person not be one of those who triumphantly try to demonstrate their objectivity and freedom of spirit by sweeping together from every corner of past and present history the scandals of the Church and spreading them out to view at every opportunity before all and [267] sundry, whether they want to know them or not. He will also of course understand that the seamier side of a great history (and the history of the Church is that even from a purely human point of view) does not necessarily have to form the main content of a first elementary text-book for beginners. He will not say that it is a falsification or glossing over of history, if the history of the Church is not turned into a *chronique scandaleuse*; for, even leaving aside all other considerations, the history of the Spirit of God in the Church is still more important and more interesting than the history of human meanness. But even for him there will remain a very noticeable dark patch in the history of the Church; and we will meet this dark patch not only in studying the history of the Church, but we will also come across it in our own lives, especially if we live with the Church and the more we do so. What effect this dark patch has on the individual naturally depends to a large extent on his spiritual temperament. But perhaps it is not even good that we should come to terms with it too easily.

But what is to be our attitude if we clearly catch sight of sin in the face of our holy Mother the Church, if in the sacred precincts of the House of God we encounter failure, corruption, the feathering of nests, the lust for power, gossiping, under-the-counter dealing or narrow-mindedness? We should see these things as men fully conscious from our own experience of being ourselves sinners. When we see the sins of others it is so easy for us to forget that we are all-too-prone to pray, 'Lord, I thank you that I am not as one of these sinners here, like these self-righteous Pharisees in the Lord's House', in other words, that even in the pose of the humble Publican we can be . . . Pharisees. If sin in the Church serves first of all to call to

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mind our own sinfulness, if it shocks us into remembering that *our* sins are the sins of the *Church* – whether we are priests or laymen, powerful or lowly people in the kingdom of God – that we all contribute our share to the Church's penury and want, and that this is the case even though our sins may not figure in any chronicle of the Church's scandals, then we have taken up the proper, that is the Christian, position to see the sins of the Church in their true light. Perhaps we will even then remonstrate, complain, struggle and attempt to better things, in so far as it lies within our power or falls to our duty; but first we will weep over our own sins by means of which we ourselves are crucifying the Son of God in his Church and obscuring the light of the gospel for the world. And we will bear the ignominy of the Church as our own and suffer it, [268] for it is in truth our own, because – whether we want to or not – we belong to her and have sinned in her. So we will comfort ourselves with that divine consolation so incomprehensible to the children of the world, the consoling fact that he has given us – each of us – a Mother whose sin is surrounded by God's mercy, a Mother upon whom, in spite of her daily sins, God bestows holiness and grace, who can never place her confidence in her own power and strength but only in God's mercy, which is grace and not merit.

If we look at the sin of the Church in this light, our eyes will also be ever more ready to observe the hidden and the manifold glory and holiness of this our mother the Church. If we usually see little of this, then the reason is not that we are observing the world and the Church exactly, critically and realistically, but that our eye is that of a still self-centred sinner, that our eye is weak and blinkered. But once we have honestly wept over the sins of the Church and our own sins, if in this confession of our fault it has dawned on us that all true holiness is a miracle of God and a grace and not something to be presumptuously taken for granted, then after being washed clean in the tears of repentance our eye may be capable of seeing clearly the sacred miracle which God daily renews in his Church: that in spite of everything her hands are today as yesterday overflowing with grace, that the entreaty of the Spirit and his inexpressible groaning still ascend from her heart, that the angels of God still carry the prayers of the just in this Church like incense before the throne of the eternal God, that her voice still proclaims the Lord's Word faithfully and unflinchingly with the clear firmness and single-mindedness of love, that she conceives life for her children ever anew in her maternal womb, that the Spirit of God continually wakens men to holiness within her – children and aged, prophets and hidden worshippers, heroes and crusaders – that in her the Lord's act of redemption continually takes place to the end of time. And always we will be able to repeat again, even with tears – whether they be tears of repentance or of joy – the prayer, 'I believe in the Holy Church'.

The Scribes and the Pharisees – they exist not only in the Church but everywhere and in every guise – will always haul 'the woman' before the Lord once more, and secretly delighted that 'the woman' is after all not (thank God!) any better than they are themselves, accuse her: 'Lord, this woman has been discovered in the very act of adultery. What do you say?' And this woman will not be able to deny it. No, it is a scandal. And there [269] are no extenuating circumstances. She thinks of her sins, because she has really committed them, and in doing so she forgets (how could a modest maid do other?) the hidden and the manifest glory of her sanctity. And so she has no intention of denying them. She is the poor Church of sinners. Her humility, without which she would not be holy, knows only of her guilt. And she stands before him whose bride she is, before him who has loved her and sacrificed himself for her in order to make her holy, before him who knows her sins better than any of her accusers. But he remains silent. He writes her sin in the sands of the world's history, which will soon be wiped out and her sin with it. He remains silent for a short while which to us seems to be thousands of years. And he passes judgement on this woman only through the silence of his love which pardons and absolves. Throughout the centuries new accusers stand

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beside ‘this woman’, and they always slip away again one by one, beginning with the eldest; for never has anyone been found who was himself without sin. And at the end the Lord will be alone with the woman. And then he will stand erect and look upon this prostitute, his bride, and ask her, ‘Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?’ And she will answer with inexpressible repentance and humility, ‘No one, Lord.’ And she will be astonished and almost dismayed that no one has done so. But the Lord will come close to her and say, ‘Then neither shall I condemn you.’ He will kiss her forehead and murmur, ‘My bride, holy Church.’

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[270]

18

THE SINFUL CHURCH IN THE DECREES OF VATICAN II

If we are to propose for our consideration a theology of the Church which is universal, exhaustive and fully developed in all directions, then there is one theme which can certainly not be omitted from it: the Church of sinners or, as we can also put it right away in order to bring out clearly the whole import and difficulty of the question, the sinful Church.

I

This topic must form part of any ecclesiology which considers its object in a thorough-going and balanced fashion, for that there are members of the Church who are sinners in the sense of living in a state of grave sin, that all the members of the Church,[1] if we exclude Mary, must truthfully [271] and humbly[2] confess, 'Forgive us our trespasses',[3] is simply an explicit dogma of the Church.

But then the question arises, how this fact is to be related to another fact which is equally a dogma: the Church is the holy Church. How are these two facts reconcilable, without reducing the holiness of the Church which is professed in the Creed to the invulnerable holiness of her objective institutions, her teaching and her sacraments?

In fact this question was a very live issue in the ancient Church and in medieval theology and it had there a very troubled history. It is a long way from St Paul's declaration that the Church is made holy 'without spot or wrinkle' (Ep 5:27) to the more sober realisation of St

[1] That sinners are still members of the Church in a real sense has been substantially defined by the Council of Constance (cf. the errors of Hus and Wyclif, e.g. *DS* 1201, 1203, 1205, 1296, etc.). The history of this dogma is well-known. Movements have constantly reappeared which were in the last analysis 'enthusiastic', like Montanism, Donatism, the various heretical wandering preachers and sectaries of the twelfth century, the Cathari, Wyclif and Hus, which harboured the dream of an utterly pure Church from which are excluded all those who have lost baptismal grace. Cf. R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford 1950); H. Grundmann, *Ketzergeschichte des Mittelalters* (Göttingen 1963). It was to such doctrines that the Council of Constance finally put an end. Since Constance, however, its doctrine has been handed on in the customary teaching on membership of the Church without any further refinement (in part even in the theology of the Reformers): the sinner in a state of grave sin is quite simply a member of the Church, provided that he has not lost the faith. In this way of viewing things the Church is seen exclusively under the aspect of her visible and social nature and of the historical form in which she appears and from this is determined what constitutes (full) membership in her; it is stated that the sinfulness (even public) of a member does not touch the constitutive marks of the Church in the dimension under consideration and therefore does not alter the structure of membership in her and that membership itself. It is noteworthy that the new decree (no. 14, in emphasising the '*Spiritum Christi habentes*') penetrates more deeply and sees more clearly without denying or obscuring what the Council of Constance has defined: the fully adequate nature of the Church includes also her holy Spirit, interior grace, and therefore this must also be called the grace of the individual within her if *full* membership is to be adequately described; consequently the sinner is not simply in the same sense and to the same full extent a member of the Church as the justified person. Between the two modes of membership there exists the same relationship as between a '*merely* valid' and a 'valid *and* fruitful' sacrament. Even the merely valid sacrament is a true sacrament (otherwise it could never 'revive' in certain circumstances); but it is not what it should be and desires to be, namely the appearance of grace actually conferred. So the sinner's membership in the Church (as basic sacrament) is indeed valid, but it does not in fact confer what it signifies, the inner grace of the Church. Yet it remains true that the sinner is in a real sense a member of the Church.

[2] Cf. *DS* 1537.

[3] *ibid*., Mt 6:12; cf. also *DS* 229.

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Augustine in his fight against the moral pride of Pelagius and Pelagianism, who held the sinlessness of the normal Christian to be a possibility, that St Paul's phrase is applicable in the strict sense only to the heavenly Church in the final consummation.[4] Accordingly, in patristic times and in the Middle Ages one spoke without hesitation of the sinful Church, of the Church [272] as the woman of sin, and this *not only* in the sense that the mercy of God has turned sinful humanity into the holy Church, that is of the sinful Church in so far as she is regarded in her origins, but also of the Church in so far as she *is* sinful *now*, of her sinfulness as a moral *condition*.

The Revelation of the New Testament at any rate knows that the reliability of a firm faith does not mean a false security. There is no fixation in grace. Even Peter denies the Lord. 'It would be incomprehensible, if such words and events were to have reference only to the acts by which the Church was founded and to have no further significance for her continuance once this had been secured. The New Testament never speaks of the assurances which have been granted to the Church of Christ without placing immediately next to them the threat of misuse, the possibility of defection. Nowhere is the spotlessness of the bride an already achieved fact which the bride only has to accept without troubling herself any further about it.'[5] The Pastoral Epistles already give evidence of defection and backsliding. No sacrament, no mission of the Spirit and no discernment of spirits is a final assurance of salvation, which comes from faith (cf. Heb 6:4 *sq*.).

The problem of the sinful Church is not, it is true, treated *expressis verbis* in the New Testament. There are sinful members of the Church (whether all are in this condition is not stated); it may remain questionable[6] whether the failure of a community can be regarded as the sin of the universal Church. The emphasis is placed – particularly in St Paul and St John – rather on the holiness and ideal figure of the Church. Historically it may be noticed that while we can recognise in the epistles of the New Testament a certain perplexity over the sinfulness which remains in spite of life in Christ, the whole force of the question of the 'sinful Church' as a whole in fact enters upon the scene (even conceptually) only later when in the third century the problem can no longer be by-passed owing to the beginning of an established Church. Yet the frequent parenesis reveals [273] how much sinfulness there still was in the universal Church; certainly it is nowhere stated that the Church as such is not affected by it.

Neither are the statements in the New Testament about the holiness and perfection of the Church such as to exclude sinfulness altogether. All the statements about holiness have a strongly eschatological character: the texts about the 'holy People of God' (Ac 15:14; 18:10; Rm 9:25; 2 Co 6:16; Tt 2:14; Heb 4:9; 8:10; 10:30; 13:12; 1 P 2:9 *sq*.), about the 'holy remnant', the 'new Jerusalem', the 'Bride of the Lamb', the 'Temple of God', the 'royal priesthood' (Rm 9:6; Heb 8:8; Ga 4:26; 2 Jn 1:13; Rv 12:1 *sqq*.), and so on, describe the Church to a certain extent from the point of view of her final end and her consummation,

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[4] For the explanation of the text from Ephesians (5:27) given by the Latin Fathers (eschatological explanation), tradition, and modern Protestant and Catholic exegesis cf. especially H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser* (Düsseldorf 1957), p. 256 *sq*., particularly p. 258, note 4. For the exposition of the text in patristic tradition cf. E. von Dobschütz, *Das Decretum Gelasianum in kritischem Text herausgegeben und untersucht*, Texte und Untersuchungen 38, 4 (Leipzig/Berlin 1912), p. 236 *sq*. To complete this cf. Hugo Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche*: *die Ekklesiologie der Väter* (Salzburg 1964), p. 394 *sq*. For the exposition of the text in the early Middle Ages cf. A. M. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik* IV, 2 (Regensburg 1956), pp. 48-99.

[5] Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Casta Meretrix' in *Sponsa Verbi: Skizzen zur Theologie* II (Einsiedeln 1961), pp. 203-305, here p. 218. For the Old Testament cf. p. 208 *sqq*., for the New Testament p. 215 *sqq*.

[6] It remains questionable because we must here prescind from the teaching of St Paul according to which the 'local Church' is not a mere administrative district of the Church, but – and this even with a certain priority – the concrete appearance of the Church as such, so that for St Paul the question can scarcely even be asked whether predicates which are accepted without reservation as applicable to the local Church can be denied of the Church *simply as such*.

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from 'above', without thereby wanting to make any statement about the presence or absence of sin in the Church as it actually exists: this would rather be the task of a description from 'below'. This principle of interpretation is applicable at least in part to St Matthew. The Church is continually threatened from within (Mt 24:10 *sqq*.), by false teachers and pseudo-prophets, by the temptation to misuse her mission, something which Jesus was not spared when he was tempted (Mt 4:1 *sqq*.); God grants a place in his Church even to the wicked, the weeds can grow until the time of the harvest, in the fishing-net there are both good and bad fish (Mt 13:24; 13:36; 13:47), all of which is certainly intended to describe not only the relationship of the Church to the 'world' but also an empirical situation of the Church in herself particularly since Matthew 16 and 18 refers to a penal process against sinful members of the community in which the 'binding' and 'loosing' presuppose a permanent relationship of the community to its sinful members, a relationship which does not exist in the same way towards those who are without (cf. 2 Co 2: 5-11; Co 5:1-13). Here as in St Matthew, the effect of Satan's working in the community is being described, as well as the fact that in the Church sin and holiness are interwoven in one texture and will be separated out only at the Judgement whereas now they are inseparable.

In St John and St Paul it is the ideal characteristics in the Church which are clearly brought to the fore. For the sinfulness of the Church perhaps the following can be cited. In general, the present is still the time of weakness, imperfection and temptation (1 Co 4:11 *sqq*. 13:9 *sqq*.; 2 Co 4:7 *sqq*.). In 1 Co 5:1-13, the community as a whole has failed in its duty ill the case of the man guilty of incest, as St Paul expressly notes, because it has not cut itself off from the sinner. Quarrels and divisions are other faults [274] which St Paul knows in the communities (1 Co 1:10 *sqq*.). At first sight it might be objected that the situation of 1 Co 5:1-13 cannot be pressed into use as supplying a biblical support for the question of the sinful Church, because the corrective for the community's sin is again an 'ecclesiastical court of appeal', namely the Apostle, who decides upon the definitive giving over of the sinner to Satan (1 Co 5:4 *sq*.; cf. 1 Tm 1:20), and in this way the purity of the community of salvation is restored. Yet precisely this act of the Apostle presupposes that the community as such must have known itself to be involved in the incest of the individual member, for St Paul knows that a judgement of separation such as he has made is quite unnecessary with regard to a heathen and that Christians can have uninhibited dealing with such a one because his behaviour does not affect the community as such (1 Co 5:9-13). In the case of the man guilty of incest the evil member is really in a religious and not merely sociological sense *in* the midst of the community and must therefore be 'got rid of'. His sin affects the community as such. On the other hand, the image of the Body, which is brought out here as in Ephesians, Colossians, Romans, Galatians, cannot be brought forward, as it often is, for the holiness of the Church; it signifies primarily the unity and harmony of the Church. Ephesians 4:15 *sqq*. speaks of a growth to the *pleroma* of Christ, therefore here the perfection of the Church is clearly being understood as an eschatological condition. In Hebrews our question is not immediately answered: while it is true that the people of God is a wandering people on the way and in a state of incompleteness in spite of its firm grip on the υ(πο/στασιφ, the characteristic failing being α)ποστη|=ναι (Heb 3:12), yet at the same time the people, consisting of 'με/ι<οξοι ξρισι<ου~' (Heb 3:14), is no longer as a whole subject to rejection (Heb 10: 24 *sq*.). But certainly individuals can lose their membership of God's people through 'sin' and thereby fall back into the state of Israel, the rebel people of God, the state of disobedience. Sin therefore here signifies exclusion from the community of salvation. How far this sin which arises within the ambit of the wandering people of God at the same time affects that people, is a question which is not expressly reflected upon any further.

In the seven letters to the Churches (Rv 2-3) the addressee is always the community as such, together with its bishop (2:7; 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Therefore here there is no

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difficulty in seeing the community itself as sinful, as needing conversion and as threatened by judgement.

The various scenes in the gospel involving sinful women have had from [275] the beginning a great deal of significance for the Fathers of the Church in their view of the concrete, living form of the Church. The whore in Luke 7, the Samaritan woman of doubtful morals with her five or six husbands (Jn 4:17 *sq*.), Mary Magdalene[7] and in general the dealings of Jesus with publicans and sinners (cf. Mk 2:15-16; Mt 9:11; Mt 11:19 and parallel), the adulteress in John 8 and other words of Jesus (Mt 21:31 *sq*.) and parables (cf. Lk 15:11 *sq*.) remain for the Fathers signs of a serious insight into sin and calamity within the Church.

Harking back to the zeal of the Old Testament prophets for the purity of Israel as the people of God, there was an increase in accusation and consciousness of sin but also in astonishment at the wonder of forgiveness and of grace in the face of the faithlessness of the elect people of God in the New Testament. The threats uttered by the prophets against fallen Jerusalem, Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, Nineveh, the laments and many other fragments from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea and also from the Song of Songs become symbols of the power and the misery of sin in the Church. Rahab and her house,[8] the marriage of Hosea with the prostitute as a symbolical representation of the people's breach of faith with their Lord,[9] the first act of infidelity by Eve[10] and especially the Jerusalem texts (Ezk 16; 23; Jr 4:29 *sqq*.) which sound particularly severe,[11] the fate of Thamar and other themes[12] become for the Fathers and for medieval theology warnings for the Church, warnings which are always called out with bitter insistence at times when the passionate zeal of spiritually aroused prophets and of resolute Church reformers protesting against the overwhelming abuses and wrongs of the Church issues a call to repentance.[13] It is true that often there is mention of the sinful provenance of the Church, of the men of the Church (and [276] therefore not so often immediately of the Church as such), for in spite of the most vigorous denunciation the spotlessness of the Church[14] is never in any doubt; yet the reference is precisely to such men as constitute the Church and officially represent her, and who are therefore closely bound up with her very essence.

We do not here intend to give an account of the investigations which have been made into this ecclesiology of the Fathers, so that it will be sufficient to refer to the works cited.[15] But even these few indications surely suffice to show that the vital interest in this theological theme grew noticeably less in late scholastic and post-Tridentine theology, although of course

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[7] For a full exposition see U. Holzmeister, 'Die Magdalenenfrage in der kirchlichen Überlieferung' *ZKT* XLVI (1922), p. 402 *sqq*., 556 *sqq*. Cf. also von Balthasar, *loc. cit*., p. 235 *sqq*.

[8] Cf. the many texts in H. U. von Balthasar, *loc. cit*., pp. 222-239; Jean Daniélou, *Sacramentum Futuri* (Paris 1950), pp. 217-232.

[9] H. U. von Balthasar, *loc. cit*., pp. 239-251.

[10] *loc. cit*., pp. 251-257.

[11] *loc. cit*., pp. 257-280.

[12] *loc. cit*., pp. 280-289; for the Babylon theme p. 289 *sqq*.; for the Shulammite p. 297 *sqq*.

[13] Cf. Yves M.-J. Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'église*, Unam Sanctam 20 (Paris 1950), p. 155 *sqq*., 170 *sqq*., 200 *sqq*., 257 *sqq*., 220, and especially the third part, p. 356 *sq*., 539 *sqq*.

[14] Cf. H. Riedlinger, *Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche in den lateinischen Hohelied-Kommentaren des .Mittelalters* (Münster 1958).

[15] Cf. also G. Teichtweier, *Die Sündenlehre des Origenes*, Studien zur Geschichte der kath. Moraltheologie VII (Regensburg 1958), pp. 58-67, p. 250 *sqq*., p. 253 *sqq*., p. 294 *sqq*., p. 336 *sqq*.; for St Augustine cf. F. Hofmann, *Der Kirchenbegriff des hl. Augustinus in seinen Grundlagen und in seiner Entwicklung* (Munich 1933), pp. 233-257; M. Seybold, *Sozialtheologische Aspekte der Sünde bei Augustinus*, Studien zur Geschichte der katholischen Moraltheologie XI (Regensburg 1964).

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it was never denied that the Church must reckon sinful members as still part of her body.[16] In practice the Church was experienced as the established Church of a homogeneous Christian society. It was known and it was stated that many members of the Church were sinners and yet were still her members. But this fact which was admitted almost as a matter of course was not felt to be a vital problem of the Church herself. She herself was seen and praised as holy. If the question was asked why she is holy in spite of her sinful members (and will not just become holy at the end of time, as St Augustine and the majority of the Latin Fathers comforted themselves by saying), then on the one hand the 'objective' holiness of her institutions, her sacraments and her teaching were pointed out, and on the other – particularly in apologetics – it was emphasised with Vatican I[17] that the Church, as is evidenced by the number of her saints and martyrs and her beneficial influence on all spheres of society and culture, has always manifested and still manifests an inexhaustible and incomparable fruitfulness in all that is good; moreover, the Church through admonition, reproof, and all her means of grace works for the conversion of her sinful members.

Fundamentally even the encyclical of Pius XII '*Mystici Corporis*' [277] contents itself with this answer now become traditional. The Church – against the tendency to be found in St Augustine – is somehow, without its being noticed, 'hypostasised', she becomes almost like an independently existent 'entity', which stands as teacher and guide *over against* the people of God; she does not appear to *be* this people of God itself (even though structured hierarchically) in its actual state of pilgrimage. For this reason it is easy to conceive her and understand her as 'holy' without the question arising whether or not (and how far) the sins and failings of her members fall on herself and, if so, how this can be reconciled with her true holiness which is part of the substance of her creed. Much less is it asked in a really radical and explicit way whether and to what extent even her 'objective', 'institutional' holiness in teaching, sacrament and law suffers a kind of reaction from the sinfulness of her members, if these objective realities are viewed not merely in abstraction but in their historical reality and in their actual realisation by human beings in the Church. But traditional theology by applying the distinction between objective and subjective holiness[18] already places these questions in parentheses or else dismisses them as of no consequence because of its apologetic interest inclining to the '*notae ecclesiae*'[19] as the properties which make the Church *definitely* and *clearly* 'recognisable'. The immediate life of the Church has indeed preserved among believers, however nebulously, the consciousness of the constant need of cleansing and penitence in the Church. Evidence for this is given even today, for example, by the collects of the First Sunday in Lent and the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.[20]

[278] In short, having examined the facts of the case and the history of the Church's dogmas we find the question of the Church of sinners to be a real one, one which has not

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[16] Cf. Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS XXXV (1943), p. 238, 202. Cf. *DS* 1201, 1203, 1205 *sq*., 1221, 2408, 2463, 2472-2478; also 1544, 1578, 1963 *sq*.

[17] Cf. *DS* 3013, 3014.

[18] Cf. e.g. J. Salaverri, 'De Ecclesia Christi' in *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* (Madrid 1962[5]), no. 1182-1192, 1204-1208, 1228-1263; 'Heiligkeit der Kirche', *LTK* V[2], 128-129 (F. Hofmann). For some further indications cf. K. Rahner, 'The Church of the Saints', *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore 1967), pp. 91-104.

[19] For the concept of 'notae ecclesiae' and its history, cf. the corresponding article by A. Kolping in *LTK* VII[2], 1044-1048, and especially the indications of J. Ratzinger in *LTK* VI[2], 181; for the history cf. G. Thils, *Les notes de l'église dans l'apologétique cath. depuis La Réforme* (Gembloux 1937), p. 287 *sqq*.; B. Duda, *Joannis Stoikovic de Ragusio O.P. († 1443) doctrina de cognoscibilitate ecclesiae* (Rome 1958); A. Lang, *Der Auftrag der Kirche*, Fundamentaltheologie Bd 2 (Munich 1954), p. 554 *sqq*. It would be the task of a further investigation to decide whether the Constitution on the Church also gives in this matter at least implicitly some indications for new perspectives on the 'notae' or 'conditiones ecclesiae'.

[20] Cf. *Missale Romanum*, or. dom. XV post Pent.: '*Ecclesiam tuam, Domin*e, *miseratio continuata mundet et muniat*; *et quia sine te non potest salva consistere, tuo semper munere gubernetur . . .*'

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been fully worked out or even today found its proper place sufficiently clearly in normal ecclesiology. And yet this question would seem to have an existential-religious importance for the life of the individual and of the Church as such. That the guilt of the individual (whether in the ranks of the shepherds or of the flock) has an importance for the *Church* and affects her being, is scarcely a topic which appears in the average teaching about sin in theology and in preaching, and yet it is not merely a theme of the *oldest* tradition beginning with scripture: without this doctrine of the sin and the guilt of the individual in its significance for the Church the whole history of penance with its many ramifications from its roots in the Old Testament and the New Testament right into the late Middle Ages becomes quite incomprehensible.

This theme can and must become of really wide-ranging importance in the religious life of the individual and in the 'awakening of the Church in souls'. And how should the consciousness of the Church as '*ecclesia semper reformanda*'[21] be really alive in all its sharpness and depth (where it is a question of a permanent *metanoia* of the Church and not merely of an adaptation 'to the circumstances of the age' of the liturgy, law and pastoral practice), if one instinctively lives only in the consciousness that the individual persons in the Church could be at times imperfect and even sinful but in the case of the Church everything is always all right, because she is without any doubt 'holy' and no shadow of the shortcomings of her members can ever fall upon her?

This subject has also a great ecumenical importance. Protestant theology repeatedly complains that Catholic ecclesiology proceeds too much 'from above', that it sees the Church merely as an objective institution, an 'institute of salvation', and then glorifies this Church in a Luciferian *theologia gloriae*, instead of placing her, as the community of sinners which constantly flees anew from her ever renewed sin to the pure grace of God constantly re-actuated and which is only thus and in so far as she does this truly the Church, in a *theologia crucis* under the cross so that there she may not boast of her glory but acknowledge her sin and thereby [279] alone be 'holy'. Of course a Catholic answer to this 'protest' against a true or a supposed Catholic doctrine of the holiness of the Church, in order to be an adequate answer, has involved the whole Catholic doctrine of the relationship of nature and grace, of the meaning of grace, of the nature of justification, of the truth and falsity of the Lutheran principle '*simul justus et peccator*',[22] of the relationship in Christian existence and in the Church between what is already present and the eschatological reality of the future. But the question how far in our doctrine we really take account of the pilgrim state of the sinful *ecclesia crucis* while acknowledging the holy *ecclesia gloriae*[23] and how far we treat it seriously in our Church life is a weighty question directed to us by Protestant theology. It is for this reason that our topic is also of eminent ecumenical importance.

II

Now the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council is not, and does not attempt to be, an absolutely complete ecclesiology. But neither is it on the other hand a Conciliar document which in order to repel a new heresy singles out one point or another to

[21] Cf. Y. M.-J. Congar, O.P., *Sainte Église,* Unam Sanctam 41 (Paris 1963): 'Comment l'église sainte doit se renouveler sans cesse ?', pp. 131-154 (with many references to the witness of the Fathers and tradition).
[22] Cf. R. Hermann, *Luthers These* '*Gerecht und Sünder zugleich*' (Darmstadt 1960[2]); W. Joest, *Gesetz und Freiheit* (Gottingen 1961[3]); H. Kösters, 'Luthers These "Gerecht und Sünder zugleich" ', *Catholica* XVIII (1964), pp. 48-77; 193-217: (a review and critique of H. Hermann with many bibliographical references).
[23] A notable attempt at a composite view of glory and cross in the image of the Church is to be found in Hugo Rahner, *Die Kirche, Gottes Kraft in menschlicher Schwäche* (Freiburg 1957).

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clarify and defend it. It discusses the Church in general and attempts to give a reasonably balanced and in some way adequate treatment of the nature of the Church. This is immediately evident from the whole structure of the decree and its sequence of chapters, and may also be deduced from the pastoral aim which the decree sets itself which can only be achieved by a certain completeness in its treatment of the topic. For this reason it is not an unfair question, or one making from the outset too great a demand on the document, if we attempt to ascertain what it has to say on the 'Church of sinners'.

In the first place, we must note quite simply, merely pointing out a fact and not making a complaint, that the Constitution on the Church does not treat this question with the explicit clarity, intensity and detail which one could perhaps have expected. This topic did not give rise to a single [280] paragraph, or even to any series of weighty principles. We will attempt to show in what follows, however, that the document does not remain completely silent on this topic, that it does in fact offer some very noteworthy points of departure for a theology of sin in the Church as such. But it can certainly not be said that this question is treated systematically, that it emerges clearly as a 'concern' of the authors of the decree or of the Council, or that the ecumenical importance of the question is made evident in what is said. (It might even be said that the parenetic impulse of the texts, if one may coin this phrase, is in *almost* every case a movement from what is good to what is better in virtue, not from sin and its recognition to an ever renewed reaching out towards pardoning grace, which would be possible even on the supposition of an interior justification, since the justified man always remains a sinner having need of an always new forgiveness by God.) It is in order for us to make this observation if only because in the Council a few Fathers in fact wished for more on this topic, although their suggestion did not make sufficient headway.[24] This fact is perhaps sufficient to show that our observation is not made merely on the basis of an entirely subjective point of view.

On the other hand the fact of a certain deficiency is also understandable; the Constitution was never conceived *from the outset* as the balanced and systematically complete summary of a whole ecclesiology. It grew slowly in an almost accidental way by filling out and adding to the pre-Conciliar schema, which at the beginning after all only set out to treat certain particular topics which were held to be of contemporary interest by that Roman theology which was primarily responsible for it. Furthermore, a [281] more penetrating treatment of this topic would not easily have been able to avoid the question whether and in what sense one could speak not only of a Church of sinners, that is of a Church in which there are those guilty of grave sin and in which all others too are in a certain sense sinners because of 'venial sins' (for example, according to the mind of St Augustine), but whether in fact one could also speak, indeed must speak, of a *sinful Church*, that is to say whether one could and must say this *explicitly*. Considering how matters stand or stood in contemporary theology and especially in the Theological Commission where the decree was elaborated, it would have been too much to hope for that a sufficiently large majority could have been reached in this

[24] These voices did not only make themselves heard among the Fathers in the general emphasis on avoidance by the Church of every form of 'triumphalism'. Council Fathers like Bishop Stefan László (Eisenstadt, Austria) and others expressly demanded that this theme should be dealt with and put forward draft texts. Cf. László's speech, 'Sin in the Holy Church of God' in Y. Congar, etc. (Eds), *Council Speeches of Vatican II* (London & New York 1964), pp. 29-31. It is partly H. Küng's influence which can be recognised here, who already during the time of preparation for the Council drew attention to this subject; cf. e.g. his *Justification*: *the Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (London 1965), [the German original of which was published in 1957]; *The Council and Reunion* (London 1962), pp. 34-52. Cf. also for this question, besides Congar's work already cited (note 21), Ch. Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, 2 vols (Bruges 1941, 1951), vol. I, XIII *sq*.; vol. II, 395 *sq*., particularly 893-894; H. de Lubac, *Katholizismus als Gemeinschaft* (Einsiedeln/Köln 1943), p. 61 *sqq*. The author may perhaps be permitted to draw attention to one or two modest attempts of his own, cf. especially 'The Church of Sinners', reprinted above in this volume.

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question without great difficulty. The awareness of many of the Fathers of the immediate theological and mediate ecumenical and pastoral significance of the problem was simply insufficiently developed for this. And in the traditional ecclesiology of the past century this topic was also not far enough evolved (beyond the doctrine that sinners are members of the Church) as to make it appear to a majority of the Theological Commission or of the Council Fathers self-evidently a topic to be treated expressly. This suffices to explain the fact of the Constitution's reserve regarding this question.

Nevertheless, the decree does not avoid the question completely, even though it does not present it all together in one place as a unified continuous statement. It does after all say so much that it offers to future theology plenty of incentive for development. The following considerations are intended to bring out into the open these possibilities contained in the decree itself.

III

To begin with, let us point out the framework which is in fact given in the Constitution for the doctrine of the Church of sinners: the doctrine of the pilgrim Church. The theme of the Church on the march, still making her pilgrimage through the history of the world and not having here any lasting abode, and so while in this state still bearing the 'form of the world' (no. 48), runs through the whole decree. It is indeed true that the decree in bringing out this aspect of the Church is thinking of her historical character and above all of the fact that she is and must be the Church of poverty, humility, temptation, suffering and persecution, [282] following in this way her crucified Lord. None the less she is clearly seen as *ecclesia peregrinans*, *ecclesia viatorum*, in contrast to the Church of the eternal consummation. And this already implies that the Church is not simply a heavenly entity passing through history as a stranger and untouched by it, not sharing in its life and its sorrow. If in the decree the concept of the people of God with whom God has made a covenant rightly stands in the foreground, almost being preferred to the concept of the 'mystical Body of Christ', and so becomes something of a guide-line for the whole of Conciliar ecclesiology, then with this representation of the Church as the community called together by God room is made or can be made from the beginning for the idea of the Church of sinners much more clearly than if the Church had been seen from the beginning *only* as an 'institute of salvation', which will certainly look after men for their healing, but which is not herself identified with her community (whereas for every individual she is *as* this hierarchically ordered People of God, which is the *fruit* of salvation, also the *means* of salvation).

Within this framework it is in the first place clearly stated that sinners still belong to the Church. The question whether an apostate from the faith still belongs to the Church in the same sense as the believing sinner is passed over. As already stated, in no. 14 the grace of justification is seen also in its significance for incorporation into the Church.[25] In any case,

[25] Provided (a) that the '*Spiritum Christi habentes*' is understood of the grace of justification; and (b) the '*Ecclesiae* societati' is taken not reduplicatively but specificatively, or that these two possibilities remain in the balance. If the Church is intended *precisely as* the visible society, then of course there can be no question of the grace of justification being a constitutive element of incorporation into this society as such, and the '*Spiritum Christi habentes*' is only specificative: not the reduplicative qualification of the subject of the whole sentence ('*Illi*…'). But if '*Ecclesiae societati*' means simply the Church, which is a society (specificative), then the '*Spiritum Christi habentes*' can and must be taken as one of the constitutive elements of 'full' incorporation ('*plene incorporantur*'). The ambiguity of the sentence cannot be avoided by an appeal to the '*plene*', for we can conceive of both a 'full' incorporation into the Church as society and a 'full' incorporation into the Church as a society filled with the *Spirit*, the two of which are not simply identical. If *every* sin did not involve a certain rejection of the Church by the sinner it could not be said that through the Sacrament of Penance a '*reconciliari*

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no. 14 declares clearly that there are men who are incorporated into the [283] Church but are not justified (*in caritate non perseverans*). It is then explained, making use of an 'Augustinian' expression, that they belong '*corpore*' but not '*corde*'[26] to the Church. It is therefore not overlooked that an incorporation which is absolute and in every respect *full* does imply the grace of the Church. And so at any rate it is stated that there are sinners in the Church, in 'her bosom' (*in Ecclesiae sinu*). By the fact therefore that a man is an enemy of God, devoid of grace, given up to the slavery of sin and to the power of the Devil,[27] he does not cease to be 'incorporated' in the society of the Church (*Societas Ecclesiae*).

It is of course true that of itself the above-mentioned '"*corpore*" *quidem*, *sed non* "*corde*" (*in ecclesiae sinu*) *remanere*' permits of many further interpretations.[28] But if one takes into account all aspects of the whole decree and the theological tradition immediately underlying it, one must objectively say that it is a question here of a genuine incorporation which has a positive value for salvation.[29] One might also say that it has the same kind of positive significance for salvation as belongs to a sacrament which has been validly but unfruitfully received (especially baptism), which ought not to have been received in this way, but which can 'revive' and in fact brings with it an obligation and inner dynamism to being revived. This is already involved in the statement that even in the case of the sinner (who is also included in the intention of the whole principle) there is given the *vinculum sacramentorum* (cf. no. 14).[30] But [284] all this implies conversely that these sinners co-determine the 'quality' (if we may use this word) of the Church herself. They still belong after all – and from the point of view of social life even '*plene*' – to the corpus of the Church (*incorporantur*) and are members of the people of God marshalled in the Catholic Church. The Church does not only stand over against them like an institute of salvation which, while remaining itself quite untouched, regrets that its care did not have more success, but must regard these sinners as a part of herself, as her members.[31] Actually, then, the decree

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cum Ecclesia' (no. 11) is brought about. Cf. in connection with these thoughts K. Rahner, 'Forgotten Truths concerning the Sacrament of Penance' in *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 135-174 (with further bibliographical references).

[26] St Augustine, *Bapt. c. Donat.* V, 28, 39 (*PL* XLIII, 197): '*Certe manifestum est id quod dicitur, in Ecclesia intus et foris, in corde, non in corpore cogitandum.*' Cp. also the parallel texts from St Augustine cited in note 12 of the second chapter of the Constitution with the formulation used in the text itself.

[27] Cf. *DS* 1668.

[28] In St Augustine it often has almost the meaning of mere appearance, of something fictitious: chaff on the threshing-floor of the Church. Cf. for this the above-named study by F. Hofmann, *Der Kirchenbegriff des hl. Augustinus* (Munich 1933); J. Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* (Munich 1954); H. U. von Balthasar, *Augustinus*: *Das Antlitz der Kirche* (Einsiedeln 1955[2]). For the continuing existence of similar formulas among the early Scholastics, cf. A. M. Landgraf (see note 4 above), pp. 60-63, 72, 84, 88, 99.

[29] This can be said because this 'incorporation' still signifies a connection with Christ, at least through the *compago visibilis*, through the *vincula professionis fidei, sacramentorum et ecclesiastici regiminis ac communionis* (no. 14).

[30] This statement can of course raise the question whether the baptised person who has become an unbeliever does not also still possess *this* '*vinculum sacramentorum*' and at least in the case of merely 'internal' disbelief, that is disbelief which does not become socially obvious, still have the *vinculum professionis fidei* (which is something else than faith itself) and so is still incorporated into the Church just as much as a mere sinner. It seems that with the majority of theologians we can answer this question without any difficulty in the affirmative, without deviating from the decisions reached in no. 14, because this passage does not concern itself with that question. Cf. K. Rahner, 'Membership of the Church according to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical "Mystici Corporis Christi"' in *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore 1963), pp. 1-88, esp. p. 13 *sq*., and p. 8, note 8.

[31] How far the Constitution on the Church gives us here as in other connections a deeper insight into the significance for salvation of the Church in general, and how far this picture of the Church differs from patristic and medieval ecclesiology and from that which dominated the nineteenth century, would have to be the subject of a special investigation.

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recognises the *fact* that the Church is a sinful Church and not merely that in her (the holy institute of salvation) there are sinners (as object of her ministrations). It is true that the Constitution avoids the expression 'sinful Church'. But it brings out the fact behind the expression, namely that the Church is herself affected by the sins of her members. How exactly this effect upon the Church is to be theologically conceived is a matter about which the decree has nothing to say, so that we must return to this question towards the end of the present article. But that according to the Constitution the Church is affected in this way there can be no doubt. In the first place, it is expressly stated that the sins of Christians 'wound' the Church ('*peccando vulnerare*'). Of course of itself this could be interpreted as meaning that the wounding of the Church consists formally in the (social, public, etc.) *consequences* of sin which are to be found in the Church, not that the Church herself in a *certain* sense is the subject of these sins on the part of her members; in other words that she is only damaged by sin but does not thereby herself become sinful. But it is expressly stated that the *Church* is '*semper purificanda*' (no. 8), that *she* '*poenitentiam et renovationem semper prosequitur*' (no. 8), that *she* '*seipsam renovare non desinat*' (no. 9), which must surely at least [285] include a *moral* renewal,[32] since the whole context makes it clear that the Church by this means is and remains the faithful bride worthy of the Lord. But the Church cannot be the *subject* of her *own* renewal and purification if she was or is not also in the first place and in a certain sense[33] the subject of sin and guilt. It would be a most arbitrary form of hermeneutics to maintain that 'Church' here signifies all of a sudden merely the average mass of individual believers. 'Church' means here what it means everywhere else: simply the Church. She is '*in proprio sinu peccatores complectens*' (no. 8) and therefore has not only external but also internal '*afflictiones et difficultates*' (no. 8), even in the same way ('*pariter*'). It would be quite arbitrary to want to exclude precisely moral afflictions and difficulties.[34]

Quite in accordance with this it is said in no. 65 that the *Church* only in Mary '*ad perfectionem iam*[35] *pertingit, quae est sine macula et ruga*'. So the Augustinian interpretation of Ephesians 5:25-27 is in a certain way taken up and completed here: the *Church* herself as being in a pilgrim state has (apart from Mary) still the '*macula et ruga*'; believers (*Christifideles*)[36] must still '*peccatum devincere*' (no. 65); '*incessanter renovemur*' (no. 7, cf. Ep 4:23). On this basis one can without hesitation understand [286] the following of the Church *herself* where it is said, '*Cum vero in multis offendimus omnes* (cf. Jn 3:2), *misericordiae Dei jugiter egemus atque orare quotidie debemus*: "*Et dimitte nobis debita nostra*" (Mt 6:12)' (no. 40). It is in a way regrettable that the footnotes in the text[37] do not

[32] It is significant that the charisms also serve the 'renovatio *ecclesiae*', as is made clear in no. 12. The permanent necessity for the charisms is thus implicitly presupposed.

[33] This sense must be harmonised with the fact that (a) only physical substances which are free subjects can be the subjects of faults and moral renewal in the strictest sense, and (b) the Church is '*indefectibiliter sancta*' (cf. no. 36). It is always to be kept in mind that if, because of (a), one refuses to admit this wider but true and religiously important sense of 'subject of sin and conversion', it will also be impossible to conceive of the Church as the subject of (subjective) holiness, which is something that must be maintained by reason of the whole theology of the New Testament, the Creed and the rest of tradition.

[34] The '*proprio*' in the passage just quoted from no. 8, '*in proprio sinu peccatores complectens*', is emphasised because it is stated by contrast with Christ who – himself without sin – came to blot out the sins of the people. Cf. also no. 42, where it is stated of *holy* people that they are to be found '*in sinu*' of the Church, which clearly presupposes that their holiness is of some significance for the holiness of the Church.

[35] With this '*iam*' the reference must be to the privilege of Mary's complete sinlessness while she was on earth (*DS* 1516, 1573, 2800 *sqq*.), because in heaven the Church is '*sine macula et ruga*' also in the other saints.

[36] The transition in this sentence (cf. no. 65) from '*Ecclesia*' (first clause) to '*Christifideles*' (second clause) is noteworthy. Clearly the redactors of the text here shrank from saying openly that the *Church* still has to conquer the sin within her and so grow to holiness.

[37] Cf. note 3 of Chapter V (no. 40): references to St Augustine and to '*Mystici Corporis*'.

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refer to the Council of Carthage of 418[38] and to the Council of Trent.[39] For these texts would really be '*loci classici*' compared to those in fact referred to. Nevertheless, the notes on this do draw attention to St Augustine (besides Pius XII); it was this anti-Pelagian conviction 'we are *all* sinners' of St Augustine and of the Council of Carthage (looking back to St Paul in Rm 3:23; 5:18, etc.) which was the reason for St Augustine's declaring the Church herself to be sinful and promising her the perfection 'without spot or wrinkle' only in eternity. But if the Church herself can be seen as being in a certain sense the subject of the guilt of her members, then it also becomes intelligible how she can be understood as the subject of '*tentationes*' (no. 9: '*per tentationes vero . . . procedens ecclesia*'), where the '*tentationes*' must he understood as temptations to sin and not as mere 'difficulties' and 'trials', as they would otherwise be indistinguishable from the '*tribulationes*' named in the same sentence. This being so, it has an ecclesiological significance and is a statement not merely referring to the individual or perhaps even understood individualistically, when it is said of the lay-people in the Church that they have the duty '*regnum peccati in se devincere*' (no. 36), and when the bishops themselves too are regarded as still having the duty '*mores ad bonum commutare*' (no. 26). Precisely in connection with this service towards the erring and ignorant brother is adduced the fact that the Shepherd, who has himself been taken from among men is clothed with weakness (cf. Heb 5:1 *sq*.).

Admittedly the question is not further discussed how the leaders in the Church not only can themselves be sinners but in fact are all such in the Augustinian sense,[40] and above all how this sinfulness inevitably, even though not necessarily in the same degree, has its effect upon the whole exercise of their office and how in this way the Church almost necessarily even in her official sphere is 'sinful' in a quite specific sense: the decree does not go any further into these questions or develop them.

[287] Since it goes beyond the subject matter of this essay, we only briefly point out the fact that the decree again and again brings into prominence the power of the Church constantly to overcome the sin existing within her, a power given her by God in his Spirit through Christ. Her members can and must fight against the Prince of this World (no. 48), they must transform the world which after all also exists in the Church (cf. no. 31; 35), they must conquer sin in themselves (no. 65). In the Church there exists moreover the *ministerium reconciliationis* (cf. no. 28) and the permanent making present and applying of the one, expiatory sacrifice of the cross of Christ (cf. no. 3; 28).

In much the same way the doctrine of the Church of sinners is found explicitly or implicitly in other documents of the Second Vatican Council. In the Decree on Ecumenism (no. 4)[41] it is admitted that for the separated brethren and for the world the face of the Church is 'less' resplendent because of the lack of Christian zeal and so the growth of God's kingdom is retarded. The Church must every day be 'purified and renewed' until she can present herself to Christ at the end 'glorious and without spot or wrinkle'.[42] Therefore there is no hesitation in addressing the Church herself as the subject of purification and renewal, even if that *from which* she must be purified is indicated in somewhat too careful and mild a way (as a want of that '*fervor*' which gives rise to the duty of striving after '*perfectio christiana*'). But in so far as Ephesians 5:27 is interpreted in the Augustinian way, an indication is also given that the want of 'zeal' and the necessity to strive after 'perfection' have as their reason the sin within the Church. In no. 6 there is talk of the '*renovatio Ecclesiae*',[43] of a '*perennis reformatio*'[44]

[38] Cf. *DS* 229-230 (can. 7 and 8).
[39] Cf. *DS* 1537 (Decree on Justification, chapter 11).
[40] Cf. *DS* 229-230, 1573.
[41] *AAS* LVII (1965), p. 95.
[42] *loc. cit.*
[43] *loc. cit.* p. 96.

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of which the Church *qua humanum terrenumque institutum* has constant need, in which is expressly included a reformation '*in moribus*'. But this necessarily involves as the *terminus a quo* a state of sin from which the *Church* must be 'purified' in a permanent 'reformation'. This becomes all the clearer when it is emphasised in this decree that this reformation must begin with the '*interior conversio*'[45] to a '*novitas mentis*' (no. 7).[46]

It is true that a certain timidity becomes evident when the decree explicitly speaks of the sins against unity and of the prayer for forgiveness, [288] where the subject of the sin and of the prayer for forgiveness is 'we' (no longer the Church!) (*ibid*.). Similarly in no. 3[47] the decree only speaks of the fact that the separations from the Catholic Church took place '*non sine hominum utriusque partis culpa*'. Hence there is fault also on the Catholic side, but it is expressly laid at the door only of her 'men', which does not of course exclude a fault on the part of the Church herself, particularly since the persons immediately concerned in *this* fault are the officials of the Church who act juridically in the name of the Church, so that their fault affects the Church as such in a very palpable way.

IV

On the other hand, according to the Constitution on the Church, the Church is '*indefectibiliter sancta*' (no. 39) and therefore is repeatedly called with the Creed simply '*Ecclesia sancta*' (no. 5:8; 26:32 etc.),[48] '*sponsa immaculata*' (no. 6), '*gens sancta*' (no. 9), '*digna sponsa*' (no. 9), '*sacerdotium sanctum*' (no. 10), '*populus Dei sanctus*' (no. 12). How the Church can be *at the same time* the sinful Church of sinners *and* the holy Church is a matter which the Constitution does not really consider explicitly. Certainly the Augustinian solution alone does not suffice, according to which it is the Church in eternity which will be holy 'without spot or wrinkle' and this is applied by way of anticipation to the Church without qualification. It does not suffice, because in this document it is to the earthly Church that the quality of holiness is ascribed.[49] Clearly the meaning of the Constitution is not satisfied by the 'objective' sanctity of her institutions and doctrines either. For reference is repeatedly made to the 'subjective' holiness of her members in this context. The whole of chapter V is evidence of this. But the functions of chapters IV and VI, too, can only be meaningful within the context of the whole decree if the necessity of this 'subjective' holiness is recognised. Hence the Church must be 'subjectively' at once 'holy' and sinful. But how and in what sense this is possible is a question which is not considered in any more precise detail.

[289]It is stated that the Church on earth has a 'vera *sanctitas, licet imperfecta*' (no. 48). One could be led from this into thinking simply that the same is true of her holiness as is true of the holiness of the justified individual: he is truly holy through the grace of justification but his holiness is still in danger and has still to find its fulfilment and perfection.[50] This holiness must still be 'actualised', as it is expressly put in no. 40. One could add that the decree furthermore explicitly presupposes that there are in the Church as a matter of fact such

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[44] *loc. cit.* p. 97.
[45] In no. 8 (*loc. cit.*, p. 98) the expression '*cordis conversio*' is used.
[46] *loc. cit.*, p. 97.
[47] *loc. cit.*, p. 93.
[48] Accordingly the document speaks of the '*sanctitas Ecclesiae*' (cf. nos. 39, 42, 47, 48) and not just of the holiness of individual Christians; cf. also the expression '*sanctitas Populi Dei*' (no. 40).
[49] Cf. for the exegesis of this the bibliography cited in note 4 above.
[50] Cf. for the New Testament H. Küng, 'Rechtfertigung und Heiligung nach dem Neuen Testament' in M. Roesle and O. Cullmann, *Begegnung der Christen, Festschrift für Otto Karrer* (Frankfurt 1960), pp. 249-270.

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justified persons, even persons in a state of great perfection, as chapters V and VI presume and expressly state (cf. e.g. no. 42).

But by establishing that there are in the Church both sinners and just (even perhaps of great perfection), are the two statements really reconciled? The possibility and reality of the reconciliation of these two would become more apparent if one were to take into account that in Mary at least the earthly Church has already reached that '*perfectio*' by which she is 'without spot or wrinkle' (cf. no. 65). But a simultaneous assertion of these two propositions is clearly insufficient. No matter how correct, it would be an evasion in the face of the particular structure of our question. The solution would be too hasty. For the '*indefectibilitas*' of the holiness of the Church (no. 39) does not belong to the holiness of the individual (even with regard to his 'ontological' and subjectively still imperfect holiness).[51] Therefore this '*indefectibilitas*' of the Church's holiness has not yet been made intelligible.

But the very concept clearly signifies that the relationship of sin and holiness in the Church is not the merely external, dialectical one of the juxtaposition of sin and holiness (distributed among different members), but that the holiness of the Church has a precedence over her sinfulness, so that in the eyes of God the ultimately determining predicate of the Church is not her sinfulness but the holiness effected in her by God's eschatological action, the sanctification bestowed upon her by God in Christ which constantly triumphs over sin. For this reason it is impossible simply to transfer to the relationship between the sinfulness and holiness of the Church the relationship between sin and holiness as in a Catholic sense it can be said to exist in the justified individual whom one can also [290] call '*simul justus et peccator*'.[52] Nowhere is it more apparent that the essence of the Church is not merely the sum of her individual members. But it is precisely at this point that the decisive problem is situated, for this proper 'essence' of the Church must not be allowed to give rise to a false 'hypostasisation' of the Church.

But the decree does not reflect on any of these exact distinctions. One can only refer to no. 48, where there is at least a point of departure for the solution of this more precise problem. Through Christ, his incarnation, his cross and his glorification, the eschatological situation is already present. '*Iam* (*ergo*) *fines saeculorum ad nos pervenerunt* (cf. 1 Co 10:11) *et renovatio mundi* irrevocabiliter *est* constituta *atque in* hoc *saeculo* reali *quodam modo anticipatur*: *etenim Ecclesia iam in terris* vera *sanctitate licet imperfecta insignitur*'. But this means in effect:[53] through Christ and his victory upon the cross there is given to redeemed humanity as a whole, and therefore above all to the Church, not only the *possibility* of salvation, but by his grace which is *in fact victorious* there is given and manifested the *realisation* of this possibility. Because the eschatological victory of Christ has brought it about and made it manifest that the *efficacious* (and not merely sufficient) grace of God and Christ is not only possible but is in fact given, and this to the end of time, the Church as a

[51] Cf. *DS* 1541, 1544, 1573, etc.

[52] For '*simul iustus et peccator*' cf. the bibliography cited in note 22 above. For Luther cf. the critical work of W. Joest, 'Paulus und das lutherische Simul Iustus et Peccator' in *Kerygma und Dogma* I (1965), pp. 269-320; for a possible Catholic understanding of this formula cf. H. Küng, *Justification*: *the Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (London 1965); H. U. von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*: *Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie* (Cologne 1962[2]), p. 378 *sqq*. (Cf. also the literature cited there by R. Grosche, A. Kirchgässner, H. Volk); cf. K. Rahner, 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time' in this volume p. 218 *sqq*.

[53] To bring out this connection of subject-matter it would have been more appropriate to make use here (no. 48) of the expression 'indefectibilis *sanctitas*' (no. 39), for it is not just an imperfect though true holiness such as already existed, for example, under the Old Covenant which is the special characteristic of the Church's eschatological situation, but the indefectibility of this holiness (parallel to the charism of indefectibility in truth of the Church's witness as an institutional entity, which also did not exist in the Old Testament, which did not know or possess an 'infallible magisterium').

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whole,[54] through this predestination of efficacious grace made visible in Christ, is preserved [291] by God, antecedently to the actual behaviour of her members, from falling away from the grace and promises of God in any fundamental and essential way. Hence the Church is (even subjectively) 'indefectibiliter *sancta*'. For this reason the relationship of the Church as a whole to justice and sin is not the relationship of a neutral freedom or indifference to two possibilities which are, as it were 'objectively' (from her point of view), on the same level. She is as a whole, from the human point of view, one who is utterly incapable by her own power of performing any saving act or of reaching a state of justice,[55] who is therefore in this sense also sinful; and she is by God's prevenient, efficacious grace to which she has been absolutely predestined one who has been raised to true holiness, even though on earth this divinely bestowed holiness still has to grow. This predestination by God of efficacious grace for the Church as a whole has already superseded man's freedom, without destroying or damaging it, and this has been made manifest in Christ's victory: therefore for the Church, which after all has been brought into being by God and not by men, it is the predicate of holiness which is the decisive and determining factor as opposed to her sinfulness.

Yet the appellation 'the Church of sinners' has a profound meaning. Not only every individual in the Church must truthfully and humbly confess himself a sinner,[56] but also the Church, for she is the community of these sinners. As such a community of sinful men redeemed and organised by Christ (the fruit of salvation), she is also the instrument by means of which God effects the salvation of the individual (the means of salvation). She would not be the really existing people of God but a purely ideal entity, possessing an almost mythological character, if one were to think that the sinfulness of her members did not also determine herself. Only if the Church recognises herself to be the Church of sinners will she be permanently convinced[57] of the fact, and aware of the full [292] force of the obligation it entails, that she has a constant need of being cleansed, that she must always strive to do penance and achieve inner reform (cf. no. 8). Otherwise all demands for reform will become merely presumptious prescriptions and inefficacious desires all of which, while they can perfect the legal system of an institution and develop a pastoral technique on the grand scale, are not in touch with real life, true faith, and the human Church. Once it is kept clearly in mind that the Church on earth is *always* the Church of sinners, then it becomes intelligible how and why she is the holy Church: namely by the grace of God, which alone does not permit the Church as a whole to fall away from God's grace and truth and so makes her indefectibly holy. This grace operates in the Church as such particularly where she actualises her whole essence *fully*, that is in the definitive witness to her faith and in the sacraments.[58]

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[54] Naturally nothing is stated thereby about the individual member of the Church as such. He can suffer the loss of grace and normally does not know whether he will persevere in grace (cf. *DS* 1534, 1540, 1541, 1563 *sq*.). Cf. a few remarks on this by K. Rahner, 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time', above p. 218 *sqq*. Cf. note 52 above.

[55] Cf. *DS* 1541 *sqq*., etc.

[56] Cf. *DS* 229, 230; 1537.

[57] Consciousness of the necessity for such constant renewal need no longer be rejected as suspect since the highest authority in the Church has himself made this element the matter of his concern: cf. the allocution of Paul VI '*ad Emmos Patres Cardinales, Exmos Praesules, Revmos Praelatos ceterosque Romanae Curiae Officiales*' in *AAS* LV (1963), pp. 793-800, e.g. '*…ma trova la Curia stessa all'avanguardia di quella perenna riforma, di cui la Chiesa stessa, in quanto istituzione umana e terrena, ha perpetuo bisogno*' (p. 797); cf. the talk about '*perenne rinnovamento*' (*ibid*.); cf. also Julius Cardinal Döpfner, *Die Reform als Wesenselement der Kirche* (Würzburg 1965).

[58] The official life of the Church and its functions in doctrine, cult, sacraments, government and ecclesiastical discipline need not necessarily possess without further qualification under all circumstances and in every condition the same quality of eschatological indefectibility which we must ascribe to the Church as a whole. For the meaning of this question, its answer and its consequences, cf. K. Rahner, 'The Church and the Parousia of

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Since ultimately this is always and in every individual case the work of efficacious, unmerited grace, and not at man's free disposal, that 'actualistic' element in the being and action of the Church which Protestant theology quite falsely finds wanting in Catholic ecclesiology is in fact present in a Catholic understanding of the Church. Even the most 'objective' and most 'institutional' element in the Church is only accomplished, and rightly accomplished from every point of view, under the grace of God. And if the Church is holy not only institutionally but also 'subjectively' and her holiness is a reality already present here and now, and not a mere juridical claim or an eschatological hope for future credit, then God gives this holiness to the Church *in so far as* he grants to her and her members the possibility and the reality of constantly fleeing from their sinful state to the mercy of God which alone makes holy.

[293]

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Christ', below p. 295 *sqq*., particularly the third section, p. 305 *sqq*. The ideas developed in that essay are also in other ways the basis of the present article and can serve to complete it and exclude misunderstanding of it.

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[295]

19

THE CHURCH AND THE PAROUSIA OF CHRIST

While the title chosen for this systematic paper is 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', the word 'Parousia' can and must be understood as including all those events of the divinely effected consummation which in Catholic theology are customarily comprised in the phrase 'The Last Things', and not only that particular moment of them which we call the 'Second Coming of Christ'. This is justified not merely by the fact that it is scarcely possible to establish a special relationship of the Church, her nature and her existence, to the Second Coming of Christ as such in the narrower sense alone, but also by the fact that the reality of the Second Coming which can be expressed in dogmatic terms, in so far as it can and must be distinguished from its mode of expression, is scarcely separable from the Last Things as a whole, as long as these are thought of (as is naturally the case here) in their relationship to the fulfilment of the whole world's history and not merely to the fulfilment of the individual as such. For otherwise we could only say of the Parousia of Christ that it is nothing more than the completion of history (Christ's, humanity's, and the world's) in God, in so far as it is then evident to all (because all have reached their end in the finality of being saved or lost) that the reality of the crucified and risen Christ who 'comes again', in so far as all come before him, is the beginning of, and the continuing reason for, the irreversibility of the history of salvation, its central meaning and its climax.[1] Therefore in so far as we are here practically identifying the [296] Parousia with the Last Things as the consummation of the whole history of humanity and of the world (so including the return of Christ, the resurrection of the body, the universal judgement, eternal life in the vision of God, damnation, the new Heaven and the new Earth as aspects of the final cosmic completion), we are also presupposing that the really basic Christian understanding of the history of salvation recognises in it a genuine temporal order, the real inclusion of the whole man (body, soul, and world) in salvation and a dialectical identity in difference in man as an individual person and as a member of human society. This leads us to conclude, however, that the Last Things, as truly still awaited, are to be understood as still lying in the future in a genuine, even 'worldly', temporal order. The question here is therefore that of the relationship of the Church to the Parousia and the completion of the history of salvation and of the world, understood in that sense. Hence also the theme of our whole consideration is not the Parousia of Christ, but the relationship of the Church to the Parousia. It must of course be admitted that not all aspects of this relationship are here considered. For example, the question of the proximity or remoteness of the Parousia can be understood to be as much a part of the question of the relationship of the Church to the Parousia as a part of the question of the Parousia in itself; but we do not treat of it here.

I

[1] If on the one hand we consider what can be objective 'in itself' in a return of Christ and what must be imaginative representation of it in the biblical and traditional accounts (cf. K. Rahner, 'The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions' in Theological Investigations IV (London & Baltimore 1966), pp. 323-346), and on the other hand do not forget that men's 'coming before' the glorified Christ by their own (personal and collective) completion is itself an act of God in Christ, then this statement can be accepted without hesitation. But it is important, because the second coming of Christ, if it is not to be understood mythologically, cannot be a renewed entry of Christ into our dimension of space and time as we now know it, but the elevation of this dimension into its glory. And that is exactly what this sentence is trying to say.

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The Church is the community, called together by God's grace in Jesus Christ, of those who in hope and love believe in the Parousia of Christ as still to come. By this proposition we do not intend to imply, on the one hand, that the nature of the Church is thereby adequately determined, particularly since belief, while essentially *always* eschatological, can also make its appearance in forms in which it is not yet a faith fully expressed, immediately related to the incarnate Word, or put into the concrete form of a common profession, through which alone it is in the proper sense constitutive of the Church. On the other hand, this proposition is [297] intended to express an essential element of the Church: this faith which hopefully awaits the return of Christ is not merely something which the Church teaches and mediates to individual men for their individual salvation, but is a constitutive element of the Church as such. The Church is after all not merely a means of salvation, an institution for salvation, but herself a fruit of salvation, a community of faith, and she is a means of salvation precisely in so far as she is also a community of faith. But this faith with its concrete profession in cult and social life is precisely faith in the Parousia, because belief in the one living God, in the incarnation of God, the self-communication of God to his creature in the forgiving and divinising grace of Christ, is essentially not belief in a perpetually valid, static truth and reality, but faith in the sense of acceptance, made possible by the action of God, of a saving *event* which is now already taking place but is not yet finished, so that it can be accepted by the believer as having happened only by his reaching forward in hope to its fulfilment. The Church would therefore understand herself falsely as a mere saving institution and only as a means of salvation, were she not to think of herself in her first and fundamental self-realisation and accept herself as the community of those who hope, those who are waiting, of pilgrims who still seek their own homeland, of those who understand and master their present in terms of the future.

If the Church is to understand herself as the fruit of salvation and as a community of faith in this sense, then she must always understand herself as still provisional, as still looking for her fulfilment, as overcoming herself, since indeed we call the fulfilment which she seeks no longer Church, but the kingdom of God. Inasmuch therefore as she recognises herself to be the intimation and sacrament of final salvation which is already present in her even if it is accessible only to the eyes of faith and hope, she ought never to misunderstand herself to the extent of thinking that her present form is the ultimate one, or that her historical dimension affects in the last analysis only the individual for whom she is the means of salvation, or that while her present form will one day pass away, namely at the Parousia, yet between Pentecost and Parousia it has no history.[2] If even the last alone were the case, then the Church as such [298] would not primarily be the community of pilgrims in faith and hope, but merely a static, unchanging instrument of salvation which, being itself without history, would merely be applied to individuals and their salvation.

It is true that the Church has something which remains permanent throughout history, because she has a real essence which will be annulled not by history but by its abolition, and because she is the fulfilled sacrament of final salvation, at once hearing God's exhibitive word of grace and salvation as present and herself being this word, the two in mutual

[2] This formal and abstract sentence does not convey much in its empty abstraction. We admit this. It would have to be materially filled out in a genuine theology of Church history. One would have to show from the Church's history, for example, that it can be no part of a Catholic understanding of the Church (and is in no way justified by ecclesiastical history) that the Church is becoming ever 'more perfect', that she 'unfolds' her essence and her faith always 'better', but that, if she has a history directed to the Parousia, she can also be seen and experienced dispassionately as the Church which grows old, for which every 'development' (which really takes place) signifies at the same time a symptom of old age, the danger of losing herself in details and matters of secondary importance or in a too self-reliant entrenchment in this aeon.

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interdependence; but even this permanent and indestructible element she has in a really genuine historical form which changes, which must always be sought anew, which must be endured in its historical originality and contingence, and whose transformation, while always both aim and result of the action of men obedient to the Word of God, is yet never adequately calculable in advance.

Therefore the Church, if only she be rightly understood, is living always on the proclamation of her own provisional status and of her historically advancing elimination in the coming kingdom of God towards which she is expectantly travelling as a pilgrim, because God for his own part is coming to meet her in the Parousia and her own pilgrimage, too, is taking place in the power of Christ's coming. The essential nature of the Church consists in pilgrimage towards the promised future.

II

Yet the Church has a quite special relationship to the fulfilment of created reality and history and therefore to the Parousia of Christ, and one which is different from other created beings, because she is herself an eschatological reality; that is to say, the future fulfilment, notwithstanding its being still to come, is in her already a present event, so that she makes her pilgrimage in a certain sense in her end to her end and in her faith is [299] conscious of this her unique – in fact eschatological – situation in such a way that this element belongs also to the faith which is constitutive of her being.

1. In the first place, the Church is herself an eschatological entity in the sense that she is the Church of those graced by Christ's Holy Spirit and this bestowal of grace upon her members is of her very essence. For notwithstanding the uncertainty of salvation for the individual[3] and the fact that it is always in peril, and notwithstanding the Catholic doctrine that even sinners belong to the Church, the Church cannot be conceived as a purely external religious organisation. She is the Body of Christ precisely to the extent that her members are graced with Christ's Spirit, and this possession of the Spirit is one of the most essential constitutive elements of the Church. And so our understanding of the nature of the Church depends essentially on our understanding of what we call justification, sanctification, being anointed and sealed with the Holy Spirit, participation in the divine nature, indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, the New Creation. It will be readily understood that we cannot expound here in this connection the whole of Catholic doctrine on grace as supernatural, divinising and justifying (imparting pardon), bestowed upon man in Jesus Christ through faith, hope and charity and by baptism, or even further to clarify it from an apologetic point of view, although it is of course true that only this way could an adequate understanding of the essence of the Church in the Catholic sense and of her relationship to the Parousia be achieved. Here we intend to confine ourselves to saying at least a little about this, that as a consequence of the Catholic doctrine of justification the Church herself appears as an eschatological entity.

Sanctifying justification, *as* the supernatural self-communication of God to man which really takes place in the event of justification and is not merely promised as a future and still completely outstanding gift, is itself already in truth and reality the gift of eternal life, precisely that in which eternal life as the fulfilment of man and his history will consist: God himself, who in his grace has given himself into man's possession, for [300] this grace is in

[3] This is not the place to expound more precisely the teaching on the uncertainty of salvation for the individual (cf. *DS* 1541, 1566) and to reconcile it 'dialectically' with the '*firmissima spes*' which the Christian may and should also have. The only point here is that we should recognise that the situation of the individual and the situation of the Church as a whole (or the situation of all Christians understood distributively and the situation of all Christians understood collectively) are not the same.

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the last analysis nothing else than God communicating himself and making himself the principle and object of life for the spiritual creature. Christianity of course rejects the doctrine that from the beginning God's life is itself man's own fundamental being, so that he only has to come to himself in order to be with God, but Christianity, at least in the Catholic understanding of it, unmistakably teaches that God gives himself even now with his own, infinite glory into the possession of him who believes and loves; that he offers this his own life as source and object of a creature's life at all times to every man, even – in virtue of his universal salvific will – to sinners, though out of pure grace and love, so that man as he in fact exists inevitably meets in the history of his essential fulfilment the God of eternal life in Christ Jesus, provided that he does not by a deliberate fault deny his own being and its concrete history. And in so far as justifying grace is in the Catholic understanding of it not merely any kind of forgiveness of sin or justification or equipment for a positively moral act which pleases God, but in the last analysis God communicating himself in his whole inexpressible glory and fullness of life, so is this grace fundamentally an unsurpassable and therefore definitive and in this sense eschatological constitution of man. It is ultimately no merely creaturely condition of man on the basis of which and by means of which he seeks a coming constitution which still lies wholly in the future, which he might perhaps already foresee and long for in a purely mental way as something not yet existing. It is the arrival of his definitive future which precisely as already given bears his history in which he accepts and takes possession of this his future. However much the Catholic doctrine of the universal salvific will of God forces us to say with regard to all sinners that this movement in the end towards the end is possible to all men at least in principle by the grace which is offered to all men, the knowledge in faith and the acceptance of this eschatological situation of all men is itself again made possible and supported by the same grace.[4] To that extent it belongs itself to the eschatological situation of men and together [301] with the offer of God's communication of himself to all men constitutes that eschatological reality in which the justification of the explicitly believing Christian and with it the inner reality of the Church herself consists. This eschatological, final and essentially unsurpassable bestowal of grace upon man by God's self-communication, which is explicitly grasped and proclaimed in Christian faith, is naturally to be understood as at once supernaturally divinising and justifying the sinner by forgiveness, and in this its unity it constitutes that eschatological gift by which the Church is what it is.

2. This eschatological, unsurpassable and irrevocable self-offer of the Blessed Trinity to mankind is not only fundamentally unsurpassable as the communication of God himself and not only irrevocable through the incarnation of the Word of God remaining eternally valid and through the resurrection of the Son, so that the Judgement too takes place precisely by reason of the unrepentant salvific will: this self-offer is also eschatological and thereby constitutive of the nature of the Church in so far as this self-offer produces by its own power (through the pre-defining power of grace) its acceptance in fact on the part of mankind and for its part guarantees this acceptance to be final and, as *victory* of God's love, irrevocable. The victorious self-communication of God, not only proffered but *accepted* in faith, hope and love by the power of grace, is itself as eschatological and victorious a part of the content of that faith by which the Church herself is constituted, confesses with praise the victory of God over the sin of the world, and thereby already here and now lends to this victory an historical and in a certain sense sacramental presence and accessibility in the world. The Church is

[4] In so far as the acceptance of grace in faith and love is itself not only the history of man's reaction to God's offer of grace but the history of grace as such, it is clear even from this that talking about the eschatological movement of history to the goal *in* the goal itself is quite compatible with a true being-in-the-future or with a true 'not-yet' of the goal. But the converse is also true: the being-still-to-come of the future does not nullify its pure presentiality. For the doctrine of grace, at least in the Catholic understanding of it, states that God is in his *self*-communication the principle of the movement to the goal which is *himself*.

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constituted thereby as the community of those who believe and confess that God's grace as love which forgives and communicates God himself is really victorious in the world and that its victory in the free acceptance of that love by man is itself the work of God's self-communication in grace.

In so far as this faith confessing the eschatological victory of the grace of God is itself an element in this victory and not merely a polite answer on the part of man to an act of God which as such does not yet include this reaction of the creature but is synergistically added to it, the Church believes and confesses that this eschatological victory of God's communication of himself happens, even if not exclusively in her, yet precisely *also* in her and upon her. For the Church is the community whose faith proclaims this victory and this in such a way that the proclamation of the [302] final and irrevocably initiated victory of God, and not merely the victory itself, can no longer disappear from the history of mankind. But if this proclamation of faith in the victory, as that faith made concrete in history, is itself invincible and an inner constitutive element of the victory itself and at the same time of the Church, then the Church must necessarily be one which confesses of herself in praise of God's grace that in her the acceptance of the divine self-communication, that is the justification of man, is indefectible and that her faith in it as the historical presence of this victory can never disappear. To this extent therefore the Church professes of herself an indefectibility of her holiness and faith. Whether, in what way, and under what conditions this indefectibility of the Church in love, hope and faith which derives from her ultimate nature is and must be also a characteristic trait of the institutional and of the official in her, is a question which cannot and need not be further considered at this point of our discussion, although it is to be suspected that only this new question would touch the real apologetic problem. The Church is therefore not merely that reality which moves in the end to the end, but at the same time and because of it that whose movement both signifies and proclaims the permanence of this movement in the end and by means of both these together represents that eschatological entity which waits upon the Parousia of the Lord as future by bearing in herself the Parousia of the Lord as present, so that present and future mutually bear one another out of the event of Christ which happened once and for all in the 'past' and remains eternally valid in the incarnation of the Word of God, the death and resurrection of Christ.

3. What we have said under I and II, 1-2, is simultaneously true and possible in so far as God's communication of himself to mankind is accepted and possessed by the Church through the power of grace in that particular way which must be described as faith, in distinction to unveiled contemplation, and as hope, as reaching out to what is still in the future, and thereby leads to the received grace of everlasting life the peculiar characteristic of hiddenness. The hiddenness of grace as the life of eternity already given here and now and the possession of this life as faith and hope in distinction to unhidden possession mutually condition one another and constitute in their unity the peculiar note of the eschatological situation of the Church. Yet they permit of being described in some way one after the other.

God's communication of himself to man is hidden to the extent that [303] in the phase and situation of its free, historical acceptance by man's vital act it is not given to him as something with which he can be concerned in its own reality as the immediate object of his own spiritual self-realisation, that is by immediate vision and unmediated community, but as the principle (even though known by the word of faith) of his obedient intercourse with the objects of the world, personal and otherwise, which are distinct from God. The man of grace moves towards the goal precisely and only as far as this goal is itself the principle of his movement towards the goal. Faith and hope, therefore, although built upon God as their principle, are 'only' faith and hope, as distinct from the vision which possesses and enjoys immediately, and they give to God's communication of himself as received and accepted the characteristic of hiddenness to the extent that faith is always mediated by the categorial word

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of faith (*fides ex auditu*) and therefore does not permit man's absolute transcendental dependence on the life of the Blessed Trinity by its real communication of itself to be for him given in itself. Therefore hope, too, although it is borne by the hoped-for itself and only so can be hope, can represent the hoped-for to itself only in the categorial word about it. Movement in the end to the end becomes faith and hope through the objectification brought about in the world of what is already really possessed in faith and hope, and only because of this necessary categorial objectification in the world can the divine self-communication still be accepted by an historical, free decision of man. This for its part is demanded not only by the dignity of the free human person who is to be favoured with God's life and by the proper nature of the divine life which is to be communicated, which is personal free love and of itself calls for a similar answer, but also and above all by the ultimate structure of the divine economy of salvation, which is built upon that Christ who freely and in obedience became man precisely because in that way God can appear in the finite as what he really is and freely wants to be in our regard.[5]

By the hiddenness of the divine self-communication in grace which is already here and now the gift of eternal life, and by the particular character of the acceptance of this divine self-communication as an acceptance in faith and hope, the real eschatological presence of the future as final and irrevocable and as such definitively accepted is not suppressed but rather [304] confirmed. For faith and hope are not merely human attitudes towards something to come, and therefore only promised, but they are man's personal self-realisation, the ultimate and most necessary principle for whose being and actualisation is the grace of God itself. But this is not any kind of aid given to an act which would still be merely human and creaturely and rob the aid and the divine word of revelation of its power by making it subject to the *a priori* of human nature. The grace of faith and hope in the last analysis (leaving out of account creaturely and necessary effects of grace which can rightly in their turn be called grace) is God himself making it possible by his communication of himself to man for his act to remain truly human and yet to be the hearing and the uttering of the Word of God as such and not merely of the response to it within the horizon of mere finitude and merely human-spiritual transcendence; this self-communication of God as the reason for hope results in man's hope grasping not merely the *concept* of a future hoped-for object within the horizon of human desire but the hoped-for object itself.

In so far as faith and hope have what is believed and hoped for, namely the God of eternal life, as the inner principle of faith and hope and to that extent experience in the act of believing and hoping this *a priori* principle of faith and hope itself notwithstanding its necessary categorial mediation through the human word, and although it is not represented objectively in its own self, we must without hesitation speak of an experience of grace, of revelation, and of faith. In it the Church is not only in fact given the eschatological gift by which she is herself constituted but this is experienced. The Church is the community of those who already possess the eschatological gift which is God himself, who in full liberty really accept this possession, who confess in faith that this possession and its acceptance has been caused by the free action of God's love, and who hope for the unveiling of this possession by the power contained within it. She belongs therefore to the present time in so far as she is still moving towards the goal by faith and hope, that is in so far as she must still let the Parousia of Christ come upon her, and at the same time she belongs to eternity, as she moves towards her end in virtue of the future which has already arrived.

The Church's experience of herself as the community which possesses the eschatological

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[5] Cf. the author's 'Current Problems in Christology' in *Theological Investigations* I (London & Baltimore 1961), pp. 149-200; and 'On the Theology of the Incarnation' in *Theological Investigations* IV (London & Baltimore 1966), pp. 105-120.

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good of salvation 'only' in faith and hope is naturally not only an experience of faith and hope to the extent that what is really believed and hoped is experienced through the mediation of human [305] categorial objectivity in a way which is itself again merely abstract. This mediation is a concrete historical one and signifies for faith and hope real darkness, trouble, constancy in the face of always new and unforeseen situations, of contradiction on the part of unbelief, of despair, of a future Utopia conceived within the limits of this world. In brief, the concrete history of the Church is the means by which the transcendental experience in faith and hope of grace as the divine life itself is objectified and so becomes in the concrete the object of man's saving decision. And this history of the Church's experience is therefore at once a means and a temptation for faith and hope. If one were to deny to history a positive function as a means one would fundamentally be disputing that in her explicit confession of faith, which is after all part of the dimension of history, the Church is herself again a work of grace and not only a merely human reaction to a grace which remains meta-historical. If one were to deny in this history the character of temptation for faith (in theory or in practice), then the Church would be regarded fundamentally as the manifest presence of God in the world and faith and hope would become an evident possession of eternal life, which could at the most be hidden in some way by that human history which remains extrinsic to salvation and its possession and does not play any part in the history of salvation as such.

III

In this third section we would like at least briefly to touch upon a question which was left open in the previous section, namely the question what exactly is the relationship of the Church as institution and official ministry to the Church as eschatological entity. The eschatological character of the Church was after all developed from the concept of the Church as the fruit of salvation, not so much from the Church as means of salvation. Now these two aspects are essentially interdependent, even though they cannot be simply identified with one another. For the Church is at least in part the means of salvation precisely in so far as she is the believing and confessing community, constituted by the predetermining power of God's grace, of those who glory in the triumphant grace of God's divinising and forgiving self-communication to mankind and who with missionary zeal as 'God's co-workers' in the service of grace move men precisely through this confession of faith to accept divine grace. On this ground alone there can be no adequate distinction between the Church as the [306] institutional means of salvation and the Church as the fruit of salvation.

But since there is an official ministry in the Church and this and its functions cannot be simply identified in a Donatist fashion with the Church as grace, the question of the relationship between the Church as institution and the Church as fruit of salvation, that is as the eschatological being-present of final salvation, is not yet answered by what was said above in the previous section about the Church as an eschatological entity. The distinctions which it is necessary to make between faith as officially proclaimed and faith as existentially accepted in a way conducive to salvation, between the valid sacramental sign and the sacrament as in fact effectively productive of grace, between the institutional and the charismatic structure of the Church, between the Church which as a whole is certain of salvation and preserved in faith and love by God's grace, predetermined to be effective, and the individual who notwithstanding his external membership of the Church can be a sinner and destined to perdition, these show that the official ministry and its functions in the Church in teaching, cult, sacrament, administration and ecclesiastical discipline, do not without further qualification possess in all cases and under all conditions the same quality of

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eschatological indefectibility which we must ascribe to the Church as a whole. If the Church's indefectibility in faith and love (in each case of course in its own way) belongs to the Church in so far as she is herself the fruit of salvation and it is from this that we must ultimately deduce theologically an indefectibility of her official ministry,[6] then it becomes evident from the distinction we have just indicated between the Church as means of salvation and the Church as community of salvation, that absolutely speaking one must also assume in the Catholic understanding an indefectibility of the official ministry in *all* its functions, although in each case in a specifically different way; but at the same time it is permissible to view this indefectibility in so far as it is predicated of the official ministry, the institution and thereby [307] of the historically tangible form of the Church, as a peripheral instance of the Church (which to be sure really occurs concretely and tangibly according to the Catholic understanding of the Church), instead of, as is usually done in Catholic theology, developing fully this indefectibility only in relation to the *teaching office* of the Church and then setting up that indefectibility as the normal case and interpreting other acts of the teaching office which are lacking in that indefectibility (which in the case of teaching is called infallibility) as peripheral instances.

Nevertheless, and this at the moment is the decisive fact, there is an indefectibility of the Church also in her institutional office and not merely of the Church as an eschatological community of salvation. Yet this indefectibility, as we may legitimately say within a Catholic understanding of the Church, has its *raison d'être* in the Church as community of salvation. For not only can the former in fact be deduced from the latter, as we intend to show immediately, but the limits of the indefectibility of office become thereby understandable, whereas they would remain incomprehensible if this indefectibility were conceived purely and exclusively as the formal equipment given to the Church's office by God's juridical commission. Finally, only in this way does it become comprehensible why the Church ascribes to herself in her office such an indefectibility which she denies to the office in the Old Testament Church which was also originally founded by God.

In the Catholic understanding of the matter, the indefectibility of the eschatological community of salvation also gives rise to an indefectibility of the office of the Church because this office (as a teaching and pastoral office) was founded by Christ as an authoritative factor within the Church on which the faith, cult and action of the Church depend and must depend, while the community of salvation would in its faith and life, at least in the tangible dimension of history, cease to be the historical presence and visible victory of Christ's grace either if it could in principle and essentially as a whole be torn apart from Christ, his truth and his love *by* its official ministry, or if in order to prevent this happening it had to revolt and separate itself in principle from the official ministry and its historical legitimation.

In this way, however, we already have as well an indication in principle of the limits of the indefectibility of this office in regard to its teaching, sanctifying and pastoral power: such an official act participates in the indefectibility of the community of salvation if and in so far as it would, [308] were it not itself indefectible, in safeguarding the structure of the Church tear her away from Christ so that the Church as an historical phenomenon would cease to be the eschatologically indefectible community of salvation. But this would happen if the highest

[6] In saying this we are not denying that an ultimate indefectibility of the Church's official ministry can be derived from those texts of the New Testament which speak directly about the Church's office, of its mission and its function within the Church. But if the question is then asked *why* such an indefectibility belongs to this office in the New Covenant although no such indefectibility ever belonged to any office up to then in the history of salvation in spite of its being positively led and guided by God, even when that office was bestowed by God himself, then the only possible answer is that here it is a question of an office in a Church which is itself the *eschatological* fruit of salvation and as such (but only as such) cannot be other than indefectible.

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teaching and pastoral office of the Church were to make use of its highest teaching and pastoral authority over the whole Church with a force definitively binding upon all with the fullest obligation, and in doing so were to contradict the truth and the salvific will of Christ to such an extent that the acceptance and the following of such an act would place the universal Church as a whole in unambiguous contradiction to Christ, and so into absolute error as 'No' to his truth or as 'No' to his unifying and sanctifying love. The canonical determination and making precise of this principle which. enables us to accept an official act of the Church as indefectible by faith in her and in her eschatological indefectibility, no longer falls within the framework of these considerations. But from the stated point of departure it is possible to recognise clearly the limits of this indefectibility of the Church in the various forms of official action. Where it is not a question of a definitively and irreversibly posited official act of the universal Church it does not necessarily and with the certitude of faith have in itself the prerogative of indefectibility of the Church. And in so far as the Church as still in a pilgrim-state, waiting, hoping, must also be the tempted and tried Church in order that her relationship to the realisation of salvation which is already given in her should be one of faith and of hope, in fact tempted by her pilgrim existence itself, the acts which do not possess this indefectibility necessarily and inevitably belong to her pilgrim existence in faith and hope.

From here we would really have to reflect more accurately than is usually the case in Catholic ecclesiology on the fact that these indefectible and defectible self-realisations of the Church, specifically those of her official ministry, make their appearance in the concrete existence of the Church and the Christian presence in a way which does not really permit the reflection which accompanies historical existence to make an *absolutely* clear-cut division between these two acts. Unfortunately it is impossible to discuss this point further here, much as it would undoubtedly contribute to a notable softening of polemical opposition between the Christian confessions. At least let us note that even according to the Catholic conception an 'infallible' definition, for example, of Pope or Council does not necessarily signify that this definition must be opportune [309] from every point of view, that is that its content must be easily capable of assimilation by the mass of the faithful in the historical situation of that time or that it must be particularly conducive to the accomplishment of the act of faith as a unified whole. Nor does a definition as infallible necessarily rule out the possibility that the way in which it is in fact understood in a determinate historical situation may be charged in spite of every clarity and precision in its formulation with associated interpretations, imaginative categories, practical consequences, and so on, which do not in any way participate in the infallibility of the definition, which render its acceptance in faith more difficult or even perhaps impossible for certain hearers without any subjective fault on their part, and which can only in a later historical situation of the Church be clearly and explicitly distinguished from that which was really and properly meant in the definition. The clearest proclamation of the principles of moral theology as guide-lines for actuating love for God and our neighbour still leave the individual and the Church to a large extent in the dark as to *how* they should be applied in the concrete situation: what concrete profession the individual should take up (although this can determine his eternal salvation); how the dialectically opposed principles of mildness and severity in the bringing up of children, of zeal and tolerance in public life, and so on, should in the concrete be combined and at the same time be respected; what attitude the Church should concretely and practically take up to world-powers which are hostile to Christ; what is really right in evaluating A B C warfare. There are innumerable obscurities of this and a similar kind in the life of the Church and of the individual Christian. The *Quaestiones Disputatae* of moral theology are really not concerned with mere subtleties which have no practical significance. The theories of the 'moral systems' which have been devised to solve such obscurities also do not take us much further because these theories in their turn are obscure in themselves and in their application. One cannot

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even console oneself with the thought that these obscurities cannot compromise one's salvation as long as goodwill is there. For it could be the case that one could more easily and more clearly become aware of the fact that one does not perhaps possess this goodwill at all, if a bad will were not able so easily to hide behind theoretical obscurities.

All these small indications which are really self-evident are here intended only to draw attention to one fact: the doctrine of the indefectibility of the teaching and ruling office does not imply at all that the [310] Church and the individual Christian wander idly from one clear certitude to another. Despite this indefectibility, Church and Christian must laboriously make their pilgrimage through the obscurity of this aeon, and for both there ultimately remains only one thing: trust in the grace of God alone. The Catholic doctrine of the indefectibility of the official ministry and its acts in determinate circumstances does not therefore in any way imply that this area can be so circumscribed as to make it from every possible viewpoint utterly and clearly distinct from all that is defectible in the Church, that according to the Catholic understanding there is, so to speak, a piece of the Church which is clearly distinct from everything else as purely the divinely founded Church of sure salvation and of the absolutely unobscured truth and love of Christ.

IV

Our treatment of the subject of the Church and eschatology would be left incomplete if we did not also cast a glance at those this-worldly future hopes and Utopias which exist today in a way and with an urgency which was impossible in earlier ages. Obviously even in earlier times man was a being who could and had to fashion his life actively in freedom. But in earlier times, and particularly at the time of the origin of Christianity, the area of man's capacity springing from his inner nature of freely and actively fashioning his own being was so narrowly limited and so well within his range of vision, that its possibility for the future had in practice to be experienced as the more or less near present. Man could at that time have only an inner attitude of surrender or protest against a fate laid upon him in point of fact simply by nature: he could not really be the active, creative designer and planner of himself, the world he lived in, and so also of a more remote future. But this is something which he can do today. He does not just more or less accept Nature as his world, but he changes it and fashions it into that world which he has of his own accord determined to live in. Nature is no longer merely the given unalterable stage upon which he acts out his being, including the history of his salvation and damnation, but the mere material, the quarry, out of which he first constructs the scenery in the midst of which as expressing his own self-understanding he wants to live out his historical existence. The practical possibilities of such an active self-realisation in the active transformation of the human sphere of existence are today perhaps still [311] very limited: but this future has begun, and there is an enormously increased area of the future which man anticipates in his planning.

Christianity must come to meet this really new experience of man's existence; it cannot be mastered immediately and adequately from the New Testament alone, for such an existential experience did not exist at that time to any notable extent. The Church as the eschatological community of salvation living in the faith and the hope of a future which is the gift of God himself and which is not designed and created by man, must come to terms with this new existential experience of modern man to whom is opened both for himself as an individual and for mankind as a whole a real and extensive future which can be foreseen, planned and realised. This will mean in the first place, that Christianity should recognise the fundamentally Christian roots of this situation of modern man and so accept it as being itself genuinely Christian. In point of fact this situation has a Christian origin, firstly because

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Christianity of its very essence conceives the totality of reality primarily as history and Nature as one element of this, and not *vice versa*; secondly, because Nature as truly created and thereby as *not* divine and the role of God as the personal partner of man signify that it is not a numinous Nature but the Word of God and man himself who are the real representatives of God in the world and that Nature is in reality that which man is to make subject to himself, because it is nothing else than the continuation of his bodiliness and therefore reaches its fulfilment in him and his history: it is not the other way about, man ultimately sharing the extra-human and infra-human destiny of Nature.

Once the Christian antecedents of man's new situation as *homo faber sui ipsius et mundi* are seen in spite of all the *hybris* and corruption which surrounded this new understanding of existence at its birth and still surrounds it today as it continues upon its both beneficial and harmful way, then Christianity must unhesitatingly recognise that future plans and future utopias within this world are not only from the Christian standpoint legitimate, but are the destiny which God's providence has assigned to man, in the carrying out and suffering of which alone can he live his Christian calling genuinely and completely today. Only on this condition can Christianity say to the man of today that his future, too, stands under the sign of creatureliness, of sin, of law, of death, of pointlessness and of redemption by Christ and that this future, too, is redeemed and sanctified and given its own proper meaning by the fact that it is [312] already overtaken by the future of Christ come upon us and by the divine self-communication, and that therefore this future too, if it is to bring man his salvation, must happen in the *kairos* of Christ. But the Church must see (and live out) the fact that she is not the true and credible eschatological community of salvation by being the resentful, ineffectual and fearful host of those who deny themselves the greatness, the duty and the danger of this world of the future or who have taken up towards it an attitude which regards it exclusively as material, indifferent in itself for the practice of Christian virtue, material without any of that original, worldly value which precisely as secular and worldly must be accepted by the Christian as a Christian without again sublimating its worldliness in a religious sense. What all this signifies more precisely in the concrete, how in this situation the different Christian professions each have their own specific tasks, opportunities and dangers of failure, cannot be considered any further here. But this will have to happen, if the Church's understanding of herself as the eschatological salvation-community to which God has given himself and which still waits for his kingdom, is today not to be misinterpreted by the Church herself and misunderstood by non-Christians.

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[313]

B. THE BISHOP IN THE CHURCH

20

THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE

FOREWORD

A vigorous attack has been made in an article[1] by D. T. Strotmann on many of the considerations contained in the following article of mine. Right at the beginning I would beg the reader to read Strotmann's article for himself and then to ask himself quite impartially whether I have always been correctly interpreted and whether I have really been convincingly refuted. For my part, suffice it to say here that I answer this question in the negative. But I restrict myself to a few remarks without entering into all the questions exactly.

In my opinion, Strotmann over-estimates the *theological* significance of the ancient tradition and practice of the East, and at the same time I find him offering no arguments against my considerations apart from a reference to these. Anyone who comes to realise how little it is possible in any case to draw a theological argument for the sacramentality of Orders from the sources of revelation themselves will allow to Orders a much greater flexibility than Strotmann is able to bring himself to do. The *multiplicity* of bishops in the ancient Church is a consequence not of the '*jus divinum*' of revelation but quite simply of the social and political conditions of the time and does not therefore constitute any argument that it *must always* be so. The multiplicity of small dioceses, for example in Italy, does not produce damaging results only because Rome excessively curtails true episcopal liberty (p. 195). When one considers how difficult it is from the point of view of the history of revelation and of dogma to justify the division of Orders (into bishop, priest and deacon) as based [314] on '*jus divinum*', one sees the indispensability of the *fundamental* principle that the Church can 'divide' the *one* fullness of the power of Orders according to practical requirements without vitiating its sacramentality. But then not only is the ascription of sacramentality to the minor Orders in the Middle Ages no longer quite so absurd as Strotmann thinks (p. 190), but there arises the possibility of an historical formation of the different grades of Orders, so that there is nothing really astonishing – from a dogmatic point of view – in a certain lack of definition of the borderline between patriarch and simple bishop, the emphasis upon which calls forth the indignation of Strotmann (p. 193), but which can have practical consequences. – If I conclude that Pope John XXIII's measure of making all cardinals bishops be theologically meaningful, then being in the pope's company I am in good company even if my opinion is not approved of by Strotmann (p. 191), without my being able to see – and this is no less important – how Strotmann really justifies his opinion in this matter.

If Strotmann holds the idea of a 'personal diocese' to be absurd (p. 195, 197), the decree on the Oriental Churches (no. 4) of Vatican II does not seem to support him, because here the possibility is foreseen that 'the Ordinaries of the various individual Churches' can exist 'in the *same* territory'. These are then surely to all intents and purposes personal dioceses. Why then should other cases which occur to us be *a priori* impossible? If this kind of thing were quite impossible in principle, then strictly speaking an abbey like Chevetogne with a rite alien to the place where it is situated would also be impossible.

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[1] 'Primauté et Céphalisation: A propos d'une étude du P. Karl Rahner' in *Irénicon* XXXVIII (1964), pp. 187-197.

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My reflections upon the meaning and form of the college of cardinals in no way aimed at putting them in the place of the *college of bishops*. What Strotmann says in this connection about my ideas is a complete misunderstanding. His own description of the essence of (p. 193), when measured against the statements of Vatican II, is only half the truth. The bishops are as *corpus* and *collegium* (with and under the pope) the one supreme bearer of the fullness of power in the Church; this is definitely a part of the essence of the episcopal office. But then today there necessarily arises the question whether and how this college can be represented and made effective by a smaller group. Such a smaller group would not downgrade the episcopate to a college of parish priests, as Strotmann seems to fear, any more than an assembly of patriarchs would turn the bishops subordinate to them into simple priests. After all, the question of a representation of this kind was raised by the Council and [315] not just by me, and was accepted by the pope ('Senate of Bishops'). A plenary Council can today no longer effectively exercise the universal function of the episcopal college. Surely it is the case that the bearer of that episcopal and immediate jurisdiction over the whole Church and over each individual Church which dogma ascribes to the Roman primacy is chosen most meaningfully by a representation of the whole Church. But if *this* representation for *this* election cannot in practice be effectively brought about by a meeting of all the bishops of the Church, then the most meaningful alternative is for an electoral commission of the episcopal college (namely, the college of cardinals) to be entrusted with the election. The only condition is that the college of cardinals should be so constituted as really to embody such a representation of the whole episcopal college. Even now I cannot see what reasons motivate Strotmann's protest against this idea. We will have to wait and see how Paul VI will develop and reconstitute the college of cardinals. The indications of this further development which are to hand up to the present do not in any case absolutely contradict the kind of development we have here outlined.[2] At least there is no sign that in Rome the college of cardinals is regarded as an '*institution périmée*' (p. 191). Against this one could ask quite simply, who then is to elect the pope, if the college of cardinals is abolished? [316] Neither the three thousand bishops nor the parish priests of Rome appear to be practically fitted for the task. Who then? The possibility of participating in the election of the pope was for the patriarchs (at least for Maximos IV Saigh) a main reason for eventually entering the college of cardinals. At present four *Eastern* patriarchs are members of the college of cardinals, something which Strotmann previously rejected most vigorously (p. 191). I do not intend to go any further into this matter here and make capital for my thesis out of the fact that it was Maximos IV himself who eventually entered the college of cardinals. One would also have to discuss further the juridical alterations in the status of cardinal (precedence, titular church,

[2] Since then Paul VI in his allocution at the beginning of the Fourth Session and in the *Motu proprio* which was published later has announced the formation of the 'synod of bishops'. In its present structure this synod of bishops is not identical with the existing college of cardinals. To that extent the remarks we have made above and in the following essay appear to be overtaken by events. But in reality we will have to wait and see what concrete Constitution the two organs of the bishops' council assume, how the two consultative assemblies are co-ordinated and what relationship the *whole* 'synod' has in reality to the college of cardinals. A large percentage of the cardinals of today are certainly represented in one way or another in this synod of bishops. But what in the concrete the relationship between the college of cardinals and the synod of bishops is to be is not at all clear, at least for the more remote future. There are all sorts of possible lines of development and of evolution open. Besides, it would be disastrous if in the joyful exuberance of seeing the synod of bishops realised at long last the actual significance of the college of cardinals were to be underestimated. We need only remind ourselves that the college of cardinals is invested with the power of electing the pope and – at least for the present – will clearly continue to be. In this sense the author would like to think that even today, although under different conditions, his former reflections (certainly with changes of emphasis) are worthy of consideration. The whole question can really be taken up again only in a much larger context, but at present we are unable to make any very decisive comments, especially since the practical working of the synod of bishops (including its relationship with the reformed Curia) still lies before us.

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and so on).[3]

If my simple question (it was no more than this) whether it is not possible to understand the primacy as being the supreme grade of the Sacrament of Orders is rejected by Strotmann as sheer nonsense (p. 189 *sq*.), I would like to ask again what is the transmission of the charism of infallibility in this office and the certain assurance from God, because of the indefectibility of the Church, of the divine grace of the office which is needed for its right exercise? Why is it impossible to understand this granting of such full power in the office as an '*opus operatum*'? If today it is the aim to bring jurisdiction and the episcopal power of Orders closer together (in this connection see Strotmann's remark on page 190, note 2), if we are again coming to emphasise relative ordination as the normal case of episcopal consecration, why should it be absurd to regard the relative consecration of the pope *for this* primatial See as a *specific* episcopal consecration (as its highest degree)? If the objection is made that today and for a long time past the pope is usually already a bishop before the papal election, then one could point to previous ages and their practice as a theological fundamental model for the answering of the question: one could say that the same problem appears whenever a bishop becomes a patriarch in another See and one must find a meaningful solution for this case; one could say that election and acceptance of the powers of the primacy can be regarded as a sacramental sign (in particular cases as a completion of the episcopal laying on of hands) just as much as the laying on of hands itself particularly since everyone knows today that the possibility of the Church's determining for herself the form and matter of a sacramental rite is very far-reaching. There are other sacraments [317] (Matrimony, Penance) which consist in a juridical procedure and yet are sacraments. This question has never been asked before: we are not accustomed to it. But is this really a penetrating reason for rejecting it as a meaningless piece of scholastic hair-splitting? Considering the historical development of sacramental doctrine and of the papal primacy, this does not seem to me to be the case, because this history is certainly not concluded. Strotmann objects that the election to the papacy when accepted does not confer any '*character indelebilis*'. I ask in response, does this involve the negation of a sacrament? What about the '*character indelebilis*' of a bishop consecrated in a relative ordination for a particular Church, when he renounces definitively his Church and jurisdiction over it? Would it not be possible to see the case of the resignation of a pope from his office as being the same as that of such a bishop, so that it is by no means established that in the case of a papal election there is no such thing as a '*character indelebilis*' rightly understood? Should we not be particularly careful in handling this indelible character from the point of view of Eastern theology? – Nor do I propose any '*nouveau genre d'évêques*' (p. 195), but merely seek to find some theological meaning in an existing institution (that of titular bishops), precisely in order to have a principle for guarding against the *misuse* of this institution. I do not see that in doing this I am doing something senseless.

THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE

The question of the episcopate within the Church, of its collegial unity and its function in the Church as the supreme bearer of the fullness of power in union with the pope is one of the central questions of the Council now meeting. In accordance with the nature of a Council, with the kind of possibilities open to it for expressing itself and their limitations, the Council will be able to say very little expressly regarding this topic, though what it does say may be important and fundamental. It may be presumed that it will declare firstly, that there exists in the Church not merely an accidental, conceptual collectivity of many individual bishops, but

[3] This is not the place for a discussion of the so-called Latin Patriarchates in the East and in the West.

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a proper college as a collegial unit (a 'moral person'), that this collegially composed unit of the universal episcopate is part of the unalterable constitution of the Church (of 'divine' law, not of positive ecclesiastical and changeable law), that this college has its head in the Roman pope, who is not merely '*princeps inter pares*' but possesses [318] (precisely as head of this college) the supreme powers accorded him by Vatican I, and that therefore this college is a college and can act as such only in union with the pope. Presumably the Council will declare secondly, that the college, understood in this way, is the bearer of that supreme and full power in the Church (the power of Orders and of jurisdiction in the three 'offices' of teacher, priest and shepherd) which according to the will of Christ and the nature of the Church belongs to her. We think that it will declare thirdly, that not only does this college exercise its power in an extraordinary way in an Ecumenical Council, but that it *can* exercise it also outside a Council (subject to the conditions which derive from its very nature, among which is of course the participation of the pope). Fourthly, there will probably then be drawn from these dogmatic principles a few – very modest – conclusions: that every bishop bears a responsibility (even though no jurisdiction) towards the whole Church flowing from the episcopal office itself, which must, for example, give rise to a duty of helping the missions; and that conferences of bishops are a practical consequence of this fraternal union of bishops.

Presumably nothing will be said about the more exact determination of the relationship of the pope to the (rest of the) college, that is about the question which in the context of the relation of Pope to Council was expressly left open by the First Vatican Council and is even today a matter of controversy, whether there are *two* inadequately distinct subjects of the supreme power (pope and college) or only one, the second theory in its turn being capable of being understood in several quite different ways. The historical question remains open, *how* the present subject of full power in the Church came to be developed from the 'constitution' of the primitive Apostolic Church, that is to say the question of the *more precise* historical descent of the episcopal college from the Apostolic college (and contained in this is the question of the manner in which the ecclesiastical office, which in the last analysis is one, came to be divided up into the office of bishop and the office of simple priest, and hence of the precise delimitation of these two powers). The question remains untouched, how more precisely the entry of the individual bishop into the college is effected (we will come to speak of this question almost immediately). The question is not discussed, what more precisely are the modes of the extra-Conciliar yet collegial acts of the college, that is to say what possibilities of initiative belong to the members of the college in relation to their head, what kind of part the pope must play or can play [319] in it (explicit or tacit, canonically instituted or para-canonical), whether the so-called 'ordinary magisterium' of the college of bishops (together with the pope) which according to Catholic doctrine enjoys in determinate conditions the same infallibility as an *ex cathedra* decision of the pope is such a collegial act or not. (To us it seems self-evidently so.)

I

It is not our intention here to enter any further into the theological foundation of the doctrine proposed by the Council, or to take up any *direct* position regarding the questions mentioned above as remaining open which are connected with this doctrine. Rather we will attempt at our own risk and on our own responsibility to cast some glances from this doctrine upon a possible future practice. In so far as *for this purpose* it is necessary to form opinions on theologically controverted questions we must naturally venture to do this. In this connection it must of course not be overlooked that while practical possibilities of this kind can be aligned with such theological opinions as a point of departure, they cease to be merely

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possible if those opinions should be right. Positive legal enactments in the Church within the framework of the unalterable divine constitution of the Church can be justified in different ways, and they are not necessarily impossible or inopportune if a particular reason for them does not enjoy universal consent.

In all the considerations which follow this is not to be forgotten: the Church is an eschatological salvation-entity, which remains constantly enveloped by God's grace, and at the same time a visible society which is the historical presence of this salvation-entity in something like a sacramental way (that is, the permanent authentic presence of grace). With this is given the fact that her essential structure, in so far as it is *iuris divini*, participates in her indefectibility. It cannot therefore come about that essential elements of the constitution which the Church ought to have should become complete casualties or be completely ignored. It cannot therefore happen, for example, that the college of bishops *iure divino* under the Pope as head should at one stage simply be unknown as the bearer of supreme power in the Church or should be an element not producing any effect in the life of the Church. And with a little unprejudiced attention the reality and the effectiveness of such an entity can in fact be observed. All this in its turn does not exclude the possibility that [320] much of this reality should exist and live para-canonically, if only because there does not really exist a written constitution of the Church. The code of canon law is not such, though it specifies elements of it. Moreover, the Church's consciousness of her constitution has a history exactly as her dogma and the understanding of her faith do. As it lives by her life carried on unreflectively, so it has in its development and its history also an influence on the concrete life of the Church. Moreover, the constantly changing external historical situation of the Church demands a continually new concretisation of the permanent essential structure of the Church to correspond to the conditions of the time, because the *real* essence of the Church (which is more than the idea of its essence) only exists in contingent, historical men and in their historically conditioned activity. It is therefore self-evident that the permanent essence of the Church, her divinely bestowed constitution, can be more or less clearly, purely and effectively in evidence in the historical image presented by the Church. In this sense, there is no doubt that the papal primacy of jurisdiction, for example, was not always 'there' as it is now. In consequence it is always perfectly legitimate to ask whether this or that element of the Church's constitution could not be brought out more clearly or be lived more intensely, whether accidents of historical development do not obscure such elements, whether the 'phenotype' (if we may use this expression) could not in constitutional practice (in written and unwritten constitutional law and life) correspond better to the 'genotype' of the Church in constitutional theory. That this is self-evident can be doubted only where the constitution of the Church is reduced to a written constitution, where without mystery or history it is identified with the paragraphs of a fixed enactment so that the only way of examining the constitutional life of the Church would be to ask whether in fact these paragraphs are being observed or not.

In this connection the following should be noted when evaluating the earliest development of constitutional doctrine and life in the transition from the Apostolic Church (the 'primitive Church' in the theological sense) to the Church of the second century ('Early Catholicism'). In the Church of this period a *development* might under certain conditions be possible and historically observed which, on the one hand, is really a determination specifying in history the originally given, manifold possibilities in the constitutional structure of the Church, and yet which on the other hand possesses and permanently retains the character of [321] divine law for the Catholic understanding of the Church's constitution. For this it is only necessary that (a) it be understood that every historically unique entity, and therefore also the Church, has in many ways a 'one-way' history and consequently not every development and historical decision must be or can be subject to revision; (b) one can and may suppose (a supposition

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which can afterwards be demonstrated to be historically comprehensible and justified, even though perhaps not 'compelling') that a particular development was a decision made legitimately even if not simply necessarily and caused what was in itself open to manifold possibilities to be made meaningfully and inevitably concrete and specified in *one* direction; and (c) it can be taken as a fact that such a decision still belongs to the apostolic age, and therefore can be regarded theologically as part of the process of revelation itself and not merely as part of the handing on of that revelation 'which closed with the death of the last apostle'. For example, if at the end of the apostolic age the Church has as a matter of universal practice an episcopal constitution, because at the beginning of the period of 'Early Catholicism' it is everywhere historically in evidence, then it can be taken to be '*iuris divini*' *without* one's being compelled to take up the position that already in the writings of the New Testament it is so clearly formed, so unmistakably predominant over 'presbyteral' tendencies, that any other constitutional development would from the beginning have been totally *unthinkable*. This remark is not without importance here. As we have neither the duty nor the intention of establishing here the collegiality of the episcopal college theologically from the *loci theologici* of dogmatics and ecclesiastical law, that remark can serve to make understandable that the later, more clearly given constitutional structure of the Church which we presuppose in the following considerations is a good 'scriptural' one, and in what sense this is so. And moreover it is precisely the collegial, the 'presbyteral' (if the word be rightly understood) idea in the Church's constitution for which we are here considering practical concrete forms without endangering the 'monarchic' idea in the same constitution.

Our reflections take as their starting-point the question how exactly the co-option of a bishop into the college is related to his appointment as bishop, to the conferring of the office (by ordination and by the granting of jurisdiction or by the first alone). Do these two sides of (membership of the college and the granting of the office) *mutually* implicate one another in a relationship of interdependence, or is the [322] membership of the college a mere *consequence*, and to a certain extent a secondary one, of the individual episcopal office and its bestowal? The same question may be studied in an analogous case: is the pope supreme pastor of the Church simply and solely because he is Bishop of Rome, with which Roman episcopal office the supreme pastorate is connected (inseparably or – by a papal act – separably), or is he, at least from a really absolute point of view, logically 'simultaneously' or even logically 'first' head of the whole Church and elected *as such*, so that *together* with this or through it he is also Bishop of Rome? In a papal election is it the successor of St Peter who is elected, in so far as he is supreme pastor of the Church even in the last analysis independently of the Roman See, so that *indirectly* the Bishop of Rome is also determined because Peter had charge of the Roman community, or is the *primary* aim to elect 'only' the Bishop of Rome who becomes *by the fact* that he is Bishop of Rome also the occupant of the universal Petrine office, because this must exist in the Church and the Bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter the first of these Roman Bishops also acquires this. supreme pastoral office? The practical consequences which this intricate and seemingly uninteresting question could give rise to (for the pope and, here particularly, for the *bishops*) will appear later. In answering these two questions, which are ultimately one and the same, we do not here defend an absolutely *one*-way material relationship of logical priority and posteriority between the two elements which are in fact present in each of the two offices (pope and bishop). For us it is sufficient to maintain a relationship of at least *reciprocal* dependence between the two elements, that is to refute the opinion that membership in the college, or the supreme pastoral office, is purely a further consequence of the other element (the episcopal individual office, usually territorially circumscribed; the local Roman episcopal office). We are saying, therefore, that it is *at least equally* legitimate to see the given situation in such a way that it can be formulated so: *because* someone is admitted (by Orders and canonical mission) into

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the college of bishops, he is a bishop. *Because* someone is elected as supreme pastor of the Church (and accepts *this*), he is Bishop of Rome. And not *only* the other way about. We are quite conscious of the fact that this so carefully formulated thesis may not possess the ultimate clarity of formal law and logic. But it seems to us well-founded (at least as a minimal theory) and is sufficient to enable us to catch those glimpses of the present or hoped-for future practice of the Church which we are striving for.

[323] As a foundation for our thesis we must first point out the fact that the college of bishops is regarded in the whole of Christian tradition as the successor of the apostolic college. That the bishops are the successors of the apostles in their (inheritable) office is a doctrine of Catholic faith. If there exists an episcopal college and there existed an apostolic college, then we can and must say as a consequence of that doctrine of the faith that the *college* of bishops is as such the successor of the *college* of apostles. There is also no other way of explaining the fullness of power of a Council, since the individual bishop is not infallible but the Council is, and this supreme authority and doctrinal infallibility cannot be delegated to it by the pope, for then this *delegated* power would not be the highest authority in the Church, which however it is. Accordingly Salaverri, for example, qualifies as a Catholic dogma the thesis that the *college* of bishops (both within and without a Council) is the bearer of infallible teaching authority (under determinate conditions). The college as such succeeds the apostolic college and is *formally* its continued existence, and in it the bishop has *as* its member the highest power of any which he possesses. Now the apostolic college is not constituted – if the word may be forgiven – by *local* apostles. Its existence and authority is objectively prior to a possible assumption of an individual territorial function by the individual apostle, even if the legendary division of the world among the apostles should be true. And in the same way the Petrine office, at least at one stage in Peter himself and in his main function in the apostolic college, is not originally 'locally' specified. Neither Peter nor the apostolic college exercised in the proper sense the function of a 'local Bishop' of Jerusalem, which was always regarded as belonging to James. Hence if the college of bishops is formally as such the successor of the college of apostles, this characteristic too must be found in it. *As* a college it is not simply the union of *local* bishops as such, but a collegial governing board in the Church which cannot *as* such derive its authority from the locally limited authority of its members as local bishops. Of course it is a theological problem demanding an answer, why this successor-college consists of men who occupy (at least in the majority of cases and at the beginning exclusively) a localised and limited ecclesiastical position: from this one could of course penetrate further into the *difference* which also exists between the apostolic and episcopal colleges. But these questions which are not here in dispute must not be allowed to obscure our discernment of the fact that the college of bishops as such derives its [324] existence and its right from a college which did not consist of men having a territorially circumscribed mission and authority, and that the college of bishops cannot in any case be formally made up of individual bishops *in so far* as they have territorially limited authority. The same is true of the Petrine office. The function of supreme pastor cannot be derived from the local function of Peter and his successors *as* bearers of these local duties and powers. Consciousness of this fundamental structure is also attested by that practice of the ancient Church whereby in the case of the election of a new local bishop not only the local community and their clergy took part, but also the neighbouring bishops, metropolitans and patriarchs. The election of the pope by the college of cardinals is at least formally an election by the suburbicarian bishops, or at any rate not simply by the representatives of the Roman community as such. Also the practice of an *international* college of cardinals, which today we take practically for granted, indicates that at least today it is formally and immediately not only a question of electing the Bishop of Rome as such, but of electing the supreme pastor of the whole Church. *For this reason* an ever stronger

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internationalisation of the college of cardinals has prevailed since the establishment of this method of election. The assignment of a Roman titular church to the cardinals who are not suburbicarian bishops only serves to make it clear that it was desired with this wider view of the meaning of the election not to lose consciousness of the fact that it was always at the same time *also* a matter of the appointment of the local Roman bishop.

On the basis of the indications we have given, we may now state the following: admittance to, and membership of the college of bishops (or respectively appointment to the supreme pastorate *as* such) is one side of the episcopal (or respectively Petrine) office or its bestowal which is essential, of equal importance and immediately given with the respective office, which cannot be one-sidedly derived *from* the other side (local authority) or be viewed exclusively from the point of view of the latter. A bishop is bishop of a given locality because and *in so far* as he is a member of the episcopal college as the supreme governing body of the universal Church, although in saying this the justification for the converse view is not being disputed. Ordination and canonical mission *also* have as their *immediate* signification admission into this college which itself has no territorial character and whose authority over the whole Church is not achieved by the individual bishops piecing together their [325] limited territorial authority and thereby covering the whole earth. At the same time it remains true and not without importance that they represent their particular Churches in the college and place their treasures at the disposal of the whole Church: their spiritual character, historical situation, vital power, the will to responsibility for the totality of the Church.

II

From the point that we have reached we must now strive to gain those glimpses which we are seeking of the outlook for the future in the practical order. We will attempt to indicate a few of these without troubling about any particular systematic order.

1. *The College of Cardinals*

If the college of bishops with the pope at their head possesses the supreme and fullest authority in the Church, it would seem in itself an obvious conclusion that it should be this body which elects its new head whenever it should become necessary. For the determining of the pope as the supreme pastor of the whole Church is *dogmatically*, if we are right, at least as important as the electing of the pope as the Bishop of Rome. And the first aspect is for all *practical* purposes today by contrast with the early centuries of the Church of so much greater significance than the second, that if it comes to a kind of ‘conflict of authority’ regarding the method of election this must without any doubt be given priority. Also such an election by the corporate body which represents the whole Church would today with its world-wide facilities for travel no longer be a practical impossibility in contrast with the first eighteen centuries of the Church. We already pointed out earlier that the historical development of the college of cardinals itself is the result of the implicit consciousness that here it is not merely a question of the election of the Bishop of Rome as such by the local Church of Rome, but of the election of a man in whom the whole Church can be and ought to be interested. Therefore from the viewpoint of purely systematic thought it would seem obvious that the representatives of the whole Church should elect its head. Even if it were to be said that those who worked most closely with the deceased pope form the best electoral body, one would have to add that those who work most closely with the pope with regard to the government of the [326] whole Church are, from the theological point of view, precisely the bishops and not the heads of central ministries, who as such can have at the most only a delegated authority over the Church from the pope which is essentially limited, and is not that

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fullness of power which belongs to the college *iure divino*.

But now we must consider with all due respect the fact of the existence and history of the college of cardinals as an electoral board for the pope. And there is no need to close our eyes to the fact that while an election of the pope by the college of bishops is today technically possible, it would yet be from other points of view difficult to carry out. An election of this kind would surely be possible in practice only if the assembly of all the bishops were to set up in their turn some kind of electoral committee (at least as preparatory). And then we would be back again at some kind of college of cardinals. The thought that the episcopal college has from the point of view of constitutional theology the prior claim to be called to elect the pope would therefore be best vindicated *in practice* by bringing it about that the college of cardinals itself is so formed that it can be regarded as a practical representation of the college of bishops. (This does not of course necessarily mean that the college of cardinals in electing the pope should be bound to any kind of 'mandates' and that a cardinal would not be free and indeed obliged to cast his vote according to his own conscience.) As is shown by the practice of the Council, such a representative function of the college of cardinals in fact gradually arises para-canonically almost of itself: the cardinals here have greater rights to submit their *vota*, and their word has in point of fact greater weight in the aula than that of other bishops. And yet they are speaking here as members of the episcopal college. Even if it be said that it befits the function of a cardinal as a member of the highest government of the Church to be also a bishop even if he is not regarded as a member of a more restricted representation of the college of bishops as such, it could again be held against this that a cardinal is not as such a member of the *supreme* government of the Church at all, but an official of the Pope, while it is the Pope himself and under him the college of bishops who constitute the highest government of the Church, so that the admission of a cardinal into the college of bishops cannot rightly be made comprehensible from his real function as it exists or is conceived. If the cardinals are in fact all bishops, this is most easily understood if their college is conceived as a restricted representation of the college of bishops. The progressive internationalisation [327] of the college of cardinals which has been steadily carried forward for the last half-century points in the same direction.

In addition there is the following circumstance: John XXIII has consecrated as bishops all cardinals of the Curia who were not already bishops. It is difficult to say what exactly was his intention in doing this beyond emphasising the dignity and significance of a cardinal. Nor can it be foreseen whether this practice will be maintained in future. One may also admit that this procedure at first struck one as strange: one almost had the impression that the highest degree of the hierarchy of Orders was being used in the manner of honours and titles for something like social and decorative purposes, that the title of an office was being bestowed upon someone without any thought of the exercise of that office, because as mere cardinals without being bishops they would not necessarily and *iure divino* have a seat and a vote in the Council like residential bishops. In the perspective which has now opened up to us the matter assumes quite a different aspect. It is, to begin with, utterly appropriate that a man of the importance of a cardinal should belong to the college of bishops, since this, being by its nature (at least equally as much as the sum of local bishops as such) the supreme collegial governing board of the Church, must consist not *only* of local bishops but must *also* appropriately include such members as contribute to the government of the universal Church as immediately as the local bishops. Such are the cardinals. It represents therefore an adjustment, simplification and clarification of the concrete structure of the Church if these men also really belong to the governing board of the Church established by divine law, if what they already are juridically and practically is also sacramentally consolidated. This can be a difficulty only so long as one holds in too indiscriminate a fashion that of itself and fundamentally the college of bishops can be made up *only* of local bishops by its nature. If

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one can overcome this prejudice and realise that everyone who in point of fact actually participates in the highest governing body of the Church should also have the sacramental authorisation and grace of state for it, then John XXIII's measure will appear to be objectively correct. But then the college of Cardinals becomes a kind of commission or committee of the college of bishops, to which is committed most appropriately from the viewpoint of the ultimate constitutional structure of the Church the election of the pope, and it becomes understandable why it is today and will remain for the future the best papal electoral body. The only proviso is that its [328] composition should be such as really to constitute a representation of the whole episcopate. For this it is precisely *not* required, according to what we have just said, that it should be composed *exclusively* of archbishops and bishops of residential sees. It is quite appropriate that in it should also be represented authoritative men from the central administration of the Church (with their meaningfully bestowed episcopal rank.) However it could be concluded from the foregoing that if the college of cardinals is to be viewed like this, the dignity of cardinal cannot be used as a kind of reward to crown a career in the diplomatic or curial service of the Holy See, and that it could be limited to that period of time in which someone authoritatively participates in the direction of the Church.

2. *Titular Bishops*

If it follows from the nature of the college of bishops that from the very beginning there can be members of it who are not properly bishops ruling a particular place (or their co-adjutors with right of succession), then it is also in principle quite thinkable, on the basis of an explicit realisation of the Church's ultimate constitutional structure and not merely on that of the possibility of an 'absolute' conferring of sacramental Orders, that there should be bishops who do not administer a local diocese, that is titular bishops of various kinds. From our point of view a pre-condition for this possibility, which is not only absolutely possible but quite consonant with the fundamental constitution of the Church, must certainly be that these men should occupy an *office*, should fulfil a function in the Church which corresponds to the office of a bishop and thus makes it appear meaningful and appropriate that its bearer should also be a member of the supreme governing college of the Church. There are functions and offices of this kind in the Church. It is impossible to divide up the Church *exclusively* on a territorial basis (even leaving out of consideration her summit). The territorial principle is *one* important, natural and permanent structural principle in a Church consisting of men living in space and time. But it is not the *only* structural principle. Just as it is right and necessary (and of this we will have more to say) that there should be in the Church exempt Orders, personal parishes, and institutions which cut right across the territorial divisions of the Church or embrace several dioceses, so there are in the Church offices and functions of an institutional kind which do not lend themselves to normal territorial [329] division and yet are materially of the same importance for the Church as the functions of a local bishop. A Catholic university of the stature of Louvain, for example, is at least equally as significant a 'member' of the Church as a small Italian rural diocese. It is therefore not at all meaningless or alien to the constitution of the Church if its rector is a bishop. And this remains true even though we fully realise that the majority of the episcopal college will consist even in the future of local bishops and rightly so, precisely because the majority of really significant collegiate members of the Church will continue in future to be territorially distinct dioceses. Following upon this, one might freely ask whether it would not be most appropriate from the standpoint of a clear and courageous theology of the constitution of the Church if the supreme and permanent heads of the great exempt Orders (or a great part of them) were to become bishops. After all, they take part in the Council with a right to vote (although this is a situation bound up with

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great distortions which are merely historical in origin).[4]

As a consequence a distinction in the theological meaningfulness of different sorts of auxiliary bishops might be brought to light. According to Catholic dogmatics, the practice of the Oriental Churches and certain special dispositions of the Latin Church, even a simple priest is sacramentally empowered (conditional upon the necessary habitual or express permission) to administer confirmation validly and licitly. In itself there is nothing fundamentally against the extension of this practice, particularly since the religious effect (sacramental, but also psychological) of the administration of this sacrament by a bishop is no greater than that of administration by a simple priest and the Western practice consumes a great deal of the bishop's time which could be better spent in other ways for the salvation of souls.[5] From this point of view it would be difficult to maintain that the function of an auxiliary bishop if restricted to administering confirmation bestows upon him an importance in the Church such as to make it necessary for him to be a member of the [330] apostolic college of bishops and so to be a bishop. If therefore the office of a mere auxiliary bishop is relatively rare outside Central Europe, this is from the constitutional-theological standpoint absolutely right. On the other hand, an additional bishop[6] in a large diocese which for various reasons (for example if it comprises a big city) cannot perhaps be meaningfully divided can have so many duties and so great a significance for the whole Church even beyond his diocese that it is entirely justified that he should be considered for membership of the college of bishops (and therefore should rightly be a bishop), indeed more so than the bishop of a miniature diocese which could easily be merged with a neighbouring one. From the point of view of the theology of the Church's constitution auxiliary bishops of this sort, too, are rightly bishops. We have already indicated that the same thing can be said analogously for the same reasons of the bearers of significant and decisively important offices in the central administration of the Church. In that case too the conferring of episcopal rank can appear not only justified by the fundamental conception which we have expounded, but as positively commendable, even though the bearer is not already a cardinal. On the other hand, from the same point of view it must be said that an episcopal consecration and dignity is not a suitable means of honouring the occupants of second-rank curial or diplomatic posts, particularly if they have superiors with the rank of bishop or cardinal, or of giving them more authority *vis-à-vis* the residential bishops.

3. '*Relative*' *and* '*Absolute*' *Ordination*

We can presume as well known what is meant by this heading: in a relative ordination a bishop is consecrated for a determined Church as its local bishop; in an absolute ordination Orders are conferred without any such special relationship (and we are given a constant reminder that in itself relative ordination is the normal case by the practice of conferring a titular see '*inpartibus infidelium*', for which purpose nearly two thousand names are held in readiness). This is not the place to rehearse the history of the slow appearance of absolute ordination alongside the older relative ordination which for a thousand years was defended as the only justified form, or to set out the reasons for and against this absolute ordination. But we may suppose that under the previous two points we have acquired enough illustrative material to permit of a further clarification of the [331] central question. If the college of

[4] If one looks at the matter dispassionately, it is really quite nonsensical that the superior of a small monastic congregation should be a member of the Council, whereas a Franciscan provincial with ten times as many priests under him as many a diocesan bishop is not. Is the difference in the duration of the office (for life in the one case, for a limited period in the other) really a sufficient ground for this?

[5] The fact that on the occasion of such a 'confirmation round' other useful things are also done (visitation of the parish, and so on) does not in any way alter what we have said.

[6] In the Archdiocese of New York there are ten auxiliary bishops.

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bishops is one and has as such a function in the Church, and if episcopal ordination as such immediately admits to the college, then *theologically* there cannot be a purely 'absolute' ordination in any unqualified sense: in every ordination there is bestowed besides the sacramental power of Orders membership in the college of bishops, which is not merely the bearer of the power of Orders but inseparably also of pastoral power. Therefore every ordination is a participation in the power of the Church in every respect, even if with regard to the pastoral power such participation is in the first place through membership of the episcopal college as such. This accords with the fact that, quite apart from our particular point of view, the idea is gradually gaining ground that ordination itself does not confer any radical sacramentally grounded and formed faculty for the exercise of pastoral power, as is also evidenced by the liturgy of Orders in the different Churches. If, then, there is a relative ordination in a really *theological* sense whenever an episcopal participation in the universal power of the Church is granted together with the bestowal of a real office (and so, for example, also of the function of membership in the college), then there cannot be any absolute ordination in an unqualified sense. What is called in vulgar or *merely* canonical usage relative ordination is then a particular species of relative ordination namely that in which is conferred also the office of a local bishop. But this does not alter in any way the theological structure of the conferring of the office. In both cases the ordination 'relates' to, is 'relative' to, an office.

This conception naturally presupposes that titular bishops too belong to the college of bishops. There are no serious objections to this conception. An objection could only be justified if it was possible to show that only someone who has the power of jurisdiction in his own diocese could be a member of the supreme bearer of jurisdiction in the Church. But such a conception would presuppose the idea that the college of bishops becomes the bearer of this power by the individual bishops in some way adding together territorially and materially limited power of jurisdiction and *in this way* constituting the supreme bearer of the *full* power of jurisdiction. But this is impossible, as is demonstrated most clearly by an office which flows from this power, namely the infallible teaching office of this college (together with the pope): a mere summation of authentic but not infallible teaching offices in the individual bishops does not result in that teaching office which both in and out of a Council [332] is indefectible. If one then wanted to say that this quality of indefectibility comes to the teaching office of the whole episcopate from the infallibility of the pope, then it would again be impossible to see why the pope can only permit a bishop to participate in this if he is also a residential bishop.

Nor can one object to these reflections by pointing out that while titular bishops can be and are members of the Council, they are not *necessarily* so, and this would have to be the case if they were members of the college. For even if it is granted that they are, it is still open to the positive law of the Church and of the disposition of the Holy See in determining more precisely the exact constitution of a Council for good reasons to *refrain* from calling individual members of the college of bishops to the Council, since this (as such *iuris humani*) being the representation of the college of bishops does not demand a physical completeness in the number of the assembled bishops and since there is no need to dispute that there is a certain difference in membership oft-he college as between local Ordinaries and certain kinds of titular bishops. The fact that titular bishops belong to the college of bishops can really not be doubted, neither on general principles nor precisely from the viewpoint that to be a bishop signifies *formaliter* to be a member of the college. This is true even if we emphasise that membership of a college admits of different degrees and modes so that a titular bishop does not have to be, nor is, a member of the episcopal college in precisely the same sense as a

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residential bishop.[7]

Added to this is the realisation that the ideal of relative ordination makes it desirable to have as subject of episcopal power and dignity someone whose *other* episcopal function (as distinct from his function as a member of the college) makes it precisely appropriate that he should be a member of the supreme governing body of the Church. Now we have sought to show that there are such functions which are not identical with the function of a local Ordinary, and that on the other hand titular bishops not infrequently exercise only such functions as do not make their [333] bearer appear objectively as a suitable member of the supreme governing body of the Church. A relative ordination, therefore, which would be desirable from every point of view, that is both theologically *and juridically*, would he one in which someone receives an office or in which someone's office is sacramentally consecrated which truly qualifies him to be a suitable member of the college of bishops. This office may then be of a local or non-local kind. A merely 'absolute' ordination (even if it is relative in the sense previously described) which would be wholly undesirable would be one which, apart from the membership of the college and the bare power of Orders, does not give anything and does not come upon or confer any function in its bearer which in its significance for the universal Church makes him 'homologous' with a local Ordinary.

4. *The Essential Nature of the Diocese*

If we listen to a recital of the statements of the Schoolmen on the nature of the diocese we will be given few illuminating insights: a diocese is a member-Church over which presides a bishop with a pastoral authority which is prescribed and precisely delimited (against pope and perhaps patriarch and metropolitan) by ecclesiastical law; a bishop on the other hand (if one abstracts from his power of Orders, which does not give any sign of being related in any immediately visible way to a circumscribed territory, and certainly not to its shape and size) is a man who governs a diocese with pastoral authority. There is thus a perfect circle in our understanding. But now that we are faced with the new and urgent question in practical law and pastoral theology of how large a diocese should in fact be and whether dioceses should be divided or amalgamated, we see that we can no longer he satisfied with such answers. On the other hand these practical questions which we have just mentioned cannot he answered simply 'in practice'. It is only when we know *what* a diocese is intended to be, what are really its functions and what are not (for example, because they can equally well be carried out by a dean, if necessary armed with the power to confirm; or because in all cases they can only be dealt with by a 'chief bishop', that is a metropolitan, a patriarch and their combinations, or a national or continental bishops' conference) that we can 'practically' ask *how* a diocese should be formed with regard to its size and institutions in order to enable it to carry out these functions. For example, someone who is of the opinion that a bishop must 'know' [334] all his priests or be in a position to confirm all the members of his flock personally will form a different ideal image of the most desirable extent of a diocese than will someone who rejects a guide-line of this kind as romantic and paternalistic.

Now it is surely evident at the start that we can neither have an 'ideal' image of the diocese which is equally valid for all times, nor develop an imaginative 'model' of the diocese for *today* in such a way as to allow us to deduce from it, for example, a particular number of square miles or of inhabitants as its 'ideal' size. The first is impossible, because quite clearly a diocese in its concrete historical form is a consequence of many natural (geographic, racial,

[7] Here we may briefly refer to the following: exactly as baptism constitutes a certain, although not a full, membership of the Church even if the baptised person is a heretic or a schismatic, so a valid episcopal consecration gives a certain, although not full, membership of the episcopal college, even if the consecrated person is a heretic or schismatic. This is especially so where the heresy or schism is only material and the absence of any '*affectus haereticalis aut schismaticus*' is sociologically obvious.

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social, historical) conditions which are changeable. The second is impossible, because these differences can be found to exist even today at the same time. But setting out from the fundamental idea of these new reflections we can say something to make the 'idea' of the diocese more concrete than it is in the formal determination of the notion with which we began.

At this point, it is good once more to arouse our wonder at the fact that the supreme governing body of the Church which originally had its normal seat in *one* place – Jerusalem – is largely composed of men who are at the same time governors of a 'province' of the Church and so are 'scattered' throughout the world. In the case of other sociological entities this is seldom so: the 'Government', the 'Cabinet' of a country will scarcely ever be composed of the governors of the provinces of the country. Neither is our wonder in any way dissipated by the mere consideration that the Roman Pope represents in this governing body the unity of the Church while the bishops represent the plurality and multiplicity of the Church's members so that these members of the board must come from all parts of the world. For even though the bipolar structure of the supreme governing body (a head of the college who is personally capable of action and a synodal plurality of members) includes a representation of the whole Church, this is no reason why it should be in itself identical with the total number of the leaders of the local Churches. And yet this fact which is so far from being self-evident is the case. Again, this is not the place to draw consequences for the theological character of the college of bishops and the particular nature of its origin from the apostolic college from these observations of the difference between a supra-local apostolic college which exists in one place and an episcopal college composed of local bishops who are 'scattered'. (Clearly it is not [335] the successor-college in the sense that the same permanent college as a moral person is merely made up of different physical persons: it is *one* college following upon *another* college.)

If we are to take full account of this surprising fact we will have to say that the members of the supreme governing body of the universal Church must be men governing such a notable part of the Church that it can rightly expect to be personally represented on that board. But this means conversely that a diocese must be such (in size, life, and character) that in it (precisely in its geographic, demographic, historical and religious make-up of that particular period) the totality of the Church is made to appear, that it can really be called a 'Church', that is, it can be characterised by the same theological concept (and not just that of a part, a province and so on, of the Church) as the universal Church herself, something which one could not say nor ought to say of a local parish. For the Church in contrast with every other society has the peculiar characteristic of being able to make her appearance *whole* on the spot. A State has in a particular place only *one* of its places: a city or a province which can never rightly be called by the same name as the whole State. But in the Church it is quite otherwise: she can be in one place as a whole and therefore the community of that place can rightly be called 'the Church'. The Church is 'there' on the spot, because her highest self-realisation which qualifies her as a whole and which cannot be thought of as any higher or more concentrated even in the totality of the Church can take place in a particular spot and not only in the territorial totality of the Church: the celebration of the Eucharist, where the Lord is truly present as Lord and sacrifice of the Church, and the proclamation of the efficacious Word of God in which the mighty deeds of God towards man are heralded in the event.

As a consequence one might be tempted to think that simply every local community about an altar and not only the diocese is already Church. It is a fact that this difficulty could scarcely be felt at all in ancient times because the average true and full community about an altar coincided with the community about a bishop. But it is precisely this view of the local community as a kind of actual presence of the whole Church which leads to the conclusion

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that only that local community is really completely 'Church', and so a diocese, in which the *whole* of the Church's realisation of her life can be representatively brought about, and not only the celebration of the Eucharist (Sacrament) and the proclamation of the [336] Word. This presence of the whole of the Church is of course not conceived in the sense that wheresoever there are 'genuine' dioceses the Church is really present *wholly* with her life, but in the sense (and this is a variable requirement according to place and time) that a proper diocese must also be to a sufficient extent the bearer of such functions as necessarily belong to the -universal Church over and above the Eucharistic celebration and the proclamation of the Word. For only such a member-part of the Church can meaningfully claim that its leader should be a member of the supreme governing board of the Church.

In connection with the foregoing the following consideration should be kept in mind: the possibility of the Church as such coming to appear in some way as a whole at a particular point in space and time in the world depends to a large extent on the secular sociological conditions existing in that particular place at that particular time. For a diocese *today* to be able to be a diocese, that is a Church which really represents at least in some way *the* Church in all her dimensions, it, requires pre-existing conditions of a sociological, economic, and cultural sort which are simply not possible in a very small diocese (we are always speaking of a diocese which is already developed or at least capable of being developed). Because the spiritual, cultural and social life of today is of such a particular kind, and therefore the organisation of the Church with her theological, spiritual and religious life must also as its analogue be of this kind, it can exist only in relatively widespread or highly populated areas. A 'village' cannot support the image of a developed and complete diocese. But the same is now true also of smaller areas which by contrast with earlier social frameworks are now no more than the villages of the present age. When today one reflects upon the diocese which corresponds to the present, one must keep in mind that the fundamental extension of the local community of today is no longer the town but the industrial zone. Just as there was a historical transition (of a gradual kind) from the village-culture to that of the town, so today we are experiencing a transition from the town-culture to a culture for whose local unit we do not even yet have a proper name, which for the moment we may call 'industrial zone'. These sociological developments ought not to be overlooked when one reflects upon the nature of a contemporary 'proper' diocese. Could one possibly conceive, for example, of the Ruhr having several dioceses? If not, and if such an industrial area is becoming more and more [337] the normal type of human life, what are the consequences for the correct size of a diocese?

What we have so far said may still be only a vague indication of the fundamental-theological nature of a diocese: if we wanted to say anything immediately more precise, we would be led into the difficult question we do not intend to discuss here, in what sense the bishop and the diocese are '*iuris divini*', that is once more how and why the one office of the Church (given in and supported by a successor-college similar to the apostolic college in its unity of Peter's office and the 'Twelve') should be borne by a college organised on a *territorial* basis; and why, for example, (*de facto* or *de jure*?) the sum of patriarchs or metropolitans alone does not deserve consideration as such a successor-college, so that these alone would have to be called 'bishops' in the theological sense, whereas those we now call bishops would be merely a kind of 'archpriest' or 'dean'.[8] But even the still vague

[8] If we consider the fact that on the one hand even a 'simple' priest can under certain conditions confirm, perhaps even ordain to the priesthood (cf. *DS* 1145 *sq*.), and that on the other hand a patriarch or metropolitan nearly always participates as a consecrator at a normal episcopal consecration, we see how difficult it is to say dogmatically just what a bishop is. Even if we maintain that *de facto* he is distinct from the simple priest '*ratione ordinis*', the question still remains open whether *this* distinction is itself *iuris divini* or not, precisely how it is to be explained (whether by the fact that a simple priest has the episcopal power of ordination

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information what a bishop is (as member of the college) and what therefore he should be (in his particular office) already offers a criterion by which to measure dioceses as they exist in fact. ii it is necessary for the diocese to be a real representation of the life of the universal Church (in its natural and supernatural character), then it is not excluded but rather implied that this kind of representation and therefore the form of the diocese is subject to historical change. The ancient bishopric of a [338] locality and the contemporary (apart from Italy) bishopric of a province, for example, represent the change from the ancient *Polis*-State (which also exercised a great historical influence in the Hellenistic-Roman Empire) to the region-State. We cannot here go any further into the history of the form and function of a bishopric, a history which is complex and varies greatly in different continents. But if our fundamental line of thought is correct then certain consequences will follow which are of considerable practical importance for our time. A diocese, as it ought to be, should not be too small: it must really be able to support of itself the organs which belong to the Church as such (prescinding from her central government). And since the apparatus of the institutional in the life of the Church in today's world of technology and mass society necessarily becomes ever more complicated (pastoral institutes, training places for the most diverse forms of aid in the Church, finance, widely organised charitable works, and much more of the same kind), the objectively correct trend is tending to an increase rather than a decrease in the size of dioceses. If the city is becoming increasingly the normal domicile and usually there is only one diocese in the one city, then by force of circumstance the large diocese will become the normal type of diocese. And this is also theologically justified: the occupant of a miniature see of a few thousand souls, and this in regions where dioceses could easily be combined, has no meaningful claim to be a member of the supreme governing college of the universal Church.[9] This is particularly so in a period when the universal Church consists of four hundred millions and almost unavoidably has at the same time two to three thousand bishops whose number can after all not be multiplied indefinitely if – and one need only think of a Council and its technical problems – they are really still to constitute the supreme government of the universal Church. It is no use resisting a development towards relatively greater dioceses, hindering the fusion of small dioceses, or pleading for the division of dioceses on grounds which are of a rather romantic or paternalistic kind. The only consequence of such a procedure would be that what a real bishop must be if he is to be a member of the episcopal college would [339] practically even if not terminologically be found only in the case of higher bishops, patriarchs or metropolitans, or with the presidents of bishops' conferences, and he who is still called bishop but is no longer really fully such would in practice be no more than a dean with the power to administer confirmation. He would no longer be at the head of such institutions as make a territorial district into a 'Church'.

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restricted to the point of invalidity of the act, or by the fact that it is simply not there) and whether this distinction must have been the same at all times in the Church's history or whether the Church's intention regarding the two Orders could itself be subject to historical change. It is difficult to characterise the bishop on the basis of the power of jurisdiction because at least as a matter of fact his pastoral power is limited by that of the pope (and perhaps of other higher bishops) and because even those who are not bishops can have a share in this power which is capable of being divided and apportioned in the most diverse ways. And so it is really simplest and clearest to say that a bishop is a member of the supreme governing body of the Church and to determine from this what office he should fill and what powers he should be invested with in order that he might meaningfully be called a bishop, that is to say, that he might meaningfully and appropriately from die nature of things be co-opted into this supreme college.

[9] If it be objected that this is all very well, but such a one is still a consecrated bishop, then we need only remark that the question here is precisely this, *who should* be meaningfully consecrated a bishop as member of the college of the Church's universal government and under what conditions; the question is not whether someone once he has been consecrated is then rightly a member of that college.

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Wherever a diocese is incapable of supporting by itself a seminary corresponding to the demands of today, wherever the institutions demanded by the educational system, or charitable organisation, the influencing of public opinion, the management of mass media or of cultural life, cannot be supported by a diocese in such a manner that in some way they are representative of the whole Church, then in that place there does not exist a member-Church which can and should be led by a successor of the apostles such that over him he needs to have only the principle of the unity of the college, the successor of the apostolic college, for his normal activity. In other words, it would be a diocese more in name than in reality. If in order to be effective a genuine, large, living diocese of the kind we have envisaged really requires further intermediaries between its head and the individual local community, that is intermediate instances 'below', which may easily be the case, then these should be created, if those which already exist (deaneries, inter-parochial diocesan organisations, personal parishes like student communities, and so on) are insufficient; or those which exist should be allowed more powers in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity which also applies to the Church. But this is no reason for making the dioceses so small that their head must sink in the spiritual, sociological, and properly ecclesiastical sense to the level of a parish priest who administers confirmation and is able to ordain priests. His pastoral authority too must be capable of showing the stature and impressiveness of a successor of the apostles and a member of the total government of the Church. For this there is required not merely the existence of a formal pastoral authority, but it must also have an object, a field of activity, and a matter for its objectification which is worthy of its significance. What we have said is of course primarily intended to apply to a diocese which is fully constituted and not to one still in process of being built up, and naturally it must be filled out in the concrete in a very variable way according to times, regions and their cultural and social development.

[340] 5. *The Bishop and his Priests*

Here and there the anxious question has already been raised, whether a clearer prominence given to the mission and authority of the bishop who rules his diocese in the name of Christ and not as a mere official of the pope may not be accompanied by the danger of substituting for a centralised and – allegedly or really – autocratic régime from Rome a practical 'episcopalism' with an autocratic régime in the diocese. We, in our middle-European lands, will not feel ourselves bound to hold this danger to be very great or urgent. Our diaspora-situation does not favour such a danger: bishops and priests are too dependent on one another in the crisis of neo-paganism. If we prescind from quirks of character and temperamental outbreaks which can have a good or bad effect in *every* 'system' and in the latter case must be borne with patience and . . . humour, and which with virile and fraternal openness of priests before their bishop can always be sufficiently contained, our bishops are in no danger and under no suspicion of being or becoming autocrats. But this may be quite otherwise in other countries with a different historical and psychological conditioning. Perhaps an African bishop may involuntarily affect the attitude of a tribal chief, or there may be still preserved in one or another French bishop something like a piece of the mentality of the *ancien régime*. In any case, in order to avoid this danger it is at all times and in every place necessary that the theologically correct relationship between bishop and presbyterium should be kept vitally in the forefront of our consciousness.

Our approach permits us to clarify this relationship. We do not in any way maintain that the relationship of pope to episcopate is in our fundamental theology simply carried further down in the same sense as equally '*iuris divini*' and so can be simply transferred univocally and mechanically to the relationship of bishop to presbyterium. But at this point we can say two things. First, the fundamental-theological structure of the Church, in so far as it demands a bipolar unity of a monarchical and a collegial element inseparably related to one another

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(without on that account being a college of mere equals, as in the 'definition' of a college given by Ulpian), can surely also serve as a guide for the relationship of bishop and presbyterium. Second, if the principle of collegiality is applied to this relationship at least as a guide from the point of view here emphasised, then we must say the following. The priest enters by his priestly ordination into a college, the presbyterium, which is surely to [341] be thought of as fundamentally *iure divino*[10] a college for the bishop. And in point of fact the New Testament and the primitive Church do not actually show any knowledge of the single priest but only of the presbyterium. The latter is even locally united with the bishop, it is not a subsequent collection of parish priests residing in places where there is no bishop, but precisely the college in the same place where the bishop is: he does not ordain a priest because he cannot be everywhere, but as a helper in his office where he actually is. He does not ordain an individual, but surrounds himself with a college. He does not act without the presbyterium. This does not mean that he is dependent upon his presbyterium juridically and in a way subject to legal action, but that he knows himself to be no lonely, autocratic monarch who could say, or would want to say: 'The diocese, *c'est moi*!'. One can unhesitatingly say that the 'synod' of the bishop with his presbyterium is just as old and original as the synod of bishops among themselves (even though it is not on that account constitutionally of the same kind). Perhaps today it may legitimately be the case on practical grounds that the function of the former episcopal presbyterium is carried out to a large extent (leaving aside the rare occasion of a diocesan synod, *CIC c*. 356-362) by the cathedral chapter and the other priest-members of an episcopal Curia, and perhaps in the concrete situation of today with the necessary big dioceses and the local separation of most priests from the episcopal seat it must be so. But if one looks at this episcopal Curia keeping in mind the bipolarity of bishop and presbyterium, one must say that the fundamental-theological structure of the Church is realised purely and clearly only if the episcopal Curia is chosen and constituted in such a way that it can be accepted to be really the representation of the presbyterium; that therefore a similar [342] relationship exists from a theological point of view as our previous reflections showed to be desirable between the college of cardinals and the episcopal college. This does not in any way mean that the episcopal Curia must be elected by the presbyterium 'from below' (or even as a kind of supervisory body over the bishop on behalf of the presbyterium). This is not the case with the college of cardinals and it would offend against the subordination of the presbyterium to the bishop. But this may well mean on fundamental-theological grounds (and not on merely pragmatic-psychological ones) that the bishop has the moral obligation to constitute his Curia in such a way that it is also the representation of his presbyterium which he himself after all has ordained as *his* presbyterium, as his council of 'Elders', even if the honouring of this moral obligation is not subject to a juridically laid down control by the presbyterium.

Only when the priest is seen as always the member of the presbyterium does it become quite understandable (particularly when one thinks of the practice of the early Church with her many small episcopal sees) why every head of a permanent, local altar-community of any size, that is above all every parish priest, is not a bishop. It becomes understandable why a

[10] Although it has not been strictly defined, it is theologically certain that the threefold gradation of the Church's office (bishop – priest – deacon) is part of the unalterable, divine constitution of the Church. But if in stating this one were to think merely of priests as individuals, called into being simply to the extent that a bishop has need of help, then it would also be possible to conceive of a bishop deciding that he can do without such help and so eliminating the threefold gradation of the office at one fell swoop. To bring this about one need only think of the theoretical possibility of consecrating every parish priest a bishop and so making individual priestly assistants superfluous. Therefore if the 'second grade' of the priestly office is really to be *iuris divini*, it can only be thought of as the college for the bishop; strictly speaking, therefore, priests do not primarily take the place of the bishop where he cannot be himself, but support him as the presbyterium surrounding the bishop where he is.

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diocese is a really theological entity, not merely an administrative organisation of many local communities, but a real, spiritual entity: the bishop does not ordain priests in order to send them *away* from him with their faculties, so that each may be a priest for himself but he entrusts to the members of his presbyterium, which remains always his, particular local commitments and so remains the episcopal Father of his whole diocese. From this it will also be understandable that the local parish is indeed the normal and most common type of such a commission of the member of the presbyterium, but that members of the presbyterium can be called upon as representatives of the bishop for other kinds of altar-communities, if and in so far as such non-parochial, permanent altar communities (personal parishes, religious communities, and so on) remain meaningful. The 'territorial principle' is not the only constitutive principle. It is precisely when the individual priest is seen as a member of the presbyterium that a romantic parochialism is avoided which would make of the parish priest a little bishop (and tries to make him, for example, irremovable or untransferable in the same sense as the bishop). The dignity of the parish priest is not lessened but increased, if he is seen as a member of the episcopal presbyterium, as the representative here and now of the episcopal church. But the parish is not a diocese in miniature. [343] If it were regarded as such, it would properly have to become a diocese. But against this must be said everything that was set out above against miniature dioceses.

Finally, our approach makes it theologically comprehensible why up to the present the dividing-line between the sacramental powers of the bishop and those of the simple priest has not achieved perfect clarity in the Church's consciousness of her faith. One can only say with any certainty that a priest cannot consecrate a bishop. But it is not even certain whether he cannot under certain circumstances validly administer priestly Orders. It is certain that he can confirm. This is a curious situation. For since a simple priest is the bearer of all the jurisdictional authority of a bishop, it might in the abstract be held according to present-day theology that simple priests exercise alone all without any bishops the offices in the Church which are really necessary for her life, since one needs episcopal consecration only if one needs bishops. But these are not required if all their functions can equally well be carried out by the simple priest, in so far as these functions are necessary for the salvation of Christians. These speculative reflections are merely meant to show that the border-line *iuris divini* between priest and bishop is not so easy to draw as it is sometimes thought. But this is the point which becomes understandable if the bishop cannot really be thought of without his presbyterium and therefore if in certain circumstances a subordinate member of this unity of bishop and presbyterium (who is designated by sacramental Orders) can represent the bishop. In the ultimately decisive matter he does it in any case: in the celebration of the Eucharist. And this has always been and is today the most central function of the bishop (because here in this most intimate mystery of the Church she is made present most actually and most intensively): it is for this reason that Thomas Aquinas and all the great theologians would not admit any sacramentality of episcopal Orders as distinct from priestly Orders. This is again an indication of the point we are making: bishop and priest belong most closely together because the priest is not a smaller 'recapitulation' of the bishop, but a member of his presbyterium apart from which in the last analysis[11] he cannot be thought of; and *this* is the reason why his [344] powers as representative of the head of the presbyterium are somewhat changeable and have not always been the same perhaps in the different periods of the Church's history in accordance with the possibly changing intention of the Church in raising men to the priesthood.[12]

[11] Even if we think of an individual consecrated bishop in abstraction without any priests of his own, he is still surrounded by priests through his necessary union with the whole college of bishops, since according to *DS* 1776 the universal episcopate can certainly not be without a presbyterium.

[12] Theologically such a possibility must be taken seriously. Although a society's office may ultimately be one by

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6. *The Unity of Offices and Powers in the Church*

By this heading we do not mean the unity of the *bearers* of the offices and the powers, but that of the offices and powers themselves, certainly in so far as this unity can be seen from the unity of the episcopal college with and under (and also through[13]) the Pope and from the inseparable unity of the conferring of powers and the co-option into the college in the case of the bishop. It is of course obvious that these brief reflections from a particular standpoint can in no way claim to be a complete treatment of the subject indicated by the title 'Unity of Powers'.

We set out once more from the fundamental fact that the college of bishops with the pope at its head is the bearer of supreme and full authority in the Church. A society ('people of God', 'people of the Covenant', 'community' of Christ) which proclaims its unity as one of its most essential characteristics and which has *one* goal and *one* mission must also he necessarily one in its office, and this ultimately single authority and this ultimately single office pertains to the college of bishops, which is [345] thus actually characterised by the full possession of this one authority and this one office. In so far as in this one office and in the one authority upon which it is based we can and must distinguish, no matter for what reasons, offices and authorities of various kinds, these must therefore never be simply enumerated purely arithmetically but grasped in their unity, or developed from the one fundamental essence of the Church, from her unity and the unity of her mission and her goal.

We must now take note, to a certain extent empirically, of the fact that the supreme bearer of this one office, or alternatively that the members of the college which is this bearer, are constituted as such on the one hand by a sacramental consecration which gives them a power to sanctify (*potestas ordinis*), and on the other by the conferring of a pastoral power (*potestas iurisdictionis*) which is not yet given or need not be given by episcopal consecration (at least as 'absolute') at any rate as *wholly* at their free and actual disposal. And yet it follows from what we have just said that these two powers (and the offices which are built upon them and through which they are exercised) must have an inner unity and an ultimately indissoluble connection. If one wishes to see this, it is no use looking merely or in the first place at the individual bishop as such, but it is necessary to reflect on the college of bishops as such and their ontological and logical equality with or precedence over the single bishops or their merely consequent summation. For there is no difficulty in the case of the college of bishops in propounding the thesis that in it as *such* a separation of the two powers is quite impossible, without coming into conflict with the fact indicated above.[14] The Church cannot after all be thought of without bishops, that is without that power of Orders which involves the legitimate

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reason of the unity of the society and of its aim and purpose, a partial participation in it is changeable of its very nature and as a consequence of historical situations without this involving any change in the nature of the one office. There is no reason to suppose that the same cannot be true of the Church. The nature of the one office which is *iuris divini* and its threefold gradation need not be affected by this. If, for example, the Church declared one day that no priest is capable of administering priestly ordination in any circumstance and under any condition whatever, this would not mean that this had always and at all times been so. Perhaps the case is somewhat similar when the question is asked whether an episcopal consecration even without a preceding priestly ordination is valid or not. After all, we have at least an analogous case with regard to the 'matter' of the Sacrament of Orders, where the Church has explicitly (*DS* 3861) left open the question whether this essential matter has at all times been the same. Presumably the Church can also determine the precise extent of the powers which she intends to confer through priestly ordination and by this means vary the distance between the simple priesthood and the episcopate, although her intention is on occasion very implicit. Such a consideration could perhaps diminish or eliminate altogether many a difficulty arising in these matters in the early periods of the Church's history.

[13] *DS* 3051.

[14] Namely the fact that someone may have an 'episcopal' jurisdiction without being consecrated a bishop, or someone may be a consecrated bishop without – at least apparently – having the *potestas iurisdictionis*.

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authority to celebrate the Eucharist and to hand on this authority (power of ordination). But neither can there be any Church without the pastoral power, without which the *one* life of the *visible* Church is not thinkable. Now it is surely unthinkable that these two powers which necessarily exist in the Church should be distributed between two completely and fundamentally different bearers. For apart from the question *how* one could even imagine this being carried out in practice, this is quite impossible for the reason that these two powers include one another at least in part. The leader of the Eucharistic celebration [346] is after all not to be thought of as the mere agent of the consecration *ex opere operato*, but as the fully authorised leader of the celebration of the community with the right and the duty of admitting to the altar-community or excluding from it as the highest realisation of the unity of the visible Church. If he does this *because he* is the possessor of the *power of Orders*, he is already positing sacred *law*. If the exercise of the power of Orders of reconciling with God and the Church in the Sacrament of Penance were simply dependent on someone who does not himself possess this power as a matter of principle and in every case, then it would be no more than an abstract theoretical postulate and nothing in reality. The giver of the jurisdiction for confession would be the true possessor of the Church's power of reconciliation, since only by him would its exercise be made possible. This is further unthinkable for the reason that this power also essentially signifies the power to admit to the full Eucharistic community of the altar, which power must however by the very nature of the case be possessed by the leader of the community's celebration of the Last Supper. Therefore the power of Orders and pastoral power at least partially include one another; they are basically two elements of one and the same fundamental power, which is divided into two powers only in relatively secondary effects and applications, where each of them is not necessarily determined in the same way or by the same norms as the other. But if they hang together in such an inseparable way in their deepest root, then the bearer of this *completely* one power can only be he who *necessarily* possesses *both*. And this bearer is the college of bishops under and with the pope.

It follows from this that it is a duty of the pope to receive episcopal consecration, if he should be elected when he is not a bishop. For even though one might justify the prescription of canon 219 of the Code[15] in the considerations we are here concerned with by saying that as head of the college he already participates in a certain sense in the power of Orders of his college before he is himself consecrated a bishop and so participates in this power also personally as an individual and not merely as a member of the college, it is surely more than a demand of reasonableness or even of the look of the thing that the supreme head of the whole Church, in whose person inheres the fullness of pastoral power, should also possess that power which in the last analysis cannot be separated from [347] pastoral power in the Church or in the whole college, namely the power of Orders, with which is immediately given sacred law, and in which the latter in fact has its origin.[16]

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[15] '*Romanus Pontifex, legitime electus, statim ab acceptata electione, obtinet, iure divino, plenam supremae iurisdictionis potestatem*.'

[16] At this point we may ask in some surprise – if for once we may be permitted to say this out loud – why it is taken so much for granted that the act of transmitting the supreme pastoral power resident in the pope is not a grade of the Sacrament of Orders. It is clear that the mode of appointment to this office (without any laying-on of hands) is no absolute barrier to maintaining the opposite opinion: a sacrament (as may be seen in Penance and Matrimony) is not necessarily bound to a 'matter' which is distinct from the 'form' (the word which assures the grace). If it is said that papal election (with its acceptance) does not confer any higher 'power of Orders' but only constitutes '*ratione iurisdictionis*' a higher degree in the official hierarchy, we are entitled to ask the counter-question whether this answer is really as clear as it appears to be at first sight in view of the radical unity of the two powers, whether it was not with a formally similar argument that St Thomas and the medieval theologians disputed the sacramentality of episcopal consecration (that is, because it did not confer any new authoritative power – in this case in relation to the Body of Christ), whether it is *a priori* evident that the conferring of the power of an office can only then be sacramental, that is bound up with the *ex opere operato*

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[348] This unity of powers in which is given the one essence and the one mission of the college of bishops is also a manifestation of the fact that law and the juridical order in the Church are an expression and an element of that grace which is preached in the gospel, and that they are an instrument of salvation and not the sting of sin only when they accompany grace and are redeemed by it, by that grace which is promised us efficaciously and without repentance in the Sacraments.

This unity of powers in one and the same bearer, in the one college of bishops, also brings home from the point of view of constitutional theology, even though it does not urge it in every individual case, the principle that wherever there is given an '*Ordinarius*' with reference to pastoral power as a permanent office in a subject for life, then that subject should also be a bishop. This is not merely because (as we saw above) such a one can meaningfully be a member of the supreme governing body of the Church (as also *vice versa*), but also because the exercise of such pastoral power should be supported by that grace which first sanctifies power in the Church and makes it a means of sanctification, and seeing that it involves such decisive events of grace should also be made historically and ecclesiologically (socially) visible in the Sacrament. As we have said, this may not be urgent in the individual case, because even without such a sacramental foundation and consecration of the pastoral power in the individual he and his activity stand within the whole of the mystical Body of Christ and as a consequence (that is, of the Sacrament of Orders which is infallibly present in the Church) the activity of such an individual also has this grace assured to it. But careful consideration should be given to this reflection in the practice of the Church. The fundamental-theological structures of the Church would thus be brought to a clearer and purer concrete development.

The question why and how the radically single power of the Church, while remaining one in its root, even though possessing two constitutive elements, yet unfolds into two separate powers which then in their [349] divided form no longer exhibit precisely the same characteristics, is a question which naturally does not concern us here. We only wish to add

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bestowal of the grace of the office, when this official power is itself a commission to perform sacramental acts. If it be said that the idea that the election of a pope could be the highest grade of the Sacrament of Orders is quite unheard of up to now, we may point out that up to the Second Vatican Council it was also not absolutely certain that episcopal consecration is a grade of the Sacrament of Orders. One might continue by asking whether, arguing from the nature of the Church as the basic sacrament, it is not necessary to say that appointment to the highest and most decisive office in the Church is also God's absolute promise of the divine Pneuma for rightly fulfilling this office (no matter whether the man completely takes up this promise or not), and what is really the difference between such an absolute promise and an *opus operatum*. One could ask whether the radical unity of the two powers in the Church does not suggest that the gradation of each of the two powers is given in the same way on both sides. If it be objected that appointment to the papacy does not produce an 'indelible mark', the character which is part of the essence of the Sacrament of Orders, it could be pointed out that a pope can be released from his authority only by his own act of renunciation, something which is not so in the case of any other degree in the hierarchy of jurisdiction, and that by this fact alone his office is already assimilated to the permanent powers of Orders in the lower degrees of the hierarchy of Orders, especially since the bearers of all these degrees can in practice renounce every exercise of their powers; the difference which then still remains can be explained by the nature of the case, that is by the essence of the supreme office, which cannot be taken up again by someone once he has completely renounced its exercise. It must also be always kept in mind that the theological nature of the pope's office can only be rightly seen if he is regarded *also* as a bishop, because he is head of the episcopal college as a hierarchy of Orders, and that therefore his appointment as pope necessarily signifies a modification of the episcopal authoritative power which he has or must have. Why should this modification in fact not have a sacramental character? Merely because we are not accustomed to see things in this way? But could we not see them in this way if we were once accustomed to seeing that the conferring of an office in the Church (as a whole) is of its nature a sacrament under the necessary conditions and with the corresponding intention on the part of the Church (to confer a definitive office) and that *therefore* and as a consequence of this the degrees of this office introduced by the Church (even it may be from apostolic times and irrevocably) are sacramental stages of the one office sacramentally conferred?

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here the note, that it is certainly insufficient to characterise the one power (power of Orders) as incapable of being lost and the other (pastoral power) as capable of being lost. For in its first bearer, the college of bishops with the pope, the pastoral power, too, cannot be lost: the college as such cannot lose it, and it is also implicit in the doctrine of the ultimate indefectibility of the socially constituted Church as such and the necessity for the power of Orders *and* for pastoral power of a historically visible apostolic succession that the historically visible college of bishops with the pope can never (as it were, all of a sudden) cease to exist and be replaced by an absolutely new college which is brought into being, so to speak, by a '*generatio aequivoca*'. Certainly the fact that Catholic ecclesiology both regards it as self-evident that a pope should be *elected* and therefore does not receive his office (as in the case of the bishop) handed on by his predecessor, and is also able to reckon with the possibility of a pope as a heretic or schismatic losing his membership of the Church and thus his office, indicates that the office of pope, rightly understood, is also supported by the college of bishops: it is because the Church remains an hierarchically ordered one even at the death (whether understood physically or morally) of the pope and the office is therefore historically then still in existence, that the election of a new pope is possible. In such a situation the Church posits without the pope an ecclesiastico-juridical act of the highest importance, namely the election of a new pope, even though this act consists merely in indicating the person who is to receive from the Spirit his full authority as pope (admittedly only in *one* respect, since the episcopal consecration of the pope is not purely an event 'from above' and episcopal powers yet belong to the essence of the papacy), and even though the Church is obliged to the act of choosing a pope. So if ultimately the power of jurisdiction cannot be lost in the Church, in so far as it reposes in the college of bishops, the power of Orders is on the other hand in many ways capable of being lost, or rather it is at least capable of being 'bound' to the extent of invalidating an act (for example, a priest's power of absolution; his power of confirming which is surely radically conferred on him *sacramentally*), and there is still not complete clarity in sacramental theology on the question of how far it is possible for the Church (even if this power, for whatever reason, should not be unlimited) to withhold [350] validity and not merely lawfulness from a determinate subject's act even of the power of Orders. One ought to study anew from this point of view the historical questions of the 're-ordinations' in ancient and early medieval times and of the invalidity of Anglican Orders: perhaps the situation is simply this, that *both* the positions adopted in these questions are 'in themselves' *possible* and the dispute, rightly seen, is really over whether the Church in making its decision *de facto* allowed or (from the beginning) denied any validity to a simoniacal Ordination (as an act). (Similarly with Anglican Orders.) From such reflections, too, it follows how close is the unity of the two powers in the Church. Yet this is not the place to pursue this question any further.

7. *Exemption*

The whole problematic area designated by this heading, too, cannot here be treated in all its depth and to its full extent. But our point of view permits us to attain to a very basic understanding of the real fundamental-theological side of the problem. The college of bishops with and under the pope is one, and it has as a college and in its head a unified function which is inter- or supra-territorial, which is not really the sum of the territorially limited functions of its individual members but is at least equal to them. From this fundamental idea it follows that someone can quite meaningfully be thought of as a member of this college who does not exercise at the same time any territorially determined pastoral function in the Church, provided only that his membership of the college be justified on other grounds, as, for example, in the case of a curial cardinal who is a 'titular bishop'.

Now there exist in the Church 'member-Churches' which on the one hand have every right

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to exist from the essence of the Church and yet are not simply a territorial 'province' of the Church, and on the other are of that importance for the whole Church and exercise that representative function for the Church as a whole which we demanded above for the constitutionally correct essence of a territorial diocese. In a word, there are 'personal dioceses', or at least there can be, indeed ought to be in certain circumstances. We do not mean by this that every 'personal diocese' which in fact exists (for example, the military Ordinariate of Colombia with twenty-four military chaplains) is from the fundamental-theological point of view such a 'personal diocese' which ought to exist. Just as juridically there exist miniature territorial dioceses which from the [351] fundamental-theological point of view should not exist, the same can happen in the case of 'personal dioceses'. But it is quite possible for large divisions of the Church to exist as representative of the whole Church without coming into being simply by the territorial division of the earth as the one field of the Church. For while man's relationship to a place is a very important and primordial element of his existential condition, it is not the only one and not necessarily the most fundamental where it is a question of the effect which such existential elements have upon the mode of man's incorporation into the supernatural community of faith, cult and life which is the Church. Localisation is after all in the first place a profane and not specifically Christian and ecclesiastical datum. Its importance for the mode of membership in the Church is therefore to be proved and not assumed as self-evident, especially since no one can any longer say today that the *necessary* localisation of the altar-community is identical with the territoriality of the diocese (as was almost everywhere the case in practice in the first centuries of the Church). The principle of territoriality is a natural principle for the essence of a diocese, in most cases rightly applied, but not one which is always the only valid one. This is already the case with the parish, and it is fundamentally no different with the diocese.

When in the Church a group which has the characteristic of being representative of the whole Church is in being as a result of the natural presuppositions for such divisions or of some qualities specifically proper to the Church and is unable to live and develop its own being and life within the framework of a territorial diocese, then in principle it has the same function and the same right as a territorial diocese. For the most part it then also has, according to current law, an '*Ordinarius*'! So it does not take anything from the territorial diocese; its equally original right is not an exception from something which of itself belongs only to a territorial diocese.

The word 'exemption' is conditioned by history (because such personal dioceses arose in *most* cases chronologically later than the territorial diocese, the juridical recognition of their own legal status was thought of as an 'exception', as an 'exemption'), but the term is unfortunate and obscures the true state of affairs. That explanation of exemption as it exists in fact in the Church which relies upon the episcopal and direct jurisdiction of the pope over every bishop, every diocese, and every individual Christian, to which particular members of the Church therefore [352] 'directly' subject themselves, is *alone* insufficient. It is true that this line of reasoning shows why such 'exempt' organs of the Church still have an episcopal head and therefore do not fall outside the framework of the hierarchy even if their immediate Ordinary is not a residential bishop. But, to begin with, the explanation of 'exemption' as an immediate subjection to the Holy See is unfortunate, since on the one hand the pope exercises an 'immediate' jurisdiction over every member of the Church and on the other even in the case of exemption the pope is not the immediate Ordinary. In the second place, this explanation presupposes what must itself be explained, namely that the pope can exercise his *always* immediate jurisdiction in *some* cases even by 'cutting out' the territorially structured jurisdiction of an immediate episcopal Ordinary which would otherwise be given, and that this is meaningful.

It is not our intention here to delineate in particular the more personally structured forms

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which, because they have a nature similar to a genuine diocese (unity, size, the capacity to represent the Church by their own spiritual-ecclesiastical make-up, and so on), also have the 'right' to exist (in the wider sense, in that they ought to exist from the point of view of constitutional theology) just as much as a diocese, that is to say, to be subject to their own Ordinary. But there are such member-Churches: they are quite thinkable from the constitutional-theological point of view and do in fact really exist. They do not really become 'detached' from a diocesan unit by 'exemption' in order to begin to exist, but the 'exemption' is only recognising from the point of view of constitutional law what already was the case from the point of view of constitutional theology: a part-Church whose principle of distinction from other parts is not territory. That these formations in the Church, while having an Ordinary, do not in most cases have an episcopal head does not alter the correctness of these reflections. Even apart from such 'exemptions', there are part-Churches which do not yet have a bishop (for example, apostolic prefectures) but tend to such a status. Besides, from the constitutional-theological point of view it would he best if under the necessary conditions such 'exempt' part-Churches did have a bishop as their superior.[17] But of this we have already spoken in a different connection. If such part [353] Churches, which do not strictly follow the territorial principle, rightly exist, then between them and the local dioceses (precisely as between these themselves) there is required a legally regulated co-operation, so that 'exemption' from the local bishop can never be absolute. Independence from and obligations towards the local diocese will naturally vary according to the nature of the subject-matter in question (the interior life, activities proper to an Order which are or are not exclusively those of a local bishop, normal pastoral concern with the members of a local diocese, and so on). The question could unhesitatingly be asked as a consequence whether those non-episcopal Ordinaries who have a seat in the Ecumenical Council or at least should have one *pari iure* should not also be meaningfully members of a corresponding conference of bishops.

From such considerations it is quite possible to pose the question in an ecumenical context, whether in promoting the unity of Christians we should not reckon more courageously and with less inhibition with the possibility that those forms of Christianity which have arisen in history and are still separated, once they are united with the Catholic Church under the necessary dogmatic and constitutional conditions, would be allowed to conserve to a large extent their previous independence and their own character in constitution, liturgy, theology, and so on, even if territorially they co-exist with Latin Churches. Such a thing may appear to the mere jurist and administrator impractical and difficult. But that is no reason for simply annihilating these part-Churches.

8. *The Duties of the Bishop*

Given that a bishop is '*aeque principaliter*' member of the college of bishops as he is pastor of his own diocese, it follows that he also has duties and responsibilities with regard to the whole Church. It is true that *in part* he attends to these precisely in so far as he participates *as* a member of the college in the strict sense in a proper collegial act of the college, and in so far as he leads his own diocese and strives to make it into a living member of the universal Church, which really contributes to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body. But because he is a member of the college, he has beyond this even as an individual a responsibility for the universal Church, a responsibility for the neighbouring dioceses, for the missions of the whole Church, and so on (although as an individual he naturally has no pastoral authority

[17] It must not be forgotten that once life according to the evangelical counsels is ecclesiastically institutionalised in religious orders specially directed by the Church, it is no longer possible to say that this involvement in the hierarchy contradicts the spirit of the free charismatic life which, religious life strives to be.

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outside his own diocese). How such a co-responsibility can be given an institutional expression, for example [354] by bishops' conferences, has already been discussed elsewhere. This responsibility of every bishop for the whole Church was clearly realised and expressed in the institutional life of the ancient Church, and this already at a time when there was as yet no written law for synods and similar institutional expressions of the responsibilities of the individual bishop towards the universal Church.

9. *The Idea of the Patriarchate*

If a bishop can only be bishop of his diocese in so far as he is at the same time a member of the college, then his unity and co-operation with other bishops is in principle not a matter for his own free judgement but something which flows essentially from the nature of his office. If there necessarily exists a college, then the union of a bishop with other bishops is not merely the union of all individual bishops with the pope. For while this is *one* constitutive element of the unity of the college, and its foundation, its guarantee and a criterion of its existence, it is not its only constitutive element. For the mere union of many with one does not yet turn the many into a college. A collegial unity of the kind we have in mind was realised in earlier times in the patriarchates:[18] a territory which formed a geographical, historical and ecclesiastical (missionary) unity, notwithstanding the fact that it consisted of several dioceses, became constitutionally one unit, or alternatively the single dioceses which originated as daughter Churches of the original unit were conserved in that unity.

From the point of view of constitutional law it can certainly be said that these patriarchates are only of human and ecclesiastical law. But as we indicated above already, we must distinguish two types of human law in the Church: firstly a human law which – even if motivated by objectively good motives – supervenes more or less as a pure addition on divine law, at best as a purely additional help for the carrying out of divine law, and secondly that human law which is no more than divine law made concrete in history. This latter is at times so much the case that it is difficult to say where exactly the boundary should be drawn between what remains divine in a law and what is its concrete historical realisation. This can be [355] seen in the dioceses themselves: each one is a concrete realisation of the episcopal principle in the Church, they could not all at the same time cease to exist, and yet no individual diocese can lay claim to divine law for its existence and its boundaries and the exact contents of its rights.

The old institution of the patriarchate, apart from the historical rights of the individual existing patriarchates, also belongs without any doubt so much to the second type of human law in the Church that it may even be questioned (if one attends to the reality and not to the nomenclature) whether a patriarchate is any less of divine law than a particular diocese or 'the' diocese, that is that organisation in the Church which in fact is designated by this term. One only has to think of the fact that, without altering the reality, one could in certain circumstances objectively and terminologically just as well say for 'patriarch': 'bishop of a large diocese', and for the bishops subject to him: 'auxiliary bishops with the rights of a vicar-general of the (chief) bishop', in order to see that the distribution of the labels 'divine law' and 'human law' between bishop and patriarch is not quite as self-evident as is usually assumed.

As soon as one has clear ideas about the collegiality of all bishops the unfavourable impression at first created by these relationships between different legal structures with fluid lines of demarcation disappears: after all one can participate in the one authority of the one

[18] We are not concerned here with the difference between patriarch and metropolitan, which is determined by historical factors and is fluid in meaning, as long as we look beyond the words to their content. Everything we are saying here could equally well be put under the heading 'Chief Bishop' and 'Chief Diocese'.

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college in different ways which can be determined in the concrete by the Church herself. What name is then given to the various bearers of the various ways in which this participation can be formulated is then almost merely a matter of regulating language – which should be done as accurately as possible. Rightly understood, one can say without any scruples that the real, fundamental-theological essence of the patriarchate belongs to the *ius divinum*[19] in the Church, because the collegiality of the bishops gives rise to the conclusion that they must realise a concrete and particular unity with one another at that time and in that place where a large part-Church embracing several dioceses grows up in the spheres of history, ecclesiastical tradition, sociology, and so on, or where such a unity already precedes the division into dioceses. Whether such a greater Church is called a patriarchate, a metropolitan union, or anything else, is a question of secondary importance. This is especially so because the dividing line [356] between the duties and rights of a 'patriarch' on the one hand and those of the individual local bishops on the other have been fluid and can vary according to time and place. Where energetic and effective national conferences of bishops exist or are in process of formation, a 'patriarchate' is already materially there, provided that there also corresponds to the national (or continental) unity of such a union of bishops a greater Church Which has historically, liturgically (or para-liturgically), theologically etc., its own proper character which enables it to fulfil within the whole Church a function which is proper to it (which does not mean that it must be legally exceptional).

If, however, it becomes clearly evident that patriarchates of this kind (in many respects newly fashioned) are already there or in process of formation in a para-canonical way, then these ought to be consciously promoted in such a way that their concrete form is a genuine realisation of their fundamental-theological essence. This involves above all a balanced relationship between the patriarch (no matter how he is designated: whether metropolitan, patriarch, president of the conference of bishops, cardinal,[20] or anything else) and the college of bishops belonging to this 'patriarchate'. The relationship need not be exactly the same as that which prevailed in the earlier historical patriarchates; much less is it necessarily that which prevails *iure divino* between pope and bishops. It is precisely because the unity of the episcopate is already guaranteed in the pope that the relationship between the members of a particular grouping of bishops can be more 'democratic'. But this again does not mean that it is desirable from the fundamental-theological [357] point of view for the 'patriarch' to have the patriarchal right simply of a '*primus inter pares*'. Since in fact he will not be such, it is much more intelligent to recognise this without scruple and make it a juridical fact and so provide a firm hope that the 'patriarch' will not unduly limit the independence and responsibility of the individual bishops but rather protect it, more so then if he exercises in a purely extra-canonical way a power which he in fact possesses even if juridically it does not exist at all.

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[19] Although we realise at the same time that this *ius divinum* must become concrete in determinate historical forms and will therefore rightly become concrete *differently* in different times and places.

[20] If the constitution of the college of cardinals is such as we have sketched it above, in other words if the college of cardinals genuinely represents the whole episcopate (which does not necessarily mean that it must be made up *exclusively* of residential bishops), and if in many cases (not necessarily always and exclusively) cardinals and presidents of national bishops' conferences are accordingly one and the same, then 'cardinal' could quite possibly become the new title for that person who is from the point of view of constitutional theology all that is meant by a real patriarch. It would also be a start towards getting rid once and for all of the unfortunate problem of the relationship between patriarchs and cardinals. In such a development one ought not to worry about moving even further from the traditional number of seventy cardinals than John XXIII has already done. Of the forty-four bishops' conferences listed in the *Annuario Pontificio* many already have or are worthy of having a cardinal as their president. As a consequence, a college of cardinals should not be thought of in too small a way, since it cannot he thought of as composed merely of the presidents of bishops' conferences.

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10. *A Consultative Board of Bishops around the Pope*

It is well-known that Paul VI declared himself very willing to accede to any request that might be expressed by the Council for him to set up in Rome a consultative board of bishops from the whole world to support him in the government of the universal Church. About this possibility there are three remarks to be made from the standpoint of fundamental theology.

1. A board of this kind is of its nature a *consultative* board. For it cannot limit the supreme jurisdiction of the pope, since this is not dependent upon the co-operation of such a board. The pope *could* indeed, if he wanted, work together with this board in the manner of a Council. For – in the abstract – one could quite conceive this board as being the real and authorised representation of the universal episcopate, so that the pope could set up with it a real and permanent Ecumenical Council in miniature without making it necessary for this board to consist of very many members. For there have been Councils enough in which there were present a very small number of bishops and which are yet reckoned to be Ecumenical. Moreover, the ecumenicity of very many of the old councils was a very para-canonical matter, that is to say, it arose not so much from the nature of the gathering itself but from an express or tacit subsequent consent of the universal episcopate and of the pope. But as we have said, in the case of this board the intention appears not to go beyond a consultative body, and there is no need to go beyond it. Its significance can nevertheless be great.

2. It must not be overlooked that even *without* such a board there can be given, and was and is given, the fundamental-theological necessity of co-operation between the pope and the universal episcopate. The phrase '*ex sese*' in the definition of Vatican I[21] does indeed signify that the supreme [358] decision of the pope in matters of faith and ecclesiastical law cannot be subject to any legal control or confirmation on the part of another juridical instance, but it does not exclude but rather implies that in making such a decision the pope is acting *as* head and member of the Church and thereby (since this Church has necessarily by her very nature an episcopal structure) also as head of the college of bishops, that he is bound to the scriptures and the faith of *that* Church which has its authentic teaching authority in the universal episcopate, that he must proceed according to the norms of justice and love and must therefore respect the concrete form of the Church, her wishes and the movements of the Spirit within her.[22]

A really living and constant agreement between the pope and the universal episcopate is therefore normal and necessary for the pope in the whole accomplishment of his office: even though the fulfilment of this requirement is not subject to a legal check by the remaining bishops, as was taught by a false Gallicanism and Episcopalism which placed the Council above the pope. Such unity and co-operation has also in fact always been present – according to the possibilities and needs of particular times – in a sufficient (which does not necessarily mean ideal) way, even if to a large extent it was accomplished para-canonically. The bishops are directly or indirectly (through nuncios, and so on) in touch with the pope; the papal theologians are moved or influenced (consciously or unconsciously) by the theology of the whole Church – which in its turn is in contact with bishops: even if it wanted to, Rome could not possibly ward off the influence of the total life of the Church. Indeed it is the case in man's intellectual history as elsewhere that even a 'No' to a movement becomes in its turn subject to the law of that against which it is protesting. The Church and her Spirit have a thousand ways of influencing Rome, and perhaps those which are not legally defined and therefore cannot be deliberately checked are the most effective, even though there may be

[21] '. . . *ideoque eiusmodi Romani Pontificis definitiones ex sese, non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae, irreformabiles esse*': sess. IV, cap. 4; cf. *DS* 3074.

[22] So much is this true that the old canonists had no hesitation in reckoning with the possibility of the pope, if he does not act in this way and therefore becomes a schismatic (by *his* breaking away from the total organism of the Church) or even a heretic, ceasing to be a Catholic and therefore pope.

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need of much patience until they have made their mark and become so much accepted in Rome that they are then sent out again as impulses from there.

While it is true, therefore, that the unity of pope and universal episcopate [359] which from the fundamental-theological point of view is necessary does always exist (*quoad substantiam*), it can yet be greater or less, more quickly or more slowly effective, can in different periods evolve different means and modes of effectiveness, it can become more explicit and canonically more evident. And in this respect the planned board is theologically an important and useful arrangement. It does away even 'optically' with the false impression that the vital flow of the Church is exclusively from head to members, that the supreme, officially organised centre of the Church is always the only place where her Spirit is permitted to launch his new charismatic impulses. It makes it easier to take account of the present day. For today it is practically impossible to guarantee that the head of a large community (or company) with a multiplicity of interests in extremely complicated situations should be 'kept fully informed' in any other way than by a team of leaders, a brains trust, and so on, even though the head himself alone has the last word. To imagine that a well-educated, well-intentioned man of great personal 'experience' can today still be sufficiently informed without any further trouble, and that in any case he has no need of any institutionalised sources of information, is an antiquated paternalism which has nothing to do with the rightful freedom and independence of a supreme head. A consultative board around the pope of the suggested kind drawn from the universal episcopate is a good constitutional concrete expression of the theological unity of pope and universal episcopate in the government of the Church. Then one also sees where the responsibility for such information lies; national bias in the observation of the reality about which information is sought can more easily be avoided; the information can be gathered more quickly and more regularly. Naturally this board must he rightly structured and organised if it is to fulfil its tasks. Its task is after all to be a means of overcoming the fortuitousness and the subjective contingency of the experience of individuals (the pope and the Roman Curia), and this would not happen if a number of bishops were merely to meet together from time to time in Rome for an 'informative exchange of ideas'. All round and comprehensive information demands here as in other spheres of high politics today, organs of assembly, examination and correct assessment of events, movements and the appearance of new ideas.

3. The standpoint from which we have been contemplating this consultative board makes it clear that it need not be *only* non-Roman members of the universal episcopate who belong to it. If we set out from [360] the fundamental-theological recognition that the universal episcopate does not have to consist merely of diocesan bishops but that it can meaningfully have other members too, and that for example really leading men of the Roman central government under the pope would from the fundamental-theological point of view meaningfully be members of the supreme episcopal governing board of the Church, then this also applies to a kind of 'committee' of the college of bishops. If the rector of a university which is in some way representative of Catholic learning is rightly a bishop, he could in certain circumstances also rightly be a member of this consultative board. And this is all the more true of episcopal members of the Roman Curia. While it is inevitable but meaningful that with the existence of such a board the Roman Congregations must appear more than heretofore mere administrative rather than legislative organs of the pope, at the same time if the insight we have just called attention to is respected, even more clearly will the impression be avoided that the Roman Congregations with their experience of legal deliberation are themselves to be excluded whenever the episcopal consultative board is engaged upon such legal deliberations and the establishing of laws, that is to say exercises a legislative function.

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[361]

21

PASTORAL-THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON EPISCOPACY IN THE TEACHING OF VATICAN II

There can be no doubt that the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is the most significant achievement of Vatican II as far as the immediately tangible results of the Council are concerned. Within this Constitution itself the teaching on episcopacy is the most important section. It would not be true to say that everything else in the Dogmatic Constitution is only the framework and ornament of this; it may even happen that only at some later date will the full significance of something else in the document become apparent to the Church and to the world, for example what it says about the possibility of salvation for all men, even those outside the Church. But the very lengthiness and sharpness of conciliar debate over this section on the bishops demonstrate that the Council itself saw in this its greatest achievement.

Conciliar teaching on this matter has a great pastoral-theological importance both in itself and in its consequences which are pointed out by the Dogmatic Constitution itself. In what follows we wish to make some remarks about this. Within the limitations of a brief essay we may be permitted to omit from our consideration those parts of the chapter on the hierarchy which treat either of the pope or of the particular functions of each individual bishop as such (as priest, teacher, and shepherd of his diocese) which are already well known and realised in practice, or directly of the individual priest or deacon.

To begin with, the teaching on the episcopal office in this document may be summarised as briefly as possible. Jesus Christ gave to his Church a hierarchical constitution, that is he established offices with a sacred authority (as service) whose bearers are in the first place the bishops as successors of Christ's apostles under the pope, who is the visible foundation and principle of the unity of the episcopate (no. 18). According to [362] the will of Christ, the apostles, chosen as the leaders of the Church, already formed a college (no. 19). Their successors are '*ex divina institutione*' the bishops with and under the pope (no. 20). In their episcopal consecration by the laying-on of hands, which is a true Sacrament, they receive all their offices, even though the teaching and pastoral offices can be exercised only in the unity of the Church (no. 21). The bishops form a true college in the same way as the apostles formed a college as ordained by Christ. This college possesses its authority only in union with the Roman pontiff and under his leadership, in accordance with the supreme authority ascribed to him by Vatican I. But in forming such a college all the bishops are the bearers of full and supreme power in the Church. This power can be exercised by the college of bishops both in a conciliar way (in an Ecumenical Council) and in an extra-conciliar way, provided only that a collegial act takes place in co-operation with the pope. One becomes a member of this college by sacramental consecration as a bishop and union with the head and members of the college (no. 22). Hence the individual bishop as an individual is not only the leader of his own diocese, endowed with sovereign authority, but as a member of the college has also by Christ's institution and command a responsibility (not jurisdiction) and a duty towards the whole Church, for the unity of her faith and life and for her mission. The unity of the college and of its function is displayed and made effective in the practical order by wider ecclesiastical units (patriarchates, etc.) and today also in bishops' conferences (no. 23), although these are determined by historical circumstances.

What then is the significance of this conciliar document on episcopacy from the standpoint of pastoral theology? First of all, although practice, which is the difficulty, has yet fully to implement theory, this doctrine represents a clear rejection of the idea implicit in the practice

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of recent years and so prevalent under the surface among many of the laity and the clergy, that a bishop is nothing more than a subordinate official of the pope. The bishop rules his flock by his *own* (not delegated) ordinary power in the name of *Christ* and not that of the pope (no. 27); this does not detract from his obligation to lead his flock in unity with and under the authority of the supreme power in the Church. To the bishop is *fully* committed the pastoral office in its normal form (‘*habitualis et cotidiana cura*’) (no. 27). He cannot therefore consider himself to be the mere recipient and executor of commands received from higher quarters. He has an independent duty and responsibility which he cannot simply [363] shirk. He would therefore not be fulfilling his office fully, if he regarded himself as the mere executive organ of universal ecclesiastical laws or of initiatives emanating from Rome. Whether alone or in union with his neighbours in regional bishops’ conferences he must strive to recognise for himself the scope of his tasks and the right moment for acting: *he* must make decisions, develop initiatives, discover solutions, which are not the mere application of universal norms provided by ecclesiastical law and pastoral theology. Only in this way can his diocese and the fulfilment of his duty contribute to the good of the ‘whole body’ of the Church (no. 23), for this Church is not a homogeneous mass but an organic structure which possesses a real variety of members and *by means of it* ‘*universalitas*’ (nos. 1-3, 22, 23).

The conciliar declaration that the sacramental Ordination of the bishop confers all three offices (of teacher, priest and shepherd) will cause the canonists many a headache. For it is not too easy to reconcile this with the doctrine for so long traditional that there are two fundamental powers (sacramental and pastoral power: *potestas ordinis* and *potestas iurisdictionis*), the latter of which is not transmitted by Ordination (considered in this case as absolute) but by a canonical mission. This is not the place to deal with this question; but the fact that the Council finds a *sacramental* and therefore *pneumatic* basis for the transmission of *every* office is of incalculable significance for juridical practice in the Church. Justice and love, law and fraternity, charisma and institution cannot be simply identified even in the future, because for man, a pluralistic being in spite of his pneumatic unity, they are not the same, and it is precisely the distinction which serves the unity. But the very fact that the law is rooted in the *Pneuma* makes it unmistakably clear that in the Church the law is no worldly law but a law which is holy and sustained by the Spirit, the embodiment of grace, and that it is put into effect and applied in accordance with the will of Christ only when its application is inspired and sustained by this Spirit: the spirit of humility, of the will to serve, of fraternity, of respect for every person and his conscience, of self-criticism, of the will of those in authority to be open to advice and new experience, of the ‘*affectus collegialis*’ which the bishop too must cultivate towards his priests, of the will to co-operate with them and regard them as his friends (cf. nos. 27, 28). Canon law must be sustained and inspired by the *Pneuma* of Christ, for only then can it really be called the law of Christ’s Church.

[364] The Council says that the one, whole office which is sacramentally conferred on the bishop (in its threefold direction) is legitimately divided in the Church ‘*vario gradu*, *variis subiectis*’ (priests, deacons) (no. 28). Although this does not set out to solve the problem encountered in the history of dogma whether Christ himself expressly willed the three levels of the one sacrament of Orders or whether this is the result of a legitimate decision of the apostolic Church, it does indicate the dogmatic basis for an outlook and attitude which are important from the pastoral point of view. The almost incalculable multiplicity of offices, functions, authorities and institutions which exist in the hierarchical Church and which often have an almost secular air, evidently determined by merely external circumstances, and which are reflected very inaccurately in the three stages of Orders, must all be seen and lived as rooted in pneumatic unity in the sacrament of the episcopal and priestly office. Every office in the Church must be understood spiritually, as the making concrete of the sacramental mystery of Orders, and where this is no longer seriously possible it should be

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entrusted to lay people who can carry it out just as well or even better.

As the conciliar teaching on episcopacy clearly indicates (no. 23), the institution of patriarchates, ecclesiastical provinces and episcopal conferences is an application (even if formally of human law) of the collegial structure of the Church, an application which is determined by historical circumstance. The subject of bishops' conferences is too wide and important for us to be able to do justice to it here. Besides, we must wait to see what will be the juridical development of this institution after the Council. One can only hope that the *collegialis affectus* will here be given a '*concreta applicatio*' (no. 23), that is to say, that the bishops' conferences achieve that juridical form and acquire that spirit which the pastoral situation of the different countries and continents renders necessary, if we are really to have Churches in those countries and continents which are capable of acting on their own and do not depend exclusively on Rome and its nuncios for representation, leadership and united responsibility. In the long run it will inevitably happen that in particular cases an individual bishop will be legally bound by the decision of a bishops' conference. It will also be the task of such bishops' conferences to administer those interdiocesan organisations and institutions (charitable organisations, film institutes, etc.) which in this day and age are pastorally indispensable. The same applies to the re-drawing of diocesan and [365] provincial boundaries: it is essential that the bishops' conferences fully share in this work.

A further practical conclusion of human law may be drawn from the collegiality of the bishops with one another and with the pope as head of the college: the need for the pope to be supported in the government of the universal Church by representatives of the *bishops of the whole Church*. This is, of course, not intended to lead to the establishment of a permanent Council, for this co-operation does not involve a collegial act of the whole episcopate. Nor is this support already sufficiently given by the episcopal character of many of the officials of the papal Curia. It should be genuinely a matter of representatives of the bishops of the world. Hence it would also not do for the bishops in question to reside permanently in Rome, otherwise they will only become Roman curial officials or agents for bishops or bishops' conferences without any initiative or responsibility of their own. This does not exclude the possibility that the bishops could be additional members of Roman official bodies without, presumably, permanently residing in Rome. From the nature of the case, they would have to be episcopal representatives of bishops' conferences, chosen by these conferences, meeting at regular intervals in Rome and there constituting an advisory body to the pope, which would thus be superior to the executive of the curial offices since it would be immediately attached to the pope as the bearer of legislative power in the Church. If the episcopal advisory board which the Council desires were erected in this fashion, a quite considerable piece of that curia! reform which Paul VI at the beginning of his pontificate declared himself to favour, and which the Council too wished to see, would thereby already be accomplished.

Although the Constitution on the Church does not contain any express indication regarding the proper size of a diocese, it does provide the objective basis for deciding this difficult question. A diocese is ruled by a member of the supreme governing body of the universal Church and not by some subordinate official of this government. The universal Church is also the *corpus Ecclesiarum*. This yields as the supreme *positive principle* for the *extensiveness* of a diocese, that the essence of the Church must be clearly allowed to appear in it; and as the *negative principle* for the limitation of a diocese, that the bishop must still be able really to fulfil his office in its regard. If at present or in the future a diocese is not in a condition to represent and make actual in some way the life and fulfilment [366] of the whole Church in all its different dimensions, it is not in the full sense a 'Church' and is not suited for government by a member of the supreme governing board of the Church. The concrete application of this principle naturally depends on many demographic, social, psychological, economic, geographical and historical factors, but none of this detracts from its great

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pastoral-theological significance. There is no doubt that the resolute application of this principle must lead to the amalgamation of many miniature dioceses. But this is not to deny that the negative principle set out above, which is likewise a consequence of the nature of episcopacy, also demands the division of dioceses which are too large.

When we reflect upon the teaching of the Council on episcopacy we feel constrained to face a problem which is partly dogmatic and partly pastoral-theological. It is not easy to formulate this problem. We could perhaps call it the problem of the relationship and the tension between the *theoretical* and the *real* structures of the Church. We must explain what we mean by this. In the Constitution on the Church the bishop appears (leaving aside the pope for the moment) as *the* pastor of his Church without further qualification: in *him* is to be found the fullness of all sacred authority, *he* preaches, *he* teaches, *he* sanctifies and *he* guides the Church's people entrusted to him. The whole official action of the Church in the transmission of truth and grace is concentrated in him. And at this point the objection might be raised that this description is surely very unrealistic: in reality the bishop is surely a kind of higher administrative official, watching over and co-ordinating the real and essential work of the Church, while this latter, the real care of souls, the *Kerygma*, the word of grace in the sacraments, the witness to Christ before the 'World', is in reality (in so far as it has an official character) carried out by the priests in the parish. One could object that the description of the episcopal office in this Constitution has an *a priori* and unrealistic character and does not describe basically and adequately what the Church really is in actual fact. (We might briefly note here that we are in this matter touching upon a problem which is also ecumenical and theologically controversial: the Lutheran theology of the Church views the official activity of the Church as primarily to be found in the actual preaching of the gospel in the concrete community by the pastor and therefore can only recognise the 'bishop' as the necessary 'superintendent' of this life of the concrete community.) It is of course possible to answer these objections by saying that the Council's teaching recognises and recounts at length the importance [367] of the individual parochial priest as a helper of the bishop, as a real priest and leader of the concrete community (especially the altar-community). One could add that the Council underlines the essence of the concrete community (the altar-community, the local community, the parish) as a true 'Church', in which *the* Church is realised and made present to the world, in a way in which it has never appeared before in any doctrinal document; a doctrine whose pastoral-theological consequences can hardly even be foreseen as yet, because in reality the foundation has here been laid for a *theology* of the parish and not merely for its juridical position. But theologically and pastorally all this does not really meet the difficulty or solve the problem which we have in mind. For this one would have to develop further the theology of the local altar-community as the manifestation and actualisation of the Church as such at a particular point in space and time, and make it vital and fruitful in the life of the individual community. One might say that as long as the local community does not recognise itself with an existential faith in thought and deed to be the Church to which can truly be applied everything that the Council proclaims of the glory and mystery belonging to *the* Church, as long as the individual community feels itself to be no more than the smallest administrative unit by means of which the *universal Church* (alone) effects the salvation of the individual, it has not yet truly understood itself. Here there are tasks before us which are pastorally of the greatest importance for the life of the individual communities and for the full and correct structuring of this life, without which the episcopal Church too is not what it ought to be.

In order to overcome this difficulty, that is in order to understand thoroughly and theologically the relationship of tension between the episcopal Church and the local Church, it is necessary to reflect further upon this relationship. In the ancient Church there was no problem: every real local Church was an episcopal Church. In medieval and modern times in

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the West the problem could not be properly formulated either: the local community did not feel itself to be the Church, and there was therefore no problem in regarding its institutions as institutions of human law which can be set up at will as appears necessary. But if the local community is the Church, its concrete form while being changeable and determined by historical circumstance is the concrete form of the *essence* of the Church, in which must be manifested '*iure divino*' what the Church is, so that the Christian can truly experience *here* what is [368] really meant by 'the Church': the sacramental presence of the divinising and forgiving grace of God in the unity of men in love. If the empirically real structure of the Church in the local community is really present and capable of being experienced, the episcopal nature of the Church's essential structure which lies as it were at a deeper level in the organism of the Church will become accessible to the religious experience of the Christian and will no longer give the impression of being an abstract theory which has little contact with the concrete life of the Church.[1]

[1] For a deeper theological discussion of the above reflections, apart from the other contributions to the topic in this volume, cf. K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, Quaestiones Disputatae 4 (Freiburg/Edinburgh-London 1962); K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie der Pfarrei' in H. Rahner, *Die Pfarre* (Freiburg i. B. 1956), pp. 27-36; K. Rahner, 'Reflection on the Concept of "Ius Divinum" in Catholic Thought' in *Theological Investigations* V (London & Baltimore 1966), pp. 219-243; cf. also 'Dogmatische Fragen des Konzils' in *Oberrheinisches Pastoralblatt* LXIV (1963), pp. 234-250.

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[369]

22

ON BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

The question of the nature and significance of bishops' conferences, of the position which they ought to occupy and which has still to be assigned to them in the common law of the Church, is one which has been newly posed by the Council.[1] At the very beginning of the Council it was already evident that conferences of bishops possess in practice a greater significance than has been accorded them in law. We saw it in the first general assembly of the Italian hierarchy known to history (in Rome on the 15 October 1962). We saw it in the formation of a pan-african bishops' conference which joined together nine separate conferences of bishops already in existence or in process of formation: this became one of the most dynamic and the best organised of all the bishops' conferences which came into being during the first session of the Council. The selection of Council Fathers to serve on the different conciliar commissions was made largely on the basis of the suggestions put forward by the various national bishops' conferences. Already in the first session of the Council there was a growing tendency for single bishops in the Council to speak on occasion no longer in their own name only, but to be permitted and encouraged to appear as the spokesmen of particular groups of bishops, which meant in practice of bishops' conferences. It may be assumed that this development will be carried further during the second session on the practical grounds of better organising the agenda, that is to say in order to speed up the debate and make it more searching. But what is most important of all is that in the very schemata of the Council's decrees there appears to be a marked desire to accord to large episcopal conferences (national and perhaps even supra-national) a much more secure canonical status and to entrust to them duties and responsibilities which up to now have never been possessed by any [370] individual bishop, or even by any provincial or plenary (national) Council, but only by the Holy See. In this way there would be created again a real intermediate legal instance between the Apostolic See and the individual bishop, something like the older patriarchal and metropolitan unions which today exist only in name, but in a new form. It is of course quite likely that the actual regulation in common law of the nature, duties and competence of bishops' conferences will only come about in an exact form with the new codification of canon law which can only happen after the Council, although it is quite possible that the Council itself will lay down fundamental norms for such episcopal conferences. But it will be absolutely necessary for this codification to be vigorously pursued, as the preparations already made to this end do indeed promise.[2] It might be objected that before the end of the Council a purely personal consideration of bishops' conferences is somewhat premature. But even in the Council and in the official consultations after the Council for the reform of canon law this question will need a great deal of intellectual co-operation from individual theologians, canonists and experts in the pastoral and administrative practice of the Church, and it is so important for an understanding of the nature of the Church in general that perhaps it is permissible and helpful to set down a few thoughts on the matter even now. In a short essay like this the question can of course be treated only in a fragmentary way. It is moreover noteworthy how sparse is the literature on

[1] Cf. Piet Fransen, 'Die Bischofskonferenz – Kornproblem des Konzils', *Orientierung* XXVII (1963), pp. 119-123, esp. p. 122 *sq*.
[2] Cf. *AAS* LV (1963), p. 363. The members of the Commission for the Revision of the Code include, for example, the two German cardinals Bea and Döpfner.

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it.[3]

[371]

PAST AND PRESENT FORMS

There can be no question here of recounting the pre-history and the history of bishops' conferences. Their pre-history would consist of the story of the origin, constitution, government and effectiveness of those major units of the Church which join together several territorial dioceses and which, as regards the Church's government, stand between the individual diocese with its bishop and the universal government of the whole Church by the pope. This pre-history would therefore be practically identical with the history of metropolitan unions and patriarchates, with the significance and effectiveness of metropolitans, patriarchs, primates, and with the effectiveness of provincial synods, plenary and national Councils. All these canonical entities still exist in some form in the current law of the Church, in so far as there still exist metropolitan unions with a certain, though extraordinarily limited, range of duties, and provision is made for plenary and provincial Councils in canon law, the latter being supposed to meet in principle at least every twenty years.[4] Also they still have some practical effect in so far as right up to the present provincial, plenary and national synods are in fact held in many parts of the world. And they are the antecedents of present and future bishops' conferences in so far as they have united several dioceses in common juridical and pastoral action and this not merely for that part of the Church which was so united, but directly or indirectly have been of importance beyond this for the universal Church. With a view to the question we are discussing we wish to make only two remarks about all these different stages of the antecedents of bishops' conferences: in the first place, it is noteworthy that these juridical structures already existed and were put into effect in synods before the universal primacy of jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome became practically evident to any notable [372] extent, in fact even before the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea. This fact certainly should serve to call our attention to the necessity and importance of such major assemblies of the Church existing between the individual dioceses and the supreme government of the Church, the pope and the Ecumenical Council. In the second place, ever since the Middle Ages the importance of these entities within the Church

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[3] One could, for example, compare the commentaries on *c*. 292 of *CIC*: cf. e.g. E. Eichmann and Klaus Mörsdorf, Lehrbuck des Kirchenrechts ([9]1959), I, 393; M. Conte, A. Coronata, *Institutiones Iuris Canonici* I (Turin 1928), 427 *sqq*.; H. Jone, *Commentarium in Codicem Juris Canonici* I (Paderborn 1950), 257; A. Toso, *Ad codicem iuris canonici commentaria minora*, Lib. II De personis, Tom. I (Rome 1922), III *sqq*.; E. Regatillo, Institutiones Iuris Canonici I[5] (Santander 1956), 322 *sq*. (A typical comment may be read here: '*Aliae conferentiae . . . In Germania omnes episcopi Borussiae quotannis ad sepulcrum S. Bonifatii, Fuldae*. *Hae vi iuridica carent*.' This therefore seemed to the noted canonist the most important thing about such bishops' conferences.) For the history of episcopal conferences cf. H. E. Feine, *Kirchliche Rechtsgeschichte* I[3] (Weimar 1955), 577, 591, 614; W. M. Plöchl, *Geschichte des Kirchenrechts* III.I (Vienna 1959), 212-216. Further reading: *LTK* II[1] (Freiburg 1931), 377 *sq*.[2]; II (Freiburg 1958), 506 *sq*.; *RGG* III[2], 1804; *DDC* I (Paris 1935), 1175 *sq*.; N. Hilling, *AKKR* XCIII (1913), 265-268 (Leo XIII and the bishops' conferences); H. Storz, *Staat und Kirche in Deutschland im Lichte den Würzburger Bischofsdenkschrift von 1848* (Bonn 1934); J. Rommerskirchen, 393-407; C. Wolfsgruber, 'Die Konferenzen der Bischöfe Österreichs', *TAPQ* LVIII (1905), 243-266; Ph. Maroto, 'Circa le Conferenze Episcopali in Itahia', *Apollinaris* V (1932), 277-280; Fr. Houtart, 'Les formes modernes de la Collégialité Episcopale' in J. Congar and P. D. Dupuy, *L'Episcopat et l'Église universelle* (Paris 1962), 497-535; J. Faupin, *La Mission de France* (Tournai 1960), 16-18 (French bishops' conferences only since 1939); Regional bishops' conferences in Africa: *Stimmen der Zeit* CLXXII (1962/3), 342 *sq*.; A. Simon, *Réunions des évêques de Belgique 1830-1867*: *Procés-verbaux*, Centre interuniversitaire d'histoire contemporaine, Cahier 10 (Louvain-Paris 1960); V.-L. Chaigneau, *L'organisation de l'Église catholique en France* (Paris 1956); *Information catholiques internationales*, 15 April 1957, no. 46, 15-22.

[4] *CIC c*. 271-291.

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has been constantly reduced in the West by a long and complicated process, and this process is practically identical with the historical development of the papal primacy of immediate jurisdiction over the whole Church and over every single diocese, which for the Western Church reached its highest point ever in Vatican I, the legal structure of the code of canon law based upon it and the administrative practice of the Holy See in accordance with it. The fact of this process of decline in the importance of the major ecclesiastical units in the West standing between individual dioceses and the Roman See, at least under a juridical aspect, undoubtedly poses the question whether this process is really terminated or whether tendencies and energies are not making themselves felt in dogma and the concrete situation of the Church's life which, while not simply leading back to the ancient forms of these major units, do impel us forward to new structures similar to the old, which will fulfil in the present and in the future the former duties of these major units in a new form, for example in the form of bishops' conferences.

The real history of bishops' conferences began one hundred and thirty years ago.[5] Already in 1830 the Belgian bishops gathered together at least once a year in the archiepiscopal palace at Mechelen. After a small episcopal conference in Cologne, 10-13 May 1848, the German and Austrian bishops at the invitation of Archbishop Geissel of Cologne met in Würzburg in 1848 in thirty-six sessions from 23 October to 16 November [373] for voluntary synodal discussions and occupied themselves especially with the relationship between Church and State. (They strove during the course of this for a strengthening of the metropolitan unions and expressed a desire for a national synod, without however pursuing Dollinger's plan for a German National Church with a primate[6] at its head.) There followed in 1850 a first bishops' conference of the Bavarian episcopate in Freising. Since 1869 the bishops' conference of Fulda is a gathering which takes place regularly once a year, but in addition to this there are conferences of Bavarian, West German, and latterly also of East German bishops. In the course of the past century the practice of episcopal conferences as assemblies of bishops from a more or less extensive territory has gradually spread throughout the whole Church. This was a development already encouraged by Leo XIII,[7] who, for example, gave to the bishops' conferences of Austria-Hungary and of South America something in the nature of statutes.[8] This development also had a certain outcome in canon 292, § 1 of *CIC*,[9] in so far as this prescribes that the bishops of an ecclesiastical province (therefore of a metropolitan union) should meet together at least every five years for pastoral-theological consultation.[10] Yet these prescriptions do not do justice to the proper nature of a bishops' conference as demanded by the real situation, since a metropolitan union usually covers too small a territory and includes too few bishops to act as a basis for giving the bishops' conferences their real

[5] Examples from the second half of the nineteenth century are still accessible in *Collectio Lacensis* III, 7. 853, 1203, 1057; V, 931 (s'Hertogenbosch 1868), 941-946 (Cologne 1848), 946-958 (Geissel's plan for a German bishops' conference), 959-1143 (the bishops' conference at Würzburg), 1144-1161 (Cologne 1849), 1161 (Cologne 1850), 1162-1189 (Freising 1850), 1189-1200 (Bamberg 1864), 1201-1204 (Passau 1864), 1203-1216 (Freiburg 1851), 1215-1220 (Fulda 1869: the first Pastoral Letter of the Fulda bishops' conference), 1317-1324 (Salzburg 1848), 1313-1332 (Görz 1848), 1331-1394 (Vienna 1849: first Pastoral Letter of the whole Austrian hierarchy), 1393-1398 (Vienna 1868), 1397-1408 (Prague 1868); VI, 699-726 (Milan 1849), 727-738 (Milan 1850), 739-772 (Spoleto 1849), 773-810 (Loreto 1850), etc. (In the same volume there are the acts of the bishops' conferences at Pisa, in Sicily, at Siena, at Milan in 1850).

[6] Cf. H. Becher, *Der deutsche Primas* (Kolmar 1940), 224-281.

[7] Cf. N. Hilling in *AKKR* XCIII (1913), 265-268. Pius X in his time praised such annual '*congressus*', yet he urged the holding of provincial synods (*Coll. Lac*. V, 1200). Cf. also *Acta Pii IX*, pars I, vol. III, 674.

[8] Cf. *AKKR* LXXX (1900), 381-383 (Austria), 766 *sq*. (South America).

[9] It is interesting to note that Gasparri cites no sources for this canon. Cf. also for the Eastern Church, I Opera *c*. 351 (AAS XLIX [1957], 538).

[10] In the questionnaire for the use of metropolitans and bishops making their reports to Rome there is also a question on the holding of bishops' conferences: *AAS* II (1910), 20; X (1918), 488.

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importance. Therefore in practice the real bishops' conferences cover a much greater territory. It is noteworthy that there are such episcopal conferences also in missionary lands.[11] Almost everywhere today, in fact, they are already replacing the plenary and provincial synods.[12] Yet the bishops' conferences are not, at [374] least up to the present, merely a modern and useful form of plenary and provincial synod; they differ from them juridically especially in two ways: firstly, plenary and provincial synods are the bearers of their own superior authority and are therefore capable of passing laws within the framework of the Church's common law which bind the individual bishop and the individual diocese who fall within the competence of the synod even when the bishop in question has voted against these laws in the course of it. By contrast, in the conference of bishops existing up to the present only those agreements can be reached from a legal point of view which bind the individual bishop and his diocese by his own consent, which therefore become law and then only diocesan law by this consent alone. Secondly, plenary Councils (synods of bishops uniting several metropolitan unions) can only be held with the previous consent of the pope and under the presidency of his legate; the decisions of a plenary or provincial council can only be promulgated and enter into force after being previously confirmed by the Roman See (through the Congregation of the Council). On the other hand, free discussions by individual bishops with one another at bishops' conferences are effective without any participation by the Roman See, as long as they remain within the limits of that jurisdiction within which every bishop can arrive at decisions without any special express permission from Rome in virtue of his '*potestas ordinaria*' which makes him more than a mere official of Rome. (This is not to forget the fact that the central government of the Church in accordance with canon 250, § 4 of *CIC* has in certain cases reserved to itself the ratification of the decisions of bishops' conferences.[13]) In addition, the episcopal conferences are not bound by the prescriptions of *CIC* c. 281-291 concerning the methods of convocation and procedure of plenary and provincial synods, and are in this way much more easily able to accommodate themselves to the circumstances of the place, the needs of the time, and the nature of the matter under discussion, and so are also technically easier to organise. Yet it is true that up to the present they have no real canonical existence; the holding of them is at present subject to no regulation in common law,[14] their competence is not clearly [375] defined and up to now it cannot in any case exceed that of the individual bishops. Above all, we are faced with the question whether their character as a voluntary agreement of individual bishops is sufficient for the needs of today.

DOGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

[11] Cf. J. Rommerskirchen (note 3 above). The astonishing effectiveness of the African bishops' conference at the Second Vatican Council is a matter of common knowledge.
[12] A list of bishops' conferences today: *Annuario Pontificio* 1963, 796-801.
[13] Cf. e.g. *AAS* XXIV (1932), p. 242.
[14] With regard to more recent declarations of the Holy See on the question of bishops' conferences, cf. also *AAS* III (1911), p. 264 (Bavarian bishops' conferences); *AAS* XI (1919), pp. 72-74, 175-177 (the division of Italy into eighteen '*regioni*' for bishops' conferences); *AAS* XI (1919), pp. 171-174 (American bishops' conferences); *AAS* XV (1923), p. 108 (Australian bishops' conferences); XV (1923), p. 339 *sq*. (Portuguese bishops' conferences); XXIV (1932), p. 242 *sq*. (the annual meeting of bishops' conferences, submission of their resolutions to the Congregation of the Council); XLV (1953), p. 247 (bishops' conference for the Philippines); XLVII (1955), p. 461 (approbation of the statutes of the Canadian bishops' conference); XLVII (1955), pp. 539-544 (letter to Cardinal Piazza, president of the Latin American bishops' conference); L (1958), p. 224 *sq*. (approval of the '*Estatutos de la Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia*'; unfortunately these statutes are not given here); L (1958), pp. 997-1005 (the pope's allocution to the Latin American bishops' conference in Rome).

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Before we attempt to set about making some observations about the problem of bishops' conferences as it arises from the Church's situation today, we must first set out some dogmatic considerations intended to clarify the position of bishops' conferences in the Church from the point of view of a dogmatic ecclesiology.

Just as according to the gospel Peter and the remaining apostles by the institution of Christ formed an apostolic college as a real, single entity of sacred right, so also the Roman pope as the successor of Peter and the bishops as the successors of the apostles are closely bound together. The college of bishops, which succeeds the apostolic college in its doctrinal and pastoral power and in which the apostolic college possesses its historical continuation, forms with the Bishop of Rome as its head the one, undivided subject of full and supreme official power in and for the universal Church; as a college made up of many members it represents the legitimate diversity of the members of God's people, and as a *united* college under *one* head the unity of the same people of God. This united college of bishops as the bearer of full and supreme power in the Church can exercise the supreme power of the doctrinal and pastoral office not only in a solemn and extraordinary way in an Ecumenical Council, but it is also capable of a collegial act of this kind outside a Council, so that one can see such a collegial act of the college of bishops under and with the Bishop of Rome, for example, in the 'ordinary magisterium' wherever it [376] possesses an infallible authority.[15] With regard to his power as teacher and pastor the individual bishop is bishop of his particular diocese, but over and beyond this he has a certain function in the universal Church in so far as he is a member of the one episcopal college and in it shares responsibility for the act of the college as a whole. It is of the very essence of the episcopate that the individual bishop belongs to this college. This fact gives rise to further duties, rights and obligations on the part of the individual bishop even as an individual in regard to the universal Church. He has a relationship to it, and while he has it as a member of the college, for that very reason he has it as an individual. It is true that he has no real jurisdictional power except in relationship to his own diocese. But this does not mean that he has no duties, rights and obligations towards the universal Church. In the first place he represents the whole Church in its unity before his own diocese, his own Church, in which the whole Church is made present in the dimensions of space and time. As a member of the episcopal college which is the supreme governing body of the universal Church he also has an official duty towards the whole Church. All bishops must defend and promote the unity of faith and discipline of the universal Church and must educate the faithful to a love of the whole mystical Body of Christ, above all of those members who are poor, suffering and enduring persecution for the sake of justice. They must promote each and every kind of saving activity which is proper to the whole Church, particularly the propagation of the faith among the heathen. Moreover it is clear that the effective pastoral care which they bestow upon their own flock is of benefit to the whole mystical Body of Christ, which, as St Basil says, is the corporate unity of many Churches.[16] Pope Celestine[17] already emphasised in the presence of the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus that the anxious duty of proclaiming the gospel to the whole world lies equally upon the whole college of episcopal pastors as upon the pope.

This fundamental relationship which every individual bishop as such has to the whole Church and to all its members (though precisely because he is a member of the college of bishops) allows us to recognise the proper [377] dogmatic ecclesiological foundations for the bishops' conference. Such conferences of bishops do not rest merely upon the practical necessity of co-operation between individual bishops, particularly if their dioceses are

[15] Cf. K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (Freiburg/Edinburgh-London 1963), p. 92 *sqq*.
[16] St Basil, *In Is. 15*, 296 (PG XXX, 637); cf. St Gregory the Great, *Mor*. 4, 7, 12 (*PL* LXXV, 643).
[17] E. Schwartz, *Act. Conc. Oec*. I, 2 (Berlin 1925/6), 23.

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adjacent. While a bishop as an individual is incapable of exercising any jurisdictional power over another diocese, it is on the other hand not the case that in such a conference he is no more than a counsellor quite freely and arbitrarily selected as such merely because bishops are 'professional colleagues'. Antecedent to their meeting together in a bishops' conference and independently of any mutual request for advice and help, every bishop bears a responsibility for the whole Church and therefore for all those members of the Church which we call dioceses. And since this universal responsibility of the individual bishop as an individual cannot be allowed to remain a merely abstract and formal requirement but must be embodied in a concrete and visible way, just as the general love for mankind becomes in God's grace love for our 'neighbour', so the responsibility of the individual bishop for the universal Church is naturally expressed in the concrete by a shared concern for the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls in the 'neighbour' dioceses and in the whole of the actual natural and supernatural surroundings in which the bishop and his own diocese are situated but which, at the same time extend beyond it.

In this case, then, the notion of the bishops' conference springs from the very nature of the Church. Certainly it is of 'human law' and certainly did not always exist in the Church in the sense in which it is intended and practised today; it is still seeking its concrete legal form; tills depends on many circumstances determined by the times. Yet the bishops' conference is a possible and today perhaps even an absolutely necessary expression of an essential element of the Church. It is based on the one hand on the fact (which up to this point in our reflections we have perhaps not emphasised sufficiently) that the plurality of independent members of the Church (called dioceses) belongs to the immutable essential structure of the Church and that therefore the dioceses do not merely represent subdivisions, demanded by practical considerations, of a united ecclesiastical monarchy which is fully homogeneous or should be as homogeneous as possible. But once this is clear and once we take into consideration the fact that an individual diocese too is in its extent, manner of administration, etc., largely dependent upon natural and historical conditions, then it also becomes clear that larger parts of the Church which are composed of [378] several dioceses but have much in common in their natural conditions and in their historical origin within the Church form genuine major structures of the Church as such and can therefore supply a real theologically significant basis for patriarchates, metropolitan unions, bishops' conferences, and so on. For this reason 'intermediate instances' of this kind between the individual dioceses and the power of the primacy are not entities to be established or abolished simply at whim for mere convenience of administration. Rather they are seeking in a positive, canonical statute of human law a concrete form of their essence which is antecedent to this its legal expression. On the other hand, that essential element of the Church on which the idea of a bishops' conference is based includes the right and duty on the part of the individual bishops to shoulder their share of the burden of care for the universal Church and so for the members of the Church next to them, from which our reflections on the dogmatic foundation of bishops' conferences set out.

Only one further remark needs to be made regarding this dogmatic foundation for the bishops' conference, even though the groundwork of this remark cannot here be more precisely laid. It is true that the organisation of the Church into dioceses, the 'monarchic' government of such a diocese and therefore the difference between bishop and simple priest are *iuris divini*. Yet theologically and from the viewpoint of the history of the Church's structures it is surely quite legitimate to hold that this necessary subdivision of the Church into individual 'Churches' (not merely into provinces of the one Church) as demanded by the *ius divinum* is not necessarily and inevitably made concrete in the plurality of those Churches which *today* we call dioceses. If we proceed from the principle, which dogmatically is surely above suspicion, that the Church by using her *own* judgement can divide the sovereign and sacramental fullness of power given her by Christ, that she has also in different times and

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places divided it differently, then the conclusion surely becomes more difficult to avoid that we must not absolutely restrict our search for the plurality and collegiality (*iuris divini*) of the Church's power of government and its bearers rigidly to what today we call bishop and bishopric in simple opposition to patriarchates, metropolitan unions, and so on. Fundamentally, it is too simple and schematically biased a distinction, which does not fully respect the possibilities we have indicated for the concrete Church in determining her constitution, if one regards the dioceses as [379] divisions of the Church which are *iuris divini* and other major divisions between the dioceses and the universal Church as merely of human law. In these greater divisions of the Church falling between the diocese and the universal Church, too, an essential structure of the Church *iuris divini* can be put into effect and made concrete, even though in a historically determined form.[18]

BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

In the following section of our reflections we wish to make a few remarks about the legal status, competence and structure of the bishops' conference, not as it already exists today but as it ought to exist. In a question of this kind we are naturally concerned with many matters of mere opinion on which it is possible to hold different views and which can be solved in the practical order only by the free legislation of ecclesiastical authority itself.

The Bishops' conferences which have existed and been seen in practice up to the present do not of themselves signify a college which is more than the sum of the bishops taking part in it. In contrast with plenary or provincial councils, episcopal conferences up to the present have no authority of their own, they are not a legislative organ of a part of the Church. Leaving aside at this stage the question which we will have to deal with later, *when* and to what extent a bishops' conference should be able to acquire the right to legislate for its part of the Church in a way binding the individual bishop, in principle one can hold that the bishops' [380] conferences of the future should he collegial bearers of superior authority and legislative power for their part of the Church, that they should therefore acquire a status corresponding to that of the present plenary or provincial councils. The importance of bishops' conferences has grown greatly, as the history of the last hundred years and also the Second Vatican Council have demonstrated. The bishops' conferences fulfil today, and will no doubt increasingly fulfil in the future, functions which on the one hand cannot be carried out by the individual bishop and the individual dioceses, but which on the other hand should not be transferred to the supreme government of the universal Church, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity which equally applies to the Church.[19] But if such an intermediate instance between the pope and the bishops is necessary, then it must be granted a legal status. This status is not granted by *CIC c*. 292, since the bishops' conference there envisaged is only the conference which corresponds to the provincial council and therefore comprises only the

[18] The resolute will of the Uniate Churches of the Near East to preserve and extend their patriarchal institution cannot therefore be decried as an obstinate clinging to outmoded structures of the Church. The same essential reasons which determine the territorial division of the Church into dioceses are effective to produce larger territorial divisions. We must also keep in mind that the ultimate theological nature of a diocese cannot be determined from the nature of the bishop. For the question is precisely why this determinate piece of territory must be given a leader who possesses the fullness of the power of Orders and an ordinary power of jurisdiction while other (larger or smaller) territories must not. But once it is clear that the nature of a diocese must be viewed as based upon the unity of a particular area of natural and supernatural life, then it becomes quite understandable that even greater natural and historical areas (which in our case correspond to particular conferences of bishops) are not simply arbitrary divisions introduced by the central administration which can abstain from introducing them if it thinks that it can manage without such 'divisions'.

[19] Cf. e.g. Pius XII, *AAS* XLIX (1957), p. 927.

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bishops of a single metropolitan union, and this, at least as a general principle, is today too small to support a bishops' conference of a kind which as a genuine intermediate instance between Rome and the individual dioceses could fulfil those functions which today and in the near future will increasingly devolve up. Moreover the bishops' conference of *c*. 292 does not have its own superior authority. But as such it is not really a genuine intermediate instance, for its prescriptions derive their real effective force either from the pope alone or from the individual bishop as such, and this does not suffice to constitute a true intermediate instance. For this reason it would also not contribute to giving a bishops' conference the nature and powers of a true intermediate instance with its own initiative and responsibility, if its decrees were to receive their binding force only through the approbation of Rome, so that, from the viewpoint of the bishops' conference, such decrees would really be nothing else than proposals made to the central administration in Rome. Since it is self-evident that bishops whether individually or in common can make such proposals, it does not require the organisation of bishops' conferences to enable them to do it. A real intermediate instance is given only where it is recognised as possessing its own sovereign power and so the right of making its own independent decisions. Just as such a power residing in the individual bishop does not detract from the meaning of the papal primacy of power and its organs, so [381] it cannot be said that a bishops' conference does, if it is capable of enforcing decisions without their needing specific papal approbation. This is not to deny in any way that ordinary and immediate papal jurisdiction extends to the bishops' conferences just as it does to the individual bishop. Moreover the duty of reporting regularly to Rome which is laid upon the bishops will naturally apply also to the bishops' conferences. Hence it is highly desirable that the new code of canon law soon to be drawn up should make the setting up of such bishops' conferences which are in principle also the bearers of their own sovereign authority juridically possible, by analogy with the patriarchates and metropolitan unions of the Eastern Church.

As regards the extent of the bishops' conference, that is regarding the question as to which bishops should be collegially joined together in one and the same bishops' conference, it must be said that today and in the near future the first and most important bishops' conference will be that which unites all the bishops of one and the same State. Bishops' conferences based upon an ecclesiastical province are now out of date. If we leave aside the question, which is after all secondary, as to what is the situation of a bishops' conference or of bishops' conferences in a State which is itself a federal State, where the principle of parallelism between bishops' conference and State must be sub-distinguished according to whether the single federated States within such a State are still genuine, independent entities or mere administrative circumscriptions of a single State with the honorific title of 'Federal State' or '*Land*', we must say that today the most pressingly important form of bishops' conference is the college of bishops of one and the same State, that is the *national* bishops' conference. The individual State is today a force which influences and penetrates every sphere of human life. So much does it impress itself upon all spheres of life in accordance with its own particular historical and political character that the Church must necessarily have a representation parallel to it, and precisely a representation of the Church of this particular country (and not merely of the Holy See and the universal Church as such, which may be represented in this State by a nuncio, who cannot, however, in the nature of the case be regarded simply as the representative of the Church of this country itself). Leaving out of consideration the tendency to create supranational entities like UNO, NATO, EEC etc., and the tendency to transfer certain of the sovereign rights of individual States to these supranational instances, the States of today are more than ever [382] before the managers and representatives of the life of the human community and even to a large extent of the individual. Social, cultural and political circumstances in the different parts of a modern State

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which roughly correspond to individual dioceses have become very much alike. The conditions underlying the most important political and pastoral decisions of the Church in the different dioceses of one and the same country are therefore to a large extent the same throughout that country. When the different dioceses come to make these important decisions they all find in practice that their negotiating partner is one and the same State. Hence it is self-evident that the national conference must be the basic type of bishops' conference today and in the near future. If within a single nation (either because it is a modern State of giant proportions, like Brazil for example, or because for historical reasons there is a vast number of dioceses within the territory of one single nation) a bishops' conference of this kind would convoke such an immense number of bishops that the capacity for quick and clear action could be greatly impaired, such a circumstance is no evidence against the-principle that the fundamental type of bishops' conference today is the national one. In cases of this kind the capacity for quick and efficient action on the part of a national bishops' conference could be guaranteed by other means, whether by courageously reducing the excessive number of diminutive dioceses, as for example in Italy, or by establishing a practical procedure which safeguards the capacity for effective action on the part of the national bishops' conference (perhaps by providing that only the metropolitans of a country need appear at its ordinary assembly).

Nor does it speak against the fundamental principle that national episcopal conferences are the norm, if in certain missionary territories and States of smaller dimensions which are still in the process of being built up and are still seeking their national identity it is possibly the case, or even in actual fact the case, that an inter-State bishops' conference, which unites together the bishops of several such States, can be more urgently needed and will then be a better expression in this part of the world of the theological meaning of such conferences than a national conference would he. The principle we have laid down does after all proceed upon the assumption of a culturally, socially and above all historically developed State of a certain size with a genuine social and political character of its own which allows it to be an independent partner in the community of peoples.

[383] This fundamental principle regarding the extensiveness of a national bishops' conference does not in any way exclude but rather implies, at least in this day and age, that beyond the national bishops' conferences, there may also be supranational bishops' conferences, and indeed that in certain circumstances there must he such. It was, for example, no mere chance that during the first session of the Second Vatican Council such supranational groupings of bishops came into being almost of themselves. It was not a question here of a pressure-group tactic, characteristic of power-politics, aiming to achieve momentarily urgent goals, but rather of the grouping which naturally takes place of itself even outside the Council whenever Middle and West European, African, or South American bishops find themselves together even if rather informally. Today supranational political, cultural, and social spheres of interest are being formed which even from the point of view of ecclesiastical politics and pastoral practice manifest a certain unity, so it can be quite meaningful, sometimes quite necessary, to organise a supranational bishops' conference geared to dealing with them, since these greater spheres of interest are in their turn such that neither the individual bishop nor the central government of the Church is immediately competent in their regard. One only has to think, for example, of the adaptation of the liturgy to the spirit and culture of the African continent, or of the pastoral problems that will ensue if the old Europe increasingly grows together economically, socially and culturally into a unity transcending individual States. It will easily be seen that the same reasons which demand national bishops' conferences can also beyond this demand supranational bishops' conferences. And we have not yet touched the question whether a canonical determination of the influence of the larger sections of the one Church upon the central administration of the Church in Rome could not itself demand

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such supranational major organisations and therefore supranational bishops' conferences. If, for example, we wish to conceive a consultative representation of the universal Church at the Holy See and its particular 'ministries' in such a way that there would be proportional representation and yet the number of representatives could not on practical grounds be too great, we necessarily come to the conception of major ecclesiastical spheres of common interest (e.g. Middle and West Europe, Latin America, North America, Latin Europe, Near East, etc.) which, if only to determine who are to he the aforesaid representatives in Rome, would have to organise corresponding supranational bishops' conferences. Perhaps one [384] could call them, even if with a certain terminological inexactitude, *continental* bishops' conferences.[20]

A further question regarding the bishops' conference of the future concerns the matter and extent of its duties and competence. Leo XIII already in his time drew up a very extensive agenda for the Austrian bishops' conferences.[21] The range of duties of a national bishops' conference arises of itself from its nature and composition. To begin with, among its responsibilities will naturally be that range of duties which, while belonging to the individual bishop who is its member in virtue of his office and his ordinary jurisdiction, cannot in practice be fulfilled by him without the agreement and co-operation of the other bishops in the same country. Within the limits of these duties a bishops' conference, at least if it succeeds in achieving the free agreement of all its members, is the bearer and wielder of its own duties and rights[22] (even though the result will represent only diocesan law as long as 'a bishops' conference does not as a college possess its own sovereign authority or chooses in a given case not to exercise it). Not only properly pastoral questions committed to the individual bishops are comprised in the conference's duties. These include also the duty of representing before the State the particular Church which is brought together in the national bishops' conference. This can be deduced of itself from what we have said, and historically, too, it has been the occasion for the formation of such bishops' conferences. Its tasks also extend to fulfilling the role of chief supervisor to those ecclesiastical organisations and institutions which are themselves of an interdiocesan kind (although this may vary in degree according to the particular nature of the institution in question). For modern social development has brought it about that in the ecclesiastical sphere, too, societies and institutions have had to be created extending as single entities over several dioceses (and yet which are not 'exempt' like certain religious orders). One need only think, for example, of the [385] German Caritas Organisation, of the many organisations with a central administration covering the whole territory of the Federal Republic, of the national branches of papal works of charity, and so on. So long as a bishops' conference is not the bearer of sovereign authority these inter-diocesan institutions have on the side of the hierarchy nothing really corresponding to them of the same status from the formal legal point of view. From a pastoral standpoint, a bishop must encourage and promote such an inter-diocesan organisation within his diocese; from the legal standpoint he is not really equal to it. Only by friendly agreement can their relationship be regulated at the moment, as long as the bishop does not wish to have recourse to the extreme means of forbidding such an organisation in his territory altogether. This fact, too, clearly leads us to the need for a bishops' conference, and moreover one with its own authority, in order that a legally equal partner should stand over against these inter-

[20] The first such continental bishops' conference was held at Rio de Janeiro in 1955 from 25 July to 4 August as the Latin American bishops' conference. Cf. also *AAS* XLVII (1955), pp. 539-544: Pius XII, '*Ad Ecclesiam Christi*'; *Conferencia general del Episcopado Latino-Americano* (Rome 1956).
[21] *AKKR* LXXX (1920), p. 382 *sq*.; similarly for Latin America, *AKKR* LXXX (1920), p. 766 *sq*.
[22] 'It is quite clear that what is discussed and decided at a bishops' conference has no need of being submitted also to the Apostolic See': J. B. Sägmüller, *Lehrbuch des katholischen Kirchenrechtes* I, 4 (Freiburg 1934), p. 613, note 4.

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diocesan organisations. This does not necessarily mean that all these inter-diocesan organisations would have to be mere organs of the bishops' conference without any autonomy of their own, irrespective of their particular nature. The more precise determination of their relationship to a bishops' conference depends assuredly also on their *own* proper nature and the degree of their 'ecclesiality', which varies considerably between the various institutions.

If the exposition of the duties of individual bishops in the doctrinal section is correct, it follows as a consequence that such a bishops' conference, simply as the assembly of several bishops, has of itself duties also towards the central government of the Church and towards the universal Church. For these duties and tasks fall upon the individual bishop already, and so all the more do they fall upon a bishops' conference without there being required for this in principle any special authorisation from the pope. After all, the individual bishop is not a mere recipient of orders or executive of the supreme, central authority in the Church: on the contrary, as a bearer of ordinary jurisdiction by divine law and as a member of the college of bishops he also has the mission, right and duty to maintain an active attitude over against the papal central government, even if such a duty, in the face of the universal primacy of jurisdiction of the Roman pope (and this even regarding the individual bishop), is not susceptible of a strictly juridical codification, one which would allow a claim to be laid before a higher instance to ensure that these rights and duties are respected by the Roman central government. An [386] active influence of this kind from the individual diocese upon the central government has always in fact been present. Naturally every bishop has the right to have recourse to the highest authority in the Church with petitions, submissions, information, proposals, complaints, etc., and he does so almost of necessity, because the reports required of him are in the concrete not merely something like the rendering of accounts by a provincial official before the central government but inevitably also represent quite justifiably an influencing of the supreme government of the Church. If, then, the individual bishop is not the mere executive arm of the supreme central leadership of the Church but also, even if in a completely para-canonical way, actively shares in the universal government[23] of the Church (although this participation by the individual as such does not possess a properly sovereign character), this is all the more true of a conference of bishops. Moreover, it would be quite likely that in the case of the bishops' conference such assistance in government would be laid down in the positive, human law of the Church. (For example, in the filling of episcopal sees its assistance may be prescribed, or it may be granted the right to be heard before decisions are made by the Roman Congregations.)

Among the duties of a bishops' conference which derive simply from the nature and the mission of the episcopal office itself there is after all also that of playing a part in meeting the needs and problems of other parts of the Church. Of its nature, for example, a bishops' conference must assume an obligation for the propagation of the faith throughout the world. When campaigns like '*Misereor*' for the developing countries or '*Adveniat*' for Latin America are supported by a bishops' conference, this corresponds precisely to the theological nature of such a conference.

Regarding the range of its tasks, ultimately we must surely consider the fact that it is in principle possible and in many cases perhaps also desirable that the Holy See should transfer to such a bishops' conference the competence over certain matters which do not immediately follow from its particular nature but which can be habitually delegated to it by the Holy See as a participation in its own responsibilities of divine or [387] positive human law. While

[23] We have already referred above to the 'ordinary magisterium' of the whole episcopate, through which the individual bishop is in fact the teacher not only of his own diocese, although his authority to teach with respect to his diocese is of a different kind in sacred law from his participation in the ordinary teaching office of the college of bishops with respect to the universal Church.

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hitherto, for example, the Holy See has reserved to itself each and every regulation of the official liturgy of the Western Church, it would be quite possible and desirable that certain responsibilities in this field, at least within previously defined limits (for example, the regulation of the more precise proportions to be observed between the Latin and the vernacular liturgy) should be committed to such national or continental bishops' conferences. With respect to this sector of possible duties conferred upon a bishops' conference there then arises the question whether each particular actualisation of this sort of competence by a bishops' conference should then again be made dependent for its validity upon a special act of approbation by Rome or not, a question arising from the Pope's general right of supervision over all that goes on in the Church, based upon his primacy of jurisdiction. The answer to this question will largely depend, from the material point of view, on the particular kind of powers in question and cannot therefore be answered in the same way for all cases. However, basing ourselves upon the principle of subsidiarity and the necessity for a bishops' conference to be a genuine intermediate instance between the individual diocese and the papal primacy, we may say that as great an independence and autonomy as possible is desirable for such bishops' conferences even in their relationship with Rome.

In conclusion we may attempt a final consideration concerning the inner structure of such a bishops' conference. Such a college must naturally have a president. It is taken for granted that this president is not the nuncio or apostolic delegate to the country in question. Where there already exists in a particular country a traditional primate (beyond the mere title) this primate will quite naturally be the president of the national bishops' conference. Where there is no such primate it will be scarcely necessary in this day and age to confer such a title on the president of a national bishops' conference. It will rather be quite natural for the senior cardinal or metropolitan to be the president. Such a bishops' conference, because it will have permanent commitments, will also form commissions assigned to the different spheres of interest (education, press, State relations, charitable organisation, etc.), and it will have a permanent office (secretariat) and a public relations service corresponding to the size of the bishops' conference and the range of its concerns[24].

[388] In this connection we must finally touch briefly upon the most delicate question of all, namely *how* the decisions of a bishops' conference are to be reached. Since all bishops' conferences up to the present have been free meetings without any proper authority of their own between individual bishops, their decisions have been based upon the free agreement of all the bishops and have bound each bishop legally only by his own consent. To be sure there are many bishops who feel that this system of a merely fraternal discussion should be maintained even in the future. They fear that otherwise, if one may put it this way, they will find in addition to the pope in Rome another Lord and Master nearer at hand who brings with him the danger that the bishop is no longer the Master and Father in his own diocese but has become the subordinate executive of this intermediate instance, and in this case it does not make much difference whether this new Lord and Master is the majority of the conference or perhaps in practice its president or the primate of the country. On the other hand, it must be recognised quite simply that the bishops' conference is an urgent necessity because in the sociological and pastoral conditions of today a quick, secure and efficient intermediate instance is necessary. And at least in the case of many countries it may be doubted whether today or in the near future a bishops' conference can fulfil its functions as we have conceived them, if its decisions remain in all cases dependent upon the agreement and the goodwill of

[24] Cf. in connection with this e.g. in Houtart (note 3 above) the account given of the commissions (or departments) of bishops' conferences (pp. 505-506) in the various countries, of the permanent secretariats of bishops' conferences (pp. 506-508), of CELAM (the council of the Latin American bishops in Bogota) (pp. 516-519, 522-532). Concerning the establishment of the French bishops' conference cf. *Herder-Korrespondenz* XVI (1961/2), pp. 447-450.

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each and every individual bishop.[25] The question therefore arises whether the bishops' conference of the future must not be legally recognised as possessing a superior authority, enabling it to make a decision binding upon all its members even if the complete unanimity of all its members is unobtainable. Perhaps a possible solution to the problem would be to strike a middle path between these two systems of decision-making (of a free agreement or a majority decision binding upon all) by assigning from the beginning certain areas of its work to the one method of arriving at a decision and others to the other. Another middle path would be found, for example, by [389] laying it down in the constitution of such a national bishops' conference that a majority decision of the conference binds all members only whenever the majority is two-thirds or more of all those present, and that in other cases the individual bishop remains free to decide on objective grounds whether he will accede to the majority decision or not.

In conclusion we may add two remarks. The foregoing considerations refer to the abstract and formal nature of a bishops' conference, to its formal juridical structure. The real importance of such a conference can only be clearly seen if one turns one's eyes to the urgent concrete pastoral needs and problems facing the Church in this day and age. If as a result of this the need for bishops' conferences is demonstrated, it will also become much clearer what their nature must be and why they are an urgent necessity, something being urged by the development of the constitutional law of the Church. The second remark is this: what has been said here is a purely private reflection, and not even that of an expert in the question; therefore its value is no more than the value of the reasons advanced in its favour.

[25] In Brazil it has happened even in recent times that individual bishops have openly protested against the decisions of a commission appointed by a bishops' conference and have rejected it as having no competence.

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[390]

C. THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE CHURCH

23

ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANS

It is almost two thousand years since the Church received her commission to preach the message of Christ to all nations unto the ends of the earth. In principle we have reached those ends of the earth: the limits of our world have been marked out. Yet what position does the message of Christ occupy in it?

In the ancient cultures of Asia it has never been able to gain a foothold, and in the West where it became one of the historical roots it is still steadily losing in importance and influence. The Christian faith is widely interpreted as one possible form of religious explanation of man's existence, alongside of which others are to be ranged either by an equal right or even as showing greater promise. Religion itself appears to many as only one of many forms of man's understanding of himself, which should be allowed to have its say or which should be combated as harmful.

This is the situation in which the believing Christian finds himself, and he is forced to recognise that the future will only bring this picture into sharper relief,[1] that the saying about the little flock will become still more true in spite of all the Church's pastoral and missionary efforts.

The Christian is convinced that in order to achieve salvation man must believe in God, and not merely in God but in Christ; that this faith is not merely a positive commandment from which one could be dispensed under certain conditions; that membership of the one true Church does not constitute a merely extrinsic condition from which it would be appropriate for someone to be freed by the mere fact that he does not and cannot know about it and its necessity. On the contrary, this faith is in [391] itself necessary and therefore demanded absolutely, not merely as a commandment but as the only possible means, not as a condition alone but as an unavoidable way of access, for man's salvation is nothing less than the fulfilment and definitive coming to maturity of precisely *this* beginning, for which therefore nothing else can substitute. – In this sense there really is no salvation outside the Church, as the old theological formula has it. But can the Christian believe even for a moment that the overwhelming mass of his brothers, not only those before the appearance of Christ right back to the most distant past (whose horizons are being constantly extended by palaeontology) but also those of the present and of the future before us, are unquestionably and in principle excluded from the fulfilment of their lives and condemned to eternal meaninglessness? He must reject any such suggestion, and his faith is itself in agreement with his doing so. For the scriptures tell him expressly that God wants everyone to be saved (1 Tm 2:4); the covenant of peace which God made with Noah after the flood has never been abrogated: on the contrary, the Son of God himself has sealed it with the incontestable authority of his self-sacrificing love embracing all men.

But when we have to keep in mind both principles together, namely the necessity of Christian faith and the universal salvific will of God's love and omnipotence, we can only reconcile them by saying that somehow all men must be capable of being members of the

[1] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Teaching of Vatican II on the Church and the Future Reality of Christian Life' in *The Christian of the Future* (Freiburg/London 1967), pp. 77-101.

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Church; and this capacity must not be understood merely in the sense of an abstract and purely logical possibility, but as a real and historically concrete one. – But this means in its turn that there must be degrees of membership of the Church, not only in ascending order from being baptised, through the acceptance of the fullness of the Christian faith and the recognition of the visible head of the Church, to the living community of the Eucharist, indeed to the realisation of holiness, but also in descending order from the explicitness of baptism into a non-official and anonymous Christianity which can and should yet be called Christianity in a meaningful sense, even though it itself cannot and would not describe itself as such. If it be true that the man who is the object of the Church's missionary endeavour is or can be already prior to it a man who is on the way towards his salvation and finds it in certain circumstances without being reached by the Church's preaching, and if it be true at the same time that the salvation which he achieves is the salvation of Christ, because there is no other, then it must be possible to be not only an anonymous 'theist', but also an [392] anonymous *Christian*, and this (since the Church of Christ is not a purely interior reality) not in any merely intangible inner way, but also with a *certain* making visible and tangible of the anonymous relationship. – How is a relationship of this kind to be conceived?

It cannot be simply given already by the mere fact of being human. The attempt to account for the grace of redemption and nearness to God in such a way would merely negate it *as* grace. Grace, as the free self-communication of God to his creature, does presuppose the creature, and this in such possession of its being and its capacities that it can stand in and on itself and bear witness to the glory of that almighty creative power and goodness which was able to say of its works that they were good. At the same time such a creature must be given the possibility of hearing and accepting as beyond itself the incalculable new turning of God towards it in his revelation. That is to say, it must be, to begin with, a being of unlimited openness for the limitless being of God, therefore that being we call spirit. Spirit signifies that immaterial being prior to and going beyond every individual thing that can be known and grasped, that openness which is always already opened by the creative call of infinite mystery which is and must be the ultimate and the first, the all-inclusive and the fathomless ground of all that can be grasped, of all that is real and all that is possible. In order to know something of this mystery which we call God there is also required some knowledge of his superiority over the world and of his personality, knowledge therefore of the fact that the fathomlessness of this ground is that of a freedom which man has to thank for his own awakening and of which he knows at the same time that it has not yet opened itself utterly and bound itself completely by this its first still open call. Awakened by its creative word, he now awaits more profound communication. Does the divine liberty banish him into the distance of its silence or has it given him these ears that he may now hear for the first time its real word?

Man therefore is not only *capable* of hearing a possible word from his hidden God, but in the sense we have explained is also positively expecting it, little as he has the least right to demand it. Every denial of this fact of his being ordered to the unsurpassably Absolute would implicitly merely affirm it once more, for it too would speak with the claim of absolute truth, would be subject to the demand of an indisputable good, would derive its force from the desire for a final and definitive meaning.

Now, how does this tendency towards God, which is on occasion [393] quite implicit and incoherent and yet always completely permeates man's being and existence, include a reference to the incarnate God, to Jesus Christ? – Much as the fact of Christ is the freest and in this sense (although only in this sense) the most contingent fact of reality, it is equally the most decisive and important and moreover the fact which has the most obvious relevance to man. If one takes it seriously that God has become man, then – it must be said – man is that which happens when God expresses and divests himself. Man is accordingly in the most basic definition that which God becomes if he sets out to show himself in the region of the

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extra-divine.[2] And conversely, formulating it from the point of view of man: man is he who realises himself when he gives himself away into the incomprehensible mystery of God. Seen in this way, the incarnation of God is the uniquely supreme case of the actualisation of man's nature in general.

It is true that before Christ no philosopher ever recognised in man's self-interpretation these depths of the human reality, but as a historical being man is one who in the concrete comes to be and to know what he is only in the unfolding of his history. Now that his thinking is illuminated by the light of the revelation which has in fact been made in the historically accomplished reality of Christ, he can recognise this unapproachable height as that perfection of his own being which can be effected by God, not in order that in a rationalistic fashion man may have it under his control but in order that he may more fully recognise the fact that he is ordained to this mystery. Bestowal of grace and incarnation as the two basic modes of God's self-communication can therefore be conceived as the most radical modes of man's spiritual being, beyond his powers to compel and yet precisely as such eminently fulfilling the transcendence of his being.

The believer will then also grasp that this absolute eminence is not an optional adjunct to his reality; that it is not given to him as the juridical and external demand of God's will for him, but that this self-communication by God offered to all and fulfilled in the highest way in Christ rather constitutes the goal of all creation and – since God's word and will *effect* what they say – that, even before he freely takes up an attitude to it, it stamps and determines man's nature and lends it a character which we may call a 'supernatural existential'. A refusal of this offer would therefore [394] not leave man in a state of pure unimpaired nature, but would bring him into contradiction with himself even in the sphere of his own being. This means positively that man in experiencing his transcendence, his limitless openness – no matter how implicit and incomprehensible it always is – also already experiences the offer of grace – not necessarily expressly *as* grace, as a distinctly supernatural calling, but experiences the reality of its content. But this means that the express revelation of the word in Christ is not something which comes to us from without as entirely strange, but only the explicitation of what we already are by grace and what we experience at least incoherently in the limitlessness of our transcendence. The expressly Christian revelation becomes the explicit statement of the revelation of grace which man always experiences implicitly in the depths of his being.

If man accepts the revelation, he posits by that fact the act of supernatural faith. But he also already accepts this revelation whenever he really accepts *himself completely*, for it already speaks *in* him. Prior to the explicitness of official ecclesiastical faith this acceptance can be present in an implicit form whereby a person undertakes and lives the duty of each day in the quiet sincerity of patience, in devotion to his material duties and the demands made upon him by the persons under his care. What he is then taking upon himself is therefore not merely his basic relationship with the silent mystery of the Creator-God. Accordingly, no matter how he wants to understand and express this in his own reflective self-understanding, he is becoming thereby not merely an anonymous 'theist', but rather takes upon himself in that Yes to himself the grace of the mystery which has radically approached us. 'God has given himself to man in direct proximity': perhaps the essence of Christianity can be reduced to this formula.

In the acceptance of himself man is accepting Christ as the absolute perfection and guarantee of his own anonymous movement towards God by grace, and the acceptance of this belief is again not an act of man alone but the work of God's grace which is the grace of

[2] Cf. the more detailed reasoning given in our essay, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation' in *Theological Investigations* IV (London & Baltimore 1966), pp. 105-120.

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Christ, and this means in its turn the grace of his Church which is only the continuation of the mystery of Christ, his permanent visible presence in our history.

It is true that it would be wrong to go so far as to declare every man, whether he accepts the grace or not, an 'anonymous Christian'. Anyone who in his basic decision were really to deny and to reject his being ordered to God, who were to place himself decisively in opposition to [395] his own concrete being, should not be designated a 'theist', even an anonymous 'theist'; only someone who gives – even if it be ever so confusedly – the glory to *God* should be thus designated. Therefore no matter what a man states in his conceptual, theoretical and religious reflection, anyone who does not say in his *heart*, 'there is no God' (like the 'fool' in the psalm) but testifies to him by the radical acceptance of his being, is a believer. But if in this way he believes in deed and in truth in the holy mystery of God, if he does not suppress this truth but leaves it free play, then the grace of this truth by which he allows himself to be led is always already the grace of the Father in his Son. And anyone who has let himself be taken hold of by this grace can be called with every right an 'anonymous Christian'.

This name implicitly signifies that this fundamental actuation of a man, like all actuations, cannot and does not want to stop in its anonymous state but strives towards an explicit expression, towards its full name. An unfavourable historical environment may impose limitations on the explicitness of this expression so that this actuation may not exceed the explicit appearance of a loving humaneness, but it will not act against this tendency whenever a new and higher stage of explicitness is presented to it right up to the ultimate perfection of a consciously accepted profession of Church membership. Here alone does this belief find not merely its greatest support and source of confidence but also its proper reality and that peace which St Augustine likened to repose in being: peace and repose which do not mean stagnation and flight but the capacity of casting oneself all the more resolutely into the inexorable will of the mystery of God, since now, as St Paul says, one knows whom one believes and to whom one fearlessly submits in radical trust.

To anyone who thinks that he cannot or dare not believe (perhaps because he fails to appreciate to what an immeasurable experience of relentless love the acceptance of its human nearness can call us – from a great distance, as though its mystery and its sublimity might thereby be destroyed), or to anyone who is quite certain that he does not believe, these reflections may mean very little, and they are not in the first place directed to him, although they could make even him attentive to the voice inside him. What is said about the 'anonymous Christian' would therefore be completely misunderstood if it were thought that it represents merely a last desperate attempt in a world where Christian faith is fast disappearing to 'rescue' in its ultimate significance all that is good and [396] human for the Church – against every freedom of the spirit. But the Christian who finds himself in a diaspora situation[3] which is becoming increasingly acute, the believer who finds his faith and his hope sorely tried at the sight of his unbelieving brothers,[4] can derive from it comfort and the strength of objectivity. Knowledge about the anonymous Christian does not in any way dispense him from caring and troubling about those who do not yet know the one necessary truth in its explicit affirmation in the gospel message. But this knowledge will keep him from panic and will give him the strength to practice that patience which – according to the Lord's saying – brings salvation to life, his own as much as that of his brother.

Our topic with all its urgency cannot be avoided or dismissed as unimportant either by a theology of grace and of the Church which has a true understanding of itself or by an honest pastoral theology which looks at our times dispassionately. The exact word may not have any importance, but the matter we are contemplating is undeniably of central importance for the

[3] Cf. also K. Rahner, 'Der Christ und seine Umwelt', *Stimmen der Zeit* XC (1965), pp. 481-489.
[4] Cf. K. Rahner, *Im Heute glauben*, Theol. Meditationen 9 (Einsiedeln 1965).

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relations of the contemporary Christian to the world around him. *Theologically* we should not make any mistake in assigning its proper 'place' to the doctrine of 'anonymous Christianity': this is not a hermeneutic *principle* critically to *reduce* the whole corpus of traditional theology and dogmatics (in the same way as an existentialist interpretation or the theses of the Anglican Bishop Robinson) and thereby to make Christianity in this form more acceptable; from a dogmatic point of view, this doctrine is perhaps even a *peripheral* phenomenon whose necessity, lawfulness and correctness derive from many other individual data of ecclesiastical teaching or are at least demanded by them.[5] As again this dogmatic-theoretical position, a theology which proceeds in a more historical-existential-practical way can certainly assign to these statements about 'anonymous Christianity' a more central position,[6] yet without coming into conflict with other fundamental dogmatic certainties. It [397] would be quite foolish to think that this talk about 'anonymous Christianity' must lessen the importance of mission, preaching, the Word of God, baptising, and so on.[7] Anyone who wants to interpret our remarks about anonymous Christianity in this way, has not merely fundamentally misunderstood them, but has not read our exposition of them with sufficient attention.[8] I think that only two things are necessary in order to understand correctly what is intended by this phrase: some really thorough *thinking* about various fundamental data of the traditional theology of the Schools, data which often are left lying together in sterile proximity, and at the same time an unbiased contemplation of the *real* situation of mankind, of Christianity and of the Church today.[9]

What is meant by this thesis of the anonymous Christian is actually also taught materially in the Constitution on the Church of Vatican II (no. 16). According to this document those who have not yet received the gospel and this *without any fault* of their own (and this possibility is clearly presupposed as a real one) are given the possibility of eternal salvation ('*aeterna salus*', which can only be understood of supernatural salvation). The only condition is, from the point of view of *God*, '*gratiae influxus*' (or '*divina gratia*' as it is also called), and from the point of view of *man*, '*Deum sincero corde quaerere eiusque voluntatem per conscientiae dictamen agnitam operibus adimplere*'. This fulfilment of the duty of conscience is explicitly supposed as possible also in the case of those '*qui sine culpa ad expressam agnitionem Dei nondum pervenerunt*'. That an inculpable atheism of this kind can last a long time whether individually or collectively is not stated, but not excluded either. Since this atheism is seen only in opposition to '*expressa agnitio Dei*', there is a clear indication that beneath such an atheism there may very well lie an unreflected, merely existentially actualised theism (precisely by a radical obedience to the dictates of conscience). But an incoherent theism of this kind can in [398] certain circumstances surely last a long time, without it becoming at any time during this period impossible to say any longer '*aeternum salutem consequi possunt*'. In its statements the Constitution on the Church is in

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[5] This difference from Bultmann's demythologisation is perhaps too little stressed in the otherwise good article by H. Ott, 'Existentiale Interpretation und anonyme Christlichkeit' in *Zeit und Geschichte: Festgabe R. Bultmann* edited by E. Dinkler (Tübingen 1964), pp. 367-379.

[6] Cf. in a wider context K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II (Freiburg 1966), Kap. VII, §3, §4 no. 6, etc.

[7] Cf. e.g. L. Elders, 'Die Taufe der Weltreligionen. Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie Karl Rahners' in *Theologie and Glaube* LV (1965), pp. 124-131.

[8] Let me refer the reader merely to *Theological Investigations* V (London & Baltimore 1966), p. 131 *sq*. Regarding the dispute with L. Elders let me draw attention to the account by F. Ricken, '"Ecclesia . . . universale salutis sacramentum": Theologische Erwägungen zur Lehre der Dogmatischen Konstitution "De Ecclesia" über die Kirchenzugehörigkeit', *Scholastik* XL (1965), pp. 352-388, esp. pp. 382-385 (note 147).

[9] For a further presentation cf. the abundant documentation given by Kl. Riesenhuber, 'Der anonyme Christ, nach Karl Rahner' *ZKT* LXXXVI (1964), pp. 286-303.

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no way implying that here in these cases salvation is achieved as it were in a substitute fashion by means of a purely natural morality. This would indeed contradict scripture and the magisterium.[10] It is also excluded by the words of the Constitution itself: salvation is reached '*non sine divina gratia*', '*sub influxu gratiae*'.

There is no justification for regarding this grace as being supernatural in a merely ontic, pre-conscious sense, such as would be required for the positing of any moral act which, as far as consciousness was concerned, was purely natural. Rather must we conceive this grace as more than merely ontic, as also entering consciousness and therefore as engendering true faith in the theological sense, even though this is not yet reflective.[11] The lesser interpretation is also excluded by a remark in the same Council's decree on the Missions (no. 7), in which it is explicitly said that God 'in the unknown ways' of his grace can give *faith* without which there is no salvation even to those who have not yet heard the preaching of the gospel. Although in the face of this theological optimism of the Council regarding salvation it remains the task of theology to show why the necessity of the gospel, of the Church and the sacraments are not thereby devalued, it is quite impossible to doubt that what is *meant* by the 'anonymous Christian' (the name itself is unimportant) is compatible with the Council's teaching, indeed is explicitly stated by it. Neither is this the place to demonstrate that such a theory in no way cripples the missionary impulse of the Church but rather puts before it the person to whom it addresses itself in his true hopeful condition so that it can approach him with confidence.

[10] Cf. *DS* 3867 *sqq*.

[11] These two sentences are an amplification of the original German text made in light of explanations furnished by the author himself. [Translator's note.]

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[399]

VOLUME 6

LIST OF SOURCES[1]

1 THE MAN OF TODAY AND RELIGION
The first version of this was published under the title 'Der Unternehmer und die Religion' in a publication of the consortium E. V. Bonn (Bonn 1962), pp. 26-42 (the lecture given on 26 October 1962). A revised version was given in a lecture in the German Library in Rome and published after renewed revision and expansion in *Der Seelsorger* XXXV (1965), pp. 18-30.

2 A SMALL QUESTION REGARDING THE CONTEMPORARY PLURALISM IN THE INTELLECTUAL SITUATION OF CATHOLICS AND THE CHURCH
First published in *Stimmen der Zeit* XC (1965), pp. 191-199.

3 REFLECTIONS ON DIALOGUE WITHIN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY
The speech of thanks at the celebration in connection with the bestowal of the Reuchlin Prize by the town of Pfortzheim on 26 June 1965. The speech was printed in a revised form by the authorities of Pfortzheim as a booklet under the same title. Cf. also *Stimmen der Zeit* XC (1965), pp. 321-330.

4 IDEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY
A talk to Catholic students of the University of Erlangen on 15 July 1964, published in *Concilium* I (1965), pp. 475-483 (German edition). [This has appeared in another translation in the English edition of *Concilium* Vol. 6, No. 1 (June 1965), pp. 23-31.]
[400]
5 MARXIST UTOPIA AND THE CHRISTIAN FUTURE OF MAN
A talk given on 1 May 1965 in Salzburg at a meeting of the *Paulus-Gesellschaft* on the theme 'Christianity and Marxism'. First published in *Orientierung* XXIX (1965), pp.107-110 (No. 9 of 15 May).

6 PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY
A talk given at a symposium on 'The Significance of European Culture for Universal History' in Salzburg 27-29 September 1961. The text printed here follows a tape-recording which was slightly edited. First published in *Kairos* IV (1962), pp. 162-169.

7 A SMALL FRAGMENT 'ON THE COLLECTIVE FINDING OF TRUTH'
Contribution to a *Festschirift* in honour of Helmut Kuhn, *Epimeleia*: *Die Sorge der Philosophie um den Menschen*, published by Franz Wiedmann (Munich 1964), pp. 61-67.

8 SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY
An article printed in *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* edited by H. Fries (Munich 1963), Vol. II, pp. 517-525.

9 SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION
Lecture given at a meeting of the Catholic Academy in Bavaria on 10 February 1963 in

[1] We obviously cannot list here the numerous reprints in German or any of the translations which have appeared, apart from a few cases where there is some special justification for doing so.

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Munich. Published in *Wort und Wahrheit* XVIII (1963), pp. 269-279, and in *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, No. 24 in the series 'Studien und Berichte der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern' edited by K. Forster (Würzburg 1963), pp. 71-91.

10 REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTEMPORARY INTELLECTUAL FORMATION OF FUTURE PRIESTS
Published in *Stimmen der Zeit* XC (1964/5), pp. 173-193. That essay has been reproduced here without alteration; but cf. the amplification provided in note 1.

11 THE SECRET OF LIFE
Lecture given at a meeting of the Catholic Academy of the archdiocese of Freiburg i. Br. on 23 May 1965 at Mannheim. The text has been revised and is published here for the first time.
[401]
12 THE UNITY OF SPIRIT AND MATTER IN THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH
A paper given at the Pentecost congress of lay theologians at Münster-Gievenbeck, Haus Mariengrund, 4-8 June 1963, and also given as a lecture on 27 April 1963 in Salzburg. Published together with the paper 'Das Selbstverständnis der Theologie vor dem Anspruch der Naturwissenschaft' in a special issue of the periodical *Religionsunterricht an höheren Schulen* (Patmos-Verlag, Düsseldorf 1963). The author has in certain parts of this paper taken over formulations from his *Hominisation*: *The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem*, Quaestiones Disputatae No. 13 (Freiburg and London 1965).

13 THEOLOGY OF FREEDOM
A lecture given on 30 November 1964 at the one hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary celebration of Georgetown University within the framework of the 'Patrick F. Healy Conference on "Freedom and Man"'. The text given here has been revised and considerably expanded.

14 GUILT – RESPONSIBILITY – PUNISHMENT WITHIN THE VIEW OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY
A contribution to the cycle of lectures at the University of Zürich in the winter term 1962/3 given on 17 January 1963. Published in the symposium *Schuld – Verantwortung – Strafe im Lichte der Theologie, Jurisprudenz, Soziologie, Medizin und Philosophie*, edited by Prof. E. R. Frey (Zürich 1964), pp. 151-172.

15 JUSTIFIED AND SINNER AT THE SAME TIME
Published in *Geist und Leben* XXXVI (1963), pp. 434-443.

16 REFLECTIONS ON THE UNITY OF THE LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR AND THE LOVE OF GOD
Theological draft of a lecture given at the general meeting of the *Katholische Fürsorgeverein für Mädchen, Frauen und Kinder* on 11 May 1965 in Cologne. Published in *Geist und Leben* XXXVIII (1965), pp. 168-185.
[402]
17 THE CHURCH OF SINNERS
First published in *Stimmen der Zeit* LXXII (1947), pp. 163-177, afterwards separately under the same title (Freiburg i. Br. 1948 and Vienna 1948).

18 THE SINFUL CHURCH IN THE DECREES OF VATICAN II

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The main part of this essay originates in a study written by the author for the collective work *L'Eglise de Vatican II*, edited by P. Guillaume Baraúna, O.F.M., and published in seven languages. The text given here is one which has been expanded by incorporating considerations relating to *De Oecumenismo* and by amplifying the exegetical and dogmatic-historical part.

19 THE CHURCH AND THE PAROUSIA OF CHRIST
Lecture given at the united meeting of the Protestant and Catholic ecumenical working-groups in April 1963. Published in *Catholica* XVII (1963), pp. 113-128.

20 THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE
Published in *Stimmen der Zeit* LXXXIX (1963/4), pp. 161-195, and in W. Stählin, J. H. Lerche, E. Fincke, L. Klein and K. Rahner, *Das Amt der Einheit*: *Grundlegendes zur Theologie des Bischofsamtes* (Stuttgart 1964), pp. 245-311. The foreword which has here been prefixed to the article was specially written for the present volume.

21 PASTORAL-THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON EPISCOPACY IN THE TEACHING OF VATICAN II
Published in *Concilium* I (1965), pp. 170-174 (German edition). [This has appeared in another translation in the English edition of *Concilium* Vol. 3, No. I (March 1965), pp. 10-14.]

22 ON BISHOPS' CONFERENCES
Published in *Stimmen der Zeit* LXXXVIII (1962/3), pp. 267-283.
[403]
23 ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANS
This essay was originally a broadcast review of the book by A. Röper, *Die anonymen Christen* (Mainz 1963) which was put on the air in the summer of 1964 by *Wesrdeutscher Rundfunk* and has never before been published. In preparing it for publication here any references to its original context have been removed and some additional matter has been incorporated which tries to take account of certain objections.

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PART ONE

Fundamental Questions

[3]

1

CHRISTIAN LIVING FORMERLY AND TODAY

There can be no doubt that at the present time a great unrest prevails in the Church, pervading all 'classes' and groups. While it may perhaps be true that many are troubled simply on the grounds that others 'give them no rest', still there are others also who go so far as to wish that this unrest may be still greater than it in fact is. Finally we ourselves must point out calmly that the world of humanity taken as a whole, together with its life, its basic concern (*angst*) and its hopes, does not take these 'movements' within the Church and among the few Christians involved over-seriously. The true origins of this unrest are not to be found in the Council. The Council is hardly more than the occasion which throws more plainly and more openly into relief in the Church these differing attitudes and positions within it, which would have been present in any case even without the Council. Admittedly the Council has given rise to a sort of 'backlash'. The Council sought to overcome the forces that threaten the Church in the present time, but in doing so inevitably seemed, at any rate to the eye of the beholder, to impart a certain increase of strength to these forces. For he who decides, as indeed he must, to embark upon an 'aggiornamento', notices straight away – there is absolutely no way of avoiding this – that the Church is relatively out of gear with the historical situation and with the needs of the hour, which he has hitherto refused to take into consideration. He becomes uncertain, and that in itself straight away makes his position inevitably more difficult. Now anyone who feels inclined to lay this as a reproach at the door of the Council must ask himself in all earnestness whether he can find it in his heart to wish that the Church might have postponed this process of taking cognisance of her own true situation for a few decades longer – for certainly this is the utmost to which it could have been deferred – and that she should only then have been brought into the state of 'crisis' in which she now in fact finds [4] herself, only in a far more radical state of crisis than is the case at present.

This contemporary unrest is hard to analyse at any rate in its entirety. It consists of a mixture of anxiety in the face of what is new, and an almost unbridled craving for the new merely because it is new and therefore 'more interesting'; in other words one of the elements in this unrest is truly creative in that it rightly looks to and seeks for renewal in the sense of a better way of life for Christians and for the Church. Another is anxiety over the present instability of the situation in which the Church and the believer lives. Yet another is a falling-off of the true spirit of faith, which breaks down before the onslaughts of the present world. Our task must be to consider the situation in which this unrest has arisen, to be patient with it and gradually to understand it and to endure it so that the Church may become that which she must be. Even the Church cannot choose the situation in which she lives. It is given to her, and therefore it is good.

1. The Problem of Christian Living Today

One of the aspects of the Church's life in which this unrest manifests itself is that of Christian

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living, of the religious life properly so-called. In speaking of this area of the Church's life we mean from the outset to exclude the liturgy. This is not because no unrest of the kind of which we have been speaking exists in this limited sphere of religious activity; nor is it because we imagine that the liturgy would still be the liturgy even if it was celebrated in a mere 'objective' sense, without the personal participation of the individual. Our reason for excluding the liturgy is simply that it demands a separate and prolonged consideration in its own right, and in fact by a specialist in the field.

Even with this restriction the problem of Christian living in the post-conciliar age, the 'spirituality' of tomorrow, remains a question of the highest importance. Indeed, rightly understood, it is *the* decisive question *tout court*. For if the Council had achieved or inaugurated nothing more than an improvement in the communal 'image' of the Church, an increase in its social prestige, a more attractive formulation of the liturgy or one more in tune with the popular mind, an increase in freedom and democracy in the authoritative structure of the Church and of tolerance towards outsiders, a more harmonious position in the totality of philanthropic movements of the world – if that were all that the Council had achieved, [5] then it would have failed to attain to that which must properly be achieved in the Church *as such*: namely that man, that is 'I', may love God more, may become more believing, more hoping, more loving to God and man, may worship God better 'in spirit and in truth', may more willingly accept the darkness of human existence and death, may carry and use his freedom more freely and more responsibly. And this is, in fact, what 'Christian living' means if the word is taken as connoting first and foremost that which is explicitly religious. And by comparison with this, which is uniquely necessary, all else is secondary, important indeed as means, but in the last analysis only as means.

The question which we are putting, therefore, is: *How does post-conciliar Christian living, the Christian living of the future, appear?* In this question it is not ultimately important whether this Christian living is accorded a very large place or a relatively minor one in the decisions of the Council. In any case in the troubled question of this Christian living and the form which it takes the Council has played and continues to play to this day, the role of a catalyst. The question is extremely difficult, therefore, if only because in the Church, the Father's house which has many mansions, 'Christian living' is an extremely complex factor. It differs according to age and sex, according to nationalities and cultural milieux, according to the various ideas and traditions which have been handed down, according to worldly avocations, according to the general spiritual level prevailing at any given point, according to the categories into which the community is divided in terms of clergy, religious and laity. In the course of our present considerations, therefore, we can treat of the problems arising in relation only to one kind of Christian living, that which applies more or less to the state of the Christian layman who is an uncompromising and whole-hearted member of the Church, and whose standard of education represents that of an average cross-section of the community in our central European cultural sphere, and is not too rudimentary.

2. Christian Living in the Church Today as Heritage and as Commitment.

It may be taken as axiomatic that *the new mode of Christian living will be Christian and ecclesiastical as it has always been practised hitherto in the life of the Church*. A little further on we shall have occasion to speak of the new form which Christian living will assume. But a factor that must be mentioned first (though this is not the same as saying that it is the most important) is that element in Christian living which endures unchanged [6] yesterday, today and tomorrow. This must be considered under two aspects: first *that which is true and authentic* in ancient tradition; this must be allowed to prevail against any false understanding of the Council. Second the instinct which prompts us to crystallise the spiritual life in terms

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of institutions and 'practices' this must be allowed to prevail against any tendency to a false existentialist subjectivism, which remains formless, arbitrary and unrealistic, and, moreover, in constant danger of being ungenuine.

First it would simply be foolish to suppose that everything *not* mentioned by the Council in the devotion of Christians as practised hitherto should be tacitly consigned to the past, and should be regarded as having no place in the future. The Council has had much to say (even though often using other terms for it) about the modes of Christian living appropriate to the layman, the priest, the religious, and even though its pronouncements may strike one as somewhat traditional and *cliché*-ridden, they are not the less important for that, or less significant as guiding lines for the future. It would be erroneous, however, to suppose that whatever subjects were not explicitly covered by the statements of the Council were *ipso facto* less important, less central and less pertaining to the essence and structure of living devotion, and the Christian living and devotion of the future at that. Even a Council operates only with a little pail as it draws upon the ocean of the spirit and the heritage of Christian living in defining what Christian life is to be in the future with all its possibilities, which are bestowed upon the Church by the Spirit. Here and there the Council does underline certain elements which must be observed in the Christian living of the future: thus that the life of the Christian must grow from a lively participation in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the genuinely communal worship of the altar; that Christians must take the scriptures as the basis for their thinking and acting; that they must exercise a spirit of fraternal freedom, and must not withdraw into a sort of pseudo-ecclesiastical ghetto, but must rather learn to regard the world with its needs and its future destiny as their Christian task. But the documents of the Council do not offer any kind of systematic programme for the form Christian living is to take in the future, nor even a truly clear, concrete and productive plan or model for such a mode of life. The references to Christian living at the Council were too random, and at the same time too much in the abstract to provide for this.

To assert that there is an underlying element in Christian living which [7] remains the same in spite of all the differences between the new and the old in it, and in spite of all historical vicissitudes, necessarily implies that this element has survived unchanged because it has been preserved as an historical heritage in the form in which it has *de facto* developed. Perhaps we could actually go so far as to say that today the real nonconformists are to be found in the group of those who have a genuine, calm and loving respect for the religious heritage of the past and the experience of past generations – such at least is one's impression when one observes the feverish excitement of many over-zealous individuals. Certainly it would be far from true to say that some current fashion is the swallow that heralds the true spring that is to come. If anyone believes that he can practise a new type of Christian living in the Church and can make out a convincing case for it, let him submit it, this devotion of his, to the 'discernment of spirits'. He will then find that one criterion of the genuineness of his Christian living which is far from unimportant is to test whether in practising it he can preserve the heritage of Christian wisdom and experience in the spirituality of past centuries.

To take a few random examples: meditation on the scriptures as practised today presupposes a modern and down-to-earth exegetical approach, ensuring that it is the scriptures themselves that are being read, and that it is not one's own pious fantasies that are being read into them. But meditation on the scriptures is far from being merely the waging of an unrelenting and destructive struggle against supposed dogmatic taboos until finally nothing more remains than the exegete's individual outlook and interpretation. Must this tendency continue until the love of reading the classics of spirituality and even the Christian mystics withers away or simply ceases, and the religiously inclined individual of the future becomes, in his own field, like some present-day student for whom German literature begins at earliest with Benn and Brecht? Certainly the Imitation of Christ will no longer be *the*

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formative work for the devout Christian of tomorrow; but must it on that account vanish altogether from the spiritual library of the future? And are there not many other classics of spiritual writing with which the devout Christian must be familiar unless there is to be a glaring gap in his spiritual and intellectual formation? Again the confessional is certainly not the outmoded shell within which modern psychotherapy is practised, and must not be misunderstood in this sense from either side of the confessional grill. It may indeed be difficult to foresee, in terms that are altogether concrete, what place frequent [8] confession will have in the life of a wholehearted Christian of tomorrow. Here too many modifications may be introduced quite legitimately on various grounds. But the more frequent 'confession of devotion'[1] is far from being on that account simply a practice which belongs to the Church's museum of antiquities. He who wreaks destruction here without at the same time building up has failed to understand the spirit of true and sincere morality, and of self-criticism in the life of the Christian.

Theologically speaking the tabernacle is certainly first and foremost the place in which the Bread of Life destined for consumption by the faithful is contained. But to reject on that account everything which has grown up in the Church and is still alive in the way of Eucharistic devotion as mere outmoded practices is still, for all that, a sacrilege.[2] Why should the Christian of the future too not kneel in prayer before the body of the Lord which was delivered up for him, before the sacramental sign of the death of the Lord and of his own death in the Lord which is made present to him? Or in the future is there to be no supplication, no forgiveness and no death? Are there only to be men who, when confronted with this abyss of existence, give themselves up to craven flight? If not, then in the future too there will be men who kneel in prayer and supplication before the shrine of the Eucharist, look upon him whom they have pierced; men who are ready to accept their fate, to which they commit themselves in the paschal mystery of Jesus.[3] In the future are there to be no more convents or monasteries of the contemplative life, in which men called by God bear witness on behalf of their brothers and sisters to the fact that all Christians, each one in his own way, must preserve that spirit of detachment from the happiness which this world offers in which alone this world acquires the beauty of its redemption? Is silent meditation no longer to be practised today as a part of our spiritual exercises? Must the clamour of the yearly fair intrude upon such times as these also? Or must we be silent here in order to learn how to endure that silence which will [9] be broken for each one when the crisis point of his life and the loneliness of his death come upon him?

These are mere random examples, all of them intended to illustrate a single point: the Christian living of tomorrow too has a great heritage to preserve. It is genuine only when it too regains its living relationship with its own past.

Again the Christian living of tomorrow is faithful and obedient to the spirit of true Christian religion when it has a taste for that which is solidly established, practised and has already taken shape, for that which is 'the practice' – in short for forms of devotion which are established institutions in the Church. It will cease to be faithful and obedient in this sense if it allows itself to be swayed by undisciplined impulses. There is no soul without a body, there is no genuine and serious religious life without man subjecting himself to discipline and rule, exercise and duty.[4] This institutional factor in Christian living is something which the devout

[1] For a deeper understanding of this cf. 'The Meaning of Frequent Confession of Devotion', *Theological Investigations* III (London & Baltimore, E.T. 1967), pp. 177-189.
[2] For the relevant theological principles cf. 'The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper', *Theological Investigations* IV (London & Baltimore Md, E.T. 1966), pp. 287-311.
[3] An attempt is made to indicate the power of Eucharistic devotion in everyday life in 'The Eucharist and Our Daily Lives' in this volume, pp. 211-226.
[4] On the necessity of this 'categorical' element and its relationship to the transcendental cf. Handbuch der

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Christian of the future, if he is to practise it genuinely, must decide for himself to a far greater extent than formerly, and which, far less than formerly, he will be able to take over simply as the generally accepted and practised way of living as a Christian. But precisely what form this institutional factor will take is in many respects a difficult question. Anyone, however, who supposes that the institutionalised practices in Christian living are already outmoded simply on the grounds that they are uncomfortable and involve strict discipline is deceiving himself and will never attain to a genuine mode of Christian living unless the grace of God rescues him by means of some catastrophe, whether interior or exterior, from his impoverished and diminished form of existence, which has only a colouring of Christianity. Certainly there is no commandment of God or the Church directing us to say our prayers precisely when we get up or go to bed, or before meals. He who really is a man of prayer without these praiseworthy Christian customs may in all Christian freedom regard himself as dispensed from them. But will he be a man of prayer? Will he be able to lay the supremely decisive moments of his life before God in prayer if in his everyday life prayer is simply the outcome of a momentary prompting or merely the 'liturgical' prayer of the Church's public services, or if he has not previously fixed his own times of prayer which he voluntarily engages himself to observe. It is strange. The most complex techniques of Yoga are [10] considered reasonable, yet the old Christian methods of prayer and meditation, as for example the rosary, are regarded as unmodern. But why precisely? Is this the result of experience or is it merely that the practitioners are all too eager to know better? Many instances of such institutional practices of devotion, even such as were or are common to the entire Church – one is thinking of the prescriptions of fasting, abstinence, fasting before receiving communion, holy water in the home etc. – may be susceptible of change, and may actually need it. Such changes in fact the official Church has already undertaken in many cases. But must the life of the Christian of the future be on that account actually devoid of any such formation by the Christian institutions? Is it already outmoded to keep a crucifix in one's own home? Why should there not be continuity between past and future in that the custom of having established usages which are Christian and human could be discovered and practised afresh? Are the students who make pilgrimages from Paris to Chartres simply engaged in a piece of sentimental folklore? Or can there not still be some meaning in such practices in the future too, even though – or perhaps because – such pilgrimages are very different in form and manner from the pilgrimage of a Polish peasant woman to Tschenstochau?

Where the power of Christian living to embody itself in concrete practices of devotion is plainly flagging then Christian living itself is beginning to die. And under these circumstances it will die however anxious its practitioners may be to express it in forms which are more tactful, reasonable and tasteful; however reluctant they may be to have a crucifix hanging in every factory workshop; however ready they may be to agree with their irreligious contemporaries that there is no need for church bells to call Christians to early Mass at six o'clock on Sunday morning. After all they have watches and alarm-clocks of their own!

All these institutional practices in Christian living are subject to manifold kinds of change. Thank God such changes are actually made.[5] But change is something quite different from demolition and atrophy. The secular institutes could make a major contribution here in testing out the merits of new, assured and practicable institutions, embodying genuine devotion, in developing these and setting an example in practising them.

Pastoraltheologie II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 64-70.

[5] For a right understanding of change as conceived of in this context cf. 'Kirche im Wandel', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 455-478; *Das Konzil – ein neuer Beginn* (Freiburg, 1966).

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III. Perspectives of Christian Living in the Future

For forms of Christian living in the future the preservation of our spiritual heritage is important. But it is not the ultimate and definitive factor. For it is possible to preserve an heritage only if one keeps abreast of what is new and what belongs to the future. Mere conservatism is sterile and cannot of itself attain its legitimate goals. It is evident that as applied to Christianity the term 'new' always implies the creative discovery and adaptation to the needs of particular epochs of that which in essence has been present right from the origins. Perhaps we may draw special attention to three factors bearing upon the Christian living of the future, of which we shall shortly be speaking. Admittedly it must be plainly stated by way of preliminary that abstract and theoretical postulates for this Christian living of the future are, and continue to be, something quite different from examples in the concrete, which are living and productive. These latter in their concreteness and precisely because of it are effective by the power of the inalienable gift of the Spirit to the Church, and are not begotten in the experiments and researches of speculative theology. But Christians can pave the way for this gift of grace in the Church in that they can be patient and hold firm throughout the present situation without indulging in self will either by becoming reactionaries on the one hand, or by embarking upon any destructive quests for novelty on the other, and in that they can seek to achieve further progress in this situation wherever possibilities arise for them to do so.

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD AS INCOMPREHENSIBLE

The primary and essential factor, and one which must play a decisive role in the Christian living of the future also, is *one's direct personal relationship with God*. This is a truism, for it merely points out that which constitutes the immutable essence of Christian living.[6] And yet today this point is far from being self-evident. We live in an age which speaks of God as remote and silent, which – and this applies even to the theological ideas put forward by Christians – speaks of the 'death of God'; in an age of atheism, and an atheism which, so far from being confined to the ideas to which evil and godless dispositions and rebellious attitudes might be expected to give rise, can also be the outcome of a wrong interpretation of [12] a human experience which is at once extremely genuine and extremely difficult.[7] We live in an age in which man actively manipulates the world and himself in which the world, from being thought of in concrete terms as subject to the control of heavenly powers, becomes the object of rational research and a quarry of arid facts from which man draws his materials for the construction of *that* world which he plans according to his own image and likeness, and where there seems to be room for wonder only where man himself is absent from the scene.[8] We live in a world in which man has made even his own interior life the subject of technical scientific investigation; a world in which he analyses himself and in which it is by no means a foregone conclusion that among the factors arising from this analysis he will discover anything approximating to 'God'; a world, on the contrary, in which the suspicion is never absent from his mind that his religious experience may be unmasked as an outmoded and erroneous interpretation of psychological drives, needs and processes which can and must be

[6] cf. in greater detail the studies referred to in this chapter, Note 4 (with further bibliography).
[7] For a precise understanding of this experience cf. 'Science as a "Confession"?' *Theological Investigations* III, pp. 385-400; H. U. von Balthasar, *Die Gottesfrage des heutigen Menschen* (Vienna. 1956).
[8] For a clearer analysis of this situation, and for a theological interpretation which is in conformity with this cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 178-276, esp. pp. 214 ff., 242 ff.

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explained and brought under control by quite different means than through a mythical and indefinable entity called 'God'.[9] We live in fact in an age in which, so it appears, 'God' (or what is understood by this term) can no longer be used in order to 'stop the gaps' which we discover in the inadequacies of our existence. We receive the impression, rather, that either we ourselves must stop these gaps or that they must remain unstopped. At any rate they cannot be stopped with the idea of God. It follows that intercessory prayer has become an extremely questionable procedure. We live in an age in which the question is not so much how as sinners we may gain access to a gracious God who will justify us; on the contrary the impression is that it is God – if there is a God – who must justify himself to his creatures in their distress, while they for their part have no need of justification. We live in an age which becomes suspicious when in answer to its questions an 'other-worldly' dimension is pointed to, in which everything is reduced to clarity and order. In such a world it is certainly far from immediately obvious that [13] one should be devout in the Christian sense – the more so since the idea formerly accepted as axiomatic by the *community as a whole*, namely that one can and must be this, no longer exists even though ninety per cent of the children in our society still receive religious instruction.

What is obvious is that in the face of a practical, or even a theoretically worked-out or positively militant atheism the real and basic question at issue, namely the question of God, cannot be treated of here and now. This would be to go altogether beyond the limits and possibilities of so brief a consideration as this.[10] All that can be attempted is to make some few observations on the actual problem of living a Christian life in this situation. First it is obvious that in this situation Christian living must of necessity be on a modest and inconspicuous scale, and indeed that this is as it should be. For us Christians this situation is not of our own seeking. But it simply rules out for us the luxury of any elaborate systems of devotion such as were possible in the old days. Today anyone who manages to live with this incomprehensible and silent God is already practising devout Christian living. One who finds courage to call upon him ever anew, to speak to him in a spirit of faith, trust and patience in his darkness, even though to all appearances no answer is returned except the hollow echo of his own voice – such a one as this is already a devout Christian. If a man, repeatedly empties himself of all else so as to open himself to the depths of his being to the incomprehensibility of God, then, even though he seems again and again to become blocked up with direct experiences of the world in its palpable reality, the tasks with which it presents him and the needs which it demands that he supplies by his own efforts, as well as the beauty and glory of the world still unfolding before him – if he still manages to live with God and commune with him in spite of this and without the support of 'public opinion' and custom, then he is already a devout Christian. Finally if he accepts this task as the responsibility of his life, and fulfils it constantly and unremittingly in his acts, and not merely in response to sporadic religious impulses, then he is a Christian, and a devout one *today*. Obviously he will participate to a reasonable extent in the liturgical and sacramental practices of the Church (and also have a real understanding of their significance), especially today, when it is once more being realised that man is no isolated individual; but [14] he will have quietly to define for himself where the real and supreme task of his religious life lies, a task which more than ever today is quite inalienable. If he is to achieve this then, in this wintry season, the tree of his devotion cannot be expected to bear such an abundance of leaves and blooms in the form of the various devotions and pious practices of the past. He will apply himself to the fundamental realities and truths of the Christian faith, and can count upon his *fides implicita* to cover many

[9] A full discussion of the ideological attitude of suspicion towards Christian living is to be found in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 109-202.
[10] More in detail on this in the author's article (published in the periodical *Concilium* III (1967), Vol 3, March. cf. also the other contributions to this volume).

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other secondary truths, derived from these, which he does not call in question. Corresponding to this *fides implicita* he also has a certain *pietas implicita* to fall back upon, without actually filling his mind and heart with the luxuriant growth of Christian devotions of earlier ages. Then the centre of live religious interest was not the incomprehensibility of God and his effective presence in the crucified one, the one abandoned by God, but rather devotion to the Blessed Sacrament – this was particularly developed – veneration of the precious Blood, the Immaculate Conception, the gaining of indulgences etc.

Now it must be admitted that if we are to have the courage to enter upon a direct relationship with God in his ineffability, to accept that our devotion must, in this sense, be cut down to the bare essentials and to accept, furthermore, the silent self-bestowal of God as the true mystery of our own existence, then we do need to do something more than merely to take up a given rational attitude to the speculative problems of the divine, and to respond in merely doctrinal terms to the teaching of Christianity. We do need to work out a certain theology of mysticism, a mysticism that leads to a religious experience which indeed many suppose that they could never discover in themselves, a theology of mysticism which can be imparted in such a way that each one can become his own teacher of mysticism. So long as we fail to realise the manifest fact of how inescapably our existence, in all its self-consciousness and self-responsibility, is orientated towards the absolute mystery which we call 'God' and which bestows itself upon us, we have not even begun to understand so much as' the rudiments of this mystical theology. This approach to mysticism must rid man of his anxiety (*angst*) in the face of attack, so that the only thing that makes him tremble is the designs engendered in him by his own longing to launch himself upon the immensity of empty nothingness when he begins to call upon God and to give him, the ineffable, a name.[11]

[15] Simply in order to make it clear what is meant here, and in the consciousness that the concept of 'mysticism' is a loaded one (rightly understood it is not the opposite of belief in the Holy Pneuma but rather identical with it) it could be said: the devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic', one who has 'experienced' something, or he will cease to be anything at all. For devout Christian living as practised in the future will no longer be sustained and helped by the unanimous, manifest and public convictions and religious customs of all, summoning each one from the outset to a personal experience and a personal decision. For this reason, therefore, the usual religious education as practised hitherto can only provide a very secondary kind of formation or preparation for the institutional element in the religion of the future. The mystical approach of which we are speaking must impart the correct 'image of God', based upon the accepted experience of man's basic orientation to God, the experience that the basis of man's existence is the abyss: that God is essentially the inconceivable; that his inconceivability grows, and yet does not derogate from the fact that the more rightly God is understood the more nearly does his self-bestowing love touch us; the experience that in mapping the course of one's life one can never confine God to specific points in it without being brought up against the fact that when one does so the sum fails to come out right; the experience that he only becomes our 'happiness' when we pray to him and love him unconditionally; but also the fact that he cannot be defined as a dialectical negation of the affirmative 'thrown up' by our *experiences*, for instance that he is not simply the one who is remote as opposed to one who is near, not to be thought of as the diametrical antithesis to the world, but rather that he transcends such oppositions. Our basic orientation to him is more primary, then, and prior to all such dialectical opposites, and this has the effect that he wills to be and is 'our' God in an act of absolute self-bestowal and grace as he who is 'so and not otherwise', without becoming involved in the complexities of our dialectic.

[11] On the mystical approach to religious experience cf. the article referred to in this chapter, note 10; *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 269 ff. (Bibliog.).

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The mystical approach of which we have been speaking must teach us in the concrete to maintain a constant closeness to *this* God; to say 'thou' to him, to commit ourselves to his silence and darkness, not to be anxious lest we may lose him by the very fact of calling him by a name, as though he cannot, if he wills (as in fact he has willed) also enter into our eternal duality precisely because he does not constitute one element among others in our scheme of things. It must teach us that he does not belong to any [16] specific place in our scheme of things (e.g. only 'outside'). Such an essentially *Christian* approach to mysticism must, of course, also take cognisance of the place which Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified and risen one, must occupy in it.[12]

For such a relationship to God theology must work out a fresh understanding and a practice of intercessory prayer corresponding to it, and so far it has not done enough in this direction. Perhaps it might be said that the particular task which man himself has to perform, or the particular fate which he has courageously to accept as inescapable does not as such need to be the direct subject of petition on his part, whereas on the other hand it is only in prayer that man can accept himself as a whole, and thereby all the particular aspects of his life. It follows from this that petitionary prayer in the concrete can only avoid being a 'troubling of the gods', and be really prayer to God when it consists in that opening of the heart so as to respond to the inconceivability of God as love in which alone one is *always* heard. Only that petition which is truly sure of being heard is petitionary prayer at all.[13]

2. LIFE IN THE WORLD AND SERVICE OF THE WORLD CONSIDERED AS PERTAINING TO RELIGION

The practitioner of active Christian living in the future will have to recognise as an integral element in his Christian living the factor of the fully free and the fully human. This is, of course, an obvious and axiomatic element in the Christian understanding of life, yet it is one which is still very far from being sufficiently brought out: namely that there is an intrinsic plurality in man's nature, a plurality such that he must not for one moment attempt to impose unity upon it, or produce an integral synthesis [17] of it by his own powers; that he has to accept this plurality of his own being patiently, whole-heartedly and without struggling against it, recognising that God penetrates with his grace even into those regions where no altar has been raised to him.[14] If we accept the teaching of Vatican II to the effect that God himself can still be the salvation of one who, in all honesty, and therefore in all innocence, believes that he must be an atheist,[15] then it is also true that in the life of the Christian *too* he can still be present wherever life in the world is lived joyfully, eagerly, earnestly and bravely even without any explicit reference to religion. Here lies the true meaning of that term which is so often misunderstood, 'the religion of the world'. The underlying conception is that this world is presented as an opportunity and a task because God wills it precisely in its worldliness and

[12] It is only if we include this dimension, which is missing here, that we can arrive at the depths of the Christian message in the true sense. Inasmuch as this aspect cannot be worked out here a whole series of points which are important and indispensable for establishing the Christian devotion of the future are missing from this attempted outline. For the more *speculative* aspects the author may refer to his article 'Theologie und Anthropologie' (which appeared in the *Festschrift für M. Schmaus*, (Verlag Schöningh, 1967). Indications of a more practical kind are to be found chiefly in *Betrachtungen zum ignatianischen Exerzitienbuch*, (Munich, 1965). Further aspects of the christological basis for Christian devotion are to be found in this volume pp. 152 ff.

[13] For a more detailed treatment of this cf. *Von der Not und dem Segen des Gebetes* (Freiburg, 6th ed., 1965), pp. 76-92.

[14] On the anthropological basis for this cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, 22 ff.

[15] The study referred to, this chapter note 10, provides an analysis of the relevant texts of the Council.

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as a world made by man himself, and because he has let it grow immeasurably in breadth compared with the worlds of earlier ages and, in spite of all its ills, has also let it become more glorious. It is no longer true that the world as human begins only (or almost only) at the point at which man makes it explicitly human in forms of communal worship, and religious poetry, or in ascribing an explicitly religious meaning to it and using it in explicitly religious ways. Wherever *secular* life is lived with *unreserved honesty* there *ipso facto* an essential element in religious life is already present because God loves the world in itself, endows it with grace in itself and in no sense regards it as a rival to himself as though he were envious of it.[16] He who responds to the world with genuine *love ipso facto* encounters in it the Cross of Christ and the inconceivability of God. He has no need whatever to conjure them up first in order for them to be present there. If he practises the virtues of the world, suffers himself to be educated by it in joyfulness, courage, devotion to duty and love, then *ipso facto* he is actively practising a vital element in genuine religion in his life and such worldly virtues will one day open to him the innermost mystery which they contain, namely God himself.[17] That in man which is really of value and fundamentally alive is already Summoned to receive the grace of Christ even before it is explicitly [18] 'baptised'. Indeed, provided the Christian does not close his heart to God there is actually no need for it to be so explicitly 'baptised' always and in every case. Because this is by no means always possible, and because the Christian is not the achiever of his own integrity, one who at basis is willing only to play the part of God himself. God alone remains the one true unity in the plurality which is in man.

A further aspect of 'the religion of the world' in the true sense follows as a direct consequence from this. Responsible action in the world is itself an element in active Christian living. What significance could the endeavours of the so-called 'secular institutes' have if they were only auxiliaries dressed up in more or less modern uniform to assist the clergy in their task? If secular activity as a task and as a deed did not already have a place in their lives even before it achieved an explicitly religious inspiration and was integrated into their religion? Nowadays man does not simply find himself living in a world that is *already given*; rather he himself *makes* his world. Thereby he incurs opportunities, tasks, responsibilities and dangers which formerly simply were not there.[18] The active Christian living of the future, therefore, will be practised *on this plane also* – and not simply in the quiet corners of those who, because they are rich, can manage to live far from this world of work and of the humanisation of the world, practising the piety of Philothea, or else who, as the proletarian poor, have not yet been admitted as responsible contributors to the formation of the world as it evolves. Certainly making some new discovery in physics or flying in space like Gagarin does not *ipso facto* make one a man who loves God. But neither will the genuine religion of the future begin only where all that leaves off. Vatican II exhorts Christians to consider their task in the world of today, to co-operate with all in the construction of a greater freer world, one more worthy of mankind, to take the responsibility and to have the spirit not merely to depend upon the moral directives of the official Church, not merely to ask how man should act in a given case in order to avoid offending God, but to ask what man can do in order to make life more worth living.[19] Now in directing [19] these exhortations to Christians the

[16] The author describes certain concrete manifestations of the 'religion of the world as understood here in *Alltägliche Dinge* (Einsiedeln, 6th ed. 1966).
[17] Examples of such virtues are to be found in this volume, pp. 229-293.
[18] On this new situation cf. 'Experiment Mensch', *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Festschrift für Max Müller*, (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 45-69.
[19] The fact that the Council too makes demands of this sort upon Christians in their lives is shown in particular by the pastoral constitution 'On the Church in the Modern World'. On this cf. the author's article, 'Zur theologischen Problematik einer "Pastoralkonstitution" (which appeared in the Festschrift für J. Höfer, R. Baumer and H, Dolch edd., (Freiburg, 1967)).

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Church is not betraying her message of the Cross, of humility and desire for the eternal in order to adapt it to a world which has become emancipated from religion. Rather she enjoins upon believers to bring their *Christianity* to bear upon their task, a task which did not exist in this form in earlier times,[20] but which does present itself now and, moreover, for the Christian as such, and therefore as a true part of his religion, though admittedly in this, as in all other spheres each one must act according to his own gifts and calling, and perform his own task and not that of another. The Christian cannot simply dismiss politics as a 'dirty business', and expect God to give this 'dirty business' to others to carry out and not to him, so that he himself can pursue his own quiet devotions in the comfort of the petit-bourgeois. The world as developing and unfolding, as a 'worldly world' operated by man lays claims upon the Christian today, and the fulfilment of these claims in what might be called a 'political' form of religion is today or tomorrow an integral element in genuine Christian living.[21]

3. THE NEW ASCETICISM: IMPOSING ONE'S OWN LIMITS

Among many other aspects of the Christian living of tomorrow which we might also take into consideration, and which are certainly also necessary, a third one has still to be mentioned: the fact that there must be a radical change in the forms of asceticism that are practised. In earlier times certain limits were imposed upon man in his activities to a large extent by the sheer force of external circumstances, by the situation in which he lived. His faults swiftly brought their own retribution and exacted their own revenge. The majority of men at least led lives that were brief and hedged about with dangers, and in which there was little or no opportunity for luxury, caprice, free time, travel, enjoyment etc. Christian asceticism, therefore, consisted in the patient acceptance of the poverty and toil in one's life which this implied, or in additional ascetical practices which were to some extent imposed from without as e.g. in monasticism, but far less in a positive summons to a form of asceticism [20] which was the outcome of life itself and of the actual daily circumstances in which it was lived. Under these circumstances asceticism – if it was undertaken over and above such hardships as have been mentioned – acquired the 'image' of something extraordinary and heroic. In this way Christian asceticism consisted in passive endurance[22] or else supplementary, extraordinary measures. Today man, who to a large extent has gained control over nature by his technical achievements in the sphere of medicine and all other fields of technical mastery, has to an ever-increasing extent the ability to play the part which perhaps, in virtue of his true nature, he should play.[23] He can live without restraint and still avoid incurring thereby any of those disadvantages which used to ensue as a natural consequence upon such a course. Sexual excesses are no longer 'punished' by children or by disease. The misuse of power no longer brings about its own downfall so swiftly as formerly, when a king who was immoderate in the exercise of his authority quickly incurred a tyrant's death at the hands of some assassin. The idle are no longer brought to heel under the stimulus of hunger. Medicine today rather helps than restrains the quest for enjoyment. Moderation is no longer imposed from without.

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[20] On the concrete tasks which the Christian has to perform in the world cf. *in extenso*, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp.40 ff.; 42 ff.; 148-175 (with numerous further references); 208-228; 236 ff.; 243 f.; 248 ff.; 258 ff.; 262 ff.

[21] For the justification in theory of the basic ideas put forward here cf. K. Rahner, Christlicher Humanismus', *Orientierung*, 31.5.1966; J. B. Metz, *Verantwortung und Hoffnung* (Mainz, 1966).

[22] On the true significance, theologically speaking, of such traditional asceticism cf. 'The Passion and Asceticism', *Theological Investigations* III, pp. 58-85.

[23] On the difficulty of this question cf. the study referred to in Note 22, especially pp. 56 ff. and, on the ascetical aspects, pp. 65-68.

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Man must practise it of his own free will. And thus a new way of practising Christian asceticism is opened up, one which, precisely because it proceeds 'prudently' is not so manifestly heroic or spectacular as the asceticism of former times, which took more active forms. The ascetical practices of those former days had the character of that which is extra and out of the ordinary. But today ascetical practices have rather the character of freely fulfilling one's responsibilities in the performance of one's duty. Yet this is almost more difficult than the former kind precisely because it must necessarily appear in the guise of that which is manifestly the 'prudent' course.[24]

This 'asceticism in the consumer society' (which, however, applies to [21] all areas of life) is difficult.[25] At basis, and as applied to the generality of men (we are not thinking here of those individuals in whom a certain weakness of the acquisitive instincts goes some way towards lightening the burden of taking their own decisions and renders them immune to the claims of an acquisitive society with its suggestions of new needs) it will be achieved only by one who is *open to God*, and therefore can undertake in all sincerity a renunciation.[26] which seems to be unattainable to the man who is weighed down by anxiety in the face of death. Certainly God and the state of being open to God are far from rendering one psychologically immune to pain, ideas which can be exploited in order to facilitate the asceticism so necessary in a consumer society. To think of them and to attempt to apply them in this sense would be *ipso facto* to negate them. Only where *God* is *loved* for his own sake does he also become a source of blessing. Only where an individual is *open* to the absolute future of God[27] will he also overcome the tendency to immoderate greed, to fill his life with the greatest possible enjoyment (taking this to include power also), and so ultimately to destroy himself by sheer excess.[28] And conversely: when man observes that moderation which is appropriate to his nature *genuinely without any thought of reward* then he is already in a mysterious sense giving his assent to God and to his absolute future even when he does not realise this.

Such is the new asceticism appropriate to the practice of Christian living in the future. It can be the new way of putting into practice that more fundamental mystery of Christian asceticism which consists in sharing in the death of Christ on the Cross, and which is offered to us because today too life still continues mysteriously to be the Passion. Today, in contrast to earlier times, this self-imposed moderation is to a large extent no longer capable of being crystallised into a general [22] institution. But for all that it must not remain at the level of theory an abstract commandment. It must assume a form in which it can be *effective in the concrete and can provide a practical pattern of living* and, from being morality in the abstract, must precisely become 'morals' in the concrete 'ethics' and good habit.[29] This again

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[24] Such prudence or reasonableness must not be understood to be 'obvious' in the sense that it is dictated by a prior rule of 'nature' which applies always and in all circumstances (theologically speaking in the sense of 'nature pura'). For this applies in any case to all exercises of the human reason throughout the world in virtue of the constant vulnerability of human nature. It applies even to the baptized ('Concupiscence'). Hence the *theological* concepts of prudence and freedom must bethought out afresh.

[25] A comprehensive analysis of the 'consumer society' and its background is to be found, with bibliography, in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 130 ff.; 175ff.

[26] On this cf. 'Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation', *Theological Investigations* III, pp. 47-57, and also, in greater detail, 'The Theology of Poverty' in this volume, Part B, pp. 168-214.

[27] On this concept, and on the manner in which it gives the lie to all ideologies which promise a future utopia in this world cf. *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 59-60, and also this volume, pp. 49 ff. and the article referred to in Note 22, especially pp. 62 ff.

[28] On the anthropological basis for this cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 34 ff.

[29] A task which still remains to be accomplished by the philosophy and theology of the future is to define the new form which such habits must assume in existential and ontological terms (cf. e.g. the works of G. Funke), so that this category, so important yet, precisely in contemporary thought, so misunderstood, of the 'habitus' of classic theology, may be made available to the theology of Christian living.

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is a major task for those secular institutes whose members genuinely do continue to live in the world: to provide examples which show how even in the contemporary setting it is possible to live a life that is moderate, self-disciplined and pure, in which one rises above that state of doubt and anxiety about death at the bottom of one's heart which makes one acquisitive and so, in the last analysis, unready also to take selflessly upon one's self genuine responsibility for the good of others in a practical and down-to-earth way, and in doing this silently and cheerfully to endure renunciations. In so acting the members of such secular institutes must be genuine, uncompromising, gentle and at the same time strict with themselves.

A few concluding observations still remain to be added. The impression may, perhaps, have been given, that it has not been made altogether clear precisely *how* all these factors and rules for the new kind of Christian living can be assembled into a unity. A further point also requires clarification. We might have entered still more deeply into the question of how the old and the new could be fitted together in the concrete in the unity of these devout Christian living of tomorrow; how in this Christian living the heritage of former times could be preserved a harmonised with the new forms of devotion; how mystical experience of God could be harmonised with humanist activities in the world. We could have given a still better idea of the ultimate and underlying unity of these factors.[30] But even then the full synthesis of all these factors in the concrete would still remain a prime problem and a task which is to be achieved only *in living practice*, and not by means of theological theorising. [23] Living practice itself when undertaken in patience, in a quest which is constantly renewed, in self-critical 'discernment of spirits' always remains the gift of the Spirit to the individual and to the Church. Above all patience is necessary because it must always sustain us in times of transition from that which was formerly accepted and approved but has now become out of date to that which is new and still has to gain approval. Patience will preserve us from any premature reactions in this situation. For these represent a danger to conservatives and progressives alike, each in their own way. As an irreducible amalgam of many factors life in the truest sense and rightly understood always entails compromise.[31] But this takes place on the historical plane and is not capable of being worked out in theory beforehand in any adequate way. For this it is necessary to have patience, courage and trust in the incalculable wisdom of life, and above all in God.

In the future there will be *many* forms of Christian living. The fact that in spite of the development of mass societies man can develop many more and more varied ways of living than formerly even in the worldly sphere – this fact alone is of itself sufficient to make this true.[32] In former times, in spite of all differences the mode of Christian living adopted by those Christians of central Europe who sought earnestly to practise their faith was relatively homogenous. This appears, for instance, in the styles adopted in the orders of tertiaries, Marian confraternities etc. It is also clearly illustrated by the fact that the prescriptions of canon law for the spiritual life of the secular clergy are uniform almost down to the smallest detail. The range of variations in the modes of Christian living of the future will be greater than these, and this is as it should be. It is important to have a full and clear realisation of this situation. Otherwise, as so often happened in the past, it will be falsely suggested that the many Christians who deviate from the normal and average way of practising this Christian

[30] Special reference must be made at this point to the works of W. Dirks: 'Wandlungen der Frömmigkeit', *Weltverständnis und Glauben*, J. B. Metz, J. Splett edd. (Mainz, 1965), pp. 254-264; 'Vernunft und Heiligkeit', *Integritas*, B. Stolte, R. Wisser edd. (Tübingen, 1966), pp. 294-305. Many suggestive points are also raised by H. J. Schultz, *Frömmigkeit in einer weltlichen Welt* (Stuttgart, 1959).

[31] This word must not be understood here in a bad sense. The very fact that the manifold factors in man's own nature cannot adequately be harmonised is in itself enough to demonstrate this point.

[32] cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 206 ff.

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living are in bad conscience, and that all is not well with their way of life as Christians and members of the Church. The young Christians of today must quietly develop a new way of Christian living and demand the right to practise it in the Church. If it leads to charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-discipline and other manifestations of the presence of the [24] Spirit one can only say with Paul (Gal 5:23): 'Against such there is no law'. Not even the law of the Church.[33]

Finally one cannot divide the old and new elements in Christian living into different compartments because the new is genuine only when it preserves the old, and because the old only remains living when it is lived anew. In the old and in the new, however, one element must be the same which survives yesterday, today and for ever, and of which we have not been able to speak nearly enough: God the incomprehensible source of life's blessing, the mystery of the crucified and risen Christ, the blessing which extends its holiness in and through all the monotony of everyday life, the hope for that eternal life which consists in the unveiling of God in his incomprehensibility. Where this is present and living there is a Christian, and that Christian is living his faith. This is true of the future also.

[33] As a further small example of such new attempts cf. the songs of Père Duval, and on these the author's article, 'Ein kleines Lied', *Glaube der die Erde liebt* (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 157 ff.

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2

BEING OPEN TO GOD AS EVER GREATER

On the Significance of the Aphorism 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam'

It is well known that the saying 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam', 'To the Greater Glory of God' is the motto of St Ignatius, of the Society of Jesus and of its constitutions.[1] It is also well known that it is roughly the equivalent of that 'more' or 'greater service and praise' (of God or of Christ) etc. referred to both in the Constitutions and in the Exercises.[2] Again and again it is taken as the maxim which gives expression to the very nature of the Jesuits, their Order and their spirituality.[3] In truth this maxim constitutes a very obscure saying. It is reasonable, therefore, to offer certain observations concerning it. They touch upon a question which is basic to Christian life as a whole.

No attempt can be made here to present an historical background to our question. Instead something must *first* be said concerning the deficiencies of this saying, and this by way of an introduction to our considerations. This will lead on *secondly* to certain preliminary observations. *Thirdly* we must indicate the context in terms of the history of spirituality against which this saying must be viewed. *Fourthly* we shall have to treat of the [26] meaning expressed in this saying, and *fifthly* of certain dangers entailed in an attitude such as that expressed in this saying.

I

Let us as Christians examine this saying more closely. The moment we do so it seems wholly unsuitable to express what is distinctive and characteristic of one particular order. First, as might be said by way of objection, it is quite clear that a maxim such as this is binding upon every saint and every Christian. There is no such thing as a saint who neither practises nor intends to practise heroic virtue. But included in the very notion of heroic virtue is the idea that the individual concerned wills to do what is better, and what is better in an heroic degree. In other words the decision to do all for the greater honour of God seems capable of expressing only something which must apply to everyone who strives for sanctity. Furthermore every Christian is actually bound to strive for sanctity in this sense, a fact which has only recently been reiterated by the Second Vatican Council (*Constitution on the Church*, C.5). For according to the teaching of the gospel every man must love God with his whole heart and his whole strength. Perhaps he does not do this yet; perhaps he has not yet succeeded in the concrete in drawing his whole being, his whole resources, his whole life and his whole effort together in one total act of love for God, but in the last analysis he would be

[1] The expression occurs in this or a similar form 376 times in the regulations of the order written by Ignatius.

[2] On the meaning of this 'magis' in the Exercises cf. K. Rahner, *Betrachtungen zum Ignatianischen Exerzitienbuch*, (Munich, 1965), pp. 27 ff.

[3] In fact, however, the motto of the Benedictines, 'Ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus' (cf. 1 Pet 4:16) has materially the same meaning, unless it be objected that in this case no special value is attached to the *major* gloria, the *greater* honour. The motto of the Friars Minor runs: 'Ad Majorem Dei Resurgentis Gloriam' ('To the Greater Honour of God [Christ] in the Resurrection', in memory of the birthday of this order on the first Sunday after Easter 1589). It is known that for Calvin too, a contemporary of Ignatius, God's 'fame' and 'honour' is the prime motive for God's actions, and therefore must be so for the actions of all Christians too (cf. *Corpus Reformatorum*, Braunschweig, 1863-1900, XXXVI, 294). Hence the motto 'Soli Deo Gloria' appears over many reformed churches. cf. also A. Favre-Dorsatz, *Calvin et Loyola* (Paris-Brussels, 1951), pp. 20 f.

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sinning mortally if he deliberately decided to refuse to give God a greater love than he has so far managed to achieve. Perhaps in some particular case or other he can refrain from taking the better course without sinning, or at least without sinning gravely, perhaps only thereby committing an imperfection or a sin of omission, even though he sees what is the better course and is capable of taking it. But he can only act in this way because this neglect in the here and now does not constitute any absolute decision concerning his basic attitude.[4] For the total integration of one's whole life, with all its powers, in perfect love of God is far from demanding, as a matter of absolute necessity, that precisely here and now we must always take the better course, and for this reason, precisely here and now, we can take the course that is less good. But if anyone were to decide to adopt this attitude, which he has taken up in some concrete individual case and at a particular [27] point in space and time in his life for the fundamental attitude that governs his whole life he would be sinning gravely. In other words, according to the gospel the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount demands as a matter of absolute duty and under pain of grave sin that every Christian shall strive after a greater perfection than that which he has already attained in the concrete circumstances of his life. Man is *par excellence* the being which is *in fieri*, the being which, in virtue of its very nature (in virtue of nature and grace alike), is bound to keep itself in openness to an ever-greater future. And from this point of view the maxim of St Ignatius and his order seems to be totally incapable of providing any meaning which precisely for the spirit of his own foundation and for himself can be regarded as a distinguishing characteristic.

One can regard the inadequacy of this saying from another viewpoint also. If one is honest and makes no claim to asceticism, if for instance one rids one's self of the habit of speaking so facilely in 'devout' circles of sanctity, striving for perfection and willing to take the better course, then one can only be profoundly shocked at a saying such as this one, concerning the 'major Dei gloria'! For is man not the lowest of creatures and the sinner among them? But if he is both of these can he then exist for the greater honour of God in any true sense?

But there is still more. In the theological treatise 'De Deo Uno', 'On God the One', we are taught that man cannot say that God has created the best of all possible worlds. Therefore he is far from willing his own greater glory at all times and in all cases. If one may so express it he is one who is thoroughly 'realistic and down-to-earth', one who wills sometimes one thing and sometimes another, who views it in all its finite limitations and accepts it for what it is – so finite as it actually is, so easy as it would be to improve upon.

A further point which must be made is that from the biblical aspect the honour of God for which we must work is first and foremost the revelation of the 'glory' ('doxa') of God to us. As creatures we are essentially those who have to receive the deed of God upon us, the deed of his compassion, his self-bestowal. Now if we are indeed those who must receive the deed of God upon us, and if God is he who creates that which is finite and limited, that which falls short of his divine omnipotence, what then can it really mean to say that we must do all for the greater honour of God? What does this saying mean if in the last analysis we have always to recognise that we are sinners, those therefore who essentially fall short [28] of the possibility of honouring God which God himself offers us? What, in that case, can this saying concerning the greater honour of God really be intended to signify?

It might even be said that this saying is typical of the new age, inspired by the spirit of the renaissance. It seems to be the saying of a man who feels himself to be the perfector of the world, and in this awareness purposes to usher in the kingdom of God and *thereby* give God honour. In Calvin too we meet this fervour to set up the kingdom of God upon earth, the fervour which aims at a spiritual conquest of the world. Have not many great Christians of

[4] On this conception cf. recently H. Reiners, *Grundintention und sittliches Tun*, Quaestiones Disputatae 30, (Freiburg, 1966).

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this age felt themselves called to bring about the greater glory of God in the world – that, in other words, which was not there before, that which is unprecedently great, that which is audacious that which puts all previous possibilities in the shade? Now when Ignatius adds to this that he intends that all that he does shall be done to God's glory this does not of itself entail any fundamental difference in this basic attitude. But does he not feel himself to be the one who has it in his power to bring about in person this greater glory of God? If against this view the objection is raised that as Christians we are obviously aware that this ability to achieve the greater is still itself a gift of God, then the question immediately arises: If this consciousness of having received the power to achieve the glory of God is really alive in us can we then really speak so facilely, so boldly, with such conviction of our own powers to do something for the greater glory of God, or should we not rather say with the psalmist that God himself must take steps to ensure at least that his name is not dishonoured in the world through us?

The ardent conviction that one is as it were, the representative of God, who defends, maintains and increases the glory of God in the world is in fact to a certain extent an attitude of mind that belongs to the new age, and is therefore conditioned by it. But if one reflects upon the 'end of the new age', as it has been called, then one is compelled to say that this world into which the man of the new age has entered as creator and perfector has in the meantime grown cruelly profane. It is a worldly world, one which, however much it may throw man into relief, does not so clearly reveal God and his *doxa*; a world which has been made by man for his own greater glory. But to speak truly one experiences all that man is capable of doing in the world either as profane or at least as ambiguous. We no longer find it so easy as the men of former centuries to recognise precisely *what* is in fact 'more' to the glory of God. For this God whom we have to [29] honour in this world is still he who is inconceivably transcendent over all that exists, all that we experience and can do. The result is that to us of the present day all that we can offer God by way of his external glory in the world seems to be so immeasurably beneath God himself, so ambiguous, so insignificant that it does not (or would not) come in the least easy to us to say: 'What I now undertake is for the greater glory of God'. Left to ourselves we would be inclined to say, rather: 'We hope that at any rate it has something to do with God!'

From various aspects, therefore, this aphorism 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam' is far from being as self-evident as perhaps it may seem to the devout man with his traditional stock of phrases.

Now before proceeding any further and coming to consider the meaning of this saying certain further preliminary observations remain to be made.

II

Every attitude, every idea, every distinctive form of spirituality in the Church emerges from a particular situation and is conditioned by the circumstances of a particular epoch. The situation itself does not remain, but this idea or attitude can survive and continue. The situation in which it emerged is historically conditioned, but what emerges in this situation, so far as the Church of God is concerned, and the life of the Church of God in the true sense, is not something which simply vanishes with this situation. It would be foolish to refuse to recognise those elements which are appropriate only to the particular epoch, the historical context in which this saying, 'Ad *Majorem* Dei Gloriam' emerged precisely in its existing form so as to become, as it were, the beacon or the motto which sums up the spirit of the Society of Jesus. But this should by no means be taken to imply that this spirit must once more disappear. The birth of the Franciscan movement was conditioned by the cultural, and

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indeed by the economic circumstances prevailing at a particular point in history, those namely in which the city first emerged as a distinctive cultural environment. Monasticism as such arose from certain cultural and, in fact, economic circumstances prevailing in Egypt at the time, which are quite distinctive and well defined. Again, if we consider the institution of the papacy, the definition of its infallibility is rooted in a particular situation in the cultural history of the 19th century, that namely in which the idea of monarchy was emphasised in reaction against the liberal and [30] pseudo-democratic ideas which were threatening to destroy it at the time. Without this atmosphere, without this basis in a specific situation no movement would have emerged even in the Church. Jesus himself in his teaching, directly from heaven though this came, spoke precisely in and from the particular situation with which he found himself confronted. So true is this, indeed, that we have, as it were, to look closely in order to realise that ultimately something which is in fact radically new has emerged at all from the situation. In view of these considerations it can be said that we must look into and evaluate impartially the particular historical context of such circumstances, in which movements have emerged within the Church, and must yet be convinced that something has been born here which is not subject to the conditions of time in the same sense as our other movements and fashions belonging to particular epochs, which do arise only to disappear once more. Much that arises in the Church has come to stay. It is taken up and destined never more to be relinquished. It becomes more developed, more explicit and finally arrives at a stage of development and explicitation at which it can never more be forgotten. What is taking place here is exactly what takes place when, for instance, a definition is produced of infallible teaching authority, whether by the pope or by a Council. Such a definition has its own particular ‘kairos’, its appropriate point in time, that point at which alone it could have emerged, a situation which once more disappears, whereas that which has arisen as a result of it still remains as a vital factor in the life of the Church. This does not, of course, mean that what has once arisen in this manner remains always and in all circumstances the ‘last word’ on the subject, the ultimate point of development which must necessarily stand as far as possible in the forefront of the Church’s conscious faith and life. The definition of the Assumption is only a few years old. Of course it is a dogma and continues to be such, and, moreover, will always be taught as such. Yet already at this stage how little lasting or effective impact it has! This is a real factor. There will always be such withdrawals into the background of factors which were once more ‘actual’ in the life of the Church.

To this first preliminary observation a second must be added, necessary if we are correctly to evaluate the maxim concerning the greater glory of God precisely as the watchword of a particular order. If we take a cross-section of the members of any organised society we shall find that only in a very restricted sense do they realise the distinctive aims and spirit of that society. Quite in the abstract and in general it can be said that it is not in [31] the least necessary for any one individual member of a great community always and in all circumstances to be representative of the distinctive spirit of that community. To demand this would be mere childish pseudo-idealism, which, in its ultimate implications, would be ridiculous. This in turn implies that we are not contesting the interpretation of a maxim which expresses that which is typical in the spirit of the Society of Jesus by saying: ‘If this interpretation were correct, then Fr so-and-so or brother so-and-so would have to be quite different. But since he is a good Jesuit, and since the life he leads and the work he does in the order is wholly correct, and since his spiritual life is such that he “dies in the Lord”, it follows that this interpretation cannot be correct.’ Such a line of argument would be false. For there is no need whatever for every member of an order to express in his manner of life what is distinctive and typical of his order in a particularly outstanding degree. It is necessary to emphasise this point so strongly (although strictly speaking it is obvious) because if we do

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not have a clear realisation of this principle we might, for instance, be able to object to a particular interpretation of the words and maxims of St Ignatius by saying: 'This has never yet been entertained by such-and-such or such-and-such a particular devout and praiseworthy Jesuit; therefore this interpretation cannot be correct'. This line of argument is false. There are a thousand matters in the Exercises which might be worked out theologically, which are authentic ideas of St Ignatius himself, yet which have passed quite unnoticed by individual Jesuits, who have never realised their significance. Moreover, this is far from being a bad thing. The individual as an individual has no need whatever to bring to fruition in his own life and in an especially representative manner what is basic and distinctive in the ideal of his order. In this sense there are among the Jesuits not only Franciscans, but also Capuchins, Benedictines and secular priests etc., who are, nevertheless, completely authentic members of the order, and the converse too is equally true.

There is yet a third preliminary observation to be made, one which it is likewise important to recognise clearly in this context. That which is highest is always the most dangerous too, the most easy to misinterpret and also that which is always and inevitably only half understood. The great inspiration, the comprehensive idea, the most exalted spirit in an individual is necessarily that which at basis is least of all talked about in order that it can be most of all lived. For this latter is harmed and threatened by too much ingenious or pious talk – for both are dangerous. By [32] these means it is very easy for some principle to degenerate into a mere catchword which everyone has on his lips, and which everyone invokes; and then it loses its true value, and from being most often referred to becomes most often misunderstood.

III

Now let us turn to that situation in the history of human thought in which Ignatius was placed, and which initially made it possible for this aphorism to be formulated. Taking account of the Spanish tradition to which Ignatius belonged we can undoubtedly regard him as in many respects a man of the late Middle Ages and of the 'devotio moderna' which, in the last analysis, does in fact belong to the 'autumn of the Middle Ages'. But ultimately speaking he is still, in a true sense, a man of the New Age. In saying this we do, of course, once more have to distinguish: there is a new age which is now gradually drawing to its close – as Guardini has pointed out – and also one which was initiated in those centuries to which Ignatius belonged, never more to cease: the age of the rational, the planned, the scientific and technical. It is at this turning-point that Ignatius stands, a turning-point at which interest begins to be directed towards the subjective, towards the question of salvation as it bears upon the subjective life of the individual, of the sense in which God is a 'gracious God' precisely to *me*. This is the point at which attention begins to be turned from the cosmo-centric to the anthropocentric (as J. B. Metz would say), to man who controls and directs himself and his world by means of rational planning, and directs himself and it towards a future that is open. It is a time when attention is turned to the subjective viewed as a task and as the object of a conscious mission in the Church and for the Church. There have, of course, always been apostolic men. But in the case of Ignatius something peculiar and special emerges in the relationship of the apostle to the Church, something which precisely has not appeared in earlier ages.

Our scholastic background and our sense of the Church always make us prone to think of things as though everything in the Church of God were always the same. Often we suppose that there has always been an awareness, so far as man and his problems are concerned, of his relationship to God, the Church, the sacraments, the word of God, his fellow men etc. In a

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certain sense this is, of course, thoroughly legitimate and [33] right. But on the other hand there really is a history of ideas, of dogma, of devotion, and it is not true that everything has always been the same. There are cases in which the old becomes new precisely in a manner for which there has been no previous precedent. In this sense Ignatius stands at a quite decisive turning-point, at *the* turning-point which absolutely divides the ecclesiastical history of ancient times and of the Middle Ages from the Church of the New Age. Of course he does not stand there alone. Of course the epoch which constitutes this turning-point is, from certain points of view, several centuries 'long'. It may be that we in the Church of today are in many respects still standing at the end of the Church of the Middle Ages, which only now is gradually realising and understanding precisely what was initiated with Ignatius, with Francis of Sales, with the whole New Age, with the Reformation, the Renaissance, the new natural sciences, the new technical achievements, the realization that the world is one single planet in place of the individual histories of particular regions taken in isolation one from another. But there is this turning to the subject, to subjective striving for salvation, to the subjective viewed as a task for the Church, to the attitude of reflection upon one's self, to that of 'sustained finality', to an existential ethic, to a 'choice' in which the subject in some sense exists by his own decision, chooses, transcends, reflects and is not merely, so to say, called by God in a manner which entails no self-reflection. This is, in short, a turning to self-responsibility. And although Ignatius stands in the midst of this revolutionary change he in turn is, nevertheless, the one who has already, to a certain extent, transformed something which was subject to the conditions of this particular modern world into something lasting. This appears for instance in the fact that in spite of his subjective approach to the salvation of souls, in spite of the fact that in his ideas the 'subjective' aspects of devotion outweigh the 'objective' ones, in spite of the fact that he founded an order which was no longer communal in the same sense as the orders of the Middle Ages, he is, nevertheless, the man of the Church, the man to whom the phrase 'sentire cum ecclesia' may supremely be applied. And if he is this, then he is this, in a true sense, 'in spite of' his subjective approach. For from the point of view of the history of ideas what provides Ignatius with his initial inspiration, what confronts him as unavoidable, is not the Church but modern man considered as personal subject. For Ignatius modern man considered in this sense is an ecclesiastical entity 'in spite of' his subjective aspects. The subjectivism involved here is not Calvinist or Lutheran, [34] although Ignatius' approach to the subjective aspects of salvation is based on exactly the same experience as that of Luther, and although he raised the question of whether he was or was not confronted by a gracious God in a form every bit as radical as Luther, radical in a sense which would have been impossible in previous centuries. Perhaps it is precisely because Ignatius is *the* modern *par excellence*, as it were, in this unique sense that he sometimes gives the impression of being so archaic from one point of view, while from another he seems to figure simply as the representative of one unique epoch. Yet even while recognising this we must once more avoid exaggerating it to the exclusion of all else if we are to take seriously the historical influences to which a given man is subject, his recognition of the truth and his intellectual attitude.

It was necessary to make this third point by way of introduction in order to recognise at all that we are justified in supposing that there is something to be discovered in Ignatius or in his use of the motto concerning the 'Major Dei Gloria' which had not previously been recognised and expressed always and in all circumstances by everyone.

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The attempt must now be made, therefore – and it is here that we first touch upon the real problem at issue – to say something about the meaning of this saying. The particular factors in the attitude which finds expression in this saying must first be analysed. This brings us to one specific element among them which seems to us to be the definitive one and this definitive element must then be investigated more closely.

Anyone who says that he wills to live, act, suffer etc. to the greater glory of God thereby asserts first and foremost that he resolves to adopt an attitude of absolute self-surrender to the sovereign will of God, and believes that he has taken up this attitude. The first element in such an attitude, therefore, is obedience to God, and that 'indifference' or detachment which is necessary for this as it can be formulated on the basis of the Exercises. Man is ready to do God's will, and he knows that when he does it he is honouring God, his disposition of things, his position as supreme Lord. But anyone who explains that in this way he is being fundamentally obedient to God who reveals himself in his *doxa*, and anyone who supposes that in speaking of the greater glory of God there are inevitably matters [35] which must be tested, selected and then put into practice on the basis of this, and that in such testing, choosing and acting the glory of God, or even the greater glory of God, is achieved – anyone who thinks this, I say, must not overlook the fact that dispositions have already been made to which he is himself subject. This is the second element. When the Exercises are made or given, when plans for life are projected and subjects for choice are put to the test, when we examine what we must do, then all too often we overlook the fact that we are already subject to pre-existing arrangements, that we are very far indeed from being simply those who make the arrangements. If we enunciate a maxim which is intended to govern our actions then we must at the same time admit that we are quite unable to take this maxim alone as the sole adequate principle by which we shape our lives. Any principle such as that of 'omnia ad majorem Dei gloriam' necessarily entails an attitude which is theologically *a priori*, and in dealing with such principles we must see that this *a priori* attitude must from the outset necessarily be supplemented and limited by an existential *a posteriori*. Someone who is sick cannot start questioning whether an activity which presupposes good health would not be for the greater glory of God in his case. When we set out to direct our lives to the greater glory of God the demands of God himself are not the sole considerations from which we start. In certain ways our lives have already been arranged for us beforehand. There is much that is totally excluded from the sphere of our choice. Freedom in the creature is already subject to pre-existing conditions. Man's freedom to act in history – and this applies to his strivings for salvation too – always takes the form of an obedient fitting in with situations which we can do nothing to alter. Indeed it always means accepting the fact that we have been made to fit in necessarily and inevitably with a given concrete situation. There is a certain priority of the actual over the merely possible, and this element of the concrete and the factual in us, in our life, in the span of life allotted to us, in our temperament, our hereditary traits etc., is, as it were, the woof which runs across the warp of the *a priori* principle 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam'. To put it better: this state of being fitted in with things as they are must from the outset be taken into our calculations if we are rightly to understand the maxim with which we are concerned. We are very far from being simply those who can arrange things for the greater glory of God. Rather God has – perhaps before any such decision on our part was possible – already made his own arrangements for us to act for his lesser glory. Now if we [36] were to try to defend the principle simply by saying that humbly submitting one's self to this will of God is precisely acting for his greater glory, then it is true that formally speaking we would be saving the principle from being overthrown, but in fact this would do nothing to alter the situation. It can be seen, then, that when man enquires what he, as the disposer of things, can do for the greater glory of God, he is, even as he asks, already subject to dispositions superimposed upon him from without.

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Now a maxim which is to be comprehensive enough to include both these factors must also implicitly express the fact that there is a certain fluidity in this state of being subject to superimposed conditions; that the obedience involved here has a special element in it, an element of changeableness, of being subject to the vicissitudes of history. To put it another way, and thereby to sum up the first three elements once more: in this statement, 'I will lead my life to the greater glory of God' man says: 'I await a command from God, and ask in all openness what this command is to consist in'. Secondly he says: 'In the most essential matters the command has already been issued. Whether I like it or not it has already been imposed upon me, so that I am very far from being in all respects the one who is summoned or the one who is questioned. The field available to me to choose from for the greater glory of God is already restricted from the outset'. And thirdly he says: 'This state of being called by God, whether the call has already taken specific shape or whether it still remains open and general, is subject to change. Now I am healthy; tomorrow I am sick. Now I must do this, tomorrow that'. Man's state of being subject to prior dispositions on God's part has a certain intrinsic fluidity in it. Obedience does not in the least imply that we have to work out a plan on the grand scale once and for all by some abstract principle. Rather in essence it implies that obedience must take place in the historical vicissitudes of our human existence, ever new, ever unanticipated and incalculable as these are. 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam', therefore does not by any means imply – at any rate in any adequate sense – that man can map out the course of his life once and for all on the *a priori* principle of the greater glory of God. It means that in essence he is not so much the author of projects as the one who has been 'projected', one whom God has already made dispositions for, and who is always only partially in a position to make fresh dispositions on his own account.

He who knows that God has already made arrangements for him, and [37] that from time to time he must respond in all obedience to fresh arrangements imposed upon him by God, and must take these upon himself as they come upon him in a concrete historical situation, (one, therefore which cannot *a priori* be mapped out), such a one can *ipso facto* accept the vicissitudes to which he is subject. This 'letting things fall upon one' is an essentially Christian attitude. For only that freedom which, in spite of its power to dispose of things, and its capacity, so to say, *a priori* to map out the course of life, recognises that it is a creaturely freedom, i.e. a freedom subject to conditions superimposed from without, is a genuinely Christian freedom. And only the life which lets itself unfold in an uncalculating manner, stage by stage, here below is a truly Christian life, evincing the humility appropriate to a creature, trust in God, recognition that one alone knows what is adequate as the formula of our life and its reality, namely God and not ourselves. This acceptance of the fact that our life is arranged by God, and this obedient acceptance of the fact that our life is unforeseeable and subject to the vicissitudes of history, is an essential element in Christian life.

For all this man is capable – and here we touch upon the fourth element – of perceiving, realising, taking into his calculations in an extremely impressive way, the fact that this state of being subject to prior dispositions and the changeableness of such dispositions is under the greater, broader power of God to dispose of things – and at the same time in man's own power. Man is essentially the one who must simultaneously plan and live from day to day. The one who plans out his life and his activities beforehand, and yet must still accept what comes to him. If it be objected to this that planning consists precisely in the fact that man does accept what God sends to him – then we must reply that strictly speaking this is not planning at all. For when God sends some fate to us then we are no longer in a position to raise the question: 'Is it to the greater or lesser glory of God?' Instead we have quite simply to accept it. In other words in the concept of 'major Dei gloria' the explicit, reflexive conscious planning of life really is included, even though man is, and necessarily must be, the one who submits to being disposed of, who accepts, and in a certain sense, who is not capable

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of planning. It is in this explicit, conscious and constant awareness of man's own further openness to the possibility of having conditions imposed upon him either by God or by man himself that what is definitive in the fourth element involved in the 'major Dei gloria' really consists. In this saying we must realise what it means when it [38] says '*ad* majorem Dei gloriam'. The 'major Dei gloria' is not so much that which is actually done, but rather that towards which our acts are orientated in order, as it were, that they may attain to it as their ultimate goal.

Let us now examine this fourth element somewhat more closely. First, what constitutes it is not found in every man or in all cases. This brings us back once more to the problem which was already adumbrated in the introductory remarks. It might be said that either the 'major Dei gloria' expresses something essential to Christianity as such, in which case it must always have been there from the first, and must be present in every Christian and in every Christian life, or it says something which does not belong to Christian existence as such, in which case it follows *ipso facto* that it is a matter of indifference – every bit as much so as for instance it is a matter of indifference whether Ignatius wore a woollen or a linen garment. But to say this would as we have seen be precisely to interpret the facts wrongly. There are factors which are essential to Christianity, which in a certain sense must always have been present wherever Christianity is found and yet which even allowing for this we have not always been used to adverting to so explicitly as real and vital factors present in our lives. Now the fourth element which we are considering is numbered among these real factors. Another way of expressing this state of affairs might be to say that the actual subjectivity of the subject here becomes the theme of the subject's investigations instead of being merely the mode in which his self-explication is realised in the concrete. This is something which is typical of the new age. The Christian recognises that what he is actually doing in the here and now, the conditions to which he is subject in the here and now, fall essentially short of what he is actually capable of in terms of the fulness of Christian existence. As a result of this realisation he constantly orientates his individual decision in the here and now towards the boundless range of other possibilities open to the Christian and will thus learn to regard himself as the subject not only of what he actually does in the concrete but also of what he is capable of over and above this. In this way he can assume possession of himself as a subject in this sense on his own account. Only on the basis of this attitude can he truly ask what in the here and now is or is not 'ad majorem Dei gloriam'. But just as it is not until the New Age that this sense of the self as subject is arrived at, so this saying 'ad majorem Dei gloriam', intended in the same sense and with the same depths of meaning, is likewise only arrived at in the New Age, and in fact only from Ignatius onwards. This [39] 'selfhood' of the subject was not always a theme of investigation for the subject himself in the sense in which it has come to be so in the New Age. And therefore the wider range of possibilities over and above the conditions actually prevailing in the concrete here and now and ordained by God was not always a theme of investigation for the Christian considered as subject in this sense. But in order to avoid any misunderstandings on this point we must straight away add: this New Age is very far from being the age of unChristianity, though it is constantly being accused of this. This subjectivism is, in the last analysis, nothing else than the outcome of Christianity itself. It is true that we have become accustomed to regarding the New Age more or less as a falling away from Christianity; and in fact this is correct to the extent that in the New Age many individuals have fallen away from Christianity, and many legitimate developments both on the human and the Christian plane have emerged initially outside the Church's orbit. Nevertheless the modern age, in spite of its interest in the subjective, in spite of Descartes, Kant, German idealism and modern existentialist philosophy, is, in the last analysis, something which is there because Christianity is there. It has been thrown up by Christianity to provide opportunities for self-reflection and for the necessary unfolding of Christianity

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itself in terms of self-reflection. When, therefore, we say that Ignatius' formula, 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam', does not become possible until the New Age this does not mean: 'Sad to say' St Ignatius could only have lived in the New Age, and he has done or seen something in that Age which is not evil, but which, in the last analysis, would have been more or less superfluous in earlier ages. No, the New Age is an age which Christianity itself has ushered in in order to realise itself by way of self-reflection.[5]

This fourth element has, furthermore, a critical function to perform in relation to the actual concrete process of taking the decision. First an example may help to throw light on this point. In the life of St Francis of Assisi St Bonaventure relates that St Francis had the gift of tears, and in his mystical meditations melted, as it were, into tears to such an extent that a doctor drew his attention to the fact that if he wept so excessively he would [40] become blind. To this St Francis of Assisi replied: 'What does it matter if I lose my eyes, seeing that these are things which I have in common with the flies?' If St Ignatius had had his attention drawn to the same danger he would have sought to stem his mystical flow of tears. Now we can describe neither the one nor the other procedure as 'the more Christian' or 'the more holy'. Moreover we should remember that we have no understanding of such mystical gifts, and that therefore we have no right to interpret St Ignatius' actions on grounds which make us far too ready to believe that we can reconstruct what Ignatius' answer would have been along these lines. For someone who really can weep tears of mystical ecstasy – for such a one the reply of St Francis of Assisi is really the obvious one. Of course if God had taken away this gift of tears from St Francis he would have submitted to this, and would have been content with it. But in the actual moment in which God, so to say, bestows himself upon him in this manner he looks neither to left nor right but uses to the full this gift of God's grace, this ordination of God – uses it, as it were, without reflecting upon it and, in a certain sense one might almost say, naïvely. In Ignatius' case it is quite otherwise. Here the subject is alive to himself in a much more intense and radical manner. Having become aware of all these factors he, so to say, draws back from them in a special way for which there is no precedent, withdraws himself in a certain measure from these concrete circumstances in which his own existence is realised, objectifies them to himself and asks: 'Now is this really and definitely the best course? It is certainly good – but is it to the greater glory of God?' The realisation of existence in the concrete – even when it is willed by God, perhaps when it is actually commanded by him, and at least when it is ordained and allowed by him – is explicitly measured against a higher standard, and inevitably in doing this the subject stands back from this concrete mode of his own existence. Not everyone does this, and indeed not everyone needs to do it. Not every saint has done it in this sense. In fact we cannot do it ourselves in all circumstances. This is not because, as Ignatius himself will say, many situations are simply as they are and cannot be altered, so that they are not subject to our choice at all, but rather because an attitude of absolute reflection upon one's self, an absolute transcendence of the self reflecting upon itself in relation to what can be chosen or altered would once more be the measure of a freedom and a possibility of decision which does not belong to the creature.

Everyone who has pastoral experience will have encountered this [41] again and again in his life. Again and again he will find men who in their devotion have become neurotic from a reflection upon themselves which is excessive, because again and again they direct everything into the empty space of other, greater, ever-changing possibilities, and then want to make a fresh choice 'for the greater glory of God' for every step they take on the basis of

[5] These statements, and the special emphasis given to them here, are deliberately intended to bring out *one single* aspect of a more complex process. On the problem itself and its manifold aspects cf. the author's expositions in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II, 1/2, (Freiburg, 1966), 1, 178-726; 2, 35-45; including the observations of J. B. Metz, *ibid*., pp. 239-267. cf. also K. Rahner, 'Der Mensch von heute und die Religion', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 1956), pp. 499-544.

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this attitude. Men such as these forfeit a certain trustfulness, a certain immunity from the dictates of their own temperament and their own impulses. But this does not for one moment alter the fact that this fourth element does involve a critical function with regard to the concrete situation which already confronts us or the decision directly demanded of us in the here and now. To this extent the typical attitude of choice is implicitly contained in this saying, 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam', together with all that the Book of Exercises has to say about the three classes of men, the three degrees of humility etc. It might be objected to this that every Christian must freely work out and so choose his own salvation. And if he chooses rightly he has brought to bear the right principles of choice, with which, naturally, he must in some measure be acquainted, for the purpose. All this may be true, but nevertheless this peculiar attitude of choice, this withdrawal of one's self to an absolute point in order from *there* to reflect and to test what is to be done, does exist. And this existential structure involved in the act of choice does exist in the case of St Ignatius in a degree which the moral theologians right to the present day have probably not yet sufficiently grasped. Again and again it seems to be presupposed that the third kind of choice, the process of rational checking, or the element of the rational in the two other modes of choice and stages of choice in the Exercises and in the Christian life is absolutely *the* decisive factor. Now this is not true. On the contrary, Ignatius is the first – is, indeed, almost unique in this among the theologians – to have developed in his Exercises a logical structure of choice which is indeed applied in the practice of these Exercises to the extent that they are carried out because it *must* be applied. And yet no-one has really penetrated beyond the theological and metaphysical principles and presuppositions behind this structure of choice.[6] Ignatius does, in fact, envisage a Christian [42] who – and this is something which carries immense dangers with it – as person, as 'self' in the New Age takes up a transcendent vantage-point from which to consider, test and choose what is and what can be to the greater glory of God. And this is precisely what lies behind this saying, 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam'.

This in turn throws light on a further point, namely the significance which this saying has for an existential ethic of the present day.[7] It is precisely not true that everything can be rationally deduced. It is not true that the individual in his individuality, in his decision, is simply the individual instance of more general, more abstract principles. We can realise how difficult and obscure these questions are by considering, for instance, the difficulties raised by the theories of J. Lahitton with regard to the recognition of priestly vocation. One may be quite ready to accept that this theory has its importance as a practical rule of thumb for ecclesiastical superiors in judging of a man with regard to his possible vocation to the priesthood. But if these principles are understood as having a theoretical, metaphysical, existential or ontological value Lahitton's theory is basically false. What would be the use of the whole process of choice formulated by St Ignatius, with all these subtle rules etc. concerning 'consolation without prior cause' etc. if, from the aspect of metaphysics or existential theology (or however we may wish to express it) the situation were such as that which Lahitton envisages for certain cases in which the presence of a priestly vocation has to be discerned. In such cases, indeed, one would only need to say: 'Dear friend, if you are a normal, balanced man, then you only need to have the right motives and your vocation is established. You can depend upon it that it is there. You have passed the entrance

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[6] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Die ignatianische Logik der Existentiellen Erkenntnis. Über einige theologische Probleme in den Wahlregeln der Exerzitien des hl. Ignatius', *Ignatius von Loyola. Seine geistliche Gestalt und sein Vermächtnis*, (Würzburg, 1956), pp. 343 ff. – K. Rahner, *Das Dynamische in der Kirche* (Freiburg, 3rd ed., 1965), pp. 74-148.

[7] On this cf. the author's article, 'On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics', *Theological Investigations* II (London & Baltimore Md, 1963), pp. 217-234; and further the articles collected under the title, 'Der Einzelne und die Kirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 499-544.

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examination. You are an intelligent man who shows with ample probability that he can observe celibacy, and you yourself know whether you have the right motives'. And if the subject then replied: 'Obviously I don't want to be a rich man, nor do I seek for any special comfort in life. I want to do something for the good God', then one would only have to fall on his neck and say: 'You have a vocation!' One has only to compare with this the complex, intricate 'apparatus' for testing a vocation which St Ignatius sets forth in the Exercises to realize [43] that the saint had a quite different idea of the existential decision and the process of arriving at it than that implied by such rationalism. For Ignatius there really is something like an existential and ethical attitude on man's part, which precisely implies an openness to that which lies beyond the data which can be calculated and deduced on the rational, abstract and essentialist plane. And this existential and ethical attitude finds expression both in his Exercises and also, in brief, summary form, in the saying 'ad majorem Dei gloriam'. Now if one reflects that this 'major Dei gloria', if it is in fact to be made effective at all, is ultimately a gift of God and must necessarily be so, then one realises what really is implied in this saying: an openness to the direct personal love of God, which is no longer arrived at through intermediate causes, and, in fact, the end of legalism and the freedom of children of God in the Pneuma of Christ. It is here that what is proper to God's own sovereign disposition of his creatures comes, in a certain sense, into force; a disposing of things which is no longer mediated through worldly causes or through the Church's official direction, a disposing of things which really can and must be called 'the better' precisely because it is itself the freedom of God in his sovereign act of disposing. And it is only when someone knows himself to be called, and is open to this sovereign act of disposing on God's part that he is truly in the New Testament. This does not, of course, mean that it is only with this attitude proper to the New Age and subjective in a good sense, which is characteristic of Ignatius, that Christianity began. But something specifically Christian here becomes explicit and actual for the first time, so that it can be seen and apprehended as such.

V

In conclusion something must be said about the dangers involved in such an attitude. First this attitude is strongly self-reflective and subjective in character, not in the sense that the general rules of the natural and divine laws do not have to be observed, but in the sense that the personal self is in a position of almost radical withdrawal from every form of actualisation in the sphere of human living in the concrete, and this means that he evaluates, judges, criticises, transcends, rejects, makes fresh choices of, etc. the various concrete forms of human acts by the standard of the absolute possibility of giving glory to God. Such an attitude does, of course, carry with it the danger of being fatally damaging to that attitude [44] of spontaneity and freedom from restraint and over-calculation on man's part which is necessary for his acts to be fully human and fully Christian. In his act of reflecting upon himself man cannot overcome his own radical inadequacy. If he sets himself to do this, if he wanted to do it in a manner that did go beyond this radical inadequacy of his, he would be going beyond himself as man, as creature. In the last analysis he would be presuming to be God. That which is unthought out, uncalculated, belongs essentially to man too, and to that extent the attitudes here described represents a radical danger to this spontaneity and freedom from restraint, to that basic peace in which man dares to live with himself. There are men who fail to achieve this, and who are not better but worse on this account. Viewed from this aspect one can exercise too much 'examination of conscience', self-control and self-criticism. Whether it can be stated as a general principle that we of today are in danger of gradually slipping into this is a question which need not be entered into here. But fundamentally

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speaking the attitude which we have been describing does entail this danger. He who is *always* asking 'is this to the greater glory of God in these present circumstances?', he who, so to say, does not bring an immediate, spontaneous and unselfconscious enthusiasm to bear on his concrete actions *ipso facto* fails to perform them in a manner which is to the greater glory of God.

The Jesuits are often accused of being rationalists. This need not necessarily be a reproach. Rationalism may be no less justifiable than any other of the possible attitudes. But what is noteworthy is that on the basis of his deepest inspiration, his special brand of mysticism, Ignatius perceives the absolute sovereignty of God, measured by which any specific activity or non-activity on man's part must be totally inadequate. It is on the basis of this vision, then, this overwhelming experience of God as ever greater, that Ignatius feels himself compelled to ask in all that he does, however good it may be, whether something still greater, something less inadequate to God's immeasurable greatness, would not have been possible. This attitude, which, as it were, is the outcome of a mystical and non-rational approach, and at the same time of one which is existential in the right sense, can degenerate precisely into an over-cautious pseudo-rationalism if it is not spontaneously carried through. The true Ignatian scepticism, however, towards what is given and what we are confronted with in the here and now, has the function precisely of leaving the last word to God. Yet it is often invoked in order to reduce everything to [45] shreds by rationalism, and to destroy an enthusiasm which is spontaneous, fine and, in the good and holy sense, naïve.

The attitude in question involves a third danger, which appears still more clearly. This consists in the fact that in the case of narrow-minded and petty people the 'aristocratic scepticism', as it might be called, can drift into something approaching officiousness and a 'managing' attitude, and thereby religion can actually become choked by legalism and institutionalism. One becomes sceptical with regard to particular details. One finds that this or that is not so important. One perceives that some particular point is still not the vital factor. But when we adopt this attitude the one factor which is vital, namely God who disposes of our lives in absolute freedom and grace, is no longer there for us. For instance one adopts a rather casual attitude towards liturgical practices because one feels that 'nothing is really and certainly achieved by all these externals'. Again in theology the smoothest and most harmonious opinion is sought for, one which upsets no-one etc. And why is all this? Man is, in a certain sense, sceptical towards everything, and because of this the temptation arises all too easily of erecting a voluntarist system in the proper and formal sense on the basis of established and institutional practices, not because one is prompted to do this from one's own interior convictions or from some interior inspiration, but really because, for want of this latter factor, one is afraid to lose even that which has gone before, unless one falsely 'rigidifies' it in this way. As a result of this we find that deficiency, which we have encountered often enough, of any genuine, spontaneous, living enthusiasm. How much in the way of a fruitful exchange of ideas, how much spontaneous love in this connection, how much apostolic zeal, which is overpowering in the holy sense, can still manifest itself or speak out today? How anxious we are to ensure that nothing of the love which we entertain in our hearts shall be noticed! All these experiences, instances of which are all too frequently to be met with, and which make life so impersonal, so drab and so grey, can of course be the sign of a fine and laudable attitude, the maturity of the saint who sees through himself to his depths. But they also serve to show what dangers are involved in constantly asking where the 'major Dei gloria' lies.

The motto coined by Ignatius expresses something quite simple but something new in the history of ideas, namely that man dares once more to measure even the element of the holy in what he does and in what he intends to do by the mysterious and immeasurable greatness of God, and [46] thereby does not merely submit in all humility as a creature subject to

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historical limitations to the various dispositions which God imposes upon him from time to time, but actually collaborates in bringing this intervention of the ever-greater God in his life to fruition, though always, of course, in subordination to God himself, through him and for him. Thereby man measures what is holy in his own actions once more by the greater holiness which, in the last analysis, can only be God himself, and what God alone brings about by his own direct action as Ignatius says. 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam', therefore, signifies the attempt constantly to judge the glory of God actually achieved in our actions by that greater glory of God which could be achieved, in order that we may be always ready and open anew, and in a manner that cannot be foreseen, to try to achieve that other glory of God (as we may now better express it) which God demands of us at another stage in our lives.

'Ad majorem Dei gloriam' opens up to man in his personal and subjective life, so to say, the greater range of possibilities entailed by the ever-greater realisation of God's own greatness precisely at that point at which we, because we do act for God's glory, might suppose that we should thereby exchange this same glory as embodied in our actions, for God himself. Such a supposition would be utterly false. If Ignatius' attitude should be qualified as an awareness of God as 'Deus semper major',[8] then exactly the same is true of the saying 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam'. Likewise in a certain sense man has always been aware that God is ever greater than his creature's own apprehension of him, and yet this sense of the incomprehensible greatness of God as ever greater is, in a certain sense, something that belongs peculiarly to the New Age, but belongs to it in such a way that it is permanent. And just as all this is true, so too in the same sense it is true that there had always been a certain basic awareness of the truth which found expression in the saying 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam' even though it is to the New Age that this truth properly belongs. But when we say that it belongs to the New Age we mean that it belongs to it in such a way that it is permanent and enduring.

[8] cf. Erich Przywara, *Deus semper maior*, *Exerzitienkommentar*, 3 vols (Freiburg,1938-1940); new and expanded edition, Vienna-Munich, 1964, 2 vols.

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3

INTELLECTUAL HONESTY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

On first reading the title ‘Intellectual Honesty and Christian Faith’ the somewhat over-hasty enquirer might feel that there was no problem at all as to what intellectual honesty really means. The only question to be raised in this connection, he might feel, is whether this honesty can be maintained in the context of Christian faith. Now it is certainly true that in the very nature of the case the problem of how the two are to be reconciled will be one of our major preoccupations. But the first point that we have to recognise is that it is by no means so clear as all that what ‘intellectual honesty’ really is.

I

In portraying the intellectually honest man we might say that he is one who does not delude himself. He faces fully and unreservedly the difficulties entailed in adopting any ‘credal’ position today. He is quite ready to concede that the upholders of other views have just as much intelligence and good will as he has himself. He has the courage to change his convictions as circumstances demand. He is resolved to be not fanatical, but rather ‘impartial’ and ‘objective’ in arriving at his conclusions. He constantly re-examines his own positions quite as critically as those of other people. He allows for the fact that in his case too, under the influence of the spirit of a particular age, a particular social class, a particular kind of upbringing, personal calling, or even temperamental or social bias, he himself may be subject to prejudices. He realises that he must do his utmost to overcome such prejudices together with the ideological presuppositions arising from them. And in all this he fully recognises that the truth may be not so much consoling as terrifying. Such a description of the intellectually honest man is certainly one which, seems acceptable – at least at first [48] sight. But if we are really in earnest in seeking to understand what constitutes intellectual honesty we must take into account the fact that, great though this virtue is, all the dangers which it is intended to avert are in fact present in the very process of formulating the concept of intellectual honesty in this sense, and threaten to distort and even destroy the actual concept itself. For this reason an attempt must be made to say what intellectual honesty does not mean if the actual concept itself is not, once more, to be hopelessly distorted by some ideological prejudice and the spurious authority which this carries with it. In this connection two postulates seem to me to be of fundamental importance.

Intellectual Honesty and Human Decision

It is not true to say that intellectual honesty is arrived at only when the subject is unencumbered (or, better, believes himself to be unencumbered) by the burden of any radical human commitment. It is a great temptation to suppose that the intellectually honest man is the one who maintains a sceptical reserve; one who does not commit himself and comes to no absolute decision; one who does indeed test all hypotheses but (the apostle’s recommendation to the contrary not withstanding) does not opt for any one of them; one who seeks to avoid error by refusing to commit himself definitively to anything; one who makes the radical mistake of taking the weakness of indecision (though it may be conceded that when this is only temporarily or partially present it may be a virtue) for the courage of the sceptic who is

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devoid of illusions. No – intellectual honesty is not at all like this! Certainly there are cases in which men are so perplexed that they genuinely believe that they cannot truly proceed any further with a previously held position, as for instance in the case of an anguished atheist who in his despair can only see all existence as absurd, so that this absurdity hangs as a sort of Medusa's head before his eyes. Such a one must quietly reconcile himself to this position, and try to accept even this experience calmly. For even this, so the believer says, will be made by God to bring a blessing upon him. But he must not assert that this is the only proper attitude for the intellectually honest. How could he presume to know this? How does he know that no-one ever emerges from this *purgatorio* or this *inferno*? How does he know that no-one ever has the strength to experience all this and still to believe?

[49] In any case, whether we regard it as a curse or a blessing, freedom is inherent in our very nature (for our purposes it makes no difference how one interprets this freedom so long as one recognises that it is inescapable). And this freedom of ours is such that it plays a vital part in even our most basic human decisions and attitudes. It is true of believers and unbelievers alike that there are no ultimate basic attitudes, no absolute standards of value or systems of co-ordinates for determining the meaning of existence such as might enable them to evade the struggles and hazards entailed in the responsible exercise of freedom. This is not because it is sheer blind caprice that rules at this level, but because at this level it is no longer possible to separate one's basic views from the exercise of one's freedom. Hence it is that one who seeks to set himself free by being a sceptic, who refuses to commit himself or to make any position whole-heartedly his own on the grounds that he is anxious to avoid all danger of error – such a one does not remain free but has actually committed himself in the worst possible sense. For he is living his life, living it once and for all, and thereby carving out a course that is irrevocable. In the very act of living his life he stands committed. If in spite of this he attempts to live without self-commitment, in a certain sense to remain in the dimension of 'brute fact' and the biological, and if he attempts by these means to return the 'entrance ticket' which admits him to the sphere of freedom and decision, to remain 'neutral', then this is itself in its turn a decision, and it is quite impossible to explain why there should be any better grounds for arriving at this particular decision than at any other.

Furthermore there is no such thing as remaining poised in some dimension which is prior to decision. The attempt to remain neutral, therefore, is in practice only the refusal to bring one's powers of speculative thought to bear upon the decisions entailed willy nilly in the fact of living one's life at all. For in this there is one decision at least which we must arrive at (even if our speculative thought upon the subject is only at the incipient stage): whether life is to be regarded as absurd or as filled with ineffable and mysterious meaning.

In short: intellectual honesty commands us to have the courage to take basic human decisions however weighed down we may feel by uncertainty, darkness and danger. For these obstacles are inevitably entailed by the fact that the minds with which we take our human decisions are finite and historically conditioned. And these minds of ours, while fully recognising the disadvantages to which they are subject, still must decide.

[50] But once this has been said it must once more be reiterated: we have to allow for the case of one who, in all responsibility and in accordance with the ultimate dictates of his conscience with regard to truth, finds himself so perplexed that he believes himself bound in duty to remain undecided upon many questions, and indeed, as it seems to him, upon the most ultimate questions of all, in order to be true to that conscience; one who believes himself bound with all the resources of his spirit to keep an open mind and not to give any definitive answer in the sphere of speculative thought. Such a one may, and indeed must, remain open as his conscience dictates. The enlightened believer will have only two points to make about this: first that there is one thing that no one man can know of another: supposing a man takes up such a stand at some point, whether proximate or remote, in the course of his

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existence. No-one can know whether a decision made at that particular point does not *ipso facto* entail a definitive decision against the sacred as providing existence with its meaning. But neither does one man have the right to bow down in worship before that particular meaning, when it is still remote from his own experience, merely on the grounds that the other feels himself compelled so to bow down, from a similar position of remoteness. Secondly the believer, faced with the man who, in the name of responsibility to the truth and intellectual honesty, is maintaining with difficulty his openness to the question to which, as it seems to him, there is no answer, will draw his attention to the fact that even this decision, namely that he can find no answer, does in fact constitute an assent to that which the believer himself calls the divine and blessed mystery of his existence, and further that the one who finds himself unable to find an answer has simply not yet been favoured with the courage to define explicitly for himself that which he is already implicitly acknowledging in his life by the silent eloquence of hi actions.

Intellectual Honesty, Responsibility in Faith and the Exploration of Ideas

In the concept of intellectual honesty in relation to the exercise of faith a second misunderstanding must be guarded against. This is the opinion that in order to remain intellectually honest while believing one would have to have thought out in a 'scientifically' adequate way all the presuppositions which such belief, and especially Christian belief, necessarily entails. Faith implies a whole wealth of material in the form of the facts, statements and ideas which go to make up its content. And this is true not [51] merely of that relatively early stage in belief in God at which one is able to explicitate one's belief in the form of a concept able to be reflected upon and investigated, but also, and still more, at that further stage at which one actually comes to believe specifically in Jesus Christ, in a concrete saving history and in the Church.

Now if it were in principle the case that in order to believe at all while still fulfilling the requirements of intellectual honesty, one would first have to have thought out in an adequate and scientific manner all these presuppositions objectively implied in the content of faith, then there would indeed be an almost unresolvable conflict between intellectual honesty and faith. For who could maintain that he would ever be capable of achieving such a thing in his brief life-span, with the limited possibilities of scientific investigation open to him, and with his lack of specialist knowledge in hundreds of fields?[1] Who could achieve a thorough grounding in all the following subjects at once: metaphysics, philosophy of religion, history of religion, knowledge of the religious and intellectual background of the period of Jesus Christ, exegesis and biblical theology together with the immensely complicated methods which have been evolved, and which are nowadays required for these, knowledge of the relationship between Christianity and the ancient world in which it emerged, history of dogma and of the complex idiom in which the dogmatic teaching of Christianity and of the contemporary Catholic Church have come to be expressed, a precise knowledge of the problems of theological controversy between the Christian confessions and the history of these? To have a knowledge of all these at once, and a fundamental knowledge at that? Never! No-one, not even the individual who is a specialist in theology! For even he, at any rate today, apart from the fairly restricted sphere of his own special branch of theology is for practical purposes a non-specialist believer and Christian in all other departments of his life which have a bearing on his intellectual responsibility for his beliefs.

A further difficulty in addition to the above is raised by the approach to fundamental

[1] cf. the author's 'A small Question regarding the Contemporary Pluralism in the Intellectual Situation of Catholics in the Church', *Theological Investigations* VI (London & Baltimore Md, 1969), pp. 21-30.

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theology usually adopted by Catholics.[2] Certainly fundamental [52] theology has, of its very nature, the task of entering *ex professo* into all the relevant problems and investigating them to the utmost possible extent with a view to providing a rational justification for faith (for the purposes of the present argument it makes no difference precisely what we mean by faith here). But in doing this it gives rise to the dangerous impression that the individual Christian has the same responsibility as an individual, especially if he is 'educated', that namely of working out for himself in a similar direct and scientific manner the problems of fundamental theology; that he must himself as an individual have competent scientific knowledge of all the 'preambula fidei'; that such a responsibility has to be undertaken by anyone who is endowed with intelligence and good will, at least if he is educated, and that only the 'uneducated' are in the nature of things excused from this responsibility. (In the case of these latter the special circumstances of their faith are matter for independent investigation). Some such idea does exist, though as an implicit presupposition rather than as explicitly asserted 'in thesi'. On this showing faith does admittedly come into conflict with intellectual honesty in the educated man. If he wants to be intellectually honest he sees how impossible it is for him to achieve this, because he recognises the complexity of modern science, and because he himself experiences its fluctuations, its disappointments and its uncertainties. And he therefore supposes that he cannot and may not believe because the idea has been suggested to him that it is only possible to believe in a rational and responsible way if he has more or less adequately discharged in his personal and individual life the task of research which is the object of fundamental theology.

There are, of course, non-Catholic interpretations of faith which make this appear irrational from the outset, and which confine it in its content to a sphere which must be ruled out from the first as an area for rational investigation. In other words these are theories which right from outset interpret faith in such a way that it seems of its very nature to be a totally irrational experience and irrational attitude, and so to be incapable of having anything to do with intellectual honesty. But for the Catholic understanding of faith there is no such easy way out of the problem. As Catholics understand the matter an intellectual element is of the essence of faith as such. It bears amongst other things upon historical realities of which it cannot be said that they are simply, and from the outset, incapable of rational investigation. The believer recognises that [53] the logical and the existential factors in his awareness constitute a unity, and he cannot and will not schizophrenically divide them one from another. The totally irrationalist concept of faith turns it into an ideology – turns it, so far as the concrete existence of the realistic man, relying on his own experience of reality, is concerned, into a dream which has no validity except precisely in the realm of fantasy.

The believer, therefore, must justify himself by the standards of intellectual truthfulness according to his own Catholic understanding of his faith, and must tackle the question of intellectual honesty on the basis of his own resources, but this precisely does not mean that this honesty is only sufficiently achieved when every individual believer has independently, in his own individual mind, and by an adequate process of scientific investigation, fulfilled that task with which fundamental theology is objectively presented. As a presupposition this is false. So far from this, even by standards of truthfulness which are fully responsible one can and must believe without having scientifically investigated all the objective 'preambula fidei' for the purpose.

Why is this? It is because the intellectual life of man is always, fundamentally and inevitably designed in such a way that a perceptible existential difference (as we might call it) prevails between that which is implied in the very fact of living and that which is the outcome

[2] On these lines of thought cf. especially K. Rahner, *Im Heute glauben*, Theologische Meditationen 9 (Einsiedeln, 2nd ed. 1966).

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of scientific speculation upon one's life. Man cannot shape his existence solely and exclusively on the basis of factors which he has made his own by a process of scientific investigation, and which he has 'proved' to himself in this particular manner (which is by no means the only one). And because he apprehends with his reason the inevitability of this difference, because he knows that the act of living in a particular way is not merely the outcome of rational speculation, he is therefore justified by the standards of his own sense of truthfulness, in other words 'intellectual honesty', and for this reason has a duty to accept this difference and, in deciding the shape of his life, to commit himself in an absolute and definitive way (in our case by faith) to that which has not been 'scientifically proved' in any adequate sense.

This does not, of course, mean that speculative testing and criticism within the limits of what is really possible form no part of man's obligations. One of the factors which belong inevitably, and from the outset to the very mode of existence which man must accept in all obedience and trust is that there is an area of speculation and testing by means of the [54] critical faculties, an area which is admittedly capable of broadening and development. So soon as the answer to one of life's questions has been found it *ipso facto* raises another one, to which there is as yet no answer, so that one has to bend one's self to the task of answering this one also. But it would be precisely not intellectual honesty but rather intellectual scrupulosity, destructive and incapacitating, to adopt the position that the life of the mind or spirit either could or should be constructed only from materials which have been submitted to the processes of scientific speculation for testing and proving. I love my mother and accept all the consequences which this love entails, even though I have no theoretical certainty whatever that Mrs So-and-so really is my mother. I have a manifest right and duty to take a political decision, possibly even to fight on one side or the other of the barricades, even though I have no theoretical certainty that my decision is, objectively speaking, the right one. Nor could even the most advanced computer, such as those which our contemporaries attempt to employ in such questions, excuse me from taking this decision for myself. I cannot take refuge from this situation by defining some theoretical position of sceptical neutrality because this in its turn is precisely a decision too, involving just as many consequences for me as the 'taking of sides'. If it be asked how, in that case, and given the existential difference mentioned above, man can submit to the demands which this terrible situation makes upon him of necessarily having to take some decision, it would be reasonable to reply: 'It *is* demanded of him, and protest against the demand takes place, in its turn, *within* this situation and does not escape from it. Those who, in all obedience and honesty, come to decisions in this way, even though the decisions themselves may be quite opposite one to another, are actually more closely and fraternally united among themselves in loyalty to their own consciences and in the courage they have shown in coming to a decision with regard to the truth than they are to one who, when faced with the demands of truth, attempt to maintain a policy of sceptical withdrawal. And this is true precisely in those cases in which both those who commit themselves and those who refrain are aware of how dark and how painful any such decision can be. Finally the actual decision when it comes may indeed be deficient in terms of objective rightness. But however much this may be the case it still remains true that in every such decision, involving as it does a spirit of responsibility and loyalty to the truth, the subject gives his absolute and definitive assent to the absolute and definitive demand presented to him [55] by that mystery of existence which we call God. It follows that provided the heart seeks the truth in this mystery in all innocence, it remains within the orbit of his favour even when it errs.

We have been raising some points of fundamental importance with regard to the 'existential difference', as we have called it. Now these obviously apply also to the relationship between intellectual honesty and faith. Indeed they apply here most of all. For

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faith is primarily concerned with the all-embracing meaning of existence, and Christian faith (as the declaration that historical events have a saving value) makes assertions about human existence in *all* its dimensions. In this case, however, the 'existential difference' between the events actually pointed to and their significance on the one hand, and the conclusions arrived at in terms of scientific speculation and theory on the other is necessarily and inevitably at its greatest. One who both believes and is intellectually honest knows this, must know it and acknowledge it, and has no need to shrink from this state of affairs. Of course there is an almost incalculable number of particular questions which – taken all together – it would be quite impossible for the individual to work out for himself by his own personal scientific investigations for the sake of providing a rational justification for his faith. But this is precisely what intellectual honesty does not demand. Why should one not trust one's own living experience without prejudice in this sphere as in other spheres of life even prior to any theoretic evaluation of such experience? Obviously one recognizes that one's Christianity, one's Catholic faith, is conditioned by one's historical, social and psychological circumstances. One realises that in a vast number of cases these conditioning factors are not present. One can say to one's self in all calmness: Presumably I myself would not in fact be a Catholic if the factors conditioning my life had been otherwise, if I had not been born and brought up as a Catholic from my childhood.[3] One realises, and can readily concede, that even in ideal cases, where very far-reaching investigations in the field of fundamental theology are possible, one cannot really obtain any absolute certainty in the attempt to find a rational justification for one's faith as such. In other words one's ideas are, [56] humanly speaking, always open and provisional, and capable of further development.[4]

All this maybe demanded by intellectual honesty. But it does not imply any suspension of faith in weary scepticism. Faith as such, as an act of human living in which the ultimate meaning of existence is accepted and embraced as God's word to us, is endowed with that absolute transcendence, that freedom from all conditions, which is indispensable to it if it is to be faith at all. But for this it precisely does not need, over and above the word of God and his grace (of which we shall have to speak at a later stage), any comprehensive evaluation in terms of theory of all its implications and presuppositions. In the first instance faith is present simply as something given (or as a possibility actually pressing in upon us in the here and now). As such it finds sufficient initial justification by what it carries with it in itself. It is a fact of life which man commits himself to whole-heartedly and without prejudice as justified even on the rational plane, so long as the opposite of faith has not become certain to him. The reason for this is that man must give life itself the chance to justify itself. And this can only be achieved if it is lived in a spirit of trustfulness. A further reason is that faith as conceived of here gives reason and order to existence; that it opens up into that infinitude which alone provides the perspective in which meaning and mystery can be reconciled, and can permeate the whole of life; further that conscience and morality with regard to truthfulness (to the extent that this is identical with a feeling for word and freedom which is self-authenticating) commands us to hold firm to such awareness of ineffable mystery to the very last, and never to surrender it except if a greater, purer, more all-embracing meaning presents itself. Yet a further reason is that faith that is really committed feels itself protected and nourished by the experience of grace which precisely carries its own intrinsic justification with it. For such experience of grace, however subtle and indefinable the form in which it manifests itself, and

[3] One can concede that one's personal faith is historically contingent in this sense, without thereby asserting that there are no objectively valid grounds whatever which objectively speaking – should cause everyone to be a Catholic, and without contesting the real possibility that another individual can become a Christian and a Catholic from a non-Christian and non-Catholic background.

[4] This means that the fact that the assent of faith is absolute does not for one moment imply that the rational justification of the 'preambula fidei' as such needs to be raised to a similarly absolute level.

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however silent and interior the state of liberation which it brings, does point us on to the mystery of God.

Now for the act of faith to be justified in this way, and in a manner which, while prior to any formal theorising, nevertheless does fall within the purview of fundamental theology, what is required? Certainly not [57] that there should be any positive or explicit realisation at this level that the experience of the illumination of one's existence by the mystery of God, and of being enveloped in that mystery (the 'mystical' experience of faith, as it may be called), can only really take place in terms of that whole range of factors on the human plane which make up the manifold content of the Christian and Catholic faith. The requirements of intellectual honesty are fully satisfied so long as this is *de facto* the situation in which the experience of faith is located, and so long as this mystical experience of faith, as realised in the concrete in the actual believers, that is in ourselves, does not elevate us above these factors or invite us to depart from them. With this proviso we are fully justified in committing ourselves to this synthesis, which is prior to any theorising on our part, between the mystical and transcendental experience of faith on the one hand, and the concrete factors which make up the content of the Christian faith on the other as a *de facto* reality, and in realising it as absolute and irrevocable in the act of faith itself. For as conceived of here faith itself possesses an intrinsic critical element of its own. Faith itself, that is to say, actively explores its own content. Faith itself activates the critical and speculative faculties of the believer, causing him to put the vital question of what his conscience demands of him in terms of truthfulness to himself. But the process of reflecting critically upon his faith, and of putting this question to himself of how it is to be justified in theory, must be allowed to develop in its own way. It must be allowed time so to develop. In investigating these theoretical questions the starting-point must be precisely *those* factors with which life confronts the concrete individual in his own personal and unique situation, and in the particular development of his own ideas. These are the factors which are real and genuine enough to offer genuine possibilities of really mastering this problem of the theoretical justification of faith. This attitude of judgment and criticism in the true sense may or may not raise connected questions which it is indeed possible to conceive of as legitimate in their own right, but which need not necessarily present themselves to the given believer in the concrete as problems which he feels himself personally bound to solve. He may not feel himself so bound precisely because he may, in all reason, modesty and courage, feel compelled to recognise that he is not competent to solve them. It is not necessary for everyone to be a Qumran specialist in order to be able to be honest in his beliefs. Not every honest believer is bound to enter into the most recent developments (as instanced in the 'Spiegel') [58] in the 'life of Jesus' discussion. It is strange. One so often hears mention of the nature of man as historically conditioned (*geschichtlich*) even in his recognition of the truth. Yet there is an unwillingness confidently to accept one's own real and personal history (*Geschichte*) as the basis for deciding one's existence. There is an idea that it is impossible to establish any absolute truth for those who remain *within* history, and are involved in it. But history itself demands this because truth does *de facto* arise in history, and without it there would be no history in the true sense at all.

II

Up to this point we have been attempting to consider the question of intellectual honesty and faith by seeking to investigate somewhat more closely the real significance of the concept of 'intellectual' honesty. The same attempt must now be made in the converse direction, in that we must ask ourselves what is really meant by faith.

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Christian Faith Considered as a Whole

As a specific, total and fundamental determination of human existence faith is necessarily an entity which is as complex as human existence itself, and one which, like human existence, resolves itself into the mystery of God. If therefore, we are to raise the question of what is meant specifically by Christian and Catholic faith with all its essential content, and not merely what is meant by the assent to God involved in an abstract or merely transcendental 'theism', then we must turn our attention to the 'basic fundamentals' of this faith. This does not mean, however, that we shall be investigating more closely all the widely differing ways in which the particular assertions of Christian and Catholic faith are to be related to these 'basic fundamentals' (whether objectively by establishing an intrinsic connection between the actual realities referred to and these fundamentals or subjectively by examining the believer's own assent to these assertions). The fact that the Catholic understanding of faith does necessarily entail this difference between what is absolutely basic and what is derived is explicitly stated in Vatican II.[5] The fact that precisely for the sake of reasonableness and intellectual honesty it is necessary for the individual to draw this distinction for himself is immediately evident from what has been said in the first part of our considerations. While bearing [59] in mind the necessary sense of historicity and of community (even in the dimension of truth), and while bearing in mind the difference between the existential decision which is prior to scientific investigation on the one hand, and the speculative process of metaphysical and scientific examination on the other, it is prudent, and also intellectually justifiable for the individual as human and as Christian (to put it simply) ultimately to avoid dissecting the totality of his belief into its individual constituents, each one of which would require its own separate speculative investigation and justification. It is sensible, and also intellectually justifiable, to say that Christianity (precisely in all the variations of its content) can be accepted or denied only in its totality, only as a whole. 'There can be no leaving out of particular parts of it'. In this second part of our considerations, therefore, we shall be concerned to throw light upon the fact that this essentially total and single entity that is the Christian faith is of such a nature that it fully measures up to the criteria of intellectual honesty.

For the purpose of such a demonstration it must, of course, first be laid down what this essentially unified and single whole consists in. This is not easy, but it is necessary to demonstrate it, and in fact to demonstrate it independently of the main line of investigation which we have set ourselves. It is not easy because Christianity, at least at first sight, consists of such a wealth of statements, dogmatic and moral assertions and ecclesiastical directives that it is all too easy to fail to 'see the wood for the trees'. It is all too easy for man to gain the impression that an assessment of this sort, into which so many individual factors enter (all of which, however, must be accepted *in globo*) would inevitably entail far too many possibilities of error for one to commit one's self to it with a good conscience. It is necessary to raise this question of the 'ultimate essence' of Christianity because one must view the single entity that is Christianity as a whole, even when one is in no position in the concrete to reconstruct it synthetically out of its various parts by a process of speculative reasoning. Again independently of the question which we are posing here, Vatican II regards a global understanding of the faith of this kind as necessary. This is not only to the extent that a distinction is to be drawn between the basic elements of the Christian revelation and the rest of the truths which it contains, but also to the extent that the Council itself attempts a formula purporting to sum everything up 'in a nutshell' for the Preliminary initiation of the catechumen, when it says that such a one must [60] have understood that 'he has been

[5] On this cf. Vatican II, The Decree on Oecumenism, No. 11.

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snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of the love of God, who has called him to enter into a personal relationship with him in Christ'.[6]

Let us too, therefore, attempt to sum it up in a brief formula of this, kind, so that we can go on to see how it measures up to the criteria of intellectual honesty. This, then, is how we should sum up Christianity as a whole: Christianity is the assent on the part of the whole community (Church) formulated and held explicitly by that community to the absolute mystery which exercises an inescapable power in and over our existence, and which we call God. It is our assent to that mystery as pardoning us and admitting us to a share in its own divinity, it is that mystery as imparting itself to us in a history shaped by man's own free decisions as an intelligent being; and this self-bestowal of God in Jesus Christ manifests itself as finally and irrevocably victorious in history.[7] I believe that what is definitive in the Christian faith is expressed here, and that too in a formula which, provided it is rightly understood and explicitated, will also be found to cover the further contents of the Christian faith as well, so long as these are not taken to include those positive definitions freely enunciated by the Church which belong to the dimension of historical and contingent fact as such, and which, moreover, do not represent any particular problem on any reasonable approach to the question of intellectual honesty.

God in his Divinity as the Mystery of Human Existence

Let us examine the formula we have constructed, bearing in mind the provisos mentioned above. What it asserts first and foremost about Christianity and about belief in it is that God is the incomprehensible and impenetrable mystery, and that God must be recognized as mystery in this sense. Christianity is not a religion which, in its evaluation of human existence, postulates the idea of 'God' as a recognised and acknowledged landmark, so to say, one factor among the rest, which can be manipulated and combined with them so as to produce a satisfactory final estimate. On the contrary, Christianity is a religion which projects man himself into the dimension of the incomprehensible surrounding and permeating his [61] existence. It prevents him from falling on merely ideological grounds (for this is the ultimate significance of the Christian religion) into the mistake of supposing that there is a basic formula of existence which is comprehensible to man, which is available to man himself to manipulate, and on the basis of which he can construct existence. Christianity constitutes a radical denial of all such 'idols'. It aims at bringing man into contact with God as the ineffable mystery without any diminution of his own human freedom, and without the *hybris* of attempting to control God. Christianity recognises that man knows God only when he is reduced to silence and adoration by the experience of this mystery. All his religious utterances are true only in so far as they constitute the ultimate word introducing the silence with which he reacts to the presence of this mystery, in order that it may remain present to him in itself, and not be replaced by the mere idea of God. But Christianity knows that this mystery permeates its own existence as the ultimate reality of all and as the truth of truths; that the Christian in his thoughts, in his freedom, in his actions and in the conscious acceptance of his own death, always and unquestioningly goes beyond that which can be defined, comprehended and conceptually manipulated in the dimension of the concrete and the particular which he encounters in the sphere of life and knowledge. The Christian never simply 'comes across' God (indeed in that case it would not be God at all) as one specific phenomenon among others within the sphere of human existence, one, therefore, which falls

[6] cf. Vatican II, The Decree on the Missions, No. 23.

[7] For a fuller exposition of this cf. K. Rahner, 'Kurzer Inbegriff des christlichen Glaubens für "Ungläubige", *Gul* 58 (1965), pp. 374-379; expanded in the third number of *Concilium* 3 (March, 1966).

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within the limits of his ideas and his actions. He is in contact with the living God as the all-encompassing and the unencompassed, as the ineffable upholder of being such that to call him in question is to call everything in question also, ourselves included; one who is not, so to say, conjured up by our questioning, but is already there in that he himself makes it possible for us to raise questions about him by himself providing beyond all question the basis from which such questions can be put, opening the door to them and raising us to the level at which we can ask them.

Rightly regarded Christianity is not a fortress of truth with innumerable windows, which we must live in in order to be 'in the truth', but rather *one single* aperture which leads out of all the individual truths (and even errors) into the truth which is the unique incomprehensibility of God. But Christianity insists relentlessly, in season and out of season that this overwhelming brightness that is darkness and silence to us, which encompasses our life and permeates everything, that is all other lights and [62] the darknesses that correspond to them, shall not be lost sight of by us, that in our existence we shall not allow our attention to be drawn away from this strange and unearthly brightness, but rather face up to it, trembling indeed yet resolute (in our commitment to it), calling it by its nameless name, never endowing our own idols with that name. But Christianity has something more to assert of this unearthly and ineffable mystery, and this is its real message. For the moment it makes no difference whether a man dares to learn of this real message of Christianity from the innermost promptings of his own conscience as moved by grace, or whether he has the impression that this message constitutes the basic motive force, purged of all extraneous elements, in the religious history of mankind (for in this too the grace of God is mysteriously at work), or even whether he simply receives this message from the witness of Christ and his apostles. In any case this, the true message of Christianity, has this to say to us: God is the incomprehensible mystery of our existence which encompasses us and causes us to realise, however painfully, the limitations of that existence, which he himself transcends. But he does not only present himself to us in this guise as the ultimate horizon of the knowable, towards which the course of our existence as spiritual beings is orientated and by which it is corrected, even while God himself remains remote and silent to us. He does indeed perform this function, setting us at a distance from himself so as to make it possible for us to 'return to ourselves' in knowledge and freedom, and thereby to give coherence and intelligibility to the environment of sensible experience in which we live, viewing it as a cosmic whole and as our environment; and in the very fact of doing this he makes us experience for ourselves our own finite state. But there is more to it than this. The mystery which we call God *gives himself* in his divine existence, gives himself to us for our own in a genuine act of self-bestowal. He himself is the grace of our existence.

We shall say, therefore, that what we mean by the creation is that the divine being freely 'exteriorises' his own activity so as to produce non-divine being, but does this solely in order to produce the necessary prior conditions for his own divine self-bestowal in that free and unmerited love that is identical with himself; that he does this in order to raise up beings who can stand in a personal relationship to himself and so receive his message, and on whom he can bestow not only finite and created being distinct from himself, but himself as well. In this way he himself becomes both giver and gift, and even more the actual source of man's own [63] capacity to receive him as gift. Thus the finite, of its very nature as finite, finds its ultimate fulfilment in God as the mysterious infinite. The 'creator-creature' relationship belongs necessarily and indispensably to the very mode of reality as such, but does not constitute its actual content. God creates because he himself wills to impart himself by 'externalising' and so giving himself. The distance between him and us is there in order that the unity of love may be achieved. Creation, covenant and law are there (as providing a framework for the finite) in order that love may exist in boundless measure. Obedience is

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imposed in order that we may receive the freedom of God. We are set far from God in order that the miracle of his nearness to us to bless us and even to forgive our sins maybe made possible. The purpose of all this is not that the mystery may be wholly penetrated and resolved by our minds, but rather that as mystery it may become the blessing of man's spirit, which possesses this mystery directly and in a manner that draws it out of itself in order that in total self-forgetfulness it may love this mystery as its only true light and life. This is the real content of Christianity: the ineffability of the absolute mystery which bestows itself in forgivingness and in drawing us into its own divine nature, and, moreover, bestows itself in such a way that we can sustain it, accept it and once more really receive the capacity to accept it from itself. It can be seen, then, that this self-bestowal of God (upon man in the history which he shapes for himself as a free and intelligent being) has a threefold aspect. Now the three aspects involved, inasmuch as they mutually constitute the self-bestowal of God, are inherent in the divine nature as such. In this self-bestowal on God's part, therefore, what we Christians are accustomed to call the triune nature of God is already present.

God's Self-Bestowal in History in Jesus Christ

A further factor which belongs to the very essence of Christianity is the person from whom its name is derived, Jesus Christ. But the mystery that is Jesus Christ is bound up in the closest possible manner with the one mentioned above. The mystery of God's self-bestowal, in which God himself in his innermost glory becomes the absolute future of man, has a history of its own because it proceeds from God himself as his free act, and because man, as existing in the dimension of history, is involved in the historicity of humanity considered as a single whole. Also because he has to achieve the ultimate transcendentality of his nature, 'divinized' as [64] it is by God's self-bestowal, in the 'space-time' dimension of history itself in and through a concrete encounter with the concrete world. For it is in this that he exists, is aware of himself and realises himself. The self-bestowal of God, even though it constitutes the innermost and transcendental basis for the world's existence and its history, even though it represents the ultimate *entelecheia* of the world – nevertheless has a history of its own, that is an inner dynamism such that it manifests itself, unfolds itself and achieves its fulfilment in space and time. We call this the history of salvation and revelation. There is a point, however, at which this manifestation of the divine self-bestowal as something offered on God's part, and as something freely accepted, even though accepted only with the help of God's grace, on man's, attains its acme and the stage at which it becomes absolute and irrevocable. It is the stage at which the dialogue between God and man which *is the* man, which becomes substantiated in him (so that it is not merely conducted by him as something distinct from his own existence) resolves itself in an absolute assent from either side, and manifests itself as such. In other words *the* man in whom this identity is achieved appears as God's absolute and irrevocable assent as uttered to and as accepted by mankind. And it is at this point precisely that we find what the Christian faith means by the incarnation of divine Logos. It is *ipso facto* present when the divine self-bestowal appears in history as absolutely and irrevocably uttered, and absolutely an irrevocably received. Admittedly there still remains the irreducible factuality of the history which has really been lived through, the fact that this takes place and is experienced precisely in Jesus of Nazareth. What we mean when we speak of the 'Church' is the eschatological of presence God's truth and God's love in this entity by word and sacrament. And this means nothing else than that the historical facts are enduring and valid, that in Jesus of Nazareth the history of God's self-bestowal has manifested itself in an irrevocable form, and in this form remains present and remains the object of belief.

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How the Theological Assertions are Rightly to be Understood

The question must now be put whether this message, in which man's ultimate understanding of himself is alleged to consist, is to be considered credible measured by the standards of intellectual honesty.

First, in dealing with such a question it must surely be pointed out that a complex made up of statements of this kind, expressing as it does in the [65] most fundamental manner what constitutes the 'one and all' of human existence, necessarily presents the greatest conceivable difficulties in putting it into words. In the very nature of things this summing up of the whole affords no one fixed point of reference, no factor by which its nature can be unambiguously recognised, understood and determined, and on the basis of which it can be defined and expressed. It is precisely because it is the absolute truth that is in man that must find expression here (but that truth considered precisely as the original and indefinable mystery) that what is expressed is necessarily obscure. The only ones who could fail to be aware of this are those whose sociological and intellectual environment is so closed in upon itself that they cannot entertain the possibility of their own mode of expression being truly or effectively called in question by any other from outside that environment. Now today the field of discourse in which we move is no longer closed in upon itself in this way. For this reason we have a sense of the 'inexactitude' of all theological statements, a sense that all can be called in question as to their precise meaning by a thousand other ideas, approaches or fresh problems which they raise, and can thereby be assigned to the already immense class of ideas which have not been fully thought out or reflected upon. But the threat which this state of affairs in the field of communications entails vanishes when we go on from this to the further realisation that all these religious statements, whatever their particular material content may be, refer to this mystery, which as such is itself unthought-out and unreflected upon, and that they only achieve their true value when they point on to this mystery. One who takes all these statements in this sense thereby ceases to be anxious on the grounds that we do not have a sufficiently exact knowledge of what is meant by them, that no explanation of them turns out to be thoroughly clear and unambiguous, and on the grounds that perhaps it is precisely he who appears to contest them who succeeds in penetrating to their true meaning. All these statements, in fact point towards the one enduring mystery which *must* endure. Of course on the material level the actual content of the individual statements still remains a matter of dispute, both because some of the real factors which contribute to salvation do belong to the realm of the historical itself, and also because the movement which leads into the ineffable mystery of God (together with the historical media through which this movement takes place) is capable of right and wrong interpretations, fuller and more deficient ones. But even allowing for this the conflict between the various [66] interpretations is, in the last analysis, less dangerous than it appears. For it is a fact of experience that even a formulation which is disputed can, without actually being a matter of indifference, truly direct us to the indefinable mystery of God, and that the truth of one's own tenets does not imply that the tenets of another, even when they are false, may not serve in the concrete to lead that other to a point at which he accepts the mystery of God in a spirit of adoration and love. For we can remind ourselves in all tranquillity (even if this way of putting the matter is unusual) that according to Catholic teaching there are indeed true and false statements about the realities of religion, that to formulate assertions which are false can endanger the salvation of the individual who formulates them, but yet that there are no such things as assertions which point, so to say, to an hypostatised falsehood. Such a thing would be totally incompatible with that event of salvation which leads us to the ultimate reality of God's truth.

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The Qualifications and Criteria for Deciding How Faith and Intellectual Honesty Can Be Reconciled

It must be recognised that intellectual honesty requires us to avoid any tendency to identify the fulness of reality and truth with the sum total of those realities and truths which we have actually grasped, or which it is possible for us to grasp and to have at our disposal. In other words the mystery of which we are here speaking does not constitute a phenomenon appearing, as it were, on the horizon of our awareness as intellectual beings. It is not merely one further piece of data for our minds which still remains to be worked out and added to the sum total of our knowledge. On the contrary it is the enduring basis for that knowledge (that which initially sets knowledge in motion with all its subsequent possibilities of being shaped and formed by the human faculties). And if this is true, then what sort of intellectual honesty is it which could ever forbid us to believe in the experience of grace which precisely transcends the ordinary processes of human life, and in the message of revelation which provides the key to that experience? What sort of intellectual honesty could compel us not to believe that this sacred mystery wills to give itself to us in an act of self-bestowal which brings us forgiveness and raises us to the level of the divine, itself becoming an innermost and most sublime source of life in us? What kind of intellectual honesty is it which makes it illegitimate to accept the ultimate content of Christian belief with our minds? For my [67] part I see no reason for such a prohibition. For such belief, at any rate in cases which entail the conscious and mature acceptance of such a promise, a special grace of courage in a supernatural degree is required. For this faith promises to raise man to those inconceivable heights in which alone be really becomes infinitely more than a mere intelligent animal. But who is qualified to judge, and what criteria can be applied in order to prove that such courage is intellectually dishonest, unworthy of belief, not to be credited? This is especially true in view of the fact that every act of knowledge and every exercise of human freedom is a prelude to an opening of ourselves to that which is beyond words and beyond all human capabilities to apprehend or to control. The only question, therefore, can be whether the boundless range of possibilities which spreads before us, immeasurable so far as we are concerned, is filled with the self-bestowal of God as an act of his free love, or whether it remains for ever void. Have we not, therefore, the duty of allowing God to be greater than the meagre confines of our own hearts? Of believing that God can and will come down to us, and that we can and will come up to him? Of conceding that neither of these things are rendered impossible by the finitudes of our own existence?

The Credibility of the Dogma of the Incarnation

This brings us to the question of intellectual honesty in its bearing upon belief in Jesus Christ, the life of Jesus being here taken as the event in which the ultimate and most radical mediation of God's self-bestowal upon the created spirit is realised. This event, therefore, constitutes the ultimate concretisation of Christianity in 'this worldly' terms. There are two points to be made about it.

First with regard to the 'idea' of the God-man, the essential content of the teaching that the Logos became incarnate in our human mode of existence. To a conscience which is intellectually honest and truthful this 'idea' is worthy of belief. The only factors which it presupposes are these: – first that man understands himself as the being which constantly transcends its own nature and reaches out to the mystery of God even as this mystery bestows itself upon man. It must further be understood (and this has already been indicated at least in brief) that the idea of the God-man is already implied as the eschatological climax to that process of historical mediation and revelation in which the transcendental self-bestowal of God is realised. At any rate it is implied as a conceivable goal which this [68] process is open

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to attain. It is vital, therefore, to rid this idea of all mythological misconceptions. The human side of the God-man is no passive puppet, no mask through which God makes himself known. It constitutes no fresh attempt on God's part in which he strives once more to achieve as redeemer in the world what he failed to achieve as creator of it. The God-man is truly man in that he is set apart from God as his worshipper, in that he is free and obedient, in that his human nature is subject to historical circumstances, progresses and develops (this applies to his religious experience as well, because nearness to God, personality and genuine creaturehood grow in the same, and not in inverse proportions). And the God-man does not represent a second intervention on the part of God as Creator, this time taking place in the already established order of the world, but rather the climax to a history of the world that is also the history of the spirit and the history of salvation. It is to this climactic point that God has ordered the whole of history from its very inception. He has done this through his own self-bestowal, which exercises a decisive influence upon all the constitutive factors in history, for this self-bestowal of God in history constitutes an 'existential', a fundamental orientation of history, which transcends all its particular modalities. Thus the incarnation, considered as the climactic and focal point of history in this sense, had already, by its redemptive power, more than overcome the guilt arising from the misuse of freedom even before it was incurred. The incarnation remains a mystery of the divine self-bestowal. If it is viewed in this context it is impossible to dismiss it as being a mere mythologem, even though, admittedly, it does not compel acceptance by the intellectually honest mind either. In spite of this it is credible, worthy of belief. Believers, therefore, and those endowed with a reasonable sense of history, are not disappointed to find that the incarnation, both in the manner in which it takes place in history and in the manner in which it is recorded in the New Testament (on a true reading of this), is just as hidden and unremarkable, considered as an event, as the deed of grace in general by which man is made a sharer in the divine. This is what one would have expected *a priori*. Both the incarnation and the deed of grace in history as a whole are accomplished in acts of practical and 'down-to-earth' compassion performed in the context of everyday human life. And yet even in this context this deed of divine grace bears a wonderful witness to itself if we can only view this plane of human existence with minds that are willing to believe.

[69] A further point that is essential is that this 'idea' of the God-man has been realised in concrete objective fact precisely in Jesus of Nazareth. It is essential that we should accept it as concrete fact at this particular point in space and time. Admittedly this means relying on the information that a particular fact has taken place in history, and for man's pride in his own capacity to transcend particular historical facts this is always a scandal. Man is tempted to hold *a priori* that there can be no question of a truth that is merely 'historical' providing the explanation of his own existence, But it is precisely the intellectually honest who can be self-critical enough to understand that real history cannot be dismissed in favour of theories concerning historicity. History in the concrete, the deeper meaning of which is never sufficiently realised, is necessary as the medium in which man's nature as a free and intellectual being can operate on the spiritual and transcendent plane. And again it is precisely the intellectually honest who can understand that man must commit himself to the finite dimension of space and time in order to render the eternal present to himself not merely as an abstract concept but as a reality actually present within him. It must be admitted that the courage to commit one's self to the concrete in this way is indispensable for faith. It must be unreservedly conceded that even to prove in terms of scientific exegesis that Jesus himself understood himself to be the Son of God in the metaphysical sense of the Christian dogma is far from easy. But one who can read, interpret and translate will not expect Jesus himself to express himself in the formulae of theological metaphysics, and will not feel this to be necessary in order to say what such formulae mean. And given the recognition of this it is not

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in principle impossible to supply such a proof. While this remains a difficult task for the individual in the concrete, with all the possible or impossible conditions to which he is at present subject, it is not the sole means to which the intellectually honest can have recourse in order to establish how Jesus thought of himself, and to justify his interpretation on this point. If the idea of the God-man is worthy of belief, if in fact in the history of human thought intellectuals have had the courage to believe in the concrete embodiment of this 'idea', yet solely and exclusively as realised in Jesus, if we have not, so to say, artificially constructed the circumstances of his life in the laboratory of our own minds, but rather found ourselves faced with them as pre-existing facts, and if we commit ourselves enough to give these facts a chance to prove themselves sound and valid, if finally we find ourselves already belonging to the community of those [70] who believe in Jesus, and if we find God in that community, what reasons could validly be advanced for holding that we were unjustified in doing all this?

Belief in the Resurrection as Reasonable for the Human Intellect to Accept

We Christians experience man as indissolubly one and whole, and on these grounds we can hold that our existence achieves its radical fulness and wholeness only when we believe in the 'resurrection of the body', and understand this formula to express that which is to be man's absolute future. In doing this we do not follow the Platonists in thinking of man as a compositum of previously separate elements. Nor do we seek to know how we should picture to ourselves this attainment of total perfection in man through a process of total 'transformation'. Now if we apply all this to the life and death of Jesus on what compelling grounds can it be shown to be unreasonable for the human intellect to accept the experience of) Jesus' disciples when they say that he rose from the dead? (Notice that this does not, in any sense, constitute a return to this mode of existence!), Is it not, on the contrary, more reasonable to believe for ourselves in what has been believed throughout two thousand years with might, light and strength, that is in the resurrection of Jesus? It is not only the sceptics, but the believers too who recognise that the disciples' experience of their risen Lord is incommensurable with any other experience in space and time, and must in the nature of things be so, since the reality which is the subject of this experience is one which is not subject to the limitations of our mode of existence in space and time. But to say that it is not so subject is not to deny it. It is possible to misunderstand this incommensurability of the disciples' experience of the resurrection, and to relegate it to the realm of myth. But we must avoid this danger. Our own personal experience of the enduring effectiveness of the one man must be fused with the Easter experience of Jesus' disciples, these two experiences mutually complementing one another so as to become absolutely and indissolubly one for us in the actual concrete situation in which we now exist. Where this is achieved the Easter experience does indeed become for us worthy of belief. Rightly understood, the Easter event does not merely bear an external witness to the role of Jesus as Saviour. It is in the Easter event in itself that that role is revealed. In this sense the Easter event coincides with Jesus' own interpretation of himself, and together with it constitutes a unified message which is worthy of belief.

[71] At this point we must break off. We are conscious of having failed to touch even in the most cursory manner upon a great number of questions. Thus a whole complex of questions arises in connection with the bearing of intellectual honesty on that communal and visible reality of the Christian faith called the Church, together with the claims it makes in questions of truth and moral guidance. On these questions, however, we must here confine ourselves to pointing out that in an epoch in which man's responsibilities and duties as a social creature are being ever more deeply realised it would be old fashioned and anachronistic in the extreme to adopt an individualist attitude; to suppose that man could or should attempt to

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preserve or to realise the ultimate ‘ideals’ of Christianity as an isolated individual, shrinking even as he made the attempt from that historical and social phenomenon in which alone we encounter these ‘ideals’ as historical realities, and find ourselves confronted by them in our concrete lives.

To sum up my conclusions:– Provided one does not make an idol of ‘intellectual honesty’; provided one does not suppose that the sceptic is most likely to be preserved from mistaking error for truth, provided one does not imagine that one can extend a theoretical suspension of judgment into the sphere of one’s practical life as well, then intellectual honesty certainly does not prohibit one from the act of belief, from deciding that one’s whole life shall depend on that supreme reality which Christianity possesses and avows. Certainly this great virtue of intellectual honesty does not compel one to believe, but it does make it justifiable for one to do so. For even this virtue achieves its ultimate and unique significance only when it arrives at that supreme point (a point beyond all merely intellectual prudence) at which it finds the courage to face up to the mystery of existence, and to love.

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4

DO NOT STIFLE THE SPIRIT!

As a title to the brief contribution which follows, delivered as an introductory discourse on the occasion of the 'Katholikentags' conference[1] his Eminence the Cardinal chose a motto which runs as follows: 'Do not stifle the Spirit!' This quotation from scripture is found in the earliest of the New Testament epistles, the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 19, in a verse, therefore, in which the apostle is expressing his concluding exhortations to the community he has founded. If we take the verse in this sense it may seem, on the first hearing, to be expressing something obvious. Who would take it upon himself deliberately: obstinately and of set purpose to oppose the workings of the Holy Spirit? And if this saying is indeed addressed in the first instance to the actual community of the faithful as a whole and not to the individual with his personal problems of salvation, then as an exhortation it seems to be almost superfluous. Is the Church not the temple of the Spirit, the Body of Christ which is vivified by the Spirit of, Christ? Does not the Spirit preside in this Church with the power of the eschatological victory of the final age, never abandoning her, always making her the holy Church? How could the Church ever stifle the Spirit of God.

[73] And yet we have only to ask ourselves what Paul actually had in mind in the concrete when he exhorted his hearers in these terms to see that his exhortation both to individuals and to the Church as a whole is far from superfluous. When we first read this exhortation we should tremble at the idea that it is possible for man at all actually to stifle the Spirit, the burning fire of God, at the idea which the apostle presupposes, namely that we ourselves – at any rate in a very broad sense – are actually in a position to do this. If only we reflected upon this what a change it might bring about in our lives! *We* could stifle the Spirit! We could frustrate his movements in us and in the world! He has been given into our power, made subject to the inertia of our spirit, brought under the control of our cowardice, placed at the disposal of our empty, earthly, loveless hearts! Not only are we able to be false to ourselves and to betray the dignity and destiny of our own nature. We can block the Spirit who wills ever to renew the face of the earth! We can kill the life of God in the world, render the spheres of life Godless, empty and meaningless! Furthermore what a terrible danger there must be, a danger that we are too stupid to notice! How easy it must be for us to bring it about, almost without noticing, that the flame of the Spirit is prevented by us from doing its work! How easy it must be evidently to act like this in all 'good conscience' if the apostle feels himself called upon to exhort us: 'Do not stifle the Spirit!'!

In point of fact, if we think of the gifts of grace bestowed by the Spirit as Paul sees them which must not be brought to nothing we shall find it easy to understand that the object of Paul's exhortations is far from obvious. For such gifts of grace are first of all distributed among many in such a way that no one individual possesses them all, and that they are given

[1] This festal lecture, delivered on the occasion of the Austrian 'Catholic Day', June 1st 5962, has deliberately been left unaltered, even though in certain of its ideas it may perhaps be less immediately relevant to the particular needs of the present moment in history. The period leading up to the Council was different from the present one. Nevertheless those factors which were essential then do still retain their validity for the work of the post-conciliar period as well. Moreover, it may well be that it is actually more necessary now even than before to draw the correct distinction between foolish 'enthusiasm' on the one hand and the prudent and sensible application of charismatic qualities on the other. For this reason it has been felt right to leave the text in its original form. For a right understanding of what is required in this respect for the post-conciliar work that is needful cf. the author's 'Kirche im Wandel', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI, pp. 455-478, and *Das Konzil – ein neuer Beginn* (Freiburg, 1966).

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as the Spirit himself decides, and not according to the will and pleasure of any one individual, nor even to that of the authorities in their designs. And yet how difficult it is for one man to allow that the other possesses something important, something God-given, which he himself does not have, which he himself can never altogether understand; something that one's own nature tells one is alien, and which perhaps seems strange and even shocking. How easily man concludes that the divine is to be identified with that which he himself possesses, and which is accessible to him precisely because it has entered into his life. And further, for Paul these gifts are of such a nature that to the worldly individual they seem folly (1 Cor 2,14). They can be manifested in the community in such a way that to the profane they are the occasion of derision; that those [74] endowed with the gifts of the Spirit appear psychologically unbalanced or, to put it plainly, are out of their minds (1 Cor 14,23). In dealing with his communities Paul presupposes that the Spirit blows everywhere, and in the most varied ways: as a Spirit of witness, of loving service, of instruction, consolation, helpful exhortation, alms-giving, understanding, compassion (Rom 12, 4-8), wisdom, knowledge, the prayer that moves mountains, the power of healing, acts of power, prophetic utterances, the discernment of spirits, ecstasies and the interpretation of utterances arising from these, service of others and leadership of the community (1 Cor 12,4-11; 28-30). According to him the Spirit of Christ is active in a thousand forms and in no one individual are all of these present, because it is only all individuals taken together who constitute the one whole Body of Christ. All must take place properly and in order (1 Cor 14,40), but this order in the manifestations of the Spirit is an order which does not restrict these manifestations in any way, which is aware of, and acknowledges the fact that these gifts are inconceivably varied in kind, and quite incalculable. It is an order which lets the Spirit move where and as he himself wills; which admits neither of merely human judgment nor of any hybris on the part of the authorities in the Church in seeking to reduce everything to their own plans. The order of which we are speaking does not allow such people to stifle the Spirit, the Spirit which can be uncomfortable, which always remains fresh and unfathomable, the Spirit which is that love which can be hard, which leads the individual and even the Church herself in directions which they had not planned, leads them always into that which is new and unknown, that which is only seen to be in conformity with the one eternal Spirit, ancient yet ever new, when it has actually taken effect; that which the Spirit himself has intended, and which is beyond all human wisdom.

The Church knows as part of her conscious faith that the Spirit too actually belongs to her, that he is indispensable to her. She teaches explicitly that it is not only her own official organisation, institutions, traditions, the rules of life which are permanent and immutable – in short that which is planned, that which can be foreseen that belong to her as the Church of God. The Church knows that the element of the unexpected and the incalculable in her own history does not consist solely in the incomprehensibility of the circumstances to which she is subjected *ab externo*, circumstances which she controls by applying her own internal and immutable principles to them. The Church knows that the Spirit of [75] God has been projected into her innermost nature, the living Spirit still actively present and at work in the here and now. The activity of the Spirit, therefore, can never find adequate expression simply in the forms of what we call the Church's official life, her principles, sacramental system and teaching. These can never be the sole or exclusive forms in which the Spirit has, so to say, made himself available to the Church. Pius XII has expressly laid down that not only the institutional factor, but the charismatic one too is of the Church's essence. According to Pius XII those who are charismatics in this sense are not simply at the disposal of the ecclesiastical authorities, nor are they mere recipients of directives. It is true that in the exercise of their charisms these charismatic individuals must submit their lives to the general 'order' of Christ's Church, that it is important for them not to break out of the confines of that Church,

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which is also, though not exclusively, a Church whose authority is vested in her official ministers. But even though all this is true, still the charismatics can be men endowed with such gifts of grace that Christ can lead and guide his Church quite 'directly' through them.

All this is a recognised fact. But it is a fact that is too often not recognised clearly enough in theory, and not acted upon vigorously enough in practice. Often the awareness of the role of the charisma of the Spirit in the Church remains at the level of mere theoretic knowledge, which has of itself no charismatic vitality. This is not merely due to faults of self-will and ossification on the part of the Church's authorities. There are other and weightier reasons why the truth of the Spirit and his charisms in the Church should be rendered ineffective in this way. It could be said that from this aspect it was easier to be a Christian in the early Church which Paul knew. The communities were small; their standard of living was simple and easy to understand. There was a place for that which had not been planned for or foreseen, as well as for that which was the outcome of policy and design. Moreover the world in which such movements took place was for its part reliable and comprehensible. Today, on the other hand, we live in an age of industrial societies on a massive scale, an age in which the histories of all the nations have been drawn together into a unity, in which all have achieved a degree of communication with one another which, whether it be friendly or hostile, is in any case extremely real and direct; an age of automation, of cybernetics, of a demand for security which is already becoming neurotic in its intensity; an age in which the aged in the community constitute a far higher percentage of its [76] members than in earlier times; an age in which the needs and opinions of the masses are manipulated; in which the machine has grown immensely in significance as a factor in society, for it is to a large extent inevitable that the circumstances previously mentioned should conduce to this effect. These and similar factors in the contemporary situation apply not only to society in the worldly sense, but also the social entity of the Church, and they are from first to last hostile to all that is charismatic. In other words they have the effect of making it seem as though the only effective and valid factors are those which are the outcome of plan and design, that only the power of the masses has any prospect of success, that the lives even of individuals are more and more dependent upon the great social institutions of the state and its authorities, organisations, ruling officials with their official enactments, five-year plans, subsidies etc., all of them aids to the machinery of propaganda.

If we are honest we shall recognise that this danger in the present age is undeniably a danger for the Church as well. We say that we have entered upon the age of the world-wide Church. That is true. But we have also entered upon an age in which every regional movement in the Church almost inevitably takes place under the eyes of the Church as a whole, and in dependence upon the central machinery of the Church. It is judged according to its real or supposed effects upon other countries and other areas of the Church's influence. There is a danger that no such movement can hope to be taken seriously unless it very quickly wins the support of public opinion in the Church throughout the world.

This is the danger that threatens the charismatic element in the Church from the external situation in which she is placed. But it is intensified by the presence of a further danger, this time arising from the interior situation of the Church. For even today the situation of the Church is still – unhappily is still – one of defensiveness against the powers that threaten her from without, of a unity indeed, but the kind of unity that belongs to a faction closed in upon itself so that watchwords are needed to enter it. It is a situation dominated by a spirit which has been rather too hasty and too uncompromising in taking the dogmatic definition of the primacy of the pope in the Church as the bond of unity and the guarantee of truth, this attitude objectifying itself in a not inconsiderable degree of centralisation of government in an ecclesiastical bureaucracy at Rome, so that regulations governing the life of each and every individual are issued from the Church's central ministries, and no-one can be sure that,

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despite all [77] intentions to the contrary, the approaching Council will not have the effect of strengthening this tendency. For a Council is expected to produce regulations covering a wide area of life, and it is almost impossible for it to avoid prescribing that its regulations are to apply in a univocal sense to the entire Church. In short, the fact that there is a charismatic element in the institution of the Church is recognised. It will not be denied by anyone. And yet because of the contemporary circumstances of the Church, both external and internal, this fact fails to make its due impact both in theory and in practice.

It can be seen, then, that in general the saying 'Do not stifle the Spirit' has the force not merely of an obvious and universal principle, but of an urgent imperative precisely for us in the here and now. As an exhortation, indeed, it has so urgent an application to the contemporary scene that its proclamation must take priority over that of many other principles. But precisely as a most earnest exhortation this saying applies supremely to us central Europeans in our relationships. Let us be honestly and calmly self-critical. What is the state of the Church in the particular sphere to which we belong? Are not weariness and mere routine far too predominant as factors in our lives? When new 'movements' arise or new enthusiasms which set us fresh goals to achieve, or seek to arouse support for new ideas, are we not all too fond of preaching balance and deliberation in applying the Church's principles, instead of boldly translating them into imperatives – imperatives which are not indeed necessary everywhere and at all times, but which certainly are so for us in the here and now? Are we not all too often lacking in the courage to say an unambiguous 'no' or an unambiguous 'yes'? And this applies not merely to those basic principles which are immutable, and which no-one seriously wishes directly to challenge or to deny, but also to those watchwords and slogans of controversy which summon us to a decision in the concrete. Do we know what to reply when someone asks: 'What concrete objectives have you Christians set yourselves to achieve in the next ten years? What is it which does not yet exist, but which, according to you, must exist and which you are currently aiming to achieve? And that too not merely in eternity, but in the here and now?' Do we not all too often claim to be adopting an attitude of detachment towards the various factions, whereas our real reason is that we are unwilling to expose ourselves to any demands in the concrete? Where is the courage we need really to become engaged in the questions of the time, really to face up to them, really to feel the burden of [78] them? Are we not all too ready to suppose, in our weariness and anxiety for peace, that our minds are already clear on all points, equipped with all the answers to all the questions – questions which are, in any case, not all that important? Among us, as in the Church in general, is there not a phenomenon which might be called the 'Church of officialdom'? In other words is there not an intermediary class of official administrators which (almost inevitably, so far as we are concerned, and yet how dangerously!) comes between the Christians and those who are their real shepherds, really called by God to their ministry, and really responsible to him for their flocks? Is not our preaching, the expression of our Christian faith, too traditionalist in character, too second-hand? Does not far too little of it well up spontaneously from that experience of grace, that awareness of being touched by the authentic word of God, which is utterly our own, and which has its source in our innermost nature? Where in the life of the Church do we find its members really initiating an 'experiment' which is not smothered over right from its very inception, so that after all everything remains as it was? Let us face up to the fact that from the point of view of cultural and social history we are passing through a revolutionary change in the times, a change which we certainly do not over-estimate, but rather under-estimate. Let us then take this revolutionary change in all its breadth and depth as a standard by which to measure the vigour, the courage, the breadth of vision which we bring to bear upon the radical change which we ourselves are undergoing in the Church. When we do this are we not compelled to fear that at this turning-point of the times we have proved ourselves still more

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inadequate than did the Church of the time when the feudal society of the eighteenth century was transformed into the society of civic liberalism of the nineteenth, or the time when the workers emerged as a new social class? Must we not say at this point that our response has been far too hesitant and lame, that we have merely allowed ourselves to be forced bit by bit by the sheer weight of the facts, and that for all this we have lagged pitifully behind the times? In a word where is that bold, powerful, creative 'self-confident' movement of the Spirit among us in the Church?

There may be some who take these remarks of mine merely as so much facile criticism; who refuse *a priori* to let themselves be disturbed, who proceed from the tacit assumption that all must be well, since they themselves are honest men who do their duty even though they too know of no remedy for the ills of the time and of the Church. But such people have [79] failed to understand the true purport of what I have just been saying. These remarks of mine are not intended to lead up to the recommendation of any facile 'cure-all', which according to my ideas needs only to be adopted for the Church and the world *ipso facto* to be delivered from their ills. I too have no such prescription to offer. And it is extremely painful and bitter to put forward accusations when one does not know how to alter the state of affairs which is being complained of. Nor do these observations of mine imply that everything in every department of the Church's life is in a bad state. On the contrary there is much that is filled with the Spirit and alive with divine life, love, faithfulness, patience in bearing the Cross, apostolic work which is full of self-sacrifice, youthful courage, theological acumen, a determination to tackle fresh problems and much else besides of which the Spirit is the prime dispenser, so that without him none of these factors would be present in the Church at all. But should all this, for which we do indeed thank God, make us blind to those other factors of which we have been speaking? Are we on this account to be excused from facing up to the real question of which of two alternatives is more characteristic for our particular age and for the Church as it exists in our particular countries? These alternatives are on the one hand the average and the stereotyped, the bureaucratic and over-officialised, the stale and the dull which refuses to commit itself to any form of attack, and on the other the fire and energy of the Spirit, the charism of life that comes from heaven, though again only in the measure in which it can be permitted to exist in this world of the mediocre. However thankful we may be for the Spirit who does not forsake us even in this age, are we not still faced with the responsibility of being honestly and severely self-critical, and saying that it is through our own fault, the inertia of our own hearts, that we feel too little of the movement of the Spirit as guider of the Church, and that too at a time when the impetus of the Spirit was never so sorely needed? In view of this, then, should we not all conclude in fear and trembling that evidently the saying of Paul is addressed to us not merely as a permanently valid principle, but as an imperative for our own particular time, disconcerting, accusing, shocking us out of our complacency?

But if this imperative has, in this sense, a particular application to us of the present age, then the question does become urgent for us: What must we do in order to avoid stifling the Spirit? This is a dark and difficult question. If it could ever be thought easy to answer it would be no [80] question at all. The real answer to it is itself a factor in the movement and guidance of the Spirit, who himself ensures that he shall not be stifled. It can be found, in the last analysis, not by the reflexive processes of theory and speculation, but rather, at basis, through the sureness of instinct to be found in Christian living. And for this reason the poor stuttering school-master can only say very little, and, that in very inadequate and halting terms, on this particular question. And what he says, in so far as anything can be said directly and explicitly on this point, is once more only a part of the theoretic statements which, as we have pointed out, cannot be any substitute for the Spirit, his power and his inalienable and uncontrollable grace. Only with these provisos can there be any right understanding of the

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few modest observations which follow.

The first thing that we could do, and do with all our hearts, would be to acquire an attitude of *caring*; of recognising with anxiety that it is possible to stifle the Spirit. The Spirit can be stifled not indeed throughout the entire Church, but still over so wide an area, and to such a terrible extent that we have to fear that judgment which begins with the house of God. And for this reason we must all face the possibility with fear and trembling that *we* could be the ones who stifle the Spirit – stifle him through that pride in 'knowing better', that inertia of heart, that cowardice, that unteachableness with which we react to fresh impulses and new pressures in the Church. How different many things would be if we did not so often react to what is new with a self-assured superiority, an attitude of conservatism, adopted as a defence not of the honour of God and the teaching and institutions of the Church, but of our own selves, of what we have always been accustomed to, of the usual, with which we can live without daily experiencing the pain of the new *metanoia*. But if we realised, and with burning conviction, that we can also be judged for our omissions, for a general obtuseness and inertia of heart which, though indefinable, extends over all spheres of our lives, for our culpable lack of creative imagination and boldness of spirit, then we should lend a sharper ear, a keener eye, a livelier anticipation to the slightest indication that somewhere that Spirit is stirring whose inspiration is not merely confined to the official pronouncements and directives of the Church, or to the holders of official positions in her. Then we should be eagerly on the watch to see whether charisms were not appearing, of which only a glimpse and a feeling can initially be obtained. Then we would not make it a condition for admitting those charisms which the Spirit wills to impart (a [81] condition to which, however, we do not subject our own lives and activities) that such charisms must have no element of the human in them, nothing which has not yet been purified out. For this is not possible in view of the fact that even the fire of the Holy Spirit burns up from the thorn-bush of our human – all too human – nature.

The second requirement is the courage to *take risks*. Let us permit ourselves to reiterate most strongly what has just been said. We live in an age in which it is absolutely necessary to be ready to go to the utmost extremes of boldness in our attitude towards the new and the untried, to that point at which it would be, beyond all dispute, simply inconceivable for one who accepts Christian teaching and has a Christian conscience at all to go any further. In practice the only admissible 'tutiorism' in the life of the Church today is the tutiorism which consists in taking risks. Today, when we are struggling to solve the real problems which confront us, we should not, properly speaking say: 'How far *must* I go?' because the very nature of the situation itself absolutely compels us to go at least as far as possible. We should be asking ourselves, rather: 'How far *can* we go by taking advantage of all the possibilities in the pastoral and theological spheres?' The reason is that the state of the kingdom of God is certainly such that we must be as bold as possible in taking risks in order to hold out in the manner demanded of us by God. For instance in œcumenical questions we should not ask: 'What do we have to concede to the separated brethren?' but 'How can we create, in every conceivable way, the conditions which make possible a fruitful encounter with them, provided only that the measures which we take are reasonable, and are in any way reconcilable with the Christian and Catholic conscience?' 'How can we be sufficiently bold and unreserved in doing this, for today it is simply out of the question for us to do anything less in order to bring the unity of Christians at least one step nearer?' It appears to me that this kind of 'tutiorism' should be applied to these and many other questions. In other words one should take as the motive force of one's actions the conviction that for these particular times of ours (the principle does not apply permanently to all times) the surest way is the boldest, and that the best chance to gain all, or at any rate something is not caution, but the utmost boldness in taking risks. And if we do adopt this attitude, then there will be a radical

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change of policy in many of the questions now being canvassed in the Church.

What is needful in order for the Spirit not to be stifled is a true and bold [82] interpretation of what *obedience* to the Church really means. It is a holy virtue. The Spirit of Christ in the Church manifests itself in obedience to the established authorities of the Church. That is no true Spirit of Christ which leads us outside the Church of the bishops, the Pope, the official ministers of the Church. But it is important to recognise the truth that the work of the Spirit in the Church takes effect not only through these official ministers, but through those over whom they preside as well; that his influence also extends in the inverse direction, from the ministered to the ministers. And if this is true, then the individuals upon whom God bestows the grace, and also the burden of charisms (and it would be better if more of the Church's members would commit themselves to accepting that the Spirit might be entrusting them with such gifts and such responsibilities) have also a right and a duty to avoid simply hiding behind an attitude of dumb obedience – in truth not in the least because it is a humble attitude, but because it is a comfortable one. Rather they must speak out – proclaim what they believe to be true, for it is quite possible that this may be the truth of the Spirit of God himself. They must be tireless in testifying to it even in the presence of the established authorities in the Church, and even when it is inconvenient or unpleasing to those 'authorities', even when they themselves have to endure the sufferings of the charismatic for doing so, in the form of misunderstanding and perhaps even disciplinary action on the part of the authorities. The spirit of true obedience is present not so much where the official machinery of the Church is running smoothly and without friction, not so much where a totalitarian régime is being enforced, but rather where the non-official movements of the Spirit are recognised and respected by the official Church in the context of a universal striving for the will of God, while the 'charismatics' for their part, while remaining faithful to their task, maintain an attitude of obedience and respect towards the official Church. For it is God and God alone who builds the one Church, shaping the true course of her history as he himself wills out of the materials of the multiplicity of spirits, tasks and ministries in the Church, and out of the ensuing tensions and oppositions which are so necessary. And further this course may seem quite different from the one thought out and planned in the official councils of the Church's ministers, even though these are quite right and are only fulfilling their bounden duty in so planning a course for the Church.

A further prior condition which is necessary if the Spirit is to become a vital force in the Church is the *courage* to endure the *inevitable antagonisms* [83] in the Church which we have just mentioned. The Church is not 'one heart and one soul' in such a way, or to such an extent that there can be no controversy, none of the pain of mutual misunderstandings in her. There are, in fact, many charisms in the Church, and no one individual possesses them all. Nor is it given to any one individual to have all the various kinds of charisms at his disposal. For even though the authorities of the Church are united, and even though they are at one in their care to ensure that there shall be one faith and one love in her, this does not imply that the official Church exercises any real controlling power over all the charisms. On the contrary many different opinions are upheld among us Christians, and this is as it should be. We should manifest many different tendencies, and there is no necessity for each to be positively suitable for all. The sort of love that might be designed to weld all into one uniform whole would be all too easy. But in the Church it is the Spirit of love who must reign, binding the many and divers gifts in their very diversity into a unity. One who possesses this love recognises and accepts others too according them their due value even though they are different from himself and even in cases in which he no longer 'understands' them. The principle which is given to the Church as a concomitant of the love she has to preserve in all her actions lays down that everyone in the Church must follow his own spirit, so long as it is not established beyond all doubt that he is in fact following a pseudo-spirit. In other words it

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must be presumed, until the contrary is proved, that he is orthodox in his beliefs, that he is a man of good will, and that he has a right to his freedom. To proceed from the opposite assumption would be contrary to the principle mentioned above. Moreover, while it is once more true that it rests with the official authorities and not simply with those subject to them to judge whether in the individual case it has been proved that a pseudo-spirit is being followed, it is no less true that those authorities themselves have the sacred duty, for which they will have to render account at the Day of Judgment, of examining themselves in a spirit of humility and self-criticism, to see whether such proof really has been put forward, or whether they have been over-hasty or self-willed in their judgment, judging merely by the standard of their own spirit and their own lights. Patience, tolerance, according to others their due freedom so long as it has not been proved beyond all doubt that their actions are wrong (and not the contrary of this: to forbid all personal initiatives until they have been explicitly proved to be orthodox, the subordinate sustaining the burden of proof here) – [84] all these are specifically ecclesiastical virtues, which flow from the very nature of the Church. For she is not a totalitarian organisation. Such virtues are the necessary conditions for ensuring that the Spirit shall not be stifled.

It is no spirit of indifference to the Church's authorities which leads us to presuppose these virtues in the authorities and to act accordingly. On the contrary it is itself a Christian virtue. One can take for granted that there will inevitably be antagonisms in the Church, for this is something inherent in her very nature as formed by the will of God. There is no need, therefore, to wait for a formal and positive expression of consent on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities for each and every enterprise in order to be able to say: 'We too have the Spirit of Christ'. But if anyone were to conclude from what has just been said that each and every movement in the Church must be allowed to have its head, that no-one should really take it upon himself to appraise the movement of a different party within the Church, to issue warnings against it or to demand genuinely and in all sincerity that it should be resisted, then such an one would have misunderstood what I have just been saying. For to impose this interpretation on what has been said would be precisely to deny that the various movements, tendencies and charismatic impulses, in so far as these are genuine, really do develop within one Church, and that they must really be experienced as the counterpoise to corresponding movements, tendencies etc. in others. Besides such a one would be maintaining by implication that no movement could develop within the Church without the gift of the Spirit from above. Now this is not true. Neither the faithful in general nor the holders of official positions in the Church in particular are equipped with any such *a priori* immunity to the innate promptings of the spirit of this world. We must therefore be able to summon up the courage or charism – for this can, in fact, precisely be a gift imparted to one particular member of the Church – to say 'No!' as members of the Church. To take up a stand against particular tendencies and outlooks, and that too even before the actual officials of the Church have been awakened to the danger which threatens. For to say 'No!' in this way can be the means of rousing the official Church to perform its function. But it is precisely when we do find the courage to accept these conflicts and tensions within the Church, this real multiplicity of gifts and charisms, of tasks and functions, that we draw the sting from the struggle between opposing tendencies which always and inevitably do occur even within the Church, that we transform that [85] struggle into the strivings of love, and that we set the Spirit free, who would otherwise be stifled.

A further factor to be numbered among the necessary prior conditions for ensuring that the Spirit shall not be stifled is that all members of the Church, whether high or low, must be convinced of the fact that of the various movements which arise and which should arise in the Church, not all of them have necessarily to be initiated by the officials and authorities at their head in order to be legitimate. These authorities must be neither surprised nor reluctant to

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find a movement of the Spirit manifesting itself prior to any plan or design on the part of the Church's official ministers. Nor must the faithful suppose that there is absolutely nothing for them to do until some directive has been issued from above. There are actions which are, under God's will, demanded by the conscience of the individual even before the starting signal has been given by the authorities, and furthermore the directions in which these actions tend may be such as are not already approved or established in any positive sense by those authorities. It would be necessary in such a case for the individual to think out afresh, and on the basis of this charismatic element in the Church, what place should be accorded to 'canonical approval' and to legitimatised custom *contra* or *praeter legem*.[2] By introducing such concepts as these the canonists leave room not merely for legitimate developments in the sphere of what is reasonable and just at the human level, but for the impulses of the Spirit as well. Those, therefore, who have the power to command in the Church must constantly bear in mind that not everything that takes place in the Church either is or should be the outcome of their own autocratic planning as though they belonged to a totalitarian régime. They must keep themselves constantly alive to the fact that when they permit movements to arise 'from below', this is no more than their duty; it does not constitute an act of gracious tolerance on their part. They must not seek to retain all the threads in their own hands right from the first. They must recognise that the higher – and precisely the charismatic – wisdom may quite well lie with the rank and file, and that charismatic wisdom as applied to the Church's official ministers may consist in the fact that they do not close their minds to wisdom of the former sort. The authorities in the Church must always be aware of the fact that neither the obedience which the rank and file owe to them as a [86] matter of duty on the one hand, nor the supreme juridical authority vested in themselves on the other render the rank and file devoid of rights in relation to the authorities themselves. Nor does this relationship provide any guarantee that every measure adopted by the authorities in every individual case is necessarily in conformity with what is right and pleasing to God, or that they must *a priori* be preserved from extremely catastrophic decisions and omissions.

All must pray. Each one must have an anxious conscience about his own poverty and deficiency in charismatic gifts. Each one must be ready to pay heed to the gift of another, even when he himself does not possess it. Obedience must not drive out the courage of self-responsibility, nor, conversely, must the courage of one's own convictions drive out obedience. We must be resolute enough to try out even the most radical projects in the recognition that in our situation, so extreme as it is, it is no longer tolerable merely to carry on prudently along the same lines as before. And if we do all this, then perhaps we may clear the ground – even to do this much would be, once more, a grace of God – for the Spirit to quicken us, this in turn being due solely to God's grace. Then we shall have no need to fear that at the judgment of God the reproach will be levelled against us that by our inertia and cowardice we have stifled the Spirit and that we were unwilling to admit it even for a moment.

In the last hundred years the proportion of Catholics relative to other denominations has in practice failed to increase. Instead, despite all the struggles of the missions, heroic as these may appear, it has remained the same. And all this even without counting the shocking extent of the apostasies within the Church in the midst of the so-called Christian peoples. Even if the increase in the world population explosion, as it has been called, merely maintains its present rate, by the end of the present century, which some of us may yet live to see, there will be six or seven billion human beings – in other words twice as many as are living today. Now this increase will take place to far the greatest extent in that section of humanity which either in

[2] For a fuller exposition of this cf. 'Die Disziplin der Kirche' I, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg., 1964), pp. 333-343, especially pp. 336 ff.

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practice or as a result of an absolute political prohibition lives outside the Christian sphere of influence. In view of this fact it may be presumed that in the next few decades the Catholic element in the population of the world will diminish rapidly and perhaps even startlingly. This is only one of a hundred considerations which might be advanced in order to illustrate the seriousness of the global situation in which, even from a merely secular point of view, the Church finds herself. [87] This is the situation of the world, and it is also our situation in the present, because it is no longer possible for any country to stand apart as an autocracy in the circumstances of the present time. Have we the courage and hardihood to say to ourselves: 'Do not stifle the Spirit!'? have we the unshakeable faith to trust, in spite of these warnings and exhortations to ourselves, that the Spirit of God will not let himself be stifled because he is the Spirit of him who has conquered the world upon the Cross? With this sort of sincerity and this sort of courage let us go forward as believers to the decisions which we have to make from day to day.

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[88]

5

THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS WORLD

'The Christian in his World' – an inexhaustible topic, upon which only a very few stammering remarks can hesitatingly be offered! For the 'world', as envisaged for the purposes of this discussion, is incomprehensible and indescribable. It is the world of a human race that is growing gigantically and at a terrifying rate; a world which has developed into a unified compositum made up of originally distinct cultures and peoples, so that today everyone has become everyone else's neighbour and the history and destiny of every nation has become the history and, destiny of all the others as well. It is a world of rationality, of technical achievement, of atomic power, of automation, of the 'ABC weapons', of the media of mass communication, of nomadic wanderlust, of militant ideologies on the grand scale, of mass hysteria, of propaganda, of the artificial manipulation of human needs, of organised enjoyment; a world which, the more it is subjected to rational planning, the more incalculable it becomes; a world which is no longer something ready given by nature to provide a secure habitation for man, but which constitutes, rather, the material for man's own creative planning; a world the tempo of which is accelerated by man himself. But it is also a world which, after all, never ceases to belong inalienably to what is permanent and immutable in man's nature: his love, his all-transcending questioning, his longing, his loneliness, his demand for happiness and eternity. It is a world of unfathomable anguish and of death; a world that is at once terrifying and familiar to us, and which, in spite of all, we love. It is our world, our fate that we accept, for we know no other besides it. It is in this bewildering world that we live. We must see it as it really is. Let us therefore ask in all honesty: What part does the Christian play in this world?

I believe that the first point to be recognised is this: the Christian shares this world of today, just as it is, with all other men in a spirit of brotherhood. He does not flee from it. He is willing neither to live in a ghetto, nor to take refuge in history. He neither takes flight into a romantic past, [89] nor does he confine himself to one particular small group in society, in which alone he can feel happy. He accepts the world in its worldliness. He has no intention whatever of changing it back into the vanished world of the Middle Ages, in which religion exercised a direct influence upon all departments of life. He makes no pretence of knowing of some prescription, ready-made or even better than the non-Christians, for each and every problem that arises merely on the grounds that he knows that this world is encompassed by the power and compassion of the incomprehensible mystery that he calls God, and upon whom he dares to call as Father. He knows as well as anyone else that his world has been caught up in a movement the effects of which in terms of concrete living in the world no-one sees clearly, since all calculations serve only to increase the element of the incalculable. The Christian accepts this world as it is: a world of human power, and at the same time of human anxiety and utter impotence. He neither idolises it in terms of ideological dreams of utopia, nor yet does he condemn it. It exists; and the Christian, true realist that he is or that he should be, accepts it without question as the sphere of his existence, his responsibility and his proving. He can afford to be a hopeful realist because, even while remaining loyal to this world and its tasks, he is journeying towards the future that is absolute, which God himself has ordained for him, and which is coming to meet him through and beyond all the victories and defeats of this world and its history.

The second point is this: the Christian recognises the diaspora in which he has to live today, wherever he may be, as the setting of his Christian life as something in which an

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ultimately positive significance is to be found. When I use the term 'diaspora' I am using it in the biblical sense in which it is currently employed, not in the sense ascribed to it until recently, in which it designated the situation of a Catholic minority in the midst of a majority of Protestants. This nineteenth-century idea may still have a certain validity in the field of pastoral care, and still point to certain needs which have to be fulfilled. But this meaning is more and more receding into the background, and the term is being applied more and more to a fresh phenomenon, which we now have to examine. This is the society which is based on a multiplicity of ideologies: the society which, taken as a whole, and from the point of view of its constitution, its special patterns and its culture, bears the stamp of other influences besides the purely Christian one. In this society Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, live, provided they are true Christians, in common as brothers [90] in the diaspora. It is the diaspora in this sense, in which non-Christian liberal humanism, militant atheism and the atrophy of religion are everywhere apparent, that is referred to when we use the term 'diaspora' here; the diaspora which all Christians have in common, in comparison with which the differences between the various Christian confessions seem not indeed unimportant, but historically speaking secondary. This diaspora must be seen by the Christian of today as the divinely ordained 'situation' of his own Christianity. It is the setting in which his free and personal act of faith is posited, a faith which cannot be overthrown in favour of any social ethic, the situation of free decision, of personal responsibility, of personal avowal of one's faith. And all this gives a fresh application to the old adage that Christians are not born but made. This is the situation which had to arise as a necessity of saving history. Christians know than on the one hand, if their own theological expectations of the future are to be fulfilled, they will always exist as the creed that is under attack, and on the other that when all kinds of far from homogeneous cultures are permitted to exist each in its own sphere as parts of one and the same world history, an attack on any one of them will only come from without, from those who do not belong to that particular culture. We Christians accept this situation. Certainly, in common with all other citizens we want to have the right to co-operate in the sphere of public life. Certainly we also demand that in cases in which, in spite of all variations within the community, the unified political system makes it quite unavoidable for all to have one and the same form, the Christian history of our people and the fact that the great majority of the people want to be Christians even now shall be respected. We demand in the name of freedom and tolerance that he who, in effect, gives the casting vote shall not be the one who is most radical in denying Christianity. But we Christians have no interest in maintaining Christian façades behind which no true Christianity is alive, and which serve only to compromise and to discredit such true Christianity. On the other hand it does not seem fair to us either that non-Christians, while secretly conforming to the ancient heritage of Christian culture in their private lives, nevertheless believe that they must attack Christianity in public. We Christians are not to be numbered among those who suppose that their beliefs and their conception of the world can only be rendered attractive if our faith enjoys the special protection of the state. But we do not, on that account, need to suppose that the prevailing political system must be constructed according to rationalist formulas out [91] of a few abstract principles of freedom and equality, and that it must eliminate every element of Christianity which has contributed in the course of history to the make-up of this political system. We accept the situation of a society made up of a multiplicity of cultures, in which Christianity exists as a diaspora. But it is to the society so constituted that we ourselves precisely belong, the masses of our own people together with the heritage of a tradition that has lasted more than a thousand years. This is no mere ballast, but rather genuine riches, carrying with it responsibilities for the future. We recognise that we must genuinely accept this situation. In other words we must be prepared to be critical of ourselves, and to maintain a constant awareness of the fact that on our own principles we ourselves in turn have to

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accord to others their due meed of freedom even when they use this freedom to come to decisions which run counter to Christianity itself. But while recognising this let us add in all honesty in our dialogue with non-Christians that the formal rules of the game of democracy are not sufficient of themselves to make it possible for all to live together in peace and freedom. For a society or state to exist it is indispensable that there shall be a single common basis of ultimate moral convictions, whether this be the natural law or whatever we may like to call it, or whether the state itself has a code of laws already drawn up in the concrete and conditioned by its own past history. Furthermore, where necessary this common basis in moral law can and must be defended by the power and authority of the society and state itself. It is not easy to accord due value to all these principles at the same time, and so to arrive at a firm conclusion as to what is right for us of today. We are quite ready to enter into discussion, are anxious for a fair and open dialogue with all, and are even ready to entertain reasonable compromises. On the other hand we refuse to be intimidated when we are stigmatised as bigots, narrow-minded reactionaries, or intolerant, merely on the grounds that we hold that Christian ideas too must be allowed to exert their due influence in the sphere of political life. We have only to compare our position with that of that false liberalism which maintains that political life can and must undergo an ideological process of sterilisation, and that creeds and conscience should only be allowed a voice in the churches or the clubs of the humanist society. Is not this too an ideology, and a bad one at that? Since every fresh claim to freedom on the part of one involves an alteration in, and a restriction of the sphere of freedom hitherto enjoyed by another even before his consent has been obtained, no one [92] member can be allowed an absolutely unrestricted sphere of personal freedom. Hence too not all authority is *ipso facto* and of its very nature hostile to the very essence of freedom. Such authority may be exercised to ensure that all have a reasonable share of freedom in the one sphere of freedom that is available, and to guarantee and maintain a due share for each individual. We Christians are guilty – unhappily this is all too obvious – of sins of our own. For this reason it is difficult to say which of two sins is the more widespread among us: the sin entailed in a reactionary clinging on to Christian forms and customs in the political sphere when these have become obsolete, or the sin of being too cowardly to stand up for what is genuine and new. Perhaps the situation is even such that both sins are often committed at once, and by the same individual Christians – even, it may be, those who occupy high offices and dignities. However this may be, we Christians are willing to accept unreservedly the situation of our diaspora in a pluralistic society, and in doing so to guard against the error of taking refuge in the ghetto of a reactionary defence of the traditional for its own sake, or in the comfortable cowardice of renouncing all claims to influence the course of political life.

There is a third point to be made. It concerns the Christian community. In the situation of a complex society made up of heterogeneous elements and of a diaspora extending through the whole of that society, the Church necessarily changes from a Church of regional and national communities to a Church of believers. What we mean by this is that the members of a Christian community constitute this community not solely in virtue of the continuity of office and the stability of the institutions governing the relationships between those members, though these factors can have a decisive influence upon the lives of the individuals even prior to the personal decision of faith which each one takes for himself. A further factor is precisely this free personal decision of faith which each individual member has won his way to in striving to come to terms with the pluralistic environment. Without impugning the sacramental significance of baptism (including infant baptism) it can be said that for the purpose of the concrete social realities of this environment the Christian community no longer depends (or at least depends less and less) upon baptism and the ecclesiastical institutions as such, but rather on the free exercise of faith. We are, of course, living through a period of transition from the regional or national Church to the Church of believers, and the

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Church cannot, in her solicitude for the salvation of all, use her official institutions arbitrarily [93] to accelerate this process of transition. At the same time she must recognise that in this situation one new member who decides to join her from his own genuine decision of faith carries more weight than three who, while belonging or seeming to belong to her, really do so only because of the weight of social tradition.

In this situation two points of importance emerge with regard to the community, and therefore with regard to the task of the individual Christian in the Church as well. On the one hand there must be a continual emergence of genuine new communities. The Church must be manifestly seen to be sustained by the faith of all not merely in her institutions and her official organisation, for this depends upon itself and regards the Christians merely as the subject of its own salvific activities. Church means people of God. Church is identical with ourselves – all of us who believe and bear witness to the world as a community of faith, of eternal hope and love, to the grace and pardon of God in Christ. If such a community is to exist and to constitute a living representative of the Church at one particular place, then the bond of brotherhood between all the members of the community must transcend all differences of individual functions in the community and all distinctions between those who hold official positions in it and those who do not, necessary though such distinctions may be. This bond of brotherhood must overcome and endure through all such distinctions. It must be possible for the established authorities and the ordinary Christians to communicate with one another. All must feel personally responsible and be ready to give their active participation, their hearts and, where necessary, their material resources too in order to ensure the vitality of the community. We must come to know each other and cohere, must play our part in maintaining the liturgy and the attitude of neighbourliness. We must not be willing merely to receive the Church, but must be ready to give; we must positively want to make contact, to get to know people, to help and to serve. The community must recognise that it, and in it the Church, is not merely an organisation based on religious techniques with the function of satisfying individual religious needs, but the community of those who, because they are united in Christ, are also united among themselves. They must be united in such a way that their communal life signifies not merely philanthropy or benevolence towards their fellow men, not merely orthodoxy or reception of the sacraments, not merely a willingness to pay the Church's dues, but truly that love which, confronted in the concrete [94] with a 'neighbour', a 'fellow worker in the household of the faith', does not fail, but rather proves itself. The educated man who is, in the nature of things, an individualist, and who thereby becomes all too easily an egoist with his head in the clouds, has a special responsibility and special tasks here, always provided that he is in earnest in wanting to live a Christian life. He must not, in the first instance, ask: 'What has the community to offer me', but rather, 'What can I myself give to it in the form of active participation, example and help'. Certainly his most important 'lay apostolate' will be found in the sphere of his life 'in the world', his profession, his specialised knowledge, in the secular and civic community, among his fellows at what seems to be the merely human level. Certainly as a Christian too he will have to prove himself here first, in the sphere, therefore, in which there is no need whatever to try and stick a Christian label on his life so that everyone else, wherever he may be, can at once notice what he is. For even such virtues as goodness, faithfulness, courage, a manifestly reasonable attitude to the problems of life and death, self-discipline and a readiness to take responsibility together with other human virtues – these do not cease to be Christian virtues merely because they are sometimes practised in an exemplary manner by those who do not consider themselves to be Christians at all. And even such virtues, provided they are exercised and lived to the bitter end, to the point at which they become incapable of being merely 'profitable' any more, of themselves lead man to the silent mystery in which the ultimate meaning of existence consists, which alone provides it with its ultimate reason and

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significance, to God himself. But all this should precisely not be taken to imply that the Christian in the diaspora has not also the task of helping to build up the Church of God, the community of faith, hope and charity, in his own region, in order that it may bear witness to all to the fact that the ultimate meaning of human existence is not emptiness and absurdity (it makes no difference whether a man shouts his doubts aloud on this point, or maintains a discreet silence) but the absolute future that is God himself. And both factors, the task of the Christian in the world which he shares with all men of good will, and his vocation to build up the Church in the community, are ultimately one and the same. For the consecrated reality that is the Church is precisely a visible sign of the fact that the world, even in its secular aspect, and even when it is at its most worldly, is sanctified by God's grace. And when this world, together with all its sublime, its questionable and its worthless [95] elements, is accepted without reserve and as an act of deep personal decision right to the last, it shows itself to be based on the unfathomable depths of the divine.

The other point which is relevant to the contemporary 'diaspora' situation, and which concerns every Christian in his task as a Christian and as a member of the community of the Church, is this: The community for which each one is responsible must not on any account become a ghetto. This is easy to say, and sounds obvious, yet it is difficult to put into practice. There is no need here to enter into a discussion as to whether the Church of believers, the future community of the believers which has already begun to exist, should be regarded as already and inevitably having the sociological status of a 'sect', (taking this term in a completely neutral sense, and as it is used in the sociology of religion), or whether it is too misleading to formulate it in this way, since it suggests one specific state of affairs. At any rate the community, both in the present and in the future, must be a community of brothers who know one another and love one another, a community that coheres, that creates the kind of environment which is so necessary of common convictions, common aims, mutual help and mutual love, an environment in which Christian faith can develop without restriction, and can exploit all the possibilities so as to become a vital force. But then the danger inevitably arises of a community of this kind becoming a 'sect' in the bad sense, of it forming a ghetto, living as a sort of religious 'back to the land' community. This makes it all too possible to arrive at the unfortunate situation of withdrawing, from an intellectual, cultural and social point of view, into a sort of 'hole-and-corner' existence, having too little to do with normal life, feeling that one belongs to an esoteric and exclusive club, in which the members mutually confirm one another's positions. All this on the grounds that the estimate which the world, the public at large, makes of the Christians is that they represent a *quantité négligeable* of harmless religious ideologists or fanatics whom one does not have to take seriously because they are incapable of coping with the realities of life. This is not how it must be. The Christian community must not be a fire that warms only itself. It must not be a preserve for life's inadequates, or a rosary confraternity for harmless souls who can achieve nothing more than to be pious, and to make this piety of theirs their sole contribution. An analogy may be drawn between the Christian community and a modern family with a healthy outlook and attitude towards life. A family of this kind is [96] no longer willing to exist in all departments of human living as an autonomous clan, withdrawing in its self-sufficiency from all others. Rather such a family comprises the concrete realisation of a personal independence and freedom which is completely and fully developed in all departments of human living. So too it must be with the Christian community. It must be open to influences from outside itself. Its members must maintain a genuine and unreserved contact in their lives with the world, its outlook, the problems that occupy it and the tasks with which it finds itself confronted today. They must not imagine that the Christian community of today can be an intellectual autonomy in the social, cultural or political spheres, or that the Church has to have an exclusive monopoly of all values and all that is important in life. What has been said

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of the Church as a whole at the Council must be applied to every regional Church as well. It cannot and will not continue any longer to act as an impregnable fortress with small arrow-slits in the walls from which the defenders shoot at their enemies. Now it is rather the spacious house with the large windows from which one looks out upon all spheres of humanity, all of which are encompassed by the creative power of God and by his compassion. And the altar that stands in the midst of this house is consecrated to God as a sign of grace, not only for those who actually live in the house, but for all who, in a spirit of good will and good conscience, seek to find the way to fulfil their existence. In accordance with this the preaching and teaching in the regional Churches must be of such a kind that as far as possible outsiders too, the onlookers at the divine service and those who merely take an interest, can understand what is being thought and said there. The message must not sound esoteric, as though it were aimed exclusively at a club of privileged members. Rather it must be presented as the mystery of what is manifest and the manifest in what is mysterious, for in reality everyone encounters this in his personal experience of life, even though not everyone is able to recognise it – at any rate sufficiently distinctly – as a factor which deserves to be examined and pronounced upon in its own right. If the Christian Churches of today want to enter into discussions of an ecumenical kind, or on subjects of theological controversy, then they must make sure that this discussion does not sound like a discussion between two ghetto-like ideologies. Rather it must be conducted first and foremost as a general discussion among Christians concerning the possibility of a more genuine encounter with the world which is not Christian or which has not sufficiently realised [97] its own Christian depths. It must be an attempt undertaken in common to think out afresh the eternal validity of the Christian message for the world and its future. I believe that ecumenical discussions of this kind will, in the long run, only be fruitful if they are, at the same time, discussions with the world of today, which has quite different questions to put to Christianity than those which the confessions are accustomed to put to each other. In its struggle against everything that smacks of a sectarian mentality or of the outlook of the ghetto the Christian community must make sure alike in the presentation of its services, the expression of its faith and its community life that it spares no effort to banish and to keep banished every element of the old-fashioned, the prudish, the ‘old-world’, the bigoted – everything, in short, which derives merely from one specific social group, and one specific historical tradition. This does not mean that the Church needs to deny the folly of the Cross, the high ethical standards of the Sermon on the Mount, the need for discipline and the courage of non-conformity. In the heritage of its own past it has preserved sufficient in the way of human and cultural treasures to be able to present itself to the world even today. And that free and unconstrained discipline in moral matters which it stands for and wishes to practise will once more always evoke a response from what is best in the hearts of others also – providing only that there is no attempt at evading the full rigour of contemporary moral problems by failing to face up to the dire needs which are with us every day, or by withdrawing ourselves from these in our thinking and living alike to areas where life has already passed us by. More than ever before the Christian community must always be developing fresh points of contact, which eliminate that feeling on the part of the so-called ‘outsider’ that he is an alien and is viewed with distrust, or else is merely the object of a plot to win converts. The Church must give these the chance to feel themselves to be close friends even though they may not always be able to share in all her dogmatic or moral principles.

For the community of the present day to reconcile both of the tasks confronting it, to be truly a family united by one faith, and at the same time an open missionary community, venturing boldly on intercourse with the world, is not easy. It is not easy to ensure that the nucleus of the community shall not be made up of individuals who have nothing else to do than to be pious. This is not to say anything against those individuals who, in the wisdom of

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old age and under the shadow of approaching death, are pious in a very true sense, and are so precisely because to be [98] anything else in this situation would simply be cowardice and a flight from reality. But in its more active sections the community must be made up of those who recognise that in the celebration of the mystery of the Lord's death it is the focal point of their own lives that is made sacramentally present. They must be coming fresh from their work in the world precisely to the recognition of this fact: to find in the dead and risen Lord the ultimate outpouring of grace upon human existence in this present world, and so to go out once more from the experience of, and the act of receiving, this grace to joy and confidence in the fact that their worldly life has been redeemed in its worldliness, and while remaining worldly. But it will be necessary to construct far clearer and more convincing concrete prototype examples than hitherto of what the way of life and social patterns of such communities must be in order for the men of today to feel immediately at home in them. These examples must include preaching, confession, liturgy, work for neighbours in the parish, the charity of the community as a whole. When all this still leaves so much to be desired it becomes absolutely the first duty and task for the Christian of today to collaborate patiently and unselfishly in the construction of such communities, and not to take the lack of them as an excuse for holding himself dispensed from selfless service of this kind.

The fourth and final point is the most difficult, and at the same time the most attractive. Christianity, always ancient yet always new, as it always has been, is and will remain, is, even in these 'diaspora' conditions, and even today, the grace bestowed upon Christians and at the same time the task with which they are presented. We are moving on in ever-increasing tempo to the world of tomorrow, to the unification of world history; to a world oppressively closed in upon itself by the increase of world population; to a world of technical achievements undreamt of as yet, and social patterns of a still more complex character. But at its ultimate roots it still remains the world which everyone has already experienced in the depths of his own heart, and it is inevitable that it should be so. It is the world of happiness and doubt, the world of innocence and guilt, the world of life and death, the world of loneliness and freedom, of love, of faithfulness, of service – that world which, in virtue of what it is, in virtue of its movement outwards and forwards and its terrible imperfections leading to its final collapse in death, raises the question inexorably of the ultimate mystery of itself, God. And why should this be so? It is because in its unfolding process this world is encompassed and upheld right to its [99] innermost depths and in the course of its history by a greater movement, in which God himself encounters it to judge it and to endow it with grace. It is because in the long run no one can fail to hear the ultimate all-embracing question silently put to him, even if, in his own thoughts and in his own life he wants to deny that one should entertain the idea of the incomprehensible. This is the situation that is old and ever new, the truly Christian situation which transcends from the outset all lesser situations, whether old or new which are confined to a particular epoch. We recognise, therefore, that our lives depend in the most radical, and yet in the most obvious sense, upon God; that we are hidden in the absolute mystery which receives us, and in receiving us forgives the sinfulness of our lives and endows us with the grace of itself. Everything else which contributes to our lives is included in this. This assent on God's part is present in Jesus Christ in the dimension of our history, and in that he has shared in our common human lot (not only, therefore, in the labyrinthine depths of our own consciences). We celebrate the death of this same Jesus Christ as our salvation, and in so celebrating it accept our own death also as the drawing of our existence into the immediate ambience of God. In doing this we seek truly to endure that death in this life in such a way that we feel ourselves to be truly the Church, the community of those who have ceased to value this life for its own sake. And all this too remains, even today, that which is old and yet new, and always the same in Christianity, and at the same time that which corresponds to the contemporary situation in which we find ourselves. We

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must never lose sight of this fact when we ask ourselves anxiously how the Christian should appear in his contemporary environment, and what he ought to be doing today. Much that concerns this problem must be raised in fresh forms and answered anew, and much must remain open. But the innermost and ultimate meaning of the question and answer is still always to be found, even if the finding of it is constantly and indisputably conditioned by the problems and vicissitudes of the particular situation in history that is ours as distinct from all others. For even in this environment, the ultimate question is this: Whether in the midst of the tasks and struggles of this life we respond unreservedly to the call of him who is first and last, present from the very origins and still present in the most distant future, committing ourselves to him in faith, hope and love, in the act of believing that this First and Last has made himself known to us and borne witness of himself to us in the love that is in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord.

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6

‘I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH’

Dogma and dogmatic definitions are always a scandal. Let us admit this much to ourselves; many of the statements included in the Church’s ‘dogmatic definitions’ are repugnant to us at the first hearing. *All* assertions which are intended to be more than the mere temporary expressions of positions which are being maintained in the living context of some discussion are somehow *ipso facto* strange and unpleasing to us of the present day. It is only with an effort that we can entertain them, and, as it were, not without a struggle to overcome our repugnance. We may recall our reactions when we hear pronouncements concerning personages of the past, concerning ‘heaven’, ‘the resurrection’, ‘original sin’ and many similar topics. Is not this reaction of ours rather like that of a man who, when he is already exhausted and wearied to death, has to listen to a lecture on the technique of how to calculate a matrix of the metaphysics of being? We hear these statements and know what they are intended to convey. We have the impression that we know just as well as the speaker himself what he means, and yet we do not really take it in. Indeed, in our innermost selves, so filled are we with leaden depression and sheer desolation, we have the feeling that there is one thing that we actually know better than the man who is addressing us on these topics. We feel that we know that he does not understand what he is saying, that he does not notice how inappropriate it is at this stage to speak in these terms, even if it ever was appropriate. The effort of will required of us by those who thus address us seems too great, and in any case meaningless and superfluous. We must have patience here. It is impossible to make everything clear and intelligible all at once. All that we intend at this point is to remind ourselves of something which the Catholic Church recognises and acknowledges as self-evident for its own faith. Such a reminder may well be useful for many in the contemporary situation, who already know it all in principle, or ought to know it. For him who cannot [101] tread paths such as these this article can serve as a quiet exploration of his own convictions. It is precisely this kind of individual who must reflect that much still remains to be said in other contexts, for instance about the sinfulness of the Church, the limits of the Church’s authority etc. (on this cf. the relevant articles in *Theological Investigations VI* (London & Baltimore, 1969).

We are not unbelievers. Oh yes the earlier ‘attitude of unbelief’ familiar to us from our fathers’ time – that is something that we could not revert to even if we wished. The only real practitioners of this who still survive are those who are behind the times (admittedly there may be many of these). How insolent it was, and how exaggerated were its claims to knowledge, this unbelief! It is no credit to us that we can no longer entertain it. Our minds have encountered too many factors which are obscure, and which cannot be dismissed as mere fancies such as might be expected swiftly to dissolve before the light of our intellect. And our heart has felt too much in the way of sorrows even to death through these incomprehensible factors for us to imagine that we could not believe because we know too much. But it is precisely at this point that *our* difficulty arises. We are, as it were, susceptible to an overdose of the light of faith. Faith is not difficult to us of today on the grounds that we can explain things sufficiently without it, but because faith itself seems to us to be trying to explain more than we can bear. A given statement – e.g. that concerning the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven – seems to be asserting almost too much. It seems to have a clear and happy knowledge of what is meant by the body and its resurrection, by ‘now’, and by ‘heaven’. Yet our faith, so difficult and arduous as it is, yet so tough, so wholly devoid of

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false pathos or exhibitionism, consists in a constant 'Lord help thou my unbelief!' It takes the ultimate reserves of strength in our hearts to sustain this appeal and at the same time in any one individual it is the ultimate strength upon which his heart can call. For this reason our faith is not curious, eager for novelty. It appeals to God and finds him on the Cross of Christ, tortured to death by us. It reaches out to the sacramental life because it seeks to meet the word of grace in that context in which we find ourselves on this earth and at this particular stage in earthly history. It knows that faith means *faith in the Church*, and that scripture and oral tradition have been transmitted in the Church. For the monologue which we conduct with ourselves, and in which we are on our own, turning things over and over in our minds, would finally have [102] driven us into doubt if it were not for the fact that this doubt had been transformed by God's own grace into a readiness to hearken to the word that has been sent down with full authority from above in the Church of Christ.

If we want to hear the message that has an absolute value for us, i.e. that decides the ultimate meaning of our lives in our earthly here and now, and in human words, then it cannot simply be left to us to work out for ourselves, but must confront us as the word of authority handed down by God himself, which does not bow to our will, and yet which must at the same time consist in something more than mere abstract or transcendental truths, i.e. statements of universal principle which are so general and vague in their application (however important they may be) that they still manage to survive and to carry some kind of force and authority even when they are denied. Without this kind of message, brought to us in this way, we would either be alone and defenceless, or at most our only weapon of defence would be mere 'metaphysics', and this would be like a net the meshes of which were so hopelessly wide that they would let the concrete reality of our own being, the life we have to live and for which we are responsible, slip through and escape. What is needed in view of all this is a declaration that is authoritative and concrete, and that we encounter as binding upon us. And this is given to us in the word of the Church, which itself encounters us and addresses us as the active mediator of the message, whether we hear it or not. So we are believers, hearers of the word of God as found in the mouth of the Church. What the Church says is our light and our strength, the love of the living God in spite of all the darkness, the word of forgiveness in spite of the experience of our own sins, the word of the Holy Ghost which has been poured out into our hearts in spite of all that they have experienced in the way of weariness, feebleness and emptiness – in short the word of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and at the same time truly man, crucified and raised from the dead into the eternal life of God, he who has plumbed the depths of human destiny, the presence of God in this world, the source of salvation and of peace, Lord of those who believe in him and recognise with trust that their destiny is hidden in him, the head of those who have been called and redeemed, who together with him make up that fellowship of truth and love and mercy which we call the Church, visible for what he is in himself in the authority which has been handed down to its official ministers in the word of God, both written and proclaimed, and in the visible sacraments of the Church. [103] Now if it is true that we are confronted with a message from this Church, how is it that it appears so new and (at any rate in some sense) unaccustomed, 'hard' (Jn 6:60) and forbidding?

Let us gradually get down to work. We are not concerned here to examine the content of such a message. We ask only what the *attitude* is which we ourselves must adopt in order to hear such a message aright at all.

Undoubtedly it is quite possible to fail to experience something because one is not listening – not listening because one is too indolent or too proud. It is possible to misunderstand something because one takes the initial difficulty of understanding as an excuse for impatience and impertinent contradiction. All new knowledge is intended to change him who acquires it, but it is only with reluctance, or at any rate not with any great eagerness, that we

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allow ourselves to undergo the painful process of being changed in this way. We want always to remain just as we are (however unhappy we may be in the circumstances in which we find ourselves). What is new is always unfamiliar and frightening. The only thing we hope to gain from the acquisition of any 'new' knowledge is to confirm ourselves in our existing position: 'That is precisely as I had already thought. That is right' (In other words it agrees with my own preconceptions; although we do not actually say this). Real truths, however, when they make their initial impact upon us, make us shy away. They carry further implications beyond themselves; they threaten us, change us, compel us to enter areas of thought in which we can no longer take custom and habit as a substitute for insight, in which we no longer feel ourselves at home, and in which reality appears in a guise which is not yet faded and subdued by familiarity, where that which seems so terrifying and so dangerous now has not yet become a part of our everyday lives.

What an experience it must be when it is a truth of God that is making its initial impact upon us! What ought our attitude to be to such an occurrence in order not to deny it from the outset? If we are sinners (do we admit this or not?), if we always have the sinister inclination to suppress the truth of God (Rom 1:18), if we are tempted to reduce the truth of God in its greatness to the petty dimensions of human 'truth', then it is obvious that when we first encounter the word of God we are always at first blinded and dazzled by its brilliance, bewildered and upset by the fact that it is so immeasurably above us. And because of this it is to be expected *a priori* that we should be vexed and out of humour because [104] the message sounds so hard to our ears. We are always tempted to believe that God's word is improbable and complicated (In spite of the fact that because of its immeasurable depths it is divinely simple). We are always inclined to explain away the message as not in conformity with God's nature, and therefore as false and erroneous. But in reality what we mean by this is that it is not in conformity with our own prior conceptions of God, which we presume to be correct, with that particular element of the divine which we have contented ourselves with recognising. It is to be expected from the outset that we shall find reasons enough for taking scandal from the lowly guise in which we encounter the message. It will appear utterly and hopelessly foolish, 'primitive', so far removed from anything sublime or wise that to the world, that is ourselves, it appears as folly and scandal, especially if we are encountering it for the first time. We have heard the old message so often that it sounds familiar to us. We only give half an ear to it, and we are, so to say, 'padded' against the scandal of it by custom (just as in fact we have become accustomed to our own sins and our liability to death, so that the most terrible things strike us as entirely 'natural'). Thus the incarnation of God, the Cross on which God was abandoned by himself to failure make the same kind of impression upon us as a long-familiar piece of furniture in our own houses. We no longer feel either astonishment or exaltation as we look upon it. It is simply 'there', and it is taken for granted that it is right. Let us simply leave it as it is! But if a message of God makes a fresh and unwonted impact on our minds, ill-prepared as they are for it, then this lack of prior dispositions on our part causes us to react with explicit hostility. Our minds, under these circumstances, cannot fail to be kindled to resentment at it. In such a case it is no longer possible for us to apply the tactics of a studied lack of attention. It is no longer possible to continue to wage merely a cold war that is beneath the surface against the truth of God. Man's contradiction of, and revulsion against the truth of God comes to the surface and is made explicit. A thousand reasons for objecting to it will suggest themselves to us. The first will be that it is new. The second that we have enough to believe in as it is without this. The third that we have to be suspicious of those who convey the message to us on the grounds that they are exaggeratedly pious, or else over-zealous enthusiasts. The fourth will be that in any case the matter is unimportant. And so we go on. All these can be real reasons, and are not necessarily false in themselves in every case. Only they do not constitute any genuine

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[105] grounds for resisting the truth of God. Rather they are human objections, deriving from the guise of lowliness and abasement in which the word of God has become incarnate and human, and in which it still continues to do so ever anew.

There is nothing to be particularly ashamed of in the fact that we, or rather sinful and earthly man in us, do take scandal in this manner at the truth of God. It is predictable from the outset that we shall do so. Indeed, if we were to find the truth of God too easy to accept (as do many of the 'devout'), then this rather would be a sign that all was not well; that we had so radically misunderstood this truth that it was no longer the truth that God wanted us to have at all. The truth of God never comes as a kind of poetic consolation or a devotional story for children. But even though it is never this in reality, it can be misunderstood in this sense. And when it is so misunderstood it can be degraded into a sedative to soothe the nerves; in which form it enters easily into the disposition of a 'devout soul'. But this is not a sign that there is an especially firm faith at work here, and that the light of God is shining especially brightly. We have no need, therefore, to envy those endowed with 'spirituality'. If God performs miracles of grace in their case, and the new knowledge is born in them without any birth-pangs, let them have the honour and glory of it! But the grace of faith can work in an obstinate spirit and a rebellious heart as well, and usually this is the way in which God performs his greatest miracles.

As we have said, we have to reckon with the fact that the truth of God, even when it really is the truth of God, does not necessarily 'suit' us. It does not suit us because we do not suit it until we have altered ourselves in order to do so. We must protect ourselves from ourselves. The humility of a sensitive spirit, readiness for change, the courage to take the pain of a new idea, prayer for light from above – these will achieve what is necessary. We do not need to be alarmed when we find that at first a new message shocks us. But we must take care that this initial scandal is made to conduce to our salvation. Now it does this when it startles us and stimulates us into adopting an attitude of patient attentiveness, of enduring the toil involved in learning something new (how hard this seems to us 'old' men!), of praying for light, for the sincerity and readiness to receive which one owes to any word if there is even a chance that it may turn out to be the word of God.

Now that we have sketched in a few rough general outlines, indicating [106] the inner attitude which we ought initially to adopt, we may go on to say something on a further point, namely on the objective sphere outside ourselves in which alone all our efforts can be brought to their true fruition. This sphere is the Church and the Church as object of faith. It is strange. As believers who receive the word of God from the mouth of the Church as God's own truth and as the good tidings of our own salvation, we feel ourselves to be faithful children of the Church. We feel ourselves to be so and indeed we are. And yet when we are confronted by this same Church with a truth that is new and startling – we do not merely have to think of the definition of the glorification of the Blessed Virgin, there are plenty of other examples – then we shrink into ourselves. Then we are startled out of the slumber of habit and custom, which we confuse with the quiet confidence of real faith, and we recognise that after all we do not belong so manifestly and so unreservedly as we had somewhat complacently supposed to the sphere of faith that is the holy Church. We suddenly realise that the reason why we had found it easy to accept the earlier truths was that they were *our* truths, our habits of mind, and not because they were those of the Church. But now we have to take ourselves in hand, abstracting wholly, in the initial stages, from the actual content of the new message of which we have become aware, and we must ask ourselves: 'Where do I stand, where do I want to stand in order to hear this message aright, to heed it and to believe in it?' And our answer will be: 'In the faith of the Church'. What, then, does this mean? What do we mean by that acknowledgment which we have made innumerable times with heart and lips from our youth upwards: 'I believe in the holy Catholic Church'?

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The Church is the object of our faith, and, in a mysterious manner, at the same time the dimension in which it exists. In this dimension alone is it possible to have anything like the fulness of Catholic faith. These two aspects of our faith are mutually complementary, and it makes no difference to our present argument at which of the two points the actual act of faith on the part of the individual is initiated in the concrete: whether he believes in the Church first and then in the rest of the matters proposed for his belief because these come from the Church, or whether he first attains to belief in Christ and his word, and goes on from there to belief in the Church as founded by Christ. In any case, where faith is found in its Catholic fulness and its inner firmness, both aspects are present. On the basis of his faith in Christ the believer includes the Church too in his faith [107] in such a way that it immediately becomes the direct medium and rule of faith as such.

As Christians we believe in that word that comes to us from the incarnate Word of the Father. We live and die on the basis of *his* message to us, basing everything with hearts and souls and with all our strength on the fact that there is no other name in heaven or on earth in which we could be blessed than the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. But he is at once the head, the foundation stone and the architect of that entity, visible yet so mysterious, which we call the Church. Like her Master and Head she extends her influence throughout reality in all its dimensions. To her belongs the Spirit whom he has poured out upon all flesh when he departed to the Father at his death, in order that he may come in the Spirit of his Father, who is his Spirit also. To the Church belongs the incarnate Word himself, with the flesh which he took from the Virgin Mary, when, as a son of Adam, he became a member of our race in order that he who sanctifies and they who are sanctified may become a single family, in order that he may sanctify those who are his brethren according to the flesh precisely because she, the Church, has extended his compassion to these, his brethren. This Church is constituted by those whom he has sent into all the world and to all peoples to preach his word. He did this in order that what took place in the very depths of reality (whether we realise it or not) through the incarnation of the Son, his death and his resurrection, may be rendered present to the spirit of man also through the word of his messengers, and may be received in a spirit of obedience and faith into the very centre of man himself, into that dimension in which he is free to be whoever he will be, and so who he ought to be.

This divine reality, Spirit, grace, truth, compassion and love of God, which is the most real factor in the world, however much it may be hidden, is brought about by God through Christ, through his Body, through his word and his commandment, through the authority derived from him, through his sacraments in their palpable and physical reality, their concrete apprehensible presence in the here and now. It is brought about in such a way that (in a manner similar to that in which the body renders the soul present) this reality is at once made present and apprehensible and unambiguously *there*, and at the same time veiled in the lowly guise of the form of a servant. The believer, therefore, possesses the grace of God in this form, and at the same time it is only to the believer that it is [108] recognisable as the true presence of grace. This means that the Church (just as with Christ) is God's eternal compassion and his Body as it exists in space and time, both aspects (again as with Christ) being inseparable yet distinct. Considered as the sphere of grace in this sense, and simultaneously as an historically apprehensible entity, the Church is the sole dimension in which, in the last analysis, anything like the phenomenon of the Catholic faith is possible at all. The Church is the bearer of the message of faith. She has been entrusted with the word of the Lord in the person of the apostles whom Christ sent. She hands it on faithfully to all subsequent generations. It is not handed down simply in the form of literature (not even through scripture), for even scripture is not self-authenticating, but is rather the book of the Church's memories of her own experience, so that the only one who really understands it is

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the Church of the origins, because she has written it with the assistance of the Holy Spirit within her. The word of God in history, which went forth once and for all in Christ and his apostles, does not drift on aimlessly, and, so to say, without an owner on the current of secular history down the centuries. Rather it is carried down in a responsible manner by those who are empowered to uphold it, and who derive their authority from the apostles. As it proceeds down the centuries it is preached, expounded and preserved by the Church, administered by her official ministers in dependence upon the bishops and upon the bishop of Rome as the concrete focal point which binds them together and welds them into a unity, and who is capable of acting in his own person. The Church is the sphere of our faith because in the plenitude of power and the authority imparted to her by Christ, (a power therefore which we, the hearers, are bound in conscience to obey) she testifies to the true doctrine of the word of Christ, and only so makes it possible for us to obtain a clear and unambiguous understanding of it. The fact that we do hearken to this word is not due to any personal initiative on our own part, by which, having found this word lost and drifting somewhere or other in history, we grasp hold of it, but rather due to the fact that it comes to us through its own movement, borne up by those who can trace their mission and the responsibilities and powers with which they have been entrusted in an unbroken chain of authority back to Christ himself. When we speak of a word we mean a word as it exists on the lips of men. When we speak of the word of Christ we mean a word as it exists upon the lips of the Church authorised by Christ. It is because *she* utters it that it is proved to be *his* word.

[109] But this is not the only sense in which the Church is the sphere of our faith. The Church has a priority in belief. The life of God brought to us through what we call faith and love, is first bestowed upon *her*, and upon the individual *in* her. It is not as though she had a separate existence as a mythical entity behind and beyond the individual believers. She is the Church because individuals have taken it upon themselves as an act of personal responsibility and decision to believe. But do not let us forget this: it is precisely this decision that is the act and the work of God, and only truly the salvific act of man when it is faith in Christ as the Word of God already present and real in history. And hence this actual act of faith in the concrete on the part of the individual presupposes that the divine reality is already present in the world. Now this reality is presented to mankind not as a unified group of individuals, but to man as the brother of the Son, one brother among many, as a member of the people called to believe, to man as already inextricably involved from the outset in a *common* destiny of sin and of salvation. The community of those who have been called out of the world, all of whom are in Christ Jesus, the Body of Christ, the house of God which the Lord has built – this community, therefore, is a reality, and can be so (however many further ‘fellowships’ there may be apart from it, and indeed, all the more so because of them) which has, at least in a certain sense, a priority over the individual, so that it sustains him, and without it he himself would not be what in fact he is, and could not act as in fact he is able to act as a member of such a community. The Church, therefore, as the fellowship of the faithful, is not merely the sum total of those who believe, each one on his own responsibility, and who are united to Christ by this fact. Rather it has a priority over the belief of the individual. It supplies the support and the basis of that belief. Certainly that belief is brought about by the Lord of grace and truth, and his act of grace is aimed at *those* men, the community of those joined together in one flesh and in one Spirit. Belief, therefore, is indeed a matter which is utterly personal to each individual man, and yet it is not simply his own ‘private concern’. It follows that faith is only completely and truly possible in the community of the faithful, in the Church. Faith, therefore, always includes the act of trustful and loving surrender to the faith of the Church, active participation in the faith of the divine community of truth, for which the Lord has supplied the basis by giving of his flesh and his Spirit, and by being its true founder. Faith does not only mean accepting what ‘I’ as an individual believe that I have [110] heard. It also

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means accepting what the Church has heard, giving my assent to the 'confession' of the Church. The Church is not merely the upholder of the message of Christ in the sense that she extends it to the individuals (only to disappear once more after the manner of a postman). Rather she is the enduring and abiding medium of faith, that in which faith is posited in order that one voice of praise of the living God may resound as from one mouth and one body, to give glory to his compassion.

However much, therefore, the individual may be sure that 'his' God has bestowed a special revelation upon him, and in a manner exclusive to him alone, he must make sure that in his faith he believes that which all believe. He must always be ready to give his mind in a spirit of submission, humility and obedience to the recognition of faith and the progress in faith which belongs to the Church as a whole. He cannot act as an 'heretic', choosing only that which pleases him as an individual. Always he must submit himself trustfully to the faith of the community of believers, which is always greater and more comprehensive than his own as an individual. Heresy is always more than merely an error concerning some specific point of faith, but rather, prior to any such deviation, error and apostasy from the Church herself, and from that insight into the inscrutable mystery of God which is bestowed upon her as the one recipient of his favour. This mystery is revealed to her as the bride of the Lamb. It is the mystery of the love of Christ made known to her in water and in the word of truth – to her, and to each of us only in so far as we are members and participants in this bride of the Lord. It is of no avail for the individual to try to rearrange and adapt his own personal ideological presuppositions, and so to arrive at Christianity by putting his own personal house in order. He can only be a Christian by entering into that house that is wide enough to shelter all, into the temple which God himself has built from living stones, and upon the rock that is Peter, the foundation of the apostles and prophets, as also of their lawful successors.

The Church, therefore, is always the measure of our faith, the measure and not that which is measured. Certainly she is the one who hears God and obeys him, the one who herself only receives the measure of her faith from the word of revelation, the word of scripture, from that understanding of her faith which God has bestowed upon her in earlier ages. Certainly she humbles herself ever anew in order to hearken to what God is saying to her in his revelation. But it is not for me as an individual to [111] put the Church to the test to see whether she does in fact conform to the measure of her faith as thus conceived, or whether, measured by the standards which do apply to her, she is indeed hearing the word of God aright. If this were the case I would in fact be setting myself up as the standard by which the Church should be measured, raising my personal understanding of the faith and my insight to be the norm of the Church. I would no longer be the one who hearkens to the Church herself. The fact that the Church does indeed hear the word of God aright is guaranteed by the Spirit who is promised to her. In the last analysis there are no norms, rules or principles for determining whether the faith of the Church herself is correct, such as I, as an individual apart from the Church, could use or apply on my initiative, regarding her, as it were, *ab externo* and as an objective entity. Certainly there are standards which do apply to the Church. But the fact that she submits herself to these standards, and applies them correctly in order to arrive at a true explication of her faith – that is the miracle of her *own* Spirit. What these standards are and how they should be applied is something which I as an individual learn precisely from seeing how she, the Church herself, does in fact apply them. And this is the only way in which I can learn this. There is no absolute standpoint apart from her affording a perspective from which she can be rightly regarded. It is only in the Spirit of God himself that she can be judged. Now the moment one decides to stand apart from her in order to judge her, and precisely to the extent that one does this, one has *ipso facto* lost this Spirit. The only objectivity that can be achieved in faith is the subjectivity of the Church. For the objectivity of faith is guaranteed by the Spirit of God who judges all things, and is judged by no-one. But this Spirit is present

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in the Church as her subjectivity, and is present nowhere else. No-one can attempt to measure this, the ultimate standard of all measures. This ultimate standard, in so far as it is apprehensible at all, actually is the Church, since the Spirit of truth has united himself inseparably to her, and to me, the individual, only to the extent that I am standing within her, and have given her the allegiance of my faith by believing what she believes. The Church is simply she who is always at the service of God, and who remains always encompassed by the power of God's truth even though, humanly speaking, she is always on the point of rebelling against the truth of God, even though she remains 'infallible' only by a miracle performed by the Spirit and constantly renewed. But it is precisely because, while remaining free, she is so possessed by the Spirit [112] that she becomes the ever-obedient servant of the truth, it is precisely for this reason and for no other that she becomes the mistress of our faith too. But she becomes this in a manner that is absolute and unconditional.

From my point of view also – where else could I find the firm concrete criterion which I need, one which is not subject to the vagaries of my own spirit and opinions, to judge whether I as an individual and in the personal allegiance of my faith, really do stand in the truth of God? Do my conscience and the inner experiences of my spirit supply such a criterion? No! – For it is precisely this conscience of mine that attests that what my spirit demands is that faith which comes from hearing and obeying, the faith which listens and does not speak itself. But when I believe *in* the Church this does not take away from me the reality of my own inalienable decision of conscience in faith and for faith. I would not in fact be in the Church at all if I had not, of my own free choice and in the grace of God, given her my assent. But what I am seeking is a quality inherent not in the believing subject, but rather in the object of belief a quality which assures me that I am not mistaken as to the true content of my belief. It might be asked whether God *has to* supply me with such a criterion, or whether in fact he *could have* contented himself with assuring me in the witness of my own conscience that what I had heard was in fact *his* truth and not simply the voice of my own heart, so disposed as it is to evil and error. But this question may be left on one side. It is enough that God has, in fact, of his mercy, given me such a criterion: he who hears you hears me. For the fact, therefore, that it is he whom I hear I do not rely merely upon the content of the message or the overwhelming impression which it makes upon me and upon my conscience, but rather upon the fact that this message is spoken precisely by those who have been sent by the Christ of God. According to the word of the Lord himself it is the messenger who provides the guarantee of his own message by the fact that he has himself authentically been sent. And in this sense too the Church is the guarantee of her own teaching and not, *vice versa*, the teaching (judged by *me* to be correct) the guarantee of the Church.

The teaching of the Church is inherent in the Church, and it may seem to authenticate itself by the very fact that it shares in the nature and spirit of the Church, in which humility and freedom are combined. But this is true only because this teaching is precisely an integral element in the Church herself, who can bear witness to herself because she has received her mission from Christ. Only in virtue of this fact is scripture the word [113] which can command obedience. I cannot decide to check the Church's credentials, as it were, by taking scripture away from her (even though it properly belongs to her) and by invoking it against her as a criterion apart. It is *she* who submits herself to the guidance of scripture. But it is not for me to check or to verify whether in fact she is doing this, for in attempting such a thing I would be setting myself up apart from the Church in order to judge her and to see whether in fact she was really doing this. The only guarantee that she is allowing herself to be guided by scripture is her own Spirit. If I wanted to take scripture alone as the sole concrete embodiment of the word of God which commands my allegiance, then, whether I realised it or not, only two alternatives would be open to me: either I would be entering into dialogue with a book which as such was incapable of defending itself against my wrong ideas or of

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offering any resistance to my false interpretations, and in relation to which I must in the nature of things have the upper hand, *or* (the second alternative) I would have to have recourse to the Spirit of the Lord which gives this book its life and defends it. But in that case, once more, the question would have to be raised as to whether in the last analysis it was the book upon which the Spirit had descended and not rather the men whom that Spirit had sent to proclaim his message and so, amongst other things, to attest *a priori* to the fact that what they wrote had come from the Spirit himself. And when the question is put in this form as to whether the inspiration of the Spirit bears in the first instance upon the book or upon the men sent by that Spirit, the answer can only be: upon the men.

The conclusion of all this is that he is truly a believer who hearkens to the Church and believes in the Church.

In our attempt to define what the right approach should be to the problems which arise when some specific dogma is defined in the Church one further point remains for our consideration, that namely of how the faith of the Church makes itself clearly perceptible to us in the Church.[1] A doctrine of the faith can be made explicit simply by the fact that it is preached by the official teachers of the Church universally throughout the world, and that it is believed by the hearers of the word. Those properly authorised to perform this duty of the 'ordinary' proclaiming of [114] doctrine are the bishops as successors of the apostles in union with the bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter, the head of the apostles. What these bishops preach with the assistance of the Spirit as the one faith of the Church as a whole and as the word of the living God who reveals himself *is* the word of the Lord, and as such is binding in conscience upon us to believe. But the proclamation of the Church's teaching can also take other forms. Prior to a new and more emphatic promulgation of teaching the Church can give added strength to her own teaching and her faith in general by bringing together the official teachers of the Church, the bishops together with the Pope, and thereby providing an assurance that what the individual official teacher is teaching and what his Church has learnt from him and holds to be true is in fact the teaching and the faith of the Church as a whole, and is thereby confirmed by the witness of God himself. In this way the teaching and understanding of the faith on specific points can acquire an intrinsic certainty, and the council can then go on to proclaim it solemnly by an extraordinary act of the teaching authority of the Church. Yet a third course is conceivable, one which, so to say, constitutes a middle path between the ordinary and extraordinary acts of the Church's teaching authority. In conformity with the position enjoyed by the bishop of Rome among his brethren, in virtue of which he is the teacher in an immediate and direct sense of them, the bishops, and all the faithful also, and in virtue of which he has the task of strengthening their faith, he, the bishop of Rome, as the successor of Peter, and as the chief teacher and shepherd of the whole Church, can lay down authoritatively what is in fact the official teaching of the Church and the faith of the Church as a whole. The Church can reflect upon the tenets of her own faith and define her position in regard to them as binding in conscience upon the individual, and when she does this the Spirit of God does not permit her to fall into error. Furthermore, as the chief teacher of the Church the Pope occupies that position in the Church as a whole at which, even if only in principle, this infallibility of hers acquires its concrete embodiment. For these reasons, when as shepherd in this supreme sense he promulgates his teaching in a definitive manner for the whole Church he enjoys that immunity from error[2] with which God willed his Church to be endowed in her knowledge of him. His '*ex cathedra*' definition is [115] infallible. It is

[1] On the whole range of questions connected with this problem cf. especially K. Rahner – K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, J. Feiner – M. Löhrer eds. (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 622-707, esp, pp. 639 ff., 692 ff., 769 ff., 7774 ff. (with extensive bibliography).

[2] For the differences of opinion on this 'freedom from error' cf. K. Rahner, 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', *Theological Investigations* VI (London & Baltimore Md, E.T. 1969), pp. 295-312.

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this because the Lord ordained that his *Church* should act as the foundation and the support of truth. The Pope is equipped with this freedom from error to the extent that he is on the one hand a member of the Church and on the other as such precisely the visible head of the Church. And in virtue of this his decision is 'of itself' binding upon all the faithful in such a way that if it were false the whole Church would fall into an error of faith.

The manner in which a conciliar or papal definition of doctrine of this kind comes into existence in the concrete can assume the most varied forms. It can be developed in the midst of fierce controversies or against a background of peace. It can be directed against some heresy that is in process of arising or it can constitute the peaceful culmination of a process of self-reflection by which the Church discovers her identity anew in the developing awareness of her faith. Viewed in terms of practical human expediency it can be evoked by the most varied situations in the field of human thought: by developments in theology, by certain attitudes arising in the realm of spirituality, by experiences, whether good or bad, which the Church undergoes in the course of her history, or by a thousand other factors. It is conceivable that these human situations, which in practice have acted as stimuli and so contributed to such a definition of faith, were of a nature that was anything but pleasant or welcome: the rivalries of opposing schools, political influences, unenlightened devotionalism, reactionary tendencies and resentments – all these can be, and have already been, contributing factors in this sense. As such their influence can be discerned right from the outset of the history of dogma and of the councils.

It is perfectly possible that – if we may put it in this way – the divine logic in such events may be far from simply coinciding with what human logic and human designs would have suggested in arriving at such a decision. The theology arising from the prior deliberations which, at the human level, constituted a contributing factor towards an eventful decision of this sort can in historical terms be ill-informed. Technically speaking it may have been far too limited in its outlook. Humanly speaking it may have been grossly inadequate and lacking in vitality. Such a decision may – viewed purely historically and from a 'this-worldly' standpoint – have been taken in an intellectual atmosphere which later turned out to be unfortunate or at least overtaken by historical events, and which therefore disappeared. Such considerations may even strike the [116] contemporaries of those engaged in making the decision and those actually involved in the conflict of ideas which precedes it. It may fill such people with anxiety and fear, and, from the human point of view, make it immeasurably more difficult for them to give their assent of faith to such a definition. Such a definition can, however true it may be, be in a certain sense 'one-sided'. I mean by this that there may be other truths, no less true than the one actually defined, which it may be necessary to set alongside it in order to provide a counterpoise to it, and so to ensure that it is the truth in all its aspects and as a balanced whole that is actually proclaimed. Yet in the actual definition which is produced these further supplementary truths may fail to be expressed at the same time and with equal clarity. All this is part of the human lot to which we are all subject; our experience of the divine truth necessarily takes place in the history of the Church, in our own human history. Yet in all the vicissitudes of that history it never ceases to be the word of God. It can be degraded; it can be circumscribed in the interests of human – all too human – ambitions, feelings etc.; it can be unworthy in its formulation through human short-sightedness and narrow-mindedness. Even to the view of a Christian – for this too is subject to human limitations and short-sightedness – it may seem inexplicably bound up with, and conjoined to error, to the point of being logically speaking hopelessly paradoxical. As a result every instinct, and even the conscience of such a Christian may be in revolt against it. But there is one thing which it cannot do: cease to be what it is, the truth of God in the mouth of the Church. But this is precisely what would be the case if what the Church with her ultimate teaching authority, proclaimed as her faith were in fact to turn out to be error. The divine

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truth has an extremely human history. This may be. Blessed is he who is not scandalised at the servile guise in which he encounters it!

Such a truth, defined as doctrine by the Church, may have a psychological background as avid for new ideas as that of the Greeks, as enthusiastic as that of the Romans, as complicated and recondite as that of the Germans. It may have all the limitations of 'primitive' (i.e. held back from developing) theology. We may have the impression that those who formulated it had no profound understanding of the restrictions imposed upon those who were 'against' this doctrine in the period when the faith of the Church was first achieving its self-awareness. It may be that the theologians who were 'for' this doctrine achieved a most unjust victory in influencing the Church's official teaching in this way, yet believe that it has [117] thereby been confirmed that they are the 'better' theologians. All this may be the case, and much else besides of a similar nature. But this does not mean that one should allow one's attention to be diverted from the ultimate reality and the profundity of what is taking place when the teaching of the Church is made explicit in its authentic reality as the outcome of her reflecting upon herself. One who does allow his attention to be diverted in this manner is like the man who will only allow that something is alive when the life in it can be defined in terms of 'organic chemistry', one whose idea of the things pertaining to the spirit is limited to those phenomena which can be tested by the methods of association psychology or behaviourism. It must be insisted once and for all that it is not theology *alone*, whether in its philological or its historical branches, nor is it personal logical deductions *alone* that define the limits within which we must remain in order rightly to understand the Church's teaching. Rather the Church herself, who possesses the Spirit, defines those limits. This Spirit and his power cannot be translated in any adequate sense into the work of the exegete with his philological investigations, or into the work of the theologian with his researches into history, or into that of the logician with his methods of speculation. Certainly the Spirit does work in all of these fields, but he is always more than the sum total of this work. Any other interpretation would draw the knowledge which faith brings down to the level of mere secular knowledge. No-one can test out this working of the Spirit in his own person. No one can say 'See, it is precisely *there*, and what is there is nothing else than this working of the Spirit'. All that one can do is as a Christian who believes in the Church and in her Spirit to say: 'If the Church speaks so solemnly and definitively then the Spirit *has already* performed his work: in the work of the theologians, in the prayers of the devout, in the researches into scripture. The Spirit works through all this, and – a little perhaps – in spite of all this, and certainly his working extends beyond all this. He who entertains reservations with regard to this Spirit, he who wants to subject his power to criteria which he himself can apply is, in effect, denying the true nature of the Church. (He might seek to use criteria in this sense by attempting, for instance, to establish whether the historical method really has been properly applied – obviously according to his own personal judgment – or whether the scriptural exegesis on which the official teaching is based is up to the standard of modern criticism – again, obviously according to his own judgment, or up to the standards of 'science', of which, of course, [118] the individual himself is the authentic representative). When the teaching authorities of the Church require the assent of faith to some defined doctrine, then there are no precautions or safety measures (whether in the writings of the Church or in any *a priori* established methods of theology) to ensure that the Spirit of the Church is not making any mistake.

All this should not be taken as implying that the Church should either underestimate or neglect either honest exegesis, genuine historical theology, true logic or information of all kinds and ranging over as wide an area of human knowledge as possible. For the Pope, the Council and the theologians alike it is a solemn duty conscientiously to avail themselves of all these means. They cannot leave it to the Spirit as though he were present for the purpose of dispensing them from what they can and must perform for themselves. If they neglect this

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duty either wholly or in part then God has means enough and punishments enough in his providence and judgment to teach the individuals concerned that they must not tempt God. But even when those actively engaged in preaching and developing the Church's teaching (or alternatively reducing it to stagnation) must be condemned as sinful and stupid men, still even in this case – indeed more than ever in this case – the faults of men remain encompassed by the pity and truth of God, and cannot escape the truth of God. When a man acts and speaks definitively as the Church's official representative, and in the name of God, then however sinful his way of exercising his responsibilities may be, he will never succeed in changing the truth of God into error. In certain cases proof, whether real or supposed, may be adduced that the human element in the process of arriving at a doctrinal definition on the part of the Church is vitiated by the faults of wrong information, over-hastiness, narrow-mindedness or theological over-traditionalism. But this is never a proof that in such a case God himself has allowed human error to be promulgated in place of the attestation of his own truth. In the proclamation of the Church's truth the guilt of the human instruments is no criterion for denying that what she proclaims is true and binding and sublime.

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[119]

PART TWO

Mysteries of the Life of Jesus

[121]

7

CHRISTMAS, THE FESTIVAL OF ETERNAL YOUTH

As the festivals return each year in their inexorable rhythm it is difficult to speak of them in a way that is worthy to any extent at all of the eternal youth of the mystery that we celebrate. Preacher and hearers alike are weary in heart and spirit. The gospel words, consecrated as they are by a holy tradition, are in their effect upon us, like window panes that have become misted over. They actually obscure our vision of the reality that lies beyond. The words fall from the pulpit like dead birds from a wintry sky. And all this is only one symptom of the general weariness that pervades our hearts, a weariness that comes from the experience of disappointment and futility, and which is our silent companion as we journey towards death.

But it is precisely because of this that the festival has so vital a contribution to make for us of today. It is the festival of the birth of him who is the Son of God and true man, of him who, in his creaturely being and activity, was so totally and radically given over to God right from the outset that in very truth his life in its creatureliness is the life of God. It is not a festival which is held in celebration of a past that has long since vanished, but one which celebrates a present, this in turn constituting the beginning of an eternal future that is even now approaching. It is the festival of the birth of eternal youth. A child is born to us, but not a child who simply begins to die from the moment when it starts to live. This child is rather one in whom the eternal youth of God breaks in upon this world definitively and victoriously; into this world, which seems only able to go on living in that the death of one of its inhabitants makes way for another to be born. To that extent this world of ours cannot escape from the despairing cycle of birth and death. What we celebrate today is the advent of that child whose true youth is not restricted merely to that meagre stock of life which is allotted to *us* at birth and which is slowly but [122] inexorably used up in the course of our lives, but is rather the eternal youth of God himself, the youth of God who, eternally ancient yet eternally new, is the endless fulness of eternal life. This eternal youth has taken root in that sphere in which we, who are under sentence of death, still live. Thereby it has not simply abolished death, but has undertaken the higher enterprise of making life victorious, of submitting itself to death in order to make death itself a means by which we ourselves can make our own this eternal youth of God. At Christmas he whose death was the birth of our eternal life himself already began to die. It was on this day that it was revealed for the first time that the life that is allotted to us on our pilgrimage is not merely something that we inherit from former generations, not merely cosmic energy, not merely the spirit which, in itself, is free from earthly limitations only to the extent that it can be painfully aware of its own finitude. The life of which we are now speaking is rather the eternal fulness of the life of God himself, which knows no death, offered to us as free creatures, so that when we accept this life of God himself it may bring about eternal life in us. Right from the very origins this life too has been made present in the world, and it drives the history of the world onwards with a speed that grows ever more daring so that its progress is accelerated not by terror of death and the void but by that life which lies at the very heart and centre of it, and which God himself has decreed. So has it always been. But in the child who has been born today (we can say ‘today’

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because his birth at that point in history is precisely not something that belongs to a vanished past) something has been revealed for the first time upon the visible surface, so to say, of historical reality. And this is that God, whose glory transcends all transient things is himself, as an act of his own free grace, the ultimate power which lies behind the world. Or let us see this same truth the other way round. It is precisely in our minds and hearts that the experience of the history of the world can properly take place. And when in our minds and hearts we experience this ultimate and intrinsic dynamism in history, tending towards the infinite, we can in all confidence give the name of 'God' to the goal towards which this dynamism is tending, and to the interior power of it. Thereby we can actually perceive for the first time what the word 'God' really means. This is something that was initially revealed and initially brought to its fulness in the Christmas child. For this is the child who today has entered upon the journey of his own personal history, a journey which leads through death right to God himself. And when this [123] child arrives at that point his whole being is totally transformed, for the end of this journey is that state which we are accustomed to call the resurrection. In him the world has won its first definitive victory. For the first time it has achieved its predestined transformation into the life of God himself. For the first time the high points of its history have been plunged into the unapproachable light. Today that victory has commenced which proceeds from the innermost depths of God's own eternal nature, to seize the world at one single point, the point that is called Jesus, and to take it up into the innermost life of God, full of eternal youth.

How frigid and artificial all this sounds – what we can say of Christmas as the birth of eternal youth! Words such as these have to be turned by the individual into the life of his own heart unless they are to remain at the level of mere rhetoric. But how can such a transformation of words from without into the reality within one's heart be possible? For this there is no blueprint. But at the same time we can say this much: Act first and foremost as he who has been born today acted in his own life. He had to do with the lilies of the field in all their beauty, with the sparrows, with the fresh green ears of the growing corn, with his mother, with the malice of his enemies, with hunger and thirst, with the bewilderment of his friends, in short with life just as it is lived from day to day in its bitterness and its beauty, without any falsification, without exaggerating either the good or the evil in it. When you accept *this* life, opening yourself simply, trustfully, obediently and without protest to its single ineffable meaning, a meaning which pervades it throughout in all its incalculable complexities, then you have begun to celebrate Christmas as the festival of eternal youth, for then your life will keep flowing, ever open to fresh experiences which will not be frozen either by that obtuseness which kills or by some obstinately held ideology which seeks to act as schoolmaster and so to provide a wise guide to life as it leads on to ever-fresh surprises. But you, when you open yourself to the inner meaning of life in this sense, do not give life its meaning *ab externo*, but rather let that meaning that is already present, even if mysteriously, in its innermost depths, rise up from the roots of your nature, endowed as it is with grace, in a quite simple and unremarkable manner into the sphere of freedom, where it finds expression in the so-called everyday virtues. We are concerned here with the God-given meaning of existence which is intrinsic in those acts which are performed in freedom, and thereby given finality and permanency. It is [124] this meaning that becomes the mystery which you now accept and which you entrust yourself to for guidance.

Listen, then, to the quiet of your own heart. The message of Christmas's eternal youth must come from within in order that the message which comes from without, from the pulpit, can be understood and translated into living reality. Perhaps then you will first hear many terrifying voices, the words of which seem to be running into each other in confusion: the voices of everyday cares, of the disappointments of life, of secret longings and many others; a strange choir! They are like an orchestra in which the instruments are first trying out their

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powers independently, and in which no kind of harmony seems yet to have been achieved. Rightly understood, however, all the voices of the heart which one can hear if one keeps quiet enough, speak of the youth of eternal life, however complex and confusing the manner in which these voices seem to break across one another. For the voices of love, of peace, of trust, of protection, of the blessings of a life that is exalted above the common, speak explicitly of a youth that endures for ever, and is subject to no limitations. And the voices of disappointment, of emptiness and of doubt are in fact once more simply protests against death, and as such themselves bear witness to the life of which we have been speaking. For a death that was more absolute and more comprehensible would simply be accepted in its own right. Such a death would give rise to no protests. Those subject to it would simply accept it for what it is, and want to die. Death is in no sense a counterpart to life, on an equal footing with it. The effect of grace upon us is that we experience an absolute and unconditional longing for eternal life. And in the light of this all experience of death and all sense of protest against death arising from it is seen to be simply something secondary and derived. It is there merely because life has not yet run its full course in freedom through history.

But when all the voices of this life blend into a single basic harmony in the quiet of one's heart, and all the movements are combined in the one single movement which is basic and primary, when this single basic movement of life is neither interrupted nor held back by any attitude of mistrust or any secret doubts, then it can, on the contrary, achieve the fulness of its nature as sheer infinite freedom. Then all the forces which are innate in man, and which have their ultimate source in God himself, speak together and say: 'I believe in eternal life'. But when the inner man trembles and quails before the utter boldness of his own demand for [125] eternal life, when all this seems to the heart in its poverty almost too good to be true, then the voices of the heart must hearken to the message of the child that is born today, and in the harmony of both these voices together the miracle of a sure faith in eternal life, that is in the birth of Christ, our eternal youth, can be worked in our own hearts. Both voices together, that of the spirit and that of history can become one, do actually become one, because one and the same deed of God has created both voices and sustains them in being in a single act of God's bestowal of himself upon the world. This one word formed out of two separate words promises the youth of eternal life, and it effects what it proclaims, for it is the creative word of God himself. And this word has fashioned the void that is in our life, dedicated as it is to death, only in order to fill that void by imparting to us the plenitude of its own infinite and boundless life. Let heaven rejoice, let the earth exult – so we sing today. A child is born to us. Today the day of the new redemption has dawned. Who, then, has come? He who will accomplish what is new in the old, for the old is still there. What does he accomplish? He accomplishes his own presence in us. Who is he? The unique and ineffable mystery which, nevertheless, we really do apprehend. *How* has he come? The answer came in the form of a question; God came as man in order that we might understand that by the power of the grace which is in it the question, even as it is put, contains its own answer within it. But even then how has this ineffable mystery actually *come* to us, when already and at all times it pervades our existence? It is because it is with us now not as something that is remote and that judges us, but rather as something that is unspeakably near to us and that brings us pardon; something by means of which all who love sustain their lives. And this ineffable mystery has also come because it willed to come in spirit and flesh since man as a unified compositum can be redeemed only in both of these. But what *effect* does this ineffable mystery have, which we call God? It brings us the youth of eternal life in the midst of our mortality, our blindness and our futility. Do you believe this? Lord I do believe, help thou my unbelief! If you believe you have eternal life. And if you think that you do not believe have trust! God will bestow belief upon you, that belief that is recognisable to him. A child is born to us. The eternal youth of the immortal God has appeared as the true interiority of our own life.

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[126]

PRAYER

God, the eternal mystery of our life, by the birth of your own word of love in our flesh you have made the glory of your life in its eternal youth into our life, and have caused it to appear in triumph. Grant us that when we experience the disappointments, of our lives we may be enabled to believe that your love, which you yourself are and which you have bestowed upon us, is the eternal youth that is our own true life.

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[127]

8

HOLY NIGHT

Everywhere in the world and every year when these days come round the talk is of the 'holy night', that is the night of *Christmas* (= German 'Weihnacht', literally 'consecrated night'), and everywhere 'Silent night, holy night' is sung. This way of referring to Christmas is simply an echo of the liturgy. For the mystery of the birth of the Lord and his resurrection are the only two mysteries the liturgical celebrations of which begin during the night. And the liturgy calls this night of Christmas the 'nox sacratissima', the night of supreme holiness and consecration. The Epiphany, the Ascension and Pentecost are festivals of the day. But at Christmas and Easter the night is the time in which the divine mystery of salvation enters into our lives. As the reason why this should be so in the case of Christmas we might be tempted to suggest that it was from considerations of fittingness and privacy for these are necessary at any birth. But the fact that Christmas and Easter are sacred *nights* shows that something more is intended by the celebration of night as holy in this case than simply the quiet and privacy which should attend upon the beginning of any human life. And this serves as an indication to us that there is some common factor which applies to both festivals.

Taken together these two festivals are the festivals of the beginning of our redemption. Taken together they give promise of that day for which we are waiting in faith. It is because both of them celebrate the beginning of the victory of a day that is eternal, because, taken together, they signify the victory of a new beginning – it is for these reasons that both of them take the form of celebrations of supremely holy nights.

There is a strange ambiguity about the phenomena of our human world which serve as the symbols of salvation (or the loss of salvation). This is not because it is possible for man, faced with these simple things of the earth, to 'get everything mixed up'. Where genuine signs and manifestations of God's salvation are concerned man does not 'get mixed up'. The [128] real reason why these symbols should be ambiguous is that these things, which are the signs of salvation, are subject to change as the history of salvation unfolds, for this history is also the history of the world, and these signs are themselves drawn into the history of salvation as it unfolds from Adam right up to the second coming of Christ, in which salvation comes into the world (and not simply into the spirit) in its full actuality. The relationship in which these symbols stand to the history of salvation is not that of static and immutable entities. They are not simply 'used' for the purpose of pointing to something outside themselves that has nothing to do with their own intrinsic natures. It is because the world itself has been drawn into this process of change which is taking place in the 'now' of the period since Christ, and which is to issue in a new heaven and a new earth, and it is because this change is still continuing, that these things, considered precisely as signs, are so strangely ambiguous. This is why they speak to us of both the old and the new.

The symbolism of night is a case in point. Is night not the symbol of that time when no one can work (Jn 9, 4), of darkness and of the shadow of death, in which we sinners are imprisoned (Lk 1:79), of that sinister darkness which overtakes us, and in which we cannot remain (Jn 12:35 f., 46)? Is not every night a reminder of that night in which *he* was betrayed, and in which Judas went out (Jn 13:20; 1 Cor 11:24; Lk 22:53), of that night in which the most that can be hoped for is that it is already far advanced and that day is coming at last (Rom 13:12), that night in which a man's soul will be required of him (Lk 12:20), and which threatens constantly to become fixed and permanent in the form of the 'exterior darkness'? And yet . . . Night is also the time when the Lord comes (Lk 12:38), appearing at midnight as

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a bridegroom arriving at the nocturnal marriage-feast (Mt 25:6). Night can be the time of heavenly visions full of consolation and divine guidance (Acts 16:9; 18:9 etc.), the time when the Son raises his heart in prayer to his Father (Lk 6:12). And was not that night when he came to his own, to the dark stable of the world, filled with heavenly song (Lk 2:8 ff.)?

Our night is on the point of becoming a holy night. The day has not yet come to which there is no longer any evening. That time still prevails which holds all things in bondage to the law of death; that time which dissolves things, deprives them of their firm outlines and draws everything back into a darkness inhabited by the ghosts of the past. One can utter lyrical praises to this night of ours as the time of stillness and unity [129] in which all things are gently reconciled; as that which provides a basis for a general stillness, rest and harmony which embraces all things, and yet which is pregnant of all that the future contains as well; as the time when everything returns to itself once more, in order to begin afresh to achieve a brighter future. One can praise the night on the grounds that it is richer than the day, for day makes things clear only by separating them off one from another. One can imagine that it is the night that is the time that is full of mysteries and that by comparison with what it promises day is a mere disappointment, for night does not yield up its hidden riches to the day. But all these experiences of what night means would be so much false romanticism, or else the faint afterglow, as it were, of our enjoyment of day; for night is that which issues from the death of day, and in itself it is really nothing more than empty darkness. It would be false romanticism in this sense if it were not for the fact that into our night-time one has been born who is more than merely one element among the rest, caught up in the despairing cycle of day and night. This cycle consists of an incessant alternation of these two elements, in which neither can prevail over the other. For each of the two elements, day and night, as its turn comes round, must perforce call the other into being and give way to it, and thereby the radical insufficiency of each is revealed. But it is not in virtue of its very nature that night becomes Christmas night. In itself night is simply empty darkness, and it would be false to the facts to pretend that this intrinsic emptiness of night could ever be a hidden fulness. The reason that our night can become, in the deepest and most all-pervasive sense, Christmas night is that he has been born who, as Son of the Father and Word of the Father, is above all time and above the world itself. It is because he who has been born in the time of night is, from his very origins, not a child of time at all, that is of day and night. Every night can be Christmas night because he was born into our night, and thereby filled it with every kind of promise and every kind of miracle; because God has sent down his grace upon the emptiness, the poverty and the darkness of night, and because he has predestined it to issue into the day of his own light, a day to which there shall be no evening. It is in virtue of this, and only in virtue of this that night becomes the promise of that true day. Only because of this is it that day which is already on the point of dawning, the time in which the light shines darkly because the fulness of it is already so inexpressibly near. Saving history as Christians understand it is not simply an interpretation of the natural order such that [130] even without any such interpretation the order would still be just the same; rather it is the process by which the natural order itself becomes radically and all-pervasively transformed into something which only the eye of faith can recognise for what it is, because only to the eye of faith is it apparent that nature too is involved in the order of redemption. It is only in virtue of the fact that the Word of the Father has entered into the world, and has become, in the power of his Spirit, the law which lies at the very roots of the whole natural order, that these things which are in the world can be symbols of that which is to come. Yet they are this in objective fact. And this is why it is precisely the believer, and, in the last analysis, only the believer who can afford to be a ‘romantic’ as he is, for instance, precisely when he sees every night as the promise and the image of the holy night of Christmas.

In that one night every night, night as such, is redeemed and consecrated. Henceforward

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there is no longer any darkness upon this earth which may not turn out to be the shadowy womb of eternal light. Henceforward when any man closes his eyes he cannot be sure that he will not open them again upon a greater light. Henceforward there is no descent into formless darkness which may not become blessed and fruitful by leading to an ascent into everlasting light. There is not a single day upon this earth which, as it fades quietly into its evening twilight, cannot speak to us of the promise that a day will come to which there is no evening. That future which we await in a spirit of faith and hope as already coming to meet us we call after the day, the light, and other phenomena associated with these. And in this we are right. For these phenomena associated with light are the prime witnesses of the fact that God is pure luminous affirmation, and that the things which God has made, and which are still in process of developing, will not always be caught up in an endless cycle between two equal poles, day *and* night, light *and* darkness, yes *and* no. But is there not some special time – Christmas, for example – when the 'no' which we choose to say to this world can become a 'yes' in the language of heaven? Let us remember that it is the things that *are not* that God has called, that it is through death that life has been given to us. And again we have to recognise that *all things* come from him who is above *all things*. He cannot be expressed, therefore, even by the phenomena of this world associated with light. And yet night too is worthy of our praise. We have to recognise that this too belongs to God (Ps 74:16), and so that to the eye of our faith the light of eternity is already visible even in it, while [131] our ears already hear the hymns of the heavenly choirs with which it is filled.

But in doing this we are acting as sober watchmen who know that God has come into our night in order to lead us forth from it into his eternal day. Christmas night (Weih*nacht*) is celebrated as the beginning of that day in which the sun will never more go down. The reason that the Christian can make the night a festival in this way, and celebrate it as supremely holy, is that he is a child of the day. Only he can look into the darkness without perverting his own nature who knows that the night is already on the point of drawing finally and for all time to its close. The Christian does not, so to say, become intoxicated with a morbid love of the night, as though it held a poisonous sweetness for him. Rather in the boldness of faith he walks bravely through the night which God has made, but which he has also transformed when he brought Christmas into being. We keep a sober watch through the night like the shepherds in the fields. And like them too in the night of our present lives we perform our everyday duties quietly and without question. And then still in the night we hear tidings of the light. There shall be no more night there (Rev. 21:25) because *here* night has become Christmas night. This is why we can praise the night in our Christmas celebrations: 'Silent night, Holy night'.

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[132]

9

PEACE ON EARTH

It is customary to speak of Christmas as a festival of peace. But if we are thinking of the Christian meaning of Christmas, and not merely of how it is celebrated in the family and the broader social units, it is not immediately obvious why it should be thought of in this way. For why should the coming of the Word of God in human flesh as an act of compassion simply in itself and as such signify peace? While it is true that scripture itself contains references to the peace which Christ brings, still this is more often and more explicitly associated with his death on the Cross. *Prima facie*, therefore, the only biblical text which seems to provide any justification for this idea is Luke's reference to the angelic choirs which appeared at Christmas and sang: 'Peace on earth to men who have found favour with God'.

Before we invoke this text, however, or before we wrongly take it as a palliative for the anxieties of life on this earth, turning Christmas into a festival of peace in the secular sense, it is fitting to give some initial consideration to what peace really means as referred to at this point in scripture.

For a point that immediately strikes one is that what the angels tell us here about the peace of Christmas follows upon what they have just said about the glory of God in the highest. And this in itself transfers us into a quite different world from that of the politicians and philanthropists who have so much to say on the subject of peace, whether sincerely or merely rhetorically according to circumstances. Peace as conceived of here in the bible is the outcome and the reflection of the glory of God. But what is this glory of God? Viewed precisely in the context of Christmas it is not primarily or initially something that *we* pay to God. It is that glory which God himself makes to shine out by performing a deed of his omnipotent compassion in the world of darkness and guilt. It is because he himself comes, therefore, because he himself condescends to us, coming to forgive [133] us and redeem us, that God is present in the world in his glory. And it is this that makes that glory manifest to men. It is for this reason too – this is the message of scripture – that there is peace, peace at least for those who accept this glorious and saving deed of God in a spirit of faith, for those whose inward eyes and hearts are open in love to perceive and to receive what God is offering them at this point: redemption from their sins. Even so, however, the question still remains, how does peace come to him who accepts this glory of God in a spirit of faith?

Let us put the question once more: What is it which takes place at Christmas? Our reply is that the Word of God has become flesh and dwelt among us. But what does this mean? This is that inexpressible mystery which we believe because in the last analysis the only possibility open to man is to believe *either* in the abyss of emptiness and nothingness *or* in the incomprehensible mystery of hidden blessedness. All *intermediary* positions between this immeasurable abyss on the one hand, and this utter sublimity on the other, cannot in the long run be maintained. So far as we Christians are concerned it is the incomprehensible mystery of hidden blessedness that we believe in. But what we mean by this is not some kind of utopian ideal which is to come at some future point, but which has nothing to do with the present world in which we live. No, the incomprehensible mystery of blessedness – we call it God – has already entered into this world itself. God has fashioned this world with its terrors, its conflicts and its ultimate and profound instability only with the proviso that he himself will accept it just as it is, that it belongs to him, that he will endure it and bring it to its due consummation by his own power and by his own fate. That consummation, namely, which a created being can only attain to if it is supported by the reality of God himself or the

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environment of being which is proper to God, and not merely by the perishable beings which he has created. The eternal rejoicing of the eternal God has itself been made to become the heart of the world. Within the indissoluble unity of his own life he has enclosed all its conflicts, all the onslaughts of its denizens one upon another, internecine in intensity though they are, and has managed so to contain them that they do not break out of this unity of the divine life in which all things remain unified and tend towards the point of reconciliation as the one end of them all. The mystery of Christmas has a twofold message for us. First the conflict between creatures which are mutually opposed is taken up into the unity of the one God and Creator who is over all things. From this position of his, high over all [134] creatures and unaffected by the opposition between them, he has created light and darkness, heaven and earth, the visible and the invisible. But there is more to it than this. Even though this conflict may be allowed to take its course and in fact be given free rein, still it is contained and already, even as it rages, it is transcended by the fact that God himself has taken into himself all things even in their conflicts one with another. This is what has taken place in Jesus. It might seem that this is too little; that such a process of reconciliation, in which conflicting creatures are taken up by God into the peace of his own unity, should take a quite different form, one in which the power and brilliance of such a deed would be made fully manifest. But to expect anything of this kind could only lead to disappointment. The reconciliation must take place in the Son of Man; in a single human life, in its pettiness, in its brevity, in its ordinariness and poverty, with its death. For if God really does accept that which we ourselves are, endures that which takes place in the internecine strife which is waged in the world outside us as well as in the interior of our own hearts, then this must be the form in which he does so accept these things. It must be small, average and unremarkable precisely in this way. Otherwise he would not in fact once more be truly and precisely in that position in which we ourselves find ourselves.

By the fact of Jesus becoming man the one who is unity itself has accepted all the complexity and conflicts of human existence and truly identified himself with them. But this cannot derogate from the ultimate reconciliation achieved by the unity which lies at the roots of his own being. Moreover this One who is unity itself has endured all this conflict, and has thereby brought it to its ultimate point of reconciliation in his own history. And it is for these reasons that what lies at the very heart and centre of all reality is peace and not that state of inward contradiction which dissipates and annihilates. Conflict there still is in the world and in the heart of man alike. Strife there still is, seemingly internecine in its intensity. All things still seem to be irreconcilably at war with one another. But however much we, caught up as we are in this disharmony and agitation, may sigh for peace as for a distant utopia, still reconciliation is already there at the heart of things. We must make sure that it is believed and accepted in that God-in-creaturehood, the glory of God, comes to be accepted. Things are at enmity one with another so long as they have not discovered the greater unity which transcends them all and at the same time unites them. The all-encompassing which already belongs to the [135] encompassed, the reconciler who already belongs to the contradictory opposites – he is there, since God himself has become incarnate. He who does not accept this unity in a spirit of faith must not complain that his heart, his life, the world, are torn apart in conflict and devoid of peace. But the reason that we can accept God in this way is that he has come in the flesh that belongs to our world, and precisely because he has accepted all the anguish generated in this world of fleshly creatures who tear one another apart and are torn in their turn. He has accepted this in patience, in longsuffering, in endurance, in hope because he, who is our peace, has created peace by accepting flesh in its sinfulness, and by being obedient even in the midst of this internecine conflict, even to the point of death itself. Thus at that point at which patience and resignation begin to evince themselves in the heart, where there is assent to one’s lot even though it is incomprehensible and crucifying, the unreserved

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acceptance of opposition, endurance, the humility which does not seek to understand or to control – where there is a certain sharing in the achievement of that event which took place at Christmas by the power of God: all is accepted and all has the promise of peace.

The only way in which man can have peace is to accept the incomprehensible God in the incomprehensibility of our own existence and lot. But one can accept both of these because God himself has accepted us when he himself came in the inward conflict of our own flesh. Would not the beginning of eternal peace be there if at Christmas we were to say a quiet 'Yes' to God who came, accepted us, divided and broken though we were, and in his own person brought us reconciliation and unity?

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[136]

10

SEE, WHAT A MAN!

Man is a complex and changeable being. It is no blame to him not always to be the same, nor is it demanded of him that he shall be so. For this reason it is difficult to define who and what he really is. There is much that he himself cannot speak of with any willingness. He flees from himself. He is able to do this because it is only possible to reflect upon and speak of one's self when one has time and leisure to do so. But among the factors which are intrinsic to his make-up there is one in particular, that he finds it impossible to speak of, one that reduces him to dumbness. How might a portrayal of man be expected to appear if it were designed to throw precisely this element into relief? The element that makes him what he is, yet what he is unwilling to admit that he is, and is not prepared to be.

It would have to be the picture of a dying man, for though we are indeed unwilling to die, we are nevertheless given over to death to such an extent that death pervades all things for us even in this present life as a sinister power. The dying man would have to be suspended between heaven and earth, for we are not fully at home either here or there. Heaven is too remote from us, and earth too is far from being a dwelling place in which we can feel ourselves really secure. The man in our picture would have to be alone. For when we arrive at our final hour the impression is that our fellow men feel shy and embarrassed (because they, in fact, are not yet ready for that stage in their lives), and that they leave us alone. The man in the picture would have to be depicted as though two intersecting lines, one horizontal and one vertical, were passing through his body. For the heart of man is, so to say, bisected by, and becomes the point of intersection for two such lines. The horizontal one extends out on either side of him as though striving to include the whole world within its ambience. The vertical one points sheer and undeviatingly upwards as though in an effort to concentrate the whole of man exclusively upon him who is uniquely one. The man in the picture would have to be nailed fast [137] to these. For our freedom upon this earth extends only to a certain point, the point at which it becomes limited and circumscribed by the inescapable necessities of life. The man in the picture would have to be represented with his heart pierced through, for at the end everything has been transformed into a lance which spills our heart's blood to the last drop. He would have to wear a crown of thorns, for the deepest pains come not from the body but from the spirit. And finally, since all men are in the same condition as this one man, this solitary figure would, in spite of his solitariness, have to be flanked on either side by other figures, the exact replicas of himself. We might go on from this to represent one of these figures as despairing and the other as hoping. For we never know altogether for sure whether there is more hope or more despair in our hearts as we draw nearer to death. This would more or less complete the picture. It would not represent all that is in man, but it would show what must be shown of us precisely because we are unwilling to accept this particular aspect of ourselves as true (to entertain doubts on this point is simply another way of shrinking from the recognition of this truth). All the other truths which also apply to us do not need to be represented in the picture, because we are ready and eager to recognise them as it is. Our consideration of what such a picture would reveal to us about ourselves poses a question for us which we must answer. And yet this is a question which we are unable to answer by ourselves.

This picture of ourselves which we view so reluctantly is the picture which God has set before our eyes in the death of his Son on Good Friday. And when this picture of man was to be set up before us one of those taking part in this drama said: 'Behold the man!' (Jn 19, 5).

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Again, in his writings Paul says of the Christians that they are those before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed as crucified (Gal 3:1). To some it is a stumbling-block, to others folly, but to those who have been called the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:23 f.). Now if God thus sets before our eyes the picture from which we have been copied, then as we view this picture, we are not looking merely at the radical instability of our own existence. Then, in the very act of forcibly confronting us with *the* question that *we* are, God also gives us his own answer to this question. It is only because he knows the answer that the drama conjured up by his unfathomable love has brought home to us the question that we ourselves are. And since his eternal Word has itself become man and, in the fulness of his human nature, has died upon the Cross of our existence, he has [138] spoken his answer to us, and thereby given us the initial spark of courage which we need in order to look upon this picture of ourselves, which was concealed from us, to hang it in our private rooms, to set it up by our waysides and to plant it over our graves.

To what extent, then, is this the answer of God to the question that we ourselves are?

The answer to this question might be stated in a single sentence which the Fathers of the Church have repeated again and again: ‘All that was received and accepted is redeemed’. All that he accepted is redeemed because thereby it has itself become the love of God and the fate of God. He has accepted death. Therefore this must be more than merely a descent into empty meaninglessness. He has accepted the state of being forsaken. Therefore the overpowering sense of loneliness must still contain hidden within itself the promise of God’s blessed nearness. He has accepted total failure. Therefore defeat can be a victory. He has accepted abandonment by God. Therefore God is near even when we believe ourselves to have been abandoned by him. He has accepted all things. Therefore all things are redeemed.

Does this pass unnoticed by us? Do we feel ourselves imprisoned in the stifling incomprehensibility of our existence, brought up against a blank wall, and unable to find any escape? Do we find ourselves quite unable to feel that everything is redeemed? Do we imagine that the darkness of Good Friday has in reality lasted continuously ever since the first Good Friday of all? Do we believe that we could accept him, the crucified one, as the image of our existence, were it not for the fact that we do not know how this man, so surrounded by pain and the darkness of death, can also be the salvation and the light of God for us in the extended death that is our life? How is the miracle of Good Friday faith brought about? It is the miracle of grace. No proof can be advanced to justify it.

But let us kneel beneath the Cross, and there pray: ‘Lord I do believe, help thou my unbelief!’ At least for the space of one moment let us command all else to silence, the anguish of our own heart and the poignant question of our spirit. Let us be silent in order that we can *listen*, and so hear just this one word issuing from the lethal darkness of this man in the moment of his death: ‘Father into thy hands I commend my spirit’. And then – O miracle of grace! – we are able to believe that everything has been accepted by God and redeemed. For let us look more closely into this death of his, and hearken more attentively!

[139] There is one here who is in mortal straits. He has been spared nothing. He has no illusions. This is death. He has no intention whatever of playing the hero in it. There is nothing of the poseur in him. He is not the sort of man who still acts a part even in the moment of death. He has known what is in man. Those about him, therefore, have not made his death any easier, neither those whom we call his enemies, and who feel themselves to be so, yet for whom he prays, nor those few others who, since he has managed, even in this moment of his death to think lovingly of them, have made the act of dying even harder for him. He has drained the cup of life almost to the last dregs. All is darkness without and within. He is alone with the suffocating malice of the entire world, which is stupid and at the same time diabolically malignant. He knows that the guilt of the world, which clutches ravenously for his heart and life, is not the sort of misunderstanding that turns out on closer

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examination to be a harmless mistake. It is the incomprehensible guilt which leads to condemnation. He is alone with this. The light of his Father's nearness is transformed, so to say, into the dark fire of judgment. There is only abandonment and feebleness left, burning and at the same time, and in an inexpressible manner, dead. Death in its stark reality has penetrated to his heart, and pierced its way into the innermost depths of his human life; death as absolute. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And when abandonment and death have pervaded his whole life in this sense, then listen to what he says: 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit'. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when in an act of inconceivable love, one has identified one's self in spirit with the sins of the world. And yet when he did thus fall into the hands of the living God what he said was: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit'. If there is one word in all this which is immediately and in itself worthy of our belief it is this one. This word, uttered by him in this moment, *must* be accepted. There is God the Father. One can commit all things to his hands – all things. In such a way that all things are accepted by him.

One is not forced to believe this word, uttered from the Cross to us and extending beyond us into the unfathomable depths of the mystery of existence. But one can believe it. One has only to hearken to him and to keep one's eyes fixed upon him. Then the crucified one, who is the image of our existence, also tells us the answer which God has given in him, the divine Word incarnate, to the question that we ourselves are.

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[140]

11

THE SCANDAL OF DEATH

Every day countless number of people die. Death is the most familiar and everyday of human phenomena. So much is this the case, indeed, that it is possible to hold that we should not make very much fuss about it. Nothing in it can be altered. In the nature of things it is unpleasant for those who have to endure it, provided, of course, that they have some degree of conscious awareness of it, and naturally when the form in which they meet it is too overpowering, too brutally real and vivid, they protest. For the rest one is relieved to assure one's self that to all appearances one is not yet one's self in the toils of death, so that there is no cause for alarm. Only great statesmen, soldiers and doctors are really habituated to death, and, moreover, not over-disturbed by it, since it is others who have to die and – for the time being at any rate – not themselves. How strange all this is! For today the whole of Christendom has a death to celebrate in the most solemn manner. What is the real reason for this? Certainly it was a particularly agonising and unjust death. But death is every bit as terrifying as it occurs in the gas-chambers of Buchenwald or the mud-holes of Vietnam. What then is this celebration of Good Friday meant to signify?

First it is intended simply to serve as a sobering reminder to us of our own deaths. This is not, of course, to deny that Good Friday is first and last the day which commemorates the death of the Lord, and, in the last analysis, his death alone. But one can only truly understand and celebrate this death if one recognises and accepts that one is one's self subject to the power of death. Otherwise one is blind from the outset, and quite incapable of viewing the crucified Lord in a true light. Therefore we must initially think of our own deaths.

This, then, is the situation in which we find ourselves: we are all sitting in the prison-house of our own existence as in the condemned cell, where we are waiting until the time of execution arrives. Until then one [141] can play at cards, enjoy the meal allotted to those under sentence of death, and for the moment forget that the prison door will soon open and we shall be called out for the last journey. But that is precisely what we must *not* forget. Animals are blind to their approaching death, or at most have some dim irrational fear of losing their lives. But we are aware of death, and must not suppress this awareness. We must live with death constantly in view. We know that we shall simply be thrust into the inexorable loneliness of death where no-one can accompany us any further, where the chatter of life ceases, and no-one can hide behind his fellow any longer. No-one can appeal to the opinion of another. The only thing that still counts at this stage is what one can take with one in death: that is I myself as I was in the ultimate depths of my own heart, that heart that was either full of love or full of spite and hidden selfishness, a nuisance to myself and others. We take nothing with us into this state of abandonment except what we ourselves are in the ultimate and radical decision of our own hearts. Already in the here and now we must weigh our life day by day on the scales of death with a view to being able one day to die our own death. We should set the worthlessness of various actions which we perform, on the one hand, against the value of other actions which we should perform on the other. It is necessary to take both into account; to learn the inward serenity of one who can in all calmness go to meet death not because he is in a state of cynical despair about it, but because he is ready to accept the mystery of death as a mystery of unfathomable significance. We should practise, even in this life, how to die, for surely it is clear that while we shall certainly pass out of life in the biological sense, it is not so clear that we have the ability to die a death that is truly human. For whatever freedom is allotted to man, at its heart and centre death lies as a factor

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which is wholly beyond his control.

On Good Friday we Christians continue to preach the death of that man until all have died, in order that all may learn how to die, since all are destined to die.

But what we preach on Good Friday is also the death of the one man, the Lord. It is in the case of this one man, initially, that we find the courage to believe that he was not only put to death, was not only swallowed up and engulfed by the absurdity of existence, but that he himself died. In other words he has made death into his own act, in which he accepts the inconceivable which is beyond all human control, and himself acts out what has to be endured. This one man, whom we take as the prototype of [142] those who die, and whom we resolve to follow into death, is Jesus. He is dead just as we shall die: in that darkness into which he uttered his groan: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' His death included all that makes death terrifying, and all that death entails was truly endured in his person: the physical anguish, the brutal injustice which was an additional factor in his case, the hatred of his enemies, the mockery of their self-assurance, the collapse of his life's work in ruins, the betrayal of his friends, and, over and above all these terrible factors, precisely the banality of death, which is present wherever it occurs, together with the lamentations of those one leaves behind, who are powerless to help one; the gasping for breath and all the anguish from which no-one returns, the utter and complete loss of power, in which one ceases to be heroic.

Now something still remains to be said concerning the death of Jesus, and it is the most vital point of all. In spite of this, however, it does not entail any alteration to, or revision of the significance which we have already seen in his death and ours. No, the manner of death which he has to undergo is determined by the manner in which he was present then, and the manner in which he will be present among us in the future. So much is this the case that we are really dumbfounded at his words: 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This is what every man will say, whatever he takes as his God in his own personal life. It may be the true God, or it may be money, or success, or science, or social progress, or his children, or carnal lust, or any other of the idols which he sets up upon the altar of his heart. These collapse into ruins, and even the true, the ineffable God seems to have given in and to have disappeared from the temple of the heart, leaving it silent. One seems to be engulfed so that all that one can feel is the sheer numbing physical pain until even that too has spent itself. What still remains to be said concerning Jesus' death and ours is not designed to spare us from death in this sense. Nor do we need in any sense to make special efforts to die in an heroic way or in the manner depicted by Christian tradition. And yet there still is something more to be said about this death, so brutal and at the same time so banal as it is. It remains to be said not because it is consoling, for perhaps the effect which it will have upon us will be very far from consoling. Perhaps it will fail to console us because at the roots of our being we are already numbered among those who die, and therefore have to die cruelly unconsoled. The point that still remains to be made is necessary, rather, because God has said it to us all at once and all in one in Jesus, in his life, in his understanding [143] of himself, in his death and in his resurrection. What has he said? It is that it is not until we have reached this point, at which our lives and our experience have been reduced absolutely to nil that the true life begins for us. This should not be understood in the sense that this true life is a further continuation of our present lives, stretching out beyond our deaths in a temporal prolongation. Rather it is because that quality which constitutes the distinguishing characteristic of our lives achieves in this true life its final transcendence over the whole of time. And this quality is the freedom and faithfulness of the love which comes from God, which bears him in itself, and which must be freely accepted and put into practice in the act of living. It is not as though this were inherent in the very nature of death, with all its absurdity. In itself death simply poses the most radical question of all. It calls everything into question and thereby forces us to decide

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whether we shall opt, even against our own consciences, for those factors in our lives which are consoling and at the same time controllable, so long as it is in our power to do so, or whether we shall give our ultimate loyalty to our consciences, even though they appear to do nothing for us. But in this question which death poses there is another answer, a blessed answer, which is already included in the question itself. This is because Jesus has died, or, to put it in a more prudent and exact form, because that which death, for all its absurdity, contains within itself in the way of mystery and blessing, has been given in him and in him made worthy of belief; because, to put it still more accurately, God has redeemed our death by decreeing that the death which he imposes upon us is a death in Jesus Christ the crucified one, in him in whom God himself took our death upon himself and made it his own. It must be reiterated that death in all its stark reality is not thereby removed from us. But we can die *this* death, in which the assurance offered us by the Son can become ours, and in which the element of incomprehensibility and of anguish which death contains can actually be a sharing in that which Jesus endured in his death. In this sense the death of Jesus is died by many who do not explicitly believe in him at all, or know him by name, yet who, by remaining faithful to the end, let themselves be received by death without thereby pronouncing a curse upon life. The death of Jesus is died by many because in one's brethren too one can encounter the death of the Son of Man, who lets himself be discovered in his brethren even by those who believe that they do not know him. For to accept one's death is in itself a way of knowing him and entering into communion with him. The [144] life of man is indeed full of doubts. But the worst doubt of all is that involved in refusing to accept the truth of life itself.

There is no consolation which can render us immune to such doubts. But there is the incomprehensible mystery that the doubt itself can be consoling if it is patiently and willingly endured, and not itself erected into the last of the idols of our human lives. *This* consolation in death is called by the true name of Jesus of Nazareth. Today we, who are dying, stand at the point where he died and preach his death and our own until he comes in our death.

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[145]

12

‘HE DESCENDED INTO HELL’

When we come to consider Holy Saturday we can notice something strange about it. In our religious life we miss it out. We celebrate Good Friday and Easter, the death and resurrection of the Son of Man, who is our salvation. But the day which falls between these two, namely Holy Saturday, is overlooked by us. It carries no significance in our religious life, in the catechism of our heart. And yet there is a significance in this day that goes beyond what the printed catechism has to tell us about it. It is a significance that we ourselves acknowledge every time we say the Apostles’ Creed, the earliest and most hallowed formula of our faith. ‘He descended into hell’. This is the clause devoted to Holy Saturday and giving expression to the inward significance of it. Now we might say that although this credal formula is so short, consisting as it does of only a couple of short lines, it does mean that not only God and eternal life, not only the Lord and his Church, not only Good Friday and Easter, but Holy Saturday too has a special article of the creed devoted to it. And surely it follows from this that in our religious life Holy Saturday needs to be marked by something more than merely a kind of pause between the two great days on which we commemorate the event of our redemption. In this sense Holy Saturday could be said to have a content of its own and a value of its own in our lives. In view of this it ought to be celebrated as the *anamnesis*, the sacred commemoration of the reality which we acknowledge when we utter the words ‘He descended into hell’.

But in that case what do we mean by this credal formula? And why should not the words we utter in it refer simply to a past event as such, something precisely which we continue to remember as having taken place long ago? Why should these words in the credal formula refer rather to something that still continues to have a vital effect upon our lives in the present? It is because this particular aspect also of the life and death [146] of the Lord is something that we have to live out in our own lives until all is consummated.

Let us examine the faith of the early Church upon this point from the period of the New Testament itself up to the fifth century, in which this declaration that Christ descended into the realm of the dead was accorded a place in the Western form of the Apostles’ Creed. For it is precisely the faith of the Church on this point that has been expressed in a fixed and crystallised form in this article of the creed concerning Christ’s descent into hell. From such an investigation it can be established unmistakably that two ideas at any rate, distinct though mutually interpenetrating, are being expressed in this formula: First, Jesus truly did die and, moreover, the death that he died is the only one that can avail to redeem our death; second, this death brought redemption and release to all those members of the human race who had died before Christ and who, even though at their deaths they were just and in principle saved, had to wait for the salvation laid up for them until the fulness of salvation as such had been achieved in Christ. Both of these two real factors, therefore, are covered by the single credal formula. But of the two it is only to the first that we propose to devote some measure of consideration here, since it has a more decisive effect upon our lives.

‘He descended into hell’. Or, to give a clearer and more precise rendering, he descended into the realm of the dead. This assertion, therefore, declares initially that Jesus truly did die. When we read Peter’s great Pentecost sermon in the Acts of the Apostles (2:22-36) we can see that the underlying intention here is to state who Jesus was and what befell him in his life. Thus when Peter wants to tell us that Jesus was the one who was put to death and rose from the dead then, in order to express the fact that this was in very truth a real death, he says that

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death held Jesus as it were in fetters, that he was swallowed up by Hades, Luke's rendering of the Hebrew word Sheol, which in Jewish theology signifies the realm of the dead. The Jews believed in some sort of survival after death, and so according to their anthropology the dead man entered the realm of the dead, a 'place', that is to say, if we may express this unimaginable state of survival after death in such terms at all. The devotional theology of Jesus' own time had developed these ideas and had (rightly) conceived of a wide variation in terms of happiness or woe in the states of life open to man in his survival after death. These were determined, it was held, according to the sort of life which the dead man had lived while still on this earth. An [147] instance in which this is clearly brought out is Jesus' own parable of Lazarus the poor man and Dives the rich reveller. Nevertheless all the dead were included in a *single* sphere, a single basic state. And this is designated precisely as Sheol, the realm of the dead. When, therefore, Peter wanted to bring out the fact that Jesus had truly died, then no other way of doing this was open to him than by explicitly declaring, 'Jesus descended into the realm of the dead, Sheol or Hades'. Probably Paul too is thinking of this when in Rom 10:7: he speaks of one who has to descend into the 'abyss', 'that is to bring Christ up from the dead', and this one has indeed 'descended into the lower parts of the earth' (Eph 4:9 f.). In just the same way Jesus himself had said that he would be 'in the heart of the earth' for three days and three nights (Mt 12:40).

There is no doubt that these ways of expressing the truth with which we are here concerned do include a certain figurative element. The dead are certainly not in a place which lies at the innermost point of our physical earth. Indeed in terms of our conceptions of the spatial dimension of the cosmos they are not 'in place' at all. Sheol plays no part in the frame of reference provided by our physical sciences. This is not because there is not, and never could be, any such reality as this realm of the dead, but because the very nature of this state is such that it belongs to a totally different dimension from that of our finite conceptual world, and is wholly incommensurable with it. But we would fail to do justice to the full depths of meaning contained in the words we have quoted if we were to take them as signifying nothing more concerning the death of Jesus than the actual fact that he died. Over and above this they have also something to tell us about the state of being dead as this applies to him. In fact it is quite clear that these words look beyond the actual process of dying to the fact of *being in a state of death*. They therefore oblige us to ask ourselves what we mean when we say that the experience of Jesus consisted not merely in the act of dying but in the state of being dead as well. He was not simply the man who died but, over and above this, the man who was in the state of death.

What, then, are the special implications of this state of having died and of being dead which project us into some further dimension in the meaning of death itself? Since death and the state of being dead are so closely connected it is impossible to regard the two terms as wholly distinct from each other. The one throws light upon the other. The man who has died is no longer there. He has been withdrawn from us into a sphere which is [148] remote and from which no echo returns, into darkness and silence. He has departed from us. This does not carry with it in any immediate or primary sense the connotation of having 'passed over' into 'another world'. Let us examine somewhat more closely this idea of what it means to be a dead man. The dead man has departed from this life. This world of ours, so familiar to him, so much his own as it was, the physical mode of existence in all its dimensions, all the fulness and colour of concrete reality. From all this the dead man has indeed been withdrawn, never more to return to this world in its unglorified state. Yet the form of existence which he does lead is not of the phantom- or ghost-like kind, one which has absolutely nothing to do with the worldly mode of existence. The simplicity of the spirit's mode of existence does indeed imply a certain perfection. But this is not to say that already at this stage it amounts to an absolute and definitive perfection in every possible respect. When we make this assertion

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we mean neither to deny nor to call in question the fact that with regard to the finitude of human nature there is an intrinsic distinction to be drawn, corresponding to the true and justifiable distinction between 'soul' and 'body'. Precisely in virtue of its openness to reality as such the spirit is not wholly removed from the world at death; indeed the underlying unity of reality as a whole actually opens up to it, so to say, at a new and deeper level. All things become present to it immediately and without distortion. For this reason the dead man is more closely and intimately united to the inward meaning of all that is real. But this totality of the real is still present to it in a peculiarly dim and remote manner. For the dead man this experience of the world in depth, as it were, is painful rather than joyful. He cannot really entertain it or express to himself that in it which is the object of desire to world and finite spirit alike, namely to come to themselves. Everything has become less real, has receded into remoteness, has become more alien and more lonely.

We recognise that this account does not cover everything that there is to say about the dead. Moreover it is quite evident that the state of death as applied to Jesus had further and quite different aspects in virtue of the fact that in death he was the one who was infinitely close to God and the one who, as dead, conquered death itself. But for all this he was precisely: the *man* who died. Not only for us but also, and primarily, for him the significance of the resurrection is that it was an event that gave him something new, something which, so long as he was dead, he had had to do, without. And however important it is for us on Holy Saturday not to [149] think of him *merely* as dead, nevertheless he was in fact and in truth the man who had died. His own death was the price which he paid in order to ensure that the state of being dead should have a new significance for us. He descended into this state of death. He endured the nadir of human existence, the ultimate fall into immeasurable depths to which it is subject. And because he submitted to this fate, yielding himself up into the hands of his Father, his entry into this eternal love was initially experienced by him as a collapse into the darkness and anonymity of death, into the real and genuine state of being dead. It is precisely because he was, in an ineffable sense, the one who was alive, that he necessarily felt the disembodied state in which he continued to exist after death so intensely as something to be overcome, something unnatural. He more than any other must have felt himself, in this disembodied state, excluded from that which was his due, that which he willed to be: the one who is alive in the most intensely real sense. He who is the source of light for the entire world, and that too in the created life-principle of his own human existence in all its fulness and breadth (we call this life-principle of bodily existence the soul), was thrust by death into death – in other words to that region where there is no light and no clear bodily mode of being, so that the 'soul' is deprived of that state in which it wills to be. He was in the state of death. In deed and in truth between his dying on Good Friday and the life which he takes up on Easter Day he has his Holy Saturday. We declare our belief in the fact that he descended into the realm of the dead.

Death and life are not simply two events which follow one upon another and are distinct one from the other in human existence. They interpenetrate one another. We are in process of dying all through our lives, and what we call death is the culminating point of an act of dying that extends over the whole span of life. This is why we are constantly undergoing a foretaste of that descent into death which the Lord took upon himself. Do we not sometimes feel as though an immeasurable distance lay silently between us and the things of this world, dividing us from them? Are we not slowly in process of becoming those who depart? Are we not constantly and ever anew saying goodbye? Is not that which is familiar to us changing to an ever-increasing extent into that which is alien and almost hostile and repellant? Long before the hour in which we close our eyes for the last time we are already being drawn back into the depths of the world. This descent into the poverty of our own being has already commenced, and has been in progress ever since we received our human [150] natures, even

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though only in an invisible and hidden manner, at the roots of our being. This basic condition to which our nature is subject, and which, for all our activity, we can do nothing to evade, is at the same time the factor which makes it possible for us already in the here and now really to participate with Jesus, our brother and the sharer in our human nature, in the celebration of Holy Saturday. Since we are hewn from the same block and since we too are already dying our own deaths in the midst of our lives, we are in a position to understand his fate not merely as outsiders and bystanders, but by actually sharing in it. By faith we experience that his descent into the utter feebleness of our human existence has consecrated all the 'Holy Saturday' hours in our lives. Left to ourselves all that we are would simply be solitary, defenceless and exposed in the midst of the darkness and emptiness of death. But since he has shared our fate and has redeemed us in it this Holy Saturday, in the midst of all its darkness, brings us the light of life. Since he has descended into the unfathomable and bottomless depths of the world there is no longer any abyss in human experience in which man is abandoned and alone. There is one who has gone before him and has endured all such abysses, so that we might conquer. Henceforward whatever disasters may befall, at the bottom of them all is to be found eternal life. 'He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things' (Eph 4:10).

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[151]

13

HIDDEN VICTORY

On Good Friday and Easter we celebrate the death and resurrection of the Son of Man, who is our salvation. But generally speaking the day which falls between these two, namely 'Holy Saturday' does not carry much weight in our religious lives. Now perhaps by failing to travel every step of the journey between Good Friday and Easter morning we are depriving the terms 'death' and 'resurrection' of something of their inner significance.

I

Manifestly Holy Saturday ought to have its due place in our life of faith, since we do in fact acknowledge the meaning of it in the Apostles' Creed every time we say 'He descended into hell' or, to give a better rendering, 'into the realm of the dead'. But what is the real message conveyed by this formula, so familiar as it is to us? For the meaning of it forms the content of this particular day.

First and foremost it declares that Jesus has truly died, because in the language of the bible 'truly to die' and 'to descend into the realm of the dead' are synonymous phrases. Let us not suppose that the underlying meaning of this clause is something which is immediately self-evident and devoid of further implications. The Son of God has truly died. He, the Son of God, the sinless, the free, he who alone, in a certain sense, is self-authenticating, he who, unlike the rest of us, is not already called in question and questionable right from the very roots of his being – he it is who, in very truth, has shared in this incomprehensible absurdity which we call death, in which it is made brutally apparent what we are: the ones who are divided against themselves, radically contingent in their being, those who take refuge from a thousand unsolved questions in the ultimate all-embracing riddle of death. He has made himself one with us in death. He has shared our ultimate fate.

[152] There is a further message contained in these words, 'He descended into the realm of the dead'. Jesus is he who is truly in a state of death, and not merely one who dies. But what, then, does it imply, this 'being in a state of death', this being dead, over and above the actual fact of dying? While we are attempting to draw a certain distinction at this point, it does not in fact make any difference whether one particular formulation applies more especially and primarily to the act of dying while another applies rather to the state of being dead. For an assertion that the former is the case is also an assertion, at least indirectly, of the latter. The dead man is the one who has departed, the one who is silent, the one who is remote. The reason he has gone is not that he wanted, in some sense, to change to a different mode of being. Certainly this also is true. But thereby he has also, in very truth, become one who has been withdrawn from that dimension in which alone he can be wholly himself with all the fulness that his nature demands, a dimension constituted by the world, by his own body, by the concrete mode of his existence. Certainly he no longer wishes to possess all this in the form in which he possessed it before his death, unglorified and subject to corruption. But neither does he on that account wish to live the life of a phantom, a disembodied spirit. In this state of disembodiment and spirituality he may have achieved a very advanced state of perfection (This was at least the case with Jesus, who in the depths of his spirit lived in a state of absolute proximity to God in his infinity). But a disembodied spirit of this kind, remote from this world and its physical mode of existence, is still not absolutely perfect in all

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respects. It is like a seed which has an innate inclination to develop and grow into its due fulness of flowering and fruitfulness, like the idea of an artist which demands to be expressed in that visual form in which alone it can really achieve its due mode of existence. He who is dead and not yet risen is alive indeed, but the dimension in which he now exists is one in which, while he retains his essential identity, his nature has, so to say, been resolved into its basic constituents, and his existence has become featureless and remote from that mode which is natural to it. He has all things – indeed all things are more closely and immediately present to him than ever. He exists at the 'heart' of the world, nearer than ever before to the innermost kernel of all reality. In fact it is only now that he becomes truly near to all this. Yet in spite of this, this reality in its wholeness and stripped of all deception is present to him, as it were, at one remove from himself. It is, so to say, separated from him as by an invisible barrier. He cannot [153] communicate with it. Thus the dead man is open to the suffering that all this entails, but is somehow excluded from the possibility of taking action in order to make this reality his own and to express himself physically in it. What we, on our side of the dividing line, experience of the dead has its exact counterpart in what they experience from their side (though they do have other experiences as well): everything is, as it were, encompassed by an infinite remoteness. Everything is there, but how unreal it has all become, how distant and how dead! One is, as it were, engulfed in an infinite loneliness, left utterly to one's self and at the same time alien to one's self, left exposed and defenceless in that state of being dead which is intrinsic in human nature itself.

II

Our life is hidden with Christ in God, St Paul tells us. Here is a saying that is especially appropriate to Holy Saturday. God's life is in us; the immeasurable value of Christ's humanity and the infinite future are already present to us. But the mode in which they are present is a 'hidden' one. They are, in a mysterious manner, withheld from us. They are present in that mysterious hope in which we think not of that which is to survive and to continue into later times in order to hold fast to the reality that is already present to us, but in which we are, in a certain sense, taken out of ourselves, so that the inconceivable future becomes the centre of our existence, and so becomes present to us as a mystery which we do not yet understand. This situation of hope becomes manifest on Holy Saturday. It is the situation of one who stands between a present that is already vanishing, and a future which is so far present only in hope.

Now death and life are not simply two distinct phases in human existence, the one following upon the other and quite distinct from it. They interpenetrate one another. We are dying throughout our entire life, and what we call death is the end of a process of dying that is life-long, and therefore we are constantly undergoing a foretaste of that final descent into death which the Lord has taken upon himself.

Do we not sometimes feel that between us and the things of this world lies an infinite distance and silence, separating us from them? Are we not slowly becoming those who have to say goodbye? Ah yes! It is not only in that moment which we call death, in order to conceal from ourselves that we are already, even now, in process of dying, that we descend into [154] the underworld. It is not only in that moment that we are withdrawn into the 'heart' of the world, which at first seems to us to be a shadowy abyss. This descent, this journey to the underworld has already begun long since. At least there is a subtle orientation in that direction which affects the course of our lives at their very roots. And it is for this reason that we can truly celebrate Holy Saturday with the Lord – can already, in the here and now, share in his fate and recognise in faith that his Holy Saturday redeems and consecrates our own.

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Our Holy Saturday, taken in isolation from his, would simply be a state of living death. Since he has endured it and redeemed it it is the day which carries eternal life concealed within its expectant silence. For since he has descended into the underworld human life no longer culminates in an abyss into which man is cast headlong, and at the bottom of which he cannot find eternal life. Hence that saying of scripture: 'He who descends, he it is also who ascends above all the heavens in order to fulfil all things'.

The life of the present recedes from us, and it is this that we then call our life. But that fuller life which is to endure for ever is still concealed – in that silent future which we are going to meet, the future which we call by the name of 'God', and are able so to call it because our demand for the future as it should be is unconditional and infinite. For only by demanding this kind of future shall we do justice to God who comes to meet us and to be our own future. And it is in this sense that our life is hidden in God. That is at once the pain and the blessing of our life as we live it, our pain, our anguish and – let us say it in all calmness – our disappointment, so constantly renewed. Life is not as we would have it in the innermost depths and in the very centre of our hearts.

The factors of goodness, beauty and vitality in life constantly bloom afresh like an endless promise, only to die once more without having fulfilled that promise. And the promise of an eternal future, however appealing and attractive it may be, is constantly veiled under the appearance of mere illusion in the trials to which our faith is exposed, in the cares of every day. Holy Saturday lasts all our life long. Can we hold out to the end of it in sincerity, in faithfulness, in calmness and in patience, precisely as a time during which we must endure, as a time which has no festivals in the true sense, which is 'non-liturgical', just as the real Holy Saturday is said to be?

If we do this, if we supplicate for and obtain the grace of that firmness and patience which is achieved in a life that can do without any powerful [155] or compelling movements of the senses (few of which are wholly devoid of some element of sinfulness), then this 'Holy Saturday' life of ours will suddenly be filled (though we may not try to force it to this conclusion) with the joy and sureness of its approaching Easter. One notices that precisely the final moment is sustained and lasts on into a blessed and unfathomable future, an Easter day that lasts for ever, and that is on the point of breaking out upon us, or better from within the very midst of our own lives, and becoming our true life. Perhaps too it is only in a certain freedom from tension, anxiety and care, not to be accounted for in merely rational terms, that we first become aware of the presence of this hidden life within us. At any rate it is there. It is still Holy Saturday. Our life is still hidden. But even if hidden it is already present. Its hiddenness implies that this is the moment of faith and of hope, and besides these of that love which is already with us and which will endure.

III

At Easter we are led all too easily to celebrate the resurrection with noisy jubilation, with the blaring of trumpets, with words and music. And certainly no-one can be blamed or suspected of unworthy motives if he indulges in such Easter jubilation, seeing that it is the joy of the eternal victory of life that suddenly breaks out with all its holiness and power from the heart of the believer. But to those who are still pilgrims and, moreover, who still have the path of faith to travel, to those who are more keenly aware of the death and the futility which is present in their human lives than of the glory of the life that is indestructible and eternal a gentler and more modest Easter joy is also permissible. Joy in this particular sense is also possible for those who have become tired to death under the burden of everyday toils and disappointments.

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If we wish to understand Easter we must first understand ourselves, that is accept ourselves as we really are. Now we are children of the earth, and as such subject to death. This much is certain. And when we put the question to ourselves of what is to become of us, destined as we are to die, then, as both our own experience and the scriptures testify, we have no reason to assert that we are, in any ultimate sense, divided into two component parts and to ascribe two different destinies to the soul and body respectively. We are children of the earth, and precisely as such we are also spirit and freedom. And we claim a final and definitive state of [156] freedom, responsibility and love corresponding to what we are. We must make this claim if we have really understood what these words mean. Now it clearly follows from this that we wish this final and definitive state to apply to us in our complete natures as concrete physical beings. Again in the last analysis the question of what is meant by spirit in this claim that we make and what the grace of divine life means in this context is a secondary one. What must be recognised is that this insistent and inalienable demand to arrive finally at the definitive state of the freedom and wholeness of eternal life, to apply to us as one and undivided, is alive in us. And if this is the case, then we know at the same time, and need not disguise it from ourselves, that we are quite unable to 'picture' this final and definitive state to ourselves. Such a thing would be still more absurd than to suppose that the caterpillar could imagine what it would be like to be a butterfly. For it is clear that the 'transformation' which our whole earthly life must undergo, as the scripture also tells us, and which pervades it right to its very roots, implies a final and definitive state in a mode of existence that is lifted right out of the temporal order. Any attempt at predicting such a thing would be doomed to failure from the outset. We know nothing more of it than that we shall exist as those who have been perfected and have entered into the unfathomable mystery of love which we call God. And that is enough.

When we think of our own consummation in this way does it lead us away from the resurrection of Jesus? No. So far from this, we have prepared ourselves to understand it, although admittedly this preparation for our understanding of the resurrection derives, once more, from the resurrection itself. In him, the inconceivable – inconceivable in itself – hope of our final perfection becomes faith. We know in fact that in that act which we call his resurrection he has not returned into our earthly state of existence, but that his life has been transformed into the fulness of the presence of God so that he has been withdrawn from our earthly state. Even such experiences as the disciples had of their risen Lord, and which were granted to console and strengthen them, were, in a certain sense, the necessary translation of his own unique and inconceivable perfection into terms which we, in our mortality, can understand here, confined as we are to space and time. The knowledge of these experiences does not justify us in depicting, in terms of our own human ideas, the state of perfection as it applies to the risen Lord who, as man, is uniquely one and whole. But if we obey the innermost longing of our humanity for [157] the final and definitive state that is his, and so with pure hearts direct our gaze wholly and exclusively upon him, his understanding of himself his death and his disciples' Easter experience of him, then indeed we are not forced, but rather empowered and emboldened to say: 'He is risen'. We can say it quite soberly and calmly because we are only asserting what we are at basis awaiting for ourselves, if we take our humanity in earnest, and do not suppose that it can evade responsibility for the eternal in it by escaping into nothingness. And conversely when we look upon him we can believe that at death life does not, in any ultimate sense, sink into the empty void of absurdity, but rather falls into the unfathomable depths of God. He is the first of those who are born through death into a final and definitive state that is predestined for all humanity, because he, being truly man, is also the Word in which God utters himself, and utters himself to us. And so when we too believe this Word and take it to our hearts, the statement, 'He is risen' becomes the essential content of our faith and hope as a whole. For what we mean when we say 'He is

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risen' is that in death he has overcome and redeemed for ever the very heart and centre of all earthly being. In his resurrection he has held fast to this victory, and he has remained victor ever since. When in the creed we acknowledge that he has ascended into heaven this is only another way of saying that for a while he has withdrawn his glorified humanity from our view, and chiefly in order that the world may no longer be cut off from God as by an intervening chasm.

Christ is already at the heart and centre of all the poor things of this earth, which we cannot do without because the earth is our mother. He is present in the blind hope of all creatures who, without knowing it, are striving to participate in the glorification of his body. He is present in the history of the earth, whose blind course he steers with unearthly accuracy through all victories and all defeats onwards to the day predestined for it, to the day on which his glory will break out of its own depths to transform all things. He is present in all tears and in every death as the hidden joy and life which conquers by seeming to die. He is in the beggar to whom we give alms as the secret riches in which the almsgiver is allowed to share. He is in the wretchedness, the defeats and failures of his servants as the victory which belongs to God alone. He is in our feebleness as the power which may allow itself to appear weak because it is invincible. Even in the midst of sins he is still present as the compassion of the eternal love, ready to be patient even to the end. He is there as the innermost essence [158] of all things, and the most secret law which still triumphs and imposes its authority even when every kind of order seems to be breaking up. He is with us as the light of day and the air are with us, which we do not notice; as the secret law of a movement that we do not comprehend because that part of the movement which we ourselves experience is too brief for us to infer from it the pattern of the movement as a whole. But he is there, the heart of this earthly world and the secret seal of its eternal validity. He is risen. He who hopes utters these words in his heart: He is risen.

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[159]

14

EXPERIENCING EASTER

The way of the Cross – *our* way of the Cross – is something with which we are all familiar. Today it means, generally speaking, something different. The street-plan has been altered. This is, in fact, often brought home to us today in the politics of these changing times. Today the way of the Cross means calamity, cancer, divorce, atomic war, being thrown on the scrap-heap and very much more of the same kind. The road to be travelled has grown longer, and new street-names appear beside the old at its intersections. But for all this it is still the old way of the Cross, which leads by way of much tribulation and pain to final death. Furthermore, in the hospitals of today this death is no different from what it was in earlier times. The eyes wander, seeking round in vain to find some fixed point on which to focus. The words of the doctors, kindly meant though they may be, have a decidedly hollow and distant ring. And so on. Finally a man is laid in a grave. But this is 'of no further concern to the man himself'.

The question, therefore, is simply this: whether the individual concerned is still there to take an interest in his own life and his own death. In so far as anything can be established 'empirically' at all it can be said that those who remain behind are no longer concerned. That much is certain. The dead man is cut off, removed from the activities in which we are engaged. All that is left behind is something strange and rather ludicrous, something that we make to disappear quickly in the process called burial because we cannot really put it to any practical use (unless the Nazis and their later disciples make soap out of it). But what is the situation of one who has disappeared in this way? 'I' may permit myself not to trouble others with this question as it applies to me. But for my own part I cannot ignore it, for I know that *I* must die. And when I neglect something which so truly concerns *me*, then *ipso facto* I have precisely made up my mind in one particular direction. In this case, with the best will in the world, it [160] is quite impossible to be so indifferent to the fact of death as 'not even deliberately to ignore it'.

But surely we should not regard it as so completely clear that with death 'everything is over'. Surely it has not been convincingly established that the rest of the tragedy called human life which we have mentioned above is nothing more than a fulfilment of the 'law of the conservation of energy'. For even before death the matter which we are considering, and which now with death begins to assume quite different forms, was already undergoing changes, though it is true that in the case of a human body the direction in which these changes tended was a little less constant and unambiguous than is the case with other units of matter. But even allowing for all this, there was at that earlier stage something different there as well: precisely a man, with the love, faithfulness, pain, responsibility, freedom and much more besides which being human entails. In view of this what right have we, properly speaking, to assert that everything in man has simply disappeared from reality and turned into pure nothingness – evaporated, dissolved? (Even this way of putting it would turn out to be untenable, because even when something is 'dissolved' all the basic elements of which it was formerly composed still remain, whereas *ex hypothesi* the human being who was there would have simply to cease to exist. Formerly 'I' was there, but after my death there would have to be absolutely nothing there any longer at all). But what real reason have we for asserting that everything is absolutely 'finished' in this way? Is it that we no longer observe anything of what was formerly there? This argument seems somewhat weak. Logically speaking the only conclusion we could draw from this is that 'for me who remain behind the dead man is no

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longer there'. But does this mean that *in himself* he is no longer there? Must he be there *for me* in order to be there at all? Is it conceivable that his 'basic constituents' were such that they were capable of being transformed in such a manner that the new creature which emerged from the change no longer played any further part in our world? (It should be noticed that on this hypothesis it would be no more necessary for the individual to be 'aware' of these basic constituents in his nature than that he should be conscious of the chemical processes involved in the material changes which in fact he does undergo).

When we look closely at this life of ours it is of its very nature not the sort of life in which man wants to go on indefinitely taking part in activities on *this* plane. Of its very nature it strives to reach a conclusion to its [161] present mode of existence. Time becomes an illusion if it involves self-consciousness as with us and is incapable of attaining its fulfilment. If it were capable of being extended indefinitely it would become hell in the sense that it would be a meaningless void. No moment would have any value because it would always be possible to postpone and put off everything endlessly to a future that was infinite and so never made actual. Nothing would ever be too late for us (there would always be enough), and on this hypothesis everything would fall into the void of absolute indifference, where it would have no value. When, therefore, someone departs this life nothing could be easier to understand (If he did not do so one would have to put him to death by force). But when the dying man departs, cannot that element which is absolutely proper to him as person survive unchanged and elevated above the 'space-time' dimension of the merely physical precisely because it was all along something more than the mere interplay of the 'elements' of physics and bio-chemistry, because it was capable of love, faithfulness, and perhaps too sheer baseness and similar qualities; because while it *come to be* in this dimension of space and time, nevertheless it does not achieve its final fulfilment *in* this dimension. (In other words it no longer remains behind on that plane on which those who do actually remain behind do continue to exist). We should not understand the existence upon which we enter at death as a mere 'lasting on' of temporal existence in that peculiarly indefinite and limitless state in which it is always open to fresh content, and is therefore, strictly speaking, a mere empty void. If this is the sense in which we think of human existence, then death puts an end to it for the *whole* man. Anyone who thinks that the immortality of the soul means simply that it 'lasts on' in time beyond death, so that after death a new period of time open up before it, will admittedly involve himself in difficulties which are insuperable both in the realm of ideas and in accounting for the real and objective achievement of man's true final state which does take place in death. But let us consider the case of one who supposes that 'with death everything is over'. The arguments by which he justifies this position are that since the period allotted to an individual man began at a specific point in time it must also end at a specific point, so that the total extent of the individual's existence really does not extend beyond his death. A further and final argument in justification of such a position might be as follows:– Let us imagine time as evolving endlessly in its own course into an indefinite future, while its content undergoes as infinite [162] series of permutations. This would imply that the idea of anything old lasting throughout its extent is ruled out. Now properly speaking this is quite unrealisable in fact, and would be more terrible than any hell. Anyone who takes up this position is being led astray by the limitations of his own imagination as it bears upon our human experience of time every bit as much as he who conceives of the human soul 'lasting on'.

In reality 'eternity' is present *in* time and emerges from it as it were as a ripened fruit growing out of it. Eternity does not really emerge 'after' the allotted span of human life; rather it completely removes the individual concerned from time, in that it itself becomes disengaged from *that* time, a limited span of which was allotted to the individual concerned in order that he might exercise freedom in working his way towards his final and definitive state. Eternity is not a way of expressing pure time which lasts inconceivably long. Rather it

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is the mode appropriate to that spirituality and freedom which is brought to its fulness in time, and for this reason eternity can only be understood on the basis of a right understanding of time. A time which does not, as it were, act as a starting-point for the spirit and for freedom does not in any sense give birth to eternity. (Such, for instance, is the time proper to animals). The final and definitive state of man, therefore, is something that pertains to the dimension of spirituality and freedom in his mode of being, something that is achieved by the exercise of these attributes. As such it transcends time, and must be detached from it in our minds. Yet because, almost in spite of ourselves, we do find ourselves envisaging it as an infinite prolongation of time, we do fall into intellectual embarrassments. Just as with modern physics, we must learn to think in terms that are abstract and non-imaginative, and in this sense 'de-mythologised'. Then we shall be able to say: 'Through death (not *after* it) the definitive fulness of human existence, achieved by the exercise of freedom in time, *is present* (not 'begins to take place')'. What has come to be, what was formerly subject to temporal conditions, now *is*. It exists as something that has been freed from its former temporal limitations. And this state of liberation came about in virtue of the fact that man is spiritual and free, and in order that the elements of freedom and spirituality in man might have final and definitive validity. Is it not possible, therefore, that what we call our life is in fact simply the brief flash of a process by which something comes to be (in freedom and responsibility), which *is* – is in a definitive sense because it belongs to the dimension of things which 'are' in this special sense (and which are not [163] merely in a constant process of becoming)? And does it not follow from this that the process of becoming ceases when the state of being begins, and that the only reason why we do not notice this is that we ourselves are still involved in this process of becoming?

It is really quite impossible to confine reality to the level of those things the existence of which even the most stupid and superficial of men are neither able nor anxious to contest. It is quite certain that reality extends beyond this level. Just as scientific systems have been evolved in order to establish that even in the sphere of the material world the objectively real extends beyond the immediately observable to the human senses, so too there are experiences for the achievement of which, while no systems have been evolved, still a more highly developed spirituality is required. And these experiences put us in touch with eternity in that dimension in which it is no longer conceived of as a further prolongation of time stretching away 'on the other side of' our present lives, but is rooted rather in the time of freedom and responsibility as in the sphere proper to its own development, and from there emerges into life in its fulness, in which time is totally abolished. Anyone who has had to take a morally right decision in a matter of life and death (involving love, faithfulness, sacrifice and so forth), and has taken it radically and without any ulterior inducements, so that he gains absolutely no advantage whatever from it except the intrinsic goodness which he has recognised as involved in the actual decision itself has already experienced in this decision that dimension of eternity of which we are speaking here. And when he goes on from this retrospectively to reflect upon the decision he has taken, and tries to translate this experience into theory, he may arrive at a false interpretation, even to the point of doubting or denying the reality of 'eternal life', and in that case it is regrettable because it is false and above all because it entails the danger of enfeebling or calling in question totally moral decisions of this kind. But it does not for one moment alter the actual experience itself.

It is not necessary here to draw speculative distinctions among the factors involved in this experience between those factors which belong to the spiritual and immortal nature of man, which even as a sinner he cannot evade, and what is to be ascribed to that grace or support which is bestowed by God in his eternity, and which for the Christian interpretation of existence attains its climax, its absolute validity and its manifestation in Jesus Christ, in his criminal's death on the Cross and in the victory which he won there.

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[164] But what are we to say of the individual who of his own resources chooses to doubt the validity of his own experience on the grounds that to him, so petty and abject as he is, it is not sufficiently clear, or on the grounds that in that deep sense of mistrust concerning the very meaning of existence from which we sinners all suffer painfully because we are cowards it seems to him 'too good to be true'? Such an one as this must hold firm to human experience itself as found in the experience of him who has risen. There is such a thing as Easter faith. Those possessing it are beyond all reckoning. It is present first in the disciples of Jesus, and the witness which they bear to their Easter experience and their Easter faith is to acknowledge him who was crucified and who saw his designs collapse in total failure on the Cross as one who was victorious with every fibre of his being, and was definitively and finally received and accepted by God.

One must not attempt to resolve this Easter experience into its constituent elements in order subsequently to reassemble them. Here too the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Our encounter with Jesus who was conscious of being the Son of God as incomprehensible mystery, and who, in his own incomprehensible understanding of himself dared to call that mystery his Father, even in the moment of his death when he felt himself abandoned by God – this encounter itself belongs intrinsically to the experience of Easter taken in its uniqueness and totality. It is an encounter with the love and faithfulness of Jesus, with his flawless obedience, with the darkness of his death, with his total and unreserved acceptance of death, and with the Easter event itself. It may be that we of today cannot draw any clear distinction within the Easter event as understood here between Easter itself (precisely the fact of the risen Christ) and the Easter experience of the disciples. In other words it may be that as far as we are concerned that Easter experience of the disciples can never be merely an external transmission of information (as though they acted as a telephone wire or a telescope) which is, as it were, discarded the moment we have made contact with the event itself. In the case of Jesus' disciples their Easter faith and their Easter experience (their belief and the grounds for that belief) are already blended into each other indissolubly. And the basis for their belief (the risen Christ) is only experienced powerfully and compellingly as providing grounds for faith when the act of faith itself has already been posited. In other cases too there are objects of experience which, while they are objectively real and valid, are still only accessible *in* the experience of someone else. And the more significant and the more [165] central to existential reality something is, the more likely this is to be so. Certainly the case here is quite different from that in which a reliable and trustworthy witness brings us news of something – for instance that he has seen someone jump into the water. In such a case the *possibility* of such an experience is already recognised and understood as a matter of our own experience independently of the information we receive about the actual event. And therefore this information on the part of the eye-witness puts us directly in contact with the actual event which he informs us about in such a way that the reliability and trustworthiness of the witness becomes superfluous in the sense that we already have reasons of our own for realising that such an event is possible, and we do not need to be able to recognise this reliability of his. In a certain sense we have already been put directly in touch with the event itself. In the case of Easter, however, it is quite otherwise. This experience is, in the nature of things, *sui generis*. For the experience of something 'other-worldly' that needs to be 'made manifest' no longer belongs to our 'space-time' dimension, and is not *ipso facto* available to 'this-worldly' minds to grasp. Certainly it is not in any sense an experience which we can 'understand' on the basis of the experiences which we already have. We have not already acquired knowledge of the possibilities of, and necessary conditions for such an experience taking place such that we could rely on our own resources and apply the everyday criteria of our own pre-existing knowledge to judge of the question of whether we could accept such an event as actually taking place and being experienced in the here and now. The appeal to the empty grave as an

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occurrence which belongs to the world of our normal experience, and which is accessible to everyone, is no real help at all, in attempting to solve this question. An empty grave cannot provide evidence for a resurrection leading to the final perfection of the individual concerned, because there are so many ways of accounting for such a phenomenon. We have no similar experience, no experience on the same plane with which to compare the Easter experience of the first disciples (that is not counting the 'experience of the Spirit' [Gal 3:1ff.]), and we are therefore forced to rely upon the evidence of the disciples in a manner that is essentially more radical than when we are asked to accept the evidence of eye-witnesses in other circumstances. This is not to deny that this experience in itself and as such has an intrinsic structure of its own; in other words that in their experience the disciples are able to distinguish between the objective basis of their experience as such, and the actual [166] psychological process of the experience. They are able to say '*He* reveals himself to us and our experience is not simply a substitute for him.' Nor is it denied that we too can in some sense establish the same distinction between the initial cause of the experience and the actual psychological process of it. We can point to the number of the witnesses, to the fact that in their dispositions they were in no sense attuned to or pre-conditioned to the actual experience which they underwent. We can point to the effects of this experience in the real world etc. But all this does not for one moment alter the fact that this Easter experience bears no comparison with other human experiences, and is unique, and that therefore our relationship to this experience cannot be regarded as on the same plane as our relationship to the accounts of natural events brought to us by eye-witnesses. Without the experience of the Spirit, i.e., in this case, without the experience of the meaningfulness of existence which we receive from faith (existence, that is to say, as it is, as a whole), we cannot achieve the necessary trustful self-commitment to the Easter witness of the disciples. And this remains true in spite of the fact that in many cases one acquires the strength to accept the meaningfulness of existence in faith precisely by committing one's self in trust to the Easter experiences of the disciples, and in spite of the fact that in all cases it is only in this Easter faith that one's realisation of this meaningfulness can become fully and properly what it ought to be. Only he who hopes can perceive the fulfilment of hope, and it is when that fulfilment is in view that hope can acquire its full and due actuality, and so rest content. It is neither possible nor needful to break out of this 'circle', but he who is called to hope in the 'resurrection' of his own flesh (the flesh that he *is*, and not merely 'has') can, by God's grace, break into this 'circle'.

Here too how could it be otherwise, seeing that the total self-commitment of the person has to be achieved not in relation to this or that objective among many others on the same level, but in relation to the ultimate meaning of existence as a whole, which is manifested in history. This being the object of one's self-commitment, it cannot be authenticated on any other grounds except those of itself, however many factors may be included in it which *mutually* condition one another. (Thus too even the reality of the risen Christ as experienced itself supplies the basis for the experience, and conversely the event only 'manifests itself' to the eye of faith). The one fact which we must never overlook is that the consummation of a human existence, achieved in virtue of the fact that it has been [167] drawn into the immediate presence of God, can never be of itself a piece of evidence capable of being inserted into the sphere of space and time proper to 'this-worldly' experiences, and available as such in that sphere. At most it can 'make itself felt' in a human life, and precisely demand the response of total decision in that life (admittedly in all its dimensions). Nor have we any need to 'picture to ourselves' how a man 'appears' in the genuine totality of his being ('with body and soul', as we say). We can admit without disquiet that we are incapable of 'imagining' what a 'physical' resurrection will be, because (unlike the restoring of a dead man to life, for instance), it is, and is intended to be, utterly different from any restoration to a former state. Rather it signifies that radical kind of transformation (of which we already find

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mention in Paul as a condition for perfection) which the person must undergo as a free earthly being, bringing his own existence to its fulness in order to achieve that ultimate perfection in which he rises above time and reaches beyond it to the timelessness of eternity. When we speak of a 'physical' resurrection we are merely saying that we think of the whole man as perfected, and, in accordance with our own experience of human reality, cannot regard him as divided into an ever-enduring 'spirit' and a merely transient 'physical nature'.

In view of this, on what grounds should we be *forbidden* by our moral conscience with regard to truth to rely on the Easter experience of the first disciples? Nothing *compels* us to believe them if we decide not to do so and to remain sceptical. But there is much to give us strength to believe in them. What is demanded of us in this is both the boldest course and at the same time the clearest: to hazard our whole existence on the fact that, taken as a whole, it is orientated towards God; that it has a final and definitive meaning, that it is capable of salvation and redemption; that this meaning has actually been realised in Jesus, who is in this an effective prototype for us all; and that as we look upon him it becomes possible for us to believe it of ourselves as the first disciples have done. We are always in the position of 'wanting to' do something (namely to believe), and to this end we explore the depths of our own natures with a view to summoning up that historical objectivity which will enable us to attain to such belief. But they, the first disciples, actually have believed in very deed and in very truth – believed absolutely and totally, and to the point of death.

Have we a better solution to offer to the basic question of the meaning of our own existence? Is it really more honest, or simply, in the last analysis, [168] more cowardly, when confronted with this basic question, to shrug one's shoulders in scepticism and yet to continue on (to the extent that we do live and strive to live decently) as though everything did in fact have a meaning after all? There is no need to maintain that everyone who supposes that he is unable to believe in the resurrection of Jesus is not able to remain ultimately and unreservedly true to his own conscience in his life. But it certainly will be maintained here that he who really does this whether he realises it explicitly or not does in fact believe in the risen Lord even though for him he is nameless. And it makes no difference to this whether the personal interpretations of his existence which he has worked out for himself agree with, or contradict faith in the resurrection. For such a one, even though he does not explicitly recognize the truth of the resurrection, is, in the basic decision by which the whole of his existence is orientated, tending towards the fulness of existence ('with body and soul') in salvation and redemption. He tends towards this fulness of existence as that which transforms this temporal state itself– tends, therefore, towards the meaning of history itself, and is at most not yet aware of whether history has already arrived at that point which even such faith acknowledges. But then *this* faith, which is also our own, need not shrink (in view of Jesus and the faith of his disciples) to acknowledge: 'It has already taken place'.

In *his* history at least the prison-house of this age has already been thrown open. And then we too can say explicitly: 'I believe in the resurrection of the body, that is the transformation and ultimate consummation of my own existence'. The Way of the Cross has a fifteenth station, at which we take leave of the march of time to be received into the inconceivable wonder of the love of God.

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[169]

15

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE RISEN CHRIST

Hope of the Despairing

Among the mysteries of the gospel, so human and at the same time so altogether divine, and because of this so consoling also, is to be numbered the story of the two disciples who were journeying to Emmaus. If we read this story aright we recognise with amazement that it is a story about ourselves. We need only to tell this story to realise that it is a part of our own lives that is recorded in it, and at the same time the whole of our lives; a part, because the same thing happens again and again in our lives, the whole because our entire life is summed up in this one story of the disciples of Emmaus. As we read we notice that we are actually passing through our own Emmaus story. And as we read we hope and pray that our story too may have the same ending as that recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke's gospel.

They had been so full of hope; but now they believe that they can hope no longer. For the way matters have turned out is far from being in conformity with their hopes, or – to put it more precisely – with the interpretations which they themselves had placed on those hopes. They supposed that what they were hoping for was deliverance and freedom. We do not know whether they had fastened their hopes upon something that was not really capable of being an object of hope at all, or whether it was merely that their hopes were true and right, yet that they were simply disappointed by what they actually experienced. We do not know which of these two alternatives is correct. Nor did they themselves know this, for our understanding of our hopes, and because of this the hopes themselves, are always still in process of development. The point at which they finally arrive, and what becomes of them on the uncharted ways of this life does not depend merely upon ourselves. For we too are not the sovereign masters of our own course. But in any case when the death sentence was pronounced, and he in whom their hopes were centred was [170] nailed to the Cross, and later when he was buried, then, so they believed, everything was over indeed. The only thing left to do was to give up and take to flight. There are situations in which there really is nothing more to hope for, in which there is nothing more to be said except 'We did hope'. Thus these disciples feel that they have been brought face to face with reality, that they are realists, and they do not let themselves be delayed in their flight by the pious fantasies of well-meaning women. No, they say, we are not falling into that mistake a second time. It is not virtue but cowardice and stupidity, so they imagine, to refuse to recognise the facts. And now, once and for all, it is a sheer matter of fact, which no amount of theorising in the world can interpret away that their hope has been hung on the gallows, and then buried in the grave. They are going away – either going home or going somewhere else, but in any case going.

How strange this is. Each of them is wholly alone, cast into the grave of his own hopeless loneliness. Why, then, are they walking together? Why are they actually still talking to one another, these two modern existentialists? Why are they seeking consolation from one another when in very truth there is no hope that it could be worth their while to discuss? They are running away and – talking. Just like ourselves. They are talking even though in reality it is meaningless to do so, and by the very fact of doing so they are bearing unconscious witness against their own convictions. That they should still be able to talk together like this – that is the beginning of grace. They want to blunt the edge of their own inconsolable loneliness by talk; to cover the void of their own hearts with chatter. And in doing so they give God the opportunity of joining in in their discussion. How often it happens that grace is actually present in our very flight from it! Sometimes God is already speaking with us when we

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imagine that we are quite alone, and only talking about him, the God that is dead. A stranger meets us on the way. It is the Lord. Our eyes, as they look round joylessly, are held by him. But they fail to recognise him. He who is taken up with himself and has a heart that is devoid of hope has strangely little place in his spirit and heart for others. But while it is salvation even to recognise him, still this remains true first and last, that even clear vision cannot bring it about that he, the Lord, is present and accompanies us; that he himself is actually accompanying us on the journey as we flee from him. This is something that he bestows, and he alone. Though admittedly he does accost many on the way who never notice it.

[171] He is there on the way to Emmaus like one who knows even less than we ourselves, like a stranger, as though he were passing us by. We do not know when he comes or when he will go if we do not say: 'Stay with us Lord for it is toward evening'. Despair and grief had not yet pierced so deeply and lethally into the hearts of the disciples that these hearts refused an answer to the question of the traveller; that in the bitterness that kills they cynically refused to pay any heed to the word of light and consolation. Their heart is not yet so proud that it has taken refuge in a narcissism of pain and death, shamefully hugging its despair to itself. They let the stranger speak, though he knows less than they do. They really listen to him. What he says to them is that mystery which alone is self-explanatory. He speaks to them of the predestined death that ransoms and sets free. He shows them quietly how everything in the world and in scripture alike contains this single message, that the one fulfilment of all hope is to be found there, precisely where they believed that they had been deceived and that they were forced to despair. As for the so-called facts of the case, he only tells them precisely what these disillusioned realists have already seen for themselves, seen all too clearly: that Jesus is the crucified one. But consider the way he presents this fact to them, not as something which he shrinks from or denies, but as something which he accepts, something precious and enduring, something with an intrinsic meaning of its own. And in this way, when they look steadfastly at these facts, with a gaze that no longer flinches away from them, when they accept them calmly for what they are, then the facts themselves are illuminated from within, and disclose their own intrinsic truth: precisely that this descent of Jesus into failure and death is the way by which he enters upon the blessed destiny which is his by right, and attains to his own glory. He shows them this not as a general law in the logic of human existence, as though it followed as a matter of basic necessity that any death should be followed by a new becoming. When he speaks of this descent into darkness as the way of entering into supreme glory he applies it as a law of absolute necessity to *Jesus* and to Jesus alone; to Jesus as believed in, and to all others only to the extent that they do believe in him.

Scripture does not record that the disciples made any answer to what the unknown traveller said to them. They are silent. Because what is in question here, so far from being some theoretical question, some improved scientific theory, is that on which one dares to wager one's whole heart and spirit right to the last: to discover life itself in the very abyss of death, in [172] the very depths of its despair, and to snatch light as it were from the dragon's jaws. That is why silence is appropriate here, for it is here that the heart is re-born. But before this is achieved amid that silence and expectancy that makes it possible, the disciples can say one word, a word of courteous solicitude such as befits simple hearts that are full of kindness: 'Stay with us for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent'. They are anxious about the night that confronts the stranger, he who so fills the night of their own hearts with light. Even as they seek to stay their brother pilgrim they invite him who is their Lord and the goal of their own journey to be their guest. They offer the pilgrim a roof, and thereby arrive home themselves. They break bread with him, and it is then, not while they are discussing the theology of human existence on the way, but in the celebration of fellowship and communion, that they recognise their Lord. It is he. The words which the stranger has spoken to them are the words of the Lord. By breaking bread with them he roots himself in their

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hearts. And they recognise the truth. Truly he is risen; out of the grave of the world, and out of the chasm of gloom of their own hearts.

How often we ourselves have experienced the same thing, even though, perhaps, only faintly and in small degree, and always lasting only for part of our lives. It may be that he who could survey our entire life-span too in his future will see that we are still on the way to Emmaus, that our eyes are still veiled, waiting for that countenance in which their whole destiny can be read, and however eager we may already have been to speak of the Lord, however much our hearts may have been quietly kindled by his word, yet in the last analysis he still continues to walk among us unrecognised.

In fact it may be that the greatness of life has still to come. We are actually bound to journey on on our pilgrimage, to travel and never to believe that we have reached our goal. For we are still on the way to the Last Supper of eternal life, where the Lord will rise and gird himself in order to give us the wine of inexpressible joy. Because we are still on the way we need not wonder at the fact that our heart constantly becomes weary, or angry, and weeps and complains at the disappointment of its hopes; that again and again we have the impression that we are fleeing from the death of our hope into a sterile void. Even on such a journey the Lord can go with us as the divine compassion present in a hidden manner in our midst, to disclose to hearts that are willing to receive it the meaning [173] of scripture and of life. Even a way such as this can lead to the Emmaus of our own lives, where we shall know the Lord in the breaking of bread.

The Good Shepherd

The second Sunday after Easter is called ‘Good Shepherd Sunday’. Obviously the name is derived from the section of the gospel appointed to be read on this Sunday. This consists of three verses from the tenth chapter of John, the chapter which contains three ‘shepherd’ parables. Our text comprises the third of these, and this arrangement of the sections of scripture included in this gospel is something which we have in common with Evangelical Christians also. In this gospel Christ calls himself the good or the true shepherd. In explaining this appellation which he applies to himself he points out that as the owner of the flock he, unlike the hireling, lays down his life for his sheep; that he knows them and they him, and he goes on to predict that one day he will be the one shepherd over all who will lead all the scattered sheep, Jews and Gentiles alike, into the unity of one shelter in his fold, so that there shall be one shepherd and one flock.

It is an age-old picture which Jesus makes use of here in one of his designations of himself in the Johannine gospel, all of which begin with that phrase of unfathomable meaning, ‘I am’. The image itself derives from the nomadic culture of patriarchal times, when the supreme authority was vested in the father. In this image the true shepherd, as the owner of the flock, is simply to be identified with the Lord, the upholder of all things in existence. Among the Greeks king and generals are considered to be the shepherds of the peoples under them. In the Old Testament Yahweh is the shepherd and king of his people. In Ezek. 34 we find a prophetic threat of judgment and condemnation of the shepherds of the people, who have forgotten their duty and become self-seeking. Here the living God of history promises that he will take up and gather his people anew as their shepherd. And then we find the following oracular promise concerning the son of David: ‘I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them. He shall be their shepherd’ (Ezek 34:23).

In this tradition Jesus clothes himself in an archetypal image: ‘I am the true, the real shepherd’. Again in the synoptics he applies ‘shepherd’ images to himself (Mk 14:27; Mt 25:32; 26-31), even though in these passages attention is focused rather on the salvation to which the sheep [174] themselves are destined to attain (Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:3-7; Mk 6:34;

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Mt 9:36). Since then this image has become a part of the language of Christendom. For the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews Jesus is the great shepherd of the sheep (13:20). For Peter Jesus, considered as the example and reward of his apostles, is said to be the chief shepherd (1 Pet 5:4), the shepherd and protector of our souls (1 Pet 2:25), while for Revelation he is the shepherd who pastures the peoples with an iron rod (2:27). This is why the early Christians depicted the Lord as the Good Shepherd carrying the sheep. This is the most ancient and the most frequent motif in the art of the catacombs, which was thereby designed to present the Lord as the leader gathering souls into Paradise. And when Abercius of Hieropolis in Phrygia (2nd c.) wanted to tell later generations that he had become a Christian he had the following inscription set on his tombstone: 'I am a disciple of a holy shepherd who feeds the flocks of his sheep on mountains and pastures, and has great eyes that see all things'.

Now let us consider that saying of the Lord's in the Johannine gospel, 'I am the good shepherd'. If we want to understand this saying aright we must take it the opposite way round to what everyday linguistic usage might lead us to expect. This sentence does not consist of a determination or specification of the phrase 'I am', which, in itself, might be thought to be empty and vague. If we took it in this sense we would only know what 'I' was from the clear information supplied by the predicate. Here, on the contrary, Jesus is uttering the words 'I am' in an absolute sense that is self-subsistent and all-comprehending. And the reference to the 'shepherd' only derives its true meaning from these preceding words, 'I am'. Thus one can only realise what is meant by the reference to the good shepherd when one has first understood what 'I am' means. In this case the subject determines the predicate, and not the other way round. This appears from the very fact that Jesus utters a whole series of such 'I am' sayings. He says: 'I am – the messiah (4:26), the bread of life (6:35), the living bread from heaven (6:42, 51), the true vine (15:1, 5), the light of the world (8:12; 12:46), the door (10:7), the shepherd (10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way, the truth and the life (14:6), the first and the last (Rev 1:17; 22:13), the beginning and the end (Rev 22:13), the root and the bright morning star (Rev 22:16).

In virtue of its authority, which extends over the whole of existence, and makes itself present to man in this way, the 'I am' of Jesus is in itself, and without any further addition, the object of faith which pronounces [175] judgment upon the sins of unbelief. Jesus speaks of those who 'do not believe that I am' (8:24). He also declares: 'I tell you this now before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that "I am" (13:19). Just as God is, in the deepest and most ultimate sense, not to be portrayed by any being other than himself – indeed not to be conceived of from any point outside his own being, just as he cannot be included in any system of reference pertaining to our own existence, such as we can understand or apply, and just as he cannot be fitted into any such system, just as he is the one who specifies and determines rather than the one who is specified – a subject in the absolute, and not one which is susceptible of predicates, just as he reveals himself in this guise to Moses as 'I am who am', so too Jesus is the 'I am' in an absolute sense: God whose existence is absolutely sovereign, absolutely independent, and prior to the existence of any other being, and it is as such that he proclaims himself in the words 'I am'. 'I am all, the beginning and the end, the way and the light, the truth and the life, the slain one and the victory over death, root and flower: I am'. And therefore in him, the presence of God for us in a guise which we can apprehend, all things are gathered up as in their origin. That is why all things belong to him. That is why he gathers all things to himself, of which he is author and maker, as into the unity of the end towards which all are tending, just as he constitutes the unity of their common beginning too. Because he is the 'I am', therefore he is the true shepherd, he who alone makes comprehensible what this means: to be the true shepherd.

It is not, therefore, by making use of an already familiar image that Christ makes himself

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comprehensible to us, even though the image itself is one which we cannot fail to recognise. Rather it is on the basis of his 'I am' that he makes it clear to us who the shepherd really is. Because he is, therefore there is one to whom all the scattered and lost ones belong, one who knows all things, however scattered and confused they may be in a dark and meaningless void; one whom the ultimate instinct of reality, still cohering even in its confusion, yet recognises; one who, by entering into this confusion and offering himself up in sacrifice there, ventures into the desolation of death and so achieves the gathering of the scattered; one, in short, who can unite all things. And because there is this 'I am', therefore there is the shepherd.

The great thinker of our times has called man 'the shepherd of being', and summed up in this phrase the whole destiny and value of man, which, [176] by our own resources, we recognise in ourselves. But the truth which Jesus is uttering to us here is still more basic and primary, and when we let it speak to us in a spirit of faith this truth reveals itself to us as an experience of ours that is more basic and more primary: the fact that we are those over whom the shepherd of men watches, and whom he gathers and guides. He, this shepherd of ours, is no abstract idea which we foster and shepherd as man 'shepherds the winds', but rather he who is *there*, acting upon us, the crucified and risen Lord, he who is invoked at baptism. We do not speak of him. Rather he says his word to us. He is present in the celebration of the Lord's supper, in which he gives us his flesh and blood. Where he is present and active by his grace, there the beginning of that unity has already been achieved which abolishes all conceivable divisions. Where he is the living God is, God as present and close to us. 'Come', run the words of Ps 94:6, 'Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our maker. For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand'. And Thomas Aquinas writes in his poem: 'Merciful *shepherd*, thou true bread, show thyself compassionate towards us. Do thou protect us and shepherd us. Do thou prepare for us the eternal blessing that will be ours in the land without death'.

Here we must break off yet holding firm to the truth that is ours, the truth that we, the scattered ones, are those whose very existence is divided and remote from the rest; those who wander about, those who are disunited, those who are cut off from one another as by barriers, those who are hunted by wolves, those who do not know who they belong to (apart from that one whom they are unwilling to belong to, and who seems to come after them in the guise of the wolf of death). If we held fast to him, and then the word came to us, came to us *there* where we really are the lost ones, the word 'I am' – then we would know indeed that *he* is the true shepherd.

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[177]

16

HE WILL COME AGAIN

This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven' (Acts1:11). This quotation from the Acts of the Apostles may serve to introduce the considerations which follow on the festival of Christ's Ascension.

The first thing which we must recognise is that what the two angels are saying here has the force of a refusal or a dismissal. It informs the apostles that their master will not show himself again in visible form, in that unambiguously human and apprehensible form in which they have hitherto been privileged to know him, until he returns in glory at the end of time. The intimacy which they have hitherto enjoyed is over – over until the end of time. The axiom that is now in force is 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed', those who hope utterly against hope, who are willing to let their whole existence depend upon something which is not humanly apprehensible. We have only the message of preaching to rely upon for what belongs to the apostles directly: to have seen with their own eyes what they have seen and have actually touched with their hands. It is not given to us to share this privilege of theirs. It is the unrepeatable privilege that belongs to the origins. At the same time it is the blessing that is promised for the end. The idea that in the intervening period too this privilege might be enjoyed – that is what the angels refuse to allow. Even though mystical apparitions of the Lord have occurred in subsequent times, this does not invalidate the denial that they are uttering here. The Lord does not appear in his real bodily form. He is remote. He is in a state in which he is sought by faith, he for whom we must wait until he comes again, the one for whose return we keep watch, but who has still to come. Christian life, therefore, is essentially a life of the provisional and transitory. Implicitly it involves the recognition of the fact that nothing definitive and enduring can be attained here; the courage to face the fact that we have here no abiding city. It means that we are [178] forbidden to make any attempt at constructing our ultimate goal in this present dimension of space and time. We shall be able to perceive the reconciliation of the finite and the infinite only when everything is at an end – not in the present. He has gone away. Even as the realisation had dawned – at long last – of who he was, even then he had already gone away. He is no longer there as he was *then*. We can no longer see him as he was *before*.

But the angels' word is also a word of consolation and of promise. 'Just as' Jesus has gone, 'even so' will he return. Properly speaking he has now no further destiny to fulfil. There is no need for us to fear that because he has gone away he may return as someone else who, in the meantime, has undergone a transformation, so that he is no longer the person whom we knew, and of whom we have experience. He is the same who was among us, and it is 'so' that he will return. 'So' he remains to all eternity; 'so' and not otherwise. He has not gone in order to destroy his identity, in order to escape from the state which was his when he was here among us, and which he experienced and endured here among us. He is, and he remains, the same as he was here, in order that he may 'so' return as he was then. He has 'gone away' from our human history precisely that the ultimate significance of this human history may endure; in order that it may not be dissipated in the void of the past, but may be able to return, i.e. may manifest itself at that point at which we shall have attained to our own final and definitive state as that which has endured throughout. Nothing in him and in his life has been lost. All has been retained, and therefore 'it will come again'. It will manifest the fact that it has endured in its entirety. We imagine that what departs also ceases to exist, that what is taken away from us cannot also return. But it is not so. The Lord has gone away as man. He has

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taken with him his human life, not merely a human nature in the abstract, still open to all the possibilities and indifferent as to which of them is made actual in it. No, it is a human life that he has taken with him into the glory of his Father. Certainly the particular concrete events of this life really have disappeared. Indeed there was an inherent tendency in them really to disappear because, precisely, by doing so they bear witness to what is final and definitive. He is no longer a child. He is no longer a youth, no longer the man, no longer the crucified one, the one who dies and sinks into the darkness of death. He has left all that behind him. But precisely because of this all that which he did undergo and subsequently left behind has entered into life in his own personhood, has become a part [179] of himself as he was when he went away from us in order that when he returns he may be just the same. Because he was that which we experienced therefore he will return as he was then: as the man who was a child, and for whom this fact remains eternally present, as the man who walked upon this earth, as the man who bore with us, who addressed words of sincerity and love, grace and forgiveness to us, as the man who went to his death, as the man who has already experienced everything that we have to bear in the way of joy and pain, life and death, victory and defeat. If we rightly understood the significance of the preterite in these statements of ours concerning his 'past life', then we would understand that the only factor which really has disappeared in them is that of 'anxiety' (*Angst*). The events referred to in these statements could disappear, and what has happened once and for all in history could not remain eternally in force. But the true time which has been won by his redemptive work is not inaugurated in order that that which is initiated may disappear, but is rather the beginning of that which endures. And eternity does not come 'after' time, but is the sheer validity of that which has taken place in time, but endures for ever. And therefore he comes 'so', just as he has gone. In the 'interval' nothing will happen, for in his temporal life itself that eternity which endures has been worked out and suffered for. When this enduring eternity appears to us in the future, it will be the validity of his own history that comes to meet us. This history has now been filled with the glory of God (that is why he has returned home); but likewise this history has become the finally valid and enduring factor which can be restored.

But this means that the word of the angel is a word of promise addressed to us, a word that promises us our eternal and enduring validity. Why has he really gone when, by this entry into the glory of his Father, he is still, nevertheless, the one who remains? It is because he wants to give us an opportunity to live *his* life; in order that when he returns he may find in us that which he brings with him to us of himself: a human life which belongs to God. In his Spirit, in his Church, in his word, in his sacraments he has indeed remained with us in order that we may continue his life. On the basis of this objective existence with us he must penetrate into all departments of our life in order to conform our life to his – penetrate what we do and what we suffer, our joy and our pain, our strength and our feebleness, our life and our death. It is his will to live on in all this. And if he will so return as he has gone, then the word which we [180] are here considering is a promise that he will give us the grace to live his life, for otherwise he could not come as he has gone.

Lord, when you return even as you have departed from us, as a true man, then may you find yourself in us as the one who bears all, is patient, is faithful, is kind, is selfless; as the one who cleaves to the Father even in the darkness of death, the one who loves, the one who is joyful. Lord, may you find yourself in us, being what we would so much wish to be yet are not. But your grace has not only endured. In reality, it has come to us simply in virtue of the fact that you, having ascended and been enthroned at the right hand of God, have poured out your Spirit into our hearts. And so we truly believe that against all experience you do continue your life in us even though it seems to be only ourselves – Ah! almost always only ourselves and not you – that we find within ourselves. You have ascended into heaven and are seated at the right hand of God with our life. You are coming back with that life in order

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to find your life in ours. And the fact that you will find it there – that will be our eternity even when we, together with all that we are and have lived and have possessed and have borne, shall have entered into the glory of your Father through your second coming.

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[181]

17

THE FESTIVAL OF THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD

We are celebrating the festival of Christ's ascension. We know that properly speaking we are thereby celebrating the conclusion of the festival of Easter, Easter once again, because by his resurrection the Lord has already entered into his full and final consummation. Thus what Christendom is celebrating in this festival, and what it is thereby making explicit, is something which, even though it was already implicitly contained in our Easter faith, is nevertheless new, something which goes beyond what we celebrated at Easter. This is the recognition of the fact that in the fulness of glory upon which he has entered the Lord has been withdrawn from his followers; that the full unveiling of the Easter glory which is to embrace all things is something for which we are still waiting; that the 'little while' is still continuing, in which the fulness of our life in Christ is still withheld from us and from the world itself. Thus the festival of the ascension is, in a very true and proper sense, the festival of faith as such; the festival, therefore, not so much of the real facts in which we believe, but of faith itself. For faith does in fact imply holding fast to that which we have not experienced for ourselves. It implies a building on invisible foundations, a committing of one's self to that which only seems to be there because of the actual act of trust and self-commitment in itself. But when we let the Lord go, and do not cling on to him, so that he is hidden until the end and is only present among his own in a mysterious manner in his Spirit, then we are saying that we are ready to perform precisely that act which we call faith. This is an eschatological entity. It cannot be reduced to the formal acceptance of any kind of truth such as is always possible and can be viewed wholly in abstraction from the content of belief. To believe is to live by the future, to exist in the power of that which, even though it is the centre of our own existence, has, nevertheless, been withdrawn into the future that awaits us. It is a [182] living by anticipation, a being true to a reality that lies in the future. In a single word it is eschatological existence. Ascension is the festival of faith as such.

In this sense the ascension becomes the festival of holy pain. He has departed from us. It is frightening that we feel so little pain about this. He himself thought that he had to console us. But our hearts, so withered and shallow as they are, respond to his consolation merely with amazement. We have to spend a long time in recollecting ourselves before we can realise – perhaps – even to some little extent, the fact that we should be inconsolable at the fact of his remoteness from us. For this we would have really to be holding fast to him. We would have to be overwhelmed with terror and anxiety at the void which his departure leaves for us. Now at last someone was there who is not superfluous; someone who does not become a burden but bears burdens because he is good – good in so unobtrusive a manner that we were already at the stage almost of taking his goodness for granted; someone who called the impenetrable riddle that lies behind all apprehensible things his Father, and in doing so gave the impression of being neither incredibly naive nor tastelessly presumptuous, one indeed who almost led the world into the temptation of taking it for granted when he allowed us too to utter the words 'Our Father' into this divine darkness. It was the compassion of God and his wisdom that were with us in him. At last we were able to think of God in a manner somewhat different from the abstractions of the philosophers. At last one was there who really knew something, and yet did not have to be abstruse in speaking of it; one whom one only had to make contact with, whom one dared to kiss, whom one struck on the shoulder in friendliness; someone who sought nothing for himself – and in these trivialities we had everything, *everything* made physically present to us: God, his pity, his grace, his nearness. Now he has gone. He wanted

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to console us by saying that precisely by so doing his Spirit, and in this living Spirit of his, himself would come to us. That is a consolation. Oh yes. For if he were only physically present to us without his Spirit taking possession of us his presence to us would be of as little avail to us as to a Judas who sits at his side or kisses him. But when his Spirit is in us, then we are his, the Lord's, and he is ours. But the fact that we have him only in order to seek him, to be able to seek him and to have to seek him, that he should be among us only in order that it may still be revealed to us what we are in virtue of this fact – this makes the joy and blessedness of possessing him in his Spirit a [183] pain as well. It is the pain of waiting, the pain of the birth-pangs of eternal life, the pain of hope, the pain of pilgrimage. Yet if only we could feel this blessed pain, this grace of the festival of the Ascension more ardently and more keenly! But we are content with this life. Today we are often proud that our loyalties are to the earth (though naturally this can have a good sense). We do not look above or into the future like the men of Galilee. We keep our gaze fixed on the foreground of our lives and on the present. We are not those who wait, those who look, those who are unsatisfied; not those who hunger and thirst for that justice which is to be found only in the future, that future which will bring us the return of the Lord if we keep watch for it. May God give us the grace to celebrate this festival as a festival of blessed pain!

The Ascension is a festival of the future of the world. The flesh is redeemed and glorified, for the Lord has risen for ever. We Christians are, therefore, the most sublime of materialists. We neither can nor should conceive of any ultimate fulness of the spirit and of reality without thinking too of matter enduring as well in a state of final perfection. It is true that we cannot picture to ourselves in the concrete how matter would have to appear in this state of final endurance and glorification for all eternity. But we have so to love our own physicality and the worldly environment appropriate to it that we cannot reconcile ourselves to conceiving of ourselves as existing to all eternity otherwise than with the material side of our natures enduring too in a state of final perfection. And – one shudders at the 'blasphemy' which such an idea must represent for the Greek mentality – we could not conceive of the divine Logos either in the eternal perfection which belongs to it for ever otherwise than as existing for ever in the state of material incarnation which it has assumed. As materialists we are more crassly materialist than those who call themselves so. For among these it would still be possible to imagine that matter as a whole and in its entirety could, so to say, be raised at one blow onto a new plane and undergo a radical qualitative change such that, for purposes of definition, it could no longer be called matter because this future state would be so utterly different from the former one in which it originated. We can entertain no such theory. We recognise and believe that this matter will last for ever, and be glorified for ever. It must be glorified. It must undergo a transformation the depths of which we can only sense with fear and trembling in that process which we experience as our death. But it remains. It continues to perform its function for ever. [184] It celebrates a festival that lasts for ever. Already even now it is such that its ultimate nature can survive permanently; and such too that God has assumed it as his own body. *Non horruisti virginis uterum*. *Non horruisti materiae beatam aeternitatem*. And already for this world as a whole the process of fermentation has already commenced which will bring it to this momentous conclusion. It is already filled with the forces of this indescribable transformation. And this inner dynamism in it is called, as Paul boldly confirms for us in speaking of the resurrection of the flesh, the holy Pneuma of God. It is a free grace. It is not the sort of entity which the world could lay claim to as something proper to itself, something belonging to it autonomously and as of right. But it is the true, the ultimate perfection of the world in all its power, which brooded and hovered over the primordial chaos, and which will preserve all things and perfect all things which were and are. And this power of all powers, this meaning which is the ultimate meaning of all meanings, is now present at the very heart and centre of all reality including material reality, and has already, in

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the glorified flesh of the Son, brought the beginning of the world triumphantly to its final goal of perfection. The Ascension is the festival of the true future of the world. The festival we are celebrating is an eschatological one. In this celebration we anticipate the festival of the universal and glorious transfiguration of the world which has already commenced, and which, since the ascension, has been ripening and developing towards the point where it will become manifest.

And there is a truth which we must repeat yet again, even though it is one which we have already seen from the obverse side of the same single reality, and have already stated. Considered as an event the ascension does not only have the connotation of departure and distance. On the contrary it is a festival of the nearness of God. The Lord had to die in order really to come close to us. For the physical nearness of those who are still imprisoned in the flesh, and who have not yet passed through death, is precisely remoteness; though it is a nearness, the sweetness of it is, nevertheless, only the pledge of the true nearness that can only be achieved in the future. And if the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord constitute one single event, the particular aspects and phases of which cannot be separated one from another, then the separation implicit in this festival is simply another way of expressing the nearness of the Lord in his Spirit, which has been imparted to us through his death and resurrection. Thus he is closer to us than he ever was; closer than he was during the time [185] when he was still in the flesh, closer so long as his Spirit is in us, so long as his life and his death have taken possession of us, so long as his Spirit in faith hope and love has loosened the fetters of our finite state and turned it into the infinitude of his Father, so long as we have abandoned the merely finite and, by his Spirit, have become strong enough boldly and lovingly to sustain the most intimate and at the same time the most ‘otherworldly’ reality of the incomprehensible mystery of God. In his death the Lord has broken the old vessel of the Spirit and has left it unrepaired. Properly speaking the infinitude with which the world has been endowed is the one new vessel into which his Spirit is poured out, for his body, even though it is truly glorified, no longer separates him from us. Rather it has itself become a sheer openness to the world. The Ascension is the festival of the true nearness of the Lord in his holy Spirit.

And it is in this sense that the Ascension is the festival which celebrates our preparation for Pentecost. This festival is simply a transition from the Easter of Christ to the beginning of our Easter, which we call Pentecost. For our sharing in the Easter of Christ is achieved through the Spirit of Christ bestowed at Pentecost. And thus we celebrate the Ascension of Christ by watching and praying for his Spirit: Come and be near to us as Spirit, since you have withdrawn from us your nearness in the flesh. In all these great festivals of Christian living let us beware of intoxicating ourselves with great words. It is not the majesty of the words of theological speculation that constitute the realities in the communication of which the true celebration of such festivals consists. Rather it is the reality of the Spirit of grace himself which both celebrates and is celebrated in us. But this reality, as the living and life-giving, the victorious and the transforming, can also be experienced in microcosm; best of all perhaps in keeping faith with him in a spirit of joy and thanksgiving to God for the life of spring, in the courage and joyfulness which we show in our everyday life, in the calmness, tolerance and love which we show to our neighbour, and many other small miracles of grace of this kind in the ordinary course of life: And all liturgical celebration achieves its meaning only if it finds a true and sustained projection of itself in the ordinary course of life in this way. For where the Spirit performs the miracle of faithfulness and courage in our poor lives from day to day, there is the Spirit of Christ. And where the Spirit of Christ is present the true festival of the Ascension of the Lord is celebrated.

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[186]

18

THE CHURCH AS THE SUBJECT OF THE SENDING OF THE SPIRIT

Easter and Pentecost are the two festivals in our ecclesiastical year which go back to apostolic times. This is because they were already included in the synagogal calendar, in which they fall at the same time of year, although admittedly their content there is different. In the time of the early Church Easter and Pentecost were not, properly speaking, two distinct festivals, or even two distinct 'festal cycles' existing independently side by side. Rather Pentecost is the culmination of Easter. Easter is the 'glorification' (*doxa*) of the Redeemer Christ, a glorification which includes his exaltation upon the Cross and his exaltation at the right hand of the Father in a single festival. Pentecost is the manifestation of that phenomenon which the Lord speaks of in John, 'If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, "Out of his (the messiah's) heart shall flow rivers of living water". And John adds to this: 'As yet the Spirit had not been given because Jesus was not yet glorified', and further, 'It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Counsellor will not come to you'. Out of the death and resurrection by which the Lord is taken away from the world, therefore, springs up the Spirit. If Jesus is not glorified it is not given. It will only be poured out if Jesus, by his death, has overcome the world and its prince. On the Cross water and blood flow down from his pierced side as a sign of the fact that the living water of the Spirit, which springs up to eternal life, and which is to flow as a stream from the heart of the messiah, can only come from the Lord 'glorified' in his crucifixion. The Spirit only comes in water and blood. *Because* Easter, that is death and resurrection, has come, *therefore* Pentecost has come. And Pentecost is only the event to which all the events of Easter are orientated with an intrinsic teleology of their own in order to find their fulfilment in Pentecost.

[187] But we must ask ourselves what Pentecost really is. It is the festival of the descent of the Holy Spirit, the festival in the baptism of the Spirit, the festival of the 'pouring out of the Spirit of God upon all flesh', the beginning of that dwelling of the Spirit permanently and enduringly 'in the vessel of the flesh and in the Church', to quote Irenaeus' words. Truly Pentecost is not a mere transitory visitation by the Spirit, a mystical ecstasy lasting for a moment. It is not even, in the first instance, a charismatic gift bestowed personally upon the apostles, as it were as private mystics or charismatics. Rather Pentecost, in all its external expressions which seem so strange, is at basis only the outward manifestation of the much more vital fact that henceforward the Spirit will never more be wholly withdrawn from the world until the end of time. For this permanent dwelling of the Spirit in the world is only the outcome of that overshadowing of the Spirit which took place in the incarnation of the Son of the Father. And because the Church is nothing else than the visible manifestation of the Spirit in the world, therefore the Church, which was born of the water and blood flowing from the dead body of Jesus, from the 'second Adam' asleep on the Cross, only becomes visible and manifest for the first time at Pentecost.

Let us develop these ideas a little further. 'The Spirit was not yet given', John declares, referring to the time when Jesus was not yet glorified. And yet we pray: '*Qui locutus est per prophetas*', 'thou who hast spoken through the prophets'. Even in this short declaration of faith, therefore, we acknowledge that the Spirit was at work in the world even before Christ, because we know that many times over and in many ways God spoke of old to our fathers. There was no Spirit and yet there was a Spirit. How can these two statements be reconciled?

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Is it merely that before the Redeemer came the Spirit was present in a lesser degree, so that now he is poured out in abundant measure upon men? No, though certainly this is also true. But taken in isolation this answer would not suffice, and would not meet the crucial difficulty. Formerly the Spirit was never in the world in the way that it is in it now, now that the fulness and the end of the ages has arrived. The Spirit of whom we speak is the Lord, for the Lord is Spirit, God is Spirit. But how is God in the world? Can lie manifest himself within the confines of this finite state? He himself as he is, can he impart himself – not his gifts, his finite works but *himself* – to man? It might be said that he reveals himself in the creation. Well, but this is only the hem of his garment, the curtain that veils him. For the creation, nature as the theologians [188] call it, tells us of God only as one who is remote, since the process of nature is cyclic, and it turns back upon itself. Of itself nature does not open up any way to man which can lead him into the inaccessible light of the depths of the Godhead, into the inner life of God himself, into his presence and before his countenance. God himself, therefore, had to come in order to lift us out of the cycle of birth and death, and in order to build a way for us by which we could be led out of the bondage of our humanity, confined as it is to the finitude of its own nature and of the world, into the life of God himself. And *this* God who comes into *this* world for *this* purpose we call the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God in the Christian sense, the holy Pneuma, is present where the deliverance of man from the world and from sin and from finitude is achieved, and where the way is opened for him to enter into the presence of God himself.

But how is the Spirit to come upon us? How can we possess him, or – to put it better – how can we allow ourselves to be possessed by him? At what point in this finite state of ours does he decide that we shall be allowed to break into the life of the infinite? Does he not move where he wills? Is his work not so mysterious and incalculable that man never knows whence he comes or whither he is going, or where he will allow himself to be found? Are not the ways by which the Lord, the Spirit, comes not untraceable, so that we only know where he is to be found when he has already taken possession of us? Is there anything visible, apprehensible, to which we can point and say: 'Behold, here and now lay hold of this. Then you can be sure that the Spirit who moves where he will has taken possession of you'?

Yes, there is such a thing, because we believe in the incarnation of the eternal Logos, because God himself has entered into the dimension of history, into the confines of space and time; because of his free grace he has assumed for ever a part of this finitude of ours which belongs to space and time: that part which we call the humanity of Jesus. He has assumed this and made it his own life in such a way as to keep it evermore as belonging to his own being. Therefore there is a 'here and now' in the world into which God has come in order to deliver us and to lead us into his own life, in which there is no 'here and now'. In Jesus of Nazareth we have the living God of the living Spirit and of grace. The Church is nothing else than the further projection of the historicity and of the visibility of Jesus through space and time, and every word of its message, every one of its sacramental signs, is, once more, nothing else than a part [189] of the world in its earthiness, with which the Spirit has united itself indissolubly since the day on which the Logos became flesh.

At Pentecost this Spirit has become manifest. Not merely the Spirit who moves intermittently and mysteriously here and there, who takes a prophet and uses him as his 'instrument' so long as he wills to do so, but who never remains lastingly among men, and who provides no lasting sign of his presence and power, but the Spirit of the Son who has become man. That is why – something which seems so contradictory – Peter's sermon, delivered on the very day on which the Spirit descends straight from above into the hearts of the apostles, does not invite the penitents to look upwards too, to see whether the Spirit coming from the realm which is beyond time and beyond history is not descending upon them as well. No, he has only one message for them: Be baptized! It is in the 'here and now'

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of the sacramental sign that the Spirit of Pentecost is present. And he is in this sign evermore and always. It is at that point, therefore, at which the visible sign is effected by the visible messenger, that Pentecost takes place. It is at that point that the Holy Spirit becomes present. Prior to the death and glorification of Jesus this was not the case, and it is for this reason that at that time the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. Previously there was indeed a Spirit of God, but not a Spirit of God made man. Before the incarnation of the Logos the invisible was not present in a mode that was visible and *lasting*. There was a juridical order which God had instituted for the people of Israel. But this juridical order did not constitute a Church. It was binding upon the men of that time, but it did not bring about any grace, any Holy Spirit. There was a Spirit, but it merely hovered and did not actually descend at any point. It never became 'visible'. Now, on the other hand, in the fulness of time, a visible mode of this kind has actually been achieved, in the incarnate Logos and in his Body, the Church. *Ubi est ecclesia ibi et Spiritus Dei*; *et ubi Spiritus Dei illic et ecclesia et omnis gratia*. These are the words of Irenaeus: 'Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is there is the Church and every grace'. *In ecclesia posuit Deus . . . universam operationem Spiritus*. 'God ordained that the entire work of the Spirit should take place in the Church'. And where the Spirit is active, there, at any rate remotely, a stage is achieved in the construction of the visible Body of the Church.

Thus for Catholics the life of the Spirit, wherever it occurs, is always included within the fold of the Church. And everything else is not the life [190] of the Holy Spirit but rather mere religious excitement. There is no Holy Spirit apart from the holy Body that is the Church. For this reason we are only 'spiritualised', i.e. taken possession of and permeated by the Holy Spirit, we only act in and by the Holy Spirit if we are incorporated in the Body of the Church. For Pentecost is the festival of that Spirit *cuius non sunt participes omnes qui non currunt ad ecclesiam*, 'in whom only those who hasten to the Church have a share'. Once more we are quoting the words of Irenaeus. And when Paul tells us that the Spirit quickens while the letter kills, the letter here refers to the Old Covenant. But the Spirit which quickens is that which rested upon Jesus of Nazareth and which lives on in the visible historical Church. We must not let the Church begin only at that point at which it no longer gives us unease.

Because the Church is there, therefore there is also a continual Pentecost. Therefore the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh is still continually taking place. Therefore we ourselves can still pray continually: *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, 'Come, Holy Spirit'. And because we say this prayer in the Church, therefore we know that we are heard. For the Spirit of the Lord is not far from us.

But for all this may we not sometimes ask: Where, then, is the Spirit in us? Where are his mighty works, his fire and his rushing wind? Do we not all too often seek in vain for the Spirit in the visible Church? Are not many true indeed to the letter without possessing the Spirit, orthodox without being moved by the Spirit of God? And does it not sometimes seem as though there were, after all, more of the Holy Spirit in many movements of religious enthusiasm than there, where the Holy Spirit has built his temple for ever?

Certainly the Holy Spirit remains always in his Church. This Church will always be the place in which he dwells in order to descend upon all who await him there with hearts ready to receive him. But for us as individuals all this is far from being a comfortable guarantee that he is able to work in us as he would wish to, and as the times demand that he should be at work. We cannot have a comfortable guarantee of this merely on the grounds that we go in and out of the house of the Lord. He is not to be found apart from the letter of the New Covenant, but not everyone who recognises this letter as sacred and says 'Lord, Lord' is *ipso facto* a Christian filled with the Spirit, spiritual in the sense that God, our own responsibility and our own age demand that we should be spiritual. Only he who is a member of the Church *and* independent, humble *and* daring, [191] obedient *and* conscious of his own personal

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responsibility, a pray-er *and* a doer, adhering to the Church in her past *and* in her future – only such a one as this makes room for the Spirit of God at Pentecost, who appears in the form of a mighty rushing wind, the Spirit who is always ancient and always young – for this Spirit to do its work in him, to renew the face of his own soul, to use those who are his own in order to transform the earth as well.

And yet . . . Is this the ultimate answer, the solution to every riddle? Where is the Spirit in us, even though we offer him a willing heart in spite of all denials, though we wait for him, though we do not say that we are children of Abraham, knowing very well that God is able to raise up such children even from stones, and to fit them as living stones into the temple of the Spirit? The Spirit comes in tongues of fire and signs and wonders when it pleases *him* to do so. But for ourselves, he has commanded *us* to believe in him, in his power and in his presence, even when we do not feel them. The Lord has commanded us not to think out beforehand how we should bear witness to him, because in the moment when we do have to bear such witness – not necessarily before that moment – the Spirit will come to our aid. But in doing this he has also warned us against obstinately seeking to have a tangible and perceptible assurance of his advent to us. Our task is to regard our feebleness as a sign of his complete power; to live in hope against all hope. He who gives the honour to God in this way, and does not seek to possess it for himself, he who commits himself to God in faith without vision, in him the Spirit lives and works. In so far as externals are concerned in such a case everything seems drab and everyday, a mere fulfilment of one's duty, patient expectation, wearisome struggles against manifold temptations. But viewed from within, Christian life consists of a *sobria ebrietas spiritus*, a clear-sighted and sober intoxication by the Spirit. The Spirit lives within us. There his light shines quietly and, as it were, with an inner life of its own. There his power is growing, though still hidden, as seed grows even though the husbandman sleeps. But when the hour of testing arrives, then – perhaps when we least expect it – the Spirit of wisdom and power will be with us. In this time, then, we will pray for the Holy Spirit, for the good Spirit whom the Father gives to all his children who ask him for it. We will seek him in his Church. With Mary, who was overshadowed by the Spirit, and with Peter, as once in the room of the Last Supper, we will 'be of one mind, constant in prayer'. We will ask God for a humble, and at the same [192] time a bold heart, one which is ready to receive the Spirit of freedom and love, for a believing heart that does not demand signs and wonders, but rather for faith to believe that it is not in the context of pageantry, but in a spirit of quiet and recollection that the living God fills the hearts of his believers with the Holy Spirit who is eternal life.

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[193]

19

THE SPIRIT THAT IS OVER ALL LIFE

Only by a process of sober and realistic questioning can we reach back beyond the religious practices to which we have become habituated to the origin of all our festivals, customs and observances. We are celebrating Pentecost. What is it, then, that we are really celebrating on this day? What is the special significance of this festival for ourselves in particular? It is with these two questions that the following meditations are concerned.

I

The answer to this question is not easy. Certainly it is not as one of the three Persons of the holy Trinity that we are celebrating the Holy Ghost. For the great festivals of the ecclesiastical year constitute a sacred *anamnesis*. That is to say, they celebrate *events* in saving history. But by commemorating them we make sure that they shall continue to exercise their influence as enduring forces in our Christian lives. But when we say that we are celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church at the first Pentecost after the exaltation of the Lord, then we are brought up short with the question: How is it, then, that in the credo at Mass we actually acknowledge the Spirit who has spoken through the prophets? Does not the power of the Spirit make its impact upon humanity throughout all the ages? Must he not have been present all along and from the very outset if without him there can be no salvation, no forgiveness of sins, no faith, no love of God, no consolation in view of eternity? Must he not have been descending continuously and right from the first if God does indeed will the salvation of all men from the beginning of human history right to the end, in all ages and among all nations? And if our only reply to this question were to be: 'The Spirit who presides always and throughout all history, and who is powerful to forgive, to deliver and to justify, has [194] on this festival of Pentecost descended precisely upon the *Church*', then the further question immediately arises: 'In that case what can truly be said to have been altered in the history of mankind and its salvation if this humanity of ours has actually been all along – in spite of all sins and all abomination of desolation – the primordial ocean over which the Spirit of God broods? If mankind has always and right from the first included among its members the community of those who, as consecrated and chosen children of grace, have journeyed towards the goal of the eternal life which God bestows?' And then we might seek to say in rejoinder: 'But now, since Pentecost has come, this community of those endowed with the Spirit in the world has been made manifest. Now the people of God, scattered throughout the world of sin as in a diaspora, has become a visible institution, a concrete reality of history'. And then once more it may be asked: 'Even if the people of God has acquired the status of a concrete body in this way, and as such has become visible in history as the Church, does this really have much to do with the Holy Spirit, or is it not precisely the outcome of the work of Jesus in founding the Church, when he gathered the believers about his apostles and gave them this status of an historical institution which we call the Church by causing them to believe in the word which he had addressed to them in history, and to accept his sacraments? And with regard to the Spirit itself, is not the situation that just as he was poured out formerly, so too he is now, and so he will be to the end of time, and that he is poured out also into that other world of those who do not belong to this historical institution of the people of God called the Church? Thus is the birth of the Church

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not something which has little to do with the Spirit and its outpourings, seeing that the Spirit was given *before* the Church, and is given to those *not included in* the Church? Furthermore, if we consider what belongs to the Church independently of this outpouring of the Spirit, namely its institutional status, its constitution, its system of law, its official organisation, then is not all this, if not actually contrary to the Spirit, at least different from the Spirit?' And if the only reply we could make to all this was that now the Spirit has been poured out in greater fulness, that since Pentecost it is more powerfully and more abundantly at work, then certainly we Christians would not care to deny this. But we would still have to ask: 'Was the Spirit really bestowed in lesser measure and less freely upon the men of former ages? Were they really less beloved by God?' And we will feel embarrassed and disconcerted (if we possess any of that courageous [195] realism which is also a gift of the Spirit) as we secretly torment ourselves with the question: 'Is then the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Church really so powerful, so overwhelmingly convincing, so authoritative that everything that has gone before in the history of the Holy Spirit seems petty and obscure by comparison?' And then if all we can say is that at Pentecost the Spirit is poured out over the institutional element in the Church as founded by Jesus, over its lawful authorities, the sacramental signs and the word of preaching in it, then, once more, this might prompt another question: 'Why is that so significant, seeing that already even without this institutional factor, this Spirit of the Father was at work, manifesting itself, judging and sanctifying, beginning with the prophets and extending right up to the time of those who dwelt quietly in the land, already looking for that eternal kingdom of God which we ourselves are still awaiting?' If we sought to rely *only* upon the words of Jesus in scripture, and upon those of the apostles, according to which, precisely: 'The Spirit was not yet given because Jesus had not yet been glorified', so that the disciples had to wait for the Spirit which the Lord promised to them at his departure, then we should still be faced with the unsolved question of how, in that case, this statement that 'the Spirit was not yet given' can be reconciled with that other truth that this Spirit has, nevertheless, spoken through the prophets, and worked, dwelt and brought to maturity eternal life in all men of all ages who believe, hope and love, by the grace of God, *that* grace which denies God's mercy to no-one who is ready to receive it.

If we wish to understand what Pentecost really is, we must first recognise one point: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost (in other words all those 'once and for all' events which we celebrate in the great festivals of Christendom) are so closely interconnected that they merely represent the temporal development of one and the same salvific event, the time structure of a single deed of God performed in history and upon mankind. This deed of God, one and indivisible, yet taking place in a historical process that is phased, is the definitive and irrevocable acceptance of humanity in the incarnation of the Logos. In that the Logos assumed a human 'nature', he necessarily assumed also a human historicity, so that this assumption of the reality of human nature was only complete when he had brought the history of this reality to its consummation by his death. What is unique, new and 'once and for all' in this single historical event of assuming human nature and human history is its definitive [196] finality. Always and everywhere where human history has been wrought out the dialogue between God and man, issuing in salvation or perdition, has taken place. Always and everywhere, therefore, the Spirit has been present to judge and to endow with grace. But this single dialogue, which runs continuously through the whole history of humanity, was *open*. Before the incarnation of the Logos no word of God had entered into world history as an event, no word which God imposed finally and definitively, no word in which God addressed himself definitively and irrevocably to the world, no word which expressed him definitively and exhaustively, no word which disclosed the ultimate and all-comprehending plan of God, no word which brought out the meaning of the real climax in the drama of world history, no word which drew this drama to its ultimate issue and brought out its ultimate

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meaning. And still less was it revealed before Christ what the import of this ultimate and all-embracing word would be, whether it would import judgment or grace, remoteness or nearness, Lordship or Fatherhood, the relationship of servant or of child, law or grace, the order of created nature or the freedom of the Spirit of God imparting itself and thereby bestowing the infinitude of God upon men. The dialogue lasted throughout the whole history of mankind from the beginning up to Christ. But the last word was not yet spoken. The whole of it still remained open. History was able to develop in either an upward or a downward direction. All was still ultimately in the balance. Every commitment was provisional and subject to revision. Every dispensation was subject to change and decay. One age might be followed by another which abolished the provisions of the first, and did not really so much as allow what was unique and proper to it to be brought to its fulness. But since the Word has taken flesh and submitted to death and to the other conditions of our history, and has subjected itself to these conditions in a final and irrevocable manner because it assumed our human nature as a factor most intimately inherent in itself now everything is different, everything has become final. However much the individual has to experience his own private destiny as still open and undecided, since the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ human history as a whole has already arrived at its goal. It has been assumed by God for ever. It has been endowed with grace to all eternity. It can never more be abandoned. The factor of sinfulness in it has already been included in this gesture of acceptance on God's part, and has been outweighed by the power of the grace which has conquered it. The world is predestined to salvation and [197] not to perdition, to life and not to death. God no longer waits for the decision of the world as though it had to say the last word. On the contrary he has spoken the ultimate word as his own Word, and *at the same time* as that of the world itself. And this word is reconciliation, life, light, victory and the glory of God himself, which he himself has implanted in the innermost depths of the world itself to become its glory. And all this is now no longer hidden in the eternal decrees of God, (though it has, of course, been present in these right from the beginning, albeit in a manner which was not available to creatures to recognise and to examine), but has rather become manifest, has been brought into being and given objective reality in the world itself, rooted in the very heart of the world to become the active principle that directs it to its goal. The result is that this active force inherent in the world already bears within itself all the fulness of perfection, and has already imparted this fulness to the world. When, therefore, we say that at Pentecost the Spirit has descended upon all flesh, then we no longer say this only of that Spirit which has always presided in the world, for we are speaking of the eschatological Spirit, the Spirit as the irrevocable gift. This is the Spirit of the eternal predestination of the world as a whole to life and to victory, the invincible Spirit which has been implanted in the world and in its history, and indissolubly wedded to it. This Spirit was not there before Christ, and since Pentecost it has been revealed that *this* Spirit is the Spirit of *Christ*, that in its outpouring and its work in the world it shares in the finality of Christ himself; that it is the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ, and therefore the Spirit who will no longer disappear from the world and from the community of Christ. It has been revealed that the Spirit is the Spirit of the risen Christ, and that it has been promised as such irrevocably and invincibly to the world – it is this that was revealed at Pentecost and was accepted in an attitude of faith by those upon whom the Spirit descended.

II

What is it which brings this event of the Spirit home to us personally? How does it make its message penetrate into our existence in order to prepare us ever anew for the tasks of our lives? Here we may mention only two basic attitudes which derive from this Spirit of

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Pentecost: responsibility and trust.

[198]

1. Responsibility

At first sight one might suppose that if this is the situation, if the Spirit is now irrevocably and triumphantly present, if it can never more by any means be removed from the world, if, in a certain sense, it is present as *opus operatum*, as of formal pre-definition, as that which is eschatologically final and definitive, then surely, one might say, everything has been made quite simple and quite secure. Then one can depend upon the fact of the Spirit's presence, and the burden of responsibility and of care has been removed from man, as also has the anguish and struggle involved in not knowing what the final issue of events will be. But this only seems to be the case. In reality the situation in which man finds himself has been rendered more acute. The hour of victory in the grace of the Spirit is also the hour of decision and judgment, and that too in a more radical sense than ever before. Such is the situation of man in the age inaugurated by Christ, always viewed from the point of view of scripture. What has been offered to men here is indeed the highest and most all-conquering gift of all. But it is also the last; the one which compels man to an ultimate decision, which can never more be revised. This decision is no merely provisional one. Once taken the negotiations leading up to it can never more be re-opened. Certainly we are all now living in the age of the Spirit of God now come among us finally and definitively; the age of the eschatologically victorious Church; the age of Christ, which is also the eternal *future*. At the same time it is certainly true that the decision which the *individual* has to take still always remains open. But now because the *situation* in which the decision is taken can no longer be changed, precisely the same principle applies to this final and 'once and for all' decision. Only in Christ is there any '*topos metanoias*', any place for repentance and conversion. The sins against the Spirit cannot be forgiven. There can be no other sacrifice for all eternity outside the dispensation of Christ. One cannot pray for one who, in a spirit of unbelief, absolutely denies Christ. These and similar formulations, the underlying purport of which is to bring out the radical character of the decision involved in the existential situation after Christ, recur again and again in scripture. And what is true as a general and universal principle has an urgent and ever more insistent application to the life of the individual Christian too. Here too, in the genesis of his spiritual being, he reproduces the philogenesis which runs through salvific history up to the time of Christ. Precisely because God has spoken his ultimate word to mankind as a whole, it has the same force [199] for the individual as such. Life is compressed into a single decisive moment. The discussion between God and man is drawn more and more to a single point of intensity and crisis. Life is more and more compressed into a single all-embracing decision. And it is precisely in the nature of this as radical decision that the power of grace, which in itself is victorious, is made manifest. For what applies to other relationships between God and his creatures applies in this case too. The fact that God's power is effective in all that is does not diminish the autonomous power of the creature. On the contrary, both powers increase in the same, and not in inverse proportion. And for this reason the eschatological triumph of the grace of the Spirit of Pentecost 'is manifested' precisely in the creature's acceptance of the responsibility of creaturely freedom at its most radical, and where the issue is literally one of life and death. If there were any individual case in which this triumph of Pentecostal grace did not appear, this would also be a sign that this grace of God, in its own sovereign freedom, had 'omitted' the individual concerned from its operation and had rejected him. The hour of victory for the grace of Pentecost is also the hour of responsibility in its most intense form. Those who acknowledge this grace truly, and not merely in words, are also at the same time the men who so act as though everything depended upon them. But in this they recognise calmly that while they play their part in this manner nothing else is achieved except the

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victory of grace. And once more it must be reiterated that all that has been said applies most of all to those who, as ministers of the Church, must be first and foremost the bearers of this victorious grace of the Spirit.

2. *Trust*

We have seen that if we understand it rightly the triumphant grace of the Spirit in the Church, both as a whole and, in derivation from this, in its application to the individual too, should spur us on to accept responsibility in its most radical form. But however true this may be, it is also true that in the last analysis this Spirit of Pentecost provides grounds for absolute trust. Let us consider the case of one who believes in it, waits for it and is ready to make it manifest in his own life for what it is in itself, in other words as that which, even as it is bestowed, brings with it the power to accept it as well. Such a one as this can trust and hope indeed. He does not know in what form or *manner* it will be victorious, but he knows the *fact that* it will be so. He knows that he may not try to prevent it from [200] making failure, death and defeat the form in which its victory is made manifest. He knows that the Spirit of grace, precisely because it is the Spirit of the freedom and infinitude of God, does not exclude anything (except his sins, all of which, so far as he knows, have been forgiven and pardoned), but can rather draw *anything at all* into the pattern of his coming, his victory and his final and permanent presence if it pleases him to do so: distance and nearness, exultation and tears, life and death, the heights and the depths, honour and dishonour. But precisely because of this it is also true that nothing is in a position to prevent his victory. Everything can remain to all appearances as it was before. But everything can also have been thrust, by these means, into the glory of God. Everything can be permeated with God and with his love. The hidden dynamism which is in everything and which drives everything onwards can be elevated and transformed into eternal life. The Spirit which is God's absolute and triumphant nearness needs no victories such as the world needs, no confirmation of the kind without which the world cannot be sure of its victories. One who has submitted himself to this Spirit and is aware of being one with it in an attitude of Pentecostal trust – such a one as this knows that all the depths to which he can sink have been enveloped in the depths of the infinite love of God. He knows, even without testing, that all his own downfalls have already been swallowed up in that victory which belongs to the Spirit alone. All his own weakness has already been healed at its roots, and only still survives as a pain which proclaims the greatness of the healing. He who believes in and loves the Spirit of Pentecost, who lets that Spirit be the Spirit of loving faith in himself, and make it his own act in him, such a one as this can say with all confidence: 'Everything has already been decided and the history of the world and of my personal life has already been accomplished in the life and death of him who, in obedience and love, died on behalf of his Church. And because of his attitude to his Church, he let his heart be pierced so that the water of the Spirit of Pentecost might gush forth over all who believe in him, and who, by this faith of theirs, become sharers in the victory accomplished in the life of this one man'. And as we listen to this declaration we should not take it merely in the abstract as having a general application. We must face up to the needs of our own existence, unique and unrepeatable as it is, which we are so eager to run away from, which we suppress and are unwilling to acknowledge. We must be willing to face up to this need of ours, and the dire peril in which we stand, and then, in an act of faith inspired by the [201] Spirit of God dwelling in our innermost hearts, make bold to say: 'The victory of the grace which has been given me is the answer to all this. Let me be confident. Let me have trust. For it is Pentecost, the day on which it has been revealed that God himself in Christ Jesus the crucified and risen Lord, has said his last and irrevocable word to you, and has made it the gift of the Holy Spirit to you, bestowed upon you without regret on God's

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part and in such a way that no-one can take it from you, in such a way that it has a permanent and inalienable place in your life.'

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[203]

PART THREE

The Sacrament of the Lord

[205]

20

SUNDAY, THE DAY OF THE LORD

We come together to celebrate the Last Supper of the Lord. We commemorate the death which has redeemed us. In the liturgical ceremonies we say our 'yes' of faith to that sacrifice as our sacrifice, which he has offered on our behalf to God in his eternity once and for all. It is a sacrifice of himself, and of us in him. We receive the crucified and risen Lord as the forgiveness of our sins, as the Lord of our life, as the love that unites us, and as the presence, in a mysterious and hidden manner, of the future glory that will be ours. We celebrate the Last Supper of the Lord in festal splendour in order that we may be able to do it more perfectly within the simple rhythm of the average and the everyday factors in our lives. The day which is set apart for every Catholic Christian by the celebration of this sacrifice is Sunday, the day of the Lord, on which Christ the Lord himself celebrates it with those who believe in him.

What is Sunday? First of all it is certain, even from the point of view of its historical background in the sabbath of the Old Testament, that it is simply a day of rest. When we look closely at this Old Testament background we are actually compelled to conclude that the decree of rest from work on the sabbath was ordained by God as an end in itself, and not to enable his people to engage in an act of formal worship. For in the original sabbath commandment and the manner in which this was observed no provision whatever was made for the performance of such cultic duties. It really was for the sake of men and not for himself that God interposed this commandment of his. From the point of view of its origin, therefore, Sunday too is primarily a day on which man must do no work, a day on which he must not attempt to support his physical life by toil in the struggle with nature and in the process of adapting himself to the laws of nature. It is a day which serves to remind us that man has not only to fit in obediently with the rhythm of nature, consisting of day and night, waking [206] and sleeping, vigour and weariness, as though he were merely a part of the natural order and subject to its laws. What this day reminds us of rather is that man is the lord of nature and not its slave, that he directs and controls the rhythms of nature by his own power, adapts and transforms nature by his own designs, makes it serve his interests and contribute to his life. The whole of the natural order is included within a single dimension of space, and a single dimension of time. But man makes nature his servant in such a way that from the space and time that belong to it he carves out, so to say, a space-time dimension for himself, where he can exercise his own freedom and his own autonomy in order to shape nature according to his own designs and, at the same time, to keep himself free and to be his own master. Sunday is the tangible expression, which takes the form of a communal celebration, of the fact that within this space-time dimension which he has made for himself man is autonomous and free – not subject, therefore, to nature's behests. Sunday is the celebration of a partial victory in the history of mankind, a celebration which is still of relatively recent in origin. It is a victory won in a struggle which has lasted right from the origins, and which is still incessantly waged. Right at the beginning of man's history God himself has commanded him to engage in this struggle. It is a struggle in which he seeks more and more to bring nature into

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subjection. Sunday is set apart from the rhythm of nature. As a day it is characterised not by the fact that for sheer weariness we cannot continue any longer, nor yet by mere negative inactivity. On the contrary, this day is an event, a celebration, regularly recurring, of the fact that man liberates himself to a real though limited extent, from the compulsion of nature. And the commandment of God at the creation which empowers and emboldens man, and lays it upon him as a duty (Gen 1:28) to engage in this struggle for his own liberation, is followed by a further commandment, namely to celebrate his victory in this struggle. Viewed from this point of view the efforts of humanity to enlarge this space-time dimension of its own personal freedom still further are in principle wholly legitimate. Those, however, who set this goal before them must bear in mind that they are only continuing a struggle which the Old Testament and Christendom have already long regarded as ordained by God's commandment, a struggle which they have already begun and have already celebrated by a day of rest.

Sunday, then, is the expression in tangible and liturgical terms, of the power actively to dispose of things instead of being disposed of, of the [207] creative exercise of freedom on the part of spiritual beings instead of the passivity of merely natural ones. And this is manifested by the fact that *in the last analysis* it is the person as spiritual who constitutes the law of nature and not *vice versa*. And in consequence of this everything points to the fact that Sunday is the day on which man truly recognises *himself* as one who is more than a mere member of the natural order. To view Sunday in a merely materialist way or actually to spend it like this is to deny its true nature. If it is so regarded it can only be one factor in a rhythmic physiological process, a mere answering of one's biological needs. On this view enjoyment as one of the factors appropriate to Sunday would represent a mere pleasurable reaction on the part of one's physiological make-up. Now let us imagine a man who celebrates Sunday in *this* spirit. He is in process of emancipating himself from nature, yet he uses his dominion over nature merely in order to realise the purely natural side of his own being, to answer his biological needs, and to find pleasure on the purely physiological plane. In other words he is actually lowering himself in subjection to nature, instead of asserting his dominion over it and recognising that Sunday is at once an expression of the fact that he himself is above nature and of the demand that he shall be so. Now if this were to be our attitude Sunday would not be a day of holiness dedicated to mankind, but a pagan day dedicated to nature, on which man voluntarily turned back to adore that from which he has been liberated. For this reason Sunday can only be rightly observed if man realises himself *as man*. Now man is spirit, freedom, a being of absolute truth and love, capable of reflecting upon himself; and he realises himself when, confronted by the absolute mystery which we call God, he believes and so dares to commit himself to the incomprehensible. But this means that man is also the being to which this mystery imparts itself in absolute freedom, in grace therefore, as radical nearness, as forgiveness and as that which fills man with this life of God himself. This absolute self-bestowal of God is made apprehensible, revealed and imparted through a historical medium, one which can, in the power of God's all-embracing will to save, extend its influence universally to all ages, peoples and cultural environments. This is Jesus Christ who as God-man is unique. He is the salvation of those who know that they believe in him, and also of those who do actually believe even though they suppose that they do not do so. For in him, the Lord, unification and reconciliation have been achieved in one supreme respect: the question which calls everything in life, right up to the point of [208] death itself, in question has been answered with the only answer possible, the infinitude of the blessed mystery of God. The fact that reconciliation has been achieved for us in this way is celebrated in the Church's sacrifice, in which the God-man continues to abide in the midst of his community, making the final and definitive state to which he attained in his death and subsequent glorification eternally effective among his followers. Man does not truly celebrate Sunday until he regards it as a means of maintaining his conquest of nature. He can only take

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this attitude to it if he is willing to lose himself in faith and love in the mystery of God. But the only way in which he will be received into this mystery is to be possessed by the Word of God. When he is possessed in this way it means that he is slain and brought to life again. Certainly this may occur wherever man accepts the fact that his existence is doomed to death, and in so doing, upheld by the grace of God, accepts the life of God in a spirit of patient faith and love. And he does this even though he is not able so much as to express to himself what is taking place in the depths of his own spiritual being. By faith, then, we can accept our own existence, doomed to death as it is, as life. And this in itself constitutes a celebration of the death of the Lord, albeit a dumb and uncomprehending one. But once our life has been imbued with grace *this* sort of celebration emerges from our inward depths and acquires an existence of its own. It becomes an objective factor for us, and acquires a central place in the 'space-time' environment of our existence. The death of the Lord generates life, and this 'celebration' of that death in us is alive with that life. Through grace the fact of its one-ness with that life-generating death becomes explicit. The life-generating death itself becomes real and effective once more *in virtue of the fact* that it thereby becomes apprehensible in the dimension of space and time and is made manifest in sign and symbol. And when it has attained this status this 'celebration' of the death of the Lord is called the eucharistic sacrifice, the Mass of the holy Church, the Sunday liturgy. Sunday comes to be celebrated in this liturgy. In it the true meaning of the freedom and grace which Sunday represents is revealed and made effective. It is the discovery of the infinitude of God as our eternal life.

Once this has been understood it becomes immediately clear what Sunday demands of us. It must not be wholly taken up with leisure activities in a process of enslavement to the enjoyment industries, whereby man is false to himself and to the mystery of his own existence. Sunday must not be threatened by the 'shift-system' as applied to the working [209] week. Where this is erected into a principle in its own right, instead of merely making provision for exceptions in particular cases, it may, it is true, cater for men's biological needs for rest and refreshment, but it cannot provide them with any opportunity for the *celebration* of the community of God as a whole. Sunday must not be merely one of the free days, but must be a holy day, and provision must be made for it in the allotment of the other free periods. It is a day on which work and recreation alike are summed up and put in order, and both are incorporated in the prelude to that final consummation in which eternal rest becomes eternal life. This day has a character which we Christians can and must defend in the juridical dispositions of public life as well. For we are not doing violence to anyone if we demand that the free time allotted to everyone, to be used each according to his own conscience, shall fall on the same day, a day which we Christians for our part fill with the celebration of the advent of that eternal freedom which comes from the living God.

Man as he develops struggles free from the foreordained dispositions of the natural order, and to the extent that he does so new possibilities of exercising his freedom open up before him. He has a broader range of possibilities to choose from in arranging and filling his personal and intellectual life, but also new opportunities for arbitrary behaviour without reference to his obligations. And for this reason it now becomes the task of the believer and the spiritual man to take personal responsibility for ensuring that Sunday shall be Sunday; to preserve a cheerful and relaxed asceticism with regard to the addictions and the hedonistic escapism of the present age, and to exercise a religious creativity himself in shaping the pattern of Sunday. He can no longer expect that Sunday as it should really be will impose itself and define its own character by sheer force of social custom. We have to create it for ourselves, each one for himself. And we have constantly to renew this process. Nor do we have any very readily available prescriptions for this. For such prescriptions, even when they derive from Christian circles, are too often simply romantic in outlook, representing glorified versions of the Sunday observances of former times. We cannot be excused from constantly

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bending ourselves to the task of making Sunday itself constantly new. We cannot evade this task even upon the pretext that it is no longer possible to adopt the bourgeois pattern of thought of the nineteenth century. We must still understand and hold firm to the meaning and the function of Sunday on the basis of the gospel. Only then have we truly understood what it means [210] for us to be and to live as Christians. This is God's day, the day of the Lord, which knows no evening, the day of that freedom and that rest which is life itself a day of God, the mystery of whom we have been favoured to receive, and which alone can avail to bring all else to its final goal. But in the sacred work of celebrating the sacrifice of the Church that is done which we have to do every Sunday and which, when stripped of its veils and made manifest, proves to be eternal life.

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[211]

21

THE EUCHARIST AND OUR DAILY LIVES

By way of revising what we learnt from the catechism let us begin by saying something about the actual nature of the Eucharist. In this sacrament saving history as a whole, and at the same time our own personal saving history attains its highest point. In this sacrament the enduring basis for our own Christian thought is constantly re-asserted and made tangibly present in symbol. This climax to the history of salvation as a whole, and to our own personal saving history, is God incarnate. But the fact that he is there where we are, the fact that the eternal Word of the Father, containing within itself all wisdom and glory, has taken to itself our flesh, our life, our destiny, our everyday activities, our death – it is in virtue of this fact that our life is redeemed and hallowed, in virtue of this fact that it is encompassed by the eternal pardon of God, in virtue of this fact that it has been inwardly healed, in virtue of this fact that it is united with God and his eternity and his own eternal and glorious life. It is because of this that his deed of compassion, the sentence of death to which he submitted, was not in vain. The incarnate Word of the eternal Father, which in the incarnation has assumed our life, is the salvation of the world and is our salvation, the salvation wrought out in the personal history of our own lives. This incarnate Word of the Father has penetrated into both of these, the life of the world as a whole, and the entirely personal life which we lead as individuals at this particular point in space and time, and at this particular point in history. He has come into the world at Christmas. He is present among us, has laid hold of our lives in the most absolute and most ultimate manner possible. He could not have made himself more intimately present in our lives than by allowing us to receive his divine Body in holy Communion. In this sacrament it is he who is the salvation of the world who comes to us with his light, with his grace, with his forgiveness, with his power. He himself accepts us who accept him by the act of receiving him, and it really is an episode in saving [212] history that is enacted in this personal history of our own lives. In this sacrament of the altar the universal deed of salvation wrought by God upon the whole world in the incarnation of his eternal Son lays hold of us and of our whole concrete personal lives. In this sacrament we are touched by God's forgiveness, the grace of Jesus Christ, and we are united with God as our eternal life. The Eucharist, the Last Supper, holy Communion, the Mass or, as we like to express it, the eternal celebration of our own salvation bestowed upon us by God himself, is the definitive religious act of our lives, in other words the act that unites us to God. Before we go any further we must momentarily leave this point in order to take up a further one, likewise concerned with this glory which exists at the centre of our lives. We must look into the factor of the everyday in our lives. Let us put forward certain ideas concerning the nature of this factor of the everyday.

We are all familiar with it, this 'everyday'. The first point to be recognised about it is simply that it belongs to the realm of the profane. When we return from the communion rail we like to join our hands and maintain an attitude of recollection. Very soon, so it seems, we find ourselves leaving the sphere of the sacred constituted by the presence of God to go out into the world, the sphere of the earthly, the sphere of the everyday, the profane, the unhallowed, into the realm of business, the world of multitudinous affairs, cares, struggles, in which general confusion prevails throughout and all words are lost and drowned in the universal clamour; where everyone pursues his own desires and aims, where the struggle for life is waged, where there is no common understanding, where factions are the order of the day, where the most divergent views are maintained, where there is hunger and care and

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inward loneliness. The moment we leave the sphere of the sacred we enter upon the sphere of the everyday, the world which is so full of profanity, and in this world God seems to be remote. We speak of a thousand matters, the newspapers and the general talk are full of anything and everything. And perhaps in the midst of this chorus we come across a small shabby religious pamphlet, or a sermon comes stammering down to us from the pulpit telling of matters which the world does not take seriously. Truly the world of the everyday is a world that is remote from God, and yet it is this world that we must constantly enter. Outside it is, as it were, dark and it is cold, and wherever we are we feel isolated. It is precisely the world of the everyday, and for those who come out of the sphere of God's sacred presence into everyday life this [213] element of the everyday, so profane, so remote from God, will in fact be even more harshly oppressive.

Those who have finally and permanently confined themselves to this sphere of profane and everyday life, or who attempt to do so, no longer feel how profane and how remote from God the everyday life of this world is in which they live. They are, indeed, themselves simply an element in this world. They have standards of their own adapted to the conditions of this world, and for this reason they do not feel – at any rate on the surface of their lives – the contradiction between their true purpose and destiny and their everyday lives. But we recognise that we have to answer to God for our lives. And even though we cannot regard this world in its profanity and remoteness from God as self-authenticating, nevertheless we must go out into this world. We must commit ourselves to it, share in its cares, its struggles, its discussions, its ideas etc., and so we shall constantly feel this world in its profanity, its remoteness from God, its godlessness as something that is oppressive. Inevitably, to some extent, it divides us against ourselves, because we bear God and our responsibility to him in our hearts, and yet at the same time must constantly go out – indeed are sent out – into the world anew, even though it is quite alien to this state of ours of being interiorly filled with God, and to this sense of having to answer to the divine and eternal Master of our own hearts for our lives, which we carry within us. The result is that again and again we must anxiously be putting the question to ourselves, as in fact we do, of how in that case this process of dividing our lives between the everyday on the one hand and God in our hearts on the other can be sustained. And ever anew it will actually be borne in upon us that we, who go out into the world, are ourselves in constant danger of becoming merely worldly. We feel how real the danger is, that our own standards will be altered, that we shall gradually begin to adopt the standards of the world that is merely profane, everyday, and remote from God, that to us too the only things that are near and familiar are precisely these things of everyday life, that they are taking possession of our hearts to the exclusion of all else. We notice then how God, his will, his love, his accustomed nearness, his grace, his forgiveness, somehow seem to be turning into mere ideological tenets. How the call of God to us penetrates only very faintly to the ear of our hearts. How we, who have to live in a world that is profane, remote from God and everyday in character, are threatening to become everyday more profane and more remote from God ourselves. [214] And over and above this is the fact that this element of the everyday in what we do is now truly dark and ambiguous. For what part does it play in our lives? We try to do our duty, and when we have done our best we still do not know in the end whether we have done it aright. In what we do the motifs of heaven and earth are intermingled in such a manner that it is ultimately beyond our powers of reflection to analyse or distinguish between them. They constitute such a mixture of light and darkness that all we are left with is a strange obscurity and ambiguity, a sort of twilight when we seek to examine and reflect upon them. In the end we have done all sorts of things, and do not know whether what we have done really is what we should have done. We grope onwards, questing, questioning, anxiously probing throughout our daily lives, and at the end we do not know whom we have been servant to, whether it really was God, really was our neighbour, or

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whether we, having become everyday in our attitude, have by our actions only paid tribute to necessity and simply go on because we have no longer the strength to take some other course of action. How dark, how ambiguous everyday life is after all, even with respect to the value of what we do in it in God's eyes, from the moral aspect. And over and above these factors which are inherent in the very nature of the everyday there is also its toilsomeness, the attitudes characteristic of it of indifference, lovelessness, unvarying routine, the stresses which it imposes on us, the unrewardingness of it, the monotony of our voices, the weariness of our nerves, our hearts, our spirits, the experience of being overworked, the experience that the inner resources of our hearts are exhausted. And all this toilsomeness amounts to one thing: nothing else than a slow death (we shall be returning to this point at a later stage).

The factor of the everyday in our lives, therefore, is characterised as profane, remote from God, ambiguous, dark, toilsome and advancing towards death. But a further factor in addition to this is that this general mediocrity, this sense of monotony in the everyday, can actually make our hearts themselves so filled with mediocrity, so weary, so depressed, so ambiguous and dark that we can no longer have any true awareness of these characteristics of the everyday. When an eye full of light looks into the darkness it does see the darkness to some extent, and when a heart that is bold and filled with inward vitality looks at the everyday then it is sensitive enough to feel the monotony, the profanity of the everyday. But when the eye of the spirit itself is dark and dimmed, when the heart itself is also bowed down with the everyday then it is as though we no longer [215] possessed the faculty we need to evaluate the everyday really as everyday, and to impose great and generous demands upon ourselves in regard to it, measuring it by the standard of high ideals and recognising it for what it really is.

It might be said that the everyday so devours us – this at least is the danger – so absorbs us into itself that we believe that it is quite impossible for there to be anything else except this everyday, and everything else is quite ruled out. And then we ourselves – this is the danger – become a still more mediocre 'everyday', which no longer recognises itself as such at all, but is, as it were, inwardly closed in upon itself to such an extent that it never looks up to the true and infinite life which we call God. Instead it constantly turns back upon itself.

Our considerations of the nature of the Eucharist and the nature of the everyday up to this point might even lead one to suppose at first that no two factors could be more contradictory, more set at opposite poles, more mutually opposed and mutually repellant. For the former factor consists in the sacred celebration of the nearness of God, the high point of atonement in our saving history, in which we encounter the eternal word of God become flesh; and the second factor is this one of the everyday, of which we have been speaking. There is the ambience of the holy. There is the nearness of God. There is the light of eternal life. There is eternal power. There is eternal glory, the eternal transcendence over death and, instead of that element of the average and the mediocre which is no longer capable of insight into itself, there is the infinitude of God. There is the boundlessness of eternal life. And here, in the everyday, profanity, remoteness from God, darkness and toilsomeness, the doom of death, the mediocre and the average. What an immense gulf seems to open up between these two factors in our lives! What an abyss seems to divide these two elements in our lives from one another, even though both are present in those lives! And we ourselves do in fact feel this. And if we no longer felt it, if we no longer felt this encounter with the incarnate Word of God in the Eucharist as supremely the immense, the exalted, the holy, the eternal and the divine in our lives, if what the Eucharist brings about in our hearts were actually to be so withered up into a minor but burdensome religious duty, then it would be precisely the factor of the everyday itself, and our own 'everyday' hearts that would have, as it were, swallowed up and devoured this, the supreme event in the celebration of the divine in our lives, that would have reduced even this to an element in the [216] everyday. But we who believe, who seek, who love,

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know what this celebration of the Last Supper of the Lord means, and on the basis of this we realise how great the difference between these two factors in our lives must seem to be.

It is only here that we arrive at the real point of our argument. Our thesis must now be stated as follows: This sacrament of the eternal encounter with God, this climax in our personal saving history, in the history of our individual lives, which is the Eucharist, is in fact the sacrament of the everyday.

Why should this be so? To begin with, this becomes clear in the Church's tradition concerning this sacrament and in her official teaching. In the second chapter of the thirteenth session of the Council of Trent the nature of the holy Eucharist, its meaning, its function and its significance, are more exactly described. This chapter contains a statement about the Eucharist such as is not to be found either before or after the Council of Trent. It consists of a solemn declaration of the Church's teaching on the point. It is laid down that this sacrament is '*animarum cibus quo alantur et confortentur*', that the Eucharist is the food of souls, by means of which they are nourished and strengthened. The Eucharist, therefore, is here regarded as our daily bread.

What can be more everyday than one's daily bread? Every day the same thing happens: we eat and drink. We feed ourselves, to adopt the mode of expression customary in profane spheres. It is only rarely that a meal taken in the purely human sphere can be counted as an elevated, fine and fully human event, celebrated in a manner that edifies the spirit. For the most part eating and drinking for the sustenance of our own life is precisely something which belongs to the context of the everyday. And so in the same way, the Church tells us, the Eucharist is the daily bread of poor Christians, by means of which they must nourish themselves ever anew, and strengthen themselves ever anew.

This alone is enough to show that the Eucharist is regarded as the food of a man who becomes hungry again and again, who becomes weak again and again – in other words one who, so far as his spiritual life is concerned, is a man of the everyday.

The same chapter of this Council goes on to say that the Eucharist has a remedial function too in that by means of it we are freed from our daily sins and preserved from mortal sin. Again in this description of the sacrament we find a real echo of the everyday and the wearisome as it [217] exists throughout our lives – lives in which the wretchedness, feebleness, moral weakness, moral weariness and moral instability which are in man manifest themselves every day. For in this chapter the Eucharist is called the *antidotum*, the remedy by means of which we are freed from daily sins – painfully evident as these are in the constantly renewed onslaughts and constantly renewed struggles – and by means of which we must be guarded against the death of the soul. Here too, in this characterisation of the Eucharist, therefore, man is depicted as we experience him for ourselves in our everyday lives. And the Eucharist itself is viewed in its effects precisely upon man in this guise, in the toilsomeness and weakness of his everyday life. It is viewed as the antidote to this enduring condition of ours. And the same passage goes on to say that through this sacrament we must be united to one another by bonds of faith, hope and love in order that we may all be of one accord, and that there may be no divisions among us. Again it is the factor of the everyday in the life of men, who live and have to live with one another, that is envisaged, and again in this portrayal of the Eucharist in the official teaching of the Church this supreme sacrament of sacred fellowship with God is shown in the central Impact which it has upon our everyday lives. Let us recognise in all calmness that it is in order that we may to some extent live in harmony one with another, at least in the context of the everyday, tolerate one another, bear one another's burdens in peace, in patience, in hope and in some little degree of love, that this Bread of life is imparted to us. This definitive description, put forward by the solemn and official teaching of the Church, is itself enough to enable us to recognise suddenly and surprisingly that this supreme mystery of Christendom, the holy and most holy sacrament of the altar, is manifestly

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the sacrament of our everyday lives.

And let us examine this truth somewhat more closely still.

Who is bestowed upon us in this sacrament? What does this sacrament stand for? What is the message of this most holy celebration in the holiest hour of our lives? It is the crucified Lord and his death. His fate is the redeeming factor in our lives. He, the incarnate Word, is our salvation through his life and through his death.

His fate is certainly more than merely everyday. His fate is the mystery of the Cross. His fate which redeems us is the mystery of Good Friday. But while it is true that he whom we receive as our Redeemer through his life and death is also more than one who has taken a mere everyday lot upon himself it also remains true at the same time that this fate of death [218] which redeems us is, basically speaking, nothing more than the everyday which, as we may express it, manifests itself here in its purest and most concentrated form. This death represents the ultimate in what we mean by the everyday. We cannot find a more precise way of expressing it than that which we have just given. But at the same time it was frustration, it was pain, it was the negation of its Victim's intentions and designs, it was the betrayal of friends. This Good Friday was loneliness itself. This Good Friday was that mysterious cry, the real meaning of which man cannot so much as guess at, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This Good Friday was the futility of life, the hatred of enemies, betrayal of friends, loneliness, remoteness from God, an exposure of the stupidity of human aims and designs, and death. What is all this? Precisely, as we may express it, the concentrated, the pure essence of what is apportioned to us again and again gradually and piecemeal in our everyday lives. Seneca the sage said long ago that when we start to live we begin to die, and Gregory the Great, in a sermon which we read repeatedly in our breviaries, explains that life is, properly speaking, nothing else than the 'prolixitas mortis', a thread of death that runs right through life. It is, as it were, a slow, long-drawn-out death, one that is, so to say, administered and received a drop at a time. And that is precisely how it is! We should not condemn life. We should recognise its joys, its glory, its greatness, its loyalties, its beauties. And we should praise them in a spirit of thankfulness. But we Christians have neither a right nor a duty to act in a spirit of false optimism, as though life consisted simply in joy and glory for their own sake. For it is sickness, it is loneliness, it is remoteness from God, it is anxiety about the future of one's plans, it is pain, it is toil, it is hardship, in one word it is – the everyday. And even if we take the burden of the everyday upon ourselves – God give us the grace to do so – in a spirit of genuine, wholesome and indefatigable vitality, with the feeling of being well-equipped to take it, with lively hearts and with the optimism of one who is precisely bold and healthy, not woebegone, not over-sensitive – even if we do all this, I say, and even if we recognise that it is precisely our Christian duty not to indulge in self-pity, not to shoot at the little sparrows of our everyday burdens with the artillery of the sacred and the supernatural in a spirit of false idealism – still it nevertheless remains true that a man who really faces up to his life as it is must feel the factor of the everyday as a heavy burden upon him. Indeed he will feel it to be so more and more, and thereby will gradually be initiated into the hard and unwelcome truth that [219] the everyday, that is that which precisely provides the content of our lives as a whole, is the 'prolixitas mortis', the act of dying long drawn out.

Now if Jesus' redeeming deed, his life and death, is received by us in him whom we receive as our crucified Lord, then precisely what is at basis the pure essence of the everyday in the Body of Christ is also received. When we receive the Lord in the Eucharist as him who died on the Cross, then we receive the innermost governing factor of the everyday, because the crucified Lord in his Cross and in his death only expresses in visible terms the lot that is imparted to us in the 'prolixitas mortis' of everyday, as it were piecemeal and drop by drop, or as though we were gradually habituating ourselves to death by practising it again and again. When we receive the crucified Lord we are receiving daily, as the innermost law of our

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life, the precise counterpart of this slow death in the person of him who, precisely because he is the crucified Lord, sends us into our everyday with the words: 'Go, you are sent forth' with which Mass concludes. Now the everyday in our life is properly speaking not something which has nothing to do with what takes place in the celebration of this sacred mystery. On the contrary, it is through the inner dynamism of what is celebrated here and what is received here, through the power and directive force which it contains within itself, that we are sent out into this 'everyday'. For we have received the crucified Lord and have thereby received his death and his Cross as well. But what is set before our eyes in the holy *sign* of the Body and Blood of Christ, what has been brought home to us in this way, that same reality is what we encounter as the *truth* of what is signified in our everyday lives as well. How can we be surprised that the everyday is as it is if we have understood that in every communion we receive we submit ourselves to the Cross of the Lord because it is in his crucifixion and death that we receive him, because we take into ourselves and into our hearts that glorified Lord who has only achieved his glorification by enduring a life which led through the sheer and absolute ruin of death. No, the law of life to which Christ submitted himself in his life and death is what we receive in the sacrament of his life because we receive him as crucified and, as Paul puts it, proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes again. This is why we must realise that the first and *primary* significance of the Eucharist is not that it provides us with *strength* for our everyday lives, that it is nourishment to help us by constantly renewing our strength and so enabling us to endure the 'everyday', though of course it does have this function also. But the Eucharist as first and foremost the [220] holy deed wrought by God upon us itself assigns the everyday to us as our task. Viewed in its ultimate perspective the position is not that the everyday is simply something which is assigned to us by chance, by the laws of the earth and of our own lives to be our lot, and then God intervenes, so to say, from outside the situation and helps us to endure this alien and godless situation in which we are placed. This is not the state of affairs at all. At basis it is rather that this 'everyday' *itself* is something that is given to us by God in Jesus Christ *through* the bond which we have with him in the grace of baptism, and the giving of it is constantly renewed in the sacrament of the altar. The fact that when we receive Jesus we receive his life as the innermost law of our own lives, and thereby the life that consists in crucifixion and death veiled in the obscurity of faith – it is this that is summed up in a single phrase drawn from the context of the secular, namely '*Our everyday*'. For it is in this that we live, to this that we are, as it were, constantly nailed and crucified, in this that we die, and in this that our dying is hidden with Christ, hidden in the drabness of the routine and the humdrum, in the blankness of the everyday. Each day and daily we receive the actual everyday of Christ himself and of his life, his life as it drains away into death – it is this that we receive in the Eucharist. And this everyday life which we receive from God in this form is our daily life as something that is given to us by Christ himself together with the strength, the interior illumination, the interior grace which enables us to endure this everyday. He and his strength, he and his meaning, he and his interior light, he and his daily forgiveness and interior sanctification – the person of Jesus, and these attributes of his together with him, are bestowed upon us by God in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Finally let us consider now how we can make this truth which we have been examining in some measure a part of our practical lives as well. It is not enough to recognise a truth of religion, to understand it in the abstract with one's mind. We must also take steps to show that we acknowledge it and value it in our lives. It must be put into practice. It must gradually be assimilated. It must permeate our whole interior man (though this can only be a slow process), so that the awareness of it becomes a spontaneous part of ourselves. It must to some extent strike its roots into the deepest levels of our life, our heart, our whole existence, those from which our true life takes its rise. And in view of this it is, of course, of little or no use

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simply to listen to such considerations on the theological and purely speculative level, and with minds more or less willing to accept what we [221] hear. We have to say to ourselves: 'Merely because we have understood these points with our minds, this is far from meaning that we have taken them into our hearts or made them, in any effective sense, an intrinsic factor, part of the basic pattern of our lives, an element in the inward law which governs them in all their dimensions and at all levels. This we must do, but it is only a gradual process. We must first consciously exercise ourselves in putting this truth into practice. Only so can it be accorded its true place in our lives. For instance it is possible to express in fine words what truthfulness or love etc. mean, and everyone who then hears these words can understand them. But to the mature man one thing is absolutely clear from the experience of his life. It is that when one has practised truthfulness in one's life, when one really has remained faithful through tests and trials, then, even though one cannot say anything more or anything finer about truthfulness, love, faithfulness etc., still one has understood what they really are in a quite different way from when one has simply achieved a speculative understanding of these statements at the purely conceptual level. Thus the truth which has been lived, experienced, suffered involves an insight into what truth means which is quite different in kind from that which can be achieved merely in terms of abstract ideas. Now applying this to the sheer truth as such that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the everyday, we have really to commit ourselves to practising, experiencing, living and suffering this truth, until, from being merely a truth at the theological and conceptual level, it has become a truth of the interior man, a truth of the heart.

In order for one to exercise one's self in such a truth there is much that is needful. First and foremost in order to exercise ourselves in this truth we must, if we may so express it, *withdraw into ourselves*. We must be recollected. It is difficult to express what this really means. But first it is important simply to bear with one's self not, as it were, constantly to be seeking to escape from one's self into outside occupations; to manage to live – in the contemporary scene it is necessary to say this without having a radio constantly in the background, to bear with one's self and not to give one's self up to empty talk and gossip, and to a reading of the illustrated papers that is a mere waste of time and a dissipation; to draw one's self back, when circumstances demand, from that more subtle form of distraction and of wasting one's own life which consists in an over-busy and all-devouring fulfilment of one's duty, or rather of what we sometimes like to regard as our duty in order to find an excuse for avoiding our real duty. No we must [222] contain ourselves and, as it were, allow our own life-force, the basic resources of our own being, to be withdrawn and gathered into the depths of our hearts. For when we do achieve this state of withdrawal, in which we, so to say, contain ourselves, we still have a further state to achieve: to *stand fast*. It is by no means the case that in order rightly to achieve this state of recollection and rightly to carry out this process of containing ourselves, rightly to arrive at the attitude of meditation which is necessary, we have actually to withdraw ourselves from the everyday as though the act of containing ourselves in this manner entailed a flight from the everyday. No, what has to be achieved in this state of recollection is that we face up to ourselves as we really are; that we stand firm and confront ourselves; that we do not run away from this. But this in turn implies that we face up to the everyday in our lives. Despite all his efforts the abiding loneliness of man is constantly being brought home to him. He feels himself somehow naked and defenceless. At some level in his being he is a prey to anxiety (*Angst*), feels pain, is in some sense disappointed with his life. But when they become conscious of these experiences men take fright. They run away from them. They seek, as it were, to bury them beneath the surface of their lives, and for this purpose they grasp at palliatives of the most varied kinds – I am not speaking here of medicines – which life has to offer, precisely chatter, conversation, mere external dissipations. They do not stand firm in face of the real truth of the everyday, and this

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is precisely what we ought to achieve courageously, honourably and without illusions.

This does not, of course, change the everyday in any way at first. Its impact upon us is not less burdensome than before. It confronts us just as it really is, bringing home to us how drably average our lives are, how mediocre our achievements, and the disappointments of our life in this or that respect. Obviously we must not fall into an attitude of pessimism. God has endowed man directly with strength to bear much, to put up with much, even to disregard much that takes place in his life. And this strength that God has given us must be preserved and used. Obviously we must not indulge in self-pity. But even the experienced man, the brave man, he who has a cheerful heart, constantly arrives in the end, by way of that grey fog of the everyday, in a situation in which he either runs away from it, avoids it, suppresses it, refuses to admit the truth of it, grasps at the palliative drugs of the everyday, or alternatively finds himself faced with the question of how he can put up with this everyday at all. And in the last [223] analysis it is precisely the believer – and only he – who can put up with it. Now in saying this we may, and indeed must, be fully ready to recognise that there may be many who face up to life bravely, calmly, cheerfully and in a spirit of selfless love, yet who do not regard themselves as believers at all. But by the way they live their lives such men avoid falling into an attitude of cynical resignation. On the contrary, in their calm acceptance of their lives they actually achieve, implicitly and in principle, what the conscious and professed believer does explicitly and in the full knowledge of what he is doing and how he does it.

But in any case the process of living the truth and practising it, as we have conceived of this in the present context, necessarily involves this attitude of containing one's self standing firm, bearing and enduring the everyday within the context of the everyday itself by living it in a spirit of faith, hope and love – in other words in the surrender of our whole being to God through these three theological virtues. And in fact the situation is such that these divine virtues have to be practised in the concrete circumstances of our everyday. They must not for one moment be reduced to mere Sunday attitudes, but must be genuinely exercised in our hearts. And they can only be so when they are practised in the down-to-earth, factual, hard, drab realities of the everyday. And this is what we do when we accept our disappointments without being shattered by them because we know that they are, as it were, the medicaments by which our humanity is really healed in its innermost depths. For this humanity of ours is healthy only when it allows God to be God, when it genuinely hopes for eternal life and when on the basis of this hope it genuinely endures the hopelessness of the everyday. It is precisely then, in this acceptance of the futility, the drabness, the mediocrity, the disappointments of the everyday that faith, hope and love are really exercised in very truth. Indeed there is no other way whatever of truly practising these virtues. When we confine ourselves merely to praying for 'the divine virtues to be awakened in us', to employ the terminology of the relevant forms of prayer, then we do indeed give evidence of the fact that our will is good, that we want to have what is signified by this formula, namely faith, hope and love. But the actual process of putting these virtues into practice and exercising them takes place in the context of the everyday, and the everyday provides material for the exercise of these virtues. It is in the situation in which we feel anxiety (*Angst*), pain and need, and nevertheless still commit ourselves to God – it is in that situation that we really [224] put into practice what is meant by the acceptance of the everyday, and in this the exercise of the holy and God-given virtues of our lives.

And it is only when we are prepared in this way that we can understand the fact that when we receive holy Communion we are accepting the everyday. For then we can say: 'Come Lord, enter my heart, you who are crucified, who have died, who love, who are faithful, truthful, patient and humble, you who have taken upon yourself a slow and toilsome life in a single corner of the world, denied by those who are your own, too little loved by your friends, betrayed by them, subjected to the law, made the plaything of politics right from the very

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first, a refugee child, a carpenter's son, a creature who found only barrenness and futility as a result of his labours, a man who loved and who found no love in response, you who were too exalted for those about you to understand, you who were left desolate, who were brought to the point of feeling yourself forsaken by God, you who sacrificed all, who commend yourself into the hands of your Father, you who cry: "My God, my Father, why have you forsaken me ?", I will receive you as you are, make you the innermost law of my life, take you as at once the burden and the strength of my life. When I receive you I accept my everyday just as it is. I do not need to have any lofty feelings in my heart to recount to you. I can lay my everyday before you just as it is, for I receive it from you yourself, the everyday and its inward light, the everyday and its meaning, the everyday and the power to endure it, the sheer familiarity of it which becomes the hiddenness of your eternal life'.

If the everyday is itself received in the act of receiving holy Communion, if in this act of receiving holy Communion we practise how to accept our everyday, then the everyday will be a further projection of the Communion we receive into the reality of our lives. If we receive the Lord and his grace only in the sacrament, if we do not make the everyday itself a means of receiving the grace of God by accepting it in the guise in which it is mercifully presented to us of the toilsome, the drab and the everyday, then, basically speaking, our Communion will not have been brought to its full and true significance. For there is one point that we must never forget: Simply stated as an abstract proposition of theology it is a truth of faith that the Christian, by every good work, by every act of faithfulness performed in the context of the everyday, by every deed done in the grace of God in the everyday, grows in this same grace of God. By such acts performed in the everyday his eternal life itself develops, is advanced, is [225] intensified and plunges deeper roots into the ultimate basis of his own being. The communion with God in his grace can itself truly grow in the context of the everyday.

Where the everyday is truly and effectively endured an abiding communion with Jesus Christ and his eternal life is achieved, not indeed in the sacramental sign but in the reality of what is signified by that sign, namely in the grace of God. In other words it may be asserted as an absolute truth of faith that the everyday is a continuation and further projection of Communion, provided only that in the power of the Eucharist we manage to endure and to sustain our everyday.

But let us not deceive ourselves. The process of enduring the everyday has itself a very everyday aspect. Enduring the everyday does not consist merely in so filling our hearts with enthusiasm that we render ourselves quite immune to the 'everyday-ness', the monotony, the routine, the mediocrity, the mere toilsomeness and the creeping death that is in the everyday. Nor does it consist in making something exalted and glorious of our everyday. No, this is not the everyday into which we are sent by Jesus Christ in holy Communion itself. We are truly sent into the everyday, and this means into the everyday in all its pettiness and triviality. When we receive holy Communion, and when we pray to Jesus Christ: 'Help me to endure my everyday from an innermost source of strength', then we cannot pray, 'Turn my everyday into a festival day'. Rather we must say: 'Let my everyday be an everyday. My feet hurt me, my nerves are overstrained, my everyday is drab and boring, I always have the same things to do' etc., 'Lord, remain in my everyday. I know that enduring this everyday, accepting this everyday, itself in its turn also remains an everyday act. But that is as you have willed it to be, and therefore my everyday is, in fact, nothing else than the enduring projection of what has been initiated in Communion.' It is itself communion, for in this everyday, when it is endured in this everyday manner, when we 'carry on', when we are disappointed, when we rise and when we fall, when we still manage to be kind even though our nerves are worn out, when we begin to pray even though we have no inclination to do so, when we still bend ourselves to our tasks even though they are hateful – in all this communion is achieved,

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because in this way we grow in the grace of Christ. In other words we attain to an ever-closer union with Jesus Christ and his eternal life. What takes place in holy Communion itself has its exact counterpart in what is achieved here in the everyday, although always with the reservation that [226] that other Communion takes place through the explicit sacramental sign, and is endowed with that unique power which can only be achieved precisely in the sphere of God's sacraments.

The everyday is the continuation and growth of Communion and its projection into the drabness of reality, and therefore our own everyday in all its monotonous and unvarying familiarity, becomes a preparation, constantly renewed, for Communion. The everyday as endured – endured in spite of being merely burdensome, is the finest preparation for Communion. By Communion we are sent forth into the everyday and the everyday needs only to be viewed and interpreted in a truly Christian perspective in order that *ipso facto* and in itself it may send us to Jesus Christ, into the everyday-ness of his own life, into the death of his own life.

There is a final question with regard to this need to practise living the truth, one which we should constantly be putting to ourselves: Where in our lives does the point of convergence and correlation lie between these two factors, Communion and the everyday, and how can such a correlation be achieved? Our life and the Communion we receive constitute an enduring encounter with the hidden Lord, with deliverance from need and distress, and with the need and distress of others too which, when we help them in bearing it, delivers us ourselves. In Communion, as in the everyday activities appropriate to our various callings, we encounter the Lord only in a hidden manner, in the first case under the appearance of bread and wine, in the second in the guise in which he reveals himself to us in the neighbour whom we serve.

Thus the everyday and Communion are two factors which constitute an everyday encounter with the veiled and hidden Lord, who is visible only to the eye of faith. Now this eye of faith must see somewhat more deeply into the significance of our everyday, and must perceive in the midst of our everyday lives in their everyday-ness Jesus Christ present in his brothers and sisters. The same eye of faith must also perceive the Lord in his sacramental presence, and seek him there. Finally these two factors, the experience of the everyday as seen through the eye of faith on the one hand, and the celebration of the Eucharist on the other, must be correlated and made complementary. Each must be interpreted in the light of the other. Only when we do all this do we achieve a real and effective encounter with Jesus Christ, our Lord, our life, our judgment, our eternity.

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[227]

PART FOUR

Christian Virtues

[229]

22

ON TRUTHFULNESS

The question of truthfulness is far deeper and more penetrating than one might suppose from a reading of the relevant treatise in moral theology, that on the eighth commandment, concerning truthfulness and lies. Now since this is the position, in other words since an attempt must be made to include these deeper levels of the theme, which usually go unexplored, in our present investigation of the subject, therefore (this must be emphasised right at the outset for the considerations which follow) we must be permitted in this treatment to leave on one side those aspects of the question which are concerned directly with religious pedagogy. We shall do this in the confident belief that this task is far better left to those who are engaged *ex professo* in the pastoral field.

I

The first point to be recognised is simply that truthfulness has something to do with truth. It is the will to truth, a mentality, an attitude of mind, in which one reverences truth first as something of intrinsic value in itself, and second as something that is due to one's fellow man, with whom one must always strive to communicate in such a way that truth too can be an intrinsic part of what one has in common with him. It is an attitude and disposition which must constantly permeate one's every thought and utterance, one's whole demeanour, everything that one does, to the point at which it proves itself to be the definitive characteristic of one's whole activity, making itself felt in all that one does. *Only* on this basis, and with these predispositions can truthfulness become a fixed and enduring attitude freely adopted, in which one speaks the truth to one's neighbour and avoids lying to or deceiving one's fellow man.

Even at this early point we discover a noteworthy and perilous shortcoming in the ethos of our own age. The man of today suffers to no small [230] extent from an incapacity to realise the meaning and value of truth in itself. At any rate he finds it extremely difficult to do so. It should be noted that what we are immediately concerned with here is not truthfulness but truth. For we shall only acquire a real and effective understanding of what truthfulness means when we have renewed our understanding of the meaning and value of truth itself. Today, however, this understanding is threatened. It is not possible here to point out the historical causes and origins of this state of affairs, in which our understanding of truth is imperilled. This would take us too far back in history. The religious dissensions and conflicts, the breaking up of society into many self-contained units, the anti-metaphysical positions which are characteristic of the new age, the purely descriptive positivism of modern natural science, the recognition that the knowledge of the individual is conditioned by far-reaching sociological factors, the deliberate manipulation on the part of political forces of the conclusions of the sciences and of public opinion, the fact that today the individual has a direct and vivid realisation of how manifold opinions, religious and moral outlooks are in the

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world, the experience of sudden and world-wide revolutions in thought taking place almost overnight – these and similar manifestations are in part causes and in part symptoms of what we are speaking of here: modern man labours under the false impression that only in those cases in which empirical reality is quite directly subject to diagnosis and control on man's part is there much chance of gaining any accurate knowledge of such reality. Modern man regards his own thoughts as unverifiable, as mere opinion, as a view which can neither command reality in all its aspects nor offer any very strong grounds for confidence in the reliability of his own cognitive processes. This attitude of relativism and scepticism on the part of modern man with regard to his own cognitive processes leads to a further phenomenon, still more important than the first. Modern man (and this extends very largely into the sphere of faith itself) is really very far from feeling that truth is important in itself; that it has a value either in itself or even, considered as knowledge, that it has any significance in itself for salvation. In other words modern man is by no means convinced that a deficiency in truth, quite regardless of whether it is culpable or not, could imperil his own life either in the temporal or the eternal dimension.

We have only to apply the experiment to ourselves to realise the truth of this. Let us ask ourselves, then, whether we are really convinced of the [231] fact that knowledge of divine truth as such constitutes a factor which is essential to salvation itself, such that without it, regardless of the reasons why one may have failed to discover this truth, it is simply impossible to attain to salvation at all. Or again we may ask ourselves whether our position may not fairly be summed up somewhat as follows: We hold that if one does know the truth it is certainly excellent and good, because then one can and must act in conformity with the real facts that one has thereby grasped. But for all that, in the last analysis we do draw a distinction between the sphere of the technical and the practical on the one hand, and the higher spiritual sphere of dispensations and principles on the other. In the former sphere if one fails, no matter how inculpably, to realise and apply the rules, then something unpleasant and injurious may ensue. In the latter sphere, however, if indeed it exists at all, any mistakes we may make cannot possibly result in the same injurious effects. For here one can only be held responsible for *those* mistakes which consist in morally culpable acts (and these only to the extent that they are morally culpable). I believe that it is only by submitting our ideas to this kind of experiment that it is brought home to us how great a danger we all stand in of denying the value of truth *as* truth; how much we all hold, without realising it, that truth is only valuable as providing the prior condition for coping rightly with reality. For we can only adopt a right practical attitude towards reality when we know what properties it has in itself, and what reactions this or that mode of behaviour may be calculated to produce in it. Perhaps this may serve to bring home to us how far we have moved in our inmost convictions from the position that knowledge as such (though admittedly this comes to its full fruition in love), constitutes in itself *the most radical mode of communication with reality*. May we not actually have reached the position of thinking of knowledge as providing merely a *starting-point and prior condition* for such communication with reality, and, indeed, not always even an essential prior condition for it at that?

The successes achieved in the whole interrelated complex of the natural sciences, the developments in technology and other revolutionary changes within the social scene, have all unintentionally contributed to the fact that men have come to prize truth merely as a means of gaining control and mastery over the environment in which they exist (and from this point they have then gone on actually to define the nature of truth in terms corresponding to this essentially functional view). This control over the [232] environmental factors in human life does not consist in knowledge as such; other means are used in the pursuit of it, those namely of technology, medicine, practical genetics etc., and so a basic attitude to life is arrived at in which something is regarded as true only when it can be put to some 'practical use', and all

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other kinds of knowledge, which cannot be shown to have *this particular* kind of contribution to make are regarded as mere opinions, mere speculative positions which are adopted, secondary side effects to be ascribed to hereditary or racial factors, social conditions etc. In short the concept of truth here is that of a sceptical pragmatism, which each one may seek to justify for himself whether on biological or sociological grounds according as he wishes. In the light of this it is easy to understand why to one who allows these ideas to influence his own thought to any significant extent it really does seem quite right that that ideology is true which is *de facto* effective and powerful. It is true in so far, as it claims to shape the future in conformity with the only sort of reality which it will recognise as reality at all: reality on the material and sociological plane with an ideology to correspond to this. Knowledge is reduced to a mere tool, enabling man so to cope with his material and sociological reality that he can gain control over it. This in turn leads to the further conclusion that he is truthful and honourable who assimilates himself to the sociological ideology which has power to shape the future. For it is this, in fact, which constitutes the real and the effective. Anyone, therefore, who succeeded in reawakening his fellow men to a sense of what the nature of truth really is in itself would be performing a vital task indeed. Such a one would also have to enable his fellow men to achieve a renewed grasp of truthfulness as the initial capacity, prior to all presuppositions, to achieve truth in itself, truth in its own unique essence. In saying this we must of course recognise that man is free to use this initial capacity of his or not as he chooses, and he may culpably misuse it and so fall into error. But if we are to attain to the unique essence of truthfulness as defined here the concept of truth on which we must fix our gaze is not one which can be defined in purely neutral and general terms. Certainly it is possible to conceive of truth in a wholly general sense as equivalent to ‘correctness or accuracy’, the idea that a proposition must correspond to reality quite regardless of what this proposition refers to. To define truth thus would be to do exactly the same in the dimension of knowledge (something which is, in principle perfectly possible) as one does in the dimension of being when one understands ‘being’ as signifying the being of a ‘something [233] or other’ completely undefined and in the void, the being of a ‘not-not-being’. When we understand being in this way as merely the unique self-identity of the ‘something-or-other being’ we have obtained no true view of being, We have further to understand that there is *being* as such, being in the absolute. This constitutes the absolutely primary basis (the very root foundation for all truth and all being) for all human knowledge of being, such that even though it is not explicitly adverted to, without it no such knowledge would be possible at all. It is only on the basis of this primary and implicit awareness of being as such, then, that we can really apprehend what is meant by the being of any given existing thing in its reality. What this *properly* means must be based on the ultimate priority of being in the absolute. In the same way too truth in its original and ultimate sense is not the correctness of a proposition which is equally valid in all its possible applications, but truth in the absolute, which man encounters as the horizon, omnipresent and all-encompassing, to every ‘concept’ in which the individual and the particular are grasped. Man is conscious of this all-encompassing horizon to his ideas not as an explicit object for investigation in itself, but rather as that which constantly impinges upon his awareness. And this is that truth which supports all other particular truths and is not itself supported by any. It is that which is uniquely self-authenticating (in itself) and, precisely in virtue of this fact, that which is to us the incomprehensible mystery.

It is only on the basis of these factors, which we have only been able to indicate in what has been said above, that the ultimate nature of truthfulness as such can be discovered: it is the basic feeling for truth as the initial and absolutely primary communication with reality at its most absolute, and at the same time at its most all-embracing. It is that feeling considered as basic receptivity, submissiveness, readiness not to refuse or to resist that which impinges

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upon it. It is the openness of man as spirit to being in the absolute (that which provides the basis for the being of all that is). It is that feeling, that initial perception, in which we accept with our minds the mystery of which we are conscious as the foundation and support of all reality, and which we call God, the unique truth of truths which bears its own meaning within itself. It is the basic acceptance of this mystery even though it has no use for us, even though it cannot be exploited by technology and cannot be made to contribute to our biological self-assertion, our physical well-being, our diversion or our enjoyment. It is that feeling for truth which is strict and exacting in its claims upon us, [234] and only bestowed upon us as such; that initial perception which demands a response not merely from the rational faculty of man as refined and developed by technological training, but from his spirit, demands the ultimate decision which is his to make as free, from the whole man. It is at this level that it demands his response, and at the same time makes this response possible.

It must be reiterated that those who define truth as 'the adequation of a statement to the objective state of affairs' are viewing it only as it appears to be, and only in a quite superficial connection, and so as a property which applies with equal validity to every correct proposition. In fact truth, like being, is first and last a property inherent in reality itself (considered as the 'able-to-be-made-manifest' as actually revealed), and simultaneously inherent in knowledge too (considered as openness to the self-manifestation of being). As such it is an analogous entity, and an analogous concept. For this reason it is precisely not applicable in any primary or basic sense in contexts dealing with the practical usefulness of a formula for the technical manipulation of material objects or for predicting the outcome of processes in the natural order. It is not in such contexts of practical living that truth achieves its true applicability, but rather in another context, one in which man as spiritual being realises and possesses his own subjectivity, himself as a whole (a process which ultimately includes the love and freedom pertaining to truth); in which he experience his own finitude, which he likewise comprehends, accepts and endures as a whole; in which, faced with the question of being as such, being in its totality, he holds firm to the ineffable mystery; in which he does not shrink from the questionability, the radically contingent nature of all individual entities, all of which point him on to the nameless infinite; in which he does not seek to grasp reality by taking possession of it for himself, but rather suffers himself to he grasped by it in its unfathomable depths; in which he does not speak but rather falls dumb with adoration. It is in this context that truth in its proper and ultimate sense comes into its own, and it is here that it enters our lives. And it is the acceptance of this ultimate essence of truth, the truth that so constantly goes unrecognised, that itself constitutes truthfulness in its primary and most basic form; it is this that is presupposed in other contexts, in which truthfulness signifies the assent of the free individual to truth.

[235]

II

The second form of truthfulness which we have to explore can be described simply as truthfulness with one's self. At first sight it might seem that this kind of truthfulness is familiar to everyone. Thus we speak of honesty towards one's self. People are warned against 'setting themselves up to be something'; nowadays everyone is familiar with the phenomenon of suppression, masking one's conscience, interior deceitfulness with one's self, dishonesty, 'putting up a façade', sentimentality, affectation and other forms in which a man tries to avoid facing up to his own true nature (that is having that truthfulness which he is empowered to achieve and which the absolute truth requires that he shall achieve). But what we find so often elsewhere occurs here too. One speaks of truthfulness in this sense only because it is no longer able to be taken for granted. One praises something only when it has become lost. One

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conjures something up only when it is threatening to disappear. One strives to keep something alive only when it is dying. And in fact modern man is sadly deficient in this interior truthfulness.

The reason for this is not immediately to be sought in a moral defect which can then be condemned, branded and campaigned against with exhortations. Not only is this useless but in this case it is also false. For the reason for this deficiency in interior truthfulness is not, in the first instance, a moral defect in the everyday sense of the term. It is to be ascribed rather to the difficulty which modern man feels in really recognising with any clarity which among the forces of his own interior life is the real, the genuine, the truly valid – precisely the 'true'. Modern man too would like not to be dishonest with himself. On the contrary he may, perhaps, even have the impression that he actually is honest with himself in a way that is brutally down-to-earth, harshly realistic, and to a certain extent this is true. He really is genuinely responsive to catchwords, to a certain hollow and anguished idealism. Somewhere and somehow the honest objectivity of natural science and technology really have penetrated into his nature and exercised a formative influence upon him. And we should take great care that in the forms in which our religion is presented we do not offend against this awareness in the younger generation by an enthusiasm that is less than genuine, by raising anguished theological problems in the wrong place, which then give the impression of being alive to themselves yet failing to correspond to the reality of life. If modern man wants to face the [236] facts in all honesty, if he is willing to hide nothing, if he strives to penetrate beyond the façades of idealism, then he finds himself in an embarrassing position, which can become really lethal in its effects, for it threatens his whole ethos of truthfulness and of sober factuality, and there is a danger that this mood of embarrassment will be exchanged for one of cynicism and total scepticism while still continuing to be taken for truthfulness and valued accordingly. In such a case one has the impression of having penetrated beyond superficial appearances only to find nothing behind them. One imagines that one has had the experience of seeing through everything and of now gazing into an empty and indeterminate void. For the conflict between the realities which one has experienced in this way is forcibly brought home to one. They turn out to be unco-ordinated, contradictory and conflicting. As a result one does not know what really to opt for in one's scale of values, the body or the abstract spirit, instinct or norm, the individual or the collective, brute fact or ideal, what is or what allegedly should be the case. Thus the harsh and onerous impression arises all too easily that man is dishonest because he is unrealistic, because man opts for the spirit, the norm, the ideal in the attempt to bring order out of chaos, in the refusal simply to admit what is, in fact, the case. One believes that it is cowardly or dishonest, a tilting at windmills if one does not 'simply take reality as it is'. And thus a perverted ideal of truth emerges with an equally perverted ideal of truthfulness to correspond to it: a truthfulness which has degenerated into cynicism, which pretends heroically to unmask anything and everything. A man with this attitude supposes his disposition to be realistic and true when he only recognises that true and real which is endowed with the harsh reality of the physical and the physiological; which is, in its mode of existence, independent of the freedom of the spirit, with its functions as deciding, creating and authenticating. For it is the spirit which recognises and acknowledges that that which is physically and physiologically weaker is in fact superior, and, in the long run, more powerful also. This perverted notion of 'truthfulness' must be resisted and contested, and the true intrinsic nature of truthfulness with one's self must be revealed for what it really is and developed in man. It is the truthfulness of self-criticism, which militates against the prejudices of the superficial, the clamour of the merely instinctive. This is truthfulness considered as courage to recognise what is truer because more real, courage to live by the spirit. Man must realise and patiently and perseveringly live by the fact that an attitude which opts for a hierarchy of [237] values, for form, discipline and order, has in itself

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and at basis nothing whatever to do with a deceitful and cowardly untruthfulness, that on the contrary it is that attitude of an unbridled yielding to impulses which refuses to be unmasked for what it is, that conceals weakness and decay under the guise of honesty and truthfulness.

Naturally it is not much use to seek to impart this knowledge by means of moral imperatives, when in fact far the best imperative of all consists not in the imperative of exhortation, but in the indicative of insight into a matter. And in this way an appeal must be made to the inner experience of modern man himself, so as to make him understand that it is not those elements in his own make-up which are most conspicuous and most insistently clamorous that *ipso facto* constitute the real in him; that that which he feels most strongly with his emotions is still far from being the real and genuine depths of his being; that the all-devouring obstinacy of the instincts is still far from being irresistible in the true sense; that true happiness can only be attained at the price of toil, discipline, foregoing many things for the sake of one, and can only be attained in the unity of the whole man which is thereby achieved; finally that here, in the finite state of man and of his world, everything tends to immoderation and self-destruction, and hence the will to achieve infinitude which is instilled in man and is legitimate, the will which seeks to rise above the world and is inspired by eschatological hope, must be steadfastly and exclusively orientated towards that promise which is God himself, otherwise this will must itself be perverted and lead to self-destructive immoderation by the fact of being directed towards objects within this world. Everyone has already had such experiences for himself. He only needs to keep them constantly in mind. He only needs to make a more or less systematic evaluation of them.

Thus man can learn that sober interior truthfulness towards one's self is an art acquired by self-discipline, a therapy of the mind enabling us to see through and to deny the pretensions of what is arrogantly put forward as 'truth' itself, autonomous and self-sufficient, but which in fact belongs merely to particular areas within the total scope of human reality; enabling us to learn that real inner truthfulness, so far from contradicting, is actually identical with what good Christian tradition has long been accustomed to call 'self-denial', that truthfulness is that *metanoia* which consists in the courage to face up to one's self, to let that which seems to be self-sufficient stand revealed in its radical contingency in relation to God. In [238] other words truthfulness is that entering into the truth, that freedom, to which only the liberation which Christ has achieved on our behalf can admit us. Once this is realised the sincere individual can then be brought to understand that in order to achieve this process of radical self-questioning which is so necessary, he must find a point outside himself (rather as in the geometry of Archimedes), one which is not subject to the autonomous and uncontrollable ideological vicissitudes of his own subjectivity, in other words authority, community, sound tradition, the Church, the accumulated experience of past ages etc. For even if the individual is rightly inclined to be sceptical with regard to such authorities, still he must also be critical and sceptical with regard to himself (seeing that the representatives of these authorities can at least claim as much for themselves as the sum total of certainty which the individual can offer on his own behalf, namely that he is a man). But the individual must also be brought to realise that he is no longer in a position to be truly critical with regard to himself when, out of arrogance, he absolutely refuses to entertain any such archimedian point outside himself. But when somebody does allow the radical contingency of his own being in regard to God to be revealed in this way in obedience to his word and in truthfulness, refusing therefore to take as the absolute standard of his own attitude and behaviour some impulse within his own nature which, however exalted, is still secondary in comparison to God, then he becomes free because the truth sets him free (Jn 8:32). But admittedly only he who, in the courage of truthfulness with himself, allows the experience of his own interior lack of freedom to come to the fore, can experience this freedom which truth brings. But precisely this courage to be truthful with one's self even when it is hard is itself, once more, a grace of God which is

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bestowed in the very act in which God makes the individual free in his spirit.

Inevitably in order to do justice to certain aspects of the matter under consideration something ought to be said at this point concerning the grace of this truth and truthfulness that set men free, which is a gift of God. It would have to be pointed out that this bringing out of the individual's own lack of freedom and of the state of bondage into which he had fallen, bondage to the power of sin, of the law, of death, of instinct, to the powers and principalities that are in the world (and these would have to be examined not as presented in earlier times but in their contemporary forms and manifestations, that is as the tyranny of so-called public opinion, the allurements of mass enjoyment, the crazes of modern times etc.) is only [239] possible when God gives his free and liberating Spirit to enable men to achieve it. But this would have to be presented in such a way that it did not strike the hearer as so much religious rhetoric, never allowing him to perceive exactly what it really was intended to convey in the concrete. It is true that what is being treated of here is a genuine experience of *faith*. But however much this may be the case, it would also have to be shown that it is a real experience that is in question here, and not a purely cognitive process confined to the theoretical plane, in which the individual concerned remains detached and uninvolved in relation to some alleged reality existing wholly outside the sphere of his own personal life. Unfortunately, however, it is not possible to enter any further into these questions at this point. We have been treating of truthfulness towards one's self. We have seen that this is a grace of God which comes to men in the word of God, liberating them and giving them the courage to accept themselves as they are. They can do this because one whom God has accepted in his own Son, the Son of Man, can accept himself. On the basis of truthfulness towards one's self as defined here, then, we would have to go on to enlarge upon the concrete forms which such interior truthfulness towards one's self would assume, and the opportunities for exercising it. The nature of these would have to be defined and made recognisable. We would have to treat of truthfulness in expressing one's self in art, in one's presentation of one's self, in the fashions, style of living and enjoyment which one adopted. All these are expressions of interior truthfulness. They have to be regarded as the point of contact between what one is and what one takes one's self for and accepts one's self as. But in treating of all these expressions of one's self one would, admittedly, have to bear constantly in mind that man, even as he truly and genuinely is, is an historical being, one which undergoes changes within its own abiding nature. For this reason it is important not to be too hasty in rejecting what is inappropriate in one's own case as something ungenuine in itself, and, in its application to others, contrary to their true nature. We would be wrong to invoke the concept of interior truthfulness in order to condemn such self-expression in others. But it is impossible here to enter any further into all this.

III

We now come to a third form of truthfulness, the one which is best known, and which is actually called truthfulness almost universally in [240] normal everyday parlance. It is that attitude and outlook which prohibits lying in human intercourse. Here it is human intercourse in its more 'private' forms which we shall primarily be considering. What we shall be speaking of here, then, is truthfulness between men. One who is truthful in this sense is honest, upright, utterly rejects all lying, is reliable and stands by his word.

One might at first sight suppose that it was a moral phenomenon that we had in mind, one which exists more or less independently as a distinct entity in its own right alongside those other forms of truthfulness which we have been discussing hitherto. But this only appears to be the case. In reality truthfulness in human intercourse is merely the outcome and fruit of the

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forms of truthfulness which have previously been mentioned. In order to see this we have only to ask: What is a liar? or, more precisely: Who finds it necessary to lie? Evidently it is he who feels himself insecure, who imagines that he has to defend himself against an opponent who is too powerful for him, one who believes that he cannot live without the special advantages which can only be obtained by lying, one who is afraid to 'take the blame', who has something to hide which in his opinion would, if it were known, lower him in the esteem of others. The liar attaches value to this esteem as something that is vitally necessary to his existence. In this sense the lie appears as a weapon, presumed to be necessary, in the struggle for self-assertion both interiorly and exteriorly. And considered in this light, as a weapon necessary for one's self-assertion, the lie must seem, in the long run, unavoidable to anyone who has not been interiorly liberated from himself in interior truthfulness, and found the absolute courage he needs in order to discover his true nature in the infinite mystery of truth (moreover on the whole, and in the long run, it does not help in the least to invoke the sort of 'prudence' or practical wisdom involved in such sayings as 'lies will not get you anywhere' or statements that in the long run lies do more harm than good to the liar etc.) Only one who has hidden his own true and ultimate self hood in God, and delivered it into his protection, only one who has thereby become secure and unassailable in a truly ultimate sense, finds it no longer necessary, in the last analysis, to defend himself. And only one who no longer has to defend himself can in all cases be truthful to his neighbour. Only such a one can really entrust himself to another, because he does not have to fear that he will ever really be lost. Only such a one can take the risk of drawing the short straw in the struggle for existence, because for him all struggle for [241] existence, all earthly self-assertion, is, after all, only secondary and provisional. Admittedly the converse is also true. Only he who renounces all lies and dares, in an act of free and trustful self-surrender, to commit his very existence to the uncontrollable and the incomprehensible can truly experience what it is to be with God, because only in such an experience can it really be understood what is the true meaning of the Word of God. This is something that we fail to apprehend so long as we think of that Word simply as a supreme demiurge of the world. From all this it may be concluded that in the field of human discourse truthfulness means that that inner truthfulness in which man denies 'his own' self is put into practice and put to the test. In this the individual himself achieves an attitude of self-criticism in which he renounces himself and thereby finds his true and ultimate essence, together with the protection and unassailability which it needs, by an act of loving self-surrender to that truth which is called the absolute mystery. It appears, therefore, that in this context of human discourse too truthfulness goes down to the ultimate roots of human nature, and must do so if it is to be able to survive at all. And this is the first point to be recognised about this third form of truthfulness. It is truly one of the forms in which the unique essence of truthfulness manifests itself as a state of harmony with truth as such, which is achieved by the individual's own free act.

This analysis should naturally not be taken as implying that this truthfulness between individuals has not other roots as well (at any rate initially): reverence for the other person as a being of truth, justice and love. With regard to a 'virtue' such as this truthfulness between persons precisely is, there is one point which should not be overlooked. The position which it occupies in the moral climate of any particular age is proper to that age and, as practised in other ages, among other nations or in other historical situations, is rightly subject to change. Similarly at specific stages in history it can impose its own characteristics on the whole moral climate of the particular period concerned.

The question that arises at this point, therefore, is whether anything can be said from this point of view concerning truthfulness as applied to our own age in particular. This could then serve in turn as a point of departure for a discussion as to the best strategy and tactics to

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employ from the educational aspect. In this connection we may perhaps take as our starting-point the consideration that when a particular 'virtue' is singled out in the general moral outlook of a particular age and accorded [242] special preference, so that it is esteemed as a virtue the practice of which will quickly bring one to an understanding of moral values in general, this almost always means that the self-same virtue is especially threatened and assailed in the particular age concerned. The converse is also true. The 'saving grace' arises in response to a need that is felt, and the very fact that special efforts are made to draw down this 'saving grace' upon society is often the first pointer to where the danger really threatens. Virtues which are manifestly in a healthy condition and not particularly threatened are not singled out for special praise precisely because they are being practised. It is rather the virtue which is in danger of disappearing or else which is in process of being introduced into society as a 'saving grace' that is the subject of discussion at least among the wise.

Now on this showing it may legitimately be concluded that truthfulness may be regarded as one of the virtues which is actually exercising a specific and decisive influence in *this* sense and for *these* reasons upon the ethos of our own particular age. The factors which work for good and those which work for evil in the age we live in, as well as those characteristic phenomena which are neither wholly good nor wholly evil, all combine to make it clear that truthfulness is to be numbered among those influences which are particularly lacking in our age, and therefore particularly needful too. It is certain that the father of lies has never had such opportunities to exploit as he has today. All the mass media in the form of the press, films, television, instructional facilities, party propaganda – all these are employed in an educational system which is compulsory and under state control. They are subject to the tyranny of public opinion, exploited in advertising, in the artificial creation of need, brainwashing etc. It is not really that men have become more evil objectively speaking in God's eyes, but rather that the actual possibilities for lying have so much increased. And therefore lying is more prevalent today than ever before. And this element of mendacity can become all-pervasive and extend into all departments of life, permeating everything from the officially fabricated ideologies to the cigarette advertisements, which must at all costs give an 'open air activities' impression, so that no-one shall really know what the true effect of cigarettes is.

To this extent education in truthfulness has to begin in the *private* sphere of human relations: in a simple and natural honesty, in a conscious process of personal self-immunisation against the persuasions of the advertisers to the effect that various things are actual necessities, against [243] their lies (an education in the art of not succumbing to the convenient lie which we find agreeable, and which we accept even though we know that it is a lie, for one can recognise a lie for what it is and still believe it – this too certainly belongs to the education in truthfulness of which we are speaking). We must also learn to be critical of our own opinions, which tend to be cliché-ridden and unduly influenced by public opinion, of our cheap over-simplifications, and 'closed minds'. We must learn to revise our earlier opinions, which we thought we had acquired once and for all. We must strive not to confuse the preconditioning of our minds through habit with evidence in the real sense in arriving at an opinion. We must practise ourselves in facing up to disagreeable situations without evading them, in the courage which enables us to submit to the criticism of others, in bravely suppressing our antipathy towards our critics. We must exercise ourselves also in acknowledging our own mistakes (how rare this is even among those in authority, even though there would be no question of their authority being undermined by such admissions). We must make efforts really to take seriously the opinion of others first, even when we are ourselves of a 'different opinion' on the grounds that one must recognise that it is just as possible for one's fellow to have hit upon the truth as for one's self.

In this connection there is admittedly one deficiency, which must be mentioned here. It is

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one that has a bearing upon the ethic of truthfulness of which we have been speaking, and which is, in itself, all too sorely needed today. This is the fault of tactlessness, over-bluntness and self-assured presumptuousness, which is often present in the so-called 'candid criticism' of others as practised today. There is no principle which lays down that one ought to say everything that one thinks or that one supposes one has seen. On the contrary there is a principle of charity according to which the truth, even when it really is such (and not every opinion arrived at instinctively, not every expression of sympathy or antipathy, not every kind of prejudice is *ipso facto* a truth) must be either stated or withheld only as the circumstances demand. Moreover if such truth is expressed it must be done in a form which does not offend the dictates of true charity. It must always be in conformity with the particular situation. Perhaps the simplest and most practical criterion for ascertaining whether one is prompted by motives of genuine truthfulness and honesty towards another or by those of a loveless arrogance and over-bluntness is to ask one's self whether one would be ready and willing, not only in abstract [244] theory but in concrete practice too, to recommend another to criticise one's self in the same way as one criticises others. At any rate genuine truthfulness and honesty are not to be confused with sheer lack of manners in the way in which one offers criticism. For when criticism is proffered that is officious, over-strong, over-blunt and wanting in the respect due to the individual, then what such criticism reveals is not the attitude of truthfulness in the sense of a selfless love of the true and the objective, but an emotional and obstinate clinging to one's own opinions and one's own subjective attitudes. This is not objective at all, but rather due to impulse and lack of control (and therefore imprudent and presumptuous). Admittedly an over-sensitive attitude towards criticism can reveal the same lack of interior truthfulness with one's self. For if one so hypersensitive to criticism were to be wholly truthful with himself, then he would indeed recognise that he too was restricted, limited, and therefore liable to error and misapprehension. Not only would he recognise this, but he would also accept these limitations of his, and yet realise that at the same time he was, both in his person and in his official work, hidden in God. Then, feeling less insecure, he would have no need to reject criticism so strenuously, or to be so eager to spring to his own defence.

IV

We come now to a fourth form of truthfulness. For the truthfulness of which we have been speaking, which is practised in private life and in personal relationships between individuals, is reproduced on a larger scale and elevated onto a different plane when it becomes truthfulness in the public life, properly so-called, of society, the nation, the Church and the world at large.

Christianity has a quite specific and peculiar bearing on this virtue of truthfulness in public and social life. Christianity is, in fact, that in which the personal truth of God, the self-disclosure of God to humanity as a whole, becomes revealed. In respect of its content, of those to whom it is addressed, and of the actual Revealer himself, this revelation demands intrinsically and of its very nature, to be complemented by an act of *attestation*, and that too in a form in which it can reach 'everyman' as well as the accredited upholders of this message, for it is 'for each and for all'. Now since the divine revelation consists, in the last analysis, not in the imparting of factual information but rather in the personal self-disclosure [245] of God, and since the response which is 'connatural' can be achieved only in a wholly human, personal, free act of faith, in which this personal truth is received in a spirit of humility and love, this revelation requires to be imparted in a form which is itself connatural both to the actual revelation itself and to the mode, corresponding to this, in which it is

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accepted. In other words it requires what we call 'witness'. And in this it is different from the mere transmission of a piece of factual knowledge in which the transmitter is not personally engaged in his own message.

Revelation needs witness as an act of personal engagement. Witness is the imparting of a message in which the imparter himself first lives out what he imparts in his own personal life, in which he becomes in his own person involved in the message he imparts. It must further be recognised that this divine revelation is directed to all and not to any kind of esoteric circle, and further that God, as the God of interior grace, can and does entrust every man with the ultimate capacity to understand this threefold self-disclosure of his. Moreover he is ready to awaken this understanding and bring it to the surface by the promptings of his own interior grace. Finally we should notice that this message is intended to touch not only the hidden interior of the individual man with its saving grace, but is also intended to produce in *all* the spheres of human living the effects of redemption and divine grace. For all these reasons the Church, as the imparter of this truth which she has to express in her own witness, must address herself to *all*. And this means to the groups and communities into which mankind is organised as well, to the corporate bodies of men, to the public at large, and in all this it must be realised that in addressing her message to mankind at these different levels the Church has to vary and adapt the manner in which she presents that message according to the particular level for which it is intended. And because *every* Christian is a member of the Church, because everyone is admitted through baptism and confirmation to an active share in the Church's mission, that namely of ensuring that the message of God takes permanent effect by bearing witness to it, therefore every Christian must be a witness to divine revelation in this sense before his fellow men, and that too in their public and corporate lives.

The layman, in virtue of the fact that he is not a member of the Church's clergy, does not have a 'canonical mission' properly so-called. His area of ecclesiastical activity, the area in which he is called, empowered and bound in duty to bear witness in this way, will be confined to *that* sphere [246] of life in the world to which he already naturally belongs. It is here that he assumes his natural place in the world, in the natural social unit, among the neighbours, in the family, in his profession, in the environment in which his public life is passed, and which is in practice accessible to him. And it is here that he too must be a witness. But the witness that he must bear does not consist only, or even primarily in doctrine and doctrina1 instruction. Rather it is witness in the sense which we have already defined, and for this reason the layman will not normally have to give any kind of catechetical instruction. Nor does he need to stand at street corners disseminating the popular writings of the Church after the manner of the sectarian sellers of the 'Watchtower'. At the same time it must be appreciated that man's existence is made actual in a specific context and with the special characteristics proper to a particular epoch. And included in this actual and specific context of his life as one of its intrinsic constitutive elements is the human word which is, of its very nature, directed to his fellow men. It must be emphasised that the human word is not something merely superimposed upon or added to human existence *ab externo*, something which can be absent without altering its essential nature. On the contrary this existence would cease to be human in the true sense at all if it were not given expression (admittedly in the most diverse forms that can be conceived of) in words, and that too at all its levels including the religious one. And it is for this reason that the word of explicit witness too has its place in a specific context and environment, that it is uttered in a world situation which is already given and defined. It is for this reason again that every Christian – the layman too therefore – has the duty of bearing witness openly in that particular public setting and environment in which *he* as an individual finds himself placed. Every Christian is a witness to the specifically Christian truth; every Christian has to bear witness in the manner appropriate to his own particular circumstances and the particular place he occupies in the community at large. The

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determination not to suppress this witness at the moment of decision is one of the fundamental requirements which characterise Christian living. Whereas in other contexts truthfulness consists in loyalty to the truth which it has been given to one to perceive, the truthfulness that is specifically Christian entails as one of its absolutely essential elements the courage to bear witness in this way.

In this connection we of today must realise two things: first that this public confession of Christian belief has been modified in many respects [247] and for the most divers reasons in its actual mode of presentation, or, to put it another way, that the variations in the actual manner in which it has been received and understood are far from insignificant. But the second point, which it is no less important for us to realise, is that the essence of this specifically Christian truthfulness which we practise by bearing witness to the truth has not been altered and cannot be altered. To appreciate the first of these points we have only to ask ourselves whether modern man has actually become cowardly in the manner in which he bears witness and avows his 'convictions'. For the way in which this duty of bearing witness to the faith is discharged has undoubtedly changed, and we of today are tempted to attribute this change to cowardice. If it is not cowardice, then we must ask ourselves what the true explanation of this phenomenon of modern times really is. We who are spiritual and anti-materialist in outlook often feel that this makes us out of place in modern society – at least in any of the situations which being a member of this society involves. It is not immediately obvious to us that we should bear witness to our Christian faith always and in all circumstances by our outward appearance, by the very clothes we wear. The procession through the streets can, in certain circumstances, give the impression of being inappropriate and embarrassing even to ourselves. Is it so immediately obvious to us that when we are having a meal in a public restaurant we should demonstrate the fact that we are Christians by saying our grace? Or to take the case of one who always and in all circumstances, and in every possible situation, tries to bring the conversation round to matters of faith – is *he ipso facto* the most effective and the most apostolic Christian? And if in the society in which we live, with all its complex ideological currents, there are many of our acquaintances – even close acquaintances – with whom we have never yet talked about matters of religion, is this necessarily and in all cases due to the fact that we suppress our Christian belief and fail in our duty to bear witness to it simply from motives of cowardice? Not for one moment, of course, must it be denied that behind these and similar manifestations of modern Christianity many human faults may truly lie concealed: faults of cowardice, anxiety (*Angst*), untruthfulness, weakness of faith, a falling-off in religious self-commitment, a succumbing to religious relativism etc. It would be naïve and foolish to attempt to dispute this. And it is precisely the Catholics of the so-called civilised sphere of central Europe who would do well to have the truthfulness and honesty to admit this.

[248] These, then, are a few small examples which are intended to serve as indications of the manifestations of modern times which we have in mind. But is everything in these modern manifestations to be ascribed to a cowardly reluctance to confess the faith and bear witness to it? I believe not. What is making itself felt here (even though this is not the only, factor) is that modern man draws *a sharper distinction* in his attitude to religious, as distinct from profane reality, than was usually the case with men of former ages. Modern man feels the reality of God and of religion in general in a quite radical sense as mystery, as 'inexpressibly' exalted above his world. He is inclined to feel that to speak about it is irreverent and almost indecent. He is acutely aware of how radically different in kind religious reality is from the reality of this profane world in which he lives. That this latter has come to be regarded as in a very radical sense remote from God and 'profane' is to a large extent due to Christianity itself, with its belief in the mere creatureliness of all this is not God. And indeed this must be so because for Christians the realities of this world neither can be

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nor are so numinous as they are for the devout pagan (who has still continued for a long period to live on in the Christian, and ought so to live on in him, but does not necessarily do so). And because the Christian of today experiences the radical difference between the predicamental and the transcendent, between the world and God, between the profane and the numinous, he can no longer speak in the same unrestricted and unembarrassed way of God and of his own attitude towards religion as he does of the other phenomena which belong to this world. He cannot find it very easy to speak of the 'good God' (Even when he does manage to realise God's absolute personhood in its true sense) as did the men of former ages. He cannot think of God as though he were the sole and supreme head of all beings in the universe, whose plans and ideas were fairly well-known to man, and upon whom man could count to make sure that the world would follow that course which man himself had mapped out as it ought to be. Now he no longer relies upon mere distant hearsay for his knowledge of the immense differences between men's opinions in religious matters, but has experienced them for himself, and in the light of this he is no longer bold enough to find it easy to imagine that he himself is sure of being able to say what he really means in such a way that the difference between his tenets and what other people are aiming at in their ideas is unambiguously clear and certainly the only version that is correct. He recognises difficulties but is still, perhaps, very far from feeling [249] that these need necessarily undermine his ultimate and basic self-commitment to belief, or his readiness to believe, which he bashfully keeps to himself (In this respect modern man is presumably more modest than the representatives of the 'enlightenment' characteristic of the last two centuries of central European civilisation). But these difficulties are such as he cannot really solve, and they inhibit him at any rate from giving free and unrestrained expression to his religious convictions in the presence of others. He feels that today the whole area of religious matters has grown almost unmanageably complex, with its shifts and variations of nomenclature, and the multiplicity of facets, points of view and personal experiences which it has come to include. And this complexity is based on such an accumulation of knowledge and such a proliferation of experiences that it seems impossible within the limited span of one human life ever to catch up with or wholly to comprehend the knowledge and experience of one's fellow. Conversely that fellow himself receives the impression, based on similar grounds, that he is neither understood nor able to make himself understood. Against such a background as this, therefore, it seems useless to embark on any religious discussion.

Modern man has not, by the very nature of his calling, lived over a long period in a milieu which is ideologically homogeneous and therefore favourable to discussions of this sort, so as to have an opportunity gradually to grow accustomed to them; such a milieu as we know, rightly or wrongly, how to create for ourselves. He has not thereby habituated himself to such discussions (and even given these favourable conditions what heart-searchings it often requires to do so!). In fact if modern man is to enter fruitfully into such discussions at all then he must adopt a different approach from that which was taken in former times (and which we still often take today). He must be quiet and reserved in what he says. He must speak sparingly and wait until the *climate of discussion* is really suitable for such an exchange of ideas as is envisaged. With regard to particular questions of theology he will make it a principle to speak of these only when they are relevant, and when, in the situation of those participating in the discussion, they manifestly do contribute to that view of the whole which must be achieved for such questions to be discussed as they should be at all. The situation of those taking part in the discussion must be one in which they are reduced to astonishment and perplexity by the ultimate mystery of existence which encompasses us. They must have an attitude of basic reverence, for only so can the ultimate forces of life be [250] present. And when such matters are not so much discussed as 'torn to shreds' in contests of words modern man will be silent. In the light of this it is not simply cowardice and timidity in the face of the

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rational and the conceptually unambiguous that makes men less ready to discuss the rational justifications for belief put forward by apologetics in the '*preambula fidei*'. One is justified in receiving the impression that even these can be discussed only when there is hope that one's observations will meet with due understanding and respect, and when the discussion takes place certainly in an atmosphere which is realistic and unemotional, but at the same time with an attitude of interior wonder, in which the whole man is deeply aware of being confronted by his own ultimate responsibility and by the mystery of existence.

This evident *change of style* in the manner in which we bear witness to the faith is not unjustified, but it must be thought out, explained and distinguished from cowardice and from that state of mind in which the convictions of faith are denied either wholly or in part. It must be purified and freed from false forms of this kind in order that it may remain clear that today as always the Christian is equipped, called, empowered and commanded in duty to confess his faith. Otherwise there is always the danger that the demand itself will be refused because, for want of reflection and due consideration, it will be required of the Christian not only that he shall bear witness to his faith, but that he shall do so in the manner appropriate to former ages, a manner which is today impracticable and unrealistic at least for many, in view of the intellectual and cultural differences between themselves and their predecessors. The result of this may be that from motives of their own interior truthfulness they believe that they can and must refuse the demand of the specifically Christian truthfulness, in other words the decision to uphold the truth of Christianity as the word of salvation for all even in their public lives. We still have much to re-appraise, much to put to the test and to try out in practice along these lines with regard to the way in which Christians should bear witness in the present climate of central Europe by confessing their faith before we can once more move on from the level of mere abstract principles to that in which we can have concrete and effective examples.

But while much might still be said about this witness which is demanded of us with regard to the form which it should take in order to meet the special needs of our own times, there must be no doubt about the actual fact that such witness is demanded of us. All Christians must be witnesses. [251] All Christians must be truthful not merely in general but also in the sense that they really do confess the truth which has been bestowed upon them as the grace of faith.

But in order that this bolder (and more joyfully unrestrained) spirit to confess the faith may grow and develop, care must also be taken to encourage truthfulness and courage in avowing the faith in the communal life within the Church herself, in other words among Catholic Christians. Let us allow opinions to be expressed even when we ourselves find them disquieting. Let us really allow 'public opinion' to have a place in the Church herself, where we are in a position to expand or to restrict the opportunities for expressing such opinions. Certainly there are nonconformists who are such in principle, people whose one principle, which dominates their whole being, is the conviction that they discover the truth when they hold a different opinion from those about them, or from the convictions held by the generality of Catholics in their country, the ecclesiastical authorities etc. But such non-conformism (which is, incidentally, an extremely conformist kind of non-conformism, because it can always claim solidarity with the chronic grousers) must not prevent us from giving genuine and honestly held opinions their due hearing even when they are uncomfortable, from taking honest criticism in good part even when it is directed against the prevailing opinions. Such tolerance towards manifestations of integrity, truthfulness and independence of thought within the Church is never comfortable, and rarely appreciated. It is much easier and more rewarding to be prejudiced in one's ideas, whether one seeks support and confirmation from the faction in power or the opposition, but genuinely decent behaviour – and truthfulness is included in this – has never been the *most* profitable course, and this applies to communal life

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in the Church as well. And surely this must be so in the nature of the case even in the Church. For even here worldly values cannot altogether be avoided.

This truthfulness in the communal life of the Church, which is a necessary prior condition for truthfulness in the witness which Christians have to bear outside the Church requires, amongst other things, that our official utterances too shall be genuine and truthful. Now this is not the case if we act as though everything in our teaching and our tenets were always clear, as though we had patent ready-made solutions in stock for any and every problem, as though the only pity was that people did not apply to us for solutions from the first. It is not consistent with such [252] genuine truthfulness when we who belong to the clergy act as though we found it easy to make our weak and cowardly flesh obedient to the commandment of God, as though everything among us was perfectly in order, as though we did not find it necessary to listen to those 'outside' the Church. If in our apologetic for Christianity, whether of the offensive or the defensive kind, we measure ourselves and our opponents by two different standards then this is irreconcilable with the sort of truthfulness of which we are here speaking (and often it is not only pagans who do this, but Christians too). Similarly, if we use unfair methods in controversy, or when we cannot listen to what others say we offend against truthfulness. Even in cases in which the position which we were defending at the beginning of the discussion was true and right, still, when the discussion itself is conducted in a serious spirit, we are still offending against truthfulness if our own opinions in all their breadth and fulness, with all their manifold perspectives and variations of emphasis do not undergo some modification as a result of the discussion. All these and similar matters have something to do with truthfulness, because truthfulness is not only the will to achieve formal accuracy in the propositions one puts forward, but also extends to the actual manner in which the correct proposition is put forward, for this too must be true. And truthfulness extends still further, and requires that man shall adopt a critical attitude towards himself in view of the fact that he is a sinner and knows that he has to appear before the judgment of God without first having been able to judge himself in any really adequate manner. For the rest it must be emphasised once more that truthfulness and criticism must not dispense with prudence in their operation within the Church's interior life. Otherwise we may find ourselves handing over all initiative in areas of controversy (both within and without the Church) to those who seek to gain advantages by being untruthful.

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In the contemporary scene we should, perhaps, speak also of a fifth form of truthfulness considered as the determination to achieve the truth. This is a strange form, and one that is probably seldom adverted to and still more seldom – if indeed ever – thought of as falling under the general concept of truthfulness. I mean the attitude of love towards, and faith in the hidden truth and the unity inherent in that truth which is in one's [253] fellow man and which underlies all his contradictory opinions, opinions which we cannot ourselves accept. This, therefore, is truthfulness considered as openness and sensitivity to the truth which is in another, which has not yet emerged into his explicit awareness but is still concealed under what may in certain circumstances seem to be the contradiction of it.

What is meant by this may briefly be explained. In the concrete environment of thought in which we live we feel ourselves to be men who are cut off one from another, disunited; men who, in the ultimate interpretations they place upon existence, in the ultimate attitudes on which everything counts, are divided. In earlier ages those who were divided in this way in their ultimate interpretations of life were also divided 'geographically' by the empty spaces which intervened, by political boundaries, social strata, distinctions of milieu etc., to such an

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extent that these differences of faith did not really constitute a significant factor radically affecting the particular kind of human existence of their times, and thus the individual lived in a milieu which was, from the 'ideological' point of view, homogeneous. Today, however, the position is fundamentally different. From his position among his fellows in the field of his calling and in public life it is brought home to modern man every day that he is the one who 'thinks differently' (from his immediate neighbour). The inevitable result of this is that modern man is exposed to a cruel and frightening burden. In the manner in which he lives his life both interiorly and exteriorly he naturally strives to develop that basic image of how life should be lived which is given to him as a constitutive element of the particular philosophy of life in which he is brought up and of his faith. And he constantly feels himself restricted in this, disowned by his fellows, his position radically called in question by the fact that those about him have a radically different outlook. The consequence of this is that all too many degenerate into a sceptical relativism with regard to all philosophies of life, all metaphysical interpretations, or again merely take as their guide for living the fragmentary remnants of standards still held in common (those of humanitarianism, of decency, of good citizenship etc.). For in the general collapse of any unified picture of the world which was once held in a particular society these have still survived. But let us consider the case of one who is unwilling to adopt either of these attitudes, who recognises that in fact this relativising scepticism of which we have been speaking is itself in its turn a point of view which is open to question, and for this and many other reasons is incapable of providing any effective [254] guide to life; one who experiences that a life based on the fragmentary survivals of the spiritual achievements of earlier ages is not enough, and who implicitly acknowledges to himself that one cannot make any progress along these lines, because otherwise the desiccation of the spiritual element in life will extend still further; one who, on the other hand, has resolved to live uncompromisingly by Christian standards in all their fulness, bravely holding out in a situation which has become spiritually hostile and will certainly remain so for an incalculable period; one who takes this attitude even when it means that from the point of view of an outsider he will be living in a tiny minority, for this is that 'little flock' to which, according to age-old prophecy, it has always been the fate of real and genuine Christianity to be confined. It comes to constitute a strange and exceptional group within society at large. Must this be all that he says to himself – simply that such a situation as this must precisely be endured because it does not actually contradict the real nature of Christianity as the act of living one's faith, or the call which the individual experiences interiorly which is a pure act of grace? Or must he develop *another* attitude *over and above* this first one, this second attitude helping him by lightening the burden of responsibility which he bears in isolation before God and his conscience alone, cut off as he is from his fellows and not sharing their convictions? For this second attitude too has its origins precisely in this same faith. I believe that here such a supplementary attitude really is possible and in the long run necessary also, even though it has not yet been sufficiently thought out and developed among Christians.

To understand this we should remind ourselves first that our faith lays down that God wills the salvation of *all*, and wills it truly and effectively. In other words he also wills the salvation of those who live all round me in a community that is manifold and varied in its ideological tenets and to a large extent not even Christian at all. The Christian hope, which is orientated towards the Lord, his Cross and his Easter victory, gives the Christian himself the right to accept, and the assurance to hope that this salvific will of God, viewed in its application to the *whole* of mankind and its history, finds expression not merely in a straightforward *offering* of salvation on God's part, which is then refused, but does effectively and actually succeed and is victorious. Now if we are not to contradict the norms of Christian faith which lay down that Christianity irrevocably and inalienably imports

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salvation, this victory cannot be achieved as a [255] *concomitant* of Christian grace and as a concomitant to the true and genuine faith. It must be a victory *of* that faith which the Christian confesses and *of* that grace by which he lives. Now if this victory of the salvific will of God is so far-reaching in its effects, and extends far beyond the spheres in which the Christian faith has, as a matter of history, visibly implanted itself and officially been embraced, and if this victory must still endure precisely as a victory of Christianity itself, then it follows that there must be an anonymous Christianity (It is difficult to find any other description for it that is so succinct and clear), a real Christianity which has so far simply failed to be recognised for what it really is, a Christianity which is already latently present even when it has not yet realised its own nature. What this must mean is something with which we are all familiar under different names. We say that when somebody declares that he does not believe in God it may well be that in spite of this he does believe, and does so in truth, but at a level which is so deep within him that he has not explored it, the level at which he takes a genuine moral decision 'determining the shape of his whole life. We speak of the baptismal desire which is implicitly elicited (even the Holy Office does this). We maintain that it is possible that the light of interior grace which God offers to every man achieves, without any deliberation on the part of the individual, but nevertheless in a real and effective sense, quite simply and without any outward sign, the ultimate orientation of that individual's whole spiritual existence towards the absolute fulness of the life which is interior to God. We also maintain that in cases in which this life is accepted it is possible to speak in a fully theological sense of a supernatural faith in revealed truth such that if it is fulfilled in love for this mystery of existence which silently draws the individual concerned towards itself, it justifies him and in this sense makes him a Christian. This does not mean, however, that the individual himself becomes conscious, in a manner which he could articulate or express, of what Christians explicitly and 'officially' believe, or realises that he is in agreement with this.

What has been said above is only an indication. It is neither intended to be, nor capable of being, anything more than this. But this was necessary by way of paving the way for our understanding of the point which we have now to discuss. In order to alleviate the existential situation of the Christian of our own times, and of the complexities of the society in which he lives with its varied and manifold ideological tenets, it seems that it would be of considerable value to take seriously the possibility of which [256] we have been speaking. The Christian can find it far easier, less restricting and less oppressive to be a Christian if he knows that according to his own Christian faith and his own Christian hope the fact that so many men are not officially Christians is to a large extent to be attributed to outward appearances, to what can be apprehended at the external level, to nomenclature (For in many cases the real existential situation which lies behind this, and which has been accomplished by grace, is quite different). But the recognition of this fact will not make the Christian regard his own personal and explicit avowal of Christianity, precisely as explicitly avowed, any the less important or any the less salvific in its effects. For this in fact constitutes that realisation of himself which is bestowed upon him by grace. It is a realisation of how he himself is related to his own salvation, and how he intends to be related to it, and this state of self-comprehension is, in fact, once more the moment of maturity and fulness in that which does thus achieve its own self-explication. But the Christian can take a less restricted view of the world which is in fact his own. In the light of this he sees men who already honour and adore the God whom they do not know, the God whom he himself consciously venerates. In the light of this he is, at one level, constantly the one who is isolated and cut off from his fellows. This is the level of the historically apprehensible, the level of common parlance, of public avowal, of the 'proclamation' of salvation throughout the social order (which is intended to be such). But at the same time the Christian is no longer the one who is hopelessly isolated at *all* levels of life. He can see himself to be the one who has already advanced further than his

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fellows (this advance being due to *grace*), the one who already knows what he is and what he hopes that others too are. He does not have the impression of saying something that is wholly strange and alien to them when he bears witness to his Christianity in their presence. Rather he feels that he is telling them what they themselves already interiorly are without knowing it.

The actual ability to recognise this anonymous Christianity in one's fellow men not merely as a deduction worked out in the abstract and hypothetically but in the concrete experience of life is something which is developed by practice and cultivated. It is the ability to make the hidden truth that is in one's fellow apparent, in the first instance at least, to one's self; in other words, as I believe, this too is a kind of 'truthfulness', the truthfulness, namely, which consists in being able enough and bold enough to let truth emerge for what it is in itself (and that is still [257] truthfulness). This truthfulness is one which is of inestimable significance for Christians, and above all for the young Christians of today, especially in view of the fact that these young Christians are no longer in the least willing to adopt a certain attitude which has characterised Christian pedagogy and the Christian approach to learning hitherto. This is the attitude of standing aloof, as far as possible, from the world of complex and conflicting ideologies and (even if only in ever more restricted circles) to confine themselves to the homogeneous world of those professing the same faith.

Of course this is only to define the *task* for the modern Christian. What we have said does nothing to solve either the theoretical or the practical problem of how to give the Christians of today the vision to practise this mysterious kind of truthfulness. If we understood this kind of truthfulness, the truth of Christianity, its intrinsic reality would reveal itself to us far more clearly and unmistakably from the world about us; the world would be far less liable to give the impression of total profanity and de-Christianisation, the impression which we so often receive and which we find painful and testing to our faith.

In the Old Testament truth and truthfulness (faithfulness) are expressed by one and the same word, *emet* (*emuna*). This is not merely a sign that the language is still at a relatively primitive stage of development, in which such distinctions have not yet been drawn. It is a manifestation of a quite specific interpretation of being and life which is essential to the revealed religion of the Old and New Testaments. Reality is essentially not the objective status of things which cognitive being is 'set over against' as something independent, alien and separate. Reality in the ultimate sense is present where being *is itself* totally, and without any break in its continuity. It is of itself something illumined from within. It possesses itself in knowledge and love. Reality is ultimately spirit and person, and in the measure that a given reality is not this, is incapable of realising itself, is not objectified to itself, is not apparent to itself, in the same measure the being of this reality is itself as such weak and lacking in ultimate validity. And in this sense truth, as the givenness of a thing to itself, is an intrinsic element in reality itself, so that a given entity has being and exists to the extent that it realises itself, stands out to itself, discloses to itself the truth that is its own nature. From this point of view, therefore, truthfulness is not, in the first instance, a virtue, a moral prescription which regulates human intercourse, but the connatural projection outwards to *others* of [258] the truth that is inherent in reality considered as the 'being present' of a thing to itself. Truthfulness is the self-confrontation of a reality in so far as this self-confrontation is faithful and really reproduces this 'being to itself' clearly and luminously, undistorted and really achieved, expressed and accepted.

It is here, then, that truthfulness towards others as well has its source. It imparts to the other person only what the individual himself is. It makes his own unique personality emerge from its hidden background and appear before that other pure and undistorted. This truthfulness is in the first instance the free self-disclosure of one's personal being as rendered present to one's self, made available to others, the conveying of one's own personal truth to others. And for this reason it is true that truth and truthfulness are at basis the same: the act of uttering

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one's own truth faithfully to others. Truth is in origin not the emergence of any kind of thing, but the self-bestowal of being upon itself. As such it is essentially personal, and truthfulness is the disclosure precisely of this personal being to others in freedom and love.

It should be noticed that such an act of self-disclosure, in which one gives one's personal being to others, is, in the very nature of the one who does disclose himself in this way, always a free act. Furthermore being is not simply and in all circumstances that which is open in itself, but rather that which has to be disclosed, to be bestowed. Thus the nature of truth, and of the inner structure of the act of self-disclosure itself as free, means that truthfulness is always a 'grace' too, a favour, a gift. Now Christianity is nothing else than the one joyful message that the absolute mystery which is personal being in the absolute, spirit and freedom, has willed to be absolute truth and truthfulness, in other words the absolute grace of a triumphant self-disclosure to us too. Hence too all that truthfulness which is required of us is not, in the first instance, a law and a prohibition of lying, but rather the power, bestowed upon us as a free act of grace, to disclose ourselves and (since we are finite beings) thereby precisely to come to ourselves, to confront ourselves in our own truth. For we only experience ourselves as that which we are, that which we can be and that which we will be precisely *in that* we open ourselves to the All of being, God himself in the act of opening ourselves to others. For man too, therefore, truthfulness is not simply a connatural extension of truth in which he possesses himself, but also an indispensable mode for this discovery of his own truth. In the last analysis every liar denies the truth of his own [259] self most of all. He withholds his own truth from himself because in being untruthful to others and to the outside world he also prevents his own truth from appearing.

Now one who loses his own truth is lost indeed, because one who has lost himself cannot possess God either. But he who finds this truth, he who accepts it in an attitude of truthfulness, lives it and makes it manifest, has God, who is *the* Truth, and this truth is freedom and eternal life.

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[260]

23

PARRESIA (BOLDNESS)

The Virtue that the Christian Needs for the Apostolate

In the last analysis all 'striving for Christian perfection' can consist in nothing else than in love of God and one's neighbour, in the fulfilment of that one greatest commandment. It should be noticed that what is required of us in order to fulfil this commandment is that we shall seek God and our neighbour and not ourselves and our own perfection. This fact alone means that it is not a commandment in the true sense at all. Love of neighbour as expressed in selfless service of him belongs integrally to this task, ancient yet ever new, which is laid upon the Christian. And because of this every Christian has a mission, an apostolate. He may have a very developed and explicit awareness of this or, on the other hand, it may remain at the implicit and hidden level as a quality inherent in the tasks imposed upon him by the necessities of his everyday life. Thus everyone has a specifically Christian task to perform in regard to his neighbour, an 'apostolate', a 'mission'. Now if this applies to every Christian it applies with twofold force to the priest, the ambassador of the faith, and to all others who have a defined and official position and function in furthering the Church's mission. Nowadays one's own native land has become 'mission territory' (although great care has to be taken in how this term is applied). It follows from this that in the contemporary scene the specifically 'missionary' virtues have become the virtues of every Christian who does not forget that he has a mission to his neighbour. Something must be said here concerning one such virtue, because it is one that is often forgotten or overlooked. It is so inconspicuous that it does not really have any distinctive and proper name of its own at all. But precisely for this reason we too often fail to take it sufficiently into account in our Christian living, when we reflect upon the tasks our mission imposes upon us, the difficulties they entail and the holiness which should shine out from them.

[261] 1. In order even gradually to be able to clarify, what is meant we must begin by calling attention to certain specific words in scripture. Thus for instance Paul admonishes us that we must be heralds of the word and preach it even *akairos*, 'out of season' (2 Tim 4:2). There is a word, then, such that to all appearances – that is viewed from the human standpoint and not from that of God – it must be spoken on an occasion, *kairos*, which is not right, not the appropriate moment, not the right situation. Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel (Rom 1:16), and the very fact that this has to be particularly emphasised implies that this attitude of boldly refusing to be ashamed must be intended as some kind of *counter* to an interior shrinking, a reluctance to speak out, a feeling that preaching the word or any other kind of 'coming out into the open' with the hidden reality and truth of Christianity into the 'world', which is uninterested and irritated by it, is out of place and inappropriate. Jesus declares that it is not enough merely to believe in him. One must also 'confess' him, and that too 'before men'. Evidently, therefore, he holds not only that belief in him is difficult and is the ultimate act for the spirit and heart of man, but that man has the further and supplementary task of confessing him before men. And this too is something that man can refuse to do. This is not so immediately obvious. For if a man already believes why should he feel that confessing this faith of his before men is a further and supplementary task and a still more difficult one? And if we simply reply to this: It is because the other men who do not believe persecute this faith of his, then the question is not solved but only deferred. For what does this really amount to? Simply that when the Christian makes public profession of his faith before others in this way they react to it not as to some strange opinion which is to be

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tolerated in another since that is what he seems to want, and so to relegate it to the sphere of everyday experience (as with so many other views and opinions), but as to something so provocative, so inappropriate and so dangerous that it is calculated to arouse contradiction, hatred and mortal enmity. Once more, therefore, the ambassador of the faith must have the courage to do something which is anything but obvious. He must have the courage to proclaim the unpreachable, the gospel which provokes contradiction, to act in a manner which is untimely, *akairos*.

Thus as presented in the New Testament the act of 'confessing' the faith has the character not merely of an unrestrained declaration of one's own opinion, something which is, in fact, understandable in itself in [262] human society (in other contexts men are, in fact, quite eager when 'they have something to say' or can listen to something), but the character of daring too, to speak the Word of God into a world which is absolutely closed to it, has no comprehension for it, offers it no foothold, to bring light, and threatens to quench it. And therefore the ambassador or messenger of faith has need of a quality which scripture calls 'parresia'. In German we have not, properly speaking, any precise term for what this means in the religious and specifically the Christian context. For here it designates a virtue, but a virtue which is a gift of God, which at once sets us a task and bestows upon us the means to fulfil it. It is all very well to take the dictionary translation 'candour', but this does justice neither to the political nor to the moral overtones which are essentially inherent from the very outset in the Greek term. Nor does this rendering 'candour' express an idea which, in the history of our language and thought, has come to be charged with religious meaning, as the term 'parresia' has as used in the Old Testament (LXX) and the New. For instance we cannot speak of the candour of God. And it is only by straining the term that we can think of it as a quality of prayer or something which makes prayer possible. The term as used among us cannot express the act of standing in God's presence in free and joyful openness, nor can it stand for something which is an essential characteristic of the self-manifestation of Jesus in the world. Hence it is that it is only with difficulty that we can translate this word in contexts in which it stands for an apostolic virtue. For when we use the term 'candour' or some similar term, then we are referring to a virtue which is common to mankind as a whole, if indeed, it is not simply a quite neutral specification of the attitude of unconstrainedness, unembarrassment and ease in self-expression – attitudes, therefore, which do not in the least measure up to the distinctive and specific element in this apostolic virtue. For this virtue is exercised only in preaching, considered as the actualisation of the event in which God himself is revealed to a world enclosed in sin.

2. Thus we propose to put forward certain ideas concerning this virtue as it is in itself. These are only few in number. For the most important factor of all must here remain unexpressed. It is that which provides the proper and true basis for this virtue of the apostle and of his mission, namely the parresia of God and of Christ himself.[1]

[263] The Christian messenger is in a situation to which he does not of himself, i.e. in virtue of his own nature and qualities, belong. He is, in fact, on a 'mission'. He has been 'sent'. Necessarily, therefore, he is intruding upon areas which are not, naturally speaking, his own. He comes to men who are in a very true sense foreign to him. His presence is troublesome to them, and he is troubled in turn. He must in some sense seem like an intruder. With his word, the word that is God's word, he intrudes upon a world which is unwilling to hear it, which is mysteriously hostile to this word, because it is a word which brings to light the hidden contents of the heart, because it goes too far, because it makes too many demands upon man, because it summons him out of the sphere of the comprehensible, because it

[1] For a treatment of this idea which brings out its full depths and significance cf. H. Schlier, *T.W.N.T.* V, pp. 869-884.

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objectifies and makes explicit things which naturally belong to the horizons of human experience, which are present only in a muted and indirect manner: conscience, guilt, death, judgment and finally the living God with the actual summons which he addresses to men. He who conveys this word to others is one who, by his own faults and by his failures to live up to the word he conveys, continually disowns it. He casts his own shadow over the light which he brings. Even while he brings salvation to others he himself must tremble lest he become a castaway. His own word can sound in his ears like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. What he utters is in truth the love of God at its deepest and most intimate offered to man at the most interior and immutable level of his being. It is a miracle of love, a grace which is inexpressibly tender and loving, and yet the Christian speaks of it (how could he do otherwise?) as though it were the most humdrum of matters. He handles it as one handles the everyday affairs of one's life as an ordinary member of society. He teaches the children, he gives instructions, he is constantly in danger of confusing the means, namely the well-being of the Church, with the end, namely that God shall be freely loved. That which is nameless he calls by a thousand names, and he is for ever speaking of him of whom he himself says that he 'is ineffable and exalted above all that is and that can be conceived of apart from himself' (First Vatican Council).

Besides this there is a further factor to be considered: that elemental embarrassment which is involved in being a man extends to the soul as well as the body. The priest and every other 'apostle', provided he is a true man (this may easily be something that is inherent in human nature as such) is, of his nature, one who would rather be silent, one who prefers to leave the unutterable unuttered, one whom it troubles to have to speak [264] out and to lay the incomprehensible mystery of his heart open to the public gaze. And further it seems that modern man finds it particularly difficult to make the mystery which cannot be named a subject for discussion. He has come to realise how vast and complex his own world has become, to gain a more and more detailed knowledge of its inner workings and the mystery and complexity of its laws. Hence it becomes increasingly impossible to confuse these with God himself. And because of all this he realises how far the God who really can be called God is from our own earthly experience, how far he is above all the possibilities of human expression. He almost has the impression that it is impious to practise any kind of formal religious exercises, any kind of organised religion. He almost has the feeling that from motives of sheer reverence he cannot give his adherence to those who believe that they have already obtained an insight into the designs of God. Still less can he belong to the official representatives of God who have to help him (God) in order that he can survive in the world at all. Does not all this make it difficult to be an official minister of religion, or to 'come out into the open' with one's Christianity in any other way either? Is it not difficult to make it one's calling to speak of God, the ineffable, difficult even before one encounters the malice of enemies who refuse to hear, before the contradictions have commenced? Does not the very nature of religion itself make it difficult when one has any understanding at all of what this is?

Now the virtue which provides us with strength to bear and overcome these difficulties is the Pauline virtue of parresia. Religion, if it is authentic and true, carries with it in its initial stages, a dumbness which is deathlike in its intensity. Parresia is the strength which enables us to overcome this and to speak out in spite of it. It is that indefinable attitude of courage which enables one to say in one's heart: *Credidi propter quod locutus sum*. In the silence and solitude of his divinity the Father utters the Word. This becomes flesh and forces its way into the empty void of the world in order to make itself heard in a dimension in which, naturally speaking, the only thing that can be heard of him is silence and nameless mystery. And when the Word took flesh in this way it occasioned immense pain and called for immense endurance. Parresia is simply the virtue which enables us to continue this endurance and

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bring it to its due consummation. It is because God himself has spoken 'in spite of' hostile dispositions in the world that the Church too has found a voice and utterance in the word of avowal, in the word of praise, in the cry of joy, in the prayer for grace [265] whispered by the weeping suppliant. And now we must go right back to the start, and read once more those passages in scripture which treat of the word that is preached *akairos*, out of season, of the 'shameless' refusal to be ashamed of the gospel, of confessing God before men, of that special kind of boldness which is called parresia, and which is proper to Christianity alone.

But in order to obtain a deeper, and perhaps a still clearer spiritual insight into the significance of this virtue, which every Christian needs in order to accomplish his mission, we must point out certain consequences which follow from what has already been said.

Anyone who has not had the experience of being forced to speak out when he would really have preferred to keep silence is a mere petty propaganda-monger, one who has no true comprehension of the significance of what he is speaking of – not in any sense a priest or a 'confessing Christian' speaking in the power of the divine virtue of parresia. There are those, on the other hand, who do feel the pain involved in the exercise of this virtue, who sometimes have the feeling, so powerful that it seems to threaten their very lives, that they had better impose silence upon themselves, or at least make mention of God only indirectly and, so to say, by means of an embarrassed silence. But this does not mean that they are any the less called to the priesthood or to the mission in which all Christians are *ipso facto* summoned to take an active part. It does not mean that they have a weaker missionary vocation than one who finds that the name of God comes easily off his lips. If the difficulties which this virtue entails are experienced less and less, then one must ask one's self whether this really is a sign that one is already speaking by the charisms of the Holy Spirit, with the tongues of angels, and in harmony with the exultations of the heavenly choirs, or whether in reality one only appears to be speaking of God, and his living presence is no longer in one's words at all. But one who deliberately evades the pain which this virtue entails, and who really is silent, one who occupies himself with something else in order not to have to speak of God, such a one as this is no apostle of the incarnate Word of God. He betrays his status as a Christian at its most basic level, the level which is referred to in the passage which runs: 'Do not say, "I am only a youth", for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak' (Jer 1:7).

The opinion has been put forward (notably in France) that the 'witness' which the Christian layman has a mission to bear consists simply in [266] (silently) being a Christian. In other words he does not, on this view, need in any sense to be the sort of apostle who speaks out unless he voluntarily accepts a supplementary 'commission' from the Church's authorities. But this is not true. Certainly the layman does not extend his activities beyond the confines of his own natural sphere of life (his family, his natural milieu, the community in which he lives and works, his neighbourhood). This is the sphere to which he naturally belongs, and as a layman he is not called to leave it (at least not in any permanent or definitive sense) in order to fulfil his duty as a Christian. But in this sphere he must also bear witness to his Christian mode of existence by speaking out and making it known in words. And for this he too needs this virtue of parresia, which is so difficult. And it would be true of him too that he would be betraying his status as a Christian if he were to evade the pain which this God-given virtue entails. If he tried to evade the duty of exercising parresia in this sense by keeping silent, by making no attempt whatever to speak of God (maintaining that the parish priests do quite enough in this direction, and are actually paid to do it), then he would be offending against his own mission because it is a duty laid upon every man from his natural position in society to bear witness in words too (with restraint and discretion perhaps, but still precisely with parresia too) to what God has wrought upon him and to the source from which his reserves of strength derive.

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It has to be something that people notice in us that we find it difficult to utter the Word of God which God himself has placed upon our lips. For only in this way can this word become credible to others. Only in this way does the content of what we speak retain, even as we speak it, the ring of holiness, the quality of silence which it must carry with it if it is not to be confused with the mere noise of this world. We have to ensure that the true power to speak in this sense does not degenerate into the false, over-facile and Godless loquacity of the mere babbler or the manager of an enterprise, something which no longer conveys God but rather one's self. And for this purpose our speaking of God must always proceed afresh from our sense of mission, from a background of prayerful silence. Anyone who would not rather be silent and who cannot endure the silence of God himself does not speak in the true sense at all. His word is not a word proceeding from that parresia which is a grace and a miracle of God. It belongs, rather, to the busy-ness of men, which makes a noise because it is afraid of the silence of God.

There remains our Christian lot as presented in Mt 10:27 (and, in a [267] form which has been completely altered, in Lk 12:3): 'What I tell you in the dark utter in the light, and what you hear whispered proclaim upon the housetops'. The message we have to utter is one that can only be heard where the light of this world is swallowed up by the divine darkness, and the voice of God comes in a quiet whisper which is not to be found in the noise of many human words. And yet this message must be uttered by us from the roof-tops and the pulpits, in the classrooms and in the factory workshops, in canteens, during factory breaks and on Sunday afternoons after the cinema, finally in the humming of the world's presses (in the manner appropriate to each particular context). The message must be spoken in these contexts in order that God may be present even in them, and in order that men may be made to notice and hear where God quietly utters the Word that is himself. Indeed it is for this purpose that the string of our tongue has already been loosened in baptism (Mk 7:31-37), and not only our ears but our mouths too have been opened in order that we may no longer be dumb servers of dumb idols, but that we may be able to 'confess' by praising God and avowing our faith in him (1 Cor 12:2), strengthened for both of these acts by the virtue of parresia.

We are all the poor servants who must, of their very natures, be silent in God's presence once we realise who we are and who *he* is. And it is in the light of this that we must understand what it means when we say on our own behalf the prayer of Acts 4:29: 'Grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness (parresia)'. What we are praying for here is that the closing words of Acts, which were spoken of Paul, may be true of all God's servants too, ourselves included: 'He preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered' (Acts 28:31).

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[268]

24

THE WORKS OF MERCY AND THEIR REWARD

When one sets out to treat theologically of the rewards of the works of mercy one very quickly finds one's self overtaken by the deepest embarrassment. And it may be that the best reward of all is to be placed in this position of embarrassment.

The problem arises from the fact that when someone exercises compassion towards those who are his equals he very often becomes condescending and enjoys this attitude of condescension. At least this very often seems to be the case. One of the etymological roots of the Old Testament concept of compassion concerns this. Compassion is conceived of as a 'stooping down'. And the other root (envisaging parental or mother love) seems not wholly to disagree with the first. But this is terrible. Who wants to be treated condescendingly? Does not the recipient of such charity not seem to be deprived of his basic dignity – the dignity of the poor and the suffering, the greatness of whom appears precisely in their lowly state? Of course it might immediately be objected in response to these apprehensions that all this makes no difference. The hungry man who is filled, the sick man who is healed by the charity of another – these will not spend much time in asking whether the charity which brought them succour was the outcome of pride, self-assurance or condescension. But even if we allow this to be the case – and even so does not the recipient of alms often feel himself mortally wounded in his personal dignity even as he eagerly grasps for these alms? – it would nevertheless still be possible to maintain that this alien kind of charity should be done away with in favour of an approach based on justice, with all the necessary and reasonable means of applying this, in which all are placed on an equal footing, an approach in which everyone is accorded his due rights and so everyone is helped. This would, in effect, circumvent the situation in which one man has to 'condescend' to the need [269] of another, feeling compassion for him from his own position of material security and the abundance of his resources whether interior or exterior. Has not wounded human dignity often enough explained furiously, 'I want not alms but my rights!' Thus it could be said that true compassion must find a way of doing away with itself in order that that poison which is inherent in its own nature, namely pride, may disappear. And let us not be too ready or too quick to reply that compassion is the practical sympathy of the *poor* and the *suffering* for the poor and suffering, and therefore far from all self-assured pride or condescension. For we have to recognise, however regretfully, the obvious fact that the poor cannot make the poor rich. He who is really in a state of despair himself cannot truly console another. Such as these can do nothing effective to answer the other's need. Was not the doctrine of the Stoa and the Diatribe right in assigning pity and charity to the list of vices? Is there any other way of helping than turning one's face away as one comes to the help of another, and doing so in such a way that one is manifestly only giving him his due? Is there any other way of helping than by setting out in a reasonable and practical way to give what is needful as something to which the recipient himself, and not the giver, has a legitimate claim? Is the genuinely charitable man not one who feels guilty in the presence of the other, and feels that the 'resources' (and this means more than merely money) on which he draws in order to help that other are so much ill-gotten gains? When we follow the words of scripture in saying that God is compassionate, and we, as creatures and children, live by his mysterious compassion, then this simply raises the same tormenting question in a still sharper form. Is it not easy to be compassionate from the pure fulness of glory and blessing which belongs to God alone? To bestow when one loses nothing thereby? To forgive when what is forgiven could not have

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done any injury to God? To be patient towards those imprisoned in time from the position of eternity, which no time affects? Is not God precisely the prototype of a kind of compassion which cannot he ours because it humiliates him whom it pretends to raise?

And yet the message of the gospel does preach that love which stoops down to poverty, a love which, unlike Eros, does not catch fire from the beauty of the beloved, but loves him out of compassion although, or because he is poor, lowly and nothing. The condescension involved in such love may be terrible, but so too is the attitude of mind which refuses to 'receive anything in charity', the claim to be able to help one's self – this [270] is a still more terrible pride. Are not both kinds of pride together at one in their spirit of mortal enmity, by which giver and recipient are divided, and do not both together represent the one single state of need of sinful creaturehood? Who can give without showing himself proud in the very act of giving? Who can receive without losing his dignity in the very act of receiving, without having his resentment kindled?

It is quite evident that there is only one who can give in such a way that in doing so he does not seem to be 'graciously' condescending. It is he who is conscious that he himself and his gift are continually being given and loaned to him by another in order that they may be handed on; one, therefore, who never for one moment loses sight of the fact that he himself is the subject of charity in the most basic, absolute and all-encompassing sense, so that it is not that which is his own which he gives to others but that which he has received. And he gives it as something which he has received, and which he must project further beyond himself because it was not given to him in the first place in order that he could retain it for his own use. A man can only be charitable, therefore, without at the same time becoming frightful, when and to the extent that he is conscious of being himself the object of compassionate love, and to the extent that he accepts himself as such, when he gives in virtue of the fact that he himself is receiving love. Only he who is loved with the love of Agape can be charitable in a spirit of Agape. Only he who has attained to this attitude of humility which consists, once more, in receiving his own self as a gift of love from God, only he who makes this humility the basic fact of his whole existence will avoid becoming proud in the exercise of his charity. Only in this way can he practise charity, and in the very act of doing so reveal not his self-assurance and his riches, but his own poverty, from which the other can allow himself to be given what he needs. And when he who is doing a work of charity looks upon him whom he is helping he sees in him the reflection of his own poverty and need. He is one with him in a spirit of brotherhood, in which all the poor and all the needy have their wants supplied from one and the same fulness, and so he receives from his brother more than he gives: a new insight into his own emptiness. For it is only in this insight that he can avoid losing his own riches, which he has received from the hand of another. *Simul dives at pauper*.

But in that case are we not all the subjects of that condescending charity which we call the love of God? Do we not, in that case, simply hand on the humiliating gift which has itself put us in a position to be [271] charitable? And is not the result of this that this attitude of charitableness, which has produced and continues to produce its own acts of charity, does not heal but simply carries the process of destruction further? And if the source and origin of all reality and all goodness, that which is present in our innermost being, yet at the same time immeasurably exalted above us (setting an infinite distance between itself and us) is called God, can we then speak in this way? Does he too humiliate even as he gives? Does he bring about the unfathomable pain of nothingness when it is brought face to face with itself and realises itself for what it is? Does he do this by the very act of supplying the immediate need? Or is it rather that when he bestows his grace on man, provided it is really accepted, it is always accompanied by that miraculous love for himself in which one can accept the gift and still not be humiliated precisely because the blessing one receives exceeds the riches and glory of him who gives? Is it not rather that one can receive gifts from this giver because in

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the gift he gives *himself* as well? Truly, if in bestowing the gift of compassion one can and does give one's self too, handing one's self over, then no offence is done to him on whom the gift is bestowed. But can *we* do this in contexts in which it is a question of charity, which can only be expressed in the giving of gifts, rather than of love, which gives itself and by that very fact sets itself and the loving subject free? And further, may it not be that in relation to God it is the absolute sin of sins not to allow gifts to be bestowed upon one? Do we not inevitably here pass from the realm of mere knowledge which is still uncommitted to any particular course of action to that precisely of act, the act namely of love in its receptive aspect, which has its own light in itself and nothing apart from itself?

But there is another answer too to the question of God's act of bestowing, in which he does not destroy by the very fact of willing to give. It is something that can only be expressed with stammering and hesitation. But are we to be silent about it merely because what it expresses seems the most improbable answer of all? God himself has assumed a creaturely status, and made it his own, and has thereby himself endured our state of need. He gave himself to our nothingness, assuming it as his own fate, and therefore he is in a position not to look down upon us or to be condescending when he bestows his favours upon us. In fact he has identified himself with the poor in their tears, their hunger and their death. This may sound like a myth which is no longer applicable to the contemporary scene. But must we not regard the situation in this light: On the one hand [272] we have the absolute fulness, and on the other ourselves, our emptiness and nothingness. Now the fulness creates the empty and, moreover, creates them in a *meaningful* way (How could it be otherwise when it really is the fulness of light and meaning and goodness?). And if this is the case, then the fulness makes itself responsible for the nothingness. The fulness that is God has committed itself in such a way that it is no longer 'able' to repel the nothingness, to set it at an infinite distance from itself and so to demonstrate the triumph of its own untouchability. It is no longer in a position to thrust the nothingness away from itself and thereby to condemn it to the absolute pain of a wound that is constantly open and never healed. Now that it has committed itself as a free act of love it is under a certain 'compulsion' in virtue of that love to take upon itself the burden of the nothingness. Moreover by accepting creaturehood in this act of absolute self-bestowal God has not only penetrated to the innermost depths of man's being (in the act which we call grace), but actually 'appears' in the concrete dimension of history, the dimension in which alone we find ourselves. And this is what we mean by saying that God has achieved his epiphany in the flesh of that man who is the Son of the Father. Furthermore if modern man finds nothing illogical in pantheism or panentheism, then he has no right to relegate to the realm of myth that *free* act by which God bestows himself upon the creature in grace and in the incarnation of his Son, which gives the world a share in God's own life. But we have almost lost the thread of our argument. All that we mean to say here is that on the Christian understanding of existence even God in his act of compassion humbles himself, empties himself and bestows himself upon the one to whom he gives gifts from his fulness; that even God encounters himself in the creaturehood he mercifully accepts, sees himself there as a compassionate man who sees his own need in the beggar whom he succours. For the Word has become flesh, has become the Man of Sorrows and the crucified one.

But the most sublime miracle of human compassion is this: He who is really compassionate loses himself, identifies himself with his brother in his need, dares to commit himself to the unknown. His freedom achieves its ultimate act of daring, that of abandoning himself. And then it can be said of such a one (even when it is only the Christian that says this): Many a man has already encountered Christ without knowing that the one with whom he was in contact was the one whose life and death had achieved for him a destiny of blessing and redemption; that by the boldness [273] of his compassion for others he had, so to say, won a place for himself in this life and death of Christ; that he was encountering the one

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whom the Christians rightly call Jesus of Nazareth. Freedom as exercised in the creature always entails a certain boldness in committing ourselves to those unknown and incalculable factors which, whether we recognise it or not, lie concealed within that course which is visible to us and upon which we decide. Factors which are *totally* unperceived or *absolutely* other cannot be taken into our calculations when we make our free decisions, for the object of these must necessarily be that which is defined and limited. But because something is unexpressed and unformulated it does not necessarily follow that it belongs to this category of the totally unperceived and unintended. Now the grace of God and Christ are present in everything as the mysterious essence of every reality which can be the object of our choice. And for this reason it is not so easy either to reach out to receive something from another or to bestow something upon another without thereby having, in some way or other, to do with God and Christ. Let us therefore take the case of one who, even when there is no question whatever of any explicit verbal revelation, accepts the poverty of his own existence as something bestowed upon him (that in itself is not so easy!); one who receives and gives charity in patient silence, or better in faith, hope and love (whatever names he may give to these basic attitudes and motivations). In doing this he accepts his own human nature precisely as that mystery which lies buried in, and at the same time leads on to the further mystery of eternal love, the mystery that carries life with it even in the womb of death. Such a one as this gives his assent to something in such a way that it is equivalent to entrusting himself to the immeasurable and the incalculable. For in fact God has filled this situation with the immeasurable and the incalculable, that is with his own self. The Word has become flesh. Such a man as this is, in fact, without realising it, giving his assent to Christ himself, for he who lets himself go and takes the plunge falls into depths which are there in objective fact, and not merely because he himself has imagined them. He who accepts without reserve the humanity which belongs to himself and his brother (something which is, indeed inexpressibly difficult so that the point at which we really do achieve it in fact remains obscure) has thereby accepted the Son of Man, because God has accepted man in him. When scripture states that he who loves his neighbour fulfils the law then this is the ultimate truth, that which is true in virtue of the fact that God himself has become this neighbour. [274] Thus every time we accept and love our neighbour we *ipso facto* accept and love in him him who is at once nearest to, and most remote from us. In other words in surrendering ourselves to, and bestowing ourselves upon our brother we ourselves receive a still greater gift: the fulness upon fulness of our compassionate God, and in this himself for his own glory.

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[275]

25

PROVING ONESELF IN TIME OF SICKNESS

The Question Which Sickness Raises for Man as a Whole

We shall be attempting here to develop only one single line of thought, that namely concerning the unity, the wholeness of man and the bearing which sickness has upon this.

Christian theology and philosophy recognise the unity and the wholeness of man. Naturally when we Christians assert that man consists of body and soul we are quite right. Indeed a sick man could say with justice that he experiences this duality in his own being only too clearly. But for all this man, that is to say that objective entity with which each of us is directly confronted as a matter of his own personal experience, is originally one, one with a unity which is not the mere outcome or result of a chance combination of two prior entities. It follows from this that what we *experience* as soul is in reality our own being which is objectively speaking a single and whole entity as viewed from within. And what we call our body is ultimately this same entity in its oneness and wholeness as experienced from without. This is not to deny that this being of ours in its oneness and wholeness, which we are faced with in our concrete living experience, has not behind and beyond this experience two metaempirical or metaphysical elements in it such that the distinction between them cannot be obliterated and they cannot be identified one with the other. But the objective reality which we encounter directly when we apprehend ourselves as a matter of authentic experience is always the whole and single entity, always man in his oneness. In apprehending this single objective reality that is ourselves we do not always penetrate to the same level of reality in it. But it is no less true that in apprehending it we never apprehend merely one constituent element in this whole in such a way that it does not necessarily bring the other constituent element to our awareness as well.

It is not possible at this point to describe the various approaches which Christian theologians and philosophers have devised in order to give intelligible [276] expression to this basic unity of man, or the various attempts which have been made to express this, without falling into the errors of materialism on the one hand, which seeks to deny and existence of the soul as a distinct principle, or into those of an abstract and overspiritualised approach on the other, which tends to deny the reality of the body. But whatever the differences in approach may be, for Christian theologians and philosophers the body is neither the prison of the soul nor a mere container for it, but rather an integral element in man as a unity. Similarly the soul is not a thing which controls the body rather as an operator controls a machine, but this too is rather an integral element in man as an unity which, as one might express it, only achieves its true identity in virtue of the fact that it is itself embodied, and has a body belonging to it, complementing the body so as to constitute the true spiritual reality. Body is not something added on to the soul. Rather it is a concretisation of it, the projection of soul as basic life-force into an already existing sphere of space and time. Thus in a certain sense it is that in the soul which causes it to exist in that concrete dimension of space and time in which it comes (figuratively speaking) to its due fulness and flowering.

For this reason when the Christian intends to confess that in which he believes the final perfection of the whole man to consist he speaks of the resurrection of the flesh, and for the same reason we recognise that we are redeemed through the physical death of the Lord, through his Blood, precisely because the act of obedience and love performed by the Lord in its inconceivable sublimity could only really be achieved in and through what became of the physical side of his nature, his flesh. And for the same reason in its further projections too, in

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its application to our own soul, salvation history becomes intelligible, acquires a body, in a human word, in the community of the Church as a visible historical entity, in the gestures of the sacraments which touch the body.

What is the significance of all this for sickness and for those who suffer it? We have seen that the man whom we experience in ourselves and whom we name according to our experience is not a compositum made up from body and soul as from two separate pre-existing entities, but is rather a being who is completely one and whole right from the origins and prior to any such distinction, so that any account we can give of body and soul in man presupposes this prior unity of his as something that is already given. Now it is in accordance with this that on the Christian interpretation [277] when an event such as sickness befalls man it always affects him as a whole, as a single entity, one in which body and soul can indeed be conceptually distinguished, yet the unity of which is objectively speaking indissoluble.

Again the experience of so-called physical sickness contains (even though one can often only understand this with difficulty) a statement concerning the sick man as a person who is spiritual and free, a statement about the tasks which his own sickness imposes upon him whether he has already managed to fulfil these or has failed to measure up to them: tasks of courage, of honesty with himself of patience, the task of turning the experience to good account in the religious sense, finally the task of integrating this intervention from without which we call sickness into the single overall meaning which a man has to find in his own existence, a task at which he may already either have succeeded or failed. By the time one becomes aware of sickness in one's self as an objective fact one has already taken up a definite attitude towards it, and this taking up of an attitude is an integral element in the sickness itself.

Admittedly – and in considering the indissoluble unity to be found both in man himself and in his sickness this is the obverse side of the coin – there is no stage in sickness or aspect of it in which man's awareness of himself is confined solely to the spiritual side of his being, or to the level of personality. Something which seems to belong purely to the realm of the spirit and the mind when we are ill can in fact be something extremely physical, something which does not belong to the level of personality at all, but has impinged upon us from without. When a sick man is suffering from the extremes of depression and even despair this may be not so much the expression of his basic attitude as a person but rather a symptom of the external affliction as this impinges upon his personhood, the reflection of something external and alien to his real personality. And it may be that in the same man who seems to be in such a distressed state spiritually speaking what seems to be merely physical and material in his power of resistance, the hold he keeps on life, is in fact to a large extent only the embodiment of a spirit that is fundamentally sound, at one with itself and also with that which has been imposed upon it because it is at peace with God.

It can also be the case that the body has more to tell us about the spirit and the spirit more about the body than either can tell us about itself. Our concrete experience of sickness is never such that we are in a position [278] unequivocally to distinguish between the spirit and the body as two completely separate compartments. We can never say with certainty 'This factor has come upon me from without and is my lot which I must accept and bear. *That* factor, on the other hand, in the sickness I am suffering from is something intrinsic to myself, something which is the outcome of, my own free action, for which I myself bear the responsibility'. It is, of course, true that a diagnosis which distinguishes between the physical and the spiritual factors in an illness is, provided it is prudently conducted, quite legitimate, and, indeed, necessary from a therapeutic point of view. But however true this may be, when it comes to the ultimate judgment, we can never have any absolute certainty as to which of the various symptoms from which the sick man suffers are to be ascribed to the affliction visited upon him *ab externo*, and which are the outcome of his own free acts as a person.

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Now all this means that what is true of man in general applies in a special and heightened sense to the sick man: he is made aware of experiencing himself yet at the same time the ultimate significance of this experience remains obscure to him. Man experiences himself as mystery, as a question to which he has no answer. He experiences his own existence as obscure and almost inexplicable not because it is lacking in objective reality, because there is nothing real behind the experience, but because the depths of being in this self which he experiences exceeds his powers of penetration.

But if man experiences himself as mystery, if he accepts this mystery silence and is submissive enough to accord its full value precisely to in his experience of himself which is too much for him to question, if accepts this question to which he can find no answer not as something which is devoid of meaning and dark, but rather as a light which is too blinding for his eyes, a light which only the eyes of another, of him whom we call God, are strong enough to look upon, then the sick man is at one with God. For he has submitted himself to God, to him to whose charge the indivisible unity of action and passion, the lot that is sent us and the acts which proceed from ourselves as free beings, must remain committed in order that we can come to terms with our sickness even when it remains a mystery.

In sickness man is brought face to face with himself in a particularly uncompromising way. He achieves a state of isolation with himself. And yet he does not know exactly what this state is into which he has fallen, [279] whether he is to regard himself as the controller or the controlled. But he does become aware of this: that that which is under his own control and which he decides upon for himself has, in its final outcome, to be decided for him by another, and that which he recognises as his own act of control and decision is something which in his sickness he experiences as subject, once more, to the silent and more remote control of another, which presides over his own controlling act.

Sickness sharpens a man's awareness of both factors in his life, both that he is in control and that at the same time he is subject to control from without. But he must accept that these are two distinct aspects of what is ultimately one and the same situation, namely the state of being ill, just as body and soul are two distinct elements in the single entity that is man himself, and just as an openness to outside influence and the power to direct himself are intrinsic to his own nature. And if he does this, if he accepts his sickness as a single reality involving both action and passion but ultimately a mystery beyond our own personal control, then both the sick man himself and his sickness are in God's hands. Then the sickness acquires a redemptive value.

Patience

In offering these few brief considerations on the time of sickness I should like to say something about patience. The relevance and appropriateness of this to the situation of the sick will surely be apparent to all. At the same time, however, we should not be too ready to discourse about the sick and the patience they should exercise, for this is not a subject on which the healthy should have much to say.

As soon as the subject of 'patience' is introduced one is immediately reminded of the opening words with which Cyprian of Carthage introduced his treatise on patience seventeen hundred years ago, to the effect that the listeners must already have what the speaker is trying to recommend to them, namely patience, for without this he would not have any listeners at all. And in fact, if one were totally devoid of patience in any sense, then one would never be able to acquire it either, because the very act of acquiring it in itself entails the exercise of patience over a long period. Some degree of patience, therefore, must be numbered among the basic attitudes of man, one that is deeply rooted in his nature. The reason for this is that it must, to a certain extent, support itself. It must already be there in order that it may be

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summoned up. It must be [280] ready to hand in order that the higher degrees of it may be sought after.

Patience derives from something which is fundamental to the nature of man as such, namely that he is both a person endowed with spirit and simultaneously a being subject to the limitations of time. Beings that are of their nature eternal have no need of patience. They have no further perfection to achieve beyond their present state. They do not look for anything further because the sheer eternity with which they are endowed means that their natures are already in the state of their due fulness and perfection. Again beings which are non-spiritual do not need patience because their consciousness is always limited to the present moment, and precisely in virtue of this fact they know nothing of continuous change as such, of the past and future as these affect them, even though they themselves are constantly undergoing a process of development and change.

But we are beings who are both endowed with knowledge and subject to time. We carry our past with us, and in our cognitive faculties we already reach out for that which has still to come in the future. We actually and consciously live through the process of change to which we ourselves are subject. The interplay of past and future acquires reality as our experience. Not only are we unable to hold back the process of transition and change, we cannot even conceal from ourselves our own inability to do this. Our existence is governed by a single and uninterrupted process of change. We are empowered to see this existence of ours as a whole and to recognise as a law of its very nature that it must constantly press on to further developments. To recognise and accept this fact is what we might call ‘existential’ patience, patience at the existential level. We patiently accept the fact that our existence is subject to change in this way, and yet that it retains its unity throughout the process of change. But the very fact that we are this kind of being and cannot avoid being so, that we have this kind of nature and cannot escape from it – this in itself, once more, presents us with a task to accomplish, one in which it is possible for us to fail; something which we must do for ourselves, exercising courage and faithfulness, being consciously and deliberately true to our own nature in order to achieve it. For a person endowed with, freedom and with spiritual faculties has in his make-up factors which are given, inevitable and inescapable, *and* at the same time other factors which are mysterious and unpredictable. It is this that sets him the task of exercising his freedom responsibly.

[281] Man, therefore, must freely and consciously come to terms with this special quality in his own nature. He must recognise and accept himself as a being subject to constant and purposive change, and at the same time endowed with cognition. He must not suppose that he is able to interrupt this change, must neither attempt to hold himself back at the stage which he has already achieved, nor attempt prematurely to achieve a stage which still awaits him in the future. In other words he must patiently accept the change to which his existence is subject for what it is, and recognise that it has a meaning and is directed towards a goal. Only then can he be said to be patient with this existential patience of which we have been speaking.

The point to be realised is this: What man has to recognise and accept with this elemental kind of patience is not simply those factors arising here and there in his life which are disagreeable, and which seem to him to be part of a meaningless lot imposed upon him from without. What he has to tolerate and endure with patience at its deepest and most elemental level is rather *himself* – himself considered as one who is on the way to some future goal, one who may neither stop and remain where he is, nor suppose that he is journeying into an empty and indeterminate void without any ultimate point of arrival. Our impatience with everyday vexations is simply a sign of the fact that at a deeper level of our life we have not succeeded in freely attaining to the virtue of this existential patience and making it our own.

There are those who seek to cling on to the circumstances of the present moment with its

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pleasures, its successes, its seeming self-sufficiency even though all these are, of their nature, precisely transient and fleeting; those who cannot let go of what belongs to yesterday until what belongs to tomorrow has already been proved to be harmless and reassuring; those who cannot freely enter into new situations which seem to be more arduous or to hold out less promise, who cannot entrust themselves to the darkness or to that which is under the control of another; those who take fright at the silent power which presides over and controls our lives, and which is God, even though he alone knows and decides where this transitory existence of ours began and where it will end. Such as these are incapable of attaining for themselves this virtue of existential patience. They betray the fact that they do not possess this virtue by the impatience which they exhibit in their daily circumstances, and when they meet with the shortcomings, the pains and toils which belong to human life even at its most commonplace and everyday.

[282] On the basis of this too we can understand why sickness above all and pre-eminently should be the situation in which the genuineness of patience is put to the test and proved. For in sickness a still higher degree is demanded of us of that patience which we have to exercise in any case in our everyday lives. And hence it is a situation which really reveals whether we possess this virtue of existential patience or not, or, to put it more modestly and more accurately, whether we have the *will* to possess it.

It might be supposed that sickness is a pause, an interlude that temporarily suspends the process of change in our human lives, one in which nothing happens, in which one is condemned to a sort of suspended animation, in which one becomes feeble and poor, and so that sickness is a kind of suffering which should not exist, so that the most that can be said is that we must painfully reconcile ourselves to it in order to prevent it from being even worse. But the process of change and progress in human existence is carried further precisely in sickness itself. Sickness takes us out of that state which we had regarded as stable and constant, out of a life which had seemed so full and fulfilling, so unvaryingly right for us, and therefore fixed and unchanging, out of our work, which had acted as an opiate masking our secret existential *Angst*, out of the business of everyday, out of the state of health which we had taken for granted. In sickness we are carried beyond all this into a state which is unmistakably transitory and not enduring, a state of pain and enfeeblement in which we are manifestly no longer in control, but rather at the mercy of unknown and alien forces. In this sense the real process of change and transition in human existence is accelerated in sickness. And once we have been forced out in this way from a state which only seemed to be fixed and stable, the question presents itself insistently and in a manner which cannot be denied of whether this is a sign that our existence is meaningless and destined soon to collapse into a void of nothingness, or rather a sign that it is being controlled and directed towards an ultimate goal of blessedness. Thus in sickness we are still more inescapably faced with the question of whether or not we do possess the virtue of existential patience.

Patience, therefore, is a quality that is inherent in the very nature of human existence. Now when man finds himself summoned by this to exercise patience freely and consciously as a virtue he can, of course respond by taking refuge in doubt, and this doubt can in its turn be [283] disguised as an optimism that is over-facile and out of place. Another way in which he can evade the question is simply to employ the resources of chemistry and drugs to suppress it and silence it in his heart. But to the question of how to exercise and acquire this virtue of patience as the outcome of a consoling and strengthening faith both of these answers would be false. Impatience in sickness is tantamount to admitting and disclosing the fact that one is deficient in that deeper existential kind of patience in which one keeps one's eyes fixed trustfully upon the underlying unity which persists throughout all the process of change in one's life; in which one recognises that this underlying unity points one on to the still deeper and more mysterious fact that that life is being directed and controlled by a power beyond

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one's comprehension, a power that one accepts precisely in its incomprehensibility as loving and benevolent, and that one calls God.

Of course impatience in the sick may simply be due to a nervous condition without being in the least a manifestation of the basic attitude of the sick person's innermost heart. And no-one can say exactly which of these two conditions is making itself felt in the painful restlessness of the sick at any given point, or how far such restlessness is due to either condition. Not even the sick person himself can say unequivocally whether his impatience is to be taken as a sign of the former condition or of the latter. Our patience or impatience too is something which, in the last analysis, only God can judge. But for all this there is one thing that we can and must do: we must examine our consciences with regard to the impatience which manifests itself on the surface of our everyday lives during sickness, and see from this what sort of patience in the truest and deepest sense we have managed to achieve. We must recognise that we are called in a special sense to this elemental kind of patience, and must be responsive to this call. It is a patience that takes the form of a certain gentleness and quietness of attitude (and so of holiness too: for it is the outcome of grace) in recognising and reconciling ourselves to the constant change and transition to which we are subject, and which runs as a single uninterrupted process beneath the surface of our lives. We must submit trustfully and without any clinging to the past to this process of transition, in which our lives are carried gently yet relentlessly onwards to that final goal in which their ultimate consummation can be attained. For provided this existential patience has been transformed into the virtue of patience, i.e. into a conscious and deliberate acceptance of, and submission to this [284] process of change and transition in a spirit of faith and love this can bring us the fulness of blessing in which our ultimate perfection consists.

Man has to learn freely to accept himself as a creature of God in his eternity, a creature which is at once subject to time and endowed with self-knowledge, and which therefore has to direct itself towards its own due consummation through a process of transition in time. To achieve this without either clinging on to the present or succumbing to anxiety (*Angst*) about the future – that is what it means to turn existential patience into a consciously exercised virtue of patience. Patience in our everyday affairs and patience in time of sickness have to be practised and so to bear witness to the fact that we have patience at this deeper and more elemental level within us too. The former kind of patience has to be nourished and strengthened by the latter, and so to prove that it is authentic and true.

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[285]

26

ON CHRISTIAN DYING

The death of Christ is not simply an event of the past. On the contrary it is, as all Christendom believes, an event which, even though in the external and superficial sense it belongs to the past, still has an eternal validity in God's sight. For it is that unique occurrence in the history of mankind for the sake of which God in his eternity has once and for all determined to keep mankind for ever enfolded in his compassion and love. But the Christian has to think of this death of Christ in such a way that he reverently and solemnly accepts its enduring validity, and by faith makes its redemptive power effective in our lives also. And in order to do this, and in order really to understand what the message of this death is meant to convey to him he must strive to gain an understanding of the nature of death in general. Of course he can learn something of the meaning of death in general precisely *from* this message of the death of Christ. But however true this may be, still, in order to have any real understanding of what it means to say 'At that point one died for all' he has to bring to bear on the question an idea of death which is as vivid and as fully developed as possible.

In what we shall be saying about death here we shall be taking it not in the strictly biological or physiological sense of the term, but rather in that sense which it bears in the context of the Christian understanding of human existence. This is not because the latter is in contradiction to the former, but rather because precisely as person endowed with freedom and with spiritual powers man is more than a biological 'case'. The purely biological aspects of death, those, roughly speaking, which fall within the field of medicine, constitute only one element in a broader and more comprehensive whole, and it is with this broader field that theology is concerned because it has to view man as a person endowed with spirit and therefore responsible, a being which has an eternal validity; for under this aspect too death comes as the supremely decisive event in man's history.

[286] The primary factor to which the Christian understanding of death directs our attention is the universality of death. This first point seems platitudinous, and simply to reiterate a fact recognised by all as a matter of natural and common experience. However there is more to it than this. The message of faith on this point is actually addressed, in the first instance to each one of us as *individuals* as a truth which expresses the ultimate significance of the existence of each one of us taken as a whole, a truth which we must accept and opt for as an act of our own personal freedom. Viewed in this light this initial point is not so self-evident. Certainly we are aware that 'one' has to die. But this is far from implying that 'I' personally have really understood that *I* have to die, that I myself am already on the way to this death, that all my life through I am advancing inexorably and undeviatingly towards this moment of my death. It is far from implying that I constantly take the recognition of this fact as my starting-point in directing the course of my life, that I never suppress it and never act as though I myself were not already a dying man. But it is this that the message of faith concerning the universality of death is intended to convey to me first and foremost as the most basic truth of my personal life. And further, if this assertion of the universality of death were based, even from the Christian point of view, merely upon the fact that at the biological and physiological level all previous experience bears it out, then indeed it might be possible to regard it as a principle which has only been valid up to the present, but which can now be abrogated. On this view it would have the same degree of validity as the statement that 'Many die of the pestilence', a statement which was indeed true formerly, but which is not so now. It might even be possible to imagine that one day medicine will actually find a way of doing away

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with the 'unpleasantness' (as it has been called) of having to die on the grounds that strictly speaking biologists are unable to explain why a cell or a group of cells should not continue to survive indefinitely.

But in contrast to this the Christian assertion of the necessity of death has an absolute validity. This is because it is based not merely upon biological considerations, but on human nature as a whole. There is a factor in man, in his very nature and in the way in which he was originally fashioned, which makes it impossible for him ever to escape from or do away with the necessity of dying, that makes it absolutely certain that he will always die. Death is not merely something that is 'appropriate' to man in the sense that it is appropriate to a precious artefact not to be [287] broken because to break it would be an outrage to its very nature and the purpose for which it was designed. On the contrary man is subject to death as a necessity of his innermost nature. It is on deeper grounds than merely biological ones that human nature inherently and inexorably tends towards death as its inevitable goal.

The deepest and most ultimate reason for the connection with and orientation to death which is most intimately inherent in man, which makes him mortal and in virtue of this fact renders all men now and for ever subject to death in the truest sense, is the freedom of the spirit. It is this, ultimately speaking, that makes man mortal, and mortality in the biological sense is only the manifestation and the realisation in the concrete of this mortality, which has its origin and basis in the freedom with which man is endowed as spiritual. How then can this be the case? Freedom is not the power constantly to change one's course of action, but rather the power to decide that which is to be final and definitive in one's life, that which cannot be superseded or replaced, the power to bring into being from one's own resources that which must be, and must not pass away, the summons to a decision that is irrevocable. If freedom were capable of achieving only that which could subsequently be abolished by a further free decision, then freedom would be nothing more than power over that which is purely neutral and indecisive, that which is always open to subsequent revision, a miserable sort of freedom, condemned, as it were, to proceed in futile circles without any final resting place, ultimately meaningless. If, therefore, man *is* personal freedom, then it follows that he is one who uses the resources of his own innermost nature to form himself by his own free act, for by the exercise of this freedom of his he can definitively determine the shape of his life as a whole, and decide what his ultimate end is to be, the ultimate realisation of his own nature, beyond all possibility of revision.

Now the physical side of man's nature, in which he actively works out the shape of his life as person and brings it to its consummation, is so constituted that it sets him in the dimension of that which is constantly open to further development. It follows from this that while it can be the dimension in which freedom is exercised *in fieri*, it cannot be that in which the fulness of freedom is achieved, the dimension of that consummation to which freedom finally and definitively attains. Freedom enters into the dimension of becoming and of openness to further development only in order to achieve its own consummation. To this extent it is exercised at [288] this physical level of man's being only in order to pass beyond it and transcend it, and so to attain to its definitive goal. The free man is willing to accept the limitations of mortality only in order that the exercise of his freedom on this plane may enable him to attain to that true immortality which lies beyond, and which consists not in an unending evolution in time but in the achieved finality of eternity itself – in that, therefore, which is beyond time.

At its deepest level the exercise of free decision bears upon death itself. It must do so because, in order to arrive at its own final perfection it must will death as that which puts an end to the mere prolongation of temporal existence. It is only on the surface of our awareness that we shrink from death. At its deepest level this awareness of ours craves for that which is imperfect and incomplete in us to be brought to an end in order that it may be finally

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perfected. Indeed if anyone told us that our present state would last for ever we would regard this in itself as tantamount to being damned, for it would mean that every fleeting and transitory moment of our existence was *ipso facto* deprived of its true value, a value which consists in the fact that each of these moments provides us with the possibility of making a decision of final and permanent validity. For the outcome of the free act is always something which endures.

Of course Christianity recognises a special kind of perfection to be attained through the exercise of freedom, one that goes beyond that which death brings, namely that state of perfection in grace which the first man was offered the possibility of attaining to in Paradise. In this situation of primæval blessedness too man would not simply have enjoyed an indefinite prolongation of his earthly life; here too his freedom would have defined some state of final perfection which would have been achieved by some radical transformation of the physical side of his human nature as realised in the concrete. But in Paradise the physical side of the man who had attained to the state of Paradisal perfection would have undergone an extremely radical change. It would have been raised to a state of glorification in which it was no longer subject to constant change and flux, unfolding itself in an unending series of transformations. At the same time, however, primordial man would not have relinquished the physical side of his nature as we have to relinquish it now in order to achieve our own perfection. To that extent this necessity of death to which we are subject is a sign of the guilt in Adam of the whole race, a manifestation of the sinfulness of all. But even this does not derogate from the fact that [289] death precisely *as* that which perfects us and raises us above the continuous flow of time, as the incursion of that finality which is posited once and for all in freedom, is on a higher level than the mere process of becoming which we now call life. The one death which comes to all is natural and in harmony with our natures inasmuch as it is the birth of that finality aimed at in freedom which is the ultimate object of man's will at its most basic and fundamental. Death is 'unnatural' in its immediate effect upon the physical side, which is an essential part of man's nature, inasmuch as in death this cannot at once be transformed and raised in glory to that state of final perfection for which man's life, taken as a single and continuous whole, is designed. Instead at first this physical side of our nature simply falls away from us as something which we have to transcend and get beyond, and is relinquished as though it were of no permanent significance.

Thus from our consideration of the universality of death, inasmuch as this is an article of faith, we have been brought spontaneously and inevitably face to face with quite different and far deeper factors which are essentially inherent in death. Death is the breaking in of finality upon mere transience – that finality which is the concretisation of freedom come to its maturity. But when we make this assertion we intend it as the Christian answer both to the materialist teaching that at death man ceases totally to exist, and to the teaching of the transmigration of souls, which implicitly denies the unique and final value of this earthly life and its importance as providing the opportunity for absolute decision (in reality this latter doctrine recognises only the miserable fate of being condemned to the eternal cycle of birth and death). But while all this is true as far as it goes, a further point must straight away be added to it: this act of freedom which ultimately determines what man's final state is to be comes to its fulness, as we have seen, in death. For that very reason it constitutes the absolute climax of the process of enfeeblement and deprivation of power in man.

The freedom which is exercised on the physical plane is, in fact, that freedom by which man lays himself open to intervention from without, submits to control by another power or powers. The physical side of man's nature constitutes the sphere in which the interplay takes place of action from within himself and passion as imposed from without. As a physical being endowed with freedom man has to take cognisance of the fact that he occupies an intermediary position. He is neither wholly self-directing nor wholly subject to control by

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another, but half-way between these [290] two. The mysterious interplay between action and passion in the exercise of human freedom appears above all in the fact that it is precisely at the very point at which man freely achieves his own perfection that he is, at the same time, most wholly subject to control by another. The ultimate act of freedom, in which he decides his own fate totally and irrevocably, is the act in which he either *willingly accepts or definitively rebels against* his own utter impotence, in which he is utterly subject to the control of a mystery which cannot be expressed – that mystery which we call God. In death man is totally withdrawn from himself. Every power, down to the last vestige of a possibility, of autonomously controlling his own destiny is taken away from him. Thus the exercise of his freedom taken as a whole is summed up at this point in one single decision: whether he yields everything up or whether everything is taken from him by force, whether he responds to this radical deprivation of all power by uttering his assent in faith and hope to the nameless mystery which we call God, or whether even at this point he seeks to cling on to his own autonomy, protests against this fall into helplessness, and, because of his disbelief, supposes that he is falling into the abyss of nothingness when in reality he is falling into the unfathomable depths of God.

On the basis of this it is possible for us to realise that death can be either an act of faith or a mortal sin. In order rightly to understand this we must consider (and perhaps it would have been clearer to make this point right from the first) that the actual act of dying does not necessarily occur at that point in time in the physical order at which doctors suppose it to take place, and at which it is considered to take place in the popular estimation when men speak of the final departure and of death as coming at the end of life. In reality we *are* dying all our lives through right up to this, the final point in the process of dying. Every moment of life is a stage on the way to this final goal, a stage which already carries this end within itself and derives its significance from it, just as when one sees a shot fired one can already estimate, even as it is travelling, where the impact will fall. Life, therefore, is in a true sense a process of dying, and what we are accustomed to call death is the final point in this life-long process. Dying takes place throughout life itself and death when it comes is only the ultimate and definitive completion of the process. Now this death in life or living death, as it may be called, can become one of two things: it can be made into an enduring act of faith in the fact that our lives and destinies are being directed and controlled by another and that this [291] direction is right; the willing acceptance of our destiny, the ultimate act of self-commitment to that destiny, a renunciation which we make in anticipation of our final end because in the end we must renounce all things; also because we believe that it is only by this poverty entailed in freely accepting our own destiny that we can free ourselves for the hand of God in his unfathomable power and grace to dispose of us as he wills. *Alternatively* this death in the midst of life can become an act of desperately clinging on by main force to that which is destined to fall away from us, a protest, whether silent or expressed, against this death in life, the despair of one who is avid for life and who imagines that he has to sin and so to obtain his happiness by force. The death that is accomplished in life, therefore, must be really the act of that loving and therefore trustful faith which gives man courage to allow himself to be taken up by another. Otherwise it will become the mortal sin which consists in the pride of seeking one's own absolute autonomy, anxiety (*Angst*) and despair all in one.

Now in both modes of dying there are, whether we realise it or not, others who have gone before us. We are not the first to die, but are rather the successors of these, caught up in a struggle between life and death which takes place on a more comprehensive scale. Certainly each individual dies his 'own death'. Certainly each individual is unique in the inexorable solitude of his own death because each individual life, despite the opposite impression of a meaningless existence *en masse*, in which many – all too many – are involved, is unique and unrepeatable in its free moral decision. But even though this death is personal and unique to

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the individual in this sense, still it is the death which has been ushered into this world of the embodied spirit (a death, therefore, which only the superficial will equate with the death of animals) by the rebellion of the first man. And at the same time it is the death which the Son of Man freely takes upon himself. Our death is modelled upon the death of both of these. For it was precisely the death of Adam that the Son of Man willed to die in order to redeem this death. And because it is never possible for us to say of ourselves with complete certainty which exercise of life we commit ourselves to with the ultimate decision of our free will, we cannot ultimately know either whether it is possible for us to say which of the two deaths we are dying, the death of perdition or the death of Adam which has been redeemed; in other words whether the death of Christ imports life for us or judgment, whether it is the death of despair that we are dying or the [292] death of faith. Both modes of dying are *concealed beneath the surface* in the everyday process of dying.

Death affects every aspect of our personal lives and being. It constitutes the transition between the sort of being that is becoming and the sort of being that is final completion, from the freedom which has been given up to the achieved finality which is at the same time the moment of radical enfeeblement. To the extent that we regard ourselves from the point of view of this world, to the extent that we are those who are quitting it and not those who are coming into it, to this extent we are, so to say, losing possession of ourselves. And for all these reasons we have no clear vision of what this definitive and final state of death will mean for us. In dying we strive to attain to the inconceivable. It is not immediately clear in the here and now what the fruit of life which we are bringing to maturity will one day be worth. But it is precisely because death is concealed from us in this sense that it is (to reiterate) the situation *par excellence* in which we can make the most radical and absolute option possible between faith and despair, between the death of Christ and the death of Adam. The dying man passes into a state of silence and solitude which engulfs everything in its own stillness. It is a state to which he has been drawing ever closer throughout his life, the situation in which he is faced with a question, an option to be taken, in which a decision is demanded of him, the situation either of the faith that redeems or of the despair that kills. The fact that death is concealed from us in this way makes it possible for us to choose either of these alternatives.

We have spoken much about death and yet said little. For who can say much about the mysteries of human existence, especially if they are followed through to the mysteries of God himself, whose eternal Word has taken our death upon him and thereby imparted to death a divine value, a divine mystery and an eternal grace? And yet we must think about death, not merely because our life is that mode of existence which of its very nature leads to death, but still more because it is the mystery of Christ the Lord in his Good Friday. Since Christ has died for the salvation of the world, since the life of God and his glory has definitively entered into the world there has been no more decisive factor in the world than precisely this death. By comparison with this every other event in the world is transitory and ultimately unimportant, or important only in virtue of the fact that it precisely does have some part to play in this history of the death of Christ.

[293] If we have been given the vocation and the grace to die with Christ in this death of his, then the everyday and banal occurrence which we call human death, and which awaits each one of us also, has been elevated to a place among God’s mysteries. In order to understand these mysteries and to be able to put them into practice in the liturgy of our life we need only to look to the death of the crucified Lord, and hear the words which he spoke, and which express what is most terrible and at the same time what is most sublime in his death. These are words which we too can hear and repeat in life and death: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Father into your hands I commend my spirit. For if we understand death as supremely *the* state of abandonment by God in which we fall into the

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hands of the eternal God, then we have already understood and endured death itself.

But together with this one crucified Lord – and the implications of this symbolism are frightening – there are two other dying figures, two men who cursed their fate of death because they did not understand it. Who indeed can understand it? But one of the two looked to the death of Christ. And what he saw there was enough to enable him to understand his own death also. For when one says to the dying Christ 'Think of me when you come into your kingdom' then one has indeed understood death, understood it rightly and received it as one's own salvation. And the Son of Man, he who shared in our fate of death, redeemed it and made it a gateway to life, said to this dying man: 'Today you will be with me in Paradise.'

But he says this to us also. If we have ears for it we have already solved the baffling riddle of death. But in order that the message of the blessing which our death will bring shall not remove from us that holy fear which is so needful for us precisely to obtain this blessing in our death he says to the other thief . . . precisely nothing. The darkness and silence which hung over this death serve to warn us that death can also be the onset of a deeper death still, a death that is eternal. But even as we fear and tremble we can also listen to the joyful message, the Christian gospel of the death that is life; of the coming of the Lord who is that life which knows no death even though it comes to us in death. This reality is still veiled beneath the solemn and humbling experiences which we have to undergo in death. But the death of Good Friday, the death which issues in life and eternal goodness in God's presence – that is the truth about death which faith enables us to know.

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[1]

PART ONE

Patterns of Christianity

[3]

1

WHY AND HOW CAN WE VENERATE THE SAINTS?

The seventh chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church lays down certain points which are additional and supplementary to what is usually called, in the current theological parlance, 'the veneration of the saints'. These are concerned with the eschatological character of the pilgrim Church and with the 'last things'. On the whole, however, this chapter remains in its definitive form as it was originally planned, a chapter on the veneration of the saints, and (without going into details) it presents a comprehensive view of what manifestly belongs to the Church's tenets and convictions on this point as upheld in her faith and life.

Over and above this certain considerations must here be presented which affect our attitudes as men and Christians of *today* towards the veneration of the saints.[1]

I. THE VENERATION OF THE SAINTS AS AN EXISTENTIAL AND THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

On closer examination this chapter of the conciliar constitution appears to be devoid of any answer to a question which appears to us of today to be more pressing than it did to those of former generations. This is not intended as a criticism, or to suggest that there is a deficiency in the document which could have been avoided. What we feel to be missing here could not in any sense have been put forward as a conciliar statement, at [4] any rate not at present, because virtually speaking it has not yet attained any *conscious* position in the Church's explicit awareness of her faith. Expression is given to the objective reality of the communion of saints, their existence in blessedness, their exemplary status, the fact that they are worthy of veneration, their ability to intercede for us with God. Attention is drawn to the fact that in all ages the Church has venerated the saints. By these statements – this is the message of the decree whether explicitly or implicitly expressed – the situation is made clear. We can and should venerate the saints. The only thing left for us to do is to respond to the reality with which we have been presented in the appropriate manner, and in fact to venerate the saints. At this point, however, it may appear to the man of our own times that one factor of decisive importance has been overlooked, namely himself. In other words the question has not been answered as to why and how he, in view of his own special peculiarities, can achieve any kind of relationship with the world of the saints even though the objective reality of this world is not denied. Presumably when faced with the Council's teaching on this point he feels

[1] In addition to the articles on this subject in the lexicons cf. M. Lackmann: *Verehrung der Heiligen* (Stuttgart, 1958); B. Kötting, 'Heiligenverehrung' in *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* I (Munich, 1962), pp. 633-641; P.-Y. Emery, 'L'unité des croyants au ciel et sur la terre. La communion des Saints et son expression dans la prière de 1'Eglise' in *Verbum Caro* 16 (1962), No. 63, pp. 1-240; P. Molinari, *Die Heiligen und ihre Verehrung* (Freiburg, 1964).

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like a young man (if the somewhat startling analogy may be forgiven) to whom a mother is describing the good qualities of her daughter, whom she is seeking to recommend to him as a future wife. He hears the message and does not dispute its accuracy, and yet no love is aroused in him. The fact that the girl is worthy of love does not mean that there is any corresponding ability to love on the part of the young man. 'Can' we of today venerate the saints? What has to be present in us as persons? What has to be brought out into the open, roused from its state of inertia, in order that we can manage effectively to respond to the reality which the Church brings to our notice? What are the basic conditions, subjectively speaking and from our side, in order that we can achieve anything approximating to a veneration of the saints?

How little the constitution is concerned with these difficult and obscure questions appears still more clearly from two small points in particular, to which attention may be drawn. The Evangelical Christian will perhaps admit the validity of all the objective statements contained in this chapter, and still not feel himself moved to actually venerating the saints in practice. In a certain sense it could be said that there is nothing in his own religious experience to correspond to this objective reality as stated in the constitution (and *for this very reason* and on these grounds alone he will find himself tempted to contest the objective accuracy of these statements).

[5] And further: there is no doubt that an approach to the veneration of the saints might be worked out on 'existential' lines, or at least the ground might be prepared for such an approach. It might be pointed out that a Christian who believes in the truth that the dead are hidden in Christ with God now regards those whom he himself has loved in his own lifetime as already with God, whither they have gone before him. But the constitution contains no mention of any need for such an approach to be worked out, any need to try to appeal to religious experience of this kind at the human level, which is more readily responded to than the adulation of the Church's 'official' saints. Instead the constitution launches itself straightaway into the world of the saints, quite unaffected by these considerations, and in this sense seems to envisage a kind of Christian who, with a kind of naïve religious realism, takes the objective reality of this world for granted as though it were obvious right from the outset, the kind of Christian who needs only to be told of the fact itself that the saints are worthy of veneration in order to respond, and does not need to be told how and why he should respond in the concrete.

The Decline of the Veneration of the Saints in Our Own Time

The present situation, however, is such that at least in the 'Cisalpine' countries of Europe veneration of the saints has suffered an extraordinary decline even among Catholics, so that the ability to practise such veneration seems to have undergone some kind of process of atrophy and decay. This assertion cannot, of course, be proved statistically, especially since the official cult of the Church has continued unchanged. But the fact itself should not be contested on this account. Rather it should be frankly recognised, and the causes of it should be enquired into. Nor should it be presumed from the outset that these causes must necessarily and in all cases be regrettable. This is not to say that we should no longer concern ourselves with the saints. The literature of the last few decades is probably neither smaller in volume nor worse in quality, but on the contrary, has become better than in former ages. But the interest which this literature presupposes and stimulates in the readers is still far from implying any attitude of veneration in the truly theological sense. We may have the greatest admiration for Francis of Assisi, and feel whole-heartedly that he is the very pattern and prototype of Christian living, yet at the same time not have 'said any prayers to him'. In this religious interest in Christians whose lives are impressive, exemplary or powerfully inspiring [6] we Catholics are not fundamentally different from the Evangelical Christians who also

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have their saints in this sense (even to the point of martyrdom). Whether one venerates Bodelschwingh or Charles de Foucauld in this sense is a secondary question. The real question is whether the modern Catholic, when he has read the life of de Foucauld or his letters, really manages to enter into prayerful communication precisely with *him* as person, to 'call upon' him, to venerate him in a 'cult', as the language of tradition optimistically dares to call it. Now from this point of view it cannot be contested that modern man has to a large extent lost his capacity to venerate the saints. Admittedly a thousand examples to the contrary can be pointed to in the complex community of the Church, in which many ages live side by side with one another. Of course there is much to be found which seems to contradict this assertion in religious houses with their stable customs and their holy eagerness to see new saints from among their own members raised to their altars, as also in the practice of novenas and pilgrimages. But what we are concerned with here is the member of the Church precisely as conditioned in a special way by the atmosphere of the present world and of contemporary life. Even though he obviously intends to be a Christian and a Catholic he maintains an attitude of aloofness towards religious tradition and its usages, an attitude which is sometimes explicitly declared, but sometimes too only implicit and beneath the surface of his conscious life. And the real question is whether this decline in the veneration of the saints applies in the case of *this* kind of Christian. It is a question which in all sincerity must be answered in the affirmative. The fact that modern churches are, to so large an extent, bereft of images and pictures is in itself a sign of this. The statues and pictures of the saints are not missed or at the most are only missed because their absence makes the churches seem too cold and bare.

The Experience of the Silent God in Our Own Time

The reasons for this decline are manifold and far-reaching. Most contemporary Christians have already ceased to have any sense of being actively in communication with their own dead, the members of their family and the relations whom they have lost. Though there are exceptions to this the general attitude is that they have departed and vanished from this life. They are forgotten, and in so far as they are thought of at all attention is focused upon their lives while they were still among us and not in any true sense upon the fact that they are still living. It is not that we contest [7] the fact that they are, in principle, living on in the presence of the God of the living, but so far as we are concerned they are not alive. They have been, so to say, completely and totally removed from our sphere of existence. Do we really believe that the city dweller still feels any need to visit the graves of his departed on Sunday after Mass as does the countryman? Is not the custom of placing lights upon the graves on All Souls' Day, at Christmas, etc., confined to one quite well-defined group which cannot possibly be regarded as 'representative' of contemporary life, a group which is slowly but relentlessly being squeezed out of modern society? But if a man thinks even of his own 'nearest and dearest' as disappearing at death into that darkness which surrounds the meagre light of our existence with its silent infinitude how can he then find it in himself to take up an attitude of veneration towards other dead persons during his life merely on the grounds that they were holier?

But there is a further and more radical reason. The capacity of modern man is essentially dependent upon an experience of God which is 'epochal', that is conditioned by the special circumstances of his own particular time. Thus special factors do arise even within the one 'final age' of the Church because the climate of thought and the situation of the world has a profound effect upon the Church also, its destiny and the quality of its faith. Now today it is precisely the man who really and genuinely believes who feels that God has become incomprehensible and 'remote' from him (even if the Christian knows that this incomprehensible and remote God is at the same time infinitely close as the mystery which freely imparts itself to him). Naturally this is something which has always been known and

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recognised. But modern man experiences it with a new and radical keenness because the world has become so inescapably vast and at the same time so profane, and also because, not surprisingly, God does not appear as one factor 'along with' others which are given in the everyday experience of this world. God is, to a large extent, experienced as the silent mystery, infinite in his ineffability and inconceivability. And the more man advances in his religious life the more *these* aspects of God come consistently to the fore (instead of diminishing). Into this silent, unfathomable and ineffable mystery the dead disappear. They depart. They no longer make themselves felt. They cease any further to belong to the world of our experience. When spirit and heart seek them, when our gaze follows them into the distance, and precisely when this quest is made in the religious sense (which has nothing to do with a 'spiritualist' kind of [8] communication that remains within the dimension of this present world) then manifestly this gaze of ours meets only with the darkness of the divinity in which nothing can be distinguished any longer. Even if we say that for all this we 'know' by faith that the dead have not been dissolved into this unfathomable and ineffable darkness of the divine, but still live on, then it is always possible to reply: 'But they are no longer distinguishable *so far as we are concerned*.'

In other words it is possible to put the objection that the veneration of the saints considered precisely as a *religious* act cannot be thought of as a further projection of our ordinary connection with other media within this world, for this would be a kind of spiritualism. It must be specifically religious, i.e. the exercise of it must be directed towards God, and must bear upon the dead or the saints only in general terms in the attainment of this end. But ultimately speaking this must be reduced to an act of falling down in dumb adoration before the ineffability of God, and in that case how can it put us in touch with the saints? How can an act of this kind fail to be totally absorbed in and taken up with the inconceivability of God and his will? How can there still be any interest in the individual finite reality of this or that saint? When even petitionary prayer to God constitutes a difficult and obscure chapter in the religious life of modern man how can he still turn to a specific saint with a specific prayer for precisely *his* help? Will a man of our own times find it easy to believe, supposing that his prayer is heard, that it has been heard precisely because he turned for help to this specific saint? How many men of our own times will have the courage (leaving out of account the possibility that it is simply the mechanics of ancient religious custom that are at work) to choose one particular saint rather than another as a matter of personal inclination to be their patron? When the official Church, even today, still designates specific saints as 'patrons' for particular 'concerns' does any *genuine* religious interest still survive in this fact? Is not the fact that the veneration of the saints is in practice concentrated upon Mary, however wonderful this Marian devotion may be, in itself an indication of how slight the distinctions have become, so far as our personal feelings are concerned, between the individual saints in our veneration of them?

The Problem of How the Veneration of the Saints Is Reconcilable with the Adoration of God

It is only with great difficulty that modern man can achieve any clear [9] conception of what is meant by the intercession of the saints in heaven such as can be reconciled with his own 'rationalism' (which is, however, a justified rationalism) and with a kind of theological thinking that is realistic and not overweighted with fantasy. The questions which the modern Christian has to put (and he asks them either explicitly or as implied in his basic outlook on life, which is an extremely potent factor in his religion) are these: What sort of idea of the intercessory activity of the saints should I have? Is this intercessory activity on the part of the saints intensified or diminished according to the extremely varied ways in which those still on earth have recourse to them for their intercession? How is their intercessory activity to be conceived of in view of the absolute and immutable decrees laid down from all eternity in the

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mind of God, by which all things are controlled, and which themselves cannot be determined by any creature? In view of this can this intercession of the saints be anything else than the unconditional adoration of God, whose ways are unsearchable, to whom no-one gives counsel and who has no counsellor? But if this is the case then can we still say that the intercession of the saints is what we normally conceive it to be? And is it still dependent upon whether we who are still on earth supplicate the saints for their intercession? Is it not simply imparted to us according to the degree of our union with God, whether we explicitly ask them for it or not? For instance were Mary or figures such as Augustine less favoured with this intercessory activity since certainly they did not ask for it so much as a devotee of the Middle Ages? Now can it really be said that to all these questions the standard theology of the day has ready to hand an answer that is simple, clear and easy to understand?

Merely as an afterthought it may be pointed out that the distinction which is drawn between mere veneration and invocation of the saints (*dulia*) and the adoration of God (*latria*) is important and certainly correct in itself. But it rather obscures than solves the important problem involved. For while we think that we have arrived at a clear and valid distinction we overlook the fact that the *unity* of the two kinds of veneration represents just as great a problem, and indeed one that is even more important. Unless we can find a clear answer to this second problem it will be impossible to explain what is specifically Christian and *religious* in the nature of our veneration of the saints, and equally impossible to find out whether the veneration of the saints is in fact a Christian activity *or* a sort of mitigated spiritualism, magic, or a watered-down form of polytheism. We [10] cannot simply assert that the veneration of the saints does not derogate from our adoration of God or of Christ as the unique mediator. We cannot simply regard the veneration of the saints (*dulia*) and adoration (*latria*) as basically united in virtue of the fact that there is unity in the object of these acts, in other words that the saints are united with God through grace and glory. We must also make it clear that there is unity in the subjective acts themselves, that they both pertain to one and the same basic act of ‘religion’. In the theology of love of neighbour as a supernatural ‘infused’ virtue (of charity) an attempt is made at least to explain why and how such an act can and must at the same time be an act of the love of God himself. We should do the same with regard to the connection between veneration and adoration. It will have to be shown why and how the act of venerating the saints is really and intrinsically included, made valid and upheld by that of adoring God, because only in this way can it be a specifically *religious* activity, that is an act proceeding from our immediate union with God and empowered by the grace of God. Otherwise it would actually remain worthless, and even dangerous, from a religious point of view. The (correct) distinction mentioned above actually conceals something essential. It can be taken in the same sense as the statement ‘Love of neighbour is not love of God’, a statement which even though formally speaking it is correct, obscures the deeper truth of the unity which exists between these two kinds of love.

II. SOME PRELIMINARY THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

But enough of problems. What can now be said in positive terms to explain the veneration of the saints, especially with regard to its ‘subjective’ aspects? In answering such a question it must always be borne in mind that the analysis of an act which is essential for our nature as human to be brought to its fullness, does not in itself effect this fullness in the concrete but rather presupposes it, and is ultimately comprehensible only in terms of it. For instance it is impossible to explain what love is in terms of a philosophy and theology of love to one who has never actually loved in any sense in the concrete. In the investigation which follows no claim is made to provide a comprehensive answer to the problem. Moreover other questions,

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connected with this central problem, will not be explored here, such as the question of what the saints in the Church are. They are not merely the happy 'fruit' of the Church considered as an [11] official salvific institution, but rather the creators of new ways of Christian living, i.e. those specific kinds of holiness which have been required of the Church at particular epochs in her history. In the same way we shall not be treating of the question of the imitation of the saints, and why their life represents not simply a constructive model for others to copy but also a dangerous adventure which cannot simply be entered upon without qualification as a 'rule of life' (quite apart from the question of how far their personal limitations and weaknesses may have been conditioning factors in the total image of their lives). Furthermore the reader cannot be excused from having his attention drawn to certain prior considerations which may not be entirely familiar to him in all cases. In every department of theology the whole of theology must in some sense be present if it really is to be a department of theology in any genuine sense at all. But this inevitably increases the difficulty entailed in discussing specific points in theology.[2]

Christ Our Mediator With the Father

We may commence with the simple statement that for the Christian the connection with Jesus Christ the crucified and risen Lord is the basic and decisive act of religion, in which he attains to God who is *his* God and the God of grace, i.e. the absolute proximity of the mystery which imparts itself in the mode which makes it most effectively and most personally present. Two points are implied here.

The Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for Our Relationship with God

The specifically Christian connection with God is in its very immediacy mediated by the connection with Jesus, in other words through a creaturely reality. Naturally it is not possible here to develop this statement in its full significance and depths. Certain brief remarks must suffice at this point. First it has to be recognised that the risen and glorified Lord is and remains truly man. This fact of itself raises the same problem at this point as the one which we touched upon with regard to the veneration of the saints. So far as the exercise of *our personal* religion is concerned, why does Jesus as man not disappear into the silence and darkness of the divinity? This real and creaturely humanity of Jesus – why does it not become, in a certain sense, uninteresting and indifferent when we try, [12] with all the resources of our spirit, absolutely to transcend all that is finite, and in grace (which, in the last analysis, is the very presence of God himself to us), to find a way of entering into an absolute immediacy with God? Or is the position that we of today have arrived at such that we actually 'bypass' Jesus? And in that case are we really still Christians, or is Jesus, so far as we are concerned, simply an episode in saving history enacted here below upon earth, so that once he has attained to God himself at the resurrection, and once we have attained to God by the gift of uncreated grace, he simply disappears from view? There can be no doubt that many Christians, so far as any clear and explicit awareness of their religious life is concerned, remain, strictly speaking, at the level of an abstract monotheism. Certainly they recognise that they have been brought into God's mercy and into a direct relationship with him through the redemption wrought by Christ. But precisely on that account they suppose that they no longer have to deal with anything except with God himself purely in his divine nature and abstracting from the incarnation.

[2] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'The Church of the Saints', *Theological Investigations* III, pp. 91-104.

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There is no doubt that the theology explicitly worked out by teachers and preachers has paid far too little attention to this question,[3] so that it almost appears as though the connection with the risen *humanity* of Jesus is a sort of adjunct within the total vision of the heavenly glory, supplementary to the vision of the triune God. And the experience of being brought into contact with mythological ideas has only had the effect of making it still more difficult to maintain this idea. If the teaching of the Church on this point is to have a genuine and non-mythological significance then it must simply be the case that the humanity of Jesus is the medium through which our immediate relationship with God is achieved. Of course if we 'picture' the 'figure' of Jesus to ourselves and use as a model for this purpose our external relationships with another man here in this life this statement is untenable. But in that case we have falsified our basic presuppositions. The immediacy of our relationship with God is certainly not invalidated by the fact that we achieve this relationship as our own ultimate act, and at the same time in this act achieve a special relationship with ourselves, find ourselves, as it were, anew. Rather both relationships must be thought of as essential and mutually complementary factors within one and the same act. We shall [13] have something more to say on this point at a later stage, but for the moment let us notice in this connection that man is, from the very first moment of his existence and throughout, the being that achieves a relationship with itself precisely by achieving a relationship with the 'other', in the first instance the other creature, the 'thou', whether this latter relationship be one of love or hate. He is the being that can only achieve its true mode of existence, its own truth and the fullness of its own personhood precisely in this state of communication with the 'other'. In the light of this truth, this process by which our immediate relationship with God is achieved through the medium of Jesus the man becomes intelligible. We obscure the truth of this process of mediation if we think of it too much in the concrete. It must never be forgotten that the most real factor in the spirit is its cognition, its freedom, its love. In thinking of the spirit we must not take material entities as our conceptual model. We must not think of the spirit as a sort of 'support' on which the cognitive powers are then superimposed, and in relation to which they are merely secondary and supplementary, less 'real' than that which 'supports' them. It is only in its activities that the spirit achieves its own reality, and it is only in love that it comes alive in that twofold relationship which is essential to it right from the outset. When I love Jesus I perform that act which effectively achieves direct relationship with God. Why the mediating factor in this case should be precisely Jesus, why it should be that even in the case of one who does not explicitly recognise Jesus (in 'historical' terms) there is still a 'quest' for Jesus, albeit a blind one, in order that the immediate relationship with God may be achieved by grace and may be achieved through him as the mediator – all this cannot be gone into any further at this point. But in any case one fundamental principle is indicated here as to how the Christian experience of the sheer and absolute transcendence of God is achieved: not by rising above and leaving behind the finite, but precisely by being mediated through the finite, the 'world'. It attains to this 'absoluteness' of God as inserted into the world itself (at any rate in the case of Jesus), and recognises it as that which is most proper to itself the 'supernatural state of being' bestowed upon it by God's grace. At this point the concepts break down. But we need only to remind ourselves of the teaching of the God-Man to realise as a doctrine indispensable to the Christian faith that God bestows himself in such a way that while remaining utterly unaffected in his own transcendence and grace he nevertheless becomes, in the most immediate [14] sense, the *suppositum* of a created nature (and that too, in a mode which essentially goes beyond the ordinary 'Creator-creature' relationship). And what takes

[3] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for Our Relationship with God', *Theological Investigations* III, pp. 35-46. J. Alfaro, 'Christo glorioso, revelador del Padre', *Gregorianum* 39 (1958), pp. 220-270.

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place in Jesus Christ with a pre-eminent fullness applies essentially, though in a minor and modified degree, to the world in general which God takes into his grace. But if this is so, then it follows that a right and full relationship with the world (which is, above all, a world of persons communicating in love and freedom) is in itself a relationship of immediate contact with God himself. This is not because of any logical necessity inherent in the conception of the world as created, but rather because, of his own free grace, God has, in this way, inserted himself into his own world. As a result this grace-given 'fact' is a permanent and essential factor in the life of every spiritual creature, one which it has to respond to whether implicitly or explicitly with either assent or denial if it is genuinely to arrive at a discovery of itself in a free act of self-comprehension (and by that very fact discover also the 'this-worldly' and creaturely 'thou' which corresponds to it).

Excursus: The Proximity of the Silent God in Jesus Christ

It may be permitted to insert at this point a brief consideration of certain aspects of saving history. Since the essential characteristics of the individual acquire their definitive form in his own history it follows that the historical situation in which he is placed, the spirit of an epoch, plays its part in determining the mode of his formation, and changes the mode in which these characteristics find expression. But now there is only one direction in which the history of man's discovery of himself can run its course; the eschatological situation brought about by Jesus, in which this history must unfold, cannot be reversed. And because of this the task of the Christian, the task which the message of Jesus Christ forces him to face up to, cannot consist simply in establishing for himself that God is silent and absent from his life (whether this is true or only a misinterpretation to be ascribed to his own subjective thought-processes), or in enduring this state of affairs as something to which he has been subjected. It is required of him to make real to himself the immediacy of God as the mystery which in Jesus is *near* to him and forgiving. He has to do this in the conscious effort of a faith which is capable of growing. The contemporary historical situation which was touched upon at the outset can play its part in determining the form which this effort of faith takes. As an effort of faith it may bear the 'signs of Jesus' in itself, and bring with [15] it the experience of his own desolation on the Cross. But in making this effort man is promised that by grace he will achieve a sufficient degree of success. But now, among the factors present in this special situation of the age we live in, there is one in particular which belongs to it in a quite new and radical manner, one which is still growing and the full benefits of which may perhaps only be felt in the future. This is the fact that man finds himself only in his fellow man, that it is in love for his fellow that man realises himself and this love is not simply one task or duty among many others, but rather the fulfilment of the 'law', i.e. of his own nature (and if there is a true sense in which a man's 'heaven' must be his fellow man as beloved by him, then Sartre's aphorism to the effect that 'Hell signifies other people' cannot be true). But if this is the case then it follows that our contemporary situation, viewed precisely from a Christian point of view, cannot be characterised as the absence of God as thus conceived of at all. It cannot be that which makes it impossible to discover him in Jesus for what he is in himself in his immediacy. Someone may reply that the terrible thing about the present is precisely that we cannot love our 'neighbour', that he is precisely hell for us. But one who in a spirit of faith and love never permits himself to doubt the fact that he is able to love cannot truly dare to say that in this particular contemporary situation of the spirit of Jesus one cannot love. How man can do this and what the implications are of the fact that Jesus is not simply another word, a mythological cypher for God, but rather is himself the crucified and risen Lord, and how and why God himself is attained to precisely in this (not through this) and attained to in himself alone – these are questions which cannot be entered into further at this point. For the purpose of our considerations it is sufficient to take our stand upon the fact that it is possible

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for Christ to be our mediator in bringing us to the immediacy of God through the 'thou' of another as accepted in love, because this loving mediation in Jesus is the basic doctrine of our Christian faith. Indeed 'faith in Christ' should not be misinterpreted as mere faith in a state of affairs, or supposed to be faith in God himself which is merely 'stirred up' and encouraged by our encounter with the historical Jesus. This faith means a true and essential personal connection 'in Christ' with God.

The 'Presence' of the Historical Lord

This act which is basic to the Christian religion, in which Jesus the crucified and risen man becomes the mediator who brings us to the immediacy [16] of God, is also and no less essentially an '*anamnesis*', the recalling and rendering present of his history in the Eucharist and in the tradition of the Church. The subject of this act is the risen Lord as now living. But it is of decisive importance to understand that the act bears upon him precisely in so far as he once had a history of his own, a history which he has now left behind him as that which has passed away, and yet, insofar as he *has* his own history, still remains present and effective precisely as something which is no longer in process of development, but as something completed and existing in his 'eternity'. The connection with the risen Lord and with the 'historical Jesus' is not achieved by two distinct acts of religion, but by one and the same act. Eternity is not a further projection of history into another dimension of time, but the sheer reality of the history itself as accomplished and complete. And thus the connection with the glorified Lord is the *anamnesis* of the crucified and dead Lord not merely in the sense that we 'know' that he whom we love 'once' had this history, but in the sense that he is loved in the eternal and enduring reality of his *history*, and, precisely as the one who has lived through this history, is the mediator who brings us into the immediate presence of God.

The Love of God and the Love of Neighbour is One and the Same Love

Now it might be objected that the considerations set forth above with regard to our relationship to Jesus do not advance us any further in what is for us the real question, first on the grounds that because of the uniqueness of Christ's mediatorship it is illegitimate for us to apply our findings on this to the saints and our veneration of them, and also on the grounds that in our observations up to this point the possibility of venerating the saints from the *subjective* point of view has not been made clear. In other words the problem which we are really seeking to solve still remains outstanding. Certainly these christological considerations do throw light upon one point at least, namely the value of a religious act in which a creaturely entity endowed with personality and a personal history becomes a mediator, and so provides access to God himself, so that this act really does become an act of religion. But to enter more deeply into both of these ideas let us make use of a consideration which can serve to make two points more comprehensible: first how rightly to transfer the specifically christological ideas to the relationship between us and the saints, second the subjective aspects of the possibility of venerating the saints. We refer [17] to the relationship between love of neighbour and love of God within one and the same grace-given power of charity.

Personal Love as a Basic Human Act

First it must clearly be recognised that the relationship of love between a spiritual 'I' and a similarly constituted 'Thou' is not simply one kind of achievement among many others of equal value, but rather *the* true and all-embracing act which is fundamental to human living. The very fact that the human environment in the true and authentic sense is constituted by the *persons* with whom one lives is in itself sufficient to establish this. It is the environment of *personal relationships* in this sense that provides the world in and through which man discovers himself and realises himself and … comes forth from himself. Knowledge must be

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integrated and elevated through this love in order to have a completely human meaning. The world of facts is, in the last analysis, significant only as one element in the life of man or in the world of personal relationships which is his. Personal love of one's fellows is the basic act, the truly and fully moral good (*bonum honestum*).

Now against this thesis it might immediately be objected that it is rather love of *God* which is *the* basic act, or which is at least as important in its claims upon man, if indeed it does not stand higher in the scale of values by comparison with the act of loving personal communication. But abstracting for the moment from the question of how we can determine more precisely how the two acts are interrelated (a point which we shall shortly have to enlarge upon) it must not be overlooked, in the first place, that in himself and so far as the created spirit is concerned, God is not one 'object' *among* others. Man cannot orientate himself to God in the same way in which he orientates himself to the multiplicity of objects and persons in his 'this worldly' experience, that is with a divided and partially distracted mind. In the original and basic act in which God impinges upon man (and this act precedes all conscious awareness of him) he is always given simply as the ultimate *basis* of experience, that which is beyond the world, upholding it in being and so making the experience possible. In other words God is present here not as a direct object of knowledge or experience but only 'indirectly' as that which is on the horizon of our experience. And even in those cases in which God is taken as the 'subject' of our religious thought, and so, in a true sense, as an 'object', where he himself speaks to us and becomes a 'partner', this always takes place in a [18] man who is already 'worldly', i.e. has committed himself by loving intercourse with his fellow men to personal encounter and communication with the 'thou' in his 'this-worldly' experience. And conversely this communication in love on man's part with the persons with whom he lives is in itself (at least implicitly) a coming to God and into his presence, because the self-commitment of a love which totally accepts the 'thou' of the other being is always in itself, and in an implicit manner, love of God as well. Thus when God addresses man in saving history, and so makes it possible for man to realise and reflect upon his relationship with God, this always presupposes as an essential prior condition that man has already committed himself to a relationship of love in the 'this-worldly' context, and this human love of his has in itself and of its very nature an implicit tendency towards an immediate relationship with God. Impelled by the dynamism of the spirit and by grace it carries man towards God, and only in doing so fulfils its own nature.

Love of Neighbour as Love of God

Our meaning will be made clearer if we consider the more concrete assertions of traditional theology. Theology firmly maintains that there is a love of neighbour which is itself a 'divine virtue', such that its 'formal object' is God himself i.e. a virtue which is exercised and achieved in a relationship of immediate contact with God in himself. Now however traditional this thesis may be in theology it is an astonishing one. For what it implies, if it is taken seriously, is that the neighbour is not only loved because God wills it and so any violation of this commandment would also constitute a denial of the love of God. What this thesis implies is that the exercise of love of neighbour (as charity) is *ipso facto* and in itself the love of God. But as true love it is a love that is supported by grace. In other words it is a love that is made open by God to attain to God. Now this is achieved not merely here and there but always and in all cases, where the neighbour is truly loved. For there is no need (at least in any absolute sense) for us to think of the grace necessary for this as though it were merely offered at random and now and then. On the contrary this grace is bestowed upon man, certainly as an act of God's free favour, but in *all* cases, regardless of whether it is accepted by him (to his sanctification) or refused (in which case it inevitably becomes a judgment upon him). This love of neighbour is really *love* in a sense which conforms to the

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genuine and most basic experience of man in the actual cases in which he loves. It [19] is not, therefore, merely the fulfilment of one commandment which is intended to protect man by shielding him from the effects of the brutish egoism involved in another. Where it is only the rights of another that are respected, where man keeps himself to himself, there is no love in the true sense, and in this situation the absolute essence of love cannot be achieved. It is for *this* reason that love of neighbour can be of supreme value, and can in itself be the fulfilment of the law. And it is for this reason that in Jesus' description of the judgment the judge only enquires into the one point of whether in our acts or our omissions we have loved our neighbour, seeming in this to be judging by norms which are quite atheistic in character.[4]

The Experience of God as Transcendental and as an Object of Enquiry in Itself

But how is this possible? In order to see clearly on this point certain distinctions must be recognised from the first. Knowledge that is developed and *reflexive* (and the decision corresponding to this) bears directly upon the *concept* of a given reality, whereas the *original* act of knowledge and freedom (however much this may also entail an element of the conceptual) bears upon *the actual reality itself*. This is made present to the knower either directly as an *object*: the flower and the man whom we love, or indirectly and in a manner which does *not* make it present as an object, in that dimension in which the spirit of man is infinitely removed from, and elevated above everything in the human environment and in human relationships which could be rendered present to it as an object, and comes to that state which we call one of 'elevation', the transcendental state.[5] In this state God's self-bestowal in grace is experienced with an immediacy in which the 'object' is precisely not brought into line with the other objects of the first-named experience, is not assignable to any particular 'category'. Thus the process by which we make conceptually present to ourselves both God himself and our connection with him in knowledge and love, so that both he and it become 'objects of enquiry' to us, however important and necessary this process may be, is ultimately *secondary*. Of course in this too it is precisely the reality of God himself [20] that we are explicitly directing our attention to. But in the last analysis this is in fact because in this act, which bears upon a concept, a still more basic and more elemental act takes place, one which has been elevated by grace to a state of transcendence in which it bears upon the reality of God himself and is upheld and sustained by it. The act achieved by our explicit consciousness always rests upon and presupposes the basic act, without being able to 'take it in' or thematise it in any exhaustive or comprehensive sense in each case.

The original transcendental experience of God in grace, however, is necessarily mediated by personal communication within the 'this-worldly' sphere. For even an act of this kind, and precisely this, needs an object presented in terms of the particular categories, in other words ultimately a 'this-worldly' 'thou'. The original relationship with God is love of neighbour, the ultimate value of which is, of course, dependent upon this grace-given connection with God implicit in it. The thematic act which refers to God in conceptual (symbolic, cultic, etc.) terms always bears the sign of its origins and the fact that it proceeds from that act of love of God which is love of neighbour. Without this reference to one's fellow men it is not genuine. Certainly this theological character of love of neighbour is only present in it through grace, and this itself cannot fully be the object of reflection. But the theological character of love of neighbour is, nevertheless, something that we can experience, even though inadequately, and even though we certainly cannot recognise it by investigating it in isolation and without reference to the history of salvation and revelation. For it is in this history that this character

[4] For fuller details on this cf. 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 231-249.
[5] cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', *Theological Investigations* III, pp. 86-90.

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of love of neighbour has acquired objective status and becomes assignable to a particular category. For in the free decision of love, in the total and earnest acceptance of our neighbour, we assent to God in an act which, upheld as it is by the grace of God, signifies our immediate relationship with God. And even though man cannot be certain that he has achieved this assent, cannot 'take any credit' for it, still he can have some awareness of it in a non-objective sense; for even though it has been bestowed upon him in grace it is, nevertheless, the assent which he himself utters to God in his heart.

To sum up: Love of neighbour is the unique categorical and original act in which man attains his full creaturely reality, and thereby achieves the transcendental and direct experience of God through grace. This experience represents the highest aspect and the ultimate value of love of neighbour, and it is objectified in our explicitly religious acts. In this [21] sense it is the ultimate and *basic* act of love of God *and* of neighbour, which the *explicit* acts presuppose, but among all those acts of personal fulfilment which can be objectified to ourselves the religious act derives its special value from that which the agent explicitly formulates to himself as its object, and is therefore higher in degree than an act in which the agent takes a creature as the object which he makes conceptually present to himself.

In conformity with this the love of Jesus Christ represents the unique and the highest act of love of neighbour, because when he becomes the 'thou' which is the object of this act the absolute fullness is given irrevocably of that which all love of neighbour presupposes and gives its assent to in the 'thou' to which this love is directed: a unity of God and man which is the basis for that unity which exists between the divine and human aspects in love of neighbour.

III. THE VENERATION OF THE SAINTS AS ADORATION OF GOD

We are now in a position briefly to apply what has been said to the saints. The 'saints' – in common with all who have died in Christ[6] – belong to Christ Jesus. They are a part of his Body, are included in the *anamnesis* in which the Church becomes a further projection of the Body of Christ, and therein maintains herself as well as their history now become definitive and complete.

The saints can be loved with a true and grace-given love, and in such love just as immediate a relationship with God is attained as is achieved in other situations through a Christian love of neighbour. This latter, indeed, becomes a specifically *religious* act precisely in virtue of the fact that it brings us into an immediate relationship with God in this way. But in our love of the saints the unity with Christ which is present in this love and which is presupposed in the beloved is not (as in love of neighbour in the ordinary sense) simply an implicit unity, and one which is in danger of being lost (because the unity of the neighbour with Christ has not yet been 'made manifest' in its definitive fulness). The unity with Christ achieved in love of the saints is rather something that is explicit and definitively complete and is the object of faith. This means that it has one advantage over love of neighbour in the ordinary sense: the theological [22] and christological character of love of neighbour here comes clearly to the fore. Now we can only effectively realise such love when it has first been given to us to come to the act of love in the concrete for the man who confronts us in the body here and now, and only in virtue of this. And because of this fact, even in the most sublime act of love for Jesus and those who have been definitively united with him, the ordinary love which we bear to the 'thou' of our everyday lives is the basis and prior condition for this (and, as has been said, this 'down-to-earth' love in itself constitutes us in an immediate relationship with God in

[6] cf. K. Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, 'Quaestiones Disputatae' 2, 2nd ed. (London and New York 1965).

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Jesus). To put it in biblical terms, only he who has encountered the Christ whom he does not yet recognise in his brother and sister can then go on to encounter him in manifest and explicit form, at latest in the judgment.

Now abstracting from the veneration of the saints as practised by the Church as a whole and in her 'official' life (she *must* venerate the saints in order thereby to preach the victory of God's compassion), the outcome of these considerations is that the veneration of the saints is not in itself laid as an absolute duty upon the individual Christian. He already achieves the essence of this act in his love of neighbour. Of course he should not radically and explicitly disassociate himself from the exercise of this veneration in the liturgy, in which the Church bears concrete witness to the fact that the grace of God does achieve its redemptive purpose in actual fact in the world taken as a whole. From what has been said it can also be understood that in order to bring the individual to any living understanding of what veneration of the saints should mean we must begin by making him understand that his absolute love, which he bears towards the men involved in his own personal life, remains and undergoes further development into what truly is a veneration of the saints, provided only that this love has in it the courage of the Christian hope that those who are loved have been saved by God's grace. We must begin by making the individual understand not only this but also the reasons for this. Even though we of today leave the dead in what seems to be the silence of neglect this still has a wholly positive side, which can serve as a recommendation to achieve genuine discretion and quietness in the official veneration of the saints too. In the silence of death, in the silent presence of God precisely as the inexpressible mystery, God is actually closer and more 'present' than in much talking. This must be allowed to apply equally to the private and the 'public' or 'official' veneration of the saints. Moreover this latter does not only celebrate the saints as they were on the [23] day of their death, but envisages their actual home-coming. In view of this it can be said that even the evangelical Christian does, in a certain sense, venerate the saints, for he loves his dead, whom he believes to have gone home to the Redeemer. Now the further step of 'invocation' is at basis only the courage of that love which utters a 'thou' that extends beyond all death, and the courage to believe that no-one lives alone, but that the life of each individual in Christ had a value in God's eyes which makes it efficacious for all. But the 'intercession' of the saints does not in any sense signify some kind of agency of intermediaries or 'court of second instance', but rather this: that every life lived in faith and love is of permanent value and significance for all, and that the redeemed man in the state of blessedness receives and lives this significance of his life. And because it is a spiritual world that is in question here, to which God has imparted himself, and in which each is responsible for all, in which one can have a significance for others, the invocation of an 'official' saint whether explicit or implicit, or of one of the individual Christians whom we believe and hope to have gone home to God, and whom we still love, is always the invocation of *all* the saints, i.e. an act by which we take refuge in faith in the all-enfolding community of all the redeemed.

The basic mystery of Christianity is not that God has created a world different from himself, in which he must be served as Lord, which gives him greater honour in proportion as it disappears, but rather that the grace which in the last analysis is identical with God himself has permeated the world with God's own presence. And when the world runs its course in this sense it is progressively glorified and redeemed. God himself celebrates the increase of his glory, and causes man to come into a direct relationship with himself in and through this divinised world. All this in and through Christ; but nevertheless through Christ he does achieve this as a real and effective relationship. Hence the doctrine of the veneration of the saints is not merely a demand for us to learn what Christianity means. We of today find this part of Christianity difficult, for in the present situation the practice of Christianity is not easy. We must not make it still more difficult by acting as though it were so. But the saints

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whom the Church venerates will help us precisely here in our current practice of Christianity. They are our brothers who have already attained their perfection, and they entreat the God of the living to let that light shine upon us too which is the manifestation of his own love and the blessed eternity of his own life.

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ALL SAINTS

This festival at the end of the ecclesiastical year, which is consecrated to the memory of all saints and celebrated with such solemnity and joy in the liturgy, does not seem to represent any very effective or living force in the awareness of the Christian of today. This may be due in no small part to the fact that it coincides so closely with All Souls' Day, and therefore derives its character to a large extent from this latter festival in our religious practices. On All Souls' Day we are accustomed to make pilgrimages to the graves of our dead, to those final memorials which signify that one who was beloved is still not forgotten. When we consider the matter from the theological point of view it is by no means so far-fetched to regard All Saints and All Souls as connected by the fact that a single common meaning is to be found in both. In fact we do not know precisely where the dividing line falls between All Saints and All Souls. In the deepest sense, indeed, it is not of any great significance, and is in any case provisional. Certainly on All Souls' Day we pray for those who are still in an imperfect state, those already beyond the grave who are still in process of coming to their final perfection. But at the same time these are the ones who have departed in God's grace, who, as the liturgy puts it, have gone before us in the sign of faith and now rest in the sleep of peace. We are praying, therefore, for those upon whom God has finally and definitively bestowed his grace, never more to withdraw it from them. And when we celebrate All Saints we have in mind chiefly those saints who are anonymous, the unknown saints who have not made any general impact in the Church and are not mentioned in her praises.

From one point of view, therefore, the distinction between All Saints and All Souls is only slight. But at the same time it must be recognised that each of these days has a special mystery of its own which distinguishes it from the other, a mystery which deserves to be pondered and prayed in its own right, a word peculiar to itself which has been spoken [25] by God into the Church and is intended through it to reach into our hearts. What mystery, then, does this word stand for which is addressed to us on the festival of All Saints? By way of preliminary it might be answered: The fact that men have attained to their ultimate and definitive goal – that in itself constitutes something that is wonderful. Anyone capable of feeling a spirit of fraternal solidarity with others, anyone who can mentally project himself into others, who is not so terribly isolated from others that when anyone else is mentioned he asks either explicitly or implicitly what that other is to him – anyone of this kind must or should in a very real sense celebrate a festival of rejoicing in his heart because he can say to himself: there are some who actually have arrived, who are perfected, who are already in a state of blessedness, who have attained their due measure of perfection and have not wasted their lives, men to whom something improbable has happened: to be drawn out of and beyond themselves in love, men in whom one does not find emptiness and hidden egoism when they are stripped bare and exposed to view, men who have not wept in vain, who have found life through death and the eternal kingdom through loss, men who by the everyday conduct of their ordinary lives have achieved a dimension of life which is to an undreamt of extent absolute and of such value 'once for all', and that it is worthy never more to perish for all eternity. To this it might be added that we have the right to hope that we can find all those whom our hearts have loved among these who have won and been favoured with the happiness of eternal bliss. Our forebears, the friends who have already gone home, our dead comrades, the nameless soldiers who have died, those who suffered so much while they were upon this earth, the noble spirits whom we have known, all – all who have impressed us as

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having hearts that were far too full of goodness and human greatness for the eternal God to allow them to perish, for them to have been lost to him who sought them upon his own way of the Cross, who was looking to them even as his darkened eyes gazed upon the void of that death which he had taken upon himself in order to save sinners. We might add that a further implication of this is that *all* human life is so precious and so noble that it can be brought to this final outcome, that it is only to our short-sightedness, our hardness of heart, our pride, that it seems as though there were far too many human lives, as though there were a sort of mass-production of humanity and a frightful waste of human material in the mass. We might add, therefore, as a further message which this festival has for us, that God can make all [26] into saints, into miracles and masterpieces so full of unexpected blessedness that one's heart can be transfixed with delight at them a whole eternity through. What this festival is saying to us is: Where there is not actually the most profound guilt, where there is not diabolical evil, there, ultimately speaking, there are no minor or intermediary degrees of goodness at the end, but only saints. Then we shall be in a position analogous to that of connoisseurs of art quietly going about their business. We shall seem to go into the junk-shops of world history and wearily rummage about in them with the feeling that in fact all the great works of art have been discovered long since, and given an honourable place in the museums and in the history of art, only to discover under the dust of the altar new and brilliant masterpieces captivating and delightful as on the day when they were painted.

But we must dig deeper in order to discover the theological meaning of the festival of All Saints in its entirety, in order to penetrate to the depths of God's message for this day. Certainly we celebrate All Saints *sub una veneratione*, and therefore the unknown saints as well, those who lived quietly in the land, the poor and the little ones who were great only in God's eyes, those who go unacclaimed in any of the rolls of honour belonging to the Church or to world history. But in celebrating these anonymous ones we precisely group them together with those whom we can call upon by name, those upon whom the Church calls when the holy community is assembled and she raises her eyes to the thrice-holy God. Now this is something that is indispensable, that in some sense we should celebrate not only the saints who are canonical because they have been canonised, but also, in addition to these, those nameless saints who are consecrated in silence and upon the private altars of our own hearts.

But in order to understand this we must first ask: What does it mean for the Church to canonise saints? What precisely is it which takes place in this act? This is by no means all that easy to define. Whence does the Church have the right to act in this manner at all? Is it not written that we should not judge our fellows until the Day of the Lord comes? Can it then be that the Church can see into the hidden depths, the impenetrable recesses of the human heart? In other contexts does she not take great pains to guard against making judgments about the ultimate subjective state of the individual in God's sight? How can she dare to make such a judgment in this unique instance? Is she in any sense justified in this [27] merely on the grounds that in this case she is not condemning but rather pronouncing individuals blessed? We can only rightly reply to these questions when we understand what the Church herself is. She is not, in the first instance, the proclaimer of that law which makes demands and indeed exhorbitant demands upon men. She is not a sort of institute of salvation which seeks to draw the utmost out of men in all departments of their lives, and then, not knowing herself what the result of her labours may be, leaves it to the judgment of God. Rather she is herself the holy Church. And this holiness of hers consists not exclusively, and not first and last in the holiness of her truth, her laws, her institutions and her sacraments, but in the holiness of her members. It is *as* the Church of the Incarnation of the divine compassion that she is the holy and the holy in a visible sense. Her mission is not, properly speaking, to proclaim the demands of God's law in such a way that it remains open to question what the

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outcome of this will be. Rather she is the compassion of God as eschatologically victorious. She is the victory of that grace which has not merely *sought* to save men, but actually *has* saved them. The reason that there is a Church at all is that God's grace can no longer be defeated in its effects taken as a whole, and in its impact upon the history of mankind as a whole; because the grace of God is more powerful and has the last word no matter how men may seek to contradict it; because the world has been received into this grace definitively and irrevocably in the dead and glorified flesh of Christ; because the drama of world history, however much longer it may still have to run, however much it may still seem to advance amid blood, tears and despair, has already been brought to its end in Christ with the definitive victory of God as the triumph of holiness and blessedness. And it is of this truth that the Church is witness and representative. It is for this reason that she has the right to be bold enough – bold to an absolutely frightening extent – to make a definitive and unreserved declaration about some at least, referring to them unambiguously by name, and not simply in vague and uncommitted generalities, saying: 'These specific individuals have been redeemed, have been saved for all eternity. These are men who even now have been pronounced free for all eternity, men of whom we know that fact which is the most unascertainable of all, and even though it is the mystery of divine and human freedom, namely that God has received them into his heart for all eternity.' It is because the grace of God is present in the world as eschatologically victorious, because this grace is attainable in the Church, which [28] is the salvation of God actually come into the world – it is because of this that there are canonised saints.

And now – certainly these saints were saints in an heroic degree. But for all this they lived in the midst of their own brothers and sisters, among us, among those who, as we hope, are in heaven. They themselves did not seem so very wonderful and blessed to themselves – certainly not as the elect in any special sense. They trod our ways, the habitual ways of our lives, in which we hope against all hope, the ways which led, so to say, by a whole series of stations of the Cross to that state of final helplessness in which everything seemed to end in emptiness and ultimate futility. And if they had one advantage over us then it was this: that they suffered especially acutely from that which, as we feel, makes our lives petty, pitiful and humdrum. The geniuses among men come to the fore of themselves. Their brilliance speaks for itself. In the case of the Church's saints, she often has to examine with great care in order to discover what she is seeking for: the divine greatness present in a life lived in the pitiful circumstances of tears, suffering and in the monotony of routine. When, therefore, the Church singles out by name those who are the blessed saints, who represent the Church herself in her function of being the presence of the victorious compassion of God as made accessible in the world, then in a real and justifiable sense the brilliance of these saints falls upon the unknown saints, and can truly bring the consolations of eternity to the heart that is willing to receive them. In the praise of All Saints, however, we are celebrating the Church herself, who, even though she is made up of ourselves, and therefore remains the Church of the sinners, of the poor and insignificant, of the despondent and exasperated sinners, is still the Church of the saints, the Church which is so beloved by Christ with a love unto death – almost, one might say, a fierce love – that she can no longer escape this love. In all the saints we praise the power of that grace which, so to say, makes use of men in order to bring about our salvation, which gives what it demands, which sets us free for that liberty in which we are the freed and the blessed.

If therefore, this is the mystery of this day, to make present and accessible to us, to those who are still imperfect, still toiling, still forever stumbling, those who are in despair and who cry out for help, to make available for these the consummation of grace and of its victory over the weakness and lowliness of man, then the festival of All Saints is not only the festival of the blessed in heaven, but our festival day too, on which [29] we make a fresh start and set

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out anew on our course with rejoicing. All Saints is the festival of our blessed hope that what they already possess may be imparted to us too. Hope in the new and eternal age is not only an attitude which one adopts or entertains on the grounds that to hope is always better and more pleasant than to despair. The very nature of hope itself has been transformed, since Christ is present where we are, and is present there in a definitive sense. Hope is hope in the victory of Christ. It is not so much a moral requirement which demands something from us, but something which is bestowed, which one should practise and which one possesses simply because God *is* already bestowing his grace. Such is the hope that is proclaimed on the festival of All Saints, for this is the festival of the victory of grace, the grace which is what it is not because we are the ones who first and last make it victorious, but because the grace itself brings about its own acceptance on our part. We hope because God has acted, not because we have the intention to act. We hope because there are saints.

All Saints is a festival of love. We should pray that God may touch our hearts in order that for once we may be able to forget ourselves, in order that for once we may find another word than merely the word of self-accusation. We should praise God for his power and mercy in a love which can be extended to others too, and actually bring happiness to them. We should bend our ears to the quiet of eternity, which, if only we are willing to hear it, speaks louder than all the tumult of noise in the world. We should hear it when it says: 'Therefore the Spirit says "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; they shall rest from their labours for their works follow them".' We should realise that in the course of the world's history an innumerable multitude has already been drawn into the eternity of God before us, so that we are the late-corners. And the realisation of this should generate hope and consolation in us, courage and trust. And in this spirit we should speak with *our* saints. We should greet them, call upon them for their help on the way which is bringing us to where they are, before the face of Our Lord.

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[31]

PART TWO

Positions and Callings in the Church

[33]

3

IDEAS FOR A THEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD

Our purpose in offering a few ideas on the theology of childhood at this point is not, in any direct sense, to be of assistance to those who, in some way or other, whether as parents or teachers, are engaged in looking after children. We have no intention of offering any guidance of this kind to such people. For this cannot be the aim of a theologian. Certainly he too has responsibilities in the 'field of pedagogy', and not least where this applies to children. He has to proclaim the gospel to the children too. But in this priestly task he has many collaborators. The subject of the discussion which follows, however, is one which goes beyond the immediate sphere of pedagogy, for here we shall be considering what the divinely revealed word has to say about childhood. In the intention of the Creator and Redeemer of children what meaning does childhood have, and what task does it lay upon us for the perfecting and saving of humanity? That is the question before us. It may be that in the course of answering it we shall be able to throw fresh light not only upon our own lives but also such as will be of assistance to those whose daily lives are spent in working for children, loving them, watching over them, estimating their progress and always and in all circumstances loving them. Admittedly in so brief a sketch as this there can be no question of developing more than a few fragmentary aspects of the theology of childhood.

I. THE UNSURPASSABLE VALUE OF CHILDHOOD

The first point of which we intend to treat can perhaps be expressed as the direct relationship to God which is achieved at each of the stages in human development and growth, and so in childhood too, and, arising from this, the unique and unrepeatable value attached to childhood in particular. What is meant by this? In virtue of the fact that we are naturally orientated outwards to the world about us we men are extremely liable to the [34] temptation of interpreting ourselves according to the categories, models and prototypes which confront us from the purely physical or merely biological environment in which we live. And we do the same thing with time too. We interpret the time which belongs to the specifically human dimension, the dimension of man's personal history, in terms of the laws of physical time as these have been worked out and established. Now this means that we think of ourselves in terms that are unphilosophical, unhuman and un-Christian. We conceive of our personal lifespan as the sum total of a series of phases in life, each of which as it is exhausted leads on to the next, the very meaning of which is to disappear into the next, to be a preparation for it, to 'exist' for the further stages beyond itself. Above all we conceive of youth and childhood in this sense. For at this stage above all most of our life has still to come. In relation to the future stages of life which still await us when we are children, therefore, this subordinate and preparatory function is at its most intense in childhood itself. And when that for which

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childhood is a preparation arrives, then – such is our conception – childhood itself disappears. Now it is precisely the Christian above all who seems to lay special emphasis on the merely subordinate role of childhood, this character which it bears as preparation for the life that is to come, by comparison with the stage of adult life, which in consequence seems to be understood as life in the true sense, as the goal and measure of life. Of course it cannot be disputed that this kind of time, which unfolds uniformly in a single direction, is to be found in man as his history too. On this understanding of time the earlier stages of life are indeed rightly conceived of when they are regarded as subordinate to and preparatory for what is still to come, as practice for what follows, as giving place to a predetermined future. Woe to anyone at any stage of life, and so at that of childhood too, if he seeks simply to remain fixed at that particular stage, living it for its own sake as though idealising it, and making himself as he exists at that particular stage into his own god! Woe to him if he is not ready to relinquish that stage and to enter the coming one! If the present is not ready to bow down before the holiness and majesty of the future!

And yet this is only one part of the truth with regard to the sort of time involved in man's personal history. Man is not a thing that is simply pushed through the space-time dimension as though it were only in possession of the transient moment which is called the present. Man is a subject. He possesses himself. He is at all stages capable of taking himself as [35] a whole. And for this reason, in spite of the continuous process of change and the alternation of action and passion in the time to which he is subject, he has before him his time *as a whole*. As his life advances he *retains* the past and goes forward into a future *that he has already worked out* beforehand. By the exercise of his freedom he makes the time allotted to him present to himself as a whole, past and future together. Now because of this the totality of man's existence as saved and redeemed in its complete and consummated state, in other words the eternity towards which man is advancing in his time, does not constitute a further period appended to, and following upon his life in any true sense, as a further projection of it which could be conceived of in linear terms as extending into an unending future. Rather this eternity is the enduring validity of man's existence before God as lived in freedom. It is the abiding fruit, the sheer definitive consummation of man's time and of man's time as a whole. What confronts man as the goal towards which he advances in his historical existence, in his saving history, is not a further prolongation of incalculable extent added on to his present life. Rather he gathers up the totality of his life as freely lived, he achieves himself *in the fulness of his subjectivity and freedom as determined by the content of life*, just as at every moment of his temporal life he has already obtained a degree of self-possession such that it embraces *the totality of his* own life-span considered formally as an empty space to be filled out with content. He gathers himself up in his completed state. He finds himself. His temporal existence is not something which, so to say, he brings behind him, but something which he makes present to himself. He does not bring his temporal mode of existence to an end by quitting it, but by compressing it, so to say, and bringing it with him in its totality into his eternity which is his time as summed up and completed. His future is the making present of his own past as freely lived.

Now all this is every bit as true of childhood as it is of all the other individual phases of human life. Indeed it has to be asserted of childhood more clearly and more emphatically than of any other phase precisely because this one most of all suffers from the impression that it is a mere provisional conditioning for the shaping of adult life in its fulness, and, this being its only function, should be left behind as quickly and completely as possible and vanish into unreality. Childhood endures as that which is given and abiding, the time that has been accepted and lived through freely. Childhood does not constitute past time, time that has [36] eroded away, but rather that which remains, that which is coming to meet us as an intrinsic element in the single and enduring completeness of the time of our existence considered as a

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unity, that which we call the eternity of man as saved and redeemed. We do not lose childhood as that which recedes ever further into our past, that which remains behind as we advance forward in time, but rather we go towards it as that which has been achieved in time and redeemed forever in time. We only *become* the children whom we *were* because we gather up time – and in this our childhood too – into our eternity. Throughout our entire life-span, and because of the decision which is required of us and which bears upon our life as a whole, childhood may always remain open. And we may still have to go on living through our own childhood in our life taken as a whole because it always remains an open question for us. But all this does not alter the fact that we do not move away from childhood in any definitive sense, but rather move towards the eternity of this childhood, to its definitive and enduring validity in God's sight. Childhood is not only of eternal significance for man's destiny to the extent that in childhood the foundations are laid for decisions which have an eternal significance. It is important not only as a point of departure for the adult man, having an influence beforehand on what actually takes place later and thereby on that which will finally takes place when the individual's life comes to its close. More than this it is important in itself also, as a stage of man's personal history in which that takes place which can only take place in childhood itself, a field which bears fair flowers and ripe fruits such as can only grow in *this* field and in no other, and which will themselves be carried into the storehouses of eternity.

All this is to put the matter in a very abstract and formal way. But if it is understood, then it imparts to childhood a value and an importance which are beyond all conception. Childhood itself has a direct relationship with God. It touches upon the absolute divinity of God not only as maturity, adulthood and the later phases of life touch upon this, but rather in a special way of its own. The special character of childhood may always be fading away so far as *we* are concerned, and may also disappear into that which comes afterwards in point of time, so that it seems only to derive its justification and its value from this, but this is not so. *This* morning does not derive its life simply from the afternoon which follows. This playtime with its beauty is not important simply as a prelude to life as lived in full earnest. It is unique. It has a value in itself (admittedly precisely as that [37] which contributes unreservedly to that which is to come). It is precious not merely because it seeks the riches of life in its maturity. The strange and wonderful flowers of childhood are already fruits in themselves, and do not merely rely for their justification on the fruit that is to come afterwards. The grace of childhood is not merely the pledge of the grace of adulthood. The values of imperishability and eternity are attached to childhood in its unique properties even in those points in which it differs from life in its broader phases. The fact that it contributes to the later stages of life is not the sole criterion of its own intrinsic rightness. It must be the case that childhood is valuable in itself that it is to be discovered anew in the ineffable future which is coming to meet us.

II. THE CHRISTIAN AWARENESS OF CHILDHOOD

What understanding of childhood is to be found in the Christian scriptures and tradition? That is the second question which we wish to put in this modest and fragmentary approach to a theology of childhood. Here there can be no question of supplementing the observations which follow with an exhaustive documentation or substantiation from scripture, still less from the innumerable witnesses of tradition. Even so I believe that it will be acknowledged that what is said here has the value of an authentic witness to the Christian awareness of what childhood means.

First and foremost the child is the *man*. Probably there is no religion and no philosophic

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anthropology which insists so manifestly and so strongly upon this point as one of its basic presuppositions as does Christianity; the point namely that the child is already the man, that right from the beginning he is already in possession of that value and those depths which are implied in the name of man. It is not simply that he gradually grows into a man. He *is* a man. As his personal history unfolds he merely realises what he already *is*. He does not seek about in a void of indefinite possibilities ranging from all to nothing, to see what he can achieve by chance. He is equipped as a man, given his allotted task and endowed with grace to perform it right from the very outset with all the inexpressible value and all the burden of responsibility which this entails. And this, because it comes from God and because his personal history, in spite of being inextricably bound up with the history of the cosmos and of the life principle as a whole, is related with absolute immediacy to God himself, to his original creative and inalienable design for him. The child [38] is the man whom God has called by a name of *his own*, who is fresh and unique in each individual instance, never merely a 'case', a particular application in the concrete of a general idea, *always* having a personal value of his own and therefore worthy to endure for ever. He is not an element in a process advancing and receding incalculably like the tides, but the unique explosion in which something final and definitive is constituted. The child is the man who is, right from the first, the partner of God; he who opens his eyes only to keep that vision before him in which an incomprehensible mystery is regarding him; he who cannot halt at any point in his course because infinity is calling him; who can love the smallest thing because for him it is always filled with the all; he who does not feel the ineffable as lethal to him, because he experiences the fact that when he entrusts himself to it without reserve he falls into the inconceivable depths of love and blessedness. The child is the man, he, therefore, who is familiar with death and loves life, does not comprehend himself but knows this, and precisely *in* this (provided only that he commits himself to the incomprehensible one in trust and love) has precisely understood all, because thereby he has come into God's presence. The child is the man; the one, therefore, who always lives in a spirit of fraternity, leads a life of infinite complexity, knows no law other than that of endlessly journeying on and of great love and of that adventure which he can only recognise that he has come to the end of when he stands before God in his absolute infinitude. This is how Christianity views man and it sees all this already present in the child. And for this reason it protects the child while it is still in its mother's womb. It takes pains to ensure that the sources of life are not poured away upon the trifles of the lowlands of mere lust and desire. It has reverence for the child, for the child is a man.

The child is a man *right at the very outset*. Christianity is aware of the mystery of that beginning which already contains all present within itself and yet still has to become all; the beginning which is the basis and foundation of all that is to come, its horizon and its law, and yet at the same time cannot even come to its own fulness except in what has still to come in the future. Thus the state of childhood too, is regarded as the beginning of the state of manhood. The child is already spirit and body united in a single entity. It is already nature and grace, nature and person, possessing itself yet exposed to the influence of the world and of history, and for all this it has still to become all things in the future. What is already present in the child has still to be realised, to become actual in [39] experience. And this unity which exists between the beginning and the stage of full development is itself in its turn a mystery which man lives and to which he is subject, but which he does not preside over or control by his own power. It is only when his final completion has been attained that this origin of his is revealed to him; the origin in which he was set on his course. For he began as a child and as a child of God. It is not until evening that the morning has completely passed away.

Childhood is a beginning in *two different senses*. The assertions of Christianity do not make reality in general, and above all the reality of man, any simpler than it in fact is. Thus

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Christianity has the courage to recognise the duality which man experiences in his existence even in the very beginnings of that existence. Now man's existence as an individual is historically conditioned, and viewed in this light he is not simply *pure* beginning, unaffected by anything that has gone before. In spite of the immediacy to God which is his right from his origins as that unique and particular creature, fresh from the hands of God, he is the beginning which springs up in the midst of a pre-existing context, a history already wrought out by man before this particular individual arrived on the scene. And this history is, right from the outset, also a history of guilt, of gracelessness, of a refusal to respond to the call of the living God. The history of the guilt of mankind taken as an unity right from the beginning of that history regarded as a single whole is also a factor in the history of the individual. The love which brings grace to man, the love in which God himself with the fulness of his life gives himself to the individual is not simply, or in any obvious sense, an intrinsic element in a love which God might have born right from the beginning towards an humanity which did not fall into sin. Rather it is a love which endures despite the fact that sin rose to power in history right at the origins of the human race. In terms of the history of human existence this is the situation which the language of tradition calls original sin. It is a situation which radically and interiorly affects the individual, and in consequence of which the individual can count upon the grace which he needs, on the sheer proximity of God to shelter and sanctify him, not right from the beginning and in the very nature of humanity as such, but only in virtue of the redemption wrought by Christ. And for this reason Christianity knows that the child and his origins are indeed encompassed by the love of God through the pledge of that grace which, in God's will to save all mankind, Comes in all cases and to every man from God in Christ Jesus. But [40] Christianity cannot on this account regard the origins of childhood as a sort of innocent arcadia, as a pure source which only becomes muddied at a later stage and *within* the sphere of human cares in which man can control and guide his own course. It cannot view childhood as though prior to this stage it was simply the same as when it came from God as its eternal source, or as though for this reason, even in the context of the actual personal history of the individual and of mankind childhood might once more be wholly purified of every kind of blemish. No, Christianity views even childhood as already and inevitably the origin precisely of that man to whom guilt, death, suffering and all the forces of bitterness in human life belong as conditions of his very existence. But since all this remains within the compass of God, of his greater grace and his greater compassion, therefore this realism with which Christianity reacts to the very origins of man in the child and its beginnings is far from being any kind of implicit cynicism. Christianity's awareness of the guilt and tragedy which belong even to the beginning is, on the contrary, the necessary outcome of its awareness of the blessedness of grace and the redemption which overcomes this guilt and tragedy, and which comes both before and after it. For this is precisely the grace and redemption which the Christian experiences and to which he submits himself.

The child is a *child*. As soon as we look more closely into what is said about the child, especially in scripture, we notice that in reality it is almost always *presupposed* that we already know what a child is, so that no explicit information on this point is given to us. Thus the word of God itself indicates that we should rely upon the infinitely complex experiences of our own lives and our contacts with children in those lives as well as on the experience of our own childhood. It is the totality of this experience as summed up in the word 'child' that holy scripture draws upon when it tells us that we must become as children, that we are 'children' of God by grace, that even the children can come to the messiah, and that they both need and are capable of attaining to the kingdom of heaven, that they can believe in Jesus, that to give scandal to them is a crime to be punished by a terrible death. Thus scripture and tradition alike presuppose that we already know precisely *what* a child really is far more than they tell us this explicitly or treat of it as a distinct question. They leave it to our experience

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to determine what a child is, and what it means to be a child. But when we consider this experience of ours is it not dark, complex and conflicting in character? Most certainly it is. But even as such it is sanctioned [41] by scripture and tradition, and in this sense we are obliged to put with the obscurity and complexity of our experience of childhood, not to try to iron out the complexities, but to endure them and still manage to be true to our own experience of children in arriving at an idea of what a child is. This is, in fact, only in conformity with the basic principles of which we have already spoken, namely that the child is the man himself in his incipient stages, and, what is more, man as divided within himself right at the beginning of his life and from the beginning onwards. In accordance with this the genuinely Christian understanding and the Christian experience of the child is both idealistic *and* realistic at the same time. The New Testament, no less than antiquity, the Old Testament and Judaism, shows itself aware of the factors of immaturity and weakness in the child (*TWNT* V 641, 41-48; 644, 46-645, 8), as can plainly be sensed not only in the writings of Paul (1 Cor 3:1; 13:11; 14:28; Gal 4:1-3; Eph 4:14; Heb 5:13), but also in the words of Jesus himself in the parable of the children in the market-place who are sulky in their play (Mt 11:16f.) But this does not mean that the 'little ones' are lightly estimated by Jesus in accordance with the attitude prevailing among his people and at his time. The children can serve him as examples of lack of false ambition, of not seeking for dignities or honours, of modesty and lack of artificiality in contrast to their elders, who are unwilling to learn anything from them (Mt 12:2 ff.; 19:13 ff.) When Jesus holds up the child to us as the prototype of those for whom the kingdom of heaven is there it cannot be said, even in a relative sense (much less in an absolute one), that what he is thinking of is its innocence. What is implied in this saying in which he holds up the child to us as an example is something far more important: that we can be like children in being receivers and as such carefree in relation to God, those who *know* that they have nothing of themselves on which to base any claim to his help, and yet who trust that his kindness and protection will be extended to them and so will bestow what they need upon them. And thus without glorifying children or failing to recognise the radical insufficiency of their natures Jesus does see in children those whom he can receive lovingly into his heart. This is what he means when he says 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 19:14). They are those with whom he identifies himself. The woes he pronounces are designed to protect them against scandal, and as he sees it there is an angel who watches over their salvation and who continuously beholds the countenance of the Father in heaven.

[42] For these reasons childhood is, in the last analysis, a *mystery*. It has the force of a beginning and a twofold beginning at that. It is a beginning in the sense of the absolute origin of the individual, and also the beginning which plunges its roots into a history over which the individual himself has no control. Childhood has the force of a beginning such that the future which corresponds to it is not simply the unfolding of some latent interior force, but something freely sent and something which actually comes to meet one. And it is not until this future is actually attained to that the beginning itself is unveiled in its significance, that it is actually given and comes to its own realisation, as a beginning which is open to the absolute beginning of God who is utter mystery, the ineffable and eternal, nameless and precisely as such accepted with love in his divine nature as he who presides over all things. Such a beginning as this cannot be otherwise than mysterious. And because it is a mystery, and because as a beginning it bears all one's future life within itself, therefore life itself is mysterious, something which is already endowed with a certain autonomy, albeit in a hidden manner, and freed from external control. Hence too, provided we reverently and lovingly preserve this state of being delivered over to the mystery, life becomes for us a state in which our original childhood is preserved for ever; a state in which we are open to expect the unexpected, to commit ourselves to the incalculable, a state which endows us with the power

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still to be able to play, to recognise that the powers presiding over existence are greater than our own designs, and to submit to their control as our deepest good. In this state we become guileless and serene – serene in a Mozartian sense even in those cases in which we weep and are overcome by dejection, because even these tears we accept as they are sent to us, recognising that the sadness which they express is ultimately a redeemed sadness. And when our powers are at an end we realise in a childlike spirit that our task too is at an end, since no-one is tried beyond his own strength. When we take up this attitude we make the mystery the protection and defence of our lives. We are content to commit them to the ineffable as sheltering and forgiving, to that which is unspeakably close to us with the closeness of love. It is not as though the child as such, has already achieved this in any fully developed sense. But this is how we see the man who, in spite of the perilous state in which he stands, is open to such self-commitment to the protection of the mystery of existence, recognising that the duality of his nature is always more than compensated for by the deed of God wrought upon him. And therefore the kingdom [43] of heaven is for those who are children in this sense when, on the basis of this attitude of openness, and not without a certain *metanoia*, they become what they are – precisely children. Now this also implies, however paradoxical it may appear, that we do not really know what childhood means at the beginning of our lives until we know what that childhood means which comes at the end of them; that childhood, namely, in which, by God-given repentance and conversion, we receive the kingdom of God and so become children. It is in this sense that we only recognise the child at the beginning of life from the child of the future. And in the light of this, once more, we can understand that childhood invokes a mystery, the mystery of our whole existence, the ineffable element in which is God himself.

III. THE FULNESS OF CHILDHOOD CONSISTS IN BEING CHILDREN OF GOD

We have now reached a stage at which we can take a third point as the object of our enquiry. In a theology of children something must also be said about what it means to be a *child of God*. At first this may appear strange. The idea of being God's child stands for a reality which seems to be associated with the first phase in human life only through a metaphorical, i.e. inappropriate, application of the concepts of 'child' and 'childhood' to our relationship with God, and therefore to be wholly excluded from the area in which these concepts of child and childhood can be applied in their proper sense. What is correct in this objection is that in a consideration of the theology of childhood as such we cannot undertake the task of pursuing the Christian message of what it means to be a child of God as such. A theological discourse on justification and the grace of childhood in this sense, and as understood theologically, would certainly not be appropriate at this point. But for all this it may be permitted to draw attention to this topic in connection with the subject we are investigating here, because to do so will serve to bring home to us more forcibly the significance and value of childhood in the human sense of the term. The real situation here is not simply that we already possess concepts of child and childhood in the purely human and natural sense, which are then applied in a secondary and metaphorical sense in order to express a religious reality. Rather the primary meaning in itself which, because it is primary seems to be merely human, is in its turn illuminated [44] and deepened by the fact of being applied in the theological sense. In other words it is only through the revelatory usage of the terms 'child' and 'childhood' that the depths and fulness of the human concepts as such can be realised and appreciated in their entirety. For this reason it is surely justifiable to say something of what it means to be a child of God, even in a context in which we are strictly speaking concerned only to say something about the ideas of child and childhood in a human sense. This is, in fact, the situation at this

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point, and this for a twofold reason. It will be valuable to consider this, and in this way, by including the human and theological concepts of childhood in one and the same treatment, we can ensure that they will constantly reflect and throw light upon each other.

First it is generally recognised what a decisive influence the *experience of a secure childhood* can have in the majority of cases for that attitude of commiting oneself to trust in the radical and metaphysical sense, which has a vital and basic function to perform in religion, considered as that which unites us to God as our Father. Certainly this cannot be exaggerated. One must not conceive in terms that are too absolute of the connection between the child's actual experience of his father on the one hand, and the possibility of achieving a relationship to God as Father in the absolute sense by faith on the other. It is perfectly possible that a lack of protection, a lack of that sheltering solicitude and security which comes from the love of one's parents, may actually serve to spur us on to the metaphysical quest for one who will provide us with our ultimate support, who will sustain us and protect us. Otherwise it would in fact be rather difficult to meet the objection that religion in general is only the projection of the father image into the dimension of the infinite, and as such a sort of colossal infantilism. We must, then, observe due caution in deciding where the connection lies between the experience of a childhood that is protected and secure and religious experience. But even allowing for this there is a further point that cannot be contested. We may take the case of one who has never been able to realise in this way what a close relationship with his father means, one which he has felt that he could absolutely rely upon to provide him with love, protection and security. It is precisely such a one as this who can only succeed with difficulty in achieving that idea of God's Fatherhood which he needs, at the level of conscious thought, so that he can express this idea and objectify it to himself in terms of the ordinary categories of thought and action which he uses in his life. Yet it [45] is only so that he can attain to that attitude of radical trust in the very basis of existence, that submissive and trustful self-commitment to the mystery which permeates and presides over the whole of existence, the mystery of God's protective and forgiving love and absolute nearness to him.

In the majority of cases it is true to say that only one who has been able to learn that the names 'father' and 'mother' stand for a protecting love to which he can unquestioningly trust himself – only he will find the courage trustfully to give the name 'father' to that ineffable and nameless source which upholds him in being (and yet this is the primary concept of true religion), to recognise that he has not been swallowed up by it, but that he has found the very source of his own existence in it and has been empowered by it to be really and authentically himself. And conversely: in those cases in which the individual, while he is a child, feels himself to be bereft of protection and abandoned, he will almost inevitably interpret this as the experience of lack of protection in an ultimate and metaphysical sense, as abandonment to absurdity and meaninglessness, to his own personal deprivation of God. He will not overcome the subsequent experiences of life's hardships, and sometimes psychological traumas, by having recourse to the experience of a secure childhood which was able to assent to meaning and to life without reserve. Rather he will interpret this as the logical further projection of that experience of insecurity, of a childhood devoid of love and protection, which was his in the beginning, when life for him was so empty and so devoid of promise. Now this reference to a fact which is recognised by, and a major preoccupation to those engaged in religious pedagogy and depth psychology only serves to emphasise still more the further fact that the human circumstances and the human concept of child and childhood is of the utmost importance for the way in which we understand and apply in religious terms those realities which are expressed by the transferred concepts of child of God, God the Father, etc. However it has still not been made clear that what has been said so far has brought to light a further point, namely that the relationship between the two contexts, the human and the

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divine, works in the opposite direction. Now this is precisely what is of interest to us at this point.

In order to develop this point the following consideration has to be borne in mind (and here we come to the second stage of our investigation). By way of preliminary it might be asked in a more formal and [46] logical manner what, in view of what has been said, the situation is with regard to the so-called 'transference' of concepts at least in specific instances: Whether in all cases a concept, a word, is only 'transferred' to another context *after* the particular characteristics of *both* contexts are already known independently one of another, and after certain points in common have in this way been established from among these characteristics, which make this process of 'transference' natural; *or*, on the other hand, whether there are *also* cases, at least in addition to the first-named, in which the so-called 'transference' is precisely the original mode in which the second state of affairs is known, and in which the knowledge of the first comes to its true fulness. Let us take the case of one who, from his knowledge of the Christian approach to ontology in general, knows what the position is with regard to the concept of being, and how he should express the idea of God as the being who is in absolute possession of being as such. Such an one knows what is meant by this second of the two alternatives we have presented. We do not know that a given object which is presented to our experience is a being, and only then go on to infer that God too is a being, only one of particular power and depths, so that this predicate of being can be applied to him too in a more particular manner. Rather the very fact that man recognises a being is in itself something that takes place within a general sphere governed by the transcendental, non-objective knowledge of being. Our non-objective awareness of this sphere in itself always includes – even though in a non-objective and unexplicit manner – the being in the absolute who possesses all being, namely God. The very fact that we recognise a being means that we have this awareness of God at least implicitly. And when this initially implicit awareness is turned into objective knowledge, then we also achieve a better and deeper awareness of what is really meant by calling that object which we directly experienced a being. In this case at least the process of 'transference' is not a subsequent poetic invention, but rather throws light upon the basic movement of the spirit itself, which only grasps something in that it first moves into the sphere of this 'something', grasps it in that it draws it back to the know himself in *his* sphere, and so 'transfers' it. In other words it is only by being transferred that that which is transferred to the knower's own ground is brought to its true status, the status of intelligibility. Now it is at least possible that this may also be the case when we 'transfer' the experience of a child-parent relationship in the earthly and human sense to a relationship with God, and then speak in a 'transferred' or metaphorical [47] sense of God as Father. For only thus can we know how to call upon the nameless by name. We repeat: it is at least *possible* that this is the case. But that it actually is so in fact, in other words that the human concept of childhood and parenthood is only fully realised when it is transferred to God, because the transference involved here is at a sublime level – this is a point that must be made clear by approaching the question from a quite different angle.

By way of preparation let us recall (and in fact this means harking back to the first point in our considerations as a whole) that childhood is not a state which only applies to the first phase of our lives in the biological sense. Rather it is a basic condition which is always appropriate to a life that is lived aright. For in the last analysis all the stages of life have an equally immediate relationship to God and to the individual's own ultimate perfection, even though in saying this we must fully recognise the fact that man's life advances towards God precisely through a time-sequence consisting of a series of stages following one upon another. But if childhood as a basic condition were not applicable to a rightly orientated life at all times the principle stated above could no longer be upheld. And there is a further point that everyone understands, namely that for our existence to be sound and redeemed at all,

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childhood must be an intrinsic element in it. It must be a living and effective force at the roots of our being if that being is to be able to endure even in the depths of the mystery. Childhood as an inherent factor in our lives must take the form of trust, of openness, of expectation, of readiness to be controlled by another, of interior harmony with the unpredictable forces with which the individual finds himself confronted. It must manifest itself as freedom in contrast to that which is merely the outcome of a predetermining design, as receptivity, as hope which is still not disillusioned. This is the childhood that must be present and active as an effective force at the very roots of our being. Everyone understands too that the childhood which belongs to the child in the biological sense is only the beginning, the prelude, the foretaste and the promise of this other childhood, which is the childhood proved and tested and at the same time assailed, which is present in the mature man. In other words we must take childhood in this *latter* sense as the true and proper childhood, the fulness of that *former* childhood, the childhood of immaturity.

But once we perceive the unity which exists between the childhood that comes at the beginning of our lives and the mature childhood, and once [48] we realise the light which each throws upon the other, then it easily becomes clear that childhood in itself, and even at the human level, entails an *orientation to God*, that it achieves perfection in that relationship which we call being a child of God, that it is not merely a question of metaphor, the transference of a *word* from one objective situation to another similar one, in which the comparison is merely secondary and incidental. Here it is rather the *reality* of childhood in the human sense that is 'transferred' into childhood in the divine sense. For if childhood (and this applies to childhood in the human sense as well) is openness, is trustful submission to control by another, the courage to allow fresh horizons, ever new and ever wider, to be opened up before one, a readiness to journey into the untried and the untested (and all this with that deep elemental and ultimate trust which seems inexhaustible in its endurance, the trust which the sceptics and those who have made shipwreck of their lives bitterly describe as 'naïve') then in all this that transcendence of faith, hope and love in which the ultimate essence of the basic act of religion precisely consists is already *ipso facto* an achieved and present fact. It is a transcendence in which the act of encountering and coming to terms with the world can be elevated to a religious act, the ideas in which we apprehend the world can be elevated to the level of prayer, and the active control which we exercise over our worldly affairs can be elevated to a point at which we are moved and inspired. In this religious act our first intimations of God are attained, although we do not presume to have acquired any kind of comprehensive knowledge of him. Now it belongs to the essence of such an act that it should not hold back at any point, that its outward movement into the boundlessness of God should proceed without restraint or inhibition, that it should not come to rest at any other point except that of total self-abandonment to the incomprehensible infinitude of the ineffable mystery. And it follows from this that it can be asserted truly and without reserve that man remains religious when he experiences the childhood which is an elemental factor in his nature, when he adopts this and maintains it as his basic attitude and outlook, and allows it to develop to the full and without limitation.

Childhood is openness. Human childhood is infinite openness. The mature childhood of the adult is the attitude in which we bravely and trustfully maintain an infinite openness in all circumstances and despite the experiences of life which seem to invite us to close ourselves. Such openness, infinite and maintained in all circumstances, yet put into practice in [49] the actual manner in which we live our lives, is the expression of man's religious existence. Now this infinite openness of existence which we maintain, and which is childhood in the developed sense, can have its counterpart in our experience in the form of an infinite and loving self-bestowal on God's part. We can experience the fact that it is because of this self-bestowal of God that we do maintain our basic openness. And this openness of ours as men is

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an infinite openness, which we accept from God, which is upheld by his act of self-bestowal and basically made possible by him. Now it is this openness that constitutes the very essence of childhood in the mature sense, and it is nothing else than what is called in theological language childhood of God, the grace of divine sonship in the *Son*. When, therefore, human childhood finds the courage to be true to its absolute essence, when it realises its own nature as an openness that is unconditional and infinite, then it moves on to a further stage, projects itself by a process of 'transference' to the ultimate consummation of its own nature, to the childhood of man before God as orientated to him and proceeding from him.

We are told in Eph 3:15 that all Fatherhood in heaven and on earth derives its name from the one and eternal Father who is God. We can go on from this to say also that all childhood in heaven and on earth derives its name and its origin from that one childhood in which the Logos itself receives its own nature in the act of eternal generation by the Father, in which we ourselves are admitted by grace to become participants in this self-bestowal of the Father upon the Logos and so have a share in the divine nature. In the last analysis, therefore, human childhood is not transferred by some dubious process of metaphorical or poetic transference to a quite different reality which we call childhood of God, but rather has its ultimate basis in this itself, so that the latter is always and right from the first contained in the former, and finds expression in it. What a mystery a child is! So writes the poet. Yes indeed! Childhood is only truly understood, only realises the ultimate depths of its own nature, when it is seen as based upon the foundation of childhood of God. And when we really want to know what the real connection is between human childhood and childhood of God, then we need to commit ourselves to the infinite depths and power of that transcendental movement which is latent in human childhood itself, and allow ourselves to be projected from this into that which is enjoined upon us in the Christian teaching about the Father in heaven, and about men who have [50] received the grace from the life of God himself to be children of God and brothers and sisters of one another.

From this view we can then turn our gaze back once more to the child in a biological and social sense as well. In the child a man begins who must undergo the wonderful adventure of remaining a child forever, becoming a child to an ever-increasing extent, making his childhood of God real and effective in this childhood of his, for this is the task of his maturity. It is only in the child that the child in the simple and absolute sense of the term really begins. And that is the dignity of the child, his task and his claim upon us all that we can and must help him in this task. In serving the child in this way, therefore, there can be no question of any petty sentimentality. Rather it is the eternal value and dignity of man, who must become a child, that we are concerned with, the man who only becomes a sharer in God's interior life in that he becomes that child which he only begins to be in his own childhood.

About fifteen years ago I met a well-known positivist philosopher of the Jewish race, one upon whom the fate of his people had left its mark, and who was oppressed by all the agonising questions which his calling and the responsibility of his mission in life raised for him. He asked himself whether he believed in God. And the answer he gave to himself and to others was 'I do not know'. But in saying this he added, 'That we are children of God – that I do believe.' Now perhaps we understand what is sought to be expressed here in a paradox. He who has the courage to accept and to preserve the pure spirit of childhood within him, and to carry it with him throughout his life – he it is who finds God. And he who accepts *in this sense* the childhood that is in his brothers and sisters has already found God. This is a truth which is present in a very real sense in the text of scripture itself. For what we find written there (though here, it is true, we are turning a negative formulation into an affirmative one) is: 'If you become as children you will enter the kingdom of heaven', and 'He who receives a child such as this in my name receives *me*' (Mt 18:5).

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4

THE SACRAMENTAL BASIS FOR THE ROLE OF THE LAYMAN IN THE CHURCH

The subject on which I have been called to speak is entitled ‘The Sacramental Basis for the Role of the Layman in the Church’. The topic to be treated of here, therefore, is one which belongs to the realm of Catholic dogmatic theology. In the very nature of the case, therefore, as also with regard to those to whom this paper is addressed, the acceptance of the Christian faith is presupposed. This does not of itself mean, however, that it is a theme which should evidently be treated of only in the pulpit, or one which could only be conceived of as a kind of parenesis, an exhortation addressed to the Christian to do that very thing which, as a matter of faith, he has already committed himself to long since. For there are enough subjects to be found in the field of dogmatics which are certainly not matters of dispute, which in a certain sense every Christian holds to be true as a matter of faith, which even become present to him in the awareness of his faith as manifest truths when explicit reference is made to them, but which, nevertheless, remain for the most part far too much at the implicit level in this awareness of his faith, are far too little thought out, play far too little part in the normal outlook and attitude which the average Christian strives to bring to bear on the realities of his faith, for them to be able to constitute an effective, formative or decisive force in the concrete practice of Christian living. In this sense we can point to a phenomenon which might be called the heresy of forgetfulness, of inadvertence, of inertia, and which is possible even within the Church’s fold, and that to a very advanced degree. Now to speak of such truths and realities of faith explicitly, to express them with all due conceptual exactitude, is a function not merely of preaching but also, and primarily, of speculative theology itself. And such theology is not merely the preserve of the theologians, but is also of concern to every Christian whose general intellectual awareness is such that he must either [52] allow his faith to become an active force in his thinking, or else incur the danger of losing this faith as an effective force in his existence. Now the reality to which expression has been given in the title to this paper is to be numbered so it seems to me, among truths and realities of his kind.

Let us be honest and clear-headed. Certainly much has already been said during the past four decades of the necessity of the Church becoming a living force in the spirit and heart of the faithful; of the fact that the Christians *are* the Church and should not merely be regarded as subject to her directives and the object of her solicitude and protection. Movements have indeed arisen in the fields of Catholic action and liturgy and work upon these is still progressing. But for these to be significant and effective at all a necessary prior condition is that the average understanding of the relationship between Church and layman shall be reappraised. Nevertheless the fact must be faced that ever since the end of the patristic age of the Church has become, not indeed in theory, not in her innermost understanding of her faith, but certainly to a large extent in average and everyday conception and practice, a Church of mere institutionalism, a clericalised Church. For her all those not included in the ranks of the clergy, the laymen, are the object of her direction and care, of instruction and leadership, to whom grace and salvation must be applied in each individual case. But they have not, properly speaking, themselves taken an active part in the constructive work of the Church or in helping to support her. In view of this we must not expect that in the space of four decades (in other words since the end of the First World War) a radical alteration has already been brought about in a mentality which is the outcome of a history now one-and-a-half millennia old. In the centuries of the great shifts of population the Church came to the barbarian peoples as the representative of a cultural force higher than their own. But her members were

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not in a position to make actual in any way at all their basic function as constitutive elements in the Church. In the Investiture Controversy and similar episodes the Church had definitively to dissociate herself as an hierarchical entity from the secular and civic community, so as to overcome the danger which had arisen from circumstances reaching far back into the past of the emperor usurping the prerogatives of the Pope. In the time of the Reformation the Church was compelled to set bounds to the demands of the laity, which arose with the onset of the new age and which in themselves were due and timely, that the universal priesthood of all Christians should be actualised in the Church, and to [53] confine this demand within those limits which are, as a matter of divine law, inherent in the hierarchical structure of the Church. These limits are thrown still more clearly into relief when the forces of democracy and social reform first begin to make their impact at the beginning of the new age in movements such as that of the renaissance, the Peasants' Revolt, the Anabaptist movement, etc., which must not be confused with that other tendency, similar in appearance indeed, and occurring about the same time but nevertheless essentially different, for the laity in the Church consciously to assume an active role in helping to discharge her responsibilities.

All this should cause us neither disappointment nor surprise. So far as concerns the awakening awareness, in any concrete or effective sense, that all Christians have this active function to perform in the Church we are still in the initial stages. The Spirit of God in the Church palpably presses us on to giving practical effect to this new awareness. But God grant of his providence that it may not turn out that the only way of achieving this will be for the Church so to be reduced to the 'little flock' that those belonging to her come spontaneously to be united in the closest possible spirit of fraternity, when each individual – and this includes each individual member of the clergy as well – realises that now all and each must play their part! For in such a case, those who aspire to the honour and dignity of making an active contribution to the work of the Church will have to realise that this can only mean toil and danger for them, and that they must be ready for the ultimate sacrifice. And we must not wait until we are only too glad to provide opportunities for them to play an active part in this way on the grounds that there are all too few individuals left in the Church to lay claim to such an honour. For when we take a sober and unromantic view of the real, average, day-to-day outlook and attitude of the individual members of the Church what do we see? We are compelled to reply: 1. That the Church still persists in being an institution supported exclusively by the clergy, an institution catering for the eternal salvation of the rest of men, the so-called laity, by mediating the truth of divine revelation and sacramental grace to them, and 2. That the layman in the Church is still regarded as the 'layman' in the sense of the non-expert, the non-specialist in ecclesiastical matters. In other words the term carries no further implication than the purely negative assertion that such an individual is precisely excluded from the official administration of the Church, the dignities and functions which are the prerogative of those [54] who, in contrast to the laity, exercise a formative and representative function in the Church.

Of course this everyday and average outlook does not amount to a conscious and clear declaration in so many words that this is in fact the situation. Such an assertion would be heretical. But what still remains to be said about the layman over and above this merely negative estimate of his function is left vague and unexplicitated. It does not constitute any real or effective force in the awareness of the faithful in general or of the clergy in particular. It is not until urgent and pressing reasons arise for actually needing the layman that the *other* and more positive truths are recalled which, on any adequate conception of what the Church means in terms of the Catholic faith, must apply to the layman too. In such a situation the layman is suddenly confronted with these truths, and then we are surprised when he does not respond as swiftly and vigorously as we had really expected, and make a practical application of them in situations in which it is really the strains imposed on the clergy that are at stake.

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But we should not be surprised at this, in view of the fact that the moment the threat to the Church becomes less palpably evident than it is precisely at the present moment, we so supinely (though certainly without any deliberate ill-will) allow ourselves to sink back into our former attitudes and let these truths with regard to the vocation of the layman to contribute actively in the work of the Church to recede into the background. In view of this there is one principle which needs to be stated, explained and proved not because it is new and unheard of, but because the long-established truth which it embodies is still far from having penetrated into the hearts and minds of us all sufficiently deeply. It is this: by sacramental consecration every Christian in the Church has been authorised and empowered for the task of actively co-operating in the work of the Church both interiorly and exteriorly. This task is laid upon every Christian as a duty, and he has been equipped to discharge it. Thus our immediate purpose here is simply to explain and to justify this one principle alone – nothing more than this. There are two points to be considered here: first, *what this task is*, which the Christian – every individual Christian in the Church – has laid upon him for which he is equipped; second, *the means by which* he is effectively called and equipped for this task, namely the sacraments which he receives. But it will be simplest to take both these points simultaneously and to develop them in a single line of argument. On any other approach we could not avoid being excessively repetitious.

[55] It is through baptism that one becomes a Christian and a member of the Church. Baptism is the first sacrament of the forgiveness of sins, that in which the grace of divine glory is mediated, that by means of which we are admitted to a share in the divine nature and equipped interiorly and permanently with faith, hope and love for God and man. But how is this interior and permanent grace imparted to the individual man in baptism, transforming him from a sinner into one who is justified? It takes effect in him in virtue of the fact that through this initiation rite he is received into the people of God constituted as an hierarchical society, that is into the community of the believers and of those who acknowledge salvation from God in Christ. It is in virtue of the fact that God incorporates man into the *Church* in baptism that he gives him the grace he needs for his own individual salvation. The state of belonging to the Church, of being incorporated as a member of the Church, is the first and most immediate effect of this sacrament of initiation, which every Christian receives. For all Christians it is this that constitutes the basis for their being Christians at all, and so for each and every function, whether it derives from hierarchical office or sacramental power or rank, with which the individual Christian can be invested in his life. For if he is not baptised then he can no longer validly receive any other sacrament, nor lawfully be invested with any official power in the Church. It is in virtue of the fact that baptism makes man a member of the Church that it gives him the grace to attain to his own salvation. Are we to conclude, then, that the sole and exclusive purpose of this membership of the Church which is imparted through baptism is precisely that the baptized individual may then go on to receive these further benefits, namely his own individual sanctification and justification? To suppose this would precisely be to deprive the principle we have just enunciated of its real force, and this must at all costs be avoided. How utterly false such a supposition would be appears simply from the fact that this purely individual justification and sanctification can, in cases of need, be attained to through faith and charity alone without the sacrament, and that this does certainly take place in the case of many unbelievers. It follows that over and above these particular effects of the salvation of the individual baptism must have a further significance in terms of its positive effects, one which cannot be reduced to this effect of individual salvation. Membership of the Church is not simply a means of attaining to the goal of one's own private salvation, but rather has a meaning of its own which it derives from baptism itself. This [56] is something which follows necessarily from the meaning and function of the Church in general. And if we ask what this meaning may be, we can only reiterate the point

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which we have just made.

The significance and purpose of the Church is not merely or exclusively to make possible or to facilitate the attainment of salvation in the sum total of many individual cases. For while the Church could be regarded as making a useful and significant contribution to this end, her existence is not absolutely necessary for it in view of the fact that this purpose is in fact often achieved even without any evident intervention on the Church's part. This is not, of course, to deny that since salvation is to be achieved through obedience to God's commandments and a readiness to receive his prescribed sacraments this too is normally to be attained to within the Church. But in the concrete there is one thing that is absolutely impossible without the Church (even if in the abstract it might be possible to conceive of this Church as constantly varying in the forms and constitutional structures which she assumes). This single factor is that the grace of God in Christ is present in the world as an event, and an event which is manifest and enduring in history and incarnate in a physical body. It should be remembered that God has willed to bestow himself as salvation and forgiveness, and to permeate the world with his divinity in an act of supernatural 'pan*en*theism' (if we may make so bold as to express it in this way) only in the incarnation of his Logos, and presumably he could only will to achieve it in this way. And because of this it is of the essence of this particular grace, and belongs to the innermost nature of this self-bestowal of God which penetrates with its 'divinising' influence into the very depths of man's heart in his ultimate free decision as an individual, that it should be actually manifested in the dimension of space and time, that it should have a place in history in the here and now, that it should be projected beyond all mere interiority of the conscience and extended to all the dimensions of human life including the history, the social and political living, the laws, the science and the art which belong to it. Because salvation comes in the flesh of Christ, and because man has to be made whole in and throughout all the dimensions of his existence in their mutual interdependence and influence one upon another, it follows that grace must be embodied, must be an historical and social reality. That grace, as made immanent in these dimensions is called the Church. He, therefore, who is endowed with faith through baptism in that he is incorporated into this Church as an historical and social embodiment of the [57] grace of Christ in the world necessarily obtains, together with this grace of the Church, the right, the task and the necessary equipment to become an active participator in this function of the Church, that namely of *being* the historical concretisation of the grace of God in the world. To express the matter in another way: grace has a force that actively constitutes the Church in virtue of the fact that it is conformed to Christ in the sense that it is 'incarnational'. From this it follows that even though the actualisation of this essential property of grace may remain at a completely rudimentary stage in many cases, still it must be constitutive of the Church in this sense wherever it is found. When, therefore, this grace is actually present as *essentially belonging to the Church herself*, in other words as sacramental, its function as constituting the Church must attain a higher degree of actualisation, and must equip those who receive it still more fully. In other words it must so incorporate the individual into the Church that in very truth he does become a member, in other words an actively functioning unit in this community, and an active participant in the basic functions of this community.

Now given that the Church is of this nature, that it is the historical concretisation of the grace of God in the world in which every baptised individual obtains an active share through baptism what are the implications of this in the concrete? What is it that causes grace to create for itself a quasi-sacramental embodiment in the world in this way? It does this in virtue of the fact that it derives from Christ the incarnate word of God. It is because in this way it stands revealed most clearly and unmistakably in its true nature as a free act of God deriving not from forces intrinsic in the creation and coming from below, but rather directly from God's own sovereign initiative. In this way it can be accepted in its true nature. For it

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makes its impact not simply by diffusing itself constantly and all-pervasively throughout everything in the world, and therefore in a manner which makes it indistinguishable from the world. Rather it has a distinct historicity of its own. And the final reason for grace being accorded a quasi-sacramental embodiment in the world is that it must confront man as a free and embodied, and therefore historical person as such. In other words it must itself be historical in this sense. Thus the Church has not simply the function of mediating grace, such that strictly speaking the Church would be superfluous if this grace of God were, so to say, designed of itself to penetrate and percolate into man's innermost soul. The function of the Church is rather to provide an outlet by which grace [58] breaks out into the world, into history, into the social and communal life of man. She has the function of giving grace a concrete embodiment in the word, in the sacrament, in ecclesiastical law, in the concrete visible lives of those endowed with grace, simply in order to ensure that this grace may be extended into these spheres also, that these spheres also may be drawn into the kingdom of God, may become the body of the Logos. The Church is the quasi-sacramental word in which the all-pervasive activity of this grace becomes effective, in which it is made present in history with an exhibitive force, in which the fact that it has come and come victoriously is publicly proclaimed. And every individual who has been baptised has a share in this function. When we view the phenomenon of Christianity from this aspect the actual fact itself indeed remains unaltered, but the perspective in which it can be viewed surely does alter in certain notable respects, for now the Christian is no longer so much one who possesses grace (as though it were more or less *certain* that this is not the case with non-Christians) as one in whom grace is meant to be made manifest in the dimension of history. In fact can we say with certainty of any individual, even if he is unbaptised, that he certainly is not endowed with the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins? No. And in that case what precisely is the difference between those who are Christians *ex professo* and those who are so in an unacknowledged sense (if I may so refer to the unbaptised who are, nevertheless, justified)? The difference consists precisely in the fact that baptised Christians appear visibly in the dimension of history and before their fellows as those who have embraced the word and the sacrament, whereas the others are Christians only in the hidden dimension of their own interior consciences, informed by a faith that is only implicit and of which they may not necessarily be conscious in any explicit sense. And the explicit, i.e. baptised Christians have an absolute *obligation* to be what they are in this dimension of the historical and the social. The task is laid upon them to be true to this state which they have entered upon, to be upholders of the Church's function as the visible and social embodiment of grace, and they have really to embrace this state as a matter of personal decision, to undertake it and act upon it in every department of their lives. What applies to the Church applies also to the individual baptised Christian. By baptism he is deputed to be a bearer of the word, a witness of truth, a representative of the grace of Christ in the world. The unbaptised man is the object of the Church's solicitude, on whom she [59] brings to bear the force of her sanctification, her forgiveness and her grace. At the very moment when this takes place he who has hitherto been the object of the Church's solicitude is transformed into a member of the Church, into an element in the Church's subjective life and activity. He is no longer 'over against' the Church, but rather stands with the Church 'over against' the world. He is one who has been called, chosen, separated from the world. He must shine like the stars in heaven in the midst of a generation that is dark and desolate.

Of course even when the individual has been baptised the Church still continues to maintain her role in his regard. In relation to him she is the subject from whom he receives benefits, and to whose guidance he submits, while conversely in relation to her he is in the position of a recipient of favours. But with regard to one who is a *member* of her own self, subordinate to her, paying heed to her and led by her, and to whom she is related as subject to object, the

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Church exercises this function of hers *in a particular way*, and, moreover, a way that is *different* from the way in which she acts towards one who is not baptised, although in fact she has claims over him too. But she would be quite *incapable* of acting in this particular way towards the baptised individual if he were not precisely also a member of her own self, one who shares in her own position as subject, and assists her in sustaining her active function. Moreover it must be emphasised that he does this precisely as a baptised individual, not only and not primarily as priest, bishop, as one vested with hierarchical authority in the narrower sense. For the peculiar nature of her relationship with the individual Christian is precisely determined by the fact that he is an active member of her in this sense, and that too even in cases in which she addresses herself to him in the name of Christ. Paul says at one point that God alone judges those who are without. The Church's power to judge is restricted precisely to those who are within. This is not because they must be more severely treated, but rather because they are something more than mere individuals. They are more because they have a function which is identified with that of the Church herself. When therefore the Church instructs her own members, calls them to order or sanctifies them, she is in fact safeguarding her own function as bearing witness in the world, and extending it to these as well.

In all aspects of her relationship to her own members one of the determining factors is the function which the Church herself maintains and exercises precisely through these members of hers in the world in general. [60] Paul finds no difficulty whatever in accepting the fact that those whom he is instructing have intercourse and fellowship with non-Christians. But he forbids them to have the same intercourse and fellowship with Christians who are sinners, and he reacts far more vigorously against the smallest deviation from the gospel as preached in the Church than against errors outside the Church. Again he is sensitive with regard to the impression which a communal assembly and their liturgical celebrations make upon non-Christians, and again in the Pastoral epistles we may search in vain for any real exhortation to the clergy to exercise any external apostolate. It seems, therefore, that no provision whatever is made for any 'propaganda' to those outside the Church, and that no particular necessity for this was felt. Now behind all these phenomena, and many others which we pass over here, we can discern a single underlying conviction, namely that each individual Christian manifestly shares in the responsibility for the Church and her functions as a whole. He is made a sharer in this responsibility precisely in virtue of the fact that he is a member of this Church. This is why when he falls into sin he is treated differently from an outsider. In failing in his own individual task, the contribution which he has to make to the holiness of the Church as the visible manifestation of the victory of God's grace in the world, he compromises the Church herself and her task as well. This is why the Church withdraws herself from the sinner by means of a kind of official ban or excommunication, because otherwise she herself would betray her own task. This is why the primitive Church had no misgivings in taking it for granted that the missionary work of the Church would be carried on without anything much in the way of systematic or official organisation, because in fact each individual Christian has to bear witness in his life to the fact that by his grace God has laid hold of his life to transform it and to fill it with his grace. Baptism, therefore, in that it admits the individual Christian to a place in the Church, initiates him into the basic function of the Church herself, in that she identifies herself with the imminent advent of the kingdom of God in the victory of his grace. And even in cases in which the Church's solicitude for the salvation of mankind is directed towards the individual himself as its object the Church cannot forget that the baptised individual is an object of such solicitude on her part in a totally different sense from the unbaptised. In caring for the salvation of the baptised the Church always takes cognizance of the further fact that he can only achieve this salvation of his if, and to the extent that he exercises his [61] active function in the Church, and in collaboration with her works for the salvation of the world by bearing witness to God's truth and God's grace.

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It may be that baptism does not impart to the layman any new position in the world such as that occupied by the officials of the Church's hierarchy. In normal cases the only ones who can be official emissaries of the Church in the hierarchy of her apostolate are those who by their vocation are withdrawn from the secular position which they formerly occupied in the world in order to go forth to all peoples. But in normal cases the baptised layman, unlike these, continues in that secular sphere of life which he previously occupied in the world before he was baptised. In spite of this, however, he acquires through baptism another and a fresh task to be discharged precisely in this position in which he finds himself at the purely human level. For it is because of him that the Church is present precisely *there*. When we use the term 'Church' here this is not to be thought of simply as an externalising application of this concept to the Church as an organisation, or simply to her legal constitution, her influence as an organisation, as a 'perfect society', as visible in her own history. When we use the term 'Church' here and in *this* context what we mean by it is the grace of God, the power of God as faith, hope and charity, trust in the meaning of existence and its further projections into infinity in the deed of God. 'Church' here, therefore, is intended to signify truth, that liberating truth which alone can open up all human truth to the infinite and dazzling mystery of God. 'Church' in this context signifies the courage to commit oneself to eternity, the daring of that love in which man uncalculatingly and finally lets his entire existence fall into the incomprehensibility which we call God. When we speak of the Church then we mean by it all this precisely to the extent that this grace does not simply take effect somewhere in the deepest recesses of our conscience, so that we hardly dare to make contact with this infinite mystery of existence, but rather acquires a body, is unashamedly borne witness to (even if not in the high-flown phraseology of a Christianity that is pretentious), is joyfully lived, lovingly handed on to others, makes its impact in all dimensions of existence whether in life or in death. It is the Church in this sense, therefore, that we are speaking of here, and we shall say of the Church in this sense that through the baptised its presence must be made manifest. It must be there wherever one who is a Christian in *this* sense is there.

The mission of the baptised layman to share in the task of the Church [62] does not begin and end with the observance of peaceful Sunday devotions. It does not consist in any primary sense in Corpus Christi processions with the notables of the parish or the political party or the good Catholics. It does not mean casting one's vote in favour of the Catholic interest, nor yet in patiently paying the Church's dues. Rather it implies an awareness, so deep and so radical that it revolutionises everything, of the fact that the baptised man is constantly confronted with the task of a Christian precisely in that environment in which he finds himself and in which his life is passed, that is to say in the wholly natural context of his calling, in his family, the circles in which he lives, his nation and state, his human and cultural milieu. And this task consists in establishing the dominion of God in truth, in selflessness and in love, and thereby making what is truly essential to the Church's nature present in the setting in which he is placed, from the position which only he can occupy, in which he cannot be replaced by any other, not even by the clergy, and where, nevertheless, the Church must be. Of course once the layman takes up his task in this position of his he will undergo a further experience: for him this Church is the Church of truth, of kindness, of selflessness, of honourable behaviour, of courage, of a tacit harmony with the dark mystery of existence, a silent attitude of readiness and sure hopefulness with regard to death, and of a practical fulfilment of duty even when no further profit is to be attained from it. And he will experience the fact that this Church has representatives and champions who never know that this community, to which they belong by being true to it in their actions in this way, is precisely *the* people of God which, according to the will of God and Christ, attains tangible form as a society and an unequivocal place in history, in other words a quasi-sacramental value as an effective sign, precisely in the Church of Jesus Christ. This is because this anonymous Christianity, present

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in those who only *think* that they neither are nor should be Christians, does in truth live by, and bring to its fulness, that grace of Christ which finds its historical concretisation and embodiment precisely in the Church.

Now when we speak in this way of a Church of interior grace characterised by a love and faithfulness that are effective, and an attitude of acceptance towards death (in which faith and love are always brought to their consummation), then we are not indulging in any kind of conceptual sleight of hand, so as to substitute a different concept of the Church for the usual one. No, what we have in mind here is not in any sense an 'invisible [63] Church', but is precisely that which manifests itself in the concrete and visible Church. And even in those cases in which the Church has less of the outward form of a visible society, the reality of which we are speaking here still belongs to the Church and is in very truth orientated towards it. Nor do we underestimate the importance of the fact that the Church as a concrete and palpable entity should have the further quality of being visible. For indeed she both is and must be the concretisation in social and historical terms of that divine reality which we call grace and spirit. Now according to the teaching of this same Church this reality both can be and is already present and powerfully at work even in those areas in which she has not yet been unequivocally manifested to the world as an historical and social fact with a concrete embodiment of its own.

What we are asserting, therefore, is that the Christian, from his position in the world, and in the power he receives from his baptism, has to render present the victory of grace, of love and of faith, of the fact that the kingdom of God has arrived. And he has the responsibility of being a sign in the world and to the world of the eternal reality of salvation. But in making this assertion we are not for one moment denying that there are other Christians too, unprofessed Christians, present in the very milieu to which the professed Christian himself belongs. It is no mere hypothesis, but a sure fact, that such unacknowledged Christians are there, and in them the same power of grace has already begun to do its work. It is on their behalf too, therefore, that the professed Christian must bear his witness. This situation may make it more difficult for the professed and acknowledged Christian to stand out from the rest so clearly in the position he occupies in the world, in his family and his calling and in the task he has to perform in the world, to the extent that these others are ultimately quite unaware of the fact that they are Christians. Yet the professed Christian has to stand apart from the rest in such a way that the Church which he represents can very clearly be distinguished from the world in the worldly milieu in which she finds embodiment. But all this does not in any way alter the task and the special responsibility of the baptised Christian to make the Church present in that context in the world which he occupies as one who has been baptised. When God of his sovereign freedom distributes talents and graces to men, and causes the Spirit to move in them through all the byways of the world, this often has the effect, if we may so express it, of creating a rival to his own Church, for in doing this he raises up men outside the visible Church who are endowed [64] with graces belonging to his Church, men who are not yet incorporated into her visible and official structure, and who may only be so incorporated when the consummation of the ages has arrived and everything that has proved itself good and true is gathered into the Church to enjoy eternal life. But in spite of all this there is no reason for the baptised Christian to be any less conscious of his mission and his radical responsibility. Wherever he finds himself confronted by justice, right living, love, faithfulness, courage, consolation in life and strength in death in the world, there he knows that the grace of Christ is at work. Because without this grace even the natural human virtues do not in the long run endure, and therefore when they manifest themselves amid all the darkness and guilt of this world they bear witness to the grace of Christ, whether those possessing them realise it or not. And when the Christian encounters such natural human virtues in the world he cannot say 'See, even without Christianity and the Church

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human goodness is achieved'. Rather he must say to himself: 'There has been achieved here that for which you have been sent, commissioned and endowed with grace twice and three times over by the finger of the living God when it sealed your soul and your life with the irremovable seal of baptism. Woe to you if in your life the witness to God's goodness shines out less brightly, less convincingly, than it has shone in the primæval forest of Lambarene, or in the case of Simone Weil, or in the lives of such as Wolfram Siewers and many others of whom we may think that the sign of Christ shines upon their brows even though they themselves appear to be unconscious of it. It is a fact that the Christian who is so *ex professo* through baptism is often sent to the unacknowledged Christian who is so through an interior grace which achieves its effects within him without his knowing it. And it is precisely because of this situation that the commission to share in the Church's task which is given with baptism becomes once more a mission to perform an act of total and unconditional obedience in faith, an act in which witness is borne to God even though this witness may seem not to be successful in winning over those to whom it is addressed to the point at which the witness itself can claim any credit for his work.

One point at least is clear. Through baptism a man becomes not only subject to the Church, bound by its rules, a sharer in its blessings, but a member of the Church as well, one who has to share actively in the performance of its functions. He has to be a witness to the event in which the victory of God's eschatological grace has arrived, in which God himself [65] becomes the salvation of the world, and in virtue of this the baptised Christian in the Church acquires a position which consists not primarily or exclusively in the fact that he is a subject for the hierarchy to exercise their authority upon, and is distinguished from the clergy simply by the fact that he is *non*-clerical. This much is clear and unmistakable. Something which bears upon the relationship between the various elements in the Church should not become the first point for consideration right at the outset. The nature of the Church cannot initially or adequately be described simply by pointing to the relationship which her individual members bear one to another, because in fact, in order rightly to determine how two elements in a whole are related one to the other one must first understand the nature of the whole itself. When, therefore, we set out to establish the exact legal status, the functions and duties of those vested with authority in the Church, and, as the outcome of this, the rest of the duties to be performed by the other members and functionaries who have to be subject to these established authorities, all this cannot count as a description of the nature of the Church, however essential the functions vested as a matter of sacred right in these officials of the hierarchy may be, and however many blessings they may bring on the Church, and however indispensable they may appear. But when we say that the Church is the Body of Christ, the enduring presence in history and in the world of his truth and grace, the effects wrought by the incarnate Word made abiding in the flesh, and when we say that every baptised individual shares in these because he is a member of this Body, then we have said everything, provided that we have really understood the principle which we have just stated.

We might, of course, go on to develop many particular aspects of what has been said up to this point. If we were to take this course we would have to point out that the Church's essential function as envisaged here is far from being confined to those powers which the officials in the Church can bring to bear, and which are of a legal and constitutional character. We would have to point out that there is such a thing as a charismatic factor in the Church which is no less vital as an element in its nature than the factors of the institutional and the official. We would have to point out that there is, and must be, an unfolding of conscious faith in the Church, a progress in the life of faith which is unplanned and which is the outcome of the Church's own experiences. And this is not controlled by the human designs of the Church's officials, but rather [66] guided by the Holy Spirit. It is true that the official teaching authority of the Church is not juridically dependent upon these movements of faith,

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but it is so in fact. We would then have to point out that the Spirit is far from choosing to produce his effects always and necessarily through the officials of the Church. Thus for this charismatic element in action, in faith and in love, which operates under the direct influence of the Spirit, the 'layman', on the basis of his membership of the Church through baptism, can be, and often enough is in practice, just as much the point of entry and the medium through which the Spirit operates as the cleric, so that he too has the duty of developing the sort of sensitivity to this movement in himself which will make him adequate for his position in the Church. We could then go on to remind ourselves that according to the words of Pius XII there must be, and in fact is, something corresponding to the factor of public opinion even in the Church, and that without this the Church would suffer damage in her shepherds and her flock alike, and that the laity inevitably are and must be to a large extent the upholders of this necessary factor of public opinion in the Church. We might draw attention to the fact that there must necessarily be something like a supernatural 'existential' ethic, even though what is normally designated as 'situation' ethics is a heresy. In other words, to put it briefly, the decision which the individual Christian takes at particular points in his life must indeed be brought into line with the universal principles as proclaimed by the teaching authority of the Church, but cannot be derived in any adequate sense from these alone. At this point, therefore, every individual and every Christian stands in an immediate relationship to God, one which does not withdraw him from the visible Church, but which cannot be left to its visible authority to sustain (even though this latter still continues to have its force as a *norma negativa* against deception). Moreover it would have to be pointed out that any such decision on the part of the individual Christian, in other words on the part of the so-called individual layman too (and here it must be pointed out that the immediate relationship to God involved in this must be thought of as wholly based upon the grace of baptism), has a vital significance not only for the individual concerned in his own private life but for the Church as a whole as well.

The role of the layman in the Church as constituted by baptism is to be understood, therefore, as deriving not primarily from the position of the clergy, but from the very nature of the Church herself. Naturally in any community of men organised as a society there must be a leadership and [67] this must be vested in specific individuals. Naturally in the Church of Christ this power of leadership is founded by Christ himself and not constituted by a democratic process from the rank and file upwards. But this is in virtue of the fact that the Church, and therefore the position, task and function of every member of the Church too, as instituted by Christ, stems from above. Thus if we take the analogy of a politically organised society, a people or nation, this does not owe its existence as such in the first instance to the fact that some political system is already available in the abstract. Rather it is the historical and human entity that is already in existence for the political constitution to be applied to it, and so to organise it into a society, in other words a people with a culture and communal organisation which has developed in the context of history. And just as the life of the people thus politically organised does not only, not originally, and not in any ultimate sense consist in the exercise of authority on the part of its officially constituted leaders, but rather these are in the position of servants contributing to the life of the people as a whole, so too it is with the Church. Even though its constitutional structure derives from above it is already in existence prior to this as the community of the redeemed, the believers, those who are impelled by the Spirit of God, those who are beloved by God, those who are called to eternal life. The life of the Church is embodied in the activities of all these. And in relation to this the members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, precisely in their constitutional function as leaders of the Church, have to act as servants. The ultimate aim of all who work in the Church and for the Church is to ensure, as a living fact of faith, hope and love, that the grace of God shall be received as the life of God in the Church, that witness shall be born to the truth of God, to the

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faithfulness of God, to the hope of eternal life. In relation to this everything else in the Church, including the whole constitutional organisation into authorities and subordinates, and the provision for official leaders vested with authority, is only a means to an end. The provision for such authorities is designed for an end beyond themselves. They are there because the Church must exist, and what is in truth her primary task must be performed. But they are not in any sense an end in themselves. Their presence in the Church does not mean *ipso facto* that she has already arrived at that true flowering of her own true nature which she is intended to achieve. One might, therefore, go so far as to say in a very true and uncompromising sense that the clergy exist because the laity exist, and the term 'layman' is not in [68] any sense derogatory, but rather is equivalent to 'member of the Church'. For the Church is composed of these laymen, and in them she achieves her own fulness as the life of Christ in the world.

We have spoken of baptism as the sacramental basis for the position of the layman in the Church. Baptism provides a sacramental basis in this sense in virtue of the fact that through it the baptised individual receives his divine calling and is established in a position, i.e. in an enduring and inalienable form of life in which he makes an active contribution to the Church in the realisation of her own nature and destiny. But all that we have said of baptism applies in a still higher degree when we come to think of the *sacrament of confirmation*. In the last analysis it is not of decisive importance when we have received this sacrament of the outpouring of the Spirit, or how we have understood it. The decisive point is rather whether as confirmed individuals we finally come to notice at any point in our lives what has been achieved in objective reality in this sacrament, and what we have subjectively to accomplish by the strength which it confers. For a dogmatic theologian it is difficult to distinguish with complete precision between the two sacraments in their meaning and their effects. It is precisely as taken both together that they constitute a single initiation into Christian existence. Sacramentally speaking these two sacraments represent two distinct aspects of our Christian calling considered as a single entity. For this reason we do not need here either to make the attempt at separating or distinguishing the two sacraments from one another in any very explicit way. All that we feel is necessary to say here is this: the sacrament of confirmation is a sacrament of witness to the faith, of charismatic fulness, of the Holy Spirit, the sacrament in which those sealed with the Spirit are sent into the world to bear witness in order that the world may be made subject to the dominion of God. It is the sacrament of strengthening in the faith against the powers and forces in this world, the powers of lying and disbelief and of the diabolical *hybris* involved in attempting to work out one's own salvation. And if this is the significance of this sacrament, then we can realise still more clearly how little the Christian as confirmed layman is a mere object for the Church's educative and directive activities as exercised through the authority and leadership of her hierarchy. We can realise how much more he is placed in the position of one who has a mission and a task, a personal responsibility for the world in virtue of his initiation into Christianity.

Of all the other sacraments too it could be shown that they have an [69] ecclesiological aspect; that they do not merely constitute so many events in which one's own salvation as a private individual is conferred and catered for. On the contrary they are meant to contribute to the Church as a whole. So true is this, indeed, that they always have the further significance, over and above their immediate effects, of initiating the recipient into an active task in the Church. And this is the case with all the sacraments including those which every layman receives. The sacrament of *penance*, as the sacrament of reconciliation with God and the Church, is in fact the sacrament in which the fulness of what was conferred in baptism and confirmation is restored, and in which the initiation which they bring is, in a certain sense, re-activated. This is true also, therefore, with regard to being assigned a definite position in the Church. He who receives the Spirit anew receives him (as the Fathers of the Church have

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explicitly realised) as the Spirit of the Church and precisely in virtue of the fact of being reconciled with the Church. And therefore he receives the Spirit precisely as willing to seize upon, save and fill with the life of God himself the world which belongs to the community of the believers, these believers being themselves filled with the Spirit. It is in this guise that the Spirit bears witness to himself through the existence of the Church.

The fact that the sacrament of the *Eucharist* is a sacrament of unity with the Church achieved through being filled with the Spirit, the Church's own bread of unity in love, and that it is not, in the first instance, a sort of sacramental private audience with God in heaven – all this is in fact a recognised truth. He, therefore, who receives this Bread of life can do nothing else (provided that he knows what he is doing) than to receive from the Spirit which the Body of Christ imparts to him the power of the unity, this expression of the highest unity of eternal life, is something that *all* Christians receive in the same way; none of them, therefore, has any prior claim over the others in this, which constitutes the supreme sacramental expression of the whole essence of Christianity. Certainly this sacrament above all, as symbolising and deepening and rendering ever more effective the unity of the Church, must of its very nature give expression to the hierarchical structure of the Church in the manner in which it is celebrated. The Last Supper of the Lord, in which all share, since all are loved and redeemed in the same manner, must be celebrated in a way that has been fore-ordained, and that is in conformity with the will of Christ himself in that the bishop or priest has the presiding role. Without an officially worked out order of celebration of this kind no celebration [70] of the Eucharist of the Lord could be conceived of as the celebration of the Church herself. But precisely as ordained in this way, the Last Supper of the Lord is designed in the intention of Christ himself, for all Christians, for the Church as a whole. Certainly it is through the officially deputed ministers of the Church that Christ extends this Bread of eternal life to us, but he extends it to all. And it is true even of the ordained minister, the member of the hierarchy, that he achieves the fulness of his personal Christian life in virtue of the fact not that he imparts, but rather that he receives this sacrament like every other Christian. It is in this way that as incorporated into the Body of the Lord he becomes filled with his Spirit and so finally achieves in this the highest act of his personal life, one which, once more, he has in common with all Christians: that he believes, hopes and loves.

The fact that *marriage* directly imparts to the Christian a social and ecclesiastical function, a position which has its basis in the world but in the Church as well, is something that hardly needs to be gone into at any great length here. It is through the sacrament of marriage that the actual common life of those who have been united by it is dedicated as the effective sign of the unity between Christ and his Church. It is through this sacrament, therefore, that the community of the married actually comes to constitute a Church. And while marriage does not impart an irremovable character to its recipients as do baptism, confirmation and orders, nevertheless it is true of marriage too that so long as it lasts as an enduring bond between two Christians in this world and in the time appropriate to it, in other words until the death of one of the two parties to the marriage, it has the force of an abiding sign of grace. It is a sign that this grace of Christ is always extended to the partners to the marriage, and always ensures that this particular state shall endure in the Church as well. For marriage has the force of inaugurating men into the closest and most intimate kind of unity that exists, and at the same time of imparting a sacramental consecration and an imperishability to this community, turning into a sort of microcosmic 'local Church'. For this community consists precisely in the 'two-in-one-flesh' relationship of two married individuals, such that the community thereby constituted represents for them a Christian grace and a Christian task to bring salvation into the world.

It must be remembered that the death of the Christian, and, together with this, the right attitude with which he endures the death-throes when [71] these press in upon him (even in

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cases in which they are overcome and he is restored to health once more) is an act of dying with Christ, an acceptance of death in faith, hope and love as the ultimate reality of life which has been redeemed by Christ and accepted by him in person. It must be remembered too that the death of Christ, even though he died this death in circumstances of the most cruel loneliness that could be conceived of, not the most private event in his life, but rather one of cosmic dimensions, in which all was redeemed and the world was cleansed of its guilt. And if this is true, then too our death as a dying with Christ must also have a significance that extends to all men. We suffer together with all, and for all in the fate in which all are ultimately made equal, and the death we die, because it is hidden in the death of Christ himself is one that generates life. And therefore it is not surprising that even in this moment of the uttermost loneliness, the Church does not let man simply fall into this ultimate incommunicability of death, death as the most solitary of events, but actually accompanies man in this moment through the sacrament of *Extreme Unction*, the sacrament specially designed for this moment of the death throes. And she does this because the dying man, sanctified and strengthened by this prayer of faith, precisely in these moments of death achieves once more an act which affects the entire Church. When an individual 'dies in the Lord' then he has also died with the Lord on behalf of all who belong to the Lord. And in this sense the Christian never loses that position which has been conferred upon him sacramentally in the Church and for the Church until all is consummated.

At the outset of these considerations we formulated the following proposition: by sacramental consecration and the power which this confers every Christian in the Church is equipped, empowered and commissioned to take up a position of active co-operation in the Church's internal and external work. It has been impossible for us, within the brief limits of an essay such as this, to develop this statement further, or to show how it provides the most complete basis for what we have been saying, and, as an interpretation of the actual content of this essay, is the most all-comprehending that could be devised. If we could go on to develop this point the question which would now arise (though this is no longer possible within the limits we have set ourselves) would be what the significance of this is in the concrete for the individual Christian of our own times. But even as it is one point at least should have been made clear: as applied in the context of the Church the term 'layman' means the [72] opposite of what this signifies in other contexts, when it is applied in the profane sphere, as for instance in the assertion: 'In the field of criminal law he is an utter layman.' In the secular sphere 'layman' means one who cannot take part in the discussion, who has nothing to contribute, who is excluded from a specific area of life and responsibility. But when the term 'layman' is used in the theological context it means the opposite of this. Certainly the findings of the most recent investigators may be correct when they say that the use of this term for the baptised and believing Christian in order to express the difference which exists between him and the cleric is not derived directly from the biblical concept of the 'people of God' (in other words from the concept of the λαο_φ θεου~ with which it has linguistic connections). According to these findings the manner in which this term was applied right from the beginning shows that it carried with it the further connotation of 'non-expert', 'amateur'. In practice, however, it would have the most devastating results – and to some extent these do exist in fact – if the sum total of the individual Christian's conception of his own position as a Christian was that he was not a cleric and therefore had at most a subordinate and more or less passive part to play in the Church's life. In virtue of his baptism every Christian is one who has been anointed and consecrated, a temple of God, one who has been chosen and set apart, one who has been called and summoned into the community of those who know and acknowledge that God has taken compassion upon the world, and has called her into his own life. Every Christian has a share in the active function of the Church both in her internal and external affairs. The word of God is laid upon his lips too, even

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though he has not the authority or the mission to preach in the officially constituted communal assembly, for in fact he has to uphold the gospel message in those areas of human life upon which the communal assembly has to make its impact if it is to have meaning and authority at all, those areas, namely, in which that life is lived which this word of God is intended to illumine and to redeem. Generally speaking the baptised Christian should convey this word by the integrity with which he conducts his life rather than by his own words, though this is not always or exclusively the case, and there may be occasions when it is legitimate for him to speak out as well. Nevertheless he is a member of the Church which possesses the word, and as such is sealed by the spirit of God. For this reason the saying applies to him: 'Woe betide me if I have not preached, if I have not born witness.' By baptism and by all the other sacraments too, every [73] Christian is made responsible in his own measure for helping in the task of the Church, namely that through her the grace of God may be made present palpably and convincingly in *that* world which *has been* redeemed by the love of God and yet which still needs to be redeemed by being made to experience and to accept this fact of its own redeemed state. This is always an act which takes place both in the Church's interior life and in the sphere of the external world as well. In the Church's interior life because all of us as Christians must constantly be re-discovering and reliving our Christian state anew. Externally because far the greatest part of the world has not yet consciously apprehended that which has, nevertheless, already been received into the depths of its *subconscious*, namely the grace and promise of being definitively possessed by God's grace which does, nevertheless, need to be explicitly and consciously grasped.

One fact remains true, and it should not be glossed over, because it is quite unnecessary to do so. There is a very real difference between the cleric and the Christian who has *not* been entrusted with specific tasks of organisation and leadership in the Church in virtue of having received the sacrament of priestly consecration or order. In this respect it is Christ's will that there should be an ascending order of rank and degree in the Church. But these differences in rank and order are so only with regard to quite specific functions in the life of the Church and her disposition and organisation as a society. They have nothing to do with the holiness of her members, or the fact that they are encompassed by the love of God. Nor do they even necessarily have anything to do with the objective significance of the function concerned for salvation. For it can be the case that a free charism in the Church, such as a layman too can be favoured with, may in practice be of greater significance for the salvation of mankind and of the world than the exercise of an institutional, official or even sacramental authority. Nor does this organisation of the Church into orders and degrees affect God's radical claim that we shall uphold and preserve the truth that the whole world in all its dimensions is that which has been brought into being by God's own creative act, and that we shall make his redemptive act effective in it too. This is a task and duty which is laid inalienably on every individual regardless of his rank or order. Now if taking all these factors into consideration, we were asked to produce a formula which was at once concise and comprehensive enough to sum them all up in one, we might propose the following: Certainly the layman in the Church is different from the sacramentally constituted cleric because [74] both have different tasks to perform in the Church, tasks which mutually complement and condition one another. But when that is realised and stated the best way to express the matter would be to say: the layman in the Church is not a 'layman' but a Christian. And in either or both of these aspects of his position in the Church he is confronted by the question of whether he wills to be what in fact he is.

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THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN THE NEW SITUATION IN WHICH THE CHURCH FINDS HERSELF

The Church is an extremely complex and multi-dimensional structure, and this is true not merely with regard to its hierarchical structure and the diversity of tasks, rights and duties belonging to its members and which derive from the very nature of the Church herself. A further factor which we should never forget is that while the Church is *one*, this unity of hers is one in which the greatest possible diversity and multiplicity of individuals, peoples and cultures live and move. If we may so express it she includes among her members the greatest diversity of human types which it is possible to conceive of, ranging from the men of the stone age to those who, while they live in the present, really belong to the twenty-first century. All these live simultaneously side by side in the Church.

The Church's life as a society is carried on in the lives of her members through the most manifold system of interrelationships. For this reason, while it may be true that human nature as constituted by the distinction of the sexes may endure throughout as a metaphysical reality, still the actual mode in which this one nature is objectively realised in the concrete is stamped and conditioned by the special circumstances of history which correspond to this plurality of types and situations justifiably existing in the Church. The diversity to be found in the Church today, with all the different territories, nations, cultures and different types of society which she embraces, means that it is possible to speak of *the* situation of the Church only in an extremely limited sense. And in the same way there is very little that can validly be asserted of *the* woman as a single and entirely homogeneous type with a definite concrete position in the Church capable of being investigated. On these grounds alone this is a subject which can be treated of only with the strictest reservations. Of course in raising this [76] question of the position of woman we are thinking of her position in our society and in the Church as we know it, and not, for instance of the position of an Indian woman in the Church as it exists in the primaeval forests of Brazil. But even so the reservation expressed above still applies. For even the Church as it exists among us and woman as she exists in our society are still abstract concepts, and the realities corresponding to them in the life of the Church and of women today are extremely diverse in character.

It is true that in answer to our question it might be possible to adopt an approach of prudent conjecture, and so to sketch in the basic outlines in a portrait of woman, her potentialities and tasks such as would gradually become more typical as our '*big city*' *culture* developed its rational, technical and cosmic potentialities. But in all this there is one point upon which we must be clear, namely that this process of predicting a future type or category is uncertain in the extreme, so that the sort of conclusions we can draw and the sort of estimates that we can make of what will be required on the basis of such a portrayal can only be conditional in so far as they can be applied at all in any effective or universal sense to woman today and her position in the Church. Any of our contemporaries who is really serious in accepting history for what it is and who recognises it as the will of God must take the representatives of the past just as seriously, and allow them to have just as much value as those who feel themselves to be the spokesmen for the future of mankind. For the past is just as much with us as a reality present and divinely willed as is the future, and for this reason even what is out of date still has its significance. And the power to render present everything of the past which should be preserved as well as everything which is to come and must come in the future is nowhere summed up in any one individual person. It is true of the woman of the past and the woman

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of the future alike that we can only rightly understand the Christian position and the Christian task of each of these types in so far as we recognise that each has a value for the other, and that their full value is only appreciated when they are brought together in the unity of an understanding love.

To this first point a second must now be added: every present conceals within itself, combined in an unity in which they cannot ultimately or totally be distinguished one from another, the following factors: the nature of man himself which endures through all change, the fact that he is called upon to enter into an immediate relationship with God, the guilt of [77] the past and the present, the legitimate impulse to advance towards the future, the failure to understand what this impulse signifies whether this failure be blameworthy or not, and finally the assent of God to man which creates salvation for him and again and again rises superior to all his sins. And because of this the attitude of the Church in response to the demands of the times and to man's will to advance towards some future still unrealised can in all cases only be one which is both critical and positive at the same time. The Church cannot simply join in the general chorus of those who demand a new age and with this a transformation of the Church herself and of her life as well. For in all this an element of short-sightedness is inevitably involved as well, as the heritage of the past and as the guilt of the present, a guilt which belongs to us all since we are, and continue to be, sinners.

Unlike the world, therefore, the Church cannot simply issue watchwords to set the spirits alight of those who belong to her. Conscious of the duty which her past lays upon her, she will always adopt a critical attitude even, once more, to those estimates which are made of the future of the world and of the Church herself. But it is no less true that she cannot simply wage a defensive battle on behalf of the concrete realities which survive from the past of the world and of her own life. For this past is itself subject to the same law which we have mentioned above, namely that a whole series of factors are united in the present: the enduring nature of man himself, the process of becoming in history to which he is subject, the providence of God in its salvific effects upon him and his own guilt. And for this reason the past can never simply provide the ideal pattern according to which the future should be constructed. This realism, in which the Church identifies herself neither with the past as it has been in concrete fact nor with the future as it is postulated, is inevitably felt by the members of the Church to be tiresome. And it must be borne with patience and hope. It is in this realism that the hope and faith of the individual Christian is made effective, for in it two essential factors are brought together, namely the incalculable and uncontrollable complexities of the world on the one hand, and the abstract rigidity of man's own conception of the future on the other. These are viewed as under the control of the Lord of history himself, whose designs, for all our planning and proposing, always remain ultimately hidden from us.

A final point which must be added is this: By reason of the unbridgeable *gulf which exists between the universal and the concrete particular* all those [78] rules of action which can be deduced from the natural law and the gospel, and which can be laid down for the future, remain at the abstract level. They never admit of being reduced to directly concrete terms or into imperatives which are binding absolutely and in all cases, and which can be laid clearly and unequivocally upon all Christians as an absolute duty. For this reason even within the Church and within the unity of her faith and her love there are inevitably differences of opinion as to what should be done in the here and now, and this divergence of opinion must be borne with in patience and love, and can only be resolved in the concrete through our own free decisions as exercised in history itself. And this history can neither be controlled by any authority nor catered for by any theory in any adequate sense.

All this must be borne in mind if we are to make any attempt at stating what the position of woman should be in the new situation in which the Church finds herself. If we do attempt

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anything of this kind then we must begin with certain theories which remain at the abstract level, and which, while they may in themselves be binding upon all, are necessarily applied in the concrete in terms of an outlook which is historically conditioned. And this outlook does not have the same degree of binding force as the theories themselves. A further factor, apart from these theories, which we have to take into account is the arbitrary demands for a particular kind of future which are made, and which, basically speaking, cannot be regarded as binding upon any Christian in virtue of the nature of Christianity itself. Now when we attempt to define what the position of woman in the new situation of the Church should be then inevitably these two factors are blended into an unity which can no longer be analysed or resolved into its constituent elements in any adequate sense. This fusion of abstract theory and concrete demand, therefore, always manifests itself in the concrete form of that which is historically conditioned, in other words in a form which Christians do not necessarily have to agree with each other about.

I. THE UNITY OF THE WORLD AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS FOR THE CHURCH

When we say that the Church now stands in a new situation we mean that this situation is new in a deeper and more far-reaching sense than could have been said of any given age in the past as it followed upon the preceding one in the general process of history. Without prejudice to the [79] supernatural dynamism of the Church, which is the work of the Spirit within her, it seems that we should ascribe this new situation to the new situation which prevails in the world in its purely secular aspects. This in turn is a situation which has been brought into being by the fact that the ‘new age’ is coming to an end, and a future one has already begun. It is this, then, that we should look to if we are ever really to come to some definite conclusions about this new situation which prevails in the Church, to some extent to arrive at some definite theory with regard to its significance, and to anticipate how it will develop, instead of merely enduring it without comprehending it.

The new epoch in world history is one in which that history has achieved a real and concrete unity such that all the particular histories of peoples and of continents which have hitherto remained separate one from another have been brought into communication. The result of this is that the fate of each individual member of the human race and of each individual, country and nation, constitutes a factor in the historical situation of all the other individuals and all the other nations too. We might put it this way: in the scriptural narrative of the Tower of Babel we are given an insight, in terms of the theology of history, into what the consequences are of this episode. God is represented as intervening providentially, and ultimately for the sake of saving mankind, in order to prevent men from adopting an united stand against him. This is viewed as the beginning of the process by which the individual peoples and nations departed one from another on their separate ways of salvation. Today this process has been reversed by an act which is just as providential and at the same time just as dangerous too. Mankind has once more been drawn into a unity, and in this *a real possibility has arisen of a collective and cosmic atheism, but also of a world Church really coming into being to afford universal access to God to all history and to all men*.

This cosmic unity, by which history becomes one, has its origins in the West. And from here it is possible for the saving history of Christianity to be extended to all the world. As viewed in its ultimate and deepest sense this unity is itself the outcome of a Christian interpretation of man’s meaning and mission. This cosmic unity, comprised by the saving history which proceeds from the Christianised West, is the unity of a world that has been divested of the numinous, a world that is dominated by human reason and human technical

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achievements. It is a world which man no longer accepts simply as the natural order, directly controlled by God, but [80] which he himself constructs according to his own plans by his reason and technical mastery, and in this sense it is a 'humanised' world. This world is one in which man takes over personal responsibility for his own moral decisions, shapes his life and works out or fails to work out his own salvation. But over and above this it is also the world in which man can use his technical mastery in an ever-increasing measure to manipulate himself and his nature. He can actively transform and reconstruct his own real selfhood, which hitherto he had simply to take more or less as given. This world is a world in which mankind is increasing and multiplying at an immense speed, and therefore necessarily requires far more developed and precise patterns of social living than has been the case hitherto. At the same time, without denying the tendency of this world towards this cosmic unity and these more intense forms of social living, it is still a *complex* world with many different elements in its make-up. And this is precisely due to the fact that because man has been freed from the dominion of nature and has been able to rationalise his environment to a far greater extent the objective impact of the human intellect in the arts and sciences has increased rather than decreased, while the differences which exist between nations and the complexities inherent in the one history of mankind, so far from disappearing have actually intensified.

It is this world, then, that exercises so decisive an influence upon the situation of the Church. She has become a world Church not only by definition but in real fact as well. For this reason she is no longer materially to be identified with the culture of the West, but embraces a whole range of national histories and cultures. Formerly she could have been accused of an almost naïve *symbiosis*, of identifying herself with a particular form of civilization which in practice she herself more or less controlled, but now she is to an ever-increasing extent emancipated from this, and is developing into a Church in a secularised world, a world that is made up of numerous and complex elements, and is the outcome of rational planning. The inner dynamism proper to this world does indeed remain encompassed by the creative and salvific will of God. But to a large extent it can no longer be directly shaped by the Church's official authority or integrated into her life by being presented with her concrete imperatives. The Church is the Church, and, as instituted by God, she offers salvation to all men and is aware that she is basically and fundamentally the Church of all men. But on any realistic assessment of the future she cannot count on being able to include all men among her members as [81] those who actually and explicitly confess her faith and receive her sacraments. With regard to the generality of mankind and its development she will, upon all human calculations, continue to be, and that to a still greater extent than hitherto, the 'little flock', and this in spite of all missionary endeavours on her part. Indeed, relatively speaking, she will become a still smaller flock despite all the efforts which are rightly made to ensure that she shall remain a Church of the ordinary people. To a still greater extent than in former times she will become the Church of those who believe as a matter of individual and personal responsibility. Hence she will recognise her role still more clearly as the leaven in the lump that is the unified history of the world, as the 'arch-sacrament', i.e. as the sign of salvation which God has set up in the dimension of history for the salvation of those, too, who are not numbered among her members as a visible society.

II. CONCRETE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EQUAL STATUS OF WOMAN TO BE MADE EFFECTIVE IN THE CHURCH

What is the significance for this new situation of the Church in a new world? We cannot, of course, undertake here to provide a systematic or comprehensive answer to this question, nor

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even to indicate the lines along which such an answer might be developed. All that is possible here is to provide a few partial answers chosen more or less at random, and these can only be given with the proviso that other points are not being dealt with here, even though they may be more important.

1. First certain consequences must be mentioned of what has been said above, which apply to the Church herself in the exercise of her authority, and which bear upon her attitude towards women. *In her own personal life too the Church must recognise without reserve the fact that women have equal value and equal rights with men*. Contemporary theology has had much to say in general terms about the position and function of the layman as based upon the baptism and confirmation which he has received. And all this applies directly, and in an equal degree, to women as well as to men: the right attitude for the authorities of the Church to adopt towards them, the universal priesthood of all believers, the fact that whole areas of human knowledge are relatively autonomous and independent of the Church, the fact that the world has legitimately become secularised, and the task of the layman in the world, which is to bring redemption and [82] sanctification into it. No-one, of course, would contest this as a general principle. But the actual practice of the Church falls away in many respects from this principle, manifest though it may be.

When the doors of the Second Vatican Council were opened to laymen as well as to clerics it was taken for granted that this applied initially to men only. But in reality the correctness of this assumption is far from self-evident. Of course, there is a point at which limits do seem to be imposed to the equality of rights which women in the Church should enjoy: the impossibility of women receiving the sacrament of order in various degrees or being consecrated as priests, and thereby becoming members of the official hierarchy. Whatever the position may be with regard to the theological arguments which are put forward in support of this doctrine (and undoubtedly in many instances at least those who put forward these arguments are unconsciously and without realizing it working from positions deriving from an age which is no longer with us and with which we no longer need to identify ourselves), there can be no real point or prospect of achieving anything by pursuing this question at this particular point in the history of the Church's understanding of her own faith and of her practice outside the specialist circles of those engaged in scientific theology. Nor is it of any avail to point to the developments in theology and in actual practice with regard to this question which have taken place among Evangelical Christians. For these do not in fact recognise any official priesthood based on sacramental consecration such as provides the basis for the fundamental distinction between clergy and people. For the present, therefore, it is legitimate to pass over this question in a spirit of patience, whatever conclusions one may arrive at with regard to the binding force of that theological principle which excludes women from the official priesthood. For even without this we still have much to achieve before we can say that we have effectively put into practice the principle that women should have equal rights with men in the Church.

The more the world changes in terms of culture and social living, the more fresh tasks and fresh patterns of living emerge in the lives of individuals and of society, the more man and woman emerge amid these changes in the human environment as equal in capabilities and equal in rights to exploit these new potentialities and to ensure that they are actualised, the more the life of the Church too changes in proportion to these other changes in her human situation. For the life of the Church [83] must be projected and extended into all these new and different spheres of life in the world, and for this reason there is a proliferation in the Church of those tasks and opportunities which can be entrusted unreservedly to women just as much as to men, and which in fact must be entrusted to them.

It would take us too far afield to describe these new opportunities in detail at this point. But they are there, and the Church, just as much as contemporary society, which in practice has

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become so emancipated from her, must gradually learn to rid herself of the prejudice that the ones to exploit these opportunities and perform these tasks should properly and in the first instance be exclusively of the male sex. The fact that society in the world and in the Church has become so multi-dimensional, and that the work to be done has been broken down into so many subdivisions means that we have perforce to recognise the whole new complex range of tasks which can be performed equally well by either sex, and to which the differences between the sexes are wholly irrelevant. At the same time, however, in the concrete manner in which these tasks are performed, men and women will each bring their special qualities to bear, and this cannot be otherwise than beneficial in ensuring that in the execution of these tasks, to which the sex of the actual performer makes no difference, every aspect of them shall in fact be catered for. When the Church speaks of the position and the task of the layman in the Church and in the world she must apply equal standards to men and women in real fact and not simply by paying lip-service to the principle of equality between them.

2. *In her preaching and in her cure of souls the Church must take into account the unmarried, independent and professional woman no less than the mother and the housewife.* If we abstract for a moment from the ideal of Christian virginity as undertaken for sake of the Lord we may hold as an absolute principle that the fulfilment of woman's vocation as human and Christian is to be found first and foremost, and in normal cases, in partnership with her husband and in the exercise of married love and motherhood But there is a further point which the representatives of the Church must be resolved unreservedly and realistically to take into account in the present and the future of the Church, and which the first point does not for one moment invalidate. This is that both in the preaching and the practice of the Church justice must be done to the number of unmarried independent and professional women, including those who do not belong to religious orders or secular institutes. What has just been said about the [84] rights and duties of the Church, namely that she must respect the principle that women have equal rights with men in the life of the Church as well, and must turn this to good account for the Church's mission, naturally applies in a special degree to women in this unmarried and independent state. Such women should tell the Church what new forms of specialised pastoral activity, what new types of vocational groups within the Christian community, and what new kinds of active mutual 'pastoral' help between women in this state are appropriate to them in their situation and to the times in which we live.

3. Apart from the personal position of these single women a further factor which does have a bearing on the situation, even if it is not an essential reason for introducing changes, is the dearth of priests. This is one reason why the Church of today has been forced actively to call upon women to a greater extent than formerly to help in fulfilling those tasks in her apostolic mission which belong originally and primarily to the members of her hierarchy. In other words she has had to give women a *share in the apostolate of the hierarchy itself.* In discharging tasks of this kind women act as social workers, catechists, parish helpers, etc., and this must not be confused with that mission and task, that apostolate, which every woman is equipped and commissioned to perform in virtue of the fact that she has been baptised and confirmed and on the basis of the royal priesthood which belongs to her, and which she has to exercise from her own position in the world. Nor should this function which belongs specifically and *ex officio to the Christian woman in the world* be thought of as a lesser and more restricted way of 'participating' in the apostolate of the Church's hierarchy. On the contrary it is to be understood as function of the laity *ab initio* and in its own right. Certainly this participation on the part of the layman in the apostolate of the Church's hierarchy is understood by him as having a further significance beyond this, and as having the force of a permanent vocation. In this sense it has a meaning, an indispensability and a value of its own. But precisely because of this it is a necessary condition that those who have an official position of this kind must not be regarded by the clergy as subordinate helpers and auxiliaries

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to be exploited for their own advantage.

Opinions may vary as to how precisely we should interpret the ancient Christian institution of deaconess and its relationship to the institution of deacon. But whatever conclusions we may arrive at on this point theology of the diaconate does show that the deacon too is not merely an [85] insignificant and subordinate auxiliary designed for the help of the priests, but is directly under the authority of the bishop, and that he has a task to perform in the Church which belongs to him personally *ab initio* and in his own right. The same could also be said of those functions which are performed *ex officio* by women, and which likewise belong fully and properly to the apostolate of the hierarchy. Those members of the Church who *ex officio* have such tasks entrusted to them must, therefore, be accorded the dignity, independence and responsibility due to them and necessary for them to discharge their functions properly. This dignity and personal responsibility should not be regarded as deriving from a concession granted to them by the condescension of the clergy. Rather, while always remaining under the control and authority of the bishop, it must gradually, yet at the same time boldly, establish itself as properly belonging to a legally authorised institution in order that there may no longer be even an impression that it needs to be left to the short-sighted caprice of the individual parish priest or chaplain whether there shall be such participation in the apostolate of the Church's hierarchy.

4. From many points of view the Church will have to develop new and better kinds of relationship between the clergy and women, such as are more appropriate to the times. In this respect much may already have been achieved, but nevertheless much still remains to be done. Relics of patriarchal attitudes in the relationship between priests and women still survive, which belong to past ages and do not derive essentially or necessarily from the spiritual authority of the priest as pastor and confessor in relation to the individual Christian.

5. *The Church must be bold and far-sighted in demanding that the religious communities of women shall be shaped in accordance with the needs of the time*. This applies to the secular institutes which have recently emerged, in which the women have to exercise their own creative powers in finding a form of life which corresponds to the evangelical counsels in the midst of the world, and in which they are not simply the objects of apostolic zeal on the part of the founders of orders of priests. But the same principle also applies to the communities of the women's orders which were founded in former times. In recent times the popes have called for the life in women's orders to be adapted and remodelled in conformity with the needs of the age, and in a manner which corresponds to the outlook on life of women of today, and the tasks they have to perform within the unity of their orders. But sometimes one has the impression that these [86] appeals have met with too much caution and respect for secondary traditions, and too little boldness or readiness to undertake genuine experiments. Obviously the evangelical counsels and the act of embracing the Cross of Christ must uncompromisingly be preserved. But this does not exclude courage and boldness in undertaking a genuine and radical re-shaping of many of the day-to-day customs practised in the religious orders. There must be a place for contemporary woman too in the religious communities if she is to be able to make fruitful her efforts to become a disciple of Christ uncompromisingly and without reserve, and if she is to be given an opportunity to fulfil her role in the Church in a manner which is genuinely and effectively human and Christian at the same time. If in this respect the women's orders may be said to show too little courage and trust in the Spirit, who is present with us even today, then there can be no doubt that it is for the authorities in the Church to strengthen this courage and to open up the way for this resolve to take effect in the concrete. The prescriptions of the Second Vatican Council relating to life in the religious orders today clearly point in this direction at least in principle.

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III. THE INDISPENSIBILITY OF WOMEN FOR THE NEW TASKS THAT ARE THEIRS

Certain further consequences arising from the new situation in which the Church finds herself must be mentioned here, since they have a bearing on the actual position of women. In view of the undeniable complexity of human, social and cultural factors in the midst of which the life of women in the Church and the world is lived, and necessarily has to be lived today, they are such as can be spoken of only with the greatest reserve. This is true both with regard to their application to the individual woman, and because of the fact that these consequences have been selected somewhat at random.

1. In the new situation in history of the world and of society woman is presented with fresh problems to solve for the world. These are such as can be solved by woman herself and in her own way, and not, in any direct or adequate sense, by directives issued by the authorities of the Church and in their preaching. Probably no single or absolute solution can be found to the question of what form should be imparted to those aspects of human living at the earthly level which are of special concern to [87] women. And yet what is being treated of here is, in the strictest sense, a Christian task.

The task of woman in the purely secular sphere and in society, with which she is presented as a secular and *at the same time too, as a Christian task*, is of such a nature that the problems which it involves must necessarily be left for the most part to woman herself as she exists today to find solutions to both in theory and practice. Obviously in her official preaching the Church both can and must proclaim the immutable principles of the natural law and of the gospel message as these affect the lives of women, just as she has done in former ages. She must stand firm in defence of these principles and this message, and constantly bring them home to woman anew in a manner appropriate to the particular epoch. But it would be a mistake not only in practice but in theory too, if we were to believe that these basic principles were sufficient of themselves to enable woman to recognise in the concrete what the concrete situation of these present times demands that woman herself shall accept as the task of her womanly life and in the role she assumes in contemporary society. The more complex and intricate the present has become – a present in which it is precisely man's own manipulation of himself and the construction of a humanised world that has made the situation of human life so complex and incalculable – the wider the gulf becomes between the abstract norms, the abiding validity of which is upheld by the Church's authority, and their realization in the concrete; the gulf between the principles and the imperatives, between an abstract statement of what is the case and the concrete constructive plan to be followed. It is quite impossible for it to be otherwise. It is something that is inherent in the nature of the case and in the contemporary situation which makes the ontological difference between the universal and the concrete particular into a gulf which is experienced as such in our everyday lives more clearly than ever before.

It would be foolish and un-Christian to make this a reproach against the Church, and in particular against her preaching, carried on as it is by human intermediaries, or to condemn her on the grounds that today she is unable to produce any living models, any convincing pattern for the life of contemporary woman such as has an immediately formative influence upon life itself, and such as in fact can and must be produced in this age. It is true that in the official preaching of the norms which govern the conduct of the life of woman today it generally seems as though the Church can no longer rise above a confusing ambiguity full of phrases [88] such as 'On the one hand . . . on the other', 'Not only . . . but also', 'Yes, but we must not exaggerate'. But this is entirely right to the extent that the official authorities of the Church recognise their own limitations, with which they must come to terms, and beyond which they cannot go without special charismatic powers. But this observation must not be interpreted as a denial of the Church. Over and above this official and abstract kind of

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preaching she has another and totally different task to perform, namely to provide the concrete model, the constructive pattern of life which is necessary for woman in the present age.

At the same time, however, the Church which both can and must perform this task is not, in any direct sense, the Church of officialdom as such, but rather the Church of women themselves. Supported by the message of the gospel and the power of the Spirit they can both discover and present this concrete pattern of life for women today as something over and above the basic norms and principles of Christianity with their permanent and unchanging validity. This task belongs inalienably and exclusively to woman. It cannot be taken away from her by the official authorities. Certainly the manner in which it is performed must always be subject to control and criticism on the part of the Church's authorities, and must be in compliance with their demands. But it is, and continues to be, a task for woman herself, and not, in any direct sense, for these officially constituted authorities of the Church.

In earlier times it was, in a certain measure, possible to translate the universal norms and principles of the Church directly into practical imperatives because the process of translation did not involve any intermediary stages between the two such as could be consciously and explicitly pointed to. The result was that one always knew what actually had to be done, and the only question was whether one was willing in actual fact really to carry out this duty which one had recognised clearly and concretely as such. Today, however, the way which leads from the norms and principles of the gospel to the point of putting them into practice in the concrete has grown longer. The gulf between the teaching of the gospel and the concrete realities of life needs to be bridged by means of a concrete model or plan. But in this context to construct such a plan is the task of women themselves. The question is how in the concrete a woman can uncompromisingly and fully be human and a woman of this age, and precisely as such a Christian who bears witness in faith, hope and love in her professional and social life, in marriage, in the worlds of fashion, [89] politics, science and art. And the answer to this question in all its convincing clarity must be discovered and presented by woman herself. Therefore a quite specific task is laid upon her, one that is greater than in former ages, in which the official Church could tell her more or less directly how she should act as human and as Christian.

Now to this problem which has to be left to woman herself to solve, it is presumably quite impossible to find any one single solution universally valid in all cases at all times and for all individuals. Indeed it is not even desirable to aim at producing such a solution. *There must be a whole range of constructive patterns and models for the life of contemporary woman in the world, and these must be of various kinds*. The situation is similar to that which in earlier times applied to the individual religious orders. A whole range of quite realistic and nevertheless very different forms were found for these, and were put forward and developed as permanent constitutions. And in these forms one and the same Spirit of grace and one and the same Christian ideal were presented in a way in which they could really take effect and generate new life. And in the same way we have boldly to take into account the fact that there must be a whole range of such productive patterns and models in the Church devised and presented by women under the impulse of the Spirit.

This process of discovering and presenting the concrete forms which the life of the Christian woman should assume in the dimension of the worldly and profane is a truly Christian – *indeed actually a theological task of the Church herself inasmuch as the women who are her members are representative of her*. Admittedly it is necessary to draw a very clear and realistic distinction between the sphere of the worldly and the profane with its relative autonomy on the one hand and the specifically religious and ecclesiastical sphere on the other. But at the same time it would be false to regard this wholly profane sphere as being of no concern to Christians as such. The worldly can indeed be distinguished from the

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Christian in the sense of that which pertains to the official Church. But the worldly itself as such constitutes a truly Christian task. For in it salvation is worked out and the grace of God with its power to save and to liberate is lived and. attempted. Thus the question arises of how women should live in those states of life which seem to be purely worldly in character in all their dimensions. But it is for Christian woman herself to decide this question as her primary, proper and inalienable task. If she fulfils this apparently worldly task, if she shows in the concrete how the life of woman today in [90] the world both can and must be lived in faith and in the Spirit, so that this life itself constitutes salvation and is a part of Christian life as a whole, then she has fulfilled the task of the Church as such – fulfilled it in the Church and for the Church.

All this may sound extremely abstract and theoretical. But if it is correct, and if it is understood, then what follows from it is precisely the truth that it cannot be the task of the priests or of the male sex themselves to develop and to present this concrete pattern for the life of the Christian woman in the world.

2. To discover and to exemplify in her way of life this concrete, constructive and inviting pattern of what the life of contemporary woman should be, and to discover this from the age itself – this, therefore, is the inalienable task of the Christian woman But precisely because this creative task belongs exclusively to her, and because it is a new task, it can only be performed by her when her life as a mature Christian derives its strength from the centre and source of the Christian reality. Indeed this task consists in a discerning of spirits, as well as in the loving acceptance of whatever the Lord of history wills to make real precisely in this age of ours. It also involves a use of the critical faculties to set on one side all elements of error and sinfulness in this reality, with which woman is presented in history. Woman, therefore, in that she is made inalienably responsible for the performance of this task has to adopt a complex attitude in which she both gives herself to, and withholds herself from the historical reality with which she is confronted. But she can only achieve this if she really lives by the grace of God and the truth of the gospel.

The present age, however, does not hesitate to impose upon life patterns which are, in the most intense degree, the outcome of conscious thought and deliberation, and for this reason a task such as we have outlined above demands the highest thought and deliberation likewise. Moreover this is a fresh task, and is laid upon woman herself. And for these reasons the manner in which the task is performed must be consciously religious and spiritual today to an extent which did not need to be demanded in earlier ages. To this end a certain theological knowledge is required, though today the situation is different from those former ages in which only those of the male sex who had official positions in the Church could have such knowledge at their command. That capacity for illuminating and critical speculation which is needful for the solution of the problems confronting [91] women must be present, therefore, in woman herself as the person responsible for carrying out the task. In spite of the fact that the official Church continues undismayed to preach the principles of Christianity, there are today a thousand moral questions and problems which can only be solved by the individual Christian himself in the concrete realities of his own life, and which, moreover, must be solved in that context even when this Christian has accepted the norms and principles declared by the official Church as the true expression of the Spirit which moves him personally in a clear attitude of obedient faith. But for this purpose it is necessary that there shall be in the layman, and therefore in woman too, *a far deeper theological awareness*, a far more direct and more living contact with scripture, a far more autonomous exercise of moral decision than in former ages. It is vitally important, indeed indispensable, that women shall mutually impart one to another a deepened awareness of the Christian faith of this kind, and over and above this a certain mystical insight into the original Christian experience. For what is in question here is precisely not merely the imparting of some theoretical or abstract

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knowledge of the norms of faith and morals, but rather the imparting of a kind of religious knowledge that can already be characterised as existential and is directly assimilable, one which, therefore, so far as woman is concerned, must already bear precisely a feminine stamp. In saying this we have no intention of conjuring up a vision of learned women theologians well-versed in science. The catechists, teachers of religious knowledge, mothers with children to instruct and women leaders of bible-reading circles, etc., are just as indispensable.

3. The contemporary age of the Church will demand from woman as a member of the Church that she shall devise a kind of religious life which is clear enough to understand and powerful enough in practice really to be lived effectively. Of course the requirement as stated here applies just as much to men as to women, because the basic forms of life in the present, and the forms of religious life corresponding to these, are the same for men and women alike. Nevertheless particular mention must be made of this requirement in this context because the special characteristics of the feminine nature, or what many women or many members of the clergy too, regard as typically feminine qualities might seem incompatible in some respect or other with a form of devotion and of religious life which has been made conformable to the present age in the manner described. Not only the men but the women of the present [92] age too, must learn to live in a situation of religious diaspora. They must learn that faith as it exists today is under attack. That it must be a faith that is constantly striven for anew, and that this is not incompatible with its true nature or its firmness and constancy. Both for her own sake and on behalf of those entrusted to her care woman must learn that faith is not a kind of folklore, not in any sense like the sort of heritage of local customs that are handed down from one generation to the next, and which woman's temperament and her readiness to find security in what she can take for granted make her particularly prone to opt for. But woman must learn that so far from this faith is in fact the exercise of the most elemental, radical and irreversible kind of decision.

Religion as practised by women, if it is to convince the world as being genuine, must be discreet and restrained. It must not make any false claims as being immediately obvious. It must establish its credentials in the sober realities of everyday life. There must be no attempt to suppress the specifically feminine qualities which legitimately belong to this approach to religion in favour of a kind of religion that is masculine in character. It must clearly be rooted in the sources of scripture and the classic spiritual teaching of the Church. It must accept that which is of decisive importance and which must have a decisive influence for what it is and let that which is secondary and immaterial be secondary and immaterial. Even though this faith may rightly involve great solicitude and great fear for the salvation of the woman's husband and children, and perhaps for relatives too, when these have fallen into unbelief, still it must be the faith of a bold and trustful hope that God's grace can still be effective in saving men even in those cases in which we can no longer perceive it at work. Woman's faith and the expression of her religious life must be joyful. It must not seem to be a false substitute for what life has denied to her in purely human terms. It must not appear to be the means by which she maintains a false kind of self-assertion and self-justification as though she had been denied the opportunity of a real task in life. In her religion she must discover the source within herself the grace which from the very outset her human heart has received into its innermost depths as life and love, and she will experience it there as a supernatural vocation to share in the life of God himself though this is not incompatible with the fact that she will also experience and endure her habitual down-to-earth everyday life as well. *Religion must not appear as a kind of ideological superstructure*, such that, if it were removed, the life that still [93] continued without it would be the same as the lives of those who do not believe or suppose that they do not believe.

I realise that I have not said much, and this may be due to my own limitations. But I also

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believe that we must and should have patience with an age of uncertainty, in which fresh quests have constantly to be embarked upon. It is at once the task and the grace of the Christian to hold out, in this way, without falling into any attitude of embittered cynicism in which he allows everything to take its course. It is his task and his grace in a world which will always remain characterised by darkness and guilt. Today there is much of which we have a clearer and more penetrating knowledge than in earlier times. But our lot in the present is not really harder than that of earlier generations, in which all too often the only attitude possible for man was one of a dumb and silent acceptance of his lot. Then there was much in his life which he simply had to accept without question. Above all he was unable even to raise the question as to whether and how he could do something to alter the life to which he was subjected.

Not the least important of the factors contributing to the new situation in which the Church finds herself is the altered structures of contemporary life in the purely profane sphere. It is a situation which provides fresh opportunities for woman to question her own lot. What woman is or should be is a matter for woman herself to decide, and it is better to wait in patience than to provide over-hasty or ill-considered answers. When we do what we can to understand ourselves, and in doing this do not forget that God is greater than our own heart and our own deeds, then in truth, even though we may not always yet know how the future will turn out, still we should trust in the fact that the future in the ultimate and definitive sense holds nothing else for us than the protection and the love of God.

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6

ON THE SITUATION OF THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL

The aim which we have set ourselves in the modest essay which follows is to make certain observations about the position of the Catholic 'intellectual' in the world of ideas, and also about the tasks which he has to perform. It is no part of our intention here to look into the problems of the 'intellectuals' in the realms of sociology or political theory. The area which we have set ourselves to investigate is narrower and less complex than this. What we mean by the term 'intellectual' in this context is simply the 'professor' and the 'scientist' in the broadest sense. For this reason all the three designations which we have used are used in the same sense. Theory and science are factors which affect the lives of all men of the present age, but here we are envisaging the kind of Catholic for whom theory and science have an even greater significance. He is one who has dedicated himself to the pursuit of science in one or other of its departments and made it his central interest and the object of his life's work. We are presupposing that the sort of scientist we have in mind is a Christian and a believing Catholic. The subject into which we are enquiring, therefore, is not the relationship which exists between the unbelieving scientist on the one hand and Christianity and the Church on the other, a relationship, therefore, which has certainly undergone a number of changes from the Church's side as a result of the Second Vatican Council. We are enquiring into the situation of a scientist who is at the same time a convinced Christian and into the sort of tasks which confront such an one, and this to the extent that the scientific life of an intellectual is also of significance for his life as a Christian, while conversely the fact that he is a Christian also has its significance for his life in the world of science. If both spheres of his life were completely separated one from the other and simply existed side by side without either of them having any significance for the other then this question [95] would simply not arise at all. Likewise a question of this kind could not be posed if both departments in the life of the Christian intellectual were simply identical one with the other. It is therefore to be taken as axiomatic for our whole approach to the problem that there is both difference and mutual interconnection between both these objective factors in the life of the intellectual. We shall not be making this axiom an object of investigation in its own right here, even though in the course of our considerations it is inevitable that we shall constantly be touching upon it.

I

The first point that must be stated with regard to the situation of the intellectual in the Church and in relation to the Church is the principle that as a result of the Second Vatican Council a wider sphere of intellectual freedom now lies open to him than was formerly the case. We are not, of course, thinking here of an explicit formal declaration to the effect that this sphere of freedom open to the intellectual in the Church has been expanded in this way, but rather of a broadening which has in fact taken place in the concrete, or, to put it another way, of the fact that the Church and her official representatives have been willing boldly to allow that freedom in thought and research which has always been permitted in principle, but which is now a concrete and practical reality as well.

In order correctly to evaluate the real though limited significance of the fact to which we are referring we must first of all recognise that there has been scope for thought and research to be carried on freely in this way. The First Vatican Council itself explicitly taught that the

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methods of arriving at human knowledge proceeded from a multiplicity of sources, and rejected the idea that revelation was the sole and unique source of the sort of knowledge that was significant for human living. The Church herself (in this opposing in part the findings of Protestant theology) has never presented saving history, revelation and faith in such a way that these realities could from the outset have no points of contact with the secular sciences, or, conversely, that there could be no cases in which secular science could have any contribution to make by being brought into the discussion of the Christian faith. When we ask, therefore, what the relationship is between secular knowledge (including knowledge of God from natural causes) and faith (theology) we must say that each is fundamentally and right from the outset different from the other and [96] possessing its own autonomy, but at the same time that there is a mutual interconnection between them. But we must also recognise that the situation between them is one in which sincere dialogue is possible, and that concrete and positive results may accrue from this. It is also one of conflict, though of a conflict which, while it may not be possible to solve it straightway, is not in principle impossible to solve. All this means that in view of the fact of the relative autonomy of faith, theology and the Church on the one hand, and of profane science on the other, the former must accord to the latter a sphere of freedom for its own thought and action, and that too not merely in questions which are from the outset of no concern to faith and theology, but also in respect of the problems and conclusions of the secular sciences, natural sciences and human sciences which certainly do have a relevance, and perhaps a very vital one, for faith and theology, and therefore for the Church as well. As has been said, in principle the Church and her theologians have always conceded to the secular sciences this scope for freedom. In principle the Church has always allowed questions and challenges to be addressed to her by the exponents of the secular sciences, has been willing to enter into dialogue with science, and has regarded this dialogue as important for her own faith, her life, and the tasks confronting her.

But this attitude has remained at the level of principle alone. It has never been put into practice in the Church's concrete life. Even though this basic principle has never been radically opposed, in the manner in which it is applied in practice it is possible to grant a greater or a lesser degree of freedom, and Christians can bring a greater or lesser degree of courage to bear in coming to grips with the problems, whether real or supposed, raised by the conclusions of the sciences. It can be that in particular instances a dialogue of this kind is broken off too precipitately or that Christians are over-hasty in believing that they have a ready-made answer to some question, some problem raised by the sciences and put to believers to solve. To that extent it can probably be said with some confidence that as a result of the Second Vatican Council courage and readiness to enter into dialogue with the secular sciences has increased in the official Church even with regard to questions which are 'ideologically' important. She is readier now to face up to the questions and conclusions of the modern sciences in all their branches, and not to be too hasty in giving a theological answer to such questions, to give due value to the position of the Christian scientist which in some circumstances can be so [97] full of difficulty and strain, and finally not to underestimate or evade the real problems with which she is confronted. This is already apparent from the Pastoral Constitution, 'On the Church in the World Today', where the Church takes cognizance in a far clearer and more explicit manner than formerly of the existence, extent and significance of the sciences for the modern world, which is also the situation in which the Church herself is placed (cf. Nos. 7, 53f.). She recognises '… the enormous growth of natural, human and social sciences' (No. 54). She recognises that 'The so-called exact sciences sharpen critical judgment to a very fine edge. Recent psychological research explains human activity more profoundly. Historical studies make a signal contribution to bringing men to see things in their changeable and evolutionary aspects' (No.

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54). She clearly acknowledges the autonomy of these sciences, which today are no longer at the level of mere theory, but actually provide the means and incentive for a transformation of the human sphere of existence planned and carried through by man himself and indeed for man to manipulate and re-shape *himself* according to his own preconceived plan (No. 56 f.). The Church recognises the ethos proper to the scientist: to be scrupulously careful to preserve truth in his scientific investigations, the need for teamwork, which today has become indispensable, the spirit of international solidarity, an awareness of the responsibility of specialists which is becoming ever clearer (No. 57). The Church realises the importance of the secular sciences for theology and of the necessity for theology to enter into dialogue with them (No. 62). 'For recent studies and findings of science, history, and philosophy raise new questions which influence life and demand new theological investigations … In pastoral care too appropriate use must be made not only of theological principles, but also of the findings of the secular sciences, especially of psychology and sociology … Let them (the faithful) blend modern science and its theories and the understanding of the most recent discoveries with Christian morality and doctrine. Thus their religious practice and morality can keep pace with their scientific knowledge and with an ever-advancing technology. Thus too, they (the faithful) will be able to test and interpret all things in a truly Christian spirit … In order that such persons (Christian scientists) may fulfil their proper function let it be recognised that all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of enquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence' (No. 62).

[98] It is the will of the Church, then, to pay due attention to the secular sciences of today in their whole range. She recognizes the swiftness of their development and their significance for the whole of human life and therefore for Christian living as well, a significance which is still continually increasing. Thus she wishes to grant these sciences genuine scope and freedom for research, for speculation and for the expression of opinion. But this attitude of hers has found expression in the Second Vatican Council not merely in declarations of principle of the kind which we have quoted, but also in the concrete approach adopted by the members of the Council. Thus, for instance, in the preparatory documents made ready before the Council commenced a particular attitude was adopted upon the question of so-called monogenism, the question namely of whether there was a single human couple at the beginning of the history of mankind or whether humanity originated in many human couples appearing independently of one another. But in the actual Council itself a quite different approach to this question was adopted. Previous explanations were abandoned and the Council fathers deliberately avoided pronouncing upon this question, and so left it open so far as the Council itself was concerned. Again on the question of marital ethics the experts have come to be extremely cautious in their approach to the question of what degree of moral responsibility modern man has to bear in this area in view of the modern population explosion and the social situation as a whole into which mankind is moving as it becomes increasingly bound together in a real and effective unity. In the Dogmatic Constitution 'On Divine Revelation' the members of the Council have been prudent indeed, but still far bolder than formerly, in taking cognizance of the findings and methods evolved by the contemporary sciences of history and philosophy as well as by modern exegetes and biblical scholars, and in applying these to the sacred books of Christendom. There is a new desire that in the specialised departments of systematic theology too, the history of dogma shall be explored and the questions of the historical origin and development of the teaching of the faith shall be approached more boldly and clearer conclusions shall be arrived at than has formerly been the case. There is a new and genuine desire to enter effectively into dialogue with the theologians of the non-Catholic Christian bodies in order to establish the conditions necessary for a genuine and unprejudiced study of Orthodox and Evangelical theology. In Catholic

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theology too, it is explicitly acknowledged that there can be differing schools and differing approaches – indeed that [99] there should be such; that Christian theology should not merely be the product of Western culture, but should have to enter into dialogue with the philosophy and wisdom of non-European cultures as well. In respect both of its theological approach and of the questions it raises the Council has avoided identifying itself simply with the idiom and approach of neo-Scholastic theology as this has been practised almost universally in the Church for the past fifteen hundred years. With regard to the theology of Thomas Aquinas in particular, in spite of the fact that his works have been quoted from time to time in the Council documents and that at one point there is a very brief and cautious recommendation to follow his teaching, he has been given a far less significant place in the theological curriculum than was accorded to him by Roman theologians before the Council. However highly we may prize the teaching of Aquinas, we still have to be realistic enough to face this as a sheer matter of fact. In a word, in practice as well as in theory the Council has subscribed to the principles of autonomy and freedom for the secular sciences, and has thereby shown its readiness to enter into genuine and candid dialogue with them. This would become still clearer if we could examine in detail the Pastoral Constitution 'On the Church in the World Today', especially the second part of this Constitution. Here we find a discussion of such questions as marriage and the family, the just demand for advances in civilisation and culture, human life in its economic and social aspects, the political systems by which communal life is regulated, peace and unity between peoples. The manner in which all these questions are handled is such that it entails a dialogue with those sciences to which these questions are of particular concern as a matter of worldly experience. This becomes all the clearer when it is remembered that the Constitution shows itself aware of the fact that it is quite impossible to find a concrete solution to all these questions on the basis of revelation alone. The only way of arriving at such a conclusion is to provide in all cases a synthesis appropriate to the needs of the particular epoch between an ultimately Christian orientation on the one hand, and that concrete 'this-worldly' experience on the other, which is, today in particular, so largely subject to control by secular science.

It would, however, be both un-Christian and untheological as well as unfair if one were willing to abandon everything for the sake of this increase in the real scope and freedom for thought and research made available to the Christian scientist, and for the sake of friendly dialogue [100] between the Church and the representatives of secular science. If we are to be both Catholic and honest we must add to all that has been said hitherto that the Catholic Church even now never ceases to regard herself as an 'absolute system', and that in a sense every bit as decisive as formerly, although the term 'absolute system' which we have chosen is intentionally a somewhat provocative one, and needs to be taken in the right sense. We may even adopt the jargon of Marxism and say that the Church is not some kind of debating society in which one can say anything, call anything in question and continually introduce radical alterations of every kind. The Church is aware of her role as the absolute and definitive self-bestowal of God in Jesus Christ made present in the here and now, as she who receives the saving deed of God for mankind in faith and proclaims it as a deed so final that the only thing still to come is its own definitive consummation. This will take the form of a direct and immediate confrontation with God in the kingdom of God himself which is without end, and which no longer belongs to the changing course of the history of this world. To this extent the Church will continue to claim the allegiance of her members in just as absolute a sense in the future as she has in the past when she asserts that she is vested with absolute authority as their teacher. But what of those who, in obedience to the dictates of their own consciences with regard to truth, have to refuse this claim of the Church to be the bearer of absolute and binding truth in this sense? For such as these the Church's claim is not in the concrete absolute or binding in duty upon their individual consciences at all. But then they

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cannot really be Catholic Christians at all either. Basically speaking they have no really compelling reason for wishing to associate themselves with the Church as members of her flock. Conversely, the intellectual, the scientist who is really following the dictates of his own conscience in deciding to be a Catholic Christian cannot set himself up in opposition to the declared teaching of the Church, or to the Church's teaching authority, as though he were nothing more than one party in a dialogue such as might lead to any and every kind of conclusion or to no conclusion at all. This is a kind of dialogue in which one of the partners can, in certain circumstances, draw conclusions that are authoritative and binding in conscience upon the other. The ultimate authority of the Church herself can only be real and effective in its application to a given individual and a Christian if, independently of this authority, he recognises that it is his religious and moral duty to acknowledge the Church herself. But once he has accepted [101] this authority he can no longer refuse the pronouncements of the Church upon specific questions upon the pretext that the grounds adduced by the Church for making this pronouncement are insufficiently cogent so far as he is concerned. In fact in the last analysis it is not for the individual, not even for the individual scientist, to discover what can be believed and thought in the Church. Rather it is for the Church herself, constituted as a society by the Pope and bishops who are her representatives and who embody her teaching authority to discover this. But she does this through them, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised to her, by consciously explicitating the content of her own faith and so deciding what is or is not reconcilable with that content in the findings of secular science. Nevertheless the believing Catholic who is a scientist is not afraid on that account that by acknowledging the binding force of the Church's teaching authority he must necessarily arrive at a radical and absolutely irreconcilable conflict. On the one hand, it is true, he has in principle acknowledged the teaching authority of the Church, and the effect of this is that he also gives his interior assent to the concrete decisions of that teaching authority in individual cases, while on the other hand he has to maintain the integrity of his conscience as a scientist with regard to truth, and this obliges him as an intellectual to accept and publicly to uphold any assured scientific conclusions which he has arrived at, and also to conduct his researches without prejudice. But these two factors in his life do not necessarily create an irreconcilable conflict within him. For the Catholic Christian proceeds from the justifiable presupposition (which is necessary in other contexts too), that two recognised and assured truths cannot contradict one another even though they may have been arrived at by quite different processes of reasoning. There is a further principle which the Catholic Christian rightly takes as axiomatic, and which, moreover, is not controverted by history. This is that the Spirit of the Church prevents her from teaching in an absolute or definitive manner, such as requires the assent of faith from the Catholic Christian as a matter of duty, anything which is proved by the subsequent findings of science to be in reality false, and which therefore has to be abandoned. Admittedly in this connection the Catholic Christian recognises that the teaching authority of the Church is justified in sparing no efforts to preserve divine revelation in its fulness and purity, and is, indeed, bound to do this, and he finds no embarrassment in reckoning with the possibility that to this end the Church can produce provisional and non-definitive [102] decisions which are subsequently proved to be either false or exaggerated in their formulation or else too one-sided, measured by the genuine findings of science, which they only seem to deny. There is a further factor which the Catholic Christian, no less than the genuine scientist, can and must take into account. This is that those findings of his science which seem to be assured remain, in the last analysis, always open to future revision when different methods are applied and in the light of new experiences and conclusions. Moreover this revision may be extremely radical in its effects, and may even necessitate that the original formulation of the scientific findings concerned actually has to be abandoned altogether.

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It is not possible at this point to develop the 'case history' involved in this problem in detail, to provide a fully developed answer to the question of what the attitude of a Catholic scientist should be in order to be both Catholic and at the same time a scientist in the true sense. This becomes a problem in cases in which there seems to be a contradiction between a decision on the part of the teaching authorities of the Church on the one hand, and a scientific conclusion which he has arrived at on the other. The decision of the Church may, indeed, only be provisional. It may be capable of 'revision' by the Church herself. But nevertheless at the time it is, in a true sense, binding in conscience upon him. Again the scientific conclusion may either seem to be assured or be so in real fact. But in any case the effect is that he is faced with a conflict which, though ultimately and basically capable of solution, seems at the time to be irreconcilable. What attitude is he to adopt in such a case? Only a few scattered observations bearing on this problem can be offered here. But we are in a position to confine ourselves to these few observations because, as a matter of concrete fact, it seems that at this particular point in history there is a total absence of any such cases of conflict, at any rate in the realm of the natural sciences (admittedly it is easier to conceive of a concrete instance of conflict even today in the area of the historical sciences. But then again, in view of the fact that historical conclusions remain problematical and always open to further revision, a conflict in this area is less intolerable). But to commence: It is often taken as axiomatic by secular science as well as by the exponents of a kind of Christian apologetics which is too brash and self-assured in its approach, that in every case where a conflict seems to arise between secular science and the teaching of the Church, it must always be possible to find a clear and obvious solution straight away. But this is not so. It is perfectly possible that both the theologian and the [103] scientist (who is, *ex hypothesi*, a Catholic in this case), are convinced that the seeming conflict is ultimately capable of solution, even though so far they have not been able to discover where the solution lies. In such a case it is necessary for them to have respect for, and patience with one another. In fact similar cases do arise, in which the conclusions of one particular science seem to be in conflict with those of another. Such a situation as is envisaged here, therefore, should not occasion surprise, and does not justify the scientist in every case in bitterly protesting against an allegedly reactionary attitude on the part of the theologian. It is also understandable that the tempo at which the content of the Church's faith becomes consciously explicitated is different from that which is possible in the secular sciences of today. And again even the modern scientist, if he intends to conduct his intellectual life as a Catholic, must today have a certain knowledge and a certain understanding of the 'theological qualifications' as they are called in theological parlance. As in other spheres of human life so too in the theology of the Church the Church herself is aware that it is not always, or necessarily the case that a given statement is either absolutely and certainly true, or else that it has no binding force whatever and can be left to the caprice of the individual to accept or not as he wishes. There are statements which cannot of themselves claim to have an absolute binding force in the realm of theology, and which, nevertheless, have to be respected both in theory and also in the practice of one's life. There are many statements in Catholic teaching which, while they do not in any sense amount to an absolute dogma such as has to be responded to with a totally unconditional assent of faith, still do, on the other hand, have a definite degree of binding force for the Catholic believer. For the intellectual this means that he cannot simply abolish such statements from his mind as matters of indifference which are, from the outset, irrelevant to him and to his work, even though he may find it difficult to reconcile them in any clear sense with his scientific views. Situations may even arise in which it is not altogether clear whether a given statement really is a dogma or merely a doctrine which, though it has a certain degree of binding force, is, nevertheless, capable of revision. On these grounds alone it can be realised how necessary it is for theologians and scientists of all branches to enter into dialogue with each other. This is

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the only way in which problems still open to discussion can profitably be viewed, in which the real meaning of the Church's teaching can be shielded from misunderstandings (and these can also [104] arise on the side of the theologians), in which the precise degree of binding force which a given theological doctrine may have becomes clearer, and so on.

II

What we have said up to this point does not, of course, cover every aspect of the situation of the Catholic intellectual in the period following the Second Vatican Council. But we are compelled to break off our attempts to describe this situation at this point because we still have something further to say about the task of the Catholic scientist. To begin with we must enunciate a principle which may seem to be self-evident but is not so in reality, namely that the Catholic intellectual can and must accept the fact that he, just as much as other intellectuals, is a scientist who belongs to the present world. His life, no less than theirs, has this significance. We have said that this seems to be self-evident, and certainly there are many Catholic scientists who do not experience any problem in this. They accept unquestioningly their status as scientists dedicated to their field of enquiry. Side by side with this they have a further status of being sincere Christians and men of religion, in the same sense as they obviously have, in addition to their status as scientists, the further status of being husbands and wives, fathers, men with musical interests, citizens, perhaps sportsmen, etc. But this 'interior pluralism' in the individual in itself entails a problem, especially when it is a question of a pluralism of status involving the individual's religious commitment and task on the one hand, and his worldly calling on the other. It is precisely the sincerely religious man who, faced with this pluralism, can ask himself 'How do all these different aspects of my life fit together? Ought I not, right from the outset, to be directing all my activities and efforts in the world, together with the goals I set myself and the results I achieve in these, to a single supreme goal with which my religion presents me? Ought not all these activities to be permeated and inspired by a religious motivation, to be done for the "honour of God" and the "salvation of my neighbour"? Ought not my whole life to be stamped explicitly and directly with my Christianity?' To these questions it must be replied: A Christian scientist must indeed have present in his heart an ultimate awareness that his life is *ultimately* orientated to God, and that God himself has made him responsible for the way in which he conducts his life as a whole. But if [105] he really understands his own Christianity in a wholly Christian sense it must be no less clear to him that in his scientific work he not only may, but actually must also live a life that is genuinely 'worldly'. Even the scientist who is a convinced Christian does not need constantly to be asking himself in his scientific work: 'What direct contribution are my researches making to the salvation either of my own soul or of the souls of others?' He needs to be sustained in his work by a spirit of enquiry in the purely worldly sense, a desire for new knowledge. And he should give himself unreservedly to this, even though it has no direct relevance to his beliefs at the ideological level. In other words, even in his science he must help to construct a world that is 'worldly'. It might seem to be Christian and pious to wish to let religion enter directly and explicitly into everything always and every-where, and to be 'religious' even in one's approach to the material realities with which one has to cope in the achievement of one's aims. But in reality this is a measure of the degree to which the finite creature refuses to entrust the ultimate unity of its own life to the mystery of God, choosing instead to retain control of this for itself. Perhaps, therefore, we may be permitted to formulate the matter as follows: The scientist does not need to submit his science to interrogation by the Church as to what contribution it makes in the fields of apologetics and ecclesiastical politics. In the last analysis he has already done enough in this

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regard if he is a really sound scientist and a convinced Christian at the same time.

For the Christian scientist of today it is, furthermore, of great importance that he really knows what it is which he believes and lives as a Christian. It is important that he does not continually labour under the impression that his science, both in its individual tenets in the concrete and still more in the general attitude of criticism appropriate to a scientist, exists in a situation more or less of conflict with his Christian faith. And precisely for this reason it is necessary that the idea which he has of his own Christianity is one which does not from the outset come into conflict with the contemporary outlook, characterised as it is by a spirit of scientific investigation. To ensure this it is necessary that the scientist in particular sees clearly that the Christian faith is at basis not a huge amalgam of complicated doctrines and propositions which are in constant and imminent danger of coming into conflict with the questions and findings of the various sciences. Certainly in our introductory remarks we laid emphasis upon the fact that in one's understanding of Catholicism one [106] cannot simply relegate the content of the Christian faith to an 'other-worldly' sphere in such a way that right from the first it has no point of contact whatever, and so no possibility of coming into conflict with that reality with which the sciences are concerned. Nevertheless Christianity, rightly understood, is something very simple. The Second Vatican Council has actually formulated it as follows: Man has to recognise that he who has been withdrawn from a state of sinfulness, encounters the mystery of the love of God imparted to him in Jesus Christ. We can also express the matter by saying: Man is aware of himself as a free and responsible being, as one who can fall into sin. He knows that no science, however sublime and however worth striving for it may be in its results, can ever comprehend or define in any adequate sense what man is as a whole, as he brings himself to his fulness as a whole and single entity in his life. Man knows that the sources of his conscious being are based on an absolute mystery which encompasses him, and that he dwells in this mystery whom we call God. The message of Christianity to this man is that the eternal mystery of his being, which is called God, not only encompasses his existence as the horizon, eternally distant, of all that he can think of or control in his life, but actually gives itself to this spiritual existence of his in the form of grace and eternal life to impart to this existence a value that is eternal, to blot out his sins and to make itself his own. Christianity asserts further that this self-bestowal of God in the Spirit of God has been made manifest in history and has been made firm and irrevocable in Jesus Christ, the man whom we recognise as him in whom God has definitively made himself present in our history. This is the real substance of Christianity, the basis on which the whole complex hierarchy of truths pertaining to the Christian faith rests, that hierarchy of which the Second Vatican Council speaks. All these truths are credible and able to be accepted by the spirit only to the extent that they maintain a constant and living connection with this true kernel of Christianity. Once we have realised this we can then go on to realise that this faith in the self-bestowal of God the grace which achieves its definitive manifestation in history in the person of Jesus Christ constitutes a community of those who believe which can legitimately claim to trace its origins back through history to Jesus Christ himself, and which assembles itself about him. We can further perceive that this community expresses its faith in the form of a credal confession and cult, and that it has a form of leadership which corresponds to the eschatological and indestructible nature of this community [107] of believers considered as the enduring presence of Christ himself. All this becomes, in fact, in a true sense self-evident, once we realise what constitutes the heart and essence of Christianity, and provided we do not misunderstand the nature of man himself by taking it in a sense that is over-individualist and so utterly out of date by contemporary standards. Moreover for a mature and realistic man it no longer occasions any surprise that this community of faith, made up as it is of men, even though it is gathered together about the God-man himself and in his Spirit, nevertheless has to bear the burden of history, of factors which are all too human,

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and the difficulty of constantly having to adjust the relationship between the individual and the social factors in this community anew. If we take Christianity in this sense, and view it from what is its true heart and essence, and if in so doing we make allowances for human nature in all its dimensions, then there is certainly nothing in the nature of Christianity which could be said to be irreconcilable with the mentality of contemporary man when this is realistic, rational and, in the best sense, critical. All that Christianity demands of modern man is that he shall not restrict himself in his reasoning exclusively to the data of science and to that which can be technically manipulated. It demands of him that he shall recognise that at the centre of his own existence a Mystery lies concealed, and one which ought to be responded to with adoration and love, that he shall have the courage to believe in the self-bestowal of this Mystery made immediately present and close to him, and to direct his life in hope towards a future that is absolute.

We have said at an earlier stage that the Christian precisely as such can and must be bold enough to be thoroughly and unreservedly 'worldly' in his approach to his science, and not to seek to give it a directly religious orientation. But this is not to deny that science as such can and must also be a *praeparatio evangelii*, a way into what is specifically Christian. An anthropology that is Christian rightly contests the view that human life in its entirety can be regarded as sacralised, and teaches that the explicitly religious and ecclesiastical factors in human life represent one section of it, and not the whole. But precisely this same Christian anthropology does teach that there is a concealed consecration of the whole of human life, in other words that the effect of grace upon human life in all its dimensions causes it to be open to the immediate influence of God, and to have an interior impulse which pushes it towards God's immediate presence, the only proviso here being that the individual concerned has [108] accepted, if only in a quite subconscious and unexplicitated manner, the ultimate Mystery of his existence in a spirit of obedience, hope and love, and has thereby been 'justified'. But for human life in all its dimensions to be open in this way to 'consecration' from above it is not necessary that it shall invariably and in all cases be interpreted in an explicitly religious sense. All dimensions of human life are, from the outset, subsumed, even though, it may be, only in the subconscious, in the unity and ultimate orientation imparted by the radical decision which man himself takes in response to the self-bestowal of God which is offered to him. This of itself is enough. Over and above this there is a basic ethos for the true scientist which has an intrinsic connection with the ultimate attitude of the Christian, and which causes him to exercise this basic attitude again and again in the concrete way in which he conducts his life. The will to truth, the determination to be self-critical, the basic realism which causes him to distinguish between what really is known and what is not, the attitude of reverence towards that which is not, and of its nature cannot be, explored, the attitude of objectivity and of a sense of responsibility, the resolve to serve truth rather than one's own prejudices – these and similar attitudes are indeed not gifts which belong to any and every individual who calls himself a scientist, and who may, perhaps, achieve very noteworthy successes in his special field. But they are attitudes which are certainly demanded by science as such, if one still understands science in a sense that is genuinely human, and they are attitudes which can be practised in the process of 'proving oneself daily in hard service' in the field of science. But such attitudes are not only human but Christian too. In virtue of the grace of God which constantly precedes all human activities such attitudes are always and of themselves open to the ineffable Mystery of God as he imparts himself to us. If then the scientist approaches his science in this way as a genuinely human activity, then the scientific work which he actually accomplishes and the goal which he sets himself to achieve, while remaining fully and uncompromisingly 'this-worldly' in character, are, nevertheless, Christian too, in their significance, even though this may be only implicit and at the subconscious level. And the explicit Christianity of such a scientist is properly speaking

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nothing else than the true self-realisation of his own humanity, already subconsciously divinised by the grace of God, which he achieves and develops in his actual scientific work.

Over and above this the position of the scientist must be one of genuine [109] dialogue with the Church, and even of active collaboration with her. It may be that references to the 'apostolate of the laity' in the Church and with the Church have connotations which are displeasing to modern man, and most of all to a scientist. They do sound – even though this may be against the genuine basic meaning of such references – as though the mission of God to man may all too easily be interpreted in terms of a brash propaganda, an egoistic self-assertion on the Church's part in the struggle for power in society, of striving for prestige, of intruding upon the privacy of others in the sphere of religion. Of course, such attitudes are most of all repugnant to a scientist. But what the Church really means by the 'apostolate of the laity', and so of the scientist too, can be expressed even without references of this kind. What is really meant by this can, of course, not be developed in its total extent and all its aspects at this point. Here we must confine ourselves to mentioning a few specific points which have a special urgency for today. The scientist should not shrink from a dialogue with the officially established Church. He should put his knowledge and his experience at the Church's disposal. Admittedly more opportunities must be provided for this in the concrete than was formerly the case, even to the point of setting up permanent institutions for the purpose. The established representatives of the Church's authority should be borne up by the conviction that today it is no longer possible for the leadership of the Church to be conducted in a paternalist manner, and solely on the basis of their own abilities and experience of life. At this time, rather, in which human life has achieved an extreme degree of complexity, there is a need to supplement this by systematically planned experiment and research such as can only be achieved by methods which have been scientifically proved. But scientists in every field must be ready to place themselves at the disposal of the established authorities in the Church. They must themselves take the initiative in making the sort of contacts which are necessary for the Church's authorities to be equipped with information of this kind. The situation is not in fact such that every science and every scientific finding has in the concrete the same degree of ideological or ecclesiastical significance, or that the Christian scientist has to evaluate the importance of his own particular science according to the degree of its importance for the Church. Nor should he use such a criterion in determining what lines of investigation to follow in his science, what aims to set himself, etc. But when we survey the chief and basic branches of the natural, social and human sciences, then we are [110] forced to recognise that all of them have a real significance for the Church too, for her official policy and for her preaching of the gospel inasmuch as this is adapted to the special needs of the age. Earlier the Church could help herself in this regard by ensuring that she always had a sufficient number of specialists in the various branches of science, even among the ranks of the clergy. Today, however, there are various factors which render this ever more impossible of attainment. Today the dialogue between Church and science must be a dialogue between her established authorities on the one hand and scientists who are laymen on the other. Indeed it will soon be the case that in many questions there will not be enough Catholic scientists even in the ranks of the laity, and the Church will be forced to seek her information without embarrassment even from those who are not Christians at all. This is not the place to adduce examples showing what the implications of this can be in the concrete. One such example is sufficient to show that the Church is genuinely in earnest in entering into dialogue with science. It is that of the commission summoned by the Pope to prepare an official declaration of the Church on the problems entailed by the increase in population and family problems, including that of legitimate methods of regulating births. Here not only theologians but also physicians, sociologists, psychologists, etc., were brought together to constitute a *single* commission which often met for weeks at a time. Moreover there was full freedom of

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discussion, and the findings of these specialists were genuinely not already laid down *a priori*.

Of course, for the scientist to make a constructive and critical contribution of this kind to the discharge of the Church's task in the contemporary world it is not always necessary to set up an official and institutionalised structure of this kind. Certainly there are many other and simpler forms which such collaboration can take. To a large extent, in fact, the educated man and so the scientist exercises a decisive influence upon public opinion in the Church, errors in which, as Pius XII has actually said, would be damaging to the Church in the highest degree. The scientist should be aware of his own significance and so of his responsibility in shaping public opinion of this kind in the Church, and should take this responsibility seriously. To a large extent the mission and task of the Christian scientist in the present age covers the same ground as the mission and task which every intelligent man of responsibility and good will ascribes to the scientist in general in the sphere of human, social and political life. [111] It can be stated with confidence: If the Catholic scientist of today is true to his duty and task in its human aspects in his science then he has already to a large extent fulfilled his Christian task as a scientist. It can be understood that the officially constituted Church cannot lay down any very concrete directives or rules for the Christian scientist as to how he should fulfil this task of his in its human aspects. This is something which must to a large extent be left to his own specialised knowledge and his personal conscience alone to decide. But the fulfilment of this task, which has to be discharged by the mature Christian as his own personal one, can in the case of the Catholic scientist be inspired by his faith and supported by a specifically Christian attitude on his part. In his case it is not only demanded by merely humanistic considerations but by his responsibility before God and by his awareness that all science must, in the last analysis, serve the interests of humanity, for man has a validity in God's eyes that is eternal, and to serve him represents an absolute value which does not disappear when the finite history of the individual or of mankind comes to an end. In the case of the Christian he is upheld in the fulfilment of the task by the religious conviction that every service of love on man's part is an actualisation of his love for the eternal God. And when he performs a service for his neighbour as part of the service which it is always the duty of all science to perform, it has for him as a Christian this significance of also being an act of love for God.

It has not been possible here, and probably it would not have been desirable either, to provide a detailed presentation of what the Second Vatican Council has to say about the scientist, his value and his task in the Pastoral Constitution 'On the Church in the World Today', or to comment on the individual points in this Constitution. In conclusion let us refer once more to the actual Constitution itself. It may be that the scientist, when he reads the relevant passages in this Constitution, might have the impression that all that it contains is self-evident propositions (here as also elsewhere). But the genuine scientist understands that it is good when he is not overloaded with detailed prescriptions as to how he should live his life, and he knows that that which is most obvious of all in theory with regard to the reverence due to truth and to his fellow men, and with regard to love and service, is in practice the most difficult of all tasks. Yet it is precisely this which is laid upon the scientist no less than upon others.

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[112]

7

THE TASK OF THE WRITER IN RELATION TO CHRISTIAN LIVING

The essay which follows is concerned with the role of the creative writer or author. It is permissible to include a discussion of this subject in the present volume only to the extent that we are treating of it strictly from the standpoint of the *theologian as such*, for certainly, apart from a specialised knowledge of theology, we have no other qualifications to make judgments in this field. If therefore the theologian is asked for his special views on the subject of creative writers and authors then what he has to say will naturally fall under the heading '"Authorship" and Christian Living'.

I

The basic thesis which we have initially to state and to develop here is expressed in the following simple proposition: the author as such stands under the summons of Christ in grace, and his Christianity must be conditioned by this fact. Authorship as a human activity has a special Christian relevance of its own.

Such a proposition may seem abrupt and enigmatic in the extreme, and for this reason certain introductory remarks may be permitted, though admittedly these are incapable of solving all the problems raised in this thesis.[1] Thus we are in a position to set out our thesis in this manner because and to the extent that every man is in a true and decisive sense (even though it may be not in a full and adequate one) 'Christian'. In [113] other words he has been summoned by Christ and has already taken up a permanent attitude in response to this summons. Of course, there must be differences in the way a statement of this sort is applied to particular cases. But the statement that every author is 'Christian' and is so precisely *as such* is not necessarily or immediately proved false by the assertion that many men are not Christians at all in any sense, and could not therefore become so merely by the fact of being authors. What is being asserted here is not that every man intends to be a Christian, or that every man knows explicitly or in a way that could be formulated propositionally that he is such, still less that every man is a member of the visible Church. But it has to be recognised that human existence as such is inevitably and inescapably subject to certain transcendent conditions or 'existentials', such that, while they may indeed be denied, they do not thereby cease to be so, but simply remain in force even though they are denied and rejected, and continue to be in force whether we recognise them consciously or not, whether we accept them or protest against them. And once this is realised then Christianity itself will, in a radical sense be numbered among these 'existentials', and will not be assigned to the category of those ordinary conditions of life (as for instance one's calling as a citizen, the fact that one is or is not staying at some particular place, etc.) which can be accepted or refused according as the individual concerned wishes.

When, therefore, we have to draw a general distinction between the chance circumstances which affect human living on the one hand and the enduring existentials which condition it on the other, then the state of being summoned by the grace of Christ belongs to the enduring

[1] The concept of 'anonymous Christianity' is one that is very often used in contemporary theological parlance (and also in the actual conclusions arrived at in contemporary theology) in a manner in which the present author would not wish it to be taken. For a right understanding of this concept we may refer to the essay 'Anonymous Christians' in *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 390-398.

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existentials which apply absolutely to every man. He can, in fact, be baptised or unbaptised. He can belong in a visible and sociological sense to the Catholic Church or not. Only in this sense and to this extent does Christianity also belong to the chance circumstances of human life, and these factors in Christian existence, freely ordained by God and either accepted or effectively denied by man, must not be underestimated as though they were insignificant or inessential (though at this point we are in no position to treat of their significance for salvation). But all this makes no difference to one essential fact: no man can prevent the fact that he is loved by God with the absolute and unreserved self-offering of the innermost depths of God's own triune life. No man can prevent the fact that he is redeemed, that God has willed the incarnation of the eternal Logos to take effect in his existence. No man can escape the fact – even when his whole life is [114] one great protest against and denial of it - that the grace of God is applied to him permanently and enduringly, and that thereby his existence in all its dimensions is constantly open to the infinite. He cannot escape from the fact that grace is present to him at least as something that appeals to, empowers and invites him, and that, in virtue of this, everything in his life is included in a self-transcendence in which his own free decision is already forseen and provided for. He cannot escape from the fact that the whole of human existence rests upon a single unique basis, namely the immeasurable depths of that mystery which is absolute love.

This reality may be received into man's conscious awareness, may be believed in and loved, or it may not. It remains a reality, and its purpose is, even when it is denied, to support the life of man from within. It wells up from the depths of man's heart in a thousand secret ways, penetrating into all spheres of his life. It makes him restless; makes him doubt whether existence is really finite and restricted to this present world, fills him with a sense of the immeasurability of that claim which can only be fulfilled by the infinity of God. It renders all the experiences which he makes of himself lead on to a further dimension beyond themselves. It reveals further and deeper levels of significance in them and makes them open to the ineffable and the incomprehensible. Man cannot rest. He can no longer be content to take his own finitude as something that is obvious. In the very moment that he becomes conscious of it the movement which carries him on to the incomprehensible, the fall into the infinite depths, is already taking place. Man may protest against this, may seek to suppress it, may employ the most subtle devices in order to hush it up. Even then he is still involved with it, even then it is still there. It (considered as that which he experiences in the very act of fleeing from it) is the ineffable mystery of which we Christians say without embarrassment and almost facilely, as of something that is obvious, that it is not something that repels us but something that is near, protecting, forgiving, 'giving' of itself and forgiving of us.

In one word: no man can escape the fact that he is 'Christian' in this all important sense of being summoned by God, and in the sense that however secret his acceptance of the claims made upon his existence may be, in accepting them he accepts *this* claim, which permeates his whole existence: the claim that in accepting them he is, in a true sense, a Christian – an anonymous Christian, perhaps, a Christian who denies his own Christianity, a Christian who has not the least suspicion of the significance of what has been achieved in him, a Christian who is constantly running [115] away from himself, one who betrays the fact that he is a Christian in spite of himself, but still precisely a Christian. And even in cases in which an individual becomes a Christian in the usual sense of the term all that is achieved in this (though admittedly this in itself is a miracle of blessing) is that someone accepts in faith what and who he in any case is, and that this loving acceptance is 'manifested' at the historical and social level in the sacramental sign and in the fact that he belongs to the community of those who can say in a definitive sense what they both are and will to be, and what all others too are, even though they may outwardly deny it.

It is in the light of this, then, that we say that the author as such is called by Christ, and has

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to be a Christian. First it must be recognised that this proposition is not simply a self-evident one. There are indeed realities pertaining to the life of man, without which he cannot exist at all, yet which as such have nothing specifically Christian in them, not even in that sense which we have already adverted to of a Christianity that is still concealed and anonymous. The laws of physics and biology, for instance, of their very nature point to such realities, which in themselves are still at the pre-Christian level and 'neutral'.

But the first thing to be recognised is that every human act of writing, just as every human act of speaking, is a free act on man's part, and as such has a moral relevance which is prior to, and independent of the actual content of what is being said. For in such an act, man is exercising control over *himself*, his spirit, his freedom, and directing himself towards a specific object; he addresses his fellow man indisputably as human even in those cases - indeed precisely in those cases – in which he requires the other to concentrate his attention exclusively upon a limited and no longer fully human subject-matter. But in the very act of saying or writing something, or alternatively of listening to or reading something, our specifically human qualities are engaged at least in virtue of the *formal* quality of the process, and so the process in itself acquires a moral relevance.

There are several different levels in the responsibility which a speaker assumes for the content of what he says. He is responsible for ensuring that what he says agrees with his own convictions as the speaker (truthfulness). He is responsible for making sincere efforts to ensure that his actual statement corresponds to the reality which it is intended to designate (truth). He is responsible for the effect which he foresees that his statement will make upon those who hear it, those to whom it is addressed. [116] He is responsible for ensuring that his statement is conveyed in the appropriate manner and measure having regard to the general intellectual environment of speaker and hearer alike. He is responsible for doing his utmost to make sure that what he says can be understood and assimilated (this is a duty of love which he owes to the individual, and of respect which he owes to the community in its intellectual and social aspects). He is responsible as a matter of duty for saying what needs to be said because it is urgently relevant and should be said in the here and now. This responsibility is laid upon those who put themselves forward to speak in public life, and who therefore must speak (each according to his particular opportunities and abilities and according to the position he occupies) in order to make their contribution to the general debate considered as a whole, and in the manner appropriate to this kind of situation (even though in this context it is clearly quite impossible to calculate or to foresee what the effect of the word will be, and so the free exercise of the mind leads ultimately to an outcome over which there is no control and the deed returns at last upon the doer's head as that which he has to endure).

The mere fact that his statements have this kind of moral relevance of itself means that the author as such is already drawn into the sphere of the Christian, and there are two basic reasons for this. First it must be remembered that every act, even one which is in the first instance made to conform merely to the norms of natural morality and the natural law, and which is judged by Christendom to be so conformed, is preserved and protected in its essential 'rightness' (its conformity to natural norms), and this in itself gives it a salvific import (at least in a negative sense). It means that the doing of it has an effect upon human existence as a whole, and in this context of the totality of human existence it can only be done aright with the help of God. This help in turn can safely be regarded as a grace bestowed by Christ. The second basic reason is that in the order of salvation as it actually exists in practice and in the concrete every human act which is morally relevant possesses (for reasons which cannot be gone into in greater detail here), a certain intrinsic salvific power within itself such that through it the doer either becomes one with God and filled with his grace, or else guilty in his sight. In other words every such act constitutes a response, either affirmative or negative, to Christianity as such, even though the Christianity involved here may be of the

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unacknowledged and unexplicit kind with which every human being is inescapably confronted.

[117] The moment the author makes *man* the subject of his assertions he *ipso facto* passes beyond the limits of the purely natural sciences and the conclusions which they are capable of yielding, and becomes a philosopher, a poet, a visionary, a sage, a committed believer or a prophet. When he takes *man* as his subject and formulates propositions about him, makes him the theme of his argument as a whole, produces definitions of him or preliminary statements about him, then the very content of what he is asserting as an author necessarily means that he is answering either 'yes' or 'no' to Christianity itself. For a factor which must always be borne in mind is that human nature is realised in a complex multitude of created individuals, and it belongs precisely and by definition to the Catholic attitude towards humanity as a whole that it maintains unreservedly, and accords full value to this complexity and multiplicity in mankind. And it is precisely this multiplicity that makes it possible in speaking about man to assert something which applies only to a part of humanity and not to the whole. In themselves, therefore, statements of this kind are still neutral in content, and, from the ideological aspect, it makes no difference whether they are accepted or denied. But if a part of a given reality really is a part, and if there is indeed a unity in human existence whether actual or, in a true sense, potential, such that this unity constitutes either a fact to be recognised or a goal to be striven for, and if this single all-embracing unity is truly a Christian unity, then it follows that the part of the reality as such (i.e. as a single 'subdivision' of it, for this is an essential specification of what it means to be a part, even if it is not one which is necessarily adverted to) has an objective bearing upon the Christianity inherent in the whole. For this reason such a statement about a part of reality is constantly open to further supplementation when the vision of the whole is arrived at. In that sense the partial statement is already Christian at least in an 'adventist' sense, in the sense namely that it is capable of bringing the one who makes it to the Christianity of the whole. Alternatively, a rejection of this openness is a denial of that Christianity which is already present at least in an implicit and anonymous sense in the whole, and is already making its impact through the partial statement about humanity.

This inescapably Christian dimension in the statements which a human author makes, only really achieves its full force when he forms the intention of isolating and throwing into relief the essential totality of human existence by pointing to the causes which constitute it as one and whole. [118] It can be the case that in pursuing this aim he never arrives at this essential wholeness of humanity at all, and that through no fault of his own, but where and to the extent that he intends to make or actually makes the all-embracing statement about existence, he speaks as a Christian, and either appeals to or denies the Christian message. The Christianity in his statement can be an anonymous Christianity, but it is Christian for all that. He may not understand the full significance of what he is saying. He may be saying more than he intended (as, for instance, if his message is one of love of neighbour and so of fulfilment of the law. This message may be Christian in an Old Testament sense, an expression of adoration for the unknown God. He may perhaps in some dumb and inarticulate way be proclaiming that anguished atheism which is, in reality, a sharing in the desolation of the Cross). But what is quite impossible is that this message should be of a kind that is really irrelevant to Christ. This would only be possible if he were not real. Even in cases in which Christianity is explicitly or implicitly denied, or seems to be so in the course of pursuing this aim to express existence as a totality, caution is required in coming to a judgment on this. A statement such as this, which sounds like a denial and perhaps actually is one, can nevertheless be the expression of a new situation for the Christian and for Christendom as a whole which is unfamiliar and which has not yet been brought under control. Such a statement can be the false or inadequate explanation and interpretation of a quest for the

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fulness of life which is, nevertheless, under God's blessing, which is Christian. It can be the statement of a man who only supposes that he does not believe in God, but does in fact accept with a sort of ultimate inarticulate obedience that absolute mystery which is called God, and that mystery of his own life which is Christ.

Indeed we can go further than this and add the following: in a human statement of this kind it is not mere words that are uttered, but the human reality itself which is expressed and put forward (put forward as something that is representative of the totality of being to which it belongs). For this reason it is necessarily ambiguous, since it is, in the nature of things, impossible to achieve absolute clarity or to eliminate all ambiguity in any objectifying statement of what human freedom means. Otherwise the abiding mystery of how man can exercise a free decision would finally and totally be unveiled, and this is not possible. But there are two sides to this truth. If in explaining what is meant we must still confine our attention more or less to what is actually stated in the writing, then we [119] shall be compelled to say: this writing contains an explicit denial of Christianity, which as such is explicitly false, and constitutes a temptation and a danger.

There is no need to discuss any further at this point the practical norms that should be deduced from this with regard to how far such writings and such creative work should be tolerated, disseminated or read. In this connection the following factors have to be borne in mind: It is a general principle that everything capable of producing false and evil effects depends for its survival on the existence of good. It would not be Christian at all, but rather Manichaean, to forget this in its concrete application to the conduct and attitude of Christians (though this does in fact happen all too often). For this reason, it is true to say, those theories in which Christianity is attacked, and which represent a real danger to it, depend for their very existence upon the fact that there are certain genuine questions which the Christians themselves have not yet sufficiently coped with, and that existential rejection of Christianity which represents a real danger to it can only derive its strength from a genuine love for a genuine reality which the Christians have not yet made their own as warmly and uncompromisingly as they should.

From this it is clear and obvious that in the concrete anyone can be a 'fine fellow' and, in the social sense, a good Christian, while still being a wretchedly bad writer. And yet there is an intrinsic connection between a really great Christianity and really great writing. Certainly they are not to be identified one with another. Great writing is achieved only in those cases in which man achieves a radical self-confrontation, in which he realises what he himself is. But even when he does this he can indeed become ensnared in guilt, perversity, self-hatred and even demonic pride. He can confront himself as a sinner, and identify himself with this, yet even in this case he would still stand to a greater degree in that blessed peril which consists in encountering God than the narrow-minded and superficial bourgeois, who right from the first anxiously evades the imponderable factors in existence, fleeing from them into that attitude of superficiality in which there is admittedly no encounter with doubt, but no encounter with God either. Therefore for those who are still only approaching maturity the question of what sort of reading matter is suitable for their education can be a serious problem in itself. But the mature Christian must be fully and unreservedly free to explore all writings that are truly great, bringing to them an attitude of reverence [120] and sympathetic love, even when this may entail pain for him. He will do this because such writings contain a message about man either as redeemed or else in need of redemption and capable of receiving it. And in any case such writing will give us a deeper insight into the truth than if we simply adopt that attitude of superficiality which has only too often and for too long been regarded as appropriate for so-called good Christians, an attitude namely in which man is regarded as the two-legged animal which has become somewhat craftier than the other animals and therefore less predictable than they.

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The further man is led by the message of great writing into the immeasurable depths upon which his existence is founded, the more he is compelled by such writing to face up to the hidden depths which a man can find within himself depths which are dark and obscure, and which are buried in that twilight of ambiguity in which man can no longer say with any ultimate certainty whether he is in a state of grace or one of radical desolation. It is no accident, but rather inherent in the nature of the case, that the great creative writings of mankind are obscure, and for the most part leave us with the unanswered question of whether it is the mystery of grace or that of perdition which takes place and which is described in their pages. How indeed could it be otherwise? Creative or imaginative writing must be concerned with the concrete, and not try to manipulate abstract principles like puppets in a dance. But that which is individual and concrete is a mystery which will only be unveiled by that unique judgment which belongs to God alone, yet which the creative writer makes present in his writing as a mystery. It is not in the least necessary, therefore, that his writing should have that simplicity and clarity of structure which many bad teachers would so much like it to have in their anxiety to protect the minds of their pupils from any harm.

If we are not Manichees then as Christians we recognise that a sin that is truly great is terrible indeed because it is a sin and because it is so great, but that the only possible way in which it can come to be so great is that in it much of the greatness of humanity itself is realised and revealed. For evil as such is nothing. Moreover we know that God allows sin to exist in this world, and to be great and powerful, and yet that for this very reason it is not so easy to confine ourselves to the saints when we seek to find examples in the concrete of the greatness of humanity. Moreover we recall Paul's instruction that we Christians must not withdraw ourselves from [121] the world, but actually can and must, in a certain sense, have fellowship (though admittedly a different kind of fellowship from that which we have with our brethren in the faith) with unbelievers and the unchaste (1 Cor 5:9-13). And in view of all this we Christians are not only not forbidden, but positively commanded to take seriously into consideration and to familiarise ourselves with that creative writing which genuinely is such, even if it is not in conformity with the moral standards of Christianity, though admittedly here we have to distinguish this genuine creative writing from that which conveys a message of sheer unbelief and immorality under the pretence of being creative writing. And in all this we must not judge those who do not share our Christian belief.

There is such a thing as a Christianity that is anonymous. There are men who merely think that they are not Christians when in reality they are so in God's sight and under his grace. Thus it is possible for the individual to be raised to a level of human living which is already imbued with grace even though he does not realise it, and even though he supposes that he is still at the purely human level. We Christians are in a better position to understand this than one who is actually in the state to which we refer. We lay down as part of the teaching of our faith that even human morality at the 'this-worldly' level has need of the grace of God in order to be able to maintain itself in its fulness or for any length of time. It is our belief therefore, precisely as Christians that to achieve this supreme level of human living, wherever it manifests itself in its genuine form, and even when it is found outside the limits of professed and acknowledged Christianity, is a gift of God's grace and a fruit of the redemption itself even though the individual who has attained to this level is not himself yet aware of it. Why should we not love this exalted level of human living when we find it in such an individual? For we would actually be despising the grace of God itself if we were to remain indifferent to it.

II

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The *second* thesis, which I would present as the development and application of the first, may be stated as follows: an author can justifiably be Christian in various ways. In order to explain this thesis and to establish it I would like to attempt to enumerate the most important of these ways. In doing this I shall be using a nomenclature that is unfamiliar, and for [122] this I apologise. Despite every effort to the contrary, I have not succeeded in avoiding this use of strange and unfamiliar designations.

1. An author can be Christian in that he is and remains one who *frankly restricts himself to a limited field*. By way of preliminary it should be noticed that every author is free to choose what he wishes to speak and write about. Of course this choice is, in itself, subject to moral, and therefore to Christian considerations too (since we have to render account for every idle word if it really is such). But even allowing for this, it is justifiable to write about anything which is a subject for human discussion, about the weather, therefore, the advantages of the Volkswagen, the absurdities of everyday life – everything, in short, which is an object of investigation for one or other of the particular sciences. Now when a writer takes this course his work can be genuinely human and – precisely because of this – genuinely Christian too, precisely in the modesty of its aims, in that it is restricted in this way to that which is in the immediate foreground, that which has no directly ideological relevance. The reason for this is that this very modesty implies a tacit acknowledgment of the pluralism of creaturehood, and of the fact that the ultimate unity of it remains hidden in ineffable and impenetrable mystery in God and is reserved to him alone to comprehend.

It is here that a truer and more Christian ‘positivism’ than that which is now in vogue might be in place. The ‘positive’ element in such a positivism would have to be evaluated from this standpoint. For a positivism of this sort, which restricts itself to the apprehensible in human life, does not thereby erect itself into an absolute ideology (this would in fact be anti-positivist) by claiming to be either in theory or in the concrete existing situation the only possible right and rational attitude to adopt. And provided it does not make any such claim then it is something for which the modern Christian can have full understanding. For he will understand the attitude of silence, reserve and modesty, of being slow and cautious with regard to all ‘ideological’ assertions as a sign that the statements reflecting these attitudes are genuine and of real value. He too does not like to hear God spoken of as though the speaker imagined that he had actually resolved the mystery of the divine. A Christian of this sort, therefore, does not for one moment expect that the honest positivist, the one who, in all honesty, restricts his field of discourse in this way, will always attain to God in everything that he says. Such a Christian recognises that there really is a pluralism of beings, and that these are precisely [123] not identical with God. Taken in their formal aspect as so many particular things they have no direct reference to God at all. The most genuinely Christian way of speaking of such things, therefore, is the one in which the speaker simply and honestly remains within the limited field of discourse he has set himself and shows himself fully and sincerely aware that it is restricted, even though he does not explicitly refer to that fact in what he says.

2. *The man who is overwhelmed by questions*, whose statement of his experiences takes the form of an *open* question. At this point attention must be drawn once more to certain factors which we have already mentioned. Wherever creative writers seek to present word-pictures of man as he is there will always be some whose presentation of him is based upon his radical insufficiency and utter insecurity, who represent man as a question to which there is no answer. A writer of this kind will do this without giving the positive answer to this question which Christianity supplies. For him man constitutes a problem which is insoluble. He will say that it has not been given to him to achieve anything more, that as a creative writer he can put into words only what he experiences, and that he is no preacher or theologian. Can an author write in this vein? Can he take this approach and actually in doing so be a Christian?

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For our present purpose we are abstracting from the special question (which must, however, be taken seriously) of how far statements of this kind can be out of place for specific circles of readers for whom they might be regarded as morally perverted and therefore unChristian. This might be argued on the grounds that these particular readers will predictably be drawn into the false opinion that the particular problem which this author has left unsolved in the here and now is insoluble in itself that there is no solution to it which the reader could in his own right supply in response to the question put to him. Here we are rather considering the question that has been raised in itself, in the absolute.

If the creative writer or thinker who raises this question and leaves it unanswered believes, or intends to assert, that there is no answer, that man constitutes the absurdity of a question launched into the void of nothingness, then he is in error, and an answer of this kind (whether taken in this sense by him or by others) is false or unChristian. Admittedly there is a further question which may be raised in such a case, that namely of whether the very fact of posing the question and of calling man himself in question in this radical sense cannot have a salutary effect upon the [124] complacent and the superficial (a type which is extremely common even among 'believing' Christians) by shaking them out of their complacency in such a way that they can no longer be soothed and quietened by the specious solutions offered by well-meaning 'average' Christians. And then in such a case we could go on to ask a second question, namely whether what is ostensibly a denial that there is any solution to the problem of man, a denial which is more or less expressed as a theory, does not in fact proceed from a deeper, although unexpressed acceptance of the solution constituted by the mystery of the forgiving God, a solution which would be present in the creative writer himself and in his basic attitude – the more so since, in cases of genuine creative inspiration, this basic attitude and impulse often go far beyond the writer's own conscious intuitions.

At all events it is often the case that the Christian reader can take the question, with all the radical despair which it involves, in a way that conduces to his own salvation. He can take it as a summons to him to call up the ultimate resources of faith within him, which he would otherwise never have brought to bear. But there are cases in which the question is genuinely left open, and then it should not be rejected on the grounds that such questions should never be asked unless the answer to them is supplied. Every piece of creative writing and every philosophical position is in fact only *one element* in a continuous and incessant discussion carried on among men. And it is impossible for the whole discussion to stand revealed in any one such element taken in isolation. What is true of human life as a whole applies in this instance too: the experience of each particular moment must remain open to the greater breadth and fulness of life as a whole. No one moment can be the measure of its own value, nor have we any right to expect of it that it should contain the whole of life within itself. It is a necessary fact of creaturely existence, and one which Christians have to accept, that the moment of fear is *not* the moment of love, that of desolation is not *ipso facto* that of consolation, that of death is not also and in itself that of resurrection. He who, whether in life or in creative writing, is unwilling to endure this fact and to bear with it constantly experiences a 'watering down' of life's due fulness. For such a one seizes life before it is ready for him, so that for him it is always flat and insipid. Nothing in it has come to the full ripeness and maturity of its being. This is true alike of the questions which life puts to him and of the answers which it can supply. But where he is humble enough and obedient enough to bear with the question and to allow it to be completely open the answer [125] is already present even though only in a hidden manner, even though it is still buried in silence, just as even before Easter, while Christ was still on the Cross or in the grave on Good Friday, the victory of life had already been won. There is a real need for writers of the type which we are considering here, who are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the questions life puts to them; writers who state what they experience in the form of an open question. There should be

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such, and even as such they are Christian.

3. *The writer who is a full, though anonymous Christian*. We have already said that according to Catholic teaching there is a type of man who has been wholly justified in faith, hope and love, and endowed with the grace of the triune life of God, even though, so far as those ideas are concerned which well up from the innermost dynamism of his being to become the expressions of his real self, he is not a Christian and a Catholic in any explicit sense, or as incorporated into the visible society of the Church and governed by her laws. This situation is not only something that was possible in former ages, or is possible in pagan lands. It is also possible among us and in our own time. And in view of the doctrine of God's will to save all men and of the victory of Christ over sin we have every right to assume that the case envisaged is of frequent occurrence among us. But if this is true then it is also perfectly possible to imagine that a man who has received and been touched by the ultimate reality of redemption and been endowed with the Spirit of faith and love in this way may go on to use his powers as an author to express this and to embody it in his words. And let it not be imagined that in cases in which a man does intend to express a reality of this kind about himself he is inescapably confronted by the following dilemma: either to profess himself as a fully committed member of the official Church, and to do this in some sense by a formula already prescribed by the Church as a society, or else to refrain from defining his position in any way at all. No such dilemma need necessarily apply to a man who finds himself in this situation.

Of course the ideal case, both from the personal and social point of view, for such a declaration would be one in which an individual who was explicitly and consciously a Catholic and member of the Church expressed his belief in such a way that it was not merely theologically correct but living, actual, able to be understood and proceeding from his own personal experience and from the innermost grace with which he was endowed. But while this is true, it does not render the other case impossible, namely [126] that precisely this Christian reality can be expressed in ways in which the individual making the statement about himself is totally unconscious in any explicit sense of the Christian significance of what he is saying. And yet in the case supposed a professed Christian can recognise in this statement the same Christianity which he himself professes, and, it may be, expressed in a more cogent and more comprehensible form than it is in merely traditional formulae which, while they may be dogmatically correct, are not really understood or able to make their full impact in the concrete existential situation. Of course statements of an anonymous Christianity of this kind can meet with indifference on our part. We can fail to recognise them as Christian at all (though in fact they are so). We can be deaf to them. Nevertheless we are in contact with authors who are Christian in this sense, and we should train our ears to be ready for statements of this kind from them. For all other considerations apart we could take over the modes of expression and style present in such statements and develop them further so as to make them express a more explicit kind of Christianity for our own salvation and that of many others. And this would fulfil an urgent need.

4. *The professedly non-Catholic writer who falls to realise that his position is in fact a Catholic one*. What kind of author this description is intended to designate can be deduced from what has just been said. Just as there are authors who profess themselves to be non-Christians but only suppose themselves to be such, so too there are non-Catholic authors who only suppose that their actual position is not a Catholic one. The outcome of four hundred years of division in the Christendom of the West is that we have drawn so far apart in our modes of thought and expression, in the tenour of our ideas and in our attitude and outlook that in addition to the real differences in doctrine and life which do exist between us there is also much else which we believe to be opposed to the teaching of our Church, but which in reality either does belong fully and unreservedly to Catholicism in all its breadth and fulness,

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or else which ought to be introduced into it. Several factors have to be borne in mind here. First let us take the case of the non-Catholic Christian whom I believe to be in good faith and justified by God's grace. With regard to the basic tenets of the Christian faith he holds these in common with me. But what of the points in which he deviates from Catholic teaching? To the extent that he is in fact in good faith he is actually *quite incapable* of maintaining these with the faith that comes from the Holy Spirit, or with the absolute [127] and basic decision of faith which he personally has made in his concrete existential situation. With regard to those tenets which we both have in common he does indeed do this in real fact, but with regard to the points which are in dispute between us he only *seems* to do so. Moreover this difference, which cannot be otherwise than real and objective, is one to which we ourselves must pay due heed. A further point for consideration is that often there is not even a real disagreement as to the actual object of belief but rather differences in mode of expression, of perspective or outlook, or at least the difference is about something which has not been perceived, but which if it were perceived would not be denied. The implications of this cannot be developed any further at this point. But at any rate this type of Catholic author too, does exist.

5. *The author who is a professed Catholic*. It might seem that there is not much to be said about this type. There is, however, a great deal that might be pointed out and yet that is very difficult to express. First we should consider the explicitly Catholic author who does not pretend to be stating the revealed fulness of the divine and human reality in the name of the Church in the manner of a teacher laying down what is her official doctrine or for her members at large. He is not in any sense preaching the Church's official message, or seeking to bring it home to men. Rather he speaks as a 'private' individual, as a layman. As such he is the creative writer, and at the same time always the professed believer too, who expresses the Christian reality as he himself experiences it and lives it, the gospel message as brought home and made actual in his life. The first point to be made is that there both can and must be authors who are Catholics in this explicit and professed sense too. Why indeed should there not be? Should the creative writer and author be ashamed of the gospel merely on the grounds that he does not feel himself called to preach, and because he seeks to express concrete reality and not merely abstract theory? Or is there no such thing as a Christianity that is made actual in the concrete? Or does this process of actualisation take place only in a hidden manner and at so deep a level that even the most exalted of creative writing or poetry could not conjure it up or give it expression? And if this were the case how could it continue to be preached at all? How could it be that God-given reality which is intended to permeate all dimensions of human life with forgiveness and new creation?

Certainly every creative writer must say only what he really has touched upon and understood. But it must be remembered that we have been [128] redeemed. God, and not the devil, has had the last word. And in view of this no-one should be the sort of creative writer who regards only the interior hell within man as a suitable subject for the genuine poet or author. Or do we, in the last analysis, still have to rely on the message of that current of creative writing that comes from the East to teach us that a man can still be a creative writer even when he is bold enough to aim at 'edifying' (using this term in the best biblical sense)? If we are considering statements about the specific achievements of Christianity, about forgiveness and redemption, grace and consolation, eternity and the living God, who is in no sense a figment of man's mind, then of course these have a quality of their own that is unique. The very nature of the subject matter of such statements sets them apart from all others. For this subject matter is present only in that faith which comes as a pure grace of God. And this faith ever-present within us is hidden in the ineffable mystery of God. To this extent, therefore, every explicitly Christian statement shares in the same absolute and unique quality, as also in the same obscurity, indirectness, difficulty and sense of mystery that

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constantly challenges us anew, for this is unmistakably a quality of the word of faith.

It is in no sense to be regretted, therefore, but rather something that is inherent in the very nature of the case, that a message of faith of this kind should come from the lips or from the pen only with the greatest hesitation and reserve, and that it should be expressed in few and modest words. In this connection one might almost say: if the theologians were more cautious and more careful in formulating their theories, and if the laity were bolder in their faith, more open and more trustful in letting the light of the creed they profess shine out, then the message explicitly pertaining to Christianity, that which emanates from God and his Church, and from the event of salvation and new life as actually achieved – that message would be more comprehensible, more penetrating and more convincing.

The point which we have now reached in our considerations would be the appropriate place to speak of the author who is explicitly Christian and Catholic and is so more or less *ex professo*. In other words his writings are directly theological or religious in character. This, however, would constitute a new and quite distinct subject, and in order to deal with it we would have to return to the fundamentals and begin all over again. Instead of taking this course, let us put forward a *third* thesis, though one which, [129] admittedly, we cannot spend any further time in establishing here. It is this: the author is wholly – and even, in this last analysis, always – susceptible of being judged and criticised by Christian standards. Such standards are not extrinsic to the special character of the author and his work, but are inherently present in them from the first. If we were explicitly to point out the implications which follow from this statement, then it would be made apparent what we meant by the assertion with which this study opened: the author as such stands under the grace of Christ and has to be a Christian in this sense.

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[130]

8

PRAYER FOR CREATIVE THINKERS

Eternal God, Creator of all men and of all things, invisible and visible alike, God of all history, you who are the Lord and the goal, the power and the light of all the activities of the human spirit, today we bring before you our prayer of intercession for all those who have a creative contribution to make in this field.

Lord, who else offers prayers on their behalf? And yet we know that the goal they set themselves, their creative power, their work and their achievements are willed by you. For your will is extended unreservedly to those men who are engaged in constantly producing new expressions of their own nature and spirit, men who are the architects of themselves. You love the sort of man who realises his own being in what he achieves and produces, who discovers and expresses that nature which is an image and likeness of your own glory. That which your will intends them to be, that they can only become with the help of your grace, O Father of poets, eternal source of all light, Spirit of all true inspiration!

It is for this, then, that we entreat you and invoke your Holy Spirit upon them. Raise up among us men endowed with creative powers, thinkers, poets, artists. We have need of them! Remember that saying that man cannot live by the bread of the body alone, that unless the word that proceeds from your mouth becomes his nourishment he will go hungry. That saying applies to them too. Give to these young men the courage to respond to their inner call, to bear the burden and the pain which such a call involves, not to be led into betraying their task in the quest for money and the cheap applause of the superficial, who wish merely to be diverted. In words and in images, in their whole attitude and presentation they express what is in man because they proclaim what they themselves experience. And in expressing this let them express *everything*! Grant them the experience that man is not merely the frustrated hell of his own nothingness, but also the fair and blessed land over which stretches the [131] heaven of your own infinitude and freedom. They do not need to be constantly bringing you into everything they say. They must make mention of you by name only when they are filled with the spirit of the purest happiness or the deepest pain. For the rest let them honour you with their silence. For the rest let them praise the earth and humanity. But in doing this they must always bear you silently in their hearts, for it is here that their creative work has its source. Then even the slightest song becomes an echo of the rejoicing that takes place in your heaven, and even when they have to tell of the most sombre depths to which man can sink, still their record of this is encompassed by your compassion and permeated by a longing for light, virtue and the eternal love. Then even an attempt to entertain is still a reflection of the gentleness and patience with which you love us in our daily lives. Give them the courage to attain to the light and to the joy in the darkness of this age and in all the hunger and poverty of our hearts. Such courage is a grace that comes from you. But give it to them, for we have need of such high courage. Give them the courage to distinguish and to decide. They do not need to be so very subtle, but their work must manifest the fact that an undivided heart has wrought them, one which, while it is open to everything, still in everything seeks you and seeks everything in you, recognising no craven compromise of peace between the good and the evil, the light and the darkness. Give them the courage constantly to begin anew, because only so do they find their source in that which is true from all eternity. Let them say what *your* Spirit has given into their hearts, rather than that which would make pleasant hearing to those who represent the forces of all that is average. When they make experience of the fact that all their work is in vain, of the frustration of their creativity and the

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insensitivity of their age, let them believe even then that in your sight what seems to be so futile is not futile, that *you* have regarded their work with delight, and have gently taken their heart when it was breaking into your own.

Your eternal Word, the effulgence of your nature and the image of your glory has himself come in our flesh. He has taken upon himself all that is human as *his own* reality. With a power that is greater and more ultimate, and a love that is deeper than that of any other creative worker for the work of his own hands he has set his own heart in the very centre of the image his hands have wrought. He has done this in order that man himself may be the expression and the image of your glory. And therefore, whether [132] we realise it or not, every creative activity of the human spirit has become an element in the personal history of your Word, because everything has come to belong to his own world, the world into which he came in order to share with it in its living experiences, to suffer with it and to glorify it with himself. It is the world from which this Word of yours will never more be separated for all eternity. Let those for whom we pray understand this truth. What they create is inevitably either a part of the Cross to which they nail your Son in guilt, and therefore a condemnation of themselves, or else a factor contributing to the coming of the eternal kingdom of this same Son, and therefore a grace for them. For this kingdom does not only come from without as the end and the final judgment of this present world. It emerges as the hidden grace which has been present in the midst of this earthly reality ever since your own Word descended into his own creation and became the heart of all things. Therefore everything which they create can and must be a promise that your eternal kingdom is already on the way, the kingdom of truth and of love, the kingdom of the glorification of man in his undivided nature, in body and soul, earth and heaven. Therefore grant to them too, that they may be proclaimers and promoters of this kingdom. For everything which man himself has fashioned as sharer in your creative power will be redeemed and taken into this kingdom for all eternity, transferred and glorified. May the Spirit of your Son come upon them in order that your name may be praised now in this time and throughout all eternity, Amen.

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[133]

9

ON THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is a recognised fact that the Dogmatic Constitution 'On the Church' includes, among other things, one section on life in the religious orders. It is also recognised – and this is equally true of the discussions which have arisen of the decree concerning the orders – that a notable difference of opinion arose in the debate preceding the promulgation of these enactments as to the precise formulations in which they should be expressed.

One point on which there was indeed general agreement was *the actual fact* that some mention of life in the religious orders (in the broadest sense, i.e. including the secular institutes as well) should be included in this scheme. Now this is not simply a self-evident proposition. The schema on the Church which was prepared for the First Vatican Council (and in substance drawn up by theologians belonging to the religious orders) contained no specific statements with regard to life in the orders. To the authors of the preliminary draft it seemed manifestly unnecessary to include this in so brief a dogmatic exposition of the theology of the Church, which must necessarily confine itself to what is essential. Thus it is not so immediately obvious as in some strange way seems to be generally accepted that today everyone should expect a section dealing with life in the orders to be included in the Constitution on the Church or should accept a subsection dealing with this topic without discussion. In this the desire evinces itself for a realistic presentation of the Church, one which does not merely describe its abstract juridical structure and composition conceived of as the characteristic forms of a 'perfect society'. This is what might have been produced by those who are hostile to reform. What we seek for today is something more than this: a treatment which also takes into account the inward mystery of grace in the Church, [134] her role as the people of God and as the Church of sinners and pilgrims. But yet a further point of interest which manifests itself here is that there is a desire to perceive, in addition to the institutional and juridical structures in the Church, the 'charismatic structure' as well; to see her as a Church of fresh 'breakthrough', a Church which is in constant process of reformation, a Church in which the Spirit operates freely and unrestrainedly. For it is precisely in all this that those committed to the religious life have, or should have, an essential part to play.

In contrast to this disagreements arose in the conciliar debates as to whether a whole section (a chapter) should be set aside to be devoted exclusively to the religious life (as was provided for in a pre-conciliar schema) or whether it should find its proper place in the wider context of a chapter on the holiness of the Church, the calling of all her members to develop to the full that participation in the holiness of Christ and God implanted in the roots of their being in baptism, and to put into practice the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and the evangelical counsels as constituting the gift and at the same time the task of the Church as a whole (this is, in fact, what the schema actually laid before the Council does). Moreover if we were to listen closely and seriously to the arguments in favour of each of these two different solutions we would find it impossible to deny that both the parties upholding them were influenced by certain secondary considerations. *Some* of the factors (though certainly not the only ones) by which the defenders of the first solution were motivated were a certain *esprit de corps* on the part of the orders, a desire to be accorded their due value, a certain anxiety lest their role in the Church should be underestimated, and a preoccupation with the need to recruit sufficient

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fresh blood. These and similar considerations, though in themselves secondary, did exercise a real influence. Again it would become apparent that the champions of the second solution were not always wholly free from a tendency to *undervalue*, in theological and practical terms alike, the significance of life in the religious orders both in itself and for the Church of today. The point that they emphasise is that *all* Christians of all classes and in all situations in life are called to bring Christian living to its full maturity. They also emphasise the ideal of the priesthood, and of the secular priesthood in particular, as a perfect state, and in all this their outlook is coloured here and there with a certain resentment (in view of past history this is understandable) against the [135] members of orders and the importance attached to them in the Church.[1]

But all this is so much 'atmospherics' or the deceptive façade behind which lies a genuine problem, for it is this that really lies concealed behind this strange conflict concerning the manner in which the ecclesiastical schema should be drawn up. And in reality, however much this problem may impinge upon our attention, in the last analysis both sides have been unanimous in arriving at one and the same solution to it. For both sides are in complete agreement on the point that every Christian has a radical vocation to develop to the full, and to prove his being a Christian, which has been given to him by God's own act in baptism. He is called to that maturity of Christian living which is called 'perfection' or 'holiness'. For however much distrust these words may arouse in us today they are, in the last analysis, the words of the bible itself.

In accordance with this the Council itself has acted as a reconciler in arriving at a solution to these problems to the extent that it treats of the two points in two successive chapters of the ecclesiastical schema, the first dealing with the universal call of all Christians in the Church to holiness (Chapter V, Nos. 39-42), and the second dealing with the religious orders (Chapter VI, Nos. 43-47).[2]

Of course it might be said that in terms of biblical theology and so of dogmatic theology too, the proposition we have just referred to is self-evident. It might be said that no real or radical opposition has ever been offered to the actual principle which it embodies. It might be pointed out that in the actual practice of the Church as well this principle has always been upheld, for she has repeatedly canonised Christians who belonged neither to the clergy nor to the religious orders. And yet this unanimity which has arisen in the Church, and which, viewed as a whole, [136] is entirely spontaneous in its demand for a conciliar statement (this too, has to be taken into account), is an astonishing event. For so far as the spontaneous attitude and outlook of the Church throughout almost two centuries is concerned the truth embodied in this proposition has precisely *not* been self-evident. Of course *in point of fact* there always are Christians in all situations and walks of life who have been and are holy. But over and above this it has not been so immediately obvious that on God's side there is also a *positive vocation* and mission to marriage and to a worldly calling, to earthly tasks precisely as the manner positively ordained by God for the individual concerned, in which precisely he is to attain to the fulness of his Christian existence, the maturity of the baptismal grace bestowed upon him and in which he is to bring to their fulness the fruits of the Spirit. Has not

[1] Of course one might take the view that a special chapter devoted to the holiness of the Church and to the fact that all are called to holiness would better meet the case. This could not be argued on the grounds that so important a topic as this must not appear to serve simply as an introduction to a statement about the religious life. But provided that both points – first that all are called universally to Christian perfection and second that one of the ways of attaining to this is that of the evangelical counsels – are clearly stated, and both the difficulties and the common ground between them are brought out, then it is certain that all can approve of the division into two chapters.

[2] For a more detailed explanation of chapters V and VI cf. recently F. Wulf, *Das zweite Vatikanische Konzi1. Konstitutionen, Dekrete und Erklärungen. Kommentare,* Vol I (Freiburg 1966), pp. 284-313 (with bibliography).

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(Catholic) Christendom always been confronted, in a manner which is quite simple and which already seems to leave no questions unanswered, with a saying of Jesus which has the force of a summons to *all* in heart and spirit: 'If you will be perfect sell all you have … and follow me?' Have not the Fathers of the Church stated uncompromisingly (and without drawing any further distinctions) that it is the virgins who bring forth the fruit one hundred- or sixty-fold from the field of the gospel, whereas married people only bring forth fruit thirty-fold?[3] Has it not been defined by the Council of Trent (without drawing any further distinctions) in the words of scripture itself that it is 'better and more blessed' to renounce marriage 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake'. Is it not the unassailable teaching of Catholic theology (even if, with Thomas Aquinas, it draws a prudent distinction between the essence of holiness and the means of attaining holiness) that it is precisely the fulfilment of the evangelical counsels in concrete practice (and not merely the 'spirit' of them) that is the *better* means of attaining to Christian perfection? And even if the phrase 'at least in itself' is added, even if this statement is tempered by the concession that the situation may '*per accidens*' be otherwise, even then do we not really mean (even though [137] we may not say so in so many words) that for the *majority* of men (how otherwise could the complementary '*per se*' retain its validity?) these counsels constitute the better means – in other words that if they do not follow these counsels they *de facto* radically renounce the quest for perfection or at least in the majority of cases do not attain to it in the degree that God's grace had intended for them? In the Middle Ages and later too, has not the distinction often been drawn between two distinct 'perfections', the perfection of the commandments and that of the counsels, and does not this imply a distinction in the goal itself and not merely in the 'means' of attaining to it? In other words does not this imply, precisely with regard to the ultimate and deepest call itself, that Christians are divided into two different classes, and that, so far as holiness is concerned, the religious orders constitute an élite? Is it not significant that in referring to married women who are saints, the liturgy only knows of the designation 'non virgines'? Has not so classic a moralist as Lehmkuhl explained that the summons to follow Christ by practising the evangelical counsels is addressed to all men, and to that extent it is for the individual to show cause why he should not respond to this summons, and not simply to take it for granted that he has a right not to do so? In other words it is the calling to the secular state, and not that to the religious life that needs to be justified. Is not the religious life spoken of even today without reservation or further distinction as a way of following Christ that is closer and more totally committed than life in the world? Is it not held that members of religious orders have made a total oblation, of their lives to God and Christ without any reserve (implying, therefore, that Christians in the world have in principle failed to do this?). Has there so far been any clear explicit or comprehensible statement on the part of the exponents of the theology of the religious life to the effect that there is also such a thing as a God-given vocation (which also represents a gift of grace) to marriage (1 Cor 7:7) and to worldly callings, and that this too, constitutes a factor which contributes positively to the sanctification of man? Or is it rather the case that up till the present the only really intelligible thing that these theologians have said is that when someone marries or devotes himself to a worldly calling he can be sanctified by God's grace *in* that state (though not, properly speaking, *through* it)? When we consider all this is not the explanation offered by the ecclesiastical Constitution (an explanation which has been accepted almost without

[3] cf. M. Viller, K. Rahner, *Aszese und Mystik in der Väterzeit* (Freiburg 1939), pp. 45 f. Thus in Augustine (Serm. 354 Ad Continentes, 9, P. L. 39, 1568) we read: 'Because she is married a mother will be granted a lesser place in the kingdom of heaven than her daughter who is a virgin. But both will be there like a brighter and a darker star which, nevertheless, are both in the heavens.' Distortions of the truth of this kind are not rectified by the fact that Augustine then goes on to warn the virgin against falling into pride, which can still corrupt everything for her.

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celebration or acclamation of any kind) to the effect that every Christian who is in the [138] married state and in a (morally justified) worldly calling is called to Christian perfection – is not this, I say, an event of immense significance in the history of the Church and in the process by which Christianity comes to realise itself? Is it not one that has gone unnoticed only because no-one contradicts it, or (better) because in the practice of their daily lives Christians have already come spontaneously to anticipate this official explanation?

But this very fact means that the question of the nature and the function of the religious life in the Church of today has been set on a new footing. For it is certainly shown precisely in this Constitution that the Church intends neither to contest nor to obscure the fact that the religious life has this part to play in the Church. The very nature of a conciliar schema is such that it can only provide a cautious indication, or else refrain from taking up any position at all on the question of *how*, in more precise terms, these two doctrines are to be reconciled: on the one hand the doctrine that *all* Christians are called universally to bring their Christian living to its fulness, and on the other the doctrine that a life governed by the evangelical counsels has a special value and a special function. Here we encounter the same situation as with many other elements in Christian teaching. In the process of consciously explicitating the content of our faith, two propositions are put forward side by side which do not seem to be altogether reconcilable one with the other.[4] Yet for all this the Church does uphold both doctrines with unshakeable firmness in the explicit awareness of her faith, and leaves the task – immensely important though this admittedly is – of reconciling the two to be worked out by her theologians. In the process of doing this they have also to acquire a more precise understanding of the finer shades of meaning involved in each of the two statements. Theology, then, has the task of synthesising these two truths by a process of dialectical confrontation, and in performing this task it may actually be the case that a deepened understanding of each of the two statements is arrived at, one that has been clarified by criticism and purged of the unconscious errors which it has carried along with it. Of course, this degree of precision in an individual's understanding [139] of a statement of this kind (as well as the amount of understanding required to arrive at such precision) can only be expected of one who is capable of taking seriously and effectively into consideration, in theological and human terms alike, that other statement which is dialectically opposed to the first.[5]

II. SOME THESES

The questions with which we are concerned then turn upon the relationship between the calling of all Christians to perfection and the special calling of some to the life of the evangelical counsels. These questions have been resolved in the new theological situation in which the Church stands, but certain observations concerning them must be offered at this point. These are primarily concerned with the nature of the religious state itself, insofar as this is constituted by the evangelical counsels. It is of decisive significance for members of

[4] e.g. 'Sacred scripture, as inspired, has God for its author. But it is also a genuinely human document produced by a human author.' Or 'The plenitude of official power in the Church belongs to the Pope alone. But it is also vested in the college of bishops together with the Pope as the head of this college'. Again, 'Jesus is a true and perfect man, yet not a human person'.

[5] For instance how many theologians there may still be even today who either gloss over or minimise the fact that the concept of sin is used in a merely *analogous* sense in the doctrine of original sin! They do this because they have never attained to a really theological and existential understanding of the free subjectivity of the person. They have never understood that a man can never become a sinner through the deed of Adam 'in the same sense' as he becomes a sinner by his own free decision.

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religious orders and the life they lead that they expose both themselves and their life, unreservedly and in the searching light of reality, to the questions which the contemporary 'age' puts to them both from the point of view of the world and from that of the Church. They must do this even if they are not yet ready with an answer which is sufficient to satisfy all sides. Their life in the Church provides them with an *a priori* guarantee that such an answer is to be found, but does not dispense them from searching for it, and they will only find these answers, which are of literally vital importance for them, if they really submit themselves to the questions. Today it is easier for a man to lose face by acting as though he always had an answer for everything pat and ready to hand than by calmly conceding that he is at a loss. This simple point does not seem to be realised everywhere throughout all classes of religious. We too shall have answers to supply in the considerations which follow, but these are only meant as statements which, since they are probably far from being universally accepted, cannot constitute anything more than a stimulus to further enquiry. If anyone [140] feels that such statements do in fact constitute a satisfying answer, so much the better.

An attempt must be made to develop, almost in thesis form, an account of what is essential to this subject, i.e. the nature of the evangelical counsels. This must be done in such a way as to include from the outset the treatment of the problems touched upon in the introduction.

1. The Fact that All Are Called to Perfection

Every Christian is called to 'perfection'. The summons of grace, to which man has a moral duty to respond, calls him to love God and his neighbour with his *whole* heart and with all his strength. Now *this* love is the perfection and goal of Christian living. One question which, though difficult, needs to be taken seriously, and is rich in implications, is that of whether it is conceivable for a man to have renounced precisely that fulness of perfection intended for him by God, and that too, definitively and in death itself (and not merely during specific phases in his life), and still, in spite of this, to attain to salvation. Or is this quite impossible? In that case even though the second view seems to entail an optimism that is all too bold, it nevertheless does include the full rigour of the doctrine that he who has decided to confine himself merely to avoiding mortal sin, and does not trouble himself or make any effort to strive for a *greater* love, by that very fact has already imperilled his own salvation.[6] This is the question, then, which must be developed here. It is apparent that God [141] offered to each individual the possibility, and at the same time laid upon him the duty, of loving God and his neighbour with his *whole* heart. Everyone therefore has the possibility and the duty to attain to perfection in *this* sense, and apart from this there is no other perfection. The particular circumstances of the individual and of the age, and of the paths by which he is led in the concrete by the grace of God, can cause variations in the manner in which this *one* perfection is realised in the concrete. But there is no holiness and no perfection apart from it,

[6] Nevertheless it does seem certain that he who *in principle* excludes the will to the greater love (on the pretext that it is enough for him simply to keep the commandments of God whenever *in concreto* these are binding upon him under pain of grave sin) does sin gravely because he is refusing to submit to the 'commandment' which contains all others within itself, the commandment namely of the love which must ever be greater, the commandment which stems from the inexhaustible dynamism of the Spirit of God. According to Thomas perfection consists essentially in that love which in its *entire fulness* is '*de praecepto*' (S.T. II-II, q. 184, 3). On this basis it is already clear that for a correct Catholic understanding the works of 'supererogation' do not signify a 'supplementary achievement' added onto the 'works of precept' of love as something over and above them. Beyond the fulness of love which is the subject of the gospel commandment there is nothing more. The works of '*super*erogation' fall under that love as the means of attaining it. The element of freedom in these works is present only because the duty that is laid upon us is of a love that tolerates no limits, and it is only in virtue of this fact that it is truly free. On this basis it also becomes immediately clear that the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount (and therefore of the evangelical counsels as well) is necessary for every Christian life, and for salvation as such.

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and every further factor which could be conceived of as belonging to perfection 'in addition to' love as such is, in the last analysis, only intelligible and 'pertaining to perfection' because it is an element in *that* love[7] (an integral part of it and freely posited by it) to the fulness of which every individual is called. While it is true that not every individual is called to *that particular* concretisation of the love concerned in which it is brought to its fulness in the life of *some other* man, still it cannot be concluded from this that the individual is not himself called to achieve the fulness of love in his own life. For this love has in fact to come to its fulness and perfection by being concretised in other works distinct from itself (virtues, trials, etc.), yet is not on that account to be identified with such works. It is not merely the sum total of them all. For this reason it can be the same love even though it is exercised in all these diverse works. Every individual is offered the grace to attain to this consummation of Christian living. But the manner in which he does so varies in each individual case, being unique just as every free human being is himself unique. It may be felt desirable to throw light upon this diversity in personal and individual modes of existence by means of a 'quantitative' concept, by saying that God himself so arranges things that one is called to a greater or lesser degree of perfection, and that too prior to any question of a greater or lesser degree of co-operation with his grace.[8] But the decisive factor in this question of a perfection that varies from individual to individual is that each one is called by God himself, and that this is prior to any position which he freely adopts on his side with regard to *his own* perfection. It follows that this perfection is not the same with each individual, yet that [142] it still remains unquestionably a fact that *all without exception* are called to holiness.[9]

2. Man's Concrete Stations in Life Considered as a Calling to Perfection

The perfection to which all are called can be attained in all walks and situations of life which are not morally objectionable. These can constitute not merely the sphere and the 'situation' *within which* Christian living can be brought to its maturity and its fulness, but are also the means *through* which and the basis *upon* which the individual concerned grows towards this fulness of his perfection. And they constitute an *intrinsic* element in this fulness itself.[10] Hence it is that the actual concrete circumstances of a man's life and calling can themselves be, precisely as such, a factor in his vocation to holiness. The individual is called not merely 'in' a given state of life of this kind *to* holiness, but actually 'to' a specific *state of life*. He has to sanctify the state of life itself and himself in it, and this because man is called to holiness

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[7] cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* V, pp. 439-459.

[8] This may be true even though the perfection in question is always *his* (the individual's) perfection, i.e. the perfection that makes actual the possibilities offered to *him* as an individual, so that as an individual when he reaches heaven he will not have to be saddened by being brought face to face with what he could and would have been.

[9] It must again be reiterated at this point that the true and effective theological concept of perfection has nothing, or at any rate very little, to do with the concept of quantitative increase. For this perfection is of one and the same nature wherever it is realised. In other words it consists in a boundless love between God and man in Christ. In essence, therefore, it does not admit of any quantitative concept. The possibility of growing in such perfection is primarily a question of how far the individual concerned realises the possibilities offered to him in particular. No comparison is possible in any primary sense between his case and that of another man to whom different possibilities are open, and who realises these in different ways.

[10] This does not, of course, mean in their temporal and physical being, for this passes away. But the concrete situations in life (calling, age, marriage, the spirit of the times, etc.) also constitute something more than the external circumstances 'by reason of' which the appropriate virtue is practised. There is no need to interpret the concrete circumstances of human life, as Hofmannstahl does in his concept of 'everyman', as some kind of arbitrary 'role', by assuming which man proves his ability to play a part regardless of what the part itself is intended to represent. Again these concrete circumstances and occupations should not be thought of as analogous to the rush baskets which the Fathers of the desert used to make, weaving them in the morning only to take them to pieces again in the evening, simply for the sake of occupying their time in a virtuous manner.

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and to holiness in the particular form appropriate to him as an individual. In accordance with this, marriage for those who are called to it is not merely 'permitted', but is actually a vocation, a positive contributing factor in that holiness which God has made [143] it possible for them to attain to, and a factor intended by God himself. From this we can and must go on to say that marriage (and, by implication, any kind of 'worldly' state of life) actually constitutes for the vast majority of Christians the *better* means positively offered to them by God himself to attain to that perfection which God himself intends for them. This assertion, therefore, is not intended to be taken in so obvious a sense as it might sound. Behind it lies the whole group of problems concerning the relationship between the order of creation and that of redemption, between nature and grace, one's earthly state and one's calling to the life beyond. And this statement will have to be evaluated as the outcome of an historical experience which has only gradually emerged, and which in turn shows that a statement of this kind is precisely *not* self-evident. If Christians had to think of themselves simply as *nothing more than* the few who have been called out of a world which is in a radically corrupt state, in which everything earthly falls under the curse of sin, in which all 'natural' potentialities invariably lead to *hybris* and a collapse into sin as soon as they are 'developed', and in which evil with its principalities and powers reigns supreme, then they would not be far from arriving at a position in which they regarded the unmarried state as the 'normal' one for these few Christians. It may well be, they would say, that many fall short of this position (without thereby having *ipso facto* to be consigned to the great mass of the damned), but still this unmarried state does constitute the true goal and the calling which is intended for all these Christians. And this was, in fact, to a large extent, if not actually the worked out *theory* of the early and mediaeval Christians (they were preserved from this by scripture and also by the realities of everyday life), still a certain basic attitude on their part which should not be condemned as Platonist, Manichaean, etc., too quickly or before one has one's self been subjected to the tragedy in man's experience of life on this earth and in his activities in this world. (For that matter what else could have been the origin of all Platonism and Manichaeism, the conclusions of which are certainly not foolish or wicked?), or finally before one has really opened one's self to the inalienable 'other-worldliness' of Christianity. But without going into the reasons for this in greater detail at this point the following statement is, nevertheless correct, and the outcome of the historical experience of the Church from which the Church is no longer in a position to withdraw herself: marriage is a positive vocation for the majority of men, addressed to them by the God of creation *and* of redemption, and not [144] merely an element in the old order tragically perverted by sin, which is tolerated even in the case of the redeemed reason of their weakness and hardness of heart.

Of course marriage as conceived of here has itself in turn a specific history of its own in each individual case. As the married man grows older it can initiate him into an interior disposition and frame of mind which is no longer very different from that which the unmarried have taken upon themselves for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. But even then this outlook is an element in, and a fruit of the marriage as such, and therefore part of the actual summons of grace which constitutes his vocation to marriage. And therefore this attitude of mind precisely does not signify that he who is called to marriage might have been able to attain to the 'more direct' way even without having entered into marriage. What we have still to consider is in what sense the evangelical counsels, and virginity as included in these, constitute the means which are 'in themselves better' for attaining to Christian perfection. But already at this stage it can be stated that the meaning of this theological statement concerning virginity cannot be that for the majority of individuals in the concrete it would have been better if they had chosen virginity. If they did this they would be choosing that 'means' (or better that 'situation', those concrete circumstances in which their Christian

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life is achieved) which was less fitting for them. Certainly it is quite possible, and even probable, that among those who *de facto* have entered into marriage a number of men (precisely how many it is impossible to determine) are to be found who have refused to follow the evangelical counsels even though these were offered to them as the means better fitted to their particular cases. But in view of the nature of man in the concrete and the task of humanity as a whole it certainly cannot be maintained that God's creative and redemptive will was such that this applies to the majority of married men. On the contrary they are positively called by God to marriage as that means of attaining to Christian perfection which is better *for them*. The very fact that scripture regards *all* as called to perfection, and presents the unmarried state as the exception offered by God to the few – this fact alone is enough to establish that marriage can be and is a positive vocation in this sense. That for the majority marriage is the better means is not controverted by the everyday experience (to the extent that this does prove anything at all) that the great majority of sinful men do not make a very good use of this better means for them, or even make a positively [145] bad use of it. For on this showing it might equally be argued that the shortcomings of the majority of members of religious orders prove that the evangelical counsels are not the better means for them (or indeed for anyone).

3. The Character of Every Christian Vocation to Perfection as Pertaining to Saving History

In the present order of salvation and the contemporary situation in saving history (i.e. in the post-Christian 'eschatological' age) this perfection of love for God and man, to which every man is called in the particular situation in life proper to him and according to his own particular 'gifts', has in *all* cases (not merely for members of religious orders) a significance as part of saving history, i.e. a specifically *soteriological*, *ecclesiological* and *eschatological* character. It is a sharing in the destiny of the Cross and the death of Christ himself for the salvation of all. It is a love of that God who in freedom has irrevocably summoned the world in the person and in the fate of Christ to a sharing in his own life, which extends beyond all the possibilities of life in this world, and who has already victoriously made this call, which is his own 'kingdom', effective in Christ and in the Church, even if its full effects are still hidden in faith. That is why all are bound to the 'spirit' of the evangelical counsels and to the basic attitude embodied in the Sermon on the Mount. The message sought to be conveyed here is as follows: In every Christian life we must put into practice, as the characteristic within us of our love for God, that attitude which can be called 'faith' to the extent that in it God is conceived of as the one who cannot simply be attained by the actualisation of the possibilities of human experience in this world, since he intends to bestow himself directly as he is in himself, that is in his absoluteness and unattainability. We shall have more to say on this subject when we come to the question of the nature (and practice) of the evangelical counsels. For this reason this 'definition' of the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and of the evangelical counsels may suffice for the present. When we speak of 'spirit' and 'attitude' we do not of course refer to a mere abstract theoretical 'feeling' of a merely 'interior' kind. An attitude, if it is to be genuine, must be actualised in real life. It must find expression and concretisation in space and time, in physical and palpable reality. In referring to what is demanded here as 'spirit' and 'attitude' we intend merely to give expression to the fact that [146] this concretisation does not, and need not have that temporal 'permanence', that 'degree of organisation', that state of being conceived of as a class apart, that emphasis, that predominance over all else which is characteristic of the 'life of the practice' of the evangelical counsels as lived in the religious orders.

4. The Duty to Strive for that Perfection which is made possible for us by God

Every Christian has his 'own gift'. However true it may be that man has been accorded a

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sphere of freedom by God within which he can dispose of his own life and be, to a limited extent, the creator of his own subjective state, still this sphere itself, together with the limited and finite number of possibilities which it entails, is precisely given to him beforehand by God, and is not under his control. And even the true decision of freedom in its uniqueness and autonomy is of its nature and in the very mode in which it is exercised a gift of God which cannot be otherwise. From this it follows that where the 'better means'[11] is offered in the concrete, and really recognised as such as possible in the here and now,[12] this entails not merely a moral possibility but a moral *demand* for the individual concerned, a demand which is not merely posited but at the same time made possible of achievement, even though the alternative course may in itself have a positive moral value of its own. To refuse the better means offered in the concrete would be an explicit denial of the will to a greater increase in the love of God, and therefore culpable and a sin.

5. The Evangelical Counsels as a Means of Personal Perfection

There is such a thing as a divine vocation to the evangelical counsels which entails the renunciation of marriage 'for the sake of the kingdom of [147] heaven'; and conversely for a life lived by the evangelical counsels a special vocation is required. The 'universal' vocation of all Christians as presented in the gospels has in the first instance simply the force of an explanation that the life of the evangelical counsels constitutes a genuine possibility for Christians in general, and means that a Christian must ask himself in all seriousness whether *he* may perhaps be called to live that life in the concrete. This light which scripture throws on the question, however, does not simply constitute a direct demand to all, as though the only question remaining was whether one actually 'willed' to respond to it, and if one did not so 'will' one would have refused something that had actually been offered to one *in concreto*. To take the phrase 'If you will be perfect' (Mt 19:21) in this sense is purely arbitrary, and is an interpretation which overlooks the fact that Jesus utters this phrase to one specific individual, one who 'was able to take it'. Nevertheless when we say that there is a 'universal' call to all Christians this should not be taken in the sense that this call is *only* transformed into an effective and personally binding call *in the exceptional case* in the concrete. This would be to contradict what has been stated above in the second subsection. For those who are called in this sense to the evangelical counsels, to whom it 'has been given', this call signifies the 'better means' of attaining that Christian perfection to which they are bound in virtue of the commandment to strive for an ever greater love.

In this connection and at this point there are several questions which we shall not be entering into: the question of what in more precise terms the actual content of the evangelical counsels is, the question of whether they must be conceived of as necessarily interconnected (though, of course, this is not in fact the case), the question of how such a calling can be recognised. Here it is presupposed that answers have already been found to all these questions. But if there is a calling to such a mode of life, then the evangelical counsels are, *for those that are called*, the 'better means', and in that case what has been said in subsection 3 applies to them. When, therefore, we speak of the evangelical counsels as the 'better means' for the attainment of the maturity of the love of God and man, then our statements

[11] This is not to exclude the fact that the basic moral attitude can be realised in the concrete in ways which are materially different, yet which, considered as actualisations of religious and moral potentialities, are of equal value, or at any rate for all practical purposes not distinguishable.

[12] In this it is clear *a priori* that it is quite impossible to arrive at any *absolute theory* that provides an all-comprehending clarification of the moral significance in the concrete of a given concrete decision. No attempt at such a theory should be undertaken. For this reason it is a Christian virtue in itself not to try to solve *all* the questions involved in every decision, a virtue which is the opposite of the erroneous attitude of scrupulosity.

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upon this subject are *in the first instance*[13] to be taken in a *relative* sense. In other words they are better *in relation to* those to whom it has been *given* to be able to act in this way in freedom. Nor can this [148] 'relative' interpretation of the traditional statements concerning the evangelical counsels be refuted on the grounds that by taking them in this way we shall be reducing these traditional statements to mere self-evident propositions. For this is far from being the case. Certainly upon this interpretation the statement: 'There is such a thing as a vocation to the evangelical counsels' is the fundamental statement, and the further assertion that these counsels are – precisely for those called to them – the better means is a straightforward consequence following from this basic proposition. But precisely this basic proposition is in itself far from being self-evident. For to say that the renunciation of marriage above all can be due not merely to the compulsion of exterior circumstances (like the renunciation of many other things which are positively beneficial to the human individual and his life), but can actually be positively striven for and willed (if only as a means of attaining to and a mode of exercising the love of God and neighbour) – all this is anything but self-evident. It represents a possibility in human existence which is only seriously entertainable as such in the eschatological situation which Christ has inaugurated, a point to which we shall have to give further consideration at later stage. This statement is not self-evident because when it is viewed in its full and basic significance[14] it is not so easy to say why the

[13] At a later stage we shall be treating of another sense in which these means are to be regarded as 'better', and one that is 'absolute'.

[14] For with regard to the possibility of renouncing marriage for the sake of Christ and the kingdom of heaven this basic outlook must not, in the nature of the case, reduce this to the banal consideration that within the restricted possibilities available in human existence it can *de facto* often be the case that one is compelled to renounce one moral and personal aim in order to attain to another. Of course this situation does often arise. A daughter renounces marriage in order to look after her sick mother. A scholar remains single because he is too intensely absorbed in his researches and because these constitute a danger to his life. A man remains single because he fails to find a wife really suited to him. Such cases really are *per accidens*. Anyone who assigns this as the basic and ultimate reason for the gospel teaching on the unmarried state, or who misunderstands the relevant teaching of Paul in this sense (for Paul only *seems* to assign reasons of this kind for remaining unmarried) is being excessively superficial, or is, by implication, maintaining something which is radically false, namely that the two loves, the love for God and Christ on the one hand, and human love which finds its fulfilment in marriage on the other, are opposed one to another as rivals, so that as one increases the other diminishes. Now this is simply untrue. Yet the idea involved does lie at the roots of many arguments which are offered in defence of the evangelical counsel of virginity. God is regarded from the outset as one particular being amongst others such that within the finite sphere of human living these others represent further values and goals *besides* him, or even in competition with him. On this conception, therefore, he had to 'share' this finite sphere of human existence with other beings constituting rival goals and values for the human subject. Now from the standpoint not only of metaphysics but of Christianity too this view is false. It is precisely the 'world' (as that which God has created) that increases or decreases in proportion as God takes a greater or a lesser place in our lives. In all genuine human immanence there is a factor of transcendence, and *e converso*. Love of God and love of man grow in the same proportion to one another. And it is radically untrue to suggest that married love, as a particular instance of love of neighbour, constitutes an exception to this principle. The true way of raising one's self up to God is to participate actively in the process of the Incarnation by which God came down and entered into the world. True 'spiritualisation' so far as *man* is concerned (for it is never demanded of man that he should be an angel) is the progressive personalisation of the material element, culminating in the resurrection of the body. All this must be borne in mind and accorded its full weight by anyone who undertakes to give a correct explanation of how Christian virginity is justified. He must not present his case in such a way as to suggest that the renunciation of married love *ipso facto* and *in itself* offers a better chance of attaining to love of God, as though one could love God more if one loved one's neighbour less. The defender of Christian virginity must show that in the concrete existing situation with regard to salvation the renunciation of *one* genuine possibility of loving or learning to love one's neighbour (that namely of marriage) itself provides a genuine possibility of learning to love God. But at the same time he must show that these two loves are not for one moment two rival entities which grow in inverse proportion one to another. He must show that when a man foregoes marriage 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake' he does not thereby renounce the possibility of learning to love God by loving his fellow men, for according to the gospel itself there is no other way whatever of loving

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renunciation [149] of a human love can be a 'means' of attaining to a greater love of God. When, therefore the tradition of the Church on the basis of scripture explains that the evangelical counsels are the better means of attaining to the fulness of love of God and of man, and when we take this statement – at any rate at first – in a relative sense, namely as applying to those who are called to this state, then in very truth this does not imply that we are in any sense reducing this statement to a mere self-evident proposition. Indeed even when taken in this sense it is precisely a scandal for many. For many imagine that the evangelical counsels cannot be the better means for *anyone* (except '*per accidens*', i.e. in circumstances which in themselves are unfortunate and which one could have wished otherwise, circumstances relating to the social status, the psychology, or the personal history of the individual. Clearly when these circumstances prevail the individual can indeed embrace the religious life precisely in order to make the best of what is possible for him).
[150]

6. Renunciation Considered as the Realisation and the Confirmation of Faith

The essence of the evangelical counsels consists in the fact that they constitute the *concrete* and comprehensible realisation of belief (reinforced by love and hope) in the grace of God that overcomes the world and our salvation.

It is not possible at this point to examine each of the individual evangelical counsels in turn in order to arrive at the distinctive characteristics of each of them. Certainly the evangelical counsels are distinguished from one another by such characteristics, and the distinction between them is great enough and important enough for one to be able to ask whether they really can be brought under a common heading at all. The history of the way in which they have been practised in the Church likewise points to this difference between them. Major variations appear in the way in which they have been practised and in the estimation in which they have been held. So far as the New Testament is concerned the only one of them which can immediately be understood as a general counsel is the counsel of virginity. Poverty[15] is included in the New Testament primarily in the concrete manner of life followed by those accompanied Jesus. Obedience goes unmentioned. Such major differences appear in the later practices of the religious orders with regard to poverty and obedience that it is not easy to bring everything included in this under a single common denominator such that the concept thus arrived at still retains some real content. For this reason it would be of the utmost importance to perform the necessary task of examining these characteristics and differences in the evangelical counsels taken one by one. But it is not possible to undertake this in the present context. The reason that we take these three counsels as falling under a single concept is that we regard them as exercises in Christian living which, in the last analysis, are of one and the same theological nature As such they are renunciations[16] [151] of supreme benefits in

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God. The only possible way of learning to love God is to divide one's heart between love of God and love of neighbour.

[15] It is in fact interesting that outside the gospels there is no mention of 'poverty' in the New Testament. The holding of property in common as witnessed in Acts has a different basis.

[16] It is not possible here to analyse the deeper or existential meaning latent in an act of renunciation as such, though this might enable us to unveil the special properties and difficulties inherent in such an act, and so to recognise its true nature and origins. At this point we must confine ourselves to noticing that there is material here for a special epistemological investigation. An act of renunciation in which he had a total and absolute understanding of all the factors involved, and had completely thought them out, would no longer be such at all. The negative aspects of it would have been resolved. This must be borne in mind if the considerations offered here are to be accorded their correct value. In their *a priori* approach, therefore, they are neither capable of rendering, nor intended to render, superfluous the demand in the gospels that we shall follow Christ by means of such renunciations. They are intended merely to throw light upon that limited measure of insight (it is far from being total comprehension) which must be possessed even by one who listens to the gospel and submits himself in a spirit of unconditional obedience – i.e. by surrendering his own insights – to following Christ crucified. A further factor which must be borne in mind in the considerations which follow is this: There is no possibility

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human life. This renunciation or self-denial can only be achieved in its true and genuine nature provided that the 'value' of what is renounced is not falsely underestimated, provided that there is no reaction against it whether already present or artificially cultivated. Rather it must be viewed and valued as it really is. Only one who loves the richness of life, one for whom domestic blessings constitute an opportunity and a means for self-expression, only one who possesses the courage of self-responsibility, only one who is capable of genuine personal love, can have a real understanding of what is involved in the renunciation [152] prescribed by the evangelical counsels. If these are not present they become a means for the weak and cowardly to flee from life's realities. The renunciation is only possible for the sake of a higher good.[17] Otherwise it is perverse. But this 'for the sake of' must imply an *objective* connection between the surrender of the one good and the attainment of the other which is of higher value. This objective connection, however, need not always and in every case be of such a kind that the renunciation is the sole and indispensable means of attaining that which is of higher value. It is sufficient that it is a possible and reasonable means.[18] Now an act of renunciation can only be a means in the sense intended here if the surrender of the good in question actually constitutes the concrete realisation of the subject's will to attain to a higher good. This becomes possible and reasonable in cases in which the *will*[19] to attain to the higher good either cannot attain to its goal at all without this surrender of the lesser good, or else if it can only attain it with difficulty or with a lack of certainty as to whether it has in fact attained it unless this surrender is made.[20] [153] In the case we are envisaging here, therefore, the

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whatever of developing the point we wish to make without simultaneously arriving at and bringing to light that factor in the phenomenon of renunciation, flight from the world, etc., which must necessarily be present in the practice of every Christian life. Indeed the evangelical counsels cannot be intended to be anything else than realisations in the concrete (for *many* Christians) of that spirit of the gospel which is demanded of *all* Christians, and which must be put into practice by all in one form or another. And finally what we are seeking to achieve in this consideration is not to establish an intrinsic connection either between renunciation and faith as reinforced by hope or between it and love. The reason why we are working out the connection which exists between renunciation and faith at this point is that by these means the specifically Christian element in a renunciation of this kind can more easily be made clear. This does not entail any opposition to that approach to the problem in which the evangelical counsels are taken primarily as actualisations and realizations of the specifically Christian *love* for God (as we have done in *Theological Investigations* III, pp. 47-57). For we only understand the essentially Christian character of this love when we see it as love for that God who, in supernaturally bestowing himself in grace and revelation, encounters us in faith, and as a love which is still advancing in hope on the way which will lead to God in his inconceivability and his inaccessible light. In the nature of the case, therefore, the question which we shall be seeking to answer throughout is that of how the Christian attitude of renunciation is related to the complex of faith, hope and love considered as a single entity in which the first two elements of their own intrinsic natures demand to be raised to the level of love, and in which the love of the Christian still journeying towards God necessarily contains faith and hope as intrinsic constitutive elements within it.

[17] This does not exclude, but rather '*in*cludes' the truth that the higher good must be loved for its own sake, and not simply as 'valuable for the individual himself'. This is possible if, and to the extent that this value is attached to the person of the other who is loved. This 'ecstatic' love (a love which draws the individual away from himself and towards the other, regarding that other and not the lover himself) does not, therefore once more, imply the ultimate paradox of a love that is self-annihilating, for the nature of man as capable of free personal love finds its fulfilment precisely in exercising a love that is selfless. For man finds 'himself', his true nature, only in the act of loving, and not, therefore, in the act of self-seeking.

[18] It is precisely as such that it makes possible those acts of obedience and self-commitment to the unknown which are essential for the renunciation of which we are speaking here.

[19] Notice that the words used are not 'If the higher good …' but '*If the will to attain to* the higher good …'.

[20] There are cases in which the will to attain to a higher good can be fulfilled and actually achieve this higher good directly, and in which the sincerity of the resolve to attain to it is immediately evident in the very fact that the possibility of attaining to it has been successfully actualised. In such cases the surrender of the one good *can only* be a means of attaining to the other when it is, in the nature of the case, impossible to possess both goods at the same time. But *precisely in the case which we are here envisaging* this is not so. To attain to God in love and to entertain a love for one's personal fulfilment in the world are in themselves wholly compatible – indeed the one may actually postulate the other. In the particular case we are envisaging here, therefore, everything

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higher good is such that (a) it constitutes a free and unmerited act of grace on God's part, one which transcends all the opportunities and potentialities of this world, which is his own personal self-bestowal, and as such can only be received, and cannot be attained to by the subject's own autonomous powers; (b) it stands in contradiction to the *sinful* corruption of the world, a corruption which, once more, the mind of pilgrim man is incapable of separating off in any sure or adequate sense from the pure state of creaturely reality.[21] Thus man's refusal of the sinful corruption, and his assent to the creaturely reality are mutually interdependent in such a way that within the historical process, still unfolding, by which the two elements are disentangled one from another, man's refusal of the sinful corruption of the world (considered as an assent to God himself) must have a certain pre-eminence over his assent to the goods of the creaturely world (cf. Mt 16:26); (c) the higher good has been bestowed upon us as a future good, i.e. as an object of faith and hope, and therefore the will to attain to it and by which it must be accepted is itself precisely what we call faith and hope. In other words, therefore, it cannot depend for its certainty directly upon the object itself, but must depend on something else apart from the object to prove that it is real and radical. In relation to a good *of this kind* the renunciation of a supreme 'this-worldly' good is a reasonable and logical outcome of the will to attain to the higher good which takes the form of faith and hope, these in turn being the factors which sustain and specify a truly Christian love for God on the part of the pilgrim Christian.

[154] This faith that is inspired by hope,[22] considered as a reaching out for the future of God who bestows himself without being able to be 'taken by force', can only really achieve its fulness and an assurance that it is truly present in a surrender of 'this-worldly' values. It is not as though these were directly opposed to faith, hope and love, and could not even positively be integrated into the full exercise of these virtues. But how otherwise could this faith

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turns upon the fact that the higher good is available in such a way that the renunciation of some other benefit can be understood as a possible (if not actually necessary) means of attaining to it, and as an expression of the will to attain to it.

[21] The fulness of personal existence can never be attained to in the concrete in any adequate sense solely by a process of reflexion, or the formulation of theories capable of 'distinguishing' between the 'order of creation' (whether in the natural or supernatural dimension) in itself, and the sinful corruption of the world (its state of 'lying helpless in evil'). For in considering the goods which the world has to offer from the Christian standpoint as the objects of a conscious motivation we can never abstract from the fact that the world that is presented to us to choose from, and which represents the sole object which is really available to us to shape and control, is already radically conditioned by sin. Confronted with a world so conditioned, therefore, we can never give our sheer, unconditional and unreserved assent to any one of the goods which it has to offer. To formulate the matter in terms of the categories of moral theology this point might be stated as follows: Viewed in its radical theological significance any object of human choice is *invariably* presented to man 'cum duplici effectu'. For this reason in every Christian choice, even when it is directed towards (finite) goods, a basic reserve must be maintained and actually practised with regard to the consequences arising from the fact that *de facto* every good in the world has been conditioned by sin in this way (cf. 1 Cor 7:29-31).

[22] Of course faith too has its elements of 'renunciation' precisely to the extent that it is a cognitive process; the surrender of the cognitive faculty to the mystery, the obedience of one who acknowledges precisely as acknowledging, a renunciation of the demand that that which is accepted by faith should have any intrinsic credentials of its own, a readiness to allow the basic acknowledgment of faith to grow and develop, and to endure the darkness of faith, etc. All these are factors which cannot be treated of in any further detail at this point. But the faith that is precisely *saving* is always something more than a mere acknowledgment (as the acceptance of knowledge), and the acknowledgment of faith as such is always brought to its fulness in an act which goes beyond that of merely accepting some proposition to be acknowledged, engaging the subject in a movement which at least impels him towards love and can only finally be brought to rest when it achieves its fulness in love. (In spite the distinction which exists between the three theological virtues it is in fact unthinkable that at death man, as a lost sinner, should still possess the 'infused virtue' of faith and yet should finally have lost that of infused love.) It follows that for faith to be real faith it must, in the real, concrete and existential mode of its realization, contain in itself elements of renunciation which apparently belong to a quite different category than that of knowledge.

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and hope be anything more than a mere appendage, a mere supplementary ideology superimposed upon an attitude to the world which as such would be and would remain exactly the same even without this faith and hope? How otherwise could this faith permeate the whole of existence as its determinative form? How could it achieve any assurance of its own reality (at any rate in some of its aspects), and of the fact that it is sincere in the dimension in which a reflexive process of this kind is possible and therefore commanded too? Of course the obedient acceptance of 'passion' as an inevitable factor in human existence does constitute such an actualisation of this faith, permeating and dominating the whole of human life. Indeed it is the only possible absolute,[23] for only in the *prolixitas mortis* which dominates the whole of life can man be he who surrenders the whole of himself, since in 'passion' he becomes wholly drawn out of himself. And it is in this process that there takes place that exercise of faith and love in which man gives himself *wholly* [155] over to that which is no longer his own and no longer under his control. But precisely this passion can, nevertheless, only be the highest and ultimate act and so the act of faith and hope in which man gives himself over to God over whom he has no control if man freely goes to meet this event of 'passion' in the absolute by renouncing a positive 'this-worldly' good, one that he can experience, possess and enjoy.[24] Otherwise this faith remains at the level of mere 'theory' formulated in a state of withdrawal from the world, or of ideological consolation which is only entertained when the world is no longer able to console. The 'bird in the bush' is only believed in when one in deed and in truth lets the 'bird in the hand' fly away, and that too before it is taken away from one and before the 'bird in the bush' has yet been laid hold of. If we were only to avoid the evil as such which stands revealed as devoid of value, no act would be posited, so far as the self-realisation of our personal existence is concerned, which need necessarily be more (unless it is to be absurd) than an assent to those 'this-worldly' values with which human existence can and must seek to satisfy itself even when it is not understood as the gift of God's own self-bestowal as an act of free grace. From what has been said it follows (a) that in *every* Christian life there must be asceticism (taken in this theological sense)[25] because every Christian life is one of faith; (b) that it has *not* been asserted that the nature of the Christian decision of faith is simply *identical* with its 'ascetical' aspect and the element of ascetism inherent in its nature;[26] (c) that it is further asserted that while [156] there necessarily must be in every Christian life a certain dialectical opposition between 'flight from the world' and 'assent to the world', both factors being present in their due measure,

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[23] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Passion and Asceticism', *Theological Investigations* III pp. 58-85; *On the Theology of Death*, 'Quaestiones Disputatae' 2nd ed.

[24] Footnote 22 above is also relevant at this point.

[25] In other words precisely *not* as a 'training' in ethical self-control over one's personal impulses when we have not yet gained the mastery over them, and *not* as training in mystical experience on the part of a subject who has been spiritually purified.

[26] In fact it belongs to *every* Christian life (and therefore to those governed by the evangelical counsels and to the most radical forms of the discipleship of Christ crucified as well) to make actual, and to live out in one's own particular concrete circumstances the conviction that it is the grace of God in Christ which comes from beyond the world that establishes the world itself, redeems it and glorifies it. An *absolute* renunciation, therefore, is in real terms neither possible nor Christian. It would, perhaps, be in conformity with the Buddhist philosophy, and would involve, amongst other things, the heretical conviction that the renunciation *is*, of its own intrinsic nature, identical with the onset of God's presence in man, or else that of its nature it compels this. From this aspect, too, great caution is required in accepting statements to the effect that members of religious orders renounce 'everything', follow Christ 'totally', or present a 'whole offering' of themselves. The man who becomes a *total* sacrifice in the obedience of faith is the one who believes to the point where he submits to being totally taken up by death itself; now this is something which will be demanded of everyone, and which is made possible by grace for every Christian. In comparison with this all the evangelical counsels can only be mere timid and cautious attempts to practise in preparation for this ultimate kind of obedience and ultimate kind of poverty.

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this measure can vary in the concrete from one case to another according to the particular calling of the individual concerned.[27] This faith which, in the concrete circumstances of the individual, is made real in the sacrifice of 'this worldly' values, now acquires a specific form in the taking over of the evangelica1 counsels. In these that element in the exercise of faith which consists in *renunciation*, as distinct from that element in faith which consists in *laying hold of* the sanctification of the 'this worldly' realities and values which are available to human experience, acquires a certain predominance. The renunciation entailed in the evangelical counsels as such is not simply identical with faith as lived out in hope and love. But it is a possible way of concretely exercising that faith, a way in which that faith is made manifest and (to a certain degree) assured. Indeed it entails a renunciation of benefits to renounce which in positive and direct terms is only rational and justified in the act of opening one's self to, and contenting one's self with that grace which comes from above, which is unmerited, and which transcends all the powers proper to man. Only so does this renunciation constitute a concrete form of living one's faith to the full. But this precisely does *not* mean that this is the sole way in which such a fulness can be achieved. The act of accepting the world as that which can be saved [157] and which needs to be sanctified is just as much a form of living the faith to the full. But it is in the act of renunciation, and in this *alone*,[28] that the element which specifies this faith, considered as the acceptance of divine grace from above, is made *explicit*.[29] The reason for this is first that every positive act which is applied to the world and what it contains bears its own intrinsic meaning and justification precisely as positive and '*this worldly*', and secondly that pure 'passion' as such, present without any free act being posited, can equally well be a manifestation merely of the experience that existence is absurd, or else can be interpreted and understood in this sense.

In order to provide a comprehensive evaluation of what has been said there is a further point to be considered. It is this: the basic difficulty in interpreting and justifying the evangelical counsels always consists in the fact that even without them the fulness of Christianity, i.e. love for God and man with one's whole heart, can be made real in a way of

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[27] Here we cannot embark upon an investigation of the fact that presumably this dialectical unity, which nevertheless admits of variation between the two factors mentioned, has undergone an historical process of development in the Church as well as in the lives of individuals. In Protestant Christendom a premium has constantly been set upon worldly callings as opposed to 'monkishness', while in the Catholic Church of the late Middle Ages the rise of the active orders, the development of lay spirituality, etc., undoubtedly took place under the influence of this Protestant revaluation. These factors alone attest the reality of the historical process in the Church, to which we have referred. Again when we consider the protest which arose in non-Catholic circles against the religious life as lived in the orders, we must distinguish the positive factor, the call for a shift in emphasis and a change of proportion between the two elements in the dialectic referred to above, from a factor which is less acceptable, the idea, namely, that this change of emphasis must have an absolute application in the Church as a whole, and must take place in *every* Christian life.

[28] This renunciation is actualised *especially*, but of course not exclusively, in the evangelical counsels. From this it is clear that this word 'alone' is not intended in any *primary* sense to separate the life of the evangelical counsels from some other Christian way of life; rather it is intended to draw a distinction between the life of the evangelical counsels and other factors which belong to every Christian life. But it must be remembered that it is the factor of renunciation that does in fact characterise the life of the evangelical counsels, even distinguishing it from a life that is lived according to Christian principles 'in the world'. The term 'alone' here can also be used with the secondary significance of distinguishing the two Christian ways of life.

[29] This is not to imply that this 'explicitation' is *absolutely clear and unequivocal*, or that it removes at one blow those uncertainties and obscurities which faith (if it is genuine) entails. Those factors in the evangelical counsels which are directly evident to the onlooker might also be ascribed to mere 'human deficiency' or, to put it in biblical terms, they could constitute a 'circumcision' operated by human hands, and devised by a human ideology. Or else they could be due to physical or psychological weaknesses. But despite this the manifest way of life prescribed by the evangelical counsels does constitute the utmost which man can do on his side in order to impart to his faith, or to the factor of transcendence of this world which that faith involves, a palpable form which gives it a greater force of reality.

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life which is not that of the evangelical counsels. And yet a life of this kind is not merely 'tolerated', but is the subject of a positive moral vocation.[30] But [158] this means that every kind of human life, human life as a whole in all its forms and possible variations ('sin only excepted'), can be integrated into the love for God and man, and can be made the means by which these are brought to their true fulness. But we only understand this statement aright when we recognise simultaneously that prior to any such process of integration, by which his love for God is objectified, man finds himself from the first involved in a multiplicity of 'worldly factors', earthly impulses, relationships' etc., and has already arrived at an understanding of himself (prior to this love of God) that is 'worldly'. And, moreover, this world has already all along been conditioned by sin.[31] From this it follows that (a) while all realities of the world in which human life achieves its fulness and enlarges its sphere of influence are indeed *capable* of being integrated into the love of God, they are not therefore already so integrated, and (b) the world is that in which man has existed right from the first, and which he has freely accepted as the sphere in which to objectify his own nature.[32] But not every element in this world, taken in isolation from the rest, is suitable for objectifying the love of God and neighbour *in the same way*. Still less is every element suitable as a *manifestation* either of the fact that this integration has taken place, or of the love which actually operates the integration. This is the existential and ontological background for the simple fact that it is true that normally speaking man does not choose marriage, riches, power, *because* he loves God, but already finds himself involved in these realities beforehand, or has already laid hold of them prior to experiencing the fact that in them he is explicitly confronted with the love of God. And then the concrete form which his situation in the world assumes acquires a significance which [159] could be called 'infralapsarian'. By reason of these prior orientations in it he experiences it not only as a confrontation with the love of God, but *also* as a restriction and a hindrance upon him (because of its power to absorb his energies, etc.), holding him back from the integration of his whole life into the love of God.[33] These characteristics of life in the world (not withstanding the fact that they

[30] In this connection, as we have already emphasized, it is no use attempting to evade the difficulty by saying that the 'spirit' of the evangelical counsels must be present in those who live 'in the world' as well. This may be true – though great caution is required as to the sense in which it is taken. But what we are concerned with here is precisely not the justification of the evangelical counsels as such or in themselves, but rather the explanation of why it is that so many rightly refuse to content themselves merely with this 'spirit'.

[31] Though this does not necessarily mean that man, as being from the first a creature of this world, must also have sinned and fallen away from God by his own act before he has positively integrated everything into his love for God.

[32] It should be noticed that when an individual adopts, or alternatively decides not to adopt, the evangelical counsels, this always involves a conscious and deliberate choice of the finite and limited freedom which is his. But prior to this a comprehensive 'engagement' of his will has already taken place at the pre-conscious level, and from this it has already acquired a basic orientation in which it has come to a realisation of itself as 'belonging to the world'. On these grounds alone it is impossible that the life of the 'counsels', which belongs to the level of conscious deliberation and explicitation in terms of mental categories, could be, in the strict sense, a 'total offering'. Here too the original and all-comprehending 'engagement' in the world (in theological terms the factor of concupiscence, which is never wholly eliminated) is never totally permeated by the decision taken at the level of conscious thought.

[33] Thus there is a *de facto* difference, but one which is also inherent in the nature of the case, between marriage as able to be integrated (Eph 5) on the one hand, and the experience of marriage as actually integrated on the other, such that the first does not lead on to the second without a certain process of transition (cf. 1 Cor 7). Moreover this difference does not apply to the unmarried state in the same way. It is this difference, therefore, and the process of transition it involves, which Paul has in mind when he recommends virginity as the 'more blessed' state. But this evaluation of the case must not be taken in an absolute sense, as though marriage were fundamentally 'divisive' in its effects, and not fundamentally designed by the love of God itself, and capable of being integrated into it; for on this view the unmarried state would always be the best one for every single one of us. But neither should we seek to eliminate or smooth out the real differences inherent in the situation. We

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can be integrated into the love of God) do not apply to the evangelical counsels. These, of their very nature, do not exist at all unless they proceed directly from the love of God. Their very nature is such that they entail a certain withdrawal which is the opposite of that attitude in which one strives to acquire a position in the world without recognising any of the problems which this involves. For this reason the evangelical counsels are, of their very nature, an expression and manifestation of *that* faith which, in laying hold of the grace of God, at the same time withdraws from this total and unreserved effort to achieve a position in the world.

7. The Status of Christians Under the Evangelical Counsels and In the World

The evangelical counsels, then, are the expression and the manifestation[34] of a faith that is reinforced by hope and love as well. In this they are [160] distinguished from 'this worldly' goods (those of riches, power and development of the personality), though these two are capable of being integrated into, and subsumed under grace (through they do not make grace manifest in any direct sense). The evangelical counsels also represent an attitude of withdrawal as opposed to an unreserved striving for position in the world, for the world lies prostrate 'in the evil' of infralapsarian sinfulness. Now since the evangelical counsels do constitute an expression and a manifestation of a faith that hopes and loves in this way, the epithets 'better' and 'more blessed' as applied to them in that *objective* sense which accords them a pre-eminence over the opposite way of life, are altogether appropriate. The truth of this has always been acknowledged by scripture and tradition prior to any application of them to the merely individual case. In this sense, therefore, they have a relatively greater suitability as a means of exercising love for one who has been called to follow them.[35] Objectively speaking, therefore, the evangelical counsels do have a certain general pre-eminence over other ways of life. But this pre-eminence, taken precisely in the sense intended here, does *not* mean that the actual fact of fulfilling them in practice *ipso facto* and necessarily means or guarantees that a greater love of God is achieved than is, or can be, achieved even apart from these counsels. It does not mean that for every individual (or even for normal cases) the 'means' which is better for that individual constitutes the most perfect realisation of the love of God that is possible. It does not mean that one who practises the evangelical counsels is *ipso facto* 'more perfect' than the Christian 'in the world'. But it does mean that the evangelical counsels (considered as a renunciation, though admittedly such renunciation can also be present in other ways of life) constitutes an objectivation and a manifestation of faith in that grace of God which belongs to the realm beyond this present world. And this objectivation and manifestation *precisely as such* are not [161] achieved in any other way of life. Objectivation means – from the ontological point of view – that in the case of a being

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should not pretend that the 'worldly state' which we freely accept from the first (and which finds its primary expression in marriage) is also always and *ipso facto* integrated into the love of God as well, or that it is easy so to integrate it. Nor should we pretend that it is our duty to love God 'together with' everything else, it being taken for granted that 'all else that we do besides God has already sufficient intrinsic justification in its own right, regardless of whether it is integrated into the love of him or not.'

[34] In all cases this 'manifestation' can only take the form of '*renunciation*'. For grace achieves a 'positive' manifestation only in the word of God and the sacraments. Even here, however, it is manifested only as offered and promised, not as accepted and triumphant.

[35] By this we do not, of course, intend to suggest that only one who is able to carry out this process of rational analysis of why the evangelical counsels should have pre-eminence can understand what this pre-eminence consists in. He who is called in the concrete to follow the evangelical counsels has a positive knowledge of this from scripture, tradition and the practice of the Church, and experiences this pre-eminence in an instinctive and non-speculative manner in the light of the grace of his vocation, when he accepts the evangelical counsels in a spirit of obedience. The emptiness and the pain involved in the renunciation is experienced as the openness of faith to the process by which the life of God becomes present in the death of man. And everything else which it is necessary to know in this connection is implicitly included in this.

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subject to physical and historical modalities certain ultimate and basic orientations have to be achieved, and these can be achieved only in an 'other being', though they are not identical with it. (For this reason this 'other being' can never show quite unambiguously what these basic orientations of the first being are.) This 'other being', therefore, has the value of an 'ontic symbol'[36] and is the expression of these freely adopted orientations. Again from the ethical point of view it is the 'means' by which these orientations are in fact achieved. 'Everything' (sin excepted) can be the 'material' which is integrated into a 'faith' orientation, and is constituted as such by it. But not everything is on that account *ipso facto* an objectivation and manifestation of faith itself in the sense intended precisely *here*, though, of course, it is also true that positively to opt for certain 'this worldly' goods as 'material for integration' in this sense can in itself be a 'means' of causing faith to grow.

We have not yet arrived at any clear and universally accepted terminology to give a satisfactory expression to this state of affairs with regard to the 'objective' pre-eminence of the evangelical counsels. If we merely say that the counsels are the 'better *means*' for achieving a believing love, then this use of the term 'better' immediately raises the question of what this is intended to signify, if the counsels are, nevertheless, *not* the better means for the majority of men. It also gives rise to the further question of whether a satisfactory answer is arrived at merely by adding that these 'means' are better 'in themselves'. For when we use the term 'means' we imply a relationship not merely to the end in view for which the means are employed, but also to the subject whom these means are intended to help in the attainment of that end. If, therefore, we say that these means are not the 'better way' for the majority of men, what, in that case, can it still mean to say that they are the better means 'in themselves', seeing that we are nevertheless concerned to point out that this 'in themselves' does not apply to the majority of cases even when there is no question of acting contrary to their nature and so sinfully? The term 'means' is valid as an expression of the relationship between counsel and perfection only to the extent that this expression makes it clear that perfection is never formally constituted as such by the counsels, and that the counsels do not constitute a higher form of perfection (one which is [162] inaccessible to the 'ordinary' Christian). Rather it must be taken as signifying that the counsels are ordered to *that* perfection to which all are called; that the counsels precisely do *not* of themselves constitute a closer form of following Christ, a more intimate unity with God, but rather are there *for* these ends. But the term 'means' is inadequate because of its nature it tends to suggest that there is an objective relationship between perfection and counsel (the case is rather as if one were to call the body and its actions the 'means' of the personal fulfilment of the spirit). If we really say that the counsels are the 'objectivation' of faith and love then this easily gives rise to the misunderstanding that they alone, and not every rational activity of the Christian in this world, can be the concrete realisation of faith, that only the renunciation and sacrifice entailed in the counsels are able to constitute faith as lived in the concrete, of being faith 'spiritually', instead of realising that 'everything – including our worldly activities – which we do' is able to become this if only we do it in the name of Christ. We must therefore simply shift by saying that the counsels are the sole mode in which faith achieves its objectivation *and manifestation*, though when we say this what we mean is that in the counsels *alone* (in contrast to other forms of renunciation, and especially to that which consists in consciously and explicitly embracing 'passion') faith arrives at a state of objectivation in which it becomes manifest precisely because all forms of objectivation which entail a positive assent to the world also conceal faith (where this is not thought of and practised as a mere ideological superstructure imposed upon one's ordinary life), since even without faith they continue to be meaningful. Since they do constitute an objectivation of the faith in this way,

[36] Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV, pp. 221-252.

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making it manifest (and thereby bearing witness to it as well), the counsels are, of course, precisely *not* mere empty manifestations of faith which have nothing to contribute to the actual exercise of it because their nature is such as can only be realised in the act of objectivation and manifestation. On the theory put forward here, therefore, the evangelical counsels are of their nature the historical and sociological manifestation of the faith of the Church for the Church and for the world. But to proceed from this (this point must straightway be added here) to a denial of the fact that the counsels also have an 'ascetical' significance for the individual would be an utter misconception. Admittedly it remains true that this faith also achieves manifestation and objectivation in the *freely accepted* inescapable 'passion' in the life of every true Christian (not in 'passion' as such, but in the 'death' which we accept [163] in 'obedience' in that 'passion' as in the case of Christ himself). But it is precisely in order to inculcate this attitude of obedience that the counsels are given, to exercise man, by anticipation, and to prepare him for death. They are not intended to be anything more than this. And in freely accepting the element of 'passion' we are, materially speaking, achieving precisely the same effect as appears in the counsels: the free acceptance of a renunciation which, from the point of view of this world, is irrational.

The statement 'the evangelical counsels are the "better way"', therefore, is not an assertion that those who practise them have reached a higher stage of perfection. For the sole measure of the degree of perfection which the individual achieves is in all cases the depths of his love for God and his neighbour. This statement refers rather to the fact that the counsels are 'means' (an objectivation and a making manifest) of faith and love (a) *relatively speaking* in their reference to the individual called to follow them. Here a contrast is established between his situation under the counsels and the situation which would be his if *he as an individual* were to refuse them; (b) *absolutely speaking* to the extent that they alone, considered as a renunciation and a practising of the passion of Christ himself, can be said to have the character of an objectivation and manifestation of faith and love (not only as preached but as assumed and lived). Here there is a contrast between the way of life prescribed by the counsels and the other 'material' for a Christianity that is lived to the full, which is capable of being integrated into this fulness of Christian life because, as having positive existence in this world, it is the material in which the Christian can express his affirmation to the world. But even when it does this it cannot make manifest the 'transcendence' of grace and of faith.

8. The Ecclesiological (Symbolic) Significance of the Evangelical Counsels

The evangelical counsels are distinguished from other forms of renunciation and of accepting in faith the 'passion' of personal existence in that they have a *status* (in virtue of their unambiguously clear sociological orientation, their permanence, their clearly defined meaning and also the vows which are taken to follow them in the presence of the Church herself). This status which the evangelical counsels impart makes them (and those who practise them) an element in the 'visible' Church. In virtue of this fact they have an essential function to perform in the Church prior to any question of the 'useful works' which the orders perform on the [164] Church's behalf (by giving an example of moral living, by their apostolate, prayers, etc.). The Church is not only the fruit of salvation which springs from a reality hidden within her (the grace of the Spirit which quickens and sanctifies the Church herself). She is also a permanent and quasi-sacramental sign of salvation in her visible manifestations in history. But it is not only in virtue of her preaching of the word and conferring the sacraments that she has this significance of a historical presence. If this were the case she would only be the sign of the grace which is *offered* by God. But she must be something more than this. She must be the sign of the actual fact that grace has been accepted, that it is already at work eschatologically, and is already in fact triumphant. Now she is a sign in this sense not in her institutional, but rather in her charismatic aspects if, and

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to the extent that, this fact is objectified and made manifest for all to see on the sociological and historical plane. And this is precisely what is achieved in the life governed by the evangelical counsels insofar as these are visible in the Church's communal life. The evangelical counsels constitute that element in the Church which makes her a sign, a sign of the fact that in her eschatological faith she is reaching out for a goal that lies beyond this present world. They also constitute that element in the Church which makes her a visible sign of the fact (which is the real reason for the foregoing) that she is the community triumphantly possessed by the grace of God. Of course, the mere fact of observing these counsels being practised in the life of the *individual* for various reasons is not of itself, unequivocally, and in a way that objectifies it beyond all doubt, an existential symbol of the faith that really is present in the Church (which must be so present because the eschatological Church, in contrast to the synagogue, must be, as a whole, she who really is indefectible in her belief). But the reality of the evangelical counsels as lived in the Church taken as a whole does nevertheless constitute a sign in this sense. In terms both of material fact and of epistemological theory the situation here is the same (and in fact ultimately for the same reason) as with martyrdom considered as an objectivation of, and a witness to faith on the part of the Church, whose faith is, in a true sense, indefectible.[37] Like martyrdom[38] the evangelical counsels too are, in their fulness and totality signs in the Church of the [165] fact that God's grace is effectively triumphant in the faith of the Church. Now the Church must be a witness precisely in this sense. But she is a witness in this sense only (cf. above subsections 6 and 7) through the evangelical counsels (we are abstracting here from martyrdom considered as the active acceptance of 'passion' in the absolute, the state in which 'passion' and ascesis are brought together, for it is precisely *not* simply in 'normal' times alone that martyrdom can represent a rival to the Church's constitution in this function of being the sign of the real and effective faith that is within her). Thus it can be seen that these evangelical counsels belong (even if not in a form which is institutionally defined in any precise sense as a matter of the Church's law) to the essence of the Church because it is not only the official dispensers of the Church's truth and grace who constitute an essential part of her, but the grace that brings about her triumphant acceptance of truth and grace as well – this latter grace as received and as manifesting itself for what it is.

As witness of the fact that it is precisely the grace of *Christ* that is accepted in faith (cf. above subsection 3) by the Church this witness has a *soteriological* character. It attests the fact that the Church (as a whole) freely submits herself to the Passion of Christ to the extent that this constitutes a free acceptance of death in a spirit of obedience, and thereby brings about salvation. It also has an *eschatological* character, not strictly speaking to the extent that the evangelical counsels already contain the future life of heaven by anticipation already in the here and now. Rightly understood this can be said of grace itself and the fulness of it as attained on this earth. This is in accordance with the fact that in empirical terms it must be said that justification is already achieved 'in the here and now' (notwithstanding the fact that this concept applies primarily to the definitive consummation of salvation). But if this were all we were saying then it would be true of *every* kind of Christian perfection and every act of striving for such perfection. The counsels themselves as such, to the extent that they are distinct from that which constitutes their basis, the grace of justification and love, do not 'anticipate' eternal life as such. For they are, of their very nature, a renunciation, and this is

[37] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Excursus on Martyrdom' in *On the Theology of Death*, 'Quaestiones Disputatae', 2nd ed.

[38] Which in *individual cases* it is difficult to distinguish from fanaticism, self-will, self-commitment to active opposition.

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no true characteristic of final perfection.[39] In particular when, according to many [166] Fathers of the Church, virginity in the earthly sphere is conceived of as an anticipation of life in heaven, as *vita angelica*, a life similar to that of angels, this is the outcome of a pietistic Neoplatonism, in support of which Mt 22:30 cannot be invoked. Marriage does not make a man 'earthly'. But the counsels can and must be understood as an eschatological witness to the extent that they objectify and make manifest that faith which reaches out in hope towards that future state which is the consummation of the grace which is received in this faith. To the extent that this objectivation and manifestation of the triumph of grace and of faith is the objectivation of that grace which embraces the world (even though this is achieved precisely through the Cross) and glorifies it, this 'sign' character of the counsels is essentially focused upon the Church, in which the consecration of the world takes place and the worldly becomes identified with the Christian. It is not only for practical reasons that there must be something [167] more in the Church than the *mere* practice of the evangelical counsels. Such a thing would actually be *unfitting*. The fact that some of the members of the Church live a 'worldly' life, that Christianity has also its 'everyday', and therefore almost anonymous aspects in the way in which it is lived, so that Christians act as the 'pagans' also act – this is something that belongs of necessity to the mode in which the Church manifests herself, and is inherent in her nature. The life of Christians in the world has a message for those who live under the evangelical counsels. It tells them that their actions too, do not compel grace, but rather that grace is bestowed upon those actions. The life of the evangelical counsels has a message for Christians 'in the world'. It tells them that they too are pilgrims, to whom grace comes from above and not *as a result of* their worldly activities (even though it does come *in* those activities). Both 'states' in the Church mutually contribute to one another according to the gifts which are given to each in particular precisely as proper to itself.

Of course, a further consequence of all that has been said is that the counsels must be lived in a manner (and that too precisely with regard to their sociological and 'institutional' aspects) which makes it clear that they have the force not only of objectivation but of a manifestation too of the faith of the Church. But at this point fresh questions are raised for

[39] In the present article we are regarding the evangelical counsels as constituting a renunciation. In doing this we wish to draw attention particularly to the formal element in renunciation, the deliberate letting go of some good. Of course the concrete act in which such renunciation is posited is not simply one of letting go. The very fact that an act of this kind has to be *performed* is of itself enough to ensure this. A sheer negative act of letting go, without any positive element in it, is not possible. A further point is that if it is right to leave such an empty space in one's human life viewed as a whole (i.e. if one is not motivated in this by an attitude of reaction against the good that is surrendered) the resulting vacuum will inevitably and justifiably come to fill itself up with certain precisely positive modes of behaviour which are intrinsically connected with the good that is relinquished. These in themselves constitute an objectivation of faith and love, for it is for the sake of these that the individual concerned has chosen to make the renunciation. The poor man is in a position to acquire a *positive* attitude of detachment towards the earthly goods precisely from his position of deprivation, for in fact it is neither possible for him totally to renounce all use of worldly goods, nor would every attitude of withdrawal from them be reasonable. (Industry, a sense of social responsibility, concern for the worldly circumstances of the religious community, etc., are virtues which must be developed positively.) The unmarried man renounces one particular form of love between human beings, but does not absolutely renounce human love in itself. His renunciation is only Christian and is only permitted if it makes it possible for him, and actually demands of him, that he shall have a true love for his fellow men, a will to loving service of them and fraternal relationships with them. Religious obedience is not mere passivity, not a shrinking from self-responsibility and independence in the right sense. It does not entail the surrender of personal initiative and boldness. Rather it is that selflessness with which one places one's self at the disposal of others and subordinates one's self to the achievement of a higher common goal. And in all these positive aspects of renunciation, which constitute the formal essence of the evangelical counsels, there is, once more, a reference to that eschatological state which is the goal of all Christian striving for perfection: a proximity in love to a world in which God is present, because in the freedom bestowed by the Spirit we no longer have to choose between God and the world, a choice from which the man who is still making his way through an unredeemed world cannot remain exempt.

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today. The poverty of the orders seems often to have very little ‘poor’ about it. The evangelical state of virginity all too often vanishes into the vague indefinability and ambiguity of the attitude of contemporary society towards sexual love. Obedience appears as a way of organising the communities on the grand scale such as also occurs in other contexts and with greater severity. All this constitutes a threat today to the ecclesiological function of the evangelical counsels, and raises fresh questions concerning the contemporary forms of religious life.

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THE THEOLOGY OF POVERTY

We have here set ourselves the task of examining the poverty practised in the religious life and its nature, in other words the theology of poverty. We shall attempt, therefore, to establish what the theological basis is for what we call poverty and the vow of poverty as taken in the religious life. This means that we have set ourselves an extremely difficult task. I cannot hope, and the reader should not expect, to arrive at any very satisfying answer to the question we have set ourselves in this enquiry. We must content ourselves with throwing some light on the actual question itself and sketching in some partial answers here and there. When I say that I an unable to offer any total answer, such as would be satisfying even to some degree, I do not believe that in holding this opinion I am succumbing to the tendency which is so widespread and predominant today, to see only questions everywhere, and to be unwilling to entertain any kind of factual or down-to-earth answers. The reason why the question posed here, therefore, simply does not admit of any simple answer is that the subject of it, namely poverty, is a concept that can hardly be apprehended in any simple or unambiguous sense. Of course we might adduce doctrines which have a very profound basis in theology, and which, rightly understood, do express the theological significance of poverty. They tell us why, on what basis and for what end the members of religious orders embrace poverty in their religious life. We can, therefore, expound the ‘ideology of poverty’, if I may so express it, in a way that is theologically speaking very well thought out. But however right and important such an enterprise may be, in pursuing it we are attempting to speak of the basis and ultimate purpose of a matter which, in itself, is not clear or unambiguous. For prior to any question of the reasons why a man should commit himself to a life of poverty it is extremely difficult to obtain any one clear idea of what poverty is, viewed simply and straightforwardly as an objective phenomenon in its own right.

[169] In fact this has always been the case. The history of religious life throughout the two millennia of its existence has been, one might almost be justified in saying, a constant record of shifts and variations in the interpretation of poverty in itself. It may perhaps be true that the actual motives and causes which lie behind the practice of poverty have also always been a matter of dispute. If we look into the matter more closely we find that at different epochs and in different religious orders very different motivations have been assigned for the practice of it. But the main point is that the actual ways in which poverty in itself has been practised and defined have been quite different from each other. Poverty considered as a concrete objective phenomenon is different today from what it was yesterday, and different in one order from what it is in another. This fact is recognised and conceded. It is even used as a criterion for distinguishing between the orders and their varying degrees of ‘strictness’. And in canon law and ascetical writings *the* poverty of the religious orders is spoken of. Of course it is possible to devise a single formula standing for a unified concept of religious poverty such as would cover all these variations in the practice of poverty in the different orders and at different epochs, and which in spite of these variations would be applicable to all. But if we do this then the question still remains whether this formula really expresses what is essential in the poverty of any given order at all, or whether we can in any sense apply to this formalised concept of poverty those theological motivations which are assigned as the basis and the goal of religious poverty; of whether this formalised concept of poverty (it might be expressed as a total dependence upon the assent of superiors in disposing of material goods) in any sense corresponds to what is meant by ‘poverty’ in the bible and in tradition, and in the real

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motivation which initially inspired the various movements which led to the religious orders.

These problems concerning the reality of poverty have always been, and still are with us. But in addition to these certain quite fresh problems have arisen today. Today we find ourselves in the midst of a process in which an economy is emerging which forces us to alter the material content of what is meant by religious poverty. It is utopian to imagine that in applying the concept of poverty to the material of our concrete lives we can live and practise it in *exactly* the way in which an Antonius, Pachomius, Benedict, Francis, or, at the beginning of the new age an Ignatius thought that poverty should be practised in the concrete. Anyone who held this opinion would simply be closing his eyes to the realities of [170] the situation, and would thereby precisely be obscuring the real task which awaits us, that namely of arriving at a materially new concept and a materially new concrete application of the essence of what poverty has been understood to mean in the new economic circumstances in which we are inescapably involved. Precisely in the dimension of material values and goods, and more here than in any other sphere, man is, with regard to the shaping of the course of his private life, a subordinate cog in the machine by which the shape of this dimension as a whole is socially and collectively determined. The shaping of this dimension of life takes place almost entirely independently of him, and so far as his individual life is concerned it confronts him as an entity that is already given, and which it is not in his power to determine. Whether one wears a shirt or has none, whether one goes barefoot or wearing shoes, etc. – these are factors which even as practised by the individual change completely from time to time in different epochs and under different economic systems. And the way in which such usages are actually applied in the concrete is almost wholly determined by these circumstances of universal application. And hence it comes about that the rules which determine the way poverty is to be applied in the religious orders, as handed down from earlier ages, which to a certain degree are intended to describe and to lay down the actual material application of poverty in a particular order, are either to a large extent no longer in force at all, or are no longer in any sense applicable to the realities which actually prevail. Hence it comes that poverty as practised has become a reality which is, to a large extent, neither envisaged nor catered for by the rules of religious orders at all. We shall have to return to these matters at a later stage. Our only reason for putting forward this consideration in the present context is that we wish to make it clear that we cannot expect any answer which is really theologically satisfying concerning the religious meaning and the theological significance of these matters, or concerning their religious motivation. For the concept of poverty, so far as what is really meant in the concrete is concerned, is no longer clear at all, and, moreover, is no longer capable of being very clear. Also because we are no longer in any position to obtain a clear insight into the phenomenon in which this is one particular factor, namely the concrete economic situation as it exists today, its nature and the lines along which it tends to develop. If we sought to give the impression that we could provide an accurate and precise theological interpretation, then the only way in which we could convey such an [171] impression would be to immerse ourselves in a sphere of abstract formalism in which everything would be true, beautiful and glorious, but the question of whether the subject of our discourse actually was in fact *that* poverty which we have to do with in our everyday lives would still remain open. The result of this state of the problem is that we must not expect to find any very clear and distinct arrangement of the materials in this essay. I shall speak first about certain traditional problems connected with the concept of poverty, and then about what can perhaps be said regarding the theological basis for poverty in view of the circumstances actually prevailing, and finally about certain questions which arise from the contemporary situation in the sphere of economics and political theory with regard to religious poverty. By way of reassurance we may reiterate once more that for men who are intelligent and wise a lack of clarity and a failure to solve all the problems at the theoretical

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level need not necessarily be extended to the sphere of practical action as well. There are thousands upon thousands of factors in human life as lived in the concrete which have proved themselves to be reasonable and valuable, beneficial and sound, by being tried and tested in the actual processes of living, and which, nevertheless, it is extremely difficult to speculate about so as to arrive at any clear theoretical conclusion. The practical knowledge which we gain in the spontaneous and uninhibited process of living our lives is always greater than that which we acquire through speculation, which can never adequately cover life in all its dimensions. And so we know that poverty too as practised in the religious life is reasonable and good because the living practice of it has been proved by the wisdom of the ancients through the experience of many centuries in the Church under the guidance of the Spirit with which she is filled. And we know it even before we have arrived at any theoretical clarity as to what we really are actively living out in this, and why it should be good in this way. This is not to say that there is no necessity for, or meaning in speculation of this kind, but it probably does serve to exclude a restlessness and a destructive force which such speculations might otherwise have.

I. SOME TRADITIONAL PROBLEMS

1. The distinction between the poverty of the individual in an order and that of the community as such is one that is well-known. Such a distinction is not without its significance, for there is no doubt that the [172] poverty of the individual does entail the factor of dependence upon the community in the disposal of material goods, and this factor cannot, in the nature of the case, be true of the poverty of the community as well. But dependence in the disposal of material goods and poverty cannot be identified one with another (however often the attempt may be made to do so on the part of the exponents of ascetical theology and canon law). And if there were no such thing as communal poverty, then it would be impossible to speak of the poverty of an individual either. Again the member who is totally dependent upon a society that is positively rich cannot seriously be called poor if the word poverty is to be allowed to retain any meaning at all. The consequence of this, therefore, is that the problem of religious poverty is primarily a problem of the poverty of the community to the extent that there is such a problem in the order concerned, and to the extent that it is presupposed that the way of life followed by the individual is determined by that of the community itself. This may be a platitude. Yet I have the impression that when the religious communities of today attempt to give new shape to the rule of poverty in the constitutions of their particular order, and one that corresponds to present-day circumstances, they are always tempted to think initially and primarily of the individual, and to allow the question of poverty, insofar as this applies to the community as a whole, to fall into the background. This is understandable. The question of communal poverty today is far more difficult to resolve than that of the poverty of the individual. But it must be solved. Otherwise the prescriptions concerning the poverty of the individual necessarily become mere casuistry designed for a particular set of circumstances, laying down how the juridical dependence of the individual upon the permission of his superiors in disposing of material goods can be maintained, simplified, intensified, etc., in this contemporary age. Such matters then easily degenerate into external formalities, which are still far from necessarily entailing any supernatural meaning designed to form the personality. And in any case dependency and poverty are not the same thing. This is an ancient problem which, nevertheless, still needs to be thought out anew today. In order to put the matter clearly once more: a rich order cannot have any poor members. It may have a well-lined purse even though it is strict in refusing the individual to draw on this at will. It may have members who in a juridical sense have no

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private possessions of their own. Orders can be poor in different senses. But an order that is really rich cannot have any poor members. At the [173] most such an order can have members who are totally dependent upon the communal property reserved to the community in respect of the material goods which they need. Someone might perhaps say that these statements presuppose an idea of poverty which is at basis Franciscan, and which, for example, would be inappropriate to a rich mediaeval institution (a royal abbey founded by a prince). In reply to such an objection we would have to say that it is precisely this concept of poverty, the Franciscan one if we like to call it so, which is the biblical one, the one envisaged by the ascetical teachings of old, in other words the 'evangelical' one which is also envisaged in the mind of the contemporary Church even among laymen, when the demand is made that members of religious orders should be poor. Theologically speaking too, it is this idea that we must take as our basis. Otherwise poverty degenerates into a mere modality of community life and obedience (no wonder that in the ancient orders no specific vow of poverty was provided for at all). In this situation, therefore, poverty represents neither an evangelical counsel in the true sense, nor, in any effective sense, the material for a specific vow, not any real theological problem. In brief: the poverty of the individual and the poverty of the community are, in the last analysis, one and the same problem. It is because the community is poor, and to the extent that it is so, that the individual participates in the poverty of the community because he is a member of it, and therefore too, a sharer in its way of life. And it is because he intends to be poor that he attaches himself to a community which practises this poverty in its life. In all this it still remains an entirely open question, and one which still awaits our further exploration, what *degree* of poverty, and what *kind* of poverty a community has or should have.

2. In this the second point which has to be made here has in reality already been anticipated: What makes a man 'poor' in the sense in question here, where we are conducting a theological and ascetical consideration of the word 'poverty', is neither dependence upon others in the disposal of material goods, nor the juridical concept of the absence of private property. One who has no property of his own can certainly not dispose of material goods of his own power, and at the same time in a way that is legally valid. But if he belongs to a community (e.g. a family, a society, an order) which decides to set him in charge of the whole range of their material goods, and to allow him to control their use (a range which corresponds to that of an individual whom one would describe as [174] 'rich' in relation to the general standard of living) then we cannot describe a member occupying such a position in a community of such a kind as poor. The most we can say is that he is economically speaking, totally dependent. Such a state of dependence may even be felt as thoroughly unpleasant. It may, at any rate in a certain respect (at least as far as outside appearances are concerned), 'deprive the individual concerned of his power'. And this dependence and deprivation of power in relation to others may even be susceptible of a wholly Christian and ascetical interpretation in harmony with the order's ideals. But this cannot be called poverty. If, therefore, the only cases in which we were willing to see offences against the vow of poverty were those in which it was this juridical dependence in respect of poverty that was offended against, then this would constitute a canonical or juridical distortion and diminution of the true concept of poverty, and in accordance with this even in those cases in which a superior has rights over property and is vested with legitimate canonical authority only as the authorised controller and disposer of the property of the community, he can still act in a manner which is absolutely contrary to the spirit of the poverty of the religious life. If, for instance, a superior attempts to employ all the arts of the business man, and to act like a ruthless capitalist in order to increase beyond all measure the resources of the order, he can offend against the spirit of poverty even when he modestly assumes the same 'ascetical' conditions for his private life as so many contemporary managers of great enterprises. In such

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a case he has not offended against the principle of dependence, because as superior he had a perfect right to dispose of the property as he had done. But he has sinned against poverty itself. When the superioress of a community of nuns exploits the individual sisters by laying excessive burdens of work upon them in order to make the order rich and powerful by establishing new houses, she has offended against poverty even though, precisely because of her acts the individual sisters have to live in an extremely 'poor' manner.

3. Religious poverty and poverty in one's *mode of life* should not be confused one with another. Certainly we must not sublimate poverty into a theory in such a way that it can be reconciled with any kind of usage of material goods. Otherwise we should be forced to arrive once more at that concept of poverty which identifies poverty and the relationship of juridical dependence with regard to these material goods. It is incontestable that a certain measure of real deprivation of material goods [175] does belong to poverty, even when we leave on one side the question of precisely *what* goods (as well as the standards by which we should determine this) poverty should lead us to do without. Poverty, therefore, has a thoroughly material content. Poverty as practised in the orders cannot simply be a 'poverty in spirit'. The subject's attitude to the world of material goods must be made actual in the concrete, and his withdrawal from that world (a point to which we shall be coming later) must likewise be made real in the concrete. Nevertheless we have to distinguish very clearly between poverty and specific modes of practising poverty. This is a point that has always been recognised from the first, and for this reason even those who took the 'Franciscan' concept of poverty as their common working basis still differed widely from one another in their applications of it. This is not the place to analyse the differing modes of poverty which have appeared in history, to describe the physiognomy of each or to define the differences between them. For our present purposes it is sufficient to establish that these differences do exist, because this is an important factor for the considerations which we shall later have to put forward. It is sufficient for us to say that we must recognise that these differences are justified in principle and theologically reasonable by the fact that the Church has recognised as legitimate the various modes of poverty practised in the individual orders. It may be that in earlier times an attempt was made too hastily and too facilely to draw an equation between the categories of the 'more strict' and 'less strict', and therefore a 'more perfect' and 'less perfect' kind of poverty. In this respect we of today are more cautious. We concentrate more upon the differences in mode and practice, and less directly and specifically upon the 'strictness' involved. We have to concede that here (as in many other matters) the differences in point of 'strictness' between the individual orders have largely disappeared, and that a movement has arisen which is still continuing even today, towards a fairly uniform mode throughout all the orders. Perhaps it is simply the fact that all in common are involved in the same economic situation, and the same general way of life in these present times that has to a large extent forced this state of affairs upon them. But if we concede that this difference between poverty (in its essence) and the mode of practising poverty is an already existing historical fact, then we cannot in principle simultaneously close our eyes to the fact that today a point that has to be thought out throughout all the orders and in each individual order is what form the mode of poverty should assume [176] specifically today in order to be really convincing and really livable. Furthermore the man who concedes the initial point cannot simply hold rigidly and conservatively to the idea that the ancient mode of poverty inherited from the Fathers must be preserved, and imagine that this is enough to solve all the problems. In the light of contemporary ideas of social economy this is simply impossible. And if, nevertheless, the individual concerned is so uncreative as to attempt such a thing, what emerges is a lifeless mixture of purely external, but nevertheless unavoidable concessions to the new age (these may, perhaps, be formulated too hastily and with a lack of clarity) and the ancient traditions of the orders, which are no longer really meaningful from the point of view of ascetics, but

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only survive as relics of the folklore of the religious orders.

4. It cannot be denied that in the tradition of poverty too, and in the tradition of the theology of poverty various motivations and interpretations of poverty have been assigned. The poverty of the ascetics of the apostolic age and of early Christendom prior to the emergence of monasticism properly so called under Antonius and still more under Pachomius was a different phenomenon from the poverty of the coenobites both in its material form and necessarily to some extent in its motivation also. The poverty of the pure contemplative on the one hand, and of the active apostle on the other, cannot, in reality, simply be identical one with the other, and therefore neither can the motivations of the two kinds of poverty be identical. Poverty of life as practised in a given religious order, without diminishing its essential theological identity, derives a distinctive stamp of its own from the distinctive characteristics which apply to that particular order as a whole, and therefore the motivation of this poverty likewise has a different specification from that in other orders. Historically speaking, therefore, we have to recognise fully the existence of these very different motivations in the numerous movements towards poverty and controversies about poverty (all reform movements in the religious orders and all controversies have in fact always entailed disputes about poverty too, and these go far beyond the dispute about poverty in the Franciscan order). History, therefore, fully justifies us in refusing to strive for an absolutely univocal explanation when we come to investigate the theological meaning and motivation of poverty. It is to be expected *a priori* that the poverty practised in the religious orders is a relatively complex phenomenon, which, as practised in the concrete, is quite incapable of being reduced to any *one single* theological root.

[177]

II. THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF RELIGIOUS POVERTY

We have now to enquire into the theological essence of poverty. But two provisos which we must always bear in mind throughout our enquiry are first that what we have to say will be at an extremely abstract level, and second that we may perhaps not manage to lay bare *all* the roots of this extremely complex phenomenon. A further point is that any attempt at assigning the basic theological reasons for practising poverty must to some extent do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon. For this reason certain preliminary observations must be made concerning the limits within which we can and must attempt to find an answer to our question at all.

1. In any attempt at finding an answer to our question one point which we must bear in mind from the very outset may be stated as follows: (a) We are trying to ascertain the meaning of *evangelical* poverty, i.e. that poverty which is recommended by Jesus himself. However many forms religious poverty may have assumed in the course of history, however many modes and fashions of practising it may have been worked out, in all cases, wherever it has arisen, the intention has always been to fulfil the evangelical counsel which goes back to Christ himself. It is true that even in the teaching of the New Testament itself several different motivations are assigned for the practice of voluntary poverty, and these are themselves both susceptible of and in need of analysis. But however true this may be, it still remains a point of absolutely primary and overriding importance that religious poverty in all its forms is intended to be a following of this evangelical counsel, and that all forms of the religious life are conscious of being authorised in their practice of poverty simply by the very fact that Jesus has recommended it, even when they do not succeed in making clear the reasons which Jesus himself had for recommending this practice of poverty. In fact a point which can and must be made right from the outset is the following (and here we are already going beyond the preliminary group of questions which needs to be treated of here, that

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namely which is concerned with the problem of poverty in its total scope and ambience): *one* element in this poverty is precisely the inalienable connection with the Lord and his personal lot, a connection for which no more ultimate reason can be assigned. We can say that the practice of poverty is based, among other factors, upon [178] that theology which envisages the discipleship of Christ as a sharing in the lot of Jesus himself and on this basis we can say that the reason for practising poverty is simply that this was, in fact, the lot endured by the Lord himself. The life of the Lord was, in its concrete realities, precisely so and not otherwise. And we cannot assign any more ultimate reason for this than the fact that it was so. Now this concrete reality is received and projected further into the life of the individual who loves Jesus and follows him. But there is a further point over and above this. Everything which the New Testament teaching on poverty assigns as a motivation for practising poverty over and above this central fact must be assigned a place in the poverty of the religious life.

(b) A point which must not be forgotten in the theology of poverty is that poverty as practised in the religious orders is concerned with a factor in communal living, and this communal living in turn makes manifest in historical and social terms factors which are inherent in the very nature of the Church herself. In fact the orders are not simply private confraternities of individuals who lead an ascetical life on their own account, and at their own risk, such that the Church still to some extent presides over these confraternities. The fact that these confraternities can provide useful assistance for the work undertaken by the Church's official hierarchy is not the sole reason that the Church concerns herself with them. For in fact, measured by the standards of the meaning and content of the religious life, insofar as the actual practice of this life is concerned, the giving of this help is a wholly accidental factor (as for instance when a bishop founds a community of sisters under vows because he needs to provide cooks for his seminaries and other institutions in the cheapest and most reliable way possible to him). Rather the orders constitute a concretisation, in social and communal terms, of the charismatic element and the element of enthusiasm in the Church which must always be present in her as an essential manifestation of her true nature. There cannot be any such thing as the Church of the final eschatological age in which the evangelical counsels are not lived and practised as a manifestation of the essential nature of the Church herself. Now such a life inevitably goes on to assume certain organised forms. And though the element in the Church which they embody is precisely not institutional but rather charismatic, still, in a certain sense, they do institutionalise even this charismatic element (with all the danger of misinterpretation which such a procedure entails). To this extent, therefore, the orders belong to the essence of the Church in [179] the degree and measure that in them she, the Church, lives out certain aspects of her own nature, making them real and manifest to the world. The orders constitute an element in the process by which the fact that the grace of God has entered the world and has triumphed over it is rendered present. This is the grace that summons man to transcend the limits of his own natural powers as a 'this-worldly' creature, and draws him into the process by which that grace is rendered present which constitutes the very nature of the Church herself. In our attempt to say something about religious poverty this is a point that must not be forgotten. Religious poverty must be viewed in the light of this essential function of the religious orders themselves.

(c) Religious poverty has a function in these religious communities considered precisely as freely committed to communal living. This practical side of poverty, which we experience every day, does not constitute the ultimate essence of religious poverty, but it is one which we neither can nor may overlook. A certain measure of religious poverty (above all consisting in a certain dependence and equality in the mode of life followed by the individual members) is indispensable for the survival of a community committed to communal living down to the intimate details of life such as the orders are intended to be. From this point of view the meaning of poverty is determined by the broader and more comprehensive

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significance which such a community is intended to have. The significance of the community is also the significance of the poverty it practises.

(d) To the extent that an order has a task to perform for others outside itself, in that the life and work of the community and of each of its individual members is dedicated to promoting a task of this kind (apostolic, teaching, missionary or charitable work, etc.), the religious poverty practised by that order will also be affected by this aim. Alike in its essence and in the mode in which it is practised it will derive its concrete specification from this aim.

2. It now becomes clear not only that these various perspectives from which religious poverty can be viewed are legitimate, and that they make the concept of poverty complex, and therefore rich in overtones, but also that from these various perspectives various explanations of the meaning of poverty can be put forward so that a fresh problem arises once more with regard to how all these explanations can be unified. For it is far from being immediately clear from the outset that these various motivations [180] of themselves lead smoothly and without interruption to the same concept of poverty and to the same mode of practising poverty. Poverty as an evangelical counsel, poverty as an individual following of Christ the poor and the suffering, poverty as an element in the process by which the Church, considered as the eschatological presence of grace in the world, is made visible and palpable, poverty as a principle in the organisation of a community, poverty as a means for drawing the powers of a community together for the fulfilment of its common task for others – all these do not necessarily or *ipso facto* lead to the same concrete 'poor' mode of life. It may even be the case that they constitute absolute threats or obstacles to one another. Poverty in a radically ascetical sense, for instance, can represent an actual threat to the possibility of living a common life, or take away this possibility altogether. The fact that poverty is subordinated to the interests of apostolic work can appear to make it necessary for the community to be rich to an extent which makes it impossible to speak any further of any real poverty on the part of the individual member of the order, and so of poverty in any ascetical sense.

From this point of view, when we come to consider how the various aspects are to be co-ordinated and reconciled, remembering that no one of them needs to be absolutely excluded, the following point must be laid down from the outset: the poverty which consists in following Jesus and sharing in his lot, in a kind of mystical identification with him, on the one hand, and poverty considered as recommended in the New Testament as a counsel to leave all things, to sell one's goods and give the proceeds to the poor on the other, neither need to cause, nor are capable of causing any difficulties one for the other. Even if they are not absolutely reducible one to another (the uniqueness of Jesus even in the concrete historical realities of his life, in which, nevertheless, this uniqueness still becomes our *nomos*, is not capable of being adequately resolved into principles which are intrinsically comprehensible and for which *a priori* ethical explanations can be assigned), still these two ideals of poverty constitute two intrinsically related entities, a fact which will become clear in what immediately follows. A further factor is introduced into poverty in virtue of the fact that the orders constitute elements in the essential meaning of the Church. But this too cannot come into conflict in any way with the two first-named constitutive elements in poverty. For the Church must in fact (a point which must be demonstrated at a later stage), make manifest and visible in the world *that* grace in which the essential content of the [181] *basileia tou theou* consists. For it is for the sake of this that it is required of the disciple of Jesus that he shall be poor. But on the other hand it must also be clear from the outset that the further shade of meaning in poverty, its function, namely, in making a technical contribution to the organisation and work of the order concerned (if we may so express the two shades of meaning mentioned above under a single heading) can only be proved to have a right to be taken into consideration insofar as it is dependent upon, and subordinate to, the two shades of meaning which we have just indicated. In cases in which it came to be so emphasised that it

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derogated from, or suppressed altogether the more original and essential meaning of poverty, it would have to be denied and resisted. If an order intends to be and to remain an order following the evangelical counsels, then any apostolic, missionary, pedagogic, charitable, etc., aims which it may have can never be put forward with such emphasis as determinative elements in the communal way of life proper to that order that for practical purposes they can cause the order to turn aside from the ideal of evangelical poverty. If certain aims, in themselves perfectly legitimate, were to demand a mode of life which could no longer in all reason and honesty be described as poor, then such aims would have to be pursued and realised outside the religious community concerned. Indeed it is in principle true that we cannot take *a priori* as our starting-point the axiom that all the aims which are reasonable and necessary for the Church must for that very reason be capable of realisation in religious communities. The modern tendency to see a connection between the religious life and more or less every conceivable kind of enterprise in the Church has in fact given rise to the supposition that this axiom does apply. But it is, and remains, false and unproved, however much it may exercise an implicit influence as something that is taken for granted.

3. What then is the meaning of poverty in the evangelical sense in the teaching of Jesus? Here we are abstracting from the fact that poverty is first and foremost simply a sharing in the life of the Lord, who was, for all practical purposes, a poor man, or better, lived poorly (Lk 9:57; Mt 8:20; 2 Cor 8:9). We are also abstracting, for the purposes of the question which we have now posed, from the fact that we only encounter poverty in the New Testament as a recommendation of a way of life which the individual can lead as an individual, in other words, that in the New Testament the idea of a communal life lived by those dedicated to poverty in the evangelical sense, and united in a community which is itself poor, has [182] not yet become apparent. A further point from which we are abstracting is the ‘communism’ of the early Christians of the primitive community in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32-37). We do not propose to include this in our consideration because this would have the effect of broadening the field of investigation to an excessive extent. But we have the right to reflect upon the fact that as the Lord himself conceived of it, it is evident that the virginity recommended by him ‘for the kingdom of heaven’s sake’ (Mt 19:12) and the poverty likewise recommended from the same motive (Mt 19:21; Lk 18:22) derive from a single basic presupposition. It is true that no compelling reason is *a priori* apparent from the first for explaining that this moral requirement or recommendation here put forward by Jesus never existed before his time. From the point of view of dogma and history, therefore, we can actually *reckon a priori* with the possibility that in his recommendation of poverty Jesus was making his own a programme which was already available in the traditions of later Judaism prior to his advent. But while all this is true, we can say, nevertheless (albeit with a certain caution) that the poverty which Jesus has in mind, and which he recommends to his disciples, is found neither in the Old Testament nor in the traditions of later Judaism, which constitute the religious environment in which Jesus worked. Nor, properly speaking, is this ideal of poverty to be found in the traditions of Qumran. This is a point which cannot be explicitly demonstrated here. But neither is it one which is of decisive importance for the problem with which we are concerned. We also presuppose (to prove this would likewise carry us too far afield at this point) that when Jesus summoned his disciples to poverty he did not intend to inaugurate any social programme. The idea of bringing about a *universal* economic and social transformation in the world was never in his mind either as a concrete demand or as an abstract idea.

With these provisos we can say: Jesus is conscious of the fact, and explains, that with him and in him the *basileia* of God has arrived and is being offered to men, that by this coming of the *basileia* men are placed in a situation of absolute and radical decision of the utmost acuteness and urgency, in other words in an eschatological situation. What is in question here is not the fact that man is, of his very nature, a moral being, and as such always, and in a

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manner that is constant and unvarying, confronted in all that he does with a decision between good and evil, between assent to and refusal of God himself. Rather it is that now in Jesus the supreme offering of salvation by God has been made present as a supreme moment [183] of opportunity in history. It is that of his own nature in Jesus God compels man to take his ultimate decision. It is in virtue of this fact that, according to Jesus' teaching a situation of radical decision has arisen in the *kairos*, the time of opportunity, which the life of Jesus represents for man. Now according to Jesus the advent of the *basileia* of God as understood here means that human riches have become a danger and an obstacle to the acceptance of this kingdom of God in faith to such an extent that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into this kingdom (cf. Mt 19:23 f; Mk 10:25; Mt 13:22; Lk 1:53; 6:24; Mt 6:19-24). This is not to say that possessions as such are *ipso facto* immoral in themselves, or that the absence of such possessions *ipso facto* constitutes a moral value in itself. 'A radical rejection of possessions, such as we meet with in Buddhism, in the tenets of the Greek Cynics, and among certain adherents of Stoicism, is foreign to Jesus' (Schmidt, *LTK* Vol 1, 2nd ed. col 880). Jesus' attitude to the rich is not that of one sociologically opposed to them as a class. But what Jesus does say is that riches, the accumulation of possessions, signifies the direst peril for man in that once he becomes involved in the cares of this present world he becomes blind to the advent of the kingdom, and deaf and unresponsive to the radical summons of God. He does not have at his command that radical freedom of spirit, and of all the powers at his command, which is necessary for him whole-heartedly to receive the kingdom. And for this reason Jesus requires of those who decide to follow him with special closeness in order to receive this kingdom that they shall give their possessions to the poor and become poor themselves (Mt 19:16-30; Lk 9:3; 9:57 f.; 12:33; 18:22).

To the question of why, under which aspects, and because of what qualities inherent in it, riches should constitute an obstacle in this sense, holding men back from preparing themselves for the *basileia*, Jesus supplies hardly any explicit answer. He seems to regard this as self-evident. He who is rich is full of cares (Mk 4:19; Lk 8:14), wants to have more, gives himself up to enjoyment, takes pleasure in the power, enjoyment and security which his possessions give him (Lk 16:19; 12:15-21). He has his 'treasure' on earth instead of in heaven (Lk 12:33 f.). Jesus' appraisal of the danger which riches entail, therefore, is simply based upon the observation of ordinary everyday realities such as are borne in upon any man of good sense who faces up to them whole-heartedly, does not idealise them, and does not allow himself to be beguiled by them. Taking [184] this as our starting-point it is immediately evident that anyone who sets out to systematise this condemnation of the rich and riches on Jesus' part (cf. Lk 6:24 f.) must constantly bear in mind the *genus litterarium* in which these words are uttered, which is prophetic and was initially inspired by the concrete realities of everyday life as Jesus encountered them. If we fail to do this we may fall into a state of mind in which we apply these words in a doctrinaire and universal sense, and erect them into an axiom admitting of no exceptions in a way which is quite foreign to Jesus' intention, seeing that he explicitly disassociates himself from any such attitude (Mt 19:26). A further reason for avoiding this is that the ethical ideals which he taught were intended for the heart, whereas to adopt this approach would be, once more, to reduce them to a sort of univocal ethical pragmatism by which we could check and control our actions in all cases, in other words to a kind of pharisaism. A further point is that in spite of Mt 8:20 the impression is borne in upon us, that Jesus was not strictly speaking in a state of abject destitution or really threatened by hunger. He did have money (cf. Jn 12:6) and quite clearly opportunities enough to obtain support from his rich friends when he had need of this. It should be remembered that the opinion of the Old Testament (Prov 30:8 f.) is that the optimum average conditions for the service of God obtain when man is in an intermediary position between the

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extremes of a degree of wealth on the one hand that satisfies every possible need, and abject poverty on the other. It cannot be said, therefore, that this opinion is simply invalidated by the example of Jesus.

It is immediately evident that the motivation underlying the poverty inculcated by Jesus is identical with the motivation he puts forward for voluntarily remaining single for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. In the evangelical counsel of poverty Jesus requires of those who decide to dedicate themselves to following him in an especially close way, and so to being 'perfect' (Mt 19:21) that by their own personal decision they shall bring their own personal lives into a situation which is that of those 'poor' whom he himself pronounces blessed in the Sermon on the Mount, in other words the situation of the 'anawim' who are really poor, socially underprivileged, threatened and suffering, but who at the same time bear their lot 'meekly' and in a spirit of resignation to God, imposing the imprint of their faith upon their external lot and so transforming it to that state to which, in Jesus' intention, the voluntary poor should bring their lives: one in which they totally dedicate their freedom to fulfilling the [185] demands of their interior faith in such a way that it shall be imposed upon their exterior situation, and so responding to the summons of the *basileia* of God in Christ.

There is yet a further aspect to be considered in addition to what has already been said. Jesus requires of him who voluntarily decides to become poor for the kingdom of heaven's sake that he shall give his riches to the *poor*. Manifestly for practical purposes this is not the easiest way open to him of becoming poor. Thus, for instance (provided that technically speaking it was just as easy to carry out), the man concerned might just as well burn his possessions in order to become poor. It is clearly envisaged and intended that the poor *neighbour* shall be the goal and object of the individual's act in surrendering his personal riches. It is the poor neighbour who must be helped. Certainly it is not the mind of Jesus that this neighbour should be regarded as one who has been 'deprived of his rights' and 'disinherited', one who, in other words, has a social and political right to riches. Rather it is because he is a brother in the kingdom of God, because as such he is beloved, because the message that must be conveyed to him in this gesture of faith in the coming of the kingdom of God from above is that this kingdom of God is already there. This kingdom, in fact, unites and combines those men who have fallen into disunity and disharmony through the presence of sin in the world. When, therefore, belief in this coming of the kingdom of heaven is lived out in the concrete in the form of voluntary poverty, then this faith must be expressed in the concrete as faith in the unity in love of those who have been united by God's grace. The individual no longer defends that sphere of his life which is occupied by his worldly goods as the bastion of his own egoistical self-defence against others, but rather gives them a share in these goods because he can regard them in a spirit of trust and love them as fellow citizens in the kingdom. The holding of property in common in some form (though of course this can take the most diverse forms and need not necessarily appear precisely in the form which we encounter in the primitive community of Jerusalem) is an intrinsic element in this poverty considered as the gesture which expresses in concrete fact the new brotherhood of men in Christ (the spirit of brotherhood in the orders, one of the conditions of which is likewise the holding of goods in common might also be viewed from this aspect, for by being placed at the service of these, what was once private wealth is placed at the service of the Church as a whole. Admittedly this is only the case [186] provided that that private egoism which seeks its own personal possessions is not replaced by a collective egoism on the part of a greater community precisely with regard to the Church or other Christians, e.g. with regard to domestic servants employed in monasteries, convents, etc.). This aspect of evangelical poverty is one of the factors which once more must be borne in mind whenever we seek to interpret poverty in a manner which is, theologically speaking, more systematic, considering it namely as an eschatological gesture of faith in the coming of the kingdom of God by grace

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from above. A fact which must never be overlooked in all this is that this kingdom, which is the unity of the brotherhood in love, is also intended to be received precisely by the gesture of voluntarily becoming poor.

Jesus regards the disciple's act in attaching himself more closely to his person, and the voluntary poverty which this entails, as enjoined also, and especially, upon those who dedicate themselves to responding to his call for missionary service (Mt 10:9 the missionary discourse).

We may, perhaps sum all this up by saying: for Jesus voluntary poverty in the evangelical sense is not a sociological programme for the reform of economic circumstances as an end in itself. It is not an element in some system of merely natural ethics which is of universal and unvarying application (to that extent, therefore, not 'ascetical' if we understand this to involve requirements of abstemiousness of a radical kind). It is the outcome of the situation of eschatological salvation. It has meaning, therefore, only to the extent that it requires us to be in a state of radical preparedness for the kingdom of God. But neither the state of being totally devoid of possessions nor that modesty and frugality which is associated with the petit-bourgeois enter of themselves into the meaning of the poverty which Jesus inculcates. This poverty has not yet arrived at the stage at which it is regarded as a way of life for a community. But it probably is regarded as a means of setting the individual free and enabling him to devote himself to missionary activities. It is primarily and essentially a renunciation of riches in that form in which they figured in the historical situation which Jesus knew, together with the ordinary effects which riches had in that particular situation. Thus a 'transference' of the counsel of poverty into all subsequent economic situations, the circumstances of which are constantly changing, is inadmissible. But the poverty which Jesus prescribes is not intended as a mere attitude of mind and conscience, as (in this sense) 'poverty of spirit'. On the contrary it involves, as one of [187] its intrinsic material elements (this still remains true in spite of all the emphasis on the mental attitude of liberating the heart and spirit for the kingdom of God) a renunciation of material goods which is actually put into practice in the concrete.

4. Now when we attempt (passing over the teaching of Acts, Paul and James) to evaluate and to systematise the results we have achieved somewhat more in terms of theology (this will at the same time have the effect of carrying our findings still further in that they will be brought into connection with more general theological insights) then we arrive at the following conclusions:

(a) Christian morality is always a morality of mind and conscience in the sense that the attitude of the heart must be objectified and realised in the dimension of concrete and apprehensible reality which is distinct from this interior dimension of disposition and attitude – in other words it must be realised in 'works'. Now since these works are different from the mind and conscience, which embrace all things, they do not admit of any ultimate assurance that the innermost attitude of the heart is pleasing to God. Yet at the same time these works do constitute the necessary and indispensable material, the material willed by God in itself, in which this innermost attitude (that namely of faith and love) can alone be realised. This remains true however many different forms this objectivation of the interior dispositions may assume, and however much the degree of clarity achieved in this objectivation may vary. All this, therefore, applies to poverty too. Poverty is a combination of interior attitude and exterior 'work', and the dialectical difference which we have found between disposition and 'work' applies to it. The attitude of detachment with regard to material possessions is in itself not yet faith and love, the sole standard by which all must be measured, and yet for those of whom it is required this same faith and love cannot be made effective and real otherwise than by the fact that they are realised in poverty as their manifestation, their 'work'.

(b) Evangelical poverty (considered as the unification of two distinct elements as explained

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above) is simply intended as a response to the situation in saving history in which man stands by the very fact that the kingdom of God has been made eschatologically present in Jesus. Poverty, like all renunciation (the attitude of 'allowing the world to pass one by' – cf. Didache 10:6 -, the attitude of having as though one had not – cf. 1 Cor 7:29-34 -, the unmarried state, etc.) as conceived of in the New [188] Testament is the realisation of faith in the coming of that grace of God which is God himself, and which transcends all 'this worldly' fulfilment such as can be achieved by man himself. Now because this grace is the absolute self-bestowal of God as he is in himself and because it has only now been revealed in Christ as the glory of God himself which exceeds all earthly measures and all values available to human experience, therefore it is only now that man can respond to this coming of God. He can so respond in virtue of the fact that he (who, so far as his purely natural state is concerned is, once more, one who is held captive within himself by sin, and therefore can only experience his openness to the glory of God, which transcends his own nature, as a deadly pain) suffers the 'this-worldly' values to fall away from him in the act of faith (which God himself, and not his own autonomous powers, inspires him to make) yet to make this same sacrifice *without* being called to it by God in this way would be meaningless, immoral and contrary to his own nature. The act of faith is realised and made concrete, i.e. in a manner which embraces the *entire* reality of man, his physical nature, his social relationships and the place he occupies in history, in virtue of the fact that he gives up realities and values when to sacrifice them is either an act of despair (or surrender) with regard to the meaning of existence, or else a transcending of the 'this worldly' order so as to attain to the reality of God himself which comes to us from above in the form of grace.

On this showing the meaning of poverty is that it is the act of faith in that grace which comes from above as the unique and definitive fulfilment of human existence. From this it follows that if faith means salvation, and if it is true that faith must always and necessarily achieve its own concretisation (cf. (a)), then such an attitude of withdrawal and allowing the world to pass one by belongs to every act of faith, whatever the context and whatever the manner in which it is posited. Thus the 'poverty in spirit' which all Christians must have necessarily entails a poverty that is made effective in the sober realities of life even though we may not be able to determine in material terms the limits within which this poverty should be applied. In the very nature of the case, therefore, the boundaries between the poverty of the religious orders on the one hand, and the riches or poverty in the lives of the rest of Christians on the other, must necessarily be fluid. No absolute dividing line can be drawn between the two such as would define them as two essentially different ways of life. And conversely the attitude of detachment and renunciation of the 'world' [189] and of any attitude of absolute self-assertion is an act of that Christian faith which is conscious of the world as that which in all its dimensions *positively needs to be redeemed*. As such it must also be an act of faith in the fact that the world is capable of being redeemed. It is quite impossible, therefore, for one who makes an act of faith in this sense, and thereby becomes poor, to regard the absolutely essential form in which this faith must find its fulfilment as consisting in a state in which, as far as such a thing is physically possible, he possesses absolutely nothing at all. This would, in fact, be tantamount to saying that freedom from the world is *ipso facto* and in itself possession of God. Now this is not true. The attitude of transcending the world is only a gesture of faith made possible by the grace of God himself in virtue of the fact that by his grace God bestows himself upon the world, and in doing so actually glorifies it. And this grace cannot be obtained by force, either by seeking for the fulness of the world itself or by fleeing from the world, taking either of these approaches simply in themselves. And furthermore in making the act of faith we can only allow for the fact that the world has a positive value of its own if we maintain a positive relationship with it. The petty-minded man, the man who is timid, undeveloped, frugal in the demands he

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makes upon life, the man who right from the outset has the standards of the petit-bourgeois only because his own nature is too paltry to make many claims upon life, is certainly not the man who is capable, to any notable extent, of bringing the meaning of the act of faith to its fulness in poverty. The 'ideal' of religious poverty, therefore, can never consist in the fact that the realisation of it is regarded as increasing in precisely the same proportion as the act of externally ridding one's self of material goods. Nor is it the ideal of those who are too easily satisfied with commonplace things, or that of those who, in a spirit of narrow-minded pedantry mount guard over the standards of a petit-bourgeois way of life of this kind and legalistically try to ensure that the rules of the game are kept for their own sake.

(c) The Church taken as a whole not only has to be the Church of the faithful, but has to be seen to be such as well. She has to be the sign of faith in the world. To this extent the concretisation of the act of faith as realised in the act of renouncing 'this worldly' fulfilments (of the most varied kind) belongs necessarily to the mode in which it is manifested, and which it can never be without. It is the mode in which, existentially speaking, witness is borne to the faith, which likewise belongs to the Church's [190] nature as holy, together with the function of authoritatively proclaiming the faith. From this point of view it becomes understandable that the task of ensuring that witness is borne to the Church's faith and in the Church through asceticism of this kind is to be numbered among the essential functions of the Church herself. The Church herself must again and again show herself and present herself as a Church in which the truth is actually lived, the truth, namely, that grace is in the very act of coming and the form of the world passing away, that the Church herself is she who looks for the return of her Lord, she who waits with hope for the eternal kingdom of God as that which is still in the very act of coming – all this in a spirit of faith, hope and love. It is the 'ascetics' of the Church and in the Church who have the duty of ensuring that eschatological witness of this kind is borne to the faith. And because of the fact that this witness belongs essentially to the Church there is always a 'class' in the Church constituted by this element of asceticism. Now the duty of ensuring that witness of this particular kind is borne is achieved in the nature of things more easily and more effectively when the Church has not simply individual ascetics living in isolation to turn to, but an actual corporate body formed by these ascetics in order to give effect to their charismatic mission and function. It is also facilitated and made more effective when this corporate body, together with the individual ascetics in it, is formed and led by the Church herself, endowed with the salvific powers of the Church herself, and constantly directed anew to the task to which they – the individuals in these communities and the communities in themselves – are called by God. Poverty as a 'situation' in life which has been chosen voluntarily, which proclaims and expresses the Church's belief in the coming of grace from above, is therefore, of its very nature, an ecclesiastical function, as also is the whole ascetical movement, and is the outcome of an eschatological vocation as well as of this faith. From this it follows that we must do our utmost to give the practice of this poverty a form such that it can maintain this function of bearing witness to the faith of the Church and in the Church, both internally and externally.

III. ON THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE FORMS ASSUMED BY RELIGIOUS POVERTY

We now arrive at the third and most obscure stage in our considerations. The question which presents itself to be treated of at this point is whether [191] this evangelical poverty should be made real and actual in one specific age, namely our own. Poverty and riches are, in fact, right from the outset relative concepts. They always presuppose the whole range of material goods which an individual has at his own free disposal, instituting a comparison between

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these and the range of similar goods which are possessed by the average individual in the relevant periods of history considered from the economic and social point of view. There is not much point in calling a pigmy in the forests of central Africa 'poor' on the grounds that he does not have a shirt. It may be that at the time of Jesus a man living in Palestine was 'poor' when he possessed only one instead of two coats (cf. Mt 5:40; 10:10). Today we rightly call an individual 'poor' when he can only call two shirts his own. Poverty, therefore, is a relative concept, bearing upon a specific economic situation. Nevertheless it is not *absolutely* relative. For in spite of what we have said there is a certain constant factor within the continuous alterations in the economic situation which take place throughout history. As applied to the basic biological act of human existence there are certain upper and lower limits defining the absolute minimum necessary for this existence. It is possible to define in figures which are more or less absolutely constant how many calories a man needs in order not to starve. Because of these constants it cannot be said that the concepts of poverty and of riches are solely and exclusively to be defined from the particular economic situation prevailing at any given time, and it is certainly not legitimate to doubt whether, for instance, 'poverty' as we know it today still has anything material in common with the 'poverty' of the time of Jesus. But on the other hand, because man is not only a purely biological being, in other words because he has needs which are not merely determined by his 'bios' but are rather subject to historical changes without for that reason being simply arbitrary, and because these cannot be established solely by the individual according to his own personal decision – because of all this there enters into the concept of poverty a factor which is variable, subject to historical alterations, and to a large extent beyond the powers of the individual to establish or control. From this a further question follows: What does religious poverty really mean today? And this question will lead us to recognise the fact that in poverty, and in the mode of practising poverty, the mere fact of the changes which have taken place in economic and social relationships has brought about transformations which are not insignificant, transformations which we have not yet sufficiently taken [192] cognizance of in the Church's laws relating to the poverty of religious communities, and which we are still far from having been sufficiently realised and worked out in terms of the constitutions of religious orders. A further conclusion is that there has been a not insignificant shift of meaning in the concept of the poverty of the orders for the Church and her witness in the world, and that we are called upon to make fresh efforts to develop a mode of poverty which is more effective in enabling poverty to fulfil its constant and abiding function in the religious life of the individual, of the order and of the Church herself both internally and externally.

It is very difficult to give any satisfactory reply to this question in a manner which is systematic, clear and comprehensible, and which at the same time is, even to some extent, satisfying and constructive. The reader is therefore asked to excuse the fragmentary and disorderly presentation of the considerations which follow.

1. Our first observation is one which is, perhaps, calculated to meet with that feeling of mistrust and irritation which is occasionally experienced today among members of the orders in dealing with religious ideals; the feeling, namely, that it is a clear and established fact that in the question of poverty the contemporary members of religious orders are only threatened with the danger of becoming more lax, and the sole task of superiors in the orders is to set themselves firmly against any such falling away. If poverty means economic insecurity and a renunciation of that power in society which is associated with possessions then we shall be able to say that the orders considered as corporate bodies, and viewed as a whole, have never been so poor as they are today. If it is true that the individual member of an order shares in the riches or the poverty of his community then this conclusion has implications for the position of individuals in the orders. But surely this conclusion does prove to be unambiguously true. The united resources of a foundation of the Middle Ages, or even of a

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house of Mendicants of the period or of a Jesuit house of studies of the seventeenth century, and the power which these gave to their holders, represent, when measured by the general economic standards of the relevant periods, a far greater percentage of the total amount of goods available for all than is the case today. But presumably this would still apply even if it were sought to reconcile the proportions between the two sets of figures by pointing out that the proportion of religious to the population as a whole was different then from what it is now. The religious houses have all become poorer than they were, even if the degree of [193] poverty involved is determined by another principle, that is, not merely by the amount of goods available in the absolute, but also according to the proportion these represented of the total amount of goods available to the community as a whole at any one particular period. The fact that this increase in poverty has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the degree of economic insecurity experienced, whether with regard to the needs of life at the biological level or otherwise, is simply a consequence of the general economic situation. In other words it may be that even a member of a religious order stood in greater danger of going hungry in former times than he does today. But this is simply due to the fact that this danger has become less for everyone than it was in former times. Again a relatively smaller increase in the degree of economic security enjoyed has probably been achieved for members of religious orders than for many other social groups in comparison with the degree of security which these would have enjoyed in earlier times. This finding is not invalidated by the fact that the decrease in economic security for the member of an order is not, strictly speaking, due to economic factors (as in earlier times) but rather to other causes, for instance the threat which political forces hostile to religion and the Church represent for religious communities. From certain points of view, therefore, it can absolutely be asserted that in guiding his Church God has so arranged matters that the Church and her orders have become poorer than in earlier times. To that extent we do not, strictly speaking, have any need to suppose that we are greatly inferior to our fathers in this question of poverty, even if today we have a typewriter and a wristwatch and other things as well which they did not possess. Of course it is right that the absolute quantity of goods which are available to a member of an order today has increased to a quite extraordinary extent in comparison with earlier times. But that is the outcome not in any sense of a development in the orders as such, or even of a decline from the ideal of religious poverty. Rather it is the consequence of the general economic development. Yet even as such this fact constitutes the basis of the present-day problem of poverty in the orders.

2. The first problem confronting us is the security of modern man (and so of the member of an order too). In our present-day economy, in contrast to that of earlier times, everyone, and so the member of an order too, can count with relatively greater security, on the availability of that absolute minimum necessary simply for maintaining life at the purely [194] biological level. Today in the areas governed by our present-day economy the probability that we shall starve is minimal. But strictly speaking it is precisely this security that poverty in its original form, and as practised in earlier periods of the economy, to a large extent gave up. Then a man became poor when in a literal sense he was reduced to begging, and not only starved when he did not succeed in obtaining alms (and there was no guarantee of this), but also, when a general situation of need arose (a failure of the crops, pestilence, etc.), he felt its effects most directly and most severely of all. And again this situation itself arose far more easily and with far less possibility of escaping from its effects. Even if we can say that in spite of this present-day economic situation the elemental anxiety (*Angst*) and insecurity underlying human life are a characteristic of man to a greater extent even than formerly, still this does not alter the facts as we have found them to be. For this insecurity in our basic personal life, even to the extent that it should be present at all in the lives of members of orders, is not in fact increased by the religious poverty which they undertake, as was the case

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with religious poverty in earlier times. It would not even be intensified if the members of orders were to practise a more radical form of doing without than they normally do, for even by a more strict withdrawal from goods of economic value both in point of quantity and kind they would not really be coming any nearer to those limits which define the minimum necessary for existence, and so the point at which this radical insecurity of existence arises. Their way of life would indeed be more severe and richer in point of detachment from worldly goods, and we can whole-heartedly defend and praise such a way of life. But even so, when they had reduced their level of consumption to this extremely modest level they would still be wholly secure. For it is precisely this abstemiousness with regard to material goods that is easiest to acquire and to maintain. This is due to another circumstance which also radically alters the situation within which the phenomenon of poverty, including religious poverty, has to exist today. In industrial societies everyone who has the power to work can in fact put it to fruitful and profitable use. But this means that mendicancy has been reduced to a mere peripheral phenomenon. As a means of maintaining the minimum necessary for existence the question of alms only still arises for all practical purposes for those who are incapable of work. Money is a symbol of the power to work productively. It is no longer what it was in earlier times, in the first instance a counter representing some consumer good [195] which is not simply any kind of possession. This means that begging (especially as the resources of the welfare state are also available) is regarded to a large extent as unnecessary and therefore as inadmissible. Even if it can be said with a certain justice that the present-day orders are perhaps compelled to ‘beg’ more than in earlier times to sustain themselves and to educate their younger members who have not yet been put to ‘productive’ work (because these are still not equipped for the apostolate, and those who are so capable do not ‘earn’ enough for their part to maintain the younger members) still this is ‘begging’ of a kind which other cultural institutions too avail themselves of today to assure themselves of a sound financial basis (by ‘donations’, ‘contributions’, financially powerfully ‘associates’, ‘promoters’, etc.). All that this kind of ‘begging’ therefore has in common with what was earlier understood by begging is simply the name, and perhaps a ‘nature’ too, in an abstract and metaphysical sense, but otherwise nothing more. The members of religious orders in our countries do not, viewed as a whole, really need to beg in the old sense any more.

Because we live in a productive economy in terms of work and money, spiritual and intellectual achievements too can be regarded as work which can be turned to profit, and so we can, if we wish, take this fact into account in formulating a theory to cover the rules of poverty. We can say that for all practical purposes, and as a matter of concrete fact, the members of orders too live to a large extent by the just remuneration of their activities, which can be considered as work. Just as with doctors the honorarium which they used to receive in the old days has given way to a straightforward payment for their work, so too it is with the activities of members of religious orders. They find their reward. But precisely because of this their contemporaries in modern times have come to think of them from the economic point of view as having passed from the class of the poor in any ordinary sense into that of those who receive recompense for their work, with all the advantages or disadvantages which the economic situation of such people entails. At any rate the members of orders are no longer classed in men’s minds among the genuinely poor, the class to which many orders at least were still thought of as belonging in the Middle Ages. At the most they belong to those who have to satisfy themselves with a relatively modest way of life. In view of this situation it is of no avail to console ourselves with the thought that in spite of this we who are members of orders still live on a modest and simple scale (even though [196] inevitably our standard of living too has been raised together with the general standards prevailing outside the orders). This may be true but it cannot be denied that because of this development,

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however inevitable it may be, the character of religious poverty as bearing witness has to a very notable extent been deprived of its clarity and its power to convince. With regard to the juridical aspects of our religious poverty, which lay down that all property shall be communal property, this is regarded as a measure which is serviceable from the point of view of technical organisation for a common way of life and for an organisation the members of which have set themselves a common goal (the more so since they are committed to celibacy, and therefore from this point of view alone are destined to live in a restricted community of this kind). But this life in which property is held in common is not thought of as that poverty which is designated as such by the gospel, and which, in virtue of the fact that it involves committing oneself to insecurity and defencelessness, is estimated as an act of faith and as a palpable attestation to faith. It is still conceded that the lives led by one or two individuals among us do have this significance, namely in those cases in which the impression is very clearly borne in upon the onlooker that this individual in particular would be 'earning' far more if he had not become a member of an order. But in general we are not credited with such capacities at all and, moreover, in the majority of cases, it simply is not the case that we would 'earn' far more in the world.

And so the fact remains. Religious poverty as it is still practised now has very little to do with any kind of insecurity (voluntarily undertaken) in one's earthly life beyond that insecurity to which all men are subject. And, furthermore, by reason of the alteration in the nature of work in industrial societies it can have very little to do with insecurity in this sense. And for these reasons religious poverty has forfeited much of its character as witness, which it is radically necessary that it should have if it is to retain its religious and ecclesiastical significance. The insecurity of life which arose from poverty as practised in earlier times has, from the economic aspect, given way to a special kind of security which belongs to life in religious houses, and this security becomes particularly intensified in those cases in which a member of the order identifies himself with his community and modifies his own personal claims to fit in with the economic possibilities open to his community. If he does this then it is hardly possible to speak any longer in any real sense of an insecurity and [197] lack of safety in one's earthly life arising from poverty. If, and to the extent that, insecurity of this kind is still present in the religious life it arises not from poverty but from the threat which forces hostile to God and the Church represent to the way of life followed by religious and clerics. This may be God's way of providing a substitute for this particular kind of insecurity which the poor for Christ's sake are inspired by faith to take upon themselves. But for all this this new kind of insecurity is precisely not poverty.

3. A further problem to which this new economic situation has given rise is concerned with the technical procedures by which the canonical dependence of the individual upon the permission of his superior with regard to material goods is put into practice. There have already been frequent opportunities for drawing attention to the fact that the merely juridical dependence of the religious upon the permission of his superior in the disposal of material goods cannot, of itself, constitute the essence of evangelical poverty. To suppose that the state of being propertyless in this formal and juridical sense, and the dependence upon superiors arising from this, constitute of themselves alone the whole essence of poverty, would mean the destruction of poverty in the true sense. But abstracting from this, a not inconsiderable difficulty arises, and one which cannot be overlooked, from contemporary economic ideas precisely in their bearing upon this dependence. I would not for one moment maintain that it is impossible in formal and juridical terms to put such a construction and interpretation upon all the deeds and omissions of a religious that each of these deeds and omissions on his part with regard to material goods could count as authorised by the superiors of his order. In other words these deeds and omissions of his would not mean that he had any ultimate control over these goods as over private property. But the question is whether this is

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of itself enough to guarantee that the religious is actually living a life of 'poverty' thereby, and whether this poverty is fruitful in those religious consequences without which, whatever form it takes, it is meaningless. And at this point a special difficulty arises for the times in which we live.

We are all living in a world of material goods which is extraordinarily rich and extremely complex whether we wish to or not, whether we live on a modest or a grand scale. Now it necessarily follows from this that we are all the time positing and having to posit acts controlling the disposal of material goods. And these acts are extremely numerous, extremely [198] varied in character, and constantly being adapted to meet the new and different situations which arise in the material world. But by very reason of the immense number of, and the great differences between, these acts the idea that they are controlled by the permission and agreement of superiors can, for purely technical reasons very often still be upheld only in a formal and juridical sense with no effective basis in reality (so at least it appears to me). In other words in fact, even if not in a formal or juridical sense, the religious of today, whether he admits it or not, has a not inconsiderable range of material goods at his disposal, which for all practical purposes he controls in exactly the same way as if they were his own private property. It may perhaps be rejoined that this has always and inevitably been the case because already even in ancient times the disposal of the handkerchief in the pocket of a religious was provided for and managed in exactly the same way as if the handkerchief belonged to a private individual, and because even in those earlier times it had already become more a joke than a legal fiction which had any effect when a nun spoke of her false teeth as 'our' teeth instead of 'my' teeth. This may all be very true. But the important point is this: the effect of modern economic developments and of the abundance of goods with which everybody today surrounds themselves and concerns themselves as a matter of necessity has been to cause a notable increase in the whole sphere of what is for practical purposes, if not in juridical and formal terms, one's private property to dispose of as one pleases. Thus a problem does exist with regard to bow the economic dependence of the religious upon the assent of his superior can be put into practical effect in the concrete. It seems to me that if we conceal these difficulties beneath formal and juridical façades consisting of permissions which are mere fictions it becomes meaningless and does not promote, but rather derogates from poverty in the true sense. For if we do this then there is a very great danger that the acts by which we dispose of material goods are likewise hidden under the same legal fictions, whereas in reality these acts must absolutely be subjected to the yoke of a genuine dependence if religious poverty is to remain poverty in any real and effective sense at all. If we maintain legal fictions of this kind then we are forcing the modern religious to busy himself with a whole host of superfluities of a bureaucratic kind, for which there will be very little understanding on the part of those who have to work hard.

This is not the place to undertake the task of developing these [199] considerations further in the direction of practical proposals. Here we shall confine ourselves to asking whether the resources actually used, which for all practical purposes already have a permanent value of their own, should not in reality (if not in terms of formal canon law as well) proceed a stage further and come to be openly regarded as goods that are to be treated of as the individual's private property. The reason is that the opposite attitude is merely formal and legalistic bureaucracy, and so far from promoting frugality in one's way of life – a frugality based upon one's personal decision, and for which one makes oneself personally responsible – actually contributes to the opposite effect, and leads again and again to the temptation of believing that poverty is preserved in other acts of disposing of goods as well, because such acts are covered by a show of legality.

4. Attention must likewise be drawn to a further change which has to be made in the concrete mode of applying the ideal of poverty, a change which is forced upon us by the

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manner in which modern economy has been developed. The quantity of those goods which are *productive* (taking the term 'productive' here in its broadest sense) has also undergone an extraordinary increase in the life of the individual religious. Naturally there have always been such goods from the first, goods which are designed not simply to be consumed for the maintenance of life in the biological sense, and which are agreed not to be means of increasing one's enjoyment either, but are rather 'instruments of work', the tools necessary for the active pursuit of those aims which an individual religious or an order set themselves. Francis himself must already have realised that even his poor men had need of books, breviaries and churches. But today the quantity of such goods has grown quite immeasurably – almost, one might say to an extent which alters their whole nature. If we abstract from the actual basic essentials the typical instance of a material good in former ages was the consumer good. In order to understand this we have only to recall the controversy about whether it was legitimate to take interest, a controversy stretching over a thousand years. Today the typical instance of a material good is neither the basic essentials of life nor the consumer good, but the machine, the instrument of work, the good that is productive. As a result, therefore, and on the basis of this, the concept of the 'rich' in earlier times immediately evokes the idea of a man who is in possession of great resources for his own enjoyment, one who can live as a 'reveller' (and because he is in possession of the necessities of [200] life which another needs is also in this sense powerful). But the effect of this new concept of the typical material good is that the concept of the rich man has also changed. He is no longer so much the man who has great resources for his own enjoyment (firstly these are, in fact, extremely limited for all men simply from the biological point of view, and secondly in the economy of the modern mass-consumer society the 'poor man' has in this respect no longer so immeasurably less possibilities of enjoyment than the rich as was the case in earlier times), but rather the man who can dispose of a whole quantity of instruments of work, of productive goods and in *this* sense possessive power is of a quite different kind from the power of former times. At the same time, however, it must admittedly be borne in mind that there are many goods which can serve both as instruments of work *and* as means of enjoyment (taking both in the broadest sense). A radio receiver can serve both purposes. A further point to be borne in mind is that the fitness of the means for a specific end within a society depends on the circumstances of that society considered as a whole. In the time of Jesus an ass was a useful means of transport. Today it is so no longer.

On the basis of these observations a fresh problem now arises with regard to the ideal of religious poverty and the mode in which it should be practised. When an order and a religious pursue specific spiritual, apostolic, etc., ends they have today to avail themselves of a far greater number of instruments of work and productive goods than in former times. A serviceable library such as can provide a starting-point for research costs at least ten times as much in the purchase of books as any comparable library in the Middle Ages. And if we should wish to travel in pursuit of such aims we have to go by express train or aeroplane. We use clocks, dictaphones, photocopying equipment, we have electric shavers (because otherwise we would lose too much precious time). It is taken for granted that we have a typewriter and a telephone. Many will actually declare (and they may actually be right in this) that a television set, and not merely a radio receiver, is part of the equipment which is necessary or useful for their work. In the missions a private plane may even be regarded as necessary. Because of the lack of labour forces and for other reasons an immense quantity of technical equipment is already available in every modern religious house. Lifts, oil-heating, hot and cold water laid on, electric stoves, etc. We may go on explaining that in spite of all this everything belongs not to the individual but to the order, and [201] so that poverty is preserved. This is not true. An order that is really rich cannot have any really poor members. But is an order not rich in the modern sense when its members can and do have at their

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disposal so significant a quantity of equipment of this kind?

Of course it might be said (and there may even be a certain consolation in this) that the amount of such goods in comparison with the amount of productive goods held by other people in the present age is very modest indeed, in other words that today, too, in relation to the rest of society an order is still poor (indeed that from this aspect – in accordance with what was said in subsection I – the orders have actually become poorer). It might be said that this increase in the number of instruments of work employed brings about effects that are absolutely ascetical, in that they compel the tempo of work (at least for those who are conscientious) to be greatly increased, and thereby force the order too to subject itself to the ascesis of modern work to a point where all the dangers entailed in a manager's position are present in it too, because today the individual religious is stretched to his limits by his work to a notably greater extent than in earlier and more comfortable ages. Perhaps this too, is something that God has arranged to compensate for the loss of poverty. But in this type of penance too, which consists in being worn out by sheer work, the factor precisely of poverty plays no part.

In any case the great majority of such instruments of work always represents, in the eyes of those outside the order, a possibility for greater enjoyment, and can, indeed, very quickly come to be used for such a purpose. And therefore this increase in the amount of productive goods in the life of orders in the present day, however unavoidable it may be, is liable, at least according to the general view of those outside the order, to make them appear not poor but rather rich. For practical purposes, therefore, this derogates from the function of representing the Church which belongs to the essence of religious poverty. A further factor is the influence of this state of affairs upon the mentality of the individual religious himself. He regards goods exactly as other men regard them at the present day, not so much, and in the first instance, as goods to be enjoyed; he does not want to have goods in order to lead a life of ease and to enjoy them (any more than the modern managing director does this, who, in spite of his great 'private resources' has such a burden put upon him, and such difficulties to cope with that a smaller man would be quite incapable of being a managing director because this would mean too much work and [202] responsibility for him). The modern religious (who genuinely is such) also belongs to the modern type of 'man of ambition' who wants to increase the output of his work at an ever-increasing rate, and therefore wants to have an every-increasing amount of goods at his disposal to serve as instruments for his work. On this basis, however, it is far from easy for him to find any connection with poverty within himself at all, at least such that what he means by poverty can be brought under the heading of 'poverty' as it is normally understood. He is subject to one of the severest forms of asceticism (the 'this-worldly' form), and this demands of him that he shall organise down to the last detail the use he makes of his time, his powers and his work. All this he understands. He does not want to 'take it easy'. On the basis of this will to work and to achieve he will absolutely expose himself to a very considerable degree of ascesis at the hands of those who use what he produces, a degree which is, perhaps, significantly greater (measured by the relative standard of the possibilities open to him at the particular time) than that practised by the orders in earlier ages, when the religious could, and in fact had to spend much time, in conversations, slow journeys, setting aside time to care for his daily needs, when life was maintained by the most primitive means by the use of wine, etc. He will say that if that is what poverty means then he has the greatest sympathy with poverty. But not if poverty means a *petit-bourgeois* mode of living and working in the style of the eighteenth century, and not if it makes it seem as an ideal that a religious house, even today, should as far as possible be made to appear in its interior dispositions to have the same style as houses of a hundred years ago, when such houses were certainly not built by le Corbusier, the architect of the new study-house of the Dominicans in France. The question, therefore, is this: According to the meaning of the ideals

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of the religious life, is one still poor if while maintaining a strict ascesis in terms of consumption or; enjoyment, one is unembarrassedly 'rich' in all that can fittingly be demanded for the other aims of the order and of the individual religious? Or must it be the case that the amount of instruments of work employed must be on a modest scale even if this imposes a certain restriction on the effectiveness of the work achieved, and must be so arranged that these instruments of work in themselves can also be brought under the concept of poverty? Should we hold this latter view in spite of the fact that it is far from being generally agreed that an order can, or should pursue a legitimate aim with *all* means which are not actually illegitimate in [203] themselves? Is this question a genuine question? Can any unambiguous theory be found to solve it? Is it not solved in that compromise which life entails in the concrete, and which can never wholly be resolved by any theory? At all events we must certainly be more precise and more honest in viewing from this aspect the practical problems and concrete cases which arise in the practice of religious poverty in the present day.

5. Again even at the peril of repeating much of what has already been said in a different form we must put the question explicitly: Can poverty in the form which it inevitably assumes in the present day, and under the economic circumstances which prevail at present, still have that meaning and those religious effects which it had originally, and which constitute the basis upon which its existence is justified? Or, to formulate it in another way, does present-day poverty still possess that formative power for religion which it once had? We have already pointed out certain aspects which do not make it easy for us to answer this question in the affirmative. Poverty used to mean exposing oneself to a certain elemental insecurity in one's existence. Today it affects fewer areas of our lives in this way, and the depths of the insecurity involved have been diminished. Again this insecurity, undertaken for the sake of religion, raised men to the very heights of faith, making them cleave to the eternal goods of grace and entailing an existential self-commitment in hope and trust to God himself. Today in practice (if not juridically speaking as well), a significantly greater area of life is open for the individual to dispose of as he will and as he thinks necessary. And this is in contrast with earlier ages, and once more makes the religious of today a figure far more similar to the man of the world who possesses private property of his own, the more so since the freedom of the man of the world to dispose of his goods as he wills has become notably more restricted in comparison with earlier ages by reason of the greater social intermingling of private property with the economy as a whole as guided and controlled by the state. From this point of view too the formative power of poverty for religion must seem to be diminished. The religious cannot now think of himself as much as he did formerly as one of the *anawim* of the New Testament in the sense of the small, the humble, the socially weak, with all the religious effects which such an experience was able to have earlier. We have already seen that from the attitude to material goods which prevails today modern man finds if difficult to recognise any meaning in poverty considered as a means of obtaining certain preconceived and legitimate ends, if it is to be [204] anything more than an ascesis in respect of goods consumed. Because in any other kind of poverty he can only see a renunciation of a possibility of attaining to these ends, which are legitimate, and even, under certain circumstances, to be regarded as having a positively religious value, together with all the means necessary for those ends.

There are still further and different considerations which make it appear that the religious effectiveness, and therefore the evangelical meaning also of religious poverty, as able to be practised in the economic circumstances of today, have been lessened and have therefore become questionable. Today for all practical purposes poverty as practised in religious houses no longer really signifies any 'deprivation'. Today too it can indeed demand a not inconsiderable degree of renunciation of enjoyments and similar things, which in other

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circumstances we could immediately approve of and feel inclined to. But almost all these renunciations are concerned with things which can be renounced *in such a way that* not possessing them does not signify any real deprivation. When, for instance, I *will* not to make a journey round the world by aeroplane the fact that it is impossible for me to reconcile this with poverty does not signify any 'deprivation', any pain, anything which affects the way I like to live. But those deprivations which are worthy of the name, and which in earlier times were still quite often entailed by poverty, and which always and everywhere, independently of what attitude we freely adopt, are felt to be such, no longer exist for practical purposes in religious poverty as practised in the present day. Such are hunger, cold, sickness, which for want of means cannot be warded off, the feeling of being thrust down to the lowest social levels and despised, ill-treatment, and being reduced to begging in the true sense. It might be said that by force of present-day economic conditions our modern practice of religious poverty has become so emancipated from practical living that it is in danger of no longer existing in its original sense at all. What happens again and again in life in human society takes place here too in its own way: the earlier nomenclature and the earlier juridical form is still retained, but underneath them something which is, in reality, quite different comes into being. The question arises whether the present-day practice of poverty in religious orders now amounts to anything more than an ascesis with regard to the consumption and enjoyment of goods, as well as to that practice of holding goods in common which must *inevitably* be maintained wherever a number of individuals live together closely, intimately and on a permanent [205] basis after the manner of a family, if this common life of theirs is to function at all. If we had to concede that the real meaning of poverty, for all practical and effective purposes, did in fact consist in these two elements, then we would have to reconstruct, on the basis of these two elements, the theological and ascetical basis for poverty both in terms of theory and in terms of the concrete mode of poverty too, in a clear and decisive way, and in doing this we would have to renounce many of our ideological ideas upon the subject as out of date. It may indeed be the case that we actually need to embark boldly and unflinchingly upon such an undertaking as this would imply. For it might be said that the ultimate theological essence of evangelical poverty is still preserved even in an ascesis of consumption and enjoyment, though admittedly this is a statement which would need prolonged testing and examination. It might be said that from these two elements in present-day religious poverty (even if no others were present, whereas in reality they are present though less clearly and prominently than formerly) forces could be brought to bear which are religiously constructive and still retain an importance which is absolutely decisive. These would make even this kind of poverty still appear as the basis and rampart of religious life.

6. No ultimate and wholly satisfying answer to this question can be put forward here, but the way in which we answer it depends to some extent upon the answer to another question. This is a radical question which can be stated as follows: Is the mode of life which, for practical purposes, all the orders practise today, with only relatively minor variations, *really* forced upon them by the concrete structure of the economy, or could this mode of life still retain a form such that it constituted a manifest approximation to the old mode of practising poverty without thereby falling into an anachronistic romanticism? In fact there can be no doubt that in very many matters and in many respects we have simply and unmistakably been forced to adopt a different mode of practising poverty than that which formerly prevailed. And all attempts to break away from this compulsion, however ideal the motivations might be (or however reactionary they in fact are) that lie behind such attempts, would simply be acts of material disobedience against God and the dispositions he has ordained when he imposed the particular situation upon man by sheer force of the changes which have taken place in history. If a Capuchin does not enter the city barefoot today, then he is in no sense being untrue to his ideal of poverty. For his forebears did not go barefoot into the cities [206]

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(and this means that even if he did do this today he would not be doing what his forebears did). Nor can he feel obliged by the ideal of his order merely to wander in poverty through the plains of Umbria in the footprints of the Poor Man of Assisi. Nevertheless the question can be raised of whether we members of religious orders, as a result of these changes which are so clearly necessary, have not taken much into our mode of life and mode of practising poverty which has no place there, and which renders our mode of poverty of today *unjustifiably* remote from the ancient mode. Have we not done this without reason and without drawing the necessary distinctions correctly? Have we perhaps allowed ourselves to be influenced by a reactionary traditionalism on the one hand, and an imprudent eagerness to fall in with the spirit and mode of life of our times on the other (this spirit is always a spectre too), and so neglected to reconstruct our mode of poverty in a manner that is really creative? And is not the result of this that our practice of poverty too often appears as a makeshift and indefensible compromise between the modern mode of living as practised by 'Mr Everyman' and the ancient and traditional monastic forms of life? The fact that something of this kind has in fact taken place *in some degree* among us religious will only be contested by those who suppose that the mentality of the average religious and the average religious house is totally immune to the general blindness, sinfulness and state of 'thrown-downness' in the world But the question remains *how great* the degree is of this false and uncreative compromise among us. And the further question is that of whether overcoming these deviations in the contemporary mode of poverty would not lead precisely to the development in clear and manifest terms of an ascesis with regard to goods to be consumed or enjoyed and the institutionalisation of this in terms of modern community life. These are questions which we cannot spend any further time in answering at this point. We cannot do this for the very reason that they would require a detailed analysis of the concrete forms assumed in the mode of poverty envisaged which were adopted in each individual order to answer its own particular requirements.

7. Finally our problem must be viewed from yet another angle, that namely of the social and ecclesiastical function of poverty in the Church, and of the Church herself for the world, which, as we have explained, pertains to the very essence of religious poverty. This too, by reason of the modern structure of the economy, has been brought into a unique state of crisis. Voluntary poverty as lived in a clear and exemplary manner in [207] the Church carried a message and witness for the man of earlier ages who was poor by force of circumstances that there are higher goods than those which we merely consume, that to strive for the possession of these latter must not constitute the true or ultimate aim of human existence, that even he who is poor in the economic sense can make precisely this situation which is imposed upon him, with all the dangers, insecurities, humiliations, etc., which it entails, into a concrete form for expressing his faith in the God of grace that comes from above and of eternal life. The message of voluntary poverty, therefore, is that if rich men become poor of their own free will, when they really do not need eternal life as a palliative for the pains and miseries of human existence, then eternal life is not simply the opium that is offered to the poor. It is a self-evident fact that the function of holding up an example in a world which, economically speaking, was poor in consumer goods and materials, had a greater and more universal range of application than it has in a world which, economically speaking, is rich in these goods and developed intensively in terms of material production. The task of giving a religious meaning to *in*voluntary poverty by providing an example of *voluntary* poverty is more relevant in a society of those who are poor in material goods than it is in one which is rich in them. If, apart from a very small upper class, the *great majority* of men is really poor and deprived, then voluntary poverty acquires the function of providing an example which is of *universal* application to the religion of all. Now if today society is inevitably pluralistic in character, and if for this reason those who are still really poor and deprived constitute only a small

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group in this society, then it becomes inevitable that poverty no longer has the same *universal* function to perform of bearing witness as in former ages. The Church has to hold up quite different examples in her preaching and life to cater for other groups in the society. The experience of radical contingency is one which is always present in human life. In earlier times this experience took the form precisely of a threat to life through poverty and the hunger arising from it. Today this same sense of radical contingency manifests itself in areas of human life which are 'existentially' other than those affected precisely by material deprivations, and it is these other areas which now have to be interpreted by the Church in a religious sense and in terms of her faith. A question which might be put forward as extremely urgent, therefore, is this: With regard to the radical contingency proper to man and the fact that he is thrown upon God, what is it that really [208] makes this present in the contemporary industrial society of the masses in this world that is rich in consumer goods, and in the planned economy of our time? Man as he exists today can no longer experience with the same directness and the same urgency as formerly that he has to ask God for a piece of bread. Of course man in himself is constantly in a state of *that* 'need' which teaches him to pray. But in the concrete this state of existential need has nevertheless a history of its own and undergoes changes. And for this reason, at the present at least, the old mode of poverty is no longer capable of providing an all-comprehending example of the religious meaning to be found in existence for all with such unambiguous clarity as formerly. For this reason religious poverty, considered as the palpable expression of this significance to be found in human existence, has inevitably ceased to have the function which it had in earlier times of providing *the* universal example of religion for society as a whole. For the same reason too it is no longer capable of providing this in the same degree as formerly because those poor who are still with us either today are presumably for the most part far poorer than the members of orders, and in other words for them the orders as a whole are quite incapable of providing an example of the meaning to be found in poverty precisely as it applies to *them* (perhaps here we should abstract from the instances of the Little Brothers of Jesus of P. Charles de Foucauld and new confraternities of a similar kind). Does this imply that religious poverty as practised today has – albeit inevitably – simply lost its function of providing an example of religion in the Church, and so too of bearing witness to the faith before the world? This cannot be, seeing that in other respects poverty is an essential characteristic of religious life, and this in turn sustains an essential function in the permanent life of the Church. But even if we concede the fact that this function of religious poverty as providing an example still persists even today, in what *precisely* can this consist? Here again, in answering this question we find ourselves compelled to invoke the key concept of an ascesis in respect of the consumption and enjoyment of goods. It might be said that the high level of consumption enjoyed by the masses today constitutes a threat to the Church, because she has not yet succeeded to a sufficient extent in constructing examples showing how this consumption can be made to conform to the principles of human ethics and morality. (The most we can say on this point to console ourselves is that the trend to an ever-increasing rate of consumption also at the same time, and in the long run [209] constitutes a far more decisive threat still to communism.) Here religious poverty might discover a new function which is (in its essence) at the same time an old one: that namely of living out an ascesis in respect of consumer goods which is both comprehensible and convincing;[1] not, in the first instance, in the sense that the members of religious orders represent in some degree the finger of the Church raised in admonition as though she were saying 'You must not proceed with a constantly rising standard of living, there is something still higher than this'. Religious poverty has this

[1] On the problems of consumption and on 'consumer ascesis' cf. the observations of K. Lehmann in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 130 ff.; 175 ff. (cf. also above pp. 27 ff.).

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function, rather, in that the orders, through what we call poverty, provide an example to modern man of that consumer ascesis which shows itself to be the only possible genuine and effective 'hygiene of need' which exists, and which cannot be replaced either by merely 'this-worldly' social techniques (the manipulation of needs on the part of the community and the powers it has at its disposal to enforce its ideas) nor by merely functional but meaningless techniques of psychology. Consumer ascesis exists simply in virtue of the fact that man straightforwardly and manifestly renounces a thousand possibilities of consuming goods (even if this is the outcome of a policy that has been planned and institutionalised precisely in religious poverty) because he has a genuine and living relationship with God, Spirit, person and love, and does not have to conceal and suppress those experiences of his own radical contingency which are always with him, by the narcotics of enjoyment and dissipation in forms which become ever more intense and more refined.

Of course this mode of poverty would have to be developed in such a way that it became noticeable and convincing at the same time. If we are to let our works shine before men (although we keep our hearts hidden in the intimacy of our relationship with God), then there is nothing to prevent us also from devising ways to ensure that our consumer ascesis really makes a strong and living impact and is in the best sense of the term radical (though this does not mean renewing and reviving the mode of life followed in earlier ages). We must also ensure that this consumer ascesis of ours is lived out as such as an example to men, and shown to be a source of invigoration and happiness for the tasks which men have to perform in their lives in this world. The members of religious orders would have to be characterised by a sort of non-conformity with regard [210] to those forms of consumption which are typical for modern times, with their techniques of artificially stimulating needs, controlling and manipulating the processes of consumption and making it desirable to indulge in consumption in order to demonstrate one's position. They do this by deliberately laying emphasis on the factor of social position instead of making consumption serve to satisfy any genuine need. (Even a provincial might believe that he owed it to his position to have a Mercedes 300.) But in all these observations one point on which we must be clear is that the members of religious orders are still far from having worked out any concrete example of how such consumer ascesis ought to be practised as a form (though not the only one) of the religious poverty to which we are committed. The mere fact of developing a few abstract ideas of the kind which have just been presented here is not enough. We are still far from having achieved a concrete and formative example for this modern way of living which we call consumer ascesis. Abstract ideas, general principles can be very true and very important. But they are no substitute for concrete example, which is the outcome of a creativity that is applied in practice. To suppose that abstract principles could be a substitute for concrete example in this way would be just as absurd as to imagine that the principles of pedagogy could be a substitute for the personality of a genuine teacher, or to suppose that this personality itself is simply the sum total of these abstract principles. And even when we have worked out in this creative way a concrete example of a modern man whose life is governed by consumer ascesis, who is able freely to abstain from much which he might do physically and technically, still even then we have not advanced so very much further. We still remain, so it appears, at the stage of an uncreative compromise between the old mode of poverty and the new modern mode of living, for even the orders are invaded by the unbridled lust for consumption, while those in charge of the orders are seeking in a negative and timid way to check and restrain development of this kind.

8. The considerations which are still to follow are proposed for discussion in all modesty and simply with a view to stirring up the spirit which will lead us to seek for a new and concrete mode of applying the ideal of poverty in this way. We live in the age of the masses, and therefore in the age of organisations and of great mass groupings as well. Even the

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Church and the orders will appear, and will actually come to be such in the eyes of modern man because even they have become, in point of [211] actual numbers, extremely large and so subject to the sociological laws applying to all such major groupings in society. In its bearing upon what we have to say here this has a two-fold significance. Humanly and morally speaking the impression which the Church and the orders as a whole make upon modern man is one that is extremely profane, one that has been 'demythologised'. His estimate of them is almost the same as his estimate of the national health, the unions, the state institutions. They are inevitable, they are heartless, they are hard, egoistical, groupings of men combined for a common interest. The morality of them is extremely problematical. They have very little influence upon him so far as his personal way of living is concerned. Precisely because they take such great pains to penetrate right to the innermost recesses of his private life with their attempts at regulation and standardisation, they have to be regarded with caution and mistrust.

And in fact the greater such mass organisations become the more difficult it becomes for them to succeed in bringing something new and creative into being in, with and in the midst of the inexpressible complexity of the institutional factors, the responsibilities which cannot be pinned down, the effects of bureaucracy (which are inevitable for governing and controlling any major grouping in society). I suppose that all religious confraternities which have any antiquity are proud of the fact that they have not had any need of any movements of reform and fresh formations of a reformist character such as were customary and traditional in the middle ages and at the beginning of the new age, amongst other things precisely with regard to the way in which the ideal of poverty was applied. The question can be raised whether this pride is really justified, or whether the fact to which we point with such satisfaction is not rather an indication of the fact that in this age of mass organisation emphasis has been laid upon the element of the uncreatively traditional in all our major groupings in society to such an extent that it must seem that every attempt at altering the mode of living in religious orders in general and the mode of poverty in particular to any extent can only achieve its object by the founding of fresh communities. It has to be admitted that both observations have some truth in them, and the result of this for our enquiry into poverty in this present age as practised in the religious orders may be stated as follows: In working out a mode of poverty that will be convincing to outsiders as well, the individual and the small units are the more important and have more chances of succeeding than the major religious [212] communities as such. This is not to say that these individuals and minor units could only exist and develop their own mode of poverty *outside* the groupings of the major orders. But it certainly is our opinion that the mode of poverty practised in these major communities of religious is liable to give an impression of ossification, or else is weakened by compromises with the new age which are regrettable. The result of this is that it becomes inevitable that the continual creative force present in any genuine idea of evangelical poverty creates fresh forms outside the communities of the traditional orders, since these orders fail to give the individual and the smaller unit scope and opportunity to exercise their creativity in working out a new mode of poverty without straightaway attempting to bring everything in these developments under their own authority by applying the rule of their order to them. The question therefore, is this: could not the orders, without prejudice to the discipline of the common life, give more scope for such creative attempts at developing a mode of poverty suitable to modern times? If the appeal of religious poverty is *effectively* to retain its force is it not absolutely necessary for different modes of poverty to be developed within one and the same religious congregation or order? When we reflect that Ignatius of Loyola actually provided for variation of this kind as a matter of firm and permanent institution in his order (even if in practice not many survivals of this remain today) then we cannot reject a question of this kind from the outset as meaningless. For instance ought not poverty as practised in a

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modern parish house belonging to an order, with its small family-size unit of religious, to have another form from, and should not its appeal radiate out to different sectors of the population from the poverty of a major study house of religious, which is, and necessarily must be, a little like a barracks of God's love, and therefore should also be different in its mode of poverty, and appeal to a different type of people? Ought we not to have a clearer idea of how the popular missioner, the student chaplain, the missionary to pagan peoples should live out and exemplify religious poverty, each in his own way? When, for instance, we remember the fact that the way of life in the religious orders today is followed more or less in the same manner in Europe as it is in Asia, and that even today it does not for one moment make a convincing impression of asceticism on the Indian, even when, by European standards, it is thoroughly 'poor', then perhaps it becomes clear that these questions cannot simply be rejected with the demand that each order shall require all of its members to follow [213] a single uniform way of life. But it also becomes clear that such questions cannot be solved straightway and right from the very outset by the order making laws to cover them. Rather the individual members and the small units should be encouraged to make attempts of this kind even within a religious community that is already in existence.

9. In concluding at this point, the impression must not be given that we are doing so in the conviction that we have now dealt with all essential questions regarding religious poverty. On the contrary some of these questions have not so much as been mentioned. To provide a comprehensive treatment of this kind we would have, for instance, to reflect in greater detail upon the fact (to name at least one point beyond what has been mentioned here) that the division of labour in the modern economy also has its effects upon religious poverty. Life in the religious orders, too, inevitably falls under the influence of this economic system, which is based upon a highly sophisticated division of labour, and one which in fact even extends to the sphere of spiritual labours properly so called. As late as the eighteenth century any intelligent member of an apostolic order was in a position to understand more or less every enterprise included in the activities and works performed by his order (so that, for instance, a superior was *ipso facto* able to act as a 'specialist' in each department, and as such able to judge the various kinds of work in which his subjects were engaged). Today this is no longer the case. In none of the active orders is there any one individual who really understands *all* the 'special avocations' which are included in the work of his order: preacher, professor, financial expert, youth chaplain, etc. – each of these has become a separate calling in its own right, so that each individual can have a real grasp only of one of these callings. The consequences of this not only affect the practical application of leadership and obedience in a religious community, but also have a bearing on poverty. The differences in these particular callings, and arising concomitantly with them, affect not only the education, way of life and mode of fitting in with society in the world as a whole, but also the nature, quantity and value of the instruments of work which are the necessary prior conditions for each of the individual callings to be pursued in an order. These differences in the instruments of work (we might take them in the broadest sense so as to include also the special journeys which scholars have to make for their researches, the need for the specialist to associate himself with specific groups in the secular community, expensive instruments and especially libraries) again have further [214] effects bearing upon the way of life and mode of poverty practised by individuals. From this point of view too it is impossible in practice altogether to prevent different ways of living and working from developing, even within one and the same order. These still persist even if we look realistically, and to some extent with the sharpened perceptions of the sociologist, at life in religious communities. But not much thought has been given to these variations. If we still persist in trying to formulate legalistic rules in our attempt to overcome them then we have not yet really and whole-heartedly come to grips with the reality itself and the difficulties which it entails. From this point of view also there

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would still be much to consider on this question of religious poverty, and there are other questions still, especially those more concerned with the sphere of moral theology, which have not been treated of: questions concerning the nature of the vow in general and of the vow of poverty in particular. On the other hand these questions, which pertain in the narrower sense to moral theology, are so well known that for our present purposes we can take the answer to them as read.

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[215]

PART THREE

The Veneration of the Sacred Heart

[217]

11

THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE VENERATION OF THE SACRED HEART

When a dogmatic theologian is called upon to speak of the veneration of the Sacred Heart from the point of view of his particular discipline he can, in a certain sense, make it easier for himself to do so simply by referring to Pius XII's great encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*, of 15th May 1956. This contains a particularly comprehensive treatment of the subject, one that goes beyond those of Leo XIII and Pius XI, and which includes everything connected with this particular devotion. But precisely for this reason the converse is also true: the very fact that there can hardly be anything left to add to this treatise, which comes from the hand of the supreme teacher of the Church, and the further fact that the actual text requires to be studied again and again in order to grasp the full depths of the doctrine it contains – these two facts together justify us in presenting a few ideas at this point which are intended neither as a summary of the treatise itself, nor yet as a supplement to it, but rather, unencumbered by any such ambitious aims, simply offer a few observations of an extremely subjective and peripheral kind bearing upon this subject.

Man is not God, but rather stands in a relationship to God in his uniqueness. Two points follow immediately from this: first, neither in his being nor in his thinking and loving can he be all in one or have all in one (otherwise he would be God); second, while the mode of his being and the mode in which he achieves the due fulness of his existence is necessarily complex he cannot withhold himself from constantly striving anew to achieve anunity in the midst of this complexity, and from actually attaining to the unity for which he strives (for otherwise he would not be the spiritual being who stands in a special relationship to God in his uniqueness). Because of this his movement outwards from himself into reality is always and necessarily a movement from unity into multiplicity, and this [218] applies to his religion too. His 'credo' comprises a series of articles. The expression of his worship in the liturgy assumes manifold forms. An extreme diversity is to be observed alike in the nature of his religious acts and in the objects to which they are directed. He must love God and man, direct his spirit outwards into a whole range of activities, and at the same time retain his interior life, returning to the innermost centre of his being, transformed as it is by grace, where God and he are alone together. Thus his spirit is necessarily subject to a plurality of acts by the very fact that it has to proceed outwards into the multiplicity of beings, and in this plurality has to seek for the unity of all things. It is this law of his being that sets him in the dimension of time and history (and it is this historical dimension in turn which allows scope for this interplay of many factors to be maintained in his life). What it implies for him is a 'richly variegated' adventure in the life of his mind and spirit, and at the same time, too, that ever-nagging pain which arises from never really quite reaching the point at which he has all in one and one in all. This truth, so simple as it is, yet exercising so overriding an influence upon man in all his dimensions, must be borne in mind if we are to grasp the meaning of the veneration of the Sacred Heart in its central significance and its ultimate implications.

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Jesus Christ is the mediator. He is that unity in which God, who in his simplicity is all in one, has assumed the multiplicity of reality and its 'thirst for unity'. He did this when he assumed creaturehood (which is never one in all) and assumed it, moreover, in the mode of a spiritual being (which craves for unity). In assuming it he made it his own reality, which remains eternally his own (even in its multiplicity), and yet it is precisely in virtue of this fact that this reality of creaturehood which he has assumed, while still retaining its multiplicity, is redeemed, set free for and drawn abidingly into the indivisible unity of God (this unity, in spite of having taken this creaturely multiplicity into itself still remaining pure and unalloyed). The fact that the creature is not excluded right from the outset from unity as that which is meaningless is due to the prior fact that he *is*, he the incarnate Word of the Father, in whom the Father utters himself totally and indivisibly. Again it is because he *is* in this sense that this multiplicity does not signify something from which man can only flee. God himself has in fact been drawn into the diaspora which the creaturely mode of being represents. Because of this man does not need to lose him when he decides not to depart from this creaturely level, provided only that he takes this situation in which being is diffused and manifold for [219] what it really is, namely as a situation in which this being has, in a true sense, been made one in (though not made one *with*) the incarnate Word of God. Thus the only way in which man can have all in one (he can only have this in the manner that befits the creature) is for him to have him who is both at once: all (the many) and one (the divine). The veneration of the Sacred Heart is intended to be the ultimate act of adoration, in which we adjure the unique and all-comprehending upholder of that reality and that unity that underlies the multiplicity in our religious life. It follows from this that he who has found Jesus Christ is *ipso facto* a venerator of the Sacred Heart in this sense. This is true even though he may not realise it, even though he may not call the Word 'heart'. Only he who understands this can, in all sincerity and truth, overcome the dilemma that either the ancients were not good Christians (on the grounds that they did not – explicitly – venerate the Sacred Heart) *or* the veneration of the Sacred Heart cannot be anything essential to Christianity (since in fact it has not existed right from the beginning of Christianity).

Now, however, this relationship with Jesus Christ has itself once more been subjected to the transforming effects of history. As it develops a whole range of different aspects come to be expressed. It has a history of its own, which advances irresistibly and cannot be reversed (however true it may be at the same time that it is a law of this process of historical development as such that it constantly returns afresh to the origins and sources whence it takes its rise). And for this reason the relationship with Jesus Christ as the unifying medium is itself made subject to the law of inevitable multiplicity. We call him by many names and praise him with many tongues. As the centuries unfold he grows in the spirit and heart of each of us (as in the spirit and heart of the Church herself). He must so grow. And if he grows, in this sense, then so far as the Church herself, her devotions and her theology, are concerned, it is quite inevitable that he should become, once more, in his own person, a vast cosmos of reality and truth, immeasurable and mysterious. And then what is left for the man who simply and humbly accepts his own limitations as a creature, the limitations entailed by the fact that he is in essence complex, and exists in the dimension of history? No other course whatever is still left open to him than to seek once more, on behalf of his own spirit and heart, on behalf of his whole Christian being, for a word to conjure up that unity, a kind of sacred epitomising formula such as will make it possible for him (at least in the here and now) to grasp as a unity that which has been [220] presented to him piecemeal in the history of the Church, her devotion and her theology as the immeasurable fulness of the reality of Christ.

Such key-words do exist, with their power to adjure to epitomise and to unify. In them, in some sense (precisely insofar as this is possible for the creature, which as such can never be

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capable of initiating any act that is not basically complex and multiple) it has been found possible to gather up the all in the one and 'interiorise' it. Such key-words, present in the devotional life of the Church and in theology, can be modified. Any one of them, from being a single unifying key-word, which conjures up everything at one blow, can be broken down into a word signifying some particular aspect of the original whole. And it can never be said of any one word (at least without thereby falling into the pride of supposing that we can transcend our historical limitations) that it remains for all eternity a key-word with this special kind of epitomising power (probably *Logos* was once a word of this kind for John himself in which, in a certain sense, his whole theology was 'epitomised'. Today, however, it has become precisely one key-word in theology among many others; other such words, which may once have had this force, are 'sophia', 'gnosis', 'Son of Man', 'Spirit' as applied to Christ). But woe betide that age which no longer possesses any word imbued with a quasi-magical force of this kind to epitomise all in one! Woe betide that age which no longer has any word which can convey to it the unity which has been achieved in the all through the effects of atonement upon it! In its thoughts and aspirations that age is deformed, confused and divided. Its message (however true it may remain) becomes a discordant babel, because its voices are directed outwards in all directions at once, and are devoid of any unity to bring them into harmony. Now it might be suggested that the words 'God' and 'Jesus Christ' do in fact constitute words precisely of this kind. And indeed, if we view them in the absolute, abstracting from the concrete historical circumstances in which they have been used and developed, and concentrating exclusively upon their essential content, it would be correct to say that precisely in themselves they could be words of this kind. But this would be precisely to overlook the concrete historical situation in which both we and these words (which we here take as representative examples) are placed. Viewed in the light of this they could never be the sort of words that epitomise the content of our faith, our devotion and our theology in all their multiplicity precisely because they themselves belong to the materials which have to be summed up in this way. For the [221] first needs to be filled out with content and the second is so full of meanings and implications which are disunited and unco-ordinated among themselves that it needs to be unified.

Now let us ask ourselves whether there is anywhere in the contemporary Church at all where we can find such a key word as we have been describing, one that is capable of epitomising the fulness of our religion in this way (from what has been said it will be realised that we cannot simply 'discover' it on the grounds that there may be many such words which, in themselves, are capable of this. For this in turn precisely does not imply that we can choose any one we wish, seeing that the lot assigned to us humans in particular is characterised precisely by the factors of the historical, the contingent and the inescapable). The word we seek, then, is one which is truly evocative, and rouses a response in us. At the same time we must be able at least to guess of this word (even before we have used it enough to realise its full richness and depths) that its epitomising force is such as can penetrate to the very centre of our own being. And it is difficult to imagine that we shall be able to find any other word which has this evocative and epitomising force within it except the word 'heart'. Or can anyone suggest another such? Is there anyone who can say, 'only bend your ears in this direction. Here another word has been resounding all along, with its scope and unifying power. Is it not simply that you have hitherto failed to hear it?' The word we are seeking must, of course, be one which names Christ himself as the unifier. For it is in him alone that God is near (and the word of God really achieves a Christian tone and one that comes to our help in our state of elemental need). But it cannot be one that simply expresses this same Christ by means of a proper name. For if the word we seek had no further force beyond this, then, for the majority of the members of the Church in this age in which we live (for our present purposes we need not concern ourselves with other ages, nor do we need to maintain

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that what applies to the majority applies in an apodictic and absolute sense to all) this word itself would need some kind of unifying medium to gather up the whole complex range of distinct meanings which have come to be adduced from this word independently of one another in the course of the history of Christianity. Where then is another word, apart from this word, the 'Sacred Heart', which is capable of designating the Lord as him who brings the one and the all into unity, and which itself in turn unifies and brings into man's interior soul, the fulness of him whom it designates in this sense? There is no other such [222] word. No other word has ever been uttered with this force, except the word 'Sacred Heart'. But this word has been uttered in the prayers of the faithful, sometimes whispered and sometimes cried out on the roof-tops (sometimes, alas, in a way that is certainly indiscreet to the point of being in terrible bad taste! But the love which is offered up in this is not such as can easily be measured by the standards of good taste and discretion), and the Church has taken this word up. She has stated that she herself knows no other word with this particular force. We might argue that this word is only one among many possible alternatives, and that tomorrow another word (educed from the fulness that is in Christ) will come to the fore, one that speaks to our hearts with a message of 'all-in-one', and at the same time, having summed up the fulness that is in Christ in this way, causes it to open up, once more, into its richness and multiplicity. Again, it might be argued that in the promulgations issued by the Church in this present day concerning the veneration of the Sacred Heart no account is taken of the fact indicated here that history has produced a whole list of such words. But all such arguments would do nothing to alter our actual situation. Certainly, as a matter of abstract generalisation, this may be one word among many. But in the concrete here and now *only* the word that stands for the heart of the Lord can be *that* word for which we seek, and which we can also fail to recognise and to hear, or even reject, even though it is there.

This word has the function of adjuring the heart, that which is innermost and unifying, the mystery which defies all analysis, the unspoken law which is more powerful than all man's ability to organise and coordinate, and all the techniques of organisation of which he can avail himself. It has the function of designating that point at which the mystery of man passes into the mystery of God. The infinite emptiness which lies at the innermost centre of man cries out to be filled with the infinite fulness of God. The heart that is adjured in this word is the heart that has been pierced, weighed down by elemental anxiety (*Angst*), drained to its last drop, overcome by death. What is designated in this word is that which signifies a love which is selfless and beyond all conception, the love which is victorious in failure, which triumphs when it has been deprived of its power, raises to life when it has been slain. It is the love that is God. The message proclaimed in this word is that where God is prayed to in the words 'My God why hast thou forsaken me?' there he is close at hand. The one spoken of here is one who exists fully on the physical plane, and [223] yet is all in all, so that we can count his wounds and come to rest weeping tears of blessedness because we have no need to journey further once we have found God. Can it be denied that in this word we discover ourselves anew, our destiny in this present age, and what it means to be a Christian, all this being laid upon us as a burden and a grace at the same time, and committed to us as our mission and task? The special quality of a particular age is, in fact, for the most part not that which is most widely acknowledged (in other words yesterday's opinions which have become common and public), but that which is denied and yet, in spite of this, is laid upon us. But in this present age how could this be anything else than the necessity and the task of having to rediscover that heart anew, and at the same time to bear with our heart with all its loneliness, its darkness and dejection and its elemental anxiety (*Angst*) about God?

What else could we say by way of summing up the whole meaning of our Christian existence except this: that the eternal Word of God, issuing from the heart of the Father, has discovered our hearts, has endured them and keeps them for all eternity.

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If what we have said is correct with regard to the epitomising and unifying force of this key word, which can be said to express the 'sum total' of our devotion (in the words of Pius XI and Pius XII), then two conclusions follow from this: first we must be reverent and therefore sparing in our use of this word, and second we must begin by learning the real significance of a key word of this kind, with its power to epitomise and to adjure.

We must be sparing in our use of it. Before we use it that which it is intended to epitomise and to unify must first be present. This word, therefore, is not to be numbered among the 'rudiments of Christian teaching' (Heb 6:1). For what is undertaken in these initial stages is a survey in all their breadth and fulness of those truths which are subsequently to be drawn together in anunity. And it is necessary to return again and again to this stage of the initial survey because without noticing it we lose sight again and again of those truths which we have already made our own. Again the word 'heart' would be reduced to an empty formula, utterly drained of the meaning and content it once had if we did not constantly renew our search of the scriptures, using our quiet hours to meditate upon, and preaching by word of mouth the truths which the Christian message contains. But in this we cannot always be speaking explicitly about the heart. This word which refers to the heart of Christ retains its [224] force and its unique function only on condition that we have not already used it to excess in a spirit of exaggerated and unbalanced 'pietism' by employing it in all cases in which we have occasion to speak of Jesus Christ. This word should be uttered and invoked by us only in those cases in which we need to refer to the 'heart' of man precisely in the sense of that interior and hidden 'self' (cf. Rom 7:22; 1 Pet 3:4; Eph 3:16 ff.) that is in *him* (in virtue of his unfathomable fulness) and in *us* (in virtue of our emptiness and dissipation of spirit). This cannot be the case on every occasion, however important it may sometimes be (and as it actually was for the Lord himself, who spoke sparingly but at decisive points of our hearts and of his own: Mt 5:8; 11:29; 22:37, etc.).

We must understand the real significance of a word of this kind. For it is not a word merely in the sense of that which gives utterance to a 'concept'. In fact there is a point in every concept at which it becomes open to the infinite, transcends its own limitations, and achieves communication with the All. In fact every word (that is not simply a signal in the merely animal sense) contains undertones and resonances beyond the surface meaning which it is designed explicitly to communicate because it is always, as it were, floating upon a deeper level of meaning which cannot be communicated. But with the majority of words this openness to the incommunicable is not borne in upon us. For the most part they are intended to bring to our notice what can be firmly and clearly grasped in the form of a concept. In the case of the key words,[1] however, the special significance of these is precisely the fact that they are open, and that what they open up to is the inexpressible mystery of God (in our case that God who is the Absolute of inconceivability brought near to us in love). Certainly if these particular words cease to perform this function they can serve simply to express a concept. But precisely as key words in the sense intended here they have died (a more terrible death than the merely physical one). Now they do so die in our spirit when they are heard and uttered simply as concepts. For by taking them in this sense we are utterly failing to understand them in the sense which they are intended to bear for us. It is true that we say of the majority of words which occur in our religious parlance that they refer to a mystery. In uttering these words, however, we may altogether fail to conjure up this mystery, to [225] make it present to ourselves. We may restrict ourselves simply to the surface meaning of the word, discarding and neglecting those deeper levels of meaning which go beyond this, and

[1] On this concept and on the ideas which follow cf. K Rahner, *Theological Investigations* III, '"Behold This Heart" Preliminaries to a Theology of Devotion to the Sacred Heart', pp. 321-330; also 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', pp. 86-90.

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precisely the mystery itself which lies concealed beneath it, and we may consign all this to the realm of that which we have simply failed to understand and to grasp. We may take this attitude to the word instead of allowing *it* to grasp *us* precisely as mystery, because we fail to grasp this level of significance in it. When we refuse to move outwards from the small circle of light represented by the literal meaning of the word into the wider sphere of sacred darkness that lies beyond then we kill the key word, depriving it of its force and reducing it to a mere word which can be used by the profane, the uninitiated and the loveless too (of whom even the ranks of the theologians can furnish abundant examples).

But how can we avoid depriving these key words of their force and killing them? How can we understand them as they must be understood if they are to retain their pristine force? From what has already been said it will be manifest that this cannot be achieved merely by conceptually enriching these words by 'filling' them with conceptual meaning or even with a conceptualised ('as distinct from a real and experiential') 'inconceivability' and 'infinitude'. In order to 'grasp' what has to be done here (this implies that we have not yet actually carried through what we have initially grasped as right, whereas in this context to 'grasp' something consists precisely in the recognition that here acting is the only right way of knowing) we have to bear this in mind: when we contemplate what has been uttered there descends upon us softly and, as it were, unnoticed, that mystery in which the life-force of that unique truth which is the immediate subject of our contemplation consists. But the actual mode in which this mystery is made present to us is not the direct mode in which a proposition is made present that is uttered and so made a subject of discussion. This mystery is made present not in conceptual terms but rather in being touched and stirred into life. What we are treating of here is not a 'feeling' or a movement of the affections in devotion which cannot be controlled, but rather that without which every concept would have to remain cut off in a state of isolation and incommunicability, in which it could no longer be understood. We are treating of that which belongs to the very essence of intellectual knowledge as such, and upholds it in being, of a reference to the inconceivable and inexpressible, which is itself beyond the power of the human intellect to grasp or to objectify, a reference such that the [226] inconceivable and inexpressible itself is silently present in it. Certainly we can also speak of this reference which points us on to and opens us to the mystery itself (in fact we do precisely this!), but, taken as a distinct phenomenon in itself, this reference is not as such present 'conceptually' by being caught in an unusual kind of concept, for *per definitionem* it is originally and primarily such that it is precisely not present in this sense at all. It is present rather in the oblique and implicit mode in which the inconceivable is touched upon in the very act of conceiving of something in the true and ordinary sense. In itself this reference to the inconceivable could be present with sufficient force in all words (for all in fact draw their life-force from it), so that these too could be used with as powerful an effect as those key words which we have been discussing. And perhaps the language of Paradise was of this kind, such that the all-encompassing All reverberated in every word, touching men with its clarity and love. And all our words (in which, for the most part, this reference is suppressed and buried beneath the surface by our frantic and convulsive efforts to cling onto the 'idea clara et distincta') ought, ideally speaking, to experience and to undergo a return, concomitant with our own 'conversion', to that state in which they were brought together in a Paradisal symphony in which each one found its echo in the whole (in the unique Word of God). But even as it is, there are certain words which should approach more closely than the rest to this return to the pristine power of their origins as we ourselves make our personal return. And the word 'heart' is to be numbered among these. Only if [we] understand it in this sense have we understood it as it should be understood in very truth, if it is really to be something more than simply one among the many words which we use in our religious parlance, the words in which mere concepts of the realities referred to are expressed, but

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these realities themselves are not rendered present in the achievement, by the help of grace, of a transcendence that is real and effective.

We have already said that the term 'Sacred Heart' stands for that reality in which the unnameable mystery which we call God is made present to us as compassionate and self-bestowing proximity (instead of as one who withholds himself from us in silence and refuses us). This mystery is made present to us where we are in that which is the *fons et origo* of our earthly being, in the heart. And now we have sought to make a further point over and above this, that we must not merely speak of this heart but understand it too, in such a way that it really can be, for the individual, what it is in [227] itself, that when we utter this word that which it expresses may take place in us; in a word, that when we utter it we may do so with 'understanding' that we may be 'at one' with it. If this word is really and effectively to remain a key word (and only so can it fulfil that epitomising and unifying function of which we have spoken at the outset of these remarks, without which there would be no need either of it or of any special cult of the Sacred Heart) then it must be understood in the manner indicated, i.e. not only as giving expression to a concept, but as containing in its innermost depths that abundance of grace and power which derives from the fact that it has an essential and immediate reference to that mystery in itself to which the word gives a name.

Anyone who finds it difficult to achieve an understanding of what we mean from what has just been said should attempt to approach the matter from a different point of view, and so to arrive at an understanding of it. In any religious concept the reference to God is in reality twofold: first, there is the conceptualisation and objectification of the reality referred to, and second, as that which makes this process possible at all, there is the achievement of transcendence precisely as such, in which we are carried beyond our earthly limitations to God, and so placed in contact with him in this sense as well. In any act of apprehending which takes place in the 'light of faith' and by the power of grace this twofold reference to God achieves a special potency. That which is objectified in conceptual terms is present as something that is given by external revelation in the *fides ex auditu* of the subject, but at the same time this same reality is also present in the state of being raised to supernatural heights of transcendence, a quality which does not merely make this transcendence a transcendence of being in general, but also imparts a basic orientation to the spiritual dynamism which is in man, which ultimately raises it to the *visio beata*, at the same time (as *gratia increata*) actually imparting the reality of what is believed to man. The transcendence which man achieves, spiritually and 'pneumatically' exalted in this way, does not constitute an object for investigation in itself, but neither does this mean that man is simply unconscious of it. It is not simply the mere mechanism of a spiritual or non-spiritual process. Man has a non-objectified awareness of it as that which is concomitant with his objectifying concept, as that which renders present, intimately and silently, that inexpressible 'something more' which accompanies any religious concept, and without which it cannot truly be such at all. Who can seriously dispute the fact that in a genuinely religious [228] act this 'something more' really is present (as something of which man is concomitantly aware even if it cannot in any immediate sense be the object of his speculation)? No-one can dispute this who has achieved a sound grasp of what is meant in the Thomist metaphysic of knowledge by the *lumen intellectuale* and the *objectum formale* of the mind; no-one who in theology has achieved any understanding of that formal object which is present in every act that is raised to a supernatural level, and only in such an act, in virtue of the very fact that it has thus been raised to a supernatural plane of reality. No-one can deny it who takes seriously the teaching of scripture concerning the anointing by the Holy Spirit which teaches us all things, or concerning the 'sighs too deep for words' of the Spirit, which has been given to us as the Spirit of God which penetrates all things. But this 'something more', this silent openness to and reference to that which is meant, which is achieved in the very process of positing the act

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itself (and not simply in the object to which it is directed) can grow, can impress itself upon us more clearly and forcefully, and be received at a deeper and more 'existential' level. When we speak of a spiritual consolation which takes place at the highest point of the spirit in faith, hope and love, what we mean by this is this awareness of what is being referred to here, which is at once more exalted and deeper and, existentially speaking, 'more radical' than knowledge in the more direct sense. It is in this awareness that we should now utter the word 'Sacred Heart'. In the light of this awareness it must then become clearer to us that in a true sense all statements about religion (when they are really true and genuine) have to be made on the basis of this achieved awareness. Only in this way can we ensure that the word that stands for the Sacred Heart is not reduced to one among the many other words which we use in our everyday religious parlance. We can use this word only sparingly. We should use it only when we wish consciously to advert to, as a distinct entity in itself, and interiorly to unify with the rest of our religious knowledge, that 'something more' which is present in what we say when we speak of God's grace and compassion in Christ. And when we do use the 'word' 'Sacred Heart' in this sense, speaking of it hesitantly and softly, then we must speak it in such a way that the word thus sparingly used may be 'understood' in this especially exalted sense; this is the sense in which we shall learn to understand all the words of faith only when the eternal light shines upon us with all its brilliance unimpeded.

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[229]

12

UNITY – LOVE – MYSTERY

Our intention in the three considerations which follow is to attempt to discuss certain implications which are contained in the veneration of the Sacred Heart. At first it may appear that these points which we are discussing are at an extremely theoretical level. But it may perhaps be shown in the end that our reflections upon them here bring to light certain relevant factors, the significance and importance of which are not confined merely to the scientific and theological levels, but are above all religious. The first implication latent in this devotion is that of unity.

Unity

1. In reality the veneration of the Sacred Heart does not represent an attempt at concentrating the whole of Christian devotion and the whole fulness of what it means to be a Christian into this veneration of the heart of Christ, or of erecting this veneration into a structure capable of subsuming and integrating everything which Christian devotion contains within itself. This is something that certain devout but unenlightened and over-zealous practitioners of this devotion have already often attempted to do either explicitly or implicitly. It is false, and can only, in the long run, be damaging to Christianity as a whole and also to this devotion in itself. Christianity is more than devotion to the Sacred Heart. But on the other hand it is nonetheless evident that this devotion is not simply one among many others on an equal footing, such as devotion to St Joseph or even to Our Lady, or even to realities which are, in some sense, still more sublime and more central in the world of our faith, which is still, so far as we are concerned, made up of many factors, as, for instance, the Blessed Sacrament itself. According to Pius XI and Pius XII devotion to the Sacred Heart can in some sense be called the ‘summa religionis’. The object of this devotion constitutes the ultimate and innermost centre, the [230] ultimate reality from which everything else draws its light, in which everything else is, in a certain sense, united and held together. It constitutes anunity.

For the moment we mention the term ‘heart’, even in quite general terms, and even apart from the religious dimension in the true sense and the language pertaining to this, we are referring not to one factor among many others, nor even simply to all things in their diversity as drawn together into a subsequent unity. We are referring rather to an interior centre from which the diversification of human reality is unfolded, and in which this diversification, which also belongs to the very nature of man, remains united. It is constantly streaming out from this centre and flowing back into it. At the same time when it allows this multiplicity to flow from it this centre reveals itself, while, when it draws everything back again into its unfathomable depths it becomes veiled. And in fact it is the same with the word ‘heart’ as used in the devotion of the Sacred Heart. When we use this term we are referring to, and calling upon, this one unifying centre of the complex reality of the Son of Man in all its unfathomable depths. We are referring to its ultimate meaning and its immeasurable mystery. Once we have understood the devotion to the Sacred Heart in this sense two points become clear: on the one hand it is neither intended to, nor capable of, embracing the whole of Christianity as developed in all its manifold aspects; on the other hand it is not in itself simply on the same level as any other object of devotion among the manifold realities towards which an act of Christian religion can and should be directed. In virtue of the

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incarnational structure of Christianity these realities must be manifold, even though any act of this kind is always aimed at God himself who is all in all, and at him alone. Thus it should surely be recognised that the problem of unity implicit in this devotion has not merely been posed as a genuine religious question with a significance that is 'existential' in these present times, but also, rightly understood, has been solved. It is this question and the answer to it that we now propose to spend a little time in considering.

2. Unity – a question that is age-old, obscure, painful and at the same time blessed! We wander through a complex and manifold world. Right from the outset, if we realise our true selves, we have constantly been exposed to this. We are never in the situation of possessing all in an One. And yet we can never be satisfied with any such One which is not at the same time All. We are ourselves made up of a whole range of complex [231] factors. In our make-up there is spirit and flesh, an interior and an exterior, happiness and pain. We can never stop at any given point in our development. There is nothing that we can simply grasp and hold, and which at the same time stands revealed as the One and All, the sole factor of importance in our lives. And yet we still continue to seek for that unity which is not emptiness, not abstract, not the sort of unity which an abstract concept has, anunity which achieves the power to comprehend and embrace all things only at the expense of a disembodied emptiness with regard to its content. We seek for that unity which is fulness, because we neither can nor will be driven onwards into the indeterminate and the unknown. Also because even though reality as we know it is so diffuse and complex there is still so much unity in it, so much mutual interrelationship, mysterious harmony, mutual attraction of one thing to another, that it is quite impossible for us to do anything else than to search for this unity which consists in the fulness of all things, and this fulness of all things which comprises a unity – that unity which encompasses and covers all things. We do this because we *are* this act of seeking. Because even the encounter with the manifold and the complex as such, the act of consciously and deliberately distinguishing each individual thing as other from the rest – all this would never be possible if the very roots of our being were not constituted by the premonition of the unity that exists as an infinite goal and the all-embracing sense of the many which is ours in the power and light of our love for unity. But we, the finite, cannot hope to attain to this unity of inexpressible fulness by a process of transcending or compressing the diffusion and complexity in which reality is made present to us. We would fall into the darkness and silence of a lethal solitude if, wearied by this complexity, or despairing of it, we sought to attain the unity we desire in a manner which is neither possible nor fitting for a creature, striving to grasp at it in itself alone as it is beyond all multiplicity, and to hold it to ourselves by force.

The pain we experience, then, is one of tension. There is anunity that we seek, one which, in a certain sense, we have already grasped by anticipation, and one to which the very multiplicity all about us points us on. Yet this unity can never be possessed by itself alone. For just as we withdraw into this unity we must perforce turn back again and go forth into the multiplicity which belongs to the very mode of our existence. And the painful tension which this involves mounts to a climax of need precisely in our specifically religious acts. What a multiplicity and complexity [232] of religious practices is to be found in the life of the Church! How numerous are her sacraments and her devotions also! How incalculable is the host of her saints! While the process by which her teaching has been explicitated in thousand upon thousand of individual doctrines is almost bewildering! How manifold too are the methods and ways of the religious life which are recommended, praised and even required by the Church! The nature of Christianity is in itself simple, but it has been developed and diffused into a whole of such complexity that it demands too much of the individual to calculate or comprehend. And yet if our spirit is awake and alive we cannot simply confine ourselves to a modesty and naïveté of outlook that is *petit-bourgeois*, selecting this and that

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factor in Christianity which we may happen to have encountered, and being quite comfortable and content to leave the rest to itself. At the same time we cannot achieve an outlook that embraces the whole either, seeing it in its sheer essential interior structure. And there is a further truth that is the converse of this: again and again in the life of the Church and her Spirit there suddenly flames up a mystical movement such as that of John of the Cross which takes the form of an ardent longing for an ultimate unity in which all the different ways of living Christianity, and all the complexities are swept away, and all is resolved in a mysticism in which there are no 'ways', and which is dark and mysterious in character. This takes place in all movements which embody the quest for simplicity and directness our way of living our religion, or which aim at the classic equilibrium and concentration upon the one essential.

3. But how are we to find the unity in the midst of this incalculable fulness? And how are we to find the fulness which this unity embraces? How, above all, are we to achieve this in the living of our religion? We invoke the experience of our own hearts and look to the heart of Christ. If we accept the message of our own heart with faith and love, if we entrust ourselves to that inconceivable heart and centre of all things which we call the Sacred Heart, then we have all along been experiencing something of the true solution to this problem. If there were no original unity prior to all problems of how to reconcile unity with complexity and multiplicity of content in a given whole, and if in that which we call our own heart we were not already disposed to unity by God himself then any attempt at such a reconciliation would be from the very outset futile. We would either lose ourselves in the multiplicity or stick fast at the unity. But because there is this heart created by God himself, because man already [233] possesses a unity bestowed upon him right from the outset, therefore he can proceed from this into the complexity and multiplicity without losing himself in it. He can gather up himself and the world together into a basic and radical unity without either losing himself or sticking fast in this sense – always provided that he commits himself to that unity of absolute fulness which we call God, always provided that this unity which is not man himself, yet without which he cannot exist, receives him by grace into proximity to itself, always provided too that (only one word more!) we have been drawn into the protecting love of Christ, which in his heart is real, close at hand, filled with blessings and single. And this is in fact the case. The unity by which we can really live is not the abstract or creaturely unity of the idea, or the unifying basis of our own nature, but rather the 'superessential' unity which by grace becomes more interior to us than the unity of our own being, and which, nevertheless, is not our own. It is a unity to which we have to commit ourselves because it has been bestowed upon us in grace. In this unity which is full of content, therefore, the conflict which takes place within our own being between diffusion and compression, extroversion and introversion – both taken in an extremely broad metaphysical sense – is reconciled without thereby disappearing altogether. But it is because this unity is so interior to our own being that it is anunity which has been bestowed in grace, which has been received, which must be 'blindly' presupposed, which is not at our disposal. It is anunity which we cannot discard in favour of any one specific individual factor which we choose to take as absolute, i.e. as an unifying centre in defiance of the facts regarding its true constitution.

All this has been put somewhat abstractly. Nevertheless it has a great significance for religion, and specifically for the practice of religion in one's life.

(a) This is because it has a message for us as the superessential unity bestowed upon us in Christ, never left to us to achieve for ourselves, but rather imposing itself upon us from without, and brought close to us in that reality which we call the Sacred Heart. And this is the message which it brings: Go out into the multiplicity and complexity which is yours by nature, and do not fear it. Have trust in the incalculable factors of your life with all its complexities with wisdom and foresight indeed, but with courage and trust as well. As an old

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mystic has put it, you cannot achieve total proficiency in a single exercise. Your heart must go out into the manifold even in the sphere of your religious practices. Do not be too [234] ready to fear that you will lose yourself in this complexity. If you only take to yourself genuinely and whole-heartedly each individual factor, however small, as it comes (Goethe was wise enough to recognise this truth), then you will arrive at the whole, because it is precisely the whole that is inherent in every one of these individual factors, because it is a whole that is the outcome of that which constitutes the unity of them all as such and the mystery which lies at its heart is in turn constituted by the innermost depths of the divine nature itself, which is also the superessential basis of your unity. Do not close in upon yourself too much. You must open yourself and so come to the fulness that you need. Otherwise it may happen that you stick fast within the confines of too much self-mastery, too tight a hold on yourself, too much self-examination. Go forth from the heart and centre of your own being in order that you may find your own heart. This in itself will be the unity underlying the multiplicity. The only way in which it can come home to itself is through the broad spontaneous adventure of living.

(b) But this unity which is bestowed upon us in the heart of Christ, and which has its real and effective symbol in that heart, also brings to us another message, which is the counterpart of the first: Return! Do not let yourself be poured away! Have the courage to return even if you seem to be the poorer for so doing, even if in doing so much seems to escape you, even if the heart and centre to which you return seems to be the dark and lifeless cavity of the grave, silent and empty, dead and death-dealing. Only if you have learnt this through practice, if you can be alone, if you have learnt to be silent, to renounce, to let things go, to be poor, only then can you also find the unity underlying the multiplicity. Only if this centre, this unity that draws all to itself which we call the heart, is actually pierced through and seems to be poured out into a terrible void in futile love for another, only then can you find that unity that can truly be called so; only then will it be bestowed upon you by God without any merit on your part.

(c) And now we seem to have returned to the position that we cannot bring the manifold and the complex into anunity until we have practised how to go forth in trust into the multiplicity, and how to gather up all into anunity in the centre of our hearts. In truth there is no formula to tell us how to harmonise and regulate this twofold movement outwards and inwards, the unity deriving from the single common basis, and the multiplicity that issues from this same basis. There is no formula to enable us [235] to achieve this unification, but nevertheless it has been achieved not by God, not as our work but as his grace, not in our hearts but in the heart of Christ. We know that our life must consist in putting both movements into practice, the outward and the inward. We must constantly be initiating the one movement for the sake of the other, in a continuous process of ingress and egress, without remaining fixed in either state. But the unity between these two outward and inward movements that we practise is something that we do not grasp in conceptual terms at all. It is hidden in God, in his providential control of things and in his love; it can be accepted by us only as unseen, as the divine mystery of our existence. We shall arrive; in all our wanderings we are aiming straight at the centre of the target, if only we are patient in our dealings with one another, because this is our life. If only we look to the unity which God himself bestows upon us, regarding it as the unity which is his alone to achieve and to control; it is anunity which remains hidden from us yet of which, at the same time, we are aware, recognising in faith, hope and love that it is the unity which love itself achieves and directs – which indeed love *is*. All this we recognise when we turn our eyes to the Sacred Heart.

Love

The second implicit factor which we wish to spend some little time in considering in these

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theological meditations of ours on the deeper meaning of the festival of the Sacred Heart is one that is in a true sense self-evident – that of love. The veneration of the Sacred Heart is, in fact, precisely a devotion to that love of God which has been made present to us in Christ Jesus our Lord, crucified and risen from the dead. For this reason it might be thought that of all the factors implicit in this devotion this one comes nearest to being explicit and on the surface, and therefore that no special effort of consideration and examination is needed in order to appreciate its significance. But this impression is dispelled the moment we advert to the fact that what is expressed in this word love is the mystery of reality as such, that in effect there is nothing less capable of comprehension than the reality which is designated by this overworked, hackneyed and degraded word, and which, according to scripture and tradition has to be so designated. Once we realise this then we find it easy to recognise that we need constantly to renew our efforts at finding an explanation in order to understand the element in this devotion which seems to be so completely obvious and clear to all.

[236] 1. First this devotion tells us that love is the very basis of our existence. When we speak of the heart then we are expressing that which is the centre, basis, origin and original unity prior to all multiplicity, which provides all existence with its goal, and constitutes a mutual interrelationship between all beings. And when we speak of the heart of Christ, then we are speaking of that particular origin and goal, that particular basis and centre, from which all that is complex and multiple draws its strength. It is that reality which on the one hand belongs wholly to God as the ultimate and absolute upholder of all things, and on the other has 'externalised' itself and indeed emptied itself in order to enter into the 'otherness' of non-divine being. As the outcome of this movement on God's part outwards from his own fulness into the empty void of the world, created beings have arisen and multiplicity has been initiated, and now these depend for their unity, their basic support and the power to achieve goal upon this centre, itself now existing in a creaturely mode. And when we speak of this centre of the Sacred Heart then we are saying that this supreme Being, who upholds the reality of ourselves, the world we live in and our very existence, and who has himself assumed a 'this-worldly' mode, is he who also sustains the reality of love in all its unfathomable depths. Moreover, the mystery contained in this statement is one which is absolutely beyond all human comprehension. Let us pause for a moment in our consideration of this truth. Withdrawing within the depths of our own hearts let us try to let the secret essence that pervades the world, nature and the history of these, as well as humanity and its history, silently distil itself there. Of course, we shall not come anywhere near to succeeding in this, but still let us try! Some intimation may, perhaps, be aroused in our hearts of the element of dumb self-obtuseness which is to be discerned in nature at the purely material level. It is so dead, so dominated by brute force, so alienated from itself! Our hearts may perhaps, be impressed with something of the unrestrained prodigality of living nature, its cruelty, the life and death struggle taking place within it, the way in which life springs up rank and luxuriant from the decay of death; the seemingly meaningless phenomenon of constant fresh mutations of form springing up within it in an apparently endless succession, the way in which the interests of the individual are constantly and brutally subordinated to those of the species, the wild and lustful extravagance – so at least it seems – of the processes of generation, the reckless waste that there is in nature, the evolving processes within it which seem blind to their [237] own goal – all this may impress itself upon us. Then let us only turn to the history of mankind, the history of the mind and spirit which is almost powerless as it is forced to contemplate this cruel, blind and stupefying world of matter and of *bios*. Then we may open our hearts to some degree to all the anguish of guilt, of death, of futility, which mankind has added on its own account throughout a million years of human history, that history which has been so blind to its own goal, which has seemed to stagnate in a state of meaninglessness that is agonising. We might open our hearts to the miseries of slaves, of the

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dying, of those who have been duped, of children who have been tormented and violated. We may consider the loves that have been dishonoured, the ideals that have been betrayed, the trust that has been broken. And then our hearts may be so crushed with horror and despair, may feel that their own basic dignity has been dealt a mortal blow to the point where it feels that what little joy and love, faithfulness and blessedness is to be found in this sewer of world-history and human history does not make the sum total of the world and mankind better, but only more terrible still, because there seems to be just enough meaning in the world to make us able to feel the prevailing meaninglessness in all its deathly pain. And when we experience all this then let us look to the Sacred Heart pierced by the lance and say to ourselves: 'The basis of all reality is love.' Let us say to ourselves: 'It is from this source alone that there streams out all this incomprehensible reality, with its multiplicity, its contradictions, its agonies, its endless journeys to unknown goals, together with its blind alleys, its struggles and deaths, its darkness, its total incomprehensibility.' Let us not forget that when we speak of the Sacred Heart then we are not merely saying: 'Somewhere in the world there is a heart which has felt love and has suffered.' We are not merely making a statement at the 'categorical' and 'this-worldly' level about one particular heart among others. On the contrary this statement of ours is on the 'transcendental' plane, if we may so express it. For what we are asserting is that each and all of the beings in the world stem from this one source, and this one *fons et origo* which comprehends all things, makes room for all things, judges all things and illumines all things, this original unity, we say, is love. And in making this statement about the heart of the Lord we are almost saying more – if we may be permitted so to express it – than if we simply said that there is a God who is in himself light, blessed simplicity and love. For in making this statement we are not merely saying that above this darkness of incomprehensibility there [238] exists this luminous and blessed unity which possesses itself in love. We are saying that this blessed and luminous upholder of all things in being has, by his creative act, not merely allowed all this dark chaos of the world to spring up from him in all its recalcitrant multiplicity, but that he has taken this anguished and loveless incomprehensibility to his own heart, has himself assumed it as his own reality, has allowed his own heart to fall into the dark abyss of the world, has inserted his own heart into the lethal void of non-divine being, to exist there as the true source of all this reality that is in the world apart from God. When we hold fast to this truth unto death, standing firm despite all disappointments, clinging to it even as we fall into the abyss of death, that state in which our own hearts are pierced through and drained of their life-blood, then we are made blessed – otherwise not. It is not so easy to understand the truth that underlies the veneration of the Sacred Heart.

2. Love, then, is the well-spring, the sole and unique source of all that reality which we experience with such incomprehension. And if this is the case then it follows *ipso facto* that love itself is every bit as mysterious as that which issues from it, every bit as mysterious as that infinite fulness must necessarily be which is the origin of all that constitutes the world and being. In the devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore, there is an act of veneration of, and an act of formal invocation addressed to, a mystery. But this invocatory formula is not really one in the true sense at all because in it man does not exercise any power of his own, but, if he grasps its significance aright, i.e. if he is himself grasped by it, is rather made subject to the power of another. Let us never forget, when we speak of love, that – if we like to formulate the matter in somewhat metaphysical terms – spirit, the state of being that is self-cognizant, freedom, love and everything which follows from such concepts are 'transcendental' concepts, i.e. they stand for realities which cannot be explained in terms of other realities. The knowledge of them cannot be progressively built up from some other and better known entity. They are not deducible from anything else. Rather they must be understood right from the very first, from the first moment that we decide to speak of them

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and to bring the awareness of them home to ourselves or to others. Concepts of this kind, therefore, are also inexhaustible concepts. They cannot, in any true sense, be limited or circumscribed. Once we have attained to them in some way or at some point they initiate an infinite movement, only gradually filling themselves out with their true meaning, which increases immeasurably in depth [239] through the experience of life, through the grace of God and finally through the immediacy of our relationship with God. In all this these transcendental concepts continue to exist precisely as mere concepts and as a mere 'transcendentalising' experience of our own personal orientation to the infinite mystery. But the process continues until they so to say break out of these limitations and become something more than mere concepts and a mere experience. They do this in virtue of the content implanted in them right from the very first by grace, that content in which their ultimate significance consists, and which is nothing less than the ineffable reality of God himself, and of his world as permeated with himself. And in this way this reality is made present to us no longer in terms of the concepts appropriate to it but directly and in itself. Now among 'concepts' of this sort, in which we are grasped and overpowered in the very act of grasping them, i.e. allowing ourselves to be grasped by them, is to be numbered love – love, that is to say, not merely existing as an abstract concept made explicit in words, but love as it is in itself, even though initially we have only an incipient understanding of it, experiencing it and grasping it merely as promise. The only way in which we can be totally seized and encompassed by this love is for it to unite us with everything, for us to identify ourselves with everything by 'understanding' it, taking the world wholly to our hearts in all its incalculable greatness, all its inconceivable terrors and sufferings; finally for us to ensure that nothing pertaining to this world and its history remains any longer 'alien' to us, that there is nothing that still remains outside our existence, dead to us because we have failed to understand it. And if we understand love as the absolute and integrating power of a process latent in existence that is moving towards the unification of that which is multiple and complex in blessedness, then how inexpressibly far from their own true consummation our lives must seem to us! How very little we can already have understood and actually have achieved of a love of this kind! Considered as that in which our own ultimate fulness will be achieved, love will still be a mystery, because it is only if it is united with the incomprehensibility of God himself. Only if we direct our gaze to the heart of Christ, therefore, do we know what love is: the mystery of the world, the overcoming of the terrors which are in the world, that which unifies and embraces, that which transforms, that which liberates and is tender, that which is only realized in its fulness when the one who loves makes a total surrender of everything pertaining to the movement of his own personal history towards its [240] fulfilment. This is achieved when this love of his is pierced through and silently pours out its heart's blood into the futility of the world, and thereby conquers it. It is this that is described and conjured up in the supreme canticle to love of St Paul: patient and kind, without envy, not puffed up, not pretentious, not passionately attached to its own prejudices, not vexed, not vindictive, devoid of envy, rejoicing in the truth, always ready gently to excuse, believing all things, hoping all things and enduring all things. There is really no word capable of describing this love, because there is nothing else like it which we could use as an external standard in order to define it, also because it is, in itself, the unifying and absolutely original essence of all reality, and therefore there is nothing apart from it except emptiness and nothingness. For it has been written: 'But God is love', and in these two words man finds two different ways of expressing the single infinite mystery of his own existence.

3. One reflection of this unfathomable love still remains to be mentioned in its own right, that of joy. We Christians must be the blessed ones, those who smile, those from whom the light of their redemption radiates out, those who have been redeemed, those who have been liberated, those who know that the kingdom of God and the fruits of the Spirit signify,

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amongst other things, that joy which is the wondrous radiance of love itself. What a pity that we should so often be the joyless ones, the morose, those who go forward groaning beneath the burden of the law, the yoke and burden of which seem anything but sweet and light to us! What a pity that we should proceed as those who are under an unbearable strain, those who either have a bad conscience on account of the discrepancy in their lives between the letter of the law on the one hand and the actual shape their life assumes on the other, or else recompence themselves for their adherence to the letter of the law by indulging in a loveless zeal and an attitude of harsh bigotry towards others! If only we had love we would actually be filled with joy because love alone makes bearable that law which it alone can interpret and apply in the glorious freedom of being children of God, far from all servility to the letter of the law; and yet at the same time love does not misuse this freedom or pervert it into an egoism which seems to be attractive but is in reality slavery. If only we had love, that love which takes away pain, and in which we could fearlessly suffer our hearts to be pierced through, then we would be joyful with that joy which proceeds from God and streams from the Sacred Heart pierced by the lance. Then we would have the joy of those who [241] overcome, then our witness would be credible, then others would be able to recognise in us that we did indeed proclaim the *euangelion*, the good tidings which sound so different from the talk that goes on in the streets of the world, for this is intended to abolish pain, incomprehensibility and death. Then we would be those whose joy no man can take away, those to whom that joy is given which is at the same time the truth of death and of renunciation. But in order to be able to have this joy we must love. We must commit ourselves to the mysterious adventure of love, which only he who looks upon the heart of Christ can guess at.

Mystery

The third point which we wish to consider from among the factors implicit in the veneration of the Sacred Heart is that of mystery. Here some repetition of what has already been said is inevitable. This, however, will do no harm. True religion really begins at that point at which we have the courage to face up to that which is always the same, precisely to that mystery which comprehends all things and envelops all things. In the nature of the case this is necessarily one and single. It is the basis and the end of all religion, adoration and love, gathering up all things in love within its own unity. It cannot therefore be matter for blame that we are speaking once more of points which have already engaged our attention.

1. What has the heart to do with mystery? This is the first question that might be asked. The original and primary connotation of heart is unity, is source. The term ‘heart’ stands for that which expresses itself and yet is always in possession of itself. Heart conjures up the idea of that which is prior to all else, and yet which can only be understood in that which it suffers to spring up and come to bloom, to develop and unfold from within it. Heart connotes the origin of things, which must lead on to that which is beyond itself in order to realise its own nature, and at the same time that which, in all its self-expression and self-discovery, remains the eternally fresh and unquenchable source which is never spent, never becomes empty, and therefore remains ever surprising, ever new – in brief the mystery that is eternally youthful. Whatever aspect we have in mind when we speak of heart, it can only be termed a mystery in a derivative sense. We can only call it so when we have already assigned its causes, found a way of expressing it to ourselves, been able to point to that which went before it. And then *ipso facto* it is no longer simply the source without origins which is eternally inexhaustible and in that sense an absolute [242] mystery. And yet for all this we can only call something ‘heart’ in the true sense if it has some element in it precisely of this unattainability, which belongs to that which is eternally inexhaustible and without origin, something of the quality of fatherhood, in that it belongs inalienably to the particular individual and can never be

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transferred to another. We can only apply the term 'heart' to something in the true sense insofar as it has these qualities in it. For this very reason the Fathers have in fact long since pointed out that the Word issued from the heart of the Father. In fact when we use the term 'heart' we mean something original which is inexhaustible in itself, and never drained of its contents, so that when we look into it our gaze can never penetrate to an empty void within. It is something that realises its own nature in the unlimited fruitfulness of its thoughts and deeds, the manner in which it is expressed and presented to the outside world. And yet at the same time in all this its depths are never plumbed. It is never ultimately laid bare or reduced to its constituent elements. In brief it is, and remains, mystery because it is everything and, in a true sense – in that it is altogether itself and to the extent that it is heart – has no norm beyond itself by which it can be defined and regulated. It is not for nothing that we speak of the heart's secrets. It is not for nothing that we say of the all-knowing God that he alone knows the heart of man. It is not for nothing that we praise knowledge in its most exalted form by saying that it is the heart's own message, and it is no random choice of words that leads us to speak of the 'depths' of the heart. The heart would never be understood in its own unique truth if it were not conceived of as a mystery *par excellence*.

2. When, therefore, we look to this heart that is the Lord's, we are looking at the sign of that mystery which dominates and encompasses our whole life. There would be no heart if the heart of the Lord were not already there as that which is prior to all others, that which remains for ever mysterious, if it were not for this mystery that lies at the very roots of reality as such. And to that extent this heart points us on to the mystery of God himself. It is not only the human heart of God's eternal Logos, who is the inconceivable mystery of God himself precisely because God is *the* mystery *par excellence*. It is a symbol of mystery as such, and therefore, too, of the mystery of the eternal Godhead. We theologians do in fact say, in some corner or other of our system of dogmatics (only swiftly to forget it once more!), that God still continues to be he who is inconceivable even in the immediacy of the beatific vision. But for the most part [243] we interpret this statement to ourselves merely as a statement of the fact that this vision, since it pertains to finite creatures, must still, in spite of its immediacy, be itself finite and so imperfect. For the most part we fail to understand that when we speak of the inconceivability of God even in the immediacy of the beatific vision we are speaking precisely of the true and proper content of this vision and that inner reality at its centre which constitutes it as blessed, because God is only seen as God when he is viewed in his inconceivability, because everything that we grasp about him (in virtue of the fact that we are grasped by him) only appears as divine in the true sense that is proper to it when it extends outwards and onwards into that blessed obscurity which alone constitutes the true day, when in the very act of grasping the divine and being grasped by it, it is experienced as the inconceivable, and this inconceivability is not that in God which we leave aside in our contemplation of him, but rather the very object of our awe, the very quality which we call blessed and surrender ourselves to in love. But for the most part we forget all this, and as theologians we are actually in grave danger of supposing that theology is an unveiling of God in the sense of a breaking down of his inconceivability (even if we recognise that we can only achieve this to a limited extent). We like to feel ourselves to be those admitted to God's secret counsel, distinguished from other people in virtue of the fact that we have grasped more about God, whereas in reality the true theologians are those who have understood better than other men that God is inconceivable. For the most part we call to mind the mystery of God only when we have become confused in our own processes of reasoning, instead of understanding theology as an initiation into the mystery of God and as the systematic breaking down of all our over-hasty conceptions of God, so that he rises more and more above us who are finite and limited. Rises above us, I say. No! – vanishes altogether, rather, standing revealed as the one true God for whom no image of God can ever be a substitute, as

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the God who is close to us in love precisely as he who is inconceivable, and who has so generously bestowed himself upon us in Jesus Christ and in his Spirit. The heart of the Lord points us on to this supreme mystery of the divine. As the sum total of our religion, the message of this heart to us is: the ultimate basis of our whole existence is mystery. Mystery is not merely a contributing factor in our existence as pilgrims here below, it is the final and definitive factor. This mystery precisely in itself, and in its inconceivability, is what is ultimately true and real in our existence. When [244] the ultimate and definitive truth shines out unveiled, and is no longer viewed in reflected images and likenesses, then this *aletheia*, which will then have been disclosed, will be the nearness of the mystery itself. This will not be by-passed. On the contrary it will have been made quite impossible to by-pass or evade it. The concept does not yield place to an empty transparency in that which we perceive, but rather to the state of being seized and possessed by truth. And blessedness consists not in the fact that what we see in the beatific vision is forcibly divested of its mystery. On the contrary it consists in the mystery itself as such. The mystery itself is beatitude because man, provided he accepts his true nature in all humility and love, achieves a blessed and loving harmony with the fact that God is all in all and is the Mystery *par excellence*. And this state of being encompassed by the mystery is even here below the ultimate fulfilment of his existence. Properly speaking, nothing is surer or more obvious to us than the state of silent questioning which extends beyond all that we can call in question and all that we can dominate and control, the state of being faced with questions that are too much for us, and accepting this in humility and love. It is this alone that makes man wise. Man knows nothing in the ultimate depths of his own nature more precisely than this: that his knowledge (both at the everyday level and in scientific disciplines) is only a tiny island in a boundless ocean of that which he has never experienced. He knows, therefore, that the existential question confronting every individual who has knowledge in his own particular concrete circumstances is the question of which he loves most, the tiny island of so-called-knowledge or the ocean of infinite mystery; whether he concedes that in a true sense the mystery is the sole factor which is self-evident and self-explanatory, or whether, according to him, the tiny light with which he illumines this little island of his (this little torch he calls science) is his eternal light which is destined to illumine him forever – Oh what a hell it would be if it were so! The meaning of existence, or the elemental question which it represents for us, is this: whether we learn not merely to regard the mystery as imposing limitations and restrictions upon our being and life, but rather to achieve that positive relationship with the mystery as such in which we accept it, believe in it, love it and adore it, and so achieve blessing. He who does not love the mystery does not know God. His gaze constantly wanders from him, the real and true God, and he adores the image of him that has been made according to our measure and standard instead of God's own. When we [245] direct our gaze to the heart of Christ this can teach us how lovingly to surrender our whole being to the mystery which endures, which from its own depths upholds us in being, which is the love that is beyond all conception, which bears us and, by withdrawing us from the acts of our own self-will and so from ourselves, draws us to our own true blessedness.

3. In yet another quite special respect the Sacred Heart points us on to the mystery of our own existence. God is the mystery *par excellence* not merely *in himself* but also inasmuch as he freely disposes of us as he wills. This is true inasmuch as the exercise of our own personal freedom in the activities of our lives, the innermost and ultimate decision of our whole existence which derives from this freedom of ours is in its turn encompassed, maintained and determined by the freedom of God. And this divine freedom is beyond us and beyond our powers of cognition, hidden in the silent depths of God himself, so that we are ourselves in turn hidden from ourselves precisely at that point at which we are most of all ourselves, in the autonomous and wholly inalienable decision of our own personal freedom. We are aware of

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ourselves, we are thrown upon ourselves and left to ourselves. There is a point in the radiant centre of our existence, even if it is one that is not susceptible of subsequent speculation upon our part, at which we and our own self-knowledge are identical, one and the same. And precisely this point is one which cannot be subjected to our own reflexive thought. We cannot clearly objectify it or define it in any explicit terms. Nor can it be shared with others, and again we cannot check or control it. And so we are ourselves a mystery which remains hidden in the mystery of God. The teaching of the Church herself is relevant here, when she reacts against the doubts of the new age and the strivings for self-knowledge which also constituted a potent force in the Protestant doctrine of the certainty of salvation. The Church is reacting here against the attempts at achieving a self-possession that is conscious and absolute. And she tells us that on the contrary we do not know with absolute certainty whether we are in God's grace, and further whether we have attained final salvation. Certainly this is a factor which does not carry much positive weight in the average Christian life of our times, in which there is so little understanding for those experiences of fear and hesitation and incessant questioning which belong to an Augustine, an Ignatius of Loyola, a Francis of Sales and many others, and also to Luther and Calvin and other representatives of the spirit of the Reformation with regard to the question of salvation: Am I one of the elect? [246] Shall I find salvation? Does God love me with that true, powerful and effective love which signifies and assures salvation for me, sustaining the elemental assent which of my freedom I yield up to God? When man is brought face to face with himself in his innermost depths he arrives in the ultimate state in which he feels himself existentially threatened, troubled, uncertain, overwhelmed by questions which have to be answered, yet which are beyond his powers to answer, those questions, namely, entailed in the basic uncertainty as to what the answer is to the question of the individual's own salvation. And then man notices that he himself is, in his ultimate depths, a mystery, and still remains a mystery even though it constitutes the heart and centre of his being with all its limitations. He notices that as a mystery in this sense he is delivered up to God, the Mystery *par excellence*, and that he can only do one thing: no longer restrict himself to the faint light of his own reasoning powers and so direct his efforts towards his own salvation rather than to God himself (as though we could achieve a greater certainty of this on our own without God than by letting ourselves fall into the mystery of his predestination), but on the contrary surrender himself to God unconditionally and unreservedly with a love by which he really loves him more even than his own salvation and his own personal assurance of this salvation. But how shall we find it in ourselves to let go of ourselves in this way, and in a true sense no longer to cling onto ourselves, to the innermost heart and centre of our own being at the last, but rather to surrender it to God? That which is most wholly proper and personal to man himself is his salvation. It is with this that he identifies himself in the most radical manner by the ultimate and definitive decision which he takes of his own freedom. Now there is only one point at which he can surrender this totally and unreservedly without thereby being annihilated and without falling into the despair of the damned, and that point is God, whom he experiences as compassion. It is not that he can distinguish and separate out different elements in this forgiving and redeeming compassion of God or in the radical nature of his incomprehensibility and sovereignty, and thereby seize this grace of his own individual salvation to himself as something that he has gained control of by his own powers. No, man must surrender himself totally and without reserve to God in the act which we call faith and hope. But he can only do this if he surrenders himself to God as the love in which he can and must believe, and for which he can and must hope as that which has been freely bestowed upon him. But this act, [247] considered as the outcome of conscious and deliberate reasoning, is only possible for him through Jesus Christ the crucified and risen Lord, through his heart, this heart that has been pierced through, the heart which has itself been subjected to the immeasurable depths of deprivation in death and to a state in which it

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seemed to be abandoned by God, that heart which surrendered itself to the judgment of God upon the world, this act, I say, is possible only in the presence of that heart which – this is the miracle of grace that is new and quite unique in each individual case – gives us the courage to forget ourselves and to believe in his love as a love which has been bestowed on me in particular (or, to put it more precisely), to hope in it in that act of hope which is more than faith in a merely general sense, and which already in itself leads on to love. We gaze upon the heart of the Lord and the question upon which an eternity depends fills the innermost centre of our being, our heart and our life: Do you love me? Do you love me in such a way that this love truly, powerfully and unconquerably creates an eternity of blessedness that is *my* eternal life? To this question there is no answer such as would finally put an end to the mystery, or which man could give of his own powers. This question leads on to a mystery which has been brought close to us in this heart of the Lord. But if through this question we are led into the heart of the Lord because it is asked in faith, hope and love, then it is not answered but rather overtaken and overcome by the mystery which is love, by the mystery of God himself which cannot be questioned.

God, eternal mystery, nameless infinitude, unfathomable source of blessings, you who encompass all things and are encompassed by none, you have uttered your own eternal Word into your creation and into our lives in order that your eternal mystery may itself become for us the protection that is your inexpressible nearness to us, and may also become the centre of the world itself. We contemplate this Word of yours that you have uttered. We look upon him who is the heart of the world. We look upon the heart of the Son which we have pierced. All the incomprehensibility of ourselves and our lives lies hidden in this heart. All the elemental fear of human existence is forever contained by it. Everything that is sublime and holy finds its way back to this as its source. Everything finds its true nature there, and realises itself as love. Everything is drawn into the mystery that is the blessedness of love.

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[249]

PART FOUR

Prospects

[251]

13

THE FUTURE OF THE RELIGIOUS BOOK

When a theologian is asked whether he believes that there is any future for the religious book he will certainly begin by replying 'Obviously there is'. But if (in the particular case) after this initial answer he begins to ponder the question he may perhaps become somewhat less sure. He asks himself whether he has not answered too hastily, prompted in this by his own subjective interests in the matter. And then, by way of drawing distinctions, he will say that since he is convinced that religion itself has an eternal validity he was in fact basically right in his answer when he foresaw a future for the religious book as well. But this is still very far from saying *what form* the religious book of the future will assume. The reason why this cannot be foretold is that even the concrete form assumed by religion itself, in spite of the fact that it is, in essence, indestructible, is extremely changeable and is in this very day, presumably undergoing changes which are extremely swift and extremely radical.

Can it be foreseen what *guise* the religious book will appear in, and will indeed have to appear in, given that it has a future at all?

Of course even in the future religious books will still differ greatly among themselves, and this does not merely apply to their subject matter. It applies to the readers too, for even in the future these will be extremely varied in respect of age, sex, social milieu, experience of life; moreover their particular needs will also be different, as also will be the questions which their particular historical situation makes them feel to be of special concern to them. This is obvious and there is no need to dwell upon it any further at this point, although it may seem that religious authors and publishers often forget whole groups of the population who would read religious books if there were any available suited to their particular needs (for instance in Germany we have fashion magazines of a purely secular kind – such as *Für Sie* which carry a good page on religion and morals [252] suitably written, and read very readily and with great sympathy because it is 'addressed' in a realistic and effective way to the type of reader concerned, and adapted to the particular needs of this type).

But these considerations apart, can we point to certain specific qualities which are characteristic of the religious writing of the future, given that there is in fact to be such a future at all? (In the answer we find to this question it may turn out that properly speaking these qualities have all along been necessary for the religious book in the true sense, but this will make no difference to the present argument.) The first characteristic which must be demanded of it is that it shall be freed from any 'ideology'. By this we mean that in it the religious element must not appear as some strange and unrealistic superstructure of theory superimposed upon that reality which man experiences both interiorly and exteriorly as an inevitable part of his life, as something that is really and effectively present in it, and which he constantly experiences anew. This kind of religious literature must appeal to man's genuine experience (this means, of course, the whole of that experience, not just a part of it). It must express this to him better than he can express it for himself. It must bring him to a realization of himself, and not simply to 'good thoughts'. In this religious literature the

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question that must constantly and relentlessly be raised is 'Where and how in the reader is that reality already present which this book is intended to bring to his notice?' There is a constant danger for the Christian here. He can always present the content of the faith in a form in which it has been fitted into an alien ideology, justifying himself in this by reminding his readers that it is, after all, 'revealed', that is, that it comes to humanity *ab externo* and from the 'sources' of revelation, and that it needs to be adapted and retranslated, etc. But in truth revelation represents precisely the destruction of the ideological façade behind which man hides and 'suppresses' the reality of God and of himself. Revelation tells him precisely what he really is. It is the total and exhaustive interpretation of what he really experiences himself to be. We have only to understand that there is an experience of grace, that God has already come to us in the Spirit prior to his coming to us in the word in order to realise that we have no need to speak of the reality of the faith as though it were another (and happier) world added onto this present one in which we are imprisoned, and existing alongside it. For this reason it can do no harm if the religious book of the future begins with matters which seem to be in the foreground, for it is these that constitute the realities of life. It must [253] begin, then, with human activities, with work, love, death, and all the well-worn and familiar matters with which human life is filled, with the 'spirit of unbelief' which makes hearts sceptical and fearful of giving way to 'illusions', for it appears to such hearts that faith only holds out illusions to man. It is precisely to the extent that the religious book sets itself to burrow down beneath the surface of the 'superficialities' of life, which are obviously present in it, to the factors below the surface (and only so can it be a religious book in any true and effective sense) that it has to begin precisely with these 'superficialities', for it is only through them that we can make our way into the deeper truths. For this reason the religious book of the future must guard against losing its true character by branching out too hastily into speculative theology. It is precisely in these last few decades that (in contrast to earlier ones) an excessively 'refined' theology has evinced itself in such books, which has had a subtle way of turning loose the whole of speculative theology (which in itself is necessary) into the field of devotion (even such a writer as Dom Marmion and similar ascetical authors seem to me to have incurred this danger to some extent). It seems that we can only produce anything or make anything attractive if we turn to those men who live a cloistered way of life in a protected environment, cut off from the world, an environment which must necessarily be, to a large extent, remote from real life. From this point of view, so it seems to me, even the biblical approach to devotion can no longer be considered altogether so suitable in the religious book of the future. Certainly the bible always remains the foundation book of Christianity, precisely because it is genuine in itself and free from ideological prejudices. But for all this, regarded realistically, it has, so far as we are concerned, receded so far back in history from us that it is no longer possible for a religious book to be a florilegium of passages from scripture with a few words of commentary attached to each. Scripture is indeed too remote, historically speaking, from *our* lives, and we must learn to recognise this realistically, and not be so full of pious enthusiasm as to use it exaggeratedly and without discretion. In all cases in which it is not scientific exegesis that is being aimed at the religious author should quietly spare the reader the long journey (whenever and wherever it is in fact long) from the letter of scripture to the reality signified by it. He should speak directly of this reality itself. And then it is always open to him, in appropriate cases, to say at the end of his investigation 'and this is already to be found in such-and-such a passage of scripture'.

[254] A further consequence of this, however paradoxical it may at first seem, is that the religious book of the future will have to be concerned with the genuine basic themes of theology, and not with secondary details of dogmatics, morals and ascetics. Indeed it must itself constitute an original theology in its own right, with a subject matter that is of central importance. It has to be addressed to a man who is forced to live in an extremely 'worldly'

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world, one who has much else to do besides reading religious books, one for whom life does not begin to be interesting only when he enters the realm of the explicitly religious (as perhaps it did for certain poor devils in earlier centuries whose lot was one of drudgery). It must be addressed to a man who has to live the Christian life not as a particular 'calling' which is apart from the rest of his life, but rather as the brightness, the power and the ultimate mystery of his own life. How can such a man effectively bring home to himself the reality of God not as something that is evident or manifest to him, but rather as the inconceivable mystery of existence? How can he make real his encounter with Christ in such a way that Christ 'is present' to him in his everyday life? What is the term 'prayer' really intended to signify? How can we come to terms with love, with our everyday lives and with our deaths? And so on. (However, though there are not many themes, there is one that is inexhaustible for this purpose: simply the single inescapable mystery of human existence.) These are the real themes for the religious book. Thus it will probably come about that the religious book becomes theological in a real and effective sense, while the theological book becomes no less really religious. For only when the pristine unity between them is regained does the religious book become worthy of belief. It cannot presuppose the world of faith as something already given (as earlier ascetical literature did) in order to go on from there to draw out the devotional implications of it for the practice of everyday life. It must, in a certain sense, constantly be making its own original attempts to create this world afresh. For this there is need of a 'new theology' (however unpleasant the associations may be which have come to be attached to this phrase), and conversely theology (considered as a science) will be fully employed if it sets itself to achieve this task, if it is aimed at stating in an effective manner what was really meant by the traditional formulae, why they appeal to an experience which is ultimately existential (this being made possible by grace), and bring one to a confrontation with one's self. Perhaps, therefore, the living theology of the future will have very little 'scientific' about it (i.e. it will [255] not suppose that it can only be true to its own nature if it concerns itself with historical or speculative matters – art for art's sake – these in turn only being of interest to the scientific theologians themselves). Meanwhile the religious literature will be very 'theological' (i.e. facing up to the ultimate and basic questions in a new, honest and radical way). Would it be a pity if the theological and the religious book of the future were almost indistinguishable one from another? In this particular field can the situation not be precisely the opposite of what it is in other sciences? In these other sciences the gulf between the 'specialist' and the 'layman' becomes perforce ever greater, and rightly so: the 'popular understanding' is a sign of scientific inexactitude. But in the realm of theology and religion the cleavage between these two ought perhaps to become ever smaller, and we could even go so far as to regard this diminution as a criterion for the genuineness of both kinds of literature (the theological and the religious). To the extent that a given statement does not adequately express the innermost centre of existence it is also, by theological standards, not scientific (taking all this *cum grano salis*). In any case the chief task of the religious literature of the future will be to serve as a pointer to the first origins of every genuine exercise of religion. It will not be to work out a complicated apparatus of religious asceticism for which these origins represent axioms and mere presuppositions, which are taken for granted as self-evident.

Accordingly the religious literature of the future will be gentle and discreet in its pronouncements. It will itself undertake the task of unmasking pseudo-religious attitudes, and will no longer leave this task to sociology, depth psychology and the scepticism of contemporary atheism. It must also be able to be read by the new man with the mentality of a contemporary practitioner of the natural sciences and a technician of the modern age – the more so since we are all, to some extent, brought under these influences. In the post-individualistic phase of human history this literature must not give the impression of being an

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opiate, catering for needs which are ultimately unimportant and designed to soothe the pains of the 'sensitive soul' of the introvert. This literature will have in mind the man who regards himself as confronted by a task to perform in this world. It will not be intended as a substitute for medicine, including psychological medicine, or for depth psychology. Rather it will presuppose these. It will regard moral problems as beginning only at that point at which these really are initiated. It will never speak of God as [256] though it knew all about him and had succeeded in expressing the whole truth of him in theological statements and moral maxims. It will openly recognise and accept the interior 'complexity' of man. It will not be too hasty or indiscreet in seeking to bring everything in man under the aegis of religion. It will prove its genuineness by letting the world be worldly and, *precisely in so doing*, making it comprehensible as that which genuine religion presupposes.

But the religious book will also have the courage to demand of man that he shall recognise and accept that he is infinitely more than merely a man. He must recognise the blessedness of the pain that is accepted, in which the finite becomes interior to the infinite love in its incomprehensibility.

How should the religious book not have a future? It will be transformed and will endure. It will achieve this even if it takes the form of an unending variation upon a single basic theme: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Even then it will endure and will lead us to that point in our human existence at which this existence is thrown headlong into the redeeming mystery.

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[257-63]

VOLUMES 7 & 8

LIST OF SOURCES

CHRISTIAN LIVING FORMERLY AND TODAY
Preliminary draft for an address which the author delivered on several occasions during the months of October, November and December 1966 in certain major cities of Germany (Cologne, Frankfurt, Koblenz and Essen). First published in *Gul* 39 (1966) Vol 5.

BEING OPEN TO GOD AS EVER GREATER
Originally an unwritten address delivered at a conference for Jesuit interns at Rottmanshöhe in 1959. A tape-recording of this was taken and subsequently edited, and the typescript of this served as the basis for a version of this conference which was duplicated and disseminated in this way. A final radical revision and expansion was made when it was published in *Gul* 39 (1966), 183-201.

INTELLECTUAL HONESTY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH
An address delivered at the invitation of the Society of Catholic High Schools at the university of Vienna (on 14 March 1966). This address was repeated on the occasion of the General Students' Day of the Societies of New Students on 31 May 1966 in Darmstadt, on 4 July 1966 for the Catholic Students' Society of the university of Saarland in Saarbrücken, and on 17 July 1966 at the invitation of the Catholic Students' Society at the university in Bochum. It was originally published in *Stimmen der Zeit* 91 (1966), 401-417.

DO NOT STIFLE THE SPIRIT
A festal address delivered on the occasion of the Austrian Catholic Day on 1 June 1962 in the great aula of the university of Salzburg. Published in full for the first time in *Löschtt den Geist nicht aus*. *Probleme und Imperative des Österreichischen Katholikentages 1962*, edited by the Praesidium of Catholic Action of Austria (Innsbruck 1963), 16-25. For the reprinted version appearing in this volume the address delivered at that time (immediately *before* the beginning of the Council!) was again revised afresh, but only certain inessential points were corrected (cf. p. 87, n. 1).

THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS WORLD
Inaugural lecture at the Nordic 'Catholic Day' on the occasion of the 1100th anniversary of the death of St Ansgar, held in Hamburg on 18 June 1965. Published for the first time in *Stimmen der Zeit* 90 (1965), 481-489.

'I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH'
This study originally appeared in *Wort und Wahrheit* 9 (1954), 329-339. In the form in which it was then presented the article was concerned with the question of how to understand the dogma promulgated in 1950 of the physical assumption of the Mother of God into heaven (hence the subtitle: 'The New Marian Dogma and the Individual'). For the purposes envisaged in including it in the present volume the essay has been adapted and once more revised, and this reference to the dogma of the Assumption has been eliminated.

CHRISTMAS THE FESTIVAL OF ETERNAL YOUTH
Christmas address delivered over the Bavarian radio on 25 December 1964. The manuscript

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of this address was distributed in duplicated form, and subsequently revised once more for printing in *Gul* 38 (1965), pp. 401-404.

HOLY NIGHT
Hitherto unpublished in this form.

PEACE ON EARTH
Hitherto unpublished.

SEE WHAT A MAN!
First published in *Gul* 28 (1955), 1-3.

THE SCANDAL OF DEATH
Address delivered in the course of a Good Friday transmission over the Bavarian radio on 8 April 1966. The duplicated typescript was subsequently revised for printing in this volume. A record of it has also been produced by the Christophorus-Verlag, Freiburg-i-Br.

'HE DESCENDED INTO HELL'
This study has previously appeared under the title, 'Karsamstag' in *Gul* 30 (1957), 81-84. Considerable alterations have been made to the whole study.

HIDDEN VICTORY
Three short addresses designed to follow one upon another on the occasion of a Good Friday service (The Liturgy of the Word) over the Bavarian radio on 9 April 1966. In its present form it is a reprinting of a slightly altered version, also produced as a record by the Christophorus-Verlag, Freiburg-i-Br. (Cf. above, 'The Scandal of Death').

EXPERIENCING EASTER
Written as a meditation on the 15th Station of the Cross, and published in a book written by Frau A. Röper, *Die Vierzehn Stationen im Leben des N.N.* (Kevelaer, 1965), 120-132. Stylistic corrections have been introduced here.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE RISEN CHRIST
First published in *Gul* 28 (1955), 81-86.

HE WILL COME AGAIN
Published for the first time under the title 'Er wird so wiederkommen wie ihr ihn habt zum Himmel auffahren sehen', *Gul* 32 (1959), 81-83.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD
A meditation given on the eve of the Ascension 1961 in the Collegium Canisianum at Innsbruck. First published under the title, 'Christi Himmelfahrt' in *Korrespondenzblatt des Collegium Canisianum* 96 (1961-62), 68-8.

THE CHURCH AS THE SUBJECT OF THE SENDING OF THE SPIRIT
First published in *Gul* 29 (1956), 94-98 (title: 'Die Kirche als Ort der Geistsendung').

THE SPIRIT THAT IS OVER ALL LIFE
Meditation delivered on the occasion of Pentecost, 1960 in the Collegium Canisianum. First printed under the title, 'Gedanken an Pfingsten' in the *Korrespondenzblatt des Collegium*

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Canisianum 94 (1960), 34-40.

SUNDAY, THE DAY OF THE LORD
Address delivered in the course of a 'Holy Hour' of the Pax Romana held at the Eucharistic World Congress of 1960 in Munich on 6 August 1960. Published in *Statio Orbis. Eucharistischer Weltkongress* 1960 in *München*, Vol II (Munich 1961), pp. 195-197. The version reprinted in the present volume is based upon a somewhat altered version which the author published in the periodical *Der grosse Entschluss* 20 (1965), 246-248.

THE EUCHARIST AND OUR DAILY LIVES
First published in *Der grosse Entschluss* 17 (1962), 391-396; 440-443.

ON TRUTHFULNESS
An address delivered at the Conference of Youth Workers held at Passau, 1960. First printed in *Katechetische Blätter* 85 (1960), 413-416; 468-474; 511-520.

PARRESIA (BOLDNESS)
First printed in *Gul* 31 (1958), 1-6.

THE WORKS OF MERCY AND THEIR REWARD
Hitherto unpublished in German. A translation of the text into French appeared in '*L'Evangile de la Misericorde*', *Hommage au Dr. Albert Schweitzer*. (On the occasion of his 90th birthday), ed. by Alphonse Goettmann. (Editions du Cerf. Paris 1965), 345-353.

PROVING ONE'S SELF IN TIME OF SICKNESS
First published in *Gul* 29 (1956), 64-67 (originally under the title 'Reflexionen zur Zeit der Krankheit').

ON CHRISTIAN DYING
Published in *Wort und Wahrheit* 14 (1959), pp. 653-657 under the title, 'Zum Tode verurteilt? Über das Sterben im christlichen Verständnis'.

WHY AND HOW CAN WE VENERATE THE SAINTS?
Original version in *Gul* 37 (1964), 325-340. The text reprinted here has been revised.

ALL SAINTS
Published in *Gul* 29 (1956), pp. 323-326.

IDEAS FOR A THEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD
Lecture delivered at the Second International Convention of the SOS Children's Villages at the SOS Children's Village of Hinterbühl near Vienna on 1 October 1962. First published as a continuous whole in *Gul* 36 (1963), 104-114.

THE SACRAMENTAL BASIS FOR THE ROLE OF THE LAYMAN IN THE CHURCH
First published in *Gul* 33 (1960), 119-132.

THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN THE NEW SITUATION IN WHICH THE CHURCH FINDS HERSELF
An address delivered at the Convention of the Union of German Catholic Women on 20/21 June 1964 at Munich. Printed in *Die Frau im Aufbruch der Kirche*, O. Brachfeld, K. Horn,

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U. Ranke-Heineman; E. Gössmann, K. Rahner ed. (Munich 1964), 120-145.

ON THE SITUATION OF THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL
A lecture delivered on 21 May 1966 at Frankfurt a.M. under the title of 'Aufgabe und Varantwortung des Hochschullehrers in der Sicht des Konzilskonstitution "Die Kirche in der Welt von Heute" (at the invitation of the Rabanus-Maurus-Akademie). The version printed here has been revised and in part expanded

THE TASK OF THE WRITER IN RELATION TO CHRISTIAN LIVING
Published under the title 'Über den Buchautor' in the Festal Almanac of the publishing house of Otto Muller (on the occasion of its silver jubilee) entitled *Werke und Jahre* (Salzburg 1962), 66-86. (Here given in an emended version.)

PRAYER FOR CREATIVE THINKERS
Originally composed for the *fifth* Austrian 'Formation of Youth' Week, held in Tirol (23 May 1954). Published in *Der grosse Entschluss* 10 (1954), 9-10.

ON THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS
First published in *Gul* 37 (1964), 17-37.

THE THEOLOGY OF POVERTY
First delivered as a lecture in the course of a conference of religious orders, published in *Gul* 33 (1960), 262-290. Previous title: 'Die Armut des Ordenslebens in einer veränderten Welt'.

THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE VENERATION OF THE SACRED HEART
A contribution to the *Festschrift des theoiogischen Konviktes Innsbruck 1858 bis 1958* under the title 'Vom Ziel unseres Strebens unter dem Symbol des Herzens Jesu' (Innsbruck 1958), 102-109.

UNITY – LOVE – MYSTERY
Meditations held at the Triduum of the Sacred Heart 1962 in the Collegium Canisianum at Innsbruck. Published in the *Korrespondenzblatt des Collegium Canisianum* 97(1962), 4-15.

THE FUTURE OF THE RELIGIOUS BOOK
Not hitherto published in German. A contribution to the Christmas message of Messrs Paul Brand, publishers, Hilversum – Antwerp, *Toekomst van het religieuze boek* (Hilversum 1965), 12-17 (together with other contributions by L. Rinser, H. J. Schultz, J. B. Metz).

Note: No reference has been made to the numerous reprintings in German-speaking countries. Translations are mentioned only if the relevant study was first published in a foreign language.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

I wish to express my gratitude for the help and suggestions given by Fr Edward Quinn, without whose kindness the translation would not have been possible; and also for the friendship of the staff and students of the College of the Resurrection, especially Fr Benedict Green, C.R. Thirdly I must thank the Reverend Mother, S.H.T. and the Sisters of the Company of the Lord Jesus, Ascot Priory, for the warmth of their hospitality during part of the work.

College of the Resurrection
Mirfield

Graham Harrison

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PREFACE

Volumes 9 and 10 of my collected theological lectures and papers contain pieces of work which originated between 1965 and 1967, with the single exception of the 'Small theological treatise concerning Indulgences'. There are considerable differences as to the literary genre, the mode of thought and the style of language of the individual papers. This is determined largely by the concrete occasion which gave rise to each particular study. A detailed list showing how each one came about has been appended to this volume. Since the origin, the aim and the place of publication were to be included, the best course seemed to be to provide as accurate and complete a 'list of sources' as possible. Some of the essays originated as tape-recordings of informal lectures, which were then remodelled and extended in various respects. Many papers were originally sketches for addresses or visiting lectures. Many were written for books or periodicals which were not meant for theological professionals alone. On the other hand not a few of the larger studies are in the nature of extensive and detailed monographs and are intended (in the best sense) for the theological specialist (e.g. 'Atheism and implicit Christianity', 'The Sacrament of Penance as Reconciliation with the Church', 'Towards a modern authoritative Church doctrine of Indulgences', etc.). Correspondingly, the notes or the critical apparatus also have quite different functions in the individual studies: in the case of remodelled lectures and essays, where only a limited period of time or limited space was available and where neither the writer nor the listener (or reader) could countenance repetition, I have taken the opportunity of making it easier for the reader to see the more precise realisation of and the deeper connection between the developed lines of thought by copious cross-references to other writings of mine. This being the case, no claim is made to have supplied a scholarly apparatus or the otherwise usual comprehensive list of sources. On the other hand, however, the theological papers in the more strict sense are intended to supply the most accurate and universal documentation possible. I would therefore like to ask the reader to bear this in mind when he finds that I quote my own works a great deal. The explicitly limited aim of these references is obvious. In any case many people (especially in other countries) have requested pointers of this kind.

[x] As previously, Volume 9 of the *Theological Investigations* fulfils the aim of collecting together chiefly my theological essays and smaller studies. During this period I also published larger studies elsewhere and I would like to mention them because together with what is published here they constitute a whole: the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1-2 (Freiburg 1966), *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln 1967) 317-420, and the commentary to Chapter 3 on the 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' in the *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* Volume 1, ed. H. Vorgrimler (Herder, New York/Burns & Oates, London 1967), 186-218 (tr. Kevin Smyth). Besides these I would like to mention the articles which have already appeared in Volume 7 of the *Investigations* and the many contributions to the international lexicon *Sacramentum mundi* (English edition 1968 *ff*.). In addition three large studies are in preparation for the series *Quaestiones disputatae*.

Before being included in this volume all the lectures, essays and studies have been thoroughly overhauled stylistically, more clearly arranged, and trimmed down or extended according to necessity. Since the first publication more precise references to the latest literature have been added to many of the articles. These changes - often considerable - throughout the course of several stages of publication have not been individually noted in the list of sources.

The untiring and learned assistance of Dr Karl Lehmann was of the greatest service to me in revising and overhauling the material. I take this further opportunity of thanking him most

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warmly. I thank my new colleagues in the History of Dogma Seminar of the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Münster for their careful and thorough help in reading the proofs.

Münster

Karl Rahner

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[1]

PART ONE

The Shape of Contemporary and Future Theology

[3]

1

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL'S CHALLENGE TO THEOLOGY

The question raised here cannot long be suppressed by equivocation: does the Second Vatican Council signify a decisive orientation for present and future theological undertakings or not? It is not just that the Council documents now appear side by side with other statements of the Church, or that a thorough and more precise investigation of the history of this Council has been initiated, and so on. The Council's inner call to the Church can be soon smothered and the Council rendered 'harmless'. There is already a certain tendency to represent the conciliar decrees as being only of 'pastoral' relevance, and thus to relegate them to a particular and circumscribed area, so that practically everything else may remain the same as before. With this in mind we ask how it is that the Council has set inescapable tasks for today's and tomorrow's theology.

I

There can be no doubt that the Second Vatican Council has created a 'challenge' to Catholic theology; that is, it has provided it with new tasks, given it a more dynamic impetus and wider scope for free movement. First of all this Second Vatican Council is of importance for Catholic theology in that the positive teaching of its decrees has in itself great theological significance. For what many Roman theologians had planned prior to the Council, and what many others had feared, did not happen, namely that at the Council the statements were to contain only what had been the received and express teaching of prior official papal doctrine, and that of the professional theology – of neo-Scholastic provenance – of the last hundred years. If this had been so, theology – courteously but firmly directed to these conciliar texts in new Denzinger numbers – would simply have had to pass on what had been taught previously.

The Council was certainly very careful and circumspect in all its doctrinal statements; indeed, it avoided any new definition. But it said a [4] great deal which was not simply a part of the assumed repertoire of professional theology. Of course, a Council can only, and only *intends* to say what has always been, in some manner, in the Church's awareness of faith, even if in very different modes of awareness.[1] In this respect what the Council teaches cannot be absolutely 'new'; even so there is by no means any need for it to belong to the repertoire of the professional theology of the last century. In actual fact the average person's awareness of faith and religious practice draws its life from a professional theology which is decidedly a

[1] For the distinction between what is changeable and what is really changeless in theology and in the field of discipline, cf. K. Rahner, 'The Pilgrim Church', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 270-294.

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'received' theology, with its particular selection of matter and historically determined perspectives. A small example: in no text-book or dogma or catechism of the recent past can one find any reference to the fact that the sacrament of penance is itself – among other things – a 'reconciliation with the Church';[2] and although this truth is in accordance with the plainest original tradition, it plays no part in the *lives* of contemporary Christians. Therefore it is of the greatest importance that the Council should have now broken through the usual themes of the text-books and catechisms of recent times and set free living realities and truths which were present as such neither in yesterday's awareness of faith nor among academic theologians.[3] The really decisive thing is not so much that many questions which were until now matters of dispute have been taken up and – to some extent – decided, setting theology the task of thinking through and justifying the decision and clarifying what still remains obscure; what is much more important in connection with these teachings of the Council is the fact that many themes have been raised which, although they were not really matters of controversy in official theology, did not form part of its clearly-defined subject-matter and therefore found little or no place in the official catechisms and in people's everyday awareness of faith. In this respect the Council provides theology with significant tasks and topics, and it implies the obligation of [5] extending and – consequently – restructuring to a considerable degree the whole thematic compass of theology in many areas and aspects. More express mention will be made of this later. Furthermore, however, the Council is of great importance in a dual aspect: the Council has *consciously* left open many questions, has revealed them as such for the first time or has expressly recognized them as requiring further theological investigation. These are not only questions which have in any case no real implications for the concrete life of the Church or for man's Christian existence and are only theological subtleties, the private business of the theological specialist. For instance, the question of the collegiality of the bishops was a matter of such violent dispute not because it would have been possible in all earnestness to doubt the issue,[4] but because it was suddenly discovered what were the *concrete practical consequences* of this doctrine. If particular mention is made of these topics of the Council at a later time, many of them will be of direct significance for the concrete life of the Church, as can be seen in the Constitution on liturgy for instance, where a broader and deepened theology of the Christian cultus and concrete liturgical measures mutually stimulate and benefit each other.

Above and beyond this broadening and deepening of the scope of theology, the Council's whole attitude shows a spirit of freedom, the desire, as Paul VI has formulated it, to study first and then to make a decision, an awareness of problems and respect for specialists (yet without timidly wishing to let them have the last word in their 'professional' and specialist capacity). All this converges on the realisation that the theological routine which has been really very widespread in the Church in the last hundred years, according to which everything of real importance in theology had already been settled, belongs to a theological manner which has been overcome, provided, that is, that theology now really takes the opportunity offered to it by the Council's attitude. For it seems to me that, however praiseworthy it may have been on the whole, the quantity and extent of technical study in the field of Mariology in

[2] cf. the conciliar constitution *Lumen Gentium*, No. 11. For an exhaustive commentary on this passage and the historical background cf. the author's study 'Das Bußsakrament als "Versöhnung mit der Kirche"' in the *Festschrift für Kardinal Ottaviani*: *Das Volk Gottes*. *Sein organischer Aufbau im Alten and Neuen Testament* (Rome, 1967) (containing further references to literature). Cf. 'The sacrament of Penance as a reconciliation with the Church', *Theological Investigations* X.

[3] Besides the concrete references in the study just referred to cf. K. Rahner, 'Forgotten Truths concerning the Sacrament of Penance', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 135-174.

[4] For the assertion that episcopal collegiality was a factor even in the proceedings of Vatican I, cf. the author's remarks (and further references) in the *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* ed. H. Vorgrimler (New York/London, 1967), Vol. 1.

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the last few decades is *also* (although not *only*) a sign of the tacit assumption that, apart from the field of history of dogma which works retrospectively, progress is only possible in peripheral areas of theology. A dogmatic historian of the stature of Landgraf gave this as his candid opinion in private conversation.[5] Indeed, one may even be inclined to think that the [6] Encyclical *Humani generis* was informed somewhat by this mentality in its quite legitimate defence of theological terms, regarding theology as certainly the product of an evolution, but as now being simply 'complete', apart from peripheral areas: the historical evolution of concepts is recognised, but once they have been developed, they are taken as in every respect beyond improvement. This kind of 'monolithism'[6] has disintegrated. At least in its ecclesiology and in the Constitution on Divine Revelation the Council has shown that this attitude can no longer be justified. The Council has assuredly offered theology a more acute awareness of problems and a wider scope for free theological study.

II

Besides these formal aspects of a general theological approach the Council has given something further with regard to theology. The Council has opened 'dialogue' with the world. It has not already carried it through and of course it could not do so itself in any case. But it has begun determinedly to be aware of the world of the modern human spirit, that is, the world of a pluralistic, scientifically and technologically orientated society with its immeasurable breadth and diversity of insights and tendencies, the world of a split and diversified Christendom and of the world religions, the world of an immense future in process of being planned. And this confrontation is not a confrontation with a world in which one merely *happens* to live, whether joyfully or disconsolately, carrying on in adherence to the old traditional activities and aims, but with a world in which one has to be engaged in an open dialogue, the result of which is not a foregone conclusion; it is a world which the [7] Church has to help to build and in which tomorrow's Church too will exercise its moulding activity; and that not merely under sufferance from the world, but in a way which the Church itself fully desires. This situation, seen and accepted by the Church, does not mean merely a new, additional and partial region of study for theology – although it does mean that as well; that is, in practice, study of the task clearly set out and delineated by the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Rather this dialogue situation with the world, consciously initiated by the Church,[7] implies a situation and a task for theology in all its regions and subjects, even those which seem its most esoteric. The whole of theology needs to be aware of this situation. What this means in detail must be said later.

At the same time something came to light at the Council which, it seems, has not yet been a matter for theological reflection and clarification at all. The Church issues a Pastoral

[5] Here it becomes very plain that the highly-prized 'freedom from presuppositions' of historical investigation is a problematical matter in theology too. 'Speculative' theological study and historical investigation are always mutually fruitful and reciprocally stimulating. In particular Landgraf's view and interpretation of early Scholasticism bears witness to a narrowing of the historical perspective as a result of dogmatic presuppositions: since Landgraf saw in High Scholasticism largely the unsurpassable perfection of theological thought, he was able to see the multifarious theological situation of early Scholasticism only teleologically in terms of its apogee and flowering in High Scholasticism. Thus it is clear that the dynamic quality of this particular mode of theological thought – and it is in itself highly variegated – which is perhaps especially interesting for us in our present theological situation, was not adequately represented by him.

[6] For a more precise understanding of this concept cf. K. Rahner, 'Kirchliches Lehramt und Theologie nach dem Konzil', *Stimmen der Zeit* 178 (1966), pp. 404-420, esp. p. 407 and note 4; cf. in this volume p. 86 note 4.

[7] For the fundamental necessity of this dialogue cf. in detail the presentation and relevant literature in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II (Freiburg, 1966), II/1, pp. 102 ff., 265 ff.; II/2, pp. 203-267.

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Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: in it she even describes this situation to which she wishes to take her stand, and the task which confronts her. But in this way she shows that she must have and must acquire a kind of knowledge, essential to her activity, which, however, does not spring from divine revelation but from human experience. The Church shows that this necessary profane knowledge by no means arises simply out of everyman's plain, everyday experience; at first sight, at least, this would not perhaps be a particularly stimulating theological problem, since this general everyday knowledge is always available. This profane knowledge which she possesses is won from a secular experience, scientifically and systematically gained through modern history, sociology, scientific psychology and futurology. This is a totally new kind of profane experience, previously nonexistent, and loaded with all the dangerous, dubious and provisional qualities which are associated with strange, scientific, 'empirical' manipulation. It could be said that the Church is no longer merely being involved with the world which God created and made available to simple (although still profane) everyday experience, but also with that world which man is building as *his* work, as an embodiment of *his* decisions, dreams, utopias and of his scientific reflection. This is a most strange and dangerous thing, and it has not so far been thought about at all in terms of an ecclesiology.[8]

[8] Proceeding from these presuppositions the attempt will now be made to say something of the tasks of post-conciliar theology. In doing so we are aware of the fragmentary and subjective nature of the following observations. We know too that the mere issuing of demands is a thankless business, that it is easier to give advice than to follow it, and that the *true* principles are given only by those who actually show the application of them.[9]

III

First of all as far as *historical theology* in general is concerned, it must be strongly emphasized that it must be extended and developed further. If Catholic theology (I am not including biblical studies here, about which something will be said in particular later) made great strides in the last century, this was chiefly, if not almost exclusively, in the realm of historical theology; the history of doctrine and theology, the history of patristic literature, textual edition, the history of canon law, etc. Doubtless there remain tasks enough in these areas. No intellectual discipline, above all at the present time, can dispense with studying its own history. And theology, on account of its own sublime dignity, owes itself such study. Where talent is forthcoming in this field – and there are men of talent for whom this should be more or less their only field – it should be encouraged. It would not be amiss if the Church authorities were more magnanimous financially in this respect (for such things as the edition of texts, the publishing of special historical monographs, etc.). But surely it need not necessarily be derogatory to the dignity and the truth-seeking impartiality of this historical theology if in future it became better aware of its function and responsibility in respect of the kind of theology called 'systematic' (including 'practical' theology), which in turn can only understand itself correctly as long as it is the servant of a truly living proclamation of the

[8] cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur theologischen Problematik einer "Pastoralkonstitution"', *Volk Gottes. Festschrift für J. Höfer*, ed. R. Bäumer/H. Dolch (Freiburg, 1967), cf. 'On the theological problems entailed in a Pastoral Constitution', *Theological Investigations* X.

[9] As in what follows a fragmentary programme of this kind is to be set forth, the author may be permitted to draw attention in the notes to own sketches of various topics, lest the impression be given that we are merely dealing here with a number of abstract ideas, incapable of being thought through in concrete terms. Of course the tasks concerned can be tackled differently by other theologians. But reference to many other works would have enlarged the notes disproportionately.

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Gospel and of contemporary Christian existence, and is inspired by the awareness of the crying needs in the practical care of souls. If one considers the most accomplished figures of historical Catholic [9] theology in the last hundred years, F. Ehrle, H. Denifle, O. Bardenhewer, M. Grabmann, F. Pelster, A. M. Landgraf and many others, one must conclude in all honesty that their great and scholarly work was practically worthless as far as the proclamation of the saving Gospel of Christ today is concerned, even if one is prepared to take into account highly anonymous and indirect influences. This historical theology was retrospective theology. It need not be so. There are today examples enough to prove this. Consider Y. Congar, M. D. Chenu, H. de Lubac, J. Daniélou, to name just a few. Historical theology today must no longer be as a whole so antiquarian and retrospective. More than before it must be prospective, retracing its steps in order to go forward into a new future of theology and evangelism. Historical theology must not simply ask what *has* been; it must inquire of the past in order to find the answer to the question, what *will* be, what is to be proclaimed tomorrow? In historical theology as well there must be as many theologians as possible who sense the demands, the unease, the burden and the danger of theology today for the proclamation of tomorrow and who bear and suffer these things along with their fellows. In the face of tomorrow's tasks presented by the times and by the Council, historical theology must indeed inquire with all precision and impartiality into what was, but it can no longer afford to maintain the art-for-art's-sake view of a boundless historical curiosity for everything and anything, but must ask the past what are the life-and-death questions which future has in store for theology,[10] even if it means that many *quaestiones quodlibetales* of second- or third-rate mediaeval theologians have to remain unedited and undiscussed.

Naturally, in order eventually to become a fruitful source for systematic theology, historical study cannot dispense with giving the past this opportunity of speaking without prejudice, irrespective of whether what it has to say seems interesting and 'existentially' significant at the first glance. Without the patience required for receptive listening, historical study would ultimately only hear what it already knew; it would learn nothing new. It must certainly not just try to discover justifications to bolster up already developed theses which are already more or less of interest. In order to hear new things it must be able to listen patiently to those traditional things which are apparently wearisome and over-familiar. But this by no means implies that the historical theologian who, [10] *qua* theologian (i.e. more than a historian of religions), must always listen to the past within the perspective of faith of the present Church's understanding, may only think of the *present stage of development* of this understanding. He must be sensitive to the *evolving* awareness, heralded both in the promising and in the distressing aspects of the imminent future.[11] In the field of history as well as in other areas the theologian of today should not be demonstrating his scholarly competence by writing books about questions which interest no-one but himself. He should not merely be showing that people in earlier times also knew – in some fashion – matters which later came to be defined.[12]

There is moreover no need for this to be so. A historical theology can make a very

[10] Thus it becomes clear how necessary is an epistemological sketch of the function of the historical mode of thought within theology. Many preliminary studies for this subject can be found hidden away among the works of modern philosophical and historical hermeneutics.

[11] cf. in this respect the parallels in the field of history in R. Wittram, *Zukunft in der Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1966).

[12] So long as historical thought in theology only results in study of this kind, a real 'historical consciousness' in the modern sense has not yet been attained. Because people on the systematic side have been too rigid to accept new configurations of questions and changed situations, it is often the case that the only thing that remains in view is the critical and destructive side of the consequences of historical investigation, not, however, its productive capacity – which is no less characteristic of it. This implies a hermeneutic self-criticism of the previous conception of history; cf. esp. H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1965).

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considerable contribution towards the necessary expansion and broadening of present theology's awareness of problems, even if one hardly expects to find ready-made answers in the past for today's questions. If the historical theologian is inspired by his interest in the issue itself and its future and not only by interest in its past history, he will often find in the past – instead of confirmation of a later dogma – only interpretations of the dogma which were and are controversial and which therefore remain *theologoumena*.[13] He will seldom succeed – although even that is possible – in finding a consensus in the past in favour of a doctrine not already defined officially by the Church such that he is able to recognise this doctrine as of categorical relevance for *present* systematic professional theology.[14] But even if this is not the case, historical study can be of service to contemporary systematic theology: it sharpens one's awareness of problems and reveals how authoritative dogma originally arose as a concrete response to the demands of a difficult and problematical situation. [11] This makes it possible, within the broad possibilities of more accurate interpretations, to perceive new interpretations in the present intellectual and spiritual situation. Historical study teaches us to distinguish more clearly between 'dogma'[15] and the theologoumena[16] which always accompany it.

Today this applies above all to the field of the history of moral theology and of canon law. There is still much highly useful and indeed necessary work to be done here by historical theology, as contemporary examples have shown, to reopen the debate – with a clear *historical* conscience as well – upon certain too simple and too calmly assumed traditional arguments in systematic theology, and to prepare better, more appropriate and more finely balanced answers.[17] Perhaps what has been said ought also to be referred to ecclesiastical history, however difficult it may be to apply it. At the Council it was sometimes possible to gain the impression that very many leading churchmen had heard little of the historical nature of the Church, her institutions and even of many of her teachings, or that at least they had learned little from this.

IV

Biblical studies have found new tasks in the wake of the Council. Not because the tasks did not exist beforehand but because the conditions for solving them have become better and, above all, calmer. The Constitution on Divine Revelation was certainly very careful and conservative in its exposition of doctrine. That is of great positive importance, since it is true in the field of biblical studies as in other fields that the latest thing need not necessarily be the most true and enduring. In the coming decades we shall need courage to stand fast by the undiluted faith of Christendom, which always remains an offence and a focus for temptation, in order, not to defend merely traditional positions, but to resist the scepticism and the

[13] cf., for instance, the rich and varied history of the different theological presentations concerned with the creation of the human soul by God. For details cf. R. North, *Teilhard and the Creation of the Soul* (Milwaukee, 1967).
[14] In the first instance one of the historical theologian's important tasks will be rather to examine the sources more closely to see what are the concrete theological conditions (and limits) of such a 'consensus'.
[15] For this concept and its change of meaning cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, ed. J. Feiner/M. Löhrer (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 639-707 (with literature).
[16] cf. K. Rahner, 'Theologoumenon', *LThK* X (Freiburg, [2] 1965), cols. 80-82.
[17] In the area of the history of moral theology we refer only to the studies by M. Müller, J. G. Ziegler, H. Klomps, J. Fuchs, J. Stelzenberger, L. Brandl et al. For a historical discussion with regard to the magisterium cf. J. T. Noonan, *Contraception. A History of its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge, 1965); also his study, 'Die Autoritätsbeweise in Fragen des Wuchers und der Empfängnisverhütung', *Diakonia* I (1966), pp. 79-106.

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tendency to disintegration which seem inherent in the [12] methodology of any modern historical science. These features, unaccompanied by any genuine religious experience, are rooted in the assumption that the living totality which is the reality of faith can be deduced from its individual parts and historically determined presuppositions, or that, if this cannot be done, the obligatory character of dogma or its meaning as affirmed by the Church is necessarily rendered null and void.

But the Constitution on Divine Revelation has actually sanctioned the development which already began with Pius XII (in *Divino afflante Spiritu* and certain statements of the Biblical Commission). The methods which were first developed in Protestant biblical studies, form-criticism in particular, may be used in exegetics and in biblical theology of the Old and New Testaments. This is possible because the techniques do not essentially bear implications unacceptable to dogma.[18] Even if one were to maintain the 'historicity' of the four Gospels, this rather indiscriminate characterization can and must be mellowed by the Constitution on Divine Revelation, and this is basically what happens when one acknowledges the *vario modo historicum*[19] and the influence of post-Easter theology on the record of the pre-Easter Jesus.[20]

The most immediate task of biblical research itself will be to show that there is a profound difference between the historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith and yet that there is at the same time a real connection between them, and a connection which is adequate to the demands of Catholic dogma. Thus it must show how men of today, with all their enlightened historical knowledge and their sensitivity to differences and developments, looking with the eye of faith may see in the story of Jesus more than merely the tragic fate of a religious enthusiast.[21] This is not only a work of defensive apologetics of the kind undertaken by Grandmaison about forty years ago. Making clear the distinction between the intrinsic interpretation of the historical Jesus and Church dogma (which does not [13] destroy the substantial unity and identity of both) can be of positive value for dogmatic Christology,[22] namely in compelling it to take radically seriously what it says about the true humanity of Jesus, his human subjectivity and setting in history[23] and to make even plainer than heretofore that the 'Hypostatic Union' does not diminish the humanity of Jesus but starkly declares it at its high point of autonomy and distinctness from God.[24] In order for biblical study to attain such a positive value for dogmatic Christology, much closer co-operation is required between exegesis and dogmatics than we have been accustomed to in recent decades.[25] But in this working-together the dogmatic theologian must not expect results from the exegete which the

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[18] For a historical and factual account of form-criticism cf. K. Koch, *Was ist Formgeschichte*? *Neue Wege der Bibelexegese* (Neukirchen, 1964); J. Rohde, *Die redaktionsgeschichtliche Methode* (Hamburg, 1966); for the Catholic side cf. the splendid study by A. Vögtle, *Das Neue Testament und die neuere katholische Exegese* I (Freiburg, 1966).

[19] cf. the conciliar constitution *Dei Verbum*, No. 12, and the relevant commentaries.

[20] cf. ibid., No. 19 and the presentation by A. Vögtle, loc. cit. (cf. note 18), pp. 68-96.

[21] For the latest developments in the study of the historical Jesus cf. the large report on the literature by W. G. Kümmel, 'Jesus-Forschung seit 1950', *Theologische Rundschau* NF 31 (1965/66), pp. 15-46 and subsequent issues.

[22] For an example with particular reference to the title 'the Son' cf. the author's own discussion in *Mysterium Salutis* (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 356 ff.

[23] With reference to the question of the self-awareness of Jesus cf. the historical study of the problem by H. Riedlinger, *Geschichtlichkeit und Vollendung des Wissens Christi* = *Quaest. disp*. 32 (Freiburg, 1966).

[24] cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 105-120; also 'Current problems in Christology', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 149-200 B. Welte, 'Zur Christologie von Chalkedon', *Auf der Spur des Ewigen* (Freiburg, 1965), pp. 429-458; F. Malmberg, *Über den Gottmenschen* = *Quaest. disp*. 9 (Freiburg, 1959).

[25] cf. K. Rahner, 'Exegesis and Dogmatic Theology', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 67-93.

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latter is unable, in all historical integrity, to give. The dogmatic theologian must show better than before that, within a correct understanding of Christological dogma (purified of mythological accretions), the exegete's genuine results are quite adequate as a point of departure and a foundation for dogmatics. So this co-operation is of the greatest practical value for evangelism today, for only in this way can Christology so develop as to satisfy today's conditions of faith.

Furthermore the Decree on Priestly Formation[26] in the future has provided Catholic biblical studies with a larger and more fundamental task than merely the furnishing of proof-texts for theses which have already been selected for exegetical study. Biblical theology is commissioned to determine, as a result of its own studies, what are to be the themes of systematic theology, i.e. not merely to insert the appropriate biblical material into a given scholastic framework (as is clearly the case, for instance, even in von Ceuppen's *Biblical Theology*). As opposed to the previous analytic and scholastic method (whereby a thesis is propounded, analysed according to its concepts and then proved from [14] 'sources'), there can be no doubt that an *a posteriori* and synthetic method will facilitate a considerable enrichment and change of perspective of the compass of dogmatic theology. Themes such as a Theology of History, a Theology of the Word, the Hermeneutics of Theological Statements, will then automatically find a place in systematic theology. Or to give a small but important example: up to the present day there is probably not a single official Catholic ecclesiology which expounds a theology of the local church as a concrete actualization of the Church as a whole,[27] a theme expressly recommended by the text of the Constitution on the Church. However, in a dogmatic ecclesiology whose subject-matter had been dictated by biblical theology it would have been assumed at the outset. It is now the business of biblical studies to do justice to this officially commissioned task of being, in a sense, the mistress and not merely the handmaid of dogmatic theology.

V

Something more must be said concerning 'systematic' theology, i.e. chiefly dogmatics and moral theology. First of all it is clear that the Council has rightly proposed many tasks as a result of its express teaching. Theology will have to concern itself above all with the Council's *ecclesiology*. The Council has naturally formulated its teaching according to tradition. But that does not militate against the fact that it has moved many themes in ecclesiology to the forefront of our theological awareness which will reward and which require further consideration, and which have in addition thoroughly practical consequences. We mention here only a few of these themes, in no systematic or logical order: the more precise relation of papal primacy to the whole episcopate;[28] the nature of [15] the

[26] cf. the Decree on Priestly Formation, No. 16.

[27] In detail with respect to the Council cf. K. Rahner, 'Das neue Bild der Kirche', *Geist und Leben* 39 (1966), pp. 4-24, esp. pp. 7-11; cf. 'The new image of the Church', *Theological Investigations*, X; cf. the *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (cf. note 4); also *Lebendiges Zeugnis*, Nos. 2-4 (October, 1966), pp. 32-45, cf. 'On the presence of Christ in the Diaspora Community', *Theological Investigations* X; B. Neunhäuser OSB, 'Gesamtkirche und Einzelkirche', *De Ecclesia*, ed. G. Baraúna, vol. 1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 547-573. Cf. also 'The presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at worship', *Theological Investigations* X.

[28] cf. *The Episcopate and the Primacy* by the author (together with J. Ratzinger) (Freiburg and London, 1962), the author's commentary on the third chapter of the Constitution on the Church referred to on p. 5 note 4, and a study of the question of the bearer of full authority in the Church in the *Festschrift für Erzbischof P. Parente* (special issue of the Roman periodical *Euntes Docete*), cf. 'On the relationship between the Pope and the College of Bishops', *Theological Investigations* X.

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magisterium;[29] the relationship of scripture and tradition;[30] the place of law in the Church as the sacramental gift of the Holy Spirit; charismatic roles in the Church;[31] the theology of the diaconate;[32] the eschatological character of the Church;[33] the non-Christian's possibility of salvation;[34] the ecclesiological aspect of Penance[35] (and of all the sacraments); the nature of revelation and salvation-history;[36] the general application of the synodical principle in the Church's constitution; the ecclesiological significance of the Evangelical Counsels and of the religious Orders in the Church; the meaning and importance of what is called the hierarchy of revealed truths;[37] the theology of mission;[38] the possibility of a *communicatio in sacris* among separated Christians;[39] the theology of the function of the non-Christian religions in collective and individual [16] salvation-history;[40] the Pope's obligation to avail himself of the Church's collegial organs (even if this obligation cannot juridically be standardised any further); the theology of the local community and altar-congregation as the Church;[41] the possibility of a historical development of the *jus divinum* in apostolic times;[42] the theology of the Word[43] and theological hermeneutics; the Church as *sacramentum salutis mundi*;[44] the theology of sin in

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[29] For this problem in the light of the decisions of the Council cf. *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (cf. note 4).

[30] cf. K. Rahner, 'Scripture and Tradition', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 98-112; K. Rahner/J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition = Quaest. disp.* (Freiburg and London, 1966); K. Rahner, 'Tradition', *LThK* X (Freiburg, [2] 1965), cols. 293-99.

[31] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Theology of the Restoration of the Diaconate', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 268-314; also 'Die Lehre des II. Vatikanischen Konzils über den Diakonat', *Der Seelsorger* 36 (1966), pp. 193-200, cf. 'The teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the diaconate', *Theological Investigations* X.

[32] cf. K. Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church = Quaest. disp.* (Freiburg and London, 1964); *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 154-160; II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 76 ff., 274 ff. (literature); *Vom Sinn des kirchlichen Amtes* (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 33 ff.

[33] cf. *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 253-312.

[34] cf. K. Rahner, 'Anonymous Christians', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 390-398; also 'Atheism and implicit Christianity' in this volume, pp. 145 ff.

[35] For further details cf. the studies referred to in notes 2 and 3.

[36] cf. K. Rahner, 'History of the World and Salvation-history', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 97-114; K. Rahner/J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition = Quaest. disp.* (Freiburg and London, 1966); in greater detail A. Darlap, *Mysterium Salutis* I, pp. 3-156.

[37] cf. the Decree on Ecumenism, No. 11, and the question of the simplicity of faith in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 142-145.

[38] For the fundamentally new aspects of the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity cf. J. Ratzinger, *Die letzte Sitzungsperiode des Konzils* (Cologne, 1966), pp. 59-63; K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 46-80.

[39] cf. the Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches, Nos. 26-27; the Decree on Ecumenism, Nos. 9 and 15. Cf. the commentary by Abbot M. Höck, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York and London, 1967).

[40] cf. K. Rahner, 'Christianity and the non-Christian Religions', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 115-134; H. R. Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions = Quaest. disp.* (Freiburg and London, 1966); also 'Die Kirche und die Religionen', *Umkehr und Erneuerung*, ed. Th. Filthaut (Mainz, 1966), pp. 292-311; J. Ratzinger, 'Der christliche Glaube und die Weltreligionen', *Gott in Welt. Festschrift für K. Rahner* (Freiburg, 1964) II, pp. 287-305; H. Fries, 'Das Christentum und die Religionen der Welt', *Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen = Studien und Berichte der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern* 27 (Wurzburg, 1965), pp. 13-37; H. Küng, *Christenheit als Minderheit = Theol. Meditationen* 12 (Einsiedeln, 1965); J. Feiner, 'Kirche und Heilsgeschichte', *Mysterium Salutis* I, pp. 324-336.

[41] cf. the literature referred to in note 27.

[42] cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflection on the Concept of "ius divinum" in Catholic Thought', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 219-243.

[43] cf. the various works by L. Scheffczyk, O. Semmelroth, H. U. von Balthasar, J. Betz, W. Breuning, H. Fries, K. Rahner et al.

[44] cf. the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Nos. 1, 9, 48, 59; the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Nos. 42 and 45; the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, No. 15; P. Smulders, 'Die Kirche als Sakrament des Heils', *De Ecclesia*, ed. G. Baraúna (Freiburg, 1966) I, pp. 289-312 (literature); K.

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the Church;[45] the theology of the Church's historically determined knowledge of truth;[46] and of the equally possible fallibility of this knowledge; these and many other broadly speaking ecclesiological themes have been broached by the Council. In addition to the work of directly commentating the Council's theological texts, systematic theology will doubtless have to concern itself considerably with these matters, and it will certainly have to do and say more than the traditional maxims current in theology before the Council. After this explicit programme on the part of the Council it can really no longer be said that present systematic theology – apart from the retrospective study of the history of dogma – can only conquer new territory in peripheral areas or special fields like that of Mariology, as everything else is already clear and cannot be better expressed.

[17] I may be mistaken, but the description of future moral theology in the Decree on Priestly Formation[47] strikes me as a biting but just criticism of the sort of moral theology generally widespread in seminaries. The Decree conceives the tasks and methods of moral theology quite differently from actual practice to date. For it demands a moral *and biblical* theology, a moral theology positively orientated towards love, the abandonment of a constricted concern merely for the individual's salvation, a morality of service to the world; these are all things which are so far not to be found in the average text-book.[48]

VI

There is a very understandable and attractive temptation, but one which would carry with it dire consequences for the future, and that is to think of the main task of systematic theology in the next few decades as the writing of commentaries on the Council's documents, and justifying historically and deepening systematically the themes explicitly discussed by the Council. Such a development in the theology of the next few years, however, would contradict the spirit and the intention of the Council. The Council did not intend to invite theology to be the means of the Church becoming turned in on itself.[49] It was the Council's intention to confront the Church of its own time with determination and courage. That was the Council's real aim. But in this situation of a Church which wishes to seek and find modern man and does not intend to be a historical relic of sociologically earlier times, the Church has to face quite different and more radical questions than those like the question of a more refined ecclesiology, for instance, which were explicitly posed by the Council. The latest questions are at the same time the oldest and most fundamental for Christianity. First of all the question of God, which requires in answer a theology of all forms of atheism[50] and agnosticism.[51] This question must ask, within a unified transcendental framework that [18] yet gives full scope for man's whole essence, about God himself and about the possibility and

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Rahner, 'Das neue Bild der Kirche' (cf. note 27), cf. 'The new image of the Church', *Theological Investigations* X.

[45] cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 253-294.

[46] cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, pp. 727-787 (literature); K. Rahner, 'Zur Geschichtlichkeit der Theologie', *Integritas. Festschrift für K. Holzamer*, ed. D. Stolte/R. Wisser (Tübingen, 1966), pp. 75-95, in this volume, pp. 64 ff.

[47] cf. Nos. 11 and 16.

[48] Details in the extensive study by J. Fuchs, 'Theologia Moralis Perficienda. Votum Concilii Vaticani II', *Periodica de re morali, canonica, liturgica* 55 (1966), pp. 499-548 (literature).

[49] For the diverse results of an ecclesiological self-reflection cf. K. Rahner, *Das neue Bild der Kirche*, pp. 4-7; cf. 'The new image of the Church', *Theological Investigations* X.

[50] Apart from the paper referred to on p. 15 note 34 cf. the whole issue of *Concilium* 3 (1967) (March).

[51] cf. J. B. Metz, 'Unbelief as a Theological Problem', *Concilium* 1 (1965) (June); also, 'Kirche für die Ungläubigen?', *Umkehr und Erneuerung* (cf. p. 16 note 40), pp. 312-329.

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the 'practice' of a genuine experience of God for modern man,[52] for whom God does not 'exist' 'in' the world.[53] This God-seeking theology must not deny the classical distinction between a metaphysical knowledge of God and the theology of the revelation of God, but must comprehend both and unite them in a new perspective.[54] It must take modern man's distress seriously with his experience – perhaps wrongly interpreted – of the 'absence of God', and must suffer this experience together with him.[55] Theology must not merely demonstrate in the abstract that the contingent character of finite being and the formal transcendence of the intellect imply God, such that experience of this contingence and transcendence implies experience of God.[56] It must inquire more precisely *where* and *how* modern man can so *experience* this that he is enabled to realise genuinely and confidently the objective nature of its implications, without desperately having the impression that he ought to be *silent* about what ultimately eludes language, leaving 'God' – though unexpressed – to the field of the love of one's neighbour, the courage of personal committal to one's own future, or the honest and willing acceptance of a bitter and absurd existence.

Then there is the question of Christ within an evolutionist world view[57] and within the perspective of a salvation-history which embraces the whole of humanity from the very outset, understanding Christ really as the apex of this general history of salvation and revelation.[58] There is the question of a framework of Christological concepts avoiding any undertones [19] likely to seem mythological to the ears of modern man,[59] and the search for a method of retracing the progress of the earliest pre-Pauline Christology from the Historical Jesus to the Christ of Faith.

Further, the question arises of an anthropology[60] which should interpret modern man to himself *as he actually experiences himself* in an existence embracing more than the 'animal rationale' of an abstract metaphysics; the question of a Christian anthropology which grasps the original unity of nature and grace[61] and does not banish what we in Christian terms call 'grace' to some region beyond concrete existence,[62] an anthropology which does not simply abandon factors like intercommunication,[63] love, the experience of the absurd,[64] of death,[65] to

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[52] cf. K. Rahner, 'Christian living formerly and today', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 3 ff.

[53] In detail cf. K. Rahner, 'Science as a "Confession"?', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 385-400; also, 'The man of today and religion', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 3-20; 'Being open to God as ever greater', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 25-46.

[54] cf. K. Rahner, 'Bemerkungen zur Gotteslehre in der kath. Dogmatik', *Catholica* 20 (1966), pp. 1-18; cf. in this volume, pp. 127-144.

[55] Besides the papers referred to in note 53, cf. the author's *Im Heute glauben* (Einsiedeln, [3] 1966), pp. 24-31.

[56] For the new shape of such a philosophy of religion cf. B. Welte, *Heilsverständnis* (Freiburg, 1966); also his *Auf der Spur des Ewigen* (Freiburg, 1965), pp. 315-336.

[57] cf. K. Rahner, 'Christology within an evolutionary view of the world', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 157-192.

[58] cf. the studies referred to on p.15 note 40. Also E. Schillebeeckx, 'The Church and Mankind', *Concilium* 1 (1965) (January).

[59] For further details cf. the studies referred to on p. 13 note 24. Cf. K. Rahner, 'I believe in Jesus Christ', this volume, pp. 165-8.

[60] cf. K. Rahner, 'Theologie und Anthropologie', *Wahrheit und Verkündigung. Festschrift für M. Schmaus*, ed. L. Scheffczyk/W.R. Dettloff/R. Heinzmann (Munich, 1967) I, pp. 1389-1407, cf. in this volume pp. 28-45.

[61] A more exhaustive treatment in K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 208-228.

[62] cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the experience of Grace', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 86-90; also his *Alltägliche Dinge* (Einsiedeln, 1966).

[63] Details in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 31 f., 272 f.; 'Reflections on the unity of the love of neighbour and the love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249.

[64] cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 34 ff.; K. Rahner, 'Christlicher Humanismus', *Orientierung* 30 (1966), pp. 116-121, esp.. 119 ff., cf. in this volume pp. 187 ff.

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moral theology or the realm of pious literature.

Finally we must include everything which can come under the heading of dogmatic eschatology. We lack a real hermeneutics[66] of eschatological statements; there must be much more radical thought about the relationship between individual and collective eschatology if our proclamation of the 'last things' is to be really worthy of belief today. The fundamental tenor of modern man's existence by no means exempts him from the danger of falling back into an Old Testament attitude towards the 'beyond'; the hope and postulate of an eternal life for the individual are not common assumptions forming a basis for discussion, as in the time of the [20] rationalistic Enlightenment, but attitudes into which men of today and tomorrow must first be carefully 'initiated'. Christian eschatology has not yet been obliged to face up sufficiently to the secular and utopian 'eschatology' of the age beginning now, with its view of a single humanity,[67] its 'hominisation' of environment,[68] and man's manipulation of himself[69] – a period in which man's *practice*, as opposed to what was previously his *theory*, appears in a totally new way as his highest and as his specific characteristic. A theology of hope[70] has yet to be developed out of the dry attempts text-books have made concerning the theological Virtue of Hope. We have as yet no theological ontology of hope, showing man as essentially one who exists *in hope*, and whose hope springs from an independent and original source which cannot be explained adequately simply in terms of a knowledge of the organic and evolutionary character of being and its possibilities. Only such a theology of hope as this could really come to grips competently with the Marxist conception of man.

The dialogue desired by the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II between the world's hope and the hope of Christianity[71] has yet to take place. In short, the subject-matter which the Council has delivered to tomorrow's theology is not the same subject-matter as discussed explicitly by the Council itself (if we exclude the remarks concerning 'the Church in the Modern World'), but the fundamental themes of the [21] Christian message upon which rests the whole hierarchically structured edifice of Catholic dogma: i.e., ultimate things concerning man's deepest need and his most exalted vocation. This is what tomorrow's theology must ponder if it is to be a theology worthy of the Council. It must carry this out with a faith which is prepared to be vulnerable,[72] which is continually breaking through the clear definitions of

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[65] Ibid., K. Rahner, 'On Christian dying', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 285 ff., cf. also pp. 25-144.

[66] For a first attempt cf. the essay 'The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 323-346, cf. also pp. 347-354 and *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 159-168.

[67] Initial starting-points in K. Rahner, 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 59-68, cf. also pp. 43-58; *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 135-153; *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 32 f., 33 f., 254 f.; II/2, pp. 40 ff., 42 ff., 109-202, 275 ff., cf. also supra, note 64.

[68] cf. J. B. Metz, 'Die Zukunft des Glaubens in einer hominisierten Welt', *Weltverständnis im Glauben*, ed. J. B. Metz/J. Splett (Mainz, 1965), pp. 45-62.

[69] For the issues involved cf. K. Rahner, 'Experiment Mensch. Theologisches zur Selbstmanipulation des Menschen', *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Aufriß einer philosophischen Anthropologie. Festschrift für Max Müller*, ed. H. Rombach (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 45-69, cf. in this volume pp. 205-224 and 225-252.

[70] cf. J. B. Mets, *Verantwortung der Hoffnung* (Mainz, 1968); cf. the author's 'On the theology of hope', *Theological Investigations* X.

[71] cf. p. 7 note 7 and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Nos. 85, 90, 92, 43, 3, 25, 21, 19, 56, 40, 23, 28; the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Nos. 20, 16, 41, 11, 38; the Decree on Ecumenism, Nos. 4, 9, 11, 19, 21, 23, 14, 18; the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Nos. 12, 14, 29, 31; the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church, No. 13; the Declaration on Religious Freedom, No. 3; the Declaration in the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nos. 2 and 4; the Decree on Priestly Formation, No. 19; the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, No. 19; the Declaration on Christian Education, Nos. 1 and 11.

[72] cf. K. Rahner, *Im Heute glauben*, pp. 24-31.

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formulas into the incomprehensibility of God,[73] a faith which compels theology to realise that this incomprehensibility is something quite simple and natural.[74]

It would also be good for theologians to consider how one might tell a modern man briefly what it is that Christianity proclaims and offers, yet at the same time in a comprehensible way and in a dynamic formula capable of driving him deeper into the fulness of faith.[75] There is no need for us to wish to replace or lay aside Apostolic Tradition. But practically no-one is taking the considerable pains necessary to correct the present tendency, where, on account of the widely different forms of theology and preaching, modern man cannot see the wood for the trees and thus does not penetrate to the 'fundamentals' of the faith which bear the 'hierarchy of truths',[76] which in turn give meaning and credibility to the whole complex structure of Christian doctrine. There are, or were, such 'short formulas'; they need not necessarily consist of only one sentence or of very few. Probably the earliest authoritative extant examples are 1 Cor 15:3-5 and 1 Thess 1:9 f.;[77] the most recent can be found in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, No.13.[78] But much more could be done in this direction, all the more since one must not be in a hurry to regard the formula 'the Word (the Son) of God became man' as being very meaningful or as commending itself to faith nowadays. As a bare formula, devoid of any further explanation, it can be very easily misunderstood, or so abbreviated that it is rejected almost instinctively as [22] myth. Furthermore it is not safe to assume, in undertaking such a task, that people understand what is really meant when one uses the word 'God'.

VII

It is my opinion that these particular tasks of 'systematic' theology will also result at last in a correct and promising understanding of '*ecumenical* theology'. Of course there must be *direct* ecumenical theology, controversial dialogue,[79] discussing the differences of doctrine between the Christian communions, clearing away misunderstanding, slowly learning to translate the various languages of the disparate theologies into each other, a theological controversy seeking unity and not more and more subtle justification for the disunity of the Churches. Certainly much has already been successfully achieved in this field in the last few decades.

It must be clearly emphasised that we have much to learn, not only from Protestant exegesis and biblical theology, but also from Protestant systematic theology. The task of learning does not only imply that, as far as the traditionally controversial themes are concerned, we must first of all discover *exactly what* the Fathers of Protestantism, its confessions of faith and its present theology precisely mean in all their various nuances; not

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[73] cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, pp. 689 f., 691 f., 696 ff., 768 f.
[74] cf. the papers referred to on p. 18 notes 52 and 53.
[75] For the need and the point of this kind of short formula, together with a sketch of the essence of faith cf. K. Rahner, *Concilium* 3 (1967) (March), cf. in this volume, pp. 117-126.
[76] cf. the Decree on Ecumenism, No. 11.
[77] For the exegetical import of these credal formulas cf. K. Lehmann, *Auferstanden am dritten Tag* (Freiburg, 1968) (incl. exhaustive literature).
[78] The text runs: '[Yet it is sufficient] that a man realize that he has been snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of the love of God, who has called him to enter into a personal relationship with Him in Christ.' (*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (London, 1967), p. 600.)
[79] Here it is impossible to deal in detail with the change of style of previous controversial theology. Cf. R. Köster's *Luthers These* '*Gerecht und Sünder zugleich*' *in der Interpretation Rudolf Hermanns* (Diss. theol., Innsbruck, 1965), pp. 1-62; also R. Köster, *Zeitschrift für kathol. Theologie* 88 (1966), pp. 121-162 (a revised version of the cited introduction to the dissertation).

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only must we go beyond the often frighteningly over-simplified representations of Protestant doctrine found too frequently in our textbooks;[80] above and beyond this there is an almost inconceivable wealth of theological questions and studies in Protestant theology concerning subjects which are not directly and explicitly matters of controversy, but which are all the same of greatest importance for theology on both sides. The relationship of word and sacrament or of institution and the occurrence (of grace), or the questions of theological hermeneutics, for instance, are not only, or even primarily, controversial matters on which the churches are divided, but rather themes of mutual concern, where Catholic theology can learn a great deal from Protestant theology and where in certain circumstances the lines of division of opinion cut right across confessional boundaries. In short, Catholic theology must in [23] future be willing to learn from Protestant theology in the area of systematics also. It is obliged to do so by the Council's Ecumenical Decree. In future the names of Protestant theologians should not only occur in our text-books at the point where 'adversarii' and their 'errores' are cited.

All this, if properly understood, is important and must be strongly emphasised here. But if ecumenism in general is only to have a real chance of uniting Christendom by the progress towards one future Church (which a Catholic too may say, who believes in the enduring and obligatory character of his Church's defined dogma and is convinced that the true Church of Christ 'subsists' in the Roman Catholic Church),[81] the same thing applies all the more to ecumenical theology. All churches and Christian communions will only find the same language and a common confession of faith, not in the first place by discussing present doctrinal differences as they have emerged from the past, but by all taking pains to learn the new language of the future which is to serve to proclaim the Gospel of Christ – without over-simplifying superficialities of Robinson's kind[82] – so that tomorrow's man can understand it. Christian theology for today's 'heathen' is also the best ecumenical theology.[83] Naturally efforts are being made in this direction on both sides. But they are insufficient in quantity and quality, at least on the Catholic side. We do not have the 1,000 volumes on 'atheism' which would be needed if we were to justify the innumerable books of Mariology which we do have.

Given all this, we may make a similar observation with regard to the Protestant side. It is precisely the 'orthodox' theology, with which we are most closely concerned, which is in danger of remaining a theology for an ever-diminishing circle of pious believers, and of being preoccupied with the discussion between the various theological alignments within Protestantism and with the ecumenical dialogue, to the neglect of tomorrow's theology for the 'heathen' with whom we in the *diaspora* live. But if *this* theology is pursued by both sides it will be the most hopeful and important branch of an ecumenical theology. Might it not come about, for instance, that when Protestants manage to present the doctrine of [24] Justification in a form which modern man can really find credible – and I am not denying the burden and difficulty of such a new task – Catholic theologians might be able to give their assent to it? If we Catholics can see more clearly, through a theology in dialogue with modern man, that the question of 'morality' and 'works' is ultimately the question of God, his grace and thus the question of faith, might it not be that the Protestant Christian could

[80] Of course the same is true of the other side, as far as Catholic doctrine is concerned.
[81] cf. the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No. 8, cf. the commentary by Alois Grillmeier, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York and London, 1967) I, pp. 170 f., 199 f., and note 33 (literature). Further K. Rahner, 'Kirche, Kirchen und Religionen', *Theologische Akademie* 3, ed. K. Rahner/O. Semmelroth (Frankfurt, 1966), pp. 70-87, esp. 79 ff., cf. 'Church, churches and religions', *Theological Investigations* X.
[82] For a correct Catholic understanding of the simplicity of faith cf. K. Rahner, *Im Heute glauben*, pp. 32-42; *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 142 ff.; II/2, pp. 164 ff.
[83] In more detail cf. K. Lehmann, *Concilium* 3 (1967).

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come to understand that we Catholics do not after all subscribe to a theology of self-justification, but that for us too 'faith' may be the key word for our relationship with God? If then, instead of justifying the differences and divisions in the Church, conditioned as they are by history, society, psychology and race, by means of increasingly subtle theological distinctions and theories, we determined to strive for a possible common confession of faith, sufficient (though not ignoring the remaining deep differences between the 'schools') for the Church's unity in the matters of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, and sufficient for a social unity as far as is necessary according to the will of Christ; if the Catholic Christian asked nothing more of the separated brethren than what *genuine* dogma[84] and *ius divinum*[85] demand (and we still await a clear decision in this direction); then one can hope against hope for a unity in the Church embracing all who expressly acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord.

VIII

We must speak of yet another theology and its future tasks: *practical* theology, usually known to us as 'pastoral theology'. Pastoral theology can no longer be merely a collection of pious recommendations for the simple parish clergy in the holy and effective execution of their office, especially after a Council which intended to be essentially 'pastoral',[86] in which the Church reflected specifically on the novel future she is going forward to meet, and in which there was discussion of the college of bishops, the office of a bishop, bishops' conferences, of the responsibility of the whole Church for mission and of each part of the Church for the whole. Practical theology today must concern itself with the Church's *total* sphere of action, with the help of theological reflection on the [25] Church's present situation.[87] If a Council discusses 'the Church in the Modern World' in a special Constitution, theology too must deal with the subject with the greatest thoroughness and clarity and in a truly theological way. So far, however, we do not find this particular theme treated as an explicit topic of theology; the Council of the Church has left its usual theology far behind in this matter. One cannot fail to be aware of this, however critical one may be as to the details of the Pastoral Constitution.

Where else should this theme of the Council's be expressed and where should the questions be brought together, if not in pastoral theology? Indeed, the Constitution's title itself declares this to be the case, and it is also emphasized by the Decree on Priestly Formation, which demands an independent discipline of pastoral theology and also that the latter should permeate and fertilize all other disciplines.[88] Canon *law* alone cannot carry out this task. Not only because its business is more the history and interpretation of *existing* law than the question 'de lege *condenda*', but chiefly because the total activity of the Church is not commensurate with the observation of explicit legal norms, neither with those in force nor with those which should be.[89] In an age of cybernetics, of the great social organizations with their self-regulating controls, questions such as how the Church as a whole is to live and act, how the central authorities in Rome should be constructed, how we should have a strategy of

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[84] cf. the remarks on p. 4 note 1.
[85] cf. the study mentioned on p. 16 note 42.
[86] For the problems involved in this concept cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur theologischen Problematik einer "Pastoralkonstitution"' (cf. p. 7 note 8) and the author's introduction in K. Rahner/H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Kleines Konzilskompendium* (Freiburg, [2] 1967), pp. 13-33; also K. Rahner, *Das Konzil – ein neuer Beginn* (Freiburg, 1966).
[87] cf. the study referred to on p. 7 note 8 and the author's remarks in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 178-276.
[88] cf. the Decree on Priestly Formation, Chapter VI, Nos. 19-21.
[89] cf. K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1965), pp. 333-343.

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mission and not merely 'tactics', how a diocese should be administered, how we should be influencing the 'politics' of learning and culture with its wide sphere of penetration; all these issues can no longer be entrusted in a paternalistic manner to the wisdom, *savoir faire* and experience of the leading men of the Church.[90] Of course, the decision must be theirs. But the consideration and study necessary *before* the decision, in all questions of the Church's present commission, require nowadays scientific method and systematic execution. We need a pastoral theology which, as far as the scope mentioned here is concerned, does not yet exist. The pastoral Council calls for a new pastoral theology, broader in its compass and deeper in its methods, which, within the enduring statements of [26] ecclesiology concerning the Church's permanent essence, and enlightened by a theological view of the present situation, seeks to discover at least approximately what are the imperatives which must determine the Church's concrete action as a whole. Practically everything remains yet to be done in this kind of scientific 'practical theology' with its own formal object and its own method.

IX

The Council's 'challenge' to theology is great; greater, no doubt, than the Council fathers themselves realised. This renewal of theology, its *aggiornamento*,[91] should be encouraged by those in authority in the Church as well. Not only by the regional bishops' conferences carrying out the task committed to them by the Council thoroughly and with all speed, and finding and issuing a new *ratio studiorum* for the training of the clergy; not only by the bishops being magnanimous and courageous in providing enough priests for the work of study in spite of the shortage of clergy, which is to some extent real and to some extent imaginary;[92] not only by the bishops encouraging lay theologians above and beyond the requirements for schoolteachers of religion, giving them aims and opportunities for their own theological study, since there is by no means any need for the διδάσκαλοι and the πρεσβύτεροι in the Church to be always the same people;[93] not only by the bishops in their home dioceses maintaining – as far as conditions allow, and in their own interest and in the interest of theology itself – the kind of contact with theologians which they found in Rome (much to the surprise and joy of the theologians and themselves); not only because the Papal Secretariats for Ecumenism, Non-Christian Religions and Modern Atheism can only fulfil their functions as a result of a renewed theology and they should thus help to encourage it; but in a world which has now become a world of science, of 'egg-heads' and specialists, the Church could and ought officially to accept the responsibility of furthering theology in many other ways and institutions of theological study, beyond what has been said here. There is still very [27] considerable progress to be made to make Catholic theology international.[94] Since no-one can do everything, why could there not be internationally agreed and arranged centres of special study in theology to the advantage and with the co-operation of the whole of Catholic theology? Could there not be a collection of funds from the whole Church for

[90] cf. the author's studies: 'Kirchliches Lehramt und Theologie nach dem Konzil', *Stimmen der Zeit* 178 (1966), pp. 404-420; 'Vom Dialog in der Kirche', ibid. 179 (1967), pp. 81-95, both in this volume, pp. 83 ff. and 'Dialogue in the Church', *Theological Investigations* X.
[91] cf. p. 24 note 86.
[92] For this problem cf. the author's indications in N. Greinacher/H. T. Risse (ed.), *Bilanz des deutschen Katholizismus* (Mainz, 1966), pp. 506-508.
[93] For instance, why should there not also be laymen among the professors of the Catholic faculties? Can one debar laymen from exercising functions not necessarily connected with priesthood without betraying the spirit of the Council? Cf. the composite volume referred to in note 92, esp. pp. 504-506.
[94] The first-fruits of this kind of concrete co-operation are the international theological journal *Concilium* (1965 ff.) and the lexicon *Sacramentum Mundi* (English edition 1968 ff.).

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Catholic theology as for Catholic missions, though on a more modest scale? Could not the contact between Church administration and Church study be closer and institutionally more regulated? Could not the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which arose out of the old Holy Office, *positively* encourage theology by creating 'study commissions' on the more important questions which concern it, and by entrusting them to theologians outside Rome as well, working ideally in a team project?[95] In brief we must ask whether the whole business of theological study in the Church could and must not adopt, in its own way, with less self-consciousness and to a greater degree than hitherto, the sociologically and technically determined organizational forms which have become essential and hence usual in modern science and society.[96]

Programmes and institutions cannot replace men of creativity, least of all in theology. It follows that in the future too, theology will remain the gift of the Spirit to the Church. But he will summon and empower it out of the longings and needs of the times. There must be theology, so that 'the Word of the Lord may speed on and be glorified' (2 Thess 3:1). If theology trusts in the Grace of God and is really one with its mission to tomorrow's world, it will become good theology, achieving what the Council has empowered it to do.

[95] For instance, when one studies the Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy one may doubt whether the decision of the Holy Office (now the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) in 1957 concerning concelebration (*DS* 3928) would have been exactly the same if an *international* commission of expert theologians and liturgists had studied the question seriously *beforehand*.

[96] cf. p. 25 note 90.

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[28]

2

THEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

This short paper[1] is intended to show that dogmatic theology today must be theological anthropology and that such an 'anthropocentric' view is necessary and fruitful. The question of man and its answering may not be regarded, therefore, as an area of study separate from other theological areas as to its scope and subject-matter, but as the whole of dogmatic theology itself. This statement does not contradict the 'theocentricity' of all theology as expressed, for instance, in St Thomas' doctrine that God is as such the formal object of revelation theology. As soon as man is understood as the being who is absolutely transcendent in respect of God, 'anthropocentricity' and 'theocentricity' in theology are not opposites but strictly one and the same thing, seen from two sides. Neither of the two aspects can be comprehended at all without the other. Thus, although anthropocentricity in theology is not the opposite of the strictest theocentricity, it *is* opposed to the idea that in theology man is one particular theme among others, e.g. angels, the material world; or that it is possible to say something about God theologically without thereby automatically saying something about man and vice versa; or that these two kinds of statements are connected with one another in respect of their object, but not in the process of knowing itself.

Similarly, this anthropological focus in theology is not opposed to or in competition with a Christological focus. It is not possible to demonstrate this in more detail here; we merely observe that anthropology and Christology mutually determine each other within Christian dogmatics if they are both correctly understood. Christian anthropology is only able to fulfil its whole purpose if it understands man as the *potentia obœdientalis* for the 'Hypostatic Union'. And Christology can only be undertaken from the point of view of this kind of transcendental anthropology; for in order to say today what the 'Hypostatic Union' is without being suspected of merely reproducing no longer feasible 'mythologies', the idea of the God-man needs proof of a transcendental orientation in [29] man's being and history under grace.[2] A purely *a posteriori* Christology, unable to integrate Christology correctly into an evolutionary total view of the world,[3] would not find it easy to dismiss the suspicion of propounding mythology.

I

This anthropology is naturally to be understood as a transcendental anthropology. A *transcendental investigation* examines an issue according to the necessary conditions given by the possibility of knowledge and action on the part of the subject himself. Such an investigation presupposes that the subject of the act of knowing is not simply a 'thing' among others which can be made at will the object of a statement including other objects, but which is not present at all – even implicitly – in statements purely about other objects. If I speak of Australia I have not said anything, not even implicitly, about Java. But in such a statement (from the point of view of its content and import) I have said something implicitly about man

[1] cf. the list of sources for the occasion of this paper.
[2] cf. 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 105-120.
[3] cf. 'Christology within an Evolutionary view of the World', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 157-192.

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as its subject (in so far as the statement, in order to be possible at all, necessarily presupposes various things about man). I have expressed and affirmed this by means of subjective implication. Therefore, if one wishes to pursue dogmatics as transcendental anthropology, it means that whenever one is confronted with an object of dogma, one inquires as to the conditions necessary for it to be known by the theological subject, ascertaining that the *a priori* conditions for knowledge of the object are satisfied, and showing that they imply and express something about the object, the mode, method and limits of knowing it.

In general, transcendental investigation does not assume that the material content of the object in question can be adequately deduced from the transcendental conditions whereby it is known by the subject, nor that this content, known *a posteriori*, is unimportant for the subject's existence (his 'salvation') and for the truth of his knowledge. It does not regard this content as in itself merely indifferent material whereby the subject experiences his own *a priori* and necessary being. This applies fundamentally and decisively to a theological transcendental investigation and method as well. For instance, not only is it important for a true Christology to understand man as the being who is orientated towards an 'absolute Saviour' both *a priori* and in actuality (his essence having been [30] elevated and set in this direction supernaturally by grace), but it is equally important for his salvation that he is confronted with Jesus of Nazareth as this Saviour – which cannot, of course, be transcendentally 'deduced'.

On the other hand, to interpret the whole of dogmatic theology as transcendental anthropology means that every dogmatic treatment must also be considered from its transcendental angle, and that one must therefore face the question, what measure of actual material content subsists in the theological subject's *a priori* 'structures' implicit in a particular theological statement? In other words it means that the transcendental side of knowledge must not be overlooked but taken seriously. The problem we mentioned of the relationship between transcendental, *a priori* theology and descriptive, historical and *a posteriori* theology is not solved, of course, by what we have just said. The problem only reveals its depth and acuteness when one is aware of the fact that in theology the final *a priori* precondition for the subject's theological knowledge, i.e. grace (ultimately the self-communicating God, acting freely in history) is the real content, or rather, the objective foundation of what is known and experienced *a posteriori* in history. One finds that in theology the *a priori* character of the subject and the *a posteriori* quality of the historical object enjoy an exclusive and unique relationship. But we must return to this matter later.

Let us illustrate what we have outlined in the abstract with a few small examples chosen at random.

Theology discusses angels. In this it bases itself on the Old and New Testaments. Traditional academic theology speaks of these angels as of any other objects and phenomena. Certain things are said about them in the scriptural revelation; therefore there are angels. By collating and systematizing the data of scripture an angelology can be developed in the same way that one speaks of anything else of which one has somehow acquired knowledge. If it had so happened that God had not revealed it, then there would be no angelology; but since it has pleased him to reveal it, as he might have revealed innumerable other facts which remain hidden from us (e.g. whether there are body-soul creatures, possessed of 'sanctifying' grace, on other stars), we do have an angelology (but no theology of extra-terrestrial embodied intelligences). A modern man will ask first of all what this utterly strange angel-lore has to do with him, since angels do not occur in his scientific sphere of experience; for what purpose God is supposed to have communicated this knowledge, and whether it is credible at all. Scandalized, he will be driven to examine the course of [31] history of this so-called revelation, and will be tempted to conclude that the remarks about angels in the Old Testament (upon which the New Testament depends) do not give the impression of having

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been communicated from heaven, but of having drifted into the minds of the Old Testament theologians from their cultural and religious environment. Now into this situation of tension between traditional angelology and scepticism of it, a transcendental theological anthropology is to be introduced. I.e. the question must be asked: where in man's theological understanding of himself is there an area which might be occupied by such a thing as an angelology? What kind of theological self-understanding on the part of man finds expression in angelology? In other words: if we assume heuristically that revelation tells man whence he comes and what he is in the present and future, and *only* this, can it be made intelligible from this that an angelology belongs within such a revelation? Perhaps what is really expressed in revelation is not the existence and nature of angels as such at all, but man's relationship with them. Angels are assumed as given (and for the moment we may leave it as an open question whether this assumption is affirmed as a proposition or propounded as a hypothesis in anthropological revelation as such). We are not concerned here to show how and within what limits an angelology can be developed from such a starting-point.[4] It is only our intention to demonstrate by means of an essentially small and recondite example what is the significance of this kind of anthropological emphasis and focus in dogmatic theology.

Let us take another example. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot easily be elicited from scripture if one is precise in one's biblical theology.[5] When the doctrine is presented in pure objectivity, the listener often wonders what it means, how he can understand any of it at all, and why it has been revealed for the purpose of his salvation; for it seems to him like a subtle, dialectical game with concepts, in which each proposition appears to eliminate every other one, and in which one can scarcely gather what is left intact in any proposition apart from various words (provided that, in attending to one proposition, one does not forget a large part of what the others contained, and thus understand it in what is from the point of view of controversial dialectic an inadmissible way). Simply to claim that one is concerned here with a mystery, and that the doctrine [32] of the Trinity is necessary in order to be able to make any Christological statement, is on its own insufficient to help us out of the situation. For even in the case of a mystery one must understand *why* there is *more* to it than merely an occasion for a *sacrificium intellectus* in the face of a formula of apparently unintelligible verbalisms.[6] Nor is it convincing to appeal to Christology if one considers that since Augustine academic theology has assumed unhesitatingly that any divine person can exercise a hypostatic function in a human nature; consequently we are saying very little if, when speaking of *God's* incarnation, we emphasise that it takes place through the *Logos*, whose hypostatic function *per se*, under these presuppositions, cannot be distinguished in any way from any other divine person's possible function.[7]

However, if the anthropocentric perspective is applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, many things become more intelligible without at the same time destroying the mystery. We need only make the quite legitimate assumption that, on account of God's absolute *self*-communication in 'uncreated' Grace, the immanent Trinity is strictly identical with the economic Trinity and vice versa,[8] and we are then able to read the doctrine of the Trinity 'anthropologically' without falsifying it. In other words if we presuppose that our relationship

[4] For a starting-point for an angelology cf. the article 'Angelologie' in *LThK* I (Freiburg,[2] 1957) cols. 533-538.
[5] cf. recently the comprehensive work of F. J. Schierse, 'Die neutestamentliche Trinitätsoffenbarung', *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 85-131.
[6] For a correct conception of mystery cf. 'The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73.
[7] For more details cf. K. Rahner, 'Current Problems in Christology', *Theological Investigations* I, pp. 149-200, but especially the article mentioned in note 2.
[8] In more detail cf. 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate"', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 77-102.

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with God, formed by grace (including its concrete appearance in salvation history), has a directly trinitarian structure; that it is always a relationship with the inconceivable God; that it is communicated by the appearance in history of God's absolute self-committal in Jesus; that this self-committal 'comes home' to us as Love at the innermost centre of our being, without losing its strictly divine character; that the consequent trinitarian structure of our direct relationship with God through grace is also proper to God because of his actual self-communication – if we assume this, then the *permanent* mystery of the '*immanent*' Trinity is made possible.[9] This frees us from the impression of a dialectic of mere conceptual subtleties and renders it intelligible to us why that mystery had to be revealed at that particular moment in the history of revelation, when revelation had progressed to [33] the express awareness that the perfect gift of salvation is not only a gift from God by God, but is God himself. It is also no bad thing that according to this sort of understanding of the Trinity our relation in grace to the three divine Persons does not mean merely an 'appropriation'[10]; incarnation and man's divinisation through grace are more closely related than academic theology usually teaches. It is a further recommendation for this approach to the doctrine of the Trinity that it excludes right from the beginning the impression (which persists in spite of its explicit rejection in academic doctrine) that each divine 'Person' has a distinct centre of consciousness in respect of knowledge and freedom and that this is the real meaning of the word 'Person' in trinitarian doctrine as well.[11] It is not our intention here to develop a doctrine of the Trinity. The example merely illustrates what significance a transcendental anthropological approach can have in all topics of dogma, even in areas where one might perhaps least suspect its fruitfulness.

II

We must be content with these two examples and now turn to ask *why* this anthropological change of direction in theology is *necessary*. There are fundamental reasons from the nature of the case, i.e. from theology and its object. Besides this there are reasons from the contemporary situation and reasons of basic theology and apologetics.

1. First of all the *reasons* or reason from the nature of the case. As a consequence of the nature of every occurrence of intellectual (and hence also theological) knowledge, the question of the object of such knowledge raises at the same time the question as to the nature of the knowing subject. This inextricable interrelation of the 'objective' and 'subjective' side of knowledge does not need, of course, to be discussed or to be equally explicit in every sphere of study. A concrete discipline in natural science does not have to investigate its philosophical foundation as well: the latter is concerned with the mode of being and structure of the subject who is concretely engaged in science. But where the study of a particular field becomes really 'philosophical' in a specific sense – and theology must [34] do this of its very essence – every question concerning any object whatever also formally implies the question of the knowing subject.

A question is first stated philosophically by being put formally as the question concerning a particular object as such in the *totality* of reality and truth, for it is only in this way that the highest reasons, the philosophical ones, are sought out. If this is done, the subject is also

[9] For a deeper foundation for a starting-point for speculative trinitarian doctrine the author refers to his more extensive contribution in *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 317-401.
[10] For the basic problems cf. 'Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace', *Theological Investigations* I, pp. 319-346.
[11] For the issues involved in the concept of *person* cf. *Theological Investigations* I, pp. 156 ff.; but in the first instance the contribution to *Mysterium Salutis* II to which we have already referred, esp. pp. 385 ff.

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investigated, not only because it is a 'material' part of the totality, but because the totality (as that to which man is transcendentally orientated) can only exist in the subject as such according to the latter's own subjective uniqueness. The philosophical question as to a particular object is necessarily the question as to the knowing subject, because *a priori* the subject must carry with it the limits of the possibility of such knowledge. Thus the 'transcendental' structures of the object are already determined *a priori*. A really *theological* question can only be put, however, if it is understood as being simultaneously a philosophical one in the sense we have shown. For it is only a theological question as long as it sees the individual object with its origin in and orientation towards God.

But God is not one object among others in the realm of man's *a posteriori* knowledge but the fundamental ground and the absolute future[12] of all reality.

As such he can only be understood as the absolute point of man's transcendental orientation. Thus every theology of this kind is necessarily transcendental anthropology; every *onto*logy is onto*logy*.

If one wishes to avoid falling into a heretical and positivistic fideism, what has been said must be applied also to revealed theology. Revealed theology has the human spirit's transcendental and limitless horizon as its inner motive and as the precondition of its existence. It is only because of this transcendental horizon that something like 'God' can be understood at all. 'Natural', 'philosophical' theology is first and last not one sphere of study side by side with revealed theology, as if both could be pursued quite independently of each other, but an internal factor of revealed theology itself;[13] if philosophical theology, however, is transcendental anthropology, so is revealed theology too.

However, the thesis in question can be given a still more direct theological [35] basis. Firstly, revelation is revelation of salvation and therefore theology is essentially salvation theology. What is revealed and then pondered upon in theology is not an arbitrary matter, but something which is intended for man's salvation. By this statement we do not imply the sort of principle (as in the case of a 'fundamentalism') according to which certain objects can be excluded at the outset from the sphere of possible revelation, for what salvation really is is determined materially for the first time in the event of revelation. But the statement must be taken seriously. Only those things can belong to man's salvation which, when lacking, injure his 'being' and wholeness. Otherwise he could eschew salvation without thereby being in danger of losing it. This does not entail a rationalistic and unhistorical reduction of man to the status of an abstract transcendental being in his merely formal structure as such, as if what is historical and not deducible and what is experienced concretely *a posteriori* had no significance for salvation. It means that everything of significance for salvation is to be illuminated by referring it back to this transcendental being (which is not the same as *deducing* the significance *from* the transcendental being). In this sense, 'reduction' does not mean diminution but the process of establishing by reflex investigation. A comparison may clarify what is meant: the concrete beloved person who is the object of my love and in whom it is realized (and without whom it does not exist) cannot be deduced *a priori* from human possibilities, but is rather a historical occurrence, an indissoluble fact which has to be accepted. But in spite of this, such love for this concrete person can only be understood when one comprehends man as the being who must of necessity fulfil himself in love in order to be true to his nature. Even the most unpredictable, concrete love, occurring in history, must therefore be understood transcendentally in this way, in order that it may be what it should

[12] For the concept of the absolute future cf. *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 59 ff.

[13] cf. K. Rahner, 'Philosophy and Theology', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 71-81; for this question the studies by H. Bouillard are also of importance. In addition to his great work on Barth and his introduction to Blondel, cf. his *Logik des Glaubens* (Freiburg, 1966).

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be. And this applies above all in the case of salvation. For even if this is a historical event, what it concerns is precisely man's actual nature; it is his nature which is to be consummated in salvation or the loss of it. If revelation and theology are essentially concerned with salvation as such, theology's structure when confronted with any object whatsoever is bound to imply the question as to man's nature, in so far as this nature is susceptible to 'saving' influence from the object involved. In other words, a theological object's significance for salvation (which is a necessary factor in any theological object) can only be investigated by inquiring at the same time as to man's *saving receptivity for* this object. However, this receptivity must not be investigated only 'in the abstract' nor merely presupposed in its most general aspects. It [36] must be reflected upon with reference to the concrete object concerned, which is only *theologically relevant* as a result of and for the purpose of this receptiveness for salvation. Thereby the object also to some extent lays down the conditions for such receptiveness.

In addition to these more formal considerations there is a decisive and clearly outlined issue. The Council's Decree on Ecumenism emphasises that not all articles of faith in the 'hierarchy' of truths are equally close to the 'fundamentals' of the Christian Faith.[14] Thus according to the Council there is a foundation, an inner core in the reality of faith, to which all other realities (and articles of faith) are related. In the nature of the case this 'foundation' can only be God himself in so far as he is our salvation through his absolute self-communication, i.e. what we in theology usually call 'uncreated grace'. Salvation is mediated exclusively in and through this grace. Grace must therefore belong at least to the core of the salvation/revelation reality. If grace and the Trinity are understood, the reality of the triune God as such is given as well. For a full understanding of this grace another important condition must be presupposed: this grace is the grace of *Christ* (and he is not merely external to it as the reason for its being conferred), even in the case of prelapsarian grace. At the same time this means that, within the history of grace (as the self-communication of God acting freely in history), the history of humanity has come *in Christ* to its own historical and eschatological apogee, irreversibly manifested. If Trinity and Incarnation are implicit in the mystery of grace, it becomes intelligible that grace not only *belongs to* the core of the salvation/revelation reality, but *is* this core. (Of course the same could be said of the Trinity, especially *qua* 'economic' Trinity, and also of Christ as the apogee of God's self-communication to the world, precisely because these three realities mutually imply each other.)

Now it is only possible to speak of this grace in a meaningful way at all within a transcendental anthropological context. For, without destroying the fact that grace is God himself in self-communication, grace is not a 'thing' but – as communicated grace – a conditioning of the spiritual and intellectual subject as such to a direct relationship with God. The most objective reality of salvation is at the same time necessarily the most subjective: the direct relationship of the subject with God through God himself. If what 'grace' is must not merely be expressed in a mythological-sounding verbalism which communicates no experience, it can only be understood from the point of view of the subject, with his transcendental [37] nature, experienced as a being-in-reference-to the reality of absolute truth and free-ranging, infinite, absolutely valid love. It can only be understood in one's innermost regions as an immediacy before the absolute mystery of God, i.e. as the absolute realisation of man's transcendental nature itself, made possible by God in his self-communication.[15]

Without an ontology of the transcendental subject a theology of grace (and hence all

[14] The Decree on Ecumenism, No. 11.
[15] cf. the article 'Gnade', *LThK* IV (Freiburg,[2] 1964), cols. 991-1000; also 'Selbstmitteilung Gottes', *LThK* IX (Freiburg,[2] 1964), col. 627.

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theology whatsoever) remains fixed in a pre-theological picture-language and cannot give evidence of a starting-point for transcendental experience. This transcendental experience is indispensable today if theology is to do justice to modern man's question as to whether all the talk of 'Divinization', 'Sonship', 'God's Indwelling' etc. is not merely poetic concepts and indemonstrable mythology. Let us emphasise once more that this transcendental direction in the theology of grace means a similar direction for the whole of theology. For today even ontic Christology itself (in spite of its abiding validity) urgently needs translating into an onto-logical Christology, i.e. one which at the outset understands the 'nature' to be assumed not as a thing but as a transcendental spiritual quality. Since nature and being not only 'has', but *is* actuality and transcendence, the substantial unity with the Logos must be basically expressible in the terms of actuality and transcendence. It must be translated into these terms in order that what is meant by the 'Hypostatic Union' is said really clearly enough and is sufficiently protected from being misunderstood as mythology. All theology stands in need of this transcendental and anthropological change of direction because all theology is dependent upon the mutually determining doctrines of the Trinity, Grace and Incarnation, and these three basic doctrines today fundamentally require a transcendental approach.

2. A considerable objection could be made against what has been said: if it really is so necessary for all theology, surely there must always have been this kind of transcendental anthropological programme and method of investigation? – for good theology has not emerged today for the first time. Since, however, there has clearly been no such investigation, the demand for it cannot be legitimate.

First of all we must draw attention to the very basic difference between proclamation and theology, although in practice proclamation always contains an element of theological reflection,[16] and conversely theology [38] can never adequately transmute the proclamation into theological reflection.[17] Modern theological eschatology for instance has been left behind almost totally in a pre-theological stage of proclamation. By and large the ecclesiology of Vatican II has still not progressed beyond a certain systematization of biblical picture-language, apart from particular sections on Constitutional Law. Seen from this point of view it is by no means *a priori* impossible that there is as yet no really scientific, i.e. transcendentally reflected theology in many areas and topics. Why should it be impossible? The fact that there is a lot of thinking, talking, writing and 'systematizing' in some way or other in theology (and this is all good and laudable in itself) is no proof that theology has reached that stage of conceptualisation and reflection which must differentiate it from proclamation. This qualitative difference only really occurs, however, where and in so far as there is expressly transcendental thought, i.e. where the *a priori* presuppositions for knowledge and realisation of the particular realities of faith are explicitly included in one's reflections, determining the choice of terms for theological objects.

At the same time we by no means wish to imply that this transcendental anthropological method has been utterly absent from theology until now. There can be no question of that. We cannot give detailed examples here to show how this transcendental method has been at work everywhere in theology (even if in different intensities), at least since St Thomas, even if it had not yet become completely aware of itself nor comprehended itself explicitly in formal principles.[18]

But in the end, whatever the historical facts may have been, we must say that today's *contemporary situation* demands a transcendental anthropological programme and method.

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[16] cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 634 ff., 661 ff.; K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 135-142.

[17] For the concept of *kerygma* cf. *Mysterium Salutis* I, pp. 622 ff.

[18] For Thomas Aquinas cf. the outline by J. B. Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik* (Munich, 1962), my introduction, pp. 9-20.

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Plato, Aristotle and Thomas will remain immortal philosophers from whom we must learn. But this does not alter the fact (even if the kind of philosophy studied in the Church has only taken notice of it in the last forty years or so) that philosophy today and hence theology too *cannot* and must not return to the stage before modern philosophy's transcendental anthropological change of direction since Descartes, Kant, German Idealism (including its opponents), up to modern Phenomenology, Existentialism and Fundamental Ontology. With few exceptions, e.g. Blondel, it can be said that this whole philosophy is most profoundly un-Christian in so far as it pursues a transcendental philosophy of the autonomous subject, who stands aloof from the transcendental [39] experience in which he experiences himself as continually dependent, with his origin in and orientation towards God. But this same philosophy is also most profoundly Christian (more than its traditional critics in modern scholastic professional theology have grasped), for according to a radically Christian understanding man is not ultimately one factor in a cosmos of things, subservient to a system of co-ordinate ontic concepts drawn from it, but the subject on whose freedom as subject hangs the fate of the whole cosmos: otherwise salvation-history and profane history could have no cosmological significance, and Christological cosmology would be infantile concept-poetry. This inner dividedness is, however, not only a symptom of modern philosophy but of all man's works, and hence a symptom of philosophy in all ages; we must not let it hinder us from seeing what is Christian in this significant epoch of modern culture. We must accept the situation in all its fundamental essence, as a factor henceforward indispensable in a modern Christian philosophy, and so too in modern Christian theology.

Perhaps it might be said that the 'modern period' to which this transcendental anthropology is especially adapted is already a thing of the past or in process of decline together with its philosophy.[19] There may be a little or a great deal of truth in that. But philosophies do not change like fashions; each philosophy disappears into the succeeding philosophy of a new period of history and thus retains what is most characteristic of it.[20] If it is the case that Christian Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, together with theology, have been mostly asleep during the modern period, they cannot be spared the task set by modern philosophy on the grounds that perhaps this philosophy is declining in its contemporary form: the lost ground must be at least made up if theology is really to do justice to the spirit of the age which is to *follow* the 'modern period'. This is particularly applicable since a conjectured future philosophy corresponding with the constitution of tomorrow's society will have its roots in a part of German Idealism, perhaps in the Hegelianism of the Left and its critique of ideology. If the topics treated in the coming philosophy are hope, society, the critique of ideology, a new form of freedom within a new social bond, the experience of God in man's experience of planning himself etc., philosophy's theme will have become once again man and his being which he has submitted to planning and thus also to the [40] unpredictable future.[21] Therefore, seen from tomorrow's particular and local form of philosophy, the change to a transcendental anthropology constitutes a challenge for today's and tomorrow's theology.

3. Finally we must try to find a basis for this challenge from the point of view of apologetics and theological fundamentals. The tendency towards 'demythologisation' in Protestant theology and elsewhere stems from a serious concern, and with all its premature, heretical and unacceptable characteristics it is aiming at a theology which we shall need in the future (and of which we have an insufficient amount up to now), if the ancient and

[19] Naturally this thesis of R. Guardini's *Ende der Neuzeit* (Würzburg, 1950) cannot be discussed here.
[20] H. Rombach demonstrates well that this series of events is a true characteristic of modern philosophy, *Die Gegenwart der Philosophie* (Freiburg,[2] 1964).
[21] I have dealt in more detail with the problem raised here in 'Experiment Mensch. Theologisches zur Selbstmanipulation des Menschen', *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Festschrift für Max Müller zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. H. Rombach (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 45-69, cf. in this volume, pp. 205 ff.

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abiding Gospel is to be preached in a form sufficiently worthy of belief.[22] It can be said (and in part justly) that demythologisation theology is a new edition of the old theological Liberalism and Rationalism. But have we applied ourselves enough to the genuine topics and concerns of this rationalistic, liberal theology? That is the real question. Both we and orthodox Protestant theology have been satisfied too readily with the idea that the Barthian school has despatched the liberal school in Protestant theology. Although a great many individual themes of Barth's great work will remain, it is Bultmann who has triumphed over Barth on the whole in European Protestant theology.[23] And that is not merely an unjust and tragic accident in the history of ideas.

Modern man feels that thousands of statements in theology are just forms of mythology and that he is no longer able to believe them in all seriousness. Of course this is ultimately false, but there are real reasons behind the impression. It is due not merely to pride and stupidity on the subjective side, and objectively to the mysterious quality of the truth and reality of faith. Let us look dispassionately at today's real cultural situation: if a modern man who has not been brought up as a Christian hears the words 'Jesus is God made man' he will straight away reject this explanation as mythology which he cannot begin to take seriously nor to discuss, just as we do when we hear that the Dalai Lama regards himself as a reincarnation of Buddha. If this modern man hears of two people [41] dying in similar state and condition, and one is said to go straight to heaven because he happens to be the recipient of a Papal Indulgence, whereas the other spends many years in Purgatory because the Pope, as Keeper of the Keys of Heaven, has not opened up straight away; he will regard Indulgences, represented in this way, as a clerical invention against which his own idea of God radically protests. It will not be easy to convince him that God desires the salvation of all men, including children dying while not responsible for themselves, even *after* the Fall, and yet is unable to allow children dying unbaptised to approach his face because he cannot dispense with his own rule of the necessity of Baptism.

One could multiply these examples at length. There ought not to be so many. Furthermore, it does not seem to me that theology has dealt with these countless difficulties in a sufficiently intellectual way; above all, not in a way which holds out much promise for the practice of religious education. Let us repeat that in apologetics it is little or no use appealing in a positivistic manner to the 'mystery' actually revealed by God. If the *fact* of a verbal revelation were psychologically so absolutely compelling that doubts were utterly impossible, one could impose acceptance of its content in this positivistic manner as a mystery beyond all discussion. But if modern man finds the *content* of revelation unworthy of belief through the fault of theology, he will think himself justified, not illogically, in further doubting the *fact* of revelation. Incidentally these remarks show that we need to strive for a much larger area of mobility for fundamental theology and dogmatics than is usually the case.[24] All these difficulties of modern man can be traced to a common formal structure: theological statements are not formulated in such a way that man can see how what is meant by them is connected with his understanding of himself as witnessed to in his own experience.

Of course one cannot demand (and it would be heretical Modernism to do so) that the attempt must be made simply to deduce strictly all theological statements *from* man's experience of himself as if they were the latter's objectifying conceptualisation and

[22] For this simplicity of faith cf. K. Rahner, *Im Heute glauben* (Einsiedeln,[3] 1966), pp. 32 ff.
[23] This over-simplification is intended only as a rough observation of what has happened: consequently it by no means excludes the possibility of attempts at a rapprochement of both theologies, especially if they are both progressing towards a larger totality. (Cf. the works of E. Jüngel and others, for instance.)
[24] cf. esp. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 123-131, 132 ff.; *Im Heute glauben*, pp. 39 ff.; 'Intellectual honesty and Christian faith', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 47-71.

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articulation. That is not what is meant, although this problem is more difficult than the traditional opponents of Modernism mostly think,[25] for there *is* also an *experience* of grace,[26] and this is the real, fundamental reality of Christianity itself. [42] If we leave this question here, it must be remembered that the connections between man's experience of himself and the content of the statements of dogma must be conceived otherwise than simply as logical connections of deduction or explication.[27] There are correspondences, above all by virtue of the fact that 'nature' – understood as personal, intellectual and transcendental – is an inner and necessary constituent not abstractly of grace *per se*, but of the actuality and process by which grace can be conferred. If these connections were uncovered and thought about as the subject-matter required by dogma, rightly understood, dogmatic statements would not only appear more worthy of belief from the point of view of religious education and doctrine; rather, thorough reflection on these correspondences would enable one to penetrate deeper and more effectively to the significance of particular statements and would lead to the elimination of latent misunderstandings, unsuitable schemes of presentation and unjustified conclusions. The discovery of such connections between the content of dogma and man's experience of himself is, in actual fact however, nothing else but the required change to a transcendental anthropological method in theology. Thus today's demand for it is founded on reasons of fundamental theology and apologetics.[28]

III

What are the consequences for theology which will result from the fulfilment of the demand for a theology along transcendental anthropological lines? In conclusion we shall answer this question by reference to a few examples. Above all, by using this method it would be at last more possible to arrive at a credible idea of the process of revelation in its recipient. For it is a very strange thing that the kind of fundamental theology common today has such an indefinite idea of the nature of the process of revelation in the prophet himself, except in so far as it represents the process as a 'miracle' instead of a 'sign' and thereby renders it unintelligible why there should be so many parallels to it in analogous phenomena in the history of religion. The method we are recommending could do much in this field: the transcendental deduction of man as the one who listens to God in history;[29] insight into the fact (and the reason [43] behind it) that the Word of God can always appear only as a heard and believed word and yet can remain the Word of *God*.[30] Another significant theme, which we shall refer to in a moment, is the understanding of salvation-history with reference to man. It is also worth mentioning in particular the understanding and the correct appraisal of the true nature of the 'sign' (including its distinctness from the 'miracle'). If *salvation-history* is necessary for salvation, theology must discuss the theme of man's *a priori* transcendental character as being within and subject to salvation-history, in the same way that history determines the philosophy of history and the latter is even an element of the former. But so far there is as good as no theology of man's 'salvation-historicity' in professional theology: salvation-history is recounted, but there is no reflection upon its formal structures and, above all, upon its transcendental necessity.[31]

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[25] cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, pp. 657 ff.
[26] cf. *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 86-90.
[27] For a factual account cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, pp. 756 ff.
[28] cf. 'The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology', in this volume, pp. 3 ff.
[29] In more detail, K. Rahner, *Hörer des Wortes* (Munich,[2] 1963).
[30] cf. 'Wort Gottes', *LThK* X (Freiburg,[2] 1965), cols. 1235-1238
[31] cf. the sketch by A. Darlap, *Mysterium Salutis* I, pp. 3-153.

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We alluded previously to the significance of this method for the doctrine of the Trinity and for Christology, so we shall not go into it in any more detail here. Because there is in professional theology still largely a lack of a theology of salvation-history and of man's transcendental salvation-historicity, the necessary presuppositions for an *ecclesiology* adequate for today are also lacking. The foundation of the Church in its formal authority and structure is usually treated almost as if God could have founded this Church at any time at all, had he wanted to. In academic ecclesiology the eschatological and salvation-historical position and function of the Church, so essential to its whole character, is scarcely considered. There is no understanding of such an eschatological phase of salvation-history, however, because there is to a large extent no transcendental reflection upon salvation-historicity and the resultant phases of salvation-history. For instance, how can one make it credible that we now have an infallible Pope, if humanity and God together in their common concern for the good of all men were able to manage successfully without such an infallible source of truth for perhaps two million years? Historical changes which are of importance for salvation are only credible if it can expressly be made intelligible that man must have a salvation-history as a result of his very nature, i.e. that, as in other respects, it is not only a matter of the permanently valid essential structures alone as such, but that also in respect of salvation man is connected with concrete history and its succeeding phases. From this point of view it might be possible to distinguish more clearly the true nature of this kind of [44] ecclesiastical infallibility from its perverted form which, like all reality in the human sphere, inevitably and perpetually accompanies it.

No further explanation is needed to make it clear that a good ecclesiology needs all those concepts which can only be acquired suitably as a result of a transcendental analysis of the essence and necessity of human intercommunication. The method we suggest has a large and important field of application in the doctrine of the sacraments too. How else is one to investigate adequately the nature of the symbol, the ability to act as symbol, the necessity of symbols, the basic concept of sign-causality, the nature of the symbol's function in intercommunication, in order thereby to create important principles for the doctrine of the sacraments and for understanding it? If it were clear in the doctrine of grace that grace does not have a character as 'thing' but an onto-logical character – as the condition of willed personal acts in relation to the immediacy of God – it would be more clearly grasped than is commonly the case in the doctrine of the sacraments that infant Baptism should not be taken as the basic model of a sacrament. It would emerge that a sacrament is God's enduring offer to man's transcendental nature, mediated through the historical and symbolical categories of intercommunication, of participation in his (God's) freedom in the concrete decision-making of his existence. Then it would be clear that sacraments really do have nothing to do with magic. Meaningful principles for the frequency of receiving the sacraments could be developed, the number seven could be more easily justified – which cannot really be demonstrated easily in a purely positivistic and historical way. It could also be made clear for instance that Indulgences cannot be thought of as taking effect in any other way but by a more intensive and radical love of man, slowly integrating man's whole being into itself.

If we set aside Faith, Hope and Love on the one hand and the positive commands of the Church on the other, we see that the major part of *moral theology* is obliged to concern itself with what we are accustomed to call 'natural law'. Irrespective of how we are to determine the precise relationship between this natural law and grace, in any case it is only possible to justify natural law from within, by means of a transcendental deduction of the nature of man and – furthermore – of his fundamental setting in a historical situation with its unique claims on him. It cannot be done by a purely *a posteriori* collating of factual particulars and conditions of man's individual and social existence, even if they are ascertained to be of 'general' occurrence. For not everything that *is*, nor even everything that is or seems to be

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general, is automatically what *must* [45] *be*.[32] Particularly in moral theology a transcendental anthropological theology would be able to gain insights of considerable practical importance, especially (though not exclusively!) in the matter of eliminating claims which pose illegitimately as natural law.

In order to be equal to today's demands *eschatology* needs the foundation provided by a transcendental anthropology, in which man is comprehended as the being who plans himself, looking forward to an open future, as the being who *hopes*, empowered by God to embrace an absolute future. It is only this kind of transcendental anthropological and formal futurology which can provide explicit hermeneutic principles which are needed today to interpret eschatological assertions,[33] if the latter are to appear worthy of belief. It seems to me that academic eschatology is still not far enough beyond the mentality of the professor of dogmatics who says he never maintained that the Archangel Michael's judgment-trumpet was a 'tuba materialis' but he would certainly defend the view that the sound of this trumpet was a 'tonus materialis'. Instead of really being theology, which always essentially involves criticism of images and models, academic eschatology is often a sort of puzzle in which one tries to unite into a single picture the images of scripture, which cannot be so fitted together in a plastic form, neither do they claim as much. A transcendental foundation of eschatology would reveal that eschatology is not an anticipatory report of the phenomenal aspects of future events, revealed by a God who already witnesses them, but the necessary interpretation, inescapably integral to man's nature, of his present existence – eschatologically subject to grace – within the perspective of its absolute future.

There is no need to add to these observations. They were meant only to open up the view of those tasks which are automatically set by the demand for an anthropological perspective in theology. At the same time we eliminated the possible and manifest misunderstanding that this anthropological transcendental understanding of theology implies a *material* reducing of theological doctrine generally. The theology we have described surrenders no really obligatory assertions. But it becomes a little more modest in the face of its own commission. In spite of all the hard thought which may be involved in it, it will ultimately become 'simpler' again. Only thus will it enter into the correct relationship with the constantly valid kerygma. What is essential remains.

[32] cf. the essay referred to on p. 41 note 24, esp. pp. 56 ff.
[33] cf. 'The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 323-346.

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3

PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHISING IN THEOLOGY

The subject under discussion is so difficult and extends over such a wide area that it is not possible to do justice to it and produce a well-rounded discussion in this small compass.[1] We can only take up certain points; whether what is said here is particularly important and relevant must remain a matter capable of question.

We shall not therefore concern ourselves with the old questions, e.g. the fundamental relationship of philosophy and theology, their distinctness and interrelation;[2] the meaning and the limits of an autonomous philosophy and a 'Christian Philosophy';[3] the possibility and obligation of being a believing theologian and at the same time a philosopher; the historical origins of modern philosophy (seen as man's transcendental and existential-ontological interpretation of himself) in Christianity, etc. All these individual questions would lead back, in theology, to the wider question of the relationship of nature and grace (including of course the further question whether this traditional way of setting the problem is the basic one and one which is appropriate today),[4] and this implies the question of the liberation of the secular in its secular autonomy,[5] i.e. the fundamental constitution of the relation of nature and grace by God, who not merely gives, but *is* grace. In reducing the problem to these [47] terms it must be kept in mind that 'theology' – as opposed to revelation, kerygma and faith – is itself not a primary quantity,[6] but must first arise out of the relation of nature and grace, secular experience and faith. Thus it contains within itself a profane element which is related to theology's whole essence in a different way from the 'nature' which, *qua* reality and knowledge, is an inner constituent of revelation and faith. So we shall not discuss all these things here.

This whole contribution therefore cannot be anything more than a relatively loosely connected series of observations.

I

There must be 'philosophising' within theology if by 'philosophising' here one understands the activity of thinking about the revelation of God in Christ in the Church's proclamation, implemented with the support of all the means and methods of the intellect and by relating the act and content of faith to everything which man experiences, questions and knows. In the last analysis it is not so important whether this sort of activity should be called

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[1] cf. the list of sources at the end of this volume.
[2] cf. the author's 'Philosophy and Theology', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 71-81. Also cf. principally G. Ebeling, 'Theologie und Philosophie' I-III, *RGG* VI (Tübingen,[3] 1962), 782-830 (literature).
[3] For this concept cf. J. B. Metz, *LThK* II (Freiburg,[2] 1958), cols. 1141-1147 (literature).
[4] cf. K. Rahner, 'Concerning the relationship between Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations* I, pp. 297-317; 'Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations* IV, pp. 165-188.
[5] cf. the presentation by K. Rahner and J. B. Metz in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 222 ff., 242 ff., 267 ff.; II/2 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 35 ff., 40 ff., 42 ff., 203-267.
[6] For this distinction cf. K. Rahner, 'Theology in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 23-42; also (together with J. Ratzinger), *Revelation and Tradition* (Freiburg and London, 1966).

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'philosophising' or not.[7] On the one hand one might say for instance that what is meant thereby is precisely what is meant by the business of theology; on the other hand it can also be asked whether, even if one considers the secular material in such theology, it can still be called 'philosophy' today or whether something else has assumed the position previously held by philosophy as constituting the secular element and function within theology. This something else would not have to be called 'philosophy' if the word were to retain its historically given meaning.[8]

We shall need to speak of this later on. But if we exclude these questions, I think that the statement '*Within theology there must be philosophising*' retains an intelligible and important sense which is not as common an [48] assumption as one might imagine, at least in the practice of theology. According to the statement, this 'philosophising' must take place *within* theology. This ought really to be discussed explicitly, since it can be questioned whether theology today can assume the existence of a ready-made and thought-out 'philosophy' – as maintained in the theory and practice of Neo-Scholasticism – which needs only to be kept in view and 'applied' in theology, or whether this is to a large extent no longer practicable today, even if one has no wish to proclaim the 'demise of metaphysics'. To this question we merely reply as follows: *in actual fact* and thus for the purposes of instruction *there no longer exists today any philosophy which can be assumed as ready-made and already adapted to the needs of theology*. *This applies equally to the Catholic Christian*. In this sense there is no longer a Neo-Scholastic philosophy as a (relatively) complete 'system', since Neo-Scholasticism has in actual fact dissolved into a wealth of philosophies which, while maintaining a more or less conscious and productive contact with the Scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages and the Baroque, have taken up such a profusion of modern themes and complexes of problems (even though in very differing degrees) that it is scarcely possible today to speak any longer of a *single* circumscribable Neo-Scholasticism, able to function as *the* given instrument and *the* given partner-in-dialogue of theology.[9] And the reverse is true as well: as a result of its own approaches, methods and needs, theology itself puts so many questions and demands before philosophy as far as concepts and the possibilities of systematisation go, that traditional Neo-Scholasticism, as it was until recently and still is, is simply inadequate to meet these needs. Therefore there remains no alternative but to 'philosophise' within theology itself. We need only observe, on the one hand, that this is in accord with the essence of theology, and on the other hand that it implies no prior judgment with regard to an autonomous secular philosophy nor to questions of the present theological teaching curriculum.

Apart from this question, our first thesis contains a certain protest against a dogmatic positivism and a biblicism, two dangers which seem to me imminent today. There is certainly still a dogmatic positivism today. If *confines* dogmatics to the ordering and structuring of official [49] doctrinal statements and – ultimately – to rendering the latter intelligible by means of the retrospective history of dogma. It does all this *only* within the terms, conceptual models and horizon of understanding provided by these official pronouncements. This

[7] A purely semantic and historical study will have little result. On the other hand there are even many areas of modern science where people really 'philosophise' in a positive sense, although one would prefer not to use this word for various reasons.

[8] Here we merely refer to the phenomenon that, especially after Hegel, modern philosophy has assumed a different form (compare Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre for instance). One is clearly aware in any case of a certain reticence with regard to the term 'philosophy' or 'philosophise'.

[9] Thus it is obvious that, in spite of the tendency towards a *philosophia perennis*, Neo-Scholasticism itself since the seventeenth century has not been immune from clearly modern philosophical influences in its approach and method, and bears all kinds of traces reminiscent of Descartes and Kant and of the Critical Method. It was not until P. Scheuer, P. Rousselot, J. Maréchal and others that the step was taken towards an *explicit* engagement with modern philosophy.

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positivism will not have been overcome as long as this kind of dogmatics works with the concepts and perspectives of a calmly academic Neo-Scholasticism and so cultivates a certain rational and conceptual skill. Of course, this dogmatic positivism exists nowhere concretely in chemical purity. But it exists. If one is correct to regard the manipulating of Neo-Scholastic conceptual forms, in which official doctrinal pronouncements of recent times have been formulated, as still not free from dogmatic positivism, then it must even be said that this positivism is very widespread indeed. It is false because it signifies an unjustifiable and in practice impossible limitation of the true task of theology. It is unaware of the historically determined nature of concepts, even of those used in doctrinal declarations,[10] by absolutising them as being 'natural', intelligible to all, and perpetually adequate for the expression of dogma. It is not aware that the man who is engaged in theology, while retaining the unity of his own consciousness, must be in an open dialogue with the totality of his intellectual and spiritual existence, and that in actual fact this totality is today no longer identical with the secular thought-forms in which the official doctrines have until now expressed the faith and the kerygma. This kind of dogmatic positivism must therefore be exploded; there must be more 'philosophising' in theology in the sense already outlined.

Perhaps the biblicism against which the same demand is directed is only another form of positivism. However, it must be mentioned separately. Of course it is practically possible to carry on the tasks of exegesis and biblical theology in such a way as to be 'philosophising' in our sense to a more or less satisfactory degree. But if this happens, i.e. if what is aimed at is an understanding of the biblical statements, charged and confronted with the whole of the modern secular understanding of existence and the world, then biblical theology is obliged to burst the bounds of its own nature; not only because in this case official doctrine and the Church's historical development of dogma must be explicitly applied, thereby clearly going beyond the nature and capabilities of biblical theology, but chiefly because the secular understanding of existence and of the world must be the object of critical theological reflection. And this is plainly [50] more that biblical theology can do, if it is to be more than simply a poor name for theology in general, precisely because its 'soul' must be scripture, as Vatican II rightly says (though without wishing thus to encourage a biblicism). In addition, if biblical theology is to remain aware of its natural limits, it cannot consequently undertake of itself the task of reducing the plurality of individual, categorised scriptural statements to the single, original salvation/revelation-event which lies 'behind' scripture. Scripture itself lives from the event, and relative to this event scripture is *already* 'theology' and must always be expressed *anew*, although this by no means implies that the original uncategorized salvation/revelation-event can ever be attained as such in 'transcendental' purity in isolation, without the mediation of the process of categorizing and objectifying.[11] It cannot be solely the business of biblical theology itself to go back to this original event by means of reflection, nor to go forward into the single and yet perpetually pluralistic totality of man's understanding of existence and of the world. For this reason biblicism represents a misunderstanding of the true essence of theology as a whole, for within it there cannot be as much 'philosophising' as is necessary. It is also un-Catholic, since in the Catholic understanding of faith theology does not begin with an unquestioning and blind acceptance of scripture as the *norma non normata* of every expression of faith and theology,[12] and since Catholic theology is not faced with the dilemma, on the one hand of dissolving scripture by

[10] cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur Geschichtlichkeit der Theologie', *Integritas*, *Festschrift für K. Holzamer*, ed. D. Stolte/R. Wisser (Tübingen, 1966), pp. 75-95, cf. also in this volume pp. 64 ff.
[11] Besides the literature mentioned on p. 47 note 6, cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, ed. J. Feiner/M. Löhrer (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 686-689; 698 ff., 700 ff.
[12] For a correct understanding cf. K. Rahner, 'Scripture and Tradition', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 98-112.

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historical and exegetical study into a collection of disparate historical documents of religion, nor on the other hand, of elevating scripture in this theology to a position of absolute authority, involving a boundless *sacrificium intellectus*. All this must be said not ultimately so much because there is a 'light of natural reason' but because the salvation/revelation-event of faith does not begin in the first place in the express meeting with scripture but precedes it by God's gracious self-communication. On account of God's desire for the salvation of all men this self-communication takes place (at least in the form of an appeal to man's freedom) everywhere and at all times, even *before* the explicit confrontation with the pronouncements of the Church's apostolic kerygma.[13]

[51] Within theology itself, therefore, there must be philosophising, or, more simply, there must be radical thought, radical questioning and radical confrontation. That is at bottom the most edifying theology. For a theology of this kind needs to keep in mind its task of serving the Gospel of Christ; consequently it must not become an 'academic' curiosity, using the data of faith as objects of speculation without being existentially involved. On the contrary. 'Philosophising' goes on in theology as long as man radically confronts the message of the faith with his understanding of existence and of the world, for it is only in this way that the saving message can speak to the whole man as a free person. It is not possible here to give concrete practical examples of what this demand implies and how it would bring about change in dogmatics and moral theology. Our critical demand does not mean that we think that this kind of philosophising theology does not exist at all, but that even today there is not enough of it, as far as average teaching and, dependent on this, the possibilities of official Church pronouncements are concerned. For instance, where can one find a doctrine of the Trinity or a Christology which goes further than the mere repetition of the traditional formulas, making possible a really kerygmatic proclamation, genuinely orthodox and suitable for teaching, so that what is meant in these doctrinal treatises really *adequately* comes home to modern man without avoidable difficulties? Can our text-book theology generally talk of 'Angels', 'Sin', 'Penance', 'Purgatory', 'Indulgences', the 'Virgin Birth', 'Sacraments' in such a way that the 'hierarchy of truths'[14] – i.e. the rootedness of all these separate affirmations in the central foundation of the faith – is in each case made clear to modern man and is capable of being assimilated sufficiently by him? Is it not too often the case today that a text-book of dogmatics looks like an expanded version of the *index systematicus* of Denzinger? Does it become apparent that dogmatics is aware of the present crisis of faith? – without thereby falling into a pious sentimentality? Not, that is, by lamenting the situation, but by making efforts to *think*, not taking the easy way out, not trying to talk merely to the person who believes in any case, but to the doubter, to the person who is earnestly questioning and to him who does not believe; not by quoting the formal authority of [52] scripture and the *magisterium* in particular questions of dogma, but by trying to render the matter intrinsically worthy of belief.

II

A second thesis may perhaps be formulated as follows: *as opposed to earlier times, a 'philosophising' theology is confronted today with a pluralism of philosophies. It must take up its stand vis-à-vis them and work with them, but they cannot be adequately synthesised by*

[13] Besides the studies mentioned on p. 47 note 6, cf. the author's writings on 'anonymous Christians'; in particular also the relevant conciliar texts. An analysis of these texts is attempted by K. Rahner, 'Atheismus und implizites Christentum', *L'Athéisme contemporain* (ed. J. Girardi, in several languages), cf. also in this volume, 'Atheism and Implicit Christianity'.

[14] cf. the Council's Decree on Ecumenism, No. 11.

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each other nor by theology. Theology today is experiencing perforce what we may be permitted to call its 'gnoseological concupiscence'.

What we have just said by no means implies the relativistic or agnostic thesis that there is quite legitimately a pluralism of mutually contradictory philosophies, fundamentally irreconcilable '*per se*', or that man may well abandon at the outset the effort of trying to overcome his gnoseologically concupiscent situation by seeking to approach asymptotically an integration of the philosophies and thus a gnoseological integration. But while rejecting this kind of sceptical relativism we must not draw a veil over the unavoidable fact of the contemporary intellectual scene, that today the individual has to exist in an actual pluralism of philosophies, unintegrated and yet mutually coexistent, not separated by a cultural no-man's-land; this pluralism is present and will remain so.[15] Secondary reflection on the matter has produced a new situation and the resultant knowledge has become, in turn, a further factor of the situation. There was certainly a pluralism of philosophies before. But they were either historically separated by the no-man's-land dividing different cultures from each other, or else they came face to face within a common and readily-assumed perspective of understanding as mutually contradictory philosophies, automatically rejecting and excluding each other, or else capable of being integrated and 'transcended' in a wider synthesis. Even when confronted with many philosophies, *one* man could develop *one* philosophy, 'his' philosophy, consciously proclaiming it as 'Philosophy'. If one does *not* have the idea that philosophies are intended for storage in computers and if one remembers that philosophy can only exist concretely in the individual's mind – a fact which no dialogue can change – one is obliged to say that there is today an irreducible pluralism of philosophies, [53] that we are aware of it, and that the fact and the awareness of it are contributory determinants of the theologian's situation and therefore constitute a question for theology.

Therefore our reason for proposing the thesis is not that these philosophies are *per se* irreconcilable. In so far as they *are* irreconcilable they show themselves as false; that creates no new, previously nonexistent problem. Rather, the thesis holds because these philosophies, quite apart from the consideration of their truth-value, can no longer all be appropriated and known by the individual and consequently by the theologian, and because at the same time we know this fact as though in a *philosophia negativa* which is now not merely the consciousness of a materially empty field of awareness, but the consciousness of a historically present reality which has not, however, been mastered and which is in fact intractable. Later on we shall discuss how this 'concupiscent' pluralism of philosophies has arisen; not only from the actual mutual confrontation of the plurality of cultures in a world which has become one and which yet remains unintegrated, not only from the growing differentiation and complexity of the individual philosophies, but at bottom it originates in a pluralism of the human sources of experience, which can never be adequately comprehended. In the plurality of non-philosophical disciplines these sources of experience are ranged, as a matter of historical fact, in a variety of methods, problems and results which it is beyond the individual's capacity to grasp. This means that a comprehensive system of knowledge and education is no longer possible, even if one were to look upon the 'system' as an 'open' one.

Of course there are today *new* ways of arriving at a certain synthesis of man's diverse kinds of knowledge. For example, there exist now formal homologies between the problems and methods of the particular sciences. These homologies enable even the individual scientist (and the philosopher) in a particular field to gain a certain understanding of those disciplines with which he is not professionally concerned and conversant. However, such new methods

[15] cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 32-42; cf. ibid., pp. 21-30; *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 208 ff., 245 ff., 261 ff.; II/2, pp. 203 ff.

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of synthesising particular aspects of knowledge do nothing to modify the basic fact that concerns us here: more is known and questioned in the modern philosophies than can be dealt with by the individual alone, and the realisation of this inability is itself one factor in our intellectual existence today.

Whatever the more particular reasons may be, therefore, the known and experienced fact is incontrovertible: we know that there is a pluralism of understandings of the world and of existence, no longer capable of being integrated adequately by anyone, whether we call them 'philosophies' or [54] not. We do not need to admit this in a spirit of resignation, for it remains our task and duty to avail ourselves of as much of this pluralism as possible. But the fact remains: every man and every theologian, although he must philosophise in theology, knows less and less of 'Philosophy', since there are continually more and more philosophies, which no single person can assimilate.

At this point too one ought to produce concrete examples, but it is impossible here. Would not a modern philosophy of language be of the greatest importance for theological hermeneutics? But can I understand anything of it, if I must first know something of philosophy and theology? Is it *a priori* impossible for logistics to be of value for theology too? How shall I make any judgments about it if I understand none of it, and *could* only grasp it by first having understood the subject *completely* and as a specialist? How many theologians could say in all seriousness that they really understand something of German Idealism, and that they could deal with its problems and concepts and think within its perspectives? Is such a thing a 'luxury' for the theologian, considering that this German Idealism has been a contributory factor of the cultural and intellectual world we live in, even if we never hear more of it than we find in a newspaper supplement? Is it possible to pursue theology seriously today without knowing anything of the philosophies which have sprung from Marxism and the modern sociologies? Are we theologians justified and excused simply because all 'educated' people are in the same position in their want of education, and because it is considered proper only to speak when those who know differently are not present? Can it really be denied that the relationship of theology's intellectual level to that of other spheres of intellectual life was previously better than today? It is assuredly not that theology's level has dropped but because the other level has risen relatively quicker and more vigorously. But can we take comfort from that? What are the consequences to be drawn for theology from this pluralistic situation? I would like to mention especially two consequences in what follows: in a totally new way there is today inevitably a multiplicity of theologies, or they are in the process of growing slowly. The Church's teaching office with its particular function has been placed in a totally new situation.

III

Let us look at our first proposition: *today there is inevitably a multiplicity of theologies*. There have always been many schools of theology. This fact [55] was not only tolerated but acknowledged by the Church as an expression of the richness of its life and of the development of the faith within the Church. This recognition is still important today for a right attitude towards the new phenomenon to which we are drawing attention. But the former situation – of the many different schools and approaches in theology – is not the same as what is meant here. The 'schools' of old were either largely separated by a cultural no-man's-land, e.g. the theologies of the West and of the East, or else they existed *within* a milieu which was to a large extent historically, culturally and philosophically homogeneous, common and available to everyone. Or, on the other hand, the 'schools' opposed each other in clear controversy and contradiction, so that one had to *and was able to* decide in favour of

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one and against another; or else they could be comprehended and marshalled from a common standpoint of the kind we have mentioned, and thus to a large extent could be positively integrated into a higher unity. These former schools and approaches with their demarcated historical outlines do not really exist any longer today.[16]

If we are correct in what we have said about the practical impossibility of integrating the pluralism of philosophies in our historical situation – which we have seen as 'gnoseologically concupiscent' – then there exists today a pluralism of theologies in a much more radical sense, presupposing that we must always 'philosophise' in theology. What present-day theologian seriously has a simultaneous, accurate and sufficiently deep understanding of Scholastic Philosophy and its origins; Transcendental Philosophy in all its profoundly different forms; Existential Philosophy; the various impulses, issues, tendencies, new analyses and perspectives legitimately contributed by Marxist Philosophy; modern Philosophy of Language and hermeneutics; the philosophy which seeks to elucidate theoretically the relation between the plurality of modern sciences; and the philosophies of the East, now appearing on the scene of world civilisation as known but as yet uncomprehended quantities? Above all, who has any knowledge which is at all reliable concerning those particular modes of understanding of the world and of existence which are produced directly by the sciences as such without the mediation of a philosophy, and which are lived out eminently practically and 'unphilosophically', refusing to accept any self-reflection mediated by philosophical theory? No-one. We may say that one must nonetheless know something about [56] all these things. That may be true. But to follow this imperative means in practice that the individual merely acquires a denatured and second-hand version of what really needs to be lived and known. We may say that even today theology together with faith must reflect upon its sphere of origin, which lies deeper and more fundamentally in human existence, *prior* to this plurality of understanding of the world and of existence. Thus theology can and must be seen as the study of faith at a level prior to that of the profane sciences, speaking to man before he 'goes out' into the unintegrable pluralism which is his existence and his world. That may be equally correct, and it may provide the impetus to a new and more original self-interpretation of theology. Theology is then no longer understood primarily as a revealed synthesis and amplification of the profane view of existence, which it surpasses, but as its deeper source and thus also as the slender root which alone makes possible such pluralistic and unintegrable interpretations of existence. The result of this theology is not a synthesis of the pluralistic experiences of existence, but a transferring of them to the intractable mystery of God in humility and hope. It may even be that, starting from this sort of consideration, we may be able to grasp the nature of what is called the 'basic theological course' which is the subject of much discussion, but which is hardly understood at all.[17]

However, all this does not change the fact that, on account of the unintegrable plurality of modern experiences of existence, side by side with each other, mutually acknowledged and yet not really *known*, there are or will be many theologies. It will no longer be possible to apply oneself to clearing up their differences and dissolving them in another synthesis. For ultimately it is in practice impossible to distinguish adequately between what is common to all men's understanding of existence – and there certainly is such a thing – and its plurality of historical appearances. Therefore there cannot be a theology which *only* works with this common material. Every theologian will bring to his theology the particular form, the

[16] In so far as they are still actually present, compared with the whole modern cultural situation they lead an esoteric existence which today no longer directly affects the concrete social and sociological position of theology as such.

[17] For some preliminary observations cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of future Priests', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 113-138, esp. 123 ff.

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historical and fragmentary nature of his own given understanding of existence. He will no longer entertain the innocent naïveté of earlier times in thinking that his contribution alone is what is important and decisive, truly metaphysical and supra-historical, and that further distinctions are peripheral and matters of small moment.

In speaking of many theologies we emphatically do not mean that they [57] exist as mutually delimited and separable. In that case they would resemble the old theological schools: one theology is acquainted with the other; they are mutually distinct and contradictory. The modern pluralism of philosophies and theologies consists rather in the fact that no clear, coherent, individual pictures can be formed any longer. Each theology and philosophy knows too much to be merely itself, and too little to become the only Theology or Philosophy.

A second-order situation has arisen in this cultural 'concupiscence': previously what constituted a situation's promise was that there was something in it which remained unreflected, not amenable to objective presentation; today it is precisely what has been once objectified and the subject of reflection which eludes us. Previously it was the as yet unconquered future – nowadays it is the uncontrollable past. If one wishes to say anything 'new' in this field, one does so with the fear that it merely *seems* new because one does not know enough and therefore cannot know that it has already been said somewhere at some time, or because it is unimportant and second-hand erudition. Like in a big city: there are *too many* neighbours for any *one* to be a real neighbour. We have a completely new kind of Alexandrinism: in earlier times it was possible to reach the end of a circumscribed culture; thereafter it could only be kept in order; beyond it were only barbarians (i.e. an unfruitful land, its promise as yet only dimly sensed). Nowadays we know that we have come to the limit of all possible kinds of old-style civilization.

Of course there is still a new future in spite of all this. But it will come from a different direction. It will come from dialogue with the sciences. But we shall speak of this later. In the future, man will not objectify himself in his art and philosophy as the rational and theorising being, offering himself in this role as theology's dialogue-partner; he will appear as practical man in the works of his hands, which change him in a way he cannot clearly express.

But if we turn aside from this hoped-for new land, we see philosophy and theology too (even if the latter's history is not exclusively dependent on that of philosophy) like a wide plain full of nothing but allotments: it is impossible to walk through them all or to plant them all oneself; in every one there is something which the garden next door does not contain. Neighbours good-naturedly exchange a few onions over the garden hedge, or mischievously throw their weeds over; but there is no longer any large, grandly-conceived and well-planned garden in which every kind of plant can be found growing. Compared with the Neo-Scholasticism of nineteenth-century theology and the situation before the first World [58] War, Catholic theology and other theologies in the last forty years give the impression of a great new departure. This is indeed the case; it is a most laudable phenomenon; but it sprang, primarily at least, from the fact that there was an almost inconceivable amount of progress to be made in dialogue in order to *catch up with* modern philosophy and the historical sciences. The real situation, therefore, will not be revealed until this task has been completed. Will it take a very long time? Will the work change imperceptibly as if of its own accord, and become a dialogue with the new partner of whom we have yet to speak? Or will theology become as Alexandrine as philosophy, in so far as it tries to live only from its own resources? In fearing this danger we are not transgressing against our faith in the power and dignity of theology. The Gospel message comes from the Ever-living God. But theology as such, however important it certainly is for evangelism and for faith, always remains a *human* piece of work, and hence not necessarily more creative and vibrant than philosophy.

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IV

We now turn to our second proposition, which draws the practical consequences from the situation we have just described: *the Church's teaching office has been put into a totally new situation as a result of the plurality of theologie*s.

First of all we must say something more about the pluralism of theologies. As we have said, there are going to be many theologies, even if no Catholic theology will subscribe to the kind of premature agnosticism which characterises authoritative pronouncements of earlier times as mere 'interpretations' of the actual content of faith, no longer necessarily 'relevant' today. For the irreversible plurality of theologies does not mean that we must deny their ability to act in dialogue, nor that they can learn nothing intelligible and compelling from the Church's ancient doctrinal pronouncements. But today it is to the plural theologies that these official pronouncements are addressed. It is already becoming obvious: how could there be a system of dogmatics today able to function equally intensively from the points of view of biblical theology, history of dogma, scholastic metaphysics, existentialist ontology, salvation-history, aesthetics, politics, comparative religion? The attempt – laudable in itself – to leave out none of these aspects can only result in practice in none of one's aims being achieved to any satisfactory degree. This remains true even in the case of a team project. A book produced in this way is to be read by one individual who cannot bring to it all the preconditions [59] necessary to understand completely what all the team members together have written. Besides this a workable 'team' would no longer be able to cope with the rate of production of modern theology. One might say that this is only impossible in practice, not in theory. But the practical impossibility remains.

It may be asked, therefore, whether there may not have to be in the long run two forms of theology running parallel: one trying to do what it can to undercut today's cultural pluralism, making use only of that side of existence which is still common to all and which will remain so. It would work with this common experience and 'redeem' it by responding with the answers of faith, even if only able to do this in an approximate way. In this way it would develop a kind of higher Catechism, or perhaps the 'basic theological course' we have already referred to. On the other hand there would be the other kind of theology, with the courage to let itself disintegrate into many theologies. All of these in their own way would confront the individual pluralist views of existence, no longer communicable to each other, and, assimilating them and criticising them more closely, would become established in particular spheres of mutual comprehension. There are of course limits to this kind of pluralism. It does not mean that theology in the Church can say whatever it likes. The Church's teaching office, the common confession of faith and the possibility of anathematising certain propositions remain. Possibly in the rather more distant future the teaching office will have an easier task in one particular respect: the pluralism of theologies and the unimaginable possibilities of conceptual forms, language and fine shades of signification mean (if I may put it thus) that a theologian who has been censured on account of a particular statement has many more 'ways out' than at present without endangering his honesty and obedience. He will have more opportunity to keep saying what he means in different ways; whereas before a particular formula could seem to be the only possible way of objectifying the particular, apparently indispensable experience of religious faith. In the past, censure struck the censured person at an existentially deeper level than will be the case in the future; it is to be hoped that tomorrow we shall be more aware of the inadequacy of our own language and its unintelligibility to others in such a pluralistic situation than most of our modern Western-style intellectuals seem to be.

However, out of this pluralism of theologies arises a new situation for the Church's

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teaching office, which we shall mention in brief; we cannot deal with its whole range of problems here.[18] It seems to me that the [60] position can be clearly seen if one compares, for instance, 'Humani generis' with Ottaviani's letter of July 1966. In the Encyclical we can sense the confident awareness that it is able to formulate the opposing position unequivocally and to demarcate its own official doctrine by positive statements; in the Cardinal's letter we are aware of a certain embarrassment in the face of theological trends which are scarcely tangible and not commonly available or intelligible. Consequently it manages only to ask questions and to give general warnings instead of making doctrinal pronouncements. If we put the matter at its most acute: how is the bearer of teaching authority in the Church to give his verdict on a particular theology if he is *not* and *cannot* really be acquainted with it? – if he cannot really understand it except by knowing the profane presuppositions on which it is based and which he does not share? One may ask whether in the future there should not be ideally as many 'teaching authorities' as there are theologies. To give a very small example, are there in Rome the kind of consultant theologians, fully conversant with the ontological and existential presuppositions which have led to the translation of 'Transubstantiation' into 'Trans-signification' or 'Transfinalisation'? Can such specialised knowledge be expected and required?

We have indicated a problem, but no solution. If the problem does not seem a very urgent matter, it is chiefly because the theologies constituting this new situation for the teaching office are not yet as clearly formed and differentiated as will probably be the case in future.

V

We have already referred to a further important factor in the present relationship between philosophy and theology, and we now turn to consider it especially. *In future, theology's key partner-in-dialogue*, to which it will have to relate its 'philosophising' in the sense we have adumbrated, *will no longer be philosophy in the traditional sense at all, but the 'unphilosophical' pluralistic sciences and the kind of understanding of existence which they promote either directly or indirectly*.

This is in many ways a platitude, since it is plain that the historical sciences have already stirred up and changed theology more than modern philosophy has done. The natural and social sciences, too, by creating [61] modern technological man, by their world-picture and the many questions resulting from it, have changed theology's situation to a profound degree.[19] If we observe very little of this in our text-books as yet, it indicates a failure, not a legitimate detachment of theology from science. In spite of this we must inspect our proposition more closely, for it is not as natural and innocent as it at first seems. We do not intend to debate the question of the 'demise of metaphysics'. This 'demise' is indeed proclaimed on the most varied quarters, but in itself it is not a clear thesis at all. What is quite clear is the concrete pluralism of the sciences, which, with all their topics, *a posteriori* methods and wide-open field of activity, do *not* consider themselves as dependent branches of philosophy, however much they may have arisen out of Western metaphysics.[20] These

[18] cf. an introduction in K. Rahner, 'Kirchliches Lehramt und Theologie nach dem Konzil', *Stimmen der Zeit* 178 (1966), pp. 404-420; also 'Vom Dialog in der Kirche', *Stimmen der Zeit* 179 (1967), pp. 81-95, cf. in this volume pp. 83 ff. and 'Dialogue in the Church', *Theological Investigations* X.

[19] cf. K. Rahner, 'Experiment Mensch', *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Festschrift für Max Müller*, ed. H. Rombach (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 45-69, cf. in this volume pp. 205 ff.

[20] Naturally we cannot enter into detail historically regarding the different theses as to the origins of modern science in Western thought and philosophising. Cf. M. Müller's systematic treatment, 'Wissenschaft', *LThK* X (Freiburg,[2] 1965), cols. 1189-1193 (literature).

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sciences do not acknowledge philosophy as the prescriber of their fields of operation, but rather as one of the factors involved in actual practice and as the necessary spur of criticism. Thus they take their decision about their understanding of existence *before* philosophy is able to have its say. At most it is accepted as reflection on the pluralism of these sciences and their methods, and it is only regarded by them as valid in the role of a formal theory of science.

Even if one submits modern science's understanding of itself to critical examination, questioning the transcendental *a priori* conditions of all science whatsoever, considering the ontological implications of a formal theory of science and thus drawing up an ontology of a particular kind, the fact remains that *earlier theology had as its only standard partner-in-dialogue a* SINGLE *philosophy*, *united in spite of all its internal tensions and controversies*. Although this was in fact the product of history, its historical conditioning had not yet become the subject of reflection by a positive historical science; philosophy had a history, but its history was not something which called philosophy itself in question. To the extent that there already were sciences in the mediaeval 'Universitas litterarum', they had scarcely any theological relevance. Today things are different: there are sciences which consider themselves no longer as tools and handmaids of philosophy, but they are relevant to theology; most important of all, theology no longer lives in the context of a *single* philosophy, established [62] as the primary and autonomous standard. Philosophy may not conceive itself as a 'complete system'; it must be aware that it cannot adequately reproduce man's total potential and therefore cannot be his absolute lord and master. This applies *today* chiefly because the sciences are fellow-contributors to man's understanding of himself without having been empowered to be so by philosophy. They perform this function by *doing things*, reaching out in power and grasping the future, and consequently they exhibit a very problematical relation to the abiding 'essence' of man.[21] How far this view of science is justified, how far it can be called in question by criticism – in turn implying philosophy, which thus enters into a new stage of self-understanding – these matters need not concern us at the moment, for in any case theology must pursue its task in its *actual* situation and can do nothing to alter it immediately. At least in the concrete situation determined by the cultural, intellectual, social and natural sciences, it is science, no longer mediated by philosophy, which constitutes theology's partner-in-dialogue. If this is only visible to a very modest and limited degree in theology as it appears at present – and then mainly in isolated particulars, not in a confrontation with the 'spirit', the 'ethos' of these sciences with their 'openness' towards what cannot be predicted in the world – it says nothing against our thesis but against theology as it actually is in practice. By nature theology ought to be more suited to *this* partner than to philosophy. For theology is primarily concerned with history and the future. Whereas philosophy can really only consider the facts of historicity and orientation towards a future in a *formal* manner, the sciences represent history and future; especially if one remembers that history and future are not *things* but are created by man and his practical awareness, and thus bear 'science' within themselves as an essential factor.

It would only be possible, of course, to give a clear content and colour to this latter thesis if one could describe in concrete terms a theology which had developed within the situation of the modern scientific world-view right from the very beginning, not merely by the process of supplementary and concessionary apologetics, and which was conditioned in part by the unsynthesised pluralism of mutually alien sciences, thereby constituting the plurality of theologies such as we have mentioned earlier. It need imply no detraction from the autonomy of the theology of the [63] Christian Revelation if it were to take up its place deliberately in

[21] cf. esp. J. B. Metz, *Verantwortung der Hoffnung* (Mainz, 1968), K. Rahner, 'Christian living formerly and today', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 3-24, esp. pp. 16 ff.; also *Theological Investigations* X, 'On the theology of hope'.

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the open context of modern science. It is certain that if it did so, a different form of theology or theologies would emerge. To sense this one only needs to imagine what a dogmatics would look like which had grown out of a context of a whole-heartedly embraced and experienced unity of spirit and matter, a context of a dynamic open world of the future, to be seized in hope and action, a world constituting the sphere of man's battle against his self-alienation for the hominisation of his environment, the context of a single history of religion, a single political world.

We cannot say anything further about all this here. But I hope it has become clear that traditional philosophy's loss of function in modern society and science must not lead simply to an 'unphilosophical' mode of study in theology. Pure positivism does most harm in theology, although the latter remains a 'positive' study and although its particular opportunities lie in that direction today too. Theology must not merely be aware of the change in philosophy: it must plan out its own intrinsic relation to philosophical thought and other forms of man's interpretation of existence. If this task is really taken seriously, 'thought' will retain its great importance for theology. One might even say that the future of theology as a human endeavour for the presentation of the Gospel depends not least on the courage to pursue this 'thought'.

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[64]

4

THE HISTORICITY OF THEOLOGY

The Society of St Paul (*Paulusgesellschaft*) in Germany and Spain desires to be a place where dialogue is carried on between theology and modern science;[1] the partners in such a dialogue, if it is to be real, must presume a readiness to learn on both sides. Otherwise there will be a one-sided harangue instead of a dialogue. The desire to learn through dialogue presupposes – perhaps in a different manner than is the case in one-way instruction – that each dialogue-partner takes into account the possibility of a mistake on his own part. We do not need to examine here whether, in what way, and with what reservations this presupposition can be adopted in a dialogue in which an authoritative Church discusses its own dogma with modern science. However this difficult question is to be answered in greater detail – and the Council's Decree on Ecumenism contains some important points on this matter – theology can and must make this presupposition on entering into dialogue with modern science. It is possible for theology to appear capable of error, threatened by error, and often indeed actually to err. This is not only because theology has to discuss many things with present-day arts and sciences which are not matters of defined Church dogma and for which, therefore, no irrevocable concurrence can be demanded on the part of the faithful. In cases like these the theological partner must consequently presuppose the fundamental possibility of error on his own side as well. But the assumption is chiefly valid because even when presenting and defending Church dogma the theologian cannot simply repeat the defined precepts of Councils and Popes alone. For them to be the object of a dialogue he must rather explain them, explicate their concepts, locate their propositions in a wider framework [65] of understanding; he must continually try to eliminate possible misunderstandings, demonstrate consonance with other assertions of faith and truths of reason, and translate them so that they correspond to the partner's given perspective of understanding (for the latter is never a mere *tabula rasa*, but always understands according to previously established preconditions, which are fundamentally incapable of being the object of adequate reflection and thus cannot be tested). In this difficult undertaking the individual theologian – and only a concrete person can be a partner-in-dialogue – is of course supported by the whole of theology which is guided by the Church's official authority and the Spirit, but he takes on this task on his own account and risk. Since he must say what is especially *his*, even when discussing defined truths of the faith; since he only possesses infallible dogma in his own individual, subjective and conditioned understanding; since he cannot adequately separate these two elements; since in the case of dogmatic concepts there can be no adequate definitions, utterly transparent to reflection (as perhaps in the case of the axioms of mathematics and geometry), the individual theologian can and must quite candidly take into account the possibility of error on his side and the consequent necessity of himself changing, even when in dialogue concerning Church dogma.

This possibility of error in theology, the readiness to undergo change intellectually, not only as a passive object of a process of change, but as a subject by a free decision (which is at the same time the most difficult, bitter and yet most felicitous form of change and 'evolution') finds its ultimate justification in the historicity of theology. A Society concerned

[1] The scope of this lecture was determined by its origin and location (see the list of sources); this also explains the lack of footnotes. For a comprehensive documentation and reference to other literature cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, 'Kerygma und Dogma: Geschichtlichkeit der Offenbarungsvermittlung', J. Feiner/M. Löhrer (ed.), *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 704-707 and 783-787.

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with dialogue between Christian theology and modern science, therefore, does well at its inception to think about the historicity of theology. In this it is considering one of the most important presuppositions of its own being. Of course, the present discussion must necessarily and inevitably remain fragmentary and incomplete. For behind the problem of truth and history lies in fact the whole problem of the metaphysics of all knowledge whatsoever, from its beginnings right up to the present day. The possibility of uniting absolute truth and the historicity of truth is one of philosophy's most fundamental questions. It is clearly impossible to say anything really sufficient on this score in one short hour.

So we shall only attempt to show according to theological considerations that theology must take account of its historicity, and what practical consequences arise from this for the Christian who is also a man of science.

[66]

I

The experience of a history of revelation, i.e. a history of the saving truth imparted to us by the free personal act of God, is one of the most fundamental data of theology and of Christian dogma itself. No Christian can doubt this assertion. It can be found explicit at the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:1). It is an astonishing and mysterious statement. It is an everyday experience of individuals and humanity as a whole that no-one can ever know everything knowable, that everyone is made aware of new knowledge of which he was previously ignorant, that man discovers what is useful to him only slowly and as a result changes his everyday life very significantly. It causes us little surprise. But that truth should have a history, truth which is ultimate, constituting its own very essence, which is itself an analogous, many-layered reality, truth which is decisive for man's ultimate salvation, speaking to man's most inner and immortal centre at the point where he borders on the eternal God – that is an astonishing assertion, by no means self-evident. Throughout the course of Christian history there have been plenty of theories which did not wish to recognise the truth of this, or at least tried to water it down.

Indeed it is strange: for the ultimate, the eternal is surely that to which man must stand in a relation of freedom, able to say Yes or No, if he is to work out his own salvation and not merely be saved passively, or be rewarded for one kind of salvation with a totally different kind. But if one says that man is always and everywhere concerned with this most inner peculiarity of his, this transcendence in respect of God and its existence in grace; that this dark brightness at the centre of his being is always present, either for his salvation or for the reverse, and is thus outside the history of his truth – like an immovable star above the restless ocean of time – there seems to be no longer any history of saving truth, or else the existing history of revelation seems not to be a history of the truth decisive for salvation. But it is to be maintained, however, that there *is* a history of the revelation of saving truth. That is why our assertion is so surprising. If such a thing does exist, then there is also a history and a historicity of theology, and it remains problematical how and why a history of revelation can come to a close, bearing in mind the *continuing* history of civilisation and the immeasurableness of God; how it can be complete (at the death of the Apostles, as we are accustomed to say) and only pursued further in the form of a mere history of the development of dogma and theology.

[67] Whatever the result of the fundamental theological question with regard to the truth of salvation, i.e. how it can both be decisive for salvation and at the same time have become historical, one thing needs to be clear in any case (and it is of the greatest importance for the understanding of the historicity of theology too): the history of revelation may not be watered down to a succession of individual propositions, communicated one by one by God to the

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bearer of revelation, and by addition causing the 'deposit of faith' to grow gradually, until in the revelation in Christ it has reached its final extent and now only requires to be administered and tapped by the Church.

This kind of quantifying model for the history of revelation is no doubt unsatisfactory. Not only because in this case it remains actually obscure why the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, of Truth, in the flesh of history is not the beginning and the centre of this quantitative *summa*, but – from a temporal view – the final addition to a body of saving truth which had sufficed to create man's saving immediacy before God *without* this addition for thousands and thousands of years. (No wonder that mediaeval theology, afraid of the historicity of revelation, always postulated an explicit belief in the coming Saviour at least on the part of the 'Patriarchs'.) Such a merely quantitative growth of revelation is insufficient as a model for its history for many other reasons as well. An individual truth exists only within a totality of truths, in a wider perspective of understanding. This may not always be very clear in each case because this totality of meaning, the perspective of understanding, the intellectual system of co-ordinates and references within which and by means of which any particular statement can alone be understood, may be felt as utterly self-evident and hence inaccessible to reflection. But all the same it is so. What is apparently a quantitative additional growth to a previous totality of knowledge in fact changes the totality, introduces new perspectives and puts new questions to previous insights. Answering these questions again modifies previous knowledge.

What has been said could be illustrated with particular examples in the history of revelation. For instance, the advent of the belief in angels in the field of revealed faith makes clearer God's transcendence (and vice versa); insight into the possibility of a positive fulfilment of life in the beyond changes the whole moral evaluation of life (and vice versa); it is only the New Testament doctrine of participation in the holy God's divine life through his 'pneuma' which first implies the doctrine of Original Sin. In the New Testament a real theology can be seen, i.e. it is apparent that God does not effect revelation by simply adding new [68] 'propositions' 'from outside' to the basic substance of the Christian Faith (Jesus as the Risen eschatological Bringer of Salvation), but that the total basic Christian message unfolds and develops from an inner dialectic and a dynamic source. Each factor of this totality is always dependent upon every other factor, and grows and develops – however much it may remain the same – together with the others.

In this process, the cultural, religious and secular environment in which the history of the revelation-event takes place acts as a spur to the latter's growth itself, as a precondition without which this history is not even conceivable. For revelation is not revelation of concepts, not the creation of new fundamental axioms, introduced in a final and fixed form into man's consciousness 'from outside' by some supra-historical transcendent cause. It is revelation by means of concepts taken from the history of human civilisation (although, of course, the latter stands continually in the light of the grace of the self-revealing God). Thus these concepts always have a prehistory, they are connected by thousands of root-fibres with the whole of man's historically developed understanding of himself. For example one only needs to investigate the words 'pneuma', 'logos', 'flesh', 'blood', 'righteousness', 'redeemer', 'sinner', etc. in the New Testament as to their precise and actual meanings with all their aspects, nuances, differences of usage and accompanying undertones; also the closer and more distant environment, the 'field' of meaning, of the terms. If this is all taken seriously one finds oneself in the midst of the vast, labyrinthine history of these terms, which can be by no means adequately 'defined' (and thus disposed of) by a mere 'definition of terms'. This is especially the case since such a definition would again have to use terms which could not be laid down by means of simple, indivisible and yet unequivocally 'clear' elements.

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This is not the place to examine how, under these presuppositions, the Divine Revelation can and must be conceived to happen. At all events the idea found in academic theologies is impossible or at most acceptable only as a very formal pattern. This idea assumes tacitly and without reflection (and by and large without any further consideration at all) that the transcendent God inseminates fixed and final propositions into the consciousness of the bearer of revelation (albeit by using a given human terminology not susceptible to historical change). This kind of idea would almost eliminate the possibility of a real history of revelation.

[69]

II

In a word, if there is a history of revelation, then and only then is there a real history of theology, recognising a real historicity as one of its essential elements. Of course this assertion can be proved directly by reference to historical empirical fact. If it were not true, the theologian would not need to write and to study the history of dogma and of theology. But he does. And yet our assertion can only be proved, in the sense in which it is meant, provided that existing history of dogma and theology itself is not misinterpreted by the theologian.

Here too there is among theologians an unreflected ‘model’ of the history of dogma and theology beneath the surface which denies its true historicity. It is understood as a system of logical relations and consequences of the basic data of faith (*articuli fidei*), projected separately and in succession on to the stream of time although in reality they are timeless and supra-historical, capable of being reunited as a system. It is certainly the case, if this ‘system’ exists, that the concrete logical relations and origins of individual statements can be viewed and justified in a deductive theology of this sort. But this applies only if the system exists, only if the particular statement, the new or metamorphosed concept, the new dogmatic formulation already exists. (This is of course always the case in this kind of logical, ‘timeless’ operation, but it does not thereby become automatically ‘real’.) One only needs to ask the naïve proponent of such an unhistorical view of the history of civilisation to anticipate the future of theology in the next few millennia by means of his method – which he ought to be able to do if he is right, and yet cannot do – to see the inadequacy of this kind of rationalistic interpretation of the history of dogma and theology.

The real and effectual logic of this history takes place only within it. The logical deductions of a theologian coming afterwards and distilling later dogma from the original data of revelation are only possible, however, because this process of distillation has already occurred in history. They are only conceivable as the realisation of what has already happened in history, and the theologian remains dependent upon this actual history notwithstanding all possible logic. If the ‘syllogism’ (in the broadest sense of the word) is already there, its context can be understood. But it must be there already. Understanding it does not mean that it therefore *is*. Today it is possible to speed up the solution of problems which are quantifiable by calculating machines and thus to hasten what one might call the ‘history’ of these calculations. But I do not think that computers [70] could be built for theology to any significant degree, chiefly because no-one would know how to programme them. Theology must work fundamentally with analogical concepts, and these are not suitable for quantifying thought-processing. The first and characteristic event of theological logic is and remains this history itself which has a completely logical energy and structure, but one which can only really take place within this actual history. The historical situation, as the concrete context in which the ‘logical’ occurrence first takes place, is indispensable to the occurrence. And since the total historical context of subsequent events of this kind in the

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progress of dogma cannot be foreseen, the future history of theology cannot be predicted or calculated in advance, in spite of the utmost rational discernment.

The following simple example may serve to illustrate what is meant with regard to theology's genuine historicity (and hence its fundamental openness to the future at all times and in all matters): one has the impression that many not insignificant theologians admit the growth of many important theological concepts (how could anyone still deny the fact today?), and ultimately also that these concepts are not merely different words for a terminology which was already present beforehand. The concrete – and unreflected – interpretation of these theologians, however, runs as follows: once these concepts are there, they acquire a fixed and final character, by virtue of which they are removed from the situation of perpetual openness to the future in history, and stand like fixed stars, immobile and unquestionable, shining down on the future history of theology. Then these same theologians declare in all goodwill and innocence that one must naturally explain these terms, make them intelligible and continually think them out anew etc. For they too assume and know that it is not enough simply to say 'person', 'nature', 'hypostasis', 'Hypostatic Union', 'substance', 'accidence', 'Transubstantiation' etc. in order to understand what is really meant and also what is not meant thereby. In any case it is only too evident in the history of theology that these individual explanations turn out very differently, and cannot in reality be reduced to such a formula as could be generally accepted, and which was also at the same time so clear as to appear to need no further explanation at all. But in listening to these theologians one becomes aware of the following: this explanation of 'perennial' concepts must surely apply necessarily to other terms: but the latter have in fact a continuing history of their own. Thus the concept which was previously assumed to be 'perennial' is once more submerged in the fluid stream of the history of theology. There is a further objection: under certain circumstances at [71] any rate the explanation ought to be better and more intelligible, with a wider range of aspects, and it ought to be more careful and lucid in its guarding against misunderstanding than the concept it is explaining. Otherwise the 'explanation' becomes a confusion. Why should not new concepts be formed from these explanations in the course of their historical evolution, to overtake and replace the concepts explained in former times, not declaring their meaning to have been false but transcending this meaning in the new concept by a more comprehensive, sensitive treatment and more effective protection against misunderstanding? This is what happened before: pre-Chalcedon Christology – at least in the East – did not possess the concepts used by us today and yet had to express the Hypostatic Union. Our meaning is the same as this ancient Christology, but we cannot use its ways and means of expression as formerly, for we have different concepts, not merely different vocables, from those of Cyril of Alexandria. In these concepts much is clear to us (and much is perhaps less clear) which was not so at that time. What happened in the past will be the case in the future as well. The slow pace of this historical progression in the history of theology may be justifiable in a particular field in the very nature of the case; in many areas a retarded or stagnating development in theology will be an unhealthy sign for this theology itself. Basically, however, one cannot simultaneously look forward to a future history of the development of dogma in particular themes, and yet regard it as closed in other areas and declare all further history to be forbidden.

Our place is in history and it is only in its forward-moving course that we possess the eternal truth of God, which is our salvation. This saving truth is the same within history, but, while remaining the same, it has had and still has a history of its own. This 'sameness' communicates itself to us continually, but never in such a way that we could detach it adequately from its historical forms, in order thus to step out of the constant movement of the flow of history on to the bank of eternity, at least in the matter of our knowledge of truth. We possess this eternal quality of truth in history, and hence we can only appropriate it by

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entrusting ourselves to its further course. If we refuse to take this risk, the formulations of dogma wrongly claimed to be 'perennial' will become unintelligible, like opaque glass which God's light can no longer penetrate.

In addition, theology must not ignore the fact that on the one hand it must employ already given concepts which it has not itself subjected to exhaustive reflection, but on the other hand these concepts of pre-theological origin continue their history in the extra-theological realm. The content of meaning of the terms used continues to change and thus can [72] lead to deeper insight or to misunderstanding when these concepts and words are employed in theological formulas. Nowadays, for example, on hearing the word 'person' we are bound by an almost inevitable historical conditioning to imagine something which is by no means safely allowable when used in the context of trinitarian and Christological dogma. This is the case even with simple words like 'marriage', 'bread', 'wine'. The subtle theologian may be able to look after himself to some extent in these cases. But what about the ordinary theological 'consumer'? All, however, have to bear the burden of history, which is laid on theology too.

III

What are the implications for a theology which is aware of its historicity?

1. Theology must take into account changes determined by the total historical situation in which it exists. The history of theology must not be imagined as the unfolding of a complete system which, though taking place in time, unfolds solely according to the conditions of the system itself and its structure and can be predicted – assuming that the system is transparent from the beginning. This is not the case, even if the presupposition has to be made that what is developing in history (the *depositum fidei*) cannot itself grow any more. Here, too, history takes place within and springing from a real, cultural and sociologically conditioned total situation, which cannot be adequately reflected upon and which is thus not completely foreseeable in all its implications and consequences. Faith itself (as *fides qua* and *quae*) is the ultimate, comprehensive interpretation of human existence, involving its real concreteness in which the whole salvation of existence is to be effected. And so even if it were possible to express an abstract assertion about the nature of man, devoid of any historical reference, it would be insufficient as a statement of faith, confronting man in the concrete flesh of his history.

It is precisely expressions of faith (and thus theology) in respect of man which must by their very nature involve themselves above all in man's historical situation. This means dialogue with and within this situation in so far as the latter has itself been the object of scientific and theoretical reflection; it also means courage to become involved with the unreflected situation, accepting it and speaking from within it in the Christian hope that the truth of God, which must needs be expressed, will not – by the Spirit of God – be substantially corrupted (either objectively or subjectively) by being expressed from within the particular historical situation, even when unaccompanied by a final and transparent confirmation [73] as to the legitimacy of the historical situation. It is obvious from this point of view that a complete, self-enclosed theological system is an absurdity. Seen in this way theology is and has always been eclectic theology. A truly living theology is free from the fear of not being sufficiently pure and systematic; the fear that it must not draw concepts, complexes of problems and perspectives from simply any quarters. This anxiety is unfounded in any case, because, when seen from the point of view of the history of ideas, the only material source for theology – scripture and tradition – has itself been involved in 'eclecticism' and in consequence has always gone without a material and adequately

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transparent synthesis of its plurality of data. It has never been able to ascertain positively and adequately whether and in what manner everything fits together.

2. If we exclude the fundamental change in the modern world from the cosmocentricity of the Classical and Mediaeval times to our modern anthropocentricity (i.e. the explicitly transcendental perspective of modern times), we see that the situation in which and to which theology's assertions must be spoken is characterised by three things:

(a) Firstly, by the rational world-view of the natural sciences, according to which every factor is explained by its antecedent factor and points to a subsequent factor – at least as far as methodology is concerned – and in which the world is a dynamic and developing system (though not capable of being adequately translated by us into our system in any positive and material way). Theology has not yet come to the end of this matter in its open and critical dialogue with today's situation; in its dialogue with a 'methodological atheism' (and its consequences for man's basic constitution) which inheres immanently in the presuppositions of this world-view, theology has not yet concluded its examination of the legitimacy and the limits of such methodological atheism; nor in respect of the possibility and the essence of the 'sign' (*Wunder*); nor with regard to the meaning of the idea of the 'abiding', unchangeable nature of man, and of the moral and juridical aspects of natural law; nor as regards the meaning, the implications and limits of an evolutionist world-view in general and the possibility of integrating Christian salvation-history into such a world-view.

(b) Today's situation is determined by the processed experiences of human historicity and the connection between all the individual elements and phases of history both in the time-continuum and in the interdependence of the various human dimensions (biological, social, cultural, etc.). Since it is nowadays interpreted almost inevitably after the manner [74] of the natural sciences, this experience is sealed off from experience of what is absolutely new and simply unpredictable in new historical phenomena. Irrespective of whether and how far this mentality is correct or incorrect, one can only deal with it effectively provided that one has expressly understood in a theological manner that man's whole history, from its very first origins, has been knit together with divine grace, that one of the constituents of man's historical existence is always inevitably his *supernatural existentiale*. Consequently theology cannot expect salvation-history as officially expressed to appear without any real continuity with the history before and around it. As this dynamic relationship of grace and revelation in the whole of history has not yet been sufficiently pondered upon by theology, the latter's dialogue with the modern situation with regard to historicity has not been developed enough.

(c) The situation of the modern world is that of a world which has become dynamic, in which man consciously plans and creates himself and his environment with a view to the future. This is another aspect of the modern situation with which theology has not been sufficiently concerned. It is true that since Leo XIII it has asserted more clearly the principles of human social organisation according to natural law, but it has regarded them chiefly as being contained in assertions concerning society's permanent essence, and thus as factors instrumental in conserving order and stability. But theology has neither given close enough examination to the historically conditioned 'models' behind this kind of vague 'principles', nor has it sufficiently developed – out of the dynamic quality of the times and of the Christian message – the imperatives and prototypes needed for the this-worldly future which is to be actively created. The dialogue with this aspect of the situation was actually not declared necessary until the Second Vatican Council. As far as the future of theology itself is concerned, all depends on the task being begun now in earnest. A Christian eschatology must also develop a theology of the relationship between Christian existence and projected this-worldly utopias. Just as Christianity, as a result of its unique understanding of the world, has emancipated from itself a secular world so that the latter may grasp its freedom and its own significance, so too, from the position of its own eschatological view of the future,

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Christianity must allow a this-worldly vision of the future to emerge legitimately from within. If it does this, theology will change.

3. The situation in which theology carries on its dialogue with the world is conditioned in part by sin. It is strange how little the Christian [75] teaching about sin is explicitly applied to the field of knowledge. Of course sin in this field, where it basically takes the form of an *actus intellectualis* as such, is radical error, personally committed. And Christian theology has a lot to say about truth and error. But quite apart from the fact that theology only deals in a very defective way with man's achievement of truth or falsehood from the point of view of its moral character as 'decision', guilt (as concretely objectified in e.g. the cultural, social situation of a particular time) in the field of knowledge can be incurred in quite different ways besides merely through propositions which, taken by themselves, must be described as 'falsehood'. Prejudice, bias, deafness to other aspects of reality, obstinate conservatism isolating itself from new knowledge, premature emphasis, heresies which come to light in a way of life but which consequently or instinctively withdraw from theoretical expression, the failure to take other opinions seriously, the impatient haste or obstructive lethargy which can miss truth's real *kairos* as that which brings salvation (in ecclesial jargon termed misunderstanding the 'opportuneness' of a truth), an unbalanced urgency in presenting a particular truth – these and many other possibilities of sin exist apart from the falsehood of a proposition even in the realm of the most rarefied and pure theoretical knowledge.

If man's concrete situation is determined therefore (whether he himself deals righteously or sinfully) in part by sin as a general 'existentiale' of human existence, this applies also in the ways we have mentioned, and in other ways, to man's situation in respect of his knowledge. Man's situation in knowing is not only historically finite (contingent, bound to a particular perspective), but it is also always partially conditioned by man's sin in the matter of objectification. Human reflection is quite unable to 'rid itself' adequately of sin prior to any thought within the situation (for to do so it would again require to think 'in a situation'). Theology's historicity is therefore also determined in part by sin. It could be said that even the situation in which truth is found is determined in part by 'concupiscence', and this conditioning factor can never be adequately eliminated. Consequently even the concrete attaining of truth itself, which is always more than the mere 'possessing' of the truth of a true statement, is subject to the question as to whether one has dealt righteously or sinfully, a question which can ultimately only be answered by the judgment of God.

What has been said however, implies two things for theology and its historicity:

(a) Theology's dialogue with and within the present situation neither [76] can nor need be pursued with the idea that theology's partner-in-dialogue is the bearer of a knowledge which does justice in all things to the truth and to the present hour. Within and in spite of its own historicity theology has a thoroughly critical function to exercise with regard to the 'spirit of the age'. Theology changes the concepts it adopts for its own communications, and must have the courage to contradict and to contest ideology's absolutising of insights which may be in themselves correct. At the same time theology must always retain the self-critical awareness that it will by no means always recognise the sinfulness of the spirit of the age easily and as a matter of course wherever it crops up and in its most decisive instances; it must be aware that it is itself always in danger of unwittingly protesting against a coming situation merely in the name of an earlier historical situation. It must realise that the very act of contradicting a time-bound ideology demonstrates the historicity of theology, for the latter cannot choose its opponent for itself and in a strange way it falls beneath its opponent's law in contradicting it.

(b) But theology must also know about the sinfulness of its own historicity, not only the sinfulness of the situation in which it finds itself. Setting aside for the moment the error which always clings to it, we may observe in theology that very concrete form taken by man's sinfulness in the field of knowledge. Theology itself can be tedious, complacent; it can

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be narrow-minded in not taking the questions of the times seriously and not being open to bear the full weight of them, with the result that they are not really brought to mind. Theology may imagine that a formal framework can be a substitute for a concrete answer to a genuine problem. It may think it has the answer already before it has taken account of the new questions; it may think that the proof must be correct because the conclusion (perhaps taken as settled from another quarter) is correct. It can imagine too easily that it has uncovered a contradiction when it is in reality only too weak and comfortable to find a synthesis. It can be tempted to regard Church orthodoxy as automatically demonstrating scholarly competence. It can imagine that the great questions of God and the world have been discussed enough and that all that is required is to pass on the sacred formulas like an inheritance of ancient and precious jewels; it can harden its heart and not see behind the opponent's false assertions the deep distress of a fellow man; it can forget that not all talk about truth is automatically done in love, although this ought to be the case. It is possible for theology to be carried on in a sinful manner. This is because the theologians are themselves sinners. Theology's dialogue with the spirit of the age can only be pursued correctly if theologians [77] always tacitly reckon with the historicity of their own theology, in which their own sinfulness is objectified.

4. As is apparent from what has just been said, the historicity of theology implies the possibility and the effects of error even in theology not officially condemned (at least at a particular time) by Church authority. Theology must take account of this in its dialogue. It is unfortunate that although this fact is not denied *in thesi*, and is also admitted as a historical fact, it has not been recognised as a subject-matter for theology as such. Thus it happens, for instance, that the kinds of theological error are distinguished by the so-called 'theological qualifications' according to their occurrence in particular propositions; but error is not distinguished in its inner essence itself. However, it is by no means easy to say where and what an 'error' is, where it is only 'ignorance', where the *abstractio* which is not yet a *mendacium* begins and ends, where a particular individual perspective, within which a particular reality is seen, claims such absolute validity (in actual fact, even if it is not claimed in theory) that it becomes effectively an error. The question hardly ever arises as to the significance of the presence of two propositions, which seen objectively are mutually exclusive, within a single consciousness – though, indeed, in different degrees of clarity and agreement. When does a distinction introduced into a statement make it clearer, when does it reveal it as previously wrongly understood, i.e. as error? At the same time it must be remembered that, because of its concrete actuality as the object of our thought, even a statement which must be designated simply as true (e.g. a definition) can enter into a field of meaning and frame of reference which latter, since they are themselves not proof against error in their construction, again make the question of the truth of the relevant proposition much more difficult than it at first seemed. And if even the truest statement does not say everything about the reality it intends, but selects its material, it is only too easy to draw consequences from it which are unwittingly and tacitly based on the assumption that the whole of intentional reality is hidden within the proposition in question.

One ought to demonstrate all this with examples in greater detail than is possible here, in order to communicate the importance of the questions raised. It is not easy to distinguish error from ignorance in theology. If, since the Council of Trent at least, the celebrant's special function at the Mass was so one-sidedly uppermost in the average awareness of theologians and the faithful that all that remained for the Christian was mere attendance at Mass, was that ignorance or error? If someone maintains the dogma of Original Sin but is simply unaware that this sin and personal [78] habitual sin are united in an analogous and not in a univocal concept, has he then made a true statement and merely been ignorant of a second and different one, or has he misunderstood a dogma and committed error? Why is the

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dogma of 'Transubstantiation' true (which no-one will doubt), although the *substantia panis* does not exist in the sense in which it was conceived at the time when the dogma was formulated? Now we can make 'distinctions' in these cases, but precisely that was impossible in earlier historical situations. Why and in which cases does this kind of inability to make distinctions not constitute an error in the earlier understanding of the particular assertion?

However these questions are to be answered, there are errors in theology, even in the theology not officially condemned. This is proved by the history of theology, and not only the history of times long past, e.g. when the Immaculate Conception was not only not known, but was a matter of admitted dispute. It has also been so in our most recent past. The changes which have appeared during the last hundred years up until the most recent time cannot all be included under the heading of 'the transition from the implicit to the explicit', from the less to the more precise, or as the simple addition of new supplementary insights. There has also been the transition from error to true insight, not without struggle, pain and bitter personal sacrifice. Much of what is and what must be taught today – this applies even to Vatican II – with regard to questions of biblical studies, questions of the nature of marriage, freedom of conscience, sociological questions, questions on the borderland between science and theology, problems in the history of dogma – much of this was at an earlier time disputed, fought over and highly suspect in theology; opposed to it was the *sententiae communis* protected and propagated by the *magisterium*, even though not, of course, in a definitive and obligatory form. The generally accepted academic theory that there are *sententiae per se reformabiles* in the theology and in official teaching as well, is not merely a theory but also – if we are honest – a theory confirmed by fact.

It is not fortuitous that Vatican II (against considerable opposition from conservative theologians on the Council's Theological Commission) asserted that the Church's *magisterium* is infallible not when propounding a doctrine in a merely general way, but when it declares one as commanding the absolute assent of faith. Of course that does not mean that where this is not the case one can think and teach whatever one wishes, as if there were no such thing as the obligation of theological assent (even if the latter is itself capable of reform). But the facts and the Church's doctrine oblige the theologian to be modest and self-critical, [79] taking the possibility of error into account even when presenting a traditional doctrine and one which is favoured by the Church's teaching office. Theology must be aware of this since it does not only *live* its historicity, as it did almost exclusively in the past, but nowadays is also consciously *aware* of it. It must ponder the matter and always seriously include it anew in its calculations. In one respect, therefore, it will move more slowly and hesitantly (it may be symptomatic that not a single new definition was produced at Vatican II), but on the other hand it will often more easily find the courage to give up an obsolete position without each time having to apply too much skill in interpreting traditional formulas. In this new situation, where theology has become capable of reflecting upon its own historicity, it is indeed hard to have to become conversant right from the start with a genuine synthesis comprising a correctly understood obligation to the past and the courage to commit oneself to the present and the future; but it is also quite clear and does not dispense one from the necessity of giving up theological positions which are no longer tenable. This courage is a better act of faith than the anxious conservatism which only gives up such a position when development has far outrun the mental framework of the thesis in question, so that the latter can only be found haunting text-books; and the damage done by this time is very great as regards the readiness to believe and the confidence in the Church's teaching authority on the part of intellectuals and also of ordinary people.

In theory and practice the most important form taken by such a possible error in theology (irrespective of whether anyone does or does not want to call it an 'error') is when a really important, indispensable (and possibly also defined) affirmation reveals certain 'impurities',

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standing within a field of meanings and problems which cannot make the same claims as the affirmation itself, or being illustrated by a model which is not timeless but itself subject to the process of historical change. What is decisive is that this 'impurity' cannot be observed automatically at all times and in all cultural periods; thus it is not so easy to decide later on whether this 'impurity' (the model, or, in short, that which is implicitly and unconsciously understood in addition to the true theological propositions) was originally put forward with the same absolute claims as the particular affirmation itself, and hence whether it shares the latter's theologically obligatory character or not. In the end one can show historically that the formulation of the indispensable theological statement originally included the implicit, unconscious content which justly appears to us today in such a problematical light, and which we eliminate [80] from our understanding of the indispensable affirmation. Once we have this 'distinction', once it is accepted and current everywhere, the problem is over. And even the most conservative theologian will then say that the affirmation in question was always understood within the context of this distinction – which is of course by and large a somewhat unhistorical interpretation of the history of theology. But a long struggle is required before this 'distinction' becomes accepted, and the immediate impression is that the 'distinction' is actually destroying the true affirmation itself and is arbitrary. Indeed it may be that the 'progressive' opponent of the 'impurity' is actually of the opinion that his denial of the impurity is also a denial of the affirmation itself, because he too is incapable of envisaging such a distinction. The historicity even of theological truth is revealed most clearly by this rejection of a particular model. And it is not a rejection in favour of a metaphysical affirmation which is now 'pure', but a rejection in the transition to a new model which is not amenable to adequate reflection at all. (Every concept needs a *conversio ad phantasma*.)

Plenty of examples could be found for what is meant. Only a few can be indicated here. The statement 'There must be private property' is correct. But how much was thought to follow from this in practice from the middle of the nineteenth century on! How much that by no means follows, and yet which was thought to be justified by this affirmation. Augustine was correct in saying that Original Sin was passed on *generatione*. But as yet he was unable to distinguish this concept from the *libido generandi*. And that was wrong. Viewed historically, did he intend something incorrect by this statement? 'God inspired the Bible' is an indispensable affirmation. But it was previously thought to mean all manner of things which have had to be given up. 'The Gospels are historical accounts' – a true statement. But what does that mean precisely, and what does it no longer mean, although it was thought to do so in earlier times? 'Original Sin as such incurs damnation' – a correct statement. But how am I to imagine this 'damnation' in greater detail? May I, must I immediately imagine it (like Augustine) as the damnation which results from personal sin? Does this statement oblige me to maintain that there really is this kind of damnation resulting merely from Original Sin, or is it only a question of a hypothetical statement? 'Marriage is an institution orientated towards procreation' is a true statement. But does this 'definition' exhaust the nature of marriage? Or has not the affirmation often been taken unconsciously – and wrongly – as an adequate definition of marriage? 'In a society all have not the same function' – a true statement. But has it [81] not been unconsciously understood as sanctioning an undemocratic, paternalistic society? 'Error has no rights' – a true statement. But have not false consequences long been drawn from this? Has it been made clear that it was itself wrongly understood, and that hence an error has been propounded?

Error exists, therefore, in theology. It cannot easily be separated from defined dogma straight away. Theology's possibility of error is the most radical indication of its historicity, in so far as the latter is related to the knowledge of truth as such.

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IV

This historicity is accepted and realised by the dialogue continually maintained with the spirit of a particular period, expressed in its sciences. Inasmuch as in this dialogue theology is the representative of God's Revelation and the Church's Faith, it need not regard the other partner-in-dialogue as of equal status with itself. This question too is not so easy, however, because even on the secular and non-ecclesial side, viewed objectively, it is not merely human intellect and worldly experience at work, but most decidedly the effects (perhaps hidden and anonymous) of the illumination of supernatural grace and faith and the impulses of the Holy Spirit.

But however this may be, the Church speaks (at different levels, and hence also through the mouth of its theology) as the historical and social representative of a truth from which she cannot fall, as a result of the eschatological promise of God and his grace. The 'world' does not possess this promise (or rather, possesses it only through the Church). Although, however, the dialogue between the Church's theology and the world is not simply a dialogue between two equal partners seeking truth in the same way, it is still a real and open dialogue. This is simply because the Church, on account of the historicity of her theology, is a learning Church, because her pilgrim's course through history also follows the path of truth. For she is guided into all truth by the succouring Spirit of God himself. But this same Spirit leads her ever anew into the truth which she always possesses, through confrontation with her constantly new situation. And since this same mystagogy of the Spirit challenges man's free endeavour and his responsible decision-making to enter into the truth of the Church, the Church today is pledged to carry on the dialogue with the world as a way of perpetual self-realisation and reappropriation of her truth. For there has never before in history been so much 'raw [82] material' for the Church's faith to confront. The Church is faced with an inconceivably immense task. The course of history, especially the history of science, is accelerating at a previous unimaginable rate. Consequently this applies also to the course of the history of theology.

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[83]

5

THEOLOGY AND THE CHURCH'S TEACHING AUTHORITY AFTER THE COUNCIL

On the 24th of July Cardinal Ottaviani as Pro-prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith sent a letter to the chairmen of the bishops' conferences. This letter, which was originally intended to be confidential, was concerned with certain tendencies and dangers in modern Catholic theology and in the Church's theological mentality. Evidently the confidential nature of the letter could not be preserved. Very soon larger or smaller reports or excerpts appeared in the press. Consequently it was decided at Rome to publish the letter in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.[1] As a result it is available to everyone and has thus also become an object of public reflection and discussion.

The content of Ottaviani's letter to the bishops is as follows:

The letter begins with the assertion that it is the task of the whole people of God now to really translate into action what has been decided at the Second Vatican Council in matters of doctrine or discipline.[2] The letter continues that it is the task of the episcopate to watch over, to lead and to further this 'movement of renewal' begun by the Council (one may add that all three tasks are to be attended to equally). This must happen in such a way that the genuine unfalsified content and intention of the Vatican documents and decrees is respected in every detail. It is the task of the bishops themselves to protect this doctrine since they are held to have a real commission of authoritative teaching under Peter as their head. However, it is to be regretted that news has come to Rome from various parts of the Church concerning abuses in the interpretation of the Council's doctrine and irresponsible opinions, appearing here and there and causing not a little confusion in the minds of many of the faithful. [84] Of course it is imperative to distinguish properly between the deposit of faith and any other opinions; consequently all attempts to understand the doctrines of faith better are to be encouraged. But from the reports of learned theologians and from the study of published theological works the Congregation has become aware of not a few theories which 'to a certain extent' affect dogma and the fundamentals of the faith itself and are no longer keeping within the limits of a legitimate freedom of opinion and hypothesis.

The letter then gives instances to support this observation, emphasising explicitly that it is quoting *examples* of these 'errors', not giving a balanced and exhaustive description of these theological dangers. *Ten* of them are enumerated. 1. Concerning revelation: recourse to scripture with an intentional exclusion of tradition, including the restriction of biblical inspiration and the infallibility of scripture, and the false evaluation of historical texts. 2. Concerning the doctrines of the faith: here and there people are of the opinion that dogmatic formulas of faith are so much involved in the flux of historical development that even their objective import can change. 3. Concerning the teaching office, especially the Pope: it is often so neglected or slightly regarded that it is almost seen as a matter of opinion. 4. Concerning the existence of an objective, absolute, firm and unchangeable truth: certain people practically refuse to acknowledge such a thing and subject truth to a kind of relativism, asserting that truth must necessarily follow the rhythm of the development of consciousness and history. 5. Concerning Christology: certain concepts are used in the re-examination of Christology which are hardly compatible with defined dogma; a 'Christological humanism' is spreading (*serpit*), reducing Christ to the level of an ordinary human being who only gradually became aware of his divine sonship; the virgin birth, miracles and even the resurrection are only held verbally, and in actual fact are made into purely natural matters. 6. Concerning sacramental theology: quite apart from the other sacraments, in the case of the Eucharist certain facts are overlooked or not sufficiently attended to; certain people, pursuing an exaggerated symbolism, proceed as though there were no transubstantiation but only a kind of 'trans-signification'; the truth of the sacrificial aspect is unjustifiably neglected. 7. Concerning the sacrament of Penance: besides the neglect or denial of the personal confession of sin, some people conceive this sacrament as a 'reconciliation with the Church' without

[1] cf. *AAS* 58 (1966), pp. 659-661.

[2] We would commend this statement – issued by such high Church authority and by a man who is entirely above the suspicion of indiscretely craving for novelty – above all to those circles in the Catholic Church in Germany (e.g. certain of the 'Una voce' groups) who apparently regard it as their privilege to defend ancient truth and hallowed tradition, and who under certain circumstances are not afraid to attack representatives of the Episcopate with most ridiculous suspicions.

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emphasising sufficiently that it is also a reconciliation with God. 8. Concerning Original Sin: there are those (*nec desunt qui*) who attach little value to the teaching of the Council of Trent or interpret it so that Adam's original sin and the transmission of the guilt of sin itself become obscured. 9. Concerning moral theology: not a few are spreading error concerning the objective nature of morality, denying natural law, advocating a situation ethics and corrupt opinions on the morals of sex and marriage and human responsibility in this field. 10. Concerning ecumenism: however much all the work done in this area is to be praised in its encouragement of love and unity with the separated brethren, the Apostolic See (!) regrets that there are people who wrongly interpret the conciliar Decree on [85] Ecumenism and understand ecumenical work in a way which detracts from the truth of the unity of the faith and the Church in a dangerous indifferentism and irenism.

Finally the letter observes that the errors and dangers which are propounded and incurred in individual instances here and there have been set before the bishops in this short summary so that each bishop can concern himself with overcoming or preventing them in accordance with the duties of his office.

As one can see, there is no mention of particular countries where these errors and dangers can be observed particularly. Although the ten points quoted are said to be examples, their theological compass is so wide (more or less explicitly) that practically the whole of theology can be subsumed under their headings except the question of God and modern atheism. Ostensibly the letter is concerned only with dangers and errors of Catholic Christians[3] and theologians, but one may wonder here and there whether in fact it was not also aimed beyond this sphere at Protestant theology or bore in mind the echo which the latter has had among us, which, though not in a tangible written form, is revealed in many people's attitude of mind and in oral theological discussion. The text scarcely discloses whether the extent and urgency of the errors and dangers are regarded as greater in particular topics or whether they are all roughly equal in this respect.

It is the intention of this essay to set forth a number of theological observations which arise or are at least possible from reading this letter. They can only be discussed very generally here as it is clearly impossible in a short essay to deal with the themes raised by the ten errors and dangers referred to.

I

First of all let us make one or two observations concerning the spiritual and intellectual climate within which Ottaviani's letter is to be read. It is one of a certain insecurity and perplexity. To admit this is not unworthy of a Christian nor of authority in the Church. There are questions which are of great import and yet for which no immediate answer is forthcoming. A situation can be opaque; it can have many levels; it can be difficult to weigh up the individual tendencies, currents and opinions or to know when a particular thing is perhaps loudly proclaimed in the Church and yet remains peripheral and uncharacteristic of the majority [86] of theologians and Church people. It can be hard to recognise what is a short-lived fashion, due to disappear of its own accord, and what is the beginning of a more serious danger to come; or what is only theology making up for lost time with rather a lot of noise because it was previously dominated by a stagnant theological conservatism, which stubbornly and in fear isolated itself from the real questions. Consequently it remains difficult to say where tendencies appear which really threaten the faith of the Church. The letter does not attempt to draw a veil over this situation of uncertainty. It draws attention to complexes of problems and questions, gives warnings, but does not reach any really doctrinal decisions, not even of a preliminary kind. That is quite within the rights of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Indeed, it is its duty.

In addition there is this: today it is in the first place never merely a question of repeating the ancient truth, presenting it authoritatively and saying No to deviations from it. We are

[3] The Protestant Church is itself suffering even more from the issues raised here, as is clearly shown, for instance, in Bishop Hanns Lilje's Pastoral Letter: 'Hirtenbrief über den Kirchentag', *Lutherische Monatshefte* 5 (1966), pp. 462-470 (cf. in the same issue of the journal Bishop H. Meyer, 'Theologie und Gemeinde', pp. 470 ff.). Naturally, however, we cannot discuss this different situation here.

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concerned with presenting this truth in such a way that it really 'speaks to' men and is accepted willingly as being intrinsically true. Whatever the formal doctrinal position may be, it is not sufficient in actual fact to refer back to the formal juridical authority of the Pope and the bishops. Whether we wish it or not, we are subject to the necessity of finding a way between, on the one hand, a 'monolithism'[4] to which everything was clear and where at least anything of any importance could be decided on easily, unambiguously and, above all, quickly and was in fact so decided in a papal declaration of some kind (Encyclical, papal address, declaration from the Holy Office etc.), and on the other hand the tangled chaos in which theologians and laymen feel that in matters of faith they can think and say anything and everything they wish.

The first way is no longer possible as it was pursued previously. It is clear that Vatican II preferred a different method, was more careful and reticent in dogmatic pronouncements, gave more scope to 'dialogue' within the Church, and allowed the different theological currents to be expressed in a less inhibited manner. It has been shown that in many [87] questions an unequivocal and obligatory doctrine can be less easily formulated than was thought to be the case twenty years ago. Complexes of questions, theological terminology and methods have become so diverse in recent decades that it has become much more difficult to say exactly what a theological idea really means when it is 'translated' into another theological language – a task which is necessary, however, in the modern theological pluralism.

The second way, for a Catholic understanding of the faith and the Church, is a false path: there must be a confession of faith in the Church; it is not the case that there are merely equally valid 'interpretations' of the most diverse, disparate or even contradictory kinds in the Church, behind which the common 'meaning' is found only as what is unutterable and inexpressible. There is an authoritative teaching office which is able to express the Church's faith in genuine human conceptuality as true and binding on everyone. It can reject a contrary affirmation and can command assent in saying that such an affirmation is contrary to the truth, however much all the Church's expressions of faith on the one hand point in the direction of the incomprehensibility of God, and on the other hand include the element of congruity within a community of language which could be otherwise.[5] Naturally it cannot be our task in this short essay to provide a foundation for this 'inbetween' situation in a theological theory of knowledge or even to give practical rules for following this 'via media'. In this area much remains to be done.

The tendencies and views mentioned by Ottaviani do exist. They exist in the German-speaking world too, although not all in the same degree of clarity. Of course these views do not exist as a complete system. Nor can all the dangers and errors be found to the same extent in German theological literature. It is rather that many of these things are present in the form of a particular mentality, or only come to light in private oral discussion. Naturally these tendencies are clearly expressed in Protestant theology except in the case of specifically Catholic themes likes transubstantiation for example. So it would be very remarkable if they were absent from Catholic theology in the German-speaking world (especially today when both theologies influence each other much more than ever before). We have these tendencies

[4] The reader is asked to excuse our using a word from the realm of politics in this context. But it seems briefly and clearly to characterise a particular way in which Church authority (which is not simply identical with the rights and duties of the *magisterium* itself) used to react before John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council. This attitude, which prevailed since Pius IX and above all since the fight against Modernism, may have been justified in its time, but it is nowadays no longer appropriate to the situation and must change, precisely so that the *magisterium* can exercise its function effectively.

[5] cf. K. Rahner/K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, ed. J. Feiner/M. Löhrer (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 686-703, esp. 693 ff.; cf. ibid., pp. 727-782 (literature).

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too. We shall not illustrate this with individual references, since in the first place it by no means depends on how far the tendencies and attitudes mentioned have found expression in actual theological literature. But we must observe (1) that, as we have [88] said, these tendencies have certainly not been formulated as a 'complete system'; and (a) that there are also questions not mentioned in the letter, although they are just as important (if not more so), which must be attended to. The question of God, of the possibility of experiencing him, the question of atheism and all that is connected with atheism as its foundation – these too belong among the problems which find themselves in a situation of insecurity.

The individual spheres of problems referred to in the letter are also (though not exclusively) concerned almost always with genuine questions and obscurities, with the difficulty of finding a genuine synthesis of the inheritance of faith with what constitutes the modern mentality and with the new questions and insights of the theological and profane sciences. Consequently nothing is effected by giving a simple 'No' to all this and by repeating traditional doctrine of which even the very formulation is monotonous to the ear. This was often stressed by the Council too. But Ottaviani's letter makes rather too little mention of this. In addition the letter's treatment of the issues is unfortunately marked by a vagueness, inevitable to a certain extent, but which is not very helpful. One is obliged to say this in all modesty and openness, even while bearing in mind that this letter was a request to the bishops and did not intend to be a long exposition of theological doctrines.

For instance, when is the *vis inerrantiae et inspirationis* incorrectly 'constricted' (*coarctant*)? For there *is* a legitimate and necessary drawing of boundaries. When is the objective meaning of a dogmatic formula wrongly altered? For there *is* a movement of change in theology which, for instance, purifies the enduring meaning of a dogmatic formula of accompanying misunderstandings which were previously almost inevitable, or which separates it from interpretations which were previously not so clearly distinguishable and now may be freely discussed.[6] When has the doctrine of the Church's teaching authority been under-valued? For there has been progress in theological knowledge (in the last century too) which has caused reformable doctrines of the teaching office to be recognised as being also *de facto* to be reformed.[7] When has there been a false relativism? There exists a development and a history of doctrine, which cannot be interpreted merely as the result of new supplementary [89] items of knowledge but which understands the ancient, 'enduring' truths in a new way. Which new concepts are being tried out in Christology which are incompatible with the Christological definitions? For there is in Catholic theology a process of rethinking of Christology, which is clearly necessary and must work with a modern conceptuality without incurring theological censure. When has the definition of 'transubstantiation' been damaged, when is the concept of 'Agape' *plus aequo* emphasised at the expense of 'sacrifice'? There are certainly many obscurities in the doctrine of original sin, but when can one speak of 'obscuring' the doctrine if biblical aspects are stressed which are not clearly visible enough in the traditional doctrine? If we are right in rejecting a 'situation ethics' (which?; and what does it imply?), what is the sound core which it does have and which is not sufficiently clear in traditional moral theology? What are the *perniciosae opiniones* in modern sexual morality and how can they be distinguished from the good elements of progress beyond the teachings of Pius XI and XII, which have doubtlessly been accepted or at least prepared for by the Council? When and by what means is a correct ecumenism perverted by a false irenism and indifferentism?

One cannot deny that the tendencies and dangers mentioned in the letter actually exist. Nor

[6] cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur Geschichtlichkeit der Theologie', *Integritas*. 'Geistige Wandlung und menschliche Wirklichkeit', ed. D. Stolte/R. Wisser, *Festschrift für K. Holzamer* (Tübingen, 1966), pp. 75-95, in this volume, pp. 64 ff.

[7] One only needs to consider the concrete example of evolution (in relation to the concept of Creation, etc.).

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can one say that a letter of this sort, or the Church's teaching office in Rome, could do much more than giving this kind of very general warning. But it is precisely this which reveals the situation: modern theology inevitably deals with a mass of problems and methods of conceptual expression and is so weighed down by the awareness of the ambiguity of all statements that it is not so easy as previously to replace a real or suspected error with another, positive and unequivocal statement in which men of goodwill recognise that not only something correct is said but also something which is equal to their 'concern'.

The situation must be looked at and appreciated soberly; for only then can one ask how the Church and her teaching authority relate in the most correct and effective way within this situation. It is a situation of a pluralism of scholarly theological methods and terminologies, an inconceivable breadth of scope of theological problems, in the face of which no individual theologian can be an adequate specialist at all. For this reason the theologians' theses are no longer simple Yes or No answers to a doctrine which has been traditionally handed on and is fixed and formulated, equally familiar to all, but they are often related to the particular doctrine in a uniquely disparate way. These theses are mostly formulated in a 'dialogue' with philosophies, profane theorems, world-views, which are [90] themselves ranged quite disparately beside one another and are not known and understood in their plurality by any one individual. However much one must always strive to speak with *one* language, to understand each other mutually, these attempts have material limits today. The attempt to produce an absolutely homogeneous theology from the point of view of terminology and the questions it deals with, accessible to all theologians, if it could succeed at all, would end up as the theology of a small sect, unable to address itself to its environment any more. In addition, this situation is characterised and made more difficult by the fact that not a few contemporary Christians maintain in themselves a strange 'unity' of two attitudes: on the one hand the tendency towards 'reinterpreting' doctrine, often with little respect for authoritative Church doctrine, whereby the desire for novelty easily dominates over the preservation of what is permanently valid in ancient doctrine, and on the other hand the desire to stay in the Church and to make room within it for one's own understanding of the faith. If one may put it crudely: before, one simply said No to an affirmation of authoritative Church doctrine and left the Church; now one tries to interpret this doctrine in one's own way and desires it to become commonly held in the Church. By this over-simplified but not insignificant description of the situation we do not mean that authoritative doctrine needs no interpretation but only to be simply repeated, precisely in order that it shall remain and be believed. But the question is, what are the limits of such an interpretation? What are the limits which cannot be exceeded, so that the Church may have the definite courage to say No when they are exceeded, and that the proposer of the interpretation may have the courage and honesty to leave the Church, whose confession of faith he can maintain only verbally and not according to the actual issues? We cannot here answer the question as to how this peculiar 'unity' of two such opposed attitudes is to be explained. In brief one might say perhaps that this 'unity' is symptomatic of the transition from an individualistic to a 'collectivist' age. People (still) wish to think individualistically and yet belong to a community of a similar mind. We cannot deny that such an intention has its justification and is – correctly understood – a task for a meaningful future. The question is only how both can be joined in one in a genuine manner.

II

In a situation like this, which will surely last for a long time, the former ways and means of doctrinal leadership are evidently insufficient. Today [91] all authoritative representatives of doctrinal world-views (not only the Catholic Church) are faced with the question of how the

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unity of the obligatory doctrine can coexist side by side with the much quicker development of knowledge in freedom, and how those who make authoritative decisions in these matters are to respond in this situation.

There has been as yet far too little reflection on this matter. The letter also seems to be a symptom of this now inevitable embarrassment, which is, however, without doubt a healthy sign: one is rightly aware that one cannot do simply everything and commit everything to the 'free discussion' of 'autonomous scholarship', and at the same time one cannot see precisely how and what one is to decide clearly, in order that the decision is both correct as far as the particular issue is concerned and also effective.

It is here that the bishops themselves have a task, so that they need no longer simply wait for authoritative decisions or 'doctrinal political' measures from Rome, as was mostly the case before, content to be relieved of this difficult office of teacher in the modern Church by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Here we see a strange convergence between the theoretical teaching of Vatican II concerning the bishops' teaching authority, which they possess *iure divino* and on which they must themselves lay hold, and the concrete situation which calls for such a teaching authority. The bishops cannot pass on this task of theirs either to the authorities in Rome or to the theologians.[8] What the dogmatic constitution on the Church of Vatican II said about the office of a bishop is not to remain mere pious print. Furthermore it would be highly dangerous if Rome's effectual authority – the effectiveness of which is not unlimited – were over-taxed. The bishops can address themselves to a particular, regionally diverse situation with better prospects of actual effectiveness than Rome. For while Pius XII was in office Rome did not always proceed sufficiently carefully and sympathetically, with the result that (if we are seeing things as they unfortunately are) it doubtless lost a certain amount of effective authority even among those who were not in principle opposed to this doctrinal authority. Therefore that authority of the bishops which is humanly speaking more effective in particular concrete circumstances, should not be by-passed. It can be more effective – in the human sphere above all – because it can react more appropriately to a concrete situation, confronting and appreciating not only opinions [92] but also those who hold them. It is, or could be, therefore practically speaking more capable of dialogue. Ultimately too it is more effective since, being the penultimate authority, it can 'risk' more (and should have the courage to do so).

In not a few cases the clergy must understand more clearly than before that by no means everything which is discussed in theological science is also suitable for the pulpit. The pulpit is not the proper place for dubious 'demythologisings'. This distinction does not imply in any way that the preacher may say things in the pulpit which he could not defend before the honest and truth-seeking conscience of the scholarly Church theologian. The distinction is based on insight into the sermon's purpose: the salvation of man in the concrete, of the man who is listening and who can be hurt even by what is, in the abstract, a correct statement, if it is said wrongly. Indeed, the letter itself says that the bishops themselves are to do something about this and not merely make reports, and to this extent the letter is 'post-conciliar' in the best sense.

One ought to try as far as possible to foresee doctrinal and practical developments, to lay hold on them in good time and direct them into right paths, separating what is inevitable and correct from what is extreme, eccentric and mistaken. Many of these tendencies which are just becoming apparent to us will very soon become more pronounced and more threatening. We must take that into account quite soberly. The questions which are also raised in the letter will be asked more loudly and more publicly; e.g. the question of 'error' in scripture; the

[8] It is interesting to observe the parallel situation that Bishop Lilje too has to defend himself against the accusation that he is not exercising his episcopal teaching authority (cf. supra, p. 85 note 3).

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relationship, in theory and practice, of the man who is both Catholic and theologian to non-definitive decisions of the Church; the manner of knowing God; the nature of original sin; the virginity of the Mother of God; the meaning of God becoming man etc.; also the more practical questions of life and piety will become more urgent, e.g. the concrete forms of the Eucharist (Benediction, 'visits', processions, Exposition); of the confession of devotion; of sexual morality; of mixed marriages; the ethics of education (confessional questions concerned with schools); the celibacy of the secular clergy etc. We can imagine that these and many other similar questions will be asked more insistently and clearly everywhere in the foreseeable future. Something ought to be done in this respect in good time. If false views have already become entrenched and are proclaimed loud and clear in the Church's public consciousness, it is already almost too late. But much is still possible now, at the beginning of the development. It should therefore be actually taken in hand. Nothing is gained by a fearful, deadly silence.

[93] In this matter it is inadmissible to think that everything is clear and that only muddle-heads have new problems with the old questions, which have been answered clearly long ago. For instance, there still seem to be canonists (and bishops too?) who proceed as though a Catholic is morally not permitted – by virtue of divine law – to contract a particular marriage if the children cannot be guaranteed a Catholic upbringing. That is incorrect.[9] Or it is thought to be completely left to the Church's discretion – not only according to canon law, but also morally – under what conditions a mixed marriage may be permitted. That is not right. The question of the 'infallibility' of scripture has not been answered and solved by the Council alone in such a way as to do real justice, in a positive manner, to the legitimate difficulties and problematical situations of the exegetes (and nowadays of the laity too). The question of Christ's knowledge concerning himself is one for which the exegete demands a better answer of the dogmatician than before, in order to deal with his problems. Nowadays, in spite of 'Humani generis', one may surely be permitted to assume that a theory of polygenism does not contradict the doctrine of original sin as defined at the Council of Trent. But this ought to be substantiated in greater detail and it ought to be shown that a polygenism of this kind does not require such a reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin which would dissolve the dogma effectively into a weak rationalism. The doctrine of original sin must be re-thought no less in other points too, even if one is obliged to respect completely the teaching of Trent on this issue. The open questions in practical sexual morality are well known. Text-book theology has often arrived at an answer too easily. What degree of moral maturity is needed to constitute an indissoluble marriage is a dark question, and its answer has very practical consequences which the canonists have by no means been considering clearly enough or long enough. There are plenty more examples like this.

In many cases Rome itself will only be able to give a 'skeleton answer' (like the Council). Such an answer is important. But it is often not sufficient to protect the orthodox doctrine in a way which does not demand an unjustified *sacrificium intellectus* or permit the propounding of actual heresy or theological error under cover of an apparent verbal respect for authoritative doctrine. A certain formal and juridical mental attitude which one finds in Rome (and which is understandable and even unavoidable) cannot deal on its own with this situation, in the first place [94] because, as the final authority of the whole Church, it cannot easily speak the theological and human language which is appropriate and understood in a particular cultural setting.

The bishops have a task here; but they must recognise that a solution has yet to be found

[9] Details in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 99-103; also the thorough study by J. G. Gerhartz, 'Die Mischehe, das Konzil und die Mischehen-Instruktion', *Theologie und Philosophie* 41 (1966), pp. 276-400.

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and cannot be presumed at the outset. Furthermore the solution must not be present simply anywhere, but must be communicated to the general awareness of the clergy, in order to protect the latter from either reactionary or heterodox 'solutions'.

In the face of this situation of open questioning, the clergy in the first instance, but also the laity, must be made far more clearly aware than before that an attempt at a solution made by individual theologians in the Church is not automatically acceptable in respect of dogma – seen from a practical point of view – if it is presented by a personally respectable theologian and has received the episcopal *Imprimatur*.

Today it is absolutely impossible to discuss such problems *in camera caritatis*, excluding all public participation and exposing only the matured solutions to the public gaze. Here too it is no longer possible to conduct 'privy council politics', although that does not mean that any theological nonsense ought necessarily to be allowed to pass the episcopal censure. It is quite in order and necessary for the episcopal censuring authorities to be magnanimous and tolerant in the case of scholarly publications (and conversely stricter than usual with pseudo-pious products which are only apparently 'popular'). In the case of scholarly theological literature the episcopal censor should be limited to a 'coarse filter', simply because it is scarcely possible today to do otherwise without obstructing necessary theological discussion. The latter is indispensable today even in important theological questions, not only in questions which have been regarded as 'open' (and of no consequence) from time immemorial. If that is the case, however, it must be clear to the clergy (especially the young clergy) and laity that in actual fact an *Imprimatur* gives no definite guarantee of the objective reliability of the view expressed. Consequently it may be a theologian's right and duty to question the orthodoxy of another theologian's theory, even if the latter were published by episcopal permission. Of course, a challenge of this sort is stated at the particular theologian's own risk and carries only as much weight as the reasons he gives. But it can be permitted or even invited. In so far as this does not happen enough, the wrong opinion grows up that everything which appears beneath an *Imprimatur* is orthodox and may not be doubted. Because this false view prevails the episcopal censors are obliged to become more anxious and rigorous. As a [95] result the theologian's function with respect to the ecclesiality of a new attempt at a solution of a theological question is excluded, to the disadvantage both of the issue itself and of episcopal authority, which consequently has to be over-strained. It is a false politeness and collegiality when theologians are too concerned to take pains to be 'indulgent' with one another. The indisputable decline in theological criticism is to be deplored in this respect, and it is an extremely dangerous situation.

One must not imagine that in relatively weighty theological questions there can or ought to be no continuing differences of opinion which even the Church's teaching office cannot resolve (at least after a lengthy period of time). The Council has declared the reverse to be fundamentally the case, and has given concrete examples of it. One could quote cases – even in post-conciliar Germany – where this freedom in disputed questions has not been sufficiently respected by Church authorities.

However, it must not be thought that today one can either leave each question alone or that it can be cleared up in a purely scholarly dialogue with the agreement of all theological parties, without the teaching office having to step in authoritatively. The bearers of doctrinal authority (each according to his fundamental and respectively different authority and according to the importance of the matter in hand) must have the courage to say No under certain circumstances, even if they have not been able to 'convince' each and every person beforehand by exhortation, theological discussion of the issue itself, etc. After all, the Church *has* a common confession of faith which must be protected; the Church is more than a theological debating society; furthermore it is not possible to distinguish what is purely 'fundamental' from what is 'secondary', guarding the former and unconditionally

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surrendering the latter. The sense of the Decree on Ecumenism No. 11 is that there *are* things which, although not fundamental or only peripherally so, all the same constitute indisputable dogma in the Catholic Church. On the other hand even what is fundamental is under certain circumstances threatened nowadays by erroneous interpretations, even if they are able to maintain a certain verbal reverence for Church definitions. What is 'indispensable' and what is not is decided in the final analysis by the theology of the *magisterium*, not by the theology of the theologians. The latter have, however, an irreplaceable function in the Church, such that today the bishops have less right than ever before to make decisions simply on the basis of what they learned at one time in some fashion or other, but must keep on continually informing themselves anew. We have already mentioned that in having the courage to take such a decision they must not only make the [96] one which is correct according to the matter in hand, but must also proceed in a humanly understanding and 'winning' way. In this latter respect the bishops have moral duties as well; and it cannot be so readily assumed as people would sometimes have us think that these duties are objectively fulfilled.

Since the bishops are obliged, in the modern complexity of theological problems, to have recourse to advice from theologians, and since the Spirit's aid to the Church is not exclusively available to the bishops and to no others, the bishops will have the right, and under certain circumstances the obligation, to let a theological view go uncensured when it is supported by a considerable body (and this need not be a numerical majority) of theologians who have demonstrated their competence by their teaching and life in general. Certainly this rule presupposes that the bishops have the practical possibility of knowing when a view is present (and what it concerns) which is subscribed to by a considerable section of theologians who think it correct or open to discussion. On the other hand not every opinion of an individual is immune to episcopal objection simply because the particular individual is respectable from the human and scholarly points of view. Naturally every theologian maintains that his view (as being correct or open to discussion) is the result of theological 'science' or some other science, and everyone is only too tempted to regard himself as the mere spokesman of this particular objective 'science'. But that on its own need by no means keep back the bishop in his teaching office from saying an unequivocal 'No' in certain circumstances.

More of these rules could be set up and refined 'casuistically', but ultimately no rule can relieve the bishop of his 'decision' in the specific sense of the word. Ultimately he must decide according to his knowledge and conscience how much courage he needs to use his authority and what measure of caution must be prescribed for using it in the concrete instance. If, objectively speaking, he prescribes wrongly, he can act wrongly in either direction. But he must have the courage to take this risk all the same. He has no absolute security against such a contingency. It is not pleasant, where matters of truth and the intellectual integrity of individuals is concerned, to have to come to a decision under certain circumstances knowing that the decision cannot be regarded as 'irreformable'. But human life and the Church's life of faith are not thinkable without these vulnerable and yet valid decisions. Even theological scholars for the most part do not get beyond such provisional decisions – which are all the same valid here and now – even where they are pronounced under the strange conviction of being merely mouthpieces of 'objective [97] science'. So the right to make decisions of this sort is all the more to be granted to the official authority. For the faith and the Church are not made in the theologian's retort, but are carried by apostolic proclamation in the message which is entrusted primarily to Church authority, to the bishops. The vulnerability of reformable decisions of this kind does not excuse the office-bearer from exercising the duty of his office. But the 'censured' theologian cannot at the outset fundamentally refuse to accept the decision of the bishop's teaching authority and guardianship simply because it is not *a priori* above the possibility of error, not

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'irreformable'.

III

What measures can be taken practically to do justice to these – self-evident – observations and rules? To this question we shall give a merely partial answer in question form.

How can collaboration between bishops and theologians become concretely closer? Why does not the episcopate provide the highly somnolent 'dogmaticians' study group' with tasks, by giving particular advice and suggesting important themes for conferences, etc.? (The same applies to the similar 'society of exegetes'). In the late Middle Ages and in the sixteenth century there were more institutions than today through which theologians expressed themselves as unities and bore collective responsibility. Today it is surely even more necessary. Surely the practice of theologians acting as consultants for the commissions of the bishops' conference ought to be more clearly institutionalised, so that it actually functions correctly and one knows who is responsible for giving advice?

Ought not the episcopal book censorship to be reformed? And why in our case is the provision of canon law not observed whereby the censor has to be responsible by name for his decision? Ought he not to do this when a book is rejected too? Are the censors always competent? Are they both courageous and cautious? Is it certain that the preliminary censure has still more advantages than disadvantages today, or does it not lead to a false evaluation, i.e. an over-valuation of those books which have only just passed the censor? Would not other forms of episcopal reaction to theological work and views be more effective and appropriate today?

It is not necessary today for the episcopal teaching office (in addition to agreeing to the appointment of professors and the filling of similar posts, sermons, the pastoral letters which for the most part seem rather antiquated, and the episcopal book censorship) to be exercised in other ways, best of all perhaps as the official statement of a bishops' conference? [98] E.g. by the bishops' conference issuing teaching letters and publishing its recommendations etc.? Theoretically the bishops' conference has for a long time had an institution for implementing the work of critical and productive contact with theology today and current cultural life as it is theologically relevant. One sees little sign of it and is tempted to doubt whether this institution, as it appears to exist, is even capable of informing the episcopate adequately on all these questions. Is it sufficiently provided with the necessary personnel and technical equipment for such a task?

Could not the 'priests' council' which is to be formed in the individual dioceses be in addition an instrument for keeping the bishop informed about doctrinal tendencies and unrest among the clergy, and for instructing the clergy correctly on such questions? Are the possibilities provided by deanery conferences, theological conferences for priests, conferences for Catholic academies (why not also for members of the clergy themselves?) sufficiently exploited for the purposes we have mentioned? Could not the bishops, without interfering with the free play of theological scholarship by excessive direction, influence the specialist theological journals to apply themselves more to modern questions of theology than to merely learned historical research (the importance of which we do not contest)?

Are the bishops really sufficiently aware of theology's urgent need of their encouragement at an academic level? Are all the bishops definitely willing enough to choose carefully and make available people who will eventually take up theological lectureships? Can this still be left to the individual bishop? May it still happen that a bishop refuses to free theologians for further study on account of a shortage of priests, in the hope that another bishop will do so in any case? Is it not possible to believe that the future of Christianity and the Church will be

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better served by a highly educated and lively clergy, able to deal with the mentality of our time, than by a quickly trained clergy prematurely expended in the routine work of the care of souls?

Is it not the case that educated people in the Church are very defectively taught by the mass media as regards theological questions? We do not mean to recommend that a more anxious watch be kept over religious broadcasting etc.; that would be quite out of place; but it is possible to have the impression that the bishops do not make available people of high enough qualifications for such a task. Is one not struck by the fact that in a broadcast religious discussion the lay contribution is often better and more relevant than what is presented by the Church in a narrower sense?

[99] The solution of the problems referred to by Ottaviani will depend in the future largely on the training of young theologians. Is the new programme of studies which was committed to the bishops' conferences by the Council being pursued energetically enough? In practice is it not in danger of withering away or being wrecked by the specialist egoism of the individual professors? Are people aware that under certain circumstances professors, who are only exalting their own subject, do not make good advisers in the reform of studies, especially if, as is sometimes the case, they do not understand very much about modern pastoral care, the mental outlook of young people and the level of intelligence of the people who are nowadays coming to theology? So far what has been made known as a result of deliberations about the reform of theological studies in Germany seems merely like a tedious bargaining over lecture timetables. Do people seriously think that that is enough? If the subjects studied are left as they are, unless the ultimate aim, i.e. the training of future pastors, emerges more clearly than heretofore as the principle of form and organization of the studies, unless the actual level of intelligence of the young theologians is more realistically taken into account, unless the theologian's academic instruction is brought into a closer relationship with the existentially religious forming of his personality, the reform of studies will collapse.

Is it not possible to come to a clearer understanding as regards those questions touched on in Ottaviani's letter? How does one transform a mere defence against erroneous or dangerous views and tendencies into a theology of 'offensive'? Could not the bishops encourage such a theology (and not just tolerate it benevolently) where traces of it are to be found?

Without diminishing the Church's basic duty to conserve and defend the whole inheritance of faith, has not the Church's teaching authority the right (and perhaps the duty), trusting in the inner power of Christian truth, to organise centres of concentration instead of fighting battles on all points and frittering away its not inexhaustible resources of strength, gaining a victory nowhere? It ought not to be thought that man has always to be doing 'here and now' all the things which he *could* do. For instance one *can* fight false views regarding the theory and practice of Indulgences; but the fight against atheism, conducted properly, is certainly a more pressing problem.

Would it not be possible to pursue quite generally a more offensive theological 'cultural politics' (in the best possible sense), with bishops and theologians more clearly forming a community than is the case at present, where theologians constitute merely the critical element and the [100] bishops represent merely the conservative element in the Church? – a strategy in which the theologians themselves take a clearer part in the offensive of defending the Church's doctrine, and the bishops' role is more clearly that of critically examining this same doctrine? Collaboration between bishops and theologians proved its worth at the Council. Will it be continued, or will everything back in the home situation, after the passing of the Council, remain as it was before the Council?

Everything that has been said is to be understood as a few observations upon Cardinal Ottaviani's letter. It would be truer to say that the letter has provided the stimulus rather than the subject-matter of these remarks. For it is plain that our observations have not entered

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deeply into the individual theological problems enumerated in the letter. They are thus concerned with a preliminary area of discussion. It may be that some readers have the impression that these notes hover between 'reaction' and 'progress' in theology.[10] But perhaps the author may hope that such an impression is fundamentally a false one after all. Not every compromise is dishonourable. Insight and action are always aiming for a centre which cannot be reached directly. For many, the extremist cuts a better figure than the one who continues patiently to seek this centre anew. But there is need today of that patience which seeks the centre.

[10] On the serious and difficult nature of the questions posed by the Council cf. the author's essay 'The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology', in this volume, pp. 3 ff.

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[101]

6

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY WITHIN THE TOTALITY OF THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES

The question raised in this paper[1] is 'What does practical theology expect of the other fields of theological study?' First of all we must define the limits of our discussion of the matter in question. The approach and the situation of modern practical theology among the Protestant churches cannot be described. And as far as practical theology within the Catholic Church is concerned, the author is really more of a dilettante who has strayed into this field by a number of chance occurrences. There may be advantages in this if one regards it as a sign that a dogmatician *can* be interested in practical theology and that, therefore, such an interest can justifiably be expected from him. Seen thus it is perhaps not so untoward that practical theology's demands upon other theological studies should be put forward not by a representative of practical theology but by an 'outsider'.

Since there is no really clear and generally accepted agreement on the Catholic side as to what practical theology is and should be, and consequently there is amongst us no general consensus as to its relationship with the other departments of theological study and as to what demands it can and must make on the latter, the author has no choice but to say – on his own account and at his own risk – what he himself imagines practical theology to be. Anything which follows as a result of this is subject to the proviso that one *cannot* speak in the name of a *single* Catholic theology. At the same time of course this does not mean that the author's view is simply unique within Catholic theology or claims any patent for its personal originality. In any case we possess a sketch of a practical theology of this kind in the *Handbook of Pastoral Theology*, even if such a composite work naturally reveals many deficiencies, since not all its contributions adequately realise the fundamental conception [102] equally well if at all.[2] H. Schuster gives an account of the history of practical theology's understanding of itself from the Catholic point of view in the first volume of the *Handbook*.[3] The author regards the name 'practical theology' as better than our more usual 'pastoral theology' because the latter indicates a false constriction of the discipline's field of activity, as we shall mention directly.

I

Practical theology is that theological discipline which is concerned with the Church's self-actualisation here and now – both that which *is* and that which *ought to be*. This it does by means of *theological* illumination of the particular situation in which the Church must realise itself in all its dimensions. We shall now amplify this essential description. For a detailed justification of this we refer to other studies.[4]

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[1] cf. the details in the list of sources at the end of this volume for the occasion of this lecture.

[2] cf. F. X. Arnold (from Vol. III onwards F. Klostermann), K. Rahner, V. Schurr, L. M. Weber (ed.), *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie. Praktische Theologie der Kirche in ihrer Gegenwart* I (Freiburg, 1964), II/1-2 (Freiburg, 1966); III. Several translations are in preparation.

[3] cf. the second chapter, 'Die Geschichte der Pastoraltheologie', I, pp. 40-92; cf. also F. X. Arnold, 'Pastoraltheologische Ansätze in der Pastoral bis zum 18. Jahrhundert', I, pp. 15-39.

[4] cf. apart from the contributions of H. Schuster and K. Rahner in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* (esp. I, pp. 93-114, 117-215, 323-332, 333-343; II/1, pp. 181 ff., 233 ff., 256 ff.; II/2, pp. 19 ff., 46 ff.) esp. H. Schuster,

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The Church is a historical quantity. Without endangering its abiding essence it is true to say that the Church not simply *is*, but must be continually 'happening' anew. This 'occurrence' of the Church, however, is not simply its being in essence perpetually present in a space-time always external to it, but the historical form of this essence – unique in each instance – to which the Spirit of the Church calls it through its particular and unique historical situation. Because of its Spirit's eschatologically [103] triumphant grace the Church cannot be untrue to the particular 'occurrent' form of its self-realisation to such an extent that it simply ceases being the Church of Christ; but that does not alter the fact that the Church has the task of making a commitment to realise this particular historical form in responsibility and freedom, and can therefore also fall far short of it. Consequently the Church must reflect consciously upon the question how the Church's self-actualisation is to take place arising out of and in response to its particular given situation in each instance. Practical theology is the scientific organisation of this reflection.

This practical theology is a unique, independent science, a fundamental one in essence in spite of its reciprocal relationship with other theological disciplines, since its business of scientifically critical and systematic reflection is a unique quantity and its nature is not deducible. For it is reflection orientated towards committal. It follows from a correct evaluation of the relationship between theory and practice; from an appropriate understanding (from the point of view of existential ontology) of the nature of freedom; from a right theology of the intractability of the Holy Spirit as the principle of the Church's history; from a correct understanding of the nature of hope; from all this it follows that the Church's committal to the particular self-realisation to which it is called at any one time cannot adequately be deduced from its *essence*. And so the aim of practical theology – precisely this continually new self-actualisation in committal on the part of the Church – is not the mere consequence of an 'essential' theology of the nature of the Church, the Word of God and the kerygma, the nature of the Sacraments, the service of love etc., however possible and necessary this may be. If, in spite of this, this non-deducible factor which inheres in each committal is to be the object of a reflection *sui generis* which sees into the future, seeking what is to be done here and now, extending the horizons of the possible future, trying the spirits which are proclaiming the future, then the process of reflection upon it, scientifically organised, is an independent and primary science and not only an 'application' of the results of the essential sciences within theology, whether the latter be systematic or historical. It is true that the decisions of the Church are not really made in practical theology, for that is a matter for the whole Church (and within this totality it is a matter for official authority), even if the theory of practical theology, as actually carried on, is itself one factor in the Church's practice. But in being this kind of theory practical theology is not simply an 'essential' science but a quite unique one, a testing of the spirits with a view to the act of committal; it implies a prophetic element – which one may be permitted to call [104] 'political' – since it must be aware of the impulse of the Church's Spirit, which is not simply identical with the perpetually valid truth in the Church, but translates the latter into the concrete challenge valid at the particular hour. Practical theology can and must be this, because the *theoria* realised in

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'Wesen und Aufgabe der Pastoraltheologie', *Concilium* 1 (1965), pp. 165 ff.; K. Rahner, 'A Theological Interpretation of the Position of Christians in the Modern World', *Mission and Grace*, Vol. I (London, 1963), pp. 3-55; K. Rahner, 'The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology', in this volume, pp. 3-27; also 'On the theological problems entailed in a Pastoral Constitution' and 'Practical theology and social work in the Church', *Theological Investigations* X; cf. also F. Klostermann, 'Pastoraltheologie heute', *Dienst an der Lehre*, ed. Catholic Theology Faculty of the University of Vienna = *Wiener Beiträge zur Theologie* X (Vienna, 1965), pp. 51-108; F. X. Arnold, 'Was ist Pastoraltheologie?', *Wort des Heils as Wort in die Zeit* (Trier, 1961), pp. 296-300; K. Delahaye, 'Überlegungen zur Neuorientierung der Pastoraltheologie heute', *Gott in Welt. Festgabe für K. Rahner*, ed. J. B. Metz, W. Kern, A. Darlap, H. Vorgrimler, Vol. II (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 206-218.

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actuality is also an internal factor of the Church's practice and only remains genuine *theoria* under this presupposition. In a word, it is 'theory' and thus science. But it is the *theoria* which indwells the practice itself as an internal factor and which is thus not simply identical with the objectifying 'essential' sciences, which simply ascertain from a 'neutral' position what is the case, or what must always be, or what will surely occur independently of decisions. Consequently it is 'critical' towards the Church although it cannot annexe the latter's decisions. It attempts to be of service in continually overcoming the Church's given deficient self-realisation and transcending it in the next new form to which the Church is being called. It exercises a critical function in respect of the other theological disciplines since it is always questioning whether they are adequately making the particular local contribution required of them (and of which they are capable) towards the Church's self-realisation in committal. In spite of this critical aspect practical theology is an essentially ecclesial discipline, since it is not only concerned with the Church in its relation to its activity, but comprehends itself as the factor of reflection which inheres in this activity and is not merely applied to it from outside. As a result it is dependent on everything which constitutes this Church's continuing essence.

Practical theology's subject-matter is everyone and everything in the Church, i.e. all those who participate in the Church's self-realisation, not only those holding office in the Church and in its official care of souls. Consequently its subject-matter is not only the 'care of souls' in the more narrow sense, but the totality of that particular action required of all members of the Church at any one time, in so far as this action is a factor in the life of the Church as such.

Everything is its subject-matter; i.e. the Church's self-realisation in *all* its dimensions. From this point of view homiletics, catechetics, the study of mission and welfare work are partial fields within practical theology as such, although this does not eliminate the question of these partial disciplines' technical and practical independence.

II

The task of practical theology as an original science demands a *theological* analysis of the particular present situation in which the Church is to [105] carry out the especial self-realisation appropriate to it at any given moment. In order to be able to perform this analysis of the present by means of scientific reflection and to recognise the Church's situation, practical theology certainly needs sociology, political science, contemporary history etc. To this extent all these sciences are in the nature of ancillary studies for practical theology. However, although the contemporary analysis provided by these profane sciences is necessary and sufficient for its use, it cannot simply draw on it uncritically as though it were already complete and given. Practical theology must itself critically distil this analysis within a theological and ecclesial perspective, a task which cannot be taken over by any other theological discipline. This contemporary analysis does not remain its only task, but it is indispensable. For the committal to the Church's particular relevant self-realisation cannot be unequivocally deduced solely even from a *dogmatic* knowledge of the essence of the Church and the reflex insight into its contemporary situation. Practical theology, on the other hand, can supply – asymptotically at least – the element of reflection and the offer of possible solutions. Beyond the confrontation of the Church's essence with the contemporary situation, practical theology should contain an element of creativity and prophecy and be engaged in critical reflection.

At this point we take the liberty of adding a small observation, even if it is perhaps not absolutely necessary for our subject. Today it is possible to observe that the concrete achievements of science as such are by no means exclusively due to university scientists.

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Besides universities there is an increasing number of other places of research, institutes, learned societies, etc.; even in public and economic administration itself there are scientific organisations which do not merely apply science but carry out actual research. We cannot here enter into the reasons for this – no doubt inevitable – partial migration of science away from the universities. But it can be questioned whether, as regards practical theology, an analogous process is not to be expected and even thought necessary and desirable. In concrete terms: can today's and tomorrow's practical theology be *merely* a university study sustained by the confidence that its work and its results will to some extent be taken note of benevolently by the 'practitioners' in office in the Church, while in general these practitioners still continue in actual fact to live, make decisions and take action in the future on the basis of their own individual experience of life, which has not been subjected to critical reflection? Or would it be desirable, for instance, for the Church's authorities to have something in the nature of a practical [106] theology being studied scientifically alongside them, since they stand in need of it and since much of what is needed from it can only be seen in enough detail as a result of the closest contact with the practice of the Church? University theology, almost as a result of its very nature, lacks this rapport to a large extent. The politician is someone quite different from the student of political thought. But if it is the case today that life is becoming irresistibly subject to science, the student of political thought and the politician must carry on their work in such close collaboration – organisationally too – that the study of politics can no longer be pursued exclusively in the university. Is not the same sort of thing valid for practical theology too? Would it not be fruitful if the university were to train representatives of practical theology who would then continue to work scientifically within the Church's official organs and in direct contact with it and its tasks, exercising an advisory, critical and prompting function on the basis of this work?

III

What does practical theology, understood in this way, expect of the other theological subjects, and what must it demand from them?

Firstly it demands the *recognition of its originality and significance as a theological discipline in its own right*. As far as the other disciplines are concerned that is by no means a readily acceptable view. For the most part the representatives of the other disciplines look on practical theology as a mere hotch-potch of practical consequences which follow automatically from these disciplines. In the Romance countries, for instance, we do not yet have any really serious and distinct discipline of 'practical theology' and in this respect the demands of the Second Vatican Council have not yet begun to be met. Or else the representatives of the other disciplines regard practical theology merely as a collection of psychological, didactic, sociological rules of prudence, gained directly from the ordinary practice of the care of souls. No wonder that one's instinctive attitude – not explicitly stated of course – is to make for the most part less imposing demands on the practical theologian's intellectual and scientific competence than in the case of the other theological disciplines. So the first thing required of the other theological studies is a right epistemological understanding of practical theology – with all its consequences. Although we are not able to pursue this matter further here, it implies certain effects as regards the number of and the manner of appointment to professorial chairs, the arrangement of courses, and the provision of the necessary finance, etc.

[107] The *second* demand – still of a general character – is the demand that *the other theological disciplines should recognise the element of practical theology which must be contained within themselves, and that they should cherish it*. The whole of theology is an

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ecclesial field of study in all its disciplines, precisely because (and in so far as) it exercises its critical function with respect to the Church as well, since this criticism is always immanent in the Church's faith as such. But this also means that all theological disciplines must serve in the Church's self-realisation, and therefore contain within themselves an element of practical theology. As a discipline in its own right it cannot deny the relatedness of the other disciplines to the Church's self-realisation and thus to her faith, her message, her sacramental practice, to the life of the Church, her love issuing in works and her critical service to the world in all its dimensions, although in this respect practical theology always has to act in stimulation and criticism of the other disciplines.

For instance it cannot itself actualise the Gospel message in an existential hermeneutics intended for its proclamation today; exegetics and systematic theology must do this together; the *material* content of homiletics is, at least fundamentally, the province of dogmatics itself. Practical theology will leave the more precise formulation even of the *ius condendum* to canon law, even if by its very nature it must press for a continually new *ius condendum* appropriate to the Church's situation at any particular time. If it carries out itself an analysis of the Church's present situation by means of theological reflection, practical theology does not thereby become engaged in contemporary Church history, simply because this analysis is impossible *without* Church history and particularly contemporary history. However, by criticism and new ways of questioning it will make Church history (as a *theological* and ecclesial science) aware that a Church history studied theologically is not the satisfaction of historical inquisitiveness but the critical implementation of that anamnesis of the Church's past without which she cannot sufficiently take possession of her present, adopting it as the germ of her future. Practical theology will not itself carry on the dialogue with man's profane understanding of existence, as that is a matter for fundamental theology and dogmatics; but it will continually make these disciplines aware that their tasks are not to be fulfilled in the unhistorical and sterile realm of eternally valid truths, but in the historical situation which is ours at any one particular time.

When we said previously that practical theology is concerned with the Church's self-realisation in the continually new given contemporary [108] situation, which it illuminates theologically, that does not mean that it either must or can itself determine the *content* of the Church's self-realisation in all its dimensions by means of theoretical reflection, but that it is to submit to reflection the tasks of the other disciplines as they touch the Church and arise from the contemporary situation. By means of its own analysis of the present, which is not the business of other theological disciplines, it will carry out a process of reflection which can now no longer be provided in a scientifically responsible and satisfactory manner by these other disciplines. Today they must allow the compass of their tasks, *in so far as* they are set by the Church and her future, to be prescribed by another discipline; by practical theology. To this extent practical theology takes precedence over the other disciplines, although the reverse is the case in other respects, i.e. to the extent that these other theological disciplines, as the essential fundamental alignment, constitute the precondition, perspective and standard for practical theology.

Practical theology challenges the other theological studies to recognise the task which inheres immanently in them, orientated to the practice of the Church; the second demand it makes is that they should apply themselves to this task. Of course that does not mean that practical theology is *only* a sort of formal conscience for the other theological disciplines. For on the one hand it implies, as its subordinate departments, the study of mission, catechetics, homiletics and the study of welfare work. However difficult it is to separate these individual disciplines from those which they presuppose as their foundation, it is in any case immediately apparent that practical theology is not only the critical and formal conscience of the other disciplines. Then there are many concrete factors in the Church's self-realisation

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(i.e. the whole 'organisation' of the 'care of souls'), which are not considered by any other theological discipline, especially what is 'institutional' in the Church's self-realisation, which is not simply coextensive with its right to be so, but far exceeds it. Conversely, what has been said previously does not deny the fact that practical theology can take on in addition subsidiary tasks which in themselves belong to other disciplines but which, under certain circumstances, the latter are not actually dealing with. So far for example there are many questions which Catholic dogmatic ecclesiology has not considered sufficiently, although they are really its province and are of the greatest importance for practical theology. In such a case practical theology can pursue a piece of dogmatic ecclesiology in a subsidiary role. The same thing can happen as regards dogmatic sacramental theology, canon law, moral theology, ecumenical theology, etc.

[109]

IV

We shall now try to fill in the details of this fundamental demand as it is addressed to the individual theological disciplines, even if it is unfortunately only possible here to formulate these demands and expectations in a very general and vague way. In addition it must be observed that the epistemological kind of question as to how the theological disciplines are related to each other at a more intimate level, forming the totality of the theology of Christianity and the Church, must be set aside.

1. Firstly, as far as *exegetics* and *biblical theology* are concerned, the question as to how far this discipline itself has the task of actualising the Word of God in scripture and how far it shares it with 'systematic theology' is a problem which cannot be solved here. In any case, as Christian theology, which is something other than the mere study of religion, this discipline is in the service of the Church's kerygma and must make its contribution to the correct and effective proclamation of the 'Gospel' in the Church according to scripture. It is a basic conviction of the Christian Faith that this is possible, in spite of – or rather *because of* – the methods of modern scientific exegesis as genuinely practised. An exegesis which does not share this conviction ought to withdraw from theology and become attached to a profane field of religious studies, if it is still thought interesting. Christian exegesis must serve the Church's kerygma; it must not only supply the critical standard but also be of positive assistance. It is precisely practical theology which will have to put this fundamental demand to exegesis, clarifying it and showing its specific application. This does not mean that it interferes thereby in the autonomous field of exegesis, but speaks in the name of the whole of theology, of which exegesis forms one part, receiving its task, its justification and its autonomy from this whole. Here I must admit that I cannot say precisely what practical theology's demands upon exegesis would look like in more specific and concrete terms, nor how it could be executed technically. But to say this is only to touch upon the more general problem of how to overcome the mutual alienation of the sciences and also of the theological disciplines. In my estimation in any case, practical theology ought to ask exegesis and biblical theology to be providing continually (as well as the increasingly detailed studies which tend to become boundless, and which are no longer digestible from the preacher's point of view) the kind of theological literature which the theologian and preacher (who can no longer be an exegetical specialist in the strict sense) finds useful in his work and which keeps him close [110] enough to scholarly exegetical research. This may mean a new kind of 'middle' position between precise research and *haute vulgarisation*. The true exegetical specialist should not think it beneath his dignity to write such books, but regard it as a higher task. Of course these wishes on the part of practical theology will be largely identical with the wishes which systematic theology lays before exegetics. There is nothing strange in that; it is

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rooted in the very nature of the case.

2. As far as practical theology's demands upon *systematic theology* (i.e. chiefly fundamental theology, dogmatics and moral theology) are concerned, it must be said at once that a more intensive dialogue between both disciplines would be desirable, to discuss their different nature. We have already observed that systematic studies continually tend to be quick to misunderstand practical theology as the mere practical consequences of the theses of systematic theology or as a straightforward echo of actual practice.

Furthermore, practical theology must draw the attention of systematic theology to the fact that the latter does not carry on its business in a vacuum, not subject to history and for its own sake, but in the concrete situation of the times and of the Church. It cannot set its own tasks and priorities just as it likes. It seems to me then, that this implies the following consequences for Catholic theology: Catholic systematic theology in universities – together with the historical work which accompanies it – seems to me today still to have too strong a flavour of historicism, too calmly pursuing historical theology detached from the question of proclamation today. It still tends to deal too intensively with peripheral dogmatic questions, to concern itself too little with the central issues involved in a new reflection upon the fundamental assertions of the faith, and (since Vatican II) it is in danger of focusing its whole attention on the Council's explicit theses, which neither were nor could have been the themes laid upon us today. It might very well be one of practical theology's tasks to investigate the strategy and 'politics' which lie unexamined and inexplicit behind the study of systematic theology; it would have to initiate an examination of the hidden tendencies and governing images of systematic theology as it is actually practised, from the point of view of a sociology of the Church, including statistical investigations; for the actual practice of theology is one factor in the Church's self-realisation and thus also subject-matter for practical theology. This kind of analysis of what is actually done and not done in the rest of theology could then lead to the question as to what *should* be done and what ought *not* to be done, or at least, not done with such over-emphasis. To my knowledge [111] for instance there is today nowhere a text-book of fundamental or dogmatic theology for the young theological student which presents the subjects wholly in a way which is both good from a didactic point of view and appropriate to the demands of the present situation. And we simply accept this fact without a qualm. Ought not practical theology to protest loudly about this matter? Surely it is part of its real task, if it is to reflect critically and creatively upon the Church's particular self-realisation presented at any one time in all its dimensions (i.e. also in the field of theology)? While maintaining all due respect for the freedom and autonomy of the individual theological disciplines, it is surely part of the dignity of these disciplines that they can accept criticism where they are proceeding against their own aims, at least by default. Surely this kind of admonition cannot today be based merely on an unregulated private experience, but rather it must be established in a very precise and exact manner? But by whom, if not by practical theology?

3. As far as *Church history* is concerned, practical theology will first of all be surprised to find that we – as Catholics – have a greatly underdeveloped theological reflection concerning the real nature of Church history. Consequently the compass of Church history and its relation to the other theological disciplines and to the Church itself in its concrete form remain highly obscure. Of course, as such Church history has to do with the past and not directly with the future; it is not a prophetic oracle, nor is it a drawing-office of creative programmes as to what is to take place in the Church today or tomorrow. But if it is really interested in genuine theological issues and looks into the past from this standpoint, it could recognise – in accordance with its own true nature – much of the past as initiating future possibilities and tasks for the Church. For instance, is our Catholic Church history aware of a *theological* structure principle of its object of study in its temporally occurrent form? If it had

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this knowledge, the real significance of 'what happens' could be made clearer, and this would be of the greatest importance for the Church's practice tomorrow, even if it were not just an easy recipe for it. From the point of view of the open questions of the future which practical theology endeavours to uncover, the past could be asked to reveal its own theological mystery, thereby shedding more light on these questions and bringing into view a horizon in which an answer could be sought. If a Christian can only grasp the Old Testament in its deepest essence from the standpoint of the New, why should he not understand the Church's past better from the standpoint of *that* theology which anticipates the Church's future in its *formal* nature and tries, in [112] practical theology, to plan out its more immediate possibilities in concrete terms?

In truth, an answer is not an answer unless it is surprising and unexpected. But it is also true that no-one receives an answer if he has no question. The horizon opened up by a correctly formulated question in no way violates the answer – if one is forthcoming – so that one only hears what one wants to hear. If history (*Geschichte*) is to be the teacher of the present and the future – and to say this is not an unscientific self-alienation of history (*Historie*) – one must know to some extent (including all possible surprises in one's calculations) *what kind* of instruction for the future one expects from history. And on *this* matter surely practical theology could have something to say to Church history, and might expect the study of Church history to take advice from history on these matters? It is unfortunately impossible here to clarify by means of concrete cases what we have said in this very abstract manner. Ultimately the Church's past achievements are only interesting in connection with what lies ahead of her. If the Church historian is imbued with this awareness, he will write Church history which is also of service to practical theology. But not otherwise.

4. The relationship between *canon law* and practical theology is or ought to be very close. First of all practical theology must cherish its independence *vis-à-vis* canon law. Practical theology is not identical with the sum total of observations concerning the more concrete implementation of canon law. Only a small portion of the life of the Church is accessible to legal ordering. Practical theology ought to defend the remaining sphere of the Church's life which is not subject to legalistic manipulation. That is not as obvious as it sounds, since our Catholic canon law tends to formulate *moral* norms in its own sphere, which on the one hand are not really *legal* norms at all, and on the other hand it tends to manipulate them as if they *were* legal norms. In so far as canon law is not only concerned *de lege condita* (historical, interpreting and casuistic) but is also seeking the correct law which ought to exist and yet does not at present, the *lex condenda*, and in so far as this law of the future is not *only* that law which develops out of the immanent dynamic of the currently valid law, it is the task of practical theology to discover aims and horizons for canon law in respect of this *lex condenda*. Today this can only take place as a result of a scientifically critical and simultaneously theological analysis of the contemporary situation. This, however, cannot be the task of canon law. For it is not a legal matter and at the same time constitutes such a difficult and extensive reality, demanding its own methodology [113] for study, that it cannot be investigated as an appendage by canon law merely because the latter as the science *de lege condenda* happens to need some knowledge of it. Criticism of current law and fundamental exposition of the recommended law are therefore tasks of practical theology and imply as many demands of practical theology upon canon law. The relationship here is similar to that between the study of politics, sociology, etc. on the one hand and jurisprudence on the other. Just as profane jurisprudence must accept observations from these other profane disciplines although they are historically junior to it, the same applies also to canon law in relation to practical theology.

5. Finally something must be said concerning practical theology's demands upon the *study of liturgy*. This question depends to some extent on whether liturgiology is to be understood

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as a subordinate discipline of practical theology or not. However that may be, modern liturgiology has taken as its object the scientifico-theological reflection of a liturgy yet to be created, and deals no longer primarily with the history and appraisal of existing liturgy. Thereby it has developed a broader and more comprehensive concept of liturgy than was the case previously within a markedly ritualistic and rubricistic understanding of liturgy. As a result, in any case, liturgiology has come into the immediate neighbourhood of practical theology. The question of the *liturgia condenda* is above all a question of practical theology seen from the standpoint of its whole task, or at least one requiring an answer for which practical theology must create the presuppositions. For one can only answer the question as to *how* liturgy ought to be done *today* if one knows what Christians are like as contemporary men, if practical theology approaches its problems with the help of sociology of religion etc. Precisely because liturgiology has now become in actuality quite independent, practical theology as a whole will continually have the task of delivering liturgiology from the dangers of a romantic glorification of the old forms of the liturgy, the danger of an aesthetic view, of a rubricistic legalism and also of the private whim of the connoisseur. It will lead to a liturgy which can really be a liturgy of the People of God here and now.

We cannot discuss here the question of the relationship between practical theology and the profane disciplines which constitute its necessary ancillary studies (like psychology, sociology, etc.). It will be clear too that we have only touched upon the relation of practical theology to those theological disciplines which to a certain extent have a fundamental and normative significance for practical theology. The prime intention [114] of this contribution has been to demonstrate the urgency of the basic task. If we find ourselves only at the beginning of our endeavours and deliberations it may be all the more a health-giving challenge to pursue the matter with more energy and with greater sensitivity. If that were done, even to a small extent, it would be a good beginning.

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[115]

PART TWO

The Doctrine of God and Christology

[117]

7

THE NEED FOR A 'SHORT FORMULA' OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

In order to be effective *vis-à-vis* modern unbelief the mission of the Church calls for a kind of witness to the Christian faith which can be really intelligible to modern man. This truism implies a demand, however, which is by no means easily fulfilled and is often neglected. For this message must be so expressed that what is essential is clearly distinguished from everything of secondary importance and can be actually 'realised'. Otherwise a modern 'pagan' is not able to distinguish this essence of Christianity from the Church's often uninviting and repellent appearance (in sermons, religious practice, social conditions, etc.), and consequently applies his – partially justified – opposition towards Christians to Christianity itself. Thus the Christian message must be such that it clearly criticises Christians and concrete Christianity. This message must be able to express what is essential *in brief* to today's highly preoccupied men, and it must go on saying it. Such repetition is not wearisome so long as it is really concerned with what is decisive and essential, not as an 'ideology' which impinges on man from outside (and which changes nothing as far as the 'facts' are concerned), but as the experienced and lived reality of man's life itself.[1] Such a 'short formula' is especially urgently required in our *pluralist* society. In earlier times a homogeneous society itself 'lived' Christianity, at least as a 'religion', even if perhaps not always as a personal '*faith*'. In a situation where one was already impregnated with Christianity as social custom and 'ideology' *before* being capable of and compelled to a personal decision of faith, it was possible to be unconcerned as to the doctrinal mode of communication of Christianity. This kind of 'postponement' was true of Baptism and also to a certain extent of life in general. It was not necessary to be very concerned about the correct proportions of what was said; secondary things could be communicated more urgently as if they were primary; one could [118] permit oneself rather to neglect that *single whole* of Christianity as such, whereas nowadays it is precisely this 'whole' which is the precondition for a correct understanding and realisation of the 'particular' within it. Nowadays the baptised person too, even if he is born into a Christian family, lives in a situation of existence which largely does not communicate Christianity. Simply from the fact of the situation in which he finds himself, even a baptised person is in many respects more 'pagan' than ever anyone has been since Constantine. He must understand sufficiently clearly what is particular and really distinctive in Christianity, those things by which he is to be distinguishable from his environment.

[1] This statement cannot be suspected of Modernism if one bears in mind that the grace of Christ always precedes the external preaching of the Gospel.

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If one considers this and other requirements, one must needs be surprised that there are so few 'short formulas' expressing the essential nature of the Christian message briefly and in terms which are intelligible today. 'Briefly' is here of course a very relative concept. Such a 'formula' does not need to be as short as the Apostles' Creed or any other authoritative confession of faith. But on the other hand the modern 'Shorter Catechism' is definitely much too long, and furthermore, it does not really correspond, for other reasons too, to what is meant here. Nor is it a question of finding an identical formula for all countries and all of today's culturally and socially differentiated groups. In our continually and rapidly changing world a short formula of this sort would be doubtless short-lived by comparison with something like the Apostles' Creed. It is therefore all the more necessary that there should be such formulas to be appropriated by man's spirit, heart and mind. They must be capable of being directly and 'existentially' assimilated, self-explanatory and not requiring a long prior elucidation, in order to commend themselves to men. They must be illuminating within the particular man's perspective of understanding and experience of life, as far as possible using his modern vocabulary and employing those presuppositions which are self-evident to modern man (whether they are actually so *per se* more than others or not). They must not presuppose as already given anything which is not immediately intelligible as 'given' and cannot be fundamentally experienced. These requirements of a short formula of this kind are not indeed as clear and evident as one might be inclined to think.

We may illustrate this with a small example: probably *all* these short formulas of faith[2] – beginning with the New Testament – presuppose that [119] the hearer understands the word 'God' correctly and can easily realise this correct meaning existentially. But is that the case today? Is it still possible today to say with Thomas that *Quid est Deus* is 'clear' and 'familiar' *to everyone* and that accordingly the question only remains as to whether this 'God' also exists? Things are simply not like this today.[3] Nor is a quickly proffered 'definition' of 'what' is *meant* by the word sufficient, however logically lucid it is. Ought not a short formula of this kind to begin much 'earlier', where what is really meant by 'God' is experienced in one's own actualisation of existence? But where could a point of departure be found for such a modern understanding of the meaning of the word 'God' and for its existential realisation? What kind of starting-point is it which would have to be actually expressed *explicitly*, even if only briefly?

From this simple discussion it is immediately apparent to how large an extent the scope and proportions of a modern 'short formula' of this kind would differ from those of other times. The chief question would be therefore, what such a short formula would look like if it were to be suitable for a situation of which real atheism is a decisive co-determinant for the first time in the history of the world. The same would be said as regards the *Christological* assertions of such a short formula. This Christological content must be formulated from the very beginning in such a way that it does not sound like a myth of a distant age and so that modern man does not have the impression that it is at the outset impossible to ascertain *what* really happened in times past, and that therefore what is past certainly *cannot* be important for today.

[2] It is possible to understand the Old Testament Decalogue as a short formula of this sort, for it should be thought of as the charter of the covenant rather than as a codification of mere moral norms (or even norms of natural law) for the individual.

[3] cf. Karl Rahner, 'Bemerkungen zur Gotteslehre in der katholischen Dogmatik', *Catholica* 20 (1966), pp.1-18; in this volume pp. 127 ff.

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Before directly presenting such an attempt – intended only as an experiment[4] – we shall say something further to a deeper knowledge of 'short formulas'. We are only drawing attention to a *demand* which must be made upon the concrete proclamation of the Gospel, on dogmatic theology and also on pastoral theology in this age, which is characterised by an ideologically pluralistic society and by atheism.

Here we mention one or two things in support of this demand. The history of these 'short formulas' is as old as Christianity itself. In the [120] New Testament the formula 'Jesus is the Messiah' (cf. e.g. Acts 9:22; John 20:31) was a formula which more or less told a Jew of the Old Testament religion everything he needed to know and confess in order to be a Christian. It was a formula which was basically directly intelligible to him.[5] Romans 10:9 (Jesus as the Risen Lord) is also a short formula of this kind, expressing clearly and distinctly in its concentrated form the minimum of the Christian faith necessary for a 'theist' at that time. If one had grasped what was said in this way and adopted it in reality, one was at that time without doubt a Christian. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 is likewise a short formula directed particularly at the situation produced by the meeting of paganism and Christianity. If one wanted to write a patristic history of these short formulas, part of it (but not the whole) would be the history of the creeds, bearing in mind that in addition to official Church confessions of faith in the stricter sense there were always the more 'private' formulations of faith (as, for example, bishops' declarations on the occasion of their taking office). Similarly under this heading come small writings like Augustine's *Enchiridion* (in spite of its more detailed character: *PL* 40, 181-196). For instance, Luther's powerful paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed in his Short Catechism is also such a short formula. The most recent attempt at – or rather the most recent demand for – this kind of short formula (in a single sentence) can be found in Vatican II's Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity: in his fundamental position as a baptised person the believer must grasp the fact that in Christianity he 'has been snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of the love of God, communicated to him in Christ' (No. 13). Naturally even a short statement like this is on its own by no means equivalent to a short formula, but it implies the demand for such a short formula and to a certain extent it shows the way towards it. For it is plain that the statement is not afraid of an 'anthropological' perspective on the part of the affirmation of faith; it presents the substance of faith in the form of a statement about man; man is the one to whom the divine self-communication is addressed and who, in receiving this divine self-communication, comprehends both what he is himself and what God is.

In everyday life today there are advertising slogans, party programmes and manifestoes by means of which social groups aim to tell other people what they are and what they intend to do. These communications are produced as a result of the greatest care and trouble, and they cannot be replaced by weighty volumes or a long series of lectures, whilst at the [121] same time they must fulfil all the necessary conditions so that what is said can really strike home and take effect in our situation of a pluralistic mass society. Something like this is also needed for the Church's proclamation in the Age of Atheism.[6] Such a short formula of the Christian message – and today we probably need several – cannot be found in the ancient creeds even if the latter remain the *regula fidei*. Perhaps dogmatics and catechetics will soon take up this challenge, if it is recognised as valid. It signifies a task not only for the teaching

[4] In the following section (II) the author presents an extended version of an earlier attempt. Cf. K. Rahner, 'Kurzer Inbegriff des christlichen Glaubens für "Ungläubige"', *Geist und Leben* 38 (1965), pp. 374-379.

[5] For a thorough treatment of the approach to these early confessions of faith in the New Testament cf. K. Lehmann, *Auferstanden am dritten Tag* (Freiburg, 1968).

[6] There is no need to explain in detail that 'religious propaganda' of this kind is inseparably connected with the specific intimacy of personal faith. Cf. K. Rahner, in F. X. Arnold, K. Rahner, V. Schurr, L. M. Weber (ed.), *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 146-151.

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of religion, but also for dogmatics, philosophy and the history of ideas. The proper starting-point for a correct expression of faith in God is a question which reaches far beyond the problems of the teaching of religion.[7]

II

In what follows we shall present an attempt at this kind of 'modern' confession of faith. It is indeed no more than an attempt. The emphases could be placed differently and it could be longer or shorter. Naturally it can only be intelligible to educated western man, if at all. But I do not find this in itself a drawback: ought we to try to make a thing suitable for everyone by rendering it not really acceptable to anyone? Was not the ancient Creed 'generally intelligible' as a traditional sacral formula by being suitable for only a very small cultural field? If anyone says that he finds this attempt useless we shall certainly not take offence at his opinion, provided that he himself knows better how to communicate just *what* we Christians actually believe to an 'unbeliever' of our own time, in his own environment, and can state it briefly. How would it be if the new Secretariat for Unbelievers in Rome were to produce examples of a short catechism for unbelievers? These examples would follow the teaching of the Decree on Ecumenism that there is a very important distinction between the 'fundamentals' of the faith and other truths, and they would underline the abiding value of the ancient formulas not by repeating the latter but by explaining them. And must this decidedly necessary process of explanation (which even the most stubborn defender of the abiding validity of the ancient formulas recognises as justified and necessary) [122] always be very much longer than the formulas it is supposed to be explaining? Why? If this is not the case, even our stubborn defender must be able to produce a short 'creed' containing the ancient abiding truth and yet expressing it in a different way as compared with traditional formulas. As we have said, the present attempt is to be understood in this sense. Its only purpose is to enable many other people to do the same thing more quickly and better.

Whether he is consciously aware of it or not, whether he is open to this truth or suppresses it, man's whole spiritual and intellectual existence is orientated towards a holy mystery which is the basis of his being. This mystery is the inexplicit and unexpressed horizon which always encircles and upholds the small area of our everyday experience of knowing and acting, our knowledge of reality and our free action. It is our most fundamental, most natural condition, but for that very reason it is also the most hidden and least regarded reality, speaking to us by its silence, and even whilst appearing to be absent, revealing its presence by making us take cognisance of our own limitations. We call this God. We can ignore him, but even in an act which professes to be unconcerned about him, God is once more affirmed as the sustaining fundamental of such an act, just as logic is still operative even in an act which denies the validity of logic, or just as an action which affirms absolute meaninglessness considers itself more meaningful than the acceptance of a meaning for existence, thus explicitly affirming once again that meaning is fundamental to reality. In its capacity as the very ground of the individual absorbed in knowing and acting, the holy mystery we call God is at once what is most internal to ourselves and also what is furthest from our manipulation and has no need of us. Our proper response to it is reverence and worship; Where these are present, where man accepts his being in an attitude of absolute responsibility, seeking and awaiting this ultimate meaning in trust, he has already found God, whatever name he may give him. For his ultimate name can only be uttered, finally, in loving silence before his incomprehensibility.

[7] For the historically different ways of access to faith cf. K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp 142 ff.

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However hard and unsatisfactory it may be to interpret the deepest and most fundamental experience at the very bottom of our being, man does experience in his innermost history that this silent, infinitely distant holy mystery, which continually recalls him to the limits of his finitude and lays bare his guilt, yet *bids him approach*; the mystery enfolds him in an ultimate and radical love which commends itself to him as his salvation and as the real meaning of his existence (provided only that he allows its possibilities to be greater than his own finitude and guilt). This love – [123] experienced at the ground of being, which is nothing other than God's absolute self-communication, in which God gives himself and not only what is finite, in which he becomes the infinitely wide horizon of our being – we call divinising grace. It is offered to everyone as light and as the promise of eternal life, working freely and graciously in every man, welling up from the origin of his existence and – even though perhaps not named as such – appearing everywhere where in the history of man courage, love, faithfulness to the light of conscience, endurance of darkness by faith in the light, or any other witness to the ground of his being is at work and is made plain as the holy mystery of the loving nearness of God. That history which reveals more and more clearly God's pledge of himself in radical self-communication to man, accepted in faith, hope and love, we call salvation and revelation-history. It is the 'categorial' historical form in which God's self-communication, 'transcendentally' given from the very beginning in the ground of man's being (by virtue of the deification of man through grace, effected by this self-communication), becomes more and more apparent. It is true that this history is often marred and darkened by the history of the guilt by which humanity shuts itself off from the grace of God in the mystery of self-refusal and wishes to understand itself from within itself alone. But in spite of this it is always and everywhere present, since the mystery of the God who reveals and communicates himself in love is more powerful than the mystery of human guilt.

This history of man's self-discovery as one who is (at least as far as God's offer is concerned) divinised in the ground of his existence, the history of the concrete expression in space-time of this self-discovery in God (both always by virtue of the divine self-pledge, called grace) reaches its historical apogee and unsurpassable goal – which secretly sustained this whole historical movement from the very beginning – in the one in the midst of divinised humanity whom we call simply the God-man. It is he whom everyone seeks, not expressly but in reality all the same, in wishing the ultimate question (of one's own being and of one's destiny in death) and the ultimate acceptance (of this question by God) to appear together, experienced in the concrete terms of one's own history, and thus be completely existent and finally affirmed. To this extent every man who is true to his conscience is for us an Advent Christian, looking forward to the *one* Man in whom his own question (we do not merely *put* questions; we *are* questions) and God's acceptance have become one and have finally appeared in one person. As Christians we have the courage to believe that this looked-for one is found. He is Jesus of Nazareth.

[124] The man who has experienced God in Christ in this way wants to and must confess him. Not as though he thought that the others, who are not able to call the consummation of their secret experience by name, are not embraced by God's mercy (by which he gives himself to us, provided only that we do not refuse him). But the man who has found Christ must bear witness to him before his brethren. In the first place that simply means that he obediently accepts life and death as they are. In this way he meets Him. Further, it means looking towards God and the continually renewed acceptance of His forgiveness, and finally the explicit confession of His Name, of the hope we find in Him.

Christ is the one in whom God's self-communication to man and man's acceptance of him have become materially and existentially 'One' by the action of God. In him, God is unsurpassably and irrevocably *present* where we are, and in him man exists not only as the question in respect of God, but, as God's pledged acceptance, has become God himself in

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appearance: *the* Son of Man, the Son of God in the true and unconditional sense of the word. The Christian recognises in faith that the historically concrete realisation of this goal of salvation-history, which sustains and perfects the latter and causes it to triumph irrevocably over the history of evil, is given in Jesus of Nazareth. Throughout its whole history humanity looks for the God-man as the fulfilment of its own salvation-history; it has found no-one but Jesus of Nazareth in whom it is able to recognise the God-man; by his wonderful life, his death and resurrection he shows himself to be this God-man, the presence of God himself in the history of mankind. In him, God is irrevocably the one who has accepted us in love and has made us possessors of his infinite wealth of truth, life and eternity. The Christian believes in the death of Jesus, in which mankind has delivered itself with its own ground and goal to the grace of God, and in the complete perfection of the man Jesus (called his Resurrection), in which mankind has already begun to possess the life of God himself directly, breaking the bounds of its space-time history.

In so far as God, in his self-communication, still remains the holy and inconceivable mystery who, in giving himself away, does not lose his divinity, we call him Father. In so far as God communicates himself to us as our most real and eternally valid life by the means of divinising grace at the ground of our being, we call him Holy Spirit. In so far as the genuine truth of our being appears in history in the God-man, we call him the Word and the Son of God. In so far as these two mutually sustaining and determining ways of God's self-communication actually communicate God himself and not a creaturely, finite representation of God, we acknowledge [125] that in his own life God himself, while remaining one, is distinguished as Father, Word and Spirit, so that we call him the threefold God, or the Three Persons: Father, Son and Spirit, one God.

The community of those who come together in faith around Jesus, in hope waiting to participate in his perfection and in him bound together in love with the Father and with each other by his Spirit – this community we call the Church. He himself founded this Church in the persons of his first disciples and provided it with his Spirit in the 'twelve' messengers to whom he entrusted his commission. He united this apostolic community in Peter as its head and gave it a constitution which these authorised messengers had authority to hand on. Thus he gave the Church the task and the powers of representing him and witnessing to him throughout history until its end, so that he should remain God's self-committal to the world in the dimension of historical concreteness, and as such should be continually at work. In this way, in its origin in and in its witness to Christ, the Church is the historical sign of God's victorious will for Salvation, conquering all man's guilt. To this extent the Church is the 'sacrament' (i.e. the holy, effectual sign) in which the world's divinisation appears and, in appearing, establishes itself. As the historical presence of God's unrevoked pledge of himself in Christ, the Church's testimony, wherever it is expressed in a definitive witness on the part of its authoritative teaching office, is protected from slipping from God's truth; and in so far as the word spoken by the Church by means of holy symbols communicates grace (which lives in the Church) in its full measure to the individual in the decisive situations of his life, it is an effectual word, carrying with it what it signifies: this word is itself a sacrament.

Just as man in his personal life is familiar with words which involve him totally and which reveal precisely what is happening *while* they are being said – for instance, words of ultimate love or of forgiveness – so in a similar way the Church is acquainted in its own field with words by which it pledges itself to man as what it actually is: the sign of mercy and of the love of God to all.

Seven of these effectual words of grace are known to the Church: the sign of grace (called Baptism), in which the sinful human being is dedicated to the triune God by the rite of washing and is also accepted into the Church as a member – in the concrete historical dimension – by the forgiveness of his sinfulness and by sanctifying by God's Spirit; the

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express promise of the Spirit in conjunction with the imposition of hands (Confirmation), enabling and empowering the baptised person to be a witness by life and testimony to the fact that God loves the world, even [126] in the presence of those who think they are unable to believe in his love; the word of judgment and forgiveness (Penance), in which the Church reconciles the culpable person to herself and to God; the word by which the Church commends the baptised person in imminent danger of death to the God of eternal life (Holy Unction); the word (Ordination) by which the Church imparts to one of her members by the imposition of hands a share (in three stages) in her authority and the power of that authority; the word (in the Sacrament of Matrimony) which lays the foundation for the marriage bond and at the same time reveals it as the reflection of the unity and fertility of the love of God towards human kind gathered into the Church in Christ. In addition to these six signs of sanctifying grace there is the seventh and greatest in the holy meal of the community of Christ, in which the latter is mindful of the death and resurrection of its Lord as its salvation and is united anew with Him in the rite of the meal under the signs of bread and wine: the Sacrament of the Altar. Thus the Church is at the same time the visible community of the redeemed and also the sign by which God's Spirit effects the world's salvation and renders it visible in concrete history.

To the extent that the Christian is united with his Lord by his Spirit in faith, hope and love, he knows that he has already been set free from all intramundane forces and powers (sin, law, death) into the infinity and finality of the life of the true and living God. But he also knows that he must share with his Lord his destiny of death, until he too, at the point where his life and death seem to enter the most extreme degree of forsakenness by God, the ultimate darkness of guilt, lays his existence into the hands of the living God. He knows that his life must be an act of unconditional love to God and his fellow men, which far exceeds the fulfilment of all law. He confidently looks forward to the end of his life and the end of the history of mankind, when what is already present now in faith and lowliness will appear unveiled and perfected to all who have loved: the life of God, who is all in all.

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[127]

8

OBSERVATIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN CATHOLIC DOGMATICS

There is always something dubious about methodological investigations: it is only too easy for the thing under discussion itself to slip out of sight. But we may observe further limitations in such a procedure. For several reasons we cannot undertake here a *new* and *basic* foundation for the methodology of the Catholic Doctrine of God. We are really presenting only 'observations'.[1] Nor is it our aim to do any more than this, in a way, for it is not our intention to propound any particular, strikingly new thesis in order to contradict what is usual in Catholic theology, or which would develop a new programme, proclaim a radically new orientation and seek once more to revolutionise theology. Nothing is further from our intention. Not only because it is contrary to the nature of Catholic theology but because it seems contrary to the reality with which we are concerned here, namely God. For if one can think of anything at all under this heading which repays constant pondering, it is clear at the outset that it would be to go sadly astray and to miss the point completely if one were to say of a particular radicalism of a system, a thesis or an opinion – as opposed to any other system, thesis or opinion – that 'this is God, and not that'; that 'this is the true experience of the true God and that is not'. The true radicalism in the doctrine of God can only be the continual destruction of an idol, an idol in the place of God, the idol of a theory about him. What it cannot be is a statement about him which distinguishes him from another object on the same plane, or which distinguishes this particular way of having-to-do-with-him from any other mode of approach to him. If it tries to do this [128] it must come under the hammer of its own principle of 'destruction', for one cannot gain control of God by a wild radicalism in negative theology either, since negative theology cannot give Him to us if He had not always given Himself to us already.

This principle is found in the sober humility of the true relationship with God. The unique character of our relationship with God and his existence for us is shown by the fact that when we have renounced a knowledge of God which *conquers* him by means of affirmation or negation, God does not disappear, but precisely at that point commits himself to us; furthermore it is shown by the fact that this renunciation (ultimately the renunciation of being God) is not *one* pole in the human dialectic between Yes and No, but is rooted at the very basis of this dialectic, and that God only appears when he is accepted simply, humbly and unselfconsciously in worship and obedience and when he is not torn to pieces in all the talk of reflection. Finally it is also characteristic of our relationship with God that all these considerations must be thought out in very strict terms all the same, notwithstanding the foregoing. Anselm says: *consideratio rationabiliter comprehendit incomprehensibile esse*. If this truth were given pride of place as the very first condition of our existence, as that which upholds everything else, itself unsupported by anything (such that every attempt to reach down to the basis of this primary condition finds itself still 'upheld' by the latter, thus placing *us* before the question whether we are to accept it or not), all reflex dialectic – which is necessary and must opt for saying Yes or No – is only preliminary; but it *is* a necessary preliminary. Consequently a certain calmness of approach is justified with respect to

[1] The author may be permitted to refer in addition to other studies which will perhaps supplement the thoughts expressed here (apart from the references given below in the subsequent footnotes): *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 385-400; *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73; *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 3-20; *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 25-46.

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theological reflection about God. But for this very reason we may not proclaim any theological affirmation in opposition to others in too absolute a manner, as theology itself does not do, so long as it is genuine and erects no idols to be worshipped. However – and this is what I really wanted to say – this seems to me to be the ultimate legitimation for my making a few observations on the theme committed to me. What is said in systematic terms is only true here provided that it is understood as something occasional and fragmentary, and provided that it is prepared to disintegrate into 'observations'.

I intend to arrange these observations, loosely related as they are, by first presenting some remarks concerning the Doctrine of God within Catholic dogmatics, chiefly as regards its scholastic form.[2] (This is to a certain extent an issue internal to Catholic theology; however, in an age [129] of ecumenism it may also claim to be of interest to Protestant theologians.) Then in the second part I shall append some further observations in an attempt to reach beyond the confines of this Catholic academic question.

In this *first* part I make some observations which arise from a simple glance at the *history* of this treatise in Catholic dogmatics. In line with the beginning of each of the Creeds, it is an uncontested practice in Catholic theology (although it is not really as evident as it seems) that dogmatics must begin with the doctrine of God if it is to be anything like systematic in its procedure. Of course, this way of beginning in Catholic theology has been called in question to a certain extent because, since the advent of modern times and the Enlightenment, the 'beginning' of so-called 'fundamental theology' has been prefixed to this original 'beginning'. Naturally, a problem has arisen in this way which, if the unity of theology is an ultimate necessity, cannot be solved by saying that this 'fundamental theology' is a discipline on its own with its own method and its own subject-matter, distinct from dogmatics as the study of the *content* of dogmatics. The issue becomes even more difficult because today, on account of theology's object being seen in salvation-history – which bars the way to a systematic treatment – the question of a fundamental and formal theology[3] as the starting-point for dogmatic theology has been recently raised. (Not to be confused with 'fundamental theology' in the usual sense.) Furthermore there is the fact that today the problems involved in an existentially effective fundamental theology apart from and prior to dogmatics have again been seen more clearly in Catholic theology, and so the tendency is to merge the two together.[4]

However that may be, it was certainly the case in the earliest epistemological discussions of the theology of the Fathers that the θεολογι/α came before the οι0κονομι/α, the doctrine of salvation. For instance, the doctrine of God stands at the beginning of Origen's περι∴ α)ρξω~ν, the first systematic treatment of the faith of the Church. Behind this tendency there are naturally the presuppositions of Greek metaphysics, the theoretical interpretation of man as a contemplative being orientated towards eternity; these presuppositions cannot be justified without further ado by appealing to scripture. But in any case it remains an open question whether man – *ultimately* at least, both within and in spite of such historically determined [130] and unsupported presuppositions and perspectives – does not always remain a being who is freely open even with regard to his own systematic endeavours, and who thus always knows more than the formal method of his systematics should actually permit him to know. Consequently even such a problematical beginning need not constitute a mortal blow for a genuine faith. In mediaeval theology, where theology's formal object is

[2] This is a kind of revision of the remarks given by the author in the *LThK* IV (Freiburg,[2] 1959), cols. 1119-1124.
[3] cf. K. Rahner, *LThK* IV (Freiburg,[2] 1959), cols. 205-206; *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 1-37.
[4] For a preliminary treatment see K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the contemporary intellectual formation of future priests', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 113-138, esp. 123 ff.

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'God as such' (e.g. Thomas I, 1, 7), this way of commencing dogmatics with the doctrine of God must have seemed even more obvious. But even in circles where this definition of theology's formal object was not held in such esteem, Catholic theology has almost always assumed that dogmatics should start with the doctrine of God and not, for instance, with the reality of Christ, 'Sophia', the Kingdom of God, faith, justification, man's religious subjectivity, or the like. And this is perfectly understandable. For according to a Catholic understanding of grace God does not apply a saving 'something' to man, but gives his very *self* as our salvation in a most radical manner, so that God-in-himself and the God-of-our-salvation are strictly identical. If as a result of this the idea of the priority of the Doctrine of God is not utterly compelling, for this very reason *every* dogmatic treatise must speak of this God who communicates himself in grace, and of this God *alone*; thus we can say that a correctly understood Doctrine of God, placed at the very beginning, expresses precisely that. In doing so it avoids making such a doctrine of God a purely regional and isolated study, but on the contrary takes the shape of a formal anticipation of what all theological studies are concerned with. Understood in this way the almost universal practice of the priority of the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics is – if not utterly compelling – sufficiently justified, especially since man, not being God, never has such an α)ρξη& at his disposal. In expressing it he can never really have said everything, he can never completely comprehend the flow from its source; for in reality he only has the source by entering the flow many times at many points.

Even historically speaking, the relationship between the general doctrine of God (De Deo uno) and the doctrine of the Trinity is more problematical. One cannot elicit a unified conception of this relationship from a study of the history of Catholic theology. The order of the treatises which is almost universally accepted today – first De Deo uno, then De Deo trino – has probably become general custom only since Peter Lombard's Sentences were ousted by Thomas' *Summa Theologica*. The Apostles' Creed with its trinitarian structure would only provide a clue to solving the problem of the unity and diversity of these two treatises [131] if one were to understand – in common with the ancient θεο&φ terminology[5] – the word 'God' as the Father of the trinitarian confession, and, taking a Greek kind of trinitarian theology (linear with respect to the world), to discuss in addition the whole 'being' of God in the first chapter concerning the Father. It is noteworthy that Peter Lombard subsumes the general doctrine of God under his doctrine of the Trinity, which M. Grabmann,[6] for instance, regards as one of Lombard's 'chief errors'. Noteworthy is also the fact that we do not yet find a clear division in the *Summa Alexandri* either, whereas Thomas, for reasons which have not yet really been explained – whether in opposition to the Arabic systems or from apologetic or pedagogic motives – clearly follows the Augustinian and Latin method: he does not treat the general doctrine of God as the doctrine of God the Father, the sourceless origin in the Godhead, but, by way of anticipation, as the Doctrine of the nature of God which is common to all the Persons. Only after that does he commence his doctrine of the Trinity. And so it has remained in general right up to today. For example the new Spanish Jesuits' Dogmatics gives an uncompromising and explicit defence of this method.[7] In still more recent times, for instance in the case of Anselm Stolz and M. Schmaus, one can sense this problem again. M. Schmaus subsumes the treatise De Deo uno as the doctrine of 'the fulness of life of the three-personal God' under the first section of his dogmatics which deals with 'God the Three in

[5] cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 79-148.
[6] *Die Geschichte der kath. Theologie seit dem Ausgang der Väterzeit* (Darmstadt,[2] 1961), p. 42. On the relationship between the two treatises 'De Deo uno' and 'De Deo trino' cf. K. Rahner, *Mysterium Salutis* II, ed. J. Feiner and M. Löhrer (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 317-397, esp. 323 ff., 340 f., 395 f., and in the same volume M. Löhrer, pp. 291-315.
[7] Patres S.J., in 'Hispania Professores', *Sacra Theologiae Summa* II (Madrid,[4] 1964), pp. 12 f.

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One'.

Furthermore, the doctrine of God of all the more recent Catholic dogmatics always contains a section on man's *knowledge* of God. That may seem strange, for at a first glance the theme seems to belong rather to dogmatic anthropology. For this accepted procedure to be really substantiated, as is quite possible, it would be necessary to deepen this section of a doctrine of God so that the following were made clear: Firstly it is concerned with that *particular* knowledge about God which arises, in an ultimate and indissoluble unity, from that experience which grasps in an original unity human existence, creatureliness transcendentally situated in the sphere of grace and of revelation-history, the consequently implied [132] possibility of a 'natural' knowledge of God, and the continual temptation to atheism in man's tenacious sinfulness. In this case the question of 'natural' knowledge of God alone, in the terms of Vatican I, cannot occupy the centre of attention, but must take its place as the reductive element within a total experience of God. And secondly it must be made clear that in this case knowledge and what is known, belief and what is believed stand in a particular, unique relationship with one another, such that the knowledge of God cannot (or can only retrospectively) be regarded as constituting a regional sphere of knowledge side by side with other regional spheres of knowledge, but is the fundamental source and ultimate horizon of all knowledge whatsoever in the unity of human existence. This knowledge of God is always there and can always be 'held fast'; its conceptual interpretation is always one factor of it itself to some degree and in some form, but it is not simply identical with it. As a result of this, knowledge and what is known can only be grasped by reflection *in one*, the doctrine of God *is* dogmatic anthropology *and* the doctrine of God itself, just as, by analogy, ontology is precisely onto-logy, i.e. the doctrine of being *and* also the doctrine of the knowledge of being, in an indivisible unity.

As far as the inner structure of the treatise is concerned, where the doctrine of God is distinguished from the doctrine of the Trinity, it has been customary for a long time, following the presentation of the theme of the being of God, to supply a discussion of the *attributes* of God. In such a discussion it is usual for issues to be dealt with which find a place equally well in the doctrine of Creation or in the doctrine of Grace, like the questions of God's foreknowledge (sovereignty) and of predestination. The discussion of God's attributes pursues an almost exclusively metaphysical, i.e. not originally theological path: we usually divide them into active and passive attributes, and the latter are again distinguished as transcendental and categorial. We shall say more about this shortly.

However, these clear and tangible features in the history of the treatise's inner structure do not supply any considerable impetus towards solving the theological issues themselves; the Catholic treatise De Deo uno is to some extent aware, at second hand, of the questioning or contesting of a rational knowledge of God, and against such a denial it repeats the Anathema pronounced by Vatican I. But so far the reformation, the change from the technical Greek way of thought to the correct anthropocentricity of modern times, the historical shift from the question of a gracious God to the question of where and how one can find God and man at all (and both at the same time), the question of reconciling transcendence and historicity, transcendence from above and from past origins [133] and transcendence from ahead in the future, the question of the interweaving of faith, hope and love in the knowledge of God itself, the question of the constant possibility of atheistic unbelief[8] as an internal factor of faith in God – all these have not really become a part of the history of the treatise. And to allow these issues to affect its future history would not be to deliver a mortal blow.

In the second part of this section we shall make a few more *systematic* observations (if that

[8] cf. J. B. Metz, *LThK* X (Freiburg,[2] 1965), cols. 496 ff.; J. B. Metz, 'Unbelief as a theological problem', *Concilium* 1 (June 1965).

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is not a contradiction in terms).

We have already said that in its own particular dogmatics – notwithstanding 'fundamental theology' and the possibility of a formal and fundamental theology – Catholic theology places the doctrine of God at the beginning. Let us leave it so. Revelation-history and salvation-history (and consequently the nature of theology) as God's self-revelation, together with transcendental and 'eccentric' man, whose fundamental vocation is to obey this self-revealing God in faith (and who can only be himself by receiving his being from the mystery which envelops him, and would not find the true God if he only considered him from the standpoint of *ad nos*, i.e. by measuring the *ad nos* from our point of view instead of accepting it from God) – these two factors demand that man should not speak first of his own salvation, but of God. In other words he must *begin again*, and correctly this time, *after* he has finished talking about himself and his sorry state. This time he must say that his true salvation is precisely the God who does *not* exist solely to be our salvation, and that our true salvation – which is wrought by him and not by us – disappears into his incomprehensibility. This does not exclude, but includes the fact that all remaining dogmatics is already contained in this doctrine of God. But besides being said *in toto* in each treatise (and hence necessarily more than once, since we cannot say everything *in toto* at the same time), the whole of dogmatics must first of all be uttered as the doctrine of God so that it remains clear that we must speak of God and not, after all, of ourselves, even if this speech is only meaningful as the final sound indicating the adoring silence before God. Instead of excluding it, this way of beginning includes the fact that this very treatise, because it is theology, reflection, and not the original source of the history of faith, must not forget the origin of our real knowledge of God in Christ and must make all affirmations whatever about God in such a way as to include the experience of salvation-history. Thus it will (as far as possible) strive against the danger of tacitly making an abstract metaphysical [134] schema into the *norma non normata* of what, how and who God 'can be'.[9]

The mere *sequence* of the treatises De Deo uno and Dc Deo trino, as if the second treatise were only supplementary to the first, and as if only the second contained affirmations going beyond metaphysics (even though of a metaphysics requiring to be confirmed and secured), is apt to obscure the concrete history of theology, i.e. the two possibilities which present themselves in the orthodox conception of the doctrine of the Trinity itself, and it presupposes wrongly that the history of revelation itself followed such a sequence, i.e. from the revelation of God's being to the revelation of the Trinity. One could just as well say – indeed it would be more correct to say – that the history of revelation first of all shows God as a Person without origin, the Father, who has then revealed himself (as we say in technical terms) within this relationship with the world as a self-communication, as the source of divine life-processes, capable of creating persons. These life-processes reveal their divine immanence characteristically in the economic trinitarian relationship of God in Christ and in his Spirit which is given to us. So the sequence whereby the treatise De Deo uno precedes the doctrine of the Trinity is not *necessarily* to be seen as the result of the infiltration of philosophy. Thus the question seems to be more didactic than fundamental whether and in which order the two treatises should follow one another, or whether they should be assimilated to each other. But on the other hand it is most important, if the general doctrine of God is placed first, not to present it as though there were no doctrine of the Trinity at all (as occurs in standard Catholic dogmatics). If the creation of what is not divine is understood dogmatically at the outset as a factor and a condition for the possibility of God's absolute self-communication, in which

[9] A typical example of this is the *undialectical* idea of God's 'immutability' which pays little or no heed to the dogma of the Incarnation. Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 112 ff.

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absolute Love gives its very self and not something other than itself, creation as the freely uttered Word of the unfathomably Inconceivable is then seen as the beginning and the 'grammar' of the divine self-expression communicated into the void. Thus it is the beginning of the trinitarian self-revelation.

It may be counted as a positive achievement of the more recent academic tradition (although the latter does not have a real understanding of itself everywhere as yet) that the study of the knowledge of God is taken as a part of the doctrine of God. For as we have already said, there is a unique relationship between this knowledge as a subjective act and what is known thereby, a relationship which essentially cannot be found elsewhere. Thus [135] we can see a transcendental factor at work in man's necessary recourse to God in knowledge and freedom in respect of any object whatsoever, and this inevitably involves an implicit, non-objective experience of God which is always unthematic and capable of being overlooked. Hence too the unique character of the religious act in general[10] (above all with its original and integrated structure), the necessity of a total involvement flowing from the very essence of this knowledge, since the *concept* of God in this knowledge only avoids being an idol by referring to the God who, without an image of himself, standing fundamentally over against man, gives himself.[11] In the same way we can understand man's basic constitution in the experience of God, according to which man does not experience himself as an autonomous subject who creates a subject/object relation or anticipates it in his transcendental autonomy, but is aware of himself as the one who is destined, consigned and 'uttered' by the inexpressible Mystery.

All this means that one is justified, even obliged, to maintain the unity of the treatise on God and on the knowledge of God. Furthermore it must be made more radical so that the treatise on the knowledge of God is not only one *piece* of the whole doctrine of God but the doctrine itself, and so that it actually speaks only of God and not about ourselves, since talk about ourselves is ultimately nothing but the challenge to be silent, to adore, to hide oneself in the inexpressible Mystery, which commits us to ourselves in order to commend itself to us and sustain us. Where this unity of θεολογι/α and θεο_φ λε/γων is reflected upon – a unity which is not produced by us, but which itself sets us in existence – we must naturally speak of the possibility of such a reflection, which is always already present. In other words we must be aware of the possibility that we must not only be silent about God, but may also speak of him (and therefore *must* speak of him). Expressed in Catholic terms this doctrine of the transcendental necessity of the priority of the experience of God and its necessary expression in explicit speaking about God (with all the dangers of conceptual idolatry) refers to a knowledge which is both transcendental *and* unavoidable and is always sustained by the offer of God's self-communication in *grace*. Consequently the doctrine of the *natural* knowability and knowledge of God is not a knowledge which appears in isolation, but one element, only subsequently isolated, in a single knowledge of God, authorised by him in its direct relation to him, which, when [136] it is accepted, is already faith. Needless to say, this supernatural transcendentality (if we may term it thus) of the knowledge of God must be understood from the very beginning such that it only exists in the encounter with history, and consequently not only is it always open towards salvation-history and the revelation of the Word but it experiences the latter as its own history.

From this it is clear that the doctrine of God cannot (and not even primarily) be concerned with making statements about God's metaphysically necessary attributes, but above all concerning the workings – maintained throughout salvation-history – of God's freely adopted disposition towards man and the world. These two things are for the most part not clearly

[10] cf. J. B. Metz, *LThK* I (Freiburg,[2] 1957), cols. 256-259.
[11] Not, of course, in the sense of ontologism, but as a result of man's transcendental being-in-reference-to God.

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enough distinguished and related to one another in the official Catholic doctrine of God. His faithfulness, mercy, love, in short the concrete relationship of God to us which we experience in the unity of the transcendental experience of grace and salvation-history, and which we have to express in the doctrine of God, are not merely the theologically attested necessary 'attributes' of God's metaphysical being, but considerably more. For God could deny us the very faithfulness, love etc. which he actually shows towards us, without ceasing to be faithful and loving in a metaphysical sense. And to recognise this possibility, to confide in the marvel of the *free* love of God, is to open up the horizon within which his attributes can really be grasped as being *divine*, i.e. such that a knowledge of them does not give us any power over him. From this point it might be possible for the Catholic doctrine of God to find a way of approach towards understanding and using the Lutheran *theologia crucis*. Even less than his attributes, God's dispositions cannot be united in a single, positive concept by us; we can only say formally, aiming at the unity of God asymptotically, *that* in God they must be one, transposed into each other in perfect harmony. For us they remain materially and positively unamenable to synthesis, and thus the way they affect us has a history (which as a result of the divine act of *self*-communication to us is the genuine history of God), and the consequent history of our response therefore neither can nor needs to consist in a metaphysical equilibrium in our attitude in respect of God's free disposition towards us. For instance we have more reason to praise his mercy than to fear his justice, because he has allowed his grace to overflow and not his anger, and we must not let this fact be obscured by a dialectic balancing between divine attributes of God in themselves, in an attempt to manipulate him by means of the understanding. In a similar way other themes usually treated in a doctrine of God, like God's foreknowledge, predestination, God's [137] freedom in grace, could be liberated from an abstract formalism; it could lead to the theological counterpart of Heidegger's secularised concept of the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*).

II

Following these semi-systematic observations on the doctrine of God in Catholic dogmatics I take the liberty of adding some further unsystematic remarks more or less at random, concerning particular points arising in connection with the doctrine of God. At the very outset it is strange to be talking 'about' the doctrine of God, as opposed to stating it, for in the nature of the case the affirmations of this doctrine can only refer to what is meant in a very indirect way. However, that may perhaps excuse the unsystematic nature of these remarks.

1. First of all, the following plain threefold presupposition characterises the Catholic doctrine of God.

(a) The calm and unembarrassed acceptance of the pluralistic structure of human knowledge and thus of theology too. Our knowledge has an ultimate subjective and objective unity. But so far as we think in terms of propositions, we are not standing at the focus of this unity, but are situated in a plurality of modes of knowledge. Consequently there is no formula which can say everything at the same time, no single idea from which everything else could be deduced. We are rightly always engaged in *systematising* (however we are to understand this word more precisely), but we never *have* a system; we always know more than what we have already systematised, and this unsystematised extra in our fundamentally plural experience is not merely supplementary to what we have mastered by system, but constitutes an incommensurate challenge and threat to it and is its future corrective. God is the presupposed objective and subjective unity, but he is also the God whom we can only *approach* by thought; we cannot ourselves join with him in realising this pluralism which he established and sustains in his creativity. It is thus clear that, as the first treatise, the doctrine

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of God is not complete until the end of the last dogmatic treatise. It is only possible at all in so far as we have continually exposed ourselves patiently to the claims of the many theological treatises. Hence it is also clear that we must always be aware – without letting ourselves become irritable or annoyed – that in a doctrine of God we have forgotten and omitted much that we could and should actually have known.

(b) The patient desire for historical continuity in theology also applies [138] in the case of the doctrine of God. If we wish to say something new and find what has been said of old to be inadequate, we may calmly count on finding implications of it in earlier theology. In spite of *Seinsgeschichte* and the recognition that the history of theology reaches right down to a real history of revelation and a real salvation-history and is not merely the playing of surface waves above the unmoved depths, the religious man, the man of faith, standing in the midst of his history where the issue is the issue of God, already possesses the totality of what can and must be pondered upon by theology. For genuine and fundamental knowledge consists in the unreserved surrender in faith to the absolute Mystery, the surrender to the self-communication of this Mystery, which, though holy, yet gives itself and forgives in direct intimacy, the surrender to its inscrutable ordering of history. This being so, we cannot really proceed in a revolutionary manner, as if the men of old did not know the God of whom we wish to speak. We can only claim to use the speech of reflection about him in such a way that it introduces *us* better to the faith which was always there. And this we must do with the painful and sobering thought that when we have poured out our pail of knowledge into the ocean of the incomprehensible God, we have really poured it back into the ocean whence we drew it in the first place.

(c) The courage to engage in metaphysics. There is no theology which does not carry on metaphysics, simply because in theology too there must be the process of thinking. I am sometimes amazed that theologians are quick to declare that a metaphysics must be false or unsuitable for theology simply because it is a matter of dispute. How can they not see that their own theology too is itself a matter of dispute, and yet they do not straight-way regard this as a criterion for saying that their own theology is false? The man who has not the courage to pursue a metaphysics (which is not the same as a closed system), a metaphysics which can be contradicted, cannot be a good theologian. Even when one is conscious of possessing a constantly inadequate metaphysics, it is still possible to rely on it, to use it in addressing the true God and in directing man towards the experience which he always has already from God. For it is man's inalienable blessing that his words say more and purer things than he himself knows and can enclose in his impure words, provided, that is, that his pride does not make him keep silent just because, as soon as he begins to speak about God, his words immediately sound foolish. In using them one always becomes ridiculous, even if neither the others nor oneself notice it straight away; the same is true if one uses the ancient words, the tired and rickety words of tradition.

[139] 2. It seems to me that Thomas separated the question *an Deus sit* rather too much from the question *quid sit Deus*.[12] Of course one can ask whether there is such a thing as that which everyone calls God, without first of all explaining in greater detail what is meant thereby. Naturally, as individuals always determined by history, we would not think about God unless we had already heard of him indirectly. But if it is not to be merely a question of the existence of a mere empty cipher, the question of the existence of God must be launched as a question concerning the *real* God. And as opposed to more arbitrarily chosen objects of knowledge, which can be known as *possible* prior to a knowledge of their existence, in the case of God possibility and actuality can only be grasped in a *single* act of knowledge. Thus from the point of view of ontology, the theology of creation, the theology of grace and of

[12] cf. e.g. *S.T.* I q.2, a.2, ad 2 et 3.

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existence (and all four in one) the question of God can apparently only be stated as one which has necessarily already been asked and which has the answer *in itself* and has not received it from elsewhere. Hence at the *same time* the question itself says both that God is, and also who he is. If we are not to miss God right from the very outset, the question of God must on no account be put as a question about an individual existent *within* the perspective of our transcendence and historical experience, but only as a question concerning the very ground sustaining the 'question' which we ourselves 'are', concerning the origin and future of this question. Consequently it already of necessity contains within itself simultaneously the answer to the questions 'whether?' and 'what?'

3. Naturally I cannot at this point give a sufficient answer to the question of the so-called proofs of the existence of God in themselves and as an element in a doctrine of God. However, I may be permitted to make a few observations. Usually, the Catholic dogmatic doctrine of God does not discuss these proofs as such but assumes them as a task of metaphysics which has been successfully completed. Even in the section of the doctrine of God concerned with the 'natural knowability of God' it is usually said that according to dogmatic sources such proofs are possible and actually exist. But on a closer investigation one would have to say that this dogmatic doctrine of God ought itself to present these proofs, at least *in nuce*. For can it say that there are such things without giving an idea of what is actually meant by them and what may not be meant? But can one give an idea of the essence of the proofs without actually performing them if (as is surely the case) their 'essence' and their transcendental necessity – their 'existence' – can only be grasped together at [140] the same time? Furthermore, can the proofs be understood in any other way but as one element in the single, ultimately indissoluble experience of God in faith, as that element which is present (though rejected and repressed) even to the real unbeliever in so far as his unbelief is capable of leading to his judgment and loss of blessedness? That is the real theological reason why Catholic dogmatics holds fast the possibility of the so-called proofs, the possibility of a natural knowledge of God, just as it maintains the distinction between nature and supernatural grace. But that is not to deny that this 'proof of the existence of God' is absolutely *sui generis* and cannot be calculated as an individual item of knowledge by the formal and univocal procedure used in the case of any other piece of knowledge, nor is it the application of general axioms (in themselves quite independent of any application) to a particular case. Rather it is the result of the manifestation of the very ground of all such axioms, which is and remains the ultimate Mystery. In Thomas' theology and ever since, in spite of his *quinque viae*, there is and can be only *one* proof: in the whole questionable nature of man seen as a totality, which man is aware of in the concreteness of his existence striking him in a perpetually novel and existential way, provided that he does not run away from it.

4. In a Catholic doctrine of God the question of atheism ought to be considered much more seriously than is actually the case as a rule. And the first question must be the 'atheism' of the believer himself. If there can and ought to be a Catholic doctrine *simul justus et peccator*,[13] its modern historical form should be concerned with the man who, by virtue of the grace which he simply assumes without proof, is always breaking out of his atheism into faith in God.[14] There would have to be an exposition of the fact that theism can be the mask of a concealed atheism and vice versa, and that in this sense ultimately no-one can say of himself whether he believes in God or not, in the same way that the Council of Trent taught justification's

[13] R. Köster's 'Luthers These "Gerecht und Sünder zugleich"', *Catholica* 18 (1964), pp. 136-160, 210-224.

[14] Because the concrete and actual free realisation even of a 'natural' knowledge of God is a moral act which, 'elevated' in the existing order of salvation by supernatural grace, is also materially *faith*. For supernatural saving grace constitutes a transcendental horizon for freedom and knowledge, and the deliberate acceptance of these automatically implies an element of non-propositional, transcendental 'revelation'. Cf. K. Rahner/J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition* (Freiburg and London, 1966).

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existential hiddenness from the reflection of the individual conscience. We shall only be able to speak in justice, love and humility of [141] the atheists outside when atheism is admitted as the constant inner temptation of the theist, as a condition of faith.

I regard it as an oxymoron, which does not really lead us any further, when Tillich[15] says that it is just as much atheism to affirm the existence of God as to deny it. If that were true, one would be obliged to abandon the question of God as something about which essentially nothing can be said. But the only possible absolute atheism would be if one said one could manage to leave the question of God alone to such an extent that it *did not arise* at all, and thus did not even need to be dismissed. This cannot really be disproved by *a priori* metaphysics but by the *a posteriori* historical and yet unavoidable fact that man's existence actually *does* ask the question. This question can become stifled and suppressed; it may be necessary to dig for it; if it were not present already, it would be senseless to wish to inculcate it. That it can only be disproved in this way is what is really meant by scholastic theology where it says that God can only be known *a posteriori*. For this *a posteriori* point of departure is not intended to make the knowledge of God into a particular individual pursuit within the homogeneous field containing all other items of knowledge; it only says that, like his existence itself, the individual has laid upon him the transcendental necessity of being aware of himself and of the question (in whatever form), and that this necessity is his destiny, communicated to him as the question of the freedom committed to him and of the necessary nature of this freedom. The only thing which seems to me to be correct in Tillich's statement is that, if God is included as one object in an arbitrary series of other objects (similarly demonstrable) and knowledge of him is treated like any other knowledge, *this* kind of theism is in reality atheism, because it has no understanding whatsoever of the God referred to by genuine theism. A theism of this kind would be erecting an idolatrous image upon a foundation laid and ordered by ourselves, instead of reaching God on the intractable foundation which sustains us and which is God himself.

5. Is God in the doctrine of God, or does it only consist of talk about God which actually conceals and drives him away? Certainly he is not identical with this way of talking; for it is *our* way of talking, and we are finite and sinful. Similarly it is *our* speech when we talk of God according to God's revelation. For we only possess this revelation as one which has reached us, which we ourselves have heard, and so too as a revelation spoken by us. And it is certainly true that there is a radical distinction [142] in the relation of the form of what we say to the content of what is said, depending on whether we are speaking of some temporal thing within our speech horizon or of God, who is not of this nature. Our speech is indeed strange and uncanny when we are obliged to speak of God with temporal words – since we have no others. And least of all can we *compare* what we say with the One of whom we speak, since for the purposes of such comparison, he would be present only in the terms of our speech. Strictly speaking, in theological talk as such it is not God who is present, but ourselves.[16] But we are the ones who are spoken of, related to and destined from the Incomprehensible. And so it happens that talk about God comes from him, without itself possessing him. If we *speak* of our origin and destiny in this way, and thus speak of God, it is still speech. But it speaks of what we are *as* what we are. And there we have God, as the unutterable Mystery, banishing us from him and yet in his grace promising and giving us himself. That which we ourselves are, which gives us God himself, and whence we speak, does not make God subject to us, does not make theology into anthropology. On the contrary it actually makes us subject to

[15] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Nisbet, 1953 [University of Chicago, 1951]), Vol. 1, p. 227.
[16] It cannot be objected that this is always the case whenever one talks 'about' something. For when, in talking about other things, we are presented with ourselves, we have already anticipated the world (that which is referred to in speech), at least as far as its formal structures are concerned. But where God is concerned this relationship never exists.

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God and yet at the same time – how can we say it in any other way? – his children.

This nameless something which we can neither grasp nor circumscribe, which lies behind us as our perpetual creation in grace, is both revelation and mysticism; as creation it always lies behind us and as the absolute future it lies ahead of us, confronting us with the concreteness of our individual and collective history and bidding us enter in (ultimately into the love of one's neighbour); this is how it actually presents itself to us; this is how we possess God himself. Provided that our explicit talk of God in the dogmatic doctrine of God really comes from this source, it possesses God although it is ours, although in itself it only *refers* to its origin. Whether, when a particular person is talking, it really comes from this source or is ultimately only the moribund babblings of what was once genuine in other people, no individual can know for certain. He can only tremble and hope. But since a man can believe that Jesus of Nazareth spoke in such a way because through death and resurrection he was 'uttered' absolutely by God as his Word; since a man, in loving his *neighbour* – and not, in the first instance, himself – must believe in hope [143] that other men can speak in this way; since a man in the fellowship of Jesus believes in hope that this very speech, springing from its original source in God, is really present, he can as an individual confidently join in this speech about God, boldly entrusting his theological issue to God. He too will assuredly possess something of this genuine speech; he must not think of himself and of his sinfulness but calmly pursue his theology and commit it to God, from whom it *can* originate. And when he has spoken he should once more be silent in adoration, drinking draught by draught the everyday cup of God-less-ness, waiting for death, giving thanks for the joy of life – i.e. accepting it as sent to him in love – holding on to the *theologia viatoris et crucis* until at last the eternal light dawns. For the present we are held suspended in the very midst of it; even in the realm of thought we have no abiding city, even in theology we are pilgrims. But that is how it must be.

6. In the doctrine of God there is no real difference between the *Deus in se* and the *Deus extra se*. At least since Christ and in him we are both obliged and empowered to be continually overstepping this distinction. For to communicate himself to us 'in se' is exactly what he desires. And it is the paradoxical miracle of his love (i.e. of himself 'in himself') that he is able to do this without becoming finite and without violating our creatureliness. This process of *becoming* identical (and not just *being* identical) is the real content of salvation-history, which is the history of the unchangeable God. He really can *become* something in this history, precisely because (and in the final analysis not 'although') he is infinite and unchanging, the absolute power, capable of doing this.

7. Can it be said that in this age there can no longer be an alliance between theology and philosophy in a Catholic dogmatic doctrine of God? If anyone thought that there were no metaphysics in theology, the answer to this question would have to be Yes. For in theology at least very accurate thought is needed; but any thought which questions and ponders itself as a whole (and how could one avoid doing this in the case of the doctrine of God, which is concerned with God and the knowledge of God, i.e. the onto-logical origin of everything?) is metaphysics. For that reason it is nonsense to talk about the end of *metaphysics*, however much one may wish to say that a particular form of metaphysics has been eclipsed. So the Catholic doctrine of God will always imply and maintain a fundamental unity of theology and metaphysics, even if one would not wish to speak of an 'alliance' between them. Of course, this does not answer the question as to the precise relationship between metaphysics and theology, nor the question as to how these two disciplines [144] have come, in a historically justified manner, to separate out from one another into two independent units, although from their very nature neither of them can be or wish to be 'regional' disciplines, but rather are concerned fundamentally with everything (including themselves).

The questions we have just raised will be answered sufficiently when reason and

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metaphysics understand that it is they which pose the open question and refer man back to the experience of his interior and external history, and when theology grasps the fact that it can only give God's answer – God as the answer for all time – provided that it keeps the question open. (For the question into which the answer is projected has always been answered already by God – not by us.) And both philosophy and theology – in their different ways – must understand that in answering the sinner too and man in general, God has granted the question. If this question were not granted, both the answer given would lack a question and the question would lack an answer, or both would dissolve together into a flat commonplace. Of course all this does not mean that the old alliance between theology and metaphysics is to remain exactly as it was before. For above all in theology the doctrine of God must not talk in terms of its *own* metaphysics, but the metaphysics which is committed to us today as our lot in history, whether through our own fault or not. The actual form of this metaphysics certainly no longer has the homogeneity, the balance of language, and of presuppositions and perspectives calmly assumed which was once the case. Consequently Catholic theology no longer has simply *one* language; it must learn many languages, and thus it probably speaks them all thoroughly badly. But it will be of the opinion, furthermore, that in being obliged to speak today in many metaphysics, it is not simply uttering propositions which oppose each other with an absolute lack of mutual understanding – like a simple Yes and No – but rather that there is a philosophia perennis *in* them, not besides them, for which one must listen sympathetically, as it cannot be distilled out. Thus a dialogue is possible with these diverse metaphysics; and theology can be expressed in their language, for theology is a human language too, and every human language which is not itself dead points, questioning, towards the unutterable Mystery with which alone theology is ultimately concerned.

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9

ATHEISM AND IMPLICIT CHRISTIANITY

I

Implicit Christianity – it could also be termed 'anonymous Christianity' – is what we call the condition of a man who lives on the one hand in a state of grace and justification, and yet on the other hand has not come into contact with the explicit preaching of the Gospel and is consequently not in a position to call himself a 'Christian'.[1] Theologically there can be no doubt that there are such people, as we shall show later in more detail. It is in itself a question of secondary importance whether this particular state should be called 'implicit Christianity' or not. Yet if one attends to the implications of this phenomenon the question can be answered unreservedly in the affirmative.

In addition there is technical justification for the use of the concept. For everything which is explicit in the proclamation, the sacraments and institutions of Christianity is instrumental in securing the possession of the grace of justification (and maintaining it until the end as the foretaste, the initial instalment of eternal life), to such an extent that, as the 'pars potior' and goal of everything else which is 'Christian', it may itself be called 'Christianity', especially since this grace is the grace of *Christ*. Furthermore the concept of being 'implicit' is thoroughly common in theology: it even occurs in a related context in *fides implicita*, *votum* (*baptismi*, *Ecclesiae*) *implicitum* etc. However, we have no objection to anyone wishing to avoid the term 'implicit Christianity' for various reasons (e.g. the danger of misunderstanding). But he would be obliged to provide another term saying what is meant in just as clear and brief a manner. The same applies to the synonymous term 'anonymous Christianity', which is distinguished from the other only by underlining the implications of this state as such *for other people*.

[146] For the sake of full conceptual clarity we must emphasise this: By virtue of God's desire for universal salvation, the 'objective redemption' constituting a fundamental factor in every man's 'subjective' state of salvation, the 'supernatural *existentiale*' and the continual offer of the grace of God's supernatural saving activity, even the unbaptised person (in the state of original sin as well) is in a unique situation. Prior to any existential attitude which he takes up, whether in faith and love or unbelief and sin, he is in a different position (and he himself is different too) from what would be the case if he were only the result of his 'nature' and his original sin. He can never be simply a 'natural' man and a sinner. By virtue of the grace of Christ (as possibility and obligation), which is at least a constant offer, he is always in a Christ-determined situation, whether he has accepted this grace or not.

Terminologically, however, it is better not to call this existentially (but not *existentiell*) 'Christian' position on the part of every man 'implicit' or 'anonymous' Christianity straight away. Otherwise we obscure the radical distinction between grace merely offered and grace existentially accepted in faith and love.

The basic thesis of this study is that even an atheist may possess this kind of 'implicit' Christianity.

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[1] cf. K. Rahner, 'Anonymous Christians', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 390-398; further reference in Kl. Riesenhuber, 'Der anonyme Christ nach Karl Rahner', *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 86 (1964), pp. 286-303.

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This basic thesis is by no means self-evident. For it must be said that right up to most recent times official text-book theology has fairly unanimously supported the view (in spite of various theological qualifications) that it is impossible for a normal responsible human being to entertain a 'positive atheism' for any considerable time without becoming personally culpable.[2] Since in this context there is no sense in weakening this culpability as though it were only 'venial', the official view involves a denial of the possibility of 'implicit Christianity' for any length of time in an adult atheist.

On the one hand one is obliged to appreciate the weight of the official view: in scripture God's knowability seems so clearly *given* and atheism seems to give evidence so definitely of being man's most terrible aberration, that it was only thought possible to understand it as a *sin* in which a man *freely* turns away in the *mysterium iniquitatis*, evilly suppressing the truth which everywhere impinges on him (Rom 1:18).

On the other hand it must be said that until now neither text-book theology nor scripture has been confronted with the experience of a [147] world-wide and militant atheism, confident of its own self-evident nature and because of this it was possible to regard the earlier, ubiquitous, theistic 'common opinion' as something necessarily so, as an eternally valid quality of human nature. This was a mistake: it led to the official text-book view we mentioned being taken as self-evident.

Next, for the sake of brevity, it will be simplest if we have recourse to the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council in order to illustrate our basic thesis theologically. The texts concerned are Nos. 19-21 of the first chapter of the first part of *Gaudium et spes*, the fifth paragraph of No. 22 of the same chapter, No. 16 in Chapter 2 of *Lumen gentium* and finally – since what has been said about the polytheistic religions of mission lands also holds good in the case of atheism as the product of a different historical and sociological situation – No. 7 of the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity.

It emerges from our definition of 'implicit' Christianity that the basic thesis can be suitably demonstrated in two stages:

1. According to Vatican II not every instance of positive atheism in a concrete human individual is to be regarded as the result and the expression of personal sin.

2. Such an atheist can be justified and receive salvation if he acts in accordance with his conscience.

II

1. In the first place, therefore, although it is relatively exhaustive in its treatment of atheism, the Council makes no reference to the traditional text-book view that positive atheism cannot be entertained for any considerable period of time, by a fully developed person of normal intelligence without involving blame on his part.[3] Furthermore it is safe to say that the Council not only left this thesis[4] alone, but actually *assumed a contrary thesis*, i.e. that it is possible for a *normal adult to hold an explicit atheism for a long period of time* – even to his life's end – *without this implying moral blame* on the part of such an unbeliever. It is true, however, that this view is not taught explicitly: for example it is not pointed out that on the one hand we are faced with an explicit atheism, very widely [148] extensive in society,

[2] A more detailed treatment is given in K. Lehmann, 'Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem westlichen Atheismus und der pluralistischen Gesellschaft', *Die Zukunft der Kirche*, ed. O. Mauer (Herder-Vienna, 1968).

[3] 1n what follows the author is taking up some observations which have already appeared in *Concilium*: 'The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on Atheism', *Concilium* 3 (March 1967), pp. 5-13.

[4] For its foundation and a more detailed interpretation cf. e.g. 'Patres Societatis Jesu facultatum theol. in Hispania professores', *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* II (Madrid,[4] 1964), pp. 23-24 and notes 21-22.

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characterised by a straightforward self-confidence, and on the other hand that in accordance with general Christian principles we do not have the right to declare these atheists to be living in a state of unequivocal and severe moral blame before God. The *absence* of the traditional view seems to be at the same time highly suggestive and most remarkable if one considers that, provided that it were assumed to be correct, the text-book answer would be *the* decisive statement concerning atheism. But in the description of atheism in Nos. 19-21 the traditionally held view appears to such a small extent; in No. 19 (third section) where the question of blame is touched on in half a sentence, there is reference to the evident truth that the holding of atheism is culpable *provided* that the person intentionally banishes God from him or intentionally and wilfully excludes religious questions from his consciousness. But by no means is it said that *every* concrete case of atheism in a man can only continue for a considerable period of time if he is wilfully trying to exclude God or the religious question in this way. When we come to demonstrate the second part of our basic thesis as the teaching of the Council it will be even clearer – it will be conclusive – that we are right to interpret the Council's silence thus. For if it is possible for an 'atheist' to be justified by grace, not every instance of atheism can be the result of the personal culpability of the atheist in question. It is an artificial and ultimately nonsensical excuse to say that atheism of this kind is always culpably induced, but can persist afterwards even if the guilt itself – which need not necessarily have consisted *formalissime* in the culpable reception of atheism as such – is cancelled by a moral change of heart: it does not dispose of the decisive issue, which is the possible coexistence of atheism and justification.

Later on we shall come to speak about the possibility of coexistence of a conceptually objectified atheism and a non-propositional and existentially realised theism. From this it will also be apparent that the Council's pronouncements in Nos. 19-21 concerning the unavoidability of the religious issue do not contradict what we have just said. Of course the Council's reticence with regard to the question of blame in atheism does not imply a trifling with the problem, for: 'the Church has already repudiated and cannot cease repudiating, sorrowfully but as firmly as possible, those poisonous doctrines and actions which contradict reason and the common experience of humanity, and dethrone man from his native excellence' (No. 21).[5] But after the Council, Catholic pastoral [149] theology today will no longer be immediately under the impression, even when confronted with a committed atheist, that it is dealing with a fool or a knave; hence in a totally new way it will have to consider – with the Council (cf. No. 21) – what the *real* causes of modern atheism are, if it cannot be attributed simply to dullness of the mind or perversity of the heart. Without intending to give an exhaustive list or a deep analysis of such causes of atheism, the Council itself has indicated some of them. But in doing so it has not released Catholic theology, and Christian philosophy, pastoral theology and the teaching of religion from their task, a task which has not, as yet, been adequately tackled.

2. The second element in our basic thesis on atheism which is confirmed by the Council and which – judged by the accepted traditions of scholastic thought and religious practice – may cause offence is the conviction *that even an atheist* (holding the concepts and theory of atheism, as we shall explain in detail later) *is not excluded from attaining salvation, provided that he has not acted against his moral conscience as a result of his atheism*. We have already said that this proviso cannot be taken for granted, i.e. the atheist's blamelessness is thus not simply an immaterial hypothesis. This is observed by the Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* (No. 16): 'Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of

[5] For an authoritative condemnation of atheism previously cf. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* II, p. 20, and K. Rahner, 'Atheismus (systematisch)', *LThK*^{2} I, col. 985.

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God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to His grace.'[6] But for salvation both supernatural faith and the grace of justification are necessary. Technically speaking it cannot be here a question of those (entitatively natural or actually supernatural) graces which constitute an as yet remote preparation for justification and the consequent attainment of salvation which are mediated by (among other things) an explicit theism. For otherwise we would be merely stating the obvious, saying in effect that by the grace of God an atheist can become a theist and *thus* can be finally justified. Nor would this fit the context of the constitution, which is concerned with the different kinds of non-Catholics *in so far as* they are and actually *remain* non-Catholics. Thus No. 22 of the Pastoral Constitution says: 'All this' – the blessed Resurrection – 'holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated [150] with this paschal mystery.' There is no reason to exclude atheists from this declaration. For it refers explicitly to No. 16 of the Constitution on the Church which concerns those who have not yet come to a conscious recognition of God. Moreover, mention of 'ways known only to God' is also made in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (No. 7), where the 'heathen' who have not yet been reached by the Gospel are recognised as having a real possibility of supernatural faith and salvation even in their condition. But it would be arbitrary to wish to attribute a fundamentally much greater chance of salvation to a polytheistic heathen, who according to Paul is still 'without God' (Eph 2:12),[7] than to a modern atheist, whose 'personal' atheism is in the first place no less a product of his cultural situation.

With regard to all the texts quoted, as we have already said, it obviously cannot be a question of assuming at the outset that these atheists will become conceptually and theoretically *explicit* theists before death and *thus* saved. For in that case the texts would be merely repeating the platitude that an atheist can attain salvation when and in so far as he ceases to be one. Such an interpretation would deny any serious meaning to the texts; in producing them the Council would have been wasting its time.

III

Something really new has been said in these two elements of the Council's authoritative doctrine. If we consider the explicit statements of Scripture[8] and the traditional verdict on atheism, as well as the cautious reticence of Protestant theology with respect to the unbaptised person's possibility of salvation, we cannot say that this 'salvation optimism' as regards non-Christians (including atheists) is simply a theological truism for here we can see the development of something which really only began with Pius IX (*DS* 2865-2867) and led to the Holy Office's declaration of 8th August, 1949 (*DS* 3866-3873). Moreover this line of thought has really been developed *further* to the extent that, in a much clearer way than before, *atheists too* have been *explicitly included* in this 'salvation optimism'.

[151] These declarations have rendered obsolete even the earlier, *moderately* optimistic interpretations of the situation of non-Christians and heathen and atheists too which were to

[6] cf. the commentary on this text by A. Grillmeier, *Commentary on the documents of Vatican II*, ed. H. Vorgrimler (New York and London, 1967).
[7] cf. H. Schlier's exegesis of this passage: *Der brief an die Epheser* (Düsseldorf, [4] 1963), p. 121.
[8] cf. the concise synopsis in *LThK*[2] I, cols. 985-986. Many scriptural statements about the fate of unbelievers need to be understood more clearly than has been the case until now in Catholic exegetics, as eschatological, prophetic 'admonitions' in a very particular literary form.

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be found in text-book theology. According to the latter, such people outside the jurisdiction of Christianity were recognised as capable of attaining a 'natural' salvation (similar to that which the text-books acknowledged in the case of children dying without being baptised) but excluded from a really *supernatural* salvation. The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (No. 7) expressly states that these people too, by the grace of God and in ways not known to us, can reach a real *saving* faith even without having accepted the explicit preaching of the Christian Gospel. And wherever the word 'salvation' occurs in the other texts we have quoted, what is meant is genuine supernatural salvation, more particularly since it is expressly declared that all men have only *one* vocation to salvation, and since the attainment of this salvation is understood as participation in Christ's Easter mystery.

Thus according to the teaching of Vatican II it is possible for an atheist to be living in the grace of justification, i.e. possessing what we have called 'implicit Christianity'. In this short investigation it cannot be our business to show how this conciliar doctrine is deduced from the genuinely original sources of revelation, nor how it is defended against the seemingly weighty objections which could be brought against it by Scripture and Tradition. The Council itself only gives a very brief and general justification for its approach. To a certain degree the Council makes its own case – the possibility of the unbaptised non-Christian's salvation without contact with the Gospel (thus including the atheist) – more difficult to defend by requiring a real supernatural faith even in such a case, i.e. not escaping the issue by saying that such a person attains supernatural salvation at the end of his life on the basis of a mere 'natural' morality.

In connection with the Council's teaching our basic thesis implies:

1. the thesis of God's will for the salvation of all men in Christ (he will is understood as 'infralapsarian'), and the availability of his grace, and the doctrine that there is only *one* supernatural goal for all men; and

2. the conviction that not every individual atheist can be regarded as a gravely culpable sinner.

The Council neither poses nor answers the question of how one arrives at the second part of this argument from a theological point of view. In this matter one can only say that on the one hand it rests on the theological conviction that one cannot and must not judge any man, but that each [152] particular empirical state of affairs, ambivalent in itself, appeals to the judgment of God alone; and on the other hand that the modern historical situation of the previously nonexistent experience of a world-wide and growing atheism, whose culture and social forms are not directly conditioned by morality, makes it improbable that in each case atheism is the result of the incurring of personal guilt.

All the same, our basic thesis, confirmed as it is by the Council, has provided us with difficult theological problems. This is clear in the Council's statement that the 'ways' in which such non-Christians reach salvation and justification are 'known only to God'. Naturally a statement like this does not forbid further theological study of these 'ways', but it shows that the Council was aware of a certain tension in what it said, even if this tension did not weaken its courage, in faith, to speak of this universal salvation optimism.

So far our observations on the possibility of implicit Christianity in an atheist have only served to set the task, not to give the answer we are looking for. We must now attempt to do this.

IV

In saying that according to the teaching of the Council an atheist does not automatically forfeit salvation, even if under certain circumstances he remains an atheist to his death, the

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question arises from the theological point of view as to whether in that case simply a 'good will' suffices to replace the knowledge about God and belief in God.

We have already seen that the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (No. 7) teaches the possibility of salvation for all men, and we have included atheists too in this category in so far as they are without blame. But the Decree expressly says that the people referred to attain salvation in so far as they come – by paths known only to God – to a saving *faith*.[9]

The question, therefore, is whether and how an atheist can demonstrate the preconditions under which this faith is at least conceivable. Here one cannot immediately refer to the minimum content of faith[10] which traditional theology, basing itself on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 11:6),[11] declares to be sufficient under certain circumstances for a supernatural, [153] saving faith. For this minimum content is precisely belief in the existence of God and in him as guarantor of the moral order. Put differently, the problem is that if belief is required as assent to the divine revelation, '*something*' must be believed. Even if we were to avoid the question as to how the atheist is to recognise this content as a revelation from God and not as the result of natural insight, the question remains just *what* this particular individual can embrace as an object of faith, in order for us to be able to talk about it being 'faith' at all.

In this connection the Council's texts which we have quoted always assume that the atheist in question is one who *acts in accordance with his conscience*, *seeks truth and fulfils the demands of his moral consciousness*; for to be considered free from blame and within the sphere of God's will for salvation, although he has not (yet) found God, he must act in line with the demands of his conscience. But is this 'content' of the atheist's awareness sufficient to provide an adequate object for *saving* faith? We must answer this question in several stages.

By reference to the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews one is justified in answering *provisionally*: Yes, *provided that* this conscious content includes *at least implicitly* a knowledge about God, and moreover that this 'content' is affirmed by a free act elevated by grace in the manner of faith. Now this is in fact the case. It can be maintained as such, at least under certain epistemological conditions. The person who accepts a moral demand from his conscience as *absolutely* valid for him and embraces it as such in a free act of affirmation – no matter how unreflected – asserts the absolute being of God, whether he knows or conceptualises it or not, as the very reason why there can be such a thing as an *absolute moral demand at all*.

This preliminary answer needs a deeper grounding, and we shall attempt to do this in a more thorough treatment. Once we have assumed this kind of affirmation by the conscience of an absolute demand, it is not so important how far, in such an act, a man *is or is not consciously aware* of these presuppositions (both objective *and* subjective) which inform his concrete knowledge and action. It may even be that he is *not able* to reflect conceptually upon the subjective factors involved in his concrete spiritual action. Whenever a simple man in his everyday life acts sensibly and with insight, i.e. also logically, the ultimate principles of logic are not only found as the objective basis of his intelligent insight and [154] action; he has also embraced them, they are his spiritual 'possession', although as a simple man he would be probably quite incapable, even after instruction, of understanding the abstract principles of Aristotelian logic as such in its abstract formality.

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[9] See the study already quoted in note 6 and the further literature mentioned in it.

[10] For the dogmatic side of this doctrine cf. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* II, p. 804 (see note 5 above), with the differentiated views of Mitzka, Beraza, Pesch.

[11] cf. especially the commentary by O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen,[12] 1966), pp. 386-387; E. Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief* (Marburg, 1965), pp. 132 ff. *et passim*.

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This modest observation from everyday life can be heightened theoretically and applied to our question. In every one of its acts, human knowledge is to a certain extent *dipolar*: it implies a subjective knowledge of the knower himself and his act on the part of the subject as such, while at the same time this same knowledge has a known and conceptualised object which is its goal and with which it is concerned. In knowing about oneself and one's act one always knows *something*. The objective content of such an act can also be something which is known without reflection on the subjective side of the same act, i.e. when the subject, knowing itself subjectively, makes itself in addition the *object* of its judgment. But even in such a case the dipolarity, the difference between the subject present to itself and the known object, between knowing-ness and what is known, is not destroyed. Furthermore it is quite possible for such an act, the content of which the self-knowing subject of this act wishes to present to itself, to be inadequately or falsely interpreted by this selfsame subject, although on the subjective side what has been interpreted is present in its known reality. For instance, a man who performs an intellectual act knows 'subjectively' what an intellectual act is, because the subject with its intellectual act is present to itself in a real identity. In spite of this, however, a theoretical psychologist who is a sensist, denying in a materialist manner the subject's intellectuality, is *bona fide* capable of giving quite false theoretical explanations of his own intellectual act; i.e. what he experiences subjectively he may translate objectively falsely into objective concepts and statements.

Now in so far as every instance of intellectual knowledge and freedom on the part of the subject and his act is a 'transcendental experience', i.e. an experience of the intellect's unlimited rootedness in absolute Being, on the subjective side every instance of knowledge is a real, even if implicit (i.e. not necessarily objectified) knowledge of God, although we cannot show this in greater detail here. What we commonly call 'knowledge of God' is therefore not simply *the* knowledge of God, but already the objectified conceptual and propositional interpretation of what we constantly know of God subjectively and apart from reflection. Knowledge of God is certainly *a posteriori* to the extent, on the one hand, that even the subjective act – which by virtue of its transcendental nature always knows about God – is historically contingent; in order to be itself this [155] subjective act always requires an 'objective' object, without which it cannot exist at all, but which it experiences *a posteriori*. Besides this, knowledge of God is also *a posteriori* in so far as the conceptual and propositional objectification of the transcendental experience first needs a vehicle to pass among the *a posteriori* given objects of knowledge of the world, in the way expounded in detail in the classical 'proofs of the existence of God'. On the other hand the knowledge of God is not *a posteriori* simply in the sense in which the knowledge of any external object is, e.g. the knowledge of the existence of Australia. It is true that there is no innate idea of God in the sense of an inborn conceptualised content, but nevertheless the conceptual and propositional knowledge of God is the objectification of that rootedness of the intellect in absolute Being which is always present to man's transcendental intellectuality; that rootedness which is a concomitant experience in every intellectual act, whether of knowledge or of freedom, irrespective of the particular object with which this act is concerned.

V

If we adopt these assumptions (which we have really only touched upon here) we can draw up a sort of table of the fundamental types of man's relationship with God. In doing so it must always be borne in mind that a conscious or known reality present to man's mind may exist in the mode of free acceptance or free rejection, since man is not merely a being who is intellectually knowing, but is also always a free being.

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First possibility: God is present in man's transcendental nature and this fact is objectified in a suitably and correctly explicit and conceptual theism, and moreover is also freely accepted in the moral affirmation of faith (in the practice of living). In this case we have what constitutes simply correct theism, what we might call transcendental *and* categorial theism, accepted and affirmed by man's freedom in both these dimensions. In this way it represents in every respect a proper relationship between man and God such as we may assume in the case of a justified Christian.

Second possibility: Both transcendental and categorial theism are present, man knows of God in his transcendental experience and also his reflection upon the latter is correct, but in his moral freedom he rejects this knowledge, whether as a sinner, denying God, or going on to reject the God whom he has correctly 'objectified' conceptually in real free unbelief. This is the category in which the 'atheist' was thought of previously in religious and in specifically Christian matters. It was [156] assumed that he had an objectified and more or less correct idea of God but rejected him in sin or freely turned away from him either in a merely practical 'godlessness' or in theoretical atheism as well.

Third possibility: The transcendental experience of God is present of necessity and is also freely accepted in a positive decision to be faithful to conscience,[12] but it is incorrectly objectified and interpreted. This inadequate, false (and under certain circumstances totally lacking) *idea of God* as such can be again the object of free acceptance or rejection in various ways, but we need not concern ourselves with that in any greater detail here. For instance, consider the case of a polytheist who, in the dimension of free reflection, freely 'believes' this polytheism or freely and 'atheistically' rejects it, without replacing it by a correctly conceived theism. In either case this third instance is the sort of atheism which is innocent in the sense of Vatican II. It is atheism on the plane of categorical reflection, coexisting in the subject with a freely affirmed transcendental theism. There can be such a thing as innocent atheism because of the difference between subjective transcendentality and categorial objectification in concepts and sentences, producing this coexistence of transcendental theism and categorial atheism. For the said 'difference' is necessarily present in every act of the mind. The components of this innocent atheism are: *on the one hand* the subject's continual transcendental dependence on God and the free acceptance of this dependence, especially in the moral act which respects absolutely the demands of conscience – i.e. a transcendental theism 'in the heart's depths' – and *on the other hand* the free rejection of the objectified concept of God, i.e. a categorial atheism in the forefront of conscious reflection, a rejection which cannot in itself be regarded as culpable.

Fourth possibility: The transcendental dependence on God is present; objectively it is interpreted falsely or insufficiently correctly in a. categorial atheism, and this transcendental dependence on God is itself simultaneously denied in a free action by gravely sinful unfaithfulness to conscience or by an otherwise sinful, false interpretation of existence (as being 'totally absurd' or of no absolute significance, etc.). In this case the free denial does not refer merely to the categorial interpretation of man's transcendental nature, but to existence and thus to God himself. Here we have culpable transcendental atheism, which excludes the possibility of salvation as long as it persists.

[157] By presenting these four basic types of man's relationship with God we do not wish to suggest that the table could not have been drawn up differently, especially as we ourselves have indicated further subordinate possibilities within this 'system'. Furthermore, by naïvely distinguishing the correct from the false conceptual objectification of man's necessary

[12] Whereby the consciously reflected object of this act of obedience to conscience is not explicitly God, but another moral object as envisaged by the conciliar texts quoted above, where the atheist is conceived as acting morally.

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transcendental dependence on God we have made an over-simplification which does not correspond to concrete reality. For here there are naturally correct and less correct conceptualisations (e.g. an idea of God revealing partially false, pantheistic or polytheistic tendencies and blemishes). Indefinite transitions and fluid boundaries are also compatible with the exercise of freedom. So the system we have outlined is no more than a rough preliminary sketch. But it may be sufficient for our purposes all the same.

VI

Our whole concern here is to reach an insight into why there is in fact in man the possibility of innocent and of culpable atheism, and the knowledge of how on the one hand a man's innocent atheism by no means destroys every really fundamental relationship with God, created by man's constant transcendental rootedness in God; and how on the other hand, in spite of this possibility, culpable atheism consists not necessarily merely in transgression in connection with any particular moral situation but in an *ultimate* 'No' to man's fundamental dependence *upon God himself* i.e. in a free 'No' to God himself.

It must be further remembered that the categorial affirmation of God – as a theoretical and categorial action – is by no means a guarantee that the man concerned really seriously accepts his transcendental dependence on God at the very heart of his transcendental freedom of choice. Put simply, a man, even a 'Christian', can accept God as objectified in knowledge and freedom, and can even declare that he is a 'theist' and think that he is keeping to God's moral norms, *and yet deny him* through immorality or unbelief in the depths of his heart. This is just as possible as the coexistence of a categorial atheism with a (freely affirmed) transcendental theism. So, too, categorial theism can coexist with a transcendental theism which is itself freely rejected, thus becoming freely adopted transcendental atheism – in spite of the abiding experience of rootedness in God.

In the Pastoral Constitution the Council taught that there is also a culpable atheism. But it was not made clear enough how such an atheism is possible as an atheism really directed at God himself. The Council recognised the existence of innocent atheism, but without plainly showing [158] how salvation and faith are reconcilable with it. The distinction we have indicated between transcendental and categorial atheism/theism provides a theoretical understanding of this teaching. Innocent atheism is always only categorial atheism, atheism on the plane of conceptual and propositional objectification, where it is ultimately immaterial whether this atheistic objectification as such is accepted or freely rejected by the person concerned, since this particular free act only involves the *categorial* object. On the other hand *transcendental* atheism (which is really possible) it always necessarily culpable, since God is always present to man in the dimension of man's transcendentality, and therefore can only be rejected by a free decision, not by knowledge as such. In this dimension the 'matter', namely God, is necessarily correctly present, so that his rejection cannot be justified or thought to be justified on the grounds of an inadequate or falsely objectified concept of God in the dimension of categorial reflection.

VII

If what has been indicated here in very few and inadequate words is understood, pastoral insights emerge concerning the correct approach on the part of the person proclaiming theism or the Gospel. These insights might suitably serve to deepen and systematise the Council's necessarily very brief remarks on this approach. The preacher of the Gospel is never

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confronted with an atheist who has so far had simply nothing to do with God; the preacher's relationship to this particular listener is never like that of a geography teacher teaching a small boy for the first time that there is such a place as Australia and demonstrating the fact. Where free, responsible human beings are concerned, the preacher of the Gospel is confronted fundamentally with a man who already has a real experience of what is meant by God, but who for various reasons (either free from blame or – under certain circumstances – culpable) is not able correctly to interpret his own experience of God in conscious reflection and consequently rejects the concept of God presented to him from elsewhere, as being either false or meaningless for him. To combat a categorial and conceptual atheism of this kind one must not remain solely on this particular plane as such; one must not only present proofs of the existence of God as if the latter were of the same structure and amenable to the same methods as the existence of an object which is merely accessible in purely *a posteriori* experience. If *this* were the case, under certain circumstances a man might be justified in rejecting the existence of such a God as being a matter of no interest and not worth bothering his head about.

[159] Even if it is possible at all to speak to an atheist on the level of the 'proofs' so well known to us, to be successful today such a dialogue unavoidably presupposes that the atheist has been made aware of his own transcendental knowledge of God through a kind of 'mystagogy'. If he is really acquainted with unconditional faithfulness, absolute honesty, selfless surrender to the good of others and other fundamental human dispositions, then he knows something of God, even if this knowledge is not present to his conscious reflection. Of course, in a particular concrete instance, it can be very difficult to bring to the surface the theological implications of these fundamental dispositions and objectify them in conceptual form. In any particular case the attempt may simply fail. In itself that is no more strange than the fact that it is sometimes impossible to make formal logic clear to a person *in the mode of theoretical reflection* although he employs this very thing in his everyday affairs and has insight *into* the 'logic' of these affairs. In any case, however, the traditional 'proofs' can only be presented successfully to a person who is not already an explicit 'theist' provided that rational reflection is joined by this kind of 'mystagogy'. Depending on the case in question, this mystagogy must naturally also deal with the difficulties from which arise, according to the Council's Pastoral Constitution, the various forms of modern atheism; the protest against evil in the world, the supposed lack of any religious experience, the supposed threat to mankind in the idea of God, the strange ideas which people connect with the concept of God, etc.

Provided one understands what is meant by the transcendental theism we have described it is clear, furthermore, that according to genuine theism God is not present in our everyday experience like the other objects of our *a posteriori* experience. He is not an existent within the sphere of our experience but the precondition of our transcendental horizon. A theist or an apologete of theism must not proceed, therefore, as though God were – not of course an object directly present to our sense-experience, but – to all intents and purposes capable of being known rather like an electric current, which, not itself directly visible can be deduced from its effects.

Here we have a way in to an understanding of the phenomenon in atheism referred to by the Council itself when it says that certain atheists are held fast in a 'scientistic phenomenalism' and are unable to understand, so they say, what might be meant at all by the word 'God'. According to a proper understanding of the nature of the knowledge of God there can be no question of expanding and deepening the area of empirical experience by the *same* methods. What is required is rather to help man to appreciate [160] that there is another mode of experience, a transcendental experience in intellectual knowledge and freedom, according to which what we mean by 'God' can be understood and known as real; and furthermore that

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what is meant by this transcendental experience, referential to God, is the precondition for every *a posteriori* experience whatsoever, whether in everyday matters or in science, even if it is not and cannot be the task of these *a posteriori* disciplines to reflect upon their own presuppositions.

The first Vatican Council expressly defined that God is incomprehensible (cf. *DS* 3001). No Christian doctrine of God and his knowability denies this. But the dogma is often forgotten in the practice of our apologetics of theism. For one cannot first of all know God – as one knows anything else according to its existence and nature – and then subsequently 'add on' the attribute of incomprehensibility. Both the proof of God's existence and the 'mystagogy' which is absolutely necessary if the former is to be successful must relate, from the very beginning, to the absolute mystery[13] which pervades and penetrates our whole existence; this mystery must be brought together with theoretical knowledge and the existential actualisation of life, and then one can say: This is what we mean when we speak of 'God'.

VIII

So far we have only taken the first of the steps (cf. V above) leading to a theological understanding of how an atheism which is not blameworthy can constitute 'implicit' Christianity. For what we have said up to now only serves to make it clear that a blameless categorical atheism can be a freely accepted, transcendental theism. But on its own this does not constitute the 'implicit' *Christianity* in which a man by grace accepts the self-imparting God in faith, hope and love.

In order to proceed further we must bear in mind that in the actual order of things the 'atheist's' transcendental, freely accepted theism, which here concerns us, is elevated by supernatural grace because of God's will for universal salvation, and man's essential transcendentality – at least in so far as it is freely accepted – finds its ultimate goal, by grace, in the God of Eternal Life. Although one must admit that the Council has expressed itself cautiously and somewhat indefinitely, it may certainly be said that as far as the texts we have quoted are concerned the Council professes no acquaintance with a merely 'natural' morality. Of course the latter does [161] exist, but it is integrated into the concrete order of God's desire for mankind's supernatural salvation as a distinguishable, but not isolated, factor in a larger whole, of which God's offer of saving grace to all is also a part.[14]

In Catholic theology no-one can deny the possibility of justification and supernatural sanctification prior to Baptism (given the presence of supernatural faith, of which we shall say something in particular later, and an implicit *votum baptismi*). Thus there is in any case a divine offer of supernatural grace and the possibility of freely accepting it prior to Baptism, apart from the sacrament.[15] We have only to assume that this offer and the free acceptance of it (thus made possible) is *always* and *everywhere* present (on account of God's desire for universal salvation, not because of the natural goodness of a moral act) where a man freely accepts his own transcendentality – which includes an implicit, transcendental theism – by

[13] cf. K. Rahner, 'The concept of mystery in Catholic theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73.

[14] It would be arbitrary to wish to understand the 'grace' which is continually referred to in these texts with regard to the non-Christian or atheist merely as God's entitatively natural assistance towards the fulfilment of the natural moral law as such. For this theological issue cf. K. Rahner, *Theologie des Todes* (Freiburg,[5] 1965), pp. 79 ff.

[15] For extra-sacramental justification cf. K. Rahner, 'The Word and the Eucharist', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 253-286.

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means of a moral decision in absolute faithfulness to his conscience, by means of 'righteousness of life' etc. We assume, therefore, that under these conditions there is *always* an occurrence of what Thomas calls *infusio et acceptatio gratiae*. In that case the concrete order of salvation together with the freely accepted transcendental theism which can even be found in an atheist, produces *implicit* Christianity.

The reason why traditional theology up to now for the most part has always counted on there being a phase of merely 'natural' morality in the course of a 'heathen's' life (and so too has been inclined to acknowledge only a 'natural' moral goodness – if any – even in the case of a bona fide atheist) is because on the one hand it is correctly assumed that justification is impossible without revealed faith, nor can a *fides virtualis* be a substitute for it, as for instance Straub suggested; and on the other hand it was thought impossible to imagine such a revealed faith in the case of a 'heathen', let alone an atheist. The reference in the conciliar texts to the 'ways known only to God' witnesses above all to this difficulty, but also shows that the Council, particularly in the Decree concerning the Church's Missionary Activity, nevertheless has no doubt that this faith is possible even in the instances which are of interest here; moreover it does not restrict this possibility to cases of extraordinary, miraculous [162] intervention on the part of God such as have been appealed to by previous text-book theology (private revelation, special illumination, etc.).

This obscure issue can be pursued further if one bears in mind, in *this* context as well, the well-known Thomist doctrine that every supernaturally elevated moral act on a man's part has, in connection with its essential elevation, a supernatural formal object which cannot be reached by any merely natural intellectual or moral act on his part, even if in both cases the material object, the objective, *a posteriori* content of the act, is the same.

If we assume this thesis, which Thomism has rightly regarded as fundamental to its 'system' and which can be held to be *at the very least* above reproach in theology, and apply it to our context, it gives us the possibility of revealed faith which we require for our cases: The communication of a supernatural formal object (in other words, the supernatural perspective within which, in a non-reflex but real manner, morality's material objectivity is grasped; the revealing of man's intellectual and spiritual trancendentality in its direct relation to God) is in a true sense 'revelation' already. It is constituted as such by the offer of saving grace itself (logically or temporally) prior to the *a posteriori* and historical communication of an objective content by means of historical revelation. The supernatural elevation in grace automatically involves revelation and the possibility of faith.[16]

Naturally *this* revelation is not simply identical with revelation as it is usually (and correctly) understood. It is obvious that much ought to be said about the relation of this 'transcendental' revelation (or rather, the transcendental *element* of revelation) to the categorial, historical, verbal revelation (or the categorial *element* of the *single* revelation). Certainly this relationship must not be thought of as if the transcendental element of revelation (constituted by grace) rendered the categorial element superfluous or threatened its meaningfulness.

But in the *first* place, if one considers that in any case this transcendental element is present in revelation and faith because the verbally objectified, categorial revelation can only be spoken in 'Pneuma' and heard in faith; and *secondly*, if one does not wish to have recourse to improbabilities (i.e. original or private revelation); and *thirdly*, if one still wishes to maintain the possibility of saving, supernatural faith and, in line with the Council, the existence of revelation for *all* men; then the only possibility [163] left is to say that the elevation through grace of man's freely accepted transcendentality is in itself revelation, because it involves an

[16] For this concept of revelation cf. K. Rahner/J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition* (Freiburg and London, 1966); K. Rahner, *Hörer des Wortes* (Munich,[2] 1963).

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a priori formal object of man's mind, not necessarily reflected in consciousness, which, *qua* formal object, cannot be reached by any natural intellectual ability but arises from God's self-communication in grace. It is a revelation without which a categorial, historical, verbal revelation – although it could constitute an utterance to do with God and 'about' him – could not be the 'Word of God' in its most proper sense.

These brief notes must suffice here to demonstrate how transcendental theism freely accepted on the part of a categorial atheist can be – or rather, actually *is* – revelation and the possibility of saving faith.[17] This is the case if it is assumed that this transcendentality of the mind, implying a theism, with its free acceptance, is elevated by grace. And we *may* assume this because of God's desire for universal salvation. Under these presuppositions the Council's optimism concerning salvation is theologically justified. Now a theism which is elevated through grace and which is freely accepted (by the grace supplied by the possibility of faith) is a justifying theism and hence an implicit Christianity. And this kind of existential transcendental theism (although not necessarily the object of reflection) is also possible in the case of a (categorial) blameless atheist, whose actions are good and arise from an absolute commitment; therefore *this* kind of atheist can be an implicit Christian.

In its Pastoral Constitution Vatican II most strongly emphasises that modern atheism requires new and most serious thought on the part of the Church and the preachers of the Gospel. This declaration must not remain a mere pious tag, a part of the inventory of courtesy used in dealing with an opponent. There really are questions which must be asked and answered *anew* if it is really intended to engage modern atheism in a real dialogue. These questions do not merely concern the 'didactic' and 'pedagogical' methods best employed in speaking with today's atheists. They are questions to do with the *thing itself*. Thus the question in pastoral theology as to how to come to grips with modern atheism changes very quickly into the question as to what is actually meant by [164] 'God',[18] and how we theists and Christians come to have a direct approach to this incomprehensible mystery of our existence, which sustains us and at the same time constantly calls our whole being in question, a direct contact which cannot be reduced to the sociological phenomenon of Christians sharing common assumptions and talking among themselves about God, merely

[17] For a treatment in greater depth cf. the author's studies: 'Concerning the relationship between nature and grace', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 297-317; 'The Christian among unbelieving relations', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 355-372; 'Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 165-188; 'History of the world and salvation-history', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 97-114; 'Konziliare Lehre der Kirche und künftige Wirklichkeit christlichen Lebens', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 479-498.

[18] For details in this issue cf. K. Rahner, 'Christian living formerly and today', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 3-24.

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thinking they know *who* he is and *why* our life itself is meaningless without God.[19] In maintaining this one has uttered an ultimate truth about our life; but to really grasp it, life must first be *experienced* as meaningful, one must face the question whether one accepts this experienced meaning or not and know, in this experience and its acceptance, what is really meant by 'God'.[20]

[19] Cf. K. Lehmann's 'Some Ideas from Pastoral Theology on the Proclamation of the Christian Message to Non-believers Today', *Concilium* 3 (March 1967), pp. 43-52.
[20] cf. K. Rahner, 'The concept of mystery in Catholic theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73.

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[165]

10

‘I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST’
Interpreting an article of faith

Today one cannot say anything of religious and theological significance about Jesus Christ himself without also describing the essence of *faith* itself as an act whereby Jesus is seen as the Christ. In referring to this faith first of all as an occurrence – and as having a ‘content’ only within the particular context of that occurrence – it must be clear at the outset that this faith is to be understood as more than the merely private subjectivity of which we today are justly suspicious, by being faith within the *Church* and under obedience to what the Church’s authoritative faith says. Hence we can immediately see the point of a mandatory Confession of Faith today too. The man Jesus commits himself to men in the faith of the Church and with the Church. To wish to find this faith by relying solely on oneself would be a fatal individualism.

This faith occurs as a result of an absolute trust, by which one commits *oneself* to the other person and thereby embraces the rights and privileges of such a total self-abandonment with a hope without reservations. This extends to all areas of existence which, on account of the absolute quality of this self-abandonment, do not need to be seen *in toto* nor to be specified in advance. The person to whom one thus commits oneself can be addressed in the most varied ways depending on the dimensions of one’s own self and the nature of one’s absolute committal: simply ‘Lord’, ‘Son of God’; ‘Pardoner’, ‘Saviour’ and a thousand other names which have become his since the New Testament. Hence it is an important but secondary question, which of the many aspects of this total claim is most suitable for any particular man’s encounter with him; whether the apparently completely private aspect, for instance, whereby one confidently lays hold on his forgiveness of one’s own guilt, or within the cosmic perspective of universal history, whereby one accepts him in trust as the Omega of the development of the universe, the meaningful conclusion of history. The most diverse approaches to him are all intended to be gateways to the one radical self-committal of the whole man to Jesus Christ and it is only in [166] this sense that they have any meaning at all. Similarly we are not concerned here with the question of what is required for a person so to find the concrete man Jesus that this act of total self-surrender to him successfully takes place. Although it is no less decisive for the understanding of Christology and the subject under discussion, we cannot here enter into detail as to why what we mean when we say ‘God’ is the same as what is known and accepted as the ultimate ground of this free act of confident, hopeful and loving self-surrender to the other person. Once we have assumed this, we can say the following: where someone is *justified* in trusting himself to another person *absolutely*, and where this other person *on his own account* is able to accept this absolute trust and give it a basis, authorised by God and by no-one else, then this other person is in such a unique and radical union with God that the relationship can be rightly and radically interpreted for all time in the way orthodox Christian faith affirms – irrespective of how such a committed person himself understands and interprets the experience.

If we are honest, we modern men will admit that the doctrine of God’s Incarnation seems at first sight like pure mythology which can no longer be ‘realised’. But if we listen closely to what *real* Christian doctrine says about the God-man, we notice that there is nothing to be ‘demythologised’ in this fundamental dogma, but that it only needs to be understood correctly to be *completely orthodox and at the same time worthy of belief*. If we say ‘God is made man’ in the ready-made patterns of our everyday speech, we either think automatically of God

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being changed into a man or else we understand the content of the word 'man' in this context as an outer garment, a body in its constituent parts or something similar, by means of which God himself renders himself visible on the stage of his world's history. But both interpretations of this statement are nonsensical and contrary to what Christian dogma really intends to say. For God remains God and does not change, and Jesus is a real, genuine, and finite man with his own experiences, in adoration before the incomprehensibility of God, a free and obedient man, like us in all things.

Then what does this fundamental affirmation of the Christian Faith mean? It is unexceptionable and legitimate from the point of view of Dogma if we consider on the one hand that, in the sense we have outlined, a man who is able to receive an act of unconditional trust in God authoritatively and on his own account, must be in a quite unique union with God; and it is conversely also legitimate to try to formulate the fact of this union, the abiding mystery of the Divine Sonship of Jesus and of the Incarnation, in primarily existential categories, i.e. in terms which [167] express man's total spiritual and cognitive nature. Man exists all the time as one who comes from somewhere and as one who is spoken to; as one who answers Yes and No and who comes from and returns to the mystery we call God. This fact of issuing from an origin and proceeding to an end is the essence of the spiritual creature. The more radically this fact is realised in actuality, the more independent, i.e. the freer man is. Therefore the realisation of thus originating in a source and being bound for an end is to an increasing extent the gift of God *and* man's act. If a man receives this human essence from God in such absolute purity and integrity and so actualises this relationship with God that he becomes God's self-expression and his once-for-all pledge of himself to the world he calls into existence, we have what we call 'Incarnation' in a dogmatically orthodox sense. Similarly in the doctrine of the Unity of the one Divine Person and the two – Divine and Human – Natures, the mystery described in ontic and substantial categories is the same as that which can also be expressed in existential terms. The only necessary condition for interchanging the types of statement is the awareness that every existential statement automatically includes an ontological one and vice versa.

It is essential, however, that we understand that this act on the part of such a man is already the act of God in creating and sustaining him as he is. It is also absolutely necessary not to misunderstand the relation between God and the human person as a merely peripheral and supplementary 'state of mind', leaving man's actual existence basically untouched, and unable to influence it radically. To understand this correctly one only needs to grasp the fact that God has not merely 'uttered' man as the open question which we are in respect of him, but that he has uttered this question in such a way as to provide it with the possibility and potential of accepting itself as such unconditionally and totally – thereby accepting God himself.

The message of the faith concerning Jesus Christ is neither myth nor fairy-tale, but it tells of the unique occasion which saw the radical achievement of the *ultimate* possibility of man's existence. Faith has the courage to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the one who, from the depths of his being, grounded in God, has surrendered himself in obedience to this God and has been accepted as such by him – this is made plain by the Resurrection. He was *able* to do this because he was and is the one who *had always* been accepted by God. What he is in reality occurred and appeared in history in his life, namely in God's pledging of himself to the world, made irreversible in and through the radical, divinely-initiated acceptance of this pledge in the true man Jesus.

[168] Looking now from the other angle, whoever experiences in faith that he trusts Jesus of Nazareth absolutely, that in him God gives his pledge unconditionally and irreversibly, that in respect of Jesus his own concrete encounter with another person in trust and love becomes absolute and he *thus* experiences what is meant by 'God' – such a man may

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interpret this experience how he will, well or ill, adequately or unsatisfactorily; in reality he believes what we orthodox Christians call 'Incarnation': the uncompounded and inseparable unity of God and man, in which God remains totally God, man is radically man, and both are One, uncompounded and inseparable, in this Jesus who is the Christ of faith. If we entrust ourselves to him in a radical way, and exist in attendance on him alone, we experience directly *who* he is, and this trust of ours is *founded* on who he is. This circle cannot be broken. Whether one knows it explicitly or not, one is always seeing God and man in one. The Christian believes that in Jesus of Nazareth he finds both as One. Love for all other people finds its justification here and discovers its ultimate ground, and all such love leads to the one man in whom this union of God and man, intended for everyone, appears in its historical uniqueness and utter finality – Jesus Christ.

The Church is right to value highly its ancient Christological formulas, the product of a long and troubled history of the faith. Every other formula – and there may be others – must be tested to see whether it clearly maintains that faith in Jesus does not acknowledge merely a religious genius or the prophet of a passing phase in the history of religions, but the absolute Mediator of Salvation now and always. But wherever and in whatever way a person accepts this in faith and trust, he enacts in such faith what Christianity confesses concerning Jesus of Nazareth, Crucified and Risen.

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[169]

11

ONE MEDIATOR AND MANY MEDIATIONS

I

In itself this title could be said to mean several different things. However, if we look at it in the context of theological controversy, the theme will be obvious to everyone: 'orthodox' Protestant Christendom – above all in its theological dispute with the Roman Catholic Church – witnesses to its belief in the *one* and *only* Mediator of salvation (forgiveness, justification and sanctification): Jesus Christ. It is believed that although the Catholic Church subscribes verbally to this same belief (which no-one can seriously deny), it is not in actual fact genuinely and unequivocally faithful to it,[1] since Catholic doctrine and especially its actual religious practice are very familiar with many other mediations of salvation 'besides' Jesus Christ.[2] These could be divided into personal and institutional mediations: on the one hand Mary and the other Saints, and on the other hand the whole wealth of institutions, like the institutionally protected authority for doctrinal truth[3] and the *opus operatum* of the sacraments.[4] Here we must restrict ourselves to the question of personal [170] mediations, setting aside the issue of mediating institutions.[5] Similarly we shall not raise the old controversial question as to whether the Catholic doctrine of justification concerning freedom and 'merit' in the process of salvation is or is not injurious to the 'merit' of the one Mediator.[6] Furthermore we shall not discuss the question of the relationship between the redeemed person's function as regards the Church within history and his function of heavenly intercession,[7] which must naturally not be thought of as a continuation of history, but as

[1] There is a summary of the contemporary discussion in C. A. de Ridder, 'Maria als Miterlöserin?' = *Kirche und Konfession* 5 (Göttingen, 1965).

[2] cf. the tendency towards this criticism in G. Miegge, 'Die Jungfrau Maria' = *Kirche und Konfession* 2 (Göttingen, 1962), pp. 150-172 (Miterlöserin), pp. 200-212. The same accusation is implied if one tries to look at Mary from the point of view of the phenomenology of religion, and fit her into a general, undifferentiated trend of religion as a whole as 'mediatrix omnium gratiarum'; cf. *RGG*^{3} IV, 769 and 1064. Cf. also W. Delius, *Geschichte der Marienverehrung* (Basle, 1963), esp. pp. 154, 160, 165, 259, 266 f. (Mittlerin), 258-320. Cf. also A. Brandenburg, *Maria in der evangelischen Theologie der Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 1966), pp. 71 ff. (The encroachment of paganism into the Christian sphere through Catholic theology?)

[3] Of course this does not mean that these institutional mediations may be treated as though they were static, material objects, without reference to persons and their expression in and through persons.

[4] cf. also K. Rahner, 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 109-133; also *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg,^{2} 1963), pp. 11-67.

[5] An initial approach to institutional forms is given in K. Rahner, 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 295-312; *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 61-79.

[6] cf. *DS* 1583. For recent discussion concerning 'meritum' cf. A. Forster, *LThK*^{2} X, cols. 677-680; M. Flick and Z. Alszeghy, *Il Vangelo della Grazia* (Firenze, 1964), pp. 638-683 (literature); H. Küng, *Justification* (E.T. London 1964), pp. 257 ff.; P.-Y. Emery, *Le Christ notre récompense* (Neuchâtel, 1962). Most recently cf. O. H. Pesch O.P., 'Die Lehre vom "Verdienst" als Problem für Theologie und Verkündigung', *Wahrheit und Verkündigung*. *Festschrift für M. Schmaus*, ed. L. Scheffczyk/W. Dettloff/R. Heinzmann, Vol. II (Paderborn, 1967), pp. 1865-1907 (literature).

[7] For an introduction cf. K. Rahner, 'Some theses on prayer "in the name of the Church"', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 419-438; P. Molinari, *Die Heiligen und ihre Verehrung* (Freiburg, 1964); B. Kötting, 'Heiligenverehrung', *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* I (Munich, 1962), pp. 633-641 (literature); K. Rahner, 'Why and how can we venerate the Saints?', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 3-23.

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history's abiding validity before God.[8] Having thus narrowed our field, let us turn to our original theme. Catholic theology is reproached with having transgressed in a totally intolerable way against the dogma, verbally common to the whole of Christendom, of the sole and unique mediatorship of Jesus Christ:[9] we [171] call on the Saints; we defend and justify this practice itself, not merely commending 'veneration' of the Saints;[10] above all not only do we teach theoretically the function of Mary as 'mediatrix of grace', but make her into an actual mediatrix 'between' ourselves and Christ in a popular devotion of vast proportions. In this way, it is held, Christ is for us not the one who stands between us and God as sole Reconciler and Mediator, but he stands over against us on the side of God as the one with whom we have to be reconciled, so that we need the many mediators, the Saints and chiefly Mary, in order to bridge this gulf.

It cannot be my task here – although in itself it is the more important issue – to present the statements of authoritative doctrine and Catholic theology in its received form concerning this problem. Instead I shall just refer to a few passages in Denzinger, chiefly from the Council of Trent and Vatican II. There it is stated that Christ is the principle of salvation itself,[11] that all our boasting is in Christ,[12] that he is the source of merit in justification, which occurs without our deserving it, the sole source and mediator of all grace.[13] It is maintained that the invocation of the Saints does not prejudice the honour of the one Mediator.[14] Furthermore the Second Vatican Council declares[15] that when we ask for the help of the Saints, the benefits which come from God are obtained through the supplication of Christ, who alone is our Redeemer and Saviour. Concerning Mary the Constitution on the Church says[16] that Christ is our sole Mediator and that whatever significance Mary has for salvation, it does not obscure the sole mediatorship of Christ but is a free gift to Mary from God, springing from the wealth of the merits of Christ, grounded and [172] totally dependent upon his mediatorship, and drawing all its power from it.[17] Thus it by no means excludes a *direct*

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[8] cf. the author's studies referred to in the last note. In addition: 'The life of the dead', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 347-354.

[9] In the New Testament the concept of the mediator appears relatively seldom. (Cf. Gal 3:19 f.; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24.) Cf. esp. A. Oepke, *ThWNT* IV, pp. 602-629, esp. 624 ff.; F. J. Schierse, 'Mittler', *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* II (Munich, 1963), pp. 169-172; O. Cullmann, *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen, 1957), pp. 88, 99 f.; C. Spicq, 'Mittlerschaft', *Bibeltheologisches Wörterbuch*, ed. J. B. Bauer (Graz, 1959), pp. 563-573, also in II (Graz,[2] 1962), pp. 869-879; O. Michel, *Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen,[12] 1966), pp. 292 f., 468; O. Kuß, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Regensburg,[2] 1966), pp. 29, 32, 108, 112, 119, 146, 155, 214; F. J. Schierse, *Verheißung und Heilsvollendung* (Munich, 1955); H. Hegermann, 'Die Vorstellung vom Schöpfungsmittler im hellenistischen Judenturn und Urchristentum' = *TU* 82 (Berlin, 1961). For the use of the concept 'mediator' in dogmatics cf. esp. J. Ratzinger, 'Mittler', *LThK*[2] VII, pp. 499-502 (with more literature). Cf. also L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and mediator* (Maximus Confessor) (Lund, 1965). Also: M.-F. Lacan, 'Le Dieu unique et son Médiateur, Gal 3:20', *L'homme devant Dieu. Mélanges offerts au Père Henri du Lubac* (Lyon, 1963), Vol. I, pp. 113-125; N. Kehl, 'Der Christushymnus im Kolosserbrief. Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Kol. 1:12-20' = *Stuttgarter Biblische Monographien 1* (Stuttgart 1967), pp. 99-108.

[10] Studies of the veneration of the Saints by Protestant theologians: M. Lackmann, *Die Verehrung der Heiligen* (Stuttgart, 1958); H. Asmussen, *Maria, die Mutter Gottes* (Stuttgart, 1950); P.-Y. Emery, 'L'unité des croyants au ciel et sur la terre. La communion des Saints et son expression dans la prière de l'Eglise', *Verbum Caro* 16 (1962), No. 63, pp. 1-24. Cf. also L. Höfer, 'Ökumenische Besinnung über die Heiligen' =*Begegnung* 1 (Lucerne, 1962).

[11] cf. *DS* 3915.

[12] cf. *DS* 1691.

[13] cf. *DS* 1523, 1526, 1529, 1530, 1560, 3370, 3820.

[14] cf. *DS* 1821.

[15] cf. the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, No. 50.

[16] cf. ibid., No. 60.

[17] Ibid.

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union of Christ with the believer.[18] Consequently the various possible forms of mediation must never be thought of like a succeeding series of 'instances'. According to the Council, if Mary's function in salvation-history as one who has abiding validity before God leads to her being addressed in terms such as 'Advocate', 'Co-helper' and 'Mediatrix',[19] it is to be understood as neither taking away from nor adding anything to the rank and efficacy of Christ the sole Mediator.[20]

So we see that Vatican II by no means ascribes to Mary the title and function of a mediatrix in the strict theological sense, but rather takes the freer language of pious affection under its protection[21] when the latter [173] has recourse to the title 'Mediatrix'. For in using this title it is expressing the fact *that in the economy of grace in Christ, as a result of and by virtue of his mediatorship, everyone depends on everyone else and is of significance for everyone else, that everyone has a task subordinate to Christ* (*munus subordinatum*), *and that the receipt of salvation also implies the receipt of the* TASK *of salvation, a* '*participata ex unico fonte cooperatio*'.[22] For this reason it is applicable above all to Mary, whose function belongs to the plane of solidarity in salvation which is true of all the redeemed, not to the plane of Christ's sole mediatorship.[23] These 'mediations'[24] exist, therefore, because justification is God's unmotivated gift, the act of freedom set free in Christ, and because this act of salvation in Christ by grace always implies a significance *for everyone*; salvation is not solipsistic.

In saying this it is only our intention to reveal a starting-point for the authoritative teaching of the Church and the more general theological doctrine concerning the many 'mediations'

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[18] Ibid.; cf. O. Semmelroth's commentary on the numbers quoted in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York and London, 1967), Vol. I. R. Laurentin, 'La Vierge Marie au Concile', *RSPhTh* 48 (1964), pp. 32-46. Further literature in Laurentin, 'Bulletin Marial', *RSPhTh* 50 (1966), pp. 496-545.

[19] We cannot go into the history of the various titles and their application to Mary. Cf. H. M. Köster, 'Miterlöserschaft', *LThK*^{2} VII, cols. 486-487 (with comprehensive references). R. Laurentin gives references to the very important supplementary literature produced in recent years in the Bulletin just quoted. On this issue cf. esp. P. Sträter, *Katholische Marienkunde* (Paderborn, 1947 ff.) II, pp. 241-313; *Heilsgeschichtliche Stellvertretung der Menschheit durch Maria*, ed. C. Feckes (Paderborn, 1954); H. M. Köster, *Unus mediator* (Limburg, 1950), pp. 108-149, 171-183; H. Seiler, *Corredemptrix* (Rome, 1939), 'Die Lehre der Päpste Pius IX. bis Pius XI. über die Mitwirkung Mariens im Heilswerk und Auslegung dieser Lehre'; J. Bittremieux, *De mediatione universali B.M.V. quoad gratias* (Bruges, 1926); G. M. Roschini, *La mediatrice universale* (Rome, 1961); F. H. Schüth, *Mediatrix* (Innsbruck, 1925); R. Laurentin, *Kurzer Traktat der Marianischen Theologie* (Regensburg, 1959), pp. 76-116; W. Sebastian, *De BMV universali gratiarum mediatrice* (Rome, 1952): Franziskanertheologie 1600-1730; J. Ude, *Ist Maria die Mittlerin aller Gnaden*? (Bressanone, 1928), pp. 41-133. Also cf. the various studies in the collection *Maria. Etudes sur la sainte Vierge*, ed. Hubert du Manoir (Paris, 1949-1961). H. Lennerz, *De beata virgine. Tractatus dogmaticus* (Rome, 1957), pp. 197-230, 231-289. Cf. also the works quoted at the beginning of this essay by C. A. de Ridder, W. Delius, etc.

[20] The Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, No. 62 (with the commentary by Semmelroth, loc. cit.).

[21] 1t must be borne in mind that the Church's commonly understood dogmatic terminology throughout history comprises very different literary genres. Besides the doxological, hymnic, catechetical, juridical and other styles, there is in dogmatic assertions the rather more speculative as well as the more devotional tone. One would have to show the respective justification of each of the various modes of expression. No doubt each one has its own particular danger. (A devotional mode of speech, for example, inevitably runs the risk of giving way to excessive emotion and vague enthusiasm, undisciplined dogmatism and pious exaggeration.) But all this would have to be demonstrated in detail to clarify the above statement. Cf. *Lumen gentium*, No. 62.

[22] *Lumen gentium*, No. 62. Cf. also on this issue A. Brandenburg, *Maria in der evangelischen Theologie der Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 1966), pp. 118-145, 146-154; M. Thurian, *Maria* (Mainz, 1965), pp. 233-237; K. Rahner, 'Zur konziliaren Mariologie', *Stimmen der Zeit* 174 (1964), pp. 87-101.

[23] For a correct basic principle in Mariology cf. K. Rahner, *Maria, Mutter des Herrn* (Freiburg,^{4} 1962), pp. 15-38; also 'Le principe fondamental de la théologie mariale', *RSR* 42 (1954), pp. 481-522.

[24] The existence of the thing itself cannot be assessed simply according to the verbal occurrence of terms like 'mediator', etc. In the New Testament even the mediating function of Christ himself is expressed in very diverse ways. Cf. *ThWNT* IV, pp. 624 ff. and *LThK*^{2} VII, cols. 498-499. The same is the case in dogmatics with the titles accorded to Mary. A comprehensive example of what is intended in exegesis is provided in W. Thusing, 'Per Christum in Deum' = *Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen* NF 1 (Münster, 1965).

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and their relationship with the single, radically unique mediatorship of Christ. We cannot discuss and defend the further development and the details of the doctrine itself at this point. It is our intention rather to proceed in the opposite direction: we wish to conceive these 'mediations' not as dependent subordinate modes of participation in the unique mediatorship of Christ, but, reversing the process, we shall try to understand the mediatorship of Christ as the eschatologically perfect and consequently the highest, the unique 'case'[25] [174] of human intercommunication before God and of the solidarity in salvation of all men.[26] This also makes it clear right from the very beginning that Christ's unique mediatorship does not suspend this saving intercommunication and solidarity, but perfects it, since the latter is both the necessary precondition for Christ's mediatorship, and also its effect.[27]

II

We shall therefore put forward the following thesis: *the condition required for the possibility of the saving mediatorship of Christ and its personal realisation in faith is the intercommunication of all men right down to the ultimate depths of their existence, to their very salvation, and the concrete and existential 'realisation' and experience of this radical intercommunication*. This intercommunication is part and parcel of man's concrete being[28] and is therefore a constant. The experience of it (whether accepted or rejected) is the precondition without which such a thing as the mediatorship of Christ could neither be understood at all nor held to be credible.

Here it is unnecessary to engage in a lengthy explanation of how, for a distinctly Catholic theological anthropology, this saving intercommunication and solidarity, as a factor in the constitution of man's concrete being, contains a 'natural' and a charismatic/pneumatic element. Both precede the individual's decision for or against salvation as its condition and perspective, contributing to making the decision possible and determining it in such a way that, in spite of its transcendental character as a condition of Christ's mediatorship, it can be understood as a condition which the Christ-event itself *actively* presupposes for its own actualisation. In this way it does not prejudice the majesty and independence of Christ's mediatorship.[29]

We shall now endeavour to elucidate and substantiate the proposed thesis piece by piece. Naturally we cannot do this here by referring in [175] detail to the sources of theology, Scripture, Tradition and their expression in authoritative Church pronouncements. We shall give a plain account in the hope that the listener will himself gather what is being referred to or will supply his own illustrations.

It must first be said by way of introduction that even in a context of theological controversy it is no longer permissible, in discussing a theme such as this, to treat the idea of Christ's mediatorship as if it were unquestioningly accepted. It is by no means self-evident just *what*

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[25] Apart from the author's larger studies on the theology of the Incarnation cf. the small sketch 'I believe in Jesus Christ' in this volume, and the preliminary plan for a speculative doctrine of the Trinity in *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 317-401.

[26] Not only providing a way to a deeper understanding, but also taking up a whole range of essential Old and New Testament motifs. Cf. J. Scharbert, 'Die Rettung der "Vielen" durch die "Wenigen" im AT', *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 68 (1959), pp. 146-161; also *Heilsmittler im AT und im alten Orient* (Freiburg, 1964) (with literature).

[27] On the fundamental legitimacy of this view cf. the author's essay 'Theology and Anthropology' in this volume.

[28] For a few observations on this cf. K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 31 ff.

[29] cf. H. Küng, *Justification* (E.T. London 1964); and K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 189 ff.

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this concept means or can mean, nor how it can be believed seriously today in this age of 'demythologising'. It is not as if we *only* had to ask whether this 'mediation' – as something self-evident both in its meaning and in actual existence – permits of another kind of mediation 'beside' or 'beneath' itself. For what does it mean to say that Jesus has redeemed us by his blood? How can we think of a *reconciliation* with God at all? How can the forgiveness of our radical sinfulness be conceived in any other way than as the pure act of God *alone*? Precisely *what* does one mean by saying that this very act of God alone, of which he is the *sole* subject and the unconditioned origin, has *happened* in Christ, has come to light in Christ and nowhere else, and is addressed to us in him? How can Jesus do more than give us courage to believe in the forgiving love of God, which *exists* but is not effected by him? What *is* a mediator, if he is constituted in the same way as those to whom he mediates? How can this mediatorship be conceived if it is to be valid also for mankind *before* and *outside* the compass of the preaching of the Gospel of the death of Jesus? When applied to our relationship with God, are not words like 'blood', 'sacrifice', 'propitiation', 'God's anger', 'Atonement' etc., verbal relics of a mythological age? Do we know what they really mean for us? Above all we are faced with this question: what is the transcendental horizon of understanding, and thus the hermeneutical principle, which will lead to an understanding of the mediatorship of Christ which can be protected from misconceptions? What and where is the unavoidable existential experience within the perspective of which we can really encounter the unique historical fact of the redeeming death of Jesus and find it credible?

There must be such a horizon of understanding, and nowadays it must no longer exercise its influence hidden from reflection; it must be especially and explicitly shown. This may be dangerous, because if it is interpreted falsely or incompletely, the wrong hermeneutical principle will also corrupt the reality and its expression which was to be rendered intelligible by reference to this horizon. It may be that the hermeneutical circle, [176] embracing both the horizon of understanding and what is to be understood, in which each must clarify the other in a mutual exchange, and which itself has a history, cannot be broken. But all the same we must ask this question: Where can the experience of a horizon of understanding be found within which the message of Christ's mediatorship can 'strike home' at all? On its own, the experience of man's unavoidable guilt does not provide this horizon. Lostness does not itself automatically give rise to a rescue, let alone lead one to understand *how* such a rescue is conceivable.

III

This horizon of understanding is man's experienced, intercommunicative existence, which is always committed to us for us to accept or reject freely. It is ultimately a matter of no significance to what extent we succeed in reaching an adequate reflex interpretation of this intercommunicative existence. It is there and it is constantly experienced, whether it is interpreted well or ill, according to pre-philosophical or pre-theological categories or according to existential ontology or theology. Nor does it matter ultimately whether this experienced, intercommunicative existence is *explicitly* recognised in its express relation to the question of *salvation* or not. For this intercommunicative existence is experienced as being unlimited: the experience would automatically cease if it were thought of as limited to a particular area of human existence, e.g. to the biological or political area, or the private area of a love which excludes others. Intercommunication in all its tenaciousness, according to which the other person is necessarily always present, sustaining and making demands upon me, would be a mere surface appearance if I could withdraw to a region where I was simply alone, where no-one could follow me or was necessary for me any longer, and where there

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was no-one for whom I was partly responsible. If, therefore, the question of salvation is an unavoidable element of human existence, intercommunication is also a factor of existence, whether for or against salvation. Here too no-one is alone; each one supports every other person, in the matter of salvation everyone is responsible and significant for everyone else. The commandment to love one's neighbour[30] was not given to make our social or private lives bearable or agreeable, but to proclaim everyone's concern in everyone [177] else's possibility of salvation.[31] It goes without saying that concepts like 'people (of God)' in salvation-history,[32] 'covenant',[33] 'Body of Christ',[34] 'Prayer for one another'[35] etc., presuppose this kind of intercommunicative existence. The reality and experience of this intercommunicative existence which is so important for salvation is made concrete in the absolute quality and unfathomable depths of the love of one's neighbour, in the puzzling experience that in the fate of any individual we are confronted and put face to face with the fate of all human kind, and that this experience cannot be explained away rationalistically as abstraction, induction or the seeing of all 'cases' in a single 'case'.[36] Everyone is aware of this in the experience of his being weighed down by a guilt which is not merely his own, in the experience of his own historicity. This historicity is on the one hand a co-determinant of the most ultimate aspects of one's own existence, and on the other hand it is itself partially the result of the historical decisions of other people. But one cannot draw a boundary between these two, between the passive and active effects of others.[37]

[178] It is impossible here to give a detailed account of how this intercommunicative existence always takes place *before God*, coming from him and proceeding towards him, however unconsciously and anonymously.[38] It would be of fundamental importance, however, for what follows. The experience of being-in-reference-to the absolute mystery we call God and the experience of intercommunication mutually determine each other, because the world, which, according to Catholic teaching, can lead to a recognition of God, is not only a world of things but the world to which self-experiencing man belongs: within himself and his intercommunication he recognises God. Consequently a closer knowledge of God's relationship to the world, together with the history of this relationship, are partial constituents

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[30] cf. K. Rahner, 'The "commandment" of love in relation to the other commandments', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 439-459; 'Reflections on the unity of the love of neighbour and the love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249.

[31] cf. also the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 31 f., 271 ff. (with literature).

[32] cf. N. A. Dahl, *Das Volk Gottes* (Darmstadt,[2] 1963); H. J. Kraus, *Volk Gottes im AT* (Zürich, 1958); F. Mußner, 'Volk Gottes im NT', *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 72 (1963), pp. 169-178.

[33] The fact that the covenant is made between unequals rather than equals does not contradict this principle. The structure of intercommunication must not be thought of as having a homogeneous and even surface. Cf. Kl. Baltzer, 'Das Bundesformular' = *WMANT* 4 (Neukirchen, 1960); D. J. McCarthy, 'Treaty and Covenant' = *An Bibl* 21 (Rome, 1963); also his 'Der Gottesbund im AT' = *SBB* 13 (Stuttgart, 1960); J. l'Hour, 'Die Ethik der Bundestradition im AT'= *SBB* 14 (Stuttgart, 1967).

[34] E. Käsemann drew attention very early to the collective structure of this concept, and maintains this biblical view of intercommunicative existence against all tendencies to individualism. Cf. E. Käsemann, 'Leib und Leib Christi' = *BHTh* 9 (Tübingen, 1933); and now E. Güttgemanns' study, 'Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr' = *FRLANT* 90 (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 199 ff., 206 ff.

[35] cf. note 7 above, including the author's studies.

[36] Thus it becomes once more apparent that the concept of neighbourly love to which we refer must not be understood in an introverted and 'private' sense, but, in an original sense, gains 'political' dimensions. Cf. on this aspect J. B. Metz, *Verantwortung der Hoffnung* (Mainz, 1968).

[37] cf. in the first place K. Rahner, 'Ursprünge der Freiheit', M. Horkheimer/K. Rahner/C. F. v. Weizsäcker, *Über die Freiheit* (Stuttgart,[2] 1965), pp. 29-49, esp. 34 ff.; also 'Der Friede Gottes und der Friede der Welt', *Der Streit um den Frieden*, ed. R. Schmid/W. Beck (Munich-Mainz, 1967), now also in this volume; also 'The theology of power', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 391-409.

[38] A discussion of principles in K. Rahner, 'The concept of mystery in Catholic theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73.

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of a closer understanding of man's intercommunicative existence. God himself initiates an absolute intercommunication between himself and man, i.e. in absolute *self*-communication – which we call 'grace' – giving himself in a direct partnership and intimacy, and not only showing himself to be the radically unapproachable Distant One, separating himself from the creature, the 'other'; to this extent (and only thus) we have the possibility of a radically serious, ultimate and secure interpersonal communication. (The mere formal concept of intercommunication cannot, of course, provide such a full content on its own.) But the reverse is also true: wherever this intercommunication is set free, accepted and experienced in its unlimited, unconditional and dynamic nature, there is – at least anonymously – the experience of the relationship of grace between God and man, springing from God's free self-communication. Man is loved in God, and God in man.[39] Where interpersonal communication reaches the ultimate possibility of its actual being (secretly supplied by and through God himself), it is already a meeting with God (whether this is acknowledged expressly or not),[40] since it is itself founded on God's self-communication.[41]

This union of men in an intercommunicative existence, which exhibits the most varied elements – although we cannot discuss them here (the [179] physical unity of the cosmos, the space-time unity; biological unity; intercommunication in the unity of a single history of truth and love, untruth and hate; the unity of rootedness in God, etc.) – itself has a history which is of relevance for salvation. It is a history in which the intercommunications sustaining it and taking place within it are never simply the same ones: each instance is unique, since this history of intercommunications is not built up out of equal atoms, but is shaped by persons who are unique at any one time. Furthermore, this history is a one-way history, and is proceeding towards a goal.

IV

When this *history* of human intercommunication and of the relationship between God and mankind together in one reach their eschatological meridian,[42] i.e. when the occurrence of the offer and the acceptance – both given quite freely – of the divine self-communication in God's Pneuma[43] becomes irreversible and *appears* historically as such for the believer, we have what Christian Dogmatics calls 'Incarnation', the death and resurrection of the divine Logos.[44] Naturally we have no time here to give a more thorough justification for this assertion.[45] We shall only draw out its implications for our particular theme.

If it is correct, it follows that the Father's Word made flesh is the Mediator of God's self-communication (which is also always a forgiving communication) in so far as he is the

[39] Details in K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the unity of the love of neighbour and the love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249; also *Glaube, der die Erde liebt* (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 83-99; note 31 above.
[40] cf. K. Rahner, 'Anonymous Christians', *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 390-398 (with further literature).
[41] In scholastic terms, because, as a theological virtue, the infused virtue of 'caritas' is a strict unity of the love of God and the love of one's neighbour. For further theological clarification cf. the essays referred to in note 30 above.
[42] cf. K. Rahner, 'Christianity and the "new man"', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 135-153; also 'Christology within an evolutionary view of the world', op. cit., pp. 157-192; also A. Darlap, *Mysterium Salutis* I, ed. J. Feiner/M. Löhrer (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 99 ff., 59 ff., 147 ff.
[43] cf. the more precise treatment in the author's attempt at a speculative doctrine of the Trinity, *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 317-401.
[44] Besides the essays referred to in notes 25, 27 and 42 above, cf. also K. Rahner, 'On the theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 105-120; also 'Current problems in Christology', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 149-200.
[45] Esp. the essay referred to in note 27.

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eschaton of the history of this self-communication. History hangs upon its own future and is mediated by it, i.e. it *is* as it happens throughout its *whole* course, and it takes place in reference to its fulness and its victorious end. Consequently it is in this sense that the Word made flesh is the Mediator of God's self-communication and, within this, of the ultimate, radical depth of human intercommunication as well. We may understand his function [180] as Mediator in this way – or rather, we *must* do so – for the following reasons:

1. 'Grace', 'faith', 'Spirit', 'justification' were effectual even before Christ and took place throughout the whole length and breadth of history, even where there was no explicit preaching of the Gospel.[46]

2. *All* salvation occurs *intuitu meritorum Christi*.[47]

3. It is not the Christ-event which provides the foundation for God's will for our salvation, i.e. God's desire, effectual throughout the whole of history, to communicate himself;[48] the Christ-event is itself the 'effect' of the latter. *Because* God loves the world, he sent his Son.[49]

Christ's mediatorship can be said to 'effect' God's will for salvation in respect of an individual in so far as the highest and ultimate factor in any action must always be called its 'reason', in so far as the history of God's self-communication has become irreversible in this individual and has thus appeared historically as eschatologically victorious, and in so far as every individual person is seen as a member of mankind, to whom God's self-communication is addressed. Seen as a unity, the whole of this history of the salvation of mankind is the object, the goal and the 'reason' for the divine desire for salvation – if such a word may be used, bearing in mind God's sovereignty.[50] All factors of this salvation-history are, as such, factors of a *single* history willed by God in the decision to empty himself in self-communication, and they are all therefore mutually conditioning. But this mutual conditioning relationship itself has a structure, so we both can and must say that, in a unique sense, the highest and ultimate factor of this single totality, willed by God, determines and sustains everything else.

V

From this standpoint it ought to be possible to understand the relationship of Christ's mediatorship to those intercommunications which are [181] also of relevance for man's salvation and which thus signify as many *mediations* of salvation.

If what has been said so far is correct and has been understood properly, we can make the following assertions:

1. *Wherever salvation occurs in the individual's salvation-history, it also mediates salvation for all others*. For a salvation-event of this kind, whether expressly or not, is in addition necessarily always involved in intercommunication: i.e. it is the love of one's neighbour, it is an event *within* the single totality of all salvation-history whatsoever, an event willed and effected by God, finding its context and its goal in this totality. Consequently these mediations are essential constituents of salvation-history. Every person who abides in

[46] For details cf. K. Rahner, 'The Word and the Eucharist', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 253-286; in this volume, 'Atheism and implicit Christianity'.
[47] cf. *DS* 1523, 1530, 1529, 1560, etc.
[48] cf. K. Rahner, 'Heilswille Gottes, allgemeiner', *Sacramentum mundi* II. *International theological lexicon* (Herder, 1968 ff.); also 'History of the world and salvation-history', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 97-114; also pp. 115-134, and the studies referred to in notes 25 and 42 above.
[49] cf. John 3:16 and I John 4:9 f., and R. Schnackenburg's commentary in *The Gospel according to St John* I (trans. Kevin Smyth, London and New York, 1968), pp. 398 ff.
[50] Further remarks in the essays referred to in note 48.

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faith and love is in this relationship because of all the other people, since each person is intended by God to be an 'element' – even though a unique and irreplaceable element – of the single salvation-history, and since God's Pneuma, imparted to us and forming the context and history in which salvation takes place, both presupposes human intercommunication *and* makes it more radical. According to Catholic teaching it is therefore obvious that mediations of this kind are not only the function of particular 'Saints';[51] they are effected by all faithful and justified people. Similarly, too, these mediations are not extraordinary, special functions of all believers, but they are identical with the latter's realisation of salvation which is always present, ultimately secure and perfected, before God and is sustained by his gracious will, which desires the single, *total* salvation-history and also the salvation-history of each one of its 'elements' as such. Since these mediations depend on, and actually *are* intercommunications, what has been said by no means excludes, but rather implies, the fact that these mediations can also become present to consciousness, indeed, that they *should* become so to some degree, thus taking the form, for instance, of explicit intercession and requests for intercession.

2. Since the world is the *one* world to which God communicates himself in his Pneuma; since in this world each person is present as he is *for* everyone else and *because* of everyone else; and since this world with its salvation-history is a real *history*, which is proceeding towards its goal and constantly lives in dependence on its goal; *this world of intercommunication, as history, has one apogee and only one goal*: *this is Jesus Christ, who,* [182] *as the God-given apogee of this history, is its sole and absolute Mediator*. Far from excluding the saving, intercommunicative character of the world's salvation-history, it implies it. All intercommunicative mediations of salvation are dependent upon their *single* goal and their eschatological consummation in Christ, but for that very reason they *actually exist*; they are not merely secondary, ultimately superfluous consequences of Christ's mediatorship; they are the very preconditions which Christ's mediatorship creates for itself. In other words they constitute the conditions for the possibility of such mediatorship, conditions provided, of course, by God's sovereign grace itself in and through its will towards Jesus Christ – just as, conversely, Jesus Christ is willed 'for us men and for our Salvation'.

VI

In order to do justice to what has been said, two further things must be mentioned.

1. If Jesus Christ is not to become an abstract idea, a Christ-principle, and hence a mythological figure unworthy of belief, then this concrete, historical Jesus of Nazareth must be capable of being loved; he must not be merely another word for the incalculable sovereignty of the grace of the transcendent God. But how am I to accept and really love him as a concrete man (not merely accepting a theoretical truth about him) and how can *this* love of this particular concrete man be my salvation, if I am unable to love and be loved by other men, with whom I am in close, concrete proximity, in a mutual love (naturally in God's Pneuma and in relation to God) which is not only commanded but is *actually salvation* itself? I admit this quite openly: if I sometimes feel shocked by the overwhelming sort of Marian devotion in which a pious Catholic rushes to Mary's bosom, loves her, entreats and importunes her in utter confidence, as if nothing in religion were so important, then I ask

[51] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Church of the Saints', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 91-104; also, 'Why and how can we venerate the Saints?', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 3-23; and 'All Saints', *ibid*., pp. 24-29.

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myself in self-criticism whether it only shocks me because *I myself* am incapable of realising in a total and unselfconscious way this legitimate *concrete* form of human intercommunication which belongs to a living Christianity. For after all, my embracing of salvation in faith and love refers to Jesus (and not to an abstract idea of Christ), a Jesus who is at the same time the Crucified *and* the *Jesus* of Nazareth who stands 'at the right hand of God' (Acts 7:56), and who now lives in God as the concrete Man.[52] But if this is the case, how could I regard [183] as reprehensible this direct, trusting love towards another person in God's glory.[53]

2. How, in an age of socialism, which by no means must be impersonal, or in the face of the Indian concept of the God-manhood of humanity as such, can the *uniqueness* of Christ's mediatorship be credibly proclaimed, unless one understands this uniqueness as that which gives the interdependence-in-salvation of all men its eschatological guarantee, its victory, its historical form and manifestation? How can this be done if it is only understood as the individualistic relationship of each person to the one Christ, as if each person in his own individual process of salvation could have nothing to do with anyone else?

Certainly, the Gospel says a hard 'No' to false self-interpretations on man's part, and makes it our duty to say no in such cases. But all the same this is only permitted when man's interpretations have the effect of closing everything down rather than opening up possibilities. But which case is it – 'opening up' or 'closing down'? – if we say that for man's salvation he needs to live in that *single* love of the Pneuma which joins all men together and hence makes each man of saving importance for each other man, provided that it is understood in faith that this single body of love has found its unique, victorious, eschatological consummation in Jesus Christ? This is an action of opening up, not closing down. Or should the members of the Body of Christ all be solely concerned with the Head of the Body and have nothing to do with each other? At least, not so far as their relationship with Christ, their salvation, is concerned? It is undoubtedly clear that all 'mediation' is a mediation to the end of *immediacy*, and not a 'medial' something which is inserted between and thus keeps separate the objects of mediation. And in a formally similar manner it applies also to the mediation of Christ's manhood to God and the mediations on the part of one justified person for another in relation both to Christ and God. If the man Jesus' mediation to God does not destroy God's immediacy but actually constitutes it as such, it cannot be held that any 'mediation' to Jesus Christ, even at the level of concepts, straightway eliminates the possibility of a relation of immediacy with him.

I am far from thinking that everything necessary has now been said on this issue. For supplementary material I refer to the studies already mentioned concerning the unity of the love of God and the love of one's neighbour, and the veneration of the Saints. One ought also to go into the [184] many existential difficulties which man finds nowadays in respect of the veneration of the Saints, bearing in mind that nowadays these difficulties apply equally to the mediatorship of Christ. My sole intention was to say this: the saving intercommunication of all (justified) men is the existential ontological precondition for the mediatorship of Christ. The existential experience of this intercommunication is the perspective within which the experience, in faith, of Christ's mediatorship is alone possible; and the *converse* of this affirmation is also true. This saving intercommunication has its own history and achieves its victorious, eschatological consummation and its historical appearance (conquering unbelief –

[52] cf. K. Rahner, 'The eternal significance of the humanity of Jesus for our relationship with God', *Theological Investigations* III, pp. 35-46.

[53] However much the concrete practice of the veneration of the Saints becomes clouded over and succumbs to wrong tendencies, the fact cannot be obscured that this theological foundation is thoroughly legitimate and does not contradict the spirit of the New Testament. In their indignance at abuses, however, people have often eliminated what is essential as well.

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even the disbelief in this very intercommunication) in Jesus Christ who, as the eschatological meridian of this history, sustains it and is thus in this sense the *sole* Mediator. What in Catholic terms we call the mediations of the Saints is essentially nothing other than this saving intercommunication of everyone with everyone else. It can be further differentiated, in so far as we know in faith something of the particular function in salvation-history of a particular person, the Blessed Virgin for instance. But such differentiation changes nothing as far as its essence is concerned.

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[185]

PART THREE

Theological Anthropology

[187]

12

CHRISTIAN HUMANISM[1]

Perhaps a question-mark ought to be put after this title, for as it stands it leads one to expect that a theologian is going to clarify and give reasons as to how Christianity and humanism form a unity, how humanism, when it is genuine, full-blooded and is really being itself, is actually Christianity. But the question which needs to be answered before making such a proud affirmation is so difficult, and has so many levels, that it seems to be more appropriate to present the thoughts of a Christian theologian who is *asking himself*, first of all, what the relationship is which exists between Christianity and humanism. In the first place it is no simple matter to say what Christianity or humanism really are. Consequently their relationship with one another is not so easy to define either. Even if one takes for granted ecclesial Christianity's understanding of itself with its authoritative theological affirmations, this very understanding can be still interpreted in many different ways, and depending on the particular interpretation one can arrive at very different definitions of the relationship between Christianity and humanism. Christian anthropology itself makes so many and such opposite assertions about man that, even if they are not interpreted as logical contradictions, they put such heavy demands on any particular man's actual ability to reconstruct a 'realisation' of these assertions, that in actual fact there are greatly differing interpretations of man even within Church orthodoxy, and consequently greatly differing attitudes to humanism. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Pascal, Teilhard de Chardin – all of them Christians – have very different Christian ideas of man and thus of humanism. And what of the very concept of humanism itself! Nowadays everyone wants to be a humanist. And at the same time there is less agreement than ever as to what a *man* really is.

[188]

I

Initially it seems quite easy for a Christian theologian to answer this question. He knows about man, he knows about God, and he knows about the God-man. And thus he confesses an absolute humanism. He can say that no-one can take man more seriously than the Christian. And he can say (which no pre-Christian or non-Christian religion and no modern ideology would actually dare to do) that Christianity acknowledges an absolute meaning and validity in *every* concrete human being and forbids anyone to try to escape into the void of the mere perishable and perishing world of time, laying upon him the task of believing that no-one can escape himself or be rid of himself, and that it is good to have to retain his own self. The theologian is aware that this *inescapable responsibility for oneself*, which Christianity proclaims, must take the shape of self-forgetfulness in the love of one's fellows, or else it

[1] For the origin, purpose and the limits of this paper cf. the list of sources at the end of this volume.

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becomes the hell of one's own egoistic isolation. This love of one's neighbour must be so radical and absolute, and must overcome subjectivity itself (as the possession of oneself) in its very essence to such an extent that it is henceforth only possible as something which *happens*, which comes to us from an absolute origin which is not ourselves, but which rather sends this love of our neighbour to us as its own love. In this way there exists an original and ultimate unity of the love of God and of one's neighbour,[2] whether explicit or unconscious, so that the love of one's neighbour is only sufficiently radical when it is an expression of the love of God, and the love of God only occurs (and man only knows who God is) when man loves his neighbour.

The theologian is aware that – if man is essentially a 'political' being[3] – this love of one's neighbour must not be the mere inclination of the affections or private intercommunication, which can be the most sublime form of egoism precisely because it can be so intimate and bring such happiness, but must become the sober service of 'political' love as well, whose concern is the whole of mankind, turning the most distant person into the nearest neighbour and having occasion to hold the nearest person sternly at a distance.

[189] The theologian is aware that Christianity is Jesus Christ, i.e. that a man can be loved who, himself the servant of all and only genuinely loved *as such*, is God's own destiny, with the result that for all eternity Christianity can possess no theology which is not at the same time anthropology, the two uncompounded and inseparable.[4] Furthermore the theologian will demonstrate how, in this same Jesus Christ, the unity of the love of God and the love of one's neighbour, the presence of God and his love within man and in the love towards men, is eternally secured.

The theologian is aware that, since the necessary setting for the individual's salvation is the Church as the unity of mankind and its history *theology must always be* '*political*' *theology*. He is aware that he may only look at the salvation of an individual as one which is not achieved fully except within the absolute future of the whole of mankind, as the ultimate result of the love of all the others in the absoluteness of God. In other words, the salvation of an individual soul does not consist in escaping from the history of humanity but in entering into the latter's absolute future,[5] which we call the 'kingdom of God'.[6]

The theologian is aware that, according to Christianity, salvation is achieved not only within the explicitly religious sphere but in *all* dimensions of human existence, i.e. even where man does not interpret his actions in a *consciously* religious way,[7] but where he loves in an absolutely responsible manner, serves his fellow-man selflessly and willingly accepts the incomprehensible nature and the disappointments of his existence, hoping ultimately to embrace its as yet unrevealed meaningfulness.

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[2] cf. K. Rahner, 'The "commandment" of love in relation to the other commandments', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 439-459; 'Reflections on the unity of the love of neighbour and the love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249.

[3] cf. K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie. Praktische Theologie der Kirche in ihrer Gegenwart*, ed. F. X. Arnold, K. Rahner, V. Schurr, L. M. Weber (Freiburg, 1966), Vol. II/1, pp. 31 f.; J. B. Metz, *Verantwortung der Hoffnung* (Mainz, 1968).

[4] cf. further K. Rahner, 'On the theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 105-120; in this volume: 'Theology and Anthropology'.

[5] For this concept cf. K. Rahner, 'Marxist utopia and the Christian future of man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 59-68.

[6] For the biblical significance of this Christian fundamental category cf. R. Schnackenburg, *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich* (Freiburg,[4] 1965); H. U. v. Balthasar, 'Zuerst Gottes Reich' = *Theologische Meditationen* 13 (Einsiedeln, 1966).

[7] K. Rahner, 'Anonymous Christians', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 390-398 (literature).

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Thus he is aware that in this sense the whole of the human sphere is religious and the whole of the religious sphere is humane.

The theologian is aware that, if one assumes the power of sin, man's multifarious development not merely reveals 'friction phenomena' but is continually threatened by the absurdity of real sinfulness which we cannot ourselves eradicate;[8] from the example of the man who struggles and dies [190] on the cross Christianity knows that the most ultimate and radical love of others in God implies this very fate: one only passes from death to life by loving the other person; and in loving him one knows that it is only with God's help that one can avoid withholding oneself ultimately from the other person, that one must carry on loving, right to the very end of a pointless death.

II

So far so good. The theologian can be convinced that there is a Christian 'humanism' in the preliminary sense just mentioned: Christianity proclaims a genuine and radical 'humanism'; what it acknowledges concerning God, Christ, freedom, responsibility and judgment is not an arbitrary or superfluous superstructure of theology[9] or even a venom manufactured by man for his practical defence, but the ultimate and radical form of man's dignity, because the Christian message affirms man himself as really absolute and yet does not show itself unworthy of belief in the face of the brutal experience that man is a wretched animal and a merely ridiculous episode in natural history, such that it is in the end of no consequence what the individual does or what becomes of everyone.

The theologian can declare that he really does not see how, in the absence of this 'ideological' factor of the conviction of the absolute dignity of man and of humanity,[10] the actual course of the history of mankind, in which the latter reaches out in hope towards its future, is at all conceivable. He will declare, therefore, that anyone who is convinced of the irresistible nature of the process implicitly experiences and proclaims, in his own actions, this apparently 'ideological' factor as the innermost truth and reality of this world; that in other words he by no means understands it as a superfluous or harmful 'ideology'.

Furthermore the theologian could ask the non-Christian whether he would be able to maintain that a Christianity understood in this way is *not* a humanism. He could ask him whether he ought not to be glad that Christians endeavour to be human in this way, even if it is his own opinion that much of this Christianity is ideology or mythology, which it uses to interpret, clarify and render effective its humanism.

He might ask the non-Christian whether he knows of a *more radical* [191] humanism: whether, comparing theory with theory and not unfairly comparing humanist theory with the miserable practice of Christians, he is certain that his humanism is *better practically*, i.e. more effective. He could ask his liberal and enlightened brother whether even today he still regards him with suspicion as a clerical suppressor of the freedom of conscience and as a defender of the Church's positions of power in society, or whether it would not be better if the Christian and the 'liberal' were to work together so that the individual's personality and freedom are not smothered in the society of the future. The theologian could ask his Marxist brother where he sees the 'opium of the people', or 'for the people' in this Christian

[8] On this problem cf. K. Rahner, 'Guilt and its remission: the borderland between theology and psychotherapy', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 265-281.
[9] For the critique of ideology with reference to Christianity cf. K. Lehmann, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 109-180 (literature).
[10] A theological interpretation of these fundamental concepts is attempted in *Theological Investigations* II, pp. 235-263.

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humanism, and whether, for example, it is really necessary for a politically powerful Marxism to persecute this Christianity in order to free mankind from servitude and self-alienation. He could ask him whether the freedom of *this* Christianity could not be guaranteed, even if, for various good reasons, one had certain reservations about the liberalistic concept of freedom; whether it is not good for a society (lest it should degenerate into a tyranny) if a Christian humanism endeavours to rescue men too, and if – instead of wasting much time in theoretical dialectic – it is left rather to actual practice and the future to show which side has the greater love, where the ever-living sources of strength are which defend mankind, and which theory is confirmed by practice.[11]

III

So far it seems that, for the Christian theologian, all is well. But in reality he has only just begun to embark on a dialogue with himself. He invites the Christian and the non-Christian to listen to this process of self-questioning in the hope that *both* of them will be able to make it their own.

The first question the theologian asks himself is whether he really knows *what* and *who* man is. Of course, thinking within the tradition he has received, he will say that he is able to utter a great many ultimate, radical things about man, even God's revelation concerning man; and that there is nothing clearer, more certain, more sublime and more beneficial than this very same Christian anthropology[12] with its highly concrete, material content.

[192] On the other hand, drawing on the experience of the last hundred years, the Christian theologian will admit that in this age of a scientific anthropology, which no longer mythologises poetically and is no longer an exclusively theological discipline,[13] man has learned an immeasurable amount about himself which the Christian revelation has not taught him; and that for this very reason there already exists a humanism today (assuming that one does not look presumptuously upon this scientific anthropology as of no consequence from the human point of view). Nor can he interpret it as a self-awareness on man's part which was always present or which is itself a product of the message of Christianity. Hence it is doubtless true that theological anthropology finds itself in a totally new and threatening situation if, as is the case, it is placed side by side with a scientific anthropology which did *not* exist at the time when Christianity was alone in revealing and clarifying man's nature to himself. But all the same the theologian will still maintain that all the empirical, scientific anthropologies, which can only exist now in a permanent state of pluralism, can only bring man to himself *whole* and *single* provided that he hears the message of Christianity. Otherwise he necessarily cannot know what the *totality* of his variegated knowledge about

[11] On the foundations and prospects of such a dialogue in theory and practice cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on dialogue within a pluralistic society', *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 31-42.
[12] On the material content of a Christian anthropology of this kind cf. the remarks in *LThK* I (Freiburg,[2] 1957), cols. 604-627 (J. Schmid, A. Halder, K. Rahner).
[13] We cannot trace the development of this concept here. Cf. O. Marquard, 'Zur Geschichte des philosophischen Begriffs "Anthropologie" seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts', *Collegium Philosophicum. Studien J. Ritter zum 60. Geburtstag* (Basle, 1965), pp. 209-239 (literature); in addition the essays by L. Oeing-Hanhoff, N. Hinske, O. Marquard and O. Pöggeler, *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Aufriß einer philosophischen Anthropologie. Festschrift für M. Müller*, ed. H. Rombach (Freiburg, 1966); H. Pleßner, 'Immer noch Philosophische Anthropologie', *Zeugnisse. Th. W. Adorno zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. M. Horkheimer (Frankfurt, 1963), pp. 65-73; A. Gehlen, *Anthropologische Forschung* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1961).

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himself means, nor why this known totality is of such absolute significance,[14] the significance without which man's understanding of himself cannot be a humanism at all.

But all this does not answer the question which the theologian puts to himself, whether he himself really knows what man is. For what does his own anthropology really tell him about man? That he is the being who loses himself in God. Otherwise nothing. For only what is implied in *this* statement or can be said about man in *this* connection, is a genuinely *theological* affirmation of his anthropology. Any other statement about [193] man is only of theological significance provided that it can be referred back to this one, and provided that it is made clear (in whatever way, whether transcendentally or otherwise) that its denial would destroy man's being-in-reference-to God. But what does man know about himself in grasping this being-in-reference? What is there in this which he can apply to his theory and practice, if God is after all the ineffable, intractable Mystery? So long as it was thought possible to know something about God which constituted him as one quantity among others in the cosmos of extra-human realities[15] which mutually determine and explain each other, it was easy to believe that in saying that man is dependent on God, made 'after His image and likeness', one had made man intelligible for the purposes of his own *gnosis* and practice. But if in our knowing and acting, we are only aware of God as our origin (our 'whence?') and our future (our 'whither?'), i.e. simply as a pure mystery[16] which is not a 'constituent' of the world of men – because otherwise God is confused with an idolatrous hypostatisation of a particular dimension of man – what is the good of saying to a man that he belongs to God? Ought not one to be silent before this ineffable mystery which silently overwhelms our existence? Not because religion is banished to the individual's interior sphere as was thought by naïve, old-fashioned Liberalism, which had no concept of man as a 'political' being, but because man is always tempted to live in a state of aversion to this seemingly unbearable and intractable mystery, in order to be at least a *man*?[17] Must not one say, 'What we know about man, we know from him himself and not from God; for we only know about God from our knowledge of man'? This applies equally to revealed theology, for this too not only works with human concepts originating from beneath and not from above (as far as their ultimate matter is concerned, which in part determines their usage), but actually only tells man that this unfathomable mystery as such is permanently present in Jesus Christ and wishes to communicate itself to us absolutely in the 'Spirit', creating a relationship of absolute immediacy with the incomprehensible God. Is theology in this case [194] anything more than an *anthropologia negativa*, i.e. the experience that man continually loses track of himself in the uncomprehended and intractable mystery? And even if one emphasises that this *anthropologia negativa* does not turn God into a function of man but places man before the mystery which *absolutely is*, its *being* in no way dependent upon man but rather causing him to suffer the ultimate agony of his finitude, of what use is that to a humanism? Would not it still be the case that, in so far as they simply *live*, men live godlessly, i.e. secularly, and encounter God (whether he is named or unnamed) only in *death*? This is by no means an argument against theism. In the first place because man dies in any case and death is not an

[14] Naturally these remarks depend ultimately on the particular concrete theological understanding of the relationship between nature and grace. Cf. *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 297-317; *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 165-188.

[15] With respect to the preconditions for a relationship with God today cf. K. Rahner, 'The man of today and religion', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 3-20.

[16] cf. 'The concept of mystery in Catholic theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73

[17] In this connection the following must be borne in mind: Does not this action of turning-away also imply the most radical turning-*towards*? Is not *theologia negativa* also a 'theology', an act which one must admit to oneself? How *could* such an act be avoided, since, in proclaiming that God is dead, one still presupposes him?

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event at the end of life but *the* event of life itself, assuming that man is not thought of as vegetating like a mere animal, unaware of what is happening.

IV

In any case, however, as a kind of reduction of 'present' existence, which is capable of being manipulated and enjoyed, into the mystery of God, theism implies the elimination of each and every particular, concrete humanism in so far as it claims to be an eternal, *absolute* quantity; theism relativises every *concrete* humanism. And since in fact humanism is not the affirmation of an abstract formal idea of 'man' but the affirmation of a particular, concrete, familiar, beloved and cherished mode of historical existence, Christian theism, by contrast, is the very denial of such a humanism as an *absolute* quantity. Naturally this does not mean that it forbids a humanism of this kind. On the contrary, a genuine negation as an act can only take place with reference to a concrete affirmation. One can only negate by positing something, not by refraining from doing so under the misconception that one can achieve a pure negation. In this way every man necessarily carries out *his own* humanism, i.e. his concrete understanding and actualisation of existence. But it is precisely the latter which comes under criticism when man, in being a theist, lets it be swept away into the intractable, nameless mystery of God.

This Christianity does not erect a particular *concrete* humanism but denies it an *absolute* value; Christianity accepts the experience of its own humanism as one which remains constantly questionable.

Of course one *can* call the very affirmation of the dignity and value of man, of the responsibility of man's freedom, his spiritual and social nature – 'humanism'. In this sense one can call Christianity Humanism, and hence it can enter into a dialogue with the other humanisms as to [195] whether the substance affirmed on one side is also affirmed on the other, how it is to be understood more precisely, and what it implies. But a dialogue of this sort concerning the formal, *abstract* aspects of a humanism will soon run aground: on both sides the understanding of this abstract *existentiale* itself is co-determined by the particular concrete humanism in relation to which one understands it, since one can never make an adequate concrete distinction between the horizon of understanding and what is understood within it. Hence the dialogue between the humanisms must consist, not in merely theoretical endeavours, but in their concrete confrontation, as the *practical* attempt to gain one's partner-in-dialogue for one's own concrete humanism, i.e. as (political) action, not pure theory.

This understanding of the humanist dialogue is most fundamentally appropriate for Christianity[18] if, on the one hand, it wishes to commend itself to others and if, on the other hand, it does not see itself as an abstract idea but as the absolute, concrete, historical fact of Jesus Christ and his Church – neither of which can be adequately theorised. As the fulness of the life of individual Christians and of their fellowship together, Christianity thus involves a *concrete* humanism, i.e. the historically given concrete humanity as it is lived out by Christians. To this extent, on the one hand, it seeks to win others to its concrete humanism, and on the other hand it is always ready, in the practical historical dialogue, to let its concrete humanism be subjected to radical change.[19] For Christianity as such – and this is the decisive point – cancels every concrete humanism by revealing its questionable nature before the incomprehensibility of God. Christianity's *concretissimum*, for which alone it stands, is Jesus

[18] cf. the author's essay referred to in note 11 above, and also the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 102 ff., 254 ff., 265 ff.; II/2, pp. 168 ff.

[19] We draw attention to the fact that the Church itself needs dialogue *intra muros*; cf. the author's 'Concerning dialogue in the Church', in this volume.

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Christ, who, in accepting death and suffering *for us* (and in no other way) has created our relationship of immediacy before God, and the Church, which looks for the Kingdom which is yet to be fulfilled and which is *not* identical with the humanism we ourselves have produced or shall produce in the near future.[20] Christianity renders every concrete humanism contingent, i.e. dispensable in favour of another, future humanism, by situating every one within God's open future.[21] In its conviction of man's [196] freedom, *rooted in* and *orientated towards* God, Christianity opens up the permanent possibility of an inhuman 'humanism'. But in consequence the only humanism which is inhuman is one which denies man's dependence on and relation to the intractable and incomprehensible One, thus positing itself as absolute and refusing to allow its own nature to be called in question by possibly taking a new decision to embrace *another* future, materially determined by history, which realises in concrete form the will to accept God's absolute future.

To the extent that Christianity, as the acceptance of the inconceivable mystery we call God, forbids man to try to understand and manipulate himself with reference to himself alone, at one and the same time it both calls into question each concrete humanism *and* also opens the way to an ever new, future humanism with its intra-mundane categories; for one can only be ready to realise God's absolute future if one is open to future intra-mundane humanisms. In spite of different emphases at various times the Church has always refused to decide between these two attitudes, which appear as opposites in Tertullian[22] on the one hand and in Clement of Alexandria[23] on the other. In fact they both belong to the nature of Christianity: the Church holds each concrete humanism at a distance as being contingent, questionable, provisional in respect of the future, and even sinful; and yet *at the same time* obliges the Christian to decide in favour of a concrete humanism, since only thus can he actualise a really serious Christianity, i.e. his will, in faith and hope, for God's absolute future. When today the Church declares that Christianity is compatible with any culture[24] and is not bound to any particular one, e.g. 'europeanism' or its imperialist and colonialist export version, it acknowledges (by implication) that a pluralism of humanisms is legitimate. Evidently this acknowledgment cannot refer solely to those humanisms which already exist, especially as the latter are threatened with being submerged in an intermingled world civilisation, but must apply above [197] all to one or more (that is an open question) *future* humanisms. And it is to this (or these) that men must open themselves creatively in a free historical decision. Christianity commits itself to and authorises the continually new humanism of the future, which is not actually Christian as such itself. It does not sanction a particular concrete humanism. But Christianity pronounces judgment on any humanism which sets itself up as absolute and thus explicitly or implicitly tries to inhibit man's openness to further concrete history and hence to God's absolute future.

V

[20] On the limitations of any intramundane future planning cf. K. Rahner, 'Experiment Mensch', *Die Frage nach dem Menschen* (cf. note 13 above), pp. 45-69, esp. 62-68; in this volume: 'The experiment with man'.
[21] In this sense Christianity is capable of the most radical elimination of what is ideological in intramundane future utopias; cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 42 ff., 159 ff., 168 ff.
[22] cf. H. v. Campenhausen's short treatment in *Lateinische Kirchenväter* (Stuttgart, 1960), pp. 12-36; J. Klein, *Tertullian, Christliches Bewußtsein und sittliche Forderungen* (Düsseldorf, 1940).
[23] cf. F. Quatember, *Die christliche Lebenshaltung des Klemens von Alexandrien* (Würzburg, 1947); F. van der Grinten, *Die natürliche und übernatürliche Begründung des Tugendlebens bei Clemens von Alexandrien* (Bonn, 1949); W. Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin, 1952).
[24] cf. the statements of the Second Vatican Council: the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Nos. 9, 53-59, 62.

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The theologian must consider a further factor if he intends to concern himself with the problem of a so-called 'Christian humanism'. It is contained in what we have said already, but we must emphasise it more particularly here. Christianity is the religion of the Cross. Whether one calls it 'death' or the radical 'change' of which Paul speaks, it is a fact that in a Christian humanism man (man, humanity, individual and collective history) is subject to the law of death, and the sign of a genuine humanism is a Man nailed to a Cross. What does this signify for a Christian understanding of humanism? If there is no life without death, if death itself is a mystery,[25] all humanism whatsoever becomes a very obscure question. For how can man understand himself if he cannot understand death? It would be a very dubious kind of humanism which tried to pass over this question. The person who says that death is only a question for an egoistic individualism[26] has already given an answer and thus recognised that there *is* a question, for he cannot make us believe that one day this 'egoism' will die out, removing the necessity for this particular answer. Is it at all possible for man to be weaned away from this question so that it never occurs again, without altogether abolishing the very humanism which maintains and defends the dignity of man? Then what does Christianity say if it does *not* wish to avoid this question? And what does this imply for our understanding of humanism?

First of all I would like to make a preliminary observation, even at the risk of seeming callous and brutal, and although I know only too well [198] that, as 'I' (though not as a Christian), I would not wish to be obliged to face up to what I shall now say. The Christian as such ought not to place *such* great importance on the death of an individual. Dying goes on everywhere, even in the brutal cases of children dying of starvation or people being strangled by cancer and so on. God evidently does not regard death as a scandal in the world which is *his* world, his creation, for which he is responsible. If one says that death is a phenomenon attributable to man's freely incurred guilt,[27] that is true, but it only begs the question, for in that case God must be held responsible for allowing this guilt to enter the world, since he could have stopped it from doing so without vitiating man's freedom. What I mean is merely this: Western humanism's high degree of embarrassed aversion to death[28] may well be very 'human'; to the extent that it encourages a certain sensitivity it may even be what is required of Christians as Christians here and now. But Christianity has not been issued with a straightforward and clear command to entertain this 'allergy' towards death at all times and in all places. If it is the case that Christianity in earlier times exhibited far less of this 'reverence for life' in home politics and war strategy, that the hectic Westerners who call themselves Christians in practice only act to a very limited extent in accordance with their theoretical death-allergy; and that wherever it wanted to seize the reins of power or actually succeeded in doing so, actual present-day Marxism calmly sacrificed, for the sake of the future, immense numbers of men, and not only in war, passively, but actively too, perhaps Christian, liberal and Marxist humanists ought to sit down and discuss soberly and honestly what value they *really* place on the death of the individual. Otherwise humanistic speeches about the dignity of human life will become degraded into propagandist party polemics. It is strange how quickly we acquire a good conscience when it is only our 'opponent' who must die. So the question is, what *precisely* is an honest *humanism's* attitude to death? But this is only mentioned here by the way.

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[25] On the following remarks the author refers to his study: *Zur Theologie des Todes* (Freiburg,[5] 1965).

[26] This answer can be found today among those Marxists who have cut themselves loose from crude materialism or an objectivistic concept of dialectic, and who now admit once again questions concerning the meaning of life and death as such (e.g. L. Kolakowski, A. Schaff, M. Machovec, E. Bloch).

[27] Details in K. Rahner, *Zur Theologie des Todes*, pp. 33 ff., 43 ff.

[28] cf. E. Waugh's well-known satire, *The Loved One*, for example; also P. Berger's investigations (e.g. *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* [New York, 1961]).

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But what is the *Christian* view of death which is to be a co-determinant of a genuine humanism? In the first place death's plain, straightforward purpose is biologically to make room for more life, for other people. Not that this eliminates its questionable nature, as if it showed that the radical protest against death is unjustified. But initially it does make room for other people. And since it must be freely enacted by a person, death, even in its most primitive aspect as a biological phenomenon, has an inter-communicative [199] or 'political' character, i.e. it is possible for it to be a radical act of love towards the most remote neighbour. This is especially the case since in death one does not make room for this or that *particular* person, but for everyone.

However, in so far as humanism *is* actually and concretely *man himself* with his power freely to order the area of communal existence in his image and likeness, death, understood in this way and freely accepted, is also an act which relativises man's own concrete humanism; it liberates other men's future, which one constricts as long as one regards the whole sphere of history as occupied by oneself. If, therefore, the only genuine concrete humanism is the one which realises itself *by keeping itself open* to the open, unpreoccupied future of all men, death, the willingness to die, constitutes one of its internal factors. But if, as a future which man has to call into concrete existence, this open, unpreoccupied future only subsists in that absolute future which we call God, death and the will for this absolute future belong together. The man who dies *willingly*, i.e. letting perish what in experience he has possessed as his own (hence too his own humanism), and letting it perish without in the end protesting or denying its most inner and absolute validity, and without wishing to prescribe the way in which death is compatible with the absolute meaningfulness of the person; such a man simultaneously affirms God as the unprescribable absolute future, not created by him, *and* the right of other people to their own future. In other words he loves God and men in a radical act of accepting death. In this way the act of death becomes the radical act of the Christian *vis-à-vis* all humanism whatsoever: he relativises his own humanism and thus gives place to that of other men in a love which is selfless. So with regard to *humanism* too Christianity is in the right as the religion which faces the mystery of death.

In all this there are naturally many aspects of death which have not been made clear. But that is not our task at present.[29] Matters for further treatment would be the special quality of death as a result of human guilt,[30] death as the radical act of self-realisation on the part of a person in a state of radical suffering,[31] death as mystery,[32] death as participation in the death of Christ,[33] etc. Our only concern here has been to make it clear [200] that, as the acceptance of the death of Christ and as the prognosis of one's own death, Christianity at the same time both calls in question each particular humanism by anticipating God's absolute future in faith and love, *and also*, precisely because of this, opens the way for the successively new humanisms of the future.

VI

Whereas until now Christianity as such has appeared above all to criticise the current humanism in favour of a future one, it must be emphasised more than ever that, although it

[29] cf. the author's *Zur Theologie des Todes*; also K. Rahner, 'On Christian dying', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 285-293.
[30] cf. note 27.
[31] cf. *Zur Theologie des Todes*, Part I; 'The passion and asceticism', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 58-85.
[32] *Zur Theologie des Todes*, pp. 26 ff., 36 ff.
[33] Ibid., pp. 61 ff., 66 ff.

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has no clear, definite and concrete humanism of its own, Christianity does not give the Christian an excuse for being indifferent to a concrete humanism of the future. Naturally it was not until the most recent times that it became clear that the Christian has a duty towards a concrete future; then it was discovered that man – mankind – actually had the physical possibility of actively planning, shaping and directing the future – not merely individually, but collectively – by self-manipulation[34] and actively modelling his environment.[35] And at that moment the material unity of mankind from the point of view of its origin and absolute destiny (of which Christianity has always been aware) became a material unity within a concrete future which is to be actively created.[36]

Consequently mankind has both the ability and the duty actively to create this kind of forward-looking humanism. And the Christian *qua Christian* must make use of this permanently secular[37] opportunity. It is not possible at this point to define precisely how Christianity sees the relationship between a secular future which not only can be, but must be, created, and the absolute future which is God in himself.[38] But if we consider the Christian doctrine of the unity of the love of God and the love of one's neighbour,[39] which applies to the area of concrete human existence and not merely to the sphere of private intercommunication; [201] if we bear it in mind that the real – not merely theoretical – act of opening oneself to God's absolute future can only be done by concretely anticipating the concrete future which is to be produced;[40] if we are clear that the emancipation of the secular world is not a process to which Christianity must of necessity become reconciled, but is itself an act of this very Christianity[41] arising from its understanding of God and the Incarnation of the Logos itself; then we are obliged to say that the creation of a humane future is not something optional for the Christian, but is the means by which he prepares himself, in actuality and not merely in theory, for God's absolute future.[42] If salvation itself – however much it must be accepted freely in a personal way – is a historically occurrent and a collective reality, i.e. a *unifying* thing and not highly individualistic, the actual mediation of this salvation cannot be solely a matter of the individual's inner life, but must itself be a historical and social quantity, service to one's 'neighbour', in whom all men are present.

Naturally the Christian knows that the love of his neighbour, of the other person, is only meaningful provided that this other person (and hence he himself too) has meaning and absolute significance. One cannot justify giving service to an empty and futile existence just because it is *someone else's* and not one's own. Therefore one can and must quite soberly take oneself seriously, in really loving the other person by service to him. But that does not alter the fact that it is only by loving other people that one enters into a right relationship with oneself. And if, in fact, it remains an eternally new question as to *what* it is that gives this other person a justified claim to be loved and recognised as important; if we cannot answer

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[34] cf. note 20.
[35] cf. J. B. Metz, 'Die Zukunft des Glaubens in einer hominisierten Welt', J. B. Metz/J. Splett (ed.), *Weltverständnis im Glauben* (Mainz, 1965), pp. 45-62.
[36] *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 191 ff., 237 ff., 259 ff.
[37] For an analysis of the process of secularisation cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 222 ff., 234 ff., 267 ff.; II/2, pp. 35 ff., 208 ff., 239 ff. (literature), cf. also the essay 'Theological reflections on the phenomenon of secularisation', *Theological Investigations* X.
[38] Some remarks in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 33 f.; 'The experiment with man', in this volume, pp. 219 ff.; *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 59-68.
[39] cf. *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 231-249.
[40] On the necessity of this truth which only reveals itself in action cf. also the more recent studies by J. B. Metz, *Verantwortung der Hoffnung* (Mainz, 1968).
[41] cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 234 ff.; II/2, pp. 239-267.
[42] K. Rahner attempts to show that this perspective must be a part of the future Christian's piety: 'Christian living formerly and today', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 3-24.

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the question by referring to a creative love in the lover which *makes* the loved person worthy (for in this case the other person would be an invention of one's own); we must say that, for the Christian this embarrassment only constitutes the necessary spur to go on to grasp the mystery of God as the other person's true reality, rendering him worthy of love and revealing this love itself as incomprehensible. Thus it remains true that the other person's concrete future is the means towards the absolute future, which is one's own and everyone else's. The Kingdom of God only comes to those who build the coming earthly kingdom.

[202] In doing this they use the continually new materials put at their disposal in succeeding ages which thus cause the plan itself to be changed continually. And the Christian knows no better than other men just what this concrete provision (created by man so that he may be ready for what *cannot* be created) looks like, what form it ought to take and how it is to be produced.[43] In this matter he is on the same level as everyone else.[44] He is obliged both to enter into a dialogue with his fellow-builders of a common future, and also to involve himself in a struggle, for the concrete future, since it is not theoretically deducible, can only be decided and implemented as a result of a 'struggle' and even violence.[45, 46] In so far as for the Christian the provision of a concrete future is always situated within the incomprehensible absolute future, the Christian is precisely the one who knows least,[47] since he can only penetrate to the bottom of himself when he comes directly before his true foundation, the unfathomable God. All else remains preliminary. Hence, however, its absolute importance.

VII

In all this have we been talking about Christian humanism or the secular humanism of the Christian *qua* Christian? I do not know. But perhaps it will be permissible, all the same, to put a few questions to our non-Christian contemporaries who exist in such large numbers. Today the Christian lives among them, and in the future Christians will live everywhere as a *diaspora*.[48]

Must Christian and non-Christian humanists be enemies? I do not [203] think so, provided that both sides realise that their obligations are to the future more than to the past. Must they be enemies because the concrete future which *one* wants to build is perhaps contrary to the plan of the other? But Christianity as such demands no *particular concrete* future and it is to be hoped that the non-Christian does not imagine he already has the future tucked away in his pocket like a complete five-year plan. This being the case, why should not they both plan together for the future which is unknown to both of them? Why not try together to come to a clearer awareness of those hoped-for aspects of the future which have as yet been anticipated only dimly – justice, freedom, dignity, unity and diversity in society? Does the Christian treat this future any less seriously than the non-Christian in seeing it as the means to God's

[43] cf. 'Grenzen der Amtskirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI, pp. 499-520.
[44] On the necessity of this dialogue cf. the author's essay referred to in note 11 above.
[45] On this correct concept of power cf. *Theological Investigations* IV, pp. 391-409; on the essential concept of the 'area of freedom' cf. K. Rahner: M. Horkheimer, K. Rahner, C. F. von Weizsäcker, *Über die Freiheit* (Stuttgart,[2] 1965), pp. 35-44; also the remarks in K. Rahner, H. Maier, U. Mann, M. Schmaus, *Religionsfreiheit* (Munich, 1966), pp. 7-23. Cf. also the study on the subject of peace in this volume.
[46] What results from this is not a question of absolute non-violence but the limitation and the most humane form of violence. From this standpoint a more profound concept of 'peace' can be found, and a legitimate area can be discovered for a meaningful 'pacifism'. Cf. the studies in note 45.
[47] cf. J. B. Metz, *Gott vor uns. Statt eines theologischen Arguments: E. Bloch zu Ehren* (Frankfurt, 1965), pp. 227-241.
[48] cf. 'The Christian in his world', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 88-99.

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absolute future? Or does not this very fact make the future as a matter of the highest seriousness *and* at the same time render it imperative to keep the future open to its further history? No doubt the Christian's secular humanism, in keeping itself open to God's absolute future, implies certain formal structures in this concrete, intramundane future too. But it also implies the provision of an area of freedom for the exercising of religious, and hence also of non-religious, decision,[49] since openness to the absolute future requires freedom for its realisation. Thus the non-Christian must be allowed an area of freedom to interpret himself in a non-religious way. But why should not the non-Christian grant the same area of freedom to the Christian? In assuming that there *is* common ground for a dialogue between non-Christians and Christians,[50] we do not wish to say that there are no hard and fast differences and that all struggles and all historical decisions which involve the use of force could be avoided. Such a thing would be impossible even if the future were built solely by Christians.[51] For the collective, historical action which constitutes a particular future, even in the most moderate case, is not the result of pure theory but a *practice* which cannot be adequately deduced from theory. This practice always implies power and force as well, i.e. an alteration of the other person's historical situation even prior to his insight into it and free agreement to it.

[204] However, if both sides could see this very issue in that clear-headed manner which is so foreign to the liberalistic approach; if they could admit it and mutually abide by it, it would be the most promising way of governing the form and scope of this abiding struggle so that everyone would always possess some tangible area of freedom with *tolerable* boundaries, and each side, having the courage to limit itself, would be positively concerned to guarantee the same measure of freedom for the other side. Not only because it is useful to have this guarantee when the other side has the upper hand, but because one's *own* principles demand it: because justice can only exist when the person in power used moderation; because one can only be a 'humane' human being by renouncing the desire to be absolute and by enduring the world's and man's pluralism however much one desires unity; because man's true victory is only won when the vanquished person remains as tomorrow's potential adversary, for otherwise the victor either discovers a new adversary among his own ranks or becomes stifled in that sterile, deathly particularism which no-one can shake off.

[49] cf. E. W. Böckenförde, 'Religionsfreiheit als Aufgabe der Christen': J. B. Metz/J. Splett, *Weltverständnis im Glauben* (cf. note 35), pp. 298-314; in addition cf. note 45.
[50] At this point we must leave the question open as to how this dialogue is to be explained theologically in detail, since it is dangerous to see common ground *merely* in certain abstract propositions of so-called natural law.
[51] cf. the essay referred to in note 19 above.

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13

THE EXPERIMENT WITH MAN

Theological observations on man's self-manipulation

Our topic here is man's self-manipulation today and tomorrow in so far as the question is also of theological relevance. It can legitimately be assumed that it *is* relevant because this self-manipulation is concerned with, or at least affects, man in his totality, and theology has to do with man's ultimate, total understanding of himself as a whole human being. I am aware that the frightening breadth and complexity of this theme are too much for me to deal with, especially as I have only a limited space at my disposal. Consequently I do not know whether, in the end, I shall have said anything really meaningful. But the main reason for my apprehension is this: in the first instance man's self-manipulation is a question for biology, sociology, medicine, pharmacology, psychology, technology and political science; for one can only raise the theological question when one knows what *can* be done – and how it can be done – in the field of self-manipulation. And for this knowledge one must turn to the specialists in these particular disciplines. So it seems at least. For one can only inquire *whether* (and according to *which* of the many possibilities) man ought to manipulate himself provided that there is room left for such a question and that everything has not already been decided. Then, and only then, may the theologian too put in a word. And in doing so he must be quite sure that he has really comprehended and mastered the foregoing question and answer. Whether this is possible at all, however, is much more questionable than was thought, for instance, by those who drew up the so-called 'Scheme 13' of the Council. And it is no real consolation to have the impression that the representatives of these same disciplines are themselves insufficiently acquainted with the questions and results of their respective fields of study, and thus produce plans and utopias for human manipulation which are inadequate in the first place, in that they refer to man as a unity but do not really know him in his totality. In any case the theologian is in a grievous position. He is obliged to join in the discussion because it cannot [206] be assumed that man's salvation is in principle independent of this self-manipulation, and the theologian's concern must be with the furtherance of man's salvation; and yet it is scarcely possible for him to speak at all.

Not only because, for him, man is turned into a question which he – precisely as theologian – must keep open to the infinite mystery, and thus he can never say in advance what concrete possibilities man himself, in the course of his history, will include in his formal theological outline of himself but simply because the theologian – or rather let us say more cautiously, because *I* cannot flatter myself that I understand much of the perspectives, methods and results of those sciences which have taken the question of man, both in theory and in practice, to be a question of experiment with man himself. And yet it is precisely here that the theologian is supposed to make his contribution. Of course here we have struck a further problem, and one which we cannot deal with at all at this juncture, namely, the problem of the pluralism of sciences. Although they are concerned with one and the same human being, these sciences have grown to immeasurable proportions and can no longer be assimilated by any one individual. They constitute a pluralism which leaves the concrete human being more at a loss then ever, the more 'one knows' about man. It is a pluralism which will be overcome neither by modern computers, nor by scientific and specialist team projects, nor by an anonymous political organisation 'drawing all the threads of the sciences together'. So at least for the moment the theologian has no alternative but to try to say something, at quite a distance and in quite an abstract way, with reference to man's self-manipulation. And it must

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be, or will endeavour to be, something just plainly theological; the theologian will ask the theorists and practitioners of self-manipulation whether they may not find it of service in their own problems. Hence it is only a question of *rapprochement*, not a confrontation between the science and practice of self-manipulation on the one hand and theology on the other. So much by way of preliminary remarks.

I

1. *The new reality and the future of man's self-manipulation which has already begun*. Before turning our attention to actual theological propositions we must attempt in a few sentences to say what is meant by self-manipulation, that possibility of human activity which, however indirectly, is the subject of these observations.

Self-manipulation means that today man is changing *himself*. On the [207] one hand, of course, there have always been quite small examples of the kind of active self-manipulation to which we refer. We shall have occasion to examine the theological and anthropological relevance of this simple fact. Man has purposely drunk wine to combat his melancholy; consciously used coffee as a stimulant; undertaken primitive attempts at human breeding; endeavoured to change his bodily form by means of various techniques, beginning with shaving; conceived the practice of education in terms of artificially superimposing knowledge instead of cultivating insight; attempted – even if in a clumsy way – to implement an institutionally controlled indoctrination, etc. And on the other hand this self-manipulation of man is still in its infancy, is still in many ways only a project, feeling its way, playing with vaguely apprehended possibilities; it is a scholars' utopia, created – with the scholar's characteristic ideological ruthlessness – by extrapolating whole systems for bringing happiness to mankind from mere initial items of knowledge. Most of it is still a dream or nightmare of the future and in reality no-one can say for certain whether it is even practicable, let alone whether it is desirable or morally justifiable. In any case, however, the situation is radically different from what it was. Man plans his own self, in much he is still groping his way, seeking the goals of his self-manipulation and only perceiving the possibility of realising them in the remote distance. But at the same time he has the feeling and actually experiences that the rate of his successes is increasing and that today's utopias can become tomorrow's commonplaces. Man is discovering that he is 'operable'.

This radically new period is approaching. It is approaching in all its dimensions. In spite of the many fluid boundaries which conceal the newness of this phenomenon from a naïve observer, it can be distinguished in many ways from the unreflected preliminary instances of self-manipulation which have occurred so far in human history. For it is multi-dimensional, its concern is with man as he is empirically experienced, not according to his spiritual and transcendental being as a free subject (later we shall have to deal in greater detail with what is meant here). It wishes to be consciously and methodically controlled according to genuine plans over a long period of time. Its concern is not with this or that *part* of man but with man as a totality; it wishes as a result of the new insights of all the anthropological sciences to penetrate to man's ultimate fabric in order to remodel it. It is not concerned with this or that man but with *man*, with mankind; it does not wish to conjure up a utopia of supermen within a profanised eschatology, but coolly to sketch, design and calculate a new, different man and then to produce him technologically in [208] accordance with this plan. The concrete dimensions of this human production, the workshops of the factory of new human beings, merging into one another, are well known:

In the first place – to begin with that which is most external – there is the workshop of the hominisation of man's environment. Man no longer merely lives in an environment and

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cultivates it superficially, but actually creates it, looking at the given stuff of nature only as material for the environment which he intends to produce according to his own design. He is beginning to inhabit a world which he has shaped artificially; he manufactures synthetic products, erects 'machines for living' instead of houses; he makes use of atomic energy, which has been inaccessible until now and is not naturally available. Perhaps he will even extend his living space beyond the Earth, and no longer eat of the fruits of the earth but invent his own food. In all this man is already indirectly changing himself to a greater extent than he realises. In itself the active hominisation of the world is already a self-manipulation of man. He makes the Earth, and hence his own self, subject to him.

There is the workshop of biology, biochemistry and genetics. It is only just being constructed now, but at great speed; and already the biologists, overstepping the bounds of their theoretical science, are designing patterns for the biological self-manipulation of man; in the new laws on eugenics we can see them already becoming reality. We cannot describe these plans and possibilities in detail here: sterilisation laws for eugenic reasons to prevent the selection of negative hereditary factors; control of the birth-rate and the prevention of further population explosions by biochemical means; increasing the I.Q. level and the breeding of super-intelligences on a biological basis; the possibility of carrying out this breeding as a result of knowledge of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), thus penetrating to the innermost secret of heredity; knowledge of genetic codes; the setting up of insemination banks, making desirable stock available.

There is the workshop of medicine, pharmacology and, above all, psycho-pharmacology. Here man, clumsily botched together by nature, can be improved in an artificial environment and adjusted to the machines he himself has built. Here artificial kidneys and aortas are built, and transistors to regulate the heart-beat more effectively. Here men's spiritual, mental and moral problems are not made bearable and meaningful by appealing to his moral freedom, but his moral tensions are removed right from the start by drugs, morality is replaced wholly or largely by psycho-medical and psycho-pharmacological manipulation – which does the job [209] much better – in so far as such action is still necessary for a man who has already been skilfully manipulated genetically.

Then there is the psychological workshop. But a psychology of the future, of course. Not like the churches of old, which – seen from a secular point of view – were psychological workshops where men were formed as free beings, after much wearying work of a piecemeal and dilettante kind, by an appeal to individual conscience. But a psychological workshop of the future, engaging in 'brainwashing' on a grand scale, fully acquainted with the use of the mass media, producing happiness and a feeling of well-being throughout the whole of man's body by means of electric brain-stimulation, and instilling into everyone an exemplary, socially desirable attitude by the modern psychological indoctrination which has no need of insight and freedom, so that the result is a frictionless society without any conflicts.

Then there is the sociological workshop. Here mankind's growth is calculated in advance, plans and laws are made to stabilise the earth's population at the desired level, exploiting fully the biological, genetic and medical possibilities available today or tomorrow. Here social medicine is organised; ways are found to match needs with resources, and to occupy man in his leisure time.

And finally we come to the innermost part of the factory: the political workshop. Here we find the World Government, in the hands of specially bred super-intelligences. Here the projects of the various workshops are co-ordinated, ultimate goals are established to which all the methods of treating man are to be orientated.

So far this factory for the new man does not exist. But it is as though buildings are being constructed simultaneously all over a great site, and one has the impression that these

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separate constructions will eventually grow into a single complex – into a hominised world. This is the one immense factory where 'operable' man dwells in order to invent himself.

2. *Theological comment*. What ought one to say as a theologian to all these states of affairs, possibilities, utopias, and dangers involved in man's self-manipulation? First of all two whole areas of discussion must be excluded for the purposes of this essay, although in themselves they are very important, namely questions of *a specialist and technical* nature, and the problems of *moral theology*.

(a) In the first place there are the specialist questions which must be answered by the relevant disciplines concerned with self-manipulation and which remain, for the time being, unanswered. For instance no-one really knows yet what the population explosion means as an issue affecting [210] mankind. And yet this question is almost everywhere regarded as the point of departure for serious discussion of the utopia of man's self-manipulation. It is quite possible (no-one can deny it) that the growth of mankind may be governed by biological and psychological self-regulating systems, thus being kept to a tolerable level. Such self-regulating systems would obviate the need for manipulation in this area on the one hand, and on the other they would automatically be working towards a morality (for which man is subjectively responsible before God), so that the moral theologians would not need to be disturbed about the question either. It may well be that in spite of the amazing and rapid progress of biochemistry and genetics, a really practicable controlled human breeding, such as would alter man in depth and on a world-wide scale, is simply technically impossible. Nor does it look as though in the year 2000 or soon afterwards there will be a really effective World Government such as the prophets of man's producibility on a global scale require. So many questions are raised by the results of the relevant disciplines, so many problems arising concerning the long-term and secondary effects of the various procedures made possible by progress, that really practical and realisable planning is still largely impossible. These and similar questions must be excluded here, although they are to a large extent the pre-conditions for a theological approach, because they exceed the theologian's competence.

(b) The second question which must be passed over here is the moral theological question, although it is of great concern as a question of theology. I.e. the direct question as to what is permissible or even morally obligatory with respect to these possibilities and methods of self-manipulation in its various dimensions, and what is not permitted and why. At this point, of course, a thousand questions raise their heads: from the moral evaluation of a kidney transplant, the contraceptive pill, to the state control of fertility, the attempts to manipulate technically man's hereditary material, and all the other problems of social sexual morality which arise from these possibilities. So here we shall pass over the practical moral casuistry of man's self-manipulation, even if in what follows we cannot avoid referring to the hermeneutical framework for the treatment of such problems.

II

1. *Christian cool-headedness in the face of man's future*. Man is fundamentally 'operable' and legitimately so. If this proposition, which we shall elucidate directly, is assumed, the first thing which the theologian must [211] say to himself, to Christians and to the Church is that one is not to take fright at this self-manipulation of man. Of course possibilities of self-manipulation are becoming apparent today which are immoral and unworthy of man, and which may indicate a 'Fall' on the part of society. And we shall refer to the Christian's and the Church's duty to have the courage to oppose with utter resoluteness those kinds of self-manipulation which are the most recent forms of barbarity, slavery, the totalitarian annihilation of personality and formation of a monochrome society.

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But it would only be symptomatic of a cowardly and comfortable conservatism hiding behind misunderstood Christian ideals and maxims if at the outset one were to simply condemn the approaching age of self-manipulation as such; to break out into lyrical laments on the theme of degrading barbarity, the cold, technological rationalism, the destruction of what is 'natural', the rationalisation of love, the heathenist lack of understanding in the face of illness, suffering, death, poverty, the levelled-down mass society, the end of history in a faceless fellahin society without a history, etc. Although we are unable to produce a concrete picture of the life of society and mankind in the year 2000, although we must take radical catastrophes and threats to man's existence into account, against which a Christian will have to fight with the greatest determination, tomorrow's world will be different from that of today. And in this coming world man will be the one who, both as an individual and as a society, plans, controls and manipulates himself to a degree which was previously both undreamed-of and impracticable. He *must* do so; he can do no other if he wishes to exist on the Earth side by side with many thousand millions of other human beings. He must *want* to be 'operable' man, even though the extent and the right way of carrying out this self-manipulation are still largely obscure, and although it is apparent that the Anglo-Saxon and Communist prophets of this future self-manipulation are themselves able to give only very vague details of this future. For whether one proclaims, with Huxley, that man's goal and future is pure 'fulfilment and self-expression', or says, with Elisabeth Mann Borghese, that at least everyone will have time to devote himself to what is true, good and beautiful; or whether one exalts the classless society where abilities, achievements and needs all finally coincide and where a common peace reigns in equality, freedom from illness, self-alienation and oppression – all these aims are highly abstract, imprecise and *uninspiring* too.

But it is true: the future of man's self-manipulation has begun. And the Christian has no reason to enter this future as a hell on Earth nor as an earthly Kingdom of God. Jubilation or lamentation would both run [212] counter to the Christian's cool-headedness. For the Christian, both he himself and his world always remain (as long as history lasts) a world of creation, of sin, of the promise of judgment and blessing, in a unity which he himself can never dissolve.

2. *Self-determination as the nature and task of man's freedom as understood by Christianity*. According to Christian anthropology man really is the being who manipulates himself. Naturally, on account of the genuine historicity of his being and of his apprehension of truth, this fact has entered even into the Christian's awareness of faith in a quite new and penetrating way. But this fact, to which he is called at this present time and which confronts him as something new, can be recognised and accepted by him all the same as his very own, as the truth of old which has always been his and which gives itself to him anew in this form – if he accepts it.

According to a Christian understanding, man, as the being who is free in relation to God, is in a most radical way empowered to do what he wills with himself, freely able to align himself towards his own ultimate goal. He is able so to determine and dispose of himself that two absolutely different final destinations become possible: man in absolute salvation and man in the absolute loss of salvation. For what happens to a man in death and judgment (to use the language of the Catechism) is not an external gratuitous action upon him, a reaction to his previous dealings, but the manifestation of the naked reality of his own ultimate goal, with which he has identified himself. It is certainly the case that this absolutely inescapable transcendental self-determination occurs in dialogue with or against God; certainly its precondition is what we know as free creation and free grace; it is assuredly a freedom which knows itself to be continually exposed to the intractable nature of its situation, and thus knows that in all its activity it is also unavoidably passive. But this does not alter the fact – which is a commonplace to the Christian – that freedom is the power to determine oneself to

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an absolutely irreversible final state, that what a man will be for all eternity is what he has made himself. Man is the one whose freedom is laid upon him as a burden; this freedom is creative and what it creates is man himself in his final state, so that the beginning of this history of man's divinely appointed freedom – man's 'essence' as we say – is not an intangible something, essentially permanent and complete, but the commission and power which enable him to be free to determine himself to his ultimate final state.

In a correctly developed ontology of the subject and his dealings, as opposed to the 'thing' and its 'activity' (which unfortunately is taken for [213] the most part as a model for the 'activity' of the genuine subject), it could be made plainer that in an anthropology based on a really Christian philosophy, a man's free action – which, in affecting the world, determines himself too – must not be imagined as an external epiphenomenon sustained on the surface of a substantial essence which itself remains untouched, but becomes part of the innermost determination of this essence itself. In contradistinction to 'things' which are always complete and which are moved from one mode of completion to another and thus are at the same time always in a final state and yet never ultimate, man begins his existence as the being who is radically open and incomplete. When his essence is complete it is as he himself has freely created it.

3. *Self-manipulation as a new manifestation in our time of man's essential freedom*. What is new in this issue is therefore not that man is *faber sui ipsius*, but that this fundamental constitution of man is manifested historically today in a totally new way. Today for the first time man's possibility of transcendental self-manipulation irreversibly takes on a clear and historically categorical form. I.e. until now man's genuine, radical self-manipulation (which is a constant factor, creating eternity) was operative almost exclusively in the field of contemplative metaphysical knowledge, knowledge in faith and moral action in reference to God. Therefore as soon as it arose, it disappeared, so to speak, into the mystery of God. This was all the more the case since the categorical and tangible aspect of this contemplation and moral practice (which was naturally always present) is constantly equivocal: it can be either genuine free action or the mere product of intramundane material causality. As mere equivocal objectifications they are therefore incapable of furnishing man automatically with a clear view of his own free self-manipulation. Now, however, man's transcendental self-manipulation has been clearly manifested, even if from the theological point of view it remains ultimately ambivalent.

No longer does man create himself merely as a moral and theoretical being under God, but as an earthly, corporeal and historical being. Passive biological evolution is being extended, at least to an initial degree, by an active evolution of civilisation. But the latter is not only external and supplementary: it is actually continuing its own biological evolution. This self-manipulation is not only carried out unconsciously, as was the case almost exclusively in the past, but deliberately planned, programmed and controlled. Man no longer makes himself merely with reference to eternity but with reference to history itself as such.

In this way, however, what he has always been now comes to light. [214] What he has always been at the root of his transcendental spiritual and intellectual essence as a free being now extends its influence to his psyche and his physical and social existence, and is made manifest expressly in these dimensions. To a certain degree his ultimate essence has broken through to the outer regions of his existence. To a larger, more comprehensive, radical and tangible extent man has become what, according to the Christian understanding, he *is*: the free being who has been handed over to himself.

Here we have not space to show how this modern man not only *corresponds* to Christianity's fundamental understanding of man but also how the historical breakthrough from theory to practice, from self-awareness to self-actualisation was essentially a *product* of Christianity, however much many Christians opposed this emancipating movement of

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history. For this possibility, which has arisen from modern rationality, science and technology, has grown historically because according to Christianity the world and nature are not something intangible, numinous and brooding in which man humbly experiences himself as hidden, but something finite, non-numinous and created; as a real partner of the God of the 'other world' man can and must stand over against *this* world as its lord.

4. *The question of the normative essence, the 'nature' of man*. It will be immediately apparent from what has been said that, as a result of this material and categorial self-manipulation – which has now become possible and which in the future will embrace a wide range of possibilities – theology is faced anew with the question of man's essence. For according to Christian theology man in his freedom can act contrary to his nature in an absurd and self-contradictory way. Ontologically and existentially this latter possibility is not of the same order, nor is it radically possible to the same extent, as action which *is* consonant with man's nature (a fact which must never be forgotten), but it *is* possible: the ambivalence of moral freedom in its potential for good or ill is reproduced in the categorial self-manipulation of man, even though it is not reproduced univocally and homogeneously (which needs to be considered in much greater depth) but only reflects this radical ambivalence in a partial and inconclusive manner. Consequently in the dimension of categorial self-manipulation the good is never as 'good' and the evil is never as radically evil as in the dimension of fundamental transcendental freedom.

But since a Catholic and Christian anthropology, on account of the *whole* man's unity and vocation to salvation, can never accept an absolute [215] separation of the ethics of man's inner disposition from the ethics of his external actions and practical norms, the question arises as to *which* 'nature' of man must be the guide for man's categorial self-manipulation, lest he be put in a situation of radical, destructive self-contradiction. Although this question could never have been simply nonexistent, it was never put before men and Christians so clearly and urgently and in such a pointed manner prior to this historical age of self-manipulation.

This question arises from an apparent dilemma: if the 'essence' of man is taken in a purely transcendental and theological sense to be the personal spirit which, in freedom and radical self-possession, is confronted with the absolute mystery of God (as the One Who communicates Himself in love), and if this essence were *nothing else*, it seems initially at least as though – in the biological, physical, social and institutional dimensions – man's categorial self-manipulation would be unable to come into really serious conflict with his nature, or at most only in peripheral areas. For all practical considerations categorial self-manipulation would be thus irrelevant to the ethical and religious field. However, if one regards the nature of man as being everything which is on the one hand empirically observable and on the other hand not shown to be 'nonessential' as a result of the biological, psychological and other changes which happen to man apart from his reflex self-manipulation, man's categorial self-manipulation would have no morally legitimate object. At most it could gently reinforce the unmanipulated changes of 'nature'; it could not set itself any aims concerning the formation of man which had not already been set by 'nature' without man's assistance. But in this case the fundamental legitimacy of this categorial self-manipulation would itself be called in question and, in fact, denied. And that again is not admissible, if we understand it as a manifestation of that transcendental self-manipulation which – be it noted – has several very radically differing possibilities at its disposal, even in the area of what is morally good.

Formulating the dilemma here in such an abstract way was unavoidable. Ultimately, of course, it can only be an *apparent* dilemma, although it seems to call in question either the nature of man and the knowledge of this nature, or man's categorial self-manipulation, conceived as a fundamental possibility and task. (However, one has only to consider the well-

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known – too well-known – problem of biochemical birth-control for instance, to see clearly what is meant. We cannot enter into this special issue here, but however it ought to be dealt with in principle, there can be no doubt that in recent decades traditional text-book moral theology has often used a concept of 'nature' ('natural', 'according to nature') which [216] ignores the fact that, although man has an essential nature which he must respect in all his dealings, man himself is a being who forms and moulds his own nature through culture, i.e. in this case through self-manipulation, and he may not simply presuppose his nature as a categorial, fixed quantity.)

In any case, as a result of man's categorial self-manipulation, today's theology has been presented with the pressing task of finding out just what this nature of man is which forms the horizon and limitations even of self-manipulation. Difficult and painful changes may be expected in this area. For in questions of concrete morality people have often spoken with reference to a condition of man which, though currently existent, was not of his essence; which, though stable until recently, has now been drawn into the changes involved in man's controlling of himself. Too often it has been said, for instance: this or that is contrary to the nature of private property, of money; contrary to the 'nature' of woman, the nature of the family; contrary to the natural function of a biological organ, etc., whereas in reality it was a question of a variable and relative quantity *within* man's constant nature.

We cannot devote any more space here to this complex question of the nature of man which lies at the bottom of the metaphysical and moral natural law, how it appears in a historically conditioned concrete form and yet can be recognised for what it is, how the possibility of knowledge of metaphysical essence is compatible with an inescapable historical conditioning of this knowledge, and how the theoretical and operative knowledge of man's essence form a fundamental and yet variable unity. We are only concerned with ascertaining what problems theology is presented with as a result of categorial self-manipulation. But in this connection we may make one further observation: nowadays the moralist often says (and practically speaking he is thoroughly justified in doing so) that a situation has now arisen in which man must learn that he *must* not and *ought* not to do everything he *is able* to do. At the same time the hard-headed sceptic will generally retort that on the whole one cannot expect man to *stop* doing what he *can* do, and that since man can do infinitely more than heretofore, what he does will be immeasurably more terrible and destructive. However correct these observations of the moralist and the pessimistic sceptic may be, two things must be added.

In the first place, if the radical ontological difference between good and evil is understood, i.e. if it is comprehended that evil is ultimately the absurdity of desiring what is impossible (because it has neither being nor meaning), then in the last analysis there is nothing which man is really [217] able to do and yet *may not* do; and conversely, what he really *can* do, he *ought* to do without hesitation. The moralist who is really close to life, therefore, would have to show modern man that, wherever he ought not to act, it is ultimately pointless, even today, to do so (i.e. in a categorial and intramundane sense too).

Secondly, because man's creaturely and finite freedom is co-determined by that which it presupposes, which exerts its influence particularly in this very categorial area of freedom (and hence of self-manipulation), biological, psychological and sociological laws can be apprehended and accepted which, without vitiating the freedom of self-manipulation, act to a certain extent like regulating systems and in the long run and on the whole stop this self-manipulation from going off the path into an absurdity contrary to man's essence. As a few crude examples: every lie gradually reduces itself *ad absurdum*; where there are few children they become all of a sudden interesting and desirable again; the man who is too concerned with his own health becomes ill; when something new, which was fiercely striven for, is attained, it loses its impetus, becomes of necessity old and thus slowly abolishes itself, it is not only lemmings who jump into the sea when they become too numerous.

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This is by no means an excuse for *laissez faire* and it gives no guarantee against a catastrophe, but it does constitute a consolation and an exhortation not to be too anxious. Apparently the 'essence' varies around a constant, innermost centre. And the *whole* essence consists of this centre together with the essential variations and aberrations and the attempts to express this constant essence in a new way. This applies to self-manipulation too. Especially since in this case, wherever the moralist believes he has located 'objective' self-manipulation running counter to man's essence and must combat it, he must be continually aware that it is only 'objectively' so; often and to a large extent – according to his own basic conviction – such instances, on a social and not merely individual scale, do not imply a genuine subjective state of sin before God. Objectively they belong to the same category as those instances where subhuman, 'innocent' nature permits itself to produce monstrous, aberrant things leading into biological and other culs-de-sac. Even aberrant categorial self-manipulation, seeming to spring from a really transcendental freedom *vis-à-vis* God, can be an ultimately harmless experiment on the part of nature, experimenting and slowly trying to bring forth what the genuine future holds in promise. This may be the case even where it seems as though it is only using man's intelligence and freedom for its own purposes, exercising its own essence and not man's free essence as such.

[218] 5. *The seriousness of irreversible historical decisions*. Having said all this we must not minimise the importance of the historical process involved in the initiation of man's self-manipulation. We are warned against this by a particular theological topic of Christian anthropology, which has probably never before been taken into account in this context, namely, the dogma of Original Sin. We cannot give a full account here of its actual content, but we merely draw attention to one of its particular principal aspects which is of significance in interpreting theologically the coming large-scale manipulation of mankind. The 'Fall' was actually the first act of self-manipulation by mankind, even if its context was essentially the dimension of religious, transcendental self-determination before God, and even if we leave open the question as to how far it had categorially tangible consequences, delivering man up not only to his own nature alone, which could conceivably be guiltless. But in this case of self-manipulation *sui generis* there is one thing which is an indubitable element of the dogma: the act had irreversible consequences, it inaugurated a process and mankind cannot get back beyond the beginning of that process. All future human history is ineradicably determined by this situation of guilt so long as history itself lasts. Although redemption embraces this fact of human history and ultimately sets its mark upon it, it does not abolish it.

In turn this implies the principle that even at the stage of self-manipulation mankind continues on its one-way, irreversible historical course. Where a collective self-manipulation on the part of the totality of mankind is concerned, it is at least in principle the case that an about-turn is simply no longer possible, even if the way is kept open to the most diverse future possibilities. For people unconsciously connect the idea of self-manipulation with the notion that it can do anything whatsoever *and can continue to do anything*; that every false manipulation can be rectified, at least in succeeding generations (and the self-manipulation ideologists are very little concerned for the individual living at any one time; he is only treated as material to be expended for the sake of the more distant future). However, the dogma of Original Sin warns us against this illusion; history will remain a one-way process in the future too; it will continue under the law incurred by its guilty beginning, involving death, futility, contradiction and suffering (however much the *forms* of the latter may change), such that no self-manipulation on the part of mankind can abolish this law. (Yet the Church and theologians must beware of thinking that they already know precisely what concrete forms this irreversible beginning will assume in the future; they must beware of prophesying [219] that the poor, wars, TB, the class struggles, etc., will be perpetuated in their classical forms for all time.) Furthermore it may be that the projected large-scale manipulation of mankind

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will have irreversible and irreparable consequences which no further self-manipulation will be able to change. Such conceivable irreversible consequences cannot reverse the definitive victory, through Christ, of God's self-communicating dealings with mankind. But neither does this mean that mankind can experiment upon itself freely without fear of irreparable consequences. So long as mankind exists with its vocation to salvation, history (including the history of man taking himself in his own hands) remains a one-way street. Man's self-manipulation must not be thought of according to the model of a limited laboratory experiment where, for the most part, isolated processes can be performed and reversed at will.

6. *Planning the future and the absolute future of man*. Christianity is the religion of the absolute future. However, at the same time it stands in a quite definite and unique relation to the categorial self-manipulation of man and mankind. It is very difficult to define the highly differentiated relationship between anticipating the absolute, eschatologically occurring future in faith and theological hope on the one hand, and anticipating the intramundane future by means of planning and active self-manipulation on the other hand. So far this particular chapter of a Christian theology of history and the world has been almost totally neglected; consequently it is impossible here to give an account of it and thus provide a theological context within which man's active self-manipulation can be really theologically understood. At this point we can only make a few modest observations. We say that Christianity is the religion of the absolute future to the extent in the first place that God is not only 'above us' as the ground and horizon of history, but 'in front of us' as our own future, our destination, sustaining history as its future. For Christianity acknowledges the absolute, infinite God who is superior to the world, a radical and infinite mystery, as the God who in free grace communicates himself in his absolute mystery as its innermost principle and ultimate future, who sustains and drives history as his genuinely most intimate concern, not only distinguishing himself from it as its creator.

Secondly we say that man's ultimate design for the future, which God has destined for him and authorised, does not aim at what can be planned and executed out of the multiple possibilities of the plural world, but has already overtaken all such intramundane designs for the future, criticising them and unmasking them in their appearance of absoluteness, and thus (as we shall see) *confirming* them.

[220] All human planning, every active human self-realisation involving the manipulation of a plurality of factors, is embraced by the fact (which can be neither planned nor manipulated) of the infinite mystery manifesting itself to us as love, which we experience and call God. Man is not only concerned with what he can *do* in the future; he experiences something which is not 'done' at all, but which is his destiny, the infinity of absolute reality, which is love. According to Christianity's experience of absolute future in Jesus Christ, the arrival of this future occurs essentially in the act of death. It occurs in this way and in no other; life is not thereby devalued, because in order to be able to die one must genuinely have lived life. But one only reaches the absolute future by way of death's zero hour, not because the former is death's gift, not because it could be calculated to be impossible in any other way, but because, beyond all deduction, absolute love was pleased to triumph in its greatest defeat.

If now this absolute future, confessed in hope by Christianity and to which the Christian, in planning his existence, opens himself, is related to the design for the future which is manifested and executed in the self-manipulation of mankind today (and it does not make any difference whether it is in a Western or Eastern form, in an explicit collectivism or one which is in practice so), the following brief remarks at least may be made:

7. *Shaping the future as a Christian task*. In the first place man's active intramundane self-planning in self-manipulation has fundamentally a positive relationship to man's openness to

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the absolute future in faith and hope. However 'secular' man's active self-manipulation is and remains (i.e. not positively deducible from the Christian design for existence as it is expressed in its ecclesial and verbal form), yet it must not be understood as an 'interim activity' (which, when pursued morally, receives a heavenly reward) lasting until the absolute future, the 'Kingdom of God' finally arrives in God's self-communication. But in its irreducible positive and negative duality it constitutes the necessary medium and historical form by which man is to embrace that 'openness' which is both active and passive, forming the precondition for the arrival of the absolute future.

Basically Christianity has always known and proclaimed this in teaching that, *inter alia*, the love of one's neighbour is the form and medium of the love of God and that this love must really be action and not ideology or the mere inclination of the affections. Only it must be borne in mind that, as a necessary medium for the love of God (and not merely as a secondary by-product of it), this active intercommunication [221] can no longer be realised merely in the private interpersonal sphere involving each man and his 'neighbour'. Even if a person rejects a 'collectivism' in the pejorative sense of the word, he cannot and must not overlook the fact that mankind today must of necessity realise higher levels and forms of social existence (and has actually already begun to do so) if each person is to really and truly affirm every other person's existence. Mankind is beginning to enter upon a post-individualistic phase of its history. This new phase brings with it new changes and dangers to the genuine, unique personality and dignity of the individual. It must not annihilate this individuality, but actually provide it with a greater area of genuine freedom.

This means, however, that loving intercommunication itself takes on a new form; now it can and must be also a servant of the new forms of man's social existence, a servant of humanity. For now 'humanity' no longer exists merely as an idea, as an ideology, but begins to exist as a concrete reality. If 'society' is a reality in a quite new way, if it is slowly and inevitably reconstructing itself on quite new lines, it can be in a totally new way a partner in this task of loving one's fellows, which is the form and medium of that love in hope and faith through which the absolute future 'arrives'. Understood in this way, however, the love of others must *will* and *co-operate* in these higher achievements of society and humanity *as they are and must be in today's particular form*: i.e. mankind's self-manipulation with a view to the future.

Of course, the love of one's neighbour itself cannot provide the material principle from which to conclude the concrete aim and methods of this intramundane self-manipulation of mankind. The aim and methods remain secular, like the bread which in earlier times was given in love to the poor man lest he should starve. Nevertheless, mankind's active self-manipulation today and tomorrow can and must be the concrete, active expression of the love of one's fellows, making possible the 'openness' to God's absolute future, even if it cannot itself bring about this absolute future. As the religion of the absolute future, Christianity is and must be the religion which sends man into the world to act.

8. *Death as the permanent door to the absolute future.* At the same time, however, Christianity warns self-manipulating man that, in his movement towards the God who is in front of him, he is obliged to pass through death's zero hour. It is strange how little man's death and the death of history is talked about today in the customary future utopias. Death is pushed to one side; what is talked about is a kind of super welfare state with little work, a great deal of automation, the elimination [222] of illness, long life, complete equality of the sexes – their differences having been almost smoothed out; a society in which all internal and external conflicts have been eradicated by genetic and pharmacological manipulation and social training, where the altruistic instincts of insect-like state-builders are formed, where history, steered by a few wise men, has been actually brought to a standstill in a high-level euphoric fellahin existence. One has the impression that it could be a horribly boring

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existence: the ash of unchallenged equality and security, spread homogeneously over the fire of life, could either smother the fire or else have the effect of making it suddenly burst out at some point as a mass madness trying to break out of a deathly equality and security. Death and the readiness to die, which is what keeps life 'alive' in this aeon, and which alone is the door of eternal life, is being pushed to one side.

We have already emphasised the fact that the concrete forms of death, futility, suffering and pain do not authorise a conservative defence of the particular forms of death and conflict which currently set their mark on man's situation. Especially since this kind of pseudo-Christian defence, which was and is all too common, is mostly put forward by those who have to suffer least in this regard. There is naturally little point in the rich man extolling the blessings of poverty and the person in power in society praising the value of humility. It remains true, however, that self-manipulation and all its concrete and utopian aims are constantly subject to the law of death – which can be neither disposed of nor manipulated. And this experience of death (in this comprehensive sense) arises from the experience of self-manipulation itself. For every plan, every pre-set and pre-calculated system gives rise to new elements which were *not* planned and *not* scheduled, because it is constructed of pre-existing elements which can never be adequately penetrated and categorised. By definition, an absolute and absolutely transparent system, functioning without friction, could only be constructed by another one standing outside it; even a machine capable of learning and adapting itself can only do this within a finite area, so long as it is not identical with the universe.

And so long as man is a being of absolute transcendence, he observes all this in terror; he can only 'alter' it by anticipating it in a formal and empty manner in the world of theory. In actual practice he cannot alter it, however much of a concretely practicable nature may still lie ahead of him as an intramundane future which *can* be manipulated. He sees his limitation; namely, those things which *cannot* be manipulated, and death, *his* death, rising up out of the very midst of the things which *can* be manipulated. And he will always be asking whether this unfathomable [223] thing which surrounds him is the void of absolute absurdity or the infinitude of the mystery of love, the absolute future which is reached through death, so that only by accepting it can man really discover and 'invent' himself. (This is always possible, even where categorial self-manipulation is in its infancy, and it remains the highest priority even where the latter has made the kind of progress which is inconceivable at present.)

This death is not only the zero hour through which the individual must pass on his way to the absolute future, but also the zero hour for mankind as a whole. If we like, we can demythologise the end of all history as proclaimed by Christianity. No stars need fall from heaven: it can be the end as a result of genocide; it can be a social end (as a result of atom bombs, for instance); a physical end in a world catastrophe; it could be (who can know for sure? – the Christian must take even absurdity into account) that mankind might actually regress biologically to the level of a technically intelligent and self-domesticated aboriginal herd or an insect-state without the pain of transcendence, history and the dialogue with God. I.e. it might extinguish itself by collective suicide, even if it were to continue to exist at the biological level. A Christian theology of history basically need not take fright at such an idea in itself (any more than at the idea of individual suicide or self-induced stultification), for it knows that the history of men always ultimately arrives at God, whether in salvation or judgment, or else it simply ceases to be the history of spiritual persons at all.

Man exists in an immediate relationship with God only by moving towards the future in front of him, but consequently he exists in this way *always*, at every moment of his individual and collective history. And this immediacy is always mediated by death, which keeps history alive for as long as there are men. For this reason too the celebration of the death of the Lord

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is the solemn anticipation of the arrival of the absolute future, and cannot be replaced by any festive proclamation concerning man's self-manipulation.

III

We must necessarily break off these fragmentary theological observations on man's approaching self-manipulation, well aware that the greater part has been left unsaid. The theologian himself ought really to say much more, quite apart from appropriate self-criticism on the part of the theorists and engineers of the self-manipulation of mankind in their own [224] sphere. For instance the theologian ought to say more clearly why and how the most radical self-manipulation of man takes place either ontologically (and hence ethically) within a fundamental horizon, neither appointed by nor subject to man, or else it eliminates man as a denizen of history.

It ought to be made clearer that, having made this *a priori* Christian distinction, we do not know, nor can we predict, what concrete possibilities are in store for this self-manipulation. One ought to go on to consider the limitations of the official Church and its proclamation with particular reference to the giving of directions and advice for this self-manipulation, which as such always remains an adventure into the unforeseeable. One ought to complain that (as opposed to the official Church, which as such has no task here) Christians contribute so little courage and creative imagination to an ideology of the future for this self-manipulation, but are generally content to provide conservative admonitions and obstructions.

One ought soberly and courageously to consider, according to a supra-individual morality, what sacrifices could be expected of humanity today on behalf of humanity tomorrow, *without* being too quick to speak of immoral cruelty, of the violation and exploitation of the dignity of man today for the benefit of man tomorrow. Indeed one could ask whether the Church as such and ecclesially trained Christians have not been set the task (to be accepted in all humility) of playing a particular part in this future course of mankind; namely, a role which implies that *their* God (the God of history), who is always bigger than His Church, has entrusted a large part of history *not* to Christians but to others, who, in a more anonymous way, are all the same the executors of that history which is guided by God alone, ultimately opening out into His own eternal life.

These and other theological questions could be discussed in the face of mankind's self-manipulation, which has already begun. They would doubtless all come together in the simple experience that man really does *make* history (and thus himself) and that in this very activity he is not his own, but belongs to the mystery of love.

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[225]

14

THE PROBLEM OF GENETIC MANIPULATION

Whenever a theologian is asked to state his position as regards the genetic manipulation of man he finds himself in a desperate situation. He is to give a moral evaluation of a particular phenomenon, but this evaluation refers to a completely new and previously nonexistent reality. In earlier times, by and large, the theologian himself had direct access to the matter he was to analyse from the moral point of view. Today man, in his scientific rationality, technology and self-manipulation,[1] is creating new realities, a second-order world, which is not immediately open to the individual unless he is actually a specialist in this field, a world with which he is really only acquainted in a rudimentary and second-hand manner. And it is in such matters as these that the theologian – himself a mere uninitiated layman in the field – is asked for guidance about their relation to humanity, morality and religion. How could the theologian avoid being in a desperate plight?

It would be wrong to attempt to smooth over these difficulties by saying that, as far as a *moral* evaluation of a particular issue is concerned, anyone (i.e. the theologian too) can still easily acquire as much knowledge as is necessary provided that he gets hold of genuinely specialist data. It is at least possible that the very 'detail' of which the theologian is ignorant, or of which he has only a vague notion, might be the decisive factor in his case; it might be the very detail which would alter the whole [226] conclusion.[2] And even if the theologian takes care to keep himself informed, can he be sufficiently sure that he knows all he needs to know in order to be able to engage in discussion? Can he acquire an adequate view of the preconditions, possibilities (or practical impossibilities) and methods of real genetic manipulation of mankind in the immediate or distant future? Is it enough for him to rest assured in the conviction that he has formed his judgment in all conscience as best he can according to the present stage of scientific knowledge,[3] if it is obvious all the time that such a judgment is provisional, alterable by some further item of knowledge in the future? There is small comfort in this, if on occasion, as a result of such a provisional judgment, decisions and

[1] cf. on this concept K. Rahner, 'Experiment Mensch. Theologisches über die Selbstmanipulation des Menschen', *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Aufriß einer philosophischen Anthropologie. Festschrift für Max Müller*, ed. H. Rombach (Freiburg, 1966) (This is the preceding article in the present volume.) Cf. also note 7 below.

This essay was originally intended for a symposium, which precluded the discussion of specialist issues of science or biology. For this reason there is also no reference to further literature. The literature mentioned in the notes is not intended to summarise theological research in this field up to the present time, but only to refer to the author's fuller remarks elsewhere on issues which could only lightly be touched upon here.

[2] A small example: for a few centuries Catholic moral theology has been convinced that the moment of union of the male and female germ cells is also the moment when an individual human being comes into existence. Will today's moral theologian still have the courage to maintain this presupposition as the basis of many of his moral theological statements, when faced with the knowledge that 50 per cent of all fertilised female cells never succeed in becoming attached to the womb? Will he be able to accept that 50 per cent of all 'human beings' – real human beings with 'immortal' souls and an eternal destiny – will never get beyond this first stage of human existence? In this particular case he can gain further knowledge and await developments; but what is he to do in other cases, where he merely suspects that neither he nor anyone else knows enough, and yet an answer must be given?

[3] For further information see the considerable material in P. Overhage's *Experiment Menschheit. Steuerung der menschlichen Evolution* (Frankfurt, 1967). The present author was not able to examine this book before writing this essay.

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actions are taken which *cannot* (unlike the moral theological dictum pronounced in good faith by the naïve theologian) be subsequently reversed.

It remains true, therefore, that whatever is said falls within the proviso incurred by the theologian's predicament. We shall have to leave it to the actual process of investigation itself to reveal whether the theologian can perhaps come to grips with his situation in some other way, thereby arriving at a conclusion which he could resolutely stand by.

First of all, however, we must try to find some footholds in our problem; we must endeavour to find a way in to the issue in question. In the first instance we shall turn naturally to traditional moral theology, traversing its scope in order to gain some estimate of the peculiar character and the relative novelty and difficulty of our theme. The non-theological reader is asked to be patient, therefore, throughout the first sections. The following remarks are necessary in order to introduce the question in a theologically correct manner, to avoid the mistake of considering the problem quite apart from all tradition. In any case, to approach the central problem gradually by experimental means also helps [227] one to lay hold more accurately on the particular ethical theme we have in view.

I

In the face of the question of a 'genetic self-manipulation' of man, moral theology is immediately placed in an exceedingly embarrassing situation. At least *Catholic* moral theology, as opposed to that of Protestant theology,[4] will not be of the opinion, on the one hand, that the question can be directly answered from Holy Scripture, nor will it thereby assume from the outset that the actual decision in a case such as this must simply be left to the conscience of the individual. But if Catholic moral theology is looking for a fundamental, *material* solution, without being too quick to avoid the issue by means of 'situation ethics', it will encounter very considerable difficulties which may perhaps oblige us to rethink quite general problems of morality.[5]

It is impossible simply to dismiss the thought of man's 'genetic manipulation' as an unethical project. As far as a Christian understanding of mankind is concerned, man is not simply the product of 'nature', as if nature *alone* were able and authorised to determine and model man's being. Man is not only the being who is commissioned by God to further God's work of creation, the being who both may and must 'subdue the earth', i.e. his environment. Rather man is characteristically the being who has been handed over to himself, consigned to his own free responsibility.[6] In this sense he *must* 'manipulate' himself.[7] Freedom is the [228]

[4] We cannot enter into a discussion of the attitude of the Christian churches and theologians. Practically all the Protestant churches (at least in Europe) reject genetic manipulation in the sense of heterologous artificial insemination and the arbitrary control or alteration of hereditary material.

[5] We need hardly say that this is not to set up, or hark back to, the old opposition between 'essential ethics' and 'individual ethics'. Cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur "situationsethik" aus ökumenischer Sicht', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 537-544, 499-536 (with further refs.). See also note 17 below.

[6] cf. K. Rahner, 'Ursprünge der Freiheit': M. Horkheimer, K. Rahner, C. F. v. Weizsäcker, *Über die Freiheit* (Stuttgart,[2] 1965), pp. 27-49; K. Rahner, pp. 205 ff. above.

[7] The author may be permitted to use the concept of 'manipulation' in this rather wider sense (cf. note 1) although the editor and the other contributors to the original symposium (see the list of sources) have agreed on a narrower and more up-to-date usage. Our wider approach is a necessary preliminary in order to be able to show the deep *anthropological* implications of such a procedure. In any case, at the level of philosophical/theological reflection this fundamental concept cannot be simply defined technically once and for all without surrendering the universal vantage-point necessary to our observation. Furthermore, the really threatening aspect of "manipulation" can only be brought out by contrasting and distinguishing it from what is true and legitimate in the matter concerned; one must not use the word 'manipulation' *only* in its pejorative sense, at least at first. And finally, the theologian uses this wider sense because he may be said to have a

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inevitable *necessity* of self-determination, by which man (though starting out from a 'beginning' which is a prior datum and within a perspective of already pre-empted possibilities) *makes himself* what and who he wants to be and ultimately will be in the abiding validity and eternity of his free decisions. The fact that in earlier times this planned self-determination ('self-manipulation') took place almost exclusively on the individual, moral-transcendent plane of convictions and of conscience may perhaps initially obscure our view of the nature of man in this respect, but it does nothing to change the *fact* of this transcendental necessity: to the extent that man is 'handed over' to himself, he is 'self-manipulating' (within the limits set by his 'nature' and 'history'). Today this fundamental essence of his has now also broken through into history and society: today he is able to manipulate himself in tangible, bodily and societal terms, and – a radical difference here from earlier times – he can plan this manipulation rationally and steer it by means of technology.

Genetic manipulation is only one particular instance of this more general phenomenon. Consequently the formal, abstract concept of (genetic) self-manipulation does not automatically imply a morally repugnant act: man does not simply perform actions *external* to himself, merely suffering his own self passively: man is such that he actually 'performs' himself. Since the latter is in accordance with his nature, this kind of 'self-manipulation' is legitimate too, if it is true that a moral action is one which is in accordance with the subject's nature. The fact that today man is able to do this in ways which were previously not accessible to him does not change the abstract, formal concept of self-manipulation. This applies, for example, in the case of genetic self-manipulation if we take a preliminary 'abstract' look at it. For here, as in other methods of psychological, physiological and social self-manipulation, [229] we must distinguish clearly between the process in its material content as such (i.e. the changing of hereditary material), and the conscious controlling of it, which does not automatically involve an artificial, arbitrary alteration which uses man himself as a means. For the moment we shall deal only with outlining the formal and abstract issues of the problem. The moral quality of control as such is determined by the moral quality of the process itself: if a thing is permissible, it may be expressly desired and consciously implemented.

Now a particular kind of 'change' of hereditary material is morally permissible. For it actually occurs legitimately, within certain limits, whenever a person chooses a marriage-partner, and whenever two human beings consummate their marital union sexually. Of course this kind of self-manipulation does not penetrate deeply into the human material as do psychological and pain-killing drugs and all cosmetic techniques in their different ways. But there are examples which show that, considered in the abstract, in this field of quite ordinary 'genetic manipulation' no moral objection can be raised on account of the conscious controlling of the process in itself. For example, no-one would think of raising a moral protest if a married couple were to opt for a particular coitus which they knew beforehand (supposing that they could) would produce a boy, rather than for another one, equally possible, but which would lead to the birth of a girl. But such a case would constitute materially and formally a 'genetic manipulation' according to our terms so far (which cannot

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reputation for entertaining a frozen, static concept of the 'nature' of man. If for once he begins in reverse, by proceeding from man's self-determination as his 'essence', it may emerge more convincingly and clearly from the process of investigation just *what* is meant by 'nature'. The use of the concept 'manipulation' in this essay is not to be separated from the actual context in which it occurs, so that the reader will only reach a full understanding of the concept if he himself follows the various diverse approaches to the issue which will be presented here. If he does this it will be clear that the author's intention is not to blunt the critical cutting edge of the contemporary usage of 'manipulation', but to approach these very problems from within a necessarily wider and more productive perspective.

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embrace the concrete phenomenon of modern genetic manipulation in all its aspects). Thus the abstract concept of genetic manipulation is not subject to any moral reservations.

Clearly this does not take us very far, for it is plain that not everything that *can* be done is morally justifiable. In our case the moral quality of a *concrete* genetic manipulation depends on several factors:

1. It depends on the concrete subject of the manipulation: a married couple is something quite different from the state, for instance, or any other active subject taking such measures.

2. It depends on the concrete, premeditated result on the whole human being: to intend to produce a human being who would never be morally responsible for himself would be immoral, even if such a human being might be very 'useful' for the particular purposes of other men.

3. It depends on the concrete method employed in genetic manipulation: initially we cannot be certain that each *technologically successful* development can be fitted into the *whole* of human reality without being [230] contrary to the latter's nature. But unless this is safeguarded, any such development is thoroughly immoral.

All three aspects of the moral evaluation of concrete genetic manipulation can be reduced to a common principle: its *concrete* reality must be adjudged according to whether it is appropriate to or contrary to the nature of man.

At this point we encounter the real difficulties of the question. Is there such a thing as an unchangeable 'nature' of man against which we can measure the appropriateness or inappropriateness of a particular genetic manipulation? With all our knowledge of man's immense malleability in the biological, psychological, cultural and social spheres, do we still have the courage to talk about the 'nature' of man? Do we know precisely where the limits of man's nature are to be found? We are even more at a loss if it is true that man is not only placed in a process of natural historical development, but also can and must change *himself* if he is to come to full stature and find true selfhood. Even if there is such a thing as this 'nature', can we recognise it, if by 'nature' we mean, not the tangible, concrete constitution of man as he is at any one time, but what is thought to be perennially valid and hence normative throughout all historical change? If there is such a 'nature' of man, if it is somehow present to man's understanding of himself, whether propositionally or not, do we come across it in any other way than in a particular historical form, where we are unable to distinguish clearly and unequivocally between the nature 'in itself' and its concrete, variable form? Is it not the case that saying 'No' in the name of morality and humanity has often been merely the mistaken and ultimately ineffectual refusal on the part of historical man to change himself and experience a new form of his reality, a new form of his 'nature'? May not the reverse be true, in a way: can there be a moral judgment based not simply on the 'eternal nature' of man as a *primary* 'law of nature', but one which draws its imperative from the particular form of man's nature which is committed to him at any one time as his historical destiny, such that he cannot act with impunity contrary to it, even if he has the power to do so? How can we recognise the boundary between the foolish 'No' of man when he will not let himself be changed, and *this* 'No', through which man holds fast to a particular form which, though historically limited, is the currently imperative form of his historical nature? If man is essentially an inhabitant of 'civilisation' and never merely a factor of nature, is it not possible to think that now this 'civilisation' is shaping his very self and no longer only his environment? This too could be considered as 'genetic manipulation'.

[231] At first sight it would appear that, in order to form an opinion of the moral quality of a particular instance of genetic manipulation, one would need to have a clear answer to all these questions, as well as the courage to give a definitive answer. At this juncture it will be

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obvious, however, that we can neither assume such an answer as given nor set out to provide one.[8]

II

Before trying to find a way of solving the problem under discussion without having to go into all the fundamental ethical questions which we have just raised, we must clarify certain fundamental problematical issues as they affect our particular question. Whatever the situation may be as regards the current judgments of modern men and specialists, man *has* a knowledge and understanding of his own nature, and this can exercise a *normative* function in his moral evaluations. But the question remains as to how far, if at all, this knowledge of the nature of man can take us in our particular inquiry. This dual statement must be expanded somewhat.

Man is essentially the *subject*: he is a person, aware of himself as a free being, and related, in this freedom, to the absolute mystery which we call 'God'. He experiences this *a posteriori* in his 'passive' subjectivity, in the flesh of history, in language and in the objective account of himself which he finds in 'civilisation'. Man's nature is constructed with a built-in transcendental necessity: man must inevitably affirm his own nature even in an action which seeks freely to deny it. Here we need not go into the question whether, further than trying to eliminate his nature as an individual – suicide being the most radical case – mankind as a whole could throw off its nature by implementing a process of 'civilisation in reverse', cultivating a species of intelligent animals which would live only unto themselves without being answerable for themselves. Such an action would be the most radical conceivable genetic manipulation. But *qua* action even this would be still the action of beings who would be denying *explicitly* what *implicitly* they cannot but affirm. The action itself like individual suicide, would do nothing to deny the transcendental necessity of man's nature. For because of his subjectivity, i.e. his *a priori* limitless transcendentality, he cannot be mistaken for merely the highest 'stage' of animal development. Hence it is clear that what we call 'immorality' is when *this* transcendental nature is violated by man's self-determining action. Yet this does not imply straightway that what is moral simply coincides with what is appropriate to this *transcendental* nature.

[232] We are left with a difficult question. Can we deduce a rule for distinguishing between morally justifiable and immoral genetic manipulation from this concept of morality as being in harmony with a transcendentally discoverable necessary nature? We can still see that genetic manipulation would be immoral if it tried to destroy or threaten man's nature as a free, subjective self-awareness in the flesh of history.[9] But the spokesmen of genetic manipulation would repudiate such a suggestion, even if one finds it hard to shake off the suspicion that the ideal they have in mind is of a gregarious animal who is, from the social, hygienic, economic and political points of view, at once the most co-operative and diligent *and* the easiest to manipulate.

However, does this definition of morality in terms of *primary* natural law help us any further in distinguishing *critically* between the various possible means and ends of genetic manipulation? Surely transcendental deduction cannot show a particular biological constitution of man to be so necessary that it had to be protected against genetic manipulation? For instance, no metaphysically-minded anthropologist would take it upon

[8] cf. further observations above, pp. 214-17.
[9] At this point it is immaterial whether *this* kind of genetic manipulation is actually feasible *without* involving the liquidation of man's vital, personal sphere.

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himself to prove that a particular brain capacity or the appendix etc. were necessary accompaniments of man's ontological, morally imperative 'nature'. This being the case, how can one know that a genetic manipulation which removes man's development from the biosphere where it was previously a phylogenetic development steered only by 'nature', and places it under the conscious control of 'civilisation' (e.g. by seeking to increase considerably the quantity of brain cells, or to adapt man biologically to his technological environment, etc.) is contrary to this 'transcendental' nature of man and therefore immoral? At this point the theologian who proceeds by means of ontological categories finds himself in severe difficulties, for there is little, indeed almost nothing, in man's biological constitution which he can recognise as necessary to his nature: on the contrary it is plain to him that a great amount, e.g. a particular colour or amount of hair, racial characteristics, etc., certainly does *not* belong to his nature.

The relationship of man's ultimate and really irreducible 'nature' to his concrete biological constitution is a highly complex matter from the theological point of view too. The man who only does research on the problem of the physical appearance of the first men will have to be very careful when it comes to making inferences *directly* to the metaphysical 'nature' of such beings merely from this external picture. And the converse [233] is true: the fact that 'man' came into being as such by a conscious awakening and in responsible freedom does not tell us anything of the 'phenotypical' appearance of such a real man.[10] All the same (and not least since it constitutes authoritative Church teaching) the doctrine of the unity of body and spirit (soul) compels us to maintain a very intimate connection between man's transcendental nature and his biological constitution.

Then how can man reject particular, calculated changes in his biological make-up as immoral? Would not such a judgment be perilously similar to those aesthetic judgments which arise as a result of familiarity and unfamiliarity, fashion, and the inherited ideas and prejudices of a particular historical period? For at this point one ought conceivably to scrutinise more closely the connection between the biological side of man and his psychic side (subjectivity and personality) in order to be able to judge the immorality of this or that genetic manipulation. For example one might say that a genetic manipulation was wrong if it destroyed or damaged considerably the vital substratum needed for genuine human intercommunication.

Or one could take a critical look at the 'aims' governing a particular genetic manipulation, in an attempt to uncover whether they conflict with man's nature as a personal being. One would have to ask the planners how they envisage carrying out such a manipulation in concrete terms, and go on to decide what would be implied by the particular *method*, whether the method – measured by the standard of man's personal subjectivity – is compatible with the subject's area of freedom (which must be guaranteed), his 'dignity', his 'privacy' etc.

The question remains, however, as to whether this kind of individual casuistics really succeeds in taking us any further towards formulating clear judgments. Just *when* would a biological alteration seriously damage a man's 'nature' as a person? What kind of manipulation ought one to accept under certain circumstances, especially when one considers that, after all, most human beings are only modestly equipped for their achievement of personality? *Which* of the aims of biological manipulation are *assuredly* contrary to man's nature, when one remembers how very limited a function the individual has to play in any case in the life of humanity as a whole? For it must be admitted – unless we deceive ourselves in a naïve individualism – that the individual is largely 'exploited' [234] as such by

[10] Further details in K. Rahner and P. Overhage, *Das Problem der Hominisation* (Freiburg,[3] 1965); P. Overhage, *Um das Erscheinungsbild der ersten Menschen. Mit einer Einführung von Karl Rahner* (Freiburg, 1959), pp. 11-30.

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society and humanity as a whole. If one appeals to the 'dignity' of the personal subject[11] against a particular method of genetic manipulation, if one appeals to his right to an area of freedom and privacy – and all these things arise, it is true, from man's transcendental nature – it must be recognised that they also constitute factors which are and have always been in competition with other necessary requirements of man – the claims of society, the rights of other men, and inevitable material and biological compulsions.[12] The more familiar factor, whose claims seem obvious as a result of custom, always inclines people to oppose the rights of a new and different factor.[13]

In consequence it seems that, from both the theoretical and practical points of view, we cannot get very far in the matter of morally evaluating the concrete forms of genetic manipulation, either as currently practised or as a future possibility, if we proceed by the methods of deductive, analytic and casuistic moral theology: the *abstract* concept of genetic manipulation cannot be shown to involve immorality *per se*. The critical evaluation of conceivable concrete forms of genetic manipulation rapidly disintegrates into a casuistics if it proceeds by using the abstract metaphysical nature of man as its term of reference. And in a casuistics of this sort it is to a large extent simply a case of one opinion against another. It is only the most extreme forms of genetic manipulation which exhibit clear-cut immorality, in trying unequivocally to liquidate or undermine man's nature, and of course it is not so much these instances which give rise to disagreement.

III

Is there another way of approaching the whole question? First of all some preliminary observations are necessary.

[235] So far we have been able to manage with a very formal, abstract concept of genetic manipulation. But if now we are to go beyond a discussion of the moral *problems* involved in this concept and try to make a moral *judgment*, we shall have to be more precise about the particular genetic manipulation we mean. Up to now the concept 'genetic manipulation' has been necessarily ambiguous because of the concrete plans and utopias of the 'man-makers'. This creates new difficulties. For it is not easy to say what the spokesmen of genetic manipulation have in mind for the future. As a result of this any description of genetic manipulation for the purposes of moral theology will be inevitably somewhat arbitrary.

In the first place the following must be borne in mind: we are not concerned, at least not directly, with defining and delimiting a phenomenon in criminal law. Not everything that is immoral must also be the object of legal proceedings on the part of society as organised into a state. So here the question is not whether the state, for instance, should suppress private experiments on human genetic material in private laboratories. This does not mean that, even if we were to exclude this question or answer it in the negative, our whole issue refers only to the sphere of *private* morals. For there are many places where private and public life cross,

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[11] cf. K. Rahner, 'The dignity and freedom of Man', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 235-263. For the frequently used concept of the 'area of freedom' cf. M. Horkheimer, K. Rahner, C. F. v. Weizsäcker, *Über die Freiheit* (Stuttgart,[2] 1965), pp. 26-49, esp. 34-44; 'Vorbemerkungen zum Problem der religiösen Freiheit', K. Rahner, H. Maier, U. Mann, M. Schmaus, *Religionsfreiheit* (Munich, 1966), pp. 7-23.

[12] cf. K. Rahner, 'Theology of Power', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 391-409; also 'The peace of God and the peace of the world', *Theological Investigations* X.

[13] For example, think of the passionate protests which were once made against compulsory state vaccination in the name of the 'freedom of personality'. How *many* measures which are now accepted as normal in more highly developed human society were once rejected as immoral in the name of the free subject? And yet they are possible, even positively *moral* measures.

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many cases where society as a state influences the life of the individual, and, without having anything to do with criminal law and direct compulsory measures on the part of the state, they are yet dependent upon the latter; just as phenomena which are treated as, among other things, criminal social influences, are also subject to moral judgment. Thus the question could be raised, for instance, whether or not the state ought to make money available for experiments in state research establishments which have genetic manipulation in view, or whether it ought to permit or encourage aligned instruction and the implementation of genetic manipulation in places of public education, and so on.

But we are not to deal directly with these questions at this point. We are not concerned with either private or state eugenic measures in the usual sense (i.e. encouraging or suppressing particular desirable or undesirable marriage unions, marriage bans, private or state-organised birth-control, sterilising those who have undesirable hereditary characteristics etc.). We omit these questions simply because they do not constitute our present subject-matter. That is *not* to say that they are at the outset morally irrelevant, or that there is no danger at all of the state making immoral encroachments on the individual's sphere of freedom.

If we exclude these questions, the issues remaining to be discussed from the point of view of a *moral* evaluation of genetic manipulation are:

[236] 1. Biological experimentation with human genetic material;

2. Heterologous artificial insemination (A.I.D.).

As far as biological experiments with human genetic material are concerned, Catholic moral theology would have to distinguish between the moral evaluation of, on the one hand, obtaining the material in the first place, and on the other, the actual experiment itself. Since it is not certain, presupposing a distinction of this sort, that obtaining material for experiment is necessarily morally problematical, in practice the question of biological experimentation is reduced to the issue of the moral quality of the experiment itself as such. And in this case one would have to distinguish, in accordance with the perspectives and distinctions customary in Catholic moral theology, between experiments with unfertilised germ cells on the one hand (i.e. on separate male and female cells), and experiments involving test-tube fertilisations and further stages on the other.

The reason for this distinction is clear. Catholic theology presupposes that at the moment of union of the male and female cells a *human being* comes into existence as an individual person with his own rights. *If* this is the case, such a person is no more an inconsequential passive object for experiments than the prisoners of Nazi concentration camps were. The end does not justify the means. It would be to exploit a present human being for the sake of a future human being. A one-hour-old human being has as much right to the integrity of his person as a human being of nine months or sixty years.

Nowadays, however, the above-mentioned presupposition is no longer held with certainty, but is exposed to positive doubt. We cannot give reasons for this statement here: it must be assumed for the moment. Of course it does not follow from the fact of such an uncertainty that experiments with fertilised embryonic material *are* equivalent to morally indifferent experiments with mere 'things'. But it would be conceivable that, given a serious positive doubt about the human quality of the experimental material, the reasons in favour of experimenting might carry more weight, considered rationally, than the uncertain rights of a human being whose very existence is in doubt. This is not adduced to decide the issue one way or another, but only to show why this question too must be excluded from our consideration.

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We are thus left only with heterologous artificial insemination as the concrete instance of genetic manipulation.[14] Homologous (inter-marital) [237] artificial insemination may be left on one side since, whatever moral judgment one may come to, it is a quite different moral problem from the heterologous case since the father and mother are married and the child thus produced is the child of this particular couple. Heterologous insemination is, however, a highly complex issue. First of all its immediate concrete implications are clear. But when one looks at the aims of genetic manipulation it means far more: the obtaining of male sperm, its storage and checking, the age factor, etc., and ultimately the establishment of and the whole organisation of a 'sperm bank' as a public institution in society, documentation of the qualitative characteristics of the sperm, legal questions of the identity or anonymity of the donor, the extra-marital use of this material, the necessity of the consent of the male marriage-partner, the question of determining 'fatherhood' in such a case, and of course the resultant question of providing instruction and propaganda for heterologous insemination. Furthermore, the spokesmen of this insemination are concerned so to propagate it and to actually establish it as the general practice of a whole population as to achieve considerable results for humanity, such as long life, intelligence, hygienic stability among wide population groups, etc.

Finally, at the outer limit of our actual problem there arises the question as to whether, above and beyond the heterologous insemination controlled with eugenic aims in view such as is currently possible, it would be either possible or desirable to develop a fertilised embryo outside a human womb and successfully bring it to the state of a complete human being, and whether experiments should be initiated with this aim in view. This issue can, however, be subsumed and discussed here under the general heading of artificial heterologous insemination, which, understood in the way we have outlined, will be considered from now on as the object of moral evaluation.

Before proceeding to try to answer the actual question itself (as a question which concerns man's free and responsible action), we must make some observations on the following approach to a moral judgment on genetic manipulation. Epistemologically this particular approach is considerably different from that of the remarks we have been making so far.

[238]

IV

In the case of those realities which have many layers and which cannot be adequately reached by analysis, there exists a *moral* mode of knowing. This moral knowledge itself has a structure which is both universal and not exhaustively analysable in conscious reflection. In a certain way it exercises a critical function in an area where 'is' and 'ought' *mutually* determine each other, but where what is 'objectively' right only becomes transparent to the person who has already embraced the correct attitude to it.

In other words, to adopt a term from the contemporary theology of faith, there is also a *moral* instinct of faith,[15] i.e. a universal knowledge of right and wrong belief. This 'instinctive' judgment cannot and need not, however, be adequately subject to analytic reflection. In the more concrete questions of morality this faith-instinct is clearly

[14] cf. on the issue of heterologous artificial insemination the moral theological handbooks: B. Häring, *Das Gesetz Christi* III (Freiberg,[7] 1963), p. 367; J. Miller, *LThK* II (Freiburg,[2] 1958), pp. 104-105 (refs.); H. Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik* III (Tübingen, 1964), pp. 768-788 (refs.). On the legal problems cf. D. Giesen, 'Die künstliche Insemination als ethisches Problem' = *Schriften zum deutschen und europäischen Zivil-, Handels- und Prozeßrecht* 18 (Bielefeld, 1963).

[15] For a view of the history of this idea and the problems and implications involved in it from the standpoint of dogmatics cf. M. Seckler, *Instinkt und Glaubenswille nach Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz, 1961).

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indispensable because such complex realities are involved which cannot successfully be subjected to analytic reflection – and yet they must be evaluated morally all the same. Wherever the judgment of this moral faith-instinct attempts to express itself in words regarding a particular issue, it naturally and inevitably works with the categories of rational analysis, 'reasons', conceptual arguments etc., and thus conceals its own character. But at bottom it knows that its judgments are not the resultant and formal logical sum of the rational considerations which it is able to 'objectivise'. Traditional moral theology has no name for the activity of this moral faith-instinct, although the instinct plays its part in the former. For instance, a merely 'rational' scrutiny of moral theological 'proofs' will often reveal – initially to one's great surprise – that, looked at purely 'logically', they already presuppose what they claim to be 'proving', or else they have recourse to Holy Scripture or the Church's magisterium as a final court of appeal, in spite of the fact that they were supposed to be dealing with questions of natural law, requiring an *inner* justification. What is really behind these 'proofs'? Under certain circumstances they are not as bad as they seem. They are ultimately an expression of the universal faith-instinct, which is by no means identical with its objectivisation in analytic terms.

Of course there are dangers in citing this kind of knowledge *sui generis*: it can be used merely to avoid producing what is sometimes [239] actually possible, namely, a more precise rational, analytic justification; it can be used as an argument where it does not, in fact, exist, where there is merely false 'evidence' rooted in historically conditioned prejudices, whether those of tradition, society or class ideology. Consequently it is fundamentally legitimate to be critical of this approach, especially when one thinks how much mischief and crime was perpetrated during the Nazi period in the name of 'the healthy instinct of the people'. But such criticism must neither dispute nor disregard the reality and rights of this universal instinct in reason and faith, irrespective of what it is to be called and how it is to be described and analysed from the point of view of formal epistemology.

Furthermore, this mode of knowing is active in human life wherever someone is 'committed' to a particular attitude: it is even active where the rationalistic sceptic gives expression to his scepticism *vis-à-vis* all so-called 'taboos', as he calls those things he wishes to reject. Denying the existence and legitimacy of such a mode of knowing cannot get rid of it: it can only obstruct the process of critical reflection upon opinions, opinions which are themselves – explicitly or implicitly – dependent on the results of this mode of knowing. One can only proceed with caution with regard to something if one has not, at the outset, denied its existence. Nor does this mode of knowing mean to curtail or even replace rationality, for it possesses this very rationality as one of its own elements. But it is necessary because what is moral, the concrete action to be performed, corresponds automatically to the unity of experienced and conceptual reality. It cannot wait while conceptual analysis – an essentially endless process – makes its conclusions; it demands that one should enter into the darkness of reality (which is never completely transparent) and have the courage to take the step from theory to practice. This action is never the mere application of concepts to an empty world of matter, enjoying no reality but what the abstract concepts give it. This kind of universal moral instinct of faith and reason can calmly take 'risks' provided that it is self-critically aware that its judgments contain unreflected elements which are, as such, contingent, subject to change; and that consequently a *different* judgment may be shown to be correct at a later time. All the same, a particular contingent judgment of this kind can still be the only correct one *in its situation*. The making of it requires a universal knowledge of the current situation; this knowledge is correctly grasped in the 'instinctive' judgment which recognises what is currently and properly called for, and this results in an 'appropriate' judgment.

Since it is made 'in general' and 'in principle', the judgment made by [240] a universal moral faith-instinct is not simply identical with what traditional moral theology calls a

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'prudential' judgment,[16] nor with what I have described as an individual existential moral decision,[17] which cannot be adequately reduced to general concepts and their application to particular 'cases' and thus requires a 'logic of existential decisions'. The fact that there are these other phenomena in the moral field shows too, however, that what we have called the 'universal moral faith-instinct' must be present in the sphere of theoretical moral reasoning as well. For this *fundamentally synthetic* knowledge, formed by the unity of a prudential judgment and a unique moral existential situation, must clearly also be the case where the situation is 'per se' morally 'general' in nature, since this too is inaccessible to *adequate*, exhaustive reflection and analysis. Taking due account of this connection between the modes of knowledge, it is also justifiable to refer to the following moral phenomena as a demonstration of the mode of knowledge we have been discussing: the choice of a career or a marriage-partner is (or ought to be) a decision of solemn moral significance. Everyone admits – including the Church – that in considering the moral correctness of this kind of decision one may be aware of a large number of points of view and reasons for and against a particular decision; but in addition to all these factors the whole process of reflection includes a synthesising element, which cannot itself be reflected upon in isolation and yet must be present, so that, from among all the conflicting reasons for and against, one may observe the plain inner security which witnesses to a moral decision.

Here we cannot describe *how* this actually happens. It is certainly true that, in the examples we have quoted, the decisions involved are essentially individual in character (not least with regard to their objects). But we have already remarked that this same synthesising function of knowledge, by which we are able, so to speak, to see the wood in spite of all the trees, is also necessary where what is involved is only a *general* moral reality. And this latter is more complicated than the simple text-book model employed in the usual kind of moral theology.

The terrible consequences of ignoring the universal moral instinct of faith and reason, or of not having the courage to rely on it, can be seen [241] only too clearly, it seems to me, in a particular example of the most recent past. I refer to the simulated crisis of conscience concerning the production of a cheap Napalm bomb for the war in Vietnam, which Günter Wallraff fabricated and set before several prominent German moral theologians for their decision. We shall not relate the whole story in detail here. It is well known. In short it shows clearly that whenever a moral theologian merely dissects such a particular 'case' into a thousand aspects and individual problems and has the courage only to make abstract deductions from more general principles, merely engaging in 'casuistics'; whenever he fails to react simply and plainly from the instinct of faith to the single totality of the 'case', he arrives at 'solutions' which are simply blind to concrete reality; in plain language, they are *false*. Such 'solutions' do not exhibit the uncompromising simplicity of decisions which are truly Christian and human, and only reveal their own impotence. In order to see the helplessness of moral theology when it proceeds solely by analysis and deduction, one need only refer to the whole complex of problems involved in the moral evaluation, according to Catholic and Protestant moral theology, of making and using biochemical weapons. Even the Council was not able unequivocally to overcome this kind of mentality, which paralyses any action which could be said to be clearly Christian.

Of course, from the lofty standpoint of his subtle reasonings the 'speculative' moral theologian will object that this is to underestimate the complexity of the problem, that to

[16] For the more recent problems cf. F. Furger, *Gewissen und Klugheit in der katholischen Moraltheologie der Letzten Jahrzehnte* (Luzern-Stuttgart, 1965).
[17] K. Rahner, *Das Dynamische in der Kirche* (Freiburg,[3] 1965); 'On the question of a formal Existential Ethics', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 217-234; *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 499-536.

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adopt the method we have postulated is to make things too easy. But *vis-à-vis* this kind of moral theology which never finds a solution the following remarks must be made:

1. In moral questions a clear, decisive judgment cannot let itself be dependent on being accepted by everyone.[18]

2. Does not the moral theologian see that the uncertainty which is uniquely a concomitant of his rational-analytic method gives rise, in actual fact, to a practical judgment (which, to remain consistent, he must immediately pronounce to be an uncertain one); namely, the judgment implied by the activity of those men who *are* prepared to manufacture and produce the weapons referred to?

[242] 3. Cannot the moral theologian see that his method *cannot* be the only valid one if it leaves men in the lurch in such deeply decisive life-issues? He ought perhaps to consider that what has thus become apparent is simply the insufficiency of his method, which is by no means an argument against the existence of another 'method'. This insufficiency itself proves nothing: whatever had to remain an open and controversial question in the past was simply not a matter of fundamental vital importance; and what *was* of fundamental importance was already held by the instinct of faith as a *fait accompli*, and was also self-evident in society's public understanding *before* the theologian began his speculative and analytic operations. As a result he could not have noticed that he was unwittingly working according to a method which he had not subjected to reflection, and that consequently he was achieving sufficiently certain results with a method which he imagined to be a merely conceptual and analytic one.[19]

4. A further factor must be considered. Nowadays, when disputed moral questions are discussed, one hears the argument – even among Catholic moral theologians – that 'it is quite conceivable' that, for instance, in a few decades almost everyone will have no objection to a particular course of action, and that it will be regarded as morally permissible or morally irrelevant. These moral theologians then conclude that therefore one cannot raise any fundamental objection to it in the name of humanitarian or Christian ethics (not even for reasons of 'pastoral' prudence).

We cannot give a detailed discussion of this phenomenon. But the following seems relevant in this particular connection: it is quite possible for certain moral states of affairs to become incapable of realisation as a result of historical development; they may then cease to be recognised as such, and an infringement of them will no longer be regarded as 'subjectively' immoral. Since moral knowledge and moral reality are closely interrelated it may happen that this particular moral 'object' *no longer exists* to make its demands felt, not merely that there is no 'knowledge' of it.[20] But all this is no argument for seeing the history of this disappearance of the moral 'object' (and the knowledge of it) from moral consciousness as *itself morally justifiable*, nor that such a state of affairs should be accepted or encouraged, especially at a time when the pernicious nature [243] of such a historical development can still be recognised and combated. To recognise the possibility of a partial moral blindness in the future, or even to foresee it, is no reason for bringing it about or passively permitting it to occur. It may well be that, in the providence of God, such a development in a particular culture or historical setting can have positive results (like polygamy had at one time). But the

[18] How can a Christian who believes in all sober intellectual honesty that he is justified in submitting himself to the absolute claims of faith, suddenly find it within him to hold such a view in a question which involves the very life and death of mankind, simply because his judgment is not shared by everyone? On the theological problem concerned here cf. K. Rahner, 'Intellectual honesty and Christian faith', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), 47-71.

[19] I presuppose here the analyses of the contemporary situation of the Church in a secularised, pluralistic and atheistic world which I have given in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1-2 (Freiburg, 1966).

[20] cf. initially K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 152-163.

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fact that good can arise out of evil by no means justifies the evil, and can only be a consolation for the person who looks on helplessly in the face of such a development. So we must be very careful and reticent about citing future moral sensibilities. We are to question the moral character not only of the actual result, but also of the historical process itself.

Here we must break off. This is not the place to elucidate further this fundamental question of method. We could not, however, simply presuppose or by-pass the question as if it were already settled, because all the answers which we are suggesting here can only be appreciated and understood from within this method. And above all, this means that all the 'reasons' which are intended to form the basis for rejecting genetic manipulation are to be understood, at the very outset, as only so many references to the moral faith-instinct (and as so many appeals to it, to have the courage to take a clear decision). For in my view the moral faith-instinct is aware of its right and obligation to reject genetic manipulation, even without going through (or being able to go through) an adequate process of reflection.

V

These more methodological remarks have already shown indirectly that the 'definition' of man cannot deal exclusively with the element of man's self-determination, however essential and decisive this particular constitutional element must remain when we talk about him. Man's finite nature implies that, however much he may conceivably (and even legitimately) submit his own self to planning, he is no less a being whose essence has been predetermined. He must accept this particular *existentiale* as well as the task of self-determination. We must now relate this fundamental anthropological and ethical insight to the concrete problem under discussion, and then draw the appropriate and necessary conclusions.

1. Man must freely accept his nature as being predetermined. For he has not called *himself* into existence. He has been projected into a particular world, and although this world is presented to him for his free acceptance or rejection, he has not *chosen* it himself. It is rather that the world [244] confronts him as something which has been determined from another quarter, *before* he embarks on his own history as a free being. Consequently the world can never be 'worked over' to such an extent that man is eventually dealing only with material *he* has chosen and created. Even if it were exhaustively calculated and planned in advance by the parents, the very stuff which is the precondition of the test-tube baby's freedom is (as far as the baby *itself* is concerned – and this 'self' is what is decisive) something already decided by someone else, something alien, like the genes one receives according to natural conception at the present time. It is part of the test-tube child's freedom to ask why he is obliged to shape his whole lifelong history out of the particular material which his parents have so wisely and thoughtfully selected for him by means of technology and planning. The question still remains as to whether, having had one's 'good fortune' planned and predetermined, one really considers oneself to be 'fortunate'. Accepting this necessarily alien determination of one's own being *is* and *remains*, therefore, a fundamental task of man in his free moral existence. All this can be understood, by 'transcendental deduction', as a necessarily given factor of man's nature. Wherever the *amor fati – fatum* in the sense of what is uniquely committed to the individual – is no longer achieved, and wherever this *fatum* is no longer accepted confidently in patience and humility as the gift of an *incomprehensible* love, man is subject to total neurosis, to a basic fear concerning his destiny which weighs more heavily on him than all the things which, as a result of this fear, he tries to escape from. Man's fundamental guilt is the consequence of his freely refusing to accept this gift.

2. However, although this *existentiale* and what it implies (the task of free decision) exercises its sovereign influence in the ultimate ground of man's being, it must also take on a

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corresponding 'categorial', tangible form in time and space, lest, banished from man's existence, it should be forgotten and ultimately freely denied by him.

Now man is in a certain respect most free when he is not dealing with a 'thing' but calling into being another, freely responsible person. If he is not to conceal or fall short of his nature, man must be presented clearly with the dialectically opposite position of his freedom as a man. And in concrete terms that means that the freedom to determine another person must remain a clear-cut and radical destiny, which one has *not chosen* but *accepted*. Procreation in particular must not become an act of neurotic anxiety in the face of fate. The other person must remain the one who is both *made* and *accepted*; both an elevating influence, because he has been [245] chosen, and a burden to be accepted and carried. If man, when confronted with his child, saw only what he had himself planned, he would not be looking at his own nature, nor would he experience his true self which is both free *and* the object of external determination. Genetic manipulation is the embodiment of the fear of oneself, the fear of accepting one's self as the unknown quantity it is.

Someone might say that even genetic manipulation cannot really get rid of every indeterminate element in procreation and that therefore genetic manipulation does not run counter to what we have said. (In any case, surely certain 'eugenic precautions' are not really reprehensible?) In this case we must answer with another question: What, in actual fact, is the driving force behind genetic manipulation? What sort of person is driven to it? And the answer would be, in the first place, the *hate* of one's destiny; and secondly, it is the man who, at his innermost level, is in despair because he cannot *dispose* of existence. In genetic manipulation such a man clearly and unequivocally oversteps the boundary between legitimate eugenic precautions and the realm tyrannised by the desperate fear of destiny. Even in those cases where no precise boundary can be set, one can see that a particular action undoubtedly exceeds it. This is plain in the case in hand, since the concrete genetic manipulation is governed by the desire to banish the *fatum* from existence, at a particular point. To the extent that this intention does not quite succeed, it is contrary to the original desire, for this desire hates destiny and can only love – as the product of its own free action – what it has calculated and planned. It no longer desires to say 'I have gotten a man from the Lord' – from *God*, who cannot be manipulated and who must be concretely present in man's existence. The essence of this rather more theological conclusion can be seen just as clearly in the dimensions of concrete anthropology: *Does* man in the concrete – who is not a mere abstract concept – really wish, in accepting genetic manipulation, to accept what *cannot* be predetermined? Has he actually the courage to take a decision, the results of which are unforeseeable? Does he really want to enter into a future of open possibilities, full of both threatening and promising surprises? And if his will fails at this point, will he ever find it again in any other area of his existence? Or is he like a man who only wants to perform a particular function of his nature when it is too late for him to do otherwise, and who will thus not be really able to carry it out even then? These are the decisive questions.

3. Man has his own sphere of intimacy. Historically and sociologically its concrete form can vary considerably. But whether it is technologically [246] possible to abolish it is not the point, for this sphere of intimacy *should* exist, and ought to be resolutely safeguarded. It forms the innermost region of freedom which man needs in order to be really self-determining. At whatever point anyone else is able and is permitted arbitrarily to invade another person's private area of free decision, freedom itself ceases to exist.

Man is right to designate the ultimate achievement of sexual union as belonging to this area of intimacy. For human sexuality, as a free activity, both is and ought to be more than a merely biological function; namely, an activity of the whole human being: the appearance

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and realisation of personal love.[21] Now this personal love which is consummated sexually has within it an essential inner relation to the child, for the child is an embodiment of the abiding unity of the marriage-partners which is expressed in marital union. Genetic manipulation, however, does two things: it fundamentally separates the marital union from the procreation of a new person as this permanent embodiment of the unity of married love; and it transfers procreation, isolated and torn from its human matrix, to an area outside man's sphere of intimacy. It is this sphere of intimacy which is the proper context for sexual union, which itself implies the fundamental readiness of the marriage-partners to let their unity take the form of a child.

The fact that it is technologically *possible* to effect the changes involved in genetic manipulation while at the same time producing a new *human being* is no argument against the essential connectedness of the factors we have just referred to (the sphere of intimacy – the union of marital love – the child as the permanent form of this union). For the child produced by such a method is, in this sense, the child of the mother *and* of the donor. The latter refuses, however, to acknowledge his fatherhood in an act of personal love: he remains anonymous or at least does not wish to be the donor in respect of this particular mother; precisely through his anonymity he robs the child of the right and ability to fulfil the obligation of his existence, namely to accept himself as the child of these particular parents. Genetic manipulation of this sort is no more 'human', merely because it produces a human being, than a case of rape. The fact that a biological chain of cause-and-effect is not broken, even when the moral/human unity and the whole of really human meaningfulness receives a mortal blow (for the 'biological' side is intended to be an expression of this total meaningfulness), does nothing, in itself, to justify its own occurrence.

[247] 4. What we have just said is directed against the *desire* (which is at least implicit in genetic manipulation) to plan man totally; it runs counter to the nature of man in the sense we have outlined. Consequently saying 'No' to this desire is not dependent on the question of its feasibility, and it is both possible and permissible to ask the further question, whether this desire *could* be totally realised, and what would be the moral implication of a failure in the execution of these plans.[22]

Initially we should have to answer the first part of the question in the negative. It can confidently be said that it would be impossible, from the technological point of view, to implement a genetic manipulation involving *all* future human beings, because, however much apparatus and 'automation' one had at one's disposal, the fact that one would have to deal with each human being as an individual[23] would imply such a vast quantity of active 'manipulators' that it would take up, *per absurdum*, the whole of mankind's attention and energy. But what would be the moral significance of the impossibility of producing the *whole* of future mankind by genetic manipulation?

In the first place it does *not* mean – as we shall show more clearly *a posteriori* – that a *partial* genetic manipulation is morally admissible, i.e. on the grounds that in any case 'not much' will happen. The practical impossibility of overstepping a particular quantitative limit is by no means a reason for morally justifying any action within that limit. If everyone told lies, for instance, the telling of lies would have no effect, because no-one would believe a liar any more. But that does not make a limited dose of lies a morally justifiable thing. Furthermore, if a *partial* genetic manipulation became normal practice, consciously recognised by society, it would create two new 'races' in mankind: the technologically

[21] cf. the Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, Nos. 47-52.
[22] We need not go into the first part of the question in so far as the concrete details are concerned; that belongs to the field of natural science.
[23] Here we can pass over the question as to whether it is possible or impossible to synthesise the hereditary material itself in large quantities.

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manipulated, super-bred test-tube men who inevitably would have a special status in society, and the 'ordinary', unselected, mass-produced humans, procreated in the old way. But what new social tensions would arise from this, and at a time when racial discrimination and racial conflicts are laboriously being dismantled so that a gigantic, tightly-packed humanity can exist peacefully! Or is one to believe that this group of test-tube men, whose intelligence quotients would be clearly considerably higher from birth, would not aspire to such a unique position in society, and that the remaining herd of humanity (*without* 'pedigree') [248] would obey them? But would the rest of mankind, remaining at least as intelligent, revolutionary and violent as *we* are, readily accept the leadership of pedigree test-tube men? All this would probably not happen provided that the number of genetically manipulated men were *very* small, and that for that very reason they could not lay claim to be the exclusive leaders of society. But in such a case the spokesmen of manipulation would not have achieved the very results they want, namely, to create mankind's elite of leaders, able to claim the right of leadership on account of their genetic qualifications. However, it must be declared immoral to plan to produce such conflict-laden material with its unforeseeable consequences. It constitutes a threat to man and to mankind.

5. Nowadays we are trying to extend and secure the individual's area of freedom. It is one of mankind's moral commissions. To pursue the practical possibility of genetically manipulating man is to threaten and encroach upon this free area. For it offers incalculable opportunities of man's manipulation – reaching to the very roots of his existence – *by organised society*, i.e. the state. This in turn subjects the state to the strong temptation of itself manipulating the genetic manipulation. And unless one adopts the radically false view (which is untenable from both the philosophical and the Christian standpoints) that what the state wants is automatically good and just, it must be acknowledged that, over and above the essential inner perversity of genetic manipulation, this gives the state the power of further immoral action in using it for its own purposes, to create men who suit its own predilections.

Let no-one say that *every* new and legitimate possibility always involves the temptation for man to misuse it, and that it is not thereby immoral, but must just be protected against abuse. The danger of misusing a newly created possibility may be taken into account *if* this new possibility is in itself justifiable and seems to be inevitable and required by man. But is this the case in genetic manipulation? What compelling aims does it have in view? That men should be able to grow a little older? But is that really desirable with the present size of world population, etc.? In any case, is this the right way – it is not the *only* way – to set about it? Or is the main aim that man should be genetically more intelligent and cultured? But is it true that higher intelligence is clearly correlated with a more highly developed humane sensitivity? Is the kind of intelligence which can be 'bred' in this way the kind we need today, i.e. the intelligence of wisdom, moral responsibility and selflessness? (For the other kind, the 'technical' kind of intelligence can be adequately increased by means of computers and cybernetics.) What is the point of genetic [249] manipulation if not to extend the state's area of control and thus to diminish, instead of to increase, man's sphere of freedom? It would be wiser not to put weapons into the hands of one's aggressors.

6. In future man must develop a critical attitude towards the fascination exercised by every new possibility. Here, in general terms, we have a new moral commission.

Essentially it has always been possible to see that not everything which *can* be done, *ought* to be done.[24] The possibilities available to man in earlier days were, however, very stable, and as a result they had been tested countless times. The possibilities for evil (and they were

[24] Of course, in a real and most profound sense one cannot 'do' something which is really immoral, for evil, measured against the *whole* of reality (including man in all his dimensions and God as well), is always impotent and ineffectual. Cf. also B. Welte, *Über das Böse* (Freiburg, 1959).

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relatively simple and clear-cut) were recognised promptly as such, since they were of a common and general nature, e.g. that 'cheats never prosper', tyranny is eventually self-destructive, excessive indulgence destroys the ability to enjoy, etc. The situation was simple: one knew what one ought not to do because one had already experienced the fact that such things were not really lasting possibilities in the long run, although one could 'get away with it' for a time. But the past did teach a sound doctrine: one should *not* do everything one is *able* to do; there are times when the attraction of the possible must be resisted.

Nowadays the situation is different. New and practical possibilities are set before us in relatively rapid succession, and they have vast and far-reaching effects. It is a strange factor of the dialectic of the accelerating movement of our history that these new possibilities can be discovered more quickly than their ultimate effects can be ascertained by practical tests. This is why it is so vital for humanity to develop a resistance to the fascination of novel possibilities. Of course there are 'feedback' effects in the field of social morality too, and they put a brake on the lure of novelty: the latest attraction in the form of the mini-skirt becomes monotonous when everyone is wearing it; and if almost everyone adopts the policy of limiting the size of the family because of the demands it makes, a large family will suddenly become an 'attractive' possibility and even gain a new social prestige. But there is no guarantee that such feedback effects can be relied upon in social morality in every case. The irreparable catastrophe can already have taken place before any feedback has had time to take effect. In certain cases to create immunity from moral diseases requires more time than the disease itself allows.

[250] Nowadays there are things with which one cannot have a preliminary run through, in order to gain experience for the next occasion and become wiser through trial and error. Or should one first of all arrange a 'trial run' for a total atomic war, for instance, before deciding to avoid a second one? Today we must be aware that a thing may have irreversible consequences.[25] This is a fundamental conviction of Christianity's theology of history; in spite of the multifarious possible recombinations Christianity sees the course of history as being ultimately a one-way street.[26] At all events, if the new humanity of the future is to survive, it must cultivate a sober and critical resistance to the fascination of novel possibilities.

Genetic manipulation seems to be, initially, a case in point. Are there any reasons against such a view? There could only be objections if there were considerable reasons *in favour* of genetic manipulation from other quarters. Like what, for instance? That we must bring the decline of intelligence and bodily health under control? But has anyone proved such a decline to be a fact? Or if it *is* partially the case, has it been shown that it could not be brought under control in another way? No such proofs are forthcoming.

7. There is another side to the fascination of novelty. The suggestion is that new possibilities will become actualities *all the same*; that nothing can resist them and that to offer any resistance is to be backing a loser; that one is being old-fashioned and stick-in-the-mud by not joining forces with the heralds of the 'new age'. On the contrary, it is one of the fundamental duties of a genuinely moral and Christian man to endeavour to do precisely this: to be *absolutely* faithful to a thing in a situation where it seems hopelessly doomed to failure. The biological end of an individual is not the only death of which one must not be afraid. There are other kinds of apparent death which one must not fear. History is not made by those who try to foresee what is 'inevitable' so that they can jump on the cart of fate in good time, but by those who are prepared to take the ultimate risk of defeat. No-one can say that genetic

[25] cf. the previous article in this volume, pp. 205-224.
[26] For the significance of the dogma of Original Sin in this connection cf. note 25 above; also a study at present in preparation on the subject of *Evolution und Erbsünde* (Freiburg, 1968).

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manipulation *inevitably* will come. The only person who 'knows' such a thing is the man who secretly *wishes* it to be so.

Is that kind of man a trustworthy prophet? Why should not mankind as a whole have to learn the lessons every individual has to learn in his [251] own life if he is to survive, namely, the lessons of sacrifice and renunciation?[27] After all we have said, the issue of sacrifice and renunciation is in this sense a 'rational' one and not the unreal fantasy of masochistic minds perversely obstructing their own progress. It is by no means certain that mankind will always be able to remain at the juvenile stage where it can only do the sort of 'mischief' which does not matter very much. That is surely another most valuable insight of our time. So then, if mankind as a whole must seek to learn the renunciation characteristic of maturity, it cannot be said that a rejection of genetic manipulation has 'no prospects' from the very beginning.

In conclusion let us recapitulate in order to understand the whole in the proper light. We do not claim that these observations against genetic manipulation are complete; rather they constitute an appeal to, and the inadequate objectifying of, a humane and Christian 'instinct' which can be discovered in the moral field. A moral awareness of this kind (which both is and does more than we have mentioned here) forms the context in which man has the courage to make decisions; thus a decision is also more than its rationale, because the act is always more than its theoretical foundation. This 'instinct' justifiably has the courage to say *Stat pro ratione voluntas* because such a confession need not necessarily be overcautious about making a decision. On the contrary it can claim to be the first really to make room for the possibility of genuine criticism and to bring to light the justification, implications and limitations of a real theoretical foundation. All theoretical reasoning always says (among other things), 'We do not *want* to manipulate man genetically'; but this will is meaningful in spite of the fact that it neither claims nor is obliged to be exhaustively analysable by theoretical reason; measured against the opposite will, *this* will is more deeply meaningful and more genuinely human. It must accept the risks involved in history and the unpredictable, [252] in order to find out whether it is stronger than its converse, and whether it can endow its theoretical meaningfulness with the particular radiance which is the exclusive characteristic of *performed* reality. Modern man is faced with making this decision.

Of course, in saying this we have raised yet another problem. Right from the beginning, rejecting man's genetic manipulation is not a merely theoretical declaration but a deliberate act. Consequently this theoretical discussion cannot be supported conclusively by the general, formal authority of the Christian churches alone. And so, as in many other cases in moral theology, we are faced today with a new, additional question of great importance: How, in concrete terms, can such a rejection (of genetic manipulation) be established in modern

[27] On this issue cf. the author's short contribution on the necessity of renunciation in *Festschrift für Wilhelm Bitter*, ed. G. Zacharias (Stuttgart, 1968) – given in this volume pp. 253 ff. From this standpoint one would have to go on to scrutinise the internal factors governing this intramundane 'design for the future', and its relation to the 'absolute future' and to the overcoming of death, etc. Cf. K. Rahner in the previous article, pp. 205-224; also his 'Ideology and Christianity; Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 43-58, 59-68; 'Christian Humanism', in this volume, pp. 187-204.

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society as society's *own* maxim, its own inner attitude and 'instinct', in the face of society's 'pluralism'? However, this particular problem of moral and pastoral theology is part of a wider issue[28] which cannot be pursued further within the limits of the present discussion.

[28] Some pointers are given in K. Rahner, 'Reflections on Dialogue within a pluralistic society', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 31-42.

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[253]

15

SELF-REALISATION AND TAKING UP ONE'S CROSS

Perhaps it is possible to say something of 'psychological' importance even without psychology. Something said in a very abstract way can be concrete because it reveals more clearly what is universally valid but is easily obscured by things of secondary importance. Today one sometimes has the impression that people very often become unhappy because they want to be happy at any price. They are suffering from frustration anxiety: they think they might miss something, that something might escape them before they have to go; and at the same time they know that very soon they *must* go and that there is not much time left in which anything can happen to bring happiness. That is why they think that the most important thing is to take care not to let anything slip past them. But in reality this fear of not having consumed everything spread out on the table of life means that nothing is enjoyed: everything is merely 'crammed' in, the digestion is spoilt. In the last analysis everything has escaped one after all, and nothing is really experienced because one wanted to experience *everything*.

It is easy to see that this is not the way. Everyone knows that really. For one only needs to bear this in mind – and here we use abstract terms, so that we can see better; the possibilities available to free action are always greater than what can be realised; one can never be everywhere at the same time; to embrace one possibility is always to renounce another, unless one had an unlimited life-span. For man always looks beyond what he has realised, and what he sees is not only the promise of new things to come, but also the renunciation of much, indeed, of everything except that minute portion which can be realised; there is much which will not come again, because it would only have been possible in the place now occupied by what has *in fact* been realised. Narrow reality is death to infinite possibility; the latter dies unborn in the womb of reality. All this, as we have said, is easy to see. The consequence is clear too, namely that the ability calmly to let things go past is one of the great arts of life which are necessary to make our existence free and bearable.

[254] But in reality this ancient wisdom of the necessity of 'proportion' does not banish our frustration anxiety. For something in us asks, Why should we calmly let what is possible go by, and only hang on to so little? Perhaps we have got hold of the wrong thing and have let the right thing, the thing which can unbind us and hence redeem us, pass by. How is one to know? One cannot seriously test every possibility *as such*; one can only test the things one has *really* examined; consequently one never knows, in being modest and restrained, whether one has put one's money on the wrong card or not. So instead, 'everything' – everything as far as possible, that is – must be tried, even if one knows that it is not really possible. Frustration anxiety continues to gnaw away; it knows it is senseless, but that does not kill it. The wisdom of keeping proportion becomes perverted into a cunning method of the part of frustration anxiety, scheming to extract as much as possible *all the same* from the empty wealth of possibilities. So in the end this itself becomes ineffective. All that remains is the desperate conviction that this is no good either. One is not alone in having frustration anxiety, one's own frustration anxiety has one too. It is not the force which keeps life moving, but it steers it, steers it into the void.

Are we then left with the only alternative of renouncing the thirst for existence, renouncing the will, 'seeing through' any initiation of action as the beginning of meaninglessness? But is it possible? Does it make sense? Is not this too another 'art of living' in disguise, is it not again merely another form of the blind impulse of life, trying in this way to reach its goal, in

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this case at least the happiness of silencing its own wishes? And does it really follow automatically or is it the absurd attempt, by saying a particular Yes, to utter a total No, and thus *secretly* to arrive back at a total Yes? For the activity of the will to live is itself still an act, and consequently it affirms what it wants to surrender. *Can* one really 'let go' of oneself right from the very root of one's being, in order to attain to the ability calmly to let go of the individual possibilities, except by being 'taken' from oneself? But by whom?

If death is life, i.e. if to relinquish the particular is actually not to lose but to gain everything, frustration anxiety is defeated Not as if the void were in itself actually the 'fulness' – we do not really seriously believe that cheap dialectical trick of words. The 'fulness' is not to be pieced together from the sum total of particular finite possibilities, but lies ahead of us as the one, whole, 'absolute' future, which in Christian terms we are accustomed to call 'God' He is ready to give himself to us if we succeed in 'letting go' It is true that we do not immediately come to possess this [255] fulness as soon as the absolute future (which contains the as yet unappropriated fulness and desires to give itself to us) enables us to let go. Whenever this marvel really takes place, and we simply let go, calmly in harmony with it, frustration anxiety is conquered at its very roots. Little reality is taken up as the promise of an infinite future, not as something which means the latter's death. We cannot 'ascertain' that all this happens to us in actual fact; we can only *do* it as the final act, an act which does not take pleasure in itself nor affirm itself consciously, an act which is *given* to us as our own particular act.

'God', 'grace', 'justification', 'freedom', 'faith', 'gift', 'task' (and all the other fundamental Christian concepts) are realities in this event of calm renunciation, and they are secretly understood as such. Everything implied by these words – the abandoning of oneself in the hope of finding the inconceivable fulness – takes place in the ultimately inaccessible depths of one's freedom when this freedom calmly 'lets go', i.e. lets the particular die, believing in hope that in this way (and ultimately *only* in this way) the whole, the fulness, 'God' will be received. This is not done only *in order to* receive the whole, for the particular too may and must be willed in a spirit of calmness.

In Christian terms this kind of renunciation in letting things die in faith and hope is called taking up one's cross. As an act of *free* acceptance it takes a step in the direction of death's inevitability and is thus a preliminary exercise in the acceptance of that particular death which is our unavoidable lot. Scripture calls this 'denying oneself and taking up one's cross'.

Where human qualities are *fully* developed, even if this cannot be subjected adequately to concrete reflection, the acceptance (of the cross) does not only occur in freedom's uttermost depths (together with its permanently ambiguous objectifications in the history of the individual); it does not merely 'occur', it also knows about itself, though in hope, not in the manner of reflection. Since man is an intercommunicative being and is only able to see himself clearly in another person, this acceptance knows about itself by perceiving another person – *the* Other Person – taking up his cross as *the* event of life. In him it can be seen that there is such an acceptance. As Christians we believe that we see Jesus of Nazareth as this Other Person taking up his cross. And in doing so we do not believe that he is only a sort of 'productive example' for us which really might just as well not be there. We believe rather that God lays the cross upon us and, within it, his own fulness, *because* he wills Jesus of Nazareth and has accepted and worked in him as his own life in time and history.

[256] The true 'productive example' is the one which really empowers and enables us. For this reason Jesus of Nazareth is the 'source of salvation', the Redeemer. We Christians acknowledge him as the Crucified; we confess him as the 'Risen' one, since, in the unity of the experience of the Spirit, who sets us free to take up the cross, *and* of the testimony of his disciples, we believe that in this death the arrival of God's life itself has taken place in the *whole* of man's reality.

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The person who, in a hope which no longer seeks to reassure itself, relinquishes himself in the depths of the mystery of existence, in which death and life can no longer be distinguished because they can only be grasped together, actually believes in the Crucified and Risen one, even if he is not aware of it (in conceptual terms). But to know of him explicitly is good and brings the promise of salvation. It is an assurance that one will be given one's own cross to take up as one's own, ultimate act of freedom.

Taking up one's cross has many forms. In what follows we shall dwell particularly on two of them. The first is to accept being disappointed – being 'undeceived' – by life. At the very latest this happens in death, provided that one does not actually try to deceive oneself about it – which never quite comes off. In this connection it must not be forgotten that dying already takes place in life, for life is itself *prolixitas mortis*, as Gregory the Great says. The second form, perhaps the most radical case of disappointment – of being 'undeceived' – occurs when one loves although this love does not, or no longer, 'pays off', nor tries to take pleasure in itself as a heroic selflessness. The attempt to produce this kind of pleasure – which is at bottom impossible – is the aim of all those glorifications of life to be found in sentimental novels *à la Reader's Digest*, where everything ends happily without any genuine dying. Is it not true that many exponents of psychotherapy use this same treatment? Cannot one avoid facing the fact that life is a *dying* if one arranges things cleverly?

There are probably only two ways of living: being driven by frustration anxiety, and the acceptance of the cross, which, whether acknowledged as such openly or not, is the Cross of Christ. Strangely enough, each of these ways of life can mimic the other. Probably it must be so; otherwise we could 'judge' ourselves. What the psychologist gets direct hold of is never one or other of these ways of living in itself, but at best its objectification, which is always equivocal. What seems to be a neurotic, even culpably incurred frustration anxiety, can be that very dying by which, in a hidden acceptance, the cross of life is taken up in suffering. [257] What presents a 'healthy' and 'balanced' appearance can be the result of a frustration anxiety which is driving the person to avoid taking up his cross.

Basically one need not be afraid that the acceptance of one's cross necessarily leads to passivity and resignation in the face of the concrete tasks of life. The man who does not fear death, or rather, who accepts the abiding fear of death, can enjoy the particular good things of life which come to him because they are a genuine promise of the absolute future. He is able to risk his whole self. He is free to love without sparing himself. He does not need to overtax this life's happiness and thus spoil it.

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[258-262]

VOLUME 9

LIST OF SOURCES

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL'S CHALLENGE TO THEOLOGY
A contribution to a projected symposium volume entitled 'The Future of the Church', edited by Mgr Otto Mauer (Verlag Herder and Vienna). Delivered as a lecture at the International Theological Congress of the University of Notre Dame (USA) on 23 March 1966. Also repeated to American students of theology at Munich on 14 February 1966 and, in altered form, in the *Kongresshalle*, Berlin, on 6 June 1966 at the invitation of the *Lessing-Hochschule* (Urania). First published in the American volume, K. Rahner, *The Church after the Council* (New York, 1966, Herder and Herder).

THEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
A lecture delivered at the Theological Symposium of St Xavier's College, Chicago (USA) on 31 March 1966. First published in *Künftige Aufgaben der Theologie*, edited by P. Burke (Munich, 1967), pp. 31-60 also as a contribution to *Wahrheit und Verkündigung*. *M. Schmaus zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by L. Scheffczyk, W. Dettloff, R. Heinzmann (Paderborn, 1967), Vol. II, pp. 1389-1407.

PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHISING IN THEOLOGY
A lecture given at the Conference of the Study Group of German-speaking Dogmatic Theologians in Munich from 3 to 5 January 1967. It was repeated at a conference of the *Katholiscke Akademie in Bayern* on 9 April 1967 at Munich. The lecture was subsequently expanded, and excerpts from it were delivered on 17 May 1967 at a meeting of the Munich Circle of Friends of the *Evangelische Akademie Tutzing* in a conference entitled 'Faith – Theology – Science' (a joint lecture with platform discussion of connected questions in collaboration with Professor Dr U. Mann of Saarbrücken); at the invitation of the Faculty of Protestant Theology of the University on 20 June 1967 at Göttingen; as a lecture in English given in October 1967 in the course of a lecture tour of various universities and colleges in the United States. The study is likewise designed as a contribution to a symposium volume, *Die Zukunft der Phiosophie*, edited by J. B. Metz and H. R. Schlette (Olten-Freiburg, 1968, Walter-Verlag).

THE HISTORICITY OF THEOLOGY
Delivered at Barcelona on 11 March 1966 as a lecture, on the occasion of the founding of the Spanish branch of the Paulus Society. In expanded form it again provided the basis of a lecture at a research discussion from 25 to 29 September 1967 at the Centre for International Research at the University of Salzburg (Director, Professor Dr Thomas Michels O.S.B.). First published in *Integritas. Geistliche Wandlung und menschliche Wirklichkeit*, edited by D. Stolte and R. Wisser, and dedicated to K. Holzamer (Tübingen, 1967), pp. 75-95.

THEOLOGY AND THE CHURCH'S TEACHING AUTHORITY AFTER THE COUNCIL
Delivered in English in October 1967, m the course of a lecture tour of various universities in the United States. First published in *Stimmen der Zeit* 178 (1966), pp. 404-420.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY WITHIN THE TOTALITY OF THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES

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A paper read at Arnoldshain on 5-6 April 1967 at a study group conference of the Ch. Kaiser Verlag (Munich), concerning the nature and function of practical theology. (Other contributors, Professor Dr E. Jüngel and Professor Dr M. Seitz.) The Kaiser Verlag is preparing a volume in which the other papers will also be published, together with a discussion.

THE NEED FOR A 'SHORT FORMULA' OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
An initial projection of the 'short formula' itself was published in the periodical, *Geist und Leben* 38 (1965), pp. 374-379, under the title 'Kurzer Inbegriff des christlichen Glaubens für "Ungläubiger"'. A version which was expanded so as to include several further aspects later appeared under the title given above in the periodical *Concilium* 3 (1967), pp. 203-207.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN CATHOLIC DOGMATICS
Lecture given at the University of Marburg on 16 July 1965 at the invitation of the Institute of Hermeneutics of the Theological Faculty of the University of Marburg (Professor Dr Ernst Fuchs). On the following day a fuller exchange of views concerning the contents of the lecture took place with Professor Dr Ernst Fuchs and Professor Dr Gerhard Ebeling. An invitation lecture at the College of Philosophy and Theology at Regensburg on 10 December 1965. First published in *Catholica* 20 (1966), pp. 1-18.

ATHEISM AND IMPLICIT CHRISTIANITY
Used as the basis of a lecture given in the course of a tour of several universities in the USA in October 1967. An initial brief version of this study was published in *Concilium* 3 (1967), pp. 171-180, under the title 'The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on Atheism'. The Study as it appears in the present volume, in a considerably expanded form, was prepared for the major work, designed to appear in several volumes and in several different languages, entitled *L'Ateismo Contemporaneo* (Società Editrice Internazionale, Turin, 1967; German version published by Verlag Hueber, Munich, 1968).

'I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST'
This essay was originally composed as a broadcast talk in the series *In Defence of Thought* (Interpretation of the Creed), and was transmitted by the South German Radio in the spring of 1967. First published in the edited series of broadcast talks entitled *Das Glaubensbekenntnis. Aspekte für ein neues Verständnis*, edited by G. Rein (Stuttgart, 1967), pp. 20-23.

ONE MEDIATOR AND MANY MEDIATIONS
Lecture delivered at Mainz on 24 June 1966 at the invitation of the Institute of European History (Professor Dr Joseph Lortz), and at Munster on 17 February 1967 at the invitation of the Institute of Ecumenical Theology of the University of Munster (Professor Dr E. Iserloh). An expanded version of the study appeared as a published paper of the Institute of European History at Mainz, Lecture No. 47 (Wiesbaden, 1967). The version printed in this volume has again been revised, chiefly in respect of the notes.

CHRISTIAN HUMANISM
A lecture given at the Conference on 'Christian Humanity and Marxist Humanism' held at Herrenchiemsee on 29 April 1966 under the auspices of the Paulus Society. The manuscript was used in altered form as the basis of a lecture delivered on 15 November 1966 at the University Week at Düsseldorf also at an Evening of the Society of Catholic Students at the University of Cologne on 5 December 1966, and at the invitation of the Reuchlin Society at Pforzheim on 15 December 1966. An initial version, including the most important points,

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appeared in *Orientierung* 30 (1966), No. 10 (of 31 May), pp. 116-121. The study also appeared in revised form and with added notes in the symposium volume, *Menschliche Existenz und moderne Welt. Ein internationales Symposion zum Selbstverständnis des heutigen Menschen*, edited by R. Schwarz (Berlin, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 137-148.

THE EXPERIMENT WITH MAN

This lecture was initially delivered at The Hague on 25 September 1965 at the invitation of the Dutch Society of St Adelbert. It was repeated at Munich on 3 November 1965, in the National Training College at Duisburg on 4 January 7965, in the Institute for Child Study of the University of Würzburg (Professor Dr J. Ströder) on 4 February 1966, in the Institute of Anatomy and Histological Embryology of the University of Innsbruck (Professor Dr G. Sauser) on 14 February 1966, at the Catholic Students' Union of the University of Munster on 18 February 1966, as an invitation lecture to the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Vienna on 14 March 1966, at the Society of Training Colleges at Graz on 15 March 1966, at a conference of the Study Group of Medical Journalists at the *Akademie Tutzing* on 19 May 1966, and on the occasion of 'University Week' at Warendorf, Westphalia, on 8 December 1967. At the invitation of the Associazione Culturale Italiana the author delivered the same lecture in Italian at Turin, Genoa, Milan, Rome, and Naples (15 to 20 April 1966). In addition an English version was delivered at several American Universities and Colleges of Education in the course of a lecture tour through the United States in October 1967. First published under the title of 'Theologische opmerkingen over de zelfmanipulatie van de mens', *Adelbert* 13 (1965), No. 11 (November), pp. 197-208; first published in German as 'Experiment Mensch. Theologisches zur Selbstmanipulation des Menschen', *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Aufriß einer philosophischen Anthropologie. Festschrift für Max Müller*, edited by Heinrich Rombach (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 45-69.

THE PROBLEM OF GENETIC MANIPULATION

An article intended as a contribution to a symposium volume projected by Professor Dr F. Wagner as editor, and entitled *Die Zukunft des Menschen. Zum Problem der genetischen Manipulation* (Verlag C. H. Beck, Munich, 1968).

SELF-REALISATION AND TAKING UP ONE'S CROSS

A contribution to *Dialog über den Menschen, Festschrift für Dr. W. Bitter zum 75. Geburtstag*, edited by G. Zacharias (Verlag E. Klett, Stuttgart, 1968).

In the list of sources given above no mention has been made of a number of excerpts or special papers which were printed in German. Broadcast talks are mentioned only when the article concerned was specially written for these. Nor has there been any special mention of the numerous translations which have been made. Only the work in which they were initially published is mentioned, whether this was in German or in a foreign language.

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[1]

PART ONE

Ecclesiology

[3]

1

THE NEW IMAGE OF THE CHURCH

On an accurate view of the findings of the Second Vatican Council one finds that in all of its sixteen constitutions, decrees and explanations it has been concerned with the *Church*. Thus in the ecclesiastical constitution *Lumen gentium* and in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity it has been concerned with the Church's basic understanding of herself. In the Constitution on Divine Revelation and in the Explanation on Christian Education it has been concerned with the teaching office of the Church. In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy it has been concerned with the function of the Church as conferring salvation through the sacraments. In the Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops it has been concerned with the government of the Church. In the Decrees on the official functions of priests, the life and formation of priests, the religious orders and the apostolate of the laity it has been concerned with the various ranks in the Church's hierarchy. In the Decree on Oecumenism and in the Decree on the Oriental Churches the Council has stated its position with regard to the relationship of the Catholic Church to the other Christian Churches and communities, while in the Explanation Regarding Non-Christian Religions it has defined the Church's relationship to these. In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and in the Decree on Mass Media of Communication the Council has defined the Church's attitude towards the secular cultures of the modern world, and in the Explanation concerning Religious Freedom it has stated her position with regard to a society that is pluralistic in character.[1]

[4]

I

This Council, then, was a Council of the Church about the Church, a Council in which all the themes discussed were ecclesiological ones; which concentrated upon ecclesiology as no previous Council had ever done. For even the First Vatican Council, with its definition of the primatial power of the pope, treated of other themes apart from this question and quite different from it, as for example the question of God and his relationship to the world. When we say that the Second Vatican Council is the Council of ecclesiology this is, of course, neither to deny nor to overlook the fact that within the general ambience of this subject-matter a whole range of different truths come to be expressed, truths which, indeed, when

[1] In this article the author attempts to sum up the more important ecclesiological findings of the Council insofar as these have theological and pastoral implications which are important for a wide circle of interested parties. It must be admitted that this attempt is subject to numerous limitations. For this reason the author may be permitted to refer to the fuller studies on conciliar theology which he has published in *Theological Investigations* VI, as well as in the present volume. In addition to these see below p. 7 n. 2.

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their place in the total 'hierarchy of truths' is adverted to, are of more decisive importance *in themselves* than they are precisely in their bearing on the question of the Church. But still, this does not in the least alter the fact that in this Council the Church was not only the author but the subject too of the conciliar statements, that this Council was the Council in which the Church reflected upon her own understanding of herself.

This conclusion may at first sound harmless enough. Yet it is startling enough in itself to bring us up short; startling enough to raise in our minds the disconcerting question of whether in that case the Church of today, faced as she is with a future that is vast and unknown, and that presses in upon her (upon us) so urgently and so menacingly, has nothing more important to say than how she understands her own nature – she who, nevertheless, exists *not* for *herself* but for *God*, for her Lord, for *mankind* and for their future. Of course we might reply to this question that in speaking of herself and her own nature the Church is, in fact, speaking also of all these more fundamental realities and truths. Admittedly it is also possible to say that the 'Church' was chosen as the central theme because of the fortuitous circumstance that this subject had been embarked upon in the First Vatican Council and then interrupted when that Council was prematurely broken off; and also because, as things are today, everywhere and in all the Churches and all the systems of theology belonging to them ecclesiology has come to be one of the most immediately relevant subjects of discussion, if not actually the primary subject. But in fact the first reply simply opens the way to the further question of why the Church should choose to discuss these themes, more important as they are in themselves, merely indirectly in the context of ecclesiology, when all the time it is so necessary to speak in quite new terms of God, of [5] Christ his anointed one, of man and of his future. As for the second rejoinder, this still leaves the question unanswered of whether a Council is *ipso facto* taking the right course in its choice of subject-matter merely because this subject-matter happens to be precisely that with which contemporary theology is engaged. It could perfectly well be the case that by concentrating its interest so much on ecclesiological questions theology itself has created a tendency to neglect the more difficult and more urgent questions. This is a startling question, and one which cannot be answered adequately merely by pointing out that ecclesiology has in fact an objective importance in its own right. Nevertheless in the last analysis only two observations can be made in reply to this question. First, man is subject to the conditions of history, and this means that the topics with which he finds himself engaged are decided for him rather than by him. And this also applies to the Church. The very inevitability with which this theme of ecclesiology became, so to say, spontaneously and without much conscious reflection, *the* theme of the Council shows the extent to which man and Church, for all the responsibility they have to reflect and decide upon such matters, continue to be those who are guided and controlled by factors outside themselves. This is something that is both alarming and consoling at the same time. Alarming because it raises the question of *who* or what is really guiding the course of events in all this. Consoling because we sinners – yes and even the devil himself – continue to be those who are guided by God. Secondly, every recognition of truth – including those which the Church arrives at – comes about not because the subject has voluntarily raised the question for himself, but because of the pressure of factors outside his control and arising from the particular place allotted to him in history. And because of this such realisations of truth always remain open to further modifications in the future. The history of the Church's faith is still in process of development, and every statement of faith posited in the here and now, and truly posited at that, can be modified and transformed by factors belonging to a future that is still unknown. Thus such a statement may be changed once more into a question, the question namely of whether and in what way it can, while still retaining its essential identity, acquire a quite different form in different historical situations, and when viewed in different perspectives. With regard to a whole number of theological statements, therefore, the question is how will

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they be initially constructed and how will they be applied in practice. Certainly even a genuine truth can fail to be realised at the time appropriate to it, its *kairos*. Obviously this applies primarily to the process by which truths come to be [6] recognised as such in the life of the individual. But we may presume that it is not so certain that this could not also take place in the history of the Church's developing realisation of truth. How otherwise could the Catholic Church, prior to a definition, and abstracting from her solicitude for the truth, raise the distinct question of whether the time is 'opportune' for defining the truth concerned and quite manifestly consider that to recognise a proposition as true is not *ipso facto* to decide that it is opportune to define it. So long, therefore, as history endures there remains also a truth that is still unexpressed in the present. The only proviso here is that there is a truth of this kind, such that it is not conducive to fulfilling the needs of the present hour. It is a truth which can be made relevant and actual through the grace of God which is conferred upon us, and in this grace we patiently carry this truth with us into the future until it finds *that particular* moment of grace in which it becomes *our* salvation. When *this* moment comes then it provides a justification for that earlier moment in which the truth concerned was plucked – perhaps too early, perhaps too late, perhaps too hastily or too violently – from the tree of knowledge. This is not to assert, or even imply, that the ecclesiological subject-matter treated of in the Council is of this kind. How could anyone be in a position even today positively to assert such a thing? Nevertheless it is helpful to pose this question right at the outset and thereby to make it serve as an exhortation to prudence and discretion.

If we are to speak of the new image of the Church which has emerged since the Second Vatican Council, then we must regard all this not indeed as a necessary presupposition to our discussion, but as a proviso which it is prudent to bear in mind. Statements made about the Church at the Council have been so many and so varied, some old, some new, some important, some secondary, some belonging to the field of dogma, others merely at the level of canon law or pastoral theology, that it is *a priori* impossible to sum it all up in a single brief survey in which every statement is accorded its due value. In the light of this, as well as in the light of the somewhat startling question which we have just posed, it is therefore justified – indeed it is actually demanded of us – to search for certain *new* traits in the image of the Church which the Church herself holds up before her in order to become that which she is. 'New' here does not mean, in any primary sense, that which has not yet been said, for it is difficult to point to any element in the ecclesiology of the Council which could be called 'new' in precisely *this* sense. A very clear illustration of the point being made here is provided, for instance, by the theme of the synodal collegiality of the episcopate (the theme, therefore which, on a superficial [7] view, was perhaps the most disputed in the whole Council). On close examination this theme turns out simply to have filled out with content a statement which was initially made at the First Vatican Council in the *relationes* of the defenders of the primacy of the pope, Bishop V. Gasser and Bishop F. M. Zinelli in particular. Not only was the statement in question not contested by these, it was actually formulated by them in so many words as a manifest truth.[2] In fact a further point is also quite clear. Where a Council gives up a doctrine previously upheld in the Church but not hitherto defined, rejecting it as false or inadequate, we can certainly not speak of a development from implicit to explicit truth. And of course instances of this are conceivable. But we hold fast to the principle that the Church does not attain any fresh revelations, but rather retains a vital hold on, and interprets the *one* Christian and apostolic revelation. And if we hold fast to this, then it follows that any new statement that is *positive* necessarily *must* – at least implicitly –

[2] For details of this cf. the author's commentary on the third chapter of the Constitution on the Church. *Das Zweite Vatikaniscke Konzil. Konstitutionen, Dekrete und Erklärungen* I (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 221-224.

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have been present in the awareness of faith of earlier ages. It cannot therefore be the task of the theologians merely to praise the novelty of a truth that has come to be recognised in the Council or in theology, as though something *absolutely* new had been discovered. It follows that 'new' as used here is a single term covering two distinct factors, and the reality it signifies is just as important as a new discovery on some theoretical plane. The two factors are the new vitality which the truth in question has acquired in the *life* and activity of the Church, and the special effectiveness which the truth will presumably acquire for the Church in the *future*.

II

The first trait in the new image of the Church which must be brought out relates to the Church insofar as she is present in the concrete in the local communities and regional Churches. It is a strange text to which we have to refer at this point. It is to be found in No. 26 of the third chapter of the Constitution on the Church, and there gives the impression of being an interpolation in a context which is elsewhere concerned with the function of the bishop in conferring sacramental consecration. In this context the following statement is made without any convincing connection with the rest of the passage being apparent: 'The Church of Christ is truly [8] present (*vere adest*) in all lawfully instituted local communities of the faithful who, united with their pastors, are actually called "Churches" in the New Testament itself. They are' (so the passage continues) 'a new people called by God each according to his own locality in the Holy Ghost and in the fulness of "utter conviction" (*plerophoria*, cf. 1 Thess 1:5); through the preaching of the gospel of Christ the faithful have been "gathered" into the local communities.' Brotherhood is instituted through the Eucharist. 'In these communities, however poor and small they may be, and even though they may live in the diaspora, Christ is present, Christ through whose power the one holy Catholic and apostolic Church is united.' Thus the text itself.

It is true. The Constitution on the Church viewed as a whole regards the Church primarily as the universal Church, the Church that is worldwide, as the union of all believers in the community governed by pope and bishops. Certainly this is not to deny the fact that the very nature of this universal Church is such that there is more to be said about it than merely the definition of its social and juridical composition (somewhat in the sense of Bellarmine's ecclesiology), and in fact something more actually is said about the Church from this aspect, above all in the first and second chapters of the Constitution. The universal Church is spoken of as a unity which is based upon the mystery of the triune God. Reference is made to the holy people of God, to the Body of Christ in which all share in the priesthood of Christ, in which each individual has his own charism and his own mission, and each one is called to bear witness to the grace of God. But even so, in explicitly defining the structures and composition of the Church, the Constitution precisely does *not* take the local and parish communities as its starting-point in formulating its conception of her. Of course it is no part of our task at this point to enter into the reasons which caused *this particular* basic conception to be adopted, whether these were conditioned by history, by the particular circumstances of the time, or by theological considerations. Doubtless there are reasons which make this basic conception both justified and necessary. But while recognising this, one point must be emphasised from the outset. When the Church gives expression to her teaching, even in the context of a Council, what is binding upon the faithful is initially and primarily *that which* is actually stated. The viewpoints and attitudes in the light of which the statements were made have a lesser binding force. The basic conception of the Church which is derived from the idea of the Church as a whole is, therefore, a legitimate one, and certainly not one to be discarded. But manifestly it does not represent the only possible view. For in [9]

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this conciliar constitution the *alternative* viewpoint, in which the Church is regarded primarily as it exists in the *local* community and this is taken as the starting-point, is also present in the passage we have quoted above, even if it is only present there in the opening clause.[3]

Here too it cannot be our task to present the history of this insertion. It is noticeable, as we have said, that it has been interpolated at a relatively late stage into a passage the broad outlines of which had already been established. In other words it was inserted into an already ordered presentation in which the viewpoint spontaneously and unreflectingly adopted was characteristic of the whole trend of Catholic scholastic theology and canon law in the post-Tridentine age. This meant that it was, as it were, taken for granted that the authors of this passage should look initially to the Church in her universality, and even the New Testament passages relating to the Church were *a priori* interpreted in this sense. With regard to the genesis of this inserted passage we must confine ourselves to the following observation: the interpolation certainly has connections (though probably these are not the sole motives which prompted it) with certain desires which were put forward in the aula of the Council, for instance by Metropolitan E. Zoghby and the auxiliary bishop of Fulda, E. Schick. Probably it was not only considerations of the factors of dogmatic or biblical theology involved that prompted these desires or imparted to them their underlying tendency. Rather they correspond to the immediate and practical needs of the concrete situation. There was a desire to see the Church as she exists in the concrete in everyday life, as present where she actually celebrates the death of the Lord, breaks the bread of the word of God, prays, loves and bears the cross of human existence, where she acquires a reality that is truly palpable and unambiguous, and is something more than an abstract ideology or a dogmatic thesis or the overall pattern of organisation in a society. There was a fear that *this* Church would still not be represented clearly enough even though now reference was made no longer merely to the pope, but to the bishops as well. These interventions were, in principle, welcomed and favourably received. Moreover the interpolated passage never became the subject of any serious debate or opposition either in the theological commission or in the plenary session of the Council. But at the same time it was impossible, if only from the technical point of view and from the point of view of giving the decree as a whole the best possible chances of [10] success, to reconstruct the whole of it in the light of this different viewpoint. And it was precisely because of this that, as G. Philips (the secretary of the theological commission) subsequently confirmed to me once more, a place had to be found for this passage wherever the matter could best be accommodated. The question of whether the happiest place for the insertion was in fact devised can be set aside. The essential point is that the passage is there and that it says what had to be said.

The highest truth which can, in the last analysis, be applied to the Church as a whole is in fact asserted of the local community itself, namely that in it Christ himself, his gospel, his love and the unity of believers are present. The Constitution recognises and explicitly states that the local and parish community, so far from being a mere minor administrative subdivision in a major religious organisation called the Church, is actually the concrete reality of the Church, the presence of Christ in which she achieves her highest fulness, and that too in the word, in the Eucharistic meal and (even in evangelical theology this point may perhaps not always be expressed with all the clarity that could be desired) in the love which unites the hearers and those who celebrate the Eucharist. Of course it could not be expected that in this passage something further should also have been said, namely how these three entities are united among themselves so as to form the concrete actuality of the Church as

[3] On this cf. the author's observations in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg 1964), pp. 179-189, II/1 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 166 ff.

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presence of Christ. But at all events what does clearly emerge in this passage is that the concept of the Church as the 'perfect society' is quite inadequate to provide a basic model for a theological understanding of the Church. The Church is more than a perfect society not merely because in and behind the social constitution of the Church as a whole the Spirit, divine truth and love are present and are constantly renewing their vital impact. Even if we confine ourselves to the actual nature of society in itself, even at this level the Church cannot be confined to the idea of the 'perfect society' inasmuch as it is precisely the Church (in contrast to every kind of secular society) that is truly present and achieves her fulness at the level of the word of preaching and of the sacrament, that is, still at the level of the social and sacramental life of the Church in itself. In other words the whole is truly present and achieves its fulness in the part. Now in view of the fact that in this connection the constitution goes back to the linguistic usage found in the Acts of the Apostles and Paul, namely when it states that the community, e.g. at Ephesus is '*the*' Church and not merely *a* Church (the plural 'Churches' carries no weight in view of the statement '*Haec Christi Ecclesia vere adest in omnibus . . . congregationibus localibus*') we are authorised, and indeed [11] called upon to explore further this ecclesiology of the local Church, and to accord it a vital place in our lives.

Certainly the work that still needs to be done in this field is immeasurable. But we should consider the future that presses in upon the Church, a future in which the premium set upon the characteristics present in the local Church, her poverty, smallness and 'diaspora' mode of existence, will perhaps be higher even than it is in the present. And especially in view of this future we can freely and calmly develop the lines indicated here by saying that life in the Church in the new form which it will acquire in the future will first, and by anticipation, be experienced *here* in the local Church. For the Church will make its impact as a present reality there where the presence of Christ is made real and experienced in the authorised preaching of his gospel and in the commemoration of his death in the Eucharist. *Here* that religious and theological 'experience' of the Church which is the most basic and most direct of all will have its place. Here the Christian of tomorrow will come to realise the true nature of the Church. Of course such a community, which feels itself to be the concrete realisation of the Church as achieved through word and sacrament, will be conscious of being united to all other communities which likewise are this same Church, will according to the will of Christ give concrete expression to this union, this state of being united in the Spirit with these other communities, even at the level of communal and social life as such, and, moreover, will be conscious of having a duty to do this.[4] It will understand by its faith that it only preserves the truth of the word and its own reality, in which Christ is rendered present, in the hierarchically constituted union of the communities of Christ. It will therefore acknowledge and live by everything which is stated in this constitution on the Church with regard to the universal Church as such, though admittedly acknowledging and living by it according to its place in the hierarchy of those truths in which, as the Decree on Oecumenism lays down,[5] the individual doctrines of faith are connected with the true basis of faith in different ways. But the factor which will first and last be of decisive importance will precisely be the real fact that, and the experience of the real fact that, Christ the crucified and risen one becomes present together with his word, the word that deepens into the unfathomable mystery of God; and because he is made present in this sense the Church [12] constantly renews herself as a vital force in the midst of the lowliness, poverty and desolation of the community which believes in him in the vast wilderness of this human life. All further knowledge of the Church

[4] 1t is self-evident that in a new way the early Church's conception of *communio* can thereby be made a living force in the practice of the Church. For bibliography cf. the studies referred to on p. 8a n. 2.
[5] Cf. this important passage in no. 11.

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will draw its life, and will only be able to draw its life, from this basis and this centre. The Christian of the new age will experience what happens to him in his community no longer – as formerly – as something that takes place *in* the Church, but rather as the impact of the Church herself considered as a vital force.

III

If we regard this fresh trait in the image of the Church in its significance for the future historical situation, then we shall also suddenly find ourselves in a position to 'place', theologically and existentially speaking, a second 'new' statement in the ecclesiology of the Council. This statement, if taken in any other way, commonly threatens to degenerate somewhat into an ecclesiology which seems primarily to be concerned with the constitutional structure of the Church. The Church is called the *sacramentum* of salvation for the world, that which gives it its union with God and within itself (cf. Nos. 1, 9, 48). In order to see why the understanding of the Church expressed in this key word *sacramentum* is of immeasurable importance for today and tomorrow we must first consider a certain dialectical tension between two statements in this conciliar ecclesiology which seem to be irreconcilably opposed. On the one hand it is laid down that every man who acts in good faith according to his own conscience attains to the salvation of God in Christ whether he is a Catholic or not. He may belong to another Christian creed, live according to the tenets of a non-Christian religion, or even, through no fault of his own, not yet have arrived at any explicit acknowledgment of God (cf. No. 16). On the other hand it is also laid down that the Church of Christ which finds realisation (*subsistit*) in the Roman Catholic Church, is necessary for salvation (No. 14), is prescribed for all men and all men for her. In addition to the dialectical difficulties entailed in these two statements we have also to bear in mind a further point. In the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, in the Decrees on Oecumenism and on the Eastern Churches, in the Explanations on Religious Freedom and on the Relationship of the Church to the non-Christian Religions the Council certainly does not expect that in some way and in some future age invisible to us the Church will [13] effectively become *the* Church of *all* men in the sense of including them all in a visible society. She is conscious rather of continuing to be the Church in the *diaspora*, the Church that exists in a pluralistic society. Indeed, according to all estimates of what the future holds for her, she will become this to a still greater extent than in the present. Now it is precisely in the light of *this*, and by taking *this* as our starting-point in interpreting the two dialectically opposed statements referred to above that we can elucidate for ourselves, in terms both of theological theory and of actual living, the situation in which the contemporary and future Christian's awareness of the Church must remain a living force, and against the background of which it must be understood.

This Christian must know the Church as the sole source of blessedness. Within the world he knows he cannot discern any one Church which, as a visible society actually belonging to human history, either is now, or is destined to become in some future age still invisible to us, the Church of all men. Yet for all this he cannot, indeed he must not, entertain that half explicit half submerged idea of the Christians of earlier ages that at least broadly speaking those are members of the Church who have been summoned out of a *massa damnata* of the rest of the human race, and called to salvation. Similarly he must not adopt that position of ecclesiological relativism which is secretly upheld by so many Catholic Christians, and in which it is felt that in the last analysis the Church is not so very important. After all it is only *one* – even if one that is particularly strongly to be recommended – among many religious

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groupings, so that it is open to the individual freely, and according to his own taste, to choose *that particular* one which precisely best answers his needs.

In the situation we have been considering the Christian is not helped merely by considering baptism, soundness of faith and conformity to the Church's constitutional laws as the 'orthodox' way of salvation, while in contrast to this innumerable individuals outside the Church achieve salvation in an 'unorthodox' way and one that is 'against' the general rule. For such a Christian sees at the same time that simply *in terms of numbers* this 'exception' is in fact the *norm*. If Christianity is Christ, the absolute deed wrought by God upon humanity, in which God bestows himself, then Christianity, and therefore the Church, cannot renounce the claim to be of her nature absolute and to have a mission that is universal. However, neither the Church nor the individual Christian can regard this interpretation of the Church (considering it as something more than a mere ideological hypothesis) as something that will only achieve reality in a remote future which is invisible to us. They must be in [14] a position to recognise that the Church, considered precisely *as* a real and effective bringer of salvation (and not merely as a well-meaning and experienced partner in a dialogue) has a relationship with the non-Christian world which is actual and positive.

It is at this point that the doctrine of the Church as the basic sacrament for the salvation of the world may be invoked, since it serves to reconcile the two dialectically opposed statements which we took as our starting-point and to provide a common ground between them. If we take in all due seriousness this statement that the Church is the basic sacrament of salvation for the world we shall realise that what it is intended to say is this: the Church is the concrete historical *manifestation*, in the dimension of a history that has acquired an eschatological significance, and in the social dimension, of precisely *that* salvation which is achieved through the grace of God throughout the entire length and breadth of humanity. The relationship between the Church and this salvation of the world is the same as the relationship between the sacramental word and grace in the process of salvation which takes place in the life of the individual. In this process of salvation in the life of the individual these two entities are intrinsically connected but not identical with one another. Inasmuch as this process is subject to the conditions of time either of the two entities involved can precede the other. Grace can already be present when the sacrament has not yet been conferred. A sacrament, even when validly conferred, can still have to wait for its fulfilment through the grace which is signified by it. In the same way the Church is the authentic manifestation of grace in history, a manifestation which offers itself as salvation *universally* and to *all*, a manifestation which is indeed intended to be presented and borne witness to as a visible historical entity with a sacramental significance, and as something that can be described and pointed to in the explicit preaching of the gospel. But at the same time the reality of the Church is not *only* present where it has already fully achieved this status of being explicitly and visibly a social entity, the nature of which can be reflected upon and described, in other words where it is fully ecclesiastical in character and so itself as a part of the Church achieving its own unique impact as a concrete historical phenomenon. But for this very reason the converse is also true. The manifestation of grace which achieves this objective reality in the Church is a *manifestation* and a *sign of* that grace wherever it may take effect. In other words the Church as manifestation of grace is a sacramental sign of the grace that is offered to the world and history as a whole. From the Christian point of view the world, mankind and human history can certainly not be understood merely as the sum total of [15] all those individuals who are each working out their own personal salvations, or of the private lives of such individuals in so far as salvation is being worked out in them. If this were the case then there would have been no need for the incarnation of the Logos in the unity of the human race. All that would have been necessary would have been a purely spiritual message of God directed to the depths of the individual's own private conscience, in other words the kind of salvation history

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that is susceptible of a purely existentialist interpretation. But against this the message of salvation addressed by God to mankind considered as a unity in this sense has the character of an *archsacrament* or basic sacrament. It embraces the individual and his personal history but is in itself Christ or the abiding continuity of his existence in history which is the Church. This message of grace to the world, which has this quality of being a 'basic sacrament' does indeed take effect in the lives of individuals. Indeed it is intended to be brought to reality at the individual and sacramental level in the explicit word of preaching and in the form of the concrete sacrament. In the same way, in fact, this message of grace to the world, with its fundamentally sacramental character, is constituted by the common life of those who have received baptism and celebrate the Christian Eucharist. But this message, does not achieve its effective force only in those contexts in which it is given concrete realisation in the explicit word of preaching and in the sacraments, in so far as these are addressed to or conferred upon the individual. Grace can always take effect in the world even apart from the individual instances of the preaching of the word and the conferring of the sacraments, but wherever it does take effect this grace is already visibly being signified as an element in saving history as realised in this world in virtue of the fact that the Church herself has this force of being a basic sacrament.

So far we have only been able to indicate our basic position. But taking this as our standpoint we can achieve an understanding of a new 'experience' of the Church, precisely the experience that the Church is still the basic sacrament of salvation for the world in just those contexts in which the world is not the Church. The Christian of today and tomorrow will experience his Christianity as *ecclesiastical* by thinking of it not primarily and essentially as one of many interpretations of the significance of the world which compete with one another in the world's marketplace, not as a sum total of theories which are put forward at the same level as statements about the realities of this present world, so that the attitude underlying the Christian theories appears to represent a negation of these other speculations about the meaning of human existence. The Catholic [16] must think of and experience the Church as the 'vanguard', the sacramental sign, the manifestation in history of a grace of salvation which takes effect far beyond the confines of the 'visible' Church as sociologically definable. The sacramental sign of a Christianity that is anonymous, that is 'outside' the Church in the sense that it has not yet realised its true nature, but at the same time 'within' the Church even though it has not achieved its 'ultimate self-realisation'. This is not because otherwise there would simply be no Christianity at all outside the visible Church, but because the Christianity that does exist there has not come to its full maturity as an objective entity, and therefore has not yet realised its own nature in the explicit awareness and reflexive objectivity of the creed as actually formulated, of the sacraments as supplying objective reality, and of the visible Church herself as providing an organised structure definable in sociological terms, all of which is, in fact, achieved in the Church herself.

The Christian will regard the non-Christians (in order to simplify the problem we shall set aside the question of non-Catholic Christians) not as having no part in Christianity or as standing altogether outside salvation because they are not Christians, but rather as anonymous Christians who do not realise what they truly are in virtue of grace in the depths of their own consciences; what they are, namely, in virtue of something that they achieve at a level which is perhaps wholly unadduced, but is none the less real; something which the Christian too achieves in that *he* goes beyond this and recognises what he is doing as a matter of objective reality in the reflexive processes of his own conscious thought. All this must be so if it is not the case that God, with a view to bestowing eternal salvation on men, suddenly permits their good will to count in place of the reality itself. For basically speaking this view would render invalid the doctrine of the necessity of the Church and grace as mediating salvation and not merely as something which men are commanded by God to embrace. Here,

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there can be no doubt. The awareness of the *professed* Christian, his faith as able to be formulated in propositions, as 'in conformity with the creed', is something that empowers him and actually obliges him as a matter of duty, to incorporate himself as a member in the visible society of the Church. And this faith of his is a part of Christianity in its fulness, and is a grace which once more facilitates and renders more secure precisely that which is already present in the depths of human existence and human awareness, so that it is this that he is actually acknowledging by his faith. There can be no doubt that the Catholic rightly feels and values his explicit membership of the Church as an unmerited grace, as a [17] blessing, as a promise of salvation. But it must be admitted that in doing this he is also aware of a fear that plumbs the very depths of his being. For the greater the grace the greater the danger, and more will be demanded of him who has received more. Again he never knows whether he is in fact measuring up to what is demanded of *him* in particular, as distinct from others. He knows – this too can be accorded its due importance – the words of Christ which tell us that many will come from the east and from the west, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the exterior darkness (Mt 8:11 ff.). Again the Constitution *Lumen gentium* invokes a saying of Augustine[6] (No. 14) to draw a distinction between 'heartfelt' (*corde*) and merely 'corporal' (*corpore*) membership of the Church. The Catholic Christian knows that he belongs to the Church *corpore*. But *what he does not know for certain* is that he is actually *living* in it by faith and love. This is something which he can only *hope* for and which he must hope for. But because the Christian hopes for salvation for others also, because he is sufficiently aware of modern theological developments to recognise that he can hope for this (even if he cannot know it for certain), because it is easier for him today than it was formerly to conceive in theological terms of how it is possible to be a 'Christian' (here this is intended to signify a man living in the grace of God and of his Christ even when he does not know the name of Christ or feels compelled to reject him) – because of all this, *therefore* he can only regard himself and the professed Christians, the Church, as the vanguard of those who are journeying towards the salvation of God and his eternity through the roads of history.[7] For him the Church is, in a certain sense, the uniformed section of the army of God. It represents that point at which the intrinsic nature of the life of God made Man as projected into the world is also made manifest at the historical and social level (or better, is made manifest most clearly, since to the eye enlightened by faith the grace of God is not totally devoid of all embodiment even outside the Church). The Christian knows that the light of morning on the mountains is the beginning of the day that lights up the valleys. It is not a day that is confined to the higher levels, and so condemns the darkness below.

We may recall the Christian teaching that there is no absolute principle [18] of evil, that evil is that which is not, that the one unique God is good, and that he wills what is good for the Church as well, that that which is real is also the good, so that it follows that a true realist must think well of reality. The Christian knows that it would be blasphemous to suppose that in the last analysis it is easier to do evil than good, or that on a 'sober' and realistic view of reality it is the evil that is in possession there and not the good, or that ultimately speaking evil will survive when good has disappeared. The Christian knows that it is not the humility of the creature but rather its pride that prompts such ideas, or that makes it suppose that it is able, at least by embracing the evil, to emancipate itself from God, for this is simply a stupid lie. The Christian knows that in fact it is precisely the achievement of his own existence that

[6] For a detailed exegesis of this section of the Constitution on the Church cf. K. Rahner, 'The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 270-294, especially pp. 282-283.

[7] For the purposes of this study the author has permitted himself in what follows to take over word for word certain observations which he has already published in an earlier volume: 'Dogmatic Notes on Ecclesiological Piety', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 336-365.

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is demanded of him; to believe in the light when he is in the darkness, to believe in blessedness when he is in pain, to believe in God as the absolute in the midst of the relativity to which he is subject. He knows that revelation in its progressive unfolding lays bare our sins to us only in order that we may believe in the forgiveness of God. (Guilt *alone* and taken by itself is something that we could already have experienced in our pain, our death and our powerlessness to escape). When Paul regards the unbelief of the Jews as only temporary (Rom 9-11) we may ask how this is to be interpreted at least in a theology which, while it wants to do Paul full justice, can no longer think simply in 'collectivist' terms. This statement should not lead us to credit Paul with the opinion that it was only later generations of Jews who would be believers, while the earlier ones remained *totally without faith in any sense*. Only one who is 'collectivist' to the point of being unchristian can suggest this kind of uncompromising solution to the question. In Paul's own thought an idea which he held firm to, and which constituted the inner kernel of his own personal conviction, was that the grace of God would emerge victorious over 'unbelief'. He himself may or may not have regarded the process by which this was to be accomplished as already having explicitly and definitively attained its full development. But in any case it makes no difference to the point at issue how far he did actually hold this view. The faith of the people of Israel, which became manifest as a phenomenon only in their later history (admittedly even this is still not apprehensible to us in any assured sense as a predestination of the individual to salvation), must be a sign of the fact that in earlier ages too God had already had compassion on this people in a manner which we can neither discern nor comprehend (once more nothing definite is implied in this with regard to the salvation of the individual as such). For why otherwise should we take as the [19] defining characteristic of Israel as a whole the faith of her later stages of development and not the unbelief of her earlier period? How otherwise could it be preferable to say: 'Israel as such will be overtaken by God's grace' rather than: 'This people has rejected God'?

In the light of this the Christian is fearless and untroubled in the view he takes of the world – that world which is filled with a thousand opinions and philosophies of life. He does not need anxiously to scrutinise the statistical data to see whether, not only in theory but in actual fact as well, the Church is the greatest organisation based on a philosophy of life, or whether her rate of growth is in proportion to that of the world population. Certainly he will regard the world with missionary zeal. And this is a point which is also included in the Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Missions. These are especially concerned to ensure that the quite astonishingly optimistic note they strike with regard to the salvation of the world shall not obscure the need for the Church's missionary activities or weaken the missionary zeal of Christians. In this connection one question may be left open as not to be treated of here, that namely of whether we have already arrived at the clearest possible 'synthesis' between this optimism with regard to salvation and the inalienable duty of Christians to be missionaries of the gospel. In any case the Christian will bear witness to the name of Christ. He will be resolved to impart his grace to others, for he possesses a grace of which those others are deprived – are *still* deprived, precisely the grace namely of belonging to the Church *corpore* and not merely *corde*. Only when they have this grace will they actually be contributing to that basic sacramental sign that is the Church. Moreover it is this grace that summons the entire world to make space in human living in its dimensions of freedom and of physical concretion too for that divine life which has all along been at work at the very roots of human nature as the offering of God to communicate himself to man regardless of whether this offering is accepted or refused. It is this grace too which not only impells history forward to that blessedness in which its ultimate consummation is to consist, but is also intended to be incarnate in history itself in full measure and in manifest form. But the Christian is aware of a further point. His zeal has the greatest chance of success when his enthusiasm for his

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missionary vocation is tempered by calmness and patience. He knows that he must imitate the patience of God (which, according to Paul, is positively salvific rather than condemning in its meaning). He knows that God has willed this world to be as it is because otherwise it would not be at all, and that even that which is 'merely' *permitted* is simply permitted precisely as an element in something [20] that is willed (and not merely permitted) by God. He knows further that this which is willed by God can and must be hoped for not merely as the revelation of God's justice but also as the revelation of his infinite kindness to man.

The Christian knows that God does not begin the work of his grace only at that stage at which man takes it up in the name of God. For this reason, when he is faced with one who, so far as his 'philosophy of life' is concerned, has no intention of being a brother, the Christian nevertheless goes to meet him boldly and hopefully as a brother. He sees in him one who does not know what he truly is, one to whom it has not yet been made plain what he nevertheless may be presumed already to be achieving in the depths of his own human living. (So true is this that we have an absolute duty to assume this in hope, and it would be a failure in charity to hold anything less about the non-Christian, for should I as a Christian simply and absolutely take it for granted that the non-Christian with whom I am in contact is devoid of God's grace?). In his fellow the Christian sees Christianity in its 'anonymous' or unacknowledged form at work in a thousand ways. He knows that man is always more and always achieves more in his human living than he himself can express. Ultimately speaking the reality of our existence as humans always goes beyond the interpretations we ourselves place upon it in theory. Now if the Christian recognises all this then he cannot consider it rash or out of place to assume that even though the non-Christian interprets himself quite *otherwise*, still by God's grace some kind of 'unacknowledged Christianity' is already present in him or even is actually, though all unconsciously, being put into practice. If the Christian interprets his own *self* (rightly understood) as *simul justus et peccator*[8] or as, arising from this, *simul fidelis et infidelis*,[9] even though he intends to be a *fidelis* and only this, then it is no impertinence either if he interprets the non-Christian as one who is perhaps *simul fidelis* even though he intends to be only an *infidelis*. If the Christian sees that the non-Christian is kind, charitable and true to his own conscience he will no longer be able to say nowadays 'All those are "natural" virtues,' for in fact, ultimately speaking, these only exist *in abstracto*. He will no longer say: This is certainly just the 'outward brilliance which the vices of the pagans display', as Augustine does. On the contrary he will think, 'There the grace of Christ is at work even [21] in one who has not yet explicitly called upon it but who, at the same time, has already hungered after it in the unexpressed and unacknowledged longings of his heart. There is one in whom the unspeakable groanings of the Spirit have already called in supplication upon the silent but all-pervasive mystery of existence which we Christians know as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!' Supposing that the Christian sees the 'heathen' dying willingly. Supposing that he notices how the other willingly submits, as though no other course were open to him (Oh yes, another course *is* open to him, for he can summon up the ultimate resources of his entire existence and use them to assume a last and absolute attitude of protest and absolute cynicism and doubt) to a death in which he falls into the bottomless abyss which has never been plumbed to the full (because in order to include God it must be infinite). Supposing that the Christian himself recognises in this basic willingness of the non-Christian, which is no longer an articulate attitude at all, that this abyss into which the non-Christian is falling is the abyss of a meaningful mystery and not of a despairing void. If the Christian sees all this then he sees also in one who is dying in this way him who is nailed to

[8] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 218-230.
[9] On this cf. J. B. Metz, 'Unbelief as a Theological Problem', *Concilium* 6/1 (1965), pp. 32-42.

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the saving cross of human existence *at the right hand* of Christ. And he sees that precisely *this* real situation in the concrete, in which this dying man finds himself, wordlessly utters the plea 'Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom'. Why should it not be so? The sheer transcendence of human nature need not always be used as a mere means with a view to asserting one's right to earthly existence. It can be accepted and endured, and then it can also be elevated by grace in such a way that, liberated from its downward tendency towards the finite, it becomes the dynamic impulse that urges us upwards towards the God of eternal life, inasmuch as he, in the ultimate reality of his own nature, considered as that which has been communicated and is to be communicated further, is the ultimate goal and destiny towards which man is supernaturally directed. This orientation towards God implanted in the spiritual transcendence of man by grace goes beyond his nature and liberates him from his earthly bent. Moreover it is sound Thomistic doctrine that it also alters the final goal, the 'formal object' of what the spirit can achieve. And because of this, even though it may not actually set any new object before man's vision it is *in actual reality* a 'revelation', and that too not a 'natural' revelation but one that is grace-given. Moreover in the sense that as revelation it is 'uttered' by God to man on the level of his freedom and personhood it can already be considered 'verbal' and, in so far as it is accepted at this level, as faith.

[22] We are dealing, therefore, with the submission of a man in obedience and love to the infinitude of his own transcendence as to something which is beyond his control. Man submits himself to this transcendent dimension in his own being not in the measure that it can be grasped by us, but rather in the measure that we are grasped and contained by it as something beyond our control. Now if this is so, why should not this attitude of obedient and loving submission on the part of the individual be so transformed, even in the present by the ordinations of God's will to bestow supernatural salvation on men, as to become something more than merely the spiritual transcendence which is in this sense natural to man? Why should not God bring it about by his own act that this spiritual transcendence *de facto* becomes in us that interior tendency which draws us into the life of God? And supposing the individual accepts this tendency implanted in him in the sense that he willingly submits to the control of that which he cannot comprehend in its incomprehensibility, why should not this be enough? (Is it really necessary to insist that of course all the demands of natural and supernatural ethics are to be thought of as implicitly contained in this, though admittedly only in such a way that their authentic orientation to God can be achieved 'subjectively' speaking in the concrete life of the individual even in those cases in which the most far-reaching errors at the material level with regard to particular moral norms are to be found?[10] This is something which is shown in the experience of Christians as well as that of heathens).

Now on this showing, when the Christian preaches Christianity to the 'non-Christian' he will take as his starting-point not so much the basic attitude of wanting to make the other something which he simply has not been hitherto. Rather he will attempt to bring him to himself. Of course this cannot mean that Christianity is, as the modernists hold, simply the explicitation of the religious needs of man's nature. Rather it is because God in his grace, and because of his will to save all men universally, has already long before *offered* the reality of Christianity in its truest and deepest essence to the individual, and because it is perfectly possible, and even probable, that the individual has already freely accepted this reality without consciously adverting to it. These, then, are the factors which will influence the Christian of today and tomorrow in his view and experience of the Church. He will think of it not as making itself felt only infrequently and with difficulty, not as one of the numerous 'sects' into which mankind is divided, not as one of many elements in the pluralism [23] of society or the pluralism in the intellectual life of mankind. Instead of this the Christian will

[10] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 152 ff.

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think of the Church rather as the visible and apprehensible form of that which already has a unifying force at the interior level, as the historical expression of that which is universal to all men and, in a true sense, evident to all (for all that it has been freely instituted by God, for it is precisely God and not any particular finite being which has instituted it!). The Church appears to the Christian as the sheer rendering present in visible form of the nature of man as subject to God's designs (that is, the nature of man as it exists in 'historical fact', and to which a supernatural calling has been vouchsafed). In short the Church appears to the Christian as the fundamental *sacrament* of a grace which, precisely because it is offered to all, presses forward to express its sacramental significance in history even where the individual sacrament (of baptism) has not yet been conferred. But precisely on this view of the Church this grace is never simply *identical* with that which constitutes its effective sign. Rather, in virtue of the particular concrete sign which it institutes in the present, and through which it is itself made present (both aspects must be expressed) it assures us that its power extends *everywhere*. We can say in all calmness: through the sign of the particular sacrament as it is conferred the grace of God assures us that its power extends everywhere, even to those areas where the specific sacramental sign has not yet been applied as such in the concrete to those specific individuals in whom we hope that the grace of God will powerfully take effect. For these individual sacramental signs taken together (and in unison with other factors contributing to the Church's make-up) precisely constitute the Church, since she is, in fact, the community of those who have been baptised and who celebrate the Eucharist. But in virtue of the fact that she is the *sacramentum* of salvation for the world, she is also the promise of grace to it. It must be remembered that the history of mankind is *one and single*, so that there is an intrinsic unity between everything that it contains from Abel to the last living human being, and each individual has a connection with all the rest, not merely those living at the same time or in the same place as himself, but with all human beings right through the ages. Now if this is accorded its due significance then the Church is to be thought of as the leaven working through the lump of dough that is the whole of humanity. And its influence is not confined to that particular part of the 'dough' where it can actually be seen taking effect and so which has itself been turned into an active element in the process of fermentation. On the contrary the leaven that is the Church is at work everywhere and for all. Its influence is extended to every age and is present precisely in [24] those parts of the flour which, so far as we can see, have not yet been turned into leavened dough. To the kind of Christian whom we have in mind, therefore, and who belongs to the new image of the Church, the Church herself will appear as a promise extended to the world outside the Church. And this is true not only on the condition that, or to the extent that, this world has already itself come to belong to the Church. The promise is not only an assurance that this world will increasingly come to belong to the Church, but is the real hope that it will be possible for the world to be redeemed through the Church even in those areas of it where its inclusion in the Church has not acquired the status of a palpable fact of history.

IV

It is only in the light of this that we can clearly recognise the ultimate basis for that collegiate and synodal principle in the Church which figured so prominently in the discussions and teaching of the Council. This principle is the love of those who are united in Christ and so equal. And this is also the basis for all the hierarchical differences that exist in the Church. Of course that unity of love in the Spirit, that state of brotherhood which is a gift of God, was, in itself, always the centre and goal of the message of the gospel and the ministry of the Church. For she has always known and preached that the love of God and the love of neighbour fall

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under one and the same commandment, and constitute the one grace which justifies. And yet this truth, so obvious and yet so far beyond our comprehension, which constitutes the mystery of our existence, exercises in a manner that is quite new a determining influence upon the image of the Church and the Church's life of worship for the future.

We may regard the usual talk about the contemporary society of the masses as false, one-sided or premature. Nevertheless this term does point to a danger, the danger namely that precisely because of the ever-widening social interconnections in which the individual is inescapably involved, because of the constantly increasing influence of social forms and systems which arise, because of the increasing insignificance accorded to human life and because of the fact that in his function in society the individual is increasingly involved in specialisation, the individual himself no longer finds any concrete 'thou', any room for intimate relationships with his fellows. The only relations open to him are such as bring him a sense of abandonment and loneliness. He has a sense of being a tiny and anonymous cog with a function to perform in a [25] huge social machine, a cog which can be replaced at any time. Of course independently of the Church and outside the Church's sphere of influence counter forces are already at work against this danger, and new kinds of informal groups are arising in society which make it possible for man to draw near to man and so protect himself against this state of desolation. Certainly the family will only truly come into its own when it acquires that significance which is at once most ancient and most new, of being the sphere of a love that is personal and proper to the individuals within it. But precisely for this reason the Church too, as she exists at the local level, can acquire a quite new importance as the community of those who, gathered about the altar of Christ, are united by love among themselves. This will be achieved precisely in so far as the local Church of the future no longer appears primarily as the operator of administrative techniques on behalf of a vast institutional organisation designed to cater authoritatively for the spiritual wellbeing of the individual. The Church at the level of the local community will be the community of those who freely believe, of those who have taken their own personal decision. For these baptism is the expression and manifestation of the grace of a faith that is actually put into practice, or at least of acceptance into a family and community of believers in which the faith of the rising generation can really mature as something which they have committed themselves to of their own personal initiative. In such a community that brotherhood will be able to flourish which has its basis in Christ. This future community of the faithful must certainly not be sectarian in character, the sort of community, that is to say, which sullenly and fearfully takes shelter in the shadowy places of history and society like a little group of social inadequates. If such a community experiences its own significance as a sacrament of salvation for the world it can never fail to recognise its task of bearing witness, its function of being the salt of the earth and the leaven of the world, or its mission extending into all spheres of human life. But it can really experience itself as a community united by ties of brotherhood in Christ.

Measured by the physical, indeed the ideological strength of the future world powers or of *the* future world power in the singular, the universal Church will also find that it has less power than ever within its own sphere of human history, if we take power to signify the possibility of exercising a decisive influence over the individual in other areas of life apart from those of truth and love. While, therefore, we must obviously recognise the spiritual authority of the pastors and officials of the Church, these will be thought of in the future precisely not as vested with power [26] in the social dimension, the sort of power, namely which would be really and effectively present independently of and prior to the faith, loyalty and trust of the members of the Church. The authority that goes with an official position in the Church stems from the mission of *Christ himself*. And this means that its real significance springs uniquely from that love that binds together those who are united among themselves as equal, as having been sanctified, and as sharing in community with one another the living

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experience of the love of Christ. Under these circumstances laity and pastors can become accustomed to meet and exchange ideas as members of a family, and it is this that is spoken of in the Constitution on the Church (No. 37). This is the love which unites the brethren who are one in their belief in the *one* Lord who sets them free for the incomprehensible and blessed infinitude of God. It is the deepest and most essential factor in their lives as Christians, and it will, much more clearly and much more directly than formerly, subsume, permeate and assimilate to itself all those institutional factors which necessarily must endure. In this community the unity between love of God and love of neighbour will be experienced in a quite new way. God will not be reduced to the level of the human by a process of demythologising. But because the fact of God becoming man is so central to Christianity, God will be found in man and man himself will be discovered anew as the mystery which projects out and beyond itself into the mystery of God. Thus man will find his true nature only in that which he himself is not, yet in such a way that when it is accepted in a spirit of love, it allows him to experience what is truly meant by God. Admittedly at first we have only weak and indistinct ideas of how such a community, formed by the new spirit of love of God and love of neighbour, will appear in the concrete; how a Church formed by love in this way will express her communal worship, seeing that she is neither a clan constituted by the local community with religious trimmings added to it, nor yet a cosy sectarian nest where the socially frustrated can take shelter, nor (and this is the mistake most often made today) an extremely select department-store of holiness in which the individual obtains moral strengthening for the wellbeing of his individual soul, and in doing this merely makes allowance for the fact that many are simultaneously claiming the services of this department-store, so that in fact, in this extremely individualistic interpretation of its purpose the Church's function as serving the community is made subordinate to its function as catering for the individual. The community of the new Church must be a community of love, and love is extremely practical. But it is better for us to admit to ourselves in all honesty that as yet we [27] hardly know what outward shape a community living by practical love in this way can assume. We are only capable of obtaining something when we do not believe that we already possess it, and this applies here also.

V

What has been said so far is admittedly far from expressing everything that can be discovered, at least in principle, in the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council with regard to the new elements which will appear in the image of the Church. Indeed we have not yet said even half of what is to be said on this subject. This is particularly true because that which most of all pertains to the origins always remains the newest as well. This element in the Church, which is at once most ancient and most new, is that which she utters and imparts. But what she utters is, in the last analysis, not herself. She is the message that speaks of another and makes this other present and effective for us.

On this showing ecclesiology is related to the other departments of dogmatic theology as grammar, the techniques of poetry and semantics are related to poetry itself. The Church understands her own nature best when she is actually fulfilling her function, and this means when she is actually speaking of God and his grace, of Jesus Christ, his Cross and Resurrection and eternal life, and when, in the very act of uttering this message, she allows herself to be moved by the grace of God. We can also say that she realises her own nature as an 'institution' of salvation only when she understands herself as the *fruit* of salvation and acts as such. There is no doubt that in the Constitution on the Church this turning-point has been reached and passed. Certainly this document does speak explicitly – why indeed should it not? – of the Church as an institution, of its officials and its authority in various

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departments, of its hierarchical structure, of its teaching and pastoral offices, of the different degrees in which its members participate in its mission, of its authorities and their powers – in short of the Church as an institution of salvation and as a means of salvation. But all this is, nevertheless, subsumed and made subordinate to a more basic understanding of the Church, in which the Church is viewed as the people of God gathered together by God's grace, and the Church is interpreted as the outcome of God's grace, as the fruit of salvation. It is possible for the Church to be seen as the Body of Christ, as the people of God; for her to be understood as 'the people of God on their journey'. It is possible to recognise that she herself is still seeking to find her goal through history. It is possible for the Church to [28] recognise her own nature as a reality which still bears in itself the form of this present aeon (No. 48), yet which is eager to raise herself above this level to the point at which the kingdom of God is 'all in all', and no longer merely a Church. It is possible for us to regard all those vested with hierarchical authority in her as being such only in virtue of the fact that the Church herself is *already in existence*, and to recognise that this view of them is at least as important as that in which they are regarded as those who form the Church. Now if we can view the Church in this light, then certainly we have achieved something more than a one-sided view of the Church as an authoritative institution of salvation. Then the Church appears not primarily as she who acts upon us, but rather as she whom we all *are* in virtue of the fact that the grace of God has moved and inspired us and bound us together into a unity.

Many further fresh traits in the image of the Church could be pointed to. Here however let us confine ourselves to mentioning a few of the minor ones. To a greater extent than in the ecclesiology of the official Church of earlier times the Church now appears as the sinful Church, the Church of sinners, so that she must constantly be turning back in repentance to her Lord. Even if it cannot be said that this presentation of the Church has been given all the importance due to it as a theme of ecclesiology, still it is a vital factor in the new image of the Church. The Church appears as a communion of faith, hope and love (Nos. 8, 64, 65), as a Church of the Trinity (No. 4). She is not merely the Church of hierarchical authorities and of the sacraments, but the Church of the free charismata as well (No. 12), the Church of martyrdom (No. 42). Moreover we are ready to recognise whole-heartedly that martyrdom is present in non-Catholic Christendom as well. The Church feels herself to be the Church of the poor and oppressed (Nos. 8, 41). Far more clearly than formerly, she has overcome the misconception which was tacitly present in the theology of the Fathers and the Middle Ages. This was the feeling that the difference between the clergy and the laity, or between the state of being ordained and that of not being ordained *ipso facto* and of itself implied a difference in the nearness to God which the individual could attain to, a difference, therefore, in the degree of his love of God and love of neighbour, and so of his holiness. The Church is conscious of being the Church in the eschatological phase of saving history, in which, to the eye of faith, the drama of the dialogue between God and man has already irrevocably been decided by God in favour of man's salvation (No. 48). But precisely by viewing herself in this light the Church is conscious of being one who bears in herself the form of the present age and of [29] herself as still belonging to that order of creation which waits longingly for the revelation of the glory of the children of God. Thus she is not the permanent institution which mediates the future kingdom of God and the eternal life that goes with it to the individuals who receive salvation, in order that she may remain herself here below. Rather she is the pilgrim who is herself journeying through history to that eternity in which she will cease any longer to be an institution of salvation with an authoritative and sacramental system of this kind (No. 48).

We have only been able to bring out a few of the traits which are present in the new image of the Church. In this we do not mean to imply that other traits, familiar to us from earlier times, are no longer in force in this image, or that they no longer have any importance. It is

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also obvious that the application of these new traits in the image of the Church in the concrete realities of her actual existence still requires a long process of education until these traits can be made manifest in real and living form in the worship of the Church's individual members and in the practice of the Church herself. But the Church has already made a beginning in entering upon her new life of worship of this kind. Now the point of vital importance will be to ensure that the letter of this conciliar ecclesiology is really made spirit and life.

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[30]

2

CHURCH, CHURCHES AND RELIGIONS

For modern Christians and for those of a religious bent the question of the relationship between the Church, the Churches and the various religions provides a thought-provoking subject for discussion. The society in which the Catholic Christian of today lives is a complex and heterogeneous one. He lives in the closest proximity to, and has the closest personal connections with, non-Catholic Christians. The sphere in which his life is passed is no longer a country which, in its social, cultural and even civic aspects, is homogeneously 'Catholic'. Indeed, where formerly the individual nations were independent of one another in their lines of historical development, nowadays these lines are tending to become fused into a single great world history. And the result of this is that the non-Christian religions and philosophies of life such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, no longer constitute an area of foreign folklore which has no bearing upon the course of life modern man maps out for himself and raises no radical problems for him. Instead of this these non-Christian religions have come to be regarded as the philosophies of life of men who have become neighbours to modern man, men in whom he cannot fail to recognise just as high a degree of intelligence as that with which he credits himself. Moreover he is compelled to accept it as axiomatic, if he wants to be just and fair, that they in their turn have a certain knowledge of Christianity and an honourable resolve to strive for the truth. Now in this situation it is borne in upon him – and far more deeply borne in than in the case of a Catholic of earlier times – that these Christians who belong to other creeds, and these adherents of non-Christian religions, are, on the whole, quite undisturbed in their interior thoughts and dispositions by Catholic Christianity; that in spite of it they continue whole-heartedly to give their allegiance to their own particular Christian confession or non-Christian religion.

Now we might conceive of a position in which the Catholic arrived at the judgment that all these creeds and religions are equally justified from the outset as expressions of a single basic attitude of 'faith'; that [31] they all serve to bring men into a relationship with God that is salvific; that they differ from one another only in points that are more or less inessential; and that, just as in human society and culture in general the individual can choose to adopt any mode of life he likes, so too here it is open to him to select whichever one of these creeds or religions suits him best. *If* this were a possible position for a Catholic, then of course the fact that there is so much diversity in religion would not in itself cause him a moment's disquiet. But this is precisely a judgment which the Catholic Christian cannot make. An intrinsic element in his Christian and Catholic beliefs is the conviction of faith that now at any rate Christianity is the unique and absolute religion founded by God through Christ and prescribed by him for all men; that it is *the* way of salvation which God, of his salvific will, has created for all and made radically binding for all to follow. We cannot adopt that attitude of religious relativism which regards all religions as on the whole equally justifiable, and the confusion and disorder among them as relatively unimportant; or that attitude which considers that the variations and points of convergence between the different religions are, taken all in all, only concerned with inessentials. Such an attitude would, if pressed to its logical conclusions, represent the total overthrow of the Christian and Catholic faith. And this is no less true even though there may be no small number of Catholics who implicitly feel that they can combine a religious relativism of this kind in their concrete attitudes with an active practice of the 'Catholic' religion which may even, in some cases, be very enthusiastic. The really convinced Catholic, therefore, finds himself confronted with the question of how,

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without this religious relativism, he can reconcile his faith in the absolute nature of his Catholic Christianity and of his Church, and in the universally binding force which they have for all, with the fact that even after two thousand years of Christianity and the Church the greater part of mankind is neither Christian nor Catholic. For in facing up to this question he cannot deny that this greater part of mankind has both intelligence and sincerity of conscience. A further fact which he has to take into consideration is that he is bound by the terms of his own Catholic belief to hold fast to the fact that God truly and effectively wills all men to be saved. He cannot hold the opinion that God himself denies the possibility and the grace of salvation to a wide section of mankind. And yet it is only in Jesus Christ that this salvation is conferred, and through Christianity and the one Church that it must be mediated to all men.

To the extent that it is possible at all within the limits of this study, this question must be answered. The answer that is given must be based [32] upon the orthodox teaching of the Catholic faith. What we are looking for, therefore, is an answer which we cannot, in any sense, attempt to find a basis for in the history or philosophy of religion, or from some position in which we remain uncommitted to the creed of a specific religion. On the contrary, we are seeking for an answer which the Catholic Christian must give on the basis of his own Christianity and according to the principles proper to this. Obviously in giving such an answer we cannot enter into any extensive development of the dogmatic principles on which it will be based. These can only be stated in bare outline. Obviously too a generalised answer of this kind, based as it is on a pre-existing system, must necessarily make use of ideas which cannot themselves claim to have dogmatic force but are only intended to be *reconcilable* with the dogmatic positions.

For the Catholic theologians of today, in contrast to those of former times, one not inconsiderable factor has made it easier to find an answer to this question. It is that the Second Vatican Council has had something quite fundamental to say upon this question. The relevant pronouncements are to be found in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, in the Decree on Oecumenism, in the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, and in the Explanation Concerning Non-Christian Religions. The relevant pronouncements, even though there is a genuine continuity between them and the earlier traditions of Catholic teaching, are nevertheless both fresh and courageous. Moreover, while they are certainly brief they are also fairly unambiguous.[1] The striking point in all this was above all the fact that although these pronouncements represented a very notable advance in the question with which we are concerned, this advance was achieved almost as though the necessity for it were self-evident, and the pronouncements were adopted without debate or opposition of any kind. It is neither necessary nor possible to expound the relevant passages at this point, or to provide a theological interpretation of them. Here we must confine ourselves to emphasising right at the outset that in the theological considerations which follow the author is conscious of finding support and justification in this explanation of the Council.

I

We must begin by stating the fundamental principle on the basis of which our question must be answered.

[33] 1. With regard to this fundamental principle we must begin by referring to a conviction which is an intrinsic element in the content of the Catholic faith. It is the

[1] For a more detailed investigation of this point cf. K. Rahner, ‘Atheism and Implicit Christianity’ in volume IX, (London & Baltimore, 1972), pp. 145-164.

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conviction that in spite of original sin and also the personal sinfulness of men God truly and sincerely wills *all* men to be saved, and that in virtue of willing the universal salvation of all in this sense he offers every man, whatever the circumstances of life in which he finds himself, a genuine possibility of attaining to his own salvation. This general offering of salvation attaches itself (at least if we set aside the question of the final destiny of children who die unbaptised) to salvation in the grace of Christ as its definitive mode, and it is this that Christian salvation properly means. It achieves its final consummation in a sharing through the life of God, and this in turn implies the enjoyment of the immediate vision of God and, as the concomitant of this, a love of God that is ultimate and eternal. It also implies that state which we refer to in the creed as the 'resurrection of the flesh'. Catholic theologians of earlier times often put forward the hypothesis that under certain circumstances men who had arrived at the use of their intelligence and free will could enjoy a merely 'natural' beatitude without sharing in the divine nature and the divine life in the beatific vision. They developed this hypothesis in order to find a way out of the difficulty of seeing how supernatural salvation could ever be attained by those individuals who, at least to all appearances, could not and did not attain to belief in the gospel as an act of supernatural grace. But today at least, in the light of the Second Vatican Council, it should be clear that this way out of the difficulty is no longer open to Catholic theologians. On this question we have to hold firm to the fact that the salvation which God offers to every man as genuinely possible for him is the Christian salvation that comes to him through supernatural grace and consists in a sharing in the life of God. The possibility of attaining to this salvation is such that it can only remain unrealised if it is frustrated by the real, grave and personal guilt of the subject to whom it is offered.

This will of God to save all men in Christ and through his grace can be characterised more precisely and more concisely as God's will to bestow himself on the creature who is endowed with spiritual faculties. What is intended to be conveyed by this may be stated as follows:

The salvation which God, of his will to save all men, offers and effectively bestows upon the individual is present now in its first principles and as a seed which is still undeveloped. (At this stage it is called 'justifying and sanctifying grace'). In the future this will be brought to its fulness in the form of eternal life (this is called the 'vision of God'). It can only [34] fail to be brought to this fulness if man of his own free will sinfully rejects it. Now salvation in this sense is not a *created* gift of God, a mere creaturely state of sanctification and blessedness, but rather, in the deepest sense, God himself. For it is himself in his innermost and most mysterious life, and so in his divine glory that God gives man to have as his own. This self-bestowal of God in that form in which it is offered is both that which God offers and imparts to man as a gift of salvation for his own final perfection, and at the same time it is something more. It is the possibility which he imparts to the creature as endowed with spiritual faculties to receive what is offered with a freedom that is raised and intensified to a supernatural level; to receive it, therefore, in such a way that in the very act of accepting it man continues to recognise that which is actually offered him as salvation as divine. In other words he does not, in some sense, draw it down to the level or into the dimension of the purely finite and natural perfection of man and so deprive it of its true status. God himself *is* the salvation and at the same time the power to receive the salvation in such a way that this salvation really is God himself, and God remains not only the ultimate Cause but the real content as well of this salvation. This self-bestowal of God as the salvation of man and as the possibility of accepting this salvation in full freedom is something that, without derogating from the sharing in the divine life that it effects in the ultimate depths of man's nature, applies to the whole man in all the levels of his being, in that which unites all these levels and in the manner in which they mutually condition one another.

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2. Thus the self-bestowal of God upon the creature as endowed with spiritual faculties implies two things:

(A) The divine self-bestowal (at least as offered and bestowed upon the free creature as that which makes it possible for it to act for its own salvation) penetrates to the ultimate roots of man's being, to the innermost depths of his spiritual nature, and takes effect upon him from there, radically re-orientating this nature of his towards the immediate presence of God. It imparts to this nature an inward dynamism and an ultimate tendency towards God himself that is a grace. It elevates the uncircumscribed transcendentality of the person as spiritual in such a way that this becomes something more than the condition proper to human nature as spiritual, personal and free. It becomes a transcendentality that reaches up to the immediacy of God himself. This divine finality and dynamic impulse present in the person as spiritual is indeed and in the most absolute sense a grace, because it owes nothing to the 'natural' nature of man. But this does not mean that it is to be conceived of as something [35] which only exists here and there in some individuals but not in others. This 'supernatural existential' or mode of being (as we may call this finality and dynamic impulse which makes us tend towards the immediate presence of God) is indeed the outcome of grace. But it is inserted into man's nature through the salvific will of God to become an abiding element in his spiritual mode of being, and as something that is a living force in man always and everywhere, whether accepted or rejected by man's own free will. It radically influences the ultimate development of his existence as spiritual.[2] Admittedly this does not mean, and need not mean, that man must always have a conscious awareness of this 'supernatural existential' in his life, or that he must be able to create this awareness within him simply by a process of psychological introspection.

Just as in other contexts too man can never achieve, merely by reflecting upon himself, any adequate view of the full depths and heights of his own existence as a spiritual being endowed with transcendence and freedom, and can never objectify this to himself, so too it is with this supernatural existential of which he is aware, yet which he cannot on that account know in the sense of objectifying it to himself. It is a mode of being, or 'existential', which is constituted by the salvific will of God for all men, to become an abiding element in their spiritual existence and to belong inescapably to human nature as such. It is the ultimate, most vital and most interior reality and power of man's existence, even though in the average and everyday activities of his life he never consciously reflects upon the fact that he is living by it, and even though the way in which he experiences this grace is not one in which it becomes the object of his conscious awareness.[3] For he experiences it in virtue of the fact that constantly, and in all the exercise of his knowledge and freedom, he experiences himself as one who is orientated towards that which lies beyond all definable realities, namely towards the silent mystery of God. In order to have a single key phrase in which to sum all this up in brief we may call this self-bestowal of God, considered as the abiding existential of every human life, the transcendental self-bestowal of God.

(B) Now even at the natural level every spiritual mode of transcendentality that belongs to man is activated when man as a physical and social entity engages himself in the concrete realities of his life as [36] conditioned by space and time, as belonging to history, and as involving communication with other beings on the same plane of existence. In other words this transcendentality of man as spiritual does not remain a separate department of human life *over and above* the historical context in which he is involved, and in which he brings his existence to its fulness. And this also applies to the process by which man develops to the full

[2] On the concept of the 'supernatural existential' cf. F. K. Mayr and K. Rahner, 'Existential', *Sacramentum Mundi* 2 (Freiburg and London 1968), pp. 304-307.
[3] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore 1967), pp. 86-90; also the same author's *Alltägliche Dinge* (5th ed. Einsiedeln 1966).

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the supernaturally elevated transcendentality bestowed upon him, the 'supernatural existential'. This is not something that takes place apart from this historical mode of being, but rather something that is achieved in and through his existence as engaged in human living in the concrete.

The 'supernatural existential' in man has a history of its own which unfolds throughout the whole length and breadth of man's life as a historical being. It is in this life that it is imparted to man in his freedom, and it is in this life that it is made manifest. This manifestation does not necessarily or in all cases need to be explicitly and thematically religious. It is *ipso facto* present, albeit unconsciously and, in a certain sense, 'anonymously', everywhere where the transcendentality of the spirit and moral freedom are exercised, because the transcendental self-bestowal of God through the 'supernatural existential' is precisely one of the factors exercising a decisive influence upon this spiritual nature of man.

Thus the presence of the abiding 'supernatural existential' in man has the effect of making saving history coexistent with human history in general in its spiritual dimension, even though in many cases man himself does not consciously advert to this or formulate to himself what is taking place in this spiritual dimension.[4] To this extent we can and must say that either saving history or its opposite, the history of perdition, is taking place wherever man of his own free decision either voluntarily undertakes his own mode of existence or alternatively protests against it. And this is precisely because this 'supernatural existential', considered as God's act of self-bestowal which he offers to men, is in all cases grafted into the very roots of human existence.

Indeed we may go so far as to say that 'revelation history' is always and everywhere taking place because of God's act of supernatural self-bestowal considered as that which raises and re-orientates the transcendental dimension of the human spirit by the power of grace. The reason for this is that even though man himself may not have recognised this supernatural self-bestowal or reflected upon it in his conscious thought, nevertheless it still constitutes an element in his transcendental awareness.

[37] Certainly the reason that 'revelation history' is always and everywhere taking place is not simply that the spiritual level of man's being, with the still undeveloped resources and possibilities which it has of itself, *ipso facto* constitutes an authentic revelation in this sense. Rather it is that God himself, by the very fact of his own gracious act of self-bestowal, *constantly* communicates himself to man as the divine ultimate to which truth points, and as the very scope of love. And this transcendental self-bestowal of God is communicated (even if not as a definable idea) in and through the spiritual dimension of man's life.

What we have been speaking of is the progressive and purposive unfolding of salvation and revelation ('salvation' and 'revelation history') which derives from the presence in man of the 'supernatural existential'. Now it is possible for man himself to explicitate this in his conscious thought and to make it a religious theme for investigation. And this process of making the 'salvation' and 'revelation history' of the 'supernatural existential' an explicit object and theme for man's religious thought can be positively guided, or even demanded by God as part of his plan to save man. Over and above this it is possible for this process of explicitation to be of such a kind that man is supplied with relatively sure criteria enabling him to judge the rightness or otherwise of the development of his ideas in objectifying and interpreting this 'salvation history' and 'revelation history' taking place within his own nature. He can assure himself by these criteria that the gradual and progressive process of objectifying and reflexively interpreting this 'history' that takes place within him is correct, legitimate, and not a false interpretation or a distortion due to human error and human

[4] For a fuller exposition of this cf. K. Rahner, 'History of the World and Salvation History', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 97-114.

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sinfulness. Now if, and to the extent that, we actually achieve all this we can move on to a further stage. Within the broader context of the 'salvation' and 'perdition' history which is universally present everywhere and all the time in mankind, and within the universal 'salvation' and 'revelation history' which is taking place throughout humanity, we attain to something more, something that we can call the *explicit* and *official* history of salvation and revelation, something which we are habitually accustomed to call simply 'salvation history' (*Heilsgeschichte*), something that is apprehensible to us as Christians in the salvation history and revelation history of the Old and New Testaments.

This explicit and official salvation history is still dependent upon the 'supernatural existential' present in all men and taking effect throughout humanity. It is dependent too upon the process of objectifying this which, unalloyed by human error, is attested by God himself. And this [38] salvation history is brought to its climax and goal in Jesus Christ. In him, as the God-man in person, there takes place God's self-bestowal upon man and upon his history in its most sublime, most absolute and most irrevocable form. At the same time in this same Jesus Christ there takes place the most total and perfect acceptance of this self-bestowal of God, as well as the most sublime effects issuing from this acceptance. Thus in this God-man the self-bestowal of God upon the world, and the acceptance of this by the world (in other words the 'supernatural existential' and the reception of this into human nature) are present in history definitively, irrevocably and in a mode in which they can be apprehended in the concrete.

The 'supernatural existential', therefore, present in all humanity tends dynamically towards its irrevocable climax in Jesus Christ. It has this innate tendency of its very nature, but also in virtue of the fact that the dimension of transcendentality in man is realised in a progressive and purposive unfolding, a history. To the extent that this is true, and to the extent that every movement towards a goal derives its direction and force from the goal itself, it can be said that the whole of 'salvation' and 'revelation history' *both* as universally present in all men *and* in its explicit and official form is dependent upon Jesus Christ and derives its direction and its forward movement from him. To this extent and in this sense too the whole of this history is the history of the God-man. It follows that this latter is itself already present even in those men who have not attained to any explicit, conscious or objective knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Taking this as our first principle, therefore, we are now in a position to indicate, at least briefly, where the answer is to be found to the question which we have posed for ourselves.

II

First let us take that assertion of the Christian and Catholic faith which lays down that Christianity is *the* universal, absolute, and God-given religion, and that the one Catholic Church is, of her very nature, a sharer in this absolute quality of Christianity. Let us attempt to answer the question of what this means and how it is justified. When we attribute this absolute character to Christianity we do not intend to assert that the salvation history and revelation history of God is identical with that particular area in the religious history of mankind which is confined to the Old and the New Testaments or to those who have had an explicit faith in Jesus Christ. When we say that Christianity has this *absolute* [39] character we are saying something quite different from this. First and foremost that the whole salvation history and revelation history of mankind is coexistent with the history of mankind as personal and spiritual and with all that is morally good in this. And inasmuch as it is coexistent in this sense with the history of the human spirit the whole of it is sustained in being by that transcendental self-bestowal of God which is grace-given and which finds its

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supreme and irreversible manifestation in history, and at the same time its free acceptance on the part of humanity, in the God-man Jesus Christ.

The God-man, then, is the supreme and climactic point in God's bestowing of himself upon mankind, such that he supplies meaning to the whole of this divine self-bestowal right from its inception. Right from its very inception God's plan and God's execution of this plan in the implementation of his will to save all men has proceeded from the God-man as its starting-point and to him as its goal. And because of this the whole of salvation and revelation history is Christian right from its inception even before there has been any conscious recognition of this in it, and even before that point in history is attained at which its Christian significance has been objectively formulated and made explicit, namely in the creed, in the Christian act of worship, and in the form of a visible Church.

Conversely, to postulate a salvation and revelation history of this kind is in no sense to deny the absolute character of Christ himself, of Christianity as an explicit faith, or of the Church as the visible expression of the abiding presence of Christ. For this history is in fact itself being impelled towards Christ, even though only in a hidden manner, by this forward movement, this historical unfolding of the grace that is offered to all and in all ages. That which is made effective (at least as something offered by God) always and everywhere throughout the history of mankind achieves its supreme expression as a comprehensible historical fact which can no longer be suppressed or denied in Jesus Christ and his Church. In Christ and in his Church man's transcendence is not merely present in the depths of his conscience in virtue of the 'supernatural existential'. Also, and more than this, this transcendence of his is actually opened up to the immediate presence and action of God in virtue of what has taken place in history and what has been explicitly uttered. Christianity and the Church can see their own significance as the effective presence of God's salvation in the absolute and of his grace, in history and as apprehensible to man. They can achieve this understanding of their own significance precisely because it does not entail any denial of the fact [40] that salvation history both in the collective sense and as applied to the life of the individual, is present *everywhere*. On the contrary, Christianity and the Church understand this as the prior history that leads up to themselves and as the effect of that selfsame grace which has achieved its definitive and unsurpassable historical manifestation in themselves. Moreover the fact that it has arrived at this definitive mode does not mean that the grace referred to has been withdrawn from the universal history of mankind, or that it has ceased to be the inner dynamism latent in the very heart of this and making God present in it.

This divine dynamism, then, latent in the entire history of the human spirit, transforms it into saving history and revelation history. And in doing this it impels this whole spiritual and religious history towards that point at which it becomes explicitly apprehensible as the history and manifestation of Christ and of his Church. And even though this point may lie in a future that is remote and invisible, it is in fact ultimately identical with the end of history and the return of Christ in glory. This is the first point. The second point is that Christianity and the Church themselves have only arrived at their definitive fulness and historical maturity when the whole of salvation history and revelation history has visibly and explicitly been transformed into the history of Christianity and of the Church and has become a definable element in the Christianity that is explicitly embodied in the Church. So far we have been treating of two basic principles, and in the light of the synthesis which we have achieved between them it now becomes intelligible to us that even Christianity and the Church themselves are constantly in process of seeking the final perfection of their own nature. And because of this they are in a position to recognise in those tendencies within the spiritual and religious history of mankind which are religiously positive even though not yet explicitly Christian, that which Christianity and the Church must absorb and transform into themselves in order to become fully that which they already are: the manifestation in history of the grace

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of God now at its eschatological stage in history and in a state of purity which is divinely attested and assured.

III

In the light of the basic principle indicated above we can also acquire fresh insights in our deepening awareness of our Catholic faith with regard to the interpretation we should put upon non-Catholic Christians and Christian Churches outside our own. The Catholic Church cannot [41] think of herself as one among many historical manifestations in which *one and the same* God-man Jesus Christ is made present, which are offered by God to man for him to choose whichever he likes. On the contrary she must necessarily think of herself as the one and total presence in history of the one God-man in his truth and grace, and as such as having a fundamental relationship to all men. She is conscious of herself as making abidingly present that which derives authoritatively and juridically, even from the aspect of historical succession, from *that* Church which Jesus Christ gathered about himself as the community of those who believe in him; conscious of herself as the Church which has remained faithful to her own origins in her sacramental system, in her moral principles and in the authority legitimately bequeathed to her by Christ himself. All this Christ has made an intrinsic element in his Church, although admittedly the manner in which she has preserved all this involves a process of historical unfolding and legitimate development. For this reason the Catholic Church cannot simply think of herself as one among many Christian Churches and communities on an equal footing with her. The unity which Christ indubitably willed his Church to exhibit is meant to be visibly and unambiguously present even in the dimension of history and social life. And the Church cannot accept that this unity is something which must be achieved only in the future and through a process of unification between the Christian Churches, so that until this point is reached it simply would not exist. But though he must hold this the Catholic Christian need not on that account regard the other Christian Churches and communities simply as entities which should not be there at all or as constituting a mere contradiction of the Church of Christ.

We must begin by stating a principle which should be fully and sincerely accepted as axiomatic, and which we have a duty in Christian love to accept in this sense. It is that absolutely speaking all Christians, together with the ecclesiastically organised communities to which they belong, have a will to be one and belong to the one true Church of Christ. Now to will this is a grace of God that is absolutely basic to salvation. As such it is undoubtedly more fundamental and more absolute than that will which causes non-Catholic Christians and their Churches to remain separated from the Catholic Church, from her teaching and from her authority, and to believe that they must maintain this separation in force. They believe this because in spite of that more basic will to unity which is present in their consciences, they still cannot see that the Catholic Church is the Church of Christ to which they too, absolutely speaking, owe their allegiance. It is not possible at this point to enter into the question [42] of why, in spite of God's universal will to save all men, and in spite of this basic will on the part of all Christians to adhere to the true Church of Christ and maintain its unity, God himself in his saving providence tolerates this failure to recognise the one Church of Christ. Indeed, this saving providence of God recognises (though no doubt only indirectly and by implication) that this failure has a positive meaning for these Christians and for the Church herself in the sense that even though this state of disunity should not be, still a deeper significance can be drawn from it.

In any case, when we reflect upon this more basic underlying will to adhere to the true Church of Christ and its unity we can see that even when it has not yet found its proper

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object, which is precisely this Church as it exists as a fully concrete and visible entity, still it has already found something. For an ultimate unity, effective at the invisible and spiritual level, already exists between all Christians. And in fact this unity is already such that, precisely because it is sustained and brought about by the Spirit of God, it is greater than the unity of the Church considered merely as a society, such as, for instance exists or might exist between Catholics. It is perfectly possible for these to belong to one and the same Catholic Church so far as their external lives and social relationships are concerned, and still, through their own fault, not to possess the Holy Spirit of grace and justification, and so to be united to one another only by social and ecclesiastical ties of a purely external kind. Furthermore on the Catholic understanding of faith it is immediately apparent that all those Christians outside the Catholic Church who have not committed any serious fault against the claims of their own religious or moral consciences, do in fact possess the Holy Spirit of justification and grace. They have already arrived at a participation in the divine nature, the 'supernatural existential' which they have voluntarily accepted. In other words that interior dynamism which assimilates them to God, and is in this sense the seed of eternal life thrusting upwards towards the immediate presence of God, is already present at the innermost core of their being. All these, therefore, are in possession of precisely that to which everything in the Church is ordered; for her official life, her sacraments and the exercise of her authority are on the one hand simply the instrument and means for achieving this end and on the other that which enables her to manifest the reality concerned as a concrete phenomenon in history. All Christians both within and without the Catholic Church, therefore, simply in virtue of being faithful to their own consciences, are united among themselves in the Spirit of the Church, in the life of God that is [43] extended to them. It is this life of God as extended to man, therefore, that everything in the Church is intended to point to as its appropriate manifestation. It is meant to be a sacramental sign in history of this life, without actually being identified with it.

The unity of men in the Spirit of God can, therefore, be present, and to a large extent actually is present, even where the manifestation in history and the imparting of this truly divine unity has not yet been achieved at least in its fulness, where this unity has not yet fully imposed itself in the dimension of the social life of Christians, their forms of worship and their adherence to one and the same explicit creed. An analogy may be invoked here from the sacramental teaching of the Catholic Church, according to which there are cases in which the reception of the sacrament as a formal act of worship is actually anticipated, and the *grace* of the sacrament concerned is already present before the sacrament is received. This grace does indeed demand its appropriate sacramental manifestation, but under certain circumstances no longer achieves such manifestation in the human and temporal life of the individuals concerned. In the case of Christians outside the Church the same relationship prevails. Let us consider this ultimate unity in the Spirit, to which, in the last analysis, all attain as the beginning of eternal life, as it exists among those Christians who are separated by their beliefs from the Church. Among them it does not exist as a mere unity, totally deprived of *any* kind of historical manifestation. It is only that the historical manifestation appropriate to it is rendered more remote. For everywhere where the word of God in scripture is acknowledged, where, in the deepest and truest sense (even though, it may be, with certain omissions or wrong interpretations) the living God, the grace of Christ the Lord and the Redeemer and the forgiveness of sins is preached, where this preaching is effective for salvation because it takes place in the name of Christ, where baptism in the Trinity is validly and effectively conferred and where, in some cases other sacraments too of Christ are likewise administered, there the Spirit of justification and unity among Christians *ipso facto* creates for itself a unity in the dimension of the social and ecclesiastical life of Christians, of their creed and of their formal worship, a unity which, even if it is not total, is still real. In all

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these areas of human life, therefore, this Spirit of unity is already beginning to clothe itself in visible 'Church' form, even when it has not yet achieved the full manifestation of its unity and the full unity which it is meant to have as a concrete historical phenomenon. Christians, even while they remain still separated from one another in terms of their express beliefs, are already in the here and now [44] more united in the dimension of grace *and* in the dimension of the Church than they are divided according to outward appearances. That which already unites them in the here and now is more than that which still holds them apart.

A further point which the Catholic Christian must take into consideration is this. The non-Catholic Christian will, through grace, make experience of the Spirit which performs its atoning and sanctifying work in him through the imparting of those Christian elements which belong to the visible realities of human life as these are communicated to him in his own Church. Moreover these Christian realities which his own Church supplies also have in real fact as they apply to him the significance of true and positive media of salvation. According to the Catholic understanding of the Church the communication of salvation as found here consists formally not indeed in that which actually causes his Church to be separated from the Catholic Church but rather in those positive Christian elements which can exist even outside the Catholic Church and which are brought about by God's salvific will. On the basis of this experience of grace which is *de facto* communicated to him through his own Church the non-Catholic Christian arrives at the judgment (even though he may not formulate it precisely in *these* terms) that so long as he can, and indeed must hold firm to this Church in which grace and justification are communicated to him he cannot recognise in any clear, positive or unambiguous sense in his own conscience that this Christian communication of his justification and experience of grace is also to be found pure and unalloyed in the Catholic Church. Nor can he judge that over and above this *in* the Catholic Church they actually achieve their authentic fulness and are made fully apprehensible as elements in concrete human living in the way that Christ willed them to be, and that must be brought about by grace in order that they can be manifested with all the fulness appropriate to them. Even on Catholic principles the non-Catholic Christian who encounters the grace of God in, and indeed through his Church, must presume that until he encounters precisely this Christianity which he has experienced in the Catholic Church, and in a form that is equally pure and more fully and unambiguously apprehensible as a concrete historical phenomenon to the point where it genuinely convinces his own conscience – until he arrives at this position he has an absolute duty to hold fast to the Christianity which he has inherited. The Catholic Christian must, without prejudice to his belief in the necessity of his Church for salvation, recognise the position of the non-Catholic Christian who has arrived at this kind of decision as [45] a result of the concrete circumstances of his life. For such a one, even without any fault on his part, the possibility of recognising the true significance of the Catholic Church to a point where it overcomes his earlier presumption is not necessarily given in all cases or inevitably, and may never be given throughout his entire life.

In the light of this it becomes apparent that non-Catholic Churches and religious confraternities too have a positive function to perform, not only for their own adherents but also in relation to the Catholic Church. For it is perfectly possible for the one Spirit of God to manifest its presence in objective historical occurrences in the other Christian confessions and communions, that same Spirit which works, sanctifies and creates unity in the Catholic Church *and* outside her as well. These objective manifestations do not have to be present in the Catholic Church with the same frequency, with an equal historical impact, or with the same clarity and power to convince the conscience. At the same time the Catholic Christian, on the basis of his own understanding of the Church, cannot concede that the Catholic Church has in principle set its face against, or still persistently sets its face against all cases of such genuine objective manifestations of the Spirit, which themselves serve in turn to impart the

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Spirit to others. To this extent the Catholic Church has something to learn from such genuine objective manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the non-Catholic Churches. They are, of their nature, a call and an incentive to watchfulness which the Spirit of God offers her because she herself, through the narrow-mindedness and sinfulness of her members, has not yet arrived at the full effectiveness of the part she has to play in human history or the full development of her own nature.

IV

Finally let us return to our basic principle in order to achieve from this standpoint a theological evaluation of the non-Christian religions. Since these, even when compared to one another, vary enormously in respect of the degree of religious feeling, purity etc. that they have achieved, what we have in principle to say at this point can obviously only validly be applied to the particular religions in this category in very different ways and with more or less strong reservations.[5]

Bearing this proviso in mind it can be said that if we begin by viewing [46] the non-Christian religions before the coming of Christ then certainly we can recognise the possibility that 'in themselves' and in principle they were positively willed by God as legitimate ways of salvation. For certainly the explicit and official salvation history of the Old Testament and the explicit and official means of salvation recorded there were not prescribed for all men. On the other hand, however, it follows from God's will to save all men that every individual must have had some positive means of salvation available to him, giving him at least the possibility of possessing true supernatural salvation. Yet the nature of man as a historical and social being was such that a way of salvation of this kind could not be followed in the concrete altogether in emancipation from the social and historical context of human life. Man will not work out his salvation simply by acts of religion which are purely interior. He can only do so through the sort of religion which must, of its very nature, find concrete expression in the social and institutional life of the community.

When we reflect upon what we have already said at an earlier stage with regard to the 'supernatural existential' present in every man in all ages, and with regard to the fact that the supernatural history of salvation and revelation are coexistent with the history of the human spirit, then it will become immediately comprehensible that the religions which *de facto* do exist outside Christianity and the Old Testament are not merely the outcome of human speculation, human wickedness or a self-willed decision on man's part to devise a religion for himself instead of accepting it from God. Instead of this the 'supernatural existential', the dynamic impulse present in man by the power of grace and impelling him towards the triune God, is at work in all these religions and plays a decisive part in determining the forms in which these religions are objectively expressed.

Of course this does not mean that these religions are thereby rendered 'pure' or unadulterated as objective expressions and manifestations of this transcendental self-bestowal of God. They continue to be through and through a mixture of disparate elements which defies all analysis: apart from the manifestation of grace there is the religious instinct naturally present in man, and also his sinfulness, corrupting and destroying the religious element in his make-up. But through them all the grace of God is nevertheless constantly at work, and even in the most primitive, corrupt or grotesque forms this grace still offers to man the ultimate possibility of activating in some way or other (however submerged or distorted it

[5] On the considerations which follow cf. the more detailed arguments in K. Rahner, 'Christianity and the non-Christian Religions', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 115-134.

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may be) that orientation towards the mystery of God which [47] is implanted in him by grace. A factor which should not be overlooked in all this is that in one way or another, and however difficult it may be to perceive, the religions that man actually encounters in the concrete have a general upwards tendency from what is lower in human life to what is higher, and so certainly do set before man the possibility, and even the necessity, of freely deciding in his conscience to move towards what is higher. In a certain measure, therefore, this impulse in his life already by anticipation implicitly directs him towards the mystery of the inconceivable fulness of God.

V

It can and must be said that these non-Christian religions are in principle, and in themselves, overtaken and rendered obsolete by the coming of Christ and by his death and resurrection. This is because in fact all of them, even in those elements of truth and goodness which they possess, were only provisional manifestations, destined to be replaced, of that divine self-bestowal which is present in the innermost depths of the history of mankind and its religion, sustaining it, actively influencing the forms which it assumes, and finally coming to its full and definitive manifestation in Jesus Christ. But in saying that all these non-Christian religions have been radically abrogated we have still not made clear our position with regard to the actual point in concrete history at which these religions ceased to be a legitimate way of salvation for certain human groups.[6] If we regard the history of salvation and revelation in the first place as being in some sense a *collective* entity, then it can surely be said that this concrete 'moment' in time (naturally it may extend over a fairly long period) is arrived at at that point at which Christianity in its explicit and ecclesiastical form became an effective reality, making its impact and asserting its claims in history in the relevant cultural sphere to which the non-Christian religion concerned belonged. This means that the historical expansion of Christianity, which even today has not yet simply been concluded, coincides with a progressive abrogation of the legitimacy of these religions.[7]

[48] But so long as these religions to a large extent determine the *particular* circumstances affecting the salvation of the individual, this reply concerning salvation history in its *collective* dimension is still not enough to answer all the questions that arise at the individual level. Let us therefore concentrate for a moment upon the individual. For him the non-Christian religion which he has inherited from past history, and which has been handed down to him in his own sphere of life, is only abrogated as the authentic way of salvation for him at that point at which the message of Christ so penetrates into his own conscience as an individual that it is only through a grave fault of his own that he can any longer reject it as the way of salvation offered by God and as the fulfilment that goes beyond anything that his former religion had to offer.

In no case can we define with absolute certainty the *precise point at which* such a moment effectively occurs in the concrete life of the individual. For if a given individual rejects the Christianity brought to him through the preaching of the Church, even then we are still never in any position to decide whether this rejection as it exists in the concrete signifies a grave fault or an act of faithfulness to his own conscience. If in such a case Christianity is accepted,

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[6] On these questions cf. also J. Heislbetz, *Theologische Gründe der nichtchristlichen Religionen* (Freiburg 1967), pp. 200-218. For a more detailed explanation reference may be made to other sections of this work (cf. also the bibliography supplied in it).

[7] For a correct concept of what 'mission' means cf. K. Rahner, 'Grundprinzipien zur heutigen Mission in der Kirche', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 46-80, esp. pp. 52 ff., 56 ff., 69 ff., 71 ff., 76 ff.

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then we can *hope* in all thankfulness that this acceptance was not merely the result of human influence, but rather due to the working of the grace of God and its effective manifestation, which really does unite this individual to God. But we have no absolute certainty whatever upon this point. Thus we can never say with ultimate certainty whether a non-Christian who has rejected Christianity, and who, in spite of a certain encounter with Christianity, does *not* become a Christian, is still following the provisional paths mapped out for his own salvation which are leading him to an encounter with God, or whether he has now entered upon the way of perdition. In any case even today, and *after* the coming of Christ, it is still perfectly conceivable that a non-Christian religion still exercises a positively saving function for the individual. Indeed the Second Vatican Council explicitly states that God does not refuse salvation to a man who, through no fault of his own, has still not attained to any explicit acknowledgment of God, who, in other words, so far as the level of his conscious awareness is concerned, must be called an 'atheist'.[8]

The paths by which mankind, and within mankind the individual, make pilgrimage towards God are long and devious. But only the gravest [49] sinfulness on the part of man himself – and about this we can make no final judgment – can turn them into ways that are really false, and which lead to perdition. And so long as this is not the case all these ways have a single secret orientation which is common to them all, however much they may seem to diverge from one another. Every way by which a man travels from genuine motives of conscience is a way leading to the infinitude of God. These ways are of various lengths, and not every one, not every age in history, and not every people either, progress at the same rate or arrive at the same point in their journey when these are compared one with another. But everyone who genuinely embarks upon such a way does arrive. But not only do all of these ways lead into the eternal life of God, all of them also lead first to a cross-roads and then to their finishing point, and at each of these points Christ and his presence in the Church are to be found. In union with the Church, his mystical body, he is the beginning and the end of all the ways of God. Whether a man reaches this final point in the way of God while still *within* history, or only attains to it when the way of his own history comes to its close – that is something which God himself arranges of his own free decision, and is a mystery hidden in him.

But whoever has already found Christ and his Church visibly present in the history of his own personal life cannot discover any reason for separating himself from Christ from the fact that so many men, through no fault of their own, have not yet found Christ and his Church. For Christ is the one source of salvation for all men. He is sought, all unknowingly, even by those men of good will who have not yet learned to call upon him by the name he bears on earth.

[8] For an analysis of what this statement means and implies cf. a study of the author which has already been referred to, namely 'Atheism and Implicit Christianity', in volume IX, pp. 145-164.

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3

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POPE AND THE COLLEGE OF BISHOPS

The Second Vatican Council has certainly made pronouncements of decisive importance in its teaching on the connection between the papacy and the episcopate, and its teaching on this point has now been ratified as the official teaching of the Church. But while recognising this, it must also be said that, for reasons which are very various, the actual pronouncements of the Council itself failed to supply solutions to many of the questions which were already being discussed among theologians even prior to the Council. Among these was the question of how we should define the *precise* relationship between the pope as the supreme pastor of the Church and the united episcopate who, as a college, are invested with the same supreme power in the Church as the pope himself possesses. Long before the Council I myself attempted to supply an answer to this question.[1] But as a result of the Council and the theological developments arising from it the problem with which we are here concerned has come to occupy a different place in our discussions, one in which it has a greater bearing on our concrete lives but which is, at the same time, more polemical. And in view of this it is necessary for us to undertake an expansion and development of the solution which we then put forward only provisionally.[2] As for the discussion which has emerged in the meanwhile, with regard to how far the thesis I proposed can be reconciled with the theology of the Council, I can for the most part only make any contribution to this to the extent that the further developments [51] offered here prove fruitful for our understanding of the actual matter itself.[3]

I

In the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* concerning the relationship between the papacy and the episcopacy the Council itself does not make any exhaustive pronouncement in the sense indicated because it leaves specific questions open to further discussion among theologians. It lays down that in accordance with the defined doctrine of the First Vatican Council the pope possesses '*plena et suprema potestas*' in the Church, and that he can exercise this plenary power even without any collegiate act in the true sense on the part of the united bishops. In this he is not bound by any juridical guidance which these bishops have to offer. It states further that the united episcopate as such, i.e. considered as a collegiate entity,

[1] On this cf. K. Rahner (with J. Ratzinger), *The Episcopacy and the Primacy*, Quaestiones Disputatae 4 (Freiburg/Edinburgh/London 1962), pp. 11-36. cf. also *idem*, *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 317, 357 ff. 361.

[2] The following article was written with nothing further in view than the special occasion proper to itself, and before any positions hostile to it had yet been explicitly defined (cf. n. 3). For this reason I think it best at this initial stage to let this study, which is wholly confined to the actual subject-matter, and therefore non-polemical, to stand upon its own merits without further modification.

[3] The opposition which my thesis has aroused is curious in one respect, namely that I myself am never cited as the defender of the thesis which is under attack. In so far, therefore, as I am being referred to at all, I must begin by defending myself against the interpretation that has been placed upon the thesis I have put forward. A full 'answer' in this sense would, however, assume such proportions that the apparatus of footnotes that it would entail would exceed the limits permissible in the present article. For this reason I must pass over the discussion which has arisen – chiefly with W. Bertrams and Kl. Mörsdorf. My assistant and student Karl Lehmann will take up the question in a special article (cf. *Philosophie und Theologie* 1968, the third number).

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is likewise the bearer of the same full and supreme power in the Church, though of course only to the extent that it is not simply the sum total of all the individual bishops, but a *corpus*, *ordo*, *collegium* that is constituted with and under the pope as its indispensable head and to the extent that it is only capable of a 'collegiate act' with the free agreement of the pope himself. This remains true even though in concrete fact and in the actual circumstances of history this may take place in very different ways.

In defining the relationship between the pope and the universal episcopate the Council does not go beyond this formulation. This means that the statement in question contains nothing else than what had all along been held clearly and explicitly as a matter of faith by the Church both before and after the First Vatican Council. For what is said here about the united episcopate and its relationship to the pope and the plenary power he enjoys as primate is precisely the same as what has all along been said about the relationship between an Oecumenical Council [52] and the pope, vested as he is with this plenary power as primate. In this it is in fact obvious that it is not merely as a result of being summoned to assemble at a particular point that the Council acquires this *plena et suprema potestas* in the Church. Rather the united episcopate must already possess this power in order that they can hold a Council. If the bishops were in possession of such power neither as individuals nor as a body, then the mere act of coming together in a particular place could never bring it about that they suddenly acquired this power. This could never be the case even if we were willing to assume that they could only actually *exercise* this power (whatever their reasons for doing so) when they were actually assembled together in a particular place. If it were sought to suggest that the bishops as locally assembled only acquire this power belonging to an Oecumenical Council precisely as a result of being called together by the *pope*, then (and this is a point that we shall have to return to in greater detail at a later stage) we should have to say that the prior supposition on which this theory is based was false, because a power that is *transmitted* within the Church herself (as opposed to one that is imparted by Christ) cannot, by definition, be the *supreme* power, since the power of him who imparts it must in fact be higher than itself.

In the light of this it becomes self-evident that the teaching of the Second Vatican Council with regard to the united episcopate as the upholder of supreme and plenary power in the Church and with regard to the relationship between this united episcopate and the pope is simply a repetition of the classic doctrine concerning the power of a Council (and in fact with regard to that of the united episcopate) which has always been in force, and which was explicitly put forward at the First Vatican Council by Gasser, Zinelli etc. But precisely because of this it is also clear that those questions about the relationship between pope and Council (= united episcopate) which have been matters of theological controversy up to now were not touched upon, and therefore that they still remain matters of controversy today. The only increase in clarity that has been achieved is that the hitherto disputed question regarding the relationship between pope and Council is now presented in a better and more realistic form as the question of the precise relationship between the pope and the united episcopate.

Scholastic theology is accustomed to give precision to the form in which the question with which we are here concerned is presented by asking whether there are two 'incompletely distinct subjects' vested with full and supreme power in the Church or only one. Those who choose the *second* of these two alternatives as their answer to this question [53] obviously presuppose that the *one* subject involved can only be the pope. Those who choose the *first* alternative as their answer equally obviously imply thereby that there cannot be two 'completely distinct subjects' vested with one and the same supreme power in the Church. For the purposes of the considerations offered here let it be explicitly acknowledged and taken as read that the two presuppositions here involved are valid, even though in themselves they are not sufficient to answer the question. For (and this is relevant to the first presupposition) let us suppose that the pope is not vested with this power in virtue of his own

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personal office, but instead of this that he derives this power of his (even though verbally acknowledged as supreme and plenary) from the united episcopate (= Council). For, in the scholastic controversy referred to, the power of the Council is commonly held to be derived from the pope in just this way. But on this hypothesis it is no longer possible to see in what sense this power could be the supreme power, and how it could ever be exercised by the pope even *seorsim*, apart from the Council and the united episcopate. There is something more to be said also which touches upon the second presupposition. If it were possible to conceive of two distinct subjects existing in the Church both vested with the supreme power, then it would cease to be comprehensible how the unity of the Church would not be, in essence, radically broken. Furthermore this would be tantamount to denying the truth that the united episcopate exists as a college only with and under the pope. In view of all this, therefore, let us take as read the validity of both the two presuppositions involved in the two answers given by the scholastics to the question which has been put. Even so, however, with regard to these presuppositions we still have a few further remarks to make, which are not unimportant for the further considerations which we have to offer.

With regard to that theory of the scholastics which maintains the absolute unity of the subject vested with supreme power in the Church the first presupposition is not so obvious as it appears. For in fact this position presupposes that there can be *one* subject such that it can be vested with supreme and plenary authority in the Church, although this power belonging to it is derived from another source (still *within* the Church), likewise vested with authority. For what is being asserted on this view is in fact that the Council is vested with such authority in virtue of being given a share of, or allowed to participate in the supreme plenary power of the pope. But if this does not involve any intrinsic contradiction then it would in fact be just as valid to hold the opinion that the pope was vested with plenary and supreme power in the Church even though he [54] possessed this power as a result of having ‘derived it’ from the united episcopate or Council either by participation or by having it conferred upon him, or in some other way. Precisely according to the principles presupposed by this first scholastic opinion therefore the statement that the pope is the possessor of this supreme power in the Church could not, taken by itself, enable us to draw the conclusion with compelling force that he does not possess this power through having derived it from the united episcopate. This consideration is enough of itself to show what a dangerous presupposition precisely for the *papacy* itself underlies the opinion that the supreme power of the united episcopate or Council can be derived from the power of the pope.

With regard to the *second* principle mentioned above as presupposed in the doctrine of the two *incompletely* distinct subjects, this does, in fact, indisputably have some foundation in virtue of the incontestable truth that the pope himself is supreme and indispensable precisely as member and head of the college of bishops. But the other ground on which it is based, which is likewise not unimportant – is indeed in reality more fundamental – nevertheless does entail certain problems. The argument here is as follows:

The unity of a society is such as of its essence to exclude the possibility of two *completely distinct* bearers of supreme power over it. Purely from the juridical point of view this may in fact be wholly enlightening. But it is possible to hold the view that in the *Church* precisely as such this difficulty with regard to the unity of the society is removed through the power of the *Spirit* within her. In other words that the unity of the Church is sufficiently guaranteed by the Spirit in spite of power in her being vested in two completely distinct subjects. In support of this view it could be pointed out that precisely according to the Second Vatican Council it is the *Spirit* which preserves the ‘organic structure’ of the Church in spite of the heterogeneous character of this structure, and that this in turn is neither caused nor guaranteed by any formal juridical norm.

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The least that can be concluded from this consideration is that when it is a question of how two different functions can exist side by side in the Church without mutually cancelling each other out or themselves in turn needing to be reconciled through the human application of some common juridical principle, caution is needed. We need not always, or from every aspect, demand a principle unequivocally applicable at the *juridical* level, in virtue of which we can test the Church's unity juridically. At the same time this is not intended to imply that the attempt we are about to [55] make will lead to a 'spiritualisation' of relationships which necessarily are juridical, or that its primary aims lie in the sphere of Church politics. Against such objections we shall be *thinking out*, in what follows, the problem of juridical law involved in the relationship concerning which this question has to be raised. The only points which will concern us, therefore, in discussing opposed positions will be the actual arguments put forward and their power to throw light upon the problem.

II

With regard to this question an attempt will here be made to justify the following thesis:

The bearer of the highest and supreme power in the Church is the united episcopate with and under the pope as its head. This single bearer can exercise its plenary power either in a 'collegiate act' in the true sense, or through an act of its head, the pope, who even in this case acts precisely *as* head of the college, without having to be commissioned for this by the rest of the bishops (the mere fact that they are such does not in itself constitute them as a college) by means of a juridical act on the part of these other bishops. *Thus there is only one subject endowed with supreme power in the Church*: *the college of bishops assembled under the pope as its head*. *But there are two modes in which this supreme college may act*: *a* '*collegiate act*' *properly so-called*, *and the act of the pope as head of the college*.

The first point to be made with regard to this thesis is that in no sense does it derogate from the significance and dignity of the primacy of the pope. In fact the Council explicitly declares that the pope is in possession of his plenary powers not as a private person but as head of the entire Church. In this statement, then, the position of the pope is not underestimated by the fact that his office and the significance attached to this in general can be understood only in relation to the Church, though this certainly does not mean that it is given to him by the Church. Now if this is the case then we cannot in any way be derogating from the dignity and uniqueness of his office either by saying that he possesses this plenary power precisely *as* head of the college of bishops. In no sense is there any implication in this thesis of the idea that his office and the plenitude of power which goes with it is handed over to him by the college of bishops. It is given to him by Christ. But it is given to him together with all that is included in it inasmuch as he is the appointed head of this college, which [56] apart from him would not exist at all. For this college is constituted as such in virtue of the unity it achieves through the presidency of the pope (Peter), and by being one with him. Without the pope it itself is nothing, and he is the pope in virtue of the fact that, and to the extent that he is its head together with all the rights which precisely belong to this headship. In virtue of these rights he can also act *seorsim*, i.e. by a separate act of his own as distinct from a collegiate one. But even so he is still acting precisely *as* head of the college. Of course the fulness of his power cannot be derived from any *abstract* concept of what 'head of a college' means. The pope is head of the college in precisely *that* manner which has been worked out in concrete fact as the faith of the Church through a progressive development of dogma, and which has been defined in the First Vatican Council. But the plenary power vested in him in this sense is precisely that of one who holds the prerogatives pertaining to the college of bishops as it actually exists in the concrete, so that however he acts he is still acting precisely as head of

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this college. This does not mean, however, that he has to be specially commissioned for the purpose by the rest of the bishops. When, therefore, we say that the pope holds his office as visible head of the Church, and only in union with her, this does not derogate from the importance and uniqueness of his primacy as bishop of Rome. Rather it is only in this way that we can arrive at an understanding of its true nature. And if this is the case, then we cannot be in any sense belittling the primacy either by saying that the pope holds his official position precisely *as* head of the college of bishops. A further point constantly to be borne in mind is that the Church of which he is head is a socially structured entity, and the papacy is not the sole factor in determining what this structure shall be. On the contrary the episcopate too is numbered among those elements in it which are *juris divini*. If, therefore, the pope is pope precisely because he is head of the Church and only in virtue of this, then it follows that he is head of a Church which is also episcopal in its constitution, and is this too *juris divini*, as a matter of divine right. It is, therefore, quite impossible for the pope to be head of the Church without at the same time and in virtue of this also being head of the united episcopate. If, therefore, the bishop of Rome enjoys his plenary powers precisely *as* head of the Church, then it necessarily follows that he also enjoys them in virtue of being head of the united episcopate. It is true of both these facts that the one implies the other in the *same* sense, and with *equal* validity: the fact that the office of the pope relates to the universal Church implies that it relates in the same sense to the united episcopate and vice versa.

[57] That this interpretation cannot simply be false from the outset is also shown by the following fact: the pre-Conciliar version of the Constitution on the Church, even though it was composed primarily by Roman theologians, had stated unreservedly that the pope is endowed with infallibility precisely *as* head of the Church *and* of the college of bishops (No. 30 in this schema): '*Tamquam universalis ecclesiae pastor et doctor, et collegii episcoporum caput*'. It is true that in the final and definitive text of *Lumen gentium* (Nos. 22, 25) this passage was omitted, or rather the term '*collegii episcoporum caput*' was transferred to another place in such a way that the two phrases were no longer explicitly presented as interchangeable. But the reason for this alteration was not that the statement contained in the pre-conciliar text is false, but rather that it was felt that this question should be left open.

Even from what has been said up to this point it will be clear that the teaching of the First and Second Vatican Councils does not exclude the thesis we have put forward at least in any positive sense. This also applies to the term *seorsim* in the *Nota Praevia Explicativa*. Having regard to the total context in which it is used this term 'by himself' only serves to rule out any necessity for a 'collegiate act' on the part of the united episcopate. What is sought to be conveyed by it is that even when the pope makes use of the supreme power vested in him 'by himself', he is acting validly and in a manner which is binding upon the Church. He is not bound in this to seek any special agreement on the part of the rest of the bishops in such a way that this agreement would be prior to the act of the pope himself and its binding force, and that it would only have full validity in this sense in virtue of this prior agreement. A further and separate question is what the nature of such an act is considered *ontologically*. Is it *ipso facto* and of its very nature the act of the head of the united episcopate, or rather the act of an individual who is indeed also (*qui*) the head of the college, but precisely in this act is not acting *as* (*qua*) such a head? On this point the term *seorsim* as used in the Declaration remains indeterminate. The opinion that this question was not affected by the *Nota Praevia* is also shared by e.g. Y. Congar, O. Semmelroth, A. Grillmeier, who were members of the theological commission of the Council.

A further objection to our thesis which is raised is that the pope holds supreme power in the Church 'alone' and 'in person'. To this it must simply be said that this term 'alone' has exactly the same force as that of *seorsim*, so that this difficulty is to be met with the same answer as that given above. Even if it is true that 'the pope in person' possesses this plenary

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power, still we cannot see what consequences can be drawn from [58] this which run counter to our thesis. In this context the phrase 'in person' can only mean 'as a concrete physical individual', since in fact 'in person' cannot mean 'as a private person'. When it is said that the pope 'alone' receives this supreme power from Christ, the word 'alone' here can only mean that he is given this power actually as a physical individual. But it cannot mean that the united episcopate does not have this power, since it does in fact undoubtedly possess it. 'Alone' and 'in person', therefore, mean simply that he possesses his power as a physical individual in the concrete, and that as such he is also the 'bearer' (certainly not merely the 'exerciser') of this power.

But in all this nothing whatever has been said in reply to a *further* question which might be asked: How can we find more precise terms in which to define what is distinctive in the position of the pope, if we are asked in what *official* (as opposed to private) capacity he 'alone' and 'in person' is the bearer of supreme power in the Church? If it is suggested that according to our version the pope exercises this power not 'in person' but 'in the name of the college of bishops', this latter being the unique bearer of this power, then we must reply that to formulate our position in these terms is most misleading. For this phrase 'in the name of the college' insinuates that in order to exercise his power the pope would need to be commissioned for the purpose by the rest of the bishops. But of course this is not the case, and is in no sense asserted by the terms of our thesis either. On the contrary what this states is: The act of the pope, which he exercises in virtue of the commission given to him directly by Christ, is *ipso facto and in itself* an act of the college (not a collegiate act), because this power conferred upon him 'in person' and on 'him alone' by Christ of itself makes him the 'mandatory' of the college. If it is stated that the pope possesses his primatial power not only independently of the individual bishops but also independently of 'all of them together' (DS 3060) this is, of course, correct. But it proves nothing against our thesis. The mere fact that this phrase *Simul omnes* of the First Vatican Council is, as applied to the united episcopate, precisely *not* equivalent to the term 'college' is in itself enough to establish this point. For the pope himself belongs to the college as such as a constitutive member of it and indeed the supreme member of the college itself. If, therefore, he were to hold this primatial power of his independently of the actual college as such, and not merely independently of the sum total of all the rest of the bishops, then he would hold it independently of himself also – a position which is meaningless. In the strictest and most precise sense the pope has a supreme power not as a figure over against the college or above it, for [59] this college is in fact itself indisputably vested with this same supreme power. The position is, rather, that the pope exercises this same power as an individual also, and this is precisely why in his possession of this power he is set apart from every other individual bishop and also from the sum total of all the bishops (though these are not identical with the college of bishops as such).

III

The *positive* grounds for upholding this thesis will appear *per modum exclusionis* primarily as the outcome of a critical examination of the other and opposed theories with regard to the relationship between the united episcopate and the primate. Let us begin by stating the first of two complementary principles which apply here. Every attempt to derive the plenitude of power belonging to the united episcopate and therefore to the Council from a primatial power that is attributed to the pope will meet with difficulties, both on the theoretical plane and on that of historical fact, which are insurmountable. It should be noticed that on such a theory this primatial power of the pope would be as such a *different* entity from the plenary power transmitted by him to the united episcopate. A power which is derivable from another power,

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quite different from it but still within the framework of the Church, cannot, simply by definition and in the very nature of the concept, be the supreme power. In virtue of being derived it is necessarily subordinate to that power from which it originates. A power vested in the united episcopate which is conceived of as at the same time a permanent sharing in the primatial power cannot be supreme.

To this principle a second must now be added. The supreme and plenary power of the united episcopate belongs to it *juris divini*. Since the Second Vatican Council there can be no doubt upon this point, and in fact in the First Vatican Council no doubts were cast upon it. Now in the light of this we are justified in asking whether a power which is held *juris divini* can be a power in which the subject is merely allowed to participate. If this participation were based upon an act of will on the part of him who confers a share of his power and might equally well withdraw it, then the power which is participated in in this sense is certainly not *juris divini*. If, on the other hand, it is suggested that the pope must allow this power of his to be shared by the united episcopate *jure divino*, then such a statement can still only signify, in effect, that the will of God [60] and of Christ, by which the Church is constituted, intends there to be a united episcopate which has the same power as the pope, and in his sight this united episcopate is such that it has this power only as united with and under the pope.

On any showing this is correct, but it says no more than what must be said and maintained in all theories that are advanced upon this question. But in that case participation in the power of the pope is nothing more, in effect, than having this power. It is no longer a question of 'participation', but instead, according to the will of God, two different subjects actually exist, both of them vested with the *same* power (in all logic therefore they must be as subjects 'incompletely distinct'), which they receive from God. But the first of these subjects is not one which itself concedes a share in its own power, since *ex hypothesi* it is quite incapable of withholding this participation from the other. In any case we no longer see how it can be the case that according to this theory anything more could be involved than a strange play on words being used to express the fact that God imparts this effective plenitude of power to the united episcopate and in doing so always intends it to belong to the united episcopate only in so far as this constitutes a college, and as united with the pope.

A further point, and one which even J. Salaverri concedes, is that the view we are contesting here is, even from the *historical* standpoint, more than improbable. The idea that the Council (considered as the united episcopate) possesses supreme and infallible power in doctrinal matters in the Church was already held as an explicit doctrine in the Church when the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope in matters of faith was still far from having been recognised with the same clarity in the Church's conscious faith. Now if this doctrinal power vested in the Council was derived from that of the pope, the converse would have had to be true. In that case the papal authority, since it provided the basis for that of the Council, would actually have had to be recognised first. Certainly at the material and factual level that which is derived, that which is sustained in being by some factor beyond itself, can come to be recognised even before that which provides it with its basis and origin. But when we are discussing juridical powers the same cannot apply. In such cases the order in which the realities signified come to be, and the order in which they come to be recognised must be parallel to one another because the actual object of enquiry is itself a conceptual reality which cannot have any significant existence at all without being recognised. This also appears from the fact that the Second Vatican Council makes no attempt to derive the plenary power of the college of bishops from the plenary [61] power of its head. It attributes this plenary power to the fact that the episcopate is descended from the apostolic college, and recognises that this same power was imparted to this apostolic college as such and in itself, and not to Peter as an individual. In the grounds it puts forward for its decision, therefore, it follows the same course as had been followed in the actual history of dogma itself.

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Now let us consider the alternative point of view. One of the commoner interpretations is the doctrine that the full and supreme authority in the Church is vested in two incompletely distinct subjects. This thesis is justified in a certain sense to the extent that it makes no attempt to derive the authority of the united episcopate from that of the pope. It can be taken merely as a description of this state of affairs, saying namely that viewed simply from the point of view of the direct practical experience of the exercise of this authority the supreme power of decision in the Church is vested in two subjects which are incompletely distinct as physical entities. And if this is all that is being said, then there is nothing in this thesis to be objected to. But if what is being maintained in it – at least implicitly – is that this *description* of the difference between the two subjects in the actual exercise of their authority is also the *ultimate* that can be said at the juridical and theological level, such that there is no further and deeper truth to be attained to beyond this, then this thesis is false. In fact it expresses nothing more with regard to the more essential and more fundamental relationship of the two 'incompletely distinct subjects' of supreme power in the Church, and manifestly presupposes that nothing more can be said either, and that this actual concrete state of affairs must be accepted as a positive datum, and that we must remain at the merely positive level of juridical institution.

Against this, however, we must first put the following objection. The concept of 'two incompletely distinct subjects' is, even from the purely formal point of view (and abstracting from the concrete case with which we are concerned), obscure and imprecise in the extreme. We might legitimately ask: 'What do the terms "distinct" or "incomplete" properly mean?' Are there really 'two' subjects, because this is, in fact, what is being maintained, or is it in the last analysis only a *single* subject, seeing that in fact we cannot regard them as distinct from one another in any 'complete' or effective sense at all? If it is true that ultimately speaking it is *quite impossible* for two subjects to be vested with supreme power in one and the same *single* society precisely considered as single, then what in that case can it mean still to assert that in this case there are 'two subjects'? Are we not being too hasty in concluding from the fact that [62] the two parties actually endowed with this power are incompletely distinct as *physical* entities, that these same parties must equally be regarded as distinct precisely *inasmuch as* they are endowed with this power? But how can we conclude this, seeing that this power is one and single not merely in a specific but in a numerical sense, as pertaining to a society that is numerically one and the same? Of course the 'misfortune' of two such subjects being irreconcilably opposed to one another and so taking decisive action in completely opposite directions is prevented by the fact that they are, after all, only 'incompletely' distinct. But does not this precisely mean that *there are not really two subjects at all*? To the extent that (notwithstanding the assertion to the contrary) they are not really 'two', no problem exists. But to the extent that, in spite of whatever unity we may concede to exist between them, they must be 'two', we must at least still pose the question of what kind of relationship they can bear to one another, such that the unity between them (which must, in fact, be implicitly conceded after all) really and effectively exists and is also recognisable as such.

Surely the fact that the pope actually belongs to the college of bishops carries, in the main, only enough weight to supply an answer to this question with regard to the juridical machinery involved, and not sufficient to provide an answer with regard to the question of the true and precise '*essence*' of this unity belonging to 'both' subjects. We may invoke a dictum of St Thomas to the effect that unity does not, in the last analysis, follow from duality. On the contrary, the notion of 'two' only becomes comprehensible to us from the notion of 'one'. Now it must be recognised that the duality with which we are here concerned cannot be derived from the unity (as the exponents of the first view contend). Since the power that is in question is not regarded as belonging of its very nature and right from the outset to the head

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of the college, this could only mean that the pope allows his power to be 'participated in' by the college. And this is excluded. Again, the unity of power cannot be achieved by combining two originally separate powers (*non enim plura secundum se uniuntur*). In the light of this the real question we have to deal with here becomes evident. It is the question of a *more basic*, *more original* unity which must be *prior* to the 'duality' of the two subjects as they now exist. The saying about 'two incompletely distinct subjects' represents a practical rule of thumb and the initial description of a fact as it outwardly appears, namely that two different ways of acting are used in the exercise of the supreme power, even though in itself and considered formally this can only be *one* and single. This saying, therefore, is correct [63] at its face value and considered purely as an empirical description or designation of the *phenomenon*. But if it is pressed any further than this it becomes not an answer but rather a question in itself, the question of what kind of unity belongs *in essence* to this subject which is vested with that power in the Church which is in itself necessarily *one*.

The *positive* answer to this question can only be given on the basis of the doctrine that there can of necessity only be *one* subject vested with the supreme power. Recognising this and taking it as our basis we can then go on to ask *how* we can arrive at a conception of this subject in which we accord it its due place as one of the facts *a posteriori* recognised as such in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and which we now have to deal with on the basis of this teaching. This *one* subject must be conceived of in such a way that it includes, from the outset and of its own nature, *both* the entities the unity between which we are discussing here. This means: Whether we say 'pope' or 'college of bishops' our conceptions of both these entities must be such that each implies the other. Whether therefore we say 'the united episcopate with the pope as the head of the college and also capable of acting alone and of his own initiative', or alternatively 'the pope who in his official acts acts in every case (even though he has two different ways of acting open to him) in such a way that through him the college is acting (though this does not necessarily mean in an act that is collegiate in the strict sense)' – whichever of these two statements we choose, the meaning remains the same. In such a statement we must always be referring to that *one* subject which as one is vested with, and exercises the one supreme power in the Church. The fact that in the thesis formulated above we have given preference to the first way of putting the matter does not imply any rejection of the second one. Our only reason for preferring the first formulation here is that it gives clearer and more direct expression to the subject considered in its concrete reality, and more clearly excludes the idea that in this thesis of ours we are treating of the pope as permitting the college to share in his power. This would mean that his power has priority over that of the united episcopate and has as its bearer the pope himself independently of his status as head of the college.

In order to understand this thesis a point that has constantly to be borne in mind is that in general and in principle it does not of itself imply any denial of the fact that the act of a 'moral' (collective) or 'collegiate' person is actually performed in the concrete by a single person in the physical sense. Nor does it imply that for this act to be validly performed the other 'persons in the physical sense' belonging to this collective body [64] or 'moral person' must necessarily and in all cases actually themselves commission the first individual to perform it by a separate and distinct act of their own, physically prior to the official one of the whole body. We can think of an extremely wide variety of ways in which a person in the sense of a physical individual can be appointed to represent a collegiate body or 'person' in the juridical sense. In our case this is quite certainly made effective by God (Christ) and not by the sum total of the members of the college of bishops, at least inasmuch as the pope is the head of this college '*jure divino*'. The only question still remaining, therefore, can be at most that of whether this appointment by God himself also implies the capacity so to act in the name of the college that this act is in fact not a 'collegiate act' at all, but still an act of the

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college. In other words the pope acts *as* head of the college whenever he makes use of his primatial power. In any case a commissioning of precisely *this* kind (such that it includes this more precisely defined authority) to represent and act for a college, deriving as it does from a third party, namely God, cannot be rejected by this college. Now in this conception there is no intrinsic logical contradiction. Admittedly all this presupposes that he who confers an authority of precisely *this* kind can also ensure in the giving of it and for the exercising of it that the acts arising from it are *de facto* in conformity with the will of the entire college rightly understood. And this in turn does not exclude the principle that precisely this rightly understood will of the college is *recognised* from the decisions of him who is its head precisely in this sense.

The harmony we are presupposing here is present in the Church through the power of the Spirit within her. In fact *Lumen gentium* (No. 25) emphasises this connection between pope and Church when it says that in his decisions the pope is not bound by the (prior) agreement of the Church (for the juridical validity of his act), but still that he and his decisions cannot fail to have this agreement '*propter actionem ejusdem Spiritus Sancti*'. The same can also be said with regard to the relationship between the decision of the pope and the will of the college.

The *fact* that the appointment vested in the pope takes this form is of course to be deduced from the actual sources of revelation in the concrete. It is to be deduced from these first on the grounds that since the Church is *one*, only *one single* subject vested with supreme power can be conceived of within her, second because the primatial power of the pope and the supreme power in the college of bishops are established from these sources.

Additional support for the thesis is also to be drawn from the following consideration. The act of founding the Church is initially posited in the [65] act of founding the college of the 'Twelve', and it is precisely *from* this college that a *member* of the college is appointed by Christ as its head. Now if we observe this order of events, which is also depicted by the Council (certainly we must bear in mind in this the indisputable fact that the college is in each case the bearer of supreme power in the Church), then it seems most consistent with the facts to say that Peter obtains his primatial authority precisely *as* head of this college. If we then go on to recognise that Peter can exercise his own personal power without any collegiate act on the part of the Twelve, still this further recognition does not invalidate the earlier realisation, namely that the authority belonging to him is that of the head of the apostolic college as such. On the contrary all that this adds is that this supreme power of his is now more precisely specified and concretised, so that it is seen to be one specific mode in which this head of the 'Twelve' can act. We can then go on to apply the same consideration to the relationship between pope and episcopate.

Of course what we primarily achieve by this is simply an understanding of our thesis at the formal level, a recognition of its formal meaning and of the fact that it involves no intrinsic contradiction.

IV

Perhaps a consideration of the content of this thesis that is *theological* in the true sense will enable us to advance a little further. The subject vested with supreme authority to lead and govern in the Church must reflect the distinctive quality of the Church herself. The first way in which this is made apparent is for visible expression to be given to the unity that exists in the multiplicity and to the multiplicity that exists in the unity. This is made especially effective if the Church considered as the 'sacrament' of love in the world, so penetrates into the world from the innermost resources of her own nature that she unifies that which is

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diverse in it, while at the same time according due recognition to this diversity. In order to point out a second way in which it is made apparent, attention must be drawn to a further constitutional factor: the unity and diversity involved in the very concept of 'Church'. This is constituted by the multiplicity of those who are using the freedom bestowed irrevocably upon each of them to work out their own salvation, and at the same time by the 'covenant unity' or comm-unity in which the individual, without any diminishment of his own uniqueness even in the actual achievement of his own personal salvation, finds salvation mediated to him.

[66] Now if the supreme holder of the power to lead and govern in the Church is to reproduce and represent this quality of the Church in his own person, then as an individual his status must be both collegiate *and* personal at the same time. Naturally we cannot, by taking this as our starting-point, deduce the *de facto* constitution of the Church from it as a matter of logical argument. But confronted with it as an existing reality we can understand it. A point which we must always bear in mind here is that the pope, without prejudice to his unique position as visible 'representative' of Christ upon earth, is still a member of the Church, and precisely identified with the Church. In other words we should not expect him *merely* to reflect the relationship of Christ to his Church as distinct from himself. Thus it cannot be inconsistent with the nature of the primacy belonging to the pope if he is head of the Church precisely *inasmuch as* he is head of the college of bishops. In other words a specific element in the nature of the Church is constituted by the very fact that he has this function of being head of the college. Whereas in Christ himself the personal and the 'official' (functional) aspects completely coincide, in a member of the Church (as redeemed) this is not altogether the case. It is not, therefore, the case with the pope either. The personal factor is present and plays a part in his official function. For instance he acts of his own initiative in the sense that he does not need any special authorisation each time he decides to do so. But his personal action is still an act of the *bearer of the office as such*. ('*Non enim ut persona privata sententiam profert*'), and, by the very fact of being a person holding office in this sense, he is a member of the Church and head of the college of bishops as such. Now precisely because he has this position the pope represents in his own individual person both the unity of the Church *and* her diversity, a unity and diversity constituted by the fact that she is made up of a collection of many Churches.

If therefore we accept the position of 'head of the college of bishops' as belonging integrally to the primatial power of the pope as such, and as an intrinsic element in it, then it straightway becomes clear why this power is 'unrestricted' and in this sense 'full'. We can only designate a power as 'restricted' if it is limited by some other arbiter external to itself, and not in respect of that kind of 'limitation' which is inherent in the very nature of the power itself. Now in many respects the authority of the pope is certainly 'limited' even at the juridical level. For instance (setting aside its limitation with regard to the teaching authority which is bound by revelation etc.) it is 'limited' by the existence *juris divini* of the college of bishops, which the pope can neither abrogate nor, taking it in [67] its entirety, inactivate. Now if this 'limitation' were not *a limitation arising from the nature of the papal primacy as such*, then we could not call his power 'full' in the true sense at all. But if this 'limitation' arises from the intrinsic nature of this authority in itself, inasmuch as the pope possesses this power proper to himself precisely as head of the college of bishops, then we can understand that it is not thereby 'restricted' in the true sense by any other juridical arbiter such as might restrict this power *ab externo*.

In terms of its content there is a further standpoint from which we can regard this thesis of ours. One of the special concerns of many of the theologians at the Council was to point out the unity which exists between all the official powers belonging to bishops, and also the fact that they all have their primary and basic roots in the sacrament of episcopal consecration. The Council then went on to ratify this point in an extremely significant manner. In the

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formulations of the mediaeval canonists the '*potestas ordinis*' and the '*potestas jurisdictionis*' have for the most part simply been juxtaposed without any connection between them being adverted to. Now, however, the real unity between these two powers has been made clear by the findings of the Council, and this raises many further questions for ecclesiology and canon law. Once the unity between these two powers is conceded and presupposed, the existence of the college of bishops as such, or membership of this college, cannot fail to have an important bearing on the further question of the manner in which the '*potestas ordinis*' is vested in the individual bishop. We must not be led astray on this point by the fact that in the validly consecrated bishop this '*potestas ordinis*' is present permanently and irrevocably. For in fact this irrevocability, to the extent that it really is present, means simply that in the individual bishop membership of the college too cannot be totally lost so as to leave no trace whatever (even if the '*communio hierarchiaca cum Collegii Capite et membris*' is removed, so that *full* unity with the college no longer exists). But it does not mean that the '*potestas ordinis*' has nothing to do with membership of the college of bishops, and therefore nothing to do with the college itself or with its head either. Even the '*potestas ordinis*' is an element in the one and full power which is originally present in the college of bishops as united with and under its head the pope, the power, therefore, in which the individual bishop obtains a share in virtue of his episcopal consecration. On the basis of this it may validly be concluded that the pope is the visible principle of the unity belonging to the college of bishops in relation to the '*potestas ordinis*' too, and not merely in relation to the '*potestas jurisdictionis*'. Furthermore it is [68] precisely when our thesis is accepted as a principle that the pope stands revealed as the supreme and definitive bearer of the '*potestas ordinis*'. It is not the case, therefore, that he needs to be able to perform more individual sacramental acts than any other bishop, or to perform them with greater intensity. Rather he represents the unity of sacramental power in the Church. If we accept that the '*potestas ordinis*' is rooted in the united college of bishops in this way, we can then understand that even in the actual conferring of the sacraments too 'collegiate acts' are possible (if, indeed, not actually necessary). This is the case, for instance, in concelebration which must, in fact, be understood not as a synchronisation of many Masses, but as one *single* sacrifice even in the dimension of the sacramental sign. The reconciliation as practised in the early Church likewise had this force. In this the bishop, in union with the assembled priests or *presbyterium*, used the laying on of hands to confer the *pax* of reconciliation with the Church, and thereby the Spirit. Thereby forgiveness of sins in God's sight was likewise conferred by this rite. Now this can be understood as a 'collegiate act' in the full sense, even though, it is true, one that was performed not by the united episcopate but rather by the college that was accustomed to act in such a setting, and which was made up of the bishop and his presbyterium. The same is true of the anointing of the sick at Easter, in so far as this was conferred by several priests.

If, therefore, we unreservedly accept that a 'collegiate act' is in principle possible even in the conferring of a sacrament, then we can go on from this to say: the sacramental sign as established in the Church is constituted hierarchically, and it is in conformity with the nature of the Church herself that the act in which this sign is made effective (and which is always an act of the Church herself and of her college) can in every case be of two kinds: it can either be a 'collegiate' act in the true sense, or it can be the act of an individual. But in this latter case the individual performing the act is actually sharing in the sacramental power of the Church, and so performing this sacramental act in the name of the Church.

We can see, therefore, that the relationship between the pope and the college of bishops corresponds in certain respects to the position of one who has been vested with sacramental power, even though initially this relationship was considered only from the aspect of the '*potestas jurisdictionis*'.

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[69]

V

We may now turn to the question of what differences the thesis we have expounded would make in practice. Certainly the importance of this question should not be exaggerated. The common ground between the different interpretations is too great for these differences to be very far-reaching. For in any case it is true that in the exercise of supreme power in the Church the pope can act *seorsim*, while it is equally true that a collegiate act on the part of the college of bishops is possible. But both of these constitute an exercise of one and the same supreme power in the Church. Nor is it legitimate to say that if we take a general view of the whole question, and accept the other interpretations as our starting-point, we shall come to the conclusion that something different takes place, or has taken place in the Church than if we accept the thesis presented here as our principle of interpretation.

But even with these reservations it does not seem that the thesis with which we are here concerned is totally without practical consequences of any kind. The concrete *way* in which various possible practical consequences which do follow from our thesis are to be drawn remains – from the juridical aspect – reserved to the *discretio* of the pope, and it must not be maintained even that a given way of applying the truth upheld here is possible only if our thesis is presupposed. To give a concrete example, it is to be enacted by positive law that the universal episcopate shall be given, even apart from its role in Councils, a share in the supreme government of the Church, as for instance in the convening of a Council, setting up the synod of bishops, arranging for the universal episcopate to be consulted by the pope, making it possible for the regional conferences of bishops to develop special ecclesiastical laws of their own, giving the universal episcopate a share in the work of the Roman Congregations by letting them have representatives on these, etc. But any such concrete way of exercising supreme power can be, both in its inception and in the practice of it (this may vary according to the particular circumstances prevailing at any given time), clearer to understand, less circumscribed and less strained if it is regarded as an application of the theory we are upholding here. For on this theory we do not need constantly to be striking a precarious balance between two bearers of supreme power in the Church, both of whom, even if they are ‘incompletely distinct’, still have to be accorded their due effectiveness. Our theory envisages rather the exercise of power by the *one single* and supreme bearer of *all* power in the Church. And on this theory the only question remaining is how to [70] establish more precisely the form this exercise of it should take in the concrete in order to be most effective.

That axiom is true which lays down that an authority which is never exercised is no authority at all. If there are *two* bearers of supreme power in the Church (even if these are ‘incompletely distinct’), then the question constantly arises afresh of how, while maintaining both the two exercises of power as two quantitatively distinct activities, we can strike a balance between them in such a way that neither simply absorbs the other into itself and so, *in reality* (even if not ‘in so many words’) abolishes it. If there is only *one* supreme subject vested with supreme authority in the Church, (even though with two ways of exercising this authority which, though distinct, are interrelated in such a way that they can be interchanged or made to flow into one another), then two principles follow from this: first, the pope cannot feel that the active collaboration of the college of bishops (which may take the most diverse possible forms) is *ipso facto* a diminishment of his own authority. Second, the episcopate cannot feel that by recognising to the full the pope’s authority in cases in which he acts *seorsim*, they are accepting a limitation imposed from outside their own body of the full scope of their own personal authority, for this activity of the pope is, of its very nature, an *act*

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of the college itself, even if it is not a 'collegiate act' in the strict sense. Of course it must be conceded as an ever present possibility that with regard to the 'independent' exercise of authority on the part of the pope in particular concrete instances individual bishops may still retain their own attitudes. They may wish that in such cases the episcopate might be allowed to share more manifestly, more actively and in a more directly practical way in the decision involved. Here, therefore, we have reached that point beyond which we cannot go in defining *juridically* the respect due to the episcopate in the taking of such decisions. This is likewise the point which may be taken as a starting-point in defining the scope of the para-canonical importance and effectiveness of the episcopate, which must not be undervalued. And we shall undervalue it if we blindly and rigidly confine ourselves to the question of whether the effective part to be played by the episcopate is sufficiently assured in juridical and legal terms. At this point too scope is opened up for the movement of the Spirit of God, which acts *fortiter*, *suaviterque* so as to ensure that in the exercise of this supreme power by the one supreme bearer vested with it harmony is preserved, at least in the long run, between the different ways in which it is employed.

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[71]

4

THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT WORSHIP

1. 'Presence' in General

In this brief study[1] we shall be discussing the presence of the Lord in the Christian community at worship. The approach we shall be adopting is a systematic and synthetic one, and we shall take as our basis the work that has already been done on the theological sources. For this purpose due allowance must be made from the outset for the inevitable and insurmountable imperfections inherent in the concepts we need to use in such a study, as also for the fact that of their nature these concepts approximate only deficiently and analogously to the realities involved. Thus a point that strikes one immediately is that the idea of 'presence' admits of, and indeed demands an interpretation in terms of space and time. But this word 'presence' is capable of being extended further into all dimensions of human existence, and of being applied to man as a whole at his various levels as a being endowed with a body, with intellect, with free choice and decision, with a social life in common with his fellows, and with a place in history. Such a word, therefore, does not admit of any strict or precise definition, any more than does man himself. Every attempt at describing or defining what 'presence' means ends up by appealing to that basic and primary experience in which, the moment we make it, we recognise what 'presence' is, and yet which at the same time we are incapable of expressing. Such an experience, which is itself shifting and variable as it occurs in the unfolding of human history whether at the individual or the collective level, gives us an awareness of the way in [72] which 'presence' is achieved, and this in turn varies in intensity according to the particular level in human living which is involved. 'Presence' always implies a relationship between two entities or, more precisely, between three: the relationship namely between the two which are present to each other, and the relationship which both bear to the 'medium' or 'common ground' between them. It is this medium as such that provides the sphere in space and time which makes it possible for the two to be present to each other. This means that the very nature of what 'present' means is determined by these two (or three) entities, their distinctive qualities and the very different ways in which they may be related to one another. 'Presence', therefore, can assume very different forms and manifest very different properties. On this basis we can, perhaps, formulate here at the very outset the following propositions:

(a) 'Presence' cannot, in the first instance, be either regarded as, or deduced from the co-existence of two physical bodies which modify one another at the physical level. Presence, rather, is a concept that is originally and basically anthropological, one which belongs *a priori* – even though in different ways and different degrees – to those factors which determine the condition of man as a whole.

(b) In the context of human living, therefore, presence in its fullest and deepest sense is that which affects and causes that which we call 'presence' from all aspects and at all levels of man's being, and which removes that contrary state of 'absence' in which one entity exists and yet, so far as another is concerned, is as though it did not exist.

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[1] For a bibliography on this question cf. the references in this volume, 'On the Presence of Christ in the Communities of the Diaspora', pp. 84-102. In addition to the documents of the Council mentioned there cf. especially the particularly important No. 9 (*Diversi modi praesentiae Christi*) in the '*Instructio de cultu mysterii Eucharistici*' of the Congregation of Rites dated 25th May 1967 (the official Latin text is to be found in *Typis polyglottis Vaticanis* 1967, p. 13).

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(c) The presence of two beings in space and time (that of men to one another or that of man to another being which is capable of being, in some sense, present to man and for him in space and time) certainly is significant and important for human life. But nevertheless, in the last analysis it can be accounted merely that which is presupposed, that which has the force of an 'ontological symbol' (is a *Realsymbol*) of the specifically human mode of presence, in which men are present to each other (and to others).

(d) Hence when we speak of a 'presence' through love, in the Spirit, in knowledge etc., what we are treating of is not some kind of metaphorical transference of the concept of presence, but rather the original and basic meaning of the word. For the initial datum of human experience is not the co-existence of two bodies in space and time but rather man himself as endowed with a consciousness of his own being, as set in charge of himself and made answerable for his own free decisions, as given responsibility for himself and at the same time achieving the fulness [73] of his own existence in personal intercommunication with others. Now all original and basic concepts, which genuinely cannot be defined in other terms, have their origins in this experience.

(e) Nevertheless we must not regard the concept of 'presence' as one for which there is absolutely no substitute. This is true even at that level at which the concept of physical presence is involved. The term has hardly any part to play in modern physics because here, properly speaking, the investigator is concerned only with the existence, location, mutual interdependence in function, or ascertainability of physical particles. But it is true in a far deeper sense of that more basic concept of 'presence' which is anthropological, for this can be expressed in terms of that by which this presence is constituted (in terms of its actual content), and in relation to this the 'presence' itself is, as it were, only subsequent and secondary. Even in the case of the 'eucharistic presence' this still applies for the very reason that that by which it is constituted, namely 'transubstantiation', is not to be thought of as the introduction of the reality of Christ into a specific locality in the sense implied in the 'adductionist' theory.

After these preliminary remarks let us pass on immediately to a synthetic and systematic exposition of that kind of 'presence' in which the Lord is made present to us and we to him in the Christian cult.

2. On the Presence of Christ in the Cult

(a) What we are considering here is the presence to each other of Christ and the Church in her cultic activities. Now the 'medium' of this presence is the Holy Spirit of Christ. This statement must now be expounded in more precise detail.

(aa) It is necessary to have such a 'medium'. Usually we do not pay sufficient attention to this 'medium' and the necessity for it to obtain any clear idea of its significance. For we interpret every mode of 'presence' according to the conceptual model of a physical and local presence, a presence in space and time (the reason for this is that *conversio ad phantasma* which is indispensable in every act of intellectual cognition). Now certainly in this kind of presence the 'medium' is necessary too. But the very fact that it is always there (both objectively and subjectively) all along means that it is not adverted to. But let us suppose that something is present not as a constant and unvarying fact of existence but still in the realm of immediate possibility or, to put it another way, that there has to be a transition from a state of absence to one of presence or to a more intensive kind of presence. In such a case as this a medium of the kind we [74] are speaking of is postulated as prior to the presence itself and as a necessary condition for it which is distinct from itself. This medium, then, is something that makes that which is to be 'rendered present' actually present, and that is, at the same time,

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different from it; something which, as one, makes two entities which are to be rendered present to one another actually present and at the same time maintains the distinction between them. It provides the unifying sphere or common ground for a mutual presence between them to be achieved. Now if it is pointed out that an entity which makes itself present to something else itself provides this medium or common ground necessary for mutual presence to be achieved, then in general and in principle we would have to concede the truth of this objection. But a point that should not be forgotten – especially in our present case – is that it is wholly conceivable that at least one of the two entities being made present to each other cannot, of its own resources, establish this access to the other, and the medium or common ground which makes this presence possible. Instead of this it has to be 'admitted' to this presence which is to be made actual. Now this means nothing else than the setting up of a medium of presence such as we have been speaking of, which is to be distinguished from the actual presence itself as the means and necessary condition for it to be achieved.

(bb) In the particular case we are considering this medium (the dimension of the presence, its *ambience*) is the Spirit of Christ. It cannot be our task at this point to show how this statement is to be deduced from the positive sources of revelation. Here we shall be attempting to make comprehensible what this statement is intended to convey. Of course this previously existing medium of the presence of Christ in the cult can, already in itself, be thought of as a 'presence' of the Spirit of Christ which has been bestowed upon the Church, which 'indwells' her as a gift of God in the hearts of those who have been justified. From this point of view no distinction is to be drawn between the presence of Christ and that of his Spirit. Christ is present in the Church through his *pneuma*. *His* presence actually is *pneuma hagion*. But precisely as such this presence of the Spirit in the Church is the 'medium' which is the necessary prior condition for that further presence which is achieved precisely between Christ and the Church in the enactment of the *cult*. There are two reasons for this. First in the cult and through it there takes place a special presence of Christ over and above the 'habitual' presence of the Spirit and so of Christ in the Church. This special cultic presence of Christ is such that it does not exist with *this* degree of 'actuality' apart from the cult. The second reason is that the Spirit of Christ as 'habitually' [75] present in the Church and her members can be, and in fact is, the ontological presupposition for the actual presence of Christ in the cult. For it is only in the *pneuma* of Christ that the Church can teach, pray, believe, hope, love and confer the sacraments. Now it is in these activities that the cult of the Church is achieved, and it is through this cult that Christ and the faithful are rendered mutually present to one another in the most actual and sublime form possible. But in what does this 'medium' consist, if we may so express it, in its ultimate essence? It is constituted by the fact that only the divine Spirit as 'uncreated grace' can cause a human act (and in the first instance the cult too belongs to this category) to become an act of such a kind that in it God is attained to in adoration and 'possessed' as he is 'in himself'. It becomes such an act through this grace working in it as an intrinsic principle. In other words the interior subjective principle of the cult must be the Holy Spirit of God himself in order that this cult really can enter into the holy of holies of the divine life itself, and in order that this cult may consist not merely in the adoration of a God who is infinitely remote and 'other' to ourselves, but may rather become that *commercium* which is, in a certain sense, interior to God himself, for it is through this that we share in the trinitarian life of God which goes back to the source without origin, the eternal Father.

(b) In this dimension of the Spirit a mutual presence of Christ and of the faithful to one another at the highest level of actuality is constituted through the cult of the local Church. The local Christian community which accomplishes the cult of God in Christ and through his Spirit is not merely one segment of the universal Church, analogous, for instance, to one particular political constituency in a state. Rather it is *the* Church as present at one specific

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place, so that through the local community in that place the Church realises to the utmost possible extent the perfection of her own nature, her 'actualisation', and experiences through the cult the presence of Christ in the Church in its most sublime form. Certainly we can speak of many ways in which Christ is 'present' in the Church. We can say that Christ is present in the Church through an exercise of the Church's teaching authority, e.g. in Councils. And he can be said to be present in all other acts which are acts of the one universal Church who extends her boundaries throughout the 'length and breadth of the earth'. But it should be noticed that when we are thinking of the cult of the Church considered as a whole we are thinking of it inasmuch as it includes the eucharistic sacrifice as the supreme mode in which the work of redemption is made present. And in virtue of this the cult is *capable* of being, in the subject taking part in it, the most sublime way of making [76] real his faith, his hope and his love. And it is to this that the whole activity of the official Church is orientated as means to end. Now to the extent that all this is true we are justified in saying that there can be no act through which Christ is made more closely and forcefully present than the cult of the Church, and it is through this presence that the Church herself is constituted ('gathered together', as the Council puts it) as 'actualising' her own nature and bringing it to its fulness. This cult, in which the supreme 'actualisation' of the presence of Christ in the Church, and thereby the supreme 'actualisation' of the Church herself, is achieved, is different from the cult of the people of God in the Old Testament in that it takes place in every local community of worshippers. In this respect too an essential and formal difference appears between the Church and any other *societas perfecta*. From this in turn it follows that the concept of the 'perfect society' is totally inadequate as a characterisation of the Church even at the 'visible' and empirical level to which her cult too belongs. No secular society can achieve the supreme 'actualisation' of its nature in one individual segment or element in its total makeup. On the contrary this degree of 'actualisation' is only achieved through the cumulative process of all its elements and their activities being added together till, in a certain sense, the sum total of them all is finally arrived at. Yet in the light of the supreme 'actualisation' which is achieved with such intensity at the altar the whole Church is 'there' in the local community at worship, because in this local community which, according to all outward appearances and in the dimension of the merely juridical and 'social' is only a small segment of the Church, the most actual and the most intimate presence of Christ is achieved, that presence which actually constitutes the Church in his Spirit.

(c) The presence of Christ in the cult must be understood as *single* and *active*. No doubt this presence of Christ in the cult of the local community contains within itself very different elements. Yet it must be understood as prior to all these elements, and as unique. For Christ is also one in his relationship to men as sanctifying them, and man himself is also one in the midst of all the many dimensions in which he exists. The different elements in this single and unique presence must be comprehended as the intrinsic constitution of this presence precisely as *single*. They derive their meaning and their significance precisely *from* this one presence, and achieve it *in* this. Or (from many points of view this way of putting it is more exact) these elements must be understood as different degrees in the 'actualisation' and intensity of this one unique presence through which God and man become united for the glory of God and the [77] salvation of man. This also applies to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist in which Christ is made substantially present under the forms of bread and wine through 'transubstantiation'. For it is not merely that this presence too, which is achieved in the dimension of the effective *sign*, is measured by the union which the faithful achieve with Christ in his *pneuma*. It is not only that this presence is always orientated to the actual consumption of the sacrament, so that Christ is adored precisely under the forms of bread and wine, these having the force of an *anamnesis* pointing back to his death and resurrection and making manifest the *meal* of eternal life. It is not only that this presence of Christ in the

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Eucharist is a real and bodily presence of a nature that is absolute and unique, and which cannot be understood on the analogy of a natural presence and co-existence of two bodies in the same sphere, to which both are related and by which they are limited. We must recognise, rather, that there is something beyond this and more important than this: the act by which this eucharistic presence of Christ is made effective in 'transubstantiation' is only rightly understood in the entire context to which it belongs, which is that of the cult taken as a whole. For the 'form' of this sacrament (which goes with the 'species' of bread and wine as an integral element in the sacramental sign of this presence) consists of the words of consecration which persist and endure (as valid) in the dimension of human living and human historicity (even when acoustically speaking they have ceased). Only as united with these words are the 'species' the sign of Christ's presence. Now these words of consecration can only exist, can only be uttered and understood (and without being understood they would not be human words at all) in the context of the Christian cult taken as a whole. Even the 'substantial' presence of Christ in the Eucharist belongs to the dimension of the 'sign' and so to the one cult taken in its entirety, even though it constitutes the supreme and ultimate reality which can be achieved in this cult.

This single presence of Christ in the cult must be understood as *actively taking effect*. What we mean by this is that right from the outset this presence of Christ in the cult must be understood not as the mere co-existence of two entities in the same place, something which is, in the last analysis, already achieved by the very fact of God's omnipresence taken by itself, and something which, taken by itself, has no significance for the glory of God and the salvation of man. This saving presence of Christ in the cult is constituted rather by the following factors:

1. The self-bestowal of God in his Spirit, through which God gives himself immediately as he is in and of himself as the 'subject' and [78] co-principle of that life in man which is a sharing in the life of God himself, and that too . . .

2. Through all the 'media' and mediating acts by which this divine self-bestowal is communicated, and which show forth this divine self-bestowal in sign and symbol at the historical and social, and therefore the cultic level. For it is through these signs that these media and acts of mediation take effect, and so make present this divine self-bestowal. We shall shortly be returning to these mediating acts to treat of them in rather more detail.

(d) This *single* presence of Christ in the cult considered as an active sanctifying force is constituted by the following elements:

(aa) *By the word of the gospel*: a true presence of Christ is already *ipso facto* achieved wherever the word of the gospel is preached in power and heard in a spirit of faith. This is explicitly stated in *Lumen gentium* (No. 26). In fact the *kerygma* of the New Covenant is no mere handing on of a piece of human knowledge from one individual to another such that only the human concepts of the reality they stand for are present and not the reality itself. On the contrary the *kerygma* is the event in which the reality itself that is being proclaimed is imparted to him who hears of it in a spirit of faith through the words and concepts that are expressed. Christ (as he who was crucified and rose again on our behalf) imparts himself to us as the eschatological union between God and man as achieved in the Spirit and through faith, in an act of divine self-bestowal, and thereby makes himself present in preacher and hearer alike. All elements of human conceptuality in the preaching of the word of God are, so to say, only the 'flesh' through which the divine reality makes itself present by manifesting itself in effective signs, and so takes effect upon us in a (free and supernatural) act of self-bestowal. The word of preaching as delivered with authority and heard in faith and in the Spirit is a word that has an effective and exhibitive force, one which, through a process of *anamnesis*, renders saving history effectively present, and already in the here and now effectively promises to man a future of salvation that is absolute (*Verbum efficax*

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rememorativum et prognosticum). This effective and exhibitive force in the word that is preached (and the presence of Christ constituted by this) has, it is true, specifically different degrees of intensity. But this effective and exhibitive force in the word of preaching belongs to the very nature of that preaching which is the event of grace and so the presence of Christ. The supreme degree of this special kind of effective force is attained in that word which is the actual 'form' of the sacrament or the sacramental sign in itself.

[79] (bb) *Through the sacrament*: Every sacrament can, and indeed must, be understood as that kind of exhibitive and effective word in which Christ, through the mouth of the Church, utters himself as the eschatological 'sacrament' of salvation to a specific man in a situation which is significant for his life as a whole and in a form in which it can be apprehended at the level of concrete human living. From this standpoint it is clear that every sacrament signifies and effects a presence of Christ. We can, if we like, call this presence 'dynamic' and 'non-substantial' (to distinguish it from the presence in the Eucharist). But this presence is not that of God alone as he exists in himself, but rather the presence of the incarnate *Word* as such. This is what is expressed in the doctrine of the 'instrumental efficacity' of the humanity of Christ in the sacraments and the imparting of grace, whatever further explanations we may choose to offer of this instrumentality. A further point for consideration is the following: the fact that an authorised human intermediary is involved in the dispensing of the sacraments is indeed an integral element in the constitution of the *sign* of the presence of Christ. Indeed the dispenser of the sacraments takes the place of Christ himself in the dimension of the sign that effects what it signifies. But since he does not himself, in any proper sense, bring about the sacramental grace, the actual *res sacramenti* as its effective source, he does not, in any sense take the place of the presence of Christ himself. In other words the human dispenser of the sacraments does not take the place of an absent Christ, but rather represents Christ as present in the dimension of the 'effective' sign, even though it is Christ himself who, of his own power, brings about the grace in his *pneuma*. Finally if we want to emphasise the 'substantial' presence of Christ in the Eucharist as distinct from a 'merely dynamic' presence in the other sacraments then, in doing this, we must not overlook the fact that this 'substantial presence' – accurately understood – belongs to the dimension of the sign, to the sacrament as such. It does not yet belong to the sacramental grace, to the *res sacramenti* itself, and does not bring about salvation in man of itself (*edunt boni*, *edunt mali*) unless this 'substantial presence' is complemented by that effectiveness of the Spirit of Christ through which alone man is really united to God, and in which the presence of Christ attains its supreme point and its goal. This presence of Christ as achieved in the sacrament (in the dimension of the 'sign' and of the 'reality' signified) has not only the character of a gift of God to man, but also that of a cultic act to the extent that through the act of Christ the High Priest, which is in a certain sense 'made incarnate' in the action of the Church, man is consecrated more and more radically to the adoration [80] of God through the cult, and to the extent that the reception of sacramental grace on the part of the recipient of the sacrament also and necessarily signifies the acceptance and exercising of this commission which man is given in the grace to take part in the cultic worship of God.

(cc) *Through the Eucharist*: We have already referred in brief to the connection which exists between the Eucharist and the proclamation of the effective word of God in preaching and in the sacraments. Taking this as our starting-point it already follows that the Eucharist constitutes the supreme event in which that presence of Christ in the midst of his people which is the Church is achieved. This supreme mode in which Christ is made present in the Church is not to be deduced solely or exclusively from the dogma of 'transubstantiation' as this dogma is understood by scholastic theologians. In the Eucharist the word of the gospel is present totally and in a supremely effective form. It is that word through which the proclamation 'showing forth' the death and resurrection of the Lord, the work of redemption

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which was achieved once and for all, is presented by the Church in visible cult and in the Holy Spirit (as a unity) to the Father, while at the same time the Body and Blood of Christ are brought to the believers. The special quality of this presence, which precisely belongs in a special and unique manner to the Eucharist, in many respects goes beyond those elements in the one presence of Christ which we have already mentioned, even though it is perfectly possible to understand it specifically as the supreme instance of the presence of Christ as we have considered it up to this point. In the Eucharist the presence of Christ achieves, through the sacramental word that 'shows it forth', the supreme and specifically distinct 'actualisation' of what it essentially is. In this two modes of presence are achieved: the death and resurrection of Christ are made present and actual sacramentally ('in the "mystery"') and at the same time the Body and Blood of Christ are made present substantially. These two modes of a presence that is ultimately and most deeply one are achieved in such a way that this presence is related not only to the entry of Christ into the individual saving history of a particular person but also to the Church herself as such. This is made manifest in visible form in the community at worship, and in the celebration of the Eucharist it achieves its supreme fulness and 'actuality' both in the dimension of the 'sign' and at the same time in the dimension of the reality itself that is signified. This is because in the Eucharist the union of Christ the head with his body, the Church, is at its most intense, being in fact made visible in the sacrament and made effective in the grace that it conveys. Here then Christ is made present on the one hand in his [81] relationship to the Father and the task he has received from him, and on the other in his relationship to the Church and the functions he performs for her.

(dd) *Through hope and love*: These are achieved through the grace of the Spirit and 'incarnated' in the cult. For the word of the gospel always has the character of an eschatological proclamation of the glory that is to come. Furthermore every sacrament is a 'prognostic' sign, and the Eucharist is the proclamation of the coming of the Lord in glory and an anticipation of the glory that is to come. And for these reasons every event in which the Lord is made present through the cult has the character of that sign and that actual event in which the Christian hopes of the people of God for a future that is absolute are born and made manifest in concrete form in the sacramental life of the Church. The same is to be said of the love of members of the Church for one another. For every word of God is the effective manifestation of the love of God as addressed to man, in which, by a true act of self-bestowal, he gives himself to man. *For this very reason* this effective manifestation of God's love brings about a genuine union between men. It follows that this applies above all to the sacramental word because every *opus operatum* unites man more interiorly and more deeply to the 'Mystical Body' of Christ. This is true in supreme measure of the Eucharist, which is the exhibitive 'symbol' of that Body, 'the head of which is Christ, and to which God has willed to unite us as the members of this Body by the closest ties of faith, hope and love' (N 875). Since the Eucharist is always to be interpreted in its 'context' (if we may so express it), in which its nature as effective sign is realised, it follows that as the sign of love it subsumes within itself everything which is necessarily included in the eucharistic cult, or is demanded as most properly due to it or as most needful for its proper celebration: the attendance of many at a specific place so as to form a local community of worshippers, the hearing of the word of God in common, praying in common, making profession in common, of faith and hope, caring in common for the needy and suffering members of the Church (through almsgiving, practical charity etc.). All this is the sign and the effect at the same time of the presence of Christ in the midst of his people, his effective presence in the hope and love of the believers.

(e) After this fourth section we must reiterate once more what has already been said under (c). These diverse elements in the presence of Christ must not be regarded as so many

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different ‘presences’. They constitute *one single* presence of Christ which, from the one deed of Christ performed upon the members united to him by faith, develops various modalities [82] from within itself, yet all the same retains that original and basic unity which is prior to this process of development. This one presence of Christ is the ‘actualisation’ in both ‘visible’ and ‘existential’ form at the same time of that unity, and so that presence too, in which the faithful remain constantly united and so present to each other also, with Christ and among themselves. For this reason this presence, considered both as ‘made visible’ in the cult and in its ‘existential’ effects in grace, can assume increasingly *different* forms and degrees of actualisation and intensity. It can be present simply in the sermon and in the common prayer of the believers, in the conferring of the sacraments, in the celebration of the Eucharist. These *different* elements in the *one single* presence of Christ are interconnected among themselves, proceed from one another, and are mutually demanded by one another as the fulness of this unity. This is because it is a unity in which the *opus operatum* and the *opus operantis*, the deed wrought by God upon man, and the response of man in grace, the interior grace and its manifestation in all dimensions of human life both social and historical, are mutually interconnected and are given concrete effect by man in ever new forms. This one presence of Christ is, in a certain sense, both ‘visible’, i.e. precisely ‘sacramental’ as the historical and social level, *and* at the same time effective and exhibitive. It signifies the further projection and actualisation of a quite unique unity which is latent in saving history from the beginning of the world as presence and promise: God himself imparts himself to the world through his Spirit in that he ‘descends’ into the depths of the cosmos and of history and so, as it were, even upon Christ himself. But precisely through this invisible movement he not only remains the ultimate consummation of the whole of saving history, but brings this unity in Christ, the incarnate *Word* of God, to a unique and definitive climax, the climax of eschatological victory realised at a specific and concrete point in history, and so constituting an unsurpassable perfection. A presence of this kind is always constituted by two elements: by the sign as that which is objectively symbolic, and by the reality signified itself. The sign itself has certain variations of its own. It extends from the simple word of preaching to the Eucharist (considered as sign). The same applies to the reality signified to the extent that the inner unity with Christ in the Spirit is capable of unlimited intensification. And from these two aspects we can deduce and understand every variation in the one presence of Christ. But if, and to the extent that the sign, considered as an element in the presence of Christ, has a *cultic* quality, i.e. a communal and explicitly religious character, being *ex professo* orientated towards the worship of God (this [83] is not, of course, always and necessarily the case), this presence of Christ can justifiably be called ‘cultic’.

(f) In describing and laying special emphasis upon the cultic presence of Christ in this way we must not forget that this effective presence of Christ is not restricted to a cultic presence. For an individual may, in the ‘medium’ of the Holy Spirit, fulfil and make actual in the human activities of his life, the grace that has been imparted to him. He may, in a certain sense, give this grace a visible embodiment in history in his Christian activities, and whenever the individual does this there takes place a true, even though perhaps a so-to-say ‘anonymous’ presence of Christ in the world and its history even if this presence is then not cultic at all. For in that case this presence, even though it is in some sense represented by a ‘sign’, is, nevertheless, devoid of the specifically cultic qualities which would otherwise have belonged to it. From this it can be concluded that the Church is the abiding and ultimate sacrament of the world’s salvation not only in virtue of the explicit preaching of the gospel, the conferring of the sacraments and the Eucharist, but also in virtue of every deed and suffering on the part of her members. For through these deeds and sufferings considered as a gift of grace this presence itself achieves a certain visible embodiment at the historical and social level. But wherever and however the Church is this ultimate sacrament of salvation for

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the world, there Christ is present in his Spirit, and there he makes this presence of his apprehensible also, even though, it may be, in a mode that is ‘anonymous’ or unacknowledged. It is because of this that the Lord himself says that he is present, though unrecognised, wherever one man shows compassion from his heart to another.

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5

ON THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE DIASPORA COMMUNITY ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The subject which we have set ourselves to examine in this brief study[1] is apparent from the title itself. Moreover it is obvious from the outset that what has to be said about the presence of Christ precisely in a *diaspora* community applies either wholly or to a very large extent to every authentic Christian community which gathers about the altar of Christ and is the Church of Christ in its particular locality. At no stage, therefore, can there be any question here of attempting to find some reasons for attributing a special theological glory to the diaspora and the communities belonging to it, or of representing the diaspora as something that is altogether right and fitting. Under certain circumstances the diaspora can be frankly recognised and accepted by Christians as a 'necessity'[2] of saving history (and not merely as a sociological fact), but even [85] so it continues to represent a harsh fate for those who belong to it, and every local Church must, in order to fulfil its missionary vocation, have the will to grow and develop, and so to lessen the 'diaspora' conditions in which it finds itself.

I

After these preliminary remarks we must pass on immediately to the theme expressed in the title. But in doing so attention must be drawn to an unusual passage in the Constitution on the Church. We are referring to No. 26 in the third chapter of this dogmatic constitution of the Council.[3] The actual subject of this No. 26 is the function of the bishop as consecrating and sanctifying. But in this general context one passage has been included which refers to the individual community of worshippers in general, and not precisely to the local Church as subject to a bishop. However obvious this may appear to everyone who reads it attentively and with due attention to detail, it is a point that must still be explicitly emphasised here. For although the individual local community of worshippers is described in general terms, nevertheless certain specific characteristics of it are explicitly mentioned here which have a special relevance to our present theme. Thus it is said that communities of this kind are often small and poor, and not infrequently live in the diaspora. Certainly, therefore, we have here a passage which has a direct and explicit bearing on the subject we are treating of.

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[1] Here the author is taking up afresh one of the topics which he has already treated of in an earlier article, 'Das neue Bild der Kirche', *Geist und Leben* 39 (1966), pp. 4-24, cf. in the present volume 'The New Image of the Church', pp. 3-43. At the same time reference must be made to a brief commentary of the author's, *Das II. Vatikanische Konzil. Konstitutionen, Dekrete und Erklärungen. Lateinisch und Deutsch. Kommentare, Teil I* (Freiburg 1966), pp. 242-244, where he attempts to interpret the text chiefly being considered here. In the study which follows the author cannot undertake to collect together all that the Council had to say about a 'diaspora' community. The presence of Christ in the community is the sole subject of the present considerations. Any comprehensive study would have to investigate other conciliar texts also: e.g. the Constitution on the Liturgy No. 42, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, No. 17, the whole of the Decree on the Missions, which in fact describes the constitution which new Churches have initially to adopt, and how they are to be implanted in the midst of non-Christian peoples – in other words in a situation which is, for all material purposes, similar to that of the 'diaspora' communities. On this cf. also 'The Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship' in the present volume, pp.71-83.

[2] On this concept cf. K. Rahner, *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck, 4th ed. 1966), pp. 224 ff.

[3] For an understanding of the observations which follow the reader should have directly before his eyes the conciliar texts which are referred to from time to time.

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The passage we are treating of has been interpolated into the text at a relatively late stage. For in a passage concerned with the consecrating and sanctifying function of the bishop (and which falls between the description of his teaching function[4] on the one hand and his pastoral function[5] on the other) there is no compelling reason for including a description of the local community and its conditions. Even though this may not be the sole reason for including this passage, its insertion is certainly connected with certain wishes which were put forward in the aula of the Council, e.g. by Metropolitan E. Zoghby and E. Schick, the auxiliary bishop of Fulda. It was not only considerations of dogmatic and biblical theology that supplied the initial inspiration and the basic orientation of these wishes. Rather they were prompted by directly practical and pastoral considerations [86] deriving from the concrete situation. There was an impression that the theology of the Church as presented in the Constitution as a whole was too theoretical and so too far *removed* from the concrete realities of everyday life, and that this would be the case so long as it treated of the universal Church, the pope and the bishops without going on to treat of the individual Christian's concrete experience of the Church as affecting his own personal life from day to day. There was a desire that the Constitution should contain some message about the Church as she exists in the concrete circumstances of everyday life, in other words in the actual situation in which the death of the Lord is effectively celebrated, in which the bread of the word of God is broken, in which we pray, love, and bear the Cross of our everyday lives in the concrete, for it is in this situation that the Church as a reality really is unambiguously and palpably something more than an abstract ideology, a dogmatic thesis or a large-scale social organisation. Interventions of this kind and expressions of this kind of desire were in principle readily accepted and welcomed. Moreover the insertion of the passage we are treating of here provoked no serious dispute or opposition either in the Theological Commission or in the plenary sessions of the Council. It was felt that something should be said about the local community of worshippers in the concrete, and so the passage was inserted at that point at which the ideas which it was intended to express could most easily be fitted in. Admittedly whether this meant that the best place for these ideas was in fact found is another question.[6] But then this question is not so very important. The passage is there. That is the main point.

Even abstracting from its precise content and from its special application to the diaspora community, this passage is of the highest importance. When traditional scholastic theologians intend to speak of the 'Church' they always think immediately of the universal Church, of the unity, under the pope and bishops, of the Christian communities scattered throughout the entire world. And they never pause to reflect that 'Church' [87] could have any other meaning than this. Admittedly it may be that the usual kind of scholastic theology does contain some brief mention, in a subsection on biblical theology, of the fact that in the New Testament the individual local communities too were called 'Church'. But in any ecclesiology of this type the local community as such is hardly treated of. In such ecclesiologies, and also in the average awareness of Catholics, it appears merely as a sort of administrative subsection of *the* Church, this being a social organisation on a cosmic scale. And even since the Church has come to be regarded (chiefly through the influence of Pius

[4] cf. the Constitution on the Church No. 25.
[5] cf. ibid. No. 27.
[6] A further conclusion arising from the observations which follow is that it would in fact be perfectly possible to take as our starting-point the *individual* communities, regarding these as the Church of Christ. We could adopt this approach even if our intention was to present an ecclesiology in the true sense of the term. So too it would have been perfectly possible in the Constitution on the Church itself to speak – at least in the first and second chapters – of the individual communities, even if the Constitution as a whole was intended, in its basic structure, to have the universal Church in view. In fact, however, this approach has not been adopted. Even the 'Church' which is presided over by an individual bishop is always regarded as a 'subsection' of the Church (No. 23 ff.).

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XII's encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*) as the mystical body of Christ filled with the Spirit of Christ, something which is far more than merely a *societas perfecta*, still even as such, the Church has continued to be the universal Church which is world-wide, while the communities living in particular place and worshipping at a particular altar are precisely communities, parishes (and other '*segments*' of a similar kind within this one universal Church). The fact that the New Testament applies the designation used for the whole to these 'segments' in themselves is something that does not trouble or disturb these ideas very much. Scholastic ecclesiology has failed to draw any clear conclusions from this linguistic usage, even though for its particular theory it must appear strange, and even though, at least in the sphere of biblical theology, we can at least raise the *question* of which of the two usages is the more original in the New Testament, that which applies the term 'Church' to the local community in the concrete, or that which applies it to *the* Church as a whole. And even when the *Council itself* set out to expound its teaching on the Church it was unreflectingly taken for granted that the subject under discussion was precisely *the* Church (and only this), in other words the totality of those who believe in Christ throughout the entire world, as existing in that state of organised unity which Catholic believers hold to be indispensable for this totality according to the will of Christ. It was far from obvious at the outset that the Council would finally come to apply the term '*Church*' to the individual local communities of worshippers too. Nevertheless that is what has happened, and it is a fact of the highest importance. For in the case of a dogmatic statement the most important point is precisely *not* whether it takes a long or short time to arrive at it, or in what particular contexts or associations of ideas it (initially) makes its appearance. Nor can we pause here to explain a further point, namely what significance this recognition might have as providing a basis for working out an ecclesiology in oecumenical dialogue with Protestant theology (even though as it occurs in the Council document it is not presented precisely *as* a basic starting-point [88] of this kind). Perhaps we are still far from being in a position to recognise this importance to the full.

In the passage we are considering one sentence in particular is crucial: '*Haec Christi ecclesia adest in omnibus . . . congregationibus localibus*'. The Church, the one Church of Christ, is present in its entirety in every local community.[7] In this local community *the* Church is made actually present in the particular place in question. Every local community is, each according to its particular locality, the new people called by God in the Holy Spirit, and in that *plerophoria*[8] of which Paul speaks in 1 Thess 1:5. What is asserted here is that *the*

[7] The problem here is how, according to the New Testament, the universal Church and the local community are related to one another, seeing that the same word 'Church' can be used to designate both. There is no need to gloss over the fact that the words '*adest in*' (a more cautious phrase than a simple *est* would have been) represent an evasion of, rather than a solution to this problem. At the same time the Council could not reasonably have been expected to supply any ultimate or definitive solution to this problem, especially in the present context. In fact the New Testament itself does not offer us any further enlightenment on this point in so many words, when it produces such formulae as 'the Church of God in Corinth' etc. Presumably the question we are considering here represents a problem that is entailed by the innermost nature of the Church as a Mystery, and therefore one that ultimately is too great for any explanation purely in terms of human reason. In any case it certainly cannot be considered any part of our intention in the present modest study either, to supply any detailed or exhaustive answer to this question. A point which we return to again and again here is that the unity of the Church and of each individual community is constituted by the fact that Christ is one and his Spirit is one. And surely this is sufficient for our present purposes to indicate the general direction in which the answer to this question is to be found; the question, namely, of how and why one and the same Church is present in each local community, and that not merely in the sense that she causes the local community to represent or 'stand for' her, but in the sense that in each particular community she achieves the ultimate and supreme realisation of her own nature.

[8] Properly speaking the Latin word used in the conciliar document represents a reference to 1 Thess 1:5, and it is hardly possible to supply a really correct rendering of it because the Latin word itself in its turn renders the

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Church of Christ (‘*Haec Christi ecclesia*’) is present in the local community, so that the local community is not ‘a’ Church but ‘the’ Church. And this assertion is not weakened by the fact that the passage speaks of Churches in the plural, influenced in this by the linguistic usage of the bible as found in Paul. Certainly it should not be denied that this usage in which the plural ‘Churches’ is employed is also legitimate, and rightly serves to underline the fact that the local community constitutes *the* Church only in virtue of the fact that it is precisely [89] united by the common bond of faith, love and law with all the other communities of Christ. Nor should it be doubted that the Council too is justified in speaking of Churches in the plural. But conversely this must not be allowed to obscure the further truth, which is brought out no less forcefully in our passage (without any further attempt being made to produce a theological harmony between two statements which seem to be opposed), namely that the one Church is made present in the local community of worshippers. In other words what we have in this local community of worshippers is not merely one *section* of the Church, one of its juridical or cultic administrative subsections. For this is precisely the difference between the Church and any earthly society, namely that in the part the whole achieves the supreme fulness of *itself*, and at the same time its clearest manifestation. It is in this sense that *the* Church of Christ (to express the matter once again in the paradoxical terms employed by the Council) ‘is there’ in the local community.[9]

II

Now the passage we are considering goes on to say that in any such local community gathered about their altar in which the Church is ‘there’ ‘Christ is present’. He is present through that which constitutes this community as such.

Two of the factors in this constitution of the local community are its union with its own bishop and pastor and its union with the universal Church. But when we look into our particular passage more closely we notice in addition to these three further factors[10] which are essential. The first is the preaching of the gospel of Christ (which takes place ‘in assembly’. In other words the gospel is not merely preached in the community as gathered together but is itself the basis for this state of ‘being gathered together’). The second is the mystery of the eucharistic meal, which is likewise designated explicitly as the basic cause for this brotherly unity [90] and so as actually *constitutive* of the community. The third is the love[11] and the unity of the community which develops precisely from *this*. This love itself appears, once more, as constituting a sign (‘symbol’) of the one and universal church in which salvation is mediated as present in the local community. The further question of precisely *how* these three elements in the constitution of the local community of worshippers are united among themselves is one on which our passage has nothing more to tell us. At most we can find an indication of where the answer to this lies to the extent that it is said that this community is

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original Greek concept only very imperfectly. On the concept of *plerophoria* cf. especially G. Delling, *T.W.N.T.* VI (Stuttgart 1959), p. 309.

[9] When it is stated in the Constitution on the Church (No. 28) that the priests make ‘the universal Church visible in their particular locality’, this is probably a weaker version of the same basic thought.

[10] Having recognised as distinct these three elements in the constitution of the local community, we may justifiably set them apart from the other two elements in it: that it is, of its nature, subject to the authority of a bishop, and that it is in union (even in the juridical and sacral sphere) with the universal Church. The reason is that what is being treated of here is precisely that which constitutes the local Church *as such*, and as distinct from the universal Church.

[11] We may be permitted to point out that even in Protestant ecclesiology this aspect has probably not been worked out sufficiently clearly. For in this the Church is regarded as existing wherever the gospel is legitimately preached and the sacraments are rightly administered.

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the new people called by God[12] in the *Holy Spirit*. For it is in fact, in a very real sense, quite evident that it is precisely the *pneuma Christi* which draws these three basic elements, which are constitutive of the community, into a unity. For all preaching of the word of God only becomes the word precisely of *God* (and not merely a word *about* God) when it is uttered and heard in the Spirit, when the Spirit of God itself in its own reality becomes the source of the utterance (with authority) and of the hearing (in faith). The fact that the celebration of the Eucharist must take place in the Spirit and that it communicates the Spirit to men is also evident in scripture (cf. Jn 6:63), and it is likewise evident that the Spirit is only there where love is, and love can only be achieved in the Spirit.[13]

From the whole tenor of the passage one point becomes clear. It may be stated as follows: Christ is present *through* this community as constituted precisely in *this* way. And this presence of his is the object for [91] which the community exists. The passage is, in fact, developed in three stages.

1. It is stated that the local community is the presence of *the* Church as actual.

2. We are told why and how (precisely through the three constitutive elements already mentioned) the local community is the Church as present.

3. As a conclusion of the first two statements it is explained that Christ is present in these local communities.

The question of *why* the community as constituted in this way is the presence of Christ[14] is one that is not explicitly entered into or reflected upon. But even so we gather from what is said that since the Church (as a whole and as a local community) has Christ, she constitutes his presence. She does this in the two dimensions[15] which, according to the Constitution on the Church taken as a whole, belong to the Church and are essential for her existence: she is the hierarchically organised people of God, his Body, and she is this even in the dimension of history and society. *At the same time* she lives by his Spirit, which is given to her as the Church of eschatological salvation through the compassion of God which he will never

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[12] Here too it is to be observed that the passage does not say (as a superficial interpretation of scholastic theology might lead one to expect) that the individual community is a part of the new people of God, but that every community *is* the new 'people of God, each in its own locality'. This is something which is quite different.

[13] Even in the 'Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests' it is stated, in No. 4, that the people of God is assembled (and 'primarily' at that!) into a unity through the word of God. In No. 5 of the same decree it is explicitly stated that the Eucharist is the flesh of Christ as living and lifegiving 'in the Holy Spirit'. Here in No. 4 the unity of sacrament and word is also indicated inasmuch as it is stated that the sacraments are sacraments of *faith* which are born of the word and nourished by the word. There is nothing, therefore, to prevent us from regarding the sacraments themselves as the most radical instance of the exhibitive word of God effecting what it utters, a word, therefore, that does not merely speak of something which is simply independent of what is said, but rather causes the reality itself that is proclaimed in the *kerygma* to take place in the here and now. This makes plainer the unity that exists between the first two constitutive elements in the local community.

[14] We have no intention here of discussing or disputing the question of whether it is better to say: 'the community *is* the presence of Christ' or 'Christ is present *in* the community' (as, on an accurate reading, our passage expresses it). Obviously the Church is not Christ. And in neither of the two possible formulations is this asserted. The simpler and less awkward formulation is certainly that of the Council itself. But on the other hand a further point must not be overlooked. The presence of Christ in the community takes place in the word that is heard and believed, in the effective reception of the Body of Christ, in the practical love of the members of the community for one another, in brief in the Spirit of Christ as really communicated and as received in faith and love. This Spirit not merely offers itself, but also brings about the acceptance of itself through its own power. Its presence, therefore, is itself in act *and* at the same time the sanctification wrought by the Spirit upon man as he brings to its fulness the freedom which has been bestowed upon him. On this basis we can also state freely that the community is the presence of Christ, provided only that we do not absolutely identify this presence (that through which Christ communicates himself to man as Saviour, and so becomes present 'for him') with Christ himself.

[15] On these two dimensions in the Church, which as distinct yet undivided are essential elements in her very nature, cf. e.g. the Constitution on the Church No. 8.

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withdraw from her, and it is given to her as a pledge of final and irrevocable victory. The Spirit is also conferred upon her as truth and love.[16] Of her very nature, therefore, the Church is the presence of Christ [92] in both dimensions (that of history and that of the Spirit which opens up to her, and assures her of, that dimension of transcendence in which she can attain to the immediate presence of God). She is the presence of Christ in each of these two dimensions, and in the modes appropriate to each respectively, so that both dimensions together constitute the single presence of Christ. In that in the word of Christ, his sacrament (including the 'real presence' under the sacramental forms of the Eucharist), visible love and unity are achieved, Christ is 'there' in the dimension of history. In that this presence is the historical communication of his Spirit, it is in virtue of this precisely that it achieves its goal, namely the immediate union of man with God in his justifying and forgiving grace, which, in the last analysis (as 'uncreated grace') is God himself in the immediacy of his act of self-bestowal. Both modes are one and at the same time distinct, just as the sacrament and that which is sacramentally signified (*sacramentum* and *res sacramenti*) are one and distinct. This unity between the sacrament and the reality it signifies is something that can no longer be destroyed in the Church as a whole (however much it may be lost in the case of the individual recipient of the sacraments: 'unfruitful sacrament'). This is because the Church is holy and endures through the grace of God as eschatologically victorious. And because this is so we can also make the following statement about the Church as a whole (and thereby, surely, about the individual communities as a whole too, at any rate in a presumptive sense[17]): it abidingly constitutes this unity of the presence of Christ in sign and in the Spirit. Because that which constitutes it also constitutes the presence of Christ we can say (and this is something that explicitly applies only here) not only 'in her Christ is present', but also 'she *is* the [93] presence of Christ', even though perhaps it would be better to avoid speaking of the Church as 'Christ living on'.[18]

III

A further question has now to be asked: *for whom* is Christ present in this way? Obviously the presence we are speaking of here is not simply a local presence such as we might conceive of in terms of the conceptual model of two bodies placed close to one another in the same area. This presence, rather, is one that causes us to be saved, a presence 'for us'. In answering this question we must certainly begin by pointing out that Christ is present in the community for the community itself, and to bring salvation to its own members. The Church

[16] cf. the Constitution on the Church No. 39, No. 48. cf. also K. Rahner, 'The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II'; 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 295-312.

[17] A question which will, in fact probably have to be left open is whether, in spite of being juridically authenticated, in spite of the true preaching of the gospel and the valid administration of the sacraments in it, an individual community can be as a whole sinful and unbelieving (and only this). The conciliar document takes as its starting-point the 'normal case' of a community in which the word of God really is heard in a spirit of faith and the sacraments are 'fruitfully' received. But since for the individual community as it exists in the concrete we can only 'presume' this to be the case (in exactly the same way as with the individual Christian as such) it also becomes clear that even on a Catholic understanding of the Church it includes an 'invisible' element, and that we must allow for this if we are not to understand the Church merely as a *societas perfecta* in a sense that is *false*. But it must be remembered that the Church as a whole is conceived of as *indefectibiliter sancta* (No. 39), and that as a whole she makes manifest to the faithful, even as a fact of history, the act of abiding in the truth and love of Christ (cf. D 1794). Because of this there are objective grounds for the presumption referred to above.

[18] On this mode of parlance cf. the commentary and bibliography provided by A. Grillmeier on pp. 168-174 of the volume of commentary on the Council referred to on p. 84 n. 1.

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is, in fact, always the fruit of salvation and the mediatrix of salvation at the same time. The fact that as mediatrix of salvation she makes Christ present means that she herself receives Christ as her own salvation, and that at the same time she mediates him to others.[19] In fact the only way in which the word can be rightly preached is for the preacher himself to have heard it in a spirit of faith.[20] In the Eucharist the Church is always she who receives, as well as she who dispenses, the Body of the Lord. In the relationship of love unity is always maintained within her in such a way that love is both given [94] and received at the same time, and that the one attitude cannot be present without the other.

But ultimately speaking it would run counter to the basic tenor of the constitution on the Church taken as a whole if we were to confine our answer to the mere statement that in the community which is the Church Christ is present for, and bringing salvation to, the Church herself and her members. For in fact the principle that the Church is the 'sacrament' of salvation for the *world*[21] is numbered among the basic tenets of conciliar ecclesiology. But this means nothing else than that in the last analysis instead of the Church making Christ present only to herself as *her* salvation, she makes him present to the world as the salvation of it. Now in order to understand this and appreciate it at its true worth we must advance beyond the stage of merely noticing in passing the explanation put forward relatively frequently and with numerous minor variations by the Council to the effect that the Church is the basic sacrament of salvation and, furthermore, of the salvation of the world. Over and above this we must realise a further conviction which is either expressed or implied[22] in the pronouncements of the Council, and that too in a manner which is notably clearer and more forceful than has been the case in tradition hitherto. This is the conviction that men can be and are justified without belonging fully to the 'visible body' of the Church (it should be

[19] We must achieve a clearer view than is obtained in the usual presentations of ecclesiology of the unity which exists between the imparting of salvation and its reception. The Church herself would cease to be the authoritative and indefectible mediatrix of truth and salvation if she ceased, or ever could cease, to be she who abides *through faith* in the truth, and she who is the holy one (in the love of her members for one another). She has authority and is indeed indefectible in mediating salvation precisely *because* she has herself already received salvation through God in an act which is eschatological and so irrevocable, and has thereby been constituted as the work of God's compassion in Christ.

[20] Obedience in faith is, of course, something that is legitimately demanded of each individual preacher in his preaching. But whether we apply what we are saying to a preacher of this kind, or whether even an unbelieving preacher can assert this word in the Church and for her, makes no difference to the point we are making. The statement is correct, at any rate as applied to preaching and the preacher in the Church as a whole, and it is true even of a preacher who in his own personal life is an unbeliever that he can only preach legitimately when he speaks in the name of the Church. And in the Church the word is not only preached but believed too. Preaching proceeds from faith as its basis.

[21] cf. the Constitution on the Church No. 1, No. 9, No. 48, No. 59; the Decree on the Missions No. 1, No. 5; the Constitution on the Liturgy, No. 5, No. 26; The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, No. 43. It is not possible here to enter into the precise nuances of this doctrine as presented in the various documents. On this doctrine of the Church as the 'basic sacrament' cf. the study of the author cited on p. 84 n. 1 of this article, on 'The New Image of the Church', now included in this volume, pp. 2-43. On the material and historical aspects of this subject cf. P. Smulders' important study, 'Die Kirche als Sacrament des Heils', *De Ecclesia. Beiträge zur Konstitution 'Über die Kirche' des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, G. Baraúna ed., German edition prepared by O. Semmelroth, J. G. Gerhartz, H. Vorgrimler, Vol. I (Freiburg/Frankfurt 1966), pp. 289-312 (with copious bibliography). cf. also *ibid*., the studies of J. L. Witte and Abbot B. C. Butler. cf. the brief summary in the article 'Ursakrament' (O. Semmelroth), *L.T.K.* X (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1965), pp. 568-569; the concept occurs in three distinct passages in the Constitution on the Church: No. 1, No. 9, No. 48. cf. in addition the comprehensive expositions of A. Grillmeier in the commentary referred to on p. 84 n. 1 of the present volume. cf. in the commentary pp. 156 ff., esp. 157 n. 4, 177 ff. also the remarks of O. Semmelroth, pp. 315-317. Also O. Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt, 3rd ed. 1963); K. Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg 1960). cf. also the bibliography below pp. 201/210.

[22] cf. e.g. The Constitution on the Church Nos. 15-16; the Decree on Oecumenism, No. 3; the Decree on the Missions, Nos. 1, 4, 7.

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noticed [95] in parenthesis that in holding this the Council does not call in question the unique role of and necessity for the Church as mediating salvation on any true understanding of this role). Once we recognise this we can see that to call the Church the sacrament of salvation for the world means something far more than merely that she is the sign to all men of the grace of God as *offered* to them (as though this grace could become fruitful in salvation only when the individual concerned actually belonged to the visible body of the Church). Also, and more than this, she is the sign of the grace of God as actually having achieved its victory in the world, a grace, therefore, which can and does extend its justifying effects even to those areas in which the individual justified does *not* already fully belong to the Church in the visible dimension of history and society, thereby himself contributing to the constitution of the Church as the basic sacrament of salvation for the world. It remains true that grace can take effect in the sense indicated even though both inside and outside the Church we cannot arrive at any assured judgment as to whether a particular individual is justified or not. Thus we can say that the Church, and therefore the individual community that is the Church, makes Christ present to the *world* in that, through her whole existence as an historical entity (in preaching, sacraments and visibly active love) she constitutes a *reality* in human history that is *one and the same* for all, the unique sphere of existence in which the personal saving history of each individual is achieved. The Church also makes a further factor present in this way. It is through her that this same Christ, actually present in the world that is not the Church, has inserted himself into the innermost centre of the lives of men, to become, as justifying and sanctifying through his Spirit, the centre and source of their saving history. Even with regard to the presence of Christ through the Church for the world, therefore, we must pay due heed to the fact that the Church, and the presence of Christ as constituted by her, has a twofold dimension.

IV

Now evidently what we have already said so far with regard to the presence of Christ in the local community of worshippers which is the Church applies also to the ‘diaspora’ communities that are small. This point is explicitly emphasised in our passage. In fact it says ‘*even though* they are often poor and small and live in the diaspora’. Evidently the intention that lies behind this formula is to express solicitude for such small and poor ‘diaspora’ communities. They *too* constitute the presence of Christ in the [96] world even if, because of their smallness in terms of numbers, social prestige and power, they cannot impart that effulgence to the presence of Christ which is so often invoked by the practitioners of an unenlightened apologetics in order to prove the presence of Christ in the world and to make it appear splendid. But we can without embarrassment pass over the actual text of the conciliar document and sum it up by saying that such ‘diaspora’ communities, *precisely as such*, are a sign of the presence of Christ. We have only to read 1 Cor 1:26-31 to realise this. The insignificance of the community in terms of numbers and social standing is, in Paul’s view, not merely something that ‘regrettably’ has to be put up with until the Church finally emerges in her full splendour and her victorious power. On the contrary it is something which God himself has ‘chosen’ in order that *he*, and not man, may be made manifest in his own autonomous power, and may bear witness to himself. God has precisely chosen circumstances of insignificance because he wants to attest the fact that his love has been rejected. The Christ who is to be present here is Christ crucified (cf. 1 Cor 1:22), who is a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles. In the Eucharist it is the death of the Lord that is to be proclaimed, for it is only through this that life is brought to the world. Of their very nature, therefore, truth love and light, to the extent that they really are of God and given by

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God as salvation, have a mysterious affinity with the mystery of the Cross and so too with the folly and scandal involved in it. Given that a community has the function of making Christ present through the word of preaching, through the sacraments and through love, how could it, in any true sense, fulfil this function by appearing in the world with power, with earthly wisdom or with social prestige? Is it not almost a necessity of the very nature of such a community to approximate to the form of the 'diaspora' community? To be 'small', 'poor' and few in numbers, and so to be living in the midst of those who have not already been touched by the grace of God at the actual level of the conscious awareness of truth and adherence to the Church as a society? Again the Council itself has repeatedly pointed to a connection between the Church and poverty (which, in the last analysis, can only be a real factor in a 'diaspora' community), even though it did not attribute to this connection the full scope and force which was desired, chiefly by the French and South American bishops.[23] We must avoid thinking of the presence of Christ through the Church in terms of an abstract ideology, [97] and think instead of the preaching of the gospel in the *concrete*, that gospel which will, as a necessity of saving history, meet with contradiction. Furthermore we must achieve a right understanding of the celebration of the Eucharist, seeing it not as a celebration of a sort of cosmic liturgy of the beauty and the unveiled *doxa* of God, but rather as an act in which the terrible death of the Lord in darkness and ruin is made present and takes possession of us. We must not misinterpret love as an idealistic philanthropy which is intended to conceal the brutality of human living from itself instead of helping to bear the pain of it. And if we do all this, *then and only then* (in spite of the reservations expressed at the beginning) we shall understand that the 'diaspora' community is capable of being, most clearly of all, the presence of Christ as the crucified one.

This will come as no surprise to anyone who reflects that in the last analysis the 'diaspora' situation is far from being extraordinary or exceptional for the Church as such from the point of view either of her own intrinsic nature or of the future which is destined to befall her. From the point of view of the Church's own nature it is not extraordinary, for in fact the Church is not the kingdom of God made manifest in glory, but rather the sign of this, the promise of this and the community which hopes against all hope as it waits for this kingdom to come. As a sign in this sense of a reality that is hoped for the Church can never for one moment expect that at some point in earthly time the world and the Church will simply become co-extensive so as to form a single homogeneous society which is both Christian and world-wide at the same time. But that contradiction to herself, her truth and her love which is an element intrinsic to her own life cannot be restricted in its manifestations to the interior and private dimension of the individual's own conscience, but must also, and of necessity, assume a social form. Today the Church is gradually entering upon a future in which she becomes a world Church in the true sense, and in which she is everywhere. This is because the individual histories of the many nations hitherto covering separate areas of human living have become united into a single overall world history. Nevertheless the Church must still remain the sign that will be contradicted because Christ, whom it is her role to make present, is himself destined to be contradicted. Now these two facts can only both be true simultaneously in that the Church as she exists everywhere is actually a 'diaspora' Church, however varied the 'diaspora' conditions may be and may continue to be, to which the Church is subject among particular peoples and in particular areas of human history.[24]

[98] Certainly it is true that even in the future the Church must not become either sociologically or still less theologically a 'sect', or ever wish to become so in any sense. By

[23] cf. e.g. the Constitution on the Church, No. 8, No. 45 ff.; the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, No. 17; the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, No. 42; the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, No. 13.
[24] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Sendung and Gnade*, pp. 24-47.

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'sect' here we mean a group of individuals who are inadequate to meet the demands of life, and who do not have the courage to take an active part in shaping a developing world. Because of this they make a virtue of their necessity that is both false and cowardly. But while recognising the danger and temptation of misunderstanding the Church's true nature in this sense (by glorifying a ghetto-like way of life as lived in the nooks and crannies of history), still this does not prohibit the Church from recognising the fate which is in fact hers, that namely of living, whether exteriorly or interiorly in a 'diaspora' situation, as a disposition of God which, so far from running counter to her true nature, precisely causes it to be made manifest. If the Church understands her 'diaspora' situation as something proper to her own nature as being a sign of salvation to the world, then she can combine in the right sense the attitudes both of humility and pride: pride ('boasting') in her election to be a sign of the salvation of the world, and humility because she is chosen precisely and only as a *sign* of that salvation, which can also be attained to by those who do not (yet) belong to the Church in terms of visible membership of her as a social and historical entity. In other words what we are speaking of is the difference between the Church as sign of salvation to the world and the salvation which is present in the Church for herself and for the world. Now anyone who pays due heed to this difference and recognises it as essential and abiding has thereby understood also the *theological* nature of the 'diaspora' situation. He no longer needs merely to endure it as a sociological situation and a purely external fate to which the Church is subject.

V

The local community of worshippers is, in virtue of the word, the sacrament and the love that is manifested in her, the supreme 'actualisation' of the very meaning of 'Church' as such. It will still be a long time before the average Catholic Christian appreciates this, and before he understands that that which first and last provides the focal point and the initial impulse for his belief in the Church and his love for the Church is to be found not where the Church appears as a large-scale organisation endowed with great power, but where the centre of that worship is located which is constituted by the word, the sacrament and brotherly love. The amount that still remains to be done in order to arouse men to an awareness of this [99] significance in the Church is immeasurable. Poverty, smallness and a 'diaspora' situation are singled out in the conciliar document as the characteristics of many local communities. But we ought to realise that these are destined to apply to the Church as a whole, especially in view of the future that is pressing in upon her, even more than we do at present. And realising this we should calmly and freely allow the full implications of the basic principle expressed in our passage to be unfolded. Thus we shall say that the new awareness of the Church which will come to prevail in the future is actually anticipated in this passage which we are considering.[25] The Christian of tomorrow will only encounter the Church as such, will only experience her as 'actual' and present where the presence of Christ is experienced and made real in the authorised preaching of his gospel, in the *anamnesis* of his death, and in that love which unites men in Christ.

It is *here* that the Christian of tomorrow will recognise what the Church is. He will understand the achievement of the Christian community in its fulness here not as something which takes place *in* the Church, but rather as the achievement of *the* Church herself. Of

[25] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Konziliare Lehre der Kirche und künftige Wirklichkeit christlichen Lebens', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI, pp. 479-498; on the situation of the diaspora cf. K. Rahner, 'The Christian in his World', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and Baltimore, 1971), pp. 88 ff. For a comprehensive analysis of the situation of the Church in the present cf. now especially the author's *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1-2 (Freiburg 1966).

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course he will be aware that this Church, in order to be able to achieve its own 'actualisation' in this sense, has a structure of its own prior to achieving the fulness of its own nature here. But at the same time he will, from the outset, regard this concrete reality and composition of the Church as a whole which is prior to the achievement of her own full 'actualisation', precisely as a condition which enables that to be enacted which comes to its fulness in the form of a community gathered about the altar. Of course a community of this kind, conscious as it is of itself as an event taking place in the Church through the word of preaching, the sacraments and the love of the brethren, will be conscious of being united with all other communities which likewise constitute this same single Church of Christ. The individual community will give expression to that unity with all other communities through the one Spirit which is according to Christ's will even at the level of concrete social living as such, and will also be conscious that it has a duty to do this. It will experience in faith that it only maintains the truth of the word which takes place in it, and its power to [100] make Christ present, in the unity of the communities of Christ as hierarchically organised. This of itself will ensure that it recognises and lives by everything which the Constitution on the Church has to say about the universal Church as such. It will think of the totality of the communities in turn as *the* Church, and precisely not as a secondary amalgam of communities originally existing in isolation from one another as though it was this combination alone that constituted the 'Church'. The community will recognise that even in the Church considered as the union of the individual communities truth and love must be achieved, and therefore too that for this purpose this 'universal' Church must have its organs at the level of social organisation and living, namely those appointed in her to exercise the teaching and pastoral office. For these do not only provide a final summing up of what is recognised and achieved in the faith and love of the individual communities as such. They are something more than the mere mouthpieces of these individual communities.

But a community of this kind will recognise all this as belonging to a Catholic understanding of the Church, and will be content to live by it, realising that though the truth of Christ is ultimately one, it is presented in the form of a structured hierarchy of truths. It will recognise and accept what is laid down in the Decree on Oecumenism,[26] namely that though this truth which is the authentic foundation and basis of faith is one, the individual doctrines of faith and their application to the concrete realities of human living are related in very different ways to this one true foundation, so that it is only from the basis of this that we can believe in these doctrines and live by these applications of them in the concrete. Now this basis (and this is something that concerns precisely the Christians living in the diaspora of today and tomorrow) is not the Church considered as a macrocosmic religious organisation with an extension that is world-wide (not even when we take due cognizance of its God-given authority and the fact that it orientates us towards the ultimate goal of our religion). Rather this authentic foundation of faith and love in relation to the Church will be the reality and the concrete experience that Christ the crucified and risen Lord is made present together with his word (including in this its sacramental and exhibitive force, its 'translation' into acts of love, and the witness it bears in this form), with its power to admit us into the unfathomable mystery of God. It is in the objective reality and the experience of this that the Church is made 'actual' ever anew in the midst of the insignificance, poverty and desolation of the community which believes in him in the vast wilderness of this human life. All other factors [101] in our awareness of the Church will draw their life from, and will only be able to live by this as their fundamental source and centre. The Christian of the future will experience that which befalls him in his community no longer – as formerly – as something that takes place *in* the Church, but rather as the 'actualisation' *of the* Church. Now this basic source and

[26] cf. the Decree on Oecumenism, No. 11.

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centre of the reality that is the Church and of faith in the Church can be, and actually will be experienced by non-Catholic Christians too (even though these may not give it its due by recognising it as a fully objective entity and as a social phenomenon expressible in 'this-worldly' categories). And because of this it becomes possible for the Catholic Church to enter into dialogue with the other Christian Churches and communities. There is a basis for this dialogue which God himself has provided in Christ, and which he brings to 'actualisation'. And only from this basis will such a dialogue hold out a real prospect of proving fruitful – fruitful in the efforts which are made on all sides to bear an authentic[27] witness to the presence of Christ in a Christian community. Even in the diaspora.

[27] In order to avoid a still greater increase in the footnotes to this article the author has decided not to repeat once again the relevant references to the findings of biblical theology and the witnesses of theological tradition. For these the reader may be referred to the wide-ranging and well-planned study of B. Neunheuser O.S.B., 'Gesamtkirche und Einzelkirche', *De Ecclesia* I (cf. above p. 138 a n. 21), pp. 547-573 (including a copious bibliography on the subject in all its aspects). Two approaches are possible, one in which the importance of the local community is stressed, the other in which we take as our starting-point a more universal conception of the Church. Now it is possible to regard these as two types of the 'theology of collegiality' as this has been developed e.g. by J. Ratzinger, cf. 'Die Bischöfliche Kollegialität' in *De Ecciesia II*, G. Baraúna ed., (Freiburg 1966), pp. 44-70, esp. pp. 56 ff. J. Ratzinger interprets my statement in *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), p. 335 as an extremely radical version of a theological conception that has only appeared in recent times. Moreover he finds that my own interpretation as set forth in 'The Episcopate and the Primacy', *Studies in Modern Theology* (Freiburg/London 1965), pp. 303-322, is in 'opposition' to his, and that even in developing the idea of collegiality it seeks to follow an exactly opposite path to that of the theology of the Fathers. But against this, my various statements on this subject (including those belonging to the present volume) show that I myself would prefer to regard these two types as 'conceptual models' which complement one another, although admittedly from many points of view, and precisely at the present time a certain priority may be attributed to the local Church. Admittedly too, difficulties do arise from the fact that for many reasons the structural forms assumed by the Church can no longer be based upon a territorial principle, while in view of the ever-increasing unification of the world an awareness of the Church as universal appears just as important. While the theological initiative of recent times may have led to an ecclesiology that is one-sided, and even

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produced certain effects in practice which are harmful, still there is *also* a necessary trait in this development which can be interpreted in a positive sense. For example in the article referred to by Ratzinger I was concerned *amongst other things* with explaining in ecclesiological terms the significance of the *diocese*, and so here I took as my starting-point factors which I do not adduce in my other studies. In the light of what has just been said, namely the broader vision in which both elements have to be taken into account, I can whole-heartedly agree with the observations of J. Ratzinger with regard to the importance of the local Church. On the local Church cf. also H. Küng, *Die Kirche* (Freiburg I967), pp. 105 f., 272 ff. etc.

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[103]

6

DIALOGUE IN THE CHURCH

The Second Vatican Council has had the effect of causing the question of dialogue between Christians to be raised as a subject for discussion and also actually put into practice. Everyone is speaking of dialogue, and of a dialogue between everyone and his neighbour. But in this there has already been a certain failure to arrive at any very clear idea of what the general term ‘dialogue’ really means, especially when it is intended to apply it to discussions which are properly speaking ideological and religious in character, and as these are conducted not merely between individuals but between social groups and institutions.

I

When the dialogue is to be conducted by that Church whose members are Catholics as well as Christians, and when it is concerned with the Christian faith and the principles deriving from this, then the basic difficulty consists in the fact that in this case it is not some favourite opinion that is being put forward. On the contrary, in such a case the subject of the dialogue is a teaching which is held with a total commitment of faith to have been revealed by God, and which is adhered to immutably by the Church and by the Christian believer. We can discuss among ourselves and exchange opinions and views. We can peaceably exchange ideas even when our minds are already made up concerning political, economic, cultural and artistic questions. And in all this we can, indeed we should, maintain an attitude of tolerance, recognising *a priori* that man in himself does not necessarily have to be right in all circumstances, that in the course of discussion he can alter his own personal opinion and allow himself to be taught a better one. In short in all these areas we can conduct an open dialogue. Nor does this need to turn into a mere disjointed discussion which is endlessly prolonged, and in which we never expect to arrive at any unity between us. Indeed an open dialogue of this kind is embarked upon with the aim of learning something and not merely [104] teaching, with an attitude of being prepared, in certain circumstances, to revise our own opinions, to modify them in their details or even to alter them, to achieve new insights and to accord due value to factors which we have hitherto failed to perceive. The ultimate meaning of dialogue is such as to preclude treating of subjects of a purely factual nature. Rather it is a communication of ourselves which is aimed at mutual and loving acceptance. And to this extent an open dialogue still has a certain meaning even in those cases in which it does not imply that kind of unity which consists in mutually holding the same opinion, but rather in accepting the other person in his uniqueness and otherness, the difference of ‘viewpoint’ being only a very secondary expression of this.

But can an open dialogue of this kind also be conducted by Catholic Christians in matters belonging specifically to their faith, and with regard to a teaching that has been revealed by God, seeing that such a Christian holds firm with a total commitment of faith to this teaching in all that concerns the manner of its promulgation and its content as revelation? For in such a case is not the purpose of a discussion already decided from the outset: the victory of one’s own personal convictions even over one’s partner in the discussion, or else a breaking off of the discussion in which both parties go their separate ways ‘unconverted’ and with the convictions which they already held before the discussion took place? In questions of faith, then, is it impossible to have any open dialogue, and is a kind of ‘missionary’ controversy

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with the avowed intention of converting the other to one's point of view all that is possible – at least from the Catholic party's view of what discussion must mean? Is the only conceivable form of discussion which can exist, so far as we are concerned, one which is analogous to that which a Christian or a sincere humanist might hold with a Nazi who sought to defend the murder of the Jews, seeing that in this field a Christian cannot hold any open dialogue but is confined to avowing his faith and attacking or rejecting, however politely, contrary points of view, or else to sternly refusing to enter into any discussion at all?

The problem of why, and in what sense, the Church can, and indeed must conduct an open dialogue in such questions in spite of this cannot really be treated of *in extenso* here.[1] Yet we must draw attention to this question at this point because in the nature of the case it still recurs in the case of dialogue within the Church as we shall shortly be seeing. On the more general question we must confine ourselves here to saying this much: even in questions of faith, and in spite of the absolute character of divine [105] revelation, the absolute nature of the Church's own assent of faith and her ultimately missionary purpose, the Church can conduct an open dialogue with all men and groups of men because in such a dialogue, without prejudice to the divine truth, the Church can and must be she who learns as well, she who is capable of being led into still deeper levels of her own truth and her understanding of that truth. In such a dialogue she can be purified from misunderstandings and distorted interpretations such as may have attached themselves to her understanding of her faith, and she can herself become more believing. It may be that it is only through such a dialogue that she can attain to that particular concrete historical form of the abiding truth which is to be the basis for her activity in hope and love, and which has to be worked out by herself in the particular circumstances of the present if she is to proclaim the gospel of God in Christ effectively to her own age.[2]

After these preliminary observations we must straightway raise the question of the necessity, the nature and the concrete form of this open dialogue which is to take place within the Church. When we speak of dialogue and the necessity for dialogue here we do not mean the sort of dialogue which is carried on everywhere and at all times, or which must be carried on (unless it is silenced by the atrophying of the human in man) because the very nature of man is such as to demand discussion and intercommunication with his fellows. When we speak of dialogue and the necessity for it here, then, we mean dialogue to the extent that it arises from a specific contemporary situation and is rendered necessary by this. From the very outset we are confining ourselves, therefore, to an aspect which, in itself, is wholly secondary. From this it is clear that even the dialogue within the Church can only be considered from this secondary viewpoint. The fundamental situation of dialogue between Christians as friends, as loving one another, as neighbours and members of the same community of worshippers – in other words the most important element in the dialogue between Christians – will be left out of consideration here. Here we shall primarily be concerned to discuss, on a broad basis, the question of an open theological dialogue within the Church, while the question of a dialogue within the Church in the spheres of pastoral

[1] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on Dialogue Within a Pluralistic Society', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 31-42.

[2] For a fuller treatment of the subject of a right understanding of how insight into the faith can be developed even in the case of defined dogma cf. K. Rahner and K. Lehmann, *Mysterium Salutis* I, J. Feiner, M. Löhrer edd. (Einsiedeln 1965), pp. 693 ff., 698 ff., 731 ff., 756 ff., 780 ff.; K. Rahner, 'Zur Geschichtlichkeit der Theologie', *Integritas*, D. Stolte and R. Wisser edd., Festschrift für K. Holzamer (Tübingen 1966), pp. 75-95, now published in Vol. IX of this series, pp. 64-82.

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[106] theology and on social, educational and political matters must remain in the background.[3]

II

An open dialogue of the kind that can be conducted within the Church is possible and necessary. First: if the Church of today is to conduct a dialogue with the world, then it must not be overlooked that this 'world' is not simply 'outside', but is rather present in the Church herself. This means that the first, and perhaps the decisive dialogue with the world is that which takes place precisely within the Church.

In fact the 'world' which is to be the Church's partner in the dialogue that is necessary today is, in the first instance, not only present where non-Christian groups have already emerged as social organisations with a firm ideological basis of their own. No such social organisation needs to be achieved for the world to be constituted as a partner to a dialogue with the Church. Prior to the formation of any such ideological groups different from the Church herself the necessity for a dialogue between the Church and the 'world'[4] arises from the almost incalculable pluralism of ideas which constitutes the situation in which modern man lives, and which on the one hand is prior to the formation of the ideologies and their upholders, and on the other cannot fail to have a bearing upon the faith of the Church. By the term 'intellectual pluralism'[5] as understood here we mean the sum total of the experiences, insights, impulses and human possibilities in all spheres of human living which are distinguished by the following characteristics:

1. As a sum total it is so immense and complex that it has reached a stage at which it is quite impossible for any one individual even to survey it all, let alone to organise it and reduce it to a single integrated system.[6]

2. It derives from the most diverse sources of knowledge and experience, for which no integrating factors can be found even if we go back [107] to their origins. Their complexity is such that no *a priori* theory of science can be found which is adequate to comprehend them, reduce them to a system or relate them one to another.

3. There is no one representative of this total complex such as might exercise authoritative control over all its elements (not even the Church).

4. All departments of this amorphous complex are – even though in various ways and different degrees – significant for the tenets of the Christian faith. All these elements are factors in modern man's picture of the world, and in his interpretation of himself, which in turn constitute the situation in which he lives out his Christian faith. They raise questions for this, and call it in question at the same time.

The world constituted by this intellectual pluralism also exists in the Church. For her members themselves live in the situation constituted by this intellectual pluralism, and for that very reason an interior dialogue is necessary in the Church. The situation of a world that is intellectually homogeneous and easy to comprehend is coming to an end within the Church as well. Since the French revolution and the restoration of the Church from the nineteenth

[3] In view of the fact that other works are available for consultation on these more concrete questions, the author has felt able to confine himself to the problems which are more basic.
[4] On the basic necessity for a dialogue between the Church and the world cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1-2 (Freiburg 1966), II/1: pp. 102 ff., 265 ff.; II/2: pp. 163 ff., 168 ff., 203-267.
[5] On the concept of 'Pluralism' cf. *ibid*. II/1: pp. 210 ff., 248 ff., 261 ff.
[6] For a fuller treatment with examples cf. the author's 'A Small Question Regarding the Contemporary Pluralism in the Intellectual Situation of Catholics and the Church', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 21-30.

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century onwards a remarkable intellectual homogeneity (which has been still further strengthened by the definition of the First Vatican Council) has prevailed in the Catholic Church even though it has not been without certain ghetto-like traits. This has lasted for a whole century. It is the age of neo-scholasticism in theology and philosophy, the age of the theory of a natural law worked out in material detail, of a uniform and centralised form of ecclesiastical government in which the universal Church was ruled from Rome, the age of a Latin liturgy which was common to all, of a canon law which was common to all and by comparison with which all laws for particular Churches hardly entered into consideration, an age in which it was attempted to establish in the Church a way of life for Christians and Church members covering all areas and as far as possible self-sufficient, and to do this through social organisations in the Church, through schools, Christian literature etc. It was the age in which the Church was extremely consistent, relatively speaking, in preserving a negative attitude to much which modern man held dear, an age in which, relatively speaking, an attitude of mistrust was to a large extent general towards democracy, towards many social, political and economic tendencies of the future, towards the emancipation of women, woman's franchise, modern exegesis, the history of religions, the free and unrestricted study of the history of dogma and much else besides.

There was no need then for much dialogue to be carried on within the [108] Church, because all were already 'of one speech', and for this reason attention was directed outwards in an apologetic and defensive attitude. Of course even then the way was gradually being paved for change, above all after the pontificate of Pius X and the First World War under Benedict XV, when integralism as a force in ecclesiastical politics disappeared, the shock of the antimodernist controversy was overcome, and a return from this in some respects integralist attitude was demanded to a certain extent even by the pope himself (manifested in a more favourable attitude towards modern exegesis, in the demand for Catholic action, in the Lateran Treaties, in the fact that liturgical and oecumencial movements were first tolerated and then positively demanded etc.). But from the twenty years prior to the death of Pius XII this gradual process of change was, so far as the average awareness in the Church was concerned, still to a large extent concealed by something which might be called a certain 'Pianic monolithism'.[7]

Now since John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council it has become evident not merely to a few individual Catholics with deeper insight, but to the awareness of the average member of the Church and to the community in general that that intellectual pluralism which we have attempted to describe above has actually infiltrated into the Church herself and exists there.

It is plainly evident that in the Church's theology and philosophy questions are discussed no longer merely in neo-scholastic terms. Instead the problems and the terminology of modern philosophy have become a factor within the Church herself. It is evident too that Protestant theology is no longer merely the opponent against whom we have to struggle, but is the partner too with whom we share a common ground in face of the questions of the present-day intellectual situation, and from whom we can learn. We notice suddenly that Catholic exegesis too is readier to adopt the methods of rational and historical criticism in its approach to scripture, and thereby raises quite unaccustomed questions for dogmatic theology, so that theologians are far from being unanimous in the answers they give to these. We discover that there are innumerable questions of profound importance upon which we Catholics are far from being united among ourselves. These relate to our attitude in the fields of anthropology, culture, art, foreign and domestic politics and education. We are no longer pledged and committed to one and the same party. Churches are built and works of religious art produced which strike some as a religious revelation while others see them as an outrage.

[7] On this concept cf. the author's remarks in Vol. IX of this series, p. 86.

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We are no longer united [109] on the question of what properly constitutes, or should constitute 'Christian' literature and poetry today. What seems to one to be necessary and in keeping with the times as an interpretation of dogma seems to another to be bordering on heresy. What one considers to be the obvious way of life for a Christian of today appears to another as too cold or as a cowardly betrayal of every Christian ideal. All at once we discover that Christian principles, though everywhere assented to, are no longer so easy and unambiguous as was formerly believed to apply in the form of concrete imperatives which are likewise accepted by all. In short (we have mentioned only a few minor examples) the world of intellectual pluralism is present within the Church herself. And because of this a dialogue within the Church is inevitable and necessary even if it makes things far more difficult and toilsome for us than formerly, especially since this dialogue is in many respects more difficult than a dialogue with the world outside the Church. This is because however lovingly we may try to behave in a family dispute it still has a special sharpness and bitterness of its own. It is also because this dialogue within the Church is conducted among complex and heterogeneous schools of thought within a single body governed by the same Christian faith and by the one social organisation of the Church. Thus these 'limits' offer less possibility of avoiding the dispute than in the case of the dialogue carried on outside the Church.

In a Church which includes complex and heterogeneous schools of thought such a dialogue within its own ambience is necessary even when it is quite impossible to hope, and indeed not even a legitimate goal to strive for, that through this dialogue every kind of pluralism in the Church will be overcome and complete unity will once more be restored. For the Christians belonging to the Church must help one another to cope in a Christian way with the complexity of intellectual forces which today are present in an unintegrated manner in every individual. Christians must help one another to overcome the dangers for the purity and strength (both factors are involved here!) of their faith, which are entailed by this complexity and pluralism even though, or precisely because, their decision in terms of their own faith and Christian philosophy of life still has to be applied to it so that in a certain sense it is still 'neutral' ground. The Christians must have a common confession of faith. Even though this is not simply to be identified with the theology, the reflexive interpretation of their one faith and creed, because theology can certainly be extremely 'pluralistic' in character, still such close connections exist between faith and theology that these two entities can never be completely separated one from another. Theological reflection, therefore, has a real importance, [110] representing either a help to or a danger for faith itself. For this reason, since Christians, in spite of their unity of faith, are pluralistic in theology, they must discuss their theologies at least in order to assure themselves sufficiently that in spite of the differences between their theologies the unity of their creed is maintained, a fact which today is far more difficult to establish than was formerly thought to be the case.

The Christians in the Church have connections with one another which are not merely theoretical. They must themselves act as Christians. They must take an active part in the single process by which the one Church achieves the fullness of her nature in the most varied dimensions and in the interior and exterior relationships in which the Church is involved. Now in view of the pluralism of ideas already present in the minds of the participators, a preliminary dialogue is required in order for there to be any action in common at all. In this dialogue we must do our utmost to unite ourselves for this common action. Dialogue is necessary in the Church because of the situation of a pluralism of ideas within the Church.

In order to achieve a still clearer view of this necessity it must be pointed out that neither the teaching authorities nor the pastoral authorities of the Church can, by their own act, supply any substitute for this dialogue.

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In earlier times, which were more intellectually homogeneous, it might have appeared so. But in itself it was not so even then. For side by side with the authorities, their decisions as affecting doctrine and behaviour in the Church, there was always the inalienable initiative of the individuals, who are never merely carriers out of commands from above. There were always free charismata in the Church, which took effect, and necessarily had to take effect without any prior authorisation on the part of the authorities in the Church. And, though for different reasons, both factors are present and have to be present in increasing measure in the Church of today. But in those earlier times it could at least appear that in spite of the dialogue in council which of course always preceded official decisions in some form, the enactments of the teaching and pastoral authorities could be arrived at, and at least to a large extent actually were arrived at, without any preliminary dialogue. This is understandable. The situation in terms of ideas within which such decisions had to be arrived at was a relatively homogeneous one. Even such contradictions as there were were presented in a form that (at least to all appearances) was comprehensible as a clear 'yes' or 'no'. The actual content of the decision was presented in a form that was intelligible and easily applicable to the straightforward everyday experience of prudent mature men.

[111] Today all that has changed. The subject on which the authorities have to take their decision no longer confronts them in the form of a simple 'yes' or 'no' so that one of the two is accepted as the authentic and authoritative teaching, and the other is anathematised. A whole range of possible prototypes on which to act presents itself, so that it is hardly possible any longer to gain a comprehensive view of them all or to relate them to one another in a comprehensible way. Neither that which constitutes a normal course of study in our formative years, nor our individual experience of life are any longer adequate to keep us sufficiently 'well informed'. Today in practice and in the concrete the authorities themselves presuppose a preliminary dialogue as necessary for their decisions, the sort of dialogue that informs them, gives them an initial understanding of the various systems of theology involved, systematically assembles and digests the relevant experiences and facts, and shows clearly for what they are in themselves those tendencies in the Church which are perfectly legitimate. All that which can be summed up under the term 'dialogue' is today included among those suitable human means[8] the application of which the Church has regarded as necessary for the decisions even of her teaching authority, in spite of the assistance she receives from the Holy Spirit. And these means are, of course, *a fortiori* indispensable for a realistic exercise of the pastoral authority of the Church.

Dialogue cannot be a substitute for the decisions of the teaching and pastoral authorities in the Church. The reason why it cannot be such a substitute is not merely that the officially constituted authority is necessary and still has a function of its own, but also that a dialogue in the strict sense, at the theoretical level, cannot of itself and in the last analysis overcome the cleavage that exists between the universal and the concrete, between ideas and existence, between possibility and actuality. But conversely, in the situation in which we stand today, whatever may formerly have been the case, the authorities themselves in their decisions presuppose that dialogue is a realistic means of arriving at a right decision in the sphere of their official authority. And the exercise of this authority by itself cannot be any substitute for the dialogue.

This is not to assert that the dialogue within the Church serves only as a preparation for the decisions of the authorities in the Church. There is no lack of topics which can be the subject of a dialogue within the Church, yet which are far from falling within the immediate

[8] cf. *Lumen gentium*, the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church, No. 25.

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competence of the [112] teaching and pastoral authority.[9] What forms should Christian literature assume today? How should we judge the contemporary political parties in the concrete by Christian criteria? What type of school is to be preferred? Does the secondary school (*Gymnasium*) with a special emphasis on the humanities still have to be our ideal today? What should we think about the most recent tendencies in art? How should we judge of the Weimar Republic? etc. These and a thousand similar questions certainly do not fall directly within the competence of the official authorities of the Church, yet they are still most certainly not on this account questions which belong merely to the general sphere of cultural and intellectual life which Christians and non-Christians have in common. Rather they are questions which have to be thought out in a dialogue among Christians as such as well.

We must say this even if we hold the opinion that in such questions the Christian ought first and foremost freely to participate in the general secular dialogue in which all share. But the Christians should speak about such matters among themselves also, because they have to help one another to arrive at a better understanding of all these realities in the light of the criteria supplied by the gospel. Also because not infrequently through such a dialogue they can arrive at a common understanding and a common course of action, which can then also become the course of action of the Church considered as the people of God, even when it is not the act of the Church's official authorities. In such questions it will often turn out that we hold different opinions and that in spite of the dialogue we continue to hold them. The following pronouncement of the Council is relevant here:[10] 'Often enough the Christian view of things will itself suggest some specific solution in certain circumstances. Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter. Even against the intentions of their proponents, however, solutions proposed on one side or another may easily be confused by many people with the gospel message. Hence it is necessary for people to remember that no one is allowed in the aforementioned situations to appropriate the Church's authority for his opinion. They should always try to enlighten one another through honest discussion, preserving mutual charity and caring above all for the common good.'

[113] Even this kind of dialogue in the Church, which seems to continue endlessly without result, has a fruitfulness of its own. Given good will on all sides, it educates us in intellectual modesty and prudence. It informs us, enriches our minds, and gives added precision to our ideas even though, for the most part, we continue to differ in our opinions and attitudes. Often it can be the case that a dialogue of this kind is the means by which we establish which group in the Church is to make its views and attitudes prevail in spite of opposition from others, and to cause the Church to conform her concrete decisions and actions to them, thereby rendering powerless and ineffective the contrary opinion. This too is now one of those factors in life which has to be accepted in patience.

When we come to the question of who is to carry on this dialogue within the Church we can think of the most varied groups or individuals, and in every conceivable kind of combination: individuals simply among themselves, formal and informal bodies within the Church, official functionaries, laymen, specialist theologians, the authorised spokesmen of organisations, those who come forward to speak of their own initiative and freely, but who may possibly have a 'charismatic' message to contribute, yes and even such non-Catholics or non-Christians as may be drawn into the dialogue within the Church because they have some 'specialist' contribution to make to this dialogue which is important, and indeed which may

[9] For a fuller treatment of the problems involved here cf. K. Rahner, 'Grenzen der Amtskirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI, (Einsiedeln 1965) pp. 499-520.
[10] Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* of the Second Vatican Council, No. 43.

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perhaps be indispensable as supplying information or something else that is necessary for the dialogue to take place.

III

Today a certain organisation of the dialogue has become inevitable. This does not mean that it has to be deprived of the elements of freedom, spontaneity and improvisation which are essential to it if it is not to degenerate into the sort of bureaucratic discussion and advice which takes place before official decisions are arrived at. On the contrary the institution itself is intended precisely to create the prior conditions in which the individual can freely come forward to make his contribution, in which the necessity for dialogue is neither overlooked nor forgotten in particular concrete cases, and in which the dialogue is never deliberately omitted on the grounds that it is uncomfortable.

Institutions of this kind, which make dialogue possible in the concrete, are already in existence to some extent. But they need to be tested for their effectiveness, and where necessary improved, in order that the dialogue really is made possible. The point of supreme importance for these [114] institutions which are already in existence is that their leaders really shall open themselves to dialogue, neither stifling it nor manipulating it, that they shall respectfully and patiently allow other opinions to be expressed, that they shall themselves seek out partners to the dialogue who are genuine and bold and who have something to say, and that they shall not produce *pro forma* 'representatives' as a substitute for these. They must also bring into their deliberations laymen in the true sense, who have some special competence in professional matters, and encourage these to speak freely. They must choose these rather than those laymen who turn their status as laymen into an ecclesiastical hobbyhorse, or act as though they had official authority in the Church. In all these ways they must avoid any excess of ecclesiastical authoritarianism, and thereby create the outward conditions for a dialogue in which the participators really can speak openly.

All these institutions which are already in existence must be tested again and again to see whether they are effective in this sense in creating the conditions for dialogue, beginning from the conference of bishops and the diocesan synods, the diocesan officials and cathedral chapters, the boards of management, the social organisations, the Central Committee of German Catholics, and going on to the deanery conferences, councils of laymen, parish councils, advisory committees for radio, Catholic schools and so on. Institutions and the letter of the law can never be any substitute for the Spirit.[11] But if the Spirit is not to be dissipated, then it must be present in the institutions as well, and there must be a demand for it in these.[12] The Spirit, namely, of the love of God and Jesus Christ, the Spirit of fraternal charity, of mutual respect, of patience, of listening to one another, the Spirit which renounces all overbearingness, whether clerical or lay, the Spirit of self-criticism and modesty, the Spirit which makes us bold enough to preserve continuity with our historical heritage, and at the

[11] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Do not Stifle the Spirit', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and Baltimore, 1971), pp. 72 ff.

[12] On the point that the Spirit of itself demands the institution cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 305 ff. Charismata can also be at work in the holders of office in the Church, cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur theologischen Problematik einer "Pastoralkonstitution"', *Volk Gottes*. *Festschrift für Josef Höfer*, R. Baumer and H. Dolch edd., (Freiburg 1967) pp. 683-703, now published in the present volume, pp. 293 ff. cf. also K. Rahner, *Vom Sinn des kirchlichen Amtes* (Freiburg 1966), pp. 33 ff.

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same time daring enough to make new experiments even when these have not yet proved themselves.[13]

[115] But in addition to those institutions which are already in existence it may be presumed that some others too will be needed in order that the dialogue within the Church may be made a concrete reality. Perhaps I may be permitted to focus the discussion on two in particular.

Specialist theologians are, of course, constantly engaged in dialogue with one another, with varying degrees of enthusiasm and varying degrees of success through their books, articles, discussions at conferences and in private conversation. But I believe that what is missing and yet is urgently needed is a genuine panel of specialist theologians properly organised and appointed to supply information and theological advice to the German bishops so as to enable them to exercise their episcopal office of teaching in a way that is realistic and in keeping with the times. Something, therefore is urgently necessary. Today less than ever is the episcopate in any position to hand over its official responsibilities in matters of doctrine to Rome and its Congregations. The bishops must themselves fulfil these responsibilities, a fact which, indeed, becomes clear in the Letter of Cardinal Ottaviani to the World Episcopate.[14] This task of teaching which belongs to the bishops must today assume a form which is, in certain respects, quite new. It can no longer consist merely in the approving of catechisms, pastoral letters, measures of a political kind in the sphere of teaching, as for instance the approving or rejecting of those recommended for professorships and the censoring of books. At the same time, however, the bishops are no longer in a position today to rely for the maintenance of this teaching function of theirs merely upon a theological formation which individuals among them may have received in the past, on taking counsel among themselves or on a chance and subjective selection of theological advisers. The situation in theology is far too difficult, too complex and too obscure today to rely merely upon these aids.[15] For the official pronouncements and enactments which the bishops necessarily have to take – and they will inevitably be faced with the necessity for these – a more fundamental theological preparation is needed today. The very fact that they need to be informed about the [116] various theological movements, schools of thought and different approaches to the problems involved etc. is in itself enough to make this necessary. Now for this a panel of specialist theologians is necessary which is assembled on an objective and representative basis, and is both able and willing to achieve a genuine and open dialogue. This is still necessary however true it may be that such a panel neither can nor should ever take the place of the bishops in the political decisions they have to take (if we may so express it) in the realm of doctrine as an exercise of their official function of teaching. Yet a panel of this sort, suitably composed to carry on a dialogue at the level of specialist theology, simply does not exist. Of course the bishops do seek information and advice, and even under certain circumstances and for specific questions convoke minor commissions of theologians. The Conference of German Bishops already includes an episcopal commission for the teaching of the faith. But how far a sufficient number and the right choice of *periti* have already been incorporated into this to advise and assist in preparing its decisions is more than I can say. But even supposing some such body does already exist I may still be permitted to doubt whether this commission of theologians is already constituted in such a way in terms of numbers, a right representation of all relevant theological disciplines, learned authorities etc., that it can fully and effectively

[13] With regard to the attitude of boldness towards novelty cf. K. Rahner, Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie II/1, pp. 274-276, *Im Heute glauben* (Einsiedeln 3rd ed. I965), pp. 24 ff., 32 ff., and also the study mentioned in n. 11 above.

[14] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Kirchliches Lehramt und Theologie nach dem Konzil', *Stimmen der Zeit* 178 (1966), pp. 404-420, esp. 411 f., cf. Vol. IX of this series, pp. 83-100.

[15] On the theological situation immediately confronting us today cf. *ibid*.

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meet the demands which have to be made upon it. A further point is that such a panel should in no sense constitute a 'secret cabinet council'. On the contrary its composition must be known, and the names of the theologians included on it must be such as to ensure public confidence in its enactments, even though all that is envisaged here is an advisory body set up to undertake a 'study' of the questions concerned.

Certainly many panels and institutions do exist in Germany in which a dialogue about cultural and political questions is possible: the societies concerned with these questions, the Catholic schools, the central committee of German Catholics, the 'Catholic days', the relevant journals etc. Nevertheless I may be permitted to doubt whether these possibilities are sufficient for the preliminary theological work which is required for the support of the German bishops and for assisting them in their resolutions. On the one hand all these boards and panels have in fact no institutional connection with the commissions of the Conference of German Bishops for such questions, while on the other I doubt whether these episcopal commissions in themselves have available to them the group of specialists (i.e. in terms of number, competence, proportional representation etc.) working together in dialogue which they need. Perhaps I am merely ill-informed, but I ask myself whether, for instance, the problem of the [117] Church schools or the urgent question of the need for a change in the mixed marriage laws in Germany have been reviewed or debated in the work of any such board, which is equipped to do the preparatory work for the decisions to be taken in the Conference of Bishops, or whether even today the bishops are still paternalistic in their way of working, choosing their advisers in a rather chance and arbitrary manner. Today, in view of the difficulty and complexity of the questions and the necessity for upholding the rightness of the decisions taken in a manner that is convincing in public as well, this procedure is simply inadmissible. We must also bear in mind that the *de facto* existence of opinions on certain specific questions has an importance of its own, greater or less according to the weight carried by the upholders of such opinions and the degree of force with which they hold them. And these opinions themselves can, and perhaps should, represent a stage in the process by which the bishops form their opinions and arrive at their decisions, at least in those questions which cannot be decided upon unambiguously or exclusively in terms of dogma.

IV

We must now attempt to say something more upon the nature and the limits of the dialogue within the Church concerning theological questions in the stricter sense, that is to say problems of biblical, dogmatic and moral theology. This dialogue is necessary today. The reason for this necessity is to be found, as has been stated above, in the very nature of the case. Even in the sphere of theology in the true sense the situation of intellectual pluralism prevails. The multiplicity of the sources and methods of theology make it impossible any longer for any one individual to master them all. Theology must necessarily engage in a dialogue with the rest of the intellectual forces of the time. But these themselves are in turn so complex that the dialogue creates a difficult situation within the realm of theology. In practice there is no longer any uniform theological terminology, nor is it any longer so easy to devise any such if theology is to be placed at the service of preaching the one gospel to this world of today, so heterogeneous and pluralistic as it is in terms of ideas. There is no longer any one theologian who has a comprehensive mastery of the methodologies, sources, problems and conclusions of any single department of theology. On any given subject each one must constantly be increasing his knowledge, and this means that the 'subject' on which he should, as far as possible, know everything that there is to be known, becomes more [118] and more circumscribed. Teamwork and dialogue are necessary in theology too.

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Now theology does not exist as an end in itself, but is designed rather to serve the Church, her preaching and then her teaching office as well. Moreover theology derives its norms from this. It follows that the dialogue among theologians must be desired and demanded by the Church, and the theologians themselves must be constantly aware that their ultimate task is to serve the Church. This dialogue must not be regarded as a substitute for the task of the Church as the official teacher, and must not be intended to supplant the authority of the Church in her official function.[16] This dialogue must not transform the Church into a debating society. A theological dialogue within the Church achieves its true nature only if certain specific prior conditions are fulfilled: the participators must all submit themselves to the authority of holy scripture; they must really pay heed to its message even when they themselves are interpreting and translating this message. Officially defined doctrine must remain unambiguously the guiding principle and not be argued away as a mere 'interpretament' devoid of binding force. This remains true even in those cases in which the dogma (in a broader sense) needs to be explained and interpreted, where it is not simply too absolute to admit of revision, but still has to be sincerely accepted as an authentic pronouncement of the official teaching in accordance with the degree of binding force involved in each particular case, for there is a certain variation in this binding force. The personal and subjective work of theologians, which is necessary, inevitable and even justified in itself must constantly proceed from the Church's teaching and be directed to this, and must constantly and sincerely be thought out afresh in the light of it even when this may be disturbing or painful. It must be contained within the greater awareness of faith of the Church herself as this exists in the present, and also as it finds authoritative expression and concrete force in the officially promulgated teaching of the Church. Everything else may be profound, stimulating and important for the history of human thought, but it would still have no place in a theological dialogue within the Church.

Since it cannot be considered as contrary to the nature of a dialogue within the Church if, on some particular question, it is not endlessly prolonged, but in a certain sense brought to an end by a pronouncement of the Church's teaching authority, this may open the way to, or even make necessary, a further dialogue. But the new dialogue is only a theological [119] dialogue within the Church if it unequivocally and obediently takes as its starting-point and binding norm the new pronouncement of the teaching authority according to the degree of binding force intended by that teaching authority in each particular case.

It may be that bishops do not, from the point of view of specialist and scientific theologians, understand much of a theological question. It is right that in such a case they are morally bound to seek the information they need directly or indirectly from the scientific knowledge of the specialists when they wish to, or have to, arrive at a decision on the question concerned. But viewed from a strictly theological point of view this does not in the least alter the fact that as bishops they, and not the theologians, are the true 'judges' in questions of faith and morals when a pronouncement needs to be made for the sake of the unity of the creed in the Church and the purity of her faith. Even humanly speaking it is well that this is the case. Experts and specialists must give advice, but leave the decision to others who are in a position to achieve a comprehensive and unrestricted view of the realities involved as a whole.

In itself all this is a truism of Catholic faith and practice. But it seems that the time has come to emphasise that this truth which seems to be a truism is not, after all, so clearly self-evident. Even among us in Germany it is no longer sufficiently respected in oral and written

[16] For an attempt at a thoroughgoing theological explanation in this connection cf. K. Rahner, *Vom Sinn des kirchlichen Amtes* (Freiburg 1966).

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dialogue, nor is the episcopal *imprimatur* any longer a sure guarantee today that this truism will really be observed.[17]

That is one side of the picture. But on the other side it has to be said that the authority of the official teachers cannot be any substitute for a theological dialogue. For today this is to be numbered among those means which are necessary, and, for the teaching authority of the Church, even morally prescribed, through which this teaching authority has to ensure that its own decisions are properly prepared and brought to maturity. This still does not imply in any sense a pre-judging of the precise question of what form this necessary theological dialogue is to take in the concrete, or how it may have to be consciously and deliberately organised or even institutionalised. To establish this in more precise terms is certainly in part a matter for the teaching authority itself. The task of establishing and judging how this duty which it has is to be fulfilled is, in the last analysis, still a matter for the teaching authority of the Church. This again does not prevent us from holding the opinion, which is based on historical fact, that right down to the most recent times the teaching authority of the Church has not always, or in all the ways [120] that could be desired or that are necessary, created the conditions which make theological dialogue possible and meet the demand for it prior to the taking of official decisions.

In cases where it is ultimate decisions of faith which are in question and which have to be defined, even though in such a case the Spirit preserves the teaching authority from any actual error of faith, this still does not mean that any evasions of responsibility at the human level are made legitimate as such. But when such decisions on doctrine are taken, which, though authoritative are still capable of being revised, evasions of responsibility of this kind can have the effect of rendering the decision itself deficient, inadequate, or in need of reform. From this such evasions can lead further to difficult situations and to a state in which any genuine willingness to obey the authority of the Church in matters of doctrine *de facto* disappears.[18] I believe that many of Pius XII's doctrinal pronouncements would have turned out differently in form and even in content if they had been preceded by an adequate, open and free theological dialogue on the questions involved. Nor in fact can there be any doubt that Paul VI has recognised more fully the importance of promoting theological dialogue as a preparation for official decisions on doctrine (or else for the decision *not* to take any decision, which can also be an important act of the teaching authority of the Church) than was the case in the preceding decades, and this remains true even though, on a superficial view, he has made his own position more difficult by doing this.[19]

We can only hope that the bishops will follow his example in this precisely because they have authority to teach as well. They too have to recognise this, and it is less permissible today even than it was a few years ago, to abrogate their responsibilities in this in favour of the papal authority alone. But when such decisions on doctrine are taken, which though authoritative are still capable of being revised, there is a further question to be asked. How is unity to be established in the particular concrete instance between the two factors in the process by which truth is [121] arrived at or deepened? These factors are: the dialogue of the theologians on the one hand and the authority of the official teachers on the other. And again

[17] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Stimmen der Zeit* 178 (1966), pp. 414 f., cf. here pp. 124 f.

[18] A theology of today that is credible and is conscious of its responsibilities will have to be increasingly aware of the fact that it is part of a developing history, though in this it will not lose its character as binding in any essential. On this cf. the bibliography on p. 105/n.2.

[19] The most important example is the commission for the study of the increase in population, the family and the regulation of births. It is also well-known that in deciding his general line of approach in other theological questions the pope avails himself of the advice of various consultative bodies (cf. the symposium (admittedly not of official status) working in an advisory capacity at Nemi near Rome in July 1966 on the subject of original sin and evolution).

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we may ask how long the debate should be prolonged and when and how it should be, in some sense, brought to a close by an official doctrinal pronouncement; when the doctrinal authorities should have the courage to keep silence and when they should be bold enough to come to a decision. All these are questions the concrete answers to which cannot be deduced from the general principles governing the relationship between the two entities involved. In these questions those concerned have constantly to return afresh for the taking of their decisions to the concrete instance. And the decision itself can never be arrived at at the theoretical level but only in practice. But from every side an attitude is demanded of courage, humility and the will to act in love according to the truth.

The dialogue or debate, therefore, when viewed in the context of the whole process by which the Church realises her faith to the full, has, of its nature, on the one hand an indispensable contribution of its own to make, but on the other its limits too. For it always remains subsumed under this more general process. And the knowledge of both these factors at once makes it a duty for the Church to engage in dialogue, and gives her the courage to do so with patience, attentiveness and a readiness to give a serious hearing to outside opinions. At the same time it serves to guard the dialogue from degenerating into mere empty talk in which only the opinionated who have no respect for the views of others receive a hearing. The dialogue must constantly be conducted in the awareness that it is taking place in the holy Church which is made up of sinners; that it is intended to conduce to salvation; that those participating in it will have to answer for the part they play in it before the judgment of God.[20] Once this is recognised it should be entered upon in the Church with all boldness. For it is much needed today.

[20] If a dialogue is to be really serious and sincere, then a vivid awareness has to be maintained throughout it of the constant danger of degenerating into ambiguity and mere talk. In a changed situation in the history of human thought the biblical exhortation once more becomes urgently relevant, that man will have to give a reckoning for every idle word.

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[123]

PART TWO

Sacraments

[125]

7

PENANCE AS AN ADDITIONAL ACT OF RECONCILIATION WITH THE CHURCH

The Second Vatican Council has laid down in two passages that in the sacrament of penance an additional reconciliation of the sinner takes place with the Church herself.[1] The Church, therefore, is not only the bearer of the effective word in which God pronounces his forgiveness and grace upon the repentant sinner. Also, and by the same act, she confers upon the individual that *pax* with her own self which was damaged or broken by his sins.

I

This declaration of the Council is an astonishing enactment. Almost fifty years ago the Spanish Carmelite B. F. Xiberta[2] initiated afresh the debate concerning the doctrine of the reconciliation of sinners with the Church[3] (and not only with God through the Church) in the sacrament of penance. Probably this was the first time the matter had been discussed since the Council of Trent. But when Xiberta sought to justify this doctrine he met only with rejection. J. Stufler,[4] the well-known expert on the history of the sacrament of penance, likewise rejected this theory after Xiberta's book had appeared. A. d'Alès[5] did the same. As late as 1957 it was summarily and unequivocally rejected by P. Galtier,[6] who certainly enjoys a great reputation as a historian and for his systematic expositions of the sacrament of penance. In E. Doronzo's[7] comprehensive theology of the sacrament [126] of penance, published in monograph form, Xiberta's theory is still accorded a relatively brief treatment (in comparison with the scope of the work as a whole), and . . . rejected. The great monograph on the history of the sacrament of penance by J. Grotz,[8] which has been published very recently, proceeds from the *a priori* view that originally reconciliation with the Church would not have constituted any essential element in the sacrament of penance itself, but would first have become established in the course of the second century, and then only in specific cases as something that was conferred *prior to* the sacramental act proper. He attempts to confirm this theory *a posteriori* by an immense display of historical learning. Even if we hold the opinion

[1] cf. *Lumen gentium*, No. 11; *Presbyterorum ordinis*, No. 5.
[2] B. F. Xiberta, *Clavis Ecclesiae: De Ordine Absolutionis Sacramentalis ad Reconciliationem cum Ecclesia* (Rome 1922).
[3] Here the reconciliation of the sinner with the Church is taken to be the *res et sacramentum*, while the forgiveness of sins in the sight of God is the *res sacramenti* corresponding to this.
[4] J. Stufler, *Z.K.T.* 47 (1923), pp. 453 ff.
[5] A. d'Alès, *R.S.R.* 12 (1922), pp. 372 f.
[6] P. Galtier, *De Paenitentia* (Rome, 3rd ed. 1957), p. 341.
[7] E. Doronzo, *De Paenitentia* II (Milwaukee 1951), pp. 131-153.
[8] J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bussstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg I955).

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that in this large-scale and learned work the historical evidence adduced has failed to establish the author's thesis,[9] still the very existence of such a work from 1955 onwards shows precisely *how strongly* the idea of sacramental penance as a reconciliation with the Church had become foreign to the thought of theologians. The majority of treatises on this sacrament, extending right down to the most recent times, pass over this thesis of Xiberta's in silence, so that I myself was surely justified in speaking of a 'forgotten truth'.[10] In any case it has played no part in the average theology of the schools.[11] Even in the most [127] recent work on the question, that of McAuliffe,[12] while its author does not absolutely reject Xiberta's thesis, he still cannot bring himself to agree with it.

Thus it is, after all, an astonishing fact that the Council, with a marked lack of reserve, gives expression to this doctrine as a manifest truth. The fact that the Council felt no difficulty in doing this will appear in the course of this study, the purpose of which is to show that what the Council is asserting here belongs to the most ancient stock of tradition, in which evidence for the doctrine can be traced from scripture right through the theology of the Fathers and the Middle Ages as something essential and manifest.

Of course it is not the case that Xiberta met *only* with contradiction or an icy silence. We may take the case of B. Poschmann. While this author did not fully develop the thesis as a subject in its own right,[13] it still remains true that his historical studies on the history of penance in the early Church are influenced by the conviction that the practice of penance in the early Church and the institution of penance in patristic times are, in the last analysis, an insoluble mystery unless we constantly keep before our eyes a clear recognition of the fact that in the early Church the conferring of the *pax cum Ecclesia* was an essential element in the penitential practice of that Church considered precisely as a *sacrament*, and not merely as an associated practice prescribed by Church law. In addition to him individual theologians have claimed a hearing again and again who (either explicitly or implicitly) agree with Xiberta. Not only in the study mentioned above, but in my duplicated treatise (still unpublished) of almost 500 pages on the sacrament of penance I myself have already presented the doctrine of the additional reconciliation of the sinner with the Church as a key to the understanding of the entire history of penance in the early Church. Of the theologians

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[9] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Die Busslehre im Hirten des Hermas', *Z.K.T.* 77 (1955), pp. 385-431; S. Hübner, 'Kirchenbusse und Exkommunikation bei Cyprian', *Z.K.T.* 84 (1962), 49-84; 171-215 (with bibliography).

[10] K. Rahner, 'Forgotten Truths Concerning the Sacrament of Penance' *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 135-174; cf. also *idem*, *L.T.K.* II, 2nd ed., col. 836; *idem*, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1963), pp. 83 ff. The author may be permitted to refer to his earlier studies in the history of the sacrament of penance (cf. above, n. 9, pp. 138 f., 141). They have been collected in an Italian translation, *La penitenza della Chiesa* = Biblioteca di cultura religiosa, Seconda Serie no. 60 (Rome 1964, 2nd ed. 1968), 872 pp. A German edition of these historical researches is planned as *Schriften zur Theologie* IX. At the same time reference may be made to the author's comprehensive treatment of the subject *De paenitentia: Tractatus historico-dogmaticus* (Innsbruck, 4th ed. 1960, duplicated), XXIII-785 ff., which has still to be revised and published. For the evidence in concrete detail, therefore, the author must refer to his detailed investigations and the bibliography he draws upon there. On the matter itself cf. also the important investigations of G. d'Ercole, *Consortium Disciplinae. Le sanzioni nell' ordinamento canonico preconstantiano* I (Rome 1955); *idem*, *Penitenza canonico-sacramentale dalle orogini alla pace constantiniana* (Rome 1963).

[11] A typical example is to be found on p. 462 of S. Gonzalez's *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* IV (Madrid 3rd ed., 1956), no. 93, n. 4. Here Xiberta's thesis is rejected as '*contra communem theologorum sententiam*'.

[12] C. McAuliffe, 'Penance and Reconciliation with the Church', *Theological Studies* 26 (1965), pp. 1-39. We are indebted to this painstaking study for references to the more recent writings on the question with which we are here concerned. But McAuliffe's study has not yet taken the pronouncements of Vatican II into account.

[13] cf. B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia Secunda* (Bonn, 1940), e.g. p. 11; 'Busse und Letzte Ölung' = *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte* IV, 3 (Freiburg 1951); Apart from his other important and well-known works on the history of the sacrament of penance the following study by B. Poschmann is particularly important: 'Die innere Struktur des Busssakramentes', *M.T.Z.* 1 (1950), pp. 12-30. Poschmann shows a certain lack of terminological precision in his exposition of the teaching of the pre-Nicene Fathers. On this cf. K. Rahner, *Z.T.K.* 64 (1940), p. 162.

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who agreed with Xiberta prior to the Council [128] the following may be mentioned: de la Taille,[14] Cabrol,[15] de Lubac,[16] Mersch,[17] Schmaus,[18] Leeming,[19] Riga,[20] Dumont,[21] Schillebeeckx,[22] Courtney,[23] Palmer,[24] Anciaux,[25] Oggioni,[26] Marie-Benoit,[27] McAuley,[28] Cantwell,[29] Ratzinger,[30] Congar,[31] Vorgrimler,[32] Semmelroth,[33] Beumer,[34] Piolanti,[35] Alszeghy,[36] Leclercq,[37] Rondet.[37a]

[129]

II

Now certainly it was natural for the Council to give expression to this truth, so ancient and yet so new, of the reconciliation of sinners to the Church in the sacrament of penance, because it was so extremely relevant in the actual *context* in which this was asserted. In chapter 2 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* the intention was to speak of the 'priestly' functions of the people of God. These priestly functions are made actual in the sacraments and through the virtuous life which Christians lead. Whereas in earlier versions of the text not all the sacraments were treated of in this connection, the authors arrived, at a very early stage in their work of drawing up the text, at a decision to mention *all* the sacraments at

[14] M. de la Taille, *Mysterium fidei* (3rd ed. Paris, 1931), p. 581; cf. *idem*, 'Conspectus bibliographicus', *Gregorianum* 4 (1923), pp. 591-599; further evidence in C. Dumont, *N.R.T.* 81 (1959), pp. 578-579.
[15] F. Cabrol, *Six Sacraments* (London 1930), p.160.
[16] H. de Lubac, *Catholicisme* (4th ed., Paris 1947), pp. 61 f.
[17] E. Mersch, *La théologie du corps mystique* (2nd ed., Paris 1946), p. 304.
[18] M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV/1 (Munich, 5th ed. 1957), pp. 591 f.; *idem*, 'Reich Gottes und Busssakrament', *Münchener Theol. Zeitschrift* 1 (1950), pp. 20-36.
[19] B. Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (New York, 1956), pp. 361-366.
[20] P. Riga, *Sin and Penance* (Milwaukee 1962), pp. 111-113.
[21] C. Dumont, 'La réconciliation avec l'église et la nécessité de l'aveu sacramental', *N.R.T.* 81 (1959), pp. 577-597, esp. 578 ff., 583 ff.
[22] E. Schillebeeckx, *De Christusontmoeting als sacrament van de Godsontmoeting* (Anvers, Bilthoven 1957), p. 152; German ed., *Christus, Sakrament der Gottbegegnung* (Mainz 1960), p. 179.
[23] F. Courtney, 'The Sacrament of Penance', *Clergy Review* 40 (1955), p. 519.
[24] P. Palmer, 'The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum* with Particular Emphasis on its Application to Penance', *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (Jonkers, N.Y. 1959), pp. 131-141; *idem*, *Sacraments of Healing and of Vocation* (Englewood Cliffs, N.Y., 1963), pp. 34-36.
[25] P. Anciaux, 'La dimension ecclésiale de la pénitence chrétienne', *Collectanea Mechliniensia* 46 (1961), p. 477; *idem*, *Le sacrament de la pénitence* (Louvain 1960), German edition, *Das Sakrament der Busse* (Mainz 1961), pp. 154-158, cf. also, pp. 44 f., 52 f., 72 f., 74, 76, 79, 111 f., 124, 136, 164 f., 168 f., 173 f., 179, 187 f.
[26] G. Oggioni, *Storia e teologia della penitenza*: *Problemi e orientamenti di teologia dommatica* II (Mailand 1957), p. 920.
[27] P. Marie-Benoit, 'Note sur le jugement exercé au sacrement de pénitence', *Études Franciscaines* 12 (1962), p. 145.
[28] G. McAuley, 'The Ecclesiastical Nature of the Sacrament of Penance', *Worship* 36 (1962), pp. 212-213.
[29] L. Cantwell, 'Pax Ecclesiae', *Clergy Review* 48 (1963), p. 617.
[30] J. Ratzinger, 'The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality', *Concilium* I/1 (1965), pp. 20-34.
[31] Y. Congar, 'Über die Mutterschaft der Kirche', *T.Q.* 145 (1965), pp. 68-100, esp. 93-94.
[32] H. Vorgrimler, 'Der ekklesiastische (deprekative) Aspekt des Bussverfahrens', *Anima* 14 (1959), pp. 307-314. *idem*, 'Busssakrament', Handbuch theologische Grundbegriffe I (Munich 1962), pp. 204-217.
[33] O. Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt 1953), pp. 64 ff.
[34] J. Beumer, 'Die persönliche Sünde in sozialtheologischer Sicht', *Theologie und Glaube* 43 (1953), pp. 81-100.
[35] A. Piolanti, 'Socialità del sacramento della penitenza', *Studi Cattolici* 2 (1958), pp. 27-33.
[36] Z. Alszeghy, 'Carità ecclesiale nella penitenza christiana', *Gregorianum* 44 (1963), pp. 5-31.
[37] J. Leclercq, *La liturgie et les paradoxes chrétiens* (Paris 1963), pp. 87-104.
[37a] H. Rondet, 'Bemerkungen zu einer Theologie der Sünde', G.u.L. 28 (1955), 28-44; 106-116; 194-208.

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this point.[38] In this connection,[39] therefore, not only the effect of all these sacraments as sanctifying man as an individual had to be brought out, but also the ecclesiastical aspect which they possess, the part they play in building the body of Christ. Now when it was sought to apply this to the sacrament of penance it was *quite impossible* to do this in any other way than that which was actually adopted, namely by saying: '*Reconciliantur cum Ecclesia quam peccando vulneraverant*'.[40]

At the same time it still remains astonishing that they were bold enough to express this doctrine so uncompromisingly, even though, to all appearances, they were unable to invoke any *consensus unanimis* in contemporary theology. It was even more astonishing that the statement was not the occasion of any debate in the aula of the Council, and that, as far as my own personal recollection goes, even in the theological commission it never became a point for discussion. Instead it was accepted even here without any opposition. Admittedly this fact, which is far from being [130] simple or obvious, is in part to be explained once more by a special circumstance: the authors of the text deliberately avoided from the outset[41] any attempt at complicating this statement of reconciliation with the Church by the further question of the *precise relationship between* the '*venia offensionis Deo illatae*' on God's part, and the '*reconciliatio cum Ecclesia*'. The two effects are simply set side by side with the connecting word *simul*.

Thus the Council leaves open the questions of how the forgiveness of guilt in God's eyes (or, to express it more precisely, the forgiveness of guilt and the conferring of grace) on the one hand, and the additional reconciliation with the Church on the other are related one to another, whether these two factors are intrinsically connected by their very nature, which of the two effects (supposing this to be the case) can be thought of as the cause of the other (additional reconciliation with the Church *because* guilt has been forgiven, or conversely the forgiveness of guilt *because* reconciliation with the Church has been achieved), whether, therefore, reconciliation with the Church should be thought of as the *res et sacramentum* of the forgiveness of guilt (considered as the *res sacramenti*).This last-named theory is probably held by almost all modern theologians who explicitly teach that reconciliation with the Church is an effect of the sacrament of penance. Now while the Council does not enter into this theory, neither does it in any sense exclude it in enumerating these effects. Yet even allowing for its reserve on this point, the text of the Council is noteworthy in the highest degree: it teaches that *all* sins have an ecclesiological aspect, all 'wound' the Church. It teaches that in *every* exercise of the sacrament of penance a reconciliation with the Church takes place as well.[42] We may also be struck by the fact that in this statement no references are offered to any theological sources. In the passage it is left to the theologians themselves to think out precisely *what* distinctions are to be drawn in this ecclesiological aspect of sin according to whether it is grave or venial sin that is in question, how the damage done to the relationship between the sinner and the Church is to be defined in detail according to each particular case. They have also to think out, when it still remains an obvious fact that not every grave sin signifies a total cutting off of the sinner from the Church, how *this* [131] *precise* reconciliation is to be distinguished from the removal of an excommunication (and

[38] This decision was first adopted in the schema of 3.7.1964.
[39] cf. No. 11 of the Constitution *Lumen gentium*.
[40] The text in the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (No. 5) is simply an echo of this passage in *Lumen gentium*.
[41] cf. the *Relatio* to the Schema of 3.7.1964 (p. 45).
[42] The terms in which this is expressed are so general and so completely devoid of any restriction that it would simply be contradicting their objective meaning if we sought to interpret the text as applying, for instance, only to the (first) confession of grave sins.

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the widely differing degrees of this) in the sense of contemporary canon law, and how the statement of the Council retains its truth even in the case of a mere 'repetitional confession'.

But all these further questions must not be answered by the theologians in such a way that their answer either contradicts or obscures the basic statement of the Council. The task of answering them is, incidentally, not so difficult as perhaps it might appear at first sight (and as, for instance, B. McAuliffe appears to imagine), for in such instances of the use of the sacrament we can meet with formally speaking the same difficulties as here, even when we confine our attention to the forgiveness of sins as such. Mortal and venial sins (the latter considered as *praeter legem*),[43] are, it is true, guilty in the sight of God. But even allowing for this the concept of 'sin' can only be applied analogously to the two types, and yet sacramental forgiveness is available for both. Why, therefore, should not venial sins too be a 'wounding' of the *holy* Church, seeing that she is holy not merely in an institutional, but in an 'existential' sense as well,[44] so that mortal *and* venial sins on the part of one of her members contradict her own nature and so 'wound' her, even though in ways which are essentially very different in the two cases? It is significant that the same guilt in God's sight can receive sacramental forgiveness several times over (in a repetitional confession). But if this is true, then it applies also to the guilt which consists in an offence against the Church. Finally – a point that must constantly and emphatically be borne in mind – if we can conceive of the Church not merely as an external juridical organisation but as a *holy* people of God, as a covenant of grace, as the Body of Christ vivified by the Spirit, then *every* sin on the part of a member of the Church contradicts the interior nature of the Church, and not merely those sins to which the Church attaches an excommunication properly so-called. This also finds expression in the fact that every mortal sin, taken in itself and before it is sacramentally cleansed, debars the sinner from the Eucharist, the central mystery of the Church, so that in every case it has an ecclesiological aspect (we do not propose here to go into the further problems connected with the question of whether this state of being debarred from the Eucharist prior to the sacramental cleansing of mortal sin is *juris divini* or *juris mere ecclesiastici*). Even taken by themselves these simple considerations are sufficient to [132] explain why the Council should have been able, without hesitation, to say what it has said.

The foregoing observations may suffice here so far as the immediate exegesis of the conciliar statements is concerned. Here we must refrain from entering into the second part of the statement with which we are concerned ('*quae* [*Ecclesia*] *eorum conversioni caritate, exemplo, precibus adlaborat*'), even though this second part of the statement too is quite unusually significant since it makes clear that in the concrete application of the sacrament of penance (which always includes the repentance, the *conversio* of the sinner as an essential element in it) the Church collaborates not merely through the priestly absolution but through much else in addition to this. In other words the *whole* Church (*exemplum*, *caritas*, *preces*) participates in this exercise.[45] One final point which still remains to be noticed is that the text ('*veniam offensionis Deo illatae ab Eius misericordia obtinent*') formally and explicitly excludes that heretical misinterpretation which is pointed out by the Congregation for the

[43] We are presupposing that the reader is already familiar with the teaching of St Thomas on this point.
[44] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Church of Sinners', 'The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 270-294.
[45] cf. K. Rahner, 'Forgotten Truths Concerning the Sacrament of Penance', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 135-174. This statement of the Council could be taken as a starting-point for achieving a new, positive and entirely orthodox understanding of that which is treated of in the History of Dogma under the headings of 'The Confession of Religious' and 'The Confession of Layfolk' (cf. *L.T.K.* VI, 2nd ed., cols. 741-742; VII, 538-539). An understanding of this kind would also be of great significance from the point of view of oecumenism. On this cf. W. Kaspar, 'Confession outside the Confessional?', *Concilium* 4/3 (1967), pp. 17-22.

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Doctrine of the Faith in its Letter to the Bishops of the World, the heresy, namely, that in the sacrament of penance it is *only* reconciliation with the Church that is being treated of.[46]

III

There is something further which we would add to this statement of the Council and the brief exegesis of this provided in this article. This is something which, in a certain sense, could have been given a place in the conciliar document itself in the form of a 'note'. It consists of a few brief proofs from theological tradition supporting this statement to the extent that this is possible in a brief article. It may be asked, what is being treated of in these witnesses? Is it the simple fact that in the sacrament of penance a [133] reconciliation with the Church is achieved as well, or do they go beyond this, thinking of this reconciliation with the Church as the *res et sacramentum* of the reconciliation with God (here it is the reality itself rather than the term *res et sacrarnentum* that is in question)? Though the question is legitimate, for the purposes of our present treatment we may be permitted to set on one side the distinction involved in this question. It is true that to some extent special emphasis will be laid explicitly on the second of the two theories summarised above, but this is justified on the grounds that this second theory necessarily includes the first. Here, it must be admitted, we have no intention of going into the more detailed arguments for holding that the *pax cum ecclesia* is to be thought of as the *res et sacramentum* of forgiveness in the eyes of God, this in turn being considered as *res sacramenti*. For such a line of argument would have first to show (and this is precisely what cannot be shown here) in *general* that in all the sacraments the *res et sacramentum* has an ecclesiological character, i.e. that it implies that the recipient of the sacraments has a specific relationship precisely with the Church. One further proviso may be mentioned. In what follows we shall often have occasion to speak of 'excommunication' (in quotation marks!) or release from 'excommunication' through penance. What we mean by this is not excommunication in the sense implied in contemporary canon law, but rather that state in which we no longer *fully* belong to the Church (or alternatively the conferring of a state of belonging to it which is in every respect full and complete) which is incurred by every mortal sin (and for which no other concise term exists). When *Lumen gentium* describes what *full* incorporation into the Church means, *one* of the elements in this apart from baptism, public confession of the faith and adherence to the laws of the community, is *also* the interior possession of grace (*Spiritum Christi habentes*[47]). Thus sinners remain in the bosom of the Church only *corpore* and not *corde*.[48] According to the teaching of the Council, therefore, there can be no doubt of the fact that even simple mortal sin, which allows the sinner to remain a member of the Church, as the Council of Constance defines, *alters* the relationship of the member involved to the Church.[49] This alteration[50] we [134] shall here call

[46] cf. *A.A.S.* 58 (1966), 659-661 (Letter of 24.7.1966). On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Kirchliches Lehramt und Theologie nach dem Konzil', *StdZ* 178 (1966), pp. 404-420, also Vol. IX of this series, pp. 83-100.
[47] cf. No. 14 of the Constitution *Lumen gentium*.
[48] *ibid*.
[49] On this text the conciliar commission has explicitly declared: '*peccatores Ecclesiae non plene incorporantur*'. cf. the studies mentioned on p. 131 n. 44, especially 'The Sinful Church …', pp. 291 f.
[50] Of course this 'alteration' in the relationship between the sinner and the Church has in turn two aspects or elements: the alteration which follows *ipso facto* from the nature of the sin as such, and the alteration in so far as this is constituted by the Church's reaction to this particular sin. For our present purposes it makes no difference whether this reaction on the part of the Church is necessary (*iure divino*, if we may so express it) or following from standards freely imposed by the Church herself, whether (to use a canonist's expression in a somewhat transferred sense) it takes place *lata sententia* or *ferenda sententia*. In any case the fact that by grave sin the sinner is debarred from the Eucharist and bound in duty to confess his sin shows that the Church always reacts

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(for want of a better word) 'excommunication' (in quotation marks!), and the sacramental removal of this 'excommunication' we shall call penance from 'excommunication'. Actually this is still conferred today in every sacramental absolution, because it is still true today that this also confers the right to receive the Eucharist, and even today to be excluded from this is the clearest expression of this state of 'excommunication'.

First we shall give a sort of *survey* of the 'history of dogma' of reconciliation with the Church, and then we shall go on to refer to a small selection of a few individual passages.

IV

This doctrine is already contained in scripture. We cannot embark upon a learned exegesis at this point. We must confine ourselves, rather, to this brief observation: if we were to undertake this our first task would be to [135] point out the 'ecclesial' aspect of sin which is clearly to be found in the Old and New Testaments.[51] The ethical system of the Old Testament is in fact explicitly a 'covenant ethic'. And this is equally true of the new 'people of God' in the New Testament. Nor can we here enter into any precise detail in the question of the relationship of dependence which exists between Mt 16:19 and 18:18 on the one hand and Jn 20:23 on the other. But in any case it is certain that the 'binding and loosing'[52] which is conferred as the authority of Jesus himself upon his community, and so upon the duly appointed functionaries of this, represents the counterpart in the synoptics to Jn 20. It is also certain that throughout the whole of tradition (also) it has been taken to refer to the same power to forgive sins[53] which, according to DS 1703, is expressed in Jn 20. This power of binding and loosing, which must not be thought of simply as an alternative way of expressing the power of the keys attributed to Peter, is to be interpreted against the background of Jewish theology at the time of Jesus. In the light of a more precise exegesis based on this it turns out

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in this way to grave sin. In every case of this kind the Church always exercises her 'binding' power even when she does not pronounce a sentence of excommunication in the sense meant in canon law. Of course a difficulty does arise here with regard to venial sins, which cannot be the subject of the Church's 'binding' power. But even with regard to these we can still say: venial sins as such (so long as we fail to rise above them), and in every instance of them, blur the relationship which man bears to the Church precisely as *holy*, a certain 'wounding' of the Church through man's own personal act (i.e. through the first element mentioned above). The fact that the Church cannot react to this as she does to a grave sin lies in the very nature of the case. If we find a difficulty in this, then it remains only because we are neglecting the ecclesiological side of venial sin. In order to make clear the character of absolution as a judicial act of the Church (cf. DS 1671, 1679) scholastic theology often emphasises that the reason why the plenary power of the Church in penance (which differs in this from baptism) is a judicial power, is that it consists in a power to decide in two opposite directions (*potestas bifaria*), a power of binding and loosing. However this argument can be applied without further qualification only to mortal sin, and has nothing to do with the question of an ecclesiological aspect of sin and absolution. Thus it appears that in any case the whole nature of the sacrament of penance is such that it is designed in the first instance for the forgiveness of grave sin and only secondarily for the forgiveness of venial sin. If we recognise this then the difficulty indicated above cannot be insuperable, and is to be solved in the same manner as with regard to the theological aspect of venial sin.

[51] cf. *L.T.K.* IX, 2nd ed., cols. 1170-1177 (with bibliography). In addition to the literature mentioned there cf. R. Knierim, *Die Hauptbegriffe für Sünde im Alten Testament* (Gütersloh, 1965) (with bibliography).

[52] It is impossible here to refer to all the literature in the field of biblical theology dealing with the question of what is properly meant by 'binding and loosing' in the bible. Here it must suffice to refer to H. Vorgrimler, 'Matthieu 16:18 s. et le sacrement de pénitence', *L'homme devant Dieu. Mélanges offerts au Pére Henri de Lubac* I (Paris 1964), pp. 51-61. Here an accurate record is provided of the recent literature on the question in biblical theology, cf. also H. Vorgrimler, 'Das "Binden und Lösen" in der Exegese nach dem Tridentinum bis zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts', *Z.K.T.* 85 (1963), pp. 460-477.

[53] cf. DS 1679.

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that the state of being bound by sin signifies subjection to demonic powers.[54] Thus, applying this to the act of the Church, 'to bind' ('on earth') signifies 'consigning the individual concerned to the power of Satan' (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20), and so exclusion from the community of the saved, while 'to loose' ('on earth') signifies the dissolving of this state of demonic bondage and so being restored to the community of the saved, the covenant people with its power to ransom. The Church, therefore, has the power of the 'ban' and of the removal of this, and *precisely in this sense* has the power to forgive sins ('in heaven').

Without this idea of the ecclesiological aspect of the power of the Church in relation to the sinner, the penitential discipline and practice of the Christians of the early Church remain ultimately incomprehensible. Here we cannot fully develop the arguments justifying this point. But one [136] thing is certain. Sacramental penance as practised in the early Church was penance from excommunication. This was not the sort of excommunication that signifies a special punishment attached to a few particularly grave sins. This excommunication pointed rather to the fact that every grave sin (grave enough to remove the grace of baptism. This is the only kind of sin envisaged in the penitential practice of the early Church) also removes the *fulness* (something, therefore, that is concomitantly conditioned by *interior* grace) of the baptised individual's organic membership of the body of the Church through which the Spirit is conferred upon her members. This remains true even though he may still belong to the Church *corpore* as the present-day Constitution on the Church declares with Augustine. Such a state of 'being excommunicated' through sin itself was made visible at the level of social life by the 'ban' imposed by the Church, and the sinner was excluded from the celebration of the Eucharist. He was relegated (in normal cases) to a special class of penitents, and the performance of his penance was supervised by the Church. During the period of penance the penitent was supported by the prayer of the Church in the form of blessings, exorcisms, exhortations (a process which the Constitution on the Church regards as also continuing in the sacrament of penance as practised today when this is viewed precisely as a *whole*, for it states that the Church collaborates in working for the conversion of the sinner through love, example and prayer). After a specified period of belonging to the class of penitents, and when he had given proof of his repentance and conversion, he was once more reconciled *with* the Church, i.e. fully received back into her through the laying on of hands by the bishop, and *thereby* also once more obtained the Spirit which vivifies the *Church*, in other words grace and so the forgiveness of sins. The *pax* of the Church, the *reconciliatio* with her, was a sacramental sign of reconciliation with God.[55] This basic pattern of the penitential discipline of the early Christians clearly remained present in the mind of the Church down to the early Middle Ages. Throughout its troubled history the only question was whether this *pax* with the Church should be restored to every sinner, however grave his sin might be (the question of whether this was basically [137] *possible* was, in general, no problem), how long the period of penance should last, whether in specific cases (e.g. in sickness) sacramental reconciliation with the Church and God should be conceded even before the time of penance had been fulfilled, and (towards the end of the patristic age) whether such a reconciliation with the Church should be granted *several times over* (after falling again into sin).

Then in the early Middle Ages the practice arose of *repeatedly* conferring reconciliation, and the external form of this was simplified (it was conferred by priests instead of the bishop, the reconciliation and the penance to be performed were given together at the outset of the

[54] cf. DS 1520.

[55] We can and must, of course, distinguish between two elements here: the sacramental conferring of the *pax* through the Church (in the person of the bishop together with the presbyterium) and the *pax* itself that was conferred. The former belongs to the sacramental sign (*sacramentum*), the latter is an effect of the sacramental sign (*res et sacramentum*). Thus in the case of baptism too we have in fact to distinguish between the rite by which the subject is received and the state of belonging to the Church achieved through this reception.

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period so that the performance of the penance followed *afterwards* etc.). As a result of this the ancient sacrament of penance assumed that liturgical and canonical form which is still familiar to us of today. But for all this the people of that time were still far from losing their awareness of the truth that the absolution in the sacrament of penance is also a reconciliation with the Church. It is true that in the main period of the Middle Ages the *precise connection* between the forgiveness of sins in God's sight and reconciliation with the Church was no longer so clearly recognised as in the early Church. But it was clear to all the great theologians of the Middle Ages, and was also explicitly asserted by them, that the absolution also constitutes a reconciliation with the Church. Even Luther[56] still recognised this. In the later Middle Ages this idea receded into the background. The teaching of the Council of Trent on the sacrament of penance was directed against the reformers, and here this ecclesiological aspect is not mentioned (though it is in the teaching on the Eucharist), but of course it is not denied either, and in recent times, with the religious individualism which characterises them, this aspect is to be numbered among the 'forgotten truths' concerning the sacrament of penance until, as has already been described, it once more appears and is given a place in the official teaching of the Church on this sacrament of hers in the Second Vatican Council.

V

A few individual references must now be added. For as early a writer as the *Pastor Hermae* penance, which permits the sinner to regain the seal of baptism which he has lost, constitutes his reincorporation into the 'tower' [138] of the Church.[57] In *Tertullian* the two entities of reconciliation with the Church and forgiveness of sins in God's sight are set side by side more or less without connection, so that the exact way in which they belong to one another is not altogether clear. But in his theology of penance both aspects are plainly present. That the two are not simply identical is shown, for instance, from the fact that even though for Tertullian the Church has to refuse her *pax* to the sinner, he nevertheless finds it possible to hold out to him a prospect of eschatological forgiveness as the hands of God. On the other hand the judgment of the Church anticipates the judgment of God as a *praejudicium* (Apol. 29). There is a further point. In his polemic against the Catholics Tertullian, as a Montanist, does assert that it is possible (although it only *appears* that this is probable, or indeed has any prospect of success) for one who has committed mortal sin to be redeemed by God. At the same time he maintains that such a one forfeits any share in the *pax* of the Church. Now he can only hold both these positions simultaneously if both elements are not absolutely identical entities even for the Catholics. Nevertheless supposing that they do have some objective connection between them, then the only conceivable way in which this can be the case is that the peace of the Church is the cause of reconciliation with God. For only so are the two entities distinct from one another (as cause and effect). The peace of the Church must, in effect, be prior (as *prae-judicium*), and yet both entities are (for the Catholics) indissolubly connected. (Indeed they emphasise that penance would have no meaning if the peace of the Church were not imparted in it.[58])

The matter becomes clear in *Cyprian*.[59] Wholly in accordance with our exegesis of Mt 16:18, for him *ligare* signifies *ecclesiam cludere* while *solvere* means the imparting of the

[56] cf. E. Fischer, *Geschichte der evangelischen Beichte* I (Leipzig, 2nd ed. 1902), p. 132; further texts in L. Klein, *Evangelisch-lutherische Beichte. Lehre und Praxis* (Paderborn 1961), pp. 66 f. (Bibliography).
[57] cf. The references on p. 126 n. 9, and n 59 below to relevant works, esp. K. Rahner *op. cit.*, p. 410 ff.
[58] cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie der Busse bei Tertullian', *Abhandlungen über Theologie und Kirche* (*Festschrift für K. Adam*), M. Reding ed. (Düsseldorf, 1952), pp. 139-167.
[59] cf. K. Rahner, 'Die Busslehre des hl. Cyprian', *Z.K.T.* 74 (1952), pp. 257-276; 381-438. cf. also p. 448, n. 9.

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pax et communicatio.[60] But the connection between the *pax* of the Church and the effects of reconciliation in heaven is expressed with all the clarity that could be desired when he says: '*Pignus vitae in data pace percipiunt*'[61] or '*pace accepta accipere Spiritum Patris*'.[62] For Cyprian, therefore, we obtain the hope of salvation and the Holy Spirit *in virtue of the fact that* we obtain the peace of the Church. The second formulation, therefore, is particularly remarkable because it [139] is the only passage in Cyprian in which the imparting of the Spirit is explicitly connected with the usual reconciliation of the sinner. And precisely here the words are '*pace accepta*'.[63] We can go no further at this point in showing how closely this idea is connected with Cyprian's whole theology of the Church (exactly as with Tertullian). But in any case for Cyprian the peace of the Church is not a further effect of the forgiveness of sins and the imparting of the Spirit, but rather precedes this as their cause.

For *Origen* the relevant passages are so widely scattered and the theology of penance in Origen is so complex that reference must be made to special studies on the subject (especially those of Poschmann, Rahner and Teichtweier).[64] For Origen the essence of mortal sin, as distinct from other sins, consists precisely in the fact that man loses his place in the Church as the medium of salvation and so is excluded from the sphere in which a certain redemptive influence of creaturely powers can be brought to bear upon the sinner. For this reason he must be 'excommunicated' in order to make explicit the fact that the sinner is delivered over to the fire of God's judgment and the *interitus carnis* by the Satanic powers (though even this has a mysterious salvific meaning). Conversely, therefore, 'return to the Church' and 'redemption' are entities which are necessarily interconnected.[65] Again in Origen's view of ecclesiastical penance, even from the purely terminological point of view, 'return to the Church' occupies the foreground.[66]

'Loosing' signifies that the subject is once more acknowledged as fully a member of the Church. The sacramental quality in the removal of the 'excommunication' therefore, must be maintained precisely for him if we are to be in a position to maintain the sacramentality of ecclesiastical [140] penance in Origen at all. But we can only do this if we maintain (a point which is then very clear) that for Origen this reinstatement as a member of the Church is precisely the mode and the cause of reconciliation with God and the reattainment of the Spirit. This can and must be established as the theological and spiritual meaning of the reconciliation of the sinner with the Church. But this means that for Origen that effect in heaven follows from this that takes place on earth.[67]

Augustine's presentation of the matter is perfectly clear. '*Ecclesiae caritas quae per Spiritum Sanctum diffunditur in cordibus nostris, participem suorum peccata dimittit, eorum*

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[60] cf. Cyprian, epist 57, 1.
[61] Epist 55, 13.
[62] Epist 57, 4.
[63] A survey of the relevant passages in Cyprian shows (against the view upheld by J. Grotz) that *pax* and *communio* as conceived of by Cyprian cannot be thought of as two separable entities in such a way that it would have been possible for a *communio* to take place (at the beginning of the carrying out of the penance) which nevertheless did not constitute a *pax* (this would of its nature be imparted by God through the Church at the end of the period of penance). The very fact that Cyprian speaks indiscriminately of *pax et communio* and *communio et pax* is of itself enough to rule this out, for it would be impossible to discover any objective reason inherent in the context for this interchange in the order in which the two terms are used.
[64] B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia Secunda* (Bonn 1940), pp. 425-480; K. Rahner, 'La doctrine d'Origène sur la Pénitence', *R.S.R.* 37 (1950), pp. 47-94; 252-286; 422-456. cf. also G. Teichtweier, *Die Sündenlehre des Origenes = Studien zur Geschichte der kath. Moraltheologie* VII (Regensburg, 1958) esp. pp. 294 f., 334 f., 336 f., 343 f.
[65] In Ps 36:2; *P.G.* 12, 1353.
[66] cf. K. Rahner, *R.S.R.* 37 (1950), pp. 255 ff., 422 ff., cf. also 436 ff.
[67] K. Rahner, *R.S.R.* 37 (1950), 436-452.

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autem, qui non sunt eius participes tenet'.[68] '*Sovitur qui cum columba* (the Church) *fecerit pacem, et ligatur qui cum columba non habet pacem sive aperte foris sit sive intus esse videatur*'.[69] '*Civitas Dei recipiendo efficit innocentes*'.[70] '*Pax Ecclesiae dimittit peccata et ab Ecclesiae pace alienatio tenet peccata*'.[71] These formulations are such as to give expression to the thesis we are upholding with unequivocal clarity, and all that they still need is to be translated into scholastic terminology. A further factor in Augustine's treatment makes this all the clearer. For him the reconciliation granted by the bishop only imparts the Spirit in virtue of the fact that by it the sinner is received into that Church of the saints which then (in a certain sense independently of the act of the official Church) acts of herself and precisely as this Church of the saints and as the possessor of the Holy Spirit in order to impart to the newly incorporated member a share in her own Spirit. Obviously this patristic conception is not contradicted by the fact that the connection between the forgiveness of sins and the act of the Church is asserted without the connecting factor of the *pax cum Ecclesia* being explicitly mentioned. The worthlessness of this as a counter-argument against our thesis appears when we compare it with the case of baptism and with the proposition that through baptism sins are washed away. In no sense can we deduce from this proposition any denial of the fact that the character in baptism is the *res et sacramentum*, and neither can we interpret the absence of any mention of the *pax cum ecclesia* as a counter argument to the patristic conception described above. Nor is there any need to deny the fact that here and there it may be that reconciliation with the Church is viewed rather as a consequence than as a cause of the imparting of the Spirit [141] through the forgiveness of sins. Precisely in terms of the ecclesiastical theology worked out by the early Church these two entities are so closely interconnected that it is not in the least surprising to find something of this kind.[72]

In spite of the changes in the exterior form of the sacrament of penance in the *early Middle Ages*, as a result of which the penance of 'excommunication' no longer found such clear expression, an awareness of penance as reconciliation with the Church remained alive right down to the high Middle Ages inclusive.

At this time a system of theology applicable to all the sacraments in general was being developed, which gave rise to such questions as those of matter and form and the interrelationship of *sacramentum*, *res et sacramentum*, and *res sacramenti*, and it is quite true that the explanation of this *pax cum ecclesia* as the *res et sacramentum* of penance did not emerge in the first moment that this systematic theology of the sacraments in general came to be applied to penance in particular. Since interest was primarily focussed upon the subjective aspect of penance, this (and not the act of the priest himself as representing the Church), was conceived of right down to the time of Thomas as the proper cause of the forgiveness. And so long as this was the case it was quite impossible to arrive at the formulation that the *pax cum ecclesia* was the *res et sacramentum* which still has to effect the *res sacramenti*. Given the general principles of the theology of the eleventh and twelfth centuries down to Thomas, it was quite impossible to arrive at any other conclusion with regard to the *res et sacramentum* of the sacrament of penance than that this *res et sacramentum* was the *paenitentia interior*, and that it was through this that the *res sacramenti*, the forgiveness of sins was effected. For in fact, right down to the time of Thomas this *paenitentia interior* was, from the human side of penance, the sole effective cause of the forgiveness of sins as such. Then in the thirteenth century a turning point of decisive importance was reached, and it came to be acknowledged

[68] In Joan. tract. 121, 4; *P.L.* 35, 1958.
[69] De bapt. contra Donatistas III, 18, 23; *P.L.* 43, 151.
[70] Contra Cresconium Donatistam II, 13, 16; *P.L.* 43, 476.
[71] De bapt. contra Donatistas III 18, 23; *P.L.* 43, 150.
[72] As an instance of such a case we may compare, e.g., the teaching of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. cf. K. Rahner, *Z.K.T.* 72 (1950), pp. 272 f.

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explicitly that in this sacrament taken as a whole the act of the Church played a decisive part as an effective cause of the actual forgiveness of sins. By this time, however, two distinct factors had come to have a radical bearing upon the state of the question. On the one hand the theological axiom with regard to the *paenitentia interior* as the *res et sacramentum* had become a formula deeply embedded in tradition, while on the other the idea of penance as reconciliation with the Church as well had been thrust into the background (even if it had not [142] altogether disappeared). In the light of this we cannot be surprised that the traditional formulation was adhered to even though now (in contrast to the eleventh and twelfth centuries), in the light of the new theology and in fact only in the light of this, a different conception, namely the ancient one which had formerly been held, had once more become possible. To that extent, therefore, we cannot rely upon the whole of the teaching of the early scholastics, or the main stream of scholasticism down to the time of Thomas inclusive. Nevertheless we can invoke the teaching even of this period (down to Thomas inclusive) in support of our thesis at least to the extent that – in spite of a certain weakening which has already been explained – a living awareness did survive everywhere of the fact that in the sacrament of penance a reconciliation with the Church as well as with God takes place. It will be relevant to demonstrate this, therefore, with the help of at least a few examples and references.[73]

For our present purposes we must pass over the literature on penance of the Middle Ages prior to the Carolingian reform. But in saying this we must immediately point out that the doctrine of penance as a reconciliation with the Church is manifestly present in the *eleventh and twelfth centuries* as well. It is not possible here to give a comprehensive presentation of the theology of sin in respect of its effects upon the relationship between the individual and the Church. In many respects the quest for such a theology was still incomplete, and scholars were still striving for a balanced formulation in which to express it. Moreover we would have to enter into such further questions as the relationship between the Church and the Mystical Body of Christ and the distinction between belonging to the Church *merito* and belonging to it *numero*, as well as the question of whether the individual belongs to the Church through faith alone or only through faith and love combined. But in any case we can surely say without hesitation that in this period there is a general and manifest recognition of the fact that sin is an offence against the Church as well, an act of *Ecclesiam* [143] *offendere*,[74] an *injuria Ecclesiae illata*,[75] and that in accordance with this it essentially alters the relationship of the sinner to the Church in such a way that he no longer belongs to it at any rate *merito*, no longer belongs as a member to the Body of Christ (or else only belongs to it as a dead member) etc. (Here a certain distinction is presupposed between the Church and the Body of Christ.) In accordance with this one of the reasons assigned (not the only one) for the necessity of the sacrament of penance is that the sinner must also make satisfaction to the Church, *ut satisfaciat Ecclesiae*, a favourite Augustinian formula in which to express this,[76] precisely because, in a certain sense he has separated himself from the church[77] and has

[73] Reference may be made to the following literature on the subject: A. Landgraf, 'Stünde und Trennung von der Kirche in der Frühscholastik', *Scholastik* 5 (1930), pp. 210-247; P. Anciaux, *La théologie du sacrement de pénitence au XIIe siècle* (Louvain 1949); also Z. Alszeghy, *Gregorianum* 31 (1950), pp. 275-283. A recent work which deserves quite special mention is also L. Hödl, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Literatur and Theologie der Schlüsselgewalt*, Pt I (Munster 1960); cf. also von K. Fröhlich, *Formen der Auslegung von Mt 16:13-18 im lateinischen Mittelalter* (Diss. theol. Basel, 1960). Anciaux's work contains references to numerous sources, and these are briefly indicated in the following footnotes by giving simply the name Anciaux followed by the relevant page references; the numbers set above the rest of the type represent the footnotes in Anciaux.
[74] cf. Anciaux, pp. 211; 214.
[75] *idem*, p. 506.
[76] *idem*, pp. 52^2; 195^2; 435; 445; 518, etc.
[77] *idem*, 52^2; 53^1; 174^3; 245^1.

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departed from her,[78] becoming an *Ecclesiae debitor*.[79] In accordance with this view the power of 'binding' and 'loosing' which takes effect in the sacrament is also regarded not merely as the authority to impose penance or a censure (the power of excommunication in the juridical sense), but also as a power (which takes effect in the actual sacrament) of exclusion and readmission to the Church.[80] But this in itself is tantamount to declaring that the act defined as *sanum in Ecclesiam recipi*[81], *recipere in gremium Ecclesiae*,[82] *efficere membrum Christi*[83] is regarded as an essential effect of priestly absolution in the sacrament of penance and, moreover, precisely in virtue of the fact that *per sacerdotis absolutionem* there takes place an *Ecclesiae Christi consociari*,[84] a *per reconciliationem in Ecclesia inducere*.[85] This means, of course, that the function of admitting the sinner to the sacraments of the Church is also ascribed to this absolution,[86] as well as the function of admitting the sinner to the suffrages of the Church, by which his own personal penance is supplemented. (This is a factor which some authors actually declare to be absolutely necessary for the blotting out of sins.) It may be that the full significance of this *pax cum Ecclesia* in terms of grace was no longer clearly perceived by all; that the 'separation' from the Church gradually came to be regarded more as an effect of excommunication in the sense proper to canon law; that the statement that the *reconciliatio* with the Church is the *res et sacramentum* of reconciliation with God was impossible at this period for the very reason that it was absolutely denied that any act on the Church's part could have an effect on the actual forgiveness of guilt considered in itself [144] (in other words for a reason which objectively speaking and from the point of view of dogmatic theology is certainly false). But while all this may be true, the one and decisive factor still remains in force for this period. It still explicitly recognised and asserted that in the sacrament of penance an additional reconciliation with the Church herself is achieved.

This truth was still not forgotten even *at the height of the scholastic movement*. Thus for instance we still find *Bonaventure* asserting[87]: '*Confessio ad hoc directo instituta est, ut homo reconciliatur Ecclesiae et ostendatur reconciliatus a Deo*'.[88] For Bonaventure this reconciliation with the Church is, together with the remission of temporal punishment for sin, the proper effect which the Church can bring about as an act of efficient causality by her power of the keys. By contrast it is not possible for her to effect the same remission in respect of the guilt incurred in God's sight. For in respect of this the keys can only exercise a dispositive causality. For Bonaventure too, therefore, this reconciliation with the Church is actually expressed in the indicative part of the form of absolution, while the part expressed in prayer form refers to the guilt incurred in the eyes of God himself (though even here there is a genuine sacramental causality).[89] Now on this basis, and since Bonaventure cannot ascribe any directly efficient causality to the absolution in effecting the blotting out of the actual guilt itself, it would have seemed natural to regard the reconciliation with the Church as that

[78] *idem*, 211[3]; 214.
[79] *idem*, 218[4].
[80] *idem*, pp. 277[5]; 290[2]; 320[2]; 321[1, 2, 4]; 344[4]; 371[2]; 496; 499; 503; 504; 516.
[81] *idem*, p. 170[3].
[82] *idem*, 525; 537.
[83] *idem*, pp. 443[4]; 536.
[84] Richard of St Victor: *P.L*. 196, 1172.
[85] Anciaux, p. 453[1].
[86] *idem*, pp. I72[3]; 492; 499; 516; 443; 536.
[87] Studies which are of supreme importance for our understanding of Bonaventure (and which serve to correct B. Poschmann's interpretation of him) are: V. Heynck, 'Zur Busslehre des hl. Bonaventura', *Franziskanische Studien* 36 (1954), pp. 1-81; *idem*, 'Der richterliche Charakter des Busssakraments nach Johannes Duns Scotus', *Franziskanische Studien* 37(1965), pp. 339-414, esp. 364 ff. cf. also below p. 170, n. 11.
[88] Bonaventure, IV Sent. dist. 17 q. 3, a.2 fundam. 2.
[89] Bonaventure, IV Sent. dist. 18 p. 1 a. 2 q. 1.

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disposition for the forgiveness of guilt which he seeks. But for Bonaventure the various effects of the sacrament of penance are already interrelated in such a way that such an idea is foreign to him, the more so since he has to take into account the doctrine which (even though still relatively recent) is for him already in a certain measure traditional, the doctrine, namely that it is the *paenitentia interior* which is the object of the power of the keys (in its deprecatory form). For all this, however, due heed must still be paid to an observation of Heynck's to the effect that the *confessio reconciliativa* (for Bonaventure) is confession. And it is with this that the full effectiveness of the sacrament of penance is bound up, namely the lessening of the punishment due to sin and *reconciliation* with the *Church*. It is this that Bonaventure is usually thinking of when he speaks of *reconciliatio*.

[145] A work which was composed under the influence of Bonaventure, and which was widely diffused in the Middle Ages, is the '*Compendium theologicae veritatis*' of *Hugo Ripelin*, the Dominican of Strasbourg. This author, like Bonaventure, teaches that the deprecatory element in the form of absolution bears upon the actual guilt, while the indicative brings about the reconciliation of the sinner with the Church.[90]

The doctrine of reconciliation with the Church still retains its force for *Thomas*. Because he is lacking in charity, the sinner belongs to the Body of Christ as a member only *potentialiter* and *imperfecte*, not *actualiter*.[91] He is no longer in the Church in an absolute and unqualified sense, no longer in her *merito* but only *numero*.[92] It is true that Thomas differs from Augustine in that for him the 'Church's sanctification', which is applied to the sinner and so brings about his reconciliation with the Church,[93] consists not so much in the fulness of the Spirit possessed by the Church herself as in the sanctification which she actively imparts through her sacramental power. It is also true that Thomas' conception of the actual process by which this is brought about is one in which the grace that is mediated by sacramental power justifies the individual and *thereby* reconciles him with the Church. But while all this may be true, the point that is of such decisive importance for us still retains its force for Thomas too. He recognises a reconciliation with the Church as an effect of the sacrament of penance.[94] Now if one adds to this that, for instance, for Thomas it is the character in baptism which is the '*immediata causa disponens ad gratiam*,'[95] and if we maintain that the character has an essentially ecclesiological aspect, then it must, in effect, be consistent with the thought of Thomas too to hold that the *reconciliatio cum Ecclesia* is analogous to the character in baptism in that it too has the force of an *immediata causa disponens ad gratiam*, i.e. like the character in baptism is to be regarded as *res et sacramentum* for [146] the reconciliation with God through grace. This is all the more true since in fact the material content of the Thomistic doctrine that the *paenitentia interior* is an effect of the sacrament must be regarded as unassailable. A further point is that in order rightly to interpret the doctrine of the *paenitentia interior* as the *res et sacramentum* of penance we must not forget that according to precisely this self-same doctrine the *votum sacramenti* is included in this interior penance. In other words it includes an orientation towards the Church and her power of the keys. Thus on any showing we can say that in any true penance the will to be reconciled with the Church is implicitly included. If, therefore, it is true that through the sacrament the *paenitentia*

[90] cf. L. Ott, 'Opusculum des hl. Thomas von Aquin de forma absolutionis in dogmengeschichtlicher Betrachtung', *Festschrift für Eduard Eichmann,* M. Grabmann, K. Hofmann edd. (Paderborn 1940), pp. 121 f.
[91] Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* III q. 8 a. 3 and 2, in which Thomas seems to identify 'Church' with 'Body of Christ' for this world and for the age after Christ. cf. also III q. 8 a. 4c.
[92] cf. Thomas Aquinas, IV Sent. dist. 16 q. 1 a. 2 q. 5 dubium. And corresponding to this, '*Per sacramentum homo non solum Deo sed etiam Ecclesiae oportet quod reconcilietur*', IV Sent. dist. 17 q. 3 a. 3 q. 2 ad 3.
[93] *ibid*.
[94] For an elucidation of the text cited cf. on the one hand A. M. Landgraf, *Z.K.T.* 51 (1927), 91 and on the other B. Poschrnann, *Die Busse = Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte* IV/3 (Freiburg 1951), p. 93, n. 16.
[95] cf. Thomas Aquinas, IV Sent. dist. 4 q. 3 a. 2 sol. 3.

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interior is intensified (or caused) then this also applies to the will to be reconciled with the Church (and this will is not in fact to be considered as a mere resolve to receive the sacrament as though it were involved in this *in indivisibili*, but is itself a grace-given act which can grow and pervade the depths of man's spirit and achieve supernatural power). Now if the *sacramentum* has (consistently with the ancient doctrine) this effect upon the will of causing it to seek reconciliation with the Church, then the sacrament must actually impart this reconciliation. But in any case on this showing the *paenitentia interior* has a twofold aspect. It relates to reconciliation with God and reconciliation with the Church. On the basis of these considerations too no grounds can be found for saying that our thesis is far removed from the mediaeval conception of the *res et sacramentum* of penance. We might say (departing in this from the actual words but not from the real meaning of Thomas) that the sacrament reconciles the sinner with the Church while he, with his disposition of *paenitentia interior* considered as a will to achieve reconciliation with the Church, precisely comes to meet this same Church. In virtue of this the sinner has the right to that *infusio gratiae* which makes it possible for him to achieve that *paenitentia interior* through which he is in a position so to appropriate the grace imparted to him in the actual conditions of his own personal life that it becomes his own in a manner that sanctifies and justifies him and that he is thereby liberated from his personal sins. Even abstracting from the earlier tradition, which explicitly demands this, it seems advisable to order the various elements logically precisely in this way because, of its very nature, this reconciliation with the Church must be still more immediate to the act of the Church in the sequence of effects than the *paenitentia interior* which, of itself, belongs rather to the sphere of the unique personal life of the individual than to the sacramental sphere in the narrower sense. *Res et sacramentum*, however, must have an immediate connection with the sacramental dimension, with the visibility of the [147] Church as such. Thus we should point to the *pax cum Ecclesia* rather than to the *paenitentia interior* as the *res et sacramentum* of penance.[96]

VI

From this point onwards the whole complex of ideas which we have followed through history seems gradually and slowly to become blurred and indistinct. It is not actually denied, but it is more or less forgotten. The 'private form' of penance cannot be the sole cause of this, though certainly it has been a contributing factor. But it cannot be solely held responsible for it. For absolutely speaking even in the present-day form of baptism the individual can still feel and experience very vividly that he is coming to the holy Church of Christ when he goes to the priest, that it is before *her* that he is accusing himself (however 'private' the accusation may be to all outward appearance), that the sin he is confessing is one through which, whether it be mortal or venial, he has sinned against the Body of Christ as well and has contributed his share in bringing it about that the Church is not fully that which she should be: the witness of God's sanctifying compassion in the darkness of the sinful world, the visible presence of the love of God in human history. The sinner can always experience even today that through his confession and the acceptance of this confession by the Church he now stands visibly[97] before the Church as he who he really is through his own fault: as a sinner who, in a certain sense, ceases to hide behind the sacred value attached to him as a member of

[96] On the genesis and the theological significance of the concepts of *paenitentia interior* and *paenitentia externa* cf. esp. L. Hödl, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Literatur and die Theologie der Schlüsselgewalt* I (Munster 1960). Summary with detailed references, pp. 376-391.

[97] We might almost say 'sacramental'. In the early Middle Ages the terms *sacramentum excommunicationis* and *sacramentum* of confession of sin were freely used: Anciaux, pp. 312; 146.

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this holy Church and so deceitfully to conceal his own sinfulness. Even today, therefore, the sinner can still experience the word of forgiveness in the sacrament precisely *as* the word of this Church, which forgives him his sin against the Church, which in that she forgives him helps to bear his guilt because in this forgiveness (as Origen taught) she truly takes upon herself the guilt of this her member and helps to bear it. She does this in the knowledge that Christ forgives *her* because he loves and sanctifies her even though in her children she shows herself again and again to be the Church of sinners. In making his confession, therefore, [148] the sinner can experience even in the present-day form of the sacrament that he is freed from his sins in the eyes of God precisely in virtue of the fact that he finds the peace of the Church, enters once more (or enters more deeply) into the sole medium of grace and of the Spirit, the holy Church. He can experience that to be 'loosed' upon earth really is to be 'loosed' in heaven. The outer form of the sacrament (which had inevitably to become what it is in view of the size of the Church and her pastoral functions) cannot, therefore, be the sole cause of the ecclesiological aspect of confession having been thrust into the background. There must have been other causes apart from this, and it would be a valuable exercise to investigate the precise history of these. Yet surely they are not difficult to divine. The Church is seen more and more merely as the external juridical organization which is indeed endowed with divine right, and to belong to which is indeed the commandment of God. But she is no longer regarded as being in herself that sacrament filled with the Spirit which brings about salvation and grace provided only that we do not close ourselves against her Spirit through our own fault. The more, therefore, theology had to guard against the theories of Wycliffe, Hus and the Reformers, the more vitally necessary it became to emphasise that the juridical and visible constitution of the Church as well is of divine right. The more necessary it became to work out the precise nature of *that* membership of the Church which is still to be attributed even to the sinner, the more difficult it became to bring out the other side or to give it conscious expression. A further factor is the individualism of modern times, the origin of which can already be found in the late Middle Ages. Salvation and grace become more and more something which is worked out between God and the individual alone and taken in isolation. And in accordance with this view, when the Church does act as mediatrix in this, she acts at God's 'behest' in such a way that we no longer advert to the fact that the fulfilment of this behest also signifies her own authentic life and that it actually draws the individual more and more into this life of the Church herself.[98]

It cannot be said, therefore, that the fact that this doctrine was obscured constitutes an argument against its correctness. It was never properly speaking denied or replaced by any other doctrine which was better. Because the general conception of the Church as means of grace receded into the background of man's conscious thought the ecclesiological aspect of the sacrament of penance could no longer remain clear to him [149] either. Yet it belongs so essentially to the dogmatic tradition taken as a whole, and even to the teaching of scripture

[98] On this development we may compare e.g. the article by J. Ramsauer on the development of the concept of the Church in the post-Tridentine catechisms, 'Die Kirche in den Katechismen', *Z.K.T.* 73 (1951), pp. 129-169; 313-346.

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itself that theology has the duty explicitly to advert to it once more.[99] In the Council this has been achieved.

[99] cf. also most recently L. Bertsch, *Busse und Beichte* (Frankfurt 1967) and in this the article by O. Semmelroth, 'Strukturen und Perspektiven im Busssakrament', pp. 68-88, esp. pp. 69 ff. on the ecclesiological character. On the theme of this article cf. pp. 76 f.

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[150]

8

A BRIEF THEOLOGICAL STUDY ON INDULGENCE

The zeal to gain indulgences has certainly declined among Catholics. The non-Catholic regards anything like an 'indulgence' as quite alien to him. How could one express the matter in such a way that the other understood something about it? Admittedly it is only with great difficulty that something which springs from so complex a background of ideas can be explained to one who is unfamiliar even with those ideas which it presupposes. But at the same time, supposing that we did try to answer his question, and to answer it in such a way as not to presuppose too much in the way of specialist terminology and further theological knowledge – how, in that case would our answer sound? Tasks of this kind are difficult. It is a pity that they so rarely attempted. All of us, priests and laymen, should be better versed in such techniques. If we practised them we would come across many questions upon which we ourselves had never sufficiently reflected before in our precisely worked-out dogmatic theology, in which the difficulties are too often smoothed over by convention and familiarity. And here and there we would even find an answer which opened up to us ourselves the way to a deeper understanding of the very question which we had hitherto imagined we understood inside and out.

With this end in view, and taking these considerations as our starting-point, let us attempt to say something about indulgence, even though in doing so we incur the danger of merely exposing ourselves to all kinds of criticism, i.e. of failing to satisfy any of our hearers, whether it be those who understand nothing about indulgence (because even after reading about it they find it incomprehensible) or those who already have clear ideas about the subject (because these find that now the question has become more obscure instead of more intelligible). From time to time – this is something that every reader will notice – something will be said which is addressed not to those 'hearers' for whom this study is properly intended, but rather to the theologians who ask themselves whether what [151] is said here agrees with the traditional doctrine on the question as this has been preserved. Such incidental remarks, therefore, should not be used as arguments purporting to show that the attempt we have undertaken is unsuccessful. Whether it really succeeds – that is a quite different question. Those who, having reached the end of this study, feel that it has failed, can always improve upon it by themselves making similar or different attempts, and can make them available in order that we can use them fruitfully to increase our knowledge. This is the sense in which we would wish this brief theological treatise on indulgence to be understood.[1]

I

Man is a complex being with many levels in his makeup. The decisions he takes and the acts he initiates from the source and centre of his personal freedom, from the innermost 'kernel' of his personhood, take shape in dimensions of his being which are not simply identical with the centre of personhood in his being considered as the source and origin of everything else in

[1] The author has published several studies on the theology of indulgence. On the particular position he is adopting in this attempt, as compared with these other studies, cf., in particular, apart from the list of sources, the essay which immediately follows this one entitled 'On the Official Teaching of the Church Today on the Subject of Indulgence', pp. 166-198. Here an extensive bibliography will be found of works by the author himself as well as by others.

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his makeup. He acquires attitudes and habits. He gives his character its distinctive mould and he 'objectifies' the acts in which he exercises his freedom, imposing them upon his 'environment'. The initial 'environment' which receives the impress of the act arising from his original decision, and in which it is objectified, consists of his own self in the external levels of his makeup. Here this objectified act is, so to say, frozen into permanent form and preserved. Hence when the innermost centre of the kernel of man's personhood is transformed by the grace of God – whereas previously, by a sinful decision, it was turned against God and his holy will – in other words when man 'converts' himself to God at the innermost and deepest level of his being, even then it does not always and *ipso facto* follow that all is once more well with him. It can be the case that all is immediately made well. It can be the case that this conversion is so powerful that it immediately transforms the whole man. *But it can also be the case* that this interior transformation of man is present in a certain sense like a glowing kernel at the centre of his personhood, yet that it does not simply and at one blow do away with all the ingrained attitudes, [152] encrustations and after-effects of the earlier course of life led by the individual concerned. Even the history of salvation really is a history, i.e. a process which requires time, and in which everything does not take place all at once. Only one who thinks in purely abstract and formal categories, one who imagines that time as a factor plays no part in conditioning our personal history of salvation, as though God achieved his effects upon us all at once in the sort of dimension beyond time which the Gnostics imagined – only such a one can contest the truth of what we have said. We must not therefore suppose that all that is needful has already been achieved simply when we repent, whether within the sacrament of penance or apart from it, and in doing so genuinely do obtain the gift of conversion (attained to by an act of unmerited grace coming from God himself), and so are in the state of having once more found how to orientate ourselves to God in faith and love. This grace of conversion is, in fact, intended to draw the whole nature of man into its sphere of influence, extending this to the physical side of his nature, to the unconscious movements of his nervous system, to the submerged impulses in it, in order that all may be healed and sanctified. Now this does not take place *ipso facto* in every case of conversion, not even when this is genuine, and when we can say: there is a man who has sincerely converted himself to God, one who, in the midst of his freedom, yet liberated by the grace of God, has 'radically changed the course of his life' and based his whole existence upon the grace of God. Even in such a case the possibility always still remains that 'I' am in many respects the old 'I', the one who is still unconverted or at any rate not wholly changed. In that state 'I' can still always be myself with my own egoism, which I utterly fail to notice, and with which, in many respects, I still continue to have an understanding; the 'I' that retains the hardness of heart, pharisaism and cowardice of me, and all the other attitudes and attributes which were made real in the sin of which I was formerly guilty (and which I now repent). The result of this is that I utterly fail to notice all this, or to achieve that state in which I really separate myself from it all. Such a transformation of the whole man in all his immeasurable complexity can, therefore, still mean that a long and painful course lies before him. What anguish, what incalculable spiritual developments, what deadly pains still remain to be endured in a process of spiritual transformation, until all is made different! Yet at the same time how indispensable all this is! Without this how could one be 'made perfect'?

These, then, are real factors arising from our sins, and they are present in our personal human lives as these take shape in history. Springing as [153] they do from sin, they live on after it and constitute a just judgment upon it. We Christians call them 'the temporal punishments due to sin'. They are 'temporal' because they must be endured in a process of development over a period of time, and can only be overcome in this. They are punishments because they are the consequences of sin and a judgment upon it both at the same time. For when man, taking his own freedom as person as the centre and source of his action, misuses

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the (rest of) his personal makeup, violating and damaging it, then in this distortion of his own nature he experiences the contradiction and the opposition of this nature, its forms and its tendencies which were created by God and are therefore ineradicable, and which are prior to this decision which man takes of his freedom. There is contradiction between that in him which is free and that which, from the point of view of God, he is intended to be and which, moreover, he inalienably is; a contradiction which arises from the condition of man following upon his sinful act. Now this contradiction is necessarily productive of pain. It is the painful protest of the reality which God has fashioned against the false decision of man. Indeed it is quite impossible to define suffering in any other way. Thus in a certain sense sin gives birth to its own punishment. To the extent that this constitutes the refusal of creaturely reality to adapt itself to the way which we, as free beings, map out for ourselves, or to reproduce itself in the material constituted by our own human natures and the world in which we live (a refusal, therefore, which is precisely not that of God himself denying himself to the sinner) – to that extent we call this painful reaction against man's sins from the side of his own nature and of the other elements that go to make up his environment 'temporal punishments due to sin'. This is different from God's refusal of himself, which can likewise be either temporal or eternal according to whether man has finally turned away from God in an exercise of his freedom which has been rendered definitive and absolute *by death itself*, or whether it has not yet reached this stage.

Of course, even though such a punishment for sin is in itself 'temporal', we must consider how it is affected in cases where man's perversion has reached a fixed and final stage – in other words in which the original contradiction of the order of created reality within and without man has been renewed again and again, and even where it is immovably adhered to. In such a case this contradiction, which is itself temporary, i.e. able to be reversed, is transformed into an eternal punishment. It should not be thought that this implies any denial of the fact that these temporal punishments are decreed by God. The world (both within and without man) [154] with which man comes into contradiction through his own guilt as objectified in his own acts, is a concrete world which in its concretion was created not by man and his freedom but by God. Who has not already experienced the fact that a sin alters in its effects according to the particular situation in which it is made actual? The sin as actually carried out always consists of a synthesis which man himself cannot calculate beforehand of two distinct elements: the original decision which he takes in his freedom, and in which he freely exposes himself to this element of the incalculable *and* the actual material in which the sinful act is made actual. It is only as realised in this material that the sinful act is brought to the 'fulness' of its nature. In the dimension of concrete reality this situation in which our sin is committed is determined not by us but by God. And there can be no mistaking the fact that in this concrete situation it is God's free disposition that determines what kind of punishment this sin is to incur. This means that this punishment for sin, considered as the reaction of 'extra-personal' reality (both within and without man) to sin is also a punishment imposed 'from without', even though it was provoked precisely by the sin of man himself. Once we have grasped this fact we can also understand what is meant by the teaching of the Council of Trent (cf. DS 1543, 1689, 1712, 1715) to the effect that for the baptised Christian who has sinned again after baptism the fact that his sin has been forgiven, whether within the sacrament of penance or outside it, still does not mean *ipso facto* that the temporal punishments due to sin are always and necessarily forgiven. Relying upon the tradition of penance which has come down to her from the time of the Fathers, the Church teaches that when one whose sins have already been blotted out by baptism, and who has thereby become a member of the holy Church, sins again, God is not prepared to bestow upon him, or to offer him straightway, in the very act in which the sacrament takes effect, all those graces which he needs in the concrete in order to accomplish the process of transformation and integration.

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Yet it is only through this process that the debt of 'temporal punishments due to sin' can be paid to the full and so wiped out. God, then, is not prepared simply to bestow all the graces necessary for this in a single blessed moment in which the whole human life of the sinner is transfigured, and in which the process of transformation is a completely painless one. This is something that we notice all too vividly in our own personal experience. Viewed from this aspect it is much more difficult to explain how the baptism of an adult can constitute a remission of this kind of all the temporal punishments due to sin, as tradition teaches. This, however, is not the real question which we have to investigate at this point, although we can say that this teaching [155] applies only to those cases in which all 'venial' (as well as mortal) sins really are repented of. And, as is shown by the findings of the individual's own concrete experience precisely of the after-effects of his former sins and because of these, this kind of repentance is not so easy. We should therefore reflect upon these truths, and recognise clearly the fact that probably all that is meant by the statement in question is that with regard to the grace of God in baptism all is indeed conferred all at once which is necessary for such a total overcoming of sin. Though probably the question remains open whether the individual really uses the opportunity offered to him in this. But in the sacrament of penance taken in isolation this opportunity is not offered to him in the same way at all. If, therefore, we recognise these facts, we shall not say that the statement in question would in any sense invalidate the explanations we have given so far.

The dissolving of the after-effects of former sin, with the sufferings they cause, the total integration of the whole person, including those extra-personal levels in his makeup, can take place in various ways in the 'fresh' radical decision on man's part to orientate himself towards God. It depends on other factors besides the 'good will' of man himself. His new act and the measure of its success are also conditioned by the situation, by the circumstances, the 'material' in which and upon which it has to be made actual. Now this situation and this 'material' are contingent factors. They are subject to change and can themselves become new and different. They depend, in the last analysis, on the dispositions of God, however we may think that these are applied in the individual case. Now according to the way in which, either through natural causes which are subject to his providence or through his own personal and gracious interventions, God forms this material which is in turn presupposed to the acts and decisions of man, and which influences these at the *interior* level, this process of dissolving and transforming the after-effects of sin becomes quicker or slower and takes place with more or less suffering and pain.

Certainly everyone has already experienced in the concrete what has here been stated in very abstract terms. Who, for instance, has not already noticed that the degree of his repentance in a given case, its power to remain constant, depends not only upon the 'good will' which 'commands' him to such repentance, but also upon the situation, upon the sudden light of knowledge which is not under man's own control, upon an inward disposition such as no 'despotic' control which man may exercise over himself by the use of his own intelligence and free will, is capable of giving. Every Christian knows that 'tears of repentance' are not simply something that man can count upon in the same way that he can take as his [156] basis for the working out of his salvation the grace that is extended to him from above. Who has not already suffered from his own impotence really to turn himself into a different man? Who has not noticed after a 'good confession' that he has still, in many respects, remained the old man, that all the secret roots and impulses of his sin, the very sin that he has repented of and confessed, are still constantly present in him, and, moreover, not merely those which simply belong to man's lot, the circumstances in which he finds himself placed etc. from his birth onwards, but also those which effectively owe their existence to his own fault? God, therefore, can remit the 'temporal punishments due to sin' which we have incurred by giving us the best possible chance, the opportunity to rid ourselves as totally and swiftly as possible

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of the burden of our past which is at once the consequence of, and punishment for our sins. From this point of view we can, in many cases, interpret the disposition and course of a human life under God's hand as something that is almost visibly unfolding before our eyes. Throughout the life in question God is gradually breaking down false attitudes which we have sinfully built up within us. Those who were formerly overbearing, stupid and selfish through their sins he makes mild, wise and unassuming. It is true that under certain circumstances a supreme hour may arrive, such as that of martyrdom or some other ultimate decision, in which that which has still not been attained to after a long period of ascetical striving systematically practised can be brought to its full ripeness and purity in a man (of course in such a case it still remains true that perhaps the chance of such an hour of destiny may be missed if this ascetical striving, the faithfulness which is achieved in the pettiness and monotony of everyday life, has not gone before).

There too we are not masters of our own course. We cannot discover such paths of life or such hours of destiny simply by ourselves. They have to be bestowed upon us. We know that (since flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of God) in the case of every man whom God admits at all to a share in his eternal kingdom in the glory of his own holiness, he will so guide him either before or after his death that he arrives at the full ripening of his own nature precisely as that particular individual. But the actual process by which this is achieved can precisely be either swifter or slower, easier or more painful. How it takes place is under God's control. In effect, then, there is – as in the very nature of the case we are supposing there must be – a 'remission' by God, in the sense just indicated, of the temporal punishments due to sin. But we do not have to think of this as though some sentence of punishment had been imposed in a merely external and juridical sense, with no intrinsic connection (apart [157] from the sin committed by the subject in the past) with his moral state. We do not have to think of the remission by God as granted simply in the way that a civic amnesty is granted (for this bestows 'grace and favour' upon the reformed and irreformable in equal measure). If this were the case then we would have to think of the temporal punishments due to sin as constituting a merely external and vindictive type of punishment such as leaves the individual who undergoes it wholly unchanged and the same man that he was before. Such a remission would only deprive the individual of the possibility of truly perfecting himself in suffering throughout all the dimensions of his being.

We have spoken above of a radical decision on man's part – we call it the love that is based on faith and hope – which has the power to justify. We have also spoken of a progressive process of integration. Now these two factors are mutually interrelated in such a way that each contributes to the other. The radical decision involves, of its very nature, the will to achieve this integration. The subject wills to achieve, in this radical decision of his, that love in which God and his neighbour are loved 'with his *whole* heart and with *all* his powers'. And conversely it is also true to say that this love is itself made perfect in virtue of the fact that it integrates within itself all the dimensions of man's being. The process of integration constitutes the mode in which this love grows and develops until it reaches the due fulness which is proper to it. In the light of this we can understand why the exponents of classic theology should regard it as immediately obvious that once it has reached this state of fulness the love of God and our neighbour also blots out all the 'temporal punishments due to sin'. This blotting out is not a 'reward' (which in the last analysis would be arbitrarily bestowed) for having achieved this fulness of love. On this interpretation how could even the theologians know that the attainment of such fulness in love had this effect? The blotting out of sin is rather the connatural consequence of this love, so that we might actually define it in the following terms: perfect love is that which has orientated 'all the powers', i.e. all the manifold levels of reality in the complexity of man's makeup purely to God, so that these, without themselves being suppressed or deprived of their true natures, become the 'material',

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the 'expression' and the 'manifestation' precisely of this love. If we have managed to understand what is meant, objectively speaking, by the term 'temporal punishments due to sin', then it is also clear that such perfect love blots out all these punishments, indeed that, ultimately speaking, this in the only way in which they can be blotted out. This in itself is enough to enable us to understand that an indulgence, whatever further precisions [158] still remain to be added in defining its precise nature, must be an *aid towards* this perfect love which blots out all these punishments due to sin, and not a 'means' which excuses us from following this one essential way of compensating for our own past and the 'after-effects' (*reliquiae peccatorum*) which it has left behind.

It cannot be objected against this interpretation of the temporal punishments due to sin that it is inapplicable to the remission of them which we can obtain in the after-life. For this interpretation in no sense presupposes that after death man intensifies the depths of the radical decision which he took with the aid of supernatural grace in the concrete condition of his earthly life (in other words that he increases his 'degree of sanctifying grace'). Such a view would admittedly be irreconcilable with the doctrine that with regard to the possibility of an increase in supernatural grace and merit death constitutes the boundary beyond which we cannot go. All that this interpretation does presuppose is that this definitive decision for God, which remains unchanged in respect of its degree of intensity also, must (under certain circumstances) still continue to take effect even after death by permeating and shaping all those levels in the human person which are less immediate to his actual personhood. There is no doctrine of the Church which is controverted by this assumption. Even at the biological level growth and final maturity are not simply one and the same thing.

II

Now manifestly we can entreat God that he may, as far as possible, grant us favourable circumstances in his guidance of our lives, such as will as quickly and as beneficently as possible shape this process by which our whole sin-damaged being is transformed once the basic decision of conversion and repentance has been taken. Who has not actually uttered this prayer if he is a Christian (even if he has never hitherto regarded that which he prayed for from this point of view)? Who has not already entertained the idea: 'If I could only die one death, the "true death" in which my entire being with all that it has become throughout my entire life was made over to God in faith and love in an act of radical self-surrender down to the last fibre of my being, so that nothing was held back, nothing denied, but death was the total act of a totally committed faith!' No theologian will deny that through so intense a degree of love for God we would be liberated from all 'temporal punishments due to sin' as well if this grace was bestowed in its entirety upon the individual. Nor can anyone deny [159] that one instance at least of a blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin does exist, that namely which we regard not as *an* instance but as *the* definitive instance of this process.

We can, therefore, ask God to grant us the greatest and most favourable chance possible of achieving the maturity of the Christian man as a whole. Such a prayer need not for one moment spring from egoistical promptings or from the impulse to escape from these punishments as 'cheaply and painlessly' as possible. Nor need it involve any denial of the truth that for Christian living too there is a genuine attitude of 'standing by one's past' and 'bearing the consequences', so that to flee from this would be cowardly, unchristian and ultimately speaking futile. Time is, in fact, not only God's gift, through which the most important factor, namely salvation, must be achieved; it is also the restriction which ensures that that which must be achieved shall be achieved only gradually. Otherwise we could never in fact pray for the coming of the Lord by saying: 'Come soon.' The attainment of maturity

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can take place in various ways: in circumstances of anguish, toil and frustration or in the midst of a tempest which we nevertheless feel as blessed; in an attitude of freedom and enthusiasm in which we experience as the blessing bestowed by a powerful love that which seems to another the anguish of a weary process of 'dying'. Thus we can ask God that he may bestow upon us the possibility of a swift and happy maturing process.[2] But we cannot ask him to allow us to share in God's own holiness and beatitude when we are only half ready and immature. Surely we can in all reason ask God to work out the destiny of those who are to be made perfect by him soon and by the more joyful way. And what we can reasonably ask for ourselves that too we can ask – one might almost say still more readily and more selflessly – for others.[3]

This is a prayer to which the Church can lend her support. As a source of truth and a means of grace she has never merely been the external controlling organisation. She is the one Body of Christ in which all the members live for one another, suffer for one another and are brought to [160] perfection for one another. When God regards an individual he always sees him in his place in the whole, as one with Christ the head and as one with all the brethren of this one Christ. No-one lives to himself alone, no-one dies to himself alone. Each one is beloved by God by the very fact that God regards his Christ and his Cross – beloved as part of a single reality which God creates in the midst of mankind, destined as they are to be brought to perfection. Through her prayers, therefore, the Church can give her support to this entreaty for the 'remission of the temporal punishments due to sin'. And when she does this then she does it as that which she is, as the one great union of those who have been sanctified and redeemed, as the Bride of the Lamb, as Head and Body, the one Christ. When God hears her then he regards that which she is as she prays. She is the Church of the saints, the Church of the one Christ. He grants her a hearing for her prayer in virtue of that which he has bestowed upon her prior to any prayer, namely in virtue of the grace of Christ which has been made powerful and victorious in the Church. Indeed the Lord himself says with regard to the hearing of the prayers of the disciples: 'The Father loves you *because* you have loved me and have believed that I have come from the Father' (Jn 16:27). This is what is meant when we speak of an indulgence as coming from the 'treasury of the Church'.

The 'treasury of the Church' is God's own will to save – ultimately speaking, therefore, God himself – to the extent that this is present in the world with the force of an irrevocable victory in *that* Christ (as head) who has been decreed by God from all eternity, precisely *as* 'the firstborn among many brethren', in other words in union with his 'Body' which is the Church. Rightly conceived of, therefore, the significance of this idea of the 'treasury of the Church' is precisely not that some part of its contents is paid out as from some public fund which can be doled out in limited quantities and by instalments, something which otherwise the individual would have had to pay out of his own resources. And the fact that this is not the case means that the question of whether the treasury of the Church could ever be exhausted, seeing that so much is spent and paid out 'from' it, is utterly ruled out from the outset and therefore does not need to be solved by any subtle explanations. For the same reason it is also clear that God is not compelled to grant such a prayer for the remission of the temporal punishments due to sin *precisely on the grounds that* he can no longer demand that

[2] This point is in itself enough to show that a position adopted by the two doctors of the Church Bonaventure and Albert is incorrect. They supposed, namely, that the more perfect should not concern themselves with trying to obtain remissions of temporal punishments due to sin through indulgences, but that they should rather strive to wipe away these punishments by their own personal penitential practices.

[3] Hence it is that such highly esteemed theologians as Thomas Aquinas, Cajetan, Soto, Suarez etc. uphold the view that an individual can 'apply' the 'satisfactions' he has performed but which he does not need himself to another precisely as the Church does in the granting of indulgences; in other words he can, in a certain sense lend his own indulgences, as it were, to others.

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which he has already received (namely *out of* the treasury of the Church). He looks to the working of his own grace. This is the reason why he guides one to his perfection by this way and another by that. It is done according to his own free and incalculable measure, and in [161] an order proper to him and decreed by him. But because in and through this sovereign power of divine grace there is a truly effective prayer – indeed, according to Christ's words an infallibly effective prayer – and because this prayer can be that of the entire Church, above all because it can and should be applied to the swift and happy attainment of the perfection of the whole man – for these reasons the Church can give her support as intercessor to the prayer of the individual for the remission of the 'temporal punishments due to his sins'. Where she does this in God's grace, where she does it well – for she must always perform such things through her members – where the individual is worthy of having his prayer heard through God's grace, there God hearkens too to the prayer of the Church of his own Son. It hardly needs to be specially emphasised once more that this takes place through the grace of God, who supplies the seed and the final flowering of this prayer and this worthiness according to the unfathomable decrees of his own good pleasure which is in no sense conditioned by any act on man's part.

With these provisos we can say that God gives the individual that which the Church implores on his behalf for his salvation. Thus the Church has always prayed for the sinner, who even as a penitent still bears the burden of his guilt. In the penitential practice of the early Church her intercession during and at the end of the period of penance belongs to the indispensable elements of ecclesiastical penance. She does not merely reconcile the sinner in that, by restoring him to harmony with herself, she imparts to him once more her own Holy Spirit which is the remission of sins; more than this, she actually prays with the repentant sinner for the forgiveness of the whole of his guilt with all its further effects. In view of the fact that it is, in fact, a *repentant* sinner that is being treated of, this applies in practice primarily (if we adopt the theological distinction and terminology current today) to the remission of the temporal punishments due to sin, to the total overcoming of the guilt. Even today this prayer is constantly being made. It is true that except for a small remnant it has vanished from the penitential liturgy used in the sacrament of penance itself because for practical reasons the accusation, considered as the initiating act of the penitential process, and sacramental forgiveness by the Church have been brought together in a single process, and the result of this is that the period of penance, the full overcoming of sin with all its consequences within man, is left almost exclusively to the Christian penitent who receives the sacrament. Yet for this reason the Church still continues constantly to be she who prays for the blotting out of the sins of her members and the punishment due to these sins, in the prayer of the [162] Our Father, in the sacrifice of Mass, in the penances performed by her saints and of all upon whom the guilt of the age weighs as the Cross of Christ and who bear this Cross in faith and love, in the explicit prayers of intercession which are constantly being made in the most varied forms on behalf of sinners. It is to be hoped that in the projected renewal of the liturgical forms of penance these aspects will be brought out still more clearly.

From such a prayer as this no-one can be excluded from the outset unless he has himself renounced his share in it by separating himself from the Church so that he can no longer be named in the liturgical intercessions in the manner in which the children of the Church have the privilege of being named (cf. 1 Jn 5:16). But in a special way we can include anyone in this prayer of the Church, and God's help can be extended to him in particular by means of an explicit and solemn intercession. Those who believe in the meaning of prayer, and who know what is meant by the Church, can be seized with awe at the following idea: the holy community of the redeemed, the Bride of Christ, stands at the throne of grace on my behalf! From her heart which is unceasingly and inalienably filled with the wordless sighings of the Spirit of God, prayer rises up on my behalf! It is *she* who says to me 'May Almighty God

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have mercy upon you, forgive you your sins . . . ' It is *she* who promises this prayer to me, and she does this not merely in general terms or implicitly, but explicitly and as pledged by an act of her supreme authority to pray on my behalf.

III

Such prayer remits, 'bestows' not simply in an authoritative remission of the punishments due to sin as though it were a simple 'amnesty' of a punishment to be imposed in purely external terms that was in question, as though this punishment served *only* as a manifestation of the majesty of the law. In fact, as the Council of Trent explicitly declares, the Church does not ascribe to herself any power precisely of *this* kind, of granting an 'amnesty' from a punishment imposed in the sacrament of penance in a purely external ('vindictive') sense, even though precisely in this she is still exercising her power of binding and loosing as defined in Mt 16 and 18 (DS 1667 ff.). Even less, therefore, can she intend to use any such power outside the sacrament, especially since in fact the theologians commonly derive her power to grant indulgences from the same power of binding and loosing as spoken of in the gospels. But the holy Church which – as Tertullian has already said in a similar context – is always hearkened to, [163] can assure the sinner in a special and explicit act, of a prayer of intercession such that it draws down a remission of the punishments due to sin. Now provided that we understand this *special* prayer in the right way and in the way in which we have attempted to interpret it, we can say: This is precisely what takes place in what we call an indulgence.

In earlier times the Church combined an assurance of prayer of this kind with the remission of a specific ecclesiastical penance which she had, of her own power, previously imposed upon the penitent in the sacrament of penance. But in a certain sense she replaced the effects of the performance of this penance by the penitent with her own intercession. And because of these facts she still gives expression, even today, to the intensity and urgency of this assurance of prayer in the form of sentences of the old canonical penances which in earlier times she remitted for the penitent in such a case. Because the Church prays, because she prays for salvation (and not for earthly things) – on these grounds she knows that she is 'always heard'. But because from the side of him for whom the prayer is offered the effectiveness of this prayer is always dependent upon his prior subjective dispositions (which themselves in turn fall under the powerful and also incalculable dispositions of the grace of God) – because of this we never know in the particular case when and how this prayer attains its goal. In the light of this we already see that the remission has not, and cannot have, the function of either diminishing or replacing the personal penance of the individual concerned. Of its nature the remission can only be aimed at securing that through the help of God that may really take place swiftly and easily which penance itself is also designed to achieve: the total cleansing and total maturing of the individual throughout his entire being, in which his initial endowment with grace is the heart and centre of the whole process. This remission, therefore, can only achieve its due effect where the individual genuinely has the dispositions necessary for penance. For without this there can be no question even of true repentance. Now if this is not the case even a forgiveness of the actual sins themselves is not possible, and therefore neither is it possible to obtain a pardon or remission of the temporal punishments due to sin.

We are presupposing that the process by which the individual is brought to full maturity, a process which is not merely psychological but in a true sense religious also, is not always and necessarily simply completed with death. This is not so even in the case of those individuals who, under the grace of God, have made their orientation towards God definitive and final in

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their lives and through their deaths. Even from the purely empirical point of view we cannot have the impression that a final and complete [164] integration, in which the individual's basic decision pervades the whole of his being at all of its levels, coincides in every case with his death. Certainly according to Christian doctrine death is the end of that period in which an eternal destiny is worked out. What comes 'afterwards' is not a prolongation of the period or its continuation in an endless series of new ages, but rather the definitive fixing and the eternal validity of what has come to be in time. But unless we wish to regard man as simply 'coming to an end', so that we can then go on to say that he undergoes a 'resurrection' of the flesh, thereby becoming something absolutely new (which, however, would be tantamount to a radical denial of his continuing identity and of eternity as the fruit of time), then, precisely upon a Christian conception of the history man as an individual, we must recognise the existence of a further period of time between death and the final consummation of all things, during which the acts performed in freedom during man's time on earth are brought to their maturity. For this history of man precisely as human only attains its ultimate end and consummation in the resurrection of the flesh, in the transfiguration of all that is real in man taken as a whole, and not merely in a sort of Platonist history of the individual spirit. We cannot picture to ourselves what takes place in it, but this is no reason for denying such a possibility. Every attempt at describing this possibility serves in its result to show how impossible it is to deny that the possibility itself does exist. But even while renouncing any such attempt we can still say this much: supposing that the *history* of the individual as such is not simply terminated with death; supposing that with death considered as the outcome of a specific and determinate stage in this history belonging to the dimension of space and time man enters still more into an open relationship to the totality of the world (though he does not become 'liberated from the body' in the sense of a negative and empty separation from the cosmos); supposing all this is true, then he experiences the contradiction between the divinely ordained nature of his own being or that of the world on the one hand, and that which he still is through the still surviving effects of his own acts, in which his guilt has been objectified. He experiences these as the painful and punitive consequences of his sin. Now the painful process by which this contradiction is overcome is his purgatory. But just as in this life, so too even after death this process can be slower or quicker, more or less painful or happy, according to the particular circumstances and the prior conditions which determine this in each individual case. That the 'poor souls' may be granted a swifter and more happy maturing process – that is what we pray for when we pray for them, and that is the object of that [165] intercessory prayer of the Church which is promised to us in an indulgence which we gain 'for the holy souls'.

An indulgence, then, implies that the Church agrees to offer her official intercession on behalf of the repentant sinner. And it is expressed in the form of a remission of some (hypothetically imposed) canonical penance (when it is a case of indulgences for the living). The necessary prior condition for this to be achieved is that the individual gaining the indulgence must perform some good work which is specifically prescribed. In earlier times, in which the indulgence properly so-called emerged, this good work constituted primarily some part of the canonical penance which had been imposed or else some other penance, generally easier, which had to be performed in place of the original one. Today the conditions laid down by the Church for gaining an indulgence consist only of some very small task, almost symbolical in its effect. This should not lead us to the point of no longer taking indulgences seriously, as though they were 'cheap' and to be had in great quantities. Many indulgences are offered. Whether many are also 'gained' in *reality* is another question. An indulgence is only gained in the definitive sense when the intercessory prayer of the Church achieves its goal. But in the last analysis this can only take place in a heart that is disposed to penance, in an individual who, working from a basis of faith and grace, strives through his

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actions and sufferings to ensure that he may become more and more a new creature fashioned after the image of Christ in all the dimensions of his being. It is in order that this may be achieved that the holy Church assures the Christian, by granting him an indulgence, of her help and intercession.

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[166]

9

ON THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH TODAY ON THE SUBJECT OF INDULGENCES

Although the theology and practice of indulgences was certainly most energetically discussed at the Second Vatican Council, no actual decision was arrived at. In the meantime a pronouncement has been issued by the pope, as a result of which a more practicable way has been devised of explaining the nature of indulgence, although admittedly certain basic theological problems still remain, which even this is incapable of overcoming. In connection with this new ordering of the question, we have set ourselves, in the investigation which follows, a relatively limited goal. The central and primary theme of these observations is the fact that the interpretation of the Church's teaching on indulgence as put forward by B. Poschmann[1] and the author[2] is perfectly [167] reconcilable with the Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*[3] of 1 January 1967. The task of demonstrating this fact, however, will probably bring to light certain further problems in the Church's current teaching on indulgence and its theological interpretation, and these too are of central importance. Because of this broader horizons will spontaneously open up, and our investigations will carry us far beyond this particular theme. It hardly needs to be said that in the 450th anniversary, the

[1] Of B. Poschmann's works, cf. especially: *Der Ablass im Lichte der Bussgeschichte = Theophaneia* 4 (Bonn 1948); also the reviews of this by H. Weisweiler, *Scholastik* 24 (1949), pp. 591-594, K. Adam, *T.Q.* 129 (1949), pp. 242-245, P. Galtier, *Gregorianum* 31 (1950), pp. 258-274, and K. Rahner (cf. n. 2); B. Poschmann, 'Busse und Letzte Ölung' – *H.D.G.* IV, 3 (Freiburg 1951), pp. 112-123; *idem*, 'Die innere Struktur des Busssakraments', *M.T.Z.* 1 (1950), pp. 12-30.

[2] cf. K. Rahner's review of B. Poschmann's *Der Ablass im Lichte der Bussgeschichte* in *Z.K.T.* 71 (1949), pp. 481-490; *idem*, 'Remarks on the Theology of Indulgences', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 175-201 (= a slightly revised version of the review of Poschmann's work); *idem*, 'Über den Ablass' *St.D.Z.* 156 (1955), pp. 343-355, also in this volume, pp. 150-165; *idem*, 'Ablass', *L.T.K.* I (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1957), 46-53; *idem*, 'Sündenstrafen', *L.T.K.* IX (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1964), 1185-1187; K. Rahner, H. Vorgrimler edd. 'Indulgence', *Concise Theological Dictionary* (Freiburg/London 1965), p. 277; K. Rahner, 'Indulgences', *Sacramentum Mundi*, III (Freiburg/London 1969), pp. 123-129. In the meantime other theologians have probably become adherents of the interpretation put forward by Poschmann and myself, cf. M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV/1 (Munich, 5th ed., 1957) para. 272, esp. 609; G. Muschalek, 'Der Ablass in der heutigen Praxis und Lehre der katholischen Kirche', *Gespräch über den Ablass = Arbeiten zur kirchlichen Wiedervereinigung*, *Kirchengeschichtliche Reihe* 2 (Graz 1965), pp. 13-37; B. Häring, *Das Gesetz Christi* I (Freiburg, 7th ed. 1963), p. 518; L. Ott, *Grundriss der katholischen Dogmatik* (Freiburg, 7th ed., 1963), pp. 525 ff.; P. Anciaux, *Das Sakrament der Busse* (Mainz 1961), pp. 175 to 192; E. Schillebeeckx, 'Der Sinn der katholischen Ablasspraxis', *Lutherische Rundschau* 17 (1967), pp. 328-355; probably O. Semmelroth too is taking a similar approach in his commentary on the Constitution on Indulgence (see below p. 170, n. 11). In all the material statements he has made on the subject of indulgence in his own published works during the course of the last twenty years or so the author has at no time adopted any approaches which are basically different from the present one. At the same time, however, notable variations can be perceived between the individual works in his conception of the temporal punishments due to sin, his interpretation in the concrete of the special intercession of the Church and the part played by love as the basic unifying force in his understanding (which is at basis both anthropological and theological) of the process by which the whole man is matured. It is in the context of these basic factors that the true theological nature of indulgence is to be sought. For this reason the author may also be permitted to adduce numerous references in this study in order to bring out in precise and concrete terms the fact that his theory of indulgence is in harmony with the current official teaching of the Church on the subject.

[3] cf. *A.A.S.* 59 (1967), pp. 5-24; in addition a separate edition of the Constitution has also appeared: *Constitutionis Apostolicae Indulgentiarum Doctrina. Breve Cornmentarium*, auctore E. Mura, R.S.V. (Vatican City 1967). This edition, published in both Latin and Italian with a commentary, was not available to me at the time this article was written.

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jubilee year of the Reformation, we shall also implicitly be bearing in mind the views of other Churches on the subject of indulgence, even though the more directly controversial problems entailed in this theology will not explicitly be presented.

I

1. We are presupposing that the reader is already familiar with the interpretation of the Church's teaching on indulgence up to the present as presented by us in connection with B. Poschmann's view. Here we shall not be repeating this. The reader will only be able to understand what we have to say here, therefore, if what has already been said about this theory of indulgence is familiar to, and still fresh in his mind. For our present [168] purposes we shall call this theory the 'new theory' because it has already been called so by others.[4] But we do not intend by this to assert that it is new in its material content. On the contrary, as B. Poschmann has shown from the aspect of the history of dogma, it is a revival of a teaching which, historically speaking, belongs to the origins of the theory and practice of indulgence viewed as a whole. The revival of this ancient teaching has been made possible only by purging the teaching on indulgence which has been usual since the Middle Ages of an exaggeratedly legalistic element which has been found repellent. The only reason we ourselves have for calling this teaching 'new' is so that we may have a brief formula for it ready to hand. Nor are we concerned in the study which follows to take up any particular position with regard to the judgments passed upon this interpretation by other theologians. This would lead us too far afield. The question which concerns us, therefore, is not how, for instance, R. Masi's[5] judgment on the 'new theory of indulgences' is itself in turn to be judged.[6] Here let us merely notice in passing that even Masi concedes that the 'new theory' does not contradict any of the defined doctrines of the Church, and does not even, in any obvious sense (*nettamente*), run counter to the teaching of the *ordinary magisterium*. One further point may be noticed, namely that (from the opposite point of view) certain [169] circles among Protestant theologians[7] have found it possible to regard our interpretation as a

[4] Thus cf. R. Masi, 'La dottrina tradizionale delle indulgenze', *Osservatore Romano*, 19 February 1966; *idem*, 'Nuove idee sulla dottrina delle indulgenze', *Osservatore Romano*, 26 February 1966. cf. also C. Journet, *Teologia della indulgenze* (Ancora, Rome 1966). These studies had, of course already been published *prior* to the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution, and accordingly efforts were not spared in them to bring their influence to bear upon the new official pronouncement. In the investigation which follows we shall be concerning ourselves only indirectly to show that these efforts to present the theory of indulgence put forward by Poschmann and myself as irreconcilable with the official teaching of the Church did not in fact have any real influence upon the official pronouncement.

[5] cf. Especially the last article by R. Masi, 'Nuove idee sulla dottrina delle indulgenze', *Osservatore Romano*, 26 February 1966, p. 6.

[6] We are also compelled to refrain from entering into the discussion on the differences in the presentation of the nature of indulgence put forward at the Second Vatican Council. If we were entering into this question we would have to point particularly to the interventions of the Cardinal Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh and of Cardinals Alfrink, König and Döpfner. On this cf. L. A. Dorn, W. Seibel, *Tagebuch des Konzils. Die Arbeit der vierten Session* (Nurenberg 1966), pp. 233 f., 237 f., 248 ff., 260, 264 etc. The most important passages are now to be found in the work edited by J. Ch. Hampe, *Autorität und Freiheit. Gegenwart des Konzils und Zukunft der Kirche im ökumenischen Disput* Vol I (Munich 1967), pp. 436-449, 440-442 (Intervention by Cardinal-Patriarch Maximos), 442-449 (Vota of Cardinals Döpfner and König).

[7] cf. K. G. Steck, 'Ablass', *R.G.G.* I (Tübingen, 3rd ed. 1957), pp. 64-67 (cf. the conclusion: 'How they (Poschmann and K. Rahner) will succeed in getting their views accepted remains to be seen'). The present investigation seeks to show that the earlier efforts were not altogether useless, and also that even apart from our direct contribution they have left at least some traces in the official documents.

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preliminary foothold for a more positive understanding of the Catholic doctrine of indulgence.[8]

2. This study is not presented as a commentary on the Apostolic Constitution viewed as a *whole*. The question under consideration here, rather, is simply whether the teaching of this Constitution[9] on indulgence amounts to a rejection, whether expressed or implied, of the teaching on indulgence put forward by B. Poschmann and myself, or alternatively whether, having regard to the actual text of it (for this alone is what [170] concerns us) this is not in fact the case. If we had to try to give a commentary on, and evaluation of this Apostolic Constitution taken as a whole, very many points would have to be discussed which cannot be treated of here, or which can only be touched upon very briefly, even though they may deserve the greatest attention from theologians: the question of the nature of the development of dogma in general, for certain noteworthy observations on this question do occur, such as are hardly to be found in any official documents of the Church prior to this one; points concerning the nature of indulgence, the necessity of adapting it or subordinating it to or under the Christian's task of working out his salvation viewed as a whole, in which love is first and last the determining factor; concerning the more ultimate 'roots of revelation' from which first the practice of indulgence[10] and then the theory of it gradually (*paulatim decursu*

[8] cf. especially H. Bornkamm, 'Thesen und Thesenanschlag Luthers', *Geschehen und Bedeutung* (Berlin 1967), pp. 60-63. This article includes, on pp. 65-70 certain observations on the Constitution on Indulgence of Pope Paul VI of 1 January 1967.

[9] Of course the question of the theological standing of the Constitution would have to be discussed in general and in specific detail. Here, however, we shall not be treating of this in any explicit sense. The Constitution certainly contains no infallible doctrinal decision but is, nevertheless, an authentic presentation of the official teaching of the *ordinary magisterium*, so that its particular pronouncements still carry a certain degree of binding force. In estimating the standing of these pronouncements the stated purpose of the Constitution should not be overlooked. In it the *Sacrarum Indulgentiarum recognitio promulgatur* – the title of the Constitution – in other words it constitutes the new prescription for *practical* purposes for defining the nature of indulgence in the concrete. For this purpose, therefore, the preliminary doctrinal part serves merely as an extended introduction. But however this may be, we are taking the teaching of the Constitution as established and (though we do not intend to determine its precise theological standing any more closely here) as 'binding'. Admittedly we do hold the opinion that even a 'binding' doctrinal pronouncement on the part of the Church's teaching authority can and must have its meaning illumined and have its full implications brought out. What is binding in our understanding of the Constitution is the actual text of the *A.A.S.* We shall not, therefore, be taking into account the brief anonymous commentary which was appended to the text of the Constitution in No. 7 of the *Osservatore Romano* of the 9th and 10th of January 1967. We do not regard this commentary as having much authority, and feel that it has little to do with the real intentions underlying the Constitution. Why, for instance, is Mt 16:18 f. quoted once more as a proof of indulgence, when it is manifest that the Constitution itself deliberately avoids this? Why does the commentary speak of a '*potere di giurisdizione*' when the Constitution says nothing of this? Why does it speak of a '*porzione del tesoro*', when this is not really in conformity with the approach of the Constitution itself? Why is the commentary silent on the subject of the *sancta et justa libertas* when the Constitution makes full allowance for this in the use of indulgences by Christians? cf. also H. Bornkamm, *Thesen and Thesenanschlag Luthers* (Berlin 1967), p. 65, n. 220.

[10] A further point that is discussed more freely than hitherto in this official document of the Church is the historical abuses in the practice of indulgence. At the same time, however, it must be recognised that at least from the pre-Nominalist period onwards a critical attitude had all along been adopted in the theory of indulgence. (See below p. 198, n. 58.) Moreover the Fourth Lateran Council (cf. D.S. 819) and the Council of Trent (cf. D.S. 1835) had already adopted a clearly critical attitude towards abuses (cf. the further inclusion of these quotations in No 8 with notes 41-42). It is explicitly conceded that there have been indulgences which were 'indiscreet and unnecessary', through which the attitude and the practice of repentance were deprived of their pristine force ('enervated'). Besides this it is also explained that because of the 'perverse quest for gain' the word 'indulgence' has been rendered obnoxious (we may contrast this with the formulation of the Tridentine text of D.S. 1835 adduced as a basis for the statement: *ab haereticis blasphematur*!). In considering these concessions it must be born in mind that such indulgences were still granted precisely by the Church (by whom else?). On the concrete practice of indulgence in the period immediately preceding the Reformation cf. E. Iserloh, *Luther zwischen Reform und Reformation. Der Thesenanschlag fand nicht statt = Katholisches Leben*

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saeculorum) developed; concerning the concept of the *thesaurus Ecclesiae*, any quantitative interpretation of which is explicitly rejected; concerning the division (so strongly adhered to) of indulgences into plenary or perfect and partial (not imperfect!) ones; concerning the 'holy and justified freedom of the children of God', in virtue of which Christians can themselves decide whether they wish to avail themselves of the indulgences that are offered or to follow the Church's recommendation to gain them, etc. All this cannot be treated of here, even though in itself and viewed objectively it could, perhaps, be more important as a subject for investigation.[11]

[171] 3. While, therefore, in the following considerations we shall be arguing that our own theory of indulgence is reconcilable with the teaching the Papal Constitution, this in no sense implies that this theory is actually put forward in the Constitution itself. It is not the purpose of these considerations to assert, far less to prove, any such thing. The reconcilability of which we are speaking here is not based upon the fact that both interpretations coincide with one another on all material points. On the contrary it is based upon the facts on the one hand that no position whatever is taken up in the papal teaching on the question of the 'new' theory of indulgence, and on the other that this 'new' theory does not come into conflict at any point with what the pope has to say about indulgence. Its teaching is the same, even though, it may be, in one point of detail or another it may be presented under different aspects or with different formulations. Moreover in the position we are adopting here that the 'new' theory is reconcilable with the papal doctrine, we are not asserting even implicitly that the papal doctrine is irreconcilable with the traditional scholastic theology of indulgence. The case here is the same as with many other theological questions. What is formulated in the official teaching of the Church is that [172] common ground which either precedes or else arises from the teaching of the various schools, and which can be reconciled with several of the interpretations of these. The official teaching of the Church may be presented from a different perspective and formulated in different terms than those which we ourselves would uphold, and which we consider to be the more accurate. It may even be (and this is particularly noteworthy) that the terms in which it is formulated belong to a more traditional theory than our own. But as every theologian knows from numerous examples drawn from the history of dogma and theology, this in itself is very far from being a condemnation of the particular

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und Kämpfen im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung 23/4 (Munster, 2nd ed. 1967), 2 pp. 16 ff., 22 ff., 30 ff. (with bibliography).

[11] We may draw attention to one further point here, namely that it is also important from the point of view of theology to notice what the Constitution does *not* say, contrasting in this with the ideas of scholastic theology. Thus for instance nothing is said about the idea that there is such a thing as a penance which can be performed by the Christian even though there is no question of applying its value in terms of 'satisfaction' as a blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin since the individual himself has no need of it, so that so far as he is concerned it is 'extra', and *precisely for this reason* can be applied to others. The use at one point (cf. Norm 3) of the expression '*in modum suffragii*' (in the case of the indulgences applied to the dead) without any further explanation is certainly striking. The expression *per modum absolutionis* or *per modum solutionis*, however, are not used. Whereas in scholastic theology it is customary to invoke the support of Mt 16 and 18, this is avoided here, even though the expression '*claves Ecclesiae*' at one point (cf. No 8) does occur. This, however, cannot *ipso facto* be identified with a *potestas jurisdictionis*. On the development of the theology of the power of the keys cf. L. Hödl, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Literatur und der Theologie der Schüsselgewalt* I (Munster 1960); V. Heynck, 'Der richterliche Charakter des Busssakramentes nach Johannes Duns Scotus', *Franziskan. Studien* 47 (1965), pp. 339-414; *idem*, 'Die Diskussion über die Notwendigkeit und Begründung der Beichtjurisdiktion bei dem Anonymus O.P. des Cod. Vat. lat. 985', *Wahrheit und Verkündigung. Michael Schmaus zum 70. Geburtstag*, L. Scheffczyk, W. Dettloff, R. Heinzmann edd. (Paderborn 1967), Vol I, pp. 1049-1071. Up to the present I have not yet heard of any extensive commentaries on the Apostolic Constitution. I should, however, draw attention to the commentary of O. Semmelroth which has appeared in the meantime under the title 'Apostolische Busskonstitution. Bussordnung der deutschen Bischöfe. Apostolische Konstitution über die Neuordnung des Ablasswesens' as number 2 in the series *Nachkonziliare Dokumentation* published by the Paulinus-Verlag (Treves 1967), cf. esp. pp. 51-71.

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theological opinion we are upholding. Let it be willingly and explicitly conceded that something of this sort may be the case here, for instance in expressions such as *dispensare*, *clavis Ecclesiae*, in the rules for distinguishing between plenary and partial indulgences etc. But no theological argument can be drawn from any such differences to prevent us from placing a different theological interpretation upon a doctrine of the Church which we all hold in common.[12]

II

Critics of the 'new' theory of indulgence have oversimplified and distorted it, regarding the pith and essence of it as consisting in the fact that according to this theory the remission of the temporal punishments due to sin – as distinct from penances imposed by the Church – is achieved not by an official exercise of the Church's (and especially the pope's) jurisdiction but (in so far as it takes place at all) through the 'prayer' of the Church. The traditional doctrine on indulgence, on the other hand, so these critics maintain, upholds this act of the Church's jurisdiction and regards this precisely as constituting the decisive difference between indulgences and other ways of wiping out the temporal punishments due to sin. It is just this difference between the conceptions that the Constitution seems to take cognizance of in No. 8. On this point it seems to decide in favour of the traditional doctrine, and so too to adopt that definition of indulgence which is set forth in No. 8 and in No. 1 of the norms: An indulgence is an *auctoritativa applicatio et dispensatio* '*thesauri Ecclesiae*' for the remission of the temporal punishments due to sins in God's sight, and this authoritative application and act of dispensing (*dispensare*) is something different from a mere prayer of the Church (*non tantum orat*). Now the question is [173] whether this explanation involves any *real* contradiction between the teaching of the Constitution and the 'new' teaching on indulgence. The points which we shall need to take into consideration in order to arrive at an answer to this question fall under several distinct heads.

III

What strikes one first on a careful reading of the Constitution is that in it the granting of indulgences on the part of the Church is not characterised as an act precisely of her *jurisdiction*. The Church's power of granting indulgences is designated as '*potestas ministrae redemptionis Christi*' (No. 8), and as a power '*auctoritative dispensare et applicare*' in relation to the treasury of the Church (No. 8 norm 1). Now this is all the more striking in view of the fact that no support is claimed from Mt 16, the classic text for the Church's power of jurisdiction.[13] Certainly it might be said that a *potestas* which is exercised with 'authority' is, of its very nature, a jurisdictional power. It might be explained that the authors have deliberately avoided qualifying the authority to grant indulgences any more precisely than this because it is necessary to conceive of this power in such a way that we realise that indulgences are possible for the dead also, even though these are no longer subject to the jurisdiction of the Church. But against this we must first reiterate once more that not every *potestas auctoritativa* is a *potestas jurisdictionis* (we may recall the *potestas ordinis* as

[12] The phrase '*resistere potest*' of D.S. 3010, for instance, cannot be adduced either against a Thomist conception of efficacious grace, even though the formulation of it was originally 'Molinist'.

[13] On the interpretation of this text cf. the works of L. Hödl (cf. above n. 11), P. Anciaux, *La théologie du sacrement de pénitence au XIIe siècle* (Louvain 1949), K. Fröhlich, *Formen der Auslegung von Mt 16:13-18 im lateinischen Mittelalter* (Dissertation, Basle, 1960).

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exercised, for instance, in the power of consecrating and dispensing the Eucharist). Those, therefore, who wish to identify the '*potestas auctoritativa*' of the Church referred to here with a specifically juridical authority have first to prove their case. For this identification is not expressed in the actual text of the Constitution itself, at any rate explicitly. A further point is that the whole presentation of the nature of indulgence from No. 8 to norm 1 is manifestly intended to describe indulgence as capable of being 'applied' to the dead as well (cf. norm 3). But in such a context how can it be supposed that it is an act of 'jurisdiction' that is intended, especially in those cases in which the indulgence can be gained *only* for the dead (cp. norm 15)? It cannot refer to the dead person himself (cf. norm 3: '*in modum suffragii*'). But in such a case *how* precisely can it refer to the living who gain the indulgence? If, therefore, this question is to be answered in the affirmative [174] at all, does this not imply that in order to support such an answer constructions have to be placed on the text of the Constitution which are no longer credible. In the case supposed is it the Church herself who performs the *suffragium*? If so then in this case also the general definition of indulgence must still apply. In other words *suffragium* must be able to be combined with the exercise of the Church's *auctoritativa potestas*. If, on the other hand, a negative answer is given to this question, in other words if the living person who gains the indulgence is the one responsible for the *suffragium*,[14] still, even then, we can say that it is the dead person himself who gains the indulgence *precisely as such*, and in that case what does the *potestas auctoritativa* of the Church bring about in this living individual? Is that which, *ex hypothesi*, is brought about in this individual while still living itself an indulgence?

Thus if we accept the idea of the *applicatio et dispensatio* of what is contained in the 'treasury of the Church' merely at its face value and merely as an exercise of some *potestas auctoritativa*, and then seek to interpret this primarily as an act of *jurisdiction*, we shall lose ourselves in a whole thicket of thorny questions. A further and final point is that the concept of a jurisdictional power in this sense and with so wide a range of possible applications is somewhat obscure when its application is extended beyond the 'visible' society of the Church and used to relate the members of the Church to one another as subordinates or superiors in respect of *all* the activities of the Church considered precisely as a *society*. This becomes clear, for instance, in the controversial question of what is implied by saying that the absolution given in the sacrament of penance has a 'judicial' character.[15] If we do think of the authority of the Church [175] in this way we are in constant danger of reducing the terms we use to the level of clichés, the precise meaning of which as we apply them in general and in particular can no longer be verified. Our course should be, rather, to leave open the question of whether the *potestas auctoritativa* spoken of in the Constitution is to be identified with the

[14] In No 8 mention is made of the fact that the *believers* undertake a '*transferre indulgentias in suffragium defunctorum*'. In norm 3 it is not so clear who precisely is the subject who 'applies' the indulgence to the dead (cf. also norm 15).

[15] cf. also K. Mörsdorf, 'Der hoheitliche Charakter der sakramentalen Lossprechung', *T.T.Z.* 57 (1948), pp. 335-348; *idem*, 'Der Rechtscharakter der iurisdictio fori interni', *M.T.Z.* 8 (1967), pp. 161-173; on the problem cf. also E. López-Doriga, 'Die Natur der Jurisdiktion im Busssakrament', *Z.K.T.* 82 (1960), pp. 385-427. cf. the bibliography already given on p. 170, n. 11. When, for instance, Mörsdorf sees the power of jurisdiction (*L.T.K.* V, 2nd ed., 1220) as consisting in the enacting of laws, pronouncing of judgment and government (this is his account of the Church's supreme authority), how is it then possible to apply any such concept so as to throw light upon the *potestas auctoritativa* with regard to the remission of the temporal punishments due to sin in God's sight – especially as, for one thing, the effect of a jurisdictional act in the true sense, as directed towards a subordinate, is independent of his assent, whereas the blotting out of a punishment due to sin in God's sight is possible only with the voluntary collaboration of the recipient of the indulgence? To the extent that a *potestas jurisdictionis* is made effective in the sacraments, its effects bear upon the communal life of the Church, not upon the relationship of the individual to God. The concept of the *potestas auctoritativa* as applied to indulgence must therefore be developed independently of any speculations about the Church's power of jurisdiction. On this problem cf. the observations of E. Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, pp. 336 f., 342 f., 345 f., etc.

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jurisdictional authority, and to avoid losing ourselves in a process of conceptual acrobatics which is rich in verbiage but ultimately devoid of content. And if we take this course with regard to the meaning of the term *potestas auctoritativa* we shall straightway be in a position to deduce from the text of the Constitution simply the following two facts:

1. What the Constitution emphasises again and again is the 'dispositions' of the recipient of the indulgence. But once we have accepted the importance of these we come to what is proper to the Church herself, and to the part she has to play in the granting of indulgences. She has an 'ability' (*potestas* from *posse*!) which is real, valid and effective in God's sight with regard to the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sins, and the Church achieves this by having recourse to the 'treasury of the Church'.

2. This 'ability' and this recourse consist not merely in 'prayer':[16] '*Non tantum orat sed . . . auctoritative dispensat*'.

So far as the first definition of this *potestas* is concerned the 'new' theory of indulgence certainly does not come into conflict with this in any respect. For the exponents of this theory have expressly emphasised that the Church's act is not confined merely to the remission of the canonical penances which have been imposed, but relates to the temporal punishments due to sins in God's sight. They have further emphasised that this activity is infallibly effective[17] – that is so far as the Church's part is concerned and leaving aside the 'dispositions' of the recipient of the indulgence – and indeed that in reality even according to the 'new' theory of indulgence this activity can be brought under the general concept of the *opus operatum*, provided this is rightly understood. In other words it certainly is [176] a *potestas auctoritativa*.[18] Thus we see that the only question at issue can be whether the 'new' theory of indulgence does come into conflict really (and not merely in the sense that it seems merely from the form of words to contradict the Constitution) with the second determination of what is meant by the *potestas auctoritativa*, in which it is said not to consist merely in 'prayer alone'. This is a point on which we must now speak further.

IV

This brings us to an initial point of very real importance, even if it is not the ultimate and decisive one with which this entire investigation is concerned. The exponents of the 'new'

[16] The anonymous commentator speaks of a '*semplice preghiera deprecativa*'.

[17] cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 185 f., 199 f.; *idem*, 'Ablass', *L.T.K.* I, 51-52; *idem*, 'Über den Ablass', *St.D.Z.* 156 (1955), pp. 351-353 etc., in this volume, pp. 150 f.

[18] For a more precise interpretation of such an act of subsuming cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 192 f., 200 f. with n. 2; also 'A Brief Theological Study on Indulgence' in this volume pp. 150 f., 163. The actual *concept* of *opus operatum* was used less or not at all in the earlier studies. The primary reason for this was that we were making every effort to exclude the misunderstandings which could so easily arise, and which would give the impression that indulgence took effect in an automatic and magical way (see *L.T.K.* I, 51; *Theological Investigations* II, pp. 175 ff., etc.). What is at issue here was expressed perfectly adequately *from the very nature of the case*: 'Always sure of being heard', 'an infallibly effective prayer' etc. cf., for instance, *Theological Investigations* II, p. 178: '… And a "prayer" of an authoritative kind need not necessarily lack the efficacy of an *opus operatum*' (thus already in the article as originally published in *Z.K.T.* 71 (1949), p. 485). For the rest I have already drawn attention, in my review of B. Poschmann's book in 1949 (*Theological Investigations* II, p. 199), to the fact that Poschmann's theory of indulgence needs to be developed and set on a broader basis precisely with regard to the 'precise nature of an '*authoritative* prayer of the *Church* as distinct from a private intercession'. For a fuller treatment of this cf. the later study of K. Rahner, 'Some Theses on "Prayer in the Name of the Church"', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 419-438; and particularly *ad rem*, pp. 428 ff., *idem*, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1963), pp. 22-30; *idem*, *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 109-133; cf. also p. 179, n. 26.

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theory of indulgence will certainly be of opinion that when the Constitution rejects the idea that the essence of indulgence consists merely in 'prayer alone' on the Church's part this does not imply a rejection of the 'new' teaching on indulgence in itself. Is this in fact correct? The answer to this question needs to be worked out very carefully.

1. First we may permit ourselves a few preliminary remarks with regard to method and approach. In theological controversies there is always a strong possibility that any conflicts that may arise are merely apparent, merely verbal ones. At first two statements are set against one another as affirmation and denial because they use the selfsame words to [177] assent to, or alternatively to reject, the proposition involved. Both parties (or at least one of them) presuppose that the meaning of these words is self-evident. They have this in mind when they use them and so do not pause to enter any more closely into, or to analyse their meaning. Each of the two parties, therefore, regards his own unreflecting understanding of the terms involved as 'obvious', and in doing so perhaps invokes the support of an alleged 'common parlance'. He regards this particular interpretation of the term, therefore, as already granted by the other party. In spite of this, however, the actual situation is that both parties are understanding the term in two different senses, and the contradiction is only apparent, or at any rate not established beyond doubt to be real.[19] The present-day situation in theology is in fact such that the differences between the different departments of it, the problems they raise and the aspects from which the objective theological factors involved can be viewed, are immense. As a result a situation has arisen almost perforce in which one can find little common ground between theologians with regard to the objective meaning of the terminology they use. So that even when they use the same words we can never be too hasty in assuming that they are using them in the same sense, nor yet shall we find it easy to establish whether this is in fact the case or not. The reason is that every explanation of what particular sense is intended is itself in turned expressed in words which, once more, remain undefined and perhaps are still not in all cases 'clear'.[20]

[178] 2. The Constitution speaks of an activity defined as '*tantum orare*', and sets this idea in opposition to that of a *potestas auctoritativa*. But it is not very easy to establish from this opposition exactly what is meant by the idea of 'prayer alone'. For it has already been shown that *potestas auctoritativa* is itself an idea that includes several different dimensions. Now it is not less true that 'prayer' alone taken in itself is a concept with several different levels of meaning, so that it is not straightway or *ipso facto* clear from the use of it in the Constitution that every conceivable level of meaning is intended to be excluded in defining the nature of indulgence. Even if we do not think of the private prayer of the individual Christian, since in fact in this context it is the prayer of the *Church* that is being referred to, still even this

[19] The present-day controversy with regard to the concept of 'transsubstantiation' and 'transsignification', their significance and the extent to which they are or are not identical with one another is probably a good example of the methodological difficulties which arise in contemporary theology and which we have in mind here. On this cf. O. Semmelroth, 'Eucharistische Wandlung' *G.u.L.* 40 (1967), pp. 93-106; E. Schillebeeckx, *Die eucharistische Gegenwart* (Düsseldorf 1967); J. Ratzinger, 'Das Problem der Transsubstantiation und die Frage nach dem Sinn der Eucharistie', *T.Q.* 147 (1967), pp. 129-158; W. Beinert, 'Die Enzyklika "Mysterium fidei" und neuere Auffassungen über die Eucharistie', *T.Q.* 147 (1967), pp. 159-176; I. van Hout, 'Fragen zur Eucharistielehre in den Niederlanden', *Catholica* 20 (1966), pp. 179-199; P. Schoonberg, 'Transsubstantiation: How Far is this Doctrine Historically Determined?', *Concilium* 4/3 (1967), pp. 41-47.

[20] cf. for instance the problems entailed in the use of the concept of 'person'. On this K. Rahner, *Mysterium salutis* II (Einsiedeln 1967), pp. 342 ff., 349 ff., 353 ff., 364 ff., 385 ff. I have attempted to point out that this situation has the most radical implications for contemporary theology and for the Church's official teachers. I have done this in a major study which appeared in 1968 (*Häresien in der Kirche heute*?, Quaestiones Disputatae, Herder, Freiburg 1968). cf. also K. Rahner, 'Philosophy and Philosophising in Theology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and Baltimore, 1972), pp. 46-63.

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concept of the prayer of the Church contains many different levels of meaning.[21] It can be the prayer of a monk reciting the prayers of the office and praying in choir 'in the name of the Church'.[22] It can be an official prayer or collect, for instance for fine weather, recited by a priest. It can be the sort of prayer through which a blessing or some other sacramental benefit is conferred. It can be the form of prayer which as such constitutes the ritual of the anointing of the sick as *opus operatum*, and precisely as such it is an act of the supreme, that is of the actual sacramental 'power' of the Church acting from her 'authority'[23] (*potestas ordinis*). In any case the 'prayer of the Church' is an extraordinarily variable entity. It varies in respect of those in the concrete whom it is intended to support, in the way in which particular members of the Church are commissioned to perform it in the name of the Church and as the prayer of the Church, in the 'object' prayed for,[24] in the way in [179] which it takes effect and in the degree to which its effect can be said to be 'assured'. So variable is it, indeed, that one particular 'species' of this prayer can be conceived of – indeed actually exists – which (so far as the part played by the Church is concerned) is perfectly reconcilable with the element of infallible effectiveness and even with the concept of the *opus operatum*.[25]

Is it then the case that the terms of the Constitution are such as to assert that of all the conceivable 'varieties' of the Church's prayer not a single one enters in any sense whatever into the nature of indulgence, or are only some varieties excluded in this sense? To this question the Constitution itself supplies no answer. Yet it is legitimate to raise this question because there is a prayer which involves no real opposition to a *potestas auctoritativa*, but actually itself *constitutes* such a potestas and in a *particular* case can actually make the nature of this in the *concrete* more comprehensible than when the concept of *potestas auctoritativa* is used merely by itself. For if we take this latter course the idea which seems to be implied by it is legalistic in a sense which in reality is not intended for one moment, or at any rate is not positively inculcated as part of the Church's official teaching. To this legitimate question, therefore, to which no explicit answer can be found in the Constitution, we can, without strain, supply the following answer: the *only* kind of 'prayer of the Church' which is excluded as inadequate to define the nature of indulgence is that which is not conceived of as an act of her authoritative power.

3. Now the 'new' theory of indulgence has all along had this particular 'species' of the 'prayer of the Church' in mind when it has sought to define the nature of indulgence as a prayer of the Church for the remission of the temporal punishments due to sin in God's sight. Materially speaking, therefore, it does not run counter to the teaching of the Constitution. The exponents of this theory have never had in mind 'just any kind of' prayer of the Church.[26]

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[21] cf. K. Rahner, 'Some Theses on "Prayer in the Name of the Church"', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966) pp. 419-438.

[22] On this cf. the Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, Nos. 84, 85, 90, 98, 99.

[23] On this cf. D.S. 1695 and the well-known theological considerations on the anointing of the sick.

[24] This aspect too is of great importance. Where the object of the prayer is *certainly* salvific (this is generally not the case, but remains in doubt) it is far easier to conceive that the 'prayer' (as, for instance in the anointing of the sick) is identical with an act of the Church's *potestas auctoritativa*, as for instance in the case of a prayer (even of the Church) for fine weather, physical health etc. In the light of this alone it becomes clear that we must distinguish between the 'prayer' of the Church in indulgence and the prayer of the Church in the sacramentals. The commentator on the Constitution totally fails to perceive the real problem, therefore, when he suggests that the 'new' theory of indulgence is affected by the fact that a '*semplice preghiera deprecativa*' is ruled out in it. On this cf. p. 175-176, n. 17 and above all 18, p. 179, n. 25, and n. 26, where attention is drawn to earlier arguments put forward by the author. cf. also K. Rahner, 'Ablass', *L T.K.* I, 51, 'A Brief Theological Study on Indulgence', in this volume, pp. 150-165.

[25] Apart from the evidence adduced in n. 18 cf. also *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 185, 199; *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 433-435.

[26] In view of the evidence already cited or referred to this is indisputable. cf. also *L.T.K.* I, 51: 'The essence of indulgence, therefore, consists in the *special* prayer of the Church…' (italics by the author). Furthermore

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They intended to refer to a prayer in which the [180] Church, exploiting her nature to the full as *Ministra Redemptionis* (cf. the Constitution on Indulgence No. 8 norm 1) and as *Ecclesia ut unum Corpus Christo Capiti iuncta* (cf. No. 6) stands as intercessor on behalf of her member. They intended to refer to a prayer of a quite specific kind, one which of its very nature can be infallibly sure of being heard. It is this for four reasons: because of the indefectible and assured holiness of the praying Church[27] (though these attributes are certainly not present in the individual man), because of the task entailed by this very nature which she has to act as intercessor on behalf of her members,[28] because of the gift for which she is praying, which is certainly salvific in a positive sense[29] (this is something which we cannot know in the case of many other gifts which are prayed for), and because the pope, so far as his contribution is concerned, has given his authorisation to this prayer in the highest possible sense. It was emphasised by the exponents of this new theory – albeit in a different context – that such a prayer can actually be identical with the exercise of a supreme authoritative and sacramental power and also that in the case of indulgence it is capable of having the force of an *opus operatum*.[30]

A prayer precisely of *this* kind transcends the situation in which we have to opt between two alternatives, 'mere prayer' on the one hand and the act of a *potestas auctoritativa* on the other. And for this reason it is not excluded by the teaching of the Constitution. At most, therefore, it could be said that the Constitution rejects a particular interpretation of the 'new' theory which, however, even apart from its being rejected here, oversimplifies and falsifies the theory itself, and goes against its true meaning to an intolerable extent (indulgence = *any* kind of prayer of the Church). Already at this stage in our considerations, therefore, we can boldly put [181] forward the proposition that the Constitution and the 'new' theory cannot be proved to be irreconcilable.

4. This becomes still clearer when we explicitly remind ourselves of precisely why the 'new' theory seeks to interpret indulgence as a prayer of the Church (made with authoritative power and 'in itself' infallibly effective). Two principle reasons are assigned for this.

(a) If the indulgence *precisely as such* is conceived of as a prayer of the Church, but precisely as *prayer*, then the danger of misinterpreting the nature of indulgence is essentially diminished. It is all too easy to represent the effectiveness of indulgence in terms which are extremely mechanical and automatic. Often the role of the personal penance of the recipient of indulgence is reduced to a minimum and regarded merely as an *external* prior condition for its reception rather than as an *intrinsic* element and as a *concrete* measure of the objective way in which the gaining of the indulgence takes effect in its recipient. It cannot be contested that there have been, and that there still are, theologians who conceive of indulgence in these terms. It has still to be shown that their theories, so far from being demanded by the

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everything depends upon the actual manner *in the concrete* in which such a 'prayer' is understood and proves to be effective in the case of indulgence also. For a more precise statement of the theological nature of this prayer cf. especially apart from the references already adduced, K. Rahner, 'A Brief Theological Study on Indulgence', this volume, pp. 150-165.

[27] On this cf. the proof passages adduced on pp. 175-176, 178-179 and in nn. 17, 18 and 24-26. For further illumination on the theology of the subject cf. above all K. Rahner, 'The Church of the Saints', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore 1967), pp. 91-104; 'Church of Sinners', 'The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II', *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 270-294.

[28] cf. K. Rahner, 'A Brief Theological Study on Indulgence' in this volume, pp. 150-165; *idem*, *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 419 ff., *idem*, 'Why and how Can We Venerate the Saints?', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and Baltimore, 1972), pp. 3-23, *idem*, 'One Mediator and Many Mediations', *Theological Investigations* IX, pp. 169-184.

[29] cf. above p. 178, n. 24 with references.

[30] E. Schillebeeckx regards the essence of indulgence as consisting also in an 'assurance of the intercession of the whole Church given by the authorities of the Church' (p. 352), though admittedly he does not explain any further the specific character of this prayer.

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Constitution, are actually ruled out by it, if we understand it rightly and work out all its implications to the full. The misinterpretation in question is excluded right from the outset, however, if indulgence is understood as a prayer of the Church (of a quite specific kind), because however infallible a prayer made on behalf of another may be in itself, in its objective effectiveness *in the concrete instance* it depends upon the dispositions of that other. Furthermore these dispositions must also correspond to what the 'object' of the prayer is which the petitioner seeks to attain to in the specific case. There is a possibility here, therefore, of misunderstanding the act of the 'authoritative power' of the Church in a sense which is extremely dangerous for the practice of indulgence, the possibility, namely, of holding that this authoritative act is absolutely incapable of failing to achieve the ultimate effect which it is intended to achieve, provided only that on the part of him for whom it is intended a few conditions are fulfilled which are easy to fulfil and also easy to ascertain. Now in terms of our objective statement of the case and of our religious teaching, this danger is not sufficiently guarded against when we speak *only* of the *potestas auctoritativa* of the Church. Once this is realised we can speak easily and in terms which can be understood of the immediate, and not merely of the ultimate object of this prayer: of the grace which the Christian receives to perform his penance in a spirit of love[31] in order [182] thereby to attain to the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sins.

(b) Once we have recognised that the 'prayer of the Church', understood in the right sense, enters into the very nature of indulgence, this should have the effect of unequivocally ruling out one quite specific conception of what a 'jurisdictional act' means as applied to indulgence, a conception which, if it is not actually directly and explicitly ruled out by the Constitution, certainly forms no part of its teaching. The conception we have in mind is this:[32] that the indulgence takes effect simply and *only* in virtue of the fact that a specific part of the 'treasury of the Church' is assigned to an individual (*per modum solutionis*: the Church 'pays' what the sinner would have to pay), and this acts as a substitute for the *reatus poenae temporalis* which has been imposed by the justice of God in its purely vindictive aspect. This part of the treasury of the Church is simply bestowed upon the sinful individual provided only that he has no actual attachment to sin as *reatus culpae*, without him himself having to change anything else. Now precisely *this* conception of indulgence as being essentially jurisdictional is excluded from the outset once we admit the element of 'prayer'. For this prayer – authoritative, uttered in 'power' and in itself infallibly effective – is a petition on behalf of the repentant sinner for that grace which is necessary in order that he may more swiftly, more 'surely' and more happily overcome the 'reliquiae peccatorum' which are something more than a *mere* external debt of punishment conceived of in purely legalistic terms.[33]

At this point we arrive at questions which carry us beyond the problem of a 'terminological' discrepancy between the Constitution and the 'new' theory of indulgence and of how this apparent contradiction is to be overcome, and which bring us directly to a question which is central to the matter itself. Just as the purpose of interpreting indulgence as prayer of the Church is, properly speaking, twofold, so too here we are concerned with the problem of how precisely we should interpret the dispositions necessary for the effective reception of indulgence, and also with the question of how the blotting out of the 'temporal

[31] This exercise of penance under the power of grace is the immediate 'object', analogous in a certain sense to the *poenitentia interior* which constituted the *res et sacramentum* for Thomas, and brought about by the *potestas ordinis* of this sacrament. The blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sins, therefore, is the ultimate 'object', analogous to the *res sacramenti* in the sacrament of penance.

[32] It is found, for instance in L. Billot, cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 185, 191 ff., 199-200 with n. 14.

[33] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'A Brief Theological Study on Indulgence', in this volume, pp. 150-165.

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punishments due to sins' is more [183] precisely to be conceived of. This latter question in turn entails a consideration of what precisely these temporal punishments themselves consist in. Naturally these two questions are closely interconnected. But they must be treated of one after the other even though this procedure must inevitably be a laborious one.

V

1. The Constitution lays special emphasis upon the fact that in order for the indulgence to become objectively effective the recipient of it must have the right dispositions. And it treats of these dispositions in an extremely penetrating way, and far more fully than in previous official pronouncements of the Church on the subject of indulgence. In order to gain the indulgence the believer must be 'apte dispositus' and (cf. No. 8, norm 1) '*debitis dispositionibus praeditus*'[34] (cf. No. 10). A '*sincera metanoia et coniunctio cum Deo*' is demanded as a necessary prior condition (cf. No. 11). It is stated that for the most part the dispositions for a plenary indulgence can only be attained in a '*congruum temporis spatium*' (cf. No. 12) – certainly an insight which has hardly been given any emphasis in earlier teaching on indulgence. In norm 5 it is demanded as a condition for gaining a particular indulgence that the believer shall be '*corde saltem contritus*', though here it still surely remains an open question whether this is intended to refer merely to a necessary disposition or to an attitude which is already adequate from all points of view.[35] In norm 7 it is required that '*omnis affectus erga quodcumque peccatum etiam veniale*' shall be [184] excluded in order to gain a plenary indulgence. Certainly this is understood as a demand arising *ex natura rei*. Nevertheless one question still remains obscure, namely how – at any rate with the majority of Christians, for after all these are regarded as capable of gaining a plenary indulgence, this condition can be fulfilled in practical terms, even though it is stated in No. 3 that *all* men engaged in their earthly pilgrimage commit at any rate minor sins, and commit them every day.[36]

We must avoid adopting a line of thought which is impossible from the psychological point of view, and have due regard to man's real existential situation as it exists in ontological fact.[37] This means that we must recognise that man cannot suddenly, swiftly and at will change his attitude (this is something which, once more, would run counter to the ideas of the Constitution itself) from a sinful inclination on the one hand, or a total conversion on the

[34] The explanation of these dispositions put forward here in No. 10, namely love for God, abhorrence of sin, veneration for the communion of saints, is certainly of basic importance both in itself and as a prior condition for the gaining of indulgence. But it still leaves the question open of whether the conditions mentioned here are enough. We shall be able to answer this question in the negative, for in norm 7, to which we are just coming, it is made clear that more is demanded for a '*plena dispositio*' of this kind. On the whole question cf. K. Rahner, 'Disposition', *Sacramentum Mundi* II (Freiburg/London 1968), pp. 92-94.

[35] Ultimately we can answer this question in the negative. Even the justified who, as such, is *corde contritus* can undoubtedly entertain such an 'inclination' ('*affectus erga peccatum*' norm 7), so that as a result the possibility is excluded, so far as he is concerned, of any blotting out precisely of the *reatus poenae temporalis* with which he is still burdened in the concrete. On this cf. K. Rahner, 'A Brief Theological Study on Indulgence', p. 158 f. of this volume; *idem*, 'Sündenstrafen', *L.T.K.* IX (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1964), 1185-1187; *idem*, 'Ablass', *L.T.K.* I, 52 f. On the historical background cf. now E. Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 333-349 (Bibliography).

[36] In this we rely primarily upon D.S. 228 and *Lumen gentium* No. 40, where the most important passages for a Catholic understanding of the doctrine of *Simul justus et peccator* are to be found. On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 218-230; *ibid.*, p. 279 (with bibliography).

[37] On this cf. K. Rahner, *art. cit.*, pp. 225 f. etc. The whole range of problems involved is discussed in H. Reiners, *Grundintention und sittliches Tun* (Freiburg 1966) (with extensive bibliography, pp. 204-212 of the same work).

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other to the opposite attitude, from any *affectus erga quodcumque peccatum etiam veniale* to a total conversion or vice versa. We must recognise that the achievement of any such radical conversion cannot be conceived of otherwise than as a gradually maturing process (this is also important for any genuine understanding of what is meant by the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin). And if we do recognise this then we shall recognise also that, to say the least, such arduous and elevated dispositions are required in order to gain a plenary indulgence that they can surely be fulfilled only in a very few cases by the individual who is, and who continues to be, a sinner.[38]

[185] Now when we consider these statements in the Constitution with regard to the necessary dispositions for an indulgence to become effective, surely we can lay down the following conclusions:

(a) The necessity for such dispositions is emphatically insisted upon.

(b) It becomes clear, at least from norm 7, that a temporal punishment due to any given sin cannot be blotted out so long as any kind of *affectus* towards it still survives. Finally we shall have to conclude from No. 3 that in actual fact this is generally the case in the life of the individual Christian.

(c) In the Constitution the question of how the relationship between these necessary dispositions and the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin is to be conceived of in more precise terms is left completely open. As we shall have to show at a later stage, very different ideas can be arrived at as to what the precise nature of this relationship is. No particular position is adopted upon this question in the Constitution itself. And this means that it cannot be invoked *against* any particular interpretation of what this relationship consists of such as, for example, is assumed in the 'new' theory of indulgence. What is really meant by this in concrete detail can only be made completely clear in the sixth section of these considerations.

2. The questions of how we are to think of the 'dispositions' in the 'new' theory of indulgence, and how, on the basis of this, we are to conceive in more concrete terms of the relationship which they bear to the effectiveness of indulgence have still to be answered. But we shall be in a better position to develop these questions and to make them comprehensible in connection with the next topic which is to be treated of in the following section. For this question of the dispositions, and of the precise relationship they bear to the manner in which the indulgence is made effective, is most closely connected with the question of the actual temporal punishments due to sins, and how we are to conceive of these in more precise terms. But for this latter question (and the different opinions which theologians hold upon it) we shall have to refer to earlier presentations and to go into these fairly thoroughly. At the same time it is equally essential and unavoidable to repeat certain points here too, and to compare them with the teaching of the Constitution. This in itself is enough to serve as some indication of the subject which we have to treat of in the section which follows.

[186]

[38] In passing it may be noticed that norm 7 presupposes that if a plenary indulgence is not obtained by reason of some deficiency in the totality of the dispositions required, a *partialis indulgentia* will be gained. But in that case, according to norm 5 and No. 12 the extent of this would have to be conceived of in such a way that through the intercession of the Church as taking effect in the indulgence 'as much' of the temporal punishments due to sin would be blotted away 'as' the actual *work* of gaining the indulgence itself was capable of wiping away. But surely this must imply some limitation of the effectiveness of such a 'plenary' indulgence which has failed to attain its goal, which presumably represents a departure, to some extent, from the usual idea of this effectiveness as previously taught. Hitherto it was probably assumed that such an indulgence blotted out at least all the temporal punishments due to those sins which really were repented of. Did the theologians responsible for this Constitution really think out this question? In any case we see here also how arduous the dispositions are which are demanded as appropriate for the indulgence to become effective.

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VI

1. How does the Constitution conceive of the 'temporal punishments due to sins' and, *arising from this* – a point which is obvious – of the manner in which they are blotted out? The first point that strikes us as manifest is that in the Constitution there is no question of distinguishing precisely between the different terms which occur in this context. The term which is, of course, used most often is *poena temporalis pro peccatis* (cf. norm 1 and frequently), but side by side with this other terms too are used such as *poena*, this term being employed in a more basic sense than the German *Strafe* (punishment),[39] and implying everything that is hard to bear in the way of toil, pain, death etc. (cf. No. 2, No. 11); 'reliquiae peccatorum' (No. 3[40]; 7; 8); 'peccatorum sequelae poenales' (No. 3).

In our present context this variation in the use of terms is not unimportant. It is in itself sufficient to show that the Constitution appears to regard the 'painful' (*poena*) consequences of sin ('reliquiae peccatorum') as something that is *interior*, connatural and arising from the very nature of sin itself rather than as a punishment which has come to be attached to sin merely *ab externo* and *merely* imposed by the 'vindictive justice' of God, which would mean that it was also capable of being remitted by a mere external act on God's part. This point will become still clearer when we consider the arguments adduced by the Constitution for the existence of such *poenae temporales pro peccatis debitae*. They are presented not merely as imposed by the vindictive justice of God (this being conceived of according to the image of a judge imposing penalties in the context of social and civic life) as something that is supplementary, external to the sin itself and independent of those consequences which flow from the very nature of its guilt. Instead in the Constitution these *poenae temporales* are considered as the consequences of the sin itself, though naturally they also serve to manifest the holiness and sublimity of God, and in that sense also [187] have, or are capable of having, a vindictive character.[41] Even when a radical conversion has taken place in the sinner the temporal punishment due to sins can, and for the most part actually does, remain at first as a connatural consequence which, considered as the residue of the actual sins themselves (*reliquiae peccatorum*), is still not *ipso facto* removed even by the sinner's conversion. It is laid down (cf. No. 2; No. 3) that every sin causes a disturbance of the *ordo universalis* and constitutes an injury to the immeasurable benefits received by the individual and by the

[39] We would have to consider in greater detail the fact that the German term *Strafe* (punishment) and the Latin term *poena* are very far from being completely equivalent concepts, and from this point of view alone difficulties arise from the aspects of psychology and religious pedagogy. 'Painful consequences of sin' would be a more accurate translation of *poena temporalis pro peccatis*. In this we would need never for one moment to overlook the fact that these 'painful consequences of sin' are an expression and an effect of the justice and holiness of God, and that they can and must be experienced and interpreted precisely in *this* sense in faith. cf. also p. 183, n. 35.

[40] In this passage it is not made clear whether the '*vel*' between '*poenae*' and '*reliquiae*' is to be taken in an explicative or a disjunctive sense.

[41] Because these consequences of sin arise from the painful experience of running counter to the abiding nature of man and of the world in the concrete, these being created by *God* and being maintained by him in their nature as hostile to the decision of the sinner, it can and must also be said that according to this conception the *poenae* are '*a divina sanctitate et justitia inflictae*' (No. 2). It is easy to recognise that these two aspects and statements are not mutually contradictory from the fact that in the same context these *poenae* are given concrete expression as *dolores*, *miseriae*, *aerumnae hujus vitae*, *mors*, factors which are undoubtedly themselves connatural consequences of our own or another's guilt. One further point may be noticed here, namely that the concept of punishment as a connatural consequence of sin does not exclude the concept of an 'external' punishment, but rather includes it: human acts (even the most 'interior') are always brought to their fulness by being objectified in the 'world' (to which the physical side of the nature of the spiritual person also belongs). For this reason too all human activity necessarily experiences the 'repercussion' of this world with its concrete structures so that of its very nature such activity is always constituted as an indissoluble unity of action 'from within' (expression) and *at the same time* passion 'from without' (impression), *actio* and *passio*.

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human community as a whole.[42] These consequences of sin which achieve objective reality in the 'world', and which are painful to the sinner, are the concrete manifestations of the '*poenae temporales pro peccatis debitae*', and they are not *ipso facto*, necessarily or in all cases removed by the conversion of the sinner however radical this may be. For this reason these *poenae temporales* can also survive even after this radical conversion on the part of the individual, a point which the Constitution emphasises as a dogma of the Church, agreeing in this above all with the Council of Trent.

Now if we think out the full implications of these indications in the Constitution, if we realise that the *poenae temporales* are realised in the [188] concrete first and foremost in the *dolores*, *miseriae*, *aerumnae hujus vitae* and in death (cf. No. 2), then the conclusion which follows logically and inescapably from this is that the blotting out of these temporal punishments due to sins cannot be conceived of according to the conceptual model of an amnesty from a merely externally imposed punishment, a sentence which has so far not been carried out, and imposed by a justice which is, in its turn, external, vindictive and coercive. These injuries and distortions of the *ordo universalis* cannot be removed by a mere 'amnesty'. They must themselves be removed, though this can take place either more slowly and with greater difficulty or more swiftly and easily (cf. the '*citius*' of No. 5 and No. 10, the '*facilius*' of No. 9) according to the possibilities that are offered and the efforts made by the individual. This is the basis from which we must, in all logic, form our concept of how indulgences are made effective, and which still remains to be explored in its own right.

The idea of the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sins (whether with or without indulgences) sketched out above is based on what the Constitution itself has to tell us about the nature of these temporal punishments. It can now be seen to be wholly in line with the indications supplied by the Constitution. Certainly one point must be conceded with regard to the presentation in the Constitution itself. After a long theological development in No. 8 it arrives at the formal concept of indulgence as an '*auctoritativa dispensatio*' of the '*thesaurus Ecclesiae*' '*ad poenae temporales remissionem*'. It then proceeds to use this formal concept in its further developments without reflecting any further upon its own previous indications with regard to the nature of the punishments due to sins and how these punishments are blotted out. In other words it is not explicitly brought out what precisely are the *middle terms*, demanded by the very nature of these indications themselves, which link the authoritative interposition of the treasury of the Church by the Church herself (cf. norm 1, '*Ope Ecclesiae . . . quae . . . thesaurum . . . dispensat et applicat*') on the one hand with the actual blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin on the other, seeing that these latter must bring about a positive restoration of the *ordo universalis* in its full integrity. But the fact that this is not explicitly brought out does not prevent us from paying due heed to the indications supplied by the Constitution *prior* to the theological development in No. 8 with regard to the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin. We must not forget that these also have an application when it comes to the blotting out of such punitive consequences of sin precisely through indulgences. The purpose of these temporal punishments is defined as '*ad purificandas animas*' (No. 2), so that it still has to be concluded [189] that the soul would remain 'unpurified' if these punishments were simply remitted by nothing more than the 'granting' of an amnesty in the purely legalistic sense. It is laid down that according to the witness of the Fathers the aim of the prayer of the Church is

[42] Once we recognise that the gracious self-bestowing of God upon the world and its history, and at the same time the personal and physical nature of man are also to be reckoned as part of the *ordo universalis*, we can say in all freedom (even though the Constitution itself does not take this into account) that any violation of God's law and any personal offence offered to God, who wills to bestow himself in Christ through grace (these are aspects of sin which are emphasised in the Constitution), are, in a true sense, identical with, and *ipso facto* involved in this damage and distortion done to the *ordo universalis*.

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that the penitent shall be 'washed and purified' (cf. No. 6). Even the faithful in purgatory are described as members of the '*Ecclesia* (*se* ?) *purgans*';[43] in other words a punishment in the purely vindictive sense is not conceived of even in the case of purgatory. For such a punishment would simply have to be endured without having any saving or enriching effect upon the soul itself. It is laid down that the souls in purgatory '*purificantur*' (No. 3). In accordance with this in No. 11 *every* kind of blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sins (in other words through indulgences also) is qualified as '*sanctificatio et purificatio*'. A further point of importance is that the other 'means' of blotting out the temporal punishments due to sins mentioned in the Constitution cannot be reconciled, without the help of arbitrary and artificial devices, with any idea that this blotting out is a purely legalistic amnesty for a mere vindictive punishment imposed *ab externo* but still not carried out. These 'means' consist in an ever closer union with God and Christ (as head and body) in the unity of love,[44] though admittedly this can be achieved in the most divers ways (the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrament of penance, the scaramentals, works of devotion, penance and charity: No. 11). Even the temporal [190] punishments due to sins, therefore, are blotted out – whether through indulgence or without it – through that 'purification and sanctification' which takes place through the increase of that love which unites us with God in Christ and the Church. This is to be understood not as a mere 'sentiment' or attitude of mind, but as a power which gradually permeates the whole reality of man in his concupiscent and hitherto sinful nature, and orientates him to God.[45]

In the light of this conception of how the punishments due to sin are blotted out we can look *backwards*, as it were, and obtain a clearer view of the real nature of these punishments due to sin. This is a point which by this time has already repeatedly been made in contexts in which we reject a purely legalistic conception. On the other hand when we direct our gaze forwards it becomes clear precisely *how* we are to think of the blotting out of the punishments due to sin, including that which is achieved through indulgences. Indulgence too must be one of the ways in which the Church can contribute to bringing it about that an ever deepening love, and one which more and more integrates all within itself, is increased in the individual. It is a love which 'sanctifies and purifies', and *in this way* overcomes the 'temporal punishments due to sins' considered as the connatural consequences of the sins themselves. When, therefore, we think out the full implications of the indications supplied by the Constitution with regard to the punishments due to sin and the various ways in which these are blotted out, it becomes clear that in fact there is both a distinction (analogous to the

[43] cf. No. 10. The expression is somewhat strange, unusual and lacking in clarity, but this is inevitable in view of the reality with which we are here concerned. It would be better if we could speak of the *Ecclesia purganda* or the *Ecclesia se purgans*.

[44] cf. No. 11. In this connection it must, of course, be realised (even though in the treatment of indulgence in the actual Constitution itself there is no clear consideration of this point) that this love consists not merely in that initial and basic orientation to God which must necessarily be present in every true repentance (*corde contritus* Norm 5), and which removes the *reatus culpae* as such. More than this, this love must be understood as a love which in increasing measure subsumes the individual, with all the complex realities of his makeup, within itself and in *this* way blots out the *reliquiae peccatorum*. This precise point is plainly stated when it is explained in No. 11 that all the means of blotting out the punishments due to sins have this in common ('*hoc unum commune*'), '*quod sanctificationem et purificationem eo validius operantur quanto aliquis arctius Christo capiti et Ecclesiae corpori per caritatem conjungitur*'. This is also the basic pattern of the blotting out of the punishments due to sin through indulgence, and this not merely because what is being spoken of here is all the *subsidia* of the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin, but also because it is explicitly stated that the blotting out which takes place though *indulgence* too is subsumed under (*inseritur*) the *ordo caritatis* (No. 11). On this cf. K. Rahner, 'A Brief Theological Study on Indulgence', pp. 158 ff.; *idem*, 'Indulgences', *Sacramentum Mundi* III (Freiburg/London, 1969), pp. 123-129.

[45] For further investigation into this cf. especially K. Rahner, 'The Commandment of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 439-459.

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distinction between *sacramentum validum* and *sacramentum fructuosum* or that between *sacramentum* and *res sacramenti*) *and at the same time* a middle term between the action of the Church in granting the indulgence and the effective blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin in the recipient of the indulgence. This middle term is the increasing of love.[46] The act of the *potestas auctoritativa* of the Church in the indulgence, [191] therefore, is to be defined in such a way that it can contribute to this increase in love, and in such a way that it becomes comprehensible why and how it can do this. It is true that in its definition of indulgence (cf. No. 8, norm 1, norm 2, norm 5) the Constitution passes over this 'middle term'. But this is not surprising, and certainly cannot be adduced as a counter-argument against the existence and necessity of this middle term. The fact of the omission may perhaps be attributed to the further fact that it was never sought in the Constitution to take up any explicit position on a controversial question of theology. Alternatively it may have been the intention of the Constitution to formulate the meaning of indulgence precisely in the terms which have up to the present been traditional of a theology which fails to perceive, or even which denies, this middle term. But this does not mean that the Constitution itself identifies itself with any such denial. The omission of this is just as unremarkable as, for instance, in the case of a definition of a sacrament which passes over the significance of its character as *sacramentum et res*, and regards the sacramental sign and the ultimate sacramental effect as connected directly with one another without any middle term.

2. From this we can now see that the agreement, or at least the lack of contradiction between the Constitution and the 'new' theory of indulgence clearly goes far beyond what we have already established at an earlier stage, chiefly in section IV. The true pith and essence, the really central significance of the 'new' theory does not come to light so long as we reflect merely upon the key term 'prayer'. We shall only come to understand what is the really central point in the whole theory if we take as our starting-point not a juridical concept of the temporal punishments due to sins (after the model of the vindictive punishments imposed by the civil powers *ab externo*) but a genuinely theological, and so too a genuinely anthropological concept of what these punishments consist in. This also makes it clear how every blotting out of these punishments, and so too that achieved in indulgences considered as a means, really is subsumed (*inseritur* No. 11) under the *ordo caritatis*. We have already said enough on this point here and elsewhere, so that what has just been said does not need any further development or justification.

Once we have realised that indulgence has its due place in this sense in the *ordo* and the increase of that love which blots out sins and also the punishments due to sins, an apparent contradiction in the Constitution [192] itself is also removed. At one point (cf. No. 9) the Constitution states that through indulgence a closer union with God is attained to '*facilius*', in other words that the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sins takes place more easily through indulgence than apart from it. This is reminiscent of an idea which often occurs with wide variations in the common conception of indulgence, and which has undoubtedly played a major role in the practice of indulgence hitherto. In earlier conceptions of what indulgence means this 'easier' (and 'cheaper') way of being freed from the

[46] It is also clear that what is formally the same effect cannot have several formally distinct causes. But if (a point which no-one will contest) the increase in love is *one* way of removing the '*peccatorum sequelae poenales*' (No. 3), then it necessarily follows that according to a right understanding of the nature of love on the one hand and the basic and self-evident metaphysical axiom mentioned above on the other, that this way must be *the* way of diminishing the temporal punishments due to sin. All other '*rationes seu viae*' (No. 8), all '*subsidia*' (No. 11) of this process of blotting out, can be, understood merely as forms and expressions, or as various means by which this growth in love is achieved or made manifest. This applies to indulgence also. But the theologian must not confine himself merely to describing the material differences between these *subsidia*. He must also work out the formal identity of their cause.

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punishments due to sin is presented plainly and without any further preamble: the debt of punishment is conceived of as a reality which can exist side by side with *any and every* interior attitude or condition on the part of the individual who is in a state of grace ('dispositions'), including that particular disposition which is demanded as an external prior condition for the effective gaining of the indulgence. The indulgence itself is conceived to remove this debt of punishment (through something else being substituted for it from the treasury of the Church *per modum solutionis* without anything further being demanded beyond the 'dispositions' (the conditions for gaining the indulgence taken as a whole) already mentioned, even though these of themselves do nothing to remove the debt of punishment. In all this the individual concerned does not have to grow and mature in love amid the pains involved in this process of maturing. All this is implied in the common theory of indulgence. But if it is really the case, then admittedly the blotting out of the temporal punishments due to sin is indeed 'easier'. In fact it is even 'cheaper' than when it takes place in conditions of pain through the individual's own penance, in which love matures until it gradually subsumes the whole sinful and concupiscent being of the individual within itself and so 'purifies' him from the punishments due to sin.

Now against this Paul IV lays down in his Letter, *Sacrosancta portiunculae*:[47] '*Non est igitur indulgentia facilior via*…', but at basis the assistance offered by the mystical Body of Christ to the sinner in his weakness in order that he may really achieve that radical metanoia which still [193] always remains difficult. Indulgence, therefore, is not a *substitute* for the difficulties involved in the exercise of love, and it is not in *this* sense that it is the 'easier' way of blotting out the temporal punishments due to sin. Rather the indulgence is the assistance of the Church which supports the works of love, always difficult as these are, and precisely in *this* sense renders them 'easier'. The indulgence does not make it easier for the individual in the sense that it is a substitute for *that metanoia* which can actually in itself constitute a blotting out of the punishments due to sin, or in the sense that it takes the place of this *metanoia*. On the contrary it makes it easier for the individual precisely by demanding this same *metanoia* of him. The indulgence is not a substitute for the acts of love and penance in the concrete circumstances of the individual's life, but rather the assistance which he needs in order to perform these, and therefore it achieves its true purpose to the extent that these concrete exercises are brought to their fulfilment by the power of grace and through the free will of the individual concerned. If, therefore, on the basis of certain pronouncements of Paul VI, we have rightly interpreted the term *facilius* as used in the Constitution, then the apparent contradiction in it is resolved. But it does become apparent that even this explanation of Paul VI's only achieves its full force when it is taken in full earnest and accorded its due value on the basis of the 'new' theory of indulgence. According to the common theory of indulgence it can be said that through indulgence we can *devitare* the *necessaria peccatorum paenitentia*, at least in part, those penances, namely, which, were it not for the indulgence, we would have to perform in order to blot out the punishments due to sin. But even this point is contested by Paul VI. The 'new' theory states that indulgence is the assistance offered by the Church in order that the sinner may perform, and may fulfil more resolutely and more radically those necessary penances without which there can *never* be any blotting out of the temporal

[47] cf. *A.A.S.* 58 (1966), p. 632. In note 39 the Apostolic Constitution actually quotes this text: '*Iis vero christifidelibus, qui paenitentia ducti hanc "metanoian" adipisci nituntur, eo quod post peccatum eam sanctitatem affectant, qua primum baptismate inducti sunt in Christo, obviam it Ecclesia, quae etiam largiendo indulgentias, materno quasi complexu et adiumento debiles infirmosque sustinet filios. Non est igitur indulgentia facilior via, qua necessariam peccatorum paenitentiam devitare possumus, sed est potius fulcimen, quod singuli fideles, infirmitatis suae cum humilitate nequaquam inscii, inveniunt in mystico Christi corpore, quod totum "eorum conversioni caritate, exemplo, precibus adlaborat*" (Const. dogm. de Ecclesia *Lumen gentium* c. 2 n. 11)'.

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punishments due to sins. According to the common theory of indulgence indulgences and penance are – at least in part – two alternative means of blotting out the punishments due to sin set side by side for the individual to choose whichever he likes. So that the believer acts prudently when he avails himself of the first means, namely indulgence, because this way is simpler and 'easier'. According to the 'new' theory of indulgence indulgence is one 'means', namely the assistance of the Church, by which we can achieve the other 'means' (namely penance), this second being always, everywhere and without exception indispensable.

In the light of this a further difficulty can now be resolved which seems to tell against the 'new' theory (and also against the pronouncements of [194] the Pope quoted above). This is one and the same problem as that which is also to be met with again and again in the theology of the sacraments when we seek to bring 'sacramental' devotion and the 'existential' devotion which we achieve in the concrete individual circumstances of our lives into a genuine relationship one with the other – in other words when we reject the false conception of the *opus operatum* as a more comfortable *substitute* for the *opus operantis* and instead conceive of the *opus operatum* as the sacramentally effective sign of the grace of God precisely *in order that* the *opus operantis* may effectively be fulfilled in the concrete circumstances of the individual's life.[48] Certainly, on any true understanding of the 'new' theory we can make the following assertion: That state of soul in which, as the ultimate *effect* of indulgence, a specific 'measure' of the temporal punishments due to sin are blotted out (for the sake of clarity this 'material' or 'quantitative' way of speaking of indulgence cannot be avoided), has this same effect of blotting out even when no indulgence is gained, provided only that it is really present or is really achieved.[49] If we did not have to say this, then indulgence and sacrament would precisely be a substitute for the exercise of the free will in faith and love, and at basis we would be putting forward an impersonal, in fact a magical conception of sacrament and indulgence. We would no longer be in a position to say with Paul VI: '*Non est igitur indulgentia facilior via qua necessariam peccatorum paenitentiam devitare possumus*'. But this does not mean that indulgence and sacrament are rendered superfluous. They are, in a special way of their own, God's offering of grace ('a grace which is offered') made manifest in the act of the Church to make the act of belief more possible and to intensify it in the concrete circumstances of the individual's life, that act of belief in which man responds to, and so achieves, salvation (as 'a grace that has been accepted').

VII

This harmony or (at least) this lack of contradiction between the two conceptions of indulgence must be still further illumined by another point in the teaching of the Constitution, its teaching namely concerning the 'treasury of the Church'. In No. 5 the Constitution reacts sharply [195] against a material or unquantitative idea of the treasury of the Church: '*Non est quasi summa bonorum ad instar materialium divitiarum quae per saecula cumulantur*'.

To say this is neither so obvious or so superfluous as it might appear to a man of our own times. In the earlier theology of indulgence the question was explicitly raised – and solved again and again – of why this 'treasury of the Church' was not exhausted, especially as it was thought to be made up of the 'superfluous' penitential practices of holy Christians who did not need the benefit of these exercises for themselves, so that they were applied as

[48] cf. the references to more detailed expositions cited above, p 176, n. 18 and p. 179, no. 25.
[49] It is also important to recognise this in order to arrive at a right theological interpretation of what is meant by the new definition of a partial indulgence in No. 12 and in norm 5. However we cannot enter any further into this point here.

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indulgences on behalf of others in the manner of an individual payment made from a large general fund.[50]

The treasury of the Church is the one total Christ ('*est ipse Christus Redemptor*', No. 5) as head and members, upon whom, from whom and in whom God is gracious to the individual sinner. The doctrine of the treasury of the Church is, as is clear from the Constitution (No. 5), materially speaking identical with the '*perantiquum dogma*' of the '*communio sanctorum*'.[51] Now this interpretation of the 'treasury of the Church', if its [196] implications are freely thought out to the full, is very far from that interpretation of the meaning of indulgence which strives to overthrow the 'new' theory of indulgence. The 'treasury of the Church' is, in fact, not divided into small 'portions' (as the anonymous commentator in the *Osservatore Romano* still formulates it) in indulgences, and so distributed to the recipients of these. This point has already been emphasised, for instance, by P. Galtier, who certainly cannot be suspected of being a seeker out of novel movements in theology.[52] And in fact no-one can conceive of the matter in these terms either, who is really prepared to accept the full implications of the description of the 'treasury of the Church' in the Constitution. For this treasury is not anything which is susceptible of being divided into 'portions' and so distributed. It is applied to each in its entirety, for it is *ipse Christus*. This application, therefore, in which Christ applies himself through the medium of the *potestas* of the Church to the sinner, can only be subject to a finite limitation in the achieving of its ultimate effect because of the finite limitations of the recipient himself, because of his 'dispositions' with which he responds to this application and voluntarily attains to what is intended precisely under its *influence*.[53]

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[50] On the treasury of the Church cf. K. Rahner, 'Kirchenschatz', *L.T.K.* VI (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1961), p. 257 (with bibliography); *idem*, *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 182, 184 f., 193, 199 f.; *Theological Investigations* V, p. 428 f.; *L.T.K.* I, 52; *Sacramentum Mundi* III, pp. 123-129; '*A Brief Theological Study on Indulgence*', pp. 223-229; cf. the study by O. Semmelroth mentioned on p. 170, n. 11, 'Theologie des Ablasses', II. 'Der Kirchenschatz.' On the historical background cf. E. Schillebeeckx, '*Der Sinn der katholischen Ablasspraxis*', especially p. 343 with n. 58, 349. On the interventions at the Council on the subject of the concept of the treasury of the Church cf. the documents already cited above p. 168, n. 6. In this certain considerations put forward by Protestant theologians on the concept of the treasury of the Church are also particularly valuable, e.g. B. M. Lackmann, 'Überlegungen zur Lehre vom "Schatz der Kirche"', *Arbeiten zur kirchlichen Wiedervereinigung* (Graz 1965), pp. 75-157; P. E. Persson, 'Der wahre Schatz der Kirche', *Lutherische Rundschau* 17 (1967), pp. 315-327.

[51] It is striking that in the description of the 'treasury of the Church' the Constitution does not particularly draw upon or emphasise the value of the salvific deed of this Christ (made up of head and members) in terms of 'satisfaction' and precisely for the blotting out of the *punishments due to sin* as such. The treasury of the Church is simply Christ's deed of salvation (including the salvific works of all the justified to the extent that this has a salvific significance for all others). On this view of the treasury of the Church it would perhaps have been better to avoid the word '*dispensare*' (No. 8, norm 1) and perhaps to use the term '*applicare*' (norm 1) alone. 'Dispensare' does have too strong a connotation of a sharing out of this 'treasury' portion by portion. And this is precisely not intended. But can one *dispensare* that which is '*Christus ipse*'? At this point the problem of the theological terminology in the doctrine of indulgence becomes extremely acute. The Constitution passes over (and in the context with which it is concerned justifiably so) that question which is of such urgent importance for theologians and historians of dogma and theology, namely of why and how the concept of the 'treasury of the Church' has been arrived at and formulated, seeing that in the last analysis the reasons for it in the history of the theology of indulgence are quite secondary ones. Moreover at basis this term is very far from being necessary in order to express the reality it is used to signify, and constantly incurs the danger of those very misinterpretations which the Constitution guards against and actually has to guard against. cf. also p. 195, n. 50.

[52] cf. P. Galtier, *De paenitentia* (Rome, 2nd ed. 1950), pp. 517-546.

[53] This statement does not exclude the fact that – on the *analogy* of intercessory prayer made by an individual, which appeals to the *infinite* kindness and compassion of God – the intercession of the Church too also has, of its very nature, different *degrees*. In other words even prior to the question of whether the finite dispositions of the recipient are sufficient for the application of Christ to take effect the prayer of the Church itself is also finite and has different degrees. In the light of this, and taking a basic view of the matter, the distinction between plenary and partial indulgences (which is in itself possible) should not be rejected out of hand. The question must remain open here of whether this distinction is as important in terms of the concrete reality of Christian

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[197] In No. 11 the Constitution emphasises that Christians have a '*sancta et iusta libertas filiorum Dei*' either to gain indulgences or not to appropriate them for themselves. It emphasises that there is much else in the life of Christians considered as the working out of salvation which, by comparison with indulgences, is 'better' and 'more effective' because it is necessary. But, saving the teaching of the Church, this is not to make the actual objective existence of indulgences in the Church simply dependent upon the freedom of the children of God. Thus the all important point is rightly to explain the nature of indulgence, to assign it its proper place in Christian living as a whole, and to incorporate it into the *ordo caritatis*. Only in this way do the possibility and the hope remain that the Christians of today and tomorrow will maintain a living and personal attitude towards indulgence, or will acquire this anew, an attitude which can also be translated into practical works. We may properly doubt whether the usual scholastic theology of indulgence is suitable to achieve this.

The Apostolic Constitution makes us free to enter upon ways of achieving a better understanding of indulgence. Indeed it itself opens up such ways. Thus indirectly it supplies a fresh stimulus to oecumenical dialogue, and this too – in spite of all the obstacles that remain – should not be too lightly esteemed. When, for instance, the Constitution explains that Christ the Redeemer *is* the '*thesaurus Ecclesiae*', then it is taking over almost word for word elements in the early Lutheran theology of indulgence,[54] even though, when we come to interpret this definition more closely, we have to recognise once more that more profound differences make their appearance. On the basis of an *approfondisseiment* of the Catholic theology of indulgence it is possible to achieve a more balanced understanding of the theological position at least of the younger Luther.[55]

[198] But more than this, this *approfondissement* will have the effect of causing a discernible change in the situation as a whole, from one of endemic controversy to one of genuine dialogue.[56] In spite of numerous incontestable reservations[57] and points of detail in the papal Constitution which may seem inadmissible, it should not be forgotten that certain genuine and original principles of the Reformation have found official acceptance in a formal

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living as the conceptual difference seems at first sight to be. It has already been pointed out above that according to the Constitution itself it will not be easy really to gain a 'plenary' indulgence. The majority of 'plenary indulgences' are in fact probably only gained as 'partial' ones (cf. norm 7, second paragraph). In the case of the partial indulgence, if the conditions necessary for gaining it really exclude '*omnis effectus erga quodcumque peccatum etiam veniale*' (norm 7, first paragraph), and accord this withdrawal its real and radical force, then in practice this indulgence is really 'more perfect' because then that love is made real in it which in any case blots out all the punishments due to sin. A similar problem also arises in the case of the offering of Mass with regard to a limitation of the effectiveness of the Church's act. On this cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 436-438; but especially K. Rahner and A. Häusling, *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1966), pp. 51 ff., 56 ff., 75 ff., 80 ff. (Opus operatum and Disposition), 91 ff.

[54] In this context it is altogether noteworthy that Martin Luther, in his theses on indulgence (58th Thesis, 72nd Thesis with explanation) can repeatedly explain that 'Christ' himself is 'the sole treasury of the Church', 'that he himself is the true treasure'. For references and further details cf. P. E. Persson, '*Der wahre Schatz der Kirche*' (cf. n. 50), pp. 318 f.

[55] cf. also E. Iserloh, *Luther zwischen Reform und Reformation* (Munster, 2nd ed. 1967), pp. 30 ff., 41 ff., 56 ff. cf. also the judgment of Iserloh's (*Luther zwischen Reform and Reformation*, p. 40) on the theory of indulgence maintained by the younger Luther; H. Bornkamm, *Thesen und Thesenanschlag Luthers* (Berlin, 1967) pp. 48-60.

[56] cf. the words of H. Bornkamm on the contemporary situation in theology: 'They are still always the same questions to which Luther had already pointed. And it is most impressive to listen today to his objections against the doctrine of indulgence of that time coming from the mouths of Catholic cardinals and theologians. In a whole series of key points a clear agreement has been manifested with Luther's criticism in the ninety-five theses' (*op. cit.*, p. 61).

[57] Thus for instance we would still have to enter particularly into the problems of how indulgence is to be measured. On this cf. the position adopted by U. Semmelroth, *Zur Theologie des Ablasses*, Section V (cf. p. 170, n. 11), pp. 69 ff.

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document of the Church.[58] Not the least of the points with regard to this document which will be of concern to the theologians of the different Churches is that they must not let the good will for a critical reappraisal shown here fail, or the considerable potential of this beginning, modest certainly, yet encouraging too as it is, to be wasted.

[58] It should not be forgotten that, especially in the early and the main periods of the Middle Ages the differences in the practice and the teaching of indulgence were often startling in the extreme. On this cf. L. Hödl, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Literatur und der Theologie der Schlüsselgewalt* I (Munster 1960). The same findings appear in E. Schillebeeckx's article, '*Der Sinn der katholischen Ablasspraxis*', especially pp. 336 ff., 339, 346, 348 f.

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10

MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT

In the current scene both within and without the Catholic Church marriage constitutes one of the most popular topics of discussion. Admittedly in this, even in the case of discussions within the Catholic Church, it is only rarely that the discussion centres upon marriage as a sacrament. Here, however, it is precisely this question of dogmatic theology, however 'theoretical' and out of touch with current thought it may seem to be, that is to be treated of. This question and no other besides. For in fact that which has been forgotten, neglected and thrust into the background is still very far indeed from being less important than that which fills the columns of the newspapers and the Church's periodical literature, or even which has been made the subject of a papal commission. Perhaps it is not altogether useless from the 'practical' point of view too to enquire into what is, *precisely on a Christian understanding*, the heart and centre of marriage. What does it mean to say that married love is sanctified by God's grace? How does that which every marriage is in any case and of its very nature acquire new and deeper roots in virtue precisely of what takes place at the *sacramental* level? What part does marriage as understood in this sense play in the life of the Church at the level of theology and faith? Is it not necessary to view the institution of marriage once more in its theological and spiritual origins, seeing that at the deepest level it is on this basis alone that the concrete problems of life can be endured and solved? In the article which follows an attempt will be made to take a first step in this direction.

A valid marriage between two baptized Christians is a sacrament, one of the seven sacraments of the Church of Christ. In what follows we shall be exploring, to some extent, this straightforward statement which has been defined as part of the faith of the Catholic Church.[1] For in fact it [200] cannot be said that we have really understood this statement merely on the grounds that we 'know' about it in the sense that it strikes us as well-known and familiar, and to this extent is firmly rooted in the contents of our catechism, whether in its printed or unprinted form. The aim we have set ourselves is not directly or properly speaking to establish that this statement is contained in the 'sources' of revelation.[2] Nor shall we be defending it as a matter of theological controversy against the theology of the Reformation.[3] Here we shall only be attempting simply and straightforwardly to understand precisely *what* this statement really means and says. It is inevitable in the very nature of the case that in this we will have to concern ourselves with questions which are both extremely difficult and extremely obscure.

I

[1] cf. D.S. 1001, 1801. For a more detailed treatment on this (with bibliography) P. Adnès, *Le Mariage = Le Mystère chrétien. Théologie sacramentaire* (Tournai 1963), pp. 100-104; H. Rondet, 'Introduction à l'Étude de la théologie du mariage' = *Théologie, Pastorale et Spiritualité. Recherches et Synthèses* 6 (Paris 1960), pp. 97 ff., 175 ff.; H. Volk, *Das Sakrament der Ehe* (Munster 1952); M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV/1 (Munich, 6th ed., 1964), pp. 767-828; E. Schillebeeckx, *Le Mariage* I (Paris 1967).

[2] cf. also the manuals of dogmatic theology, e.g. in P. Adnès, *Le Mariage*, *op. cit.*, pp. 135 ff.; M. Schmaus, *op. cit.*, pp. 781 ff.; cf. also J. Michl and H. Volk, 'Ehe', *L.T.K.* III (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1959), 677-684; W. Molinski, 'Marriage', *Sacramentum Mundi*.

[3] This is set forth in P. Adnès, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 ff. (with bibliography); cf. also P. Althaus, *Die Ethik Martin Luthers* (Gütersloh 1965), pp. 88 ff.; O. Lähteenmäki, *Sexus und Ehe bei Luther = Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft* (Turku, 1955).

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We must begin by enquiring briefly into the nature of the *sacrament in general*. In doing so we are conscious of the fact that we are embarking upon a way which is, from the aspect of the history of dogma, as also from that of the methodology employed in this field, a dangerous one. For the general concept of 'sacrament' is – historically speaking and from the point of view of the subject matter itself – a subsequent abstraction which has emerged at a relatively late stage from those seven sacred realities which take place in the life of the Church, but which, when we compare them with one another, turn out to be of very different kinds. An ill-thought out application of this concept which has subsequently been abstracted from them, therefore, in which it is taken as an overall model which is capable only of secondary variations, can make it extremely difficult for us to perceive the real nature of the individual sacrament. However our only purpose in beginning with a consideration of sacrament in general is thereby to acquire an initial orientation. The significance [201] of it is that in a certain sense it makes sure that in our treatment of marriage as such certain definite aspects of it will not be able to escape our notice from the outset.[4]

The first point to be recognised about a sacrament is that it is essentially something that takes place in the *Church*, i.e. not merely something which the Church brings about, as it were, externally in the life of specific individuals, but an event in which the Church realizes her own nature and thereby 'actualizes' herself. A sacrament is something that takes place at that manifest level which belongs to the nature of the Church, not a 'private treatment' in which the Church merely collaborates in some way. This event has the force of a cultic manifestation, an objective symbol, a physical embodiment. It belongs palpably to the historical dimension of space and time, as well as to that of God's self-bestowal in grace upon man.[5] At the same time it also belongs to the nature of the Church which in Christ is the arch-sacrament, eschatologically victorious and indefectible, of precisely this same self-bestowal of God.[6] And finally it is also the free act by which this gracious self-bestowal of God is accepted by him who allows the sacrament to take effect in him, and by his act plays his own part in constituting it as such. In accordance with this we have to distinguish in the sacrament between the sign and that which is signified, between the manifestation and that which is manifested and which has a message to proclaim in hidden form in the manifestation. In the order of the physical person endowed with freedom as he exists in space and time, and in the order of the incarnation, both elements have a connatural relationship to one another, yet are not identical with one [202] another.[7] The sacramental sign proceeds from the will of God truly to save men, and from the nature of the Church as the arch-sacrament of the grace of God, eschatologically victorious and indefectible. And as rooted in these this sign always has an 'exhibitive' force as the effective and unconditional offering of

[4] For more precise details on the emergence of the general concept of 'sacrament' see G. van Roo, *De Sacramentis in Genere* (Rome 1957), pp. 1-61; J. Finkenzeller, 'Sakrament' III, *L.T.K.* IX (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1964), 220-225 (with bibliography). On the problem of the sacramentality of marriage in particular cf. P. Adnès, *op. cit.*, pp. 43 ff., 71 ff. (the Fathers), 89 ff. (the Middle Ages), 104 ff. (Post-Tridentine), 132 ff., 134 ff. (Systematic theology); H. Rondet, *op. cit.*, pp. 79 ff. (Middle Ages), 97 ff. (Trent), 145 ff., 153 ff. (Systematic theology); H. Volk, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-18; M. Schmaus, *op. cit.*, pp. 787 ff.

[5] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'The Word and the Eucharist', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 253-286. My reason for referring to my own works in the course of this article is to give the reader the opportunity to achieve a better understanding of unusual and difficult lines of thought in the context of the general theological system which I have worked out.

[6] On this K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg 1964), pp. 118 f., 121 ff., 132 ff. See also below, p.202, n. 7, 210, n. 20, p. 211, n. 21, n. 22 cf. in addition E. Schillebeeckx, *Christus Sakrament der Gottbegegnung* (Mainz 1960), pp. 17-95.

[7] Apart from the treatments mentioned in nn. 5, 6 with references, cf. on this also K. Rahner, 'The Church and the Sacraments', *Studies in Modern Theology* (Freiburg/ London 1965), pp. 206-215; *idem*, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I, pp. 323 ff.

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salvation by Christ and the Church. In this sense, then, the sacramental sign is *opus operatum*.[8] But since grace is only the event of salvation as brought about when it is accepted in freedom, and since this free acceptance can precisely be withheld by man, the sacramental manifestation of grace remains radically indeterminate *precisely from the human aspect*. It can remain an 'empty' manifestation. It can be an invalid or ineffective sacrament, or alternatively it can have the force of really being that 'exhibitive' word which carries what it expresses within itself, the word in which and through which that which it signifies takes place in very truth. Certainly this is far from being an exhaustive description of the nature of the sacrament in general.[9] But nevertheless certain aspects of it have been indicated to which we have to pay due heed in any consideration of marriage as a sacrament.

Marriage is a *sign*. It possesses this character prior to any theological consideration and prior to its bearing upon the relationship between Christ and the Church, because in itself it has a physical and social dimension of reality. Here we have the incarnation, as it were, the real symbol, the manifestation, the 'space-time' dimension, the expression of the most interior and most personal union in love of two individuals at the very roots of their being as orientated in freedom to God. Already here, then, we can perceive that difference and that unity in the elements which go to make up this sacrament inasmuch as this too is the sign at the physical and social level of a personal faith and love manifested in the appropriation of the grace of God as addressed to the individual in the sacrament. Considered purely in itself marriage already constitutes such a unity, in which the two elements remain distinct, of personal love, on the one hand, and its sign at the physical and social level on the other.[10]

[203] This sign, therefore, is both the 'other factor' in which and through which the personal love expresses itself, declares itself and makes itself manifest, and also, under certain circumstances, the *mere* sign which remains 'empty', deprived of its true basis, in which case it precisely does *not* carry with it what it signifies. Obviously this applies to marriage considered both as the sealing of a covenant and as the 'concluding of a contract' (as the canonists put it), and it also applies to married life as such. In both respects we can speak of the unity and the difference which exist between the sign and the reality signified.

II

For the present we shall still be remaining in this dimension of marriage in itself, without explicitly adverting to the precise *sacramental* significance of this sign. The question for us is, therefore, in view of what has been said, precisely *what* is made manifest in marriage in the dimension of the physical, of space and time, and of social living? Up to this point we have concluded that it is the most intimate and personal unity in love between two individuals (of different sexes). We must now see a little more deeply into what this statement signifies. Admittedly this could be achieved in various ways and at various levels. For instance that personal love which forges the most intimate possible unity between two human individuals would have to be considered in its own distinctive nature. Every word of this definition is capable of yielding the deepest insight into the meaning of marriage. Here three further specific aspects are particularly to be brought out: how this love relates to God, the process

[8] cf. K. Rahner, 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 109-133; *idem*, *Kirche und Sakramente*, pp. 22 ff.
[9] cf. G. van Roo, *op. cit*., pp. 62 ff., 82 ff., K. Rahner, 'Sakrament' IV, *L.T.K*. IX (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1964), 225-230.
[10] This is precisely what we mean when we use the term 'real symbol', cf. K. Rahner, 'The Theology of the Symbol', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 221-252.

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by which this personal love acquires fresh roots through that which we call grace, personal love as uniting us with the whole community of men.

1. We would have to begin by saying something about how this personal and unifying love relates to God. To do this we would have to give an account of the entire theological problem of the unity which exists between love of God and love of neighbour, of the relationship which we bear to God, and of our intercommunication among ourselves. And of course this is not possible here.[11] Love of God and love of [204] neighbour *mutually* condition one another, even if at first we do not explicitly reflect upon the fresh roots which both acquire through grace. Love of neighbour is not merely a moral task and a duty which is demanded by love of God. More than this, it is the means without which love of God, a right knowledge of God and of our true and total commitment to him, is quite impossible. The transcendental reference which man bears to God can only be realised to the full, can only be experienced for what it truly is and as such freely entered into, in the experience which we have through love of our neighbour. For the 'world' in and through which, according to Christian philosophy and theology, God can be 'recognized' is precisely in its ultimate depths, not merely our material environment, but first and last the world of personal interrelationships. Only one who has encountered this world as a matter of concrete experience, has accepted it in love and freely committed himself to it, can make real to himself and freely accept that transcendental orientation of the spirit in terms of knowledge and freedom, the ultimate basis and absolute goal of which is that Mystery upholding all and upheld by none which we call 'God'. It is this that makes it possible to realise what it is to be so orientated. In this context it is a question of secondary importance (in the light of what is ultimate) how far we succeed in arriving at a free and loving commitment to the world of personal interrelationships such that this involves, at least as something included in it, an experience of our own transcendence, and in this of God also. The question, in other words, of how we succeed in objectifying in conceptual and thematic terms, and setting out in propositional form, that orientation to God which we realise and accept as something that is included in our personal relationships. Even the atheist who truly loves makes experience in his love (provided only that it is what it must be) of God, whether or not he can express this to himself in his conscious thoughts or words.[12] Even in his case the absolute quality of personal love for the 'thou' of his fellow man utters a silent 'yes' to God. It has that quality of self-surrender which is achieved, and necessarily must be achieved, in love, and which can only take place provided that its basic origin and its ultimate goal consist in that which we call God. Or, to put the matter in another way, a love of this kind between human beings is based in its ultimate and connatural depths precisely upon this orientation to God. These ultimate and connatural depths of love consist in its power to attain to the other at the very deepest [205] and most ultimate levels of his personhood and his uniqueness. Thus there is a hope of the two beings as they actually exist arriving at what is ultimate and definitive in the existence of them both, and in a love of this kind this hope is positively affirmed. This too has its basis in the ultimate orientation to God as also has the basic faithfulness which such love involves.

2. Now this personal love, which creates the state of marriage as the mode in which to manifest itself, is in fact[13] in the present order of salvation sustained by the grace of God

[11] cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 231-249; *idem*, *Der eine Mittler und die Vielfalt der Vermittlungen = Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz. Vorträge Nr. 47* (Wiesbaden 1967), also Vol. IX of this series, pp. 169-184.

[12] For more exact details on this cf. the author's recent work, 'Atheismus und implizites Christentum', *Handbuch des Atheismus*, J. Girardi ed. (Munich 1967), also Vol. IX of this series, pp. 145-164.

[13] The character of this grace as unmerited is not destroyed by the fact that this *de facto* situation is inescapable. Nor can this be presented as a 'demand' arising from human nature as such at the purely natural level. On this

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which *always* imbues this love with its salvific power, exalts it and opens it to the immediacy of God himself. Now this can take place even before this love encounters the message of the gospel proclaimed and made known as such in explicit words.

We cannot here set out the special reasons for holding this. Instead we shall assume it as an application of a more general theological principle.[14] This can be formulated in the following terms: *in the present order of salvation a moral act that is truly positive* (‘*actus honestus*’) *is in fact also a salvific act* (‘*actus salutaris*’) *in the proper sense in virtue of the grace which always exalts it and which is offered always to every man by the universal salvific will of God*. This more general principle is, it is true, not universally accepted in Catholic theology. Nevertheless in different forms it has already been maintained in it for a long time, for instance by Vasquez and Ripalda,[15] and materially speaking should certainly be accorded recognition as a prolongation of what the Second Vatican Council teaches with regard to the possibility of salvation for the non-Christian and the inculpable atheist.[16] Doubts have been cast upon, or opposition offered to this principle hitherto by theologians only because they were incapable of rightly appreciating how it is possible, outside the sphere of the *explicit* preaching of the gospel, for that true faith to exist which is necessary for salvation, and also for a salvific act in the true [206] sense to be posited. But if, for reasons which cannot be treated of here and now,[17] we accept the fact that revelation, and therefore faith too, can also be granted to him who has not been touched in any direct sense by the historical message of the Old or New Testaments, then neither the general principle already mentioned nor its particular application to the special question we are considering here continue to constitute any insuperable difficulty. In other words we can say: in the order of salvation as it *de facto* exists there are no merely ‘natural’ moral acts on man’s part. These acts are *de facto*, when they are posited at all, also upheld by grace and supernaturally orientated to God in his direct act of self-bestowal, and indeed are already in themselves acts which have been made possible by this self-bestowal even though this has not become objectified or explicitated in terms of man’s own conscious awareness.

The situation as set forth above applies primarily to the love between human beings where this is made real in the form of a personal and selfless union between two individuals. But this means: *genuine love is* de facto *always that theological virtue of* caritas *which is sustained by God himself through his grace*. In this virtue love is extended to both God and man both in a mutual interrelationship and according to their respective conditions *in such a way that in this relationship the lover achieves his salvation in the event of justification. In this salvation of his he wills salvation for the other also, and in both God is attained to immediately as this salvation in person*. The human love of which we are speaking here, therefore, ‘intends’ God not merely as a transcendental (not explicitly objectified) origin and goal in his infinite remoteness, but rather attains to God in that absolute proximity in which he imparts his own self – and not in the form of any merely creaturely gift – as the innermost mystery and life of man. In virtue of the fact that it is *caritas*, therefore, this love is also the event of the loving self-bestowal of God upon us which alone empowers us to love God and man. *Caritas*, therefore, is the event of the love of God for us and of our love for God taken

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cf. the author’s article, ‘Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace’, *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore 2nd ed. 1965), pp. 297-317; ‘Nature and Grace’, *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 165-188, cf. also p. 219 n. 37.

[14] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Zur Theologie des Todes* = *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 (Freiburg[5] 1965), pp. 79 ff., 85 ff.

[15] On this cf. Patres Societatis Jesu in Hispania professores, *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* III (Matriti, 3rd ed., 1956), pp. 516-512 (bibliography).

[16] More precise details are provided in the study referred to on p. 204, n. 12.

[17] Apart from the article referred to on p. 204, n. 12 cf. K. Rahner (with J. Ratzinger), *Revelation and Tradition* = *Quaestiones Disputatae* (London 1965), pp. 9-25; *idem*, *Zur Theologie des Todes*, pp. 80 ff.

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as a unity. Unfortunately here we must forego the attempt to translate this statement, which has been made in very abstract terms and on the basis of theological data, as it were into phenomenological terms and to express it as an existential and ontological fact. In this way, and on the basis of the experience of this radical love in itself, we could show that these theological implications of the nature of [207] love are actually present in it, or at least we could demonstrate the possibility of this.

3. But this love signifies at the same time a unity with mankind as a whole also. This needs to be shown from various aspects. We are accustomed to attribute to married love the character of a special intimacy and exclusiveness in relation to others outside the married partnership itself. We actually go so far as to regard these qualities as constituting what is special in married love as opposed to other forms of love such as love of neighbour in general, comradeship, friendship etc.

Now we do not for a moment intend to deny that married love has this character. Certainly it is consonant with the nature of married love. Nevertheless we ought to ask ourselves precisely *whence* the character of this somewhat startling exclusiveness derives. Is it based upon the ultimate nature of this personal love or are there *also* less basic reasons for it which have to do, rather, with the concrete physical forms and manifestations of this love as these are limited by space and time? Or can it even be that still further determining factors in this exclusiveness are the cultural, social and sociological factors of human living? In other words are some of the factors which go to determine this exclusiveness susceptible of alteration?[18]

But in any case it must be of service to point this out, if only because of the fact that it would be false if we sought to understand married love from the outset as an act of withdrawing behind closed doors where the two partners are isolated from the rest, for this would be, at basis, an egoistical state. Marriage is not the act in which two individuals come together to form a ‘we’, a relationship in which they set themselves apart from the ‘all’ and close themselves against this. Rather it is the act in which a ‘we’ is constituted which opens itself lovingly precisely to *all*. This aspect of the basic essence of such love ‘appears’ already in the very fact that those united by married love themselves already come from a community. In their love they do not abandon this – indeed they must not abandon it. And their love becomes fruitful in the child that they produce, which for its part in turn must not become enclosed within the ‘we’ relationship, but must be set free to enter into the wider community of the [208] ‘all’. Married love, therefore, is, even in respect of its concrete physical forms, a source of, and an initiation into a wider community, and must therefore itself also intend this right from the outset.

This idea needs to be still further deepened. Married love cannot be so intimate and exclusive that it ceases to be love at all. Now of its very nature it is love only when it does not exclude, but rather opens itself to and includes, when it really commits itself ever anew to that which is strange in the other even before it has explored and seen into it; when it trusts itself without condition to accept that which is really ‘other’ in the beloved as its own (which, in fact, must also constantly be taking place in the intimate partnership of the marriage itself). In the *specific* love for the *concrete* individual man must precisely *experience* what ‘love’ is in general. He must experience that this is possible really as love and not as flattery, behind which, contrary to all appearances, only egoism and self-assertion lie concealed, in order that he may be able to trust himself in his relationship with the other. But then when he has achieved this his love must not be smothered by both the married partners becoming egoistical to all others. They must not seek to use their mutual love so as to justify a position

[18] From this point of view we would have to concern ourselves with certain aspects of the ‘crisis’ in marriage as this is defined principally by sociologists. It is only by ridding our minds of certain specific patterns of marriage which have arisen in the course of social history that the true essence of Christian marriage can be established in its pristine force.

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in which they precisely do *not* love others. They must maintain an openness to all, however much their finite powers and possibilities may in fact impose limitations upon them in this.

Married love too is a readiness, an exercise, a promise and a task, to *love* man *in himself* – something which is more than merely 'respecting' him, merely giving him 'his due' instead of being ready again and again to trust him with one's *self*, to commit one's self to him 'with one's whole heart and with all one's resources'. We are always in debt to all, often, perhaps to those most remote from us even more than to those who are closest. Marriage is the concrete state in which we begin to pay this endless debt, not a dispensation from this endless task which can only be fulfilled by God's help.

A further aspect must now be added to what has just been said. That grace which, as we have seen, sustains married love and renders it open to God in his radical immediacy is the grace of a covenant, which constitutes the innermost dynamism of the world and of the history of mankind in its unity. It is a grace which establishes the one dominion of God over all. So individual a grace, which, in its ultimate depths, is God himself, is directed to the individual in his uniqueness, and this is true however much it may also be the case that, while never ceasing to be this, it is at the same time an 'universal concrete', a unifying grace through which the individual is intended precisely as *belonging to* the *unity* of mankind, as having a place [209] in the people of God.[19] This is not surprising. For the true uniqueness of the existence of each particular individual consists, if it is genuinely to be brought to its fulness and not to lead to an egoistical self-gratification of one's own 'personality', in the unique singleness with which one actually *loves* all. If grace is in this sense the event in which God becomes, for the particular individual, *his* God, it is also, and precisely in virtue of this, the event in which grace not only breaks out of the bonds of egoism in a 'moral' sense and, so to say, at the external level of man's life, but does so in such away that thereby man is *set free* to transcend the possibilities of his own nature and to attain to *that* infinitude of the freedom of God in which *all* are comprehended in love from the very roots of their existence, and in God can actually be loved in this way even by the creature.

Married love, therefore, is – in spite of, and in its intimacy or exclusiveness – of its very nature and on the basis of the grace of God which sustains it, a state in which we achieve union with mankind, impelled as it is by the selfsame grace. It follows, then, that right from its very origins married love, if its true nature is really attained to, also constitutes a relationship with God, an event of grace, a loving concord with that basic movement in which, through grace, mankind considered as the people of God arrives at the unity of the kingdom of God.

Marriage, as we have said at the outset (I), is the physical manifestation, the sign, the real symbol and the embodiment of this married love, which achieves reality through this manifestation of itself. Marriage – this is what we now have to conclude – is the sign of *that* love which is designed in God's sight to be the event of grace and a love that is open to all. Yet even this insight is still only at the provisional stage in its development. The actual structure of 'sign' in itself has now to be examined more precisely, and that in its *sacramental* character. To accomplish this we shall first compare the sacramental structure of the Church and of marriage in general.

III

[19] Attention has once more plainly been drawn to this aspect in the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (Chap. I-II).

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What has just been said about marriage considered as a 'real symbol' of the love which has thus been specified can now also be asserted of the *Church*. Of course in drawing this parallel we have to maintain the force of the distinction which exists between the individual (or a few individuals) [210] and the community made up of all. But this distinction as applied to mankind is not *ipso facto* the same as that between a unity merely in the numerical sense and a numerical multitude. The mutual relationship which exists between the individual and mankind as a whole is different from this. In every individual man everything is present (*homo quodammodo omnia*), and the whole achieves a unique manifestation of itself in each particular individual. The community of mankind for its part is not the agglomeration of the many – all too many, but the unity in love of those, each of whom is unique in his own right, a love which sets each free for his own, which assembles all this and so once more unifies it. In the light of this it is not surprising that we can make the same assertion about the Church *and* about the individual, the more so seeing that even from the point of view of the individual it is a genuine community that is in question.

Allowing, therefore, for the general differences in the relationship which the individual bears to the community and that which the community of all taken together bears to the individual, we shall put forward the following proposition: the same 'sign' function which is found in marriage is also present in the Church. For the Church is, in Christ, the arch-sacrament, the basic sacrament: in him the love of God for mankind in his act of self-bestowal achieves its historical manifestation through grace in the loving unity of mankind.[20] In this parallelism which exists between the 'sign' function in marriage and in the Church respectively, one further particularly noteworthy element, as well as a difference which will be of importance in our later considerations, must be brought out. The special aspect in this parallelism is the following one. We have said that in marriage a difference exists between the sign and that which is signified, between the marriage as it exists at the physical and social level and married love. This difference can be so far-reaching that in the individual case the two entities – even though this is against the mutual relationship which is connatural to them – can actually be torn apart. The same is also true of the Church. Here too the sign ('Church as basic sacrament') and the reality signified are not simply identical. For what the Church points to is not herself. Rather as sign, i.e. as a socially organised community constituted by a common creed, a common cult and common works of charity, she is precisely the sign of that humanity, consecrated and united by grace (in interior faith and justification), the grace-given unity of which [211] extends far beyond the social organism of the Church.[21] On the other hand a further and more essential distinction is to be found within this common difference: the 'sign' function in the case of a particular marriage can sinfully be degraded into a lie when that which it is intended to manifest and to render present is not present in itself, namely the love that is grace-given and unifying. In the Church as a whole the intrinsic connection between sign and reality signified can no longer radically be destroyed in virtue of the eschatological victory of grace in Christ. Nevertheless the basic parallelism between marriage and the Church continues to exist. The following proposition applies just as much to the Church as it does to marriage: she is the sign, at the palpable level of historical and social human life, of the fact that *that* love is being made effective and victorious throughout the whole of humanity which is the love of God for us and of us for God, the love which comprehends and unifies all so long as no-one sinfully denies it.

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[20] On this cf. J. Alfaro, 'Cristo, Sacramento de Dios Padre. La Iglesia, Sacramento de Christo Glorificado', *Gregorianum* 48 (1967), pp. 5-27; P. Smulders, 'Die Kirche als Sakrament des Heils', *De Ecclesia* I, G. Baraúna ed. (Freiburg 1966), pp. 289-312; *idem*, 'Sacramenten en Kerk', *Bijdragen* 17 (1956), pp. 391-418.

[21] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoral Theologie* I, pp. 121 ff., 132 ff.; *idem*, 'The New Image of the Church', pp. 3-43, esp. pp. 12-25 in this volume.

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We cannot develop any further the doctrine of the Church as the basic sacrament of salvation (and therefore of that love which is salvation) at this point.[22] Here we must be satisfied with what has already been said, since what we are concerned with is the parallelism between marriage and the Church. When we compare the Church with marriage we are thinking of the Church simply as she is, the Church who is what she is simply in virtue of the mutual love between her and Christ. But while Christ is in this sense included, at the same time it is not *merely* a summary description when we say simply 'Church'. For she is also the basic sacrament of grace and of the love which unites us all precisely in virtue of the fact that in her a *social* unity of truth, hope and love is brought about among men in themselves. This aspect belongs just as much to her character as basic sacrament as her unity with Christ which she expresses in creed and cult, and which thereby constitutes the manifestation of her unity with Christ in the *pneuma*.

Indeed we can actually make bold to proceed a stage further: the unity of the Church which she presents as the model and basis for the unity of marriage – in the dimensions of the sign and of the reality signified alike – is, nevertheless, so far as that precise aspect is concerned which we are considering here, *de facto* constituted through the love of men in the Church and the manifestation of this at the level of social and communal [212] life. But this love is not something that belongs to another dimension altogether, but rather precisely that same love which unites married spouses - including all that deeper theological dimension which belongs to it. But in that case we can also say: *the love that unites married spouses contributes to the unity of the Church herself because it is one of the ways in which the unifying love of the Church is made actual. It is just as much formative of the Church as sustained by the Church*. The term 'Church-house', signifying the sort of local Church which is constituted by a family unit, is more than a mere pious image.[23]

This correspondence and parallelism between Church and marriage, therefore, is not merely an external similarity between two entities each of which exists on its own and independently of the other. On the contrary the conformity between the two is due to the fact that both have a common root. For marriage as such is, taken as a whole, the manifestation which is creative of *that precise* love which, as the love of God and for God in the divine act of self-bestowal, is constitutive of the union of mankind with one another and with God, and constitutive too of the basic sacrament of this which is the Church. In this we must not overlook the fact that the Church and humanity as made manifest, sanctified and unified in her are in no sense mythical entities but precisely those concrete individuals in themselves who love God and love in God, and give their intrinsic unity a manifest expression in the dimension of history in the unifying society that is the Church.[24]

Now let us see what happens when, on the basis of this fundamental conformity marriage takes place precisely in the sphere of the Church. It becomes precisely that which we are seeking to express when we explain that it is a 'sacrament'. In the light of the principle we have laid down this statement acquires the force not merely of a principle which we already know and understand. Rather this principle only truly becomes intelligible to us in the truths which it itself is intended to express, so that it is no mere abstract concept of sacrament which is applied to the institution of marriage *ab externo*. We must now attempt to clarify this point.

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[22] On this cf. the studies quoted on pp. 201, n.6 and 7 and p. 210, nn. 20, 21. In addition, K. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 193-201.

[23] On this cf. the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, No. 11. This passage deserves greater attention, and not merely in the context with which we are here concerned.

[24] On the concrete problem thereby entailed cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 289 ff.

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IV

Two baptised individuals voluntarily bind themselves in marriage. In this something takes place in the Church too. Here we do not need to adopt the approach of canon law, or to ask what precise conditions are required by the divine or human law upheld by the Church and from the nature of the case in order that such a bond of marriage (let us not call it a 'contract'!) may take place precisely *in* the Church and in the context of her life as a 'visible society'. But at basis all this is already given in virtue of the fact that it is two baptised individuals that are involved, and a marriage between them, something which always has a social relevance. Because married love has the character of a pointer and a sign, marriage itself is never a mere 'worldly affair'. For this love itself is no worldly affair, but rather the event of grace and love which unites God and men. When a marriage of *this* kind, therefore, takes place in the Church, it is an element in the process by which the Church fulfils her own nature as such, one which is brought into being by two baptised Christians who, through their baptism, have been empowered to play an active part in this self-realisation.[25] As baptised, therefore, they act in a manner which is precisely proper to the Church herself. They make manifest the sign of love in which *that* love is visibly expressed which unites God and men.

Now when the Church achieves the fulness of her own nature in this way precisely at this *essential* level, making it effective in the concrete and decisive living situation of a human individual, there we have a sacrament.[26] In that case there is no need for this purpose of any *explicit* words of institution uttered by Jesus (we could never establish as a matter of historical fact that he ever uttered such words, nor is it even probable that he did so), such as for instance are to be found in the case of the Eucharist.[27] The 'word of institution' in this case consists in two factors: on the one hand in the fact that the religious relevance of marriage is acknowledged and that it is recognised that this too is something that is achieved through the word and the deed of Jesus himself.[28] It also consists [214] in the fact that marriage has been instituted by the Church as an eschatological sign of salvation for the kingdom of God (considered as the absolute proximity of God to man) until the end of time.[29] On the other hand marriage itself and of itself carries with it its own profoundly significant theological dimension.

Those theologians who invoked the support of Eph 5 for the sacramental nature of marriage were unable to perceive this point clearly. And because of this there has always been a certain embarrassment about this theology which, ultimately speaking, proves to be utterly unnecessary. For the saying from Gen 2:24 which is quoted in Eph 5 appeared to raise marriage *in general* – not merely that between Christians – to a sign of the unity between Christ and the Church, and it was believed that this could not be conceded without difficulty. In reality this is perfectly possible if we think out exactly the full implications of what we have said with regard to the character of marriage as a sign referring to married love and the special theological dimensions belonging to this. In Christian theology, in fact, we certainly do not have to maintain that a sacramental marriage is related to a non-sacramental marriage

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[25] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I, pp. 146 ff., 151 ff.; *idem*, *The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 269-272, 289-294.
[26] cf. K. Rahner, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I, pp. 323-332; *idem*, *The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 202 ff.
[27] On these problems cf. K. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 258-264, and M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV/1, pp. 75 ff.; E. Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 ff.
[28] On this cf. the brief survey by J. Michl, 'Ehe', *L.T.K.* III (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1959), 677-680 (bibliography); P. Adnès, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-42; M. Schmaus, *op. cit.* pp. 781 ff.; J. Dupont, *Mariage et divorce* (Bruges 1959); P. Grelot, *Le couple humain dans l'Ecriture* (Paris, 2nd ed., 1964); cf. also pp. 210, nn. 34 and 35.
[29] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 295-312.

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as a sacrament to a purely secular human activity. On the contrary both are related to one another as the *opus operatum* to an *opus operantis*, and this latter too is wholly an event of grace.[30] The order in which the one stands to the other here is similar, for instance, to that relationship which a sacramental forgiveness of sins bears to a non-sacramental one achieved merely through repentance. For this too takes place as the outcome of grace and in grace.[31] Marriage does not become an *event of grace* only at that stage at which it acquires the status of a 'sacrament'. On the contrary the event of grace in marriage becomes a *sacramental* event of grace as *opus operatum* in those cases in which it takes [215] place between two baptised individuals in the Church. The case here is exactly as with the faith which justifies of itself even *prior* to baptism, and which then becomes *opus operatum* in baptism.[32] Up to the present, if I am not mistaken, there has been a strange naiveté among theologians in their approach to marriage in that that distinction and that unity which is familiar to every theologian in the case of faith – baptism, penance - sacrament of penance has not consciously been worked out and applied here. In the two former cases the grace-given event of justification is initiated not merely at the moment when the sacrament as such is conferred, but already prior to this at the stage of faith and repentance. *On the other hand* in the dimension of historical manifestation as such this sign only acquires the character of an *unconditional* pledge of grace from God, in other words that of an *opus operatum* and so of a 'sacrament', when it takes place in the Church and takes its place in the concrete in the context in which such a pledge acquires its historical manifestation. This is the Church herself considered as basic sacrament. When a marriage takes place between baptised people in the Church it constitutes an element in the Church's role as basic sacrament, so that the parties actively share in and contribute to the Church's role as basic sacrament, for both give manifest expression to the unifying love of the grace of God, and a marriage of this kind between them achieves this precisely *as* an element in the social unity of the Church herself. Now because of this the marriage as an event of grace gives rise to a 'sacramental' event of grace in which this sign actively contributes to the irrevocable manifestation of God's pledge of grace to mankind, that pledge which is constantly in force and of which God himself never repents. And this manifestation is nothing else than the Church herself.

On the basis of this conception of the 'institution' of this sacrament we can now proceed more freely to evaluate the findings of dogmatic tradition with regard to the doctrine of marriage as a sacrament. We do not need to force the evidence here so as either to postulate or to construct for ourselves any explicit doctrine hypothetically supposed to have existed right from the outset, in which marriage would always have been considered as a 'sacrament' and as such subsumed under a general concept of sacrament. The less we make use of any such idea – so long as we still understand and experience the 'sacramental' nature of a sign of salvation in the Church – the better it will be. When, therefore, we find this also confirmed by the [216] dogmatic tradition we should regard this as neither surprising nor shocking.[33]

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[30] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 114-133; *idem*, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I, pp. 330 ff.; *idem*, *The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 206-215 (supplement with A. Häussling); *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* = *Quaestiones Disputatae* 31 (Freiburg^2 1960), pp. 208-253.

[31] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'The Meaning of Frequent Confession of Devotion', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore 1967), pp. 177-189; *idem*, 'Die Priesterbeichte', *Knechte Christi. Meditationen zum Priestertum* (Freiburg 1967), pp. 208-253.

[32] Apart from the studies already mentioned in n. 30 cf. K. Rahner, 'The Word and the Eucharist', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 253-286; *idem*, *The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 269-272.

[33] On the dogmatic tradition of the sacramentality of marriage cf. especially P. Adnès, *Le Mariage*, pp. 43 ff., 71 ff., 76-110; H. Rondet, 'Introduction à l'étude de la théologie du mariage', *op. cit.*, pp. 11-135; E. Schillebeeckx, *Le Mariage* I (Paris 1967). The principle we are stating here could also be taken as the starting-

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point for a new oecumenical approach. Many Protestant theologians maintain that marriage is not indeed a 'sacrament' but is, nevertheless, a *sanctum*. (Thus, for instance E. Brunner.) In view of this, and setting aside all polemical attacks against an alleged Romish 'sacramentalism' – which, however is based upon a wrong interpretation – the question has still to be raised whether a serious discussion, or even a mutual enlightenment is not possible on this point, to the extent that from the Catholic side we understand how rightly to interpret the sacramentality of marriage. In any case we should not simply apply to it a general and abstract concept of 'sacrament'. This procedure is adopted, for instance, by M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* IV/1, pp. 803 f., 806 f., and probably also by K. Mörsdorf, *Lehrbuch des Kirchenrechts* II (Paderborn, 10th ed., 1960), pp. 238-249; cf. also *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 9 (1958), pp. 241-256, esp. 248 f. These authors believe that they have to evaluate the function of the presiding priest in dogmatic terms, and so to treat of marriage in a way which is exactly parallel to the treatment appropriate to the other sacraments. K. Mörsdorf enters quite explicitly into the question with which we are concerned in his article 'Der ritus sacer in der ordentlichen Rechtsform der Eheschliessung', *Liturgie. Gestalt und Folgzug. Festschrift für J. Pascher*, W. Dürig ed. (Munich 1963), pp. 252-266, esp. 265 f. Mörsdorf sees an intrinsic connection between the marriage liturgy and the juridical form of marriage, with the result that he posits the closest possible relationship between the solicitude to ensure the juridical validity of marriage, and the activity of the Church in her function as mediator of salvation. Mörsdorf regards the more recent history of the Church's practice in the case of mixed marriages (especially as a result of the decree *Ne temere* of 1907) as the expression of the Church more and more realising her own power with regard to the forms by which marriage is validly celebrated. In this, according to Mörsdorf's own interpretation, the fathers of the Tridentine Council were not yet able to attain to this realisation. The active assistance of the priest in the liturgical sense is raised to the function of the priest as an active contributor (*pensona agens*), so that the 'collaboration of the priest presiding over the marriage is an essential element in the performance of the sacramental sign' (*op. cit.*, p. 266). Mörsdorf is followed in his views by his pupil, G. May, *Die kanonische Formpflicht beim Anschluss von Mischehen* (Paderborn 1963), p. 42. At this point we shall not undertake any investigation of the historical aspects of this problem, even though these continue to be of decisive importance (the function of the marriage customs and rituals in the early and main periods of the Middle Ages, the interpretation of the decree *Tametsi* etc.). Nor can we examine the ways in which Mörsdorf and May use the concepts of 'passive' and 'active' 'assistance'. Nor do we propose to challenge these authors on the question of whether, and to what extent, the Church has the right to decide (in part) the external signs or form of the sacraments. A more important point is the fact that there are phenomena or factors in the Church's theology and practice of marriage which it is hard to reconcile with this thesis: marriages of baptised non-Catholics are indeed not bound by the canonical form, but are rather valid and sacramental as *matrimonia rata* even without the priest playing any part in them. The marriages between persons of different confessions prior to 1918 in Germany were valid and sacramental even without any Catholic ceremony taking place. Finally reference may be made to canon 1098 (the possibility of concluding a marriage without any collaboration by the priest). When, therefore, Mörsdorf seeks to regard the active intervention of the priest as an '*essential* element' in the sacramental act, then this term 'essential' cannot be taken in a strict sense. For with regard to a requirement that is essential in the *true* sense in the context of the sacraments, the Church has *no* power of dispensation. But if the priest has no constitutive function in the concluding of a sacramental marriage in the strict sense, then it is not immediately clean what is meant here by 'essential element', '*persona agens*', 'active contributor' etc., on whether this in fact demands any theological interpretation. In any case from the standpoint of a sacramental theology such an interpretation is quite unnecessary. With regard to those cases in which the priest plays no active part, or at any rate not an 'essential' one, it is not asserted that the Church has no mediating function at all, as is proved from the example of valid baptism by laymen. Even in historical terms it must be maintained that the introduction of the form made obligatory by the Council of Trent derives primarily from the Church's anxiety for the welfare of the Christian community (clandestine marriages), but in no sense has this anything directly to do with the progressive development of the Church's authority. On this cf. *C.T.* IX, 639 f., 682-685, 761-764, 668f. Precisely with regard to the problems which are raised today on the subject of mixed marriages, the acceptance of this theological interpretation of the essence of marriage would in practice raise a fresh difficulty which, from the point of view of dogmatics, is quite unnecessary. On this problem cf. also L. Hofmann, 'Formpflicht oder Formfreiheit der Mischehenschliessung', *Catholica* 18 (1964), pp. 241-257, esp. 245 f.; F. Böckle, 'Das Problem der Mischehe', *Lutherische Monatshefte* 5 (1966), p. 342 with n. 6; P. J. Kessler, *Die Entwicklung der Formvorschriften für die kanonische Eheschliessung* (Diss. iur. Bonn, 1934, Borna-Leipzig 1934); H. Portmann, *Wesen und Unauflösigkeit der Ehe in der kirchlichen Wissenschaft und Gesetzgebung des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts* (Emsdetten/Westfalen 1938); R. Lettmann, *Die Diskussion über die klandestinen Ehen und die Einführung einer zur Gültigkeit verpflichtenden Eheschliessungsform auf dem Konzil von Trient = Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie* 31 (Munster 1967), pp. 166 ff. (Conclusion). Unfortunately even with regard to the historical aspects Lettmann does not adopt any position with regard to Mörsdorf's works (for his only remarks on this cf. p. 19, n. 21), and attaches himself without any discussion of other attempts at a

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[218]

V

What has been said, however, still needs clarification to some extent in terms of what is familiar to us from the catechism as a formal statement of what constitutes marriage as a sacrament. It is customarily said that marriage is an image of the unity of Christ and the Church, and that it is a sacrament in virtue of this. On an initial reading of Eph 5:22-33[34] we may, perhaps, receive the impression that the vital common basis for the similarity between the relationship which Christ bears to the Church on the one hand and that involved in marriage on the other consists in the fact that the husband represents Christ while the wife represents the Church. In that case the unity of marriage as such would itself be a relatively secondary reflection of the unity between Christ and the Church, which in turn would be based on a reflection in which the married partners were regarded as separate from one another precisely in respect of the different roles they play. But surely we would still have to say that even for Paul himself this way of viewing the matter is secondary, conditioned perhaps by the parenetic context and more or less conditioned too by the sociological factors prevailing at the time. On this showing, then, it would not simply be the text quoted as a whole which would constitute a statement of central theological importance, but rather the particular passage of 5:29-33 that would have primary importance in it, for these particular verses bear upon the unity of love as such, as constituted in one flesh and body. The relationship of leadership and subordination as expressed in the love of solicitude and help on the one hand, and in obedience, submissiveness and 'fear' on the other, is not the objective factor that is decisive in this parallel.[35] If for our present purposes we can take this as [219] established, then all that needs to be clarified here is where, in more precise terms, Christ is to be fitted in in the basic conception put forward in this study. First in the case of Paul it is clear that he regards the order of creation depicted in Gen 2 as belonging to the order of grace and redemption,[36] so that right from the outset that order of creation, and so too of the

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theological interpretation to the theses of Wilhelm Bertram, which are primarily influenced by factors of social philosophy. In reply to the more recent hypothesis of K. Mörsdorf I can only offer the present outline of a theology of marriage in general and in numerous points of detail as an alternative suggestion. This could then constitute a starting-point for a further attempt to solve the dogmatic problems entailed in the question of mixed marriages. Even on the interpretation of the form made obligatory by the Council of Trent the last word has not yet been said from the point of view of the history of canon law, a fact which is brought out strikingly in the inaugural address of P. J. M. Huizing, the official canonist for the diocese of Nijmegen, *De Trentse Huwelijksvorm* (Hilversum/Antwerp 1966).

[34] For the exegesis of this cf. especially H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser* (Düsseldorf, 2nd ed. 1958), pp. 252-280.

[35] In view of the number of studies a detailed exegetical cannot be undertaken here. On this cf. N. A. Dahl *et al*., *Kurze Auslegung des Epheserbriefes* (Göttingen 1965), pp. 68-72; F. Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Michigan 1963), pp. 154-163; H. C. G. Moule, *Ephesian Studies* (Michigan, 2nd ed., 1955), pp. 281-296; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London 1961), pp. 114-120; J. N. Sanders, 'The Theology of the Church', *Studies in Ephesians*, F. L. Cross ed. (London 1956), pp. 64-75, esp. pp. 71 ff.; H. Schlier and V. Warnach, *Die Kirche im Epheserbrief* (Munster 1949), pp. 25 ff.; H. Conzelmann, *Die kleineren Briefe des Apostels Paulus = N.T.D*. 8 (Göttingen, 9th ed., 1962), pp. 86-88; F. Mussner, *Christus, das All und die Kirche. Studien zur Theologie des Epheserbriefes = Trierer theolog. Studien* 5 (Trier 1955), pp. 147-153; E. Kähler, *Die Frau in den paulinischen Briefen* (Zürich 1960), pp. 88 ff.; J. J. von Allmen, *Maris et femmes d'après Saint Paul = Cahiers théologiques* (Nauchâtel/Paris 1951), pp. 28 ff.; P. Grelot, *Le couple humain dans l'Écriture* (Paris, 2nd ed., 1964); P. Adnès, *Le Mariage*, pp. 39 ff.; H. Greeven, 'Zu den Aussagen des N.T. über die Ehe', *Zeitschrift für evangelische Ethik* 1 (1957), pp. 109-125, esp. 121 ff.; P. Colli, *La pericopa paolina ad Eph. V 32 nella interpretazione dei SS Padri e del Concilio di Trento* (Parma 1951). cf. also n. 36.

[36] On this cf. H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, pp. 262 f., 276 ff. Most recently, especially R. Batey, 'The μι/α σα&ρχ Union of Christ and the Church', *N.T.S.* 13 (1967), pp. 270-281; N. A. Dahl, 'Christ,

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marriage of Adam, had the significance of pointing forwards to this order of grace. In our terms this is implicitly asserted – albeit on quite different theological principles – when we emphasise that every moral attitude on man's part (and this includes also what is presupposed to such an attitude) is everywhere and in all cases sustained and subsumed by the bestowal of grace by God upon the creature. 'Covenant' is the more sublime and more ultimate factor which, by comparison with the creation considered as the positing of a creature still not determined in a specific direction, has in turn the character of unmerited grace.[37] But precisely because of this 'covenant' is the goal and the all-embracing factor which sustains and subsumes creation as the positing of the condition which makes covenant possible, since it provides the potential covenant partner. This means that objectively speaking everything that takes place in terms of human morality has a hidden relationship to Christ, in whose being and work precisely this imparting of grace finds its eschatological culmination and manifestation. Because he is the goal of it all he provides the basis for the whole dynamism of human history as imparted to it through grace, impelling it towards the immediacy of God.

We are speaking, then, of a unity in love between two human individuals. They are united in a love which consists not merely in the fact that both are aiming at a single common goal in this earthly dimension. This unity, rather, refers to the persons themselves in so far as their orientation to the last end has an eternal validity. And where the unity of love in this [220] sense is achieved, there we have the operation and manifestation of that grace which constitutes the unity of men in the truest and most proper sense. But the converse is also true. Precisely this same grace, considered as establishing a unity between God and man, is manifested in the unity between Christ and the Church, and that too in a manifestation which has an absolute and eschatological force, and which as goal provides the basis for all other graces and their function as establishing unity in the world. For this reason there exists not merely an external similarity between the unity in love of two human individuals on the one hand and the unity between Christ and the Church on the other, but also a relationship between the two unities such that they condition one another: the former exists *precisely because* the latter exists. Their mutual relationship of similarity is not subsequent to the two but is a genuine relationship of participation due to the fact that the unity between Christ and the Church is the ultimate cause and origin of the unity of marriage.

In the light of this we can also understand that the more precise quality of the relationship between Christ as the *directing and controlling head* on the one hand, and the Church as the *obedient* and submissive *bride* on the other is not simply projected in precisely the selfsame sense into the unity of those united in love through marriage. The unity between Christ and the Church is the basis for the unity between husband and wife prior to the question of whether, and to what extent this unity which is brought about also carries with it all the special attributes of the unity which brings it about. To the extent that the unity of Christ and the Church itself has its source in God's gracious will to bestow himself, both *this* unity *and* the unity of marriage have their basis in the selfsame grace of God, which unites mankind to God and men among themselves. To the extent that the goals of this *one single* will to bestow grace are related to one another as 'cause' and 'effect', since precisely *in* the will by which God intended Christ and the Church everything else is willed, this one particular effect of this grace-giving will (namely married unity) is also brought about by the other effect (the unity of Christ and the Church).

Creation and the Church', *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (Festschrift for C. H. Dodd), W. D. Davies and D. Daube edd. (Cambridge 1965), pp. 422-443, esp. 437.

[37] On this, in addition to the articles mentioned on p. 524, n. 13, cf. esp. K. Rahner, 'Erlösungswirklichkeit in der Schöpfungswirklichkeit', *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck, 4th ed., 1966), pp. 51-87, esp. 52-75 = *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 203-228.

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By reason of this mutual interrelationship of the two unities, the unity of marriage achieves its *full* manifestation precisely in the unity of Christ and the Church. And because of this much that would otherwise perhaps have remained obscure and unrecognised in the unity of married love can be deduced from the unity of Christ and the Church. And this remains true in spite of the caution which is necessary in adopting this approach. Thus with regard to the relationship of leadership and subordination between husband and wife in marriage Paul had already, and rightly, [221] perceived that the basis of this was the unity of Christ with the Church, even though it may be true that the relationship which he was seeking to justify in part belonged to *that period alone*, and to that extent cannot have been a *moral demand* in the same sense at all periods. But if we were to take the same principle as our starting-point we could recognise other and similar parallels too: the character of the Cross with which both are imprinted; the irrevocability of the covenant; the provisional nature of both measured by the final and eternal consummation for which the Church[38] and marriage[39] are still waiting. However we cannot delay any longer in this article in explaining and rounding off this point.

Marriage, therefore, reaches upwards into the mystery of God in a sense which is far more radical even than we could have guessed merely from the nature of human love as unconditioned. Certainly all still remains hidden under the veil of faith and hope, and all this may still not be lifted from the lowly circumstances of our everyday lives. There is no question that such a truth does not take place either at a level which is utterly beyond man, his freedom, and his interior assent. There is no doubt, therefore, that those united in married love experience this reality in the same measure as they open their hearts to it in faith and love. Surely it has become clear that such a theology of marriage cannot be understood in that sense in which we introvertedly make it our own 'private affair'. On the contrary genuine Christian marriage has at all times the force of a real representation of the unifying love of God in Christ for mankind. In marriage the Church is made present. It is really the smallest community, the smallest, but at the same time the true community of the redeemed and the sanctified, the unity among whom can still be built up on the same basis on which the unity of the Church is founded, in other words the smallest, but at the same time the genuine individual Church. If we were able to recognise[40] and to live out such a truth in its full significance then we could return somewhat more consoled and more bravely, in a spirit of truly Christian freedom, to our 'married problems', so urgent as they are, yet almost talked to death.

[38] cf. the Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, No. 48.
[39] cf. *ibid*., No. 35.
[40] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Glaubend und liebend* (Munich 1957); *idem*, 'Vom Gottgeheimnis der Ehe', *Geist und Leben* 31 (1958), pp. 107-109 = K. Rahner, *Glaube der die Erde liebt* (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1967), pp. 125-128.

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[222]

11

THE TEACHING OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL ON THE DIACONATE

The subject which I have been asked to examine here is concerned with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the diaconate and the restoration of this.[1] So far as I know, in the various documents of this Council three texts in particular treat of this subject. The most important of these is, of course, article 29 of the 3rd chapter of the Constitution *Lumen gentium*. In addition to this two further texts have to be taken into consideration, namely a passage which falls under No 16 of the Scheme on the Missionary Activity of the Church, a Scheme on which there is still some little work to be done. Here the restoration of the diaconate is treated of from the point of view of the necessity of such a restoration in the missions. A further brief reference to this restoration is to be found in Article 17 of the Decree on the Oriental Catholic Churches, which has already been promulgated. Here it is stated that where the institution of the diaconate as a permanent state has ceased to be the practice it should be introduced once more.

First let us concentrate upon the principal of these passages, that which occurs in *Lumen gentium*. It is not possible for me here to set forth the history leading up to this passage. Here I would only recall the fact that this question is numbered among the five so-called 'test questions' which were laid before the Council on the 3 October 1963. The fifth question asked whether the fathers were agreed on the point that mention should be made in the Constitution on the Church of the diaconate and the necessity for its restoration. To this general question, which was intended merely to provide a general direction for a further working out of this decree, an affirmative answer was given, 1,588 of the fathers voting in favour of it with 525 against. It was, therefore, a notable majority. The work of the theological commission went forward along the lines indicated by this [223] vote, with the result that that text was produced which – apart from a few small alterations – we now read in the Constitution.

In a vote taken on the 28th September 1964 the radical necessity for, and possibility of a restoration of the diaconate as a permanent state in the Church was accepted by an overwhelming majority. On the 29th September following the precise points of detail involved were laid before the fathers of the Council. These agreed by a comfortable two-thirds majority that even married men of mature age could be admitted to the order of deacon. On the same day, in the aula of the Council, the fathers rejected, by a majority the extent of which is not known, but which was substantial, the idea that younger men too could be admitted to the diaconate without any obligation to remain celibate. This must be sufficient here with regard to the history of the text. For the time appropriate to a brief lecture does not admit of entering any further into the manner in which these documents emerged and acquired their existing form.

Let us turn our attention to the actual *texts* themselves. In this we shall, normally speaking, be referring to the Constitution *Lumen gentium*. But where it is a question of entering into the reasons which the Second Vatican Council had for believing that the diaconate should be restored we must also refer to the Scheme on the Church's Activity in the Missions which was prepared, because in my opinion the reasons are set forth more clearly and more

[1] For the concrete occasion in view of which this lecture was composed cf. the list of sources attached to the end of this volume.

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profoundly there than in the Constitution on the Church itself. I shall be saying a few words more on this point at a later stage.

I

The first point to be made with regard to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the diaconate is concerned with the question of the essence of this as a permanent official state and as a sacrament in the Church. In this teaching it is laid down first that the hierarchy of orders in the Church does in fact include, or at least could include, a state which, though subordinate, does constitute a genuine and permanent degree of the sacrament of order. In spite of this, according to the teaching and practice of the Western, as opposed to the Eastern Church, the diaconate has come to be regarded ever since the Middle Ages (apart from a few isolated cases which we cannot enter into here) merely as a necessary stage in the process of being raised to the priesthood. Now in the teaching of the Council, which is in conformity with the earliest and most universal teaching, it is expressly laid down that there is, or at least there could be, [224] a degree in the hierarchy of orders, genuine, permanent and sacramental, which is something more than a mere stage on the way to priestly ordination. It is one which could be, and, under certain circumstances actually ought to be, recognised as a state and a degree in the hierarchy of orders, albeit a lower one, which has a genuine and essential function of its own distinct from that of the order of priest. From this point of view, therefore, the nature of the diaconate is such that it belongs in very truth to the hierarchy of order in the Church herself. It is not a lay state, but belongs to the three official states or degrees in the hierarchy of order itself, so that in all truth and reality deacons belong to the officially instituted and sacred orders which Christ founded in his Church. When, therefore, we distinguish between laymen on the one hand and the hierarchy of the Church on the other, we should certainly not assign the deacons to the lay state, nor should the diaconate itself be understood as in some sense designating the status of outstanding lay functionaries in the Church. On the contrary, the diaconate is, in very truth, a degree, albeit a subordinate one, in the hierarchy of order itself. Now with regard to the tasks which are, in practice, attached to this order of deacon, the passage with which we are concerned distinguishes between these various tasks of the diaconate in almost the same way as in its presentation of the official functions of bishops and priests. A new division has been introduced here according to which three general official functions are envisaged: the function of teaching, the function of sanctifying and the function of leading. It is true that with regard to the third function certain more precise distinctions and provisos have been introduced. But it is still quite evident that in the Constitution on the Church these three general official functions which apply to every official state in the hierarchy of the Church are attributed to the office of deacon also.

This appears from what is said here about the function of preaching the word. It is stated that the deacon’s part in this is to read the sacred scriptures to the faithful and to instruct and exhort the people. In other words the function of preaching the gospel is attributed to the deacon too, though of course in union and cooperation with the Church under the direction of the bishop and, in some respects, of the priest too. Thus with regard to the first function, which is attributed to all those who have been officially ordained in the Church, this applies to the deacon too. In the passage under consideration here the function of sanctifying is likewise attributed to the deacon clearly enough. In fact it is stated that it is his task solemnly to confer baptism, to have custody of and to distribute the Eucharist, to assist at and to bless marriages in the Church’s name, to [225] carry the Viaticum to the dying, to preside in the liturgy and prayers of the faithful, to dispense the sacraments and to conduct the rites of burial. Again with regard to the function of guiding and leading, we can find something in

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our text which has reference to the deacon. For in it the task of directing and administering is explicitly adduced. Now it is true that this task of the deacon belongs to the service of the Church and not, strictly speaking, to the guiding of her, this being, in a certain sense, confined to the bishops alone. Nevertheless the deacon does, in a certain sense, share in this task, and it actually belongs to the very nature of the diaconate itself to the extent that explicit mention is made of the task of administration. Of course this is expressed only very briefly and in a few words. On the other hand the task of charitable activity receives just as brief a mention even though this does undoubtedly belong, according to the very earliest traditions of the Church and with a firm basis in holy scripture, to the office of deacon.

Nevertheless we are compelled to say in all honesty that the text itself does not supply much information on this question. Perhaps, on the other hand, the Scheme on the Missions, *Ad Gentes Divinitus Missa* can help us, for these official functions of the deacon are likewise mentioned here. The function of preaching the word is expressly mentioned. It is said that in the missions deacons have the duty of preaching the word of God as catechists. The function of sanctifying receives slighter mention in that particular Scheme. But to compensate for this it is expressed all the more clearly that the activity of deacons can, in a certain respect, be understood as a function of providing official guidance and leadership, or at least a sharing in this. This is what is meant when it is said that it is the task of the deacons in the missions to act in the name of the parish priest or the bishop in giving guidance to the widespread communities. Again the official function of performing works of charity is expressly mentioned here. It is said that it is the deacon's responsibility actively to engage himself in works expressive of love in the form of social and charitable activities. In this Scheme, therefore, this aspect is developed on a broader basis than in *De Ecclesia* itself.

Now with regard to the essence of this order of deacon, the essential point, and one which finds expression in all the texts we have mentioned, is the sacramentality of the diaconate. On this point the documents leave no room for doubt. What is in question here is a sacrament, a genuinely sacramental consecration, a sacramental grace which is imparted through the laying on of hands.

[226]

II

The topic which is being treated of in the main text, and also in the texts on the Eastern Churches and on the missions, is the restoration of the diaconate. In article 29 of the Constitution *Lumen gentium* two sections are devoted to this. The first concerns the theology of the diaconate, the second speaks explicitly of the restoration of the diaconate on which we shall now have something more to say.

This restoration is characterised in the Scheme on the Missions as useful and to be recommended, and in the Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches it is urgently advocated. The reasons which the texts adduce for this deserve to be considered first. The presentation of these reasons appear, as I have already indicated at the beginning of this article, to have brought about a salutary development between the Constitution *Lumen gentium* and the Scheme *Ad Gentes Divinitus Missa*. In the Constitution on the Church it is stated that the tasks of the deacon as enumerated here are certainly supremely necessary for the life of the Church, and that even though, in the current administration of the Latin Church, there are many areas in which these tasks can only be performed with difficulty, still in the future the diaconate can be restored as a special order in the Church's hierarchy existing as such in its own right. The reason adduced in the Constitution, therefore, is to be sought primarily in the difficulties of the concrete situation. It is said that there can be no question that these tasks are necessary: baptising, preaching, the works of charity etc. And it is further stated that the

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restoration of the deacon is necessary because, owing to the lack of priests today, it has become extremely difficult to fulfil these tasks. The Scheme on the Missions has not yet achieved final completion. But the reasons put forward here, while they do not run counter to this text in the Constitution on the Church, still differ from it nevertheless in certain notable respects. For this Scheme treats of those individuals who already, in effect, are actually performing the official functions of the deacon by acting as catechists and so preaching the word of God, by acting in the name of the parish priest or the bishop to guide and administer the scattered Christian communities, or by performing the works of charity in social or philanthropic activities. Such individuals, the Scheme states, should be fortified by the laying on of hands as handed down from the apostles so that they may be able more effectively to perform their diaconal functions through the grace of the sacrament. Here, therefore, it is not any actual difficulty, for instance the lack of priests etc. which is adduced, rather it is asserted that the official functions appropriate to [227] deacons already in practice exist in the Church. Now it is assumed as self-evident and actually asserted that since these individuals are actually performing these official functions which already in practice exist in the Church they should, as a matter of necessity or at least of suitability, be further fortified with that sacramental grace which, according to the doctrine of the Church, is truly designed precisely for these official functions. In other words it is simply stated: 'The official functions already exist. We know from revelation that the diaconate also has a sacramental status. Why, therefore, should those individuals who already exercise these official functions of the deacon be deprived of that grace which does *de facto* exist in the Church as a sacramental grace?' The Scheme on the work of the missions, therefore, abstracts from the question of whether or not the external circumstances and difficulties, the lack of priests etc., are so great that fresh resources are necessary to come to the help of the Church's priests and hierarchically ordained ministers in their work. It is simply stated that these official functions are actually in existence in practice and in effect, and that those who perform them should do so in that specifically sacramental power with which Christ has *de facto* endowed his Church.

Now with regard to the restoration of the diaconate itself, the authority appropriate to this is mentioned in both texts. It is said that the conferences of bishops instituted in various forms and over different areas can undertake this restoration. Similarly in the Scheme on the Missions it is said that the appropriate conferences of bishops who have regarded the restoration of the diaconate as beneficial must be the ones to put it into practice. We must, therefore, lay down clearly and unequivocally that according to both texts the proper authority to act in this matter is not the pope but the conferences of bishops. It is to these conferences in themselves, here taken as the bodies from which such action must appropriately proceed, that power is ascribed to decide in this question as to whether it is opportune to bring about such a restoration in the different areas. Of course this must take place, as is also explicitly laid down, in full agreement with the pope or with his assent. Nevertheless it is the bishops who have to take the initiative in this matter, and who therefore have the responsibility of examining and judging as to whether it is opportune to bring about such a restoration in the different territories. It would be mistaken, therefore, for the bishops to suppose that the initiative has to come from the Holy See. On the contrary, the task with which we are here concerned is not directly that of the actual restoration itself, but rather of investigating and judging whether restoration is opportune. And this task is assigned, by the passages from *Lumen gentium* dealing with the missions, to the bishops. Now [228] once such an authorisation has been given there can be no doubt that, for all the difficulties, a manifest duty exists to act upon it also. I do not say that there is a duty to bring about a renewal of the diaconate, but rather a duty to take all possible pains to examine and to judge whether or not this is opportune in a given area.

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In the light of this it also becomes clear what is being laid down in these passages with regard to the manner in which the restoration should take place. With regard to the territorial spheres it is immediately evident that these passages do not presuppose that the restoration must necessarily take place everywhere in the world at the same time. There can be no doubt that a given conference of bishops can arrive at the judgment that in their particular area such a restoration of the diaconate is necessary and would be extremely beneficial, whereas another conference of bishops may arrive at the opposite judgment so far as its area is concerned. We have seen that the authorised bodies who have the power to bring about this restoration are the various conferences of bishops. And to this extent it is obvious that it need not necessarily be expedient for a uniform restoration to take place simultaneously throughout the entire Catholic Church. But no conference of bishops can say, 'Since our colleagues in another country are not restoring the diaconate we too can peaceably abide by the practice which has been customary up to the present.' Right from the outset and of set purpose, the text itself provides for the possibility of the restoration of the diaconate being confined to a particular region. But since this is within the power not of the individual bishops but of the bishops' conferences and territorial assemblies of bishops, there is no doubt that in a given country or in a greater area a certain uniformity is necessarily required. I do not believe that an individual bishop can set himself up in opposition to such a restoration against the majority decision of his colleagues who belong to the same conference of bishops. Otherwise it would not in fact have been stated that it is for the conference of bishops to judge of the expediency of this restoration. The idea that this question is within the competence of an individual bishop to decide is certainly contrary to the spirit and the letter of the passages concerned.

After prolonged discussions the decree decides that in any such restoration the diaconate can be conferred upon more mature men as well, and even when they are married. On the other hand it is explicitly laid down that younger men too, when they are suitable, can be raised to the order of deacon, though in this case they are bound to celibacy. In view of this it is evident that the text with which we are concerned itself envisages various classes of deacons. Naturally this now opens the way to further [229] and more far-reaching discussions, the subject-matter of which no doubt presents difficulties of its own. Nevertheless we must accept the text as it stands, and recognise that in any such restoration at least two classes are envisaged: younger deacons who are bound to celibacy, and others who are of more mature age and married, upon whom this sacramental ordination can likewise be conferred. Surely no-one will deny that the diaconate as conferred upon these more mature men will, in practice and in the concrete, have a greater significance and more influence from the pastoral point of view in the life of the Church than the other case which is likewise envisaged in the text concerned.

III

We must now briefly enter into certain further questions which are still left open by the texts themselves. First, the question surely arises of who these men of more mature age are. What actual *age* is envisaged here? The actual terms of the text are extremely general and somewhat vague, and probably this is deliberate, because in this field, after all, there is need for a little further experience in deciding how old married men should be in order to be ordained deacons. Next a further question arises as to what conferences of bishops or regional assemblies of bishops of various kinds the texts intend to refer to. Here too the answer is not easy. The conferences of bishops are so different from one another in respect of the number of their members, their status, the extent of the regions they represent, that in this respect

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many questions can suggest themselves. On the other hand even this difficulty could, without great effort, be removed because even after they have come to their judgment as to whether a restoration of the diaconate is opportune, it is only with the agreement and assent of the pope himself that this restoration actually takes place.

The text says nothing about the kind of *formation* which the future deacons should undergo. Here too there is much that still needs to be considered and examined in greater detail. Nevertheless I believe that in view of the fact that the Scheme on the Missions envisages men who are already performing the tasks appropriate to deacons, we should regard this in itself as an indication of what kind of formation is required. Those individuals ought to be put forward for ordination who have already *de facto* acquired sufficient formation and experience in the Church's work, and who are already performing the official functions of deacons. On this view not so very many difficulties will arise in our considerations of what sort of formation deacons should undergo as might otherwise be [230] expected. *De facto* such individuals already exist. *De facto*, therefore, they are already, to a large extent, formed and prepared for their diaconal functions and experienced in them. The form and manner of formation, therefore, which has hitherto been considered sufficient for the formation of such individuals will also to a large extent be no less adequate for the formation of the future deacons. Otherwise those who already perform the official functions of deacons would, in fact, have been unable to perform them at all.

A further question which has been left open in the texts with which we are concerned is that of the diaconate as a 'lower' *degree* of order. One statement which has a certain relevance here is that passage in the Constitution on the Church which states that deacons would be ordained not as a preliminary to the priesthood but for a ministry of their own. Nevertheless, with regard to this 'lower degree' several theological questions still remain unanswered. It is stated that the deacon exercises his ministry in union with the bishop and his priests. But what, in more precise terms is the relationship which the deacon bears to the bishop or to the priest or to both together? How can we define more precisely the reasons for representing the order of deacon as a 'lower' degree of order? Much in the way of theological exploration and examination is still needed in order to establish this. Of course it is true that the deacon does not have those functions which, according to the official teaching of the Church, and especially that of the Council of Trent, belong only to the priest, as for instance the administration of the sacrament of penance and the consecration at the Eucharistic Mystery. And to this extent there is a palpable and easily comprehensible difference between the diaconate and the priesthood. From this basis, therefore, we can easily go on to say that the status of the deacon is lower as compared with that of the priest. Nevertheless this does not necessarily or *ipso facto* imply that the diaconate is simply a 'lower' degree from every point of view. When we think of the ministry on behalf of the poor, and of many other tasks which belong primarily to the deacon, it is no longer easy to perceive how the diaconate could be designated in this connection as a lower degree. Moreover, a point which we should particularly notice is that the Constitution *Lumen gentium* carefully avoids saying that the episcopate (*munus episcopali*) is a 'higher' degree, above that of the priesthood. On the contrary, it regards the episcopate as constituting, of its essence, the plenitude of an order that is, though hierarchically structured, integrally one, and that exists in the Church in virtue of a divine institution. Now if we make this way of regarding the matter our own, then we can consider the diaconate too as [231] constituting in its own right an authentic and special mode of participation in this one integral order in the Church. From this it follows that on the one hand we both can and must say that the diaconate is a lower or more restricted mode of participation in this order than the priesthood. But at the same time we do not necessarily have to say that this is the case in every respect. My belief is that the bishop has the most solemn duty of making the love of Christ present in the world in relation to all who toil and

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suffer, who are poor and weak, who have to bear persecution etc. Now if this task belongs, in a quite primary sense, to the bishop himself, the deacon has no less vital a share in it than any priest. I have decided to mention this one point alone in order to show that the text with which we are concerned still leaves many questions open, both for further theological investigation and also so far as the Church's practice is concerned.

In conclusion perhaps it will be appropriate to return once more to something which has already been said in order to enlarge upon it a little further. When we look more closely into the texts relating to deacons in the Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Missions, we find that it is not permissible, theologically speaking, to say that the tasks there ascribed to the future deacons can also be performed by laymen, or perhaps by those who, at some point in the future are to be equipped with the lower orders. In my opinion any such conception would be, from all points of view, quite untheological. In the sacrament of order a threefold division exists both in the sacrament itself and in the official functions that go with it, and no-one can deny that from apostolic times onwards the Church has been aware of, has recognised, and has actually exercised her God-given right to impose this division. Now if, and to the extent that, this is true – and it cannot be denied by anyone without danger of heresy – then in my opinion a further point manifestly follows, and one that is clearly stated in the Decree on the Missions. It is that when certain individuals in the Church are in fact fulfilling certain specific functions, then the Church herself must supplement this by conferring on them that grace which our Lord specially instituted precisely for these functions, and which he gave his Church authority to confer in sacramental form. This is the fundamental point for consideration in this whole question of the restoration of the diaconate. It is not some arbitrary question of what functions can or cannot be exercised by whom. It is not some kind of romantic revival which is in question here, of a reality which did in fact exist in the early Church. Rather what we are asking here is whether in our Church of the present day the office of deacon is *de facto* being performed. If, and to the extent that we have to answer this question in the [232] affirmative, or if and to the extent that we have to say that it is absolutely necessary for there to be such an office, given the circumstances of the present day, then this office is to be set up. And if an individual is already suitable for this office, then it seems to me to be necessary on theological grounds that that grace should be conferred upon him which does exist in the Church precisely for the official functions which he is *de facto* performing. Moreover it appears that all other considerations are, from the outset, excluded from this genuinely theological one. We are not in the least concerned with the question of whether absolutely speaking it is possible for laymen too to give Holy Communion to others. No-one will deny that this is possible. But the question that is being asked here is whether the Church really needs individuals who will have the duty of doing this and much else besides as part of their official and permanent functions, and as part of the normal life of the Church. If such individuals are needed, if such a permanent office, together with its functions, can be provided for in the Church, or if, indeed, it actually already exists, then the matter is already decided. The Church already has, in her possession, that sacramental grace which is designed for this office, which is already present and being exercised in her. And this sacramental grace must be conferred on those individuals. Theologically speaking, no other factors enter into the question. This may suffice by way of introduction. Since other theologians will be exploring the nature of the case from the theological point of view, I have been able to confine myself to certain aspects which have, of their very nature, been raised by the relevant conciliar documents.[2]

[2] For a fuller treatment of this cf. the conference report entitled 'Le diacre dans l'église et le monde d'aujourd'hui', P. Winniger and Y. Congar edd. = *Unam Sanctam* 59 (Paris 1966). The concrete occasion for which this lecture was composed was such that it was not possible to enter into the new prescriptions for the diaconate set forth in the *Motu Proprio* '*Sacrorum Diaconatus Ordinem*' (cf. the *Osservatore Romano* of 28

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June 1967, p. 1). For a more detailed interpretation of this document I may draw attention to the edition with commentary which is to be brought out by Herbert Vorgrimler and published by the Paulinus-Verlag, Trier (= *Nachkonziliare Dokumentation* No. 9). On the situation in Germany cf. K. Rahner, H. Vorgrimler, J. Kramer, 'Zur Erneuerung des Diakonats in Deutschland', *Stimmen der Zeit* 180, (1967), pp. 145-153. For further information on the current movements attention may be drawn to a series of documents entitled *Diakonia*, and produced by the *Internationale Diakonatskreis* at Freiburg im Breisgau (Directors: Mgr. Georg Hüssler and Hannes Kramer).

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[233]

PART THREE

Eschatology

[235]

12

A FRAGMENTARY ASPECT OF A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE FUTURE

In the attempts which contemporary theologians are making to describe how the future provides scope for the preaching of the Christian message one factor which is somewhat lacking is any concrete evaluation of the 'future' as a phenomenon. Perhaps a theologian should allow his hearers to feel more of the perplexity and embarrassment into which he falls as soon as this word is mentioned. For what is it, this future? I suppose that faced with this question we should immediately emphasise that the future does not consist (or at least that it does not consist exclusively) of that which is foreseen in the concrete and which will actually be in existence by tomorrow, since our concrete plans for it are already laid and the means for accomplishing it are already to hand, so that all that we still need in order to bring it to reality is a little more time. Properly speaking, all this already belongs to our present. One of the characteristics of futurity is that it is mysterious, that for the most part we are unaware of it – indeed that we actually suppress the awareness of it in ourselves. And the concrete future which has already been determined by us as depicted above, only partakes of the nature of true futurity to the extent that it is threatened by uncertainties: the question of whether our plans may not yet be thwarted by some alien factor or another, whether we shall not be prevented from experiencing tomorrow in the same way as we experience today by the factor of our death – for instance through heart-failure. Hence evolutionary ideas cannot be taken as a starting-point either for our understanding of the future. For in that case it would in fact precisely be something which we already possessed in our designs and within our abilities, namely that so-called 'natural order' which simply represents a further actualisation of possibilities which we already possess and of which, in principle, we are already aware, even though we need a little more time in order to bring them to reality: just a little more patience, it is already coming! On this view there is a certain pride in our attitude, for we think [236] that our relationship to the future is such that it is already present to us so long as the 'reality' turns out as we have foreseen in our designs and estimates, whether of a theoretical or practical kind. On this showing the future reality is, properly speaking, formed and determined so as to fit in with the plan as it exists in the present. It serves only to confirm the presence of the all-penetrating spirit and the rightness of its calculations. The only interest it still possesses is that it serves as a proof of the fact that we have not made any mistakes in our estimates or in our plans. I cannot avoid the impression that in the attitudes of enthusiasm with which both Western theorists and Marxists view the future there is a constant temptation to confuse the real future with this 'tomorrow which is already here today', and which is based on evolutionary or technical theory or on a combination of both; a temptation, therefore, to call this combination of plans plus time in the sense of being a pure formal and empty interval the 'future', and thereby distorting the true relationship which man bears to

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the real future, and suppressing the real meaning of future altogether. I have nothing against planning; nothing against that enthusiasm with which we greet the fact that ultimately speaking man is no longer merely subject to the play of external forces over which he has no control, but is himself the manipulator; that man imposes his own existence no longer merely at the theoretical level but at the practical level as well, and that he possesses a futurology; that man already knows what he wants his future to be, and how he intends to ensure that it shall be this; that man can no longer be surprised; that he can calculate correctly and foresee; that he imposes his own will as formed by him today upon tomorrow and, on the basis of what actually is, knows what this same reality is destined to become tomorrow. It is remarkable that all this is already an accomplished fact; that man, with his cunning and yet tormented by the factor of blind chance, has actually managed to catch the approaching event as his prey in the meshes of his own will; managed already in the present to build those paths by which his children are destined to travel – though admittedly here there is one point precisely that still remains vexing, namely that it is our children and not we ourselves who are to travel by these ways. Nevertheless at the same time we have become extremely well informed on our own account. Yet still even this is precisely not the future.

But in that case what is the future? Precisely that mysterious element in that which we are accustomed to call the future, and which, nevertheless, we have deprived of its true nature and turned into a part of the present by anticipating it through our plans and the abilities we have acquired, though we certainly recognise the rights which belong to him who is far-seeing and [237] able. The future is that to which we ourselves cannot reach out, but which rather comes to us of itself – when it decides to – and with which we have to deal, strangely, precisely on *these* terms. The future is that which does not evolve, that which is not planned, that which is not under our control. It is all this, and it is this precisely in its incomprehensibility and its infinitude. The future is that which silently lies in wait, and which, when it springs out upon us, rips up the nets of all our plans, the false 'future' which we ourselves have constructed, so as to make that which we have planned or foreseen a present fact. The true future is that which is uncontrollable, that which is, and which remains in control calmly and silently, incalculably and yet patiently giving *us* the time we need because it itself needs none, for it never comes too late. It is that which cannot be controlled or calculated, which again and again wells up and breaks through the most precise calculations of the future, makes room for them and yet at the same time always makes them provisional and doubtful of accomplishment. It is that which cannot be calculated or controlled, and which has the effect (this is something of which we are convinced, however strange it may be) that in this human history to which we are subject we are never finished with working out the so-called future, and trying to draw it down into the present. It is that which cannot be controlled or calculated, and that in which we cannot intervene. It does not depend for its life on any power of ours, but rather has power of itself. It can of itself make its own impact in that which we experience – but precisely as future. In relation to it we are able to be that which we have to be in order for it to impose itself. But precisely in virtue of this very necessity it confines us to those limitations in virtue of which we ourselves are precisely *not* it, but of our very nature always have before us the element of the uncontrollable in it as the alien factor in our lives.

We cannot escape from the necessity of having to deal with the future precisely because it is not subject to our control. It can be suppressed and forgotten as the spectre which makes fools of us, which the sensible man looks down upon; as our shadow which we cast before us (admittedly it may be asked why that which is sheer nothingness does not swallow up this shadow too and thereby free us from it). But even so this future is there: as the silent expanse, empty so far as we are concerned, within which alone we can trace out our narrow courses of life. It is there as the mystery which we must always take into our calculations in raising

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those questions which we answer to ourselves. It is there as that which empowers us freely to exercise the power given to us, for this power of ours can only achieve that which we have determined within the sphere of that which [238] we ourselves have precisely not achieved. For we would not be able to begin to achieve it at all unless it was already open to be achieved by us. When we have made some moment of pleasure for ourselves we can command it to stay with us, and it makes no difference whether it punishes us for this by remaining and 'freezing', or whether it strikes us dead by departing from us. We are always guilty when we command it to remain. For of its nature it exists in order to die, in order that by its coming and its departure from us the future, with its incomprehensibility and uncontrollability, may be there and may manifest itself and conceal itself at the same time in all the instabilities of this present as constituted by that which we have decided for ourselves.

We have constantly to come to terms with the true future, even when we are embittered enough, ill-disposed enough, cynical enough or culpably naive enough to seek to achieve a state in which we are untroubled by it. Its silence becomes so loud that we believe we are deafened when death begins to impinge upon our awareness and our senses, when the glory of our past achievements is suddenly transformed before our eyes into the boundary beyond which we cannot pass, yet without our being able to forget that glory, and when that which we grasp at so greedily escapes from us once more by turning out to be that which is not, after all, what we seek in the depths of our being. Now there is a certain attitude of trust which we may discover within ourselves – discover it not merely because it is there (whether accepted or denied) but because it is manifested in us as part and parcel of our conscious presentation of ourselves. This attitude of which I am speaking is one in which we trust that this incomprehensible and ineffable future is not merely that which was and which remains the eternal that pre-exists us, and which serves to show us the limitations to which we are subject, but is rather intended to be and to become the future precisely as *arriving* for us without ceasing thereby to be in itself the nameless mystery. Now supposing that we did in fact have this attitude of trust, what in that case would properly speaking be taking place in this life? What would be taking place in this event in which the attitude of trust and the future itself considered as arriving for us neither could nor should any longer be distinguished from one another, but where there would be a self-commitment in trust (or trust would be ventured upon) as the still-unfolding event of this future precisely in its aspect of arriving, and in this sense as a hope in the future?

Apparently nothing. The world would continue to go on just as it would in any case. We would make plans and ourselves construct the future which would be the present of today and perhaps of tomorrow – [239] but always as lost in the infinitude of the true future. But yet at the same time everything would be different. But before we raise the question of the reasons for this difference this 'would be' must be corrected. Perhaps it *is* different, not merely 'would be' different. For in fact, to put it at its lowest, it might be the case that we actually *have* this attitude of trust which consists in hope in the true sense; that we are actually making it real and effective, and that all that we still lack is the courage openly to declare that we have it. It would be perfectly possible for a man to be quite incapable of drawing any clear distinction between one who really has this attitude of trust and one who has not. It could even be the case that it is actually achieved, and yet that we can only become consciously aware of the fact that it has been achieved at that stage at which we no longer need to speak about it. The achievement of trust in its fulness in this sense is especially apparent in death, where the individual himself is silent, and where it is not we but the truth that begins to speak. There where this trust is present and where our hope on behalf of ourselves and others also is of *this* kind, there that which is hoped for actually takes place even when this trust has not yet arrived at the stage of reflecting upon itself and being recognised for what it is. We must no longer ask, therefore, what in fact 'would be the case' *if* such a hope was attained to.

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Rather we already have this attitude of trust and hope, and with this attitude no longer ask what 'would be the case'. We have already long passed the stage of wishing to ask this question. The assumption involved here includes the supposition that with regard to this attitude of trust we are quite incapable of establishing any way of testing or comparing what is and what might be or perhaps is, in the case of a specific individual. Only with this proviso do we ask what would be or is if someone either has, or could have this trust, that the absolute future is that which is actually breaking in upon him.

What does it mean, therefore, for a man to have this trust in the absolute future considered as that which is radically breaking in upon his own life?

First, the world of the future that we construct for ourselves still remains. It would in fact not exist at all if there were no reference to the absolute future, whether this is present as that which is actually coming to meet us or as that which repels us. This absolute future is present as presiding over us in some way or other in that it is made over to us as the 'material' of the future we construct with all its variations between good and bad fortune. The existence of this – as the presence of the future in the temporal sense – is to this extent precious and indispensable. Admittedly from this aspect it must not be interpreted as a future which can be [240] constructed merely in technical terms. It also includes invariably the event of the love which proceeds from the 'thou' to the 'thou', which constitutes, in a manner quite different from the future which can be constructed at the technical level, that which provides a foothold for the future which cannot be controlled. But at the same time this absolute future gives the future which we construct for ourselves its place in the real and effective openness of true human history. There is no future which can be constructed, no plan which would not open outwards and forwards into that which has not been foreseen and which no system can provide for. Every humanism with a predetermined content is relative. It can become other than it is and contains no promise within itself of any abiding permanence. Man is never aware of himself as the being who is open to the mysterious and absolute future in such a way that he could devise any adequate plans for himself. All ideals which he formulates in the concrete remain, when their true nature is not misunderstood, bounded by the 'ideal' of the question which is kept open. The one who exposes himself to the mystery of the absolute future is the one who knows least of all about himself and who defends this awareness of his non-awareness as the ultimate achievement of life and as the ultimate truth which is proper to himself. There are, then, two attitudes to be considered here: first the attitude in which we take with absolute seriousness the future which we can construct, considering this as the medium of the absolute future, and second the factor in this future which can be constructed which makes its contents relative and conditional. It is this latter factor that distinguishes it from the future that is absolute. Now through both of these factors taken together the man who has this trust calmly and quietly faces the vicissitudes of the future which can be constructed with an attitude of ultimate freedom, without falling into any kind of Stoic apathy. He actively engages himself in his lot, taking this as his absolute duty, and endures with composure any corrections which may be imposed upon him by that which is outside his own personal control. For this too is in its turn the onset of the future that is absolute, provided only it is accepted without reserve.

The true future, the ultimate which itself cannot be constructed, takes place quite simply. It comes to meet us. It is intended to be imparted to us as the incomprehensible mystery. We are those who precisely experience the impact of it as a lightning flash in the hope that our darkness may be the blinding effect of its very brilliance; that it is not striking us dead, but rather imparting to us a healing that is eternal. And if anyone supposes that he has no experience whatever of this, he must say that even so he does experience it and is not aware of it, provided only that he accepts his [241] own life unconditionally. But because he is immersed in human history, man can always keep watch to see whether he finds in his history

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anyone in relation to whom he can entertain this trust for him and so for himself also, in such a way that he attains to that attitude in all its purity in which he submits to the breaking in upon his own life of the absolute future. It is this precisely that is also a promise for us. This would be the starting-point from which we should have to go on to speak in particular of how Christianity is related to the future. But since this has already been done in another context[1] we can break off this fragmentary consideration at this point.

[1] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 59-68.

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[242]

13

ON THE THEOLOGY OF HOPE

We have no intention here of giving the impression that in the pages which follow we could, in any sense, present the theology of hope. The title has been chosen with care because only certain aspects of such a theology are intended to be expressed, and the choice of these has been somewhat arbitrary. Hence we cannot set forth, with all the fulness they deserve, the contributions to this subject of scripture itself, of traditional scholastic theology, or of more recent works which have appeared over the last few years,[1] especially those of P. Lain-Entralgo, G. Marcel, E. Bloch, J. Pieper, O. F. Bollnow, J. Moltmann, W. D. Marsch, J. B. Metz, E. Schillebeeckx, H. Schlier, J. E. Fison, A. Brunner, G. Sauter etc.,[2] though in fact all these have made contributions.[3] Moreover, on even a brief survey of the hypotheses which have been put forward from the aspects of philosophy, existential ontology, psychology, depths psychology, moral theology, exegesis and systematic theology, the impossibility is plainly revealed of claiming in any sense to [243] provide a full examination of all this wealth of literature.[4] By way of preliminary an attempt should by all means be made to set forth the various ideas of what the essence of hope consists in, the means of attaining to it, and the actual place it occupies in contemporary theology. Anyone who casts an eye precisely at the more recent hypotheses put forward by J. Moltmann and J. B. Metz, including the controversy which has arisen in this connection (though of course we cannot pass any judgment upon this here), will be in the best position to understand that the only considerations which can be put forward here with regard to the problem as a whole are only of the most fragmentary kind. Here we shall be confining ourselves to the area of those questions which have been raised *primarily* by scholastic theology. But this should not be taken to imply that we are remaining wholly within the ambience of this theology as initially worked out in those circles, or that we regard this as adequate for a theology of hope for today. But if we begin with the way of setting out the problems that is more familiar to us from scholastic theology, then we have not only the advantage of opening up an approach which is more generally comprehensible, but also the opportunity of uncovering certain essential aspects and dimensions in the nature of hope. It is true that to arrive at a fruitful understanding in contemporary terms these can be adjusted and rearranged in many ways, but it is also true that they conceal within themselves the hidden treasure of prolonged and

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[1] cf. the bibliography in *L.T.K.* V (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1960), 423/424 (P. Engelhardt).

[2] Apart from the more detailed works cited in *L.T.K.* V, 423 f. cf. P. Lain-Entralgo, *L'attente et l'espérance* (Paris 1966); J. Pieper, *Hoffnung und Geschichte* (Munich 1967); J. Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung* (Munich, 4th ed., 1965); W. D. Marsch, *Hoffen worauf*? (Hamburg 1963); G. Sauter, *Zukunft und Verheissung. Das Problem der Zukunft in der gegenwärtigen theologischen und philosophischen Diskussion* (Zürich-Stuttgart 1965); H. Schlier, *Über die Hoffnung*: *Besinnung auf das Neue Testament. Exegetische Aufsätze und Voträge* (Freiburg 1964), pp. 135-145; P. Engelhardt, 'Der Mensch und seine Zukunft. Zur Frage nach dem Menschen bei Thomas von Aquin', *Die Frage nach dem Menschen. Festschrift für Max Müller*, H. Rombach ed. (Freiburg 1966), pp. 352-374; P. Schütz, *Charisma Hoffnung* (Hamburg 1962); *idem*, *Parusia – Hoffnung und Prophetie* (Heidelberg 1960); J. B. Metz, *Verantwortung der Hoffnung* (Mainz 1968).

[3] cf. further from the wide field of connected literature, H. Kimmerle, *Die Zukunftsbedeutung der Hoffnung. Auseinandersetzung mit dem Hauptwerk Ernst Blochs* (Bonn 1966); E. Roeder von Diersburg, *Zur Ontologie und Logik offener Systeme. Ernst Bloch vor dem Gesetz der Tradition* (Hamburg 1967).

[4] This also applies particularly to the works on the history of theology, cf. e.g. L.A. Arand, *St Augustine, Faith, Hope and Charity* (London 1947); M. Lods, *L'espérance chrétienne d'Origène à St. Augustin* (Paris 1952); R. Schwarz, *Fides, spes und caritas beim jungen Luther* (Berlin 1962); L. Ballay, *Der Hoffnungsbegriff bei Augustinus*, = *M.T.S.* 2, 29 (Munich 1964).

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mature experience, and this may, perhaps, be able to make a contribution which is not inessential by deepening and filling out the hypotheses put forward in contemporary theology, or even serving as a kind of corrective to them.

I

Primarily, therefore, we are taking as axiomatic what is laid down in the classic theology of the scholastics: the existence of three theological virtues in man which are 'divine', which go to make up the concrete content of his justification to the extent that this can be conceived of as the power to produce acts which are directly salvific in faith, hope and love. Scholastic theology is also concerned with the specific quality of these 'divine' virtues to the extent that the theological virtues of their nature [244] signify God himself as he who, in an act of grace which is unmerited, which raises man to a supernatural level and 'divinises' him, directly constitutes himself, in the glory which is proper to his own interior nature, as the salvation and the ultimate goal of the creature endowed with spiritual faculties. Yet a further tenet of scholastic theology is the existence of hope as the second of these three virtues, one which follows upon faith and constitutes a prior condition for love. Again scholastic theology is concerned to define the nature of hope on the one hand inasmuch as it is a quality proper to the will and the exercise of its freedom, causing it to reach out in a spirit of trust in God for God himself as the absolute good and therefore as salvation, and to the extent that on the other hand this good appears as something still to be attained, something difficult of attainment, i.e. not immediately or evidently attainable, yet which is, nevertheless, made possible for us to attain through God's promise and in the light of his omnipotence and his kindness in forgiving us. Again scholastic theology draws a sharp dividing line between presumption on the one hand and despair on the other, and a further point is that all particular and individual goods which are still unattained and which are difficult of attainment, but are nevertheless genuine and possible, are subsumed under the subject-matter of the theological virtue of hope, in so far as these are included in God's purposes, a 'means' of attaining to salvation. In scholastic theology the christological aspect of hope is also dealt with inasmuch as Christ, the risen Lord, constitutes the concrete realisation in history, and the eschatological consummation of the divine promise which is the basis for hope and which makes it possible. It defines the connection between hope and certain related attitudes or individual aspects such as 'expectancy', 'perseverance', 'patience', 'trust', 'assurance of salvation', 'self-interested love', 'selfless love'. And a further point which is defined in scholastic theology is the relationship of theological hope to hope in general considered as a basic 'existential' or essential factor in human living as such. It is concerned with the nature of hope to the extent that this is not merely an individual 'virtue' practised in isolation by one who is pursuing his own private salvation, but rather something that provides a basic framework for the attitude of the people of God as such on their pilgrimage, and one in which each individual does not merely hope for himself alone, but each hopes for all. All this – and certainly in itself it already constitutes a major and difficult task to investigate – must be regarded as given and presupposed.

[245]

II

A first attempt to penetrate somewhat more deeply into the nature of hope must now be made, and in order to do this we shall take as our starting-point the classic principle of

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Catholic theology that hope is a special *theological* virtue which must be assigned a place together with and between faith and love.

At first this statement seems to be readily understandable. A theological virtue is an attitude freely adopted by the subject endowed with intellect and will, yet supported by God's self-bestowal in grace. It is an attitude which is related not, as with the moral virtues, to a particular finite moral value which can be defined in 'this-worldly' categories, but bears upon God himself as he is 'in and for himself', and as such becomes, in a direct sense through this act of self-bestowal in grace, our absolute good. In this way, therefore, God becomes radically and effectively 'God for us'. But hope bears precisely upon God in this sense, God who has promised himself to us in this dimension of his nature and who constitutes our absolute future.[5] This seems to be enough to enable us to understand the fact that hope is one of the three theological virtues and why it should be so. In fact, however, not everything is *ipso facto* clear, especially if we are to understand that hope is not merely a preliminary and provisional form of faith and love, not merely faith and love 'on the way' and before they have attained their goal, not merely, therefore, a form conditioned by that situation in human existence in which we are still making pilgrimage and therefore in danger. On the contrary hope is to be thought of as a unique theological virtue in its own right, and one which cannot be reduced to the other two. This, however, is not clear immediately or without further explanation.

In order to recognise the obscurity here we must consider the following factors. In the doctrine of the Trinity[6] we know of *two* 'processions', in other words two modes of mediation through which God as ungenerated (the Father) utters himself and possesses himself in love, so that three modes of subsistence in the one God are constituted, the 'procession' as Word and also as 'breathing forth love'. In conformity with this, in any Christian interpretation of man, we must hold fast, in spite of many [246] contrary tendencies of recent times, to the fact that there are two basic modes of human (transcendental) self-realisation: awareness of, and reflection upon the self through knowledge and through free love, corresponding to the two basic transcendentals *Verum* and *bonum*, in which the one (*unum*) being (*ens*) imposes itself. These two basic transcendentals, then, are such that we cannot at will add any others to them on the same plane. Thus it appears that from what we know both of God and of man it is natural to expect two basic attitudes to be involved in man's right realisation of his own nature, two basic virtues which correspond to this original transcendental duality inherent in man. This is all the more true in view of the fact that a 'divine' or theological virtue is sustained precisely by God's self-bestowal, and the response of the creature who has personal status and is endowed with spiritual faculties to this divine self-bestowal is precisely made possible and effective by the divine self-bestowal itself. Now there are only two such modes or – better – aspects in this *one* divine self-bestowal: the first aspect is constituted by the *Logos* and the second by the divine *Pneuma*. It is precisely through these two aspects that God as ungenerated, God the 'Father' (not, therefore, an abstract divinity!), who is incomprehensible and never loses his incomprehensibility even through his act of divine self-bestowal, imparts himself. Because of this we cannot imagine that the Trinity in the modes of subsistence in the one God implies *ipso facto* that there is also a trinity in the response by which we accept this self-bestowal of the Father in *Logos* and in *Pneuma*. The fact that there is only *one* act of self-bestowal in which the 'Father' imparts himself in *Logos* and *Pneuma* implies that in the response, i.e. the 'theological' virtue, of man

[5] cf. K. Rahner, 'Marxist Utopia…', *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 59-68, *idem*, 'A Fragmentary Aspect of a Theological Evaluation of the Concept of the Future', in this volume, pp. 235-241.
[6] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Mysterium Salutis II*, J. Feiner, M. Löhrer edd. (Einsiedeln 1967), pp. 317-410.

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which is itself upheld by this divine self-bestowal, only a single act is conceivable with *two* modalities: faith and love, to correspond to the Word and the Love of the Father.

It also seems to be in conformity with this that in the theology of the bible the twofold combination of faith and love is earlier than our threefold combination of faith, hope and love, even though in not a few passages in the New Testament itself ε0λπι/φ has been inserted between πι/στιφ and α)γα&πη. Thus hope is intended to figure primarily as a mere formal aspect of faith and love taken together, the power and the mode in which man, while still in peril, lovingly yearns for God as the absolute essence of truth as apprehended by his faith, and as the absolute essence of all that is good as the goal of his love, reaching out for him under these aspects as a salvation that is still to be attained in the future, but is, nevertheless, promised. Hence it is that hope does not figure so very clearly as a distinct attitude in its own right with an independent status of its own and [247] a nature of its own somewhere between faith and love. Nor can we evade the question arising from this merely by pointing out first that hope is appropriate to the nature of this present life considered as a pilgrimage, as provisional, as lived in *statu viatoris*, seeing that later it is to be left behind, abrogated, once we 'possess' God, and second that this is also proper to faith, which ceases and gives way to the vision which is 'face to face'. For in one passage in which he is dealing with all three of the theological virtues which he mentions in 1 Cor 13 Paul ascribes to them a definitive permanence, a με&νειν that is absolute. Thus he does not recognise any total abrogation of πι/στιφ or ε0λπι/φ. On the other hand, however, and *e converso*: If we follow the traditional interpretation, and regard hope as coming to an end with 'possession', just as faith comes to an end with 'vision', then this 'possession' of God would still be constituted precisely by a vision and a love which unites, and hope would once more appear as the mere mode in which man for the time being, and in his *statu viatoris* strives for this possession of God as truth and love. Hope as such would be abrogated in a far more radical manner than faith, which is raised to the level of vision. In comparison with faith or vision and with love, whether as still in process of development or in its definitive form, we would constantly be in a position where we could not yet ascribe this status to hope as of the same origin as these other virtues and as 'enduring' like them as that in which the basic fulness of human life is achieved in the attainment of God. Thus at this stage it seems as though we can only construct a triad of divine virtues by postulating an interrelationship of initially disparate concepts which is relatively superficial, and only in such a triad can hope be considered one of the three theological virtues. Now despite all appearances to the contrary this problem is not a question of subtle, and ultimately superfluous playing with concepts. On the contrary, the process of finding the answer to it will bring us perforce to a deeper understanding of the nature of hope, and thereby of man and even of God himself. This is why we have dwelt upon this problem in all its acuteness. But what is the solution to it?

III

It would certainly be false for us to seek to find a solution to the problem by contesting the statements which have been made, as for instance by holding that ultimately speaking what is being postulated is a third basic power to which hope would correspond as its appropriate virtue. In fact we do not need to conceive of the triad of the theological virtues as such [248] that it necessarily presents us with three virtues together, unified by a strict principle of distinction which is common to them all in the same sense and at the same level, so that they have precisely the *same* relationship *among themselves*. We do not necessarily need to argue against the correctness of regarding these three virtues as constituting a triad. We do not need to adopt this approach even though 'hope' is regarded as the midterm and the common factor

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between the two other virtues. Admittedly in saying this we are assuming that it is not regarded merely as a *transient* modality of the two other virtues and of the 'powers' corresponding to these, but rather as that property which endures in them, and which draws both equally together into one. We must not regard hope merely as standing 'between' the two other virtues. Rather we must think of it as constituting the original and unifying medium between them. If we can show this then we are justified in speaking of a triad, but at the same time we do not have to conclude from its existence that hope must be related to faith and love in precisely the same way as these two are related to each other. Nor is it, ultimately speaking, of decisive importance whether the basic modality of the relationship to God as understood here is that which is called 'hope' in the common parlance of everyday, or whether rather there is something which lies concealed behind this term, but which, nevertheless, this term is used to point to because there is no better one for it.

It is common practice in scholastic theology to replace the vision of this quality of hope which is so obscurely pointed to by the conceptual model according to which hope is dissolved by 'possession', by the 'attainment of the goal'. This conceptual model is drawn from everyday experience, and from the experience of 'hope' at the profane level. Initially, for instance, we 'hope' for a position in life which we have not yet attained to. But once this has been achieved, once we 'have' it, then we no longer need to 'hope', but at most hope to retain that which we have achieved, though in that case we experience or interpret this attitude as something quite different from 'hope'. But what is to be said of precisely *that* basic act in which (it is called theological hope) we reach out towards God? Can we interpret this basic act too as a mere provisional attitude which will be dissolved once we have attained to that state of 'possession' which itself in turn is constituted by 'vision' and unifying 'love'? In that case hope will be abolished as something that belongs to the past, because now there is nothing more that has to be 'hoped for', but rather everything is already in our possession, and we do not even have to fear that we may lose what has been attained to, in other words we do not even have to hope that this will continue permanently. But is this line of thought correct?

[249] In fact, however, it is questionable in the extreme – in other words basically inadequate – to take as our guide the conceptual model of 'possession' in order to understand the definitive consummation of man's life, and on this basis to conceive of hope as that which is merely provisional. This conceptual model in fact distorts the special quality of man's final consummation as consisting in vision and love, and thereby too that basic modality belonging to this final consummation which is both expressed and concealed at the same time in the term 'hope'. This basic modality only constitutes the authentic nature of *that* theological hope in so far as it is present in the life of the pilgrim here below – and here admittedly it has a certain provisional quality. The act of attaining to God as truth in the 'vision' of God in fact allows for the transcendence of this God as the incomprehensible. The event in which this takes place, inasmuch as it is made possible by the divine self-bestowal, is not the act in which the absolute mystery which is God is finally overcome and solved, but rather the act in which this truly unfathomable mystery in all its finality and its overpowering acuteness is no longer able to be suppressed, but must be sustained and endured as it is in itself without any possibility of escape into that which can be comprehended and so controlled and subordinated to the subject and his own nature as it exists prior to any elevation by grace. The act of attaining to love as love is the response to, and acceptance of, a love which, totally independent of any element in ourselves, is rather freedom in its most radically incalculable form. The intelligibility of this love is not to be found in any prior quality in ourselves which makes us 'worthy to be loved' (even though the love itself does confer this). On the contrary, it always depends totally and eternally on this freedom of God which is based on nothing else than itself alone. In this radical sense the love we are speaking of is, and remains eternally,

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'grace'.[7] The 'possession' of God – if in spite of what has been said we may still use this term – is that radical transcendence of self and surrender of self which is entailed in the act of reaching out for truth into the unfathomable mystery, and it is also the radical self-surrender and self-transcendence of that love which cannot charm love from the beloved through any act of self-surrender on its part, but lives totally by the love of that which is beloved as based on nothing else than itself. It is pure act of reception and *as such* sustains the mutual interplay or *commercium* of the love involved, but is not itself upheld by this *commercium*.

[250] These qualities inherent in the response to and acceptance of God as truth and as love have an interior unity and a common source in the one radical attitude which draws us 'out of ourselves' into that which is utterly beyond our control. This 'letting of one's self go' is certainly the essence of man, rightly understood *in the concrete* as already bearing 'grace' within itself. Once he has discovered this nature of his and freely assented to it, man has attained to freedom in the true sense, which consists in realising himself and fulfilling the meaning of his life. And precisely this fulfilment of his nature is that 'outwards from the self' attitude of the finite subject reaching out into the incomprehensibility and incircumscribability of God as truth and as love. In the word 'hope' this one unifying 'outwards from the self' attitude into God as the absolutely uncontrollable finds expression. Hope, therefore, represents this unifying medium between faith or vision and love (still on the way and also, even when it has achieved its 'goal'). *Hence "hope" does not, in this most ultimate sense, express a modality of faith and love so long as these are at the provisional stage. On the contrary, it is a process of constantly eliminating the provisional in order to make room for the radical and pure uncontrollability of God. It is the continuous process of destroying that which appears, in order that the absolute and ultimate truth may be the intelligible as comprehended, and love may be that which is brought about by our love.* We would like to be those who set up God for ourselves through that which we ourselves do, acting (morally) as free and intelligent beings, and thereby having him as ours to dispose of as we will. But hope is the name of an attitude in which we dare to commit ourselves to that which is radically beyond all human control in both of man's basic dimensions, that, therefore, which is attained to precisely at that point at which the controllable is definitively transcended, i.e. in the ultimate consummation of eternal life. Taken in this sense hope is that which 'endures'. And this means that it also shares in this character of 'enduring' which is involved in the definitive finality of the relationship to absolute truth. Hence Paul can say that faith itself 'endures', even when vision has been attained to. A further point also becomes clear in the light of this, namely that the love of eternity can only rightly be understood if it is thought of as carrying the quality of 'hope', so that we can just as truly speak of a *fides* and *caritas spe formata* as of a *fides* and *spes caritate formata*. Hope implies the one basic character which is the common factor in the mutual interplay of truth and love: the enduring attitude of 'outwards from self' into the uncontrollability of God. Conversely we can say: where hope is achieved as the radical self-submission to the absolute uncontrollable, there alone do we truly understand [251] what, or still better *who* God is. He is that which of its very existence empowers us to make this radical self-commitment to the absolute uncontrollable in the act of knowledge and love. One might almost say our radical self-commitment to the 'absurdity' of truth and love, because both derive their true essence – quite otherwise to what we would have thought at first sight – from the incomprehensibility and uncontrollability of truth and love in themselves.

This means that radically speaking hope is not the modality of the historical process by which we pass through time to that state which is definitive and eternal, but rather the basic

[7] On the question as a whole cf. also K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), 'The "Commandment" of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments', pp. 439-459.

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modality of the very *attitude to the eternal* which precisely as such sets the true advance towards eternity 'in train'. In the light of this both presumption *and* despair are, at basis, the refusal of the subject to allow himself to be grasped by the uncontrollability and to be drawn out of himself by it. Clearly all that has been said with regard to the ultimate nature of hope does not imply any denial of the fact that it itself, in the *status viatoris* it bears certain properties which can no longer be ascribed to it in the eternal life in which it achieves its consummation. But these properties – the striving for the finite *within* that process in which the encounter with the provisional is still taking place – conceal more than they unveil the innermost essence of hope. For this encounter, even when we rise above it in our hope for the future, always gives rise to the impression that that which is definitive and final too will one day be possessed in the same way as now we comprehend, dominate and so dispose of the provisional and temporary benefits available to us.

IV

We must now adopt a second approach, and attempt thereby to penetrate still more deeply into the absolute essence of hope. In this we must once more take as our starting-point certain familiar theological data. In this way it will be sought to clarify still further the unique and original nature of hope which, perhaps, even after our first approach, still continues to be understood as a modality of faith and love in *such a way that* it is not sufficiently made clear how faith and love too themselves only appear rightly in their true nature when they are conceived of in the light of the original and independent status of hope.

In the average Catholic theology hope appears almost as an inevitable consequence of faith. Faith is the assent and apprehension not merely of the theoretical statements in which divine revelation is formulated, but also of God's promises which are proclaimed in this revelation, the [252] promises of grace, of forgiveness and of eternal life. Once these promises are apprehended and are present by *faith* itself, then – so the average theology of hope appears unreflectingly to suppose – everything is clear and simple. These promises which are present and apprehended by faith itself considered as *fides historica et dogmatica* apparently set hope in train of themselves. Hope as a reaction on the part of the free will appears to be the simple consequence of the *assensus intellectualis* of faith considered as the act by which revelation is initially accepted, but it is this only provided that this freedom is not used to block the way in an incomprehensible and nonsensical refusal of these promises as theoretically apprehended, to which faith has already given its assent and which it offers to the free will as a subject on which to exercise its power.

This conception of hope, unreflecting for the most part but nonetheless real, is of course only the reflection of a more general theoretical intellectualism, according to which the 'will' is almost reduced to the status of the executive power for attaining to that good which is the *verum* of the intellect as *ipso facto* attained to, and which, therefore, in its original essence as the final consummation of knowledge as such, also signifies its beatitude. In saying this we have no intention of entering into the questions raised in the traditional controversy between Thomism and Scotism, or of supporting an option in favour of will, freedom and love as against 'intellect', if from both points of view the matter is conceived of as a choice between two 'powers'. Both historically speaking and of their real natures, the factors involved are not so simple. On the contrary, what has just been said is intended to be understood as an indication of a prior and more radical unity of knowledge and will, which the word 'hope' is precisely intended to represent in its status as a prior medium or common factor between faith and love, and therefore between knowledge and will.

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But let us notice in greater detail the misunderstanding indicated above, in which hope is interpreted as a simple consequence of faith. On the one hand what does faith offer in the way of promise if it is understood in the traditional sense of *assensus intellectualis* as put forward by the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council? And what promise is it, on the other hand, that becomes the object of hope as such? We can and must answer this question in the following terms: in both cases it is far from being precisely the same promise, however much the second too, though not in isolation, may be based upon the first and depend upon it. From this a fresh insight can be obtained into the special quality and radical uniqueness of hope. Faith – viewed more in its 'theoretical' nature (including in this the dogmatic and historical specifications) – can only [253] proclaim the 'metaphysical' kindness and holiness of God, the universal and fundamental meaningfulness of existence, God's universal will to save all men as 'prior' to man's response and conditioned by it, the existence of 'sufficient grace' for all and the existence of 'efficacious grace' for 'those in whom its presence cannot be recognised', so that we can never know precisely to whom this efficacious grace is *de facto* to be attributed. Faith in this sense, therefore, can only express a universal 'promise'. *This* faith as such cannot tell me that God has conferred this efficacious grace precisely on *me* in particular and is thus bringing about my salvation in the concrete.

Now if it were sought to object to this point that it is only through some inexcusable *fault* that a given individual can forfeit salvation in general and so *his* salvation, which is set before him as something that is possible and actually offered to him precisely through this faith and the universal promise of freedom which it contains, then we must rejoin that, without prejudice to the fact of the inexcusable fault on the individual's part, the distinction between 'sufficient' and 'efficacious' grace is prior to this as established *by God himself*, so that the presence or otherwise of this efficacious grace does not simply depend upon his fault. Faith in its theoretical aspects, therefore, cannot overcome this difference which is established by the freedom of choice of God's grace, and so not subject to any influence of ours. It cannot remove this difference according to which there is a distinction between the universal promise and the concrete and particular promise which intends and brings about the salvation of me as a concrete individual through this 'efficacious' grace. Certainly grace as formulated in dogmatic terms only realises its authentic nature and attains its true purpose when it is subsumed and transcended, when the theoretical promise which is proper to it is transformed into the specific and particular promise in which it is applied to the individual. But this takes place precisely in virtue of the fact that faith is transformed into hope. The free subject recognises that in spite of his freedom, and precisely *in* it he himself is subject to God's control, even though it still remains true that this cannot diminish his personal responsibility before God. Wherever and whenever he exercises his freedom to receive the salvation that is offered to him, this acceptance is itself in turn the effect of the grace of God which as such is unmerited and '*effective*', not merely 'sufficient'. The will of God is 'prior' to the decision of man in his freedom. And this will of God is as such distinct from God himself and not merely from man, so that it is beyond our powers to discern even so far as theoretical faith is concerned. Does this will of God, even at that level at which it is prior to my free [254] decision, *de facto* represent the ultimate and definitive meaning of existence for me in particular in such a way as to exclude all other possible meanings? This is a question which no-one can answer by turning the fundamental statement of theoretical faith with regard to the general promise of God's will to save all men into an absolute statement. But although such a statement is not possible *theoretically* speaking, and though we cannot achieve any positive knowledge of the meaning of existence or of our salvation in the concrete, nevertheless we must find another way of making this assertion to ourselves, because a positive decision of this kind is necessary for the subject himself who takes the initiative: I must hope.

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Hope, then, is an act in which we base ourselves in the concrete upon that which cannot be pointed to in any adequate sense at the theoretical level, that which ultimately speaking is absolutely beyond our power to control, namely upon God who, in himself, can be the God of grace *or* the God of anger, but who in this case is apprehended as the God of grace and under no other aspect. And it is apparent from what has been said that hope in this sense is a basic modality of human existence. Hope, therefore, is not merely a function which follows manifestly from knowledge, including in this the factor of theoretical faith. Certainly it can be demonstrated 'in theory' and 'in principle' that there must be hope. But this does not make hope a secondary function of the insight provided by theoretical faith. For the concrete hope of each individual in particular for *his* salvation is, in a certain sense, authorised even prior to any theoretical judgment precisely by this theoretical insight and by his knowledge of the general promise. But while this is true, still this hope cannot be constituted by these factors alone. They cannot provide the actual *basis* for this concrete hope. This can only be the 'efficacious' will of God to save as applied to the concrete individual case, and it proceeds from God alone and remains hidden in him. This 'basis' is not something that faith provides for hope, but rather something that is grasped solely by hope as such. As providing the basis for hope the will of God to save in the concrete is only present and attained to in hope itself and as such. It is the hope that is not derived from something other than itself, i.e. from faith, unless indeed we are to understand faith – with Luther – as being itself *fides fiducialis* and as such already including hope within itself. But this would be to obliterate the sound and permanent distinction between theoretical and practical awareness.

Hope, therefore, appears as *that* act in which the uncontrollable is made present as that which sanctifies, blesses and constitutes salvation without losing its character as radically beyond our powers to control, precisely [255] because this salvific future is hoped for but not manipulated or controlled. However true it may be that hope has its basis in the special, but uncontrollable promise of God, it still can and must be said without any cheap attempts at paradox, that it is only hope itself that provides its own basis and in this sense creates that basis. For this special and particular promise takes place only *for* the individual who hopes as such, and only in hope itself as such. Hope alone is the *locus* of God as he who cannot be controlled or manipulated, and so of God as such.

This does not mean that the function of hope as the medium of the theological virtues is removed. The *perichoresis*, the mutual interaction between the three theological virtues by which they condition one another and permeate one another (cf. above Sections II-III), is not disrupted. But what we have said does, perhaps make plainer that in hope which is irreducibly unique and underived: we only know who God is and who man is when we hope, i.e. when we take as our basis that which is incalculable and uncontrollable as the blessed which as such, and only in this guise, makes itself present to us in hope. The expression 'the incalculable and uncontrollable as the blessed' here is to be taken as the expression of a closer identification, although one that presents it more as having the nature of an event. For he who commits himself to the absolutely incalculable and uncontrollable is committing himself to the blessed one and to salvation. Presumption *and* despair both entail the same basic refusal to commit oneself and so to abandon oneself to the incalculable and the uncontrollable.

This does not mean that the status of Christ as the fundamental promise of hope is done away with in favour of a hope which, by its sheer radical quality, is based upon itself. For precisely this radical quality inherent in the 'outwards from self' movement into the absolute incalculability and uncontrollability of God as our absolute future, is based upon that grace of God which finds its unique historical manifestation in Christ precisely as *crucified*, and thereby as surrendering himself in the most radical sense to the disposing hand of God. It is in this historical manifestation that the grace we are considering here definitively establishes

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itself in the world. But precisely this takes place in the death of Christ as the most radical act of hope ('into *thy* hands I deliver up my life').

Whatever divisions there may be in human powers, in theory and practice, in knowledge and in free love, they are all subsumed alike in respect of what is common to all and what is peculiar to each of these elements, under the single factor of their common creaturehood and their orientation to God who, in his act of self-bestowal, makes himself the [256] absolute future of man. And to this extent the act of hope stands revealed as the acceptance of this orientation towards the incalculability and uncontrollability of God. This act comprehends and unifies all these divisions even though, in order to be realised in the concrete, it has itself to be distinguished into faith and love. For, even allowing for this, this orientation must come from God and find its consummation in attaining to him.

V

In order to allay the suspicion that up to now we have been speaking of hope too much in terms of individual salvation, our considerations must now be supplemented by a third line of approach. Certainly it is not possible to include a full treatment of all that contemporary theology and existential ontology has to say with regard to the cosmic and social dimensions of hope, with regard to hope as exercised by the people of God on pilgrimage as such and in the course of its journey, with regard to the exodus which this people is constantly undertaking afresh, quitting all situations which have become 'frozen' and static in all dimensions of human existence.

Let us concentrate simply upon a single small passage in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (cf. C. IV, No. 35) which has for the most part gone unnoticed. There it is stated with regard to the laity that they should not conceal their eschatological hope in the innermost depths of their hearts (*in interioritate animi*), but should rather give it concrete expression ('exprimant') in the complexities and in the framework (*per structuras*) of secular life (*vitae saecularis*). This admonition is found in the context of the prophetic function of the laity in the Church and in the world. Surely it would be to misunderstand it if we sought to interpret it merely as a moralising conclusion of a secondary kind, following from the nature of that hope which the 'sons' of *the* 'promise' (*ibid.*) could ultimately speaking have lived by even without 'informing' the secular framework of the world with their hope in this way.[8] Contrary to this view, the admonition contains a statement about an element which is essential to hope itself. The process by which this becomes an achieved reality involves a permanent transformation of the framework of secular life. Abstracting for the moment from the fact that 'revolution' is an extremely indeterminate and ambiguous concept, we might go so far as to say that the significance of this admonition is that Christian hope is at [257] basis a continually revolutionary attitude on the part of Christians in the world. If we interpret the significance of Christianity aright, and if Christians themselves have a right understanding of the real significance of their own commitment, then the position is the diametrical opposite of what is generally thought both within and without the Christian body. The hope that is directed towards the absolute future of God, towards that eschatological salvation which is God himself as absolute, is not entertained in order to justify an attitude of conservatism which, from motives of anxiety, prefers a certain present to an unknown future and so petrifies everything. It is not the 'opium of the people' which soothes them in their present circumstances even though these are painful. Rather it is that

[8] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the "New Earth"', in the present volume, pp. 260-272.

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which commands them, and at the same time empowers them, to have trust enough constantly to undertake anew an exodus out of the present into the future (even within the dimension of this world).

In reality man as physical and as belonging to the historical dimension actually fulfills the ultimately transcendental structures of his own nature not in the abstract 'interiority' of a mere attitude of mind, but in intercourse with the world, the world made up of his own environment and of his fellow men. 'Practice' in the real sense, and as opposed to, and radically different from, theory, is, moreover, not confined solely to the mere execution of what has been planned and so is merely theoretical, but rather consists of an opening of the sphere of action in general and an attitude in which we dare to enter upon that which has not been planned, so that it is only in practice itself that any genuine possibility is given of what we have been bold enough to commit ourselves to. Planning may be necessary and justified in the manipulation of our environment (by technical measures), of the society we live in (by social measures), and of man himself. But all this does not derogate from the element of the unplanned which presses in upon us, and does not reduce it to a mere remnant of the contents of our lives which we have 'not yet' worked out. On the contrary such planning increases the element of that which is unplanned and has the effect of causing it to stand out still more sharply as the outcome of practice itself. Man himself, in the very process of breaking down the factor of the incalculable already present *beforehand* in his life, actually builds up those incalculable factors which are produced by *himself*.[9] Now the effect of these two elements is that in the very act of venturing upon the future which is unforeseen and incalculable in 'this worldly terms' in his practical life as understood here, man realises, and necessarily must [258] realise, his eschatological hope as a commitment 'outwards from self' to that which is incalculable and uncontrollable in an absolute sense. The Christian must, therefore, impress the form of his hope upon the framework of the world he lives in. Of course this does not mean for one moment that certain specific and firm structures of the secular world he lives in could ever be such that they could constitute the enduring objective realisation of his eschatological hope (in the sense of being established as this once and for all). On the contrary, every structure of secular life, whether present *or still to come* in the future, is called in question by hope as that in which we grasp at the incalculable and uncontrollable, and in this process of being called in question, the act of hope is made real in historical and social terms. Admittedly this is not the only way in which this is achieved. The Christian also accepts in the 'form of the world' as it passes over him those factors for which he himself is not responsible, and which he merely has to endure. He accepts these as part of the individual lot of his own personal life in death and in the renunciations which prepare for this, and it is no less true that he makes his hope real and living in this process too. A wildly revolutionary attitude, taken by itself can be one of two things: either it implies that an absolute value is accorded to the form which the world is about to assume in the immediate future, in which case it is the opposite of hope, namely a form of presumption which only recognises that which can be controlled and manipulated, or which treats that which is not subject to our control or calculations as though it were so. Alternatively this attitude signifies despair, a state in which nothing more is hoped for, and therefore everything is absolutely negated because there is nothing final or definitive, or because nothing of this kind exists at all. But to subject the structures of this world too to constant reappraisal and criticism is *one* of the concrete forms of Christian hope which, as the courage of self-commitment to the incalculable and uncontrollable, must never hold fast to anything in this worldly life in such a way that it is as though without it man would be cast headlong into an absolute void. Hope

[9] On the problems involved here cf. K. Rahner, 'The Experiment with Man: Theological Observations on Man's Self-Manipulation' in volume IX.

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commands man in the very moment in which, far more clearly than hitherto, he actually becomes the fashioner of his world, not only to let go of that which is taken away from him, but more than this actively to renounce that which, in the light of the limitless future which hope opens up to him, he recognises as provisional, and which, because of this, he can also understand to be dispensable already in this present time.

It is strange that we Christians, who have to achieve the radical commitment of hope in which we venture upon that which is incalculable and uncontrollable in the absolute future, have incurred the suspicion both in [259] the minds of others and in our own that so far as we are concerned the will to guard and preserve is the basic virtue of life. In reality, however, the sole 'tradition' which Christianity precisely as the people of God *on pilgrimage* has acquired on the way is the command to hope in the absolute promise and – in order that thereby this task may not remain at the level merely of a facile ideology of ideas – to set out ever anew from the social structures which have become petrified, old and empty. Precisely *in what* this hope is to be brought to its fulness in the concrete in an exodus which is constantly renewed in this way, precisely *what* the Christian is to hold firm to (for this too is in fact possible) – because his hope also divests the future, even within the temporal dimension, of any false appearance of being the absolute future – this is something which 'theoretic' faith cannot answer as a simple deduction following from its own tenets. This concrete imperative is not merely the result of applying the theory of faith in practice. It would be just as wrong to hold this as to say that faith as such, and by itself transforms the general promise into that special and particular one which is only realised in the original and underivable act of hope. But this hope summons the Christian and Christianity to venture upon this imperative, underivable in each case, in which they have constantly to decide anew between whether they are to defend the present which they already possess, or to embark upon the exodus into the unforeseeable future. This is something which hope can do, for hope itself has in fact already all along achieved something which is even greater. In it man has surrendered himself to that which is absolutely and eternally uncontrollable and incalculable by any powers of his. In the power of this greater hope he also possesses the lesser hope, namely the courage to transform the 'framework of secular life', as the Council puts it, and the converse too is no less true. In this lesser hope the greater one is made real.

There remain, therefore, faith, hope and love – these three. But the greatest of these is love. So says Paul. But we could also translate this: 'Faith, hope and love constitute that which is definitive and final.' Perhaps it has been shown that hope is not simply the attitude of one who is weak and at the same time hungering for a fulfilment that has yet to be achieved, but rather the courage to commit oneself in thought and deed to the incomprehensible and the uncontrollable which permeates our existence, and, as the future to which it is open, sustains it. Perhaps it has also been shown that such courage has the power to dare more than what can be arrived at merely by planning and calculations. Perhaps it has been shown that in the final and definitive consummation hope still prevails and endures, because this definitive consummation is God.

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[260]

14

THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ENTAILED IN THE IDEA OF THE 'NEW EARTH'

The basic imperative which permeates the whole of the 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today' of the Second Vatican Council is the demand that the individuals in the Church shall collaborate in those forms of contemporary human existence which are more worthy of human beings at all of its levels. And in fact – this is the decisive point – this is achieved on the basis of their ultimate Christian interpretation of existence, because their status as men is not something over and above their status as Christians, but rather they act as men precisely because they are Christians. The task which they have in common with all men of good will (even atheists are not excluded from this) is therefore one that they must accomplish on the basis of their specifically Christian faith, their eschatological hope and their love for God and men, that love which has been bestowed upon them *by God himself*. The Constitution interprets this point (at least so it appears in many passages which we shall be considering in greater detail at a later stage) not in the sense that this basic Christian attitude represents merely a certain motivation for fulfilling this task, an ideological 'motive force' or merely a new supplementary, but only formal, duty, presented by the Church in such a way that the *material* content of this task remains unaffected by this motivation and by these new duties. For in that case the content itself would be determined on the basis of a knowledge purely belonging to this world, purely at the level of philosophy and natural law, and existing purely at the concrete and practical level. On this showing the most that revelation would have to do would be to guard this knowledge from any error, and there would be a certain moral necessity in this in the sense implied in the First Vatican Council. What is said rather is, for instance – and even at this stage we are already coming to grips with more precise indications – that Christians must impress the framework of [261] *secular* life with the stamp of their *eschatological hope*. Surely this means that the specifically *Christian* determination of the worldwide task which has actively to be engaged in consists not merely in the fact that the Christian must so fashion the world according to principles of merely natural law that in it Christianity is afforded sufficient room for developing the specifically religious and 'supraworldly' mission which is proper to itself, for in fact this would also be possible even on the basis of tolerance and freedom for an 'ideological' pluralism in society.

But in that case how can this task of creating a world more worthy of men be the common task of all men of good will? How, furthermore, can any 'understanding' be aimed at between all men, if the Christians and members of the Church have basically speaking, after all, a conception of this task which is precisely Christian in its *material content*. Of course the precise nature of what Christianity has to undertake at this level of material content in the task of renewing the world remains at this stage wholly indeterminate and unclear. Can it be then, alternatively, that the conciliar Constitution is taking back what has been said with regard to this task when it emphasises the 'secularity' of the world, the autonomy of the intellectual and cultural areas of human life, and when, still more clearly than in the social encyclicals of the popes from Leo XIII to Pius XII, it lays down that the Church cannot offer any readymade 'blueprints' for the concrete formation of the world and history, explaining rather that to apply such 'blueprints' and imperatives in the concrete is the common task of all men who are conscious of their human responsibilities? Does a certain veiled inconsistency appear at this point in the Constitution, which has still not clearly been resolved? Or is it simply the case that in concrete practice there are still so many tasks to be

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performed in *common*, so many *preparatory* stages to be gone through for Christians and non-Christians together in order to achieve a 'better world' even though there is a material difference between Christians and non-Christians in their interpretations and deeds even at the purely secular level, the way they interpret their goal and their (relatively speaking) completed task? Can we, therefore, allow this difference to go unreconciled for the present, to await our attention as *cura posterior*?

The difficulty, which must first itself be made clearer, consists not so much in the mere fact that a task to be performed in common with *non*-Christians as such has been postulated, for it would in fact be quite possible to hold that even with these there may perhaps be some common ground in that even in the case of non-Christians the ultimate motive force behind their acts and decisions as a part of human history is still, [262] even in their case, precisely *grace*, even though they do not recognise it. It could further be said that in every pluralistic society (and this is recognised by all as the situation in which we have to act in common) the common ground has to be established from *different* currents in human history coming together in a freely achieved harmony. It must not, therefore, be considered in any way surprising that Christians invest this situation of open dialogue and collaboration with their own conception of the future.

II

The difficulty lies, rather, in the nature of the case itself. Have we, or can we have at all, precisely as Christians a peculiarly *Christian* ideology of the future applicable to the secular world? To the extent that the question bears not upon general *principles* whether of 'natural law' or of 'Christianity itself' (though such principles do exist), but rather on a *programme in the concrete*, upon certain unambiguously concrete imperatives (for today and tomorrow, even though they always remain open to the more distant future) it is certainly clear that the official Church *cannot* include any such absolute programme in the concrete in her preaching.[1] This is no part of her commission. She is not capable of it, nor does she claim the right to perform any such function. But this is not merely *ipso facto* to decide the question that has been raised in the negative. For it is still at least conceivable[2] that the Church, as the concrete people of God, does in fact find and choose such a programme in the concrete in a concrete, and in a certain sense 'political' decision even though this is precisely not a mere 'deduction' from the principles of natural law and of Christianity itself. In this connection the question can here remain open of what any such act on the Church's part signifies for the individual Christian in her, i.e. whether as an individual he is *ipso facto* committed to being 'for' it. A further question which must remain open is *how* in the concrete any such historical and 'political' decision on the part of the Church considered as the people of God is arrived at, and *how* she succeeds in putting it into effect in forming the will of secular society *as a whole*, whether this takes [263] the form of a state, an association of nations etc., or alternatively how she strives in vain to do this. It would also be possible to imagine that the official Church, having arrived almost instinctively at such a decision in principle, and having formulated it to herself almost unreflectingly, might then go on to articulate it more plainly in its application to a concrete earthly future for mankind, and to proclaim it in the form of a 'proposal for guidance', something which is clearly to be distinguished from doctrine and

[1] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Grenzen der Amtskirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln 1965), pp. 499-520.
[2] On the distinction which follows cf. the Pastoral Constitution *On the Church in the World of Today*, Nos. 43, 74, 75, 76. In the pages which follow the title of this Conciliar Document will not be included in references to it. Instead the relevant numbers will be given, e.g. No. 43 etc. Other conciliar decrees will be cited by their respective titles.

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commandment. Now if we regard some such measure as possible in principle,[3] i.e. if we recognise an intermediate position which is neither that of the Church in her role as authoritative and as speaking with an official voice, nor yet that of Christians merely as individuals who then act merely as individual members of secular society albeit under Christian 'inspiration', then this in itself would provide us with the material for working out a specifically Christian programme for the future of this present world of this kind, and for arriving at a decision about the present world in this way irrespective of how far *de facto* the Church succeeded in carrying through her ideas.

Is there a future of this kind for the material world, such that it can be mapped out from the point of view of Christianity itself? When the Pastoral Constitution lays down[4] that the future and the world it brings must be 'more humane', 'more just' and 'more peaceable' than the present, that it must be permeated by a justice and love which make possible the free unfolding of each individual man, which cause the unity of mankind as a family of brothers to develop, which wage war more effectively upon the destructive spirit of egoism and other kinds of sinfulness etc., when it further goes on to apply these basic principles in detail to the concrete realities in the form of demands for a just policy, upholding the status of the family and so guarding the dignity of man, working out an economic system that is just, working for peace etc., then certainly this does set the goal which Christianity, i.e. the Christian faith and the command of God, demands. But still, in all this there is nothing specifically Christian in what is here proclaimed as the content of the future which is to be striven for. Again the same is also true of the statement that the future shaping of society must be permeated by a Christian spirit. Nor is it any [264] clearer that anything more has been added when emphasis is laid upon the fact that love of God and love of neighbour are one, or when the importance of revelation is extolled as contributing to the effective recognition of man's dignity. Indeed it would be possible to think not only that the emphasis on the fact that all Christians have this earthly task in common with all men of good will (e.g. No. 21 etc.) is rather an indication that the answer to our question is negative, but also that this is made even more probable by the fact that a distinction is drawn between man's 'total' (otherworldly) vocation and his earthly task (No. 11). This is shown from such statements as that the 'building up of the world' 'contributes to the total vocation of man' (No. 35), that the growth of the kingdom of God on the one hand, and earthly progress on the other, are distinguished as two different entities (Nos. 36, 38, 39, 42, 43), and also from the fact that emphasis is laid upon the relative autonomy of the order of creation (Nos. 34, 36, 39, 41, 59, 67). But even though the connections are also emphasised a distinction is drawn between responsibility for the world order and the duty of striving to attain to our homeland in heaven. Emphasis is also laid upon the fact that the two orders of knowledge are distinct (No. 59) etc.

III

But we must now consider the other side. What does it mean to say that there is a unity of mankind such that on the one hand it is based on *Christ* (No. 32) and must *grow* until the time of consummation is reached (No. 32), while on the other hand it still seems not simply to be in all respects identical with the Church as such seeing that in fact the whole of mankind

[3] For a more developed treatment of this cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur theologischen Problematik einer Pastoralkonstitution' in *Volk Gottes. Zum Kirchenverständnis der katholischen, evangelischen und anglikanischen Theologie*, R. Bäumer and H. Dolch edd. (Festgabe für J. Höfer) (Freiburg 1967), pp. 683-703, in the present volume, pp. 293-317.

[4] On the following points cf. the Pastoral Constitution Nos. 11, 15, 21, 23, 24, 26, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, 55, 57, 58, 61, 63, 76.

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must be brought into the unity of the family of God?[5] What does it mean to say that the kerygma of the gospel is, to a certain extent, already latent in the human situation even before it is brought to light, for instance through art and theology (No. 62)? What is the significance of emphasising that humanity strives for a future in which mankind itself will become an offering pleasing to God (No. 38), in which it is also mentioned that the earthly service of mankind makes ready the 'material of the celestial realm' (No. 38)? At several points in the deliberations of the Council [265] mention is made of the 'new earth' and the 'new heaven'. This 'new earth' is, in fact, certainly presented as the eschatological gift of God himself and is, therefore, not simply the outcome of the *progressus terrenus* (No. 39). But at the same time it is also not simply something which replaces what has gone before, in that it merely suppresses and does away with this, but rather a transformation of the world as it has existed hitherto (*transformatio mundi*, No. 38; *universi transformandi*, No. 39). But this world which is so to be transformed still appears to be not simply that which God himself has fashioned (in other words the substantial continuance of this simply as such). For it is said (No. 39) that not only love endures but also the *work* (*opus*) of this, and that we will also 'rediscover' the *industriae nostrae fructus*, in other words, surely, the fruits of human activity itself (since these are, in fact, thought of as 'purified'). Surely what is being thought of, therefore, as the world which has to be transformed, is that which man himself has shaped in 'projecting further the work of creation' (Nos. 34, 57). For this 'further projection of the creation' of God is often mentioned even when it is regarded as the carrying out precisely of the will of God as *Creator*, and so as distinct in a certain respect from the supernatural will of God to save. The divine love is also the law of the *transformatio mundi* (No. 38), and an intrinsic element in this is a *fraternitas universalis* which manifestly consists in something more than simply the Church as such (*ibid*.). The eschatological hope has itself to impose its own stamp upon the framework of the *vita saecularis* (*Lumen gentium* No. 35). While, therefore, the *renovatio mundi* is already an irrevocably established fact and is already to be anticipated in a real manner even *in hoc saeculo* (*Lumen gentium* No. 48), still this presence by anticipation of the eschatological *renovatio mundi* is surely given not merely in the Church in her *kerygma* and cult *exclusively*, but also precisely in the framework of the *vita saecularis*. Only so can mankind as it exists in the present give some idea in basic outline of what the future world is to be (No. 39). The indications supplied by the Constitution must certainly not be pressed too far in our interpretation. Certainly in the Constitution there is no clear attempt to work out how the 'formation of the future at the secular level and in a purely earthly and transient sense by the Christian spirit' on the one hand, and the 'Christian formation of the future brought about by man himself and having a final and definitive significance' on the other are alternatives. Nor is it really made clear precisely *how* we should react to these alternatives. But for all this the Constitution does lead us, albeit itself hesitating and feeling its way, to the point where we have to face up to these questions.

[266]

IV

Perhaps as a result of what has been said the real problem now becomes clear with which we are here concerned: is the world which man himself fashions only the 'material' in which he has morally to prove himself, and which in itself remains indifferent? And when the final

[5] cf. Nos. 40, 43; *Lumen gentium* No. 28. What is being referred to here, however, is surely not that controversial question, the process of incorporating the whole of humanity into the Church and so *this particular* sense of the phrase *unitas familiae Dei*, especially in view of the fact that the 'growing body of the new family of mankind' is not to be thought of merely as a quantitative entity and is not identical with the Church, and yet does represent an *adumbratio* of the world to come (cf. No. 39).

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consummation of the kingdom of God comes, will the world simply be done away with? The problem expressed in this question has in fact become more acute of itself in view of the fact that this world is no longer *merely* the 'situation' brought about by God himself in which man has to act in a morally right way. A further and more pressing reason is that it is a world which has reached a second stage in realising its potential: man himself takes it upon himself as a task with which he has been commissioned to fashion it and so to complete, in a process of historical evolution, the creative work of God himself. Can we nevertheless compare the world as understood here with the rush-baskets which the ancient monks of the Scythian desert wove by day and unravelled once more in the evening in order that they might fill up without sinning the interval of waiting for the eternity of this future which still lay wholly before them? Or does this second world, itself pass, albeit inconceivably 'transformed', into the *eschaton* properly so called? Does the 'new earth' come down from heaven (even though, as it were, on the 'neutral ground' which God once fashioned and which is constituted by the fact that the body remains substantially one and the same even after it is glorified, and by the material world only in so far as it is entailed by *this*)? Or alternatively will this world be constructed here in time by man himself? Are we to read the relevant phrase as 'new earth' or 'renewed earth' (admittedly taking this as applying to the final consummation of God who is eternally new)?

Formerly the question could not be put in so plain a manner. For precisely *this* world did not exist before. Man lived in a world of 'nature', which he simply had to accept as something already given. In so far as he himself produced anything it was only small and frail, from the body which died to the relatively minor products which were the material outcome of the exercise of his skills. All this seemed merely to be the fuel for the future conflagration of the world, which could only leave ashes behind it. It was from the outset impossible for man to think that the real eschatological outcome of history would consist, properly speaking, in anything else than the moral element in the immortal 'soul' which is to be taken with us into the 'life beyond'. Certainly a 'resurrection of the body' was expected. Man could even picture to himself how the marks of the wounds [267] in Christ's glorified body lasted on as signs of the victory he had won in his personal history. In some way, therefore, the question we have raised here was already present on the very periphery of man's awareness then – but no more than this. As the Pastoral Constitution shows, no clear working out of it as a question has been achieved even today. Nevertheless it is no mere scholastic subtlety, as for instance when the hair-splitters break their heads over the question of whether those who have risen again can still eat. For the question is – albeit in a particularly refined form as presented here – the question of the more precise relationship between the hope of Christian eschatology and the present-day ideology of the future or of the future Utopia (in a neutral sense of the term). Are we ourselves those who achieve the final consummation when we respond to the creative task which God lays upon us even in this world in a spirit of justice, love and obedience, and so become the completers of his creation? What we are speaking of here is a final consummation to be wrought out in the substance of man and of matter merely as these have been fashioned by God himself.[6] Are we then to become the completers of God's creation in this sense in *such a way that* this final consummation is to be constituted by a morality of human history which, in its ultimate basis, remains at the meta-empirical level?[7] Or alternatively, is human history at the material and physical level itself to become a part of this definitive consummation, albeit through a process of death and radical transformation?

[6] From the Christian point of view this applies *sensu positivo* to every case and is something of which Christianity has always been clearly aware.

[7] The ultimately ethical quality of history as it exists in the sight of God is something that cannot in fact be deduced from history itself by our judgment with any unequivocal certainty.

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This question has, after all, an important bearing on the relationship of Marxism and Christianity, for the Christian interpretation of human history and for much else besides in the Christian interpretation of existence. As Christians we have in fact to fight not against a naive form of Marxism which simply uses the individual as the material for a future society and history. This would be to postulate a Marxist act of faith in which man believed either that he himself could build the 'kingdom of God' simply of his own resources, or alternatively viewed the future as being, after all, simply the mirage of history forever unobtainable, forever leading on into infinitude, and never to be possessed by anyone as a rounded whole. We Christians have to allow Marxism to put the question to us (though in doing so we always have to maintain the proviso that by [268] the mere fact of taking something in the world too seriously it would be possible precisely to corrupt it) of how in any real sense we Christians take with due seriousness the world which we have been commanded to achieve. Does this world, so far as we are concerned, constitute merely the material, ultimately speaking indifferent, upon which we exercise our own virtues? Is this of itself taking it seriously enough? On this showing is not the world itself a matter of indifference, since in fact it would be possible to exercise these same virtues in a world that was held fast in the grip of reactionary forces? In such a world we might practise above all the virtue of patience with a world that was mean, agonising and unjust. If we Christians were to answer this question we could not simply concentrate on those aspects of the world which make it a situation of testing and proving for those who seek the kingdom of heaven. We would have to recognise that we have to prove these heavenly virtues of ours which alone 'endure' precisely in the 'material' which is presented to us in the here and now by the world itself in its course. And if this world were to change, *then* we would have to face up to the further question of *why* this should be so, seeing that, in spite of the change, it would be the same virtues which alone endure that would have to be perfected even though the 'material' in which they were exercised and the 'objective' outcome which they achieved would merely recede into the past and absolutely cease to exist. In putting this question we have no intention of pressing it to lengths that are artificial. For in any case it remains true that concrete human history, with all its physical aspects, is the dimension in which the final consummation and the absolute future are made real. All that the Council has said remains in any case valid with regard to the responsibility which Christians have for the world, and with regard to the falsity of any artificial opposition between the integral vocation of the Christian (including, therefore, the 'other worldly' aspects of this also) on the one hand, and his task in the world on the other. But for all this perhaps it can be understood that the question we have raised is not unimportant either in view of the current intellectual climate in which Christianity has to make its message comprehensible.

V

But *can* this question be answered at all, and *how* is it to be answered?

First the following is clearly true: the kingdom of God, the final consummation which brings history to an end and 'raises' it is that which is coming of itself. It is not merely the mirage towards which history constantly [269] reaches out, or its final goal, utterly different in kind from history itself. If it were this then it would only have the function of maintaining history in movement. This definitive finality will not exist simply as a final and definitive stage and the final outcome of the history planned and accomplished by man himself. Rather it will the deed of God which, admittedly, is to be thought of here, as elsewhere also in the history of nature and of the world, as the *self*-transcendence of history (divine, free and something which is totally beyond all our calculations if we take as our starting-point the

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movement which we ourselves initiate). History and its consummated finality are always different and distinguished from one another by that which is experienced in the personal history of the individual as death, and which signifies a radical 'transformation'. This transformation applies just as much to universal history as death does to the history of the individual. 'We do not know the time for the consummation of the earth and of humanity. Nor do we know how all things will be transformed' (No. 39). Therefore the statement that history will endure not only in the meta-empirical morality realised in it but also in its historical outcome cannot simply be set aside as mistaken in view of that other statement about the radical transformation of history into that which is unknown and into an openness to the absolute future which is God himself. The actual *conception* of history as it will exist in its enduring finality is impossible. Any attempt at depicting it (and in a real sense we are actually warned against this in Mt 22:30) would be pseudo-Christian apocalyptic and no true Christian eschatology. The very attempt to *depict* to ourselves a glorified body as it exists in itself leads into contradiction. How much more this would be true if we sought to make the same attempt with regard to the body of humanity which it gradually forms for itself in its one and continuous history! On the other hand it cannot be objected from the opposite point of view either, against what has been said, that it is not merely the final and definitive stage of human history precisely as such that can have the opportunity of acquiring an eschatological validity and lastingness, since on this showing nothing that belongs to *any* concrete reality of history whatsoever would be assumed into this final and definitive stage. For the same objection could be raised with regard to the physical aspects of the personal history of the individual. No one stage in a man's life can be *the definitive* model for the definitive and final state of the body, and nevertheless the Christian tradition thinks of this final and definitive stage as such that it brings what it has become in the concrete throughout its entire concrete history to a state of glorification.

So far as we are concerned in the here and now there is a basic dialectical [270] tension between the two statements, on the one hand that human history will finally endure, and on the other that it will be radically transformed. This tension maintains us in an openness to the future while still according a radical importance to the present. Both statements are hermeneutic principles and at the same time statements of fact. Bearing these points in mind as provisos we can positively say: history itself constructs its own final and definitive state. That which endures is the *work* of love as expressed in the concrete in human history. It remains itself as something achieved by man, and not merely a moral distillation of this, something which history leaves behind it as though it were the 'grapes' from which the wine had been pressed. History itself passes into the definitive consummation of God, and not merely man who has once influenced the course of history and then, after he has played his 'part' (as in Hugo von Hofmannstahl's 'Everyman') leaves this behind him as something which has become inessential.

Why should we say this? Because the Logos of God has himself wrought upon and endured history. If our thesis were altogether false, then he would have had *totally* to lay aside his 'role'. But he remains for all eternity the God-man. And his humanity is not merely that which has received the reward of glory, but rather remains above all his *own*, something which, if this thesis is not accepted, would strictly speaking have become superfluous. The opposed thesis would lead, ultimately speaking, to an intolerable division between 'soul' and 'body' and between the noumenal and the phenomenal. 'History' in the true and proper sense, and as worked out by the exercise of personal freedom, demands of its very nature to be brought to a definitive consummation and does not receive any such consummation merely as a reward. Consummation is not something that is located 'beyond' history, as it were, seeing that it is in history that that takes place for which we are responsible even though it may not appear on the surface of any reality that we know and cannot be judged by us. And the

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correctness of our thesis is made even more probable by the positive answer which we must surely give to the question of whether the moral element (without prejudice to the fact that it is something that must be performed as a work of freedom) does not, after all, precisely *consist in* that which takes place in history as concrete, and the question of whether it does not achieve its meaning in history and from history. This means, therefore, that history itself must have a final and definitive significance if the moral is to have any such significance.

[271]

VI

The outcome of what we have said is that a history that is constructed by man himself as event and as the end product of his activities has a final and definitive significance. And if this is true, then it also becomes apparent what is the basis and the necessary presupposition for this, namely that precisely this 'world in its worldliness', which as such retains all its secularity, nevertheless, still in itself and as such, at basis exhibits a secret Christianity. The task of completing the creation and the fulfilling of it appear as an intrinsic element in the one total redemptive and divinising will of God for a world in which his self-bestowal is achieved, and this task and the fulfilling of it derive from this totality their ultimate meaning and a concrete form. In virtue of this, task and fulfilment alike, precisely in the specific worldliness, are orientated towards their consummation. Admittedly in all this nothing has yet been said of *that precisely in which* in the concrete this Christianity of the task of achieving the 'this-worldly' future consists. It should not be supposed that because the answer to this question is extremely difficult that there is precisely no such thing as this Christian element. Moreover, as has already been said, the actions in human history of non-Christians too, which are designed to shape the future, fall under the impulse of grace. And because of this it is by no means the case that in seeking a more precise answer to this question we must necessarily fall into the dilemma of simply having to choose between the two following alternatives: either of having to point out some Christian element in this future such that it can be attributed exclusively to those who are 'explicit' Christians, or to recognise what is being striven for as *merely* 'human'. Therefore (and over and above this) the situation can be such that the Christian 'meaning' and the ultimate Christian roots of a reality which is in process of being brought about in history (whether in the social, political or some other sphere) only reveal themselves for what they are when they are already present and so able to be reflected upon and interpreted as an explicit subject for investigation. This appears, for instance, in the case of the growing unity of mankind so often referred to in the Pastoral Constitution, which is at the same time the necessary prior condition for a world Church that is relevant to the contemporary situation. The same could perhaps apply to the openness of the future which is becoming clearer, and the plans for this, the dialectical interplay in which the element of planning and the factor of the unplanned and unforeseeable develop side by side, a development which is explicitly and formally anticipated as such. It may be that in this dialectical interplay, the [272] elements in which cannot be separated from one another by any power of ours, the absolute future of God appears as a silent presence. This Christian mould imprinted upon the 'this-worldly' future towards which mankind is being impelled does not, therefore, depend, in the last analysis on whether or not Christians as a body have certain special demands of their own to raise in the concrete affecting communal, political, social and other aspects of human living, which could not otherwise be raised by anyone else. But the point that is sought to be made clear in this thesis is that in the deepest sense the Christian has not two tasks which are held together merely by a 'moral' bond, namely precisely the fact that he has a duty to perform both. In other words they are united by

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something more than the fact that the Christian's task for this world has an abstract moral significance for all eternity.[8]

[8] In order to throw further light upon the questions treated of here the author may refer to the following studies in which he discusses the problems involved: 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 59-68; 'The Experiment with Man. Theological Observations on Man's Self-Manipulation', 'Christian Humanism', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and Baltimore 1972), pp. 187-224.

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[273]

15

IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD

The very nature of the subject of this brief study is such as to entail noteworthy difficulties of methodology. The approach to the actual *reality* to be considered, and as pointed to by the title 'Immanent and Transcendent Consummation of the World', is made difficult by unsolved problems in the philosophical and theological fields. Obviously it is not possible here to examine with sufficient clarity the conceptual areas defined by the terms 'immanence', 'transcendence' and 'consummation', important though this is in itself from the point of view of the history both of the concepts concerned and of the previous discussion of the problem. We cannot introduce our study by providing any systematic discussion of the actual terms in themselves. The origin and original meaning of these concepts are in fact insufficiently explained even at the level of historical fact. For this reason it may be permitted to contribute a study which unashamedly refuses to observe with too much exactitude the difference between philosophy and theology, but which, on the contrary, freely employs the methods and basic principles of both disciplines. The attentive and understanding reader will therefore constantly be aware of what the background is to certain of the ideas presented here.

I

The word 'consummation' can be applied:
1. to a particular material event as such of a purely physical or biological kind.
2. to the sum total of all such particular events, in other words to the material world considered as a whole.
3. to the spiritual and personal history of an individual.
4. to all such spiritual and personal histories considered as constituting a unity, and accepting as axiomatic that in spite of the particular subjects [274] of these each being individual spirits in their own right, this unity and totality of all their individual histories is something more than a final amalgam in which they are all summed up.
5. to the real unity (here presupposed) of the material world together with the history of the spirit at both the individual and the collective levels, in other words to the real unity and totality of the temporal creation, of the 'world' in the widest sense.

It is obvious that the concept of consummation assumes a different meaning according to which of the five entities mentioned above it is applied to. This of itself implies that when we ask whether we should speak of an immanent *or* transcendent consummation, or of an immanent *and* transcendent consummation the question itself likewise assumes a different meaning in each particular case, that the shifts in meaning of the question correspond to the shifts in meaning in the actual use of the term 'consummation'.

Before we can even begin to raise the question of the relationship between immanent and transcendent consummation at all, we have to ask whether the concept of 'consummation' has any meaning when it is applied to the two first-named entities, in other words to the material world merely as such and taken by itself, and to a particular physical or biological event within it to the extent that this can rightly and meaningfully be regarded in isolation from the development of the physical world as a whole to which it belongs. In connection with this we shall formulate the following thesis:

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The concept of consummation is totally inapplicable in any meaningful sense to the world as signified here, or to an event taking place in it as such and in isolation; *the physical world as such is in itself radically incapable of* '*consummation*'. It has, if we may so formulate it, no will to achieve its own consummation, but rather tends to continue as that which is abidingly unconsummated. For 'consummation' is (if the word is to have any meaning at all) applied to a *temporal* event regardless of whether the temporality entailed in it is simply experienced by us ourselves or whether some other kind of temporality can be conceived of, e.g. that of the angels.

As applied therefore to such a temporal event and to that which takes place in it the concept of consummation implies:

1. that this event has an end, still regardless of whether the cause of this is inherent in the event itself or brought about by some cause which is different from it.
2. that this event not only has an end, not only 'ceases', but in time [275] produces a result, something definitive which is different from the event itself, independently of how this abiding result in its validity and 'lastingness' is to be conceived of more precisely as compared with 'time'.
3. that this result which has been produced in time is that for which the event considered precisely in its temporal development as event took place, that which it 'sought' and in which the event itself finds its meaning and its justification.

In this connection the question may for the moment be left undecided of whether such a 'consummation' considered as the final product of a temporal event, e.g. in the free personal history of an individual spirit, is only present when this personal history achieves its final consummation – we call it 'salvation' – in a manner that is *positively* moral and religious, or whether alternatively it is still justified and meaningful to use the concept of 'consummation' even when such a history of the free individual 'consummates itself' negatively in final perdition. In any case this concept of 'consummation' which, as the very term implies, has been presented as the opposite of a mere end, cannot have any meaningful application to a mere material event as such. The material event 'runs out'. It remains radically and constantly open to a further future so long as it is not thought of simply as having been terminated. Whether it is conceived of as having *entropeia* or not it does not of itself produce a result different from it. Of itself in any case it does not exhibit any 'will' to achieve a final and consummated state, for in its temporal development it does not show any qualitative difference between elements such that *one* element as compared with another appears to be preferable. Even when we think of and accept such a total and undifferentiated process of development as a state of being directed uniformly, so that it is irreversible, still any given later stage in it is basically of the same quality as the earlier ones, and open to a further stage, or else to that stage at which this movement is brought to a halt, in which case we cannot attribute any higher value to this final stage than to the event itself as such. Now if we regard the material event as having, of its very nature, an intrinsic reference from the outset to the spirit – however we may conceive of this unity of spirit and matter[1] – then certainly we can think of a 'consummation' of the material world. But in that case there has already been a shift in the question itself, so that it is now concerned with the problem of the consummation of the 'personal' [276] history, although it is true that a special problem arises in turn precisely in *this*.

The thesis formulated above also applies to the special case of biological life as such. Certainly here we can speak in some sense of a 'consummation', namely when the due and

[1] For a more developed treatment of this point cf. K. Rahner, 'The Unity of Spirit and Matter in the Christian Understanding of Faith', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 153-177; K. Rahner (with P. Overhage), *Das Problem der Hominisation* (Freiburg [3]1963), pp. 44 ff.

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proper temporal development of some biological entity in its course of life is not distorted or destroyed by external causes, and so has attained to the full unfolding that is due to it. But even in this case this 'consummation' is nothing else than this due process of temporal development as such and in itself, and it is not a result different from the actual outcome of the temporal process which has run its course. But this is precisely what 'consummation' means. Nor does it make any difference to this when and to what extent such a due process of temporal development initiates a new process of temporal development of exactly the same kind through generation etc., or even itself prolongs its existence indefinitely without being subject to temporal change, as in the case of the 'immortal' primitive organisms. The case here is the same as with other kinds of physical event.

'Consummation', therefore, is a concept which can meaningfully be applied only in that kind of history which is worked out in personal freedom, though admittedly in this it acquires a special property, because this history worked out in personal freedom fastens onto the material event as an intrinsic or extrinsic element of itself, and so from this *among other factors* (and not *solely* from this) can be and is the *single* history of a person in the individual or the collective sense as endowed with spiritual faculties.

It is not possible here to enlarge upon the nature of the personal spirit, its freedom and, arising from this, the special kind of historicity and history that belongs to it, and so to arrive at a satisfactory concept of its consummation based on full and precise arguments. This would be possible *only* by adopting an approach of this kind, of an ontology of the free and personal spirit and the historicity that belongs to it. Here it must be sufficient for us by way of preliminary simply to formulate the following thesis in itself: *the nature of the personal spirit as acting in freedom and as having a personal history implies that there takes place a free and definitive final state of the spirit worked out in time which we call its* '*consummation*', *and which carries within itself those three elements which we have set forth above as constitutive for the concept of consummation*.

Here once more a question arises which we have already touched upon, namely whether the concept of 'consummation' can or cannot be applied also to the *negative* or *wrongly* worked out definitive state of freedom [277] considered as the self-determination of the personal being to perdition. The question involves something more than a mere terminological difficulty. In any genuine ontology of freedom the good or bad exercises of freedom are not ontologically equal as possible uses of it. It is true that in God's sight freedom can achieve its final outcome as a consummation of the self in final and definitive evil. But still the nature of being, of good and therefore of freedom too, is such that this is not a possibility open to the free being which is ontologically on the same level. Such an outcome of the history of the free person as intrinsically involved in the definitive state he has reached is, on the contrary, to be understood as the final and definitive state of *non*-consummation. There is the same dialectic of being and non-being in this as in the evil actions in the concrete of the personal agent in general.

I

This in itself is enough to establish the fact that we have to begin with the problem of the relationship between, or alternatively the mutual exclusion of, immanent and transcendent 'consummation', and indeed of the very meaning of these two concepts as applied to the consummation of the spiritual person in freedom. Only on the basis of this (if indeed at all) can this problem be applied to the world, its course and the human history it contains.

If we take the terms 'immanent' and 'transcendent' consummation primarily in the sense which is suggested by the very nature of the terms themselves, we shall say that an *immanent*

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consummation is that which arises from the 'immanent' essential composition of the being which is in process of achieving its consummation, i.e. from the resources proper to it and through the intrinsic tendency of what is taking place towards a future goal. Immanent consummation, therefore, is considered precisely as the final outcome which has been worked out in time purely from within the event itself: the definitive finality of the freely posited event in itself. We have attempted to describe the concept of consummation above in these or similar terms. By contrast with this, *transcendent* consummation would in that case be a consummation which comes *ab externo*, being conferred upon the agent independently of the action he himself posits. And this means that it would be that which is given rather than the final and definitive state arrived at by the being itself in its process of reaching maturity. On this showing, therefore, a consummation of this kind would precisely *not*, properly speaking, be something that could be [278] discerned simply from the process itself and nothing more; it would be something, therefore, that went beyond it, 'transcended it' in *this* sense. We would have to think of such a consummation, on this showing, as something already existing in its own right prior to the actual process by which it was arrived at, something towards which this was impelled (if indeed the temporal process has any active part to play at all), something which it only attains to but does not, properly speaking, bring about. It would, therefore, be that which is 'transcendent' in this sense also.

Now let us apply the two concepts of immanent and transcendent consummation as interpreted above to that particular case to which they originally belong, namely to the definitive finality of the free person working out his own destiny in time. When we do this, then immediately the whole range of problems involved becomes apparent. These problems themselves in turn are due to the most divers causes.

The nature of the person endowed with spiritual faculties, including in this his freedom and so his human history too, in other words his 'immanence' *is*, precisely, transcendence. For transcendence establishes a reference to the absolute being, to that which cannot be constructed, cannot be developed into something beyond itself. Transcendence imparts an orientation to the beginning, which is not simply left behind as that which has never been achieved and never been conceived of. It imparts an orientation towards the 'absolute future'.[2] This, as constituting for every specific outcome of human action, a boundless horizon which lays open vistas which are unimaginably remote, always includes every kind of consummation which can be conceived of in 'this-worldly' categories. Ultimately speaking it is orientated towards the absolute mystery, incalculable, uncontrollable and inconceivable, which permeates every material project for achieving a consummation, and calls it in question.

This of itself is enough to make it questionable whether we should postulate any contrast between 'immanent' and 'transcendent' consummation. The following formulation could just as well be adopted: *the immanent consummation of a history worked out in freedom by a being endowed with spiritual faculties is its transcendent consummation* because the immanence is the transcendence; or: *a spiritual being, acting of its knowledge and freedom, has of its very nature no immanent consummation* because the immanent transcendentality rises up to that which is truly transcendent, [279] and this (however we understand it) must precisely not be conceived of as the goal of a relationship of transcendentality in the sense of the German idealism. On the same basis it would be possible to formulate it as follows: *The transcendent consummation of a personal freedom is the only true immanent consummation*. If spirit really does *constitute*, in the sense indicated, a transcendence opening up to the

[2] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 59-68. On the phenomenological aspects of the concept cf. K. Rahner, 'A Fragmentary Aspect of a Theological Evaluation of the Concept of the Future', in this volume, pp. 235-241.

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mystery, to the absolute being, to the incalculable and uncontrollable future, and if it is precisely this that constitutes its very essence, then the terms 'immanent' and 'transcendent' consummation are deprived of any unambiguously definable distinction. The reason why such a distinction appears to be possible is merely the fact that the free personal being is conceived of after the pattern of a being to which a quite specific function has been assigned, a being thought of purely at the biological level, or a machine which develops its 'goal' from within itself by an 'evolutionary' process. In this sense, therefore, it can have a certain determinate immanent consummation, to which another can be thought of as being added, this time a consummation of the transcendent type, coming from without. Though in that case it still remains somewhat obscure how the nature of this can be conceived of in such a way that it really 'comes' and really is itself a consummation of the being already consummated. But this conceptual model is precisely false. The very definition of man is his indefinability, i.e. precisely his transcendence as absolute openness to being in the absolute. This transcendence of his, therefore, is such that it is radically incapable of being limited to any given future whatsoever, such as might be determined for it in 'this-worldly' categories, or to any given mode of consummation determined for it in this sense. For the limits of such a consummation would already be predetermined, and would be immanent in it from the very nature that was proper to it.

III

What has been stated up to now in very formal terms with regard to the problems involved in the contrast between immanent and transcendent consummation will be made plainer, and at the same time given added precision, if we introduce certain data of the theological anthropology of Christianity into our question.

If we sought to do this in very precise terms then undoubtedly questions would have to be touched upon which are matters of controversy between the Christian confessions, and to some extent even within the circle of Catholic theologians. These relate primarily to the relationship between nature and grace, and ultimately speaking to the relationship [280] between God and man considered in his sheer creaturehood. For instance in the classic Protestant doctrine of justification the justification of man is only 'juridical'. It consists in the gracious will with which God regards the sinner, but ultimately speaking leaves him in his sinful condition. Now certainly another conception is involved in this with regard to the possibility of an 'immanent' consummation than in the Catholic doctrine of justification, in which grace pervades the essence of man from his very roots with divine influence, and thereby gives him the possibility of acting positively for his own salvation, and so implants in him a free and active tendency towards his own consummation. In other words in this Catholic doctrine the tendency towards consummation is much 'more immanent' than according to the Protestant conception. Similar differences might be developed if we were to present in more precise terms the different conceptions with regard to the exact relationship between nature and grace which Catholic theologians have put forward, and the logical outcome of which is that they make the consummation of man appear either 'more immanent' or 'more transcendent' according to the particular position of the theologian involved. But we cannot enter, in any explicit sense into all these questions here. We shall simply be taking as our starting-point a specific conception of grace which we regard as tenable within the framework of Catholic theology, and which appears to us correct.[3] From this we shall go on

[3] For a more developed treatment and justification of this cf. K. Rahner, 'Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore 1961), pp. 297-317; *idem*, 'Nature and

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to ask what conclusions may be drawn in the light of this for the problem of 'immanent' and 'transcendent' consummation. God is not only the Creator of a world different from himself. Of his own initiative, and in that act of immediate self-bestowal which we call grace, he has made himself an intrinsic principle of this world in that creature belonging to it which is endowed with spiritual faculties and which is one element in this one world. This grace can be conceived of in such a way that the power which God has to create out of nothing is seen to be one element in the more sublime and more comprehensive power of God as he who is able to bestow himself in a free exercise [281] of love. It can also be conceived of in such a way that we see that God has *de facto* willed the creation (even though he might have willed it even without his act of self-bestowal) precisely *because* he willed, as an act of free love, to surrender himself, to empty himself, *himself* to come out of himself. 'Nature', therefore, is in the real order willed from the outset for the sake of 'grace', and 'creation' for the sake of the covenant of personal love. In this self-bestowal as an act of free love God remains on the one hand he who is absolutely free and in no sense in need of his creatures, and he who is infinitely raised above all his creatures considered as the subjects to whom such a free and possible self-bestowal is extended. He creates the world and the creature endowed with spiritual faculties precisely *as* the subjects to which such free and possible self-bestowal is addressed in uncreated grace, but in this self-bestowal God, while remaining the absolute transcendent, nevertheless becomes the innermost principle, the innermost basis, and in the truest sense the goal of 'spiritual' creation. God is not only *causa efficiens* but also *causa quasi formalis* of that which the creature is in the truest and most concrete sense. The nature of the spiritual creature consists in the fact that that which is 'innermost' to it, that whence, to which and through which it is, is precisely *not* an element of this essence and this nature which belongs to it. Rather its nature is based upon the fact that that which is supra-essential, that which transcends it, is that which gives it its support, its meaning, its future and its most basic impulse, though admittedly it does so in such a way that the nature of this spiritual creature, that which belongs to it as such, is not thereby taken away from it but rather obtains from this its ultimate validity and consistency and achieves growth and development because of it. The closeness of God's self-bestowal and the unique personality of the creature grow in equal, and not in converse measure. This self-bestowal of God, in which God bestows himself precisely *as* the absolute transcendent, is the most immanent factor in the creature. The fact that it is given its own nature to possess, the 'immanence of essence' in this sense, is the prior condition, and at the same time the consequence, of the still more radical immanence of the transcendence of God in the spiritual creature, this creature being considered as that which has been endowed with grace through the uncreated grace of God. The conceptual models which are constructed on the basis of the difference between 'inner and outer' break down at this point. The orientation towards the self-bestowal of God as most radically different from the creature is the innermost element of all in it, and it is precisely this that makes the immanence of that which is most external of all to it possible.

[282]

IV

Grace', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 165-188; *idem*, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 208-239 (bibliography pp. 203-207). In addition to these works of more recent date by the following authors should, of course, also be mentioned: B. Stoeckle, H. Bouillard, I. Willig, M. Seckler. J. Ratzinger etc. But the work which we should particularly notice is H. de Lubac, *Augustinisme et Théologie Moderne* = *Théologie* 63 (Paris 1965); *idem*, *Le Mystère du Surnaturel* = *Théologie* 64 (Paris 1965).

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What has been said must now be applied still more explicitly to the concept of 'consummation'. In the movement of the creature endowed with spiritual faculties towards its consummation God is not only the ultimate asymptotic point of reference, not only the goal of this movement in all his immediacy. Rather God himself has, through his grace – and not merely through an impulse formed by him as something different from himself – become its ultimate and innermost principle. The point which we must not lose sight of in this is the unity which exists between uncreated grace considered as *causa quasiformalis* and created grace as the necessary prior condition and at the same time the consequence of the uncreated grace.[4] God in his absolute immediacy is, in the concrete order of reality, not only the consummation, the goal (*beatitudo objectiva*) of the spiritual creature, but the principle in the movement which is most proper and necessary to it, the sole really connatural principle by which it is impelled towards the consummation of this goal. The truly ultimate movement towards consummation, towards the goal, is achieved 'in the goal itself'. In the deepest sense, therefore, the present is sustained by the future itself. Our perfection (as prelude) is the 'consummation of that consummation' which already exists and, in spite of being future, is already making its impact (*quoad nos*). All this does not remove the openness of this true future in which our consummation consists. In fact it is God the absolutely incomprehensible who constitutes this future and maintains the movement towards it. He is this future because he is that love that is absolutely free, which has no law outside itself by which it could be measured or judged. Even if we can say that because of it we are what we must be in order that it can be what it is, namely that love which is prodigal of itself, even *so* precisely this love, in virtue of the necessity which it has in itself, imposes upon us those limits which ensure that we ourselves are precisely *not* it, but of our very nature constantly have before us that element in it which we have never possessed or prevailed over, and which is foreign to us, so that we receive it as free and unmerited love. *The* '*immanent*' *and* '*transcendent*' *consummation of the spiritual creature is the same. It is one consummation in which the one aspect demands the other.*

[283] Two further points are to be noticed. The first is that Thomas, no matter how much he makes plain that the one goal (the *visio beata*) is also the principle of the movement towards it in its aspect as 'supra-natural' and 'unmerited', and so transcending the nature of the creature, in fact does not recognise the concept of a *finis naturalis* for the creature endowed with spiritual faculties. The second point is that any such concept of a 'natural' and, in this sense, *merely* 'immanent' consummation is *de facto* devoid of any ultimate meaning. We have only to rid ourselves of the prejudiced view that at least some kind of 'consummation' which merits this name must be 'due' to the creature, in order to see this point. The very term consummation (German *Vollendung*) precisely implies full completion (German '*Voll*-endung'). But when the *potentia oboedientialis* for grace and for the *visio* is identical with the nature of the spiritual creature, then this nature precisely achieves its true and full consummation only when it has discovered the state of absolute proximity to God through grace and in the *visio*.[5] If this nature is precisely the nature of openness to the *free* love of God, such that it could not be blessed at all if it were not for the freedom and unmeritedness of this love, then there is no need to construct any consummation or any *finis* for such a creature such that it would be merited by him. Only the quality of unmeritedness in love can really bring this creature to its consummation.

[4] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore 1961), pp. 319-346; I. Willig, *Geschaffene und ungeschaffene Gnade* = *Münsterliche Beiträge zur Theologie* 27 (Munster 1964).

[5] In this connection one conciliar text has a not inessential bearing. It lays great emphasis on the point that 'in truth there is only *one* ultimate vocation of man, the divine' (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today', No. 22).

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If this quality of being unmerited inherent in the one and unique consummation implies that it could also be 'refused', then we may ask straightforwardly with Rom 9:14-18; 11:33-36; 'Why not?' It must be pointed out that even in respect of predestination to salvation and of the efficacious grace that comes from God, Catholic theology teaches that these are unmerited in the same way, even though it is impossible to conceive of even a 'natural consummation' without these factors. It is true that we can construct a positive finality and completion of the decision taken in freedom at the 'natural' level as a reality which is conceivable in itself and as providing a basic conceptual framework. And within this we can imagine the supernatural elevation of man being refused. We can do this in order to clarify the unmerited nature of the love with which God bestows himself upon us. But in that case we should not call this positive and final moral state 'consummation'. It is from this that the idea of a merely immanent consummation can also be developed in the [284] sense that this, taken by itself, might be the definitive state which man arrived at solely through the resources of his own nature.

In what we have said so far we have had in mind the individual being which exists at the spiritual level. But this can also be applied to mankind as such. For mankind is not the final summing up, at the conceptual level, of all the particular persons endowed with spiritual faculties and of their personal histories as free individuals. On the contrary, in respect of its origin, its existence and its determination mankind constitutes a unity, a fact which is clearly brought out in the theological concepts of 'people of God', 'covenant', 'communion of saints', 'kingdom of God', and in the doctrines of 'original sin', 'redemption' etc. Even though the precise nature of this unity cannot be set forth here,[6] still we can say this much: even the course of the one history of mankind as in this sense constituting a unity, as it moves towards its consummation in the kingdom of God, transcends that alternative which seeks to assign history to *either* an 'immanent' *or* a 'transcendent' consummation. On the basis of the self-bestowal of God this opposition is radically overcome. But this self-bestowal in turn is intended for the individual nature endowed with freedom, *and at the same time* for the community of all such natures. And because of this all that has so far been said concerning consummation as 'immanent' *and at the same time* 'transcendent' applies also to the consummation of mankind as such.

V

The primary question which now remains to be asked is what the implications are of all that has been explained if our investigation of the concept of 'consummation' is extended to the question of the consummation of *the world as a whole* (i.e. including the basic element of the material in it). We have in fact already said that the concept of 'consummation' cannot meaningfully be applied to the material world *purely as such*. For this as such and taken in isolation is radically incapable of being consummated. But the problem is not solved merely by saying this. For the world is a unity of spirit and matter, and in this unity matter is an essential element. The answer given above, namely that the material world is radically incapable of being consummated, therefore, presupposes an abstraction, [285] and it is not in terms of this that we can come to grips with the real problem.

Any effective attempt at answering the question now to be treated of must depend on how we conceive, in more precise terms, of two further factors: first of the relationship between

[6] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'One Mediator and Many Mediations' in volume IX pp. 169-184; in addition see 'Evolution and Original Sin', *Quaestiones Disputatae* (Freiburg 1968), for the problem of the unity of mankind; cf. his earlier observations in *Theological Investigations* I, pp. 274 ff.

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spirit and matter in general, and then of the metaphysical nature of the development of the material world. Here too only a few theses can be formulated here.

It is justifiable to postulate a real unity and mutual interrelationship between spirit and matter as these exist in creatures.[7] The physical world is not merely the outward stage upon which the history of the spirit, to which matter is basically alien, is played out, such that it tends as its outcome to quit this stage as swiftly as possible in order really to achieve full and complete spirituality in a world beyond that of matter. In a metaphysical interpretation matter is considered rather as that other factor which is necessary, in which and upon which alone *a finite and creaturely* spirituality can be *precisely that which* it is of its nature, and can bring this to its fulness. And this is constituted by the attributes of self-awareness, transcendence and freedom. Without that materiality which is the expression and medium of the self-fulfilment of the finite spirit, spiritual creaturehood at the finite level is totally inconceivable.

We do not need to allow ourselves to be held back from this basic conception by any neo-Platonist or dualistic interpretations of the Christian teaching on angels, or by the interpretation of human death as the 'dividing' of the spiritual soul from matter. Quite apart from metaphysical considerations, this basic conception is made more probable by the Christian dogmas of the substantial unity of spirit and matter in man, by the doctrine of the divine *Logos* becoming *flesh* (without this undergoing any angelic transformation), by the fact that man's personal history as spiritual being is identical with his material and biological life (it does not pre-exist this, nor is the soul 'sojourning' in an alien setting, nor does it have any further and separate history of its own after death). Again it is made more probable by the 'simultaneous' creation of spirit and matter, by the 'resurrection of the flesh', and by the consummation of the world in the new heaven and in the new *earth*.[8] We can only avoid attributing to [286] all these dogmas an overtone of anthropomorphism and mythology if we take *a priori* as our starting-point the essential mutual interrelationship of spirit and matter in the creature.

It is precisely in the light of these factors that the essential difference between spirit and matter becomes clear, without us having constantly to trouble ourselves (and that in vain) to point to a creaturely spirit in its concrete existence and as a complete entity in its own right such that it would no longer also be 'material' at the same time. Spirituality and materiality are essentially different *precisely in that* they constitute the metaphysical principles of the *one single* spiritual-material being. Nor is this conception invalidated by the consideration that there was matter and material development 'before' spirit entered 'into' the world. This objection could in fact be met first by pointing out that according to Christian doctrine God '*simul ab initio temporis utramque de nihilo condidit creaturam, spiritualem et corporalem, angelicam videlicet et mundanam*' (DS 800, the IVth Lateran Council of 1215); in other words the material world has always been the counterpart of the 'principalities and powers' with their personal and spiritual mode of being, and these have had to fulfil their natures, once they have been created, in and through the material world, albeit not in a corporal mode such as that of man himself. But even abstracting from this: in the case of a being which is essentially subject to time, the essential unity of the metaphysical principles which constitute its being do not need to be denied on the pretext that the 'potential' principle has some kind of temporal priority over the other, provided only that it is totally ordered to achieve its

[7] In addition to the studies referred to on p. 275, n. 1 cf. also K. Rahner, 'The Secret of Life', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 141-152.

[8] The question of the theological significance of the making of plans for the future at the 'this worldly' level, and therefore too the question of the significance of the 'new earth', are rendered more difficult in view of modern man's planning for and control over the earth. On the question as a whole cf. my brief study of the problems involved, 'The Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the "New Earth"', in this volume, pp. 260-272.

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proper fulfilment in being actualised through the other principle. Now in our case this can be assumed unhesitatingly in spite of the essential difference between spirituality and materiality. For we can make the following statement without any difficulty: the dynamic tendency and development of the material world is ordered to the spirit, and that too in a development which – provided the term is rightly understood – we can even designate as 'immanent'.

For the concept of an 'immanent development' rightly understood implies the idea of a 'self-transcendence' and a 'projection beyond the self'.[9] It does not imply for one moment that in such an 'immanent [287] development' all that takes place in every case is merely that an essence which remains the same is made to run its course, or that we have to think of the development as, in a certain sense, a machine-like process whereby a structure is set in motion and made to repeat its appropriate action again and again. There is this also, but 'development' (and precisely as such it is an *immanent* development) in its true nature consists in 'self-transcendence', in a projection into that which is new, that which essentially goes beyond what has hitherto been achieved. The idea of becoming, taken in its full significance, is radically thrown into relief by another mental picture. Such self-transcendence implies an ultimate common bond between the point of departure and the final outcome of a development. Otherwise it would merely be a question of one factor simply being replaced by another and totally different one. In that case there could be no question of one and the same object undergoing a process of becoming and development.

Now there really is in fact an ultimate common bond of this kind between spirit and matter, for matter too is an element in the creation (which participates in God) wrought by God who is absolute and simple spirit. And God cannot make anything which is opposed to him and to his nature as absolutely disparate from it and alien to it. Matter exhibits its 'spirituality' in that it appears as an intrinsic co-principle in a spiritual and personal being, and shares in the destiny of this being. Unless the roots of being are to be considered as nothingness, the concept of a self-transcendence also implies at the same time that this process of rising beyond the self is made possible and sustained by the absolute being of God. But this power of bringing about transcendence, which belongs to God as Creator, does not have the effect of adding the higher principle to the lower *ab externo*, but rather precisely gives to that lower the capability of rising beyond itself. The new element is then that which is really and essentially higher (in a real 'qualitative change'), and yet at the same time the outcome and goal towards which the 'lower' is orientated. This creative impulse implanted by God is in this case too the 'supraessential' factor in a (material) being, in other words that which transcends it and precisely as such that which is most immanent in it, through which *it* itself alone is a being in process of becoming, and therefore one that rises beyond itself.

VI

Taking these considerations as our premises, we can now come directly to grips with the question of the 'immanent' or alternatively 'transcendent' [288] consummation as this applies to the material world as well. What has been said earlier remains in force here. The material world as such, so long as it remains confined to itself, has no consummation, just as a prelude as such cannot have any finale. But it is perfectly possible to accept that the material world, by reason of its essential orientation to the spirit, is sustained from the outset by that creative impetus, implanted by God, by which it tends towards the spirit as the goal of the self-

[9] On this concept cf. the bibliography provided on p. 275, n. 1 and p. 285, n. 7, esp. *Das Problem der Hominisation*, pp. 55-78, 84-90.

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transcendence of the material element. This impetus can be conceived of from the outset as the impetus of the divine *self*-bestowal which of itself implies, as a necessary factor, the impetus to create a material and spiritual world as the subject to which this self-bestowal is addressed. A further thought which may arise from this is that this impetus of the divine self-bestowal upon the material and spiritual world implies the manifestation in terms of material history of the absoluteness and victorious power of this self-bestowal upon a material and spiritual world *precisely as this is subject to the process of history*, and from this we can recognise that there is present in this creative impetus, as its goal and climax, that which we are accustomed to call in Christian terms the incarnation of the divine *Logos*.[10] In this impetus of the divine self-bestowal upon the material world in order that it may achieve its self-transcendence in the spirit a point that we must always bear in mind is that this self-transcendence of the material world in spirit and freedom takes place in history, in a contest, therefore, in which sin is also possible and which can lead to a radical refusal of God. This self-transcendence is achieved in such a way that it leads to an absolutely open future, for this is what human history in the true sense involves. It is precisely the *self*-transcendence of the material world that is being treated of here. And precisely because of this two further factors should be borne in mind. First the history of the personal spirit in freedom, in redemption and divinisation, must not be thought of simply and exclusively according to the pattern of mechanical or evolutionary processes in material events as such. Second, it is, after all, the real history in which the *material* world itself arrives at its goal and the fulness of its consummation.

Finally the following point must be noticed, as it were as a supplement to what has been said above. On metaphysical grounds (matter as the complement to the creaturely spirit as such), and also on theological grounds, matter (the 'materiality' of the spirit which always and in all cases constitutes an 'environment' for the spirit) must be thought of not as a condition for the spirit, or as something necessary for it to be brought [289] to its fulness such that once its consummation has been achieved it is simply cast aside as a means which has become superfluous or as a transitory stage through which it has passed. It endures as an intrinsic element of the spirit and of its history even in its consummation.[11] This is not to dispute the fact that we are totally incapable of forming any conception whatever of the mode of existence of matter in the consummation of the free history of the spirit (cf. 1 Cor 15:35-56). But surely we can hardly form any better idea of the consummation of the creaturely spirit. In as much as the material world as such is carried beyond itself in an act of self-transcendence it achieves in the consummation of this its own consummation. This, therefore, likewise transcends the dilemma which, formulated in these terms, is insoluble, of 'immanent' and 'transcendent' consummation. Its movement towards its consummation is, right from the outset, sustained by divine power, which consists in the love which bestows itself absolutely in freedom. In that this is and remains that which transcends all that is finite, it is the most immanent element in every creature.

It is no mere pious lyricism when Dante regards even the sun and the other planets as being moved by that love which is God himself as he who bestows himself. The innermost principle of this self-movement of the sun and the other planets towards their consummation which lies concealed in the incomprehensibility of God as the absolute future is God himself. He is the 'transcendent' consummation, and therefore can and will, precisely as *God*, himself

[10] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 157-192.
[11] For a more detailed development of this statement cf. provisionally *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 151 f., 154 f., 161 f.; cf. also 'Der Einzelne in der Kirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln 1965), pp. 499-544; cf. also *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 203-216.

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be the ‘immanent’ consummation and the ‘immanent’ principle of the movement towards this single real and uniquely fulfilling consummation that is the *fulness* of finality: God – all in all.

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[291]

PART FOUR

Church and World

[293]

16

ON THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ENTAILED IN A 'PASTORAL CONSTITUTION'

The distinctive characteristics of the Pastoral Constitution on the 'Church in the World of Today' are already apparent even from the very title, as well as from the preface. These in themselves are enough to show that what is in question here is a conciliar declaration of a kind that is absolutely new and unique at least in intention. Earlier conciliar decrees were either expressions of the official teaching of the Church, and therefore doctrinal in character, declarations, in other words, which embodied some revealed truth which had a permanent validity, or else they were regulations and prescriptions of the Church's law. And while it is true that these latter were consciously promulgated as subject to temporal conditions and therefore capable of alteration, and only in so far as they corresponded to the concrete circumstances of a particular epoch, nevertheless they still constituted something quite different from what this Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council is intended to be. At the same time it is not easy to say what a Pastoral Constitution really is. In fact the terms of the title itself are still not enough to make this clear. The preface too describes this idea primarily in negative terms: it states that while it is true that in the *first* part the Constitution is primarily doctrinal in character and so is to be interpreted according to the *hermeneutic* principles applicable to the doctrinal statements of the Church in general, still in the *second* part it is primarily intended to correspond to the concrete conditions of the age and therefore, so far as these declarations are concerned, actually undergoes the same risk of being changed which applies to the conditions which it is intended to define and to assist in overcoming. Even this, however, is properly speaking only a negative expression of the fact that the Constitution, in virtue of being bound up with the particular epoch, its attachment to this being at least partly conscious and intended, precisely does *not* have that 'supratemporal' validity and universal binding force which belongs, albeit in varying degrees, to a declaration of the Church's official teachings.

[294]

I

But over and above this, what does the term 'Pastoral Constitution' signify *positively*? The word 'Constitution' (as distinct from 'decree' or 'declaration') certainly implies first that the Council intended to attribute a very high degree of importance to this document, and therefore gave it the same designation as those on the liturgy, on the Church and on divine revelation. But what does this special importance of this document consist in?

The word 'Pastoral' does not, initially speaking, throw very much light upon this question. For when we say that 'pastoral' signifies 'that which belongs to care of the flock', 'that which

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arises from the exercise of the office of shepherd', 'pursuing aims directly concerned with the cure of souls', 'intended to promote the eternal salvation of mankind', then certainly 'pastoral' does acquire a meaning which corresponds to the term itself, and also one which is in harmony with this Constitution. But on this approach we have still not gained very much insight into the special quality of this document, because if this is all that we can say of the meaning of the term, then all the Constitutions, Decrees and Declarations of the Council can and must be called 'pastoral' in some sense or other. For all of them are expressions of the Church in her one and unique function: to promote the salvation of man, to be the mediatrix of salvation.

Now it might be said that the term 'pastoral' is intended to designate this Constitution as an act of the 'shepherd' function in the Church as distinct from an act of the purely doctrinal function as such. But even this, taken by itself, does not advance us very much further in our understanding of the meaning we are seeking for. It is in fact immediately clear that the Church's specifically juridical activity in promulgating laws is in itself also an act of her 'shepherd' function, and of the supreme power of the Church. Yet it is certainly not this that is being treated of in the Pastoral Constitution. This document is manifestly not concerned with lawgiving, obligatory prescriptions, or the promulgation of fresh directives. In view of this, therefore, it still needs to be made clearer what further function can be covered by the concept of the Church's pastoral office (as distinct from her teaching office). We can put this question in a still more developed form if, instead of the Council's distinction between three distinct functions belonging to Christ and the Church (*munus sanctificandi*, *munus docendi*, *munus regendi*) we take into consideration the more basic classical distinction between the *potestas ordinis* and the *potestas jurisdictionis*.[1]

[295] Manifestly the pastoral office must be seen as falling under the concept of the *potestas jurisdictionis*. Yet this concept covers so many factors which are irrelevant to the meaning which we are seeking for that it becomes still more obscure what really can be meant by speaking of a constitution as the act of the pastoral office of the Church (for the Church's teaching function and her authority to make laws are also assigned to the *potestas jurisdictionis*).

But supposing we say that this document is manifestly concerned to throw light upon the concrete contemporary situation in which the world, the Church and the individual Christians live and have to accomplish their tasks, and, over and above this, with the instructions, recommendations, admonitions, warnings and encouragements which the Church of herself addresses to Christians and to all mankind in order that they may all shape their lives aright in this situation which they have to endure; and supposing that such instructions on the one hand do not have the character of a mere 'doctrine' (with eternal validity) or of binding laws in the strict sense of the term, while on the other hand instructions and explanations of the situation of this kind do nevertheless belong to the tasks, powers and duties of the pastoral office, then certainly we have succeeded in describing a meaning contained in the term 'pastoral' which is surely intended here. But at the same time we have brought to light a fresh question, and one to which we must now give our attention.

II

[1] On this cf. the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, and the author's commentary, especially on Chapter III, Nos. 18, 21 etc. of this, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil. Konstitutionen, Dekrete und Erklärungen. Kommentare*, Vol I (Freiburg-im-Breisgau 1966), pp. 211-221; cf. also *ibid*., p. 221, n. 2, the studies quoted by K. Mörsdorf.

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Certainly the first point to be recognised about such '*instructions*' (we are using this term to cover all the aims latent in a specifically pastoral constitution as set forth above) is that in principle it has a doctrinal basis. For what could be the starting-point for such instructions, from which they could derive their standards and the authority which they do ultimately claim to have, if not the message of the gospel, the doctrine of the faith which the Church upholds and proclaims in virtue of her teaching authority? Manifestly instructions contained in a pastoral constitution also have to be supported by those principles *de rebus fidei et morum* which are proclaimed and authoritatively interpreted by the official teaching of the Church. This fact is, indeed, explicitly brought out in the preface to the [296] Constitution, when emphasis is laid upon the fact that this Constitution too is not devoid of a doctrinal character. Now it is manifest that there is no intention in this Constitution of drawing any absolutely binding conclusions from these principles, such as would then themselves ultimately have the force of sheer doctrinal norms in their own right.[2] And in view of this fact it is manifest that a fresh question now arises: why is it *only* or primarily 'instructions' that are derived from these principles,[3] why do these principles not give rise simply to '*norms*', *each with its own distinctive message, certainly with an application to the concrete situation, but at the same time with an unambiguously binding force*, such that these norms can be presented as belonging integrally to the official teaching of the Church?

Now one answer to this question might be: 'Because the concrete situation to which these principles have been applied is such as to make it impossible any longer for instructions *bound up with a particular epoch and a particular set of circumstances* to have this force.' But such an answer, which manifestly approximates to the argument presented in the preface, still merely gives rise to yet another question. For a specific situation can indeed be contingent and transient, and yet nevertheless, as a result of applying universal principles to it, it can give rise to a distinctive norm which has absolute binding force in its own right for the circumstances here and now prevailing. And under certain circumstances this norm can be promulgated by the Church as part of her authoritative teaching: as a distinctive *principle* which has an immediate and strictly binding application to the here and now, which, in other words, is something more than a mere instruction. Why, therefore, is the Constitution characterised as pastoral, seeing that this implies that at least part of it consists in a presentation of mere instructions? In view of this, what is such an instruction in more precise terms, seeing that it must be clearly distinguished from a distinctive norm carrying binding force, and yet at the same time is intended to be something more than simply a non-binding expression of opinion with regard to a concrete situation, or a reaction, likewise non-binding, to the situation – a statement, therefore, such as a Council [297] manifestly could and should omit? What sort of awareness of the situation does the Church have, that it leads her to try to respond to it with an instruction precisely of this kind, or – to consider it more precisely – that from the knowledge thus acquired she deduces not a distinctive principle but precisely an instruction? Clearly there are questions here which draw our attention to the special quality of a pastoral constitution.

In all these questions the only way in which we can really make progress is to take as our starting-point a thesis which has a basically existential and ontological force. This *thesis*

[2] Such have in fact actually been put forward, for instance in many of the encyclicals of the past hundred years even though they were intended to be wholly doctrinal, and not 'merely' pastoral in character. In the present context it makes no difference to the point at issue whether these encyclicals always succeeded in their purpose or not.

[3] Here we may for the moment set aside the fact that in several, or even in many cases something more than 'instructions' does nevertheless *de facto* appear as a result of the document concerned having this character. Here we are concerned simply with the question of what gives such a pronouncement its specifically pastoral force.

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could perhaps be formulated as follows: *While recognising to the full the validity of the universal, we must say that any free decision, as a concrete individual act, and therefore as an act of the person endowed with spiritual faculties in the concrete, is never merely one instance among many sharing a common nature. And for this reason it can never, in the last analysis, be fully deduced from universal principles*. Even if we abstract from the well-known general problems of the ontology of the individual, still this thesis must apply at least to the concrete free decision of the person endowed with spiritual faculties.[4] This thesis can be upheld at least in its application to this free decision, and its practical value appears precisely in its application to the questions we have raised here, and its power to throw light upon these (this in turn serves to confirm the basic correctness of it).

The individual decision in the concrete, therefore, is, in respect of its reality and its moral necessity or non-necessity, not capable of being totally reduced to the universal as expressed in a principle. But in saying this we must overlook the fact that even the 'most concrete' of individual principles still always is, and continues to be, a universal principle. The concrete decision is always *at the same time* the realisation of the universal. For this reason it certainly falls under universal principles, however, we may interpret the universal and its relation to the concrete individual in more precise ontological terms. On this showing any radical 'situation ethics' is false. Like the gospel itself the Church can define even a material ethics as binding. But the free individual decision, in its nature as a unique act in the concrete, is something more than merely a particular instance of this universal, even though this 'something more' is not directly comprehended as such by any exercise of the abstract [298] intelligence reflecting upon and objectifying it, and always having to refer back to universal concepts. On the contrary, the most we can do is to describe it ideographically by means of a thousand approximations. On the other hand in itself it is experienced as such through the concrete act of the individual subject, who carries out and consciously possesses within himself this decision without reflecting upon its nature from the ultimate standpoint of himself as subject endowed with the spiritual faculties inherent in human nature. At the same time it must be remembered that any such individual decision, in common with all intellectual acts on the part of a physical person, has an intrinsic structure of its own. This is because there is a unity, and at the same time an inalienable duality, between subject and object. In other words even in the most basic act there is already an element of objectivation which is the outcome of the universal and the reflexive elements,[5] and for this very reason, even though the individual decision cannot be resolved into the universal, still it is to a certain extent able to be reflected upon, albeit always merely at the asymptotic level. In terms of human intercommunication this decision is also as such able to be summoned up by an *imperative*[6] in the form of counsel, concrete example to be imitated etc.

III

We have now arrived at a point at which we can give a possible and reasonable explanation of what is meant by 'instruction'. *Instruction is the counsel to take a concrete decision which, while it is intended to give reality to a universal nature and to a universal principle in a*

[4] For a concrete exposition of the problems involved here the author may refer to the following studies of his own: *Das Dynamische in der Kirche* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau [3]1965); 'On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 217-234; Section entitled 'Der Einzelne in der Kirche', *Theological Investigations* VI (Einsiedeln 1965), pp. 499-544.
[5] For an understanding of how freedom and the spiritual are to be objectified cf. the author's observations in *Über die Freiheit*, M. Horkheimer, K. Rahner, C. F. v. Weizsäcker edd. (Stuttgart [2]1965), pp. 35 ff.
[6] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Das Dynamische in der Kirche*…, pp. 14 ff.

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specific situation (because of the value and binding force of this universal), *is nevertheless incapable of being derived from this universal in any full or compelling sense, either in respect of its content or in respect of its binding force, but remains, both in its uniqueness and its factuality, that which belongs to history, and something which, in the last analysis, can be completely understood only in its actual realisation*. Now if what we have said is rightly understood, then it is immediately evident that instruction too, by the very fact of being the act of the instructor, is a decision. For even as the act of the instructor it cannot be deduced solely from the universal (considered as its genus and its principle). It cannot be so deduced even when, both in the instruction [299] itself and in the decision corresponding to it the situation in which it is taken is actually included in the consideration. For one thing the situation, at least as constituted in part by free decisions taken at an earlier stage in the unfolding process of human living, is itself incapable of being fully or exhaustively thought out in all its aspects. A further point is that every analysis of a situation on the part of a concrete individual subject must be something more than merely material for the speculative intellect to theorise about in an absolutely neutral manner. In all cases and inevitably it must also be the spontaneous act of the practical intellect. In other words it must *ipso facto* itself be a decision. Even if we neglect these aspects which belong to any analysis of a situation (this is something which for the most part we are right in doing in the practical activities of everyday life), still even then the fact remains unaltered that in a specific situation – at least in principle, even though perhaps not in practice in every individual case – there are *several* possibilities for taking a decision, and moreover for taking it in such a way that several further decisions still remain open as, from the aspect of the *universal* norms, *morally* permissible. This remains true even though for the most part the range of what is morally permissible as a result of combining universal norms with a concrete situation will be extremely limited. Instruction, counsel, recommendation etc., therefore, constitute a free decision taken in the developing process of human living with the aim of using the intercommunication which exists between one human subject and another in order to make that other choose one specific decision among several possible ones (possible, that is to say, even in the sense of being permitted by the general norms of morality). In this process of causing him to choose one particular decision, therefore, what is aimed at is neither to impart to a given course of action the force of a duty by the application of universal norms, nor yet to impose any compulsion. For any ‘response’ of this sort does, of course, still leave the decisive question open: whence does instruction derive its unique character as having the force of a demand, since this force is manifestly attributed to it (albeit in a different way than in the case of a universal norm, which is binding as a matter of moral duty)? For evidently the instruction is not intended to sink to the level of a mere expression of opinion or of the sort of wish on behalf of the other which imposes no obligation on him whatever.

In order to obtain a deeper insight with regard to the nature of the instruction and the concrete decision taken in the unfolding course of human life, the first point for consideration is that even the individual decision as such can have a certain binding force although, or even to the [300] extent that, this force is not something that can be deduced from the relevant moral norm with its universal application. From the theological point of view this binding force is, to the extent that it is a genuinely moral element that is in question here, to be interpreted on the basis of the *summons uttered by God in the concrete* to the individual, and directing him to take a *specific* decision. This summons is precisely not identical with the binding force of universal norms considered as divine commandments. In the individual case this summons is always conveyed through the medium of the concrete situation in which a moral decision has to be arrived at. However, this situation, objectifiable though it is to human thought, is not of itself *ipso facto* sufficient to supply all that is necessary for such a decision to be arrived at in all its fulness. Whether the course we decide upon among several

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morally permissible ones *always* has a binding force of this kind as a result of God's specific summons to us in the individual case, or whether it has this only in many cases, is a question which, for our present purposes, we may leave on one side. But what is certain is that this character of moral obligation can be attached to a specific position in the concrete as one of these morally permissible courses. Now when an instruction, while continuing to have this force, is presented as an act of the instructor in the awareness of being authorised and endowed with moral obligation in virtue of such a divine summons (of course this need not necessarily be explicitly defined precisely in these terms) what is constituted thereby is that which can be called, in the stricter and more proper sense, a *theological* instruction. Even an instruction of this kind is directed to the standards freely adopted by the other in taking his own individual decision. This is true not merely because the authenticity and compelling power of the instruction as such can never be established by appealing to principles which can be objectively defined and in this sense recognised, not merely because the individual instance of the divine summons conveyed by the instructor to the other cannot comprehensively be grasped in those modes of objectifiable knowledge which are open to us in other cases, for because what is implied in this divine summons is a quite unique mode of knowledge and testing on the part of the 'addressee' or 'recipient'.[7] On the contrary, instruction as understood here also appeals (though without thereby losing its character as demand) to the free and open decision of the other to the extent that we cannot *a priori* exclude, or pronounce meaningless, that case in which someone, prompted to a [301] decision by the summons of God, gives an instruction, without the binding force of the divine summons to the individual also applying immediately and *ipso facto* to (any) one *specific* addressee in the concrete, to whom the instructor directs his instruction. For the instruction can, e.g., perfectly well have meaning and validity in the Church as such, can be designed to be put into practice in a spirit of obedience by specific individuals, without the instructor himself knowing precisely *who* this instruction is ultimately addressed to in the intention of the divine summons which the instructor himself responds to in obedience. The result is that the instructor must, properly speaking, direct his instruction to individuals who are 'anonymous'.

IV

It will now be relevant to apply what has been said about the nature of instruction in general to the action of the Church. The Church is not merely the upholder and interpreter of the truth of revelation, or the dispenser of the sacraments. As subject she is constituted as a society, and as such she is also the upholder of her own concrete resolutions and actions, which, of course, have to be realised by physical subjects in the concrete. Moreover, over and above the function of proclaiming the truth of faith and dispensing the sacraments, the Church has also, as is made clear by the very fact that she has a pastoral function, a task of guiding and an authority to guide the Christian actions of her individual members, who have to respond to this authoritative guidance by their own individual decisions and actions in the concrete. So far as the question goes with which we are here concerned, it makes no difference, ultimately speaking, in this second case, what the nature of this authoritative guidance consists in more precisely, as applied to the individual members of the Church. In other words it makes no difference whether the Church has any such power to guide only to the extent that the individual Christian must contribute to a common life of the Church as such (something

[7] In traditional language this mode of knowledge and examination is called the 'discernment of spirits'. On this cf. K. Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 100 ff. (bibliography in n. 35).

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which undoubtedly belongs necessarily to the nature of the Church), or whether the Church's authority to guide can extend beyond this and beyond the preaching of faith and dispensing of the sacraments so as also to bear upon the Christian life of the individual Christian in his 'private dimension' as such. In any case a power to guide does exist in the Church, and this power bears upon the concrete decisions and actions of the individual Christian. Now it cannot be contested that under certain circumstances the Church's power to guide in this sense *can* apply to the action of a [302] Christian in the concrete to some extent with an imperative force, in other words as claiming to be morally binding in the same sense as a commandment or prescription (this is true at least of the individual Christian's 'exterior' activities, and we may leave aside the question of whether the Church as such can directly command an 'interior act'). But what is certain is that general commandments or prescriptions of this kind are not the only way in which the Church's power to guide can take effect. The very fact that many factors have to exist, and many things have to be done in the Church (and, moreover, in directions and ways which, while they are quite specific, are nevertheless open to change) for the carrying out of which the Church can appeal to specific individuals without necessarily exercising her power of command over them. The *Caritas* movement in the Church, her work in the missions, ecclesiastical education, ecclesiastical learning, and much else besides, are factors which must be present. They are tasks which are obligatory upon the Church, and yet she is not able to impose these duties of her own volition as binding upon certain specific individual Christians. The realisation of her own fulness is something that is necessary and a duty for the Church, something, moreover, in which there is always an element of contingency, since it belongs to the dimension of concrete history, and since *de facto* it can be achieved only through the free decision and the free act of individual Christians. And yet the Church cannot, of herself, make this a duty in the strict sense for specific individuals as a matter of law or concrete commandment which they can be compelled to carry out.[8]

Now there is no doubt that it is to this area that the 'instruction' (counsel, exhortation to perform something which is incapable of being the subject of an order etc.) belongs. If it were not that the Church had the power and the authority to issue such instructions, it would be quite inconceivable how she could apply her pastoral function in the concrete. Laws and commandments taken by themselves would never achieve what has to be achieved and done in the Church.

V

We have already said above that the very fact that the instruction is an [303] act of the instructor *ipso facto* implies that a decision is involved which cannot wholly be deduced from general laws and norms applicable to the class of action involved. Now there is no doubt that this also applies to the Church. When she causes an exhortation to be issued in the sense of an 'instruction' as understood here, when she emphasises some special point in these recommendations, exhortations, desires etc., when she recommends one course of action with special urgency today and another tomorrow, then in such instructions she herself makes decisions which cannot be compellingly deduced *solely and exclusively* from her understanding of the faith *de rebus fidei et morum*. Moreover these decisions (at least in very many cases) do not derive unambiguously and in the concrete from this understanding of the

[8] Here it is apparent that we can only conceive of the nature of the Church if we include within our purview the controlling force of the Church's Spirit who by his grace causes the individual to decide of his own freedom to obey this impulse which moves him in his freedom and so to do that which the Church cannot command and yet which must be done because it is necessary to the Church.

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faith which she has, even when we take into consideration as one of the relevant factors the situation of the Church herself of the world and of the individual, in which such instructions are issued. For even for the Church the basic principle applies that even in a concrete situation several morally justifiable decisions can be arrived at in so far as these are measured merely by the general principles of whether they are morally permissible. Now in the case of such instructions how does the Church come to recognise which specific ones she *should* promulgate and which others she can or should leave undefined even though, from the moral and Christian point of view, they are possible?

It has already been said above that a moral decision in the concrete becomes recognisable as something that ought to be done not solely or exclusively because of the normative power of the general material and formal principles to which it is related, in other words that the concrete decision, precisely as concrete and individual, can come to be recognised as something that ought to be done in virtue of a divine summons. This also applies to the instructions of the Church to the extent that they constitute concrete decisions of the Church who instructs. The Church cannot issue any instructions she likes, only restricting herself in this to the extent of ensuring that any instruction she does issue does not come into conflict with her general principles. Nor is the individual obligation involved in a concrete instruction removed in virtue of the fact that he to whom it is addressed can, without violating any general moral norms, act upon the instruction or not as he wills. For even the instruction as such constitutes an alteration in the sphere of freedom open to the other[9] to whom it is directed, and therefore entails certain moral demands. Hence in [304] effect the question must be raised of whence, in that case, the Church knows how her concrete instruction has to be issued, what brings her to recognise that individual summons of God which imparts to a decision (in this case the instruction) its specific character as something that ought to be promulgated in the particular circumstances. Now certainly it can be said that the Church (in her official representatives) gives, and should give, such an instruction 'according to the highest dictates of her one conscience'. In other words in such an instruction she should command what seems, in the light of the concrete situation, most probably to be the 'better' course, what is most calculated to serve the interests and aims of the Church and of the realization of Christian living in a concrete situation. A further point wholeheartedly to be conceded is that in her practice the Church must act in this way, just as an individual man also, in a concrete situation, follows the 'dictates of his conscience' in selecting one of various possibilities even when his theoretic intelligence is incapable of recognising any one of these possibilities as absolutely and certainly the only one which can be entertained.

VI

Manifestly, however, this alone is not enough to explain how the Church recognises that any one specific instruction is such as to express something that ought to be done in a particular set of circumstances, and thereby becomes aware that she herself is authorised and empowered to issue this particular and specific instruction. For simply in virtue of the fact of issuing instructions alone, decisions are arrived at which are, all things considered, of such great importance for the Church herself, for the individual Christians and for the world, that it is hardly possible to conceive, merely on the basis of our understanding of the Church, that the manner in which they are arrived at is no different from the manner in which those

[9] cf. the study referred to in n. 5, pp. 41 ff., and the author's brief study on what is needed for a right understanding of religious freedom in the small volume entitled *Religionsfreiheit*, M. Schmaus and E. Gössmann edd. (Munich 1966), pp. 7-23.

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resolves are arrived at by which an individual man, acting upon 'the highest dictates of his conscience' makes experiments in his life because nothing more is possible for him. But then one point which the Christian is aware of with regard to the Church is this: the Church is constantly being guided by the Holy Spirit.

We must develop this statement. It is certain that this Spirit is bestowed upon her primarily in order that she may not depart from the truth of Christ in any *definitive* doctrine, and in order that in her that hope and that love may always remain alive and may also be manifested in history in [305] adequate ways (cf. D 1794), without which the Church would not be what she must be, and, moreover, must always remain, through the eschatologically victorious grace of Christ.[10] Certainly the fact that she has the assistance of the Holy Spirit does not exclude the fact that there are sins in the Church, and, moreover, even in the official representatives of the Church as such, and therefore, that there are wrong decisions, wrong developments, denials of the Church as such. The Church is not only a Church of sinners but also a sinful Church, an *Ecclesia semper reformanda*.[11] But the fact that the Church abides in the truth of Christ, in his hope and love, is in fact not simply a static condition established once and for all, but must always be made actual afresh through specific individual acts and decisions in history on the part of those officials and human individuals in the Church who are commissioned to uphold her official functions in the concrete. This essential state of the Church abiding in the truth, hope and love of Christ, therefore, is necessarily achieved through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and there is no other way whatever in which it can be achieved, because the institutional Church is totally incapable of guaranteeing that she will abide in them in this way. But from this it follows that this assistance of the Spirit extends precisely to the whole range of those decisions, acts, omissions and mutual influences in all their variations, in which the abiding of the Church in Christ is realised in the concrete.

A further point is that in the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council the Church explicitly teaches that what belongs to her intrinsic nature is not merely the institutional factors of universal doctrine, sacraments and law, but the charismatic factor as well. There is no need to provide a detailed exposition at this point of what this means.[12] What we must emphasise here, however, is one of the implications of the statement that even the *laymen* are the bearers of such charismatic gifts belonging to the Church. In no sense does this truth have to be bound up with the idea that *the holders of official positions* in the Church are not the bearers of such charismatic gifts, or not recipients of such charismatic [306] influences on the part of the Spirit of God.[13] It is perfectly possible, therefore, to conceive of these officials in the Church as the bearers of charismatic gifts and as receiving the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which is never totally withdrawn from the Church. With regard to such charismatic gifts the Constitution on the Church emphasises that we should not, at any rate not always and not in the normal instances of them, think of them as extremely miraculous or spectacular phenomena. In other words they may be manifested in forms which seem to belong to life at an extremely down-to-earth, everyday and sober level. Now this point which is so much emphasised naturally applies also to the Church's officials and to their acts to the

[10] For a fuller treatment of this cf. *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 295-312, especially pp. 301 ff., 305 ff.

[11] For an understanding of this cf. the author's study, 'The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 270-294.

[12] cf. K. Rahner, *Das Dynamische in der Kirche*…, pp. 38-73; *L.T.K.* II (Freiburg ^{2}1958), pp. 1027-1030 (with bibliography); *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg-im-Breisgau 1964), pp. 154-160; Vol II/1 (Freiburg-im-Breisgau 1966), pp. 76 ff. (Bibliography). cf. also below n. 14.

[13] On this cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I, pp. 154 ff.; *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 305 f. Even in the concept of the sacrament of order we already find an ultimate unity being pointed to between a power that is official and institutional and a grace which is personal and consecrating, and as such capable of having charismatic effects.

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extent that the charisms play an essential part in determining the nature of these, charisms which are to be thought of as bestowed with the assistance of the Holy Spirit (at least in principle) as extended to the generality of the Church's official functionaries. The fact that we have to think of the effects of the assistance of the Spirit and of his charisms as taking place in unspectacular ways should not obscure the conviction of faith that this influence of the Spirit and of his charisms is present in the Church's officials even though sometimes the concrete image of the Church may seem disappointing and may lead us to wish that this power of the Spirit could be manifested more clearly and in ways which transcend all merely institutional levels.[14]

This provides us with a starting-point from which to answer the question posed above, that namely of what enables the Church to recognise in formulating her instructions (these being considered as decisions on the part of her official functionaries) which of these instructions in the concrete do in fact express what ought to be done, seeing that this cannot be deduced in any adequate sense either from the general principles of the Church or merely from an analysis of the situation, or even from a combination of both of these. We are now in a position to formulate the following principle: *The instructions of the Church considered as decisions on the part of her official functionaries are* (*at least amongst other things, or at least in specific instances*) *charismatic instructions formulated with the assistance of the Spirit in the Church*. It is from this that that unique character [307] of such instructions derives, namely of expressing what ought to be done (this is inherent in the instruction and for those who are the recipients of the instruction). This unique character is such that it belongs neither to a law, a norm or a commandment, nor can the instruction itself be reduced to the level of a mere expression of some opinion which the promulgators happen to favour, or of a wish which imposes no obligation whatever upon those others to whom it is addressed.

VII

On the basis of this point which we have now recognised as correct we can attempt to think out in more precise terms the true nature of a pastoral constitution. But before we do this there remains to be investigated yet another aspect of a charismatic instruction of this kind. Certainly this 'instruction' which we intend to recognise as the distinctive element in a pastoral constitution ultimately constitutes the charismatic decision through which the Spirit guides the life of the Church in the concrete, and leads her to adopt ever fresh modes of self-realisation and ever fresh forms in which to express herself in concrete history, though these can never be worked out solely or totally at the theoretical level. But this does not exclude the simple fact, which is readily observable at all times, that such decisions and instructions emerge in all cases only in the context of a concrete encounter with a specific situation in which the Church finds herself. Inspiration from above is always made real in and through the 'material' which is supplied from below, even though it is equally true that this inspiration can never be established totally and exclusively, as it were, by a process of synthesis from below. Here, however, we are considering how this situation comes to be recognised. And while according all due importance to the factor of the guidance and assistance of the Spirit of God (precisely in this process of recognition as well), we must say that this recognition is a *human* recognition, with all the necessary prior conditions, developments and systems of thought which belong to a human process of recognition, and

[14] On this cf., in addition to those works by the author mentioned in nn. 12 and 22, especially 'Do not Stifle the Spirit', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and Baltimore 1971), pp. 72-87.

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above all to the recognition of a particular individual factor in history. It must be remembered, however, that *the Church has something more to do* than merely to preach the enduring truth of the gospel, something more than merely to ensure that the abiding essence of the sacraments shall be realised again and again in innumerable particular concrete instances. Over and above this she must *act in and upon history, and the necessity of such concrete action in history also belongs to her own intrinsic nature. Now if all this is true then the necessity and the* [308] *power of recognizing the situation in which she has so to act and so to realise herself likewise belongs to her own intrinsic nature, or to the full realisation of this*.

Now in saying this we are expressing something which is a truism, and yet at the same time astonishing. We say so easily and so unreflectingly that the Church draws her life *solely* from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, from the gospel which *always remains the same*; and that this revelation (for all the possibilities it offers of historical development and explicitation, and for all the necessity that exists for progressively unfolding it) was *closed* with the death of the apostles and is not susceptible of any further additions. Yet through this very truism which we have just expressed it becomes manifest that it is quite impossible for the Church to draw her life *solely* from the revelation of God (the progressive unfolding and right interpretation of this). In order to be able to act at all, and in fact to act in a way such that without it she would not be what she must be at all, she needs a knowledge of the situation in which she lives. Certainly this knowledge of the situation can likewise be achieved with the assistance of the Spirit and, as a knowledge belonging to the Church, may bear, in some respects, a charismatic character. In other words it may be something different from knowledge of a historical situation at the merely secular level considered as a secular analysis of the age, of society etc.[15] And a further point which may be conceded as perfectly correct is that the occasion of acquiring such knowledge, in which a theoretical analysis of the situation (despite the fact that it is always incomplete) is concluded and made the basis for decision and action in the concrete, also includes, as it were, that point in this concluding of the analytical stage and in this transition to decision and action to which the working of the Spirit is primarily to be assigned. But all this does nothing to alter the fact that the Church has need of a non-revelatory kind of knowledge, a knowledge which does not belong to the *depositum fidei*, in order to be herself and to be able to act.

VIII

This fact only seems not to make much difference therefore. It has been able to remain more or less unremarked, and has not given rise to any particular theological reflection, because in earlier ages this knowledge [309] of the situation was an extremely simple and uncomplicated factor which could be presupposed as already present to an adequate extent in everyone endowed with practical wisdom so long as they had a little personal experience of life, and could therefore also willingly be attributed – at least by presumption – to the individual leaders of the Church. But in this respect too the situation has altered. Knowledge of the situation in which the 'world' and the Church have to live, act and make decisions today is so multidimensional, complex and confused that it can no longer be attained to solely through the simple experience of life in the concrete which prudent and mature people achieve. Today it has to be made the subject of the fullest consideration, of a learning which is both manifold

[15] The author has carried out an analysis of the present of this kind (partly in collaboration with N. Greinacher) in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 178-276; the basis in scientific theory, pp. 180-188. cf. also 'Theologische Deutung der Position des Christen in der modernen Welt', *Sendung and Gnade* (Innsbruck [4]1966), pp. 13-47.

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and far-reaching in the methods it uses which include several auxiliary sciences (in certain circumstances computers etc. may be employed) in order really to achieve what has to be achieved: to impart to a society, a state, the community of nations and to the Church as well[16] that knowledge of the situation which is the necessary prior condition for any course of action which measures up to the realities involved. This being the state of affairs, the problem of precisely *how* the Church can acquire knowledge of the situation in which she has to act, since she cannot create this knowledge for herself from revelation, suddenly becomes extremely awe-inspiring. The Church cannot give her decisions, even when these are merely 'instructions' issued to her members, without achieving a confrontation with the situation in which instructions need to be given, and in acquiring knowledge of this in the world of today she is perforce put in a position by men themselves in which she is dependent upon sources of knowledge and methods of gaining it which are artificially controlled,[17] and which she is, in effect, quite incapable of controlling for herself in any adequate way. And yet her own action depends at least in part upon this knowledge, as also do the achievements of the *ex professo* scholarly element within her ranks, as distinct from the charismatic impulses of her spirit.

The fact that there is a problem here which has been insufficiently worked out in terms of any theory of the Church's knowledge (if we may so express it) appears from a single small fact, in itself insignificant, but [310] in this context rich in implications. At the Council there were certain conservative theologians who expressed their opposition in very strong terms to any attempt on the part of the Council at providing an official analysis of the contemporary situation – just such an analysis, in fact, as was, in the end and in spite of these objections, set down in the *expositio introductiva* of the Pastoral Constitution. But what these conservative theologians said was: *Whence* is the Church to know precisely *what* must be said in this Constitution if after all she cannot draw this knowledge from the sources of knowledge bestowed upon herself? How is she to be in a position to make some binding pronouncement on the subject? *How* can she avoid the danger in such discussions either of putting forward mere platitudes which can be found better expressed elsewhere or of hazarding assertions which rightly meet with rejection on the part of those who are specialists in analysing the contemporary situation and in estimating what the future will hold? In this latter case the Church cannot even defend herself by putting forward the proposition that in the last analysis she is, in fact, more competent in these matters than the specialists themselves. Such objections are certainly to be taken seriously, and in so far as they are answered at all by the terms of the Pastoral Constitution they are answered only *via facti*, without any explicit or conscious reflection upon them, somewhat as follows: The Church has dared to attempt such an analysis of the contemporary situation because she absolutely needs such an analysis. Moreover, given that she has to undertake an analysis of this kind, it is only fair that she should also be allowed to state freely to her members and to the world the findings which she has drawn from it.[18]

The question we are treating of here is concerned with a theory of the Church's teaching office as this bears upon the nature of that knowledge which is necessary to the Church, yet which cannot be acquired directly or exclusively from the sources of revelation. Now in the

[16] Hence in the sphere of the Church too a livelier awareness is needed of the necessity for planning, for prognostication, and for analyses based on scientific theory. cf. on this *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 214 ff., 258 ff., 274 ff., II/2, pp. 19 ff., 76 ff.

[17] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Experiment with Man', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and Baltimore 1972), pp. 205-224.

[18] In this connection it is, of course, almost self-evident that inasmuch as this analysis of the present was relegated to the *Expositio Introductiva* it is not adequate and, furthermore, that it makes no claim to be so; in other words that the Church certainly knows more upon this subject than it expresses in this Constitution.

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last analysis the problem this involves can only be solved if we take into consideration among other factors the charismatic assistance of the Holy Spirit available to the Church in this process of reflecting upon her own situation which is necessary for the conduct of her life and her activities. Moreover, as understood here, this assistance does not exclude the process of reflecting upon the contemporary situation at the human level, which today is extremely complex and involves the use of all those methods which human [311] science has made available. On the contrary it includes this and becomes effective precisely in and through such humanly acquired knowledge. Nor does the assistance of the Spirit as understood here exclude the fact that the Church may fall short in her analysis of the situation through human limitations and human failures, or even through culpable obstinacy and narrow-mindedness, the refusal to recognise her own faults, a lack of charity in recognising the value of those outside her etc. In all these ways the Church may fall short of what can be achieved and what should be striven for in such an analysis. Obviously in acquiring such knowledge the Church too has to recognise certain limitations at the existential and ontological levels to which all men are subject. It is true of all men, when they embark upon an analysis of their situation as a prelude to 'estimating' what the future holds for them, that however advanced their 'futurology' may be, their true and actual future always remains to a large extent unknown, and so not subject to their control. And this applies to the Church also. But this should not for one moment obscure the basic insight of faith by which we recognise that even when the Church undertakes an analysis of the contemporary situation of this sort – something which is vitally necessary to her – she is still acting under the charismatic influence of the Spirit. It is quite unnecessary to regard this influence as consisting primarily, or indeed at all, in the fact that in the course of this analysis the Church discovers factors which have not been, or could not have been discovered equally well by secular and uncommitted bodies undertaking a similar analysis of the contemporary situation. On the contrary, this influence of the Spirit is manifested primarily in the following two facts: first that the Church actually does venture upon an analysis of this sort, not attempting to suppress the factors adverse to herself which she may, under certain circumstances have to recognise in doing so, but rather facing up to them in all openness and humility; second, that the Church is able to select from the incalculable number of individual facts and findings to which such an analysis gives rise those in particular to which the charismatic summons of the Spirit directs her when it is mediated to her in the process of arriving at her own decisions and instructions. What has been said so far is not intended to give the impression that the problem of the theory of the Church's knowledge raised here has now been solved in a satisfactory manner. But if we have to speak of the nature of a Pastoral Constitution issued by a Council, this problem too should at least be touched upon.

We are now in a position to make the following statement:

The essence of a Pastoral Constitution consists in instructions issued by the [312] *Church primarily for her own members, and to some extent over and above this for all men who are ready to pay attention to the Church. These instructions are issued in view of the contemporary situation as evaluated under the charismatic influence of the Spirit and in response to the charismatic summons of God.*

In this description the terms 'instruction', 'summons' and 'charismatic knowledge' are, of course, to be regarded as involving that content which we have attempted at least to indicate in the preceding sections. Admittedly too, in order that this description may be valid, a further qualifying clause must immediately be added to it as follows: ' . . . *if* and to the extent that a Pastoral Constitution really is intended to be, and is capable of being, something more than a mere amalgam of principles put forward in a doctrinaire manner, these general principles being developed into particular principles with as precise an application as possible to a specific situation.' Obviously, however, this taken by itself would not entail anything that

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went beyond a doctrinal pronouncement of the Church based solely on her sources of revelation.

IX

The very moment we have arrived at this mode of describing what a Pastoral Constitution of the Church essentially means we find ourselves inevitably and spontaneously brought up short by the question: Is there really any such thing? But the question which will occur to us first and foremost is: Can we really claim precisely *this* Constitution of the Second Vatican Council as a Constitution in the sense which we have now defined?

With regard to the *first* question, what has already been said needs only to be supplemented by the following further observation: In the history of the Church there undoubtedly have been, and still are men and women who are charismatically endowed. These have made statements which have subsequently become 'instructions' of the Church of precisely this kind, instructions which are not derivable merely from the principles of revelation alone. Moreover these utterances of theirs have commanded attention and have thereby contributed very notably to the concrete history in which the Church is in process of achieving her own fulness.[19]

[313] A further consideration to be borne in mind in this connection is that when such instructions, deriving as they do from those favoured with charismatic impulses, have emerged in the Church's life, they have invariably been dependent for their success upon a certain acceptance on the part of the Church's official representatives, although this acceptance may perhaps have been at a quite inexplicit and unofficial level. In view of this, and even apart from what has been said above, we can see no compelling grounds for excluding the official Church too as such radically and *a priori* from the possibility of itself giving utterance to 'instructions' of the same kind in the Church as a whole. Moreover we who recognise the Church (differing in this from the Old Covenant) as an indissoluble eschatological unity of institution and Spirit, must not conceive of the abiding distinction in her between the 'institutional' and 'charismatic' elements in so primitive a manner.[20]

The *second* question, it must be conceded, is more difficult to answer. Does this Constitution in its actual and existing form really possess the character of a 'pastoral constitution' precisely as *we* have attempted to define this? The first point we have to make with regard to this question must in all honesty be that it is not easy to supply any assured answer to it. The point of departure for our description of the essential nature of the Constitution is to be found in the preface to it. And it must be conceded that here it is neither as ample in scope nor as well substantiated as we could wish. For it can be asked whether the reference in the Constitution to its own 'pastoral' character, that is to that 'something more' which it contains over and above the assured and abiding doctrinal statements, is such that our explanation of it is wholly compelling or in fact the only possible one. It can legitimately be asked whether after all this preface is not intended to say merely that from the *general* principles of Christian revelation the Constitution draws particular *principles* with a narrower application in view of the nature of the present situation as it exists in the concrete and as subject to change. On this latter showing, however, the composers of the Constitution would

[19] From this point of view Church history would have to be rewritten *precisely in its pastoral aspect as understood here*. We may think, for instance, of such definitive breaks with the past as were brought about by the acts of individual Christians such as Catherine of Siena or Joan of Arc, or even of still greater achievements on the part of whole groups such as the work of missionaries in China (Ricci), the experiment of the worker priests etc.

[20] cf. pp. 305, 306, nn. 12 and 13.

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have had in mind the implicit proviso that they would not vouch for the correctness of these particular principles in every case or with their *ultimate* authority, and that obviously *a fortiori* if the situation itself changed principles different from those actually expressed would then acquire greater relevance and force. A further point that has to be conceded is that, apart perhaps from a few quite minor and timid statements, there is a lack in this Constitution of any radical consideration of the nature of a 'pastoral constitution' and, [314] over and above this, of the nature of the pastoral office, its possibilities and its limitations and also the ways in which it can be exercised (precisely as including the authority to instruct) as distinct from the teaching office, even though, in view of the content of this Constitution a consideration of this kind could properly have, and perhaps even actually should have, provided the subject matter of one of its basic themes. At the same time however, we must still be careful to avoid any denial of the fact that it does have the character of a Pastoral Constitution in the sense which we have worked out here. Here we must confine ourselves merely to pointing out certain further indications of why this should be so.

A point which can be established fairly clearly as a matter of historical fact is that not only in respect of its subject matter, but also in its whole inspiration and attitude this Constitution follows in the footsteps of the great encyclicals of John XXIII.[21] It is true that in these encyclicals too there is a similar lack of any radical consideration of the real significance of what is there being enacted. But even so the specialists, accustomed as they were to the 'doctrinalism' (using this term in no pejorative sense) of Pius XII, were sometimes extremely startled at what they found in these encyclicals. For here statements were made and demands put forward which can no longer be shown to follow compellingly as conclusions drawn from the general principles of Christianity. Even when due attention is paid to the contemporary situation in the concrete, and even if it is sought to find principles with a more particular and more concrete application to this, still even these do not follow solely or with full certainty from the general principles referred to. Now does this mean that John XXIII exceeded his own competence in doctrinal matters; or has he achieved, and moreover quite rightly achieved, something quite different (at least in part and with regard to the ultimate point and significance of his statements) than to explicitate further in doctrinal terms the content of the *depositum fidei* as such? Has he perhaps achieved precisely that which we have here called 'instruction' in a quite specific sense? In these encyclicals has he perhaps acted as an 'issuer of instructions' in precisely the same way as in the convocation of the Council, seeing that here too he was convinced [315] of the fact that no compelling ground for this decision could be drawn either from the nature of a Council as such or simply from the relevant factors in the contemporary situation and in the Church, but rather that in convoking the Council in this way he was acting under an inspiration from above?

X

Now if we are inclined to reply to these questions in the sense indicated here, then we shall be still more justified in arriving at the same conclusion with regard to the Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, and, despite all its undeniable and striking deficiencies, we shall be able to regard it as a Pastoral Constitution in the sense described

[21] Admittedly here we can only recognise the need for a historical study of these connections without ourselves carrying it out. Nor do we intend, in the thesis we have stated, to maintain that Paul VI has abandoned this course which his predecessors had embarked upon (this is especially true of his encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam*). Rather he has supplied different and fresh emphases to what had gone before. But it remains the achievement of John XXIII, with his bold and charismatic directness, to have initiated these difficult undertakings. As always this initiative has to be further developed and guided in *different* ways.

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here. Of course this does not imply (in fact the introduction itself already makes this clear) that there is no doctrinal element in this Constitution. Actually it is quite obvious that from the purely quantitative viewpoint this doctrinal element far outweighs all other elements. This is in fact inherent in the very nature of the subject matter. An 'instruction' always constitutes a summons to some act. And this act must also realise in the concrete some necessary value the force of which is abiding and immutable. (Here, for example the dignity of man or the values of justice, love, the unity of mankind etc.) And every instruction, even in the secular sphere and whatever the form in which *de facto* it emerges in history, is issued as pertaining to the proclamation of principles which are constant and immutable in their validity. It is these, and not the nature of the instruction itself that those issuing it have consciously in mind, even though, outwardly speaking, the instruction is something more than a mere application to the present of these permanent and immutable principles. Again in the light of this it is not surprising that even a Pastoral Constitution in our sense can give the impression to its readers almost of being a collection of particular principles drawn from the spheres of moral theology and social politics, and that any explicit reflections upon its real nature are either totally absent or at any rate extremely imprecise. The ultimately concrete element in this which constitutes the true essence of an instruction is in fact wholly incapable of being the subject of speculation. And quite evidently the process of reflecting at the *theoretical* level upon an essence of this kind in the manner presented here cannot bring any particular *concrete* actualisation of this essence under our microscope. In other words so far as any one specific 'instruction' is concerned such theoretical speculation can only have a very secondary importance. At the same time the [316] theologians, sociologists, futurologists and other specialists must subject this Constitution to the closest possible scrutiny and, in a certain sense, test its various elements to see where and how the Constitution goes beyond the limits of a purely doctrinal presentation, and achieves the status of what we have called 'instruction' as issued under the charismatic summons of God to the Church. When we say, however, that this is demanded by the very nature of the case, we precisely do not mean that the boundaries between the two can be made absolutely clearcut and unambiguous. We have only to achieve an understanding which is correct in a genuinely ontological sense of the relationship between the universal and the particular, and between the knowledge we can have of the former and of the latter, in order *ipso facto* to see too that it is quite impossible for human knowledge, radically bound up as it is with history, to draw the boundaries between 'doctrine' and 'instruction' as sharply as this would imply, the more so since every act of human cognition, even at its most theoretical, invariably and of its very nature has itself in turn the essential status of an act and decision on the part of the practical intellect also as realised in the concrete.

This does not mean, however, that it is unnecessary and meaningless to look for such possible boundaries between doctrine and instruction. In those cases in which the theologian believes that he is no longer able to see at the theoretical level how a given statement in the Constitution follows from the sources of revelation alone, he should not straightway start talking about the possibility of error or of the composers exceeding their competence etc. (though admittedly even in a conciliar constitution which is precisely *not* intended to be a definition this is possible). The theologian should ask himself whether a statement of this kind at the theoretical level, yet not fully supported by arguments, is not precisely an 'instruction' justifiably issued to summon the Christians of today to a specific decision in history. It may be too that the character of 'instruction' is to be ascribed to this 'Pastoral Constitution' in virtue of the selection which it arrives at between those statements and demands which it actually makes and those which – from the theoretical point of view – it could just as well have made but in fact does not. Here too we should not be too hasty in speaking of the finite nature and the limitations of even the Church's pronouncements, or of

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the element of chance or even the effects of fashionable mental attitudes, even though it may be admitted as an obvious factor that the fathers of the Council too are not immune to these. But there is something more in the reasons prompting a selection of this kind than can be accounted for purely at the theoretical level. It [317] may be that behind it lies the summons of the Spirit in history, that Spirit whose will it is to have *both* enacted in the Church of today, demands as well as doctrinal statements. And if this is so, then it is something that despite whatever 'one-sidedness' there may be, the Church both can and should do in all trust,[22] without having to be anxious as to whether in taking this course she is betraying the inexhaustible resources of her own nature. For this always contains something 'more' than merely those elements which are traditional and customary or the obvious lines laid down for the development of her teaching and practice.

[22] On this cf. *Handbuch der Pastoralthleologie* II/1, the work mentioned in n. 14, p. 626 and also K. Rahner, *Im Heute glauben* (Einsiedeln [1]1966), pp. 24 ff., 32 ff.

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[318]

17

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF SECULARISATION

I

The aim we shall be setting ourselves in what follows is to conduct a *theological* consideration of the reality and the idea of that which the term 'secularisation' is intended to convey or that which we have to understand it to signify in order to obtain a correct view of this reality.[1] Now the first point to be established for this is that the concept of 'secularisation', both historically and in terms of its actual meaning, imports primarily and essentially a relationship to the *Church* considered as a social entity, and not, in the first instance, to God, his salvific grace or the historical realisation of this in the world. In German it is perfectly legitimate to distinguish between *Säkularisation* (secularisation), *Säkularisierung* (secularising considered as a process) and *Säkularismus* (secularism),[2] taking this last term to signify – though it in turn has many different levels and shades of meaning – the phenomenon of the 'world as it has been rendered worldly and profane', the world as self-authenticating *without* having, either in theory or (above all) in practice, any particular reference to God. In view of the history of the term 'secularisation', however, and also for reasons connected with its actual content, it is more accurate and more in conformity with the facts to take the term 'secularisation' as our starting-point, using this to signify the growing influence of 'world' (as the outcome of human ingenuity) and the process by which it becomes increasingly autonomous and separates itself more and more from the Church considered as a social entity in the world. A point that may be readily conceded from the outset in this connection is [319] that for the purposes of a truly theological consideration (as distinct from one in which considerations of canon law are included) it makes little difference whether such a 'secularisation' has been achieved by compulsory measures taken by the state appropriating the material resources of the Church or by the state abolishing or frustrating the Church's organisations (such as orders, confraternities etc.). The element in this concept which is of decisive importance for us is the fact that the 'world' in this sense separates itself from the 'Church', and that there is an increasing separation between *sacerdotium* and *regnum*, an increasing profanisation of the world by comparison with ages in which religion as an institution on the one hand, and the life of society on the other – in other words 'Church' and 'world' – constituted a homogeneous unity.

This 'secularisation' or worldliness in relation to the Church must not simply be identified with an a-theistic profanisation of the world.[3] For one thing there is such a phenomenon as a 'religious attitude'[4] which does not find expression in the sociological group or the Church. But more than this, and even if we view the matter from the point of view of the Church, the world even as secularised still falls under God's universal will to save. It is permeated by his

[1] On the concept cf. H. Lübbe's work, Säkularisation (Freiburg 1965); this includes a section explicitly devoted to the historical development of the concept which is strongly recommended.
[2] On these key words cf. E. Hegel, 'Säkularisation', *L.T.K.* IX (Freiburg [2]1964), 248 ff.; A. Auer, 'Säkularisierung', *L.T.K.* IX, 253 ff.
[3] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Science as a "Confession"?', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore 1967), pp. 385-400; *idem*, 'The Man of Today and Religion', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 3-20; *idem*, 'Universal Salvific Will', *Sacramentum Mundi* V (Freiburg/London 1970), pp. 405-409.
[4] cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 228 ff., 253 ff.

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grace, and in virtue of this is far from being in any position to be atheistic in any absolute sense, even though it may sometimes interpret its own position in this sense at the level of explicit and conscious reflection. This means that the world is actually playing a positive role in the history of salvation and revelation, whether it consciously realises and accepts this or not. The most radical illustration of this truth is the fact that even one who is in all good faith an atheist properly so called at the level of conscious and explicit thought can still attain to salvation and can therefore still be in possession of grace and faith.[5]

Of course in spite of this distinction between 'secularisation' considered as the removal of the Church's influence and 'secularisation' considered as an attempt at atheistic profanisation, these two realities are closely interconnected. In its scope and the manner in which it is brought about, the process of ridding the world of the Church's influence can acquire a [320] specific form, one which gives it a tendency towards an atheistic profanisation. It can proceed from such a tendency or alternatively give rise to it or demand it.

At this point[6] we would wish deliberately to impose certain restrictions upon ourselves by confining ourselves to the concept of 'secularisation' considered as ridding the world of the Church's influence in so far as this is possible in view of the connection between the two concepts we have mentioned. In doing so we are conscious of the fact that this means that we are passing over the more ultimate aspects of the matter. We shall not, therefore, be speaking directly of the atheistic interpretation of the world in all its manifold forms as the 'world without religion' (Barth, Bonhoeffer), the 'death of God' movement (Altizer, Hamilton, van Buren etc.), the 'non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts' (Bonhoeffer, Ebeling), the 'worldly world' as such (Metz), the 'world as attaining to its majority' to the extent that this in itself already presupposes a certain separation between world and Church etc. Even when we have restricted our aims to this extent it is still possible to treat only of *some* but not all the specific aspects which are necessarily raised even when the subject-matter is as limited as this. We shall present our considerations in five brief theses, each of which will be followed by its own particular interpretation. As the final section of the whole study we may be permitted to draw certain conclusions from the rest of the theses which will have the effect of removing the restrictions which we shall meanwhile have imposed upon the subject-matter, broadening our viewpoint once more so as to relate our findings to the profanisation of the world in general and to the manner in which the Christian can live in it (cp. Thesis V, Section VI).

In our considerations we shall be taking as read certain aspects upon which much has already been written in recent years, and some of which are vitally relevant to the question of secularism and secularisation. In this study, therefore, we do not have to speak of the biblical and theological concept of 'world', with all the discussion it involves concerning that which is merely 'creaturely', that which must not be invested with 'numinous' quality, that which as created reality is good and is intended to be 'permeated with human influence' and by man as the 'environment' which is orientated to him. Similarly we shall not be returning to the question of the sinfulness of the 'world' considered as 'the present aeon' from which we have to detach ourselves in order to be ready for the 'aeon [321] that is to come' of the 'kingdom of God'. We are presupposing as a point that is already familiar the idea that the dynamism inherent in Christianity itself gives rise to a justifiable process slowly working itself out in history by which the world becomes worldly, even though in the concrete the representatives of Christianity and the Churches have often been so misled in their understanding of the

[5] cf. 'Atheism and Implicit Christianity', *Theological Investigations* IX, pp. 145-164.
[6] cf. The author's studies in *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck [4]1966), pp. 13-47; *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 222 ff., 234 ff., 242 ff., 267 ff., II/2, 35 ff., 40 ff., 42 ff., 208 ff., 228 ff., 269 ff.; cf. also J. B. Metz, *ibid*., pp. 239-267.

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world, due to their ideas being ossified at particular epochs, that they have actually sought to hold back this process. In saying this, therefore, we are conceding not only the radical difference between 'world' (society, state) and 'Church' which 'in itself' is always valid and which is to be taken in the sense formulated by Leo XIII, but we are also asserting that this difference itself and in its own turn has a history of its own worked out in theory and practice which tends towards a growing clarification of the difference involved and so too to a growing awareness on the part of the two entities in themselves of what they really are and what the mutual relationship between them consists in.[7] We cannot treat of the basic relationship between Christian hope for the 'kingdom of God' which is God himself in his act of self-bestowal upon us as the absolute future and the future towards which the 'this-worldly' hope of man is orientated and which he sets up before him as his aim in his struggle against all alienation from the self.[8]

II

Our first thesis runs as follows:

A phenomenon frequently apparent in the history of the Church is a false integralism. By comparison with this the process of secularisation is, judged by genuinely Christian standards, right and just.

It is true that this statement expresses much that properly speaking belongs to the content of those principles which we have designated above as presupposed to our present considerations. Here, however, we must investigate with particular care the idea and the true nature of 'integralism', because even today the unreflecting attitude and mentality which this implies have not altogether died out in the Church. In view of this we can take an objective evaluation of this concept and of the reality it signifies as [322] a starting-point for arriving at a clearer conception of a kind of 'secularisation' which is, of its nature, legitimate, and also of the wholly practical consequences arising from this. What we are concerned with in the idea of 'integralism' is not that historical phenomenon consisting in the part played in the Church's history in the closing years of Pius X by the anti-modernist group under the leadership of Mgr. U. Benigni. Nor are we thinking of similar movements in the concrete which took place after the Second World War (*intégrisme* as the counter-tendency to *progressisme* in France, 'right-wing Catholics' as opposed to 'left-wing Catholics' in Germany etc.). What we shall be concerned with here is simply the essential nature of a reality which can be called 'integralism' (though there are other names for it also) because it signifies a specific interpretation of the relationship of the Church to the world (in the humanities, in science, in society and in politics), an interpretation in which every kind of 'secularisation' is rejected. Integralism in the sense intended here is that attitude, whether at the theoretical or at the practical (though unreflecting) level, according to which human life can be unambiguously mapped out and manipulated in conformity with certain universal principles proclaimed by the Church and watched over by her in the manner in which they are developed and applied.

Integralism in this sense implicitly presupposes that in his acts man simply puts his theory into practice, and that the world and its history, considered as the material field in which these acts of his are posited, is sufficiently predictable, malleable and submissive to his will,

[7] For a bibliography on this topic cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 203-207.
[8] Also K. Rahner, 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 59-68; in this volume cf. 'A Fragmentary Aspect of a Theological Evaluation of the Concept of the Future', pp. 235-241; 'On the Theology of Hope', pp. 260-272; 'The Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the "New Earth"', pp. 242-259.

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to make such a procedure possible. Integralism in this sense, therefore, entails a failure to recognise that the 'practical intellect' has an element of the autonomous in it. Its acts of apprehension can be achieved only within the context of the free decision as actually posited in hope. An integralism of this kind presupposes that the Church is already in possession – at least to a sufficient extent for all important purposes – of these principles which are needful, and thereby denies the existence of any genuine historical development of dogma and theology at least for the sphere of practical action and the principles covering this. Furthermore integralism tacitly implies the opinion that in those cases in which it cannot be shown by just and valid argument that a given course of action is in direct contradiction to the universal principles of the gospel and of 'natural law', it follows *ipso facto* that this course of action is of itself and of its very nature so 'secular' in character that from the point of view of morality it is simply and absolutely irrelevant, so that *ipso facto* there cannot be any question of evaluating it as an act leading to salvation or alternatively to perdition. In virtue of [323] the fact that the Church is the proclaimer, and also the interpreter, of these principles as understood precisely in *this* sense the exponents of integralism regard her wholly and unreservedly as the guide of the world, at least *de jure* and in view of what she claims herself to be.

Nor is it sufficient in itself to overcome this attitude of integralism to emphasise that point initially made by Leo XIII and still upheld by Pius XII, namely that the Church recognises the relative autonomy of the world, the state and the departments of secular learning, and that in these dimensions of human living she ascribes to herself only a limited authority *ratione peccati*. For there are[9] two questions with regard to the doctrine of any such *potestas indirecta* or *directiva* belonging to the Church in relation to the world which we have to answer rightly in order that integralism may really and effectively be accounted as overthrown:

First: Given that the Church has the right to draw the dividing line between that which is morally permissible and that which is unethical, in other words to apply the criterion of the *ratio peccati*, does this give her the power to determine in the concrete what the 'world' should do in the here and now? Or alternatively does the establishing of this dividing line leave, at least in principle, the way open to various possibilities so that the world acts autonomously and on its own responsibility in making its choice between them? (Though this does not mean that the content of the decision as taken in the concrete is *ipso facto* of no 'human' significance, or that morally speaking it is simply irrelevant). The question is to be answered in the second sense, though the reasons for this need not be given in any greater detail at this point,[10] and this is despite the fact that integralism, for all that it verbally upholds the doctrine of the *potestas indirecta* or *directiva* of the Church, tacitly answers the question in the first sense and so, for all its outward professions, can still 'indirectly' assert that the Church has, or at least claims to have, a kind of dominion over the world which enables it positively and effectively to shape its course. There is a further point, which we need only mention in passing, with regard to that element in a course of action freely entered upon which, unlike the other elements, cannot be determined in the light of universal [324] principles. It would be wrong and prejudiced to suppose on this account that this element is *ipso facto* morally irrelevant, or to put it another way, that the *only* way in which we can recognise the morality of an action as such is by applying universal principles to it, as though

[9] 1n this connection we must for the moment abstract from the fact that on this theory the importance attached to the Church's role is in reality too little. This is a point which we shall shortly have to demonstrate.

[10] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Grenzen der Amtskirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln 1965), pp. 499-520. On the problems entailed in the use of the term 'ecclesiastical' in this connection cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 211-214; on the actual subject itself cf. also in the present volume 'Practical Theology and the Social Work of the Church', pp. 349-370.

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there were no 'logical' way of working out the ethics of human action at the individual level.[11]

Second: the correctness of a further idea tacitly presupposed by integralism has also to be called in question, the idea, namely, that we know what ought to be done once we know (precisely through the Church and her pronouncements *ratione peccati*) what we ought *not* to do. The fact that it is possible and justifiable for the Church to prohibit certain courses of action must not be doubted. Yet in reality such a prohibition does not *eo ipso* or of its very nature supply us with any positive idea in the concrete of what course of action we can and should adopt.

There may be many simple and unremarkable instances in the morality we practise in our everyday lives in which this may be the case. But it is not so as a matter of principle, and still less is it so in the sphere of 'political' ethics as applied to major social and historical events. In spite of the *ratio peccati* as defined and applied by the Church, the sort of responsibility which the 'world' has to take with regard to these is quite different from that which integralism imagines it to be. In this context the insoluble *casus perplexus*, from being the subject of the subtleties of moral theology, can become a matter of deadly earnest such that moral theology at the theoretical level, with its abstract concepts and *quaestiones disputatae*, is of no avail to solve it. In these circumstances once more the world has to be left to itself by the Church. To give an example: no pope and no Council has been able to say *in the concrete* how we can effectively, and in the actual situation as it exists, escape from the vicious circle of the balance of fear created by the atom bomb, or how we are to face up to the worldwide population explosion. Absolutely speaking we have to respect all principles of abiding validity in arriving at those solutions which we have to find in the here and now. But these abidingly valid principles do not yield any solution in the concrete. Ultimately speaking the question that remains constantly present is concerned with those goals defined by [325] principles laid down by the Church and, in an asymptotic sense (i.e. as never quite attainable), binding 'in themselves' and 'in principle' to be striven for in an historical development (both at the individual and the collective levels). Do these aims *ipso facto* actually have to be capable of realisation at every moment of history? Or alternatively is it possible for man, under certain circumstances, to fall short of them even consciously, and in doing so to incur 'material' sin indeed but not formal sin, and precisely in that very act to attain to the best possible course in the here and now?[12]

Whatever answer we may arrive at to this question, the raising of it represents the first serious attempt to take into account the historical conditions to which man is subject as a factor essentially affecting the moral demands which are required of him. Whatever answer to it we may arrive at it does appear from the considerations which we have set forth above that the Church is in no position whatever to determine unambiguously the 'human' factor, or even what constitutes moral behaviour in the world, seeing that this can vary according to the circumstances prevailing at any given time. For this reason too the Church is in no position to claim such determining power when she emphasises the binding force of the principles she upholds, principles which, ultimately speaking, always have the force of defining boundaries which must not be overstepped. The Church is never, and never intends for one moment to be, the total and exclusive force determining and administering human conduct and morality

[11] On this cf. K. Rahner, *Das Dynamische in der Kirche* (Freiburg [3]1965); 'On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore 1963), pp. 217-234; *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln 1965), pp. 521-544. 'Do not Stifle the Spirit', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and Baltimore 1971), pp. 72-87; 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution"' in this volume, pp. 293-317.

[12] On the principle here being enunciated cf. provisionally *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 152 ff. (with references).

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in the world. She is not the sum total of this, but rather an element in this sum total made up of many factors, for at basis and of its very nature the sum total of all that determines human morality is essentially 'pluralist' and derives from numerous elements: from the concrete historical situation, which can never be thought out completely in all its aspects; from the principles of the gospel and also of the 'natural law' as rightly understood, *and at the same time* from the decision taken in a concrete set of circumstances which is unique in each particular case, and yet which, even as such, is still subject to the claims of morality. Man has the task of unifying all these heterogeneous factors and, once more, it is not for the Church, but rather for God alone to say how this is successfully to be achieved in the concrete. Why else, for instance, does the Church avoid making any moral judgment on the Vietnam politics of the USA? If she could make such a judgment *ipso facto* she would also be under an obligation to do so.

It is not merely that integralism in the Church has never been able to be [326] achieved in practice. It is actually false in principle too. Now all this taken together has the following significance: Of her very nature the Church constantly leaves the world free to be itself in its 'worldliness' and to have its own responsibility (and this not only in the execution of its decisions but in the actual process of arriving at the imperative underlying these also) even though this worldly element as such still precisely does *not* cease to have a 'moral' relevance and to have a *significance for salvation*. This worldly element is not merely the secular 'material', in itself indifferent, 'in which' Christian action is to be made real, but also includes (though it is not co-extensive with) Christian activity itself, since not every aspect of this can be controlled by the Church. In this process of 'secularisation' of the world which she herself promotes, the Church supplies the grace of God, the principles of the process and its ultimate boundaries. But the human and Christian conduct desired is something that is achieved by the world itself on its own ground and its own responsibility.[13]

III

The second thesis runs as follows:

The secularisation of the world in the good sense implies that the Church has a quite new task, namely to create a new ecclesiastical integration between the faithful themselves within herself taken as a whole and in the individual communities.

This second statement is intended to draw a conclusion which, though it represents but a short step, is in itself not unimportant in view of a new task which the Church has to perform in her own sphere. The Churches as the sum total of the faithful and the human groups which assemble at particular places of worship are intended to be communities. But they are this not merely in virtue of the juridical structure of the Church in the purely formal sense, together with the confession of a common faith and the celebration of a common liturgy. These are not the sole factors even if this liturgy as realised in the mystery of the Eucharist is aimed at the emergence of the community in sacramental power.[14] In earlier times the Church and the communities of local Churches were able to achieve an [327] integrated community life of this kind even at the sociological level, relatively speaking without any special efforts on their part, in virtue of the fact that the Christian community (together with the specifically

[13] For a treatment of the principles governing the relationship of the Church and the world cf. K. Rahner, 'Kirche und Welt', *Zehn Jahre Katholische Akademie in Bayern*, ed. by the *Katholischen Academie in Bayern* (Würzburg 1967), pp. 9-27.

[14] On this cf. 'The New Image of the Church' in the present volume, pp. 3-29; 'The Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship', pp. 71-83, 'On the Presence of Christ in the Diaspora Community according to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council', pp. 84-102 (with the bibliography attached to each article).

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ecclesiastical elements in its formation as a community: a juridical structure, creed and cult) could presuppose as already in existence in the secular sphere a socially integrated group characterised by the following elements: a cultural life which made equal demands upon all, a society which, at the civic level, was homogeneous rather than pluralistic, an ethical system which was immediately and manifestly common to all, and which went beyond abstract moral principles. In other words (to put it briefly) it could presuppose all that which lies at the roots of a stable and homogenous society integrating the individual into itself, defining for him the boundaries beyond which he could not pass, and relieving him of his burden by offering him security.

This situation also had its effects upon the specifically ecclesiastical elements in the ecclesiastical community: the common creed was also a manifest factor at the social level. This meant that those vested with official authority in the Church were relieved of certain burdens. The cult was also experienced as a sacral sublimation of the unity of the secular community. Today it is quite otherwise. Earlier the 'world' introduced *ipso facto* and of its very nature certain vital basic factors into the 'Church'. Today the society which penetrates into the Church, and which has to form a community there from the outset, is the world as 'secularised' even in the sense that it no longer immediately and of its very nature supplies the necessary substrate for the formation of the Church's community, as was formerly the case. It is pluralistic in the patterns of life in the world which it offers. It is made up of men of whom no one individual any longer has command of the whole of knowledge, of culture, or of the trends towards the future which are present throughout the whole of society. In spite of the fact that there has been a great increase in universal education, that masses of information in various fields are now available, and that the media of communication have multiplied so rapidly, society as a whole has become less possible to evaluate with regard to its condition, more difficult to guide and more incalculable with regard to the future towards which it is tending. In brief: society is less integrated, with all the consequences which this has for the individual and for society itself. Now this gives rise to quite a new task for the Church in working for the fulfilment of her own true vocation. She must herself create what she could formerly presuppose as the social or 'natural' substrate for the formation of her own community.

[328] Admittedly this precisely does *not* mean that the Church has to transform this world as secularised and pluralist in this sense back into that former state of being a homogeneous society which of its very nature brought its own integration with it into the Church. The Church does not have to do this even to the extent that this present world as secularised and pluralist has to be absorbed ever anew into the Church herself. Indeed if the Church were to attempt such a thing – and the temptation to do so is always present and always great – she would be building herself a ghetto and, in terms of the sociology of religion, the very tendency of her own efforts would be such as soon to turn her into a 'sect'. But *even within* the boundaries of the Church herself she must herself remain an 'open society'. Indeed she must become this far more than formerly. She cannot practise any kind of 'negative selection' in the sense that unconsciously, but nonetheless really, she seeks to address herself to, to reach and to win over only individuals of a particular social or cultural stamp. She must have a place for conformists *and* non-conformists, for men of the most diverse political tendencies, for philosophers with the most diverse ideas, for *catholiques de droite* and *de gauche* etc. She must cope with this state of pluralism in an anti-integralist way. In fact she must learn to view and to experience this as something positive.

But this in turn precisely does not mean that the Church has no task of integration at the higher level with regard to this abiding intellectual and social pluralism within her. If this task were not recognised and fulfilled, then the Church would be a 'sect' designed for the satisfying of merely individualistic religious needs, and still more would once again become a

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mere 'official Church' of clerics;[15] these alone would, in fact, satisfy such religious needs, and the believers could, as an unintegrated multitude, be nothing more than the recipients of the Church's salvific acts despite all ideological protestations to the effect that they are something more than this: to a large extent the really constitutive element of the Church. The Church would not be in a position to fulfil any responsibility to the *world* or any task for the *world* precisely as a *Church*.

But what is this 'integration' of the Church considered as a community, and how is it to be presented, seeing that it cannot be the act by which the pluralist world is rendered homogeneous after the pattern of an integralism interior to the Church herself nor yet a restoration of that earlier degree of integration which the society of the Church enjoyed, nor even a mere [329] ideological superstructure of devotionalism ('We *are* already the Body of Christ')? It is difficult to find an answer to this question. The following alternative answers might be considered possible:

First, in answer to this question concerning a task for the Church which is still hardly recognised we might point to all the social work for the 'new' integration of society which the Church is performing, should perform and could perform in common with secular society which undertakes the same work with similar aims.[16] It might be said that the Church must undertake precisely this work, even though it seems to be wholly secular in character, primarily in relation to her own baptised members. Thus for example her children, adults, the old etc., who have, each in their own way, to be integrated into the society and to find a place in it and security for themselves.

Second, a plea must be entered in this connection for a genuine process of democratisation in the Church. Rightly understood this term as applied to secular society stands not so much for a 'liberation' from all kinds of compulsion, but is rather the key word for institutions, standards of conduct, models, rules etc. which have to be formulated in order that a society which is pluralist in character and has to survive as such may be a *society*, and not a radically disintegrated accumulation of individuals and groups, each with their own special interests. In accordance with this, 'democratisation' in the Church does not in the least need to be understood as a battle-cry against the authority of the official hierarchy of the Church, but rather should be taken as the key word standing for the integration of that secular and pluralist society in the Church which today constitutes her enduring substrate, which the formation of the Church has to presuppose.[17]

Third, we might refer to a factor (as something that also has validity in this connection), which will have to be spoken of further in our third thesis, with regard to a quite new function of the Church as a whole in relation to secular society.

However, as we have said, we shall have to devote a fresh section in our considerations to the discussion of this. What we have said up to this point on the subject of the second statement is, of necessity, very abstract, first because the task indicated here, which the secularised state of society makes necessary for the interior life of the Church, has still scarcely been [330] recognised, and second because, for want of space and also of competence in the field, we have not been able to make any practical proposals at the level of 'pastoral theology'.

IV

[15] On this cf. the article already cited on p. 323, n, 10. 'Grenzen der Amtskirche' and in addition to this cf. especially K. Rahner, *Vom Sinn des kirchlichen Amtes* (Freiburg 1966).
[16] In fuller detail in my study, 'Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church' in this volume, pp. 349-370.
[17] For a concrete treatment of this cf. 'Dialogue in the Church' in this volume, pp., 103-121.

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The *third thesis* may be formulated as follows:

In its situation of pluralism and secularism the Church leaves society to develop along its own lines. Now precisely because she is incapable of shaping the course of society in its concrete decisions in an integralist, doctrinal or juridical sense, the Church herself has a quite new task in relation to this society, a task which might perhaps be characterised as 'prophetic'.

But what this presupposes is that new formation of the people of the Church in terms of ecclesiastical and social organisation which has already been referred to in the second thesis. This statement is obscure and must be clarified.

The process of secularisation on which we sought to cast light from the theological aspect in the first thesis appears initially and at first view to imply that the Church lacks influence in many departments of life in the world. Certainly the Church can set herself to establish certain boundaries *ratione peccati*. She can lay down certain universal norms. But against any tendency towards an integralism beneath the surface she cannot control the history of the secularised world in the concrete either by means of her – admittedly valid – doctrine or by means of her pastoral commission (considered as *potestas jurisdictionis*). Are these negative determinations now sufficient fully to determine the true relationship between the Church and the secularised world? Is it the case that the only way in which the Church can achieve any further influence on the formation of the secularised world is simply as a 'grace' and through the individual Christians as such, through the power of grace and the 'mental attitude' of the gospel as inculcated into these Christians?

I believe that no clear answer has been given to this question even in the Second Vatican Council. Such an answer is to be found neither in the Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, nor in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolican actuositatem* nor in *Gaudium et spes*. The reason is that the activity of the Church, in those contexts in which it is not to be identified with the activity of the individual Christians, is still viewed too much as an assistance in *doctrinal* terms, in other words as a 'communication of principles'. And this despite the fact that that idea which is so often invoked of 'collaboration' on the Church's part with all [331] men of good will and with their social institutions points in a different direction.[18]

Our third statement is intended to provide an answer to the question which we have just presented: the Church as Church can achieve something more than a mere counselling of the world by the preaching of her own principles, something more too than mere 'collaboration' which in practice could only be achieved through the work of the individual Christians in the secular institutions, allowing for certain exceptions of no great importance.

In order to see what is positively intended we must begin by considering the following point. In a democratic and pluralist society which is functioning well each of its informal and formal groups has the purpose and the right to exercise its influence in the general decisions which still inevitably have constantly to be taken by the society as a whole. The groups concerned can use all justifiable means in doing this, beginning with discussion and extending to propaganda and the use of their own power in legitimate ways. But what is constantly presupposed is that such a group has an 'opinion' as to what ought to be done in the here and now with reference to such decisions taken by society as a whole and with a view to the actual taking of them. A concrete 'programme of action' of the kind envisaged is itself an extremely complex entity, and yet in the practical 'will' of the group concerned it constitutes a unity. It contains within its own nature elements of rational and conscious

[18] For a fuller treatment of this theme cf. 'The Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the New Earth' in this volume, pp. 260-272; 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution"' pp. 293-317, and 'Practical Theology and the Social Work of the Church', below, pp. 349-370.

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calculation measured by the reality itself with regard to the particular matter involved, and it is by means of these that an attempt is made to win over the rest through *instruction*. Such 'rational' elements are present both with regard to the goal to be aimed at and also with regard to the objective means by which it is to be attained. But a 'programme of action' of this kind, belonging to a particular group, always contains a further element over and above that which can be justified on purely rational grounds which have consciously been thought out. This is an element of creative imagination. It is 'creativity' which makes the 'utopian' a possibility. It is a decision taken from the freedom inherent in human living which, from many possible or conceivable courses of action, chooses – perhaps all unreflectingly – one in particular, resolves upon this and seeks to carry it out. It actually creates, and does not merely endure, the process of human history.

[332] All this takes place at that level of practical living which cannot be deduced from mere speculation, which carries its own conviction, and does not, in any full or comprehensive sense, derive this from the sphere of speculative thought.

The Church too can, should and must be a group of this kind within the secular and pluralist society. The pluralist society itself cannot prohibit the Church from having such an aim. For only a society which is absolutely totalitarian in structure can have the intention of allowing social groups to exist only as subdivisions and subordinate functionaries of a society which is set up and controlled in a totalitarian and authoritarian manner from a single central point. A pluralist and 'open' society, which, unlike a 'closed system', does not merely make room, legally speaking, for a single point of control for all its powers, cannot *a priori* have anything against a community of believers freely and constantly forming itself anew with such an aim, provided only – and this *is* presupposed – that it keeps the 'rules of the game' belonging to such a society and to the interpositions of its decisions and its 'practice'.[19]

But the Church should have an aim of this kind. Whether she is in any position to achieve this, whether she can be equipped for it, what degree of social unity she has to have and the manner in which she can form such a unity within herself in order to be the 'subject' of such an aim at all – these are questions which at this present and initial stage cannot yet be discussed. Nor shall we yet at this point be raising the question of how far she can in practice be successful in bringing this aim to fruition in the secular society, namely of making *her own* 'programme of action' either wholly or in part a principle of action for the secular society. We have no intention either of implying that such a programme of action could from the outset and in its first inception *only* be that of the 'explicit Christians'. God's grace can also inspire others to adopt the same programme. On theological grounds the Church can and must have such a name, such a programme of action if she can manage it. She has a task to perform for the world. She is there not for herself, but is rather the basic sacrament of salvation for the *world*.[20] She must be the leaven of the world. The worldly [333] activity of Christians and the working out of their salvation are not two areas of her activity which are materially speaking completely distinct, but – at least in part – two aspects of one and the same process by which the lives of Christians are brought to their fulness. Now this fulness is achieved essentially in intercommunication and in social living as realised in the concrete 'space-time' dimension of history. As 'visible' the Church is a concrete historical and social entity which, even if she did not wish it, necessarily influences society as a whole in various ways and, indeed, in ways which proceed not merely from her nature as 'eternal' but also

[19] On the process by which the common will is formed in contemporary society cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 31-42.
[20] For a treatment of the basic principles involved here cf. K. Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Freiburg ^{2}1963), pp. 11-22; 'Konziliare Lehre der Kirche and künftige Wirklichkeit christlichen Lebens', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln 1965), pp. 479-498; 'The New Image of the Church' in this volume, pp. 3-29, esp. pp. 12 ff.; *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg 1964), pp. 118-142.

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from the form she inevitably assumes of her own free will and in the concrete. These are effects for which the Church has to answer. The Church as such has *de facto* willed to have such an effect – one which goes beyond her doctrine and the activities of the individual Christian – and has exercised an influence of this kind upon the world. And in view of this state of affairs there can be no serious question of the Church in principle having to renounce this influence and to withdraw into the 'sacristy'. The question rather is precisely *how* the Church is to be able to direct this legitimate influence in relation to the secular world today.

These indications must suffice at this point as a basis for our thesis concerning the legitimacy and the need for the Church to have such an influence upon the world, over and above the statement of her doctrine in principles and the specific activities of the individual Christians. The points that are of more immediate concern to us here are as follows:

First, the attempt to determine to some extent the precise nature of this influence, and this not merely in negative terms as formerly, and

Second, the question of what form the Church herself ought to assume in her concrete structure and in the minds of her members in order that she may in fact be able to exercise such an influence upon secular society.

In order to make some contribution to the answering of the first question it is advisable initially to devote some consideration to the character of many of the encyclicals of John XXIII (*Mater et magistra*, *Pacem in terris*), as also of the encyclicals of Paul VI, *Populorum progressio* and above all the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* of the Second Vatican Council. In what does the special quality of these documents consist? While they rightly and necessarily contain much that is fundamental and of permanent validity in the way of 'doctrine', the true focal point of their significance, that in them which is so striking and which actually 'shocks' those who expect them to remain at the purely theoretical level, consists in their underlying purpose which, following the language of the Second Vatican Council, we can characterise primarily as 'pastoral'. But it would [334] be to undervalue this 'pastoral' element, and to deny its true nature, if we sought to understand by it merely those 'practical' consequences which – at least in view of the world situation as it actually exists – could certainly and compellingly be drawn from the universal principles. The climactic significance of these documents plainly lies in certain 'imperatives', in certain assignments of emphasis, in the unfolding of an historical programme which summons the world to certain decisions. Indeed this is also shown from the fact that the actual analysis of the contemporary situation which in part provides the basis for this 'pastoral' element is neither something given in revelation nor so simply capable of being established that it could present the 'situation' as a 'brute fact' which no-one is in a position to doubt. On the contrary it belongs inseparably to that sphere of practical activity in which knowledge of the situation and the reaction to it in terms of human decision and action constitute a unity and *mutually* condition one another[21] The demand, for instance, for a 'super-UNO'[22] or the formation of a world fund for aid to the under-developed peoples in *Populorum progressio* are certainly demands representing lofty aims and ones which, even in material terms are wholly justifiable. But undoubtedly they represent something which cannot compellingly be deduced as a *conclusio theologica* from revelation for each individual, such that every Christian is *obliged* to accept this demand. On the contrary, they constitute programmes of action, having the character of a decision, assertions of the practical intellect, precisely as this cannot be deduced from pure *intellectus principiorum*. They constitute decisions in which the Church does something more

[21] On the theological difficulties involved in an analysis of the contemporary situation cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1, pp. 181-187; 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution"', in this volume, pp. 293-317; 'Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Disciplines', *Theological Investigations* IX, pp. 101-117.
[22] On this cf. *Gaudium et spes*, No. 84.

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than merely to conceive of putting her principles into practice; something in which she actually *wills* to realise these principles in the concrete in a specific form and one which cannot be deduced from those principles, and in which the Church exercises an influence upon secular society as a concrete group within that pluralist society in virtue of this will of hers.

The discovery of this imperative directed towards society can, in view of the nature of the Church, only be characterised as 'prophetic' although this does not exclude, but rather includes all the other elements in such a discovery such as are found in other contexts in any decision of social and [335] political relevance. This means that a pastoral 'instruction' is, at that point at which it fully realises its ultimate nature, the *prophetic* instruction of the Church considered as a decision taken in terms of concrete human living and ultimately not derivable from theory, and in fact directed to the secular world.[23] Of course this applies only to that which the Church can demand of this secular world precisely for its *salvation*. But this is not in dispute.

But the question which we have now to consider – this is the second of the two questions we have just raised – is whether the Church as actually constituted in the concrete is the sort of subject which, as one of the groups within the secular and pluralist world, can address the world with a programme of this kind with even a little prospect of success. This hope can indeed not be based (merely) upon the fact that the programme of action is in some respect enlightening in itself or that other groups are raising the same cry. The difficulty entailed in this hope and the prospect of the Church having any effective influence on the secular world is twofold: on the one hand we have the official Church, which in this respect cannot, of its very nature as Church, be anything much more (though at the same time it must be this) than the *herald* of a prophetic impulse which is present elsewhere in the Church, or at most *one* of the possible points of entry for the Church's own Spirit with its power to influence history. This official Church has, in relation to the world, only as much 'authority' and influence to move it as belongs in a thousand ways to the 'Church' considered as a social group. On the other hand the official Church cannot lay it upon the believers belonging to her in virtue of her formal teaching authority or jurisdictional power to follow this prophetic imperative which the official Church sends forth.[24] The Church as people of God must 'go along with' the official Church in these prophetic imperatives if they are to have any real effect on secular society. Now the truth that stands revealed at this point is that the Church is fundamentally something different from, and, for practical purposes must henceforward become something different from, the institution of truth merely at the level of the speculative reason, supplemented by the necessary consequences [336] that correspond to this in terms of the administration of the sacraments and the apparatus of ecclesiastical government. Rather she must be the institution of the truth of the practical reason, the 'vision' and activity of which also belong to that institution which the revelation of God has created for itself. She is the people of God on pilgrimage, which is intended to, and wills to, imprint its eschatological hope upon the structures of worldly life through the orientation of this pilgrimage in the concrete, which is not fixed and determined *ipso facto* and from the outset by the maps which revelation at the theoretical level provides. It must and will also achieve harmony with the

[23] On the concept of the prophetic 'instruction' cf. 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution"', pp. 293-317, esp. 295 ff., 298 ff., 302 ff.

[24] Even within the Church phenomena analogous to this are to be found: e.g. the Church can for instance recommend the gaining of indulgences, but what real meaning would the Council of Trent's dogma on indulgences have if an overwhelming majority of the faithful used their *Sancta et justa libertas filiorum Dei* (Thus Paul VI in the Apostolic Constitution 'Indulgentiarum Doctrina' of 1.1.1967, No. 11) so as to decide not to gain any indulgences?

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secular world in its course, without being able to determine this course in any doctrinal or even integralist sense.

But how much there still is to be done in the Church in order that this task can be fulfilled with all the effectiveness that is necessary! A 'political theology' of a fundamental kind would have to be developed. That is theology (considered as content) in general and ecclesiology in particular would have to be developed in their significance for social politics and the shaping of history, and thereby the exaggeratedly narrow and individualist view of revelation as pertaining to the salvation of the individual in isolation would have to be overcome. A 'mental attitude' would have to be developed in believers in which they no longer confronted the official Church with the dilemma, either to make pronouncements that are doctrinally binding or else to be 'uninteresting'. Instead believers with this mental attitude would be ready seriously to respond to 'prophetic' impulses, to make their own attitudes worked out in the freedom of human living, to share in the formation not merely of opinions but of resolves too. In the official representatives of the Church a readiness would have to be developed (and that too not merely with regard to specifically religious matters such as e.g. new devotions etc.) to take up *prophetic* impulses in the Church. For however true it may be that for the most part these become really effective only when they are extended beyond the official representatives of the Church to the Church as a whole, and thereby to the world, still they do not necessarily emerge in this way, but in a few cases they actually appear for the first time precisely in the holders of office in the Church. That process of social integration within the Church would be required of which we have already spoken from a different aspect in the second thesis, and which can be of assistance to the Church in achieving her effect only when it is applied at the social and political levels.

[337]

V

Our *fourth thesis* runs as follows:

The relationship of the Church to the secular world as it exists today demands, within the framework of '*practical theology*' *that a special theological discipline shall be worked out and shall have a constitution of its own*.

This constitution we shall call, provisionally and for want of any better term, a '*practical ecclesiological cosmology*'.

What is meant by this? First a word must be said with regard to 'practical theology', which is commonly – and even in the Second Vatican Council – called 'pastoral theology',[25] since this 'cosmology' of which we speak is to be understood from the outset as a discipline which is part of 'practical theology'.[26] 'Practical theology' is not a mere amalgam of 'practical' maxims which emerge necessarily and of their very nature from dogmatic and moral theology and from canon law. Much less does it consist merely of such guidelines as are of importance for the 'pastoral' work of the priest engaged in the cure of souls. 'Practical theology', so far from being this, is a discipline in its own right because its subject matter and its methods cannot be deduced simply from the 'systematic disciplines' of theology. It enquires in a properly worked out and methodical manner into the ways in which the Church as a whole can achieve her due fulness according to the demands made upon her and the possibilities open to her at any given time in *all* her dimensions, and not merely in the clerical sphere and through the activities of clerics. It differs, therefore, from other disciplines in which

[25] cf. my study, 'Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Disciplines', *Theological Investigations* IX, pp. 101-114 (together with the references to further studies there provided).
[26] On this concept of a 'practical cosmology' cf. further the study entitled 'Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church', and especially below, pp. 339 ff., 350 ff.

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ecclesiological questions are raised in that these can enquire merely into the abiding nature of the Church's self-realisation, and the essential forms in which this can be achieved as determined by revelation or – as in the case of canon law – into the *jus conditum* and its history. But they cannot consider in any adequate manner the '*jus condendum*'. Now in order to realise what is entailed in this self-achievement of the Church as something to be realised at a particular point in time, and which extends far beyond the mere putting into practice of abiding principles and of the Church's *jus humanum*, we need to make a theological analysis and an interpretation of the contemporary situation [338] of the Church both in its internal and external aspects. Now this analysis cannot be worked out in terms of any other theological discipline. Moreover what we are faced with here is a quite distinct subject for theological investigation in its own right – it is not 'revealed'! – so that it also entails a distinct theological method, one which cannot merely be that which is applied in secular sociology, history, the study and evaluation of cultures etc. And precisely for *this* reason 'practical theology' is a theological discipline which is, in a genuine sense, original and unique in character even though it does presuppose all other theological disciplines. This must suffice for our present purposes as a description of the nature of 'practical theology'.

Now within this self-achievement of the Church as she exists at any given time the relationship of the Church to the secular world is something that has to be discovered not merely in its permanent and immutable nature, but also, and no less essentially, as it has to be realised in the circumstances actually prevailing in the here and now. And to this extent this relationship assumes not indeed the only place, but still a place of such significance that it has to be the subject of a special consideration in its own right and one that is worked out by precise and correct methods in practical theology. The general grounds for regarding practical theology as an autonomous discipline in its own right are in themselves sufficient to show that this relationship cannot be treated of in other theological disciplines, for this relationship is changed by the changes which take place in the secular world considered precisely *as* the situation of the Church. But this situation itself cannot be the subject of the disciplines of systematic theology. Moreover the recognition of this relationship, in view of the complexity of this situation, can precisely *not* any longer be deduced from the mere pre-scientific experience of individuals. A further point is that this relationship entails, as one of its characteristics, an element of prophetic decision. In other words it is totally incapable of being interpreted as a mere combination of two elements alone, namely a theoretical ecclesiology and a recognition of the situation.

Now this doctrine concerning the relationship of the Church to the world as it exists at any given time, even though it is a part of practical theology, has no name. And hence it comes about that this task for theology for which there is no name is in fact far from being recognised sufficiently clearly or evaluated sufficiently clearly in its urgency or its importance. This task is not identical with the 'social science' of Christianity, for this latter discipline is concerned with the basic forms of secular society (in economics, law, civic constitution etc.) and with what these *ought* to [339] be according to Christian principles.[27] Nor is this discipline simply a department of dogmatic ecclesiology, for this can at most treat – if only it did so! – of the permanent forms assumed by the relationship of the Church to the world. Nor is this discipline identical with 'political theology' as so urgently demanded today by J. B. Metz,[28] for this is concerned with the social implications and the social relevance which are universally and abidingly immanent in the revelation, the doctrine and the hope of Christendom, and is not concerned with what ought to be the relationship of the Church, in

[27] On this cf. W. Weber, 'Kirchliche Soziallehre', *Was ist Theologie*?, E. Neuhäusler, E. Gössmann edd. (Munich 1966), pp. 244-265 (Bibliography).
[28] On this cf. the summing up of J. B. Metz in his study, *Verantwortung der Hoffnung* (Mainz 1968).

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the actual circumstances prevailing, to the world in its worldliness as it actually exists in the here and now. This discipline which we have postulated really has no name. And for this reason it would almost be true to say that it has hardly any existence yet either in the Church and in theology. We recognise it immediately when we think of *Gaudium et spes* and in doing so resist the temptation to reduce what is said there to mere 'dogma', 'moral theology' and 'social science', and when, on the contrary, we try to recognise the element of the 'prophetic' in it and *then* ask ourselves precisely what theological discipline this Pastoral Constitution considered as a whole and in its distinctive character is properly speaking intended to assume. We cannot point to any one because the theological discipline which we have postulated has no name and so has not yet been constituted at all in any explicit sense as a discipline in its own right. For want of a better name we may call this subdivision of the science of practical theology which we have attempted to define 'practical ecclesiological cosmology', but in doing so we hope that the term 'cosmology' as used here will retain the biblical connotation of 'cosmos', and that no-one will confuse this kind of cosmology with the discipline belonging to 'natural philosophy' which bears the same name.

Today the task which awaits a 'cosmology' of this kind is an almost immeasurable one. In our naiveté we constantly suppose that we know the world in which we live; that we are familiar with its forms, its diversity, its ideologies, its hopes and impulses, the co-existence of the various levels of human living within it, which are present in it simultaneously right from the origins. We find no difficulty in believing that we know what manner of men they are to whom the Church addresses herself in her specifically religious mission, but also, over and above this, in the message [340] she has to give with regard to the wellbeing and prosperity of society and its future even within this present world. We do not know these men. Or at most we know only a particular group of them, separated from the rest by our own mental attitudes, conditioned as these are by our membership of the Church and the bourgeois outlook of our own times. We need only to notice the emphasis, the perspectives and the choices of subject-matter which are made in the official pronouncements of the Church, and to ask ourselves precisely which *men* can pay heed to these pronouncements, to see that in spite of all her good will the Church does not really know, in any adequate sense, man as he exists today.[29]

In this cosmology innumerable aspects of the relationship which the Church is required to bear to the secular world today would have to be considered. The directly religious mission of the Church certainly does not belong to *this* part of practical theology. Nevertheless this cosmology would have quite sufficient material to consider with regard to the relationship between the Church and the world. Certainly there are many particular subjects belonging to this complex of questions within the theological discussion – all those which are treated of in the second part of *Gaudium et spes* and which in fact also constantly point by implication to a function which the Church has in relation to the world. But is this enough to include all the particular subjects? Are there not others which, as we can foresee, will become urgent in the immediate future? Are there not many such particular subjects, in relation to which the Church *de facto* merely adopts a theoretical and detached attitude, a dialectical approach characterised by the phrases 'on the one hand… on the other' without venturing upon any *concrete* imperative as a prophetic instruction? Or are there not certain subjects to which the Church responds only with an imperative so timid and so hedged about with provisos that it is inevitably ignored? Indeed – for this is how it sometimes seems – are such imperatives actually formulated with the secret hope precisely *that* they will be ignored? In other words they will be there as an alibi and yet create no offence anywhere.

[29] How otherwise, for instance, would it be possible to speak with so little embarrassment even today, e.g. of the 'fire' of purgatory, as Paul VI still does in his most recent Apostolic Constitution, '*Indulgentiarum Doctrina*'?

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Certainly a scientific cosmology of the kind we are thinking of cannot of itself formulate such imperatives. But it could pave the way for them and provide the scientifically and critically informed conscience leading to them, and at the same time the encouragement necessary for concrete action. It could serve to keep alive in the Church the awareness that she [341] herself is far from being a mere organisation for satisfying the religious needs of the salvation of the individual merely because she is not, and cannot be, that which controls the world in an integralist sense. Rather she must recognise, in the particular area which we here have in mind, that the secular world is a *free* partner in an open dialogue. Indeed she must recognise that she herself is a genuine *part* of this secular world which collaborates as an element within history in the history of the world of which God alone is the autonomous controller. And in this history she herself is not simply *the* representative of God.

VI

Up to this point we have sought to consider and to concentrate methodically upon that process of 'secularisation' in which *the Church and the world* become involved in a greater diastasis, one which is conditioned by the relevant epoch, and are thereby compelled to strive afresh to achieve a positive relationship to one another, one which consists neither in 'integralism' nor yet in a mere negative withdrawal and the exercise of a critical function towards the world on the part of the Church. In conclusion, however, we may permit ourselves to extend our theme of investigation somewhat, so as to include in it the distinction between the 'secular world' and the 'grace' of which the Church is only the effective sign without thereby *ipso facto* being identical with it. This means that we are regarding the 'world' as worldly no longer in virtue of its distinction from and relationship to the Church and vice versa, but as it is in itself. We do not intend, however, to take up once more those questions with regard to the 'worldliness' of the world which we have already established as in principle answered at the beginning. Rather we shall attempt to make a somewhat deeper and more far-reaching theological assessment with regard to this worldly world, which is at once abiding and changing from age to age. This assessment which we shall attempt to make will bring into play certain findings of early theology which seem to have become uninteresting and uninspiring to the scholastic theologians, but which in the context with which we are concerned, once more acquire their original significance and weight.

On this basis we may formulate our fifth thesis as follows:

The situation entailed by the secular world is one of pluralism and '*concupiscence*'. *Now the process by which man unreflectingly allows himself to become involved in this situation is not* ipso facto *or* '*of itself*' *sinful. What this situation signifies, rather, at all levels in which man strives to achieve the* [342] *fulness of his own existence, including those levels characterised by* '*gnoseology*', *is the necessary prior condition and the existential context in which the mode of human living in which the Christian is involved is one of contest and struggle, and one threatened by sin* (*the sin namely of forgetfulness of God*). *This situation must be accepted and realistically endured by the Christian as something that is permanent, and in doing this he must not fall into any ideologisation of this world in an integralist sense.*

In order to understand what is meant by this statement a few words must first be said with regard to the 'concupiscence' of man in the theological sense of the term.[30] 'Concupiscence', rightly understood, implies an interior pluralism within man at all levels of his being and in

[30] On this concept of concupiscence cf. especially K. Rahner, 'The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore 1961), pp. 347-382; 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 218-230; J. B. Metz, 'Konkupiszenz', *H.T.G.* I (Munich 1962), 843-851.

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all his impulses, and that too a pluralism of such a kind that it can never be totally or radically integrated into the *single* decision of freedom (either for or against God) by man as a personal and consciously reflecting being endowed with freedom. This inalienable state of 'disintegration' appears at all levels of human self-fulfilment, not merely in moral acts in the narrower sense but also in the dimension of knowledge, which as such is always at the same time a 'practical' activity. It appears at its bitterest and starkest in the 'disintegration' of death and of life considered as a *prolixitas mortis*. Now it would be to deny this interior 'fleshly' state of disintegration and the impossibility of ever overcoming it[31] if we sought to conceive of it as consisting of 'interior' conditions terminating, so to say, at that point at which the subject of them makes contact with the external world. Man is an open 'system', constantly in communication with the world. Right from the first he is orientated outwards to the world. The world is in him and he in it, and what we call the 'environment' of man is man himself in his state of radical outward orientation in space and time. In this state he is at once himself in possession of himself and yet sharing this otherness of his in his identity with others. The constitution of man as 'concupiscent' and as having an 'interior' life of his own, and at the same time the constitution of the world he lives in, necessarily correspond to one another. Thus it is easier to deduce what 'concupiscence' properly [343] speaking consists in from the world than to do so by a process of 'psychological' introspection into man as he is in himself. This concupiscence has an unfolding process of its own, the process precisely in which man endures and in which he constantly, but only imperfectly, overcomes this state of disintegration to which he is subject. The statements of traditional theology with regard to 'concupiscence', therefore, can with perfect justice be interpreted as statements of theology with regard to the secular world which, considered as the area of human living in space and time and as a prolongation of the physical side of man, display exactly the same basic qualities, subject to change from age to age, as does that 'interior' element of concupiscence which is in man himself: a plurality of the objective factors involved and of the various dimensions at which they exist, their state of disintegration, the abiding impossibility for man, even though asymptotically speaking it is something which man must constantly strive to overcome, of ever achieving a point of unity from which man himself can control all these diverse factors and so overcome this pluralism; the fact that this pluralism as it exists in the concrete, together with the attempts at achieving integration in it by subsuming all the factors involved (under a single idea, a single representative body vested with power etc.) is finite and subject to the vicissitudes of history.

Thus we can see that the statements of theology with regard to concupiscence are *ipso facto* statements of a theological interpretation of the world. The interpretation of the world by Christians, and thereby of their own relationship to it, can therefore be deduced from the theological statements with regard to the interpretation of concupiscence. We shall therefore concentrate particularly upon the three basic statements of the Council of Trent with regard to 'concupiscence', and interpret them as statements about the secular world.

First: the non-integrated pluralism of the human reality which is called 'concupiscence', and therefore too of the secular world, is not *ipso facto* and 'of itself' sin, but rather an element in saving history, a stage which is 'open' to further development and which leads to an integration which can only be attained to in the consummation of man and of the 'kingdom of God'. This 'declaration of innocence' is not so immediately obvious or so insignificant as might appear at first sight. In order to see this we do not even need to remind ourselves of the heterodox interpretations of the world such as those of Gnosticism, Manichaeism etc., though

[31] Of course this does not exclude, but rather takes into account the point that the control we exercise over our human living in history must always be actively directed towards a state of total integration, even though this is a goal which is only asymptotically attainable in this world.

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in fact even in Christianity as it actually exists these continue to have an underground existence, albeit not at the level of conscious theory, at least with regard to specific and particular levels of human existence which are subject to [344] change from age to age. There is no need whatever for these denials of the 'innocence' of the 'concupiscence' of the secular world to be set forth dramatically. They are actually *lived* in the unreflecting modes in which human existence is fulfilled. Cases arise in which one particular milieu and mode of life is from the outset preferred before all others as *the* truly 'Christian' one, for instance the 'simple and modest way of life', the life which refrains from any 'dangerous' erudition or a 'puritan' life characterised by a mistrust of the factor of sex and of any happiness taken in the 'enjoyment of life'. Cases arise in which certain specific ways of life which are open to man are from the outset regarded as suspicious and not 'suitable' in any true sense for the Christian. 'The soldiers' calling' (in earlier times!), the life of the politician and involvement in politics (as a 'dirty business'), the callings of the actor or artist in general etc. And wherever this is the case there we have the underground influence of the sort of denial we are speaking of, of the innocent and unblameworthy pluralism of the world, even though it is not stated in so many words. Efforts are made to escape from the non-integrated pluralism of the world by excluding from the outset certain dimensions as not 'relevant' to human or Christian life. There is an effort to simplify life, to reduce it to a unity (German *ver-ein-fachen*) in order not to have to endure and sustain the burden of the non-integrated and 'concupiscent' pluralism. But the only way of achieving a simplification of this kind is to regard that which one has excluded from one's life and so the complexity of the world with all the heterogeneous forces in it, as a world that is rightly to be rejected and pronounced 'guilty'. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (No. 25) clearly recognises the difference which exists between the disturbances (*perturbationes*) involved in the inevitable 'tension' (*tensio*) of economic, political and social factors on the one hand, *and* on the other the disturbances which arise from sin. In those cases in which we pronounce the first kind of 'disturbances' and tensions as *ipso facto* and of themselves 'sinful' we are undertaking a secret manoeuvre to rid ourselves of a burden, because in that case we are in fact simply producing objectivations of our *own* guilt which add nothing whatever either new or different to this sinful world.

Second: Concupiscence is imposed upon man *ad agonem*. We can translate as follows: the world as pluralist, secular and non-integrated is no abode of 'peace' in which man can enjoy a world that is integrated and in which the various elements are 'reconciled' and brought into harmony with one another, and one that, provided 'good will' is present, can quickly be set up. Rather it is the sphere in which man's life is one of *agon*, contest [345] and struggle.[32] Certainly this *agon* is directed towards a goal, namely the integration of all realities in the final fulness of the love of God as encountered 'face to face'. But this is a goal which can never fully be attained to in this age. Always it lies before us and because of this it constantly leads us into areas of fresh opportunity. But the primary demand which this *agon* makes upon us is that it shall be readily accepted – *viriliter*, as the Council of Trent expresses it. Now it is not accepted so long as man's ultimate attitude is one in which he refuses to accept and endure the pluralism of his life as non-integrated and the forces present in this life to which he is constantly exposed from the very outset. For instance he is failing to accept the situation in which he has to live as conditioned by 'gnoseology' and also by concupiscence so long as he sacrifices the open and unresolved conflict between its many heterogeneous 'sources' of experience and knowledge, which cannot be subsumed under one another, in favour of a system in which one particular 'science' – whether it be theology or metaphysics – is made

[32] On this concept of peace cf. my study, 'The Peace of God and the Peace of the World' below pp. 371-388 (and also the fuller bibliography supplied there).

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simply to dominate over the rest without allowing itself to be called in question by them in any 'open dialogue', or modified in any way in the unfolding processes of human living. This would give it the status of a universal science which sought to extract and to integrate within itself all knowledge from all the schools, so that its practitioners would be afraid to allow that there was anything that they did not know. They would be unwilling to be surprised by anything that they really had not 'heard before', any alien piece of knowledge such that they would have to change their own system in order to admit of it, not having previously provided any place for it in that system. The truth is, however, that even the *areopagus* of the spirit constitutes an 'open society' in which a constantly shifting balance is maintained between the various forces.

Such an attitude represents a failure to accept the *agon* present in human life through the medium of the world as pluralist and subject to the forces of concupiscence, and not already reconciled and brought into harmony so long as we believe that we are not empowered to entertain 'interests', joys, initial options and preferences which have not yet fully been subjected to a process of criticism and choice by the standards of explicitly religious and 'supernatural' motives. The *agon* as it exists in the secular world is not accepted (though it does, of course, remain even while it is denied and suppressed, and precisely as such becomes more dangerous) when, in an attitude of hostility towards the incalculable [346] factors in life because of the 'disintegration' which they introduce into it, we seek, in a spirit of harsh obstinacy to reconstruct it through and through in a 'Christian' sense, as though its confused cacophony had to be brought into harmony here and now by us ourselves in a process of integralism guided now not by the Church but by the Christian himself of his own power and by his own right.

Third: 'Concupiscence' implies an impulse to sin (*ad peccatum inclinat* DS 1515). This is not the place to consider concupiscence, and so too the world as pluralist and non-integrated, in all its bearings from the point of view of its origin ('original sin') and its consequences (personal sin and the objectivations of this in the world both at the individual and collective levels). We may confine ourselves to drawing attention to one point, because it belongs directly to the subject of the 'world'. We do not need to derive our knowledge of what that sin is which threatens us in the concupiscent world from any other source. This knowledge is already present in the worldly and concupiscent situation itself. Sin is precisely the failure to sustain and the failure to endure this situation in the private or public departments of human life. It causes man anxiety not to have any absolute fixed point at his disposal within the integrated instability of the open system of human life. He does not dare to abandon himself to the uncontrollable factor inherent in that unique unity which is to be found in this totality of the pluralist at its still unintegrated stage. This uncontrollable factor is open in all directions. It leads backwards into the hidden origins, forwards into the unplanned future, upwards into the limitlessness of transcendence, downwards into the darkness and sheer impenetrable factualness of the material. From the basis of this 'mortal fear' (Heb 2:15) one particular element in the non-integrated and pluralist world is, whether in theory or (perhaps also) in practice, accorded an absolute value. In other words man in his self-will and fear elevates it, as it were, to the single and all-dominating point of reference for the integration of the world which, it is claimed, will be autonomously achieved. This is what takes place at the theoretical level in that which constitutes a (bad) 'ideology', and at the practical level in that which in simple terms is called sin. Now to the extent that man's theoretical and practical activities themselves in turn constitute an element in the world, and to the extent that man's original decision taken in freedom necessarily achieves its fulness beyond himself in the physical and social objectivations which this freedom achieves (although this freedom does not absolutely speaking enter into the objectivations concerned and therefore the objectivations of it remain ambiguous), it follows that through any 'integration' precisely of

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this [347] kind the world itself is altered. It becomes the 'world of sin', 'this present age' in the biblical sense of the phrase. The objective relationships are affected by the various ways in which sin works itself out.[33]

So long as the integration given by God has not been achieved in the world there are always some ways, albeit *essentially* different ones, in which man, even though 'free', yields to the pressures of the non-integrated world.[34] Moreover there is a division between the non-sinful pluralism of the forces of concupiscence in the world on the one hand and the disintegration imprinted upon it through sin on the other (for sin as a pseudo-integration is really a strengthening of disintegration). Now if this division is asserted to constitute an unambiguous criterion of 'judgment', then it in turn becomes a way of attempting to achieve an alleged integration through one's own power. For if this were indeed the case then we would know 'what we have to hold firm to' as that which, as reconciled within itself, constituted our own good. But this is not the case. Now because of all these factors the secular world constitutes a unity of many heterogeneous realities which is not for us to shape or control, and which are invisibly involved with one another: the world as made up of manifold created goods; the world as made up of many different, though justifiable human activities; the world as the objectivation of man's guilt in his will autonomously to reduce the world 'to order' in an integralist sense.

The secular and pluralist world is the 'world' as envisaged in scripture. The pluralist world can be precisely this because it is *history* and not a mere static 'system'. At the same time, however, this secular world is also precisely that world which the Christian expects, acts upon and endures from his own innermost Christian understanding of himself. For in this he does not regard the world as alien by reason of some ideological or integralist attitude, but rather views it as it actually is. Here, then, at the end of these theological considerations on the problem of secularisation, we have returned to a truth which is quite simple and, for Christians, never to be forgotten. In spite, therefore, of the differences which sometimes seem to threaten our lives to their very roots, it is the same 'world' [348] which God loved so much that he took it upon himself and laid down his life for it. If the Christian takes this central point of his faith as the centre of his life too, then he can endure even the secular world and, in the right sense, be of service to it.[35]

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[33] On this cf. also *Gaudium et spes*, No. 25.

[34] This takes place in a twofold manner: first through an exercise of basic freedom amounting to pseudo-integralism in that it accords an absolute value to some element in the world ('mortal sin'). The second way bears upon that dynamic impulse towards a genuine integration of the world which is constantly striving towards, and in *process* of attaining to its goal but asymptotically, never wholly reaching it. In this second way the act of the will delays and holds back this process ('venial sin'). Of course as a matter of concrete practice neither way can, with complete certainty, be distinguished from the other.

[35] This would provide a suitable starting-point for presenting more fully the necessity and the concrete function of the evangelical counsels. cf. K. Rahner, 'Kirche und Welt', *Zehn Jahre Katholische Akademie in Bayern* (Würzburg 1967), esp. pp. 22-24; 'On the Evangelical Counsels', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and Baltimore 1971), pp. 133-167.

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[349]

18

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK IN THE CHURCH

In order to speak upon this topic as I have been commissioned to,[1] I can only imagine myself, even on the most favourable showing, as being like Balaam's ass who uttered prophetic speech and yet remained an ass. Certainly I am no expert in the social sciences, and no specialist in practical theology either. Still less have I any practical experience in social work, whether in the ecclesiastical or the secular sphere. It may perhaps be true that the dogmatic theologian should have a certain minimal understanding of these matters, seeing that he has to think out, from his central watchtower of theology, the significance of the Christian and the Church, among other things in their relationship to the world and to the circumstances of human living in this present world. But if this is true then the dogmatic theologian of today as he exists in the concrete will in turn have to make a report which is either very deficient or almost wholly negative: the much vaunted 'theology of earthly realities' is, despite the Pastoral Constitution 'On the Church in the World of Today', still barely in its initial stages. I cannot conceal this situation, and therefore what I *personally* can say will be said with the courage of despair.[2] If I [350] altogether fail or achieve far too little of importance then I can only appeal to the forebearance and forgiveness of my readers, and can only hope that at least the contradictions which my remarks will occasion may perhaps lead to other insights which are better than those offered here. We shall attempt to present our considerations in four key statements and lines of argument.

I

The first is that principle which belongs to 'scientific theory' to the effect that the teaching with regard to the Church's works of charity and social work is an intrinsic element in pastoral theology which should better be called 'practical theology'. 'Pastoral theology' so called can in fact no longer be understood today as teaching and direction relating, for

[1] For the occasion on which this lecture was delivered cf. the detailed list of sources appended at the end of this volume.

[2] For this reason the author is compelled to refer to a wide range of preliminary studies of his own. cf. especially the expositions in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, F. X. Arnold, K. Rahner, V. Schurr, L. M. Weber edd., Vols I-II/1-2 (Freiburg 1964-1966) concerning the connections between Church and world, the situation of the Church today etc. For an explicit statement of the principles involved, therefore, reference must be made to this work in particular (and also the comprehensive bibliographies there provided). On the present subject cf. also especially the expositions of R. Völkl, I, pp. 385-412; II/2, pp. 403-423; another approach which the considerations which follow presuppose, but which was undertaken with different aims in view, is offered by K. Rahner and K. Lehmann in II/2, pp. 389-402 (bibliography). cf. also A. Ziegler, *Thesen zum Verhältnis von Sozialarbeit und Theologie* (Caritas-Verlag, Lucerne, special edition); A. Hunziker, 'Geistige und berufsethische Aspekte der Sozialarbeit', *Caritas* 45 (1967) (Supplement to Section 3), pp. 102-116. For a brief presentation of changes in social work and work to raise standards of living, and also of the role of the Church today, attention must particularly be drawn to these studies. cf. also K. Rahner, 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution"'; 'Christian Humanism'; 'The Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship'; 'On the Presence of Christ in the Diaspora Community According to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council'; 'Theological Reflections on the Problem of Secularisation', in the present volume pp. 293-317; 71-83; 84-102; 318-348; and Vol. IX, pp. 187-204. On the range of subject-matter involved in the study which follows cf. also a further study by K. Rahner, 'The Christian in his World', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and Baltimore 1971), pp. 88-99.

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instance, to the world of the cleric charged with the cure of souls in his particular field. Today, rather, it consists in theological reflection upon the *entire* process by which the Church as a whole brings her own nature to its fulness in the light both of her own nature *and also* of the contemporary situation of the world and the Church today thought out from a theological point of view. Now those actively involved in this task of bringing the Church as a whole to its fulness include *all* degrees in the Church's hierarchy and *also* the laity, as well as everything which is included in the concept of this self-fulfilment of the Church: not only cult, doctrine and pastoral work in the narrower sense as immediately concerned with the mediation of salvation to the individual, but also, and no less essentially, the charitable work of the Church and the whole of her impact in all its aspects upon that which we call the 'world'. This means that the social work of the Church too belongs to this inasmuch as there is a special way of carrying out this social work, of defining its aims and limits, which pertains precisely to the Church as such. The situation of the Church in [351] the world and in the unfolding process of salvation history is constantly changing, and not everything that an individual Christian does is to be included in this self-fulfilment of hers at any given time, for there is certainly a 'private' sphere of Christian living too. But on the other hand this self-fulfilment is not to be identified with the activity of the officials of the Church either, or even, it may be, of the laity to the extent that they are carrying out some commission for the official Church. The Church (which, however, is not identical with the hierarchy) achieves this self-fulfilment of hers in the most manifold forms of activity and in widely varying degrees. But all these, which characterise her and in which she is involved, belong to this process of self-consummation. Certainly there is such a thing as a 'private' level of Christian living as well, a process, therefore, of intercommunication between individuals which is private, Christian and sustained by the grace of Christ, and which therefore constitutes a love, a charity in the theological sense of the term, in which the Church as such is not involved. At the same time, however, charity and social work are integral elements in the self-fulfilment of the Church as such, and therefore also constitute a subject for practical theology, however difficult it may be in the concrete to discriminate between *caritas* at the level of the Church and the *caritas* of the individual in his private Christian life.

This first principle, which we have only been able to explain very briefly above, is no mere theological subtlety, a play with words at the level of scientific theory. First the theological consideration of the Church's charity and social work precisely at the ecclesiastical level has, without prejudice to the fact that the work of charity is the subject of a distinct scientific discipline in its own right, its own essential place in practical theology, and is not a mere floating or arbitrary theory about something which is now actually to be found within the sphere of the Church, in her sanctuary and before her walls. Second, practical theology does not merely draw the more concrete conclusions for the Church's activity which follow from a mere 'essential' ecclesiology, but rather constitutes an original and autonomous science, because it alone can say, on the basis of an analysis of the present worked out in theological terms, what the Church should do at the particular time concerned (not therefore at all times); and also because it actually has to say this with the force of a certain prophetic imperative. Thus it comes about that the science of *caritas* need not confine itself to describing what constitutes the *caritas* of the Church *at all times* and from the very nature of the Church herself. Rather this science has to define what the *caritas* of the Church must be precisely [352] today, in the particular circumstances prevailing now, rather than always, but in these circumstances, once more, as interpreted in terms of a theological critique. The science of *caritas* has a critical, almost a prophetic, function with regard to the *caritas* which the Church *de facto* performs, and must to some extent employ the creative imagination which springs from hope to project the ever-fresh forms which the *caritas* and the attitude of the Church towards the world have to assume. It can be concluded from the nature of practical theology

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as rightly understood that the science of caritas is an original theological science, and also a critical and normative one, which must at basis include sociology, futurology and similar sciences as its aids, if it is to recognise what form the caritas of the Church has to assume today. It is not a mere collection of practical counsels deriving from the nature of Christian charity, nor merely an appendix to moral theology.

There is, however, straightaway something further to be said – at least in the form of a question – once we have recognised the necessity for such a change in the form of charitable works on the basis of a scientifically thought our charity of this kind: there is a Pastoral Constitution 'On the Church in the World of Today'. There is a Secretariate providing for the Church and Christians to enter into dialogue and (perhaps) collaboration also with 'unbelievers' (better with non-religious humanism). There is much more besides in terms of thought and action which leads in the same direction. Yet so far as theological consideration goes there is still no name whatever for all phenomena of this kind which are slowly coming to the surface in the form of questions, teachings and action. And yet something is 'there' palpably and unforgettably only when it has a name. Certainly this nameless phenomenon belongs to the sphere of practical theology, but it is not identical with the whole of practical theology since in fact this also has to take into consideration the cure of souls in the narrower sense. Nor is this nameless phenomenon a department of dogmatic ecclesiology for the area which this has to investigate is the enduring relationship to the Church, and not that which arises adventitiously at a particular time. Nor yet can this nameless phenomenon be identified with Christian social sciences, even though it is related to these. For these sciences are concerned with social and economic factors etc. in so far as these, while retaining their own secular status, still fall under the norms of the natural law and the gospel. But what the sciences do not consider is the mutual interrelationship of the Church and the world as such, both in its active and its passive aspects. Nor is the designation 'theology of earthly realities' correct, because in fact what is being treated of here is the relationship of [353] the *Church* to the world, and that too to the world considered as a social entity, as a work of man and not as the immediate outcome of the creative work of God. J. B. Metz has once more seized upon the term 'political theology', but even this does not signify what is being pointed to here, because 'political theology' includes within its purview the social relevance of faith and the entire reality which it envisages. The Americans call this phenomenon simply 'Church and world', but mean by this a special theological discipline in its own right. We should perhaps provisionally call this phenomenon 'theological and ecclesiological cosmology', if this name cosmology had not already, and, at least in a still provisional sense, been appropriated for a philosophical discipline which admittedly is gradually being eliminated in favour of a transcendental ontology and anthropology on the one hand and a scientific study of nature and history on the other.

Whatever course we adopt in order to fulfil the urgent and important need to find a name for this anonymous reality, one question may be posed: always given that the science of the works of charity is understood as a department of, and an intrinsic element in practical theology, should it not, in these times, be expanded and reorganised on the basis of this 'ecclesiological cosmology'? Would this not be reasonable in view of the following two factors: *first*, that it is probably inevitable that the work of charity as practised today should be caught up in the process of changing its forms and modes of expression even though its essence endures. Even the charitable works organised on an ecclesiastical basis cannot any longer simply be identified with 'welfare', and the borderline between charity properly so called and the whole range of works performed by the Church for the world in general and in the field of social work in particular is, both in theory and in practice, extremely difficult to establish – *if* indeed there is any such; *second*, that theological and ecclesiological cosmology is still seeking for a foothold and a home, still seeking, therefore, for some real possibility of

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being systematically studied. Charity would not be being false to itself if it were to extend its scientific aspects so as to include a 'cosmology' of this kind. It would be combined with that 'hope' which is so very neglected and isolated,[3] and together with it would form a cosmology made up of futurology and ecclesiology of this kind as a part of practical theology, and so construct a framework within which these two theological virtues would find a place proper to themselves in speculative theology alongside that assigned to faith. It is clear, therefore, that the [354] science of *caritas* and the theology of the social task and work of the Church would thereby achieve a closer and more comprehensible relationship. All this, however, has been put forward merely as a *question*.

II

Now let us come at last to those factors which the actual terms *caritas* and 'the social work of the Church' are intended to stand for, in order to approach one stage nearer to our real subject. In accordance with this the *second* principle runs as follows: the difference between the Church and grace on the one hand, and 'the world as it has become worldly' on the other, which contemporary theologians are beginning to recognise and to understand as a difference imposed by Christianity itself, determines also and in turn a further relationship. The two terms of this relationship are on the one hand grace as *caritas* and the Church as the historical and social manifestation of this ecclesiastical *caritas*, and on the other that *caritas* the forms of which have been secularised (considering this both as an 'attitude of mind' and in the forms in which it is objectified in society).

Let us first consider not *caritas* and the social work of the Church together with the counterparts to these in the secular and worldly sphere, but rather the factors of grace or Church and world in general and as a whole. 'World' exists not merely as a creation of God, as 'nature' but as a task to be performed, an activity to be entered upon and the objective realisation of these on the part of man himself. It exists as the subject of man's own projects for the future, the world that he has made and has still to make, that to which he himself belongs as one whose course is shaped and directed by himself. World in this sense is to be distinguished not merely from grace and Church in the same way that 'nature' is to be distinguished from grace, for in this latter case nature is that which grace presupposes and to which it is addressed, that in relation to which grace represents the opening up of a new and distinct modality, that which makes it possible for grace to be imparted as the self-bestowal of God. The world is also to be distinguished from grace and Church *from age to age*. As the history of grace progresses this world is, to an increasing extent, made responsible for itself in its autonomy, its maturity, its secularity and its realisation of its own nature. This 'worldliness' of the world which increases from age to age is, despite the distortions and damage due to sin always present in the process, in the last analysis not a disastrous fate which blindly runs counter to grace and the Church, but the mode in which grace itself enters more and more fully into creation: as a [355] liberation and authentication of the world as it is in itself. In this connection it must be recognised once again that a state of pluralistic – indeed of 'concupiscent' disintegration is proper to this world as it is in itself, and must be accepted and endured by man *as such*. In other words in the world as such and as it exists in itself there is no controlling power, whether already in existence or capable of being set up, which could, in any adequate sense, integrate it into a comprehensible and controllable system. It would, therefore, be utterly unchristian to seek univocally to inform and to control the world in its reality and its history in terms of its positive content. And faith and the Church make no

[3] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Theology of Hope', in the present volume, pp. 242-259, esp. pp. 256 ff.

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claim of this kind. Rather they seek to accord due responsibility to the world itself, to man as mature and free, to his decision and responsibility in the forms which he imposes upon his world. Now for the moment nothing further need be said with regard to what further positive significance faith, grace and the Church still have as contributing to the liberation of the world in its worldliness. For this question will soon be raised again in the course of our present investigation.

For the present, however, it must be recognised that all communication between men at all levels and in all its dimensions belongs essentially to man. Now in accordance with what has just been said, this has the following significance: intercourse between men has its appropriate place 'also' in the world which is liberated in this way by grace and the Church in its worldliness. Certainly there is also a form of intercourse between men which is constituted by grace as such and only by it. This is precisely *caritas* in the theological sense, that unity between men which is constituted by the divine self-bestowal. This specific form of communication between men is manifested in the Church in that special and unique form in which it has the basically sacramental significance of being a sign and effective within the dimension of history. It is this that in principle distinguishes the Church from the world.

But in accordance with the relationship between the Church and the world in general, and also as subject to variations from age to age, this grace-given human intercourse which is made manifest in the Church in *caritas* also releases, as its necessary prior condition, and appropriates to itself, a human intercourse at the worldly level which grows from age to age. The Church renounces any claim personally to exercise control in an 'integralist' sense over this human intercourse at the worldly level, and sends the Christian – and precisely as such – into this context of human intercourse, still at the worldly level, as the appropriate field for him to fulfil in maturity his human *and* his Christian task. At the same time the Church herself imposes upon him as his lot and his burden that human [356] intercourse at the worldly level which is pluralistic, unintegrated and subject to the forces of concupiscence together with the modes in which it is developed to the full and objectified. Grace and the Church leave the world unimpeded in its autonomous reality and its own responsibility with regard to the future in which it seeks fulfilment and the task which confronts it in the present. And precisely because of this the Church avoids the danger of becoming a mere accomplice of the world ('throne and altar') in its social institutions, often petrified and even affected by sin as these are, and achieves that detachment which she needs in order to fulfil her ministry of providing a critique of the world and of opening it to its own future by 'imprinting' her own eschatological hope upon the structures of 'worldly' life, as the Council itself lays down (*Lumen gentium*, No. 35).

From this the following conclusions arise: the element of the worldly, social activities while remaining at the worldly level and the worldly forms in which these are institutionalised cannot, either in themselves or in the manner in which they develop from age to age, be regarded by the Christian or the Church as something which should properly speaking and better be achieved merely by the Church and the Christian as such by their own dispositions and explicitly ecclesiastical guidance. In principle no greater value is to be attributed to the specifically Christian or ecclesiastical element in the field of social work than in any other spheres of activity of the world in its worldliness, of culture or of society. Hence too the theology of the Church cannot of itself alone arrive at any theoretical or adequate judgment with regard to the necessity, urgency, concrete forms or lines of development for such work in order that man may attain to a higher and more fruitful level of socialisation, however much Christians too, considered as individuals, may be called upon by their faith and their *caritas* to collaborate in open dialogue and in competition within the context of human living with all other men as fellow citizens of one and the same world in the unfolding process of this social reality, and however much too the Church may be

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justified and authorised in offering to the world in its freedom and responsibility a word of prophetic 'instruction' over and above the abiding principles of the gospel.

III

We pass on to a *third* principle. The Church (in all the complexity of this concept) has the task of bringing to bear upon the world the work of charity and social welfare. This work cannot *a priori* and in all cases [357] materially be distinguished from the same work and the institutions catering for this that belong to the world. Any lines of demarcation or any possible overlappings or 'two-way traffic' situations between the ecclesiastical and secular spheres of charitable work can only be laid down for a particular place and time. And, as has been said, there is neither any one *a priori* plan to regulate all that pertains to this nor yet any autonomous body with authority to draw such lines of demarcation. All that we have is an 'open' system, and at most this can never strike more than a precarious balance between the two.

The Church has the task, and also the right belonging to her of her very nature, to make an impact upon the world through her activities in the fields of charitable and social work. We use the simple terms 'charitable' and 'social' work. While for practical purposes it is perhaps possible to draw a certain distinction between charitable and social work, an essential and unequivocal distinction between the two at the theological level is not possible – is indeed actually ruled out. For *caritas* in the theological sense consists in that one love which exists between God and man and between men among themselves and signifies the one all-embracing factor and the one whole which encompasses the whole of man and *so* his salvation. Moreover this love is no mere attitude of mind, but is an action which is made incarnate in all departments of human living (even though perhaps in some cases in forms which appear secular and worldly, and, as it were, concealed). Again it is quite impossible to think of mankind without also thinking of the human intercourse that goes with it and which has to be given objective reality at the social level. Now if all this is true *then* it follows that *all* activities directed to a human intercourse which is right, beneficial and also a part of concrete living in society, can be the 'material', the expression and the event in terms of social living in the concrete precisely of this theological *caritas*, and nothing can be excluded from it *a priori*. Indeed this *caritas*, considered as a factor that comprehends the whole of Christian living, always contains within itself the duty and the impulse constantly to seek out fresh forms in which to realise itself as each particular situation demands and suggests. This also means that all social work, provided only that it is contributing in some way to man himself and to his communal living, is an element in those processes by which *caritas* is brought to its fullness, and that precisely in the circumstances of today it can actually be offered eagerly as something over and above that which is so commonly termed 'charitable' work.

If the very act of feeding the hungry in the simple and biological sense can, and even must be *caritas* and the work of *caritas*, then we can say [358] from the outset that we cannot perceive how anything else pertaining to social service and social work can of itself be excluded from the work of *caritas*. On the contrary, in every age the Christian and the Church must ask themselves afresh what precisely, in view of the circumstances of the time, the seven 'corporal' works of mercy and the seven 'spiritual' works of mercy are to consist in. We should not envisage these according to the old conceptual models of a society and an economy in decline, and so blind ourselves to those forms of activity in which '*caritas*' should be embodied today, even though, perhaps, no-one would call them 'charitable'. It can surely not be the task of the theologian to sketch out a systematic table of the sort of levels of

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human living in which a *caritas* supported by concrete institutions could become embodied as a factor in the life of society, a '*caritas*' such that its activities would not necessarily be 'charitable' in the usual sense of the term. On the other hand this would be a question which practical theology should not evade. Let us then use the term 'social work' to cover all this field as a whole, together with the achievements, works and institutions belonging to it, and let us also subsume under this head the work of charity (*caritas* as traditionally understood) as a part which is important indeed, but not as the whole of 'social work'.

The Church has the right and the duty to engage in this ministry of social work for, constituted as she is as a social and historical entity, she is not merely the recipient and the witness to the world of the truth in faith and of the future in hope (from both aspects she is the basic sacrament), but also the basic sacrament of unity in the ministry of love.

The subject of social work in this sense is the *Church*. In laying down this principle we must bear in mind that the word 'Church' in it contains many different shades and levels of meaning. Church in the sense envisaged in practical theology and in the nature of the case itself is certainly not *ipso facto* present where the individual Christian, while continuing to act as a 'private' individual in his Christian life, does 'social' work and finds himself compelled to act in the unique place belonging to him within the society of his fellow men, a place which he shapes by his own free and responsible decisions. Nor is the Church yet present in the work of the individual Christian when he discharges this personal task of his as a 'private' individual living in the world, sharing in the communal responsibility for its well-being, or actively co-operating as a member of the community in the social work which it needs at the worldly level, even though in so doing he may be making real at one and the same time the *caritas* which flows from the grace bestowed on him *and* his task in the world.

[359] Despite this, however, the statement that the *Church*, both in her activities and through her institutions, has a social work to perform has several different levels of meaning. One example of the Church's social work in this sense would be those instances in which the pope and bishops play an active part in social measures in the world but precisely as official representatives of the Church as, for instance, has already in fact been the case in the encyclical *Populorum progressio*. This is also true of those cases in which the pope and bishops ensure that their social activities as hierarchically constituted officials of the Church shall be carried out by individual Christians or institutions officially commissioned for the purpose. But a further instance of the social work of the actual *Church* as such is to be found in those cases in which the local communities at the parish level go out from the altar to work actively and to set up institutions (for instance through the *caritas* organisation of the parish etc.) in order to make real the love that exists between the individuals belonging to the community of the faith. In doing this such local communities also make an important contribution to ensuring that the social organisation of secular society shall be sound and healthy.

A further and indispensable instance of the social work of the *Church as such* is that in which Christians as such come together of their own free initiative to set up an institution with the following characteristics: on the one hand it is quite unnecessary that it shall be the outcome of any initiative on the part of the Church's official authorities. It is by no means to be thought of simply as an organ for carrying out the enactments of these ecclesiastical authorities, and properly speaking it does not act as such at all. On the other hand its status as an institution of this kind is due to the free collaboration of Christians and in this sense does have its place within the Church. In other words as an institution of this kind it does recognisably pertain to the Church, and can unreservedly be accounted 'ecclesiastical' at least to the extent that the official authorities of the Church, by their tacit agreement, give free rein to the exercise of the Church's own free charisms. Not everything 'ecclesiastical' is set up by a positive *juridical* authorisation on the part of the Church's official authorities. Of course it

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is possible in the concrete for institutions to be set up, the forms of which represent a perfectly reasonable mixture of the official on the one hand and the free charismatic on the other, but which are still ecclesiastical institutions. The manner in which these function has to be guaranteed by positive juridical prescriptions of a sensible kind. But in any case 'Church' matters are not identical with 'episcopal' matters in a juridical sense. For even the free charisms are, or can be, integral elements in [360] the Church as such. Of course there are continual transitions and interplay between the two kinds of institutions catering for social work, those which we have mentioned, which are ecclesiastical but inspired by the free charism of the Church on the one hand, and the 'worldly' institutions on the other, which, however, are still either exclusively or principally supported by Christians, and which explicitly appeal to the inspiration of the gospels, even though the Church as such, together with her officially constituted authorities, cannot play any active part in them. This does nothing to alter the basic principle that that which pertains to the 'Church' and that which pertains to the 'official authorities of the Church' are not identical but partially distinct, because the process by which the Church *as such* (even in those areas which are to be distinguished from Christian modes of existence and the life of Christians) realises her own nature implies something more than the activity of the official authorities, and further because the Church has to become the basic sacrament of the presence of God's grace in the world not merely in virtue of what is done by the official authorities in the Church in the form of teaching, sacraments and official ministries.

It is only at this point, however, that we come to the decisive part of our third statement. Probably it is impossible in principle to draw once and for all any firm, rigid material line of division between the respective areas of social work belonging to the world on the one hand and the Church on the other. Indeed it is probably impossible to devise even a formal principle on the basis of which this borderline can be *deductively* worked out and established with any certainty, in the particular situation prevailing at any given time and on the basis of this, in the sense of a principle as distinct from a prudent and calculated practical decision and as essentially different from theory.[4] To draw a material borderline of this kind, whether directly or in virtue of some formal principle, is impossible and also unnecessary. It is impossible because (sin apart) *every*body can be and should become a medium for fulfilling and manifesting *caritas* as grace – albeit in a process which develops asymptotically, which only attains to its final point in the kingdom of God, and so is continually acting as a sort of counterpoint to the growing worldliness of the world. Thus *all* social work can be the means and the medium for bringing the *caritas* of the Church to its fulness, apart, of course, from those cases in which, whether in principle or in practice, it would tend to do away with the autonomy of the world together with its institutions and the social [361] work that is proper to it. But even this proviso (already formulated in the second statement) does not yield any principle on which to establish unambiguously the material line of division between secular and ecclesiastical social work. Furthermore, even from the point of view of the world and the state, the drawing of a material line of division of this kind is impracticable. For everywhere where the secular social activities of the community contribute to the abiding dignity of the person, his freedom and his liberation from a state of alienation from himself, where they enable man to be himself and to pursue his earthly and eternal lot in self-responsibility, where they free him from as much as possible of the burden of the pre-personal element in order to lay upon him the heaviest burden of all, himself in his own freedom – in all these areas factors are objectively present in the life of society which are also capable of embodying love, and often actually do so. And in doing so they are capable of belonging to the form in which the Church manifests herself, even though this significance in them is quite

[4] cf. K. Rahner, 'Grenzen der Amtskirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln 1965), pp. 499-520.

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unrecognised. Where this is not the case there is no social work or institution either. Whether it remains at so worldly a level as this, so that it is impossible to discern whether it can constitute *caritas* in the theological sense, or whether it really *does* constitute that manifestation of love which proceeds from a heart filled with the Spirit of God – this is something known only to God who alone judges the hearts of men. But this also applies to all social and historical phenomena in which *caritas* is objectively made real through the Church.

In all this it remains true that it is impossible to find any principle on the basis of which to draw a material line of demarcation. Of course in the course of history attempts have been made again and again to make permanent all the lines of division between the Church and the world which have *de facto* arisen: in the field of marriage, education, the special liberties of the clergy, the taxation of Church property etc. The drawing of material lines of demarcation of this kind might be put forward as deduced (whether in a direct and material sense or an indirect and formal one) from principles, and might be attempted by both sides, the Church and secular society, or by only one of these. But in any case such attempts have always constituted an unconscious mixture of two factors: *first* correct (or incorrect) theoretical principles which, however, taken by themselves, and strictly applied, did not yield (even though their exponents thought they did) the desired conclusion of establishing a material line of demarcation, and *second* a resolve and a decision arrived at in concrete history as a freely calculated act and even in circumstances of [362] conflict. But it was supposed that all that was being done was to make effective and real certain immutable principles. In fact, however, this problem of establishing lines of demarcation, however true it may be that we have to respect certain general principles (cf. the second and third statements) is a matter of calculation, of agreement freely entered into on both sides, of historical power in a shifting situation, of creative imagination and even of conflict. It is a matter decided in history precisely as ever unique, ever surprising, which can never be explained in any adequate sense in theory, but is rather ‘practice’ in a sense which implies something more than the mere execution in time of theoretical principles and plans. Once we realise this, and in doing so accord due importance to the second statement we have enunciated from the point of view of the Church, a significant lightening of the burden is achieved in the difficult decisions which the Church has to take with regard to the question of what particular social work she should engage in in the particular situation prevailing at any given time. This is arrived at from two different aspects. *On the one hand* the Church can freely and to some extent ‘without recourse to principles’ leave to the world in its growing worldliness much social work which at one time she did perform, for in fact she herself wills the world to develop along these lines. She does not need to be anxious, as it were, lest she should be surrendering something which she is bound to perform for all time. In such cases she is merely giving her assent to a world which, so long as it is rightly performing what is necessary for society, is always in fact creating the objective conditions in which an unrecognised grace can be embodied, conditions, indeed, in which Christians as such can and should collaborate, albeit not precisely as ‘Church members’, for they should not suppose that the realities signified by the terms ‘Christian’ and ‘ecclesiastical’ are co-extensive. *On the other hand* the Church must be equally ‘emancipated from principles’ in taking over new forms of social work in the sense that she must not suppose that she is faced with the question of whether or not she has a duty and obligation to undertake them arising from her own ‘principles’ (abstracting from the principle of prodigality in love which is no longer any ‘principle’ in the true sense). Free from any excessive calculation, she can develop initiatives without check or hindrance, give free rein to creative imagination and to the boldness of love, recognise and seize upon tasks with shining eyes and a ready heart, tasks which no-one else has yet recognised and undertaken. Nor is any such rigid drawing of lines of demarcation based on pre-established

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principles necessary. For in a society that is free and pluralist in character the state must in fact, of its very nature, will that 'the same' activities shall [363] be performed by the individual groups within it, and shall be incorporated into the society as a unified whole by a process of free competition. For society as a unified whole in this sense is not a closed system directed in a totalitarian way from one single point. Rather it is the 'system' which is maintained by a balance of forces which has constantly to be established afresh. A further factor is that it is precisely *here* that we should apply the principle of the subsidiary role of the state even though it is not suitable to be used as a principle for establishing the lines of demarcation in our present problem. This principle is that the state as such, without actually becoming a 'night-watchman' of mere legality, must, precisely in the area of social institutions, set in motion on its own initiative only that which the free individual groups within the society cannot perform themselves. This remains true even though the work of the 'social state' or the 'social welfare state' of today must necessarily be great. These are factors that must be borne in mind, and in addition to these it must be remembered, and in fact by both sides, that the free groups, and so the Church too, are becoming more and more suitable as the practitioners of social work. For this is actively pursued not so much in the area of what can be achieved and organised *materially* through *legislation*, and hence compulsorily, but rather in the manner of a help that is given swiftly, spontaneously at the 'personal' level and without complications (though admittedly this does not exclude the institutionalising process). Now the more this is true the more readily it can be perceived that in this question of how the necessary task should be divided in the concrete between the social work of the Church and that of the secular state, there is no need to fear that any insoluble conflicts need arise. The will to arrive at a solution in the concrete can be present on both sides so long as the state for its part has no intention of acting in a totalitarian manner while the Church for its part does not imagine that any development in the worldly world *ipso facto* and of its very nature represents a threat to her own effectiveness. On the contrary she must freely accept the mode of life open to her at the sociological level in a pluralist society and send out her believers into this world as genuine collaborators in order that there they may fulfil their Christian task without any reservations of an integralist kind.

IV

What has been said in the third statement is not intended to deny, and must not obscure, one further point. This is that there can be a form of social assistance which can be fully and legitimately exercised only by the [364] Church and by the Christian as a member of her. In any case this fourth statement would only contain an implied contradiction of the statement made above if the social work of the Church either could or should be confined merely to that which she can achieve by herself. Obviously it is only on the basis of an adherence to Christian truth that this fourth statement can have any light to throw upon the question, and in order to understand why it should be justified certain further considerations have to be borne in mind.

Human life is subject to a continuous *plurality* in respect of its dimensions, its origins, its awarenesses, impulses and its involvement with society. But in spite of these factors, and in the midst of them, man is essentially *one*, so that there is a constant mutual interplay between each dimension and every other, and so that no one of them is realised in total independence of another and no one of them can be *altogether* sound unless the other too is sound. The *plurality* of the dimensions of human living (whether interior or exterior) in which man exists is such that they can never wholly be controlled from any one point within man's own capabilities. But this also implies that each dimension has laws of its own and a force of its

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own, and therefore not *every* upset in *one* dimension has an effect of the same magnitude in some other dimension. Nevertheless the effect of the real *unity* which is present in all these manifold dimensions is that, fundamentally speaking, an upset in one dimension can still make itself felt as a factor of disturbance in another dimension. Now the result of this is that it is possible to have disturbances in one dimension such that they can be removed only by the removal of a disturbance in another dimension. This remains true even though, while the difference between the two dimensions still remains, it is justifiable to attempt to remove some upset in one specific dimension (and a certain measure of success may even be achieved in so doing) by means appropriate to itself – as it were as a 'therapy of the symptoms' – without, and prior to, any removal of the true and initial source of the upset concerned, which is to be found in a different dimension. Admittedly this is not to dispute the fact that the same symptom may be the outcome of several causes working together to produce upsets in various dimensions, and that there can be a *mutual* conditioning and intensifying process between the upsets in various dimensions. 'Chain reactions' may be set in motion in the cycle of causes that exists within a system that is, to a certain extent, 'closed' and in which all depends on each among the elements constitutive of the system.

What we have so far stated in abstract terms necessarily arises from the inalienable dialectical unity to be found in the unity and plurality of man [365] and of his world. Now let us apply this to our particular case. Disturbances do exist or are at least in principle conceivable – even at the social level – which can only be removed by the removal or diminishing of disturbances in the dimension of the religious, of faith, hope and love in the strictly theological sense. Because of the 'chain reaction' (and also abstracting from this) 'therapy of the symptoms' is fully justified and also has certain chances of success in exactly the same way as, for instance, a case of insomnia can be removed by soporifics, or at least an attempt can be made to achieve this even though this insomnia derives from a disorder which cannot be controlled. But this does not in the least alter the fact that social conflicts can, and actually do exist – both at the more individual and at the collective levels – which also constitute (though probably they are never merely this) the *consequences* of the upset of the religious relationship between man and God and (because love of God and love of neighbour are one) of the specifically *religious* relationship at the human level and *between man and man*. This basic 'theological' disturbance can be situated in the original and basic relationship between man and God and between a man and his neighbour and also at the ecclesiastical level in the conceptual and so cultic forms in which this basic relationship is socially objectified, a level which is not the same as that of the relationship itself. But disturbances at both levels can have, and in principle actually do have, their further effects in other spheres of human living, and so too precisely in the social dimension, even though not necessarily and not always in a measure which is empirically ('clinically') noteworthy.

In fact: anyone who is not in ultimate harmony with the most ultimate and uncontrollable mystery of existence called God in faith, hope and love cannot accept and endure as he must the human interrelationships and the concrete social conditions in which these are realised either, as these exist with all their hardships and disappointments, the ever-fresh tasks and responsibilities they entail, and the concrete modes in which they are realised in history and society. It is only in the breadth of the freedom of the children of God that man can sustain the narrowness of human intercourse as a whole in all its aspects and in the spatial and temporal conditions to which it is subject in all their length and breadth. It can often be the case that this is attained to by the individual in a Christianity that is 'unacknowledged'. And truly we cannot maintain that it is only those who are *explicit* Christians who are capable of managing their human intercourse in a manner that is 'clinically' adequate. Still less do we maintain that man can manipulate the 'religious' element as a *means* for regulating social conflicts without thereby destroying its true nature. God becomes a [366] genuine help in life

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precisely and only provided that man sees him as he really is, as holy and worthy of adoration in himself, and provided that man makes him a *goal* and *meaningful* in himself, and not merely a means for achieving something else. But all this does nothing to alter the fact that social conflicts can, and actually do derive from a distorted relationship with God. Hence Christianity and the Church have a special task in social work proper to themselves, one which no-one can take away from the Church. Certainly she cannot herself establish this relationship of man to God, for this is something that every individual has to do for himself in freedom and grace. But she is, nevertheless, the mediatrix of this relationship through the effective sign of her word and sacrament, and also of that love which is made effective and manifest in the community of the believers.

Now this certainly implies that the Church precisely through her specifically religious activities, and as mediating salvation, is also socially effective. But this precisely does not mean that the Church could ever be restricted to this properly religious area of social effectiveness. On the contrary, if we bear in mind what has been said in the third statement, and also precisely with regard to the 'chain reaction' of the various dimensions in human living upon one another, then we must come to the following conclusion: an area of social work is opened up for the Church initially in those situations in which the specifically religious problem is entered upon and so a specifically ecclesiastical and missionary task becomes necessary, and on the other hand such an area is opened up in a situation of specifically social conflict when this represents – at least in part – the consequence and at the same time an intensification of some religious conflict *as well as* simultaneously constituting that situation in, and on the occasion of which the religious problem is, for the most part first borne in upon man and made the subject of his conscious decision. In other words: when there is a specific *work* of love to be performed or expected, a work which, in the long run, can never be performed at all without a love that is reinforced with faith and hope, and when there is a failure to perform such a work, then the situation arises in which the religious question can be explicitly and consciously borne in upon man in the concrete, and this is the place for a kind of social work which is specifically appropriate to the Church. This is to put the matter in terms which are still very abstract and can be no substitute for that creative imagination which is capable of revealing situations of this kind. But still it remains true to say that a pastoral activity that is 'purely' religious in character and expressed in preaching and the sacramental ministry alone is, in a certain sense, too abstract.

[367] Taken by itself this does not make itself felt – or does not do so sufficiently – in those cases in which man is involved in a social conflict having a religious background and religious undercurrents. For these emerge more effectively in the concrete instance of social conflict than in some kind of 'abstract' situation in which action is confined to the 'purely religious' sphere and mediated by the Church. The very fact that a conflict of *this* kind is, in concrete fact, never *purely* religious in origin, and that a justifiable 'therapy of the symptoms' does actually exist, means that it is never possible unambiguously to demarcate it *materially*, dividing it off from the areas proper to secular social work and aid. Nevertheless in principle it is a 'case' of social work belonging specifically to the Church.

Properly speaking what has been said should in itself be enough to make it clear first that the practitioner of the Church's social aid in precisely *this* sense does not necessarily have to be an ordained priest – indeed that for the most part the earlier formation of priests is, or may be, quite inadequate for this, and second that the lay 'social worker' of the Church acquires, by that very fact, a character and a task which has a specifically religious and ecclesiastical relevance such as has hardly been recognised sufficiently clearly up to the present.

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This aspect of the matter could shed fresh light upon the problem of the social worker of the Church as an ordained deacon.[5]

A further point which still remains to be made is this: the social work of the Church upon which we have now focussed our attention certainly has, of its very nature, an extremely 'personal' character. But this does not necessarily exclude a permanent system of organisation and institutionalisation which does justice to its specific nature. If the actual *sacramental* aids to living, e.g. in the sacrament of penance, exhibit an extremely significant element of institutionalism and 'organisation', then this cannot *ipso facto* be impossible in the case we are considering either.

A special sub-species of this specifically ecclesiastical social work, but one which may perhaps be extremely important today, would be the collaboration offered in overcoming those factors of social disintegration which are manifesting themselves at present for the most divers reasons within the local and parish communities of the Christian body itself. This [368] task is certainly the concern of pastoral activity in general, but the social activity we are considering can lend it a support which is quite essential. A first point is that the Christian community must be something more than the embodiment of a parish-dominated ideal, a regionally demarcated human group organised according to essentially pastoral conceptions, or the assembly of many unattached individuals at the same place and the same time to satisfy individual religious needs. A second point is that the community of the Church assembled for divine worship is precisely not now, as it was formerly, *ipso facto* a group that is integrated in terms of secular society. And a third point is that this integration cannot be achieved solely through the actual practice of divine worship as such. And all these reasons are in themselves sufficient to make it necessary for the Church to undertake a kind of social work that is specifically ecclesiastical in character, though probably it is still far from being sufficiently clearly recognised as such.

The Christian community as it exists today (and regardless of whether it is organised on regional or functional lines) is a communal as opposed to a national Church. And because of this it may sometimes be forced to adopt structures which (in terms, for instance, of the sociology of religion) seem almost to be those of a sectarian Church, even though the *only* point of really vital importance is that she shall not allow herself to fall into the *mentality* of the sect, but shall rather be *missionary* in outlook, committing herself boldly and without reserve to share in all aspects of the life of contemporary society, pluralist and secular as it is. But for the most part she has in fact not even the status of a genuine *community* Church, but rather hovers in an undefined no-man's land between the earlier 'national' Church (and she still calls her members from an environment which, sociologically speaking, provided the prior conditions for this) and a community Church in the genuine sense, constituted by individuals who have arrived at a genuine religious decision of their own, an idea which has not yet been realised.

The integration of the community itself in ecclesiastical and social terms, which cannot *solely* be achieved by mere 'preaching' in the normal sense of a theoretical indoctrination, is a specific task for the social work of the Church of today, and one which cannot be performed by the 'spiritual element' alone. This can be expressed in terms of *images*: the diaconal ministry of *caritas* by the deacons and deaconesses as practised today must provide for something more than merely that when the community is already assembled at the 'table' (Acts 6:2) everything shall proceed in a right and orderly fashion. It must also, and primarily

[5] Of course this must not be taken – and precisely for the reasons adduced in the present explanation – as meaning that the social work of the Church would have to be returned to clerical control. On the problems entailed here with regard to the diaconate cf. K. Rahner, H. Vorgrimler and J. Kramer, 'Zur Erneuerung des Diakonats in Deutschland', *Stimmen der Zeit* 180 (1967), pp. 145-153.

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see to it [369] that the union of believers whose state of integration is still weak or inadequate shall become a 'com-union' or 'table-fellowship' in fact.

And further – does not something of this also apply in its own way, today being the age of oecumenism, so far as a certain integration of groups which are confessionally divided is concerned, an integration which must come before the unity of the Churches in the strictly theological sense for which we are striving, and which alone will make this possible? Is not something of this kind too a social work of the Church which no-one except the Church or the Churches can perform? Must it not be recognised and performed, seeing that the division between the Churches has arisen precisely from sociological grounds in the broadest sense, and not merely from theological ones?

V

I know that everything which I have been able to say is, and must be, not only liable to criticism and contradiction (which is obvious), but has also remained at so abstract and formal a level that the practical exponent will ask: 'What can this lead to?' I am acutely conscious of the fact that I have only been able to contribute very little by way of an answer to those questions with which we find ourselves confronted in the concrete today, from the very nature of the case. But can the theologian, detached as he is from specialised knowledge and practical experience in these matters, do much more? Perhaps formal considerations of this kind do, after all, provide something approaching a system of co-ordination between the various points within which the real specialists both in theory and practice will be able, given sympathy and good will, to find and to locate a little more easily what they themselves have to search out and discover.

What I have sought to say was properly speaking simply the following:

First: Today the concept of *caritas* as a science and as a part of scientific theology could and should be thought of as an integral element in practical theology, which is itself a theological science in its own right and not simply a 'practical' supplement to the other theological disciplines. This being its status, therefore, '*caritas as a science*', which derives its name from *caritas* as a reality, should be thought out afresh in such a way as to become the most sublime consummation and perfection of all Christian activity, the science of how Christians are to fulfil their responsibilities to the world in the concrete precisely as these arise at any given point, a 'theological cosmology'. In this way it would also be freed from the fatal suspicion that it is merely the theory of that kind of welfare which [370] becomes ever more problematical in a welfare society and in a state which itself is and must be a 'social state' or a state committed to social welfare, because in such a case the welfare services of the Church can at most perform a service of filling in the gaps where secular society unexpectedly fails.

Second: In the second and third statements an attempt has been made to show that the co-existence of ecclesiastical and secular social work is demanded by the very nature of Christianity itself, and that the problem of drawing the line of demarcation between the two is at basis not a problem to be solved by theoretical considerations and *a priori* deductions, but a problem demanding ever fresh decisions as history unfolds. In these decisions the Church can both boldly surrender earlier social functions which she once had, and *at the same time* boldly recognise and engage herself in fresh tasks of social work in the world and secular society. Fundamental considerations, therefore, prompt us to refer the problem of drawing the line of demarcation to the practitioners themselves, even though these may find it unwelcome since it lays upon them a task and decision which they would certainly gladly leave to others. But at the same time it does mean that a greater freedom is achieved for the practice of

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caritas and for its practitioners. They do not need to wait for concrete imperatives from some centre of direction which would be run merely by theorists pursuing principles. The practitioners could themselves decide, by discovering for themselves imperatives which would not merely be the transference of principles into practice, but would constitute historical, indeed charismatic decisions. In these the truth would be made manifest that practice, in contrast to theory, cannot simply be deduced, and that in such cases the practical reason takes priority over the speculative.

Third: Without prejudice to the co-existence of ecclesiastical and secular social work and the mutual influence of the one upon the other, there is a specifically ecclesiastical social work to which quite new tasks accrue today to be performed both in the world and also in the Church herself.

It has not been possible to say more. I would console myself with the ancient saying, *In magnis voluisse sat est*, for it still always remains true that the greatest factor of all is love. If we have attempted to speak of this and to praise this, then we may hope and entreat for pardon.

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[371] THE PEACE OF GOD AND THE PEACE OF THE WORLD

IT is extraordinary how many different levels of significance can be found in this subject. For this reason a few preliminary observations may be permitted in order to indicate the almost incalculable breadth of the questions and tasks implied by this title, and at the same time to make clear the limits of what is here being attempted.[1]

1. If we are to speak of peace *theologically,* then we must speak of peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace in the contacts and relationships between man and man, and within these relationships peace between the generations, the classes, the age-groups and the sexes. We should also—because this too is of concern to theologians—have something to say with regard to peace in the international sphere and of the old-fashioned idea of peace. And finally we should give some consideration, precisely as *theo- logians,* to that *political* peace which is implicit in the current situation, in which the tendency of world history is towards an ever-increasing and ultimately total unity.[2] The question of how these various kinds of peace, [372] with God, with one's self, in human relationships, in more private contacts and at the political and international levels, are related to one another is, of course, in turn, a question in itself for the theologian, for manifestly he has the impression, even after reading the scriptures, that these various modes in which peace is realised have an intrinsic relationship and unity among themselves, and that on a radical view one kind demands the other. Only the individual who is conscious in some sense of being interiorly at peace with himself, and who—as we Christians say—lives ultimately at peace with God, can truly and radically maintain that attitude which can also contribute to peace among men.

2. In all its dimensions, therefore, this peace—and this is something that opens up a whole range of further levels in the theology of this con- cept—has forms which are subject to wide variations. At a later stage we shall have to see still more clearly that the concept of 'conflict' and 'war' in a metaphysical sense and in terms of existential ontology, and probably also in a theological sense, is not so simple or obvious that we could react to it with a simple refusal in favour of peace as the obviously right attitude to assume. To that extent there are necessarily genuine forms of peace and true forms of conflict. And hence even from this point of view the theolo- gian will have to

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[1] It has been necessary to keep the actual article concise. For this reason it has been attempted in the notes to draw attention to certain phenomena and certain problems in order to make apparent the whole perspective in which the author has intended his fragmentary observations to be understood.

[2] On this cf. the observations of C. F. v. Weizsacker, *Bedingungen des Friedens* (Göttingen '1964); *idem, Gedanken iiber unsere Zukunft* (Gottingen 1966); *idem,* 'Zumutungen der Freiheit', *Gber die Freiheit,* M. Horkheimer, K. Rahner, C. F. v. Weizsacker edd. (Stuttgart [2]i965), pp. 53-76; *idem,* 'Ethische und politische Prob- leme des Atomzeitalters', *Integritas. Festschrift fiir K. Hol^amer,* D. Stolte, R. Wisser edd. (Tubingen 1966), pp. 337-355. cf. also the further studies by Weizsacker mentioned in the notes which follow. See also T. Brocher, W. Gerlach, R. Lowen- thal, N. Sombart, P. G. Walker, R. v. Weizsacker, *Der Zwang %um Frieden* (Stuttgart 1967). On the concept of peace and the idea of peace in the context of politology and history cf. the following works: H. J. Morgenthau, *Macht und Frieden* (Giitersloh 1963) and R. Aron, *Frieden und Krieg* (Frankfurt 1963). On the history of the movements for peace cf. K. v. Raumer, *Ewige Friede. Friedensrufe and Friedensplane seit der Renaissance* (Freiburg 1953); H. J. Schlochauer, *Die Idee des ewigen Friedens* (Bonn 1953); cf. also U. Nerlich (ed.), I. *Krieg and Frieden im industriellen Zeitaker* and II. *Krieg und Frieden in der modernen Staatenwelt* (Giitersloh 1966). The comprehensive Catholic literature of recent years bearing on our problem is not explicitly adduced because it has been reviewed in certain excellent bulletins of the periodical *Concilium,* cf. R. Coste, 'Pacifism and Legitimate Defence', *Concilium* 5/1 (1965), pp. 45-52; F. Bockle, 'Peace and Modern Warfare; Theological Discussion in West Germany" 5/2, *Concilium* (1966), pp. 69-75; cf. also below, n. 7.

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exercise great prudence in his work with regard to the question of war and conflict on the one hand, and of peace on the other. Certainly there have already been times at which Christians became, to a greater or lesser extent, the representatives of the sort of quiet that belongs to the graveyard, times, moreover, at which a *pseudo-Christian* ideology[3] was actually invoked in support of the thesis that the primary duty is to ensure that the citizen shall have quiet. And there is a modern anti- Christian ideology according to which the sole possible realistic form of peace consists in an equilibrium of fear.[4] All this shows how widely vary-[373]ing in form that phenomenon can be which is so commonly characterised as peace. From the time of the Fathers of the Church onwards Christianity and the Church have always and actively concerned themselves with the question of the relationship of Christianity to the soldier's calling,[5] to war in the concrete sense, to nationalism,[6] to the question of conscientious objectors,[7] and always in very varying ways and with very varying results. Today the refusal to rely on physical force is certainly on the way or is actually being pressed as a watchword within Christendom itself.[8] This again shows how many theological problems are connected with the question of peace. [374]

3. A more important idea, and one which has a quite direct connection with our understanding of peace, belongs to that which we call 'power'.[9] It is manifest that Christians or theologians are not simply at one with regard to their judgments upon

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[3] On the erroneousness of this ideological interpretation of the understanding of peace cf. the radical statements of principle in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 148-180 (with bibliography).

[4] cf. *ibid.,* pp. 142, 184 f.

[5] For the early period cf. H. v. Campenhausen, 'Der Kriegsdienst der Christen in der Kirche des Altertums', *Tradition und Leben* (Tubingen 1960), pp. 203-215 (bibliography); J. M. Hornus, *Politische Entscheidung in der Alten Kirche* (Munich 1963). On the connected questions cf. also A.A.T. Ehrhardt, *Politische Metaphysik von Solon bis Augustin* I-II (Tubingen 1959).

[6] On this cf. the still always interesting expositions of E. Peterson, *Theologische Traktate* (Munich 1951), pp. 45-147.

[7] cf. the Pastoral Constitution, 'On the Church in the World of Today', No. 79. On peace and co-operation between nations cf. No. 77—90. B. Drees, 'Das Konzil zur Frage des Krieges, des Friedens und der Volkergemeinschaft', *Umkehr und Erneuerung. Kirche nach Jem Kon^il,* T. Filthaut ed. (Mainz 1966), pp. 393-403. More comprehensive studies on the teaching of the Council are to be found in a symposium of studies on the interpretation of the Pastoral Constitution 'On the Church in the World of Today' published by Paul Brand Verlag (Hilversum), a work which will also be brought out in translation by other publishers: L. J. Lebret O.P. on social and economic life and on the demand for co-operation between nations; J. Y. Calvez S.J. on the life of the political community and D. Dubarle O.P. on the position of the Council with regard to war and peace, cf. e.g. the French edition, *L'eglise dans le monde de ce temps. Constitution [l]Gaudium et Spes'. Commen- taires du Schema XIII* (Paris 1967), especially D. Dubarle, 'Le Schema XIII et la guerre', pp. 327-393- Reference must be made in quite general terms to the com- mentaries on the Pastoral Constitution (cf. *Das Zweite Vadkanische Kon^il* I—III [Freiburg 1966—1968]; the commentaries belonging to the series *'Unam Sanctam* [Paris 1966—1968] etc.); W. Dirks, 'Die Entdeckung des geschichtlichen Risikos und die Folgen. Zum Verhaltnis zwischen Politik und kirchlichem Lehramt', *Hochland* 59 (1967), pp. 280-285.

[8] This could be demonstrated for the Catholic side also by pointing to a certain difference in teaching or development in teaching leading up to the acceptance of the Council documents. Apart from the works already mentioned in n. 7 cf. also R. P. Regamey, *Gewaldosigkeit* (Vienna 1966). On the history of the developments leading up to the conciliar document cf., apart from D. Dubarle, a further work by R. Regout, *La doctrine de la guerre juste de St. Augustin a nos jours* (Paris 1935); R. Coste, *Le proileme du droit de guerre dans la pensee de Pie XII* (Paris 1962); *idem, Morale Internationale* (Paris 1964); G. Gundlach, 'Die Lehre Pius' XII vom modernen Krieg', *Die Ordnung der menschlichen Gesellschaft* I (Cologne 1964), pp. 637-651.

[9] For an initial orientation with regard to the concept of power cf. R, Hauser, 'Macht*, Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe II (Munich 1963), pp. 98-111 (bibliography); Handbuch der Pastordltheologie II/z, pp. 358 ff., 362 ff., 365 ff. (Bibliography, PP- 337-340).

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power. Is power something which, on any ultimate view, belongs ipso jacto from the outset, and necessarily, to the sphere of sin? Does the basis on which power rests consist solely and exclusively in the sinful world and in the fact of its sinfulness, or is there initially a power such that, even though in the concrete conditions of the world it is always, as it were, corrupted by sin, it nevertheless has properly speaking and of its true nature a different function and a real justification for its existence in the world?

In any such question we would first have to explain what is meant by power. Now we may take this concept of 'power' to mean the process in which one man is influenced by another, and the possibility which he has of determining that other's course, this act of determining his course being prior to the free decision of the man so acted upon. For my part I believe that this is more or less correct as a concept of power. Now if this is correct then we may perhaps be forced to say that the presence of some such phenqmenon as power in the world is necessary, and that power of this kind belongs to the essential conditions of human living; that although—as the theologians will say—it is true that power is always sinfully misused as well, nevertheless this sinful misuse cannot on that account be totally overcome simply by adopting the attitude of an absolute renunciation of power. On the basis of a conception of power of this kind the question would then have to be raised of the inevitable existence of conflict and-in a metaphyscial and theological sense—of war. On this showing the specifically Christian question would he more concerned with the concrete forms and manifestations of power and of conflict in so far as these could, from certain aspects, be considered the responsibility of the Christian alone. The question of how the Christian might gradually attempt to overcome this inescapable 'existential' or condition of human living as defined by power and conflict in history, or at least how he can impart to history a tendency towards such a conquest through that love which, in the last analysis he alone can have who knows that he is loved by God—this is a question the answer to which will only be attempted at a later stage. Here too we shall confine ourselves simply to making clear how the theological [375] problems involved in peace become lost in a whole range of connected questions which is far broader in its extent.

4. A further question is how to achieve a right approach to peace considered as a theological phenomenon. In this we must not simply postulate some false Utopian or romantic image of absolute rest and permanent equilibrium, something which does admittedly represent a lofty ideal in the concrete cirumstances of our life, but which, nevertheless, does not provide us with very much force with which to realise it. And if this is the case, then at the same time we must seek for that concept which, in terms of theological meaning, constitutes the opposite pole to that of peace. The moment, for instance, one formulates the theological concept of concupiscence[10] it carries with it ipso facto and in each case the further idea of an interior dissatisfaction on man's part, a state of inward conflict, a plurality of the forces within him of which, ultimately speaking, he is not in control, and which he cannot reduce to any state of definitive integration.[11] What is being spoken of, therefore, is a 'war' and 'conflict' of man within

[10] This is enough to show, at least by way of indication, why it is inadvisable to present the concept of 'sin' without further distinction (to the extent namely that there is a difference between this and the concept of 'concupiscence'!) as the opposite of'peace'. On the concept of concupiscence cf. K. Rahner, 'The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia', Theological Investigations I (London and Baltimore 1961), pp. 347-382; J. B. Metz, 'Konkupiszenz', Handbuch theolagischer Grundbegriffe I (Munich 1962), pp. 843-851; cf. also the observations which follow.

[11] Apart from the literature already mentioned cf. Handbuch der Pastorahheologie II/i, pp. 22-24 (with references).

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himself, and this involves as its counterpart the opposite idea of peace with himself that comes through God and from God.

5. The theological and Christian problem of peace is further associated with the question of what the idea of'peace' is really intended to conjure up. What does it mean to conceive of this as 'the order of justice',[12] seeing that 'order' and 'justice' are, and continue to be, in a certain sense extremely obscure concepts? What does such a concept of peace signify when we raise the question of a dynamism of history which will certainly not be held at any one specific point in an equilibrium of power, of social relationship etc., which is wholly predetermined? What must we say with regard to peace seeing that the question of a theology of revolution can be raised and that the young people precisely are today inclined, even in their Christian representatives, to invoked Christian watchword to the effect that under certain circumstances revolution may be necessary.13 This in itself is, of course, enough to indicate the question of how a theology of history on the one hand and the theology of peace on the other are related to one another since they are two factors which can be taken as having a necessary connection with one another and so reveal a further range of theological problems into which the question of peace leads us.

6. Today the peace which we seek in the international sphere is depen- dent to an extraordinary extent upon the growing unity of the history of the world, upon a situation of secularism in the sphere of culture, of society, of the state and of politics, and also upon the rationalisation and technical manipulation of the world. And in view of this it is obvious that any question of the theology of peace invariably implies also something in the nature of an enquiry into the theology of the worldliness of the world, the unity of contemporary world history in general, a theology which consists in analysing the contemporary situation in world history and the factor of the rational and the technical in human living.[14] This in turn entails a further and almost incalculable range of problems associated with the question of the theology of peace.

7. Properly speaking if the theologian sets himself to consider the question of peace he must also consider his theology of justice and his theology of love, his theology of the mutual relationship between justice and love. He must enter into a problem which, in current theology, is once more becoming very clear: the problem, namely, of how we should conceive of the unity and the distinction between love of God and love [377] of neighbour upon an originally and authentically Christian

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[12] The definition of peace in this sense is essentially connected with our basic understanding of the western concepts of state, justice and order. For a few witnesses to this cf. H. Kriiger, Allgemeine. Staatslehre (Stuttgart 1964), pp. 714 ff.; cf. H. Fuchs, Augustinus und der Friedensgedanke (Berlin 1926); F. Wiesenthal, Die Wandlung des Friedensbegrijfs von Augustinus iu Thomas von Aquino (Diss. jur. Munich 1949); A. Brecht, Politische Theorie (Tubingen 1961), pp. 484, 494 ff.; B. de Jouvenel; Ober Souveranitat (Neuwied 1966), pp. 169 ff. Further bibliography in the Staats/exi-kon der Gorresgesellschaft III (Freiburg 1959), p. 605.

[13] The critical attitude of the Christian towards the world as a matter of positive and creative activity is becoming a focal point for the consideration of theologians (cf. e.g. the theologies of hope by J. Moltmann, J. B. Metz, W. D. Marsch), and a point inevitably arising from this is the need for a ‘theology of revolution’. The problem appears still more urgent in the recent theologies (chiefly Protestant in character) which can be recognised as just emerging in Asia, Africa and South America. On this subject cf. especially H. Arendt, *Über die Revolution* (Munich 1963)[5] *Guerre revolutionnaire et conscience chretienne* (published by Pax Christi, rue de 1’Abbaye [Paris 1964]); D. Dubarle, *Le Schema XIII et la guerre,* pp. 337 f.; J. B. Metz, ‘Religion und Revolution’, *Neues Forum* XIV (1967), pp. 460—464; cf. *Ev. Tkeol.* 27 (1967), Nos. II—12.

[14] On the problems mentioned above as a whole cf. the comprehensive analysis by the author and others in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/i-2.

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conception.[15] Undoubtedly the question of peace is not wholly unconnected with the Christian message of love of neighbour, and this love of neighbour has manifestly something to do with that which we call the love of God for us and our love for God. In the biblical concept of agape the various aspects of both kinds of love are already indissolubly interconnected.16 According as each theologian views the love of God and love of neighbour as a unity he will undoubtedly modify also his concept of that peace which is achieved through this single love of God and love of neighbour. In fact a further problem which arises for theology is that of Christian and secular humanism, and this too in turn has connections with a theology of peace. Is there such a thing as a unity between men such that they become one in their humanity and one in their humanism?17 Is there a material content belonging to a humanism of this kind such that in it Christians and non-Christians could be at one, so that on this basis they could achieve a common concept of what they really understand by peace? These too are problems and questions which are evidently not so easy to solve, and which can serve in turn to throw light upon the whole multidimensional character of a theology of peace.

II

With regard to the biblical concept of peace only a few indications should be given.[18] On any showing 'peace' as presented in the Old and New [378] Testaments is one of the most important religious concepts. *Shalom* in the Old Testament signifies, ultimately speaking, a state of wellbeing, of having overcome an evil of some kind. It therefore signifies a state of good fortune, precisely a 'being whole', so that a man can salute his fellow with the greeting *Shalom,* 'Peace be to you'. And even on this basis this state of 'wholeness', precisely in those cases in which it is applied to an area involving human relationships, also acquires the significance of peace, and is therefore translated in the Sepruagint as *eirene.* In this connection, how- ever, we must constantly keep clearly before our eyes the fact that this specifically Old Testament concept originally had a far broader, deeper and more comprehensive meaning than that which we attach to the term 'peace' today, thinking of it in a sense

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[15] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God", *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp.231-249.

[16] On this cf. the well known investigations on the New Testament concept of *agape* by C. Spicq, V. Warnach etc.

[17] On this cf. the Council documents 'On the Church in the World of Today', Nos. 21, 8;, 88, 90, 'Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity', No. 27, 'Decree on the Missions', No. 41.

[18] On this aspect pertaining to biblical theology cf., apart from the concordances, W. Foerster, G. v. Rad, *T.W.N.T.* II (Stuttgart 1935), pp. 398-418; W. S. van Leeuwen, *Eirene in net Nieuwe Testament* (Wageningen 1940); J. J. Stamm, H. Bietenhard, *Der Weltfriede im Licht der Bibel* (Zurich 1959); J. Comblin, *Theologie des Friedens* I (Graz 1963); H. Gross, *Die Idee des ewigen und allgemeinen Weltfriedens im Alten Orient undim Alten Testament* (Treves 1956); E. Biser, *Der Sinn des Friedens* (Munich 1960); H. H. Schrey, 'Krieg und Frieden im N.T.', *Fur Arbeit und Besinnung* 5 (1951), pp. 466—480; S. Herrmann, *Die prophetischen Heilserwartungen im A.T. = Beitrdge %ur Wisszn schaft vom A.T. und N.T.* 5th series, No. 5 (85) (Stuttgart 1965); cf. also the relevant treatises in *L.T.K.* V (Freiburg "1960), 366-369, and in *R.G.G.* II (Tubingen [1]i958), 1133-1135, and in X. Leon-Dufour ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (London 1970), pp. 312-315; also in the Theologies of the Old and New Testaments (W. Eichrodt, L. Koehler, P. v. Imschoot, T. C. Vriezen, M. Meinertz, R. Bultmann etc.). On the concept of peace in the New Testament cf. also P. Mikat in his address on the occasion of the conferring of the peace prize of the German book trade on Augustin, Cardinal Bea and Willem A. Visser't Hooft (Frankfurt am Main 1966), pp. 23—39, *C.* Westermann, *Shalom: Der Frieden 1st unter uns* (Stuttgart 1967—Preparatory number for the Conference of the Protestant Church at Hannover 1967), pp. 29-31. H. Bacht, 'Dimensionen des Friedens', *Geist und Lelen* 40 (1967), pp. 4-12; 194-303; *Frieden* (Kreuz-Verlag, Stuttgart 1967).

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that is based on politics or merely on human relationships. This peace in the Old Testament is, of its very nature and right from the outset, something that has to be supplicated from God, because without God there can be no peace. And in the Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel peace in this sense precisely becomes the key word for what is central to the content of salvation in all its aspects, and as such also becomes in the case of Isaiah the key word for messianic expectation. Because of this peace already comes, under certain circumstances—by including, as it were, protology and eschatology within a single conspectus—something approaching the restoration of the para- disal peace which was destroyed by original sin,[19] and on this view the Messiah is the *princeps pads,* the prince of peace. But even here peace is, once more, interpreted as the all-inclusive content of salvation.

In the New Testament too, therefore, the Christian message (Eph 6:15) can be called the 'gospel of peace', that peace of which God is the author and Jesus Christ the mediator. Peace is, then, that which is mediated by Christ in the Spirit through a new creation as the fruit of the *Pneuma,* so [379] that *he* is our peace. And this peace is regarded as the peace which exists between God and men (Rom 5: 1). Hence peace then ensues between men but in such a way that this peace is also really and effectively the appease- ment of that interior conflict which has arisen in man through sin.

On this basis we might pursue the concept of peace through all depart- ments of theology. When we came to consider the doctrine of creation we would have, as it were, to regard the openness of the creature to salvation, the ability to be saved, the possibility of attaining to its own 'union with God' as peace, as well as the counterpart of this from God's side. In Christology, when we speak of the plenitude of grace in Christ then Christ is precisely he who is in his own person this peace between God and the world, and from whom the new order of the world as recon- ciled with God is initiated. In any presentation of ecclesiology we might wholeheartedly follow the Second Vatican Council in viewing the Church as, so to say, the sacramental sign in history, the historical manifestation, of this self-utterance of God which unites the world with God and in itself, and so gives it peace.[20] In a presentation of ethics peace could be regarded as the goal at which work for the kingdom of God is aimed, and in a presentation of eschatology we could speak of a hope for the eternal rest, and in that case once more this peace would be being regarded as the content of eschatological hope.

III

We must now turn to a further point and attempt to say something on the theology of peace and of the peaceable attitude or state of mind. A thesis might be formulated, however untimely it might sound, which would not give a very Christian impression and yet perhaps would be extremely Christian: the *'conflict' which is a 'war' so long as this world in which we live endures, so long as the 'kingdom of God' is not made present by the act of Godhimself— is an abiding reality, and insuperable 'existential' of human living.* In spite of this the *Christian*—in precisely the same way as mankind in general—*has an abiding task to create peace,* and so both must constantly be expressing the demand that humanitarian principles shall prevail.

This thesis derives from a realism that is Christian and anti-ideological. As has

[19] cf. especially the eschatology of the prophets: Hos 2: 20; Amos 9: 13; Is 9: 5; Zech 9: 9 f.; Is 9: 6; Mic 5: 4; Is 2: 2, 11: 1, 32: 15-20, 65: 25, 66: 12, 48: 18. For alayses of these cf. S. Herrmann, *Die prophetischen Heilserwartungen im A. T.* (cf. n. 18).
[20] cf. the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council, Nos. 1, 9, 48, 59 etc.

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already been said, any genuine Christian theology can and must recognise the inescapability and the necessity of that which is called and is power. Every individual is, to a certain extent, in virtue of his very existence, and in the very act of his self-fulfilment within the general sphere [380] of existence common to all men, one who alters the situation of freedom, the sphere of freedom open to his fellow, restricting it in some measure prior to any agreement on the latter's part21 After all this is, more or less, what power means, and a power more or less of this sort is unmistakably present. Of course the Christian will always recognise that this natural 'existential' of human living, which is inevitable and which, therefore, since man is not merely sin, is perfectly legitimate, is de facto always conditioned by sin as well, in other words by the sinful uses to which this inevitable power is put. But if such a power is present not merely in the sphere of our private lives, in which we mutually restrict the field of liberty open to one another, but is present also in the dimension of society and of peoples, then it is quite impossible for Christianity, maintaining as it does an anti-ideological realism of this kind, to escape from something like a war in this sense, that is to say conflict or contradiction. For the situation is that many human lives, each of which is multidimensional in itself, are in process of achieving their self-fulfilment in many ways. All of them exist within a single finite sphere of freedom, and therefore necessarily mutually restrict one another within this sphere of freedom. And it is this that constitutes the exercise of such a power, which ultimately speaking cannot be guided or controlled by any earthly authority. The reason for this is that any such central and totalitarian administration, or any division of this single sphere of existence of the kind that this would imply, would in fact represent the greatest exercise of power, in fact the most radical use of force by man.

When applied in an anti-ideological sense, therefore, Christian realism soberly recognises the existence of power and therefore of conflict as one side of human living. It does not raise this power to the status of an ideo- logy or accord it an absolute value. It precisely does not want this power to be administered by an ultimate and central tribunal within this present world.[22] It is, therefore, against any ideological or any practical monopoli- sation of this power, but at the same time it also recognises that it is [381] inevitable that there shall be something in the nature of conflict, contradic- tion and war. The Christian, therefore, is sufficiently realistic to take his stand in principle at a point halfway between a total rejection of power, an absolute hostility towards it on the one hand, and an attitude on the other in which power is accorded an absolute value raised to an ideology and monopolised.

The Christian is *in principle* opposed to both extremes, for ultimately speaking

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[21] On this interpretation of freedom and the scope of freedom cf. K. Rahner, 'Ursprlinge der Freiheit', *Über die Freiheit,* M. Horkheimer, K. Rahner, C. F. v. Weizsäcker edd. (Stuttgart 1965), esp. pp. 35-44.

[22] On the whole cf. K. Rahner, 'The Theology of Power', *Theological Investiga- tions* IV (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 391—409. The extent to which modern psychology, sociology and anthropology too regard the state of 'readiness to be unpeaceable', the situation of conflict, 'covetousness' etc. as almost insuperably powerful as factors in human life is made plain in the following studies: J. von Graevenitz, 'Personliche Voraussetzungen der Friedferrigkeit', *Streit um den Frieden,* W. Beck and R. Schmid edd. (Munich/Mainz 1967), pp. 11-30; T. Brocher, "Psychologische Aspekte des Friedens', T. Brocher *et al., Der Zwang [um FrieJen* (Stuttgart 1967), pp. 17-31; T. Brocher, 'Angst und AngrifF, *Der FrieJen ist unter uns* (Stuttgart 1967), pp. 21-24; K. Lorenz, *Das sogenannte Base. Zur Naturgeschichte der Aggres- sion* (Vienna 1964); E. Denker, *Aufklärung iiber Aggression* (Stuttgart 1966); H. Schoeck, *Der Neid. Sine Theorie der Gesellscha.fi* (Freiburg 1966); H. R. Liickert, *Der Mensch als konflikttrachtiges Wesen* (Munich 1964); *idem, Konfliktpsychologie* (Munich 1965). In interpreting this situation, which pertains to the nature of man as it *de facto* exists, greater emphasis should be laid upon the factor of 'concupiscence'.

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they come to the same. For the absolute abrogation of power and of the conflict or contradiction ensuing from it, the abrogation of a situation of struggle in general, would be possible only through an abso- lute monopolisation of power, and this would precisely be absolute tyranny.[23] The Christian cannot agree to any easy compromise, but must maintain a genuinely central position between these two extremes, be- cause precisely in virtue of his awareness of his own creatureliness he must recognise from the outset that he, the individual, *must not* set himself up as the absolute representative of God in the world,[24] since he *cannot* be this. A further reason is that neither the Church or state on the one hand, nor any different body on the other, representing science or some other finite concrete entity in the world, can or should set itself up, as it were, as absolutely acting in God's place, and so as having absolute authority to decide how the sphere of freedom should be divided between men.

The Christian's attitude is that any attempt to develop the ideal of an absolute peace in this present world into an ideology would imply the death, the end of history, a fellahin culture or rather lack of culture, and precisely the state of absolute tyranny.[25] In other words the sober anti- ideological realism of the Christian, who takes due account of conflict, contradiction and war, provides what is precisely the sole genuine possibility of coping with the problem of war and conflict in general in a [382] manner that is fully *human,* because any attempt at radically abolishing conflict and war would precisely imply the ultimate in tyranny, the most extreme concentration of power.

Nevertheless the Christian has the most solemn duty and task, and one which radically and vitally affects his salvation, of restraining this inevit- able conflict, of inculcating humanity, and, to the utmost of his power, of avoiding it. Obviously he has also, as one who knows about sins and in fact about his own sins, a critical attitude towards power and authority. He knows that this authority is one of the forces in the world which are indeed created by God, but which, nevertheless, can at the same time constitute the greatest possible temptation to man to put them to a wrong use and perhaps actually to rebel against God by means of them. To that extent he has always the task of bringing humanitarian standards to bear upon the struggle, just as, for instance 'blood feuds' and individual acts of retribution against private enemies have actually been eliminated from our society today.

When, therefore, it is asserted that theology, on the basis of a sober Christian realism which is anti-ideological in character, maintains that power, and therefore conflict too—that is war in the abstract sense—cannot be eliminated this obviously does not mean that the old and seem- ingly immovable forms in which power has been customarily applied in the past need always remain the same as they were, or even that we can allow them to do so. The opposite is true.[26] Precisely the struggle against these forms of war, forms which are still less than human, must be con- ducted precisely in the light of the anti-ideological realism of the Christian with its capacity for sober criticism.

IV

Now if we ask as Christian theologians how and in what way this effort or this task to

[23] cf. *ibid.,* pp. 497 ff. etc.
[24] In greater detail, *ibid.,* pp. 503 ff. (the temptations of power.)
[25] On this cf. also R. Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit* (Munich 1961), pp. 85 ff., 237 ff., 321 ff., 363 ff. On this problem cf. also H. Steubing, *Der Kompromiss als ethisches Problem* (Gutersloh 1955).
[26] cf. the conciliar decrees mentioned in nn. 7, 17.

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achieve a humanisation of the struggle and of power is to be conducted, then what first comes to mind—at least as far as Catholics are concerned—are the two Christian key words of 'justice' and 'love'. It is in fact stated in a noteworthy manner in the Second Vatican Council that peace is not the outcome of any human dictatorship or a balance of power between opposing forces, but is in a true and proper sense the work of justice.[27] Now obviously we cannot here embark upon an attempt to [383] present a theology of the nature of what is here meant by justice and love considered as the means by which the conflict is to be humanised.[28] This would go beyond the scope and the limitations of the present considera- tion. Thus only a few indications may be made at this point.

It could in fact be said that peace exists where 'each individual is accorded his due' in justice. Certainly some kind of description of justice could be given by explaining the phrase *suum cuique,* but in that case what is right and fair for 'each individual'? The question still remains, how can we in this one finite sphere of freedom, attain to that equality in which *no one individual* receives less than his due. Justice is constantly in danger of stopping short at the level of an organised egoism, and thereby, once more, providing the occasion for that conflict and war which has to be overcome and humanised. Whereas justice says, in a certain sense: 'to each according to his due', 'Let me have what is mine and you keep what is yours', Christian love says: 'What is mine is yours.'

Now certainly if we wish to remain realistic as Christians we must always keep clearly before our eyes the abiding fact that justice and love are two distinct entities. In this concrete world in which there is a plural- ism even of virtues, justice cannot simply be elevated into that love which never counts the cost to itself, and which is self-forgetful in such a way that all the Christian would have to do for everything to be well would be to practise that prodigality, that self-forgetfulness of love, in which he no longer sought to assert any claims on his own behalf. There remains too a pluralism in our Christian attitudes which itself cannot adequately be integrated or elevated into a higher synthesis—for instance precisely that of love. This is a pluralism which, in a true sense, must be endured by the Christian so long as this present age lasts. This sounds terribly abstract, yet it is an extremely practical matter.

Certainly there is and must be that love in the life of the Christian in which he abandons himself, renounces himself, surrenders his own rights, allows his fellow to have his way with him, achieves the folly of power- lessness, and really rises above the level of organised self-interest to the folly of self-abandonment according to the model which God has set before him in Jesus Christ. But Christian love as applied in the concrete in all that plurality which cannot be controlled by man, and which is to be found even in the virtues belonging to man, also means precisely that under certain circumstances it can be not merely a possibility, not merely morally permissible, but an actual duty for man to establish that kind of [384] justice which at some specific point precisely does not put into practice the holy foolishness of love, but rather seeks soberly, intelligently and empiri- cally to create conditions in which rights may be distributed between all concerned. This is what is so fearfully difficult and at the same time once more what is utterly realistic and down to earth in this Christian attitude.[29]

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[27] cf. the Pastoral Constitution 'On the Church in the World of Today', No. 78 (Is 32:17: Peace as a 'work of righteousness'; cf. also p. 375 n. 12.).

[28] On the basic determining factors in the classical concept of justice or righteous- ness cf. J. Pieper, *Über die Gerechtigkeit* (Munich [3]1950). cf. above p. 375, n. 12.

[29] On how love is related to the other virtues cf. K. Rahner, 'The "Command- ment" of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966),

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If I may so express it, it cannot reduce love to justice. Love is, from the Christian point of view, really something different from the intelligent organisation of human living such that each receives at least a portion from the cake of worldly prosperity. Love is really something more like the element of madness, of the improbable, of that which does not pay, that through which we continue to be the ones who do the paying and in which we let ourselves be exploited.[30] Love is, therefore, something too in which we are bold enough to make experiments—of the kind, for instance, which our politicians are always so frightened of making.

On the other hand, however, we cannot turn Christian living into some kind of marvellous and blessed paroxysm of love in which we strip our- selves of all power. This task of coming to terms with both aspects *for the sake-of peace* is one that is incalculable and that changes according to the changes in the particular situation concerned. It is the task of the Christian, and one for which, ultimately speaking, neither the Churches nor the letter of the gospel can supply any readymade or concrete formula. Admittedly the Christian will again and again have to tell himself- in the spirit and meaning of the Sermon on the Mount—that in a true and ulti- mate sense it is his duty to keep his eyes fixed upon the folly of God on the Cross, and so in all cases of doubt, whether at the individual or personal level, or at the collective and political one, to opt for the folly of love in that situation in human life in which he is placed in concrete history, which makes demands upon him and yet all the time remains ambiguous. And yet so long as the age of this present world lasts justice, so sober, realistic and hard as it seems, and even when it involves the use of power, whether in private or in public life, can precisely be the earthly form in which an extremely selfless love is embodied, which perhaps even for the sake of another may have to find courage enough to appear as though it were devoid of love.

A further point must be added to this: the experience of man shows [385] again and again that mere justice, however strict it may be in not claiming more than its due, always fails, is always reduced to absurdity arid, taken by itself, can never provide a basis for peace.

The sphere of freedom open to us in our mode of living becomes ever more restricted and, from the point of view of sociology, ever more com- plicated systems of dividing it are required. Because of this it will become, in a certain sense, ever less possible to establish solely as an end in itself an ideology by which to divide this sphere of freedom realistically in order to create peace. The world is a place in which all men are, as it were, justified in living and claiming their own due, and in which they actually seek to assert their own sinful egoism. But this world will become more and more the danger area in which a highly explosive mixture is present. And the more we seek to divide this restricted sphere of living in an equable manner the less peace will prevail. Wherever this sphere of human living is growing ever narrower, and wherever a frenzied will to be just asserts itself as an absolute, there naturally and inevitably an ideology will come into force and will proclaim intolerantly and again and again as a fresh message that there is nothing to wish for, no peace and no justice to achieve, unless it yields power and ‘right’ to a single absolute autonomous totalitarian centre to determine what is due to each individual, and thereby to achieve a just distribution of the one source of prosperity to be found upon earth.

Man after all is not an animal, and even in the empirical world belonging to him there is a vital need for that folly and mystery of love. But when he comes to this

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pp. 439-459.

[30] Here we might recall an interpretation of love in the sense of 1 Cor 13.

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point the Christian asks how man can really manage, in a manner that is fully justified, to renounce something to which he has a right or at least supposes that he has a right. I know that regrettably I am forced to speak in very abstract terms, but I believe that thereby we really are attaining to a point of central importance. There is much that an indivi- dual can renounce simply because, for instance, he wants to be left in peace; because under certain circumstances he may feel that egoism as practised by a group of two or of many is of greater advantage than being egoistical in a more primitive, solipsist or individualistic sense. But in the human living of the individual and also in political and national life moments will arise again and again in which something should be and has to be renounced such that the renouncing of it no longer benefits the renouncer, where, as it were, he feels himself threatened and injured in [386] the most personal claims which he makes upon existence.[31] Precisely in the Protestant theology of the Reformation period great emphasis was laid upon this, and in the Catholic theology of the natural law perhaps too little attention was paid to the fact that here, in these matters, there is a difference—we cannot examine it in greater detail at this point—between the private sphere and the political and national sphere. But in this case the situation is such that we have to entertain that love which is capable of renouncing that which seems to belong to one as a necessity, a necessity of life, and even a necessity of salvation. And the question is what resources man can find within himself really to achieve this.

Among this world's goods I can only as a last resort renounce that which seems to be a necessity of life if I am conscious of being so radically loved by someone that that which is mine is constituted by the infinite fulness of life that is his. Thus, as it were, in him and in his love is to be found the only place in which I can give way and allow my fellow his due within this present world. And this is precisely the point to which any rationally organised and intelligent egoism no longer extends. On the other hand a man cannot, in any true sense, adopt a position of sheer paradox by taking his fellow more seriously than himself,[32] and ultimately speaking he can only take himself and his fellow seriously, and concede something to him which is truly his, if he is conscious that both he and his fellow are already at rest in, and encompassed by the infinite land, in the infinitude of love and freedom, in peace with God. Only then can there no longer be any question of whether I have this or that, whether I am a little more or a little less fortunate, more or less solitary. Here peace with God, his love bestowed in the event of his self-utterance, becomes that which opens the way to and makes possible that other love which is also precisely that which opens the way to peace among men.

Obviously this is not to provide a formula which, if it were applied in this sense, would bring the world once and for all into a condition of peace, that is of a sheer absence of disagreement. In fact all this takes place in a changing history. All this takes place in a synthesis which is ever new, and which has to be discovered in ever different forms, between a love which commits itself and offers itself and a justice which asserts itself even rightly so that under certain circumstances this love can even initiate [387] the use of force or even revolution and a state of 'non-peace'.[33] Thus it can be a correct view that the first duty of the citizen is unrest. All this is possible if

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[31] cf. also in this sense the Pastoral Constitution 'On the Church in the World of Today', No. 79. (Bibliography cf. p. 373, n. 7.)

[32] The problem of 'love of self cannot be treated of at this point. On this cf. R. Volkl, 'Selbstliebe', *L.T.K.* IX (Freiburg ^{2}i9<54), 926/927 (with copious biblio- graphical references).

[33] It surely does not need to be explicitly demonstrated that in this context a great number of variations is to be found. On the subject itself cf. also p. 376, n. 13.

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love accords justice its right and proper status, confines it within this proper status, and commands it. If the just man is conscious that he can and should be the man who hazards himself and commits himself, the man who dares to make experiments, then this will only be possible in the hope that in this process which is still unfolding—not through the efforts of men but through the deed of God—the kingdom of God is actually present, and in it that peace which surpasses all under- standing,[34] a peace which is no longer built upon a synthesis of the kind of which we have been speaking, always unstable, always to be established afresh, or upon a precarious balance of all the elements which constitute human living in the here and now so long as history is still unfolding. It is obvious that against this background of theological considerations we ought, as men and Christians, to set ourselves to consider specific problems which are necessary in this world as we experience it in the concrete: as a world of hunger, of illiteracy, of atomic bombs, of ever increasing inter-involvement on the part of nations and the histories belonging to them; the world of the technical mastery and the media of communication of the present, of the present needs of man and of the population explosion. It is necessary to consider these specific problems in order thereby to preserve and to establish something at least which holds out some prospect of a tolerable peace.[35] What, therefore, is the final impression which the Christian as he exists in the concrete will receive precisely from the sort of theological considerations set forth above? He [388] may think that he can leave them as they were before. He may think that precisely because he has to be one who loves and serves selflessly, one who has to work out his own salvation in the concrete reality of his own existence, he must apply himself to the concrete and contemporary questions regarding peace. And in that case we agree with him. After such theological considerations the theologian as such once more returns to the ranks and leaves to Christians as men with concrete human lives to live[36] their due place and their task which he of course for his part also recognises as his own.

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[34] On the relationship between the kingdom of God, peace and Christ cf. X. Leon- Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (London 1970), pp. 254-258, 312-315, 364- 367. On the deeper christological aspects involved cf. K. Rahner, 'Peace on Earth', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and Baltimore 1971), pp. 132-135.

[35] At this point, and precisely in connection with the Council, a whole series of quite concrete measures for peace might be mentioned, cf. the study by B. Drees mentioned on p. 373 n. 7. On the whole cf. also—apart from the studies already cited by C. F. v. Weizsacker (cf. p. 371 n. 2)—G. Howe, H. E. Todt, *Frieden im wissen- schaftlich-technischen Zeitalter. Okumenische Theologie und Zivili^ation* (Stuttgart 1966) and A. Etzioni, *Der harte Weg ^um Frieden. Eine neue Strategie* (Gottingen 1965); W. Dirks, 'Erziehung zum Frieden', *Diakonia* 2 (1967), pp. 65-80,- *1st der Weltfriede unvermeidlich?* (C. F. Freiherr's review of Weizsacker with a discussion appended) = *Bergedorfer Gesprachskreis zu Fragen der freien industriellen Gesellschaft* No. 24 (Hamburg 1966); J. Kuhn ed., *Frieden. Das Abenteuer des Brilckenscklags* (Stuttgart 1967).

[36] For this reason the humanity of the Christian as applied in concrete living mani- fests his will to achieve peace in very varied forms, cf. e.g. R. Schneider, *Gedanken des Friedens* (Freiburg [6]i9J7); J. Lasserre, *Der Krieg und das Evangellum* (Munich 1956); H. Gollwitzer, *Forderungen der Freiheit* (Munich [2]1964*);* A. Schweitzer, *Friede oder Atomkrieg?* (Munich 1958); M. Niemoller, *Reden* (Frankfurt 1961); E. Gross, *Das Geheimnis des Pazifismus* (Stuttgart 1959); C. F. v. Weizsacker, 'Zumutungen des Friedens', *Streit um den Frieden,* W. Beck, R. Schmid edd. (Munich/Mainz 1967), pp. 31-52. We should also recall Martin Luther King, the strivings for peace on the part of Paul VI, the figure of Dag Hammarskjold and the 'Oppenheimer case', to mention only a few very different strivers for peace, cf. also U. Miehe (ed.), *Thema Frieden. Zeitgenossische deutsche Gedichte* (Wuppertal 1967). For a brief orientation cf. J. Beckmann, 'Friede', *Theologie fur Nichttheologen* I (Stuttgart "1955), pp. 111-117.

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VOLUME 10

LIST OF SOURCES

THE NEW IMAGE OF THE CHURCH
Delivered as a lecture on 3 January 1966 at Koblenz (The Academy of Theology), on 8 January 1966 at Mülheim/Ruhr (Wolfsburg), on 11 February 1966 at the invitation of the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Tübingen, on 13 February 1966 at a theological conference of the Catholic Academy of Bavaria in Munich, as an invitation lecture to the Philosophical and Theological College of Paderbom on 19 February 1966, on 26 February 1966 at the Institute for Catholic Culture Emmendingen (Baden), on 21 March 1966 at Brussels, on 27 June 1966 at the Loyola Academy in Chicago (USA), on 22 April 1966 at Pforzheim (Institute for Catholic Culture), on 27 June 1966 at the Technical College at Munich (The Society of Catholic Academies), on 27 July 1966 at the first Study Week at Ottobeuren, as one of several invitation lectures delivered during a study course of the Ecumenical Council at Bossey/Geneva from 12 to 16 October 1966, and on 25 October 1966 at Betzdorf (Institute for Catholic Culture). First published in *Geist und Leben* 39 (1966), pp. 4-24 (also published as a special paper).

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THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AS AN ADDITIONAL ACT OF RECONCILIATION

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WITH THE CHURCH
Originally written as an article for the Festschrift in honour of Alfredo, Cardinal Ottaviani, entitled *Das Volk Gottes*. *Sein organischer Aufbau im Alten und Neuen Testament* (Rome 1967/68), it then bore the title 'Das Busssakrament als "Versöhnung mit der Kirche"'.

A BRIEF THEOLOGICAL TREATISE ON INDULGENCE
This essay initially appeared under the title 'Über den Ablass' in *Stimmen* [391] *der Zeit* 156 (1955), pp. 343-355. It was deliberately left almost unaltered (cf. the author's remarks on p. 150f. of this volume) in order to maintain a clear view of the specific position it occupies in the sequence of the author's works on the problems involved in the doctrine of indulgence. The only part to be completely revised was the introduction. The original essay was supplemented by a longer insertion on p. 349, cf. above pp. 157-158 ("We have spoken above. . . left behind") and again an insertion was made on p. 361 of the earlier article, cf. above p. 160 ("The treasury of the Church. . . is precisely not").
All the remaining alterations affect merely the style and method of subdividing the article as a whole.

THE CURRENT OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH ON THE DOCTRINE OF INDULGENCE
This study was initially composed for a second edition of the volume published in Italian and entitled *La penitenza della chiesa*. *Saggi teologici e storici* (Rome 1964, 2nd ed. 1968). Here the works by the author on both the history and the systematic theology of the doctrine of penance and indulgence are assembled. Apart from being intended as an 'apologia' for the author's own position, this article is also intended to contribute towards an analysis of the Constitution on Indulgence by Pope Paul VI of 1 January 1967. First published in German in *Catholica* 21 (1967) Vol 4.

MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT
A lecture given at the invitation of the advisory committee on education of the Catholic Action Movement of the Archdiocese of Vienna on 7 March 1967 m the Great Hall of Music at Vienna. First published in *Geist und Leben* 40 (1967), pp. 177-193.

THE TEACHING OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL ON THE DIACONATE
The present brief essay is the outcome of a lecture which the author delivered (as a free version from notes) at the International Conference of Studies, 'The Deacon in the Church and in the World of Today' at Rome (22 to 24 October 1965). All that the author had in mind here was to give a presentation of 'The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the [392] Diaconate'. This explains the restricted subject-matter of the present article. First published in German under the above title in *Der Seelsorger* 36 (1966), pp. 193-199. The account of the conference as a whole has been published under the editorship of P. Winniger and Y. Congar in *Le diacre dans l'église et le monde d'aujourd'hui* = *Unam Sanctam* 59 (Paris 1966). A more comprehensive account in *German* of the conference held by the International Association for the Diaconate (Freiburg in Breisgau) is to be found in Vol II (1966) of *Diakonia* (= *Dokumentation des Internationalen Informationszentrums für Fragen des Diakonates*).

A FRAGMENTARY ASPECT OF A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE FUTURE
The published excerpt constitutes the first part of a paper entitled 'Das Christentum und die Zukunft' which the author read on 11 September 1966 at the *Darmstädter Gespräch 1966*:

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'Der Mensch und seine Zukunft', first published in *Darmstädter Gespräch*. *Der Mensch und seiner Zukunft*, edited by Professor Dr E. Schlechta (Darmstadt 1967), pp. 149-160. The other parts of the lecture delivered at Darmstadt are in substance equivalent to the article already published at an earlier stage under the title 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man' in *Theological Investigations VI* (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 59-68.

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ON THE THEOLOGY OF HOPE
An initial version was delivered as a lecture on 6 March 1967 to the Association of Higher Studies at Graz, and on 8 March 1967 to the Association of Higher Studies at Vienna. Besides this an English Version was given in October 1967 at several universities in the course of a journey through the United States. The article appeared in revised and expanded form in the first number of an International Periodical published by Verlag Herder (Freiburg) in 1968 and entitled *Internationale Zeitschrifi für das Gespräch zwischen den verschiedenen Humanismen*, edited by Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler (the latter also being the chief editor).

ON THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ENTAILED IN THE IDEA OF THE NEW 'EARTH'
Initially composed for a symposium volume, *Knowledge and the Future of the Man*, edited by W. J. Ong (Verlag Holt, Rinehart and Winston, [393] New York 1968) on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the St Louis University (USA). Delivered as a lecture several times at American Universities in the course of October 1967. First published in German under the title, 'Mitarbeit an der Neuen Erde', *Neues Forum* 14 (1967), pp. 683-687.

IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD
A lecture delivered at the annual conference of the Institute of the Görres Society for Achieving an Encounter Between Natural Science and Theology held at Feldafing (Starnberger See) on 21 September 1966. At the same time it was designed for publication, together with the ensuing discussion, in the Report of the Conference of the Society (Verlag Alber, Freiburg 1968).

ON THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ENTAILED IN A 'PASTORAL CONSTITUTION'
Composed for the commentary which appeared in Dutch entitled *Schema dertien*. *Tekst en commentaar* (in collaboration with J.-Y. Calvez, N. D. Chenu, K. Rahner, E. Schillebeeckx etc.) = *Vaticanum* 2. No. 2: *De kerk in de wereld van deze tijd* (Verlag Paul Brand, Hilversum/Antwerp 1967), pp. 315-336. First published in German in *Volk Gottes*. *Festgabe für Josef Höfer*, edited by R. Bäumer and H. Dolch (Freiburg 1967), pp. 683-703.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PHENOMENON OF SECULARISATION
Lecture at the Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church (20-25 August 1967) at Toronto (Canada). It was repeated at the invitation of the Institute for Catholic Education at Salzburg on 26 September 1967, and at the Conference of Academics of the Diocese of Hildesheim at Hanover on 22 November 1967. First published in the Acta of the Congress.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK IN THE CHURCH
Delivered as a festival lecture on 13 June 1967 at the General Assembly [394] of the Swiss Caritas Association at Lucerne. First published in *Caritas*. *Zeitschrifi des Schweizerischen Caritasverbances* 45 (1967).

THE PEACE OF GOD AND THE PEACE OF THE WORLD
Lecture at a Conference for the Directors of Colleges of Advanced Engineering held by student chaplains and industrial chaplains of the *Evangelische Landeskirche* at Württemberg in September 1966 in the *Evangelische Akademie Tutzing*. The original lecture was delivered freely from notes and recorded. Subsequently it underwent several revisions and expansions, and was supplemented with notes. First published in the Report of the Conference edited by

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W. Beck and R. Schmid, and entitled *Streit um den Frieden* (Munich and Mainz 1967), pp. 64-85.

In the list of sources given above no mention has been made of a number of excerpts or special papers which were printed in German. Broadcast talks are mentioned only when the article concerned was specially written for these. Nor has there been any special mention of the numerous translations which have been made. Only the work in which they were initially published is mentioned, whether this was in German or in a foreign language.

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FOREWORD

In the foreword to the ninth (eleventh and twelfth in this English edition) volume of my collected writings it only remains for me to repeat what I have already said in the forewords to the earlier volumes. For this reason I may confine myself to referring primarily to the foreword to the eighth volume. The ninth volume contains the lectures and articles which have been composed over the last two-and-a-half years. I have to acknowledge my heartfelt indebtedness to all my colleagues in the faculty of Catholic theology of the Wilhelms University of Munster, Westphalia, for their help in the work of collecting these articles and preparing them for publication in this volume. My thanks are due, therefore, to Dr Elmar Klinger, Dr Leo Karrer, Herr Heribert Woestmann, Herr Kuno Füssel and Fräulein Annerose Köster. Without their help it would have been impossible to publish this volume so quickly. For the provenance of the individual articles I may once more refer to the List of Sources at the end of the volume.

Munich, March 1970

Karl Rahner

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[1]

PART ONE

Tasks and Problems for Contemporary Theology

[3]

1

PLURALISM IN THEOLOGY AND THE UNITY OF THE CREED IN THE CHURCH

The theme enunciated in the title to this essay is certainly extremely relevant to the present. For pluralism is making a deep impact in the life of the Church right down to its concrete details, and especially when this pluralism is conceived of in the broadest sense, and without exaggeratedly scholastic restrictions. Now this pluralism confronts the authorities of the Church and her believers alike with the question of how it can be maintained side by side with a true unity of creed, the question of what this unity can mean at all in more precise terms on this showing, and how it can be set apart and preserved from a pluralistic interpretation of the creed itself, while allowing for a legitimate pluralism in theology.

The problem is new. It is a genuine ‘quaestio disputata’. We are still far from having obtained a clear enough view of the question to give any clear answer to it, or even an answer which is unambiguous enough and universally accepted enough to provide an immediate solution at least to the practical difficulties to which the problem has given rise in the life of the Church.

This being the situation, it cannot really be expected that in so brief a study as this all aspects, even of the problem in itself, can be brought to view. The author is aware of this impossibility. He knows that he himself is immersed in the midst of these problems without really having mastered them, and that this means that he can only set forth the problem itself in fragmentary form, and that his suggestions as to the lines along which an answer can be found are questionable in the extreme. Indeed on a closer inspection they may even appear false.

One of the consequences arising immediately and precisely from theological pluralism today is that we cannot allow a well-considered answer to mature in the silence and privacy of our own individual minds. Rather we must have the courage to think aloud and in public in order to have [4] any unequivocal results to offer. On this basis the reader may also understand why this study should strike a more personal note than is usual in scholarly essays of this sort.

I

First it is of the utmost importance to recognize that the problem of really does exist, and that it is new. Even among specialist theologians there is all too often a failure to recognize both of these facts clearly and unequivocally. For it is precisely the specialist theologian who is aware that all along in the history of theology there have been different schools; that there has been a lack of unity among the theologians upon many questions, and that the Church has tolerated, or even made necessary, the differences between the schools, actually taking

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disputed positions in theology under her protection and guarding them against the accusation of heterodoxy on the part of their opponents.

This and much more besides gives rise again and again to the impression that what we are dealing with in this pluralism among the theologies is an old phenomenon, one which has been with us all along, so that the Church and her *magisterium* have already long since worked out the right principles and the sound practice for dealing with it in such a way that she has easily been able to reconcile her attitudes on the one hand of tolerance of, and even actually requiring, the existence of the many theological schools, and on the other of upholding unequivocally the common creed.

But on this point appearances are deceptive. Until we recognize this and admit it, until we realize that to a certain extent the earlier quantitative proliferation which this pluralism has entailed has led to a qualitative shift, and given birth to a pluralism of a totally different kind – until all this is recognized we are failing to see the real problem and the fresh difficulty which has emerged for the Church and for maintaining the unity of her creed.

What then was the situation (always viewing it as a whole) in earlier times? Certainly in those earlier times there were different schools and orientations in theology. But the divisions between these were in part (e.g. as between the patristics of the east and the west) geographical and due to a sort of intellectual no-man's land dividing the different schools from each other. In some cases, even, the differences between them were not reflected upon in any really effective sense. Or, when they really were [5] recognized and adverted to in the minds of the individual theologians, the opposing theses were set against one another as 'yes' and 'no', and the controversy over them took place within a common intellectual ambience constituted by principles, ideas, and ways of approaching questions which were common to all the parties involved. And in those cases in which later historians have come to recognize that this was not the case, or was only partially so, still the differences these have discovered have been such as those earlier schoolmen, actually engaged in the living and historical controversies, were themselves totally unconscious of.

Formerly it was possible to proceed from the basic principle that one could know the position of one's opponent. One could understand it and could oneself explain to him why one could not share it. The fact that despite having this common ground of understanding, whether real or supposed, with one's opponent, one still could not achieve unison with him was a sheer unanalysable state of affairs, something at which one could only shrug one's shoulders without any further attempt at analysis, recognizing it as a brute fact. At best one could explain it simply in terms of the difficulty of the subject-matter involved, very often in terms of the stupidity of the other theologian or the obstinacy of the heretic. In any case one was convinced either that one knew what one's theological opponent was saying, that one had understood him, or else one was not even aware of his existence and did not recognize him at all. Terminology, philosophical presuppositions, fields of discourse, unanalyzed attitudes and feelings, were either held in common or such differences as did exist in these areas remained unreflected upon.

Today all this is in a real sense essentially different. Very many factors have contributed to this quantitative change, which, to a certain extent, has led to a qualitative transformation. But it is quite impossible to analyze these factors with any precision at this point. The accumulation of historical material which the theological disciplines have to work upon has become so great that it is no longer possible for any one theologian to cope with it. Furthermore the individual theologian (differing in this from his forbears) is actually aware of this. The methods of the individual disciplines have become so complicated that no one theologian can still avail himself of them all. Philosophy itself; as the instrument which the theologian employs of necessity in pursuing his discipline, has itself become so pluralistic

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that no theologian has any longer any overall mastery of philosophy *as a whole*. Instead he works with one specific philosophy, and perhaps too with a very eclectic one.

Today philosophy is no longer, as it formerly was, the sole and [6] sufficient meeting-place where those theologically relevant findings which man gleans from his everyday experience, from his intellectual life as a whole and from his scientific pursuits can be handed on to theology. The modern sciences (the historical and intellectual disciplines, natural sciences and social sciences) have emancipated themselves from philosophy (rightly or wrongly, it makes no difference here), and although ideally speaking with all of these, in the concrete this is to a very large extent impossible for him, and hence he is in no position to say that something of which he himself is ignorant is theologically irrelevant.

Today the relationship in which a Catholic theology stands vis-à-vis other Christian theologies, whether exegetical, historical or systematic, is quite different in kind from what it formerly was. The Christian theologies today are not diametrically opposed as affirmations and denials of the same simple propositions. Today the real theological frontiers cut across, at least in part, the confessional divisions. This in itself entails a theological pluralism, and one which cannot be overcome merely by teamwork, however necessary such teamwork may be today, and however intensively it may have to be organized. For in fact no team can embrace all the theologians in the world, and even the most broadly conceived team possible in terms of numbers cannot be adequate to cope with the pluralism indicated above.

An additional point is that intellectual disciplines, and so theology too, differ from the natural sciences in that the ‘conclusions’ cannot really be taken over and understood simply as they stand. Rather it is a necessary condition for any true understanding of the actual conclusions that have been achieved that those who take them over should themselves go through the reasoning process by which they were arrived at. For this reason in theology even teamwork does not help in the last analysis against that pluralism which exists precisely in theology. Today this difficulty is insuperable because there is this difference between the present and former times, that even the substance of the theology and the theologies which are possible and actual today can no longer be contained even approximately by the mind of any one individual theologian, or assimilated in the time available to him. Now this state of affairs is not merely an objective fact, but is something of which the theologian himself is aware and, as a consequence of his own ignorance with regard to a knowledge which he knows exists and yet which he himself has not grasped, it sets the theology of the individual in a strange situation of insecurity and unease.

From what has been said up this point it will be clear that when we [7] speak of a pluralism in theology the decisive factor in this is not that the theologians involved contradict one another, so that according to the simple principle of non-contradiction they cannot both be right at the same time since their respective theses are opposed as the affirmative and negative poles in a contradiction. Such a situation would not constitute any genuine pluralism in theology-at any rate not that pluralism which causes such disquiet today, and which is being referred to here. For when a man is aware of being confronted by two theses which are contradictory alternatives, and when he can recognize them as such, he can, at least in principle, decide between them, and thus both in virtue of the fact that they are alternatives, as also, and still more, by the decision he makes upon the question he finds himself confronted with in this way, he is in a position to overcome the pluralism.

The pluralism of which we are speaking here, rather, consists precisely in the fact that it is quite impossible to reduce the theologies and their representative theses to a simple logical alternative in this manner, in the fact that they exist side by side with one another as disparate and mutually incommensurable. Hence that position of transcendence from which, as being one and common to both a judgment might be arrived at, is totally unattainable to the individual theologian. In other cases there can be some common intellectual ground or

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ambience of ideas, one which can be accepted as held in common by the rival theorists and recognized, albeit unconsciously and tacitly, right from the first by both of them, so that on the basis of this common ground individual propositions can be discussed. In this case, however, there is nowhere near sufficient common ground of this kind, and this means that the representatives of the different schools cannot achieve, even indirectly, a position in which they can explain to one another consciously and unambiguously in what precisely the difference between their respective intellectual outlooks consists. This difference is only sensed as something vague in virtue of the experience of a mutual state of alienation and disparity through the experience that one's partner in the dialogue constantly proceeds in the dialogue from starting-points which are alien to oneself, or which seem less important to one, and that he presents the subject-matter under discussion, in other words speaks of points which he regards as established, which likewise seem alien or less important to oneself. The result is that the discussion very often, or even in the majority of cases, fails to arrive at any conclusion arising from the subject under discussion itself, but is rather broken off because either the time or the physical resources made available for it make it impossible for it to proceed any further.

[8] In order to clarify what has been said up to this point I must ask to be allowed to strike a somewhat more 'personal' note. In what follows I am speaking of what I know from my own experience. A more senior theologian, one who grew up while the old scholastic tradition was still in force, that tradition which reigned more or less unassailably right up to the time of the Second Vatican Council, cannot easily understand what has been said so far. What approach, then, used we older theologians to adopt, brought up as we were in the orthodox tradition of scholasticism?

If we were obtuse, or somewhat over-convinced of the absolute value of our scholastic theology, we rejected whatever was alien or alienating which we came across from any other theology as false or at least as unimportant, and without really having felt the material weight or the living relevance of an opposed position we found reasons enough and distinctions enough to cope with any such position which struck us as alien, though obviously without really having achieved any clear awareness of the questionable element in our reaction.

If we were cleverer, or more open and alive to new ideas, then we revised our previously held positions, expanded our intellectual horizons, enriched our terminology, and introduced fresh nuances into our points of view and outlooks. We learned to use modern exegesis and a more modern, or a really modern philosophy as the basis for our thought. We arrived at clearer and less prejudiced evaluations of the changing history of dogma and theology (without losing sight of a certain ultimate continuity and consistency in it) etc., and thus we succeeded, to an extent which was certainly significant, in assimilating that which was alien and ran counter to our established ideas, and in making a genuine element in our own theology that which we came across from a different theology (especially a non-Catholic one) or from the theology implicit in the modern understanding of human living. This latter approach, surely a legitimate one, has its due need of success and certainly must not be abandoned. But I cannot escape the impression that today we are experiencing the limitations even of an approach of this kind. The alien is close to us. It is making us aware of itself as such, and yet can neither be assimilated within our own existing framework of thought nor legitimately be rejected as that which is false (or as one-sided, something which we have already advanced beyond in the broader vision and finer distinctions of our own system).

Today it very often happens that we no longer simply succeed in arriving at any fixed or immovable attitude towards the basic theological positions of other theologians when these are specifically different from [9] our own, especially (but not only!) when these belong to other Christian confessions.

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In those cases in which another theologian of this sort explicitly and directly denies a proposition of our own Church which has the force of an official ecclesiastical dogma, we still find the position relatively easy. In that case we can, initially at least, counter such a denial with an equally decisive rejection. But then the tormenting question begins to impose itself upon us once more of whether our opponent has really understood the official dogma which he has contested, and therefore whether it was the proposition itself which he rejected and not merely the wrong interpretation of it. The tormenting question begins to impinge upon us of whether we orthodox theologians, taking the proposition which we adhere to, and in the sense in which we understand it, have transposed it explicitly enough into a broader ambience of ideas in such a way that we are reasonably justified in expecting that we have communicated an understanding of this kind of the proposition concerned to the 'opponent' who has rejected it. Have we done this in such a way that we can really expect him to accept it?

But this case is by no means the real one which provokes disquiet with regard to the difficulty in assimilating alien and disparate elements from a different theology. In these alien theologies we encounter basic positions which are far from being in contradictory opposition to our own theology in this sense, but which have been developed within a basic intellectual ambience which their representatives held in common with ourselves. Yet even in such cases as this we have still been unable to achieve any clear or unambiguous analysis of the original disparity which exists between us and them. Now in such cases as this we are no longer in the least capable of arriving at a position in which we can give an unambiguous 'yes' or 'no' to such basic positions.

For instance who among us today can say with sufficient sureness whether the basic conception of the doctrine of justification put forward by Karl Barth is Catholic or heterodox? Anyone among us who believes that he has the precise answer to this is to be congratulated indeed. But what are we to do if we fail to arrive at this position? Who can say precisely that the basic positions held by Rudolph Bultmann are, in the last analysis, really un-Catholic, or whether it is merely that the propositions themselves have not been understood or developed with sufficient precision, and that this is why conclusions have been derived from them by Bultmann or his followers which seem to run counter to the ultimate basic principles of Catholicism and so can no longer be acceptable to Catholics?

[10] What course should we adopt when, for want of time, through the limitations of our physical resources, or because of the other tasks in theology to which we are committed, we are no longer in a position to form any clear or responsible opinion upon this point?

Both in terms of thought and action it would be to evade the real problem involved here if we were simply to say that we could, after all, set these questions aside with untroubled consciences in order to pursue our own theology, and in order to express for ourselves, and in terms of our own theology what we hold theologically with regard to our own Christian and Catholic faith, and to have analyzed this sufficiently to make it understandable for ourselves and to some extent for others also. For a fact that precisely cannot and must not be overlooked is that side by side with our own theology there are other theologies which remain alien to ourselves, and which, nevertheless, claim to be theologically analyzing the same creed. Certainly if this creed were simply presented to one in total independence of these disparate theologies everything would be quite simple. But since it is quite impossible for this to be the case (seeing that faith and theological understanding of the faith cannot simply and unequivocally be separated from one another) how then can one man ascertain whether his faith is the same as that of another when that other's theology is alien to him and existing side by side with his own, unexplored and uncomprehended?

Another example: the discussions between Dutch and Roman theologians with regard to the doctrine of the Eucharist and the interpretation of transubstantiation are well known. Any

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idea that the Roman theologians are more stupid or uneducated than their Dutch 'opponents' is totally foreign to my thoughts. But nevertheless I do have a suspicion that even with the best will in the world they are simply incapable of mastering the philosophical presuppositions, the ontological categories of thought as they actually exist, which lie behind any serious exposition of the doctrine of trans-signification etc., and that for this reason these discussions remain barren. Of course such an understanding is 'in itself' attainable, and of course if it were in fact to be attained to one would have to use this position to test in turn whether in the concrete case supposed the dogma, even when subjected to the critical judgement of a tribunal, does not give rise to these ontological assumptions, and whether in turn these assumptions cannot be accounted simply as manifestly possible interpretations of the dogma. But what is to be done when we presuppose positions which are not in fact held on the 'Roman' side and which perhaps, while they are indeed maintained on the 'Dutch' side in a real and effective [11] sense, have even there not found any clear or articulate expression? Some such position is possible, and it implies no reproach for any lack of intelligence or will to achieve mutual understanding (how long, for instance, have we had to wait until philosophy in the ecclesiastical sphere has been able, to some extent, to cope with modern philosophy from Descartes onwards?). What are we to do in order that both sides may achieve the initial mastery of the basic assumptions which disparate doctrines of the Eucharist of this kind presuppose?

Nor can it be objected that to establish an incommensurability of this kind as present, at least provisionally, between such doctrines in itself implies that a bridge has been built between these two alien and opposed positions on the grounds that a third and detached standpoint has been arrived at, one from which the presence of this incommensurability has been established, and from which an 'understanding' of both sides has been achieved. For even supposing that someone from this third and detached standpoint can justifiably hold the opinion that he has an equal understanding of both positions, and so has overcome the disparity between them, still the one holding this third position must then presumably anxiously question himself as to whether in other cases he too is not exposed to a similar impossibility of really being able to cope with opposed positions, an impossibility such as, in the case supposed, he actually believes that he has been able to recognize from his own standpoint even though each of the two opponents involved is convinced that he has in all good will tested and really understood the position of the other party.

A third example: How do we manage today when we enter into discussion with contemporary Catholic intellectuals who, though they have no formation in scholastic theology, are nevertheless interested in theology and well read? Very soon we come across a whole complex of theological views which is, in certain cases, extremely rich and profoundly thought out. This complex has a quite different structure and different perspectives from those to which we scholastic theologians are accustomed. For the most part, in the statements deriving from this complex, propositions are enunciated which sound to us, and perhaps actually are, heresies of the grossest kind. In this complex we may perhaps discover lacunae which are astonishing even to us, omissions which, judged by our outlook, are indefensible and, on the other hand, an over-emphasis upon factors to which great weight is attached yet which seem to us utterly secondary. We discover that in such a 'theology' as formulated by an intellectual of this kind the system of ideas involved assumes a quite different form from that which we tacitly presuppose to be present in the minds of an [12] intellectual who wills to be and is a 'practising' Catholic. We always assume that the orthodox answers of the catechism are present in his mind. We expect that from this catechism, which after all is nothing else than the full and valid emanation of our standardized scholastic theology, while there may be some omissions for which the 'fides implicita' of the subject may have to compensate, still on the whole even in this intellectual our own theology will have

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maintained more or less its own form from the religious instruction which he has had at an earlier stage.

In reality it is quite otherwise. Even in his case we find ourselves confronted with a 'theology' which seems alien and disparate to us. Very soon we recognize that it is impossible, within the space of time available and with the 'technical' equipment available to bring our own theology into harmony with the alien one. The alien theology of the sort of intellectual we have in mind, to a far greater extent than our own, is influenced by his personal lot in life, his distinctive psychological make-up, the intellectual and social milieu in which he lives, in other words by factors which are different and take effect in different ways in the case of the professional theologian, and which are quite impossible to overcome in his encounter with the intellectual through the fragmentary dialogue and instruction which is all that is possible for them in the limited time available. Thus when we encounter a 'theology' which is alien to us and which remains alien we must, as specialist theologians, actually ask ourselves whether among us too, in the form which our theology assumes, the same theological 'proportions' are present which strike us as so alien in the case of an intellectual of this kind: lacunae, deficiencies, oddness of emphasis and perspectives which are anything but obvious etc. We have to ask ourselves whether the only reason why we orthodox scholastic theologians do not notice this clearly is that we discuss these matters too exclusively among ourselves alone, taking it for granted that we should confine ourselves to the terminology and horizons of thought which we hold in common.

II

What then is to be done in this situation in which we are confronted with an insurmountable theological pluralism? This is the real and difficult question, which can put to ourselves only insofar as we really have learned to regard this pluralism genuinely without prejudice or anxiety of any kind. It is only with great difficulty, if at all, that we can supply any answer to this question that is to some extent adequate. It cannot really be [13] expected that any such answer will be wholly satisfying either at the theoretical or at the practical level. For in fact an answer that was completely satisfying could only be given in the form of a solution which itself in turn transcended this pluralism and so in principle overcame it. As has already been emphasized at the outset of this study, it is only quite modest statements that we can attempt here, and even these with all due provisos to the effect that it may later become necessary to revise them.

To begin with, however, two points have to be laid down. *First*: Obviously, however true it may be that pluralism in theology is, and will continue to be an inescapable fact, it nevertheless does not signify a mere static state of affairs which we simply have to accept. Obviously we have to strive again and again and in every possible way to overcome it, to conduct a dialogue between all theological schools and outlooks, to subject our own thought-world to critical examination and to expand it, to learn from others etc. The theological pluralism of today is, if we may actually express it in this way, the self-realization of the individual Christian and theologian as well as of the theological awareness of the Church of the situation in which they stand in terms of epistemology and 'concupiscence'. Once we understand this then properly speaking it must be clear to us theologians that pluralism in theology can neither be eliminated nor simply accepted, but that it belongs to that category of human realities which are entailed by the historical dimension and the abiding contingency of the human state. These can never be overcome in such a way that they no longer exist, and yet at the same time we are compelled to strive again and again to overcome them in the future.

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Second: Obviously while recognizing the abiding factor of, we are not denying to the Church, whether to her awareness of her faith or to her teaching authority, the right to draw new and unequivocal boundaries, under certain circumstances to reject the teachings of a given theology as heretical or (for reasons and in a manner which have still to be described) as not to be tolerated in the Church. The function of the teaching authority as, under certain circumstances actually pronouncing anathemas, is not abolished by the factor of pluralism in theology. This pluralism does not give licence for any kind of weak tolerance of everything and anything, because otherwise in dealing with the mutual interrelationship of creed and theology, and in recognizing the distinction which exists between the two entities – a distinction which can never adequately be analyzed or defined – we could no longer maintain, in the concrete individual case, that unity of the creed in the Church which is constitutive for her. For even the most enlightened understanding in [14] terms of the psychological, historical and sociological factors involved of how and why an individual arrives at an 'insuperably' heterodox view is still very far from requiring that such a view should be upheld within the Church. This latter position is not required for the very reason that the Church by her rejection neither denies the 'bona fides' of the upholder of a heterodox view of this kind, nor denies him any chance of salvation any more than she denies that such heterodox views have a positive function for the further development of the Church's awareness of her own faith when she maintains her separation from other Christian creeds. Now while we must uphold the right and duty of the Church's teaching authority in this matter quite uncompromisingly, still it must be recognized on the other hand that this is not to deny, but rather positively to maintain, that the manner in which this right and this duty are exercised must, at least in many respects, acquire a quite new form in the concrete, seeing that the contemporary pluralism of which we speak is not merely a present factor, but one which in its intractability has arrived at the stage of being consciously reflected upon. The question is, therefore, how in, and in spite of, a situation of theological pluralism which is consciously being reflected upon and recognized as insuperable we can still maintain the unity of the creed in a form which is at least partially new. And this brings us to the real question which concerns us here. The manner in which the unity of the creed must be maintained is new because this pluralism is itself new, and yet at the same time has manifest consequences for the attitude of the Church and her teaching authority in preserving the unity of the creed. Such observations as we can make upon this question are extremely fragmentary, and will be expressed in a few individual statements without any intention of uniting these within a single 'system'.

III

We are wholly failing to grasp the nature of this theological pluralism so long as we fail to recognize that the formulae in which the teaching authority of the Church expresses her creed always include amongst other things an implicit element of linguistics. These formulae have been subjected to rules of language which might have been different. But the formulae have not simply and solely been dictated by the reality itself which they express. Rather they are conditioned by sociological and historical factors in the development of human thinking. These factors, therefore, provide the setting in which the formulae come to be articulated, and the [15] formulae themselves justly demand to be respected in their own right even though the respect we accord to them is not simply identical with our assent of faith to the truth itself which is expressed with dogmatically binding force. Up to this time there has hardly been any conscious reflection upon this element of linguistic conditioning in the formal statements of the Church's *magisterium*, which are designed to preserve the unity of

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the creed (even though an inkling of this conscious reflection does appear here and there, cf. DS 1515, 1642, 1652). Formerly it was not possible to recognize this by any process of conscious reflection because we held more or less the same field of linguistic discourse in common with our heretical opponents (even when this field of discourse itself was changing gradually and in a way which was hardly adverted to). Because of this the different doctrines were formulated in the same terms as so many affirmations and denials. Today, however, we have only to reflect for a moment on the terms 'person' and 'nature' in the doctrine of the Trinity and christology, and concepts such as 'original sin', 'transubstantiation' etc. (though we cannot do this in any explicit sense in the present context) in order to see that in such dogmatic teachings certain specific rules of language are actually being applied which in other circumstances could have been different, and that the formulations are not simply determined by the truth which they express as such and exclusively. Indeed dogmatic teachings of this kind actually become problematical and provoke great misunderstandings when the secular field of discourse in which such concepts are applied, and on the basis of which they have been understood, is changed without the Church having the power autonomously to guide and control the linguistic development of the concepts themselves which are involved. Viewed from this aspect the unity of the creed and the pluralism of the theologies, together with the mutual interdependence of these two entities can manifestly no longer be conceived of or applied in practice today as it was formerly. Formerly on the one hand it was not only the truly basic statements of the creed *alone*, but those of theology as well which were encountered within this system of linguistic rules, while on the other hand the 'explanations' of such concepts of the Church's teaching authority, though of course always necessary and also actually given in earlier times, appeared and were felt to be merely secondary, and were clearly distinguished from the concepts themselves, as commentaries appended to the theological statements properly so called. What earlier appeared to be, and was thought in theology and by theologians to be, mere subsequent and secondary commentary upon such concepts and statements of the official teaching (for it was these that [16] constituted the true corpus of theological statements as such) can today actually acquire a different status and significance in the theologies as such. It can be included as an intrinsic element in the true corpus of the statements of such a theology.

To put the matter simply and once and for all: whereas earlier the really important theses in a theology were themselves statements of the Church's *magisterium*, this will no longer necessarily be the case in the future for theology itself. Indeed it is probably impossible that it shall be so if a theology of today is effectively to come to grips with its true past. The linguistic rules governing the expressions of the Church's teaching authority have this status primarily and in principle so far as the creed is concerned, and they do not have it in the same basic and binding manner for the actual theologies themselves. These theologies do of course remain attached to the official doctrine of the Church, and thereby to the linguistic rules which are maintained with this. But these linguistic rules must be viewed more clearly than in earlier times as having their force so far as the Church's creed is concerned and as not having the same basic force so far as theology is concerned. So far we have been aware that behind these linguistic rules lies a history stretching into the past, a history in which they themselves first came into being so that they were not always in force. Today in the same way it becomes clear that these too, at least so far as theology as such is concerned, have a further history extending into the future. The attempts which are discernible in 'Humani Generis' and 'Mysterium Fidei' to represent such theological concepts and the linguistic rules which they involve, despite their past history, as indispensable for the future also are ill-conceived and fail to carry conviction. Even if some such approach were right so far as the creed is concerned (and on this point we shall have something to say at a later stage), still this certainly does not also apply in every case to theology and the theologies. The theologies

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have a basic and intrinsic right from the outset to express even the pith and essence of the realities they are enunciating as theological, and ultimately as official, in a different way from the manner in which they are expressed in the formulations of the Church's *magisterium*. This does not of course mean that they may also simply as such tacitly neglect these formulations of official teaching with the linguistic rules they entail, or that they are not bound by that which is expressed in these formulations in a truly binding manner.

Presumably in a contemporary presentation of the theology of the Trinity one could express that which is dogmatically binding in the Church's faith in the Trinity, one could make it intelligible, one could [17] set it within a framework of thought which has become necessary today, in such a way that in doing so the statement about the 'Three Persons' and 'One Nature' would not occupy the central place with everything else merely converging upon it as so much commentary. What is meant by original sin could presumably be expressed in a theology of the 'sin of the world' in a manner which was orthodox and did justice to the Church's creed without thereby having to speak of original *sin* in the terms of the theological statements as such (for all the binding force of the classic Tridentine doctrine of original sin), and without thereby having to obscure the actual content of the specifically credal element, at any rate any more than in the classic formulation, which in fact also 'obscures' because it fails to bring out the merely analogous relationship between personal and inherited habitual sin. The factor of linguistic conditioning present in the expression of the Church's doctrine and now able consciously to be reflected upon makes it clear that it is both possible and justified for there to be a pluralism among the theologies, and for these to exhibit great differences in their formulations from the formulations of the Church's official teaching.

IV

This in turn, however to, serves to bring out still more clearly the real problem with which we are here concerned: How can we ensure that the unity of the creed is maintained, while allowing for a pluralism of this kind in the forms of language used by the theologies?

On the one hand, however, it is impossible to get beyond any one specific theological language in formulating the creed, for even the formulations of the official teaching themselves are inevitably (to some extent at least) *ipso facto* theology and so draw upon one specific theology. Moreover the degree to which the different theologies are commensurable, the degree to which they converge in the unity of the creed, is something that, as has already been said, cannot adequately be established in the concrete by the individual.

In view of this situation, and of course with the provisos already mentioned above, there can be no escaping the conclusion that today the Church and her teaching authority are forced, to a notably greater extent than formerly, to leave to the individual theologies the responsibility for seeing that they genuinely do maintain themselves in agreement with the Church's creed; that their interpretation of this creed is not such as to interpret away the creed itself while paying it mere lip-service, not such [18] as to empty it of its content, but such as really to maintain its truth. Today it must surely be recognized that even the Church's teaching authority is confronted with this situation and the consequences arising from it. For either it is the case that it is upheld by the representatives of one specific individual theology, or else, if its upholders are appointed as far as possible so as to be representative and to include a fair cross-section of the adherents of the different theologies, then the council thus formed simply reproduces the pluralism of theologies which exists in the Church herself; and which cannot be transcended in any adequate sense. The Church of today must, to a far

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greater extent than formerly, leave to the individual theologies the responsibility of ensuring that they genuinely do preserve the common creed.

Despite the proviso stated above, it is of course still possible that in specific cases the teaching authority of the Church will pronounce specific statements put forward by a particular theology as irreconcilable with the creed itself. But in this it is surely impossible to lay down *a priori* norms which make it clear by the purely formal directives which they provide what the cases are in which a given theology has to bring its own self-responsibility (that is always as limited by the *magisterium* itself) to bear, and what the cases are in which even today the *magisterium* itself has to intervene to draw a possible line of division between orthodox and heterodox theology.

But even in this second case, a point which we must fully and unreservedly take into account is that to a notable extent, and perhaps even in its real heart and centre, certain rules of theological language are implied. We have to reckon with the fact that when such a line of division is drawn it is a fact, whether consciously adverted to or not, that it is not primarily and immediately a question of truth that the distinction bears upon, but a phenomenon of epistemology and sociology that is involved. In other words when such a line of demarcation is drawn what is really happening is that the Church is making the following pronouncement (albeit in the form of a doctrine bearing upon the truth content itself): 'Such-and-such an assertion cannot be made in the Church without the one making the assertion bringing himself or at least others with whom he has to live in the unity of the faith into the danger of mistaking the reality signified in the creed.' And then the Church once more leaves it to the theology concerned to interpret the common creed for itself and on its own responsibility while paying due respect to this ruling in the matter of language.

Presumably the old credal formulae and doctrinal decisions of the [19] Church achieve in this contemporary situation a new status and a different significance from that which they formerly had. They are of course (and this applies even to those already contained in the New Testament) conceived of in the language of a specific theology (though this is not to deny that already even in them a certain theological pluralism is objectively present. Only it is such that the reality of it has not yet plainly been reflected upon or adverted to). But these ancient statements of doctrine were after all precisely the common and sole expressions in which the common creed was expressed. And this means that these ancient statements of doctrine, in virtue of the uniqueness of the realities signified in the creed, of the unity of the creed itself, and of the continuity that had to be preserved in the Church's awareness of her faith, the abiding and binding points of departure and the norm (albeit *norma normata*) for the manifold theologies which are only now really emanating from them, and which can no longer adequately be contained within an overall unity. The teaching authority of the Church cannot in principle arrive at its expressions of doctrine except by availing itself of a theology, even though what it refers to is the actual creed itself, and even though, varying, naturally, according to the particular case being treated of, the difference between the creed in what it really signifies and the theology which expresses and interprets it is very great. Moreover the pluralism among the theologies of today can no longer adequately be subsumed under any overall unity. Now because of this we presumably have to reckon with the fact that in the future the *magisterium* will hardly be in a position to arrive at any fresh positive expressions of doctrine. The unity of theology which such expressions would presuppose is no longer present. Presumably it must be expected that in the future the teaching authority will intervene in particular cases as these arise in defence of doctrine, and undertake to define the boundaries in the manner already described. Meanwhile she will protect and encourage the individual theologies which, each in its own way, are striving to make the creed which all hold in common comprehensible and relevant in a manner corresponding to the needs of the particular epoch. In the future, then, the *magisterium* will regard this pluralism among the

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theologies as an enrichment of the Church and as something which is necessary today. And under certain circumstances, by a certain expansion of the function it has exercised hitherto, it will be inspired by the abiding gospel to permit pastoral movements, prophetic impulses to arise in the Church, which will guide the Church's actions in a particular concrete historical situation.

But presumably the dream which not a few theologians have been [20] indulging in in the very recent past, namely that by a process of ever more refined development of dogma the Church herself will develop her teaching ever further and ever more swiftly in a series of individual pronouncements, has now proved devoid of reality.

For pressed to its logical conclusion such a procedure would only still be possible if some one single theology were at her disposal and were to be accepted by all as the immediately obvious presupposition for such a development in this explicative sense.

The relinquishment of a 'development of dogma' as understood above need not entail any impoverishment of the life of faith in the Church, or any ossification of her awareness of her own faith. This life of faith is simply concentrated all the more clearly upon the ultimately decisive points contained in the Christian faith, and in the contemporary intellectual situation in the world there is every occasion for this concentration. And these most central and most radical points in the content of the Christian faith will be considered, interpreted, and applied to the present by theologies which are, and which will continue to be, very different in character. Both these factors taken together, however, signify an enrichment of the Church's awareness of her faith in terms of content and application which is at least as great as that which would accrue if the 'development of dogma' were taking place in the manner which probably not a few theologians in the last hundred years have thought of it as taking place when they strove to achieve a 'new dogma' as the goal and crown of such a development. Probably too we can understand from this that the earlier and positive doctrinal statements of the Church now acquire a somewhat different function from that which they formerly had. They no longer constitute so much the *terminus a quo* for a further development leading to fresh dogmas through and within a single unique theology, but rather constitute the initial expression of a common creed to which many theologies, while retaining their pluralism, refer, and which they are intended to serve.

V

Presumably, however, we should approach the problem of how the unity of the creed is to be reconciled with the pluralism among the theologies from yet another point. This is necessary if we are really to make it plain how difficult it is to convince ourselves of the uniqueness of the common creed; seeing that on the one hand this conviction is not *ipso facto* achieved by the verbal equivalences between the formulae of the creed as applied in [21] the individual theologies and as recognized and respected by them, while on the other hand the pluralism among the theologies (in which nevertheless it is an understanding of the one creed that is being maintained), cannot adequately be overcome or transcended.

In order to achieve any further advance at this stage the following point must be reflected upon: As understood in the Church faith and creed can certainly not be present apart from words or in a state of emancipation from words. This means that the unity and uniqueness of the faith and the creed can certainly not be realized and adhered to by many simply and exclusively at a level which is beyond words, for instance that of common sympathy, common action, or a common cult etc., quite apart from the fact that even such human realities are in any case never simply beyond words. But precisely this word has at the same time a further character as of its very nature pointing us on to realities, achievements and

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experiences which are not present to us simply through this word alone. Faith and creed do not constitute a 'verbal event' in such a way that this word is, in a certain sense, simply sufficient to itself. Men communicate with one another and form a unity with one another. But although certainly they never do this apart from the word-event, still this as such never constitutes in itself alone the whole reality of this unity. Rather it points on to a further unity which it indeed initiates but never constitutes of itself alone. The word itself in its comprehensibility points on to the mystery of God, to the historical reality from which man derives, to the common way and the common activity of humanity, and thereby to realities which are indeed never present without any word at all, but which are not simply identical with this word, and which are communicated by this word not as absent but as matters of present experience. To this extent, then, even in the word the assurance of a unity of the word is possible which is not simply or solely achieved by the word itself alone. Now the Christian faith presupposes such a possibility as already given quite independently of the question which is raised by the pluralism among theologies which exists today. For how otherwise could any one individual school of thought assure itself sufficiently of agreement with any other, seeing that this assurance with regard to the attitude and conviction of the other school of thought is, after all, invariably possible only through the medium of one's own awareness? This assurance is never achieved in the processes of human thought merely by establishing a correspondence between the content of conceptual awareness between the two parties. Life in common at the physical level, the same statement (as distinct merely from the same ideas), concrete action in common – these are [22] necessary elements in the process of assuring ourselves of identity of conviction among many parties.

The fact that in Christianity the same baptism exists as a concrete mode of action, that a form of worship is celebrated in common at the physical level, that all words point on beyond themselves to a single historical reality, and in this precisely to that which can no longer be expressed conceptually, that is treated of in community within the concrete dimension of a world that is subject to space and time – these and much else besides are not merely the consequences of a conviction held in common which one has previously assured oneself of as common prior to any action by the process of theoretical discussion. Rather they too are just as much so many elements through which this common conviction can be realized and conceived of as present. In the last analysis there can be no breaking out of the circle. Concrete action (in the broadest sense) is, as common, not merely the consequence of a conviction previously arrived at and already held in common, but the mode in which such a common conviction is brought to its fulness and achieves its realization and its certainty. This means that the maintenance of the unity of the creed within the pluralism of the theologies and the assurance of this are also (though not only!) dependent upon the fact that the community and the unity which are being achieved do not exist simply or exclusively in the dimension of the word as such and at the conceptual level. If we want to bring the unity of the creed to its fulness and to assure ourselves of this unity (of course always with an assurance which remains at the human level, which is never attained to in the absolute, which must be worked out in hope, and which is not even communicated at the theoretical level), then we must *express* this one creed in common, celebrate the Death of the Lord in common in the physicality belonging to this, celebrate the sacraments in their physicality, serve the world in common in action, and then through all this process community of creed is achieved in the midst of all the pluralism of the theologies.

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In conclusion the question can be posed – still without any real answer – of what all that has so far been said signifies for an ecumenical theology and for the ecumenical strivings that are made to achieve unity between the Churches. Proceeding from what we have said so far, surely the question is this: Can it perhaps be the case that the theologians of the separated Churches have already, without our really noticing it, entered into that [23] pluralism among the theologies which certainly has its place in the one Church? Has this taken place (and this is a point which is, for the most part considered in isolation) not because these theologies have themselves undergone further development since the Reformation, but, on a deeper and more exact view, because in the awareness of faith of the individual Churches of today they are accorded a different status, i.e. the difference between them and the creed proper is seen and recognized as greater than was formerly thought because in each of the Churches concerned, even in those in which these theologies are maintained, they are from the outset expressed and interpreted in a broader context, i.e. precisely *as* such as can have other theologies existing side by side with them in an abiding pluralism of such theologies? A situation has been arrived at, at least in part, in which these theologies of the different Churches are, in this new context, not in the least incompatible with one another. Perhaps we can be tolerant enough to accord to them, at least in part, that self-responsibility of which we have spoken above without requiring from them, over and above the ancient formulae of faith, or, it may be quite new and original statements of the Christian faith, a common theological mode of expression as the condition for these theologies existing together in common in the one Church. Perhaps there is a genuine theological possibility not only of achieving the unity of the Church on the basis of the unity of the creed as theologically formulated, but also a further possibility of arriving at unity of creed on the basis of unity of life and action in the Church or of acquiring sufficient assurance of the fact of this unity. Our intention is merely to pose these questions, not to answer them. We have no intention of offering a potent recipe for producing a mere seeming solution to all the differences between the creeds. Let us simply put the following question: What significance does it have for the strivings of the ecumenical movement for a workable unity among the Churches, if within the Catholic Church an effective pluralism of theologies exists and has a positive right to exist?

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[24]

2

ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE ECUMENICAL DISCUSSION

The subject of this article[1] is the theology of ecumenism. This has the unusual advantage that in a certain sense the subject under consideration and the considerations themselves coincide: an ecumenical dialogue which treats of ecumenical dialogue. Given a subject of this kind it would be perfectly conceivable to fasten upon one specific question in terms of theological content from the whole group of associated subjects, and thereby to demonstrate by means of one specific example what we mean when we speak of ecumenical theology.[2] But surely [25] it is still possible, albeit in an abstract and formal manner, to consider the actual nature of this. It may be that in adopting this method we shall never advance beyond the level of very general principles, and perhaps we shall lay ourselves open to the objection that the difficulties lie in the details. But I cannot escape the impression that even so abstract an approach to the essence of the matter as this has tasks and problems enough to offer, at any rate to attempt it. Since it is not easy to provide a preliminary plan such as would be enlightening in itself of the considerations which will be attempted here, I may be permitted simply to embark upon my subject.

I

Let us measure ecumenical theology against a background in space and time of the divisions which exist within western Christendom, in other words that constituted by the period of the last 450 years. Against this background, then, is the task of ecumenical theology old or new? Are we to say that ecumenical theology has been in existence since

[1] The Considerations which follow originally served as a double lecture delivered in the course of a lecture tour in the Scandinavian countries lasting from 21st March to the 4th April 1968, and which was held at the invitation of the deans of the theological faculties of Copenhagen, Lund, Oslo, Uppsala, Helsinki and Abo/Turku. The text was subsequently revised and some additional notes were added to it.

[2] The author must here refer to the different studies which he has published in another context on particular questions in ecumenism. In these it would be possible to see in greater detail what possibilities there are, in the opinion of the author, for ecumenical discussion, even in difficult areas of detail, and how a theology really cornmitted to the realities of the situation can bring life and movement to positions which have become petrified. On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Protestantismus', LTK VIII (2nd ed. 1963), 827-831; *idem*, 'On Conversions to the Church', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 373-3 84; *idem*, 'The Presence of the Lord in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 291-311; *idem*, 'Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification', *ibid*., pp. 189-218; *idem*, 'Some Remarks on the Question of Conversions', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966) pp. 315-335; *idem*, 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 218-230; *idem*, 'Zur "Situationsethik" aus ökumenischer Sicht', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 2nd ed., 1968), pp.537-544; *idem*, 'Katholische Besinnung zum Reformationsjubiläum', *Gnade als Freiheit* (Freiburg, 1968), pp. 177-186; cf. also the further studies on indulgence, *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 175-201, and X (London and New York), pp. 125-199. To achieve a general survey of the literature reference will be made to *Internationale Ökumenische Bibliographie* ed. by L. Gerken, H. Weissgerber *et al*., I-II (1967), as also to Oecumenia 1969. *Jahrbuch für ökumenische Forschung* (Gütersloh, 1969).

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the Enlightenment and the awakening of historical awareness in the nineteenth century – in other words, so far as we Catholics are concerned, since Möhler and Newman? Or does ecumenical theology only begin to exist since the modern ecumenical movement in the strict sense of the term, since there has been a World Council of Churches and, so far as we Catholics are concerned, since the Second Vatican Council has been in existence with its Decree on Ecumenism? Or should we perhaps even go so far as to say that ecumenical theology is still more or less something to be desired, a hope rather than a reality? It will be best not to opt for any one of the alternatives presented, or to give any wholly decisive and unambiguous answer to this question. Here rather we must let it remain an open question. Every living reality has a history, and often too a pre-history, and for the most part it is not possible to draw any unambiguous boundaries between history and pre-history, especially since in the case we are considering the mentality of the individual theologians, even in earlier ages, was not the same, but rather exhibits profound differences, so that perhaps in any distinction we might draw between controversial theology and ecumenical theology it might be said that from the Reformation to the [26] present day there have been ecumenical theologians and controversial theologians.[3]

E. Stakemeier defines controversial theology as the theological treatment of doctrines considered as the official proclamations previously put forward by confessional groups and as reduced to their underlying principles-doctrines, that is to say, which form the basis of the differences which divide the Churches and which exist between the confessional bodies conceived of as Christian and ecclesiastical.[4] This definition of his points the question of whether in any such description of the nature of controversial theology we could not work out a still less ambiguous and more vital difference between this and ecumenical theology, or whether 'ecumenical' as distinct from 'controversial' serves merely to describe the greater hope and a more ironic and understanding approach by which to describe one and the same discipline, a discipline which we call 'controversial theology' or precisely today prefer to call 'ecumenical theology.'[5] We intend actually to abstract from the question of how far ecumenical theology in a given Christian Church is of its nature and inevitably distinct from that of another Christian Church even in respect of its formal essence through the different understanding which is involved of revelation, faith, and thereby too of theology itself in its general nature. But even abstracting from this it can certainly be said that a 'controversial theology', or probably better 'ecumenical theology' in every Church has *first and foremost* the task of

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[3] At this point it is impossible to enter in any detail into the history of ecumenical theology. On this cf. in greater detail R. Rouse/S. Neil edd., *Geschichte der ökumenischen Bewegung* (Göttingen, 1957); G. Thils, *Histoire doctrinal du mouvement oecuménique* (Paris, 2nd ed., 1963); G. Tavard, *Geschichte der Ökumenischen Bewegung* (Mainz, 1964).

[4] E. Stakemeier, 'Kontroverstheologie', *LTK* VI (2nd ed., 1961), 511-515, esp. 514; cf. also R. Kösters, 'Zur Theorie der Kontroverstheologie', *ZKTh* 88 (1966), pp. 121-162.

[5] For a definition of the concept 'Ecumenical' cf. W. A. Visser't Hooft, *Der Sinn des Wortes "ökumenisch"* (Stuttgart, 1954); Y. Congar, 'Ökumenische Bewegung', *LTK* VII (2nd ed. 1963), 1128-1137; W. Beinert, *Um das dritte Kirchenattribut*, 2 Vols (Essen, 1964), esp. II, pp. 532-572; W. Seibel, 'Ökumenische Theologie', *Gott in Welt* II (*Festschrift für K. .Rahner*) , ed. by J. B. Metz, W. Kern *et al*. (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 472-498; P. Wacker, *Theologie als ökumenische Dialog* (Munich, 1965); H. Volk, 'Katholische ökunaenismus', *Gesammelte Schriften* II (Mainz, 1966), pp. 161-178; P. Bläser, 'Ökumenische Theologie', *Was ist Theologie?* ed. by E. Neuhäusler and E. Gössmann (Munich, 1966), pp. 358-415; J. Brosseder, *Ökumenische Theologie* (Munich, 1967).

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providing a presentation of that Church's own teaching in all its breadth and depth. In this connection the theologians [27] of the other Christian Churches must be borne in mind and included in the considerations to the extent that the ultimate self-understanding of the particular Church's own theology allows for this. The *second* task would be the attempt at a thorough presentation of the doctrinal views of the other Churches in respect of their origins, their historical development, and their current positions, and in this deep consideration would have to be given especially to the connection between the individual doctrines, to the roots and sustaining principles and prior assumptions of these, and, in particular cases, to the different concept of truth which lies at the basis of this other theology right from the outset. *Third* the theologians concerned must submit themselves with an unreserved will for truthfulness and unreserved obedience to the revealed will of God, and this implies that they have a duty, and must have the courage, should the need arise, to qualify the particular point of doctrine of the other Church as running counter to the revelation of God in Christ and so without any false irenics, as an error.

That such a theology – whatever name we may give to it – must be concerned with serving the unity of Christians in the one Church of Jesus Christ, that above all in western ecumenical theology the way that must be trodden is above all (if indeed not exclusively) that of exegetical and biblical theology and also the theology of the Fathers which these Churches recognize in common as such -all this seems to be obvious. Nevertheless we must not disguise from ourselves the fact that in agreeing in this way to recognize the formal principles and methods to be used the ecumenical theologies in the individual Churches will appear very different from one another, especially since they are precisely theologies, and should not be official confessional pronouncements considered as part of the general or religious phenomenology of the individual Churches taken as a whole. Today, perhaps, there is in fact no longer any agreement as to the premiss which this involves, that in all the Churches which have been separated from one another there either should be or can be any such thing as a unifying doctrine binding upon each of the individual Churches. We have only to consider the radical differences which in fact exist between the individual Churches, at least in part, in their understanding of what theology can be or should be at all,[6] to realize that ecumenical [28] theology considered as a discussion between the theologies of different Churches constitutes an immensely difficult problem. It could in fact be the case that these theologies, regarded from their ultimate understanding of themselves, are so disparate that they no longer speak with one another, confront one another, or can be measured by one another at all, and, at least in theory, an ecumenical theology would almost be something like a '*contradictio in adiecto*'. And in that case the only insight that could help us to overcome this state of doubt and questioning would be to remember that we are men, that we do recognize one another mutually as Christians, and that for both these reasons we must bend ourselves again and again to the task of speaking with one another, because there is no other way whatever for us to conduct our human lives. We must do this even if we are still far from knowing in what the ultimate prior assumptions and contexts of ideas consist which we

[6] The actual plurality of the Churches themselves is reflected in this different interpretation of the meaning of theology, and in this way this in turn becomes a subject for ecumenical discussion.

On the problem of pluralism in theology on the basis of the numerous philosophical approaches of the parties to the discussion cf. K. Rahner, passim in *Theological Investigations* IX and X (London and New York). What has been said there may analogously be applied here also in our present context.

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hold in common, and even though without this knowledge any discussion seems to be quite inconceivable.[7] It might be said that our *de facto* existence as men and Christians has from the first decided the question for us and told us that there can be discussion between us. In an ecumenical theology, therefore, we must consider the question of *how* this is possible, because *prior* to all conscious insight on our part this possibility does *de facto* already exist as a present reality.

II

When we turn back to what the Second Vatican Council has to say with regard to ecumenical theology in the Decree on Ecumenism we come across the key word 'dialogue' again and again.[8] Certainly it can be said that controversial theology and ecumenical theology, even if both have ultimately speaking a common nature, differ from one another in virtue of the fact that the old controversial theology consisted of a controversy, whereas the current ecumenical theology is intended to be a dialogue and is recognized by all Christians of today as having this purpose.[9] However [29] old the word 'dialogue', and even the element of dialogue in human life may be, still it is, after all, only in very recent times that this word has come to be a key word standing for the manner in which discussion between Christians belonging to separate Churches is meant to be conducted. What this word means is made plain in No.9 of the Decree on Ecumenism, where it is stated that an attitude of 'par cum pari agere' is required of all in ecumenical discussion. Ecumenical theology is intended to be a theology of open dialogue between those who have equal rights. But can theology really want this to be the case above all among Catholic Christians? Can it be this? The attitude of anxiety and mistrust with which non-Catholic Christians often encounter their Catholic partner in ecumenical meetings must not be straightway condemned as unjustified. It is not to be eliminated even when the Catholic Church declares that according to her understanding too the ecumenical movement and work, and thereby (as we may add) ecumenical theology as such (among Catholics) should not be accompanied by the intention of winning over individual converts to the Catholic Church.[10] The real and ultimate ground of this mistrust lies far deeper, and must clearly be recognized if the nature of ecumenical theology as a 'dialogue theology' is rightly to be understood.

If by dialogue we understand nothing else than the imparting of our own respective opinions to one another, as a mere interchange of information, then naturally no problem exists. Even in that case it may still remain obscure whether in such an interchange of information *theological* opinions really are made comprehensible, since the task of understanding them is certainly more difficult than in an interchange of information, e.g. on economic views and enterprises. Surely it is not absurd from the outset to hazard the thesis that in the sphere of faith and theology the opinion of the other party will be

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[7] On this cf. also K. Rahner, 'A Small Fragment on the Collective Finding of Truth', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 82-88.

[8] cf. the Decree on Ecumenism, 'Unitatis Redintegratio', Nos. 4, 9, 11, 13, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, and further the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 'Apostolicam Actuositatem', Nos. 17, 31.

[9] On current ecumenical theology's interpretation of itself cf. G. Thils, *La Théologie oecuménique* (Louvain, 1960). cf. also n. 5.

[10] cf. the Decree on Ecumenism, 'Unitatis Redintegratio', No. 4.

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understood only when it too is accepted as having been fully assimilated as one's own and accepted as one's own faith. For there are certainly truths the meaning of which is really borne in upon us only in the very act of giving our practical assent to them, and in positively acting upon them so that to understand their meaning and to give our practical and living assent to them are acts that cannot be separated one from another.

But if for the moment we abstract from this question, and presuppose, at least provisionally, that we can to some extent abstract from it, then ecumenical theology, understood as an interchange of information with regard to the opinions of the partners to the dialogue, raises no initial difficulty. One supplies information, as far as possible exhaustively, with [30] regard to one's theological ideas. Each party apprehends the meaning of this information as supplied by the other just as in other contexts too we experience and understand the opinion of another without thereby being brought to share it. But manifestly ecumenical theology cannot be confined to this interchange of information however much this may constitute the initial stage in it, and however important it may be for it not to be aimed at gaining individual converts for one's own Church. Theology has to do with truth. It is not intended merely to inform but rather to communicate truth – truth which makes valid claims upon the other party and therefore can and should be communicated by the informant only in such a way that he identifies himself with this claim to truth. One may think as one will about the nature of truth, the nature of theoretical reasoning, the nature of truth in the context of faith, truth as universal and as particular. Evidently theological dialogue too is not intended merely to communicate information to the other party of what one thinks oneself, but rather to speak to him that truth which is intended to lay claims upon him. If we were unwilling to attribute this purpose to ecumenical dialogue, then it would be degraded into a mere sociological phenomenon in which mutual information was supplied with regard to attitudes and opinions on either side because this is necessary in order to live peaceably together, and in this every kind of opinion and attitude would at basis be simply a psychological fact on the same level and of the same importance as all the rest, independently of any question of truth. Even if someone feels compelled to hold the view that he cannot regard ecumenical dialogue as consisting in what has just been described, and even if, in view of the account given of themselves by specific theologies, he might legitimately raise the question whether these can attribute the purpose we have mentioned to ecumenical dialogue, we would still have to make two points in reply to his question. First, the mutual presuppositions of ecumenical dialogue are such that they could only have a social significance. For how could the opinion of another be of interest to me if it were not from the outset claiming to be or to become my truth quite apart from the fact that it is also a social reality which plays its part in determining my sphere of existence. Further, the Catholic Christian at least, so far as his theology is concerned, cannot surrender this claim to truth in ecumenical dialogue according to his understanding of his faith. The Protestant partner to the dialogue, therefore, will take this attitude and this purpose into account and ask himself whether he believes that he is open to conduct a dialogue with a partner of this kind to the discussion.

There is yet another way of throwing light upon the problems which [31] ecumenical dialogue entails. Dialogue presupposes a pluralism of attitudes, convictions and aims in the partners to the discussion. Where there is complete identity of opinion dialogue, at least in the dimension of theoretical reasoning, is superfluous to scientific investigations,

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and therefore to speculative theology too even at the purely informative level. Now in this pluralism there are on the one hand opinions which are *de facto* particular and, moreover, are not intended to be anything more than this. On the other hand, however, there are opinions, the outcome of theoretical reasoning, which, while they certainly cannot be shared by all, are still put forward with the theoretical claim and the practical aim of winning over *all* as their adherents. That opinion which is in principle and of its very nature particular implies at most the theoretical problem of whether such a particularist attitude, the holding of an 'opinion only for myself' is, in specific cases, reasonable in the very nature of opinion, i.e. whether this 'modesty' does not constitute a gradual death of the opinion of all. For properly speaking, as emanating wholly from the personal inclinations of the individuals concerned it is no longer really relevant even to those to whom it is communicated. And in practice the only problem which is recognized in this particularism is that of how to achieve a 'technical' harmonization and mutual co-operation between the parties involved, in order that such basically particularist opinions can be given concrete application at the social level and within the activities of one and the same social group. The real problem of pluralism of opinions only arises at that point at which *de facto* particular convictions have in principle and of their very nature to lay claim to a universal validity. They must do this unless they are willing to surrender their own nature. For example: a society of entomologists and a society of aquarium enthusiasts uphold a particular opinion with regard to the significance of what they are doing. But they do not claim that all must share their opinion. In contrast to this Christianity, a Christian confession (at least if it understands its own significance in the classic sense), and the ideology of a militant dialectical materialism are conscious of being (provided they do not deny their own nature) endowed with gifts and with a vocation which gives them a special claim to truth and a mission which is directed to all. For what they represent is a radically universal conviction, a comprehensive view of the meaning of the cosmos or (if we wish to phrase it so) a faith. To teach that it is in principle impossible for there to be any system of beliefs having such a universal claim, and that these are from the outset always, and in every case false, would itself in turn constitute such a universal opinion with practical consequences for all.

[32] Let us take then as our starting-point the fact that Christianity too, as it exists in the specifically confessional form which it has acquired, and as the outcome of a process of ecclesiastical institutionalization, is indeed *de facto* a particularist phenomenon, yet in terms of its radical understanding of itself and the claim it makes, a universal conviction with a claim to truth directed to all. Now if this is the case, then the problem arises of whether it is still possible at all to conduct an ecumenical dialogue with this as our premiss, even when it is only one of the partners to the dialogue (in other words the Catholic one at least) who conducts the dialogue with such a claim that his convictions have this universal validity.[11] The principle that an ecumenical dialogue must be conducted without force is clear, and is not in question here even though this renunciation of every form of force has not always been so self-evident, as a glance at the history of western Christianity reveals. But this still does not provide any solution to the question of whether a real possibility of dialogue exists between those who hold convictions of which

[11] On this cf. also K. Rahner, 'Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 31-42; *idem*, 'Dialogue in the Church', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York), pp. 103-125.

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at least one (if not both) claims to be absolute, i.e., in our case, demands to be affirmed with an absolute assent of faith such that it involves salvation – something which we must not lose at any cost. The basic reason why the earlier controversial theology was so sharp is that it involved this assertion of the absolute value of one's own convictions. And while we can no longer in the least enter into the mentality which made the earlier controversial theology so hard and bitter, still we must begin by asking ourselves whether this lack of understanding on the part of us of today is not conditioned by a relativism deriving from our liberalism, an attitude in which we are quite incapable of understanding what an absolute assent of faith, acquiring a life-and-death importance for us, can signify for the individual's own personal creed as that which alone brings salvation. But can one whose faith is of this kind really enter into any open dialogue, or with such an attitude can he merely be willing to instruct, to bear witness, and to convince, insofar as he is capable at all of advancing beyond the stage of merely supplying information? This is a serious question. At this point we leave it open because probably we shall be in a better position to answer it when we have considered that which constitutes the ultimate theological basis of ecumenical theology.

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III

The question I have posed is what constitutes the ultimate basis of ecumenical theology. My answer to this question will initially take the form of a brief thesis which I shall then attempt to explain more precisely. The thesis runs as follows: the ultimate basis of ecumenical theo1ogy is that unity, apprehended in hope, which consists in a belief in justifying grace, a be1ief which, even though in its theological formulation and its explication in credal form it is still in process of being arrived at, is nevertheless already in existence as one and the same belief in both of the parties involved in ecumenical theology.

Now what is meant by this thesis in *more precise* terms? First it must be unreservedly conceded that for ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical theology in the form in which it appears today a liberal humanism, with its defence of freedom of opinion and faith within a pluralistic society, has been, and still is, the occasion and the context without which the pursuit of ecumenical theology as it *de facto* exists today is inconceivable. This historical necessity for this liberalism, for the relationship which the separated Christians of today have achieved with one another, does not need to be denied, and must not be glossed over. Certain further observations must be made on this point. This liberalism, however, is hardly the true ground, the ultimate *fons et origo*, of the ability which the separated parties have of conducting a dialogue today. So we must not confuse the essential basis for a given phenomenon with the historical situation in which such an essential basis becomes effective. Now what is the true and effective basis for ecumenical dialogue such that it is constitutive of its essential nature? It is to this question that the thesis formulated above is attempting to supply an answer. When we conduct an ecumenical dialogue, or pursue ecumenical theology with one another despite the fact of our being divided among many Churches, then the ultimate necessary condition which we presuppose for this is that each of us recognizes the others as Christians. But what does this mean in precise and genuinely theological terms? Certainly it does not merely mean that we accept and

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acknowledge the fact that the other partner to the dialogue regards himself as a Christian. Nor does it merely mean that we mutually credit one another with the fact of all having validly been baptized – provided we are thinking of baptism here first and foremost in its empirical reality as an external fact of cult. Nor does it merely mean that in spite of all the differences between us with regard to the creed we can establish as a matter of empirical fact that there is agreement between us on certain of our tenets, in the sense, [34] for instance, that is implied in the basic formula of the World Council of Churches. What it means, rather, is that we are convinced as a matter of hope, if not of knowledge at the explicit and theoretical level, that the partners to the dialogue on either side live in the grace of God, that they are truly justified by the Holy Pneuma of God and are sharers in the divine nature.

Now there have been ages in which this conviction, in which we mutually recognize in hope the real and triumphant presence of God's grace in one another, has not been felt with the force of a self-evident truth. When for instance Augustine upholds the validity of baptism among 'heretics' against Cyprian and the Donatists, and even outside the 'Catholic' sphere, he is certainly not including in this doctrine of his the conviction that this baptism actually communicates to the baptized individual an effective forgiveness of his sins and the sanctifying Spirit of God. Probably, indeed, right down to the age of the Enlightenment, the prevailing opinion on both sides has been that in the case of the heretic (and both parties have mutually regarded each other as such) it is to be presumed that his heresy must be accounted as guilt, and therefore in controversial discussions each side must presume that the other has not lived in God's grace. It may be that it was not until the eighteenth century that this question was the subject of any close thought. Distinctions may have been drawn between the educated and uneducated, and there may have been a tendency to attribute 'bona fides' to the latter more than to the former. It may be that the interpretation of one's opponent from the other confession as depicted above may not always and everywhere have been raised to the level of an explicit thesis. Nevertheless men lived and acted upon the basic feeling that their opponents could not be living in God's grace as justified and sanctified when nevertheless with regard to the faith that is saving, and without which (according to the Epistle to the Hebrews) man cannot be pleasing to God, they deviated in certain vital points from one's own convictions of faith, points which one regarded either as at least belonging absolutely to one's own faith or even (as in the case of the 'sola fide' doctrine) as the heart and centre of that faith.

Today, no doubt, the situation is different. This is a point which I do not really need to substantiate where Protestant Christians are concerned, especially since if I were to do so I should have to raise the question of whether this attribution of a state of justification to my partner in the dialogue who is confessionally separated from me derived from a liberal and relativist interpretation of my own creed, or whether it exists side by side with, and is to be regarded as reconcilable with, the conviction of the [35] absolute truth and universal claims of my own creed. But for all this I believe that the Protestant partner to the dialogue will not only credit the Catholic one in some sense with 'bona fides' and a genuine conviction at the human level, but also accept that the grace of Christ permeates the innermost roots of his being. And conversely the Catholic will do the same. The Second Vatican Council explicitly teaches that the Protestant Christian too is one who has received grace and justification provided he has not in any way sinfully denied God. The Council recognizes just as unequivocally that such an interior state of grace on the

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part of the Evangelical Christian can obviously be present even in those cases in which he decisively rejects specific elements in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, following in this the claim of his own conscience with regard to truth, since according to his belief they are irreconcilable with true Christianity. This conviction may be utterly obvious from the standpoint of a mere tolerant humanism. But in those cases in which the individual concerned is at the same time convinced of the salvific meaning of his own specific creed, a creed that differs decisively from that of another (and this applies at least to the manner in which Roman Catholic believers think of their faith) this conviction is anything but self-evident, and it is only very gradually, and with great efforts, that it has been brought to maturity in this Church's understanding of her own faith, to the point where it has been given clear expression in the Second Vatican Council. Nevertheless this conviction does now exist on the Catholic side as well.

At this stage we do not need to discuss in any direct sense the question of how the significance of the Catholic creed, salvific and necessary to salvation as it is according to the Catholic understanding of faith, can be reconciled with the simultaneous conviction that one who does not share this faith still does have salvation. The question that we have to ask here is simply what this conviction implies on both sides with regard to the possibility of ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical theology, and to this question the thesis formulated above does supply an answer. This dialogue is possible because, despite the differences in our respective creeds in terms of objective formulation and verbal expression (in other words despite the differences of faith which exist between us in this sense) there is, nevertheless, a unity of faith such that we not only seek it but actually mutually concede it as already present and given in one another, because each of us is aware of the other as believing, hoping, and loving in the power of the Spirit of God possessing us, without whom there can be no belief and with whom there can be no unbelief. This statement naturally forces us to a decision as to what true faith really means. In this we must [36] neither overlook nor neglect the importance of the differences between the forms of words in which our respective creeds are expressed. At the same time, however, each side must credit the other with the presence of the divine Spirit of unity, together with the truth of God, enlightenment and faith. Each of us must recognize in the other the interior witness of the Holy Spirit. And if we do this, then a distinction of the kind we are suggesting here becomes inevitable if we are not simply to allow two contradictory positions to exist side by side. That which we Catholics call sanctifying grace, and that which Protestant theology calls justification and sanctification may still have as many different interpretations placed upon it as there are different theologies. Nevertheless it still remains in any case an act of God wrought upon us in his grace which truly alters us, transforming us from sinners to justified men, regardless of how we may interpret this sanctifying event of justification in more precise terms, whatever concepts we may use to express it, and however different the provenance of these concepts may be. Now precisely upon the Protestant understanding of grace, and at the same time on any truly rational Catholic ontology of grace, the reality involved here cannot be conceived of as though it had nothing to do with 'faith', or as though it could coexist with a mere state of unbelief. Thus if each of us credits the other with justifying grace, then we also credit one another with a real and true faith, and one which we may certainly not regard as merely empty in terms of the formative impact which it has upon our lives in the concrete, in other words as mere credulousness. Now if we credit one

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another mutually with true faith in this way, and if at the same time we take due cognizance of the very radical differences between the interpretations of faith put forward by the various Churches to the extent that this faith is objectified in conceptual and verbal terms, then there must be a faith with which we mutually credit one another as true, and yet which is different from this faith that is given objective expression in concepts and words.

This conclusion cannot be evaded merely by saying that even at the level of conceptual and verbal objectification of the content of faith there are, after all, certain fundamental points which all hold in common, which thereby ensure that there shall be one and the same faith common to all despite other secondary points of faith on which these Christians differ. For in the first place it is in fact questionable whether such common principles really are to be found held in common by all Christians. It is questionable whether if there are such, there is sufficient common understanding of what they mean – over and above the mere verbal formulations which are common to all – and whether they have not been so much [37] altered by the further theological statements which have been made and which are opposed to one another that it is no longer possible to speak of any real or effective unity of mind with regard to these more fundamental principles. And finally it may be questioned whether even in those cases in which – as with the Catholics – other points of faith are adhered to with the absolute assent of faith even though they are disputed by other confessions, these do not so intrinsically influence and modify those other points too which seem to be held in common (at least supposing that they are held with this absolute assent of faith) that we can no longer speak of any real fundamentally common mind with regard to the Christian creed. The questionableness of all these points is such that one is certainly forced to conclude that the oneness of mind that is postulated with regard to one and same true faith cannot consist – or at least cannot consist exclusively – in agreeing upon certain fundamental Christian principles (as for instance after the pattern of the basic formula of the World Council of Churches).

The postulate arrived at in this way of one and the same true faith held in common by all (despite the fact that the Christians involved differ from one another in the verbal expressions of their faith in their creed) is not an entity of which man is incapable of forming any idea merely on the grounds that manifestly it must be something that exists beneath and beyond any dogmatic principles which can be formulated in conceptual terms. When we Christians, projecting our ideas beyond the confessional boundaries, credit one another with the presence of the Holy Spirit of grace, then manifestly what we are saying is, after all, that the ultimate and most interior ‘testimonium spiritus’ is present in all, or at least must be presumed to be so present, that all of us are endowed with the ‘illustratio et inspiratio’ of the Spirit (concepts with which tradition throws light upon the movements of grace), with the wordless groanings and utterances of ‘Abba’ of the Spirit within the depths of our hearts, with the anointing of the Spirit spoken of by John which instructs us -all this is present even though this innermost reality of the Spirit and faith is objectified and interpreted differently in terms of words and ideas between the individual confessions. Thus we still accept that in any anthropology of man as spiritual and free which is capable of looking rather deeper into him a difference always prevails (and one which can never adequately be overcome or transcended) between two factors in man’s consciousness of himself: on the one hand an ultimate self-possession of the subject as free, i.e. a presence to himself which is never consciously explicated, a self-

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understanding on man's part which is never fully reflected upon; on the Other man's objectified awareness of himself his subjectivity and his [38] capacity for free decision as objectified to himself.[12] Now if this is true then the postulate we have put forward on theological grounds of a true faith held in common between separated Christians through and beyond that faith which can be objectified in concepts and words does not signify something of which man himself is totally incapable of forming any idea. All of us 'know' in the Spirit of God something more simple, more true, and more real than that which we are capable of knowing and expressing in the dimension of our theological concepts.[13]

At this point we must, of course, pass over the question of why faith in the form in which it is objectified in conceptual terms is not rendered meaningless by a true faith of this kind present in the midst of our lives in the power of the Spirit of God himself, yet pre-conceptual in form.[14] This faith which we hold in common at the heart and centre of our lives through the grace of God is the same true faith in all and incapable of deceiving. And it constitutes the true basis and the ultimate prior condition for ecumenical dialogue and an ecumenical theology. Once we recognize it as the basis and prior condition for such dialogue and theology in this sense then, even when one or both parties to the ecumenical dialogue have given their absolute assent of faith to the particular propositions of faith which they uphold, the ecumenical dialogue can never be the sort of discussion in which one or both sides seeks to communicate purely *ab* [39] *externo* to the other parties to the discussion at any given time some doctrinal point which those other parties have so far simply failed to recognize or which is rejected as an erroneous belief. Ecumenical discussion consists rather in the attempt through dialogue to render intelligible to the other parties the fact that what is being expressed to them in conceptual terms is simply a more correct, a fuller and a more precise expression of something which they have already apprehended as their own faith through the Spirit in the ultimate depths of their lives as already justified, and which they have laid hold of as their own truth.[15]

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[12] On this distinction cf. J. B. Metz, 'Befindlichkeit', *LTK* II (2nd ed. 1958), 102-104.

[13] On the distinction between the reality of faith and faith as consciously reflected upon cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 86-90; *idem*, 'Theology in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 23-41; *idem*, 'What is a Dogmatic Statement ?', *ibid*., pp. 42-66; *idem*, 'Universal Salvific Will of God: General', *Sacramentum Mundi* V (New York/London, 1969) pp. 405-409 *idem*, 'Heresies in the Church Today?', *Theological Investigations* XII.

[14] This question is also to be met with in a different form. It recurs once more in the distinction which is drawn between 'personal' and sacramental devotion, private and liturgical prayer, personal sacrifices and the sacrifice of the Mass, existential and essential morality, sacramental and extra-sacramental justification, charism and institution, the act of faith and dogma, particular and universal revelation, personal and universal saving history, Church and world, and also in a theological context it is once more a particular form of the general problems involved in the relationship between transcendentality and the 'this worldly' categories of being in human life in general. Again it plays a central part with regard to the possibility of ecumenical discussion. On the positive function of the institutional factor cf. amongst others K. Rahner, 'Dialogue in the Church', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 103-121 *idem*, 'Die neue Kirchlichkeit der Theologie', *Gnade alt Freiheit* (Freiburg, 1968), pp. 131-143.

[15] On this cf. also the discussion of anonymous or unacknowledged Christians as a whole. In this connection cf. especially 'Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church', *Theological Investigations* XII. The critical evaluations of my interpretation [cf. H.U.von Balthasar, *Cordula oder der Ernstfall* (Einsiedeln, 1966), pp. 85-97 or (2nd ed. 1967), pp. 84-96; L. Elders, 'Die Taufe der Weltreligionen', *ThGl* 65 (1965) pp. 124-131; H. van Straelen, *The Catholic Encounter with World*

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On this basis an answer can also be given to the question which we have posed but left unanswered so far in section II, the question namely of why an ecumenical dialogue is still possible even without any liberalizing prior assumptions, i.e. even when an absolute assent of faith has been given to a controversial proposition of faith on the part of one or both parties. Even under these conditions ecumenical dialogue can be carried on as open to further decisions and results. For even an absolute assent of faith on the part of one party to an article of belief that is controversial can and must presuppose the difference we have indicated between faith that is absolutely basic on the one hand and faith as objectified in words and concepts on the other. Such an absolute assent of faith, therefore, is perfectly compatible with the recognition that even a true objectification of the faith that is absolute and basic never adequately or fully expresses this, so that it is always open to further and fuller expression. For this reason precisely this growing understanding of ourselves and of our own faith as objectified [40] in concepts (even when these concepts are correct) can be promoted in an open dialogue by our partner in the discussion even though heterodox. Even when an absolute assent of faith has been given, this need not mean that the party to the dialogue must either be able to indoctrinate his partner through the propositions which he firmly upholds without any alteration, or else, if he cannot succeed in this, the dialogue must again and again be broken off without result, or be degraded to the level of a mere mutual interchange of information between the two sides with regard to their respective beliefs. Even one entering into dialogue when he has already given his absolute assent of faith to controversial articles of this kind can in a true sense learn from his partner in the discussion and thus conduct a dialogue that is open and that can yield fresh insights and results.

IV

We may permit ourselves to draw yet another conclusion from what has been said above with regard to ecumenical theology, one which is for the most part overlooked in ecumenical dialogue. We have seen that a necessary prior condition for this dialogue is the distinction that must be drawn between that basic and ultimate faith which is present in the midst of our lives through the Spirit of God on the one hand and that faith of the Church on the other which is expressed in objective concepts. At the same time we must recognize that what is being treated of here is an ecumenical dialogue between Churches whose faith must necessarily be formulated in concepts for sociological reasons. Now if we recognize this then those participating in the ecumenical dialogue must take into account the fact that at least on the Catholic side it is circumscribed by certain official

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Religions (London, 1966): H. Kruse, 'Die "anonymen Christen" exegetisch gesehen', *MThZ* 18 1967), pp. 2-29; E. Biser, 'Ausgegrenzt und eingewiesen', *MThZ* 19 (1968), pp. 1-16, esp. 7 f.]. simply overlook the fact that this 'Christianhood' of man., which is already present as a concomitant of grace, is precisely the condition for any proclamation of truth on the part of the Church, while conversely this grace itself only achieves its full consummation and becomes fully apprehensible as a historical phenomenon when it achieves and sustains an explicitly Christian creed, and a state in which it is embodied in the social life of the Church. Furthermore such an authority as Balthasar himself puts forward the very same doctrine as that which he disputes in my interpretation, cf. *idem*, Cordula (2nd ed. 1967), p. 95; *idem*, Wer ist ein Christ (Einsiedeln, 1966), p. 100; *idem*, 'Spiritus Creator', *Skizzen Theologie* III (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 160 ff., 318 ff.

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definitions the terms of which are laid down by the Church's magisterium.[16] For Catholics these are indeed binding, but nevertheless different in quality from the absolute truths to which an absolute assent of faith has to be given.

The parties to the discussion need to bear in mind that in an official and conscious sense at least on the Catholic side and, it may be, in an unconscious sense, and one that is merely conditioned by the facts of history on all sides, there are certain theological definitions which on the one hand are present and on the other are nothing more than (however [41] reasonable and perhaps necessary they may be in terms of religious sociology) definitions which are to some extent conventional in character. Now if we were to recognize this then, it may be presumed, ecumenical dialogue could often be conducted more freely and with a greater hope of being fruitful. Words such as 'person' and 'nature' in christology, 'original sin' in the theology of sin, 'transubstantiation' in the doctrine of the Eucharist, 'infusion', 'habitus' ,'increase of merit' etc. in the doctrine of justification certainly do point to a reality of faith and of binding conviction. But they also always imply the influence of certain linguistic conventions and language in the forming of definitions within a given confession which are not necessary and could in principle be altered without any surrender of what is really being expressed in such definitions.

If, for instance, someone put forward the proposition (as Emil Brunner has) that there is no such thing as original sin then this need not necessarily imply for a Catholic understanding of faith that something heretical in the true sense is being expressed. Certainly all that would initially be taking place in such a case is that a particular ecclesiastical definition, in some sense binding for Catholics, would be being rejected. For the question would in fact still remain completely open as to whether the rejection of me term 'original sin' really entailed a rejection of the reality signified by and under the term original sin in a Tridentine formulation of a proposition of faith.

Let us pay due heed, therefore, to the difference which has been explained above between the two levels of faith. And let us further consider that the formulations of Catholic dogma on the part of the authorities of the Catholic Church always involve a concealed element of a definition in linguistic terms addressed to that particular community even when there has been no real conscious reflection upon this fact. Finally let us not lose sight of the fact that every theological expression, however acute and profound it may be, is, nevertheless, measured by the reality to which it points, inadequate (which is not the same thing as false) to express this. Now if we recognize all these factors then we must take into account the possibility that in ecumenical dialogue what we are disagreeing about is not the truths and realities signified but simply the words in which they are expressed. We should consider that it is only rarely that the true subject of a dialogue of this kind is the question of whether the parties involved can advance beyond that unity which is already in principle achieved with regard to the actual matter concerned so as to arrive at a common definition. This question, therefore, is not so devoid of hope, because Catholic theology too is aware that concepts of this kind which [42] have been officially laid down in the Catholic Church and the definitions thereby produced are in need of explanation and interpretation, and that obviously this

[16] On this cf. J. Feiner and M. Löhrer, edd., *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 693-696 and in the present volume the chapter entitled 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', pp. 3-23.

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can be achieved only through the use of different words and concepts. This means that even ideas and definitions of this kind which have been produced by the official Church are not thereby exempted (by the fact of having an official status of this kind) from the process of historical development.

V

I believe that those involved in working out a theology in the form of an ecumenical dialogue should all in common have the courage and, more-over, today actually do have the common task of pronouncing a common 'No', under certain circumstances, to real heresies, for probably such heresies are emerging today in all the Christian Churches, albeit with varying degrees of clarity, and are threatening the gospel of Christ.

Certainly in the individual Churches there can be a pluralism of theologies without prejudice to the particular creed held by each.[17] Certainly this pluralism of theologies has also grown up in the Catholic Church – especially in connection with the Second Vatican Council. Certainly as a result of fresh questions, such as the Reformation period alone was not of itself sufficient to bring to the surface, the leading currents in theology today not infrequently cut across the confessional boundaries and the theologies that correspond to these. Certainly, without prejudice to an abiding question of truth, many of the old questions which were matters of controversy between the confessions have ceased to have that weight attached to them which is always subject to historical conditions and particular concrete situations, and have lost their significance in the theology of today. But in the midst of, and in spite of all this the theologians of the different Christian Churches who are conscious of their responsibility to uphold the gospel and the Christian faith whole and untruncated can help and encourage one another in certain circumstances to pronounce an unambiguous 'No', a 'damnamus' (as for instance the Confessing Church in Germany did with regard to the teaching of the German Christians within the Evangelical Church) against heresies which also threaten the stock of basic doctrines of the Christian faith which all hold in common.

Of course these different theologies, as upheld in the individual [43] Churches, all have to begin by helping one another mutually within the framework of an ecumenical theology to distinguish in such new questions and doctrines between that which on the one hand constitutes a justified and perhaps necessary expression of Christian faith, and so genuine progress in the history of dogma or theology, and on the other that which for any genuine Christian and theologian, and for any genuinely Christian Church, must uncompromisingly be accounted as heresy. Certainly such a distinction will require consideration, prudence, restraint, patience, and finally time. Obviously in an ecumenical discussion the theologians of the Christian Churches can be of assistance to one another in this discerning of the spirits, and under certain circumstances too can exhort one another to prudence and tolerance in the face of such new currents in theology. In this connection it is in fact interesting that, for instance, such a theologian as Karl Barth believes that he has discovered in not a few representatives of contemporary Catholic theology in Germany an excessively favourable attitude and leaning towards the school of Bultmann, that in fact even Bultmann himself confirms that there is such an

[17] On this cf. also 'Perspectives for the Future of the Church', *Theological Investigations* XII.

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understanding among these Catholic theologians, and considers that it is greater among them than on the right wing of German Protestant theology. But what I am speaking of here is rather that over and above all this, however necessary and urgent it may be, the theologians of the different Churches should work together in ecumenical collaboration to the point where they can define unambiguous boundaries upheld by all towards attitudes and doctrines which are simply no longer Christian at all, although their practitioners still claim a right to exist within the Churches and are unwilling of their own volition to leave the Churches. So long as the Churches are in a state of pilgrimage in this world they can only pronounce their assent to the gospel and no less to the Deutero-Pauline Epistles and the First Epistle of John if they also have the courage to pronounce their dissent. An ecumenical theology could make it easier for the theologies in the different Churches to achieve that clarity of insight and that courage to arrive at a decision at the appropriate point and in the appropriate manner, and with sufficient practical down-to-earth effectiveness within the Churches, actually to pronounce a 'No' to false interpretations or invalidations of the Christian message. Certainly in doing this they would not be depriving the leaders of the various Churches of their proper task and function. Rather they would be lightening this task and function and giving it a practical effectiveness within the communities. An act of dissent of this kind, made in common by all, even if it entailed a loss of some or of many who would thereupon leave the Churches, [44] could also promote the aims of the ecumenical movement, the unity of the Churches, because in this way the least that would be achieved (this is a point to which we shall be returning at a later stage) would be that the unity between the Churches in the fundamentals of the Christian creed would already be made clearer here and now.

This demand should not be taken as an incitement for ecumenical theology to become a sort of heresy hunt and persecution on the part of the united Christian community. But the Churches must not be degraded to mere umbrella organizations, supplying, by the historical conditions under which they have grown up, a specious appearance of Christianity within which the upholders of absolutely any opinion, however arbitrary, can be gathered. It must not be thought that that principle which has its basis in Christianity, namely of absolute freedom of conscience and tolerance, should actually be pressed so far as to include absolute freedom for any kind of opinion within the Church so long as its upholder does not wish to leave that Church of his own volition. If we were to fall into this error then an ecumenical theology likewise would be degraded into a mere conversation between the upholders of any kind of opinions, and the Churches would only survive as separate entities from one another at the organizational level, no longer at the level of theology and creed. And ecumenical theology would have lost its purpose, because in fact that purpose would, at basis, long since have been achieved. Or, to put it better, it would have vanished. The ecumenical movement would no longer have any content in terms of faith and theology, it would only still continue to survive in the discussions of the official functionaries of the various Churches as to what better arrangements might be made between the Churches in terms of religious organization, or even how they might amalgamate. And the only function which the ecumenical movement could have beyond this would consist in a mutual acclimatization process in which the points of dissimilarity due to psychological and historical conditions, but ultimately speaking theologically irrelevant between the Christians of different confessions, would be smoothed out.

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Now if ecumenical theology and the ecumenical movement is to be something more than this, then the Churches must have, and must maintain, a substantial nucleus of beliefs as the necessary prior condition for this 'something more' regardless of whether this substantial nucleus is interpreted more in terms of the nature of Christianity, its doctrines, its application in human life, its concrete realization, or in some other way. This substantial nucleus of Christian faith, however it is conceived of, is certainly not identical with that which is present in every upright and [45] human individual in the dimension of his conscious thought and sense of social responsibility. Otherwise the opinion might be upheld that the Christian Churches as such have long since absolutely outlived their usefulness and should be transformed as quickly as possible into a humanist and democratic society purely secular and a-religious in character, and only having the function of providing a field of intercommunication between individuals. If, on the other hand, there is a genuine substantial nucleus of Christian faith of the kind we have referred to, then certainly it will, in the end, be the task of an ecumenical theology to support the different theologies and Churches even as separate from one another in upholding this substantial nucleus.

VI

In what follows a confrontation will be attempted between ecumenical theology and the situation in terms of religious sociology[18] in which all Churches rind themselves today.

The question of truth as between the separated Christian creeds is certainly the concern of ecumenical theology as such. We can say this even while not overlooking the fact that the separated theologies are disunited not only on the question of whether the statements made by any given theology are true or false, but also on the question of what truth and error mean at all in this context. This latter point is in fact strikingly illustrated by the very fact that in the last few decades the focus of interest has been transferred (at least in Protestant theology) to the question of hermeneutics. At the same time, however, this does nothing in the last analysis to alter the fact that ecumenical theology consists of a dialogue with regard to the truth or erroneousness of propositions which are expressed in the separate Christian confessions.

But however seriously ecumenical theology may be taking what is certainly its legitimate task in this sense, it is still insufficiently aware of the situation in which it is pursuing its activities in terms of religious sociology. What then was the position of the earlier controversial theology with regard to the situation in the sociology of religion in which it was pursued? It consisted of a discussion, more or less irenic or controversial, [46] between theologians and churchmen of the separated Churches who, so far as their theological convictions were concerned, justifiably felt themselves to be the legitimate spokesmen and representatives of their Churches. Now the reason why they were able to feel themselves to be the representatives and spokesmen of the Church community standing behind them in this way was on the one hand that this Church community, to the

[18] On this situation cf. K. Rahner and N. Greinacher, 'Die Gegenwart der Kirche. Theologische Analyse der Gegenwart als Situation des Selbstovllzugs der Kirche', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/l (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 178-276. Further, N. Greinacher, *Die Kirche in der städtischen Gesellschaft* (Mainz, 1956) esp. pp. 293-369; A. Jansen, *Kirche in der Grossstadt* (Freiburg, 1969).

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extent that it had any theological opinion at all, by and large neither could have, nor did have, sociologically speaking, any other opinion whatsoever than that of these representatives and spokesmen who were authorised as such even as a matter of civic and state appointment, and because, moreover, it was the prerogative of these spokesmen and representatives to an extent which was certainly not inconsiderable, to impart this distinctive confessional creed of theirs to this Church community, and so also *de facto* to inculcate a single homogeneous confessional awareness with a specific stamp of its own in the Church concerned. In this sense the Evangelical Churches too were themselves, right down to the end of the nineteenth century, clerically dominated Churches. And they were this despite their avowed belief in the universal priesthood, despite the sectarian and revivalist movements which arose again and again from within the rank and file, and despite notable differences of opinion between the Evangelical Churches and between their theological representatives themselves. In other words a distinct formal group, separated sociologically and institutionally from the rest, was in respect both of its claims and its effective influence, the channel for the particular Church community concerned in every detail of its life, and, moreover, was in a position really to be this. This group could speak with the other Churches us representative of the people belonging to its Church in discussions either in controversial theology or in the more irenical ecumenical theology. Today, however, this situation manifestly no longer exists, a point which we shall shortly have to develop in somewhat greater detail. Yet it is still tacitly and unreflectingly assumed to exist because in fact even today this ecumenical theology is *de facto* still engaged in almost exclusively by such churchmen and theologians although these have a quite different relationship towards the confessional creed which has been handed down to them. In fact they still act as the representatives of their Churches in ecumenical theology even in those cases in which they adopt an extremely critical attitude towards the creed of their Church, while still acknowledging it and taking it seriously and still remaining constantly under its influence, and so still constantly feeling themselves at variance with the creed of any other Church.

[47] But what is the real situation today in which ecumenical theology is engaged in by these theologians and churchmen? If we want to express it in terms of popular sociology, and without any claims to religious sociology in the specialist sense,[19] then we might perhaps state it somewhat as follows: For historical reasons a series of human groups is living, each under the umbrella of a specific religious organization, as a so-called Church community. Each of these organizations, religiously separated as it is from the rest, has a ‘unifying constitution’ recognized as more or less binding and called its creed. This ‘unifying constitution’ in its specifically distinct character, and its differences from other Christian and religious organizations, is, however, in practice known only to the functionaries and specialist theologians of the organization concerned, while the actual people belonging to that Church remain, to a very large extent, ignorant of it. But if and to the extent that the actual people of that Church recognize and assert that their religious organization is separated from the rest in this way, and feel that it is different from, and must reject the other religious organizations as alien to it, this is in very large measure due to historical, cultural, psychological and institutional factors which, precisely according to the agreed judgement of the functionaries and theologians, are not

[19] For an initial orientation in this field reference may be made to J. Matthes, *Religion und Gesellschaft* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1967); *idem*, *Kirche und Gessellschaft* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1969) (Bibliog).

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such as to justify a division of the Churches at all. An example of this is the external differences in forms of worship, in religious usages, differences of a cultural kind etc. What a Church community of this kind *de facto* derives from its particular Church is to a large extent common to all Christians: belief in God as providing the assurance and goal of the moral order, hope in the forgiveness of sins, acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as the mediator of salvation in which it is recognized (though perhaps only vaguely) that he has this function in some sense, prayer for, and hope in eternal life. If we may permit ourselves a general estimate in terms of religious sociology which is of course to some extent rough and ready, we may say that the different Church communities are not aware, or are hardly aware of the official and institutional reasons for the separation between the Churches, and that the real and *de facto* reasons at the level of the sociology of religions for the separation between the Churches are to a very large extent theologically and institutionally irrelevant. It is in fact only in this way that we can explain, for instance, the fact that in Holland, in very recent times, Eucharistic [48] intercommunion has been taking place in many areas between communities which are institutionally separated, and even between Catholics and Protestants. This is because the Christians involved, though officially separated from one another, experience themselves as not separated at all in the creed as they *de facto* realize it to themselves. Again this is the only possible explanation of the fact that the question is already seriously being canvassed in the communities of Catholic and Protestant student in Germany of whether these communities should not be amalgamated. This situation in terms of the sociology of religions does not, of course, imply that ecumenical theology as understood by churchmen and theologians has been false in its approach, or that the real question of truth with regard to the traditional points of theological controversy have simply disappeared. But nevertheless the question must be raised of what the situation as depicted above implies for ecumenical theology. We can perhaps divide this question into two: (1) What are the implications of this situation in religious sociology as it exists today and as presumably it will become still more acute in the future in its immediate bearing upon ecumenical theology? (2) What does this situation also imply for the question of truth as such?

With regard to the first question we are surely compelled to assert the following principle: In the future the difference between the institutional status of the individual Churches on the one hand (which in fact also defines the attitude they ought to have and the creed which their members ought to uphold) and the *de facto* attitude, the *de facto* content of faith on the part of their members on the other, will become very much wider. This is to be expected among the Protestant Churches or, on a Catholic view, has actually already come about. Because on this view it is actually possible openly to express theological opinions such that they retain nothing or almost nothing of the traditional credal position of the particular confession concerned, and to do this quite openly in the Church without any contradiction on the part of that Church's authorities. But a widening of the difference of which we have been speaking in this way is also to be foreseen as coming in the future concrete life of the Catholic Church too as a phenomenon of religious sociology, even though, measured by this Church's understanding of herself, and in view of the greater exercise of her teaching authority it raises great theological difficulties, and even though the authorities of this Church have probably more means at their disposal than the Protestant Churches of excluding heterodox opinions from the Church, or at least of preventing them from being disseminated among the Church's

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members. In the Catholic Church [49] too there are today, and presumably will be still more in the future, not a few of those to whom the doctrine of the seven sacraments, the infallibility of the pope, the veneration of the saints and of Mary, the doctrine of indulgences etc., are matters which play no part in their real religious practice and, moreover, these are to be found not only among the adherents of the new heresy of indifferentism or among those who are merely baptized and pay the Church's dues and nothing more, but also among those who actually practise Christianity in its basic elements within the Church. There are those who doubt, deny, or simply ignore in practice all these things, without thereby feeling any cause for leaving the Catholic Church; and they remain within the Church (at least so long as these differences are not unequivocally proclaimed in public in the Church) without the official authorities of the Catholic Church excluding such people 'from the official body', even though they do have the practical powers necessary for this ready to hand.

Now if, by reason of the pluralism at the intellectual and political levels which exists today and will exist in the future, by reason of the constant mutual interpenetration of Church and world, this difference remains as a constant factor for the future and is, indeed, increased and made more acute – what then? Several possibilities are conceivable. First it must presumably be expected that a not inconsiderable number of these peripheral groups within the individual Churches will, after all, separate themselves officially and in terms of civic and religious organization from the Churches to which they have traditionally belonged. The manner in which such separations will be effected will of course vary from country to country according to the particular relationship which a given Church bears in a specific country to the civic society and the state. For our present purposes, however, the manner in which such separations will take place have no further interest for us. Such a separation from the Churches at the level of religious organization need not *ipso facto* imply that the separated totally remove themselves from the sphere of spiritual influence of their Churches and of the Churches in general, or that they will become committed enemies of the Churches and of Christianity. They can perhaps very well remain as 'sympathizers' with the Churches, and indeed may in some cases find it easier to maintain a positively favourable attitude to the Churches 'from a distance', and pass in and out of the Churches through the 'open doors'. A situation may arise similar to that which prevails in missionary countries today with highly developed cultures, as for instance in Japan or India. A relatively large group of individuals may perhaps be formed in this way which, without any fixed connection with [50] any specific Church, no longer maintains any very exclusive adherence to a specific Christian confession but takes its stand round the Christian Churches as a whole as a kind of 'Christian orientated' group; and in such a case this group may regard itself from its own standpoint more or less as a unity with differences which, so far as it is concerned are unimportant.

A further course is conceivable for events to take in the future. In the course of being transformed from national Churches to Churches of individual believers the Churches may more easily discover and apply resources of their own: the courage and also the to draw clearer dividing lines between those who really believe in them, acknowledge them, and fully adhere to them in the life of the Churches themselves on the one hand, and on the other those who only still continue to regard themselves as Christians and members of a specific Church in virtue of having belonged to them as a matter of social tradition. If

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the individual Churches were to find within themselves the courage and resolution to draw such distinctions (we have already spoken of the contribution which ecumenical theology could make towards stimulating so bold a course), then surely the difference which we have taken as our starting-point in this consideration would once more be diminished (though admittedly only on condition that one section of those traditionally belonging to an ecclesiastical community would be separated from the Churches concerned).

What we are envisaging for the future, therefore, is a twofold process (active and passive) by which the Churches would be concentrated each upon themselves, a concentration which in fact already seems to be in process of being arrived at even now. For this seems to be the significance of what we see in the swiftly advancing process of secularization in society at the civic level in the so-called Christian countries. Now if this is true we must once more ask the question what thee outcome of this should be for ecumenical theology. If this took place would we once more arrive at a situation in which the distinctive confessional form of the individual Churches would once more be asserted in terms of religious sociology, and not merely in the official theory of the churchmen, with the result that the possibility of the unification of Christianity as realized in the Churches would once more be relegated to an indefinite and remote future, and still more than at present? I believe not. This twofold process of concentration of the Churches (in German it would be possible to express this somewhat ironically as a 'Gesundschrumpfen' or 'contraction for the sake of health') could, if it was carried through successfully and not made the occasion [51] on the part of the individual Church of each becoming ah encapsulated sect closed in upon itself, have a positive significance for ecumenical theology and, on the basis of this, for the unification of the Churches, and this for two reasons. First, as a result of their greater interior unification and the greater homogeneity they thereby achieved in the awareness of their respective faiths such Churches, each in its own right, would be able to commit themselves to a binding assent to the effective findings of an ecumenical theology to a greater extent than at present, because then they would be subjects conducting an ecumenical discussion on behalf of their own real selves, and not merely through individual theologians representing them. It is important to perceive the ecumenical significance of such a process in terms of religious sociology, and ultimately of theology too, of each of the individual Churches of today concentrating upon a clear – and decisive creed. And in order to do this we have in fact only to ask ourselves the simple question of from where, on this showing, the Churches, and above all the non-episcopal ones, derive their official authority, by and large, that authority in virtue of which they can commit themselves with real effectiveness to such an assent to any possible positive findings arising from ecumenical theology. Finally it is, after all, only Churches which in some sense know what beliefs are and should be held and acknowledged within their folds that can conduct on behalf of their members, and with a certain binding force, an ecumenical discussion leading to the unification of the Churches which will not be endlessly prolonged and never achieve such binding force.

What we are envisaging, then, is a concentration, at once theological and democratic, on the part of the individual Churches, a process of radicalization and a serious commitment to a binding creed, as well as the effectiveness in terms of religious sociology of such an attitude upon those members still remaining within the Churches.

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Now this process of concentration will not be focussed upon the traditional doctrines which divide the individual Churches because in the world as it actually exists today those who are *de facto* the members of these Churches, or who will be so in the future, have, after all, too little interest in these, and also because many such controversial doctrines from former times no longer constitute real points of conflict at all, or at least the interpretation of such controversial doctrines from former times within the individual Churches is no: compelling in such a sense that they must perforce constitute in some sense an official ground for separation between them. The process of radicalization, and the serious commitment to a binding creed as developed within these individual Churches will in the future be concentrated [52] upon far more central factors within the 'hierarchy of truths'.[20] Even if, for instance, an individual is a dedicated Catholic, one for whom the whole dogmatic teaching of his Church is felt in its totality to be binding upon his personal faith as an individual, and even when such an individual has the fullest possible interior understanding with regard to the claims which every dogma of this Church has to be truth, and with regard to the value and significance of truth in itself, without any undervaluing of the question of truth as such on existentialist, dogmatic, or utilitarian grounds, still such a one can commit himself unreservedly to the position that not every truth has in itself always, and in every age, in relation to others, the same significance and concrete effective force in the realities of human life. Let us take a small example, in itself unimportant, yet significant as illustrating the fact that even in the Catholic Church of today it can be recognized more clearly than formerly that an individual dogma can vary in the significance it has in particular sets of circumstances in human living. For this we may point to the fact that Pope Paul VI has reiterated what is more or less traditional Catholic teaching on indulgence, yet at the same time has added that every Catholic Christian enjoys the freedom of the children of God as to whether he avails himself of such indulgences or not.[21] In spite of particular examples which might be adduced, and which either seem to point in the opposite direction or really do so in fact, we can, without embarrassment, assert the following: The *de facto* situation as it exists today is such that it is not on the basis of the really classical points of controversy between the Churches that an individual Christian (apart from certain specialist theologians whose theological conscience is precisely differently constituted from that of the rest of men) either enters or leaves a specific Church. At a later stage we shall have to consider further the theological relevance of this fact. But to express it in different terms: With regard to the really effective forces which constitute membership of a Church as distinct from their theological claim to truth, which exists merely 'in itself and in the absolute, the basic truths of Christianity which will really be constitutive of Church membership in the future (within the mass of genuine 'sympathizers') will be first and foremost belief in the living God and in Jesus Christ as Lord and as absolute mediator of salvation, in other words basic truths upon which, in spite of the pluralism in the interpretations of them which will presumably [53] remain, there are no longer any serious differences between the Churches.

Whereas formerly these basic truths were simply presupposed on all sides as given and self-evident, in the future it is precisely *these* which will be the sole body of truth

[20] For an initial orientation in this field reference may be made to J. Matthes, *Religion und Gesellschaft* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1967); *idem*, *Kirche und Gessellschaft* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1969) (Bibliog).
[21] cf. Paul VI, 'Indulgentiarum', *AAS* 59 (1967), pp. 5-24; No. 11, p. 20.

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constituting in all the Churches the power to form a Church. The doctrines which have been matters of controversy hitherto are, in the process of history, being removed from the body of those principles which are socially effective forces in constituting the Church. But this precisely gives rise to a quite new situation for ecumenical theology and the ecumenical movement. For once the questions and ideas which have hitherto been matters of theological controversy have lost their force in this sense as at once constituting the Church and also separating the Churches (even though their claim to truth has not thereby been eliminated) then, surely, it will after all be easier to arrive at the possibility of setting aside these questions for theological, and above all for practical purposes, even though in theory they still continue to be matters of controversy. The very fact that the situation has been altered means that they are rendered less acute, because in the case of no one party to the discussion do they any longer have any real effective force as constituting the Church, although they do of course retain their significance in theory as constituting the Church and as dividing the Churches. We are dealing with a truth such that it no longer enters, or at least does not enter so directly, into our hearts, and is no longer capable of so entering, because the situation for this does not exist, or does not impinge so much, and in view of this it is possible to conduct our discussions quietly, '*sine ira et studio*' and to achieve unity more easily. This is all the more true in view of the fact that in such a fresh situation too the precise interpretation and the practical concretization of a point of controversy of this kind (as for instance that of the primacy of the Pope) will differ to a not inconsiderable extent from the interpretation and concretization formerly attached to it.

There is a further point. The Churches, and above all the Roman Church, for all the necessary unity of creed and the courage to maintain this, are accustoming themselves to a greater pluralism in the theologies and modes of life which take place within them. Thus in the case of us Catholics, for instance, the element of Roman legalism and the scholastic element are no longer the sole form in which the dogmatic nature of this Church has to be presented in the concrete for those outside it, and which make it notably more difficult for him to arrive at the possibility of distinguishing between the nature of this Church as presented [54] dogmatically and the form in which he encounters her in the concrete. In this new situation too it will be easier both for the authorities of the Catholic Church and for Catholic theology itself effectively to 'realize' in spirit what the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council calls the 'hierarchy of the truths of faith', a hierarchy which is both an. objective and abiding entity, and at the same time conditioned by the epoch in which the Church is living at any given time. Once this distinction between the objective significance and the epochal significance even of effectively true and dogmatically binding statements within the Catholic Church is clearly realized, it will presumably be easier to make the meaning and force of Catholic dogmas which are still matters of controversy in interconfessional discussion more understandable and more accessible for non-Catholic Christians. When we think of the process, so largely achieved, of the 'enfranchisement' (*sit venia verbo*) on the Catholic side of the threefold 'sola' of the Reformation during the centuries which have elapsed since Trent, and especially today, we no longer need to regard such ideas and hopes for the future as utopian. With the altered situation of the Churches in terms of religious sociology it may perhaps be easier in the future to achieve agreement on some points of theory as the outcome of this new situation, and from these it may be that practical conse-

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quences too will develop. And this may be the case in the future even though theological progress in ecumenical theology towards a consensus has not produced any alteration in the 'immobility 'of the Churches as they exist in the concrete, and has not advanced beyond irenical words and friendly gestures. In brief: The situation of the Churches in the future in terms of religious sociology can, if it is rightly interpreted and exploited, in itself signify a positive opportunity for ecumenical theology.

At this point, however, we must pass on to a *second* stage in which we consider the real theological relevance of this situation in terms of religious sociology gradually advancing upon us to the question of truth as such. This situation as it *de facto* exists induces in a large section of the membership of the Churches a sort of confessional relativism. A great number of the members of the Churches are ignorant of the classical points of controversy separating the Churches, or regard them, insofar as they do recognize them at all, as so much wrangling between the theologians, and as such quite uninteresting. In itself this is not very surprising. For it is not astonishing to find that the average Christian does not succeed in so reflecting upon and articulating that faith of his of which we have spoken earlier present at the depths of his existence but *ex supposito* still quite unreflected upon, that anything arises from this so far as he is concerned [55] with regard to these classic points of controversy. Thus it is almost impossible for him to take any other course than to regard these as un-important and so to become confessionally speaking a relativist, one who feels able to choose any particular confession he likes, or to change from one to another at will as though they were so many businesses of different proprietors, where one could purchase the same goods or refuse any longer to accept goods which had fallen out of fashion.

Now certainly the theologian or (may I say?) at least the Catholic theologian cannot identify himself with any such *a priori* confessional relativism, even though he may concede that much in his Church does *de facto* lend support to such a relativism in historical terms, even so far as the perspectives and formulations of that dogma are concerned which he recognizes as inseparable from the Church and as binding upon himself. Surely there is no need to treat of this point at any greater length here. At least so far as the Catholic theologian is concerned he is once and for all bound beyond all shadow of doubt to reject any such confessional relativism when lie acknowledges that according to the faith to which he is committed the Church of Christ 'subsists' in the Roman Catholic Church, and this Church considers herself as constituted, among other factors, by the totality other dogmatic teaching taken as beyond dispute.[22]

But when we reject any such confessional relativism as an illegitimate consequence arising from the situation in religious sociology described above, has this no significance whatever for the question of the actual truth of those propositions which are matters of theological controversy, and which divide the Churches, and therefore no significance either for ecumenical theology as such apart from that indirect one which we have already attempted to formulate? This is the question which we must now consider in still greater detail. Obviously this more detailed consideration leads us into an almost incalculable series of problems, such as we cannot survey here. Thus surely the problem of the relationship between truth and institution would have to be discussed, for in fact we with our western individualism are presumably being over-hasty if we take it for granted that me bearer of knowledge and therefore truth is in fact the particular individual

[22] Cf. the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 'Lumen Gentium', No. 8.

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in each case. Obviously any knowledge can exist only in the real physical individual. But this still leaves the problem open as to whether particular truths are not so orientated to human societies, and in fact even expressed in an institutional form, that they can only be expressed in them, and in the individual to the extent that he belongs to this [56] community and, moreover, in an institutional manner. Let us presuppose for the moment – more is not possible here – that we can give a positive answer to this question. In that case the further problem emerges of how the individual in his individual awareness shares in knowledge, the true bearer of which is the community to which he belongs. Manifestly this sharing does not necessarily have to consist in the fact that the individual awareness completely and adequately reproduces the collective awareness of this community. Surely on the principle we are invoking here it is perfectly legitimate to distinguish between individual and collective awareness in general, and therefore a distinction of the same kind is also conceivable in our particular case.[23] This distinction could certainly not legitimately or *de jure* consist in the fact that the individual awareness of faith simply contradicted the collective awareness of faith of the Church. Yet the former does not necessarily have to be the total and adequate repetition of the latter. It could legitimately be narrower in extent, it could be compatible with some subjective choice, it could justifiably be in part only *fides implicita*, and not merely *de facto* remain distinguished in this sense from the total faith of the Church, but actually recognize such a distinction, be aware of it and accept it freely as such, provided only that it remained open in principle to the greater and collective awareness of faith of the Church.

In this connection we should then also have to consider, at least as a question, whether in that case every disparity which exists between the individual and the collective awarenesses of faith really is of the same kind, and therefore illegitimate at least in principle. The scholasticism of former times already drew a distinction between a ‘judicium’ properly so called, i.e. a proposition taken over and adhered to by an act of radical assent and decision on the one hand, and an ‘opinio’, i.e. a mere opinion on the other, this latter being conceived of in an experimental sense, with an awareness of its provisional character and vulnerability, and with a certain readiness to abandon it should the need arise. Now if we were to apply a distinction of this kind in the present context, the legitimate difference which we have described above between the individual and collective awarenesses of faith might perhaps be rendered still more precise. Perhaps we would only be transgressing the limits of a justifiable distinction and reaching the stage of an individual state of error and heresy if at that point at which some personal conviction which we held in our individual awareness of faith, and which ran counter to the collective [57] awareness of faith, was put forward as "judicium” and not merely as "opinio".

On the basis of these and similar considerations, which we have only been able to indicate here, the situation in terms of the sociology of religion which we have depicted at an earlier stage could be subjected to a theological interpretation in terms of which it would no longer appear as a mere state of affairs, but could be justified in positive terms at least in part. On this basis it would perhaps be possible to imagine, at least in many instances, that an ecumenical dialogue and an ecumenical theology might in all patience admit of many differences of doctrine between the various parties. In such a case a

[23] cf. ‘Heresies in the Church Today?’ *Theological Investigations*, XII.

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dialogue and theology of the kind we are thinking of would not have to be excluded totally by theoretical theology to a point where it was no longer possible to arrive at even a form of words expressing agreement. Nor, on the other hand, would the differences of doctrine involved have to be regarded as still making it necessary for the Churches to remain separate. After all in pastoral practice at the individual level these presuppositions are acted upon, albeit quite unreflectingly. In other words the pastor concerned, when faced with 'difficulties of faith' on the part of an individual, rightly refrains from trying to overcome these in any direct or total manner, and merely says to him: 'For the time being just quietly leave the question open and do not close yourself rigidly to the Church's explicitations of faith. Rather live without straining in the hope that your individual experience of faith and that of the Church will be able to grow towards one another. In this sense you can in all honesty retain your own subjective position and still be a member of the Church.' One cannot, it is true, transfer an approach of this kind at the individual level, designed indirectly to meet the difficulties of faith which may be felt by an individual in relation to his Church, to the relationship between the Churches themselves. But conversely it still does not seem certain that many differences of doctrine between the Churches in ecumenical theology might not be overcome in an analogous manner at least for the time being.

The situation in religious sociology which we have taken as our starting-point surely entails, in its bearing upon the question of truth, not merely the problem of the relationship between truth and membership of an institutional community, but also the problem of the relationship between the objective status and the concrete existential application of theological propositions which are true, but at the same time always importing salvation. Propositions of faith are always and in all cases propositions of salvation too. It is perfectly true that we can never neglect [58] the 'objective' truth in our quest for salvation because man precisely as spiritual asks himself, and must ask himself, in a 'selfless' manner what the nature of reality is 'in itself. But while recognizing this to the full, it still remains equally true that the truth which is pointed to in theological propositions cannot really be apprehended unless it is understood as salvation. There is, therefore, both a difference and a radical interpenetration of two elements here, the element of 'objective' truth and subjective salvific significance in theological propositions. But while recognizing this we must also say that these propositions have a subjective significance which has nothing to do with any subjectivism. All theological propositions remain in their truth (as recognized) orientated towards concrete individuals who as individuals and as belonging to particular epochs and particular human groups are situated in history.

The situation in religious sociology of which we have been speaking should be thought out anew in theological terms from this basic stand-point. The question should be formulated in the concrete and faced up to as to what significance is to be found for ecumenical theology and the dialogue that goes with this (and that too precisely with regard to the question of truth) in the fact that theological propositions, both as compared with one another and also in the developing process of history, do not always have the same bearing, whether remote or proximate, to the subject in his subjectivity and so to his salvation. This question has, after all, in a genuine sense been envisaged in the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council when an explicit exhortation is included in that document to pay heed in ecumenical dialogue to the 'hierarchy' of truths, and to their

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different bearings upon the fundamentals of faith. After all such an exhortation only has any real meaning if, in striving for the unification of the separated Churches on questions of faith, the purely formal equality of status in the definitions of dogma by the Catholic Church, for instance, and the formal equality of authority of the Catholic Church which is prior to all these dogmas is not taken to mean that any possibility of distinguishing between them is ruled out from the outset in the manner in which agreement upon them is arrived at. Now if this is the case then even on a Catholic interpretation of faith and of the Church the question should perhaps be asked whether from the Catholic point of view particular Churches, hitherto separated, should not be allowed to retain their existing forms while achieving union, since, despite the fact that they do not accept all propositions defined by Rome, provided only that they do not positively deny these as irreconcilable with the substantial nucleus of Christian teaching held [59] in common by all. I believe (to give a still more precise example) that even a Roman theologian can concede the following position: a member of his Church certainly cannot decisively contradict a papal definition without thereby ceasing to be a Catholic. But still this does not mean that he is bound to give any positive agreement to the material content of the definition involved. Rather this content can be left to his fides 'implicita'. Now if this is correct, what are the consequences of it for an ecumenical discussion? Surely that is a question which has not yet received sufficient detailed consideration in Catholic ecumenical theology. Yet even abstracting from the subject of ecumenical dialogue it is a question with which the Catholic really finds himself confronted the moment he considers the situation in terms of religious sociology for his own Church as it is in itself. For after all in this Church there already is a very notable difference, which is at least in part legitimate, between that which belongs to the collective awareness of faith of this Church as such and is explicitly stated to do so in the definitions other teaching authority, and that which *de facto* is explicitly believed by the individuals belonging to this Church. If we were not content merely to accept this situation as already *de facto* existing, and if instead of this we really thought out its theological relevance, surely this would have the effect of opening up many insights and possibilities for an ecumenical theology which, at least so far as we Catholics are concerned, have hardly been considered at all as yet, yet which could open up more fruitful prospects for ecumenical theology.

VII

Perhaps I may be so bold as to put forward the following proposition: Ecumenical theology is for the most part the theology of the future, which has to be worked out by all the Churches, each from its own starting-point as previously determined by its past history.

When I speak of 'the theology of the future' what I mean by this in the present context is not a theology of the futurology of mankind, the element of the 'apocalyptic' which is hoped for in the Christian faith and the question of how this should be realized, or the element of political involvement etc. What I mean by the theology of the future is something far more simple: that theology which is necessary as a prior condition for any proclamation of the gospel in order that the gospel may appear credible in a future

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conditioned by science, technology, cybernetics, the [60] social unification of mankind on a global scale, a future which has already begun.

When one has participated for many years in ecumenical discussions between specialist theologians belonging to the various separated Churches it is not very easy to achieve a mood of hopefulness with regard to the outcome of such ecumenical theology. Whereas ecumenical discussion between everyday Christians all too easily goes astray and leads to a confessional relativism, and the doctrines which divide the confessions are all too cheaply and too hastily by-passed, ecumenical discussions between specialist theologians on the other hand are for the most part still concerned with the traditional and classic doctrines which divide the Churches as these have come down to us from the past. The result is that these discussions do not advance any further in the problems involved even when the theological premises conditioning the formulation of these divisive doctrines today are those supplied by modern exegesis, the historical sciences, and the differences in modes of expression at the philosophical and conceptual level of today, differences which have become almost too complex for the human mind to cope with them. Certainly in the last few decades we have, to a greater extent than formerly, been able to speak with one another. The theologians of the separated Churches have achieved a new interest in one another's views. A greater exchange of subjects, viewpoints, methods etc. has been achieved and still is being achieved. But if we ask what results have been achieved from this ecumenical dialogue with regard to the unification of the Churches we are forced to reply with sober realism: these results are very slight. The reason for this is certainly not that we have not come much closer to agreement with regard to the traditionally controversial doctrines. The main reason for the paucity of results is perhaps to be sought in the following fact: on the one hand the scholastic theology of the Roma: Church is still as a whole very far from having arrived at a position in which it can make the dogmas of this Church sufficiently clearly comprehensible to the average Protestant Christian. On the other hand, within the Protestant Churches such differences exist with regard to the most fundamental interpretation of Christianity, differences which the leaders of those Churches cannot overcome or which, perhaps they are simply willing to accept (because it may perhaps be that to attempt to overcome them would itself be regarded as running counter to the principle [61] Protestant freedom of faith) that for this very reason any collective union between these Churches as they now exist and the Roman Church is impossible. For from the standpoint of her own faith the Roman Church is forced to reject many of these interpretations of Christianity as heretical, even though they are tolerated in the Protestant Churches and in fact, to a certain extent, recognized as legitimate.

In this situation, setting aside that hope against all hope which is enjoined upon the Christian, there is only *one* real chance. Only if the theologians of the separated Churches devote themselves intensively to the of shaping the theology of the future, does any hope or prospect exist of these theologies arriving in the future at one and the same meeting-point. This is not to say that the direct and immediate discussion of questions of controversial theology should be broken off. This is necessary, and in fact does achieve certain partial results in the 'public opinion' of the theologians, even though it has achieved as good as nothing to alter the immobility of the Church leaders beyond producing irenical words and friendly gestures. But in the last analysis it seems tome that the greatest chance for ecumenical theology will consist in working for the Christian theology of the future, when the adherent of all theologies and Churches, each in his own

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way, have learned to bear witness in a credible and comprehensible manner to the gospel of Jesus Christ as addressed to the man of that future age which has already commenced, no longer demanding of him as a condition for being a believer that he shall grapple with unnecessary difficulties in addition to that attitude of metanoia involving the whole man which he must embrace; and when furthermore the adherents of these theologies of the future avoid betraying the true gospel by accommodating it to the fashions of the moment then, as I hope, these theologies of the future as upheld in the separated Churches will increasingly approximate to one another and draw closer to one another than the traditional theologies which are immediately conditioned controversial questions of the past. Thus I like to feel that the most important work for ecumenical theology consists not in the least in a theology which is to be developed as an explicit dialogue side by side with the rest of the theologies of the separated Churches, but rather one which is pursued in them as a whole, and in all the disciplines pertaining to them. For in the last analysis and taken as a whole this theology has, after all, no other task than to think out to the flail the question of how the gospel can be preached in away that arouses and demands the response of faith – and that too not merely for a traditionally minded remnant of mankind who, on historical ground; have still remained believers, [62] but for those men who have to become Christians in the future and from their own special situation in the future. From this point of view ecumenical theology absolutely coincides with theology as such. If therefore ecumenical theology is understood in this sense as the theology of the future, and if it actually becomes the theology of the future because wherever it is practised it has this one and the same task, and because it is pursued in the closest possible collaboration between the theologians of all the confessions, then it will of itself become ecumenical theology.

In conclusion a few further considerations may be put forward with regard to the limits which must be recognized in determining the meaning and the possibility of ecumenical theology. In this we shall take as our starting-point the recognition of the fact that that which constitutes concrete history and that which constitutes a concrete decision both at the individual level and also at the level of social groups can never be brought about solely by rational speculation as such, and that the nature of history as concrete and the attitudes freely adopted within it cannot be comprehended in any adequate sense either by any process of subsequent reflection. Certainly it is true that an element of reflection and speculation always belongs to concrete history as this is imposed upon us by the past. The explicitation of objectively lively real motives and the assigning of theoretical reasons constitute in themselves an intrinsic element in this history. But the history itself is always something more than that which is brought to light in its scientific awareness of itself. This is not merely because the whole of reality at the material and biological level belongs, in all its dimensions to history also, or because in this there is something more than man is conscious of in it, so that the computer which sought to record and store the whole of this reality as so much data of human knowledge would have to be richer in content than the structure of the material world in itself. It is also because that element of self-command which is intrinsic to the act of personal freedom (setting aside the intrinsic prior orientation of this) is, of its very nature and as such, incapable of objectifying in any adequate sense its own intrinsic significance. Human knowledge, therefore, considered as the science of nature and of the human spirit, is in principle always that which is incomplete, that which can never adequately objectify the intrinsic self-possession of

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reality. For this reason historical decisions are never merely the outcome of scientific speculation; which in fact is not only incapable of stating unambiguously and in an ultimately concrete formula what will be, or should be the case, but is even incapable of stating what unequivocally and really is the case. This applies to the context with which we are concerned also. [63] The Church, the separated Churches, and the unity which ought to exist' between them can never adequately be comprehended in the science of theology by a process of human speculation. This science is not the mistress of history. She cannot even legitimately claim any such dominion within the history of the Churches themselves. On the contrary in this history of the Church and of the Churches she is simply one element among many, one which remains dependent upon the whole of this history which can never adequately be analysed by her, for only he who stands outside history altogether can be said not to be subject to it. Now certainly the science of theology and ecumenical theology in particular cannot be said to stand outside history in this way. However important and necessary this may be in the life of the Church, it can never produce any such theoretical project of an ideal unity and unification of the Churches of this kind such that the real unity and unification would be nothing more than the mere transposition of these theories into reality. It is here that we come to the ultimate limits of ecumenical theology. It always derives from those concrete historical conditions belonging to the individual Churches which can never adequately be analysed or reflected upon, and it remains confined within these limits as imposed by its own origins, so much wider in scope than it is itself. It still remains restricted in this way even in those cases in which, and even at that stage at which, a theologian might bring about in his theology some kind of revolutionary break: with his own past and contradiction of it. This theology takes as the starting-point for its speculations an existing situation in the intellectual life of the Churches and their theologies as these extent here and now, a situation which always contains something more than that which can be reflexively apprehended and reflexively criticized by it. This theology puts forward ideas for the future with regard to the relationships of the Churches to one another which, so long and to the extent that it is only the exponents of theoretical theology who pursue them and make themselves responsible for them, can never remove that difference which prevails between the real and the conceivable, nor yet the difference between the conceivable and the reality that lies in the future. Ecumenical theology as a science, therefore, is ultimately addressed, incapable as it is of ever achieving a total analysis of its own subject, to the element of the incalculable in history, which is also the sphere in which the Spirit of God moves and exercises his freedom, a freedom which cannot be subjected to man's control. Ecumenical theology at the theoretical level, therefore, while never pronouncing its own nature to be meaningless or superfluous, is constantly reaching out anew beyond itself [64] into that wider sphere which is constituted by the concrete history of the Church. To the extent that the Church has humanity as its subject at all, it will in fact never properly speaking be represented by the theologians, the 'doctores', but rather by the prophets and bishops in the Church. And although the unity between these is likewise something that can never be calculated, still they do together constitute first and last the upholders of the history and the decisions of the Church. This is, of course, not to deny that in the concrete instance a 'doctor' of theology in a certain sense in a personal union of roles, can also be a prophet or bishop in the Church.

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What we have stated in abstract terms with regard to the limits of ecumenical theology will also constantly be confirmed by the experience of our work in ecumenism. In fact it is a strange phenomenon: all speak of unity, declare their will to achieve unity between the Churches and their conviction that it is a duty to work for this unity. Nor have we any right, at least in principle, to doubt the honesty of this attitude and this will to work for the unification of the Churches. And yet in historical fact nothing, or almost nothing, actually takes place. For the umbrella organization of the World Council of Churches is not itself a Church and is not intended to be such, and all friendly contacts and discussions between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church have still not yet achieved any effective unification. This in itself would in fact be understandable, but more than this they have not even discernibly drawn any closer to one another. In spite of all the ecumenical good will, the real frontiers are still very rigidly and immovably maintained. And yet given such good will and the ecumenical courage to call our own convictions in question, it might properly have been expected that however the Churches themselves might maintain themselves in their traditional positions, still at least among those engaged in ecumenical work in theology, and not merely among other Christians, some real and not inconsiderable degree of interchange would necessarily take place to and fro across the confessional boundaries. Yet in fact the cases of such 'individual conversions' between the individual Churches among the practitioners of ecumenical theology are so rare as to be almost non-existent. And surely this phenomenon cannot wholly be explained by the fact that it cannot be the task of ecumenical theology as such to achieve individual conversions from one confession to another, or that many of these theologians hold from the outset that the time for individual conversions of this kind between the Churches is past because of the real and serious hope of a collective unification of the Churches, or because [65] each theologian can and must work best for this collective unification by remaining within the Church in which he has grown up. For firstly this opinion too could and should in fact also be subjected to the judgement of an ecumenical theology as practised by the individual confessions, and examined as to its validity. And furthermore it would have to be considered that any ecumenical theology is itself confronted with two alternatives: either it takes tacitly and ultimately as its starting-point the position that objectively speaking all the individual Confessions are equally justified as they stand before the judgement-seat of the gospel (in which case it itself stands revealed as unnecessary or at least it reduces its aims once more to something that is entirely secondary) or else – the second alternative – it still remains a recognized truth that in the very last analysis the real unity of the Churches, which is after all the goal of this theology, cannot be brought about except through individual conversions take place. And in this, so far as the purely abstract nature of ecumenical theology is concerned, it makes no difference in which direction they do take place, and these individual conversions must be such as to bring what is validly and abidingly Christian in one confession into the other.

Now if we abstract from the higher providence of God at work in the history of his Church we must surely recognize that ultimately speaking we cannot explain the fact that such conversions do not take place merely by the fact of the weight of the past and the *de facto* present situation of the individual Churches, factors which have not been, and cannot be consciously analyzed or reflected upon. We cannot simply point to the fact that the individual ecumenical theologians have in fact been born in these Churches and have

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experienced the living power and grace of Christianity within them. At this point the limits of ecumenical theology at the theoretical level become palpably clear. This witness may appear alarming. But without either underestimating or denying the alarming element in this, it can still once more serve to console us too. For if the 'doctrinal structures' set up in the individual confessions were nothing more than so many elaborations of theological reasoning at the purely speculative level, they would certainly be just as unstable, just as much in [66] a constant state of flux in the mode in which they have been realized in history, just as subject to change under one another's influence, as the systems of the philosophers. The fact that this is not the case is only intelligible, and can only be explained on the basis that despite the contradictions between them they all live in some degree from that original and true faith brought about by the Spirit of grace in the heart and centre of their lives, and at the same time also that all of them contribute to this original state of being in the truth as that in which God communicates himself in his justifying grace in all the confessions. This positively salvific function of the original faith common to Christians and already present from God and for God can also be recognized as present in the various confessions even by one who rejects any kind of confessional relativism and is convinced of the fact that the real, legitimate, historical and social objectification of the Church of Christ is present (in a manner not to be defined any more precisely here and now) in his Church in contrast to other confessions and Christian Churches. It is true that the Roman Catholic Church is the one who, as a result of her own understanding of herself, finds it most difficult to ascribe any such positive significance in terms of salvation and faith to the other Christian confessions. Nevertheless she has struggled through to a position where she can clearly achieve such a recognition in the Second Vatican Council. And if this is the case, then surely the other Christian Confessions must find it still more easy, again without any danger of falling into a confessional relativism, to arrive at such a judgement and such a recognition, which is an important presupposition for ecumenical discussion as such. Even when, for the sake of conscience and for the sake of the Gospel, they do not acknowledge the 'popish Church' as such, and cannot recognize it, from this point of view, as a legitimate objectification of the nature of Christianity and of the Church of Christ, still today they will no longer find it necessary to view the Roman Church as the synagogue of the Antichrist in which man cannot find his salvation, and from which he cannot receive that which is most true and most ultimate, namely the absolute fundamentals of the Christian faith of which we have been speaking, as present in the heart and centre of his human life.

Thus our consideration of ecumenical theology returns for its answer to the question of what truly and ultimately constitutes its prior theological assumption. This is that faith which transcends all theological speculation, all objectification at the theoretical and social level, in virtue of which justifying grace is already present in all Christians of good will. On this basis ecumenical theology can and must say: We must arrive at the unity [67] of faith in the dimension of conscious thought and social living too, because we already possess this unity at the level of the justifying grace of God. The unity of faith already present at this level, points both to the possibility and also to the necessity of ecumenical theology. For obviously we cannot say: Because we already possess the unity of faith, being basically constituted in grace as Christians, we no longer need the unity of faith at the level of theological objectification and social living. Rather we must say: Because we have the former unity we must also strive for this latter one, which is the

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incarnational consummation of that more fundamental unity. On this basis the Catholic will think of the Lutheran as already being, at the heart and centre of his life, an anonymous Catholic, while the Lutheran will regard the Catholic as being at the heart and centre of his life an anonymous Lutheran. Which of us two is right is a point on which we are not at one, and this is the point which ecumenical theology has to consider in any genuine dialogue between Christians. But the fact that we can think of ourselves in this way, that what we are seeking is not to attain to unity from a position of absolute and total division, but rather to achieve it from a unity already existing in grace and in the truth of God as already apprehended by us, means that we can and must strive for that unity of truth in the one Church which constitutes the value and the hope of ecumenical theology.

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[68]

3

REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY IN THEOLOGY

I

The task I have been given of providing some exposition of my theological methods at first threw me into considerable confusion.[1] My initial reaction to this request was to ask, 'Have I, in fact, any theological method which is in some sense peculiar to *my* theology, or is my theological method simply that which any Catholic theologian conditioned by tradition applies, and that too without any further or more far-reaching reflection upon it? Certainly it might be said that I too have put forward some views in writing with regard to theological method and with regard to theological hermeneutics. But in comparison with the multiplicity of theological topics which I have considered and written about over the last thirty years, any reflections I have put forward with regard to theological method in general, and still more with regard to my own personal methods, represent only a very small and modest part of this work. Perhaps I can add to this the further point that in the first years of my appointment as professor of dogmatics I did explicitly concern myself to some extent with the history of dogma, i.e. my written works were chiefly concerned with penitential theology as found in the Fathers, and besides this I did write an outline (unprinted as yet) of the history of the theology of penance. But it is now about fifteen years since I was [69] either able or willing to concern myself any further in a strictly scientific manner with the history of dogma and theology (unless we include in this a sketch, likewise still unprinted, of the history of the dogma and theology of the doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven – in other words of the dogma defined by Pius XII in 1950). My constant and overriding preoccupation, especially in the last twenty years, has been with systematic theology. Yet this has been characterized by the fact that I have had to treat almost exclusively of *individual* schemes in an unsystematic manner and as dictated by the needs of the moment. Actually this state of affairs is reflected in the ten volumes of my *Theological Investigations*, in which my particular studies have been collected. The only book which I have published with a systematic overall plan is that entitled *Hörer des Wortes*, and consists of a small outline of a philosophy of religion written more than thirty years ago. The same lack of systematic planning in my theological work is likewise reflected in my work of editing the theological lexicons, *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche* and *Sacramentum Mundi*, and likewise in the work of editing the *Quaestiones Disputatae*. Such individual questions as I have treated of in the volumes in this series of which I personally have been the author do not alter in any essential respect the picture of my theological work as outlined above. I have also striven to achieve a development and deepening of Pastoral Theology and of Practical Theology within Catholic theology in general. But these surely must be left out of the present consideration from the outset. All this may perhaps serve to explain the fact that it has not been possible to allow questions of methodology to play any major part in my theological interests, at least in

[1] This study was originally prepared for a theological symposium which was held in Montreal in the summer of 1969. On what follows cf. also in general the following articles of the author's: 'The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', Theological Investigations IV (London and Baltimore, 5966), pp. 36-73; 'Theological Principles Governing the Hermeneutics of Eschatological Statements', ibid., pp. 323-346; 'Theology and Anthropology' ibid. IX (London and New York), pp. 3-101 (with bibliog.); 'Dogmatik', LTK III (2nd ed. 1959), 446-454; 'Formale und fundamentale Theologie', ibid. IV (2nd ed. 1960), 205-206; 'Dogmatics', Sacramentum Mundi (London and New York); 'Theology', ibid.

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any attempt to define those interests as a whole, or measuring them by what has been achieved and worked out on the Protestant side in theological hermeneutics. On this basis it appears reasonable and justifiable to adopt an approach in these three lectures in which I do not so much reflect upon my own theological methods, which I have either put into practice or already reflected upon elsewhere, but simply to attempt to put forward a few observations with regard to theological method such as seem to me to be demanded by the direction which Catholic theology is taking today quite independently of the question of how far I myself have sufficiently mastered this method or consciously reflected upon it up to now. In view of the brevity of these three small lectures it is necessary and justifiable that these reflections on theological methods as practised today should not attach any particular value to a strictly systematic approach, but should seize upon one point or another from a far wider range of subject-matter which might have [70] been investigated and to allow myself a certain arbitrariness in doing this.

The first particular area of the general subject-matter to which some thought must be devoted here might be entitled *The Situation Which Provides Current Theology with its Starting-Point*. In this first lecture we shall properly speaking have only two points to make about this:

1. In contrast to earlier ages this situation has, for the individual theologian, a special and peculiar element which renders it less capable of analysis and calculation. This point will be clarified to some extent in what follows.

2. This situation is, however improbable it may at first appear, precisely determined by the ecclesiastical context in which the theology of today must, more than ever before, be practised.

The situation in which a systematic theologian has to pursue his theological investigations today is in certain respects markedly different from earlier ages which, so far as Catholic theology is concerned, extends perhaps as far back as the first decades of the twentieth century. This new situation, then, is characterized by the fact that it has become in the highest degree incapable of analysis and, so far as the individual is concerned, incapable of being grasped and apprehended as a whole, Such was the situation in earlier times. I can still remember those who taught me theology then, and so can still perceive how they felt about themselves and their theology, and how they understood their situation. In this connection it is no idle question to ask whether their personal understanding of their role as theologians was ‘objectively speaking’ altogether justified, or whether, on the other hand, it failed wholly to correspond to the real factors with which they were confronted and which they did altogether succeed in realizing. These theologians of the generation before our own went about their work in a theological territory which was already defined for them, one with which they were familiar. They spoke a common language. They had almost a fixed repertoire of ‘quaestiones disputatae’, and if they disagreed about these they did so in a manner such that each of them knew why and in what respect they did disagree, and that in these respects they actually could disagree without the teaching authority of the Church being invoked against them. At the same time they were likewise aware of those areas in which they were and had to be in agreement, namely on a number of particular theses traditionally defined, and which could be expressed in precise theological terms. They developed their scholastic theology along lines which were already determined by tradition It was a sort of ‘Denzinger theology’, and they were [71] convinced that they had at their disposal in the practice of this a sufficiency of clear, exegetically unassailable ‘dicta probantia’, and at the same time a sufficiency of assured knowledge from the history of dogma and theology to confirm their own propositions as the outcome of a permanently valid tradition. Certainly they were more or less adequately aware of modern and scholastic philosophy since the time of Descartes down to the present day, and also of Protestant theology from the Reformation

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down to the present, although for the most part their knowledge of this was over-simplified and they availed themselves of it only to the extent that it helped them to justify their own personal standpoint in terms of scholastic theology and apologetics. But nevertheless both these areas of thought were, after all, simply that which was alien, that which had to be contested. In no sense did they constitute that which, in the very doubts and questionings which it raised, in its questionability (in the original sense of the term), was something which was itself present and intrinsic to their own proper 'system' itself as the seeds of a greater future that involved both threats and promises. One could put it in this way: as little as thirty years ago the state of Catholic theology was that of a system closed in upon itself in such a way that any further developments that took place within it took place according to laws which were both already given within it and also already known to the upholders of the system, namely the theologians. In the light of this we can also understand that it was taken for granted that any further developments in dogma and theology would constitute so many further logical explicitations and articulations of propositions already given. So much was this the case that it was only really possible to conceive of these further explicitations as taking place on the periphery of the system of ideas, as for instance in the sphere of Mariology. It was hardly possible to imagine that the substantial nucleus of the faith itself (which was, of course thought of as the object of devout mediation) could once more be thrown afresh into the area of theological questioning. Certainly there was an awareness that this central nucleus was also contested, but it was so contested precisely by enemies from without. And against them the only duty the Catholic theologians had was to defend this central nucleus of the faith.

Today all this is quite different. And if we are to speak of any theological method which is to conform to the current situation, then it is worthwhile to reflect upon this *new* situation. The matter might be expressed somewhat as follows: Unless we undertake some systematic arrangement of the material involved in this situation by enumerating the elements which characterize it, then there can no longer be any common philosophical [72] or theological language which can serve as a straightforward basis for theological work and a theological dialogue. Obviously so far as Catholic theology is concerned there are certain definitions by the teaching authority of the Church which are binding, and to which every theology must continue to adhere. But today precisely these doctrinal formulations of the official Church seem to a large extent to be no longer simply the sort of statements which are already formulated in a truly theological language. Rather they give the impression of being statements which, for all their binding force, need to be interpreted, translated, transposed into a different theological language, in order to be assimilable at all in any effective sense in their application to the world of ideas characteristic of the present day. In any case the theological language used within the framework of Catholic theology is no longer one and the same. Considered as a philosophical instrument of theological thought, and as one and the same entity understood by all in the same sense and ready to hand to each, to be used in the same sense, neo-scholasticism has ceased to exist. It has undergone so many transformations and new interpretations under the influence of the most varied systems of modern philosophy that it itself has come to be dissolved and lost in the whole complexity of philosophies which have grown up, for these no longer constitute a unity in virtue of the very fact that they are all still aware of the heritage which has come down to them from the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages. Now this situation of philosophical pluralism is not, as philosophical, transformed into a unity in virtue of the fact that the practitioners of these various philosophies all adhere to a single common credo in a single Church. For the articles of the creeds as such are not, in any true sense, philosophical. And the ultimate question still constantly remains open as to whether they themselves are interpreted in the individual philosophies in such a way that the unity of faith they express can still assure a

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sufficient unity of philosophical thought. This is not, of course, to maintain that these different philosophies (considered as instruments of different theologies) cannot stand in any relationship to one another in terms of dialogue, or that simply of their very natures they must, once they are clearly apprehended, contradict one another. But to say this is not remove that pluralism of philosophies which exists today even within the Church herself, and it remains in practice too much for the individual to gain a comprehensive view of all this, because the prior factors in terms of the history of philosophy and of human thought, culture, and much else besides entailed in this pluralism are so great and complex that they can no longer be mastered by any one individual. Only those remaining at an intellectually primitive stage, or [73] the victims of their own fancy, can deceive themselves with regard to this situation, which in itself alone and of its very nature produces the conditions of an uncontrollable pluralism of theologies. This philosophical and theological pluralism, this situation of gnoseological concupiscence, constitutes a situation in which the individual theologian has to perform his task. This situation is rendered still more acute in the pluralism it entails, and which cannot be controlled or mastered, by numerous further elements. Here it is only possible briefly to draw attention to a few of these.

When we consider the position of the systematic theologian we recognize on the one hand that even as such he cannot avoid being a biblical theologian. He cannot simply leave the work of biblical theology to the exegete alone. On the other hand, however, present-day exegesis and biblical theology, in the problems they have raised, in the complexity of their methods and their presuppositions, have become so complex and difficult that the present-day practitioner of systematic theology finds himself in a totally different situation from that in which his predecessors were placed a few decades ago. Where today can he still find those ‘dicta probantia’ from scripture which he could avail himself of in earlier times to prove his own theses? Today it has become evident as a result of historical and critical exegesis that it is no longer so clear what the genuinely binding message of scripture to us really is, as distinct from the conceptual models and modes of expression belonging to it which are conditioned by history, and what does not constitute this binding message. And precisely because of this the situation in which the systematic theologian stands in relation to exegesis is quite different from that of a few decades ago, when for instance, he could, with a few simple and briefly stated arguments, establish a firm bridge extending from Mt. 16 to the dogma of the First Vatican Council.

Even the material and the methods of work in the field of the history of dogma have come to involve so many fine distinctions and have become so complex that the assertion of what is dogmatically binding, and the process of distinguishing this from mere theologumena as conditioned by the history of particular epochs in tradition, have become different in kind and essentially more difficult than in earlier ages; for then on the one hand we always had ready to hand a few sentences from the Fathers to prove the positions of current theology and of the official pronouncements of the Church, while on the other we could always overlook in a calm and broadminded way other opinions in the Fathers which were less suitable to our purpose. Today the position is to a large extent such that [74] theology must engage consistently in a direct dialogue with the modern natural and social sciences, and that this dialogue, in the very nature of the subject-matter involved and the manner in which the modern sciences are presented, can no longer be communicated through what was earlier called philosophy, the nature and function of which in the light of current unphilosophical sciences, is more obscure and more threatened than commonly admitted among us. Finally it is also a special problem in its own right, whether modern man’s understanding of himself (a factor which is always involved in theology, and which in fact enters into theology as such, as distinct from revelation, as an intrinsic element in it) is communicated to the theologian at all through mere words, as he still always tacitly presupposes, or whether this self-

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understanding even theologians has original sources of knowledge of its own such that they cannot be replaced by words, and which consist on the one hand in imaged and on the other in the concrete exercise of the practical reason, something which can never adequately be communicated or expressed merely through the insights offered by the speculative reason.

This situation in which the individual theologian stands and has work, then, is conditioned by an uncontrollable pluralism of theologies and by a state of affairs in the development of human thought which is likewise incalculable, and it is something that must be recognized soberly and without any inhibitions, and from which the due consequences have to be drawn The individual theologian in his work today is the theologian who is alien, alone, and isolated. Today it is no longer so easy for him as it formerly was to think of himself as a worker on a common building site on which a single building is being erected according to a plan which has already been worked out and is known to all. He works on the basis of a world of ideas, from certain premisses, and with certain philosophical preconceptions as his tools, yet is well aware that these are subject to historical conditions and the limitations of particular epochs. Yet for all this formal awareness of his he is incapable of eliminating or overcoming these limitations For the first time in the history of theological thought theology is not only conditioned by history, but is also aware of being so conditioned, and besides this is aware of being unable to avoid this conditioning. It is only in the second part of this first lecture that we shall be able to consider what all this implies for the ecclesiological element in the theology of today. At this initial stage we must simply concentrate upon the situation itself, the fact that it cannot be overcome and the isolating effect which it has.

The alienating effect of this situation in present-day religious belief [75] is rendered particularly acute because in theology what is being treated of is a discipline which, more than any other, has to uphold the rightness of its propositions with a certain absolute binding force. Certainly this does not simply mean that they can claim the same absolute commitment as faith itself. Yet at the same time, in a manner which is far from being clear, they do participate precisely in the nature of this absolute commitment, for it is quite impossible to arrive at any completely clear dividing line between the propositions of faith and the propositions of theology. In any case in this situation, to the extent that theology should be, and is intended to be, the justification of the intellectual honesty of faith, a theological method is necessary which is itself in turn rationally justified, one which, in contrast to so many which have commonly been practised hitherto, avoids from the outset adopting many of the approaches by which the theologians of earlier times sought to overcome all the problems of philosophy, exegesis, and the history of dogma upon the pretext that all these difficulties could be overcome positively and in a way which the individual could understand by means of a frontal attack upon them. Now it is of course in principle possible to solve all the philosophical and historical problems entailed in theology in a direct and positive manner (at any rate to an extent which is sufficient). But while recognizing this we must also say that this possibility, so far as the individual theologian is concerned, and therefore so far as the individual Christian is concerned also, in practice no longer exists because of the immense variation in all the scientific methods which are employed, and because of the impossibility of acquainting oneself with all the literature that has been produced, within the space of any one finite life. Yet having recognized this we must also say that in all intellectual honesty we must provide the justification for faith both as a whole and in its individual propositions. In view of this, then, it is necessary for theology today, in this contemporary situation in which it stands and which it can no longer control, to develop *indirect* methods of achieving a justification of faith such as will satisfy the demands of the individual conscience on the question of intellectual truth. These methods will be indirect in the sense that they will legitimately bypass the particular material problems involved, and that they will apply first and foremost in the particular concrete situation of the individual in the development of his

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thought, and not lay claim to any permanent or universal validity. But what all these methods will assume in the concrete depends on the concrete material which is being treated of at any given moment. Now obviously this indirect form of justification will assume one form when it is applied to some intellectual decision to be [76] taken in a context involving metaphysical problems which have not yet directly been tackled or positively solved, and will assume a different form when it is some specific historical question which is being treated of. For instance I may concern myself with the question of why, in all intellectual honesty, I can assent to the existence of God even though the most recent linguistic philosophy and the systems of modern structuralism remain closed books to me, while at the same time they manifestly do have a bearing on the question of God. But this is a quite different question, and demands a different indirect method of approach, from the question, for instance, of how I can accept the claims of the Catholic Church, including the doctrines of the papal primacy and the apostolic succession of her episcopate, to be founded by Christ even though I cannot perceive how this Church developed from the historical Jesus to the stage of early Catholicism, and even though I know, or at least suspect, that much must have taken place in the social development of the Church during this interval.

All that has been said up to now still has not made it clear what the special quality is of these various indirect methods considered as justifying the Christian faith. Before we go on to invoke at least one example intended to throw light to some extent upon such a method, we must begin by establishing two points: *First*: that a methodology of this kind, worked out by a process of conscious reflection, does not yet exist in Catholic theology, or at least that it exists at the semi-conscious level the sphere of apologetics. Moreover this apologetics is of such a kind that it undervalues itself considering itself merely as an 'argumentatio *ad hominem*', and with an exaggerated modesty imagining that its achievements are less than those of the supposedly higher discipline of 'scientific' fundamental theology. In reality, however, such apologetics represents a more direct approach and achieves more than this fundamental theology. The *second* point is this: When we apply indirect methods of the kind of which we have been speaking these can very well serve to yield insights into the actual matter itself which is being treated of in the concrete case, insights which would have remained unrecognized if we had attempted to apply only those methods which seem to be at a higher level, because they involve a more direct and positive approach to the work. Now let us pass on to a particular example of what we mean, because we have reached a point at which it is no longer possible to treat of these indirect methods of theological investigation and justification with all their manifold complexities at a purely abstract level. How, for instance, can we attempt to make it clear that it is justifiable to belong to the [77] Catholic Church as distinct from the Churches of the Reformation? If we were to attempt to work out all the points of controversy in exegesis, biblical theology, and the history of dogma positively and in particular, we would, presumably, never come to an end, and never achieve any conclusions. And in fact (this is the decisive point) it is not merely the normal Christian today, but the learned theologian too whose contemporary situation is in fact such that any such line of investigation would manifestly be (to say the least) as difficult for him as for any ordinary Christian. This aspect alone will serve to demonstrate in the concrete that the indirect method, as applied in the present context, does not constitute any merely supplementary or secondary theological approach such as is applied only by way of additional support in those cases in which no further progress can be made when dealing with some concrete individual. Rather it is a method which, whether consciously reflected upon or not, constitutes an intrinsic element in theological methodology as such. For today even the learned have to see and recognize in all honesty how impossible it is for them to work out exhaustively all the aspects of the problems with which they are dealing by a direct and positive approach. They must recognize this because they too (to express the matter in the

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parlance of the 'analysis fidei') can no longer perceive any essential difference between themselves and the 'rudis'. In other words they have explicitly to allow for, in all their considerations and calculations, the fact that their own recognition of truth is subject to historical conditioning, and they must make this an explicit subject of consideration.

Now to concentrate in greater detail upon our example. The first point that should be made is that every Christian has the right to presume, until the contrary is proved, that his own Christianity and his adherence to the Church in the concrete are valid on the basis of the power of grace and the workings of the Spirit which he feels within him. Why this is so, and why such a presumption does not produce a state of absolute immobility among the Christians of the various denominations so that any passing from one Christian Church to another becomes impossible – this is a point which does, of course, also need to be made clear.

A second stage in the indirect methods which we are envisaging here as applied to our particular question (and abstracting from a point that would also have to be established, namely that of its very nature Christianity is always and necessarily in some sense embodied in a *Church*) would consist in the recognition of a further fact, namely that the nature of any conceivable Church of Christ and of the ultimate eschatological validity to which it lays claim is such that that Church has the best chance of [78] authenticating itself as the Church of Christ which stands more clearly, more fully and, from the historical and sociological point of view, in a manifestly more unbroken line of continuity with the Church of the origins, provided only that the Church in question does not also stand in clear and manifest contradiction to the basic essentials of Christianity at the theoretical level as recognized universally and as applied in practice by every individual in the particular concrete circumstances of his life.

From this point a third step would then have to be embarked upon in which it would have to be established that the threefold 'sola' of the Reformation, as understood rightly, and precisely in the sense, and with the due distinctions of contemporary Protestantism, certainly has its place in the Catholic Church, and that for this reason the Catholic has no-grounds for withdrawing from his Church in the name of some pure Christianity, seeing that he is aware of this Church of his as standing in a more unbroken line of historical continuity with the Church of the origins than the other Christian Churches.

These considerations are absolutely basic. But of course a whole series of other supplementary considerations would have to be added to them, which it is necessary here to pass over, as for instance the question of how such a recognition, in which a considerable degree of historical relativity is involved, is adequate as a rational justification for an assent of faith that is absolute, or that other question of how this way in which Catholics justify their Church might be transposed and reapplied in an (ecumenical) enquiry among the Protestant Christians, for whom the whole problem equally exists in a manner corresponding to our first stage, yet in a predominantly different form. But these indirect methods which we are considering here do take into consideration and allow for the situation in terms of concrete human living of the individual right from the outset, and if in our question these methods are taken as our starting-point, then surely it is still clear that in this way a whole range of particular historical questions can be bypassed right from the outset, which today would otherwise, at least in practice, be insoluble. A more detailed working out of such a methodology would surely serve too to show what has already been indicated, namely that in itself it actually carries with it certain implicit insights into the actual matter under consideration which would) presumably never have been won in any other way. This indirect methodological approach would, for instance, in the case we are considering here, be able to make it clear that there is an element of historical contingency in the constitutional law of the Church without this element of historical contingency either on the one hand removing the

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jus divinum [79] of this constitution, and without on the other hand this *jus divinum* as rightly understood necessarily ruling out this genuine element of historical contingency in the constitutional law of the Church. The indirect methods which we are aiming at, and the very structure of the matter itself, could be understood as having a mutual bearing upon one another.

Evidently it is not possible at this point to enter any further into all this. Only one further particular example may be invoked in order to show what is meant in general by this indirect methodological approach in theology, which has been suggested by the contemporary situation in theology in which the theologian himself is placed, and which he can neither master nor control. The only further point which we can still make in passing is that this indirect method precisely as indicated also has a vital bearing upon the methods employed in the 'course of basic theology', the 'cursus introductorius' recommended by the Second Vatican Council as providing the foundations of the study of theology in general.

Clearly although we have actually mentioned only one consequence arising from the contemporary situation in theology, this does not mean that there are not many other consequences also, just as important for the work of theology. Many of these are such that we cannot enter into them any further here. Here we shall attempt to throw light only upon a single further consequence when we shall have occasion to speak in the second part of this first lecture of the ecclesiological element in theology as this is demanded by contemporary circumstances. Ecclesiology has always been an essential element in Christian theology. Here we cannot repeat what has been said with regard to the permanence and fundamental significance of this ecclesiology of theology. Hence we shall not be speaking of verbal revelation in general, of scripture and tradition and the bearing which each has upon the other as a result of their interrelationship, of kerygma and faith on the one hand, and theology on the other, and the manner in which these mutually condition one another, of the Church's teaching authority and theology, of the immutable element and the historical element in the truth of revelation within the Church. All this is presupposed here. Here we shall be treating simply of specific aspects of the ecclesiological element in theology as these arise precisely from the contemporary situation in which theology stands.

First it can readily be understood that in a situation in which it has come consciously to be recognized and reflected upon that every kind of knowledge, including theological knowledge, is subject to the vicissitudes and the conditioning process of history, the ecclesiological element in theology [80] is confronted both with greater threats than formerly and at the same time with fresh opportunities. The first point is self-evident. The factors of the Church, the authority of her official teaching, the ecclesiological element in theology, are factors in a more general awareness which has itself become the subject of conscious reflection in its state as in a real sense subject to the conditioning processes and the vicissitudes of history, and which, therefore, has limitations of its own. This means that we feel that even these specific factors have to be enquired into from a quite fresh point of view. The point we are making here does not need to be developed any further. But this contemporary situation implies at the same time a fresh opportunity for the ecclesiological element in theology. Contemporary man, who consciously reflects upon and recognizes the fact that his own knowledge is subject to historical conditioning, and that it is impossible for him to achieve any completely adequate reflection upon the presuppositions of his own knowledge, can achieve a typical standpoint with regard to *his own self* in a way which was quite impossible in earlier times. He can realize more clearly that his views are in danger of being influenced by his own subjective inclinations the very moment they cease to be confronted with the convictions of society as a whole in an open and effectively maintained dialogue at a fundamental level. Today he is in a better position to understand that truth actually has something to do with institutional life and practice; that even in respect of his

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knowledge man cannot be an individual subject in isolation; that truth can, to an extent greater than was formerly supposed, be measured by its effectiveness as a social force; that practical reasoning and decision-making are not simply derivatives from the speculative reason, but also entail factors which are autonomous and original to themselves even so far as knowledge is concerned. For in themselves these are only conceivable within the context of social living.

From these and similar considerations, which cannot be developed further at this point, the contemporary situation in which theology finds itself has acquired, precisely in respect of its ecclesiological element, a quite new importance in terms of human living in the here and now, a new understanding of itself, and a new opportunity. The statement that theology either constitutes a process of responsible reflection upon the faith of the Church or ceases to be theology at all has, on a fundamental view, acquired a new intrinsic meaning and a new importance for the theologian himself such that today he is, less than ever before, in a position to regard his own personal opinion taken in isolation as important and worthy of consideration because less than ever before is he able to hold [81] that be has, on his own personal responsibility and of his own resources, evolved what he feels to be the correct view of the world in which he lives. For today, less than ever before, has such a view any prospect of being accepted by many others. Theology is only of interest when it constitutes a process of reflection (though obviously of course critical reflection) upon the faith of a Church which is actually using this faith as the basis of its activities. This does not mean that we are canonizing a collective (as opposed to an individual) subjectivism or pragmatism, but simply that we are applying to the nature of theology the insight that that which is subjective in a radical sense (which is necessarily the inter-communicative subjective) is also that which is most objective, and that the highest truth remains in practice only attainable in that love which is most all-embracing and free. From this point of view it is obviously part of any sound theological method to take as its starting-point the average and representative awareness of faith to be found in the Church as it exists in the concrete. This does not mean that we do not have to subject this to a process of critical questioning. It does not mean that it is obvious from the outset what the real and true meaning of this representative awareness of faith actually is. It does not imply any denial of the fact that it is necessary to bring to bear upon it a constant process of critical discrimination between that which is really meant and asserted in the absolute and that which, while connected with this essential nucleus of real meaning, nevertheless belongs to the category of presuppositions, patterns of thought etc. which are subject to the conditions of particular epochs (naturally when we speak of such a process of discrimination we do not mean one that leads to a ‘chemically refined’ residue of true and proper meaning of the object of belief in itself and for itself alone. Such a process leads rather to this object of faith in itself being presented in a new form which is, no less than formerly, conditioned by the circumstances of history).

But unless a theologian is willing to take as his starting-point this awareness of faith of the Church as it exists in the concrete today, autonomous and capable of providing a safeguard against any deviations in the subjective awareness of the individual theologian himself, he will necessarily remain pent up in his own personal subjectivity even in those cases in which, for instance, he is in principle ready to submit to the authority of scripture or the material arguments of some intellectual discipline. If this were to be his attitude he would never be able to achieve any standpoint as a starting-point for his active work which would be really independent of his own subjective awareness as an individual theologian.

[82] Now what we are about to describe is precisely such a standpoint. The situation today is that those universal *auctoritates* which were earlier tacitly presupposed are less than ever before present in a form that is clear and beyond all contradiction. And in this situation it has become more necessary than ever before to apprehend and to recognize as a matter of

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conscious reflection the specifically ecclesiological element in theology. Of course this is not to assert that the authority of this ecclesiological element could ever be present and effective otherwise than in virtue of the fact that it is also recognized and apprehended as such at the subjective level also. What we are saying, rather, is that the most objective form of knowledge is bound up with the most insuperable subjectivity at the same time, so that we cannot escape from the circle in which the processes of our thought move to and fro between both these two elements.

Thus at the level of the question of truth too an ecclesiological element in theology is making itself felt, just as the individualism of the recent past – is giving way to a higher form of socialism in the future. But to say this is not to dispute the fact that precisely this ecclesiological element must constitute a fulfilment of that enduring and permanent essence of the ecclesiology inherent in theology in a quite new situation and in a quite new form. First and foremost the critical function with regard to the Church's awareness of faith has become more necessary and come to play a greater part. For this awareness of faith as it exists in the concrete in the present-day Church entails an unconscious interplay of the most varied elements: real faith in all its radical openness to the absolute mystery called 'God' and in its unequivocal attachment in history to Jesus of Nazareth as the eschatologically definitive and historically manifested self-communication of this mystery; the models, thought-patterns and modes of expression in the concrete in which this fundamental faith is objectified and, rendered communicable in the social life of the Church; the numerous opinions, theologumena etc. which are concomitant with, but not intrinsic to the faith, yet which are all unreflectingly accepted as part and parcel of the faith. Now the process of discriminating in this way, or of reformulating the elements of one and the same faith and the same creed into various theologies each differing from the others, and either appearing one after the other or existing side by side, inevitably and invariably causes theology to stand apart from the Church and her teaching authority with a certain attitude of criticism. For in this situation two things are possible: in this process of critical discrimination and reformulation of truths and realities which belong inalienably to the Christian faith and the Church's creed, the individual theologian may go astray, and second it is equally possible [83] that the Church in her *magisterium* may seek to resist a process of this kind even when it takes forms which are perfectly legitimate. This situation gives rise to a dialogue between the theologians and the Church which is never finally completed. The reason why this dialogue is never finally completed is that even in the case in which a particular theologian puts forward an interpretation of this awareness which the Church has of her faith to be subjected to the judgement of the Church in this same awareness of faith of hers, and if the Church then, with a greater or lesser degree of authority, herself rejects this interpretation in one or other of the various ways in which this can be done, even then the theologian must still in fact continue to ask himself what such a decision on the part of the Church rejecting his interpretation does or does not mean in precise terms. Because of this the dialogue between the theologian and the Church is never brought to a definitive conclusion even by a definition on the part of the Church's *magisterium*. The only way, therefore, in which the theologian can actively engage in theology is for him to be prepared again and again to incur the risk of involuntarily finding the Church against him in his interpretations. If he is unwilling to incur this risk, and confines himself simply to repeating the formulations of the Christian faith put forward by the Church's teaching authority or in other traditional formulae in order to achieve safety in his work, then he runs the (greater) risk of uttering formulae which he only imagines that he has understood. From this point of view the theologian's conviction that his personal theology does include this necessary ecclesiological element is, in the last analysis, an act of hope which, ultimately speaking, can only prove justified by its own results.

In conclusion two further supplementary points must be made: First it must be explicitly

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reiterated yet again that the pluralism of theologies in the Church as it exists today is such as can no longer be controlled or mastered, though this is not to assail the unity of the Church or the unity of her creed. For the implications arising from this I must refer to another study in this volume,[2] in which I have attempted to set these forth.

Thus I may be permitted to express my decided and radical mistrust of any attempt to reduce theology in any adequate sense to the methodology employed in it, or to reformulate it in these terms. Theology always is, and always will be, even in the future, something more than its own hermeneutics. Certainly we must constantly reflect also on those methods which at first were not reflected upon, and which we applied when we [84] were enquiring into the actual subject-matter of faith in itself. And to this extent the teaching of theological method, hermeneutics, fundamental and formal theology etc., are themselves necessary themes for theology to investigate. And certainly it is regrettable that in Catholic theology as it is *de facto* practised far too little attention has been paid to these themes. Is it true that it is impossible to know what 'fides qua' is without defining 'fides quo'. But however true this may be, it is no less true that theology cannot be reduced merely to theological hermeneutics or a formalized system of teaching on the subject of speaking about God. Of course the converse is also true. If we want the knife to cut we must first sharpen it. But if we confine ourselves to sharpening the knife alone then we have not yet done any good cutting. It is the same with theology, although in this case the two processes do enter more closely into one another than in the case of the knife which we use in everyday life. In the long run theological methodology will only be convincing when it brings man into immediate contact with the subject-matter itself, and in the last analysis this is, once and for all, not faith and the theology that goes with it, but that which is the object of faith, because faith itself is only itself insofar as it surrenders itself to that which it itself is not, even while the man of faith is convinced that this greater entity which he cannot comprehend, can become an event in this faith of his.

II

The second lecture could be entitled 'transcendental theology'. Certainly transcendental theology is not simply the whole of theology and must not claim to be anything more than one part or one aspect of it. Certainly transcendental theology is a theology in which the specific themes of traditional theology (the doctrine of God, Christology, the doctrine of grace etc.) are considered under one quite specific aspect. In other words this discipline is not concerned simply or exclusively with theological method. Nevertheless it does imply a quite specific line of enquiry and methodology with which it approaches the material subjects of theology, and to that extent the term 'transcendental theology' can also unreflectingly be used for one specific theological method. It is in this sense that we shall be speaking of it here, though at the same time what is meant by transcendental theology considered as a method must once more be clarified by examples which we shall at least be able to point to of transcendental theology as a theology with a subject-matter of its own.

It is not easy to say what is really meant by the theology thus designated. [85] The concept is, of course, based upon an analogy with the term 'transcendental philosophy'. But it is not *merely* a verbal analogy that is indicated here. Transcendental philosophy and transcendental theology are interconnected in terms of their subject-matter, and it is quite impossible for them to be separated one from another. From the historical point of view a transcendental philosophy consciously conceived of as such made its appearance prior to the advent of any

[2] 'Pluralism in theology and the unity of the creed in the Church,' pp. 3-23.

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transcendental theology, likewise as consciously reflected upon. Because of this it is conceptually impossible to begin simply with the following statement: transcendental theology is that theology which uses transcendental philosophy as its method. Philosophy is not merely an instrument for the practice of theology introduced into theology from without. Rather it is an intrinsic element in theology itself. This being the case, we can say that the provisional definition of transcendental theology which we have just put forward in terms of transcendental philosophy does not represent any alienation of theology from its own true nature. This definition does not constitute any merely external specification of theology which has nothing whatever to do with its intrinsic nature. This is not to say that this definition of transcendental theology as the theology which involves transcendental philosophy in itself comprises the total and fundamental nature of transcendental theology. But it is only at a later stage that we shall have to speak of this.

When we define transcendental theology as that theology which involves transcendental philosophy we have admittedly still not come very much nearer to an understanding of transcendental theology, in terms either of history or of systematic thought. For everything now depends on what is to be understood by transcendental philosophy, once more in terms of history and systematic thought. Now in both respects this is a very difficult question. Let us take as our starting-point the principle that *every* philosophy, i.e. every genuine metaphysics worthy of the name must proceed along the lines of transcendental philosophy, or else is not philosophy in this authentic sense at all; then it is of course possible to reply that every theology which really involves conscious reflection and, thought, and is intended to be something more than a mere record of saving history – in other words which is philosophical in character – is *ipso facto* at the same time that theology which involves transcendental philosophy – is, in other words, transcendental theology. And since on any showing there is a certain entirely correct element in this identification of metaphysics with transcendental philosophy in terms both of subject matter and of historical development, it must not be disputed for one [86] moment that certain qualities of transcendental theology can be discovered in every genuine theology, for instance that of an Origen, an Augustine or a Thomas Aquinas. It is not necessary to maintain that transcendental theology is an absolutely new discovery of an area investigation which did not exist in former times.

But if we regard transcendental philosophy as some special and peculiar form of philosophy which has existed as a matter of explicit and conscious reflection only from the time of Descartes onwards, subsequently emerging still more clearly in the philosophy of Kant and of the German idealism, then it is likewise permissible and reasonable to say that a theology, involving transcendental philosophy could only have emerged since Descartes, and indeed that a transcendental theology in this sense could exist, insofar as it existed at all, only because modern philosophy has at last been accepted – admittedly very tardily – within the faith of the Catholic Church more or less today, and since Catholic thought has emancipated itself from neo-scholasticism.

But whether we hold this opinion or another, whether we allow both developments to exist side by side or argue that this is impossible, it remains true on any showing that the concept of transcendental theology is still obscure, and we are leaving it in this state simply because no one universally accepted and unequivocal concept of transcendental philosophy exists, and because even from the historical point of view – i.e. if we characterize the whole modern and metaphysically orientated developments in philosophy up to and including existentialism as transcendental philosophy, it is evidently clear that the most contradictory systems can be brought under the general ‘umbrella’ concept of a transcendental philosophy, as is shown by the history of philosophy in the last few centuries.

Now within the framework of the present theological consideration there can be no question of developing a concept of transcendental philosophy (whether from the historical

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or the systematic points of view or from both) which fulfils the requirements of a philosophical concept in all their rigour. It would be too much to demand such a thing of a theologian who, after all, can only be a philosopher in a very weakened sense, and furthermore any concept of transcendental philosophy which he might develop would be one which could not possibly be very useful, since it would be open to dispute with regard both to the understanding of and to the practical application of a transcendental theology. For this reason we have the right to take as our starting-point a somewhat less precise, an almost popular concept of transcendental philosophy, yet one [87] which for this very reason is also broad enough to cover the very heterogeneous manifestations of the modern history of philosophy. A further point is that it is possible to develop a concept of transcendental philosophy of this sort from the lines of enquiry which are followed immanently within theology as such. This is a point which we shall have to clarify at a later stage. But because of it we do also have the right to take this sort of concept of transcendental philosophy as our starting-point. In other words it is not in the least dependent upon a general consensus of the philosophers as such.

Quite simply, therefore, and in a sense that is almost pre-philosophical, we shall make the following statement: A transcendental line of enquiry, regardless of the particular area of subject-matter in which it is applied, is present when and to the extent that it raises the question of the conditions in which knowledge of a specific subject is possible in the knowing subject himself. The fact that an enquiry of this kind is in principle possible, legitimate, and under certain circumstances even necessary hardly needs to be discussed in general terms or at any length. In any act of cognition it is not only the object known but also the subject knowing that is involved. It is dependent not only upon the distinctive characteristics of the object, but also upon the essential structure of the knowing subject. The mutual interconnection and the mutual interconditioning process between the subject knowing and the object known precisely as known and as knowable are in themselves the object of a transcendental enquiry. The *a priori* transcendental subjectivity of the knower on the one hand and the object of knowledge (and of freedom) on the other are related to one another in such a way that they mutually condition one another, and they do this in such a way that knowledge of the *a priori* conditions which make knowledge possible in the subject necessarily constitutes also an element in the actual knowledge of the object itself both with regard to the question of what the nature of the object known is as a matter of metaphysical necessity, and also with regard to the question of what the concrete historical conditions of this object are, factors which are precisely not intrinsically necessary. Thus a transcendental enquiry constitutes not merely the posing of a question which is supplementary to the question of the object in its autonomy and as it is presented *a posteriori* and at the empirical level. Rather it is only in this transcendental enquiry that knowledge of the object as it exists in itself achieves the fulness proper to it. Knowledge on the part of the knowing subject in himself is always at the same time a knowledge of the metaphysical (and in an objective sense transcendental) structure of the object in itself.

[88] At this point we cannot devote any further consideration to the metaphysical presuppositions and implications of this statement. But in order to guard from the outset against any fundamental misunderstanding as to the nature of a transcendental enquiry of this kind certain further observations are, nevertheless, necessary.

There is a basic thesis, commonly attributed to the German school of idealism, according to which the subject as such in his act of apprehending himself transcendentally constitutes the event of the absolute spirit in itself at least in those cases in which that subject, in a real and radical sense, apprehends itself in its own transcendental purity and pure subjectivity, and realizes itself at this level. Now it would be wrong to suppose that this basic thesis is implicit in a transcendental enquiry or method of the kind which we are considering here.

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This basic thesis, therefore, is not as such present in the transcendental enquiry, because the transcendental subject even in the boundlessness of his own transcendentality, ultimately apprehends himself and must apprehend himself as a *question*. For he always experiences himself in this transcendentality of his as open, as of himself an empty question, as that which refers beyond and outside of himself that which he himself precisely is not. Now he experiences the act of self-realization of his own transcendentality as communicated to him through the *a posteriori* experience of the object which of itself manifests itself to or refuses to manifest itself to him. As an object in this sense the subject is not master of it. Nor does the transcendental enquiry in the sense which we are using the term here signify any devaluation of history or of the experience of that which is factual and irreducible to the transcendental. For when the subject turns in upon himself to recognize the transcendental conditions of the possibility of his own knowledge (and his freedom) this in fact means precisely that he apprehends himself as inescapably anchored in history, and realizes the *a posteriori* nature of his experience something which precisely cannot be reduced to the transcendental dimension. To the extent that in the transcendental mode of cognition man reflects upon his own historicity as a factor of this kind, and one that is transcendentally necessary, and to the extent that he achieves reflection upon himself at this level, the full rigour and inescapability of his history is borne in upon him. And conversely, anyone who says that man is that being which is inescapably pent up in the concrete experience of his own history has thereby either sought simply to put forward an assertorial proposition (in which case it can be hoped that it will eventually turn out to be invalid), so that he has utterly failed to express the real historicity of man's nature, or alternatively, by saying this he has expressed an apodictic [89] proposition which as such can be attained to only by a transcendental approach and methodology. In other words he has practised transcendental philosophy. Perhaps it is also useful to isolate and to emphasize one further point, namely that transcendental philosophy in the broader and to some extent pre-philosophical sense in which it is conceived of here does not constitute any true object for an anthropology of freedom either, for in this man considers himself as a subject of the hope and promise of a future to be created and made real of his own resources. On this approach, then, he is not the subject which, in its *a priori* aspect, has already all along anticipated its own future. No such opposition exists, therefore, for the precise and simple reason that a futurologist anthropology of this kind, if rightly understood, is rendering itself transcendental to the statements on which it itself is based or is rendering itself blind to the radical nature of the human reality which it is attempting to express. Of course this is not to deny that any transcendental philosophy is in constant danger of interpreting the *a priori* element as that which alone is important, of being intolerant of the historical element and failing to take it into account, and instead seeking to approach it theoretically or aesthetically and so to neutralize its effects. But in that case precisely this transcendental philosophy is entertaining a false understanding of its own nature.

Nor does our interpretation of transcendental philosophy involve any denial of the fact that in the concrete situation of a particular epoch or a particular individual it may be necessary, in coming to a decision of the practical reason, in concrete practice to be 'one-sided' and in a certain sense to forget the prudent balancing of one factor against another in the dialectic of a transcendental philosophy, because otherwise it would deprive the legitimate one-sidedness of the concrete decision of its force.

For our present purposes we must satisfy ourselves with this quite modest pre-philosophical concept of transcendental philosophy. Properly speaking it is sufficient for us to achieve the insight that the question of the knowing subject signifies not one particular department of knowledge which exists on an equal footing with many others, but a reality which is prior to every kind of knowledge which introduces material divisions of the subject-

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matter into particular departments as the prior condition making this possible. We must also recognize that we have only arrived at the level of real philosophy and metaphysics in the strict sense of the term, and that we can only make apodictic judgements at that stage at which, while according all due recognition to the objectivity of the reality Investigated, we also include as an object of conscious reflection as such the subject which is always and in every case also involved in every act [90] of cognition as such, albeit without always being explicitly adverted to as an object of investigation. It is in this sense, then, that philosophy is necessarily transcendental philosophy, even though that stage at which its true nature is explicitated as a theme in its own right is arrived at of only later in the history of philosophy. And it is also true that theology is necessarily and of its innermost nature in the truest sense also philosophical theology. For otherwise it would comprise faith and creed indeed, but no longer theology precisely as such. Indeed it would no longer even comprise faith and creed in any real sense unless it also included this philosophical element. Now if this is true then it is in principle evident that theology must be transcendental theology. As has already been said this does not mean that all theology is transcendental theology. For it is clear that theology must restate and reflect upon the propositions of faith with regard to saving history as such. And the account of that history contained in it does not become a scientific discipline only at that stage at which this history is subjected to philosophical reflection as to the transcendental conditions which make it possible. On the contrary there is a science of history as such (although the theology of the Middle Ages was unwilling to concede this). Now if this is true then theology already exists as a science at that stage at which, prior to any explicit transcendental reflection, it records saving history and considers its significance. But conversely this does not exclude the fact that theology, in virtue of the element of philosophy necessarily immanent in and intrinsic to it of its very nature must also necessarily be transcendental theology. In this connection it is ultimately of little importance whether the statement that theology is necessarily transcendental theology and yet is not developed solely and exclusively in this form as such leads to the setting up of distinct theological disciplines divided from one another materially and departmentally (somewhat in the sense of the distinction between positive and speculative theology within one and the same discipline of dogmatics and fundamental theology), or whether the effect of this statement is merely that different aspects and methods are mentioned which must be considered in their mutual interconnection in any one investigation of the material subject-matter of theology.

After all these considerations all that we have achieved by way of beginning still remains a very abstract concept of transcendental theology. We must now deepen this somewhat further and fill it out with content by showing that a transcendental enquiry must constantly be undertaken afresh and, as a matter of concrete history, has been so undertaken, from the very nature of theology itself, though it is far from following from [91] this that any explicit recourse need be had to a transcendental philosophy. The second way in which we shall deepen and fill out our initial concept of transcendental theology is to show, by means of a few small concrete examples from theology itself, how urgent such enquiries in transcendental theology are today if contemporary man is genuinely to be able to assimilate the propositions of faith. In both cases we must not tacitly presuppose (thereby becoming entangled in insoluble problems) that a transcendental enquiry into how some specific reality can be known must as such, either in principle or in fact, come before the *de facto* knowledge of the object in question. Since in an enquiry of this kind it is always the *a priori* conditions which make the knowledge of a specific reality possible that are being enquired into, it is always true that in practice and in the concrete it only becomes possible at that stage at which the object involved has already come to be known. Thus for a transcendental theology it is neither surprising nor scandalous that theology has all along been practised even before its character as transcendental theology has been conceived of in explicit terms and made the

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object of conscious reflection. It is also evident that, throughout theology and from the first, statements are made and have been made which of their very nature belong to the context of transcendental theology and have come to be recognized as such precisely at *that* moment at which an enquiry in terms of transcendental theology has explicitly been undertaken.

Perhaps the presence of such statements in traditional theology can be established most easily and directly in the case of the teaching on faith. In the 'analysis fidei' it is in fact not merely the question pertaining to fundamental theology) of the connection between the 'preambula fidei' and the absolute assent of faith that has to be treated of. Also and in addition to this an answer has to be given to the question of why revelation as heard should constitute and should remain not merely a human word about God, albeit one brought about by God himself, but actually God's word itself, even though it has still entered into the world of ideas proper to man. After all it has its existence in man's own conscious thought and hence is subject to the *a priori* structure of human knowledge. Now if theology says that any act of hearkening to God's revelation is possible only in the power of the *growth* of faith, and if theology interprets this growth of faith ultimately as 'uncreated grace', in which, therefore, God himself becomes in himself the constitutive principle of the subject of faith, then in principle a theological answer has been given to a question of transcendental theology: the act of hearing divine revelation as the Word of God himself, as something more, therefore, than a word uttered [92] about God and caused by God, presupposes, as the condition which makes it possible in the subject, that God himself through his own act of self-communication upholds this act of hearing as an intrinsic principle. And this is precisely what we are accustomed to call the supernatural grace of faith.

Although there may be no conscious reflection on this, such statements are, in the nature of the case, statements of transcendental theology, and they still appear in manifold ways precisely in the context of the teaching on grace and the supernatural theological virtues. In this respect as in the example just given it might be shown again and again that the answer to any such enquiry in terms of transcendental theology is arrived at not simply *ab externo* by some theological datum which is initially foreign to this enquiry itself. Rather it derives from this actual question of transcendental theology. For it is from the limitless *a priori* transcendentality of knowledge and freedom in themselves that we come to know what is really meant when we speak of God as absolute being and absolute good, recognizing that the absolute goal of this transcendentality is not something additional to, or external to itself, but rather something that is present all along and in its very origins, albeit without being recognized as a conscious theme of thought. And the same is also true in the dimension of a transcendentality and freedom to which man is raised by grace. Here too the goal of this transcendentality is not some point of refuge towards which this transcendental movement of knowledge and freedom tends as something that remains for ever asymptotically unattainable to it. Rather it is that which as such freely communicates itself to the finite spirit to the point of being immediately present and proximate to it at its very roots. Let us therefore take as our starting-point the idea of transcendentality as understood here, to which man is raised by grace (in the usual theological parlance this would mean God's universal will to bring men to supernatural salvation). And taking this as our starting-point we can make clear that in which supernatural grace and the theological virtues properly consist. Once they are recognized as having a transcendental derivation and significance of this kind these concepts also acquire a point of contact with the transcendental experience of the human spirit. They can be 'verified', albeit in a manner corresponding to these realities, because what they express is neither more nor less than the absolute radicalization of the transcendentality of the human spirit in knowledge and freedom.

We must now invoke a few more concrete examples in order to throw light upon the question of how such transcendental theology can be made [93] effective in treating of the

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themes proper to dogmatic theology, however varied these may be. In this connection it is obvious that the concept of a transcendental theological method is modified very considerably according to the particular subject to which this method is applied. Such modifications may indeed be so considerable that it might be disputed whether one or other application of such a method to a specific subject can or cannot be said to belong to transcendental theology at all. However all the examples which we are about to adduce are intended to render intelligible and assimilable that particular object in them which is actually being called in question here by attempting to point out in the knowing subject an *a priori* reference to this object. And because of this they can all be understood in a transcendental-theological sense despite the variations between them.

In this attempt it is not merely obvious (as has already been emphasized) that this transcendental-theological disclosure of an *a priori* reference on the part of the knowing subject to its specific object is *de facto* possible only after this object itself has revealed itself and so communicated to the subject the knowledge of its own reference to that object as a matter for conscious reflection. While explicitly abstracting too, for our present purposes, from the problem of the precise relationship between nature and grace, still we can and must say that this transcendental reference to a reality of supernatural verbal revelation, to a mystery that has been revealed, is thought of throughout as constituted by God's grace itself. Thus the attempt at achieving a disclosure of this kind in terms of transcendental theology of an *a priori* reference on the part of the subject to a reality of supernatural salvation freely posited by God is not to be objected to on the grounds that we are attempting to deduce the mystery of this unmerited reality of salvation *a priori* from the mere nature of man as such. At an earlier stage it has been argued that the acceptance of the saving mystery of God by faith as it is revealed in his word is possible only in virtue of the self-communication of God himself. Now in the very nature of the case it has already thereby been laid down that the acceptance of the realities of salvation through the word of revelation *ab externo* takes place in the power of the saving reality itself as communicated to the *a priori* and transcendental subjectivity of man.

An initial example of such transcendental theological methods can be adduced from the theology of the Trinity. Here this example can, of course, only be presented in the briefest possible terms. We shall take as our starting-point the following principles, which derive partly from a metaphysical anthropology and partly too from an ultimate and utterly [94] irreducible experience of grace which explicates itself in Christian revelation and in the history of revelation itself: 1. In respect of his knowledge and freedom man constitutes absolute and limitless transcendentality. 2. This in itself has a historical process of explicitation of its own which belongs essentially to itself and only communicates an awareness of itself to man in the total history of man considered as a historical being precisely in its transcendentality. 3. In this transcendence man is radically orientated to the absolute mystery which we call 'God', and which, in a free manner (which we call creation), opens up this transcendentality of man and sustains it. 4. In respect precisely of *this* (grace-given) transcendentality the abiding mystery of God is not merely the asymptotic point of refuge which provides it with its goal, and towards which (as the 'unmoved Mover') the transcendental movement of knowledge and freedom in man tend, even while it always remains remote from him; rather this infinite point of orientation of the transcendental movement discloses itself, at least in the mode of that which is offered, as a free miracle of a love that reaches out beyond itself in self-communication to man, to achieve a state of absolute immediacy and proximity to him, and in this act of self-communication itself sustains this transcendental movement on the part of man himself. 5. In accordance with the second statement this self-communication of God to man in the transcendental dimension of his being has a history of its own within the history of man, and as such becomes the history

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of God's self-communication which we call saving history and revelation history, taking the offering of salvation and revealing of the word as together constituting a unity. Where this history of God's self-communication to the world attains its absolute highest point, its point of irreversibility, and where the offering of God's self-communication to the world as a whole as endowing it with grace at the transcendental level has brought about the definitive acceptance of this offering on the part of the world itself, there is achieved that which is designated as the hypostatic union and also (naming it according to its concrete realization in history) that which we call the absolute bringer of salvation, Jesus as crucified and risen, the Son of the Father.

What we have expressed in these five statements is the mode in which man is constituted in a state of grace-given transcendentality, and the historical process in which this takes place. On the basis of this we can now acquire an understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in terms of transcendental theology. First on the basis of the principles we have formulated we can recognize a threefold presence of God in the economy of salvation. In the self-communication of the one God this constitutes [95] that incomprehensible mystery which never ceases to be such even in a really radical act of self-communication. To that extent the God who imparts himself in a (forgiving) love is called 'Father'. Now this God imparts himself in such a way as to be in himself in a state of absolute proximity to man, and as a sustaining principle of the transcendentality of man in his act of knowing and loving. To that extent he is called 'Holy Spirit'. Now this self-utterance of the one God to man is manifested in history as the irreversible faithfulness of God in Jesus Christ, and as such is called the incarnate Word of the Father.

Only under all three of these aspects, all three of these modes of God's giving of himself to the world, is the one act of self-communication on the part of the one God fully achieved, though this does not mean that these three aspects can either be thought of as identical or considered independently one of another.

On the basis of a transcendental approach, then, we have acquired an idea of the Trinity on the level of the economy of salvation. From this we must now advance a stage further to the idea of the Trinity as immanent, in the knowledge that unless this Trinity at the level of the economy of salvation were not that of God in and for himself we could not really speak of any true *self*-communication of God. For any distinction in this act of self-communication such that it was not attributed to God in and for himself would appear as merely creaturely. The 'self-communication of God' would be mediated through a creaturely act. We would have God not in himself and for himself, but merely as he is reflected in a creaturely reality. We would have failed to pass beyond the sphere of the merely creaturely so as to attain to God himself as he is in himself in his own divine glory, and as he wills, precisely as being this, to be for us as an act of free grace which is not ultimately a creaturely reality at all, even though it does have creaturely effects and creaturely modes in the manner in which it reaches us. But for all that this free grace is God himself. All these considerations do of course presuppose 'faith' in the self-communication of God. But this faith is not merely indoctrinated into us *ab externo*. Rather it is an experience of a transcendental kind (called the grace of faith) such that the reality of it cannot be denied merely on the grounds that it is only through revelation *ab externo* that it is brought to its full self-realization and certainty at the level of conscious thought.

In a similar manner too we can develop a transcendental christology, and for this too we must take as our starting-point the principles already mentioned above. Such a transcendental christology, which develops the 'idea' of a bringer of salvation in the absolute, a manifestation in history [96] of the irreversibility and the victory of God's self-communication over the denial of the unbelief of the world, can of course never be a substitute for the historical experience of Jesus of Nazareth – in other words of that reality in

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which this 'idea' has been made real, and only precisely in virtue of this permits the idea as such to become real in history. Nevertheless there is, and necessarily must be, such a thing as a transcendental christology. Without it the traditional christology would today be in the gravest danger of being regarded as a mythology which is no longer capable of being made real to the man of today. Admittedly explicit plans for such a christology at the level of transcendental theology are extremely rare. In addition to certain attempts which I myself have made, I may refer to the article by Bernhard Welte in the third volume of the work entitled 'Chalkedon' (Würzburg, 1954) edited by Heinrich Bacht and Alois Grillmeier. And surely a christology of this kind at the level of transcendental theology would have two tasks to achieve which of course are closely interconnected.

First, therefore, taking as its starting-point the principle of God's will to save all men, in other words a self-communication on God's part which supports the whole of history and supplies it with its goal, and also taking as a starting-point the principle of a historical development in this transcendental self-communication of God to the world which is necessary of its very nature, such a christology in transcendental theology would have to develop the concept of an absolute mediator of salvation. In other words it would have to show that a historical development of the transcendental self-communication of God in this sense (provided that it does not lead to the absolute perdition of the world) must necessarily be developed to a point at which this self-utterance of God appears as addressed to the world irreversibly (as 'effective' and not merely 'sufficient' grace for the world in its power to lay hold of this grace in the dimension of history), and at which it is freely accepted as such. Further a christology of this kind in terms of transcendental theology would of course have to do something more than to enable men to understand that the event of God's self-communication as posited in history and as made irreversible on the one hand, and the definitive acceptance of this on humanity's part on the other, implicitly expresses in the unity of both these aspects precisely what the classic doctrine of the hypostatic union, on any right understanding of this, is intended to convey. Over and above this this transcendental christology would also have to enable men to understand how the endowment of the world as a whole with grace and the hypostatic union constitute the necessary unity of a mutually conditioning [97] relationship, how, in other words a supralapsarian christology and a universal christocentricity are the necessary postulates for any christology to be credible today. Such a christology would also have to enable men to understand, likewise in terms of transcendental theology, why a hypostatic union exists only in a *single* instance, and how this fact does not mean that the universal God-manhood inherent in the spiritual creature as such is not in some sense degraded to a secondary category such that in and for itself it could conceivably be surpassed.

Secondly, the christology of transcendental theology would also have to develop what might be called the 'christology of awareness' (understanding this term in the right sense) such that the hypostatic union of the Logos with the human reality would be described not merely in the ontic categories of the traditional theology of the hypostatic union, but actually with concepts that are onto-logical in the true sense. In other words it would have to be made intelligible why and how the human being in the transcendentality of its constitution as such is the 'potentia obedientialis' for the hypostatic union. Then this would no longer appear merely as a unity between two substances conceived of on the analogy of material things, between the hypostasis of the Logos on the one hand and a creaturely substance on the other, thought of in material terms, for this kind of unity could just as well have been achieved with a sub-spiritual substantial reality as with the Logos as it exists in itself. But in the 'christology of awareness' of which we are thinking here we could then go on to give an account of the interior grace with which the human reality of Jesus is endowed such that this no longer appears as a 'fitting' equipment bestowed upon the human nature hypostatically

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assumed by the Logos, but rather as something which was already present as a matter of ontological necessity in the hypostatic union itself. Once this 'in itself' was understood ontologically, in terms of a transcendental christology, this point would become clear. Admittedly what we would be presupposing in all these considerations would be an understanding of the fact that spirit and spiritual quality in their true and original essence are not secondary epiphenomena added onto a substantiality conceived of in material terms, but rather constitute the authentic existence of a being as such (here we are not treating of the negativity of matter as such) and so too the constitution of an existing entity as a being can be expressed in its ultimate and radical reality by means of the concepts of a transcendental ontology. All this is of course merely to indicate in barest outline the task of a christology worked out in terms of transcendental theology.

Probably too (if we may mention one further and final example) [98] something like an eschatology of transcendental theology would have to be developed, and only by means of this would it be possible for the man of today so to transpose the dogmatic statements of eschatology (which right down to the present day still remain stuck fast in the imagery of a vanished world of ideas), and that too at a radical level, and not merely through subsequent re-touching undertaken only with reluctance, that these statements really would be intelligible and credible. An interpretation of these eschatological statements in terms of transcendental theology, therefore, is both conceivable and necessary for the very reason that the eschatological statements of scripture and tradition certainly do not constitute any anticipated descriptions, as though by an inspired journalist, of God and in the light of that which will one day come to pass. Rather they are anticipations of final consummation based upon that which, considered as God's deed of salvation, is already present, or which implies simply and precisely a state of radical openness to an absolute future the nature of which cannot be calculated beforehand. An interpretation of eschatological statements in terms of transcendental theology is also demanded for the very reason that that final and definitive salvation which finds expression in eschatology precisely does not signify any secondary and departmentalized specification of man on the basis of, and within the framework of the human possibilities which he already experiences, but rather the radically transformed reality of man as one and whole who, as subject to time and in process of dying, is utterly incapable of conceiving his salvation as the outcome of this reality of his as he experiences it empirically within the framework of human existence. If therefore eschatological statements about the salvation of man as understood here are still to be possible at all, they can only be formulated in the concepts proper to a transcendental ontology, i.e. as statements about a force inherent in man (remaining at a very abstract level) in his 'body-spirit' nature considered as transcendentally necessary and as the radical and ultimate realization of this achieved through the self-communication of God (this remains true however legitimate it may be to retain the imagery of apocalyptic language which also still has a significance of its own for metaphysical concepts, since these too can be conceived of only in a 'conversio ad phantasma'). Until that end has come in which history is consummated, in which that consummation does not consist simply in its own reality, all eschatological statements are simply propositions which on the one hand express the fact that man, as he who exists in grace through God's self-communication and so precisely as historical, will one day achieve his consummation, and which on the other hand guard [99] against any filling out of this hope and this anticipation in more concrete terms, seeing that the future to which it points is absolute and inconceivable, which is God himself and which can only be laid hold of in an act of freedom which is itself intelligible only if, and when it is actually achieved. The dissatisfaction which is so generally felt with the existing state of traditional eschatology could be removed by an eschatology expressed in terms of transcendental theology, if this eschatology conceived of man as a being destined to an absolute future in a transcendental

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anthropology which included within its purview the self-communication of God to man.

In concluding this lecture the following further point may be made: it is of the utmost concern to theology to recognize the limitations which transcendental philosophy imposes on itself by the nature of its 'own' proper work. If a transcendental philosophy were to present itself simply in the absolute as the exclusive basis, without any further presuppositions, of human existence in, the concrete, if it were to lay claim solely and exclusively to express that which is 'necessary' for this human existence and in this sense salvific, then, any 'positive' revelatory religion based on a saving *history* which as such affects the existence of man as a whole (in other words salvation itself) would be impossible from the outset. This limitation of *itself* on the part of transcendental philosophy (as the outcome of reflecting upon the historicity of human life, something which cannot be thematized systematically, or on the nature of dialogue, language, and hermeneutical experience) is itself an essential element in any true transcendental philosophy. Without this self-restriction philosophy would fall into the error of hybris and the crudity of claiming to solve all things in terms of reflective thought. If this self-restriction were not the work of philosophy itself this would lay claim to be able of its own nature to enquire into everything, and would thereby destroy itself. This self-restriction which man's transcendental understanding of himself imposes upon itself is, however, at the same time (in principle, and above all in the current situation of philosophy and theology) a task of fundamental *theology*. For this must show proof of the positive possibility of a saving history and revelation – that history as such and in the concrete, and not as susceptible of analysis by reflective thought, affects man in his ultimate and essential nature as subject. In other words that it is capable of being either *saving* history or the history of *perdition*. But when fundamental theology exercises this function it *ipso facto* constitutes transcendental theology: the act of consciously reflecting upon the fact that the creaturely subject as such is of its very nature rooted in that [100] history which is precisely that of the subjectivity most proper to its own nature as such. The self-communication of God in grace in virtue of God's universal will to save all men is certainly (initially at least in the form of something offered) a transcendental existential modality of man. But it achieves the fulness of its own nature precisely in the history of salvation and revelation (both at the individual and collective levels), and in this history as that which mediates it comes to its own realization and to us. The metaphysical nature of a reality and the history belonging to it, and therefore grace considered as an existential modality on the one hand, and the history of salvation and revelation on the other, are not merely entities existing concomitantly with one another. Rather they mutually condition one another, and this is something which must be shown precisely in terms of a transcendental theology. This means that transcendental theology neither can nor will constitute theology as *such*, but is rather an element in it, because theology (or better and more precisely faith, the element of reflective thought inherent in this, and the elements which are ultimately incapable of being reflected upon in it which theology has to consider) are always intended to express that which is concrete and historical in its irreducibility, and in this must precisely render intelligible the fact that this concrete element in history can really affect man at the ultimate level of his existence and his subjectivity. The significance in terms of concrete human living (i.e. as affecting the whole of man in his salvation) of historical facts is something which man is quite incapable of rendering intelligible without transcendental theology. This is so for the very reason that the knowledge of the factuality of such saving events cannot be achieved *merely a posteriori*. If they are intended to affect man as such, man himself must achieve contact with himself as a whole. In other words he must discover that he is, of his very nature, orientated to them. Insofar as he recognizes their bearing upon himself he engages in transcendental theology. Reflection upon the transcendental reference of man to these saving events is not rendered impossible by their historicity or the fact that they are freely posited, by their *a posteriori*

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character, or by their factuality as freely posited by God. For that which is initially and in the truest sense freely posited by God is precisely the enduring and supernatural existential modality of grace considered as the offering of God's self-communication – in other words a transcendental state in which man is constituted. And this free grace, considered as a transcendental determination of man, has a history of its own in that which we call the history of salvation and revelation, which it is quite impossible to conceive of precisely *as* such without this *a priori* possibility on man's part.

[101] Now it is this that is the object of consideration for transcendental theology.

III

A single phrase could be used, a title to sum up the theme of this third lecture: *reductio in mysterium*. Obviously such a theme does also constitute a special area of subject-matter in theology. At the same time, however, and over and above this, it also expresses a methodological pointer for the theologian, serving to warn him against falling into a certain kind of illusion, at least so far as theology is concerned. This is the illusion that the mystery of reality as such is merely that part of it which still remains obscure for the time being even though in principle it is comprehensible, a part, therefore, which is constantly being diminished as the various branches of science advance, and which is destined ultimately to disappear completely at least in the 'visio beatifica'. Now this illusion, this radical misunderstanding of himself on man's part, is *de facto* constantly asserting itself again and again in theology, and for this reason when we come to speak of the *reductio in mysterium* of all theological proposition which takes place in theology, this also constitutes a methodological guide which is of fundamental importance. Precisely today it is of the utmost importance that we shall understand the significance which theology has as *reductio in mysterium*, i.e. we must understand that this *reductio* constitutes not a regrettable imperfection in theology, but rather that which is most proper to it of its very nature. Theology must be bold enough to make it clear to modern man that this *reductio in mysterium* is its positive distinguishing characteristic and at the same time the task most proper to it – something, in fact which arises as a matter of transcendental necessity from the very nature of man himself. If theology fails to do this, then in an age which sets a premium upon scientific knowledge, men will inevitably receive the impression that theology is the mere external facade for an intellectual discipline which increasingly dissolves and frees itself from theology itself. It is all too easy for modern man to receive the impression that theology supplies answers of a mythological kind or otherwise unscientific answers to questions which either have no communicable meaning or which in reality will only be answered by the sciences of the day. It is all too easy for modern man to receive the impression that theology is a mere interweaving of ideas which are, of their nature, incapable of any verification, which remain at the level of poetical concepts and can still be upheld, at most, simply by pointing with a certain arbitrariness to those dark and subconscious levels in man [102] which have not yet been illumined by the anthropological sciences and so, for the time being, are not yet really capable of being used in any constructive system of thought. Now in reply to such an attitude on the part of modern man what can the theology of faith say when it sets itself resolutely to stand and to make a direct counter-attack upon this attitude, i.e. when it manifests its position with the utmost conscious rationality of which it is capable as a transcendental discipline? It can only assert that this reference to the absolute mystery which it involves is in fact the condition which makes all the perceptions available to the human reason possible. It can only point out that 'mystery' is not merely another word for that which for the time being has not yet been comprehended and perceived, that it is both

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possible and meaningful explicitly to come to terms with mystery as such and in itself, so that we precisely do not have to say with Wittgenstein that we should simply be silent about anything concerning which we cannot speak clearly. Theology then is to be understood as the 'science' of mystery as such (though admittedly it is this as sustained by *that* proximity of this mystery to man which is designated by Christians as grace etc.). Furthermore the only chance which theology has of providing for the future is for it to show itself openly and with the utmost resolution true to its own nature in this sense, and for it to refuse to conceal its true nature for fear of modern man's opinion. And if all this is true, then theology must not forget this nature which it has in the manner in which it is practised from day to day among the theologians themselves either. It must understand itself not as that science which develops itself more and more in a systematic drawing of distinctions down to the last possible detail, but rather as that human activity in which man, even at the level of conscious thought, relates the multiplicity of the realities, experiences, and ideas in his life to that mystery, ineffable and obscure, which we call God. How strange it is in fact! We are accustomed to understand the history of revelation and dogma according to the conceptual model of a logically developing system in which ever finer distinctions are drawn. There may be some element of truth in this, and it may be that those phases in the history of dogma and theology which now lie behind us can to a large extent be rendered comprehensible in terms of a conceptual model of this kind. After all even Thomas Aquinas regarded the true nature of theology as consisting in a progressive exposition in terms of concepts of this kind, and the same idea still dominates the modern interpretation of the history of theology. And yet the question may be asked whether it really does constitute the basic principle of development of the history of dogma and theology as such, or merely that [103] of one specific epoch in it, and one which, even though it has lasted for almost two thousand years, is in our own days drawing to its close. And further, is it not possible to understand even the history of dogma and theology up to the present as a *reductio in mysterium* constantly renewed, constantly made more radical, of all theological statements, so that precisely the believer actively engaged in theology knows better than anyone else that every theological statement is only truly and authentically such at that point at which man willingly suffers it to extend beyond his comprehension into the silent mystery of God?

First an attempt must be made very briefly to say something about mystery as such, before we undertake the further attempt to understand theology itself as *reductio in mysterium* (in all this it is, of course, self-evident that theology as such constitutes such a *reductio in mysterium* only in a *derived* sense, since the original act by which man surrenders himself to the mystery is as such the act of faith). Again in defining what mystery means the declarations of the Church's *magisterium*, and still more the general tendency in theological thinking, take as their basis that which is not mystery at all. Thus mystery is made to appear in a purely negative guise as that which has not been comprehended, that which can only with difficulty avoid giving the impression of being contradictory, and yet at the same time that which is destined to be illumined for man too one day, and as mystery to be dissolved at latest in the '*visio beatifica*', or perhaps only at that stage. Mystery is restricted almost inadvertently to a pilgrim mode of existence here below. Thus mystery is presented under a merely negative aspect. In comparison with that which man can comprehend that which he recognizes as mystery may be in its own objective reality for the most part or even always of greater importance for his salvation. But even so the very fact that he is still aware of it precisely as mystery makes his present knowledge of it negative by comparison with any other knowledge which he has, and still more by comparison with knowledge of this mysterious entity in itself, for he thinks of this as in principle possible and as something that he will later attain to, so that then this knowledge will itself dissolve the element of mystery in his earlier knowledge and in the entity that was mysterious in itself. The measure and ideal

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of knowledge that is applied to knowledge of mystery is that which comprehends and thoroughly sees into the object known.

In reality, however, this is not the case. The concept of mystery that is commonly accepted is false, or at any rate superficial. This is implied even by the dogmatic teaching of the abiding and essential incomprehensibility of God, which is not eliminated even in the '*visio beatifica*', but on [104] the contrary is borne in upon us in its most radical, most infinite, and most blessed form precisely there. In this statement the word 'blessed' needs special emphasis. For manifestly the incomprehensibility of God as made immediately present to the creature signifies not the limit, the mere borderline showing the finitude of the beatific vision of God. Rather it is a positive element in this vision in itself, because clearly man can achieve the truest fulfilment of his own nature at that point, and only at that point, at which he reaches beyond himself and oversteps the limitations of his own knowledge, being definitely drawn out of himself and ecstatically attaining to the incomprehensibility of God as such, which we only truly grasp in its immediacy when it is accepted by us as that which abidingly blesses us. This in itself is sufficient to reveal every kind of comprehensive knowledge for what it really is: the knowledge appropriate to a finite reality considered as that which is provisional, part of our pilgrim mode of existence, not bestowing any blessing upon us. The dogma of the incomprehensibility of God is in itself enough to show that comprehensive knowledge is a deficient mode of knowing when measured by that knowledge which is beyond all doubt the highest, the most intensive, and that which bestows the deepest blessing upon us, that which takes place in the immediate vision of the incomprehensibility of God.

Now the same conclusion which we have been able to demonstrate on the basis of a direct dogmatic datum can also be arrived at by approaching the question rather from the standpoint of the philosophy of transcendentality. Man is the subject of a transcendentality that is limitless. As such he apprehends each of the objects of his knowledge and freedom in a prior awareness, itself not contained within any finite limits, of the original and infinite unity of all possible objects. Yet at the same time man as subject in this sense of a transcendence that is limitless must not, even as such, be understood as the absolute subject, for this would be God. Now if this is true then the condition which makes any individual act of cognition possible is this prior awareness of that horizon of all knowledge and freedom which is absolute. In other words it is that which, while not simply identical with the knowing subject, is the condition which makes any act of cognition on his part possible. It can never be known in the same way as the individual objects of cognition which are rendered intelligible and comprehensible precisely in virtue of the fact that they fall within the ambience of this horizon of all knowledge. This horizon, then, which makes knowledge possible within its ambience, this ultimate point of reference towards which all knowledge tends, is itself radically beyond all comprehension, and its incomprehensibility is such that it is not [105] removed even when, in accordance with the Christian doctrine of the 'finitum' considered as 'capax infiniti', the absolutely original cause and the ultimate goal of this transcendental awareness, prior to all knowledge, actually imparts itself directly to man. Indeed it is precisely at this moment that this first cause and ultimate goal really manifests itself as incomprehensible in the most radical sense. Thus the *mysterium* reveals itself as the condition which makes it possible for us to know that which is not mysterious. The relationship in which man stands to the *mysterium* is a primary and an ultimate datum of his own nature and his mode of existence, one of which, in his transcendence, he is constantly aware, though not as the object of his conscious' thought, and one which cannot be deduced from any other datum as a secondary phenomenon. The *mysterium*, therefore, is that which alone is genuinely self-evident, and for that very reason that too which can always be overlooked and misinterpreted as a negative phenomenon belonging to the periphery of human living.

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Taking the concept of the *mysterium* in the sense in which we have presented it here (though admittedly we have only given a brief indication of what we mean by it) we can now begin to understand the nature of theology as *reductio in mysterium*. The fact that Christian theology has to do with mysteries (in the plural) is something that this theology itself regards as immediately obvious. Moreover this point has been formulated still more explicitly and precisely in the official teaching of the Church by Pius IX and the First Vatican Council in answer to a kind of rationalism which had come to regard every theology of revelation involving faith as constituting merely the prelude to a philosophical vision. In this official teaching of the Church, however, these mysteries as such continued to be viewed in their relationship to the situation of man as pilgrim, and hardly any attempt was made to bring this teaching about the mystery explicitly into connection with the eternal and abiding incomprehensibility of God. And even abstracting from this point, no consideration was ever given to the strangeness of the fact that the mysteries of faith as such should be manifold. The question of whether in fact there could be many real mysteries in the strictest sense of the term such that they were really distinct from one another was hardly touched upon, if indeed it was adverted to at all. It seemed more or less obvious that this question would have to be answered in the affirmative in view of the many mysteries with which theology *de facto* has to deal. And yet it is perfectly possible to lay down the following thesis: there is, and there can be, only one single absolute mystery in the strictest sense of the term, namely God himself and in relation to him all those aspects under which man with his finite [106] knowledge has to conceive of God to himself are specified in the same manner by this character of the *mysterium*. The thesis can also be formulated negatively: a finite being as such can never be a *mysterium* in the strict sense of the term, but is, of its very essence, merely that which has not yet been fully understood. On any correct ontology of the relationship between being and knowledge, which ultimately speaking consists in the confrontation of a being with itself, it belongs to every finite being necessarily and of its very nature that it should be endowed with a kind of cognition appropriate to itself such that for its own cognitive powers this being cannot be a mystery to itself (apart from its radical orientation to the one mystery which is God). The reason for this is that this mode of cognition is either simply identical with the being concerned or, in virtue of its unlimited transcendentality, it offers every finite being sufficient scope for it itself to be understood within this. Every finite being, therefore, as such, and in its very nature as positive is (abstracting from its intrinsic reference to God) non-mysterious. For this reason it also constitutes as such a mere object for the sciences to investigate to the extent that these are different from theology. Just as all worldly realities are withdrawn from the sphere of the numinous through recognition of the fact that they have been created and are different from God, so too they must in themselves also be removed from the sphere of any ideologizing, i.e. they must be radically submitted to the control of the sciences in the knowledge that no being accessible to the categories of human cognition can be mysterious, unfathomable or obscure. It cannot be this except of course through and in its reference to the incomprehensible horizon of all apprehension in terms of human categories, namely God. Now this reference of which we have just been speaking (and it is this alone that renders the particular being mysterious and at the same time non-mysterious in that special ‘quiddity’ which is proper to *it* in itself) can be a twofold one: the reference to God as remote and the reference to God as making himself near by an act of self-bestowal. It is the first of these two aspects that constitutes the element of mystery inherent in the world and in worldly knowledge. The second ultimately speaking constitutes (a point which we still have to develop) the whole content of the Christian mysteries.

In the light of this it is in a true sense clear that theology cannot contain as many mysteries as one wishes to ascribe to it. Basically speaking there can only be *one* mystery: God as he is

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in himself. This means that theology has the task of reducing the mysteries which manifest themselves, or appear to manifest themselves in it to this single mystery, in order thereby [107] to avoid the danger of invoking mysteries in those areas in which all that is really needed is a more penetrating consideration, or perhaps even the 'de-mystification' in some respect of a given proposition of theology. Now this process of reducing the many mysteries in theology to the single mystery which is God is not particularly difficult. The fact that God in and for himself constitutes mystery in the strictest sense of the term and eternally – even, therefore in the '*visio beatifica*' – this is a point that needs no further explanation here. Insofar as there are propositions in theology over and above this which do constitute mystery in the strict sense, this can only mean two things: on the one hand, in accordance with what we have said, they must refer to God himself, while on the other, in order for them not simply to be identical with the mystery thus mentioned, even formally speaking so far as we are concerned, they must signify God himself in his reference *to us*. This reference cannot simply be that which is constituted by the relationship in which God stands to the world and the individual elements in this as their creator. For abstracting from the scholastic principle that as creator God has no real relationship to the world, and that it is only the world that has the relationship to him, the content of this relationship, over and above the element of mystery in it deriving from its single point of reference, God, would be identical with the reality of the creature itself, and therefore in principle no true mystery at all. The relationship of God to the world in which God is mystery, therefore, can only consist in the fact that it is constituted by God himself and not by any created reality distinct from himself. In other words this means that over and above his 'intrinsic' status as mystery, God can be mystery only in virtue of a quasi-formal causality in which he makes not some entity different from himself, but rather *himself* (in his freedom and abiding sovereignty) the specification of the creature. Let us put the same point in a different way: over and above the mystery intrinsic to his own nature God can only be a mystery in virtue of his self-bestowal, in which that which is bestowed is formally speaking God himself as mystery. Probably there is no need to spend any further time in demonstrating the point that here we have arrived at the key mysteries which are pointed to in traditional theology. For in the very meaning of this concept of God's self-bestowal both that which is designated as the hypostatic union is signified and at the same time that which is referred to as supernatural grace and '*visio beatifica*'. The reason is that in both of these what takes place is truly one and the same act of self-bestowal on God's part, an act which cannot be subsumed with other acts under the concept of the power of God's efficient causality as creator. This means that we are in a [108] position to make the following assertion: That mystery which Christian faith acknowledges consists in the sheer fact that the absolute reality of God himself (of course understanding this as personal, loving, and grace-giving) cannot only achieve a creative confrontation with that which is other to itself, but actually wills to commit itself to, and bestow itself upon this. Then, from the point of view of the creature we can go on to say: the mystery here consists in the fact that it truly is, in the radical sense already referred to, '*capax infiniti*'.

In order to clarify still further this unity which belongs to the one mystery, we would have to go on from this point to work out in detail the unity and the mutually conditioning relationship between the Incarnation and the process by which the world is assimilated to God by grace, a development which we cannot undertake at this point. We may say here, however, that both of these factors constitute the free act of God, yet that at basis they constitute only one single object of the exercise of his freedom as such. Here then we have a theology of the one mystery of God's self-bestowal upon the world with its two mutually conditioning aspects of Incarnation and grace. Now if it is clear what is meant by this theology then the mystery of the Trinity is *ipso facto* given in such a theology and rendered intelligible as mystery. All that has to be done -and that too precisely on the basis of the

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concept of God's self-bestowal is to show that the Trinity as present in the economy of salvation through the two '*missiones*' (of grace and the Incarnation) necessarily embodies also the Trinity as immanent.

Once the two central mysteries of Christianity are recognized as constituting the single mystery of God's self-bestowal upon the world, then we might go on to ask in more precise terms whether other mysteries apart from these do not arise in dogmatic theology such that on the one hand they cannot be subsumed under the one mystery of the self-bestowal of the absolute mystery which is God, while on the other they can justifiably be claimed to be absolute mysteries in the true sense. In my opinion we can unhesitatingly answer this question in the negative. This opinion is based not only on *a priori* considerations put forward above, but also on certain *a posteriori* considerations in which the assertions of dogmatic theology are put to the test to see whether they can justifiably be claimed to be mysteries in the true sense without constituting an element in the mystery of God's self-bestowal and coming to be recognized as such. At most the question might be raised whether the character of mystery is not so unambiguously ascribed by tradition to transubstantiation that in this particular case we have to recognize a mystery in the strictest sense, and [109] one that is supplementary to and distinct from the mystery of God's self-bestowal. But surely we can at least leave this question open, for it can at least be asked whether on the one hand tradition does not cling to an exaggeratedly 'physical' understanding of this mystery, and on the other whether we do not have to regard the real presence of Christ as so closely bound up with the mystery of the Incarnation that from the outset it is only possible to conceive of any transubstantiation at all insofar as it is related to the reality of Christ in general. Here we have only been able to indicate the considerations which we feel to be relevant, yet precisely on the basis of these transubstantiation does nevertheless seem not to tell against our general thesis, namely that there is only *one single* mystery in the strict sense, that of God's self-bestowal by which he extends himself into the dimension of that which is most interior to existence (Spirit) and into the dimension of the history of man (Incarnation).

Now to reduce the actual statements of revelation in this way to the one single mystery has a further significance beyond that which it has for the development of a distinctive theological system as such. The true significance of this *reductio in unum mysterium* is to be found elsewhere. We are taking as our starting-point the intrinsic unity and the mutually conditioning relationship between Incarnation and the grace by which the world is assimilated to God, and we are not overlooking the fact that of his very nature as a historical being man necessarily seeks for the concrete historical manifestation of that which he is as a transcendental being in his own history. This is because history is precisely that process in which the fulness of his own transcendental being is progressively made over to him. On the basis of all this, then, we can here concentrate upon the process by which man is endowed with grace and so assimilated to God without thereby losing sight of the single mystery of salvation in its totality. But on this basis we are compelled to state the matter as follows: that supernatural grace which has supernaturally orientated the transcendentality of man to the immediacy of God must not be conceived of merely as a material addition or supplement such that the only kind of knowledge which can be had of it is that which comes through indoctrination from without. Rather it is something of which man himself must necessarily be aware, even though he does not consciously objectify it to himself. Now if and to the extent that this is true it follows that the totality of the message of the Christian faith is in a real sense already given in a transcendental experience. This does not of course make the history of revelation or the act of bearing witness to the faith, which comes from hearing, superfluous. It is precisely this history of revelation and history of faith at the social [110] level that constitutes the historical process by which this grace-given transcendental experience, constituted and upheld as it is by the self-bestowal of God, is brought to the stage

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of self-realization. It is precisely in order to arrive at the most ultimate and transcendental dimension of his own nature that man is orientated towards his own history at both the individual and collective levels. But precisely as such this is the history of his own transcendental nature itself. Hence it is that revelation as the transcendental experience of grace and revelation as history do not mutually contradict one another but rather are the mutually conditioning elements in one and the same event. In this sense, then, theology constitutes the *reductio in mysterium* and in fact *in unum mysterium*. But this still does not mean that what we are treating of here is merely a process of unifying and systematizing at the conceptual level the various dogmatic statements in which revelation is expressed. Equally, and in a more basic sense, we are concerned with the attempt to interpret all these various statements as a summons to that ultimate and transcendental experience of grace which is implicit in all these statements and which signifies the ultimate verification of them all.

What is meant by this is already to be perceived in scripture itself. For theologians scripture is indeed the absolute norm. But it is this not because the revelation imparted by God takes place originally and for the first time in these human statements as such, but rather because in them the original experience of the Spirit and of its eschatological address to man in Jesus Christ has been objectified in a form which has abiding validity and with a purely normative force. Measured by this original experience scripture is in itself theology, albeit at the normative level, and even though obviously an original and basic experience of this kind never takes place without some kind of conceptual objectivation in terms of human categories. Thus the task of theology must precisely be to appeal in all the various conceptual forms in which it is objectified, to this basic experience of grace, to bring man again and again to a fresh recognition of the fact that all this immense sum of distinct statements of the Christian faith basically speaking expresses nothing else than an immense truth, even though one that has been explicitated throughout all the levels of man's being; the truth namely that the absolute mystery that is, that permeates all things, upholds all things, and endures eternally, has bestowed itself as itself in an act of forgiving love upon man, and is experienced in faith in that ineffable experience of grace as the ultimate freedom of man. So long as theology remains stuck fast at the merely conceptual level – however necessary this may be in itself – it has failed in its true [111] mission. And if we seek to take refuge in the consoling thought that after all the statements of theology still speak constantly of God, and therefore of mystery, then it must be rejoined that this alone is not enough to avoid the danger of sticking fast in this sense. It is not only the 'fides quae' that must come to terms with God as mystery, but also the 'fides qua'. The act of faith as such in itself, and not merely its conceptual objectifications, must in some sense come to terms with the mystery as such. For this too theology (considered as a whole) should offer guidance and direction. It should constitute a 'mystagogia' leading men to the experience of grace, and should not merely speak of grace as of a material subject which is present in man's life solely through the conceptions which he formulates of it. Theology as science must certainly not be confused with kerygma, with parenesis, with the immediate utterance of the Spirit. But at the same time it must not forget either, as it all too often does, that it derives from the utterance of the Spirit and has to serve it. For unless this utterance of the Spirit and the theology deriving from it are related to the ultimate experience of the Spirit in the life of man they lose their distinctive subject-matter altogether.

This task of theology, then, can be defined as a *reductio in unum mysterium*, and that too in terms of its own subject-matter and in the concrete circumstances in which it is currently formulated. From this very many consequences can be drawn for the practice of theology today. Here we can mention only very few of these, which we have selected at random. The propositions of theology must constantly be referred back to the single indefinable mystery

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and the ultimate and grace-given experience of this. In fact all of them express, ultimately speaking, nothing else than the fact that this mystery has imparted itself so as to achieve a state of absolute proximity to man, in which it becomes his authentic consummation and the future that lies before him. The process by which the connection between these propositions and the mystery itself is firmly established belongs to the true nature of theology as such, and this ultimately speaking constitutes the true difference between these propositions and those pertaining to the secular sphere. For these latter too do indeed express realities related to God, but in what they express the actual mystery remains unaffected and still more fails to reveal the reference latent in them to the immediacy of God. This, however, is not to deny, but on the contrary once more to reiterate, that the statements of theology are different from that which they point to, even though the difference here is not self-evident, as it is in the case of statements belonging to the secular sphere. This means that theological statements have a special and [112] peculiar theological relativity of their own, i.e. their radical reference to that which infinitely transcends them, such that without this reference they become meaningless. Now this distinctive relativity in theological statements is something constantly to be enquired into anew in a peculiar and special form of dialectic. It is one that cannot be replaced by an attitude of silent adoration, by a '*theologia meditativa*' which effectively reduces itself to silence. Nor can we express these statements in a form which suggests that the actual formulation of them in human words is the ultimate goal at which we are aiming. Rather it is the attitude of trembling and silent adoration which is intended to beget these statements, and this belongs to that deathly silence in which man's lips are sealed with Christ's in death. It is, therefore, a very difficult task with which theology has to cope in these statements. They must be expressed in words in order that we can arrive at the authentic silence which we need. They must be borne with in patience and hope in respect both of their necessity and of their incommensurability, in which they attempt to utter the ineffable. I believe that theology today has still very much to learn before it speaks in such a manner that men can achieve a direct, effective, and clear recognition of the special quality of this language.

It always remains true, then, that theological statements only authentically become such in a process in which they reach out to a point radically beyond themselves. And if this is true, then, so it seems to me, we in the Church could often show ourselves far more favourable and tolerant with regard to those statements which we may be tempted to qualify as 'heresies' on the grounds that they seem so inappropriate to the reality they express. This applies both to ourselves and to a *magisterium* in the Church which may be excessively self-confident in the manner in which it does its work. Of course the Church has a right and a duty to reject certain theological statements as irreconcilable with her own conviction of her faith. And indeed properly speaking anyone who is suspected of 'heresy' in this way should not be so very resentful that his statement has been rejected provided that in this statement of his he too really has arrived at the *reductio in mysterium* without which his statement certainly would be a heresy. This *reductio* is certainly neither prohibited nor rendered impossible by the fact that his statement has been subjected to censure. The situation today is that every statement of the Church's *magisterium* includes an element of regulating the actual language of theology, something which, fundamentally speaking, has nothing to do with the actual reality in itself. Moreover our position today is quite different from that of earlier times. Today we have to take into account a situation in which [113] on the one hand loyal believers and adherents of the Church, with the best will in the world, cannot come to terms with specific statements of the official teaching of the Church, while on the other they have not *de facto* simply arrived at an interpretation of such statements of their own such as could find acceptance on the part of the teaching authority of the Church. Now in this situation it is surely justifiable and necessary for the Church's *magisterium* to show more patience and

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prudence than it probably brought to bear in practice in earlier times in many cases in which its authority was exercised. We must really and effectively practise theology on the basis of a *reductio in mysterium* in terms of its material content and of the actual concrete circumstances in which we practise it. We must genuinely, effectively, and radically realize the incommensurability of our own theological formulations, a point which in itself is self-evident. And if we do this, then, so I believe, we will very often find it possible to be more modest in presenting our own theology and more indulgent in considering that of others which we are tempted to qualify as heretical. Certainly we cannot hasten at will the gradual advance of history. But did not individuals on both sides already find it possible, even at the time of the Reformation, to perceive that the really fundamental positions of both sides with regard to justification, scripture, faith, etc. certainly did not positively contradict one another, a fact which today is, after all, conceded by both sides? I believe that in a theology which genuinely and effectively, and not merely verbally, realized its own nature as *reductio in mysterium* we of today could in many cases be more patient with so-called 'heresies', of course always with the proviso that the theology suspected by anyone of being heresy is intended in itself to be a *reductio in mysterium*. In fact in the theology put forward by many individuals this actually has been achieved with a notable degree of effectiveness. The theology in question must not merely be a superficial rationalism intended to preserve the individual from having to commit himself to the unfathomable depths of the mystery. And of course a further proviso must be that a theology which is 'under suspicion' in this sense must itself not represent any *schismatic* tendency, any attitude of arrogance in which it refuses to pay heed to the formulations of traditional theology. Rather it must in a right manner and in the right place pay due heed to the prescriptions with regard to language put forward and maintained for theology by the Church's *magisterium* in order to preserve the unity of the Church's own creed. With these provisos, however, we of today both can and should show ourselves generous, patient, and tolerant with regard to theological statements which do not immediately strike us as being [114] 'orthodox'. We should adopt this attitude in view of the fact that the pluralism among the theologies of today is too great for us to control or comprehend. Moreover we ourselves should have a little trust in the power of the reality itself which is being referred to, i.e. in the one single mystery of the proximity of the incomprehensible God who sets all things free to come to himself and to be drawn into his infinitude.

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THE NEW CLAIMS WHICH PASTORAL THEOLOGY MAKES UPON THEOLOGY AS A WHOLE

There can no longer be any doubt that pastoral theology, at least on the radical view taken of it at the Second Vatican Council,[1] and especially in the formation of future priests, has achieved a far higher status among the theological disciplines and a greater importance than it [116] formerly possessed.[2] Pastoral theology is a relatively young discipline.[3] It derives from the age of the Second Empire, and for this reason has, up to very recent times, really been able to exercise any effective influence only in the central European sphere.[4] According to the document '*Optatam totius*' of the Second Vatican Council, however, it should not only be one distinct discipline among other special branches of theology, but should be accorded a role in the shaping of theological studies as a whole and should permeate them throughout their whole extent.[5] So far not much progress has been made in the fulfilment of this task in the Church, however, and it is rendered particularly difficult by the fact that among the theologians and those responsible for arranging the programmes of theological studies there

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[1] The pastoral task laid upon the Council from the outset was repeatedly given expression, and also formulated in programmatic terms by John XXIII; 'Neque opus nostrum, quasi ad finem primarium, eo spectat, ut de quibusdam capitibus praecipuis doctrinae ecclesiasticae disceptetur, adque fusius repetantur ea, quae Patres ac theologi veteres et recentiores tradiderunt . . . Etenim ad huius modi tantum disputationes habendas non opus erat, ut concilium oecumenicum indiceretur . . . oportet ut haec doctrina certa et immutabilis cui fidele obsequium est praestandum, *ea ratione* pervestigetur et exponatur, quam tempora postulant nostra . . . scilicet eae induendae erunt rationes res exponendi, quae cum magisterio, cuius indoles praesertim pastoralis est, magis congruant', *AAS* 54 (1962), 791-793.

However obvious this exhortation may seem – for nothing is more obvious than to preach the faith according to the particular needs of the day – there are certain problems of scientific theory which underlie it and which must now be coped with, and certainly these were not presented to the Counci1 in their full difficulty. Yet they did find expression with all the clarity that could be desired even within the Council and, as it appears, with unprecedented acuteness in the official sphere. This was in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The sustained conflict which took place over the various forms of the text between the rival claims of dogmatic content and understanding of the contemporary situation must here be regarded as particularly symptomatic. On this cf. Ch. Möller, 'Die Geschichte der Pastoralkonstitution', *LTK* Suppl. Vol. III (revised and expanded, Freiburg, 1968), pp. 242 ff.

On the problems referred to here cf. J. B. Mets (ed.), *Weltverständnis in Glauben* (Mainz, 1965); K. Rahner, 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution" ', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York), pp. 293-318; idem, 'The Church and The World', *Sacramentum Mundi* I (1968), pp. 325-327; E. Schillebeeckx, 'Kirche, Lehramt und Politik', *Gott – die Zukunft des Menschen* (Mainz, 1969), pp. 119-141.

These unsolved problems appeared in a still more acute, and apparently still more intractable form in the post-conciliar situation. But the true task of pastoral theology, to which it is urgently summoned at the present moment, is for the Church both at the universal and the individual levels, to develop a strategy which gives a precise theological formulation to, and at the same time advances further, the contemporary situation.

On the efforts which have been made in recent times to recognize these problems and (at least incipiently) to find a way of overcoming them, cf. n. 7.

[2] cf. 'Optatam totius', No. 16-21. Here too it is emphasized that formation in pastoral theology must equally include practical exercises within its scope. We shall not be entering any further into this question in the present study, because it is concerned with formation in pastoral theology as such and not directly with the 'demands' which pastoral theology makes upon theology as a whole.

[3] On the history of pastoral theology cf. especially H. Schuster, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 40-92.

[4] What we mean is a scientific pastoral theology as a theological discipline in the true sense, and not as a practical introduction to catechesis, preaching, and practical work in the confessional ('casus conscientiae') etc.

[5] cf. No. 19

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is, and has been, a total lack of unanimity as to what the essence of pastoral theology actually consists in. This appears from the history of pastoral theology and the considerations of the specialist theologians as to its true nature. It is true that Anton Graf, the theologian of Tübingen (1811-1867) developed an idea of pastoral theology which has only been taken up once more in very recent times.[6] But apart from this the average idea which prevailed in the nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth centuries amounted to saying that pastoral theology (insofar as it was accorded the status of an intellectual discipline at all) consisted of a collection of practical instructions for the cure of souls such as chaplains and parish priests (and apart from these [117] at most only the 'spiritual directors' in the confessional) have to exercise. It is not surprising, then, that a widespread opinion was that these pieces of practical advice for the concrete cure of souls at the level of the parish could already be imparted by the practitioners of other disciplines (chiefly moral theology and spiritual theology) as part of their courses without constituting any distinct discipline in its own right. It was felt, therefore, that the special functions which, after all, pastoral theology still really does have to achieve could in practice be achieved in several other branches of the more practical kind more or less independently of one another, as for instance in homiletics, catechetics, pastoral liturgy, so that it would be superfluous to have any special pastoral theology existing side by side with these more readily understood branches of instruction or practical work.

Against this view an essentially different and deeper concept of pastoral theology was developed in the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*[7] which appeared in four volumes between 1963 and 1969, and also in the preliminary studies leading up to this. At the same time it still remains to be seen whether the new and deeper concept will achieve general acceptance at the levels of theory and above all of practice in the Church. In this conception [118] pastoral theology or 'practical theology',[8] as it should more rightly be called, consists in scientific and

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[6] cf. A. Graf, *Kritische Darstellung des gegenwärtigen Zustandes der praktischen Theologie* (Tübingen, 1841), and on this H. Schuster, *op. cit.*, pp. 56 ff.

[7] F. X. Arnold (Vol. III: F. Klostermann, K. Rahner, V. Schurr, L M. Weber edd., *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie. Praktische Theologie der Kirche in ihrer Gegenwart*, Vol. I (Freiburg, 1964), Vol. II/1-2 (Freiburg, 1966), Vol. III (Freiburg, 1968), Vol. IV (Freiburg, 1969). Several translations are being prepared.

Apart from the studies by H. Schuster and K. Rahner in this manual (cf. especially I, pp. 93-114, 117-215, 323-332, 333-343; II/1, pp. 181 ff., 233 ff., 256; II/2, pp. 19 ff., 46 ff.) cf. also, especially on the whole range of problems treated of here, H. Schuster, 'Pastoral Theology: Nature and Function', *Concilium* I 3 (1965), pp. 4-9 idem, 'Pastoral Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi* 4 (New York and London, 1969), pp. 365-368: K. Rahner, 'Zur gegenwartigen Situation des Christen, Theologische Deutung der Position des modernen Christen in der modernen Welt', *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck, 4th ed. 1966), pp. 13-47; idem, *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 293-371; 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution"', *ibid.*, 'Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church', *ibid.*; cf. also F. Klostermann, 'Pastoraltheologie heute', Dienst an der Lehre, ed. by the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Vienna = *Wiener Beiträge zur Theologie* X (Vienna, 1965), pp. 51-108; F. X. Arnold, 'Was ist Pastoraltheologie?', *Wort des Heils als Wort in die Zeit* (Treves, 1961), pp. 296-300; K. Delahaye, 'Überlegungen zur Neuorientierung der Pastoraltheologie heute', *Gott in Welt* II (*Festschrift für K. Rahner*), edited by J. B. Metz, W. Kern, A. Darlap, H. Vorgrimler (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 206-218. In addition cf. the general summary in the article by K. Rahner entitled 'Pastoraltheologie', *Was ist Theologie?* edited by E. Neuhäusler and E. Gössmann (Munich, 1966), pp. 285-309.

[8] Protestant theology has long since given preference to this term (particular reference should be made at this point to as early a writer as Schleiermacher). It is also better because the term 'pastoral theology' always suggests the idea that it is only the clergy (the 'pastors') who are the upholders of the Church's active work which 'pastoral theology' is designed to study scientifically. But it is precisely this point that is contested by the new and more comprehensive conception of 'pastoral theology', and for this reason it ought to be called 'practical theology' as being less liable to misapprehension.

In accordance with the fundamental ontological difference between the theoretical and the practical reason, we might go on at this point to conceive of the two basic branches of theological investigation each according to its own distinctive nature: on the one hand those theological disciplines which are pursued at the level of the theoretical reason (in other words systematic and historical theology), and on the other hand precisely 'practical

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theological research into the task laid upon the Church in the present of achieving the fulness of her own nature as Church. Two main features distinguish this concept of pastoral theology from the earlier conceptions which prevailed: first, it is not confined exclusively to the work of the clergy (and especially the 'lower ranks' of them) or to the 'cure of souls' exercised by these in the narrower sense of the term. Rather it extends to everything with which the *Church* as such has to do, beginning from the worldwide Church and extending right down to the local churches and the individual communities of believers.[9] Thus (to select a few examples at random) among the questions pertaining to a pastoral theology of this kind would be, e.g. a scientifically conducted investigation into the form which a Roman congregation should assume today, where as a matter of concrete practice a balance can be struck between centralization and decentralization in the Church of today, how large a diocese ought to be today having regard to the particular circumstances in particular societies in which it exists in any given case, what ecclesiastical institutions ought to exist at the supra-parochial level apart from the curia attached to the bishop of a diocese, what the constitution of a national conference of bishops ought to be.[10] Such questions as this [119] and others almost beyond number belong (of course in addition to those already customarily regarded as belonging to it) to a pastoral theology of this kind[11] because today these questions can no longer be left solely to the prudent estimation of the higher authorities of the Church or to mere practical experience to decide.[12]

The second characteristic of a pastoral theology as understood here consists in the fact that an exact scientific investigation must be made into the concrete situation of the Church both interior and exterior, since in practice the achievement of her own fulness depends upon this. Moreover this investigation must be conducted in a theological manner since while the analysis of the contemporary situation does indeed presuppose the findings of the secular sciences, still for the purposes of pastoral theology it must be conducted in a specifically theological way.[13] If pastoral theology today is to take into consideration something more than the activities of the parish priest, having rather to work out in a process of scientific

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theology', which properly speaking once more transposes the whole of theology from the level of the theoretical reason to that of the practical reason.

[9] On what follows cf. the author's study, 'Die Grundlegung der Pastoraltheologie als praktische Theologie', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 117 ff.

[10] In addition to the study in the Handbuch just mentioned cf. also on these particular specific questions K. Rahner, 'The Episcopal Office', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 313-360; idem, 'Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of the Vatican II', *Theological Investigations* VI, pp. 361-368; idem, 'On Bishops' Conferences', *ibid*., pp. 369-389.

[11] In making this point here we do not forget that the actual practice of the Church in all such questions always remains in itself one element in the decision in which a choice is implied. It is an element which cannot be replaced by any process of speculation, even as this is applied in practical theology. Nevertheless there still remains an essential difference between the two kinds of speculation: that of the theoretical reason, which is concerned with that which is and always must be the case (or alternatively speculation on the historical past insofar as this is presupposed in 'systematic theology', as for instance in the history of dogma or theology), and speculation upon the contemporary situation and on the question of what the appropriate action of the Church is to be in the present and future arising from this situation. Moreover while this kind of speculation does not lead unequivocally and of itself to a concrete imperative, still it does open up the field and define the limits within which a decision becomes possible and reasonable.

[12] In other contexts too in the sphere of secular politics etc. we notice an inevitable tendency to reduce everything to 'scientific method' through the 'social sciences', which are intended not merely to yield 'factual findings' but also to use the elements of creative imagination and critical speculation in order to provide patterns for social decision.

[13] On this cf. likewise the contribution of K. Rahner and N. Greinacher entitled 'Die Gegenwart der Kirche. Theologische Analyse der Gegenwart als Situation des Selbstvollzugs der Kirche', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 178-266.

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speculation the 'higher strategy'[14] of the Church in the fulfilment of her salvific task, then the findings of the secular sciences must be brought into theology and subjected once more to examination from the theological point of view in a way which certainly has not been achieved [120] in any traditional pastoral theology so far. It is this theological analysis of the contemporary situation which radically distinguishes pastoral theology in this sense for instance from ecclesiology, which investigates the nature of the Church, or even from canon law, to the extent that this has as its proper field merely that law which is actually in force and the history of this but not the '*jus condendum*'[15] At this point, however, we cannot go any further in developing and justifying this new conception of what pastoral theology must mean. For this we may refer to the *Handbuch* already mentioned, though this is not to assert that this manual has already achieved anything more than a fairly modest progress in working out its own basic conception.

Before we can go on to consider the old and new conceptions of pastoral theology in their relationship to theology and the study of theology in general we must refer to yet 'another' theology which is new, and which can by no means be passed over in the question of the relationship of pastoral theology to theology in general. We are referring here to 'political theology'. It is not possible at this point to provide an account of the nature of this 'political theology', still less to give an account of the various interpretations of it which have been put forward by Catholic and Protestant theologians.[16] Here we must content ourselves merely with characterizing this theology in completely general terms by saying that it is intended to overcome the tendency to restrict theology as a whole exclusively to the private sphere of the salvation of the individual taken in isolation, and to consider the relevance of all theological statements to the politics of society and to sociology in general. Political theology is not, however, intended itself to practise 'politics'. For precisely on its own terms this must be left to a world which has 'become worldly' and autonomous. All that interests us here in view of the special subject with which we are concerned is the relationship which political theology bears to pastoral theology on our own understanding of what pastoral theology means. Now any theological statement can have its points of relevance to, and its implications for social politics and sociology in general – including, therefore, those statements which pertain to the essential theological disciplines which are distinct from pastoral theology itself. To this extent, [121] therefore, and despite the fact that it is the activities of society as such that constitute the special concern of political theology, it does belong to the essential theological disciplines precisely because it is not in fact intended to be a special discipline with a particular 'area' of its own, but is rather conceived of as an essential element in all 'systematic' disciplines. To this extent, then, political theology constitutes no difficulty for pastoral theology, since the latter is in fact conceived of as a special theological discipline distinct from the others. An additional point is that political theology is orientated towards the task of the Church in the 'world' and secular society in the sphere of social politics and sociology. In other words it itself even if it is not intended to be thought of as purely investigating an aspect of the actual 'nature' of the Church, is still concerned with a specific area in which the Church achieves the fulness of her own nature in the concrete. Nor would it make any difference to the points which we have made if it were to be pointed out that everything which the Church does also has a social significance and must be subjected to theological investigation from this aspect also.

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[14] On this concept, and the problems it involves cf. K. Rahner, 'Das Verhältnis der Kirche zur Gegenwartssituation im allgemeinen, *ibid*. II/2, pp. 19 ff.

[15] If canonists were to consider their work as also and primarily concerned with scientific speculation on the '*jus condendum*' as this is required on the basis of a theological speculation on the present and future of the Church, then this kind of canon law (or this part of it) would constitute an element in pastoral theology.

[16] For a summary of this cf. J. B. Metz, 'Political Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi* 5, (1969), pp. 34-38.

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Now if we accept the existence and special nature of pastoral theology, what are the consequences of this for the study of theology as a whole? What claims[17] does pastoral theology make on theology in general? Two points are obvious from the outset, and they are also points which are brought out in the documents of the Church with regard to the reform of theological studies.

First, in our own times pastoral theology must certainly constitute an important and significant branch of study among the other branches which are included in the theological formation of future priests.[18] This at least must be granted if the division of theology into its various branches which has been customary up to the present is by and large taken as given. Let us consider the normal formation of a young theologian on his way to becoming a priest, one who is destined to work at the cure of souls in the ordinary sense. Obviously the emphasis here will firmly have to be laid upon those sub-disciplines within this general subject entitled 'pastoral [122] theology' which are particularly important for the practical activities of a priest of this kind, that is e.g. on catechetics, homiletics, pastoral liturgy, the scientific application of caritas, and (so far as priests working in the missions are concerned) missiology. At the same time, however, it would be regrettable if even in the formation of priests of this kind pastoral theology were, in practice, to be reduced from the outset to the specific department of 'practical' work which we have mentioned, and others of the same kind, and if the future priest were not made familiar with the other problems which belong to pastoral theology on a modern and more comprehensive view of what this means. Attempts are constantly being made to educate the members of a society to a point where they can become active supporters of the life of the society equipped with a critical awareness of the problems involved, and moreover, they must become this (with the due and necessary reservations) by scientifically thinking out the problems involved. On this view, then, every priest too ought to have the sort of formation which does not merely equip him to fulfil the immediate pastoral task to which he will be committed, but also, and more than this, to take an active share in the responsibility of the Church as a whole in the process of achieving the fulness of her own nature. He should have a social and political awareness sharpened by scientific training with regard to the life of the Church *as a whole*. He should be able to contribute actively in his own way to the great decisions of the Church etc. Now the necessary equipment to do this could be imparted to him through pastoral theology, provided that the true nature of this is understood and realized to the full, and provided that pastoral theology is not reduced simply to the level of mere useful ideas and relegated to those sub-disciplines which alone, so it is alleged, are interesting and important for the normal pastor.

The *second* point which is immediately obvious is the need for all theological disciplines to be given a certain pastoral orientation. All of them must, each in its own way, be ready to contribute to the man, the Christian, and the future priest and the task which he will subsequently have to fulfil. In the formation of the theologians our attitude towards the theological disciplines in which we are engaged should not be research for research's sake, or any kind of lofty 'l'art pour l'art'. Rather those engaged in these disciplines must have an awareness of the fact that in this formation of future priests the function they have to fulfil is one of contributing to that pastoral work. This does not imply any cheap popularization of the intellectual disciplines involved, nor, properly speaking, any 'haute vulgarization', any 'adult education courses' in the sphere of theology. For the first consideration must be that the priest

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[17] On this cf. E. Jüngel, 'Das Verhältnis der theologischen Disziplinen untereinunder' = *Studien zur praktischen Theologie* edited by R. Bohren, K. Frör, M. Seitz (Munich, 1968), pp. 11 ff.; M. Seitz, 'Die Aufgabe der praktischen Theologie', *ibid*., pp. 65 ff., and on this W. Herrmann and G. Lautner, *Theologiestudium*. *Entwurf einer Reform* (Munich, 1965).

[18] On the need to include pastoral theology already in the first semesters cf. the memorandum on the formation of students of theology in pastoral theology in *Diaconia* 3 (1968), pp. 372-375.

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must be [123] educated in a conscious critical awareness of what his task involves, and this implies that he must be shown how to think out theological questions in a critical and scientific way, and the second consideration is that theology itself and the problems which constantly arise in it must be 'translated' in a manner that really is appropriate to the subject-matter involved and to the particular epoch. Now to express these matters in a way that is suitable to the times, and which makes it possible to preach them, is itself in turn a task to be scientifically worked out, and one which often demands more in terms of living awareness and strength on the part of the specialist theologian than if he confines himself merely to contributing to his own special branch of theology at the scientific level. Yet in the way in which these particular subjects are studied this process of orientating all theological disciplines towards the practical work of the future priest still remains to a large extent an unfulfilled need. We cannot enlarge any further at this point on the question of what is implied in particular detail by this need for all theological subjects to be orientated, in this way, towards the practical pastoral activities of the priest.[19]

All that we have said so far, however, is totally inadequate as an explanation of the claims which pastoral theology makes upon theology in general. In order to achieve any further progress in this direction we must present certain preliminary considerations with regard to specific aspects of the reform of theological studies in general which has been recognized as due in our own times.

Let us consider first the theory of the nature of a university. In this a justifiable distinction is drawn with regard to the tasks of a university or university faculty and a teacher of academic subjects between teaching and research. The teacher of academic subjects has not merely to teach, not merely to hand on a certain amount of scientific knowledge which he has already gained, or to transmit this to his students with didactic skill He should also undertake 'research', i.e. he should make a critical and positive further contribution to the problems which arise in his particular science. These two tasks are of course intrinsically connected, and ultimately speaking mutually condition one another. But the teachers at the academic level need not merely to strive to fulfil them and to achieve them by their own personal work. Most tasks also need the institutional conditions necessary for their fulfilment as also does research itself. Now among these institutional conditions we have today to include, and that too [124] in a higher degree than formerly, the factor of 'teamwork'. This need not necessarily consist solely in the collaboration of researchers at the same level of formation, but can be conceived of in the form of a collaboration of those who are still at the formative stages in their scientific work ('doctorandi', 'habilitandi') working with an experienced researcher. Here too this collaboration can in its turn assume the most varied forms. At this point a special kind of contact is achieved between teaching and research such that they can actually constitute a practical unity. Nevertheless teaching and research are ultimately speaking *not* simply identical with one another. For even instruction at the academic level in the universities is, in the vast majority of cases, aimed at the formation of individuals who themselves are not in turn destined to become scientific researchers as their own vocation for life. Rather they are intended to apply what they have learned in some 'practical calling' outside the university itself. It is of course a question in itself whether in view of the immense mass of scientific material which has been accumulated, the increasing complexities in scientific method in research etc., we should not introduce a new kind of school intermediary between the high school (secondary schools designed to mature the students to the point where they are ready to enter university) on the one hand, and the universities themselves on

[19] On this cf. also the idea of a basic course in theology which I have developed extensively in connection with 'Optatam totius': K. Rahner, *Zur Reform des Theologiestudiums* = Quaestiones Disputatae 41 (Freiburg,1969), pp. 51 ff.

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the other (considered as institutions for research and for the introduction of the new generation into research as such). These intermediary schools, then, would be 'schools for advanced specialist studies', and in them the material findings of science aimed at by research properly so called would be communicated to those who were intended to apply it in the sphere of a practical calling not designed to make any practical contribution to research itself. In other words it is certainly an open question today whether research and teaching can still remain united institutionally in a single university or university faculty without one or other of the two tasks having to suffer by this. But even if we hold firm to the idea of the university as a single institution sustaining both tasks at once, research and teaching together, and even if we do not regard this idea of the university as utopian in the conditions prevailing today, it must still remain clear that research and teaching do constitute two tasks which, both at the personal and institutional levels, are very different.

Everything which has been said precisely with regard to the university or university faculty in general applies also to a theological faculty and the tasks with which it is confronted. In earlier times in the majority of countries in the Catholic world the theological institutions were more or less identical with the seminaries, and very often these served only to [124] teach, to impart material scientific knowledge, to the next generation of priests, so that in them the teacher of theology was not a researcher in the real sense. By contrast with this the recent pronouncements of the Church with regard to the study of theology do show a certain tendency (to express it prudently) towards the position that all theological study should take place at an 'academic level' after the manner of the theological faculty in a university.[20] Of course this has a positive importance of its own which is very great. But at the same time it also raises, of its very nature, all those problems which are today connected with the ideal of a university as combining research and teaching and pursuing them as a unity. It is of course obvious that in instructing future priests a teacher of theology must not simply provide a higher level of catechetical instruction – in other words that he can only impart the kind of knowledge required for this if he himself is also in some sense a researcher in the sphere of theology. But however true this may be, it still does appear today that in the sphere of theology too research and teaching (considered as the formation of future priests who are not destined to be specialist theologians) can be practised in combination only with great difficulty.

This difficulty is not *merely* that difficulty which threatens the unity of research and teaching at the university in general. There are special reasons, over and above this, that apply to the study of theology in particular. The chief of these consists in the multiplicity of disciplines which have accumulated in the course of the last hundred years as special subjects of instruction within the single discipline of theology, all of which are of obligation. These special subjects are there. They have almost universally been taken as given in the considerations and dispositions which have been put forward for a reform of the studies. And on this [126] view, and with these presuppositions the only question which can still be raised and solved with regard to a reform of the studies is where the individual disciplines should

[20] By way of example we might adduce the following: *Sacra Congregatio pro Institutione Catholica*, *Normae quaedam ad constitutionem apostolicam* '*Deus Scientiarum Dominus*' *de studiis academicis ecclesiasticis recognoscendam* (Rome, 1968). While the term 'Theologia pastoralis' does occur in this programme of studies, nevertheless the reality signified by this does not constitute a principle by which the whole of theology is structurally organized (p.69). Moreover it can hardly be accepted that the pastoral theology signified in these *normae* is in itself aimed at 'practical theology' as briefly outlined above. With regard to these *normae*, therefore, the question has to be raised whether a central theological discipline is not needed in order that there may be an overall orientation of the Church in modern society, and whether this theological discipline should not be developed in terms of scientific theology precisely in the sense intended by the Council with a view to the organization of the Church and her overall strategy (e.g. with regard to the 'political' effectiveness of the central organs of the Church) for the world of tomorrow.

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come in the course of the years of study, and how many semesters and lecture periods should be devoted to each particular discipline. Now it must not be contested here that all these disciplines have their own justification as branches of theological *research*. The question is, however, whether it is equally necessary for all these numerous branches, autonomous as they are and therefore inevitably coming into rivalry with one another, to constitute particular subjects in the teaching and formation of future priests. I may suggest that this is in fact *not* the case, even though at this point I shall not be putting forward any more detailed arguments in support of this view.[21]

Provided a clear distinction is drawn between research and teaching there is at any rate no need to maintain the view that every area of research must also constitute a special branch of teaching different from the other branches, and which, without much regard to the other branches, is accorded a position governed by laws of its own within the general formation of young theologians. A different approach must be adopted, particularly today, because otherwise the proliferation of such special subjects, the material content of which has increased beyond all bounds, is brought to a point at which in studying all of them the theological student knows nothing of any. The organization and presentation of the subject-matter pertaining to the formation of the theology student for his future pastoral activities, and which has to be suitable for this end, must not be determined according to the branches into which theology is divided for the purposes of research. Insofar as it is meaningful at all to regulate the study of theology in terms of the various branches of research, it has at most a certain significance in the formation of future researchers. Though there has been a certain awareness of this in earlier attempts at working out the curriculum of studies, it has not been explicitly reflected upon. For in these earlier attempts there has been an intense concentration upon dogmatic and moral theology, and the other special subjects have been much neglected in favour of these – insofar as they have been accorded any place at all in the official timetable of study. Alternatively [127] a so-called ‘seminarists’ course’ has been provided side by side with the academic one, in order thereby to orientate the subject-matter and mode of presentation of theological instruction to the real goal of this formation, at least to some extent.[22]

We may speak of the unity of theology and its pastoral orientation, but in reality the unexpected pluralism of the theological disciplines as they have developed in history has

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[21] On this cf. the ‘Quaestio Disputata’ by K. Rahner already cited, *Zur Reform des Theologiestudiums* = Quaestiones Disputatae 41 (Freiburg, 1969), pp. 19 ff. and the positive counter-proposal on pp. 48-50.

‘*Optatam totius*’, No. 17 does indeed warn us against any ‘nimia disciplinarum multiplicatio’, but seems at least to accept the usual subjects as a fact which is inevitably given and which raises no problems.

[22] An attempt is actually made to justify this in terms of ‘scientific theory’ by drawing a distinction between an ‘academic’ and a ‘kerygmatic’ theology. On this cf. J. A. Jungmann, *Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkündigung* (Regensburg, 1936); F. Lakner, ‘Theorie einer Verkündigungstheologie’, *Theologie der Zeit* 3 (Vienna, 1949), pp. 1-63; J. B. Lotz, ‘Wissenschaft und Verkündigung’, *ZKT* 62 (1938), pp. 465-501; H. Rahner, *Eine Theologie der Verkündigung* (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1939) and against this E. Kappler, *Die Verkündigungstheologie* (Freiburg, 1949). While this distinction is not actually justified, since every theology must be scientific in its approach, and at the same time every theology as ‘intellectus fidei’ must also be orientated towards preaching, still the whole range of problems raised in the thirties of the present century [on this cf. also K. Rahner, ‘Kerygmatische Theologie’, *LTK* VI (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1961), 126; idem, ‘Über die Verkündigungstheologie. Eine kritisch-systematische Literaturübersicht’, *Pazmanita Tudósitó* (Dunaszerdahely, Hungary) 16 (1941-42), pp. 3-10] does show that even today a considerable part of theology as *de facto* practised is still not making a clear enough contribution to a form of preaching that is really relevant to the times, one which reaches modern man and touches his need for faith, and educates the young pastoral cleric in *his particular* tasks. One expression and cause of this deficiency, however, is also the excessive pluralism of the subjects included in the course of theological instruction. Unless this excessive pluralism is eliminated all reform of the curriculum of theological study remains at the level of mere theory. One might regard the determination to overcome this excessive pluralism, which is dictated by the subjects chosen as areas of research, as a touchstone for determining whether the will to undertake a far-reaching reform is real and sincere.

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been left unaffected by this in the anxiety to achieve a course of studies which is as far as possible 'academic'. And so long as this is true any reform of theological studies is foredoomed to failure. For the purposes of teaching theology, as distinct from researching into theology, the traditional theological disciplines must be broken up, and the subject-matter which has to be taught must be organized on quite different principles. In demanding that the subject-matter of theology shall be presented according to a single unifying principle of organization[23] we are not, of course, implying that henceforward anything and [128] everything which a young theologian has to hear and learn in the course of his studies must positively be integrated into this intrinsically structured corpus of his theological formation. Not only is this impossible from the technical point of view, but also it would lead to the forcing of a 'system' upon him, or at least the setting up of a 'system' which existed merely formally and on paper. Moreover to demand this would be to do violence to the very nature of human knowledge as such, and to the 'gnoseological and concupiscent' conditions to which the individual is subject and in which he is from the outset constantly exposed to a pluralism in the various branches of knowledge such that these do not mutually throw light upon one another.

When we say, therefore, that the special subjects in theology which have become traditional must be broken down in order that an intrinsically articulated structure may be imparted to the corpus of theological teaching, and in order that this teaching may be effectively imparted, this demand is not invalidated when the corpus properly so called comes to be surrounded by a whole circle of 'ancillary' subjects, 'special lectures', 'special courses', or even by particular courses of lectures in which at least a certain idea of the 'pursuit' of theological research and the methods and problems it entails is imparted to the student of theology. Hence we can leave open at this point the question of *which precise* special subjects in theology as taught up to now will have to be transformed so as to be included in this corpus of theology properly so called, and which other subjects as taught up to now can continue to exist as formerly, but now more or less as autonomous disciplines in their own right, i.e. as 'ancillary subjects' attached to the corpus of theology.[24] It is of course likewise impossible to enter here into the question of whether any consequences arise from the considerations we have put forward so far with regard to the relations between philosophy and theology on such a view of theology as this, and what those consequences are.[25] A further

[23] The old and famous question of the 'formal object' of theology (in its unity and presupposed as constituting that unity) would provide a starting-point for investigating the question of a principle of structural organization for the whole course of theological instruction. But presumably it could never be anything more than such a starting-point.

[24] There will be no attempt artificially to force such subjects, for instance, as Church history or history of philosophy, introduction to textual criticism of the New Testament etc. into this course. Rather they will firmly be allowed to remain as special courses in their own right. Otherwise there will in fact be no place for a corpus of teaching in which everything which the student of this body of doctrine needs to know can be integrated within a single discipline.

[25] In the 'Latin' scheme of studies, which was different from the 'German' one, it was taken for granted that some years of the course of studies should be devoted to philosophy purely as such before the theologian began his theology. The justification for this Latin scheme is anything but obvious. It proceeds from a fundamental idea of the relationship between nature and grace, philosophy and theology, which was tacitly assumed, but which can surely no longer be accounted as self-evident, at any rate today. This is not in any way to deny the possibility of an independent, relatively autonomous philosophy, or the necessity for distinguishing in principle a '*duplex ordo cognitionis*' (*DS* 3105). But surely we must object to the procedure of a superficial departmentalization of philosophy and theology in which one is made to follow upon the other in the formation of a theologian. For today it is quite impossible for him any longer to be a 'philosopher' in the sense in which this was formerly conceived of. On this cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IX, (London and New York, 1973) passim; and the author's article, 'Philosophy and Theology', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 71-81, and most recently 'Philosophy and Theology' in *Sacramentum Mundi* (New York and London, 1969) (bibliog.).

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question of which [129] we shall not be speaking here is concerned with exegesis, and that too not merely from the point of view of its very nature as theoretically conceived of, but also in view of the fact that it is not only the specialist, but every priest who must be a reader and interpreter of scripture as such.

In exegesis, then, we cannot avoid the responsibility of ensuring that it shall not consist of an artificial and a *priori* interpretation of prescribed texts in answer to questions set for it by systematic theology. But the question concerning exegesis of which we shall not be speaking here is whether it can be incorporated into this newly structured corpus of theological teaching, and if so how, or alternatively whether it should exist autonomously side by side with this corpus as an independent discipline equal in importance to the corpus itself.[26] Thus a question which now arises is what, in more precise terms, the structure of this corpus of theological teaching should be, given that the process of working out this structure must not be prejudiced from the outset by the traditional disciplines of theology. Here we must mention two principles for working out a structure of this kind. They are not simply two principles among many other conceivable ones which we might perhaps have selected. Rather they have to be understood as arising fundamentally from the very nature of the question as the only two possible ones. A priest has to be trained for his future priestly tasks. But that which he has to impart to others as an official priest of the Church is precisely that which also constitutes his own personal existence as a man and a Christian. If both of these aspects are borne in mind then we can perhaps say that two and only two basic conceptions and principles of organization are possible for a [130] course of studies of this kind. For want of a better terminology we shall call the first of these the '*existentielle*' concept of theology, and the other the 'vocational' concept of theology. The first concept seeks to organize the corpus of theology on the basis of a 'Christian anthropocentricity'[27](which does not imply any opposition to a theological theocentricity) in that it seeks to awaken the student and to cause him constantly to reflect upon the question constituted by man himself (from the philosophical point of view and drawing upon the other anthropological sciences of the present day), and to answer this question in terms of the message of Christianity. Of course it might be said that this too has been, and continues to be, the task and the achievement of the theological disciplines as practised up to now. But what we mean here is that by presenting the question in this way a structured development can be achieved of the subject-matter which has to be taught in theology without referring back to the theological disciplines as formulated in earlier times. To this structured development of the subject-matter which has to be taught in theology the specialists in the particular branches of theological research have to make their contribution precisely at *that* point at which it is demanded by this 'system' as a whole. They do not make this contribution on the basis of each particular theological discipline as such taken autonomously and in isolation from the rest. This 'existentielle' concept of theology cannot be considered any further at this point; for this reference may be made to considerations which the author has put forward elsewhere.[28]

As a result of this long and apparently devious development we have now arrived at a point at which we are in a better position to clarify the demands which pastoral theology makes upon theology as a whole. The 'vocational' concept of theology as a whole means, in material terms, nothing else than that the structural organization of the whole corpus of theology must be provided by pastoral theology.

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[26] On this cf. the discussion between N. Lohfink, 'Text und Thema', *Stimmung der Zeit* 181 (1968), pp. 120-126 and K. Rahner, 'Die Exegese im Theologiestudium', *ibid*., 181 (1968), pp. 296-205 and in general my study, *Zur Reform des Theologiestudiums* Quaestiones Disputatae 41 (Freiburg, 1969).

[27] cf. K. Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology', *Theological Investigations* X (London and Freiburg, 1973), pp. 28-46, and also the literature cited in n. 25.

[28] cf. K. Rahner, *Zur Reform des Theologiestudiums* = Quaestiones Disputatae 45 (Freiburg, 1969).

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The fact that a project of this kind need not remain at the level of pure theory is demonstrated by the new theological faculty at Heerlen (Hoogeschool voor Theologie en Pastoraat) which was founded a few years ago in the diocese of Roermond in collaboration with certain members of religious orders and societies.[29] In this faculty the scientific and theoretical [131] formation is provided in a 'basic course' lasting five years, followed by two years of directly practical pastoral formation. To give only one example of how such a 'vocational' concept of pastoral theology can supply the principle of organization for the whole of theology considered as teaching a brief outline may be given of the 'basic course' provided by the Heerlen faculty.[30] In the *first* year of this 'basic course' (the 'propaedeutic year') the organization of the subject-matter is aimed primarily at an exposition of the student's understanding of himself (to the extent that he is aiming precisely at making a pastoral contribution to the Church's mission). This is achieved by giving a description of society and of the Church of today, together with a special philosophical and theological evaluation of this. In addition an introduction is given to the methodology of scientific thought. The subject-matter in the *second* year is the wellbeing of society: problems such as work, technology, welfare, leisure-time, catering for the welfare of the individual in the contemporary developments of industry, the progressive unification of the world, salvation and perdition, politics, communism, the consummation of the world and eschatology. All these questions are treated of in an inter-disciplinary manner by a team of lecturers (sociologists, psychologists, exegetes, dogmatic and moral theologians). Iii the *third* year the development of the person in society is treated of. Light is thrown upon the various aspects of man as sinful, as free, and as redeemed, by the various specialists. The subject-matter of the *fourth* year falls under the heading of 'Man in the Christian and Religious Aspects of his Life'. Here [132] such questions are raised as the existence of God, the nature of God, and religion, and all of these are treated of in an interdisciplinary manner. In the *fifth* and final year of the 'basic course' the subject treated of is the Christian and religious community. In this year an extensive treatment is given to such subjects as the Church, the sacraments, liturgy, preaching, and other means of communication, and a treatment of these questions is given on the basis of the various disciplines. In this connection too it is obvious that, as has already been laid down as a matter of principle at an earlier stage, the corpus of these courses of lectures is supplemented and surrounded by special lectures, the subject-matter of which, so far as the Heerlen faculty is concerned, has an explicitly missionary character.

Here we have given only a fragmentary account of the programme followed in this theological faculty. But even so, when we view this programme, the first point that immediately becomes clear is that the classic theological disciplines are no longer provided as special subjects for instruction, but are rather accorded an 'interdisciplinary' status in

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[29] cf. e.g. *Over de nieuwe opleiding tot priester en pastoraal werker aan de Hoogeshool voor Theologie en Pastoraat te Heerlen* (Heerlen, 1969).

[30] We should not, of course, overlook the great difficulties which such a conception entails. For certainly we should not fall into the mistake of seeking absolutely to transform all theology into practical work. Such a thing would be quite impossible in view of the difference between the two spheres, which is radical and irremovable. But even abstracting from this, it is also necessary to accord 'pure' theory its own due place in the concrete development of the course of studies. Nevertheless we cannot overlook the fact that in the discussion of the reform of studies which has taken place in the central European sphere there has been pressure to give a greater place to practical work. In this respect we should have to regard the Dutch scheme described above and the Roman scheme which has prevailed hitherto as at opposite extremes to one another in the Catholic sphere. For my own conception, which bears more on the concrete existing circumstances, cf. the *Quaestio Disputata* already referred to, *Zur Reform des Theologiestudiums* = Quaestiones Disputatae 41 (Freiburg, 1969), p. 48; in addition reference may be made to my study in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* IV (Freiburg, 1969), pp. 497-515; for other attempts of this kind we should mention the survey of studies in the article entitled 'The Renewal of Training for the Priesthood', *Concilium* 3/5 1969, pp. 91-98, especially note 1 and note 14, and also H. E. Hess and H..E. Tödt, *Reform der theologischen Ausbildung*, I-II (Stuttgart, 1968-69).

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which they assist and make a contribution towards a. single unified subject matter to which all of them are subordinated. In practice, perhaps, this 'vocational' concept of theological formation is, after all, not so far removed from the 'existentielle' concept of theology as indicated above, so that perhaps the two conceptions do not necessarily have to be presented as mutually exclusive alternatives so far as the concrete development of the studies is concerned. The conception of the course of theological studies at Heerlen as set forth in the small programme published in April 1969 still remains at a very general stage, although it is clear that the process of using the subject-matter of pastoral theology to determine the structure of theology as a whole has been carried through uncompromisingly and without any false concessions. A possible criticism might be, however, that it does not yet appear from this programme whether the traditional subject-matter of dogmatic and moral theology has been included.[31] Other special subjects, such as the history of philosophy and [133] Church history can be interpreted even now as permanent 'ancillary subjects' supplementary to the corpus of theology proper, and this procedure does not constitute any special difficulty. But the subjects covered in dogmatic and moral theology as previously understood must certainly also be included in the corpus of this unified theology in itself (though this is certainly not to exclude the possibility of holding individual courses of special lectures in these areas), and here a difficulty does arise which has probably hardly been overcome as yet.

Our reason for referring to this order of studies at Heerlen at this point is simply that we wish to point to a concrete example of how pastoral theology can be something more than merely an important special subject within theology, and one that as such has to be taken into account in all the other special departments of theology too. Pastoral theology, rather, or the subject-matter and function belonging to it, can provide the principle according to which the whole of theology is structurally organized. Certainly the way in which this is done precisely at Heerlen is not the only possible way. In principle other concrete approaches are conceivable in which pastoral theology can be made to provide the structure and unifying principle of theology as a whole. Nor let it be said that all these considerations are so much word-play, serving only to organize into a formal system a multiplicity of subjects or courses which in any case do exist and always have existed from the first, without doing very much to alter the realities of the studies that are undertaken. There is very much that is changed in the practical application of the studies when a principle of structural organization of this kind is really put into force clearly and decisively. It becomes clear how specific subjects must necessarily be included in the curriculum, even though they were hardly treated of at all in the earlier disciplines. Other areas of subject-matter recede into the background which formerly simply took up too much time, attention, and energy, and imposed too great a strain on the memories of the students. A division of the number of periods available can be arrived at which is effective and realistic, being decided by the individual themes themselves, and not according to the already established division of the theological disciplines. As for the fresh themes for theological investigation which arise, we need only recall the whole range of subject-matter in pastoral theology mentioned at the beginning of this study, which [134] extends far beyond the themes which have already become traditional in this particular

[31] There is no need to deny that in a 'vocational' concept of this kind the *danger* does exist of orientating the work of teaching theology in *too* pragmatic and utilitarian a manner towards something which – all other problems apart – already no longer exists or will no longer be the case if the priest is constantly engaged in pastoral work. For those problems which are most immediate and urgent today may soon perhaps no longer be so. Thus we would certainly be doing no service to the future priest if in dogmatic and moral theology we were to treat merely of what is the subject of discussion in all 'public circles' precisely today and is of 'burning' interest to young theologians. But while recognizing the truth of this principle it still does not justify the practice of continuing to hand on questions which have become obsolete in theological teaching. In view of the fact that the Second Vatican Council itself warns us against this ('Optatam totius' No. 57) the suspicion of this cannot be based on mere fancy.

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discipline, and extends to all those questions which fall under the heading of 'political theology'. By introducing a clear and unambiguous structural organization into the corpus of theology in this way we could also avoid the burden and waste of time entailed by the fact that certain themes tend to reappear again and again in different disciplines (for instance in the case of the sacraments, they are treated of very extensively in dogmatic theology, but also in moral theology, canon law, pastoral theology and liturgy).

Of course we might consider the demands which a pastoral theology of this kind makes upon theology as a whole from certain quite different points of view.[32] For instance it would have to be shown in the concrete how practical theology can and must be the critical conscience of the other theological disciplines (taking these also in their role as branches of research). What we mean by this is that practical theology should provide the particular disciplines with an awareness of the element of practical theology inherent in themselves, and which must be taken into account by themselves (something which in practice is often neglected). If, for instance, homiletics is to be something more than mere rhetoric as applied to preaching, it must in principle also be a *material* homiletics, i.e. it must make actual and relevant to the present, by means of a 'hermeneutics appropriate to the existing situation of the world' the message of the gospel in the teaching of the Church with a view to proclaiming it in a manner appropriate to the needs of the present day. A major part of this material homiletics, however, will in principle and for practical reasons (to avoid repetition etc.) have to be included in the study of dogmatic theology itself. And practical theology must again and again draw the attention of the dogmatic theologians to this point. It must raise the relevant questions in a more acute form and promote active consideration of them – those questions with which dogmatic theology is confronted as a result of practical experience. A similar point could also be shown to apply to Church history, exegesis, and biblical theology, canon law, and the study of the liturgy (considered primarily as instruction in the *liturgia condenda*).[33] This is not to say that it is only in a formal sense that practical theology constitutes the conscience of the other theological disciplines, rousing them to activity in a critical and creative way. But there is in fact much which must be considered necessary precisely in [135] order that the Church may achieve the fulness of her own nature in the concrete (in other words for her 'practical life' in the specific situation prevailing 'today'), and yet which cannot be achieved in pastoral theology taken as an individual discipline in isolation. In other words it must be achieved in the other theological disciplines. But it is precisely practical theology itself that must ensure that this is in fact done.

A further question might be raised, this time from the standpoint of the history of human thought in general. It concerns the fact that today the theoretical reason has lost a certain primacy which it once enjoyed, and pride of place has come to be accorded to the practical reason. The reason is that the world itself, even so far as the mind of man is concerned, has become dynamic, with the result that man and his environment are no longer merely the object of contemplation, but constitute rather the object and the material of human activity itself. What, then, it may be asked, are the implications of this for the theology of today and tomorrow and for practical theology in particular. The moment we consider this question from the point of view which we have only been able to indicate here we can conjecture that theology will inevitably be transformed to a far greater extent than we of today can yet perceive. A further general perspective within which our question must be considered is provided by the growing recognition that today, for all the unity of the creed in the one Church, a pluralism of theologies[34] has inevitably come to prevail within the one Church,

[32] On this cf. also my study in *Theological Investigations* X (London and Freiburg, 1973), pp. 293-317.
[33] cf. *ibid*., passim.
[34] On this subject cf. also *Theological Investigations* IX and X, as also idem, 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church' in this volume pp. 3-23.

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which is far deeper, more far-reaching and more uncontrollable than formerly. This is something which in principle must by all means be considered a positive enrichment of the Church herself. From this point of view a further distinction would have to be drawn within the questions we have raised, so that it would lead to the further question of whether perhaps there must be, and will be, another theology besides those already existing (the theologies of the theoretical reason, of contemplation, of an 'aesthetic' interpretation of the world, of a transcendental metaphysic etc.). This other theology would be the theology of the practical reason, of human activity, of the decisions which have to be taken in the Church and in the world at the social level. The effect of all this would be that while these theologies would certainly have a unifying point of reference among themselves in the common creed and in the unity of the Church's hope and love, still it would no longer be possible in any adequate sense to produce a single overall [136] concept of theology to cover them all and relate them all to one another. When we view the question in this perspective surely we can no longer doubt that two consequences follow: on the one hand, even if we produce a single universal theology structurally organized in terms of the practical reason and of practical theology, it will still not be the only theology in the Church. On the other hand, however, it is surely true that it will be this theology that will most clearly make the nature of our own times subject to conscious reflection. And it is this reflection on the special nature of our own times that will constitute the signature of the Church of tomorrow, and therefore of her theology as well.

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THE FUTURE OF THEOLOGY

The man who seeks to look into the future of theology is in the same position as anyone else attempting to say in other contexts how the future will turn out. All he can do is to throw onto the screen of the future a broader and vaguer projection of certain special features of the present. But whether these features he projects really will be included among the distinguishing characteristics of the future is something that ultimately speaking no-one knows.

So it is too with regard to the future of theology. Everything which we are about to say is subject to this proviso. Let us attempt, without systematizing, and in the knowledge that the selection we make must necessarily be extremely arbitrary, to depict certain traits of that future of theology which has already begun.

The Catholic theology of the future will be a theology of the one abiding creed of this Church. We do not know how large this Church will be in terms of numbers, or what influence it will have upon society in the future. But in any case it will endure, and it will always be constituted by its proclaimed belief in the living God who, by his act of gracious self-bestowal, has penetrated into the world to become the ultimate strength underlying the unfolding process of its history and to be the absolute future towards which it tends. This is achieved through acknowledged belief in Jesus Christ in whom this absolute proximity of God to the world has achieved its climax in history and the manifestation of its eschatological victory. It is achieved through that creed which leads to unconditional love of neighbour and hope for eternal life.

This ancient creed of the Church is of course itself something that has constantly to be thought out afresh, to be made actual, and to be expressed in a manner appropriate to the times. Yet it endures. It can endure because what it proclaims as creed is precisely belief in an infinite future; belief in the immediacy of man's confrontation with God considered as the absolute point of reference by which every ideology bound up with [138] history and subject to its conditions is to be judged.[1] And it is to this creed of the Church abiding, yet ever new, that the theology of the future in the Catholic Church also remains ceaselessly attached. It will continue to be the task of that theology to reflect upon this creed with all the energy of the spirit and all the power of the heart in the light of each new situation as it arises in the life of believing and thinking man.

The Church's creed is the creed of a Church which constantly adheres to the basic structures with which she was founded, a Church which retains a living historical continuity with her own origins, a Church which has her officially constituted authorities, and therefore a teaching authority also. And to the extent that all this is true the theology of the future also retains a permanent connection with the teaching authority or *magisterium* of this Church, the upholders of which are the pope and the whole body of bishops considered as the unity.

The critical function which theology as a science obviously has can only be exercised by it precisely insofar as it acknowledges this necessity of adhering to the creed of the Church and

[1] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Das Christentum und der "neue Mensch"', *Schriften zur Theologie* III (Einsiedeln, 7th ed., 1967) , pp. 159-179; idem, 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 59-68; 'Ideology and Christianity', ibid., pp. 59-76; also the chapters entitled 'The Function of the Church as Critic of Society' and 'The Question of the Future' in *Theological Investigations* XII.

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to her teaching authority. This abiding connection which theology has does not exclude, but rather includes the fact that the concrete forms which it assumes are themselves subject to a process of historical change, so that theologians must constantly show themselves anew bold enough to commit themselves to a future that is still unknown.

The theology of the future, for all the unity of the abiding creed, will include a very high degree of pluralism in theology,[2] and one which can no longer be mastered by any one mind. It may be true that as a result of modern rationalization, technical skill, and the intermingling of all those spheres of human living which were previously kept distinct, a single world civilization has emerged. But however true this may be, still, by reason of the interior differences which still exist within this single world civilization a far more manifest pluralism of theologies will develop such that, however firmly they may remain attached to the one creed of the Church, still they will remain quite different from one another in [139] respect of their methods, their structural developments, their outlooks, their terminologies, and the practical trends to which they give rise. These differences will be so great that as theologies it will be quite impossible for them to be covered by, or subsumed under any one single homogeneous theology. It must be recognized that in terms of sheer time and energy it is quite beyond the resources of any one individual Christian and theologian to achieve a comprehensive grasp of all the material with which each theology has to work at the scientific, social, and cultural levels, and so to incorporate it in his own theology. And this fact alone makes it impossible for the pluralism of theologies which will exist to be subsumed within a single homogeneous theology in this way.

It is of course necessary for these theologies to maintain a constant dialogue among themselves. But however actively this may be pursued, still there will no longer be any one theology of the Church. Rather there will be theologies of the Church in the plural, each of them having a different bearing upon, and approach to the one creed, though this does not of course mean that they will be in contradiction to it. All this will be borne in upon us more clearly and more forcefully than formerly, so that it will become clear that we can no longer achieve a comprehensive view of all the differences involved. This also has implications for the teaching authority of the Church. The function of this in preserving the unity of the creed must be maintained to the full. But for all this it will have to accord to all these various theologies a greater degree of self-responsibility in the particular bearing which each has upon the single abiding creed of the Church. Presumably this pluralism among the theologies of the future will also open up quite new possibilities, for then there will be no attempt at falsely smoothing out the differences between them and so reducing them to a single uniform theology in order to cope with the danger of a confessional pluralism among the theologies leading to illegitimate divisions within the Church.[3]

Nor will the theology of the future be able to dispense with a certain boldness in which all the powers and resources at man's disposal are brought to bear in seeking out the problems involved — a boldness, therefore, in applying philosophical thought to these problems in the broadest sense of the term. Yet the theology of the future will no longer be able, as in former times, simply to presuppose a single philosophical system common to all which is already more or less worked out and ready [140] to hand when theology enters upon its own specific province.[4] These theologies will, to a certain extent, have to manage for themselves in working out the particular philosophies with which they will have to work. Obviously they will not be able to presuppose or to develop on their own account a philosophy which is

[2] cf. the chapter entitled 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church' in this volume, pp. 3-23.
[3] cf. esp. the article entitled 'On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion', in this volume, pp. 24-67.
[4] cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* X (London and Freiburg, 1973), pp. 235-242.

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consciously opposed to or contradicts some other philosophy which has been presupposed or developed in another theology within the Church. But the theologies of the Church in the future can freely commit themselves to different philosophies existing side by side and allow for the fact that they may, to a certain extent, be disparate and alien to one another. And in this situation it may be quite impossible in the concrete to achieve any higher level of integration at which all these various philosophies are subsumed within a single system of philosophy which is regarded as absolute. This insuperable pluralism of the philosophies which are in turn pursued within the theologies is in itself a cause and a factor in the pluralism of the theologies in the Church.

The theology of the future considered precisely as theology, and so not primarily in its bearing upon the future but in its enduring validity as such, will concentrate very decisively upon the heart and centre, the ultimate and basic questions of the Christian message. Certainly this does not mean that we shall have to abolish, or interpret in a quite different sense than formerly, certain expressions of the Church's awareness of her faith which were formulated at some point in the past as claiming an absolute commitment of faith on the part of the Church, and so considered as having the force of official dogma. But this concentration of the theology of the future on the most radical questions and the most ultimate content of revelation surely does imply that the future developments in theology itself, and so too in that understanding of the faith which it helps to condition in history, will consist less than formerly in drawing further distinctions at the conceptual level within the existing statements of the faith; that the aim of the theology of the future will be not so much to produce 'new dogmas' as to achieve a radical understanding of what it means most ultimately and most fundamentally to speak of divine revelation and grace, of the one mediator, of the Church's responsibility for the world, and of eschatological hope.

However regrettable this may appear at first sight, the theology of the future will be one that speaks at what is, comparatively speaking, a very abstract level. This statement is not intended to decide the question of [141] whether and how the man of the future can regain a new and unconstrained attitude towards images, symbols, and therefore too towards myth in the true sense of the term, and so too in his theology, despite his critical rationalism. But even if this were to be successfully achieved the language of the theology of the future would still necessarily be a very abstract one. It must be remembered that in the secular sciences concerned with man, and even in those concerned with the world as subject to sense perception, the treatment of these subjects is always and necessarily an abstract one.[5] This fact alone makes it not so very surprising that theology too has to be treated of at a very abstract level.

Right from the first there has always been, in the treatment of theology, a certain awareness of the fact that all theology can only speak of its subject in analogous terms; in all its statements a difference has to be recognized between the idea and its expression, the image and that reality which it properly signifies. Theologians have had to be aware of this even though they can never overcome the situation in which vision and expression are simultaneously one and distinct. But this distinction is recognized more clearly today than it was formerly. It constitutes the basis, materially speaking justified, for a programme of demythologizing which is for the most part misunderstood or falsely applied. Once this distinction is more clearly grasped at the conscious level it will have the effect of making the language of the theology of the future more abstract. It is true that we have consciously to be aware in theological language of a figurative element which is not simply a quality inherent in the reality signified in itself. It is true that ultimately speaking this figurative element can

[5]We might for instance adduce the example of the Quantum Theory in Physics, the subjects of which can only be referred to by means of complicated comparisons.

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be expressed only in statements which themselves in turn have to work with a figurative approach of this kind. Moreover this criticism must precisely be applied to every statement of this kind, since it points to a factor inherent in theological expression in itself. It involves a constant movement to and fro between various conceptual patterns. It means that in seeking to understand such statements we must constantly subject our hermeneutic methods to fresh questioning. Now it is precisely this that forces upon us what at first sight appears as the pallid abstraction of theological language. We will have to accustom ourselves to this just as we have accustomed ourselves to the formal abstractions involved in modern physics. We will have to learn freely to allow the vivid imagery of the ancient formulations of the creed to retain their force as being still [142] significant for us in the future also. But we will have to stand back from them, so to speak, at a greater distance than was formerly the case, in order to express in relatively abstract theological terms what is truly meant by such credal formulae, yet at the same time we must not imagine that that single reality which is signified in both modes of expression can be attained to and lived by solely by a process of mere theological abstraction.

The theology of the future will bear an ecumenical stamp. In the future ecumenical theology will be not so much a special discipline existing side by side with others, but rather an intrinsic element imposing its stamp upon all theological thought and work. The very fact that every theological discipline has a duty to contribute to the life of the Church, and that it belongs to the life of the Church to maintain always and everywhere the ecumenical will to achieve the unity of the Churches and at the same time a living multiplicity within the one Church[6] — this fact in itself is enough to make it necessary for all theology to bear this ecumenical stamp.

One factor will make it more and more possible to impart an ecumenical character of this kind to each specific discipline within the future theology. It is that the methods of work adopted in the theologies of the particular confessions are coming increasingly to approximate to one another. This is because biblical theology is coming to be recognized in all of them as the starting-point and the norm for theological work, and also because nowadays the real theological frontiers to a large extent cut across the confessional boundaries. Again the theologies of the particular confessional groups the ultimately basic positions and basic attitudes (as distinct of course from the further consequences which are drawn from such basic positions, these being still matters of genuine controversy between the confessions) have perhaps already everywhere overcome the limitations inherent in maintaining schools of theology proper to particular confessional groups. Hence with regard to these basic attitudes and basic positions the various Churches no longer differ so very much among themselves. The differences still outstanding between them are concerned rather with some real factor in the life of another Church which makes it different from one's own. In saying this however we do not deny that precisely this difference of attitude towards the realities which divide the confessions from one another has in its turn a certain theological relevance. The theology of the future will have an ecumenical quality. The theologies of the various Churches will be conscious of their responsibility to maintain [143] a constant dialogue with one another, and will be ready mutually to learn from one another.

Again with regard to the choice of subject-matter, the emphases in the theology of the future will be very different from those of the theology of the last century. The greater pluralism among the theologies of which we have already spoken will in itself be enough to ensure this. Of course it is difficult, or even impossible, to say what the central subject-matter of these individual theologies will be. In theology too it is justifiable to allow for something like a fashion. For this means nothing else than the attitude of according due importance to a

[6] cf. n. 3.

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specific historical situation which is not always the same, which implies fresh tasks for man at any given time, and therefore too which justifiably imparts to theology itself a form appropriate to the particular epoch. But how this will take place is something which we can hardly guess at in advance. For the present itself is always ambivalent and susceptible of more than one interpretation, and hence in itself lays special claims upon theology. Yet we have to recognize an inescapable circle here such that theology in its turn has itself to interpret this claim which the present makes upon it. Moreover however justified futurology may be in itself, the real future, and that too precisely as the situation in which theology has to develop, remains obscure.[7] Thus with regard to the choice of subject-matter, and the preference given to special subjects in the future theologies, we can perhaps only raise questions, even though we know that these future theologies, even in respect of their content, will have a different structural organization from the theology of the past.

Will the theology of the future be intrinsically anthropocentric in character? This would not imply any contradiction of the fact that theology in itself is radically theocentric, provided only it is borne in mind that man only realizes the theological dimension in his nature in the act of totally committing his own existence to the ineffable mystery which we call God. But concentration upon the anthropocentric element of this kind could mean that in all theological statements the fact that their contents refer to man as subject, as the embodiment of freedom, and as the formative agent of his own world, constantly remains clear.

What will be the principle of structural organization in the theology of the future, and the preference given to specific theological themes which this will quite inevitably entail? Will the principle here be a theology of the practical reason, of action, a political theology of the social responsibility [144] of the Christians and of the Churches towards the secular world?[8] Will the structural organization of the theology of the future be determined by its task of maintaining a constant ideological critique of the secular ideologies and false social utopias, and also of any attitude of ideological mistrust towards the message of the gospel and of the Church herself? Will the theology of the future maintain a far more direct and explicit dialogue with the modern sciences, in which the subject-matter will be arranged by the parties involved instead of being imposed from without, seeing that today and in the future these sciences will have to be understood as existing autonomously in relation to a philosophy which stands apart from the individual sciences? As a result of this these sciences no longer allow philosophy to be the sole sphere in which ideas are exchanged bearing upon man's understanding of himself at the secular level, or upon revelation and theology. Will the theology of the future be organized on different lines in terms of its subject-matter too, in view of the fact that like the other sciences it will have to work out in far closer detail its own methodology and its own hermeneutics? For in a certain sense it has itself to become the theology of theology, even though here it is threatened by the mortal danger of sticking fast in barren reflection upon its own nature, and never coming to terms with the actual reality to be investigated. This is a danger which must at all costs be overcome. Will the theology of the future have to adopt a more transcendental approach in reflecting upon the formal historicity of saving history, towards which of course it remains constantly orientated, or will it rather very quickly find that it has to commit itself with a new freedom to history itself with its openness to the future?

These and similar questions might be raised with regard to the choice of subject-matter in the theology of the future, and many further ones might be added to these. Today, surely, we are hardly yet in a position to answer them, and the multiplicity of such questions, which presumably cannot possibly be decided in terms of any one individual question and answer,

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[7] cf. esp. the chapter entitled 'The Question of the Future', *Theological Investigations*, XII.

[8] cf. the chapter entitled 'The Function of the Church as Critic of Society', *Theological Investigations*, XII.

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points once more to a pluralism of theologies which we must expect for the future.

In its own way this theology of the future must give the Christians and the Churches of the future the courage to take decisions and to engage in concrete action in shaping the future. It can only do this in its own way provided that it ascribes to itself a prophetic function of advising, exhorting, and summoning, while recognizing that the practical sphere has an intelligibility of its own. For it itself is once and for all committed to work [145] in the sphere of speculative reason, and concrete decisions and actions can never be forged solely and exclusively on this anvil. At the same time theology itself is recognizing this more clearly, and conveying it to the Churches. Of itself it justifiably attributes a certain primacy to the practical reason, to freedom, to action, to the future. And at least in virtue of this fact it can make the Christians and the Churches more clearly aware of the truth that Christianity consists in something more than a mere contemplation of essences or an attitude of passively waiting for the advent of the kingdom of God. Rather it consists in bold decisions, in action, in transforming the world, and in these alone is the eschatological hope for the advent of the absolute future made real.[9] Of its very nature as a science theology must constantly be pointing the way on from itself towards a Christianity of action, one which is life and not merely the outcome of theological speculation. In this way theology itself must be that which maintains a living awareness of the fact that Christianity is something more than merely the upholding of a given dogmatic statement as true and something more too than contemplation, cult, and right moral conduct in the world.

The theology of the future will discover in a fresh and more living way that ecclesiological element which is proper to it and which belongs permanently to its very nature. In the future humanity will achieve a higher degree of social organization, and in these conditions the sense of community in the Church's awareness of her own faith, and also in the indissoluble connection which truth itself has with social institutions, will once more become clearer in theology itself. Again in this theology that indispensable element which is the individual's own sense of truth will have to be actively and manifestly engaged. But precisely through this sense of truth which he has the individual will experience more clearly that it is abidingly related to community, to society, and so also to the Church as socially constituted. He will experience that this sense of truth of his will never achieve its due fulness so long as it is allowed to wander alone in the isolated sphere of private opinion. On this basis, I believe, the theology of the future will come to acknowledge with a new freedom, and also with a new firmness of resolve, the ecclesiological element inherent in its own nature.[10]

It is to be hoped that the theology of the future will become more [146] clearly aware that of its very nature it is meant to contribute to Christian living in the concrete and to the self-fulfilment of man in a truly religious sense. It is not a science for its own sake. Having this function, it should perhaps not be a theology of praying and bowing the knee. For it will have to be a critical theology. Yet at the same time it should proceed from prayer more than it has done in the past hundred years. It should not exhaust its resources in mere theological, historical, or speculative learning. As far as possible it should throw light upon the existence of man in the real circumstances of human living, and give him the boldness to commit himself in adoration to the incomprehensibility of existence, at the very roots of which God

[9] Also on this cf. the literature mentioned in n. 1.

[10] cf. K. Rahner, 'Die neue Kirchlichkeit der Theologie', *Gnade als Freiheit* (Freiburg, 1968), pp. 131-143; Concerning our 'assent to the Church as She Exists in the Concrete', *Theological Investigations*, XII.

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rules with his grace. It should give him the courage to commit himself to this incomprehensibility with courageous hope and in that love which, in a single act, reaches out to God and man.

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[147]

PART TWO

Natural Theology and Christology

[149]

6

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD TODAY

If we are to speak of the experience of God today we must, in the very nature of the theme we have set ourselves to explore, presuppose two points:

1. That there is such a thing as an experience of God, and
2. That it has a special and peculiar quality of its own, which it derives from our contemporary situation.

In this context the phrase 'experience of God' implies two things: first that what we call God is a reality, and a reality with which we have to do, and therefore that three attitudes on this point are false: (a) atheism, (b) a sceptical positivism which restricts man exclusively to the data accessible to him from the natural sciences, (c) the theology of the absolute remoteness of God, the 'Death of God' theology in the popular sense of the phrase. All these positions imply a denial of man himself and his reality. The second thing that is implied in the phrase 'experience of God' is that there is something more, something different, and something more fundamental than that knowledge of God which can be acquired through the so-called proofs of God's existence, though this is not to deny that these are possible and meaningful in their own right. But in terms of human living in the concrete they are possible and meaningful only as the outcome of an *a posteriori* process of reasoning as the conceptual objectification of what we call the experience of God, which provides the basis and origin of this process of reasoning. At the same time, however, these proofs of God's existence should not be conceived of as mere intellectual indoctrination informing man of an objective state of affairs which (as for instance in the case of existence of a subparticle in the physical sphere) lies outside and beyond his basic human experience, and of which, therefore, he cannot possibly become aware otherwise than through an indirect and *a posteriori* knowledge of this kind.

Now let us turn to the second word in our title, the word 'today'. At this preliminary stage we have only two points to make about this: *first* [150] that it is no part of our intention to try either to assert or to prove that there is an experience of God such that it is absolutely new and proper to the present day, and which, therefore, simply did not exist in earlier times. If God exists, if it is rightly understood what is meant by the term 'God', and if man himself, for all the radical changes which have taken place in his history, does still continue throughout to be precisely man, then it is inconceivable from the outset that some experience of God should have arisen today which did not exist in any sense in earlier times. Our *second* point with regard to the term 'today' is this: it is equally obvious that the present-day situation of man, in which he has to achieve the total fulness of his own selfhood (for apart from this there is no experience of God), also in a very essential sense imposes its own distinctive stamp upon this experience, more so even than the subsequent process of rational reflection upon it, whatever name we may give to this process, 'proving the existence of God'

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or anything else. But surely both together, the initial experience and the subsequent reflection, make it justifiable to speak of the 'experience of God of today' without thereby restricting our considerations exclusively to the mere fact that this experience takes place in the present day.

The difficulty of, and at the same time the necessity for these considerations of ours derive from the fact that we are seeking to reflect upon an experience which is present in every man (whether consciously or unconsciously, whether suppressed or accepted, whether rightly or wrongly interpreted, or whatever the way in which it is present), and which involves the following factors: *on the one hand* it is more basic and more inescapable than any process of rational calculation in which we follow a line of causality leading from the egg to the hen, from the lightning to the thunder, in other words from the world to an originator, but which can also be broken off, leaving the conclusions which might have been arrived at unrecognized. *On the other hand*, however, this experience does not impose itself upon us irresistibly (as does the physical existence of a datum of sense experience or an organic sensation) in such a way that the transition from the experience itself to an explicit recognition of it in which we reflect upon, interpret, and express it, imposes itself upon us irresistibly. There are other basic experiences also, as we shall shortly have to show, in which the transition from the experience itself (even though it is inescapably present) to a recognition of it at the conceptual and reflexive level is more difficult for the actual subject undergoing the experience, so that this subject can actually prevent this transition from taking place. Moreover the interpretation of these basic experiences which [151] is achieved in this transition can be more or less successful and clear, or the subject can even fail to make the transition at all. Such considerations, therefore, can only serve as pointers or appeals inviting the listener to make the attempt to discover this experience, previously perhaps quite unrecognized within himself, to admit it and to accept it instead of suppressing it, and to ask himself whether he can understand that this appeal to his experience is actually to some extent interpreting it correctly. It is possible for someone hearing a word addressed to him by another not to be ready to listen to that other word uttered from within himself, to become aware of the silent word which his own existence addresses to him. It is possible for him to be unwilling to allow himself to be drawn out of a kind of knowledge in which he is in control of himself, which he has at his disposal, and which is therefore called 'clear', into that mystery which reduces us to perplexity, which controls us and is not controlled by us, and in cases in which we meet with a reluctance of this sort all such appeals to this kind of experience are doomed to failure from the outset. But in that case the subsequent reflection upon this experience at the conceptual level, which we call the proof of God's existence, likewise falls into a void.

Such experiences do exist, and the very mode of their existence is such that they are inescapable. They exist in addition to our sensible experiences of objects in the external world and our vital sensations of joy, sorrow, etc., and quite apart from the experience of God, even though this too has a unique quality of its own which prevents us from grouping it under a *single* concept together with the other experiences and ascribing the same meaning to it as they have. What joy is, what anxiety, faithfulness, love, trust, and much else besides are, what constitutes logical thinking and responsible decision – these are things which man has already experienced before he reflects upon them and attempts to say what it is that he has all along been experiencing as an intrinsic part of his life. Indeed the expression of these experiences arising from his reflection upon them can actually be false or inadequate. It is possible for someone to achieve and to experience a love that is genuine and personal, a radical faithfulness and responsibility even though what he says about these experiences of his when he is asked what really takes place in them may be very mistaken. On the other hand a man who has been instructed by indoctrination from without can perhaps give a very

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clever and correct account of this even though properly speaking he has as yet not really experienced anything, or hardly anything, of them. Experience as such and subsequent reflection upon this experience, in which its content is conceptually objectified are never absolutely separate one from the other.

[152] Experience always involves at least a certain incipient process of reflection. But at the same time the two are never identical. Reflection never totally includes the original experience. Indeed there are experiences which the subject really undergoes as such even though in his reflections upon them they are wrongly interpreted, denied, or suppressed. For instance let us take the case of someone who asserts that there is no logic and no truth such that they are fundamentally different from error, such that they can properly be so called; one who asserts that so-called logic and truth are merely the product of specific mechanical processes of the brain, or due simply to social pressures, all of which could no less justifiably be different from what they actually are. In making an assertion of this kind such a one is by implication declaring the opposite of it to be false. But in the very act of doing this he is achieving and experiencing in his turn, whether he admits it or not, the meaning and the claim of that very truth and logic in the absolute which he denies in his conscious assertion. Of course in the unfolding course of an individual's life an experience of the kind we are speaking of, as for instance that of love and faithfulness, is capable even in itself (and not merely in his reflection upon it) of growing, of becoming more radical, of being accepted more totally in his free decision. Or alternatively it can become atrophied and be frustrated in its proper tendency to become more clearly objectified through the process of reflection. Or it can almost cease altogether.

Even such experiences as these take place in a certain mode proper to the particular age. It is true that such basic experiences are prior to any conceptual objectification or interpretation of them, and are in principle independent of these processes. But however true this may be, still we cannot regard this process of objectifying reflection as superfluous, or say 'If such an experience is inescapably present in itself there is in fact no need for us to expend our efforts in reflecting upon it. Rather we can let such experiences remain as they are.' Such an opinion is just as false as if someone were to say that in the sphere of medicine a theoretical knowledge of the nature of a micro-infarct of the heart is superfluous, seeing that even without this knowledge he may perhaps have undergone this experience and never noticed it at all. The actual *experience* of love is indeed absolutely basic and absolutely indispensable. But despite this fact the experience itself as such can in itself be accepted more profoundly, more purely, and with greater freedom when we achieve a knowledge of its true nature and its implications at the explicitly conscious level.

An experience of this kind can also be related to God, and this experience of God is inescapable. It precisely does *not* depend upon whether we [153] do or do not call the reality to which it refers 'God', whether or not we express the experience to ourselves in conceptual terms in a theoretical statement about God, whether the individual concerned freely identifies himself with his experience or denies it, suppresses it, or leaves it unexplored. The experience of God which we are pointing to here is not some subsequent emotional reaction to doctrinal instruction about the existence and nature of God which we receive from without and at the theoretical level. Rather it is prior to any such teaching, underlies it, and has to be there already for it to be made intelligible at all. This experience of God is not the privilege of the individual 'mystic', but is present in every man even though the process of reflecting upon it varies greatly from one individual to another in terms of force and clarity. Of course it is an experience of a unique kind, and the interpretation of it at the philosophical and theological level is extremely difficult, so that it cannot properly speaking be achieved here. Otherwise we would have to go on to consider in more precise terms the peculiar and unique mode in which the 'object' of this experience is made present, in other words that reality which we

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call 'God'. On the one hand, therefore, we would have to say that that which we call 'God', considered 'as' the object of this experience is not present in a manner which should be thought of as analogous to that in which we view an object immediately confronting us (the manner, therefore, which so-called 'ontologism' ascribes to this experience). We should say, rather, that God is present as the asymptotic goal, hidden in itself, of the experience of a limitless dynamic force inherent in the spirit endowed knowledge and freedom On the other hand, however, we should have to emphasize that this dynamic force which the spiritual subject experiences within itself is experienced not as an autonomous power of this subject, but rather as initiated and sustained by the goal towards which it tends. We should have to emphasize that this dynamic force is experienced as 'grace-given' in virtue of the fact that it also includes within itself the powerful hope of achieving a state of ultimate proximity and immediacy to that goal towards which it is tending, so that this goal does not remain merely the power that draws it yet remains eternally asymptotic and remote from it, but really does constitute a goal that can be reached. In this way it would have to be shown that even in the dimension of human awareness itself 'God' is present in a manner which does not have to be defined in terms of either of the two following alternatives: either that 'God' can be present merely as 'conceived of' (almost 'ideologically') or that he can be present in an immediate vision in the sense implied in ontologism. But, as we have said, it is not possible [154] here to enter into these and similar questions concerning the correct metaphysical and theological interpretations of this experience.

A further point is that it is also meaningless to subject this experience, in a manner which is, theologically speaking too hasty, to the question of whether it belongs to '*nature*' or 'grace'. Such a distinction belongs to the subsequent process of reflection, and does not need to be treated of systematically in dealing with the experience itself. In the very nature of the reality we are concerned with we would have to describe this experience in the concrete situation of our human lives as belonging both to 'nature' *and* to 'grace' at the same time, though in saying this the 'grace' aspect of this experience does not signify a privilege belonging only to particular individuals, while conversely the question of whether this experience is freely accepted in the concrete circumstances of the individual's life remains completely open. This experience of God must not be conceived of as though it were *one* particular experience *among* others at the same level, as for instance an experience of pain at the physiological level can be regarded as at the same level as the experience of an optical reaction. The experience of God constitutes, rather (though here we should perhaps abstract from certain mystical experiences in the true sense) the ultimate depths and the radical essence of *every* spiritual and personal experience (of love, faithfulness, hope and so on), and thereby precisely constitutes also the ultimate unity and totality of experience, in which the person as spiritual possesses himself and is made over to himself.

But *how* does man undergo this experience? At what point does he begin, if not actually to make this experience for the first time, still to recognize that it has been present all along in his life? Only at this point do we arrive at the true heart and centre of our subject. Once again it must be reiterated: we can only point to this experience, seek to draw another's attention to it in such a way that he discovers within himself that which we only find if, and to the extent that we already possess it. It is however possible to have it and to discover it in oneself even when one has never yet called it the experience of *God*. In pointing to, and attempting to describe this experience we are constantly faced with a dilemma: in pointing to it and appealing to another to discover it within himself we either attempt to touch the spirit and heart of the individual concerned in the most concrete possible way, and in the particular situation which belongs to him personally – and in that case an appeal of this kind gives the impression of expressing something subjective or poetic, a mood which is too vague to be verifiable. And then our appeal is open to the objection that after all it cannot be taken

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seriously on any realistic view at the 'down-to-earth' [155] level of everyday life. Alternatively the appeal in which we point to this experience is formulated in terms of the greatest possible philosophical exactitude and at the strictly conceptual level. In that case we shall be discussing it in such very abstract terms that they are difficult to understand, and we are faced with the objection that we are indulging in mere subtle word-play, so that in the end the discussion is abandoned from sheer weariness. In order at all costs to avoid being defeated by this dilemma it will perhaps be best for us to try and express what we mean without indulging in any separate speculation as to the actual language itself which would be employed. In appealing to this experience in our fellows we must ourselves be aware that it is impossible for our words to avoid meeting with a blank wall of incomprehension in those cases in which they are not genuinely ready to open their minds to them, and this must be our consolation. We must remind ourselves that that which we are appealing to, namely the unrecognized experience of God, is present, whether accepted or denied, even in those cases in which any discussion of it meets only with incomprehension. We must remember that what we have to say necessarily presupposes a certain experience of life on the part of our hearer. And in view of this we must not be surprised to find that if he is one who, from a spirit of youth, still feels compelled without misgiving to conquer the external world, he continues to reject or to disregard what we have to say. He has not yet been able to put the question to himself of what it means to have met with disappointment and failure in the effort to conquer the world.

A potent factor in every life is a certain element of the ineffable, namely mystery. This does not signify that part of reality which still remains to be explored, which we have not yet thoroughly understood or achieved or made real to ourselves. Mystery, rather, is the underlying substrate which is presupposed to and sustains the reality we know. For the condition which makes it possible for man to achieve the fulness of his own existence, and which gives it its special character, is precisely a certain prior apprehension which transcends every particular concrete reality which we conceive of or make real to ourselves, a certain radical limitlessness inherent in every movement of knowledge and freedom even though this stops short at some finite level of significance and is initiated by some specific and individual reality. We exist, think and act in freedom only in virtue of the fact that we have already all along transcended that which is specific and particular, that which we can comprehend, in a movement which knows no boundaries. The moment we become aware of ourselves precisely *as* the limited being which in so many and such radical ways we [156] are, we have already overstepped these boundaries. Admittedly in doing so we step, as it were, into a void. But nevertheless we have overstepped them. We have experienced ourselves as beings which constantly reach out beyond themselves towards that which cannot be comprehended or circumscribed, that which precisely as having this radical status must be called infinite, that which is sheer mystery, because as the condition which makes every act of apprehending, distinguishing and classifying possible, it itself cannot in turn be experienced in *that* mode which it itself makes possible and of which it is the condition. It is present as the abiding mystery. This ultimate and original reality, therefore, which has no other basis beyond itself even though the experience of it is mediated through our apprehension of some concrete object, cannot properly speaking be explained in terms of anything else than itself. It is the experience of that mystery which abides, which has been present all along, and precisely as such is both the inconceivable *and* that which alone is self-evident both at the same time. The dynamism of this limitless movement, and in it the ultimate point of reference towards which it tends, are of course experienced in a *single* act, and at the same time are in this experienced as distinct. But the 'ultimate point of reference' of this movement *is per definitionem* precisely *not*, and cannot be, an 'object' in the same sense as the object aimed at in acts of knowledge and freedom at other levels, so that it can be brought under the control of the

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knower as the preliminary stage in this movement in such a way that he can assign it a specific place in a co-ordinated system. Moreover this ultimate point of reference is experienced *in* the infinite movement of the spirit and *in terms of it*, even though it is also precisely that which in itself initiates and sustains this movement. And for these reasons the question of where this movement culminates is ultimately a secondary one. One man may say that the infinite sphere opened up without bounds or end in this movement is the void which, in order to be able to exist at all, points on to an infinite fulness, because nothingness, if the term is taken seriously, cannot be extended so as to become the sphere within which this movement takes place. Another may say that this ultimate point of reference is the infinite fulness itself which is aimed at. Which of these two alternatives we choose is secondary. Hence too it is also a secondary question whether we decide to speak of an experience of God or of the experience of an orientation towards God. Certainly we must always maintain the distinction between the 'objective' and 'subjective' sides of the experience in this context (if man is to avoid making himself God), but nevertheless these two sides are, in a unique and radical manner, inseparable one from the other.

[157] In accordance with the warnings which we gave at the beginning of this study, what we have just said is extremely abstract, and it must never be forgotten that a statement of this kind does not bring about the experience referred to, but refers to it retrospectively as something that already exists. We do not therefore bring about the experience itself by speaking about it retrospectively and in the abstract. The form in which it impinges upon us is extremely concrete, even though it manifests itself as the element of the ineffable in the concrete experience of our everyday life. While it is present unacknowledged and unexpressed in *every* exercise of our spiritual faculties, it nevertheless manifests itself more clearly and in some sense as an object of enquiry in those episodes in which the individual, normally lost amid the individual affairs and tasks of his everyday life, is to some extent thrown back upon himself and brought to a position in which he can no longer overlook those factors in his life which he customarily evades. Thus it is when man is suddenly reduced to a state of '*aloneness*', when every individual thing recedes, as it were, into remoteness and silence and disappears in this, when everything is 'called in question', as we are accustomed to say, when the silence resounds more penetratingly than the accustomed din of everyday life. Thus it is when man suddenly experiences that he is inescapably brought face to face with his own freedom and *responsibility*, feeling this as a single and total factor embracing the whole of his life and leaving him no further refuge, no possibility of acquittal from guilt. Thus it is in those cases in which man can no longer find any approval or support, can no longer hope for any recognition or any thanks, in which he finds himself called to account for his actions to that silent and infinite reality which is not ours to shape or control, which exists and is not subject to us, that which is most interior to us and most different from us at the same time. Thus it is when man experiences how this reality silently extends itself, as it were, throughout the whole of existence, permeating everything, unifying everything, while remaining itself incomprehensible; when he experiences the fact that this reality which calls him to account is ultimately speaking not that which is, and which takes effect because we ourselves freely posit it, but is rather that which lays claims upon our freedom, that from which there is no appeal, that which is still present in the form of judgement even when we deny that we are answerable to it and seek to escape from it. Thus it is when man suddenly makes the experience of personal *love* and encounter, suddenly notices, startled and blessed in this both at once, the fact that he has been accepted with a love which is absolute and unconditional even though, when he considers himself alone in all his finitude and frailty, he [158] can assign no reason whatever, find no adequate justification, for this unconditional love that reaches out to him from the other side. Thus it is too when man experiences the fact that he himself likewise loves – loves with an inconceivable audacity that overcomes the

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questionability of the other even though he is aware of this, when he experiences that this love of his is so absolute that it commits him to finding support in a reality which is no longer subject to his control, which is most interior to the love itself in its inconceivability and yet at the same time is different from it. Thus it is when *death* silently directs its gaze towards a man – that death which causes all to fall into its own nothingness and precisely in doing this, provided only that it is willingly accepted (thus and only thus), does not strike man dead but itself transforms him, liberates him, endows him with that freedom which no longer appeals to or finds support in anything beyond itself, and yet at the same time is unconditional. This is a line of thought which we could and should follow further so as to point out how this single basic experience of man is present in a thousand different forms, and in this experience it is borne in upon him that his existence is open to the inconceivable mystery. In it he remarks that he is the prisoner of his own terrifying finitude (which does exist, and which cruelly torments him) only so long as he turns his eyes away from the infinitude and inconceivable reality which encompasses him on every side, or when he shrinks from it in terror because its power silently and uncontrollably pervades all. It is at this level that we should speak of joy, of faithfulness, of the ultimate *angst* to which man is subject, of the yearning which transcends every individual reality, of the fear which we feel at the inexorability of truth – that truth which is still there even when it is denied or mocked at. This is the level at which we should speak of the peace that comes from that detachment which never clings onto any individual reality in the absolute, and so gains all of the experience of the beautiful which is the assured promise of that which still lies in the future, of the experience of that radical and inescapable guilt which is nevertheless suddenly and inconceivably forgiven. This is the level at which we should speak of our experience of the fact that that which seems simply to belong to the past nevertheless in truth having come to be, A and in a true and sacred sense is still in force. This is the level at which we should speak of our experience of the infinite openness of the future which is inexhaustible promise. We might proceed still further along this line of thought, and our vision would have to become far more concrete still -concrete not in the sense that it would cause us to lose ourselves in the particular realities of the external world, but rather in the sheer density [159] of that experience which is ultimate and yet present at the same time everywhere in our everyday lives, for in these man is forever occupied with the grains of sand along the shore where he dwells at the edge of the infinite ocean of mystery.

Admittedly we should now go on to bring out more clearly two further truths: first that all these experiences of the absolute imply an original and ultimate unity among themselves, second that these experiences really do point to that which – or better him whom – we call God. Now this second question should in fact be approached from two different directions. We should not merely confine ourselves to saying that what is experienced in this way signifies God, for in that case we should be presupposing that it is clear from the outset what is meant by God. We should also have to state the converse of this: what is meant by God is to be understood on the basis of this experience, because otherwise we are in constant danger of supposing that the term God stands for something meaningless, and so of rejecting this, and then believing that we are compelled to be atheists. However, since we still have much more to speak of apart from this, yet still in the very nature of the case have to make some reply to both these questions, let us take it as given here that both questions are to be answered in the sense we have indicated.

But before we go on to ask ourselves what that special quality in the experience of God is which is peculiar to the *present day*, two further points must first be noticed: this experience of God should not be discredited as a mere mood carrying no conviction, or as an unverifiable feeling. Nor is it merely a factor in our private interior lives. On the contrary it has a fully social and public significance. This experience is no mere mood, no matter of

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mere feeling and poetry carrying no conviction. It is of course different from that knowledge which the individual achieves at the conceptual level, and *within* the sphere of knowledge. In fact it bears upon the totality of knowledge and freedom as such. But this is still far from implying that the experience in question consists in a feeling devoid of conviction. For it is present irremovably, however unacknowledged and unreflected upon it may be, in every exercise of the spiritual faculties even at the most rational level in virtue of the fact that every such exercise draws its life from the prior apprehension of the all-transcending whole which is the mystery, one and nameless. It is possible to suppress this experience, but it remains, and at the decisive moments of our lives it breaks in upon our awareness once more with irresistible force. Nor can we say that we should be silent about it on the grounds that we cannot speak 'clearly' about it. For what is clarity? Have we not already spoken [160] about it the moment we say that it is illegitimate to speak about it, that properly we must not speak about it? And if the rationalist philosophers and positivists are unwilling to speak about it, does this mean that the saints, the poets, and other revealers of the fulness of existence as a *whole* must also be forbidden to speak? The term 'God' is there, and it asserts itself even in the struggle which the atheist wages against God. And will this term 'God' not raise the question ever anew of what is meant by it? And even if this term were ever to be forgotten, even then in the decisive moments of our lives we should still constantly, though silently be encompassed by this nameless mystery of our existence, judging us and endowing us with the grace of our ultimate freedom, and we would discover the ancient name for it anew.

Nor let it be said that this experience is of no account for the social and public areas of our lives. Religion, which constantly draws its life from this experience, is a social reality even though the atheist may believe that it would be better if this reality did not exist. This experience of God would not be made irrelevant in its social aspects even supposing that those realities which we call religions, and which consist in a conceptual reflection upon, and a social institutionalization of this experience of God, were totally to disappear. For even in that case the transcendentality inherent in human life is such that man would still reach out towards that mystery which lies outside his control. The experience of God itself would still take effect, however unconsciously, in terms of faithfulness, responsibility, love and hope, extending beyond all those particular realities which justify such attitudes in human life, and it is these attitudes which, even though they seem to be wholly non-political and private in character, and not susceptible of being directed or controlled from without, do in fact sustain the social level of human living.

Finally we must apply ourselves to the question of what the special characteristics of this 'experience of God today' may be which are proper to our own times; the question, therefore, of whether, despite the fact that up to now we have been describing this experience of God in almost 'supra-temporal' terms, it does not, after all, derive certain quite special characteristics from the special situation in which man stands today. Four brief indications must suffice by way of reply to this question to the extent that any such reply is possible at all here.

1. First the following consideration has to be borne in mind with regard to the 'transcendental' character of the experience of God: the man of earlier times assigned a place to God precisely as a factor in his world even though in doing so he did say that this 'factor' was the highest and [161] most perfect, upon which everything else depended, and even though the philosophers and theologians did teach, in their statements at the theoretical level, that properly speaking it was contrary to the 'nature' of God and of the experience of him to think of God in this way. In spite of this God was thought of in the world as an element of it, and not as that which supported it or as the unfathomable depths beyond it, such that from the outset it could not be accounted as itself belonging to it. God was one particular reality in the world (however much it might be asserted that he had caused all of it to exist), a contributory cause engaged in a constant mutual interchange of activities with the other realities in it. In

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this way God was rendered 'comprehensible', and the teaching about him was such as every man could readily apply at the practical level. He was the 'good God' who acts as a ruler of the world, acting to ensure the good moral conduct of its inhabitants and at the same time capable of restoring it to his grace. The ultimate content of man's beliefs was indeed valid and true all along. But the actual manner in which he applied those beliefs was less so. This is something that we have only come plainly to recognize today. For now it has become clear even to the average man (who in earlier times still restricted himself to the practical level even in his more lofty speculations) that *this kind of* God does not exist, that he is not to be found within the world, that he has no heaven above the clouds, that he does not work miracles in order to remove any disturbances in the machinery of the world. The average man of today has come clearly to recognize that God is absolutely incommensurable with the world, and that he cannot be included as one item within our calculations – and so on. It is no wonder, then, that the death of a more primitive idea of God has come to be interpreted as the death of the true God himself, or that God has come to be thought of as unspeakably remote. In truth, however, the position is this: the deepening of our rational comprehension of the world, which has the effect of eliminating the divine from it, is wholly legitimate provided only that this elimination of the divine from the world gradually comes to be experienced more and more as supported and upheld by that transcendence of the world and of the finite subject in which the true experience of God takes place. This experience of God, precisely as it exists *today* is, much more clearly and radically than in earlier times, an experience of transcendence, a transcendence which eliminates the divine from the world and is thereby enabled to let God be God.

2. A further peculiarity of the experience of God today consists surely in the distinctive character of the medium in which it is communicated in [162] the present. Every experience of God has its medium of communication in virtue of the fact that there always has to be some starting-point from which the process of transcending the world and the subject himself can proceed. And that which constitutes the medium in this sense can change at least in respect of the outward stamp which it bears and which is borne in upon us at the public and social levels of human life and thought. The first point that strikes us is that today, in contrast to earlier times, the medium of this experience has shifted from the world to existence. In earlier times it was the external world with its order and harmony that provided the initial start for man's experience of transcendence. Today it is his existence with its unfathomable depths and it may be conjectured – though perhaps there is some small element of prophecy here – that the mode of existence which is typical precisely of this *present* age, and which is destined gradually to fulfil this role of being the medium in which the experience of God is communicated, is not so much the existence of the saint with his wisdom and contemplation, but rather that of the man whose life does not appeal to our feelings, who bears responsibility for himself in silence and solitude, yet who exists selflessly for the sake of others.

3. A third element serves further to characterize the distinctive nature of the experience of God of today, with the dangers which threaten it and the new function which it has to fulfil. Formerly religion reigned undisputed at the social level, however many different forms it may have assumed. For there were no nations without gods. And so long as religion had some public expression of this kind the individual who admitted and accepted this experience of God at all had no further special problem in finding it possible to communicate with this God at the personal level, to call upon him and to adore him. Now today this is, perhaps, *the* real and central problem for man, even when he clearly undergoes this experience of God. Given that this God is radically different from ourselves, and at the same time that which upholds our own activity – including, therefore, the attempt to speak to him and freely to respond to him – can we then really address him and achieve a personal relationship with him? Certainly we should not say that we are too insignificant for him to be able to 'interest'

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himself in us, for such a line of thought in fact makes him precisely one element in our world, so that his relationship with a smaller element in it would be more tenuous than his relationship with a greater one, whereas in truth he is able voluntarily to enter upon the most immediate possible relationship with us as we are.

[163] But this in itself is not enough to solve the problem. Here we cannot enlarge upon it at any length. But the first point is that this question must be taken seriously. But in that case it has an extremely positive effect in itself in helping to determine our attitude towards God. It makes this attitude something which, in the traditional terminology, is called adoration, total commitment in which man falls into silence, in which the word he addresses to God is merely the prelude to his silence, in which he veils his countenance before the majesty of the ineffable mystery, and in which he is aware that contrary to all appearances today man cannot contend with God. Further: if man feels that actually to address God in this way is unheard of audacity, if indeed he feels the concrete act of venturing upon such a thing as a pure grace, in which God, by his own free act, empowers man to undertake this venture, this is nothing but good. For in that case he will feel that it is anything but obvious that God should empower him to do this, yet at the same time he must not deny the possibility of God doing so, for otherwise he would once more be thinking of God according to human standards. And finally: it is no matter for regret, if we find the courage to address God in this way only by keeping our eyes fixed upon Jesus, seeing that even in death he still managed to call this Mystery ‘Father’, and to surrender himself into his hands even as, in slaying him, it withdrew itself from him and threw him into the most inconceivable state of dereliction from God.

4. It seems that we should include one further factor among those marks of our ‘experience of God today’ which belong particularly to our own times. At first sight it seems as though there were hardly anything specifically Christian in this experience of God, and this seems particularly to be the case in those cases in which it either remains alive or comes to live once more in our conscious awareness, even though all the trends of the time are against it, and even though it receives no significant support from the tradition of Christianity as this survives at the merely social level. We ourselves have in fact treated at length of this experience of God, and in doing so have spoken of it apparently almost without any reference to Christianity or to the Christian message as it has emerged in history. And today there is no lack of religiously motivated individuals – even Christians – who bring their own basic experience of God to the stage of conscious awareness and reflection with the help of witnesses which they are convinced that they perceive everywhere throughout the history of humanity and of the nations and religions of the world, and which they feel to be genuine and inspiring. On this point too we can only make a few brief remarks. We may take two contrasting lines of approach here.

[164] First, the ultimate depths of this experience of God to which we have sought to appeal are precisely the experience of an ineffable nearness of God to us such that for all the adorable inconceivability which abides throughout he bestows himself upon man with an immediacy that brings him forgiveness and a share in his divine life. This experience, therefore, is something more than that of an ultimate point of orientation for all the movement in human life that remains eternally remote from it. Now it is precisely in Christianity that these radical depths of the experience of God are clearly grasped. They are grasped as grace and as something that imposes itself victoriously in Jesus Christ, something that is borne witness to and apprehended in the dimension of history. The experience of God to which we have appealed, therefore, even in the form in which we encounter it in our own times, is not necessarily so a-Christian as appears at first sight. On the contrary, among the religions which *de facto* exist (considered as historical and social phenomena) it is precisely Christianity which makes real this experience of God in its most radical and purest form, and in Jesus Christ achieves a convincing manifestation of it in history.

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Now let us approach the same point from the opposite direction and under a different aspect. Today it is becoming clearer, and that too within Christianity at the doctrinal and institutional level, that this experience of God (admittedly as rightly interpreted and in its most radical form) really constitutes the very heart and centre of Christianity itself and also the ever living source of that conscious manifestation which we call 'revelation'. Now if this is true then through this experience of God Christianity itself simply achieves a more radical and clearer understanding of its own authentic nature. For in fact in its true essence it is not one particular religion among others, but rather the sheer objectivation in history of that experience of God which exists *everywhere* in virtue of God's universal will to save all men by bestowing himself upon them as grace. Today, therefore, Christianity recognizes more clearly than formerly, and makes real in the concrete conditions of human living, the fact that it constitutes the historically pure realization of God's self-bestowal upon mankind which takes place everywhere and in every experience of God, even where, without any fault on the part of the individuals involved, this experience is wrongly interpreted. Christianity, then, is this achieved fulness of God's self-bestowal upon mankind as made definitely victorious in Christ. Now if this is true then recognition of it signifies one element by which Christianity itself can realize its own nature more effectively. It is, therefore, a task precisely for Christianity itself to point [165] ever anew to this basic experience of God, to induce man to discover it within himself, to accept it and also to avow his allegiance to it in its verbal and historical objectivation; for, in its pure form and as related to Jesus Christ as its seal of authenticity, it is precisely this that we call Christianity.

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7

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON SECULARIZATION AND ATHEISM

By way of introduction I may be permitted a brief remark concerning the functions and methods of the Secretariat for Unbelievers which has recently been instituted.[1] Since in fact there is also a Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions as well as the Secretariat for Ecumenical Questions we can in practice conclude that the unbelievers with whom this secretariat is intended to deal comprise only the atheists. This secretariat, therefore, must concern itself with atheism and atheists, with maintaining a dialogue with these, and with the struggle against atheism as such in the world. But what is it really intended to do in this respect?

In accordance with the exhortation of 'Gaudium et Spes' of the Second Vatican Council we can of course distinguish the most varied forms of atheism. We can study its roots and origins at the theoretical, historical, and social levels, and in the concrete conditions in which it actually exists.[2] We can attempt to learn more about the various forms of atheism too by entering into dialogue with their representatives, and by arriving at an understanding with these atheists on this or that point which may actually be of real and great importance at the social level, for this clears the way for the subsequent decision which has to be taken between theism and atheism, and is something that can be striven for as the goal of a real and workable humanism which we can join with them in aiming for. But in doing all this are we really achieving anything else than what has been done all along in Catholic theology, in Christian philosophy, and fundamental theology, and in the Christian kerygma? Of course it is [167] possible to say that all these undertakings must be pursued more intensively today, that in order to achieve a form in which they can be more vigorously pursued these interests must be co-ordinated within the Church, that contact with Christian and non-Christian theists must be strengthened in this struggle, and that in all these tasks the Secretariat for Non-Believers must lend its assistance. All this is certainly true and important.

Yet the impression is borne in upon me that, abstracting from the organization and technical aspects of these movements, which must not be underestimated, we cannot say in any real sense to what extent and in what way these movements are effectively aimed at something that is new at the theoretical level,[3] something that has not been recognized or put into practice hitherto. Finally it does after all seem to be the case that we are simply putting forward once more the old and certainly important teaching of a philosophical and theological theism, albeit in a form which is somewhat deeper and more precise, and that we are hoping thereby, by bringing to bear the necessary patience and zeal in our preaching, actually to win over those who were formerly atheists. To this factor of a certain stagnation, present though unadmitted in the theoretical teaching in defence of theism and against atheism, a further one must be added, one to which, after all, we have as yet hardly given any

[1] *AAS* 56 (1964), p. 560. See also F. König, 'Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil und das Sekretariat für die Nichtglaubenden', *Internationale Dialogzeitschrift* 1 (Vienna, 1968), pp. 79-88.
[2] On this cf. the Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council 'Gaudium et Spes', Nos. 19-21, with the commentaries in J. Chr. Hampe (ed.), *Die Autorität der Freiheit* III (Munich, 1967), pp. 574-615.
[3] On the question of God cf. the author's 'Gott', *LTK* IV (2nd ed. 1960), 1080-1087; 'Gotteslehre', ibid., 1119-1124; 'Meditation über das Wort "Gott" ', *Gnade als Freiheit* (Freiburg, 2968), pp. 11-18; 'Gott ist keine naturwissenschaftliche Formel', ibid., pp. 29-23; 'Gott, unser Vater', ibid., pp. 24-29; 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate", *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore,1966), pp. 77-202; 'Observations on the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics', *Theological Investigations* IX, (London and New York, 2972), pp. 127-145 and 'The Experience of God Today', in this volume, pp. 149-165.

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serious consideration. For today we are confronted with the task of bringing about a change at the level of social psychology and, if we may so put it, inherited psychology, in the awareness of the broad masses of society, a change which has become necessary in view of the worldwide atheism which has come to prevail at least at the practical level. The question is, therefore, what form our attempts to bring about this change should take in order to achieve the necessary prior conditions for a theism that is really powerful and effective in men's eyes and at the social and public level. The two questions we have raised and the two deficiencies we have pointed to are of course intrinsically connected. And since in respect of both we do not really have any new idea to offer, we are in no position either to develop any [168] effective strategy for the struggle against atheism.[4] Neither of course is it possible for me, and within the scope of this study, to devise remedies for the two deficiencies I have indicated. Nevertheless we should have an awareness of them, and moreover, for our present purposes this awareness will be presupposed, while we must also hope that the extreme problematical considerations put forward here will meet with sufficient good will and a sufficient readiness to understand the problems involved.

Absolutely speaking it would be my task to discuss that form of atheism which is conditioned by the movement which we of today are accustomed to call the process of secularization. Properly speaking, therefore, in order to describe the characteristics of the atheism to be treated of here, I would have to begin by speaking of this process of secularization in itself, to say what is meant by this, to give an account of its causes and origins in history, to distinguish the various forms which it assumes, to work out the difference between two factors within it: on the one hand a worldliness of the world which has been brought about in a long process of development by Christianity itself, a de-numinization and de-sacralization of the world which is in accordance with the nature of Christianity itself, and on the other hand a secularism which is at basis identical with atheism and is the mortal enemy of Christianity itself.[5]

In all this we would have to draw far more precise distinctions. For instance we would have to raise the question of a justifiable and a false distinction between Christian faith and religion. We would have to investigate what is really involved in the 'Death of God' theology.[6] We would also have to enquire more precisely at the level of empirical sociology into the question of whether this secularization of the world in which we live today is in fact so intense as is often maintained, or whether [169] what is referred to in these terms is often simply a change in the outward form which religion assumes, which we and others are simply confusing with secularization because this religious element no longer falls within our traditional theological and religious categories. But so much has already been written on all this that here we shall not have anything further to say about the process of secularization as such.

Here, therefore, we shall proceed straight away to enquire into that form of atheism as such which corresponds to this state of secularization in the world of today. We shall adopt this

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[4] On the idea that it is necessary for the Church to have a strategy cf. the author's 'Das Verhältnis der Kirche zur Gegenwartssituation im allgemeinen. Globale kirchliche Strategie', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 19-24.

[5] cf. K. Rahner, 'Theological Reflections on the problem of Secularization', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1973), pp. 318-349. Here of course we cannot enter any further into the theses of Schillebeeckx, Metz, Schlette *et al* with regard to this problem.

[6] On the whole it is true to say that even in the Church herself the understanding of God is beginning to change. cf. A. Vanneste, 'Le problème de Dieu de Vatican I à Vatican II', *Revue Clergé* 22 (1967), pp. 234-251.

In recent times the discussion of the 'Death of God' theology and the efforts to achieve a fresh understanding of God by changing our understanding of transcendence have resulted in such an increase in the literature on this whole complex of questions that it would exceed the limits of a footnote if we were to give even an introductory list of references.

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procedure even though in doing so we are aware of the fact that our starting-point, namely this state of secularization, is a phenomenon that is very obscure, has many different levels, and many different shades of meaning. We shall say therefore quite crudely: there is today an atheism which exists in virtue of the fact that the world has become worldly, i.e. so far as man's feelings are concerned it is not easy for him to discover anything which he can call God in the sphere of his manifold experience of a world that has become ever more complex, but at the same time too ever more comprehensible and controllable. For contemporary man every element in his world which he can experience seems to point on to some other element of the same kind, so that no element ever seems to stand outside this process of functional interplay. In its individual elements the world seems to be a system closed in upon itself which has no outlet leading to a reality which is real and yet at the same time does not belong to the world. And even if we achieve a metaphysical plane of thought at which, by some kind of supreme effort of mind, we seek to say that precisely this closed system called the world, in which these individual elements are closed in upon themselves, points on to a sustaining and originating cause of an absolute kind, with a unity of its own that transcends the world, and that it is this that we call God, still even then the man of today all too easily receives the impression that so lofty a line of thought, which transcends the whole, is demanding too much of him, no longer has any message for him, is unrealizable in the concrete conditions of his existence, and leads only to a mythological reduplication of his world. Yet, as has been said, this is the kind of secularism we are assuming to be present and we believe that it enables us to understand a specific kind of atheism which exists at least at the practical level, and in particular that atheism which from the outset declares that it is incapable of achieving any understanding of a metaphysical question even considered merely as a question.[7]

[170]

I

The first point which has to be made with regard to this atheism that derives from the secularization process is this: that it does exist as one specific phenomenon of this secularized world, yet that in principle, and even today, it should be regarded as the sole form of atheism.[8]

The positive part of this statement surely does not need any separate treatment in order to explain it in greater detail or to prove it. The only further point which we have to make on this is that in their practical lives men have the impression that they can manage even without God (we shall have to speak further on this at a later stage) and that the sciences by which the men of today live – independent of any philosophy – and which appear to the men of today as providing the standards by which they conduct their lives, are in principle, at least so far as their methods are concerned, a-theistic. In other words every phenomenon which engages their attention is reduced by them to another empirically verifiable element in the world as to its original cause. The second part of our introductory statement is initially and for our present purposes somewhat more important: it would be superficial and false to regard the atheism which proceeds from secularization as the only important form of the atheism of today. There are forms of atheism which are quite different in their nature and origins even though in a world that has become secularized these atheisms manifest themselves more easily at the social level and have become more numerous than formerly, and these different atheisms have of course been able to combine in the mind of the individual in the concrete to

[7] The historical, philosophical, psychological and sociological assumptions of atheism are treated of at great length in the symposium volume edited by J. Girardi, L'Athéisme dans la vie et culture contemporaine, 2 vols (Paris, 1968/69).
[8] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Atheism', *Sacramentum Mundi* I (New York and London, 1968), pp. 116-122.

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form a single atheistic mentality and way of life.

Now if these various atheisms really do differ from one another right at their very roots then it is false from the outset to maintain that they can all be reduced to a single common system of so-called atheism in the singular, for since the various systems grouped under this heading spring from quite different roots, any one of them has little more in common with the rest than the name 'atheism'. From this it clearly follows that the struggle against the different atheisms must be conducted in quite different ways. The atheism that springs from secularization, therefore, requires a quite different treatment from that which we accord, for instance, to an atheism springing from an attitude of despairing pessimism which declares that after Auschwitz it is no longer possible to believe in God, or to an atheism which consists merely in an aversion from any [171] thematic treatment of the transcendental reference which man bears to the absolute mystery in and over his own existence, which is merely afraid of adoring an idol once he begins to speak of God and to allow him to enter into his calculations or to have a place in his life. Such an atheism as this seeks to be Godless out of respect for God, and to remain Godless honestly and courageously in the desert of an existence within which no such reality as God is to be found or may even be sought for at all if God is to remain God. Of course between these different atheisms, only a few aspects of which have been indicated here, there is a constant mutual interplay and inter-influence both at the theoretical level and in their application to human living in the concrete. Nevertheless it must still clearly be recognized that they differ from one another in their roots, and so too in their essence, and hence too in the struggle we wage against them our approaches to them must be different. So great are these differences indeed that it would almost be true to say that it is only the label 'atheism' that they have in common. Anyone who is not prepared to recognize this truth must allow the question to be put to him of what precise and really credible idea of God he has. He must allow us to ask him whether what the term 'God' represents for him cannot, in some sense, really and validly be denied or called in question, and whether on this account the atheism which he rejects is not an extremely obscure and dubious entity.[9]

The seriousness and effectiveness of the considerations, proofs, means and methods put forward at the theoretical level and proposed to be used in the struggle against the various forms of atheism, which differ so much from one another, must therefore be measured by this standard: whether on the one hand they really do relate specifically to one particular form of atheism, and whether on the other they do not express mere self-evident truisms which have been and are valid always and everywhere, whereas the specific form of atheism concerned has origins and a background of its own in the history of human thought which have by no means been present always and everywhere, but which are present today, and therefore cannot be overcome in their atheistic developments solely by *those* considerations, means, and methods which have been put forward and applied always and everywhere. Considerations of this kind at the [172] theoretical level, therefore, and means and methods of this kind at the practical level, must surely be worked out from the first. They are not simply weapons which have all along been there ready to hand in the arsenal of the *Ecclesia militans*, so that all that we have to do now is at most to polish them somewhat more brightly and to give them a somewhat sharper edge. But if such considerations means and methods need to be worked out afresh, then it is inevitable that any suggestions in this direction must give due and serious consideration to the fact that some of them may be problematical and liable to be contested, that they will have to stand up to discussion or possibly to practical

[9] For a more extensive treatment of this point cf. K. Lehmann, 'Some Ideas from Pastoral Theology on the Proclamation of the Christian Message to Non-Believers of Today', *Concilium* 3/3 (Pastoral Theology) 1967, pp. 43-52, and the revised and expanded version of this study in Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie III (Freiburg, 1968), pp. 638-677.

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testing insofar as such a thing is possible, and even to a determined attack upon them. All that we shall have to say in what follows is to be understood in this sense and with this proviso. What we are treating of is mere material for discussion and nothing more, though admittedly we shall be treating of this at a very serious level.

II

Against the atheism that derives from secularization, with its pragmatic and positivist mentality which we have already pointed out, there is little sense and little prospect of success in conducting our defence of theism and our struggle against this atheism either explicitly or implicitly merely from the general standpoint 'we cannot manage without God'.

Even on the basis of a true understanding of God it is extremely questionable whether we should attempt to assign to God so utilitarian a place in the struggle for a better world (whether at the individual or the collective levels). The world as God has created it, and as it has been even under the dominion of a theism which has been generally accepted, at least in public, has been an extremely wretched world. It has been this even in those areas in which Christianity has held sway in public life with what is, at least according to the theory of its high-minded theologians, its sublime concept of God. And the very fact that it has been pitiful in this sense means that in principle we cannot use the idea of God in this way. Atheism lays great emphasis on this simple fact of the world's wretchedness, and even if against this we were to rejoin that this wretched world is so as a consequence of man's own guilt, still the atheist could in turn reply that this pitiful state of the world, its anguish and strife, the alienation of man from himself taking place within it, in very large measure does not derive from his own guilt, but on the contrary is itself the cause of this guilt to the extent that there really is any guilt at all. And the [173] atheist might go on to point out that it is precisely the Christian who is least of all in any position to maintain that God has been able to create the world and freedom only at the risk of man falling voluntarily into sin so that no real problem of 'theodicy' exists at all. But even if we abstract from the problems of principle involved in this line of argument that the world cannot prosper without God, still the man of today at least has the impression that wherever, and to the extent that, any improvement has been achieved in the world and that progress has been made, this has been achieved by man himself and that he has done it of his own initiative even without God.

There is a question which we intend to set aside here even though it is no merely theoretical one, but of the highest practical importance as well; the question, namely, of what would happen if the idea of God were to be totally eliminated in the world, if theism were to disappear not merely in its explicit, but in its anonymous form as well. On this question we should certainly have to say that taking human life as a whole we certainly cannot manage without the idea of God, at least – in order to be completely prudent – not if we include within this idea of God those unexplicitated and anonymous forms of this encounter with God also which do exist and which are transcendentally necessary so long as man continues to exist at the spiritual dimension and has not degenerated to the level of an intelligent animal. Certainly we should have to refer, in this connection, to C. G. Jung's statement according to which all human conflicts in a man of over thirty-five have a religious origin, whether he is aware of it or not.[10] But, as has been said, for our present purposes we shall be abstracting from this question, ultimately crucial though it is.

Prior to this, however, and apart from it, even if this ultimate and fundamental question has to be answered in the affirmative, still there is very much that is possible in the world which,

[10] C. G. Jung, *Die Beziehungen der Psychotherapie zur Seelsorge* (Zürich, 1948), p. 16.

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it was formerly believed, required an immediate and explicit basis in theism. There is much in human life at the individual and social levels which in earlier times derived its stability from the idea of God, yet which today can in fact be aimed at as a goal, even without any recourse to an explicit theism by means of a liberal and humanistic education, by consciously aiming to develop psychic mechanisms and social methods of training, by means of social pressures and conditions of interdependence, and finally by the police. It is true that today at least not enough experiments have yet been carried out for us to be in a position to lay down what can be achieved in the way [174] of a genuine humanism and a tolerable mode of social living among men by a genuinely atheistic society in which all the surviving elements of an earlier mode of living based on theism have effectively been eliminated. Nevertheless, while not calling in question the fact that the idea of God has an ultimate significance of its own, we may perhaps be permitted to doubt whether there are any very notable differences between the average morality of an atheistic society which can already be observed, to the extent that such a phenomenon does exist, and the morality of an average theistic society, i.e. one in which the idea of God has a certain validity for the purposes of public life and remains undisputed at the public level. It is true that we can produce definitions, at the speculative and theoretical level, of the pure atheist and the absolute theist, and compare them with one another, and on the basis of this we can probably give an unambiguous preference to the theist not merely with regard to the question of truth as such, but also with regard to the practical effectiveness of his tenets in producing a humane and tolerable way of life. But this theoretical construction and comparison has only a very limited effectiveness so far as the working out of a practical apologetics for theism is concerned. For first we are unable to produce this pure atheist at the experimental level, since in fact such an individual does not yet exist today. Indeed, in view of the factor of a certain anonymous and unexplicitated transcendental theism even the avowed atheist cannot be said to be a pure atheist in this sense. And second, it is only with great difficulty that we can produce that kind of theist who shapes his whole life radically and exclusively on the basis of his theist convictions.

So far as the practical apologetics for theism are concerned, therefore, we shall have to recognize that that approach in which we invoke the idea that we cannot manage either at the individual or the social level without the idea of God has to be viewed with the utmost caution and critical realism. The actual position at present is such that at least so far as our external empirical observations are concerned, atheists die peaceably and without any particular fear, and that morality considered as an empirical and statistically calculable entity in a society does not seem, in any very clear sense, to be dependent upon our position with regard to the existence of God, whether we still verbally acknowledge this, or call it in question, or positively deny it. So far as the maintenance of liberal and humane morality in society is concerned we must not, precisely as Catholics, be too hasty and over-zealous in using the idea of God as a weapon in our argument. In fact we are upholders of the idea of the ‘natural law’, whatever interpretation may be placed upon this concept, so very controversial [175] as it has once more become in the present day. Now on any showing this means that there are basic principles of moral conduct such that they have to be discovered first and foremost in the nature of man himself, and in the structures of the society and the environment in which he has to live, even though any binding force which we may attach to these human norms immanent within our own world does include a theism that is postulated at least at the implicit and non-thematic level. This in itself should cause us to observe the greatest prudence and reserve in adopting the approach to apologetics described above.

To this a further and rather different point must be added. When theism is invoked as a postulate for shaping the world in a way that ‘makes the course of human life in it reasonably humane and tolerable, it almost inevitably arouses the suspicion in the mind of modern man of being a fictitious ideology. It is quite useful, but for that very reason incurs the suspicion

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of being a mere fiction. The question of whether we believe in God certainly has some importance too for human living in its fully concrete reality. But if we attempt to persuade either ourselves or another to believe in God precisely *in order that* these very real advantages ensuing from belief in God may be gained, then hi the majority of cases today the psychological mechanism which we seek to set in motion in this way will fail to function in view of the fact that the world as we experience it is so terrible. Some will say that the idea of God is 'too beautiful to be true'. Others will always regard the element postulated in it (and even Kant freely invoked this in his work) as the fictitious element, and will say that a God who is postulated to exist on the grounds of human needs is and remains in all cases a projection of man himself, something which is conjured up by him to help him. They will say that this postulated element is the opium of the people, valid only so long as they cannot find the help they need elsewhere, a neurosis of humanity which has gradually to be broken down.

III

The positive message that there is a living God, and that he wills to save mankind, is in principle directed to *all* men. Certainly there are in principle no explicitly definable boundaries for Christianity and the missionary movement of the Church at which her proclamation of the living God should be brought to a halt, no boundaries beyond which live men to whom theism is from the outset and in principle of no concern. It is no less obvious, and in principle still more important, that there is no form [176] of human living in which an encounter with God does not take place at least anonymously, non-thematically, and transcendentally (or however we may wish to express the reality referred to). For everywhere where a truth is asserted as absolute there, as a matter of transcendental necessity, albeit, perhaps, in a quite anonymous and unacknowledged manner, God is present, even in those cases in which the individual involved is unable consciously to recognize this transcendental implication or to express it in words, or when, by a culpable misuse of his own freedom, he denies or excludes this radical mystery of his own existence.[11] The more firmly a Christian theism has to stand by the two principles just mentioned, the more it must guard against the danger of drawing from them conclusions which are over-hasty and ultimately false. What we mean by this is that without being false to its own nature or adopting an attitude of cowardly defeatism, and without allowing itself to be intimidated by the atheism of today, Christian preaching can be realistic enough to take into account the possibility that *de facto* even the message of theism as such, and not merely the more complex and detailed tenets of Christianity, will remain more or less ineffective so far as a great part of the future order of society and mankind is concerned. Contrary to the tacit assumptions of scholastic theology we cannot see why any *fundamental* distinction has to be drawn in this question on theological grounds between the chances of survival for an explicit theism on the one hand and those which may be ascribed to Christianity in the full sense on the other. Formerly the necessity for such a distinction was regarded as axiomatic, even though the problem involved was not clearly recognized. The reason for this was first that it was held that as many individuals as possible must have a real chance of salvation, yet without any theism this was regarded as inconceivable (in accordance with Hebrews 11:6), and second that it was not possible to conceive of an anonymous theism, a theism which had not been objectified at the conceptual and verbal level so as to become an object of conscious thought, yet which could also be accepted in freedom and which had power to justify. Today, however, the Second

[11] For a similar thesis of the author's with regard to the possibility of an anonymous Christianity in the atheist cf. 'Atheism and Implicit Christianity', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 145-164.

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Vatican Council has laid down that even the atheist has a genuine chance of salvation *so long as* he is true to the promptings of his own conscience. In asserting this the Second Vatican Council was manifestly thinking too of the kind of atheist who throughout the course of his life will never become a theist at the explicit and thematic level, yet at the same time it still remains true that [177] without any encounter with God salvation is impossible. Now in view of all this there must be a theism of the sort which I have described, a theism that is anonymous, non-thematic, and even as such capable of really existing and being accepted in freedom. I cannot enter into the nature of this theism here in any closer detail.[12]

But if this is the case then I can no longer see why the chances of Christianity surviving at the historical and social level have to be regarded as less than those of theism as such; why for instance – to put it in more concrete terms – the established theology up to now finds it easier to recognize the possibility of an inculpable failure to recognize the truth of Christianity, the Church, and the obligations which these impose than to see that the same must apply with regard to the explicit recognition of the existence of God. Of course certain differences may exist even in this case. But they are certainly not so fundamental or so great as was supposed by the former established theology right up to the point at which the Second Vatican Council began. To put the matter for the moment in an exaggeratedly hostile way, and one which perhaps goes beyond the facts, it would be perfectly possible to imagine that in some future but wholly conceivable age the opportunities of survival for a Christianity that exists in concrete form are actually greater than those to be ascribed to a theism in the abstract, one which exists apart from the concrete reality and practice of a Christianity embodied in the Church. However this may be, we can at least say this much: Just as the specifically Christian message recognizes from the outset that in the case of many individuals and social groups it will *de facto* fail to make them Christian in any explicit sense, and yet in spite of this regards it as possible that such individuals will find salvation in an 'anonymous Christianity', so too a similar situation may freely be expected, or at least taken into account as possible, for the future with regard to theism as well.

In the future, therefore, it may be presumed that atheism of the explicit kind will be extremely widespread (though of course there will be very many different shades and degrees of this) ranging from an atheism of irresponsiveness and indifference towards religion as a matter of living practice to one that is very thoroughly worked out at the theoretical level, and in fact a militant atheism (admittedly, for reasons which cannot be developed in any greater detail here, an atheism of this kind, as it exists in the concrete individual, is under certain circumstances perfectly compatible with an implicit and anonymous theism). There will be a widespread atheism of this kind in the future because the situation in which the [178] world has become secularized cannot be reversed. Now this situation is constantly renewing its impact upon men and so generating an atheism of this kind in very many of them, not indeed with any justification at the theoretical level, but nevertheless with a certain psychological compulsion.

Without prejudice, therefore, to the fundamental universality of its message of the living God, a universality which we are bound to strive for, Christianity and the Church can reckon with this prospect of an extremely widespread and enduring atheism as a 'must' of saving history in their proclamation of this message, just as the Church always reckons with the 'must' of saving history that she and her message will always remain the sign that is contradicted, and even with the fact that this contradiction is becoming more acute. However true it may be that this 'must' relates to something that should not be the case, the fact still remains that Christianity and the Church can allow this prospect to enter into their calculations and turn it to good account by allowing it to produce a kind of reaction within

[12] cf. n. II

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them. In this sense, therefore, they can allow the methods and tactics they adopt in the preaching of theism to be influenced by this factor. In other contexts also factors of a similar kind are already taken into account, as in the methods and tactics of pastoral work. For instance these may determine how certain *finite* forces are to be applied in the pastoral field and used to determine the specific directions in which pressure is applied in pastoral work. This takes place in cases in which the pastoral effort has a smaller chance of being effective and the mode and direction of such pastoral work are ordered accordingly.

IV

In the light of all this it would be perfectly conceivable for explicit theism, both in the account that it gives of itself and in its methods, to be thought of and presented as the 'wooing' of an 'elite'. Of course such a thesis is only intended as a basis for discussion with all due reservations. It is also obvious that the term 'elite', both in respect of its content and in its applicability to our present question, is highly problematical, and never at any stage intended to refer to specific *social* groups.

An initial objection might be that objective truth can have nothing to do with an 'elitist' awareness since truth is either valid for all or else does not exist. But against this the point that we must constantly keep in the forefront of our minds is precisely *which* truth is being treated of. There are truths which from the outset relate to the totality of human existence, and the recognition of these depends upon many prior factors, and a certain [179] vision of human nature in its totality. These are truths, moreover, which always involve an element of decision and the process of objectifying them at the conceptual level also presupposes very many intellectual conditions such as can, in effect, be achieved only with great difficulty in those situations in which they are not supported by a public opinion that is homogeneous throughout a given society. Such truths as these may very well have something to do with the kind of awareness that may be called 'elitist', and however true it may be that such truths and convictions have an objective validity of their own in virtue of which they are in principle of concern to all, still as they exist in the concrete they do have the character of being orientated towards an 'elite'. Moreover such truths and convictions do exist quite apart from, and independent of the problem of theism. The loftier perceptions in the fields of aesthetics, logic, ethics etc. are in themselves truths for all, yet *de facto* they only come to be apprehended by a minority endowed with the necessary equipment for receiving them, and in this sense 'elitist'. The theism of the future can *de facto* – though this does not mean *de jure* – have an 'élitist' character in this sense. Formerly we closed our minds to any such possibility because of our belief (this is a point which has already been emphasized) that we necessarily had to accept an element of culpability in any atheist who remained obstinate in his atheism. We have already briefly indicated that this assumption is theologically invalid.

To this the following consideration must now be added. In earlier situations in the history of human thought some idea of God was certainly present in most minds, mainly because it was supported by public opinion in society as a whole. But the moment we put the question seriously to ourselves of what part this concept of God effectively played in the lives of very many of these earlier 'theists' both inside and outside of

Christendom, then surely we can justifiably ask whether precisely *this* idea of God really had so very much to do with the true, living, and inconceivable God as he really is. From this we can go on to raise the further question of whether the abandonment of an idea of God of this kind, which has been brought about by the new situation which has arisen in public thought and social life, truly has altered so very much with regard to the real chance of salvation which men of this kind have. And if in reply to this it were to be objected that even

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in so shockingly primitive and degenerate an idea of God some kind of very decisive reference to the true God was still always present, some notion of the true God was still always guessed at, then we must rejoin that an unexplicitated reference to God of this kind still remains constantly present even in those cases in [180] which it is no longer labelled with the term 'God' in the mind of the individual concerned through the influence of public opinion in society as a whole. In the light of this, and so far as a great part of the men of the future as they will *tie facto* exist are concerned, there is no need whatever to present true theism as that which is, both at the theoretical and the social level, simply self-evident, that which would already have to be explicitly present even in a human group which had only reached a very 'primitive' stage of development. In stating this principle we are of course presupposing that rational thought, even in its highest stages of scientific and technical development, can be perfectly compatible with a stage of development within mankind which is only very 'primitive' to the extent that development here consists in finding within oneself the courage explicitly to face up to the one question which is entailed by the very nature of man as a single whole, and by the world in general.

Even the teaching of the First Vatican Council with regard to the possibility of recognizing the existence of God by the light of the natural reason does not invalidate the theory of the 'elitist' character of the theism of the future. For what is being treated of in this definition is a possibility in principle which applies to man as such. But nothing is said here about the possibility or impossibility of an individual man in his concrete situation coming to recognize God by the power of his own capacities as an individual. Even Thomas Aquinas has emphasized how very much the individual man in the concrete is dependent, even for this knowledge, upon his social situation. Now if it is true that in the present and future this situation entails a greater danger than formerly of raising difficulties or obstacles to prevent man from knowing God, then it will not be surprising if many men fail to arrive at any explicit knowledge of God with sufficient clarity and firmness. Moreover this statement is not irreconcilable with the declaration of the First Vatican Council.

On the basis of all that we have said, therefore, there is nothing which makes it illegitimate for us in conducting an apologetic on behalf of theism in the future to proclaim this theism as the specially exalted gift of the wise who are impelled to advance to an ultimate understanding of their own existence in a way which, other things being equal, cannot possibly be accessible to the '*profanum vulgus*' even though no-one can in principle and from the outset be excluded from this matured experience of existence. And surely there is a further reason too for regarding a theism of this kind rather as the especially exalted gift of the wise. In a world which has become so complex that it is almost impossible to gain any comprehensive view of it, and in which the methods employed in all science proceed [181] along a-theistic lines (even though this in itself is justified) it is immensely difficult to view the one and ultimate question of truth as a single whole, and to make it a subject of investigation in itself, to dare explicitly and in a spirit of adoration to come to terms with that mystery which, almost *per definitionem* withdraws itself from man into its own ineffability. I believe that an explicit theism of the future will more readily be made 'attractive' even for the many if it is considered and presented as 'elitist' in character than if, contrary to all appearances and contrary to a widespread public feeling, it is presented as a doctrine which only the stupid or malicious will reject.

If the considerations which we have just put forward are to some extent correct then, while explicit theism would not have to regard every form of atheism as 'narrow-minded', it would have to regard that form which proceeds from secularization as being this; as the attitude and perspective in terms of thought and life of those who, for reasons which are very varied but also very understandable, have not – at any rate not yet -advanced to the stage of being able to achieve an overall view of the functional interconnection between the individual elements

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in their existence and in the world and explicitly to objectify this at the conceptual level. Because they have not yet reached this stage they cannot yet face up to the absolute mystery which ultimately, but silently encompasses this totality of the world, within which their own activities are confined. This attitude in which the theist of the future feels atheism to be 'narrow-minded', 'uneducated' and 'primitive' actually can and may (though all possible caution and educational discretion must be brought to bear here) help to determine the form of the apologetics which theism develops against this kind of atheism. The attitude here is to some extent analogous to that which is adopted by one who is genuinely expert and very highly educated in musical matters towards one who feels that the marches of a brass band or a popular song represent the supreme point of his musical experience. This attitude, in which theism justifiably feels itself superior to this kind of atheism, should come to be accepted as obvious. The theist should no longer feel himself to be the one who is defending an old theory against a modern viewpoint, but rather as the one who humanly speaking and in the concrete conditions of human living, has advanced farther than the atheist. And if this attitude were adopted then we should perhaps more easily and more quickly overcome the shock which many theists of today feel from the fact that on the one hand they assume that it is theism that constitutes the self-evident truth which all understand and are able to recognize, while on the other it is borne in upon them as a matter of [182] experience that many do not share this theism, are opposed to it from the outset as being unintelligible, even though at the same time they cannot be described either as stupid or as ill-willed.

V

To the extent that theism is actively opposed to this atheism that stems from the secularization process it requires something more than a mere indoctrination on the lines of the old scholastic proofs of God's existence, however correct these may have been viewed as a whole. Over and above this it requires an 'initiation' in which it attempts from the outset to appeal to man as a single totality.

In the manner in which the old proofs of God's existence were put forward they were very remarkable in character. On the one hand they were presented in a way that suggested that they were seeking to prove to the individual a truth of which he had hitherto never heard anything at all. The effect they had was as if in treating of God and the knowledge that could be gained of him they were dealing with a matter which could be brought home to man from without in the same way as, for instance, the existence of a distant land to which the hearer had never yet journeyed. These proofs did not really take into account the fact that the subject of which they were treating had been latently present all along in the hearer in a manner corresponding to his particular capacities and the resources of freedom and knowledge inherent in the human spirit. They failed to take into account the fact that under certain circumstances the truth they were proposing had actually already freely been assented to. In other words what these proofs of God's existence were seeking to achieve was to objectify in the form of a conceptual statement something of which the hearer had all along been aware at the transcendental, implicit, and non-thematic level rather than to indoctrinate him *ab initio* with a completely new truth which had never been present in him in any sense at all. On the other hand, however, these proofs of God's existence were put forward by people who had never been assailed by the slightest doubt of God's existence by anything deriving from the course of their own personal lives, or still more from the milieu in which they lived. In this respect too the situation was, and for the most part still is, similar to that which prevails in moral questions. If as a result of a certain global instinct inherent in human living, and of consistently acting upon a given moral maxim in practice, the individual is already convinced

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of the rightness of this maxim, then he will be very quick to receive the light of the *a posteriori* [183] justification of this maxim at the theoretical level, even though it remains true that these proofs, viewed in their true perspective, do not amount to much more than a repetition of the thesis in different terms. When the hearer is already himself a 'practising theist' and is this in a social milieu that is homogeneously theistic in its turn, the proofs of God's existence do not constitute any particular difficulty for him. But if this is not the hearer's situation then, even if he is not, as he very well may be, the better philosopher, while he may perhaps not raise many objections against these proofs, they will nevertheless fail to make any real or effective impact upon the hearer in the concrete conditions of his life.

In order to achieve such a thing something more is needed than an indoctrination of this kind at the conceptual level. What is needed is an initiation, an 'inauguration' into an experience of God that is ultimate and basic. What is more, this is needed precisely in the case of an atheist who has been influenced by the secularization process, because precisely this kind of atheist, as informed by a positivist and pragmatic mentality, is most of all remote, at least so far as any conscious reflection upon them is concerned, from those experiences which the proofs of God's existence in the usual sense assume as obviously having been present in him all along. Of course when we speak of initiation and inauguration we are initially simply enunciating a term which in its turn raises a problem without solving it. Nevertheless if any understanding has been achieved of that reality which we have already often designated as man's transcendental reference to the mystery[13] called God, if this transcendental reference is not once more confused with the concept corresponding to it and objectifying statements about it, if we do not speak of this transcendental reference in merely abstract and formal terms, but rather point it out to man in his concrete life (for it is precisely *here*, in his own life, that he makes this experience all unnoticed and undefined, whether he wills it or not) then it is no mere empty talk to speak of the possibility of and necessity for inaugurating him into an ultimate experience of God. This is not to deny that we have spoken of this initiation only in very abstract and formal terms, because at the moment nothing more is possible here.

It is a fact that a great number of those who proclaim the message of Christian theism basically speaking take as their starting-point a sense [184] which is still sustained by a (mere) general social acceptance that their theism is self-evident. Basically speaking they themselves are aware only of God as an idea indoctrinated *ab externo*. They are far from having achieved with sufficient clarity a truly ultimate religious experience of their own radical reference to the ineffable mystery which we call God. Alternatively in those cases in which, and to the extent that, such an experience is present in them, they are unable either to express it in genuine and credible terms, or to combine it in an effective and living way with their indoctrinated theism. And because of this the majority of those who uphold this Christian theism are at most in a position to teach this to others at the theoretical level, and even this is something which they do only in an extremely inadequate way in their dealings with really educated atheists. Still less do they succeed in advancing from this point to achieve a truly genuine initiation into the ultimate mystery of human existence or, to put it more precisely, to instil others with the courage to face up to this experience and accept it. In the light of this it would often be better if the preachers of the message of explicit theism had experienced in the concrete conditions of their own lives more of those temptations from which the various forms of atheism, especially that form which springs from the

[13] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73; *idem*, 'Science as a "Confession"?', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 3967), pp. 385-400; *idem*, *Worte ins Schweigen* (Innsbruck, 10th ed., 1967), and the study entitled 'Reflections on Methodology in Theology', in this volume, pp. 68-114.

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secularization process, emerge.

I cannot refrain from adducing one example of this inadequacy, this inability to speak of theism – which, after all, is the basis and centre of the Christian faith – in a way that really springs from the situation of modern man. I am referring here to the credal formula which has recently been published at the end of the 'Year of Faith' by Paul VI[14] It has much to say about God which is extremely acute and profound. But a truly modern credal formula of this kind, should also declare how a man of today can really arrive at belief in this God, and of this we hear nothing.

[14] *AAS* 60 (1968), pp. 433-445.

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8

THE POSITION OF CHRISTOLOGY IN THE CHURCH BETWEEN EXEGESIS AND DOGMATICS

Preliminary Remarks

In order to make the problem intelligible some preliminary approach will first be necessary. The faith of the Church, and so fundamental theology and dogmatics too, recognizes the existence of a saving history, something, therefore which takes place in the 'space-time' dimension of our existence, something which is unique and unrepeatable. In this history that which we call salvation is achieved, the turning of God to man. Moreover it takes place in such a way that this turning of his really does take place in history, and is dependent upon certain quite specific events to provide it with its proper dimension and reality. That which theologians call salvation is not a truth belonging to the realm of knowledge, always the same, eternally valid, elevated *above* history. And it is not a summons or turning of God to mankind such that it has always been given in the same way. Nor is it merely man's reaction in the dimension of history to an offering of salvation on God's part which itself always remains the same. Rather salvation itself takes place precisely *as* history, the history of God's action upon man. There is a more precise question, the question of how God the eternal, with his will to save which is ultimately the same, is related to that history in which this will to save achieves its historical manifestation. But this is a question to which we cannot give any deeper consideration here.[1] In any case the exponents of [186] fundamental theology and dogmatics assume as the basis for their specific statements that there is such a thing as saving history, that God acts in history, and that the distinctions to be drawn within this action of his are not based merely upon the different reactions of men to it. They assume rather that within God's saving action in history there can be events of such a kind that in them something is achieved once and for all, that even though this action of his is in principle posited in the dimension of space and time it nevertheless imports salvation for mankind in the future, and indeed under certain conditions (as the Christ-event shows) for the whole of humanity, even those sections of it which come before the event itself.

Now in such deeds of God in saving history the word as word of God in the mouth of man is (for reasons which we shall not be treating of within the scope of the present study) a constitutive element in the saving event itself such that without it an event could not really belong to saving history at all.[2] From this it may be concluded that the practitioners of

[1] Admittedly in any theology of saving history this is a problem which would have to be treated of at length. For a summary cf. K. Rahner, 'Universal Salvific Will. General', *Sacramentum Mundi* 5 (London and New York, 1969), pp. 405-409.
The fact that here too different conceptions of history are possible, and so different theologies, is self-evident and needs no emphasis. A good survey of the conceptions of history which are influential in the contemporary theological sphere is to be found in W. Kasper, 'Grundlinien einer Theologie der Geschichte', *TQ* 144 (1964), pp. 129-169; J. Ratzinger, 'Heilsgeschichte und Eschatologie. Zur Frage nach dem Ansatz des theologischen Denkens', *Theologie im Wandel* I (edited by the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Tübingen) (Munich, 1967), pp. 68-89; F. Schupp, 'Die Geschichtsauffassung am Beginn der Tübinger Schule und in der gegenwärtigen Theologie', *ZKT* 91 (1969), pp. 150-171.

[2] It is important to emphasize this because in the Protestant sphere, for instance, there is an explicitly verbal theology which is in contrast to the various theologies orientated towards saving history. In this verbal theology the 'word character' of history and 'the reference to history' inherent in the word have a contrasting

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Catholic fundamental theology and dogmatics cannot dispense with the conviction that in the historical Jesus there was an awareness and an assertion of the significance of his own function and his person such that, in the fulness and authentication which they achieve through the Resurrection, they effectively constitute the basis and the adequate point of departure for those beliefs which are proclaimed by Christian and Catholic dogma in the christology of Jesus Christ. The exponent of Catholic fundamental theology and dogmatics, therefore, must hold firm to the fact that there was a Jesus of Nazareth who, in his own understanding [187] of himself even at the pre-Easter stage had something to do with what Christian faith believes and proclaims of Jesus Christ the risen Lord. Otherwise the life of Jesus and his death would not have constituted a saving event. The post-Easter faith would, in itself and taken in isolation, be the saving event, and in the last analysis would have no necessary connection with Jesus himself or with his death.[3]

Of course – and it is only here that we really touch upon the problem with which we have to concern ourselves – Jesus' understanding of himself, his mission, and his person were not necessarily of such a kind that there is, so to say, a verbal identity between it and what is stated about Jesus Christ in the subsequent christology of the Church. But if before Easter Jesus had been only a man who, in virtue of some kind of religious inspiration and a certain consciousness of his mission, appeared as some kind of prophet or religious genius, and if in the last analysis the message he upheld had nothing whatever to do with his own person, his reality and his death, then the post-Easter christological teaching of the New Testament, and *a fortiori* that of the later Church, would after all be precisely nothing more than a religious idea which had adventitiously been projected onto this Jesus. Nor would Easter alone be of any assistance in narrowing the gap between the pre-Easter Jesus and the post-Easter christology unless it had been the seal set upon a claim of Jesus himself rather than merely the abstract experience of that validity in the life of any individual we like to choose which endures beyond his death. Indeed it would be perfectly possible to imagine a prophet who, having suffered a prophet's fate, is thought of after his death as one whom God had delivered, and is in this sense risen from the dead. But thereby he would in fact cease to be what he formerly was, a prophet, a religious genius, a man inspired by God, who perhaps expressed certain very important truths with regard to the relationship which man bears to God. Even if he had undergone a 'resurrection', his life and his death would not themselves achieve the status of an eschatological event of salvation with a significance for all men. Certainly the apostles were able to express the ultimate truth with regard to the function and person of Jesus in saving history only in the knowledge that he is not only the crucified Lord, but the risen Lord as well. But conversely the experience of an individual having undergone some kind of abstract resurrection cannot be any substitute for a knowledge of his function and person, which must be supplied from elsewhere.

[188] Of course we can say that the Resurrection of Jesus is the enthronement of this individual, in which he is accorded the status of the bringer of salvation in the absolute, and the entire christology of the Church might be developed on the basis of this. But even then the question would still remain of whence this interpretation of the Resurrection acquires its

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significance. cf., among others, R. Bultmann, 'Heilsgeschichte and Geschichte. Zu Oscar Cullmanns Christus und die Zeit', *TLZ* 73 (1948), 659/660.

On the problem of the connection between saving truth and the truth of history a very precisely worked out *prise de position* on the part of the official Church is to be found under Nos. 11 and 12 of the Constitution 'Dei Verbum' of the Second Vatican Council. On this cf. the detailed commentary by J. Ratzinger in *LTK* II, revised and expanded (1967), 544-557.

[3] The concept of 'retrospective interpretation' does not seem sufficient of itself unambiguously to eliminate a misunderstanding of this kind. For the validity of such an interpretation has itself in turn first to be established in theological terms.

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justification, and how it has emerged at all. This question becomes more urgent today in view of the fact that a contemporary exegesis and theology will not accept that the post-Easter Jesus has expressed and formulated a christology defining the significance of his own Resurrection. Moreover if the Resurrection of Jesus is not to be viewed merely as an external apologetic argument from miracles, in other words if it was itself a witness, an element in what is being borne witness to, then Catholic theology still cannot dispense with the truth that the pre-Easter Jesus recognized and stated so much about his own mission and function in saving history that this, when confronted by and combined with the experience of his definitive fate of having been delivered by God, provides the starting-point for that christology which is already present in Paul and John, and then extends further to the christological dogma of the Church. The question of precisely what understanding of himself in the pre-Easter Jesus is being referred to here is one which we shall have to spend a little further time in investigating.

For the historian the question of what significance the pre-Easter Jesus perceived in himself with regard to his function and his person is not so simple to decide. And hence even in the New Testament itself, when we meet with the titles of glory and concepts of exaltation etc. in which the explicit post-Easter faith of the Church in Jesus Christ is expressed there, we cannot *ipso facto* assume that it is Jesus' own understanding of himself at the pre-Easter stage in his life that has been expressed in these.[4] For everything which we read about Jesus in the New Testament, and moreover even in the gospels (including the earliest of them, that of Mark), which purport to record Jesus' own words, is already an avowal of faith in Jesus Christ (if we may reduce this avowal to a single clear and simple formula).

Now the exponent of fundamental theology and dogmatics tells us that in order to enquire into the self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus we must discern what lies behind this avowal of faith, though at the same time this does not imply any withdrawal from the faith of the early Christian preaching to a purely neutral and secular standpoint in which we view the [189] matter merely in the light of historical science. And the exegete too does not in principle dispute the fact that it is possible to enquire into what lies behind the avowal of faith in this sense,[5] or the fact that there are words of Jesus himself which are absolutely authentic, so that it is possible for us to some extent to isolate them with a sufficient degree of historical certainty from the whole complex of sayings attributed to Jesus in the New Testament in which he is already being interpreted by anticipation as the Christ of Easter. On the other hand, however, this same exegesis makes it clear to us today that this self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus which we can still to some extent discern is not so immediately or obviously identical with what is asserted of him by the post-Easter community and the later dogmas of the Church, and what the New Testament itself has introduced into this self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus by a process of interpretation (even though objectively speaking this process of interpretation is perfectly justified). And thus the more precise question, and the one that is crucial for the exponent of fundamental theology and dogmatics, is this: whether the findings which contemporary exegesis has been able to arrive at with regard to the pre-Easter Jesus' awareness of himself and his own understanding of his task and person are still sufficient as a point of departure for the New Testament christology to be found in Paul and John, and for the Church's dogmatic teaching about Jesus Christ. This is the question with which we are concerned here, and to which – even at this stage I must assert this much in anticipation of my argument – an affirmative answer is justified.

[4] On this cf. also F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel* (Göttingen, 2nd ed. 1964).
[5] The 'Bultmann' school itself has recently discovered the historical Jesus and the significance which he has for the early Christian preaching. cf. the relevant works by E. Käsemann, G. Ebeling, H. Bornkamm, H. Braun.

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Before we attempt to enter directly into the question which we have just posed it may perhaps be appropriate to say something further about certain more general assumptions and broader perspectives without which it is quite impossible to answer such a question at all. The first point that we must bear in mind is that historical certainty and the sort of certainty which we can achieve in the concrete conditions of our human existence (if we may so express it) are two different things. And the difference between them is something which we should clearly recognize and freely take into account in our faith.

We may begin by invoking a quite simple example to illustrate what we [190] mean by this. Someone has a mother. He has a quite specific and unique relationship to this woman. He accepts all the consequences that ensue from a relationship of this kind. Now if we were to ask him what real grounds he has for knowing that this individual, in relation to whom he behaves and acts as a son, really is his mother, whether he really has any certainty of this at the levels of natural science or metaphysics, or even merely of scientific history, then surely he would in the end be forced to answer: 'At this level I have no such certainty'. Certainly we can see no reasonable grounds for calling this personal conviction of his of this mother-son relationship in question. But at the same time we have never yet reflected, at the level of 'scientific exactitude' upon this conviction of his. In other words we have no scientific or absolute certainty of the genuineness of this relationship. We could if we wished make a scientific problem of this relationship involving a whole range of difficult questions.

Without having to analyse this 'case' in any greater detail at this point we can easily perceive in the light of an example of this kind that the two kinds of certainty are two different things: the attitude which prevails at the level of the individual's own existence in the concrete, and which involves this immanent and personal certainty, together with all the radical consequences ensuing from this on the one hand, and the process of scientifically reflecting upon the grounds and presuppositions for such an attitude of '*existentielle*' certainty on the other. This process of scientific reflection is important and indispensable. But it can never adequately include or replace that more ultimate and global certainty which belongs to human living in the concrete and the actual experience of this. We cannot demand this from the process of scientific reflection, because it is in principle incapable of achieving any such thing, since in any given instance the explicit content of knowledge arrived at as a result of scientific consideration is only given in an act of cognition which as such is not in its turn made the subject of reflection, and which at least in the case of those kinds of knowledge which are of 'existentielle' significance, at the level of concrete human living, inevitably plays its part in influencing the actual content of the considerations involved. This difference between the certainty of science and the certainty which belongs to the ultimate dimension in which we achieve the fulness of our own existence cannot be eliminated. The individual must learn to live with this difference. He must not use it as a weapon to destroy that other, and more ultimate certainty inherent in life itself (in our case the certainty of faith), whenever this certainty, which may be more ultimate, becomes unacceptable to him for some reason or other.

[191] Now let us apply the insight which we have merely been able to indicate above, to our present problem. All the statements of exegesis considered as a historical science belong to the category of theoretical reflection and speculation, and of historical criticism, and here they have a legitimate place of their own. But even in this case we must not suppose for one moment that the human, global, and total conviction of Jesus Christ as the absolute bringer of salvation would not be legitimate so long as that other certainty arising from theoretically reflecting upon the historical assumptions implicit in this faith has to be qualified as a lesser

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certainty in terms of epistemological theory. We have in principle the right to say, 'Of course in exegesis many questions remain open. There is much that continues to belong to the sphere of mere historical probability, and subject to a discussion among the exegetes which is endlessly prolonged. But this cannot and need not represent any attack upon the believer in the absoluteness of his faith. For this faith is in fact based not merely upon the data of exegesis and the certainty belonging to these, but is also sustained by the experience of personal grace, by a certain interior self-assurance in the Christian understanding of existence which has never been consciously reflected upon to the full, by the totality of Christian living in the concrete, by the collective experience of Christendom, in a history extending over two thousand years. In accordance with the saying attributed to Peter in the sixth chapter of John (6:68 f.) this faith can always remind itself that anyone who abandons the Christian faith cannot find anywhere else to go where he will be able to discover a brighter light to illumine the meaning of existence.'

While on the one hand it is justifiable to ask, at the level of historical reflection, what data can be found with regard to the pre-Easter Jesus and what degree of certainty these have to offer, still on the other hand we must not assume in this that these data to which we can attain are the sole factors by which the absolute assent of faith in Jesus Christ is sustained. Now the converse of this is also true. It does not imply that this absolute assent of faith in Jesus Christ has nothing whatever to do with the data of history with which exegetical speculation is concerned. If someone came to us and proved to us positively and unambiguously that for instance Jesus himself either never existed at all or certainly understood himself merely as having some kind of religious mission to arouse his fellow men with a message which had nothing whatever to do with himself, his own person, and what he himself did, then our faith would no longer have that reality of saving history as its content, then our faith would be vain. Faith in saving history has an historical content. It cannot dispense with [192] a content of this kind, and therefore it cannot dispense with the historical element in it either, or with the process of reflecting upon history, even though we can never adequately carry this through. At the same time, however, this faith is not born of scientific speculation alone. It would certainly be a heresy, and one which could not be tolerated within the Catholic Church, if anyone sought to maintain that faith in Jesus as the Christ is absolutely independent of the historical experience and self-interpretation of the pre-Easter Jesus. But it would also be false to suppose that the content and the certainty of faith in Jesus Christ are the mere product of historical speculation as practised in exegesis.

A *second* preliminary principle must be mentioned, which is necessary if we are to supply a reasonable answer to our basic question. It is obvious, yet still for the most part forgotten, that that utterance of God which we call his revelation requires our own capacity to hear it for it to take place at all.[6] To state the matter once and for all *in globo*: the statements which God addresses to us exist only in the statements which we receive with our minds. Basically speaking this is a truism, even if we take into account the fact that the revelation of God also takes place in the events of our own historical environment. For in order for these to be capable of being revelation events at all they must include an element of verbal interpretation of the purely factual element in them, and one which is not merely applied to these events from without, but is an intrinsic and constitutive element in these events themselves, necessary for them to have the status of revelation events at all.

If therefore the statements which God addresses to us exist only in statements which we

[6] On this idea cf. K. Rahner, J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, Quaestiones Disputatae 17 (Freiburg, 1966); K. Rahner, 'Propheten', *LTK* VIII (2nd ed. 1963), 800-802; *idem*, 'Wort Gottes', *LTK* X (2nd ed. 1965), 1235-1238; *idem*, 'Theology in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 23-41; *idem*, 'Scripture and Theology', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 89-97.

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ourselves formulate in our minds, then this clearly raises the problem of how we can know that these statements which we formulate in the subjectivity of our own minds are statements of God with an objectivity of their own. We cannot enter into this problem at this point in our investigations. Here we must confine ourselves to pointing out that it is merely one instance, albeit the most radical, of a general range of problems that arises in epistemological theory, that namely of how we can apprehend the objective element in reality without standing outside the subjectivity of our own acts of cognition (something which is [193] precisely impossible). But on the basis of this special quality which belongs universally to all subjective cognition in which the objective is apprehended, we can at any rate understand that the subjectivity inherent in knowledge, and which can never be overcome, is the mode in which the objective is presented to us and not that which causes this objective element to be veiled by the merely subjectivist factors. This is also true of faith. The objectivity of the revelation of God always exists in the subjective expression of an individual, in other words in his 'hearing', his 'faith' which, in a very extended sense of this term, also includes the attitude of listening obediently to the message of God as brought to us by the bearer of revelation. The history of revelation and the history of faith are ultimately speaking two sides of one and the same process. The very fact that the address of God takes place in the concrete only in the mind of the individual who bears it in history means that the revelation of God is a historical process, a history such that what takes place in it is not always the same. All this is at basis a self-evident datum of Catholic dogmatic teaching, which is constantly aware of a saving history and also of a history of revelation.[7]

It is only now, however, and after these preliminary considerations, that we arrive at a point which is especially important in its bearing upon our basic question. We have to recognize that even Jesus, as man and in his special character as the bearer of revelation, likewise utters the revelation of God to the extent that he himself in his human subjectivity hears and accepts what he has to say. And in all this this subjectivity of his can have, and has had, in its turn, an individual history. The nature of divine revelation then is such that its ultimately basic acts take place solely in the mind of the individual who hears it. However the process of human hearing in this sense has a collective, and even more an individual historicity of its own. And again this applies to the humanity of Jesus too, which is real and true. And in the light of all this it is not only not difficult in principle, but actually and positively necessary, to recognize that that revelation which takes place in the subjective human consciousness of [194] Jesus and in his preaching is also a historical entity. What contemporary exegesis establishes *a posteriori* with regard to the self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus is, at basis, something which the dogmatic theologian has had to postulate all along *a priori* on the basis of the principles indicated above with which he has to work.[8]Of course what applies throughout the history of human thought applies in this case too: we can only reflect upon and explicitate the implications inherent in our own position when *a posteriori* the historical situation is given, and also some concrete stimulus from without impelling us to do this. But this does not alter the fact that given these conditions we can then recognize implications of this kind *precisely as such*. Thus it is not surprising that in dealing

[7] Hence too one of the points with which the Constitution 'Dei Verbum' of the Second Vatican Council is explicitly concerned is to demonstrate the unity which exists between word and deed in the revelation event. On this cf. the commentary mentioned in n. 2, and also the projected schema worked out by myself in collaboration with J. Ratzinger: 'Le schéma du P. K. Rahner. De la révélation de Dieu et de l'homme faite en Jésus-Christ', *Vatican II*: *Unam Sanctam* 70 b (Paris, 1968), pp. 577-597, and also *H. Waldenfelds*, *Offenbarung*. *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil auf dem Hintergrund der neueren Theologie* (Munich, 1969).

[8] On this cf. also A. Vögtle, 'Revelation and History in the New Testament. A Contribution to Biblical Hermeneutics', Concilium I/3 (Dogma), 1967, pp. 20-26.

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with certain implications in the basic conception of the Church's christology with regard to the historicity of revelation, and also the historicity of the human awareness of Jesus as the bearer of revelation, we only explicitate these at that stage at which exegesis, with its *a posteriori* approach, discovers this historicity.

Exegesis, therefore, establishes that Jesus expressed his own understanding of himself in terms which are far from being identical with those of the later christology of the Church, and indeed not even identical with those of the christology of the primitive community or the gospels of Paul and John. And exegesis further establishes that in expressing the significance of himself Jesus may have avoided certain terms used in the theology of his environment, indeed that he could not use them at all, even though they do subsequently reappear – albeit in altered form – in the christology of the primitive Church. Finally exegesis actually establishes that a certain historical development is to be observed in this self-understanding on Jesus' part (e.g. with regard to the fact that he came to include his own death as an integral element in this self-understanding of his). Moreover this historical development is actually such that it is wholly reconcilable with the Church's dogmatic teaching to the effect that God was immediately present to Jesus in his human subjectivity (this is what the established dogmatic theology means by saying that the 'vision of God' was present from the outset in the human soul of Jesus, though in order to reconcile this with the findings of modern exegesis we must understand this 'vision' as consisting in a 'basic content' in the human subjectivity of Jesus which was only gradually objectified, though also with complete clarity, in terms of the *a posteriori* material of the theology of his [195] environment). Now all these theses or hypotheses of exegesis, strange though they may seem to us at first sight, turn out, on closer examination, but also in the light of the basic data of the christology of the New Testament and the Church herself, to be such as we should have expected.[9]

We may therefore explicitly draw attention to the fact that the position today regarding the relationship between historical and critical exegesis and its findings concerning the self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus on the one hand and the dogmatic and fundamental theology of Jesus as the Christ on the other, does not, in the last analysis represent an uneasy compromise between the two which is maintained through thick and thin in order that critical exegesis and traditional Christian faith may to some extent be able to co-exist with one another. Rather, on a deeper view, the position between the two is one that we should expect on any really genuine understanding of the faith, and from a christology which is that of the Church but at the same time one that is the outcome of a process of radical self-realization. This interpretation of the current position is not invalidated by the fact that the dogmatic theologian only recognizes the *a priori* implications of his own position at the radical level when he encounters them *a posteriori* in the findings of exegesis. In the encounter between dogmatics and exegesis, therefore, the position is, in the last analysis, far from being as critical as is sometimes assumed, though of course this position will only gradually become clearer in the course of further discussions between exegetes and dogmatic theologians. We shall have to accustom ourselves to this situation, and it is only gradually that we can do so. But when we have achieved this we shall no longer be surprised to find that Jesus of Nazareth does not explicitly put forward a christology of the kind maintained by the Church herself. We shall achieve an ever-better understanding of the fact that while the formulations of the

[9] On the question of the self-awareness of Jesus in dogmatic theology cf. chiefly K. Rahner, 'Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-consciousness of Christ', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 193-215; also H. Riedlinger, *Geschichtlichkeit und Vollendung des Wissens Jesu*, Quaestiones Disputatae 32 (Freiburg, 1966); E. Gutwenger, 'The Problem of Christ's Knowledge', *Concilium* II/1 (Dogma) (1966), pp 48-55; and from the exegetical point of view A Vögtle, 'Exegetische Erwägungen über das Wissen und Selbstbewusstsein Jesu', *Gott in Welt* I (*Festschrift fur K. Rahner*), J. B. Metz, W. Kern *et al* edd. (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 608-667.

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Church's christology remain justified and indispensable, still they are not of such a kind that it is precisely *they* which, simply as they stand, constitute that which is self-evident and clear to the utmost possible extent, while that which is presented in the New Testament as christology, and [196] above all as the self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus, is merely that which is ambiguous, 'elusive', and obscure in its expression, and less developed by comparison with the firmness and lack of ambiguity in the christology of the Church. Rather we must learn to view the intrinsic convergence of the two kinds of statement in such a way that the moment we reach that point in unfolding the formulations of the Church at which they become perplexing, this brings us back once more to the formulations of the New Testament, while conversely the formulations of the Church have done nothing else than to take seriously, and really to investigate radically, the quite homely and simple and humanly assimilable statements of the pre-Easter Jesus and the statements about him in the New Testament. Exegesis and dogmatics are not two enemies seeking to engage in a life-and-death struggle against one another, and yet precisely still allowing one another to survive. We often express the matter by saying that one or other of the findings of modern exegesis are 'still sufficient' for dogmatic christology. But this precisely does not mean that the dogmatic theologian would 'properly speaking' have expected something more from the exegete. If he really takes seriously the historical nature of revelation, and therefore the history of Jesus himself, he cannot want or expect anything more at all from the exegete.

This brings us at last to the real theme, the central question, of our considerations. We have seen that with regard to the self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus modern critical exegesis has isolated and established this by setting aside the interpretations superimposed upon it in the post-Easter christology. Now as we have already said at the outset of this study, what we are seeking to establish as the basic thesis of these considerations of ours is that once we presuppose the experience of the Resurrection this self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus as isolated and established by modern exegesis provides a sufficient basis and starting-point for the dogmatic christology of the New Testament and of the Church. In other words the present-day exponents of fundamental theology and dogmatic christology have no need to feel themselves abandoned by modern exegetes. They must not have the impression that the axioms and assumptions necessary for their work have been withdrawn from them by this exegesis. Of course it cannot be the function of the systematic theologian once more to recapitulate at this point the data yielded by modern exegesis, and which represents the 'residue' (*sit venia verbo*) of Jesus' understanding of himself, once the subsequent accretions of christological interpretation have been set aside. This is something which we are assuming here, and we are seeking only, to the extent that [197] such a thing is possible within the scope of a brief study, to justify the thesis formulated above.

For this we must take as our initial starting-point a really correct understanding of the Church's dogmatic teaching on christology. It is necessary to build a bridge to unite present-day exegesis, with its critical methods and findings, to that body of dogmatic teaching on Jesus Christ developed by the Church which must be retained as permanently valid. And the two halves of this bridge must be projected outwards from both sides at the same time – including, therefore, the side represented by systematic theology. Both departments must refuse to content themselves with any facile compromise, but rather each proceeding from its own axioms must seek to achieve a new encounter, so that a genuine and intrinsic reconciliation may be achieved between the ancient dogmatic teaching and the findings of modern exegesis. For this ancient dogmatic teaching is in fact that of the Catholic exegete too and, moreover, precisely as such.[10] But for this purpose fresh ground will also have to be

[10] The first steps in this direction have already been taken. cf. e.g. H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Exegese und Dogmatik* (Mainz, 1962); K. Rahner, 'Biblische Theologie und Dogmatik in ihrem wechselseitigen Verhältnis', *LTK* II

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broken from the side of the systematic theologian. He too will have to think out afresh those formulations of this dogmatic teaching which, though ancient and self-evident to him, still need constantly to be subjected to fresh questioning, in order to achieve a fresh apprehension of his own essential message. This implies that the dogmatic theologian must be prepared to make a fresh start on the basis of the ancient and radical statements of christology itself as these have been defined, so as to eliminate from this christology as he *de facto* conceives of it all those distortions and misunderstandings which have crept into it and which are ultimately Monophysite in character.

The very manner in which a systematic theologian recognizes, formulates, and emphasizes at a specific point within his system these ultimate principles, and chiefly that concerning the true human nature of Jesus, entails a certain danger, and one which has not yet really and permanently been eliminated. This is the danger that at some other point, or in other connections within the same christology, or perhaps because of the religious mentality it entails and the expressions appropriate to this, he may once more forget these principles and – if we may be permitted to [198] formulate it in these terms – fall back into the attitude of an average Christian, who all too often is still either partly or wholly a Monophysite, even though he knows and repeats the sound and correct formulations of the catechism. In the mind of this 'ordinary consumer', orthodox though he may be, a strange and unconscious line of thought all too often and too easily asserts itself, by which Jesus comes simply to be identified with God who, in some remarkable manner, avails himself of the 'humanity' of Jesus as a sort of livery which he wears, or an instrument, in order to render himself 'noticeable' to us here below.

In truth, however, the Christian dogma of Chalcedon lays down that without prejudice to what we call the hypostatic union, Jesus really and in very deed is a man. The word 'is' as employed by us in the formula 'Jesus is God, is the Son of God, is the Logos' suggests a further 'is', a further synthesis between the subject and the material content of the predicate as, for instance, when we say 'Fritz is a man', asserting thereby not merely that this humanity is one with the subject Fritz, but that there is a real identity between the two. In the case of Jesus, however, his humanity is precisely not identical with God in this way, and on any right understanding of the Church's dogma this is precisely not what is being maintained, but rather what is excluded. We might put to the 'ordinary consumer' Christian who intends to be orthodox the following question:

'Can Jesus tremble before the inconceivability of God? Can he, radically thrown back upon his own feeble creaturehood, adore God as the inconceivable? Can he go to meet a fate which is dark so far as he is concerned?' And then, even though this 'ordinary consumer' has himself all along been saying that Jesus is truly man, he will suddenly be brought up short and the 'yes' which he must pronounce in reply to this question will not come easily to his lips. And yet this 'yes' belongs to Catholic dogma right from the outset, and not merely to the findings of a modern exegesis. The Jesus of the Chalcedonian dogma, which was directed against Monophysitism and Monothelitism, likewise has a subjective centre of action which is human and creaturely in kind, such that in his human freedom he is in confrontation with God the inconceivable, such that in it Jesus has undergone all those experiences which we make of God not in a less radical, but on the contrary in a more radical – almost, we might say, in a more terrible – form than in our own case. And this properly speaking not in spite of, but rather because of the so-called hypostatic union. For the more radically any given individual is related to God existentially, and so mo in his concrete mode of existence as a

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(1958), 449-451: *idem*, 'Biblische Theologie und Dogmatik', *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* II (1963), pp. 523-525; R. Schnackenburg, '*Konkrete* Fragen an die Dogmatik aus der heutigen exegetischen Diskussion', *Catholica* 21 (1967), pp. 12-27.

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creature, the more such a creature achieves the state of self-realization; again the more radically any [199] given individual is able to experience his own creaturely reality, the more united he must be with God?[11]

Thus we have genuinely to eliminate from the christology which we actually live this element of Monophysitism and Monothelitism (though today we should more properly call it Mono-subjectivism), not merely in the explicit verbal formulations of its tenets, but in our own ultimate and uncircumscribed understanding of our religion. Once we have achieved this we shall find it all the more easy to acquire a free and uncircumscribed understanding of what modern exegesis has worked out with regard to the pre-Easter Jesus. For when we can freely allow our interest in Jesus (to put the matter somewhat paradoxically) to be in a genuine sense concentrated more on his significance for the kingdom of God and for God himself than on his actual status as a 'person', we can recognize that in his own individual history real questions arise for him, and that he is surprised, that he achieves insights and realizations at the conceptual level about himself which are only gradually articulated and expressed, and which surprise himself. At the same time, however, we understand that these are always discovered in the process of developing an understanding of himself which is based upon that element which ultimately lies at the very roots of his existence, and which dogmatic theologians are accustomed to call the 'immediate vision of God present in the soul of Jesus'. The fact that this is the only way in which the dogmatic theologian can do justice to the data of modern exegesis is not the sole reason why he has to take into account the fact of a genuine humanity in Jesus. He *must* do this because otherwise his position would be contrary to the dogmatic teaching of Catholic theology, in other words to his own principles.

There is one point which the dogmatic theologian must again and again make clear to himself on the basis of his own principles and data. It is that however true it may be that according to these dogmatic principles Jesus constitutes a unique reality in saving history such that he must not be placed on the same level as any other prophet, religious personality or inspiring leader, still it is also true that he must be fitted organically into a basic conception of saving history as a whole, even though in fitting him [200] in in this way we only realize his position at the supreme point of saving history viewed precisely in this way as a totality after we have achieved the *a posteriori* experience of Jesus. He does indeed constitute the supreme point of this saving history, unique and unsurpassable, but he is this precisely within this saving history itself. We are presenting the uniqueness of Jesus in a false light if we regard him merely as the Son of God, setting him in this sense over against men as though initially these had nothing to do with God, or when we view him simply as a messenger from the other world of the divine, entering a world which again has nothing to do with God.

Against this the real position is that whatever place we occupy throughout the whole history of mankind, we are children of God. God himself never ceases to dwell and to hold sway in his own divine nature at the innermost centre of this history throughout its course in virtue of an absolute, albeit a completely free and grace-given act of self-bestowal, thereby constituting the ultimate principle and the ultimate driving force of the history of this present world. Whether we always recognize this, whether we arrive at a conceptually objectified and consciously formulated statement of this basic grace-given mystery of the world and its history or not, whether we open ourselves in faith and in love to this ultimate reality of our own existence, or alternatively incur mortal guilt by closing ourselves against it (though even then we cannot banish God and his will to bestow grace from our world) – these are yet further questions, and ones which we shall not be treating of here. The process by which this

[11] On this axiom cf. also F. Malmberg, *Ein Leib – ein Geist* (Freiburg, 1960), pp. 315-333; K. Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 105-120; B. Welte, 'Zur Christologie von Chalkedon' *Auf der Spur des Ewigen* (Freiburg, 1965), pp. 429-45 8; K. Rahner, 'Incarnation', *Sacramentum Mundi* 3 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 110-118.

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ultimate and grace-given mystery of God's self-bestowal instilled into the very roots of human nature and into the very roots of history itself achieves its own due fulness – a process of self-realization achieved in knowledge and love – constitutes the *single* history of revelation and salvation, because the history of knowledge and the acceptance of this basic mystery of the world which consists in God's self-bestowal is itself the history of this self-bestowal of God as imparting revelation. God is not to be thought of as merely 'over against' the world and its history in virtue simply of being its first 'cause', untouched by the world itself and transcending it. Rather in the outward movement of his love he has inserted himself into the world as its innermost *entelecheia*, and he impells the whole of this world and its history towards that point at which God himself will be the innermost and immediately present fulfilment of our existence in the 'face-to-face' presence of eternal beatitude.

Without prejudice to the uniqueness of Jesus he must be viewed in his place in this saving history which is the history of God and the world [201] both in one.[12] Such a view need not obscure this uniqueness of his, but it will eliminate from it that element of the exaggeratedly miraculous, the mythological, which comes to be associated with the idea of an intermediary whom God sends from another world constituted by his own life into a merely secular world. Let us therefore take as our starting-point a conception of saving history of the kind we have described; one in which God, in an act of gracious self-bestowal, is always at work from the heart and centre of the world itself, and which is co-extensive with the history of the world in general. Let us set clearly before our eyes the fact that a saving history of this kind, which is always the history of God's freedom and man's freedom, presses on towards a point at which this history of God's self-offering and the free acceptance of this in the world becomes irreversible, and manifests itself in the dimension of history in this irreversibility that belongs to it. If we approach the question in this way then, on the basis of this realization of its own significance which is achieved in saving history, we have obtained a view of that point at which Jesus stands, at which God accepts the world in such a way that he can no longer let it go, and at which the world, through this self-bestowal of God, obtains as its own gift that deed of creaturely freedom in which this freedom of the world definitely accepts God's offering of himself. Then we are standing at that point at which a man, from the ultimate roots of his own being, signifies the definitive address of God to the world, *and at the same time* the assent of the world to this God.[13]

Assuming that an understanding of the question has been achieved from both these perspectives, we can now apply ourselves directly to the consideration of our basic thesis. According to the findings of contemporary exegesis it can be said even today that the pre-Easter Jesus understood [202] himself as the absolute eschatological event of salvation and the eschatological bringer of salvation.[14]

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[12] In this connection cf. especially my article, 'Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 157-192, and also the study entitled Christology in the Setting of Modern Man's Understanding of Himself and of his World', in this volume, pp. 215-229.

[13] On this cf. the author's article, 'History of the World and Salvation History', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 97-114; 'Church, Churches and Religion', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 30-50; idem, 'Jesus Christ', *Sacramentum Mundi* 3 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 192-209; *idem*, *Ich glaube an Jesus Christus* = Theologische Meditationen 21 (Einsiedeln, 1968); in addition to these, A. Darlap, 'Fundamentale Theologie der Heilsgeschichte', *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 3-156; K. Berger and A. Darlap, 'History of Salvation (Salvation History)', *Sacramentum Mundi* 5 (London and New York, 1970), pp. 411-419; E. Klinger, Formaler Vorentwurf und geschichtstheologische Einführung zu Mysterium Salutis III/1 (Einsiedeln, 1970).

[14] In this connection critical exegesis speaks of an 'implicit christology'. Cf. R. Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen* I (Tübingen, 1952), 204/205; also *idem*, *Theology of the New Testament* I (London, 1952,) pp. 42 ff.

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Of course for this statement to represent the findings of modern exegesis it is not necessary for absolutely all exegetes to subscribe to it. In any historical science, in view of the complicated nature of the facts under investigation, this is something which from the outset we should not expect. In this connection we may remind ourselves once more of that difference between the relative certainty or probability of historical knowledge, even as a presupposition of faith on the one hand, and the absolute assent of faith as such on the other. What the precise terms were in which Jesus made this self-understanding of his real in his life, and in which he actually expressed it, whether and how far he drew upon religious ideas and concepts which were already present beforehand in his environment for expressing this significance which he saw in himself – these are questions which the dogmatic theologian can freely set aside, seeing that the exegete tells him that while there are indeed many particular unsolved questions and difficulties with regard to the details of the self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus, still it can be stated with a sufficient degree of reliability that Jesus understood himself as something more than merely some kind of preacher with a mission to arouse men to a sense of religion such that his message merely pointed to a relationship between God and man, a relationship itself already existing independently of the message pointing to it. He understood himself, rather, as one in whose message (precisely as *his*), and in whose person that which he preached was actually made present in a new and irrevocable form as a new and unsurpassable summons of God. In this sense we say that the pre-Easter Jesus (including in this concept his actual message in itself) understood himself as the eschatological event of salvation and the eschatological bringer of salvation,

The self-understanding of Jesus in this sense is something that we must take with the utmost seriousness and realize in the full depths of its significance. We must take seriously the fact that in Jesus' understanding of himself his message constitutes that which is new, that which has not always been present. At the same time, however, despite the infinity of the possibilities open to God, and the openness of history itself to that which is new, this message constitutes also that which is ultimate and unsurpassable, as well as that which is inseparable from his own person. Once we have [203] realized all this, then we have arrived at a point of departure from which we can attain to the Church's dogmatic teaching on christology, provided only that this is not itself misinterpreted in a Monophysite sense. What we call the divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth as a metaphysical and substantial reality in fact has no further content whatever beyond what can be expressed in the affirmation: Jesus is the eschatological, i.e. the unsurpassable and abiding, Mediator of our relationship with God. This precisely can never signify a prophet, an inspiring religious leader, or a religious genius. For the message precisely of *this* kind of individual is in principle always capable of being separated from his person and his religious works. This is because the reality to which he points in this preaching exists independently of himself. Moreover, since he is a mere man, existing at one isolated point in history, the truth which he proclaims always is, or always should be, expressed with the proviso that this message will be made out of date once those further possibilities are realized which are open to God and which also exist in history. Now if on his own understanding of himself Jesus is not one of the prophets in this sense, and if it is obvious that on any Christian understanding of God he cannot be interpreted as a demi-god either, then, when the christology of the Church speaks of the unity between this event of salvation in the concrete and this Mediator of salvation in the concrete – a unity involving the duality of two natures as distinct, the divine and the human – it is simply stating in different terms this self-understanding of Jesus as the eschatological bringer of salvation. The converse of this is of course likewise true.

When, therefore, exegesis emphasizes that the pre-Easter Jesus speaks in the first instance not so much of his own person but of the advent of the kingdom of God which has become quite new and actual, then this should not surprise the dogmatic theologian in the light of his

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position either. For if this kingdom of God has come definitively, victoriously, and in a manner which can no longer be surpassed by any fresh events of salvation in his person and message, and if Jesus himself declares precisely *this* to be the case, then *ipso facto* he has spoken about his own person. If he has come, as we confess, '*propter nos et propter nostram salutem*', then the message he had to convey to us first and foremost was: 'Your salvation is there now as judgement and grace.' And if it is true that he possessed a genuinely human subjectivity, which achieves the truth most proper to it precisely at that point at which it looks away from itself to the inconceivable God and his love, and to mankind as brothers, and in a certain sense loses itself in both directions, then we should precisely not expect [204] him to speak of himself in that explicitly self-reflecting manner which is employed in the dogmatic christology of the Church. We understand his true nature only when we see it as absolutely one with his function in saving history. If therefore he speaks of this function of his, *ipso facto* he has spoken of his own 'nature'. If he says that in him God has uttered his ultimate assent to the world in a way that is ever more unsurpassable and irrevocable, and that in virtue of this the kingdom of God is irrevocably present in the world (though at the same time it still constantly has to impose itself in history) then, at basis he has already spoken more clearly of himself than if he had spoken of himself in isolation, presenting us, so to say, with a mirror image of himself by a certain process of introversion after the manner of the christology developed by the Church. Certainly this latter is inevitable and good at the retrospective stage. But it is such that even then it can only really be understood by us when we make real to ourselves in our faith what he is for us, and what has taken place through him and in him in that saving history which is our own. We must understand that a dogmatic formulation, however much it is, and continues to be, binding upon us, is not something which simply has to be defined in order that everything may be 'clear'. We must recognize that in the case of any dogmatic formula, in order really to understand it and make it real to ourselves in our faith, we must think back to that in which it properly originated as well. And if we realize all this then we will no longer listen to what we are told about the self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus with that attitude of slight mistrust and surprise with which we ask ourselves how in that case he did not express himself 'more clearly' about his own significance. The true meaning of the dogmatic teaching of christology has already been grasped (indeed it may perhaps actually be more assimilable to us in our concrete human lives in this form) when for instance we have really understood that saying of Jesus which runs: 'Whatsoever you have done to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me' (Mt. 25:40). There is no conceivable claim which could be more radical than this, that he himself is always and in all cases involved in the ultimate relationship between two individuals.

We have still to justify in fuller and more precise terms the thesis that the concept of a bringer of salvation in the absolute *ipso facto* implicitly contains the dogmatic teaching of christology, once it has been taken with the full and radical seriousness due to it, thought out and re-stated in different words. At this point, however, lam compelled to refer to expositions which I have put forward elsewhere.[15] Here therefore I may confine [205] myself to reiterating once more this one point which I have already made: everyone who is genuinely a Christian will concede that the message which Jesus addresses to him is unsurpassable. We must, however, recognize the immensity of the implications *ipso facto* contained in this statement, for all its apparent innocuousness. For it might be said: Every prophet, however much he may appear as a messenger of God with a momentous and stirring message to convey, must still retain an awareness of the fact that in this message of his he is forming only a single tiny drop from the boundless ocean of the eternal Godhead. Furthermore he can

[15] cf. n. 13.

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only utter this message precisely as the messenger of God so long as he submits himself in the most radical manner to the fact that tomorrow another messenger will come who, from the boundless fulness of God, in which all eternity and the future that still lies before us is comprised, draws some quite different message, yet one that is no less momentous and that renders the old one out of date. In other words every prophet must, in a true sense, allow for the fact that saving history remains open to further, unforeseeable and sometimes revolutionary developments beyond any to which he can point. Nevertheless in a very real sense that one brief statement which we have just taken as our starting-point, and to which every Christian subscribes, puts a definitive end to all this. Otherwise it should not be taken seriously at all. In itself and without any further addition this one brief sentence states that no single word that Jesus utters can be surpassed or invalidated in its further application to the world even by God himself. The message which Jesus utters through his person and through his words can be the unsurpassable and abiding word of God only if the reality that it constitutes (including in this the words that he utters and the fate that he endures) is God's own reality in the manner which we seek to express by the term 'hypostatic union'. Otherwise saving history would be open to further extensions into the future which would no longer stand under the law of Jesus Christ. Alternatively, if we wish to deny that this one brief sentence has the definitive finality which we have ascribed to it, we would have to subscribe to that completely distorted anthropomorphism according to which God, the infinitely wise and powerful, is thought of as breaking off the history of revelation and salvation at a certain point in a completely arbitrary manner *ab externo*, even though in itself, considered as God's own history, infinite further possibilities still remained open to it. Or again we would have to postulate that through his person and his words Jesus had, after all, only expressed what is true always and everywhere, and attainable from any point in history. And this would mean that there would in truth [206] be no history of revelation and salvation. Even taken by itself, therefore, this brief statement which we have taken as our starting-point as a statement which, after all, every Christian can surely make his own, implicitly, but in a very true sense, contains the whole christology of the Church. Admittedly this point would require a more extensive development and justification than we can accord to it here.

Once more we may formulate our basic thesis: If Jesus understood himself to be the eschatological event of salvation in the absolute, and the Mediator of salvation in the absolute, and if this self-understanding on the part of the pre-Easter Jesus can, with sufficient certainty be recognized as present in him even by modern historical and critical exegesis, then we have found an adequate point of departure for the christology of the Church. At the same time this is not to deny, but on the contrary to imply, that in the dimension of Jesus' own conscious reflection upon himself, this self-understanding of his can in its turn have a history of its own. And this history in itself only attained its definitive fulness in his Resurrection. Only through this event did it become credible in a definitive sense for us.

If it is true, then, that a christology of the Church is possible on these premisses, it is equally true that these premisses for a christology of the Church are themselves unalterable. It is perfectly justifiable for an exegete to point out the historical problems which these premisses entail. But if he goes beyond this, if he seeks to say, rather, that he has come to recognize with positive and unambiguous historical certainty that the realities presupposed here simply did not exist at all, then the premisses of fundamental theology and dogmatic theology for the Christian faith would really be destroyed. But I believe that no exegete would claim to be able to substantiate such a position. On the contrary, even a very critical approach to exegesis, so long as it remains open to what is unique and peculiar to Jesus, will conclude that the self-understanding of Jesus presupposed here is to be affirmed.

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If we are to speak of the Resurrection of Jesus and the credibility attached to it, then properly speaking we should explicitly state and make clear certain principles at the level of existential ontology and anthropology upon which we shall be basing our arguments. We are accustomed to think of man to some extent in a dualistic sense, and because of this we find it difficult to grasp the fact that what is meant by the definitive state [207] of man, his state of being redeemed and having attained to salvation, is basically speaking the same as that which we call the Resurrection of Jesus and of man in general. For basically speaking it is inconceivable either in terms of modern anthropology or biblical anthropology that there should be any absolute division between a fate which we attribute to the physical side of man and the fate which he undergoes at the spiritual level and in his personhood.[16] Now if we evaluate and understand this point correctly, then the following two statements have exactly the same meaning: first, 'This crucified one is he who has been received by God in such a way that he, together with his fate and the decision which that fate involves, has been ratified by God as having an eternal validity', and second, 'He has risen'. It is necessary for us to recognize the fact that for ourselves too we can hope for no other definitive form of deliverance than that which, on any correct understanding of Christian terminology, we call Resurrection. And if we did perceive this more clearly then we would see that right from the outset the individual may justifiably and confidently ask this question of history itself: Is there any point within this history at which I find an event which makes it possible for me confidently to assert, 'So-and-so is the one who has been accepted and saved by God, in other words the one who has risen from the dead'? We should begin by reminding ourselves of all these general perspectives and prior assumptions for our understanding if we intend seriously to enquire into what is truly meant by the Resurrection of Jesus, and why it is worthy of belief. Even here it is not a question of a miracle of God being inserted into a spiritual situation in which nothing of the kind could possibly be expected at all. It can perfectly well be the case that it is only through the *a posteriori* experience that an *a priori* perspective of hope already transcendentally present within us is brought to the stage of conscious and explicit realization. But when it is brought to this stage we recognize it as something which has been present all along, although, it may be, in a very unexplicitated way. This is the one principle which should be borne in mind from the outset and all along in seeking what the Resurrection of Jesus means.

Secondly we should achieve for ourselves a clear understanding of what [208] really can be meant in *theological* terms by resurrection. The moment we picture to ourselves a dead man returning once more into our temporal dimension, with the biological conditions belonging to it, we have conceived of something which has nothing whatever to do with the Resurrection of Jesus, and which cannot have any kind of significance for our salvation either. In fact to say that any individual has risen from the dead must precisely be tantamount to saying: 'This man in this fate of his which seems so absolutely negative, has in a true sense, as himself, and together with his history, really attained to God.' What it does not say, however, is this: He has once more extricated himself from the process of death, and is once more there on the same plane as ourselves. This is in fact precisely not any sort of concession to the modern spirit of the time, after the manner of the demythologizers, but belongs so obviously to the very content of dogmatic teaching that this dogmatic teaching itself would otherwise have no Christian meaning whatever.

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[16] For fuller details on this cf. my articles ,'Auferstehung Christi', *LTK* I (2nd ed., 1967), 1038-1041; 'Resurrection', *Sacramentum Mundi* 5 (1969), pp. 323-342; 'Dogmatic Questions on Easter', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 52 1-133; 'Experiencing Easter', *ibid*. VII (London and Freiburg, 1971), pp. 159-168; 'Encounters with the Risen Christ', *ibid*., pp. 169-176.

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Once we recognize this, then, precisely on *this* basis, and not merely on the basis of contemporary exegetical criticism, it becomes evident that the question of whether we could touch the risen individual, whether he could eat, etc., is absolutely secondary, and this not merely because it suits us of today to take this line, but because it is positively demanded by any true understanding of the ancient dogmatic teaching of the Church. One who has achieved the definitive finality of his own existence cannot be subject to the material changes we undergo. He cannot exist in a temporal dimension such as belongs to us. He cannot remain dependent upon other physical entities such as temperature, tactibility etc. In other words, even if we were to take all these stories in an extremely literal sense, we would still even then have to interpret them as meaning that in terms of the range of experience and understanding open to us the individual risen from the dead had undergone 'in himself' a process of *transposition*. It should be clear that this 'transposition' sets the risen individual 'in himself' on a different plane just as much as it attests the fact that he has been eternally and definitively saved by God. To questions such as whether if we were already even now in a glorified state we could see the marks of the wounds of the risen Lord, whether then we would still have a head and hands in the same way that we do now etc., we should in principle reply: This is something which we do not know and the reason that we do not know it is not that we adopt an attitude of critical scepticism and are no longer willing to accept very much by faith, but rather that the intrinsic meaning of the dogmatic teaching itself does not admit of answers being found to questions of this kind. Whether Christendom [209] has or has not always recognized this fact so clearly as is entailed by the radical nature of resurrection – this too in its turn is a secondary question.

As Catholics we believe in a development of dogma, that as the awareness of our faith becomes more and more developed, we achieve a deeper understanding of the dogma itself. And under certain circumstances certain conceptual models, or perhaps even errors which have crept into our understanding at an earlier stage are gradually eliminated in this process. The ultimate goal of the process itself is not that in this way we shall gradually argue away the very substance of the dogma itself, so as to leave no room for it in our world, but rather that from its own true and innermost centre an ever better understanding may be achieved of what it truly signifies. Even Paul recognized that all realities, and so too the conceptual models we use to understand them, undergo a radical transformation that extends right to the ultimate roots of their nature. Hence we cannot, on the basis of the models we currently use to understand existence, vividly portray to ourselves what eternity is like. On any radical view this is just as impossible in the case of the soul or spirit of man as it is in the case of the physical side of his nature. Yet because we are inclined to accord a certain priority of value to the spiritual side, we find it easy to suppose that at the spiritual level we can live on throughout all eternity in the same mode as that in which we are living in the present. Yet this is quite untrue. We know nothing of the eschata beyond the fact that we are and that we receive the history of our own reality and free decision and our relationship to God as something that is permanently definitive. We have no conceptual models to explain to ourselves precisely *how* this comes to be. All we know is that we cannot conceive of man as a sort of space rocket with two stages, in which the lower stage, that which is called the 'physical side' will one day fall away so that then a 'spirit', with the special dimension of reality belonging to it, will continue on alone to enter definitively into the glory of God. We know that man is one and cannot be separated into two compartments. If we believe in a consummation then we believe in *our* consummation. The fact that in accordance with the intrinsic complexity and historical development of human nature this consummation must appear different in respect of each particular element in man – this too is, admittedly, a point that is clear. But as for any positive conceptual model showing us *how* we should represent this to ourselves – this is something which we do not and should not have, for if we did have

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it then quite certainly we should be misinterpreting the meaning of 'eternity'.

[210] All this is very obvious to man when he is thinking of *his own* resurrection according to the affirmation which we make in the creed. But obviously it also applies to the case of the risen Lord. For in fact he is risen in that which we call his human nature, his human reality. If he then manifests himself to the disciples in a quite specific mode, then inevitably this has the force of a 'transposition' of that which he himself is into our conceptual world. Yet it is clear from the outset that we can never adequately separate this 'for us' aspect of the risen Lord from the 'in himself' aspect of him. I cannot work out for myself whether or not the glorified wounds of the physical side of Jesus actually exist in the 'in himself' dimension which belongs to him as risen. I do not even know whether one who has been glorified has a head. I have no positive grounds for denying it, but ultimately speaking I do not know it, and, moreover, it is a matter of indifference. All this still does not in the least alter the fact that I believe that I am not simply some transitory element in this world, but rather, that as this particular individual, the physical side of whose nature I must include in my concept of myself, I have a kind of existence which is destined to endure, for which I am answerable to God, and which will have an eternal validity in his life.[17]

If we have ever devoted any intelligent consideration to these matters, then, while of course not all those particular questions are immediately clear which we can raise with regard to the Resurrection and manifestation passages, still many of these questions will cease to appear to us of such acute and radical importance. Of course this in itself is still not enough to provide an answer to the question of precisely *how* the disciples really did experience, at the ultimate heart and centre of this Easter experience, the existence of Jesus as delivered from death, and so in some sense having an abiding and eternal validity in God. This too is a point on which not much can be said. Why is this? It is because we ourselves have precisely not undergone this experience. But even *in* an experience of this kind of one who, having been delivered, definitively possesses his own history, the true heart and centre of this experience is of course, in the very nature of the case, not something which can initially be verified by touching him with our hands etc., or laying them upon a wound in his side. It is obvious from the outset that we cannot weigh and measure the risen [211] Lord, cannot photograph him with our cameras, that even a team of television reporters could not make a documentary about him. He does not belong to the world of our experience. For this reason it is extremely difficult now to express in more precise terms exactly *how* the apostles made this experience. Nevertheless we can from the outset say this much:

If they had been able to touch him in the same way that we touch things at the everyday level, this would in fact not have constituted the true experience of the definitive state which this man Jesus had attained to at all. For in that case the more solid the disciples would have felt such experiences to be at that time, and within the dimension of this world, the less they would have experienced that in which the essence of resurrection in fact consists: the fact that this man is he who has been definitively delivered. We must simply say: These disciples did maintain that they had undergone this experience, and these individuals actually described this experience. But in these descriptions of theirs it is clearly apparent that they were very conscious of one fact, and actually point to it with what is relatively speaking considerable exactitude, the fact namely that their experience was no mere subjective impression of some abiding validity in Jesus, such that it still maintains a permanent force for us, the fact that the point of departure in this experience was him and not their own subjectivity; that it constitutes something quite different from visionary experiences in other contexts with which

[17] Hence, despite the very extensive 'historical' attestation of the Resurrection it would certainly be false to confine our attention solely to these accounts as such. H. Schlier rightly regards the Resurrection of Jesus as constituting a borderline problem between exegesis and dogmatic theology. cf. his 'Über die Auferstehung Jesu Christi' = *Kriterien* 10 (Einsiedeln, 1968), pp. 69-71.

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these men were perfectly familiar. In the case of Paul too we find him on the one hand uncompromisingly presenting himself as a mystic gifted with visions and similar phenomena, and yet at the same time on the other being plainly conscious of, and emphasizing (even to the point of using a different terminology) the fact that the experience of the risen Lord is something quite different.

The question still remains: Is the experience which these disciples attest for us susceptible of abstract investigation and explanation in rational terms, or is any such rationalizing abstraction contrary to the experience asserted by them to have taken place on the grounds that if we do subject it to this rationalizing process even that which they do record of it in all honesty thereby ceases to have any further validity? At this point the Christian says: 'Well, I accept this experience from themselves as being unique, but at the same time as something which has really been attested. I believe with them.' If we say, with the exegetes of our own time, that the Resurrection is not an event that took place in historical fact,[18] but that [212] the historical fact consists rather simply in the faith and the conviction of the apostles and disciples about the Resurrection, then this again is not a statement which the dogmatic theologian, on any right understanding of this statement concedes to the exegete and the historian only reluctantly and with a 'gnashing of teeth', The situation is, rather, that here too we have something which is at basis obvious from the very nature of the case, and, moreover, from the very nature of the case as the dogmatic theologian views it from his *own* standpoint. For one to rise from the dead in such a way as to rise into the inconceivability of God obviously in the very nature of what is signified by this is not something which is intrinsically included, or should be included, in the dimension of historical experience as found in other contexts. This, however, is in no sense to exclude the fact that this experience involves *some reality* which is not identical with itself as such.

The disciples do not create the Resurrection of Jesus *by* their experience. Rather they experience (this is a witness that we must accept from them if we are willing to believe at all) the Resurrection of Jesus. The Catholic interpreter of the apostles' experience of the Resurrection says, 'What I accept from them is that they had experience of one who had risen'. He does not say, 'I postulate the experience of Jesus in virtue of the fact that I postulate an experience of faith'. And it is in this sense too that Paul understands the Resurrection. If we wish to deny this experience to the apostles and Paul, then that is a matter for our own free decision. But what we cannot say on any showing is what Bultmann and others have said in their interpretation of the Resurrection, namely that the apostles themselves would also have understood it in this sense. What the witnesses of the Resurrection intended to convey was that in the risen Lord they experienced a reality which is immediate, radical, and inseparable from the saving significance which this event bears for us. On the other hand, however, God would have had no reason to cause an individual to rise from the dead unless that individual had some significance for us. Thus we can uncompromisingly state that Jesus properly and radically became he who had risen from the dead only when he had attained precisely to *that* point towards which everything tends as its goal, and at [213] which he is present in my faith too as he who has risen from the dead. The very fact that reality quite in general is a single reality which is intended to be made present in the subject endowed with spiritual faculties – this fact in itself is enough to justify us in making the assertion we have just made. Whether we refuse to accept the apostles' witness to

[18] For an orientation from the Catholic side on this question the following studies are particularly suitable: J. Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi* = Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 17 (Stuttgart, 1966), and *idem*, *Die Osterbotschaft der vier Evangelien* (Stuttgart, 1967). On the whole cf. also the relevant studies in the volumes which have recently appeared, *Mysterium Salutis* III/1, 2 (Einsiedeln, 1969/70), and also the comprehensive discussion of the early Christian tradition of the creed in K. Lehxnann, *Auferwecks am dritten Tag nach der Schrift* = Quaetiones Disputatae 38 (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1969).

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this experience of theirs or not – that is a matter for ourselves.

But in any case if we are honest we must not assert, as the sceptics so often do, that it is possible in the twinkling of an eye to provide a serious explanation of this experience of the apostles (which, after all, is on any showing a piece of historical data) even without according to the experience as its subject matter that reality which it is intended to have in their eyes. If anyone says they were precisely people who were religiously inclined, who could not bear to be parted from their Master, and so precisely ended by conjuring up the idea that he had risen from the dead – if anything of this kind is intended to be taken as a serious explanation of the apostles' experience, then this again belongs to the realm of uncritical rationalism. And even though nowadays this 'explanation' is usually formulated in somewhat loftier and more polite terms, it still belongs to this realm of uncritical rationalism. If anyone understands the Resurrection *aright*, if at the centre of his own existence, he yearns for his own 'resurrection' since on any true anthropology, he can only understand himself as a man who hopes for that which is described in terms of resurrection, then, in my belief, he has also achieved an *a priori* perspective such that, while it certainly does not excuse him from the *free decision* of faith in the Resurrection of Jesus, still at the same time it does justify him in believing in such a thing as the Resurrection of Jesus, i.e. in accepting the Easter experience of the disciples as a matter of his own intellectual honesty. Incidentally it may be said that the disciples were precisely not stupid or primitive men. We have only to represent their concrete situation to ourselves. There is someone who was a very nice man, put forward very remarkable ideas, and who was yet condemned and killed by the legitimate political authorities and also by the religious authorities accepted by the disciples themselves. How on this showing are the disciples, without something more than this happening to them, to arrive at the idea that it is all quite otherwise than it seems, that the reality has, after all, turned out gloriously? The Easter experience of the disciples really cannot be explained away as simply as the sceptics suppose.

But let us put the question to ourselves once more: If we are sceptics and doubters, have we any positive meaningfulness to offer for our lives and the lives of others? Anything which makes life itself more meaningful?

[214] And if in reply to this we sought to say, 'Oh yes, all that about the Resurrection of Jesus would certainly be very beautiful, but it is too beautiful to be true', then the reply to this would be to ask, 'Why should not man prefer the darkness of his existence to consist in faith in an absolute light than to commit himself to this darkness as one who has been banished from the light'? This is all the more true in view of the fact that man as he is does not, after all, basically speaking, or in his life as he lives it in the concrete, allow himself to fall into the void of the absurd. For, in spite of everything, he is, in his existence, one who is decent, loving, faithful. In the very act of achieving the fulness of his existence he still says again and again, 'There is a light'. And basically speaking is not the attitude of Christians precisely tantamount to saying, 'Despite all that is unintelligible, dark, cruel and brutish, there is a hope justified even prior to any theoretical process of reasoning, that existence has a meaning'. Now if this meaning is such that it affects the whole man, and not merely a spiritual element within him, then it thereby asserts that man will be the risen one. But once he achieves this plane of thought, then once more it does not involve any 'hara kiri' of the intelligence when he believes that message of the apostles, on which they have staked their lives, that they have made the experience of *the* risen one as the instance of resurrection that is radically first and provides the foundation for all the rest. And it is he who justifies us in hoping for our resurrection.

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[215]

9

CHRISTOLOGY IN THE SETTING OF MODERN MAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS WORLD

Christian revelation certainly claims to be God's word, to be addressed by God to man, a word which does not depend upon any historically conditioned perspectives of human understanding as its prior condition, a word which in its message goes beyond all such perspectives, and in which that which we call the grace of faith itself creates the true perspectives of understanding for that which God wills to utter to man as his word in the form of human words. Nevertheless it is still not the case that the perspectives of understanding which are developed in human history and subject to change have no significance for the manner in which divine revelation is communicated and comes to be understood. At the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:1) we are told that God has spoken at various times and in many ways. And this statement serves to express and to emphasize the historicity of the revelation event itself, the fact that divine revelation has a history of its own such that neither the content nor the mode of revelation remain always the same. Now one of the factors that plays a decisive, though not an exclusive part in shaping this historicity of revelation itself is the historical situation in which revelation arises. Ultimately speaking, therefore, the divine sovereignty of revelation consists not in the fact that it presupposes no conditions already existing in history, that it has no perspectives of understanding such that they are historically conditioned and subject to variation and change, but rather in the fact that it is not, ultimately speaking, subject to these historical conditions even though it is posited in them. From the divine standpoint all these prior conditions in history are actually conditions designed to make revelation possible, which God himself as revealer creates and himself foreordains as the condition of his deed of revelation. In this sense, therefore, secular history must be thought of as a secular element in the divine revelation in which God himself is [216] communicated. Even if as Christians we say that revelation closed with the end of the New Testament age, with Jesus Christ and the eye-witnesses to him, and with his apostles, so that no new public revelation can any more take place, even if we say that all that still remains to be done is to preserve and hand on through 'tradition' that which has definitely taken place in Jesus Christ, still this does not mean that from the apostolic age onwards this revelation is to be conceived of as an entity which has been 'frozen' into its definitive form so that all that we still have to do is to push it on through the dimension of future time and space.[1] Nor does this statement imply that that development of dogma, that further unfolding of the revelation that has been 'closed' which does undoubtedly take place is independent of the historical situation. The historical situation and the historical process in which particular perspectives of understanding are changed and altered are, on the contrary, demonstrably something more than the mere external situation for the development of dogma. Rather they are the ferment within this such that without it such development would be totally inconceivable.[2]

[1] Hence right down to the Middle Ages the inspiration of Ecumenical Councils and a revelation of the Holy Spirit have been spoken of almost as self-evident factors. On this cf. H. Bach; 'Sind die Entscheidungen der ökumenischen Konzilien göttlich inspiriert?', *Catholica* 13 (1959), pp. 128-138. Y. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (London, 1966).

[2] cf. the author's articles, 'History of Dogma', *Sacramentum Mundi* 2 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 102-108, 'History of Heresies; *ibid*., pp. 18-23; 'Theology II. History', *ibid* 6 (New York and London, 1970), pp. 240-246.

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In the light of this it is obvious that theological work consists to a large extent in answering the question of how the perspectives of any given age give rise to fresh problems for the traditional dogmatic teaching that has been handed down, and how this teaching must be interpreted afresh (which does not mean circumvented while pretending to interpret it) in the light of such perspectives. This has been the case right from the first. But surely what is specifically new in the theological work today as contrasted with that of earlier ages consists in the fact that today the situation for theology is not merely unreflectingly lived through and allowed to exercise an influence on theology unconsciously. Instead this situation itself becomes the object of conscious reflection and can therefore be related explicitly to the theological work itself. Formerly there was no scientific awareness of the developing history of ideas in the present, and of course *a fortiori* no futurology either. And because of this theology was merely passively influenced by the historical situation in which its work was done and this passive influence was unconsciously [217] introduced into the theology itself. Today, on the other hand, this encounter between theology and the contemporary situation must take place at an explicit and conscious level, though of course only to the extent to which the individual from his place in history is capable of achieving such a level of conscious reflection on his own situation, for the attaining of it always remains an asymptotic goal. As a pointer to this new situation in theology we may regard it as a significant fact that in the decree 'Gaudium et Spes' of the Second Vatican Council a description was included of the contemporary secular human situation certainly for the first time in a decree of the official Church carrying such authority.

With these prior assumptions, therefore, let us put to ourselves the following question: Having regard to the contemporary situation of human thought, the view which modern man takes of the world, what are the implications of this for christology? What impulses could this contemporary situation give rise to for christology in terms of fresh currents in theological speculation? This question is raised in view of the fact that for many centuries the officially authorized christology of the Church has hardly made any progress at all, at any rate not such as has been made clear in the average Church member's awareness of his faith. In answering such a question we are faced from the outset with the hard problem that it is only with great difficulty that we can describe this contemporary situation in secular thought. And this is a difficulty which we must labour under from the outset in striving to answer the question of what the implications of this situation are for christology. Hence only a few quite primitive characteristics of the contemporary situation in terms of ideas can be mentioned here, and our question will be related to these. It is in these terms, then, such as they are, that we shall be attempting to answer the question of what this situation may demand of a christology that is in keeping with the times. It is also obvious that the reply we give to this question could strictly speaking only be arrived at by working out a fresh christology, and this of course is something which cannot be accomplished here.[3] Again we cannot claim either that the order in which the characteristics we have in mind will be presented is based on any well founded system, or that the order in which they appear here will correspond to the degree of importance to be attached to each particular landmark of the contemporary situation which we shall be mentioning.

Our age is certainly characterized by a profound conviction of the [218] unity between spirit and matter.[4] In fact our own times are to a large extent decisively influenced by a dialectical materialism. For a large section of mankind this represents an ideology which has

[3] On the questions with which a new christology of this kind is confronted cf. K. Rahner, 'Current Problems in Christology', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1962), pp. 149-200, and also *idem* 'Jesus Christ', *Sacramentum Mundi* 3 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 192-209.

[4] This idea is developed more deeply in my article, 'The Unity of Spirit and Matter in the Christian Understanding of Faith', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 153-177.

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been constitutionally imposed, protected and propagated, and because of this, and in addition to its dominance in this sphere, it has also had a very profound effect in influencing the situation in terms of human thought in the rest of the world as well. Even if as philosophers and Christians we decisively reject this materialism, still the element of truth in this error (for unless there was such an element of truth the importance of materialism in the present age would be totally incomprehensible) can be regarded as consisting in a recognition of the unity between spirit and matter. For in the traditional 'ideology' of earlier Christian ages this unity had, after all, not been recognized with sufficient clarity.

This unity of spirit and matter in a sense which is philosophically and theologically acceptable to a Christian, cannot of course be established here *in extenso*, or in its own right. If this were possible, we should be putting forward the following thesis as its content: Spirit and matter have necessarily an intrinsic connection with one another, because both of them derive from the one infinite Spirit which is God as their Creator. All creaturely spirituality has an essential connection with matter, because ultimately speaking, although in very varied ways, creaturely spirituality is a receptive and intercommunicative spirituality (even in the case of the
'angels'), and matter in the metaphysical sense is the necessary condition for finite spiritual beings to exercise an intercommunicative influence upon one another. We must assume here the concept of an essential self-transcendence on the part of an existing creature sustained by God as its ultimate cause, and on the basis of this assumption we can freely assert that the development of biologically organized materiality is orientated in terms of an ever-increasing complexity and interiority towards spirit, until finally, under the dynamic impulse of God's creative power, and through a process of self-transcendence of this kind, it becomes spirit.[5]

[219] Now assuming a unity of this kind between spirit and matter, then (quite apart from other treatises such as that of eschatology) this has a direct significance for christology. One instance of this is that on this assumption *it* is easier to understand why the Incarnation has a significance even for the angels, namely because these too belong as such to the cosmos which is one and material at the same time. But more than this there is a further problem (one which is already to be found even in Origen's works), which can be rendered more intelligible, the problem, namely of why the Logos becomes man without also becoming an angel. For in finding a solution to the problem entailed in this state of affairs we must not invoke any arbitrary dispensation on the part of God. Again on the basis of this unity between spirit and matter it also becomes clearer for christology why the assumption of a spirit-creaturely reality by the Logos actually constitutes a hypostatic union with matter, an Incarnation of the Logos in the true sense, which attains to and commits itself to matter itself as such – in other words the radical potentiality of the world as such – and why the total reality of the world is *ipso facto* touched to its very roots by the Incarnation of the Logos precisely in virtue of the fact that matter must be conceived of fundamentally and from the outset as one. Finally there is one further point which can be made still more unambiguously clear on the basis of this unity between spirit and matter. This is that in the *de facto* free ordering of this total reality the creative deed of God, and that too in its bearing upon the material world, was from the outset an element in that wider and more radical decision of God's will to impart himself to that which is other than himself and not divine.[6] There can be

[5] A similar line of thought, though developed from a different starting-point, is to be found in Teilhard de Chardin, Man's Place in Nature (London, 1966). On the author's conception cf. chiefly K. Rahner and P. Overhage, *Das Problem der Hominisation* = Quaestiones Disputatae 12/13 (Freiburg, 1961), esp. pp. 43 ff., and also 'The Secret of Life', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 2969), pp. 141-152.

[6] On this cf. the author's contributions entitled 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 105-120; also 'Incarnation', *Sacramentum Mundi* 3 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 110-118.

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no doubt that in accordance with Augustine's phrase relating to the humanity of Jesus, '*Assumendo creatur*' the humanity of Jesus is the object of God's creative will because it is through the hypostatic union that the Logos wills to utter itself into the external world.[7]
[220] Nevertheless because of the unity between spirit and matter, and because of the ultimate unity of the world constituted by matter as such, this humanity of Jesus constitutes an element in the world as a whole, while conversely this world constitutes in a very radical sense the environment, the concomitant setting, indeed the very physicality demanded by the Logos in its act of uttering itself into the non-divine. Now if this is true then it must also be said that the whole of creation in the *de facto* order imparted to it is from the outset posited as the condition enabling God to impart himself to the non-divine by becoming the addressee and the recipient of this self-utterance of his. On this showing the entire supernatural reality constituted by grace and Incarnation (taking both of these as mutually conditioning elements in a single act of self-bestowal on God's part) no longer appears as a subsequent addition to a world that is considered merely as having been created by God. On the contrary, the creation, considered as the constitution of the non-divine 'out of nothing', is revealed as the prior setting and condition for the supreme possibility of his imparting of himself 'to the outside world' to be realized, a self-bestowal in which he does not constitute some other being, different from himself, but imparts himself, and thereby effectively manifests himself as the *agape* that bestows itself.

An essential trait in modern man's understanding of himself and of his world is the conviction that the world is not a static reality, but rather a world in process of becoming, subject to the process of evolution and history. It is not our task here to distinguish evolution and history from one another in any more precise terms, even though it is of the highest importance, in other contexts at least, to draw the lines of demarcation between the two, and even though we are in danger of denying the true nature of human history itself, if in our conception of it we make an exaggerated or over-facile use of the conceptual model of physical or biological evolution. The fact remains, however, that in this connection in his understanding of himself and his world modern man conceives of the reality involved in terms of evolution. In former times the basic conception of the world and of man was that they were created by God at the 'beginning of time', and never lost this radical reference to their own origins and basis. But this abiding reference to the transcendent and ultimate basis of all reality was unquestioningly interpreted as a state of being sustained in being, as '*conservatio*'. God creates a world and maintains it in being. And however much the phenomenon of becoming takes place within it, this process of becoming consists in the reproduction, constantly renewed, of what was already there before; or at any rate it is [221] a becoming which unfolds on a stage which has been firmly and immovably established once and for all, and in such a way that this firmly established sphere of the world, this stage of the theatre of the world, itself remains unaltered. From ancient times, and from the beginning of the Christian age right down to the theology of the baroque period, the image of the world was such that the basic constituent of reality was not time but space considered as a static entity, and history in the truest sense – in other words the history of salvation and perdition – was the movement of reality towards a specific and definitive point within this system as spatially conceived. Of course even prior to the advent of the modern interpretation of the world and of man these basic ideas were interwoven again and again with perceptions and expressions of belief which ran counter to this basic conceptual model involving a static interpretation of the world, and which could only be made to conform to it with difficulty and

[7] A fuller treatment of this is to be found in F. Malmberg, *Über den Gottmenschen* = Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Freiburg, 1969); cf. also *idem*, ' "Ipsa assumptione creatur". Ein Versuch scholastisch-theologischer Glaubensinterpretation', *Ein Leib – ein Geist* (Freiburg, 1960), pp. 315-353.

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to a limited extent. But this does not alter in any respect the fact that the activity of God was regarded primarily as consisting in the upholding of a static world, one which, insofar as it had any 'movement', moved in cycles, ultimately turning back upon itself and not achieving any linear advance of history towards a future that remained open before it. In accordance with this God was also thought of as he who belongs to another world, he who, as unmoved Mover, does not contribute to bringing history to its fulness by impelling it towards new and different points.

In contrast to this the man of today experiences the world as a becoming, a changing, and a history. He thinks of space rather as a function of time,[8] history as a process of linear development which leads to ever more complex systems, systems which are at the same time present in the subjective awareness of those involved in them. Hence the question naturally arises for Christian faith of how in more precise terms we should conceive of God and his relationship to the world if we take this model of a dynamic and evolutionary world as our premiss. In order to pave the way for our answer to this question we must explicitly draw attention to a further point, namely that there is much which Christian faith has recognized all along and which in reality stands opposed to the ancient conception of the world, even though this was long preserved in christendom, and even though the opposition involved was with difficulty [222] concealed. At the same time these very factors, recognized from the first by Christian faith, exhibit a positive affinity with the basic conception of the world and man which belongs to modern times. Christianity has never been merely a doctrinal system of eternal ideas, pointing on to realities with an eternal validity and prescribing a mere mystical sinking into God which involves a withdrawal from history. On the contrary Christianity is the proclamation of a saving history in which the true absolute which is significant for man is the historically concrete. At least on the religious terrain which is most proper to it Christianity has all along constituted an ideology which is evolutionary in character. The only point was that the Christian tradition represented this saving history as being played out on the fixed and static stage of the material and biological world, and as a result saving history itself was in constant danger of being conceived of in terms of this static concept of the world, and so of being undervalued as being, in the last analysis, an epiphenomenon in the world and nature of a very secondary kind, this in turn leading ultimately to it becoming incredible and so denied. Some awareness of a future new earth, an eschatological consummation of the material world as a whole, a consummation to which man too could actively contribute, was indeed included at one point or another in the conscious faith of Christianity. But it did not emerge as a distinctive trait in its own right in any theological cosmology or cosmic eschatology. Instead it constantly remained submerged beneath a conception of salvation in which the individual spiritual subject was considered to be delivered from the world and its history and taken into that other world of the eternal God who is outside all history. Properly speaking, therefore, what is needed is not so much a transposition of the Christian understanding of the world and man into an evolutionary view of the world, but rather the bold and radical carrying through to its logical conclusion of that view of the world which essentially and in principle has been present all along in Christianity, and still is present in it, as opposed to those portrayals of the world which have been superimposed upon it and are alien to it, and to which Christianity itself has formerly been exposed as a result of the influence of a Hellenistic view of the world.

Admittedly in establishing this basic point we have still not answered the real question with which we are concerned, that namely of how in more precise terms we should

[8] We are not concerned here to produce an exact scientific description of the relationship between space and time in the sense appropriate to physics. Such a description is, after all, not required in the present context. On this cf. also my article, 'Theological Observations on the Concept of Time' in this volume, pp. 288-308, esp. n. 1.

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understand the relationship of God to the world. In answering this question we must inevitably touch upon the old metaphysical problem of the immanence and transcendence of God in relation to the world. In principle the philosophical and theological teaching of Christianity about God has always also been aware of and spoken of an [223] immanence of God in the world, even though in doing so it has always fought against the danger of interpreting this immanence in a pantheistic sense, and making God in some way simply identical with the world as a whole. But this immanence of God in the world precisely as above and beyond the world and in this sense transcendent, was nevertheless in some respects abbreviated in the traditional theology of the seminaries, and in two respects its characteristic traits were not fully brought out: this immanence had, so to say, a static character. It was not understood (at any rate not clearly enough understood) as the immanence of the divine dynamism in the world as a becoming, but rather as the immanence of God as conserving and maintaining the abiding orders of being. Certainly over and above this teaching of the divine 'conservatio' a further teaching was presented of the divine 'concursus', God's collaboration with the activities of his creatures. But this divine collaboration was, nevertheless, merely the providing of the necessary divine assistance for the 'actus secundus' of a stable and unchangeable being to be brought to its own due fulness. It was not conceived of as the dynamism in virtue of which the world advances and develops its own nature to the point of producing essentially new and different realities.

But it is precisely this that we must straightway go on to treat of if we are to discuss with all due seriousness an evolutionary view of the world. Certainly this modern view of the world is to a large extent corrupted in its own basic conception in that it seeks to interpret the element of the new appearing in the history of the natural order and of the spirit as being constituted once more merely by the chance variations and combinations of basic elements which have been present all along. Again that view of the world which is presented as modern all too often proceeds from the basic misconception that something radically new, qualitatively different and higher, cannot be the outcome of an evolution from below (on this showing, therefore, there would never really be any such radically new element), and that what really emerges in such an evolution from below is not something genuinely new, but rather something that is quantitatively more complex. Against this, however, whether we be Christians or philosophers or natural scientists, we must genuinely and freely accept the element of becoming in the world for what it is. We must recognize the possibility of a genuine development from below into something higher, denying neither that this 'something higher' is genuinely new in time, nor that it has connections with what already exists in time. And if we do this then in the very nature of the case we cannot escape from the concept of becoming as a genuine process of self-transcendence. All [224] creaturely being is being in process of becoming, but all becoming, if it is really worthy of the name, is the becoming of that which is qualitatively higher, and which, nevertheless, is the act of that which is lower. And it is precisely this that is signified when we speak of self-transcendence. That which is higher is not merely added on to the lower stages in the world's development, but is actually enacted and attained to through these lower stages in a process of genuine self-transcendence. What was formerly signified by the terms 'conservatio' and 'concursus' in Christian theology is nothing else than the dynamic impulse towards precisely this self-transcendence present in all being in virtue of the immanence of God.

It is not possible here to pursue any further the dialectical relationship between the immanence and transcendence of God in relation to the world. But on any showing the immanence of God in the world must be conceived of as of so radical a kind that the process of self-transcendence inherent in being in process of becoming genuinely is and remains an active process of *self*-transcendence. At the same time, however, the transcendence of God must be maintained, and that too not merely by reason of God's sovereign independence of

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the world, but in order to ensure that what emerges from this process of becoming is that which is genuinely new. And this too must be maintained in such a way that that which comes to be is genuinely new and not merely an explicitation of that which has been present all along. Thus we can see that the state of becoming genuinely inherent in the world of itself postulates the fact that God is simultaneously immanent and transcendent in it in a single act.

Probably the account of the immanence of God provided in the traditional theology of the seminaries is inadequate in a second respect also. We cannot here treat of the philosophical question which we already find arising again and again in the philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages, the question, namely, of what precisely constitutes the relationship between the 'esse' of God and the 'esse' of the creature, or, to express it more exactly, what the consequences are for this relationship when we consider that the creation of finite being by God does not presuppose nor, properly speaking, even create, the difference between God and the creature, but rather, from the standpoint of God, that God himself through his own being precisely *is* this difference in himself. Taking this as our starting-point, it would once more be possible to attain to an immanence of God in the world or an immanence of the world in God. And such a consideration would also have its significance in enabling us to realize those further truths with regard to the immanence of God which have to be stated on the basis of a specifically theological premiss.

[225] But this difficult approach must be set aside here. We can achieve a still more radical understanding of the immanence of God in the world by more directly theological methods. We have already said that the creation can and should be conceived of as an element in, and prior setting for, the self-bestowal of God, that act in which he does not create something different from himself and set it over against himself, but rather communicates his own reality to the other. If and to the extent that we have understood that the created world is the subject to whom the divine self-bestowal is addressed, and is the condition and prior setting posited by this self-bestowal of God in itself, and enabling it to take place, if, in other words, the world emerges within the process of God's self-bestowal, then it naturally follows that there is an immanence of God in the world (though always, of course in a way that allows for the difference between it and that which belongs intrinsically to the world). This immanence is not merely that of the Creator in the creature, but rather that the recognition of which comes to be developed in Christian theology in dealing with the question of the indwelling of God in the spiritual creature through grace. But once this recognition is achieved, then this indwelling of God is no longer understood merely as constituting a particular phenomenon occurring here and there within the world, but rather as a fundamental relationship which God bears to the world in general. The proper *topos* for achieving an understanding of the immanence of God in the world in theology, therefore, is not a treatise on God worked out in abstract metaphysical terms, but rather the treatise on grace, admittedly taking this as teaching not that some created quality of grace is instilled by a creative act, but rather as teaching that the existence of God bears a quasi-formal relationship to the world such that the reality of God himself is imparted to it as its supreme specification.[9]

It seems to us that we have strayed far from the proper theme of our investigation. What has all that we have said to do with christology? We have attempted to perceive a more radical theological significance in the modern understanding of the world as a world of becoming that exists in a constant process of self-transcendence. The world can really be a world of becoming in the unity of spirit and matter that belongs to it, and in a linear process of history in which an ever higher degree of self-transcendence is achieved, precisely because the mystery most interior to it, and as such precisely elevated above it, is the absolute being

[9] On the manner in which this connection between grace and history etc. is to be thought of more precisely cf. E. Klinger, *Offenbarung im Horizont der Heilgeschichte* (Zürich, 1969).

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of [226] God, whose basic act (an act which also includes God's creativity) is the self-bestowal of God upon that which is not divine. The whole history of the becoming of the world, therefore, proceeds in ever higher stages of self-transcendence towards that point at which this self-bestowal of God can be and is accepted as such. Now in this history of the world considered as the history of self-transcendence that being which appears as a subject capable of accepting such a self-bestowal on God's part is called man. The acceptance of this self-bestowal of God by man and in conformity with the nature of man (considered as a transcendental subject endowed with ultimate freedom on the one hand, and as a historical and inter-communicative being on the other, such that these two factors mutually condition one another) has, as it has *de facto* taken place, a twofold aspect: on the one hand it takes place always and everywhere where a transcendental subject in this sense takes possession of himself in freedom. This is because this subject is always endowed with the offering of God's self-bestowal even when, in the exercise of his own subjective freedom, this self-offering of God and the acceptance of it at the level of an 'anonymous Christianity' remain quite unexplicitated and unconscious. On the other hand, however, in accordance with the historical nature of man, this acceptance of God's self-bestowal must in increasing measure achieve an historical manifestation. It must be explicitly objectified, and that too not of course merely in words, but in acts in which the real fulness of human existence and of history is achieved – precisely in that which we call saving history and revelation history. For this is nothing else than the historical event of that transcendental self-bestowal of God and the acceptance of it in the dimension of human freedom.

This brings us to a point in our argument at which christology can be fitted into a modern understanding of the world and history taken as a whole.[10] If the history of matter and spirit in the unity constituted by these two is a history of an ever renewed process of rising to self-transcendence, then the supreme, ultimate, and 'eschatological' self-transcendence is that in which the world freely opens itself to the self-bestowal of God himself as Being and Mystery in the absolute, and in which the world accepts this in the power of this self-bestowal of God itself. The acceptance of the world by God in his act of self-bestowal then, and the acceptance of God in his act of self-bestowal by the world are manifested historically in such a way that these two acceptances are seen to constitute a unity. Moreover, [227] this manifestation achieves its irrevocable climax at that point at which these *two* acceptances become definitive and irrevocable (however much further saving history in general is prolonged). Now if we accept this, then we have precisely accepted what we call the Incarnation of the divine Logos, the Mediator of salvation in the absolute. The fact that this event, in which man attains to God in an ultimate act of self-transcendence, and in God's own self-bestowal upon man in its most radical form, has taken place precisely in Jesus of Nazareth – that is a fact that cannot, of course, be deduced in a transcendental christology which recognizes the idea of the God-man as the supreme point, and at the same time the point of intersection between the ultimate self-transcendence of the world reaching out to God and the self-bestowal of God upon the world in its most radical form (both taking place in history). On the contrary, the fact that this event has taken place in Jesus of Nazareth is ascertainable only through the historical experience of the crucified and risen Jesus, an experience which as such cannot in its turn be communicated any further. But this does nothing to alter the fact that an 'evolutionary view of the world' can conceive of the idea of the Incarnation as the asymptotic goal of a development of the world reaching out to God, provided only that such a view of the world conceives of the self-transcendence of the world in the power of God and God's own immanence in the world in sufficiently radical terms for us to realize that this process of self-

[10] On what follows, therefore, cf. also K. Rahner, 'Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 157-192.

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transcendence only attains its end at that point at which it recognizes and accepts the self-bestowal of God as the supreme and unsurpassable apogee of the dynamic immanence of God.

Nor is a transcendental christology of this kind, within an evolutionary and dynamic conception of the world in general, invalidated by the consideration that *de facto* such a transcendental christology is only developed *a posteriori* and after the experience of the God-man has already been achieved. This sort of (ultimately mutually) conditioning relationship between *a posteriori* experience on the one hand, and the transcendental interpretation of the experience on the other, is also to be found in other contexts. In a transcendental christology of this kind, as fitted into the totality of an evolutionary view of the world, the Christ-event is not something which is enacted upon a sort of cosmic stage which is static and unaffected by what is taking place in him, but rather constitutes the point to which the becoming of the world in its history is from the outset striving to attain. An objection that might possibly be raised against a transcendental christology of this kind, and against the christo-centricity of the world and its history which it entails, is that the *de facto* history [228] of Jesus of Nazareth, circumscribed as it is in terms of space and time, and, after all, empirically speaking, so limited, cannot in any way be adequate for what is claimed for it by this transcendental christology. To this we should first and foremost reply that the ultimate and the greatest of all conceivable histories, namely the radical commitment of the creaturely spirit in faith, hope, and love to the infinite mystery of God, always makes a modest impression, and seems to be a peripheral event within the world's course on any view which is restricted to the superficial dimension of everyday empiricism, and yet for all this constitutes the ultimately real and ultimately decisive in that which takes place in the world. It must further be said that we are not viewing the Christ-event in Jesus of Nazareth in a way that is in conformity with its true meaning and essence unless we bear in mind two factors: the First and Second Coming of the Incarnate Logos must be understood as a unity, as a single event still in process of achieving its fulness, such that in it the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus constitute merely the first beginning of an event which will only have achieved its fulness and definitive state when the world as a whole is illumined by, and brought face to face with, the immediacy of God, and in this sense when Jesus himself will have 'come again'. This in itself implicitly contains the second point which has to be borne in mind: Christ can only rightly be understood if in him the 'head and body' which is the Church, and ultimately the world itself, are apprehended in their unity as constituting the one and whole Christ.

The irrevocable self-bestowal of God upon the world which has taken place in Christ, and the definitive acceptance of this by the world in Jesus Christ, do not simply bring history to an end. Rather they merely confer upon it its proper sphere, within which alone it can be unfolded. Hitherto (following the secular and Marxist view of history) history has been thought of as developing in the manner of a pre-history to that point at which man liberates himself from his own self-alienation, and only so begins his own true history, in which he freely disposes of his environment and of himself. Now to this view we should have as Christians to reply that this freedom which man himself has to work out in the course of his history is conceded to him as in fact legitimate and attainable (admittedly at the 'this-worldly' level, and always in a merely asymptotic sense) precisely in virtue of the fact that he is now fulfilling this task of his in history (even here it is still always possible for him to go astray) in the dimension of that which has been irrevocably addressed to him and which has achieved its historical manifestation in Jesus Christ, namely the self-bestowal of God as the absolute future. It is in the light of this that there [229] is real hope for the 'this-worldly' history in this sense, and it is also made free, whatever catastrophes may befall, to cling onto this hope because precisely it achieves its fulness in the dimension of God's uttering of himself to it as

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the absolute future. Now this self-utterance of God is present as such, and God does not merely move the world in its history as its unmoved Mover, as such unattainable to it.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN DEVISING A SHORT FORMULA OF THE FAITH

A point that has been under discussion for some years among Catholic theologians is whether it is not necessary today to have some brief new basic formulae in which the Christian creed can be expressed in a manner appropriate to the contemporary climate of ideas.[1] It is pointed out that the apostolic creed actually had a function of this kind, chiefly as the baptismal confession of the adult catechumen, and indeed that such quite brief formulations of the creed are already to be found in the New Testament.[2] Emphasis is laid upon the fact that, even assuming that a full and basic religious instruction has been given, a summary of this kind is still necessary today, in order to preserve what has been learnt at the catechumen stage of instruction, and in order to achieve a clear organization of the 'hierarchy of truths' without which the content of the Christian faith all too easily becomes amorphous, or alternatively the believer comes very easily in his religious practice to attach an exaggerated value to what is merely secondary. It is argued with some justice that it is necessary for the Christian layman to have at his command some [231] brief formulation of his faith and his creed orientated towards what is essential in it. For although there is no need for him to be a specialist theologian, he nevertheless has to take responsibility for his faith in the non-Christian environment in which he is placed. It is also significant that in the 'Year of Faith' Paul VI published a 'Confession of Faith of the People of God',[3] and even though it must be admitted that on the whole this has turned out to be too detailed, and to draw too much on the language of seminary theology for it to serve as a short formula of the kind we are thinking of, still for all this it does in its own way bear witness to the need for a short credal summary of the faith of the kind we have in mind.

The assumption underlying all these considerations is of course the idea that the Apostles' Creed, however old and honourable it may be, however important it is for it to be used at appropriate points in all the Christian Churches, and however true it may be that it will always constitute a permanent and binding norm of faith, is, nevertheless, simply incapable today of fulfilling the function of a brief formula of this kind in any adequate manner, precisely because it has too little direct contact with the contemporary intellectual situation for its claims to be attended to.[4] Chief among the factors which make this apparent is the very fact that the existence of a God transcendent above the world or, at any rate at first, the

[1] In this connection the author may refer to an attempt which he himself has already submitted at an earlier stage, cf. 'The Need for a "Short Formula" of the Christian Faith', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York), pp. 117-127; in the same connection reference should also be made to the following: P. Brunner, G. Friedrich, K. Lehmann, J. Ratzinger, *Veraltetes Glaubensbekenntnis*? (Regensburg, 1968), and H. Schuster, 'Kurzformel des Glaubens und seiner Verkündigung', *Rechenschaft des Glaubens* (edited by E. Hesse and H. Erharter) (Vienna, 1969), pp. 117-135; also 'Bemühungen urn eine Kurzformel des Glaubens', *Herder-Korrespondenz* 23 (1969), pp. 32-38 and the extensive bibliographical survey, 'The Creed in the Melting Pot', Concilium 6/1 (1970, Dogma), pp. 131-153.

[2] A penetrating discussion of these credal formulae in the New Testament is to be found in K. Lehmann, *Auferweckt am dritten Tag nach der Schrift* = Quaestiones Disputatae 38 (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1969).

[3] *AAS* 60 (1968), 433-445.

[4] An attempt to interpret afresh the ancient formulae themselves is to be found in G. Rein (ed.), *Das Glaubenshekenntnis. Aspekte für ein neues Verständnis* (Stuttgart, 1967). The credal formula devised by D. Sölle in his 'Credo', *Meditationen und Gebrauchstexte* (Berlin, 1969), pp. 24-25 is intended to be taken as a programme for future discussion.

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meaning of the word 'God' is, or has been able to be, taken as self-evident. Now in an age of anti-metaphysical pragmatism and world-wide atheism it is, after all, manifest that this has ceased to be possible without further justification. Hence a desire evinces itself for a new basic formula, or new basic formulae, of the faith.[5]

[232] Even if we assume that such a desire is justified, a whole series of questions do of course still remain unanswered with regard to the postulate itself, and even prior to the actual composing of one or several such new basic formulae. And these questions must be clarified. Perhaps it is only in attempting to compose the formulae themselves in the concrete that we can clarify questions of this kind. Alternatively it may be that such questions should be clarified even before we undertake the composition of such basic formulae. Whatever the connection may be between the two stages, such questions must be recognized and solved.

At least some of these questions may be indicated at this point. First we should mention the question of whether such formulations at the conceptual and doctrinal level really are so important today. For this is an age in which pride of place is given to the practical rather than the speculative reason, and in which precisely in the religious sphere men are positively allergic to speculation and theorizing. It is an age in which men commit themselves to decision and action in preference to adopting a contemplative attitude towards life. In such an age, then, may it not be that the feeling is that there is no urgent need whatever to produce doctrinal statements of this kind with regard to the nature of Christianity? And in view of this may it not perhaps be that any attempt to compose such basic formulae cannot in fact have any real success? Here we are presupposing that Christianity, in contrast to other religions, cannot dispense with a certain conceptualized statement of its beliefs as an element inherent in its own nature. Assuming this, then, to be the case, we must adhere to the opinion that even in the contemporary situation the demand for a basic formula of this kind is far from being antiquated or out of date, the more so since such a basic formula can certainly be understood precisely as representing a critique of, and a counter to, any excessive conceptualizing, over-defining, and so 'dissecting' of what is properly signified in the Christian faith.

A further question is whether we can seriously count upon being able to compose a single basic formula of this kind which will be acceptable to the whole of christendom (at least Catholic christendom), and indeed such a formula as can perhaps, like the Apostles' Creed, have the character of expressing the official teaching of the Church, and which in virtue of this [233] fact could actually replace the Apostles' Creed in the Church's religious practice and liturgy, or whether alternatively it is from the outset no longer possible to conceive of any such single formula finding universal acceptance. I believe that this question must be answered in the negative, and in accordance with the second of these two alternatives. There will no longer be any one single and universal basic formula of the Christian faith applicable to the whole Church and, indeed, prescribed for her as authoritatively binding.[66] In this sense the Apostolic Creed will never have any successor, and is therefore destined, for certain purposes, to endure.

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[5] The intellectual climate of the new age is in fact such as again and again to compel theology to give fresh presentations of Christianity in its 'essence'. cf. among others C. H. Ratschow, 'Wesen des Christentums', *RGG* I (3rd ed. 1957), 1721- 1729; A. von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig, 1913); G. Ebeling, *Das Wesen des christlichen Glaubens* (Hamburg, 1964); R. Guardini, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Würzburg, 1938); M. Schmaus, *Vom Wesen des Christentums* (Westheim b. Augsburg, 1949); G. Söhngen, *Die Einheit in der Theologie* (Munich, 1952), pp. 288-304; K. Adam, *Das Wesen des Katholizismus* (Düsseldorf; 13th ed., 1957); K. Rahner, 'Christentum', *LTK* II (2nd ed., 1958), 1100-1115; H. U. v. Balthasar, *Glaubhaft ist nur Liebe* = Christ heute 1 (Einsiedeln, 3rd ed., 1966); *idem*, 'Summa summarum', *Spiritus creator* (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 322-344; J. Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum* (Munich, 8th ed., 1969), In this connection the author may draw attention to a more large-scale publication which he himself is preparing for the immediate future on the subject of 'An Introduction to the Concept of Christianity'.

[6] On this cf., in the present volume, 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', pp. 3-23.

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To show how impossible it is to produce any such new, single and universal basic formula of the faith we may begin by pointing to the fact that certain attempts which have been made to compose and officially introduce a world catechism to be enforced throughout the world have failed and have met with unanimous resistance on the part of preachers and exponents of catechetical theory; and this despite the fact that at one stage a Tridentine catechism was actually produced with this kind of official authority (although despite its advantages it never succeeded in imposing itself as a schoolbook for practical use), and despite the further fact that under Pius XII Gasparri actually attempted to compose a new world catechism of this kind. Against all such attempts it is justifiable to point out again and again that the differences between the individual peoples, cultures, and social milieux, and also those which arise from the different mentalities of the hearers, all have a bearing on the concrete situation in which the faith has to be preached. And nowadays these differences are too great for us to be able to address these hearers in all parts of the world through the medium of one and the same monotonous and uniform catechism. And if this is true then the same also applies to basic formulae of the kind we are thinking of, but in this case not merely because of the differences between the hearers themselves, but also because of the very brevity of such formulae.

Any basic formula of this kind must, precisely in spite of its brevity, as far as possible be directly intelligible to the hearer, and capable of being 'brought home to' him without much commentary. Now in view of the immense differences between the various outlooks it must be concluded that it is quite impossible that any one basic formula can be produced such that wherever it is used in the world it will be understood in the same sense and have the qualities indicated above. Already in the [234] New Testament itself a great difference is apparent between the basic formulae which it includes. We have only to think of the differences between the attributes of glory by means of which the reality of Jesus and his saving significance for us are expressed.[7]

Certain further and different considerations must now be added to this principle which we have enunciated that in view of the differences in the situation in which the gospel has to be preached it is necessary to have precisely *different* basic formulae in the Church. The consideration put forward so far should in itself have been enough to make it necessary for basic formulae of this kind to be devised afresh already at that stage at which Christianity emerged from the Hellenistic and Roman civilizations, and also from that which belonged homogeneously to the West. Thus taken in themselves those brief formulae of the faith which were adequate for the situation in the West should not merely have been 'exported' as they stood. Probably we can only fully explain the fact that they were 'exported' in this way if we take into consideration the repellent sense of superiority characteristic of European colonialism and imperialism, Now the moment the authority of this European imperialism in the sphere of theology ceases to be accepted without question, and the moment the Western civilization, formerly homogeneous as it was, falls into an intellectual and cultural pluralism that is extremely far-reaching, it immediately becomes clear that despite the unity of the Church herself, and the fact that this Church adheres to one and the same creed, it is no longer possible for us of today to count upon having one and the same homogeneous theology. Even in theology (taking this to signify a process of systematic reflection upon the Christian faith in the light of the total situation and the self-understanding of man as a whole) there necessarily emerges today a pluralism of theologies which, while they certainly may not contradict one another, are nevertheless, as they exist in the concrete, no longer capable of being integrated into any single system of theology by individuals or particular groups. In the universal Church of today it is recognized as legitimate that there should be a pluralism of

[7] Cf. F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel* (Göttingen, 2nd ed., 1964).

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'situations' constituted by the different theological schools of thought, such that all of them are equally justified, and that they are no longer dominated or presided over by a European outlook. And this has perforce given rise to a pluralism of theologies such that it is beyond the powers of any one theologian to master them all. Now while it is true that creed and theology are two very different entities, that they have been so all along, and that [235] *a fortiori* they will continue to be so in the future, still at the same time it is no less true that there is no such thing as a creed which is capable of being formulated in total independence of any system of theology. Even formulae of the faith bear the characteristic imprint of some specific school of theology to such an extent that even in the New Testament itself, for all its unity as the expression of revelation, it is possible to discern several different theologies. In view of the fact, therefore, that the differences between the various theologies of today are too many and too wide for us to master them all, we must not expect that any one uniform basic formula can be produced such that it carries equal authority for all members of the Church.

Perhaps the Second Vatican Council constitutes, to some extent, a sign of this fact in itself. Certainly it has been able to achieve a certain eclectic amalgamation between the traditional neo-scholastic theology of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth on the one hand, and modern movements in theology on the other, and on this basis to produce certain universally accepted statements of doctrine. And in view of the contemporary pluralism of ideas the possibility of achieving this even at the public and official level was far from self-evident. From this point of view alone it has been a remarkable phenomenon. But even the Second Vatican Council itself has not attempted to produce any new official definitions of doctrine. What prompted it to refrain from this was probably not merely the more sympathetic, understanding and tolerant attitude which it adopted towards 'heretics', but also the feeling that a lengthier statement of doctrine, expressed in positive terms and in a single homogeneous theological language equally intelligible to all, is something which the Council can no longer so easily be expected to produce today. Moreover, in this way the Church avoids exercising her authority to the point of exhaustion by producing definitorial decisions of doctrine, and is able to continue to restrict the exercise of her authority to negative anathemas. For even in earlier times the great majority of such official definitions of doctrine were couched in this form.

In view of this it can be said that we are justified in attempting to produce many such basic formulae. These can be different from one another not merely according to the differences between the nations, the areas of cultural and historical influence, and the world religions, all of which play their part in shaping any one specific situation, but also according to the level of social development, the degree of maturity etc. of those to whom any given basic formula of this kind is addressed,

These various basic formulae will also differ among themselves [236] primarily in respect of that which is taken to be already recognized and accepted in any given milieu, and that which is asserted in these formulae as new and hitherto unrecognized so far as their particular milieu is concerned. For the differences between the various basic formulae must be in conformity with the differences between the various situations of the hearers themselves, and these differences of situation make themselves felt precisely in respect of what the hearer can accept as obvious in any given situation, and which can be used as a principle and point of departure for giving him an understanding of what is addressed to him as *new*. When therefore a basic formula of this kind appears more or less unintelligible in a milieu that is different from that for which it is designed, this state of affairs still does not invalidate the basic formula concerned, but on the contrary precisely justifies it.

Among the basic questions which have to be raised in connection with such basic formulae is of course to be included the special question of what is properly being expressed in a basic

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formula of this kind and what can be set aside. It is surely clear that any such basic formula must not be presented as a brief summary of a systematic dogmatic theology. It cannot express all at once everything which constitutes the Church's explicit awareness of the content of her faith. In none of the creeds prior to the Council of Trent was everything expressed which belongs to the Christian faith. The teaching of the 'hierarchy of truths' in the Second Vatican Council asserts, in fact, that not everything which is true must necessarily and *ipso facto* be equally important on that account, but a basic formula should contain only that which is of fundamental importance, and on the basis of which the totality of the faith can in principle and in itself be attained. We should add to this the further consideration that it is surely possible to draw a justifiable distinction between an objective hierarchy of truths and one that is conditioned by the concrete conditions of life prevailing in a given human situation. Thus in a basic formula which is intended to be only one among many the emphasis must be laid on expressing that which can truly and effectively constitute the point of access and departure for the whole content of the faith in the specific situation and the specific concrete conditions of human life actually envisaged in that particular basic formula. In view of this, then, it is clear that such basic formulae can vary very greatly even in respect of their content, and that this content should consist primarily and chiefly in that which, so far as the hearers actually involved are concerned, represents an initial point of departure, though one that holds out a prospect of success, for achieving an understanding of the Christian faith as a whole.

[237] A further question would of course be how much to include in a basic formula of this kind purely in terms of quantity. Such a basic formula should certainly not be as long as the confession of faith of Paul VI, But even in this respect it is possible to conceive of very notable differences between the various basic formulae, ranging from a basic formula consisting of a few words, as in the Apostolic Creed, to one that consists in a few sentences, similar to that which I myself once attempted to formulate a few years ago.[8] Presumably in this respect too it is by no means necessary for the various possible basic formulae to be equivalent to one another.

We must now go on to draw attention to a further question with regard to the basic formula in general. In order for such a formula really to constitute a confession of Christian faith it must express belief in the historical Jesus as our Lord, the bringer of salvation in the absolute. And it must be related to this as a matter of historical fact. There can be such a thing as an anonymous Christianity in which grace, the forgiveness of sins, justification and salvation do take place even though the individual concerned sees no explicit relationship, so far as his conscious awareness is concerned or as an explicit object of enquiry, between himself and the historical event of Jesus of Nazareth.[9] Again it is possible to say very much with regard to the most central reality of the Christian faith without doing this directly from the point of view of Jesus Christ. This is particularly true because in fact not even every explicit relationship to the historical Jesus is *ipso facto* that entailed in faith or, in other words, needs itself in turn to be explained in its distinctive theological character. Moreover under certain circumstances this can be achieved on the basis of quite different fundamental statements of the faith which 'quoad nos' can initially be made without any explicit reference to Jesus Christ. This applies for instance to the first article of the Apostles' Creed. Nevertheless it is obvious that even a mere *basic formula* of any explicit Christianity must explicitly contain the reference of what is expressed elsewhere to Christ or the reference of Jesus to this other truth which is expressed, and this means that it must have the structure of an affirmation of faith that is

[8] cf. n. 1.
[9] On this cf. also the study entitled 'Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church', *Theological Investigations*, XII.

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christological.

In order to express all this in a slightly more concrete form, and to illustrate what has been said up to this point, we may adduce three brief theological formulae and explain the particular intelligible content which [238] it is possible to arrive at in them. Why there should be precisely three such brief formulae can perhaps better be explained at the conclusion, and hence for the time being this question must remain open.

These three brief formulae attempt to achieve the utmost possible within a very brief compass. For this reason alone they are extremely 'abstract' in their formulation. They attempt briefly to express the innermost nature of that saving history in which, whether it be taken in a collective or an individual sense, Christianity consists. The abstract formulation entailed in this is obviously not of itself accessible to everyone. It is therefore evident that these brief formulae, even on their own terms, cannot claim any universally binding force. It is likewise necessary to emphasize that these brief formulae have been devised in the light of a western milieu, and in view of a European situation corresponding to this. Hence taken by themselves they cannot claim to be applicable in the same manner, for instance, to the situation in terms of culture and history of thought that prevails in Japan. In this respect they could only be understood as requiring that something similar should be attempted which would then be suitable to apply, for instance, to the situation in terms of ideas that prevails in Japan.

The first brief formula, which we can call the *theological* one, runs as follows: The incomprehensible point of reference towards which human transcendence is orientated, and which cannot, either absolutely or in the concrete conditions of human living, be attained to by speculation alone, or in merely conceptual terms, is called God. And it imparts itself to man in the concrete and historical conditions of his existence by an act of forgiving love as his true consummation. The- supreme- eschatological point of God's self-bestowal in history, in which this self-bestowal is revealed as irrevocably victorious, is called Jesus Christ.

Let us add a few observations by way of commentary on this first brief formula, which we have called the 'theological' one.[10] It contains three [239] fundamental statements: a preliminary one with regard to what is meant by God. It seeks to communicate an understanding of God (in his nature and his existence) in which God is designated as the point of reference of human transcendence, and precisely in being so as the Mystery which remains incircumscribable.

In connection with this it is emphasized that this experience of God implicit in the experience of transcendence is not initially or ultimately achieved in a process of theoretical reflection, but in attaining to the ultimate fulness of knowledge and freedom in our everyday lives - in other words this experience of God is on the one hand inescapable, on the other can take place in a profoundly anonymous and preconceptual form. In this way it is intended to summon the individual to discover this experience of God which is present in any case within him by reflecting upon himself and to objectify it in conceptual terms. This first brief theological formula, therefore, must not merely say *that* God exists, so that from this it will be clear (as even Thomas Aquinas supposed) *what* he is. The brief formula is intended rather

[10] The following studies by the author may also serve as commentaries on this formula: *Worte ins Schweigen* (Innsbruck, 10th ed., 1967); 'The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73; 'Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World', *ibid*. V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 157-192; 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 295-312; 'Christology in the Setting of Modern Man's Understanding of Himself and of His World', in this volume pp. 215-229; 'Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urpsrung der Heilsgeschichte', *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 317-401; 'Incarnation', *Sacramentum Mundi* 3 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 110-118; 'Jesus Christ', *ibid*., pp. 192-209.

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to point out also how we can arrive at an understanding of *what* is really meant by God.

The second statement in this theological brief formula declares that this God who has thus been made accessible to man's understanding is not merely man's eternally asymptotic goal, but - and it is at this point that the first unambiguously Christian statement is made - that he gives himself to man in an act of self-bestowal to be his true consummation, and that too even though it is presupposed in this that man is a sinner, so that this act of self-bestowal entails an attitude of forgiving love. This self-bestowal is stated to take place both in the concrete conditions of the individual's own existence and at the same time in the dimension of history. In this way two realities are included (and moreover in such a way that the two are seen as elements mutually conditioning one another). The first is that which (at least as offered) is in the usual theological terminology called justifying grace (the self-bestowal of God in the 'Holy Spirit' in the concrete conditions of the individual's own existence). The second, concomitant with this, is what is called saving and revelation history, which is nothing else than history as the medium in which the self-bestowal of God is achieved; the historical objectivation, therefore, continuing to unfold through history, of that self-bestowal which, at least as offered, is inserted by grace into the very roots of history to remain abidingly present there. This then is a statement of the twofold self-bestowal of God upon the world, in other words of the two 'missions' in the economy of salvation, the mission of the 'Spirit' in the concrete [240] conditions of the individual's existence, and the mission of the 'Logos' (Son) in the dimension of history. And in this statement it will be noticed that mention has already been made of the ultimate and incircumscribable Mystery of God as abiding ('Father'). This statement, therefore, contains first an expression of the Trinity as manifested in the economy of salvation, and *ipso facto* in this the Trinity as 'immanent' too because without this the reality referred to would not constitute any real *self*-bestowal on God's part.

The third basic statement consists in the fact that this historical self-bestowal of God, of which the deed of grace in the individual's own existence is the historical objectification and the medium, achieves its supreme and eschatologically victorious point in Jesus of Nazareth. Although the need for brevity prevents us from providing any fuller exposition of this point here, this much at any rate must be said: If the historical self-bestowal *of* God achieves its supreme point, in which it is present not merely as directed and offered to human freedom (at the individual and collective levels) but as accepted in humanity as totally irrevocable, victorious and definitive (though this does not mean that saving history had already attained its absolute end at this point), then what is present here is precisely that which in the dogmatic theology of the Church is called the God-man, the hypostatic union (including in this the Death and Resurrection of this God-man). The third statement of this short formula thereby avows the truth that this eschatological supreme point in the historical self-bestowal of God upon the world has already taken place in the concrete in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. Since this eschatological event cannot be conceived of at all without including in our concept of it the fact that it has an abiding historical force in the further prolongations of saving history, an adequate starting-point for the theology of the Church is already present also in this brief formula. For in fact this can only be understood in its ultimate essence as the abiding sacrament of the saving deed performed by God in Christ for the world.

The second short formula, which we may perhaps call the *sociological* one[11] runs: Man realizes himself truly and achieves the authentic fulness of [241] his own nature only when he

[11] On this cf. especially the author's studies, 'Thoughts on the Possibility of Belief Today', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 3-22; 'The "Commandment" of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments', ibid., pp. 439-459; 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249; *Im Heute Glauben* = Theologische Meditationen 21 (Einsiedeln, 1968).

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turns radically away from himself and to his fellow. If he does this he apprehends (whether latently or explicitly) what is meant by saying that God provides the ambience, the assurance and the radicality of such an act of love, for it is God who, in his act of self-bestowal (at the level of both individual existence and of history) becomes the dimension within which such love is made possible. The term love as used here signifies both the love of intimate relationship and love in the social dimension. And it is the radical unity between these two elements that constitutes the foundation and nature of the Church. In this we may perhaps distinguish three assertions.

The first states that in that act of self-transcendence within his own individual existence which is achieved in the act of loving his neighbour man makes, at least implicitly, an experience of God. This first assertion, therefore, is simply a further specification of the first part of the theological brief formula. It concretizes that truth which was expressed in the first assertion of the first brief formula, namely that the achievement of the ultimate fulness of human transcendence takes place not at the level of theoretical speculation, but in the concrete practical knowledge and freedom of 'everyday' life. For this precisely signifies life as lived with and among one's fellow men. This first statement of the second brief formula is also covered from the theological point of view by the truth that love of God and love of neighbour are one, provided only that we do not reduce this truth to the platitude that we cannot please God unless we pay due heed to his commandment to love our neighbour.

The second assertion in this basic formula states that precisely through his self-bestowal God creates the possibility of achieving that relationship of love between men which is possible for us in the concrete and is the task which we have to achieve. In other words, therefore, this second assertion states that love between men (when it really achieves its proper and ultimate nature) is sustained by the supernatural infused and justifying grace of the Holy Spirit. If we have a more precise understanding of this self-bestowal of God in the sense in which it was more exactly defined in the first brief formula (in other words in the unity, the distinction and the mutual interconditioning of the self-bestowal of God in grace in the individual's own existence on the one hand, and the historical self-bestowal of God on the other, having its supreme point in the Incarnation of the divine Logos), then the statement that God has made himself the dimension in which it is possible to achieve a radical relationship of this kind between men includes also all that was said in the first brief formula and its interpretation with regard to the self-bestowal of God as constituting the [242] essence of the Christian faith. We have only to reflect upon Mt. 25 to realize that it is certainly quite unnecessary from the outset to dispute the fact that in the radical love of neighbour as realized at the practical level the whole salvific relationship of man to God and to Christ is already implicitly present. And if anyone were to feel that what was lacking in this second statement of the sociological brief formula was an explicit statement of the reference to Jesus Christ in man and in his love of neighbour, then obviously we could reply to him explicitly: This self-bestowal of God upon man which sustains him in his love of neighbour has its supreme and eschatologically victorious point in history in Jesus Christ, and for this reason in the love of every other man Jesus Christ is loved at least anonymously.

The third assertion of this second brief formula states that a love of this kind, in which God is loved in our neighbour and our neighbour in God, has itself a dimension of intimacy at the level of personal existence, and a social dimension at the level of history which precisely corresponds to the twofold aspect of the self-bestowal of God inherent in it. Where this love achieves its supreme point, and that too in the unity of these two aspects, that which we call the Church is *tie facto* present. For what is peculiar to the Church as distinct from other social groups consists precisely in the eschatologically indissoluble connection (not identity!) between truth-spirit-love on the one hand, and the historical and institutional manifestation of this bestowal of the Spirit as truth and love on the other.

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A third brief formula,[12] which we can call *the futurologist* one runs as follows: Christianity consists in an attitude of open enquiry into the absolute future which wills to give itself as such in itself in an act of self-bestowal, and which in Jesus Christ has confirmed this will which it has with an eschatological irrevocability. It is the absolute future in this sense that is called God.

This briefest of all the formulae transposes the statement about the transcendentality of man in the first basic formula in that it interprets this transcendentality as a reference to the future as 'futuricity'. An absolutely [243] limitless transcendentality, therefore, *eo ipso* implies an enquiry into the future in the absolute, as distinct from indefinite, finite, and partial futures following one upon another. Concerning this future it is stated that it is not merely the ultimate and asymptotic goal towards which history is orientated, which, while it does indeed maintain this history in motion, will not itself be attained to as itself, but rather wills to give itself through its own act of self-bestowal. Now what is said about this self-bestowal of the absolute future which is still in process of being realized in history is what has already been said concerning the self-bestowal of God in the first brief formula, namely that this self-bestowal, which is obviously also and in all cases posited in the dimension of concrete individual existence, has a historical aspect and in this has achieved a stage of eschatological irrevocability in Jesus Christ.

There is no need to provide yet again any full exposition of the fact that in this basic principle of a divine self-bestowal upon the world which has been rendered eschatologically irrevocable in Jesus Christ that truth is already implicitly contained which is explicitly stated in the doctrine of the Trinity and in christology. Nor do we need to repeat at any length our exposition of the fact that in the experience of our orientation towards the absolute future, and that too in the mode in which this wills to bestow itself directly as itself, God is experienced, and moreover, the God of the supernatural order of grace. And this means that he is experienced as sheer mystery.

Inasmuch as Christianity consists in the adoration of the one and true God as opposed to all idols (taking these to signify the according of an absolute value to finite, powers and dimensions in man) it is that attitude on man's part in which he maintains himself in openness to the absolute future and, inasmuch as this is, and continues to be, the absolute Mystery even in the consummation of this self-bestowal, Christianity consists in maintaining open the actual *question* which points to the absolute future.

These three brief formulae are certainly intended first and foremost as conceivable side by side with other possible basic formulae of the same kind, even supposing that such formulae have been conceived of at one quite specific level of conceptual abstraction, Nevertheless it is perhaps no mere theological word-play if we seek to understand these three formulae in their juxtaposition and interconnection as reflections and consequences of the Christian faith in the Trinity, or if we interpret them as the three approaches which are open to human experience, and by means of which an initial understanding can be achieved of the Trinity in its effects in the [244] economy of salvation and, in the light of this, of the Trinity as immanent also.[13]

The first formula speaks of God in fact as the uncircumscribed point of reference of

[12] For further elucidation reference may be made to the following studies: 'Christianity and the "New Man"', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 135-153; 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 59-68; 'A Fragmentary Aspect of a Theological Evaluation of the Concept of the Future', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1973), pp. 235-242; 'On the Theology of Hope', *ibid*., pp. 242-260.

[13] On this cf. the statement of the principles involved in the author's article, 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate"', *Theological Investigations* IV, (London and Baltimore, 1966), PP. 77-102; and further the articles 'Trinity' and 'Trinity in Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi* 6 (New York and London, 1970), pp. 295-303 and 303-308.

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human transcendence. If we include in this conception the fact that in it the absolute and unoriginated 'principium inprincipiatum' of all conceivable reality is named, then, in a real sense the 'Father' of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is named in expressing this incomprehensible and unoriginated point of reference of human transcendence. When in the second brief formula we say that the true scope of this is the idea of God in Jesus Christ as man making himself the dimension in which man can achieve a radical relationship with his fellow men, then in it we have named God made man, the 'Son'. The absolute future of man bestowing itself of its free and sovereign power over history which is God is, however, in a special sense the 'Spirit' of God, because it can be characterized as love, freedom, and a newness that constantly takes us by surprise.

Of course this triad of the brief formulae which we have mentioned should be conceived of still more precisely and clearly against their Trinitarian background, and it is not possible to do this here at any greater length. But at any rate we can say this much: a brief formula must on the one hand express the basic substance of the reality of the Christian faith in such a way that the most intelligible possible access to it is opened up at the level of man's experience in the concrete conditions of his existence, while on the other hand this basic substance can certainly be discovered in the idea of God turning to the world in the Trinitarian dimension of the economy of salvation. And if this is true then it is not from the outset difficult to show that there must be three basic types of such brief formulae, corresponding to the dogma of the Trinity. This does not exclude the fact that each of these basic types in turn can be very different from the others both in respect of the further distinctions which it contains and the difference of emphasis which it introduces into its content, and in respect of the due attention which it pays to the differences between these for whom a basic formula of this kind is destined.

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[245]

PART THREE

Anthropology

[247]

11

THE SIN OF ADAM

The most striking feature of the situation which exists today for an ecumenical discussion of 'the sin of Adam' is that neither on the Protestant nor on the Catholic side is there any theology on this theme which could be presented simply as *the* Protestant or *the* Catholic position. So far as the Protestant side is concerned this seems to me to be clear from the fact that here there is no general agreement as to the existence of any original sin. But on the Catholic side too the situation is not different.[1] It is true that here – at least in principle – the doctrinal definitions produced in the fifth session of the Council of Trent with regard to original sin are recognized as binding in character. But this still does not clarify the situation. In the first place since then questions have arisen bearing upon the theory of anthropological evolution, the creation of man, polygenism and monogenism. And on these the teaching authority of the Church has adopted certain definite, though provisional, positions to which due heed must be paid in any Catholic theology in dealing with the question which concerns us here also.[2] A further factor is that for the past few years even in Catholic theology attempts have been made to interpret the Catholic doctrine of original sin such that they appear all but contradictory to one another and to be opposed to the simple and literal sense of the Church's definitions. Furthermore so many questions have been raised for the Catholic doctrine of original sin in the light of the general [248] situation prevailing today in theology itself and in secular anthropology that a mere repetition of, and simple commentary upon the Catholic dogma of original sin would, taken by itself, in no sense constitute an answer. For this reason unless a certain attempt is made to answer these questions, at least on the individual's own account and on his personal responsibility, it is no longer so clear that even the official teaching of the Church on original sin can be adduced as a real and vital factor such that it is adequate to sustain a real faith. For this is never possible unless a confrontation is achieved between the content of this faith and the totality of the believer's own understanding of himself prevailing at any given time.

In this situation the only course still remaining open to the Catholic dogmatic theologian is to put forward his own understanding of the official Catholic teaching on original sin without claiming thereby that this particular understanding is obviously or unquestionably identical

[1] An extensive account of the state of the discussion at the moment is provided by A. M. Dubarle, 'Le péché originel, recherches récentes et orientation nouvelle', *RSPT* 53 (1969), pp. 81-113. cf. also P. Schoonenberg, 'AT, NT und Erbsündenlehre', *TPQ* 117 (1969), pp. 115-124. In what follows we cannot enter any further into this point. This study reproduces a lecture which the author delivered in March, 1968 at a conference of ecumenical work at Paderborn.

[2] An account of these positions is given by J. Feiner, 'Der Ursprung des Menschen', *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 562-581; see also Z. Alszeghy, 'Development in the Doctrinal Formulations of the Church concerning the Theory of Evolution', *Concilium* (1967) 6/13 (Church and World), pp. 14-17.

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with that official teaching.[3] All that he will claim on behalf of his understanding of the question until the contrary is proved is that he has put forward an interpretation of the official teaching of the Church's faith with regard to the existence and nature of original sin which it is possible to hold within the Church; in other words that this personal understanding of his has been formulated in an attitude of unreserved obedience towards the teaching of the Church and that it remains as a point for discussion submitted to the Church's understanding of her faith as a whole. What we are asking, therefore, is whether in an interpretation of this kind the Church can recognize that it is her own understanding of her faith that is being reproduced. Whether the Church will react on the basis of her total understanding of her faith to this personal understanding of mine which I am submitting for her consideration, when she will do so, what form her reaction will take, and what its outcome will be – these are questions which still await an answer. For the time being it is sufficient that the dialogue to be maintained between the two sides should be a peaceable one. For the point to be decided in this dialogue is whether a personal understanding of the doctrine of original sin as put forward here is to be designated as 'Catholic'.

In a subject as extensive as this it is not possible to examine all the relevant factors, and for this reason there is much that must be put forward here in the form of a simple statement without any further arguments to justify it. And again it will not be possible here explicitly to define our [249] position with regard to other expressions of opinion on original sin which have been put forward from the Catholic side.

We shall proceed straightway to the question itself and put the question quite simply: What do we really mean when we speak of 'original sin'? We believe that this is the only way to arrive at a meaningful answer to the question of the 'sin of Adam', because the doctrine of original sin in us is the sole point at which the theological question of the 'sin of Adam' can be raised and answered – and answered moreover on grounds which we are just about to discuss. In terms of content both questions are one, a point which is already recognized and made clear in the combination of the two scholastic terms 'peccatum originale originans – peccatum originale originatum'. For us the sin of Adam is a theological datum only in virtue of the fact that *our* sinfulness, which we assert of ourselves, is a sinfulness that has been 'derived'.

I

Methodological Presuppositions

1. Our information about the 'fall of the first man' and the situation of perdition which it entails for all those descended from him has not come to us through an eye-witness account emanating precisely from that event in 'perdition' history. No such eye-witness account has been handed down to us either through a tradition deriving from that first man or as transmitted in the writings of the Old or New Testaments, nor has any such account been communicated to us by God as one of the parties concerned in the original event by any direct act of revelation such that it derives from no further source apart from God himself. On the contrary all protology, and so too the doctrine of original sin, is *ipso facto theology*, albeit a theology worked out in the writings of the New Testament (and the Old) themselves, and thereby guaranteed, so far as we are concerned, to be valid. In other words all protology comes to us as explicitated and deduced from a more original source, from a primary revelation. This more original starting-point, from which the doctrine of original sin is arrived

[3] For a better understanding of the author's personal position cf. his article, 'Original Sin', *Sacramentum Mundi* 4 (New York and London, 1969), pp. 328-334.

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at in a process of aetiological retrospection is man's awareness, as part of the basic Christian revelation, of the fact that he himself is a sinner who obtains forgiveness and salvation solely through Christ, Why and how a doctrine of original sin, and moreover one that is rightly understood, can be deduced from this – these are questions which cannot yet be raised at the present stage. Our first task must be to concentrate on [250] the starting-point and methods to be adopted in working out this doctrine, and to point out the formal characteristics of these.[4] This formal starting-point and these aetiological methods have this much at least to be said in their favour that *de facto* it is not until the New Testament, and in connection with the message of Christ, that a doctrine of original sin appears with the radical significance which the Church perceives in her understanding of it.[5] By contrast, in the Old Testament it has not properly speaking yet been evolved.[6] This heuristic principle is also to be recommended on the grounds that in fact *any* specific question in theology at all must enquire into the 'transcendental horizon' which it itself presupposes.[7] Thus it is only in terms of the particular 'transcendental horizon' involved here that we can understand what would otherwise be quite unintelligible, namely why original sin really applies in some sense to us ourselves, and is not reduced to the level of a mere fact of the past and one to which we can be quite indifferent. It can be stated quite in general that we understand the past and what derivation from the past means from the present and the fact that realities in the present are, of their nature, derived, and continue to be present as such. Thus we understand them by relating them as present and as experienced in this sense to their own origins in the past. It is true that the Catholic theologian cannot dispute the fact (even though this is a point that not all contemporary Catholic exegetes are still willing to admit as correct) that in Romans 5 scripture does contain a doctrine of original sin and, moreover, substantially that which (whether explicitly or implicitly) was subsequently defined by the Council of Trent.[8] But the Catholic theologian is not thereby prohibited from viewing even the [251] teaching of Romans 5 as 'theology' in the sense defined, and so interpreting this teaching itself in terms of its own origins so as to establish more precisely its exact meaning and bearing. Nor is he forbidden to hold that a doctrine of original sin can be found in Romans 5 only if the passage concerned is read in the whole context of the Pauline doctrine of justification and the Pneuma. Nor yet is he bound to read into or read out of Romans 5 everything which has already been taught with regard to original sin by a traditional, but ultimately non-binding seminary theology or exegesis. For instance even to a Catholic it is a completely open question how we should interpret Romans 5:12d.[9]

2. Methodologically speaking it should probably be stated straightway at this initial stage that what is in question here is not, in the last analysis, the actual term 'original *sin*', but that an *additional* factor is a certain established ecclesiastical *terminology*, as it were of a

[4] On this K. Rahner, 'Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zur Anthropologie und Protologie im Rahmen der Theologie', *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 406-420,esp. 417 ff.
[5] For a summary on this cf. S. Lyonnet, 'Péché IV', *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* VII (Paris, 1966), 509-565.
[6] We cannot enter specifically into the contrary positions upheld on this point by H. Haag, *Biblische Schöpfungslehre und kirchliche Erbsündenlehre* (Stuttgart, 1966) and J. Scharbert, *Prolegomena eines Alttestamentlers zur Erbsündenlehre* (Freiburg, 1968). With regard to my personal controversy with Haag on his position I may refer to the number of the Quaestiones Disputatas referred to in n. 16.
[7] On the transcendental approach in theology cf. K. Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1973), pp. 28-46, and *idem*, 'Transcendental Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi* 6 (New York and London, 1970), pp. 287-289. Also in the present volume the article entitled 'Reflections on Methodology in Theology', pp. 68-114.
[8] In the Council of Trent this passage is itself officially interpreted: DS 1512 and 1514.
[9] On this cf. also S. Lyonnet, 'Le sens de ε)ϕ ω|||{ en Rom 5:12 et l'exégèse des Pères grecs', *Biblica* 36 (1955), pp. 436-457.

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disciplinary kind, and though this too is important and needs to be respected, it must be distinguished from the reality itself and the various ways in which it can be expressed. We have several reasons for saying this, and among them is the fact that the theology of Eastern Christianity (for this also has won an undisputed place for itself in contemporary Catholic theology, as has recently been recognized by the Second Vatican Council) for the most part avoids using the term 'sin' in this connection. But we must also bear in mind the following factors which are also vitally relevant: Even the traditional Catholic seminary theology explicitly teaches (and this is a point which has never been disputed by the teaching authority of the Church) that the terms 'sin' and 'sinfulness' as applied on the one hand to the condition which man owes to his descent from Adam, and on the other to the condition which is The outcome of his own personal decision to go against God, are used in a sense that is merely *analogous*.[10] This condition of man, therefore, in the first and second case must not be thought of as strictly one and the same, even though the same terms are used to describe it. For both conditions are induced in man by two different causes, exterior to the condition itself. Anyone who makes the opposite assumption, following an implication which might be drawn from the Church's teaching, and *then* disputes the existence of original sin, has not [252] properly speaking thereby denied any dogmatic teaching of the Church. It would even be possible to imagine a situation (corresponding to an analogous instance which actually is *de facto* to be found in the linguistic usage of the Church) in which the Church actually forbade us to call the condition which we derive from Adam original *sin*, without thereby altering her own dogma. The reason for this is that all along there has been a danger of misinterpreting this word so as to suggest that it is through Adam and our descent from him that we have in the strict sense been constituted as sinners, whereas we are such and become such as a result of our own personal and inalienable decision, unique in each particular instance, to go against God.[11]

3. In presenting our interpretation of the doctrine of original sin we shall exclude the question of monogenism and polygenism,[12] i.e. we are of opinion that on a more exact interpretation of the Church's dogmatic teaching on original sin we do not have to hold that the theory of monogenism is contained in it either as a necessary premiss or as a direct doctrine. It is true that Pius XII declared in 'Humani Generis' that Catholic theologians were not free to uphold the theory of polygenism.[13] But in the first case even he did not declare that monogenism had either explicitly or implicitly the force of dogma, and secondly we may surely say that the development of Catholic theology since 'Humani Generis' has made such advances (advances that have been tolerated by the Church's *magisterium*) that the opinion that polygenism is not irreconcilable with the doctrine of original sin is no longer exposed to the danger of being censured by the authorities of the Church.[14]

When therefore we use the term 'Adam' in the course of the following arguments we mean humanity in that form in which it existed at the beginning of its own history, and from which all subsequent humanity originated, from which we are all descended. In saying this, however, we are abstracting from the question of whether this humanity in its original form consists in a single couple from the numerical point of view, or in a [253] 'population' more

[10] cf. Patres Societatis Jesu Facultatum Theologicarum in Hispania Professores, *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* II (Madrid, 3rd ed. 1958), pp. 833 and 939-949 'Ergo ratio peccati est analogica, non univoca, cum diversa ratio voluntarietatis sit peccato personali ac originali' (ibid, p. 949).
[11] An interpretation of the doctrine of original sin from this point of view is to be found, for instance, in K. H. Schelkle, 'Schuld als Erbteil?' (Einsiedeln, 1969).
[12] A summarizing presentation of the problems entailed here is provided in the article 'Monogenism', *Sacramentum Mundi* 4 (London and New York, 1969), pp. 105-107.
[13] On this cf. the detailed interpretation in K. Rahner, 'Theological Reflexions on Monogenism', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 229-296.
[14] cf. K. Rahner, 'Evolution and Original Sin', *Concilium* 3 (1967), 6/13 (Church and World), pp. 30-35.

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widely extended in terms of space and time which emerged from the animal kingdom and in which the historical origins of the human race as a single entity are to be located. For the fact that we are leaving this particular question open certainly does not imply any belief that the doctrine of original sin is to be explained away in 'existentialist' terms in a doctrine which *merely* expresses something about every man, 'man as such', the Adam which we all are, without implying any further statement with regard to the fact that he has descended through a unique history from an origin that is genuine, concrete, and real.

4. In order to be able adequately to meet the claims that are made upon it a doctrine of original sin today should develop a formal philosophy and formal theology of the *beginning*,[15] because only on the basis of this can we achieve any understanding of the necessity, meaning and methods of that retrospective aetiology of which we have already spoken. Of course it is not possible to develop these here. But even so we may attempt a few indications of how it might be done as some poor substitute for this.

Man is a historical being, and it is a necessary law of his nature that he is conscious of himself as being such. Hence protology and eschatology, a statement of the fact that he has derived from the past and is orientated towards the future, necessarily belong to that understanding of himself in which he conceives of himself as given over to himself in the here and now and committed to himself in a present that belongs to him. Inasmuch as he is that being that can only exist in a state of co-existence with other men any such protology must, so far as he is concerned, always and necessarily be the protology of the beginning *of humanity*, and this because and to the extent that precisely *this* kind of beginning does not simply consist in what belongs to the past, and so at most still survives in historical records, but is rather that power which extends into his own present, controlling it and shaping it as the law governing his own emergence on the plane of existence. A further point entailed in the relationship between past and future as the powers presiding over the present is that it is in the light of the future that the past is revealed. The emergence of the future constitutes the growing revelation of the origins, even though this future is never simply the mere temporal explicitation of the past. The beginning also presides over the present in the further sense that it is that which has been withdrawn from it. For invariably we encounter ourselves as those who have already come to a free decision, and we never encounter ourselves at that original starting-point which there must once have been [254] (if in fact it is right to make freedom responsible for itself) and which invariably we only have in that form, or lack of form, which it has acquired as a result of our freedom itself, though in this the two factors involved, that which belongs to the origins and that which we ourselves have done, can never be distinguished with complete clarity in any given case. This applies to the individual and to every community which has come to exist as a historical entity through the exercise of freedom. The beginning which has been withdrawn from our control (we might even call it the *Urgeschichte*) is constituted as now in force in virtue of that original stage which is prior to our own freedom and hidden from us, *and at the same time* in virtue of the event in which freedom was first exercised, which *per definitionem* is different in kind from the freedom which we can exercise now. For this latter kind of freedom is always exercised throughout in a situation which creaturely freedom, whether our own or another's, has already helped to shape, a situation which has rendered that which belongs to the origins withdrawn from us, so that we can no longer draw upon its nature to illumine our own acts, but are compelled, rather, to seek it in the future, pursuing protology in eschatology.

For our present modest purposes, however, the chief point in this formal theology of the beginnings is this: for an anthropology that is existential-ontological in character, and

[15] A more detailed analysis of this matter is to be found in A. Darlap, 'Anfang und Ende', *Sacramentum Mundi* I (Freiburg, 1967), pp. 138-145.

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especially one that is theological, 'beginning' is from the outset not the first moment in a whole series of moments following one upon another, but rather the basis, of its very nature unique, on which the whole of history rests, a basis which, in virtue of the fact that it has been posited by God himself, and of the uniqueness of the free act which educed it from sheer ultimacy, is itself *sui generis*.

To anyone who does not recognize all this the doctrine of original sin must either appear as sheer mythology or else a rationalistic view of it will be taken in which, as *peccatum originale originans*, it will be assigned to the same level as, and regarded as the first in a whole series of, sinful acts of basically the same kind, each one of which, and so the first as well, has, as we recognize from our everyday experience, further consequences in that it leads on to other and later sinful acts. In truth, however, what we call original sin (considered as the sin 'of Adam') belongs to the initial constitution of that ultimate beginning which is withdrawn from us and never recurs, and the true nature of which is only gradually revealed in the light of the future which is Christ.

[255]

II

The Nature of Original Sin

In the light of the principles we have just mentioned, therefore, we shall attempt to provide a statement of the Catholic dogma of original sin.[16] It is claimed that in this statement this dogma will suffer no diminution, even though in the course of making it theological ideas will be used which perhaps are not universally accepted.[17] For it is inevitable that there should be some such, and it could be demonstrated that the same is true of *every* theological statement of the doctrine of original sin.

1. We shall be speaking, then, of that self-bestowal of God (who is of his nature holy) upon man in grace which *ipso facto* sanctifies him prior to any moral decision on man's own part, i.e. which sets him in the ambience of God in his holiness. Now this self-bestowal of God upon men (whether as offered or as accepted) is given by God to the whole of humanity (and to the individual man as a member of this) only in virtue of the fact that this humanity as a historical and derived reality (through 'generation', as the ancient formulations express it) draws its existence from Christ and is orientated to him. But this bestowal is not given to the individual man in virtue of the fact that he derives physically and historically from this human race, and in virtue of this derivation of his is a member of it. For the individual man his derivation from, and thereby his union with the single human race is neither the basis nor, in any direct sense, the medium of his justification and sanctification by the self-bestowal of the holy God in his Pneuma. We must repeat the terms we have used here: '*Basis and medium*.' A distinction has to be drawn between these two concepts because on a 'Scotist' conception of the relationship between supralapsarian and infralapsarian grace the will of God towards *Christ* was the basis for the sanctifying will of God towards mankind even prior to sin being committed. Now on this assumption the derivation of man from the single human race, insofar as it enters into the question at all of how grace is conferred on the individual man, enters into it at most as 'mediating' to him that grace which was 'Christian' all along, and so from the outset cannot constitute the basis for this grace. And [256] precisely for this reason too derivation and descent must properly and explicitly be excluded as a medium. This

[16] On what follows cf. also K. H. Weger, *Theologie der Erbsünde* = Quaestiones Disputatae 44 (Freiburg, 1970), together with the excursus, 'Erbsünde und Monogenismus'.
[17] On the teaching of the Church herself cf. also P. Schoonenberg, 'Der Mensch in der Sünde', *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), esp. pp. 916-927.

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derivation and descent do not enter into the question as the 'sacrament', the sign and the medium for grace.

2. But against this, according to the will of God and the intrinsic specification imparted to the human race by this in itself, the descent of the individual man from the single human race and its divinely ordained beginning *had* to be if not the basis, then at least the direct medium, in which that justifying holiness of man was communicated to him which is prior to his own personal existence, and therefore has the force of an existential modality. This is because this holiness was intended as a gift to, and claim upon, humanity as a whole by the Creator of mankind, who graciously willed to 'raise' it. This creation in view of grace, in which God created the spiritual order of nature, causing it to exist both in many individuals and in a single race as a prior condition for his divine self-bestowal, may have been conceived of by God (in the Scotist sense) all along from the very beginning in view of Christ as the supreme point in history and the point of eschatological irreversibility of this world as endowed with divine grace, and if this interpretation is correct, then even the supralapsarian grace of the 'original state' was a grace of *Christ*. But even supposing this to be the case, and indeed precisely on this view, descent from and union with the human race in this sense (as that which provides the origins of the individual) was capable of being, and should have been the medium in which this sanctifying grace was communicated to the individual man. Now it is not this if it remained merely at the level of a remote prior condition for this endowment with grace, though of course it would still always have been this also. To say that this descent and derivation are not the medium ('sacrament') in this sense is *contrary* to the original will of the Creator in his act of bestowing grace. The absence of that holiness which is an existential modality imparted by God's own holiness prior to the concrete conditions of individual existence, inasmuch as this was intended to be mediated through human descent but in fact is not so – this is rightly called a state of sinfulness, and it is this that is meant by original sin (peccatum originale originatum). On the basis of this principle the definitions of original sin given in the Council of Trent can be developed, although they do not have to be presented in the same way here. Likewise we shall not here be treating in any explicit way of what is traditionally expressed under the heading of concupiscence in the doctrine of original sin. This too should be accounted a legitimate approach because according to the Tridentine doctrine of [257] original sin concupiscence as such should not be viewed simply as that which gives original sin its proper nature as a state of sinfulness in the true sense.

3. In itself, then, the factor of human descent should have the function of providing the medium for this 'holiness' to be imparted to man. Now its failure to do this is only conceivable as the outcome of the guilt of those men who existed at the beginning of the human race and provided the origins of the rest. In this connection it makes no difference whether humanity itself is conceived of in terms of monogenism or polygenism, provided only that it is recognized as a real unity, something which is possible in any case and independently of the question of polygenism. At all events: the only possible reason for the non-existence of something which, according to God's will, should exist can be personal guilt. But since the guilty act at the moral and personal level is not that of the descendants themselves, and since obviously a personal act of this kind can neither be 'inherited by' others or 'accounted to' them, it follows that this guilt which constitutes the non-existence of that which, as we have said, should exist, is the guilt of that part of humanity from which the rest originated. This also serves to show in radical form the merely analogous character of original sin by comparison with an act of personal guilt and the state of guilt ensuing from this. This too is a point which cannot be expounded here at any length. That state of analogous guilt which is called original sin is not a projection of the personal state of guilt 'of Adam' to us, but is constituted by the absence of the holy Pneuma which, prior to any moral decision, sanctifies man interiorly when it is present, or would sanctify him if it were so, but

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the absence of which correspondingly, prior to any personal decision, constitutes an analogous state of guilt, seeing that this deficiency consists not merely in the fact that the holy Pneuma is not present, but implies a deficiency which is the opposite of the situation which *ought* to exist.

A few explanatory observations must be added on this point:

(a) It is necessary to postulate personal guilt at the beginning as such of the '*Urgeschichte*' in the theological sense, but in accordance with the manner in which, as we have seen, this beginning is radically withdrawn from us. Unless we postulate this we cannot conceive of a situation which ought not to be the case, a state which is contrary to the will of the Creator. But if original sin is not to be explained away in a rationalizing sense as consisting in the sum total of the personal sins committed by men in the course of history, if, in other words there is a state of sinfulness such that it is prior to the personal decision of any given individual, and such that [258] the fact that it ought not to exist cannot simply be referred back to God (as though the very constitution of finite man as different from God were *eo ipso* and of itself to be identified with the constitution of the sinner as such by God himself), then this state of affairs which ought not to exist must be constituted by creaturely guilt at the 'beginning'.

(b) This personal guilt at the beginning of human history, regardless of how we may conceive of its subject in more precise terms, does not, however, constitute the state of guilt arising from original sin as though this were the extension and prolongation of the personal state of guilt inherent in the *peccatum originale originans* as subject. The effect of it, rather, is simply that the human descendants of this subject do not possess the state of sanctification by God's self-bestowal in Christ *precisely as descendants*.

(c) The deficiency which inhibits a state which 'ought to exist' inhibits sanctifying grace. It does this inasmuch as the state which ought to be, and to which this deficiency is opposed, is not that which, in accordance with the moral demands of God, should be brought about by the individual as such in his own capacity for free decision, and as a matter of personal duty. Rather this state which ought to be, and to which the deficiency of which we are speaking is opposed, is that which is constituted by the will of the *Creator* as such in his will to endow humanity with grace.

It is what has been expressed under the heading (b) and (c) that constitutes the merely analogous character of original sin as opposed to a personal state of guilt which is identical with the personal act, and which is directly opposed to the moral demands which God makes upon the free individual as such. The other differences entailed in the merely analogous connection between original sin and personal sin derive from these two basic factors.

(d) It follows from what has been said that the concept of original sin has nothing to do with that of a 'collective guilt'. For what is posited in the term 'collective guilt', to the extent that it is not simply the final sum total of the personal guilt of many individuals, is that the personal guilt of a particular individual or individuals is as such transmitted to others. Now whether or not such an idea is conceivable at all, it has in any case nothing to do with the idea of original sin.

(e) A further point which must not be overlooked is the following: In the concrete order of salvation in Christ (whether we interpret this in an infralapsarian or a Scotist and supralapsarian sense) 'original sin' is always to be understood as a dialectical element in counterpoint to *that* effective [259] will of God to save men which, on account of Christ, always imparts that sanctification through Christ (at least as 'offered') which was not imparted through descent from 'Adam'. Original sin and grace, therefore, to the extent that both these realities are prior to the personal decision of man, do not, properly speaking, follow one upon another in a temporal succession, but rather both together imply a single

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dialectical '*situation*'[18] of man (as a being endowed with freedom) to the extent that a specification is imparted to him both by the 'beginning' (that which provides the origins of mankind) and by Christ as the 'end' and 'goal'. Thereby he is placed in a situation in which he has to decide in the concrete conditions of his personal existence which of two factors he will take as the freely chosen basis for his actions: either the factor of his descent from the beginnings of humanity, or his orientation towards the future in Christ (the first of these is that state of sin spoken of in Romans 5:12d, while the second is the faith which justifies).

(f) If original sin is to be interpreted and understood in the sense explained here – in other words as a datum of New Testament theology, and not merely as revelation in its most basic form (for in this form it is to be found in Romans 5 alone, if at all) – there is one point that must be recognized. This is that descent from 'Adam' was in itself intended according to the will of God as Creator to be the 'medium' of grace. Now if we are asked how we know this, then we must point to two factors:

i. It is the solidarity of mankind in salvation and saving history (which is to be conceived of as all-embracing, and which after all is a motif that runs through the whole of scripture) that constitutes the basic assumption underlying the doctrine of the universality of salvation as one and the same for all, the doctrine of the redemption of all through Christ, of the Body of Christ, the Church, and of the radical importance of love of neighbour, which is something more than the fulfilment of any one particular commandment. For after all solidarity in salvation and saving history surely implies in itself that man is intended to receive salvation in virtue of the fact that he is a member of this human race.

ii. In scripture the fact that Christ is the originator of salvation is always viewed in its application to man precisely as a *sinner*, and not merely to man as one to whom the grace of God as imparting a share in the divine nature is not due. Moreover, while this sinfulness is conceived of [260] primarily as personal, still its *universality* is surely not to be conceived of as absolutely radical and ultimate unless we recognize a certain sinfulness which is prior to the personal decision of the individual as such, so that in this personal decision this prior state of sinfulness is made manifest by a process of ratification. Unless we assumed the existence of a sinfulness of this kind we would have to concede that each individual man in the history of individual freedom takes as his starting-point a situation which, after all, is, from the point of view of salvation, precisely neutral, and then we would no longer be able to conceive in any effective or real sense of how the *universality* of personal sinfulness comes to exist. Nor can it be said that this answer merely transfers the problem from the many individuals to the individual or individuals at the beginning of humanity. For what we are concerned with here is not to maintain that the sinful decision taken at the personal level at the beginning is as such extended to all others and *so* constitutes a universality of pre-personal sinfulness. This pre-personal and dialectically universal sinfulness is constituted only by the following facts and in the following way:

By reason of the sin which took place in the *Urgeschichte* at the beginning mankind as such is incapable of acting as the mediator of grace, and it is precisely in this way that a universal sinfulness comes to exist which is *sui generis* in character. The personal sin at the beginning creates a *situation* for all which should not exist, and it is as arising from, and concomitant with this situation that that reality is simply given which we call original sin, taking this term in its correct sense.

(g) From what has been said it will surely also be clear that the doctrine of original sin is ultimately contained as a simple implication in the truth that all of us as sinners have been

[18] This concept is also used by P. Schoonenberg. cf. *ibid*, pp. 928 ff., and *idem*, *Theologie der Sünde* (Einsiedeln, 1966).

Admittedly a question which should be raised in this connection is how the existentiality of such a situation is to be established metaphysically.

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redeemed by Christ, and must be redeemed by him. But this redemption consists not merely in some kind of liberation from guilt, but in that justifying sanctification in which God imparts his own holiness in his holy Pneuma, and that in this whole saving event the individual is always involved in virtue of the fact that he is also a member of the human race as one, a unity which Christ both presupposes and constitutes at the same time.

4. Finally we must speak explicitly once more of the 'sin of Adam', in other words of *peccatum originale originans* as distinct from original sin, *peccatum originale originatum*, which is a specification that applies to *us*. Thus by way of résumé we can state the following:

(a) That beginning of the single human race which is withdrawn from our view and control is characterized by the fact that in it a state of original freedom existed, i.e. one such that the situation in which it existed was [261] still unspecified by any decision of human freedom (whether that of the individual himself, or that of others).

Logically speaking, this statement is self-explanatory, and moreover it does not contradict the empirical ideas which we have evolved today of 'early' man, because this situation of freedom exists independently and is capable of realization regardless of which particular category of material in this world was available to this freedom as the medium in which it could be exercised, and how far this original freedom was, or could be, consciously *reflected* upon, and inherent in a subject capable of reflecting upon himself.

(b) The subject of such a free decision at the beginning can freely be conceived of as a 'group'. For even a humanity conceived of as polygenist in origin constitutes a real unity, however varied the aspects which it displays, and as a humanity of the 'beginnings' is distinguished from a '*humanitas originata*' by the ultimacy and originality of its freedom.

(c) The decision of this group is conceivable as a decision which all the members of this group take as individuals, since in fact, after all, these would be relatively few in number. In the light of the interpretation of the role of decision at the beginning in the factor of *peccatum originale*, however, it is also perfectly possible that this decision is that of one individual, assuming here that according to God's will the *humanitas originans* was intended to mediate grace only if it had continued as a *whole* and wholly sinless through its decision. An interpretation more or less on the following lines is perfectly conceivable: If on the one hand man is inevitably personal *and* communicative at the same time, and both aspects mutually condition one another, and if further the *humanitas originans* on any showing constitutes a unity, and as such is to be distinguished from the *humanitas originata*, and if by its initial free personal decisions it specifies the existential situation of the *humanitas originata* in manifold ways, then it is perfectly conceivable that the decision of *one individual within* this unity (and one who thereby plays his part in specifying this *humanitas originans*) can actually fulfil the function of this *humanitas originans* as mediating grace.

(d) Since the 'polygenist' view of the origins of mankind has to be adopted, at any rate to the extent that at least two of its members are not derived from a single human nature, it surely has no theological relevance, but rather belongs to the realm of imagery and modes of expression, when scripture (in general) regards 'Adam', as opposed to 'Eve', as the bearer of *peccatum originale originans*. Again the Adam-Christ parallel does not compel us to take the opposite view, since the parallelism (one-all) also [262] remains in force if the *humanitas originans* is interpreted as *one* and seen as distinct from the *humanitas originata*.

(e)This historical derivation of our state of sin, and the difference between 'imitatio' and 'propagatio' in the Catholic doctrine of original sin, must be maintained. This is possible, since humanity has a history. The individual understands himself only when he apprehends himself as deriving from a real history. The decision of the individual constantly plays its part in specifying, in the most varied ways, the situation of freedom which applies to all others. Man as such (the state of being man, humanity in process of achieving itself) first begins at the point at which freedom is exercised. Humanity is also one in its saving history. If we

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consider these simple principles, which contain no mythological implications, then the statement that humanity, or real membership of it, does not imply any mediation of divine grace to an individual member of this humanity because at the beginnings, and from the beginnings onwards it was a sinful humanity, is not mythological either. This statement, however, properly speaking contains everything which is stated in the doctrine of original sin, and hence too the doctrine of original sin is no mythologem. Such a mythologem would be present if this doctrine were to imply that the subjective and personal guilt of one or a few individuals as such were projected onto their descendants. But this is far from being the content of the dogma of original sin. This implies the existence of a real guilt at the beginnings, but only as the basis for a primitive deficiency of the sanctifying grace of God, and that, moreover, only *to the extent that* humanity is descended from this beginning. The existence of a real sin at the beginning, however, is no myth, however important it is for us not to portray this sin to ourselves as a concrete phenomenon. If it were a myth, then ultimately and logically speaking, the same would absolutely have to be asserted of the history of human freedom. This is a reality which we experience.

5. It must be conceded that the classic doctrine of original sin contains many further aspects besides those which have been discussed here, above all the question of the existence and loss of the so-called preternatural gifts of the original state, of freedom from concupiscence and from being delivered up to death. But this is a question which cannot be taken as a subject for theological consideration any further here.

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[263]

12

ON THE ENCYCLICAL 'HUMANAE VITAE'

On the twenty-fifth of July 1968 Paul VI published his long-awaited encyclical, 'Humanae Vitae' on the right principles governing the procreation of new life.[1] This encyclical had been announced years before. It had been prepared for, in a manner which had not previously been usual, by the work of a commission, and its publication had been repeatedly postponed. In spite of this it provoked the greatest surprise among Catholics and in the non-Catholic world. Side by side with the measure of agreement which it received, and which certainly must not be under-estimated, it also met with worldwide contradiction. Now certainly this is partly to be explained by the simple fact that the supreme authority of a Church comprising millions of believers had pronounced on a question affecting the personal lives of countless individuals. Apart from this the subject-matter of this question is 'of interest' to many more than merely the Catholic believers. But this alone is not sufficient to explain the opposition which it provoked. This is to some extent understandable when one considers that on the question treated of in the encyclical married Catholics had already arrived at a definite opinion (regardless of which this was), and had applied this in the practice of their lives. Furthermore, among moral theologians too, at least for some considerable time, there had no longer been any unanimity of opinion on this question, and it was becoming ever clearer that the practical importance of the question itself had grown immeasurably as a result of the 'population explosion'. This opposition, especially as found even in the Catholic Church herself, is a fact, and it is with this fact that we shall chiefly be concerned in the considerations which follow.

[264]

I. Preliminary Observations

Before we go on to treat more directly of the problem itself certain preliminary observations have to be made which are necessary for a right understanding of what follows.

A Catholic must take this encyclical seriously. Certainly we shall have to state more precisely and to define what this in fact implies in the present context. But the encyclical itself must be taken seriously. It is the pronouncement of a pope. It is certainly the outcome of mature thought and preparation. In the Catholic Church it has a notable doctrinal tradition behind it. Under these circumstances it is meaningless and contrary to the seriousness with which the question should be taken, and the respect due to the authority of the pope, if our reactions to the encyclical simply take the form of short-sighted emotionalism; if all we can do is to produce crude and distorted summaries of its contents, and to ascribe to the pope motives which are designed to render his pronouncements unworthy of belief from the outset. Anyone who from the outset maintains his own opinion as indisputable without any self-criticism, anyone who believes that a more recent idea is *a priori* and certainly more correct than an earlier one, anyone who simply argues on the basis of the undesirable practical consequences of the papal pronouncement, is thinking pragmatically and so even from his initial standpoint evading the question of truth. And anyone who does this cannot, as a Catholic, do justice to the encyclical.

Now what we shall be treating of in these considerations of ours is not that which constitutes the heart and centre of the papal encyclical. In other words we shall not be

[1] *AAS* 60 (1968), pp. 481-518.

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investigating the question of whether and why objectively speaking it is immoral, or alternatively need not necessarily be so, for a man deliberately, and as his own free personal act, to exclude the possibility of new life coming to be as a result of an individual married act. Here let us simply confine ourselves to noticing in this connection that on any sound view of the basic principles involved it is a crude simplification of the papal teaching to represent it as an absolute prohibition, even at the theoretical level, of any deliberate control of the birthrate, whereas in reality what the encyclical is concerned with is to reject *certain specific methods* of such birth control. In this connection, however, it must be admitted that for the normal and average reader of the encyclical it is even so not clear how the control of the birthrate which is conceded to be necessary can *de facto* effectively be achieved in the concrete conditions which prevail at the social and individual levels without applying the very methods which have been rejected.

[265] Here, therefore, we shall not be treating directly either of the material problem in itself or of the question of truth which it involves, even though these constitute the heart and centre of the encyclical. It would be impossible to carry out such an undertaking within the limits of a single brief article. In any case we would have to treat of the basic assumptions underlying the papal position: the nature of the natural law, its 'immutability' and historical development, the competence of the teaching authority of the Church in relation to this natural law, the relationship between the natural law and revelation, what constitutes the essence of 'human nature', how we can recognize this, the relationship which the person as a free agent bears to the reality which is already there for him to act upon (the reality called 'nature'), man's capacities in relation to that 'nature' which he himself has, his powers to shape and direct himself and how far he is subject in this to certain moral restrictions. All these prior factors, which have had an influence on the papal decision, are so difficult, and matters of such widespread controversy among contemporary Catholic theologians, and, moreover, even in the encyclical itself so fleetingly indicated, that it is impossible, within the limits of a brief article, to treat of these factors which are the premisses of the papal thesis even though in themselves they do need to be discussed. The same applies to the meaning to be attached to the papal position itself, and the justification for this. For from this point of view we should have to treat of the question of whether, and on what grounds, any given individual married act in the concrete, even taken in itself as individual, and independently of married life as a whole, is subject to an unequivocal moral judgement. It must be remembered that the individual married act has a twofold importance: it is conducive to married love and at the same time it is an act from which new life may possibly be generated. In view of this we would have to treat of the question of why *every single* married act must be such that it has both these significances together. A further point which we should have to discuss relates to the fact that 'nature' itself allows us to take these two aspects apart from one another and to take either one of them as our motive for the act. Moreover even according to the encyclical itself this is a state of affairs which can deliberately be taken advantage of in regulating births. The point which we should have to discuss in this connection, therefore, would be why *man himself* under certain specific provisos, cannot separate the two aspects in the married act in any *individual* exercise of it, so long as this continues to be accorded its proper place within the totality of a married life which remains in principle willing to propagate new life. This question becomes still more acute when we [266] consider that after all the power freely to shape and direct himself inherent in man himself, and distinguishing him from animals, is itself in turn an intrinsic part of 'human nature', so that there can be no question of this power of self-manipulation through his own 'nature' being *in principle* conceded to man as a matter of *morality*. The only question can be, rather, whether in this specific instance the moral boundaries governing such self-manipulation are or are not overstepped. In all respects we shall surely have to say that on these questions a specific

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position has indeed been adopted, but this is merely stated rather than explained or proved in any effective sense. It becomes clear in the encyclical itself that the real and primary reason for adhering to this position is the need that is felt to hold firm to the traditional teaching of Pius XI and Pius XII. This fact certainly carries a not inconsiderable theological weight, the more so since in individual moral questions a certain global 'instinct' can be right even when it is incapable of being explicitated to the utmost at the level of rational theory and speculation. Yet in view of the fact that *according to the encyclical itself* what is in question here is not simply a divine revelation of a moral norm, but rather a principle of the 'natural law', it would have been desirable for the material grounds for holding the papal thesis to have been justified by more precise arguments. But, as has been said, these are all questions which cannot be treated of here.

While therefore we are setting aside that which constitutes the true essence of the question here, still in doing so we must not overlook or treat as of no importance that which is held among Catholics as a matter of common conviction even though not all of them will give their interior agreement to the papal position or apply it in practice in their lives. After all the encyclical does give expression to a conviction that is held in common by all Catholics (though by comparison with the basic outlooks and practices of non-Christians it is far from being simply a self-evident truism!), namely that sexual life is subject to moral laws which themselves derive from the very nature of the realities involved, and which are designed to ensure that human happiness can be achieved in sexual life, the conviction, moreover, that under certain circumstances it is necessary both for the individual and for society to control the birthrate. Again this is something that is also subject to moral laws stemming from the very nature of marriage itself. And a further conviction held by all Catholics and expressed in the encyclical is that hedonism and moral libertinism in sexual matters lead not to a liberation of man from oppressive taboos but ultimately to a de-humanization and to unhappiness. If we want to arrive at a correct evaluation of the encyclical, this general Christian conviction [267] must be clearly recognized. And there are really no apparent grounds for supposing that in the present age it is superfluous to speak of this universally held Christian position or to uphold it in public in the secular sphere even though in doing so we must guard against the danger of unduly blackening the outlook of secular society today in the sphere of sexual morality. A further point is that the encyclical rightly recognizes the dangers that would be entailed if the state were allowed to act in a totalitarian way by claiming exclusive rights over the practice of birth control. Here there are dangers which must really be taken seriously even though we may hold the opinion that the state cannot simply and in every respect leave it to the individual as such to cope with the problem of the population explosion, and even though in this connection the encyclical remains too much at the level of the general, the abstract, and the imprecise. What we shall be concerned with in these considerations of ours, therefore, is the simple fact that even within the Catholic Church herself the encyclical has not met with any unanimous agreement either in theory or in practice. And surely the fact that this is so – regardless of whether we regard it as normal or as extremely regrettable – is beyond all question. The very way in which the Church's members have reacted to the encyclical up to now is in itself enough to demonstrate this point, and in this connection it makes no difference, ultimately speaking, whether this reaction is the same in all countries, or which individuals, groups and official bodies in the Church have been responsible for it. This fact in itself and as such constitutes a theological problem, and moreover this is particularly true in view of the fact that in this case the reaction in the form of opposition is far greater, far swifter, far more decided and far more vocal in the public life of the Church than has been the case on earlier occasions of doctrinal pronouncements by the popes. What then is to be said at the *theological* level with regard to this opposition which the encyclical is meeting with and will continue to meet with in the manner we have described? This is the sole question with

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which we shall be concerned here.

II. The Encyclical as a Reformable Statement of Doctrine

This encyclical is not a papal definition ('*ex cathedra*') of the moral norms which the Pope lays down with regard to the 'inadmissibility' of any 'artificial' prevention of the possibility of procreation in the individual married act. In itself and as it stands this is a truism. Its real significance and implications may initially be pointed out by means of an extensive [268] quotation from the Doctrinal Letter published by the German bishops in 1967, which will then be explained in greater detail.[2]

'We are here concerned with the presence or possibility of errors in those statements of doctrine which, though promulgated by the Church, do not have the force of definitions, and which themselves in turn can vary very greatly in their degree of binding force. On this question we must begin by recognizing soberly and firmly that it is a rule of human life quite in general that it must always be lived (as conscientiously as possible) in accordance with tenets which, while on the one hand they are not recognized as absolutely certain at the theoretical level, must nevertheless be respected as valid norms for thinking and acting (here and now), because provisionally at least they are the best that can be found. Every individual is aware of this from the experience of his own life in the concrete. Every doctor in his diagnoses, every statesman in the judgements he has to make from his particular situation in politics, and in the [269] decisions which have to be taken on the basis of these judgements, is aware of this fact. The Church too, in her doctrine and practice, cannot always or in every case allow herself to be confronted with the dilemma either of arriving at a doctrinal decision of an ultimately binding nature, or simply remaining silent and leaving everything to the individual, allowing him to hold any opinion he likes. In order to guard the true and ultimate substance of the faith she must, even at the risk of including some error of detail, provide explicit directions in matters of doctrine such that these have a definite degree of binding force even though, if they do not constitute any definition of the faith, they do have a certain provisional character even to the point of possibly including some error. Otherwise she

[2] The study which follows was written immediately after the Encyclical had appeared. Since in the meantime a very intense discussion has been initiated on this subject further reference may here be made to the following works, even though, in the nature of the case, it is impossible at this point to provide any full account of our position in relation to them. cf. F. E. v. Gagern, *Geburtenregelung und Gewissensentscheid. Die bekanntgewordenen Dokumente des päpstlichen Ehekommission* (Munich, 1967); F. Greiner, 'Nach "Humanae vitae"', *Hochland* 60 (1967/68), pp. 681-686; F. Boekle and C. Holenstein (edd.). *Die Enzyklika in der Diskussion* (Zürich, 1968); B. Häring, *Krise um* '*Humanea Vitae*' (Bergen-Enkheim, 1968); D. v. Hildebrand, *Die Enzyklika* '*Humanea vitae*' *– ein Zeichen des Widerspruchs* (Regensburg, 1968); G. Martelet, 'Pour mieux comprendre l'encyclique "Humanae vitae"', *NRT* 90 (1968), pp. 897-917, 1009-1063 (On this cf. A. Winter, 'Neues Licht ad "Humanae vitae"?', *StdZ* 183 (1969), pp. 206-210): *Humanae vitae oder die Freiheit des Gewissens* edited by members of the 'Humanea vitae' action group of Bochum University of the Ruhr (Olten, 1968); K. Rahner, 'Im Beichtstuhl nach der Pille fragen? Spiegelgespräch über die Enzyklika zur Geburtenregelung', *Der Spiegel* 22 (1968), No. 39 (23.9.1968), pp. 166-176; K. Rahner, Cardinal Renard, B. Haering, *A propos de l'encyclique* '*Humanize vitae*' (Paris, 1968); F. Oertel ed., *Erstes Echo auf* '*Humanae vitae*'. *Dokumentation wichtiger Stellungnahmen zur umstrittenen Enzyklika über die Geburtenkontrolle* (Essen, 1968); 'Schreiben der deutschen Bischöfe zu "Humanae vitae" ', *Herder Korrespondenz* 22 (1968), pp. 484-487; 'Stellungnahmen zur Enzyklika "Humanae vitae" vom 25. Juli 1968', *Diakonia* 3 (1968), pp. 300-312; W. Wickler, 'Das Missverständnis der Natur des ehelichen Aktes in der Moraltheologie', *Stimmen der Zeit* 182 (1968), pp. 289-303; A. Antweiler, *Ehe und Geburtenregelung* (Munich, 1969); A. Auer, 'Nach dem Erscheinen der Enzyklika "Humanae vitae" ', *TQ* 149 (1969), pp. 75-85; F. Boeckle, *Freiheit und Bindung* (Kevelaer, 1969); A. Günthor, *Kommentar zur Enzyklika* '*Humanae vitae*' (Freiburg, 1969); E. Hamel, 'Conferentiae episcopales et encyclica "Humanae vitae"', *Periodica* 58 (1969), pp. 243-349; J. Noonan, *Empfängnisverhütung* (Mainz, 1969).

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cannot possibly proclaim her faith, interpret it, or apply it to the fresh situation which arises in the individual's life in such a way that it shall be an effective force in determining the course of life to be pursued. In such a case the position in which the individual Christian stands in relation to the Church is first and foremost an analogous one in the sense that as an individual he recognizes that he is bound to accept the decision of the specialist even though he knows that this is not infallible.

'In any case there can be no place in catechetics for an opinion opposed to the provisional pronouncements of the Church in matters of doctrine, even though it is right, under certain circumstances, to instruct the faithful as to the nature of and the limited degree of weight to be attached to provisional doctrinal decisions of this kind. This is a point on which we have already spoken. Anyone who believes that he can retain his own private opinion, and that he is already even now in possession of that better insight which the Church will achieve in the future must take stock of himself in an attitude of sober self-criticism, and ask himself before God and his own conscience whether he has the necessary breadth and depths of specialized theological knowledge to be able to deviate from the current teaching of the official Church in his private theory and practice. Such a case is in principle conceivable. But subjective presumptuousness and over-hasty opinionatedness will have to answer before the judgement of God.

'It pertains to the right attitude of a Catholic towards his faith seriously to strive to attach its due and positive value even to a provisional doctrinal pronouncement of the Church, and to make it his own. The position here is similar to that in the secular sphere, for here too far-reaching decisions have to be taken on the basis of fallible insights arrived at as conscientiously as possible by others. So too in the sphere of the Church, [270] no-one need feel ashamed or diminished in his human dignity when he commits himself in his own mind to the Church's doctrine, even in those instances in which it cannot from the outset be accounted as definitive. It is possible that in specific instances the development of doctrine in the Church advances too slowly. But even in arriving at a judgement of this kind it is necessary to be prudent and reserved. For in a Church composed of individuals subject to the conditions of history, time is needed to achieve such developments in doctrine, since they cannot proceed more swiftly than the necessity of preserving the substance of the faith without loss allows.

'We do not need to fear that in adopting the attitude we have described towards the Church and her pronouncements we shall be refusing to meet the claims of our own times. Often enough the serious questions which are raised by our own times, and which we have to answer on the basis of our faith, make it necessary for us to re-think the truths of our faith anew. In this it is perfectly possible for fresh shifts of emphasis to be introduced. But this is not to call the faith itself in question. It contributes, rather, to a deeper apprehension of the truths of divine revelation and of the Church's doctrine. For we are firmly convinced, and we see that experience confirms us in this, that we have no need either to deny any truth for the sake of the Catholic faith, nor to deny the Catholic faith for the sake of any truth, provided only that we understand this faith in the spirit of the Church, and seek always to achieve a still deeper apprehension of it.'[3]

The first point to be made is that the papal encyclical clearly falls under the heading of the kind of doctrinal pronouncements of the Church which the bishops refer to in their doctrinal letter, namely doctrinal pronouncements which are authentic but non-definitorial in character, and so at least in principle susceptible of revision. At no point in the encyclical is any formulation to be found which could give rise to the impression that it is an *ex cathedra*

[3] *Schreiben der deutschen Bischöfe an alle die von der Kirche mit des Glaubeneverkündigung beaufratgt sind* (Treves, 2nd ed., 1968), pp. 12-14.

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definition that is being treated of. In this respect, indeed, it is possible to say that the formulations are actually more cautiously worded than, for instance, Pius XI's pronouncements in '*Casti Connubii*'. Now it is clear in the very nature of the case, besides being explicitly stated as a norm in canon law, that an official statement of doctrine constitutes an *ex cathedra* decision only if this force is *explicitly* attached to it (even though this can be done in very different ways). In accordance with the [271] norms laid down in the Doctrinal Letter of the German bishops which we have cited, therefore, the following distinctions, both formal and material, can be adduced with regard to the *binding force* of the encyclical.

A doctrinal statement by the Pope in which no definition is presented is in principle a teaching that can be revised. Of course it cannot straightway be concluded from this that such a document has no importance for the instruction, understanding and formation of conscience of an individual Catholic. On the contrary, so long as the Catholic Christian does not radically reject the official teaching authority of the Church (and thereby ceases to be a Catholic) this document is in principle and from the outset a declaration which should cause him to maintain a critical attitude with regard to himself and his personal understanding in such a way that he must also seriously take into account the fact that a decision of this sort has been arrived at by the Church's authorities under the guidance of the Spirit and with the utmost conscientiousness. For this reason it must be considered right, even when it contradicts one's own subjective opinion, which is not in any true sense protected from error from the outset. A Catholic who has no understanding of what is signified by a 'presumption' of this kind must incur the reproach that he is in love with his own subjective opinion in a way that is childish and emotional, and that he is not bringing to bear that attitude of self-criticism which we must bring to bear with regard to our own opinions, however deeply rooted they may be, even though these appear to represent the voice of our own 'conscience'. Such a Catholic as this is so enclosed within an attitude of retarded individualism that he fails to understand the extent to which any 'ideological' convictions, or convictions affecting mankind as a whole, invariably have some connection with an 'institution'. And again he is enormously under-estimating the fact that as a Catholic a man must have grounds which are really proved and tested to the last detail, and have really been reflected upon in a spirit of self-criticism in order to be able conscientiously to disassociate himself from an official declaration of doctrine on the part of the Church. What still remains to be said over and above this with regard to the importance of taking an official declaration of doctrine positively and seriously will be set forth at a later stage.

This is one aspect of the attitude which a Catholic ought to have towards an official declaration of doctrine on the part of his Church. The other aspect, however, can be formulated as follows. A non-definitorial declaration of this kind really is in principle susceptible of revision, and the Catholic or the theologian has in principle the right, indeed the duty, to take cognizance of this fact. To say that an official declaration of doctrine [272] can in principle be revised does not of course *ipso facto* imply the presumption that one who recognizes this fact is convinced that the specific official doctrinal declaration involved is actually *de facto* false, inadequate, or in need of revision. One the contrary it is the opposite presumption and approach that is intended, but then only and precisely as a *presumption* which in a specific instance may later have to yield to the superior conviction, conscientiously arrived at in the theory and practice of an individual, that the opposite position to that adopted in the official teaching is correct. Whether in the particular case with which we are concerned in the *concrete* (even abstracting from any ultimate decision on the question of truth with regard to the papal declaration) there are *de facto* grounds which make it morally justifiable to disagree with this declaration – this is a point which we shall have to discuss later. First let us simply draw attention to the fact that (even if we abstract from all

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the 'classic' instances of papal declarations of doctrine which have subsequently been revised, such as those of Vigilius, Honorius, many statements contained in the Bull 'Exsurge Domine' of Leo X, and in several of the papal pronouncements with regard to the moral justification of usury etc.) there actually have been in very recent times papal declarations of doctrine to which the same weight has been attached as to this encyclical, yet which have not merely been susceptible of revisions 'in theory', but which have, whether tacitly or explicitly, actually been revised. We may for instance recall the doctrinal pronouncements of Gregory XVI and Pius IX with regard to a liberal and democratic social order which would certainly not be formulated in this way by any pope today. We may recall many of the pronouncements in the field of exegesis and biblical theology put forward against Modernism at the beginning of this century, and which today are almost totally out of date. From this alone it can be concluded that the Catholic has the right and the duty to take into account the fact that an official pronouncement by the Church on doctrinal matters so long as it does not imply any definition, is susceptible of revision. These examples also show, if we realize their full significance in the concrete, that to 'allow for' the possibility of such revision is not in principle only permissible once such a revision actually has taken place quite in general in the Church. For in that case such revision would never have been undertaken at all, and at the same time it cannot be assumed that in practice such revisions only come to be made in the first place as a result of the pronouncements concerned actually having been contradicted by individuals who, from the point of view of conscience, were un-Catholic in their thinking and acting.

[273] However in view of the formal authority of this Encyclical, as also with regard to the fact that it is in principle capable of being revised, something further must be said more from the point of view of its actual *content*. For even in respect of the basic norms expressed in it this actual content in itself is not so clear-cut in its message as might appear at first sight. And this also has its significance for the question of its formal authority. What we mean by this can only be indicated quite briefly here. For even if, in all simplicity, we assume the correctness of the norm laid down by the Pope, it is still always possible to raise the question of *what*, in more precise terms, this signifies. After all it is conceivable, in principle at least, that what is being formulated here is an 'ideal norm' such that it is not *ipso facto* clear that it can effectively be 'realized' in all its moral obligations in every situation in human life, or by every individual and every social group. For instance even at the time of the Old Testament patriarchs monogamy was a moral norm which derived in the most basic sense from the nature of man and of marriage itself. Yet in the concrete situation in terms of human living and at the stage of development of human 'nature' of that time, neither the individual nor the social group concerned was capable of putting it into practice to a sufficient extent for an obligation to monogamy actually to be imposed in the concrete circumstances prevailing at that time and in that area. Could it not be conceivable that something similar is the case with regard to the basic norm of the encyclical? It is not *ipso facto* against such a parallel to say that the norm in the encyclical has been explicitly formulated and promulgated in a manner which is quite different from the other case. For even in other cases too we recognize a certain 'delayed action' in the developing recognition of moral norms as this emerges among specific peoples, civilizations and human groups and comes to be apprehended as morally binding in practice. And we can still see the effects of this 'delayed action' with regard to a moral norm which was actually proclaimed during the age of Christianity. Here we have only been able to indicate the fact that the recognition of moral principles has a historical development of its own. But in the light of this it is conceivable, at least in principle, that even in the case of a moral norm that has been officially proclaimed and is 'ex hypothesi' correct, it may only be at some subsequent point within a given age or a given society taken as a whole that its content really comes effectively to be understood in such a way that it has

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the force of a moral obligation in actual concrete fact. In that case the force which such a norm carries already in the present concrete circumstances consists in the obligation to strive for that degree of apprehension on the part of the individual and the [274] society in which this norm can be recognized as binding in content as a matter of direct concrete practice. In all ages Catholic moral theology has recognized the idea of 'invincible error' as valid with regard to moral norms of a more detailed kind. It is true that it has applied this idea almost exclusively to the conscience of the individual as such. But it is perfectly conceivable, as is also apparent from the moral history of mankind, that it can also be applied to the collective moral awareness of an age or of larger social groups. From this point of view it can at least be said that it is not absurd from the outset to ask whether the moral norm of the encyclical may not perhaps have been proclaimed as an 'ideal norm' which, while it does indeed carry a direct and practical binding force already in the here and now for many individuals who differ very greatly among themselves and in the way in which their consciences have been formed, still does not carry the same immediate moral obligation for a wide range of people at the existing stage of their moral development.

This *question* can at least be *raised* as such with regard to this moral norm which has been laid down by the Pope. Indeed the moment we assume that it is materially correct it actually must be raised because on the one hand we have to be realistic enough to allow for a large measure of rejection of this norm even within the Church, while on the other there are many cases in which it is rejected in practice, and in which even so this practical refusal to observe it should not be qualified as subjectively speaking grave sin. Thus in fact the theological question does arise of what is implied by a discrepancy of this kind between an officially proclaimed norm on the one hand, and the 'ex supposito' largely inculpable failure to accept it on the other. This is a question that really does impose itself. And precisely on the assumption that the papal norm is objectively correct, the solution to it can, after all, surely be found only in the direction we have just indicated. But in that case this has a further significance also for the question of the formal binding force of this norm. On our hypothesis this would be, in a certain sense, that degree of binding force to be attached to a norm which defines a goal to be aimed at in the moral development of the Church and of society, but which, in the actual circumstances prevailing, is far from having yet been attained to, even though it is intended to be attained to. The case here is similar to that of loving God with one's *whole* heart. This too implies a radical obligation, yet at the same time does not say that this total love is already attainable in the 'here and now'.

[275]

III. Deviant Decisions of Conscience

We now come to the grounds which make it permissible for us to allow for the fact that subjectively speaking the individual Christian may believe himself justified in conscience in deviating from the papal teaching. Whatever approach we adopt to this question, our first task must be to define the precise limits of the 'state of the question'. For the purposes of our present investigation what we are concerned to achieve, therefore (and this is in accordance with the limits which we have defined for our considerations as a whole) is not to present arguments which, in our opinion, objectively demonstrate that the papal norm is incorrect or at least incapable of proof. Our sole aim here is to make clear that apart from the abstract possibility of an inculpably erroneous conscience there are grounds for holding that in this particular concrete instance even a Catholic conscience can, by a psychological process that we can understand, arrive at the (subjective) conviction that it is not bound by the papal norm.

(a) The first point to which we must draw attention in this connection is that we are

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arriving at too facile a judgement on the situation in which a subjective conscience is placed if we assume that this conscience is simply being subjected to a conflict between a harsh norm proclaimed by the Church and an easier course of action which has only moral laxity, superficiality, and hedonism to commend it. On the contrary not a few cases arise in which such a conscience finds itself caught up in what is (at least to all appearances) a conflict between moral *duties* on *both* sides. This is surely a point which does not need to be clarified at any greater length here.

(b) A further point to which attention must be drawn is that in this question, as a factor in the concrete situation of human living we must not over-emphasize the formal authority of the official teaching body with regard to its effectiveness. For in fact even from the point of view of sheer formal logic the matter appears to be very simple: the Catholic Christian in principle acknowledges the Church's teaching authority in moral questions also. It still continues to be authoritative for him even in the case in which he fails to perceive – at any rate with sufficient clarity – the material justification for this particular official decision in matters of doctrine. In other words – for this is how we might express the simple conclusion that appears to follow from this – even according to the dictates of his own conscience he has to adhere to this concrete norm. In reality, however, the matter is not so simple. First we must simply recognize the [276] fact that despite the formal logic of the position which has been indicated above a formal authority can be over-strained from the psychological point of view, and that too not merely in the individual case, but also in collective situations. Man in his concrete behaviour is in fact not made up merely of logic. For instance a case that is perfectly conceivable and actually arises again and again is that of a Catholic doctor who in principle and theory recognizes the Catholic doctrine that any direct termination of pregnancy is forbidden. Yet in the concrete instance in which it is a question of saving a mother who already has many children he is psychologically in no position to realize the moral force at the psychological level of a norm to which he adheres at the conceptual level to such an extent that he either observes this norm in the concrete individual case, or alternatively disobeys it and incurs subjective guilt in doing so. A somewhat similar situation is perfectly conceivable even at the 'collective' level in the case with which we are here concerned, and may apply to wide areas of the Church even when we assume the objective correctness of the papal norm.

(c) A further point which must in all sober realism be emphasized is that in the case with which we are here concerned the individual and collective consciences of Catholic Christians neither have nor can assume any absolute certainty with regard to the objective correctness of the papal norm.

(d) Once this situation is taken duly into account the arguments *against* the papal norm acquire, both theoretically and practically speaking a far greater effectiveness, at least at the subjective level, than we could ascribe to them if – as in the case of a dogma – we could assume the absolute correctness of the papal teaching (regardless of whether we clearly saw the reason for it, or how we coped with the arguments against it).

(e) It must further be emphasized that in a question of the natural law it is far from being a matter of indifference whether we realize the *intrinsic* basis in reality for a norm of the *natural law* or not. In a case in which we completely failed to achieve this degree of understanding we would have to say that to observe a norm of this kind would indeed be an act of moral obedience *to the authority of the Church*, but it would no longer be an act in which the *intrinsic morality of what is actually prescribed in* itself would be attained to *subjectively*. Now this is certainly not a matter of indifference.

(f) In addition to this the actual situation in which the individual stands is such that while he may recognize this authority formally and in principle, still in the concrete individual case it is all too often made [277] effectively present to him as nothing more than a moral demand

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for a given line of conduct in practice, so long as it does not succeed in effectively enabling him to understand how its demand is justified from the real nature of the case.

From this point of view alone we must be realistic enough to allow for the fact that in the case with which we are concerned, even though formally speaking we may acknowledge the teaching authority of the Church, and assume that the papal norm is correct, still there will be very many Catholics who neither recognize nor acknowledge in any effective sense that this norm has any binding force upon their own consciences.

So far all that we have been saying has been expressed in very formal terms. Now, however, we have reached a point at which it must be said quite decisively that there certainly are notable *arguments against* this papal norm. We cannot estimate the force of these arguments by asking ourselves whether they supply an objective and unambiguous proof of the contrary position to that upheld in the papal norm, but rather, from the standpoint of whether they are capable psychologically, albeit on the basis of objectively real considerations, of *de facto* causing the mind and conscience of an individual Catholic to hold the opinion that the papal norm is incorrect and, moreover, in such a way that he can foresee such a state of affairs emerging not merely in this or that individual case (a possibility which will certainly not be contested by any moral theologian) but in larger groups as well within the Church. If this is indeed the case, then here too we must not overlook a fact that a state of mind of this sort in such a group will have the effect of confirming the conviction of the individual.

Now such arguments are certainly to be found. In this connection only a few indications are possible here.

(a) First the line of argument against such positions adopted in the encyclical is surely too brief to be very effective so far as its power to convince at the *de facto* psychological level is concerned. It hardly goes beyond the actual statement of the thesis. It fails to show why the natural constitution of an *individual*, with his particular human powers, *ipso facto* and of itself alone lays a moral demand upon the individual concerned. To say the least the impression it arouses is as though man's capacity deliberately and consciously to shape and direct himself is power added on purely *ab externo* to a closed and 'static' nature, and not that which constitutes human 'nature' precisely as human. It therefore fails to demonstrate in any enlightening way the fact that man (admittedly with all the necessary provisos) precisely does *not* remain any longer *within* his own [278] 'nature' when he deliberately induces a state of affairs which 'nature' itself also in fact produces again and again through the factor of the 'safe period'. All this is not said in order to deprive the line of argument adopted by the Pope of its own intrinsic force, but simply in order to make it clear that *de facto* in the case of many individuals it will turn out to be psychologically ineffective.

(b) An additional point is that a notable majority both of the theologians and of the bishops who were included in the Papal Commission set up to study this question declared themselves *against* laying down this norm, which has been published in the encyclical. In the light of this fact it is difficult to hold out any hope that a notable majority of Catholics will regard the line of argument adopted in the papal encyclical as carrying conviction. It has already been pointed out that any attempt to counter this position by having recourse to the formal papal authority alone will not help in a way that is psychologically effective.

(c) Finally in this respect the following factor has to be borne in mind: the papal encyclical recognizes that when there are serious grounds to justify it the safe period may be used to control fertility. In view of this we shall surely feel able to go on to say that even assuming the correctness of the papal norm we can still defend the position that it is morally permissible to make sure that these safe periods really are safe; that the woman concerned does not become fertile even during them as a result of factors which are biologically abnormal (and therefore 'unnatural'), in other words through ovulation taking place at a time when it is

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not expected. According to this line of argument it would be morally permissible to ensure the regularity of the 'safe period' by means of a 'pill' (it makes no difference whether one has already been found which is suitable for this purpose or not). The argument here would be that this would simply be a way of 'supporting' and regularizing 'nature', but not altering it. Now assuming for the moment that such a course of action is permissible, then the only difference in practice between the sort of 'birth control' which is in conformity with the papal norm and the sort that corresponds to the point of view opposed to this is that the papal norm would regard the use of the pill as unlawful during a period of about three days within the menstrual cycle (it would be lawful, therefore, for all the rest of the days) because in these three days a normal ovulation takes place and should not be prevented by the 'pill'. Of course to the moral theologian who accepts the papal norm this difference is vital to a degree. But in spite of this we are compelled to doubt whether this difference can be effectively apprehended and accorded its true value by the average human conscience.

[279] If such refinements are introduced into the case, then the difference between the papal and the 'modern' position will no longer be understood by the average conscience, and will be felt to be so much hair-splitting. The *effect* is the same even though the means by which man seeks to achieve it are different: in the one case through his 'knowledge', in the other through his biological 'techniques'. In both cases it is *intended*. The sole difference, so far as the conscience of the average man is concerned is that something which he is permitted to do for all the rest of the time is unlawful for the specific period of the three days. It must be reiterated that what we are treating of here is a line of argument not about the true nature of the case in itself, but about the insights demanded of the average man in the process of forming his conscience. From this point of view, therefore, we must expect that in practice the papal norm will not be accepted.

IV. The De Facto Situation Among Catholics Since the Encyclical

From all that has been said up to now we must surely be realistic enough to draw the conclusion that so far as the outlook and living practice of the majority of Catholics is concerned the situation after the encyclical will be no different from what it was before. The number of protests which have already been raised even within the Church are in themselves enough to demonstrate this point. Moreover all the considerations which we have put forward so far in any case make it probable. The majority of Catholics will regard the norm presented in the encyclical as *de facto* not merely '*doctrina reformabilis*' but actually as '*doctrina reformanda*'. They will apply to the case in question those principles which have been stated in the doctrinal letter of the German bishops with regard to the possibility of deviating from that teaching of the official Church which, though authentic, has not been defined. In this situation a point that is crucial for any theological judgement upon it is that (though certainly not in all cases, still in very many) the 'bona fides' of the individuals concerned, the fact that at least in their subjective consciences they are inculpable, even when they do deviate from the official norm in this way, cannot be contested. Furthermore we cannot regard such a state of 'bona fides' in the concrete as a mere isolated case arising here and there. Rather it is a state that applies to large groups within the Church and to the Church's public life. It cannot be proved by any *a priori* line of theological argument that such a situation is impossible in a case such as this, in which the teaching of the Church that is in question is indeed authentic, but nevertheless objectively speaking capable of revision. Teaching of this kind is *of its very* [280] *nature* exposed to such a situation, even though it is still far from being the case that it must therefore arise in all cases wherever such teaching is proclaimed as authentic yet capable of reform. Certainly a situation of this kind actually has arisen often in the past, albeit

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not with such a full glare of publicity as in the present instance. For instance we can certainly state that with regard to many official doctrinal pronouncements in the field of biblical theology put forward at the beginning of the present century the great majority of exegetes had already abandoned these officially prescribed positions even before the teaching authorities themselves prudently withdrew from them. In the case of an authentic pronouncement of the teaching authorities such a situation is possible, and on all human estimation has *de facto* arisen in the case with which we are here concerned.

The importance to be attached to a doctrinal pronouncement of this kind, and the authority of the Church herself in her official doctrinal pronouncements, are not helped by covering over this situation or attempting to suppress any public awareness of it in the Church. Both within and without the Church so much will be said and written, and so many opinions will be put forward concerning this situation, opinions which cannot be suppressed and will not allow themselves to be suppressed by such expedients, that it could only do damage to the authority of the Church if those who in principle acknowledge their allegiance to the Church's authority were to attempt to remain silent. What we are concerned with here (and this is in conformity with the limited field of enquiry which we have defined for these considerations of ours) is in fact not whether this situation is, in every respect to be approved of, but rather what ought to be *done*, assuming that it already *exists*.

In such a situation the task of the bishops will be no easy one, the more so (though this is not the only reason) in view of the fact that in recent years they have more or less clearly adopted a public attitude which is either directly or indirectly at variance with the norm enunciated in the encyclical. A bishop need not, and certainly should not, take as his starting-point the conviction that it is absolutely certain that the positions unequivocally opposed to the papal norm are correct. And he cannot assume this to be the case. It is certainly impossible to maintain any such position so long as we view the question in a spirit of self-criticism and guard against any short-sighted emotionalism. But so long as he does not proceed from a conviction of this kind any bishop, regardless of which position he personally is inclined to adopt in view of the objective realities involved, can honourably and in all subjective honesty point out to the [281] faithful over whom he presides the weight and importance to be attached to a papal pronouncement of this kind. He can exhort the faithful and the priests to be self-critical and so to take seriously a norm of this kind, laid down as it is by the supreme authority of the Church. He can put the question to the conscience of the individual believer whether he can have, or actually has, a sufficient conviction, supported by serious arguments, to make it lawful for him in conscience, either in theory or in practice, to deviate from the papal norm, or whether alternatively he is falling prey to an unconscious allergy against any teaching authority in the Church which is very widespread today, and so reacting merely emotionally without reflecting that in the gospel too claims can be put forward which at first seem to demand too much of man, driven as he is by his own impulses, and so appear to him incapable of fulfilment.

But a bishop need not and should not act either as though the papal pronouncement were absolute and incapable of revision, or as though any deviation from it necessarily implied a radical denial of the teaching authority of the Church such as would objectively separate the Catholics concerned from the Church. We have a right confidently to expect that on this question the bishops will proceed in conformity with the general norms which the German bishops themselves have formulated for such cases. Certainly a bishop will have to do his best to ensure that in the pulpit and in other contexts his priests will treat of questions of sexual morality in such a way that they continue clearly to maintain a genuine and positive attitude towards the teaching authority of the Church. But in a society in which there is still only very little that can be achieved at the merely discrete level, '*in camera caritatis*', it is impossible to avoid a situation in which the basic principles of the doctrinal letter of the

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German bishops, even as applied to the specific case, will be set forth *in public*, and in which it will be explicitly asserted that it is quite conceivable for a Catholic in 'bona fide' to deviate from the papal norm. It seems to be impossible for a bishop to have recourse to the disciplinary measures available to the Church's *magisterium* against a priest merely on the grounds that he is applying these principles to the case with which we are concerned, now that *those same* principles have been proclaimed by the bishops themselves in a presentation that is discrete, credible, and respectful in its attitude towards the teaching authority of the Church. To take such a course would be to deprive those same principles of their due weight, and to discredit the honesty of the bishops themselves in proclaiming them. For principles are there to be applied to concrete cases.

What we have already said in itself carries certain implications with [282] regard to the attitude which priests should adopt in the pulpit and in the confessional. Even today one who is charged with proclaiming the gospel message has a very high and important task in upholding a Christian morality of sex. It has already been pointed out at an earlier stage that even today there is a great body of doctrine, held in common by all Catholics on this question, which the priest must boldly and unashamedly uphold. He has to point out again and again that marriage is something more than a mere egoism shared by two individuals, more than the legitimization of mere instincts, that it consists in a genuine and personal monogamy in which each partner strives to achieve the eternal salvation of the other, and that it is a love that entails a lifelong faithfulness. He has to point out that it is subject to the law and the grace of the gospel, that in principle it must be permanently open to the procreation of children, that the norms of birth-control are essentially ethical in character, and as such affect the whole man, etc. Again and again in the course of pastoral discussions in preparation for marriage, and in counselling married people (both in the confessional and outside it) the priest has to strive to instil an understanding of the Christian conception of marriage in the believers. He neither need be, nor should allow himself to be, manoeuvred into a situation in which it appears as though the sole question which arises in the ethics of marriage today is that concerned with the arguments *for* or *against* the 'pill'. Even today it is in principle perfectly conceivable that he will encounter individuals who, if it is left to their own judgement, will reject the 'pill'. In view of the 'authenticity' of the papal pronouncement he has certainly no right, in relation to such consciences, to seek to 'teach them better'. It would be still more reprehensible (although unhappily it does already occur in practice) if a priest in the confessional were to deprive people of their confidence when they had the joyful will and the Christian courage to increase the number of their children. On the other hand, however, he can also allow for the fact that there is a genuine state of 'bona fides' in many believers such that they do not incur guilt by deviating from the papal norm. If *in general* he acts in support of an understanding and a genuine respect for the papal norm (with the due provisos which the actual realities themselves require) he will in practice in the majority of cases in the confessional be able to refrain from making any attempt to 'upset' the 'bona fides' which is firmly present, or which may be assumed, in the penitent. For in accordance with what has been said so far, in the majority of cases he will not merely not succeed in this, but also in making such an attempt in the current situation he will fail to abide by the traditional rules, which lay [283] down that a 'bona fides' of this kind must not be 'destroyed', but rather left untroubled. For today in effect any attempt of this kind would not as such be productive of any good, even in the sphere of public morality. In accordance with this the only cases in which the priest in the confessional will still have a 'duty to enquire' as to the use or non-use of the pill will be those in which he is forced to presume from positive signs that the penitent is keeping silent about his use of the pill, and that this is *contrary* to his subjectively 'better' conscience.

The theologians who have to present Catholic morality as from the professor's chair find

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themselves in a particularly difficult situation today with regard to this matter. First we are surely justified in saying that even in this official position of theirs they have the right and the duty to say everything which we have said up to now in the form of general considerations and the consequences to be drawn from these for the course of action to be followed by the bishops and the priests. But certain explicit questions still remain to be treated of which have been omitted in the above treatment. In 'Humani Generis' Pius XII had already declared that even if a papal pronouncement in matters of doctrine does not have the force of an *ex cathedra* definition, it is no longer open to free discussion among the theologians. It is true that this pronouncement has not been repeated in 'Lumen Gentium', the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council, even though it was at first included in a projected schema of this Dogmatic Constitution. But even in this Constitution it is laid down that a doctrinal statement of this kind has to be upheld by the theologians with a 'religious obedience' (No. 25). This certainly raises a special difficulty for moral theologians in their teaching, the more so since it is certainly reasonable to draw a distinction here according to whether, in the given case, it is a personal opinion that is being treated of, which remains at the private level and is held as a matter of personal theory and practice by someone who in doing so observes a '*silentium obsequiosum*', or whether it is an opinion which is upheld with a certain degree of publicity within the Church.

Over and above what has already been said at the beginning of this section we must surely adopt the following position on this question: in the concrete conditions prevailing today in the Church and in public life in the world, the respect which the moral theologian has to pay in his teaching to an authentic but not defined pronouncement of the Church's *magisterium* can no longer imply that the moral theologian concerned must either defend a doctrinal pronouncement of this kind through thick and thin as absolutely the only opinion which is certain and admissible for all [284] ages, or else he must simply be silent. In conformity with what has been said up to now he cannot in honesty adopt the first position, and if he adopted the second he would both be failing in his task as a moral theologian and at the same time doing no service to the Church, to the moral standards of the faithful, and to the Church's teaching authority. Hence the moral theologian will on the one hand have to do his utmost to make the arguments supporting the papal doctrine intelligible to his hearers – in other words he will have to uphold the formal authority of the Church's official teachers (within the limits here laid down), and present the objective arguments supporting the papal position – on the other hand, however, he will not have to be silent concerning the difficulties against this papal teaching, neither those which actually exist as a matter of objective fact, nor those which may be very effective at the subjective level, for the very reason that this would have the effect of making his presentation unworthy of belief in the estimation of his hearers. Over and above this he will seek to help his hearers genuinely to form their own consciences even if he is unable to ensure that all of them will form them in the same sense. It can be said that in the concrete individual case this line of action on the part of the moral theologian is sufficient to ensure that he is adequately taking into account those principles to which we have just referred. It must be remembered that even according to the traditional interpretation these principles as stated by Pius XII and the Second Vatican Council do not in principle exclude the possibility of a theologian dissenting from an authentic statement of teaching of this kind, and that today it would be utopian to suppose that such dissent must always and in every case remain locked up in the private conscience of the theologian concerned. These factors alone are enough to ensure the validity of the approach which we have described. Moreover even in former times the theologian was not forced to keep his dissenting opinions to himself in this way. For otherwise the revisions which *de facto* have been arrived at – whether explicitly or tacitly – of other such official pronouncements of the Church would never have been made at all. Something which is necessary for a theological development,

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which *de facto* has existed all along, and is ultimately recognized by the Church's *magisterium* as well, cannot in principle or from the outset be contrary to morality.

So far as the adherents of the Christian faith, and above all Catholic married people are concerned, all that is essential has strictly speaking already been said, and, moreover, is already contained in the written statement of doctrine published by the German bishops. If, after maturely searching his conscience, a Catholic Christian believes that in all prudence [285] and self-criticism he has been forced to arrive at a point of view which deviates from the papal norm, and if he follows this in the practice of his married life, then, so long as he observes those principles which have already repeatedly been mentioned as of general application to all Christians, such a Catholic need not fear that he has incurred any subjective guilt or regard himself as in a state of formal disobedience to the Church's authority. If he really succeeds in sincerely forming his conscience in this way, then such a Catholic has in principle no obligation to subject the judgement of his conscience which he has arrived at in this way to fresh questioning each time he receives the sacrament of penance. Admittedly in the contemporary situation the Catholic has one further duty to perform over and above those we have mentioned: his love for, and faithfulness to the Church must be such that he does not allow himself to be led astray by the scornful criticism of the Church and her sacrament, and the sometimes unbridled insults to which they are subjected, and which he can hear and read everywhere today where the 'question of the pill' is discussed. He must actually have acquired all the necessary information for understanding the true situation in this question. He must know how to distinguish between reformable and definitorial statements of doctrine on the part of his Church. Furthermore he must achieve a clear understanding of the fact that a teaching authority of the Church cannot in every case be forced into the dilemma either of having to speak with its supreme and infallible authority, or else simply keeping silent. Finally he must recognize that the examples of an alleged fallibility in the Church's teaching authority in the current controversy have been adduced by journalists who are either wholly or partially uneducated in theological matters. And all these examples involve decisions which were either not *ex cathedra* at all or which have nothing whatever to do with pronouncements of the Church's teaching authority (as, for instance, alterations in the Church's marriage laws, on the question of cremation etc.). Now if a believing Catholic does inform himself to this extent, then, even in the atmosphere of tension which now prevails, and which is in part artificially stimulated, he will be able to remain calm and composed and to preserve an attitude of trust towards the Church.

V. The Significance of the Current Situation as Constituting a Representative Example

What a Catholic or a theologian is experiencing today in our question is not really anything absolutely novel. For developments of doctrine and [286] situations in which doctrinal developments such as the present one were still possible, even though the subsequent history could not be predicted with any clarity, have obviously existed again and again in the course of the Church's history. The new element in all this is simply the fact that such developments and situations arise and advance, or alternatively change, more rapidly nowadays, and so make a sharper and more urgent impression on the awareness of the individual within the brief span of his single lifetime; and further that this question affects the concrete life of an incalculably greater number of individuals, and affects it more directly than other dogmatic questions. Whatever the situation may have been over the last hundred years from the psychological point of view in the awareness of the average Catholic with regard to his attitude towards the Church, it is not true to suggest that the Catholic Church either has understood herself in the past, or understands herself now as a Church in which everything

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that is important is already clear from the outset, and already possessed as a matter of absolute certainty; or as a Church in which every fresh discovery of truth takes place solely and exclusively through the pronouncements of her supreme official teachers. The teaching authority in the Catholic Church, and above all in those cases in which it does not produce any definitorial pronouncement (and in many cases it is quite incapable of doing so) is an important and essential element for the discovery of truth and the development of doctrine in the Church. But it is not the sort of official body which acts in isolation and in every respect in total independence of other real elements in the Church, and so presides over this discovery of truth or development of doctrine in a totalitarian manner. Even the *ex cathedra* decisions of the popes or Councils have properly speaking always arisen, in some sense or other, as a final seal of approval accorded to a development which has been sustained by factors quite different from the official teaching body itself or the formal authority attached to this. The authority of the official teachers in the Church and the respect due to this do not require, therefore, that we who are in the Church shall act as though all theological views upheld in the Church consist simply in an obedient repetition of some declaration on the part of these official teachers. On any true understanding there is, even in the Catholic Church, an open 'system' in which the most varied factors (the 'instinct' of the faithful fresh, insights on the part of individual Christians and theologians, fresh situations that arise in a particular age, the new questions to which these give rise and much else besides) work together to throw fresh light upon the Church's own awareness of her faith, and to produce a development of doctrine.

[287] And in all this this open 'system' considered as a whole, in which the official teaching authority has its proper and necessary place, is not taken over and directed in any exclusive or totalitarian sense by this official teaching body in itself.

These are factors in the Church's understanding of her own nature which are properly speaking self-evident. Today we are experiencing them in a particular concrete instance in a way that is perhaps painful but that should not, on any ultimate view, have been unexpected to us. In such a situation the question arises of what attitude the individual Christian in the Catholic Church ought to adopt in his own conscience. For deciding this question there are indeed numerous principles, of which we have mentioned only a few in the present discussion. But in this particular concrete case, as also in the important decisions which he has to take in other areas of his life, these principles do not relieve the individual Christian of the responsibility of arriving at a sincere decision in his own personal life, or of his responsibility before God as an individual. The two factors of free responsibility even in the process of arriving at the truth on the one hand, and of paying due heed to the teaching authority of the Church on the other are united and combined in the process of arriving at this decision. And to unite the two factors in this way is a task that arises ever anew, one which cannot be achieved *solely* by speculating on abstract principles. According to the teaching of the Church herself there are certain cases in which the individual's own subjective conscience with regard to truth is blameless, either when it fails to lead him to the Church and her defined doctrine or even when it leads him out of her. The question with which we are here concerned, however is certainly not, objectively speaking, a case in which anything of this kind necessarily must take place.

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[288]

13

THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF TIME

In the considerations which I propose to put forward here I shall not be taking as my starting-point the problems of modern physics, non-Euclidian geometry, the fundamentals of the theory of aggregates, or the natural philosophy developed on the basis of all this, because this cannot justly be demanded of theology as a scientific discipline. Nevertheless this is regrettable. For in Catholic theology, which in this respect differs from several tendencies in Protestant theology, the opinion cannot *a priori* be upheld that, quite apart from the methodological differences between his discipline and that of the natural scientist, the actual area of subject-matter which he has to investigate is so different from that field of reality with which the natural scientist has to deal that from the outset there are no points of contact between them, and therefore no possibilities of conflict either. Nevertheless this restriction, regrettable though it may be, is rendered increasingly inevitable by the fact that the pluralism which exists among the contemporary sciences is too great for any *one* mind any longer to achieve an overall synthesis. At the same time this contemporary situation itself in turn creates problems which did not exist before, and so demand a completely new approach. These too, as far as possible, have to be solved. We may further justify the fact that we are not, in any primary sense, taking as our starting-point for the considerations presented here the sort of problems that are raised by the natural sciences[1] on the grounds that according to its own demonstrable understanding [289] of itself theology is a science which is concerned with the interpretation of human existence, a field which is existentially and ontologically prior to man's interpretation of himself at the level of the natural sciences. For this reason theology can and should pursue its own tasks without having to wait for the findings of the natural sciences as the necessary prior condition enabling it to achieve what is proper to itself.[2] Precisely in virtue of the account which his science gives of its own nature the theologian must, after all, enter into dialogue with the natural scientist, and at the same time in doing so retain the right to state his findings without having first studied the findings of natural science, and before the natural scientist himself has pronounced upon these. He can then leave it to the dialogue itself to achieve the further developments necessary, developments which in fact have not already been anticipated by what the theologian himself asserts in the sphere of his own interpretation of his faith and his theology.

The Christian believer and his theology are in the highest degree concerned with the concept of time. Whatever may be meant by this in more precise terms, Christian dogma recognizes the creation of the world as having a temporal 'beginning', and rejects the

[1] Hence we cannot here enter any more closely into the problems of space and time entailed in the scientific theorizing of the natural scientists. Thus a bibliography may be sufficient on this point: See M. Schlick, Raum und Zeit in der gegenwartigen Physik (Berlin, 4th ed., 1922); H. Reichenbach, Die Philosophie der Raum-Zeit-Lehre (Berlin, 1928); A. Wenzl, 'Das Paradoxon der Relativierung der Zeit in der Relativitätstheorie', *Forschung und Fortschritt* (1958); G. Frey, 'Der Zeitbegriff in den Naturwissenschaften', *Stadium generale* 14 (1961); P. Mittelstaedt, *Philosophische Probleme der modernen Physik* (Mannheizn, 1963); *Die Problematik von Raum und Zeit* = Naturwissenschaft und Theologie 6 (Freiburg, 1964); R. W. Meyer, ed., *Das Zeit-problem im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bern, 1964); W. Büchel, *Philosophische Probleme der Physik* (Freiburg, 1965); H. Weyl, *Philosophie der Mathematik und Naturwissenschaft* (Munich, 1966); C. F. von Weizsäcker, *Die Tragweite der Wissenschaf*t I (Stuttgart, 2nd ed., 1966); H. Sachsse, *Naturerkenntnis und Wirklichkeit* (Braunschweig, 1967); A. Koyré, *Von der geschlossenen Welt zum endlichen Universum* (Frankfurt, 1969).

[2] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Science as a "Confession"?', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 385-400.

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doctrine of a 'world that has already existed from eternity' as a heresy.[3] It recognizes a *history* of salvation and perdition which is unique and linear in its advance, and rejects the 'eternal return of all things'. This Christian dogma recognizes certain absolutely unique events occurring at particular points in space and time in saving history, and looks for the end of all history. It ascribes to the human existence of the individual a personal history developed in a freedom which does not give the subject concerned the power to go back over his course at will, or the possibility of limitless revisions, but consists rather in the forging of that which is definitive, that in which time as a process will be raised to its definitive outcome, that which is called the [290] 'eternity' of man in salvation or perdition.[4] The doctrine of the faith includes the concept of the 'fulness of time', the biblical concept of the *kairos*, the possibility, appointed and given once and for all, for man of his freedom to achieve definitive salvation. It includes the concept of the 'ε0ϕ α#παχ'[5] i.e. the event which, taking place at a particular point in time, remains as an unsurpassable existential modality for all times. Faith is aware of the flux of time as an enslaving power over man, from which he is liberated by the grace of God in Christ. And it recognizes saving time, in which that can take place which endures blessedly in force for ever.

There is the theological concept of hope, which is act *and* expectation both in one, reaching out into a time that lies open before man, and which he can never seize upon or bring under his control by his own autonomous planning. Theology considers the concept of divine providence through which God is not merely the sole Lord of time and history, but also guarantees that time shall be shaped and directed in a way that is ultimately meaningful for history, and does not allow this to be fragmented and so to sink into a formless succession of particles of time following one upon the other. In the doctrine of the Incarnation of the divine Logos Christian dogma apprehends the tremendous fact that time becomes, in a true sense, predicated of God who is 'in himself' immutable, God who assumes and undergoes a personal history of his own in time, and 'in the world' itself. In the concept of the development of revelation and dogma as history an encounter is achieved between truth and time, and it becomes clear that time is not merely a specification of physical and material reality, but also one that applies to the spirit as such. Among the insights of the Church's dogmatic teaching is included the truth that the ultimate essence and outcome of the history of *nature* and of the world itself are specified by the history of man's achievement of salvation or perdition in freedom. And from this the further truth emerges that the time inherent in material reality is not, in the last analysis, the power which dominates human history, but on the contrary remains one particular and subordinate element in the time that belongs to personal freedom. Ultimately speaking, therefore, it is the former of these that must be specified by the latter and not *vice versa*. The New Testament uses a whole range of concepts which include both purely temporal aspects and at the same time [291] a theological content and weight: αι0ω&ν, αι0ω&νιοφ, η|9με/ρα, ω|#ρα, καιρο&φ (ε1σξατοφ), τα τε/λη, ση/μερον, ε0νεστω~τα-με/λλοντα θα&νατοφ, ε0φα&παχ, νυ=ν, παραυτι//κα, παραυτα_, ε0ρνε/σθαι, ϕθορα&, ε0κθε/φ, α)να&μνησιφ, etc. Thereby it provides an immediate basis for a theology of time. Theology reflects (or should do so!) upon the concept of *that* 'simultaneity' in virtue of which the believer achieves immediate contact with the saving event of the 'past' in 'anamnesis'. Theology recognizes the sacraments as events of grace having the character of 'anamnesis' and at the same time anticipating the future. It is

[3] A brief and precise explanation of this point is to be found in W. Kern, 'Zur theologischen Auslegung des Schöpfungsglaubens', *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 464-546, esp. 519-529 (bibliog.).
[4] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Comfort of Time', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 141-157; idem, 'Immanent and Transcendent Consummation of the World', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), 260-273.
[5] cf. A. Winter, #Απαχ ε0φα&παχ *im Hebräerbrief* (Dissertation, Rome, 1960).

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clear, therefore, that the dogmatic teaching of Christianity must concern itself particularly with the concept of time.

Now this conclusion contrasts strangely with the fact that there is hardly any 'theology of time' in the established theology of the seminaries, and therefore (as dependent upon this) in the average Catholic's conscious awareness of his faith. Of course some controversies have arisen in the history of dogma and theology which do relate to time. This applies for instance to the struggle against Gnosticism and against an Origenist doctrine of *apokatastasis*, and also the controversy of the Mediaeval schoolmen 'de aeternitate mundi', i.e. in more precise terms with regard to the possibility or impossibility of establishing the finitude of the temporal world by philosophical argument. But any systematically worked out doctrine of the nature of time has never been arrived at in the established theology of the Church. The statements about time which this contains have remained scattered throughout the particular theological treatises, ranging from the treatise on creation to that on eschatology. What is true with regard to any formal theology of history is also true with regard to a theology of time. It does not yet really exist, and even though here and there time is inevitably spoken of in the treatises which exist on particular topics, still even here the question is not for the most part entered into very deeply in this established theology. It assumes as self-evident a popular understanding of time, and when it does reflect upon it more precisely it does so with the aid of a Greek understanding of time which derives its primary orientation from the model of κι/νησιφ, in other words, in the last analysis, from the idea of changes of place. In the light of this we can understand that from the ancient conception of the world right down to the most recent times the idea of saving history has been worked out according to the model of changes of place. 'Heaven' does not *come to be* in time, but history is basically speaking presented as a movement (or return) taking place in a sphere within which certain specific and qualitatively different points can be discerned, each with a theological relevance of its own. This failure to reflect upon the real nature [292] of time is also shown, for instance, by the fact that the actual word 'time' (tempus) only arises as a specific topic in the official doctrinal documents of the Church in contexts in which the beginning of the world through creation is being spoken of.

In arriving at this conclusion we do not of course intend to dispute the fact that a far more profound and radical Christian understanding of time evinces itself in many theologians ranging from Irenaeus and Augustine[6] to Pascal and Kirkegaard,[7] or that the understanding of time commonly accepted among Christians, even though insufficiently reflected upon, has still had a considerable influence upon that conception of time which is characteristic of modern philosophy.

This omission, strange and surprising though it is, has reasons of its own which are readily understandable. Everyone imagines that he knows what time is as constituted by past, present and future, and in a certain sense is justified in this even though for the most part he is overlooking the principle that that which has been 'known all along' is, and must continue to be, that which constantly calls for fresh questioning. And hence theology too seems able to manage with this awareness of time which is prior to any ontological speculation upon it. For the message of faith is intended to be intelligible to all. And even when theology draws upon, or attempts to draw upon, the specialist concepts of philosophy it does not in its turn produce

[6] On this cf. U. Duchrow, 'Der sogenannte psychologische Zeitbegriff Augustins im Verhältnis zur physikalischen und geschichtlichen Zeit', *ZTK* 63 (1966), pp. 267-288.

[7] The central discussion of this concept of time, which is also particularly important for the considerations on simultaneity already mentioned above, is to be found in S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophische Brocken* (Vol. so of the German edition) (Düsseldorf, 1952), esp. pp. 7-107; in this connection cf. also idem, *Der Augenblick* (Jena, 2nd ed., 1909); *idem*, *Abschliessende unwissenschafitlche Nachschrift* (Vol 16 of the German edition) (Düsseldorf, 1957/58); *idem*, *Einübung im Christentum* (Vol 26 of the German edition) (Düsseldorf, 1951).

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any official doctrinal interpretations of these, but uses them on its own account and at its own risk in its proper field, and in so doing often fails to achieve any unanimity in the use of such concepts.

Hence it is perhaps appropriate to show by means of a few examples -more are not possible – how theology must, in order to cope with its own problems, concern itself with achieving a deeper understanding of the concept of time, and how in the course of its own enquiry it encounters problems which require it to take into account certain relevant factors which fall outside its own boundaries. From these few modest preliminary [293] soundings we shall pass on somewhat arbitrarily and abruptly, because nothing else is possible here.[8]

I

The dogmatic teaching of the Church lays down that the world is not 'eternal', but has been created in time and with time, and that it has a 'beginning'. Here we must dispense with any more detailed investigation of the 'theological qualification' attached to this statement, though it is consistently qualified, at least in the manuals of Catholic dogma, as '*de fide divina et catholica definita*' (Reference being made here to D 428, 501-503; 1783). Let us simply notice in passing that nowadays a small question mark is here and there appended to this qualification.[9] Insofar as any dispute arises in the established theology with regard to this statement, it is at most concerned with the question of whether it constitutes merely a statement of revelation or also has the force of a statement of the findings of 'natural' philosophy. Here we may adduce Thomas as an example of the first position, and Bonaventure as an example of the second. Possibly it may be asked in more precise terms here whether with regard to this point of controversy still further distinctions are offered to show precisely *which* finite and created reality is being treated of in each particular case. But even if we set aside this controversial point, we must still ask whether the actual *meaning* of the dogma itself is unambiguously clear. Certainly no further explanation of a binding character has been put forward by the official Church as the outcome of any conscious investigation of the actual dogma itself. But can it be said that its meaning is clear? What does it mean to say that the world has a 'beginning', that real time is 'finite' in respect of its extension back into the past, and therefore that the world is not 'eternal', not existing from all eternity? Theology itself in fact explains that we should not interpret this statement as though we could, by tracing [294] the course of time backwards, arrive at some point at which the world no longer existed, as though space and time in the material sense were still present, though empty, so that only God still existed. Established theology itself states the world as a whole cannot be conceived of in such a way that it would be reasonable to ask whether it could have existed either 'earlier' or 'later', because, as applied to the material world, there is not and cannot be in the concrete any 'earlier' or 'later' at all. And such a question derives merely from the illusion of the 'transcendental phantasy' which fails to understand that the world actually *has* time as the specification of itself, but as a whole does not in turn exist *in*

[8] The considerations put forward here are not of themselves to be thought of as constituting a systematic plan for a theology of time of this kind. In such a theology we should probably also have to take into consideration and develop more strongly our own evaluation of the way in which the concept of time has been discussed among philosophers ever since the introduction of the Kantian antinomies. But, as the title of this study shows, it is the prior conditions for, and also the insoluble difficulties encountered by, such a theology of time that we are seeking to make apparent here. For such a theology must have an awareness of these if it is to pursue its proper task in an intelligent way. In general reference may be made to the article, 'Zeit, Zeitlichkeit' I-V, *LTK* X (and ed. Freiburg, 1965) 1324-1334 (Bibliog.).

[9] cf. W. Kern, *op. cit.*, p. 524.

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time.

But what is finite time as material, seeing that it cannot in its turn be expressed in time, because otherwise it would once more have its place in a material time? Can the *finitude* of the totality of time be real in any other way than in virtue of the fact that it is conceived of as (and actually is) a part of a wider extent of time which is just as real as itself, something which, *ex supposito*, cannot be the case?

We might begin by imagining to ourselves what it would be like for us to set up a clock beside the world and proceeding at the same rate as it such that it would always be co-existent with the world (whether this always exists or not), and then say: now since the time which this clock tells is finite, so too the time of the world is finite. But this clock would either be a part of the world as such or not. In the first case, as a particular element of the world it could not tell us anything *more* about the temporality of the world as a whole than any other individual element in the world, namely that it itself exhibits a finite number of changes. But the idea that because of its continuous co-existence with the world the world itself too exhibits only a finite number of processes, and so has a finite time – this is an idea which we could not assume, but would rather have to have proved. But how?

In the second case the clock would be a world in itself. But in that case it would first have to be proved that two absolutely disparate worlds, having no real connection with one another, are conceivable at all, and, even assuming this, that the two absolutely disparate times belonging to them could, nevertheless, serve as measures of one another, and that a non-finite time could not be continuously co-existent with an absolutely disparate finite time.[10] But how are we to prove this without constantly [295] assuming what appears to be the case from the transcendental phantasy, namely that time is a unique and homogeneous medium, constantly present for all and for each, of the realities which must from the outset exist in it in order to exist at all? Are we to say that the statement, 'The world has a beginning' means 'If we count up the total number of states, real yet distinguishable from one another, in which the world and the elements belonging to it have existed up to now, we shall arrive at a finite sum total'? But a computation of this kind presupposes on the one hand that the individual states themselves, as constituting a numerical series, are subject to time and have a temporal extension (otherwise they could not constitute time), and on the other that they must not be thought of in turn as materially continuous with one another, but rather as temporal 'atoms' of the states or conditions through which the world passes such that they cannot materially speaking be broken down into any smaller units.[11] But is this assumption conceivable, and not rather a contradiction in itself? Why, for example, could not as much 'take place' in those particles of time considered as a specification of such computable states as in the totality of the time that is measured? Why is it assumed in this clarification of the meaning of the dogma that there is an absolute flow of time proceeding at a regular rate such that nothing can have any place in the units of it except precisely these states, any one of which, so it is alleged, is materially different from the rest. To put it in other terms, if the statement that material time is finite is to have any meaning, does it not presuppose (at least in principle, even though it may not be something that we ourselves can realize) that time is measureable, that the units of time can be calculated, and in that case does not the question

[10] For if it were possible, e.g. for a non-finite time permanently to co-exist with a finite one in such a way that one of the two time-series involved was unknown to us, then we still could not say whether that other was finite or infinite, and it would be of no avail to attempt to represent it to ourselves in terms of the one that we did know. The only assured assumption here, albeit one that we should have to prove, is that an infinite time-series can never be represented in terms of a finite one.

[11] For the idea of a primary unit of extension and a primary unit of time, the so-called time atom cf. e.g. P. Jordan, *Das Bild der modernen Physik* (Berlin, 1957), pp. 147 ff. On what follows cf. also what is said about the model proposed by K. E. v. Baer in H.-D. Bastian, *Theologie der Frage* (Munich, 1969), pp. 52 ff.

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necessarily impose itself of how any such measurability, even if it is only a measurability in principle, is to be conceived of? Is the computability of the events related, at least in principle, to actual occurrences such that these are ultimately accessible at all to the empirical methods of the natural sciences, or is the sort of finitude that is signified here one which is, so far as these empirical methods are concerned, capable of being divided *ad infinitum* into ever further elements, whether hypothetical or actually [296] observed, so that in principle such an enumeration never comes to an end and hence cannot of itself tell us anything with regard to the finitude or infinity of what *it precisely* is able to enumerate.[12] But in that case what does the finitude of that which is in principle incapable of being calculated or measured signify? Does it still have anything to do with time, or is it simply concomitant with the fact that everything belonging to the world without exception is dependent upon God? In other words is the finitude of the time that belongs to the world not after all merely another term for that reality which, in other contexts or on other approaches, is called contingency? To express the question in yet another way: time is experienced as a mutual relationship of the constituents of the world to one another precisely so long as we are considering the intrinsic temporality of the individual, and not time as an external factor, the 'space-time' dimension and the measure of time as a starting-point for every understanding of time.[13] Does it have any essential meaning to transpose this relationship from the constituents of the world as a totality to the totality itself, and, as is or seems to be the practice in dogmatic teaching, to express finite time as applicable to the world as a whole?

It seems that material time, that is time as constituted by a temporal interval between two entities, can only exist if between the two lies a temporal process of development in virtue of which they are both connected, and at the same time held apart from one another. How are we to apply time as thus conceived of to the world as such and in its totality? On this showing, then, is the dogmatic teaching saying anything more than precisely that the world consists of realities which have a temporal relationship *between one another?* But who has ever seriously disputed this? And is this all which the dogmatic teaching is intended to express? Before we go any further in enquiring into the meaning of the dogmatic teaching we must pause to introduce a certain methodological consideration.

In principle it neither can nor should be disputed that a *de fide* pronouncement can contain implications which only become clear in a confrontation with those secular findings and hypotheses which are arrived [297] at, and objections which are raised, at a later stage, so that then it becomes necessary to maintain the pronouncements against the difficulties that arise in this way. Certainly, therefore, we must be cautious in invoking a certain hermeneutic consideration which is often too hastily applied today, namely the suggestion that at the time when a given dogmatic statement was formulated such and such factors had not yet been realized, had not been conceived of, and could not be taken into account. In other words the dogmatic pronouncement concerned could not have expressed anything about them.[14]

But in the concrete instance with which we are concerned we must, after all, surely lay down the following principle: the dogmatic statement concerning the temporal nature of the world must always, and from the outset, be read and understood in the context in which it is enunciated, in the context of a *veritas salutaris* – in other words of a saving statement ('evangelium') addressed to men and of an appeal to their free decision ('law') to accept

[12] On the problem of the continuum referred to here cf. H. Weyl, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-90.

[13] For a more searching philosophical discussion of the distinctions in the concept of time indicated here reference may be made to the basic studies in H. Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris, 1889); E. Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeibewusstseins* (Halle, 1928); M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Halle, 1927).

[14] cf. K. Rahner and K. Lehmann, 'Kerygma und Dogma', *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 622-707, esp. 686-703; P. Schoonenberg (ed.), *Die Interpretation des Dogmas* (Düsseldorf, 1969).

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'irrevocably' the definitive salvation in a definitive exercise of freedom. Only so long as the statement regarding the temporal nature of the world is consistently and strictly read in this context do we escape the following dilemma: either the statement concerned is intended to be one which merely describes a 'phenomenon' of popular experience, but which nevertheless neither can be nor in fact is an object of revelation (the temporality of worldly things as a phenomenon is in fact something different from the temporality of the world) *or* it is intended to be a statement the meaning of which can only be clarified and authenticated by means of the resources of contemporary natural science with its still unresolved problems, something which, in terms of theological method, would, nevertheless, be impossible to carry out. Thus it appears that the considerations put forward so far with regard to the meaning of the dogmatic pronouncement on the temporal finitude of the world, in virtue of the insoluble difficulties[15] into which they have led us, can justifiably be understood as a demand to consider this general context within which the dogmatic statement itself is to be read, and in the light of which its dogmatically binding meaning is to be determined.

[298]

II

In the light of all this we are now in a position to fix a starting-point (and at the same time to anticipate the conclusion) to state the following: the dogmatic pronouncement regarding the created nature of the world in and with time (= the dogmas of the Fourth Lateran and the First Vatican Councils) is intended to express the following: Man is an element in the world in virtue of the unity of spirit and matter[16] in him, and the factors entailed by this, the resurrection of the flesh and the consummation of the world in the 'new heaven and the new earth'.[17] Now because of this, and in spite of the limitations it implies, the world must be such that man can be that which he is: a being endowed with a freedom to be exercised in time and history which attains to the definitive finality of God in the definitive finality of its own free decision.

In what follows this statement will be developed in two parts: (a) It tells us something about a qualified temporality inherent in man which can be experienced and verified directly from the way in which he lives; (b) secondly it introduces a (discreet) extrapolation of this temporal factor, applying it to the world as a whole.

(a) With regard to the first part of this statement it is of course impossible here to develop at any length either a theological anthropology in general or a theology of history and freedom in particular. Here too we must exclude from the outset the question of whether there is a kind of time which is already in force and being directed irreversibly forward as a necessity of nature even at the sub-human level – especially in organic things (or in virtue of the law of entropy which prevails throughout the cosmos as a whole), in other words whether even independently of man there is a process of change which unfolds in a linear development and can only unfold in this way.[18] For so long as we do not ascribe any false individuality to the various types of organism and, in accordance with this, are cautious in the value we attach to death in their case, it would perhaps be conceivable to interpret the history of living things as a series of expansions and contractions (on the analogy of a pulsating

[15] On the insoluble problems which arise in connection with the concept of time cf. the first antinomy of the pure reason in I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (London, 1929).
[16] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Unity of Spirit and Matter in the Christian Understanding of Faith', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 153-177.
[17] cf. K. Rahner, 'The Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the "New Earth" ', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1973), pp. 260-273.
[18] We may compare, e.g. the main principles of thermo-dynamics.

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world),[19] [299] and so to doubt whether the history of living things follows a linear course and to ask ourselves whether the real 'death' in organic matter does not consist in the formation of a new germ or seed, in other words a return to the point of departure. On this view that which we regard as death in this sphere would be only a relatively secondary episode in the transformation of matter.

It will not even be said that this theory (which, by a process of extrapolation, we would then go on to apply to the world as a whole) is the sole possible starting-point for achieving an understanding of the statement regarding the temporal creation of the world. Certainly in terms of theology it would be possible to formulate another and different starting-point.[20] We could for instance take the theology of saving history, the covenant, the Incarnation etc. in this sense. Here, however, we prefer to take as our starting-point the theory we have formulated above, because on the one hand it has the advantage of being closer to the experience of the individual, and on the other the alternative theories which we might use as a starting-point (which are in any case connected with ours, and among themselves) probably do not yield any more help for achieving an understanding of what is meant by the statement that the creation took place in time and had a beginning than that which we can achieve on our theory. Finally it may be observed that by adopting this theory as our starting-point we can bypass the problem of biblical hermeneutics, how in more precise terms we should interpret the 'not yet' sayings of scripture as such (Gen 1:1; 2-4;Ps 90:2; 102:26; Prov 8:22-30; Mt 13:35; 25:34; Lk 11:50; Jn 17:5, 24; Eph 1:4; Heb 4:3), the problem, in other words, of how far we can interpret them as making an objective statement about the finite time of the world by pointing to an empty void in space and time 'prior to' the existence of the world, or how far they present a conceptual pattern for expressing the radical dependence of the world upon God regardless of whether or not it did actually exist 'all along'.

In any case however man experiences himself as a historical being endowed with responsibility and freedom in such a way that he exists in a time the very meaning of which involves a clear and irreversible forward orientation, and which cannot be conceived of as capable of being reversed in the opposite direction without thereby denying the very nature of man as deciding what his final and definitive state is to be. At least through his first free act and through his death man experiences this history of the exercise of his own freedom in time as finite, with definite limits in the past [300] and the future, and this has the effect of ruling out, so far as the personal history of the individual as such is concerned, any 'pre-existence' or any indeterminate prolongation of his life into the future. Here, in a theological consideration, there is no need to examine any more closely the question of how far these data of a theological anthropology are already given or could be discovered even independently of the supernatural order of grace in which man is called to receive God's self-bestowal, and independently also of the divine revelation in which this summons is interpreted. The one point upon which there can be no doubt is that these data belong intrinsically to man's understanding of himself at the Christian and theological level, and that is sufficient here, where we are concerned with the theological interpretation of a dogmatic statement (i.e. that concerning the temporal nature of the world). This man who experiences time as irreversible in this sense, with a beginning and end, within the history of his own freedom is aware of himself as a real element of the world *and at the same time*, in a manner unique in each particular case, as the totality of the world. In this awareness of his there is a dialectical unity in which the two elements involved are mutually interconnected. In his physical side he experiences himself as a partial element of the world and of the history of nature, and in the radical unity of his nature as constituted by spirit and matter he cannot

[19] cf. W. Büchel, 'Das pulsierende Universum', *StdZ* 177 (1966), pp. 119-126.
[20] cf. W. Kern, *op. cit*.

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conceive that his history as a free being, considered as something that takes place in the material world as subject to time, is something enacted, as it were, on a static stage, and something that is brought to an end once the historical person himself and the effects of this history of his make their exit from this world. On a Christian view the history of nature can, in the last analysis, be understood only as an element in the history of the free spirit in its dialogue with God who bestows himself in grace, and hence the material time of the world is to be conceived of as an element in the material time of this history of the free spirit.

All this still does not do much to throw light upon the intrinsic nature of this time that belongs to the world, because in fact, while we should have a right understanding of the real distinction between spirit and matter, the distinction itself cannot be eliminated. But surely what has been achieved here is a general orientation for our understanding of the time factor in the world, which in principle must never be overlooked: this temporal factor must never be interpreted in such a way as to leave no room in it for the time that is intrinsic to the personal spirit with its beginning and end. As has been said, what we are demanding here is not so self-explanatory when we consider that materiality is an element that [301] is intrinsic to the concrete subject of this history of freedom, and is in part affected by it. And this materiality is also an element in the material world which cannot be isolated from the world. A further point is that the subject of freedom considered as a historical process in this sense cannot be interpreted as a *mere* constitutive element in the world. As '*anima quodammodo omnia*' it has a real-onto-logical relationship to the world as a totality, and could not be considered to have achieved its due fulness so long as the fulness of this relationship itself had not yet been achieved, as would be the case if the world itself were conceived of as still in a state of openness and becoming in a time that ran onwards into the indefinite future.

(b) Taking these as our prior assumptions, in the second part of our statement we shall now go on to say that the world and its modes of existence must be conceived of in such a way that they are *capable* of being the sphere within which precisely *this* history of the free person in time can take place, and at the same time an intrinsic element in that history. This is a cautious and almost negative assertion: the world does not have to be such that, while still remaining an intrinsic element in this history, it so to say cuts off its temporal span at the beginning and end of it. The positive element in what we are saying about the mode of existence proper to the world, to the extent that it is a real element which is different in relation to the spirit as such, is precisely *whether* it is possible to make some positive statement about something which is, initially, still completely open. *In the last analysis*, moreover, this question can actually remain open because what we are concerned with is the *veritas salutaris* of man in his freedom as a finite historical being, and properly speaking nothing else than this, provided only that we recognize that this truth in itself already involves some statement about the world to which man belongs, while recognizing also that it is only with difficulty that we can arrive at any clear reflection upon these implications contained in the *veritas salutaris*. But if despite this fact the attempt is to be made, and we are to try to apply the positive content in this negative statement, then we may perhaps say the following: any positive statement about an 'everlasting' world with a limitless range of specifications, is inconceivable from the outset if the statement in question relates to the world precisely *as* the environment in which a finite mode of freedom exists, and the concomitant conditions of this. For this is not the sort of world with which a finite freedom can be involved. It must be admitted that even when we have said this, it still remains obscure what is meant in positive terms by a negation of this sort ('a world with many, but not limitless, specifications'). But it must [302] be observed that at any rate in the case of an existing world which constitutes the material of finite freedom by the limited number of specifications to which it is open, we do not *have* to suppose that this world is the product of an infinite number of temporal states following one upon another in a limitless series in time. Hence it is at least superfluous to

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postulate an endless series of this kind. On this basis a finitude of this present world can be asserted and maintained as at any rate a more intelligible interpretation of the content of the dogma regarding the temporal finitude of the world. Moreover the significance of this can be understood in its implications for the religious fulfilment of human living even though it may not be quite clear to us what finitude and infinity are intended to signify when these two concepts are related solely to the totality of the material time inherent in the world as a single whole.

To express the point in different terms: we can and must positively assert that the time of the world is finite (even when it is not clear what this implies or does not imply) if, and to the extent that, we regard the time belonging to the world as the material for the finite freedom of man as related to the totality of the world. For in that case to postulate an infinitude of the world's time would imply that it was of such a kind that in principle it could not be the material of man's finite freedom in this sense. Now even if we accept that the world's time does in fact constitute one element in the time which creaturely freedom involves in this way, we might still raise the further question of precisely *how* this world's time is constituted 'in itself' and taken in isolation,[21] that is conceiving of it in abstraction from this connection which it has with man's finite freedom. But surely the reason why it is so difficult to make any statement on this point is that despite all the objectivity we may achieve in our knowledge of the physical world, and despite the fact that we are able to measure the time belonging to this, even this time is in real fact only experienced within the experience of the concrete individual as rational and spiritual, and as a being endowed with freedom even in the act of formulating his theory about the time of the world. In such an act the individual is indeed concerning himself with a quality inherent in objective experience. But at the same time this same quality is inherent also in the subjective fact of the individual himself even though at the same time it does go beyond this. Now in these circumstances it is in principle never possible to isolate this quality completely from the subjective aspects, because the very act of reflecting upon it is itself in turn subject to the same conditions and the [303] quality being reflected upon is inherent in this act itself. It is this, in fact, that gives rise to all the representations of the transcendental phantasy, representations which we can recognize negatively as such, but which we cannot positively eliminate. What the term 'representation' here is intended to stand for is not that which is false, but rather that kind of reality which has both an objective and a subjective side. Now while it does not fall within the purview of the natural sciences to offer a critique of transcendental 'representation' in this sense, still transcendental 'representation' is a factor with which they have to work. And in view of this it can surely be said that whereas in investigating any given temporal element the natural sciences must always seek for that which came before it, the same does not apply to theology (or metaphysics). For these disciplines must assert that time is finite in the sense we have defined. And yet this does not imply any contradiction between the two different approaches. For time is not *ipso facto* constituted as infinite merely by the fact that any number of material temporal elements which we can discover is in principle capable of continuous further increase. And this in itself is sufficient to justify the statement we have just made.[22]

[21] cf. I. Kant, *op. cit.*

[22] Without analysing any further here what, on this showing, is the meaning of time as such (on this cf. also what follows) reference may simply be made to the fact that the methods used in the natural sciences are consistently formulated in such a way as to lead to an understanding of the functional connections between individual facts, But the dimension in which these facts are manifested taken as a totality cannot itself in turn be an object of investigation by these same methods of natural science. And since the space-time world considered as a totality is not an object which is empirically discoverable natural science cannot say anything either with regard to the possible infinitude of this totality.

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III

To the problems which we have presented up to this point, and which derive solely from the dogmatic teaching that the world was created in time, certain further considerations must be appended, which are intended to broaden the subject of investigation a little further.

(a) For the theologian it is the time that belongs to saving history that is primary.[23] The time of saving history means the history of personal freedom as engaged in dialogue with the God of grace in his act of self-bestowal at both the individual and the collective levels. When we say [304] that *this* time is primary we mean that it provides a standard of measurement in the light of which, so far as the theologian is concerned, all other time has to be considered, and that too in such a way that the 'content' of this kind of time also specifies the modality of time as such. Now this statement has constituted the heuristic norm in the considerations we have offered up to this point, and we have been compelled to adopt it by reason of the insoluble difficulties which we encounter in the question of what in more precise terms the dogmatic statement that the creation took place in time really means. Of course it would be possible to adduce further considerations in support of this statement. We might, for example, advert to the question of *how*, on this showing, we could conceive of the revelation of this dogma in the concrete. And in the course of answering this question we might show that it can be understood as an implication of God's self-bestowal precisely as conceived of in terms of salvation and revelation (and that it cannot be understood in any other sense). For in this self-bestowal of God salvation and revelation, and man's own ultimate understanding of himself, are achieved all in one.

(b) Any extrapolations in which we transfer our conceptions of this kind of time (i.e. the time belonging to saving history) and the special qualities belonging to it to the time in which material events purely as such run their course, can only be undertaken with the greatest caution and with a limited degree of success. This latter point is of course something that we experience and recognize in our everyday lives and work in the field of natural science. But what we establish in this is temporal development and temporal processes as distinct from one another, time as it appears to be and not as it is of its essence. What time is 'in itself' is no more directly ascertainable in this experience than the existence of an existing thing is *ipso facto* ascertainable in its essence in virtue of the fact that we constantly have to do with existing things. In the same way too we do not, ontologically speaking, *ipso facto* know what matter is in its essence merely in virtue of the fact that we constantly have to do with material things. But strange though it may appear at first sight, we can draw upon our experience of the spirit (as being in possession of itself) so as to state in negative terms what matter is, namely precisely that kind of being which is not given over to itself (and this negative character is inherent not merely in our knowledge but in matter itself as a specification of this), and in just the same way the only way in which we can determine what physical time is as such is in negative terms and from our knowledge of that time which belongs to the free operation of the spirit. And this negative character, considered as a negative inherent in the time of material [305] being, is precisely that negativity which prevents this time as such from being raised in itself to any definitive and final state and being brought to an end in this. In the light of this we are here once more justified in principle in approaching the matter with the same caution which we have adopted in dealing with the question of whether we ought to postulate a finite and calculable series of states extending backwards into the past beyond physical time (whether considered from the standpoint of physics, philosophy or dogmatic

[23] A bibliography on this point has been compiled by W. Kern, op. cit., n. 40; cf. also the article, 'Zeit III, IV', *LTK* X (2nd ed., Freiburg, 1965), 1329-1334.

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theology), or whether there is no necessity for this. Just as matter as such is not endowed with self-awareness and freedom, and so not 'in confrontation with' itself so as to be capable of achieving it own definitive consummation, so in the same way physical time is in itself 'negative' in the sense of being incapable of any definitive consummation. Considered as 'potentiality' in this sense it is probably unlimited in either direction, past or present. As such then it does not begin or end at any specific points. The only sense in which any beginning or end can be ascribed to it is in virtue of the fact that it constitutes an element in the time inherent in the history of personal freedom, and to that extent must have a beginning and ending of this kind within this. And surely this phrase 'to that extent' marks the limits beyond which we cannot go.

(c) It must clearly be recognized that exactly the same relationship prevails between a secular and theological understanding of time as between nature in itself and nature as *de facto* endowed with grace, and between a philosophical and secular self-understanding on the one hand, and revelation and theology on the other. Manifestly time is not a modality which is present in a univocal sense everywhere where anything takes place, but rather a modality[24] which admits of intrinsic variations, and hence is analogously applied to the various realities of which it is predicated.[25] And this in itself is tantamount to saying that in principle, even though for the most part this fact is overlooked, all the problems entailed in correctly defining the relationship between nature and being that has been raised to a supernatural level must necessarily lead us back to the problem of time.

[306] It is no purely abstract or formal interest that prompts us, for example, to raise the question of whether even in a '*status naturae purae*' the free person would have been impelled towards an absolute and total decision determining his own final destiny by the same impetus which is inherent in every free act to the extent that it involves a decision regarding the self-offering of God in grace.[26] This instance too serves once again to show how cautious the theologian must be if he seeks to make any statement about natural time as such. For him the concept of *natura pura*, though peripheral, is a necessary one, yet one which as such can never be applied purely as a positive datum in its own right, because we can never go beyond the limits of an experience raised to a supernatural level. And just as this is true, so in the same way and in the same measure merely secular and natural time (even as this is applicable to personal freedom at the purely natural level) is likewise a peripheral concept. The opinion that man experienced it purely in itself could be an instance of that culpable blindness in which, even in the present order of grace, an attempt is made to understand 'nature' purely as it is in itself. That is one side to the question. On the other hand the following position is of course valid: it must be remembered that grace presupposes nature as the condition distinct from itself which nevertheless makes it possible for it to be itself and to maintain the distinction between itself and nature (even though, so far as our conscious understanding is concerned, it is not possible materially speaking to follow through this distinction completely to the end). And the case is exactly similar when we come to speak of a 'supernatural understanding of time', if we may so express it, and in doing so envisage *that* time which is achieved in free dialogue with God in his self-bestowal, and only in this. Here too we are presupposing a secular understanding of time and secular time itself

[24] cf. the article mentioned in n. 23, especially 1328 f.
[25] There is no need here for any further extensive metaphysical speculation or for entering into the Heideggerian understanding of time as set forth in *Sein und Zeit*; for it is also apparent that this is recognized in the theory of relativity, where time is no longer conceived of as an independent dimension. For here the world is understood as a four-dimensional space-time continuum, in which time is dependent upon the changes and developments of the continuum as a whole.
[26] For more precise details on this cf. K. Rahner, 'Erbsünde und Monogenismus' in K. H. Weger, *Theologie der Erbsünde*: Quaestiones Disputatae 44 (Freiburg, 1970).

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as the condition, distinct from supernatural time, which makes it possible of achievement. Just as grace wills the world to be worldly, and as such to increase, and positively establishes it in its own autonomy, so too the 'time of grace', as a unique kind of time that belongs to God's self-bestowal and derives its own ultimate quality from God's eternity positively wills the existence of a time of this world, i.e. a time that is open to decision, to hope, to the unforeseen, as the sphere for *that* activity which fashions the possible from the utopian and so time itself.

(d) Perhaps it may be appropriate in this series of improvised theological remarks on time to say something also with regard to the 'eternity' of [307] God.[27] In using this term, the established theology conceives initially of an existence extending without cessation in either direction, backwards and forwards alike, and it then goes on to improve this idea by invoking the Platonist ε1στι μο/νον (as distinct from η]ν, ε1στι και∴ μο/νον), or by the saying added by Boethius: *tota simul* and the *nunc stans*. It conceives of eternity, therefore, as the non-temporally-extended possession of existence.

It is therefore initially understood precisely according to the model of '*duratio*'. '*In cognitionem aeternitatis oportet nos venire per tempus*', says Thomas. And of course in a certain sense all this is obvious and inevitable. But it might perhaps be said: We can best arrive at an understanding of the eternity of God (albeit still always treating of this '*per modum negationis et eminentiae*' if we envisage *that* factor in *our own* (not simply physical!) time which is experienced in it, and perhaps is only experienced there precisely as it in fact is. For what we are treating of here is the event of God's *free* bestowal of *himself*, in which, namely he wills the final consummation of a love that is freely given, and which is prompted by no further reason beyond itself, and does not depend upon any empty possibility prior to itself. It is, after all, in this that man experiences his own 'eternity' as something more than simply a further prolongation of an entity, so that it has an indeterminate extension. And *this* is the point of departure for understanding the eternity of God *per modum negationis et eminentiae*.

(e) A brief word on the sort of time which belongs to God himself. Here we have the same theological problem as arises in connection with the 'immutability' of God. The very fact that the problem arises at the same point enables us immediately to understand this. With regard to the immutability, and therefore the non-temporal nature of God, however, Christian theology must not make the question simpler than it in fact is in view of the fact that the Logos became true man, and therefore entered into time. Christian theology must hold firm to the 'immutability 'and 'eternal' timelessness of God 'in themselves'. At the same time, however, it will have to say that God *himself*, in the otherness of the world, undergoes history, change, and so too time; the time of the world is his own [308] history. As the eternal he does not merely establish time by creating it, but freely assumes it as a specification of his own self. *Assumendo tempus creat tempus*, as we might say, adapting in this a saying of Augustine's. He thereby causes his own eternity to be the true content of time. He creates his own time in order to impart to it his own eternity as the radical effectiveness of his own love. Temporal becoming is not merely the distinguishing characteristic of that which is different from God, but that which, precisely as different from God in this way, and permanently maintaining itself as different, can become, and has become the distinguishing seal of God himself. Ultimately speaking this is possible because the difference between creaturely time

[27] On this and on the section which follows cf. K. Rahner, 'Theos in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 79-148; *idem*, 'Gott', LTK IV (2nd ed., 1960), 1080-1087; *idem*, 'Gotteslehre', *ibid*., 1119-1124; *idem*, 'Observations on the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 127-145. M. Löhrer, 'Dogmatische Bemerkungen zur Frage der Eigenschaften und Verhaltensweisen Gottes', *Mysterium* Salutis II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 291-315.

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and the eternity of God removes time from eternity but not, properly speaking, eternity from time. For if God himself causes the difference he sets that which he has established apart from himself, but not himself apart from that which he has established. Being different from eternity is a predicate of a time that has been established. Eternity as predicated of the God who establishes time implies, however, in the fullest sense, the temporal as an element in itself. And hence, in assuming it as his own time, he can be both he who establishes it and he who assumes what he has established.

(f) It is because time – from the viewpoint of God and man alike – is first and last the modality of the loving freedom exercised in God's act of self-bestowal, that there is the sort of time that is *kairos*, a unique and privileged time, a 'once and for all now' and an 'only now and not at any other time', a fulness of the times etc. It is because time is ultimately constituted by God's act of self-bestowal on that which is other to himself, in other words because ultimately speaking this is one act and takes place once and for all, that it is precisely not the case that everything is possible at any time, or that time is the empty sphere in which anything and everything can be fitted in and moved from point to point. Time rather is the modality of this one event, such that it is only in the achievement of this that it itself comes to be. The neutral homogeneity of physical time is, insofar as it exists at all, merely the condition making it possible for the freedom of love to manifest itself as free love in the gift of God and its acceptance. For God is the love that is unconditioned, and this physical time constitutes a temporal sphere within which this free love can take place 'here and now' even though it might also have taken place 'there and then'.

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[309]

14

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE MOMENT OF DEATH

It is evident that Christian theology recognizes dying and death as one of the basic themes of its own message, and has to proclaim the message of the death of Christ, the death that takes place at the beginning of saving history, the death of man, the first and second deaths, the life of God that overcomes death, and the celebration of the death of Christ in the Church's cult. But even abstracting from this, we must recognize that a new situation has arisen in contemporary thought which has a bearing on this question. It is a situation of radical pluralism among the sciences, one in which the problems, methods, and findings in each particular science are so wide-ranging and so different among themselves that no-one who is not a specialist in the particular science concerned can any longer achieve an overall view of it. In this situation, then, as it exists today, it is quite essential that there should be discussion and dialogue among the sciences themselves, including philosophy and theology, on this question also. They must conduct such a dialogue if the life of the individual and the scientist is not to be reduced to hopelessness, and in fact if the individual science is not itself to suffer as a result of being isolated from the other sciences. The current question of the limits of a doctor's duty to preserve life as it arises in the study of medicine is certainly a question of this kind, which needs to be treated of at the interdisciplinary level. There can be no doubt that this question is of concern not only to the doctor, not only to the jurist, but to the theologian and moralist as well. For the care which needs to be taken in preserving life, and the limits to be attached to this, refer not merely to a procedure carried out solely in the biological sphere as such, but have a significance for man as a whole. Now this is of concern to the theologian also, hence he cannot pass over this question as though it were irrelevant.

Now it can be said with perfect justice that on a question of this kind it is only at the end that the theologian can be given a hearing, because in [310] finding the answer to this question so many biological, medical, and even juridical factors have first to be taken into account, factors in which the theologian is in no sense competent, and which he simply has to take cognizance of as the findings of other sciences. But we can also say that these *a posteriori* sciences themselves in turn have *a priori* perspectives and premisses of their own, albeit for the most part unconscious, and also that they have need of principles of this kind in order that from the findings of these departmental sciences norms can be arrived at applicable to human activity as such and considered as a single whole. The philosopher, and the theologian inasmuch as he works as a philosopher, giving the philosophical interpretation of existence a still more radical dimension, may number himself among those who are competent to deal with these prior assumptions, and in view of this it is surely justifiable once more for the theologian to open the discussion. Admittedly in doing so he must be aware that in the question which is here being treated of it is only when his general considerations have been supplemented by contributions from the other sciences and their findings that they can become concrete norms for human action.

From the standpoint from which the theologian views this question of the limits of the doctor's duty to maintain life, the question of precisely *when* the death of the patient has supervened and how it can be recognized surely takes pride of place even though there may be other questions too which need to be considered from the point of view of morals and theology. Here, however, we shall not be entering into these other questions. For as a matter of principle and in the abstract we can certainly say this much: the doctor can relinquish his efforts only when the individual is dead, and not before. And this remains true even though in

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hopeless cases where death is inevitable but has not yet supervened, many further questions do arise as to the circumstances in which, and the degree of intensity with which the doctor must still continue to strive to prolong such lives as these, or alternatively at what point he can relinquish this struggle while still doing everything possible for the individual concerned in the way of ordinary care. But abstracting from these cases, and the special problems they raise in the concrete, the axiom we have just mentioned, namely that the doctor should only relinquish his efforts when the patient is dead, seems to be a truism which is self-evident and does not help the doctor in arriving at a moral judgement about his work. But the matter is not so simple as this. For today the question of when someone dies in his human nature is much more difficult to answer than in former times. For the sake of clarity attention must first be drawn to the fact that dying [311] and death (as 'death that has been died') are not simply one and the same, and yet so far as our ultimate understanding is concerned it is only from a knowledge of what death is that we can say what dying is as distinct from illness in general. But this death of which we speak is both the most familiar of everyday occurrences and at the same time that which is dark and mysterious to us. Hence the inevitable and bewildering embarrassment always arises at this point that we have to speak of dying and not of death, and yet at the same time it is impossible to do this without constantly speaking of death at the same time.

Medicine, and above all medical ethics, are faced with a new situation today because of the possibility of transplanting organs, for these are actually transplanted 'alive' from a dead person (and also precisely because of the question of when a doctor should give up positively striving to prolong a human life in a case in which any personal and spiritual life of the individual as human has ceased, or is no longer present, and in which it cannot be restored by any efforts on the part of the doctor). In this situation the problem of the borderline cases arises with quite fresh acuteness, the problem namely of when that human life for which the doctor must positively strive with the application of all his medical skill is still present, and when it is no longer so; in other words when human life as such has ceased, when the process of dying in the human being as such has been terminated by death even though, perhaps, specific organs or combinations of cells still 'survive' and can be maintained 'alive', i.e. capable of functioning either within or without the human organism.

This simple observation alone makes it much more difficult than formerly for the theologian to say when the death of the human being has taken place. Indeed it is not even certain from the outset that the question of where precisely the borderline lies between human life and death can be answered in the same way by biology, medicine, and above all by specifically medical ethics on the one hand and by theology on the other in such a way that these answers can be made formally and materially to coincide. It is of course immediately obvious that in dealing with the question of when in a specific case death has taken place and when it has not yet done so the theologian cannot dispense with the factor of experience at the quite primitive level, any more than he can dispense with the judgement of the biologist and the doctor. Hence in arriving at a concrete judgement in any particular case he is constantly dependent upon these sciences and the developments in them, even though strictly speaking the essentially theological statement of what constitutes human death in [312] general and as such is unaffected by these developments in the sciences we have mentioned.

But conversely the question with which medical ethics is faced of when a human being as human is dead is intrinsically connected with the question of what a human being as such is. And this means that it is a question which the doctor can only answer if he is prepared to go beyond the limits of his own science and to allow philosophical and theological anthropology to have some say in the matter. At the same time this is not to assert either, in any unequivocal sense, that medical ethics can *simply take over* the philosophical and theological concept of when a human life as such does or does not exist. It cannot take over this concept

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in such a way as to be able to assert that the doctor's duty to strive to maintain a human life ceases *ipso facto* at that point at which, from a philosophical and theological point of view, such a life appears no longer to be present.

It would even be possible for a case to arise, and that too for the most varied reasons which will not be discussed here, in which the theologian and philosopher might perhaps accept the biologist's view that life in the strictly biological sense was still present even though they themselves believed that they could no longer recognize any specifically *human* life still remaining. And even in such a case it might very well be that it would be the doctor's duty either positively to extinguish the life that still remained nor to neglect any normal care on its behalf. In such a case in fact he might still have to presume that human life was present, and so that he was obliged to do his utmost to preserve it.

Nowadays in fact the theologian must presumably say that both with regard to the emergence of life at the level of the strictly human, and with regard to the termination of such life there is a question which he cannot answer with any certainty, the question namely of whether the fact that life of this kind manifests itself at the level of human biology *ipso facto* means that it is certainly, and in all cases, human life in the sense that has a theological relevance and entails moral demands upon man himself, and above all upon the doctor. Certainly the theologian will hold firm to the proposition that specifically *human* life, which as such is under the protection of certain moral principles, can be present and, in the case of life deriving from *human* generation must actually be presumed to be present, even in those cases in which no really conscious personal activity is any longer present, or at least can no longer be established. But when he considers specific borderline cases of embryonic development which have miscarried from the first, when he regards the survival of tissues which in some conditions no longer have anything to do with human life in the [313] theological sense, when he bears in mind that in a heart transplantation, which is, at least in principle, morally legitimate, on the one hand the death of the organ donor as such is presumed to have taken place, while at the same time (from the biological standpoint) it is also presumed that the heart continues to be alive, then the present-day theologian will hardly be any longer in a position to assume, as he formerly did, that the axiom applies uniformly to all cases that any life deriving biologically from man is always and invariably human life in the theological sense as well. A further point is that if we take this axiom as our starting-point then it becomes difficult to assign any place to that 'life' which must be ascribed to the sperm and egg-cells even before they have become united. And yet a further relevant factor is that today we are surely once more in a position in which we can give no completely clear answer to the question of the precise point in time at which the fertilized human ovum begins to have a soul.

These then are all problems which the theologian has to bear in mind. Moreover in order to proceed with his theological considerations at all he has to be in a position to assume that from the biological aspect it is at least in principle possible (which does not mean *ipso facto* that this possibility is made actual) that life is present at the spiritual and personal level. In view of all this then he will surely have to recognize that in those cases in which the biological substrate for life at *this* level, i.e. (in nonscientific terms) the human brain, is no longer present or has ceased to retain any life, biological life at the specifically *human* level is not present either, or that it has ceased to be present.

In terms of the principles which provide him with his own starting-point, therefore, the theologian will defend the position that human life as human has been terminated at that point at which the death of the brain has supervened, even though he has to leave it to the biologist and medical scientist to work out the precise criteria for deciding when this takes place. And this means that the theologian will recognize that the process of human dying precisely as human has come to an end also, even though other organs and tissues may 'be alive' or

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'continue to survive' in a biological sense either within the organism as a whole or outside it. I have already said that even when we have defined in anthropological and theological terms the borderline between human and non-human life, or human and non-human death, this still cannot be accounted *ipso facto* and of itself a sufficient and assured basis for medical ethics in treating of the question of when a doctor can relinquish his efforts to preserve the life entrusted to him with his medical skill, and the further question of [314] what means he should use, whether normal or exceptional ones, in carrying out this task of his. It is perfectly possible, as we have already said, that a doctor's idea of the life that is entrusted to him as a doctor may not coincide with the theological and anthropological concept of human life. Indeed it may not even be desirable that the two ideas should be made to coincide. But this problem, together with its deontological implications, cannot be treated of any further here.

We have established, then, that both as conceived of in itself and in its implications for medical ethics the life which the doctor strives to preserve from dying is not simply to be identified with that specifically human life which is of immediate concern to the theologian, and which he takes as axiomatic in his researches. At the same time, however, the two concepts of life here, the medical and the theological ones, are intrinsically interconnected. For in the last analysis the obligations which arise from, and the value to be attached to the work of the doctor derive from the fact that it is man as such, and not merely some kind of biological organism, that is the object of his concern. Hence, while maintaining the provisos which we have already indicated so far as medical ethics are concerned, we should still say not only that the struggle waged by the doctor against death derives its ultimate value and its moral necessity from the fact that it is the life of man as such – in other words the life of a person with a spiritual mode of existence that is being treated of but also that precisely because of this this struggle and the moral obligation to maintain it also have intrinsic limits of their own. Even if for want of time and the necessary competence in the field, we cannot here embark upon an investigation of the difficult cases involved (although this might perhaps be of great interest primarily for the doctor in his work in the concrete), still we may conclude that the point at which the doctor may willingly concede victory in his struggle against death is determined by the specifically human factor involved in living and dying.

What we mean is this: as a medical scientist, a biologist, and one who is governed by the obligations of medical ethics in the most direct sense, the doctor will certainly be seeking only to prolong life and the struggle against death with all the means at his disposal. And from this point of view he can only feel death as a terrible defeat which is so much the contrary of what he wills that he feels it almost shameful to be forced to concede victory to it. Even so, however, the patient with whom he has to deal as a man and a doctor is a human being, one whose life is specifically human, i.e. this life constitutes a personal history which of its own intrinsic nature seeks its own consummation. The intrinsic nature of this [315] history is such that it is never for one moment intended to be prolonged indefinitely into an indeterminate future. Rather it has a definite shape such that of itself it demands to be rounded off and to achieve a consummation which goes far beyond any mere state of further prolongation.

Of course prior to the moment of death itself it is never possible as a matter of empirical human experience to state unambiguously the precise point at which a given life achieves its intrinsic consummation in death even though, from the theological point of view, it must be stated that it is possible for a specifically human history of this sort already to have achieved its intrinsic consummation even before the possibilities of prolonging life at the biological level have been exhausted. To that extent the doctor must certainly continue to strive right to the very last to prolong life in his sense of the term. But what does this phrase 'right to the very last' imply? From the viewpoint which we have just achieved we shall, after all, be in a position to begin by stating the following: When a doctor has done all that is in his power and

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still a dying man has finally died, then precisely as a man the doctor is not simply one who has suffered a catastrophic and meaningless defeat, but rather one who can willingly suffer the sick person to die, one therefore who has not failed to fulfil his task but on the contrary has effectively completed it. For in fact he has provided his fellow man with that span of life in the biological sense within which his specifically human life considered as the history of a free person has in fact been able to achieve its consummation. He has provided him with a span of biological life in this sense which was never for one moment intended to, or sought to be extended into the unforeseeable future. And this remains true even though it is at most only very approximately that we can state *prior* to death (in all cases except the sort of death that results from sheer old age) precisely how far this span is meant to be extended in order to be able to constitute the sphere for a personal history of this kind advancing towards a consummation which it demands intrinsically and of its very nature.

In the light of these considerations we may after all suppose, without entering into individual cases or being superfluous, that a doctor who is struggling to avert death is justified in adopting two rather different attitudes towards the life which he is attempting to save. There is the kind of life which at least to all appearances offers no real basis for a truly personal kind of living, and his attitude to this will be rather different from his attitude to a life which will still be lived at the fully personal level, or which can at least be restored to provide once more a possible basis for such personal living. Certainly, even before death, the doctor may feel [316] more willing to let the former kind of life be terminated than the latter.

Perhaps this may serve as some guide for drawing a certain distinction within the general attitude which the doctor ought to take towards the death of an individual, a distinction which is all too often forced upon the doctor in the difficult situations in which he often has to exercise his medical skill. For all too often he is quite unable to escape from the responsibility of having to choose *which* of several sick or dying individuals he should concentrate upon, devoting his utmost efforts and resources as a doctor to saving him before the rest.

More than all the rest of us doctors find themselves again and again having to stand beside the death-bed engaged in the struggle against death. Their will is to save life, and when death has proved too much for them their task is ended. All that we can still ask of them is at most whether what is lying there really is a dead man. It might appear that their concern is with life alone, and that they have nothing to do with death. But as men, when faced with the dying in this way, they must inevitably be reminded of the approach of their own fate. They may suppress, but cannot avoid, the question of what really happens at this moment when a man dies, when as human he becomes subject to death, or better: they cannot avoid asking what happens in their own death, in ‘my particular death’ which is slowly and inexorably advancing upon us. And the more human a doctor is (for it is only as human that he brings his medical activity and his medical ethos to their due fulness), the more the specifically human question of what death is becomes a question for the doctor himself, the question that the doctor asks as he gazes after the man to whom he has devoted his care. For there the doctor must see the anticipation of his own death, he who lives as a helper in the midst of men, none of whom can escape the destiny of having to die. The man in the doctor can perhaps attempt to suppress this question. He can attempt to answer it in an epicurean sense, by saying that there is no such question, since it is no question for us so long as we are alive, and no question for the dead man seeing that he is no longer there. The man in the doctor can, perhaps, respond to this question with a helpless shrug of his shoulders. He can endure his own helplessness in humility and with a secret trust in the fact that a question that is faced up to, not suppressed and not run away from, conceals within its depths its own answer, even though we may not have raised it from these depths of our own existence to the surface level of our conscious awareness and so expressed it in words. At least the question ought to be

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present in this sense in the mind of every sincere man. In this [317] sense at least it can and must be endured by every man. In this sense at least there can be no escaping from this question in all its inexorability. It still arises even when we resolve that it should not arise at all, or that it is unanswerable. It is clear even though we do not commit ourselves to answering it that to try to answer it on the basis of biology alone would *ipso facto* and from the outset be a failure to recognize the question itself.

For the point of the question is the death of *man*, man who is alive not merely at the level of the material and the biological, but on the plane of self-awareness, personhood, freedom, responsibility, love and faithfulness; man whose mode of existence is such that it is charged with the responsibility of his self-awareness and his freedom. The question of what constitutes the consummation of a personal history at this level is still not answered even when on the one hand we have established that biological life comes to an end, and on the other hand are not prepared on these grounds alone to find an optimistic and over-facile answer to the question by adopting a conceptual image of man as consisting of two parts, each existing independently of the other. On this conception, then, prior to the biological death the two parts would have been adventitiously combined while after it the 'immortal soul' would continue on ultimately and alone in an indefinite prolongation of its existence. Even if we do not produce an over-facile answer of this kind to the question of human death, it still remains true that in any case it is not *ipso facto* answered once we have established the termination of life at the biological level. Such an answer would be nothing else than an illegitimate overstepping of the limits of a materialist biology which is quite incapable of including within its purview man at the specifically human level, and hence too is incapable of stating in any adequate way what constitutes the consummation of the personal history of a man as such. The question is there. This question has to be endured, and this question cannot be answered solely in biological terms. Hence too it goes beyond the competence of a doctor to answer it simply as an exponent of medical science.

But how to answer it? As I have already indicated above, even a theologian who in all modesty and diffidence hazards an answer to this question can take cognizance of the fact that a man, through no fault of his own, stands at one specific point in his own personal history as a human individual endowed with spiritual faculties at which he is not yet in a position personally to realize the answer to the ultimate questions of life, even though in the absolute such an answer does exist. Instead of realizing the answer straightway at this point then, he is compelled to hold out, in an attitude of questioning openness, and hope in silence and patience for [318] a future light to come to him. Hence the theologian too can, in all patience, freely credit the honest seeker with an attitude of perseverance and hope, as in the concrete conditions of his personal existence he endures the question of what the true nature of death really is.

At the same time, however, the Christian and the theologian may offer to the individual concerned that interpretation of the nature and meaning of death which pertains to the faith. He can do this by asking him whether this answer does not strike a chord in him, appealing to a secret and, as it were, anonymous awareness at the depths of his being with regard to human existence in general and, as a part of this, the ultimate meaning of death. As his mind moves, then, somewhere between this silent and basic understanding of existence on the one hand and the word of God on the other, can he not discover that courage, that spirit of freedom and happiness, which will enable him to make his own this understanding of death which faith supplies, to join with all those who, with their gaze fixed wholly upon the crucified one, upon Jesus Christ, freely commit themselves to death as the gateway to God and eternal life? The message of Christianity does not in fact contain any rationalist 'explanation' of death. We can only really understand what is stated to be the teaching of Christianity with regard to death when we read it in the context of what the faith declares

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with regard to God. Now this statement about God represents *precisely* the ultimate that can be said before falling into silence. It is a statement about the inconceivable mystery that we call God, and that is beyond our apprehension, that never at any stage constitutes a fixed landmark such as we can assign to a specific place in the calculations we apply to our own lives. Yet at the same time it is equally a statement which promises this same God of mystery as the fulfilment of these lives of ours through forgiveness and the imparting of his own divine nature to us. In terms of the message of Christianity, therefore, the word 'death' does not stand for a phenomenon of this world which can be used and manipulated in combination with all the other factors which we recognize and understand so that it has a specific place in the total system of co-ordinates which we build up for ourselves from our human apprehensions. Rather the death of man is the moment at which the whole of his history as a free being, now consummated and completed, is brought into immediate confrontation with the mystery of God, encountering this either as its consummate blessing or as judgement. And hence death is as incomprehensible as God himself. It affects man as one and whole. For we of today find it even less possible than those of former times to reduce man either to spirit or to matter. Nor can we conceive of him as a union of both these [319] principles *in such a way that* the destruction of this unity entails no further difficulty either in reality or in our own minds. The death of man consists in the immediate confrontation of man, together with the whole of his history as a free person now consummated and complete, with the absolute mystery, with God.

We may call this confrontation the continuing life of the immortal soul in order to express the fact that man and his personal history are something more even in the inception of this, and *a fortiori* at its end, than a mere biological process in space and time such that it fades away at either end of the span allotted to it into the anonymity of the merely physical. This same confrontation of man's existence as consummated and complete with God can also be called the 'resurrection of the flesh' in order to express the fact that it is the one whole man who is brought before God, though this is not to say that the physical side of his consummation before God consists in a return to the sort of 'bios' which belongs to the dimension of space and time with the incessant process of change extending indefinitely into the future which is characteristic of this. Whichever formulation we adopt, the truth we are pointing to is always the fact that death brings man into the presence of God, God who does not permit the personal history of man as rounded off and completed to fall into nothingness, God to whom man has to answer as to how he has used his freedom, whether he has used it to love his neighbour and God himself for he cannot escape from being called to account in this way by taking refuge in a mere cessation of existence from which he could no longer be recalled. Now if death is that which brings man as one and whole face to face with God in this way, then it is not surprising that once a man has undergone death, neither the death itself nor its effects are discoverable within the sphere of that which we can ascertain empirically, the sphere in which we lead our earthly lives as subject to space and time, for obviously we can never encounter God as one particular element within this sphere.

Death, then, is the consummation of a man's history as a free person, that in which this history breaks through into the absolute future which is its goal, and in which God as the ultimate, original, and infinite all, by whom all reality is upheld, is encountered either as judgement or as man's blessed consummation. Now if this is true then death is that towards which the will of the free person tends at its deepest and most ultimate, because this free person must seek the end of that which merely prolongs itself in time in order to achieve his consummation. It is only on the surface of our awareness that we actually see death. But at the very roots of our existence we hunger for the end of that which is unconsummated in [320] order that consummation may be achieved. If anyone were to tell us that the state we had lived in up to now would simply continue on into eternity, in that self-same moment we

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would have to recognize ourselves as damned. For in that case each successive transitory moment of our lives would be divested of its own special value, a value which consists in the fact that these moments in our temporal existence provide the possibility for us to take a decision that is irrevocable. For it is the exercise of our freedom in these particular moments that gives birth to that which will remain and endure.

Inherent in the history of any man as personal and human, then, there is an ultimate and deepest tendency of the will to achieve its consummation in death. And in the light of this the doctor who stands at the death bed is placed in a situation that is unique. As a doctor he is bound to preserve life at the biological level and the tendency inherent in this to 'prolong itself'. Yet as man he is no less bound by the ultimate will to achieve the end, the consummation, that will which says 'no' to the fate to which Ahasuerus was condemned, the fate of not being allowed to die. This tension is inherent in the very life of a doctor, and it must be maintained and endured without any short-sighted surrender to one side or the other. It is a tension that underlies many of the concrete questions which a doctor has to face as part of his responsibility as a doctor when he stands at the bed of a dying man.

A doctor should take effective cognizance of the fact that what constitutes the normal circumstances of his everyday life, namely having to do with death, is also a central factor in the Christian faith, that faith which is either his own or at least constitutes a factor in the situation of human living and ideas in which he lives, whether he is a Christian or not. For while Christianity does indeed avow its certainty of eternal life it certainly does not look askance at any kind of life, or at the attempts that are made to cause it to flourish happily, to maintain it as vigorously as possible, and to defend it to the utmost from the dangers that threaten it. But this Christianity consists precisely in a professed belief in the Cross, in other words, as we might say, a belief in the Death of him whom we Christians call our Lord.

In the case of one man, the first of all, we are bold enough to believe that he was not merely made subject to death, not merely swallowed up by the absurdity of existence. Rather he himself died. He made death his own act. He himself assumes that which is beyond all human conception and control, and himself enacts what has to be suffered. This first one, whom we seek to follow in death, is Jesus. He died as we shall die: in that [321] darkness into which he uttered that groan of his, 'My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?'. In his death everything which makes death terrible took place, and that which death entails was truly suffered: the agony of the body, the brutal injustice which was an additional element in his case, the hatred of his enemies and their mocking self-assurance, the failure of his life-work, the betrayal of his friends, and over and above all that is terrible in death precisely that sense of futility which death entails wherever it is died amid the mourning of the dying man's fellows who cannot help him, the struggle for breath and all the pain from which no-one returns, and all the sense of being powerless to do any more in which he ceases to be heroic.

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[322]

VOLUME 11

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PLURALISM IN THEOLOGY AND THE UNITY OF THE CREED IN THE CHURCH
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[323]
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[324]
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[1]

PART ONE

Ecclesiology

[3]

1

THE TEACHING OFFICE OF THE CHURCH IN THE PRESENT-DAY CRISIS OF AUTHORITY

A theological consideration of the Church's office to teach or magisterium[1] and the authority which, on a Catholic understanding of the Church, is to be attached to this, is not perhaps in any direct sense a suitable theme for ecumenical discussion or in controversial theology. And in fact our present consideration will indeed, to a large extent, take the form of a *quaestio disputata* internal to the Catholic body. But surely it is permissible to present even a consideration of this kind in the present context. First because even in a Protestant Church, despite all differences of opinion between Protestant and Catholic Christians precisely on the question of ecclesiastical authority, the subject of an official function to teach cannot altogether be evaded from the outset, as is shown, for instance, from the fact that instructional techniques have been raised as an issue for discussion.[2] Second because any further development in the theology of the Church's official teaching function, even within the Catholic body and on the basis of specifically Catholic principles may perhaps be able to bring us nearer to an ecumenical agreement. I propose, therefore, to put forward certain considerations concerning the authority of the Church's magisterium on a Catholic understanding of the Church. It is obvious that in view of the brevity of the time available these considerations will once more be very fragmentary in character, and our choice of subject-matter must necessarily appear somewhat arbitrary. Our aim, therefore, in these considerations of ours is not once again to present, or even to justify, the universal Catholic doctrine with regard to the official teaching function of the Church as this has once more been set [4] forth in the Second Vatican Council (and, moreover, abstracting from the question of the collegiality of those in whom this official teaching function is vested, without any notable advances by comparison with the First Vatican Council). Our present aim is rather to lay bare certain problems inherent in this doctrine which have not been reflected upon, and so to provide a stimulus for a further development of this doctrine which may then perhaps even have better prospects of success in coping with the present-day crisis which threatens the teaching authority of the Church.

Let us begin by re-stating in contemporary terms the formal model which is customarily used in presentations of the teaching authority of the Church's official representatives. The following statement may perhaps achieve this:

As the absolute teacher and the prophet *par excellence* Jesus Christ delivered to the apostles a quite specific body of teaching. In doing so he also equipped these apostles with a

[1] Cf. also the article under this heading in *LTK* VI (2nd ed. 1961), 884-890, and 'Magisterium' *Sacramentum Mundi* 3 (New York and London, 1969), pp. 351-358.
[2] A survey and summary on this point is to be found in H. Hohlbein and W. Maurer, 'Lehrzuchtverfahren', *RGG* IV (3rd ed., 1960), 281-286.

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quite specific formal authority deriving from himself and supplementary to the actual content of this doctrinal message which he handed down to them. It equips the apostles and authorises them to stand before their fellow men and claim the allegiance of their faith for the content of their message. It also equips them to preserve that message itself undistorted, to interpret it, and to explicitate it. The assistance of the Spirit of Christ promised to them guarantees that they shall make a right use of this formal authority to teach, and their use of it is 'infallibly' preserved from error in those cases in which the exercise of this teaching authority is accompanied by a claim to an absolute assent of faith on the part of those to whom their message is addressed, in other words in those cases in which the fulness of their authority is brought to bear. This teaching authority of the apostles has been handed down to the college of bishops under the pope.

This absolute authority can be exercised both in the ordinary proclamation of Christian doctrine and also in an act of the 'extraordinary magisterium', i.e. in the form of a definition on the part of a Council or of the pope. However in very many cases in which the authoritative magisterium is exercised it is not brought to bear with this absolute force, and the obligation which it lays upon the faithful is not the assent of their faith properly so called, but merely a qualified assent, for in such exercises of the official teaching authority of the Church the doctrine that is stated, though authentic, is not in itself irreformable. Rather it is a doctrine that is formulated as conscientiously as possible by the teaching authority to protect the essential and proper substance of the faith.

With the proviso that in the following considerations this conceptual [5] model will have to be slightly expanded or more precisely defined in this or that respect, I believe that the terms in which I have just presented this conceptual model do justice to the essential tenor of the established ecclesiology of the Church with regard to her own teaching office.[3] But the very fact that it has been stated in such formal and abstract terms means that very much in it still remains unclarified and obscure. And it is with these elements that we shall be concerned in what follows. In this we are abstracting altogether from the questions (in themselves fundamental) of whether, how, and how far this conception of the teaching authority attached to the office of bishop can be justified on the basis of scripture as a whole, and we are abstracting even more from the still more difficult question of how, and to what extent a doctrinal authority of this kind can be traced back to a resolve of the pre-Easter Jesus himself. Here we are considering only the problems inherent in this conceptual model.

In considering this conceptual model of what is meant by the teaching authority of the official Church the first point that we notice is the absence of any reference to the Church as such. To state the matter more precisely: the Church as 'hearing' and believing is merely that which is addressed, that to which this authority is directed. Now in the Second Vatican Council statements are to be found at various points (though no specific presentation of these can be undertaken here) in which an attempt has been made to overcome this one-sided state of affairs in which the official teachers do all the speaking, and their point of view alone is expressed, while the Church of the faithful listening to them is in the position merely of an addressee obediently accepting the Church's teaching authority as vested in her bishops. The fact that sporadic attempts were made to overcome this situation in the Second Vatican Council should be neither doubted nor under-estimated, But I believe that initiatives of this kind have, after all, remained precisely at the level of initiatives and no more, and have

[3] The tendency referred to here is to be discerned in all the classical treatises of theology. Cf. e.g. *PSJ* I (Madrid, 4th ed., 1958), 503-993, where the authority of the official Church is treated of almost to the exclusion of all else.

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therefore had hardly any practical effect in the life of the Church and in the manner in which her teaching is presented and listened to.[4]

The first point to bear in mind is that on any showing the apostles can [6] only be the bearers of a teaching authority of this kind to the extent that they themselves are believers and hearers. This is not merely because the unbeliever could have no reason and no motive for laying claim to or applying any such formal authority, nor merely because in fact in our case (in other cases it might conceivably be different) the exercise of such authority necessarily claims the allegiance of faith from the official bearers of this teaching authority themselves. This means that any officially appointed teacher who refused the allegiance of his faith would thereby himself be denying his own authority in the very act of laying claim to it. For this authority vested in him is at the same time an element in his own message. When an apostle preaches he bears witness precisely to his experience of Jesus' Resurrection, and it is quite impossible to separate this experience from his own faith in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Furthermore he always preaches as a member of a community of believers which asserts its claims openly in virtue of the fact that it also presents itself as the genuine continuation and perfection of the Old Testament community which was constituted by faith in the promises of God, those promises which have been fulfilled in Jesus. The apostolic preaching was always that of a member of the Old Testament community of the faith. It assumed as its starting-point the faith and the professed creed of Israel. It used this as the basis for its argument. In other words it proceeded from the faith of a Church which did not presuppose as infallible any teaching office which was institutional in the proper sense of the term. The preaching of the individual apostle, therefore, is not merely addressed to the believing community, but also proceeds from it. It bears witness to a faith which has already been brought into being by God alone in Jesus Christ, and it is only on this basis (this is a point which we shall have to consider more fully at a later stage) that it can also justify its own formal authority.[5]

The fact that the authority of the officially appointed teachers in the Church derives from the Church herself as a whole becomes still clearer [7] when we consider the bearers of this authority in post-apostolic times. We are making it impossible for ourselves to achieve any insight into this truth that the authority of the official teachers in the Church derives from the Church as a whole if we suppose that we can conceive of a derived authority of this kind merely as corresponding to a popular and democratic form of government. On this interpretation the 'people' of the Church in this sense would be the juridical subject of power extending the authority which it possesses as such to certain specific individuals as a decision of the people's own will. But to reject the conceptual model of a 'democracy' precisely of *this* sort is far from making it completely impossible to conceive of any way in which the authority of the Church can be derived from the believing Church as a whole. On any fully Catholic understanding of the Church the believing Church is not merely constituted as such

[4] In this connection chapters II and IV of the Constitution 'Lumen Gentium' are significant. Here an infallibility of faith is attributed to the people of God as a whole, as also to the people of the Church as the recipients of teaching in particular. The Council itself has not attempted to carry this further by relating what it says in these chapters to the statements in chapter III, where it is the hierarchical structure of the Church that is being dealt with.

[5] This connection is in fact one which was clearly recognized in the ancient Church as well. On this cf. the extremely instructive study by G. Ludwig, *Die Primatsworte Mt 16:18-19 in der altkirchlichen Exegese* (Munster, 1952), and also K. Adam, 'Cyprians Kommentar zu Mt 16:18', *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Augsburg, 1936), pp. 80-123; M. Lods, 'Le "Tu es Petrus" dans l'exégèse patristique', *Eglise et Théologie* 21/62 (1958), pp. 15-34; A. M. La Bonnardière, 'Tu es Petrus. La péricope Mt. 16:13-23 dans l'oeuvre de Saint Augustin', *Irénikon* 34 (1961), pp. 451-499. And in addition to these: B. Botte, H. Marot etc. (edd.), *Das Konzil und die Konzile* (Stuttgart, 1962); Y. Congar, ed., *L'Épiscopat et l'Église universelle*, Unam Sanctam 39 (Paris, 1962); *idem*, *L'Ecclésiologie du Haut Moyen Age* (Paris, 1968), pp. 138 ff.

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by the factor of teaching authority. On the contrary for authority of this sort to be able to exist at all a believing Church has already to be in existence as its necessary prior condition.[6]

The basic principles leading to this insight are already to be found in the established ecclesiology of the seminaries. Thus for instance even in the First Vatican Council the nature and extent of the pope's authority to teach, especially with regard to its 'infallibility', are determined by the standards of the teaching authority actually exercised in the Church in general (DS 3074). But since there cannot be several supreme teaching authorities in the Church this relationship which the pope's authority to teach bears to that of the Church in general is not only a relationship of mere *equality* between two entities which are really distinct. Rather the pope's authority to teach them in a real sense be derived, at least from the *active* teaching authority of the Church as a whole. The truth that we are seeking to express in this way is simply that the derivation of an authority from Christ need not from the outset be incompatible with a derivation of this same authority from the Church. Rather both kinds of derivation can constitute two sides of a single objective situation, because ultimately speaking the derivation of a specific office from Christ is nothing else than an element in the derivation of the Church as a whole from Christ.[7]

[8] In the Second Vatican Council too (Lumen Gentium No. 25) the teaching authority of the pope and bishops is regarded as deriving univocally from Christ and aimed at the Church rather than deriving from it. In this way it is emphasized that it is not primarily in virtue of the agreement of the Church that the decisions of the popes and bishops are unassailable. At the same time, however, it is also emphasized that in any *ex cathedra* definition the pope is acting not as a private individual, but as the supreme teacher of the universal Church. His charism is the charism of the infallibility of the Church herself, and not one that is separate from this. And it is emphasized further that it is the effective power of the one Spirit of the Church as a whole that ensures that the Church herself can never fail to agree to such decisions. It is further stated in Dei Verbum No. 8 that the deposit of faith to which the teaching office is bound includes all 'that she herself is, all that she believes'. This, then, constitutes a further pointer to the fact that the teaching office is not only actively orientated towards the Church with a content of faith which she initially possesses on her own account, but is at the same time derived from this believing Church herself. In a true sense all this is, in fact, obvious. Only in this particular context, in which we are speaking of the teaching office, it is generally overlooked. In this connection the teaching office appears simply as deriving from God and Christ alone, and as consisting in the possession of the deposit of faith and of a formal ratification enabling it to bear an authoritative witness to the content of this faith. The situation is of course such that in the concrete the bearers of this deposit of faith and the teaching authority that goes with it are necessarily men who as simple believers have already received this faith from the Church and from her life as these exist in the concrete – from the concrete Church, therefore, who in her faith, in the history of her faith, and the development of her dogma, is not simply the passive and obedient object of a teaching authority in the Church. The *de facto* bearers of the teaching office are, at least in respect of the content of their teaching, dependent upon a Church who is not constituted simply by the one-sided functions of the official authorities in the Church. This faith, this history of faith, this development of dogma on which the teaching office depends in the concrete, are factors to which all the members of the Church contribute, each in his own way, by their lives, the confession of their faith, their prayers, their concrete decisions, the theology which they work

[6] The author has pointed out a connection which is – *mutatis mutandis* – similar in other contexts. Cf. K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, Quaestiones Disputatae 17 (Freiburg, 1966). See also H. Fries, 'Lehramt als Dienst am Glauben', *Catholica* 23 (1969), pp. 154-186.

[7] On this cf. the extremely enlightening studies on the history of dogma in O. Rousseau, J. J. von Allmen et al. (edd.), *L'infaillibilité de l'Eglise*, Collection Irénikon (Chevetogne, 1963), esp. pp. 147 ff.

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out for themselves, and their activities in all this are very far from being confined merely to putting into practice truths and norms deriving from the teaching office itself.[8]

[9] But the doctrinal authority attached to the teaching office has a derivation from the Church as a whole and in herself not merely in respect of the content of what is proclaimed, or in virtue of the fact that those who do proclaim it are always first and foremost themselves believers involved in the single developing history of faith in the Church as a whole. More than this the actual power to teach, the authenticity and effectiveness ('infallibility') of the teaching have a certain derivation from the Church herself as a whole. We do not need to conceive of the reality and effectiveness of this authority, which must in fact be something more than a mere formal right to teach as constituted by a continually renewed intervention on God's part from without taking place in a miraculous manner in the course of the Church's history. For otherwise saving history and revelation history as abiding factors in the Church would not in fact constitute the Church's history itself, but would merely be present at those isolated points within that history as a whole at which God intervened to correct the course of the history of the human spirit and to preserve it from deviations arising from its own interior dynamism. The real effectiveness of the authority vested in the Church's official teachers must consist rather in the fact that through God's grace-given bestowal of himself upon the world, and through the historical manifestation of this in the absolute in Jesus Christ, which renders this self-bestowal victorious and irrevocable, the Church is constituted as *the* experience in faith of this self-bestowal of God, which can no longer be defeated by error. This entity, then, constituted by the experience of the irreversible victory of God's self-bestowal, is called the Church. As a community and a society she is of her nature institutional, and this means that she has an office, an officially constituted body to be the organ through which she realizes the fulness of her own true nature. Now because of this office, as a teaching office, participates in this abiding victory of the truth of God in the world which constitutes the innermost entelecheia of the history of the world, and the self-realization of the world in its relationship to God.[9] In Jesus Christ the Church constitutes the achieved self-realization of the eschatological [10] victory of God's self-bestowal upon the world. Moreover, as a community of faith the Church always continues also and necessarily to be a society composed of men with an official constitution. It is because of this that there is also a teaching office. Hence both in what it teaches and in the power and infallibility with which it teaches it this office has a derivation from the Church. This derivation from the *Church* is precisely the concrete form in which the derivation of the teaching office from Christ and God is realized.

Now while all these points are in themselves self-evident truisms, it is nevertheless all too easy, both in theory and still more in the practice of the Church, for them to be covered over by the formal and juridical framework in which the doctrinal power of the teaching office is conceived of, for it tends to be thought of in merely formal and juridical terms as a commission coming from God and Christ. And on this view we cease any longer to enquire what this conceptual model, in itself perfectly correct, is really intended to convey in terms of content. Precisely today, when all merely formal claims to authority are being called in question and disputed, it must be emphasized that the doctrine of the Church's teaching office has a concrete content of its own of a theological kind, and this fact must be clearly

[8] Cf. M. Löhrer, 'Träger der Vermittlung', *Mysterium Salutis* I (Zürich, 1965), pp. 545-555. Likewise the comprehensive presentation of the relevant dogmatic history by Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (London, 1957). On Newman's thesis to the effect that the real resistance to Arianism in the fourth century was achieved by the 'people' cf. J. Guitton, *Mitbürger der Wahrheit* (Salzburg, 1964).

[9] This idea has been still further developed by K. Rahner, 'Ekklesiologische Grundlegung', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 117-148; *idem*, 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 295-312.

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recognized and included as a factor in Christian thinking and in the exercise of the Church's official functions in the concrete.

In fact it must be recognized as a basic and universal principle that the situation is not that the formal authority vested in an official body in society and the authority inherent in the realities themselves which that body is designed to represent and uphold really have to be two different entities. The two entities can perfectly well be conceived of as really identical in objective fact. The only proviso is that we must realize and hold firm to the truth that the reality itself and the authority inherent in it as such need to be upheld and given concrete application by an authority of a formal kind existing in society, and further that this authority, which depends upon the authority inherent in the reality itself can in the concrete individual case make claims of its own and interpret the reality itself, and can thereby claim a 'formal' authority whenever it is not immediately clear to the individual how the individual decisions derive from the 'reality itself' as a whole. But precisely for this reason, and in every individual case in which such formal authority is exercised, it must be able to make it clear again and again that as a whole it derives from the very reality which it is concerned to uphold.[10]

[11] What this means in the concrete in the case with which we are concerned is this: the teaching office must show itself as it really is according to its own understanding of its nature. It may not cover over and conceal aspects in this from the short-sighted feeling that these aspects tend more to overthrow the authority of the teaching office itself and entail a danger that it will not be recognized. In Lumen Gentium No. 25 the Second Vatican Council explicitly states that the officially appointed teachers of the Church have to apply the appropriate human means in order to arrive at the truth in official decisions on matters of doctrine. Even this, however, is only a very general statement, and almost excessively mild and vague. For in the very nature of the case it obviously implies that those charged to uphold the teaching office are also obliged to study before coming to a decision. They must consult theologians, work themselves and cause others to work in the fields of exegesis and the history of dogma. They must open their minds to discussion. They must maintain contact with the living awareness of the faith which manifests itself in the Church as a whole. For it is from this living awareness that these bearers of the teaching office themselves derive their ideas. Again in any definitorial decisions which these representatives of the teaching office arrive at the Church's own absolute assent of faith as worked out in history, albeit unreflectingly, must already have gone before, so that in a case of this kind the specific charism of the teaching office consists, strictly speaking, in its 'infallible' confirmation of this absolute assent of faith on the part of the Church as a whole, which has already been arrived at.

All these factors are implied in the very nature of the case in the statement of the Second Vatican Council referred to above.

Now it must not be disputed that these and similar 'suitable means' of the teaching office have by and large *de facto* been applied, although perhaps it should also be emphasized that in particular epochs and at particular stages in the history of the world and of the Church the means and procedures employed in a process of discovering truth of this kind need not necessarily always be the same. Today, for instance, means and procedures may be necessary and obligatory for the representatives of the teaching office which could not possibly have

[10] In this connection very different ideas were developed in the past as to the precise connection between authority and 'objective truth'. In addition to the work mentioned in n. 7 cf. esp. J. M. Todd (ed.), *Probleme der Autorität* (Düsseldorf, 1967); Y. Congar, *Pour une Église servante et pauvre*, L'église aux cent visages 8 (Paris, 1963), and also *idem* in M. Nédoncelle, R. Aubert *et al*. (edd.), *L'Ecclésiologie au XIXe siècle*, Unam Sanctam 34 (Paris, 1960), pp. 77-114.

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been present in earlier [12] ages.[11] But I cannot escape the impression that attempts are still constantly made to conceal these genuinely human factors in the concrete process by which the Church's teaching office arrives at the truth. And this is manifestly because there is a tendency to feel that belief in the divine assistance accorded to the teaching office would be endangered or even disappear if the normal Christian were to realize the sort of concrete personalities who were involved, the sort of institutional factors and procedures which were brought to bear, the sort of struggles, discussions, factional divisions etc. which arose in the process of arriving at the truth in this way. On this question there is a tendency tacitly to proceed from the assumption that there is a kind of 'synergism' at work here, to point to forces that are extrinsic to the human debate, and so to regard God's intervention as commencing only at that point at which human efforts are suspended. In reality, however, God works precisely in and through these human efforts and his activity does not constitute a distinct factor apart from this. Precisely for this reason we should bring these human factors into the open. Instead of concealing them we should throw light upon them and make it possible to assess them at their true worth. For in themselves they constitute something more than merely a supplement to the divine activity, a prior condition for it, or an obscure residue, otherwise unaccounted for, in the exercise of the teaching office. Rather these human factors constitute an intrinsic element in the exercise of the teaching office itself. We are deceiving ourselves if we suppose that meets with more respect and trust on the part of modern man when it withdraws itself into a mysterious remoteness, when it conceals even the material questions with which it has to cope beneath the veil of a *Secretum Sancti Officii*, when it prohibits a realistic and open discussion of the suitability of the theological advisers who are engaged, when it fails to make clear what objective and really relevant criteria have governed the choice of these, and when its decisions are not accompanied by any arguments, or at least any that do justice to the importance of the realities involved.

Of course at a time like the present, in which many more advanced stages of development are to be found side by side, and are being achieved [13] almost hourly in the Church, there are still many individuals for whom any sober and realistic view of the work of the teaching office as it is and as it actually must be as a matter of theological necessity represents an attack upon their faith. But for those people who really do provide the standards by which the present and future of the Church will have to be shaped the converse is true. Hence today the Church has a vital task to perform in so educating her members that they are effectively conversant with the nature of the Church in all her aspects and the forms in which this must necessarily be manifested today.

Perhaps even here we have already reached a point at which it is possible to make some explicit statement about that question which is customarily referred to as the question of 'the teaching office and democracy'.[12] In formulating this subordinate theme in these terms we are of course aware of the fact that 'democracy' is not a concept for which any authorization can be claimed from scripture, or which arises in any traditional ecclesiology. This fact in itself shows that we must be cautious in seeking to introduce 'democracy' into any ecclesiology as a theological concept. It is clear from the ultimate nature of the Church that she can never be *allowed* to be a 'democracy' in the sense in which a secular society can or should be this. What has to be said about 'democracy' in an ecclesiology could be expressed without ever

[11] The author has developed proposals for this in other contexts. cf. K. Rahner, 'Theology and the Church's Teaching Authority,' *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 83-100; and in addition 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church' *idem* XI (London, 1970) pp. 3-23; see also G. Baum, 'The Magisterium in a Changing Church', *Concilium* I/3 (1967), pp. 34-42 (Dogma).

[12] On what follows cf. also K. Rahner, 'Demokratie in der Kirche?', *Gnade als Freiheit* (Freiburg, 1968), pp. 113-130, and O. Semmelroth, 'Demokratie in der Kirche?', *Martyria, Leiturgia, Diakonia* (Festschrift für H. Volk), (Mainz, 1968), pp. 399-415.

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using this term at all. We could take as our starting-point the biblical doctrine of the Body of Christ and the pluralism of its functions, no one of which can be allowed to exclude the others, and all of which must work together. Alternatively we might take as our starting-point the concept of 'brotherhood' etc. Our true reason for speaking of democracy in connection with the Church at this point, therefore, is simply that it is precisely this key term that is used today in treating of this question. In this connection we can point out to those theologians and believers who all too uncompromisingly reject any such key term as 'democracy' from the outset in their theology that the traditional ecclesiology works freely with concepts which derive from the experience of what it is to live in society at the secular level.

First in the very nature of the case it is obvious that that reality which the term 'democracy' can be used to signify or to stand for has, and necessarily must have, a quite different relationship to the faith and creed of the Church and to the truth of divine revelation from that which it [14] bears to those realities consisting in institutional factors, modes of life and practices in the Church, which according to the Church's theological understanding of her own nature, are from the outset regarded as 'juris humani', and as such subject, in a way which is quite different from that which applies to the truth of revelation, to historical change and to free evaluation on the part of the Church's members. Right from the outset the meaning of the term 'democracy' and the place accorded to it in our scale of values differs according to whether it is the first or the second of these two realities that is being treated of. In our present study, therefore, we are treating exclusively of the question of the *teaching office* and democracy, and any answer which we arrive at to *this* question is still not an answer to the further question of in what ways, and to what extent the Church could be 'more democratic', for instance in the manner in which its office-bearers are selected, the exemption of ecclesiastical laws from human justice, the degree of autonomy granted to particular Churches within the one Church etc. If the subject of our discussion is to be democracy and the teaching office it is necessary to reject straightway any 'reactionary' prejudice which might lead us to suppose that any democratic system of voting is from the outset incompatible with the nature of the Church's teaching office. From the time of the Council of the Apostles right down to the Second Vatican Council votes have been taken in questions of doctrine, and this system of voting was the manner in which decisions were arrived at which were binding in conscience upon the faith of every member of the Church. Nor let it be said that at least since the First Vatican Council any such system of voting on the part of a *collegium* can no longer have any true significance or any real democratic character on the grounds that it could be blocked or rendered ineffective by the decision of the pope acting as an individual and in isolation. For when any such fully ratified decision of a Council is arrived at by a voting process – and this is what has in fact taken place – then it has the force of an effective decision on the part of the *collegium* as such, and not merely a consultative procedure prior to the decision of the pope. Conversely it is quite impossible for the pope to take an *ex cathedra* decision in opposition to a clear majority of the bishops of the Church, though the term 'impossible', as applied here does not signify any limitation of his formal and juridical authority, but rather constitutes a limitation which is inherent in the reality itself and in the moral norms which have to be observed when the pope arrives at any such decision (seeing that it is through the assistance of the Spirit that he actually does arrive at it).[13]

[15] In fact to realize how impossible this is we have only to put to ourselves the following question: Given that the pope proposed to define a doctrine which was contrary to the

[13] The doctrine of the Second Vatican Council on this point is clear. Cf. the author's commentary on chapter III of the Constitution 'Lumen Gentium': *LTK* Suppl. Vol. I (1966), esp. 221-229. But the pronouncements of the First Vatican Council too on this point must not be ignored. On this cf. H. Fries, 'Ex esse non ex consensu Ecclesiae', *Volk Gottes* (Festschrift für J. Höfer) edited by R. Bäumer and H. Dolch (Freiburg, 1967), pp. 480-517.

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conviction of the great majority of the Church's members, and that too as expressed by the undoubted representatives of these, and given that, according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council itself, the pope himself does not receive any fresh revelations, how could he ever know that the doctrine which he proposed to define was in fact contained in divine revelation? If he were to arrive at a decision which was positively opposed to the conviction of the great majority of the universal episcopate, this would be tantamount to asserting that he had received a fresh revelation regardless of whether we did or did not apply the term 'revelation' to this knowledge on the pope's part that *he* was right while the opposite opinion, upheld by the majority of the Church, was wrong. Even if the actual content of the doctrine itself was not held to constitute a fresh revelation which the pope alone had obtained independently of the rest of the Church, still the very statement that this content belonged to revelation would constitute such a fresh revelation in itself. Now according to the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council no such situation is possible. The pope's teaching precisely as formulated in his *ex cathedra* decisions is derived from the faith of the universal Church, and the fact that it is derived in this sense is ensured by the taking of a 'vote', though of course this can take place in the most varied ways, and need not necessarily have the juridical form or the solemnity of a vote taken in a Council. In the nature of the case this 'vote' may be present as the prior condition for an *ex cathedra* decision on the pope's part even outside the context of a Council. If we decide to regard any 'vote' as a democratic element, then we must uncompromisingly assert that the teaching office has something to do with democracy even though in saying this we are still leaving certain more detailed questions not fully answered, the questions, namely, of the theological nature of a voting procedure of this kind, and still more that of which members in the Church are or can be qualified to participate in this voting procedure. With regard to the theological nature of a voting procedure of this kind it must be said that in any such vote the voter does not simply declare what is his own personal free choice (as is the case in votes taken on civic laws in secular [16] society) but bears witness to that faith which he is conscious of possessing and which he finds within himself as a divine gift. In secular society a decision of this kind, even though arrived at democratically, is of its nature binding upon society as a whole. In contrast to this, however, a vote of this kind taken within the free community of the faith which is the Church, and pertaining essentially to the Church, is restricted in its binding force to the individual conscience of the believer.

In a secular society which is democratic in its constitution the outcome of a vote implies a situation in which even those who have voted against the majority are bound to observe the majority decision (otherwise we would have to support a utopian idea and hold that no truly democratic society had yet been evolved at all. We would have to say that it is something that still has to come in the future, and that it is only achieved when the goals which opposed factions have set themselves to achieve can be, and actually are, realized simultaneously). By contrast with this the situation essentially produced by a vote on questions of faith admits of the following two alternatives: first, prior to the decision being taken, the personal faith of those belonging to the minority party may still have remained ultimately open in conscience to the view of the opposing party on the concrete question of faith that was being discussed. In that case *after* the decision has been taken and the convictions in faith of the majority party have been adopted as the convictions of the Church as such, the minority party can re-orientate its ideas in conformity with this. The *second* alternative is that the conscience of the minority party with regard to their faith was such that the decision of the majority is conceived actually to separate its adherents from the Church. In that case the minority party remains free because on the concrete question concerned its own faith taken as a whole is committed firmly to a position which is felt to be diametrically opposed to that of the majority party. From this it follows as a matter of necessity that the majority party must be

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considered to have separated themselves from the Church, and the true Church must be deemed to be constituted by the minority.

With regard to the question of which members of the Church may be considered as qualified to take an active part in such a vote all that we can briefly say here is the following:

According to the Catholic understanding of the Church the universal episcopate must be considered qualified jure divino to take part in such a vote in union with and under the pope in exercising the Church's doctrinal authority. But 'jure divino' here does not signify in any primary sense that others too cannot be given the right to take part in such a vote in [17] union with the college of bishops in virtue of human laws enacted within the Church. In fact this has actually been the case in all the more recent Councils. There have always been non-episcopal members of the Council who were given the right to vote.[14] The reasons for admitting a non-episcopal member to a consultative vote at a Council or similar occasion do not necessarily have to consist in the fact (though formerly this was, generally speaking the case) that the member concerned, though not a bishop, was nevertheless exercising quasi-episcopal functions (e.g. as the head of a religious order). Another and equally valid reason which was admitted in principle could be the special competence of the individual concerned in a particular field. Roman prelates who had a seat and vote in the Council, on a serious theological view of their functions, rely more upon the competence of specialist theologians of this kind than upon the mere fact of their episcopal consecration, which, after all, constituted them as 'bishops' only in a very formalistic sense. In other words it is at least *possible* for the Church to extend such a right to non-episcopal members even though, when she does so she is acting *jure humano*. In this connection a point to be borne in mind is that in principle it may be *morally demanded* of her in the very nature of the case that she shall extend the right to vote in this way in situations arising at particular epochs, in particular cultural conditions, and in questions arising in specific fields. For it is at any rate not in principle or *a priori* inconceivable that a case of this kind might arise in circumstances such as these. Now if such cases were to arise then the difference between divine and human law in the Church would be only a very relative one, since on the one hand the divine law of the Church's constitution must always and inevitably exhibit a concrete form that is subject to the conditions of particular epochs, while on the other every *jus humanum* entailing a moral duty to act in such and such a way in a specific situation conceals within itself a basic core of necessity that derives from God. From this it follows that the *jus divinum* attributed, in the case which we are considering, to the universal episcopate ultimately signifies merely that the united bishops, and no-one else beside them, represent the abiding assurance and the abiding visible manifestation of the *continuity* of the right of the teaching office in the Church to be heard and obeyed.

The *jus divinum* belonging to the universal episcopate in union with the pope, therefore, does not imply that *it alone* can always and in every [18] epoch be the sole bearer of the teaching office in the concrete. It is at least perfectly conceivable that a historical situation might arise in which the concrete bearer of the teaching office *need not* necessarily be simply identical with the episcopate alone, and this for moral reasons which in fact do not necessarily have to entail obligations applicable to all ages, but certainly can make claims of this kind at specific epochs and in specific situations (in terms of intellectual, cultural or social development). Now even though one who is a representative of the Church's teaching office does not necessarily have to be fully a member of the episcopate, still in the very nature of the case there will be individuals who are, in spite of this, what we now call bishops (and whom, presumably, we will continue to call by this name in the future), and in virtue of

[14] On the practice of earlier Councils in this connection cf. the study by Y. Congar adduced in n. 8, and also *idem*, *L'Ecclésiologie du Haut Moyen Age* (Paris, 1968), esp. p. 96.

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this fact the *jus divinum* of the episcopate itself considered as an official authority to teach is assured, and at the same time we are assured of the fact that the teaching office even as upheld by such individuals can be traced back through the ages in unbroken succession right to apostolic times.

Up to this point we have been following two lines of thought with regard to the possibility and the significance of exercising the teaching authority of the Church in the form of a vote, and with regard to the individuals to whom such voting power could be extended. Now the only way in which we can develop these considerations any further is to attempt to define still more precisely the significance which such a voting procedure would have. We have already said that a vote of this kind is of its nature different from the sort of vote that takes place in the context of secular politics. This latter constitutes a public statement of a voluntary decision taken by the voters themselves. By contrast with this the sort of vote we are speaking of is an attestation of certain beliefs held by the voters which as a matter of their own personal conviction they discover within themselves and recognize as brought about by God.

The next stage in our considerations must be to examine the question of the weight and significance to be attached to a majority vote. How far, and in what sense must this be allowed to prevail over a minority of the voters? The first point that must be made is that (abstracting for the moment from the position of the pope) on a Catholic understanding of the Church the fact that a given position is upheld by the majority of the voters does not represent any absolute guarantee, so far as the conscience of the individual Catholic believer or the individual Catholic bishop is concerned, that the doctrine assented to by the majority does in fact belong intrinsically to the deposit of faith bequeathed by the apostles, and as such binding in faith upon the conscience of the individual believer or bishop. (This does not [19] invalidate what has been said above with regard to the *negative* function which such a majority vote has in contributing to the decision of the pope.) A further point is that on a Catholic understanding of the Church no majority decision arrived at in the present can ever prevail over the absolute assent of faith accorded to a given doctrine by the Church of earlier ages. If such a case should arise, the true Church would unquestionably be constituted by the minority alone. This would remain true even if the pope himself took his stand on the side of the majority in such a case, a situation which, as we know, is not regarded by theological tradition as simply and absolutely impossible from the outset.[15]

It must be recognized *a priori* therefore that we can regard the opinion of a majority as theologically relevant only if in coming to a decision on some open question it continues to affirm the absolute assent of faith upheld up to that point by the Church of earlier ages, and moreover only if in arriving at its decision it has worked in positive collaboration with the pope. And in that case the majority is not merely putting forward its opinion in this sense as constituting what it feels to be the better one, but is rather attesting this opinion as commanding the allegiance of its faith. When a majority has arrived at a decision in this way and under these conditions the minority both can and must agree to it if that minority is not insuperably convinced that the decision of the majority goes against the substance of its own faith as a whole as upheld by it up to that point. In that case this decision would show that even the formal authority of the Church's teaching office was an illegitimate presumption.

[15] On this point the ecclesiologies of the Middle Ages were far more open, and despite their universal recognition of the principle, 'Prima sedes a nemine judicatur' they did to a large extent reckon with the possibility that on a very wide variety of grounds, ranging from sickness to heresy, the pope could lose his office. Cf. chiefly H. Zimmermann, *Papstabsetzungen des Mittelalters* (Graz, 1968), and A. Fransen, 'Conciliarism', *Sacramentum Mundi* 1 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 401-403. It is no argument against the kernel of truth in these ideas, which theologically speaking is extremely important, that they could lead to an extreme form of conciliarism.

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The Catholic as such is of course convinced as a matter of his faith that any such radical case will never arise in the Church. In other words: when the pope, together with a majority of the bishops (or, supposing that they are in a minority it is a minority purely in the numerical sense, but one which still gives the agreement of the pope the force of moral law) arrives at a decision which is binding in faith on some open question, then this decision is preserved from any real or radical error by the assistance of the Spirit (though this does not mean that any such decision is in every respect successful in the way in which it is formulated, or that it covers all the [20] factors which such a question may involve of its very nature in a full or adequate way, or that it is opportune etc.). But even the Catholic can, and today actually must concede that it is possible for an individual in the concrete to arrive at a judgement in conscience which cannot be overthrown, that a decision of faith of this kind is radically opposed to the ultimate essence of the Christian faith, and in that case the claim which this teaching authority of the Church makes upon his conscience would lose its validity.

In any case these considerations show that some form of democratic collaboration in the decisions taken by the teaching office as such in the Church is not impossible from the outset, quite apart from the fact that in questions of the Church's practice, life in the Church, and discipline, and also in questions of Church law, it is in principle possible from the outset to accord a far wider sphere for such democratic collaboration to be exercised. Here, too however, the interplay between divine and human law which we have touched on above would have to be more clearly borne in mind than is the case in our present considerations. A further point which has already arisen from the very nature of the case in the present discussion is that any such collaboration on the part of the Church as a whole in the progressive articulation of the faith in the course of history is not present primarily or exclusively in those cases in which this collaboration is manifested in forms which are 'democratic' in an explicit or juridical sense. The derivation of the teaching office from the universal Church as supported and sustained by the Holy Spirit even in the progressive development of her faith is far wider and deeper in its ramifications, and does not begin, as many believe, only at that point at which it is given concrete expression in juridical forms.

What we are considering here is a worldwide Church with many millions of believers, all of them in principle called upon to collaborate. But for technical reasons alone any formal or juridical process of democratization represents no absolute guarantee of the fact that the people of God are effectively and actively taking part in the life of the Church in a way which corresponds to the movement of the Spirit of God. Our experience of the contemporary democracies of the masses, whether in the forms in which these may appear in the western or the eastern spheres, serves to show how cautious we have to be in this matter. It may be argued that the people of the Church should collaborate to a greater extent and more 'democratically' even in the functions of the teaching office, and this cannot be rejected from the outset as un-Catholic. At the same time, however, it should first be shown how some scheme can be devised for [21] achieving this in the concrete which is both realistic and practicable. It should be shown which Catholic Christians have achieved a position in secular society such that they are not merely equipped and willing seriously to take part in such collaboration, but also that they are justified in doing so in ecclesiological terms, and it should be shown how Catholic Christians of this type can be distinguished from the rest. The present-day situation of the Church is one in which we are faced with the phenomenon of individuals only *partially* identifying themselves with her, and so too of varying very greatly in the degree in which they do so identify themselves with the Church. Now in this situation there is a very real danger that under cover of the watchword of democracy many individuals will be carried away from the Church into positions which are un-Christian and un-Catholic. Hence the officially constituted authorities of the Church cannot be blamed when they suspect such dangers to be present and attempt to avert them.

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In this connection a further factor may be pointed out, one which both reveals the relativity of the majority opinion in any voting procedure of the kind of which we have been speaking, and at the same time also enables us to understand that there is an intrinsic connection between the teaching office and the pastoral office as exercised in the Church. In any such voting procedure we are presupposing from the first that both the majority and the minority accept, with the full assent of their faith, the basic substance of the faith, for the decision actually arrived at in any given case is, or is intended to be, an explicitation of this. It is obvious that we must assume this much, but if we do assume this, then strictly speaking it is no less obvious that the decision of the majority materially speaking implies more a specific definition on the Church's own part[16] on the question involved than a decision which is directed against the opposite opinion on the actual matter itself which is concerned as upheld by the minority. In this respect it is ultimately speaking a secondary question whether the parties themselves have been aware that the controversy between them has this special character, or whether they have supposed that they were radically disunited on the actual matter itself. In any case when we look back on history we can recognize retrospectively that the controversies which have taken place between genuine Christians have only been controversies with regard to the terms in which the truths of the faith should be defined. It is not possible here to corroborate this assertion by means of historical [22] examples, nor does the assertion itself imply that it is always easy to distinguish between content and expression in matters of controversy. And again in maintaining this position we are not implying that the controversy with regard to the terms of the definition is in itself a matter of indifference. But it is possible to state that in all decisions in matters of doctrine *one* of the factors included is always that of the terms in which the decision should be defined, because in theological questions it is quite impossible that any given formulation should be the only one and the only correct one. This would only be possible if the truth which it was intended to define contained nothing more than was explicitly stated in the formula. And when it is a theological reality that is being treated of this can never be the case.

However when, if, and to the extent that it is a terminological controversy that is involved in a voting procedure of this kind (whether the parties involved are aware of it as such or not) the taking of such a vote is essentially an exercise of the pastoral office, and it is relatively easy to understand why in this context a majority can be more important than a minority in tipping the scales to one side rather than the other. The majority declares that with regard to the real substance of the faith (which in fact all agree to) it is able to express this better and in a way which is more intelligible to it by means of a particular form of definition, and that therefore, while having to respect the claims of charity towards the others, it has a right to demand that the minority shall fall in with this definition. This is not too much to demand since on the one hand a definition of this kind does not prohibit others from explaining what has been expressed in it in different terms, while on the other any such expression, even among those who respect it, is wide enough and 'analogous' enough to be able to include and implicitly contain within itself the 'special concerns' of the minority.

Now surely this applies especially to the contemporary situation. For today the situation in which we all find ourselves in terms of ideas is such that we are very well able clearly to recognize and to evaluate the historical factors and the analogous nature of any such expression, even, therefore, one that is produced by the official authorities of the Church. The situation of the Church today in terms of theology and speculation is such that we may presume that any authentic, and still more definitorial decisions on doctrine on the part of the Church will in the future consist not so much in fresh explicitations and developments of the

[16] A more detailed treatment of this idea is to be found in K. Rahner and K. Lehmann, 'Kerygma und Dogma', *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 693-696.

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ancient teaching of the Church as in the special emphasis which she gives to particular points of doctrine in order to maintain their truth against false interpretations.

[23] Hence in producing authoritative pronouncements of this kind the Church will not be restricting the necessary scope for interpretation which should be allowed for in a situation of pluralism among the various orthodox theologies. Precisely in the future, therefore, decisions on doctrine on the part of the Church will take the form of 'justified and important' definitive formulae in which to express the one creed of the Church, and will be understood as such. Now on this showing any discovery of truth which is arrived at democratically, even though it transcends mere considerations of 'voting' is both more appropriate to the realities involved and also easier to understand and accept than was the case in earlier times.

So far we have been attempting to consider the teaching office of the Church in its relationship to the Church as a whole. We must now consider the question of the teaching office from yet another point of view. In our introductory remarks we have already drawn attention to the fact that in the usual theology of the seminaries, by reason of the formal and juridical categories in which the nature and power of the teaching office are conceived of, the formal authority to be attached to the teaching office is thought of almost independently of the actual *truth content* which it attests. In this seminary theology the content of the faith on the one hand and the formal authority of the teaching office on the other are presented as two separate entities almost without connection. It is true that it is stated clearly that the teaching office is obviously constituted under divine revelation, that it must be subordinate and obedient to it, and that through the power of the Spirit that has been promised to the Church it will also be preserved in this obedience. But this in itself is not enough really to make clear the precise relationship which exists between the formal authority of the teaching office and the *fides quae* which is intended to mediate it to the *fides qua* of the individual believer. We shall enquire into this relationship in respect both of its essential constitution and of the forms which it inevitably assumes today.

With regard to the basic relationship which constantly exists between the formal authority of the teaching office and the content of the faith which that teaching office is designed to present it must first be stated simply and unambiguously that according to the fundamental theology and the interpretation of the faith of the Catholic Church the formal authority of the teaching office is not the first and most fundamental *datum* in the content of the faith such that all other elements in it are based upon this one as their necessary foundation. There is a well-known saying of Augustine[17] (which unfortunately is quoted all too often and in [24] a sense that is misleading) to the effect that he would not give the allegiance of his faith to the gospels unless the authority of the Church had moved him to do so. Now taken in a strict and absolute sense, and as a universal principle applicable to the faith as such this statement is simply false. Of course it is true as a matter of history that the gospel has come down to me, the individual, historically separated as I am from Christ, through the mediation of the Church. It has come down to me in this sense as that which at once commands and makes possible my belief, as the grace-given power of the Kyrios and as containing the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. But this is still very far from saying that the *formal* authority precisely of the *teaching office* of the Church is in the specifically theological sense the first and most fundamental datum for a Catholic Christian in his faith. Ultimately speaking he believes in the formal authority of the Church's teaching office because prior to this he already believes in God, his grace, in Jesus Christ the crucified and risen Lord, and not *e converso*. In the hierarchy of truths[18] referred to by the Second Vatican Council the fact that

[17] PL 42, 176.

[18] A full treatment of the history of this dogma is to be found in U. Valeske, *Hierarchia veritatum* (Munich, 1968). On the subject itself cf. also H. Mühlen, 'Die Bedeutung der Differenz zwischen Zentraldogmen und Randdogmen für den ökumenischen Dialog', *Freiheit in der Begegnung*, edited by J. L. Leuba and H.

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there is in truth and in reality a teaching office of the Church is not in fact a first and fundamental datum, but a relatively secondary one, though this is not for one moment to deny that this truth does belong, albeit in its due and proper place, to this hierarchy of truths.

Both in reality and also as recognized in the subjective conscience of the believer, the doctrine of the teaching office is itself based upon certain more radical truths of faith and is not either logically or ontologically speaking the basis upon which all else rests. Precisely in order to be Catholic in our belief we must turn Augustine's axiom 'the other way round' by saying 'I would not believe in the authority of the Church if I were not moved to do so by the gospel'. This is not to deny that in the unity of the whole structured hierarchy of the Catholic faith there is also, in a certain sense, a *mutual* relationship of interdependence between the Church, her institutional structures, and her officialdom on the one hand, and the true substance of the faith on the other as recognized in the conscience of the individual believer. Nor do we deny that Christian faith is always the faith of the Church as well.

[25] But in this unity and in this wholly *mutual* relationship, in which each of the individual elements in the faith conditions and modifies the others, there is still an overriding order. From this point of view belief in the Church's teaching office is both objectively and subjectively sustained by a reality of the faith which is prior to this teaching office and to faith in it. Hence too in any book on Catholic fundamental theology even of the traditional kind it is taken for granted – indeed we might almost say too much taken for granted – that the section dealing with the existence and authority of the teaching office in the Church as vested in the pope and bishops is included only at a very late stage. A further point is that the truth that in founding his Church Christ gave it an official authority to teach in this sense in virtue of his own authority and promise is obviously no easier to recognize than any other truths of the Christian faith which subjectively and objectively speaking are of a more fundamental character. Since the Second Vatican Council and in the age of a sincere ecumenism a Catholic should not hesitate to conceded that the more fundamental realities of faith common to all Christians, and at the same time more vital to their salvation (whether logically speaking or at least under God's saving providence as it *de facto* exists) are actually *easier* to apprehend in faith than the specifically Catholic truth of the teaching office of the Church. Now these facts, however self-evident, have certain consequences for the teaching office of the Church as applied in practice which, as I feel, are not always recognized and observed.

When the teaching office of the Church arrives at decisions (whether definitorial or merely provisional, albeit authentic ones) if in doing so it relies simply and exclusively on its own formal authority it is in a real sense acting against the obvious truths mentioned above. It is true that within the theoretical system of the Catholic faith this formal authority is itself an obvious factor. But it is not so in the subjective conscience of the individual Catholic believer to which such a decision is addressed. Here this authority is no primary datum, but rather a dependent function, a truth based upon other truths, indeed a truth which is more assailable and more easily imperilled than the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. Hence in taking such a decision the teaching office of the Church has the duty of showing that the content of this decision does not rest merely on its own formal authority. Rather it must show as clearly and convincingly as possible that it is intrinsically connected with the original basis of the Christian faith in general. In doing this it will at the same time have again and again to enable believers to understand afresh that this authority of the teaching office derives from the basic essence of the Christian faith [26] which the subject to whom this particular decision of the

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Stirnimann (Frankfurt, 1969), pp. 191-227, and P. Schoonenberg, 'Geschichtlichkeit und Interpretation des Dogmas', *Die Interpretation des Dogmas* (Düsseldorf, 1969), pp. 58-110, esp. pp. 80-88.

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teaching office is addressed must already have apprehended prior to any assent on his part to the formal authority of the teaching office.

If, and to the extent that, the Christian faith is ultimately *one* and all elements in it *mutually* condition one another it can uncompromisingly be asserted that there is a mutual interdependence here too. It is just as true to say that the formal authority of the teaching office depends upon the power of the truth of faith as proclaimed to command the allegiance of our faith as to say that the latter depends upon the former. This relationship in which either factor influences the other is distorted, however, if we rely exclusively upon the formal authority of the teaching office. It can be stated absolutely as a matter of principle that in its individual decisions and the preliminary proposals leading up to these the teaching office of the Church acts best and most correctly when it allows the truth which is sustained by grace and inherent in the reality itself which it is treating of and seeking to teach to make its own impact, and allows its own formal authority almost completely to be effaced by giving pride of place to this truth. As we have said this is the right approach to adopt simply because the truth that the teaching office has this formal authority is in any instance supported and kept alive by faith in the fundamental truths of Christianity. Hence in the concrete exercise of its functions the teaching office must again and again re-establish its connections with these truths.

The urgency of the point which we are making here becomes still clearer when we reflect upon the way in which the teaching office of the Church exercises its functions in the situation which prevails *in the present day*. Very many authorities whom we encounter in the world and in the course of human living have a certain power regardless of whether or not the legitimacy of their formal claims to power are recognized by the individual in his own conscience. For the most part these various kinds of authority (that of parents, of groups in secular society, of teachers or experts, or of the state) are reinforced with a certain degree of *power*, whether explicit or implicit, consciously adverted to or unconsciously taken for granted. So far as the conscious awareness of the individual is concerned moral authority and the power accompanying this are far from being clearly distinguishable from one another. When we recognize authority we are very largely, without actually noticing it, submitting ourselves to the power (which itself in turn may take many forms), and when authority is claimed by those in whom it is vested these likewise are aware of and rely upon this *power* which they take for granted without explicitly reflecting upon the fact. This is particularly true in those cases [27] in which the parties involved take it for granted that their authority is accompanied by such power. In such cases authority imposes itself in virtue of the power attached to it and not in virtue of itself. Now right down to these present times in which we live the authority of the Church and of the Churches has had power of this kind which extends to their teaching function as well. They have had this power in virtue of public opinion, many institutional factors, the extremely close connection which they have had with secular society, and all the opportunities they have enjoyed of influencing public awareness in general.

This is not the place to enquire how far such power should be attached to the formal authority of the Church's teaching office as of right, what historical factors and situations have caused this supplementary power to be attached to the teaching office in society and in the awareness of the individual, or what reasons, whether regrettable or providential, have led to a situation in which it has to a large extent lost this power. At any rate the situation which prevails today and which will come to prevail still more in the future is that the power which in earlier times was ascribed to the teaching office in addition to the authority which it was recognized as having in itself has to a large extent disappeared and is in process of disappearing more and more. The teaching office has less and less 'authority' in itself in virtue of this power which was formally attached to it prior to and independent of the assent

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of faith in which the individual recognized its existence as legitimate. In other words what it lacks now is any effective influence upon the individual prior to his assent of faith precisely to this teaching office. The only real significance which it still has depends almost exclusively, and in increasing measure today, upon the question of whether and how far it succeeds in making its own spiritual authority credible on the basis of the gospel itself. Today less than ever before can it assume *a priori* that its own formal validity as a teaching office has already been acknowledged as *de fide* in the conscience of the individual Catholic Christian, and so rely simply and exclusively upon this as a justification of the specific doctrine which it promulgates. Every time a specific doctrine of this kind is promulgated without its own intrinsic claim to truth being made clear (this does not necessarily have to mean rationally comprehensible in itself, but it surely does mean intrinsically intelligible and following logically from the Christian faith as a single whole) it always entails a threat to the formal authority of the teaching office as a whole such that there is a real danger that it will not be acknowledged. The reason is that, as we have already said, this authority does not of itself command any greater degree of credibility in terms of fundamental theology than other [28] truths of the faith. And since today all kinds of purely formal authority are under attack it follows *a fortiori* that this particular kind of authority cannot constitute the fixed and unquestionable point of departure for considering questions of truth in the subjective conscience of the individual with regard to truth. Hence any appeal merely to the formal authority of the teaching office as a factor which is given and can be assumed as obvious and beyond all dispute will to a large extent be ineffective even though in itself it may, from one specific point of view, be perfectly legitimate as following logically from the faith.

Again in the situation which prevails precisely today every time the teaching office proclaims a specific doctrine of the faith it must justify its own formal authority in doing so, and it must of course do this not merely by speaking in abstract terms about its own formal authority, but by establishing the connection between the content of the individual doctrine which it promulgates and the totality of the Christian faith and the Christian interpretation of existence. It must do this in order that it may, to some extent, lighten the burden which is placed upon its own formal authority, and at the same time state the basis on which it itself rests.[19]

In other words: when an individual doctrine is promulgated by the teaching office the actual content of the truth that is proclaimed should impart credibility to the formal authority of the body which proclaims it. It should do this in virtue of the conviction which it carries of its own nature, and which is immanent within itself, and in virtue of the clear connection which it has with the totality of the faith. Moreover it must do this in a manner which is in conformity with the contemporary situation as well as the actual truth which is involved. This does not render the significance of the formal authority of the teaching office superfluous. On the contrary what we are requiring here is, as we have already said, justified on the grounds that the formal teaching authority is based on a truth which is prior to itself, and on the fact that the individual truth which is being taught can never be a truth of the faith as an isolated doctrine, but must always be so only in virtue of its connection with the totality of the Christian faith in general.

If these two factors are borne in mind then the requirement which we have stated above is in a real sense self-evident; the requirement, namely, that the teaching office itself must so act as to render itself in a certain sense, and speaking approximately, more and more superfluous. This requirement is further strengthened by the fact that it would be quite [29] untrue to say that the progressive development of the Christian faith has ever found its anchor-holds or its

[19] It may be doubted whether all the more recent pronouncements of the Church's teaching office have in fact met this requirement.

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turning-points first and last in the teaching office as one particular institution within the totality of the Church. This is of course not to exclude the fact that in the life of the individual believer and of the Church as a whole particular situations have arisen, can arise, and will arise in the concrete in which the assurance that a specific doctrine is a genuine explicitation of the faith as a single whole is provided by the pronouncements of the teaching office.

It is not possible here to develop these considerations any further so as to show, by means of individual examples of the practice of the Church's teaching office, that in the life of the Church in the concrete it has consistently been taken for granted right from the first that these requirements must be fulfilled. Still less should our readers be left with the impression that in what has been said here everything is covered or at least touched upon which it is necessary to demand if in the contemporary crisis of authority the teaching office is to achieve what it is capable of in order to survive this crisis. The present-day situation is such that many further consequences arise from it in addition to those mentioned here which have a bearing on the continuing function of the teaching office. Thus for instance a situation has arisen today in the development of ideas in which it is necessary and inevitable that there should be a pluralism of theologies even within the one Church and in spite of the unity of her creed. This again implies a quite new situation for the exercise of the Church's teaching office, because precisely in its pronouncements and critical judgements it is quite impossible any longer to assume that there is any one theology common to all with a single uniform language.[20] It would even be possible to raise the further question of whether the future development of dogma in the Catholic Church, and so too the further functioning of the teaching office either can or will lead to further dogmatic explicitations of individual points of doctrine which, as it were, are still waiting to be developed over and above the existing hierarchy of truths, or whether alternatively the future task of the teaching office will consist simply in preserving the basic substance of the Christian message in a far more radical and concentrated way than hitherto.

If we hold the second opinion then it will become still clearer that in the present and future situation of crisis the best and most effective way for the Church's teaching office to defend its own formal authority is for it to present itself as the official body which bears witness with the uncompromising courage and hope that arises from faith itself to that basic [30] substance of the faith which is common to all Christians. Perhaps we ought to express this more cautiously by saying that this is what ought to be the case. If the teaching office of the Catholic Church bears witness with unwavering faithfulness to faith in God and Jesus Christ, and again and again gives fresh life to this faith, then even it has its greatest opportunity for achieving advances in the ecumenical field.

[20] See n. 11.

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THE POINT OF DEPARTURE IN THEOLOGY FOR DETERMINING THE NATURE OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE

The priestly office in the Catholic Church is an extremely complex entity, and one which is subject to historical changes. As realized in the concrete its form is determined not merely by the dogmatically definable nature of the Church herself, or by its own real theological nature, which belongs to the 'jus divinum' of the Church, but also by the concrete forms which the Church has assumed under historical influences and, arising from this, by the changing positions which the priest has occupied within the Church as a society, as also by the role ascribed to him by secular society. Our present considerations, however, will be confined merely to the point of departure in *theology* for determining the nature of the priestly office in the Church. All other factors will remain outside the scope of our present study even though they do contribute to the contemporary crisis in our understanding of the significance of the priesthood at least as much as the specifically theological problems which it entails. Obviously there is a constant and active interconnection between the theological essence of the priesthood which abides, and the other basic factors and influences in history and society which play their part in determining its form in the concrete. To that extent these questions too (even though they will remain untreated of here) constitute the background for the question with which we are specifically concerned. It is true that even from the point of view of its theological nature the priestly office is an extremely complex entity, so that we must guard against an over-'speculative' approach in which we attempt to deduce the fulness of its reality by a process of logical deduction from one simple and radical characteristic inherent in its nature. But however true this may be, still it is manifest from the contemporary theory and practice of priestly life that we *must raise the question of* where the *initial point of departure* lies for determining the theological nature of the priesthood. Because only in this way can it be made clear what belongs to its abiding nature and what pertains [32] rather to those changeable factors which are the outcome of historical conditions and the circumstances of particular epochs.[1]

Preliminary Remarks

[1] It is impossible in a brief study such as this to set forth each individual idea in detail. For this reason I may refer to other basic studies in which I have defined my position on the theme in question: K. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Freiburg, 1963); *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 149-215 (those charged with ensuring that the Church shall achieve the due fulness of her own nature), esp. 154 ff. (the institutional and charismatic factors), 189 ff. (the priesthood and the individual priest) (New and expanded edition in preparation [2nd ed. 1970]); *Vom Sinn des kirchlichen Amtes* (Freiburg, 1966); *Knechte Christi* (Freiburg, 1967); 'Priestly Existence', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 239-262; cf. also 'One Mediator and Many Mediations', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 169-186; also cf. my address to the Catholic Conference entitled 'Dogmatische Grundlagen des priesterlichen Selbstverständnisses', *Mitten in dieser Welt* edited by the Zentralkomitee der Deutschen Katholiken (Paderborn, 1968), pp. 96-115 and the study entitled 'Theological Reflections on the Image of the Priest of Today and Tomorrow' in this volume pp. 39-60; on the concept of office cf. also my commentary on the third chapter of 'Lumen Gentium', The Constitution on the Church, *LTK* suppl. I (Freiburg, 1966), 210-246 (on No. 28 cf. the commentary by A. Grillmeier, *ibid*., 247-255).

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1. Both from the point of view of the concrete contemporary situation of the priest and also on theological grounds there seem to be disadvantages in taking as our initial starting-point for defining the nature of the priestly office those *sacramental powers* which, according to the teaching of the Councils (chiefly that of Trent) belong to him alone in contrast to the laity and the lower ranks in the hierarchy of order (especially that of deacon). The powers we are speaking of here, therefore, are those of presiding at the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacramental forgiveness of sins (including the administration of the anointing of the sick). There is no need here to enlarge upon the fact that at least in the present age this approach can be adopted only with difficulty, if indeed it is not totally inadequate as a primary and basic starting-point for understanding the true nature of the priesthood.[2] In any case this [33] starting-point would have no directly perceptible basis in scripture.

2. We can also see disadvantages in seeking to define the nature of the priestly office in the first instance *on the basis of the concept of* '*mediator*'. This approach too would not find any immediate support from the witness of the bible, for in scripture the concept of mediator is applied only to Jesus Christ. Such an approach would immediately give rise to the difficult questions of how in more precise terms we should conceive of participation in the mediatorship of Christ through the priestly office, what the connection would be between a participation of this kind and the other functions of mediating salvation which are exercised in the Body of Christ even apart from the priestly office, how any such mediatorship should more precisely be conceived of seeing that after all it must always be a mediation between God and the individual man endowed with grace such that the mediator makes them immediately present to one another. Such an approach would also have to come to terms with the dogmatic principle that all sacramental mediation constitutes only one particular manifestation, albeit an effective one, of a grace-given relationship of man to God which extends throughout all dimensions of human life even without any mediation on the part of the official priesthood.

3. It is admitted both from the point of view of biblical study, the history of dogma, and theology, that in order to obtain any understanding of the theological nature of the priestly office (as distinct from the 'episcopal' office, the 'diaconate' and the 'lay state') we must not immediately assume that there is a hierarchical order in the Church divided into three stages, and that this sets its holders apart from the rest of the 'people of God'. On the contrary the approach which should be adopted – though of course this is not possible here – is to take as our starting-point the nature of the Church as a sacrament of God's utterance of himself to the [34] world as accepted in faith, hope, and love. From this point we should go on to show – always of course with reference to scripture – that the Church as understood in this sense is always in need of that which can be called 'office', the nature of which is determined on the

[2] On this approach the tendency would be to take the hierarchical element and the traditional concept of the priestly ministry too much for granted.

For this reason it is, however, extremely questionable whether any adequate starting-point can be found by envisaging merely the functions of the priest as leader of the community or the merely spiritual element in his ministry. On this cf. also H. U. von Balthasar, 'Das priesterliche Amt', *Civitas* 23 (1968), pp. 794-797; W. Breuning, 'Zum Verständnis des Priesteramtes vom "Dienen" her', *Lebendiges Zeugnis* (1969), pp. 24-40; J. Ratzinger, 'Zur Frage nach den Sinn des priesterlichen Dienstes', *GuL* 41 (1968), pp. 347-376; W. Kasper, 'A New Dogmatic Outlook on the Priestly Ministry', *Concilium* 3/5 (Pastoral), 1969, pp. 12-18.

In this connection cf. likewise E. Niermann, 'Priest' *Sacramentum Mundi* 5 (New York and London, 1970), pp. 97-101; O. Semmelroth, 'Die Präsenz der drei Ämter Christi im gemeinsamen und besonderen Priestertum der Kirche', *Theologie und Philosophie* 44 (1969), pp. 181-195; H. Vorgrimler, 'Der theologische Ort des Priesters', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* IV (Freiburg, 1969), pp. 432 ff.; K. Lehmann, 'Das dogmatische Problem des theologischen Ansatzes zum Verständnis des Amtspriestertums', *Existenzprobleme des Priesters*, Münchener Akademie-Schriften der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern 50 (Munich, 1969), pp. 121-175.

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one hand by the nature of the Church herself and on the other (since it signifies a particular function in the Church) must also be negatively circumscribed and distinguished from other ways in which the Church achieves her own due fulness. This factor of office is primarily one as the Church herself is ultimately one. This *single* office can and must be subdivided into particular departments both in respect of its holders and also with regard to the task and functions which it entails of its very nature because in view of the nature of the Church as a socially constituted reality it is quite impossible to conceive of it assuming any other form. But the ways in which this subdivision of the priestly office can be achieved are very varied, and this remains true even if we assume that a development took place during the apostolic age in which the priestly office was divided into three ranks and that this is permanently and irreversibly binding upon the post-apostolic Church and is in this sense '*juris divini*'. For in the New Testament itself this subdivision of a *single* sacrament of order is still extremely fluid. The question of precisely what functions are to be attached to each of the three degrees of order (assuming for our present purposes that there are indeed three degrees) still remains to a large extent an open one both in the New Testament itself and in later ages. From the standpoint of dogmatic theology, even if we recognize this division of the priestly office into three degrees this does not mean that other functions, no less genuine, may not arise within and in addition to the functions attached to these three degrees, albeit as the outcome of the fresh subdivisions of the *single* priestly office which emerge from the ever-changing conditions of history. Indeed the very fact that in the course of history further and quite different official functions and holders of official functions can be discerned in addition to, and also within, the three degrees into which the priestly office is initially divided is in itself enough to demonstrate this point. The same is also true with regard to the process by which such a function is sacramentally imparted to a specific holder of office. The idea that it is only the official process by which the orders of bishop, 'priest' and deacon are imparted that can constitute a sacrament, so far from being part of the Church's official doctrine, is actually in contradiction to the theology at least of the Middle Ages. In the light of these considerations, which we have only been able to touch upon here, it is theologically speaking perfectly conceivable (though naturally the question [35] of whether it would be opportune still remains open) that, while preserving the three degrees of the priestly office in some sense, some different way might be devized of distributing and sacramentally conferring the various functions contained within this *single* priestly office in the Church. Thus for instance the concept of the 'priesthood' might come to cover a very different range of functions in respect of both the official role of the priest in the Church and of the sacramental powers conferred upon him. Again it is possible for there to be other sacramentally conferred 'leadership' functions (e.g. those of 'teacher' or 'community leader') apart from the priesthood itself. We may defer to tradition and the terminology in vogue at the moment by confining our use of the term 'priestly' as applied to such functions only to those which include presiding over the celebration of the Eucharist and the rest of the so-called sacramental powers. But this precisely does not invalidate the point that the Church is free to choose between a wide range of possibilities, or that she can exercise her own free judgement as to how best to divide up this *single* office between various functionaries according to the requirements of the situation at any given time, or how to distribute the functions themselves inherent in this *single* office as determined by the very nature of the Church herself.

4. There is a further point which we must not overlook in our quest for a simple point of departure comprehensible in terms of biblical theology and at the same time capable of 'realization' in the current circumstances, for determining the nature of the priestly office. This point is that in principle the word which has been entrusted to the Church has the force of an event, an exhibitive and effective character. It does not imply merely the communication of some reality which exists in total independence of the actual doctrinal

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process of communicating it. The Church fulfils her own nature as the sacrament of God's self-utterance to the world in the word, and hence this word has in principle an exhibitive character. That which this word proclaims takes place through it. As with human words in other contexts so too with this word the degree of 'event' character to be attributed to it is essentially variable. And it is in that form which we call the sacrament in the theological and technical sense of the term that this 'event' character achieves its highest point. Nevertheless the fact that this word is essentially variable in the degree of 'event' character to be attributed to it and in respect of its power to take 'effect' does not deprive it of that basic force inherent in all the Church's words of rendering present the single event of salvation both as anamnesis and as prognosis. The proclaiming of the word and the dispensing of the sacrament, therefore, spring [36] from a single common root and are ultimately one in nature.[3]

The Point of Departure Itself

In the light of these considerations we can arrive at the following definition (although it must be admitted that in doing so we are adopting a somewhat audacious 'short-cut'): *The priest is the proclaimer of the word of God, officially commissioned and appointed as such by the Church as a whole in such a way that this word is entrusted to him in the supreme degree of sacramental intensity inherent in it. His work as proclaimer of the word in this sense is essentially directed towards the community* (which is at least potentially in existence). To express the matter quite simply, he is the one sent by the Church to proclaim the gospel in her name. He is this in the supreme mode in which this word can be realized, that namely of the anamnesis of the Death and Resurrection of Christ which is achieved in the celebration of the Eucharist. In defining the concept of the priesthood in these terms we are not seeking to set it apart from the episcopal office. The very fact that mediaeval theology denied that episcopal consecration had a distinct sacramental character in itself shows that it is not altogether easy to separate the two entities one from another even though since the Second Vatican Council the position of the mediaeval theologians can no longer be maintained.[4] On the basis of this definition of the concept it becomes clear that the priest is not simply a 'cult official',[5] and that this task of bearing witness to the word of God as exhibitive and effective of salvation is one that lays claims upon his whole existence (viewing this [37] from the theological standpoint), regardless of the extent to which it may also determine his calling in secular society or how far it may or may not supply his economic needs. Since the essence of his priesthood consists in proclaiming the word of God this imparts to it from the outset a *missionary* character. It orientates him from the outset towards a community, regardless of whether he can assume this as already in some sense in existence, or whether he has to create it *ab initio*; and regardless too of what the precise sociological constitution of this community may be.

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[3] For a more detailed justification of this point cf. 'The Word and the Eucharist', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 253-286; 'The Theology of the Symbol', *ibid*., pp. 221-252; 'The Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 84-102. We may refer to the points that have been demonstrated in the articles referred to in order to guard against any misunderstandings of our observations here.

[4] On this problem cf. chiefly Y. Congar, 'Tatsachen, Problem und Betrachtungen hinsichtlich der Weihevollmacht und der Beziehungen zwischen dem Presbyterat und dem Episkopat', *Heilige Kirche* (Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 285-316; also L. Ott, *Das Weihesakrament*, *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte* IV/5 (Freiburg, 1969).

[5] The limitations of this idea even prior to the Tridentine decree are very ably demonstrated by K. Lehmann, 'Das dogmatische Problem des theologischen Anstazes zum Verständnis des Amtspriestertums'. *Existenzprobleme des Priesters*. Münchener Akademie-Schriften der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern 50 (Munich, 1969), pp. 121-175.

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What we have said does not rule out either the possibility or the fact of there being quite different ways in which the 'ministry of the word' may be realized, these too being 'official' ways and capable of being sacramentally imparted to an individual as a commission from the Church.

In this connection the *concrete form* which a priestly commission of this kind may assume in the social structure of the Church and in secular society may *vary very greatly*, and many of the functions which are *de facto* exercised by priests can in practice also be conceived of as special and non-priestly official functions in the Church without the theological essence of the priesthood itself being affected by this. The way in which the word is proclaimed, the concrete form of the community to which the priest is attached, the precise manner in which the various official functions, whether actual or possible, are co-ordinated in the Church, and the status of the priest in secular society – all these are factors which can vary very greatly. But we should not identify all these from the outset with that which constitutes the real theological essence of the priesthood. Not only are all these factors subject to change as a matter of empirical fact, but the Church herself ought actively to take the initiative in imparting ever new forms to them. Up to the present there has been a failure to realize sufficiently the extent to which official functions in the Church in general and the priesthood in particular are capable of being changed in this way both interiorly and exteriorly. Often the indelible character of the priesthood has been appealed to by those opposed to ideas of change of this sort. Contemporary exegesis, the history of dogma and of the Church, the sociology of the Church, and the needs of the Church in the present day all compel us to a radical re-appraisal of the mutable and immutable factors in the Catholic priesthood. If this re-appraisal is carried through boldly enough two points will become clear: first, there is indeed an abiding element in the priestly office such as justifies an individual in the concrete circumstances of his life as a man of today in entering upon it boldly and confidently; second, from the standpoint of dogmatic theology almost unlimited scope is available to the Church in subdividing and [38] giving concrete form to her official institutions in those ways which most effectively correspond to her own mission and the contemporary situation.

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3

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PRIESTLY IMAGE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

I

I must begin by saying that I am well aware of the fact that the article which follows represents only a very small selection, based on my own subjective preferences, from the totality of the subject-matter which falls under the heading mentioned in the title. The subject of our consideration is connected with so many problems in the fields of biblical theology, dogmatics, the history of religion, psychology, the sociology of religion, social politics, canon law and pastoral theology that in our present treatment our choice of subject-matter will almost of necessity be an arbitrary one, and we can say only very little on the subject as a whole.

With regard to the priestly office and the priest's own personal understanding of his office we find ourselves in a period of transition which is conditioned by both theological and social factors. Without prejudice to the fundamental theological nature of the institution of the Catholic priesthood – something that is inherent in the nature of the Church herself – the concrete form which the priestly ministry assumes in the course of the history of the Church can, may, and indeed should undergo repeated modifications. The very fact that the Church herself both is and should be an historical entity is in itself enough to make this necessary. The actual rate at which changes of this kind take place is not always the same. In the last hundred and fifty years we have lived through an epoch in which the concrete form of the institution of the Catholic priesthood has been relatively fixed and immutable both with regard to the priest's own theological understanding of his own function and with regard to his position in the Church, as also in secular society. Today, however, we are certainly in a situation in which the process of such changes is notably accelerated. The old image still survives. The old image still defends itself. But suddenly the old image is no longer taken for granted, and is [40] threatened. The new image makes itself felt, but has not yet acquired any clear outlines. In such a period of transition and the uncertainty which it inevitably entails, in which experiment is justified and tentative trials are made, in which there is a right and a wrong way of holding firm to the traditional and the accustomed, we priests must maintain an attitude of patience and courage with ourselves, our office, and the Church whom we serve. We must learn to live with those factors in our office which are questionable, and which today we must inevitably feel as burdensome. We must calmly endure those elements in our priestly situation which seem to be troubled, obscure and confused. We cannot simply entrench ourselves in the accustomed ways, in that which has been tried and proved over a long period and enacted a thousand times over, nor can we, simply by a revolutionary act of force, produce in priests *ex nillilo sui et subjecti* that conception of their own role, that mode of priestly life and work, which future generations of priests are perhaps destined to have the happiness of achieving in all its classic and fully refined purity in the near or more distant future.

Such problems in understanding one's own role arise in other callings too in virtue of changes in the social situation, and the individuals concerned cannot forcibly apply that interpretation of their role which is appropriate to the present to the future also, because problems of this kind call for concrete decisions and not merely speculative considerations. No-one is free to choose any situation he likes for his life, and hence it is that we priests of

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today have had the great task and burden imposed upon us of enduring this period of transition in patience and hope. Yet this is something which God can demand of a priest and a Christian. Sometimes from sheer perplexity and insecurity we find ourselves asking what the role of the priest of the future is to be, and how he is to work. But this has nothing to do with prophesying, the capricious conjuring up of fantasies, or wishful thinking and dreaming. What is involved in such a line of enquiry is simply a realistic confrontation with a future state of affairs, in so far as we are already in a position to foresee this, in order (as far as possible and with all necessary provisos) to deduce consequences from this for the priestly way of life. Our uncertainties with regard to the form which the priesthood will take in the future – uncertainties which oppress us so much today, and in many respects even reduce us to perplexity (something which we can freely admit to ourselves) – are perfectly reconcilable with the firm and unquestioning conviction of faith that the official institution of the priesthood will always exist in the Church.

For at least fifteen hundred years, and since the much criticized Constantine [41] era, the institution and function of the priest in the Church have also come to be regarded as a profession so far as the world is concerned, one which, like any other profession, has been fitted almost without any friction into the structure of secular society adopted by the *corpus christianum*. For this, after all, has been more or less identical with society at the political level. Certainly from the theological point of view the priesthood has always been a profession *sui generis*, with powers and functions which distinguish this particular office from any other worldly calling. Nevertheless within secular society at the social and political level the priest as such has himself had a definite place of his own, carrying a social prestige more or less inherent in the office itself and independent of the personality of its holder, and carrying also a degree of economic support accorded to the priest by secular society, albeit in the most varied forms. In virtue of these the priestly office has been a profession in the normal and modern sense of the term. The priest has had a function in human society which has been recognized and valued by that society itself. It has been taken for granted that the divine calling to the priesthood is at the same time an earthly profession too.

There is nothing in the nature of the priesthood itself which makes this necessary. Nor can we, on the basis of our personal conviction of faith, assert from the outset that this will continue to be the case. The priestly vocation and the office of the priesthood need not necessarily or in all cases also imply a profession taken for granted as such in society. There can be great differences between a vocation and a profession. Indeed there already are in the secular sphere vocations, missions, and forms of human activity extending even into the public life of society which do not *ipso facto* imply any particular profession which is either desired, expected or *ipso facto* recognized as a way of earning one's living by society itself. In fact the very nature of missions of this sort can be imperilled to the utmost in those cases in which they are also institutionalized and accepted as ways of earning one's living in society. This is the case, for instance, with poets, philosophers, artists, or the prophets of a new ideology. Even in the secular sphere there can be a great difference between vocation and profession. The tension between the two may be so great that it can actually be a criterion of the genuineness of a vocation of this kind that it is impossible to institutionalize this vocation in any calling such as society can recognize. Now if this is already true in the secular sphere then the priestly vocation can certainly not *ipso facto* and as a matter of course be conceived of, without any further distinction, according to the conceptual model of a profession in society, even though a habitual outlook extending [42] over a millenium and a half represents a constant temptation to us to conceive of the priestly vocation in these terms. Today we are actually in a position to say with Paul in a completely realistic and objective manner that he who ministers at the altar should also live by the altar. Nevertheless in this period of transition we will have to ask ourselves again and again whether from the very heart

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and centre of our existence we are succeeding in really understanding and constantly renewing our acceptance of our own priesthood without tacitly attaching to this understanding the prior condition that the priesthood itself must be capable of being lived in such a way that it also constitutes our worldly profession.

II

After these preliminary remarks let us attempt to develop a few theological considerations with regard to the nature of the priesthood. This is something which has become obscure to many priests of today, not merely because the social status which it carries no longer appears to them to be taken for granted and secure, but also for theological reasons. A fresh problem has arisen with regard to the very relationship between that which is religious in the sacramental sense on the one hand and the secular on the other quite in general. This is because modern man has the impression that if he is to find God at all he must seek him in the sphere of his secular and everyday life, that that which is cultic and religious in the specific sense is *ipso facto* and of itself suspect, that it is 'religion' rather than Christian 'faith'. In the light of the New Testament a question arises ever anew of whether the presbyter of the primitive Church should be interpreted at all in terms of the religious category of the priest, that is to say the 'mediator' between the holy God and an unholy people empowered by a higher authority for cultic activities. In the light of the true and biblical doctrine of the royal priesthood of the holy covenant people of God the question presents itself of what place there can still be on such a view for the official priest within this holy covenant people, seeing that its relationship to God is immediate. How can any such official priesthood still constitute a special calling, and that too both in the society of the Church as such and at the same time in secular society. These are a few specific reasons for the sense of insecurity that a priest feels in his understanding of his own role. They relate to the official priesthood as such. But to these and similar specific reasons other and more general ones must be added, reasons which, though they are less specific, are nevertheless [43] far-reaching in their effects. The authentically religious element as it exists today – even when it is a real and living force, and indeed most of all here – manifests itself as that about which we maintain a tactful silence, that which must not be spoken of, that which does not fall within the sphere of social and institutional policy making.

Here we have only been able to indicate these reasons for the insecurity which the priest feels in interpreting his own role. But in response to these reasons it cannot be our task at this point to present a biblical theology defining the precise nature of the apostle, the disciple, the presbyter, the deacon, the bishop, the prophet, the teacher in the Church. As found in the New Testament all these concepts are still fluid both in themselves and in their mutual relationship to one another. It is by no means the case that in the New Testament they always have the same meaning, and it is a difficult question, and one which has certainly not yet fully been solved, to decide precisely what elements in all that is referred to by such terms as so many functions in the life of the Church have entered into the hierarchically ordered offices of bishop, priest and deacon as we have them today, and what elements in these primitive functions are still really present apart from these offices in the contemporary Church, although, it may be, in quite anonymous forms or existing under different designations. Here we must confine ourselves to a few theological considerations which on the one hand can be deduced from a wholly traditional theology of the sacrament of order, and which on the other hand still serve to show how even today the essence of the Catholic priesthood can still be conceived of as a unity, although one that is still at the same time vital and capable of change.

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If we wish to achieve a genuine theological understanding of the nature of the ministerial functions in the Church which we designate as her official priesthood then we must take as our starting-point the Church as one and whole. An alternative would be to interpret the priesthood of the Church whether explicitly or unconsciously in terms of a general conception of the priest as the mediator endowed with higher faculties between a sacral dimension belonging to God as holy on the one hand, and a secular and unholy world on the other. This concept of the priesthood would be worked out in terms of this history and phenomenology of religion in general. But if we adopted this approach we would constantly be in danger of misconceiving the true nature of that function in the Church which we nowadays designate as the priesthood, departing in this to some extent from the linguistic usage of scripture. We can legitimately designate this function as the priesthood, provided only that we overcome [44] the dangers of misunderstanding which such a concept entails. We should take as our starting-point a concept of the Church as one and whole and achieve an understanding of what is special in the function which the presbyters in the Church take upon themselves in the light of the nature of the Church herself.

God loves the *world*. His grace is at work everywhere and in every age. Considered as God's self-bestowal offered to man it summons man in all dimensions, including the 'secular one', to a decision: the decision namely of whether or not he accepts this self-offering of God in the living of his everyday life, although his acceptance of it may perhaps be at a quite unexplicit level. If the 'sacral' is ultimately constituted by the grace of God, in which God becomes the sustaining basis, the ultimate depths, and the absolute future of man, then in this ultimate sense there is no sacral sphere such as could be marked off as the holy temple and set apart from a profane and Godless world, as though it were only there, and not here, that the holy God of eternal life was waiting for us and was to be found. There is only one ultimate line of division between the secular and the sacral, *that* namely defined by the mortal guilt of man's refusal of God, God who wills his salvation to be everywhere and in all dimensions of man. In relation to this sanctification of the secular world even the Church as a whole is simply the basic sacramental sign of the fact that God has, in this sense, loved the world itself. When the will of God towards the world as forgiving it and permeating it with his own divinity is explicitly proclaimed in this Church in the word of preaching, in the creed, in the sacral sign, then, while this proclamation is certainly effective, what it proclaims is not a saving event which takes place only in the explicitly sacral sphere of the proclamation itself. What this proclamation constitutes rather is an explicit revelation of a saving will on God's part which is addressed in the form of judgement and grace to the whole world in all its dimensions and epochs, and which can still achieve victory even in those spheres in which it is never accepted at all at the level of conscious and explicit decision. For the acceptance can take a purely anonymous form and consist simply in maintaining integrity and honesty throughout the vicissitudes of life.

From this point of view alone, then, the Church as a whole is not simply identical with the salvation of the world. Rather she constitutes the historical and symbolic manifestation of this salvation, the basic sacrament of salvation for the world. Now if this is true, then still more caution must be brought to bear if we are rightly to define the nature of one specific function within this Church. The officially ordained priest is not the sacral representative of God who is equipped with celestial powers and [45] set apart from an unholy people by God. Rather he is the bearer of one specific and necessary function within a people that has already been sanctified by God. The universal priesthood is not an entity deduced from the official priesthood by a process of metaphorical refinement. Rather it constitutes the sustaining basis for this official priesthood. It is because there is a holy covenant people, because the Church as one and whole constitutes the historical and social manifestation of God's will to bring universal salvation to the world as eschatologically victorious, because the Church is she

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who makes manifest this victory of God's universal will to save – it is because of this that there can be within her such a specific function as the official priesthood. There must be an official institution of this kind in the Church because the Church is an entity which, of its very nature, must necessarily have directive functions at the social and historical levels too, through which she becomes apprehensible and effective for the individuals within her and about her. But for this very reason the nature of these directive functions at the social level is in its turn determined by the nature of the Church herself. This does not exclude, but rather includes the fact that as applied to the individual holder of such functions it both can and must be said that he receives his commission to exercise such functions from God and Christ, and is not commissioned to exercise them as it were from below by the multitude of individual members within the Church inasmuch as this multitude can be thought of as prior to the Church herself as constituted as a society, in other words as structurally organized by her official institutions. Certainly the Church only becomes concrete and effective to the extent that one factor, albeit not the only one, by which she is constituted is the factor of officialdom within her considered as one particular function. But for this very reason this element of officialdom derives its nature, its eschatological character, its special features, and its limits from the Church considered as a whole and as one. In the light of this we can understand, for instance, that it is only a baptized individual who can be a priest, that the Eucharist which he celebrates is from the outset the Eucharist of the holy people of God, that he can only teach inasmuch as he himself hears in a spirit of belief and inasmuch as it is the faith of the universal Church that he preaches, for the Church as hearing and as encompassed by the victorious grace of God is she who is indefectible. We can understand also that all sacramental power that is conferred empowers the individual to achieve a fulfilment of the Church's own nature, and to do so in such a way that the recipient of the sacrament does not merely remain passive, but himself makes a positive contribution towards this self-fulfilment of the Church in which she makes actual her [46] own nature as the basic sacrament of salvation for the world. In fact this is the almost universal teaching of the theologians, at least with regard to the sacrament of penance.

We should conceive of the priestly office, then, from the standpoint of the Church. We should think of it not as a power which in the first instance sets its holder over against the Church as the people of God, but as the empowering of an individual in one specific area to achieve the fulfilment of that which the Church is as a whole, and moreover, that fulfilment which she must achieve in this way in virtue of her official ministry. And once we recognize this then we can understand how very cautious we must be in enquiring into the specific characteristics proper to the ministerial priesthood in relation to the rest of the members of the Church.

In the case of many priests today we find a degree of insecurity with regard to their understanding of their own priesthood which strikes us as almost neurotic. The question is raised of what a priest really is and why there still are priests today, seeing that on the one hand almost everything which he himself has the power to do and does could also be done by others, and on the other that the little which, according to the teaching of the Catholic faith, can be done only by ordained priests can hardly constitute the content and the function of a 'principal calling'. Certainly the following proposition is true: according to Catholic teaching and practice there is little in that which constitutes the normal activity of a priest engaged in the pastoral ministry which could not also be done by a 'layman'. At least provided that authority is granted on the part of the hierarchical Church (something which it is perfectly well able to do) teaching and directing, indeed baptizing itself, are not acts for which priestly ordination is absolutely required, although in concrete living practice all these constitute the principle part of the priests' vocational work. Of course there is a whole range of further and more subtle problems which might be treated of in this connection. But abstracting from

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these we can certainly raise a further question with regard to those functions of presiding over the celebration of the Eucharist, the administration of the sacrament of penance and the anointing of the sick which, according to Catholic teaching, can be exercised only by an ordained priest. Even if a special 'class' has to be constituted within the hierarchical structure of the Church in order to cater for these functions we are of course entitled to ask whether in themselves they are capable of constituting a 'calling' in the sense in which this is understood in secular society, one namely which, even from the secular point of view, constitutes the main occupation of an individual in the same way that an official post in secular society does.

[47] Yet if we present the question in this way and divide the function of the ministerial priesthood into its individual components in this way then, even though in doing so we are following the pattern of the established theology of the seminaries itself, we are still putting the question falsely. In this connection it may be pointed out that the problem which we are treating of here is still not precisely the problem of whether the priestly office in the Catholic Church should necessarily also have the status of a profession in the secular sense. This problem of the professionalization of the priesthood, as it is called by the contemporary sociologists of religion, is one with which we shall have to concern ourselves at a later stage. But in order to recognize how false it is to present the question in the manner envisaged here, and in order to achieve an understanding of how the question should rightly be presented, we may begin by pointing to an analogous example, namely the recent revival of the diaconate in the Latin Church.

In the discussion which has taken place in recent years both before and after the Council, the objection has often been raised even by such personages as Cardinal Ottaviani that the diaconate comprises no tasks or functions whatever which, provided the Church authorises it, could not be exercised by laymen also. From this point of view the problem with which we are here concerned arises still more acutely than in the case of the official priesthood. For in this case there are at least some powers and functions which, according to Catholic teaching, can only be attributed to the ordained priest. Nevertheless in response to this attitude of scepticism with regard to the diaconate and its renewal it has rightly been pointed out that to present the question precisely in *this* way is false. It has been emphasized that what is in question here is not whether in ordaining an individual as deacon we are transferring functions to him which he would not otherwise possess and hence has not previously exercised. The question is rather concerned with a whole unified complex of functions and tasks, reasonable in themselves, which the individual holds and exercises in the name of the Church. Does there exist in the society of the Church an explicitly sacramental form and sacramental seal which can be applied to this unified complex of functions and tasks in such a way as to give the individual concerned an assurance of grace in the exercise of his tasks? The question of the legitimacy and reasonableness of a sacramental order, therefore, is not, in the last analysis to be answered by pointing out that one or other of the tasks involved in the Church is only possible provided the individual has actually been ordained for it in this way. This question is to be answered rather by applying the principle that it is [48] reasonable and in accordance with the nature of the Church to confer a sacramental seal and sacramental power upon the official and institutionalized functions exercised in the Church as a society, and moreover this remains true even in those cases in which such functions and tasks are 'in themselves' possible and indeed *de facto* exercised in the Church even when no such ordination has been conferred. The nature of sacramental ordination and the purpose for which it is designed are such that it does not depend upon whether it relates to something and achieves some form of consecration which would otherwise not exist at all.

In the light of this it becomes clear that priestly ordination is in principle and from the outset also related to such priestly functions as are possible and actually practised in themselves even without ordination, such functions, therefore, as teaching, directing,

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preaching the gospel in the name of the Church and in the word of authority that claims the obedience of faith. In other contexts too sacraments are in fact – especially so far as their recipients are concerned – not symbolic events such that without them the actual reality signified, the *res sacramenti*, would not be possible. Rather they are the historical, social and effective manifestation of those events of grace which are also possible even apart from them, and the effects of which extend beyond that sphere within which these events require to be made manifest at the sacramental level also. Grace, justification, and even unity with the Body of Christ in his Spirit (the *res sacramenti* in the Eucharist) are in fact possible and become a reality even apart from baptism, the sacrament of penance and the Eucharist. And yet this does not mean that we have either to deny or to obscure our obligation to receive these sacraments or the '*necessitas medii*' attached to them. In an analogous way, therefore, priestly ordination can perfectly well be applied to the totality of the priestly office as this is exercised in the concrete in the Church. The basic question with regard to the essence of the priestly office, therefore, is not 'What is it which the priest alone can do?' but rather this: Let us say that what the priest assumes and brings to its fulness in his office is a complex of tasks and functions deriving its meaning from the nature of the Church herself, so that it is this that gives the priestly office its justification. On this showing, then, are we to understand this complex as a unity that is conferred on a specific individual so as sacramentally to empower him to exercise these tasks and functions, and so constituting a special status in the Church with a distinctive content of its own?

Certainly with regard to the manifold elements in this complex we can impose a structure upon this complex. Certainly we can take as our [49] starting-point in imposing this structure the fact that the individual is empowered to proclaim that effective and exhibitive word which the priest utters in the name of the Church in the celebration of the Eucharist. We can further freely and unreservedly take into account the fact that the complex of such priestly tasks and functions in the concrete is itself subject to a certain process of change in the course of history – the more so since according to the witness of history itself no absolute lines of demarcation can be deduced by which this complex can be separated off from the complex of functions and tasks belonging to the bishop. But the imposing of a structure of this kind on the complex of priestly tasks and functions, and even the factor of change in the concrete realization of this complex, do not exclude the fact that priestly ordination bears upon the complex of these functions taken as a single whole, that priestly ordination consecrates the individual for this complex and confers it upon him as a single whole, and that it is not confined merely to those functions of the priest which are reserved to the ordained individual exclusively. To put the matter bluntly: the priest is not merely ordained to say Mass, but equally to preach the gospel in the name of the Church, and this statement is not invalidated by the fact that it can be said that preaching the gospel can also be done without ordination. The point in question here, therefore, is simply whether the complex of priestly tasks as it exists *de facto* in the present constitutes, when viewed as a whole, a meaningful complex of tasks and functions which must be present in the Church. Now this is a question which can unreservedly and unambiguously be answered in the affirmative, and that too even if we leave the question of whether any particular element in this complex will also continue to be included in it in the future.

In order to understand this more clearly we must first go back somewhat further in history. We should not in the first instance take as our starting-point that threefold division of the Church's office into bishop, priest and deacon which is traditional, and also functioned as legitimate in the Second Vatican Council. The official institution of the Church is ultimately one, and that too not merely in the sense of an *a posteriori* unity among the holders of office in the Church, but in itself. The Church has an office and, moreover, in virtue of the fact that she, without prejudice to the deeper unity in the Holy Spirit of faith, hope and love, of her

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very essence is also endowed with an historical dimension. At this level too, then, the Church is she who is one and she who must necessarily actualize her own nature as a single social entity, amongst other factors through that one precisely which we call her official institutions, although this does not imply that the Church as such and as one could only achieve the fulness [50] of her own nature in actual terms through her official institutions. It is not easy, and above all not possible in any adequate sense here, to express the basic essence of this single office in a definition that is brief and yet at the same time expresses all that it contains in terms of the nature of the Church herself. To do this we should have to consider this nature in itself, and that too at a most radical level of theological thought, a level to which the dogmatic constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council has brought us essentially nearer, but which it has still not succeeded in achieving in any definitive sense. We should have to consider the unity which exists between that which in ecclesiology is called the '*potestas ordinis*' and that which in the same discipline is referred to as the '*potestas jurisdictionis*'. And in doing this we should have to ask whether these two concepts, even considered in their ultimate and original unity, provide a basis for the whole essence of the factor of office in the Church, or whether in them functions such as, for instance, the prophetic function, which also belong in some sense to the factor of office in the Church, are not perhaps too inadequately represented. We should have to ask ourselves whether the Church as understood simply in these terms does not after all appear too much as a mere static establishment.

We have no intention of denying the questionable factors in this, or of rejecting as false or misconceived other possibilities of arriving at a radical definition of the nature of the Church at this level, and, arising from this, of the factor of office in her. But even allowing for this, we may perhaps commit ourselves to the following statement: For our present purposes we are viewing the Church not as the society of the saved, though obviously she is also and even primarily this, but rather as the medium of salvation – in other words as the offering of salvation to mankind and not as the acceptance of salvation. On this showing, then, we must describe her as the abiding actualization of that word of promise on God's part which was uttered and made manifest in Jesus Christ in history, and which is eschatologically victorious. This word certainly achieves its supreme point in that proclamation of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus in the Eucharist which renders these events present. But obviously too it is not restricted to this. For this basic word must not merely be doctrinally formulated, developed and expressed in ever new forms corresponding to the concrete situation of the world itself, so that in this sense the word itself has a history of its own, but more than this it must be uttered in a form in which it can penetrate into the concrete situation of the individual man and into all the dimensions of individual human life both private and social so as to become actual for the present and future [51] alike. In this sense, then, this basic word in its unity bears within it a character that is at once doctrinal, juridical in the social sense, sacramental, and prophetic.

The nature of the Church as medium of salvation, therefore, consists in the presence of this word as understood here being actualised ever afresh. Moreover the Church in this sense necessarily has a social character also, and therefore an institutional character and an official establishment, Now it follows from this that with regard to the nature of the priesthood, presupposing all that has already been said with regard to its complexity, this can be specified by the fact that as conferred on an individual it empowers him to proclaim this word as the word of the Church. In defining the nature of the priesthood in this sense we can set aside those elements in it which distinguish it from the episcopate, for these are relatively secondary and, moreover, have varied in the course of history, and for our present considerations they are of minor importance. The priest is he who has been empowered for the ministry of the word in the Church, and we can recognize in this 'definition' all the

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functions attributed to him provided that we have clearly before our eyes the manifold dimensions intrinsic in this word, the variations in the degree of its actuality, and its exhibitive character, its nature as not merely doctrinal but prophetic too in its orientation, and its character as promise. All these are factors in it which we have already indicated above.

It is unimportant whether the bearers of the word which is, in this sense, 'official' can also be – at least in certain degrees of its actualization and certain specific directions – men who have not been essentially commissioned for proclaiming this word by having that special power conferred upon them which we call priestly ordination. In those cases in which a commission of this kind is given with sufficient breadth (although it may be rather vague with regard to the more peripheral activities which it includes) it should also be ratified, made explicit and reinforced with the sacramental grace necessary for it in the public and social life of the Church. According to the Catholic interpretation of faith this word is present in a particularly intense degree in the word of the Eucharistic anamnesis, in the word of pardon uttered in the sacrament of penance, and in the concretion of this in the anointing of the sick, so that in all normal cases in the life of the Church this sacramental ratification constitutes an indispensable prior condition for the word to be uttered in these contexts, so that everything may take place 'in order' in the Church. The Church is intended to be something more than merely the amalgam of the individual religious enthusiasts, the 'zealots'. For though the Church has a certain freedom, [52] bequeathed to her by Christ himself, as to the precise manner in which she defines the powers attached to the individual offices within her, and as to the way in which she divides her offices into several degrees or orders, still this factor of institutionalized office is something that she must have, and its function is to empower its holders to render present through their official witness this word that is always identified with the Church herself. Now if all this is true then there is in the Church a priesthood of a kind which cannot be reduced solely to the cult of the Church in the narrower sense.

An office of this kind is of its very nature so multi-dimensional, necessarily extending its claims over all departments of the life of its holders, and it depends upon so many prior human factors, that the function it confers upon its holder in the Church is far from being merely a partial one. On the contrary it gives him, amongst other things, a clearly defined status in the social life of the Church as such, and in virtue of this fact implies a vocation and a calling in the ecclesiological sense even though this does not necessarily, or at all epochs in the Church's history, carry with it a professional status in secular society as something that is accorded by that society and is effective in its life. This remains true however much it may be the case that this is likely to be brought about as a result of the interplay between the ecclesiastical and the secular spheres, an interplay which it is quite impossible wholly to avoid.

So long, therefore, as we believe in the nature of the Church and her character as abiding we have no reason to call in question the necessity of the official priesthood as an abiding factor in her. However much the image of this may be charged in secular society its nature will endure. Now the nature of the official priesthood is such as to lay claims upon the whole man in such a way that it certainly implies a vocation and, following from this, a profession too, taking the term profession here to signify a comprehensive and permanent task which an individual exercises on behalf of others, which to a very large extent demands that his whole life shall be committed to it, and which is prior to any process of institutionalization in terms of secular society. If a priest were unable to understand his priesthood in this sense as a vocation and thereby as a profession too, he would have failed to understand the very nature of this priesthood itself. If today he is experiencing the fact that secularized society refuses to recognize his 'profession', then he is simply suffering from the contradiction of the Church as such by the 'world' (something which the Christian layman also has to endure in his own way), and he should ask himself how he can be surprised at this since in fact, after all,

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Christian faith always [53] implies folly and scandal so far as the 'world' is concerned. Certainly as a result of this contradiction special features will often be evoked in the activities and life of the priest as it *de facto* exists which have nothing to do with the nature of the priesthood itself, and through these we and the Church in the concrete often cause scandal to the world in a way that is unnecessary and regrettable. But for the most part what is implied in this contradiction is, after all, something which constitutes the very nature of the Church and the priesthood, for the word of God both as judging and as liberating is destined to be contradicted and this is precisely something that belongs to its very nature.

III

While recognizing, then, that the priestly office as it exists today, and also as it will exist in the future, constitutes a special status in the Church and, in this theological sense, a profession, this is still clearly not enough to decide the question of the priesthood considered as a profession in the secular sense also. Certainly we might refer to the biblical statement that he who ministers at the altar can also live by the altar, and in fact we have already invoked this principle. We could further point to the fact that in secular society as it exists today, with its extremely wide variation of callings and divisions of labour, there is a whole range of callings and professions in a secular sense within that society which do not play any part in the social productivity of that society in the material sense. Those engaged in the representational arts, authors and musicians for instance, belong to this category. The fact that they live by their activities in these fields is something which society accepts without question. It could further be emphasized that on a right theological understanding of the function of the priest in the Church, which is so very far from being confined merely to the cult, it actually includes today, and will include in the future, so many prior activities and tasks that it can only be fulfilled if it is accepted as a 'principal calling'. All these aspects certainly have a certain significance even with regard to the future, and they will also be capable of taking effect in the future at least provided that society does not become so anti-Christian and hostile that it prevents them with physical force. But this is still not enough to provide any effective answer to the question of the 'professionalization' or professional status of the priesthood. From two points of view a question still remains: on the one hand from the point of view of the reform which the Church and the individual local and [54] worshipping community will assume in the future, and on the other from the point of view of the function which the priest himself will have to fulfil for communities of this kind.

It is not merely that which still lies totally in the future which is affected by these questions. For in some sense this future has already begun even here and now, and hence the questions which we have raised already affect the present-day life of the priest and his understanding of his own function, the more so since, after all, it is the priests of the present day (not alone, it is true, but still amongst others) who will have to conduct the Church into the future that awaits her. For this reason we cannot simply set these questions aside if we want to consider the priesthood as it exists today. We cannot do this even though at the same time we must neither forget nor neglect the point that we emphasized at the beginning of these considerations, namely that calmness and patience which are so needful in a period of transition.

The moment we turn to consider the future form of the Church herself this 'professional status' to be attributed to the priesthood becomes a question. For over the space of one and a half millenia the Church has existed as a national Church, so that her status in the midst of secular society has, on the whole, been taken for granted and never called in question, and on this showing the professional status of the priesthood too has been something accepted

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without question. Nor do we need, from our contemporary point of view, to condemn this status of being a national Church which the Church has enjoyed since the 'Constantine epoch' as in principle a sinful derogation on the Church's part. This status of being a 'national Church' has been, and still is – to some extent this is still true even today – a historical phenomenon which was probably quite incapable of being otherwise, and which, moreover, has certainly had a positive significance for the true and enduring function of the Church herself. Nevertheless all this seems to tell in favour of the point of view that the Church is changing from being a 'national Church' into a Church of those who believe as an act of their own personal and free decision. Whereas earlier, and right down to our own days the Church has been, despite all her struggles with the state, a social entity in her social constitution and in the status accorded to her by secular society, one which, through her power as a society, her institutions, the value accorded to her in public opinion etc., was prior to the free decision of faith on the part of the individuals, and rather supported this than was supported by it, nowadays this situation is changing at an ever-increasing rate.

More and more the Church, with her offices, the authority attached to [55] these, her value in the eyes of the public etc., is becoming an entity such that her real effectiveness in society is dependent upon the free faith of those who confess their allegiance to her, and incidentally to recognize this is in no sense to deny the fact that she has been founded by God in Jesus Christ. It is true that in a Church which is only gradually becoming a Church of personal believers in this sense, there still always are certain elements (justifiably so not merely with regard to the Church's due mode of existence but also with regard to her real effectiveness) which are prior to the free decision of faith on the part of the individual to believe in the Church. These factors are present first because even a believing community continues to be in specific areas a real entity in secular society which also plays its part in shaping the situation in which non-believers live. A further reason why such elements still remain in the Church is that Christian parents have a right and duty to bring up their children as Christians and to bring them to a positive decision of faith. On the other hand, however, this still does not in the least alter the fact that there is a difference between the national Church of the past and the Church of free personal faith which is gradually developing and which must so develop even though at the same time we hope and work to ensure that this future Church will not be all too small a flock in terms of the numbers of her members.

In a Church of this kind constituted by personal faith it is after all inevitable that the professional status of the priesthood in its secular aspects will in some respects be called in question. Certainly the Church of the future must be open in a missionary and apostolic sense to the whole of society, and this means to non-believers as well. She must not seek to turn herself into a ghetto, a small sect with the sort of cosiness and lack of interest in the 'wide world' outside which is characteristic of this. But the number of her priests, their mode of life, the possibility of their human existence, will be primarily conditioned by the number of adherents, the economic resources which they will have and their mentality in a Church of the kind we are thinking of. For instance it is after all hardly conceivable that throughout all future ages this Church will to a large extent have her economic necessities provided for by those who have no personal relationship to the Church whatever in terms of faith, are hardly Christians at all even in the most superficial sense through baptism, and declare themselves Christians only for the purposes of their official status in secular society (this is in fact the situation which prevails today in central Europe with regard to the administration of taxes on behalf of the Church).

Conversely we can foresee that the resources which a living community [56] of believers of this kind will be able to contribute towards those who are called to be priests will be on a totally different basis, and will be conditioned by quite different factors in terms of education and way of life than is the case today with the great majority of such communities.

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Certainly it is desirable that in the future too as many priests as possible will be humanly and theologically highly educated men who can also assume a significant place in secular society. At the same time, however, it is certainly not a matter of necessity in the very nature of the Church that the priests will have simply the same type of academic formation as educated functionaries in the state. Already today in view of the fact that the lack of priests is becoming ever greater we should work to abolish prejudices of this kind, and seek to devize institutional means of enabling men to become priests which need not be identical with those which are nowadays required for so-called late vocations to the priesthood. We shall straightway be going on to develop certain aspects of this point in somewhat greater detail.

A preliminary point that still has to be recognized is that even from the point of view of the function of the priest himself his professional status will be called in question to a notable extent in the future. On any honest and realistic view of out work we priests of today must admit that our work and the success which it achieves, which is still considerable even today, depends upon the conditions provided by the national Church and by a traditional Christianity. People still come to the Church even when we preach badly. The Church taxes are still paid, even though the relationship between these and the Christian faith and the Church is an extremely problematical one. Even today, without having to exert ourselves particularly, we still receive almost all the children of parents who have been baptized Catholics in baptism and religious instruction in the state schools. Even today it is still almost universally regarded as important to be buried with the Christian rites. Our sermons and morning prayers are transmitted over the radio even when they are bad. In the long run, however, we cannot simply count upon this always remaining the case. But any alterations which take place in this situation, whether they are gradual or, as it may be, in the form of spectacular upheavals, we priests will be brought face to face in a far plainer and harsher light with the fact that the success of our work depends upon the vitality of our own personal religious lives, and will survive precisely so long as this survives. Just as an artist (i.e. one who thinks of himself as such) goes hungry and fails if the personal factor in his art is not real and strong, so too the priest of the future will depend, in his concrete living, upon the question of whether he [57] is really a man who lives from the heart and centre of his own personal existence as one who bears witness to the faith and arouses faith in others. To put the matter crudely the priest of the future will ‘earn’ as much as he himself provides in terms of genuine religion. But this does not imply that we are in any sense calling in question that professional status which is still obviously present among us today, and that too even though we neither wish nor expect the priest of the future not to ‘live by the altar’.

Let us attempt, albeit only in the form of questions which are genuinely conceived of as open and unreserved, to express in somewhat more concrete form, the point which we have just sketched out in barest outline. It is perfectly conceivable that a situation might arise in which some future community of believers found itself unable to discover any more priests through the administrative channels customary hitherto. Why, then, should such a community not discover and select from among its own more vital members some senior man who (the due conditions of theological formation and human maturity being fulfilled, and ordination having been conferred by the bishop) would become the ‘presbyter’ of this community, its priest? Certainly we will always need priests and bishops in the Church who also exercise the priesthood as their ‘chief office’ and ‘main calling’ in the secular and civic sense, and also in the manner in which these were to be found in the first centuries of the Church in circumstances of persecution. But does this prevent us from boldly envisaging the possibility that there may also be ‘part-time’ priests in the civic sense, and that it may be that this will be something that is not merely forced upon us by the ever greater lack of priests, but also something that has positive opportunities and advantages of its own to offer? The term ‘part-time’ as applied here would in fact only serve to characterize a priesthood of this sort from

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the standpoint of secular society. But it would not imply that such a priesthood would be, in the concrete existence of the individual, or in a theological sense, a hobby which such priests would practise in their spare time.

Today the 'diaspora' situation of the Church is increasing and extending, and because of this any organization of the cure of souls in the Church on a basis which is in principle territorial will also perhaps become ever more difficult and problematical. Now in view of this would it not be possible to work out the concrete form of the priesthood as vested in a specific individual in terms of a personal group of a specific kind, and not by invoking the territorial principle of the parish, which, after all, still consistently serves as the basic model for priestly activity. After all there may already be today many men, both young and old, who are [58] suitable for the priesthood in the truly theological sense already indicated, and who feel themselves called to it even though they may not on this account *ipso facto* regard themselves as suited or feel themselves inclined to take upon themselves all the various functions exercised by a parish priest as normally envisaged today. Could we not, without prejudice to the theological essence of the priesthood, be bold enough to allow it to become specialized? Could we not from the outset juridically work out institutional forms for it in such a way that when this priesthood was conferred upon the individual through sacramental ordination the range of functions attached to it and the group of believers which that individual was intended to serve would be such as he himself felt himself formed enough to cope with.

We have in fact already come to recognize a similar situation with regard to the deacons who are newly ordained or about to be so. The social worker who has been ordained deacon or the teacher of religion who has been ordained deacon, despite having been ordained, and indeed concomitantly with it, precisely continues in his own calling. He is not obliged to perform all those functions which in principle and in themselves are included and consecrated through this sacramental ordination. Why should not something similar also be conceived of and introduced in the future in the case of the priesthood as well? After all it would for instance be perfectly possible to ordain one of a group of masters attached to a secondary school as priest, without thereby obliging him even in principle to any kind of priestly activity outside the milieu in which he had formerly lived and worked. The established offices in the Church are essentially one, and they are capable of far more variations and subdivisions so as to suit those who hold them than we have been accustomed to recognize hitherto. For generally speaking even when we consider this problem at the theoretical level we overlook the fact of how many concrete variations of form priestly activity has already manifested in former times, as it still does to this day.

We may notice merely in passing that among these possibilities for the future the questions of priestly celibacy would also have to be thought out afresh. I myself have been most resolute in supporting the view that celibacy should be retained even for secular priests. I am convinced that any further secularization of the clergy would not be conducive to the salvation of the Church and the priesthood, and moreover that in accordance with the recommendation of scripture the priest is called to live by, and to bear witness to his faith in that eternal life which is not of this world, amongst other things by his renunciation of marriage, however great this [59] blessing may be. These considerations of themselves are enough to justify my support of priestly celibacy. At the same time, however, the question may very well be raised whether this sacred burden should be imposed upon all those groups of priests who may perhaps be formed in the future within the single priesthood.

The priestly office will endure in the Catholic Church because the Church endures. In the outward forms it assumes in secular society it may undergo great changes. We do not need to introduce such changes violently or in a hysterical and revolutionary spirit. Nevertheless we should not shrink from them either, as though through them the essence of the priesthood

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itself were to be imperilled. We only safeguard the abiding essence of the priesthood when we maintain an attitude of freedom and openness towards a change in its external forms as and when this is demanded by the situation of the Church today and in the future. And so in accordance with that attitude of mind which prevails today at least in this respect in the hierarchy of the Church we must guard still more against any tendency to a conservative rigidity than against being over-bold in devizing fresh forms of the priesthood. But in an age in which an ecclesiastical defeatism and a general insecurity prevail, an age in which the Christian faith is under attack in the most radical manner, the point of first and last importance with regard to the priesthood is that unconditional hope which springs from faith in its existence and its function in the Church of today and tomorrow.

As Christians we do not have to calculate what the future of the priesthood will be in a futurologist sense. We do not have to estimate its chances and adapt ourselves accordingly. We have to believe in this future unconditionally, and by this act of faith to shape this future precisely when it seems to be improbable. Here too we need to be not those who suffer the future, but rather those who create it. In a spirit of faith, prayer, and selflessness we have to overcome any tendency to a bourgeois ‘establishment’ attitude towards our priesthood as though it were a means of earning our living. We have to be the sort of priests who in the boldness of faith seize upon the folly of the Cross. We have to be not hirelings but shepherds who hope against all hope. We have to give our allegiance to the scandal of the Cross of Christ, to have the patience to endure historical situations which are impenetrable to our gaze. We have in a real sense to see ourselves as servants of Christ, that Christ who, through the fathomless darkness of his death, has redeemed the world. We have to be ready to bear unemotionally and in all the realism of our colourless everyday lives the stigmata of Christ. And if we do all this then we are priests indeed, [60] then it is the grace of God alone which is creating through us, and also through our priesthood, that future which the one and unique Lord of history and of the Church has devized for this priesthood and which will come to pass.

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4

ON THE DIACONATE

Such far-reaching and rapid developments have taken place in the theology and the practice of the permanent diaconate[1] that even twenty years ago it would have been quite impossible to guess at them. Certain theological movements in the last few years before the Council, the Council itself, and certain impulses arising from it, have all undoubtedly contributed to this. In our present consideration however we have no intention of re-opening in any direct sense the discussion of this conciliar theology of the diaconate and the practical effects deriving from this. We must begin by taking all this as already recognized and valid.[2] Since the Council, however, and without any direct dependence upon it, the development of the diaconate has received a quite fresh impetus, and it is this that we shall be concerned with here. For in the light of this fresh impetus which we are on the point of describing the question of the content, the significance, the usefulness, or even the necessity of the permanent diaconate will be presented from an aspect which is quite different from those which have formerly been discussed, and different even from those which were considered in the Council.

The new stimulus to develop a theology, and concomitant with this new practical applications too, of the diaconate stems from the new theology of the priestly office. This is something which in its current developments was still not envisaged at all in the Council, or at any rate, [62] if it was so, the statements in which it was referred to did not attract any attention. This new development of the theology of the priestly office, which is of the utmost importance for the diaconate, generates its own forward impulse, and this from two different directions: from the standpoint of the biblical theology of 'office' in the Church, and from the situation both within the Church herself and in secular society in which the priestly office is placed today. Although we must begin by speaking of the fresh problems raised by the theology of the priestly office, our treatment of this must necessarily be extremely brief, and we shall only discuss these problems in so far as they throw some light upon the theology of the diaconate itself.

The first point to be clearly recognized in the New Testament theology[3] of 'office' in the Church concerns the division of this into the office of priest and bishop. In so far as we can discern this division at all in the New Testament it certainly does not consist in any clear line of demarcation drawn between the office of priest and bishop. Moreover it is clear that that which constitutes the essence of this office does not consist in any immediately apprehensible sense in sacramental powers of a specifically sacerdotal kind, or, more precisely still, in any

[1] This study is the text of a lecture which the author gave on the 7th of December 1968 in Freiburg, on the occasion of a conference on the diaconate. For purposes of publication a few notes have been added to it.

[2] On the state of the discussion at the Council itself cf. the commentary on Article 29 of the Decree 'Lumen Gentium' by H. Vorgrimler, *LTK* Suppl. I (Freiburg, 1966), 256-259; cf. also *idem*, 'Erneuerung des Diakonats nach dem Konzil', *Der Seelsorger* 35 (1965), 102-115; K. Rahner, 'The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the Diaconate', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 222-234; also H. Vorgrimler, 'Zur Theologie des Diakonats. Thesen', *Der Diakon heute*, edited by the Cathedral School, Akademie für Erwachsenenbildung der Diözese Würzburg (Würzburg, 1969), pp. 39-43; *idem*, 'Der theologische Ort des Diakonats', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* IV (Freiburg, 1969), pp. 417 ff.

[3] On this cf. H. Schürmann, 'Neutestamentliche Marginalien zur Frage der Entsakralisierung', I/II, *Der Seelsorger* 38 (1968), pp. 38-40, 89-104; J. Blank, 'Der Priester im Lichte der Bibel', *ibid*., 155-164. But see also H. Schlier, 'Grundelemente des priesterlichen Amtes im Neuen Testament', *Theologie und Philosophie* 44 (1969), pp. 161-180.

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special powers exercised in the community's celebration of the Eucharist. In so far as we can discern any special office in the Christian community as portrayed in the New Testament, with its universal priesthood, it is characterized primarily by a special mission to preach the word and by the function of leading and directing a Christian community, and in this connection the question of the relationship and at the same time the distinction between these two functions represents a further special problem in its own right. Of course we can say, and objectively speaking we are certainly justified in saying, that any official preaching of the word or leadership of the community achieve their supreme point in that proclamation of the Death of the Lord which takes place in the liturgy of the community. And it is in this liturgy that the community itself achieves the fulness of its own nature in a form that is sacramentally most intense. In this sense we can certainly establish a rational connection between the traditional and sacerdotal concept of the priestly office which is also that sanctioned by the Council of Trent, and the conception of office which we find in the New Testament, which is not [63] in any direct sense defined in specifically priestly, i.e. cultic and sacerdotal, terms. But even if we recognize this still the question of the nature of the priestly office is presented in a fresh form by the New Testament, and needs to be answered afresh by working out a fresh way of organizing the manifold elements belonging to the priestly office based upon the bible itself.

To this a second point must be added which also derives from the present-day biblical theology of 'office' in the Church. In the light of the New Testament it is surely possible to conceive of official functions within the society of the Church which are quite different from those which spontaneously occur to our minds today when we speak of 'office' in the Church and go on straightway to divide this into the offices of bishop, priest and deacon in the conviction that these three hierarchical degrees can be easily and unambiguously distinguished from one another, and that these alone, when taken together, represent the single totality of 'office' in the Church. It is true that the three terms do occur already in the New Testament: bishop, presbyter, diakon. But even if it appears in the Pastoral Epistles that by the end of the apostolic age the bishop as an individual already possesses a well-defined function of leadership in the local community reserved to him alone, still this in itself is not enough to supply any unambiguous distinction between the three concepts or to assign any unambiguous content to each of the three. In other words in terms of the New Testament there is indeed an 'office' in the Church, and this is ultimately one. But it can be subdivided into various functions according to the concrete needs of any given community. These functions as distributed in this sense between various office-holders will certainly also have to be thought of as hierarchically arranged. But the element of 'office' in the Church is certainly still fluid. Various sociological patterns can be employed in determining the concrete forms which it assumes and the variations which it undergoes, and moreover no very clear lines of demarcation are to be found in the New Testament marking it off from other charisms contributing to the wellbeing of the community, which cannot be regarded as official or institutional in any proper sense. In passing a further point must also be emphasized: the fact that in the New Testament the Church's 'office' is still fluid in this sense, and that variation is still possible in the way in which its different functions are distributed between different office-holders according to the concrete circumstances and requirements in any given case does not gainsay the sacramentality of the three hierarchical degrees of order recognized in our own times. In other words these factors in the New Testament cannot be contested on [64] the ground of the dogmatic teaching of the sacramentality of order as it exists in the present day. There is a further question of what the reasons are, in more precise terms, for ascribing a sacramental force to the juridical act of conferring 'office' in the Church. But this question need not concern us for our immediate purposes. In any case the teaching of dogmatic theology demonstrates the fact that the single

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sacrament of *ordo*, even though it really is single (otherwise there would be more than seven sacraments) can be subdivided into different degrees, and this teaching also demonstrates the fact that at least as late as the high Middle Ages the theologians uncompromisingly taught that the truly sacramental element in order was further subdivided into very minor and insignificant official posts in the Church. And they also taught uncompromisingly that the conferring of a share in the single 'office' of the Church allowed for a far greater variation and modification of content among the official posts which the Church recognized than we are nowadays accustomed to accept as either possible or actual. What all this implies for the diaconate can be explained only at a later stage.

We must first consider the fresh impetus which the theology and practical application of the priestly office implies for the diaconate from yet another aspect. The problems entailed in the situation of the present-day priest both within the society of the Church and within secular society must briefly be touched upon.[4]

Formerly in virtue of his priestly office, it was taken for granted that the priest has a specific and well-defined position in secular society. In virtue of his priestly office he had also a calling in the worldly sense, a 'firm position' even at the secular level, a plain and recognized 'role' in the body politic. Today this is no longer so obvious. The question is raised, for instance, whether a priest should not follow a secular calling as well in order to achieve an indisputable position in the world, and one which provides him with economic support, so that he may bear an effective witness to the gospel precisely from this well-recognized position. In fact there are here and there in the secular institutes priests who side by [65] side with their priestly tasks follow a worldly calling. This, together with the phenomenon of the worker priests, demonstrates the fact that we have already reached a stage which is beyond that of purely academic speculation.

There is a further question, namely whether in view of the dangerous lack of priests today there should not be individuals who, in addition to their priestly office, also follow a worldly calling as a 'full-time job'. These would exercise their priestly functions on Sunday or in the evening as a 'part-time job'. This question points in the same direction. An additional factor is that even regarded from within the Church those who hold the priestly office in the Church at least to some extent have gathered to themselves and exercised functions in the Church which are both very intensive and very numerous, even though precisely if we take the traditional conception of the priesthood as our starting-point we cannot really see why such functions should be exercised precisely by priests. The phenomenon of the lay religious instructor, the so-called lay theologian, and many others besides show that even this question which is interior to the society of the Church is no mere theoretical problem.

These are findings which both at the theological and the practical levels have properly speaking only been realized in their full relevance since the Council, and it is in the light of these that the question of the diaconate too must be viewed today. Although the factor of 'office' in the Church is ultimately one, in respect of its functions and its distribution between various of its holders,[5] it is far more elastic, flexible and fluid, if we may so express it, than

[4] There is a constantly increasing body of literature on this subject, which it is quite impossible to present here. For this reason reference will only be made to the address which the author delivered on the 4th September 1968 at the Conference of German Catholics in Essen: 'Dogmatische Grundlagen des priesterlichen Selbstverständnisses', *Mitten in dieser Welt*, edited by the Central Committee of German Catholics (Paderborn, 1968), pp. 96-115. Reference may also be made to the following articles: 'The Point of Departure in Theology for Determining the Nature of the Priestly Office' in this volume, pp. 31-38; 'Theological Reflections upon the Priestly Image of Today and Tomorrow', in this volume, pp. 39-60.

[5] On this cf. the author's article, 'Die Aufgleiderung des einen Amtes der Kirche" *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964, 2nd ed. 1970), pp. 160-167, together with the chapters which follow. On the concept of office in general reference may be made to the author's commentary on the third chapter of 'Lumen Gentium', *LTK* Suppl. I (Freiburg, 1966), 210-246. On the question of whether it is possible for a way

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has been realized in the last few centuries. We have no intention here of drawing from this the conclusion that we should *ipso facto* call in question or seek to revise the threefold division of the single office of the Church into bishop, priest and deacon, which had already become classic and canonical at the beginning of the post-apostolic age. At the same time it should not be forgotten that the great theologians of the Middle Ages still counted the so-called minor orders as well – in other words those belonging to quite unimportant office-holders in the Church [66] – as to be included also among those degrees of office which are sacramentally conferred. Moreover, even to this day the Church has not produced any official doctrinal decision which rules out such a theory.

But even when we simply take for granted the three degrees in the hierarchical division of ecclesiastical office, still it must at least be concluded from the evidence which we have mentioned both in terms of biblical theology and of the state of contemporary society, that it is possible freely to reconsider in more precise terms both the content of the three offices in the Church and the lines of demarcation between them. Moreover this reappraisal needs to be something more than merely an affair of the reason engaging in theological speculation so as to establish what is the case. Also, and more than this, it must at least to some extent be capable of leading to an alteration in the content of these offices, and to the establishing of new and real lines of demarcation between them (that this is not impossible from the outset is indeed also demonstrated by the fact that, for instance, it cannot be asserted in any very precise terms whether the power of conferring the sacrament of confirmation belongs to the episcopal or the priestly office. This is something that on any showing needs, from this aspect to be determined once and for all as a matter of positive law by the Church).

On this basis it would be theologically justified to say that the function and tasks of the renewed and permanent diaconate enumerated by the Council do not restrict our scope for working out a more profound and also a fresh and creative theology of the diaconate. These functions adduced in the Council vary very greatly in their significance. Taken in isolation any one of them can also be conferred upon one who is not a deacon, although on any right understanding of the single complex ‘office’ in the Church this does not tell against the significance and the sacramentality of the diaconate itself. These functions enumerated by the Council are not co-ordinated among themselves by it so as to constitute the diaconate as a unified whole in which all these functions and tasks are manifestly interconnected. And finally it is by no means certain that in the diaconate in its contemporary form, in contrast, and also as an alternative to these historical functions of the diaconate, quite other functions may be present which will characterize the diaconate of the future far more decisively than these former ones.

In this theological situation, in which the question of what a deacon is and what he should be in the future is still, to a very great extent an open one, in this situation in which it is possible to work out a new definition of what the diaconate shall mean not merely at the speculative but at the [67] practical level as well, it seems to me that properly speaking only the following fixed points can be regarded as established: the deacon receives his office together with the powers and duties appropriate to it. The conferring of this office on the part of the episcopate has a sacramental character and because of this must take place in the manner required for a sacramental act performed in public, something which is perfectly reconcilable with a considerable breadth of choice in the form which this conferring of the office of deacon is to assume. It is not normal (i.e. legitimate in the ordinary circumstances prevailing in a Christian community) for the deacon to have the power of presiding at the

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of subdividing the institution of order to be developed *juris divini* within Christian history cf. also the author’s article, ‘Reflection on the Concept of “Ius Divinum,” in Catholic Thought’, *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 219-243.

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Eucharistic liturgy. For while it is true that this does not simply constitute in itself alone the content of the priestly office or the basic theological starting-point for defining its nature, still this power is, after all, proper to the priestly office, and will surely remain so in the future, although it still does not carry with it any absolute, fixed, or unalterable connection with the official preaching of the word of God and the direction of the community (taking these in turn as constituting a unity). It seems to me, however, that these three specifications of the diaconate constitute at the same time the sole three invariable factors which can be attributed with certainty to the diaconate.

All that has been said up to this point has been intended to convey in barest outline the insight that we cannot properly speaking define the meaning and content of the diaconate of the future on the basis of the New Testament, the ancient practice of the western Church, or of course on the basis of the eastern Church's conception of the diaconate either,[6] although at the same time the three invariable factors mentioned above have to be respected. Today, therefore, what is properly in question is not a restoration of the diaconate in its ancient form, but a creative conception of the diaconate of the future. Ancient models of the diaconate can provide stimuli for this new specification of it. Nevertheless in this new and creative specification what is involved is not merely a restructuring of the traditional functions of the ancient diaconate at the level of speculative theology.

But how is this new specification of the nature, i.e. the specific function, of the diaconate of the future to be arrived at? This is the difficult question [68] with which the Church has to cope today the moment she has resolved upon a renewal of the diaconate of this kind. Two points should be self-evident from the outset in this quest for a new conception of the diaconate:

1. Any such creatively new conception cannot be worked out exclusively at the conference table of rational theological speculation, because in principle and in all cases no concrete decisions can be arrived at solely and exclusively by a process of theological reasoning. Practical and concrete experimentation is required. All kinds of attempts have to be made, even though they do not lead immediately or in all cases to results that are serviceable or permanent, and even though conversely such attempts have to be undertaken only with theological speculation as their concomitant, and with an attitude of realism and prudence.

2. It can readily be accepted from the outset that the diaconate of the future as it is realized in the concrete will admit of a quite considerable number of variations of form. This is surely something that we should expect both with regard to the concrete functions attached to an office of this kind and with regard to the various holders of this office. For even an office which, as a matter of theological principle, is conceived of very much as a unity certainly demands very considerable variations in the forms it assumes in the situation which exists today both in the Church and also in secular society with all its extreme complexities and variations. In fact it can be the case that it will only be from a fairly wide variety of concrete forms assumed by the diaconate (forms which have been prompted by the situation of the Church and her concrete practice, and have almost been forced upon her) that we shall gradually come to recognize the single theological essence common to all these various forms and underlying them, and constituting the ministry of the diaconate as an office of the Church.

Now if I am to attempt to say anything with regard to this content and nature of the diaconate of the future I would like to begin by drawing attention to the fact that probably the

[6] This also becomes clear in view of the very different motives adduced at the Council as arguments in favour of restoring the diaconate. In the Decree on the Church the motive adduced is the importance of specific functions (No. 29). In the Decree for the Eastern Churches the motive is the ancient discipline of the sacrament of order (No. 17), and in the Decree on the Missions the fact that the diaconal ministry is already being exercised in practice (No. 16).

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best treatment that has been accorded to this theme up to the present is that of H. Vorgrimler in the *Handbuch der Pastoral-theologie*, Vol. IV.[7] In what follows I shall be relying very much on this study, but I would like to present what I have to say in my own words and on my own responsibility.

In order to find an answer to our question concerning the nature and function (which is the same thing) of the future diaconate certain preliminary methodological remarks must first be made, and then certain [69] negative boundary lines must be drawn, and finally an attempt must be made to state in positive terms what the future diaconate will be.

First a few preliminary methodological remarks. In the days of the Council the line of argument which I customarily followed in support of the restoration and renewal of the permanent diaconate was as follows: the diaconate already exists *de facto* in an anonymous form in the Church of today. In these circumstances it is right that those who are already vested with this anonymous diaconate should also have the sacramental commission conferred upon them, because in principle it is possible for there to be a sacramental diaconate in the Church, and such a sacramental commission is reasonable and productive of grace.[8]

This line of argument was, and still is in principle, not unjustified. Today, however, it is no longer adequate, for first in asserting that *de facto* the function of the diaconate was already being exercised in the Church, albeit in anonymous form and without any sacramental commission, we allowed ourselves to be influenced too much by the model of the earlier form of the diaconate,[9] although this in itself did not simply make our assertion false. It was not possible on these grounds to define more precisely what form the diaconate is to assume in the future in terms of its functions and activities. With regard to the functions already *de facto* existing in the Church it could not easily be explained which ones would be conferred by means of a sacramental commissioning and which would not. In the 'institutional Church' in the future, even though it is certain that in the future too there will be functions of this kind pertaining to the administrative practice of the Church such as not merely can be, but actually should be exercised by laymen, even so it will remain to some extent a question of practical judgement to decide where to draw the borderline in the concrete between this type of function and the other type. There is a further point to be noticed, pertaining to methodology. The diaconate of the future will remain an integral part of the official ministry of the Church as hierarchically organized. On the one hand, therefore, it must certainly manifestly be seen to be a subdivision of this official ministry and its functions, deriving from the very nature of the official ministry itself. On the other hand, however, this subdivision can and must be conditioned by the concrete situation in which the Church fulfils her [70] task through her official ministry. It follows that whatever authentic basis we find for instituting the diaconate of the future in its distinctive form it must be such that it does not in any sense depend upon the postulate that this concrete form of the diaconate as conceived of in the present must have been in existence all along and of necessity, and must continue to exist for all time. This means that the concrete situation of the Church is an essential element in this line of argument. This does not invalidate the '*jus divinum*' of the diaconate (and, as the concomitant of this, its sacramentality too) for this *jus divinum* simply implies that the Church's official institutions belong essentially to the Church herself that they are communicated sacramentally as such, and that this special quality inherent in them also extends to the concrete subdivisions of these institutions whenever the process of subdividing the single

[7] On this cf. n. 2.
[8] On this cf. my article, 'The Theology of the Restoration of the Diaconate', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 268-314.
[9] Up to the present the best general presentation is still to be found in K. Rahner, H. Vorgrimler ed., *Diakonia in Christo*, Quaestiones Disputatae 15/16 (Freiburg, 1962).

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institution of order is demanded by the concrete situation of the Church, or is at any rate reasonable in view of it.

There is one final point which has to be taken into account from the outset with regard to this basic flexibility and adaptability of the single institution of order in the Church and the forms into which it is subdivided. It is that any specific subdivision of this order is itself in turn capable of appearing in various concrete forms as demanded by the concrete circumstances and tasks of the Church, and that in such subordinate manifestations of it various aspects may be particularly emphasized at various times. In seeking a theological basis for the future diaconate, therefore, we do not need to make it our aim to evolve any absolutely univocal and uniform type of deacon. The priesthood itself is subject to a wide range of variations, even though it is conceived of as consisting essentially in the authoritative preaching of the gospel in the name of the Church, and in guiding and directing the community (both functions being thought of as a unity), and this in itself is enough to make it apparent that the diaconate does not necessarily have to be univocal and uniform in the sense indicated. Admittedly it is necessary that a single basic essence of the diaconate, deriving from the very nature of order itself and from the concrete situation of the Church (for it is this that demands that the single institution of order shall be subdivided in this way) shall be common to all these variations of type which the diaconate may assume in the concrete, and shall be recognizable as such in them all. But all that we can demand is that it shall continue to be sufficiently intelligible why this particular subdivision of order is called the diaconate, and how it is adequately to be distinguished in terms of theology from those other 'official' functions which are present in the Church as institutions, and which are both distinct from the priestly office [71] and at the same time not to be conceived of as pertaining to the diaconate. In this respect it is inevitable that in the process of drawing the lines of division certain points will remain unclarified. The reason is first that in view of the variations in the way in which the single institution of order in the Church is subdivided it is quite impossible wholly to avoid such points of obscurity; we have simply to accept them and make due allowance for them. Second, it is perfectly possible that the future situation of the Church will make it necessary, and will actually bring it about that new and hitherto unfamiliar ways of subdividing the institution of order will be introduced, and that concerning these it will not always be easy to say *a priori* whether they constitute a variant form of the diaconate or a subdivision of order which cannot be subsumed under this concept of the diaconate.

Now let us turn to certain negative demarcations of the diaconate. In order to be in a position to define these the following preliminary points have to be made: the Church as a whole, and therefore all her members – including, therefore the so-called laity – have been entrusted with a ministry towards man to work for his salvation. This universal ministry has an individual and a social dimension affecting both those entrusted with it and those to whom it is directed. This universal Christian *diakonia*, binding in the same way upon clergy and layfolk alike, is a Christian duty which no one individual can transfer to the rest. In this universal *diakonia* each has a responsibility towards all, and each Christian has a responsibility not only towards his fellow Christians but essentially towards every man as well. But not withstanding this the concrete form in which this universal *diakonia* or ministry is realized in the individual Christian life, and in which each individual discharges his personal responsibility varies according to the concrete circumstances of those involved, both those vested with this ministry and those to whom it is directed.

Now without prejudice to this universal *diakonia* there is a special *diakonia* proper to those who are officially ordained. The reason for this is twofold: first, ordination considered as an official institution too can be understood only as conferring the authorization, the duty, and the equipment to minister to other Christians and individuals. Second, in the community of

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Christians called the Church, which is of necessity constituted as a society with institutions, there is need for a special office with special functions and the powers entailed in these attached to it, with a particular part to play (we shall not be describing or justifying this in any more precise detail here) within this universal *diakonia*. On the basis of these prior considerations we can now lay down the following negative [72] lines of demarcation with regard to the diaconate in the special and restricted sense as part of the official institution of order in the Church, with special functions of its own. Its specific nature cannot, in any proper sense, be regarded as consisting in the function of leadership as such. For this is proper to the episcopal and priestly office. In some cases, as in the missions or communities deprived of priests, the deacon is entrusted with leadership functions of this kind, and this is perfectly possible chiefly in virtue of the fact that he belongs to the ranks of those who are officially ordained. But all such cases are secondary, and do not imply that this leadership function belongs specifically to his particular office. Nor does the office of deacon imply that the laity are deprived of their mission and duty to exercise the universal diaconate or that these can transfer their mission to the officially ordained deacon. Again the officially ordained deacon is not, properly speaking, a mediator between clergy and layfolk in the Church, for at least in principle there is no need for any such mediation even though it may be conceded that in specific sociological situations in the Church the deacon does perform a useful secondary function of this kind. In principle, however, this function does not constitute the very nature of his office, and the very fact that he himself belongs to the ranks of those who have been officially ordained – in other words to the clergy – is in itself enough to show that this is not the case. Again the true nature of the diaconate cannot be defined in terms of specific cultic powers, even though *de facto* he may exercise powers of this kind, such as baptizing, conferring Christian burial, giving communion, performing the sacramentals etc. at least provided the official Church gives a certain authorization for them. Such specifically sacral functions can also be assumed by any baptized layman, and even though this fact does not in itself alone in principle exclude the possibility of empowering the individual sacramentally to exercise a whole complex of such sacral functions, still at least today, in the present situation of the Church and the concrete possibilities thereby entailed such functions should he left to laymen, and should be regarded as functions which are not so important in themselves that they need to constitute a specific office in the Church of today. Nor does the office of deacon in the proper sense imply that bishops and priests should be able to transfer the specifically diaconal functions entailed in the institution of order in the Church in general to the deacon in the strict sense in such a way that they themselves would have nothing more to do with such diaconal functions. The institution of order is ultimately one, and any subdivisions introduced into it do not in fact imply that the various ways in which this single office is shared are simply set alongside one another as [73] so many separate compartments. The significance of the episcopal office at least is such that the institution of order in general in the Church must be present in it in its fulness, and in view of this those who hold it cannot transfer the specifically diaconal functions contained in it (which we shall have to define more precisely at a later stage) in such a way that they no longer remain the responsibility of the bishop himself. And the same applies analogously to the priestly office to the extent that this too involves leading a community constituted by a particular locality or class, analogous in structure to the Church presided over by the bishop. The fact that an office is subdivided does not in fact imply that that single official institution is *a priori* split up into totally different functions. Rather it signifies a graded participation which is made necessary *a posteriori* by the concrete situation, because the technical work, material conditions etc. involved are such that in practice no one individual office-holder can perform by himself everything that is absolutely speaking required of his office.

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After applying these negative lines of demarcation to the office of deacon we must now attempt to define its nature in positive terms. Once more we have to emphasize that this process of defining the nature of the office of deacon cannot be deduced solely from any one abstract concept of the nature of officially constituted order in the Church. Rather we have to take into account the concrete situation prevailing today in which this official institution has to fulfil its function.[10]

The office of order in the Church has the function of building up the Church herself, forming the community. Now this function of forming the community implies not merely a function of the kind which might be contrasted with the function of mediating personal salvation to the individual as such. On the contrary this function of forming the community also and precisely implies that in human and Christian terms a place is assigned to the individual as such in the community such that in it he finds a position in the ecclesiastical and social life of the Church from which he can live out his own individual human and Christian life so as to achieve his salvation. This function of forming the community, which also and essentially involves certain prior conditions simply at the human level, and which also implies an integration of the individual into the community (something which is itself different from any totalitarian subjugation [74] of the individual on the part of an ecclesiastical society) is confronted today, in the conditions of secular human life, with special difficulties entailed in the contemporary state of society. Hence those officially vested with the task of forming the community in this sense are required to become specialists in their own right, to learn special kinds of knowledge and skill such as cannot be either presupposed as already present or capable of being acquired by every ordained individual.

In earlier times secular society itself was so constituted as to ensure that men were integrated to a greater or lesser degree, but in any case in sufficient measure, into secular society. Right from the first they had in it that role which best fitted them, and sufficient stability and security at the human level. The ecclesiastical community could from the outset presuppose a society at the secular level which was sufficiently integrated to provide due scope for the life of the individual, and did not need to make any special provision for this social integration of the individual into secular society.

Today all this has changed. The individual man lives in a society which is in a state of great disintegration, and therefore in a state of insecurity as to his proper role, and this also implies a lack of the natural human substrate for a Christian life on the individuals' part, and for his incorporation into the Christian community as such. Of course secular society itself has the task of striving ever anew to achieve this integration of society. But precisely in virtue of the institutional factors which it creates for this purpose, it in turn introduces new forms of disintegration. Now what we have to bear in mind in the case of these individuals who are socially disintegrated in this sense is not merely those who, from the economical aspect, are very poor and oppressed, not merely the conflicts between the social classes in the usual sense of the term. There are other such forms of disintegration also. There are the lonely, those who are in various ways cast aside by secular society, deprived of any secure place or any role in society to give them stability and free them from burdens of care. There are also those who while they are still young and immature have to be integrated into society.

This task of integration is primarily a human one, one from which the Church even as such cannot withdraw herself if she is to serve humanity as such. It is a task for the Church even though in this respect she cannot claim any monopoly in discharging this task in human society. Furthermore this task is a specifically ecclesiastical one to the extent that the

[10] So far as the present author is concerned cf. on this requirement the considerations put forward at the scientific and speculative level in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 181-188, and further 'Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Disciplines', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 101-115.

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integration of the individual at the human level into the human community and society is the necessary prior condition for the forming of an ecclesiastical [75] community, while conversely any such process of forming an ecclesiastical community or of providing a permanent place for the individual in the community of the Church always also has repercussions upon the formation of the human community and the humanization of secular society.

This task, then, of integrating the individual both into a humanized secular society and at the same time in particular into the community of the Church is, from these various points of view, a function of the Church. And it is a function of such a kind that it presupposes specialist equipment and human qualities which can neither be possessed nor acquired by every one of the Church's official functionaries. But if this task, which we may surely describe with justice as a diaconal task in a specific sense, is a task for the *official* Church as such, and if today it cannot adequately be discharged by every one of the Church's officials for want of specialist equipment at the material and human level, then it follows that the Church today must institute a special subdivision within the single institution of order[11] which can be called the diaconate in the specific sense and in the sense which we have defined. And it is precisely this that constitutes the diaconate as it must be today, regardless of whether the earlier diaconate did or did not have this specific content. This is not to dispute the fact that this diaconate of the future as understood in this sense does still continue to have a sufficient connection with the earlier diaconate to make it legitimate for us to apply the old name 'diaconate' to it.[12]

The position is, then, that on the one hand one of the tasks of the Church's official ministers is to build up the Christian community by integrating man into the civic and ecclesiastical community when he exists today in a state that is to a large extent disintegrated from a religious and social point of view, while on the other this task cannot be fulfilled unless those charged with it have specialized formation of the most varied kind at their command, such as bishops and priests cannot possess. It is this position, therefore, that makes it necessary to have the diaconate as a special official institution.

We have now explained the starting-point for determining the nature of the future diaconate on the basis of the nature of the institution of order itself and of the contemporary situation of the Church in the concrete. But even though we have done this many questions still remain open with regard to the forms in which it is to be developed in the concrete. It is in [76] a true sense evident in the light of our basic position that even in respect of the sphere allotted to him from the very nature of the diaconate itself the future deacon cannot be an 'all-round' deacon, but must rather be himself in turn a specialist even within this sphere. The question of which specialized tasks pertaining to this diaconal ministry have to be discharged in a particular branch of the Church or local community by such a specialist holder of the office depends of course on the concrete circumstances of the particular branch of the Church or local community concerned. With regard to these specialist deacons we should not seek to deduce too much *a priori*. For uniformity within the individual groupings within the Church is far from being an aim to be striven for. At this level the particular and special forms of the diaconate which are developed should be arrived at on the basis of the concrete needs and requirements of the Church's life. A deacon may be working in a factory or trade, he may be running a community home, he may be a welfare worker, an assistant in pastoral work, a specialist in marriage counselling, engaged in preventing suicides, or in similar tasks. All these are perfectly possible concrete forms of the diaconate which may be developed,

[11] On this cf. also the section in the *Pastoralhandbuch* adduced in n. 5.
[12] On this cf. also the author's 'Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1972), pp. 349-370.

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although it is clear that those engaged in them should have a minimum of specifically religious powers and duties, and by actively engaging in the celebration of the Eucharist on Sundays should give expression to the fact that the diaconate, as the spirit of fraternity put into practice, finds its starting-point and its supreme sacramental realization in the sacrament of unity. It seems to me that with regard to these concrete forms of the diaconate that are developed the question of the teacher of religion in primary and secondary schools represents a special problem. Perhaps it is not necessary to conclude without further ado that the function of the 'teacher' who is not a priest in the Church, the function of the 'lay theologian' in the Church, should be subsumed under the diaconate as understood here. The 'teacher' (*didaskalos*) in the Church already figures prominently in the New Testament, and it must be remembered first that he does not necessarily have to be identified with the priestly leader of the community, and second that it cannot simply be taken for granted that the only possible role for such a teacher in the Church of the future will be as a teacher of religious doctrine to immature schoolchildren. These facts in themselves are enough to show that the role of 'teacher' in the Church does not necessarily have to be subsumed under the diaconate as understood here. But at least certain concrete roles which will be developed for the 'teachers' in the Church, i.e. those in which the teaching given to adults is designed to introduce these to the Christian life, and so into the Christian community, can [77] perfectly well be understood as a specialized form of the diaconate.

The theological nature of the diaconate has nothing in it that decides the question beforehand of whether a deacon should work as a 'full-time' deacon, i.e. engage himself in this ministry as his chief calling in the secular sense, or whether he should exercise his office on what is, from the point of view of the state, a 'part-time basis'. The theological nature of the diaconate does not predetermine from the outset the question of whether a combination of ecclesiastical office and secular calling of this kind constitutes simply the *de facto* combination of two roles which do not have much to do with one another, or whether, as in the case of the worker priests properly so-called, these two tasks compenetrate one another. The theological essence of the diaconate does not predetermine from the outset whether deacons should be drawn from the ranks of younger men, or from the class of those who have been prematurely relegated to retirement by contemporary society because their physical powers have been somewhat reduced even though they have reached the full maturity of their experience of life. All these possibilities are given, and which of them are to be realized in practice is a question which must be decided in the light of the concrete circumstances involved. The same applies to the question of whether a deacon should work as an individual in isolation, or in a team made up of several deacons, whether he should work directly under the bishop in the fulfilment of his task or should be assigned to one particular parish priest.

In any doctrinal review of the nature of the diaconate one thing further must also be said concerning the sacramental grace which is imparted through this sacrament. A sacramental grace which is ritually communicated by the conferring of a given office in the Church has, in virtue of that fact in itself, a quite peculiar character. The reason that it is imparted by means of a ritual conferment of office is because this office can only be exercised in accordance with its true nature if it is fulfilled in faith, hope, and love. The reason is that while the absence of any personal or 'existential' engagement on the part of the individual (i.e., in the case supposed, an engagement that is sustained by grace) certainly does not simply 'invalidate' the ways in which this office is fulfilled, still it is contrary to the nature of the office itself, and hence something that is indeed conceivable in individual holders of office, but not in the Church as a whole. For in her the dimension of her social and historical reality can never totally and definitively be separated from her endowment with the Spirit. Any conferment of office by the Church and in her, therefore, always also constitutes the offering and the promise of that grace which alone really makes the [78] fulfilment of this office an

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ecclesiastical fulfilment in the full sense. Any such 'grace of office', therefore, is given precisely in order that the individual holder of the office may fulfil his ministry for the other members of the Church in accordance with its true nature. It 'sanctifies' the holder of the office precisely inasmuch as it equips him not to seek his own sanctification in an 'egoistical' manner, but rather, by directing his gaze away from himself and forgetting himself to serve his neighbour in the Church.

It is in this that the very essence of every charisma of office, every 'grace of office' consists. It 'sanctifies' the individual on whom it is conferred precisely in virtue of the fact that he forgets himself in the service of his neighbour. Hence it is that on any true understanding of the nature of the Church as a society and as pneumatic at the same time the grace of office is not, properly speaking, something that is supplementary, that fills out the basic equipment that is given when an office is conferred within her, but rather actually constitutes this basic equipment of office in itself. This in itself *ipso facto* implies the further point that this grace of office is not something which takes place solely at that particular point in time when the office is sacramentally conferred and actually constitutes that point, but rather implies the promise of God to support with his grace the whole conduct of office on the part of the ordained individual in his life, a promise which, therefore, is constantly achieving fresh actualization in the life of the deacon. Once we recognize that to be appointed to the diaconal function in the Church is something abiding and ultimately irrevocable, and recognize too that the promise entailed in this of the assistance of the Spirit of the Church for the fulfilment of this task as something that is likewise abiding, we have *ipso facto* also achieved an understanding of that which in tradition and in the teaching of the Council of Trent is called sacramental character, something which is present in every 'degree' of the single sacrament of order in the manner appropriate to each degree. It is really superfluous to embark on any lofty speculations over and above what has already been said concerning this 'character indelebilis' inherent in the sacrament of order. Such speculations would merely give rise to ideas which are inessential or else would state in other terms something which is, in the very nature of the case, entailed in the enduring nature precisely of this specific ministerial task and the abiding nature of the offer of grace inherent in it.

Now if we are to give any adequate account of the sacramental grace of the diaconate, we must now consider this event of grace from yet a further aspect. For this purpose we must undertake a consideration which touches upon the relationship which exists between grace and sacrament in general.

[79] Any short-sightedness in theology, or any excessively naïve piety constantly entails the danger of unconsciously falling into the position of regarding the sacraments exclusively as *the* events of grace alone (even though this is in contradiction to other firmly held theological positions). Such a position, however, is false. He who seeks God in a spirit of faith, love and hope is *ipso facto* justified, a child of God, and a temple of the Spirit even before he has received the baptism of water, though of course even in any such 'subjective' attitude the will to receive baptism is implicitly and unconsciously included. At least in normal cases he who comes to the sacrament of penance as a repentant sinner comes as one who has already been justified, and whose sins have already been forgiven. The prayer of the 'confiteor' before Mass, if it is uttered with a sincere heart, is not merely the desire addressed to God for the forgiveness of some sin, a desire emanating solely from the individual himself. Rather it is an event of grace which God himself brings about in the individual and through his act. The question of why, without prejudice to these obvious points, the sacraments are, nevertheless, meaningful and, under certain circumstances necessary is one which cannot explicitly be discussed here. The reasonableness of and necessity for the sacraments arises ultimately from the nature of man as a physical person, and from the 'incarnatorial' dynamism of grace itself. For as the grace precisely of *Christ* this seeks to project itself

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beyond the source and centre of human living as endowed with grace, and to achieve a dimension of historical concretion in space and time. For it is in this alone that even grace achieves its full effectiveness and power over all dimensions of human existence.

Let us therefore apply these points which we recognize as evidence to the diaconate. First it is clear that there can be powers in the social dimension of the Church which, in order to exist at all and to be validly applied, presuppose in the society concerned a specific conferment of office achieved in a manner that is juridically defined. Speaking quite in general it is also perfectly conceivable that such official functions in a society can be conferred in various ways. Now it has already been said that the particular functions inherent in the diaconate, however they are to be thought of in more precise terms in their particular details, and whatever possible new forms are to be conceived of for them, are 'in themselves' also within the power of a 'layman' and can be exercised by him even though this fact does not call in question the reasonableness of such a complex of tasks and powers as are involved in the diaconate, and therefore of the diaconate itself as an office in the Church. If we consider this point in conjunction with what has been said above with regard to extra-sacramental and [80] pre-sacramental grace, then we can freely arrive at the following conclusion: that amalgam of functions which is or can be unified and sacramentally conferred in the diaconate already exists independently of any such sacramental conferring of office, and this complex amalgam of functions is exercised in its 'lay' practitioners (provided the necessary conditions are present for grace to become effective) with a grace which is, in its effects, the same grace directed towards the service of neighbour which is manifested and conferred '*ex opere operato*' in a sacramental mode in the sacramental order of the diaconate. We say this for the 'consolation' of those who, in virtue of the functions which they do *de facto* exercise in the Church are striving to attain to the diaconate as a sacrament, but have not yet had it conferred upon them through the imposition of hands. In a Church that is permeated by the Holy Spirit even such a ministry as this cannot be 'devoid of the Spirit'. Conversely, however, it follows from the same radical connection between sacrament (sacramental sign) and grace that the fact that the lay 'deacon' is endowed with the Spirit does not invalidate the reasonableness and relative necessity of the sacramental diaconate. Precisely this extra- and pre-sacramental grace enjoyed by the lay 'deacon' demands, in virtue of its incarnatorial dynamism, to achieve its due sacramental manifestation in the Church in which this grace in itself finds the full realization of its essence. So true is this, indeed, that conversely this 'incarnation' of it becomes the sign that effects the grace itself. This is true just as it is also the case that when diaconal functions are exercised in the Church, and when these are entrusted in a more or less informal way to individuals there is a tendency for them to become recognized and entrusted to those individuals in that more formal manner in which the recognition and the conferring of them can be called a sacrament in the proper sense, appointing the individuals concerned to the office of deacon.

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5

OBSERVATIONS ON THE FACTOR OF THE CHARISMATIC IN THE CHURCH

I

The Catholic ecclesiology of former times from the period of the Reformation onwards was concerned almost exclusively with the institutional factors in the Church. It viewed the Church as a '*societas perfecta*', unified, organized, and directed by the official hierarchy, which is in its turn summed up in a supreme and effective manner in the pope. It is true that in this period also it was recognized that the Church is holy, and that this holiness is one of her essential characteristics and notes (characteristics which make a given entity recognizable and distinguishable for what it is), but this holiness was looked for almost exclusively in the sacraments and other objective means of holiness present in the Church, in other words, once more in the institutional factors. Meanwhile the interior subjective holiness achieved by justifying grace was regarded as consisting almost exclusively in grace at the individual level and as present in the individual for himself. Whenever the holiness of the saints (either canonized or worthy of canonization) was spoken of, this was, it is true, valued as a proof of the 'outstanding holiness and inexhaustible fruitfulness in all good' of the Church, something in virtue of which the Church as '*signum levatum in nationes*' manifests herself as instituted by Christ to 'outsiders' as well.[1] But this objective holiness was not regarded as an element intrinsic to the life of the Church herself, standing in a quite specific dialectical relationship to the institutional factor in the Church such that each influenced the other, instead of this holiness merely being the product of the institutional activity of the official functionaries in the Church.

Now in the most recent times, prior to the Second Vatican Council, in it and after it, a more explicit theology of the charismatic factor in the [82] Church has been developed.[2] First a clearer emphasis has been laid upon the fact that the Church is not simply a society at the merely external level, and constituted as such by institutional factors, not merely a means of salvation but also the fruit of salvation in herself. It has come to be emphasized that the opposite of ecclesiological Nestorianism is that the Spirit and grace are constitutive for the Church as an eschatological reality.[3] Now on this showing the gifts of the Spirit, the

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[1] DS 3013/33014.

[2] Admittedly no comprehensive work on this subject has yet been written. The basic principles are to be found in Y. Congar, 'Le peuple fidèle et la fonction prophétique de 1'Eglise', *Irenikon* 24 (1951), pp. 289-312, 440-466; K. Rahner, 'Das Charismatische in der Kirche', *LKT* II(2nd ed. 1958), 1027-1030; *idem*, *Das Dynamische in der Kirche*, Quaestiones Disputatae 5 (Freiburg, 1958), pp. 38-53; Cardinal Suenens, 'Die charismatische Dimension der Kirche', *Konzilsreden*, edited by H. Küng and D. O'Hanlon (Einsiedeln, 1964), pp. 24-28; H. U. von Balthasar, 'Charis und Charisma', *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1964), pp. 319-331; H. Küng, 'The Charismatic Structure of the Church', *Concilium* 1/4 (1965 (Ecumenism)), pp. 23-33; *idem*, *The Church* (London, 1969); B. v. Leeuwen, 'Die allgemeine Teilnahme am Prophetenamt Christi', *De Ecclesia* I, edited by G. Baraúna (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 393-419, esp. 409 ff.; E. Bettencourt, 'Charisms', *Sacramentum Mundi* I (New York and London, 1968), pp. 283-284; G. Hasenhüttl, 'Die Charismen in Leben der Kirche', *Der Seelsorger* 39 (1969), pp. 167-174; *idem*, *Charisma*, *Ordnungsprinzip der Kirche* (Freiburg, 1969).

[3] On this view of the Church cf. K. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Freiburg, 1963); *idem* 'Ekklesiologische Grundlegung', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 117 ff.; *idem*, 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 295-312.

In this connection ecclesiology has come, from the nineteenth century onwards, increasingly to be conceived of in terms of christology. This appears in the work of theologians such as J. A. Möhler, J. Perrone, F. Pilgrim,

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'charismata' can be conceived of not merely as present in the Church but actually as constitutive for her and for the life that is proper to her. These charismata belong to the very nature and life of the Church just as much as the institutional factors. It is further emphasized that in a Catholic ecclesiology we find neither in practice nor in the linguistic usage of the New Testament [83] any opposition or hostility between the official institutions of the Church on the one hand, and the charismatic elements on the other.[4] The Church is not only the 'holy Church' the 'communio sanctorum' in the objective sense, a community of *the* holy one, the dispenser of the goods of salvation, in virtue of her truth, her foundation by Christ, her sacraments and the salvation present in her. As an eschatological community, sustained in being by the victory of God's grace, she is also holy as a totality in virtue of the actual faith that exists and that is brought about by this victory of grace, and in virtue of the love of God and neighbour practised by her members. As such she manifests herself as she who demands faith and provides the basis for it, and she must bear witness to her own nature in this sense.[5] Now this is possible only through the working of charismata, the more so since in fact the sacraments can become effective for sanctification only through the extra-sacramental grace of God predisposing the subject for them.[6] Moreover under certain circumstances even one who has been sacramentally justified stands in need of a special and exceptional measure of extra-sacramental grace.[7]

There is no need at this stage to enter into a distinction which, while it may be possible, is not very decisive, between actual and effective grace for supernatural Christian activity on the one hand, and charismatic gifts of grace in the narrower sense on the other. Of course it is possible to draw a distinction of this kind if we take the charismata to signify that which, empirically speaking, is in some sense out of the ordinary, but bestowed upon an individual by God to benefit others. It must be remembered, however, that each particular instance of sanctifying grace enjoyed by a given individual is always at the same time designed to benefit the Body of Christ as a whole. In other words there is no such thing as a mere [84] individual sanctifying grace benefiting one particular member in isolation from the rest. It must further be remembered that any power, whether it be an official authority that is conferred or an endowment with gifts of a non-institutional kind, can be applied by the holder in a way that is morally right only when the exercise of such endowments proceeding from sanctifying grace also sanctifies their holder (this is in fact clear in the case of sacramental powers and their use). A final point which must not be overlooked is that the borderlines between that which is

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J. Görres, C. Schrader, M. J. Scheeben, H. Newman, K. Arnold, O. Semmelroth, Y. Congar, F. Malmberg and many others right down to the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Cf. most recently H. Mühlen, 'Das Verhältnis zwischen Inkarnation und Kirche in den Aussagen des Vatikanum II', *Theologie und Glauben* 55 (1965), pp. 171-190; J. Alfaro, 'Das Geheimnis Christi im Geheimnis der Kirche nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil', *Volk Gottes* (Festschrift für J. Höfer) edited by R. Bäumer and H. Dolch (Freiburg, 1967), pp. 518-535; in the light of this tradition it is of course astonishing that a merely juridical conception could have continued to be maintained so long in the official ecclesiology.

[4] A more detailed treatment of the relationship between these two basic elements in the Church as she really exists is to be found in J. Brosch, 'Amt und Charisma', *LTK* I (2nd ed., 1957), 455-457; K. Rahner, 'Amt und freies Charisma', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 154-160; *idem*, 'Grenzen der Amtskirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 2nd ed., 1968), pp. 399-520; *idem*, 'Dialogue in the Church', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1972), pp. 103-123; *idem*, 'The Teaching Office of the Church in the Present-Day Crisis of Authority', in this volume, pp. 3-30; *idem*, *Vom Sinn des kirchlichen Amtes* (Freiburg, 1966); cf. in addition O. Semmelroth, 'Die Kirche als Hierarchie und Pneuma', *Die Zelle in Kirche und Welt* edited by A. Spitalen (Graz, 1960), pp. 129-150; *idem*, 'Institution und Charisma', *Geist und Leben* 36 (1963), pp. 443-454; *idem*, *Das geistliche Amt* (Frankfurt, 2nd ed., 1965); *idem*, 'Office and Charism', *Sacramentum Mundi* 2 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 171-173.

[5] DS 3013.

[6] DS 1526; 1559.

[7] DS 241.

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normal and that which is extraordinary in Christian living are wholly fluid.[8] Now when all these points are considered the distinction between actual or effective grace on the one hand, and charismata on the other is a very secondary one, which to a large extent we can confidently leave unexplored for our present purposes. What we have to bear in mind above all, therefore, is the ecclesiastical and social function of every effective actual grace, and we must not overlook the fact that as effective (distinguishing this from sufficient grace) this grace falls under the sovereign disposition of God, which can neither be coerced nor taken for granted as always present. These are factors, then, which impart a 'charismatic character' to effective grace, and in the light of these considerations we can conclude that the charismatic element belongs no less necessarily and abidingly to the nature of the Church than her official institutions and the sacraments. The charismatic element was not merely bestowed in order to facilitate the initial stages of the Church's life, though in the alarm which followed upon the Montanist crisis this view was often maintained, since then any spontaneous manifestations of the charismatic were all too easily suspected of being 'enthusiasm', and there was an exaggerated tendency to recognize the charismatic as manifested in certain specific historic forms which in fact are out of date. Against this view it is in fact the case that the very nature of the charismatic as an essential trait inherent in the Church demands precisely that in contrast to the official institutions and the continuity apparent in these the charismatic manifests itself in ever fresh and unexpected forms, and hence too needs to be discovered ever anew.

The truth that the charismatic element belongs to the very nature of the Church is also an explicit doctrine of the Church herself. It was already put forward as such in the encyclical 'Mystici Corporis' of Pius XII.[9] The Second Vatican Council too speaks relatively at lengths of the charismata [85] of the laity.[10] They are imparted by the Holy Spirit in the Church according to his good pleasure.[11] They contribute to the renewal and further development of the Church, and they can be extraordinary, exceptional, or equally well be merely simple and broadly disseminated. In principle it pertains to the Church's official functionaries to judge of them, and it is their task to examine these charismata. At the same time, however, they must not suppress them when they are genuine. A similar emphasis on the existence of charismatic, as distinct from merely hierarchical, gifts, in the Church is to be found in the Decree on the Missions.[12] The terms 'charisma' and 'charismatic' occur in fourteen passages in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Admittedly it must also be stated that apart from the insistence on the point that the officials of the Church have on the one hand to respect the charismata, and on the other hand to examine their genuineness, not very much is said in the Second Vatican Council with regard to the relationship between the charismatic and the institutional elements and their mutual interplay. Certainly in contrast to the ecclesiology of post-Reformation times the charismatic element in the Church is explicitly referred to. But, as 'Lumen Gentium' shows, the Church of officialdom still continues constantly to occupy the centre of the ecclesiological stage despite the fact that the second chapter, concerning the people of God has been placed before the third, concerning the Church's official functionaries. Perhaps, even at the risk of seeming over-subtle, we might be permitted to characterize the position of the ecclesiology here in the following terms: In the ecclesiology of former times the official institutions were concentrated upon almost to the exclusion of all

[8] In 'Lumen Gentium' No. 12 the Council too takes into account the factor of gifts of grace which are disseminated universally.
[9] DS 3807.
[10] Cf. the decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 'Apostolicam Actuositatem' Nos. 3 and 30, and on the Ministry and Life of Priests in 'Presbyterorum Ordinis', No. 9.
[11] Cf. the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 'Lumen Gentium', Nos. 4, 7, 12.
[12] Cf. the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, 'Ad Gentes', Nos. 4 and 23.

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else, and were at most regarded as also being the channels through which the charismata were mediated. Today, on the other hand, the charismatic factor is felt in some sense to supply the institutional one with the motive force necessary for it. The question still remains whether in any future ecclesiology we shall not have to regard the official institutions as the necessary regulators of the charismatic element, so that it will be this that constitutes the true pith and essence of the Church. When we consider that the distinctive characteristic of the Church as compared with the Old Testament synagogue, consists precisely in the fact that she constitutes the presence of grace as irreversibly victorious, and that the difference between these two is not to be found in their institutional aspects as such, then it should in [86] reality be perfectly possible to regard the Church primarily as the historical concretization of the charismatic as brought about by the Spirit of Christ, and to regard the specifically institutional element in her simply as one of the regulating factors (albeit a necessary one) for this charismatic element. Now precisely from this consideration the converse actually follows, namely that the official element in the Church has a charismatic character. For it is evident that ultimately speaking the gifts of the Spirit can only be regulated by a gift of the Spirit. In other words any attempt to regard the official and the charismatic elements as simply opposed to one another would be totally at variance with the real situation. It is perfectly reasonable to suppose that some of the charismata as such are destined for the official functionaries of the Church such that without them these functionaries could not rightly perform their duties. This would imply a promise which in itself and from God's point of view cannot fail that the necessary charismata will be bestowed for the performance of these offices in virtue of the eschatologically definitive possession of the Spirit on the part of the Church as socially constituted, and in virtue of this eschatological character of the Church this promise would actually constantly be being made good in the Church as a whole, even though we cannot say with any certainty that it is actually being made good in any given individual case, and even though we cannot adopt the Donatist view that the individual act of the official Church is *ipso facto* invalid whenever it is not supported in a visible manner by the charismata.

In this connection, and in order to understand what has just been said, reference must be made to the so-called sacramental grace in the sacraments constitutive of particular callings within the Church, and it must be emphasized that such 'graces of calling' (order and matrimony) are capable, under certain circumstances, of achieving heroic dimensions, and therefore as a moral miracle of being charismatic in a narrower sense as well. This means that the transition between the graces of calling (as actual and effective) on the one hand, and the charismata of office in the narrower sense and extending beyond the scope of official authority as such on the other, is extremely fluid. It is certain that indefectibility and life promised to the Church, and in virtue of this to her officials also, is *de facto* made good in the concrete in part through the charismata bestowed again and again precisely upon her officials. But over and above these official charismata there must also be non-institutional charismata. For the Church as holy and as bearing witness in the world to the eschatological victory of God's grace through the manifestation of her own true nature is in fact not a Church which is constituted solely by her official [87] functionaries. Rather she is the holy people of God. The charismata which can be present in all Christians, and which therefore actually are present at least in germ in every justified individual who, as a member of the Body of Christ has a quite specific function to perform in that Body, are different from the Christian virtues and the actual and effective graces necessary for the exercise of these only in that in these virtues they make manifest that which is *ipso facto* present (albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness) in order for any Christian virtue to be practised in the Church, namely the outward sign of her nature as a society, of revelation, of the creed, of witness and of mission on the Church's behalf. Of course these charismata necessarily have a significance for the

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world as well, corresponding to the whole meaning of the Church as 'the sacrament of the world'. It is through them that the Church fulfills her mission towards the world in serving it. It follows from the connection between virtue, effective grace and charism as described above that in addition to the major bestowals of charisms and 'enthusiastic' movements which have arisen and must arise again and again in the Church, the acts of heroic faithfulness in coping with everyday life, in standing firm in situations which are unfavourable to religious life and similar virtues can perfectly well be charismatic also, and that too in a relatively strict sense in that by their endurance and indefatigable force in the totality of an individual life or the life of the Church these virtues clearly make manifest the power of the Spirit of God.

If charismata belong to the very nature of the Church it follows that the official functionaries of the Church must not merely tolerate them but actually examine them and cultivate them too (1 Thess. 5:19 f.), a point which is emphasized by the Second Vatican Council. The official functionaries must recognize, and in practice act upon, the truth that the impulses of the Spirit on the Church's behalf do not always or necessarily have to manifest themselves in and through the official institutions. On the contrary some of them can also proceed from the holy people to the extent that in that people the Spirit makes effective his gifts of grace. The Church's officials must not suppose that any movement from below *ipso facto* proves that it is not sustained by the Spirit and not charismatic merely on the grounds that the officials themselves succeed in suppressing such a movement. The officials of the Church can 'quench the Spirit' just as much as individuals when they do this through their own fault. Certainly it is a truth entailed in faith in the Church and in the promise of God to her that there is no question of any radical or definitive opposition to the workings of the Spirit taken as a whole in the Church's institutions [88] taken as a whole. But this does not exclude the possibility that in many cases, even important ones, the officials may erroneously or culpably suppress charismatic movements of the Spirit or condemn them in an attitude of mistrust. Nor should we euphemistically term such acts on the part of the Church's officials as simply a necessary and prudent process of testing the charismata. The officials must have the courage to allow fresh and hitherto unknown forms of the charismatic factor in the Church to appear.[13] The officials must also require, make legitimate, and give a place in the life of the Church as a whole to the further processes by which these charismatic factors are given that institutional embodiment in some form to which they have a right, and which they must achieve at a very early stage in order to be effective and to endure.

II

In the previous section we have stated, in somewhat brief summary, the basic essentials with regard to the charismatic factor in the Church, though admittedly without entering into the biblical theology[14] or the history of the charismatic element in the Church.[15] We have now to approach the question of this charismatic element from yet a different aspect, and one which has rather to do with the sociology of the Church. The following proposition is put forward

[13] On this requirement, which has also been taken up by the Council, cf. K Rahner, 'Do not stifle the Spirit!', *Theological Investigations* VIIA (London and Baltimore, 1972), pp. 72-87.
[14] For a more detailed treatment see E. Käsemann, 'Geist und Gesitesgaben im NT', *RGG* II (3rd ed., 1958), 1272-1279, and H. Schürmann, 'Die geistlichen Gnadengaben', *De Ecclesia* I, edited by G. Baraúna (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 494-519.
[15] Admittedly to a large extent this history also proceeds outside the Church. On this cf. the comprehensive studies by R. A. Knox, H. G. Steck, H. Grundmann and E. Benz.

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for further discussion: The charismatic element in the Church designates that point in the Church at which God as Lord of the Church presides over the Church as an open system.

In order to make this statement intelligible we must first explain what we mean when we call the Church an open system. There is a certain approach adopted both by the exponents of apologetics within the Church and also by those who oppose them, in which both either explicitly or implicitly take as their starting-point the axiom that the Church is a closed system. What we mean by a closed system here is that this system, i.e. a [89] complex of realities of various kinds which, despite their variations, are related to one another and contribute towards a common task, is defined and directed from a point within the system itself. At least so far as the life of the Church as a society in the true sense is concerned (as distinct from any purely private sphere in the life of the individual or from the merely secular dimension), friends and foes alike of the Church conceive of this system more or less explicitly in such a way that all initiatives, in so far as the only real validity they have is within the Church as such, are thought of as proceeding wholly from her official functionaries and among these ultimately from the pope as the supreme pastor of the Church. The Church is conceived of as an absolute monarchy or totalitarian system in which in principle the only measures having any force in the dimension of the social are those decreed, ordained, or at least approved in a positive manner by him who stands at the supreme point within this system. Of course in such a conception it is held that in order that the Church may abide, this supreme figure endowed with totalitarian dominion is preserved from making any erroneous decision in any essential or decisive matters by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and hence that as constituting a society in the formal sense this totalitarian and closed system, which is adequately directed from a point immanent within the system itself, is nevertheless, in virtue of this assistance of the Spirit, precisely not a totalitarian system of the kind which must radically be rejected by reason of its total subjection to one who is omnipotent and at the same time liable to error. But however much this idea of a closed system of this kind may be furthered by a certain kind of papalism, by reason of its authoritarian outlook, the Church is not a closed, but rather an open system, i.e. a system such that the definitive condition in which it actually stands and should stand neither can nor should be defined in any adequate sense in terms of any one point immanent within the system itself. On the contrary its definitive state can only be defined in terms of a point outside the system, i.e. in terms of the dominion of God, so that to do justice to the state in which the system exists at any given stage we must say that its operations are charismatic rather than institutional in character.[16]

This last statement calls for a little further explanation. Of course within the dimension of the Church's official institutions and juridical system there is a supreme position within her which, so far as this dimension in itself is concerned, is not in its turn determined by any further point of [90] reference existing in the same dimension. To that extent there is a supreme universal authority in the Church which is not itself in turn dependent upon any other legal authority as such. In the Catholic Church the pope and the united episcopate are the bearers of this supreme authority as constituting a special kind of unity which is quite incapable of being adequately defined in terms of any further formal or juridical factors. In other words taken together they constitute a 'supreme authority which is both monarchic and collegiate (however contradictory this way of putting the matter may sound).[17]

[16] In this connection cf. also the various works which the author has written on the subject of 'Freedom in the Church', as well as the study entitled 'The Question of the Future' in this volume, pp. 181-201.

[17] Treated of in greater detail in my studies, *Episkopat und Primat*, Quaestiones Dispuatae 11 (Freiburg, 1961), pp. 13-36; 'On the Theology of the Council', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 244-267; 'The Episcopal Office', *ibid*. VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 313-360; 'On the Relationship between the Pope and the College of Bishops', *ibid*. X (London and New York, 1972), pp. 50-70.

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At this point we may set aside this question of how, on a Catholic view, the supreme holders of the highest universal juridical authority in the Church are to be conceived of in more precise terms, because this point does not affect the question of whether the Church is a closed or an open system. But it must be urgently insisted upon that this whole juridical dimension, taken strictly as such, is only one of the elements in the social reality of the Church herself and that too not one such that it can dominate over the total reality and the total functioning of the other elements even at the merely social level. In this statement it is of course presupposed that there are elements in the Church, at least in the social dimension, which must not be thought of simply as subordinate elements, subdivisions etc., of the dimension of the juridical, in other words that the social dimension and the organization of a society by law are not identical at least so far as the Church is concerned.

In the deliberations leading up to the doctrine of the papacy embodied in 'Lumen Gentium' at the Second Vatican Council a statement proposed by the Pope himself was rejected and deleted with a certain force, the statement namely that the Pope is only answerable (devinctus) to the one Lord (Jesus Christ).[18] The very fact that a statement of this kind could be proposed at all illustrates the tendency touched upon above to understand the Church as a closed and totalitarian system. Of course this statement can be taken as an expression of the fact that the highest, and in fact [91] personal supremacy within the officials of the Church is not in its turn subject to any other authority at the juridical level within the Church, that the supreme position (*suprema sedes*) is not judged by anyone else, as it is stated in the CIC, and clearly in this sense the statement which was rejected would be correct. But it almost inevitably conjures up the misunderstanding that in all that concerns his own functions the Pope acts merely on his own volition, merely as autonomous, and not as accepting the ideas of others; that his position is not merely an essential element of an indispensable kind in a greater whole, incorporating the contribution proper to himself into this greater whole without being able to recognize or define in any adequate sense what develops from this contribution of his within this whole, and what the whole itself becomes through this contribution of his. The statement that was rejected conjures up the mistaken impression that at the social level of the Church the Pope is the sole sovereign and active determining factor, so that everything that takes place in the Church, even though it is carried out by many subordinates, is properly speaking his work. It suggests that Peter is the Church, and that the Church is adequately contained, reformed, and determined in its activities in Peter.[19] It is to rule out this position that we say that the system of the Church is open, and in this sense charismatic. What we *de facto* observe in the Church throughout her entire history is a genuine pluralism within which the papacy has a position of its own without thereby being able to determine or to initiate the whole of that activity. And this fact is not one which must be misinterpreted in terms of a mistaken ideology in favour of a totalitarian papalism by saying, for instance, that such realities are, after all, positively integrated into an absolute system of this kind by being approved of and explicitly or tacitly consented to. The first Councils, almost the whole history of dogma, the origins of the religious orders, the greater part of the history of spirituality, the life of the Churches of the Far East including their juridical systems, the history of theology, and much more besides, have developed, as a matter of history, without any influence – at any rate any notable influence – on the part of the Pope. This is, as has been said, a fact which must not be interpreted away. In dogmatic ecclesiology it is explicitly taught that even the office of the bishops, despite their necessary union with the apostolic see, is *juris divini*. In other words the bishops rule their flocks not in

[18] On this text proposed by the Pope, but referred back by the Theological Commission cf. my commentary on chapter 22 of 'Lumen Gentium', *LTK* Suppl. I (1966), 227/228, and in addition to this the observation of J. Ratzinger on the 'Nota explicativa praevia', *ibid*. 355/356.
[19] S. H. Meyer, *Das Wort Pius XI*: '*Die Tradition bin ich*', Theologische Existenz heute 122 (Munich, 1965).

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the name of the Pope but in the name of Christ, and hence are not mere officials of the Pope. And in this doctrine, even at the juridical level [92] of the Church, a certain inalienable pluralism is recognized, so that even at this juridical level the authority accorded to the Pope is not a totalitarian one.[20]

Now at the juridical level it is not merely the relationship between Pope and bishops briefly delineated above and culminating in the doctrine of the united episcopate as the body vested with supreme powers in the Church that could be further developed and applied in the concrete. There are other phenomena too in this sphere precisely of law which demonstrate the openness of the system. For instance there is a doctrine in canon law, and that not merely the canon law of the Middle Ages, to the effect that any new law needs to be accepted by the people of the Church. And this phenomenon actually exists in practice too down to the present day, albeit only in a few striking instances.[21]

All these observations might equally well be extended – albeit prudently – to the sphere of the discovery of truth within the Church. Here too, without prejudice to its real authority, the official teaching institutions constitute one particular element in an open system, and do not constitute that point from which, taking it simply as a point within the Church herself, the Church's awareness of her own faith can alone or adequately be defined. The official teaching institutions are not merely bound by scripture and tradition as two factors to which they are subordinate. It is also true that they can only carry out their own work in preserving, and especially in developing, the deposit of faith with the help of theology and of religious awareness in general, neither of which are simply dependent upon those official institutions.[22] So far as theology is concerned it is admittedly the case that the official teaching institutions are rightly empowered to censure or reject opinions in matters of theological doctrine, but they cannot simply dictate the direction in which theology proceeds in positive terms, if only because they cannot direct anyone *in concreto* to work actively at theology. A further point that is demonstrated again and again is that the history of the ideas that are applied in the official pronouncements [93] of the Church's teaching authorities are quite incapable of being directed in any complete or adequate sense, although of course the teaching of the official Church too has some influence on the history of such concepts. Thus a position can arise in which the official teaching authority itself is compelled by a developing history of ideas of this kind, independent of the teaching office, to express the content of the faith in fresh concepts which run counter to its earlier opinions in order to avoid the danger of doctrines previously expressed in terms which have become petrified no longer being understood, or being rejected as impossible to apply.[23] In the dimension of her awareness of truth too the Church is an open system within which even a Pope cannot know beforehand what course the further history of faith and dogma will follow.

All the elements which either condition or constitute the concrete life of the Church in all her dimensions, revelation, the history of the world, the history of ideas, science, political influences that are brought to bear etc., have a mutual interplay, mutually modify one another, and all this goes to make up a history which even in terms of this present world tends towards a future that is unknown and which cannot in any adequate sense be prognosticated. Even the Pope is not merely the pilot who guides the history of the Church, but he who is

[20] On this cf. also n. 17 and the commentary on the Constitution on the Church referred to in n. 18.
[21] An example of this from the disciplinary sphere, and belonging to recent times would be the 'Constitutio Apostolica' of John XXIII, 'Veterum Sapientia'. The prescription contained in it to use Latin as the language for lectures in the Catholic faculties has not been carried out, and hence manifestly no longer has any validity. See *AAS* 54 (1962), 129-135, esp. 133 f., and also the definitive interpretations *ibid*. 339-368.
[22] On this cf. also my study 'The Teaching Office of the Church in the Present Day Crisis of Authority', in this volume, pp. 3-30.
[23] See K. Rahner, 'Demythologization and the Sermon', *Concilium* 3/4 (Pastoral), (1968), pp. 12-20.

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himself guided as well in a history the true pilot of which does not himself belong to this history. It could be said that this is something which is not peculiar to the Church, but rather constitutes a characteristic present in absolutely all forms of human history which everywhere and in all cases is open and can never consciously or totally be guided by any futurology towards a preconceived future. It may be that the openness of any social system, constituted as it is by the openness and unpredictability of the future, and present in it perhaps against its own will, is, at least in a certain sense, a mere remnant of obscurity, untouched by man's own will to plan the future rationally, and something which he is precisely forced to put up with in shaping the world and manipulating the course of human life. But even if this is true, in the Church this openness is not a mere remnant to be put up with in a system which has failed to achieve a totalitarian constitution governed from one single point, and thereby to achieve complete control of itself. This openness, rather, is precisely that which positively asserts itself as an essential element in the system. The Church must positively will to remain open because only in this way can she be true to her own nature as the exodus, the people on pilgrimage towards the inconceivable mystery of God, as [94] she who is endowed with that radical promise and hope which cannot be defined in 'this worldly' terms otherwise than as the will to the absolute future which precisely in this form is mediated through the willing acceptance of the openness to an unknown future within the present world.[24]

It is from the nature of the Church in this sense, as constituting an open system in a radical and abiding sense, that the charismatic element in the Church derives its ultimate and truest essence. This charismatic element is not merely, not even primarily, something like one particular individual factor introduced into the Church by God from without as something belonging to a particular category, and almost as an element of disturbance. On the contrary, when we use the term charismatic we are using a key word to stand for that ultimate incalculability which belongs to all the other elements in the Church in their mutual interplay. This means that the charismatic is, if we may so express it, transcendental in character, not one element in the system of the Church but a special characteristic of the system as a whole. At the same time, however, that in the charismatic element in the Church which is concrete and belongs to a particular category could perhaps, without doing violence to the nature of this charismatic element, be conceived of as constituted by the openness of history within this present world considered as creative freedom. This element of the free in history, of that in secular history which cannot adequately be controlled from any point within the world, and which is in fact also an element and a condition of the history of the Church, would on this showing become that which is charismatic in the true sense in the Church in virtue of the fact that precisely this openness of the future in the present world becomes, through the grace of the Spirit, a medium for the Church's own members to reach out to the absolute future.[25]

III

A third consideration should now be introduced: the question of the interplay between official institution and free charisma as it exists in the concrete. In accordance with what has been said in the first section let us leave [95] on one side the interplay between the teaching office of the Church and the charismatic development of faith or theology. In other words let us concentrate upon the connections between the Church's official institutions and the charismatic element in her at the level of the Christian life and the Church's life in the

[24] On this see the study already referred to entitled 'The Question of the Future' in this volume pp. 181-201.
[25] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 59-68; *idem*, 'A Fragmentary Aspect of a Theological Evaluation of the Concept of the Future', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1972), pp. 235-241.

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concrete, and recognize at this level that in this interplay within an open system of the Church the very nature of the system is such that it is quite impossible to avoid cases of conflict. In the light of this we can then formulate our third question quite simply as an enquiry into the nature of ecclesiastical obedience. The question with which we are here concerned has also arisen again and again in the course of the Church's history, and particularly in those cases in which charismatic prophets, filled with a consciousness of their own mission, have come into conflict with the official Church and her leaders.[26]

When we speak of obedience in connection with the charismatic element it is evident that we are presupposing that obedience to the Church on the part of a Christian, a priest, or a member of a religious order is indeed one virtue, but not the only one, in which all else is subsumed, and further that within the scope of a Christian life, even though his obedience plays its part in determining its course, autonomous personal initiatives, conscious judgements, and a personal and inalienable responsibility for his own actions must be present; in other words that in an open system obedience, no less than official juridical authority, makes it necessary for there to be mutual influence and interdependence between those vested with authority and those who are 'subordinate' to them. Within the Church, therefore, obedience is to be conceived of otherwise than would be the case if it consisted in the legitimate response of a 'subordinate' to an authority conceived of in totalitarian and authoritarian terms. In a closed system such authority decides everything and is itself influenced by no-one. The obedience we have to consider, then, is such as is to be found in an open system in which each party influences the other; in other words an obedience which allows for personal initiative, and in which we have absolutely to allow for the possibility, even in the Church, that in certain circumstances the individual may feel called upon by the dictates of his own conscience to refuse to carry out some directive. Now on this view of obedience, and on the basis of the concept of the open system, it is clear that in all these cases of conflict there can be no formal principles on the basis of which, and purely at the level of theoretical consideration, it is [96] possible to arrive at a single univocal solution applicable to all such cases.[27]

The very process of striking the right balance in the concrete between personal initiative and obedient fulfilment of the directives from above can no longer be clearly and unequivocally arrived at on the basis of general principles. The same applies to innumerable further questions in which charismatic movements and tendencies on the one hand, and the official institutions on the other, may come into conflict. The national peculiarities of a particular local Church, and the way in which it is incorporated into the single universal Church, centralism and decentralization, freedom in theological research and certainty in matters of doctrine, devotion to the sacraments and personal devotion in the life of the individual in the concrete, interior attitudes and cult on the one hand, and Christian responsibility towards a secular world on the other, withdrawal from the world and assent to the world etc. – all these contrasting attitudes are such that each of the separate tensions involved may be maintained, preserved or evoked either by the official institutions or by the charismatic element, and hence conflicts can arise with regard to the way in which these tensions are to be smoothed out and reconciled in the concrete. For the reconciliation that is arrived at in the concrete is not in any sense itself a firm and unchangeable factor laid down once and for all. Rather it is something that must constantly be rediscovered afresh as a matter of concrete decision, and in this process it cannot be arrived at in the concrete solely on the basis of abstract principles. It might be suggested that we should content ourselves

[26] Cf. A. Müller, *Das Problem von Befehl und Gehorsam im Leben der Kirche* (Einsiedeln, 1964).
[27] On the whole range of problems entailed cf. K. Rahner, 'Marginalien über den Gehorsam', *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck, 4th ed., 1966), pp. 487-509; *idem*, 'Christus als Beispiel des priesterlichen Gehorsams', *Knechte Christi* (Freiburg, 1967), pp. 142-145.

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with a statement that in cases of conflict between the official institutions and the charismatic elements it is the official institutions that have the last word (although not the penultimate one), so that our obedience is due to them. The validity of this can indeed be admitted as a certain practical rule of thumb. But the problem is not solved thereby. For the only 'last word' in the true sense is concerned with that which has already taken place or is brought into being by this word. So far as the future is concerned there is no 'last word' in the proper sense. For even one who actually obeys a directive can still always take into account the fact that at a later stage such a directive will be withdrawn, that the situation will change radically and will thus render the controversial directive superfluous, that as generation succeeds to generation in the Church, as theology progresses etc. many [97] directives are rendered out of date, and thus a whole new scope for the charismata is created in the Church.

It must be remembered that obedience itself in its turn had its due place in the open system of the Church, and that the obedient man cannot possibly be obedient and nothing more, but must rather work out ever afresh, and on his own responsibility, a synthesis between the responsible taking of personal initiatives on the one hand and obedience on the other, even having to exercise his own critical judgement on the law and the directives of the Church. In other words it must be remembered that in the practice of obedience there is no such thing as any 'once and for all' universal and formal law laying down precisely what *form* this exercise of obedience must assume in the individual case. Now in view of all this one of the factors entering into obedience in relation even to the institutional element in the Church is actually a charismatic element, a movement of the Spirit which cannot be foreseen or controlled either by the representative of the institutional or by those who respond to their directives.

To put the matter quite simply: obedience in itself and as such must call upon the free initiative of the individual seeking to obey in the Church, and upon the decisions he takes of his own personal responsibility. And on these grounds alone, while the institutional factor in the Church is a legitimate entity, it nevertheless remains encompassed by the charismatic movement of the Spirit in the Church, the Spirit who again and again ushers the Church as an open system into a future which he himself, and no-one else, has arranged, and in a manner which can never adequately be planned for beforehand by any man or any institution. The charismatic element does exist in the Church, and it does not merely stand in a dialectical relationship to the institutional factor as its opposite pole, existing on the same plane. Rather it is the first and the most ultimate among the formal characteristics inherent in the very nature of the Church as such.

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[98]

6

SCHISM IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

Everywhere in the post-conciliar Church we are afraid of new schisms, and believe that we can recognize signs that the danger of schismatic division is no mere nightmare on the part of reactionary Catholics, but a reality which has to be taken seriously into account. A short time ago the Pope[1] himself spoke of such dangers of new schisms arising in the Church. Everywhere groups of priests are formed who feel themselves to be in some sense opposed to the bishops as the leaders of the Church. Such groups may sometimes, perhaps, give the impression of being pressure groups because in certain circumstances they actually seek to make the hierarchy agree to their demands by means of threats. Here and there, for instance in Holland, Eucharistic confraternities have been set up which, on any normal Catholic understanding of what the Church is, seem to be schismatic in character so far as the Catholic Church is concerned. In Amsterdam Catholic priests have threatened the lawfully constituted bishop that they will set up a non-episcopal Catholic community unless he allows married priests to remain fully in their official positions. Even in the pre-conciliar age we were forced to face the question of whether something similar to a schismatic separation from Rome had arisen in China under the pressure of the communist régime. As the ecumenical movement has become stronger the lines of demarcation between the individual Churches have seemed less clear and less significant. Such a trend can actually lead to individual groups of Catholics forming premature amalgamations at the ecclesiastical level with other Christian groups to the point at which in reality, albeit not of set purpose, something like a schismatic separation from the Catholic Church is brought about. This means that the theme, 'Schism in the Catholic Church?' is not lacking in a certain interest and immediate relevance. We have no intention here of describing or even analysing any further the facts and symptoms indicated [99] above which are indicative of a danger of schism in the Church. Instead we shall be putting forward certain basic theological considerations bearing upon this theme of 'Schism in the Church of Today?'.

Heresy and Schism

First the difficulty of drawing a theological distinction between heresy and schism must be pointed out. The difference between heresy and schism has been recognized from ancient times. Moreover in the history of the early Church certain particular cases can be found in which this distinction seems, at least at first sight, to be actually illustrated in the concrete. At least in those cases in which the point of dispute was merely the legality of a given individual holding a leading office in the Church, whether subordinate or supreme and nothing more than this, we seem to encounter an instance in which schism is present without any heretical split having taken place. Again the present-day *Codex Juris Canonici* (c. 1325 § 2) draws the relevant distinction between heresy and schism, and seems to presuppose (without providing any clear definition on this point) that schism does not necessarily imply heresy and vice versa. And indeed at first sight this seems readily comprehensible. Schism arises in those cases in which someone explicitly and directly, or by implication through his actions, refuses

[1] In his address in the Lateran Basilica on the 3rd April 1969. It is interesting that shortly before in 'La Croix' Cardinal Suenens had declared that he did not believe that there was any danger of schism in the Church today.

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obedience to the Pope as the supreme leader of the universal Church and the representative of unity in her, and (or) unequivocally separates himself from the Church as a living community. This can be the act of an individual or a group, and in fact it makes no difference whether the individuals who do separate themselves from the community of the Church do or do not attach themselves to some other Church or church-like group. Now such a separation does not seem necessarily to imply the denial of any Christian doctrine explicitly taught as such by the Catholic Church.

In reality, however, the distinction between heresy and schism is not so simple. It has long been noticed that ever since the primacy of the Pope has come to be numbered among the explicitly defined doctrines of the Catholic Church, on any Roman Catholic understanding of the Church's nature the distinction between schism and heresy is no longer so simple. For to withdraw obedience from the Pope seems, after all, if it is radically carried through, to imply a denial of the dogma of the primacy of the Pope, in other words to be heresy as well. The Second Vatican Council does not state this with regard to the Orthodox Churches because it consistently [100] avoids the concepts of 'haeresis' and 'schisma'. But this does not eliminate the problem. We could of course say that the problem of whether or not it is possible to arrive at any real distinction between heresy and schism is unimportant, since we have in fact accustomed ourselves to regarding heretics and schismatics alike as in good faith, or to presume that they are so. In other words we have grown accustomed to regarding the separation from the Church which these involve as existing merely at a specifically external level, albeit an important one, either that is to say at the level of a specific conscious and abstract formulation of a reality of the faith or at the level of the Church's organization as a society. If this is the way in which we regard heresy and schism in the case of one who is, in all good faith, following the dictates of his conscience, in other words one who is merely materially speaking a heretic or schismatic, then the distinction between the two realities is from the outset not very important. Nevertheless this question, which we have no more than indicated above, has a certain importance for our considerations as we shall straightaway have to show.

A first point that strikes us is that today we speak almost more of the dangers of a schism arising in the Church than of the dangers of fresh heresies arising. The reason for this is surely not that there is no danger of fresh heresies arising in the Church.[2] Surely the explanation of this state of affairs is to be sought elsewhere in the fact that the lack of interest in theoretical questions of faith in the case of many young men is far too great to give rise to any directly theoretical dissent from the official Church at the level of conscious will and opinion. On this showing we can understand that resistance to the Church today is enkindled first and foremost at the level of concrete living, and is directed against her juridical dispensations and her 'establishment', and because of this when any such revolt becomes manifest and socially relevant in the Church it is easier to subsume it under the ancient name of schism or of the danger of schism than under the concept of heresy as formulated at the theoretical level. In the light of this we can, however, go on to ask whether in fact the phenomena which are referred to as schisms or entailing the danger of schism can appropriately be subsumed under this ancient concept at all. For this does, after all, presuppose that the theoretical reason has a certain primacy over the practical because it precedes it in time. Properly speaking, therefore, I would from the outset relegate schism to the level of a secondary phenomenon by comparison with heresy, something which properly speaking, could only constitute a reaction against very secondary factors at the [101] social level, as for instance the question of whether this or that individual is the legitimately elected Pope, whether this or that bishop is or is not exercising his authority legitimately, etc.

[2] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Heresies in the Church Today?' in this volume, pp. 116-141.

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It is true that in the times in which we live the practical reason has, at least *de facto*, attained a certain primacy because on the one hand, in the active control of the life of man and his environment by technical means, it has come to have quite new functions, and because on the other in these functions it is no longer thought of as merely the carrying out of the speculative reason. Now on this showing the dissent manifested by the Church's members comes to be quite different in kind and to have a quite different significance from what has been called schism hitherto. Basically speaking this new kind of dissent carries with it the dissent of the speculative reason because the practical reason is regarded as the more comprehensive. And because of this it is properly speaking heresy too, even though this term too can only be applied in that modified sense which has just been indicated with regard to the use of the term schism.

Schism as a Contemporary Phenomenon

From all that has been said, inadequate though it is, it surely follows inevitably that what we of today are confronted with is not simply the new danger of a schism which has remained unaltered in its essential character as such, but rather a phenomenon the true theological and social nature of which is still far from being clearly recognized. It cannot be our task here to embark upon a theological and sociological examination in order *ex professo* to describe this new and different phenomenon. This would be too great and too difficult a task. A point which we shall be treating of more fully at a later stage is that not everything new that is desired and striven for in the Church today in the way of doctrine and living practice is also *ipso facto* schism or entails the danger of schism. On this basis, however, certain insights will be provided, albeit indirectly and without being explicitly stated, into that phenomenon of modern times to which the ancient term 'schism' can be applied only hesitatingly and with reservations. For these 'schisms' are the distorted forms of those pluralist factors in the Church which are justified in the present times and only possible in the present times. And it is of these that we shall have to speak. And it is because it is only in these present times that these pluralist factors are possible that it is only now that a phenomenon arises which can only very inadequately be designated by the ancient term 'schism'.

[102] Abstracting, however, at this preliminary stage from the problems of terminology and the material questions implicit in them, we must begin by pointing out that schisms still can arise even today in which individuals or even more specific groups in the Church can separate themselves from the Roman Catholic Church by refusing to give their allegiance to the universal Church or to a legitimately established division of it to the extent that is necessary, and by refusing to obey the officials legitimately vested with authority in the Church. Just as this sort of thing was possible and actually happened in earlier times, so too it can also be possible today. The occurrences mentioned at the outset in the contemporary Church provide concrete illustrations of the fact that there is a danger of such schisms arising. Admittedly it must be pointed out at the same time that even when this general statement has been made very many individual problems of a more concrete kind still remain wholly unsolved. Presumably when men separate themselves to a certain extent from the concrete unity of life within the Church, or refuse to obey the authorised officials in the Church today this is not the outcome of a quite general *a priori* attitude in which this concrete unity of life with the Church and obedience to legitimately constituted authorities in the Church are rejected in general and in principle. Rather it represents a reaction against specific modes of living in the Church which are historically conditioned and are regarded as no longer in keeping with the times. These modes of life in the Church can then also be maintained and defended in the concrete by specific laws and prescriptions on the part of the Church's authorities (the Pope or a bishop).

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In any cases in which an attitude was adopted of radical rejection of the concrete unity of the Church and her legitimately constituted authorities, and in which a schism arose as a result of this attitude, a heresy would be present from the outset and unequivocally, and it would be this alone that would be the source of the schism. Such a case, therefore, would imply not so much the problem of schism but that of heresy. But let us envisage the second case, i.e. one in which a reaction arises which (at least) appears to be schismatic against a particular way of life in the Church which is no longer in keeping with the times or reasonable to impose, and the ecclesiastical laws and prescriptions upholding that way of life. In such a case the question arises whether in the concrete case the ecclesiastical law or official ordinance has or has not any objective authority binding in conscience. The case of an unjust command, an unreasonable ordinance, or one in which an ecclesiastical authority exceeds its own competence is in principle possible in the Church, and it cannot be regarded as schismatic to [103] react against this by refusing to obey it even when the form this takes in a specific instance is not merely a failure to fulfil the ordinance or law in question, but a radical rejection of such a specific and particular law or ordinance. Something of this kind is at least conceivable when the law that is being questioned or the dubious directive not merely prescribes that which is less good, but actually does violence to a genuine human right, or commands something which, when all the circumstances have been taken into consideration, must be judged to be immoral. As we have said, the possibility of such ordinances being issued in the Church cannot be excluded *a priori*, however true it may be that the individual Christian in the individual case must exercise great caution before he presumes such a situation to have arisen. It is true that within the official hierarchy of the Church there is in principle such a thing as an authority over authority, at least in the prime instance of the Church's teaching office as vested in the Pope or in a Council. This means that when an officially defined doctrine in the strict sense is issued by the Pope or Council then it is also clear so far as the Catholic understanding of the Church is concerned that in this case the Church's teaching office is not exceeding its authority.

But this absolute authority over authority is primarily present only in official definitions of doctrine, and not in other authentic statements of doctrine. And in the case of laws and prescriptions on the part of the Church's official pastors it is only in the most exceptional cases that it becomes possible to deduce a law or prescription of the Church as a rule of action at the concrete level unambiguously and compellingly from the teaching authority of the Church in an absolute sense, and so to demonstrate that any rejection of such a law or prescription amounts to heresy by a usurpation of the authority that governs authority. This means that any resistance to a concrete law, the real binding force of which is in fact precisely disputed, cannot so easily and simply be proved to be unequivocally schismatic provided we do not fall into the false assumption that a directive issued by an ecclesiastical authority in all sincerity can never be immoral. In those cases, therefore, in which it is not any definitorial decision of doctrine that is in question, and in which a specific directive cannot be proved unequivocally to follow from a doctrine of this kind, it is in principle conceivable that a conflict between an ecclesiastical authority and one who refused to obey its directive might be a case of open conflict, one which cannot univocally be decided from either side. In such a case the question of whether the refusal to obey does or does not constitute a schism remains open, so that such a conflict can be decided not in terms of theory or formal law, but only in terms of the facts themselves.

[104] Now given that a conflict of this kind remains insoluble at the level of theory and formal law, so that the question remains open whether it does or does not constitute a schism, we cannot solve it by saying that in such a case the officially constituted authorities of the Church can eliminate a case of conflict by threatening or actually imposing an

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excommunication. For this would merely be to transpose the problem and turn it into the question of whether an excommunication of this sort is just and effective.

From these indications it will be recognized that the question of whether it is a schism or merely a legitimate resistance to possible excesses on the part of the Church's official authorities in a given concrete instance will in many cases be difficult to answer, and that in many such cases it will often be quite impossible for the situation to be controlled by decisions at the level of theory and formal law. Such control will only be achieved, on the contrary, by the practical reason which in this case consists in patience and a Christian attitude of readiness to renounce and to serve. Despite all this it still remains valid as a principle that even today schisms can arise in the Church which really are such. Nor do we need to enlarge any further upon the point that very often if not always today, to the extent that a genuine and not merely a presumptive schism has arisen it proceeds from a heretical attitude of mind even though this may not become wholly apparent in every case. For even when individual groups attempt to assert their rights, whether supposed or genuine in a way that involves force and is devoid of charity against that concrete unity in the Church of which the official authorities are the representatives, a heresy at least of the practical reason can be present by the very failure to accord due value to the importance of this concrete unity, and also to the formal authority of the official functionaries of the Church. While, therefore, it may be perfectly true that there are real dangers of schism arising in the Church of today, still very many tendencies or actual situations occurring in the Church today should not *ipso facto* be condemned as constituting a danger of, or a tendency towards a schism. Alternatively we may say that the dangers involved here are such as are also inevitably involved in every good in our present world and age, and such as do not *ipso facto* make us suspect the genuineness of such goods. Let us identify a few such tendencies and real situations which must not be confused from the outset with schism or the danger of schisms.

[105]

The Degree of Autonomy of the Subsidiary Churches

The first factor we may point to is the tendency of the subordinate Churches to achieve a specifically greater degree of autonomy. The right of the subordinate Churches to a certain degree of autonomy and the importance of this both in itself and for the universal Church were in principle recognized at the Second Vatican Council. But the inferences envisaged in this recognition were nevertheless chiefly the subordinate Churches of the east. Obviously an autonomy of this kind could readily and unhesitatingly be conceded to these. We were already accustomed to them, and a recognition of this kind was still far from affecting *that* Church in which the majority of those who expressed this recognition live, namely the Church of the west, the western hemisphere, her daughter Churches in America, and the missions All of these are governed by one and the same *Codex Juris Canonici*, which manifestly affords little scope for the distinctive way of life proper to the subordinate Churches. The tendency to insist more strongly on their own distinctive ways of life and to achieve a more manifest degree of autonomy on the part of the subordinate Churches, therefore, is something which, though it has been recognized by the Second Vatican Council, has still been recognized primarily at the theoretical level, so that numerous grounds for conflict are concealed within this recognition, even to the point of threatening to turn into schism. But in itself this tendency is legitimate, and must not from the outset be suspected of being schismatic. Obviously this tendency meets with resistance on the part of the Church of the west, which is *de facto* to a large extent reduced to uniformity. If we take as our starting-point the assumption that whatever the forms in which the particular degree of autonomy enjoyed by a subordinate Church is expressed they must fall within the uniform pattern which

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has hitherto prevailed, then this tendency would from the outset be deprived of any real force and reduced to a mere theoretical ideal. As a matter of right and in practical terms the tendency to achieve a more emphatic degree of autonomy on the part of the particular subordinate Churches demands a wider scope than has hitherto been accorded to them by the general law of the Church and the practice of the Roman curia. On the other hand the unity of the subordinate Churches within the one Church is certainly not constituted or assured by the unity of the *creed*. On the contrary, it also demands, and that too precisely today, in an age in which an ever greater degree of unification is being achieved within a single world civilization, a certain measure of universal law and [106] universal patterns of life within the Church, over and above the *jus divinum*.

How to strike the balance in the concrete between these two principles of the autonomy and the unity of the subordinate Churches still remains a very obscure question, the more so since in many respects today the Church is actually confronted with fresh tasks and fresh decisions which require a greater degree of unity than was formerly the case. Obviously the concrete point at which to strike the balance in the contemporary scene between these two principles, and that too in terms of the particular concrete questions being treated of in any given case, is something that has to be discussed afresh again and again. But this is a point which cannot be discussed any further here. The question which remains in this connection is how such a balance can be *discovered* afresh in the concrete. Now the actual situation prevailing in the Church, and that too even at the human level and in all areas of the Church's life, is that generally speaking a right and a measure of power in the concrete is only granted under the force of a certain compulsion and not on the basis of a dialogue and the arguments put forward in this. It cannot be said that a degree of compulsion in some form, brought about by newly created situations, by a certain resistance etc. is from the outset or in every case an illegitimate way of altering a given state of affairs in the Church. In human life and in human society it is in fact not the case, and can never be so, that the process of arriving at decisions takes place *solely* through discussions of the *facts* involved (however important it may be to strive for such discussions), in other words that the authority of an official institution is demonstrably nothing else than the representation of the material arguments on which a given decision is (or should be) based. Now if this is the case on any Catholic and realistic view of the matter from the point of view of the 'authorities', then we cannot fall into the utopian idealism either of demanding that the desire for some change on the part of those 'subject to authority' shall only be arrived at *exclusively* on the basis of a reasoned discussion of the realities involved (however true it maybe that these must be the most important factor) which comes to be accepted by the officially constituted authorities as correct. In any decision one of the factors which is constantly at work is a certain 'compulsion' from above *and* from below, and we do not make the process of arriving at a given decision more human by suppressing this. Only if we recognize this obscure element in the process of arriving at any decision can we restrain and control it, be self-critical in our application of it, and concede that the other party too has a right to it, recognizing that it is all too easy to condemn it as immoral even [107] while we are all too ready to overlook it as a factor in our own activities. If all this were not the case, then the very idea of *consuetudo contra legem* could not have any legitimacy, not even in specific instances.

On the other hand it can never be legitimate to use a schism or the threat of a schism as a means to impose by force a new balance between the unity of the Church on the one hand and the autonomy of the subordinate Churches on the other. This statement is intended to apply to those cases in which there is question of a real schism, and not to that radical situation mentioned above in which it is only a presumptive schism that is involved in the process of resisting a directive of the ecclesiastical authorities prescribing something which is not merely the lesser good, but something that is actually immoral, or against an

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excommunication which is objectively speaking unjust, and at the same time definitive. The reason, therefore, that it is illegitimate to use a real schism or the threat of one as a means of achieving a new balance between the two principles mentioned above is that any real schism breaches the unity of the Church, which for a Catholic, and in the light of the Churches doctrine, is an entity which he can dispense with only by dispensing with the Church herself as necessary for salvation, and also that the will to enter into schism in this way runs counter to the eschatological hope of the Christian, who holds firm to the truth that, in spite of all, the good that God wills always finds its due place in the long run through the exercise of humility, patience and courage, without any revolutionary irruption into the continuity of the history of the one Church. For once and for all the Church is not a broken-down synagogue, but the Church of the final age such that the only stage which is to come after it is the eternal kingdom of God.

This eschatological hope does not imply any canonized immutability on the part of an established Church, but simply holds firm to the fact that this change within the Church and through her can take place and does take place repeatedly within her hierarchical constitution without us having to separate ourselves from the unity of the Church as it exists in the concrete, and not merely as an ideological postulate. He who attempts to oppose the due and justified differences of constitution of the subordinate Churches within the one Church by schismatic force overlooks the fact that thereby, and precisely in this present age of a growing socialization of man, he is turning himself into a religious individualist. And the ideologies on which this state is based have no real future. We can reform the Church only from *within* the Church, and while maintaining an eschatological hope which humanly speaking can never be proved in any adequate sense. Now it belongs precisely to the very nature of this hope that [108] even in conditions which seem to be unfavourable or hopeless it takes up the cudgels against any establishment within the Church. But when all this has been said, the fact still remains that the tendency on the part of the subordinate Churches to achieve a greater autonomy is legitimate and must not be suspected *a priori* as a schismatic tendency, because without a certain gentle force this aim is impossible of achievement.

Pluralism in Theology

A second phenomenon in the contemporary Church must likewise not be suspected *a priori* of being a schismatic or even heretical tendency. This is a growing pluralism in theology.[3] We cannot at this point set forth the reasons for this increasing pluralism in terms of the history of ideas or the history of the Church. But the time when one and the same scholastic philosophy and theology prevailed throughout the Church has passed. It is clear that several different theologies have emerged within the one Church and within her one binding creed, and that these differ from one another according to their respective intellectual backgrounds, the linguistic and philosophical presuppositions on which they are based, the concrete situation in terms of ideas to which any given theology of this kind is addressed and to which it must respond. Of course to say that there is a pluralism of theologies of this kind is not to assert that they have not all in common emerged in order to contribute to the understanding, the interpretation and the proclaiming of the one Christian creed. Nor is it to assert that these theologies should cut themselves off from this one and abiding Christian creed as it is proclaimed by the Church's authorities, the bishops and the Pope.

[3] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', *Theological Investigations*, XI (London, 1973), pp. 3-23.

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But surely this does mean that the theologies which have been developed today on the basis of various intellectual presuppositions and aims cannot simply be reduced to one and the same theology in any one higher synthesis worked out as a complete and positive system at the level of abstract speculation, however much we may have to strive for this as an ever asymptotic goal. Each of these theologies has its own special aspects, presentations of subject-matter, terminology, historical situations etc., on which they lay special emphasis at particular points, and this means that in certain respects they are irreducibly alien and unassimilable one to another.

[109] Indeed it may perfectly well be the case that in specific questions the underlying agreement between these different theologies in the one area designated by the creed can never be defined at all in any positive or adequate terms by any process of speculation on the part of the particular theologies, or by recourse to an overall authority. Instead it may well be the case that we have to be satisfied with trusting to the fact that each of the individual theologies unequivocally gives its allegiance to the one creed for all the variations of theological language between them, and that each of them adheres in a spirit of obedience to this one creed. For it is obvious that these theologies still have a duty to adhere to the creed even when the creed itself is in its turn partly determined in its very formulation by the language of one specific and historically conditioned theology. A pluralism among the theologies of this kind, even though it does not exclude, but rather constantly demands, a dialogue between them is something that we have to take into account today, and learn freely to live with as an unavoidable fact. This means that any one of these various theologies must refrain from over-hastily concluding that it can discern heretical or schismatic tendencies in the others. Of course this is not to say that a theologian no longer has the right of appealing to the teaching office of the Church to which the true and ultimate judgement belongs in expressing his opinion that a specific theological proposition put forward by some other theologian is no longer reconcilable with the creed of the Church, even though in principle this other theologian continues to submit to the teaching office. But in view of the pluralism among the theologies of today, which can no longer be avoided, any theologian has to be extremely prudent and cautious before expressing such an opinion.

Again, so far as the teaching office of the Church herself is concerned, with its task of watching over the unity of the creed and the purity of the faith, it finds itself, as a result of this insuperable pluralism among the theologies, confronted with fresh tasks in the way of working out procedures which will do equal justice alike to the task of the teaching office itself and to the contemporary situation of an abiding pluralism in theology. Concerning these fresh tasks with which the teaching office is faced we cannot enlarge any further at this point. On any showing, however, it remains a fact that a pluralism in theology has of itself nothing to do with schismatic and heretical tendencies, provided that the theologies concerned constantly and consciously submit themselves to the one creed of the Church, and are willing to make ever-renewed efforts to listen to one another’s message.

[110]

The formation of Groups within the Church

One of the points that is spoken of today is the necessity of achieving a process of democratization in the Church. Here we are abstracting from the question of whether any such concept as ‘democracy’, belonging as it does to the realm of secular society, is suitable to any extent to be incorporated into the terminology of the Church and her ecclesiology and the discussion of her interior problems. Nor can we treat of the problem of democracy in the Church at this point as a problem in itself. The question we are raising is simply what this problem has to do with that with which we are properly concerned. Moreover, however the

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nature of a democracy and the methods, limitations and needs of democratic life and the procedures of a democratic society should be defined, it is clear on any showing that in the broader social groups, and so too in the Church, democracy is inconceivable without the formation of informal and even formal groups too within the Church which emerge from below and are not formed as executive organs of the official leaders within the Church. Again these groups do not find their justification only at that point at which, and in virtue of the fact that they enjoy explicit approval from above. They do not have to be the upholders of a policy which is either intended (with the necessary provisos and in legitimate ways) to become general throughout the Church and to establish itself even in her institutions, or alternatively is at least intended as a struggle to achieve some recognized, albeit particular, place in the Church's life.

In order that there may be democratic procedures within the Church (to the extent that it is possible and reasonable for there to be such even in her, and that certain forms of democracy are allowed for) such groups are indispensable. Moreover such groups have always existed in the Church even though the key term 'democracy' has not been applied to them. In earlier times groups of this kind were generally informal and tended rather to bear the character of charismatic movements, at least at the beginning, inasmuch as they were not represented by religious orders or even by secular institutes. To this extent the difference between earlier times and the present day is to be found rather in the fact that on the one hand such groups are appearing more clearly than was the case as formal groups, and on the other that they regard their efforts as falling under the heading of a process of democratization or of collegiality within the Church.

It is self-evident that with a programme which they seek to carry out in one or other of the ways that have been mentioned such groups all too [111] easily incur the suspicion of being schismatic in tendency. They are in fact groups which clearly stand apart from the *corpus ecclesiae* considered as a totality and from the official institutions in the Church, and uphold a specific attitude and specific aims which do not *ipso facto* and from the outset enjoy the positive approval of the official authorities in the Church. If such groups sought to give their aims a concrete social embodiment in the sphere of religion without any regard to the Church as one and whole, and without any attempt to adapt themselves to her order, or in persistent and unequivocal defiance of the Church's official authority and the unity of this as represented in the Pope they would be *de facto* schismatic, though this is not to contest the fact that it is often not easy to decide in the concrete whether such a group is really schismatic in the sense defined. But the important point in this connection is the one which we have already briefly laid down, namely that the formation of a formal group of this kind from below – in other words independently of any prior authorization on the part of the official authorities is in principle perfectly legitimate, and must not be suspected from the outset of being schismatic in tendency merely on the grounds that it has not been formed by the official authority, or that its aims are not *a priori* brought into positive conformity with those of the official authority. In order to justify this statement reference must not simply be made to the rights of the individual to freedom, to the right and duty of every Christian actively to co-operate in the life of the Church, to the necessity for public opinion to be expressed in the Church, or to similar fundamental considerations. Nor must the proof from tradition be adduced by appealing to the fact that there always have been such groups in the Church, even though they have appeared under different labels and often with a less social formulation. In order to justify the position we have adopted reference must be made to one point alone: if there necessarily is a charismatic element in the Church, if a charismatic dynamism cannot and should not be achieved by the official institutions in the Church totally and of themselves, and if, furthermore, in the very nature of man himself and of society it is quite impossible for the charismatic element to exist or to function efficiently without any kind of

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concrete social embodiment, then 'spontaneous groupings' from below of the kind we are speaking of are in principle perfectly legitimate even if, under certain circumstances, the form in which they arise may be startling and uncomfortable to the Church's officials.

Side by side with the official institutions, therefore, and independently of them, there should also be those through whom a certain formation of will should be manifested, canonized and made effective in the contemporary [112] scene from the grass roots upwards, as for instance in councils of priests, pastoral councils etc. Just as in the secular sphere, side by side with the parliaments, despite them and at the same time for them, there are parties, and in a more complex society it is quite inevitable that there should be such if a parliament is to be set up which is really capable of its work and genuinely democratic, so too in the supremely complex society of the Church such 'spontaneous groups' formed from below, and having a certain similarity to political parties, are perfectly legitimate and necessary. Hence they should not from the outset be suspected of being schismatic in tendency.

A schismatic tendency would only be present in cases in which a group of this kind, without regard to the wellbeing of the Church as a whole, sought to uphold merely its own special interest, if it employed unfair or unChristian means in order to make its will effective, if it worked against the official authorities in the Church as a special group and with the threat of schism, if it conducted itself in such a way as no longer to make it apparent that it was sustained by that eschatological hope against all hope which to earthly man must appear as folly, but rather sought to achieve its aims by human cunning and human force *alone*. We in the Church of today have to accustom ourselves still more than in former ages to such 'spontaneous groups' arising from the grass roots, and we must learn to accord due scope to such groups in a spirit of fairness and brotherly openness. We have still to find, and still to discover again and again the happy medium between a revolutionary sectarianism which all too easily asserts itself in such groups, and that attitude of mere pious devotion towards the Church's officials in which we do not have the courage to hold our own opinions and to bring influence to bear at the social level.

Incomplete Identification

The problem of schism, or alternatively merely of the presumption of schism, must be approached from yet another angle. The phenomenon we have in mind here is the fact that many individual Catholics identify themselves only partially with their Church. The phenomenon in question is extremely complex and exists in very many forms, which are also essentially different from one another. To speak quite simply what we mean is that a Catholic remains in contact with his Church in his life, continues to 'practise' (at least in a certain, although it may be a very restricted sphere of that life) but in any case never thinks of separating himself from [113] the Church at the manifest and social level, yet at the same time retains certain notable reservations in his attitude towards his Church. Such reservations may be of the most varied kind. They may be such as are positively recognized as perfectly legitimate by the official institutions of the Church in their understanding of her essential doctrine, and hence too do not properly speaking affect the theological attitude of the Catholic involved towards his Church even though he has these reservations. For instance the individual has a perfect right to hold the opinion that this Pope is not a saint or not a skilful and wise ruler. He has a perfect right to consider many of the man-made laws of the Church as deficient in wisdom, as antiquated, or even as unjust and inhuman. In themselves such reservations do not affect the theological attitude of the Catholic concerned towards the Church. In fact, however, many Catholics of the present day do have reservations, and very far-reaching reservations at that, affecting the very substance of the Catholic faith and the

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nature of the Church herself, calling them in question or unequivocally rejecting them in themselves without the Catholic concerned feeling compelled on that account to separate himself from the Church even though he does not stand apart from it in this way, and in such cases his reasons for not separating himself from the Church, for continuing partially to identify himself with the Church, can in their turn be very varied, ranging from a bourgeois conformity to convention to motivations of a genuinely religious kind.

Now with regard to this incomplete identification with the Church as it bears upon our present theme we shall only be putting forward a few observations which in no sense constitute an exhaustive treatment of this subject of merely partial identification. An initial point to be laid down: reservations of the second kind which we have mentioned above do in themselves amount to a state of objective heresy, and thereby of a partial apostasy from the faith of the Church, and so too of an interior schism even when this is not made manifest at the social level. But so far as the concrete instances of such an attitude are concerned we will have to be cautious in arriving at such a judgement, in which we actually conclude that the cases concerned do amount to heresy and schism. Very often, or even in the majority of cases, a reservation of this kind which seems to be heretical does not entail any subjective guilt. This means that in judging of the individual who makes these reservations we should have to apply all those principles with regard to membership of the Church which apply to merely material heresy and the heretic at the merely material level, and that too even in the sort of case in which a heresy of this kind is far from being manifested at the level of public and social life, and in which he who [114] makes the reservations is not for one moment deliberately separating himself from the Church and her life. In such cases a situation that has really arisen in the concrete is simply one which has constantly arisen and constantly will arise everywhere in the Church in innumerable instances, a situation namely in which some individual at once wills to adhere to the Church and so to attain to salvation, maintaining a *fides implicita* in the full and orthodox faith of the Church, yet at the same time upholds opinions which objectively speaking are in contradiction to the faith of the Church. If therefore we assume *bona fides* to be present in such a reservation, and if this reservation is not manifested in the public and social life of the Church (for instance through the heretical preaching of an individual priest in the public services of the Church) then he who makes a reservation of this kind, despite the fact that he is in a state of only incomplete identification with the Church (at the level of conscious awareness) is, nevertheless a good Christian and Catholic. There would be no need to cause him any special ‘disquiet’, especially as after all there are precisely many cases in which psychologically speaking it is in practice often impossible within the limited time available to arrive at any *positive* synthesis and reconciliation between the statements of the Church’s faith on the one hand (which are not always easy for every individual to understand) and the opinions and attitudes of the Catholic involved on the other, which are in themselves justified. Here too we find ourselves faced with that phenomenon which can only very unsatisfactorily be characterized by the traditional term ‘schism’.

A further possibility is that the reservation which seems to be heretical does not truly represent a judgement on the part of the Christian who holds himself apart in this way, but is merely an expression, to some extent primitive and not fully worked out, of the fact that the Catholic concerned has failed to achieve any *positive* harmonization of the proposition of faith which has been called in question with the remaining tenets which he holds according to his own individual lights. In a case of this kind it is even less possible to say that schism and heresy are present in any objective sense. Of course for all that we have said we are not denying that the official authorities in the Church have the right and duty to guard the unity of the creed and the full purity of the Christian faith, and to conclude that heresy and schism are present in those cases in which an attitude of unequivocal separation from the Church’s

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doctrine is made manifest at the social level. It is clear that in such a case he who really makes reservations of *this* kind can no longer be tolerated as a teacher and director in the Church at the public level. Now between these two extremes constituted [115] by the first-named kind of reservations and the second kind many intermediate attitudes of reservation, and so too of partial identification of this sort are to be found, which vary in their nature and are difficult to analyse. They may entail dangers of schism or heresy while still not as such having to be qualified as *ipso facto* being schismatic or heretical in themselves. Not every theological opinion which is not already positively declared to be legitimate or admissible by the Church, yet which does run counter to some currently received opinion on the part of her teachers, *ipso facto* constitutes a heretical reservation contrary to the teaching of the Church. Not every individual act of disobedience against the man-made juridical dispositions of the Church implies a partial non-identification with the Church of such a kind that we would be compelled to judge it as schismatic, or would be forced to regard it as entailing a real danger of a schism. Indeed certain forms of partial non-identification with the Church in the concrete are recognized in her doctrinal tradition, and these have a positive function to perform. What we are referring to here are 'customs contrary to the law' which can be legitimate and concerning which it cannot genuinely be maintained in every case that they owe their origins to an initially immoral transgression of the law. A partial non-identification with the Church in one respect can therefore in some *other* respect perfectly well constitute an identification with her Spirit, with other concrete realities in her, and with her future.

All these considerations serve to bring out situations and problems which cannot be coped with by means of formal rules alone. There are many cases in which it cannot be established solely on the basis of the Church's doctrine whether they are heretical or schismatic or non-heretical and non-schismatic in character. There are conflicts between directives on the part of the Church's authorities and the resistance that is offered to them, which cannot be definitively ruled out even by the application of the principles of formal justice, since even juridical authority on the one hand and the obedience due to it on the other are not simply or exclusively the principle which dominates all else in the Church, but merely constitute a partial principle, the precise force of which in a specific case can perfectly well be an open question which cannot in its turn be decided unequivocally by this authority itself. In other words there are cases of conflict in the Church which cannot be solved simply by the rational application of theoretical and general principles to one individual case, but which can only be solved by the practical reason, i.e. *in concreto* by patience, modesty on both sides, efforts to overcome that intolerance which is to be found among both conservative and progressive Christians, humility and charity [116] which are capable even of surrendering a right, faith and hope which are able to overcome in weakness by keeping their gaze fixed upon the Cross of Christ.

Is it really so very surprising that there should be a situation of conflict of this kind in the Church? After all according to our Christian convictions the abiding nature and the power of the Church ultimately derive not from the univocal significance of propositions of faith formulated by human minds or from inflexible juridical rules (however true it may be that both have their necessity and their justification) but from the power of the Spirit who makes use of many human means and does not totally identify himself with any one of them. If we really believe this then we shall no longer be so very surprised at the fact that for many of the conflicts in the Church there are no smooth ready-made solutions. Admittedly in a conflict of this kind each individual, whichever side he is on, must (in a 'discerning of spirits') put to himself the critical question of whether his own attitude in the conflict really leaves sufficient room for the sway of the Spirit or is after all, in the last analysis merely governed by self-will. Often it is in fact impossible to solve such conflicts by the application of formal principles or merely at the level of rational argument. But often too it can plainly be recognized which side

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has more faith, hope, and dedicated love, humility and readiness for genuine *metanoia* in a spirit of self-criticism. Given this discerning of spirits we can after all arrive at a decision as to which 'party' in a conflict we should support. Even in a case such as this God is not simply and exclusively on the side of one party alone, but brings his own work to fruition according to his own good will by means of all the parties to the conflict. Our task, however, is not to seek to be God, but rather to seek out our own decision and our place in such conflicts in whatever direction a Christian discernment of spirits guides us.

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[117]

7

HERESIES IN THE CHURCH TODAY?

What we shall be attempting here is to state certain points of fundamental importance with regard to 'heresies in the Church'.[1] The theme has certainly become vitally relevant since the Council. The Christian in the Catholic Church who grew up in the preconciliar age and felt himself at home in this pre-conciliar Church not infrequently has the impression that the old faith is wavering, and that today even in the very pulpit itself doctrines and opinions are put forward which are claimed to have validity in the Church, yet which such a Catholic feels to be in contradiction to his own faith, to constitute heresy. He hears that in Holland an Adult Catechism has been published with the approval of the united Dutch episcopate which is at the same time denounced by other Dutch Catholics to the Pope at Rome on the grounds that side by side with much that is good it contains heresies or doctrines suspected of heresy. Again such a Catholic hears of the Doctrinal Letter of the German Bishops,[2] in which those entrusted with the task of preaching are warned [118] against false doctrines, attitudes at variance with the Church, wrong interpretations of the gospel, of the Resurrection of Christ, of the Eucharist etc. Such a Catholic has experience of apostasy on the part of priests who give up their priestly calling not merely because the duty of celibacy seems unbearable to them,[3] but also by reason of an interior apostasy from their very faith. And such a Catholic then feels oppressed by the further question of whether other priests too, even though for various reasons they still continue at their posts, may not fall away in their faith in a similar manner. In questions affecting his own moral life, especially with regard to married ethics,[4] such a Catholic hears of differences of opinion among moral theologians and confessors, and

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[1] On the basic problems involved cf. also J. O. Sanders, *Heresies Ancient and Modern* (London, 1948); K. Rahner, *Gefahren im heutigen Katholizismus* (Einsiedeln, 1950); W. Philipp, 'Irrlehre', *RGG* III (3rd ed., 1959) 898-901; J. Trütsch, 'Glaubensabfall', *LTK* IV (2nd ed., 1960), 931-934; J. Brosch, 'Häresie', *LTK* V (2nd ed., 1960), 6-8; K. Rahner, 'Häresiengeschichte', *ibid*., 8-1l; *idem*, 'On Conversions in the Church', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 373-384; *idem*, 'Some Remarks on the Question of Conversions', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 315-335; *idem*, 'What is Heresy?', *ibid*., pp. 468-512; A. Böhm, *Häresien der Zeit* (Freiburg, 1961); U. Ranke-Heinemann, 'Die Kirche und die christlichen Konfessionen', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg, 1966), esp. pp. 84-87.

The chapter which follows is a very much abbreviated version, and an excerpt from a larger treatise entitled 'Häresien in der Kirche heute?' which the author prepared for publication in the series, 'Quaestiones Disputatae' (Verlag Herder, Freiburg). For a more detailed exposition of the arguments presented here the author may refer to this projected study.

[2] *Schreiben der deutschen Bischöfe an alle, die von der Kirche mit der Glaubensverkündigung beauftragt sind* (Treves, 2nd ed., 1968). In this connection cf. also the encyclical of Paul VI, 'Mysterium Fidei', *AAS* 57 (1965), pp. 753-774 and also the Letter of Cardinal Ottaviani to the Universal Episcopate, *AAS* 58 (1966), pp. 659-661 and on the latter, K. Rahner, 'Theology and the Church's Teaching Authority After the Council', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 83-100.

[3] On this cf. F. Wullf *et al*., 'The Discussion on Celibacy, France, Germany and the Netherlands', *Concilium* 3/5 (Pastoral), 1969, pp. 86-90.

[4] In this connection the practice in mixed marriages and the question of birth-control occupy a central place in the discussion. On this cf. J. M. Reuss, 'Eheliche Hingabe und Zeugung', *T.Q*. 143 (1963), pp. 454-476; T. Roberts, *Empfängnisverhütung in der christlichen Ehe* (Mainz, 1966); F. Böckle, *Das Problem der bekenntnisverschiedenen Ehen in theologischer Sicht* (Freiburg, 1967); further, E. McDonagh, 'The Moral Theology of Marriage: Recent Literature in English', *Concilium* 1 (Moral Theology, 1965), pp. 70-82; J. David, *Neue Aspekte der kircklichen Ehelehre* (Bergen-Enkheim, 2nd ed. 1966); B. Häring, *Moralverkündigung nach dem Konzil* (Bergen-Enkheim, 1966), and also K. Rahner, 'On the Encyclical "Humanae Vitae"', *Theological Investigations* XI (London, 1973), pp. 263-287.

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indeed among bishops, even concerning doctrines which as recently as a decade ago seemed to him to be put forward by the Church's official teachers as uncompromising and beyond all doubt. In short such a Catholic asks himself whether today doctrines are not emerging unchallenged, and even being put forward within the Church herself, which, measured by the teaching traditionally upheld up to the present, would simply have to be rejected as heresies, as errors against the faith.

I

The question we are raising here is not concerned simply with heresies in the full sense. The fact is that individuals come forward in the Church proclaiming an opinion or upholding a doctrine which is then declared [119] irreconcilable with the Christian and Catholic faith by the Church's official teachers, with the result that the upholders of any such doctrine must either submit to the pronouncement of the Church in the obedience of faith or alternatively depart from the Church in a way that is manifest even at the level of her social and public life. But this is something which has always happened again and again in the course of the Church's history, and it is not this that constitutes the subject of our considerations. What we are treating of, rather, is the phenomenon that Catholic Christians uphold opinions of this sort in the Church, deviating from the Church's faith in a way that is in some degree manifest and public in her social life without on that account then departing from the Church. Indeed their way of upholding such opinions may actually be such that the ecclesiastical authorities, with the doctrinal authority vested in them, may not even take proceedings against them in a sufficiently clear manner. In speaking of heresies within the Church in this way we are of course not referring to variations of opinion on theological questions such as there have always been in the Church, without prejudice to her one faith and her one creed. Admittedly we are also aware of the fact that it is not always easy to establish the line of demarcation between such variations of opinion in theology on the one hand, freely existing side by side with one another, and heresies which are hostile to the faith on the other. In other words it is not always easy to say whether a given opinion really does constitute a heresy, and radically calls for the intervention of the Church's *magisterium*.

Nor do we intend here to investigate the question of the extent to which anything which has to be called heresy within the Church really is present in the Catholic Church of today, and if so how great or how small the threat that this represents for her is. All that we are assuming is that the threat is present in some degree, and that it is such that a consideration of this phenomenon does not merely constitute the heart-searchings of a reactionary Catholic who is the prey of anxious nightmares. The fact that this phenomenon is present in some measure, at least as a genuine danger, is in fact apparent from the Doctrinal Letter of the German Bishops mentioned above, and also from the warning words of the Pope. In other words it has been pointed to by individuals in the Church who certainly are not struggling against mere nightmares. What we intend, rather, is, without adopting any more precise or in some sense statistical position with regard to the phenomenon of heresies in the Church of today, first and foremost to enquire what the reasons are for this state of affairs, which is, in a certain sense at least, a new manifestation. These reasons are certainly complex and together constitute a unity, and it is only by taking [120] them together as a unity that we can to some extent explain this phenomenon. Catholics who are over-anxious and conservative in a sense that is not altogether above suspicion have already laid the blame for this manifestation at the door

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of the Council itself.[5] This is of course mistaken. First the Council has never in any sense cast doubt upon, or even merely obscured, any of the real doctrines of faith hitherto upheld by the Church. Perhaps, however, it is possible to say that the Council has in some respects acted as a sort of catalyst through which the true origins of this phenomenon have been set in motion and have brought these heresies within the Church to the surface at the level of the Church's public life as well – heresies which were already present previously, albeit *in radice*, and only in a latent form. For the Council realistically and boldly faced up to the intellectual and social situation in which the Church has to live today, and this situation, in which all of us as individuals and so the Church too have to live, is the real cause of this phenomenon.

Faith recognizes its own nature in relation to a great number of sciences, intellectual disciplines and branches of the natural and sociological sciences which have become autonomous and which show the widest possible variations. And in the questions they raise, the conclusions they arrive at, and the aims for which they strive all these have an ideological relevance.[6] Faith as it exists today lives in a world which is intellectually and sociologically speaking pluralist in character. Every believer comes continually into contact with men who have different philosophies of life, amounting in extreme cases to a dedicated and militant atheism. Even on the most basic questions of human existence there is today no one homogeneous public opinion in which the conviction of the individual could find support in virtue of their self-evident truth and universal acceptance. The world has become *one* in such a way that the individual has been brought to close quarters with cultures which were formerly very remote, and has become [121] familiar with their interpretations of existence and modes of living. The world which was once static has become dynamic. The changes it undergoes, planned and carried through by man himself, are becoming ever swifter, and in this world which is the creation of man himself, or seems to be so, it is not so easy to discover God. In a world of this sort it is obvious that faith is much more threatened and assailed in the individual than in an earlier static or homogeneous society, the ethos of which first bore the stamp of Christianity and in which any view that deviated from the publicly accepted and homogeneous Christian opinion immediately met with resistance from society itself.

Now in a situation of this kind, in which faith is threatened, it is obvious that more inroads will be made into the faith of the individual, and even more inculpable breakdowns of faith at this level, than in an earlier age. A further point is that in a new situation of this kind the ancient faith, precisely in order to remain the ancient one, must learn to interpret itself afresh. It must surrender old patterns of interpretation which are not identical with itself, and seek for new ones. It must express itself in new forms in order to make itself understood in the contemporary scene, and manage to make contact with findings arrived at in other branches of human knowledge and human life in such a way that it does not cause the tension inherent in the very nature of faith in relation to the rest of human experience to become too great for the individual to sustain. The root causes of the phenomenon we are considering as indicated above are still, however, insufficient of themselves, for the only effect it could produce, and in fact to a considerable extent does produce, is that those who find themselves opposed in

[5] In this connection we should notice the criticisms which the French episcopate put forward on the 27th June 1966 with regard to various articles in the periodicals, *Itinéraires*, *Défense de Foi*, *Lumière* and *Le Monde et la Vie*. Cf. also in the German-speaking sphere, *Nunc et Semper. Eine katholische Korrespondenz für Kirche und Papstum* 1 (1966) and ff.

[6] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'A small Question Concerning the Contemporary Pluralism in the Intellectual Situation of Catholics and the Church', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 21-30; *idem*, 'Reflections on Dialogue Within a Pluralistic Society', *ibid*., pp. 31-42; *idem*, 'Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests', *ibid*., pp. 113-138; *idem*, Theologische Deutung der Gegenwartssituation als Situation der Kirche', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (1966), pp. 233-256.

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their convictions to the faith as it has existed hitherto either cease to be members of the Church even in the external sense, or alternatively become so remote from the Church at least in virtue of ceasing to take any active part in Church life or any interest in the Church's doctrine that it is hardly possible to speak of any heresy within the Church at all. There must be some further cause besides the one which we have mentioned, and in fact there is such a cause.

Modern man is, from a certain point of view, man in a strange state of transition.[7] One of the dominant characteristics of him is a kind of [122] individualism which has arisen in recent times such that it is only with the greatest difficulty that he can reconcile himself to any authority imposed upon him from without so far as his understanding of existence and his mode of living is concerned. Now certainly among the elements that go to make up this modern form of individualism there is one which we must want to endure, and that too precisely as Christians: the right to freedom of conscience and of personal decisions, which must neither be directed nor replaced by any external compulsion from the society in which we live. At the same time, however, it seems to me that contemporary man, characterized as he is by this modern form of individualism, is also in a strange way already one who belongs to a future era. Man as we envisage him here is aware of the fact that any absolute individualism is not only unrealistic and futile, but also, so far as knowledge is concerned, leads to what is merely arbitrary and capricious. He already feels, albeit not in any very explicit way, that truth itself is somehow bound up with society and institution. Unlike the man of the age of upper-class individualism, he is no longer assured of the fact that one can discover one's religion for oneself according to one's own opinions and inclinations. There is a certain scepticism in his attitude which he directs against himself, and which makes it less easy for him to regard his own philosophy of life as the only true one.

Now a man of this kind, standing as he does at the point of transition between a modern form of individualism and a new experience of the importance of the collective discovery of truth (to express it vaguely) is thereby exposed to the temptation of opposing his own views, drawn from his own personal philosophy of life, to the collective awareness of faith upheld by the Church as a whole, and yet even while doing this of continuing to claim his place in this community, constituted though it is by a body of religious convictions which cannot hastily be worked out afresh. He wills to be a heretic within the Church. He wills to remain within her in order to avoid simply degenerating into scepticism and relativism, yet without unreservedly submitting to the claims which his community makes to be in possession of a collective truth, and he does this in the *hopeful* conviction, which he strives ever afresh to realize, that it is possible to achieve harmony between his own individual sense of truth and the convictions upheld by the believing community.[8]

[123] In addition to this there is a further fact which, though correct in itself, has the opposite effect to what might be expected in its bearing on the case we are considering. The Council itself has recognized that in the totality of the Christian and Catholic faith there is a hierarchy of truths,[9] in other words that even though the binding force of all the doctrines of the Church (which really are such) is formally speaking the same, nevertheless there are

[7] For a description of modern man's social situation cf. H. Freyer, *Das soziale Ganze and die Freiheit der Einzelnen unter den Bedingungen des industriellen Zeitalters* (Göttingen, 1957); K. Mácha, *Individuum und Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 1964); R. Linder, *Grundlegung einer Theologie der Gesellschaft* (Hamburg, 1960); K. Rahner and N. Greinacher, 'Grundzüge der Gegenwartssituation', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (1966), pp. 188 ff. (A further bibliography is to be found here, cf. pp. 178 ff.).

[8] On this cf. also K. Rahner, 'On the Theology of Hope', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1972), pp. 242-259; *idem*, 'A Small Fragment "On the Collective Finding of Truth"', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 82-88.

[9] Decree on Ecumenism, No. 11.

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extraordinarily wide differences between the individual doctrines in respect of their importance and the weight they carry as applied to objective situations and particular concrete circumstances. Not all the statements of the Catholic faith are equally important or central. Hence it is all too easy for an individual caught up in this state of transition to arrive at the opinion that he can preserve those truths of the Christian faith and those fundamental practices of Christian life which really are most central, in other words belief in God, prayer and hope of eternal life, and thereby remain in the Church and hold firm to the practices of Christian living, and nevertheless, with regard to the less central teachings of the faith, form his own opinion in contradiction to the official teaching of the Church.

In addition to all these other causes there is finally one further cause for the phenomenon we are considering. There are many questions which are matters of dispute in theology.[10] As the German bishops have explicitly recognized, there are *de facto* propositions which, though not defined, have nevertheless been authoritatively taught in the Church up to now, which have turned out to be either erroneous or at least susceptible of legitimate doubt. This applies not merely, for instance, to the sphere of biblical studies, but also to the sphere of morality in questions which have a wholly practical significance for the life of the individual Christian.[11] [124] Finally it is not always easy to draw any exact line of demarcation between that which constitutes the true doctrine of the Church, which is irreformable, and those opinions and interpretations which are open to discussion, but which have hitherto to some extent been amalgamated with this essential doctrine without sufficient conscious discrimination. In the light of this it is, once more, understandable that a Christian who legitimately rejects views which have hitherto been current in the Church may without noticing it, and indeed even while intending to achieve a new and better understanding of the Church's doctrine, overstep the limits and contest or throw doubt upon doctrines which have an absolute dogmatic binding force as well, without thereby either entertaining or enunciating any intention of separating himself from this fellowship of the believing Church.

II

We shall now attempt to formulate certain rules for a right understanding and a right attitude towards the phenomenon with which we are concerned.

1. There is both a legitimate and an illegitimate way of distinguishing between the individual and the collective conviction of faith. Not every distinction between the conviction of faith entertained by the individual and that of the Church is legitimate, for otherwise there would in fact be no heresies in the Church such as are obviously to be rejected. Conversely, however, not every distinction is illegitimate. If we were to overlook the fact that there both

[10] On this cf. n. 4, and further the discussions concerning the relationship between nature and grace, between the Pope and the College of Bishops, and also concerning questions bearing upon Jesus' awareness of himself, the relationship between scripture and tradition, the Virgin birth, the precise nature of transubstantiation, original sin etc. In these respects, however, our situation is not essentially different from that of earlier ages in which the Church likewise had to endure sharp differences of opinion (Thomists, Scotists, Suarezians, Augustinians) and had to bridge the gulf between them (Bánez-Molina, the Contritionists-Attritionists).

[11] As an example from an earlier age we might mention the following: Innocent VIII on the question of the burning of witches, Gregory XVI on the question of the press and freedom of conscience (DS 2730), Pius IX in The Syllabus of Errors (DS, 2977-2980). In this connection cf. R. Aubert, 'Religious Liberty from "Mirari Vos" to the "Syllabus"', *Concilium* 1 (1965, Church History), pp. 49-57; H. J. Zwetsloot, 'Witch-Hunting', *Sacramentum Mundi* 3 (London and New York, 1968), pp. 143-145. On the question of usury, J. T. Noonan, 'Die Autoritätsbeweise in Fragen des Wüchers und der Empfängnisverhütung', *Diakonia* 1 (1966), pp. 79-106; *idem*, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, 1957); *idem*, *Contraception. A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge, 1965).

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can be and is a legitimate way of distinguishing between the individual and the collective conviction of faith, we would not merely be overlooking the situations which *de facto* exist, but also failing to adopt a right attitude to that element of concern inherent in the heresies within the Church which is justified.[12]

[125] The truth which this is intended to express is this: there is an illegitimate way of distinguishing; it is found in the heresies in the Church which arise in connection with some truth of the faith in the strict sense, for which the official teaching authority of the Church claims an absolute assent of faith through a definition of the Pope of the Council, or else through the ordinary channels by which doctrine is promulgated. Such heresies arise when a Catholic unequivocally denies, or of his own free decision casts doubt upon truths of the faith of this kind (though obviously the difficulties which we may feel with regard to some doctrine of the faith promulgated by the Church do not of themselves entail any such doubt or denial), and arise above all in those cases in which this denial or voluntary questioning of a truth of faith also becomes a factor in the public life of the Church. When he does deny a truth of the faith in the strict sense in this way, or at least when his denial becomes a factor in the public life of the Church, a Catholic separates himself from the Church even though juridically speaking, and so far as external Church membership is concerned he still continues to belong to her. For instance he may continue to pay the Church dues or attend Church on Sundays or send his children for religious instruction. Even so he is separated from the Church, and that too even though the Church's officials may not have laid down that he is separated from her by a distinct and specific juridical enactment. Such a Catholic is separated from the Church because the Church is a spiritual community united by all her members holding the same faith, and not merely an external juridical organization. Now a Christian of this sort separates himself from this one unified community of the faith as a matter of his own personal decision by rejecting a doctrine which this community adheres to with an absolute assent of faith, and in virtue of the fact that by his denial of such a specific truth he is also rejecting, at least by implication, the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church's faith in the strict sense and of her teaching authority. Of course in defining the general principles according to which heresy is judged to involve separation from the Church we have still not decided the practical question in the individual case of where in the concrete such heresy is to be found. For manifestly a [126] denial of a doctrine of the Church only constitutes a heresy that separates the individual concerned from the Church in the sense we have defined when it is posited with sufficient freedom and responsibility, when this denial really signifies a grave fault in God's sight, when the denial is really directed against a doctrine of the Church and not merely against some misinterpretation of such a doctrine.[13] Very often we are far from being able to establish all these conditions exactly in the individual case. Besides this a distinction which we shall not be entering into any more fully at this point should be drawn between heresy which is merely objective and that which is subjective too according to whether in the particular case supposed the denial of some defined doctrine of the Church is culpable or inculpable.

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[12] On the distinction between the individual and the collective awareness of faith cf. M. Löhrer, 'Überlegungen zur Interpretation lehramtlicher Aussagen als Frage des ökumenischen Gesprächs', *Gott in Welt* II (Festschrift für K. Rahner) edited by J. B. Metz, W. Kern *et al*. (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 499-523; K. Rahner, *Bemerkungen zum Begriff der Offenbarung*, Quaestiones Disputatae 25 (Freiburg, 1965), pp. 11-24, esp. pp. 11/12 (with reference to Modernism); *idem*, 'Theoretische und reale Moral in ihrer Diiferenz', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 152-163; *idem*, 'Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 189-218; *idem*, 'Theology and the Church's Teaching Authority After the Council', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 83-100.

[13] On the concept of heresy cf. K. Rahner, 'What is Heresy?', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 468-512; J. Brosch, 'Häresie', *LTK* V (2nd ed., 1960), 6-8; H. Flatten, *Der Häresieverdacht im CIC* (Amsterdam 1963).

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But there is also, as has already been stated, a perfectly legitimate distinction between the individual's own convictions of faith and that of the Church as a whole. Heresy in the true sense often emerges precisely through the failure to recognize this legitimate distinction and to be bold enough to apply it to one's own case, with the result that then, when difficulties arise in understanding the faith, we go beyond the prescribed limits, not knowing how to resolve our difficulties except by specifically denying some defined doctrine of the Church.

In what does this legitimate distinction consist? First and foremost it is clear that at the level of his own personal convictions of faith an individual Christian does not have to be in possession of all the doctrines of the Church's faith with complete clarity and in a fully explicitated and developed form as these doctrines are present in the convictions of faith of the Church as a whole. The catechism or concrete body of convictions present in the mind and heart of any one individual believer is in most cases much smaller and more modest than the printed catechism or the compilation of all the doctrinal decisions officially laid down by the Church. This is not merely *de facto* the case – something which no-one surely will deny – but it actually should be the case. Precisely today, when it is man's most ultimate decisions with regard to God, Jesus Christ, and the hope of eternal life that are in question, it is quite impossible, and moreover not for one moment to be supposed in the case of an average Christian, even one who is interested in religion and well instructed, that his personal commitment of faith will be equally alive and vigorous to every truth without exception. It is perfectly legitimate for him to concentrate [127] his personal will to achieve the truth on the most central questions of the Christian faith and the Christian way of life, in other words upon a living and prayerful relationship with God in his history, upon Jesus Christ, upon the task of bravely enduring his life and the demands it makes upon him, upon the hope of eternal life, and all this within the Church of Jesus Christ and in the fellowship of those who do believe in this way and celebrate the memory of their Lord. Provided he does have a conviction of faith of this sort, orientated towards the most central realities of the Christian message, the Christian of today can freely leave unexplored much else that belongs to the convictions of faith upheld by the Church as a whole. He must not deny it. He will maintain an openness in the convictions of his personal faith and the development of his own religious experience to this more ample fulness of the Christian faith in the Church as a whole. But he does not need to act as though he were obliged to maintain an equally intensive attitude in his own concrete personal circumstances towards everything which the Church proclaims as pertaining to the faith, and in doing so to overstrain the capacities of his personal religious life. With regard to the less central truths of the faith, for instance the position of Mary, the number and importance of the sacraments, and other matters, it is perfectly legitimate for him to say: 'I do not deny all this; in principle I fully acknowledge that all this pertains to a legitimate explicitation of the basic reality of Christian revelation as upheld in the universal convictions of the Church. But here and now in the concrete situation of my own religious life I cannot take any special interest in these matters. I leave all this more or less on one side. My personal conviction of faith is not simply a repetition of the total convictions of the Church, but merely a legitimate part of those convictions arrived at by a certain process of selection and individual arrangement'.

Once the Christian recognizes this legitimate distinction between his own individual convictions of faith and those of the Church as a whole, once this distinction is not merely *de facto* present but also boldly and freely invoked, then many difficulties are avoided in a perfectly reasonable and harmonious way which in other cases lead to heresies within the Church, because in these other cases the individual supposes that as a matter of his own personal conviction of faith he has always and in every case to achieve an explicit and conscious appropriation of any and every truth of faith in his own personal life. And this may be impossible in the here and now precisely in the individual's own case. A further point is

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that in the contemporary scene modern man has a lively awareness of the difference between accepting a given doctrine merely at the conceptual [128] level and making it his own at a genuinely personal level in such a way that the truth concerned really does achieve a genuine effectiveness and force in his own life. Now because of this the attempt to achieve a personal appropriation of this kind of a given doctrine of the Church, such that it becomes a force in the individual's own personal life, can easily lead to an over-straining of the will, and then this over-straining can lead precisely to the heresies in the Church of which we have been speaking. These are the difficulties which we would be able to avoid if we were clearly and freely to allow for the fact that there is a legitimate difference between the message which we hear or can hear in the official preaching of the faith and that in this message which we effectively appropriate in our own personal lives, without thereby denying the rest of the message.

The situation here is the same as in other departments of life. When we demand more of ourselves or believe that we have to demand more of ourselves than we are actually capable of we do not even manage to achieve that which really is within our capacities In other words with regard to many individual truths of the Church a Catholic of today, especially an educated one, can perfectly well say: 'I do not understand this or that point. It raises difficulties for me. I cannot cope with it at all. Any genuinely personal understanding of it is simply not given to me or accessible to me here and now. But on the other hand I do not deny it. I set it on one side. I have a perfectly genuine right as a human being to do this, and in principle it has nothing whatever to do with cowardice or dishonesty', because in other spheres of individual experience and the development of ideas in his personal life every individual is aware that the totality of objective truth, of the values and benefits for human life which a given culture, or even humanity itself, has to bestow is too great for the individual to be able positively to appropriate this totality for himself at the level of his own personal understanding.

2. The justifiable pluralism arising from the theological freedom within the Catholic Church must freely be accepted as a given fact.[14] In the last century Catholic theology bore a neo-Scholastic stamp and exhibited a [129] great uniformity, and if we abstract from relatively few exceptions, it was regarded as obvious that it was simply *the* predominant theology in the Catholic Church, even though in principle it had always been recognized that there should be various schools in theology. Now in the last few decades the situation has been very considerably changed, and this change has been accelerated by the Council. As a result of bolder confrontations with the modern sciences, with the problems and findings of exegesis, with Protestant theology, with all the questions which are raised by the contemporary climate of ideas, Catholic theology has become far more varied than we could have imagined a few years ago. Even in those cases in which we are willing to accord an unreserved respect to the defined doctrines of the Church there are, in contemporary theology very great variations of opinion even on important questions, very great differences between the perspectives in which the reality of the faith is viewed, between the philosophies and terminologies which theology employs in its attempt to master and express its subject-matter.

The increasing pluralism in Catholic theology which has come about in this way cannot be depicted at any greater length here. Nevertheless it has a very great significance for the

[14] On the concept of freedom in the Church cf. K. Rahner, *Das freie Wort in der Kirche* (Einsiedeln, 2nd ed., 1954); *idem*, 'Freedom in the Church', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 89-133; *idem*, 'Dialogue in the Church', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 103-123; *idem*, 'Do not Stifle the Spirit!', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and Baltimore, 1971), pp. 72-87; *idem*, *Das Dynamische in der Kirche*, Quaestiones Disputatae 5 (Freiburg, 3rd ed. 1965). With regard to the statements of the Council cf. the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 'Lumen Gentium', No. 37 and the Decree on Ecumenism No. 4.

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question with which we are here concerned. It is in fact not always easy to distinguish between a body of doctrine which all hold in common and the various theologies which interpret it. Indeed any absolutely clear-cut division between the common stock of dogma on the one hand and its more detailed theological interpretations on the other is quite impossible, since every theological statement of a given dogma necessarily and of its very nature involves a certain element of interpretation[15] without thereby being absolutely identical with it, yet at the same time without being able to be set apart from it by any absolute process of separation either. This situation gives rise to a danger of heresies in the Church. It is necessary constantly to reinterpret dogma afresh, though of course this does not mean to alter that essential content of its message which has a permanent validity. In order to be assimilated to the living faith of believers a dogma must again and again be brought into confrontation with the totality of the overall intellectual climate in which man lives today taken as a whole, and this is changing ever more swiftly. But precisely this necessity inevitably produces a wealth of varied interpretations of the dogma in the contemporary situation [130] even in those cases in which what is aimed at is the *one* essential point which the dogma is intended to convey, and even in those cases in which these varied interpretations do not necessarily simply contradict one another, but merely exhibit a certain disparity and incommensurability among themselves.

Hence it can come about that even with the best intentions, the most whole-hearted willingness to be loyal to the faith, and genuine obedience' towards the Church's *magisterium* the interpretations of official doctrine put forward in theology are either irreconcilable with that doctrine as a matter of objective fact, even though their irreconcilability has not been realized, or, even when they are in conformity with that doctrine and indeed may be necessary for any genuine understanding of the faith in the contemporary situation, they are still wrongly rejected by other believers or theologians as irreconcilable with the Church's doctrine. Thus over and above the differences of opinion between the various schools which have always existed, in the pluralism of theologies as it exists today doctrines are put forward within the Church which either really are heretical or are unjustly suspected of being so. In this situation it is not always easy to distinguish between these real heresies and those which are merely presumed to be so. The task of distinguishing between real and merely presumptive heresies in these new interpretations of the ancient and abiding doctrine of the Church may require long and toilsome efforts on the part of theologians, the official teachers of the Church, and in the developing awareness of the Church's faith. For this task there is need of patience, self-criticism on the part of individual theologians and of theology in general, and on the part of the Church's official teachers generosity and patience on the one hand and vigilance on the other.

What takes place at the level of specialist theology clearly also exists at the level of the less consciously and methodologically worked out theological development of the convictions of faith of those Christians who are to some extent instructed and religiously awake. At this level too real and also merely presumptive heresies are to be found as personal interpretations of the Christian faith. All, Christians and theologians alike, must be aware of the fact that it is necessary to achieve a lively understanding of the faith in the context of an ever-renewed confrontation with the climate of ideas in general, that the danger of mistaken interpretations of the official doctrine cannot be avoided merely by monotonously handing down the traditional formulae of faith, and that therefore, in a pluralism of theologies which cannot be overcome[16] (and, it may be [131] said in passing, is already present in holy scripture itself)

[15] Cf. also K. Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 28-45; *idem*, 'Philosophy and Philosophizing in Theology', *ibid*, pp. 46-63. On the historical development of the dogma itself cf. *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 727-782.
[16] On this cf. no. 6.

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real or merely presumed heresies may arise in the Church, that it takes time to distinguish between the two, and requires patience on the part of the official teachers as well as of theologians and believers, and that for this reason we should not be too hasty to throw suspicion upon either side with regard to an interpretation of this kind, accusing it either of being stupid and old-fashioned or alternatively as *avant-garde* and heretical. Again the official teaching of the Church is subject to a living process of historical development, and at a time when the history of human ideas is undergoing swift transformations it too must critically, boldly and confidently accept and endure these historical conditions to which it is subject.

3. This inevitable pluralism of theologies which exists today must not and need not surrender the unity of the Church's creed even at the verbal level.[17] In the theology of the Church and in the mind and heart of the individual believer there must be a pluralism in the interpretation of any given dogma. Otherwise it is quite inconceivable that there can be any lively understanding of the Church's message such as can become a force in human life. Indeed in a situation in which each individual retains his own radical individuality, even though there may be a genuine verbal intercommunication between men, it is quite impossible, even in respect of truth itself, to establish empirically with absolute certainty whether two individuals pronouncing and accepting in common the same proposition really think and mean the same by it.[18] But all this does not exclude the fact that there must be unity of creed within the Church and, moreover, that this can be established in sufficient measure. On any Catholic understanding of the faith this unity cannot consist merely in the unity of that reality which is ultimately signified but is beyond words, and to which the various theological statements refer. There must also be a unity in the verbal creed itself within the one Church. So as to ensure a sufficient possibility and certainty of achieving and establishing this it is necessary that we both believe and express in words the same truth even though in doing so it must be recognized that differences do incontestably exist in the concrete between individuals according to their own personal conditions in their individual interpretations of what they all assert in common.

In order to ensure that there shall be a unity of one and the same creed [132] within the Church in a context of insuperable pluralism with regard to the understanding of the faith, and in order to uphold the verbal expression of the truth in its presentation at the social level, it is inevitable and legitimate to have a certain linguistic norm.[19] There are also unjustified deviations from such a linguistic norm as laid down by the Church which are illegitimate (even though they do not necessarily and in all cases *ipso facto* also have to deviate from what is signified in the Church's official formulation) at least in those cases in which the formulation that deviates from the linguistic usage of the official Church is presented not as a possible interpretation of this official statement of the Church, but rather itself, either explicitly or in practice, rejects this official formulation. Again a proposition which is merely presumed to be heresy though in fact it is not can in its turn have to be rejected on the grounds that it itself rejects the verbal formulation of the official Church and departs too far from it in its own formulation, so that in practice it is in danger of arousing in the hearers of such an interpretation opinions which really are heretical even though they were not intended

[17] On this cf. also K. Raliner, 'The Need for a "Short Formula" of the Christian Faith', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 117-126 and the study entitled 'Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devizing a Short Formula of the Faith', *Theological Investigations* XI (London, 1973), pp. 230-244.

[18] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'A Small Fragment on "The Collective Finding of Truth"', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 82-88.

[19] This requirement is emphatically laid down in 'Humani Generis' (DS 3881-3883). Cf. also on this *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 693-696.

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as such by the original upholders of this interpretation. The Christian and the theologian must adopt a policy which has nothing to do with any cowardly or facile ecclesiastical conformism, namely to strive in a spirit of sincerity and self-criticism to ensure that a verbal formulation of the creed expressing the one faith of the Church is really preserved. And to this end they must ever anew bring their own interpretation of the faith (however justified or indeed necessary it may be in itself) into conformity with the one creed of the Church, and help to promote this one creed. Otherwise in the long run the danger of real heresies arising in the Church can no longer be excluded.

4. There is a possibility – indeed under certain circumstances a necessity and a duty – for the Church to reject a doctrine arising within her as heretical.[20] Such a statement is distasteful to modern man. He feels all too easily, although ultimately speaking unjustly, that any condemnation on the part of the Church's official teachers of a doctrine upheld by an individual Christian is an attack upon the freedom of conscience and opinion. Ultimately speaking there can be no question of this, although it must be conceded that a non-definitorial rejection of a theological opinion on the [133] part of the official teachers can be, and in fact often has been in the past, over-hasty, lacking in charity, or erroneous. When the Church rejects the doctrine of a theologian or the opinion of an individual Christian within her midst as heretical she is in no sense asserting that the case involved necessarily constitutes a subjectively culpable error. Nor does she deny the possibility that an individual may be unable to extricate himself from his error, which subjectively speaking is invincible and inculpable, even though it leads the individual concerned out of the Church. On the contrary the following principles apply:

a) In any definitorial rejection of a given doctrine put forward by one of her members the Church states that such a doctrine is absolutely irreconcilable with the Church's own convictions of faith, and on these grounds the conscience of the individual concerned with regard to truth is confronted with the alternative either of abandoning this view or, if such a measure is irreconcilable with the subjective conscience of the individual involved with regard to truth, of separating himself from the Church in an attitude of mutual respect because the Church is a free community constituted by the unity of her faith, and the individual involved is precisely in the position of no longer sharing in this faith as a whole. The sphere of freedom of conscience and opinion which the Church herself protects and recognizes is not simply coterminous with the sphere of that which can be believed and taught in the Church.

b) In any non-definitorial rejection of the doctrines or views of one of her members the Church states that having examined such doctrines or views to the best of her ability with the means at her disposal at the given point in time, and while retaining all respect for it and all charity towards its protagonist, she cannot see how this doctrine or view can be reconciled with her own faith. In such a case, in which a truly authoritative but non-definitorial rejection of a doctrine of this kind has been pronounced by the Church's *magisterium*, the individual who has been 'censured' in this way must examine his own conscience as to how, in the concrete case, he can reconcile his own subjective convictions with the respect and the obedience due to the authority and the competence of the official *magisterium* of the Church. In such cases, in which the Church has taken up an authoritative but not irrevocable position with regard to certain theological opinions (which incidentally can have an effect on practical life) various possibilities are conceivable according to the circumstances involved in each particular case, none of them necessarily provoking either an internal or still less an external breach with the Church. In this connection, and for a better understanding of what has been

[20] On this problem cf. the following further articles by the author: 'Membership of the Church according to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical, "Mystici Corporis Christi"', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 1-88; 'Kirchengliedschaft', *LKT* VI (2nd ed., 1961), pp. 221-225.

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said, reference may be made to the [134] Doctrinal Letter of the German Bishops, in which, perhaps for the first time in an official ecclesiastical pronouncement, this point is treated of in a realistic and genuine manner. In this we find the following passage:

'On this point a difficult problem arises calling for realistic discussion, and one that in the case of many Catholics of today, and to a greater extent than formerly, threatens either their faith or their free and trustful attitude towards the Church's *magisterium*. We refer to the fact that errors can and do infiltrate into the *magisterium* in the exercise of its official functions. The fact that this sort of thing is possible is something of which the Church has always been aware and which she has actually stated in her theology, and she has developed rules of conduct to cater for such a situation. This possibility of error does not apply to those statements of doctrine which are proclaimed by a solemn definition of the Pope or the universal Council, or through the ordinary channels of official teaching as requiring to be received with the absolute assent of faith. It is also historically incorrect to maintain that an error of the Church has subsequently been brought to light in such doctrinal definitions. This is of course not to contest the fact that even in the case of a dogma, while its original meaning must be maintained, a development in the understanding of it is always possible and always necessary provided due safeguards are observed to avoid misinterpretations which may formerly have been current. Nor should the question which has been raised be confused with the manifest fact that side by side with the divine law, which is immutable, there is also a human law in the Church which is subject to change. Such change has from the outset nothing to do with error, but at most raises the question of the opportunism of the earlier or more recent juridical decision concerned.

'With regard to error or the possibility of error in non-definitorial statements of doctrine of the Church, which themselves in turn can vary greatly in their degree of binding force, it must be first recognized realistically and decisively that human life, even taken quite in general, must always be lived with the utmost conscientiousness according to those lights which on the one hand must be recognized at the speculative level as not absolutely certain, and yet at the same time which have to be respected 'here and now' because provisionally speaking they cannot be bettered as valid norms for thinking and acting. Every individual is aware of this fro his own concrete life. Every doctor in his diagnosis, every statesman in his evaluation of political circumstances and the decision he bases upon them is aware of this fact. The Church too in her doctrine and practice cannot always and in every case allow herself to be faced with the dilemma [135] of either imposing a doctrinal decision carrying ultimate binding force or simply being silent and leaving everything to the opinion of the individual to decide in any way he likes. To preserve the true and ultimate substance of the faith she must, even at the risk of error in some point of detail, put forward doctrinal directives which have a specific degree of binding force, and yet, since they do not constitute a definition of faith, carry with them a certain element of the provisional even amounting to the possibility of error. Otherwise she cannot proclaim or interpret her faith at all or apply it as a decisive reality of life to each new human situation as it arises. In a case of this sort the position of the individual Christian with regard to the Church is analogous to that of a man who recognizes that he is obliged to accept the opinion of a specialist even when he knows that this is not infallible.

'In no case can there be any place for an opinion opposed to the provisional doctrinal pronouncements of the Church in preaching or catechetics even when, under certain circumstances, the faithful have to be instructed concerning the nature and the limited range of any such provisional doctrinal decision. This is a point which has already been discussed. He who believes that he has to hold his own private opinion and that already here and now he is in possession of that better insight which the Church will arrive at in the future must ask himself in the sight of God and his own conscience, and in a spirit of realistic self-critical

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evaluation, whether he has the necessary breadth and depths of specialized theological knowledge to be in a position to deviate from the current teaching of the official Church in his private theory and practice. In principle it is possible to conceive of such a case. But subjective arrogance and over-hasty self-opinionatedness will have to answer to the judgement of God'.[21]

However clear it may be that all this has to be borne in mind by a present-day Catholic and, in appropriate circumstances, put into practice as well, the fact still remains that one harsh truth which is still more radical must not be obscured, namely that under certain circumstances the Church must recognize her duty and have the courage unequivocally to reject specific teachings if and to the extent that they are irreconcilable with the Church's own convictions of faith. And this is true today even of those teachings the champions of which do not simply leave the Church of their own initiative because of their opinions, but suppose that an opinion of this kind has a right to be at home in the Church and is reconcilable with [136] the Church's doctrine as rightly understood, and indeed may be the only practicable interpretation of this doctrine at the present day. It is true that for very good reasons the Church has refrained from pronouncing anathemas of this kind at the Second Vatican Council. But this does not mean that the Church either must not or *cannot ever again* pronounce such an anathema in the future.

Certainly in a situation of pluralism in language and in the conceptual apparatus by means of which theological realities are expressed today it is often very difficult to bring different statements into confrontation with one another, to translate them, as it were, into another language and transpose them into another conceptual world, and so to come to a position where it can be recognized whether a given statement is in conformity with or in contradiction to the faith of the Church. It can also be the case – and this precise point is emphasized by the bishops in the same Doctrinal Letter – that the Church either fails to form any opinion at all or forms one only with great difficulty as to whether a specific conception as enunciated by its original learned authors is or is not reconcilable with the faith of the Church. But in this passage of their Doctrinal Letter the bishops explicitly emphasize that the Church has the right to intervene with her anathema once she establishes that in the majority of her adherents or among the faithful of the Church in their existing concrete situation and according to their present understanding a conception o this kind will be understood in such a way that at least in what is, perhaps, its over-primitive formulation of the relevant doctrine it is no long reconcilable with the faith of the Church. The Church would betray her gospel and the *magisterium* of the Church would betray its task if from the outset they no longer had the courage under certain circumstances to pronounce an unequivocal 'no' to a doctrine which arose in the Church and attempted to achieve a legitimate footing there.

Very many theological questions – for instance with regard to what meant by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ – may be open questions and remain obscure, and various answers to them may be found within the Church. But when someone disseminates a doctrine in the Church which so far as the Church's conscious faith is concerned constitutes in practice a simple denial of the Resurrection of Christ, then the Church can and must respond with an actual definitorial anathema. Perhaps in certain circumstances it might still be possible to say that in such an anathema the relevant doctrine has been misunderstood. But in that case it would still always be the duty of the teachers of such a doctrine, if they wanted to put it forward in the Church, to formulate it, expound it, and remove all [137] dangers from it in such a way that this misunderstanding on the part of the faithful in the Church and her official teachers would not arise. On any showing the unity of the creed of the universal

[21] Letter of the German Bishops, *loc cit*., 12/13; cf. also B. Schüller, 'Bemerkungen zur authentischen Verkündigung des kirchlichen Lehramtes', *Theologie und Philosophie* 42 (1967), pp. 534-551.

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Church takes precedence in value and importance in the Church and for her over the theology of an individual or of individual groups.

Even though in a specific case the Church may recognize the necessity for such an anathema, and may pronounce a condemnation of this kind, still it does not *ipso facto* follow that the condemnation will be successful in all respects. He who in a spirit of genuine faith assents to the Church and to her *magisterium* is indeed aware that the Church has pronounced right judgement (subject to the distinctions already touched upon in the Doctrinal Letter of the bishops). He is aware that teaching cannot be put forward in the Church or for her in the way that the condemned doctrine is put forward. But in a twofold respect the real success of such a condemnation is still not assured. For in the first place it can be the case, and that too for the reasons already mentioned when we were considering the causes of heresy in the Church, that those who incur condemnation in this way may perhaps indeed be silent or more subdued in the promulgation of their opinions, yet at the same time will be willing neither to depart from the Church nor to give up those opinions. Against this position the Church has only very limited possibilities at her command. Secondly it is possible that the real success of such a condemnation, namely the preservation of the faith from corruption or injury and the genuine and joyful willingness to believe on the part of the faithful are only achieved when the doctrines safeguarded by this condemnation are themselves thought out in a new and living way, and formulated in a way that can be assimilated and preached from an attitude of personal conviction. A mere condemnation taken by itself is still not enough to assure that all this shall be the case.

In certain circumstances the only way for effectively safeguarding an irreformable doctrine of the Church is – to express it paradoxically – to reform that doctrine in a forward direction. In other words while preserving that in its message which has an abiding validity, to express it in fresh terms which have a living relevance, and to set it in broader and more comprehensive contexts.[22] To put the point in what is perhaps a somewhat exaggerated form, we might perhaps imagine that in not a few cases an [138] anathema of this kind pronounced against individuals who do, after all, at least in principle intend to be Christians, is actually a sign of theological petrification and ossification on the part of the Church's *magisterium*. At the same time, however, even though in all realism this point may be conceded, it should not in its turn be regarded as amounting to an obligation imposed upon the Church such that she cannot reject any interpretation of the faith which she recognizes as clearly contradictory to her own faith by an unequivocal 'No', for she can do this even before she has achieved this positive task of arriving at a living and freshly acquired understanding of her faith.

5. A point which has to be borne in mind throughout the whole question which we are considering is the difference between pulpit and seat of learning, between the preaching of the faith and theological speculation.[23] Certainly close connections do exist between the preacher authorized by the Church and the theologian engaged with his problems. What the theologian is reflecting upon in his scientific study is in fact the conscious faith of the Church as it is present in and expressed in the Church's preaching and the Church's life under the direction of the official doctrinal and pastoral authorities. And conversely the preacher must be theologically educated. He must have studied before he preaches in order that he may preach the word of God in a way that does justice to his subject-matter and to the

[22] On the basic principles involved cf. *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 696-698, 756 ff., 771 f. Besides this we can see this demand fulfilled on a right understanding of the definition of 'Pastoral Aims' by the Council, cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution"', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1972), pp. 293-317.

[23] On this point cf. the author's article 'Demythologization and the Sermon', *Concilium* 3/4 (1968, Pastoral), pp. 12-20.

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circumstances in which he preaches. At the same time, however, there is an essential difference between the pulpit and the seat of learning.

The message which the preacher utters from the pulpit must be neither in contradiction to the teaching of the Church nor something that runs counter to his own personal sense of truth as a serious student of theology. At the same time, however, the pulpit is not the place in which abstruse points of theological controversy should be canvassed. The reason for this is not that Christians, and especially educated ones, must be shielded from the problems of theology, or that in the pulpit it is a 'simple faith' that should be put forward such as the learned theologian in his study or in his professorial chair feels himself superior to. The real reason why such problems should not be canvassed in the pulpit is that here it is the word of God as guiding and vivifying that must be preached, the word that is intended to touch our consciences and hearts and change our lives. For in the pulpit it is God's truth, albeit expressed in human words, that must be imparted, and not human problems concerning this word of God. Certainly it is very often difficult to maintain this distinction in the concrete [139] individual case. Nevertheless it is in principle valid. When the preacher fails to respect it in a spirit of self-effacement and submissiveness to the truth of God and the Church the pulpit is turned into the place where heresies arise in the Church. Problems are then raised which have not yet been coped with even by scientific theology, and it is quite inevitable that the believer who is not a theological specialist, and moreover, does not need to be so, misunderstands these problems in his turn, receives a crude and inaccurate impression of the attempts that are made to solve them, fails to recognize what may be a possible way of reconciling theological positions of this kind with the substance of the Church's faith, and then supposes that in order to be 'modern' he has to surrender the Church's own statement of faith rather than the interpretation of this statement which has been offered to him and misunderstood by him.

It would be false to suppose that today it is impossible to make any statement of the Christian faith from the pulpit without explicitly embarking upon theological problems of this kind. In certain circumstances the preacher must be aware that such problems exist. He must pay due heed to them in his preaching, but in interpreting the text of holy scripture he must concentrate on a central content of faith, and for this he does not need to enter into exegetical problems in the passages concerned which are ultimately unimportant. Certainly however by keeping his eyes fixed on the essence of the Church's faith in a spirit of modesty and responsibility he will be able to express the faith as found in the gospel and the Church without thereby being false to his own conscience as a serious student of speculative theology, and without preaching in such a way that his message is no longer 'brought home' to his hearers because it sounds old-fashioned, stereotyped, and cliché-ridden. To reiterate: when we fail to observe the difference between the pulpit and the chair of learning the pulpit becomes the place at which heresies arise in the minds of the hearers, often against the will of the preacher. A situation may arise, however, in which an educated Christian who is not a professional theologian nevertheless wishes to be instructed as to the current theological problems and in which he has very solid grounds, over and above a general and praiseworthy spirit of enquiry, for wishing this. In such a case there are sufficient opportunities elsewhere for him to receive such instruction: in lectures, in conferences arranged by the Catholic academies, on the radio, in books and so forth.

In any case, however, the preacher must avoid giving any 'scandal' to believers from the pulpit such as can be provoked from both sides. The preacher can preach in such a way that he fails to do justice to the demands [140] of a hearer who may under certain circumstances be theologically very well educated. He may maintain propositions which he has no right whatever to impose upon his hearer as binding in faith. But the preacher can, however, take the opposite line by presenting a so-called modern theology which is either objectively

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irreconcilable with the Christian faith or at least is such that the hearer fails to understand how it can be reconciled with that which a Christian must on any showing believe and hold firm to, so that in this way he takes scandal. Even today there still exists a middle course between these two possibilities of scandal. This does not mean that the preacher has to take into account any and every conceivable difficulty which may arise, or that every sort of 'pious' prejudice entertained by a narrow-minded man has to be sanctioned from the pulpit. Under certain circumstances theological findings also emerge which are sound and, subject to the guidance of the Church's *magisterium*, genuinely received in Catholic theology. And it is in the interests of a genuine and free faith on the part of this same modern man than these should be stated simply, even though here and there there may be some old-fashioned listeners who will take scandal at them.

III

Paul himself already recognized that divisions, 'heresies' as he puts it arise again and again in the Church. And it is even less surprising that divisions of this kind should exist today at a time of immense spiritual upheaval. Today more than ever before the ancient faith is confronted by fresh questions, so that it is not surprising to find that not infrequently even genuine questions meet with poor answers since the process by which a good answer is arrived at to such questions is inevitably only a slow one. Nevertheless even today the situation is not such that a sincere Christian with a ready will to listen to the word of God in the mouth of the Church no longer knows what he may and should believe, or that the word of the Church has become ambiguous or obscure. Certainly it is true that faith always involves a self-commitment to the incomprehensibility of God, and so to a truth which is and remains a mystery. But if we say: 'We believe in God, in his forgiving compassion and his love; we believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, the crucified and risen one; we believe in the grace of God and in eternal life, in the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Redeemer and are united among themselves in hope and love', then while it is certainly true that such statements still always remain [141] mysterious and again and again provoke fresh theological speculations as to how they should be understood, still it is nevertheless true at the same time that in such statements we know what we intend to say, and we know that that truth which is mysteriously pointed to in such statements constitutes our life and our assurance in death.

Certainly our faith is not simply identical with a fixed sum of statements which have been formulated once and for all. Our faith, suffused as it is by the grace of God, ultimately speaking bears not precisely on the statements but on the reality of God himself who through Jesus Christ and in his grace has drawn near to us in forgiveness and divine self-bestowal. Hence our faith is constantly to be conceived of as the faith of men who are still on their way, making pilgrimage towards eternal life. It is a faith that is open to the future. And whatever propositions it maybe formulated in it is committed ever anew to the living mystery of God himself. It endures its own imperfections and the contradiction which it experiences, but even as such it is also a faith of the holy fellowship of the Church borne up by the assistance of her Spirit in a single creed. Yet for this very reason it should also have the humility and the courage to say 'No' to heresies which contradict it. In such a 'no' it does not condemn men, but neither does it allow itself to be drawn away by human opinions from committing itself to the truth of God which it has received from God through Jesus Christ and in his Church.

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[142]

8

CONCERNING OUR ASSENT TO THE CHURCH AS SHE EXISTS IN THE CONCRETE

If I am to discuss the nature of the assent to the Church as she exists in the concrete two preliminary observations must first be made in order to understand what this theme involves and to define the area within which it falls. The assent of which I am speaking is an assent to the Church in the *concrete*. This means that what is being treated of is not, or at any rate not primarily, the Church as she is envisaged in a presentation of fundamental theology or in a dogmatic treatise on ecclesiology. In other words it is not so much the Church in her abstract theological nature, but rather the Church in the concrete, with those special characteristics which derive from the historical conditions of the present age, the Church as we find her in the contemporary situation in which she stands – in brief the concrete Church in that form which has been conditioned by the age in which we live and in which she represents at once a challenge and a burden to us.

The precisions and restrictions which we are thus imposing upon the subject-matter are not invalidated by the fact that here once more, and in the context with which we are concerned, we cannot speak of this Church in the concrete otherwise than at a very general and abstract level. In spite of this the fact still remains that it will be the Church in the concrete that we shall be referring to, the Church as we experience or even suffer her in our everyday human and religious lives. Now in speaking of the Church in this way we are speaking of Catholics, and not to those others, whether Christians or non-Christians, who do not belong to this Church and are, for that reason, quite incapable of experiencing her so immediately as we Catholics do as a burden and a challenge. We are speaking, therefore, to Catholics who are Catholics not merely as defined by the sort of rules which a state official might devize in determining a specific social group, but who will to be Catholics on the basis of a commitment of faith even though this is something which they may have to achieve again and again and only at the cost of toil and pain. It has been necessary to introduce [143] what we have to say with these brief preliminary remarks in order that the nature of our theme should be understood and that its limits should be defined.

I

If we are honest and recognize not merely that we should be honest but also that we have to be Christians, since otherwise we cannot truly be believers at all, then we must say that to us of today the assent of faith, hope, and charity to this Church as she exists in the concrete does not come easily. At this present moment it makes no difference whether there was some other time at which this was not the case, or whether in every age the Church has always been something more than merely the sustainer of faith and the sphere within which our Christian lives are lived, namely, albeit in ways which constantly vary according to the historical circumstances, a harsh burden and a challenge that threatens our faith as well. In any case this is the situation today, and that too for many reasons which derive – at least for the most part – precisely from the situation in which willy nilly we have to live today in terms of the development of ideas, of civilization, and of society. Some brief indication, albeit a very general and abstract one, must be given of what these reasons are.

Before we can arrive at a position to evaluate causes of this kind we must consider that a Catholic Christian feels himself confronted by his Church in her doctrine and in her life as an

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entity that imposes demands and exacts duties from him. Of course within this Church there are wide areas, both in her theology and in her living practice, in which the individual Catholic is left free to decide for himself so that in these areas no absolute obligations are imposed even upon one who wills to be a Catholic Christian. His personal methods of prayer, how often (within an area defined by a minimal demand) he takes part in Church activities, attends divine service, or receives the sacraments, whether, for instance, he does or does not gain indulgences, what personal opinion he holds with regard to the traditional theology of the Church while respecting her essential dogmas – all this and much else besides is left to his own free decision even though this still does not imply that he can be arbitrary or capricious in arriving at it. But this does nothing to alter the fact that to the Catholic the Church as she exists in the concrete is an entity that makes demands upon him and exacts obligations from him. So far as the individual Catholic is concerned this Church is not the sort of authority which he can accept [144] or reject as he likes in any given case, so far as her effective reality and the decisions she takes are concerned, provided only that he maintains his ultimate commitment of faith to her. This Church has a body of dogmatic teaching which is enduring and binding. She has a specific concrete life within which the individual Catholic must lead his own personal religious life and work out his salvation. She is made up of concrete individuals, and the qualities which these possess in the concrete, and the historical conditions to which they are subject, inevitably have their effect even in the most supreme exercises of authority and the decisions of this Church, which are authoritative and binding upon the individual Catholic.

Once we have recognized that the relationship between the Church and the individual Catholic is of this kind, then it becomes easy to see what those factors are in contemporary life which makes his assent to the Church as she exists in the concrete so difficult and which represent a danger to it. It is because he cannot simply adopt an attitude of critical detachment to her, or reject these concrete factors in the Church from his own personal life precisely at that point at which the teaching and way of life proper to this Church become difficult for him to understand. Today the individual lives amid a vast multiplicity of opinions, ways of life, social groupings with the most varied characteristics and tendencies. In the milieu in which his life is passed there is virtually nothing which can simply be taken for granted and would be disputed by no-one, nothing which can find a sufficient justification simply in our personal life alone without itself in turn having further to be justified by our own personal decision. In such a situation, from which we cannot escape, even the faith which the Church herself teaches us, and even the essential nucleus of that faith as presented to us as absolutely binding dogma, can no longer appear to us simply as something that is unassailable and to be accepted without question. This is all the more true in view of two other factors bearing upon the Church's own awareness of her faith. First in the course of almost two thousand years of history this has undergone enormous developments and an immense multiplicity of further distinctions. Second it is in practice still to a large extent formulated in terms of concepts and viewpoints which are not in any simple or obvious sense those of our own age.

Hence it is quite inevitable that much even of that which is most proper to the essence of the Church's message of faith shall strike us as strange, so that it is only with difficulty that we can bring it into a reasonably harmonious synthesis with what we experience elsewhere and with the findings of the contemporary sciences which we accept and regard as established. In this present-day situation it is quite impossible wholly to [145] avoid a position (even though there is very much that could and should be avoided) in which the Church's teaching of the faith strikes us at first sight and at a first trial of it as in some sense impracticable, old-fashioned and, so far as the concrete life which we have to lead is concerned, irrelevant.

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The extremely complex distinctions in the Church's doctrine, then, combined with our failure to synthesize this doctrine in any adequate way with the rest of our attitude to life is one of the factors which make our assent to the Church as she exists in the concrete difficult. An additional point of difficulty arises from the aspect of the individuals belonging to the Church and especially those who hold official positions of authority in her. If we are Catholics we have to live in a society with which, however possible and justified it may be to maintain certain reserves, we must after all ultimately identify ourselves, a society made up of individuals and official authorities which all too often appear pitiful, narrow-minded, old-fashioned and out of date. Humanly speaking they often strike us as underdeveloped, restricted in outlook and pettifogging, and yet they confront us with demands and requirements which on the one hand are put forward in the name of the enduring gospel and the enduring nature of the Church herself, and yet on the other hand are all too clearly stamped with the personality precisely of these individuals, and of the historical and human modalities to which they are subject. All too often they may receive the impression that the Church has been too old-fashioned to overcome the burden of her own past, that she preaches her message in a way in which it is simply no longer possible for us to put it into practice, that what she regards as important is in fact secondary and insignificant, and that at the same time she is overlooking points which are of decisive importance for our present age. Alternatively it may seem to us that she is merely paying a hasty lip-service, which she herself does not take altogether seriously, to these points of decisive importance, and that even after the Second Vatican Council, and in spite of all the concessions which have been wrung from her in the way of *aggiornamento*, she still prefers anxiously to build upon the past which she feels to be true and trusted, rather than upon a creative future which is still unsure; that she is truer to the letter than to her own Spirit. This portrayal of the factors which make our assent to the Church as she exists in the concrete so burdensome, and which represent a danger to it, is only a very pale and abstract one. But we have sought to point to precisely those factors which should recall to our minds what we ourselves experience every day in our concrete lives as Catholics.

[146]

II

We must now ask ourselves how it is that the Catholic Christian, despite all those factors in his experience of the Church which he finds burdensome and oppressive, nevertheless finds it possible to give a wholehearted and honest assent to this Church as she exists in the concrete. Before entering upon this question, however, we must begin by pointing out the following factors: viewed from a purely formal standpoint these same oppressive difficulties are also to be found in other departments of human life even apart from the Church. In all departments a tension arises, between freedom and society which can never be so completely solved at the theoretical level that all the difficulties arising from this tension are eliminated from the outset. Everywhere in the world, and in all the groupings that exist within society, the degree of social organization *and* the desire and will for freedom are both increasing at the same time. We all recognize that today and in the future it will be impossible for the individual taken in isolation to live outside the kind of society which is something more than a mere pre-existing entity which is taken for granted, which raises no problems and therefore is never felt to represent a burden to him at all. Today and in the future, rather, the kind of society in which the individual will be forced to live is itself highly planned, institutionalized and controlled. It is a society which imposes demands and certain inevitable compulsions upon the individual. On the other hand we also recognize that we are becoming more individualistic and more critical in our attitude towards society, its institutions, its patterns of

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behaviour and taboos, and its frozen ideologies. Indeed our reaction to all this is one of protest. Now the question of how these two factors can be reconciled on the one hand with the greater degree of social organization and on the other the greater degree of individualization is a problem which exists everywhere in the world today, and not merely in the Church, a problem for which there is no patent solution such as can eliminate all the conflicts which arise in the concrete from the outset, a problem in which we cannot short-sightedly opt for either the one or the other of the two alternatives, even though we do not find, and in the concrete may be destined never to find, any completely satisfactory synthesis between them anywhere in the world. Thus we place the question with which we are concerned within this broader perspective. While it still does not lose the difficulties with which it is burdened, still in the light of this we are reminded of the need for that patience, prudence, and courage without which we cannot endure [147] all these tensions in the living of our lives either at the secular or the Christian levels.

I believe that in seeking the *point of departure* for a hopeful and committed assent to the Church in the concrete we can to some extent show where this lies in three ways or from three distinct aspects:

a) Human living in the concrete is not artificially developed by a process of speculation as though in a test-tube. Certainly the power to speculate is a part of human nature, the capacity to experience the question of human existence, to adopt a critical standpoint towards, and to enquire into, that state in which all unquestioned we have been placed. Certainly there is nothing in this existence such that it either should or even may seem to be excluded from the outset from this process of critical speculation. But after all this is only one side of human existence.

We never wholly include ourselves in our critical speculation. In it we take as our starting-point again and again presuppositions which we have not subjected to our critical questioning in their own right or in the same way. Constantly we find ourselves already embarked upon a course the starting-point of which already lies behind us. In our critical evaluations we proceed from certain standards and intellectual perspectives, and even though we certainly could subject these in turn to our process of critical questioning, *de facto* we have failed to apply this process in their case. We never really begin from zero. Indeed we are incapable of doing this because otherwise we would be standing outside our own course of history and the historical mode which is proper to us, and this is impossible for us. Even the most radical revolutionary in his quest for an ideological critique which is unconditioned, cannot achieve this without in turn, whether he is aware of it or not, beginning from some point which he himself has not determined and upon which he has not reflected in any adequate sense.

The will to achieve a critical standpoint which is absolute, which in its concrete exercise has refused to commit itself by an act of trust to any prior assumptions, would lead only to a state of absolute immobility, to total sterility, to a radical neurosis of existence such as would incapacitate its practitioners for living. It is a fact that nothing comes from nothing. Where there is real and genuine life at the intellectual level, such as is capable of surviving and taking responsibility, there will also be an attitude of trustful and willing commitment in which that which is inevitable is accepted and accorded its due force. And for this reason anyone engaged in genuine living freely accepts, by an ultimate act of trust in life itself, the impossibility of totally comprehending life in his own speculative [148] processes and in the process of critical enquiry precisely into this life. And this remains true even though it does not mean that any one specific factor should from the outset be excluded from this process of critical speculation. Man as a being endowed with critical faculties calls all things in question, and man as finite, and as a being who exists in a specific pre-existing situation which he himself has not created is himself in turn critical with regard to his own critical faculties, and for all these critical attitudes of his, in an absolutely ultimate sense he proceeds

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in his life from an unreserved act of trust in the fact that however true it may be that any individual factor can be destroyed, that which is prior and given would ultimately speaking and taken as a whole stand up to his critique even at those points at which that critique can no longer in practice be applied to it in any adequate sense. We are speaking of a certain unity between an attitude of radical criticism at the fundamental level on the one hand, and a spirit of unreserved trust in that which is untested by criticism on the other. Now this is not something which man could control for himself in his practical life (different in this from theory which remains at the merely formal level). It is not something which he himself in his turn could master or bring within his control by achieving a standpoint of transcendence at some high level from which he could subject it to a concrete critique. Rather it is something which is bestowed upon him as that incomprehensible reality of his life which is called grace, though admittedly this must also be accepted and can be refused. The actual situation is this: the concrete human life which a man lives is not created in the test-tube of speculation. It is not first dissected by his critique down to the point of an absolute void, so that subsequently it can be artificially built up by speculation, criticism and theory.

Now so far as the Catholic is concerned one of the factors in his concrete human life is his membership of the Church and his life in and with her. For him this state of belonging to the Church is not some kind of minor incidental factor in his life which can even disappear without his life as a whole being thereby altered, as though it were like a man buying a new suit or going to live in another district. This assent to the Church as she exists in the concrete has already permeated our entire life. We have prayed, supplicated for the eternity of God in his holiness. We have heard the words of eternal life from the mouth of the Church, experienced the grace which she has imparted to us through her sacraments. Again and again we have been roused by her from the inertia and apathy of our everyday lives. Through her we have experienced the eternal in ourselves. Already in our lives we have lived, and in this sense uttered, an assent in [149] the concrete to the Church in the concrete. This assent has truly been made at the very centre of our personal human existence. Hence we also have the right and duty, precisely on the basis of intellectual honesty, freely and unreservedly to commit ourselves to this assent, to let it stand even though in doing so we are constantly aware of the fact that we have still not mastered all the reasons for this assent which have unconsciously asserted themselves in us or all the implications which it carries by our speculative processes; even though we are aware that this assent can be confronted again and again with fresh critical questionings, and that the relationship between the free and trustful prior decision governing our lives on the one hand and the process of critical speculation on the other is constantly shifting and constantly bringing us fresh surprises. Certainly even our relationship with the Church is something that we subject again and again to critical questioning. But we have the right and the duty, until the contrary is proved beyond all doubt (and this is something which we do not fear) to assume and to live by the fact that these critical questionings do not destroy this relationship of ours with the Church, just as in other ultimate commitments and attitudes of our lives, commitments to loyalty, love, integrity without thought of reward or trust, or commitments to our neighbour, again and again through life itself and through the processes of our critical speculations we experience the fact that these commitments are under assault and yet, so long as we do not fall into a neurosis of criticism and doubt, we are aware that these basic commitments endure throughout all the purgatory of doubt and questioning.

We have already said at the outset of these remarks that we are addressing ourselves to Catholics. Now these have experienced the fact that their assent to the Church is not some kind of incidental option which they have taken in their lives, but in a true sense is to be numbered among the basic attitudes which sustain those lives. But if this is true then they have the right to commit themselves to this assent in a spirit of trust, to nourish ever fresh

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hopes that the inner spiritual continuity of their lives will endure throughout all the manifest and painful vicissitudes in the unfolding process of their lives as spiritual beings, whether these be great or small. We cannot allow ourselves to be manoeuvred into that kind of questioning which is destructive of our lives, and we would be doing this if we were suddenly to notice at some point that after all the ultimate grounds on which our assent to the Church was based had given way as a basic reality of our personal lives and that our existence had become a bottomless abyss into which we had been cast. This is a situation in which we do not stand, and we must not allow ourselves to fall into it. And hence it is [150] meaningless when faced with the possibility (absolutely speaking conceivable) of a kind of doubt which of itself does not admit of any further answer already in the here and now to react to this with a universal doubt of the kind that negates. Otherwise we would be in the position of men who for fear of death already did themselves to death in the here and now. We must recognize the fact, therefore, that human life in the concrete cannot be constructed by any absolute process of reflection. And for this reason it must not feel itself to be called in question at the ultimate level by these particular critical questionings which may arise on individual points even if there are such. Now the perception of this fact is the first aspect of the point of departure at which we must take our stand again and again in critically re-appraising our assent to the Church in the concrete in the manner that is legitimate and prescribed. The true process of critical re-appraisal is itself in turn subjected to its own critique, and with regard to our experience of the realities of life *in globo*, which, even though we do not subject it to speculative analysis is nonetheless genuine and sustaining, this genuine process, of critical re-appraisal trustfully allows this global experience the chance to endure and again and again to prove itself genuine.

b) This brings us to a second aspect of the point of departure for arriving at a correct answer to our basic question. Global decisions of life, which affect the totality of our human lives and which are therefore incapable of ever being totally subsumed under our critical speculations, should endure throughout those unresolved tensions which arise between the decisions themselves and our critical reflections upon them. Newman pointed out long ago that a thousand difficulties of faith such as we obviously experience still do not constitute a doubt of faith such as constitutes a negation of our commitment to faith. In view of the finitude of their intellectual resources in the concrete, the finitude of their knowledge and the brevity of their lifespan, neither the average Christian nor yet the learned theologian are in any position to solve for themselves in any positive and clear way all the difficulties which can be raised against the convictions of faith in critical questions. We are confronted with the immense complexity of our existence, with an immense pluralism among the philosophies of life and the problems and findings of the sciences, such as cannot be mastered by any one individual. We are confronted with the multiplicity of our personal experiences of life, which can never wholly be reduced to a synthesis at the level of theory. And in view of all this it is obvious from the outset that our ultimate Commitment of faith is always surrounded by an incalculable range of questions which we have not yet [151] positively solved, mastered, or reduced to a positive synthesis within this commitment of faith in any effective sense.

But we must and can in all calmness achieve the perception that this is also something which is not for one moment to be expected, because it is impossible that this tension between question and answer can be solved in any direct and definitive manner. On the contrary it has constantly to be endured in a spirit of confidence and patience in our lives until one day the eternal light illumines us. Even the Catholic Christian can say: ‘When an individual genuinely and inculpably comes to grief as a result of this tension, when he is genuinely *incapable* of enduring it any longer, he is guiltless and hence even in these circumstances he has not lost the true substance of his faith at all’. But in a spirit of self-criticism we must guard against the danger which arises in the concrete circumstances of our

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lives of supposing that we have arrived at a state in which we 'cannot do any more', when in reality the point that we have arrived at is one in which an 'acquittal from guilt' of this kind is merely serving to cover up an ultimate cowardice of life which is no longer *willing* to endure these unreserved tensions. In other departments of life too the situation that arises is in fact this: We have enough harsh and disappointing experiences of ourselves and our fellow men to have seemingly good grounds for adopting an attitude of doubting scepticism towards humanity. Now we can never solve such grounds as these by any process of theoretical reasoning in such a way that they no longer represent a threat to our ultimate and basic attitude towards humanity, no longer bring it ever anew into mortal peril, that basic attitude which consists in trust, reverence, and love. And yet at the same time we are aware that we must maintain this affirmative and loving attitude towards humanity right to the end. In the same way many temptations, questionings, problems and objections obviously arise on the personal, historical, and theoretical planes against our assent to the Church, her truth and institutions, objections which it is not given to us to work out in any positive and direct way until we have arrived at a complete solution to them. But the attitude of trustfully enduring unresolved tensions even in our relationship with the Church is only one instance of a reality which is actually a factor inherent in our lives. We cannot overcome such tensions by running away from them.

c) This leads us on immediately to the third aspect of the right point of departure for finding the answer to our basic question. It is only in the act of striving for that which is greater, more enlightening, a greater force for life, that man has the right to relinquish something that belongs to his life, to surrender it. And it is only for the sake of a greater meaningfulness that [152] he has the right to abandon that which has hitherto been meaningful to him as meaningless. Perhaps this statement will not enlighten a sceptic who has allowed mistrust, and that doubt which calls everything in question, to penetrate into the innermost centre of his life. But nevertheless this statement is true, and without it life cannot endure. Indeed the radical sceptic recognizes the truth of this statement even though in doing so he contradicts his own position when he achieves the courage to embrace a scepticism which on his view is devoid of illusions as the highest meaning of his existence. And most average men are quite unaware when they adopt a sceptical attitude of this kind, of how much in the way of meaningfulness, in the way of that which is unquestioningly taken for granted and made the basis of their lives, they are still constantly allowing to remain. But he who, as a Catholic Christian, takes this statement as the standard by which to evaluate the question of his assent to the Church in the concrete can in all intellectual honesty justify this assent of his ever afresh despite all difficulties and temptations. For he can see what it will mean to depart from the truth of the Church, from her essential message, from the living and protecting mystery which we call God, from the hope of eternal life, from a hopeful sharing in the death of Jesus who, in a spirit of hope and love, allowed himself to fall into this mystery of God, from the fellowship of love called the Church, from the acceptance of forgiveness for the guilt of our lives, in brief from all that which the Church signifies. To depart from all this would not bring the individual concerned into a greater sphere of meaningfulness, of light, of freedom or of hope. Instead such a departure could only lead to one of two consequences: either an attitude of surrendering oneself to a lethal darkness of scepticism and of unworthy relativism or to the dubious attempt to live in isolation by the impoverished remnants of meaningfulness, light and courage which still remained, without really being able to see why these remnants deserve more assent or trust than that fulness of meaningfulness which is present and living in the Church.

III

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Taking this as his point of departure the Catholic can raise the question ever afresh of what the Church means for him, seeing that in spite of all temptations which persist he can give a bold assent of faith to her. Clearly she presents too complex a picture for him to comprehend in its entirety. How could it be otherwise seeing that she is intended to be the historical [153] and social embodiment of the truth and grace of God in man's personal life and in society and history, the sacrament of salvation for the whole of man and for humanity. But if in virtue of this she necessarily constitutes the most complex, the most manifold, and the most variegated entity, extending into all levels of man's existence and of society, then, from this point of view, it must be the most difficult task of all for the individual man to come to terms with her.

a) But let us take the three aspects we have mentioned, and which belong to that point of departure which any man must take in arriving at an ultimate commitment of his life, and consider her under these aspects. It may be obvious to the individual, or gradually become so, that when confronted with the ultimate realities of life, he cannot select or discard any one he likes, that there are realities in life which he will either achieve or lose as a whole, and towards these we can only adopt a critical attitude in that we commit ourselves to them immediately without reservation. Now if we recognize all this then, in spite of all, the Church, who of her very nature is too much for our comprehension, can nevertheless once more become a simple and self-evident fact for us. We who have already had a positive experience of this Church are familiar with not a few aspects and realities in her, of which we are aware that we cannot give them up, that they are in the heart and centre of our lives, even though much else in her, her doctrine, her official authorities, her institutions, her way of acting in the concrete in our own time, may seem strange, alienating and difficult to endure. Our relationship with her is similar to our relationship to a specific individual to whom we entrust ourselves and whom we love. Much in him may continue to be alien and incomprehensible to us. But nevertheless we have found a way of access to him. We have experienced what he is, and this justifies us and obliges us to accept and love him as a whole, to entrust ourselves to him as he is even in those factors in his nature which are alien and incomprehensible to us. And we know that we only have him and live with him when we do accept him and entrust ourselves to him in this way even in respect of those aspects of him which we do not understand.

So too it is in our relationship with the Church. We have never wholly understood her, and certainly in specific points we have fully justified objections to raise against much that exists within her in the concrete. We can have such objections and must have them, though admittedly they are objections which have to be endured in the Church and as an intrinsic factor in our membership of her, and not from an attitude of withdrawal or detachment from her such as would lead us to relinquish our grasp upon [154] her as a whole. We have had sufficient experience of her to give us the right to accept her as a whole in a spirit of hope, love, and intellectual honesty. In her we have achieved the experience of God, of prayer and of hope in an absolute future. In her we have encountered Christ the crucified one who gives us the ultimate trust to accept our own death and all the futilities in our lives as a means of entering upon eternal life. The Church has given us the scripture as her own book which, after all, we can read as the word of God only within the sphere of her own faith. And this is the only way in which we can approach the scriptures unless we are merely seeking to come face to face with ourselves and the unanswered questions which we represent once more within their pages.

A man cannot do away with his parents once he is born. The very fact that we are and that we continue to exist assures us of the fact that they continue ceaselessly to be our parents. Hence we cannot be Christians with these ultimate Christian experiences by quitting the

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Church which has been, and remains, once and for all the mother of this Christian existence of ours. Otherwise all that we have, ultimately speaking, is an abstract God and an abstract Christ who continues to exist merely as the projection of our own subjectivity, a projection which is merely resolved into this subjectivity once more, and hence fails to escape from it. By way of analogy we may take our relationship to another man whom we have unreservedly accepted. In such a case even though there are elements in him which remain alien, so that we are constantly on the way to overcoming this alienation, nevertheless from the first we have accepted these alien elements in a spirit of trust, because we have already experienced in him that which we have at once understood and recognized as meaningful for us. It is the same with our relationship with the Church. The positive experience of this Church which sustains our life gives us the promise and the hope that that in her which is still alien and incomprehensible as well can be meaningful for us and can gradually, albeit always in an asymptotic process, be assimilated by us. Admittedly this can take place only if we constantly proceed from that threefold starting-point of which we have spoken, and which is legitimate, because even in other contexts it is prescribed and imposed upon us beforehand by life itself.

b) In this connection, and in order to understand the nature of our assent to the Church in the concrete, we must now enter in somewhat greater detail into a more specific question which bears upon our relationship with the Church as the accredited messenger of God's revelation, and as such endowed with authority to teach. For the Catholics who believe in her the Church has an authority to teach. This statement cannot be denied by the [155] Catholic, however true it may be that the forms and ways in which this teaching authority finds expression are also constantly subject to the laws of history and change, and influenced by the need to orientate the message to the particular climate of ideas prevailing at any given time. There is no doubt that precisely in respect of the binding doctrinal authority of this Church contemporary Catholics find that their assent to the Church in the concrete again and again entails a heavy burden.

There is much in relation to this question which we cannot enter into at this point. In particular we cannot treat of the question of how the immutability of a defined dogma can be reconciled with the necessity for re-interpreting this dogma ever afresh in the light of the climate of ideas prevailing at any given time. Nor can we describe the very different degrees of binding force which are to be ascribed to this authority which the Church possesses according to whether in any given case it is a dogma in the true sense that is being treated of or merely an officially promulgated doctrine which, though authentic indeed, is nevertheless in principle capable of reform. There is a further question into which we cannot enter, and which though difficult is, after all, an obvious one in view of the difference which cannot be overcome between knowledge as initially acquired and theoretical reflection upon that knowledge. This further question then is that which concerns the boundary line (which is always somewhat imprecise at the level of conscious awareness) between dogma in the true sense and other kinds of teaching put forward by the Church or by theology. Again we do not intend explicitly to discuss the question of what, in the particular concrete case, the relationship should be between the individual Catholic's personal conscience with regard to truth (something which must never be passed over) and the teaching authority which in principle is assented to by Catholics. For the decision taken by this teaching authority may vary greatly in degree in a specific instance and again the degree of binding force to be attached to such a decision may vary greatly. But my purpose here rather is simply to formulate and explain a single specific statement which can throw light upon this assent of ours to the Church as she exists in the concrete in this respect, and justify it for us in all intellectual honesty while safeguarding our conscience with regard to truth. The statement I am referring to may be expressed as follows: Truth, and that truth precisely in its specific force as illuminating and sustaining human existence as a whole has something to do with

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institution. It is not possible at this point to reveal the full and exact significance of this statement in existential and ontological terms, or to show its precise application and justification. In order to make it intelligible [156] we shall confine ourselves merely to a few simple observations.

I am not infrequently surprised at how individuals in my own milieu give voice to their personal opinions with the utmost emotion, as though they were absolutely obvious. They call these their convictions and proclaim them as manifestly correct even in those cases in which they are either really (or often presumably) in contradiction to some doctrinal declaration on the part of the Church. It is indeed obvious that an opinion of this sort which is binding upon the individual concerned in his conscience with regard to truth can be inculpable even when such an opinion or conviction involves a rejection of some dogma (though admittedly in that case, according to Catholic convictions, it is objectively erroneous). It is inculpable even though it may be that an individual of this kind, who is led by his own conscience with regard to truth to a position in which he firmly believes that he has to reject a dogma of the Church, can no longer be called a Catholic in a theological sense. It is also obvious that any proposition which contradicts a doctrine of the Church which though authentic has not been defined and is therefore in principle reformable can objectively speaking even have a chance of being materially correct. But even while conceding and explicitly stating all this I am still amazed at the degree of naïve self-opinionatedness and emotional aggressiveness against the Church's official teachers that not a few Catholics are accustomed emphatically to evince in contradicting the teaching of the Church whether defined or not.

The present age is characterized by a pluralism of ideas, of experiences of life, of systems and theories, questions and problems, together with the constant temptation to relativism and scepticism which these entail. It is true that underlying this tendency towards relativism and scepticism there is a good and necessary attitude of openness to a truth which is broader and richer than that which we already explicitly possess. Nevertheless the attitude itself should really be directed against our own persons, and should cause us to question our own opinions in a spirit of self-criticism. Even in the purely human sphere in general it is dangerous and oddly naïve to regard one's fellows more or less from the outset as less intelligent or having less good with than oneself. Now this is far truer of our relationship to the teaching Church.

We of today, with that strange 'later individualism' of ours in thought and opinion which is, at bottom, no longer modern at all, stand in danger of being dominated by our emotions and trapped in our own subjectivity by over-valuing our personal opinion, our theological knowledge, and our capacity for theological thought in terms of analysis and synthesis [157] alike, when our opinion comes into conflict with some doctrine which is proposed to us from the Church and by her official teachers, which at first sight strikes us as alien. It is manifestly true that our personal subjectivity and our own moral and inalienable responsibility for the truth is something which we can never neglect. We must attempt subjectively to appropriate the truth of the Church and to make it our own in a process which is never completed. And we have not achieved the true obedience of faith so long as we merely repeat theological formulae, or simply leave them unexplored in a spirit of total indifference. But nevertheless it is the part of every true man to allow the truth to be borne in upon him, that truth which on his first encounter with it – and this after all is something seriously to be taken into account – strikes him as alien, difficult to understand, startling and forcing him out of his former finite subjectivity. Where there is no readiness to do this this man remains trapped in the capriciousness of his own subjectivity. He experiences himself only within the limitations of his own individual human nature and his personal experience. He is incapable of transcending this subjectivity and taking into himself that which is really new. Of course this applies primarily to those cases in which what is in question is not the particular findings of the so-

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called exact sciences, evidence for which can be acquired by experiments which can be repeated, but rather that truth which applies to man as a whole, that truth which imports salvation. In this quest for truth we rightly demand an authority which cannot simply be manipulated by our own subjectivity, one which, while we neither possess it nor can possess it otherwise than in the form of an utterance of our own personal and inalienable conscience with regard to truth, is nevertheless capable in particular cases of genuinely confronting us and laying demands upon us, an authority, therefore, which is something more than merely the projection of our own personal opinion. Only so can we manage to escape from the capriciousness of our own subjectivity. Only so can we strive for that freedom in which we are set free above all from ourselves.

Now this authority, this archimedian point outside ourselves, on the basis of which we can overcome our own narrow subjectivity, will vary according to the particular truth arising in the concrete circumstances of our lives that is involved in any given case. Now the truth of salvation precisely demands an archimedian point of this kind outside ourselves. With regard to this authority in which the truth of salvation resides, and which frees us from our own subjective capriciousness, we may ask how it is to be determined in more precise theological terms. Are we to say that it is the historical experience of faith of the Church as a whole? Or that it [158] is scripture? Or that it is the official authority to teach instituted by Jesus Christ? We may further enquire how these various elements, which constitute this one authority, are related to one another. But for the moment it is not these questions that concern us. However there must be such an authority in order that salvation may be bestowed upon us and liberate us from our personal subjectivity. And the only real way in which such an authority is no longer liable to be subordinated to our own subjectivity is if it is upheld by other subjects existing in the concrete and capable of acting in the concrete within our own historical situation.

Even though we have only been able to indicate these considerations above, nevertheless they do surely enable us to realize the meaning of the statement that truth, when it applies precisely to man as a whole, man who can never exist in the ‘splendid isolation’ of his own subjectivity without being entrapped in it – that truth, I say, has something to do with institution. We do not need to be communists in order to understand this, although sometimes we may have the impression that this statement is better understood among them, albeit in a perverted application, than among us ‘later individualists’ with our liberalist mentality, which calls everything in question, and can still continue to do this for a whole epoch until the last remnants of what is valid from the past have been worked over.

But let us understand this statement that truth has something to do with institution, and that it is not the case that it is our own only when it is emancipated from this. On the contrary it is our own when we have grasped this statement and made it our own truth. Once we have understood this, then it can be that a radical assent to the Church as she exists in the concrete, even in respect of her teaching authority, will no longer be so difficult for us as it may sometimes seem. Obviously the difficulties which arise in points of detail, and with regard to specific individual doctrines of the Church, are still not wholly eliminated thereby. But nevertheless it has perhaps been made a little more intelligible why, and with what right, the individual Catholic conducts his dialogue with the Church (a dialogue which is always necessary and never concluded) from within the Church herself, recognizing her in principle as a binding authority for his convictions of faith.

c) For all that has been said so far, the Church still always remains – however much she may constitute the sphere of our life and our hope – a fearful burden upon us. We can neither cast this burden aside nor pretend to ourselves that it does not oppress us. The burden of the human factors in her to which we ourselves too make our own pitiful contribution. The [159] burden of traditions for which it can in no sense be claimed that they share in the promise of

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eternal assistance to the Church. The burden of the difference between the formulae and that which is expressed in them, the burden constituted by the fact that she falls short of the immeasurable grandeur of her task. The burden of the difference between the official and institutional element and the charismatic one. The burden of the difference between the peoples and civilizations which have to live together within her. The burden constituted by the fact that the measure of living faith, of creative hope for the future, and of selfless love is always too small. If anyone feels this burden, which always represents an assault on our assent to the Church in the concrete and makes it difficult for us, let him consider that he too plays his own limited part in increasing this burden. Let him consider above all that the Church is always the Church who wearily seeks her way through history, that she and we ourselves are on the way, and have not yet arrived at that goal at which all will be reconciled.

And finally: all that the Church is, all that she does, all that she seeks to help us in with all her statements of faith, her sacraments and institutions, all this has after all one single significance, namely that by loving our neighbour, by hoping and working to make this life bearable, we let ourselves fall through that death which is being died throughout the whole of our lives in a spirit of submission and adoration into the incomprehensible mystery; that we achieve this in faith, hope and love in that creed of ours which runs counter to all that our experience suggests to us, telling us that this mystery is the mystery of freedom, of truth, of love and of forgiveness, and is addressed to us as such in Jesus Christ who was crucified and definitively received by God.

But because we really do find this too within her, because in her, in the hard and often harsh concrete forms of her reality the real message achieves concrete embodiment in our own lives, therefore, rising above all the burdens and tensions of our relationship with her we utter our assent to the Church. We do not take refuge from her everyday manifestations, however pitiable these may often be in ideals which are all too facile and which would merely deliver us up to ourselves in our own narrow, sinful, and pitiful limitations. We endure her in faith, hope and love precisely because so far as we are concerned, while still existing in her dimension of divine truth, she is the Church of those individuals who, as the people of God on pilgrimage, have embarked on that course in which the history of mankind opens up into the blessed mystery of God which is our own hope, but even as such the sustaining force of our life as well. We are critical in our attitude to the Church because this critique belongs to the very nature [160] of our faith itself since in union with the faith of the Church it is on the way to the eternal light. But this means that the critique itself derives its life from an assent to the Church as she exists in the concrete which is ever renewed in hope, causing our faith to rise above all temptations and constantly to renew itself.

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9

ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANITY AND THE MISSIONARY TASK OF THE CHURCH

It is important to emphasize right at the outset that the following considerations do not, properly speaking, refer to that which we have for some time been accustomed to call 'anonymous Christianity',[1] nor yet to the missionary task of the Church as such,[2] but merely to the relationship which these two entities bear one to another. Nevertheless it is obvious that something must be said at least very briefly concerning the two realities, the relationship between which is intended to constitute the proper subject of these considerations.

In speaking of the universal missionary task of the Church as a right and a duty of the Church herself this is taken to include the basic duty of every man to become a Christian in an explicitly ecclesiastical form of Christianity, because it is quite impossible to separate these two entities from one another. The reason that this needs to be emphasized is that the objections raised against the doctrine of the anonymous Christianity of the [162] Church's universal missionary task[3] can likewise be raised and *de facto* are raised in virtue of the basic and indisputable vocation and duty of every individual to become a Christian in a sense that is manifested at the historical level, having an explicitly credal force and social dimension. The fact, therefore, that the following considerations refer more explicitly to the possibility of reconciling the doctrine of anonymous Christianity with the doctrine of the universal missionary task of the Church in itself also includes an enquiry into the question of why the doctrine of anonymous Christianity is reconcilable with the doctrine of the duty of every man to become a Christian in an explicit sense.

In discussing the question of anonymous Christianity here, therefore, we must begin by emphasizing that this subject implicitly involves two different questions: first the question of the inadequacy or appropriateness of the terminology under various possible aspects involved in the subject-matter, second the question of the objective reality referred to by this terminology independently of the problem of whether this reality is itself adequately described by this terminology.

So far as the terminology is concerned the question has already been raised of whether in enquiring into whether the choice of terms is adequate a further distinction should not be drawn between the concept of the 'anonymous Christian' and the concept of 'anonymous Christianity'. The well-known theologian Henri de Lubac, for instance, rejects the concept of

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[1] The author has already given his views on this theme at length in other contexts On this point cf. also the bibliography supplied by K. Riesenhuber, 'Der anonyme Christ nach K. Rahner', *ZKT* 86 (1964), pp. 286-303; in addition to this now cf. K. Rahner, 'Anonymous Christians', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 390-398, and further *idem*, 'On the Theology of the Ecumenical Discussion', *Theological Investigations* XI (London, 1973), pp. 24-67; *idem*, 'Atheism and Implicit Christianity', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 145-164; *idem*, 'Church, Churches and Religions', *ibid*., pp. 30-49; *idem*, 'Salvation of the Non-Evangelized', *Sacramentum Mundi* 4 (New York and London, 1969), pp. 79-81.

[2] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Grundprinzipien der heutigen Mission in der Kirche' *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 46-80, esp. 55 ff.; further *idem*, 'Mission dringlicher denn je!' *Die katholischen Missionen* 86 (1967), pp. 3 ff.; B. A. Willems, 'Who Belongs to the Church?', *Concilium* I/1 (Dogma, 1965), pp. 62.-71; M. J. Le Guillou, 'Mission as an Ecclesiological Theme', *Concilium* 3/2 (Pastoral Theology) (1966), pp. 43-61; J. Schütte (ed.), *Mission nach dem Konzil* (Mainz, 1967); S. Brechter, 'Kommentar zum Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche "Ad Gentes"', *LTK* Suppl. III (1968), 9-125.

[3] On these objections cf. also A Schmied, 'Prozess gegen den impliziten Glauben?', *Theologie der Gegenwart* 13 (1969), pp 103-107, and the article 'On the Theology of the Ecumenical Discussion', *Theological Investigations* XI, pp. 24-67, esp. nn. 14, 15.

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'anonymous Christianity' but has no objections to the term 'anonymous Christian'.[4] Perhaps in order first to settle this ancillary question it might be pointed out that in German the term *Christentum* (= 'Christendom' or 'Christianity') can be used in at least two fairly distinct senses. *Christentum* can simply signify the sum total of real Christians. Hence anyone who concedes that there are anonymous Christians should not raise any objections against the point that in that case there is an anonymous *Christentum* (or Christendom) in this sense as well. The question becomes more difficult if by the term *Christentum* we understand that which constitutes a specific individual as a Christian ('Christianity'). For in that case it could be argued that one of the factors belonging to Christianity in this abstract sense is precisely its manifestation in history in the explicit [163] Christian creed, in a Church that is constituted as a society, in the fact that membership of the Church comes through baptism, and in all those other elements which go to make up full membership of the Church. On this basis the following argument might be put forward: if this explicit Church membership belongs to the very nature of Christianity, i.e. to that which constitutes an individual as a Christian in the full sense of the term, then there is no anonymous Christianity because the term 'anonymous' is precisely intended to exclude that historical and social manifestation which belongs to the essence of Christianity. But if we adopt this line of argument, basing it on this second sense of the term, then to be consistent we should also reject the concept of an 'anonymous Christian', because the objection mentioned above applies just as much to this. In our enquiry into the opportunism of this terminology, then, we can set on one side the distinction between the concepts of 'anonymous Christian' and 'anonymous Christianity' as being unimportant, and assume that for practical purposes and in the concrete we must either accept the possibility of using both terms or else we must reject both.

Even in the light of the foregoing observation it is certainly to be conceded that a certain difficulty is entailed in both concepts. For Christianity in the full sense of the term does involve as one of its factors a conscious awareness of faith, an explicit Christian creed, and a constitution of the Church as a society. And it is precisely these factors which are once more eliminated by the term 'anonymous'. This reservation is openly to be conceded. But before rejecting these terms on the grounds mentioned certain points still remain to be considered.

First the term 'anonymous' is certainly a term that, understood absolutely and in a general sense, does not provoke any special misunderstanding, and therefore is in itself legitimate. Yet the term 'anonymous' precisely expresses the fact that the individual thus designated is devoid of a name. For what leads to the naming of something is a process of explicitly reflecting upon a nature that is *de facto* real and existing, the explicit and public recognition of the fact that this nature is present in a specific existing individual. Now manifestly there can also be the sort of anonymity that is envisaged here, and it can be designated by the term 'anonymous' when the nature of the reality referred to is such that it makes a difference whether this state of conscious self-realization is or it not present in the anonymous being concerned, his conscious awareness of his own nature and his recognition by a distinguishing name. The term 'anonymous', therefore, is fully capable of expressing the fact that the state of anonymity is in a certain sense a state that is contrary to nature, that should not be [164] because there is an inherent tendency in the very nature of the being involved to overcome this state of namelessness. When we consider these possibilities latent in the term 'anonymous', a term which certainly contains a paradox, then the objection against the idea of 'anonymous Christianity' loses its force. 'Anonymous Christianity' serves precisely to express the fact that in the case of a Christianity asserted to be present in this way something is missing from the fulness of its due nature, something which it should have and towards which the nature already present is tending. A consideration of this kind does of course

[4] H. de Lubac, *Geheimnis aus dem wir leben*, Kriterien 6 (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 131-154, esp. 149 ff.

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presuppose that the term 'Christianity' designates an extremely complex reality in which very many differing elements are contained, elements which do not as a matter of necessity simply have to be present at the same time, or which are removed altogether at one blow. But once we do make this assumption (and unquestionably it does apply to the term 'Christianity', as will be argued in fuller detail at a later stage from the very nature of the case) then the term 'anonymous Christianity' does not involve any intrinsic contradiction. It is not 'wooden iron' (to borrow a phrase from Hegel), for in that case this term signifies precisely the fact that while it is true that Christianity is already present in an incipient state it has not yet developed to the true fulness of its nature, not yet come to be expressed in its historical and social modality and visibility, and hence that it is precisely anonymous.

Two final points must be made with regard to this merely terminological question. First, concepts involving the use of two terms always entail a certain difficulty and obscurity. Language is never wholly precise. Concepts which are intended to express something more than the rudimentary data of sense experience, and which stand for extremely complex realities can hardly ever avoid a certain ambiguity and possibility of misunderstanding. In them we sum up an extremely complex reality for the sake of expressing it briefly. But in using a concept of this sort we omit certain aspects which are not unimportant for a right understanding of the concept involved. (As examples of this we might adduce such terms as original sin, infused virtue etc.). In such terms the adjective is precisely something more than a mere supplementary specification of the term which stands for the substantive. For it supplies a very important modification of this term (the *peccatum* referred to in the phrase '*peccatum originale*' is not the same *peccatum* as in the phrase '*peccatum personale*', and again the word 'virtue' as used in the phrase 'infused virtue' in its own intrinsic meaning stands for something different from virtue as used in the phrase 'acquired virtue'). So too the word 'Christianity' as used in the phrase 'anonymous Christianity' is far from signifying exactly and totally the same reality as [165] 'Christianity' as used in the phrase 'Christianity as explicitly manifested in the Church'. And this means that a linguistic process is being applied which is often found in other contexts as well, and which should not give rise to any misgivings.

To this a second point must be added: ultimately speaking it is not this terminology that is the essential point at all. Anyone who recognizes the existence of the realities signified by these terms and has a brief practical term of his own expressing these realities just as clearly or more clearly, and that too briefly enough for this term of his to be used in other contexts as epitomizing in brief the outcome of a long consideration can readily dispense with the terminology we are considering here.

We now come to the realities themselves. We will start with a brief word on what is meant by 'anonymous Christianity' or 'anonymous Christians'. What they signify is nothing else than the fact that according to the doctrine of the Church herself an individual can already be in possession of sanctifying grace, can in other words be justified and sanctified, a child of God, an heir to heaven, positively orientated by grace towards his supernatural and eternal salvation even before he has explicitly embraced a credal statement of the Christian faith and been baptized. What 'anonymous Christianity' signifies first and foremost is that interior grace which forgives man and gives him a share in the Godhead even before baptism[5]. Considered in its formal essence this concept still leaves open the question of which man can be thought of as justified before baptism, whether for example they are only the catechumens or – in accordance with Heb 11:6 – those who believe in the existence of God as the guarantor of the moral order, or even, over and above these, those too who have not arrived at any explicit acknowledgement of God or of their own guilt but nevertheless are striving to

[5] Cf. K. Rabner, 'Universal Salvific Will', *Sacramentum Mundi* 5 (New York and London, 1969), pp. 405-409.

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live good lives even without God's grace (as is stated in the document of the Second Vatican Council, 'Lumen Gentium', No. 16). In the concept of anonymous Christianity formally as such nothing is decided with regard to this question. Of course in practice it is only meaningful to speak of anonymous Christianity if we assume that justifying grace can be present even in those cases in which there is no explicit orientation to Christianity and its official verbal revelation at the historical and conceptual level. Indeed as the Second Vatican Council explicitly teaches, it can even be present in those cases in which God has not yet been discovered at the level of conscious thought or as the subject of any explicit statement, and in which at [166] this explicit and conscious level the individual concerned believes himself to be an atheist.[6] The proposition being put forward here is that in this broadest sense there can be anonymous Christianity, i.e. justifying grace, even apart from any explicit Christianity. In other words that even in this infralapsarian order at least in the case of mature individuals no other limits can be set to salvation than those of grave subjective guilt. And this is something which cannot be established merely by the fact that in the course of his life the individual concerned has failed to arrive at any explicit Christianity. At this point we cannot embark upon any fuller justification of this thesis.

Obviously a long history lies behind the point at which it has come to be recognized. We might say that that history began with the recognition, already present in the New Testament, that under certain circumstances God imparts his Spirit even before baptism.[7] As stages in this history we might point, for instance to the teaching of Ambrose that even the catechumen who dies before baptism can attain to salvation,[8] or again the mediaeval doctrine of the *votum baptismi* or baptism of desire, through which the individual can be justified even before the sacrament of baptism,[9] a doctrine which was confirmed by the Council of Trent,[10] or again we [167] might point to the doctrine of the mediaeval theologians that in the normal cases the renewal of justification in one who has fallen into sin after baptism takes place even before priestly absolution has been given, indeed that properly speaking it must take place before this.[11] Or again we might point to the controversy among the post-Tridentine moralists as to which truths of faith have to be believed as a necessary means for being able to be justified. Those involved in this controversy were forced to arrive at ever milder and more generous solutions.[12] A further stage in the history leading up to this recognition is the teaching of the

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[6] The relevant texts of the Council are discussed at length in K. Rahner, 'Atheism and Implicit Christianity', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 145-164.

[7] Cf. Acts 10:47, with the explanations of this passage by M. Barth, *Die Taufe - ein Sakrament*? (Zürich, 1951), esp. pp. 154-159 and G. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London, 1962).

[8] PL 16, 1374. Still more ancient is the doctrine of the power of martyrdom to justify. Taken together the two doctrines represent the counterpoint in scholastic theology to the thesis of the necessity of baptism as a medium (*necessitas medii*) of salvation: *PSJ* IV (Madrid, 3rd ed., 1959), pp. 147-170. Instructive for the whole range of problems entailed is E. Schillebeeckx, 'Begierdetaufe (als aussersakramentale Heilsweg)', *LTK* II (2nd ed., 1958), 112-115, and *idem*, *Christus*, *Sakrament der Gottbegegnung* (Mainz, 1960). On the radical turning-point which arose on this question at the Council through the doctrine of degrees of membership of the Church cf. A. Grillmeier, 'Einführung zur geschichtlichen und theologischen Problematik von Art. 14 (der Kirchenkonstitution)', *LTK* Suppl. I (1966), 194 ff.

[9] On this cf. A. M. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik* III/1 (Regensburg, 1954), pp. 210-253. This author is struck by the fact that the very nature of the question is such that the doctrine of 'sacramentum in voto' was formulated significantly earlier than, for instance, that of the causality of the sacraments. Indeed it must actually be acknowledged that precisely from the recognition of the *sacramentum in voto* which had already been achieved great difficulties arose for an understanding of the effectiveness of the sacraments (*op. cit.*, p. 211).

[10] DS 1524, 1604, 1677.

[11] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Bussakrarnent', *LTK* II (2nd ed. 1958), 826-838, esp. 832 ff.

[12] Admittedly the whole question, right down to the present day, is overshadowed by the subject of the relationship between nature and grace, a subject which is very difficult to define. The post-Tridentine theology, in which there is a widespread tendency to identify faith in its explicit form more or less with supernatural grace

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Holy Office (of the 8th August 1949, against Leonard Feeney)[13] that even a merely implicit *votum ecclesiae* could be sufficient for justification, and a final stage is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council which in a noteworthy departure from established tradition holds that not even every kind of atheism (even when it is of a positive nature and of long duration) is *ipso facto* gravely sinful, but rather leaves this question open to be decided in each individual case and does not deny that the atheist who unequivocally follows his own conscience can obtain salvation.[14]

[168] Only a few remarks will be made concerning the missionary task of the Church. According to the evidence of the New Testament itself this task is in principle universal, i.e. fundamentally it is directed to all men in the sense that there is no *a priori* principle laying down that from the outset (for instance because of a specific nationality, a specific form of civilization, a specifically different religion) specific individuals are excluded so far as this missionary task of the Church is concerned as in principle and from the outset not being included in the offering of grace and the duty to become Christians. The universality of this missionary task does not mean, however, that this positive obligation of divine law for the Church must be actively pursued to the same extent at every moment in every situation or for every individual. The same of course applies too to the basic duty of every individual to become a Christian. This too varies greatly in its degree of actuality in each individual case according to the individual involved and the situation in which he stands.

There is a further question, that namely of whether right from the initial promulgation of the gospel and from the first Pentecost this objective duty has been laid upon all men and whether the history of this obligation is merely the history of how they come to recognize it in practice. Or alternatively whether the objective duty as such itself arises only in a process of historical development to which all men are subject, though obviously in that case the duty, the right and the dynamic force needed to engage in this historical process in order to bring it to the universal state which is proper to it are themselves subject to a process of becoming which is far from complete. But these are questions which can be passed over here.

Now that we have briefly described the two entities involved what is their relationship one to the other? It is only at this point that we come to our true theme. The crucial question, which is important for practical purposes as well, is whether these two entities can exist in unison or whether the one removes the other. There is a practical problem implicitly contained in this question, that namely of whether the will to fulfil the universal missionary

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in general, does at first seem to leave no possibility of salvation for the individual in the non-Christian sphere who cannot give his faith any expression ('implicit' here signifies the truth which is contained but not expressed in a given statement). The whole question, therefore, is brought to a head, however strange this may sound, by the problem of unbaptized children who now appear as a prototype example of the unbeliever in general. As a logical outcome of this Billot develops the idea of a limbo for the pagans.

On the way in which the question was framed by post-Tridentine theology on this point cf. S.Harent, 'Infidèles', *DTC* VII/2 (Paris, 1923), 1726-1930. Now however it is coming to be recognized that the state of 'pure' nature never exists in the concrete at all. Rather man is placed all along in the sphere of history and it is here that he is summoned by God. Now if this is true then it also necessarily follows that 'historical' man as *such* and 'historical' revelation are in a positive sense mutually conditioning entities. The offering of salvation by God is already in existence prior to the practical proclamation of it, and is the intrinsic factor that makes it possible.

[13] DS 3866-3873. A historical survey of the whole affair is to be found in C. Goddard Clarke, *The Loyolas and the Cabots* (Boston, 1950).

[14] Cf. n. 6. A similar development is also to be traced in other problematical areas. Thus the Second Vatican Council declares that man has the right to religious freedom (Decree on Religious Freedom No. 2), that God 'in ways known to himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please him' (Decree on the Missions, No. 7), that the other 'ecclesiastical communities' have in principle a saving significance (Decree on Ecumenism, Nos. 19-24). On this cf. also the literature adduced in n. 2.

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task of the Church is not deprived of its force in the case of one who is convinced of the possibility and the existence of an anonymous Christianity. Of course this question can also be put the other way round, and we can approach the question from the opposite point of view by asking whether any genuine missionary energy is conceivable, at any rate today, otherwise than by assuming that an anonymous [169] Christianity of this kind is already present as an enabling condition for a preaching of the faith in that individual to whom this missionary preaching is addressed.

It is clear that to supply an answer to these questions which would be satisfactory in every respect would require a whole theology of mission, its nature and its ultimate justification.[15] And this is something which can neither be prescribed or assumed here for the very reason that there is no such theology at all of a completely satisfying kind or as generally accepted.[16] What we shall have to say with regard to our present problem, therefore, must be presented and understood with this reservation.

First we may surely say that in order to be possible or to have any hope of success missionary preaching necessarily presupposes that which we may call by the name of anonymous Christianity or by some other name. On any right understanding of the nature of the Christian faith it is clear that a missionary preaching is possible only if we presuppose the grace of faith (at least as offered). The word of God as preached can only be heard and received as the word of God through this grace of faith.[17] Obviously however this should not be taken to signify merely some kind of psychological assistance provided by God in order to overcome the intellectual or emotional obstacles involved, which derive from the nature of the hearer, his cultural situation, the kind of personal history he has undergone etc., and which always make it difficult to understand or accept any kind of teaching that is hard. The object of faith as such can itself be recognized and accepted only with the help of supernatural grace imparting a share in the divine life. Now at least according to the Thomist doctrine, which after all is relevant to this point and which has the weight of ancient tradition behind it, this grace is precisely something more than [170] what it was maintained to be by a Molinist school of thought against Thomism and against Suarez, namely a mere ontological and subconscious alteration of the act of faith. Rather it also implies a genuinely conscious alteration and imparts a dimension of understanding which cannot be attained to by any merely natural act, having a formal object which is specifically supernatural.[18] Only in the light of grace can we recognize and accept the light of the gospel. The grace of faith is the necessary prior condition for the teaching of the faith. But it would be to suppose the

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[15] On this cf. also the Decree on the Missions of the Second Vatican Council, which in its first chapter attempts to lay down the basic principles governing missionary activity, and cf. also the relevant commentary in *LTK* Suppl. III (1968), 9-125; J. Hampe (ed.), *Die Autorität der Freiheit* III (Munich, 1967), pp. 518-573; E. Dhanis and A. Schönmetzer (edd.), *Acta Congressus Internationalis de Theologia Concilii Vatican* II (Rome, 1968), pp. 340-442; Y. Congar, 'Theologische Grundlegung', *Mission nach dem Konzil* edited by J. Schütte (Mainz, 1967), pp. 134-172.

[16] In fact the missionary decree likewise has avoided attaching itself to any of the theories of mission developed hitherto.

[17] This idea is more fully presented in the section entitled 'Wort Gottes', *LTK* X (2nd ed. 1965), 1235-1238. In this connection cf. also K. Rahner, J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, Quaestiones Disputatae 17 (Freiburg, 1966); K. Rahner, 'Scripture and Tradition', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 98-112; *idem*, 'Scripture and Tradition', *Sacramentum Mundi* 6 (London and New York, 1970), pp. 54-57.

[18] A more detailed treatment of this point is to be found in K. Rahner, 'Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 297-317; *idem*, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 86-90; *idem*, 'Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 165-188; *idem*, 'Gnadenerfahrung', *LTK* IV (2nd ed., 1960), 1001-1002; *idem*, 'The Existential', *Sacramentum Mundi* 2 (New York and London, 1968), pp. 304-307; J. Alfaro, 'Formalobjekt, übernaturliches', *LTK* IV (2nd ed., 1960), 207-208.

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miraculous, almost to indulge in mythological ideas, if we were to hold that this grace of faith was conferred only at that moment at which the preaching of the gospel actually reached the ears of those to whom it was addressed. In this moment it does indeed become actual, effective and demanding, but this is precisely in virtue of the fact that it has been present all along and belongs to the enduring existential modalities of man, albeit at the level of the supernatural, in the same way as the natural spiritual faculties are present all along in man even though they only become actual and effective when they encounter an external object of experience which corresponds to them.

For our present purposes we cannot provide any more detailed justification for this conception of grace as involving a unity of so-called habitual and actual grace.[19] From the point of view of dogmatic theology, however, it cannot be contested, and is at basis already contained in the Thomist doctrine laying down that the act by which justification is appropriated takes place in the power of the habitual grace which is already present. Now if we accept this classic Thomist conception we need only to go on to consider a further point with regard to that habitual grace which is offered as the condition enabling the subject to act for his own salvation, and which, according to Thomas, is logically prior to the free act by which salvation is appropriated in the subject's own personal life. There is no longer any difficulty in regarding this grace as constituting, even from the temporal point of view, an abiding grace-given existential modality. Then [171] without further consideration it can be assumed that the preacher of the gospel who seeks to impart faith as an appropriation of grace addresses himself, and must address himself (since it is impossible to preach the faith without the grace of faith) to an individual who already possesses justifying grace at least as offered, and indeed, it may be, as already freely accepted in an implicit way. The individual concerned would in this sense be an anonymous Christian. The missionary task, therefore, must be one that can exist together with anonymous Christianity because on theological grounds we must hold that this missionary task presupposes the existence of the anonymous Christian as the only possible hearer of the gospel message.

But we can view this possibility of union and mutual interrelationship between the missionary task and anonymous Christianity from the aspect of anonymous Christianity itself. Even though anonymous Christianity is prior to explicit Christianity it does not render it superfluous. On the contrary, it itself demands this explicit Christianity in virtue of its own nature and its own intrinsic dynamism. In order to achieve a clearer recognition of this point we may begin by stating the following general thesis:

In the general economy of salvation it is a perfectly logical process for the grace that creates salvation, and indeed constitutes the individual as saved, to be both logically and temporally prior to the sacramental act which signifies it. Yet as such and in virtue of its own intrinsic dynamism it itself demands to be realized in this visible sacramental mode and in the dimension of the Church. It presses forward towards this sacramental incarnation of itself and thereby ensures that it is not impossible for this effective sacramental symbol of this same grace to be itself a cause of the grace and not merely an outward expression of it such as ultimately speaking would make no difference.

This thesis requires a little further explanation. But if it were not correct, then basically speaking it would no longer be possible to explain how in that case Paul can sometimes attribute justification to faith without baptism, and elsewhere attribute it to baptism alone. We have already emphasized above that on the occasion of the baptism of Cornelius Peter insists upon the fact that Cornelius can and indeed must be baptized *because* he has already received the Holy Spirit.[20] The thesis we have put forward is simply an application of the fundamental

[19] On this cf. the expositions of K. Rahner under the heading 'Gnade', *LTK* IV (2nd ed., 1960), 991-1000.
[20] See n. 7.

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doctrine concerning salvation history as a whole to the salvation of the individual, the doctrine, namely, that the grace of Christ, as that of Christ himself was temporally present throughout the whole of salvation history and was prior to its [172] manifestation in the *Ursakrament* of history which is Christ himself, and that it is precisely in virtue of this fact that it issued in the fullness of time in the eschatological victory of the crucified and risen Lord.[21] This basic thesis is also to be found in many of the more particular doctrines of sacramental theology.[22] Properly speaking, when we come to baptism we must already have faith, hope and love, in other words the state of justification. It is meaningless in the context with which we are concerned to seek to raise the value and significance of the sacrament itself by saying that a sacrament can justify even one who only possesses imperfect repentance and so has not yet received the grace of justification. This may be correct, although a point that would still have to be considered is that according to Thomas it is precisely this sacramental grace that raises man in his personal life from being an 'attritus' to being a 'contritus', in other words that after all what is bestowed upon man is not that deed of salvation in virtue of which he justifies himself in an *opus operantis*.[23] Abstracting from this, we must say in all realism and against all the strangely heated controversies between contritionists and attritionists in post-Tridentine theology that while it is true that we can distinguish between imperfect and perfect repentance, in practice this distinction has no special significance since he who by an act of perfect repentance has achieved an unequivocal rejection of sin (something that must also be present in imperfect repentance) no longer has any difficulty in loving God with his whole heart, or in choosing him as the goal of his own personal life in an act of true charity, since he necessarily must have a freely determined goal for his personal life of this kind. Yet *ex supposito* he no longer seeks it in any finite good which he has sinfully made his absolute goal. Even in baptism, then, the situation is that through it an anonymous Christian becomes an explicit Christian, and in any case through such a baptism he may indeed be validly baptized, but [173] not justified. In the case of adult baptism the justification is prior to the baptism itself and it is precisely in baptism that it achieves its manifestation at the ecclesiastical and social level. This does not entail any denial of the efficacy of the sacrament as conferring grace, or make it impossible.[24] For first we can and must say that on any showing the sacrament increases the justifying grace even though this increase in its turn is mediated through the personal intensification of the subjective act in the reception of the sacrament. And secondly it must be pointed out that as '*causa finalis*' of the history of a dynamic grace, as the incarnation and effective symbol of this grace, the sacrament can constitute one side of a mutually conditioning relationship being the effect and the cause at the same time of the original grace.

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[21] On this conception of saving history cf. K. Rahner, 'History of the World and Salvation History', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966) pp. 97-114; A. Darlap, 'Fundamentale Theologie der Heilsgeschichte', *Mysterium Salutis* I (Einsiedeln, 1965), pp. 3-156; K. Berger and A. Darlap, 'History of Salvation (Salvation History)', *Sacramentum Mundi* 5 (New York and London, 1970), pp. 411-419; E. Klinger, *Offenbarung im Horizont der Heilsgeschichte* (Zürich, 1969).

[22] The interpretation of what is meant by sacrament presupposed here is present more fully in K. Rahner, 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 109-133; *idem*, *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Freiburg, 1963); *idem*, 'Sakramente als Grundfunktionen der Kirche', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 323-332.

[23] On the series of connected questions here a more detailed treatment is to found in K. Rahner, 'Problems concerning Confession', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 190-206; cf. also n. 11.

[24] This causality is investigated more fully in the author's studies, 'The Theology of the Symbol', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 221-252 and 'Sakrament', *LTK* IX (2nd ed. 1964), 225-230.

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All that we have stated above finds expression once more, and that too in a way that is commonly even more emphatic, in the teaching concerning the sacrament of penance. For Thomas Aquinas and the whole of theology prior to him (Scotus was the first to introduce any change) it was regarded as obvious that when the sinner came to the sacrament of penance he had already been justified once more (through penitence), and indeed in normal cases actually had to be justified in order to approach the sacrament of penance. And the theologians did not feel the smallest difficulty in regarding the sacrament of penance for all this as a sacrament that was necessary for salvation. They did not in the least feel it to be any objection to ask how in that case the sacrament was still necessary and meaningful, seeing that the *res sacramenti*, the justification, is already conferred even before the reception of the sacrament.[25] Manifestly in their theology of saving history and grace at the collective and individual levels it was obvious to them that the signs of grace as found in the historical dimension and in the Church were not rendered superfluous and meaningless by the fact that grace is already prior to them, for there is an incarnational order such that this grace itself of its very nature seeks its historical embodiment in the [174] word and above all in the sacrament, so that it itself would be denied if an individual sought in principle to frustrate this incarnational dynamism inherent in grace itself.

What is so much taken for granted in all the traditional theology concerning the relationship between grace and sacrament can unhesitatingly be extended to the relationship between grace and the word. For we also have need of grace in order to hear the word of the gospel, and even this word of the gospel can and must be conceived of as a kind of incarnation of grace at the level of human conceptualization in its objectifying and speculative function. For if grace consists in the self-bestowal of the triune God which of its own intrinsic nature seeks for the historical incarnation of the Logos and is, for that reason everywhere and in all cases a grace of Christ,[26] then it follows that the total reality which faith as articulated in words expresses is already present in this grace considered as the self-bestowal of God. And from this we can understand why it should be a property inherent in the very nature of this grace to press forward to this state of conceptual objectification which we call the doctrine of the faith at the level of the collective history of revelation and the personal history of faith. For it is in this explicitation as the doctrine of the faith that he who has been endowed with grace and the grace itself achieve a state of full and conscious self-possession. Grace, therefore, presses on to its state of conceptual objectification in the preaching of faith and is prior to this as its enabling condition. The explicit preaching of faith is not superfluous, because the grace which is preached is prior to this preaching as the condition of it and as the content of its preaching. Precisely because it is prior to the preaching the grace itself demands that it shall be preached. Now to say this is *ipso facto* to say too – for it is only expressing this in different words – that anonymous Christianity does not render explicit Christianity superfluous, but rather itself demands it, and that there would no longer be any anonymous Christianity, or at most it would only continue to exist as a judgement against the individual concerned, if he upon whom it is bestowed as offering were radically to close himself to any explicit Christianity.

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[25] In this connection the theology of penance of the very recent past has provided a new development of the ancient conception of '*reconciliatio cum ecclesia*' considered as an essential element (*res et sacramentum*) in the sacramental process. On this cf. amongst others K. Rahner, 'Penance as an Additional Act of Reconciliation with the Church', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1972), pp. 125-149. This idea could have significance for the future from the standpoint of general ecclesiology as well. For at the Second Vatican Council the Church as a whole is interpreted as the sacrament of salvation for the whole world.

[26] For fuller details on this point cf. K. Rahner, 'Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte', *Mysterium Salutis* II (Einsiedeln, 1967), pp. 317-401, esp. 369 ff.; *idem*, 'Die Kirche als Präsenz der Wahrheit und Liebe Gottes', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 121-131.

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In the light of the consideration so far put forward it is valid to hold that the theology of mission, of the meaning of and the necessity for mission, requires in part to be interpreted afresh. In former times the [175] necessity for mission was regarded more or less explicitly and radically from the point of view of the personal salvation of the individual, and the reasons for this necessity were sought here. Mission was regarded as necessary on the grounds that those individuals to whom no mission was directed would be lost. It is true that even in former times certain theories were adumbrated in order to be able to explain God's infralapsarian will to save all men universally, such theories as that of the private enlightenment of a particular individual or that of an original revelation handed down to later ages. By these means it was sought to explain how, at least in certain instances, a real faith in a supernatural revelation (taking this to be the necessary prior condition for justification) was at least in principle possible, and so too how justification itself was possible in principle, even without the explicit message of Christianity. But it was held that in practice this sort of situation arose only in a few exceptional cases, and these exceptions were explained by referring to original sin or to the universality of the breaking of the natural moral law, this being taken, even in the infralapsarian age, to justify the withholding of the supernatural grace of faith on God's part despite the conditional will of God to save all men.

In this connection, and in order correctly to evaluate such ideas, it must be realized that prior to the modern age European theology had no true idea of the enormous numbers of individuals outside Christianity or of the immense length of non-Christian history. Thus in arriving at the basic ideas of the traditional theology of mission the following assumption was conceivable: Mission is aimed at the salvation of individuals who otherwise simply could not avoid being lost, and that too with a necessity which is properly speaking prior to any question of the grace of faith as offered being rejected in any individual case. Today we can recognize the full length and breadth of non-Christian human history, and evaluate the power of the Cross of Christ at its true worth, and in view of this we can no longer assume that a majority of mankind is destined to perdition. Formerly this was assumed, and that too not merely on the grounds that they refused the grace of faith as offered to them – in other words not on the grounds that they had specifically rejected Jesus Christ – but for different reasons. And conversely today we are in a position to consider more clearly and with a deeper theological insight the question of how an individual who is not brought face to face with the explicit preaching of the gospel can still be brought, albeit at a quite unexplicit level, to an authentic decision of faith, and how he can thereby attain to a state of justification through faith (a theme which obviously cannot be developed in any fuller detail at this point). Now in view of all this we can and must [176] take it as established that it is possible for all men, including non-Christians, to arrive at a state of justification by having supernatural grace conferred upon them. But if this is the case then we cannot deduce the meaning and necessity of the Church's missionary task primarily or exclusively from the salvation of the individual, as though apart from this (abstracting from a few special cases) he would be lost unless he were subjected to the preaching of the gospel and baptism.

A positive evaluation of the meaning of mission is both possible along these lines, and in a true sense already given in what has been said so far. The grace of God which is intended effectively to redeem all has an incarnatorial character. It wills to extend itself into all the dimensions of human life, and in other words to take effect and find expression in the historical and social dimensions of this as well. This grace is intended of its very nature to be constitutive of the Church. Mission and the missionary actively contribute to this incarnatorial dynamism of grace. Of course this represents only a brief indication of the theology of mission, which could and should be supplemented and deepened on the basis of scripture, and also, for instance, in the light of the missionary decree of the Second Vatican Council by the insight that mission is directed not exclusively to the individual in his own

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personal quest for salvation, but no less primarily to peoples and civilizations as such. Mission consists in a sending out to all people. It has the task in saving history of making Christ, his gospel and his grace present among all peoples as such in their own specific histories and cultures, and thereby of achieving a quite new incarnatorial presence of Christ himself in the world. Once and for all Christianity is not intended merely to assure a salvation conceived of embryonically and almost in abstract terms for the individual in the other-worldly dimension, but is rather intended to make God's grace manifest here below in all its possible forms and in all historical spheres and contexts. The palpable dimension of the present world itself is intended to be made Christian to the utmost possible extent, because it is precisely not merely the other world that belongs to God and his Christ, as though he secretly rescued a few isolated individuals out of a merely secular world. On the contrary this world too belongs to him, the earthly dimension, history, the peoples, and also the history which present-day humanity itself sets itself actively to shape, instead of merely passively enduring it.

This new interpretation of the theology of mission in no sense involves any assertion that mission has no connection whatever with the personal salvation of the individual. Even if it is maintained that there is a basic possibility of salvation and a genuine opportunity of achieving salvation for [177] all at all times, and even outside the sphere of any explicit preaching of the gospel (an opportunity which is lost only through the personal fault of the individual), still this is in no sense to assert that the salvific situation and the opportunity of achieving salvation constitute an entity that is undeviatingly the same, equally present at all times, and for every individual man. It is obvious that mission improves the situation in which salvation can be achieved and the opportunity of salvation for the individual, even though at the same time it must be recognized that according to the New Testament the situation in which salvation can be achieved is also rendered more radical thereby, and so in a certain sense more dangerous too. In principle and quite in general the following statement may be applied to the conscious objectification of the existential modalities of human life, even though in principle these can be freely realized at a quite implicit and unconscious level: the conscious objectification of these modalities, while it does not necessarily or as a matter of compulsion bring about the actual realization of them or the radical modification of personal human life which such realization entails, still does induce conditions which are very favourable to this realization. Otherwise any metaphysical anthropology, for instance, would have no significance for concrete personal living whatever, but would simply be of concern to those who had a purely speculative interest in metaphysics for its own sake. If man is consciously aware of who he is and what he is making of himself of his own freedom, the chance that he will succeed in this self-achievement of his and arrive at a radical self-fulfilment is greater than if he merely possesses and fulfils his own humanity at a merely inert and unconscious level. Hence the conscious self-realization of a hitherto anonymous Christianity brought about through missionary preaching implies on the one hand the achievement of a more radical dimension of responsibility and on the other a greater chance of this Christianity interiorly bestowed by grace being brought to its fulness in all dimensions precisely as an explicit Christianity and in a state of radical freedom. Nor let it be said that if the only difference between explicit Christianity and anonymous Christianity is that the opportunity of achieving salvation afforded by the former is greater (instead of saying that salvation is initially bestowed by that explicit Christianity), this must after all have the effect of weakening missionary zeal. It is perfectly possible for there to be an absolute duty in human life to offer one's neighbour a greater chance of freely achieving the fulness of

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himself even when in principle the chance of such full self-realization was present all along even without offering him this further opportunity.[27]

[178] No father questions the fact that he is still far from being dispensed from the duty of giving his child the opportunity of having the most favourable start in life that he can merely because his child is already assured a minimal opportunity in life. Love strives for what is greater, and this striving is not to be accounted as greed. In fact it is precisely this striving which constitutes that love which is an absolute duty. This also applies to mission, for it is in this that love for God and neighbour is realized. The doctrine of anonymous Christianity as applied to the theology of mission does not exclude, among other things, a right understanding of the reference which mission has to the personal salvation of the individual.

[27] A similar line of argument is to be found in chapter II of the Decree on the Missions.

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[179]

PART TWO

Church and Society

[181]

10

THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE

A ‘political theology’, whatever more precise interpretation we may place on such a phrase, implies a certain understanding of the questions of whether and how an individual can know something of the future. This surely calls for no further explanation. It can therefore represent a contribution to the discussion of ‘political theology’ if the question of what the future holds is considered precisely as a question. In adopting this approach we must emphasize right from the outset that we can only discuss this question from the viewpoint of the theologian. This means that our enquiry into the future cannot be presented from the viewpoint of the futurologist,[1] the practitioner of cybernetics, the politologist, or even the philosopher. By comparison with all these the theologian is certainly the one who knows the least of all with regard to any ‘this-worldly’ future, and is indeed the one who, as we shall shortly have to explain more fully, makes this ignorance of his the true pith and essence of his message, regarding it not as a mere afterthought or peripheral phenomenon by comparison with some knowledge of the future, but rather as that which as a theologian he is striving precisely to bring and to keep before men’s eyes. *Docta ignorantia futuri* is from the outset the theme that is proper to the theologian, which he must put forward in season and out of season, and whether it is attended to or falls on deaf ears. In these preliminary remarks it must first be emphasized simply by way of warning that the theologian is no futurologist.

[182]

I

The moment the precise terms are adverted to of the title to this study, ‘The Question of the Future’, it is immediately apparent that the point of concern is not to define in terms of actual content what actually can or will be the case in the future. This question of the future is to be considered, rather, precisely as a *question* – indeed as *the* question which man himself constitutes and which he is impelled to pose to himself from something more than mere curiosity. What we are enquiring into, therefore, is the question of the future and not the actual content of the future. If the theologian is he who inculcates that *docta ignorantia futuri* spoken of above, then an enquiry of this kind into the question itself is certainly appropriate to him, because he, if anyone, is most of all in a position to say something about this.

[1] The concept of futurology was applied for the first time in 1943 in the United States by O. K. Flechtheim as a characterization of the work of systematically coping with the problems of the future. The programme for this science of the future can be summed up in a few key-words: research into the future, shaping of the future, and interpreting the future. An initial introduction to the range of problems involved together with a comprehensive bibliography is supplied by O. K. Flechtheim, *Futurologie – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen*, Projekte und Modelle No. 3 (Frankfurt, 1968).

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It is proper to Christian theology of its very nature, and in virtue of its contemporary state, that it should be concerned with a question of this kind. It is proper to it of its very nature because that Christian faith which is the subject of theological speculation, the recognition in hope of that absolute future of man which is God, lays down that this absolute future of the world is not simply offered as a mere open possibility, but in Jesus Christ is infallibly and victoriously promised. And this is something that man himself confesses. Finally it is appropriate to Christianity of its very nature to concern itself with this question because however true it may be that this absolute future is constituted by God and by his activity it still remains true that the acceptance of it on man's part is undertaken only in his own personal history when he adopts a right and responsible relationship to that future of his which has to be wrought out by himself in this present world.

It is true that in Christian theology eschatology is treated as a special branch falling at the end of dogmatic theology. But for the reasons we have indicated above eschatology also constitutes the whole of Christian theology or at least a formal structural principle for all theological statements.[2] For regardless of whether this is explicitly adverted to or not we only know what is meant by God if we recognize our own state as being orientated towards an absolute future. We only understand what saving history and revelation history mean if we live through them and recognize [183] them as the history of the promise of salvation extending more and more to the very roots of our being. We only understand what it means to say that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God if we believe in him as the one who will 'come again', in other words as he who belongs to the future and *as such* constitutes the Word of God's absolute promise of himself to the world. We only understand what faith is if we recognize clearly the edifice of hope that is built upon it, in which it accepts God's revelation as promise. We only value the Christian sacraments at their true and intrinsic worth if we also understand them as *signa prognostica*, to adopt the parlance of Thomas Aquinas. If we define the essence of Christianity as consisting in love of God and of man then we cannot overlook the fact that this love lives by, and necessarily must live by, the expectation in hope that that which is the counterpart to this love has still to come in the future which belongs to the God whom we love and the humanity that we love. And it is this that renders this love authentic, definitive, and blessed.

It is in the very nature of theology as such, therefore, that the question of the future belongs to it as one of its basic questions. But this question is rendered still more urgent in the light of the contemporary state of faith and of theology. The world in which man lives has been set in motion. It has become possible to plan and shape it. Man himself is no longer merely one who puts up with himself, makes himself the subject of his own metaphysical speculations or religious contemplations in the sphere of his theoretical reason, no longer one who 'works' himself *in the same way* as he might work a machine already in existence and working properly until it was worn out. On the contrary man is, at least in the first instance, the one who has made something of himself, one who at the individual and collective levels alike, makes plans and projects for himself – in a certain sense takes control of himself, not merely drawing out what is already there, but creatively discovering that which is not there, that

[2] This point has long been treated of clearly and thematically in its own right in the work of H. Cox, W. Pannenberg and J. Moltmann, where theology is actually interpreted *as* eschatology. The most recent presentation of this position is to be found in J. Moltmann, 'Die Zukunft als neues Paradigma der Transzendenz', *Internationale Dialog-Zeitschrift* 1 (1969), pp. 2-13. From the Catholic side the author who has probably followed this position most consistently is J. B. Metz who, in view of the primacy of the future in our contemporary world, conceives of theology primarily as providing an eschatological and social critique. A survey of this point which is concerned with the range of problems we are discussing, and which at the same time includes a *prise de position* with regard to the problems of futurology, is provided by W. D. Marsch, *Zukunft* (Stuttgart, 1969).

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which belongs to Utopia. And it is in this way that man shapes the present in the light of the future. However incipient all this may seem to be, [184] however true it may be that even today man still constantly has to endure himself and the world in which he lives instead of only shaping it creatively, the prospect is still opened up to him of a future which can be shaped, and does not merely have to be endured. The future is no longer *merely* something which he has to wait for, something which is merely hoped for, merely dreamed about. Instead it is a reality which has achieved power to influence the present itself and in that sense has become the real.

There is such a reality as cybernetics; it is possible to develop complicated computer-programmes and the planning of the futurologists has its validity. For Christian theology this raises the question of what the relationship is between modern futurology and Christian eschatology. In earlier times what entered into the present was an eschatology and a hope for that which was not the outcome of man's planning, not capable of being developed by man himself. Today there is a future into which the designs of the futurologists enter, one which is orientated towards that which can be planned and developed. And this gives rise to the question of whether this present-day futurology has replaced the old eschatology, whether the old eschatology constitutes merely the obsolete mythological form or the preliminary adumbration of present-day futurology, or *alternatively* whether this futurology is embedded in the 'this-worldly' sphere of human living in such a way that this earthly sphere itself taken as a whole, despite the radical changes which it has undergone, still constantly remains circumscribed by that which constitutes the goal of Christian eschatology and hope. In any case Christian theology as eschatology has arrived at a state in which quite new demands are made upon it precisely in respect of its special and peculiar role as eschatology. Moreover it is obvious without any further discussion that a 'political theology' regards these questions as questions which essentially belong to the subject-matter which is most proper to itself.

II

Before applying ourselves directly to a theological enquiry into the question of the future certain conceptual distinctions have to be drawn which, for the sake of clarity, must be considered first even though the objective justification for them will appear only when we come to treat directly of the theme which is the proper subject of these considerations. We have to distinguish between the absolute future which is God himself and another future, whether more proximate or more remote, which [185] belongs to this world. It is self-evident that *precisely at this stage* we cannot supply any answer to the question of what right we have to assume at this point that the term 'God' is understood, or to introduce it into our considerations in order to define what is meant by the phrase 'absolute future'. Nor must it be denied that under certain circumstances a 'political theology' must proceed and is justified in proceeding in the opposite direction, in other words precisely from the experience of being orientated towards an absolute future. Taking this experience as its starting-point, therefore, a theology of this kind must undertake a radical critique, and one that has to be achieved ever afresh, of the present and future with which we are confronted at any given stage, for it is only so that we can arrive at an understanding of what is meant by God, and precisely in this way that such an approach becomes a political *theology*.

With the proviso that even when we have drawn this distinction between the two kinds of future we have still not arrived at any unambiguous conclusion with regard to the mutual

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relationship between them,[3] we may define this distinction as follows: the *absolute future* is God himself or the act of his absolute self-bestowal which has to be posited by him alone. The effect which this produces does not constitute any specific event within the world, representing one particular element in it such as can be defined in 'this worldly' categories. Rather it is a specification of the world as a whole, comprehending the whole of reality and determining where its consummation is to be achieved. To this extent it has a transcendental character. Properly speaking, therefore, it cannot be planned or brought about by man either, because as the total consummation of reality as a whole it cannot *per definitionem* be brought about by any one particular element within this reality. This is neither to exclude nor to deny a further point regarding the subjectivity of man through which he is confronted with himself and with the whole of reality in knowledge and freedom. In virtue of this subjectivity of his he can and must accept this [186] totality of the consummation of the finite reality of the world, in other words the absolute future (with the spontaneous power that is proper to this), and in this sense the absolute future will be brought about by man's own act.

The 'this-worldly' future of man signifies that which at any specific moment, conceived of as the present, remains to be achieved, but which will come about within this world and within the dimensions of space and time belonging to it as a particular event or a specific state of this world. 'This-worldly' futures of this kind, which *per definitionem* always remain open to a further future, are themselves in turn radically distinct from one another. There are such futures or elements in such futures which can and must be thought of as conforming to the pattern of an evolutionary process determined by merely casual factors. In these that which belongs to the future simply constitutes the succession of the series of situations prevailing at any given time as determined by natural law, and the content of the future unfolds from the correlation of these succeeding elements. In such futures or elements of the future the content of the future is the slave who is governed by strict laws, the sheer outcome of present and past. Such futures are to be thought of not in eschatological terms but rather in protological or archaeological ones. The law of the beginnings is the law of the end. The future is the return to the *arche*, to paradise. Then, inasmuch as any element of personal history can still be discerned in such a process the watchword can only be: 'Back to the sources', for there that which the future is capable of producing is already implicitly contained in its pure and original form. In the sphere of the biological the potential immortality which the process of reproduction through the adult's act of generation is intended to assure would constitute one kind of a future conceived of in terms such as these. And yet a conceptual image of this kind would no longer possess any clarifying force even so far as a transspecific process of evolution is concerned.

But there are quite different futures or elements in such futures, the special quality of which cannot be conceived of in terms of any such mechanistic or evolutionary conceptual pattern: future as that which is radically new, as the creative factor which is brought about in the process by which man freely shapes his own history without having simply been contained from the first in hidden form in the origins, or consisting in a mere variation of constitutive elements present all along from the origins, a variation which is ultimately

[3] This proviso must be especially emphasized here because it is important to guard against the misunderstanding that here a 'transcendence-immanence' theology is being restored as a separate polarization in each case. What we are concerned with here rather is precisely to overcome this opposition by means of an orientation towards God as coming, and as already present in Jesus as the future of *this* world. This idea, and the question of the necessity for a process of mediation, are also factors of decisive importance in the author's earlier studies. Cf. K. Rahner, 'Das Christentum und der "neue Mensch"', *Schriften zur Theologie* III (7th ed., 1967), pp. 159-179; 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 59-68; also the articles on eschatology, *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1972), pp. 235-291.

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indifferent and to be conceived of simply in spatial and quantitative terms. It is a fact that there can in this sense be an element which is genuinely and radically new in such a future, and that taken by [187] itself any evolutionary conceptual pattern as characterized above would fail to do justice to the realities. It is a fact that it is this element of the radically new that provides the truly qualitative transition, and that at least the history of personal development implies a process of genuine self-transcendence. But all this cannot be considered here in its own right, and must be taken as recognized.[4] A further point which must likewise remain undiscussed here is whether, how, in what sense, and why even a future that is brought about creatively in this sense nevertheless still has a cause in its turn and is not generated simply from the void, from nothingness. On this point we must confine ourselves to stating quite briefly on the basis of a Christian understanding of God that the Christian calls this cause the origin of a future of this kind which is brought about by a free and creative process, by God, recognizing that it cannot come from mere empty nothingness. It must further be stated that the Christian, precisely in order to allow this genuine kind of future to emerge and to achieve its own authentic reality does not regard God as an element in the unfolding process of personal history, but precisely as the condition for any genuine future such that it does not reduce this to a mere process of evolution. It does not reduce it in this sense even in those cases or at those points at which this future is not identified with God himself as the absolute. The distinction within the 'this-worldly' future between that which is evolutive and that which is free and creative, is of course not intended to be conceived of as though in the sphere of the human these two futures simply existed side by side as two separate entities. On the contrary they are elements in the 'this-worldly' future of man which mutually demand, and dialectically condition one another. For this future of man constantly depends upon previously existing factors from which it derives by a process of evolution, *and at the same time* always contains also a creative and utopian element which is underivable, in virtue of which man does not merely achieve a further extension of his own past and present, but in a real and radical sense surpasses it.

III

The *first thesis* which we propose to establish runs as follows: The content of the Christian preaching consists in the question, which we maintain [188] open, into the absolute future, and properly speaking in nothing else besides. One point is very remarkable: Christians and non-Christians alike have the impression that in its doctrine and practice Christianity is an extremely complicated affair, a highly developed system including a multitude of factors, a doctrine which far exceeds any other philosophy of life in its claim to knowledge and the ability to supply answers.

The true position, however, if we pay close attention to the preaching of the Christian message and really allow it to impart its own message to us, is quite otherwise. Of course Christianity is an extremely complex reality, and ultimately speaking no one individual can achieve a comprehensive view of it as a whole. Nevertheless it is such only because Christianity neither omits nor neglects anything in the complex reality of man and his world whether at the individual or at the collective levels of human life, whether of the body or of the spirit, whether of the past or of the present. At the same time, however, the message which Christianity has to convey to this infinitely complex reality of man *precisely as such*,

[4] For the significance of self-transcendence in the total process of evolution cf. the article by K. Rahner in K. Rahner and P. Overhage, *Das Problem der Hominisation*, Quaestiones Disputatae 12/13 (Freiburg, 1961); *idem*, 'The Unity of Spirit and Matter in the Christian Understanding of Faith', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 153-177.

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and the manner in which it lives in and through this reality, in other words that which alone constitutes what is specific and proper to Christianity, is something utterly simple, namely the question, maintained in openness, of the absolute future which is God or – which is saying the same thing – the question of God who is the absolute future.

In order to understand this statement we must achieve an overall view of many manifestly basic assertions of Christianity, subsuming them all in a single ultimate basic statement: the world and man have a history which God himself has made his own history. This one history of God, the world and man is, on any real understanding of its nature as history, ultimately speaking only intelligible and realizable from the standpoint of the future to which it tends. Now this future is the self-bestowal of God upon the world as radically consummated, and is not merely some kind of property of the finite world as distinct from the absolute and infinite God. This God, however, who is the absolute future of man and the world, is the absolutely incomprehensible mystery which remains, and which is now bestowed upon man in the radical openness of his knowledge and freedom and in a mode that transcends any one specific definable factor. In other words it is bestowed in the mode of the radical question as such and only in this mode, and not in the form of an answer supplied from without to this question which, supposing that this were the case, would represent only a partial fulfilment. Only when the question is posed in its radical openness do we know at all what is meant by God. We do not know this until every idol is shattered, the idol of an answer which fails to meet the [189] question in all its radical breadth, and yet at the same time seeks to bring the question to an end. Properly speaking Christianity states merely that all that we are still awaiting as our future is that this God, as the true fulfilment of the question in all its absolute extent, shall come in that which we call ‘visio beatifica’ and ‘eternal life’. And even when he comes to us in this mode he will still always remain the eternal mystery[5] to which man commits himself in the ecstasy of love. In a real sense, therefore, Christianity in its true essence is the state of radical openness to the question of the mystery of the absolute future which is God. All individual statements in Christianity, in its knowledge and its life, therefore, can be understood only as a modality of this radical commitment to refuse to call a halt at any point and to seek the fulfilment of its life, its ‘salvation’ in something to which no further name can be assigned,[6] something which still lies in the future and remains an eternal mystery, something which love alone can receive.

To understand Christianity in its truest essence in this way is neither to omit nor to overlook Jesus Christ. It is no self-evident truism to say that God himself intends to be the absolute future of man in a free act of self-bestowal, or above all that this self-bestowal of God is not merely one of the possibilities to which history is open, but also *de facto* imposes itself as the future end of history. On the contrary, this is something that was only promised to us precisely in Jesus Christ in whom alone, as the crucified and risen Lord, God has entered into the world as absolute future. If we seek to understand how it is that in the incarnation of the Logos God has not ceased to be the promised future of the world as still outstanding, we must consider that for a true understanding of the Incarnation of the Logos which has made itself to be history, this history is precisely the history of him who has to

[5] For an understanding of the sustaining and sheltering function of the mystery cf. K.Rahner, ‘The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology’, *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73.

[6] We cannot enter any more fully here into the discussion concerning the word of God or into a critique in terms of language and logic. Cf., amongst others, G. Ebeling, *Gott und Wort* (Tübingen, 1966); K. Rahner, ‘Meditation über das Wort Gott’, *Gnade als Freiheit* (Freiburg, 1968), pp. 11-18; ‘Gott ist keine naturwissenschaftliche Formel’, *ibid*., pp. 19-23; E. Jüngel, ‘Gott – als Wort unserer Sprache’, *Evangelische Theologie* 1 (1969), pp. 1-24; C. A. van Peursen, *Das Wort Gott* (Göttingen, 1969). As used here this formulation is intended to emphasize that God is not a name in the sense that through this naming the object so named has come to be unequivocally available to the investigations of the namer.

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come again, or, to put it better, his coming has only begun, and is still moving towards the future consummation of his [190] advent. We must consider that this incarnate Logos has entered precisely into the death of man, and we achieve a share in his salvation and his promise only in virtue of the fact that we die with him, i.e. that in knowledge and still more in the act of living, precisely with him we break through all provisional answers or cause ourselves to break through to that expectation which looks for nothing more and hopes for nothing more than the future of God who is the eternally incomprehensible salvation of man through his self-bestowal. Despite the many branches into which Christianity has spread, the manifold forms in which it has articulated itself, and the manifold distinctions which have been introduced into it over two thousand years of its history, it can be expressed in very brief formulae. One formula, which could in a certain sense be called a futurological one, would be this: Christianity is the attitude of abiding openness to the question of the absolute future which seeks to bestow itself, which has definitively promised itself as coming in Jesus Christ, and which is called God.

IV

The *second thesis* which we propose to put forward runs as follows: The 'this worldly' future of man always constitutes an open, and abidingly open, question.

No long explanation is required to define the formal meaning of the phrase 'this worldly future': it is that which man discovers by his own creative powers, sets before him as his Utopia, plans for and realizes, and thereby draws down into the world of space and time in which he finds himself placed in such a way that it continues to be subject to this world and its laws. This still remains valid even though it must not be denied that a future of this kind, definable in 'this worldly' categories, makes retrospective impact upon the conditions already existing in the world, and plays its part in altering them in such a way that, without man being able clearly to recognize or manipulate it a variable balance is struck between the previously existing conditions which make such a future possible and the future itself.

We have no intention here of treating at any length the theological question, in itself fundamental, of what in more precise terms the mutually conditioning relationship consists in between man's orientation towards his 'this-worldly' future and his orientation towards the absolute future. We must confine ourselves here to asserting without any more detailed [191] supporting arguments, that these two orientations, towards the 'this worldly' future and the absolute future, mutually condition one another in such a way that the Christian attitude towards the absolute future which is God neither diminishes nor eliminates the responsibility it entails for a 'this worldly' future, but rather imparts a radical dimension to it.[7] The reason is that the only genuine way in which man can achieve this state of readiness to hold himself open to the absolute future in his personal life is for him to adopt an attitude, at once positive and critical, of responsibility and active engagement leading to the achievement of an ever-fresh future within this world.

After these brief preliminary remarks let us consider our second thesis in itself. The 'this worldly' future always remains an open question. What we mean by this is that even with regard to a future understood in merely 'this worldly' terms man is never related to this as though it were already present, planned down to the last detail, and requiring only that a specific interval should elapse before it was an achieved reality. Not merely the absolute

[7] A full and detailed presentation of the position that to recognize God as the future of this world also implies an active responsibility for the world and for the transformation of the world on the part of the Christian is provided in K. Rahner, 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the "New Earth"', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 260-272.

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future which is God himself in his inconceivability, but the 'this worldly' future too is an open one. It too is always unknown, a future which, when it arrives, takes us by surprise. And it is *precisely for this reason* that it can also be the medium leading to the absolute future.

Why is this the case? First it must of course be stated that man can and must plan, project, and control the future. Our thesis, therefore, in no sense involves any denial of the fact that at least today, in the age of rational technology and of the exact sciences, of cybernetics and futurology, there is such a thing as a planning of the future; that by comparison with earlier ages the element of the planned in the future has increased to an extent which was formerly inconceivable; that modern man has achieved an almost qualitatively different relationship to his future, and that too both because of the possibility of planning the changes which his environment is to undergo, and also in virtue of the fact that man can plan how to manipulate himself at the individual and collective levels. All this is obvious, and is here taken as given,[8] even though it in turn should be [192] thought out in greater detail in its own right. But all this does not alter the fact that even the questions of the 'this worldly' future is in principle such that we can never arrive at any comprehensive answer to it.

In order to perceive the validity of this second thesis we may concentrate on *three* considerations in particular, which are of course interconnected, while passing over certain others.

First, when it is the future that is planned and brought into being by man himself that is being treated of it must be borne in mind that the achievement of a future that is planned proceeds from certain prior conditions which man finds already in existence and the full significance of which he does not perceive. Today the harvest that man gathers does not consist solely of the fruits of nature which present themselves to him spontaneously to sustain his life. On the contrary he himself alters his environment. He creates new materials for himself. He does not merely domesticate plants and animals, but alters them as well according to plans of his own, and by a process of self-manipulation gradually arrives at a state where he is actually the *faber sui*. But however true it may be that we cannot already in the present determine how much or how little will show itself to be possible along these lines, this does nothing to alter the fact that in this creative activity of his man proceeds, and must proceed, from certain specific prior conditions. These prior conditions are subject to a twofold limitation: first they have a specific content, a determinate state of being 'so and not otherwise' which imposes certain definite and pre-determined limitations on what can be made of them. Second, to the extent that they make it possible to introduce changes, they always require a certain period of time until these changes can emerge as the outcome of them, a period which again and again exceeds the personal life-span of any one individual.

This situation in which the point of departure is pre-determined in respect of its content and the time needed for the development to take place might at first sight lead us to suppose that because of it it was possible precisely to calculate accurately beforehand how the future would turn out, as in fact all such predictions of the future are based upon a knowledge of the conditions governing this point of departure and the intervals of time involved, which at least in macro-physical terms are accurately calculable. At the same time, however, a point that must not be overlooked is that we do not have and cannot have any comprehensive knowledge of all these prior conditions. Yet in order to make an exact prognosis possible the causes governing such concrete futures must be known not merely in their *general* structures, but also in their quite specific and unique dispositions [193] in relation to one another.[9] Now

[8] This problem is investigated in fuller detail in K. Rahner, *Theological Investigation*s IX (London and New York, 1972) in the articles entitled 'The Experiment with Man' and 'The Problem of Genetic Manipulation', pp. 205-252.

[9] Here we may recall the fiction of the 'Demon of Laplace' constructed within the framework of a mechanistic conception of the world. This had the power of using its knowledge of all the factors prevailing at a given point

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this is impossible. For within the system governing the one world every element in this world depends upon every other, and at the same time all depend upon each. Any comprehensive determination, therefore, would only be possible if we had a comprehensive knowledge of the totality of this cosmic system. Yet in so far as such knowledge can be aimed at at all by man it can only be aimed at in virtue of an overall mastery of the system itself, and this would itself bring about and presuppose an alteration of this system in itself, even though it itself cannot in its turn be observed in this process since it itself constitutes an element in the observer. A further point over and above this is that it is impossible to achieve any point of observation which is absolutely separate from the world. And in view of this any comprehensive formula for the world on the part of one individual element within this world called human knowledge cannot be established. But this means that the future even of an individual element within this total system cannot be determined beforehand with complete accuracy on the basis of the knowledge of the history and the situation of this element at any given moment, for this element and its future in itself always remain subject to partial determination by all the other alterations of the system as a whole and, in accordance with what has been said above, this can precisely not be perceived and comprehended as a whole,[10] unless by an intelligence which stood outside this system, in the concrete, therefore, only by a divine intelligence, since in the light of the unity between spirit and matter any finite intelligences existing absolutely outside the world are surely quite inconceivable.

In this consideration we have taken the world considered as a human environment and as humanity itself merely as a physical system, and we have considered man's ability to prognosticate on the basis of his knowledge merely at the level of physics and natural science. The openness of the future to man's knowledge which is already inherent in this is radically [194] broadened still further when we reflect upon the fact that this world, the future of which we are looking to, is far from being a merely physical and biological world. However true it may be that it is based upon this physical and bio-physical reality or contains this within itself, it is at the same time a world of the psychological, the social, and not least of freedom. We have no need whatever to enter in detail into all the radical unknown factors which this entails, factors which prevent us from achieving any totally comprehensive prognosis of the future. We need only to point out the difficulty which has already revealed itself in the task of foreseeing the development of the purely physical world and which now recurs in a fresh and radical form, for man as cognitive is himself an element in the psychological and sociological system which he is seeking to know, and he himself alters this by his own knowledge. For instance anyone who proclaims some form of determinism as an existing psychological and social factor himself modifies the social and psychological situation into which he emits this proclamation of his. In its prior assumption this knowledge itself is dependent upon that which it seeks to encompass and alters what it has to recognize.[11] In order to achieve an accurate knowledge of itself it would have to have reflected comprehensively upon the conditions which make it itself possible. In order to establish its findings beyond all doubt it would have to avoid itself altering its own subject-matter in the very process of the act of cognition itself. For the reasons that have been set

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in time in the cosmic order, whether momentary situations or developing processes, and so of calculating comprehensively the course of the world's history both backwards and forwards. The findings of modern physics have shown that this fiction is no longer meaningful even in the sphere of physical knowledge today. *A fortiori* it is no longer meaningful when we take into account in our cosmic system the factor of human awareness. This is something which will appear from the considerations which follow.

[10] Without any exaggeration this state of affairs might be called the factor which brings an element of obscurity into any prognostication.

[11] A penetrating investigation of these areas has been carried out by J. Habermas in *Erkenntnis and Interesse* (Frankfurt, 1968).

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forth such knowledge as this remains constantly in process of development and is never completed. Rather it projects itself into a future that is proper to it and unknown to it.

In all that we have said we have still not even begun to reflect on the freedom of man, which itself as an ultimate and original factor is incapable of reflecting in any adequate sense on the fact that its own point of departure is subject to prior conditions. Moreover as genuinely creative this factor of human freedom presupposes the unknown as a sphere which will be filled with a future that is known only through the creative freedom as an act which is not prior to any knowledge, for it is this that is unequivocally presupposed to it as its guide. This is a point of which we shall have to treat more fully at a later stage.

The *second* point to be considered for an understanding of this openness to the 'this worldly' future is the circumstance that in the contemporary situation in which man's creative freedom to shape his own future has become actual the *number* of possibilities available to this freedom is growing, [195] and precisely in virtue of this the question is becoming more open of which of these possibilities which have become so numerous will in fact be realized. From this point of view we shall only be in a position to answer this question when, out of all the many possibilities, one specific future has been turned into the present by a free and undeducible decision. It must be borne in mind that today the number of concrete possibilities for man to exercise his freedom has become greater than in earlier times. Two further factors are, however, first that not all possibilities can simultaneously be realized at one blow, and second that the realization of any one specific possibility renders the realization of the other possibilities which are given, and which up to that point have remained open, impossible. But these are points which in view of the linear development of history in time do not need to be expounded at any length. Admittedly it has been said that the age of a true liberation of man from his social self-alienation can, will and should be ushered in only at that point at which the most divers possibilities for self-realization available to the individual in society are offered to him as *simultaneously* realizable so that he is not confined merely to one specific possibility chosen by an authoritarian decision on the part of one individual, or in a democratic manner by the majority.

But however desirable it may be that the development of society should lead to the sort of situation in which each individual can determine his own personal self-realization, and has the means necessary for this realization made available to him by society without the different form of self-realization aimed at by another being thereby prevented, still there cannot be any doubt that at least in part the fact that all are confined to a single dimension of space and time, as well as the finitude of the means available in the concrete, sets certain quite notable limits which can never wholly be overcome to the simultaneous realization of alternative forms of self-realization which man may propose for himself. A further point which cannot be questioned is that because of the finitude of man's life-span the *specific* mode of self-realization of an individual always implies a renunciation of another possibility of self-realization subsequently being taken up, even though precisely today such a possibility would be present, at least as offered, to a greater extent than in former times. By a man's free decision to opt for a specific mode of self-realization, however, this possibility is ruled out, whether as present or as future. Which one among all such manifold possibilities which cannot be realized at the same time is in fact the one to be realized remains in principle obscure and undecided so long as the possibility opted for has not yet been realized.

[196] To deny this statement would by implication be to deny the fact that several real possibilities of a future actively to be shaped by man himself do indeed lie open before him. The increase in the number of such possibilities, however, is precisely the characteristic feature of the situation of modern man by comparison with former times. And again it is precisely this increase in the possible ways of shaping some concrete future that makes it difficult to discern which of the possible futures will be the real one. In fact all the prognoses

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even of futurology point again and again to this indeterminate element, because no-one can really foretell the manner in which men will react to these future situations that are prognosticated. In all cases it is merely particular features of a future world of man that are predicted, and never a whole system in which some world of tomorrow can so be summed up that the reaction of future humanity to its presence can itself be taken into the calculations.[12]

In order to make clear the indeterminacy even of the 'this worldly' future there is a *third* point to which we can only barely refer, even though it is only when we have recognized this that we have arrived at the true and ultimate reason for this indeterminacy: it is the factor of freedom.

Once the forms in which freedom is objectified can already be taken as given, once they are in existence, they are, in principle, always capable of being explained and made intelligible in terms of causal or functional determinism from a consideration of the factors leading up to them. At the same time, however, there is a further factor, namely the free exercise of choice, which differs from that which is subject to these laws, and which can be explained in terms of them once it is an existing fact, in that this further factor cannot in its turn be explained in terms of any pre-existing conditions outside itself. It is this which most properly impells realities of this sort to emerge into existence as the outcome of the exercise of freedom, autonomously selecting and positing one specific possibility out of the wider range available to it. It is not possible here to demonstrate the existence of such freedom as the original positing factor by any transcendental deduction, a freedom which does not rule out the *a posteriori* explanation of what is already present as the outcome of certain laws, but [197] at the same time cannot itself be accounted for, much less predicted, by any explanation of this kind.[13]

Here we must confine ourselves to pointing out that anyone who denies the existence of this kind of freedom, in which the subject becomes the ultimate source of action, is thereby failing to recognize the phenomenon of genuinely personal historicity and the nature of history itself, and *a fortiori* of the real future. Thereby he falsifies and distorts the nature of personal history (which in its very existence is orientated towards the real future) in that his conception of it is governed by a purely mechanistic image of evolution in which later developments are already unequivocally present in hidden form in earlier ones, and the beginning is master of the end. It may be conceded that genuine freedom is never manifested in isolation from the other factors prevailing in any given case, and that it always appears merely as a secret repudiation of the necessary concealing itself in the forms in which it is properly objectified so that it appears to be merely the outcome of causal factors, and explicable in terms of these. But however true this may be, if there is such a thing as genuine freedom at all, then there is a 'this worldly' future which is indeterminate and obscure, one which, so far as the historical subject himself is concerned, is in principle only brought to light in the very act in which it is posited and so rendered present. Up to this point it has been hidden in the limitless breadth of the possible, especially since this broader sphere of the possible is of course not to be thought of as comprising a definite number of separate projects and plans which have already been worked out, and each of which is thoroughly understood in its own right, so that the only question still unresolved is which of them will in fact be put into execution. The interdependence of such possible projects, the infinite possible variations (which are inexhaustible so far as our conscious thought is concerned) of such projects and

[12] The plans of H. Ozbekhan are to be estimated as an effort on the part of a futurologist to eliminate this uncertainty. Ozbekhan seeks to construct model futures by anticipation of such a kind that the variations in these models enable us to arrive at a conclusion as to what are the desirable reactions in the present in order to achieve, these 'ideal' futures. Cf. H. Ozbekhan, 'Skizze einer "Look-out-Institution"', *Atomzeitalter*, Vol. 4 (1967), p. 187.

[13] For a more detailed treatment of this point cf. K. Rahner, *Gnade als Freiheit* (Freiburg, 1968), pp. 31-89.

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plans, prevent us from distinguishing the one obscure possibility within a definite and comprehensive number of separate individual possibilities, and so to rationalize it in any adequate sense. To the extent that it is possible clearly to delineate certain distinctly defined possibilities for the future, what these constitute (even abstracting from what has been said at an earlier stage) is not a comprehensive articulation of the possible in general, but merely, in their multiplicity, indications of the one obscure possible course which freedom grasps at, only throwing light upon those points in them which it itself really brings into being by the decision in which it is exercised. If freedom is brought again and again to [198] the dividing of the ways, this precisely does not mean that it can first trace all these ways to their respective ends at the conceptual level as on a complete map, and then decide which way it will embark upon. It is only the way that is actually trodden that reveals its real nature. All those which are recognized as possible but not followed remain behind as the unknown ones which lead into what is unresolved and obscure. In all plans even the 'this worldly' future remains that which is unresolved and obscure.

V

In conclusion a *third thesis* may perhaps be adduced with regard to the question of the future: in the very nature of his function the theologian is the guardian of this *docta ignorantia futuri*.[14] This thesis should not be regarded as presumptuous. For it is obvious first that the theologian is, in this sense, a counsel for the defence of the openness of the absolute and the 'this worldly' future only to the extent that he takes as his starting-point the gospel which is addressed to all, and returns to it; that he makes this the subject of his consideration and finds in it the *docta ignorantia*. Second, in order that the third thesis shall not be misinterpreted as presumptuousness on the part of the theologian it must be realized that the Christian and the theologian can perfectly well concede that even one who does not consider himself a Christian in any explicit sense may, in his concrete personal living, be realizing what Christianity itself proclaims as its own interpretation of the significance of human life. In other words, for instance, even this wise recognition that we do not know the future, this determined submission of oneself to that which is unplanned, represents not an unhappy survival of irrationalism which will gradually be eliminated, but rather an abiding existential modality and an intrinsic element in the dignity of human freedom.

On this basis, and in the light of the mutually conditioning relationship to be found between man's attitude towards his 'this worldly' future and his attitude towards his absolute future, we will perhaps be in a position to understand that element which in a positive sense can be called the 'utopian' in human existence, something which constitutes a prior condition for every change that takes place in personal history, and so too at the social level. The utopian is the expression of the mutuality of this conditioning relationship. Anyone who, in moving towards the absolute future [199] encounters the concrete data of personal history, may experience in this concrete data the relativity of it as given in the here and now. And yet at the same time he neither can nor should let go of that which belongs to the particular categories of history as the medium of the movement towards the absolute future. In this position he must exercise his creative powers in order to construct for himself a 'this worldly' future goal, and it is precisely this which can, in a positive sense, be called the 'utopian' factor. For that which at any point is given in the here and now is real, and its historical modality does not rest merely upon rational criticisms or the assigning of a relative status to it

[14] On this cf. also J. B. Metz, 'Gott vor uns', *Ernst Bloch zu Ehren* (Frankfurt, 1965), pp. 227-241; *idem*, *Zur Theologie der Welt* (Mainz - Munich, 1968), pp. 88 f.

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in human thought. This point can be recognized so long as it is not viewed merely as belonging to the infinite perspectives of the absolute future, for it is only as viewed from these perspectives that it could still constantly and uncritically be maintained that its status as historical was due to these subjective factors. But its objective state as historically real is revealed when it is called in question by means of another factor belonging to history, and precisely to the future, in other words by the utopian factor which constitutes the point of reference for, and the representative of, the absolute future. This means that the utopian factor in history belongs essentially to the achievement of the fulness of Christian life as realized in man's assent to the absolute future and to absolute hope. This utopian factor is willed precisely because, and to the extent that, it is not yet achieved, and also not merely the foreseeable outcome of the present in a mechanistic or evolutionary sense. Christianity, therefore, should involve a genuine commitment to the world and an assent to the absolute future both in one, and in such a way that each attitude mutually conditions the other. And where this is the case its creative force gives birth to the utopian factor which becomes a standard by which to criticize the present and to impel it forwards to a new historical future. This is the medium of this mutually conditioning relationship, and obviously it always constitutes at the same time that which provides the critique of, and calls in question, the social situation actually prevailing. To put it quite simply: anyone who as a Christian sought simply and uncritically to identify himself with his existing social situation would have to ask himself whether in that case he believed in the absolute future in a really effective sense and in the real practice of his own living, instead of merely at the theoretical level and in some private and interior dimension. He should put the question to himself of how in that case he has any sincere realization of the fact that the present is that which is merely provisional, seeing that he does not critically measure it against some other 'this worldly' future, albeit one which in its turn always [200] remains provisional. Thus it is precisely our hope in the absolute future which we do not create that demands that we shall keep our eyes upon the historical utopia which introduces an element of criticism and disquiet into history, and impels it forward, and, moreover, brings it into the social dimension.

Precisely in the light of these axioms, however, it must be stated that Christianity and, as the servant of this, theology, are and must be the guardians of the *docta ignorantia futuri*. In fulfilling this function they are contributing to man in his role as the free subject of creative activity. For if a point were ever arrived at at which the future were really understood as something which could be comprehensively prognosticated, and that was able to be calculated in all its aspects, at that point the future would, basically speaking, be eliminated in favour of a continually abiding present. For at that point it would in principle no longer be possible to avoid a position in which the present was explained as the already inaugurated realization of *that* future which as outlined in rationalist planning would be the only legitimate one. Only the *docta ignorantia futuri* provides a basic position for exercising a sustained critique of a present which is at all times only too ready to assert itself as the only right state of affairs.[15] Only an open future, which in principle is assented to as such, can stand up to the objection which every establishment raises against revolutionary critics of the present, namely that while they are ready to criticize, they themselves have no unequivocally clear and positive alternative to offer for the future. Of course we must agree with Paul in saying that man is not meant to launch himself blindly into the void. The critique of the present should as far as possible be combined with positively formulated projects for shaping the future. But anyone who demands that projects for the future shall be just as far-sighted

[15] The position that at least up to the present futurology itself has actually promoted this tendency instead of overcoming it, and indeed that it constitutes an 'ideological confirmation of an order which draws the veil over what is new in order to leave everything as it was before' (C. Koch, *Kritik der Futurologie*, Frankfurt 1968 – Kursbuch 14, 2) is a point which C. Koch attempts to demonstrate.

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and perceptive as is allegedly the case with the actual present, anyone who seeks in principle to rule out the possibility that the will to achieve a future also involves a commitment to the unknown, anyone who seeks radically to eliminate the factors of freedom and personal history, is adopting a rationalist and determinist attitude of radical hostility towards the *docta ignorantia futuri*. He is rejecting that medium of his hope in the absolute future which is indefinable, the medium, namely, which consists in a hopeful engagement of himself in [201] the daily commitment to a 'this worldly' future which is open. Anyone who rejects the *docta ignorantia futuri* in this way is properly speaking no longer a Christian, even though this rejection is posited in a sphere which, since it is apparently wholly secular in character, seems to have nothing further whatever to do with Christianity and theology.[16]

The controversy between Christians, therefore, in their attitude towards the 'this worldly' future can only be concerned with arriving at reasonable and responsible measures of planning on the one hand and commitment to the openness and obscurity of the future on the other. But even though a controversy precisely of this sort does demand rational and objective discussion, ultimately speaking it is precisely incapable of ever being totally eliminated solely by means of such discussion. For in fact if a discussion of this kind is to be engaged in among Christians at all, it must constantly take into account and recognize the element of the unknown in the future that has to be planned for. Moreover both sides to the discussion must take this into account as an element which is not merely something to be put up with only at that point at which it is absolutely impossible to avoid it any longer, but one which is positively sought for and welcomed by the Christian. When we consider this point it must truly be a matter of surprise that the Christianity of today has fallen under the suspicion (and not without reason) of being a conservative force which favours the present rather than the future. Of course in inculcating a hope in the absolute future Christianity does also liberate man from a hysterical quest for that which is new at the 'this worldly' level, and which tends to be sought for merely because it is different. But as constituting a cure in this sense of this kind of disease Christianity is merely credible and healing when it itself avoids uncritically defending the existing state of affairs, and thereby itself tacitly denying hope in the absolute future. For this hope, whether consciously or unconsciously, constitutes the motive force and the critique for all strivings which are directed towards a 'this worldly' future, and it is this striving which constitutes the medium in which the hope for the absolute future is maintained.

[16] In this sense it cannot be objected even to the political theology of J. B. Metz that it undervalues the autonomy of the political sphere when it makes the attempt to show that the absolute future as understood eschatologically is critically mediated by the abidingly open ('this worldly') future of human society. The autonomy of the political sphere can in fact never be interpreted in Christian and theological terms as though the political future of mankind could be brought to a future capable of being totally worked out in rational terms and comprehensively planned for by technology. On this cf. also J. B. Metz, 'Der zukünftige Mensch und der kommende Gott', H. J. Schultz ed., *Wer ist das eigent1ich – Gott*? (Munich, 1969), pp. 260-275.

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[202]

11

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

I am of course no prophet, and hence I do not know what will become of the Church of Christ in the next few centuries. The fact that we do not know this is indeed an intrinsic part of our Christian faith, for otherwise it would be quite impossible for the command to be laid upon us that we should place all our hopes solely in the Lord of history and of the future. This would be impossible if a futurologist with his computer already knew what was to come. Properly speaking, therefore, the only certain point is that the word of the Lord will proceed on its course through the ages, that the gates of hell will not prevail over the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord, but also that a point will never arise in this world's time at which the Church will achieve, on the basis of this, a total victory such as can be made manifest in terms which this world can recognize. The only certain point is that the nearer we draw to the day of Christ the more fiercely the Church will be assailed by the threat of Antichrist. But the concrete form of the abiding Church (concrete in respect of the numbers of her members, her life, the value that is attached to her, and her weakness in secular society) and the concrete form of the abiding assaults upon her – these we do not know. For all the foresight and planning which there is and which in fact there must be to an increasing extent, we Christians make pilgrimage into the unknown future. And so far as Christian living is concerned this unknown is not a regrettable survival which continues unresolved despite our planning, but an essential element which is necessary and expected in that hope and that patience which is set before the Christian as his task, and bestowed upon him as grace. Everything which has to be said here is subject to this proviso, which must never be forgotten.

Yet precisely in the light of this the Christian must consider the 'this worldly' future, however true it may be that that which is really awaited, hoped for, and prayed for is not the Church but the kingdom of God. For it is only the planner who has something which he can freely and silently leave to the sole Lord of history to decide, and it is only in this way that [203] hope is really hope instead of being a mere apathetic sinking into the obviousness of the present. What is it that can be foreseen in this way, concretely awaited and planned for? I will attempt only a *few* brief answers. Whether they are the most important ones or the right ones – this is something which I do not know. Bur for the patient and submissive in the spirit of ε)λπι/φ and υ(ποµονη&, who have as their only God the absolute future, this is something which is important and yet at the same time easy. My readers will not be irritated if they notice that here and there I formulate my answers on the basis of a *Catholic* understanding of Christian living and the Church, perhaps without myself clearly adverting to it. Nor is it so important to draw a precise distinction between the following two factors: first that which is simply destined to come because it is either in conformity with the omnipotent will of God to bestow grace in Christ, or else is a 'must' of saving history such that through it (albeit brought about through man's sin) God achieves his gracious purpose, and secondly that which man himself as Christian desires and can or should strive for on behalf of the Church without exactly knowing whether this desire of his will be fulfilled, a desire which God permits or even enjoins upon us for the age of this world without guaranteeing that it will be fulfilled within this world.

1. The Church is destined to be the 'little flock'. This is not merely because only God knows those who are his own, whom he has chosen, while we never know it, but only hope on our own behalf (as also on behalf of all others) that we are destined to overcome all our

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sins and attain to the final consummation of love and to the eternal peace of God. The Church of the future will also be the little flock at the empirical level of social living. In asserting this the Christian is brought into a situation which can rightly be described only with difficulty. For on the one hand he must have the missionary will for the gospel to be preached to all peoples, and so to all social groups in the world, that all shall be baptized and that the eschatological hope (to adopt the parlance of the Second Vatican Council) shall be imprinted upon all social orders, that the name of Christ shall be recognized by the 'kings' of this earth too, that Christianity shall be not merely an affair of the private conscience or of a few, but also a factor in public life, in society, in the world, and moreover among all. We recognize the duty to will this, and no definable limits can ever be imposed upon this will. We are never allowed to say: 'At this point there is enough of the Church in the world and its public life'. But while recognizing all this, the Christian can and must know that saving history and Church history are *de facto* never to be identified in the age of [204] this present world, that the gospel will always be contradicted, that the Church will remain the little flock that is assailed. And the recognition of this has nothing to do with the sectarian pride of the 'righteous remnant' which regards itself alone as the elect. In fact the Christian of today can wholeheartedly recognize that from the point of view of her position in society the Church of the future will be, to an even greater extent than hitherto, stamped with the character of the 'little flock' in all its harshness. Indeed he should allow the recognition of this fact already by anticipation to have its due and right influence upon his missionary aims and, since he can foresee that those aims will in practice be restricted in their effect, he should allow this to play its part in determining the manner in which he puts those aims into practice.

In other words: Christians cannot expect that any homogeneous society will once more emerge which as such can simply be called Christian. Those factors in civilization and society which once produced and sustained a society of this sort, which was in some 'mediaeval' sense homogeneously Christian, will never return. They were in any case not specifically Christian factors but rather secular, and they produced similar effects in constituting a society characterized by homogeneity in religious matters even outside the Christian sphere. In so far as it might ever be possible to aim at producing a homogeneously Christian society in the future the only way in which this goal could be pursued would be by using the means of a system which in social, political and ideological terms was totalitarian. And this is something which the Christian, precisely on principles of freedom of conscience and faith itself, must radically and unconditionally reject. The Church can only be the Church of the free believers, and in view of this must actually champion the cause of freedom for unbelief as well. Moreover in the future – different in this from earlier times – there will no longer be any point of departure for finding a homogeneously Christian society (except possibly through forced indoctrination of a totalitarian kind). And because of these two factors the future position of the Church from the social point of view will be one in which she exists side by side with a state of unbelief which will likewise be manifest at the social level. She will be the little flock, that is to say at best, and in the most peaceful circumstances, one element in a pluralistic society, a local community Church of believers more than a national Church with a social code of behaviour of its own, even though both these entities represent extremes of abstract thought such as will never be realized in a form that is 'chemically pure'. The important point is, however, that the Church must uncompromisingly take this point into account in considering her [205] missionary plans for the future, even though this must not be allowed to lead to an attitude of defeatism in missionary work or a withdrawal into the sacristy or into a merely interior life, something which in any case a pluralistic society cannot of its very nature demand of any one individual group within it.

In the concrete this implies that the Church must not necessarily hold fast to those positions of power in society which in former times she came legitimately to acquire, and which

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perhaps even today cannot be proved to have become unjustified in the contemporary scene. But above all this also implies that there is something which the Church must not do for the sake of still continuing to be a Church of the people and the masses in the widest possible sense: she must not tolerate without condemnation every corruption of the pure gospel within her united social body or retain within it all those who seek to uphold heresies in the Church[1] yet do not quit the Church of their own accord. Certainly full freedom of conscience is to be accorded to every individual, but the Church would cease to be the Church of *one* faith, one creed, of the gospel, and of the right administration of the sacraments, if she had to grant any and every individual the right to do what the freedom of his own conscience dictated to him *within* the Church. In a pluralistic society in which failure to belong to the Church no longer has any social consequences, or is gradually ceasing to have such, the Church can and under certain circumstances must also have the courage to pronounce a sentence of excommunication even when thereby she is even more reduced to the status of the little flock. The sphere of freedom of conscience and the sphere of the Church are not identical, though it is true that precisely on this account the Church herself must uphold this wider sphere of freedom even in those cases in which on any human estimation she is acting against her own interests in doing so.

This small group within a broad pluralistic society will gradually overcome the temptation to an inferiority complex which can emerge through tension between the claim of Christendom to offer salvation to all on the one hand, and the very restricted degree of success which it achieves at any visible level in society on the other. This little flock will not overcome this temptation by falling into an attitude of over-compensating pride and anxiety, and so a sectarian attitude in which she regards herself as the community which alone is elected for eternal life. She will overcome this temptation by recognizing that she is the recipient of the grace and the [206] burden alike of being the sacrament of salvation for the *world*,[2] of being the manifestation of God's will to bestow grace at the social level, that divine will which causes grace and justification to take effect in an 'anonymous Christianity' in the depths of the human conscience and in much which belongs objectively speaking to the sphere of the human spirit, even though all this may have failed to achieve any conscious expression of itself to the point at which it is recognized and objectified in social forms for what it is: the grace of Christ which has its abiding presence in the world in the Church.

2. The Christian community of the future will have a quite different sociological structure from that which she now has both in the Churches and also in the sects.[3] For me as a Catholic this cannot mean that the theological essence of the Church as constituted as a society will be altered. But even in terms of a strictly orthodox Catholic ecclesiology this essence is so broad and elastic, is capable of being realized in so many different concrete social forms, that it must not be supposed that anything like the sociological image which the Church and the local Church communities present today has always to remain the same, or even that this image is in all circumstances worth striving for. This change will, I believe, imply, amongst other things, the following:

a) The community (whether at the level of a local Church, a diocese or the Church in the absolute) will be a Church of brethren. Certainly the present-day Christian Churches differ from one another very notably in respect of their doctrinal interpretation of their own juridical constitution to the point where the differences of opinion involved lead to a separation of the

[1] On this cf. 'Heresies in the Church Today?' and 'Schism in the Catholic Church?' in this volume, pp. 98-141.
[2] On this characterization of the Church at the Council see 'Lumen Gentium' Nos. 1, 9, 48; 'Gaudium et Spes', Nos. 43, 45; K. Rahner, 'Konziliare Lehre der Kirche und künftige Wirklichkeit christlichen Lebens', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 2nd ed., 1968), pp. 479-498; E. Schillebeeckx, 'De Ecclesia ut Sacramento Mundi', *Acta Congressus Internationalis de Theologia Concilii Vaticani* II (Rome, 1968), pp. 48-53.
[3] cf. 'On the Structure of the People of the Church Today' in this volume, pp. 218-228.

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Churches. But abstracting from the Christian sects and admitting the fluid transitions between these and Churches in the true sense, we can say that all Christian Churches, viewed from the sociological rather than the doctrinal point of view, have been or are 'clergy' Churches. That is to say, viewed in their sociological aspects they exist *prior* to the free unity of their members as constituted by faith, hope, and charity. Not only in its nature but also in its effective mode of existence the juridical structure is a reality which is prior to the community of faith as such. Only on this [207] showing in fact, abstracting from all other considerations, is it conceivable that the Churches can and do number almost the entire population of central Europe as members of themselves, applying very obvious criteria for this purpose, even though only a fragment of that population either feels itself to be, or can regard itself as genuinely Christian in a theological sense. Because after all it is obvious that to be a Christian is not simply identical with having been baptized in infancy.

In the future, however, this situation will no longer continue, even though, perhaps, it is far from being desirable that the change in events shall take the form of a spectacular revolution. The Churches will be Churches of brethren. They will exist because, and in virtue of the fact that men unite themselves with the community of Christ through faith and love. And everything which exists and must exist in the Church in the way of order, official authority, and constitution will be sustained in its real existence and effective force by this believing love and be virtually nothing else besides. (I say *virtually* because obviously it is again and again the case that those social realities which achieve objective status as a result of the exercise of freedom also achieve, and should achieve a value in their own right). Moreover, however true it may be that in the future too the officially constituted authority in the Church must be understood as an authority deriving from Christ and his mission, still the individual member of the Church will experience the one vested with official authority as he who, in his official activities, is sustained not by any social power or prestige in society such as is prior to the effective faith and loyalty of the members of the Church, but rather owes his position to the free faith, willingness to obey, and brotherly love of all men within the Church because every believer will rejoice and thank God when the grace of God makes it possible for one individual to take the burden of official position in his Church upon himself, a burden which brings with it no earthly honour and no worldly advantage. While a certain tension is inevitable in every 'society in which the work is distributed', I hope that apart from this there will no longer be any place in the Church of the future for any additional attitudes of anticlericalism or antilaicism. For in the diaspora situation then prevailing, since all will be believers as the outcome of their own free and most personal decision, and all will be seeking for the unity of love, they will also experience the Church as too intimately *their own* most personal concern for it to be possible in practice for the official authorities in the Church to be regarded as anything but identified with 'the Church' either by themselves or by the laity.

b) The individual communities (and on this basis the Church as such) [208] will have to create their own social unity for themselves, and in fact to a certain extent as the outcome of their own planning. Hitherto it may have appeared as though the social unity of the community were constituted simply and exclusively by the common creed and the common liturgy (together with that which is the prior condition precisely for *this*). It was possible for this apparent situation to exist and this impression to be given because the ecclesiastical community was able to assume as already existing a *sufficiently integrated* secular society (for instance that of the village or the small town), and to raise it in its already integrated form to the level of a confessing and worshipping community, and again because even from the point of view of civil administration it had an undisputed social status and so to a certain extent was held together from without. Now that the society of the masses has to a large extent been disintegrated in the large cities these prior conditions for an integrated Church community are no longer present, and the unity of creed and cult are not sufficient in

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themselves to sustain the unity of the Church community in any concrete or effective sense. In order to exist and live the Church community needs an integration which it can no longer *assume* to be already existing in sufficient measure. Instead it itself has to create this state of integration. The rock which must at all costs be avoided in this course is the danger that in busying itself to achieve a state of integration between individuals in this way we may reduce the community to the status of a sect, a ghetto of insignificant people who seek in the Church community that cosy state of concealment which is so attractive to those who have proved inadequate in the public dimension of life, and which they cannot find in the pluralistic deserts of society in the broader sense. Again – and this is something that applies precisely to the Church community of the future – we absolutely *must not* seek to be self-sufficient in human terms, or seek to provide everything which a man needs in order to be a man in the way of human intercourse, culture, security, neighbourliness etc. Again the Church community of the future must be open to the outside world, must be ready to be shaped by individuals who obviously and whole-heartedly engage themselves in the life of the pluralistic society in general, in its struggles, in the self-commitment which it requires, in the pluralism of 'movements', interests, parties. The Church community must not identify itself with any specific formal or informal group in secular society, and yet it cannot achieve its own intrinsic integration through the 'merely' religious factor in the narrowest sense. In its spirit of brotherhood it must provide neighbourliness. It must be capable of providing a basis for Christianity to become engaged in the tasks of the world in the sphere which is proper [209] to them. Here surely tasks are to be found which are as yet hardly recognized, still less fulfilled. The social structures of the Church community of the future have not yet been worked out.

c) At this point a more specialized consideration should perhaps be added, one which, as it seems to me, is of concern to all Churches, even though there may be some differences in the way in which the practical consequences of it are worked out according to the particular character of the individual Churches involved. It seems to me conceivable for all Churches (including the Catholic Church) that these fraternal communities of the future may in many cases – not always or in every case – differ from the Churches on the grand scale of the past in that the official positions in the Church will be vested in individuals who undertake them only at a mature age and who emerge from integrated communities of this kind having belonged to them in the fullest possible sense. Why indeed should it not be so? Must every preacher of the gospel, every dispenser of the sacraments and everyone who presides at the Eucharistic sacrifice also be a 'specialist theologian' who has undergone a course of academic studies in his youth, one whose career is like that of a civil servant, holding a series of 'posts' in due succession in a large-scale ecclesiastical administration, being transferred to other posts, promoted, etc.? Without prejudice to the mission and (sacramental) ordination conferred by the universal Church, why should not a fraternal community of the kind we have in mind appoint an elder from its own 'elders'? Provided such a one has the theological and cultural formation and experience, and the experiential knowledge necessary in *this* sphere and for *this* community (all requirements which cannot be fulfilled merely by following the course prescribed for the academic formation of a professional ecclesiastical functionary) why should he not serve this specific community as its 'presbyter'? In this way, it will be remarked in passing, the charismatic and institutional factors in the Church would once more achieve a clearer unity, and after all there is nothing in the constitution of the Church as required by the nature of the faith which would exclude such a measure *a limine*. Certainly we do not need to underestimate the value of theological study in its academic form. And in the future too it may be indispensable for many of the Church's officials. But at the same time I do not believe that in the future the type of the 'civil administrator' equipped with a special academic formation will continue in all circumstances to provide the standard for the

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kind of presbyter to be appointed over the community in the concrete. In the future the lack of priests (pastors) will be too great for this, and the significance of the 'charismatic'-religious personality will be too important.

[210] It will be also clearly possible for older men who are still vigorous and in good health to be 'officially' appointed for fresh tasks after they have retired from their secular callings. (It may be remarked only in passing that on this basis the question of celibacy for secular priests in the Catholic Church may be raised once more in the future in a quite different form from hitherto.) Initiatives tending in this direction are in fact present everywhere. But we should have the boldness gradually to develop them, and that too not merely with a view to exceptional and particular cases, but in order that a new type of 'presbyter' may emerge as normal in the Church, one who is in principle on an equal footing with the professional administrator. In this task the Protestant Churches, with their principle of the universal priesthood, could find it easier and quicker to devize practical ways of achieving this, which could then, with relatively minor modifications, become practicable in the Catholic Church as well. A further point is that in the last analysis it would be wrong to misunderstand the efforts to restore the diaconate in the Latin Catholic Church as an emergency measure to make up for the lack of priests.

3. The creed and the preaching of the gospel will find new ways of making themselves felt in the Church of the future. Precisely in order that 'no other gospel' may be proclaimed or believed than that which is ever ancient and ever new, the interpretation of it must be presented in a different form from what was formerly the case. For in a world governed by different perspectives of thought and living it would inevitably become different in a bad sense if we sought to 'interpret' and present the preaching of the gospel in the future simply in the same way as it has been interpreted and presented hitherto. The only possible way for ensuring that it shall really remain the same is to introduce the right kind of changes. What this will mean in the concrete is difficult to predict. Perhaps amongst other things we can say this much:

a) What is signified by, and so badly formulated as the programme of 'demythologizing' and the 'existential interpretation' will, once it is both boldly and rightly carried through, become obvious. We will gradually learn in our reading of the scripture and the ancient creeds so to 'translate' them that we no longer notice at all that we are 'translating'. Instead the ancient truth contained in them will spontaneously find expression in terms which correspond to our own perspectives of thought. This does not imply that the kind of 'translation' arrived at by the school of demythologizing up to the present is correct, or that it does justice to the abiding gospel. We must recognize that an intrinsic element in that part of man's understanding of his own significance that endures is his commitment

to real history (and not merely to speaking about historicity at the formal level). From our contemporary perspectives of thought we do not merely criticize those to be found in the scripture, but use the perspectives found there, and still more the actual statements contained in it, to criticize our own viewpoints. In other words we must allow them to spring up ever afresh, and to be transformed. We must not be too hasty to bring our considerations to an end. We must not be too hasty in refusing to advance beyond the point where we recognize a pluralism of theologies in scripture (though this is certainly present there). Instead we must take upon ourselves the task which this involves of achieving a synthesis (however imperfect this may be). And if we do all this then I cannot see why the basic task and the methods characterized by the sinister term 'demythologizing' will not be able to lead in the future to a new kind of theology, a theology which, while it will certainly lead man into the mystery of God, and not into the realm of a flat rationalistic humanism, will nevertheless also eliminate many difficulties of interpretation which modern man labours under with regard to the Christian message, and which we should not regard as of no account. And in all this this will

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still continue to be a wholly 'orthodox' theology of the ancient gospel, or alternatively it will preserve such a theology. Of course this is primarily a general programme, an overall vision for the future. But at the same time it is also a firm Christian hope. Let us attempt to treat of this point a little more in detail.

b) It seems to me that Christian theology, the moment it solves to some extent the general task that is laid upon it in view of the contemporary climate of ideas, should and could arrive at a quite new and *simple* statement of the Christian message. The simple statement that contains the whole is always the most difficult; not the most facile, slipped in with a seeming show of plausibility by the worst kind of over-simplification, but rather the prize won by putting forth our utmost efforts of thought. At least this is the case today, and will be so tomorrow. Yet we should achieve a position in which we are able to say to a modern educated unbeliever within the space of at most half an hour what we Christians really believe,[4] and that too in such a way that this does not strike him simply as incomprehensible and beyond his powers of assimilation, as though it were like an exposition of Tibetan medicine. Do we really manage this? Are we already in a position to do it today? The recitation of the Apostles' Creed [212] is unsuitable for this purpose, even though it still constitutes an authentic confession of what is our faith even today. Again a 'penny catechism' of the common sort cannot be used for this purpose, quite apart from the fact that it is unsuitable for children as such. In arriving at such a basic statement of our faith we are no longer, for instance, in a position to assume from the outset that everyone knows what is meant by the word 'God'. We must not formulate the doctrine of the Incarnation of the divine Logos in such a way that it sounds like sheer mythology to our contemporaries. We could uncompromisingly *begin* at that point at which the christology *prior* to Paul and John began, namely with the man Jesus of Nazareth. For instance in speaking his Resurrection we should from the outset present it in such a way that while continuing to be the miracle *par excellence* it is interpreted initially as a manifestation of the assertion of our own selfhood, grace-given and absolute, and in doing this we should ensure that it is not *a limine* misunderstood as a miraculous return of a dead man into our sphere of existence. I nourish the hope (to express the matter somewhat paradoxically for the moment) that a new *symbolum apostolicum* will have to be composed for the Church of the future, though this is not to say that the old one will be done away with.

c) The future theology cannot surrender anything which belongs to the genuine content of the ancient faith. Yet surely in all realism we must recognize the fact that in the case of most men the catechism of real Christian living in its fulness, and the learned catechism of theology are not identical; that there simply is, and can be, a blending of *fides explicita* and *fides implicita* and moreover one that varies. And if we do recognize this then there is no objection in principle to the idea that the real catechism of the heart in future Christianity will be organized on quite different lines from the ones which prevail today; that in it what are points of departure today will be points of arrival tomorrow; that themes concerned with a particular area of theology which seem difficult today will constitute the initial and almost obvious axioms of tomorrow, etc. Thus for instance it may be the case (to take only a random example) that the conviction of the universal will to save on God's part will be one of the starting-points in a history of grace and revelation which is co-extensive with the history of human thought for a consideration of why despite this fact there should be a special history of revelation extending from Moses to Jesus, or why the idea of 'Church' should continue to be meaningful. Today, on the contrary, we are still toiling to find a starting-point in this

[4] For an orientation on the efforts which have been made to arrive at a brief formula of the faith cf. 'Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devizing a Short Formula of the Faith', *Theological Investigations* XI (London, 1973), pp. 230-244 (with bibliog.).

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particular history of salvation and revelation, and only timidly seeking to discover the universal will of God to save as it works throughout the whole history of [213] mankind. In view of the historical vicissitudes to which human knowledge is subject we should not for one moment expect that all elements in the Christian faith will be equally explicit at all times, that the points of access and points of departure, the basic concepts accepted *hic et nunc* as needing no further explanation will always remain the same. The question, 'how can I discover a gracious God?' will always remain a decisive theme for Christian living and Christian doctrine. But this is still far from saying that it will remain the point of departure and the essential heart and centre in the preaching of the Church of tomorrow. Certainly we must not transform Christian doctrine into a formal hermeneutics of language about God, and so empty it of its real significance. But at the same time there is no need on this account to exclude the possibility that one who has stated in appropriate and acceptable terms what language about God is really intended to convey may not *ipso facto* have expressed the content of, or at least the point of departure attainable by us of today and tomorrow for this understanding of the God of grace in his fathomless compassion. Truly we cannot reduce Christianity to a shallow humanistic love of neighbour. But again this is not to say that in the future love of neighbour may not be the key term, or one of the key terms, which, interpreted in all its radical immeasurability, leads us on into all the mysteries of Christianity. We not merely may, we should arrive at such shifts of perspective in our preaching for the future. We should arrive at a theology which from the outset takes as its starting-point man's experience of himself, and which can do this because even prior to our preaching this theology falls under God's grace. We should arrive at a theology which from the outset has its place within an evolutive and historical '*Weltanschauung*', however true it may be that the theology must provide a standard of criticism for the *Weltanschauung* in that it imparts a radical dimension to it. We must arrive at a 'political theology', one which does not reduce Christianity from the outset to the private and interior sphere. We must arrive at a theology in which God, while infinitely transcending all other beings, still does not properly speaking move the world 'from without', but rather, overcoming the dilemma of transcendence and immanence, constitutes the innermost grace-given mystery of the world. We must arrive at a theology which does not seek to contain the mystery of God within its own system of co-ordinates, but rather launches man into these unnameable depths which constitute the incomprehensibility of love.

d) One further point should be noticed, namely that a theology of this kind, which really speaks to the man of today and tomorrow, is surely too the most 'ecumenical' theology of all. The theologies of the separated [214] Churches will achieve the most fruitful encounter and understanding if all of them, each from the point of departure given to it by its own historical background, transform themselves into the theology of the future Church, and discover that 'hierarchy of truths' which corresponds to the situation prevailing for the time being in the future.

4. What will be the attitude of the separated Churches towards one another in the future? This is a question which can be answered only with difficulty. But perhaps a few points can hopefully be raised[5].

a) All the Churches in a pluralistic society, if and in so far as they still remain as separate, will everywhere and in all countries have the status of diaspora Churches. They will count themselves fortunate if in order to avoid total disintegration and death, this society does not find refuge in a totalitarian state dominated by a forced ideology. Such an ideology would certainly not be Christian. On the contrary in its irreconcilability with Christianity it would be

[5] On this point cf. also the fuller presentation, 'On the Theology of the Ecumenical Discussion', *Theological Investigations* XI (London, 1973), pp. 24-67.

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forced at the social level to declare Christianity to be the enemy of society and the state in a quite new manner and, from the point of view of this society, this would represent the mere instinct for self-survival. In any case, however, these separated Churches will spontaneously be drawn closer together in the one diaspora situation applying to them all. Without prejudice to the question of truth many of the controversies dividing the Churches will inevitably lose something of their force in the actual circumstances prevailing. If God becomes the one radical question for all Christians instead of merely being the assumption which they all hold in common, it will simply be impossible for them any longer to feel so separated by the question of the Pope as was the case between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. And there will be no lack of tasks and decisions in relation to the secularized world in which the Churches, provided they live with one another and not merely side by side with one another, can bear witness in common to the gospel of the liberating grace of God and of eternal life leading to the absolute future of God, taking these as enduring standards by which to evaluate all 'this worldly' ideologies in both theory and practice. Much that is involved in this common witness could also achieve a common institutional basis, and in addition the situation appears to be such that God will bestow the same or corresponding charismata on the different Churches. Admittedly a necessary prior condition for the Churches drawing together in this way in the diaspora situation prevailing in the world of today and tomorrow will be that we avoid falsely playing down the difference of opinion that [215] still separate the Churches and that still have to be taken seriously in such a way that we assume the position, whether implicitly or explicitly, that the Churches have arrived at a common basic credal formulation of the gospel in the eyes of the world, one that already causes them to exhibit a real and genuine unity in relation to the world, and again we must not arrive at a false formula of unification such as is quite incapable of providing a basis for a common decision as to the task of the Churches for the world.

b) All the Churches, including the Roman Catholic one, will have to reckon in the future with a greater degree of pluralism among the theologies upheld within each Church. For our present purposes we may take it that the validity of this statement is recognized without any further explanation or justifying arguments.[6] But it does not merely imply a more difficult situation than formerly for each of the individual Churches taken separately with regard to the need to preserve substantially the same creed within each individual Church. It also implies a greater opportunity for the separated Churches to arrive at a better theological understanding among themselves. Already even now it is recognized that today very vital theological positions cut clean across the boundaries dividing the Churches. Indeed theological controversies within the Churches are no longer identical with the traditional controversies which separated them in the past. Admittedly, though it is hardly possible to dispute this finding, a further point should be added to it, even though it may sound hard to many ears and must not be misinterpreted as an attitude of presumptuousness on the part of the *beati possidentes*. The Protestant Christian and theologian who seeks to maintain the *credo* of the fathers of his Church must nevertheless ask himself today how and why he can maintain a state of association in Church matters and in worship with Christians whose interpretation of Christianity differs from his own far more radically and fundamentally than from the Catholic creed. I know that the question is not easy. I know that it is open to such a Christian and theologian to say that for the sake of freedom of conscience and doctrine he can *tolerate* such more radical forms of heresy within his Church because in fact they form no part of the creed of his Church. Doctrines in the Roman Church on the other hand which, so far as he is concerned impose a separation between the Churches, are regarded as intrinsically belonging

[6] On this cf. 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', *Theological Investigations* XI (London, 1973), pp. 3-23.

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to official Catholic dogma. This reply, in itself understandable, could admittedly lead on to the further question of whether there is not a certain way of tolerating [216] specific and radical 'heresies' which is equivalent to recognizing them as equally justified as the tenets of his own Church, whereas logically speaking this is impossible. However this may be, the only real point which I would make is this: the growing pluralism among the theologies practised within the individual Churches including the Catholic Church opens up, although perhaps only gradually, a possibility for the future of being in a better position to decide what really belongs to the creed in which a Church must be at one, and what constitutes mere theological interpretation of this one creed on the part of particular schools. For at this level there is no need whatever for all the members of a given Church to be at one in order to be able to live within her single fold. If the difference between creed and theology, not merely in individual points of material content but at the essential and formal level were then made still clearer, and if it were shown that despite its essential content, with its orientation to history creed is precisely not simply 'doctrine', then this situation of a pluralism in theology which prevails in the Churches today and will prevail tomorrow would lead us to expect a greater possibility of the Churches no longer having to be disunited and separated from one another in the creed.[7]

I have made only a few points with regard to the future of the Church. Properly speaking one could and should say much more, especially with regard to the positive opportunities open to Christianity. And precisely on this point there would be much to say. For however much Christianity may be threatened by an explicitly formulated atheism or by the kind of atheism which has to a large extent ceased to pose any kind of religious question at all, still this situation has a positive significance for Christianity as well – not merely that of 'purifying' the concept of God in itself of which even the Second Vatican Council speaks, but also the significance that in a situation of this kind no new religions emerge. Yet so long as [217] religion remains – and it will remain, because man will again and again raise the question of the meaning of the totality of his existence, then the religion that does remain and is not constructed anew will be precisely that of Christianity. In a world civilization that has become one and homogeneous the different religions can no longer in the long run exist without mutual influence upon, and 'interpenetration of' one another. But in this mutual exchange Christianity will be the determining factor, because even from the empirical point of view it is the most comprehensive religion, the one that allows for most variations and is least of all attached to a specific cultural milieu.

For the Christian who is not merely a philosopher or a sociologist of culture and religion there is however one final point to be made in conclusion, and it is the most important and the crucial one: the future does not simply come in the course of a natural unfolding or as a blind fate. Rather it is wrought out in the solitary decision of the heart. In the last analysis our task is not to orientate ourselves to a future which we have already worked out beforehand, but rather to create it in a spirit of unreserved commitment and hope, fashioning it by our own decision. And this means that our glance into the future of Christianity and the Church has one message for us and only one: If you believe, if you commit yourself by hoping against all

[7] With regard to the question of what form the relationship between the Christian Churches will probably assume in the future we must view this question from yet another and quite different standpoint. The ecumenical efforts and dialogues proceed, whether tacitly or explicitly, from the assumption that the Churches involved are, regarded each in itself, homogeneous (ideologically determined) major groups, each with a firm body of doctrine (called 'creed'). It is assumed that so far as this is concerned the only disunity is between Church and Church, and therefore that they can precisely not be united. This assumption may be theologically correct, but from the point of view of the *sociology of religion* it is a figment of the imagination which, so far as the ecumenical question is concerned, is made a substitute for looking into the future. For further details on this point cf. the article, 'On the Theology of the Ecumenical Discussion', *Theological Investigations* XI (London, 1973), pp. 24-67.

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hope as the Apostle says Abraham did, then this position of faith, with the total and unreserved commitment which it involves, will of itself usher in the future which God has promised to those who believe in Jesus Christ and to his Church.

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[218]

12

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH TODAY

The Church is neither an idea, nor a principle, nor a postulate. Nor is she simply or merely identical with that which she believes as having been promised to her by God and, moreover, ever destined in its essence to be kept alive by the power of God's predestinating grace, such that in its essentials the content of her belief will never simply cease to be a concrete reality. She is a 'visible' Church, the 'people of God' in the concrete, a social entity, a formal group, an institution in the world with all that that entails, and that too not merely in virtue of her 'nature' as instituted by God, but also in virtue of all that is in her and pertaining to her. This is because and to the extent that she is an institutionalized group of individuals who bring into this institution something different from, and more than merely that which is recognized as belonging to the Church by an ecclesiology treating of the Church's nature. If therefore the Church is to act aright, and in a manner appropriate to the particular situation prevailing at any given time (and this is something that pastoral theology has to enquire into), then she must be aware of what she *is* in *this particular* quite concrete sense. It is the constant temptation of the Church to conceive of herself *merely* in terms of her own nature ('*juris divini*'), and to conceal from herself her real concrete reality by hiding it behind this portrayal of her nature, in other words behind that which she should be. And this is all the more possible because at the same time she always is that which she must be, and this bold confession that of her nature she is what she ought to be itself belongs to this nature of hers as constantly maintained in existence by the grace of God. But in order to be able to act in a manner appropriate to the situation she must not overlook her historical and social reality, which is not simply identical with her nature. On this basis the question of the 'structure of the people of the Church' constitutes a serious question for pastoral theology. Merely on the basis of her nature there would be nothing to say with regard to this structure (or at least this seems to be the case) further than what is laid down in 'Lumen Gentium' [219] with regard to the essential structures of the people of God which is the Church. Certainly this is of fundamental importance, but it is not all, because it does not describe the concrete form which the Church assumes here and now. This is all the more true because 'people of God' and 'people of the Church' are not identical concepts. 'People of God' is to be understood as equivalent to 'Church', 'people of the Church' as equivalent to the laity. It is true that much has been said at the theological level concerning the laity in the Church at the Second Vatican Council. But hardly anything has been said which directly concerns the sociological structure which belong to the position of laymen. The people of the Church as constituted by the laity is described merely in terms of the Church's nature, or at most quite general characteristics (such as sex, age, education, professional life) have been introduced into this picture.

Now there certainly are structures of the people of the Church which are present within the Church simply because she is made up of men who are subject to natural conditions. An ecclesiological monophysitism has no place in a Catholic ecclesiology or pastoral theology. This human factor in the Church is not merely something inevitable that has to be put up with, or an irreducible remnant in a Church which properly speaking should be the invisible Church of the predestined. The human factor, including, therefore, the social life of man (with all that should be the case and all that is so merely *de facto*) is – 'undivided and unmixed' – an intrinsic element in the Church herself. In the light of this it is in itself permissible, indeed obligatory, to enter into a description of the 'structures of the people of the Church', using for the purpose secular sociological categories and models. In itself this is a

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point of which we have always in principle been aware. The old key phrase, 'societas perfecta' as used in ecclesiology still has a good sense even today, although we of today recognize more clearly that on this basis alone the hidden reality of the Church (which is accessible only to faith and hope) cannot be arrived at. When secular sociology of religion seeks to describe the Church we must not be over-sensitive in our reaction to it. It describes the human factors and (in the Church of sinners) the inhuman ones too which exist and will exist even in the Church, which is the historico-sacramental manifestation of the grace of God. For it is quite impossible for it to be this manifestation, this basic sacramental sign of grace, otherwise than through the medium of this human factor within her, which also falls within the purview of the secular sociologist in his study of human life.

But surely it is also permissible for a theologian as such, and on the basis of his own data and principles, to attempt to arrive at a description [220] of those structures of the people of the Church which are hardly ever discussed, if at all, in the usual presentations of ecclesiology. In doing this he is not disputing the right of the specialist in sociology in the true sense to evaluate the people of the Church by his own standards, and to classify those belonging to that people according to his own categories, producing a variegated and vivid picture different from the usual pallid portrayal of the people of the laity in the Church by viewing them as they are and not merely (as for instance in 'Lumen Gentium') as they ought to be. But it will appear that the theologian himself also has the right to use such data and such principles (of a Christian anthropology) which can help him too to arrive at a far more variegated portrayal of the people of the Church than is commonly supposed. And if from this certain conclusions have to be arrived at which are important for pastoral theology, and which emerge spontaneously in the process – so much the better. Nor is it matter for regret that the considerations proceeding from such principles often encounter structures which *should be* present instead of actually *being* so in any clear sense. In this way we can learn to recognize structures which are present in rudimentary form but are overlooked, and which, once we have become more clearly aware of them, turn out to be capable of and to require further development.

1. Man is an individual and, as endowed with freedom, every individual is unique. Certainly this is a datum of theological anthropology. But the Church's attitude towards this datum is different from that of any other society. For a secular society has to cater for what is common to all men, and merely to ensure that man's uniqueness is accorded the necessary scope. The Church, however, as the mediatrix of salvation, has as her goal that in the existence of a free being which is wholly unique in each particular case, namely his salvation. Certainly we should not overlook the radical difference between the mediating of salvation and the achievement of salvation. And in the Church too this distinction leaves the individual free in his inalienable responsibility before, and immediacy to God. The salvation of the individual neither can nor should be controlled in a totalitarian sense. It must be remembered, however, that the Church is not merely the mediatrix of salvation, but something more than this as well. As the *visible* community of those who genuinely believe, hope, and love, she is the historical manifestation of the event of salvation as effectively achieved and victoriously imposing itself (DS 3014; the question of how this is possible is difficult. How can that factor which is at once the most individual of all and at the same time the most total of all in human existence, namely its final and definitive value in God's eyes, or even merely [221] the promise of this and the process by which it is being achieved, be made available to empirical 'experience' in such a way that the Church becomes the great witness for the working of God's grace in the world? This, however, is a question which cannot be discussed here. The *fact that* the Church can achieve a visibility precisely of *this* sort is something which we simply presuppose, referring for our authority in this to DS 3014, and we shall merely draw from this the conclusions which are relevant to our present interests). But because the Church

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is a *visible* community in this sense, the personal history of the individual as uniquely vested with freedom belongs intrinsically to her. It must at least be made manifest in her, and must be capable of revealing itself for what it is. In other words the Church must make a permanent place within her for a manifestation of this sort. The biography of a 'great man' is out of place in the history of the state or of its institutions. But the life of a saint surely does have a place in the history of the Church precisely as *such*. The Church as such, therefore, has the duty of recognizing the great Christian personalities, the 'enthusiasts', and she must not do this only when they are dead. She must do it precisely if, and in virtue of the fact that, they are not simply the happy product of the merely institutional factors within her, but rather of the charismatic grace that moves freely within her. The official authorities in the Church are false to their own nature if they fail to respect such individuals and to make them visible in the Church. A 'pilgrimage' of the Church's officials to such 'men of God' is just as reasonable as the converse. (In former times such pilgrimages were known. Today such a thing is difficult to discover.) It would be perfectly reasonable for a certain spiritual kind of 'aristocracy' to appear in the Church even as a phenomenon in her social life, and the recognition of such an 'aristocracy' is not identical with respect for the official hierarchy. If we seek to level out this 'structure' or dimension, then we are responding to the humility of such 'men of God' in an unworthy way. A further point that will be intelligible in the light of the basic datum referred to above is that certain formal groups must emerge as the upholders of and the social manifestation of individual charisms of this kind. They must emerge in the Church *as such*, and as part of her manifest social image. Moreover these groups must 'emerge from below' and not as manipulated by techniques or controls from above. Thus for instance orders or members of orders are not *ipso facto* or of their very nature (in spite of the necessity for official recognition of them) functionaries organized to fulfil the task of the officially constituted authority in the Church. (This is at most a secondary and quite 'consequential' function). Rather they are the social manifestation [222] of the individual charisms and callings of individuals as such. And this remains true even though the 'disciples' may be shaping their lives according to an exemplary 'productive pattern established by their founder'. It is precisely as the social manifestation of individual charisms and callings in this sense that the orders and their individual members belong essentially to the Church. Now if, on this showing, exemplary Christians of this kind belong not only to the Church but also, and necessarily to her public manifestation, and if it is certainly not the case that they are *a priori* to be identified with those holding office in the Church, then there is or should be in the Church a movement in which the people of the Church group themselves round such charismatic personalities. And this 'structure' would not simply be identical with the grouping of the worshipping community about its official leader. We should have the courage to make room for such groups. Churches belonging to religious orders could fill this role, so long as they are not designed too much with 'normal pastoral activities' in view.

Despite all the factors of a 'mass society' to be found in her the people of the Church has become more 'individualistic', and that too not merely in the 'secular' order but in the ecclesiastical one as well. And this is in conformity with the intrinsic tendency of a community which is based, in the last analysis, on the free decision of the individual to believe. The uniform and homogeneous people of the Church of former ages, to which the hierarchy could adopt a fatherly and paternalist attitude, is becoming ever smaller in number. It its place there is an increase within this people in the number of those individuals who are vividly alive to the legitimate distinction which exists between the universal commitment of faith (as represented by the hierarchy) and the individual commitment of faith, together with the personal history of this in each individual's life. There is an increasing number of individuals in the Church who are no longer willing simply to fulfil the (passive) role of the taught, the mere recipients of directives from the hierarchy responding blindly to the

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'information' supplied to them from above. Instead they seek to be selective in their acceptance of this, and wish not merely to hear but also to be heard. They demand a 'dialogue' with the hierarchy. Since salvation always takes place at the individual level (for all the institutional factors through which it is mediated), and since this individual salvation is an element in the Church as such, and even in the form of her historical manifestation, the process of 'individualization' taking place within the people of the Church is not merely a regrettable situation to which the Church is forced to reconcile herself as inevitable, but on the contrary a radical goal for the Church in [223] the achievement of her own fulness. How much still remains to be done at the institutional level in order that this process of individualization of the people of the Church may achieve its beneficial effects for the Church! It might perhaps be pointed out that 'sects' constitute (in their initial intention and origins) the socially institutionalized protest against a Church of the masses, tending to reduce all to the same level. But in reply to this we would have to say: In order to be equal to the situation in which she actually finds herself at the present the Church of today should integrate the 'sects' within herself and, while upholding the unity of the creed and of her leadership, she should maintain sufficient scope for them to operate within her. Nor should it be regarded as a criterion of whether such individualist movements are capable of integration that there shall be a total absence of *friction* in the process by which such individualizing movements, whether of isolated persons or of groups, are incorporated into the 'apparatus' of the Church. It is at this point that the work of the sociologist properly so called should be brought to bear. He it is who, with his own special methods, should teach us to recognize more clearly and in a more concrete form, factors which have so far precisely not been recognized from a theological standpoint.

2. Man is constantly threatened by sin and unbelief as an *internal* as well as an external element in his personal life. Certainly traditional ecclesiology (rightly) states on the one hand that everyone who is baptized, at least publicly professes his allegiance to the Catholic faith, and submits to the hierarchy and the unity of believers, belongs to the Church, while on the other hand there is a difference in the mode of belonging to the Church between those who belong to the holy Church '*corpore*' (as sinners) but not '*corde*', and those who stand under God's grace as justified. At the same time, however, as a characterization of the differences which exist between the members of the people of the Church this is still inadequate – inadequate as a description even of those differences which can be recognized from the data of theology. As applied to the various modes of belonging to the Church the norms mentioned above serve rather to reduce all to a single uniform level, instead of enabling us to recognize the differences within the people of the Church. For the difference between the sinner and the justified in their respective ways of belonging to the Church is not a sociological difference, since the basis for it (the possession of, or loss of, grace) is at least in a direct sense, and for all practical purposes, not an empirical datum, and the concept of the 'public sinner' hardly takes us any further, at any rate today. The question already appears in a somewhat different light the moment we take the abstract concept of [224] 'communio', which is one of the factors constitutive of Church membership, and seek to fill it with concrete content and to ask at what point a sufficient degree of 'communio' ceases to be present. The internal assaults through sin and unbelief manifest themselves (as in a chain process) in a state of alienation and withdrawal from the Church's life in innumerable ways and degrees, and the instance that is most evident to the sociologist is that of the 'non-practising' Catholics. The points of obscurity and controversy concerning the precise point at which such a state of alienation from the Church's life, and such a refusal to take part in it constitute an actual state of separation from the Church are well-known. The point of primary importance here is that not every refusal to participate in the Church's life *ipso facto* involves a loss of membership of the Church. The directly opposite thesis would materially speaking

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lead to the position that sinners do not belong to the Church. Now there are very weighty theological grounds for holding that this thesis is untenable. This has a bearing on that grey throng made up of the weary, the indifferent, and the uninterested, and of those who, from the ideological point of view, are characterized by other and non-Christian opinions more than by faith in the Church. So long as this lack of Christianity on the part of the baptized Christian does not solidify into a clear and decisive negation of the Christian faith, such as can be recognized even at the public level, this grey throng does belong to the people of the Church, in other words to the Church herself and not merely to the objects of the solicitude of the Church (that is, of her official institutions!). Since in her explicit ecclesiology the Church regards the 'border-line Catholics' as belonging to her, she must not adopt an attitude of latent and unexplicitated Novationism by acting as though despite this it was only the 'attendants at Sunday Mass' who really belonged to her, while the rest merely had to be patiently put up with as 'bad Catholics'. However true it may be that the situation of the 'so-called border-line Catholics' also constitutes the objective manifestation of the 'sin of the world' and its unbelief, still this relationship which the 'border-line Catholics' have to the Church cannot *ipso facto* be diagnosed with any certainty as their personal and subjective sin. It cannot *ipso facto* be judged to be this even when this state has been preceded by a zealous participation in Church life during their childhood. In principle they can just as well be regarded as '*still* half Catholics and Christians' as '*already* half Catholics', provided the 'still' and 'already' here refer not to a practice of the faith belonging to their childhood and to a large extent to a stage when their personality had not yet developed, but to the history of a developing personal faith and life as at least possible in principle.

[225] Viewed in this light it is far from being *ipso facto* justifiable either objectively or as a matter of pastoral policy for us to suggest through the attitude of the clergy to those who do not regularly attend Sunday Mass that they themselves should regard themselves as centrifugal border-line Catholics. We can also adopt that attitude of Evangelical patience in which we allow them to grow in hope, and so regard them as border-line Catholics who are centripetal, as the kind of Catholics who, in the circumstances, are doing all that is appropriate here and now to *their particular* phase of religious development, all the more so when we consider that so long as we divide the people of the Church into those who fulfil their Sunday and Easter duties and those who do not we are, in a strange way, deciding whether individuals shall be accounted as Catholics or not not according to whether they fulfil a divine commandment but according to whether they fulfil a precept of the *juris ecclesiastici*. A point which we should recognize clearly once and for all is that at least from the theological point of view this distinction is a very secondary one. An adulterer or an unscrupulous and power-hungry politician is more truly a 'border-line Catholic' even when he is seen at Church on Sundays, than certain non-attenders at Sunday Mass who have not yet come to terms with this particular commandment of the Church, something which from the Christian point of view is more easily understandable and more tolerable than violating the divine commandments. The social prestige of such border-line Catholics in the Church varies very greatly according to the particular country to which they belong. An Italian intellectual who has temporarily given up practising does not feel himself so alienated from the Church *on these grounds alone* as a German or Englishman in the same position. In any case there is no dogmatic reason for attaching any special importance to the Church-going prestige of such Catholics. In this connection it would already be a considerable achievement if the people of the Church had a clearer awareness of the fact that the commandments of the Church have a status which is certainly relative, a fact which has been recognized by the Church herself. It can hardly be feared that even today a recognition of this would still have greater negative consequences for the zeal with which individuals practised their religion. The status of the 'border-line Catholics' in terms of the sociology of the Church carries within itself as an

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intrinsic element its own interpretation on the part of the official Church. In the light of this alone it is a variable entity. From this point of view it could be very much altered even though to all appearances nothing is altered in the 'objective facts'. These 'border-line Catholics' cease to some extent to be 'border-line' when they are viewed from a different point of [226] view, namely as Christians who have not yet developed the course of their Christianity to that point at which an individual achieves a positive relationship to the Church and her life, something which under normal conditions is both attainable and desirable, and to be striven for as a concrete goal by those engaged in pastoral work. If the position of the 'border-line Catholics' were interpreted in this sense by public opinion in the Church, they themselves would also be more ready to understand their own position in this sense, and this (by a kind of reaction) could strengthen that development which we assume to be taking place in them in the desired direction. Hence the effects of sinfulness and assaults on the faith in the individual are also to be numbered among the structures of the people of the Church.

But even in addition to this, or abstracting from it, it would be naïve to picture the 'practising Catholics' to oneself as a crowd of uniform individuals with absolutely the same convictions in an 'ideological' sense. The fact is that faith inevitably has an individual *history* and development of its own, and further that there is a justifiable no less than an unjustifiable way of distinguishing between the collective commitment of faith of the Church and the individual commitment of faith of the individual. (We may, for instance, distinguish between the degrees of implicit and explicit awareness of what is contained in the faith, and between the varying degrees in which that which is conceptually believed is appropriated at the 'existential' level. Again that which is believed in theory has varying degrees of effectiveness in practical life, and these differences may be so great as to lead to 'heresies in the Church'). Now these facts give rise to the most manifold structural subdivisions within the people of the Church. The printed catechism and the unprinted catechism in the head, and above all in the heart, are not identical. Merely by way of example it may be pointed out that without any official difference of faith groups do exist within the people of the Church in whose religious life indulgences or devotion to our Lady play a significant part, and others in which for all practical purposes these factors do not exist; groups in which specific moral requirements carry a quite different weight and influence as characterizing their way of life. Precisely in those cases in which it is the effectiveness of Christianity as a force in social politics that is in question very great differences arise in the real structures of the people of the Church, but even from a theological point of view the fact that the history of the faith is ultimately not ours to shape or control should lead us to expect this. There are groups of Church Christians who live their Christianity as a basis for their social status (this must all too often be the case), and others [227] who take the message of the gospel as a critique of the social order and as a stimulus to action to bring about changes in society. There are so many ways of forming groups within the people of the Church which are ultimately based on the distinction between the commitment of faith of the Church as a whole and the personal commitment of faith of the individual considered in his own personal history.

But because this situation is precisely that of the Church herself, and because she is the Church of sinners, it is also possible to conceive of structures entering into the people of the Church which tend in a contrary direction (and it may be hoped that such structures will always be present in sufficient measure in her). There must be individuals and groups within the Church who are the representatives of a protest against the sinfulness and latent unbelief in the Church, and the Church on her side must maintain sufficient scope within herself for 'non-conformists' and 'protestants' in this sense. It is in fact simply not the case that in the points they emphasize and in their efforts to meet the demands of the particular hour and the particular age the official representatives of the Church's teaching and pastoral work are the representatives of Christianity in the absolute, pure and unalloyed in such a way that it would

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be impossible for any non-conformist 'protest' on the part of individuals or groups within the people of God in the Church to be directed against the officials in the Church. The worker priest movement constituted a protest group of this kind against the bourgeois tendencies developing within the Church. Were they given sufficient scope, and was their voice heard with sufficient humility?

3. *Gratia supponit naturam*. This is an ancient principle, although theologically speaking it is only with difficulty that we can interpret it precisely and correctly. But let us apply it to our present question. This will yield the following conclusion: the society of the Church as such is constituted not merely by that which belongs specifically to the Church's nature (Spirit, word, sacrament, official institutions). Rather it presupposes and implies the 'natural' structures of an integrated society. If we did apply this principle it would emerge that whereas in earlier times these structures both could be and were presupposed by the Church in working out the organization of her own membership, today, because of the disintegration of society, they have to a large extent to be discovered afresh and in part created afresh by the Church herself. The parish priest with his local place of worship can no longer base himself on an already integrated village society such as existed in earlier times. But since it is no longer the case that this society is already present for him to work upon, a worshipping [228] community has a strangely ideological effect. Yet taken by themselves the common creed and cult upheld by the community are quite incapable of constituting this worshipping community as it ought to be. Anyone who holds this to be the case is running counter to the principle, *gratia supponit naturam*, i.e. as applied in the present instance, the social factors in the Church presuppose the social factors at the human level. If these natural structures cannot be presupposed (neighbourliness, mutual acquaintance, a readiness to help one another in the secular sphere, and the necessary conditions for all this, a common language, similar problems to face, a level of education which is to some extent homogeneous etc.) they must be created by the Church. She must constantly be looking for such structures when they are present in still rudimentary form. She must promote new initiatives in this sphere, discover and bring forward those actively engaged in promoting such structures. In our need to work out a sociology of the people of the Church we still know far too little of these structures and those who promote them: the 'natural' spokesmen of a society which aims at becoming a worshipping community, the 'trend-setters' who have a selective influence in determining which elements of the official pronouncements really shall become an effective force among the people of the Church, etc. From this aspect too there is a need for any dogmatic ecclesiology to include within its purview the researches of 'secular' sociology in order to achieve a correct view of the real structures of the people of the Church and to pay due regard to them.

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13

THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH AS A CRITIC OF SOCIETY

The subject, 'the function of the Church as a critic of society' certainly has the utmost relevance to the contemporary situation. Everywhere in the world, and on both sides of all so-called 'curtains' the students are in revolt against the ideologies and institutions of a society that has become established and 'frozen'. When they are Christian and Catholic they demand that the Church shall take part with them in their struggle. One of the extremely wide variety of theological key-words developed today is that of 'political theology'. It has emerged in the Protestant theology of Germany and America (for instance in the works of Altizer, Cox, Marsch, Moltmann, Sauter, Shaull),[1] and also to an increasing extent in Catholic theology, chiefly in the works of J. B. Metz.[2] This political theology is already being sharpened (above all in South America) to a theology of revolution and force.[3] The Churches too [230] are already taking an official interest in the subject of political theology. In the case of the Second Vatican Council even though the actual concept of political theology has not been invoked it has ratified a long Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today. Several of the encyclicals of John XXIII and Paul VI are concerned with sociological issues and with a critique of society. On the Protestant side the same concerns are in evidence in discussions which have taken place within the framework of the World Council of Churches at Geneva and Uppsala.[4] In brief the task of the Church or of the Churches as providing a critique of society is a theme that is actual and relevant today.

It is self-evident that within the restricted scope of our present study we can put forward only a few very fragmentary observations on a theme that is so novel, so comprehensive and so difficult, and furthermore that we can have no intention of exploring all the heights and depths of a political theology of this kind.

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[1] Cf. especially the following studies: J. Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung* (Munich, 1964); G. Sauter, *Zukunft und Verheissung* (Stuttgart and Zurich, 1965); Th. J. J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia, 1966); *Diskussion über die 'Theologie der Hoffnung'* edited by W. D. Marsch (Munich, 1967); W. D. Marsch, *Die Freiheit erlernen*, Beiträge politischer Theologie (Freiburg, 1967); R. Shaull, *Containment and Change* (New York, 1967); *idem*, 'A Theological Perspective on Human Liberation', *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 49, No. 578 (1968), pp. 509-517; H. Cox, *Der Christ als Rebell* (Kassel, 2nd ed., 1968); *idem*, *Stirb nicht im Warteraum der Zukunft* (Stuttgart, 1968).

[2] Cf. J. B. Metz, *Zur Theologie der Welt* (Mainz, Munich, 1968); *idem*, 'The Church's Social Function in the Light of "Political Theology"', *Concilium* 6/4 (1968, Church and World), pp. 3-11; *idem*, *Reform und Gegenreformation heute* (Mainz and Munich, 1969); *idem*, 'Political Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi* 5 (New York and London, 1969), pp. 34-38. As a *prise de position* on political theology cf. the articles in the compendium volume entitled *Diskussion zur politischen Theologie* edited by H. Peukert (Munich, 1969).

[3] Material information and judgements on this are supplied by C. Jaime Snoek, 'The Third World Revolution and Christianity', *Concilium* 5/2 (1966, Moral Theology), pp. 18-27; J. B. Metz, 'Religion und Revolution', *Neues Forum* XIV (1967), pp. 460-464; 'Theologie der Revolution', *Evangelische Theologie* Vol 12 (1967); T. Rendtorff and H. E. Tödt edd., *Theologie der Revolution* (Frankfurt, 1968); on the situation in South America cf. also the bibliography supplied in the same volume, pp. 164-165, and also J. C. Bennet (ed.), *Christian Ethics in a Changing World* (New York and London, 1966). For a general orientation cf. E. Feil and R. Weth edd., *Diskussion zur Theologie der Revolution* (Munich, 1969).

[4] Cf. the official documentation in *Appell an die Kirchen der Welt. Dokumente der Weltkonferenz für Kirche und Gesellschaft* edited by the Ecumenical Council of Churches (Stuttgart, 1967), and also *Uppsala 68 spricht*, edited by N. Goodall (Geneva, 1968). On the conference at Uppsala cf. *Ökumene zwischen Routine und Erneuerung. Ein Uppsala-Report*, Evangelische Kommentare 1 (1968), pp. 428-435; 'Die Vollversammlung des Weltkirchenrates in Uppsala', *Herder Korrespondenz* 22 (1968), pp 383-388.

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I. A Critique of the Church is Implicitly Involved in the Church's Understanding of Her Own Nature.

Before attempting to say something of the sociological function of the Church with regard to secular society, it will be useful, by way of preliminary, to offer a few remarks with regard to the possibility of, and the necessity for a sociological and political critique of the Church herself. For practical purposes and in the concrete a critique of the Church herself of this kind is the necessary prior condition enabling her to fulfil her function as providing a sociological critique of society, something which is demanded of her today, and that too on the assumption and with the impression that she is not *de facto* fulfilling this function to a sufficient extent, and is herself insufficiently equipped for the fulfilling of it. These [231] facts in themselves are sufficient to justify the approach we are taking here.

The Church is a social entity. She is this even as embodied in the different Churches, and even though at the theoretical level these Churches have a very different theological understanding of their own nature, and that too precisely with regard to their sociological constitution. All Churches are institutionally constituted. They have social structures and institutions, and even though they may not wish to do so, they do in fact exercise an authority which is prior to the free decision and assent of the individuals within them. They do this not merely with regard to society in general, but also with regard to the individual and the smaller groups belonging to these Churches themselves. The Church and the Churches are themselves social entities. In the light of this it is obvious that they are inevitably exposed to the dangers which threaten every process of social institutionalization, namely that these institutions do not adapt themselves swiftly enough to the changes in the historical situation, that they are made an end in themselves, that they become merely conservative forces which lose living contact with other social realities. From this point of view alone it is clear that with regard to the concrete forms of social institutionalization which she has undergone the Church is open ever anew to criticism, and stands in need of criticism even while that understanding of her nature which derives from the Church's own faith credits her with an ultimately abiding identity persisting throughout history and in accordance with the will of her founder. If, as the Second Vatican Council says, the Church always remains an *ecclesia semper reformanda*, then there can be no doubt that this applies not merely to her 'moral' situation, and does not merely imply that as a sinful Church of sinners[5] she must take refuge again and again from her own sinfulness in the grace of God in Christ. It also implies that she stands again and again in need of reform in respect of her forms of institutionalism. Applying this to the Catholic Church, it means, for instance, that the relationship between clergy and the people of the Church, the relationship between centralization in the Church and autonomy on the part of the subdivisions of the Church, the introduction of democratic structures, and much else besides, constitute subject-matter for an ever-fresh enquiry, and are subject to historical change even though, on a Catholic understanding of the Church certain specific structures belong to the *jus divinum* of the Church and are abiding. For our present purposes, however, it will not be the individual material details of a [232] critique of the sociological aspects of the Church of this kind that we shall be considering, because this would lead us too far from what is our real theme.

Let us confine ourselves to adding one further observation with regard to the sociological and political criticism of the Church herself. Only a Church with a clear and unambiguous creed and dogma can be subjected to this critique. The dogma is itself the necessary prior

[5] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'The Church of Sinners' and 'The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 253-269 and 270-294.

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condition for a critique.[6] This statement may sound surprising. Nevertheless it seems to me to be valid. Obviously it is possible to apply negative criticisms to a social institution from a standpoint which it itself does not share. But in that case all that we can do is precisely to apply negative criticisms to it. We can only transform an institution by criticizing it precisely if we can appeal in this criticism of ours to its own understanding of its nature, if we can demonstrate to it that the actual concrete form it has come to assume is, at least in part, in contradiction to that which it recognizes as its own true nature, as the law governing its initial emergence, and which it itself seeks to approximate to ever anew, albeit as an asymptotic ideal. But in the nature of the case this means that when we develop a critique of the Church we do so on the basis of her own theological understanding of her own nature, in other words, of her own dogma. Thus this critique can constitute an intrinsic element in herself. It is not a critique *ab externo* which either fails to affect her or else destroys her. Rather it is a critique from within, based on the intrinsic tension within her between that which she herself seeks to be and that which she *de facto* is. This interior critique as an element in the Church herself does not cease to be interior to her merely because this critique always at the same time takes occasion of an external historical situation in which the Church is involved at the secular level, and needs to take occasion of this in order to emerge and to become articulate. Opposition, criticism, protest, belong to the very life of the Church herself because she recognizes her own nature as the pilgrim Church, the Church of justice, of respect for the dignity of man, of love etc., and of its very nature such criticism provides weapons to be used in the war against her own inadequacies. Any sociological critique of the Church herself is itself an element in the Church precisely at those points at which in the name of the Church herself it protests against such inadequacies, [233] where the critique as such is based upon a committed faith in her. However, a critique of the Church in the name of the Church is always possible because her own understanding of her own nature is always wider, freer, and more exalted than that which is *de facto* realized in the form which she assumes in history, and is in fact wider in scope than that which we have already formulated to ourselves about her at the level of speculation and theory. To understand the significance of a critique of the Church conducted from within the Church herself in this way does not mean that the critical dialogue with the official Church which we conduct must always take the form simply of a peaceful and friendly discussion between two bodies who are at basis totally at one from the first. We can already see in the controversy between Peter and Paul that this critical dialogue can also take the form of a face-to-face confrontation, a genuine struggle as to the shape of a future which neither of the disputants can plan beforehand in any adequate sense.

II. The Self-Critical Church as an Authoritative Critic of Society

This brings us to our real theme, namely the function of this Church as a critic of society when she is herself in turn subject to criticism, and changes in response to it. First let us put forward considerations with regard to why a function of criticizing society of this kind is to be ascribed to the Church on the basis of her own understanding of her own nature.

1. The Distinction Between Criticism of Society on the Church's Part and Political Action.

[6] Dogma, considered as the Christian Church's articulation of her awareness of her own nature, constitutes on the one hand the basis from which the Church (in contrast to other forces of criticism) is able to criticize the world and society from her own standpoint, and on the other the standard by which to determine more precisely the goal of such criticism.

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In order to avoid from the outset certain misunderstandings which it is very easy to fall into it must first be emphasized that the thesis concerning the function of the Church as a critic of society is not intended to conjure up the idea of a Church actively engaged in politics. It is obvious that the Church cannot deprive secular society and the institutions belonging to it of its political decision making, and also that it has no intention of doing this; that the Church cannot act as a higher authority to manipulate or control this autonomous secular society.[7] Perhaps it is true that in the course of history she often has done this, sometimes for good reasons and sometimes for bad. But she should not do it, and moreover she has [234] basically and explicitly committed herself to this principle in ever clearer measure. Culture, history, society, state and the economy are all matters which the Church neither can nor should in any direct sense control, guide, or manipulate. Nor is it possible to justify such a course on her part by invoking the so-called natural law, even though the Church considers herself to be the guardian and interpreter of this. For even this natural law, considered as the sum total of those demands which have a permanent claim to be recognized as valid by man in his decisions has itself a history and, what is more important still, it does not in itself yield any absolutely unreserved and concrete imperatives such as would deprive man and society of the power to commit themselves to historical decisions, and such as could be arrived at deductively by the Church herself. The function of the Church as a critic of society, therefore, does not imply that the Church herself should engage in politics either explicitly or behind the scenes. Obviously in her position as one social group within a pluralistic society[8] she both can and should defend and maintain the position that her members, even as constituted in free social groupings, have the right to exercise an influence on society as a whole in legitimate ways, and has the same rights in this respect as any group in a society of this kind. The Church can proclaim and put forward those moral maxims which she regards as norms defining the limits within which every moral decision, and so too every political decision, must fall. And she can do this without exercising any illegitimate compulsion upon others. Again with regard to power, even though this may be engaged on the side either of sin or of the kingdom of God in the world, the Church can develop a theology of power[9] through which she can, under certain circumstances, communicate to those actively engaged in politics a more or less impartial attitude towards power. But presumably this is still far from being sufficient to enable us to achieve a clear view of the true function of the Church as a critic of society, a function which in no sense consists in political activity on the part of the Church herself. It is not easy to define in the abstract what this function of the Church as a critic of society is, having due regard to these [235] factors. Indeed if the function of criticizing society is intended precisely to be a critique of existing practical activities with a view to further practical activities – in other words a stimulus designed to bring about a real alteration in society, and not merely a theory of what social activity ought to be – it is in principle quite impossible to obtain an idea of it by means of a mere theoretical and general statement of its nature, just as it is quite impossible in any adequate sense to reduce will to intellect, hope to faith, practice to theory, orthodox practice to orthodox thought. With this proviso, which in spite of its decisive importance cannot be thought out any more fully at this

[7] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Theological Problems Entailed in a "Pastoral Constitution" ', *Theological Investigations* X (London and Freiburg, 1973), pp. 293-317; *idem*, 'Theological Reflections on the Problem of Secularization', *ibid*., pp. 318-348; *idem*, *Gnade als Freiheit* (Freiburg, 1968), esp. pp. 64-67, 80-82.
[8] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on Dialogue Within a Pluralistic Society', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 31-42; *idem*, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/1 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 208-214.
[9] For an introduction to the problems involved cf. R. Hauser, 'Macht', *Handbuch theologische Grundbegriffe* II (Munich, 1963), pp. 98-111 (bibliog.). In addition to this cf. esp. K. Rahner, 'The Theology of Power', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 391-409; *idem*, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 358 ff., 362 ff., 365 ff. (bibliog. pp. 337-341).

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point, we may attempt to make the following statement with regard to the nature of the function of the Church as critic of society: It consists in opening up ever anew a perspective which transcends the concrete social reality such that within this perspective the social reality concerned appears in its relative value, and so as capable of alteration. To the recognition of this relative value and alterability of the social reality as it *de facto* exists it adds a further factor. For it provides the opportunity and the power to introduce practical changes into this reality even though it does not supply with this any concrete formula or any absolute imperative for a quite specific new social reality to be introduced by the use of creative forces in history. It cannot supply any such concrete formula and does not seek to do so. In other words this function of the Church as critic of society does not *ipso facto* or in itself constitute any absolute political decision.

2. The Origins of the Perspective Provided by the Church as Critic of Society as Found in the Gospel Itself.

This critical perspective as applied to social realities and changes in social politics can, to the extent that it is opened up by the Church, only be the gospel which the Church preaches and lives by,[10] though of course this is not to deny, but rather to maintain, that the Church herself needs to be brought back ever anew by her own Spirit to this gospel as providing the perspective for social criticism. She needs to be brought back to it by her own history, to which the history of the world itself belongs. The task to which we must now apply ourselves, therefore, is first to throw light in somewhat greater detail on the question of why and how the [236] gospel of the Church has the significance of providing a perspective of this kind, opening up possibilities for social criticism.

The first point to be considered is concerned with the difference and the separation that has grown up today between the Church and secular society.[11] This is something which more clearly than in former times makes it possible and requisite for the Church to adopt a critical position with regard to society. And it is a factor which ultimately corresponds to the nature of the Church herself, albeit only in her later historical development. Let us consider the process by which the world has been de-numinized. From a position in which it and man himself constituted a static reality controlled by God and representing him directly, and immutably prior to the exercise of man's own freedom, it has come to be material for man himself to control by the free exercise of his critical faculties. This therefore is the process of secularization,[12] and despite the danger of a sinful and atheistic interpretation inherent in it it is a process which, ultimately speaking, has been demanded and initiated by Christianity's own understanding of God, of the world, of man, of history, and of the nature of the Church

[10] If the Church seeks adequately to reproduce in her own life that impulse which she must of necessity receive from any critical theory of society, her way of achieving this should not be through any excessive application of theological concepts or through the mere further exploitation of a borrowed conceptual apparatus. Instead she must achieve it by seeking the answer she needs from the gospel, critically enquiring into it and submitting herself to the message it yields.

[11] For basic information on this complex cf. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 415-448; II/1, pp. 222-233; II/2, pp. 109-267. In particular in the context of our present enquiry cf. W. D. Marsch, *Gegenwart Christi in der Gesellschaft* (Munich, 1965).

[12] On the principles governing the relationship between the Church and the world cf. K. Rahner, 'Kirche und Welt', *Zehn Jahre katholische Akademie in Bayern* edited by the same (Würzburg, 1967), pp. 9-27; *idem*, 'Theological Reflections on the Problems of Secularization', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 318-348; From the comprehensive literature on this subject the following studies in particular may be mentioned: H. Cox, *Stadt ohne Gott* (Stuttgart, 3rd ed., 1967); F. Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 2nd ed., 1958); H. Lübbe, *Säkularisierung* (Freiburg and Munich, 1965); H. Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt, 1966).

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herself. This remains true even though the Church as she exists in the concrete has very often sought in matters of detail to close herself to this development and to act against her own ultimate understanding of her own nature. This means that the development which leads away from the state Church and the ecclesiastical state towards a secularized world, and so too to a manifest separation between Church and secular society is legitimate, even though the concrete form which this separation has assumed has in practice always been subject to sinful corruption for which both parties are responsible.

Yet it is precisely through this separation, and only through it, that it has become more clearly possible for the Church to exercise her function as a critic of society. Certainly it is true that the Church herself is constituted [237] as a society. At the same time she has an abiding place in the world, and this means that she herself is justifiably exposed to contradiction arising from criticisms of her as a society. The reason for this is that even in this state of separation it is quite impossible for her to avoid participating in the social life of the environment in which she exists at any given time together with the short-comings inherent in it. But for all this the position in which she stands today – and moreover it is a position which she has accepted and willed – is one of greater separation from secular society and the institutions belonging to it which have critically to be called in question. The age of Constantine with the imperial Church and the bond between throne and altar is at an end, even though this stage must not be short-sightedly condemned as the age of a Church that has been made worldly, a base surrender of the gospel to a sinful world. On the contrary it can equally well be interpreted as a commitment of the Church to the world, albeit one which in the specific historical form which it assumed, was transient, and this commitment of the Church to the world is something which is precisely demanded of the Church today, albeit in a quite different form. It is also true that many remnants of this Constantinian age, with its naïve symbiosis between Church and society, gospel and world, still survive today in the most divers forms among the so-called Christian nations. Such survivals would only be qualified as reprehensible from the outset if we were to adopt the position that every social commitment in which the Church seeks to impress her Spirit upon concrete social realities as well is from the outset reprehensible.

The secularization of the present-day world, then, is something which derives historically from the spirit and intention of Christianity itself. And it is a primary condition enabling the Church to exercise a critical function with regard to society.

The Church seeks to be the mediatrix of salvation to the individual man in God's sight, working in God's power and towards him as her goal. But the Church has never interpreted this salvation in an individualistic sense as a matter of man's merely private and interior life.[13] It is true that as a result of the process by which the world has become more worldly the danger of misunderstanding Christianity, faith, religion, and salvation in this individualistic sense has become very great, and certainly it cannot be said that Christianity and the Churches have not in a measure succumbed to this temptation. The Churches can misunderstand the process of secularization by regarding it as a sign that they should withdraw into [238] themselves, into the private interior lives of their individual members and by regarding the sphere of interior conscience and the individual quest for salvation as the sole sphere in which the Church can still exist in the present-day secularized world. But any such understanding of Christianity and Church would, after all, constitute a radical misunderstanding in which the Church would find herself in contradiction to her own true understanding of her own nature.

[13] To the extent that political theology is directed against this tendency to restrict salvation to the private sphere it represents a genuine concern of the Church.

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God's promise of himself to man is addressed not only to each individual in the freedom of his own unique personhood. From its very origins this promise is at the same time aimed at mankind as a unity, a unity which is always historically and socially constituted. It is aimed at history, society, the people of God.[14] As the subject to whom God's grace-bestowed will to save is addressed, the individual is always aimed at as the member of a community of mankind, and always and necessarily this also has a social manifestation. Original sin, saving history as a factor in the life of the community, the redemption of all through one, salvation through the mediation of the Church – these, and many other data of the Christian faith are in radical contradiction to a conception which would seek to confine Christianity exclusively to the sphere of the individual's private interior life. Salvation and grace are wrought out in that which constitutes the social basis for what is called saving history and the Church, and these are in themselves a historical and social embodiment in space and time. Now if this is true, then this reality necessarily comes into contact with other social realities, shares a common life with them in a single sphere of human existence in which there are no absolute rules of separation, and in view of this it must adopt a critical position towards, and call in question these other social realities which constitute its environment and modify them. As a reality which is constantly also achieving visible form at the social level, it is quite impossible in principle for salvation not to be concerned with the social realities within which it has to be realized and made manifest in history.

A further point is that the dimension of the explicitly sacral, of the cult and of the preaching of the gospel, is far from being identical with the dimension in which salvation is achieved.[15] This sphere in which salvation [239] is achieved is identical with the sphere of human existence in general. As the mediatrix of salvation, therefore, it is quite impossible for the Church to adopt an attitude of indifference towards this total sphere of human existence which also always involves social structures. And this is just as true as it is true that she should not determine or manipulate this sphere in any direct sense. For in fact it is an intrinsic part of what is demanded of the Christian as such – precisely that he shall commit himself to the world while it still remains worldly as a matter of his own personal venture and decision.

The possibility of the Church exercising a critical function towards secular society can be made still clearer from a different aspect. Christianity is the proclamation of the absolute hope in the absolute future which is God himself,[16] God himself in his unassailable dominion, a dominion which cannot be established by man, himself wills to be the infinite future of man, infinitely transcending all that man could ever plan or fashion for himself. The movement towards this future is implanted in the world all along by the universal will of God to save through that which in Christian terms we call grace. God himself is the sustaining ground, the ultimate perspective and orientation for the total movement of man through history, whether he is explicitly aware of it or only experiences it at the unconscious level and without acknowledging it in the movement of the personal history of his own spirit as it develops in freedom. From this standpoint, therefore, an infinite perspective of this kind and an infinite entelecheia implanted in history in this sense serve as standpoints from which to criticize and estimate the relative value of all the individual goals which can be planned and

[14] As an introduction to the problems involved cf. K. Rahner, 'History of the World and Salvation History', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 97-114.

[15] On the question of desacralization cf. H. Schürmann, 'Neutestamentliche Marginalien zur Frage der "Entsakralisierung"', *Der Seelsorger* 38 (1968), pp. 38-48 and 89-104; *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* II/2, pp. 35-45; A. Th. van Leeuwen, *Christentum in der Weltgeschichte. Das Heil und die Säkularisation* (Stuttgart, 1967).

[16] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Marxist Utopia and the Christian Future of Man', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 59-68; *idem*, 'The Church and the Parousia of Christ', *ibid*, pp. 295-312; *idem*, the articles grouped under the general heading 'Eschatology' in *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 235-291.

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set up on the part of historical man, and they impart to all these the character of the provisional, that which can be transcended, that which is merely transient and that which can be called in question. These finite, intermediate and individual goals and particular forms in which man realizes himself in his own history are not rendered insignificant or indifferent by this fact. On the contrary it is precisely in virtue of this alone that they achieve their radical importance and their inexorable seriousness. For it is only through them, and not in by-passing them, that man can realize his assent of faith and hope to his absolute future. But precisely as particular goals of this kind, and as being never [240] more than provisional and capable of being transcended, they are subject to critical evaluation from the standpoint of a higher goal. This is that perspective of infinitude, that infinite point of orientation, which man has come to terms with as such and in itself once he has been endowed with grace. A further point is that this ultimate and infinite point of orientation is something far more than merely that which enables man constantly to set before him particular goals definable in terms of subordinate categories of being. But the critical evaluation of these particular and 'this worldly' goals from this standpoint is not merely a formal disclosure of their relative status. As has already been said, a mutually conditioning relationship does in fact exist between the experience and the acceptance in faith of the absolute future of God on the one hand, and the realization of 'this worldly' tasks and goals on the other.

The assent to the absolute future of God, and so the recognition of the relative status of these 'this worldly' goals, is achieved in the affirmation of these particular goals within history, and not in a mere attitude of discarding them in a flight from the world. And the recognition of their relative status, so far from diminishing their importance, actually increases it.[17]

We can achieve a realization of how possible it is for the gospel and the Church as representative of this gospel to exercise a critical function in relation to society from yet another point of view, and one that is very well known to Christians, namely from the Christian perception of the unity between love of God and love of neighbour.[18] It is a basic conviction of the gospel that love of God can be effectively realized in the transient state only in the act of love of neighbour, and that love of neighbour achieves its radical depths and its absolute significance only when either explicitly, or at any rate in a state in which it has not been consciously formulated, it itself constitutes love of God as the innermost reality of man. This is something which we must plainly recognize, and in doing so we must grasp the fact that love of neighbour is no mere matter of natural disposition, or of some private inclination of our own towards someone else. On the contrary it is an act which has to permeate all the social dimensions of human life, and which implies soberly and realistically giving others their due and respecting their freedom in the social sphere as well. A further [241] point which we must recognize is that this love of neighbour as understood here has to impose its influence in a world that is constantly sinful, a world of injustice and self-alienation on man's part. And once we recognize all this, then it becomes clear that this unity between love of God and love of neighbour implies an attitude of protest and criticism of society.

Finally attention may be drawn to one last aspect from which we can achieve a further insight into what is meant by saying that the Church has the function of criticizing society. The gospel is always and essentially a gospel of the Cross as well, of the acceptance of failure and death within this world in a spirit of faith and hope. Christian theology is always a theology of the Cross. Even the Cross should not be interpreted in a private sense. The death of Christ is certainly not the death of a social revolutionary who, in his activities merely as a

[17] In this connection cf. K. Rahner, 'The Question of the Future' in this volume pp. 181-201.
[18] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249.

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critic of society and nothing more, is reduced to failure. At the same time, however, this death of his did take place in the social and public life of Israel, and in a hostile confrontation with the social forces and institutions then prevailing. It was no merely private fate which befell him but a public one, a political event, if we like to express it in these terms. If we cannot be Christians except by following our crucified Lord in the assent of faith and hope to all the futility of human existence, which at least in death achieves its most radical and palpable manifestation, if, furthermore, this act of faith and hope in accepting the futility of existence on the part of the Christian has to be posited not merely in purely cultic acts or in the private and interior sphere alone, but in the hard down-to-earth secular sphere of the Christian's worldly life, then it follows that from his Christian understanding of existence the Christian can find the understanding and the courage to venture upon that commitment which he has to take upon himself without any assurance of success and which has to be ventured upon in any really effective attempt at achieving social change in the struggle against all the forces in society that cling onto their own selfish interests.[19]

[242] 3. The Upholders of the Function of Criticizing Society in the Church.

From the question of why and how the function of criticizing society is in principle to be attributed to the Church on the basis of the gospel we now turn to another question, that namely of who are the upholders of this function in the Church.

When we speak of the function of the Church as a critic of society, we are influenced by a certain concept of the Church which in practice still persists and has not wholly been overcome. This leads us to think primarily of the official Church and so of the hierarchy. In fact the protest of young Catholics of the present day, of the 'critical' movement in Catholicism, of the 'Kapo' etc., constantly involves a reproach levelled against the officially appointed authorities of the Church for their lack of commitment to social criticism. Indeed this protest goes so far as to accuse them of entering into an unChristian union with the social establishment.[20] This means that it is assumed, whether tacitly or explicitly, that it is precisely in her officially appointed authorities that the Church must discharge this function of hers of social criticism. Now certainly it is justifiable to say that a function of this kind also belongs to the officially appointed authorities in the Church as such. At the same time, however, we must recognize what this function precisely consists in and what limitations are imposed upon it to the extent that it has to be exercised precisely by the officially appointed authorities as such. The true nature of this function of criticizing society as exercised by the officially appointed authorities as such has hardly been thought out as yet at the theological level. For perhaps two hundred years we have been accustomed to distinguish the basic task of the

[19] Clearly we cannot treat of all the possibilities here, as for instance the question of whether a basis can be found for the function of the Church as critic of society in that problem of biblical criticism, the 'delay of the Parousia', or whether it can be arrived at through a discussion of the reproach that earlier presentations of eschatology have been lacking in any historical sense.

A further point to be considered as a counter to that reproach which is often too hastily raised, namely that Christianity has restricted itself to the 'private' sphere, is that even the most 'private' form of religion, provided only that it is genuine and vital in its practice, necessarily has extremely significant social effects. For instance it can bring man to the point of recognizing the evil elements in his existence as merely 'relative' and to experience them as such instead of according them an 'absolute' status. Any enquiry into a function of social criticism should not neglect this simple fact.

[20] 'Kapo' = 'Catholic Extraparliamentarian Opposition'. However it is not the opposition groups among Catholics who have initiated this reproach. Rather it has already been expressed in far sharper form in other works in which it is used to express the suspicion of those concerned that the Church is collaborating with the ruling powers. Such a work is that of P. Blanshad, *Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power* (London, 1952); R. Hernegger, *Macht ohne Auftrag* (Freiburg, 1963); K. H. Deschner, *Mit Gott und den Faschisten* (Stuttgart, 1965).

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hierarchy into three official functions, and it has been assumed that these three official functions are sufficient to define and to delineate the total area covered by the tasks proper to the hierarchy. This threefold division has been re-stated above all at the Second Vatican Council. Yet the Church's function as a critic of society can hardly be subsumed under any of these three official functions of the hierarchy. It is immediately [243] obvious that the task of the official authorities in the Church as critics of society cannot be subsumed under the heading of the teaching or priestly office, for on the one hand the task of the teaching office strictly as such is to preach the gospel in its abiding and permanent validity, even though, of course, under the direction of the teaching office this preaching has to be made relevant ever afresh and performed in a manner appropriate to the intellectual and social situation. A further reason why it is impossible to subsume the Church's function as critic of society under the teaching office is that obviously the more practical conclusions to be drawn from this gospel, to the extent that they can be arrived at by a process of deduction, are still not sufficient in themselves to represent the total contents and the real contents of that social criticism which we can expect from the Church and even from her official authorities. Again with regard to the pastoral office in practice at least we understand this as a task of guiding and instructing the faithful in the specifically religious sphere. And this means that it would be very difficult to subsume this function of the official Church as a critic of society under this heading of the pastoral office.

It can justifiably be said, therefore, that the function of the official authorities of the Church as critics of society has still not found any clear theological *topos* for itself. This is not very surprising in view of the fact that this theme is capable of emerging into clarity only when social change proceeds more rapidly, comes more clearly to be recognized as a fact and a necessity, and is recognized as something that has to be planned for by man and for which man himself has to take responsibility. We must realize, then, that this task of criticizing society which belongs to the official Church has still not achieved any theological definition, and so too any recognized position in theology. And once we do realize this fact we may perhaps characterize it as prophetic[21] instruction in social criticism. There are two points to be made about such instruction. First it is something different from mere theoretical teaching, with all the deductive (still, therefore remaining at the theoretical level) applications to a historical and social situation which this entails. On the other hand it implies a practical appeal to the freedom of Christians and of the world to take historical decisions, an appeal which leaves unimpaired in those to whom it is addressed the freedom to take historical decisions of their own and their personal creative responsibility. At the same time, however, it [244] does not withhold from them the offering of a concrete course of action which of their freedom they can, and actually should decide to adopt provided only that they experience this course of action that is recommended in its own right as well, as that which is prescribed and demanded by the circumstances of that particular moment in history, something which cannot ultimately be determined on any theoretical basis.

We could call this function of social criticism prophetic instruction because as instruction it is not simply a conclusion deduced from general Christian norms, and it can be called prophetic to the extent that it is the outcome of a conviction that it is sustained not merely by those 'this worldly' forces from which the future can be held to derive, but by the spirit of Christ.

A prophetic instruction of this kind, which must be distinguished from the teaching put forward by the teaching office and by the binding directives of the pastoral office, can surely be ascribed to the official authorities in the Church, since on the one hand the function of

[21] On the concept of 'prophetic instruction' cf. 'On the Theological Problems Involved in a "Pastoral Constitution"', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 260-272.

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social criticism in the Church cannot be sustained merely by the individual Christian or by individual groups of Christians alone. A further point is that in practice the official bodies in the Church actually have really promulgated guidance in social criticism of this kind, recommending it to Christians and to the world in their historical freedom, at any rate in recent times. Let us consider, for example, two encyclicals of the recent popes, 'Mater et Magistra' and 'Populorum Progressio', and also the document of the Second Vatican Council entitled 'Gaudium et Spes'. It would surely be to deny the true nature of these documents if we sought to reduce the pronouncements contained in them to mere general norms at a merely theoretical level in the sphere of social politics, albeit concretized, to some extent. What they contain is something more concrete: proposals, imperatives, a utopian element, if we like to call it so, and this is presented not as doctrine or binding prescription, but as something that is recommended to the historically created freedom of man. This remains true even though the authors of these pronouncements may not have been consciously aware, in any strict sense, of the difference between orthodox teaching and the directives of the pastoral office on the one hand, and a recommendation to orthodox practice on the other. But from this point of view too we can understand the limits imposed upon the official bodies in the Church in exercising the function of social criticism in this way. It is not only that its pronouncements in this direction are for the most part an echo of, and a taking up of criticisms of society which have initially emerged as a charismatic movement from below. It is far from being the case that they [245] can be demanded *ipso facto* as an exclusive initiative on the part of the official bodies. Such instructions in social criticism on the part of the official body are quite different from the doctrinal pronouncements of faith and the decisions of the pastoral office in their application to the free historical decision of the Christian and of the world, and of their very nature are (whether explicitly or implicitly) subject to criticism on the part of the faithful and of the world. In order to achieve a better understanding of what has been said by means of an example we need only for instance to think of the desire for a super-UNO, or of the concrete proposals for aid to developing countries.

But the main promoters of a function of social criticism of this kind in the Church are the Christians in general and their formal and informal groupings within the Church, in other words the so-called laity themselves. Precisely in this respect the Christians themselves are something more than mere recipients of directives from the official bodies. They have to develop an autonomous initiative of their own from which they alone are responsible. They can do this even when they are not specifically commissioned or particularly encouraged to do so by the official bodies in the Church. They can do this even when the *de facto* attitude of the Church's authorities is by contrast so much at variance with such initiatives as to appear to restrict them. Under certain circumstances they can and must do this in the name of the gospel and their own Christian moral responsibility even when on the one hand other Christians or Christian groups oppose them in it, while on the other an autonomous initiative of this kind, together with the antagonisms within the Church which it entails, must still preserve mutual love and the unity of the Church. This is explicitly stated in 'Gaudium et Spes' in the following pronouncement which this Constitution contains concerning the laity: 'Often precisely a Christian view of things will cause one particular solution to recommend itself to them in a given concrete situation. More frequently, however, and certainly legitimately, it is the case that other Christians, while exercising the same degree of conscientiousness and applying themselves to the same question, may arrive at a different judgement. In such cases it is very easy, even when it is contrary to the will of the parties involved, for either solution to be regarded by many others as clearly following from the message of the gospels. But a fact which should never be lost sight of is that in such cases no-one has the right to claim the authority of the Church exclusively on his own behalf and in

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defence of his own opinion. But they should constantly seek to help one another in an open dialogue in order to clarify the question involved. In doing this [246] they should preserve mutual love, and above all bear in mind the common good'.[22]

We cannot interpret this text of the Council any more closely here. But it will be clear from it that even though specific individual groups of Christians cannot claim the authority of the official Church herself they can appeal to the authority of the gospel. In other words they are authorized by the Church herself to conceive of and attempt to carry through a social programme even in those cases in which their particular conception of society in the future is not that of another group within the Church. The function of specific members and groups within the Church in criticizing society extends further, therefore, than that of the official authorities within the Church as such.

III. The Problems Entailed in a Theology of Revolution

Today the question of the function of the Church as a critic of society (taking 'Church' here to include the several different sense of the term distinguished above) is sharpening into the question of a theology of revolution and force.[23] And in view of this an attempt must be made to say something further on this point within the extremely brief compass available. First it must be pointed out that the concepts of revolution and force are extremely abstract and ambiguous, so that from this point of view alone the question of any Christian justification of revolution and force becomes complex and ambiguous in the extreme. The border-lines between evolution and revolution in social relationships is extremely difficult to determine. And even if we say that revolution is the introduction of change into social relationships by means of force, whereas a social evolution takes place without force, still this way of drawing the border-line between the two is not really clear. For this is merely to shift the terms of the question so that it becomes a question of what constitutes force. If we define force (and from the existential and ontological aspect it would be perfectly reasonable to do so) as the bringing about of change [247] in that situation in which another is freely placed prior to any freely given approval on his part to this change, then it becomes clear that unless we allow an element of force as understood here to enter in it is absolutely impossible for men to live together at all. For by our activities, with the autonomy and spontaneity inherent in them, we are constantly altering the situation freely belonging to others without any prior assent on their part, whether we wish it or not. On this showing then it is clear that every evolution also includes an element of revolution in the sense defined below, so that any distinction between social evolution and revolution becomes a question of the proportion between the two elements of evolution and revolution present in any concrete social change. But this question in turn leads on to the further one of striking the right balance in a mixture of this kind, a decision which can no longer be arrived at by means of the speculative reason alone, but is a matter for the practical reason, for freedom, for social decision, and so once more in turn a question of the power which is in fact involved and applied.

But to extricate ourselves from all these existential and ontological lines of enquiry, if we want to say that in all these questions what is being treated of is not power in a metaphysical

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[22] Quoted according to the version of K. Rahner and H. Vorgrimler, *Kleines Konzilskompendium* (Freiburg, 1967), p. 492.

[23] For the sake of comparison see nn. 3 and 4, as well as the compendium volume edited by H. E. Bahr, *Weltfrieden und Revolution* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1968). On the flood of studies on the theology of revolution currently appearing it must be observed by way of criticism that in their essentials they no longer have any new patterns to present, but for the most part constitute discussions of old principles with a mere change of emphasis in the direction of revolutionary pathos.

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sense but that particular kind of power which is effectively felt by the average man as an incursion upon his freedom in a concrete historical situation which is never the same – in other words of 'bloody force' – then the whole problem is certainly set on a somewhat more concrete and manageable plane, but is not rendered much easier to solve thereby, for even then it still remains an open question what such 'bloody' force, assumed to be unjust, means in the concrete. For instance those who uphold an absolute rejection of (bloody) force in bringing about changes in society certainly do not confine their objections merely to manslaughter and similar brutal measures against humanity. The border-line between justifiable and unavoidable force and the kind of force that is condemned as bloody and reprehensible remains obscure in the extreme.[24] With these provisos all that we can assert is surely the following: On the basis of the Sermon on the Mount the Christian will always argue in favour of the least possible use of power in bringing about changes in society, though admittedly with the proviso that a principle of this kind, which he accepts with absolute sincerity, does not condemn him to immobility, and that it is not used as a means for consolidating the kinds of social relationships which are unjust and amount [248] to an oppression of humanity.[25] The Christian will stand firm in the conviction that we are still far from having sufficiently thought out, formulated in practical terms, distinguished, or applied, the possibilities and methods of producing non-violent change in social conditions. At the same time, however, he will be aware of the fact that concupiscence is an abiding factor in the human situation, and one which constantly prevents man from achieving an absolute transformation of the world solely on the basis of the single and central idea of love. And in view of this the Christian will not commit himself to the declaration that any application of force, or even one which may lead to human killing, is immoral and unChristian in any possible situation in society.[26] According to Pius XI[27] situations may arise in which the social order not merely institutionalizes particular kinds of injustice but actually threatens the ultimate basis of human living and human rights. And in such cases even a revolutionary struggle in the true sense and including the use of force in the concrete sense of the term is permitted and, in certain circumstances, actually prescribed. Of course the question of where to draw the boundary line between institutions that are unjust in either the first or the second sense is, once more, a question of degree, and one surely to which no one univocal solution can be found even by Churchmen who seek to draw their inspiration from the gospel and the Sermon on the Mount. Here then we find in its most extreme form the case envisaged in the text of the Council, a case of dissent between Christians in which both sides appeal to the gospel in support of their position.

Although at basis our remarks have been only very fragmentary, we [249] have spoken at length concerning the possibility and the duty of the Church exercising a function of criticism

[24] An enlightening discussion of these questions is provided by W. Benjamin, *Kritik der Gewalt* (Frankfurt, 1965), and also by B. Moore, *Zur Geschichte der politischen Gewalt* (Frankfurt, 1967).
[25] For a general treatment of the problems concerned here cf. R. Schnackenburg, 'Bergpredigt', *LTK* II (2nd ed. 1958), 223-227 (bibliog.); U. Luck, *Die Vollkommenheitsforderung der Bergpredigt* (Munich, 1968) (bibliog.), and P. Pokorny, *Der Kern der Bergpredigt* (Hamburg, 1969).
[26] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Peace on Earth', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and Baltimore, 1971), pp. 132-135; *idem*, 'The Peace of God and the Peace of the World', *Theological Investigations* X (London, 1970), pp. 371-388 (bibliog.); also, in order to refer to the most recent manifestations, cf. the articles by H. Marcuse, H. Morgenthau, F. M. Schmölz in *Neues Forum* XV (1968), pp. 702-713, and H. Schmidt, *Frieden* (Stuttgart, 1969); A. Mitscherlich, *Die Idee des Friedens und die menschliche Aggressivität* (Frankfurt, 1969).
[27] Cf. Pius XI, *Ep. encycl.* '*Firmissimam constantiam*' *ad episcopos foederatarum Mexici civitatum* (*18th March, 1937*), *AAS* 29 (1937), 189-199; for further information on the pronouncements of the official teaching authorities on this question cf. also R. Coste, *Le problème du droit de guerre dans la pensée de Pie XII* (Paris, 1962), and also the positions adopted by John XXIII in 'Pacem in terris', *AAS* 53 (1961), 401-464, and Paul VI in 'Populorum Progressio', *AAS* 59 (1967), 257-299.

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of society. All that we have said has remained at the level of abstract theory. For the question still remains: Is such a function of criticizing society in fact being fulfilled in the Church of the present day? Is it being exercised in the degree that is necessary and adequate? Is the Church – that is, are Christians and groups within the Church – such that, overcoming their own egoism, in a spirit of self-criticism and selflessness, they recognize and seek to change the institutionalized injustices in society which derogate from man and his dignity? Surely we shall have to answer this urgent question as follows: A function of social criticism of this kind does exist in the Church and is carried on by groups and individuals within her. But it is still very far indeed from being exercised in that measure which is demanded by the hour or by the historical circumstances now prevailing. The younger clergy in Spain or South America may already be alive to the necessity for seriously bending themselves to this task in the Church. Much of what the Popes have said in the last few years may represent a contribution to this task in so far as it is a task of the official authorities in the Church, though admittedly it has not met with any really effective response in the Church as a whole. But by and large the Church considered as the people of God has not yet bent itself to this task of social criticism, and not yet responded by any effective action. Where the Church herself is not directly threatened in any palpable sense by the institutions of society and the state, and where the leaders of thought in the Church (by this we refer to officials and laity alike) do not feel themselves directly injured by institutionalized injustice, there in all such cases the task of the Church as critic of society is still to a large extent neglected and remains unfulfilled. It is true that at the Second Vatican Council the Church has laid down more clearly than in former times that she exists to serve the world, that she is there on behalf of mankind and stands for a life worthy of mankind. But she is still far from having fulfilled in sufficient measure what she herself declares to be her mission. If we have understood what the Church is, namely ourselves and the whole people of God rather than merely the hierarchy, if it is clear what has been said up to this point with regard to the true upholders of the Church's function as critic of society, then we have pronounced judgement upon ourselves in saying that the Church is not yet that which the present and the future require her to be, and that she has not fulfilled her task in the political sphere, her task as critic of society. For when we say that this task belongs to the Church we have pointed to ourselves, called our own position in question, and probably accused ourselves too.

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[250]

VOLUME 12

LIST OF SOURCES

THE TEACHING OFFICE OF THE CHURCH IN THE PRESENT-DAY CRISIS OF AUTHORITY
Lecture delivered at the 30th Conference of the Ecumenical Study Circle of Protestant and Catholic Theologians at the Priory of Hardehausen from the 24th to the 28th of March 1969 on the theme 'Authority in Crisis', and to the KS G Würzburg on the 27th June 1969.
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ON THE DIACONATE
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HERESIES IN THE CHURCH TODAY?
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November 1968) and Koblenz (the 15th November 1968).
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Lecture delivered to the KHG Cologne on the 20th June 1969. Published in revized form as a contribution to the symposium volume, *Diskussion zur* '*Politischen Theologie*', edited by H. Peukert (Mainz, 1969), pp. 247-266.

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In the above list of sources not all the publications in German have been recorded. Radio broadcasts are adduced only if the article concerned was specially 'written for such broadcasts. Only the publication in which they initially appeared is adduced, whether this was in German or in a foreign language.

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PART ONE

Theology as Science

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1

ON RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THOMAS AQUINAS

The purpose of the present study must be defined here right at the outset so that everyone can know what he has to deal with in it. It is intended as a call to contemporary Catholic theologians not to forget Thomas Aquinas. From the time of Leo XIII onwards he has been *the* teacher in Catholic theology, the *Doctor Angelicus et Communis*. [1] Formerly his position as such was laid down in ecclesiastical law: the study of theology should be practised *ad mentem* Thomas Aquinas.[2] And although the tone adopted by the Second Vatican Council was already far less forceful, nevertheless it singled Thomas out for special mention in the course of its pronouncement on ecclesiastical studies.[3] Even the past few years have seen the appearance of serious studies on his theology, which rank higher than that type of doctorate thesis which consists in the presentation of various historical details but is incapable of making any dynamic impact on the theology of the future. In Rome too one more Congress of Thomists[4] was recently added to the many which have already been held in the past. Yet even so, in contemporary theology regarded as a whole, there is a strange silence on the subject of Thomas. We need only to glance at the catalogue of recent major publications in theology to recognize the extent to which Thomas has receded into the background among all those many theologians from whom it is found necessary to quote at [4] various points in any scholarly presentation of theology. Is this state of affairs so satisfactory? Should it be allowed to remain unchanged? That is the question.

We shall not be in a position to give a negative answer to this question until we have made one proviso. Right down to the most recent times it has been possible to regard Thomas as in a peculiarly direct sense *the* teacher in the schools of theology and for his *Summa* to be used as *the* textbook. All that the lecturer had to do in order to discharge his duties as a lecturer in theology was merely to supply a commentary on what he had written. Whether this approach was *de facto* universally adopted is another question. It was possible to adopt it, and to a large extent it actually was adopted, and, moreover, with the recommendation and approval of the official Church. And once this approach was adopted it was possible for great benefits to be reaped from it. ‘Whether changes should have been introduced at an even earlier stage is again a question which does not concern us here. Today we neither can nor should adopt

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[1] Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patri*s, dated 4 August 1879; cp. DS 34, 3135-3140.
[2] CIC c 1366 § 2.
[3] Vatican II, ‘Gravissimum educationis’ (*Declaration on Christian Education*), no.10, and the references there adduced to the address of Pope Paul VI to the Sixth International Congress of Thomists on 10 September 1965; cf. also ‘Optatam totius’ (*Decree on Priestly Formation*) no. 16, and also the references to addresses of Pope Pius XII (24 June 1939), and Pope Paul VI (12 March 1964).
[4] The Seventh International Congress of Thomists held at Rome from 7 to 12 September 1970; on this cf. the report by H. Beck in *Philos. Jahrhuch* 78 (1971), pp. 181-184.

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precisely *this* approach any longer, and. do not in fact do so. From being, in this peculiarly direct sense, *the* teacher of theology in the theological schools themselves, Thomas has acquired the status of a Father of the Church. He has receded into the background and become more remote. And this is something which we cannot alter. From this point of view any restoration of the former seminary Thomism, or of a direct and almost naive commitment to Thomas as to a contemporary figure, would be a betrayal of the Church and of the men of today. From having formerly been a teacher in this direct sense he has become a Father of the Church, an authority belonging to the same dimension as the great philosophers such as Plato or Aristotle, or the great theologians such as Augustine or Origen, more remote, less readily accessible, more isolated than he was before. And this remains true even though this authority which he carries is of a quite specific, peculiar, and unique kind of which we shall have to treat further. This state of affairs is quite inevitable. For after all between him and us lie seven hundred years of further and forceful developments in the history of ideas and the history of the world. Hence we cannot simply ignore all that lies between him and us. And of course this applies to theology too. The methods of teaching and the scientific approach envisaged by the Second Vatican Council for theology no longer ascribe to Thomas a status such that his works can be regarded simply as *the* textbook of theology for today.

But while recognizing all this we are still very far from being justified on this account in more or less forgetting Thomas, or only allowing him [5] still to have a place in our discussions as the subject of theological dissertations. He must remain alive in contemporary theology even though his function in it is more or less that of a Father of the Church. For in saying this we can still recognize that his function is of a unique kind by comparison with the other Fathers of the Church. The reason why it is necessary to recognize this is not merely that Thomas is one of the initiators of that anthropocentric approach which already has been for centuries, and still continues to be even today, a decisive influence on the cultural and intellectual life of Europe; not merely, in other words, that for anyone who seeks to reach back to the roots of his own situation, Thomas is one of the factors which he must not ignore. There are other reasons too, simpler than that which we have mentioned, to which Metz and others have already drawn our attention.[5]

Even in the speculative disciplines or arts there is a spirit of the age which raises problems. Even here, and not least in theology itself, it is inevitable that there should be historical development and change. The gospel has to be preached in ever fresh forms, adapted to the changing historical situations of its hearers. And hence theology is confronted again and again with fresh tasks. And, with the best will in the world – seeing that man and his capacity for attention are finite – such fresh tasks cannot simply be added on to those we already have, and so be fulfilled in such a way as to leave what has gone before totally unaffected. Whether we like it or not, fresh tasks tend to squeeze out former tasks and aims, which inevitably recede into the background. A theology which was not one-sided in any sense would be a bad theology. If we were so balanced as to accord an equal measure of our attention and capacities for work to every possible approach, this would merely be a secret excuse on our part for being reluctant, or even totally unwilling, to come to grips with the new tasks and duties that press in upon us. What we are saying here, then, does not imply any rejection of a legitimate one-sidedness, or of laying very strong emphases on particular aspects of a question, even in the study of theology. But there are also wrong kinds of one-sidedness, and to forget Thomas would be one such. To forget Thomas might be fashionable, but it could only lead to a blurring and circumscribing of that awareness of the past which is so fragile,

[5] A survey on the question of 'anthropomorphism' is provided by J. Splett in *Sacramentum Mundi* I (New York and London, 1968), pp. 40-41; on the same subject cf. J. B. Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik* (Munich, 1962), and the discussion arising from this, H. Meyer, 'Zur chrislichen Anthropozentrik', *Th. Rv.* 61 (1965), 9-12, and J. B. Metz, 'Nochmals: Christliche Anthropozentrik', *ibid*., pp. 13-16.

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the maintaining of which is [6] precisely the function of theology, and which, according to Metz, is the indispensable precondition for any genuinely enlightened attitude towards the present, and so too towards present-day theology.[6] Often that which we leave unspoken is precisely that which, in a strange way, we are suppressing, that which we do not want to consider because it calls for a critical questioning of our own position. In view of the silence of contemporary theologians on the subject of Thomas, this is a point to be borne in mind.

To put it more precisely: in the speculative disciplines it is necessary, if they are to remain alive, for us to maintain contact not merely with the ideas, but with the thinkers too, of earlier ages. In the physical sciences the learned figures of the past still continue to figure only through the busts set up to them at the entrances to laboratories or as names that are given to laws or units of measure. But with the speculative disciplines the situation cannot be the same. For in these the essential meaning of an idea is not present wholly and solely in the terms in which it is expressed. The actual process of thought leading up to the idea must be taken into account as well. For we always acquire deeper insights into the idea itself in and through this than in the proposition resulting from this thought process taken by itself. And we can always make the idea our own in a more satisfying way by taking the thought process behind it into account. Again and again we must think with a thinker if we are to achieve a genuine and radical insight into his ideas. In this field of the speculative disciplines the process of thinking with the thinker at the personal level is an intrinsic factor in the process of thinking objectively. It entails a dialogue that is constantly renewed with the great thinkers of the past who can never, properly speaking, be wholly out of date since the questions they raise can never be answered in such a way that the question in itself can be set aside as a problem that has definitively been solved. On these grounds alone, then, and abstracting from all other considerations, the history of philosophy, and *a fortiori* of theology, constitute intrinsic elements in philosophy and theology themselves such that without them these disciplines would always be subject to the contingent character of their own present, and, in the end, to destruction, and, moreover, precisely at that point at which their practitioners considered them so modern and relevant to the present that they imagined that they could dispense with that dialogue with their own past which is so necessary.

Thomas Aquinas is to be numbered among the great figures of theology [7] with whom any contemporary theology must engage in a genuine dialogue. This despite the interval of seven hundred years which separates him from us. Certainly he is not the sole partner with whom we so engage. There are others too. Nevertheless I believe that even today Thomas still remains, in a quite special and *unique* sense, a theologian of such magnitude that he must not cease to have a place in our discussions. In support of this opinion I will adduce only a few quite simple reasons. Thomas is first and foremost a theologian who, if the paradox may be permitted, is interested in that which is for the moment uninteresting. He is not the kind of theologian who is influenced by a mere fashion or succumbs to a monomania that blinds him to all other aspects except one. His attitude of balance and calm is such that he can give his attention to *a whole number* of theological questions. However true it may be to call him a *systematic* theologian, it is no less true that the importance he attaches to system never leads him to omit questions and valid findings which at first sight do not seem to be prompted either by his basic approach or by any special relevance they may have for him. It is consistent with this attitude that Thomas' reading and range of studies and general knowledge should also have been extraordinarily wide for his time. Points of common knowledge, points already made by others, and seemingly quite unexciting, are just as interesting to him as those which *he himself* recognizes for the first time or manages to embody in his system. So much

[6] Well treated of by J. B. Metz, 'Political Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi*, V (New York and London, 1970), pp. 34-38, together with the bibliography there adduced.

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is this the case that even when he brings out a point that is absolutely original to himself, he either never mentions the fact at all, or at most gives some indirect indication of it. Among the ancient Fathers of the Church, and among the theologians of his own age as well as of later ages, there may be not a few whom we find more immediately striking than him in virtue of their originality and creativity, their capacity for sudden fresh discoveries, the element of challenge and passionate commitment to their theories. But the theologian of today could learn certain simple lessons from him: to think *in breadth*, to have enough boldness to be modest and self-critical, to give devoted consideration to points which seem uninteresting or not relevant to the moment, to listen to, and take seriously, the views of others, even when they may at first be on a different wave-length from oneself in the arguments they put forward, to recognize genuinely and sincerely that one can only exercise self-criticism, and so be truly modern and avoid merely following the fashions of yesterday with the rest, by bearing in mind the ideas of earlier ages. This is why Thomas' tone is gentle and restrained. He is not concerned to dress his ideas up in impressive terms. In speaking of great matters he does not find it necessary [8] to make them still greater by the greatness of his words. His ideas are consistently developed in the perspective of, and orientated towards, the whole. He does not seek to make an impression, but is rather himself impressed by the matters he is treating of. Even as he seeks to express and impart his ideas to others he is still meditating upon them and making their reality his own. And because of all this he is almost speaking to himself, patient with himself and the question he is treating of, and courteous towards his opponents insofar as he either has, or ever could have, any such at all in view of the intrinsic breadth and magnitude of his spirit. He is the systematic theologian who consistently considers each individual point in the light of clearly conceived ultimate principles; the theologian who, in his questioning, is preoccupied with fundamentals and not much concerned with the complexities and variegations of the concrete world. But because he is a realist, the specific point of detail represents something more for him than merely an occasion for discoursing on abstract principles. He still continues to accord it all due respect even when, at first sight, it seems that it cannot, without further modification, be brought into line with the great *leitmotivs* of his thought.

In this sober realism of his we find concealed, or rather betrayed, a sense of reverence and yearning for the eternal light which does not yet illumine our minds directly here below; an awareness that even in theology all the theologian's insights are theological only to the extent that he remains consistently conscious of their provisional character. For the theologian must remain conscious of this even when *that* dimension of inconceivability which, properly speaking, it is his sole province to consider, is not being acclaimed in lyrical outpourings.

Thomas is the mystic, whose message is one of adoration of that mystery which transcends all powers of expression. He does not hold that because theology is concerned with this incomprehensible mystery of God it should speak of it in terms that are vague or imprecise. But neither does he hold that precision of language in theology should give the impression that one has penetrated the divine mystery and caught it within the subtle convolutions of theological concepts. Thomas knows (even though he may not repeat it every other moment) that the utmost precision and the soberest realism which is achieved in true theology are ultimately designed simply to serve a single end: to force man out of the brightness of the dimension which he can comprehend, and into the mystery of God where he no longer grasps but rather is grasped, where he no longer rationalizes but rather adores, where he no longer controls but rather is himself subject to a higher control.

[9] When we say the words '*Adoro te devote*, latens *Deitas*, *quae sub his figuris vere latitas*' we must not always speak them in a lyrical sense, but recognize that they also express the innermost essence of all theological thought and perception. This will continue to be the case for all eternity. Even when we behold face to face, that which we behold, love, and

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praise will be the eternal mystery which continues to be such. Indeed, so far from diminishing, once it is present in itself, and no longer merely in signs and parables, it will be still more incomprehensible and more consuming. And because of all this the theology of pilgrim man must not be at variance with this recognition of God as mystery. It must point us on to the experience of the mystery in the absolute, albeit the mystery that has been brought near to us. It is not for the idle, the soulless, or the heartless to say that what is said in theology is all straw, though St Thomas himself did in fact say this. Yet, measured by the ineffable reality which it seeks to make its concern, all that theology has to say is, after all, mere '*paleae*', straw. And to recognize this is a pain that slays us and raises us from the dead. And unless a man has himself, in heart and spirit, with zeal and energy, endured this pain with Thomas, then he has never given himself to theological study as a disciple of Thomas either. His theology may perhaps be ingenious, but it will never be really spiritual theology, the theology of the Pneuma, theology in the true sense. From an historical point of view it may be Thomism, but it will never be the kind of theology that is Thomas-inspired.

Obviously a Thomism that has become petrified has manifested itself in various forms and at various points in the course of history. Its practitioners have set themselves to keep Thomas alive, but in the very act of so doing have in fact brought him into discredit with their own contemporaries. But this is, after all, a fate that befalls other thinkers and other schools as well. The Jansenism of the 17th century is a petrified Augustinianism. The philosophy of such figures as Wolff is a 'boiled-down' version of the philosophy of Leibniz, truncated and adapted for pedagogic purposes, and so on. We must precisely avoid judging a great philosopher or a great theologian by the minor school which invokes his name, and the members of which are prone to deny that anyone unwilling to be associated with their pettifogging systems can be a disciple of their master at all. We must avoid viewing Thomas simply in the light of a Cajetan (though in itself his contribution is far from insignificant) – still less in the light of the Thomism of a Billuart or any other theologian of a similar kind. We must reject the attempt to reduce the truly great philosophy of a Thomas to that potted version of it produced under Pius X in the [10] so-called Twenty Theses published by the Congregation of Studies at Rome in 1914, and purporting to be the genuine philosophical teaching of Thomas.[7] In response to all such forms of circumscribed, over-systematized, and so petrified Thomism, we must insist on the point that in his own period, and measured by the philosophy and theology then accepted as traditional, Thomas himself must have been felt to be uncompromisingly progressive, if not actually revolutionary. This must have been so even though he himself never proclaimed his own theology and philosophy *as* progressive or revolutionary with drums and trumpets. Instead, calmly confining his attention solely to the question under investigation, and without any strident partizanship, he said what he had to say. Yet precisely in virtue of this he stood at the centre of a theological current, and was never the upholder of any final and definitive system, an edifice within which men of all subsequent ages could live. In this respect too Thomas can be an example and a consolation to those of today who seek to practise, at their own cost and at their own risk, a type of theology that has come to be discarded, and in doing so refuse to be 'modern' in the sense of falling in with mere fleeting fashions of the hour, thereby giving their work a spurious acceptability.

Certainly we should not adopt the approach of Leo XIII in regarding Thomas as the one great ocean into which all conceivable streams of wisdom and knowledge flow and converge, so that it is from *this* ocean alone that we must draw our knowledge and inspiration, all other sources now being superfluous. Again, he is obviously conditioned by his own age, and has not pronounced upon all those questions which we of today have to raise and to find answers

[7] cf. DS 34, 361-3624 (Decree of the Congregation of Studies of 27 July 1914).

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to. Yet we do need to be aware that even in those factors which, from a Christian and theological standpoint, we have to recognize, act upon, or endure as characteristic of our own age, we are not far removed from Thomas. The philosophical apparatus (emanating from Greek sources) which he uses in his theology may to a large extent be derived from an approach that is orientated towards objects and an objective world, an approach, therefore, belonging to a stage *prior to* Copernicanism, when philosophy became reorientated towards the subject and existence. In his approach Thomas may still have few explicit reflections to offer on the historicity of man and of his thought, so ingenuously – almost naïvely – near is he to history itself. Yet for all this he does stand at the threshold of that world which still remains ours of today as well, the world which is essentially secular, and not immediately [11] apprehensible as sacral in character. It is true that Thomas may be regarded as the great philosopher and theologian of a comprehensive system of ideas in which all that is genuinely real is duly recognized as such, but at the same time assigned its appropriate place within the system in all its breadth. But while Thomas is all this, he is also first and last the theologian who, in the teeth of the conservatism and pietism of his contemporaries, recognized philosophy as an autonomous discipline, one which sees God not as one particular element (albeit the highest) within the world, but rather as him who produces effects in the world only through those 'second causes', those realities and forces which themselves belong intrinsically to the world as having power over its own course. This means that Thomas himself stands at the origins of that reflexive process in theology in which Christian faith explicitly recognizes the status of the world as autonomous and responsible for its own destiny. It is true that, by a process of synthesis, this world, while still remaining autonomous and secular, is nevertheless subsumed, in Thomas' system, within the order of God as revealing himself and creating salvation. And while this synthesis may still be over-static and, as it stands, not something that we can simply accept without modification, the fact still remains that Thomas stands at the beginning of a period in the history of ideas in which his system, taken in conjunction with Scotism and Nominalism, and as developed between the earlier period and the High Middle Ages, can be set down as the beginning of that age which, in a true sense, remains ours also. Today, for instance, we are living in the age of rationalism, and of a methodological atheism, the outcome of the empiricism of the natural sciences. In our theology of creation and grace we think of God not so much as him who inserts himself into the world, as it were perforating an otherwise closed system from without, but rather as the infinite incomprehensible mystery and absolute future, present intrinsically in the world all along as that which provides its ultimate consummation and so sustains its movement towards this from within. And if all this is true, then we must feel that we are not far removed from Thomas. At the same time we must recognize in him a consoling confirmation of the fact that in the last analysis that which is special and proper to our age derives from the spirit of Christianity. Whatever disagreements there may be on points of detail – and all too often both sides are guilty of misrepresentations here – these special characteristics of our own age do not involve any rebellion against Christianity. On the contrary, they have already been accepted and recognized, at least incipiently and in principle, by him whom the Church recognizes as her 'doctor communis'. And this even though [12] much of what is said so simply and quietly would surely still seem revolutionary even today to the more timid and conservative elements in the Church if they only realized to the full the true import of his message.

As we said right at the outset, what we need in theology, if we are to practise it aright, is not only great theologies but great theologians also, so that in fellowship with them we may reflect upon the ineffable in a spirit of reverence.

I do not believe that some spectacular Thomist renaissance is on the point of breaking out in the Church. But at the same time I do hope that there will always be enough independent

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thinkers constantly emerging afresh in theology. And by ‘independent thinkers’ I mean such as will also have the courage to be unmodern, to enter the arduous school of a great master and, when they are confronted with goals which can be achieved only slowly and at the cost of toil, will not regard them merely as a bore. So long as the Church can number such men and such theologians in her ranks and in her theological schools, so long will Thomas Aquinas always have disciples and constantly be acquiring fresh ones. For today too he still has something to say. One element in that awareness of what Christ means in the Church which renders us free and immune to the cult of mere modernism is safeguarded in the works of Thomas.

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[13]

2

THOMAS AQUINAS ON TRUTH

Our purpose here is to present, in brief outline, the essence of truth as seen by Thomas.[1] For this it should be unnecessary either to point out *in extenso* where the relevant statements are to be found, or to draw attention to the limits imposed upon us by the very nature of an article of this kind. It should be equally unnecessary to spend much time in justifying the point that all that is possible here is to provide a few summary indications – necessarily, therefore, in simplified form. What is more important is to draw attention right from the outset to two difficulties which any such attempt necessarily entails. First, Thomas Aquinas is by profession a theologian rather than a philosopher. It is true that he consciously draws upon certain explicit philosophical tenets in that he continually incorporates them into his theology, but he had never developed this philosophy in itself into a positive system in its own right. He has not written any major work such as could, in any true sense, be said to be exclusively philosophical in character. Even the *Summa Contra Gentiles*[2] is, measured by the essential message which inspires it, not a philosophical work but a work of Christian apologetics.

This conclusion does not for one moment imply any pre-judgement as to the intrinsic value of Thomas' philosophy. But it does give us some intimation of the difficulties entailed in attaching a philosophy which is so much subordinated and assimilated to theology, and in presenting it in its own intrinsic significance and, corresponding to this, the principles it lays down. This state of affairs in fact leads to the position that even [14] though a point may be crucial from a philosophical point of view in Thomas' works, it does not always follow that it is also the main point at issue. This also applies to the subject of our present investigation. It is true that we have the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*[3] and for some years a good translation of these has been available, that namely by Edith Stein, the pupil of Husserl. This does provide us with certain important pointers (especially in the case of the first *Quaestio*, articles 1-12, where truth is explicitly treated of). But many of the arguments here would be quite out of place in a philosophical discussion. Of course further and more comprehensive passages are to be found which throw an important light on the epistemology of Thomas Aquinas.[4] A further factor in his teaching which the historian of philosophy cannot, properly speaking, neglect, is his teaching on angelic knowledge. For it is here, despite the fact that the

[1] The text of this essay – a lecture first delivered in 1938 and here lightly revised in certain unimportant details – belongs to the period of the author's basic works: *Geist in Welt* (Innsbruck, 1939) and *Hörer des Wortes* (Munich, 1941). The reason for publishing it here for the first time is that apart from its documentary importance it has a special value as indicating the basic preoccupations of the author in the development of his thought.

[2] In German, *Thomas von Aquin*, *Die Summa wider die Heiden*, Vols I-IV (Leipzig, 1935-1937).

[3] German, *Des hl. Thomas von Aquino Untersuchungen über die Wahrheit*, Edith Steins Werke, III (Louvain/Freiburg i. Br. 1952; first published in 1931).

[4] The relevant passages have been assembled and set forth by Jos. de Vries, *De Cognitione Veritatis Textus Selecti Sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, Op. et Textus, Ser. Schol. XIV (Munster, 2nd ed. 1953).Cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, cc. 44-71 (metaphysics of the divine knowledge); II, cc. 46-90 (anthropology and the metaphysics of human knowledge); *Summa Theologiae* I qq. 14-17 (the knowledge of God; ideas; truth; falsehood), *Summa Theologiae*, Eng. transl. Vol.4, *Knowledge in God* (London, 1964); qq. 79 (the powers of reason), *Summa Theologiae*, Eng. transl. Vol. II (London); qq. 84-88 (how the soul, in conjunction with the body, comes to know the physical world which is subordinate to it by reason; the modes and consequences of rational knowledge; what does our reason know of material things?; how does the soul endowed with intelligence come to understand itself and its powers?; how does the human soul come to know what is above it?), *Summa Theologiae*, Eng. transl., Vol. 12 (London, 1968).

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context seems to be of its nature exclusively theological, that Thomas Aquinas presses his theory of knowledge to its ultimate limits in developing the concept of a finite knowledge that is not based on sense experience. This teaching on angelic knowledge in Thomas represents, so to say, a counterpart to the monadology of Leibniz.

In view of this situation and the difficulties it entails, we are justified in approaching the question in such a way that our presentation seems unconnected (at least to all outward appearances) with any specific individual passages in Thomas' writings. Instead our exposition of his basic position will be through a freer approach, and one which, in fact, in view of the difficulties described, we are obliged to adopt.

To this initial difficulty in achieving any adequate presentation of the thought of Aquinas a second must now be added: the question of its interpretation. A point which applies to Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and others [15] is just as true of Thomas here. In all cases we can discuss how far the philosopher's teaching is correct only to the, extent that we find it easy to answer, and to achieve general agreement upon, the question of what he actually taught. We can never arrive at the true philosophical content of what is being taught merely by assembling and summarizing the relevant statements. The only way of doing this is creatively to reconstruct the original line of reasoning of the philosopher himself. And this principle applies to Thomas too, for unfortunately his justly acclaimed clarity also entails a constant temptation to assume that his philosophy is easier than it in fact is. Our only reason for pointing this out in the present context is that we wish right from the outset to emphasize that in the present interpretation of Thomas nothing that we have to say either can or should be regarded as spoken in the name of scholasticism. All that we seek to convey is that particular interpretation of Aquinas which, as we personally believe, must be correct. That is our sole aim. The question of whether our understanding of the master is right or wrong cannot be decided by invoking some illusory consensus of 'the' scholastics, but only by a fresh examination of Thomas' own writings and of the matter itself.[5]

[16] Our ideas will be developed in three stages. If we were to name each stage in accordance with the basic ideas of Thomism itself they might be classified as follows: I. Judgement, 2. The Light of the Active Intellect (*Intellectus Agens*), and 3. God: Pure Being and Pure Thought. In terms of Hegelian terminology we might bring our threefold classification into line with the three divisions of his phenomenology of the mind as follows: 1. Awareness, 2. Awareness of Self, and 3. Absolute Mind. The first section is discarded

[5] In addition to textual studies and translations we find a whole series of attempts to provide a comprehensive presentation and interpretation of Aquinas' teaching on truth, belonging chiefly to the period of the thirties, but also, in part, both to earlier and later periods. Mention may be made of certain important works which are not without significance for the thought of the present author as well: P. Rousselot, *L'intellectualisme de Saint Thomas* (Paris, 2nd ed., 1924); J. Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la metaphysique* (Bruges/Louvain – Paris, 1923-1926); G. Söhngen, *Sein and Gegenstand. Das scholastische Axiom: ens et verum convertuntur als Fundament metaphysische und theologische Spekulation* (Munster, 1930); P. Wilpert, *Das Problem der Wahrheitssicherung bei Thomas von Aquin* (Munster, 1931); P. Wilpert, 'Das Urteil als Träger der Wahrheit nach Thomas von Aquin', *Philos. Jahrbuch* 46 (1953), pp. 56-75; A. Hufagel, *Intuition und Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin* (Munster, 1932); G. Siewerth, *Die Metaphysik der Erkenntnis nach Thomas von Aquin I: der sinnliche Erkenntnisakt* (Munich/Berlin, 1933); idem, 'Die transzendentale Selbigkeit und Verschiedenheit des ens und des verum bei Thomas von Aquin', *Philos. Jahrbuch* 66 (1957), pp. 22-23; *idem*, *Der Thomismus als Identitätssystem* (Frankfurt, 3rd ed. 1961); J. B. Lotz, *Das Urteil and das Sein*, Pullacher *philos. Forsch.* II (a second edition, revised and expanded, of *Sein and Wert* I, 1938) (Pullach, 1957); M. Müller, *Sein und Geist. Systematische Untersuchungen über Grundproblem und Aufbau mittelalterlicher Ontologie*, Beiträge zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte, 7 (Tübingen, 1940); J. Pieper, *Wahrheit der Dinge. Eine Untersuchung zur Anthropologie des Hochmittelalters* (Munich, 1947); W. Kern, 'Das Verhältnis von Erkenntnis und Liebe als philosophisches Grundproblem bei Hegel und Thomas von Aquin', *Scholastik* 34 (1959), pp. 394-427; E. Coreth, 'Das Sein als Wahrheit', *Metaphysik* (Innsbruck, 1961), pp. 399-422; J. Fellermeier, 'Wahrheit und Existenz bei Thomas von Aquin', *Munch. theol. Zeitschrift* 20 (1969), pp. 136-145.

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because Thomas regards truth as present only in the judgement. The second section is justified on the grounds that according to Aquinas judgement consists not in any mere passive acceptance of an impression, but in a creative synthesis between the transcendental *a priori* of the mind (the light of the active intellect) and sense experience. Finally the inclusion of the third section is justified by the fact that Thomas recognizes, side by side with the truth of judgement, the further ontological truth of being in itself, an intrinsic illumination of that which is inasmuch as, and to the extent that it is being, an illumination which finds its absolute fulness and ultimate original norm in that absolute being which is the absolute intelligence.

1. *The Judgement*

'If truth consists in the agreement of an act of cognition with its object . . .' Thus even Kant opens his argument.[6] We should not, therefore, be surprised that in the Thomistic metaphysic of the nature of truth the same sentence should provide the starting-point and, so to say, the definition of truth: '*adaequatio rei et intellectus*'.[7] Ultimately speaking, however, what we have here is a mere provisional approximation, a mere description, of something which we are aware of from the first when we begin to ask what truth is. The situation here is the same as with all metaphysical enquiries. It is an enquiry into something which is already familiar to us from the first, and which we fail to comprehend precisely for this reason. For what do we mean when we say that truth is present where intellect and object agree? In real terms, what is intellect? What is being? What is agreement? And how can these particular entities agree with one another? It is self-evident, therefore, that even though this initial definition is familiar to us from the first, we can only grasp its true meaning once we have comprehended the particular concepts of which it is composed in themselves, and [17] also precisely as components of this statement considered as an unity. We find an initial indication of what Thomas means by intellect (*intellectus*) when we find him saying that truth at the human level is located in the judgement. It is self-evident that in the normal act of human cognition it is the content of the judgement, and not the act of judging as such, that is made to correspond to the object: '*Illud quod intellectus intelligendo dicit et cognoscit oportet esse rei adaequatum . . . non operatio qua id dicit*'.[8] For Thomas a meaningful content of this kind, such as – under certain circumstances at least – can claim to constitute truth, is possible of attainment only in judgement and not in the forming of a concept, i.e. what he calls *simplex apprehensio* or *incomplexum*. We must emphasize, therefore, that point in Thomas' doctrine on judgement which is most important for our enquiry. For Aquinas a judgement does not consist merely in a synthesis between two concepts so as to form a single concrete idea. In Thomas' eyes a concretizing synthesis of this kind – Heidegger would call it a predicative synthesis – would still be an *incomplexum* of the type, for instance, to which definition belongs. In order for judgement and truth in the true sense to be present, the concretizing synthesis must further be related to the reality itself; there must be a *comparatio vel applicatio ad rem per affirmationem vel negationem*. An affirmative or objectifying synthesis of this kind (and it is only through this kind of synthesis that a *complexio* or judgement is arrived at) is therefore a constitutive element of judgement and so too of truth (with Heidegger we might also call it a veritative synthesis), though admittedly only provided that this affirmative synthesis is also in fact a valid one. Of course the subject and predicate do not

[6] I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, BS. 83.
[7] cf. e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 21, art. 2 c, and *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. 1, art. 10.
[8] *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, c. 39.

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have the same place or function in the statement involved, a point which can be demonstrated by an analysis of the Thomist doctrine of the concretizing synthesis. The known content of the concept forming the predicate is applied to the object itself in its ontological reality as pointed to by the affirmative synthesis and as designated by the concept forming the subject, so that the affirmative synthesis is just as much the enabling condition of the concretizing synthesis as the other way round.

Now for Thomas Aquinas it is only in such judgements that truth exists, for it is only in them that this affirmative and objectifying application can be made of the consciously entertained content of our ideas to a reality existing in its own right, and independently of the concept as such that we form of it at the psychic level. As applied to such an ontological reality, therefore, the reason that our judgement is valid is that the [18] concretizing synthesis is merely the reproduction in the conceptual dimension of that synthesis achieved in the objective one between a subject (a *hypokeimenon*) and a quiddity (*quidditas*, *forma* etc.) by which that subject is specified.

But how does the subject making the judgement know that his reproduction and application of the objective synthesis is actually valid, does in fact correspond to it? Clearly there can be no question – at least in all ordinary cases – of proceeding straightway to compare the reality as known in the act of judgement with the reality in itself.

In order to understand Thomas' answer to this question we must begin by laying down, in accordance with his teaching, that every one of our judgements and every one of our concepts contain two elements: a sensible element and an intellectual one (representation and conception, to the extent that this is based on the spontaneity of the understanding, as we might say with Kant). Aquinas would wholeheartedly subscribe to the following statement by Kant: 'Thoughts without content are empty; perceptions without conceptions are blind.'[9] The point Kant is seeking to make here is treated of by Thomas under the heading of the necessity of a *conversio* to the *phanatasma* in spontaneous thinking.[10] As for Kant, so too for Thomas, there are no perceptions other than sensible ones. This proposition calls for some explanation at this point, at least in passing, since time does not admit of any fuller discussion of it. According to Thomas sensibility as such, to the extent that it apprehends the existing thing at all, apprehends it as it truly is in itself. The 'impression upon the receptivity of our mind' is, as a single and undivided reality, present at one and the same time both in the sensible object itself and in sensibility as such. This seemingly 'naïve' realism is in truth profoundly metaphysical, for the conception of sensibility on which it rests is metaphysical and ontological in character, and is not merely derived from an empiricist-sensualist approach in which the senses are regarded as instruments. This metaphysical and ontological conception in its turn stems from the conception of a finite act of perception that 'takes in' an individual object as such as it presents itself in its own identity; only so does it arrive at the metaphysical conception of what it is to be material: the materiality of the object that exhibits itself and the necessary materiality, and thereby sensibility, of a knowledge that 'takes in' and perceives. Unfortunately it is impossible here fully to carry through this transcendental deduction of the sensibility inherent in a finite act of perception. Hence, even though [19] our approach at this point is, properly speaking, quite unphilosophical, all that we can do is to give the following assurance: when we speak of the apprehending, by a subject endowed with sensibility, of certain determinations in a material object in itself this involves no contradiction for philosophy because, as contrasted with popular notions, it regards the essential metaphysic of the process by which one material being is affected by another material being as consisting precisely in the fact that absolutely one and the same reality is

[9] I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B S. 75.
[10] *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 84, art. 7.

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present in both agent and patient. Now if a determination of the patient of this kind is recognized to be such, then, since the 'patient' in this case is sensibility, this means that we are recognizing and experiencing a determination of the agent as such, and, in the case we are considering, as a determination of the sensible object.

If it were pointed out that after all, as the most universal experience attests, that which is immediately observed by the senses (the sensible qualities) is to be regarded as present only in the sensible experience itself, Thomas would surely have disposed of this by replying that the determination of a being does not cease to belong to it because it belongs to that being only inasmuch as it is posited as a specification of itself *and* of the patient at the same time. Two points follow from this position: first, scope is given, on a totally different scale, for a physics in the metaphysical sense, i.e. regarded as critical enquiry into the determinations of a material being, which belong to it independently of its reality, and as being the kind of thing it is and shows itself to be in the medium of the sensory cognition of the knowing subject. The second point, however, is that even prior to any physics an answer is given to the metaphysical question of how the knowledge of another being can apprehend by taking something into itself, a question which must, in principle, be resolved prior to any physics, since any physics, whatever critique it has to offer of outward appearances, basically presupposes an outside world that is already realized as such, and so a knowledge that is already present from the outset emanating from that which is other to itself. This remains true even when it supposes that what it experiences is, in itself merely a subjective affection, for even this is still external to the knowledge we have of it. The metaphysic of sensibility that is presupposed in Thomas' theory of cognition is, then, of this kind. According to it sensibility is a finite experience in which a finite being reveals itself and is 'taken in', a kind of knowledge in which a sensible object is possessed in its manifestation of itself as it is in itself. Once we assume such a metaphysic of sensibility it is immediately evident why, according to Aquinas, sense knowledge as such [20] can never be false and, for this very reason, never true either in any proper sense.[11]

The purely passive process of consciously 'taking in' – it would be called receptivity without spontaneity by Kant, or awareness without self-awareness by Hegel – in virtue of its passivity, makes it possible for the real thing to imprint its image upon the receptivity of the knower, and so to reveal itself of itself. But precisely in making this possible, this passive process makes it impossible for sensibility to stand back, so to say, from the impression it has received and from its object, and so to judge of it as it is in itself. What sensibility experiences is always a genuine reality, yet it cannot express any judgement upon it, which means that strictly as such it never rises to a level at which it is capable of being true or false. Sensibility possesses things in a single uninterrupted projection from the things themselves, but for this very reason it is also at the mercy of their obtuse particularity, their lack of reference to anything beyond themselves. Of course when such sensibility is linked with an intellectual and spontaneous power of knowledge within the unity of conscious awareness, as with man, this sub-logical certainty, inherent in the material reality itself and manifesting itself of its own power at the level of sensibility, can have a certain significance for the establishing of truth. But taken in itself and in isolation from this, it merely supplies the basis for the truth of the material content of a particular judgement. The formal structure even of such a judgement, and *a fortiori* the structure and content of universal, and especially metaphysical judgements, are too advanced to find any basis in this sureness of perception at the sensible level.

[11] *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. I, art. II, and *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 16, art. 2.

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2. *The Light of the Active Understanding*

We are faced, then, with a further question: what is the truth of a judgement based upon, to the extent that the judgement constitutes something more than the mere passive receiving of the impression of a particular sensible object as such? As in every major metaphysic of knowledge from Plato to Hegel, so too with Thomas Aquinas, we here arrive at a principle of truth which is prior to the sensible impression. But Thomas departs from the tradition of Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Bonaventure, and Malebranche in refusing to regard this as consisting in any objectified *a priori* postulated as a second objective sphere immediately accessible to man, over and above the individual thing as perceptible by the senses. Thomas [21] stands, rather, in the line of the tradition of Aristotle, Thomas, Kant, and Hegel in regarding this principle of truth as consisting in a formal *a priori* of the spontaneous intellect itself. In other words it consists not in a *fundamentum* of truth viewed as an object, as for instance an idea, a light of God, God himself etc., but rather – to express it in Thomist terms – in a light of the understanding itself which permeates and informs the material of the sense knowledge, and raises it in acts of judgement to the level of objective apprehension and conceptuality.

It would be possible to work out a transcendental deduction of this formal *a priori* of the understanding in the Thomist sense in various ways. With Aquinas himself we might enquire into the *a priori* conditions which make it possible to raise the individual object as apprehended by the senses to the conceptual level. This is the normal way in which Thomas arrives at the concept of the spontaneity of the understanding, the *intellectus agens* as he calls it (following an Aristotelian conception in this), as well as the essential structure which this has. Again we might – likewise in the Thomist sense – enquire into the conditions enabling that process to take place which Thomas recognizes as the *reditio subjecti in seipsum*, that which sets the intellect apart from all that is non-intellectual, and which, in modern terms, and in the Hegelian sense, might be called self-awareness: the capacity which the knowing subject has to stand apart from that which he experiences with his senses so as to maintain a position of free transcendence over the sense impression, even though inevitably 'lost' at this level, to evaluate it and estimate its truth, to be conscious of himself being 'over against' the world – in brief the knowing subject's capacity to enjoy that which in Heidegger's terminology is called '*Dasein*' (personal existence). We may say that the act of judgement consists in the applying of a cognitive faculty to a being as it is in itself so as to find meaning in it. In itself the being involved is set 'over against' cognition as the content of subjective awareness. Now if we accept this, then it is in fact self-evident that this act of judgement always involves a simultaneous awareness of the self as 'over against' the known object, and that for this reason any enquiry into the transcendental conditions which make a true judgement possible also involves an enquiry into the enabling conditions of self-awareness too.

We have reached a point at which we have to recognize the entire problem in the context of which the question of achieving an assured truth has to be viewed. But at this point another line of approach must at least be indicated, which is still more immediately connected with this question of an assurance of truth. The assurance of the truth of any given [22] judgement, to the extent that this is not to be derived from the evidence of sense perception, is achieved, according to Thomas, by a reduction to the first principles. These come first in the *via intentionis*, and in critically evaluating his own judgement, the person making the judgement returns to them '*resolvendo*'.[12] It is impossible here to enter in any greater detail into the content of these first principles. We may confine ourselves to noticing that in the view of

[12] *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 79, art. 8 c.

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Thomas Aquinas we have in them something more than the mere principles of formal logic such as, for instance, the principle of non-contradiction. We are dealing, rather, with first principles of an ontological kind, with the ultimate and apodictic axioms of metaphysics, which claim to apply necessarily and absolutely to every existing thing. But where do we find the basis for the assurance of truth of these first principles themselves? At this stage there can no longer be any question of syllogistic justification. They must, therefore, be 'seen' as evident in themselves: *dicendum quod omnis scientia habetur per aliqua principia per se nota et per consequens visa*.[13] They are '*per se nota*', as Thomas also says frequently in other contexts.

Now for any right interpretation of the Thomist argument in support of this assurance of truth in judgement it is crucially important to know what the real import of this word 'evident' is as applied to first principles. Above all a clear grasp of first principles does not consist in the mind recognizing an obvious state of affairs in the sense of being confronted with a complex entity having being (albeit not 'existence') in its own right, or a proposition having meaning in its own right. It is not as though such a complex or such a proposition were being seen by the mind in some objective or ideal mode of being of their own. Propositions, 'values', or 'ideas' existing in their own right have no place in Aquinas' system. The reason he rejects them is that, as he sees it, there is, in principle, no objective dimension of subsistent ideas such as, in terms of being and knowledge alike, would ultimately be independent of the dimension of being already in existence. To accept any kind of vision of ideas objectively subsisting in themselves (a theory with which Thomas is familiar from Plato and Augustine, but contests) must, therefore, as he sees it, logically lead to ontologism, to the doctrine of a direct vision of absolute being in itself, in other words to a conception which he rejects from the outset on theological grounds, as well as on grounds of the Aristotelian metaphysic of epistemology.

A further point is that Thomas does not recognize that the first principles [23] are evident in virtue of their objective conceptual content as such in the sense that once we have realized the intrinsic meaning of the individual concepts or of the propositions as a whole in which these first principles are expressed as such, we have immediate grounds for recognizing them as having an objective existence and validity in their own right. This thesis of the classic pre-Kantian rationalism of the 17th and 18th centuries would not have gone unopposed by Aquinas any more than it did by Kant. Thomas, no less than Kant in a later age, and for the same reasons, rejected the ontological argument for the existence of God, an argument which, according to the principles of the classical rationalism, would have been regarded as sound. Indeed it is accepted as valid even by Leibniz and Wolff, and in just the same way in the rationalism of the Middle Ages, with its tendency to an objectifying mysticism, easily turning to ontologism. This is exemplified in Anselm of Canterbury, Albert the Great, Aegidius of Rome, Thomas of Strasbourg, and Bonaventure. As with the ontological proof of the existence of God, the realization – in itself certainly reasonable – of the connection which necessarily has to be established between various conceptions and the first principles, only has an ontological significance provided that this connection is valid for the individual conceptions. And for Thomas this connection is not simply and *ipso facto* established in cases in which these conceptions transcend the level of concrete individual sense experience, being something more than mere pointers to such experience. These universal conceptions, which lie at the roots of the first principles, impinge upon man in his apprehension of individual sensible reality and in connection with this. To that extent (but only to that extent) the universal concepts of metaphysics are ultimately abstractions from the individual object as apprehended by the senses. In holding this Thomas Aquinas is no Platonist but an

[13] *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 1, art. 5 c.

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Aristotelian. But it would be totally to misunderstand his Aristotelianism if we sought to go on from this and to jump to the over-hasty conclusion that Thomas regards the particular meaning at the level of sense perception as providing an adequate basis for the ontological validity of individual metaphysical conceptions. Thomas leaves no room whatever for doubt that the only meaning which the individual, taken simply as such, can convey is that of its own self. And because of this, while the experience of a multiplicity of individual things simply as such may perhaps be capable of providing a basis for an empirical, inductive, and so assertive, generalization of experience as expressed in propositions, it is still quite incapable of providing a basis for the validity of conceptions which are universal in a metaphysical sense, and so could be in turn the [24] basis for an apodictic universality and validity of metaphysical propositions, namely the first principles. For such metaphysical conceptions to have universal validity it would be necessary to find a basis for them in a principle that was prior to the individual case, in other words an *a priori* principle. But, as we have already pointed out, Thomas' system is such as to exclude any *a priori* principle of this kind, having an objective existence of its own and independently of other being. It follows that it can only be a formal *a priori* principle of the spontaneous intellect itself. Aquinas calls this the *lumen intellectus agentis*. The light he refers to here is the *a priori* form in which an intellect, of its own spontaneity, apprehends the sensory material – Thomas actually calls the sense impression itself the *materia* of the *intelligibile* – that which can be understood. The intellect gives conceptual form to this material, and so makes it that which is *intelligibile actu*, that which is known at the conceptual level and emerges as a synthesis of the sensory material and the *a priori* of the intellect. And in Thomist metaphysical epistemology this *a priori* form in which the sensory material is apprehended is, ontologically speaking, nothing else than the dynamic movement of the intellect as such outwards towards the absolute totality of all possible objects of the human intellect, the *tendentia in objectum formale adaequatum intellectus*, to express the matter in the Latin terms of Thomism. To this extent, in this dynamic outward movement of the intellect as a 'hunger' (for so it might be called with Hegel), the individual object as sensibly experienced is apprehended, recognized as that which is finite, and as failing, by reason of its limitations, to measure up to the capacity of the dynamic force in all its fulness and depth. Once the absolute epistemological ideal is applied to it as a standard, it is shown to be a being as compared with being itself, and so as a 'this', a finite *individuum*, the limitations of which are such as to admit of other possible objects being experienced together with itself. Now in the very act of recognizing it as particular in this sense, the universal is, by implication, recognized too and *vice versa*. The process of transcending the particular and attaining to the totality of all possible knowable objects appears, then, as the transcendental condition enabling abstraction to take place, and so the condition of expressing a judgement, i.e. of understanding something as a 'something', and finally of thereby arriving also at the *reditio completa* of knowledge of the self.

At this point an initial question arises as to the extent and range of this transcendence, and of what limits can be set to this totality of all possible objects of human knowledge as opened up by the light of the *intellectus agens*. And here Thomas departs from Kant. For, as the latter sees it, the [25] transcendence of the understanding and of its formal *a priori* does not in principle extend beyond the basis provided by the power of the imagination, of sensory perception. Kant's view, expressed in Thomist terms, is that the *objectum formale* of the human spirit is *ens principium numeri*, *ens materiale*, that which is and which has, as an intrinsic principle of its being, that *materia* which Thomas too regards as the metaphysical basis for conceiving of space and time. Now for Thomas the intellect's transcending power avowedly bears upon being in the absolute. It extends beyond the sphere of the senses, thereby opening up a knowledge of being as such, and providing the basis on which metaphysics, with its specifically human characteristics, becomes possible.

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Regrettably we cannot spend any further time at this point in carrying through the transcendental deduction of this extent and range of the intellect's transcending power. For this we must refer to that work by Maréchal[14] which probably constitutes the best example of a philosopher in the spirit of Aquinas coming to terms with the central problem of Kant. Here we must confine ourselves to remarking that even according to Thomas the opening up of the sphere of human thought so as to make room for a metaphysic extending beyond the sphere of sense experience, and embracing all being in the absolute, is not achieved by any direct view of metaphysical being in the sense of classical rationalism or ontologism. According to Aquinas it is of such a nature, rather (and this is precisely something that would have to be shown by any transcendental deduction of the range of transcendence in this sense) that to accept this range of transcendence and, concomitantly with it, a knowledge of being in the absolute and in its most ultimate and formal structures, is numbered among the transcendental conditions enabling an intellect endowed with self-knowledge to make objective judgements upon, and so know, the objects of sense perception. In other words it would have to be shown that that transcendence which is the enabling condition of judgements upon, and *a priori* knowledge of, objects of the world of perception, must necessarily be a transcendence extending beyond this world, and hence is accepted to be such in every kind of knowledge belonging to this world. Once this transcendental deduction is carried through, then that condition is fulfilled under which even Kant is prepared to recognize a metaphysic as valid. While it is true that knowledge of the world based on judgement – Kant calls it physics – does not afford any direct view of the metaphysical dimension, still it does implicitly involve what is the enabling condition of this, namely the acceptance of transcendental being and of its [26] ultimate structures. Thomas' primary and most fundamental way of expressing these is not through the categories (for him, in fact, these apply primarily to material being), but through what he calls the transcendental determinations of being. For him they are the ultimate 'categories' of metaphysical being. It is from these metaphysical concepts that the first principles are formed. These are, then, valid in their application to being in the absolute, and also, by the same token, to the being touched upon in direct sense experience.

In the light of this we are now in a better position to state the precise sense in which the first principles are said to be 'evident', for according to Thomas the assurance of truth in all our true judgements is based upon this character which they have of being evident once we abstract from the evident character of sense experience as such. For this latter, of itself and taken in isolation, is incapable of any judgements at all, much less any true judgements.

The character of any judgement as evident is ultimately based on the character of the first principles as evident. As principles these are, of their nature, metaphysical, i.e. they purport to apply to being as such. Their claim to have this kind of application cannot be regarded as justified by any 'evidentness' inherent in the reality of which they treat in itself, for this would presuppose that we were able to compare the concept with the metaphysical object, and so were capable of metaphysical intuition. Or again, it would necessarily mean being able to interchange the concept and the object for which it stands. The 'evidentness' of the first principles, rather, is the objective recognition that in every judgement which man makes as an act of cognition within the material world, the metaphysical validity of these principles is asserted, and this assertion constitutes the *a priori* condition, implicitly posited, which makes knowledge possible within the material world. Thus in the very act of recognizing his judgements as necessary, man is also asserting, as something posited and asserted as a necessary corollary of this, the metaphysical validity of the *a priori* structures of being as such. And since it is totally impossible for man to achieve an existential 'epoch' in his attitudes of judgement upon the world, he is necessarily, albeit implicitly, committing himself

[14] See n.5.

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to an assertion of these metaphysical principles such that, if in his thinking he were explicitly to deny, or cast doubts upon, the ontological laws of being which he implicitly asserted, he would be breaking that law of formal logic which is the principle of non-contradiction. The 'evidentness', at the human level, therefore, of these metaphysical principles, is ultimately based not upon any recognition of an evident identity between the concepts [27] (even for Thomist epistemology, rightly understood, these principles are a synthetic *a priori*), but on the 'evidentness' of a manifest contradiction, in terms of formal logic, between the positing as such of their validity and their content and the denying of this. If anyone were in a position to arrive at a metaphysical and existential 'epoch' from which to judge (and to doubt is also a form of judging), the metaphysical principles would cease, so far as he was concerned, to have any claim to validity. But at the selfsame moment such a one would cease to be that which he proclaimed himself to be in every act he performed: a finite being endowed with intellect, '*Dasein*' (in the sense of modern existentialist philosophy).

In the light of this conception of 'evidentness' in finite human knowledge, it is easy to understand that Thomist epistemology cannot be accused of basing its theory of the adequateness of truth upon the naïve assumption that it is possible to compare the reality in itself with the reality as known, and so to establish an agreement between the two. This objection has no basis in the Thomist interpretation of sense knowledge strictly as such, because here the reality as experienced and the reality in itself are strictly one and the same. With regard to the objects of metaphysical enquiry and their 'evidentness', the objection has no force since, on a Thomist interpretation, the 'evidentness' of these for finite knowledge is based not upon the reality in itself, but on the *a priori* of the intellect; in other words at no stage is there any attempt whatever to institute a comparison. In fact such a comparison can only be based on a misinterpretation of the nature of intellect, for it is first and foremost in this that anything in the order of truth can reside. Thomas states that in the act of understanding truth is achieved by the judgement as it bears upon the reality in itself,[15] and this statement alone serves to show how far he is from attempting at any stage to institute a comparison between the reality in itself and the reality as apprehended. Ultimately speaking, however, this truth, this *proportio ad rem* of the act of judgement, is realized not, as we would expect, by a reflecting upon, or looking at, the reality itself, but by the understanding reflecting upon itself. We do not seek, at this point, to give a precise interpretation of the actual text of Thomas, on which so incalculably much has already been written. To conclude the point we are making, we may confine ourselves merely to observing that what has here been presented as the process of transcendental reflection upon the conditions which make knowledge possible (on the *natura tritellectus*, as Thomas expresses it) is, in our view, the same as that process [28] which, in the passages just referred to, Thomas calls the '*supra seipsum reflecti*' of the understanding.

If, therefore, truth at the individual level consists in a judgement upon the 'thing in itself', where judgement is a veritative affirmative synthesis, then it is based upon the metaphysical first principles of being which constitute the sustaining basis for individual judgements. These principles, however, are rooted in the formal *a priori* of the intellect, the *lumen intellectus*, and their validity is recognized by the fact that our implicit assent to them is apprehended as being the transcendental condition making it possible for there to be objects of knowledge as such. Hence we can say that in all cases truth is possible only in self-awareness. The discovering of truth is always the discovering of the self as well on the part of the intellect.

But it also appears from this what truth signifies for Thomas at this level of the self-awareness which is always and necessarily involved in any true judgement. So far as human

[15] *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. I, art. 9 c.

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cognition is concerned, truth is found in the judgement alone. Judgement presupposes abstraction and self-awareness. Both are possible only in virtue of the transcendental *a priori* of the intellect, which opens up the perspective of being in the absolute. Thus a true particular judgement on a being is possible only in and through an implicit estimation of being in the absolute, at however formal a level, only in a comprehensive awareness of being itself, and so, on any definitive understanding, in an implicit acceptance of pure being, God himself. *Omnia cognoscentia implicite cognoscunt Deum in quolibet cognito*. Truth is possible only in being as such.

3. *Pure Being and Pure Thought*

These remarks are still not enough to bring our argument to its completion. That which, for the Thomist system, constitutes the heart and centre of the metaphysical concept of truth still remains to be discussed. As Thomas sees it, truth in human judgement essentially presupposes an *a priori* formal principle as its enabling condition, in any understanding arrived at through judgement, and one which must be accepted as such. Yet at the same time truth consists in judging of a being as it is in itself. This means that the intelligence adduces the ultimate formal and metaphysical structure of its possible objects of its own power and concomitantly with its judgement upon them, yet must accept this structure as that of its objects, i.e. as that of being in the absolute and in itself. Now at basis this implies nothing else than accepting an ultimate unity of being and [29] knowledge, for it is only on this assumption that the validity of the formal *a priori* of the intellect is wholly reasonable and intelligible. Our chief point in saying this is that man, by the very fact of accepting the validity of his own transcendental *a priori*, and thereby the first principles of being as such, in every act of judgement he makes, accepts also that it is in principle possible to know a being as such. *Quidquid est intelligi potest*.[16] Furthermore, as a corollary of this, he is also assenting to the proposition that every being, as a possible object of knowledge at some level, has, as a determination of all beings necessarily present in the very nature of being itself, an intrinsic orientation to possible knowledge and a possible knower. Now if this is the case, then being and knowing (ultimately in the form of pure being, and also as realized in the existing thing to the extent that it is being and not non-being) must constitute an ultimate unity, must be *unius generis*, as Thomas puts it. For wherever a correlativity is found between two realities, such that it arises from their very natures, it can, in the last analysis, only have its basis in an original unity between the two. Now what this means as applied to our present question is that the reason that being and knowing are correlative is that they are originally and radically identical.

Pure being and pure knowing are the same reality, and we call it God. A finite being is endowed with knowledge, and in fact with knowledge of itself, in that it is, in a certain measure and according to a certain ‘analogy’, being. Now it is here that, taken at their ultimate metaphysical level, the concepts of knowledge, and so too of truth, are realized in their radical significance; it is here that the ultimate truth of truths is finally discerned. If being and knowledge (pure being in the absolute and *a* being in the measure that it is being) constitute an original unity, then knowledge cannot at its ultimate basis consist in a state of having something intentionally ‘over against’ one as an object; the only way still open to us to conceive of it is as a state in which the being concerned is ‘with’ or ‘beside’ itself, in which being is inwardly illumined to itself, in which knowing and the state of what it truly is to be known are identical, in which the knower in the true sense and the known in the true

[16] *Summa Contra Gentiles* II, c. 98.

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sense are one and identical in being. At its metaphysical roots, then, true knowledge consists in the unquestioning 'being with itself' of being. But knowledge and truth consist in thinking out and forming at the intentional level concepts different from the knower himself only to this extent: that that knower, in virtue of being finite, and so of the element of non-being intrinsic to him, does not *ipso facto* and from the outset know everything by the inner light of [30] his own intrinsic possession of himself. For he himself is not everything.

At the same time, however, to the extent that it is constantly extending itself, and to the extent that it actually 'loses itself' in the object, the act of cognition never ceases to remain a conscious 'taking possession of himself' on the part of the knower, for it is in this that knowledge first and last consists. For Thomas Aquinas the extent to which such a conscious return to the self in knowledge is possible is the essential factor showing the degree of existential power to be ascribed to a given being.[17] Thus for Aquinas an item of knowledge is true, i.e. comprehensive of being as such, to the extent that it simultaneously constitutes an opening up of the personal being of the knower, of the knowing subject. And because of this every true item of knowledge is – to put it in modern terms – always, and *ipso facto* an existential factor in the life of man as well. For the more it confronts him with being itself, the more it confronts him also with his own self, and brings him to self-realization.

Once this is recognized, namely that knowledge constitutes, in an ultimate unity, the 'being to itself' of being, we might go on to achieve an understanding of what ontological truth signifies on Thomas' theory. We might explain how ontological and logical truth are essentially interconnected. A being is, in the measure of its being, inwardly illumined to itself and possesses itself as an object of logical truth. It is in virtue of this fact that a being is ultimately knowable, a possible object of knowledge, and so ontologically true. This is why logical and ontological truth absolutely coincide in the pure being of God.

We must break off our considerations at this point. If we may make one further attempt briefly to recapitulate what we have been trying to say here, then it must be stated in conclusion that for Thomas Aquinas truth is primarily a state of having reality before one in judgement, the process of applying the concretizing synthesis between two concepts to the reality as it is in itself.

From this the following conclusion may be drawn: since truth, with the insights it offers, exists at the human level only in the judgement, it is always rooted in a transcendental *a priori* which is formal in character. The first effect of this is that being as such is always assented to in its most formal structures. Assent precisely to this is a necessary condition of realizing truth, and necessarily present, by implication, in every judgement. And this assent itself represents the ultimate assurance of truth at the human level. From this the second effect follows, namely that this transcendental [31] *a priori* is *ipso facto* the transcendental condition enabling man to have knowledge of himself.

Finally, therefore, truth is, in its ultimate depths, that state of inner illumination, that intelligibility, which belongs to any being in itself and in the degree of its being. It is the self-confrontation of being as present to itself, such that pure being and pure thinking are one and the same, the absolute intelligence before which we stand in virtue of the transcendence of our intellect. And because truth exists only where being as such is attained to in transcendence, therefore that root which is most hidden, yet which is present and active in all truth, is this one single reality: God.

Therefore the most personal of existential factors, and the most metaphysical at the same time, is that which Thomas has expressed in these words: *Adoro te devote latens Deitas*, *quae*

[17] cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles* II, c. 101, and III c. 51.

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sub his figuris vere latitas. Everything is a parable – *figura* – of God, who is constantly being unveiled yet at the same time constantly concealed in the parable.

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[32]

3

POSSIBLE COURSES FOR THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

For anyone seeking to achieve a balanced view of Christian theology in the 20th century[1] it becomes relevant to look to the future too, for any such attempt gives rise to the pressing question of what future can be foreseen for this theology in the next few decades. Certain forces in contemporary Christianity, as described, for instance, by the Second Vatican Council,[2] and which, moreover, are among the decisive factors for Christian theology, will certainly persist. There are many tasks which theologians of all Churches have always regarded as their special concern. Either they have been discharging them all along or they have now begun to take them in hand. From this point of view and many others besides it is, of course, possible to attempt some estimate of what form the theology of the future will take, at least to the extent of expressing certain fragmentary prognostications, desires, and conjectures. But surely the first point (this at least is my view) which any theologian must lay down for this theology of the future is that ultimately speaking it is unknown to us, not only in practice but in principle as well.[3] If is in any [33] sense true that Christianity as a whole acts as the guardian of the '*docta ignorantia futuri*' for the history of mankind in general, if it represents the most radical critique of the theory that we are either able, or have the right, to work out an absolute plan for the course of history (seeing that any such plan would represent the end of history itself), then it follows that the Church must also go on to state in ever clearer terms that she herself is vitally involved in history, and yet that whatever possibilities or duties there may be to make plans for it to a certain limited extent, the future of history still remains unknown.

This precise point, then, applies to the future history of Christian theology as well. So far the Church has never, properly speaking, worked out any effective plans for it. But surely it both can and should engage in a little more planning and do a little more to provide institutions for such planning to be worked out for the future. In other words some kind of futurology for theology should be engaged in at both the theoretical and the practical level. But the future of theology as a whole, and on the longer view, will still remain unknown for the Church too. And this as a matter of principle. However obvious this point may be, it nevertheless has a practical importance as well. Just as other sciences work out scientific plans for their own spheres, so too (to the extent that all this is applicable to theology) theology itself (and the Church which upholds it) can lay down programmes of research or set up teams of researchers and, where necessary, find the resources to finance these (with

[1] The original lecture, of which this is a lightly re-edited version, first appeared under the title of 'Ausblick', *Bilanz der Theologie im 20. Jahrlundert*, H. Vorgrimler and R. van der Gucht edd., Vol. III (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1970), pp. 53O-551.

In what follows the impression may at times be given that it is the future of Catholic theology only that we are discussing here. No one speaking of the future from the basis of his own convictions and concrete desires would ever dare to speak on behalf of all theologies. Nevertheless the considerations which follow may, from a material point of view, evince many connections with non-Catholic theologies and – *mutatis mutandis* – include their special subject-matter within its purview. Y. Congar is concerned with the same theme, though he concentrates more upon the aspect of tradition, in his book, *Situation et taches présentes de la théologie* (Paris, 1967).

[2] cf. e.g. Conc. Vat. II, *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*), Nos. 4-10: 'The Situation of Men in the Modern World'.

[3] On this cf. the author's essay, 'The Question of the Future', *Theological Investigations* 12 (London and New York, 1974), pp. 182-201.

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greater generosity and understanding, as we may hope, than has formerly been the case). And if this course is adopted, then it can only be praiseworthy and, properly speaking, obvious as well. This is, of course, equally true of international theological periodicals if they decide to cease from publishing articles in a haphazard way simply as they are contributed and without any planned programme. It would also apply to the setting up of an international theological commission at Rome which could set itself quite specific tasks. Or again to projects, either envisaged or already in hand, to publish whole series of earlier theological literature presented according to modern principles. Or again it would apply to any scheme for using the most modern technical aids for theology as well, including even computers for verbal statistics or perhaps even for analyses of style, researches into the history of ideas, etc. (We can say this even while recognizing how large the question looms of the extent to which the financial situation of the Church of the future will really allow us to keep up in this sense with the technical side of modern science.) But all this should not blind us to the fact that the future of theology is properly speaking unknown to us. The [34] abiding character of the Church, and so of her theology as well, does not set either the Church or theology apart from human history in general. The history of the Church and theology develops essentially as the reaction of both to the historical situation of the world which they have to serve. Indeed the Church and theology have to help in shaping this situation in certain limited areas even though they cannot really or totally manipulate or control this situation.[4] Even abstracting from the free movement of the Spirit that disposes in the Church, guiding it but never being guided by it, and remaining always the uncircumscribed Lord of its history, the very fact that, despite all the plans and estimates of futurology, the history of the world ultimately remains unknown, is in itself enough to ensure that the history of the Church and its theology is likewise ultimately unknown. Now this has practical consequences. Neither theology itself nor the Church's teaching office should be over-energetic in attempting to plan or direct theology. Such a course would have very little effect. Nor should we seek too hastily, or without due thought, to organize or institutionalize the whole development of theology by devising mammoth programmes for it. I do not say this idly. For instance at the first session of the International Theological Commission at Rome it was declared, right from the outset, that this commission set itself the task of covering what I felt to be more or less the whole of theology, or at any rate its fundamental themes, embracing all the rest. My personal opinion was against this. *Theology as such* can really be pursued only by *theologians as such*, and it can never be subjected to a standard imposed upon it by planning of a totalitarian or authoritarian kind. Moreover the Church's teaching authority has never laid claim to any such authority, and will be less than ever in a position to do so in the future. It will do no harm if in the future the Church becomes the place where the original and surprising findings of the freely creative spirit can most of all be looked for and welcomed in her theology. So far from any ideological petrification [35] of its own understanding or itself, theology must, precisely in the future, continue to be the guardian of the '*docta ignorantia theologiae futurae*'. Precisely because now, in contrast to earlier ages, it is possible and tempting to try to achieve the opposite of this, this manifest fact should be stated here at the beginning of this section.

However true it may be that the future of theology is unknown to us, one factor that

[4] There is nothing derogatory in this statement for the Church or theology. First, reaction also implies considered and responsible action upon an already existing situation. So universal is this law that it is quite impossible for there to be any action in human affairs which is not also a reaction. Hence it is, to a large extent, an open question how the Church will 'react' to its situation. Second, the Church is aware that this situation in which it stands in the secular world is ultimately speaking willed by the Lord of history whom the Church itself serves, and whom it must precisely acknowledge as greater than itself, not claiming to be his representative in a totalitarian sense, or pretending to decide everything that takes place. Third, every reaction also implies that the situation to which the Church is reacting is itself having an influence upon it in its turn.

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belongs to it of its very nature is its attitude of hopeful belief that it will endure and keep its own identity in the future too. We must not dwell too long on this here, for we cannot offer a theology of the nature of theology within the present context. Nevertheless it does seem important in this context to emphasize that even though theology does endure and keep its own identity throughout all temporal changes, this precisely does not shield it from the surprises which its unknown future will bring. The fact that it keeps its own identity, continues in the future too to be what it has been in the past, is, indeed, not simply to be accounted for by an abiding nature which is devoid of any real historical development whatever. On the contrary, it is to be ascribed to the true historical development of this nature itself. Let us take, for instance, the following statements,[5] in themselves justified: that this Christian theology has to be the kind of theology that never ceases to have its roots in the revelation of Jesus Christ; that it never ceases to have its source in Scripture and the Church's own understanding of her faith; that this theology is a theology of the Church, and one which never ceases to be bound up with the teaching office of the Church, even though its relationship with this is constantly subject to critical reappraisal; that it must not lose its living contact with the kerygma of the Church; that it is, with a unity that cannot be dissolved, at once positive, historical, and yet at the same time genuinely theoretical, or 'speculative'; that it must never become too far removed from that theology which has been called a theology of 'genuflection', and so on. All these statements are, and will continue to be, perfectly true. Yet we must not imagine that having made them we know exactly the concrete lines of development which the theology of the future will follow.

A. GENERAL TRAITS IN A THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

Having made these provisos and reservations, then, what can now be said about the theology of the future? The term 'future' as used here [36] stands for a relatively proximate future. Even secular futurologists, provided they are scientists and not writers of science fiction, do not in fact extend their prognostications much beyond the year 2000. What we have to say about the future as thus defined consists, as we have already pointed out, in a certain haphazard and unsystematic amalgam of prognostications, conjectures, and even desires. Even desires, for it is permissible to have these too, and, as compared with 'prophecies', for the most part more reasonable. But where are we to find any kind of basic principle to reduce such conjectures and desires in some sense to a basic common denominator, and put them on a legitimate footing? Surely we cannot dispense ourselves from the quest for a key idea of this kind. For if we sought simply to analyse theology as it *de facto* exists today into its various individual disciplines, and to adduce a futurology of theology on this basis, then surely all that we would achieve would be one of two things: either we would produce programmes of work for the individual theological disciplines which were already familiar to them, and which cannot be developed here, or such an analysis would lead once more to the question of how we should seek in order somehow to be able to define the basic trend of the theology of the future. In the light of this let us begin by pondering the following proposition: the future theology of the Church will become less and less that which it formerly has been, namely the theology of a society which is culturally and regionally homogeneous. In other words the theology of the Church (or the Churches) will be the theology of a world Church, yet one which will never again be in a position to find any obvious basis for itself in any one specific culture, and which will never again simply constitute an obvious social and cultural

[5] cf. e.g. K. Rahner, 'Theology' and 'History of Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi*, VI (New York and London, 1970), pp. 233-246.

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phenomenon belonging to a particular region, one which is guarded by the society concerned as its own special possession and its own tradition. It will be the theology of a world Church, therefore, which, wherever it exists, will, be (albeit in very varying degrees) a diaspora Church, one which will have to maintain itself in a neutralist and secularist world. These social conditions under which the Church, and thereby her theology too, will operate, seem to me to be already present in part, and indeed to a large extent. I suggest that in a world dominated by rationalism and technology they can only increase. For the immediate future all this seems to me to be a manifest truism. In any case I cannot, at this point, enter into dispute with those Christians or theologians who believe that even in the future there will still be, in many great areas of the world, societies which, taken as a whole, will, in their outward character, constitute a Christian or Catholic milieu for the Church and theology in the [37] sense familiar to us up to the present. (There is a quite different question, and one which cannot be treated of here, namely whether there ever can or will be a society such that, though wholly secularist, it is nevertheless subject at a quite radical and hidden level to 'anonymous' Christian influences as one of its determining factors.) The only problem with which we have to concern ourselves here, therefore, is what the implications are of this social situation for the theology of the future. It is, of course, also obvious that such a question could be answered with much greater precision and probability by a specialist in sociology and futurology (assuming that he also understood something of theology) than it can be here, where it is being treated of by one who is a mere theologian and nothing more.[6] We must explicitly emphasize once more that we can treat only, or almost only, of theology in general. Without wishing, therefore, to underestimate other theological disciplines, their necessity or their importance, [38] the disciplines which are of most concern to us here are those which have the greatest possible relevance to the Church's task of missionary preaching – above all to the extent that she does effectively perform this.

I. *Pluralism in Theology*

[6] Obviously this pluralist, secularized, rational, and technological world which we are regarding as the situation of the theology of the future cannot be described or analyzed in greater detail here. Let us confine ourselves to emphasizing one point: the fact that an individual, e.g. a cleric, speaks about this world does not in itself mean that he is really living in it. It is only when he is actually living in it as well (though this does not mean identifying himself totally with it in every respect) that he can write *that* theology which the future needs. Now this attitude of accepting the intellectual and social situation necessarily involves something precisely more than a mere awareness of the existence of alien 'opinions' which remain just as alien to one as Tibetan medicine might to the average European who has come to know of it through indirect sources. Also, and more than this, this attitude of acceptance involves the ability spontaneously to enter into the basic attitude of mind of a man of tomorrow who is not a Christian, a man who, for instance, is astonished at the sound of church bells on Sunday morning, at the sight of religious habits in the street, which strike him as the costume of folklore; one whose impression of Rome, with its countless clerics clothed in all kinds of habits, and its innumerable churches, is not at all that of a 'holy city'. On the contrary it gives him the sort of feeling that a European might have on arriving as a tourist at Lhasa, and so on. Obviously in such cases a Christian of the kind we are thinking of will still willingly bear the scandal which his faith represents, not regarding it as interchangeable with that other scandal which arises from an obsolete culture which is not his any more than it is the non-Christian's. If he meets a cardinal who still decides to appear in his traditional 'uniform' (if there still are any such) he will not find him any more important, on this account, for his Church or his life (though in saying this we are not falling into a 'fanaticism of desacralization', for an attitude of this kind is not modern but rather inhuman). And so on. These are examples the details of which are not worth disputing over, and are merely intended to illustrate the sort of situation in which the theology of the future too will have to be pursued. But unless we have this truly living feeling for the situation, even those examples will remain incomprehensible which will shortly have to be adduced from the immediate context of theology itself.

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The theology of the future will be a *pluralist* theology,[7] even though obviously it will have to maintain the unity of the Church's creed. This statement should not for one moment be taken to convey that the pluralism we are speaking of (one which, admittedly, should be rightly understood, and should not in practice lead to anarchy) is capable of representing something of the Church's riches, or is in itself to be regarded as something especially welcome. Our intention is simply to recognize this pluralism as a fact. We accept that the Church is, or is destined to be, a world Church, and that too not merely in the sense of having a geographical universality. It also has this character (and this is something which may soon become far more important if the Church intends to be really true to its missionary task) in the sense that it is genuinely and unreservedly committed to recognizing the plurality of life-styles among men within one and the same geographical region, variations of life-style which the Church can no longer be as swift as formerly, and especially as she has been in the last few centuries,[8] to regard as valueless, preferring [39] instead to replace them with a single type of society characterized chiefly as that of peasants or petit-bourgeois. Now if all this is true then the theology of the Church is confronted with the most varied points of departure, ranges of perspective, conceptual models, and the most diverse criteria for distinguishing between that which can be taken for granted and that which cannot. These are genuine assumptions, from which theological thought must proceed, and they cannot in the concrete be reduced to any one 'system'. Likewise they give rise to a number of theologies which cannot, in any adequate sense, be reduced to a single theology. In respect of the axioms from which they proceed, and also of those factors in them which can never adequately be expressed at the philosophical, scientific, or sociological level, their intellectual approach, the degree of importance they assign to the various points they deal with, and their terminology, all these theologies differ very vitally among themselves. It obviously follows from this that the question of how theology is related to the Church's teaching office, to the credal formulae, and to the cultic life of the community as a whole, needs in many respects to be set on quite a fresh footing, and this in itself, once more, raises problems of language and communication in these theologies. Likewise it is obvious that these theologies must, for all this, continue to maintain a dialogue with one another not merely because of the unity of the Church and her creed, but also because of the state of interdependence and mutual influence which exists between the various outlooks and schools of thought in the secular world. This pluralism of theologies is in itself enough to justify us in the assumption and the conclusion that no one of these theologies, taken in isolation, any longer has the capacity to work out fully and

[7] cf. K. Rahner, 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and Baltimore, 1974), pp. 3-23.

[8] This conditional clause does, of course rest upon assumptions which it is the task of the sociologist and futurologist rather than the theologian to investigate. It is becoming ever clearer that we are involved in a culture of the masses of a rational, technical, and cybernetic kind. But however much we may assume that this will lead to uniformity and reduce all to the same level, it will presumably still at the same time offer the individual numerous opportunities for exercising his freedom such as formerly he did not have; opportunities to shape his life-style even though it may be true that the varied forms of life-style which emerge are based upon this universal and technical culture for all. Now these life-styles, which each individual is free to develop for himself within a pluralistic society, will certainly include among others some which are (either wholly or in part) anti-Christian in character, and constitute the 'reproach of the Gentiles'. And in response to these, Christians will have to find courage of a quite new kind in developing a manifest non-conformism. At the same time, however, there will also be precisely the kind of life-styles which on the one hand strike us of today as being still, perhaps, 'impossible' or 'unchristian', while on the other they are capable of fully integrating Christian faith within their framework. The situation will be similar to that of former times, when an actor who was at the same time a Christian was regarded as a contradiction in terms. Unless we can bring a missionary élan to bear, we are inclined too hastily to regard certain social classes or groups as more or less disqualified for Christianity. Yet often all that they are disqualified from in fact is a certain very restricted section of Christendom which we have regarded as the only possible one. All this too will emerge in the theology of the future.

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explicitly in terms of fundamental theology all the ideological and philosophical assumptions to which the situation of pluralism in secular life at the social and individual level gives rise (and in fact a further reason is that no one individual any longer has time or intellectual resources enough to master all these theologies). Every such theology, taken as an autonomous system in its own right, must, in a certain sense, and within certain limits, have the courage to be 'unscientific', and, indeed, is fully justified in being so. At the same time, however, it must make this clear and, in a special (we might say a transcendental) way, show explicitly (as is perfectly possible) why it may legitimately claim to have this right. The very fact that no one [40] individual man either does live or can live merely by those principles which he has proved right in conscience by a process of scientific reflection after the pattern of the present-day sciences – this fact in itself is enough to justify theology's right to be 'unscientific' in this sense.

2. *Missionary and Mystagogic Theology*

The theology of the future will, in a more direct sense than hitherto, be a missionary and mystagogic theology, and no longer be so willing as has been the case in the past few centuries to consign this department of missionary mystagogy to the realm of personal practice or ascetic and mystical literature.[9] For in the future the Church will no longer be upheld by traditions that are unquestioningly accepted in secular society, or regarded as an integral element of that society. The community Church will be transformed into a Church made up of those who believe as a matter of personal conviction and individual decision. (We are stating all this in a somewhat simplified form.) Again theology has to make a contribution to preaching. And whereas formerly it was possible to depute a large part of this task to the traditional practice and the strength of society in general, in the new situation it will no longer be in a position to do this. And for all these reasons theology (or the theologies) must itself be far more missionary and mystagogic in outlook than it has formerly had to be. I believe that theology, wherever and whenever it still remains alive, no longer has the time, the inclination, or even the right to write such large-scale studies on the Trinity as were written in former ages, for instance, by a D. Ruiz de Montoya. In the unceasing life-and-death struggle within a secularized society it is inevitable that theology should be fully preoccupied with having to raise and answer ever afresh the ultimate questions of a personal decision for God, for Jesus Christ, and (of course in a very derived sense) for the Church. This does not, of course, mean that we will not also have to engage in very intensive 'specialist' studies in the field of dogmatics, a point which we shall discuss more fully at a later stage. But this must be done in such a way that a strong and explicit contact is constantly maintained with the ultimate questions confronting [41] theology today. 'Mystagogy' means that the *fides quae* of today can be expressed only in a very explicitly recognized unity with the *fides qua*. Obviously it is not those preoccupations of 'modern' man which his own inclinations have fixed upon and determined that provide the criterion for deciding what should be studied in theology. But if it is true that everything that is expressed in objective concepts in theology has a reference to the interior self-communication of God in every man, then the *fides qua* both can and must constitute a theme in all departments of dogmatic theology and, moreover, from a different

[9] In this respect theology from the age of the Fathers to the High Middle Ages can perhaps in its turn provide a new model, though of course always recognizing the necessity for having to speak in more 'abstract' and 'formal' terms than in that period. In what has been said a question which has, of course, not really been brought to the surface in any effective sense is the question of the future of the 'religious book'. On this cf. K. Rahner, 'The Future of the Religious Book', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 251-256.

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aspect according to each department involved. The point we are seeking to make is that it does not merely signify a subject of some pious interest operating in an area outside theology properly so called. For in all departments of dogmatic theology we have to ask 'What does this mean for me (and society)?' 'How does this really affect me?' 'How precisely can I myself really believe this? Once such questions as these are raised, once the theologian ceases to identify himself in his studies, in a manner which is at basis out of date, with a quite specific, but ever diminishing social group (which nevertheless still continues to survive in a ghetto-like existence), then theology of itself will become something quite different from what it formerly was. It will of itself become more mystagogic, more missionary, and this is something which in practice is in accordance with the contemporary and future situation. Of course we should supply examples to make our meaning clear. But this is impossible here. Yet we have only to read some teaching about the nature of God or some treatise in fundamental theology or dogmatic christology, or a substantial part of moral theology in the seminary textbooks, to receive the inescapable impression that something is being expounded and proved here about which the author has never seriously entertained any doubts. Now what this means is that the author is, without himself noticing it, sustained by that 'ideology' of his group in Christian society which is still relatively undisturbed. For what other source could there be for his certainty of the compelling force of his all-too 'binding' arguments and ideas? Now a theologian does not necessarily need to be a doubter in the sense in which moral theology treats of culpable doubts on points of faith. But how is a theologian to write a theology capable of being, in any effective sense, missionary and mystagogic if he does not maintain a constant and vital inward sympathy with those for whom, after all, he is really writing, in other words for those who have still to make their way towards belief and who for the most part still stick fast in their position in the face of those who, from the point of view of their place in society, regard themselves as good Christians and [42] Catholics. But we have not yet achieved such contact so long as, in our dealings with confirmed non-Christians of this kind, we behave towards them as I might behave, for instance, towards a Hindu or Zen Buddhist acquaintance, or as they might behave towards one of us nowadays on any secular occasion which is not concerned with religious or philosophical questions, and at which no one speaks of religious matters or has the slightest intention of attempting to 'convert' the others.

3. '*Demythologizing*' *Theology*

The theology of the future must be a 'demythologizing' theology. In saying this lam fully aware of the disadvantages which this term has come to have. On the one hand, as a result of the use to which it has been put in the theology of Bultmann, it has nowadays come to acquire a sense which is, to a large extent, unacceptable to Catholics. On the other hand, however, we must recognize that theology as such (and beginning with the New Testament itself) has all along engaged in 'demythologizing'. But if we try to avoid these connotations in choosing the concepts we need to express what we mean, how are we to prevent these other concepts from becoming, so to say, a protective layer of cotton-wool within which a comforting theology can continue simply to reproduce itself in its attachments to those traditional forms of Christianity which do of course still exist, with some variations according to the particular countries in which they are found. When we use the term 'demythologizing' here we are taking it to signify nothing else whatever than the attempt to ensure that the essential and primary statements of faith which must be preached, will be preached in a form which will be credible and acceptable to modern man (though we must recognize to the full the radical responsibility we are taking upon ourselves in this). But this is the chief and

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primary task for which theology must prepare the ground. It must be stated boldly and explicitly that, at least for the *initial* preaching of the faith which is so necessary, the expressions of that faith which have become traditional are now, and always will be, to a large extent unsuitable, Obviously they will continue to provide – and, moreover, precisely and more particularly for theology – a starting-point and a norm for theological thinking. But if theology is to make a contribution to preaching, the traditional formulae of faith can no longer constitute the outcome and conclusion of theological speculation in the same way as has formerly been the case. In our preaching we cannot continue to present these statements, which come at the beginning and end of theology, more or [43] less as they stand, or provided only with a few additional explanations. In the future too the traditional formulae of faith, the official and definitive doctrinal declarations in force up to the present, will continue to constitute again and again, not merely the starting-point and the norm, but the final goal of theology and preaching as well (the more so since it is quite impossible totally to dispense with them in the liturgy). They will continue to have this function whenever, on the occasion of some fresh theological pronouncement, the following statement is made: 'When such and such a pronouncement was made in the past (or is made in the present in the form of a cultic formula) this was what is meant.' Catholic theology must be upheld by the conviction in faith that a 'demythologizing' of this kind is possible even in an approach that is unambiguously orthodox. The task may be difficult. It is only barely in its incipient stages. Nevertheless it is possible. In order to express our meaning once more in different terms: preaching and cult have drawn their living force more or less from those traditional statements and formulae of faith which emerged in the first five centuries of Christendom in a world of ideas which was more or less homogeneous in character. At the time theology provided, as it were, a musical accompaniment to these formulae (of course in circumstances of mutual interdependence) which was certainly enlightening, but which (as every catechism shows) carried no very great significance so far as understanding and the will actively to believe were concerned for the normal Christian. Today, however, theology must accept as its new and primary task (albeit in the context of a pluralism of theologies within the unity of the Church and her creed) the duty of devising fresh statements of the content of the ancient faith. As we have already said, theology has been engaged in 'demythologizing' activities right from the first. But properly speaking it is only today that such activities have come to have the status of a consciously defined task which can only be discharged in terms of this pluralism. The only question which Thomas Aquinas had to deal with, for instance, was whether God exists. He did not have to answer the question of who and what he is. Anyone undertaking to develop a theology of the nature of God must be willing to proceed very slowly in bringing his hearers to a gradual understanding (capable of being made real in terms of their own concrete lives) of what the very term 'God' is intended to signify. Obviously in any such approach he will still all along be retaining some connection with what was formerly called the proofs of God's existence and the doctrine of the nature of God. Nevertheless his approach will not be the same. For there are very many points with regard to the nature of God and his relationship with the world (for instance that [44] God takes 'responsibility' even for the wicked in the world in a quite specific way etc.) which were accorded a fairly secondary place in advanced theology and regarded as altogether too much for the average Christian. Today, however, in a mystagogic teaching on the nature of God of the kind we have in mind, such points must be brought into the discussion right from the outset if we are to avoid, once more, either presupposing or implying an idea of God which will appear unacceptable to modern man precisely by presenting God as one particular factor in the world itself. A theology which is 'demythologizing' in the right sense should clearly recognize the effect of such statements as 'there are three Persons in God; God has sent his Son into the world; we are redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ', when we continue to make them the beginning and end of the

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statement of Christian belief in the manner of the old theology and preaching. When he encounters them in this guise, modern man will find them simply incomprehensible, and they will give him the impression of belonging to the crude mythology of a religion of former ages. Of course for many of our contemporary Christians and theologians it would be necessary to provide further explanations and elucidations of this statement. And here this is impossible. All that we can manage in the present context is simply to draw attention to examples of this kind, and so indicate the quite radical difficulties which the task of a future theology will involve. And in such a context it does nothing to make such basic statements of Christian belief acceptable for us to invoke the element of mystery in them. For first the concept of 'mystery' must not be used as a facile excuse for the flabby thinking of a theology that merely repeats traditional arguments, and second, a point that precisely calls for demonstration is how such 'mysteries' have an intrinsic connection with that ultimate mystery which man really feels as an effective part of his life at the depths of his existence, and which he can discover and, in a certain sense, 'verify'. In the results it is designed to achieve the 'demythologizing' envisaged here has little or nothing to do with that residue of Christianity which survives from Bultmann's existential interpretation (even though this may perhaps amount to far more than over-hasty critics have supposed). The crucial point in what we are calling for here – to reiterate it once more – is the conviction that however true it may be that the Christian faith of yesterday and today is materially speaking one and the same, the actual expression of that faith in preaching, the conceptual models employed for it, its connotations and perspectives, will assume a radically different form in the future from that which they have formerly had. This is what theology must work to achieve, though obviously in [45] doing so it must maintain a constant hold on Scripture and the officially binding doctrinal statements of the faith of the Church of former times. To retain this hold is primarily the task of theology, and presumably it is only in a very secondary sense that it is the concern of preaching, to the extent that cubic formulae, which develop according to a tempo of their own, make it necessary. On the whole preachers will proclaim the beliefs of Christianity without constantly falling into the style and parlance of the ancient credal formulae, as preachers and catechists formerly tended to do. Thus what is truly and properly signified by the two natures or the hypostatic union in christology, or by transubstantiation etc., must always be retained. Moreover such ideas must constantly be the subject of fresh studies on the part of theologians in respect both of their history and their content. Yet is it so certain that fifty years from now preachers will still have to operate with these terms? An idea which is constantly being put forward is that while, in our use of such ideas, we do indeed have to recognize that they belong to past history, we also have to recognize at the same time that we can neither replace them nor do without them in the present, seeing that they correspond to a general common sense which has a universal philosophical validity. This thesis, however, though often stated, is still far from having been proved.

4. Transcendental Theology

The theology of the future will be, in a far more explicit sense than hitherto, a transcendental theology:[10] not in the sense that a transcendental theology will be presented as the whole of theology, or that the Christian faith will be reduced to the private and personal dimension by an individualizing philosophy which views the individual as a monad-like 'subject'. The theology of the future will not fail to recognize that the Christian faith has from its origins, side by side with its solicitude for the salvation of the individual, a social relevance, and is, at

[10] cf. *Sacramentum Mundi*, VI (New York and London, 1970), pp. 275-285, with bibliography.

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least in this sense, a 'political theology'. One of the factors belonging intrinsically to transcendental theology is precisely its conscious recognition of its own limitations. And this means that as the outcome of its own principles it arrives at an understanding of the fact that an individual cannot draw his life-force solely from some abstract metaphysic, or even from some philosophy of his historical mode of existence. He can only be fully alive in consciously accepting his own history as something which he must [46] endure and act responsibly in, yet which can never in any adequate sense be consciously comprehended either in its past or its future dimensions by the speculative reason. Nevertheless some form of transcendental theology will have to be worked out for the future in a more consciously reflective and methodical sense than has been the case hitherto. This does not mean the mere taking over of a transcendental philosophy into theology. As a matter of history this transcendental theology may find its point of departure in such a philosophy, and in fact it would have nothing to be ashamed of precisely in this. But the true source of any transcendental theology is itself genuinely theological. For the question theology enquires into is properly speaking this and nothing else: the salvation of man to the extent that this consists in the self-bestowal of God, and therefore the consummate wholeness which man can achieve. If man in this sense is to be taken as a subject in the strict sense of the term, and not merely as one particular individual factor among others, then we can only understand what salvation means to the extent that it (including, by the same token, all the elements in this salvation) is conceived of as applying to the subject as such. Now to understand the reality of salvation in this way means nothing else than to conceive of it as transcendental, applying, that is to say, to the transcendental subject, which is such a subject 'of its very nature', and precisely as so constituted achieves its most radical dimension through that which we call grace. All this has nothing to do with any false 'anthropocentricity' of theology, a fact which will be immediately clear to anyone who (in terms of philosophy and theology) conceives of man precisely as the subject of a radical orientation to the absolute mystery which bestows itself as such upon man in grace, without which man fails to discover his own self, and which is called 'God'. A transcendental theology could be defined as that kind of systematic theology which (a) avails itself of a transcendental philosophy as its instrument, and at the same time (b) is more explicit than formerly and, unlike fundamental theology, not wholly concerned with general principles in defining its themes for investigation on the basis of questions arising at a genuinely theological level. For these themes are the a priori conditions in the believing subject which enable him to recognize the fundamental truths of his faith. (A transcendental enquiry of this kind can be extended to all areas except one: that namely in which it is in principle and from the outset impossible to enquire into the *a priori* conditions on which a given piece of theological knowledge depends by reason of the nature of the subject. In such cases man has to recognize that here and now at this particular point, and in fact even in its bearing upon his own salvation, he is confronted by the inescapable factualness of [47] a free historical event, and of his faith accepts this as salvation despite the 'relativity' inherent in it.) It is impossible here to point to individual fundamental dogmas of Christianity in order to exemplify what such a transcendental theology can achieve and must achieve. For this we must refer to other studies.[11] One concluding point remains to be emphasized, however, namely that the need for a transcendental theology is not simply one and the same as the need for a transcendental philosophy in one particular historical form, as though this constituted the indispensable basis of our thinking. To that extent a transcendental theology would not even need to constitute one particular theology within the pluralism of theologies, but could represent an approach and a task which is present in every such

[11] cf. the article cited above in n. 9.

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theology according to its particular mode.[12]

B. POINTS OF EMPHASIS IN A THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

Having pointed to four general and formal characteristics of the theology of the future, we may now go on to make certain more concrete individual points on the future of Christian theology, though our choice of these points may seem somewhat arbitrary.

The biblical and historical (history of dogma) branches of theology as they exist today seem to me in a certain sense to have reached a crisis. Of course this applies to historical theology in an essentially higher degree than to biblical theology (obviously including exegesis). First with regard to historical theology, there will in fact always be a place and an important task for this, and not merely among those who have a justifiable and selfless interest in history as such, and to the extent that they have this – in other words among those seeking simply to know about past developments. Historical theology also has an important function for theology as a whole and as such. This is not only because theology must constantly be referring back to the authentic and binding pronouncements of the official Church of earlier ages which, since they still continue to remain a norm for the theology of today also, though on these grounds alone there must be a historical theology. But a further reason is that ultimately speaking the only way in which we can arrive at a sufficiently clear understanding of these official doctrinal pronouncements in their full bearing and significance, as also in their limitations, is to take account of their historical [48] context as a whole. And for this, historical theology must provide a contact with the totality of theological thinking. In other words it must embrace the study of the history of dogma and theology throughout all the centuries.

1. *The History of Dogma*

But unless I am mistaken in my impressions, this historical theology as practised hitherto has been sustained by the expectation that over and above the officially defined and assured doctrines of the Church, there are still teachings to be discovered in the Fathers of the Church or the theologians of the Middle Ages – if only we study them closely enough –which belong to the faith of the Church as such. This kind of exaggerated pietism and fideism, based as it is on a false conception of tradition, is something that should explicitly be abandoned – and in fact even in its application to the earliest of the Fathers. We can indeed discover in their works a theology from which we of today can still learn much. But it is precisely *theology* and not *ipso facto* or of itself dogmatically binding theses, going beyond those already recognized and acknowledged as binding by the Church's teaching office. It is true that what we find in these past ages is not merely a history of theology but a history of dogma as well. But right from the earliest ages of the Fathers of the Church onwards this is not a history of individual theological dogmas, each of which has been handed down as an entity already fully matured and existing in its own right, such that we can still discover further statements of a similar kind within the volumes of Migne. On the contrary, this history of dogma constitutes that part of the history of theology (springing from very simple sources) which already begins in the New Testament itself, and has assumed the form of irreversible

[12] cf. K. Rahner, 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 3-23; idem, 'Zum Begriff der Unfehlbarkeit in der katholische Theologie', *Stimmen der Zeit* 186 (1970), pp. 18-31.

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decisions or dogmas in the Church's conscious faith. This is not the place to treat of the question of why and how there can be any such discipline as a history of dogma in the true sense within the history of theology and emerging from it. Arising from what has been said, the point that is important for us here is that we cannot approach the history of theology in the manner of a prospector searching for metals (dogmas) still hidden beneath the rocks of the history of theology. Our way of studying it must involve, rather, two distinct approaches. (a) We must recognize both the meaning and the limitations of the dogmas actually formulated. Presumably these have reached a stage at which they are no longer susceptible of further explicitation and so of further extension through theological study, as a result of some datum [49] purely of the history of theology or dogma coming to be discerned in them, which had hitherto only been implicit. This is, of course, not for one moment to deny the Church's right to exercise her official teaching authority in producing fresh definitions in the future. But she will arrive at such definitions in some other way. (b) Our approach to the history of theology must, as Bernhard Welte puts it,[13] take the form of 'a deductive investigation of the major historical stages' which have taken place in the history of dogma, to see 'what authority they carry, *and at the same time* their limitations'. This means that the historical approach to the study of theology today will involve not so much an explicitating theology, one, that is, which in a direct sense yields fresh material either consisting in dogmatically binding pronouncements or providing an immediate point of departure for some new statement of this kind.[14] In its historical approach modern theology will be, rather, a 'reductive' theology. It will not involve any false or exaggerated emphasis on the formal authority of the Church's official teachings in terms either of the material it investigates or its pedagogic approach (the Church's doctrinal authority is beyond dispute. But the material and concrete factors on which it is based are precisely *prior* to it, and it is necessary to make these clear ever afresh). But the new theology will have to be a 'reductive' theology in the sense of showing how all the manifold individual statements of the Church's faith derive from the simple and pristine kernel of the Christian faith (even while recognizing the historical mode in which this is mediated).

2. *Exegesis*

The conditions governing that department of historical theology which we call exegesis and biblical theology are similar, and yet in some respects different.[15] Something similar to what has been said would apply to this [50] department of historical theology to the extent that, in terms of time and content alike, not only the Old Testament but the New Testament too has a long history. And even in the New Testament several different theologies are to be

[13] cf. B. Welte, 'Em Vorschlag zur Methode der Theologie heute', *Auf der Spur des Ewigen* (Freiburg, 1965), pp. 410-426 (quoting from p. 420).

[14] When, for instance, the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was due to be defined there was a reluctance to admit plainly and openly that it was not only impossible to adduce any proof that the doctrine had explicitly been believed all along as a truth of faith, but that any such proof that was adduced would certainly be false. For this reason attempts were made (e.g. by Otto Faller) to ascribe the earliest possible date to explicit witnesses to a pious belief of this kind. Alternatively its exponents sought to assemble all possible witnesses, and so to give the impression that it was explicitly attested by an existing dogmatic tradition even though 'for a lack of still available witnesses' it was no longer possible to trace the tradition right back to apostolic times.

[15] Without denying the unity of 'scripture' as constituted by the Old and New Testaments, we are confining ourselves to one observation on the New Testament, because it is impossible to say more at this point, and because even within this unity of Scripture, the Old Testament is, after all, very clearly distinguishable from the New Testament as a whole in its function and significance for Christian theology.

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discovered. If we take a dogma to mean some one specific individual statement, formulated as such by doctrinal authority, and reinforced with an anathema, then presumably it is no longer possible to discover any fresh dogmas of this kind even in the New Testament,[16] however true it may be that a 'history of dogma' in the specific sense in which it may continue to exist even in the future must constantly be proceeding from, and returning to, the New Testament. The conditions applying to exegesis and biblical theology are different to the extent that the New Testament as a whole will always remain the norm by which theology is judged, and not simply (as with the later history of theology) something from which elements, entire theologies, or trends of development can be set aside as illegitimate. (This does not, of course, mean that one particular question is thereby settled: the question, which is in fact in a true sense obvious, of the 'canon within the canon'; of whether a 'hierarchy of truths' is to be found even in the New Testament; of whether different *niveaux* are to be found even in the New Testament. Even for Catholics these are open questions, and Catholic theologians should be far bolder in their way of tackling them than they have been in other contexts. This is the question which has, in effect, been recognized all along under the formal heading of the *analogia fidei*. The only remaining point [51] to be made for the Catholic biblical scholar of the future is surely this; he has certainly the right and the duty to avail himself of all the methods of historical science in his task, and so, for instance, of those of form-criticism, redaction history, etc. He can also be far more critical than formerly in drawing a bold and explicit distinction between the truths which he can deduce from scripture working purely as a historian and fundamental theologian on the one hand, and those which he finds in it when he is working as a believing dogmatic theologian within the context of that understanding of the faith which belongs to the Church as a whole on the other. For precisely on a Catholic understanding of what faith means, a distinction has to be drawn between these two approaches. In respect of their purview, their certainty, and the kind of certainty involved in them, these two approaches do not lead simply to one and the same conclusions. And the exegete has the right to make these differences clear. But the exegete is also as such not simply a secular student of the history of religions, but a theologian who has to take responsibility for the whole of theology, and who also has a function in fundamental theology, one which he cannot shift to any fundamental theologian who is not a specialist in exegesis (and in most cases is incapable of being so). Admittedly a point which calls for more explicit reflection than has formerly been accorded to it is where precisely the task of the exegete in fundamental theology reaches its limits. What, in real terms, can or cannot be demanded of the exegete by fundamental theology or dogmatics?[17]

3. '*Ecumenical Theology*'

[16] What we are referring to is the appearance of constant 'new' individual propositions such that, as new, they would belong more or less unambiguously to Scripture itself and (after sufficiently preparing the ground by exegesis) could then be defined by the Church in virtue of the fact that they were 'revealed'. In putting forward these considerations we may possibly be beating upon an open door. Yet I do have the impression that right down to our own times the old-fashioned conservative type of Catholic theology has worked with this assumption. The work of biblical theology will not become any less important once this tacit assumption is abandoned. But then the question which the exegete and biblical theologian will ask is whether he can show his own theology faithfully to reproduce the message of Scripture, whether Scripture has some fresh message for his theology, or throws new light in some way upon it. But he must pursue this line of enquiry within a pluralism of theologies which he already encounters in Scripture itself, and *a fortiori* in the contemporary scene, without being able fully to integrate it, in any positive sense, within any one single theological system.

[17] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Remarks on the Importance of the History of Jesus for Catholic Dogmatics', in the present volume, pp. 201-212.

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There are, perhaps, some points also to be made with regard to the 'ecumenical theology' of the future. So long as there are Christians (and, of course, among them officials too) who feel convinced in conscience by their reading of the truth of the gospel that they cannot give their adherence to this or that community of Christian believers without betraying the truth of the gospel and so forfeiting their salvation, so long will there be confessional theologies orientated each towards its own particular specific Church community. (There is a further and different question which cannot be treated of here, the question namely of how it comes about that the vast majority of contemporary Christians do not really have any confessional awareness in the theological sense whatsoever, but belong to one specific confession solely for historical and social reasons.) So long as [52] theologies of this kind exist, differing from one another in a sense that is (theologically speaking) confessional, there must also be an 'ecumenical theology' in the individual Church communities. The reason for this is simply that the Christians of different confessions have the Christian duty of being concerned about one another, and must strive for the unity of the Church. What form this ecumenical theology will take in the concrete is another question. It may be suggested that all the major institutes of theological study should, with the necessary provisos (and with intelligent concentrations of resources), set up special chairs of ecumenical theology. But almost more important than this is the requirement that there should be an 'ecumenical' element in the study of all the theological disciplines, each according to its own special approach. Nowadays this is already fairly obvious so far as exegesis is concerned. But for many other disciplines it is still more or less a demand for the future. It is necessary for each separate discipline to include such ecumenism as an intrinsic element, if only for the reason that any theology of the future must be mystagogic and missionary, and this means that the hearers who must be envisaged in such a theology can in concrete practice never again be solely, or even primarily, the theologian's own co-religionists.[18] But we have still not so much as touched upon what is surely the true problem for the ecumenical theology of the future. Future Catholic theology will have to reckon with a very considerable degree of pluralism within itself. In these circumstances it will be far from easy to establish, and give expression to, that unity of the creed which has to be preserved in the midst of this pluralism (for without every possible help from theology this will be quite impossible). Again there is an unmistakable trend for contemporary and future theological opinions, in establishing their frontiers, to cut across established confessional divisions among the Churches.[19] And a point which cannot be gainsaid is that a consensus either has already been achieved, or is perfectly capable of being achieved, on many questions on which the Churches were formerly divided in the answers they gave. At any rate it is often the [53] case that the answer given, even to a question of this kind within a particular Church, is no longer regarded as inseparably bound up with some confessionally binding doctrine. And if all this is true, then, after all, a position might be achieved in the theology of the future in which the theologies of the various confessions are no longer really confessional in any sense at all. Instead many of them, as pursued in the various confessions, while taking a clear stand against those who deny the real and basic substance of Christianity, have come to a legitimate understanding among themselves as having a unity in the midst of pluralism. Now on this showing a position might be arrived at in which the individual Church institutions, together with their official representatives, while

[18] Even if in theory someone did not hold this opinion, he would have to remind himself that today (the very climate of ideas dominating human relationships everywhere makes every thinker akin to every other, and this situation in itself is enough to justify us in the point we are making) even in every Catholic, regarded from a 'psychological' aspect, a potential Protestant and an atheistic unbeliever lies concealed. If we bear this in mind, then we shall recognize that the requirement mentioned above is justified in practice at any rate.

[19] Because the current problems in theology are no longer in any sense the ancient themes of the Reformation on which the differences between the sects were based, or at least are not these in any direct sense.

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recognizing the divisions among themselves, could actually regard themselves as having eliminated the theological grounds for their state of separation, and could recognize that the only real factor causing them still to remain separated was the hold that past history and sociological circumstances had upon them. What then? Will the leaders of the Churches appoint the sort of theologians (for there both are, and will be such) who will make a 'bona fide' use of their theological acumen to develop still more doctrinal differences, possibly leading to still more declared divisions between the Churches (differences in which each theologian persists in identifying his own theological opinion with the binding teachings of his Church, and declares that anyone deviating from it is merely tolerated, and does not possess the true spirit of that Church)? Or alternatively will the leaders of the Churches have the heroic courage to draw the institutional consequences from any such possible theological situation, and to allow *one single* Church to emerge, which will maintain and recognize a great pluralism of Church life within itself? But let us return to those factors which constitute the prior conditions for such possibilities!

For instance we have nowadays reached a point at which it is no longer possible, in any really serious sense, to regard the doctrine of justification as a ground for division between the Churches, at least not in the sense that each of the separated Churches has its own distinct theology of justification uniformly accepted by all of its members.[20] We must maintain a version of the institution of the sacraments by Christ, and of the distinction between them, which is, in the fullest sense, possible for Catholics to hold. We must maintain a theology of the word which is fully possible for Catholics. And we must sincerely accept[21] the third canon of the seventh [54] session of the Council of Trent (DS 1603). But even while recognizing all this, the difference between the various sacramental doctrines must not be regarded as insuperable. A similar situation prevails today for the theology of established authority in the Church, even though here we do seem to have somewhat further still to travel. What we have said applies, of course, solely to the doctrines which became matters of official controversy between the confessions at the Reformation period. In addition to these, the various Protestant theologies do, of course, include opinions which, while they are not objected to by the authorities of those Churches, can nevertheless have no place in a Catholic theology. But this is, once more, a quite different question, in itself and in its consequences for ecumenism. We have to begin, in fact, by finding the answer to the first question, which, even from a theological point of view, has a different bearing, the question, namely, of what the situation is, in terms of theology, in which the various confessions as they *de facto* exist now find themselves, seeing that those doctrines which, as a matter of history, have been responsible for the separation between the Churches, no longer constitute unambiguous grounds for such separation. (With regard to the second question of the ecumenical relevance to be attached to other differences of doctrine which, though they do *de facto* exist, are not those of the official Churches, surely all that needs to be said here is that in any case it would be illusory to suppose that the various Church congregations, together with their theologians, would simply follow their ecclesiastical representatives into the unity of the Church the moment that point in the future was arrived at when these had achieved unity at the theological and institutional level between their Churches. It would be an illusion to suppose that the members of the various Churches would do this merely because these representatives of their Churches claim and exercise a certain general doctrinal authority.)

To all these considerations it would of course be possible to reply that even today the

[20] We have only to think, for instance, of H. Küng's study on Barth's teaching on justification and the foreword to this study written by Barth himself.

[21] In this connection, on any serious evaluation, the history of the Catholic theology of the sacraments in the Middle Ages justifies us in developing a far more flexible theology of the sacraments than is recognized in post-Tridentine theology.

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doctrine of papal authority as interpreted by the First, or even the Second Vatican Council is still – and, moreover, in its theological aspects – a doctrine that divides the Churches, and one which banishes all the hopes of a theological unity between the Churches to an unforeseeable future. This remains true whether this doctrine is viewed in itself or in the assumptions on which it is based (e.g. in respect of the concept of truth as such or of the structure of the Church in general, with regard to the processes [55] by which the Church seeks to discover the truth, the relationship which one particular proposition of faith, taken in itself, bears to the Christian faith as a single whole). But even in this question do not misunderstandings still exist with regard both to the content of this doctrine and to the ways in which it is put into practice – misunderstandings such as the Catholic ecumenist might be able to overcome not only so far as non-Catholics are concerned, but also in his own mind and the minds of his own co-religionists? In any case, as I see it, the most notable obstacles to the progress of the ecumenical movement come not from the side of theology but from the weight of traditional and institutional factors (and sometimes factors belonging merely to the realm of folklore). Ecumenical theology, therefore, would also have the task of working out conceptual models for the leaders of the various Churches which would be comprehensible to them and acceptable to their theological conscience, aiming at a rapprochement between the confessions which can be achieved at the institutional level as well. Among other advantages it will also have the effect of throwing light on the question of what policy the authorities of the various Churches should adopt towards those Christians who find it simply impossible in the concrete conditions in which they *de facto* live so to understand and to realize the existing doctrinal differences (including the doctrine of papal authority) in all the seriousness which should still perhaps be attached to such differences, that, so far as their own consciences are concerned, these differences amount to confessional divisions at the level of theology, and not merely of ecclesiastical sociology. Since the various denominations are no longer confined to particular regions, or cut off from one another by territorial boundaries, such a question would have the highest urgency. The impression may possibly be given that at least among us Catholics it has not yet seriously been posed, because individuals baptized as Catholics are presumed to be Catholic Christians in a theological sense too until the opposite is proved in the individual case, whereas the real position is that despite Catholic religious instruction, the majority of them are Catholic only at the level of the sociology of religion, and very often the kind of Christianity which they 'draw' from their Church is more or less simply that which is common to all Christians. This is certainly not enough to provide any adequate account of the nature and task of the ecumenical theology of the future. But for further details we must refer our readers to the literature which has appeared on this.[22]

[56]

4. 'Political Theology'

Let us attempt at this stage to make a few brief observations on the question of 'political theology' as well.[23] They will be offered with the proviso that what the idea of a 'political theology' precisely means has probably not yet been established beyond all possible

[22] Here we may simply refer to the number of 'Concilium' deyoted to ecumenism, which has appeared every year since 1965, and in which these questions are treated of. On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Zur Theologie des ökumenischen Gesprächs', *Festgabe für Bischof Volk*, O. Semmelroth et al. edd. (Mainz, 1968), pp. 163-199; J. B. Metz, *Reform und Gegenreformation heute. Zwei Thesen zur ökumenischen Situation der Kirchen* (Mainz/Munich, 1969).

[23] For a description of Catholic 'political theology' cf. H. Peukert ed., *Diskussion zur 'politischen Theologie'* (Mainz/Munich, 1969); also J. B. Metz, J. Moltmann, W. Oelmüller, *Aspekte einer neuen 'politischen Theologie'* (Mainz, 1970).

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ambiguity, and that I myself am not really sure in my own mind whether I understand what is properly meant by it. What is certain is that 'political theology' has nothing to do with any political activity of the Church or her clergy. On the contrary it recognizes the existence and the legitimacy of a secular world on theological grounds. Hence it does not in any sense run counter to that 'withdrawal' of the Church from 'politics' which has been progressively taking place in the last few decades, and which has been hastened by the Second Vatican Council. The Church cannot influence politics even 'indirectly' by invoking the natural law which it has to uphold (a temptation, not wholly overcome even today, to which those so-called 'Christian social sciences' are subject which in many cases have established themselves in the theological faculties as a theological discipline). The reason is that on any truly thought-out view of the natural law, in which its own historicity is correctly taken into account, it is impossible to deduce from it an unambiguous model for the politics of society even from the point of view of a particular historical and social situation. If we take 'political theology' to mean simply that which explicitly gives value to the relevance of all theological statements for society, then of course there must be a political theology. It will be not so much a regional theology as a formal point of view inherent throughout in all subjects for theological investigation. For on a right understanding (and without falling into any false theological anthropocentricity) all theological statements say something about man. And when we view man as a member of society we are not, in the last analysis, considering factors which are realized merely in particular individuals and in particular regions. These factors, rather, apply at all times to mankind as a whole from one particular point of view. Again the converse is also true: society is never merely the sum total of the individuals of which it is constituted. In this sense at least there is an urgent need today for a 'political theology', because traditional theology betrays [57] certain tendencies to circumscribe Christianity and to regard it as applying merely to the private life or the interior salvation of the individual man. And a further reason is that the theology of hope has likewise been conceived of at the exclusively individual level, while the earthly task of man as endowed with creativity has been regarded too little as that of communicating his eschatological hope and his love to his neighbour. Furthermore 'political theology' can be regarded as the special task of theology in maintaining a constant critical reappraisal and calling in question of the social system prevailing at any given time, seeing that there is a constant temptation to make an idol of this, and to establish it as absolute by unjust oppression. It is true that we are not forced to regard 'political theology' as a mere partial discipline (more or less subordinate to, or leading up to, moral theology or the Christian social sciences, which are themselves regarded as partial disciplines), but however true this may be, it would surely also be wrong to regard political theology simply as *the* theology of the future, which, in virtue of the new social situation, does away with all previous theologies. The real situation is that the significance of man is not fully apprehended even at the social level by considering him in his place in society, the influence of society upon him, or his function in society. Hence I find myself unable to see how on this showing a transcendental theology and a political one necessarily exclude one another or do away with one another. The very statement that man is a social being, and must therefore develop his theology as a political theology, is in itself a transcendental statement, which has to be based on transcendental grounds. Otherwise it may lose its validity in the future, and might be rejected even today. And this in itself is enough to show that transcendental and political theology are not mutually exclusive. This is an age in which the social sciences have come to the fore, side by side with philosophy, the traditional speculative disciplines, and the modern natural sciences, as on an equal footing with them and to be regarded as autonomous disciplines in their own right in their bearing upon man's understanding of his own nature and shaping of his own course. And obviously in such an age, and arising from this essential change in its situation, theology must and will take these

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into account in the future far more than it has done up to now. The social sciences themselves will have a part to play in theology of the kind which up to now has at most been accorded to philosophy and, in recent times, to the scientific study of history. This means that it will also be an essential task of 'political theology' to examine more closely the precise connection between 'politology' (in the broadest sense of the term) and theology. A question which [58] may be left open is whether much which has hitherto been studied under the heading of the sociology of religion or pastoral sociology will in material terms be included as an integral part of 'political theology'. Wherever a tendency arises to erect the social sciences into ideologies, or an attempt is made (whether explicitly or in practice) to give them an absolute status as basic and all-dominating sciences, a 'political theology' should precisely serve as a corrective to such false claims.

In conclusion attention may be drawn, in quite brief and simple terms, to a few still more particular points. From what has been said concerning mystagogic and missionary theology and transcendental theology we may surely conclude, without any prolonged discussion, that a far closer unity should be forged between fundamental theology and dogmatics than is, or has been, customary in the study of theology up to the present. Hence it would be perfectly conceivable to assign fundamental theology in its explicit form a place at the conclusion of dogmatics where it could serve as a further critical reappraisal of, and reflection upon, the responsibility which our faith and our hope lays upon us. On any showing it is true that whatever the point in dogmatics at which we attempt to achieve a transcendental understanding of the basic statements of our faith, there we shall be embarking upon a part of fundamental theology which will thereby emerge from that formal void in which it is usually studied (especially in the treatises, 'De Deo Revelante' and 'De Christo Legato Divino'). With regard to the methodological and didactic aspects, and above all with regard to the question raised at the Second Vatican Council as to the essential character of a 'basic course' in theology, I must refer to observations published elsewhere.[24] The same applies to a fundamental and formal theology (which is not to be confused with fundamental theology!).[25] In this survey much is certainly lacking of what might justifiably be expected in the way of answers to the relevant questions. Perhaps we should have included a section more explicitly devoted to theology considered as the hermeneutics of the Christian message, and to the necessity and limits of a theology of this kind. Certainly we have said too little about the question of the freedom of theology, the question of how, in technical terms, the theology of the future will be organized, the questions (primarily concerning the internal policies of the Catholic Church) of theology and priestly formation, of a theology for layfolk, etc. The question [59] of the connection between theology and the natural sciences has not been treated of as a distinct subject in its own right, but who is there who would dare to prophesy, or is even in a position to prophesy, on all these matters?

Has theology still a future before it? It is not only 'heathens' who raise this question only to answer it in the negative. It is being asked by Christians and theologians too who have been thrown into uncertainty when faced with this question. If there is to continue to be any theology in the future, then this theology will certainly not be of the kind which is set up, right from the outset, simply as a world apart, side by side with, or above the ordinary world. It must not regard itself as a distinct department of life in its own right – not even by invoking the factor of divine revelation. First because this factor of revelation and gracious self-bestowal on God's part has entered into the midst of this world, and hence does not exist apart from, or above it, on any right view of the world and revelation alike. But this also has a bearing on the secularized perspectives of the thinking of modern man, in cases in which

[24] cf. K. Rahner, *Zur Reform des Theologiestudiums*, Quaestiones Disputatae 41 (Freiburg, 1969).
[25] cf. K. Rahner, 'Formale und fundamentale Theologie', *L. T.K.* IV, 2nd ed. (1960), cols. 205-206.

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these have been accorded an absolute value, and developed into an ideological system. Even when modern man is prepared to allow these ideas of his to be called in question, he still has the impression that unless revelation actually *enters into* his own contemporary world, it is totally unintelligible. There is, of course, the scandal of the Cross, and we are prone to appeal to this whenever we have an inexcusably old-fashioned theology to put forward. But even taking this into account, in facing up to the question so anxiously pondered among theologians of whether there is still any future for theology, we shall still have to say that this can be answered in the affirmative only on condition that theology learns to speak about God in the language of this world. To speak about *God* of course, and not about that world which a primitive empiricist might envisage. Such a one might suppose that the world contains nothing except those things the reality of which not even the most stupid or superficial observers would dare to contest, or which might be 'demonstrated' by electric light, drugs, or atom bombs. But theology must speak about God as he is present in the midst of the world, recognizing that it is precisely in *this* form that the gospel bears witness to him as the salvation precisely of this world. Nowhere are any prognoses of the future justified which can deprive man of the boldness to hope against all hope. This also applies to theology. The future which we theologians are fighting for on behalf of our theology is not one in which we have to embark on anxious calculations to see whether it has any future at all. We create this future when – if need be against all the probabilities – [60] we engage in the study of theology, doing so because we love man, for whom this theology of ours is intended to act as a light, and also because we seek to serve God, who has set us upon the course which we must follow in our study of theology, so that thereby we may perhaps discover God himself.

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4

ON THE CURRENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

The task I have set myself is a difficult one: to give some reasonable opinion on the relationship between philosophy and theology, and on the significance which philosophy has for and in theology.[1] On these questions one has to seek calm and consolation again and again by reminding oneself simply that theology and (surely too) philosophy exist and are facts, and that, in the face of such facts, one must have the respect which is due even if one cannot work out any wholly adequate justification for the fact by an interpretation of its nature which, in the nature of things, can only be human and finite.

We may perhaps come somewhat closer to a positive answer to the question we have set ourselves if we try to achieve a clear view of the difficulties inherent in it.

I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THEOLOGY

The very concept of theology is in itself difficult and obscure. For our present purposes, it is true, we shall be quite satisfied with the statement that theology consists in a process of human reflection upon the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and, arising from this, upon the faith of the Church. It also includes the process by which this faith reflects upon its own nature as a factor inevitably entailed in any such faith. Yet this description, while it does bring us enlightenment on some aspects of theology, leaves us in darkness with regard to others. Let me draw attention to one single point, which is, nevertheless, of the utmost importance for our particular question. On any genuine interpretation of the nature of Christian faith, [62] at least as currently conceived of whether we think of it as a given fact or as ecclesiastically and theologically possible, there is such a thing as a genuine revelation of God co-extensive with the history of the world and of ideas, and in that sense universal. The first point to be recognized about this is that it is not identical with the revelation of the Old and New Testaments, for this is confined to a particular area of human life and limited in space and time. Ultimately speaking, however, it does bear a relationship to revelation in this sense, a relationship which is capable of precise definition, though we shall not enlarge any further at this point on its particular characteristics.

The revelation we are speaking of, then, is universal. And though for the most part we do not reflect upon it, we should understand it as a transcendental determination of man, constituted by that which we call grace and self-bestowal on God's part in other words his Pneuma. It may be present in a form in which it is either reflected upon or not, in a form in which it is either freely accepted or freely refused. And here again, under certain circumstances this refusal need not be at the explicit and conscious level. Nevertheless this revelation is constantly present, because otherwise it is not really conceivable how there can be any universal will to save on God's part, or any possibility of salvation which is perpetual and extended to all. For the reasons given grace (Pneuma), seeing that it is always present at least in the sense of always being offered to man, cannot be conceived of as one particular

[1] A lecture delivered on 13 November 1971 on the occasion of the ceremonial opening of the 'School of Philosophical Studies at Munich'. On the same subject cf. K. Rahner, 'Philosophy and Theology', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 75-81; 'Philosophy and Philosophizing in Theology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and Baltimore, 1972), pp. 46-63.

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event in human life, making its impact only intermittently. Rather it is a transcendental determination of human life, albeit one that is freely bestowed by God, and even when it is never objectified or conceived of at the level of explicit consciousness at all. In fact it is, perhaps, quite impossible so to conceive of it without further factors being brought to bear in any process of individual reflection upon the conditions within which the concrete human spirit can operate and exercise its freedom. This is why revelation is always a phenomenon which has precisely those properties ascribed to it by Christianity in its faith and theology. It is of course, impossible at this stage or in this context to define more precisely why, how, or in what ways it is given to man, in the particular concrete circumstances of his life, freely to determine his attitude towards this grace-given and transcendental determination of his being. And this fact makes it still clearer why we both can and must understand this universal self-bestowal of God, considered as a transcendental determination of man, as also constituting revelation.

What we have just said has hardly ever found any clear expression in [63] the usual textbook theology right down to the present day. Nevertheless, if it is correct, then there cannot be any pure philosophy whatever as something produced by man himself in his concrete life. In his thinking man as philosopher is in fact constantly subject to a theological *a priori*, namely that transcendental determination which orientates him towards the immediate presence of God. And this determination is something of which he is fully aware, even though it does not *ipso facto* follow from this that he can reflect upon it. There are, therefore, no pure philosophers – not even at the level of their conscious thinking. Nor is there any such thing as a pure philosophy, if we understand by this the self-perfection of the man who engages in philosophy as he exists in the concrete. This is all the more true because philosophy, when it is really true to its own nature, enquires into *all* and each within the totality; into man as such, and not into one predetermined or merely regional factor present in man or affecting human living. The process of philosophical reflection (whether in principle or as it *de facto* exists – this is a question which we must abstract from here) will rarely if ever succeed in objectifying and reducing to human terms this gracious determination of man in his transcendentality which brings him into immediate contact with God. This applies at least to the individual philosopher in his individual studies. Nevertheless this still does not alter the following fact: that the only way in which man can, in his reflections, successfully penetrate to the very *basis* of his own real existence (and, after all, this is something which he can never really exclude from the outset from his philosophy) is in practice (at the initial stage in his process of reflection) through that which we call revelation history, defining it in terms which assign it to a particular place in the total context of human living as belonging to the official life of the Old Testament and of Christianity. In other words the limitations of philosophical reflection which we have been speaking of make no difference to the fact that the primary and most radical history of philosophy is the history of Old and New Testament revelation. This remains true however shocking it may sound.

We must recognize that philosophy can *never* exclude *anything* from the outset as a subject which is *a priori* alien to it; that that transcendental determination of man is a factor present in virtue of the self-bestowal of God, and, moreover, present always and everywhere (at least in the sense of being offered); finally, as something that follows from this, that in principle there is no so-called philosophy such that it can exclude the process of reflecting upon this. What we are saying, then, is that philosophy in this sense, in the very process of reflecting, penetrates to the [64] dimension of grace inherent in its subject as freely worked upon by God. It might then be said that at this point it should no longer be called philosophy, but rather theology, inasmuch as in this process of reflection it becomes conscious of the fact that the initial process of reflection, which is conscious of having achieved its goal, and which, therefore, is also the norm for all secondary ‘philosophizing’, is called Christian revelation.

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But if all this is true, then philosophy as such, or conceived of as 'pure', can only mean that the individual engaging in philosophy methodically abstracts from this factor of grace as a transcendental dimension of his very being, and from the historical manifestation of this, even though this objectification has initially been achieved in faith, which has then in turn been reflected upon in theology. But what philosophy in this sense cannot mean is a discipline which can justifiably and successfully abstract from the ultimate orientation of the human spirit and its freedom to the immediate presence of God, as an objective factor already given and recognized prior to its own speculations, and present through grace rather than as the outcome of any reflective process. This statement that there is a theological element inescapably present in every philosophy is, of course, first and foremost a theological statement. But the theologian will precisely have in mind this further statement: that he views the philosopher as constantly subject to that *a priori* truth which he makes explicit in his theology through a process of historical reflection upon the transcendental process by which grace is bestowed upon man, the process which is called the revelation history of the Old and New Testaments. For the theologian there lies concealed in every philosophy right from the first a theology which is either unreflectingly accepted or rejected in a manner which is (at least materially speaking) culpable. Indeed theology is so present in every philosophy not merely in the sense that the content of the philosophical propositions involve an objective reference to the realities of faith, or are open to them as that which ultimately fulfils and transcends these propositions, but rather in the sense that the very process of philosophizing, in the unity between *noesis* and *noema* inherent in it (if we may so express it), involves, of its very nature, a hidden element of grace, and thereby of theology. The theologian, therefore, discerns in every philosopher a counterpart of himself; or better, he discerns his own theology in a situation involving either salvation or sin, present in that hidden manner in which God, the true God who is no mere 'this-worldly' idol, is present in the world as that which is most interior to it, most hidden within it, as its future.

Philosophy, then, is the partner of theology in the sense that theology is [65] its forerunner, and yet at the same time constantly retains its justified place in every one of its developments, not merely when it is engaged in evolving a 'natural theodicy', not merely when it explicitly comes into confrontation, either in a positive or a negative sense, with the statements of faith. From this point of view philosophy is properly speaking a theology that has not yet arrived at the fulness of its own nature. Now this process of arriving at the fulness of its own nature with regard to its individual themes does not always take place at the same stage. Conversely, theology too is still in process of development. And because of all this it is possible for philosophy, if we can still call it so, actually to have reached (albeit unreflectingly) a stage beyond that at which theology in its present state has arrived. Indeed under certain circumstances (after the pattern of the so-called pagan religions) it can do this not only with regard to the so-called natural assumptions or implications of theological statements, but even with regard to theological data properly so called, though unconsciously and not precisely *as* data of Christian revelation. In the light of this it can be seen that not very much is to be made of the well-known saying that philosophy is the handmaid of theology, even though, on any right understanding, this axiom is not necessarily false in every respect. We may remind ourselves, for instance, of 1 Corinthians 2:15, where we are told that all things, and so the wisdom of this world too, are subject to the judgement of the spiritual man. But there is one point which the theologian, in reminding himself of this saying, must not forget: that it is precisely not merely his own theology that confronts him from the world in a situation leading to salvation or sin, but the Spirit of God too who fulfils all, and has not appointed any administrator to act as his sole representative or regard this Spirit as his exclusive domain, not even the theologians. The theologian must not suppose that the only context in which theology is a living force (regarding it as the process by which we come to know of God,

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who, in a hidden manner, fulfils all and bestows himself) is in books in which citations from Scripture are adduced or references given to numbers in Denzinger.

In judging of a philosophy, therefore, the theologian will not, in any primary sense, take as his criterion the question of whether everything contained in that philosophy is correct. This is all the more true since there is an ultimate incommensurability of the two disciplines such that the question can be raised whether, in those cases in which theology disputes the truth of philosophical statements, this 'does not really and ultimately amount to the fact that the theologian is laying down in a negative sense that the given philosophical statement is not to be accepted as reconcilable [66] with the propositions of faith, and should not, therefore, be put forward in the Church. If, then, what we have just said is correct, then, when theology exercises a critical judgement upon philosophy, it is attempting first and foremost to lay bare the hidden sinfulness or the hidden state of having grace bestowed upon it by the Spirit, inherent in all philosophy, even though philosophy itself does not recognize either of these states at the level of conscious reflection. The relationship between philosophy and theology, therefore, is in itself extremely obscure and complex. To see this we have only to ask what in more precise terms we really take theology to signify.

II. THE PROBLEMS ENTAILED BY PHILOSOPHY

This relationship becomes even more problematical when we ask ourselves in more precise terms what we should, and *de facto* do, take philosophy to signify.

We have already alluded to a possible sinfulness in philosophy. Could not philosophy itself too reflect upon this? After all, it should without difficulty be able to recognize that the philosopher, engaged as he is with *a priori* principles, is all along working from prior assumptions which he never reflects upon or is capable of reflecting upon in any adequate sense at all. He is working from absolute decisions taken prior to any conscious reflection, so that the field of his activities only seems to have a greater serenity and objectivity than life itself or history, with its cruelties, its delusions, and stupidities – in brief with that state of sinfulness which the theologian (resisting the attempt to explain it) seeks to keep clearly in view and to submit to the mystery of God's compassion. The philosopher, on the other hand, despite all his proud speeches in defence of freedom, is, after all, in constant temptation of explaining this factor away and precisely in doing so falls into one of those sins which are committed in philosophy. Why has no one written a hamartiology of philosophy and of the history of philosophy? Admittedly the failure to do so could be excused on one particular ground: that we must not judge, and that even when man created a real, and not merely an apparent, darkness for himself, still the light of God devours it. But let us leave this point.

In order to throw light upon the problems with which philosophy is faced (admittedly primarily from a standpoint which is of interest to the theologian) I may take as my starting-point that evaluation of philosophy which was put forward at the First Vatican Council. Although this Council has been so much derided by many of our contemporaries, if we [67] understand it rightly it was a great Council despite all the antiquated outlooks which so dominated the conciliar fathers of the time, obviously frightened as they were by what was taking place in their own age. These fathers, it is true, would much rather have returned to the ages prior to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Yet for all this it was a great Council. Why? Because it declared that it was possible to arrive at a natural knowledge of God through the light of reason alone. In this pronouncement let us set aside the terms 'reason', 'proof', 'knowledge', 'natural' etc.

All this is not the main point or the essential element in the declaration. The heart and centre of it is this: man cannot escape from having to do with God, and even at a stage prior

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to any Christian revelation conceived of in explicit or institutional terms. This is inescapable and is something he encounters before any particular prophets or pastors have reached him. And if we fail to recognize this clearly, if modern man does not explicitly assert it and the pastors cannot draw attention to it nowadays, then – if the view of the Council is to prevail, and it will prevail – this inescapable factor of God's intervention in human existence must precisely be taking place in forms, and through experiences, and giving rise to forms of expression, which are unknown or unfamiliar to us And then it is for us precisely to discover these, and not straightway to fall into lamentations over the atheism of the present age. Our task is to convey to man where, within the totality of his existence in all its breadth and depth, he is making – even though he does not recognize it – experiences of God even while the explicit statements about God among Christians may perhaps not contain very much of God within themselves. What is astonishing about the First Vatican Council, in other words, is the fact that it recognizes something that takes place in man which is significant for his salvation (if we want to put it in theological terms) and yet which is, independently of Christianity or the Church, present inescapably and always. The famous distinction which Paschal drew between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Jesus Christ, is precisely not made here, seeing that the God who is recognized by the light of reason is precisely he who appears as the God of salvation in fundamental theology and theology. And this is all the more true seeing that it should, after all, appear obvious that if there can be any such thing at all as a knowledge of God through the light of natural reason, this cannot have that liability to error which is entailed, for instance, in what man does or does not know about Australia. Whether this inescapable reference to God is 'natural', and whether this 'naturalness' is present in every case [68] autonomously and in its own right – this is a question that does not concern us here. What is exciting in this conciliar declaration is the assertion that there is a factor of decisive importance for human existence apart from faith in revelation at the biblical and ecclesiastical level, a factor which is of radical significance for Christian faith despite the fact that it is said to have its basis within itself. Whether this does, or does not mean that a 'pure' philosophy emerges as of equal rank with revelation theology, or indeed whether it means that ultimately speaking it is quite incapable of achieving such a position – this is a question which is, for the moment, not important. But what is utterly astonishing is that the faith of the official Church, of its own volition, ascribes so fundamental a significance to a factor which lies outside the Church's own conscious faith in revelation.

Now if we call this knowledge (however we should conceive of it in closer detail) philosophy (however this should be understood on any closer investigation of it), then what is being said at the First Vatican Council is that basically speaking philosophy has a similar significance (or perhaps better an equally important significance) as revelation. Textbook theology will, of course, cry out at this and say that this is not what the Council fathers meant at the time; that they did actually defend the autonomy of theology and its dominance over philosophy. In a certain sense all that is quite true. Yet in the Council's eyes there is precisely a certain autonomous knowledge which is of decisive importance for the sphere of theology, and which, nevertheless, is not revelation theology, something which is prior, to any experience of revelation taking place at any particular time or in any particular region, as that which is universal.

The Council regards this knowledge, which is 'secular' and yet is one of the very roots from which theology springs, as having its unity only in God, the source of all truth, and not, properly speaking, in any earthly authority presiding over the two kinds of knowledge and subsuming both within a synthesis that is truly higher and in which each kind contributes to the other. Of course according to the Council in any case of conflict between theology and philosophy this faith constitutes the higher norm for the believer. But this applies so far as

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faith in itself is concerned. Nowhere is it said that in the case of an apparent conflict between faith and worldly knowledge faith will always prevail, or that it would be impossible for someone to believe that his faith was overthrown by some piece of secular knowledge, provided always that it was not really some *fault* on his part that gave rise to his false judgement in favour of secular knowledge and against faith. And above all: nowhere is there any promise for [69] the believer of a kind of synthesis between faith and knowledge which is attainable immediately and in every instance. In other words in this time of pilgrimage he will actually have to live in circumstances of a gnoseological pluralism, and will never be able fully to achieve that gnoseological integrity which would overcome this unresolved pluralism. He will not even be able to achieve this in the area of those kinds of knowledge which are in some sense significant for salvation, for even in this area pluralism still prevails. What we have, then, is a knowledge of subjects which are important for salvation which, however it is to be conceived of in more precise detail, is different from the knowledge of revelation of the official Church. Now if we apply the term philosophy to this kind of knowledge, then the First Vatican Council has declared that a pluralism in gnoseology exists, in the concrete conditions of human living, between philosophy and theology. It is true that right down to the Second Vatican Council a cultural and social homogeneity in the sphere of knowledge which really belonged to earlier ages still survived for certain good Christians and Catholics in markedly ghetto-like conditions. But only this kind of outlook could fail to feel this pluralism, which in principle had been recognized by the First Vatican Council, as hard and dangerous. Only those affected by a cultural and social homogeneity of this kind could suppose instead that so far as Christians are concerned everything can easily and positively be brought into harmony in this sphere of knowledge. In other words, there is no need for any very peaceful or harmonious relationship to prevail everywhere and at all times between theology and philosophy. The conflicts which may possibly arise are not only such as the philosophical theologian or the religious-minded philosopher will have solved right from the outset, or which as conflicts arise only from the techniques of presentation in the textbooks. There will be many occasions on which there really are no positive solutions to such conflicts. We may perhaps have to allow them to continue unresolved in the conviction that we cannot do without either of the two kinds of knowledge involved in the conflict, even though they seem to us in all sincerity to be totally irreconcilable. We have really to endure under the pain of this gnoseological pluralism and this kind of concupiscence or yearning to achieve harmony. Paul's '*infelix ego homo*' (Rom 7:24) has its place in this context too. Whereas the Council of Trent was the Council of a pluralism yearning for harmony in the dimension of moral decision, the First Vatican Council was the Council of a pluralism yearning for harmony in the dimension of the theoretical reason wherever this exists in concrete human life. In this area we are still constantly prone to [70] refuse really to admit this state of a concupiscent pluralism or a pluralism yearning for harmony. We recognize that faith and secular reasoning should not be opposed as contradictory sources of knowledge, and that the integration of the several different kinds of knowledge is the goal which we must constantly be striving towards, albeit asymptotically. And because of all this we regard the situations of conflict which arise between philosophy and theology as from the very outset being sinful, and believe that we should force integration in the sense we have been speaking of upon them even when in practice this can only be done at the cost of intellectual honesty. And so we lose our attitude of sensitivity and alertness for the differences between the various languages in which these different departments of knowledge can and must find expression. From this point of view alone, and abstracting from all others, it becomes clear that the history of the relationship between theology and philosophy constantly gives rise to factors that are, in a genuine sense, new and *unexpected*: it is the history of two realities and the history of the relationship which each bears to the other, and there is no higher sphere

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within this world common to them both and transcending all the differences between them in which they can meet and be reconciled. It is, therefore, a history which cannot be planned, but remains open and subject to that freedom which itself has to survive in and in virtue of a number of different and unintegrated factors.

a. *Pluralism in Philosophy*

We have attempted to achieve a view of the problems entailed in the relationship between theology and philosophy precisely from the point of view of philosophy itself. We have tried to see how theology in itself; and according to its own principles, has to regard this. Now let us turn our attention directly to philosophy itself. In this connection we may draw attention to a quite simple fact, yet one which is of the utmost importance for theology. There are many philosophies. And theology is involved with many philosophies, and thereby is itself in turn divided into many theologies.

It is worthwhile to ponder this statement a little. When I was young I was devoted to the study of philosophy through thick and thin. And at that time our whole attitude was coloured by a belief in *one single* philosophy. Obviously we were aware (as men always have been) of the fact that in practice there were many philosophies. Indeed we studied the history of philosophy and there came to know of a whole range of the [71] most varied systems and theories. And in systematic philosophy we took up a critical attitude towards these systems, deciding what to accept and what to reject in them. But in all this we were, after all, constantly, albeit tacitly, taking as our starting-point the belief that in adopting this approach we were touching more or less upon everything in the philosophy of the past and present alike which was of real philosophical importance; that we could and did draw from it into our own system everything that was true and valuable; finally that we were fully justified in rejecting the rest. All this is intended as a broad and general view of our principles and our approach.

Now I believe that the situation today is radically and insuperably different. Prior to the question of truth proper (I emphasize – *prior* to this!) the modern philosopher is confronted with a pluralism of philosophies which no one individual is any longer capable of mastering, and we are aware of this fact. Formerly there was a total unawareness of anything which could neither be integrated into, nor rejected from one's own personal philosophy. Today we are aware that there is much in the philosophies which we can neither reject nor particularly welcome precisely because we are unfamiliar with it. But we do know that we are not really sufficiently familiar with it either to welcome it or to reject it of our own resources and on our own responsibility. The means of communication of the present age have the effect of making us know that we do not know. And in fact this also applies to the realm of philosophy. I at least would regard it as both naive and presumptuous if nowadays a philosopher were still to behave as though he could know and did know all the essential answers in philosophy as it is *de facto* being studied. Philosophy *as a whole* has grown to enormous dimensions. It has become planet-wide. It is no longer the prerogative merely of one particular culture, and precisely for this reason a whole range of philosophies has emerged, too many to be brought together in one mind, even though all possible efforts still can be, and are, brought to bear in this direction.

Now it is true that there is no such thing as a theology which does not unquestioningly include an element of philosophy within it, or which either can or would reflect upon the Christian faith without the help of philosophy in general or of one particular philosophical system. Perhaps the neo-scholasticism in the theology of the last 150 years constituted the final attempt to use *one single* homogeneous philosophy in the study of theology. But this is

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something that is simply not possible any longer, and contemporary theology also shows that it no longer in practice makes the slightest attempt to achieve this. What the implications of this are for the [72] Church's teaching authority, its methods and its effectiveness, is a question which cannot be entered into here. For our present purposes we have simply to recognize this: the fact that, prior to any question of truth properly so called, we have to recognize a pluralism of philosophies too great for us to master or control, compels us of today to recognize a pluralism of theologies prior to the question of theological truth, and without prejudice to a general orientation of all such theologies towards the original message of faith and the single teaching authority of the Church. The destiny of philosophy is today becoming, in a quite new sense, the destiny of theology too. Obviously we do not mean by this, in the case either of theology or of philosophy, that the relationship between these manifold systems is that of so many individual monads standing 'over against' each other. Obviously the boundaries between the individual philosophies and the individual theologies are in principle not such as can be precisely drawn. Obviously it is always possible to judge of the question of truth in terms of each such scientific discipline and in terms of its own individual findings.

But all this does not for one moment alter the situation that we find today, namely that as a result of the modern pluralism of philosophies our task is no longer simply to bring to light a series of theologies which speak with different tongues, i.e. use different philosophical systems. This fact has not yet sufficiently been recognized. The Church's teaching authorities have not yet taken due cognizance of it. No principles and methods have yet been developed for coping – indirectly if need be – with this fact without destroying the unity of the Church or of the Christian creed.

b. *Philosophy as it Affects the Specialist in Modern Scientific Disciplines*

In reflecting upon the relationship between philosophy and theology we have to evaluate the situation of philosophy from yet another point of view. Formerly philosophy was *the* representative embodying secular knowledge in its bearing upon the ultimate meaning and values of human life, and as significant for salvation. The prior equipment in terms of secular knowledge which the theologian had to have in order to be a sound and effective theologian he learned in philosophy, because in the concrete conditions of human living at the time this alone constituted the meaningful integration of knowledge as such. To the extent that a particular branch of knowledge was non-philosophical, to that extent it was also irrelevant for any theology in the true sense. This is shown by the [73] very fact that formerly whatever affinity theology may in itself have had with history, there was no such thing as a science of history in the true sense to act as a partner to theology. In fact it was not really until the documents of the Second Vatican Council were produced on ecclesiastical studies that any real recognition emerged of the necessity for a partnership between theology and the science of history which could be methodologically effective. Previously scientific history had never been included as an integral element in the 'systematic' theology of neo-scholasticism. At most it had been tolerated as an unavoidable preliminary course leading up to the study of theology and apologetics. Admittedly this state of affairs was in reality an anachronism at least from the 19th century onwards, and here and there it was of course recognized as such – for instance in the Tübingen school. Today, however, the whole situation has been radically altered.

The sciences which exist side by side with philosophy include not only the speculative disciplines but the natural sciences and social sciences as well. And there are two points to be recognized about these: first, they regard themselves not as subalternate sciences, depending

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upon philosophy for their justification and the defining of their tasks, or having their methodological approach and their sphere of investigation determined for them by philosophy. On the contrary, these sciences are regarded as autonomous in origin and as self-authenticating. They are constantly liable to the temptation of regarding philosophy as a mythical prefiguration of themselves, or of thinking of philosophy as at most playing a supplementary role in reflecting upon and summing up precisely *those* methodological approaches which are developed within the sciences as of their own right. And the second point is that it cannot be said that these secular sciences, which have emancipated themselves from philosophy, have no relevance to our faith or our theological understanding of revelation in their bearing upon our view of the world and the concrete modes of human existence. It is true that on many individual questions an interchange of ideas has gradually been achieved between theology on the one hand and these individual sciences in their findings on the other over the last fifty years, quite apart from philosophy. Apparent conflicts between the two sides have been shown to be due to misunderstandings and so resolved. Yet at the same time the present age is dominated by a radical and all-embracing mental outlook conditioned by the natural sciences, and this continues to be something with which theology is constantly, directly, and uniformly confronted, or should feel itself confronted, and, moreover, this confrontation is not something which theology can simply [74] delegate to an old-fashioned type of metaphysic to deal with as its particular concern.[2] The following grounds alone are sufficient to justify us in saying this: that in practice these natural sciences, as practised today, are more ready to enter into serious dialogue with theology than with philosophy (whether they are justified or not in this attitude, it makes no difference to the facts). The reason is that in the positions which theology tends to adopt they are more ready to recognize points of reconciliation in which they can still remain detached and allow for differences between them, yet which, in the concrete conditions of human life, have a significance even for the practitioner of the natural sciences as such.

These natural sciences, then, regard themselves as autonomous. Yet they do have a certain radical significance, and one which applies to the whole of human life. All this is something which can no longer be denied at the present day. And from this it follows that theology has to recognize as her partner in dialogue no longer philosophy alone, regarded as the sole mediator and interpreter of man's experience of himself as such in its most radical form. On the contrary, theology has itself directly to turn its attention to the natural sciences, enquiring into their basic outlook and their autonomy, and allowing itself to be conditioned by them. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same must be said about the relationship between the social sciences and theology. Here too theology has acquired a new partner, one who refuses any longer to accept that the only way of communicating with theology is through the medium of philosophy. Hence theology must take due cognizance of this refusal as an actual existing fact. This remains true even if it is possible to say that theology has a duty *ex officio* to remind the social sciences of their theological implications. For the very act of doing this will in itself awaken a metaphysical conscience in these social sciences. Precisely in these social sciences it becomes manifest that the distinction in man between his metaphysical nature and his concrete, historically conditioned nature is far less easy to draw than was formerly supposed; indeed that it is in principle quite impossible to draw it in any full or adequate sense. Now if theology has to deal with man as a whole, seeing that it is in his wholeness that he is meant to enter upon salvation and that this salvation depends upon him in his wholeness, then it follows that it is quite impossible for theology to avoid turning its attention

[2] On this cf. the following two articles in the present volume, 'Theology as Engaged in an Interdisciplinary Dialogue with the Sciences', pp. 80-93, and 'On the Relationship between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences', pp. 94-102.

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to the social sciences, with their *a posteriori* and historical level [75] of experience, and to allow itself to be influenced in its lines of enquiry and its methods by these and not merely by philosophy as such. Presumably this process is still hardly in its incipient stages.

III. ASPECTS OF THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

Certainly it is a tenable position that metaphysics cannot possibly die so long as man has not degenerated into a clever animal or finally destroyed his own nature. But the destiny of metaphysics is, after all, precisely a destiny the future paths of which cannot be foreseen. And when it is predicted that something will bring metaphysics to an end, or asserted that it is already ended, this may itself once more be based on a wrong diagnosis. Even so, however, it is not simply a mere empty spectre, or an occasion of groundless alarm. Now on this showing it is obvious that the task of theology cannot be first and foremost to keep metaphysics alive or flourishing, even though there is inevitably a certain task to be fulfilled in this direction. Rather theology will keep its attention fixed upon man in the conditions of life in which he actually lives in the present, even though man himself may suppose that he is living in a post-metaphysical age. Theology will recognize (at least as a primary task) that it has to make man as he exists today aware of the blind spot in the vision of a post-metaphysical neo-positivism, the social sciences connected with it, and the interpretation of language which it puts forward. And theology must straightway attempt to supply a theological interpretation of this and not concern itself so much with working out, in any explicit or exclusive sense, the metaphysical implications involved in this positivism, by which modern man's whole mentality is almost totally conditioned.

In any case: with regard to explicit philosophy in the traditional sense, the theology of today cannot do this the favour of regarding it alone as its partner in its dealings with the world. To use a figure of speech that might seem almost malicious, this state of monogamy is over. Theology can no longer allow its connections with the secular and *a posteriori* sciences to take place solely through the medium of philosophy. Instead it has direct and autonomous connections with these. That the task of theology is not made any lighter thereby is obvious. For after all, in the sphere of Western civilization philosophy has all along been recognized as such as the sister to theology, so that in a true sense it was a simple matter for it to continue in partnership with theology. For while a dispute between relations may grow very bitter, it is much less dangerous than that situation of almost [76] mortal peril which can emerge between those who are quite unaware of what they may have to do with one another at all.

Is it the case, therefore, that the marriage between theology and philosophy, now almost two thousand years old, is at an end? Or (*sit venia verbo*!) has it been transformed into a strange kind of 'love triangle', in which the sciences in the modern sense are also involved as of their own right? This is a question which properly speaking it is the task of philosophy and the sciences themselves to resolve rather than theology. For it is for philosophy and the sciences to determine their mutual relationship in principle and as it has *de facto* developed in history. It is of concern to theology that as positive a relationship as possible should be established between philosophy and the sciences, but theology itself cannot establish this relationship of its own power, even though it would suit it best. For otherwise it would itself have to engage in philosophy in pursuit of this aim. Certainly it can *de facto* do this, and is not prohibited from doing so, but in that case it would precisely be engaging in philosophy, and, moreover, however necessary it might consider its findings here, it would in practice be one particular philosophy, not excluding the possibility of others existing beside it, and a philosophy which was conditioned by practical historical realities. However this is surely

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something which theology can hardly take it upon itself to engage in of its own resources in any effective manner or one which can influence the course of history.

However this may be, nothing that we have said represents any threat to the true relationship which exists between theology and philosophy. Theology necessarily entails thinking, and thinking takes place outside the realm of theology. And provided this thinking is at a radical level, provided it touches upon man in his wholeness, provided it reaches to the level of mystery and faces up to it, provided it considers itself and not merely the things about us, it can be called a philosophy of confidence, and this prior to the question of what further developments may take place in the traditional forms of philosophy handed down through history, and how this radical self-realization on man's part may find expression in the future. Thinking of this kind must be engaged in within theology itself. First because for a Catholic theology man is the recipient of a revelation which is objectified and institutionalized in the Church as a historical phenomenon, and as such he is precisely not a *tabula rasa*, not some *materia prima* having nothing of its own to contribute to this revelation. In the very process of making this revelation his own he must recognize in himself that he is, from the outset, bringing something positive of his own to bear upon this revelation. This recognition of the part he himself [77] plays may be 'secular' in character if not actually outside the realm of grace altogether, but man must still recognize his own subjective contribution, however true it may be that this is itself transformed in a historical process in and through this encounter of his with revelation. Regarded as a discipline designed to achieve a reflexive and critical understanding of the Church's revelation, therefore, theology includes, as an intrinsic element and not merely as an external prior condition, man's secular understanding of himself; and it is only in relation to this, and as confronted with this, that faith becomes theology. This is not to say that for the believing theologian all philosophy should, or even so much as could, be pursued only within the sphere presided over by theology.

It was Thomas Aquinas who first recognized philosophy as an autonomous discipline, and its secularization, its emancipation, constitutes the first step in the legitimate process by which the world is allowed to become 'worldly', a process which, ultimately speaking, is willed and has been set in motion by Christianity itself. Theology must, of its own nature, will that man shall freely, independently, and on his own responsibility, achieve an understanding of himself. It must will to have philosophy concomitant to, and independent of itself. Only in this way can philosophy be, in any effective sense, a *partner* to theology (of course in saying this we are not pre-judging the issue of whether the roles of philosopher and theologian can be united in the personality of a single individual, either in a positive or a negative sense). But to the extent that, as a matter of historical necessity, a 'worldly' world is the appropriate milieu for a theology that meets the demands of the true Christian faith, to that extent an autonomous and secular philosophy will also be right as the true partner in the dialogue with theology, provided only that we take philosophy to signify that understanding of himself on man's part which considers man as one and whole, and provided that the revelation of God, as truly objectified and achieving due recognition of its own nature in the Christian Church, is not from the outset introduced as the subject of this reflection and as the norm which governs it. Of course this does not entail any clear-cut distinction between man's understanding of himself on the one hand, and the revelation of God in its *a priori* form, as a grace that inescapably permeates all, on the other. But this is a point which we have already made at the beginning of these considerations.

Now this secular understanding of himself on man's part, which we have called philosophy in the sense described, will not, in its contemporary form, be controlled simply and exclusively by philosophy alone. Rather it remains subject to historical conditioning and dependent upon *a* [78] *posteriori* experiences as institutionalized in the sciences. This means that theology must maintain a direct dialogue with these sciences as well, because the bearing

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which these have on man's understanding of himself is direct, and not merely mediated through philosophy. But this again is a point which we have already made.

What finally emerges, therefore, is a dialogue in which it is quite impossible to draw precise distinctions even between the roles which the partners to the dialogue should play. The theologian hears a philosopher who, ultimately speaking, bases himself from the outset on the theology of sin and grace, whether he is aware of it or not. The philosopher hears a theologian who – again from the outset (and again whether consciously or not) – has developed his theology with the help of philosophy; in other words one who, right from the outset, encounters him as a philosopher, so that, being this kind of theologian, he needs to have the problems of his philosophy set forth by a philosopher. Both, theologians and philosophers alike, are engaged in dialogue with the modern scientist who (whether consciously or not) has from the outset overstepped his boundaries and entered the spheres of philosophy and theology, thereby speaking to the theologian of matters of which the philosopher as such and taken in isolation cannot speak to him, and yet which are of crucial importance for a theologian, obliged as he is to take man in the concrete into his considerations. These are matters some at least of which it is quite impossible to reflect upon adequately from a philosophical point of view, and yet which cannot be left out of consideration in theology.

The scientist, who neither can nor should make the foolish attempt to monopolize his science and reserve it to his own official clique, may perhaps hear from non-specialists the kind of message which, however dilettante the form in which it is expressed, can still have a revolutionary, or at any rate a crucial, significance for his own science. And he hears explicitly the message involved in that tacit overstepping of boundaries on which he is forced unscientifically to depend in order to keep his own science vital, if only because the study of the particular science he is engaged in is always subject to norms which wholly transcend the material content of that science. If, therefore, the partners to the dialogue speak to one another, each in turn will be transformed, and their respective roles will be exchanged. And this transforming dialogue is an element in the true history of man, incalculable as it is, in which all branches of knowledge are constantly open from the first to the ultimate Mystery, ineffable and yet invoked, in which all science, theology, and philosophy alike, are comprehended. The label by which society assigns a particular calling to [79] the individual, and the personal decision by which that individual chooses this or that secular calling in the world of ideas in preference to others – these are, ultimately speaking, provisional factors, and little more than a welcome or unwelcome deception. There is an ultimate *basis* at which each is constantly engaged with all. And this basis has still to be revealed. Only if we have engaged in all branches at this ultimate level, are we saved. Admittedly this state of being saved requires also the modesty of confining ourselves to our own proper sphere, and leaving other spheres to other thinkers. It is only for this reason and in this sense that we can nowadays open a philosophical faculty. The theologian welcomes it because everything human belongs to God, and only so is truly appropriated to man, and because in the midst of all philosophy the theologian discerns God revealing himself in his grace.

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THEOLOGY AS ENGAGED IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE WITH THE SCIENCES

Before we can embark upon any discussion of the possible participation and the task of theology in the interdisciplinary dialogue between the sciences[1] we must first have found an answer to the question of what interdisciplinary discussion is in itself. It is only when we have found an answer to this question that we can then go on to enquire *whether* theology has any part to play in it, and *what* that part is. Yet I am not aware of any real answer having been found even to the first question.

The fact that men speak with one another may be obvious, although even in simple discussions so many mysteries lie concealed, the moment they extend beyond the level of the sort of language which is necessary for the most basic human communication.[2] The fact that the specialists in the particular sciences speak with one another may also be obvious on the assumption that as human beings their interest also extends to matters which lie outside their own specialist fields, where their principal and professional interests lie. But the question becomes obscure the moment we seek to discern precisely what one partner to such discussions communicates to the other. For the question then arises of whether this is something [81] which interests the other scientist precisely *to the extent that* he has further interests beyond the sphere of his own particular science. For in that case what is taking place is, basically speaking, not an interdisciplinary dialogue at all.

THE PROBLEMS ENTAILED IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE

Let us suppose that one scientist communicates to another a piece of information which is of interest to him precisely as a scientist. It seems that the only cases in which this can take place are those in which the particular specialist sciences overlap with one another in their subject-matter. In other words all that the first scientist is communicating to the second is something which as a scientist, he could also have come to know, or discover by his own researches. Properly speaking, therefore, what is taking place here cannot, except in a very broad sense, be called an interdisciplinary dialogue, for the specialist in a particular science *de facto* always knows less than he really ought to know as a specialist in his own particular discipline. I cannot really see how we can escape from this difficulty. It is, of course, possible to say that while the particular sciences are indeed concerned with their respective areas of subject-matter from particular aspects or with particular formal objects in view, in many cases these areas of subject-matter are themselves materially speaking identical. This, then, would explain why the result of one science concerned with one particular subject might be

[1] Certain ideas on the present subject have been published by a collaborator of the author's under the same title: Fr. Mann, 'Die Theologie im interdisziplinären Gespräch der Wissenschaften', *StdZ* 186 (1970), pp. 109-116.

[2] This fact has also been made particularly clear from a scientific point of view as a consequence of the development of modern cybernetics and research into communication. Hence these have also given rise to a whole series of particular problems in relation to theology. Literature is available on this subject, though here we may confine ourselves to a few passing references for the assistance of those who wish to pursue the question further: H. R. Rapp, *Mensch, Gott und Zahl. Kybernetik im Horizont der Theologie* (Hamburg, 1967); H. D. Bastian, 'Anfangsprobleme im Gespräch zwischen Kybernetik und Theologie', *Theologia Practica* 3 (1968), pp. 33-42; D. O. Scumalstieg, 'Kybernetik – Theologie – Gesellschaft. Möglichkeiten interdisziplinärer Theorie', *Internat. Dialog. Zeitschrift* 4 (1971), pp. 130-133.

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of interest to another, and would make an interdisciplinary discussion between them meaningful. But in response to this it might presumably be objected that even when two sciences are concerned with the same material object, the findings of one science are arrived at by considering a distinctive formal object in it from a distinctive viewpoint. Hence the only way in which the findings of one such science could be of interest to another is for the one to be subalternate to the other, to be a subordinate branch of the other science. And in such a case any dialogue between them would not, properly speaking, be an interdisciplinary dialogue, a discussion, in other words, between two sciences which are regarded as autonomous, and not as already subsumed under a single supreme science which has subsequently branched out into particular areas, and is arrived at by considering a basic conception that is common to all the sciences. We must take into consideration, therefore, something which is nowadays surely taken as established, namely an original pluralism of the sciences. We must not recognize any one science [82] as occupying a position of supremacy or transcendence over the rest, or as assigning the individual sciences their place or their task (as in earlier times philosophy was called the ultimate science), and we must ask ourselves whether there is any such thing as a scientific doctrine prior to the individual disciplines, instead of being merely subsequently educed from the methods employed in these and arrived at by reducing what is common to them all to formal and systematic terms. And it is precisely when we adopt this approach that the interdisciplinary dialogue seems to be reduced to a dialogue between men as such – men, in other words who, while they are engaged in various branches of science, still fortunately take an interest in other matters outside their own particular science. Of course it would be possible to attack the initial postulate on which this finding is based, namely that pluralism between the sciences in virtue of which each is autonomous in its own right and from its very origins. It would be possible to postulate instead a basic science imposing its influence bindingly upon all *a priori*, and to call this logic, metaphysics, *a priori* scientific doctrine at an ontological level, or any other name we may choose. But in that case we would merely be setting up a postulate which *de facto* the individual representatives of the various sciences would find it quite impossible to accept, so that in the concrete it would have nothing to contribute in throwing light upon the nature and special characteristics of interdisciplinary dialogue. In reaction against this we might console ourselves with the assurance that even though the scientists assert their respective autonomies each in his own branch of science, they would still tacitly disavow this autonomy of theirs if they consented to engage in an interdisciplinary dialogue as such, and in the strict sense. Yet this is, after all, only a very slight consolation in view of the blind alley into which we have been led by the problems entailed in the idea of an interdisciplinary dialogue. For even if we are willing to accept this consolation as legitimate, we still have to concede that even if these scientists are willing to forego their own autonomy, which they claim each for his own particular science (anti-metaphysical in outlook as they in fact are nowadays), they do so precisely as *men*, though admittedly they show themselves wiser and more reasonable in this role than they would if they remained precisely scientists and nothing more.

INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE AS A FACT

Of course we can take as our starting-point the sheer fact that an interdisciplinary dialogue exists, at least to a modest extent, and, furthermore, [83] even before it is recognized what, on any precise view, the participants are committing themselves to. We might be prepared to acknowledge that this fact has the same significance and the same justification as the individual sciences. After all, these too already exist and are actively engaged in even before they know precisely what the outcome of their activities will be. For while they do indeed

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know the subject-matter with which they are concerned, they do not know themselves. Their position is similar to that of a man who is already questing about in his everyday life even before he has arrived at any conscious reflection of what his precise purpose is in doing so, or why he ever commits himself to this totally unsystematic everyday life of his, and that too when it leads him in several different directions. Before coming to my real argument, I would like to supplement what I have said with regard to the problems entailed in an interdisciplinary dialogue at least from one further aspect. I believe that any interdisciplinary dialogue will in practice entail something like aggression in the actions and reactions of each particular discipline in its relations with the others. The individual scientist may personally be extremely modest, and have extremely modest ideas about his own science and the particular place it occupies within the total spectrum of human life and of the knowledge which mankind needs. Yet in practice he is secretly, and for the most part unconsciously, impelled by an awareness that he has something to say to all other men which is important for them and, moreover, precisely as the representatives of some other science. His attitude is that one has only to step out boldly enough and far enough from the starting-point of one's own science, to penetrate, in the long run, to all departments of human life while yet remaining within one's own science. Any science, at least as practised in the concrete by the individual scientist, has a tendency to monopolize. Every scientist, therefore, has the tendency to instruct the other sciences and scientists, and is prone to the temptation of failing to listen to the others, or being willing to hear from them only what is confirmed for him in his own science. Hence the strange attitude of aggression which prevails among scientists even when it is concealed by a mask of conventional politeness. But this is still not enough to explain the real grounds for this attitude of aggression on the part of particular sciences, causing them to seek to dominate all departments. Ultimately speaking these grounds are to be found in the paradox that every science as such regards itself as autonomous, and yet, in view of the unity of human knowledge, is secretly convinced of the fact that man has only to pursue his own scientific investigations at a sufficiently radical level to be able to identify them with the totality of human knowledge. [84] This attitude of aggression, therefore, secretly draws its vitality from an awareness that, despite the pluralism of the sciences, each of which regards itself as autonomous, a principle prevails, unacknowledged and yet necessary for the very life of each particular science, that impels it towards the totality of human knowledge; a principle, in other words, which belongs to it and yet is not subject to it and cannot be controlled by the science itself. Each particular science, therefore, taken in itself is in a state of self-alienation, and that too in a positive sense, and it is this, so I believe, which constitutes the grounds for the positive side of the attitude of aggression towards one another which we find among the sciences, and which usually manifests itself with extreme intensity in interdisciplinary dialogue. One is not aggressive towards that which is totally alien. When one is aggressive one is asserting a difference on the surface and yet revealing the presence, albeit unacknowledged, of a hidden relationship with that which one opposes. This interior principle, present within the individual science yet never consciously reflected upon or brought under control by it, is the factor which secretly sustains its attitude of aggression towards the other sciences. And it also manifests itself in the fact that even when a science is intended to be effective in the modern sense of the term, it still always has to allow for the possibility that it not only fastens upon fresh subject-matter at the material level and makes it explicitly subject to its own laws, but also may call its own principles in question, break through its own perspectives and change them. Such a science may, in fact, of its own power, transform itself in its basic understanding of its own nature. Now a process of self-questioning of this kind is, after all, only possible provided that in every science a principle prevails which is not subject to the control of that science, a principle which the science concerned cannot bring into harmony with itself and which, nevertheless, is not subject to it

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either. And it is precisely this that seems to be the basis for the love-hatred between the disciplines, and for the possibility, necessity, and at the same time difficulty of an interdisciplinary dialogue.

THE HUMAN FACTOR AND SCIENCE

Of course it might be said that in all this we have simply been pointing, and that in very general terms, to the common human factor. Right at the beginning of these considerations of ours we said that it was this that sustained the interdisciplinary dialogue, and at the same time made it a dialogue to which the name of 'interdisciplinary dialogue' could be applied only in a very improper sense, seeing that, in the last analysis, it is not the [85] scientific specialists as such, but the individuals who happen to be scientific specialists, who speak to one another in it. All this remains true. But what is the situation now that some indications have been given, however weak they may appear, pointing to the fact that this human factor as such may belong to each particular science *as such*, albeit only in a quite peculiar sense of the term 'belonging', such that it is at the same time not under the control of that science. Of course in saying this we also recognize that it belongs to each particular science in a manner quite specific to itself. It is true that in former times this factor common to all sciences which we have pointed to so obscurely, which contributes to their life-force without itself being susceptible to control by them, was called the metaphysical factor, the transcendental factor etc., which was the special concern of philosophy. Now we may seek to explain away this common factor as non-existent on the grounds that, at least to all appearances, philosophy and metaphysics in the derived sense have reached their end, or at any rate are incapable of treating of this factor common to all the sciences in a credible manner, even though it is this that sustains the interdisciplinary dialogue. Here again we may assign two grounds for this: either that it is something which in principle is not susceptible of scientific consideration, or that it cannot be upheld by any philosophy concretely enough or decisively enough to make this common factor a basis for an interdisciplinary dialogue in such a way that in that dialogue we can expect not merely openness and freedom, or in the end, at a secondary level, a mutual interchange of information, but conflict, decision, and the achieving of some genuine common ground as well. But can we really maintain this position? In present conditions will this common factor be sustained by some other 'science' or whatever name we may wish to give to the upholder of this common factor?[3]

THE STANDPOINT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

At this point we must begin by interpolating a few remarks. We are speaking of Christian theology. Here no distinction is being drawn between Catholic or Protestant theology. We may therefore pass over the problem of whether the two theologies do not differ to some extent in the way in which they regard themselves, and whether this would not also be a conditioning factor, causing each of these two theologies to place a different interpretation upon its particular powers and qualities as contributing to the interdisciplinary dialogue. A further question which we [86] are leaving on one side is whether theology can or should regard itself as a science which can take its place in the interdisciplinary dialogue as one particular science, or alternatively whether, even if it is something quite different, it should

[3] cf. W. Pannenberg, *Was ist der Mensch? Die Anthropologie der Gegenwart im Lichte der Theologie* (Göttingen, 1962).

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nevertheless hold firmly that it has a right to intervene at least at specific points in this dialogue, even though it is not intended to be a science. On this showing, therefore, the interdisciplinary dialogue would become something more, and would be less restricted to the science alone. This is a question which we can leave open, even though in doing so we are in no sense questioning the fact that from the practical and technical point of view theology cannot renounce its task of organizing something which at first sight appears like the systematic investigation of a science in the true sense, and even if we are convinced of the fact that this scientific or quasi-scientific enquiry on the part of theology (whatever interpretation may be placed upon it either by the theologians themselves or by others) both can and should be engaged in within the framework of a university. One third point: provided theology has not tacitly surrendered its role, does not allow its understanding of its own nature or awareness of its own task to depend upon the question of whether it is given a place in an interdisciplinary dialogue, or whether the other sciences have the impression that theology has something to tell them which is of concern or value to them, it is in a position to lead the discussion. Obviously theology too, like any other science, can act as an ancillary science to other disciplines. But if theology were to make its understanding of its own nature dependent upon the question of whether it was welcomed in the symposium of the sciences, if the only way in which theology could establish its position would be through the contribution it makes to the interdisciplinary dialogue (and this seems to me to be approximately the opinion of many of the younger theologians), then at basis theology would already have given up its true role, and would also have to be silent in the interdisciplinary dialogue, because it would then have nothing to say.[4]

THEOLOGY AND THE HUMAN FACTOR

Some may hold the view that in the interdisciplinary dialogue of today theology's role is to take over the defence of that mysterious human factor which is constantly present in the other disciplines, constantly making its [87] impact even when unacknowledged, and prompting these disciplines to transcend their own limits and, going beyond the explicitly methodological concept which they *ex professo* uphold, to submit themselves to the most radical questioning. Now if we ascribe a role of this kind to theology, critical and at the same time supra-disciplinary, then obviously we are placing it in an extremely hostile and unhappy position. This is not so much because the same role might, and in former times actually has been, ascribed to some philosophical system. If the philosophy of today is still wilting to play this part, and is recognized as having this function by the other sciences, even though these are reluctant to allow philosophy to tell them anything, then certainly theology will not from the outset deny this role to philosophy. Instead, presumably, it will try to achieve agreement with philosophy in a more private discussion on the question of how philosophy and theology, each in its own way, and as the outcome of a decision arrived at only with difficulty, can together take over this task in the interdisciplinary dialogue. Moreover the difficulty which such a role involves consists surely not in the question of whether the other sciences will admit theology to their discussion, and then allow it to make that contribution which it believes it has to make in this dialogue in virtue of its very nature as it understands this. If the other sciences were unwilling to admit theology to their discussion the questions would have to be raised of what right they had *a priori* to exclude theology as a partner to their discussion, of whether in that case they knew what theology was and whence they

[4] See the symposium volume, *Recherche interdisciplinaire et théologie* (Paris, 1970), with articles by F. Houtart, H. E. Tödt, G. Palmade, J. Ladrière, M. D. Chenu, A. Astier and M. Faessier,

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derived their knowledge of it, whether it was from their own scientific findings or from some other source, whether this other source *ipso facto* constituted a criterion so sure that they could undertake to exclude theology in this way with a good conscience. And further questions which we would have to put to these other sciences are these: since their decision to exclude theology in this way would be *ex supposito* unanimous and common to them all, whether they recognized some authority among themselves common to them all and binding upon them all, and what this was (for instance whether after all it was once more philosophy *as such* or some system of philosophy). Again the fear of not being admitted to the dialogue at all rules out any possible risk that may be entailed in the part theology plays in the interdisciplinary dialogue. Finally the point to be taken into account in considering what such participation may entail is not the objection which might possibly be raised that every participant in such a dialogue must be personally responsible for bearing in mind the human factor as providing the basis and the ultimate perspective for the dialogue itself. For not only is every individual [88] an upholder of this human factor, and responsible for upholding it, but in addition the human factor itself constitutes a hidden element intrinsic to every science and calling every science in question, compelling it to reach beyond its own limits and impelling it to make contact with all other sciences.[5] Obviously every partner to the dialogue must take responsibility for taking due cognizance of this mysterious human factor. But precisely theology proceeds from the assumption that basically speaking it is quite impossible for any individual to escape from being a theologian, at least implicitly, provided that by theology we understand the consideration of human life as a whole and in itself; over and above all the more restricted outlooks of science, and in its orientation towards the absolute Mystery. But precisely on this account the theologian will say that it is both good and necessary to have, among the participants in the interdisciplinary dialogue, one who has not any other part to play in it than to draw attention to that factor which all the participants have a duty to pay heed to, one who has no special interest in upholding any particular science, but rather has a responsibility to all in common.

THE TASK FOR THEOLOGY

But it is precisely this point that brings us immediately face to face with one particular element in this function of theology and of the theologian in the interdisciplinary dialogue which calls for the most careful consideration. We have seen that the special task of the theologian is not restricted to any one particular aspect of science, and hence, if we like to put it in this way, is not scientific at all. Yet even apart from the dialogue itself; the theologian exercises this function of his in the same way that the practitioner of one particular branch of science would, with all the imperviousness of the specialist, the egoism of the specialist, the attitude of aggression, the impulse to suppress all other considerations, which are actually characteristic of a recognized science. With regard to the mysterious human factor of which we have been speaking, therefore, the Mystery in the absolute which alone renders all science truly human, the theologian must begin by submitting his own science to the most searching criticism in the light of this. And whenever he has only a very imperfect recognition of this task of his, he is forced to be the upholder of this human factor from an attitude of critical detachment and superiority in relation to all other sciences. The theologian cannot be surprised, therefore, if the other [89] sciences adopt an attitude of reserve and mistrust towards him in admitting him to this dialogue. The only way in which he can make this task

[5] From this point of view cf. K. Beck, ‘ “Kritische Theorie” und Theologie’, *Theol. Prakt. Quartalschrift* 119 (1971), pp. 212-220.

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of his acceptable to them is by acting as one who recognizes that even a factor which cannot clearly be discussed still has to be spoken of: that a rational account has to be given even of that Mystery which represents a continuous and radical threat to our rationality, because this does in fact belong to human life, and we do not get rid of a situation by simply refusing to trouble ourselves with it on the grounds that it is too much for us. At the same time it is clear that theology must take an extremely modest attitude in this dialogue, and be ready rather to listen than to speak; in fact that it cannot make any special material contribution of its own to knowledge in the way that the other particular sciences do in interchanging ideas among themselves. At least theology cannot do this so long as it is acting strictly as such and not merely as a science whose stock of knowledge inevitably exceeds that which belongs to it strictly as theology. In this dialogue it will, whenever necessary, prefer to appeal to that element of theology which is already present and active albeit implicitly and, perhaps, actually being repressed, in the other partner to the dialogue. It will gently and modestly put the question to the other partner, whether there is not here and there a blind spot in the eye of this particular science or this particular scientist, which needs to be taken into account, and which the other scientist too can discover, given some degree of methodological skill and some good will, seeing that by a paradox he and his science always constitute something more than that which explicitly characterizes them and distinguishes them from other scientists and other sciences. To this end theology must (provided always that it makes its message authentic and credible by the attitude it adopts towards itself) be the upholder of self-criticism on the part of the sciences. It must persuade them to be modest in outlook, to be aware of their provisional nature and their limited perspective, which they can never wholly overcome, whatever extrapolations, sometimes justified and sometimes not, any given science may inevitably and habitually undertake. In this way theology will become the defender of any given science against any other. As the upholder of the inconceivable Mystery which is uncontrollably but nonetheless really present, and which must be respected as such by every science, it will ward off the temptation to which every science is liable of setting itself up as wholly autonomous and totalitarian in character, and so to subsume all other sciences as subordinate to itself and to submit them to its yoke.[6] It is theology which defends a pluralism among the sciences [90] which is wholly incalculable and incapable of systematization, against a danger which even today, in the age of the so-called end of metaphysics, has still not been banished. For in place of philosophy other individual sciences are beginning to claim a monopoly of authority over the rest.

A SITUATION OF ‘GNOSEOLOGICAL CONCUPISCENCE’

In the old theology ‘concupiscence’ was a key term. It stood for the idea that man, despite the unity of his knowledge, and despite his unity as a being endowed with freedom, is not in any position to regard himself as a single integrated system capable of being controlled and carried through to its consummation from one single point within itself. Thus it is mortally dangerous for him to attempt to grasp to himself this ideal, so lofty as it seems, of radically systematizing his own existence, with all its impulses and instincts. In the same way we might say that theology is the guardian and defender of the situation of ‘gnoseological concupiscence’ in the sphere of the sciences, defending it against that mortal danger, inherent in every science, of according itself an absolute value and of supposing that the key which it

[6] On this cf. W. Weidlich, ‘Zum Begriff Gottes im Felde zwischen Theologie, Philosophie und Naturwissenschaft’, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 68 (1971), pp. 381-394.

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carries within itself will fit every door. In those cases in which a science is already relatively mature and, moreover, has undergone a history of bitter disappointments and failures, the danger of over-valuing itself may not be so very great. In such cases the science concerned is satisfied so long as it is allowed to survive and continue. In fact, however, the inevitable situation is that further and new sciences are constantly emerging, and in their case this danger is present, the danger, namely that even though they are only idols, they will claim the adoration of all. Obviously the only way in which theology can fulfil this task of upholding the situation of 'gnoseological concupiscence' is for it itself, while indeed keeping the totality of knowledge in view, still for all that never, even tacitly, to fall into the trap of claiming a universality of scientific knowledge for itself; or of regarding all other sciences merely as its handmaids or as branches springing from its own roots. Certainly it is true that in the course of history theology has sinned often enough against this law, and precisely in doing so has demonstrated that even it is not in itself the immaculate representative of God, presiding over all human affairs. Yet we never rid ourselves of our faults merely by rejecting the very task against which we have sinned. And as I see it in the interdisciplinary dialogue theology too will have to undertake that basic task [91] which we have just ascribed to it. And the less it is recognized as belonging to it in a formal and explicit sense, the better it will have to perform it.[7]

POSSIBLE FACTORS DERIVING FROM THE DIALOGUE WITH THE INTELLECTUAL DISCIPLINES, NATURAL SCIENCES, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, WHICH MAY BE OF FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Obviously what we have said should not be taken as implying that in the interdisciplinary dialogue theology has no further task or no further possibilities whatever beyond those which we have just mentioned. Theology can again and again offer valuable assistance to all those intellectual disciplines which inevitably have to take historical facts into account in their work. For at least in the West the history of ideas has all along also been a history of theology, and precisely in those areas in which it has not been presented as such in any explicit sense at all. This means that if we are ever to achieve knowledge of the history of ideas belonging to us we must first understand something about theology and the history of theology. It is no disgrace for a non-theologian, working in the field of the intellectual disciplines, to recognize and admit that in certain circumstances he knows too little of theology and the history of theology for him to be able adequately to cope with his own subject-matter even taken in itself; and for him on this account to accept advice from theologians. Now both sides come to recognize that it is both necessary and possible for them to achieve a mutual interchange of information only when they take an interest in one another without any intention of gaining an advantage over one another. In the light of this, therefore, it is in the interests of each party, the intellectual disciplines and theology alike, to embark upon the interdisciplinary dialogue which is so necessary without any idea of gaining advantages over one another. Obviously this also applies to theology itself. The only way in which it can achieve an understanding of its own history is for it to accept instruction on the history of ideas in general – indeed actually on economic and social history in general. For it is within this that the history of the Church and of theology too has been enacted.

The dialogue between theology and the natural sciences[8] (regarding [92] this as extending

[7] On this see, from the other point of view, U. Mann, 'Wahrheit in Wissenschaft, Theologie und Religion', *Zeitwende* (*Die neue Furche*) 42 (1971), pp. 247-255.

[8] An experiment from the side of natural science which is of interest for this dialogue is to be found in the small

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beyond that basic function which theology has in the interdisciplinary dialogue which we have been chiefly concerned with in what we have previously said) will be possible, but will differ, in certain very notable respects, from the dialogue between theology and the intellectual disciplines. Certainly the history of the 19th century was chequered with a whole series of conflicts between the natural sciences and theology on particular material questions which had a theological relevance. But surely these conflicts have, in the majority of cases, been resolved. But this does not mean that the task of theology in relation to the natural sciences has been fulfilled, the task, namely, of allowing itself to be instructed by them on their own terms. This is a task, rather, which can only now really be embarked upon. For within theology (which, after all, must be concerned with man as one and whole) it is only gradually that a view is being achieved of man as portrayed by the rationalism of the natural sciences rather than by traditional humanism. After all theology, precisely in those areas in which it is, and is resolved to remain, an ecclesiastical discipline, is to a large extent conditioned by a type of humanism deriving from the early Fathers. And it is still far from having achieved a really adequate knowledge of him to whom its present and future message must be addressed. In this sense it still has a long time to spend in listening to the natural scientists. But conversely it too can and must draw the attention of the particular natural science to certain factors. For these too always and inevitably have a certain anthropological relevance. And to the extent that any given natural science has this, it may have allowed some undue foreshortening to appear in its portrayal of man, which represents a danger from the point of view of the natural science itself. And where this is the case theology can and must remind the scientists concerned of the human responsibility entailed in every finding of natural science. This surely is also an obvious contribution which theology can and must make to the natural sciences, yet one which must be realized ever afresh. In this connection it is also obvious that the task which both the natural sciences and theology have to discharge each for the other can only really be recognized in its true light by both sides if each takes an interest in the other without seeking to gain any advantage over it. And a further obvious point is that such a policy of taking mutual cognizance of one another's findings represents a problem, in view of the methodological difficulties and the material incommensurability of every modern science, a problem [93] such as never existed formerly and which can be coped with only indirectly if at all. But this is a question which cannot be treated of in the present context.

That the modern social sciences and theology can and should enter into discussion with one another is obvious. The history of society has always constituted one of the prior conditions and causes of the history of the Church and of theology. And the converse has likewise always been true, even though this relationship of mutual interdependence has never been reducible to a single system by means of a methodological monism such that the origin of the relationship could be ascribed exclusively to one of the two sides. With regard to the social sciences, these both empirically establish and provide possible models for society, and in some cases these become normative. And it likewise seems to me to be obvious that in respect of both these functions the social sciences must submit to a critical enquiry by theology with regard to the image of man which determines their outlook. The converse is also true, namely that the relevance of theology's own content as constituting a critique of society must also be considered, and this is impossible without the help of the secular social sciences. This point becomes clear the moment we remind ourselves that contemporary

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volumes by G. Ewald entitled *Wirklichkeit, Wissenschaft, Glaube, Die Frage der Wirklichkeit in exakter Wissenschaft and in christlichen Glauben* (Wuppertal, 2nd ed. 1965), and G. Ewald, *Naturgesetz und Schöpfung. Zum Verhältnis von Naturwissenschaft und Theologie* (Wuppertal, 1966).

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theology is beginning to understand itself as 'political theology'[9] (regardless of how in more precise terms we should understand this concept), provided we are really to achieve a right understanding of this 'political theology' and of the nature of theology as such. Finally I believe that the scientific disciplines of today (including theology too among these) must achieve a *rapprochement* both in order to enquire into the question of which sciences should perhaps exist which do not yet exist in any explicit sense, and also in order to investigate the question of what kind of organizational and institutional footing an interdisciplinary dialogue of this sort should be placed upon so that it does not remain a pious wish or an edifying remark included in devotional Sunday discourses.

[9] On this subject cf. the survey by J. B. Metz, 'Political Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi* V (New York and London, 1970), pp. 34-38.

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6

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND THE CONTEMPORARY SCIENCES

We have here certain observations to offer on the relationship between theology and the sciences, especially the natural sciences, which are intended to bring out as clearly as possible the difference and the autonomy both of theology and of the sciences. But before this certain basic points need to be established.[1]

We shall here be emphasizing the basic and original distinction between theology and the present-day sciences. But this does not mean that the differences between them amount to a total disparity such as to admit of no contact between them, and thereby capable of giving rise to situations of conflict. This is not what we mean if only because, for all the pluralism in human knowledge, there is a certain unity in it, and because theology, albeit in a manner quite peculiar to itself makes assertions the subject of which belongs (still more directly) to that sphere in which the subjects of the natural sciences and the historical sciences too are to be found.

For our present purposes we shall pass over the question of the relationship between theology and philosophy,[2] and the question of the relationship between philosophy and the contemporary sciences. This chiefly because the following problems cannot be treated of or solved within the present context: the question of a transcendental metaphysics in relation to religions which are neutral in character; the question of the relationship between those sciences which nowadays regard themselves as autonomous and are unwilling to accept a position of subalternation to ontology on the one hand and a philosophy on the other which constitutes [95] something more than a mere theory of science which is supplementary to the sciences themselves; finally the question of a pluralism of philosophies which we are nowadays no longer in a position to transcend (and which we still have to recognize even if we assume that these philosophies are not so opposed as to contradict one another).

Likewise, without any exhaustive discussion, we are assuming that the problem of a 'gnoseological concupiscence'[3] is something which still awaits solution after we have dealt with the relationship between theology and the sciences, and therefore something that must be thought out in its own right in order to cope in a more penetrating manner with the problem which we have now to discuss. By the term 'gnoseological concupiscence' I mean the fact that in human awareness there is a pluralism between the various branches of knowledge such that we can never achieve a full or comprehensive view of them all together, and that they can never be integrated in a unified system by man in a way which makes them fully controllable or comprehensible to him. This remains true even though no one branch of knowledge can be regarded as a matter of indifference when it comes to rightly interpreting another. The reason I call this pluralism, which can never fully be transcended,

[1] On the question in general cf. the author's study, 'The Unity of Spirit and Matter in the Christian Understanding of Faith', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 153-177; also O. Spülbeck, *Zur Begegnung von Naturwissenschaft und Theologie* (Einsiedeln, 1969), and H. Schwarz, 'Das Verhältnis von Theologie und Naturwissenschaft als systematisch-theologisches Problem', *Neue Zeitschrift für sytemat. Theol. u. Religionsphilos*. 11 (1969), pp. 139-153.

[2] On this cf. in the present volume, 'On the Current Relationship between Philosophy and Theology', pp. 61-79.

[3] On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Wandelbares und Unwandelbares in der Kirche' and 'Der Glaube des Christen und die Lehre der Kirche', *Schriften zur Theologie* X (Einsiedeln, 1972), pp. 241-261 and 262-285 (to be translated in *Theological Investigations* XIV with provisional titles 'Change and Constancy in the Church' and 'The Faith of Christ and the Teaching of the Church').

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'gnoseological concupiscence' is in order to show that problems arising in the sphere of knowledge are at least analogously the same as those which, in the traditional theology, are accorded close examination merely in the field of voluntary impulses.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND THE SCIENCES

We are assuming that every science is *per definitionem* a particular branch of human knowledge, but that this does not apply to divine revelation and theology, at least so long as these do not betray their own true nature, and finally that this fundamental difference must have a decisive influence upon the relationship between theology and the sciences. We must now explain in somewhat greater detail what we mean by this statement.

Every science constitutes, on a contemporary view, a particular branch or category of knowledge. It assembles particular phenomena, which are, and are assumed to be, different from one another. What the connection is [96] between these various phenomena, and what the purpose is of assembling them in this way, is irrelevant to our immediate purpose. In any case, however, a science does not consider the single subjectivity of the scientist as the condition which enables him to take it as axiomatic that the subject-matter he has to consider falls within one particular category. The science as such does not take into consideration the subjectivity of the knowing subject. It does not think about thinking – not even in the case of empirical psychology. For this invariably confines itself simply to establishing a connection between various individual pieces of data so as to constitute a category. Nor do the sciences as such consider that original unity of reality which is prior to the *a posteriori* experience of individual objects, which never constitutes the mere sum total of individual empirical data, any more than it constitutes a subsequent extrapolation of experience, extending it to fresh possible particular objects which, while they are not yet present, are nevertheless capable of becoming so. For our present question it makes no difference whether or not these sciences are investigating the real roots and essential natures of the individual objects and phenomena falling within their respective fields.

The area with which theological statements are concerned is the transcendence of man as such, that transcendence which is a special characteristic of knowledge and freedom, of the theoretical and practical reason, and to that extent is, once more, realized in the relationship between the two faculties mentioned, and, as an experience of transcendence, implicit in the inalienable difference and unity between them. There is a transcendental experience to the extent that the experience of that prior awareness which comes before any individual object of the two faculties we have mentioned constitutes an inalienable *a priori* condition of the knowledge of objects assignable to particular categories, and to the extent that the knowledge of these involves, at least implicitly, this prior awareness.[4] This transcendental experience is orientated towards that absolute Mystery (i.e. one which in principle cannot in its turn be apprehended by us) which we call 'God', and which constitutes the true 'subject' of theological statements. It makes no difference to our present argument whether the very process of recognizing this transcendental experience as a subject in its own right, and thereby postulating an explicit relationship to God, *ipso facto* assumes that relationship of God to man which in Christian terminology we call 'grace', 'the supernatural elevation of man', the 'self-bestowal of God', or whether this process of explicitating the relationship to this Mystery, sustaining and opening up this transcendentality of man, [97] constitutes an *a priori* condition of human knowledge in the absolute, which in theological terms would be called philosophical in character. This question can be left open, not only for theological

[4] On this cf. in the present volume 'Thomas Aquinas on Truth', pp. 13-31.

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reasons which there is no need for us to develop here, but also because at that stage of human reflection which is demanded as necessary by the philosophy of today, and therefore too at the level of the theoretical reason as such, the pluralism of philosophies may perhaps be such that we can no longer transcend or control it, with the result that it surely becomes an extremely difficult question how to make God the subject of any purely philosophical or theoretical investigation. In passing it may be pointed out that this proviso does not involve any conflict with the declaration of the First Vatican Council concerning the possibility of knowing God at the philosophical level. But this too is something which cannot be considered any further at this point.

THE HEART AND CENTRE OF THEOLOGY

Now properly speaking the statements which Christianity makes about this absolute Mystery (called God) are only fairly few in number. But they are of fundamental importance for its dogmatic theology.[5]

We cannot avoid having to concern ourselves with this mystery, whether we explicitly objectify it to ourselves or not, whether we use our freedom to accept it or to reject and suppress it. What Christianity asserts is that its message is concerned precisely with that about which no 'clear' message can be conveyed inasmuch as *per definitionem* it neither has, nor is capable of having, any one particular place firmly assignable to it within the frame of reference constituted by human knowledge and human freedom. Theological statements, therefore, are, in the sense described above, different from scientific statements in respect both of their quality and their source. Hence theological statements, as thematic and verbal in character (and it is only as such that they constitute 'statements' at all) invariably point, despite the rational structure manifestly belonging to them (for without this they would, once more, not be statements at all), to the original pre-thematic and transcendental experience, and it is only on this condition that they are really comprehensible. Otherwise they would be mere rationalizing statements which would be very quickly unmasked and shown to be meaningless by the modern sciences (formal logic, the philosophy of language etc.).

[98] Concerning this mystery which is made present in the transcendental experience as absolute, Christianity asserts that it is something more than merely the goal, remaining forever remote and asymptotic, towards which the human spirit moves in knowledge and freedom, in theory and practice. Also, and more than this, it has actually bestowed itself as absolute Mystery upon man so as to be the innermost consummation of the movement of his being and a goal to be immediately possessed. This relationship which the absolute Mystery bears to man is a fundamental element in his transcendental experience, albeit not necessarily an element in his reflection upon, and interpretation of this. To that extent every theological statement concerning that which we are accustomed to call grace, justification etc. has its place in a theological statement at the transcendental level. What we are accustomed to call, in Christian terms, the history of revelation is nothing else than the developing process, taking place within history, by which man reflects upon this transcendental experience of the self-bestowal of God, a reflection which, of course, in its process of historical development, cannot be achieved by the individual as such taken in isolation, but is rather sustained by the history of reflexive thought discernible within the history of mankind as a whole right from its origins, and is reflected upon anew at a merely secondary level in that discipline which we call theology. There is a further question, the question, namely, of how the revelation history

[5] On this cf. the author's article, 'Mitte des Glaubens', *Hilfe zum Glauben*, Theol. Meditationen 27, A. Exeler, J. B. Metz, K. Rahner edd. (Einsiedeln, 1971), pp. 39-56.

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of the Old and New Testaments has its special place within this more general revelation history, co-extensive with the history of human ideas as a whole. But this cannot be set forth in the present context. The element in all this which is absolutely indispensable for an understanding of theology will probably be made clear in the statements which follow.

This experience of the absolute self-utterance of God given in the transcendental experience of man achieves its supreme point in Jesus of Nazareth. He is the eschatological climax of the self-utterance of God to mankind, and of the primary history of reflection upon this self-utterance (primary because taking place not at one remove, at the level of theological reflection, but rather in the concrete conditions of human living and in the unity of action, passion, and word) inasmuch as it is in Jesus that this offering of God's self-bestowal becomes something more than a sheer offering. Rather, through the deed of God, it takes place and is revealed as *de facto* victorious and irreversible. This historical manifestation of the eschatological victoriousness and irreversibility of the self-utterance of God, which is in itself transcendent, does not remove the transcendental character inherent in all theological statements. For first, every transcendental [99] experience as it takes place is invariably accompanied by an element of reflexive thought expressed in verbal form, which does not remove the transcendentality of this experience so long as it is aware of being at once orientated towards, and different from this transcendentality, or so long as – to adopt Anselm's way of expressing the matter – it is aware of the fact that here what is beyond human reason is conceived of as really present and inevitably rational. And there is a further reason why the transcendental character inherent in theological statements, and thereby setting them apart from scientific knowledge of concrete 'this-worldly' realities, is not removed in the case of Christian statements by the fact that they refer to the concrete 'this-worldly' reality of Jesus. In such statements about Jesus the relationship to him which it is intended to express and to make possible is precisely that which we have with him as having died. In other words the relationship with him is in that real event in which absolute transcendence in theory and practice is achieved, bringing us to the absolute mystery in the event which we are accustomed to call death. The statement of faith that Jesus has risen from the dead is merely the justified expression of the fact that our transcendental experience of the self-bestowal of God is attached to the historical event of Jesus, and it is in this that it achieves the fulness of its reality and manifests itself as victorious. And the same statement of faith expresses the truth that the event taking place in the death of Jesus, the event in which an individual man achieves radical transcendence and is brought into the incomprehensibility of the divine Mystery, has in concrete fact achieved its goal. The fact that the statements of Christian theology refer to the concrete 'this-worldly' reality of Jesus does not remove the transcendental character inherent in them as theological statements in virtue of the fact that in these Christian statements a concrete 'this-worldly' historical reality is being touched upon only to the extent that it is precisely the event of absolute transcendentality. In concrete fact the transcendentality belonging to us always takes place as a historical event, and the fact that this does not destroy this dimension of transcendentality is shown by our own experience in which transcendentality is invariably achieved in a specific historical situation without being destroyed as transcendentality thereby. We say that the Christian experience of the victory of transcendentality leading to the mystery of God achieves its full realization precisely in the experience of Jesus. Now this statement obviously involves a fundamental trust in the powers and significance of unique historical events which, in this unaccountable uniqueness of theirs, do not as such constitute subjects falling within the purview of the sciences as [100] understood today, not even that of the historical sciences. For even historical events, considered as subject-matter for the historical sciences, are viewed by these, certainly in their *de facto* contingency, but not in their character as absolute and as posited 'once and for all', a character which they both bear within themselves and can also impose upon another subject.

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Nevertheless historical events as such, and as freely posited, have the character of being absolute and posited 'once and for all' in this sense, even though this cannot ever be authenticated by science, concerned as it is with objectifying concrete 'this-worldly' realities. Rather this character inherent in historical events vanishes the moment we seek to make it a subject for investigation by such sciences.

THEOLOGY AND THE SCIENCES IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER

In the light of what we have said we should now determine the relationship which exists between theology and the modern sciences as they nowadays understand themselves to be. However, in the present context it is possible only to provide a few pointers, somewhat arbitrarily selected.

Before we can undertake to define this relationship, we should of course consider more precisely the connection between the following two factors: on the one hand the original, grace-bestowing experience of, transcendence (faith) and the concrete expression of this, and on the other human reflection upon this, and the further process of reflection at the theoretical level (= theology). For obviously the relationship between the sciences and faith on the one hand and between these sciences and theology on the other, is not simply one and the same.

The difference between concrete 'this-worldly' experience and transcendental experience does indeed imply a fundamental and justified distinction between that which ultimately constitutes the subject-matted of theology, and that which is the subject-matter of the sciences. It is, therefore, in principle legitimate to regard these two entities, theology and the sciences, as irreducibly distinct from one another, and as caught up in the state of gnoseological pluralism, together with the 'concupiscence' which this involves, in the total context of human knowledge. Bu this does not imply any absolute disparity between theology and the sciences. First, theology itself has in its turn a concrete 'this-worldly' history of its own, in which it can be made the subject of historical science in the secular sense, albeit from a point of view which reduces history to the same level and concentrates upon its common factors. But [101] also, and more than this, in its assertion that an event of absolute transcendence has taken place, theology postulates the historicity of Jesus and of his interpretation of himself (whatever more detailed description we may give of this), and thereby achieves an established point of contact with the historical sciences. Theology neither can nor should, therefore, regard itself from the outset as of such a nature that cases of conflict between it and these historical sciences are totally inconceivable. It belongs to the very nature of theology to accept that such cases of conflict are possible, even while it hopes, once more at the eschatological level, that no such case of conflict will be regarded as so radical and so positively insurmountable that the only remaining course is for either theology or the sciences to surrender and submit. Nevertheless any such ultimate reconciliation between theology and the sciences is not a state of affairs actually established once and for all, but rather a subject of eschatological hope, and one which can be conceived of and made real anew stage by stage only as this hope moves towards its ultimate goal.

The sciences can have a certain significance for the investigation of mystagogy into the transcendental experience, in virtue of the fact that these sciences do communicate something like the first intimation of transcendental experience. For these sciences conduct a critique of themselves, and involve a pluralism of methods which can never fully be eliminated or overcome in a higher synthesis. And from this arises a relativism of the methods they employ. Again human life in its totality constitutes a threat to them from without which can never fully be removed, and for all these reasons they themselves impart something like a first intimation of an experience of transcendence.

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Theology and the sciences also come into contact with one another (in both a positive and a negative sense) to the extent that the sciences have *per definitionem* a tendency to achieve the greatest possible rationalization of human life, but in doing this always come up against the freedom, uniqueness, and sheer factualness of life as it exists within the wider sphere of the possible. Thereby, in their rationally conceived demands for the future of man, they encounter the eschatological limits imposed by theology in the name of faith in the incomprehensible God of freedom and of the future alike.

So far as the role of theology in the interdisciplinary dialogue between the sciences is concerned, I may refer to observations which I have offered elsewhere. [6]

[102] Faith and theology are related to the sciences as to all other concrete 'this-worldly' realities in human life. These are already there even before faith and theology realize their own natures. These human realities of a concrete 'this-worldly' kind, and so too the sciences, have their own special meaning for man, a meaning which does not and should not vanish in that insuperable pluralism in human awareness which is necessary for faith even when man himself begins explicitly to orientate himself towards the absolute Mystery as that which is near and all-embracing. For the eschatological integration of all reality in God, and in his knowledge and love, is the deed of God himself, a deed which takes place precisely at the point at which, and in virtue of the fact that, man endures the pluralism of his world, and so too of his knowledge, and does not suppose that he is standing at a point at which all reality, and the knowledge of it, is one. For at this point stands only God himself.

[6] On this cf. 'Theology as Engaged in an Interdisciplinary Dialogue with the Sciences' in the present volume, pp. 80-93.

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[103]

PART TWO

Anthropology

[105]

7

INSTITUTION AND FREEDOM

Has the theologian as such any contribution to make on the subject of 'institution and freedom',[1] without *ipso facto* arrogating to himself the role of a social scientist or an authority on jurisprudence? It must be said that the theologian is concerned with this subject as such, and will from the outset seek for an answer to the question as posed in one specific direction. This will surely be clear in the light of the following consideration: in the history of ideas of the last few decades a phenomenon which appears again and again is an atheism that is postulated in the name of human freedom. Whatever terms it may be expressed in, what it says is that God is to be thought of as nothing else than the great architect of the world, the ultimate principle of order and law, the great institutionalizer. And this being so, he neither can exist, nor should be allowed to exist, if there either should be, or is in fact, such a thing as freedom. Whether freedom and institution are ultimately speaking and in the absolute reconcilable, therefore, is manifestly a theological question right from the first, one which is of immediate concern to the theologian as such, and not merely as a man.

'INSTITUTION AND FREEDOM' AS A QUESTION FOR THE THEOLOGIAN

When we open the pages of the New Testament or study Pauline theology then we perceive that freedom is a key concept occupying a central position in the Christian understanding of human life.[2] For Paul the real gift [106] of God in his Spirit, the fruit of saving history for mankind and for the individual alike, regarded as something which both has already taken place and is to achieve its fulness in the future, is freedom. Certainly this freedom of the redeemed children of God, regarded as a gift of the Spirit in faith and hope, is not *ipso facto* identical with that freedom which constitutes an ideal of social politics arid is engaged in a constant struggle with self-alienation, enslavement, the lack of freedom, as constituting a constantly renewed threat to man emerging from the concrete forms of history. But while the *former* kind of freedom, namely the religious one, and the *latter* kind, namely the social one, are not simply identical, still they are in a very essential sense connected with one another, although this is a point which cannot be developed in detail in the present context. The only way in which we can achieve a spirit of faith and hope in ultimate freedom as a gift of God in

[1] On this theme cf. also the author's *Freiheit und Manipulation in Gesellschafti und Kirche*, Münchener Akademie Schriften (Munich, 1970).
[2] On the concept of 'freedom' see K. Rahner, 'Freedom III. Theological' *Sacramentum Mundi* II (New York and London, 1968), pp. 361-362, with further bibliography, and also M. Müller and J. B. Hirschmann, 'Freiheit', *Staatslexikon* III (Freiburg, 1959), cols. 528-548; J. B. Metz, 'Freiheit III. Theologisch', *HbThGB* I (Munich, 1962), cols. 403-414.

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his Spirit, and as the content of his kingdom, is for us in principle to opt for social freedom and to play our part in striving to make it real. In just the same way there can be no love of God without love of neighbour, and the will to achieve a world worthy of mankind or a better future is intrinsic to the will that hopes for the final coming of the kingdom of God, the will which we call faith.

The real blessing of salvation, then, which Christianity proclaims as the goal of its hope as expressed in concrete action, is that freedom in the theological sense which has an intrinsic connection with social freedom. And this means that this social freedom too must be considered if we are to arrive at true and Christian ideas about God. Now the significance of this can be expressed as follows:

We may think of God as the great architect of the world, as the operator of a universal cybernetics, as the law-giver, as the ultimate guarantor for all structures and orders in reality which we directly experience (all these conceptual models, as applied to that which we call God, are meaningful only provided that we retain our overall awareness that God is the absolute Mystery, and one which we can still never incorporate within some higher system). At the same time we may, by contrast, regard freedom not merely as any kind of factor making itself felt within this world which belongs to God, but as constituting the central blessing of salvation itself. Now if all this is true, then God, as the author of all structures and orders in the world, can be conceived of simply as the provider and the content of this freedom regarded as a blessing of salvation, seeing that all orders and structures of which he is author can themselves be conceived of as the condition making *freedom* itself possible, and providing it with its context. The point can be expressed in different terms by saying that God can [107] be thought of in this way provided that all orders and structures are themselves ultimately thought of not as opposed to freedom, but as an intrinsic element in it. Only on this showing can we say that a positive option for freedom does not entail any demand for atheism. Only on this showing can God be conceived of as the absolute, single, and original source of freedom *and* structure and order at the same time.

Now it is undoubtedly true that all institutional factors constitute, in a social sense, the outer periphery and the utterly secondary (although not inessential) realization and concretization of that which is called structure and order in the world, the more so since these institutional factors are to a large extent dependent, in their concrete forms, on the free will of man himself, and so much more liable to change than that which pertains to the structures investigated by the natural sciences and intellectual disciplines inasmuch as these are concerned with what is permanent and enduring. But despite this fact, the institutional factor at the social level still belongs in its own way to those structures and orders of the world which are unavoidable, if only because the institutional factor in the concrete can be brought to an end only by introducing some other institutional factor, though perhaps a better one, and not by simply obliterating it. Now if the institutional factor at the social level is in this sense to be numbered among the enduring structures and orders of the world, at least to the extent that it is a world of man, then it is clear from the outset that the institutional factors in the world of man are of concern to the theologian as such as well. The theologian may indeed say that this institutional factor at the social level, as it exists in concrete reality, belongs only to this world of man as transitory, and that one day this will be dissolved and give way to the kingdom of God as the kingdom of freedom. The theologian may regard precisely this human institutional factor as in an especially pressing sense subject to man’s decision, undertaken in hope, to change the world. For man himself strives for the dominion of perfect freedom. And yet the theologian, with his belief in God as the source of all freedom, and as the source of all structural factors as well, can only concern himself with this world of the institutional – inasmuch as it is the institutional factors that constitute the enabling condition for freedom – if he also includes under this heading the institutional factors at the social level as well.

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I hope that I have given some indication of why this theme of 'institution and freedom' should be of concern to a theologian, and what the direction is in which his ultimate and basic positions will lead him to turn for an answer to the question to which this theme gives rise. If, therefore, [108] little more seems to be said on the subject of theology in what follows, the subject being treated of is, nevertheless, one which a theologian may treat of without being accused of going beyond his brief in an amateurish manner. Admittedly in doing so he will be obliged to confine himself to observations remaining at a relatively general level, since his starting-point must be his own particular discipline.

FREEDOM AS A SLOGAN: A KEY FACTOR IN MODERN LIFE

Every age has its own great and dominant ideals, its slogans (using this term in a wholly positive, or at least a neutral sense) in which it sums up its hopes and its desires. A dominant idea of the kind we have in mind, in which everything is drawn into a synthesis, may on this account be very imprecise, if only because – to put it briefly – man cannot arrive at a definition of the whole when he does not himself stand outside it, or assign what is an *ultimate* practical goal to a place in a system of coordinates which is different from, and, higher than, itself. Such slogans, key concepts, and all-epitomizing ideals belonging to a particular age may undergo changes. For a man whose awareness is safeguarded against falling into a mere pluralism of totally disparate realities they are both necessary and justified. Slogans of this kind should not be blamed on the grounds that they are not susceptible of any full analysis or exact definition, even though of course this fact again should not wrongly be exploited as a blank cheque to justify us in producing mere phrases where exact answers and precise reflexive thought are possible. Man is in fact a being such that his reflections upon himself and his understanding of his own existence are invariably only approximate, if only because the reflexive thought itself as it develops is subject to intellectual perspectives and motivations which are incapable of being in their turn objectified, reflected upon, or subjected to critical analysis. In this situation slogans play their part. They are intended to sum up the awareness and the aims of a given epoch, without thereby standing for a process of reflection which is total and all-embracing, or capable of being analyzed down to the last detail. A given epoch – it may be precisely the present one – can have several such slogans and dominant ideas. In the present age the term 'freedom' certainly constitutes one such. It is true that for at least two hundred years it has been included among the ideals of all movements in social politics, but even so it has still not lost its power of attraction. It has become a watchword throughout the world, and peoples of very widely differing stages of economic and cultural development have fastened upon it. [109] Precisely on this account it is, of course, almost inevitable that the word 'freedom' has come to stand for an entity which is almost indescribable, and in fact is unknown. The social scientist, with his rational and empiricist approach, would therefore be justified in saying that freedom has become, to such an extent, an indeterminate entity, something which bears a different meaning for every individual, every nation, and every social group, that any social politics capable of giving an account of itself in rational terms will find this concept totally intractable. But even the practitioner of this science of social politics should at any rate concede that such a slogan *exists*, that it makes its impact in the minds and hearts of individuals, and that therefore, whether it is welcome or not, it does on any showing make itself felt as a force in the field of social politics. We can also understand that the reason why this term should already have made so strong an impact for so long, and should still be making it today, is that freedom has still not become something that can be taken for granted, something no longer capable of stimulating any movement. Presumably it would indeed be

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perfectly possible for us in all sincerity to uphold the position that at least in the Western industrial countries the degree of social freedom already achieved is greater in relation to the broad mass of men than has been achieved in any previous age. But even though this fact can presumably be adduced, it still does not make freedom something that can be taken for granted, something which, since it already exists for many individuals and in a notable degree, is no longer of concern and no longer capable of serving as a slogan to express the expectations and demands for social change in the future. For in the sphere of society freedom is always a relative concept, related to the sum total of what men value as capable of achievement within a foreseeable space of time. For the men of a particular age, or at least according to their opinion, whether true or false, the sum total of these physical, medical, economic, and social changes which they demand may be very great. And in these circumstances, when these physical, medical, etc. factors in practice remain stable, they feel that their freedom is needlessly restricted by this lack of change, when in principle change is possible. And they feel this even though materially speaking the freedom they enjoy is far greater than that of the men of some former age, who must have regarded the restrictions upon their freedom as in practice more or less unalterable.

Now the situation today is that the sum total of economic, social, etc. changes which, at least in the opinion of individuals, might be introduced, is immense, regardless of whether this opinion is altogether correct, or whether further distinctions would have to be drawn in order to make it [110] so. And for this reason the men of today are far from feeling that they enjoy a particular freedom, especially in the case of those who no longer recognize their existing situation as the outcome of free and creative activity on the part of those who overcame conditions of economic and cultural chaos so as to bring it about, and hence regarded it as manifestly praiseworthy. Today many, especially younger men, are reacting against the contemporary social situation by aggressively demanding more freedom. But I believe that we should view this in the way that we have indicated above. Presumably it would not be very meaningful if we sought to explain this aggressive demand simply by saying that in a technological and industrial age and, in conditions in which the population has increased enormously by comparison with earlier ages, the economic, social, political, and legal conditions in which men have to live have become so complex and so difficult to change that even when they are regarded as inevitable, they are still felt to restrict the freedom of the individual in the highest degree. In a certain sense this may be justified. But as an explanation of the aggressive demand for more freedom it is straightway open to the objection that in former ages man, living as he did in simpler situations of life and social conditions, did not in any sense enjoy any more freedom, either for the shaping of his own life, for going where he liked, for choosing his own philosophy of life, forming the sort of social groups he wanted, choosing the goods he thought best, etc. The sole difference between this and former ages is simply this: that the compulsions of former ages, which allowed man less freedom, were felt to be more or less unalterable, and therefore the demand for more freedom could not be regarded as capable of fulfilment in any effective sense. But this brings us back once more to the explanation we have adumbrated at an earlier stage as to why there is so aggressive a demand for greater freedom today, even though, objectively speaking, there has never been more freedom than there is today. Now this enables us to give a certain description of what is meant by freedom as such at the level of social living. On this showing freedom would be a condition in which it is possible to get rid of a situation which is regarded as undesirable and capable of being abolished. In arriving at the judgement that a given social situation is undesirable it is possible that another situation, the one that replaces the previous one, is regarded as desirable. And this view in turn may be justified or unjustified, or may be arrived at with or without the agreement of the majority of one's contemporaries, with or without appealing to this. But it may also be the case that in

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struggling against the existing situation we do not make any attempt to consider in detail the [111] future situation which is intended to replace it. In other words that it is a matter of indifference to those advocating the change whether they fall out of the frying-pan into the fire. The characterization of freedom in the social sense which we have given is, of course, at a very formal level. But surely the reason for this is to be found in the fact that it actually *does* take very different forms at the material level as well, this freedom which individuals and groups desire when they put forward their demands for more freedom. We could of course draw a distinction between genuine and merely supposed freedom, and say that a greater freedom is to be found in those cases in which an individual, without being hindered by external factors, can direct his own human and individual nature in general, and the value attached to it, and in which he has greater scope for this in terms of the possibilities and the means at his command. But while in itself such a definition of the nature of social freedom would be justified so far as metaphysical anthropology is concerned, it too would fail to bring us any closer to the answer we are seeking because precisely on this point, of how we should rightly understand the nature of man and his dignity, very different ideas are put forward, and any description of freedom, if it is to be effective at the level of social politics, must take into account the pluralism of anthropologies which exist today and come to terms with it.

REALITY AND INSTITUTION

What then is to be said about the relationship between institution and freedom? Before we attempt to give an answer to this (to the extent that a theologian can give an opinion upon the matter at all), one further word remains to be said as to what is meant by institutions in this context.[3] As with the term ‘freedom’, so in this respect too, we must remain at a very general level. Presumably we shall not meet with any contradiction if we say that by ‘institutions’ in the sphere of human society we mean only those realities which, at least in some sense, are capable of being changed by the exercise of human freedom. Compulsions which are contrary to freedom may derive from those natural laws which fall totally outside the sphere of human freedom, and are to that extent unalterable by it. Certainly no one will want to subsume these under the heading of institutions. [112] Conversely, however, we can, for our present purposes, include under this heading all those realities in the social sphere which are subject to change, and which impose certain compulsions upon human freedom, in other words not merely human laws bearing upon various departments of human life and having juridical effects, but also dominant ideas, customs, taboos (as we are accustomed to call them nowadays), and other realities in such society, which do in fact exist but are capable of being changed. So far as human freedom and decision are concerned these constitute preexisting conditions which exercise a prior influence upon such decisions, canalize them, make them advisable or unwelcome by the attaching of social sanctions of either a positive or a negative kind to them, etc. All this can surely be included in the *present* context and for our present consideration under the heading ‘institution’, so long as we also remain aware that from many points of view we are expanding the concept to a not inconsiderable extent. For I am, of course, fully aware of the fact that among sociologists the term ‘institution’ has a narrower and (if one likes to express it so) a more precise meaning inasmuch as in these circles the only cases in which the term ‘institution’ is used are those in which a specific system of rules is being put forward and applied by means of some specific equipment operated by a specific

[3] On this cf. G. Gundlach, Cl. Bauer, A. Bellebaum, ‘Institution’, *Staatslexikon* IV (Freiburg, 1959), cols. 324-334; G.Sta venhagen, ‘Institutionalismus’, *Staatslexikon* IV (Freiburg 1959), cols. 334-338; K. Rahner, ‘Institutionalismus’, *LTK* V (Freiburg, 1960), cols 714-715.

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COMPULSIONS AND CHANGES

Now with regard to the relationship between freedom and institution in the second sense mentioned above, it is correct, first of all, to say that freedom is, and can be felt to be, opposed to institution. All the institutional factors in our lives also imply a certain restriction of our freedom, because in manifold ways they debar us from possible courses which would remain open to us, and could be acted upon, if our freedom were absolute. For the most part we do not feel these compulsions upon us at all. We are accustomed to them. They actually bring us advantages which we are unwilling to forego, and they seem to us to a large extent obvious and unchangeable. In other cases, however, institutional factors of this kind in our lives may be regarded and felt as capable of being changed. At the same time we may regard them as preventing us from acting upon one of the possibilities which freedom entails. And in cases such as these we begin as free creatures to react against them. We feel that our freedom is in some sense oppressed and enslaved, restricted and frustrated by these institutional factors. Obviously this applies chiefly to those cases in which the possibility which freedom offers, and which is then withdrawn by an [113] institutional factor of this kind, seems clearly the more favourable one by comparison with the institution itself, at least as actually applied to the freedom of the particular individual concerned. In this sense there cannot be any doubt that the incalculable multiplicity and complexity of present-day institutions must strike us, to a terrible extent, as restricting and (if we wish so to express it) frustrating. The present age and state of society, with its discoveries and techniques, opens up before our eyes an almost infinite range of real possibilities, which are now brought almost within the grasp of our freedom as such. And at the same time they are withdrawn from us by the institutions of our age and society, institutions which, since they now exist within the wider context of many other real possibilities, strike us as themselves capable of being changed, and so precisely cause us to feel that our freedom is being curtailed. We have already said that this experience of frustrated freedom must manifest itself chiefly, and with the greatest acuteness, precisely in the case of those whose memories are shorter, for these are no longer in the position of having experienced present-day institutions of all kinds in society as they actually emerged, or at a time when they were felt as liberating men from conditions which undoubtedly entailed still more restrictions and frustrations of freedom.

In connection with this experience of freedom being restricted by an already existing institutionalization of society, the following point too must not be overlooked, so as to enable us to arrive at a right judgement on the conflict between the generations which has arisen in this area. The attitude of some who demand freedom is such that change is felt to be desirable for its own sake and precisely as a full exercise of freedom, regardless of whether or not the innovations which it brings can *ipso facto* be recognized as improvements. Things are different from what they formerly were, and this in itself is very often enough to give a sense of freedom. This is especially the case when this feeling that freedom is to be found in change as such is not counterbalanced by a sense of familiarity with conditions as they have been hitherto. For in the case of the old their anxiety when faced with the unfamiliar and untried elements in the new conditions can give rise to a state of tension which is in part justified and in part due to physiological factors. And this anxiety may take away any joy they might have had in change as such. We can recognize the phenomenon which we are seeking to describe in its plainest and most familiar form in the changes which take place in the so-called fashions, meaning by this not merely fashions in clothes and similar outward customs in everyday life, but also fashions in art or science, in the preference given to certain specific

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themes etc. All fashions are nothing else than changes [114] made for their own sake, without regard to whether the innovations introduced are or are not improvements as well. They are changes which give rise to a sense of freedom – changes, therefore, which in terms of physiological factors and differences between generations are more acceptable to the young than the old. The former will always find innovations as such to be attractive, whereas in the latter the same innovations will arouse anxiety. The only way in which we can achieve a serious discussion between the young and the old as to the desirability of a given change is to pose the question of whether, taking all aspects into account, the innovation concerned, even by the standards of the younger generation, and on a realistic appraisal, turns out to be worse or better than that which it is intended to replace. Without a discussion of this kind the balance will be tipped in favour of what is new as such in the judgement of the young, and in favour of what is familiar as such in the judgement of the old. Each side will regard its choice as the better institution for ensuring freedom, and the only remaining question will then be whether it is to be the young or the old who have the power to make their judgement prevail and begin to act upon it. It cannot be denied, however, that what is new purely as such does in itself possess a certain value for freedom, and both is, and will continue to be, one of the sources of social change. If what is new is not notably worse than what is old the old too cannot seriously raise many objections against such fashions, but must endure them with the wisdom of those who know that changes are still welcomed even when they do not bring any convincing improvements with them.

After this brief digression (if in fact it is such), let us begin by recognizing the simple fact that institutions, just because they occur within the context of wider possibilities and are felt to be capable of change, are also held to be restrictions and obstacles to the freedom which men seek. So much is this the case, as we have said, that in some cases we do not even pause to ask, in our quest for freedom, whether our protest against the situations and institutions which curtail freedom actually have some possibility of improvement to offer. And when we refuse to answer this question, and are thereby impelled into an adventure the outcome of which can no longer be foreseen, then obviously our demand for freedom is shown by this refusal to be materially and morally capricious and reprehensible. At the same time, however, the fact that innovation as such does inevitably have a certain intrinsic rightness of its own becomes clear the moment we enquire into the basic reasons underlying such attitudes of capriciousness, and ask ourselves why the danger with which they constantly threaten us is so indefatigable.

[115]

THE AMBIVALENCE OF CREATIVE FREEDOM

We must concede, then, that there is a *prima facie* opposition between institution and freedom. But this must not be allowed to obscure a deeper unity existing between the two entities and a relationship in which each influences the other. Man, when he has the power, does in fact himself create these institutions of his freedom. They are objectifications of freedom. Indeed this should constitute an intrinsic element in our description of what institution means, distinguishing it from those compulsions which are present within the sphere in which freedom is exercised in virtue of the unchangeable laws of nature. In fact it is only by recognizing that institutions derive from free acts that we are able to see also that the compulsion which they bring to bear is in a real sense capable of being changed or abolished, and it is the recognition of this fact that provokes freedom's protest against the restrictions imposed upon it. We are here faced with the paradox that freedom is protesting against its own creations. Faced with this paradox, we feel it only a slight and partially valid consolation to say that the institution is the creation of *one* freedom, while it is *another* freedom that is

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protesting against it. For first, the freedom of the individual in individual life creates certain conditions, and then, having created them, it itself protests against them as imposing restrictions upon it. But more than this, insofar as it is possible to speak of a single society in a single age we must also say that this same society invokes the principle of freedom to protest against its own institutions, which it has created through its own freedom. In fact there is no lack of examples which we might analyze to show that the individual protests against institutional compulsions upon his freedom within his own society even when, from a different aspect, he freely assents to, and positively wills them. And yet he never notices this contradiction in his attitude. The situation is, in fact, that freedom creates its own compulsion within itself. It objectifies itself, and creates for itself the external conditions for its own fulfilment, shapes them and so opens out a sphere within which it can operate. And everything which freedom thus creates for itself, even though called forth by freedom, nevertheless achieves an autonomy and independence in relation to freedom both in the mind of the individual man and in the society he belongs to. We freely create customs within ourselves, and surround ourselves with institutions in order to be free, in order to disburden ourselves of compulsions which already exist by nature, and what we thereby create in freedom then confronts the subject endowed with freedom as autonomous and, as it were, alienated from him, [116] in the form of a fresh compulsion. But this ambivalence and dialectical character inherent in the forms in which we objectify our freedom should precisely not blind us to the fact that these secondary compulsions are created primarily as objectifications of, and aids to freedom. We submit ourselves to traffic regulations so as to achieve more unhindered conditions of travel. We enact permanent laws which are binding upon us for the regulation of commerce in order to remain unimpeded by others in the disposal of our own property. We produce what are nowadays contemptuously called taboos in the public awareness, even though we may feel restricted by them, but our basic reason for doing so is simply to ensure a greater sphere of individual freedom – for example to guarantee a sphere of intimate privacy which is immediately available simply to oneself. In other words we would ultimately speaking have less freedom without such taboos than we have with them. (Of course this is not to deny that there are taboos of this kind which either are meaningless or have become so in the course of time, but precisely this fact too is merely the outcome of that ambivalence inherent in every form in which freedom is objectified, and which at once makes freedom possible and places limits upon it.) Now in view of this inescapable ambivalence inherent in all the institutions which arise from freedom, are intended to make freedom possible of achievement and to safeguard it, *and* at the same time restrict its scope and in certain senses frustrate it, there are two points to be made. First, any such objectification of freedom, or of the history of the freedom of the individual or of society, can be for better or for worse in its effect upon this freedom itself. Presumably man is to some extent justified in interpreting more or less everything which has appeared in the course of human history as developed from freedom in order to contribute to freedom. Not only will more or less everything which takes place in society in the course of history actually be *presented* as a contribution to freedom, to a certain extent it actually *is* so. Let us consider, for example, the institution of absolute monarchy or of the most totalitarian régime. On close examination it appears that these invariably leave a certain scope for freedom unaffected. The reason is that a society simply cannot exist which is constructed and controlled totally and all-embracingly from one single point. The more so, since the absolute tyrant, in order to be absolutely uninfluenced by anyone else, would have to die in his own state of absolute isolation. But more than this, such systems do in fact, by comparison with other social orders, create elements providing fresh scope for freedom. This factor, which it is impossible to deny, does in fact provide propaganda for the most absurd and tyrannical social [117] systems always and inevitably to have some appearance of justification. And among older

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individuals it is a factor which has led often enough to the sceptical conclusion that all social orders are at basis equally bad, and that the only difference between them is to be found in the different holders of power and the different ideologies on which they are based. At basis the same old situation remains, it is alleged, despite all these variations, especially since for the majority there is from the outset no prospect of gaining power for themselves within a given society.

But however strong an element of truth lies concealed in all this, the fact still remains that in relation to freedom some institutions are better and some worse, according as they limit and frustrate the legitimate freedom of the many in a greater or lesser degree. And hence there is a genuine history of freedom, a struggle for greater freedom that is genuine and not merely apparent; a legitimate protest against social institutions that unjustifiably restrict freedom, a protest which has a greater significance than a mere selfish clamour for a power hitherto possessed by others. In society institutions really do exist which, for all the ambivalence inherent in them too, serve the interests of freedom better, at least in cases where new and changed conditions have come to prevail affecting the numbers of the population, their level of education, the resources of communication, the quantity of goods which a given economy is now capable of producing, etc. Not all the forms, or even the institutions, in which freedom is objectified have the same restricting and frustrating effect upon freedom itself, quite apart from the fact that, as we have said, a certain preference can be given, with the necessary provisos, to new institutions as such over those which have been in force hitherto.

While we cannot enlarge upon this fact any further in the present context, we must recognize, then, that it makes it both right and necessary to maintain, and constantly renew, the struggle for greater freedom. But to this first factor a second and different one must now be added. It is true that the new and improved forms in which freedom is institutionalized serve the interests of this freedom better, and offer it a wider scope for its fulfilment. But even these new forms remain subject to that law of ambivalence which applies to all institutions, namely the inescapable law that they invariably both make freedom possible and frustrate it at the same time. It is at this point that the theologian raises the question of what the significance of this is. He asks himself whether, on this showing, man is able of his own resources to tolerate this ambivalence inherent in the situation of freedom. The question is whether man, is not constantly exposed to the temptation and the danger of throwing off the oppressive frustrations to [118] his freedom inherent in the situations in which he finds himself, even though they also contribute positively to his freedom. Again he may be tempted to throw them off in this way even though he actually needs these institutions as indispensable for his life, and the innovations which he is not yet willing to trouble himself about, so far from constituting improved forms in which to objectify his freedom, are actually harmful to it. He feels the oppression of the present existing institutions, the even more frustrating character of which weighs upon all except perhaps for a few of those actually holding power. This oppression stimulates his freedom to act against it. He does not yet feel the oppression and frustrations of the future institutions which he will perforce have to go on to create. He falls into a paroxysm of uncontrolled desire for a freedom which is quite un-realizable, destroys more than he can build, comes to a deadlock again and again in the course of history, and finally creates institutions which are not very dissimilar to those against which he was previously struggling. They may perhaps be *different*, but are only *better* – at least in certain respects – provided that all turns out well. In view of this question the theologian cannot hold that history as it *de facto* exists will ever be able to eliminate errors of this kind arising from the will to achieve freedom. They certainly belong to the very roots of history, which, viewed from the loftiest perspectives, are inescapable. But this sceptical view of past and future history as it *de facto* unfolds does not give the theologian

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any licence for holding that man has the right to give his support to such paroxysms and upheavals in the cause of a desire for freedom which is ultimately destructive, or to claim that he has a right to support such movements. The fact that world history as it develops always entails sin, error, and bias, does not mean that a morally responsible subject such as man is intended to be has any right to commit such acts as and when he sees that they are in prospect.

Now on this assumption the theologian will ask what sort of interior dispositions man must have in order to avoid being liable to the seduction of such a desire for freedom. And the theologian's reply will be this -ultimately speaking man is only immune to such diabolical temptations to freedom from freedom itself when he recognizes, and accepts in a spirit of hope, a dimension of freedom which transcends this ambivalence inherent in the forms in which freedom is objectified. We mean that dimension of freedom which is the kingdom of God. In this connection it makes little difference, ultimately speaking, whether an individual who in fact actually achieves, and lives by, this state of interior liberation of his freedom, which transcends the ambivalence of the forms in which that freedom is [119] objectified, does in fact explicitate the theological interpretation of this state of liberation in conscious forms of words. Anyone who, having been set free for his freedom to be engaged in infinite hope, accepts the limitations imposed upon his freedom at the social level by all the institutions to which he is subject (and in fact, of course, without making this liberation of his grounds for an unjustifiable conservatism and social petrification), is living for God in a spirit of faith and hope. And this is what the theologian calls the freedom which has been liberated by grace from all earthly powers, and interprets as the true blessing of salvation, regardless of whether the individual concerned consciously recognizes it or not. In this sense the spirit of faith and hope in an absolute future is to be numbered among the prior conditions which alone prevent us from despairing of that freedom which is ever subject to institutional frustrations, and in our despair from destroying it.

THE INSTITUION OF FREEDOM

In speaking of the relationship which exists between institution and freedom there is one further and special secondary kind of institution which calls for special mention. For there are institutions which are created with the special purpose of contributing to freedom by counteracting the effects of other institutions. In earlier ages, when human relationships were, in concrete practice, unalterable, this secondary kind of institution to which we refer, designed to counteract the curtailments of freedom imposed by other institutions, was confined almost exclusively to the sphere of law as such. In this field there were, and still are, officially appointed defending advocates, courts of appeal, and similar institutions. All these are, after all, institutions designed to uphold freedom which are something more than mere forms in which freedom is objectified. Rather they are precisely of a kind designed to defend freedom against other institutions. In other words in them the paradox achieves palpable and explicit form at a secondary level of an institution designed to give freedom. An institution is *ex professo* set up as a means of counteracting the effects of other institutions as inhibiting freedom. We cannot see why such a thing need necessarily be confined solely to the sphere of the administration of justice as such. Many institutions which do exist might perhaps be better understood in their nature, and improved and made more effective in their functioning, if they were consciously interpreted in the way we have indicated as institutions for safeguarding freedom against the restrictive effects of other institutions. I can only speak in very abstract [120] terms here, but I believe that at the various levels of our society further and new institutions could be created of this kind, which would contribute to freedom in

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specific areas.

Only an absolute social system, integrating, organizing, and controlling everything within itself, something, therefore, which, in its extreme form would constitute a barefaced tyranny, could prevent legitimate claims to freedom as such from being raised against society itself by groups outside the institutionalized sections of society who felt particularly frustrated in their freedom. It is in these circumstances that the real seeds of a revolution are brought into being. And regardless of the forms in which such a revolution appears or the means which it uses (these may be very different from the ones known from former times), it brings about changes in society which were not previously catered for in it by the relevant institutions which were responsible for bringing such changes about merely by evolutionary methods. Only an absolute tyranny, subsuming and bringing everything under its control, could assert that within its sphere a revolution was from the outset unnecessary and impossible; that it itself constituted the permanent revolution. And because there cannot be any absolute tyranny, it also follows that in any reasonable society, which precisely on this account has never reduced to institutionalized form every conceivable or newly developed possibility for society, it is always possible in principle for a reasonable and justifiable revolution to take place. We older members of society should not in principle deny this merely in order to have the rest we have earned. But although it is impossible already in the here and now to forestall every kind of future claim to a justified revolution by devising institutions within society in its present form, this should not divert our attention from those still unrealized possibilities in a whole range of fields for creating institutions which as such, and as actually acknowledged here and now by society in its existing form, are designed to counteract the effects of other institutions within the same society, and to provide a greater scope for freedom. Such fresh institutions constitute an institutionalized element in social change as such, and thereby are capable of bringing about very much by way of evolution which otherwise would have to be forced upon society by revolution, with all the harm entailed in the use of uncontrollable force. Obviously such institutions, working as they do in favour of freedom to counteract the effects of other institutions, are, or would be, of a secondary order. They are also always liable to succumb to the law of obsolescence, to bureaucratization, to the danger of frustrating their own real purpose in the effort to maintain themselves, to Parkinson's law. And again, [121] institutions of this kind will not bring the kingdom of infinite freedom upon this earth. But we should still ask ourselves where scope can yet be found for such institutions, working for freedom and counterbalancing the other institutions. The representatives and administrators of the primary institutions would be enquired of and appealed to in their wisdom and foresight not to feel that their authority was being limited or inhibited by such secondary institutions. In order to have such wisdom these officials will in turn have to have that spirit of detachment towards the ambivalence and authority of institutions which ultimately speaking is achieved only by that liberation of freedom which comes from God, and which we have sought to point to in what we have said.

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[122]

8

EXPERIENCE OF SELF AND EXPERIENCE OF GOD

In view of the magnitude and difficulty of the theme under investigation, it is impossible, within the scope of a brief study such as the present one, to treat of more than a few particular aspects, which have been somewhat arbitrarily chosen. Experience of God and experience of the self each constitute themes in their own right, and in a real and fundamental sense they stand for the totality of human experience and human knowledge, albeit each in its own special way. For when man, the subject, experiences himself as such, he is recognizing himself to be that particular being which is '*quodammodo omnia*', not, that is to say, one particular subject among many others at the material level, but that inconceivable being in which the sum total of reality as such achieves realization of itself, so that the only way of fully understanding it would be to achieve an experience and understanding of reality itself. Metaphysical anthropology, therefore, is, on any right understanding of its nature, not one particular department or branch of science among others, but rather that philosophy which is concerned with *the* being as such, even though it is true that as anthropology this philosophy is attempting to understand the whole of reality from one specific point of departure, namely from that finite subject which is, nevertheless, open to the infinite. Presumably we do not need to justify in any greater detail the proposition that teaching about God does not constitute one particular department or branch of science, but, regarded as teaching about God at the philosophical level, constitutes an ontology as one and total, considered from one particular aspect. But if it is true that a metaphysical anthropology and a philosophical theology constitute, each in its own way, a universal science, then there are still stronger grounds for regarding the question of the mutual interconnection and underlying unity between them once more as a question involving an enquiry into reality in all its aspects.[1] Hence it is [123] obvious that on such a theme, and within the scope of the present study, it is only possible to touch upon it in a few brief and inadequate remarks.

I

Let us begin by drawing attention to the terms in which the subject of this consideration has deliberately been defined: *experience* of self and *experience* of God. Thus we have avoided the terms 'knowledge of God' or 'knowledge of self'. This should be enough to indicate from the outset that what we are treating of is that kind of knowledge which is present in every man as belonging essentially to the very roots of cognition in him, and as constituting the starting-point and prior condition for all reflexive knowledge, and for all derived human knowledge in its function of combining and classifying. We are assuming, therefore, that there is such a thing as a passive experience of this kind as a matter of transcendental necessity, an experience so inescapable, in other words, that in its ultimate structures its reality is implicitly asserted in the very act of denying it or calling it in question. In accordance with this, it must be emphasized, with regard to man's experience of himself that we are treating of this here in its initial stages as an unconscious factor in human life, one that

[1] On this cf. the author's 'Reflexions upon Methodology in Theology', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 68-114; also 'Theology and Anthropology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London, 1972), pp. 28-45, and 'Transzendentaltheo1ogie', *Sacramentum Mundi* IV (Freiburg, 1969), pp. 986-992.

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is prior to any anthropology (at the philosophical level and as a particular department) in its reflexive and classifying functions, through both of which it exercises the further function of objectifying. Man's experience of himself sustains all such objectifying anthropology, and can never fully be grasped in man's findings as he reflects upon his own nature. Thus it would be justifiable to say that man always experiences more of himself at the non-thematic and non-reflexive levels in the ultimate and fundamental living of his life than he knows about himself by reflecting upon himself whether scientifically or (mainly in his private ideas) non-scientifically. The transcendental orientation of man to the incomprehensible and ineffable Mystery which constitutes the enabling condition for knowledge and freedom, and therefore for subjective life as such, in itself implies a real, albeit a non-thematic experience of God. With regard to this experience of God we must emphasize here above all that it can be so non-thematic, so different from any theology, whether popular or scholarly (whether philosophical or revelational in character) that on the one hand the experience really is present, yet on the other, under certain circumstances, the individual concerned may be ignorant of the very word God. An experience of God of [124] this kind, therefore, is present from the outset in everyday life, even though the individual may be interested in everything else except God. It is also present, although it may be isolated or suppressed, in one who believes himself to be, or wills to be, an atheist. We have drawn a distinction between man's original and non-thematic experience of himself and of God on the one hand, and a knowledge about God and man in which this experience is objectified and interpreted on the other. Obviously in making this distinction we do not dispute that it is both important and inevitable that man must achieve a certain stage of reflexive knowledge (at least of himself as subject). Nor does man's interpretative knowledge of his own experience constitute in its turn an element in the history of man's experience in the concrete. Again when we speak of an experience of man and God we are inevitably using the very abstract term of 'experience', yet what we mean is that concrete developing history of experience in every individual man in his uniqueness and difference from all others, and in the whole length and breadth of an individual human life, different in every case, in which the struggle for conscious knowledge, objectified and explicitated in conscious terms, constitutes only a modest and secondary part of life. And let us further assume for our present purposes that every human experience, and so too that which we are concerned with here, contains within itself a transcendental and *a posteriori* element of historical development. In this sense it is both subjective and objective at the same time, so that the personal history of life in the concrete is, in virtue of this fact, precisely the personal history of the transcendentality of knowledge and freedom in the individual man. Conversely the only way in which this transcendentality can really achieve its true nature is for it boldly and freely to expose itself to the experience of the undeducible historical development in its *a posteriori* character, without attempting wholly to detach itself from this history belonging to it by a process of reflecting upon itself.[2]

II

If we are to speak of the experience of self *and* the experience of God, then the first point to be established is that they constitute a unity. Obviously what we mean by unity here is not simply an absolute identity. For when, [125] in experiencing ourselves as subject, we see ourselves as 'transcendental', even then this 'transcendental' subject is absolutely different

[2] On what follows cf. 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', *Theological Investigations* III (London and New York, 1967), pp. 86-90, and, in a different connection, 'The Experience of God Today', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York), pp. 149-165.

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from that which we mean when we speak of 'God'. Even the most radical truth of self-experience recognizes that this subject which we are is finite, even though, precisely as such, and in its sheer transcendentality, it contains an absolute orientation towards the infinite and the inconceivable through which it is this without being identified with it. In other words, therefore, its nature is constituted by something, and experiences itself as so constituted, which it itself must perforce refuse to identify itself with. While, therefore, experience of God and experience of self are not simply identical, still both of them exist within a unity of such a kind that apart from this unity it is quite impossible for there to be any such experiences at all. Constantly both would be lost, each in its own way. This unity implies, of course, not only that every experience of God (like every other knowledge of God) as it exists in the subject is a process in which this subject is at the same time made present to itself and experiences itself. Taken by itself such a unity would in fact still not constitute any *characterization* of the experience of God as such, for in every spiritual act of knowledge or freedom, whatever it is concerned with, the subject is made present to itself. Or, to put it in Thomas' terms, a '*reditio completa subjecti in seipsum*' takes place. The unity between the experience of God and the experience of self is too ultimate and too all-embracing for it to consist solely in the simple fact that, as in every other 'subject' of human knowledge, so too in the knowledge of God, the subject experiences himself at the same time. This unity consists far more in the fact that the original and ultimate experience of *God* constitutes the enabling condition of, and an intrinsic element in, the experience of self in such a way that without this experience of God no experience of self is possible. In other words the personal history of the experience of God signifies, over and above itself, the personal history of the experience of the self. Of course the point could equally well be formulated the other way round. The experience of self is the condition which makes it possible to experience God. The reason is that an orientation to being in the absolute, and so to God, can be present only when the subject (precisely in the act of reaching out towards being in the absolute) is made present to himself as something distinct from his own act and as the subject of that act. In accordance with this we can then likewise go on to assert: the personal history of experience of the self is the personal history of the experience of God.

All this is certainly something which cannot be said of every 'subject' of experience. It is true that there is no experience of the self without the [126] passive experience of subjects of some kind of an *a posteriori* character in the personal life of the individual concerned, subjects which are offered to the individual in the course of his life by his environment and his social milieu. To that extent the 'return' to the self necessarily also involves in all cases a 'projection' into the world outside. So much is this the case that true observation of the self at the level of explicit reflection upon oneself (whether scientific or non-scientific) constitutes only a very secondary and supplementary process in the totality of the human experience of the self. Nevertheless the knowledge of a particular individual subject within the world does not constitute the necessary condition enabling man to experience himself or the subject of that projection in which this experience is achieved. Yet without any experience of God, however non-thematic and non-reflexive in character, experience of the self is absolutely impossible. And hence it is, as we have said, that the personal development of experience of the self constitutes the personal development of the experience of God and *vice versa*.

The unity which exists between experience of God and experience of the self as here understood could of course be made clear in a process of transcendental reflection. Inevitably some of the factors involved in this have already been indicated in what we have said so far. The transcendentality of man in knowledge and freedom, as it reaches up to absolute being, the absolute future, the inconceivable mystery, the ultimate basis enabling absolute love and responsibility to exist, and so genuine fellowship (or whatever other presentation we may like to make in fuller detail of this transcendentality of man) is at the same time the condition

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which makes it possible for the subject strictly *as* such to experience himself and to have achieved an 'objectification' of himself in *this* sense all along. But this philosophical argument for the unity between experience of self and experience of God will not be pursued any further in the present context.[3]

In place of this, attention may be drawn to a theological consideration which shows that such apparently remote and abstract lines of thought have, after all, a concrete bearing upon life. The unity between the experience of God and the experience of self is the condition which makes it possible to achieve that unity which theological tradition recognizes as existing between love of God and love of neighbour, and which is of fundamental importance for any right understanding of Christianity.[4] In [127] order to achieve a clearer view of this a preliminary consideration must be included at this point. The only way in which man achieves self-realization is through encounters with his fellow man, a fellow who is rendered present to his experience in knowledge and love in the course of his personal life, one, therefore, who is not a thing or a matter, but a man. Of course an individual experience of self on the part of the subject, taken in isolation and abstracted from the totality of the course of a human life, is conceivable in connection with an individual piece of material 'subject-matter'. In that case '*I* come to know something' would be the formal structure of an experience of self of this kind in connection with a piece of 'subject-matter' which, following the custom of the philosophers of old, we conceive of not without reason, as a material object. In reality, however, the situation is different. One's fellow man is not any 'piece of subject-matter', one of many in which the experience of self can be achieved. The true, living, and concrete experience of life which is identical with the experience of self in the concrete has, in relation to its 'pieces of subject-matter', a structure in which not every item has an equal value. Despite the ascendancy nowadays enjoyed by the sciences orientated towards material realities, and which also include man as one such material reality within their area of subject-matter, the experience of life is an experience of one's fellow men, one in which material objects are encountered as elements connected with, and surrounding concrete persons and not otherwise. Life in its full sense is in the concrete achieved in knowledge and freedom in which the 'I' is always related to a 'Thou', arising at the same moment in the 'Thou' as in the 'I', experiencing itself in all cases only in its encounter with the other person by recognizing itself to be different from that other person, and at the same time by identifying itself with that other person. The original objectivity of the experience of self necessarily takes place in the subjectivity of its encounters with other persons in dialogue, in trustful and loving encounter. Man experiences himself by experiencing the other *person* and not the other *thing*. Man could not achieve a self-withdrawal from a world consisting exclusively in material objects any more than he could from his own body, the concrete experience of which as it *de facto* exists also in fact presupposes an encounter with the physicality of other persons. Self-experience is achieved in the unity between it and the experience of other [127] persons. When the latter is harmoniously achieved, the former succeeds as well. He who fails to discover his neighbour has not truly achieved realization of himself either. He is not in any true sense a concrete subject capable of identifying himself with himself, but at most an abstract philosophical subject, and a man who has lost himself. The subject's experience of himself and of the Thou who encounters him, is one and the same experience under two different aspects, and that too not merely in its abstract formal nature, but in its concrete

[3] For a more detailed treatment this cf. 'The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73, and also *Worte ins Schweigen* (Innsbruck, 11th ed., 1972).

[4] On this cf. 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249; The "Commandment" of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 439-459.

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reality as well, in the degree of success or failure with which it is achieved, in its moral quality as an encounter with the real self and with one's fellow in love or hatred. Thus the concrete relationship of the subject to himself is inextricably dependent upon the factor of how a subject encounters his fellow man. Now assuming all this (though this statement of ours constitutes only a cursory adumbration of it) we can now enquire into a further implication of it, one contained in the doctrine of the bible and the Church, namely that love of God and love of neighbour constitute a unity. In other words it follows I from this Christian doctrine that in view of the fact that on the one hand the experience of God and the experience of self are one, and on the other that the experience of self and the encounter with our neighbour are one, that all these three experiences ultimately constitute a single reality with three aspects mutually conditioning one another. Now this also implies the converse, namely that the unity between love of God and love of neighbour is conceivable only on the assumption that the experience of God and the experience of self are one. The unity which exists between experience of self and experience of God, which at first seemed to be formulated and pointed to in purely philosophical terms, is also an implication of that principle, basic to Christianity, that love of God and love of neighbour are one. We must think of these three relationships of the subject to himself, to God, and to his neighbour, not simply as separate from, and existing side by side with one another like the relationships which a single subject bears to another contingent being which he chances to encounter, or to the subject-matter of *a posteriori* experience. These relationships, on the contrary, are present, as a matter of necessity, all at once, and as mutually conditioning one another, in every act of the subject endowed with intellect and freedom, whatever form this act may assume. Only if we recognize this can we say that the love of neighbour is the fulness of the Law, and that in it the destiny of man as a whole is decided. Only then can we say that man discovers himself or loses himself in his neighbour; that man has already discovered God, even though he may not have any explicit knowledge of it, if only he has truly reached [129] out to his neighbour in an act of unconditional love, and in that neighbour reached out also to his own self. In brief, among many other reasons which might be adduced for the unity of this experience, but which cannot be developed here, there is a theological one too, namely the unity between love of God and love of neighbour. This statement can be maintained in its real and radical significance only if the relationship inherent in every act posited by the subject is extended to God and the neighbour also with the same transcendental necessity as it is to the subject himself, if God and his fellow man (his fellow man in principle and in general, even though this is then concentrated in the concrete other subject whom he encounters as a matter of irreducible contingency in the course of his personal life) constitute not particular factors confined to one area within the total scope of the experience, but are realities present as a matter of transcendental necessity opening up and sustaining the experience in its totality. [5]

III

[5] On attempts to tackle the same question up to 1969 cf. 'Neue Versuche zum Verständnis der Gottesfrage', *Herder Korrespondenz* 23 (1969), pp. 184-189. The fact that this is a burning issue is shown by the copious literature on the question. Here we can give only a few random references, which, nevertheless, could lead to a work of far greater scope and depths: K. H. Weger, 'Gotteserfahrung in der Glaubensnot', *Geist und Leben* 39 (1966), pp. 343-354; Kl. Riesenhuber, *Existenzerfahrung und Religion* (Mainz, 1968); E. Kunz, 'Uberlegungen zur Gotteserkenntnis', *Geist und Leben* 41 (1969), pp. 86-101; idem, 'Wie kann Gott vom Glaubenden erfahren werden?', *ibid*., pp. 421-431; W. Kasper, 'Möglichkeiten der Gotteserfahrung heute', *ibid*., pp. 329-349 R. Egenter, 'Praeambulum fidei. Eine Uberlegung zum christlichen Gotteserlebnis heute', *StdZ* 185 (1970), pp. 18-26; E. Kunz, *Christentum ohne Gott*? (Frankfurt, 1971); E. Coreth, 'Weltverständnis und Gottesverständnis', *Atheismus kritsch betrachtet*, E. Coreth and J. B. Lotz edd. (Freiburg and Munich, 1971).

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A further point, following from what we have said, is that the personal history of the experience of self is in its total extent the history of the ultimate experience of God itself also. The history of knowledge of God at the consciously explicitated level is merely one particular and secondary element in this. But once we go beyond considering the unity of the experience of the self in formal and abstract terms and consider it is its concrete reality, it becomes in itself an anthropological problem of the utmost obscurity. For, in accordance with our basic thesis, it must also have its effect upon the history of the experience of God and its unity. The true and full unity of the history of the experience of self cannot consist [130] merely in the fact that the subject endowed with spiritual faculties experiences himself at every moment in his self-realization as 'subject to time', i.e. as in the abstract orientated towards past and future in general. The unity of the concrete history of the experience of self to which we refer – in other words, therefore, the enduring possession of one's own personal history – cannot have its basis solely in what we call, in a popular and superficial sense, our memory. This cannot be the case seeing that then there would no longer be any abiding unity in the history of the experience of the self, any identity of the subject with his own past in relation to the earlier occurrences in his life. This remains true even though we do not overlook the fact that the potential memory as upheld by the material organism in man (the 'brain') is far greater than the total range of items which we can actualize from it at will. For only if this potential memory in man were present in every part of the material organism in itself alone (in a way similar to that in which the genetic code is present in every cell of the organism), something which it seems impossible to accept, could we think of the identity of the subject with his own past history of experience of the self, and thereby the unity of this history, as having its basis solely in this potential memory. This unity of the history of the experience of self, and the abiding identity of the subject with it, does not in any sense need in principle to be extended to all and every occurrence which has actually taken place in physical concrete fact in such a history. This is something which can never be demanded of a philosophy of the material as such, even abstracting from the question of whether a factor in the history of an individual can and must also have a permanence which cannot be lost even when it has never entered his awareness. A real state of belonging to the past is inherent in the material as such if it is regarded purely in itself, and to the extent that in viewing it in this way we really do see something which objectively belongs to it in itself. To that extent we can confidently conclude that there can be occurrences in man's history of experiencing himself too, which at least as such totally disappear, as such no longer exist, with the result that it would be totally impossible and meaningless to assert any abiding identity of the subject with them. There is a further question, namely, over and above what we have said, how the unity of the history of the experience of self, the abiding nature of this history, and the identification of the subject with his own history, should be thought of in further detail as *prior to* the freedom inherent in this history. But this is a question with which we shall not concern ourselves any further in the present context.

But there is a further and special question to which we must draw [131] attention, that namely of how the unity of this history of the experience of self is to be conceived of if, and to the extent that, it constitutes a history of freedom, in other words of the free self-interpretation of man. For this question is of special importance in its bearing upon the unity of the history of the experience of God. The freedom in which the history of the experience of self is achieved cannot, it is true, eliminate the identity of man with his own past history, in other words a unity of the history of his experience of self which is not subject to man's own decision. In other words in the decree posited by human freedom man cannot so detach himself from his former history that this no longer affects him in any way whatsoever, even if this freedom of the past (in 'conversion', as repentance, or even as guilt) can undergo very real re-interpretations. Nevertheless freedom does introduce certain radical caesuras into the

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abiding unity of any such history of understanding of the self or experience of the self. So long as the single personal history of freedom belonging to the individual man endures, it is exposed, for all the unity and permanence inherent in it, to the constant possibility of fresh interpretation through the exercise of man's own freedom. At any moment in the here and now past history may be rendered present through the freedom of man in the form of a free identification of the subject with it, in the form of explicit rejection of it, in the form of unconscious yet free suppression of it, in the form of culpable and lying re-interpretation, and so on. This is all a line of argument that cannot be further developed here. But in the light of our basic thesis it is immediately clear that in saying this we are also saying something of decisive importance about the history of the ultimate and basic experience of God, when we conceive of this not at the abstract and formal level but in its concrete reality. The history of the experience of self, i.e. of man's interpretation of himself as achieved in freedom, is *eo ipso* the history of his experience of God as well, and *vice versa*. The destruction of false idols, the act of attaining, or failing to attain, a state of transcendence over all reality definable in terms of particular categories and also reality as the necessary starting-point for our knowledge of God, extending up to the Mystery which is beyond all our conceiving or achieving, man's surrender of himself, constant yet ever renewed, to the inconceivable God, or the refusal of such surrender in a lying self-sufficiency – these and many other episodes in the history of the experience of God are *eo ipso* events directly belonging to the history of the experience of the self as such as well and *vice versa*.

A complete and exact table might be drawn up of the correspondences between the one history and the other, because what is in question here is [132] simply two aspects of one and the same history of experience. Such a table, which it is of course impossible to set forth here, would be very necessary precisely today. For in this way it might be possible for modern man, for whom all explicit statements about God fall all too easily under ideological distrust, to have it brought home to him that whether he wants it or not, in the changing history of his relationship with himself (whether in trustful acceptance of himself in loss of identity, in hatred towards himself, in love for his fellow man, and only in this for himself, despite all his sceptical experience of the fragility and unreliability of finite man etc.) that he has all along been living through a history of his experience of God. With such a table it would be possible constantly to translate and describe an anthropology at the existential level and also in concrete human life, primarily in the form of teaching about the experience of God and *ipso facto* in this in a theology. It could be shown that in the history of experience of the self the experience of the loss of identity (to the extent and in the manner in which such a thing is possible, since in fact even that which is lost still always remains present in its own way) is also (in the same sense and with the same provisos) a loss of the experience of God or the refusal to accept the abiding experience of God.

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[133]

9

DOES TRADITIONAL THEOLOGY REPRESENT GUILT AS INNOCUOUS AS A FACTOR IN HUMAN LIFE?

Nowadays an attempt is being made to unmask the problem of guilt, and to show that in reality it is an apparent, rather than a real, problem.[1] In the present context no attempt will be made either to set forth or to analyze the lines of argument for this process of unmasking the problem which are usually followed today. Again there is a question which in itself is of the utmost interest (and, moreover, one which has hardly been considered within theology itself), namely this: on the *hypothesis* that these unmasking processes are in fact justified, would it not be *quite impossible* for any such phenomenon as guilt to exist at all – in other words do not the arguments put forward in these attempts to show guilt to be an unreal problem prove simply *too much* about something that is a basic phenomenon of human life, and therefore is it not quite impossible for them to be correct, seeing that on any serious view they are wholly incapable of going on to explain how any such 'apparent problems' can arise at all? But the question which we are posing here is both [134] different from, and far more unusual than these. It is a question of whether attempts at showing that guilt is in reality an innocuous phenomenon in this sense are not to be found within classic Christian theology as well, even though it itself is not fully aware of the fact.

At first sight the thesis does not seem a particularly reasonable one. In reply to it it might straightway be objected that it would be impossible for any such attempts seriously to be made within Christian theology. After all Christianity is a religion of Redemption, and is rooted in an event in which the real guilt incurred by man's acts, and from which he cannot escape, is removed by the deed of God alone, So true is it, in fact, that Christianity is the religion which views man as radically subject to guilt, to malice and not merely to evil, that it would have to abandon its own essential nature if it sought itself to deny the reality of malice or in any sense to unmask it as an apparent, rather than a real, problem. Yet the matter is not so simple, if only because of the following factor: there is always a difference between living practical devotion (which invariably includes some elements of which we are not fully aware), and a fully reflexive theology. And because of this difference even when theories are put forward by the upholders of this devotion tending to suggest that guilt is unreal, there is a stage at which such theories are not yet perceived to have this implication. Later, however (after a long period during which they have been at least tolerated by the Church's authorities), such theories can have a devastating effect in the concrete living practice, the devotion, and the life of the Church. In fact such theories have already been taking effect over a long period in contexts outside the Christianity of the Church (for secular heresies can be

[1] The problem of evil, sin, and guilt has been approached in recent times from the most diverse aspects. The following bibliography is intended merely to give some indication of this multiplicity, and so at least provide some idea of the background against which the essay which follows has to be viewed. B. Welte, *Über das Böse*, Quaestiones Disputatae 6 (Freiburg, 1958); H. Boelaers, 'Ist jede schwere Sünde eine Todsünde?', *Theol. der Gegenwart* 3 (1963), pp. 142-148; K. Lorenz, *On Aggression* (trans. by M. Latzke, London, 1966); K. Rahner, 'Guilt and Its Remission: the Borderland Between Theology and Psychotherapy', *Theological Investigations* II (London, 1963), pp. 265-282; P. Schoonenberg, *Theologie der Sünde* (Einsiedeln, 1966); M. Adam, *Le sentiment du péché*, Etude de psychologie (Paris, 1967); B. Schüller, 'Todsünde – Sünde zum Tod?', *Theologie und Philosophie* 42 (1967), pp. 321-340; K. Hemmerle, 'Evil', *Sacramentum Mundi* II (London and New York, 1968), pp. 279-283 (with bibliography); K. E. O'Shea, 'The Reality of Sin; A Theological and Pastoral Critique', *Theol. Studies* 29 (1968), pp. 241-259 M. Oraison, *Was ist Sünde*? (Frankfurt, 1968); F. Böckle, 'Das Problem der Sünde', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* IV (Freiburg, 1969), pp. 115-127.

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the logical and open outcome in radical form of heresies that secretly propagate themselves within the Church).

In this sense, therefore, the theme we have put forward may perhaps repay consideration after all. But our consideration of it will *not* proceed from the tacit assumption that such heretical views secretly propagating themselves, in which malice is regarded as apparent rather than real, certainly *do* exist in the theology of the Church. Throughout our investigation we shall fully be taking into account the possibility that the classical theology of the schoolmen may in itself turn out to be (in a positive sense) more penetrating than the average feeling of the 'devotees' in the Church, and may actually have undertaken a justified 'demythologizing' of ideas of guilt which, as they exist in the average practice of the Church, have never ceased to contain a strongly 'mythical' element. Obviously it is impossible, in brief considerations of this kind, to provide [136] a record of the history of theology involved. All that we can do is to offer a few very basic reflections on what we actually find in the average outlook of the official theology of today.

It seems to me that any considerations we may put forward on the theme we have defined involve one basic difficulty: that the 'factor' being pointed to in the thesis we are seeking to defend is itself precisely lacking in clarity. What is guilt? Under what circumstances is guilt 'rendered innocuous'? Under what circumstances is its 'character as absolute' threatened or overlooked? It is relatively easy to counter any *modern* attempts to 'do away with' guilt by pointing out that once a relationship to that which is called God, freely entered into by man, is declared by the 'enlightened' to be a misconception (whether on positivist, sociological, existential, or any other grounds) it is evident that there is no such thing as 'guilt' in the sense upheld by Christianity and the Church. And conversely the fact that Christians do dispute this 'declaration by the enlightened' is itself an argument in support of the proposition that there is such a thing as guilt, something which actually *exists*, from which man does not liberate himself of his own resources (in the form either of enlightenment or progress), something which, on the contrary, if it can be removed from man *at all*, is removed by being forgiven him. Admittedly in any such argument in defence of the reality of guilt, in which we contest the assumption on which the opponent of guilt bases his case, we must not overlook the fact that in any intellectual position as it exists in the concrete the proposition we 'assume' as our basis is already conditioned by the conclusion we feel justified in drawing from it. To put it in concrete terms, we shall hardly be in a position to understand what is meant by God without freely accepting the attitude that guilt is possible.

But how are we to take the field against the outlook which we presume to exist *within Christianity itself* and which regards guilt as unreal? Nowhere here do we find any denial either of God or of the existence of a possible guilt in his sight (which at least to this extent has a certain absolute character). What, therefore, is there to contest, apart, perhaps, from a few theologumena of the official theology which do not in any sense touch upon the Christian attitude to guilt as it really exists in the concrete? Admittedly the opposite might equally well be the case. The doctrine of guilt which, taken as a whole, is orthodox, might be the façade behind which lies concealed an attitude of unbelief towards guilt which, though unexplicitated, is nonetheless a real factor in 'concrete life'. (Who nowadays is still subject to the '*Angst*' of going to hell?) Is it perhaps possible that precisely *this* unbelief could betray itself through this or that detail [136] in the orthodox teaching (if we were, so to say, to lay this teaching on the psychoanalyst's couch and pay rather closer attention to the remarks thrown up from time to time in what it then had to say)? Or again, this orthodox teaching might be subjected to questioning with regard to such details in it by those who feel a certain astonishment and doubt, and who would like to ask it why, as a matter of concrete living practice, it has become so ineffective nowadays, and whether the underlying reasons for this might not, after all, be discovered within itself.

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Our line of investigation will be as follows: we shall draw elements from certain theories, the orthodoxy of which has either been recognized in officially accepted theology, or at any rate not disputed. With the help of these we shall attempt to present an argument against 'guilt feelings' or in support of the 'demythologizing' of guilt. Thus we shall produce an 'enlightened explanation' of guilt which (at least to all outward appearances) is drawn from within theology itself yet which, when pressed to its radical conclusions, *must* be pronounced false when it is submitted to the judgement of the Christian conscience. In this way we shall be able to see what consequences follow (at least incipiently) from pressing a genuine theology of guilt to its radical conclusion in this way, or what context such a theology of guilt must be viewed in in order to find an interpretation for it such that we do not have to regard it as a false demythologizing of guilt.

The line of argument adopted in a Christian case for the defence of this kind, supporting the utmost possible exculpation of man, might run as follows: there is no guilt or, if this sounds too imprudent and heretical, guilt is a 'peripheral concept' in the sense that in practice it does not arise or (to put it still more prudently) not in any notable degree or one which is relevant to the world and history as a whole. Rather it is something which, for various reasons (of which we shall have to speak at a later stage) cannot totally be eliminated from human awareness as an idea, a threat, a stimulus, even though the 'poison' of this idea should be used for purposes of a psychological and social hygiene with the utmost prudence and (quite otherwise than in former times) in the very mildest doses. This is the basic thesis put forward in this case for the defence.

What we mean by 'guilt' here is an (*in se*) definitive state into which man enters of his own freedom, and of which he cannot rid himself of his own resources, yet which sets him in contradiction to his own nature as a whole and (thereby) to God and to the relationship which in itself he has decided to bear to man. This state of contradiction is such that it leads to the final and definitive 'perdition' of man as a whole (or alternatively [137] actually *constitutes* this perdition). It is as a (fictitious) argument in support of this conception of guilt, therefore, that we have put forward the above thesis.

The first point: we are here assuming the existence of freedom (in a psychologically indeterminate sense), but such freedom is finite. This is a point which the theologian is least of all in a position to deny. But what this finitude of freedom implies in terms of content is becoming clearer today than it formerly was, and the moral theologian nowadays takes this factor freely into account. He recognizes the physiological, psychological, and social factors which condition the choice that is made within the scope of finite freedom. Man as he *de facto* exists is restricted in his knowledge by these conditioning factors, so that only a finite number of objects[2] is open to him to choose from. It is perfectly conceivable – indeed more that probable – that this limited number of options which it is open to him to know and freely to choose from, is in turn far more restricted by the following circumstance. It is very far from being the case that all the objects impinging in any way upon the awareness of the individual within the total scope of his conscious awareness are *ipso facto* so 'attractive' to him that they are capable in any real sense of constituting genuine objects of choice. Now in no concrete individual case (whether by the individual concerned reflecting upon himself or by external observation) is it possible to establish in the concrete with any certainty whether precisely in the *concrete* case this extremely restricted finite number of objects of choice available on any given occasion include among them that which constitutes the '*objective*' good (that which is willed by God). This is something which cannot naïvely be taken for

[2] Here of course we are speaking only of realities constituting the subject-matter of knowledge and freedom which – as capable of being freely realized – constitute 'options' to the subject endowed with freedom to choose and to decide upon.

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granted without further ado. It is perfectly possible that in specific cases the objects of choice *de facto* available in the concrete include only those which are objectively bad. Even then the individual will regard one such object of choice as the 'better' one, i.e. as constituting the better choice in comparison with some other possible object from this or that point of view. Again, it is still possible to say in such a case that someone has the moral duty to choose the lesser evil in preference to the greater. But this does not alter the fact that in such cases something which, objectively speaking, does constitute an evil course will be taken in virtue of the fact that in the concrete the individual concerned has no real objective good within his purview. And again it is extremely questionable whether in such a case in [138] the concrete that which constitutes the lesser evil is so distinctive and so important that a moral significance is to be attached to the act of preferring it to all other options. Now if this is so then is the individual really 'responsible' in such cases as these? Can something significant really be taking place here? And even supposing that an 'objective' good is recognized as possible (obviously this is the case in unnumerable instances) still in the concrete instance it remains open whether the individual can freely choose it or whether it is present merely as an object of a 'choice' which is already predetermined (from a physiological, psychological, or sociological aspect). The same applies *a fortiori* to something that is recognized as evil. In each concrete instance it remains open to question whether a particular option is present to the individual's awareness at all, whether it is present in its moral relevance precisely as *evil*, and whether as it exists in the concrete (as evil) it is present to the individual as a real object of free choice. It might be argued that after all the question of whether this or that specific object of choice is present to the individual's awareness, and is chosen by him in freedom, is something that can be established beyond doubt simply enough by a straightforward act of self-introspection. But to this we would have to reply that a free choice of one specific *individual* object at a level beyond all doubt, and as present to the subject's awareness as something actually *reflected* upon by him, is something that we precisely do *not* have. The individual act of freedom as such, and precisely as an *individual* act, is not a direct datum of the individual's awareness, if only for this reason: the fact that no determinative motive (object of choice) is present precisely *so far as* the subject's own objectifying and reflexive awareness is concerned is still not in itself any proof that no such motive exists. It may still be present and effective even though the subject has not objectified it to himself or reflected upon it. (The philosophically valid 'proof' of the existence of freedom can and must be established in a quite different way, and one which we shall not be entering into here. For this proof we do not need to rely upon the *individual* act of freedom as such, and as directly present to the subject's awareness as such. Hence in order to prove the existence of freedom we do not have to be able to assert that freedom, together with a specific moral value, is certainly present in any one *particular* act.) At basis all this is theologically clear. If it were indeed the case that by a simple process of self-reflection (subsequently and finally reinforced by the observations of another too) it were possible to establish the free character and (thereby) the moral quality of a given act with complete certainty, then we would likewise be able to achieve complete certainty about our relationship with [139] God in each concrete individual case with regard to our 'state' of justification or mortal sin (which, as we are told, we incur only when in possession of clear knowledge and full freedom). And a knowledge of this kind is precisely what we do not have. The genuine Christian attitude towards God forbids us to seek a completely sure and fully conscious knowledge of precisely *how* we stand in God's sight. It prescribes that we shall endure, in a spirit of hope and not otherwise, the uncertainty to which our reflections upon our interior state are subject, even as, in the non-reflective movement of the practical reason (despite the claims of the speculative reason to act as judge), we reach out in hope towards that future which is constituted by the 'compassion' of God. But then we ask precisely, Does not this make guilt an extremely

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questionable phenomenon? Now there is a certain transcendent awareness of freedom prior to the specific individual act of freedom – prior, that is, in a logical and existential sense, not in a temporal one or as immediately preceding it. But whatever the nature of this knowledge may be, and while recognizing that the question of guilt or lack of guilt is in all concrete cases insoluble, we do hold that *every* Christian must from the first, without 'judging' himself, flee from himself in a spirit of hope in God's compassion; in fact that *every* individual must capitulate before God as *simul justus et peccator* (a formula which retains its justification and its truth throughout the *whole* of Christendom and beyond all theological controversies and differences of opinion). Now if this is true then is not the question of guilt in the concrete individual case (guilt, let us note, in the theological, and not the' civil' sense), if not actually eliminated, at least left behind from the very outset? On this showing is not guilt reduced to a mere peripheral concept (again in a theological and not in a civil sense), seeing that *every individual* can and must take into account guilt of this kind at the unreflecting level, and *every individual* can and must hope for forgiveness to the extent that it really is guilt in God's sight that is in question and not some deed in which he had transgressed the laws of this world and can be called to account by the civil authorities?

Can we not go further and say that the biblical doctrine of the punishment of hell (as presented in the literary *genre* known as the 'threatening sayings') are *nowadays* so conceived of that, while they do indeed express a real *possibility*, they tell us nothing as to whether this final and definitive perdition will truly be realized as a matter of historical fact. It might of course be objected that regarded as a hope in the concrete conditions of human living rather than as a theoretical statement, this does not rule out the *de facto* incurring of grave guilt (but only its final and definitive [140] outcome). But in reply we in turn might put the question of whether on this showing too such guilt is not rendered innocuous, seeing that it is 'in principle' denied that it will ever arrive at this definitive outcome (even though this is based on the universality of *hope* and not on any theological principles of the theoretical reason). The question might be raised of what kind of 'possibility' (of eternal loss) this really is, seeing that on the one hand it must be something seriously to be taken into account by man (with the seriousness due to something that affects his entire existence), and which he has to, and indeed must, resist with the no less total and radical resolution of his hope. Is not the situation really that this hope, which is asserted to be so radical and universal (and unless it is this can it be the theological virtue of hope?) has the function of unmasking the 'guilt' in the world (not at the theoretical level but in the concrete practice of life) as a mere façade[3] – something, precisely, which is invariably overcome by hope? Must it not be unmasked as an apparent hopelessness in which we suppose that we know for certain precisely *that* in many cases history does, despite all, end in the radical contradiction of perdition, a perdition which, nevertheless is, when viewed in the true light of hope, meaningless even in relation to God? For he certainly has no need of this in order to manifest his 'righteousness', as an officially approved seminary theology, prevalent in many Christian denominations, impertinently believes that it can recognize (though it cannot invoke the support of Scripture for this, seeing that for Scripture such a revelation is merely the means of revealing *grace*, and that in the case supposed it would cease to have this function). Nor yet should we say that freedom in relation to God can only exist if guilt also exists as really incurred in God's sight. This is in fact often asserted in a popular apologetics of God's 'right' to 'tolerate' guilt. But ultimately speaking it is in contradiction to the basic conviction of all theological schools in Christendom, all of which are convinced that God can, in all cases without exception, of

[3] What we mean here is a 'transcendental' appearance which is constantly there, and therefore has constantly to be overcome. But we do not mean a misunderstanding to be removed once and for all by explanations, so that it finally and definitely ceases as soon as we become a little more enlightened.

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himself predestine the goodness of the creature as *free*, if he wills it so, *without* thereby inhibiting the freedom and responsibility of the creature endowed with intellect and will. Now if this is correct, then it becomes difficult, to say the least, to understand what real (as distinct from merely verbal) distinction should then seriously be drawn between a mere 'tolerating' of freely committed evil (if we are to regard this as really existing!) on God's part and an actual [141] 'willing' of moral goodness and of finite evil in the non-moral sense within the world. For must we not in all honesty say that to 'tolerate' something is actually to 'will' it if it is within one's power to prevent it, and that too without inhibiting the quality of freedom inherent in the action involved? Let us consider the various theories of the traditional theological schools with regard to the relationship between God and human freedom. Where here do we find any real distinction between tolerating and willing, seeing that the entire concrete reality of the human act is also actively brought about by God? Furthermore, let us consider the negative element in this positive and real act. Where do we find any room for a distinction between 'tolerating' and 'willing' here, seeing that the only way in which this negative element can exist is *in virtue* of the concrete causality of this positive element, seeing that the free act of the man willing this negative element, considered in its positivity as an act, also comes into being only in virtue of an active collaboration on God's part? And the question which then arises is whether the impossibility of this distinction between 'tolerating' and 'willing' which then imposes itself so strongly does not after all permit us to conclude that an evil presumed to be radical is in reality merely an evil which God is capable of willing in, and in collaboration with, a finite world.

But from other aspects too the question can be posed of whether traditional theology does not engage in something like an argument designed to deprive guilt of its force. What we mean is the doctrine that the formal evil of guilt is something 'privative', a privation of being. This is the principle which Augustine used successfully in order to overcome Manichaeism. And this thesis has continued to belong to the common stock of Catholic theology right down to the present day. But do the devout take this thesis seriously, and conversely, if this thesis is in fact taken seriously (i.e. not merely invoked when questions of theodicy arise, but rather accorded an integral place in our conception of guilt as a factor in our concrete lives), does guilt still continue to be guilt? There are certain questions which, though they are certainly not easy to answer, must be wholly set on one side here. The questions namely of what a 'privatio' really and precisely is in ontological and ontic terms, inasmuch as it is different from a simple state of non-being. And even if we recognize this distinction as valid beyond doubt, and take it with all due seriousness (the state of 'having been robbed' cannot as such simply be nothing), still there is a further question with regard to the thesis of the non-being of *malitia formalis*: whether its ostensible meaning does not conceal a further underlying intention with regard to God and his [142] collaborating with the action of his creature. Since on any showing God does actively collaborate at that point at which the distinction between mere non-being and '*privatio*' is constituted as real, an explanation must be found, so it is felt, in which we do not have to attribute to God and his 'active collaboration' with his creature in its action the causing of the evil which the creature commits. In any case, however, in order not to attribute this to God by upholding the thesis of the non-being of *malitia formalis*, we would have to raise a further question with regard to the real and positive action causing some deficiency which should not be the case to be produced from something which should be the case through something which has been brought about (whether an act or the outcome of an act). The question is, therefore, whether this real and positive action is nothing but good, or whether it itself is *ipso facto* morally evil because of what it brings about. In the first case the whole matter becomes totally incomprehensible. Something that is good and nothing more brings about something that is morally evil. In the second case the whole question recurs afresh unresolved. On this showing, then, two

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conclusions may be reached with regard to the thesis itself: It may be (a) an instance of a wrongly applied conceptual model. We recognize the possibility of something that is good in a pre-moral sense yet which might be better. It lacks some further goodness which we can imagine, but which does not belong to it as a reality, as 'existing', though this does not mean that even without it the thing concerned is evil. Now we apply this conceptual model to the question of moral evil. The 'deficiency' then seems to constitute a mere 'non-being' in this case also. But we are overlooking the fact that on this showing only two alternatives are open to us with regard to the moral evil: *either* it too is as innocuous as the lack of some further goodness in the original conceptual model, *or* the true evil lies in the objective origins of this deficiency and the question arises afresh. We may, however, take a *second* line of argument: (b) basically speaking, all that we intend to assert in this thesis is that when a free creature uses its freedom to act culpably it cannot on this account make God *ipso facto* responsible for its deed on the grounds that he sustains and causes all that exists. And this remains true even though this thesis does not *explain* why we cannot make God responsible for our faults in this way. With regard to this thesis, all that we are doing is (rightly) to maintain that God's effective activity is present all-pervasively throughout the whole of existence. But even if the thesis is taken in this sense, i.e. as having the function not of explaining evil but merely of maintaining its reality, a further question which can then be raised is whether there can still be any place for evil once we recognize [143] this all-pervasive effectiveness of God's act which brings about everything that exists, and at the same time assigns everything its due limits and boundaries. The situation seems to be such that we must either hold a theism which reduces evil to unreality in view of the all-pervasiveness of God's effective activity, or (conversely) we are driven to a position of hypothetical atheism in order to maintain the reality of evil as a radical factor in existence. Evil seems no longer to be evil if it can be tolerated by a God of absolute moral perfection, even though he can prevent it and, moreover (a point which we have already made and which needs to be carefully noticed!), without withdrawing or diminishing creaturely freedom. For according to all Catholic theories of grace and freedom genuine freedom is both freedom in the fullest sense and at the same time absolutely under God's disposing power (whether through a *praemotio physica* or by way of *scientia media*). It might be rejoined that what has just been said means merely that God himself has a radical attitude towards evil proper to *him* alone, such that, if the creature were to claim it for himself, this would imply the absolute presumption of claiming to be God, and further that this distinction between the two attitudes (of God and of the creature) towards evil is simply a further explicitation, application, and radicalization of the absolute difference which prevails between God and the creature, between his and our attitudes to everything whatsoever (being, time, individual reality etc.). But to this we in turn might reply: precisely this statement in fact confirms that what we are stating about evil is stated with reference to *ourselves*, and not to God. In other words, evil is radically evil in this sense only because, and to the extent that it is related to ourselves, who are finite, whereas in its relation to God evil is precisely *not* as evil as this. But if this is true then who can really prevent the creature from knowing precisely this (it actually asserts it!), and thereby ascribing to evil a relative status in relation to itself as well, placing itself in the position of God (there is in fact some echo of this even in Rom. 6: 1) first at the theoretical level and then at the practical level too. i.e. in practice how can we still be afraid when we know that through the evil which we do we are playing a part which fits perfectly into the total symphony which God conducts, at least from his point of view, and which at least to *his* ears sounds sweet? For does not traditional theology from Paul onwards maintain that God, at least so far as he is concerned, is able to use the evil to initiate something, e.g. he can use it as the prior condition for his grace, for the revelation of his righteousness etc.? With regard to the creature endowed with intellect and will who is able to make this assertion, how can he still be afraid for himself, seeing [144]

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that after all it is actually asserted that through evil God has performed a kindness? How can evil still be evil in any effective sense?

To this line of argument Paul has only one reply: μη_ γε&νοιτο (Rom. 6:1). But we still do not find any arguments supporting this disclaimer in his writings. But what arguments can be found on which to base it? Is it enough to say this: Constituting as he does a finite spirit which is, nevertheless, open to the infinite, man is precisely such that he knows about God (and therefore too about that relationship to evil which is unique to himself) and nevertheless (nevertheless!) precisely as such man is *not* God (and so too does not have the same relationship to evil as God has)? Is this answer enough? Is it enough precisely in view of the fact that after all in traditional theology we regard our relationship to evil (if it is a correct one) precisely as a unilinear extension and reproduction of the relationship which God has to evil? If we have to say that we ourselves can have a less 'relativist' relationship to evil than God has (and this is really what is said by Paul and by traditional theology when it recognizes that God can tolerate evil in order to reveal his justice and his mercy), can we then still really maintain the reality of this knowledge if the state of affairs which is expressed here not only exists but is also precisely something of which we ourselves are aware? Does not the fact that we are aware of it at basis reduce evil to unreality? And when a man does evil is he not acting upon this ultimate reduction of evil to unreality when he – so it seems – does evil in the awareness that there is an ultimate reasonableness in so acting? It can still only have a good outcome.

The way in which traditional theology tends to represent evil as innocuous – of course always clean contrary to its own real intention – can be viewed from a completely different aspect. Has it ever occurred to the exponents of this theology to be surprised at the fact that they are ascribing to God the power of forgiving and removing evil? Should not the very, first point to be recognized be that the very nature of human freedom is such that in all cases once a free agent takes a decision, if and to the extent that his freedom is fully exercised in arriving at it, the only way in which it can be rescinded is by himself, always provided that this process of a free decision rescinding a free decision is not itself in turn contrary to the very nature of human freedom as a finite created entity? Tradition theology finds an easy way of answering this question by saying that obviously the agent endowed with finite freedom must himself be converted and 'repent', otherwise any divine forgiveness is of its very nature impossible (incidentally even in this statement we can see that tradition theology is wavering in that to some extent it regards this proposition as [145] valid merely at the *de facto* level, and not as something that necessarily follows from the very nature of freedom itself). But if the free agent himself must be converted in order to remove the evil he has done, why then is there any need for a distinct and separate act of divine forgiveness? Why can this conversion take place only during earthly life, before or at the moment of death? Can we find an answer to the first question by invoking the example of an injured party who must of his own initiative grant forgiveness even when the offender from his side decides not to continue his offence? For we can at least ask whether an offence against God still continues to be such, and therefore requires to be forgiven by him, when man, by his repentance, removes the offence which (*ex supposito*) he has committed against God. Those who wish to protest against this general line of argument must allow the question to be put to them of whether they are not falsely transferring from the conceptual model, and introducing into the theological consideration, a concept of time and certain social factors (unconnected with man's intrinsic make-up) which basically speaking either assert or tacitly assume that the offence against God is, as a free act of man, finally and definitively posited and so in itself definitive and irremovable in the sense that it can be removed only by God (precisely *as* God and not merely as any sort of injured party) for reasons which are quite beyond our conception (and through resources which belong only to God as God), and moreover

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precisely *in that* he extends to man the possibility of repentance. And the only way of avoiding an extremely anthropomorphic and decretorial way of thinking about God is to deepen our theology even of biological death, unless we are willing to accept the doctrine of the transmigration of souls as providing a conception of man's moral development and of the history of freedom leading to a final and definitive state as more in accordance with God's nature, the more so since in fact any transmigration of souls must be conceived of as a never-ending process. In the light of these two questions alone it seems that it is only with great difficulty that we can arrive at a position which really lies *between* asserting that every radical exercise of freedom is absolute and definitive on the one hand, and asserting that every particular fault is simply provisional and to be regarded as a stage which man both can and should pass beyond in his moral development on the other.

Whatever position may in fact be adopted on these two questions, which are far from easy to answer, a further question which must in any case be raised is whether God really can remove evil by an act of forgiveness. This is all too easily assumed to be obvious. Any genuine and radical phenomenology of the human awareness of guilt both can and must bring [146] out clearly the experience of the radical inescapability of guilt. It can and must show how real guilt is experienced as that which can no longer be made good (once there has been any effective betrayal of love how can the former position be restored? etc.). God would, therefore, precisely *per definitionem*, have to be *postulated* as he who can in some sense remove an irremovable and inescapable guilt of this kind despite its irremovability. (We may conceive of him either as one who simply adds his forgiveness to the sinner's repentance or as one who alone can make such repentance possible.) In recognizing the phenomenon of guilt and in hoping that it can, in spite of all, be removed, we must not simply take God for granted, but reach out to him, rather, as the factor which makes it possible to have such hope at all. Can we not say that in this respect too traditional theology tends to render the phenomenon of guilt innocuous, seeing that it takes the possibility of its forgiveness far too much for granted?

Let us approach the problems indicated above of regarding evil as a '*privatio*' in a somewhat different form. For the same reasons as those which prompt it to conceive of evil as *privatio*, traditional theology lays down that evil can be willed only *sub ratione boni*. All evil-doing, therefore, in the concrete conditions of human life, takes place, according to this doctrine, as the outcome of a transcendental willing of the good as such and in general to the extent that the impulse of the human spirit towards good in general takes effect through the medium of the specific concrete exercise of knowledge and freedom (in the form of a concrete free decision), and is prompted by some finite (or conceived to be finite) particular good which precisely should not be aimed at here and now and in the particular circumstances in which it occurs, since to do so constitutes a denial of some higher concrete particular good which should be aimed at here and now, and thereby constitutes a voluntary denial of that good at the universal level and as a whole which we must constantly strive for as a matter of necessity. The will to the good, therefore, is present and active in all human actions, even those in which evil is done. And to the extent that this will to good in general and as a whole is still being exercised even in the free act which is directed towards some concrete particular good or evil (or one conceived of at this level), this will to the good in general and as a whole always still remains a free will. On this basis the evil is properly speaking only a certain misconception (if it exists at all) in the process taking place at the concrete particular level by which the free will to the good as such, for blessedness as such (considered in its formal structure) is mediated. If evil is conceived of somewhat along these lines is it so evil? On this showing is it not *ipso facto* constantly being corrected by the [147] fact that further effects follow from man's striving in any given case through the necessary alterations in living situations necessarily imposed upon the individual, which make it quite

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impossible for him to hold firm to this or that particular good (which in the concrete circumstances is interpreted as evil)? Does not life gently withdraw from man that which he eagerly seeks to retain ('But only wait . . .'), and does not man himself in the end (at latest in the moment of death) willingly relinquish that which is thus withdrawn from him, that which, if he either could or would cling fast to it and finally and definitively opt for, could be called evil? Of course we can put forward the postulate that even while ultimately and definitively protesting against something, a man can still use his freedom to cling onto it, and that it is precisely through this that he is brought to a final and definitive state of inner conflict in which he is torn between two goals, that which as free he clings onto obstinately, and that which constitutes his true good. But is it probable that this in fact often happens, in view of the infinitely powerful yet gentle pedagogy of death, regarded as man's farewell to every concrete particular good which he has really possessed? And is that particular good, so perversely clung onto in the individual act (so that it comes to be called evil), of such importance in the economy and history of the world when we compare it with the immense multitude of evils which are not the outcome of free acts, and which constitute the major part of human history? In fact we must not exaggerate the significance of guilt (so the argument might run) in order to eliminate such guilt as far as possible from the world, if only because, as it may be presumed, the total amount of evil *de facto* arising from such guilt in a world in which this metaphysical and theological interpretation applies will hardly be smaller than in a world which rejects such an interpretation. At least it will not be diminished within the sphere of actual human experience. The total amount of evil in the world arising from guilt seems to remain more or less constant throughout, in the course of history to vary in the forms it assumes rather than in its degree of intensity, and to be held in check by factors arising from the limited resources of human nature, factors, therefore, belonging to the physical and social, rather than to the moral order in any true sense of the term. On this showing, then, is not the concept of final and definitive evil reduced to a peripheral concept? Is that which we really call evil, and experience to be such, not merely a process in which we are temporarily captivated by some good which loses its hold upon us as we develop further, or which can and must voluntarily be subsumed within an integral order of good in the absolute existing at a higher level?

[148] What then are we to suppose? Are we to say, 'Yes, we must press on in the process of "demythologizing" evil along the same lines as have been sketched out, at least incipiently, in traditional theology'? Are we to say what is in fact said by, or at least ascribed to Teilhard, namely that evil is, after all, the mere manifestation of frictions which arise in the process of cosmic development, which are inevitable and are only 'evil' when we cease to view them as a factor in a broader movement, a factor which is itself precisely overtaken by this movement and so eliminated? Are we to say (which would really amount to the same thing as has just been said, only expressed in theological terms) that the evil consisting in that which is willed by God, and conceived of with a good end in view as a good means of achieving it, is only evil in so far as it is viewed in isolation, and apart from this function which it has of being a means to an end. In God's eyes, however, it precisely does not have this absolute status in any sense, and therefore can perfectly well be willed by him, whereas we confine ourselves to saying that it is merely tolerated by him if and because we view it apart from this reference it has to an ultimate goal. Are we to say that evil is only apparent on the grounds that all creaturely good is finite, and, when willed by man as a promise of the infinite good, always carries with it that appearance of being more than it is in itself? Or conversely that to will it would imply over-valuing it in the sense of stopping short at the creaturely good in itself without recognizing its character as pointing on to something beyond itself? Are we to say this: that it is only within the course of the history of our personal freedom that we can (for the time being) falsely identify a particular good with the absolute good and so evoke the

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appearance of evil, whereas once we have attained the fulness of freedom in the moment of death, and all specific 'this-worldly' goods have passed away, it will be quite impossible for us any longer to will anything except the sheer good in the absolute, and in that sense we shall be liberated in any case from the apparent evil, the appearance of evil? The transcendental appearance of evil will necessarily vanish with death, in which the factors on which such appearance rests themselves disappear. And even if on other grounds we cannot affirm any theory with regard to this redemptive function of death (though as a participation in the death of Christ it need not contradict the doctrine of the Redemption by Christ), still would it not be perfectly possible to hope that death will have this effect at the practical level?

Or do we have to say this: given that it is at least possible to draw these conclusions, and in fact difficult to resist drawing them, from the traditional doctrine of guilt and evil, they show that some false or exaggerated [149] factor must lie concealed in the traditional premises, for these conclusions do follow more or less from the premises concerned, and yet at the same time the Christian conscience, convinced as it is of the radical nature of evil, protests against these conclusions leading to a demythologization of it? But how are we to attack these premises when, after all, they are not only strongly traditional, but seem to be quite inescapable unless we are to make God the cause of guilt or to take the line of Manichaeism or some other dualistic system? Are we to develop an ontology in which the 'reality' of evil is made clearer without thereby falling into a Manichaean dualism or projecting evil into the dimension of God himself?

Presumably – not to develop these points any further – the solution to this entire question must be sought from some different direction, so that we do not have to decide between the two tendencies with which we have been concerned up to now. As a quite general principle is there not, in the individual man and his knowledge, a pluralism of views which is too much for him to overcome, views, therefore, which cannot be brought into harmony in a higher synthesis? In this connection is it actually the case that we cannot even reduce these manifold branches of knowledge of ours, incapable as they are of being synthesized, into a single dialectical synthesis, because even this would still constitute an attempt to overcome their pluralism? If we can give an affirmative answer to this question, then we can go a step further. There are in man two fundamental experiences which provide the basis for two kinds of knowledge, and both are, in a real sense, incapable of being reconciled in a higher synthesis: the experience of the innermost state of being threatened by sin, the experience of the possibility of guilt on the one hand, and the experience of hope in a reality (called God and his grace) which can and will remove this guilt whether as a possibility or as an actuality on the other. These two basic experiences give rise inevitably to different interpretations. But we should not suppose that they are simply to be unified and reduced to a harmony by dialectical methods. This is not possible because both experiences, so far from representing opposite poles within a single order, which still remain static entities, have their place, rather, in a developing personal history of freedom which cannot, in any full or comprehensive sense, be the subject of conscious reflexive examination. It is not the case that everyone has, at every moment in his personal history, the same causes for fear, for trembling, or for hope. The changes in the theory are the necessary consequences of the personal history of both experiences. In those cases in which these experiences are made within the believing community of the Church they are, of course, in some sense brought into [150] a unity and reconciled with one another in their verbal presentation as an impartial dialectical doctrine which avoids all radical one-sidedness. But the moment we look into the matter more closely and examine more closely the terms that are used, it appears precisely that we are far from being able to achieve here a 'reconciliation' of such a kind that now a positive and fully intelligible synthesis is achieved between fear for salvation and hope for salvation. It appears

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that the traditional theory of guilt is really (at least to a predominant extent) a theology of guilt formulated from the standpoint of guilt. This does not mean that, by a process of conscious separation, this awareness of guilt, based on the experience of hope, can precisely be distinguished from the theology of guilt based on the experience of guilt. This is something that we can precisely not do, even though we can recognize that in this traditional theology of guilt an element of salvific optimism must lie concealed which derives not from the knowledge of guilt in itself but from the experience of hope as instilled by grace. We shall even be able to say that the Church neither can nor should develop any other theology of guilt than one of such a kind that hope has a decisive influence upon it if the Church as a whole and as holy is sustained by this hope and must by no means depart from this situation brought about by God. To this extent too it is not surprising that we have never really succeeded in the least in what we have said above in developing a clear counter-position by any truly theological process of reflection to the classic doctrine of guilt, a position which consists in something more than merely dumbly pointing to the experience of guilt itself and as inescapable. Only the classic theology of guilt must always remain aware of the fact that it cannot be an 'objectively' neutral theology of guilt. Rather it itself *ipso facto* includes the idea of Redemption from guilt by God even when it seems to be speaking only of guilt as such. And it must constantly remain aware of the fact that it speaks from this basis, and that it only remains valid provided it retains its openness to that desolation and darkness of guilt of which man too must still remain aware when, in a spirit of hope, he turns from it (as he must) so as to understand guilt in *that particular* light in which it stands when it is viewed in its relation to *God* and not in its relation to man. In guilt a reality is present which can be understood only on the basis of living practice, in which man hopes for something more than that which his theoretic reason can tell him about it. We should affirm the traditional doctrine of guilt in this sense and in no other, namely that, sustained by the grace of God that arises out of guilt, man lives in hope. Otherwise this traditional doctrine would indeed have the effect of representing guilt as innocuous. Otherwise [151] we would be setting ourselves up wickedly and in mortally sinful arrogance so as to adopt the standpoint of God (whereas it is only the hope created by God, and this only in view of the very real existence of guilt, that enables us to adopt this standpoint). The only two courses open to us are either to live in that hope of forgiveness which we accept in freedom, *or* in the despair, freely admitted, to which guilt gives rise (even though we may not consciously advert either to the one attitude or to the other, as in fact we are *incapable* of consciously reflecting upon them in any full sense). We live, then, by either the one or the other basic decision upon which we can never consciously reflect in any full sense. For this reason too we cannot lay bare and examine every possible aspect of it in our theological calculations. And because of this any consciously worked-out theology of guilt must reflect either the one or the other basic decision (together with the process of consciously reflecting upon both attitudes as possible and as attempted). The classic theology of guilt, therefore, will presumably have to be viewed as a conscious reflection upon that hope of forgiveness in which guilt is in principle already overcome by God. For otherwise it would not be able to avoid the suspicion that it was representing guilt as innocuous. This of course is precisely not to say that it is possible for the Christian to develop a theology of guilt in which the factor of hope is eliminated. In theology too we remain those who have been redeemed by God's grace. For even the speculative reason has need of the compassion of God, and it is possible for it to have found this. Now on this showing we should so speak of guilt as the classic theology of guilt speaks of it, *so long as* in doing so we do nor forget the basis from which we speak, and we must make this standpoint from which we speak clear, seeing that freedom and its final and definitive character can be interpreted in a radical sense to the point of becoming a hypothetical atheism (in this way man can be free and this freedom of his can really create something final and definitive). But

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this radical interpretation may give rise to the impression that Christianity is representing human guilt as innocuous, at least in its consciously explicitated theology.

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10

THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF 'WITNESS'

If we take the data of a Christian theology as a basis for an enquiry into the concept of 'witness', then presumably this approach should throw into relief certain special aspects and factors, even though precisely in *this* consideration what we have in mind is not an exegetical investigation but one which is based on dogmatics. Admittedly so far as the question of the nature of witness is concerned the data of a systematic Christian theology are (as will shortly appear) not so much the starting-point from which the enquiry will be conducted as the point to which it will lead up. Nevertheless this will not have any effect on the theological character of the considerations which follow.[1]

[153] It is true that 'witness' is a term which involves an intrinsic reference to someone else. Manifestly, however, it is also a term signifying not the imparting of some other *thing*, but rather that in which someone communicates himself, and, moreover, by the most intense use of his own freedom in so disposing of himself that thereby a corresponding decision is evoked in some other person too.[2] If 'witness' were concerned only with a '*something*', then it would amount merely to a piece of information delivered by an expert on some specific topic, or an eye-witness's account of some occurrence which he had observed. In other words

[1] The theological literature on the concept of 'witness' consists almost exclusively in exegesis and biblical theology (but cf. below K. Hemmerle). Alternatively it is concerned with the question of the difference and connection between the New Testament concept of witness and the idea found in early Christianity and in the Church of 'martyrdom'. Considerations of the concept of witness from the side of systematic theology, therefore, have to be sought in treatises on the theology of the word (on this cf. the author's remarks in the article 'Was ist em Sakrament?', *Schriften zur Theologie* X (Einsiedeln, 1972), pp. 377-391 (to be translated in *Theological Investigations* XIV). While in Protestant theology an extensive literature is available on this, in Catholic theology there is no very wide coverage. Any attempt at supplying a full and precise list would exceed the limits of the present article. Only a few studies may be mentioned, which are directly concerned with the concept of 'witness' itself, and are either especially important, or have been published very recently. Earlier literature is to be found in N. Brox, *Zeuge und Märtyrer.* H. Strathmann, 'μα_ρτυφ', *ThW* IV (Stuttgart, 1942), pp. 477-520; R. Koch, 'Witness', *Encyclopaedia of Biblical Theology* III (London, 1969), J. B. Bauer ed., pp. 976-985; E. Neuhäusler, 'Zeugnis in der Schrift', *LTK* X (Freiburg, 1965), cols. 1361 f.; N. Brox, 'Zeugnis', *HthG* II (Munich, 1963), pp. 903-911; G. Harbsmeier, *Ihr werdet meine Zeugen sein!*, Theol. Existenz Heute 8 (Munich, 1947); K. Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, 2nd ed. (London, 1969); K. H. Rengstorff, *Die Auferstehung Jesu* (Witten, 4th ed., 1960) (Exkurs 3, Zum Begriff des Zeugen im Osterkerygma), pp. 136-145; N. Brox, *Zeuge und Märtyrer. Untersuchungen zur frühchristlichen Zeugnis-Terminologie*, Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament V (Munich, 1961) (Bibliography, pp. 241-243. But the references contain some errors); U. Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der ApG* (Neukirchen, 1961) (The 'Twelve' commissioned to act as witnesses, pp. 144-149); G. Stählin, 'Zum Gebrauch von Beteuerungsformeln im NT', *Novum Testamentum* 5 (1962), pp. 115-145 (The Synoptics and Paul); J. D. M. Derret, 'Law in the New Testament; The Story of the Woman Taken in Adultery', *NTS* 10 (1963), pp. 1-26 (on the juridical aspects of the concept of witness in the New Testament); R. Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesbriefe* (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1963) (Exkurs I: Sinn and Tragweite der 'Zeugen'-Aussagen von 1 Joh. 1:1 ff., pp. 52-58, and Exkurs II: Das Gotteszeugnis und der Glaube, pp. 267-271); H. von Campenhausen, *Die Idee des Martyriums in der Alten Kirche* (Göttingen, 2nd ed., 1964); W. Bieder, *Segnen und Bekennen. Eine biblische und historicche Studie* (Basle, 1965); N. Brox, *Der Glaube als Zeugnis* (Munich, 1966); K. Bornkamm, *Wunder und Zeugnis* (Tübingen, 1968); H. Fries, *Heraufgeforderte Glaube* (Munich, 1968); T. Lippert, *Leben air Zeugnis*, Stuttgarter biblische Monographien 4 (Stuttgart, 1969) (The Pastoral Epistles, I Peter); K. Hemmerle, 'Wahrheit und Zeugnis', *Theologie als Wissenschaft*, Quaest. Disp. 45 (Freiburg, 1970) (Systematic and Philosophical Aspects of 'Witness' in its Bearing on the Question of Truth).

[2] cf. the ideas of the Second Vatican Council on Revelation as self-communication on God's part in 'Dei Verbum', The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation No 2, and the ideas of witness, *ibid.*, No. 3.

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it would amount to evidence in a sense which is (ultimately) forensic. Now all this cannot be what is being referred to in any primary sense – at least not taken in isolation – when we speak of a bearing of witness in a religious sense. In this provisional description of witness we have not yet arrived at a stage at which it makes any notable difference whether or not we have already brought out with sufficient clarity that which constitutes the formal specification (the specific difference) of witness. Thus we are aware that our description might, in an extreme case, also be applied to functions of the human person which do not properly constitute witness, as, for instance, a totally committed love for another.

We are assuming straightway that the real factors included in this provisional description of witness do *de facto* exist: a man endowed with freedom and having power over his own self; the possibility of disposing [154] of himself in an ultimate and 'absolute' sense so far as the concrete conditions of human life are concerned (or at least the power to attempt this in the hope that at any rate within the course of a lifetime the man concerned will actually succeed in achieving it); the significance of an ultimate understanding of himself in freedom for some other man as well; the possibility of so using this power of self-determination as to achieve contact with another, to make himself 'intelligible'; the character which such communication has as a summons or appeal; the understanding of such communication by the other leading to a state in which each party is orientated towards the other, a state which must ultimately be called love. Let us take all this as established for our present purposes, and leave any further consideration to the philosophers to work out in an existential ontology.

Our intention here is to throw light upon a few specifically theological implications of the (provisional) description given above. For once these have been explicitated, they can enable us to understand the specifically theological sense of 'witness' which belongs to it absolutely and necessarily. Nor do we fear, in using this method of arriving at a specifically theological concept, the reproach that philosophy is seeking to produce a specifically theological concept on its own authority, and thereby doing damage to itself and to theology. For by this approach it will also be possible to make clear the point at which a certain reality of human life begins; a reality, namely, in which, as a matter either of hypothesis or of actual experience, an experience accessible at the level of philosophical insight is elevated to a higher level on the basis of a transcendental experience. Now since this reality which we are pointing to is arrived at by a process of transcending and radicalizing man's own experience of himself, it must not be excluded from a philosophical view merely on the grounds that it belongs to theology – in other words that what it stands for is precisely that which Christian faith expresses as a reality graciously bestowed upon man by God, and understands to be supernatural revelation. Theology does not begin only at that point at which we begin to study the scriptural sources of revelation (Scripture and Church tradition). On the contrary, it has already begun at that point at which, prior to any such positive studies, man attains to such *de facto* realities in his own reflections upon himself, realities which – whether reflected upon or not, or reflected upon precisely *as such* or not – are already constituted, amongst other things, by that which Christian theology calls grace. The fact that there is a grace of this kind, which modifies the actual *awareness* of man (and, moreover, as an abiding existential of human life) – this is a [155] point that a Molinist might possibly deny. A genuine Thomist cannot do so. On the contrary he must concede that theology (as the process of reflecting upon realities and experiences which are grace-given and inspired by the Spirit) is already present incipiently and in principle at the very heart of philosophy (considered as the process of reflecting upon man's own experience, which does not allow any external limits to be imposed upon it).

In witness man exercises his freedom at the most ultimate level of which he is capable of directing himself. In doing so it is of course conceivable that this process of directing himself in freedom may, in the individual case, be prior to the act by which it is communicated in the

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word of witness to another.[3] But if we assume (as we may assume here) that even the truest form of subjectivity as realized in freedom still always consists in an encounter with a being outside oneself (and, moreover, ultimately speaking not a thing outside but a person outside oneself) in which one receives that person and gives oneself to him, if subjectivity essentially consists in intercommunication, then in the last analysis witness is not a *subsequent* declaration of a basic decision which the subject has previously taken about himself, but rather is in itself the concrete form of this decision. In saying this there is a further question which can remain unresolved for our present purposes, the question namely of whether every decision which a human subject takes about himself, and in which he directs himself towards another, must be called witness, or whether such an act of decision in which he communicates himself should be called witness only provided certain further specific conditions are fulfilled, and the act concerned has certain specific properties. But regarded as a disposing of the subject's own self, and as such a process in which freedom acts upon itself, witness necessarily takes place as an act of self-transcendence in which the subject reaches up to the unsurpassable and sovereign Mystery [156] which we call God.[4] Transcendence as knowledge and freedom is always that openness, deriving from the Mystery itself (we distinguish it, therefore, from the idealism of an autonomous subject) to that Mystery beyond all comprehension which exceeds every experience of a conceivable 'subject', but constitutes the condition enabling knowledge to be achieved of 'classifiable' subjects. It is the openness to this Mystery as the basis of knowledge and reality both at the same time, this Mystery which we call God. Now given that this movement (initially, of course, not consciously reflected upon or explicitated, yet present in any and every act of cognition as that which makes it possible) towards the Mystery is sustained and empowered by that Mystery itself, it is necessarily open to the question of *how far* this Mystery allows itself to be attained to by the movement it initiates and sustains. Is it *merely* that which remains forever remote, forever forbidding, the asymptotic point towards which is orientated a movement which, while it does indeed proceed *outwards to* the infinite, nevertheless remains forever enclosed within the finite? Or does this movement contain the promise in which we hope that this Mystery bestows itself as itself (while remaining incomprehensible to us) to be, in a true sense, a goal which will be attained, and therefore even as itself sustains this movement from within itself? Christianity is a religion which acknowledges precisely *this* hope, regarded as an explicit theme, as the centre of its faith. It calls this goal, as we have understood it here, the *visio beatifica*, and that factor which sustains the movement from within and directs it towards *this particular* goal is called grace (*Pneuma*). Man can make this hope his own, and for this he finds within himself an inner power and (albeit never as something which he can fully reflect upon or realize) an enlightenment (called the grace of faith), and he seizes upon that in which

[3] Viewed from a purely temporal aspect, this can actually be accounted the normal state of affairs. But this does not alter the fact that witness is, after all, precisely not a mere subsequent announcement of a pre-existing reality which would still exist even without this announcement, and which has no intrinsic connection with it. The space of time during which an individual comes to his own fulness should not obscure the intrinsic unity of that through which the essence of this fulfilment is, in a real sense, constantly present in all sections of time in which it takes place. We encounter this phenomenon frequently in theology. Baptism is the sacrament of faith in which this faith is itself posited, and yet the baptized person normally comes to baptism with this faith already present in him. The sacrament of penance is the event of *metanoia* and conversion to God, and yet it presupposes that the *metanoia* which is made full and declared in the sacrament has already been present prior to it.

[4] This statement, and the considerations which follow, can of course be nothing more than brief indications within the present context. We say that the (human) spirit endowed with knowledge and freedom implies a limitless transcendentality, and that this transcendentality (as opened up from the basis of being regarded as mystery) implies an affirmation of the infinite Mystery which we call God. But this and much else besides can merely be asserted here without our being able to attempt any more precise explanation or justification. On this, however, cf., in the present volume, the observations on the subject of 'Thomas Aquinas on Truth'.

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this hope is actually fulfilled in exemplary form in the historical experience of Jesus of Nazareth. The experience of the Christ event in Jesus may or may not be achieved at a fully conscious level. But in any case it remains true that where the transcendental movement of the Spirit is unreservedly accepted it constitutes (according to the Christian interpretation of it) a movement sustained by God himself outwards towards the immediacy of [157] God, because it *de facto* and inescapably has as its intrinsic principle God himself. And this remains true even as we recognize that this state of being sustained, this openness of human transcendence to the immediacy of the absolute Mystery, is to be interpreted as (supernatural) 'grace' and as 'unmerited'. In those cases, therefore, in which 'witness' is achieved in the sense indicated in our provisional description (and so as an act of self-determination in which man positively and unconditionally accepts that which is within himself), there also takes place invariably and in all cases so far as Christianity is concerned the event of grace, the acceptance of this grace, the movement outwards towards the immediacy of God regardless of whether this is explicitly reflected upon or not. Witness is *de facto* a grace-given event, or it is not really witness at all. In this connection we are assuming that it can be present only in those cases in which man accepts himself in it unconditionally, and so bears witness to *himself* as he is. We are assuming, therefore, that the attempt, for instance, to attest the absolute absurdity of existence can be one of two things: first it can be regarded as no witness at all, seeing that man cannot introduce himself into his own witness in any way he likes, cannot interpret himself in any way he likes (is not the absolute creator of himself, but always proceeds from something previously offered him, always takes up his attitude *towards* something which he himself has not posited); or second, his false interpretation of himself is false only on the surface (which is perfectly possible), is merely the mistaken objectification of an original act of self-interpretation which, ultimately speaking and in its innermost depths, is, nevertheless, successful. In other words precisely *in it* there can be a witness for one who can distinguish between the witness itself and him who bears it. Witness, therefore, is, precisely inasmuch as it seeks to communicate the bearer of witness in his act of self-interpretation to his fellow, a bearing of witness of God himself as him who communicates himself in grace and offers himself as the subject of a direct relationship. Witness is an attestation of the grace of God whether this is consciously realized or not, whether it is objectified and expressed verbally or not. The imparting of oneself in witness to one's fellow constitutes, if it is really achieved (i.e. if it consists in an act of unreserved self-acceptance in the transcendence which is *de facto* elevated by grace to a higher plane), a witness of God himself. Any explicit statements about God (such as can of course arise in witness, though they do not necessarily have to) are merely the objectification in words of an ultimate depth which is always present in witness. The witness is always a theological one. What is different is simply the degree of conscious objectification of this [158] theological character inherent in *every* witness, even though, as it has been presented in the provisional description with which we began, it appeared quite untheological and merely anthropological in character. This witness, therefore, can be Christian in an 'anonymous' sense. It can be an '*anonymous*' fulfilment of human nature in which man reaches out to God,[5] and so (because sustained by God's self-bestowal = grace) salvific. But it is always (at least at the subconscious level) Christian. It would, of course, be advisable at this point to describe in greater detail the forms of witness of anonymous Christianity as they arise in concrete history, and also their specific content, if we were able to do so. For instance a commitment to sheer self-sacrifice for the sake of social justice; the unreserved championing of truth and one's own genuine personal convictions. With regard to a witness of anonymous Christianity of this kind, we should

[5] On this cf. 'Bemerkungen aura Problem des "anonymen Christen"', *Scriften zur Theologie* X (Einsiedeln, 1972), pp. 531-546 (to be translated in *Theological Investigations* XIV).

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guard against the criticism that any such Christian and theological interpretation of this kind of witness runs counter to the repeatedly declared intention and the (verbal) self-interpretation of him who bears the witness in this way. But all these are questions which cannot be entered into any further in the present context. Witness is directed towards *someone else*. The one bearing the witness seeks to communicate himself to *him*. Is this possible? What this question is concerned with is not the problems in the forefront, of how, and by what means, one person can communicate himself to another, or the question of how any such thing can be possible seeing that after all he who bears witness in this way can only impart, communicate, or bear witness in words *about* himself and, furthermore, ultimately speaking, can only communicate some objectified message, even if this message which is to be the medium of his self-giving consists in gestures and acts belonging to his own physical nature. Such questions as to the possibility of witness in the sense incipiently described above are certainly important too in enabling us to understand how such communication of self is possible. But we shall not concern ourselves with them here because they are questions concerning the process of imparting or communicating oneself, and not questions concerning witness in itself and the specific and ultimate possibility of this. Here we are assuming *the fact that* there can be such self-communication, which is realized in witness, or at least (to express it more cautiously) that it is possible to form the purpose, and make the claim of bringing such self-communication to reality. (In this connection, again, it makes no immediate difference *here* whether such self-imparting [159] is achieved precisely and exclusively in witness, or, for instance, whether it is achieved primarily in the love between two individuals, or whether there are very different kinds and modes of such self-communication. What we are presupposing for our present consideration is simply that such self-communication is achieved at least in witness too, and in this in a specific manner.) Now that we have demarcated the question in this way, it seems that we are justified in arriving at the following conclusion about it: If we are to say that there can in any sense be such self-communication on the part of a person endowed with freedom, unique in each individual case, a self-communication that is of its nature unrepeatable and incapable of being fully realized at the conscious level, then this can be only to the extent that both sides to this relationship have an ultimate bond of love with the one God, who, as the single and selfsame ground of these unique and, in themselves, incommensurable individualities, at once affirms them in their difference, unites them as providing their common basis, and sustains and guarantees the absolute character of their (mutual) self-communication. When an individual commits himself to his fellow absolutely, though in himself, in view of the finitude of his nature and the threats to which he is subject from forces within himself, he cannot guarantee the absolute character of this commitment, then, whether he recognizes it consciously or not, he is *ipso facto* appealing in hope to the one sustaining and reconciling basis of all free and unique acts. Witness, inasmuch as it is directed to another, and that too in an unconditional commitment[6] to this other, is, whether we realize it consciously or not, theological in character. It is sustained by that which, in Christian terms, is called ‘grace’, i.e. through the self-bestowal of the one God upon both of the *two* finite individuals who have achieved union

[6] It might be objected that so far as the witness of truth and his claims are concerned, it makes no difference, ultimately speaking, whether he is hearkened to or not. But it is precisely an intrinsic part of his ‘martyrdom’ to maintain his witness, despite contradiction, even to death. This is correct. But a witness which did not involve the hope, despite all disappointments, really to take effect and to be hearkened to, would be giving up its own nature in respect of its truth and its universal claims. The witness must necessarily hope that the contradiction which he encounters will be merely temporary. In him who bears witness, therefore, there is always a tendency, in the expression of the truth which he is bearing witness to in concrete human life, to reach out to a point at which that truth will be accepted by the hearer as well. The one bearing the witness, therefore, seeks himself to be assented to and accepted in the truth he proclaims.

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with one another. And in this way the ultimate union between them, and at the same time the difference between them, are both assured, and God is made the interior [160] principle of their mutual relationship. Of course we can conceive of a relationship between two individuals, and it can be such that it does not have God as its intrinsic constitutive principle. But to the extent that this relationship constantly tends to an absolute proximity and ultimate validity, and hopes to have attained to this at a radical level and as a real fact (precisely through God), God is (whether explicitly or implicitly) incidentally asserted as the intrinsic principle of this relationship. In this respect too witness has a theological character.

Of course witness always has also and necessarily a content 'classifiable in terms of this-worldly categories'.[7] In witness man can commit himself in his ultimate free decision to his fellow only in that he says a 'something' [161] to that fellow. This gives rise to the question of what the nature of this particular and specific content of witness must be in order that it can constitute the content, classifiable in terms of specific categories, of a *self-commitment* to the other in which on the one hand the individual bearing witness commits *himself in* the totality of his free existence, while on the other, thereby and therein (whether consciously or unconsciously) he bears witness to the reality of the Mystery which commits itself to man, and which is called God. Manifestly this content, classifiable in terms of specific categories, cannot in any *primary* sense be an objectification in verbal form of the original transcendentality as opened up by God's grace to an immediate relationship with God, and accepted as such in freedom. Certainly something like this is possible, as, for instance *here*, in the present consideration, and as in every explicitly religious statement.[8] But this cannot be the first and primary content. For otherwise the only possible forms of witness would be statements which were explicitly and *ex professo* religious in subject-matter. Up to now we have consistently proceeded from the opposite assumption, because we have been seeking to discover the theological character of witness in a line of investigation which seems to be

[7] It is true that fairly explicit consideration has already been given to these points in the context of different key concepts in Christian theology (e.g. under the heading of 'Proofs of God's existence', in the light of the limitless transcendentality of man, or in the context of the idea of the radical unity between love of God and love of man). At the same time, however, it is probably true that hardly any explicit consideration has been given in Christian theology to the points which follow. Death in general and the death of Christ in particular have hardly been considered at all in the light of an existential ontology. Death in general is first and foremost a biological event, and the standard theology constructs a genuine interpretation of the death of Christ by regarding it from the outset as a moral act on Jesus' part, supposing that this could just as well have been achieved in a different way and still have had a salvific significance. Of course here we can provide no more than an indication of the intrinsic connection between a final and 'eschatological' revelation (and, together with this, its attestation) on the one hand, and the event of the death of him who was essentially the last of the prophets and the bringer of eschatological salvation on the other. When we speak of the 'blessed' death, we are referring to the death which, by the very fact of being undergone, leads to that which in Christian terms we call the 'resurrection'. By this term we are seeking to bring out as clearly as possible the intrinsic unity between death and resurrection, and, moreover, in such a way that death does not appear as a mere misfortune to be made good once more by 'resurrection'. When in what follows we interpret witness as the attestation of God's gracious imparting of himself, and for this purpose determine the content of this witness in terms of specific 'this-worldly' categories as a witness of death, then obviously we have still not arrived at any decision as to whether this bearing witness to death has to present its content explicitly and in so many words as death. The 'anonymous' forms of Christian witness already envisaged above do not, of course, need to bear witness in so explicit and conscious a sense to a blessed death as we would wish to work out in view of the full form of witness in the full realization of its own nature. The absolute and unconditional nature of the resolve, taken in hope, in virtue of which witness is borne even at the cost of endangering one's life can perfectly well take the form of an 'anonymous' (taking place in the hope of some other outcome) attestation to the blessedness of death, even when it has not yet been realized as a matter of conscious historical experience where this blessed death that is hoped for has occurred or will occur.

[8] The necessity of an explicitly religious statement, and precisely the statement here being questioned, does not need to be treated of from different points of view, though of course we are in no sense either disputing it or trifling with it.

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merely at the human level, and which we began by evaluating as a provisional description of witness. But how can the content of a witness of this kind be constituted, classifiable in terms of specific categories, and still not in any sense pertaining to a consciously religious statement? It must (without on this account *ipso facto* having to constitute a consciously religious statement at the secondary level) point on to that transcendentality which gives a statement the force of witness. If we look at the history of revelation in the Old and New Testaments we might very quickly come to the conclusion that the content of this as assignable to particular categories is related to the deeds of power wrought in history by God, who in them manifests himself as the bringer of salvation. This piece of information may be formally speaking correct, but it does nothing to solve the problem with which we are here confronted. For how is any historical event of this kind, expressible in terms of 'this-worldly' categories, to be recognized precisely *as* a deed of God? To this question we might seek to reply with the usual answer supplied by traditional theology, namely that it is in virtue of the fact that the salvific deed of power wrought by God in history is a *miracle*, or is accompanied by a miracle. But this would merely be to shift the question to a different level [162] without solving it. Presumably too such a reply would constitute merely a piece of information applicable to the purely formal and abstract concept of revelation as such, but not capable of working out that which is specific to the New Testament revelation in Christ. A further point is that on these assumptions, and in the face of this reply, it might reasonably be asked whether on this showing there could be any basis at all for an *absolute* witness in the sense of a genuinely achieved absolute relationship between him who attests and him to whom his message is addressed (even if such a witness can in itself be assumed to have taken place without any such basis). The appeal to some kind of miracle is questionable in view of the difficulty of recognizing it as such (if it is to be regarded as some kind of occurrence assignable to a particular 'this worldly' category), and in view of its function as providing a basis for an *absolute*[9] witness. It could have significance only in connection with a *hope*, not yet established on any adequate basis, in a manifestation still to emerge in history, which subsequently enables us to apprehend the basis for an absolute witness of this kind in history as definable in terms of particular categories. The content of a witness classifiable in these terms, which attests the absolute immediacy of God as a grace that is posited in history, is thereby intended to enable man, by an exercise of his own freedom, radically to give himself to his fellow. Now this content of witness can only consist (in the 'order' in which this self-communication on God's part is not of itself simply or absolutely manifest, so that it no longer needs any witness bearing to it) in a reference to an event of this kind, in which an individual, in all the reality of his effective human life (and not merely in some ideological 'interior' dimension and attitude) radically makes himself over to God, and in which this giving of himself is seen to be achieved by God's own acceptance of it. In other words the particular and 'this worldly' content of witness at this radical level can consist only in the proclamation of that death which, as it takes place, leads to the absolute life of God. Only a death of this kind, as 'accepted' by God, can be something more than an event of self-transcendence as sustained by God (though in fact we do intend to express this in witness). Also, and more than this, it consists in the fact that the actual achievement of such self-transcendence is [163] made apprehensible to us.[10] For all the 'this-worldly' positivity of a

[9] As used in this context 'absolute' simply means: a witness for a final eschatologically victorious and unsurpassable self-communication on God's part as that which constitutes (albeit 'unmerited' and so grace-given) the radical fulfilment of that transcendentality which man represents, which he possesses, which as freely affirmed in the witness given to his fellow, is itself attested to. Cf. on the whole question the author's study in the present volume, 'Ideas for a Theology of Death'.

[10] Of course in a fuller development of the idea the distinction, and at the same time the connection, would have to be described more precisely. The witness borne to the blessed death which is not itself a death of the one who

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human event, it can indeed perfectly well (whether explicitated or not) be the process by which such self-transcendence is achieved (because in fact it takes place in the power of that God, that Mystery which human transcendence positively affirms in knowledge and freedom). But precisely because of this positivity and in it, such an event cannot enable it to be *made manifest* that the process is intended precisely *as* self-transcendence, and the transcendentality of this event constitutes something more than the enabling condition and the means by which such a process in its free intention seeks *merely* to achieve a reality definable in 'this-worldly' categories, and to achieve the immanent meaning of this. The acknowledgement of that death which has been blessed with happiness constitutes the content, assignable to a specific category, of a witness which, in respect of God and the individual personhood of him who bears the witness, is intended to be absolute. Of course this transcendental deduction of the content is not a deduction of the death of *Jesus* at this death which is sought as the source of blessedness. This belongs to the concrete event in which this content is realized, something, therefore, which remains at the historical level, and does not *have to be* so as a matter of transcendental necessity. Nor do we seek to maintain by this deductive argument that it would *de facto* take place without the historical encounter with the death of Jesus. But neither of these two factors in any sense changes the insight that a witness at the radical level can have its content as assignable to a specific category only in our acknowledgement of a death that brings us into the immediate presence of God, so long as such a witness needs to have any such content assigned to it at all.

We have said that witness is directed towards one's fellow. Now (in order to simplify the matter) let us make this more precise. Him to whom the witness is addressed is one's fellow not in his private individuality, but one's fellow to the extent that he exists in the life of society, to the extent that he is a 'political' being. Witness has a political character. It is public proclamation. If witness were directed to one's fellow as an individual person, and to the extent that he is, in any given case, that particular, unique, [164] and private individual, or to the extent that he does not represent the whole multitude of society at large, over and above any value we may attach to him as an individual, this self-communication would be that which we call love, or a pairing off at the purely biological level. Witness as such has a public and political character. This statement is initially simply a definition of terms. We call witness simply that which has a public character (and that which, to this extent, has a material affinity with witness in a strictly forensic sense). A transcendental necessity is to be ascribed to this statement (but then in a genuine sense) only to the extent that on the one hand man is in all cases a political and social being, and yet on the other precisely *as* such one which is no less invariably always unique and different from all the rest in his free individuality. Belonging to a society, and being unique and different from all others in free individuality are not two 'qualities' of man existing side by side with one another, but are present as mutually complementary, as (ontological) transcendentals in the scholastic sense. They are, in their relationship to one another, not one and the same, and yet at the same time they are inconceivable in isolation from one another. And to that extent the subject of the summons which we call witness and the one to whom it is addressed can express themselves and accept each other by listening to its message in a unique decision of freedom, and thereby act precisely *as* political beings. But then we have precisely that which we call witness, with all the qualities which we have hitherto claimed that witness has, whenever and wherever it really has realized its full nature. The public and social character of this witness is, by a special inter-involvement, that of the 'world' and that of the 'Church'. 'World', because, and

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bears the witness, and the witness of the assent of him who bears the witness to this death in a spirit of faith and hope. To the extent that the latter element too belongs to witness, even though *de facto* it may also be lacking in a process which claims to be witness, it can come to be present in the false forms of witness in the individual 'bearer of witness' which still await discussion.

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to the extent that, this witness appears as a 'claimant', i.e. one who demands agreement and who essentially incurs the risk of remaining unheeded and being rejected. In other words it is addressed in public to another who can also be one who rejects this witness and is called the 'world' in the sense usually intended in Christian terminology in that here it is (rightly) assumed that in principle all men can and must be summoned by this witness, i.e. this witness cannot be regarded as having, in the fulness of its nature, a particular application, but constitutes, rather, a universal message. Wherever, by contrast, this witness is expressed and also hearkened to, something is constituted in him who bears the witness and him who hearkens to it (because both attitudes are public ones) which we here call (employing the same terminology) the 'Church'.

To the extent that the content of witness as classifiable in terms of 'this-worldly' categories is in its full nature the historical event of the [165] death of Jesus as blessed and as leading to God, it can, as a factor in concrete human life, only be realized aright when he who bears the witness has in principle decided to accept his own death. The spirit of faith and hope that one's own death will lead blessedly into the freedom and security of God's presence constitutes the mode in which alone witness is possible. To that extent there is a real and effective connection between the act of bearing witness to the truth and 'martyrdom'. For that which (in terms of content) is attested in witness is (from a Christian point of view) nothing else than the belief that this death has, in Jesus, achieved its goal and the hope of the witness himself that in his own death he will be able to follow after the dying Jesus. Now this necessarily involves the will to incur the risk of this death, and, moreover, precisely as something occasioned by the witness itself to take upon oneself the act of 'martyrdom'. The development which takes place, starting from the New Testament idea of witness which does not yet (explicitly) contain the idea of a 'witness of the blood', leading to the concept of witness of the early Church in which death (as freely accepted) is itself regarded as witness, is therefore perfectly legitimate. For the truth which is attested to in the verbal witness of Christianity is precisely the truth of death as constituting salvation.

In Luke a witness is essentially a witness to the 'Resurrection', and, moreover, an 'eye-witness' who as such has an 'official' position and a special function. Now on this showing we must notice this point as something that follows directly from what has been said so far: every (Christian) witness must bear witness not merely to the blessedness of death which we await and hope for (and so the 'resurrection') in general, but must also include in its concrete and specific content precisely the blessedness of the death of Jesus. And to this extent such a witness, whenever it is borne, and whatever authority and power is attached to it, is related to the 'eye-witnesses' of the origins, without whom we could never assign to that blessedness of death which we await and hope for the historical name of Jesus. But in saying this we are not saying at the same time that this witness handed down through history of the Resurrection of Jesus is exclusively, or taken in isolation, the sustaining basis for the witness of faith of subsequent generations and of Christian belief. For the credibility of this historical witness ('the Lord is risen indeed') is itself sustained by the transcendental expectation of resurrection which is inherent in man's basic attitude. It is because (whether he explicitates it to himself or not) he entertains a hope for himself, for his own final and definitive state – in other words for the blessedness of his own death – that he has 'ears' to [166] hear this witness to an historical fact. A further factor is that this transcendental and inalienable hope (albeit either accepted or rejected in freedom) in the possibility of achieving blessedness in human death is always present. Moreover this hope recognizes that sooner or later in history it either has become, or will become, a real fact, and because of this and to this extent too, all such hope and the witness borne to it is 'Jesus-orientated'.

From what has been said it becomes clear what is involved (chiefly in the Johannine theology of the New Testament) in the witness borne from within oneself and in its

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attestation by the Spirit, The very nature of the reality involved is such as not to admit of any justification or authentication of the witness from without. Witness involves a total human act (albeit one that is specified with reference to the world at large). And this can neither be authenticated by any factor outside itself, nor consist of a combination of individual acts or elements such that this combination could be justified by the individual elements making it up. For the first hypothesis is ruled out by the totality of the act involved inasmuch as it lays claim to the whole man and therefore does not admit of anything 'outside'. The second hypothesis is equally impossible, if only because freedom as the all-embracing self-comprehension of man, constitutes, despite all the plurality of the elements making it up, precisely the original unity and not the final result of the plurality which is in man. We are not maintaining, in what has been said, that this act constitutes sheer self-identity, or that it does not have within it any pluralism of constitutive elements which are irreducible one to another. Hence, of course, there is an *intrinsic* connection in that they have a common basis, and a mutual reference of the elements of such an act one to another. Hence, we may notice in passing, such a discipline as a fundamental theology is, if rightly understood, perfectly possible even if it does not construct the act of faith from without but makes its subject the intrinsic self-basis of this act in the mutual reference to one another of the elements constituting it. Witness is borne for the attester and the hearer themselves, and there are two reasons for this. First, it constitutes the movement of the spirit in knowledge and freedom in all its limitless, all-embracing, and radicalized breadth, comprising that which is at once self-evident and beyond our apprehension (incomprehensible), and it supplies its own authentication. Second, the content of this witness as assignable to 'this-worldly' categories contains nothing else than precisely the blessed acceptance of this limitless breadth as the salvation of man. The fact that this content is interpreted in Christian terms as Jesus of Nazareth and as his victorious death of course accounts [167] for the factor of 'uncertainty' and of hazardousness which is inherent in every historical event where it is taken as the medium through which freedom reaches out to that which is transcendentally necessary. But on this point the Christian does not really need to say anything more than 'to whom else shall we go?'. And he can point to the fact that according to the witness of many consciences freedom's leap outwards towards the transcendental necessity is achieved in this name, and therefore this name in history can be appealed to in the witness. The breadth of human transcendentality, freed from all limits and radicalized (i.e. vivified by the hope of the immediacy of God), which carries its own authentication within itself because it is, and *ex definitione* can have no basis outside itself, is called, in Christian terminology, the state of being engraced and sustained by the Holy Spirit. In Christian terms, therefore, we can say that, as a witness affected by the Spirit, a witness is true and authenticated in itself. As such is also renders the specific and concrete content of this witness credible. God himself bears witness to himself in the witness. And only in this selfsame grace can it be hearkened to and accepted.

As a free and autonomous act of the individual bearing witness, the witness calls upon the freedom of the hearer. Because, and to the extent that, this witness has a specific content, classifiable in terms of 'this-worldly' categories, and thereby 'locates' the ultimate autonomous act of man in history, and since too it constitutes an appeal to the freedom of the other, it also brings to concrete and apprehensible form in history the ultimate decision of that other about himself. At the same time, however, it must be admitted that this objectification, as achieved in this sense in specific and historical terms, of a total free decision in accepting or rejecting the message attested to, contains an ultimate ambivalence or ambiguity within it. Thus for instance the concrete historical form in which rejection is manifested does not yield any absolute certainty of the fact that this rejection has also really been made at the heart and centre of the person endowed with freedom. And for this reason we cannot 'judge' him at this

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point. With this proviso, however, we can say that the effect of the witness is to lay bare the hostility with which the individual appealed to responds to God's self-communication to him, as made known to him in the witness. To that extent the witness has a revelatory character with regard to the 'sins of the world'.

There are two further points to be made about the witness: first that it constitutes the ('one') event of God's self-communication to man, and second that, as an event to which a concrete name can be assigned ('Jesus') it remains related to the historical series of those who bear witness to the [168] 'Resurrection' of Jesus. And for both of these reasons this witness (precisely as it is presented in the Lucan theology) constitutes the bridge between the age of Jesus and his 'return', and at the same time is *ipso facto* truly eschatological in character. For the eschatological event of the self-communication of God is already present in faith and hope, and already apprehensible in the witness that has been uttered and hearkened to in history. Nevertheless the witness points us on to the future, to the unveiled immediacy of God, at the consummation of the world and of human freedom, which at present is still 'in course of development'.

What has been said about the unveiled form in which the witness is accepted also applies, of course, to the actual process of giving witness as apprehensible at the historical and social levels. Even while preaching to others, we can ourselves become castaways. Admittedly, in this case which Paul emphasizes, the witness too is not such as it is presented to be. For in fact in the very act of uttering the witness man should be surrendering himself to the Mystery of existence which we call God. This surrender can be lacking. The witness pf the individual can be a lie to the extent that this making over of man to the God of grace as an act of concrete human living can *de facto* be wanting. But in that case this witness too is itself no true witness. The 'objective' validity which the Christian interpretation nevertheless ascribes to it, even when it fails to correspond to the interior attitude of the individual who proclaims it, is intelligible only if we recognize clearly that this witness takes place within a society precisely as a witness of this society which also as a whole effectively fulfils the witness which it bears. 'Holy Church' is, as Christians understand it, that which ensures that its witness (even when borne by an 'unworthy' individual) is a true witness, i.e. makes real that which it attests.

Of course, as in human discourse in general so too with witness, there are not only the full form and the radical realization of the very nature of witness, but also derived and deficient modes of witness. Religious or moral instruction, theological discourse, etc. are derived modes of witness, but still deficient ones, not even coming close to witness itself. This is all the more true since such religious discourses, which, for the most varied reasons, cannot be called witness in the true sense, nevertheless would be deprived of any meaning at all, or become statements belonging to the science of religion at the secular level without any concrete bearing on human life, if every element of witness were to be eliminated from them.

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[169]

11

IDEAS FOR A THEOLOGY OF DEATH

If the theologian is to follow the philosopher, the psychologist, and the physician in having something to say about death and dying, he will find himself in great difficulties,[1] and, moreover, for a whole variety of reasons. However normal and everyday an occurrence dying and death may seem to be, no one can have anything to say about them as a result of having actually undergone dying and death, as a matter of his own physical and spiritual experience. For even the experience of being in danger of death, whether from internal or external causes, does not provide any guarantee of the fact that this experience is substantially the same as that which is undergone by one in whom this state of mortal need really does lead to death itself. In this respect the theologian too is no more an expert so far as dying and death are concerned than the rest. A further difficulty, this time affecting the theologian precisely as such, is that what he has to say about death in particular, as distinct from the other specialists, is in any case more withdrawn from everyday experience than what the other experts have to report. For this reason his message is most of all liable to the suspicion of being mythology, a fantasy designed to provide false consolation, and mere empty talk. A further factor in the difficulties with which the theologian finds himself surrounded is the fact that the question of what he has to say about death as such, and the further question of 'survival after death', the 'immortality of the soul', 'eternal life' as attained to through the 'resurrection of the flesh' constitute two questions which in themselves are very different, but which cannot be treated of apart here because otherwise the impression might be given that the theologian is here speaking of death as such and taken in isolation, in [170] order to avoid the question of what, according to his convictions, will become of man 'after' and 'beyond' death.[2] But if he regards it as his task to discuss both questions at once, his subject-matter will become immeasurably obscure and ill-defined. One further and final point is that each of these two questions in its turn involves a whole series of further particular questions, questions of biblical theology, history of dogma, history of theology, philosophy, and existential ontology – questions, therefore, which are, again, totally incapable of being answered directly or unambiguously within the terms of any system of Christian theology or according to the particular interpretation of faith upheld by any Church. The result is that the individual theologian is forced to take personal responsibility for many statements which he makes on such particular questions, even though in himself he is not seeking in any way to go beyond a simple statement of the beliefs of Christianity and of the Church, and, indeed, of an immense tradition in human thinking which, for all the variations introduced by the use of conceptual models drawn from mythology, are ultimately all pointing to one and the same reality.

In this situation, then, beset as he is with difficulties, the theologian has no other course open to him than to seize upon certain aspects of the matter, chosen somewhat arbitrarily. Such a course may involve an intermingling of philosophical and theological propositions, principles which are, in a real sense, held in common by all the Churches as well as individual interpretations of such principles, and all this may take place without always being explicitly adverted to. But there is simply no way of avoiding this, a point which we must

[1] The author has already published earlier studies under similar titles. Cf. *On the Theology of Death* (2nd ed., Eng. transl., 1969). In the foreword to this work some references will be found to important earlier studies on the question. Cf. also in this volume 'Theological Observations on the Concept of "Witness"'.

[2] For a concise survey cf. the author's article, 'Death', *Sacramentum Mundi* II (New York and London, 1968), pp. 58-62.

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explicitly emphasize here right at the outset. And a further point, likewise following from the situation as it exists, is that the approach we are adopting cannot be one in which we explicitly quote passages from the writings of the Old and New Testaments, or refer to declarations of the Church's teaching authority. One final proviso: when the sceptic hears the message of faith and hope concerning a definitive finality of human existence which man will arrive at through death as the outcome of the history bf his personal freedom, let him not be too hasty or too prejudiced from the outset in suspecting that the theologian is being moved by some personal egoism of his own, or is being excessively naïve and taking things too much for granted in setting such a value on 'eternal life'. One factor alone which might deter the theologian from doing this is what he finds in the earlier strata of the Old Testament itself. On the one hand it records how a living partnership, [171] finding expression in prayer and trust, was forged between the individual and the God of the covenant of his people. And on the other, despite this fact, any real prospect of a positive fulfilment of individual life after death is as good as totally ruled out for this same individual so far as these earlier stages of Old Testament history are concerned. It may be true that the individual stages in a history of revelation are not interchangeable with one another and, in the unilinear development of sacred history, no one of them ever recurs or is really the same as any other. At the same time, however, the theologian should take warning from the Old Testament not to be excessively triumphalist in his proclaiming of the principle, '*Non omnis moriar*'.

With regard to the theology of death, many themes must be set aside from the outset, even though in the traditional and established theology of death they are explicitly treated of. Thus, for instance, we shall be omitting any discussion of the universality of death, even though a whole range of theological problems are implicitly contained even here, in what seems to be a self-evident truth. We shall be compelled to set aside the question of whether what the tradition of Christian faith has to say about death and the last things really applies to every being which we can account as human in a *biological* sense, and so, for instance, even to one who dies at the embryonic stage, or whether, on the other hand, all this applies only to those endowed with a genuine certainty of faith, who have really used their human freedom to achieve a personal history for which they themselves are responsible. Nor will we be able to enter into the doctrine of the relationship between sin and death, although in itself this is theologically speaking of radical importance.[3] In this connection we must confine ourselves in passing simply to the remark that for Christianity's understanding of existence a point that must in any case be taken into account is that specific interpretations of death are far from having that objectivity which merely confirms further views which they themselves feel that they possess. Rather such interpretations themselves in turn derive from that darkness of death, borne of human guilt, which pervades the whole of life, and so too this interpretation of self, even if the individual interpreter may be personally blameless and honest.

LINGUISTIC FORMS AND REALITY

It seems appropriate to me to exclude from the outset (i.e. before we enter [172] directly into the question of the Christian understanding of death) to clear up certain misunderstandings, especially with regard to the question of the 'continuance of life after death', a question which, in fact, we shall not be attempting to separate from the question of death as such. First, in all Christian statements (as in all other human statements which are not mere signals

[3] On this cf. the studies of one of the author's pupils: L. Boros, 'Strukturen christlicher Vollendung', *Strukturen chrstlicher Existenz*, H. Schilier, E. von Severus, J Sudbrack, A Pereira edd. (Würzburg, 1968), pp 251-262, and also the well-known study by L. Boros, '*Mysterium Mortis. Der Mensch in der letzten Entscheidung* (Olten/Freiburg, 1962).

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of biological needs and requirements) a distinction has to be drawn between the form of language and that which is actually signified by it, a distinction such that the sense intended and the conceptual model used are neither identified nor yet fully distinguished from one another in the processes of conscious human thought, nor again can they be totally separated from one another. For there is no such thing as an idea without perception, a concept (as Thomas Aquinas already recognized) without a *conversio ad phantasma*.[4] And even the process of criticizing a perception at the conceptual level will always be undertaken by means of concepts which themselves in turn have to work with some other apprehension, even though they are not always simultaneously conscious that the perceptual and the conceptual elements in the concept are not identical. Given that human conceptuality and language have this special quality, which cannot be eliminated by any kind of meta-language, nor yet by computers or other technical attempts at a total rationalization of language, we have fully to take this quality into our calculations in the particular case we are considering here.

It may be true, therefore, that Christian statements about death and the 'continuance of life after death' make use of conceptual models of a mythological kind when they use conceptual systems which, in them-selves and in their origins, are spatial or physico-temporal in character in their references to 'heaven', to 'the life beyond', to the 'after-' life, to the 'continuance' of existence after death, to the parting of the soul from the body, etc But the use of such conceptual systems and forms of language does not in any sense invalidate the reality referred to by means of them, even though, by contrast with earlier ages of the human interpretation of existence, the elements of imagery or mythology and the inadequacies inherent in such systems and forms, have now come to be consciously recognized and felt to be such. Perhaps, indeed, those inadequacies are felt with such intensity that it is now totally impossible to use earlier systems and forms, at least if these are not to give rise to fatal misunderstandings [173] in men of a certain level of education, with their knowledge of the natural sciences, their technical and historical equipment, and their new perspectives of thought. On this point it seems that, as a matter of ultimate principle, a difference of this kind, between the perceptual model and the reality to which it relates is present even in modern physics, and even in those conceptual models which, within their own dimension, are contrary to one another, as for instance particles and waves, which at once assert and, by the contradiction between them, at the same time obscure, the reality to which they refer. It is, therefore, perfectly conceivable that at some point in the future men will have learnt once more freely to use conceptual models and images which are now felt to be intolerably mythological and so rejected, because by means of these they perceive and express the reality referred to without incurring the danger of succumbing to the misunderstandings of earlier times thereby evoked. In all this the situation is, as we have said, not such that a reality referred to could be expressed in non-image form and without the aid of such conceptual models, the moment we consciously reflected upon the difference between that which is referred to and the form in which it is expressed in our previous statement of it. The new statement still contains this dualism also; only it is not reflected upon, or at least not so clearly, and it is not felt as so unsatisfactory. The dualism is still present even in a negative statement. It would be eliminated only if the question itself too which such a statement is designed to answer were eliminated, i.e. if it never arose at all. Someone who denies something must have understood that which he believes he has to deny. But even here it is only in a dualism of concept and image of this kind that he can make clear to himself in virtue of his denial precisely what this is that he is denying. And he must constantly ask himself whether what he is really denying is simply the image which he rightly finds to be inadequate or erroneous, or whether he is indeed denying the reality itself signified by this

[4] On this cf. the author's article in this volume, 'Thomas Aquinas on Truth'.

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mental picture. The situation is in any case a difficult one, and particularly so in the case of a negative finding. But the only way in which the difficulties could be resolved by a sceptically negative reply would be if the situation itself and the question giving rise to it simply did not exist at all.

THE END OF THE TEMPORAL DIMENSION

On the basis of these assumptions we can now consider the misinterpretations which have to be eliminated from the outset in dealing with our present subject. On these misinterpretations the following must be said: [174] the 'continuance of life' after death is not to be thought of as the self-prolongation of time, or as a further extension in time of acts and experiences following one upon another in a series arising from some neutral substantial entity which impels itself forward through ever fresh epochs, and is forever engaging in some fresh activity within these constantly changing sections of time. On the contrary it is obvious that death is in *this* sense the absolute *end* of the temporal dimension of a being of the kind to which man belongs. What takes place after death is not something new in a temporal sense, or something that is constantly changing. Man does not wander through it in a dimension beyond death of a spatial or temporal kind such that between it and our former life a frontier in space and time would be constituted within what was ultimately one and the same dimension of spatiality and temporality. The opposite conception, originating from the traditional conceptual models, and giving rise again and again to the danger of radical misunderstanding and so too of radical rejection, is ruled out if only because otherwise we would have logically to accept something like a transmigration of souls or a radical change in the ultimate basic attitude of an individual in the so-called dimension beyond death, interpretations of existence which the Christian faith radically rejects because it takes seriously the fact that this life is one and single, and is brought to its fulness in a single and definitive historical development. Life 'after death', on the contrary, is something radically withdrawn from the former temporal dimension and the former spatially conceived time, and a state of final and definitive completion and immediacy to God which is absolutely disparate from space and time, and is the end-point of a life lived once and for all in freedom precisely *here*, the end-point of that personal history which is brought to its completion in itself. Now someone might say that a life after death would be totally inconceivable to him unless it involved other activities and interests, unless it 'went on' after a 'change of horses', as Feuerbach would put it, and, moreover, more joyfully than before. Again someone might object that it would, after all, be terrible if our former life, with all its banalities and questionable aspects were itself to be frozen in a final and definitive state. But to this we should have to answer that it is perfectly possible to conceive of 'eternal life' in some sense, even without having to imagine anything new over and above our former life by a process of mythological fantasizing, and further that the definitive state of our former life in its historical development is far from implying a petrification of its former banalities and questionable factors. For provided that this former life of ours was accepted in the freedom of love (at the moment we do not [175] need to take into consideration the possibility of our culpably having allowed it to be lost) it included sufficient of the content of an eternal life and of infinite freedom for us to have some understanding of what these mean. For even in our present state the infinite Mystery which we call God is experienced in love and adoration; even in our present state we take absolute responsibility for our lives, experience that freedom, give and receive that love which, when they are exercised in that spirit of hope of which we shall have to speak further, are themselves experienced as having a radical validity and as final and definitive. We cannot withdraw ourselves from the absolute claim to validity

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which such freedom and such love have upon us by quietly, each in his own identity, vanishing into nothingness (whether in despair or in joy is ultimately speaking a matter of indifference here).[5] It must be said straight away here that this ultimately speaking entails no *objection* whatever to him who supposes that he is unable to believe in this 'eternal life' even as rightly understood. Rather it is only addressed *to* him so that despite the opposite interpretation of existence he may understand and savour the meaning of eternity in this sense as a matter of conscious reflection so long as in his freedom he takes the radical responsibility of loving. Eternal life is not the 'other side' so far as our personal history is concerned, but rather the radical interiority, now liberated and brought to full self-realization, of that personal history of freedom of ours which we are living through even now and which, once it has been fully brought to birth in death, can no longer be lost. The only further development which it can still achieve then is to lose itself in a loving immediacy to the ultimate Mystery of existence called God, and thereby discover its own fulness. We have mentioned above certain misinterpretations of the Christian faith with regard to 'eternal life'. Side by side with these, and subject to certain provisos consisting in more precise theological distinctions which it might perhaps be necessary to draw, we can now go on to make a further statement, even though it may entail a possible crude over-simplification of the theological propositions involved. It is this: statements about the 'continued existence of the soul after death', about its 'separation from the body', and about the 'resurrection of the body' must be accounted, so far as we are concerned, and at least for the purposes of *this* consideration, not as statements about different objective states of affairs, but as statements about one and the same state of affairs that is being pointed to by means of different conceptual models, statements, that is to say, about the final and [176] definitive state of the personal history of man as brought to its fulness in freedom. In view of this it is neither necessary nor helpful, at least for the range of problems with which we are concerned, to introduce a dichotomy between body and soul as a necessary assumption for the Christian conviction being referred to here. Nor are we absolutely forced to posit a temporal interval between the death of the individual and that which we really mean when we speak of the 'resurrection of the flesh'.

THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE

Up to now we have been indicating how certain misinterpretations can be cleared away concerning the meaning of eternal life, which, precisely according to Christian theology, takes place at the moment of death. We can now apply ourselves to our real subject-matter, namely the hope of eternal life. Certainly so far as a Christian philosophy of belief is concerned, it is far from being so obvious as might perhaps appear at first sight that we can develop our Christian interpretation of death more or less directly from our idea of that eternal life which we hope to achieve through death. It would be just as legitimate a course to proceed in the opposite direction, attempting from a radical acceptance of death to achieve a genuine understanding of that which is meant by eternal life. But without in principle debarring ourselves from arguing in either of these two directions, let us attempt to achieve an understanding of the true nature of death on the basis of hope of eternal life.

The Christian has this hope of eternal life.[6] Such a statement is easy to make. Not only because it is far from being all that clear whether the individual Christian in concrete practice really does hope, really does hope for this eternal life, or merely uses this hope which we

[5] On this cf. the author's article in this volume, 'Experience of Self and Experience of God'.
[6] On this cf. the author's article, 'On the Theology of Hope', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 242-259.

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assert to exist as a façade and an analgesic so as to conceal an ultimate despair, this being the real truth of that Christian's existence. It is not only that to a man who is critical of himself and on his guard against his own deep-rooted egoism the word 'hope' all too easily comes to sound like some facile consolation, although in its true sense it implies the most radical exercise of the human spirit when subject to the bitterest pain, and even though hope is present only in him who first and foremost hopes on behalf of *others* – hopes in the responsibility he takes for them, hopes in that love for him whom we call God, and in the face of whom even authentic hope must in its turn forget its own nature. Over and above this, and on a theological [177] understanding, the word 'hope' in relation to eternal life involves a great gnoseological obscurity. Its significance is very far from having been reflected on in a really adequate sense in the traditional standard theology of the seminaries. Willy nilly the mental picture of hope which we entertain is such that that which is hoped for is something of which we already have a neutral knowledge even beforehand as in principle possible. From this the individual who entertains the hope then has to go on to a further stage because of specific difficulties in attaining the known object in the particular case envisaged, and actually *hope* for it. But in this view of hope we are *ipso facto* failing to realize its true nature in a radically theological sense. We are confusing that which is hoped for, that which is only present at all in hope, with that which is planned, that which is undertaken as the outcome of neutral speculation, that which, under certain predetermined conditions and according to certain specific methods, we have to bring to reality in the concrete. On this showing we are no longer in any real position to speak of the 'hope against all hope', of a hope such that it is only *within* it that that which is hoped for can be discerned at all, of a hope which constitutes the basic dimension of the Christian understanding of existence as such. Instead we have, right from the outset, missed the real theological nature of this hope, and degraded it to a more or less accurate calculation of chances which are entertained even by one who has no hope in the real sense in striving to achieve a still conceivable goal. Theological hope, on the other hand – to speak in wholly general terms – is the free and trustful commitment of love to the 'impossible', i.e. to that which can no longer be constructed from materials already present to the individual himself and at his disposal. It is called the expectation of that which is absolute gift, the giver of which withdraws himself into an unnameable incomprehensibility and can only be encountered in himself by actively engaging in such hope. This is called building on that which is without foundation, self-commitment to that which is beyond one's power to control. Christian hope never for one moment conceals or denies this character which it has. It freely exposes itself to the charge of being 'irrational', It merely declares that it continuously discovers at the basis of existence that an offering is being made at this level of the power freely to commit oneself in such hope, even if it is possible to reject this offer or to suppose that one has rejected it. It says only, in an attitude that is 'inoffensive' and at the same time one of ultimate decision, that it cannot forbid itself to conceive of the inconceivable, because that inconceivable is precisely and inescapably present in existence and Christian hope cannot see why it should not also be spoken of, seeing that in fact it [178] is spoken of by the very ones who condemn such statements or obstinately persist in holding that such statements cannot have any meaning because we cannot represent the reality concerned to ourselves or have any *comprehensive* knowledge of it.

Christian hope does indeed hold that, in the words of Anselm of Canterbury, it can '*rationabiliter irrationalia cogitare*', because the recognition of the inconceivable itself constitutes in its turn a prerogative and a function of reason, which must be unprejudiced in its encounter with reality as it is in itself. Nevertheless this hope also constitutes its own light. It carries its own authentication within itself, and is not the mere outcome of a rational insight which – itself not involving hope – would on this theory generate and release hope. On the

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contrary it is a primordial exercise of human freedom which commits itself to the unity of that which it cannot synthesize by its own power, the unity which it no longer comprehends, and yet recognizes as valid. It commits itself to the unification of that which has been divided, a unification which cannot be achieved by ourselves in some higher unity which we ourselves perceive and possess as something that we recognize within ourselves. Hope is itself a unique and underived mode of knowledge in which the creative element and the element which accepts from without in an ultimate passivity constitute a paradoxical unity, because that which is hoped for is present to us only within the hope itself, and is otherwise not even present as really conceivable. At the same time it is also that which constitutes pure gift, and which is received as such. We might go on to say much more about the nature of Christian hope in general. One point which should of course be emphasized is that the word 'Christian' as applied to it is not intended to have an exclusive sense such that it could only be engaged in by the kind of individual who considers himself a Christian in an explicit sense and as a matter of Christian and social indoctrination from without. We might go on to develop the gnoseological significance of hope in more precise terms, its place in the sphere of the practical reason which does not merely follow the speculative reason as its simple outcome and as something to be achieved of man's freedom. We might go on to enquire the extent to which it belongs to a subject endowed with intellect and freedom as a matter of transcendental necessity or, over and above this, how far it is sustained (albeit unconsciously) by that which we call Christian grace, in which the goal, namely God himself, sustains the movement even as it reaches out towards this selfsame goal. But these and many other matters cannot be treated of any further at the moment.

[179]

DYING AND DEATH

We shall shortly have to speak of death and the process of dying which actually leads to death.[7] We shall have to say that it constitutes the one situation for this hope, and that in which it is at its most radical, or, to put it better, that it can constitute this. But before going on to explain this we must first say something about death itself. It is precisely to the extent that in his death the Christian has to be he who hopes that it is both possible and necessary for him not to conceal from himself the comfortless absurdity of death. One day he will actually suffer it, and for this reason he should accord it its full significance in his theology of death too, as well as he can. Precisely from the point of view of a Christian theology it would be a failure to recognize the reality of death if we sought to approach it from an attitude of anthropological dichotomy by supposing that death affects only the so-called body of man, while the so-called soul, at least if it boldly resolves upon an attitude of Stoic transcendence, will be able to view the fate of its former partner called the body unaffected and undismayed as from above. Of course we do have to draw a distinction within the single individual between a number of different elements and dimensions. We must do this if we wish to avoid stupidly joining the *terribles simplificateurs* of anthropology. But however true this may be, still man is *one* in being and act, and death is something that affects the whole man.

At this point man in all that he is has arrived at a conclusion. It may be questioned whether this conclusion constitutes the consummation or the termination of him, but in any case in death he arrives at a radical conclusion, one which, on any showing, he cannot bring under his own power. Some may, in all calmness, describe this conclusion as absurd and an arch-contradiction. So it is, if only because we may in all calmness say that death is a contradiction to positive *and* to negative thinking. For the absolute conclusion as such provides neither

[7] 'E. Kübler-Ross, 'On Death and Dying', *Amer. Eccl. Rev.* 161 (1969), pp. 351 ff.

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thinking of a positive kind with any subject-matter, nor yet thinking of a negative kind, seeing that this latter is in all cases capable of operating only from the basis of a positive subject-matter, and its shift away from this is only partial. Even as the object of thought, death is, in relation to the individual existence of each person, as inconceivable as absolute nothingness in relationship to the sum total of reality. Death as a conclusion is the absolute powerlessness of man, in which we certainly also become too powerless to conceive of death or of God. But the dying man, who of his freedom possesses his [180] own life, nevertheless inescapably confronts death with a demand that it must constitute the sum total of his life as an act of freedom in which the whole of life is gathered up. For the very nature of freedom and its claim to the absolute dignity of responsibility and of love belonging to it cannot give its assent to a mere empty draining away of life. If there is anything that is of concern to man it is death, And it is precisely this that radically repels him. We can say in all calmness that to think about death is as impossible as the thought of death, because, in contrast to all other objects of thought, whether possible or actual, one's own death (incidentally just as God himself) is something that we cannot comprehend in our thoughts, bring under our power, and so manipulate, and hence one who, in his thinking, seeks always to bring that which he is thinking about under his control will be thwarted in the case of death.[8] It is, and remains, a fact that from all the points of view already mentioned and many more besides, death is the absurd arch-contradiction of existence. If it were not both possible and necessary for the Christian too to experience it as such, how could the Christian assert and recognize that death is the manifestation of sin, of that 'no' to the absolute truth and love which dwell in God, which is at once free and overthrows freedom?[9]

In this connection it must be said that we, presumably different in this from animals, cannot refrain from thinking about death, that we cannot 'pigeonhole' the fact of death. That the opinion of Epicurus to the effect that death does not concern us so long as we are alive, and, when we are dead, cannot be of concern to anyone, simply does not correspond to the reality of human existence, because in fact this advice in itself, and in the very act of consigning death to oblivion, gives it a place in life and so betrays the impossibility of putting the advice into practice. Death is not merely any kind of occurrence within our life, or coming at its conclusion. Rather, whether we suppress it or admit it, it is that in virtue of which we are continually discovering the nature of our own existence as finite and so mortal through that supreme apprehension in which we transcend everything assignable to categories within the space-time dimension. Among other factors, this one is of constant concern to us: the absurd arch-contradiction of our life. This is something more than a mere quality or attribute of death belonging to it to the extent that we seek to set ourselves [181] apart from it as those who live. Rather it is something that we ourselves are.

THE EXERCISE OF FREEDOM IN DEATH

We shall now attempt to show that this situation of death constitutes precisely the true and necessary situation of Christian hope. And the first point to emphasize is that the state of hopelessness or (in order to avoid unnecessary verbal conflicts) the radical inescapability of this situation of death constitutes precisely the prior condition which makes hope in the strictly theological sense possible. In other words it is something which the Christian is least of all in a position to conceal from himself. Hope, in contrast to foresight, with its function of

[8] Joh. Hofmeier, 'Vom gewussten zum gelebten Tod', *StdZ* 186 (1970), pp. 338-352 (a survey of the relevant literature).
[9] On the character of death as mystery cf. e.g. Y. Congar, J. Daniélou, H. M. Féret, *et. al.*, *Le mystère de la mort et sa célébration* (Paris, 1951), and also I. Lepp, *Death and its Mysteries* (New York, 1968).

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planning and controlling, is possible from the outset only in a situation in which we really are radically at the end; where the possibility of acting for ourselves is really and finally closed to us; where we can find absolutely no further resources whatever within ourselves by which to achieve a higher synthesis between a state of radical powerlessness and the supreme exercise of freedom in death; where we become those who are utterly delivered up to forces from without; where even the possibility of a heroic attitude of faith or a stoic *apatheia*, or even a wild protest against the absurdity of existence, is withdrawn from us; where we are deprived of even the innermost and ultimate subjectivity of our existence in its absolute depths. This is the situation of Christian hope.

Of course it is open to us to object straightway at this point that if death constitutes the ultimate state of absolute and dreary powerlessness, while Christian hope must still be conceived of as an *activity* on man's part, then there is no longer any place or any possibility of existence even for Christian hope. Certainly as a matter of sober logic we must assign Christian hope to a place during *life*, and, as far as it goes, in the process of *dying*, and not assign it to that point of absolute void which we have to understand death to be. But if we have to do with death even in life, the question both can and must be posed of *what attitude* we are to take, can take, or ought to take, towards this absolute null point. And it is precisely here that the answer of Christianity comes: hope in eternal life – though admittedly in that sense which we have previously sought to give to the phrase eternal life in order to prevent misunderstandings of it. Of course on a radical view of it this hope does view God and eternal life as one and the same, and the exercise of this hope does not draw upon a reason unthreatened by death or a knowledge of God already acquired from some [182] other source such that from it an innocuous reduplication of the real Christian hope could easily be constructed. Real Christian hope, faced with death, hopes in fact precisely while recognizing to the full the powerlessness of man either in thinking or willing when confronted with the absurd arch-contradiction of existence. And what it hopes for is a unity, a reconciliation of the contradictory elements, a meaning for existence, an eternal validity for love as freely entered into, an assent to absolute truth, so that all this that is hoped for is truly *hoped* for, i.e. is neither to be manipulated by one's own autonomous thinking, nor controlled by one's own autonomous power. All is hope, even the act of thinking in one who can still only think about the meaning of death, and is no longer in a position to think 'through' it comprehensively.

NOTHINGNESS AND FINALITY

To hope for this, however, since it is and remains hope which cannot be authenticated from any other source, but only in itself, could not be simply an exercise of sheer arbitrary choice, as if someone might hope here and now to become emperor of China tomorrow. This hope draws its life from that finality, as from an element inherent in itself, one of which we have already spoken briefly, that finality with which the individual freely decides for himself what is to constitute the good that he aims at, his personal love, his radical responsibility beyond any considerations of reward. The nature of this moral act is such that unless we are to deny the fact that it is demanded of us in an absolute sense, it cannot be regarded as radically transitory. It itself would surrender its absolute character if it were to recognize the death of itself as its appropriate end and as an element inherent in its own nature. In fact even one who feels death to be the radical and absurd arch-contradiction of existence does also concede this in principle. For what could prompt him to feel that death was so contradictory if in the act of dying *everything* were, of its very nature, to seek out the finality of finalities and to accept it as appropriate to itself. It might be said that in the very moment in which someone does what is proper to himself, the act of greatness, the total commitment, the act of love or duty in the

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most radical sense, he should of course not think of this as sheer finality, and should not thereby himself destroy himself in an attitude of ultimate cynicism, the only alternative being that he should, despite all, perform the supreme act open to man in an attitude of inconceivable, indeed absurd, heroism in response to this absurd finality. But if someone were to say this, then we should have to reply along these [183] lines: in a moment of this kind of a free act of love, radical loyalty, etc. there is one reason why man cannot think of the nothingness, in a temporal sense, inherent in this act that is proper to his own nature, namely that it is *precisely* not subject to time. A further question might be what place there can still be for a protest against the absurdity of the nothingness of existence once we take up the following position: the moment we seek to be honest and truthful we have to accept this same nothingness as having a legitimate place in existence seeing that it is an intrinsic element in that which is proper to it. On this showing we ought to identify ourselves with Paul and ask why the maxim 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' (1 Cor. 15:32) is in that case so meaningless or unworthy, if after all it can be claimed to have the value of sober truth. And if in reply someone made the further rejoinder that it is, after all, precisely the greatness and glory of human existence to maintain this protest against absurdity in the midst, and in view of, the absurdity inherent in human existence itself, and to practise love without recompence, loyalty etc., then such heroism under protest of its very nature excludes at least this finality which renders all meaningless. And then we should have to ask why at least this which is most deeply proper to oneself, namely our protest against the absurdity of being delivered over to death, cannot allow the truth to be borne in upon us as it really is. How too can it be that it is only the *appearance* of a definitive finality that we encounter, seeing that everything carries within itself from the outset the marks of that death which brings an end to all as the genuine truth?

All this should not be taken to mean that hope should be generated and built up through some factor which, in the last analysis, is exterior to itself. The very fact that this which is eternally valid is present in and with the absurdity of the experience of death is in itself enough to show that this is not what is meant. But hope is offered a choice. It *must* choose precisely because that which is valid in this sense on the one hand and death on the other cannot be reconciled on the basis of human nature itself. And hope opts for that which is offered to it as the eternally valid in the midst of an existence in process of dying. It chooses the eternally valid, rejects the death as the final and definitive factor, and gives the name of God to that power which is not its own, yet which removes, by reconciliation, the absurd arch-contradiction present in existence through death. This hope is exercised on behalf of all men, for all men are loved in it and it is not confined merely to the hoping subject himself. And hence the subject of this hope hopes too concerning his fellow men, who suppose that the only realistic interpretation they are able to come to about themselves [184] is that they are the hopeless, that they too, beneath and beyond this supposed hopelessness, are the hopeful. How could hope think otherwise? In fact it experiences these fellow men as those who love and those who are radically loyal and selfless, and it refuses to interpret all this as a mere ideological façade in a world made up only of an egoistic and merciless struggle for existence, an existence which for all ends in the void of death. But if hope discovers itself afresh in the love and loyalty which it encounters in others – because in this hope is brought to its fulness in its protest against the absurdity of a life that is dedicated to death – then it will be giving no offence and doing no injustice to him who supposes that he has, in a spirit of defiant honesty, to interpret existence in a sense that is hopeless. For why should it not be the case that for some individuals their concrete situation is such that the only way in which it is possible for them to achieve a radical acceptance of death in which nothing is veiled (and this, after all, is the condition of true Christian hope) is for them to abandon themselves to the darkness of death even though it brings them despair? Why should it not be the case that

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many who die can only cry aloud with the dying Jesus: 'My God why hast thou forsaken me?', and in the midst of this abandonment that other word rises up silently in their innermost depths: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit'? If even we Christians are in constant danger of using the words which, properly speaking, only Christian hope as such should pronounce, as a false consolation, which can never form any true basis for hope but represents an attempt to cover over the darkness and terror of death? Why should it not be possible even for such as these to entertain Christian hope unwittingly in the very depths of their souls. The borderline between real and final despair on the one hand, and illusion with regard to death on the other, is difficult to draw. We could here adapt a saying of Jesus so as to run like this: With men it is impossible, but in the power of God it is possible to draw this borderline, so that man finds his strength neither in despair nor in the illusion of self-sufficiency, but rather, believing and loving in hope, commits himself to the incomprehensible Mystery which comes to him and takes effect upon him in death.'[10] We call this mystery the God of hope (Rom. 15:13).

FREEDOM AS THE EVENT OF DEFINITIVE FINALITY

Perhaps in conclusion we should return to a difficulty in the Christian [185] interpretation of death to provide a fuller explanation of it. It is one which in my opinion is more covered over than solved in the language of popular theology. In seeking to understand our own basic tenets we inevitably proceed from a basis of ideas drawn from the physical and temporal world. Right from the first we are conditioned by these ideas, and so we constantly think of all reality in terms of space and time extending in a linear prolongation in two opposite directions. We assign all reality to a place in the future as the past or the future as parts of a linear prolongation of time extending to infinitude between two poles. Unless we have learnt to subject this conceptual model to critical questioning (though obviously this does not mean simply to do away with it) the question arises of how on this showing something can continue forever into the future in this linear prolongation when manifestly it only began a short time ago in the past, and its existence does not extend backwards in this direction into infinity at all. It is not surprising that the idea has been seized upon of a transmigration of souls or a pre-earthly existence of 'souls' (an idea which appeared even within Christianity, for instance in Origen). These ideas have been developed in order to eliminate the apparent anomaly that a future extending into infinitude is ascribed to a being which has not had any past extending backwards into infinitude.'[11] So long as we subject ourselves uncritically to this image of time, we will necessarily limit man in both directions as being radically subject to time. Obviously we have no intention here of contesting the fact that the physical man, compelled to seek his own identity from within space and time by relating himself to that which is alien and other to himself, is also a being subject to space and time. But it is not on this basis that we should think of his ultimate and free subjectivity if we are to avoid involving ourselves in this insoluble dilemma. At a level more ultimate than his state of belonging to space and time or time conceived of in spatial terms, he is a being endowed with a freedom which must

[10] For the foregoing ideas cf. for instance F. F. Wiplinger, *Der personal verstandener Tod* (Freiburg, 1970), and E. Jüngel, *Tod* (Stuttgart, 1971); but also 'Der Treffer aus dem Absoluten. Informationen zu einer Theologie des Todes', *Evang. Kommentare* 2 (1969), pp. 623-630.

[11] On the problems of time in connection with the question of death cf. also R. Ochs, *The Death in Every Now* (New York, 1969), and the reports or interpretations of experiences with drugs, N. W. Pahnke, 'The Psychedelic Mystical Experience in the Human Encounter with Death', *Harv. Theol. Rev.* 62 (1969), pp. 1-20, and the reply by a natural scientist published in the same number (H. K. Beecher, pp. 21-25), as well as a reply by a theologian (G. D. Kaufmann, pp. 26-32).

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achieve its own fulness. Now freedom precisely does not consist in a quest to achieve ever fresh changes at will. Rather it is of its very nature the event of a real and definitive finality which cannot be [186] conceived of otherwise than something that is freely achieved once and for all. And to that extent man is the event of that state of definitive finality which we call eternity, and falsely, or by a misinterpretation, reduce in its turn to the dimension of linear time extending endlessly backwards and forwards. To the extent that this freedom is such that it must achieve its own fulness, it has laws of its own and conditioning factors of its own which are not at its disposal even when it is free precisely in the attitude it adopts towards these, and has in *this* sense a 'beginning'. This beginning, however, is as such not the mere occurrence of events and circumstances which precede freedom in time. Rather it signifies something which is ultimately and underivably new, and which, therefore, can be allotted to a specific point in the external linear development of time only in a secondary sense.

Now in order to picture to ourselves this modality of the event of freedom, namely the fact that it has a beginning and a definitive end, we have not at our command, of course, any such convenient conceptual scheme as is available to us through the experiences of spatial movement and the kind of time that is ultimately acceptable in this. The only way in which we can objectify in words this free occurrence which we ultimately experience and produce is for us to make use of the conceptual schemes which belong to external time. But even as we use these, and cannot avoid using them, we have also at the same time to adopt a critical attitude to them.

In fact we are gradually educated by the natural sciences rather than by any philosophical critique to realize how cautious we have to be in supposing that reality as it in fact exists can be apprehended by means of these popular conceptual models drawn from everyday life. If, therefore, again and again we feel ourselves oppressed by the real experience that we cannot see beyond death as the true end in a vision which could advance further within the same linear concept of time, then this still does not represent any argument against, or any condemnation of, the Christian hope of eternal life in the real meaning which this has. Where love and loyalty are truly exercised, and where the absolute truth which guides us is accepted, there *ipso facto* that definitive finality is achieved which we must seek not in some linear development of time after death, but in that state of definitive liberation which is achieved and brought to its fulness in death. This is the Christian hope, this alone, but this in a very true sense.[12]

[12] Two authors approach the question from the basis *of* the Bible, R. Pesch, 'Zur Theologie des Todes', *Bibel und Leben* 10 (1969), pp. 9-15, and M. Laconi, 'La morte nei vangeli', *Sac. Doc.* 13 (1968), pp. 395-426.

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[187]

PART THREE

Christology

[189]

12

HUMAN ASPECTS OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The decisive factor in the mystery which we believe in and celebrate at Christmas is, of course, the advent of the eternal word of God as our Redemption in the flesh, and so as something which affects all Christians alike, and is in principle no different in its effect upon the Christian doctor than upon other Christians.[1] Of course Christian faith is also aware of the special factors in the conception and birth of Jesus (something which we shall have to treat of rather more fully at a later stage) precisely *from that* experience which the disciples *subsequently* had of Jesus in his acts, his words, his witness to himself, his death, and his Resurrection. This retrospective view, proceeding from Jesus himself to his origins, is legitimate. To the extent that he has proved himself in his life and Resurrection to be the absolute Word of divine grace, addressed to us through the deed of God wrought in him, Christian believers know that he was this Word of God in our flesh right from his origins, and did not merely become so gradually in the course of his life, though this is not to rule out a development of Jesus' human awareness at the level of conscious explicitation in terms of concepts and words, and thereby the character of Jesus' ultimate understanding of himself as mediated. Of course there are certain basic historical data with regard to Jesus' origins, some of which are obvious (e.g. Nazareth as his place of origin, the name of his mother, the existence of a group of relatives still known in the early Christian community etc.), and some of which can be deduced over and above that which we can accept as assured. But we are still forced to conclude that there are some factors acknowledged by believers as belonging to the origins of Jesus' life, which are not properly speaking handed down by historical tradition, factors which, while they are indeed rooted in the [190] actual event concerned, are theologically speaking known to us by a fully justified process of retrospection from what we know about the 'adult' Jesus himself. Thus from our knowledge of him at this stage we deduce what must have been the case 'at the beginning'. Now when retrospective theological deductions to the origins of Jesus are involved in certain of the statements which faith makes about those origins, then we can also go on to say that the content and the limits of such statements are determined by that which really follows compellingly from a retrospective process of this kind and what does not. This retrospective process may yield a legitimate stock of findings with a specific content. But it is possible that in the concrete, in dealing with an event thus arrived at by a process of retrospective deduction, we are unable to recognize where such distinctions should be drawn, even though we would be able to know them if it were a question of a historical datum following from the direct experience of the origin as a

[1] On this subject cf. the author's article, 'Virginitas in Partu', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 134-162, and also 'Dogmatische Bemerkungen zur Jungfrauengeburt', *Zum Thema Jungfrauengeburt,* Frank, Kilian, Knoch. Lattke, and Rahner edd. (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 121-158.

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phenomenon in itself. What we mean in more precise detail by what has just been said, and why this abstract principle has a practical importance, will appear straightway the moment we apply this principle to the case with which we are concerned in the present study.

When the Christian doctor applies himself to the question of Jesus' birth, he will surely feel especially inclined to concern himself over and above that which is of crucial importance in this Christmas mystery, with the biological aspects of this birth of the Lord. By this we do not mean the conception of Jesus by his mother without the intervention of a human father. This doctrine of Christian tradition raises too many questions for the theologian for it to be capable of being treated of here, within the space of so brief a consideration. What we are referring to here, rather, is the biological aspects of the actual process of the *birth* itself. At Christmas the Christian doctor may turn his mind to this biological side of Jesus' birth, and if he is theologically well instructed, then what will straightway strike him will be the traditional Christian doctrine of the 'virginity of the Blessed Virgin in the actual *moment* of the birth'. And so today the question arises for Christians in general, and for the Christian doctor in particular, of what really is meant by this 'virginitas *in* partu', in which the special factor in the birth of Jesus is represented as consisting in its physical aspect. For after all, once we abstract from this doctrine of 'virginitas in partu', it is obvious that since Jesus is truly man, his birth too is the same as that of all other men.

But how should the Christian and the Christian doctor conceive of what is meant by this 'virginitas in partu'? On the one hand he wants unreservedly to respect the traditional Christian doctrine, yet on the other [191] he does not want to think of the *kind* of 'miracles' which strike him, conditioned as he is by modern outlooks and the modern environment, as too incredible, or which give him the impression of being too strongly mythological in character.

At this point we do not want to concern ourselves with the question of what theological qualification is to be ascribed to the doctrine of the 'virginitas in partu'. We will also pass over a question which might perhaps be of concern to the discerning biologist, namely whether the word 'virginity' as used in this phrase, 'virginitas in partu', is in its real meaning altogether suitable in its application here, or whether it would not be better to use some other term than 'virginity' to express what is meant, drawing our expressions from a clearer, more accurate, and more informed terminology. For our present purposes we are accepting the traditional understanding of the statement of the 'virginitas in partu'. Those who understand it in this sense explain it as follows: the process of birth takes place without any pain to the mother, and without the *hymen virginale* being destroyed by the passage of the child as it is born. The question is this: whether the concrete conception of the 'virginitas in partu' is simply identical with the doctrine of such a 'virginitas in partu', and therefore whether this particular conception remains binding so long as the doctrine itself is maintained, or whether *alternatively* we can maintain and formulate the real content of this doctrine without simply having to assent to this conception in its entirety, which traditional theology uses to explain that which is unique in the birth of Jesus. From the observation of various factors in the development of this doctrine's dogmatic history we can surely feel free to draw the conclusion that the 'virginitas in partu' has come down to us not as a record ultimately deriving from Mary herself and relating what she herself experienced in the birth of Jesus, but that on the contrary it involves a retrospective theological deduction as to how this birth must have taken place for theological reasons based on the unique character of the child himself. We cannot, within the present context, accord a separate presentation to each of these factors as observed, which belong to the category of the history of dogma. We must confine ourselves to pointing out that the New Testament itself contains no record of a 'virginitas in partu', and that it is only a very long time after the origins of belief in Christ that we encounter this doctrine for the first time in recognizable form, and, moreover, primarily in

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theological circles which are suspected of having been Docetist. But even if we assume that what we have in this doctrine of the 'virginitas in partu' is a retrospective theological deduction to a reality, and not a historical tradition of that [192] reality, deriving from its initial occurrence in itself, this still does not mean that such a retrospective deduction is illegitimate. It is perfectly possible that the conclusion to which it leads constitutes an objective state of affairs. But the meaning and the limitations of what is thus concluded to needs to be tested and subjected to the question of what we can or cannot come to know by a retrospective deduction of this kind in view of its premises.

In any attempt we make to carry out a retrospective deduction of this kind our attempt will be accounted legitimate from a theological point of view provided it concludes to the substance of the traditional doctrine concerning the 'virginitas in partu'. And it will still be legitimate even though it does not in any sense justify us in concluding that this necessarily entails assenting to all the conceptions and mental images which have been employed in the attempt to provide vivid illustrations of what this 'virginitas in partu' signifies. It is true that what we are enquiring into is the human aspect of the birth of *Jesus* himself. Nevertheless, in accordance with the traditional view of the question we may concentrate more explicitly in our enquiry on the birth of Jesus precisely in its aspect as an event in the life of his mother Mary. For precisely this phrase 'virginitas in partu' is traditionally interpreted first and foremost as a statement about Mary herself. On the basis of dogmatic christology taken as a whole we must say first and foremost that when Mary gave birth to Jesus it was a genuinely human birth. Such a statement is to be understood not as a concession to those who shrink from the miraculous, or as a mere statement of human experience. Rather it is a genuine statement of faith, for the true, genuine, and full humanity of Jesus is a dogma of faith, so that without fear of contradiction we can modify the saying of the teacher of the early Church to the effect that our own birth would not be redeemed unless *it* had been 'accepted' too in the birth of Jesus. But in interpreting this statement we must invoke a no less obvious theological truth, namely that at the moment of the birth the mother and the child were human beings capable of suffering. And so at least initially we should presume that they were in fact subject to the pains of birth until the contrary is shown to have been the case. In this respect if there is something special, something in the nature of an exception to be asserted about this particular birth, then it must in a real sense be based on theological arguments, and should not *ipso facto* simply be assumed to be the case as the only fitting conclusion to be drawn in relation to such a birth as this. Jesus is truly man, and it is only as man that he was able to be our Redeemer. And for him and his mother pains are, in the fullest sense, 'fitting'. A [193] doctor is least of all likely to see anything unfitting in the pains of birth. Nor can Gen. 3:16 be invoked as an argument against this, for the Redeemer, and so too his mother, precisely accept a position in which they are subject to the consequences of sin (Gal. 4:4 2 Cor. 5:21). If, and to the extent that Gen. 3: 16 is to be taken, therefore, in the sense that the pains of birth are an expression and a manifestation of the universal situation of sin in mankind, the birth of Jesus from Mary is not in itself such that it needs to be made an exception to this law. So far as the naturalness of Jesus' birth is concerned, it must be emphasized once more that it also includes the fact that Jesus came into the world through the natural processes of human birth. The traditional idea that Jesus came forth from the body of his mother in a manner similar to that in which he came forth from the closed tomb at the Resurrection must, therefore, be understood in the light of this, or else abandoned. Even Rathramnus, the 9th century Benedictine, took his stand against such Docetist or Manichee ideas, which all too easily come to enter into this question.

Now every doctor knows that the concrete processes of birth, in their effect upon mother and child, can vary very greatly from one individual to another despite their overall similarity. For all that the same physiological laws apply, the birth of a human being, at least

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as first and foremost an act on the mother's part, is an event affecting the *whole* of human nature, and hence, as it takes place in the concrete, depends to a large extent upon the particular disposition and attitude of the individual mother concerned. Taken even in a purely general sense, pain (regarded as a physiological occurrence) can be experienced in very different ways, according to whether the individual subject is in a position positively to integrate this 'pain' into the totality of his active living or not. Pain as lived through is itself from the outset pain that is interpreted by the free and intelligent subject, and so true is this that under certain circumstances one and the same physiological process, taken subjectively and as affecting the whole of the individual concerned, constitutes a pain (in the popular sense of the term) for one individual and not for another. On this basis when we say that as a matter of general principle Jesus and Mary were liable to pain, and when we presume in principle that in the case of Jesus' birth they were subject to the ordinary birth pangs, these statements must, once more, be subject to a certain crucial proviso. If we are thinking of the sinlessness of the Blessed Virgin, her integrity (i.e. her freedom from concupiscence,[2] taking this to mean a state in which it is impossible fully [194] to integrate the impulses of the physical side of our natures and those deriving from the environment about us within our personal decisions as subjects), then it is clear that that which, in physiological terms, we would call 'pain' would be, and actually was, in her case experienced quite differently than with us. With us this occurrence is experienced as pain. Whether or not we still wish to call it by this name as experienced by Mary is perhaps ultimately speaking a mere question of terminology. For in any case the believing Christian can say this: the birth which took place here was, after all, different from birth as we know it, because she who gave birth and he who was born were different from ourselves in virtue of their sinlessness and their integrity (though this should not be conceived of in a 'paradisal' sense), for all that they made themselves one with us. Now once we recognize this as a starting-point for a true interpretation of the phrase 'virginitas in partu', albeit one that is not decked out in mythological hues, we can surely go onto regard the conception of the '*hymen virginale*' being unbroken as one of which we have no historical knowledge at all. Moreover even without this we can continue to maintain a positive meaning for the phrase 'virginitas in partu'. This conception, then, even considered as a theological conclusion, can be shown not to have any compelling force, and therefore is not binding as a matter of faith, the more so since in this respect the theological tradition is not so univocal as is sometimes supposed.

[2] cf. the author's 'The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia', *Theological Investigations* I (London, 1961), pp. 347-382.

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[195]

13

THE QUEST FOR APPROACHES LEADING TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MYSTERY OF THE GOD-MAN JESUS

The situation may possibly be otherwise than I suppose. But I believe that there are three possible approaches to that mysterious relationship with Jesus through which, in the very act of living itself, that is achieved and really comes to be understood ('realized') which the Church's faith recognizes about Jesus. Approaches to a mysterious relationship, I say. What we have to recognize here is both the distinction and the connection between the approach as such and the reference of our whole personal existence to Jesus.

These three approaches are constituted by the following factors: one's fellow man (one's neighbour), death, and the future. They are closely interconnected. But we have to have taken these factors of our neighbour, death (to the extent that we can do this as a matter of 'living' experience) and hope in the future in full and radical seriousness in order that they may point us on to that relationship with Jesus which alone constitutes the basis for an explicit and genuine Christianity.'[1]

Before we go any further, before we proceed to speak of each of these three approaches in turn, one point of concern which we encounter particularly often nowadays requires an answer: we do not really know (at least at the level of conscious reflection) what is properly speaking meant by this Christian relationship with Jesus, and why such a thing constitutes something more than a mere 'ideology' which we 'conjure up' for ourselves in order to escape from the harsh realities of the real world.

[196] What has to be said on this point? First and foremost: Can we really love Jesus? Whatever his fate may have been 'after' death, has he not been withdrawn from us and from any possible relationship of love with us by this death? When the question is put in these terms, then we are really referring to that person who once lived, him himself in his earthly lot, rather than as an ideal to which we have assigned an historical name more or less adventitiously and of our own volition. It is the historical Jesus – not an ideal or an ideology – whom we are referring to when we ask whether we can 'still' love Jesus. In rejoinder it might be asked: Can we love anyone whom we have loved in life and who has died? Must we not go on loving him if our love for him during his life was such that it embraced the individual who was loved unreservedly? Have we not precisely a responsibility for the dead – in other words a radical connection with them? Can we, or should we, simply turn away from them with a shrug of the shoulders, on the grounds that they are precisely no more, or at least that they have been withdrawn by death from any conceivable sphere of life available to us? No! Love and responsibility cannot detach themselves from the beloved once they are dead. They still have a claim upon us. We may, perhaps, forget them, because we do not really know what we can 'do' for them, because, precisely, we are unable really to preserve and integrate our own life in its various sections, from which they cannot be blotted out within the flux of time. But what we cannot say is this: the dead are in principle of no further concern to us. Their abiding claim upon us is such that they are not transformed into an ideal ideological

[1] The considerations here presented are intended as preliminaries leading both to the development of a personal attitude towards Jesus as a matter of one's own faith, and also to a consciously worked out christological process of reflection within theology. But since such approaches actually belong, so far as we are concerned, to the 'reality of Jesus' (in order so to express it) they also have their place – once we have explicitly thought them out – in christology.

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demand upon us which has to be respected for the future (our attitude to those fallen in war or murdered at Auschwitz etc. is often misinterpreted somewhat in this sense, as though a state of affairs belonging to the past remained in force throughout a quite different future to which these dead do not belong). Rather their life, as still laying a constant demand upon us *is* forever both for them and for us. They do not prolong their existence in a different life, one with which, admittedly, on this hypothesis we could not really have any genuine relationship. They remain as real factors forever, with this life of theirs which we ourselves have experienced. This is why they both can be, and are, loved. The concrete manner in which they enjoyed a real relationship with us during their lives may vary very greatly. But in the last analysis this is not of fundamental importance for our relationship to one who, though he has 'died', is still living. A child too can love his mother and accept that her life still in a real sense continues as a force that lays demands upon him even when this same mother died in giving birth. Nor do any of these [197] genuine possibilities of an abiding relationship of love with those who, though they have died are still living, gainsay the fact that the majority of men have only very rudimentary experiences of this relationship, indeed may perhaps go so far as explicitly to deny it when they are explicitly brought face to face with it. We men are, in fact, beings who realize their ultimate potentialities only gradually and in fragmentary form, and not all epochs necessarily offer equally favourable situations for the realization of such potentialities.[2]

From all this it follows that we can love Jesus too, accept as of radical significance the demands which his life lays upon us, and in accepting these demands affirm this life as an abiding and continuing force, as 'existing'. We have not yet reached a stage at which we can straightway proceed to raise the question of what approach we should adopt so that this love can include precisely those special qualities (in its actual nature and in what we can recognize about it) which belong precisely to it, as distinct from the love we bear to other men. All that we are attempting to establish at this point is that he who regards Jesus and his life as entailing a final and definite demand upon him personally, is in effect affirming that he is living, and has been delivered from death. On any other showing he would not be assenting to Jesus himself in his claims upon us, but assenting to him only as an abstract ideal, an 'idea' which we have conjured up for ourselves at most in connection with the past life of Jesus, but which ultimately speaking would be independent of him.

Now that we have drawn attention to this point we can go on to enquire into the three approaches already mentioned, enabling us to understand what the Christian faith acknowledges about Jesus.

The first approach consists in *love of neighbour*.[3] Jesus himself shows us what this means in Mt. 25, where he asserts an identity between himself and our neighbour. Every love for one's fellow man has, at least in its nature, the character of an absolute commitment of one's personal existence to that fellow man. Hence where there is real love, it is achieved whether consciously or unconsciously, in the hope that, despite all the questionableness and fragility by reason of which that fellow man cannot in any sense supply a complete justification of the absolute character of [198] the love that is borne to him, such a commitment is reasonable, and need not necessarily meet with ultimate disappointment. Now in Jesus and through him this hope has been confirmed. In his person a man appears in palpable and historical guise for whom and in whom it is manifest (to those who believe) that that love in which man lovingly commits himself to him can, in its absolute character, no longer meet with disappointment. This man, therefore, can enable us to commit ourselves in love to our fellow man too,

[2] On this line of argument cf. the author's ideas as presented in the article immediately following the present one and entitled 'Remarks on the Importance of the History of Jesus for Catholic Dogmatics'.
[3] On this see also the author's article 'Reflections on the Unity Between the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God' in *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 232-249.

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justifying us in this and enabling us to hope in the total and unreserved character of this commitment. But let us imagine a man who, in virtue of his very existence, his human lot, and the final and definitive outcome of this, provides an absolute justification for a total and unreserved love for himself and his brethren, and overcomes all ultimate reserves on the part of himself as the subject of this love with regard to the ultimate questionability of the beloved. Such a man as this is (though this is a point which we cannot develop further here) precisely he whom the Christian faith in its traditional formulation acknowledges as the God-man, as that man who is one with God to such an extent that if we commit ourselves to him unconditionally in the sureness of faith and hope, then the goal of this love of ours, which embraces both the beloved and ourselves, becomes God himself, and no longer solely an individual man in all his radical questionability. But for the same reason the converse is also true: he who loves Jesus as one who lives, with a love that is justified and sure of itself, and in an attitude of absolute trust that recognizes its absolute basis in Jesus himself, such a one has already accepted Jesus as him whom the Christian faith proclaims, whether he does or does not understand the classic and abidingly valid formulae of christology.

A second approach, leading to an understanding of what Jesus is and is for us, can be discovered in the *experience of death*.[4] This approach is primarily connected with that which has been said with regard to love of neighbour as leading to an understanding of Jesus. The absolute character of such love seems in fact to be threatened in the most radical sense by the very fact of experiencing the death of the beloved. And even if we say that such love is asserting that the beloved survives as a final and definitive force, still this would in its turn lead to the further question of what grounds there can be for so boldly hoping that the beloved does remain as a final and definitive force in this sense, and where that man is whose fate, regarded as brought about by God, enables the victory which such a [199] final and definitive state represents to be manifested to our eyes in historical terms. But even apart from this, the experience of death constitutes an approach enabling us to understand the reality of Jesus and his significance for us. However much each individual may die his own death, it still remains true in the deepest sense that death is the common fate of all men, and that in it they are united among themselves by having to endure that which is most extreme and most ultimate. And no one is justified in adopting an attitude of indifference to his fellow. But at what point in our personal history do we achieve the concrete hope that this that is most ultimate and extreme in our existence, in which we are absolutely torn apart from ourselves, is not the victory of the sheer empty nothingness of man, but in the contrary opens onto the absolute blessedness of the love of God and his eternity? In the end it is only in a man whose 'resurrection' is experienced in faith and hope as the crown and fulfilment of our common death. But if in such a resurrection the final and definitive assent of God to us is recognized as the true reality of the death of Jesus and of our own death, then the risen Lord is believed in as the unsurpassable word of salvation uttered by God to us, and as the bringer of eschatological salvation. And again we can assert this: he who is thus believed in in the power of a hope that overcomes death and as the basis of this hope, is precisely he who is acknowledged in the Christian faith as the incarnate Word In whom God has definitively and victoriously uttered himself to man.

On this basis it becomes, properly speaking, *ipso facto* intelligible why and how we can designate the factor of *hope in the absolute future*[5] as an approach enabling us to understand what Jesus is and what he means for us. We are speaking of a hope which hopes on behalf of

[4] On this cf. also the author's ideas as presented in this volume in 'Ideas for a Theology of Death', and also in *On the Theology of Death* (2nd ed., Eng. transl. 1969).

[5] On this see also the author's article, 'On the Theology of Hope', *Theological Investigations* V (London and New York, 1973), pp. 242-259, and the various studies in which the future is treated of from one point of view or another as an active factor.

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all, and, moreover, hopes for a final and definitive victory as the outcome of the history of mankind, even though it cannot point to any definable goal already filled out with a content which we can recognize (for to do this would be to turn from the inconceivable and mysterious God of the future to make an idol of the future itself fashioned by our own hands). Such a hope as this must necessarily search history to discover how far it has already advanced in its course towards the future. This is not in order to anticipate the absolute future by already formulating it in ideological terms, or in order falsely to transform it into a goal to be constituted as such by man himself. [200] Rather it is because this hope must render an account of itself in the concrete. It should not be prohibited from enquiring into the 'signs of the times', seeing that it is genuinely hoping for its own fulfilment, and that this, after all, is destined to be achieved in and through history. Nor should it restrain itself, from motives of false diffidence, from itself noticing in history that history itself has already entered upon a phase in which the possibility of an ultimate collapse of history into the void of God as its absolute future is already past. Once we have, in a spirit of faith, seized upon the 'Resurrection' of Jesus, then we have grasped the fact that the one and single history of the world as a whole can no longer fail, even though the question of how the personal history of the individual will turn out remains open, and belongs to the absolute future of God which brings blessing indeed, but still at the same time remains at the level of inconceivable and indefinable mystery. But once the word of God's self utterance, in the case of a concrete individual in history, is present never again to be withdrawn, and accepted in faith as the absolute future of history, then that unity between God and man is present and believed in too which Christian faith acknowledges in the 'hypostatic union'.

The question must be asked how we can love our neighbour unreservedly, committing our own lives in a radical sense on his behalf how such a love is not rendered invalid even by death, and whether we can hope in death to discover not the end but the consummation in that absolute future which is called God. And anyone who does ask these questions is seeking thereby, whether he recognizes it or not, for Jesus. He who really keeps alive this threefold question and does not suppress it will not find it in itself so difficult to discover the answer to these questions in history in the person of Jesus, provided Jesus is preached to him aright. And provided he opens himself to the answer to this threefold question, constituted by Jesus and his life in death and Resurrection, then he gains too an approach which will enable him to understand the traditional christology, which at first sight seems so difficult to understand, but ultimately speaking conveys no other message than that in Jesus God has uttered himself to man victoriously and unsurpassably as the blessed response to that threefold question which is not merely something which man may possibly raise within himself but rather which, at basis, he himself is.

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[201]

14

REMARKS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORY OF JESUS FOR CATHOLIC DOGMATICS

By way of introduction to my short essay I may be permitted to recall a brief episode, though in itself it is of no great importance. A few years ago, on a visit to the U.S.A., I met a Catholic professor of dogmatics from Europe. In the course of a theological discussion he explained to me that though of course he did not doubt the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, still he felt that even if this were not a historical fact it would make no difference to Christianity as he understood it. However unimportant this little story may be in itself – the more so since this position was put forward with a gentle undertone of doubt and self-criticism – it is, nevertheless, not altogether without significance as a symptom of what is taking place in Catholic theology today. I say Catholic theology because it is well known that in Protestant theology the tendency radically to emancipate the beliefs of Christianity and its 'dogmatics' (to the extent that any such discipline still survives) from history is of far longer standing.[1]

The *first* thesis which I would put forward here on the complex problems pointed to by this anecdote runs as follows: Catholic faith and its dogmatics as they have been understood up to now, and also as they will have to be understood in the future, remain indissolubly bound up not only with the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth, but also with the historical events of a specific kind which took place during his life. This thesis, precisely in its universality, has of course become a sheer obvious truism from the earliest times of Christianity onwards (in the struggle against gnostic tendencies which are already discernible in the New Testament itself) right down to the struggle of the Catholic Church [202] against Modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century. But abstracting from the difficulties which this thesis has to face, and to which we shall be returning in our second thesis, it turns out after all, on a more careful and precise presentation, to be less self-evident to our understanding of the Catholic faith and Catholic theology's understanding of its own nature than appears at first sight. For the thesis does in fact become more difficult and more obscure the moment we ask the following question: Is it intended as a *dogmatic* statement of faith or as a thesis of fundamental theology which (on a right understanding) has the function of *supplying a basis for* our faith? In putting forward this question we are, of course, not from the outset insinuating that the question as presented in this twofold form has to be answered in precisely the same sense or with the same *range* in view of the historical events of the life of Jesus that are pointed to. But even if we do not make this insinuation, the question as presented in these two alternative forms remains difficult for us of today. I believe that we have to presume that today not a few Catholic dogmatic theologians and exegetes would answer the question in the affirmative in its *dogmatic* sense, but in the negative if it is taken as pertaining to fundamental theology.

If we deny from the outset that there is any kind of difference between dogmatics and fundamental theology, or at most are prepared to conceive of a fundamental theology which from the outset has nothing to do with the facts of history, precisely, for instance, the history of Jesus' life, then of course, while it is still open to us on the most favourable view to regard the first thesis as intended in a dogmatic sense, it can no longer possibly be intended from the

[1] A survey of the treatment of the question and the importance accorded to it in the Protestant sphere is provided by H. Zahrnt, *Es begann mis Jesus von Nazareth* (Gütersloh, 2nd ed., 1968).

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point of view of fundamental theology. But there are many who, even though they would not defend any such radical elimination of fundamental theology in general, or have never entered into a question of this kind very profoundly (for in fact even in theology there are a few strange 'obsessional specialists'), nevertheless in the concrete they will deny the first thesis when taken in a fundamental theological sense, even while they accept it when taken in a dogmatic sense. For instance nowadays even respectable theologians should be subjected to the question: Do you believe *that* Jesus is risen from the dead, or do you believe also *because* he has risen from the dead (as, despite Bultmann, Paul was allowed to believe)? And to this not a few among even the Catholic theologians of today will be found to reply: Obviously I believe only *that* he has risen from the dead. Such theologians, therefore, reject, at least with regard to the Resurrection, an interpretation of the first thesis in a sense pertaining to fundamental theology. It should be noticed [203] that here we are still abstracting from the more general question of *which* realities and events in the life of Jesus the interpretation of the first thesis in the sense of fundamental theology necessarily has to concern itself with. But allowing for this, the first point to be made is that it seems to me that any absolute denial of the first thesis is thoroughly false and heretical. The proof of this assertion from Scripture, tradition, and declarations of the Church's teaching office, can of course not be adduced *here*. It is true that in the course of the struggle against Modernism at the beginning of the present century many regrettable wrong judgements were made at the individual level by the official institutions of the Church's teaching authority. Nevertheless, on this crucial point that which it was sought to hold firm to and to defend in this struggle was right, was Catholic, and must endure. (In this connection it is a secondary question what degree of success was achieved in arriving at a correct understanding of Modernism itself considered as an historical entity and in a way that did positive justice to its basic concerns.)[2]

Now that we have established the fundamental theological meaning of our first thesis, which still remains in force even today, we can go on to the more precise question of exactly what the real interrelationship is between dogmatic theology and fundamental theology, faith and the historical experience on which faith is based. This is a question which still remains completely open. Certainly since the apologetics of the 19th century right down to the first few decades of the 20th century an extrinsicist approach has been pursued in fundamental theology which has made itself felt even in many of the individual declarations of the Church's teaching authority against Modernism. This extrinsicism, however, fails to do justice to the realities, or to express aright the true relationship between faith and that which provides the basis for faith.[3] There has been a widespread failure (as, for instance, the charge of heresy made against Rousselot has shown) to recognize how faith and the historical findings of fundamental theology mutually condition one another, and are immanently present within one another, even though they are not to be identified, and to perceive the relationship between the light of faith and the basis for faith as capable of being reflected upon by human reason. In a fundamental theological demonstration of Christian revelation of the kind we [204] are thinking of it was fondly imagined that properly speaking we could only be surprised at how, in that case, men who could not be presumed to be stupid or ill-willed did not embrace Christianity in its Catholic form as soon as they had heard only a little of this fundamental theology. But even if today we no longer accept the idea which has held sway for at least a hundred years of how, in more precise terms, dogmatic theology and fundamental theology are related one to the other (not even if today, once more, a somewhat similar version is seeking to assert itself in a certain current of Protestant theology), then this

[2] On this cf. e.g. K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, *Offenbarung und Uberlieferung* (Freiburg, 1965), pp. II ff.
[3] Among many other studies which should be cited on this question, cf. G. Muschalek, *Glaubensgewissheit in Freiheit* (Freiburg, 1968); E. Kunz, *Glaube - Gnade - Geschichte. Die Glaubenstheologie des Pierre Rousselot* (Frankfurt, 1970).

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is still, despite all, far from meaning that the Catholic dogmatic theologian, or even the Catholic exegete, should seek to get rid of his difficulties by saying that he rejects the fundamental theological significance of the first thesis totally and from the outset. Even when we have defined this thesis in such precise terms, we are still far from having arrived at any decision as to the full scope of what the Catholic theologian is to regard as indispensable in the life of Jesus as being relevant to fundamental theology. Even when we have interpreted the thesis in this sense, we have still not decided anything on the point of whether the historical findings in fundamental theology of such real events in the life of Jesus are or are not in *all* cases *univocally* the same.[4]

This brings us to a *second* thesis. It runs as follows: Catholic fundamental theology, and also present-day dogmatics (each in its own way) must nowadays take quite new factors into account, affecting points of individual detail. These consist in the findings and problems of present-day exegesis with regard to the historicity, whether asserted or assumed, of the events of the life of Jesus. Fundamental and dogmatic theologians must reckon with the fact that the degree of historicity to be ascribed to these may vary very greatly and in very vital respects. Their approach, therefore, must be quite different from that which it has formerly been. I am aware that so far as the majority of modern Catholic *exegetes* is concerned, in presenting such a thesis we are merely beating an open door. But I believe that unfortunately even today this thesis is still far from being regarded as established so far as the dogmatic theologians are concerned, and above all in the teaching of dogmatic theology in the seminaries. One point of detail, in itself insignificant, may serve to indicate this. [205] It is intended not as a hostile criticism of the Second Vatican Council, but as a simple statement of fact. Let us take as our example what it means to read the third chapter of 'Lumen Gentium', concerning the hierarchical constitution of the Church, or other passages concerning the priesthood in the Church, through the eyes of a modern exegete, and in the light of the New Testament passages there adduced. Unless we choose to regard these passages as mere pious biblical embellishment of statements of doctrine which could equally well have been expressed without these New Testament quotations, we must come to the following conclusion: a modern exegete would not have had the audacity to produce such naively asserted *dicta probantia* from the New Testament, and, moreover, would have maintained this attitude even if, with his colleagues from the department of dogmatic theology, he were to hold that such passages should obviously be included in documents of the Church's official teaching and in a context which intrinsically belongs to the modern awareness of faith and tradition. But it must be conceded that nowadays they should not be included in such documents in a way that reduces them to the status of mere pious embellishments devised by those who rejoice in biblical jargon. What we have said here does not, of course, apply to all such Scriptural quotations, but conversely, not all the quotations concerned can be allowed to escape this criticism.

The modern dogmatic theologian needs to adduce arguments from Scripture and to present them seriously as such, instead of merely repeating the Church's doctrines in biblical formulations. And if he is to do this he must take serious and exact cognizance of the findings, and also the problems, of modern exegesis. Nowadays he can precisely not simply present every saying placed upon the lips of Jesus by the evangelists as his *ipsissima verba*.[5]

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[4] This is certainly not the case, and these distinctions should be worked out in any fundamental theology. In doing this we should not act as though, for instance, our knowledge that the Eucharist was instituted by the pre-Easter Jesus is arrived at by a process of speculation univocally the same as the experience of his Resurrection and of the reception of this experience on our part.

[5] Although this still is a widespread practice in the current textbooks of dogmatic theology. We cannot justify these methods simply by saying that the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture is presupposed from fundamental theology. For the pupil will rightly recognize who is the immediate author of the statement which is adduced,

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He, the dogmatic theologian, must also allow for the possibility of very early theological developments within the primitive Christian community, dating even from before the earliest writings of the New Testament. Again in drawing theological quotations from the Apostolic writings, he should not simply treat them as though the individual sentence cannot and should not be submitted to further enquiry against the background of the whole of Christian revelation and of its [206] real origins[6] (in accordance with the *analogia fidei* and the ultimate unity of the New Testament, which, however, is not always immediately apparent, and which the dogmatic theologian must always in principle uphold). The doctrine of a canon within the canon is, in its real content, a sound and ancient principle, of hermeneutics for Catholic dogmatics. But we should not conclude from it that we have the right to set aside certain writings of the New Testament or even individual sentences (though admittedly these have to be interpreted aright) as not being in any sense binding upon us. The Catholic theologian must achieve a genuine understanding of the fact that even in the New Testament itself there are different levels and certain theological developments of the most varied kind, and which are far from admitting any direct or easy harmony between their various parts. Once he has grasped this fact, he has no reason whatever to despair of an argument from Scripture on a right understanding of it, provided he takes with all due seriousness modern exegesis and the refinements of biblical theology. The only prior condition is that he must have sufficient confidence in himself thoroughly to think out and bring to maturity in the context of the Church what he has already in principle observed in the New Testament, namely a living theological development which proceeds from the original experience of revelation, produces further theological developments, and even at the end of the New Testament, despite the division between the New Testament itself and the theological developments which follow (a division which itself has theological relevance) does not cease to advance to further ideas, taking the New Testament as its standard. A further prior condition is, admittedly, that the dogmatic theologian, in his use of arguments from biblical theology, must make clear the true nature of his approach through biblical arguments to his pupils. He must try to avoid giving the impression that all that is needed is to cite some passages from Scripture, perhaps to add a verbal paraphrase, and one has *ipso facto* proved what a Council has taught on the subject a thousand years later. Of course we can say that the statements just referred to constitute the outward presentation of something which a serious dogmatic theologian has actually achieved at an earlier stage, but when we view the average approach in dogmatic studies from *this* aspect (not from any other) right down to the present, we see that in fact it has not been such as has been described above, even though much in this approach can be excused on grounds of sheer lack of time. For a seminary teacher in dogmatics too inevitably suffers from this. [207] With regard to former interpretations of the second thesis, we are, once more, still stuck fast at a very general level, so that what has been said up to now must still seem to be nothing very exciting. The situation completely changes once a more precise question is posed. It is a question for the theologian who is not an exegete. What, in more precise terms, is he to hold firm to as historical in the life of Jesus, and as indispensable for him from the point of view of fundamental theology? This means too what he can and must expect from the exegete working in the field of fundamental theology. For whether the exegete notices it or not, he too, whether in a positive or a negative sense, is constantly working in this field. To mention just a few examples chosen at random, and purely for the sake of illustrating what is meant: must such a theologian expect the exegete to present the command to baptize in Mt. 28 as the *ipsissimum verbum* of Jesus? Must the exegete hand over to him the institution of

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and, moreover, it is of the utmost importance for the meaning and the theological significance of such a quotation to recognize this.

[6] cf. K. Rahner, 'Theology in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 23-41.

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the Eucharist, with at least a few words of interpretation and historical reconstruction? Innumerable questions of this and similar kinds are manifestly raised between exegetes and dogmatic theologians, and however true it may be that the dogmatic theologian should not prejudice the methods intrinsic to exegesis and biblical theology as historical disciplines, it is no less true that the dogmatic theologian cannot dispense the exegete from the duty of finding the answer to these questions which he puts to him, provided this exegete himself intends to be a Catholic theologian in the true sense, and not merely a historian of religion who by chance is concerned with the writings which are called the New Testament as mere texts of the history of religion.

I believe that the problem as here presented in more precise terms sharpens into a twofold question for the Catholic dogmatic theologian, with his special interest in the history of Jesus:

(a) According to the findings of historical research, did Jesus, prior to his death, say anything expressive of a messianic awareness in some way that is *apprehensible* to us, or *alternatively* are the indications of this such that historical research can be in a position positively and actually to *contest* them?

(b) Did Jesus rise from the dead in a way that does not simply reduce this event to a mere figure, and to something belonging only to the realm of the disciples' conscious faith? Or alternatively is this conscious faith of theirs based rather upon the Resurrection (however this may be interpreted in more precise terms) as something which is prior to the faith itself albeit only apprehensible *in* that faith?

In connection with these two questions we must add a few further [208] observations before going on to our third thesis, so as to understand what the two questions mean. So far as the 'messianic' consciousness of Jesus is concerned a question *of this kind* is ultimately speaking independent of the question of whether Jesus really claimed for himself the title of Messiah in his own words. The same applies to the other titles of dignity ascribed to him. The one point of concern for our present question is whether prior to his death he in some sense understood himself to have a significance of such a kind that he required other men to enter into a state of unity with him (a state to which the name faith, or any other name, may be given) of such a kind that the believer recognizes salvation as objectively and indissolubly bound up with him. If we can say this, then, I believe, we can trace the development of all that the subsequent strata in the New Testament present us with in the way of interpretations of Jesus, and which are found later still in the Church's teaching concerning divine Sonship at the metaphysical level (together with the doctrine of the preexistence of the Logos as rightly interpreted) from Jesus' own understanding of himself as here described. In this connection it still makes no difference whether a particular exegete formulates the point of departure in New Testament and ecclesiastical christology referred to above as historical or merely as being more or less *of such a kind* as we have just indicated. He may formulate it quite differently. What is essential is that this point of departure, so long as the individual wants to remain a Catholic exegete, is adequate so far as he himself is concerned, and so far as the Church's own conscious faith is concerned, as such a point of departure.

The second observation is this: so far as the question formulated under (b) is concerned, the Catholic dogmatic theologian (and the exegete, who in fact should never cease to be a dogmatic theologian as well) has not only the right but the duty too (generally much neglected) clearly to work out the uniqueness, deriving from the reality itself, of the knowledge of the Resurrection of Jesus achieved in fundamental theology as distinct from all other historical knowledge. This is a point which cannot be developed or rendered more comprehensible any further here, yet it is of crucial importance for a right understanding of the question formulated under (b).

Only at this stage can we proceed to formulate the *third* thesis, and it is only by so formulating it that we can show how the problems we have developed up to this point come

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to their full sharpness. The thesis runs as follows: there is one question which Catholic dogmatic theologies have not yet thought out in any explicit sense at all, and so which has not been [209] answered even at the implicit level by them in any clear sense. The question is whether the dogmatic theologian can be satisfied *solely* with a positive answer from the exegete to the *second* question (that concerning the Resurrection of Jesus), and whether he can develop the statements of christology concerning Jesus himself solely from faith in the Resurrection as based on the findings of fundamental theology, even when he dispenses with the historical witness which the exegete provides to a 'messianic' awareness of the pre-Easter Jesus as a positive assertion.

The thesis we have stated lays down that there is a question here concerning which the dogmatic theologian still has to make his own position clear. Is it for him still an open question, or *alternatively* is it one which has already been decided in the affirmative on dogmatic grounds (obviously in collaboration with the exegete)? Obviously no such question is being presented as open so far as Jesus' own messianic awareness is concerned 'in itself', nor even with regard to any *dogmatic* statement about it. It is a question only of the knowledge of this messianic consciousness as a matter of *fundamental theological* enquiry into the history of Jesus, and *quoad nos*. Alternatively, and in more precise terms, it is a question of whether the dogmatic theologian's knowledge of this awareness as derived from fundamental theology constitutes an absolutely indispensable prior condition so far as he is concerned for his dogmatic statements about Jesus. In my opinion it has been sufficiently demonstrated elsewhere[7] that we can so think of the messianic awareness of Jesus, or Jesus' human awareness of his 'metaphysical' divine sonship in the sense of the theological orthodoxy of the Council of Chalcedon, that the exegete will not feel compelled to raise any objection on the basis of his data.

We are asserting, then, that there is here a question which, so far as the specialist in dogmatics or fundamental theology is concerned, is still an open one. It is the question of what demands such a theologian must make upon the exegete from the standpoint of his dogmatic theology with regard to the possibility of knowing about the messianic consciousness of the pre-Easter Jesus (this question is, of course, still independent of the further question of what the exegete's reply will be to this question and this demand from the side of fundamental and dogmatic theology). Again in asserting that the question is open, we are not of course in any [210] sense biased against the fact that this question which is put to the exegete must inevitably, or at least with the utmost historical probability, meet with a negative answer from his side. Nor do we intend in any sense to insinuate by this third thesis that it is exegetically speaking certain, or at least extremely probable, that there was never any point in time in the 'development' of the pre-Easter Jesus (though from the point of view of dogmatics it is perfectly conceivable) in which he claimed for himself certain titles of dignity (it makes no difference which), which of their very nature contained that which we are nowadays able to call a messianic awareness, the awareness of being the eschatological bringer of salvation, the Son of God etc. Again in these questions, which are certainly exegetically speaking difficult, we should not proceed from the tacit assumption that the most sceptical and minimalizing interpretation has the greatest chance of arriving at the truth.

The situation nowadays, however, in exegesis is such not only on the Protestant but on the Catholic side too, that with regard to the pre-Easter Jesus' understanding of himself in so far as this is still historically attainable to us, very difficult and disputed problems arise, and hence the Catholic dogmatist and fundamental theologian must ask himself what he should or

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[7] cf. K. Rahner, 'Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-consciousness of Christ', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 193-215; A. Vögtle, 'Exegetische Erwägungen über das Wissen und Selbstbewusstsein Jesu', *Gott in Welt. Festgabe Rahner* I (Freiburg, 1964), pp. 608-667; H. Riedlinger, *Geschichtlichkeit und Vollendung des Wissens Christi* (Freiburg, 1966).

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should not demand of the exegete from his own standpoint as in this respect unconditionally established. And with regard to this question our third thesis now purports to say that provisionally (at least until the whole problem has been thought out more precisely) it is not impossible from the outset to take the experience of faith of the Resurrection of Jesus as our sole basis, and so to achieve those theological conclusions which are already expressed in the New Testament itself, and then in the later credal pronouncements of the Church in her christology. Admittedly the Resurrection must be understood not as any kind of coming to life of a man, or even as the return of a man to the plane of temporal and biological existence, but rather as a unique event, though one that still takes place within the unfolding of our time, as the seal of God upon the 'reality of Jesus' (if we may avail ourselves of this somewhat obscure phrase) etc. To state the matter in other terms: it is perhaps conceivable (from the aspect of fundamental theology) that the risen Lord (who, of course had a religious mission with regard to the radical closeness of the kingdom of God, which claims our absolute obedience) can, solely on the basis of the Resurrection, be recognized with sufficient sureness as *that which* the statements of Christianity in its orthodox christology acknowledge him to be. It is true that we cannot at this point adduce the true arguments on which this thesis is based. This would go far beyond [211] the scope of so brief an essay as this. The third thesis is, in fact, ultimately speaking intended merely as a question to be put to the fundamental theologian and the dogmatist as to whether they might possibly come to terms with a thesis of this kind, and thereby could give the Catholic exegete wider scope and greater freedom in his historical researches concerning the pre-Easter Jesus' understanding of himself than they have accorded to that exegete hitherto.

Of course an objection which might be advanced against this hypothetical third thesis might be that whatever reply might be made to it it would be of no real importance for the simple reason that the enquiry into the Resurrection of Jesus from the point of view of fundamental theology is no easier to answer than the question, likewise from the point of view of fundamental theology (not from that of dogmatics!) of the pre-Easter Jesus' understanding of himself. But for reasons which I cannot set forth here, this objection does not seem to me to be really justified. Provided our thought is not conditioned by the Platonist assumption that man is divided into body and soul, each 'part' having its own absolutely disparate destiny, provided we do not think of our Resurrection and Jesus' in the sense of a return to a biological mode of existence such as we experience in the present, or in some similar sense which is in reality mythological, provided we understand, on the basis of both these conditions, that the definitive mode of existence for a being of our kind endowed with freedom, when this definitive state is taken as the object of our hope, implies what we know as 'resurrection', then we are in a position to understand how there can be a 'transcendental' justification for a hope of resurrection (even though in history as it *de facto* exists this hope is always connected with the 'experience' of the Resurrection of Jesus in a *mutually* conditioning relationship). And so in the light of this the assured faith of the disciples comes to seem as though they had believed in a strange miracle which no-one nowadays can reproduce. But as we have said it is no part of our task here to provide a justification in terms of fundamental theology for the conviction that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead (regarding this as an element in faith in his Resurrection which comes into force only within this faith, but still as such can also be, in a genuine sense, the basis for this faith).

Even if this third thesis were to be taken as an enquiry into what it means to say that the Resurrection is an adequate point of departure in fundamental theology for christology, it would still always have a certain importance for the question of Jesus' own understanding of himself something which is a matter for historical research. For the exegete who [212] in his own faith reproduces the Easter faith of the disciples (without interpreting it away) must, in his realistic researches into the historical facts, precisely pose the question of how in all

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seriousness the first disciples could have arrived at their Easter faith if they had known nothing beforehand about Jesus from his own understanding of himself, except that he was a wandering religious preacher preaching a message which was totally independent of his person and his own faith.

It would be a satisfaction to me if this first sketch for a strategic approach to liberate the modern Catholic exegete were to be welcomed by the exegete himself and greeted by the specialists in dogmatic and fundamental theology at least with a certain good will and without immediate protest. Admittedly for this I am assuming that in both camps there is some understanding of such problems. For today it is the fashion to be fideist so far as the Christian faith is concerned and more or less schizophrenic so far as the relationship between faith and reason (taken in a philosophical and historical sense) is concerned. But this state of affairs need not necessarily always remain the same.

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[213]

15

THE TWO BASIC TYPES OF CHRISTOLOGY

We shall here be attempting to work out two basic types of christology, and so of christological statements which are put forward with the claim that they are *the* basic forms – in other words that in principle and taken together, they embrace the entire field of possible christological statements. Before attempting to give an outline of these two types, I shall have to make certain preliminary observations. The two types envisaged are, so far as I know, nowhere explicitly or precisely reflected upon as such, i.e. as distinct from one another. This means that I must take full responsibility for what I shall have to say about them, the special qualities which I shall be ascribing to each type exclusively, and the lines of demarcation by which they will be distinguished from one another. Both of these basic types (and of course from time to time various exceptional forms and hybrids appear), can be expressed in either an orthodox or a heterodox way, so that in the history of dogma as it actually exists both types figure repeatedly and in very many ways. In the christologies which have *de facto* been developed these basic types figure for the most part in mixed form, so that it is extremely difficult to draw a clear and explicit distinction between the two. I believe that these two forms are already present in the christologies of the New Testament, even if there too they have not been consciously adverted to as clearly distinguishable from one another. It is virtually impossible within the limits we have set ourselves to provide proofs from biblical theology and the history of dogma in support of our proposition. We must confine ourselves to delineating the two basic types envisaged in very abstract terms and without the safeguard of established historical facts. It is extremely difficult even to find names for the types referred to capable of designating them clearly and unmistakably. In fact any concise designation of them inevitably entails the danger of misunderstandings. With this very important proviso, I would like to call the first type the '*saving* history' type, a christology viewed from below, and the second [214] type the *metaphysical* type, a christology developing downwards from above. In saying this it must admittedly be recognized that the concepts of a rising and descending christology do not really cover what is here being pointed to in an unmistakable manner. For a 'saving history' christology, leading upwards from below, can as such obviously be re-expressed in the alternative christology proceeding downwards from above. For it understands, and must understand, this process of 'rising up' as an act proper to God himself. This does not of itself mean, however, that the 'movement downwards from above' here would lead to the same conclusions in terms of content as the 'downwards movement' in a metaphysical or 'descending' type of christology. In distinguishing these two types we are leaving the question open as to whether the second type is not in some sense logically contained in the first all along, and whether it cannot be explicitated from this under certain metaphysical and theological conditions, especially those bearing upon the unity between the history of the natural world and the history of human thought. There is a further question which cannot be treated of here, namely to which of the two types here envisaged the classic christology of Chalcedon properly belongs. Despite the fact that at first sight this christology, which is strongly metaphysical in character, seems to correspond to a descending christology, it appears on closer examination that what we have in this classic christology is rather a mixed type, especially seeing that in it the development of ideas is markedly in terms of particular categories, and it is not the cosmological christology proper that determines the approach. Rather this is at most something that can be derived from it as a conclusion, especially since in a Western Trinitarian doctrine the

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cosmological function of the Logos (who becomes man) has ceased to be regarded as a special property of the Logos as distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit.[1]

[215]

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF SAVING HISTORY

We must now proceed to delineate the first type, the 'saving history' christology. In it the eye of the believer in his experience of saving history alights first on the man Jesus of Nazareth, and on him in his fully human reality, in his death, in the absolute powerless and in the abidingly definitive state which his reality and his fate have been brought to by God, something which we call his Resurrection, his glorification, his sitting at the right hand of the Father. The eye of faith rests upon this man Jesus. He is, in the concrete sense described, the content of the specifically Christian experience, and the experience of saving history. Through him, as faith sees it, God's ultimate and irrevocable utterance of salvation to man is made. The fact that God is gracious to man despite his attitude of culpable protest, and the fact that this grace imposes itself victoriously – this is something which becomes definitively and unsurpassably clear to the experience of faith in this man Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth is not merely *an* utterance of God to man which, viewed in the light of the development of the history of salvation and revelation always remains at the level of the provisional and conditional turning of God to man, but rather the definitive, unsurpassable, and victorious – in other words eschatological – utterance of God to man. And because of this, and to the extent that it is true, Jesus cannot be subsumed into the category of prophet and religious reformer.[2] On the contrary, it could be demonstrated, even if we must forego this here for want of time, that from this starting-point of christology which we have just defined, the classic statements of the Chalcedonian christology can be arrived at provided that we interpret these in themselves aright. And for this precisely the starting-point mentioned above has, conversely, an indispensable and crucial importance. The point of departure for this christology, therefore, is the simple experience of the man Jesus, and of the Resurrection in which his fate was brought to its conclusion. It is he whom man encounters in his existential need, in his quest for salvation. And in Jesus he experiences the fact that the mystery of man, which it is not for man himself to control, and which is bound up with the absurdity of guilt and death, is, nevertheless, hidden in the love [216] of God. Where Jesus is present in this sense there is *ipso facto* present too an orthodox – a Chalcedonian, if we like to express it so – christology, even if through our own limitations, or because of the liability to mis-understanding inherent in the Chalcedonian formula, the explicitation in terms of faith of this basic experience of Jesus and in Jesus in faith is *de facto* not attained to. We have already said that a basic experience of this kind of the fate of Jesus can be described as the deed of

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[1] The author has repeatedly made known his views on questions of christology. Cf., for instance: 'Current Problems in Christology', *Theological Investigations* I (London, 1961), pp. 149-200; 'The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for Our Relationship with God', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 35-46; 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 105-120; 'Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 157-192; 'One Mediator and the Many Mediations', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 169-184; 'The Position of Christology in the Church Between Exegesis and Dogmatics', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 185-214. Also in the present volume, 'Remarks on the Importance of the History of Jesus for Catholic Dogmatics'.

[2] Materially speaking, the subject here being treated of is the same as that which the author has sought to throw light upon in the articles entitled 'Mitte des Glaubens', *Hilfe zum Glauben,* Theol. Meditationen 27, A. Exeler, J. B. Metz, K. Rahner edd. (Einsiedeln, 1971), pp. 39-56. But cf. also in the same series, *Ich glaube an Jesus Christus,* Theol. Meditationen 21 (Einsiedeln, 1968) with references and bibliography.

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God wrought upon him and upon us, and so too the Chalcedonian interpretation of that fate can be expressed as a descending christology, though this does not mean that this *precise* descending christology, in contrast to the second basic type of christology, need necessarily be saying more than what was already clearly present at the starting-point: Jesus in his human lot is *the* (not *a*!) address of God to man, and as such eschatologically unsurpassable. In this basic type of christology, in which Jesus is from the outset seen within the context of the individual man's quest for salvation in the concrete human conditions of his life, the cosmos as such does not enter into the question.[3] As the creation of God and as the world which is in a fallen state, this is simply there beforehand as the stage on which the event of Jesus in saving history takes place. And properly speaking it makes no difference to this to say that this world has, in the providence of God, been conceived of all along in such a way that its true function is to be the stage for this saving event. This appears above all from the fact that the possibility and actuality of sin, to which this saving event represents the answer, does not itself in turn appear as conditioned, permitted, and mediated by this saving event. Any transition of this christology into the second basic type could at most be arrived at on the basis of the conviction that the promise of the Spirit given through Jesus signifies not merely the salvation of man, which is measured by his own personal need, but rather the self-communication of the absolute God as he is in himself to man.[4] For our present purposes we shall not attempt to show how the various exceptional varieties of this basic type, whether orthodox or heterodox in character, can be derived from it, and also how they make their appearance in history. And a further task which must likewise be foregone is that of devoting a fuller consideration to the question of what [217] may be concluded from this basic starting-point of christology with reference to an orthodox, sober, and prudent theology of the Trinity, and also with regard to the question of the pre-existence of the divine Logos.

METAPHYSICAL CHRISTOLOGY

The second basic type of christology has, with all the necessary provisos, been called the metaphysical type, a descending christology. In this formulation the term 'metaphysical' is taken in its broadest sense – in other words not merely as having that meaning which is familiar to us from the classic Western philosophy of being. If, and to the extent that, a christology clearly goes beyond the original experience of Jesus by the believer (whether justifiably or unjustifiably, this is not the question for the present), then it is metaphysical. This also applies, for instance to a christology which originally, and not merely in a derived sense, speaks of a communication of idiomata from the *kenosis* and the death of God, and intends such paradoxical statements in their full seriousness. It would in fact be possible to speak in these terms in a derived sense of the conclusions following from the first basic type of christology. In any case the metaphysical christology as intended here clearly finds its point of departure and the possibility of verifying it in the first basic type of christology. But this does not alter the fact that what we are dealing with here is a basic type which is different in its entire conception. It can, of course, be present in various ways more intensively and more clearly. If we want to designate it in its fully characteristic form we can surely isolate two special characteristics in it. First the approach here consists in a markedly 'descending' christology, which, at least formally speaking constitutes something more than a mere

[3] The consideration of these basic forms, and, arising from this, the working out of a programme for the presentation of christology was brought to fruition in the course of a study which the author undertook with his colleague, W. T. Thüsing in the Winter semester of 1970-71 at the University of Munster, Westphalia.

[4] On this cf. the pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council on Revelation in 'Dei Verbum', *The Decree on Revelation* Nos 2 and 6.

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inversion of the ascending christology found in the first basic type. The pre-existence of the Logos, his divinity, his distinction from the Father, the predicate 'Son of God' ascribed to the divine Logos as him who pre-exists in this christology, are regarded as manifestly belonging to him from the first, and assumed more or less to be statements based upon the verbal assertions and convictions of Jesus himself. This pre-existent Logos who is the Son of God descends from heaven, becomes man, i.e. assumes a human reality as his own, in such a way that this pre-existent Logos also achieves a visibly historical dimension and appears in the very history which as pre-existent he has already shaped and moulded.[5] In this statement of a 'descending' christology we [218] are not at present concerned with the question of whether and how it is covered as implicitly included also in the ascending christology of the first basic type. If we have rightly understood it, this is certainly the case. But the decisive factor in this descending christology is, after all, precisely that it proceeds, as something that is self-evident and does not need any further recourse to the experience of Jesus in saving history, from a doctrine of the Trinity, the Logos, and a pre-existing Son of God. And these assumptions are properly speaking based not upon the experience in saving history of the crucified and risen Jesus, but are made known through verbal teaching by this same Jesus, a teaching which is placed upon his lips and regarded as his *ipsissima verba*. And in this approach we are abstracting from the question of whether this is historically speaking justified or not. God has become man. For this second type of christology this is, from the point of view of religion and theology, not a justifiable interpretation of a more original experience of saving history, but the supreme and primary axiom of this christology, though of course we are also aware that there is a history behind the revelation of this axiom itself. Hence it comes that the statement of faith that Jesus Christ is God does not need any further explanation so far as this line of thought is concerned, whereas in the first basic type of christology the same statement has an interpretative force – though of course a justified one – and comes as the conclusion of an elaborate argument, since our critical understanding of it has to be acquired from the more original experience of saving history. Secondly this descending christology, as found in the second basic type, implies a doctrine concerning the cosmic and, if the term may be permitted, transcendental significance of the Incarnation. It is the Logos that created the world that becomes man. But from this there follows the further implication that this process of becoming man constitutes something more than a mere isolated event marking a particular point in space and time, and belonging to a particular category, in a world which for the rest is comprehensible even on other grounds, but is rather the supreme point in the relationship of the divine Logos to his world in general. Creation is then regarded as the enabling condition for an element in the self-emptying, self-uttering, and self-communicating of God. Because, and to the extent that, God will not empty himself and bestow himself in an act of love into a void of nothingness, the world becomes that which opens itself to receive its own glory, which is sufficient for it. Man, on this basic conception, is not that which is 'self-evident' in itself, or the empty question waiting to be answered by God, but precisely that which comes to be if and to the extent that, God himself utters himself; that [219] which is precisely contained within a question, and also an answer of God in which God himself expresses himself. World is not simply accepted as that which is already given, but comes to be in that God himself utters himself and in this self-utterance of his in the Word become flesh, imposes the finality and unsurpassability of this self-utterance. The Incarnation is not so much an event in space and time, simply requiring to be accepted in its factualness, but is rather the historical supreme point of a transcendental, albeit free, relationship of God to that which is not divine, in which God, himself positing this non-divine, enters into it in order

[5] At the New Testament level these basic forms seem particularly clear in passages of the christological hymns in the Pauline Captivity Epistles and in the Prologue to the Johannine gospel.

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himself to have his own personal history of love within it. Saving history, as the history of the forgiveness and reconciliation of man in his guilt, is embraced and integrated within a relationship of God to the world which is established prior to guilt with a view to the history of God's own Incarnation within his world, and admits of the presence of guilt in the world only as a possibility of radicalizing this relationship of God to the world, sustaining it always and throughout from the first, the relationship of love in which God lavishes himself upon the world. For this basic type it is ultimately speaking not a decisive factor whether it is developed more in terms of existential ontology or of cosmology – whether, in other words, man is conceived of as belonging to a world or whether the world, together with man, is conceived of as God's self-utterance – provided only that this self-utterance of God is thought of as achieving its point of eschatological irreversibility in Jesus.

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO BASIC TYPES

The fact that these two types are not merely basic types but *the two* basic types of christology should surely be conceded. If we take sufficiently into account the formal character of the characterization of these two basic types, the two types concerned could, of course, materially speaking, be made to undergo extraordinary variations. And hence the impression may emerge that there are very many other types of christology which can likewise be claimed to be basic types. But if we take the transcendentality and the historicity of man as constituting the two poles of our basic understanding of humanity, then, for our understanding of what is meant by Jesus Christ, there can be only one conception, in which man remains freely within his history, from which in fact he can never be separated so as to achieve a state of total transcendentality, and in which he finds his salvation, and one conception according to which man radically brings to bear his metaphysical powers in order to proceed from the question of [220] what he is as subject and what the whole of reality is in one, and attempts once more to understand what he has initially freely experienced in history as his salvation.

This in itself already provides a starting-point for a more precise definition of the relationship which the two basic types bear to one another. It is clear that the second basic type constantly presupposes that experience of sacred history which is experienced in the first basic type, as its abiding basis and as the necessary criterion for rightly understanding the assertions it contains. Precisely today it is necessary, for an understanding of faith which is appropriate to the modern situation, to make clear whence this second basic type derives. This is not to maintain, even implicitly, that the second basic type is really superfluous, and, especially today, simply makes it more difficult to believe in Jesus as the eschatological bringer of salvation. Even in the New Testament as a whole the frontiers are, after all, crossed, from a statement belonging to the sphere of the first basic type to statements belonging to the second. And in principle this procedure is justifiable even if the titles of dignity attributed to Jesus in the New Testament point to him as man in his function as bringer of salvation without directly or *ipso facto* consciously reflecting upon his pre-existence as a God who is on the one hand 'in himself' the inconceivable origin, and on the other he who can utter himself in historical terms and so justifies what is really meant in statements about the Trinity.[6] Man as a whole, and in the spiritual development of humanity as such, is always too he who asks questions at a metaphysical and transcendental level. He is always he who cannot have any eschatological hope as a man of this earth unless he affirms that a continuity exists through all the discontinuity between the history of the natural order

[6] On this cf. the author's remarks in the article, 'Theos in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* I (London, 1961), pp. 79-148.

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and the history of the human spirit. Jesus constitutes the eschatological response of God primarily not in words but in the deliverance of concrete reality. And precisely if this is true, then this response of God is *ipso facto* an event of this material world, albeit one which brings about eschatological transformations in it. If we conceive of the deed of God as one, for all the freedom in virtue of which the individual realities and events of the world are both connected with one another and distinct from one another, then we should enquire into the intrinsic unity which exists between the creation of the world and that unique event within this world which we recognize in faith in Jesus of Nazareth. All descending christology of the second basic type may have a secondary and interpretative [221] character. It may again and again, in order to achieve intelligibility and to justify its own propositions, be forced to return to the quite simple experience of Jesus of Nazareth. Nevertheless it is legitimate, inevitable, and sanctioned by the fact that the Church, right from the earliest times down to the present day, has discovered Jesus of Nazareth precisely in these statements of a Chalcedonian christology which seem so abstractly metaphysical, almost irreligious, and strangely inquisitive in character. It has discovered him there afresh again and again.

ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND CREDIBILITY OF THE TWO BASIC TYPES

Surely it is unnecessary to give any prolonged explanation of the fact that in modern times, and on the most different grounds, whether from missionary considerations or considerations of religious pedagogy (or however we like to put it), the first basic type of christology can more easily be understood in its credibility and significance for the concrete conditions of human living than the second, which, if, as is usual, it is presented in isolation and without connection with the first, all too easily gives the impression of mythology, and seems to run counter both to historical experience and to any genuine idea of God. If from considerations of missionary needs and religious pedagogy we set the first basic type in the foreground as our point of departure for christology in general, then a clearer distinction must be drawn between the two basic types than is normally the case in the preaching of the Church. For it is usual for this to present the saving history and soteriological significance of Jesus for us merely as the conclusion of arguments primarily put forward in a descending christology, and not as the point of departure, as an experience of saving history, which we make first and foremost in the true man, Jesus. It is possible of course to take the statement ‘The Word was made flesh’ in the sense of the metaphysical and descending christology of Chalcedon. (This without prejudice to the question of how the statement was intended in its explicit sense in John.) But as understood in this sense it cannot nowadays constitute the point of departure for a preaching of christology which can only find any basis in fundamental theology by invoking the established authority of those who put forward such a statement.

With regard to the relationship which the two basic types bear one to another, a point which should be examined more precisely than has been the case hitherto or is possible here is whether we cannot discern an [222] exaggerated argument in the second or metaphysical basic type of christology, in that it goes beyond anything which can be regarded as an implication or a clear and unambiguous consequence deduced from the first basic type, and capable of being justified on these grounds. It could in fact be the case that an exaggeration of this kind, even when it is assumed to be binding in faith, is nevertheless incapable of being deduced by formal logic from the propositions of the first basic type, but needs other supplementary principles, so that it is only when these are brought together with the propositions of the first basic type that the statement of the second basic type can be arrived at. It might be the case that statements which sound to our Western ears, educated as they are by Chalcedon, as statements of this second or metaphysical basic type, and so contain a

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supplementary element of this kind, are actually (and above all in their place in Scripture), intended merely as emphatic statements in the sense of the first basic type.

These two basic types and their mutual interrelationship surely enable us to understand that in present-day Christian theology too there is room for a pluralism of christologies. If these christologies respect the Church's credal formulae concerning Christ where these are definitive, and constantly submit afresh to critical reappraisal by standards outside themselves, and provided that at the same time they include, and accord all due respect to, the essential reference to Jesus as the bringer of eschatological salvation, the different christologies can continue to be different, and still be orthodox. Even the approach by way of fundamental theology to the understanding of a certain essential point can assume very different shapes. The point we refer to is that man, whether consciously or not, seeks for a bringer of salvation in the absolute of this kind. Again very different answers can presumably be given to the question of how far we can advance into the second basic type of christology, if we start from the first. For surely very different opinions can be held with regard to the existence, content, and binding force (from the point of view of faith) of the previously mentioned element of exaggeration in the second basic type as compared with the first, and such differences of opinion cannot straightway be eliminated by appealing to the decisions of the Church's teaching authority, or by a discussion merely at the theological level. The point of departure for a decision of faith in concrete human life varies from one individual to another, and from one epoch to another. In practice it invariably and inevitably includes elements which are not the outcome of conscious reflection, and are incapable of being so. Now these different points of departure for a decision of faith for Christ – something [223] which invariably plays its part in determining the christology of a man or a theologian – are quite incapable of being united, in any effective sense, within a higher synthesis. Certainly one can strive to achieve some such thing. It may well be legitimate to tackle such a task ever afresh. But whatever gains may be achieved by christologies of this kind, which reduce a pluralism as far as possible to a synthesis, they are achieved only at the cost of becoming more remote from one particular, but in the concrete conditions of human life essential, point of departure in human understanding, and the only one from which christology can be pursued. Even the two basic types of christology, and their mutual interrelationship, render such a pluralism of christologies both inevitable and legitimate.

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[244]

VOLUME 13

LIST OF SOURCES

ON RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THOMAS AQUINAS
A lecture included in a special series broadcast on the Bavarian radio on 29 December 1970; unpublished hitherto.

THOMAS AQUINAS ON TRUTH
A slightly revised version of a lecture given on 26 January 1938 to the Philosophical Society at Neukirch. It is here published for the first time in German. A translation has already been published in *Rev. Portuguesa de Philos*. 7 (1951), pp. 353-370.

POSSIBLE COURSES FOR THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE
First published in *Bilanz der Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert* III, H. Vorgrimler and R. van der Gucht edd. (Freiburg, 1970), pp. 530, 551. A French translation in *Bilan de la théologie de XXe siècle* II (Tournai-Paris, 1971), pp. 911-952. Published again in French in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 93 (1971), pp. 3-27, and in Spanish in *Arbor* 75 (1970), No. 291, pp. 6-29.

ON THE CURRENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY
A lecture delivered on 13 November 1971 at the formal opening of the 'Hochschule für Philosophie/München' (The Jesuit Faculty of Philosophy), and published in *Theologie und Phiosophie* 47 (1972), pp. 1-15.
[225]
THEOLOGY AS ENGAGED IN AN INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE WITH THE SCIENCES
Lecture delivered at a conference of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research at the University of Bielefeld on 28 September 1970; published in *Die Theologie in der interdisizplinären Forschung*, J. B. Metz and Tr. Rendtorff edd. (Düsseldorf, 1971), pp. 27-34.

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND THE CONTEMPORARY SCIENCES
A lecture delivered at a conference of the 'Secretariat International des Questions Scientifiques' of the *Pax Romana* at Rome on 20 March 1971.

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EXPERIENCE OF SELF AND EXPERIENCE OF GOD
First published in J. Tenzler (ed.), *Urbild und Abglanz. Festschrift für Prof H. Doms* (Regensburg, 1971), pp. 201-208.

DOES TRADITIONAL THEOLOGY REPRESENT GUILT AS INNOCUOUS AS A FACTOR IN HUMAN LIFE?

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Hitherto unpublished.

THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF 'WITNESS'
Prepared for a symposium at Rome in January 1972. Unpublished in German.
[226]
IDEAS FOR A THEOLOGY OF DEATH
A Lecture delivered at a conference of the *Katholische Akademie in Bayern* on 15 November 1970 at Regensburg. Hitherto unpublished.

HUMAN ASPECTS OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST
First published in *Tribuna Medica* 7 (Madrid, 1970), No. 368, pp. 14-15. Here published for the first time in German.

THE QUEST FOR APPROACHES LEADING TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MYSTERY OF THE GOD-MAN JESUS
Published in *Geist und Leben* 44 (1971), pp. 404-408

REMARKS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORY OF JESUS FOR CATHOLIC DOGMATICS
First published in *Die Zeit Jesu*. *Festschrift für H. Schlier*, G. Bornkamm and K. Rahner edd. (Freiburg, 1970), pp. 273-283.

THE TWO BASIC TYPES OF CHRISTOLOGY
A lecture given at the *Katholische Akademie in Bayern* on 16 December 1971 at Munich. Hitherto unpublished.

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BASIC OBSERVATIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF CHANGEABLE AND UNCHANGEABLE FACTORS IN THE CHURCH

The essay which follows is concerned with the theme of changeable and unchangeable factors in the Church.[1] Right from the outset it must be emphasized that we shall be concerning ourselves only with certain *basic* observations. This in itself imposes certain clear limits upon our study.

For the most part it is on points of detail that internecine strife arises. Basic observations are, in fact, usually so general that they can be accepted even by groups which will subsequently find themselves vigorously fighting against one another once they come down to those concrete questions and decisions in which the general principles do indeed have to be applied, though even then in very many cases they do not, taken in isolation, yield any very precise conclusions. If, however, we were to seek here and now to draw a distinction between the changeable and unchangeable factors in concrete individual instances we would perforce be drawn into an endless study of cases, such as cannot be the subject of a single brief study.

Nevertheless we may perhaps hope that even very general principles bearing upon the distinction referred to can be of some use in finding one's way somewhat better and more confidently through the life of the Church today.

In treating of this theme we feel that we can count upon very lively interest on the part of any educated Catholic Christian. And surely we do not need to justify this feeling at any length here. As a result of the [4] activities of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council a great sense of unrest and great changes have been initiated in the Church whether we like it or not, whether we regard this Pope and this Council as the true cause of this process, or merely as the occasion of it and the catalyst which set it in motion. These changes have embraced all departments of the Church's thought and life: the doctrine and theology of the Church, her liturgy, her concrete constitution as affecting both the universal Church and the particular churches, her ecclesiastical law, her pastoral activities, our conception of established authority in the Church, the relationship of the Church's officials and her people to one another, the relationship of the Church to the world, our understanding of her function of service which she has to maintain and perform for the world, the states, international relationships, the various movements and parties, etc. In these and many other respects we can even now recognize that a notable transformation has already taken place. This transformation has not been concluded but is still in process. Some praise it, while others deplore it. For some it is not proceeding fast enough and-is regarded merely as a starting-point for many more radical transformations. Others hope that the position will soon become stable once more. Or they are in despair, believing that the Church, no less than the world, gives the impression of an immense confusion, of contradiction, of opposed tendencies and the uncertainty arising from these as affecting the Church's officials and her people alike. When we attempt to achieve a clear picture of the background factors in terms of psychology and the history of ideas which lie behind such sharply opposed judgements on the significance of these changes, even at a quite general level, then surely we have to say that the progressives' greet this change and seek to accelerate it and press it on to further lengths

[1] The subject has already long been under discussion. We may regard Y. Congar's work, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise* (Paris, I950) as the first major contribution, though the question has undoubtedly acquired a fresh vitality and breadth as a result of the Second Vatican Council.

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because they regard change, becoming, transformation, and the process of breaking into a future as yet unknown as the true essence of reality and as the special characteristic of our own times, and because on this basis they regard all change in the Church as justified in itself even as applied to the Church's own life, at least to the extent that they take it for granted that that which is new is also that which is true and valuable. And in this they are often extremely naive and lacking in real thought. The 'conservatives', on the other hand, have hitherto experienced the Church precisely as the context of that which abides, of an eternal truth which does not adapt itself to intellectual fashions, of the courage to reach out to eternity, of clear unambiguous meaning and sureness. In many cases they may have become converts to Catholicism precisely on this account, because they envisaged the Catholic Church, and [5] especially the Church since the French Revolution, precisely as the guardian and protector of that which abides and is unchangeable. These conservatives, therefore, feel a sense of shock at the current changes in the Church, and feel that they have been cast headlong by them into a cruel uncertainty. Under certain circumstances they may, as converts, ask themselves why then did we really become Catholics at all? As Catholics they miss the former clear and decisive voice of the Church in theology, morals, and canon law, and in the Church's practice as well as in the Latin liturgy. And they likewise ask themselves where that Church still survives which they once experienced as clarity, lack of ambiguity, sureness, and peace.

Before we enter into the real problems which our subject entails certain firm positions have to be defined with regard to the distinction to be drawn between changeable and unchangeable factors in the Church. These positions are correct, still continue to be valid even today, and are at the same time traditional. We must firmly and clearly define these traditional positions precisely because they remain valid, offer at least a provisional orientation, and must not be forgotten even though, as we shall have to point out at a later stage, they are incapable, of themselves, of supplying the *whole* answer. On the contrary, it is only with them that the real problems begin. We might formulate these firmly held traditional positions on our subject as follows: there is an abiding corpus of dogma in the Church, an interpretation of basic moral attitudes which has a permanent validity in Christian life (in other words an abiding Christian ethic) and a valid and permanent constitutional law of the Church. The First Vatican Council solemnly promulgated the doctrine that when the Church expresses and articulates, in the form of specific propositions, her awareness of her own faith, then, whether it be through the ordinary doctrinal channels open to her or through solemn and official doctrinal definitions on the part of the Pope or a Council, and as commanding an absolute assent of faith, these propositions are free from error, remain permanently true and binding, and must not, in any subsequent age, be interpreted in a different sense — in other words have a different interpretation placed upon them. Rather *that* sense must be firmly adhered to in faith for all future time which was intended at that point in the past when this particular proposition of faith was promulgated or defined. The Church has an abiding and permanently valid system of ethics because it has always regarded the ultimate principles of the so-called natural law and of a way of life directed by the light of the gospel as dogmatically binding, and has always taught that these principles have the same value [6] and the same abiding validity as dogmas concerning God, the three Persons in God, the nature of Christ and his significance for salvation etc.[2] The Church also has its own basic constitution as something already predetermined for it and not subject to its own decisions. To this doubtless belong the Petrine office and an episcopal organization (which we shall have to determine in more precise detail at a later stage). The result is that in virtue of these two

[2] It is primarily the well-known idea of the 'hierarchy of truths' put forward at the Second Vatican Council that enables us of today to recognize key dogmas of this kind once more as central and fundamental Cf. 'Unitatis redintegratio' (The Decree on Ecumenism), no. II. See also the further observations which follow in the present article.

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factors (the primacy of the Pope and the episcopal order) the Church exhibits a palpable historical continuity with the Church of the origins even at the level of visible social history.

We might go on to unfold still more precisely the material details of this unchangeable factor in the Church as just described from the three distinct aspects of creed, life, and juridical constitution. We might go on to provide a fuller exposition of the fact that so far as this immutable element is concerned the Church herself does not claim any right to introduce changes. In fact she explicitly denies that she has any such right, and recognizes herself in all this as bound by the single and definitive revelation of God in Jesus Christ. We might go on to provide a more detailed presentation of the fact that according to the Church's own understanding of her faith it is at least true that anyone who consciously and in the public life of the Church denies a dogma of this kind relating to the creed, to Christian life, or to the constitution of the Church, thereby *ipso facto* ceases to belong to the Church as a social entity. Moreover the Church herself is quite incapable of doing anything to alter this fact, though under certain circumstances she surely is obliged to ascertain that it is a fact even in those cases in which the individual concerned, despite the fact that he still continues at most partially to identify himself with the Church and does not want to separate himself from the Church or her life totally, is nevertheless denying a dogma of the Church of this kind.[3] Here, however, we must forgo the task of developing any further these traditional positions, which constitute firm principles belonging to the very existence of the Church. In what follows, therefore, we shall be applying ourselves more fully to the *problems* entailed in these firmly held positions. But in doing so we shall in no sense be casting doubt upon the [7] importance of these declarations or their practical applicability in the life of the Church. There is an unchangeable element in the Church in the three respects mentioned. This unchangeable element can be distinguished from much else which is changeable in the theology, the life, the liturgy, and the concrete constitution which we find in the Church, and which, therefore, is, under certain circumstances, capable of being reformed. The possibility of drawing this distinction gives the Christian and the official functionary in the Church the possibility of a discernment of spirits: *those* spirits, namely who call for changes in the Church. For to the extent that it is possible so to distinguish between the changeable and unchangeable factors in the Church we have a standard enabling us to decide *here* to concede that reform and change is possible, and *there* to pronounce an absolute 'no' to any such demand for change.

It is only at this point that we come to the real heart and centre of our subject: in the concrete it is not so simple to decide where the distinction is to be drawn between changeable and unchangeable factors in the Church when it is some specific doctrine, some concrete living practice, some point of the Church's juridical constitution, or some other point of law that is in question – not so simple, that is to say, as has usually been assumed to be the case whether tacitly or explicitly in the traditional theory and practice of the Church. And it is this that gives rise to the practical difficulties which disquiet us today so much within the Church. We must even go so far as to concede the following: we recognize the abiding continuity and identity of the Church in the course of her history and of the change constantly taking place afresh within that history. But however far we may be able to go in verifying this continuity and identity in empirical terms, *in the last analysis* it is an object of believing hope and of that faithfulness which dares to commit itself on the basis of hope. But it is not simply an object of which we can achieve any empirical assurance with absolute certainty. It follows from this statement that we must assign the changeable and unchangeable factors in the Church to different positions in the scale of verifiability with regard to the possibility of experiencing them in the concrete. The changeable and the unchangeable are not two entities

[3] On this question cf. the author's observations in the article in the present volume entitled 'Congregation of Faith and Theological Commission'.

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simply existing side by side as immediately empirically apprehensible each in its own right. That which we immediately experience and make living contact with is that which is in process of change, and it is the more immediate to us and the more apprehensible of the two entities. It is precisely *in* this – for all that the unchangeable factor is relatively apprehensible to us too – that this unchangeable factor has ever afresh to be believed in, hoped in, and acted upon in a spirit of faithfulness as that [8] which is the more hidden of the two factors. If this thesis is correct, then for the Catholic too it is the experience of change, of being on the way to a goal, of being on pilgrimage, that constitutes the primary task laid upon him and required of him, and it is in this alone that he can genuinely realize his faithfulness to the unchangeable factor. We fully recognize that the experience of the Church as that in which we find an unchangeable divine truth, a rule of life which is always the same, a juridical constitution ordained by God himself is indeed an experience which is possible and legitimate, and in fact one which belongs to the very essence of Christian faith and life. But *precisely in that form* in which this experience has been made and evaluated in the period of a 'Pianic monolithism' in the Church, it is an experience subject to the conditions of that particular age, and not even a particularly fine one when we look more closely into the matter.

The thesis we have just formulated is very abstract, and therefore, perhaps, not readily understandable. It needs to be illustrated and given firm outlines by means of a more concrete examination of the connection which exists between the changeable and unchangeable factors. In this connection we are deliberately avoiding the process of tracing the question to a deeper level, and embarking upon the examination of a more general range of problems such as might be developed in an existential ontology or a philosophy of history and theology, with regard to the connection between essence, idea and history, truth and history etc.,[4] in other words of a range of problems which in itself should be tackled and coped with if we were seeking to answer the question here raised by tracing it to its *ultimate* roots.

UNCHANGEABLE DOGMA?

We may begin by considering the unchangeable factor in Christian *dogma*. In this we are passing over the question, in itself important, of the further and deeper distinction which might be drawn *within* this unchangeable dogma itself that namely between an ultimate and innermost kernel, a real heart and centre of the gospel on the one hand,[5] and the manifold ways, almost beyond recounting, on the other, in which this kernel has [9] come to be developed into a whole range of individual dogmas as formulated in the course of the history of dogma. A distinction of this kind is justified by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the 'hierarchy of truths'. It likewise would, in itself be of great importance for our present question. Here, however, it must be set aside. We are examining, therefore, the individual dogmas as they have been put forward by the ordinary or extraordinary *magisterium* of the Church as unchangeable propositions in the sense of having the quality of inerrancy. Even in the case of these dogmas we recognize on closer examination that the statement that they are unchangeable is not so simple or clear as appears at first sight. To begin with, in the case of many dogmas, it is only gradually and as the outcome of a long process of reflection, that they have come to be crystallized as such in the Church's conscious faith. It is far from being the case, therefore, that all of them were as such and as dogmas

[4] More recent surveys and bibliographies are easily accessible in the volumes of *Sacramentum Mundi* under the same key terms as are mentioned here.
[5] On this cf. the author's article, 'Mitte des Glaubens' in *Hilfe zum Glauben*, A. Exeler, J. B. Metz, K. Rahner eds., Theologische Meditationen 27 (Einsiedeln, 1971), pp. 39-56.

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formulated in this specific manner, present right from the origins of Christianity. They have *come to be* through a historical process which is inevitably bound up with changes. It would be naive to suppose that once they have actually come to *be* they are simply unchangeable in *every* respect and so absolutely withdrawn from that dimension of history in which in fact they initially emerged.

Furthermore, despite the fact that in the formulation of these dogmas there is, in the nature of things, a *mutual* influence of the original divine revelation and of human language one upon the other, they are nevertheless expressed by means of human concepts deriving from a quite specific cultural and historical situation, and which themselves had, and still continue to have, a history of their own. In this respect it would be naive to suppose that such concepts are raised to a status of absolute immutability in every respect, and so become detached from their former history merely because they have undergone a certain sacral dignity and sanction in virtue of their being used in statements of dogma, or that once used in this ecclesiastical language they justifiably achieve thereby a more durable and tenacious life with less change than they would have undergone in secular usage. But even given that they have been so used in dogmatic formulations, it is still in any case clear that such concepts, which are in origin common to all spheres of human life, or belong to philosophical contexts, continue to develop their own secular history, and that the teaching Church must take due cognizance of this further history of the concepts concerned and draw the necessary consequences from it if its teaching is not to become incomprehensible. For it is no longer in any position to appeal, without further ado, to a secular understanding of [10] these concepts suitable to be used for its own purposes and to convey the meaning of its own teaching. Alternatively there is another possibility open to the Church. A concept of this kind, which is in origin secular, but has been used in dogmatic propositions of the Church, is simply dead, and no longer has any existence in *this* sphere either if it is totally withdrawn from secular usage. And at this stage it is also unusable or hardly usable for the Church's doctrine either. For this doctrine of the Church must necessarily work with concepts which are in themselves secular in order to become intelligible at all. Against this it might be objected that there are, after all, specifically theological concepts which have application only in a specifically ecclesiastical parlance. But to this it could equally well be rejoined that even though we may recognize the validity of this point, it still does not invalidate the point we have just made. For first such concepts which belong specifically to theology, have at most a quite modest extent of application in the real preaching of the Church to those who are not specialist theologians, and second (and this is the decisive point) such specialist theological concepts have to be explained by means of secular concepts belonging to human life in general of a kind which remain subject to the laws of history, undergo changes, and so introduce the unrest inherent in history into the dogmatic formulations as well.[6] Furthermore an individual human proposition, whether secular or theological, is in all cases only really capable of being understood in the context of human awareness *as a whole* and in a *broader* sphere of meaning. Now it inevitably follows from this that even a dogma is necessarily conceived of by means of conceptual models in contexts involving real or presumed insights of a secular kind, with correct or premature conclusions drawn from this dogma, and in combination with emotional attitudes on the part of the concrete individual which may be either justified or not by the dogma itself in a specific age. In other words it is conceived of in combination with factors affecting human awareness, not all of which are, in themselves, identical with the actual dogma formulated. If we may so express it: it is totally impossible for the individual concrete man to conceive of a

[6] On this cf. the author's 'The Historicity of Theology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London, 1972), pp. 64-82.

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dogma that is 'chemically pure'.[7] His way of conceiving of it inevitably involves an amalgamation of conceptual models. It is arrived at in contexts, and under the influence of emotional factors [11] etc., which do not really belong to the actual dogma itself at all. It is justifiable, under certain circumstances necessary, and in fact indispensable for the individual's own personal understanding of the dogma concerned, for him to attempt to purify the dogma of these concepts which are subject to the conditions of a particular age, these conceptual models and these connected factors which do not essentially belong to the matter itself and so to arrive at the dogma 'in itself' pure and unalloyed. Under certain circumstances such an attempt may succeed. Certain ways of understanding the dogma, which are subject to the conditions of time, are overcome. Earlier misunderstandings, which inevitably influenced the individual's judgement on the dogma concerned, are eliminated, and, moreover, if this attempt *really* succeeds all this is achieved *without* any distortion of the dogma which is really intended and its true meaning as binding upon us in faith. And even then this dogma is not arrived at in a state of 'chemical purity' or 'in itself'. Rather it is presented in a new form which is likewise subject to historical conditions, and expressed in different concepts which, no less than the former ones, have a specific place in history. It is presented in contexts and by means of conceptual models which are just as subject to change as those which were formerly used. We may reflect upon those historical factors which have conditioned earlier propositions – propositions which, even though they express an abiding truth, are nevertheless subject to history. But by doing so we do not escape from history. On the contrary we draw the proposition thus reflected upon in its former historical conditions still further into *history in the true sense*. In other words we make it subject to a whole range of fresh historical conditions which we cannot reflect upon so clearly as the former ones and, moreover, in the conviction that it is *to some extent* historically and rationally demonstrable that the new proposition constitutes a formulation of what was really meant in the former one which in the present circumstances is justified and authentic as a formulation of it.

What has just been said with regard to the historical conditions to which a dogma is subject can only be rightly understood in the full range of its application if we consider that an individual man in his concrete place in history is in no sense in any position *fully and adequately* to draw a conscious distinction between the *particular* historical formulation of the truth he is expressing and that truth in itself and in its abiding validity. This is something which we do to some extent arrive at by reflecting upon *earlier* dogmatic formulations. In the case of these we can achieve a more precise theological hermeneutics and so to some extent be able to say: [12] 'this is what is really meant by a statement of this kind, and it is this too which is binding upon us, whereas *that* is only a concrete mode of expression, the outcome of historical conditions for this truth, and as such it is no longer binding in faith upon us of today.' In drawing a distinction of this kind with regard to such a proposition we are doing something which the Christian and theologian who formulated it *in the past* could not do. Moreover we ourselves could not in any adequate sense arrive at such a distinction today with regard to *those* new propositions which we ourselves formulate as statements of our own faith. It might be asked whether the Christian and theologian of former times would himself have *drawn such a distinction* as we ourselves draw between that which he properly intended as binding in faith on the one hand and the concrete historical expression in which what was meant is formulated on the other, *supposing* he had been confronted with the possibility of drawing such a distinction. But this question, though in itself possible, is an idle one. The fact remains, however, that in many cases at least it is basically impossible to arrive at any one

[7] On this cf. the author's 'Considerations on the Development of Dogma', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 3-35, and also 'The Development of Dogma', *Theological Investigations* I (London, 1961), pp. 39-76.

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unambiguous decision on this question. In other words that there is one point on which we cannot arrive at any absolutely assured conclusion merely as the outcome of a historical investigation: the point namely that those factors in a previous dogmatic formulation which, as viewed by us of today, constitute mere concomitant effects and are subject to the conditions of time would also have been, or actually were, felt to be such by the Christian of an earlier age supposing that it had been possible to put such a question to him. It is possible to ask whether he would have recognized such factors as in this sense inessential. And the very fact that we can put this question shows, in my opinion, that the continuity and identity of dogma in the Church's awareness of her own faith cannot simply be an object merely of historical investigation. Rather it implies an element of decision at the level of faith and hope such as cannot in any adequate sense be verified merely by the investigation of historical facts as such. For a process of verification at the historical level *precisely as such*, and taken in isolation cannot draw upon the assurance of faith of the former age concerned to draw a distinction in the earlier statement of faith between that which is changeable and that which is unchangeable, both being present in that earlier formulation. The reason is that this distinction was itself precisely not present in the awareness of faith of those of former times, or at least not in full and absolute clarity.

At this point we should go on to illustrate the statement we have just made concerning dogmatic formulations by means of concrete examples drawn from the history of dogma. But this is something which we are no [13] longer in any position really to do in the present context. Here we must precisely confine ourselves to indicating merely a few examples chosen quite at random. For instance we may ask what the term 'transubstantiation' means for us of today seeing that the 'substance of bread', regarded as the subject of transubstantiation in the Council of Trent, is something which we of today can no longer recognize as having any existence in *that* sense which this term 'substance of bread' was conceived to have in the Middle Ages.[8] Again how are we to conceive of Adam as the originator and cause of original sin, and thereby of original sin itself, nowadays, seeing that for us who accept polygenesis as an established fact this unique figure Adam, from whom all other men are allegedly descended simply did not exist precisely as an individual at the beginning of the history of the human race? Rather, as we see it, mankind was originally formed by a human population.[9] Obviously in these dogmas of transubstantiation and original sin the essential points intended by the Council of Trent remain in force for us as well. But at the same time the very fact that there is a distinction to be drawn between this essential point in its abiding validity on the one hand and a conceptual model used at that time on the other (that namely of the substance of bread or of an Adam who was numerically one) – this fact does have a modifying effect even upon these abiding dogmas. And this modification cannot be fully justified solely by the Council of Trent's own understanding of its own dogmas. For this distinction, with its modifying effects, is something which the Council of Trent neither knew nor was capable of knowing, seeing that it could not have had any knowledge of modern physics or contemporary palaeontology. We must say, therefore, that the modifications we introduce in our understanding of these dogmas do not destroy the real identity between our understanding and that of Trent – in other words that we abide by the faith of preceding generations '*in eodem dogmate eodem sensu eademque sententia*'.[10] And

[8] On this see the author's 'The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 287-311, and also 'On the Duration of Christ's Presence After Communion', *ibid*., pp. 312-320.
[9] On this see the author's 'Theological Reflexions on Monogenism', *Theological Investigations* I (London, 1961), pp. 229-296.
[10] cf. Conc. Vat. I, Const. dogmat. 'Dei Filius', DS 34 3020 (Quotation from Vinc. Lerinensis, Commonitorium primum, c. 23 (PL 50, 668 A)).

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the identity and historical continuity we are pointing to here is, in the last analysis, itself in turn a statement of faith and hope which in fact can, to a certain extent, he historically verified, i.e. shown to carry conviction. Nevertheless it is precisely only to a [14] certain extent that we can achieve this, so that we cannot from the outset wholly exclude some element of anxiety and uncertainty as to whether, under certain circumstances we may not after all have lost this identity. The temptation to allow the changeable element to destroy the unchangeable in Christian dogma is to be numbered among the factors belonging intrinsically to the Christian faith in our state of pilgrimage.

AN UNCHANGEABLE ETHIC?

The same applies to the norms of the Christian ethic, and thereby to the Christian way of life. Here precisely the same points apply to these Christian norms (inasmuch as they belong to revelation) which we have already made with regard to the interrelationship between the changeable and unchangeable factors in Christian dogma. This in itself justifies us in extending what we have said to the norms of Christian morality. A further point which must straightway be added to this is the following: apart from wholly universal moral norms of an abstract kind, and apart from a radical orientation of human life towards God as the outcome of a supernatural and grace-given self-commitment, there are hardly any particular or individual norms of Christian morality which could be proclaimed by the ordinary or extraordinary teaching authorities of the Church in such a way that they could be unequivocally and certainly declared to have the force of dogmas. This fact alone justifies us in confidently arriving at the following conclusion: the sum total of the norms of Christian living, together with a specific way of life felt to be binding upon Christians, may once have been developed and held confidently and unquestioningly in a particular age. Nevertheless they contained far more changeable elements than were ever conceived of as a matter of clear and conscious reflection by those belonging to that particular age itself. This is not so very surprising if only because the moral awareness of an individual, a particular society, or a particular epoch is more or less explicitly conscious all along that what it prescribes quite in the concrete here and now applies first and foremost under the conditions of this same here and now, and that thereby there are very many cases in which in practice it can remain an open question whether a norm of this kind also remains in force under *different* conditions and in different situations, the more so since in the concrete in many cases the very possibility of these future conditions may not have been foreseen. Under these conditions universal statements of principle more or less always include elements which are highly problematical.

The element of the unchangeable in the sphere of moral norms and the [15] Christian way of life becomes a still more potent factor in virtue of the changes – nowadays indeed the swift changes – to which the immediate norm of natural morality is subject, this norm being man himself in his *concrete nature*. In fact we may go so far as to say that nowadays these changes are directed and controlled by man himself. It is true that we can undoubtedly speak of an enduring ‘eternal nature’ of man and say that from this certain abiding moral maxims, at least at the most universal level, do flow as well with the transcendental necessity of this human nature itself.[11] But this *concrete* nature of man in all its dimensions (biological, social, etc.) is itself precisely subject to a most far-reaching process of change. It is not so simple as is often supposed, therefore, to distinguish between that which is eternal and abides as a

[11] On this cf. the author’s ‘On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics’, *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 217-234.

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matter of transcendental necessity in human nature on the one hand, and human nature as it exists in the concrete on the other, as subject to historical conditions and capable of change. The reason is that we invariably experience this eternal nature of ours only as it exists in concrete history, and at least up to the present we have not been able to experience much change in this concrete nature 'in our own person' in so brief a space as is constituted by an individual life-span. It would have little meaning to assert that no moral maxims applicable to the here and now flow from the nature of man in the concrete and as subject to the historical conditions prevailing in each particular case as distinct from the nature of man in its meta-physical necessity. For if we were to maintain this we would be reducing the Christian morality developed in any given age, and as such fully binding, to a few universal moral principles at the metaphysical level. Now the history of Christian morality proves that this is something which we neither can nor should do, and if this is the case then human nature in the concrete, as it exists in each particular individual, but at the same time as constantly subject to change, has a moral relevance, sets up moral norms of its own which on the one hand are valid in the present, and yet on the other cannot lay claim to any absolute or permanent validity. This also of its nature involves phases which are to some extent transitional phases, that is, in which maxims which were formerly in force in practice pass through an uneasy stage in which they gradually cease to have this force, though it would be impossible to lay down the precise point in terms of days or years at which they cease to be recognized as valid. Now as we have said it is impossible by any conscious process of reflection to draw a full and adequate distinction between that which [16] belongs to human nature as of metaphysical necessity and that which belongs to human nature as it exists in concrete history. And if this is true then inevitably there emerges in concrete human morality that disquieting interaction which we have spoken of between changeable and unchangeable moral norms which cannot fully be distinguished from each other. We must not therefore, be excessively surprised when the question arises of what is really and actually changeable and what is unchangeable in Christian morality. We should in no sense expect the Church always and in every case to undertake to draw this distinction for us with absolute clarity and at the same time with absolute binding force. Indeed the Church herself must expose herself to the experience of change in human nature as it exists in the concrete, a change which cannot be foreseen with full clarity even by her. A moral requirement which she either relaxes or alternatively reiterates at a particular point in time can thereby, under certain circumstances, also be interpreted *either* as a norm which, although in process of passing away, can nevertheless *still* be claimed to be in force, or *alternatively* as an imperative designed to ensure that the individual or a society, by an act of historical decision, shall so determine and shape precisely this human nature as it exists in concrete history that this norm which is proclaimed to be such can be a norm prevailing over this human nature as thus shaped.

Even in the case of the Church, therefore, we cannot expect of her that her teaching authority either shall draw or shall be capable of drawing a fully *adequate* distinction in every case and with complete sureness between the metaphysical and unchangeable element on the one hand and that other element which, while it does indeed still remain or has already been valid, is nevertheless subject to change on the other in the moral norms which are proclaimed by that teaching authority. And it follows from this that even with regard to such norms of Christian living a process of interaction between changeable and unchangeable factors which cannot fully be distinguished continues to exist. And this is something which must be sustained and endured in patience. In relation to this concrete situations may arise in which a practical decision is demanded of us which we cannot arrive at in any adequate sense at the theoretical level. In such a case we must rely upon our individual conscience alone to draw the necessary distinctions and arrive at the necessary decision 'according to its best lights and with the utmost sincerity'. And we cannot comfortably shift the responsibility of taking this

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decision to the teaching authority of the Church or to a moral theology in which full agreement has already been reached on the point concerned.

[17]

HOW FAR IS THE BASIC CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH UNCHANGEABLE?

We encounter the same situation in the sphere of the constitution of the Church, one namely of an interaction between changeable and unchangeable factors which itself in turn is subject to historical change. Although this is a point which cannot be proved here or illustrated by examples, we are first able to observe a development taking place in this juridical constitution of the Church in the apostolic age, in other words in the primitive Church in the true sense. Yet it is precisely this juridical constitution which in a later age, and so far as we are concerned, is now claimed to be unchangeable and permanently binding upon us as of 'divine' right. Here, then, we have a juridical constitution, binding upon us now and for ever, which nevertheless has had a past history, a period of development in which it came to be what it is, even though this process of becoming did not take place as a matter of logical necessity. And this fact in itself warns us of how cautious we must be in assuming that among the principles of the Church's juridical constitution now in force we shall find it very easy to distinguish between the changeable and unchangeable factors – in other words between human and divine law. This point becomes far clearer when we reflect upon those juridical structures of the Church as a society which are declared to belong to divine and unchangeable law in theology and the official teaching of the Church on ecclesiology (e.g. that of the Second Vatican Council), and, moreover, in principle perfectly correctly so. I am referring to factors which are beyond dispute so far as Catholic ecclesiology is concerned, namely the primatial power of the Pope and the episcopal structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Since obviously the definition of the First Vatican Council concerning the plenitude of the papal power is still in force even today, and will also continue in the future to belong to the unchangeable juridical constitution of the Church despite the long dogmatic development which lies behind it, it seems at first sight that all we have here is an unchangeable factor. Yet the matter is not so simple. To begin with, the concrete forms in which this papal authority has been exercised have not only varied very greatly in the past, but in the future too can undergo such far-reaching transformations that so far as the average everyday impression of an individual Christian is concerned the directive power of the pope may be encountered in some new form in which it seems to retain only a slight connection with that authority which was once and for all defined in the First Vatican Council as permanently enduring. It is recognized that [18] though the pope has in principle the right to intervene in the lives even of particular Churches, this does not reduce these subordinate Churches to mere administrative departments within a single unified state subject to a monarchic régime or even an authoritarian discipline from above. It is further recognized that the Roman Congregations and nunciatures are in themselves far from necessarily or certainly constituting embodiments of the primatial power of the pope as defined, and further that neither they nor the code of canon law as already embracing almost everything that takes place in the particular Churches are necessarily or certainly valid for all ages. Furthermore, the rights which in principle belong to the pope in relation to all subordinate Churches is still not such as to decide anything beforehand with regard to *how often* this authority is to be exercised in the concrete. And in view of all this even so far as this unchangeable element in the structures of the Church is concerned, the concrete form which this function assumes is capable of very wide variations. Certainly we do not need to think of a future pope in relation to the bishops as one who is powerless, or in the position of a passive Merovingian king in relation to his maior-domo or a Japanese *tenno* in the centuries before the beginning of the

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Mejii period (1868). In fact in this age of UNO, one namely of a blending and interweaving of all particular cultural spheres in the earth, we can in many respects ascribe fresh and vital tasks to the papacy, contributing to the unity and global effectiveness of the Church, such as hitherto have never needed to be ascribed to it. But all this does not for one moment alter the fact that in the future the papacy, while retaining its basic 'generic form', will be able to present a quite different 'image' (if we may so express it) from that to which we have hitherto been accustomed. Without in any sense in principle either diminishing or calling in question the *ex cathedra* teaching authority of the pope, it is conceivable that on quite other grounds (pertaining to the stage arrived at in the history of human thought or the situation prevailing in the development of faith and dogma, which precisely does not prolong itself endlessly or indefinitely etc.) the pope will hardly be in a position to define any further 'new' dogmas in the future of the kind which have been defined in the past, and which constitute something more than a mere defensive re-expressing of the ancient and basic substance of the faith which any real Christian has not doubted even before the definition was produced. The theological possibility of a change of this kind, which might take a number of conceivable forms, still does not entail any decision on the question of whether such a change is either necessary or desirable. Still less does it imply any prophecy that such a change will in fact take place. [19] But it does open up scope for the possibility of it and obliges us, in a spirit of obedience towards the demands of the particular age in which we live, to hold ourselves open for such changes.

A similar conclusion applies too to the episcopal structure of the Church. In its reflections upon this the Second Vatican Council showed the same one-sidedness *vis-à-vis* the people of the Church as the First Vatican Council had shown in its reflections upon the papal power of the Church *vis-à-vis* the episcopate. Here again, while recognizing the abiding validity for the future of the episcopal structure of the Church, we can also recognize (though this is not something that needs to be explained at length in the present context) that many structures and institutions may be built into the Church which give the people of the Church a more active role than that which they have previously had in the life of the Church itself. In other words, if we like so to express the matter, these new structures and institutions may signify 'democratic' rights within the Church. In fact many changes in this direction have in practice already been achieved within the Church, even though we may hold the opinion that still more changes of the same kind will have to take place in the future.

But perhaps (though this must be on our responsibility and at our own peril) we may go a step further. In constitutional law we speak of a monarchic episcopate and mean by this that the regional Church is governed in each particular case by an *individual*. This structure of a monarchic episcopate has been in force everywhere throughout the Catholic Church since the beginning of the second century, though it cannot be laid down as a matter of certainty that it has existed at all times and in all places as such even before this, ever since the time of the apostles, where-ever particular Churches have existed. Now on this showing, so I believe, we can at least go so far as to pose the theoretical question of whether it really does belong intrinsically to the unchangeable juridical constitution of the Church not only that there must be, within the particular Churches, an episcopal power such as a present-day bishop enjoys, but also that as a matter of divine law this can be vested in an individual person in the physical sense and not in a moral person consisting of a small central body. The question is, therefore, whether in reality not only the episcopal power but also the necessity of it being borne by an individual person is a matter of divine law, whether, in other words, the constitution of the monarchic episcopate which we have in the Catholic Church is such as to exclude a synodal or presbyteral structuring of the Church *jure divino* even if the authority of a bishop as understood in the Catholic sense were [20] to be ascribed to a small collegiate body of this kind. Although of course my opinion is quite unauthoritative on this point, I

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believe that nowadays in Catholic theology we can still leave the question open as to whether the possibility of episcopal power being vested in a collegiate or presbyteral body is really irreconcilable with the principle of episcopal constitution.[12] These indications too will serve to show the extent to which changeable and unchangeable factors in the Church are interconnected.

To this a further point may now be added: an abiding divine law can never be conceived of as being in itself, or taken in isolation, such a law as can directly, and without any further additions, be capable of being put into practice. On the contrary, in order to be directly capable of being put into practice in this sense it must necessarily be rendered present in the concrete form of a human law. Just as in the secular sphere there are laws which are incapable of taking any practical effect without further practical determinations in the form either of specific legal enactments or of concrete customs, so too it is in the Church. The *jus divinum* of the Church always and wherever it exists has a concrete embodiment which is not itself *juris divini* though of course this does not mean that this *jus divinum* in the Church is not real, i.e. that it cannot be present in any effective sense. What we find ourselves directly confronted with in the constitutional law of the Church either to our joy or to our sorrow is the changeable element. And it is precisely and solely *in* this that the abiding nature of this constitutional law as given to the Church by God can be made present and effective.

The first and primary quality demanded of the Christian by this relationship between the changeable and unchangeable in the Church is that patience which in the New Testament constitutes the basic virtue of the Christian life, and so too has its application in the attitude of the Christian towards the Church. The unchangeable element in dogma in the Christian understanding of existence in the institutional Church is something which she always encounters in a form which is historically conditioned and necessarily subject to historical change. The Christian cannot simply have and enjoy this unchangeable factor in its pure intrinsic essence. He must grasp it in a form which is changing, and so, under certain circumstances, in a form which has not already been made familiar to him by lifelong custom. This is especially true since those who are contemporaries and fellows in a strictly temporal sense may still be far from contemporaries and fellows in the spirit or in terms of ecclesiastical history. [21] On the contrary, at one and the same period in the Church individuals belonging to the most different ages are to be found living side by side, all of them playing their part in shaping the concrete form of the Church. Hence no one individual can find in the Church simply and exclusively *his* Church, i.e. a Church of a kind which is shaped exclusively by *that particular* situation in the history of human development which belongs particularly to him. Again in relation to the unchangeable factor in the Church there is need of that patience which endures what is alien and strange in history, and so is able to recognize in this first and foremost that which is abiding in the Church. The Christian also has need of this concrete synthesis which is always present between the changeable and the unchangeable in the Church in a further respect, namely in relation to the distinction of spirits. It will be noticed that in our considerations we have laid special emphasis upon the interaction between the changeable and unchangeable elements in the Church, which is such that they can never fully or adequately be distinguished from one another. Clearly this does not imply any denial of the necessity of using our *utmost resources* to draw the necessary distinctions ever afresh between the changeable and unchangeable elements in the Church, and at all levels of its existence, because without this it would be quite impossible for there to be any responsible further historical development of the Church at all. Instead we would have to commit ourselves blindly to a process of change which unfolded at random or (in order to avoid this) we would have to adopt an attitude of false conservatism and proclaim as our ideal

[12] On this cf. the author's article in the present volume, 'Aspects of the Episcopal Office'.

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a state of absolute unchangeableness of the Church in all matters, even those of only relative importance.

Theology, whether in the form of dogmatics, moral theology or canon law, invariably constitutes, from this point of view, the methodically directed and conscious attempt to distinguish between the unchangeable and the changeable. The theological qualifications introduced in dogma and morals, the distinction between divine and human law, and the question of the *jus condendum* in these disciplines, are in themselves enough to illustrate this point. While theology is not a merely secular science, but is also sustained by the light of faith and by a special kind of theological charisma, still the scientific work performed in theology exhibits unmistakably a quality of 'distinction of spirits' as this term is understood in traditional religious parlance.

Finally, however, despite this distinction arrived at by scientific reflection between changeable and unchangeable factors – something which is to some extent both possible and necessary – a further factor, which [22] neither the Christian nor the Church herself can dispense with, is nevertheless the courage to experiment. For at least in very many cases it is, for all the reasons already indicated, impossible to establish by the conscious reflection of the theoretical reason where such a distinction is to be drawn between the changeable and the unchangeable. In many cases, therefore, it is quite inevitable that tentative experiments should be made to see whether the Church can discover that which is abiding in her conscious faith, and so herself as identical with her own past, in the specific form of a theological proposition, a way of life, or a juridical institution. Experimentation in this sense is necessary. In fact every theology is the work of a theologian who does not merely confine himself to repeating monotonously the traditional formulae of faith, and thereby ultimately speaking precisely distorting them by expressing them in this form in a *new* situation. Every theology constitutes an experiment of this kind, one in which an individual with his personal awareness of faith enquires of the Church's awareness of her faith as to whether this can achieve a fresh discovery of its own nature in a new formulation of this kind. New ways of life which individuals attempt constitute modes of questioning the Church in exactly the same way in the whole breadth of her life to see whether she can recognize and accept a life-style of this kind as authentically Christian. These ways of questioning the Church in word and deed have the character of an experiment, first because they have to be expressed in words or actions by an individual on his own responsibility and by his own decision without any preliminary authorization on the part of the Church authorities, and second because in very many cases the favourable or unfavourable reaction of the Church as a whole, or the Church authorities is far from being achieved, or capable of being achieved, at the selfsame moment at which this process of questioning is directed to the Church. On the contrary a fairly long interval has to be endured before the reaction to it comes, whether in the form of acceptance or rejection, positive recognition, toleration, or rejection in a form which can clearly be apprehended.

Experimental stages of this kind are also to be found in the relation between the ideas and life-styles of a particular Church and the ideas and life-style of the universal Church, and so too at the level of ecclesiastical law and pastoral practice. In the process of experimentation in this sense it is often necessary to begin by establishing whether some formulation or practice which is new in historical terms constitutes a concrete embodiment of that which is unchangeable in the Church, or whether it has to be rejected by this as incapable of assimilation. Such stages in the process of [23] experimentation are not always avoidable because it is impossible to draw any full or adequate distinction between changeable and unchangeable factors solely by means of the theoretical reason. A further reason is that the process of experimentation is precisely the manner in which the distinction of spirits is achieved by the practical reason, and also that even if this were not the case a concrete

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embodiment which was historically speaking new as a form of expression for the unchangeable element in the Church would not *ipso facto* and unequivocally be authenticated merely by the fact that some *earlier* form was in a full and unequivocal sense shown to be distinct from this unchangeable factor and to be historically transient.

To return once more to the beginning of these considerations: the underlying purpose of the thoughts we have put forward has been first and foremost to show that we should not oversimplify the task of distinguishing between the changeable and unchangeable elements in the Church, and that for this reason a certain anxiety among the Church's members and a certain antagonism between conservatives and progressives such as cannot immediately be resolved are perfectly understandable. But while recognizing all this, a point which must not be obscured is that in the majority of cases in the practical life of the Church, in her ideas and actions, the open-minded willing and well-instructed Christian can recognize in a manner that is *sufficient* that in the Church's faith, way of life, and laws, even though this Church undergoes changes, he can still recognize and hold firm to the ancient Church in its abiding nature. In the majority of cases, therefore, the conflict that we find between Christians cannot seriously bear upon the point of whether the unchangeable in the Church has survived, even though obviously cases of such conflict can arise. The only point of real conflict can be whether the new historical form embodying the unchangeable element which does endure, and which has been present all along, is *opportune*, whether it finds acceptance with the individual and contributes to the task of the Church today and tomorrow better than the forms assumed in the past, or those which precisely it is sought to relegate to the past. Even a conflict of *this* kind may often be both strenuous and bitter. But however it is decided it does not remove the abidingly unchangeable element for the Christian, and with good will it can be conducted in such a way that the true unity of the Church, her abiding identity through history, and the love between Christians is not diminished.

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2

THE FAITH OF THE CHRISTIAN AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

In view of the current unrest in the Church, no words need be wasted in pointing out the relevance of the subject we have chosen to our present times.[1] It will be developed in three stages. First I would like to make a few points with regard to a traditional key thesis included in the usual presentations of the Church's teaching concerning the relationship between the faith of the individual who is *de facto* a Christian and the official doctrines of the Church. It is a key thesis which we must respect, yet which at the same time we can also regard as constituting no more than a point of departure for the theme which we are seeking to discuss among ourselves. We shall then go on to speak about the situation in terms of the sociology of ideas within which this thesis, initially considered in its traditional form, has to be understood today. Finally, in a third section, we shall have something to say about the attitude of the Christian of today towards the Church's official teaching on faith.

I. THE POSSIBILITY OF A HERESY THAT SEPARATES MEN FROM THE CHURCH

As a Catholic I am convinced that the traditional doctrine of the Church is correct, though admittedly only as subject to all the points which we shall have to make in what follows. This traditional doctrine lays down that if an individual Catholic Christian explicitly and publicly contradicts any dogma of the Catholic Church as upheld by her official teaching authority, then this Christian is cut off from the Roman Catholic Church. This basic thesis – in other words the proposition that it is possible to be cut off from the Church by heresy – has been expressed innumerable [25] times in the Church's official documents. Even today it is both correct and necessary for the Church's essential nature, just as many explanations and interpretations which were formerly not asserted in so explicit a form may also still be necessary for this basic thesis. We cannot, while remaining within the Church, publicly uphold anything and everything in it as a proposition of which we are absolutely convinced. There are propositions which, if they are upheld in an absolute and public sense, will set the defender of such a statement outside the Church, regardless of whether he recognizes and accepts this outcome or not, or whether this outcome is or is not explicitly laid down as such by the Church's authorities. What such a thesis presupposes is that according to Catholic doctrine revelation is at basis directed, not to the individual as such or taken in isolation, but to the community of the covenant people, that is to the Church. It is the Church as single and in its totality that is the hearer of the word of the living God and (as a single collective entity) that makes the experience of revelation. And it is precisely to this revelation of God, as directed to her, the Church, as the people of God, that she responds with faith. This faith is something that she bears witness to as a community, a community which itself in turn is institutionally structured, constitutes a social and historical entity, and, moreover, does so precisely as the bearer, guardian, proclaimer, and witness to this truth which God has spoken to her. On this basis it is immediately and intrinsically obvious what a dogma of the Church is and is intended to be. We are considering those cases in which the Church as one, and, furthermore, as represented by those bodies in which her institutional structures achieve their

[1] This article is a written version, only lightly revised, of a lecture which the author gave in the Union of Catholic Students at Munster on the 7 July 1971.

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various peaks (these we do not need in the present context to analyse theologically in any greater detail), acknowledges, by an act of total commitment, a given doctrine as an element in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In such cases, according to Catholic teaching and Catholic understanding, the truth or the proposition concerned (for all the historical conditions or limitations to which it is subject, and for all the relative factors in the mode of its conception) cannot ultimately speaking be erroneous,[2] i.e. under the Church's laws she cannot give the individual the right to pronounce an unequivocal and definitive 'no' to the proposition concerned, amounting to a total commitment of his own personhood. This is the one point which has to be made with regard to this traditional basic thesis.

This statement needs to be made more precise in one significant respect, one which belongs to the authoritative interpretation of this statement and, moreover, needs to be added even according to the Church's [26] traditional doctrine. It is this: in the case of a concrete individual contradicting the official doctrine of the Church, it is perfectly possible for the action of the individual concerned to be objectively speaking unjustifiable and subjectively speaking justifiable both at the same time. We may express this in other terms. The Catholic Church does not in any sense maintain that when an individual contradicts her doctrine (even assuming that he knows that this is in fact her doctrine) such a contradiction necessarily means that the individual is morally disqualified from membership of the Church. It might of course be said that nowadays this is a mere truism, for who could seriously or honestly regard his opponent in 'questions of the philosophy of life' as stupid or ill-intentioned? But what I mean is that we should first regard the matter from the point of view of earlier ages, for which there are also reasons, and, perhaps, which is still far from being completely dead, and second from the point of view of the situation with which we ourselves now find ourselves confronted. It is in the light of these two approaches that we should consider the doctrine just stated, namely that it is possible for a contradiction of the Church's official teaching to be subjectively speaking justified even though this contradiction cannot be acknowledged as objectively justifiable by the Church as such, since otherwise she would in fact be denying her own truth. We must realize that this position is, after all, precisely not so self-evident as it is sometimes presented to be by well-meaning people. A proposition can be entirely correct and yet misunderstood or misused, if merely from recognizing it as correct we then go on to regard it as self-evident as well. Then it is exposed to the danger of being contested, and, moreover, in the last analysis, more vigorously than if we had regarded it as less self-evident and therefore as in need of more precise justification. Only read the newspapers and other publications of the socialist countries to see how they deal with the opponents of socialism, how they 'execrate' them and regard hatred against them (at least as a group, but also in such a way that ultimately it bears upon their individual opponents too) as justified and a matter of duty. And the attitude tacitly underlying all this is that unless the socialists adopt an aggressive attitude of this kind, which sets their opponents morally beyond the pale, they cannot have the energy and compulsion which they indispensably need in order to achieve their genuine and legitimate goals. In fact they pronounce any tolerance which involves at least a presumption of moral integrity on the part of their opponents as a trick of the establishment, which thereby manages to deprive its opponents from the outset of the single-minded courage they need to promote their aims. Only read the bill-posters [27] which are nowadays being pasted up everywhere by student groups within our society! There you will be able to find irrefutable evidence of an attitude of aggression against their opponents according to which they qualify these in principle as men whose subjective disposition is evil. We can see, then, that such attitudes exist even today – indeed that this attitude, in which one side condemns the other as subjectively stupid or evilly disposed, seems once more to be on

[2] cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 12.

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the increase. In the *present* context I am not attaching any *blame* for this at all. For the Church has done the same often enough in her past history, regarding every heretic who publicly and objectively contradicted the doctrines of the Church as a villain and treating him accordingly. But today at least it has obviously become a doctrine of the Church, belonging intrinsically and necessarily to the basic thesis mentioned above, that it is possible for a contradiction of the Church's official doctrine to be subjectively speaking justified. The Church recognizes that individuals stand in a specific concrete situation and have certain basic dispositions predetermined for them for which they cannot be blamed. In such a situation they can, in the development of their own individual personhood and ideas, arrive at a judgement through no fault of their own, and in fact be obliged to hold firm to their opinion, which involves a rejection of some doctrine of the Church. And this interpretation of the basic thesis referred to above, which the Church has only learnt to recognize with sufficient clarity through a long historical development, is something which she will hold firm to in the present and future even though a mentality may arise, or even come to predominate, in secular society which seeks to reject this attitude towards one's opponent in theory or in practice.

Despite this it must be said that according to the Church's understanding of her own nature, even in such a case the individual concerned ceases to belong to her. If I deny that there is a triune God, that there can be any sin or redemption at all, if I say that Jesus is at most a religious enthusiast and nothing more, then – all other considerations apart – I am no longer a Roman Catholic Christian in the sense in which the Church regards the attitude of faith of an individual as a condition for true and full membership of her (even at the level of the Church as a society). I believe that a modern man should not take offence at such an attitude on the part of a Church. There are in fact political parties too which – *mutatis mutandis* – recognize the necessity for expelling individuals from the party where necessary on these or similar grounds, and that too through a decision of an official representative body, and even though the individual thus expelled may protest against this decision and regard himself as the [28] true upholder of the spirit of this party. If it is objected that it is inappropriate to apply this example to the Church, we must reply as follows: Why should we not, seeing that on the one hand the Church is, and must be, and always has been (and, moreover, as it exists in all confessions) a normal social entity *as well* as a spiritual one, and that on the other the basic thesis and the comparison refer precisely to the social level of the Church's life as such – in other words do not, of themselves, involve any judgement whatever as to how the individual thus expelled stands in relation to the mystery of grace of the Church as such, or as to whether or not he is excluded from *this* (something which, of course, is possible only through some grave personal fault of his own in God's sight, and through no other factor whatever)?

In all that we have been saying we do not, of course, intend in any sense to deny that in the secular sphere the question of who really represents the true spirit of a social entity in the views he upholds and who does not is ultimately speaking something which cannot be decided by any official decisions within this society, but must be decided rather through that more powerful spirit which can be seen taking effect only through the development of history. This also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to that spirit of hope and faith of the Church in which the Church determines herself in her own nature, and rejects other interpretations as inapplicable to her. Even the officially defined faith of the Church is maintained in the hope of not being rejected by the absolute future which is God. It cannot be anything more than this. But to be this, and to draw the necessary consequences from it, is the task and duty of the Church as a social entity.

All this means that in the concrete human situation it is quite impossible to avoid a state of affairs in which a society having a body of doctrine, a party programme, or whatever name we may like to give to it, has to lay down that certain specific denials, erasures, or alterations

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put forward by a theologian or any other kind of Christian with regard to an official doctrine of the Church are irreconcilable with the manner in which this society understands its own nature. Hence the Church has to ask the individual involved to take due cognizance of this fact. Obviously in saying this I have still not touched upon the real problem in the concrete, the problem namely of how the foregoing remarks are to be applied in a positive and negative sense in the concrete situation of modern man at the sociological level, what further effects it has, or, under certain circumstances, does not have nowadays. There is a further question which we have not touched upon, namely which particular contradictions of official ecclesiastical doctrine have the effect of separating the individual [29] involved from the Church in the manner described or, as the case may be, of precisely not so separating him, what form these contradictions take, which particular doctrines they relate to, and how absolute the contradiction involved is in any given case in the form in which it is asserted. Obviously there are people who pay the Church taxes and at the same time assert apodictically that the papacy should be totally abolished, or maintain similar heterodox doctrines. And there are other people in the Church who contradict points of ecclesiastical teaching which are less central. And here their contradictions are put forward more as an expression of the difficulties they feel, as a ‘questioning’, as a complaint about the difficulty in assimilating the doctrines concerned. Alternatively they may from the outset relate to points of doctrine which are not dogmas at all, and therefore are capable of revision in a totally different sense from the Church’s dogmas in the true sense. Now the conclusions which have to be arrived at, the interpretations which have to be made in the concrete in all these cases – these are points which unhappily we cannot enlarge upon any further here, even though the concrete questions begin only at that point at which, in our present context, we are forced to break off.

II. THE MODERN PLURALISM OF IDEAS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CONVICTION OF THE BELIEVER

We shall only be in a position to apply the thesis above in practice, and thereby really to understand it to some extent, when we have found an answer to the question: What form does this thesis assume in the *present* age? First and foremost the following point must be stated: In former times in a given society the truth upheld by the group as a whole was upheld and safeguarded by a few elite individual representatives and, moreover, their influence extended even to the manner in which it was effectively and really accepted by all. The responsibility for deciding and maintaining the convictions within the society concerned was in the hands of a few, and all the rest followed in the footsteps of these few. Right down to the age of the Reformation, for instance, the beliefs prevailing in a specific region were decided by its ruler, perhaps in collaboration with a few theologians or similar elite individuals, or through a few figures equipped with political power. The others unquestioningly accepted their decision, and while individual contradictions and protests did arise, they were socially speaking of no very great importance. In other words a narrowly defined group within a society, sometimes even represented by [30] a single individual, in practice actually determined the principles which were recognized as true in a society and by which it lived. Today this is no longer the case, nor is it any longer possible. It may be true that even today there are still groups who form public opinion and set the course for the rest to follow, and which are different from other groups, though such ‘formers of opinion’ may make their influence felt in more anonymous ways than was formerly the case. But still this does not for one moment alter the fact that in one and the same society, in one and the same geographical region, an abiding pluralism of systems of belief is to be found such that no one specific group within the

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secular world can any longer succeed in bringing all the various systems of belief within society as a whole into harmony with its own ideas. We have *de facto* a pluralism in the sphere of living human thought. This pluralism is something which all of us of today can experience. Now it follows from this (and here I come to the essential point I am making) that it is no longer possible even for one who firmly and decisively accepts the official teaching of the Church to achieve a completely *positive* synthesis between that which he believes as a committed Catholic Christian and the other items of knowledge, aspirations, mental outlooks etc. by which, in the midst of which, and on the basis of which he lives his life in such a society. In this situation we do of course arrive at a point at which all those supports for the Christian's personal convictions of faith fall away which formerly, within a homogeneous Christian society, he inevitably had. He no longer finds his faith confirmed by the public opinion of society as a whole. His position is quite the opposite of this. I am not saying here that a modern man need necessarily discover an unequivocal and clearly apprehensible *contradiction* of an absolute kind between those attitudes of the modern age which are shared by the Christian too on the one hand, and that which he believes as a Catholic Christian on the other if and to the extent that he accepts the Church's doctrine. But the fact that the Catholic Christian does not assert that any such positive absolute and insoluble contradiction exists does not mean on the other hand that he can straightway achieve a positive and harmonious synthesis, such as he himself can readily understand, between his own faith as governed by the official norms of the Church on the one hand and the rest of his attitudes on the other. This pluralism in our mental attitudes, which we can no longer completely reduce to harmony, is to be numbered among the inevitable characteristic features of the current situation in human thought. It means that faith has ceased to be a 'system of ideas' (in a sense which will have to be more precisely explained). On the contrary it is a particular element [31] in the world of ideas to which the man of today belongs. Of course he hopes for an eschatological reconciliation of truths, and, moreover, precisely while maintaining his protest against any kind of ideological totalitarianism. A protest of this kind belongs precisely to the nature of Christianity, and is directed against any attempt at an ideological totalitarianism against a system of human thought which draws everything within its net and reduces everything to a single homogeneous whole, regardless of whether the attempt to achieve this is made by Christians or other 'systems' (examples of both are to be found). When I was young it was perfectly possible for someone who had grown up in a Catholic environment to have the impression that a man could maintain an attitude of openness towards science, could be in sympathy with the world, and at the same time could harmonize and synthesize all this with his Roman Catholic and Christian faith in an absolute and positive manner *in such a way* that what emerged was something which I would call a 'system of ideas', namely a conception of human reality as a whole in which all the individual elements were (at least approximately) reconciled in a positive sense with one another so that there was a mutual interplay and homogeneity between them. In former times we did in fact entertain a 'system of ideas' or *Weltanschauung* of this kind. For we simply did not recognize anything which was not in harmony with a mental attitude of this kind which reduced everything to a synthesis, or alternatively we suppressed it. In other words it was still possible right down to the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth to be an 'ideological' Christian, that is to live by a synthesis of all the data arrived at in one's own intellectual awareness, which one had, at least in one's own estimation, achieved.

I believe that such a situation no longer exists. The world we live in is one which is really pluralist even so far as our own interior and individual lives are concerned, one which does not begin only outside and beyond our own personal awareness, but constitutes an intrinsic element in the intellectual situation of each particular individual. We may of course ask what faith signifies in such a situation. I would reply: In contrast to any medieval conception, it

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precisely does not any longer signify that principle of synthesis which can be brought to bear even at the practical level, and which is capable of synthesizing, integrating within itself, and assigning to a quite specific place within one's intellectual life, all the nonreligious data of Aristotle or of a school of medicine in Palermo. Furthermore such a unified 'outlook upon the world' (taking this in the sense described) no longer exists for the modern believer in this sense even in [32] his own interior life, and to that extent faith constitutes one particular element in our total intellectual lives. Of course this does not mean that we fail to maintain the *hope* that precisely *this* unsynthesized pluralism in knowledge and experience will, at some eschatological point in the future completely give place to the one truth. Nor does it mean that we have to tolerate what we can recognize as a clear and certain contradiction between the individual items of knowledge within the totality of our awareness. But even with these two essential provisos, the point we are making remains valid. We no longer have any unified or fully constructed system of ideas by which to live. And for the believer it is precisely an essential task to allow this pluralism to exist, and not to seek to suppress it either from the side of 'science' or from that of faith by evolving some homogeneous and all-embracing system of ideas. Faith, which ever afresh rejects, and gives the lie to, the totalitarian claims of science, must precisely not, on its side, nowadays, seek itself to have the status of an 'all-embracing system of ideas'.

At this point I may allow myself a brief digression. Today a younger generation of theologians is arising, one which finds all that it discovers in the First Vatican Council disagreeable to it. However on a right interpretation of the First Vatican Council we can see that this Council recognizes the pluralism referred to here as true and valid. For it is precisely the First Vatican Council that finds a solution to the problem facing it of the confrontation between the Church and a world that is no longer Christian. And it solves this problem not by explaining that all human and secular knowledge is ideologically or religiously speaking indifferent and neutral in order *thereby* to be able to save the hegemony of revelation and faith. On the contrary it says that there are such secular truths, born not of the Church or of divine revelation in the narrower sense, yet which, nevertheless, affect human life in the true sense even though they do not simply or exclusively constitute data of faith. The Council precisely does not (in order to create 'peace and order') draw the kind of distinction between the various branches of human knowledge which assigns the secular ones, capable of being used for the manipulation of the world and its resources, to one side, these, therefore, having no significance for the salvation of man, for his 'existence' as one and whole, while assigning the existentially significant religious truths to the other, these then constituting by that very fact truths of pure revelation, and as such subject to the sole authority of the Church. On the contrary the Council speaks of *two* sources of knowledge which are united with one another only in their origin (God), and in no other area. Moreover (and this is the striking [33] point), knowledge which is of fundamental significance even at the existential level is to be found in the secular source as well: the existence of God and much else besides, which is included or entailed in this. The only further point that we now need to add (and for this the First Vatican Council has at least opened some possible doors) is that these secular truths, which, nevertheless, radically affect human existence, are incapable, so far as we are concerned, of being synthesized in any positive or adequate sense with that which the Christian believes as a Catholic, because they in fact extend from another source which is made available to man in a quite different sense and given over to his history in all its unforeseeable developments. And it is here that we arrive at that which we have called the modern pluralism of ideas which is incapable of synthesis, and at the impossibility of achieving any homogeneous 'all-embracing system of ideas', regarding this as a characteristic feature of the world in which we have to live today.

To that extent, therefore, and in contrast to earlier ages, in this age faith has become in a

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special sense one particular element in the life of the human spirit, and so become something which historically speaking it was not in former ages. For then an order of enthusiasm prevailed, deriving from the Middle Ages, a will to achieve order, and an attitude of triumphalism which was extremely praiseworthy (conditioned as it was by the situation at that time). And this state of affairs made it possible for faith to synthesize all else within itself and imparted a synthesizing power to it. If faith in this sense has become one particular element in our existence as intellectual beings, then the only way in which it can of itself be that which, theologically speaking, it is intended to be, is for it to recognize its own significance as constituting the hope of that eschatological unification of truth which will take place in that which we call eternal life, the consummation of history. It is here, then, that that synthesis is bestowed upon us in grace which we can neither in fact, nor to outward appearances, achieve in our present-day mode of existence.

Now an eschatological hope of this kind is, of its nature, opposed to every other ideology seeking to impose itself as absolute, and also to itself in this role, i.e. to any misunderstanding or misuse of it. It constitutes a protest against every kind of ideological totalitarianism. For such an attitude does in fact exist precisely in the claim to be able even today to have a system within which everything which can reasonably be conceived of at all, and which can claim to constitute truth, can positively be integrated. Christianity makes no such claim to an ideological totalitarianism, for it recognizes the existence of this pluralism. Obviously it [34] recognizes it today in a conscious manner as something that cannot in any adequate sense be reduced to a synthesis, but this makes no difference whatever to what we have been saying, for thereby it recognizes precisely that it itself is subject to historical conditions, and in doing this it also constitutes a protest against the setting up of any other system as absolute when it claims this status. This is enough to indicate, at least to some extent, the situation in terms of social philosophy, within which the relationship between the faith of the individual Christian and the official teaching of the Church must be conceived of and viewed.

III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN TOWARDS THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF FAITH

1. *Accepting the Difference Between One's Own 'Personal' Truth and the Official Teaching of the Church*

The genuine Christian, who sees and accepts the situation indicated above, recognizes and endures the difference between his own personal truth and the official teaching of the Church in that he achieves both precisely *as* open to further development (admittedly each in its own way), and understands that the difference between them is an element in that contemporary pluralism which is no longer capable of being reduced to a complete synthesis, and which is anti-ideological in character. In view of the pluralism which necessarily exists it is obvious that the individual Christian in his awareness neither is nor can be simply the mirror image, the reflection, the echo, the reproduction of the official teaching of the Church. He is far too much under the influence of historical conditions for this to be the case, far too much a concrete individual. He can recognize this difference and he must bear with it.

The Christian no longer possesses any overall awareness in which his secular knowledge, in all its departments, is brought into a *positive* synthesis with the truths of his faith. On the contrary his mode of existence is subject not only to a 'situation of moral concupiscence', but also to a 'state of intrinsic gnoseological concupiscence'. By 'an intrinsic state of gnoseological concupiscence' we mean precisely that pluralism which exists in the present-day awareness of each individual: his knowledge has various sources yielding within himself branches of knowledge which cannot from the outset be reduced to synthesis or brought into

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harmony with one another. His conscious capacity for reflection is only limited in scope. As a result, in very many cases the individual does not even have [35] any clear awareness (apart, perhaps, from that which is borne in upon him by a vague general intellectual unease) that it is far from being evident how the various branches of knowledge (and the attitudes formed on the basis of them) can really be integrated with one another. Just as there is a situation of moral concupiscence which cannot adequately be resolved, and which consists in the disparity of the moral impulses to good and evil which continue to exist in their disparity even despite the understanding of himself at which an individual may freely have arrived, so too in the field of knowledge an analogous situation is to be discerned: the heterogeneous pluralism which cannot in any full or adequate sense be resolved of the various branches of knowledge which a man has. It is precisely this that we call the intrinsic state of gnoseological concupiscence in man, and can therefore apply to it (*mutatis mutandis*) all that is involved in terms of problems and answers in theology in the concept of 'concupiscence'. In response to this state of affairs, just as in response to his moral situation, the individual has the duty and the power to advance one step and to make some attempt at overcoming this situation of pluralism and of disparate forces in the direction of achieving a synthesis of all his various branches of knowledge within a single 'overall harmonized system of ideas'. But he can and must be aware at the same time that this positive process of synthesizing has still not succeeded, and will never fully succeed. This situation of concupiscence in the sphere of knowledge is something which has emerged into clear awareness only in modern times. It compels us in a quite new way to have recourse to a '*reductio in mysterium*'. In former times one's task was to pass from a well integrated, well ordered world of knowledge on to the inconceivable mystery. Today it is a disordered world of knowledge which cries out for that light which can only be that eternal light which does not yet shine upon any man here below. Today man knows too much at the level of the concrete categories of this world and its realities for him to be able to cope with it all, or for him to be in a position always and in every case to say how all this fits together. Obviously a theology works constantly and rightly to achieve a position in which it can show, by means of a realistic and bold interpretation of dogma that this must not appear positively and unequivocally irreconcilable with the secular branches of knowledge and (something which is still more important and more difficult) with the whole mentality of the current age. Certainly theology strives explicitly and unhesitatingly to rid itself of those statements, recognized as erroneous, which have been proved to be no longer tenable by the advances of secular knowledge. In this it has had some success and can also show that it is not necessary to [36] reject the true dogma of the Church as an error merely because it must and also can manifestly be interpreted afresh in a new historical situation, though obviously without thereby being destroyed or having its meaning completely changed. Certainly these manifold efforts on the part of contemporary theologians also have their successes, successes which will be underestimated only by those who are too entrapped in an old-fashioned mentality really to feel the present-day insuperable pluralism in our awareness at all, and who therefore find it easy to be 'orthodox'. But all these theological strivings cannot (and, moreover, do not need to) invalidate the fact that the harmonization consisting in a philosophy of life in which everything is synthesized is something which is unattainable so far as we are concerned, and that we actually feel this clearly and acutely.

The official teaching of the Church viewed in itself alone is not simply reiterated in its (relative) *intrinsic* harmony in the awareness of the individual Christian who assents to this teaching in faith. For secular knowledge too is present in his mind, deriving from quite different sources. And so far as man's finite awareness is concerned this knowledge is not from the outset brought into a synthesis. Moreover nowadays it is no longer capable of being fully synthesized, within the limitations of time, with the message of revelation to us regarded as an interpretation of this same human life. The opposite view will seem to be true only to

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those who no longer have any real interior attitude to the modern secular understanding of existence. Such people, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, have still made the intellectual situation of Christendom which prevailed in the past and which was once justified into a present-day ghetto in which they stubbornly seek to survive and so threaten to turn the Church into a strange and old-fashioned sect (such as, for instance, that of the Adventists). In doing this they persist in regarding their entire attitude as the courage and intransigence of true Christian faith. The modern Catholic has to recognize and unreservedly to endure this pluralism in his intellectual life, painful and perilous though it may often seem. In view of the insuperable limitations in the subjectivity of his awareness it also implies a difference between his own faith and the official teaching of the Church. Difference in this context does not *ipso facto* mean a radical or total contradiction, but it does imply a distinction, e.g. in virtue of the fact that it is still far from being the case that everything which is included as dogma in the official teaching of the Church *ipso facto* also has to be appropriated and understood – by the individual within his own personal existence. It also implies that order and structure as applied to the awareness of the individual and the order of the official teaching of faith are different.

[37] There is one point which the Christian can and must recognize: his own truth, and the personal history of his own achievement of self-identity are still open to further development. We are not people who always and in every case have to uphold all that they actually state with the deep notes of ultimate interior conviction and with an ‘absolute assent’ (as with the dogma of the Church) as though we were convinced of the fact that we are already in absolute and total possession of the truth in its fulness. Precisely so long as we are neither willing nor able to do this, precisely so long as we are, in this sense, humble individual Christians, subject to the influence of historical conditions, there is a difference between the official teaching of the Church and that which concerns the concrete content of the personal faith of each particular individual. And this difference is not only inevitable, but perfectly justified. We do not become good, or even theologically educated Christians only at that point at which we have a precise knowledge of official seminary dogmatics, and so have a precise awareness of where the appropriate numbers in Denzinger are to be found and what they say. There is, in fact, a wholly justified attitude of indifference towards this or that particular doctrine of the Church, an indifference affecting the concrete existence of the individual which constitutes something approximating to a process of ridding oneself of a burden in one’s own personal life. Under certain circumstances such an attitude is in principle justified. We do not in any sense need, so far as our own personal concrete lives are concerned (and, moreover, precisely inasmuch as they have something to do with the absolute God and his final judgement) to act absolutely as though we were in some great chemist’s shop in which we had to watch over all the various doctrines of the Church, drawn off, so to say, into so many bottles.

2. *Paying due heed to the hierarchy of truths*

Let us attempt to translate the message we have sought to convey into practical terms. The best course for a man who calls himself a Christian would be once and for all really to understand what one thing really means: to pray. For this is anything but easy (‘Lord, teach us to pray!’, Luke 11:1). If he can do this, and perhaps in doing so still notice that this orientation to God has something to do with Jesus Christ and his Cross, then under certain circumstances he may remain in complete ignorance as to the number of the sacraments and still be a better Christian than if he had an exact knowledge of this, or if he could repeat every catechism answer by heart. For even so he might still have understood nothing of [38] the real and vital point, so very simple, so very fundamental, so very radical, and precisely on this account so very difficult as it is, and therefore so easy to replace with a pious or

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theological verbiage. The fact that there is such a thing as indulgence is (rightly understood!) a defined truth. But this does not necessarily mean that a Catholic Christian (even an educated one) must have some knowledge of it. If Paul VI says that there is a Christian freedom to avail oneself of indulgences or not to do so, then the individual Catholic can confidently apply this Christian freedom to the question of knowing about indulgence also. We should not be too hasty in asserting that we must do one thing and not omit another. For the individual in the concrete (just the same as the pastor of souls) will notice that in view of the restrictions upon his time, his resources etc. there are many cases in which he is actually *compelled* to omit one thing if he seeks really and whole-heartedly to do another. In relation to the official teaching of the Church such a way of lightening one's burden can, under certain circumstances, be indispensable if a man is to cope with his own life (precisely as a believer). He may (as Scripture itself says) not always 'bear' everything. While 'objectively speaking' there may be no legitimate way of getting rid of a burden by a personal and resolute denial of one of the Church's dogmas, still there is manifestly, at least in the personal life of the individual Christian spirit, a way of 'getting rid of it' by failing to notice it, by 'postponing' a problematic question to a later time, just as this happens, and necessarily must happen, in other departments of life.

When the Second Vatican Council speaks of a 'hierarchy of truths'[3] it is of course clear that the real *essence* of this total structure of truth (regardless of how it should be described in more precise detail) is of greater importance and, moreover, in the sense that those truths which belong to the periphery within this total hierarchy may be such as the subject is totally unaware of without this being any ground for criticizing him. In this context we can discern not merely an objective structure in this Christian truth taken as a whole, but also (and this is just as important) a subjective 'hierarchy of truths' and, moreover, one that is perfectly justified. What we are seeking to convey is this: the various aspects and perspectives from which any Christian regards his personal life as it unfolds, or alternatively the totality of Christian doctrine from his own individual standpoint, vary very greatly. And this is quite as it should be. In this context we may do something which is also done in other departments [39] of human life with regard to the various areas of knowledge as they are presented to us, namely we may, with full deliberation, go out of our way to avoid this or that theological question because we instinctively feel that we cannot cope with it in the concrete circumstances of our lives. It is also possible to bring a certain subjectivity to bear in selecting certain special and preferred truths of faith to live by, and in this to allow other truths, which are just as valid and important, to recede into the background when we notice that this 'subjective attitude' is healing and liberating in its effect. A man must not in principle struggle against allowing himself to be led by God in his religious and spiritual odyssey into unforeseen depths of truth. But provided he avoids this he can, for instance, confidently live in an untroubled sureness of having been redeemed without having to endure all the darkness of anxiety about his salvation or of being lost in guilt, a state which he may perhaps already have discovered in other great Christians.

A further point which must also be taken into consideration in order to achieve a genuine understanding of this subjective hierarchy of truths is the following: the act of faith is not based upon a capacity which, being in itself neutral, is directed at will in each individual instance as it arises to one or other of the various 'objects of faith'. Rather these objects of faith are grasped in an act which in every particular instance is at basis always directed towards the single and total reality of faith which also constitutes at the same time the sustaining basis for faith as an act. *Fides quae* and *fides qua* (the content of faith and the process of the act of faith) are identical in their origins because the fundamental reality which

[3] cf. Vatican II, *Unitatis redintegratio* (The Decree on Ecumenism), no. 11.

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is believed in, the self-communication of God to man, namely the Holy Spirit, is also the principle of faith itself, its sustaining force, and its active movement.[4] The act of faith is single, underived from any prior act, and in its originality always the same. It constitutes an outwards movement of the spirit towards the immediacy of God in the power of the Spirit of God moving man from within. And in the unfolding development of faith in the individual man it gradually assimilates the various 'objects of faith' and assigns them their place in this single and total movement of the spirit as it yields itself up to God in his self-disclosure. If these individual 'objects of faith' were not taken up in this single and total movement of man in God (grace) to God (eternal life), then, while it is indeed true that we might still be aware of them, that they might be either approved of or called in question etc. at the human level, still they would never constitute [40] elements in faith in the true sense. This process of assimilation which faith of its very nature necessarily entails (the gradual process of being introduced to universal truth), viewed in the perspective of the particular objects in which faith as one and the single reality of faith is articulated, is in fact a process of *genuine historical development* at the collective and individual levels which never comes to an end. And this too is something of which the believer should be aware. He can experience and freely concede that the development of faith within his own personal life, regarded as a personal appropriation of the reality of faith by him as a concrete individual, is, by comparison with the development of the collective faith of the Church, less advanced. He cannot in principle deny that this personal history of his own faith has still further to go, while at the same time these further developments of it are already given to him at the collective level in the history of faith in the Church, in its theology and the history of its spirituality. If he did deny this, then this would take the form of a positive and committed rejection of the Church's dogmas. At the same time, however (*sit venia verbo*) the phylogenesis of the faith of the Church and the ontogenesis of personal faith in the individual are not simply identical. The individual believer does not need, in his primary and basic act of faith, *ipso facto* to have positively assimilated and articulated to himself everything which is objectively included in the faith of the Church. Even without this he still possesses the faith of the Church because this faith too, in and despite all its incalculably complex articulations, lives, no less than the faith of the individual, by this single basic act in which a man surrenders himself in hope and love to God as he reveals himself to him. (Here again we cannot go on to explain precisely *how*, within this basic conception of the historical process of faith, faith in *Jesus Christ*, the historical manifestation of God's triumphant turning to man, is incorporated.)

An individual form of faith of the kind we have been describing, articulating itself in a subjective hierarchy of truths, is of course present not only in each individual, but also in particular groups within the Church, in the particular Churches within the Church, at particular epochs in the Church's history, etc. But this too is something which we cannot enlarge upon any further at this point.

3. *Awareness of the Historicity of the Truth Officially Proclaimed by the Church*

A further point must be recognized: obviously the modern Christian must also have an awareness of the historical 'relativity' of the truth officially [41] proclaimed by the Church. This is, in a true sense, relative in virtue of the conceptual models by means of which these truths are expressed. These conceptual models belong to particular epochs and are subject to change. The truth officially proclaimed by the Church has certainly a further relativity in virtue of the inevitable transformation which takes place again and again in the explosive

[4] This identity is something in which H. de Lubac takes a special interest, primarily in his most recent work, *La foi chrétienne* (Paris, 2nd ed., 1970).

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impact of the particular truths at the individual and social levels. Not every truth has the same revolutionary force in concrete human existence or in society in every age. We are justified in recognizing a relativity in the truth officially proclaimed by the Church, and obviously this also implies an awareness of the fact that truths included in this official teaching of the Church can be obscured. A given truth is not always or necessarily assigned, or capable of being assigned, to its rightful place within the hierarchy of truths, and obviously a further factor included in this relativity which must be recognized is an awareness of the fact that this truth of the Church, even that of the Church's authorized teachers, still belongs to history, and so is itself still seeking for its own definitive consummation, and, moreover, a consummation which does not simply fall from heaven, but is obviously sustained by us ourselves in the unfolding historical development of this truth of the official teaching of the Church. It is we who may perhaps have to bring out some specific truth from the 'treasury' of the Church, dust it off polish it, once more achieve a living understanding of it, realize it in our own concrete lives, and decide to do something more than merely to tolerate it or regard it as a matter of indifference. And to the extent that we do this, this truth of the Church, which, even while being such, never ceases to have a historical relativity, achieves its own place in history, develops, undergoes modifications, and precisely in doing so, and only in doing so, remains the same.

4. *Any absolute contradiction of dogma is false and unnecessary*

Perhaps it is only at this point that we arrive at the true and difficult outcome of our foregoing considerations. If and to the extent that a person is a Catholic Christian he cannot declare any absolute contradiction in the name of a truth which he recognizes in his own concrete personal existence to the truth officially formulated by the Church's teaching authorities. But besides this, any such absolute contradiction is quite unnecessary for him. This is, of course, the statement of a Catholic Christian. You will remember the initial point which we made, namely that precisely *as* Catholic Christians we are bound to concede that another [42] may *subjectively* arrive at the conviction which is absolutely binding so far as we are concerned that we must declare an absolute contradiction to some doctrine of the Church. If someone is convinced that the papacy was instituted by the devil – to use a primitive example – and if this conviction is, in a true sense and so far as he is concerned, absolute within his own personal life, then obviously he has the duty and responsibility of separating himself from the Catholic Church, because otherwise, even according to Catholic teaching, he will go to hell unless he does so. This is a quite basic and obvious truth. Yet despite this, he who really believes and, moreover, is resolved to remain a believer, says that in the light of the truth and the conviction which he has grasped *for himself* in his own personal existence, he sees no necessity for declaring any absolute contradiction to a truth officially formulated as such by the Church in those cases in which it really is a dogma in the truly ecclesiastical sense that is in question. There are many people who suppose that the Church says such and such, and so gain the impression that it is simply nonsense, it is an assertion our assent to which cannot possibly be demanded, and who on this account contradict what they suppose the Church to have said. In very many cases (I do not say in every case!) such a contradiction is a contradiction not of that which the Church teaches really and in truth, but of that which we suppose to be taught by the Church. You may say: 'Jesus is God' or 'There are three persons in God'. Now among those who make such an assertion as a matter of faith and personal conviction we can assume that there are very many Christians, including even some of the Church's official representatives, who make it only at the cost of a *sacrificium intellectus*. In other words they are in reality conceiving of something which is anything but a genuinely binding doctrine of the Church, something which is simply nonsense. And when someone else then goes on to deny it, it is because he has falsely identified his own personal

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understanding of a dogma of this kind with the Church's official teaching, and it is this personal understanding of his that is really unacceptable.

This is something that must be taken into account when we are considering the attitude of the Catholic Christian towards the Catholic Church's official teaching of faith, and when we say that it is quite unnecessary for such a Catholic Christian to assert any absolute contradiction to the Church's official teaching. Why should he go on to make such an assertion? Ultimately speaking I do not know why so many are convinced of their own subjective opinions that they believe that they have resolutely to reject the teaching of the Church or some particular teaching of the Church. I do not know why they have so little mistrust of [43] the capriciousness of their own subjective individualism. Nowadays even among us Westerns an attitude is already re-asserting itself which can be summed up in the axiom: the party is always right. But an attitude of this kind is certainly not identical with the attitude of the Christian towards the Church in assenting to its doctrines even when this teaching seems not immediately to be in conformity with its own subjective feelings. But this 'socialist' attitude towards life should serve to warn us of the danger of too quickly allowing our own subjective feelings and ideas to lead to a determined contradiction of a doctrine of the Church. Can we not in all honesty regard such apparent conflicts between the official teaching of the Church and our own subjectivity as provisional, as a question which does not have to be answered straightway in the present? In the eyes of a man who is self-critical and modest, must that which he fails to understand always straightway be rejected as that which is false? If he did absolutely identify himself with his own subjective feelings at any particular moment, would not such an attitude be the death of all delight in intellectual growth? Would not this be the outcome if an attitude of self-assurance of this kind became the universal law of his own thinking? At least so far as that Christian is concerned who still remains in agreement with the ultimate and basic positions of Christianity, is it not truer, and also subjectively more honest because more modest, for him from this basic position of his at least to keep himself open, despite all still unresolved conflicts, and to avoid drawing any premature conclusions? Is it not the better course for him to wait and see whether a positive solution to such conflicts is not to be found in the course of life by a maturing process applicable both to the interior man and also to his personal theology? Nowadays, however, the temptation to which we find ourselves prone is rather that of an absolute relativism in which we have a certain understanding for every possible position, regard everything as true and false at the same time, view everything as subject to a historical relativity, and therefore allow every possible position to have a certain validity. And if this is so then, after all, we should surely give the Church's teaching too at least the chance of slowly achieving intelligibility, gradually proving itself, in a genuine and true sense, capable of being assimilated. In this connection everyone should also recognize a further obligation, laid upon as a matter of truth and courage in our ordinary lives. When we find ourselves placed in a particular position by life itself we should surrender it only in favour of some better and more liberating position and never in favour of a weary scepticism, an attitude of indifference and neutrality towards all possible positions.

[44]

5. *The Ultimate Basis of Faith*

Consider further that on a radical view of the Church, however detailed may be the system of doctrines in which its faith is expressed, in reality it says very little. What it tells us is that there is an impenetrable mystery of the most real kind in our lives, namely God, and that this God is near to us; that the absolute self-communication of this God to us has been manifested in history in a manner which is irreversible and valid in Jesus and his fate. This is something that is really quite simple, yet in it we already have, fundamentally speaking, the whole of Christianity – but only provided that in addition to this you also reflect that there is, and

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necessarily must be, a community which confesses and lives by this truth. The community we are speaking of here is one that is sociologically constructed, an institutionalized community because that too is precisely appropriate to our human state. Once these prior assumptions are accepted, we have in a real sense already expressed the whole of Christianity. I do indeed recognize that it is still possible to set oneself up in *contradiction* to this simple basic truth and, moreover, even on the part of intelligent men. Otherwise I would have found it quite impossible to maintain the modification of my initial basic statement in the first part of this essay. But we are obliged to accept a modification of this kind as Catholic Christians, and not merely as liberal-minded men who recognize that others are no more stupid or ill-willed than ourselves. As Catholics we can, and indeed we must, whole-heartedly concede that there are men who, as a matter of their own conscience, cannot be Christians or Catholics, and therefore should not become such either. But the point that I contest is that we necessarily *must* entertain the impression that on a right understanding of the basic convictions of the Christian man, there is in them something against which we must assert an absolute contradiction. If we were compelled to assert such a contradiction, then we would no longer be Catholic Christians, and each individual would have the duty of positively deciding not to be such.

But let us try to understand the whole structure of Christianity, with all its detailed implications and explicitations, in the light of this ultimate essence of Christendom. Once we do this then, as Catholic Christians, we have no need to maintain that there is any official doctrine of the Church absolutely binding upon us against which we are compelled to assert an absolute negation as a matter of our own subjective conscience with regard to truth, and of our own intellectual honesty. For all the individual statements in the whole doctrinal structure of Catholic Christianity are [45] capable of being read and interpreted as so many concretizations and variations of that quite simple truth which we have just pointed to as the true substance of the Christian revelation. He who posits a contradiction of *this* must of course reject the whole of Christianity and the Church. But where are the compelling grounds for such a rejection? And if we experience how freely we can live on the basis of this ultimate substance of Christianity, what reasons can we then have for allowing ourselves to be led astray by the possibility or the fact of a rejection *precisely of this kind*? To posit it would not make us more prudent, would not reduce the number of propositions which we assented to as true, would not cause us to take any less risks. On the contrary we would, in the last analysis, merely be opting for a total negation, as distinct from a total affirmation (as actually attainable in history). In order to cope with this official teaching of the Church we must precisely live by the truth which is prior to, and transcends, all verbal expression, the truth namely, of the inconceivable God, and we must live by this in participating in the fate of Jesus.

If we do this, then, it is true, we have still not achieved any full, exhaustive, or wholly comprehensible synthesis between an understanding of Catholic doctrine of this kind, and deriving from this essential attitude, and the rest of the realities by which we live in our spiritual and intellectual lives. Nevertheless, provided we accept the possibility of an existential unity of this kind with the truth which is prior to, and above, all verbal expression, that truth which, ultimately speaking, Christianity in all its propositions is seeking to express, then we can endure in hope this pluralism in our concrete personal lives which is nowadays inevitable, and can never wholly be reduced to a synthesis. Obviously in attaching ourselves to the truth of the Church we do not live in a state of utter paradisal harmony such that everything is clear, everything beautiful, and everything agreeable. Obviously this faith, in its bearing upon the personal, intellectual, and social lives of particular individuals, constitutes an element which is far from fitting immediately or smoothly into the totality of our concrete personal existence as intellectual beings. But would we be people who had achieved harmony

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in ourselves and in our apprehension of truth if we were not Christians, not Catholic Christians, and not individuals governed by the official teachings of our Church? We would be just as subject to pluralism, and indeed we would, to a certain extent, be men who were actually in a state of being torn asunder. Even then we would not know how really to synthesize and harmonize this pluralism within the total content of our spirit. We would still always have to advance from truth to truth through every possible kind of obscurity. We [46] must not under-estimate our relationship to the Catholic, official, and institutionalized forms of Christianity, which also act as a standard of truth to us, in favour of some ideal state which does not exist anywhere else. And provided we avoid this, then even today we can, with complete confidence, continue to be Christians. For what has a Christian to believe? Nothing else than that the man who is a Christian precisely does *not* have the ultimate say in his own existence, but rather that all solutions, all advances in knowledge and free action, are all along already transcended by the absolute mystery, that this mystery itself wills to concern itself in some way with us, that it has addressed itself to us as the ultimate definitive word of our existence in Jesus on the Cross, the crucified and risen Lord.

If we live by this, then while the whole ideological impetus in the Church which is inevitable may still cause us pain in very many respects, we can nevertheless really entertain this hope: that our reason for grappling with this official teaching of the Church in our own personal lives and thoughts, with all the hazards it involves, is always in order that we ourselves may be liberated from our own subjective capriciousness and at the same time may make our own personal contribution to this collective awareness of faith of the Church. Even today we can be Catholics.

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3

DOES THE CHURCH OFFER ANY ULTIMATE CERTAINTIES?

The question which we are here attempting to answer within the compass of a brief article runs: Does the Church offer any ultimate certainties?

The problem is a complex and difficult one. It is in no sense a clear question, then, which we are seeking to answer. For what does the term 'Church' imply in this context? What is meant when we speak of ultimate certainties, and – assuming that any such exist at all – what can it mean to ask whether the Church can 'offer' such certainties? Questions of this kind are raised by the very meaning of the subject under investigation. And if this essential meaning is itself obscure, then obviously it is all the more difficult to find an answer to these particular questions. From this it follows that all that we can say here will remain extremely fragmentary.

One further proviso has to be made: there is a certain connection between the subject of these considerations and Hans Küng's book entitled *Unfehlbar? – eine Anfrage*.[1] Reduced to plain terms, this publication contests the defined doctrine of the First Vatican Council. In doing this, however, the book does not confine itself merely to the teaching authority of the pope, but rather refers quite in general to all propositions of faith whatsoever, whether contained in Scripture or put forward by the Councils or the teaching authority of the pope, with the intention of making an ultimately binding statement. According to the traditional doctrine such statements of the Church put forward with ultimately binding force are guaranteed to be preserved from any real error by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, even though such statements are of course historically conditioned, constantly capable of, and in need of fresh interpretation, and [48] always too falling short of the mystery they seek to express. Küng, however, takes up the position that while it is true that many such statements are *de facto* correct, still even statements such as these can, precisely in principle, be erroneous, and may later perhaps come to be recognized and rejected as errors.

This applies *a fortiori* to those statements which are put forward by the official doctrinal authority of the Church with a certain binding force but precisely not one that is ultimate and irrevocable. In this respect Küng clearly does not depart in his interpretation from the traditional doctrine of the Church and of the theologians. Thus it is immediately clear that our present theme for investigation has a certain connection with Küng's book, for with the publication of this book a certain question has been touched upon and has once more been rendered actual and relevant as a matter of open discussion: the question, namely, of whether there are any ultimate certainties and assurances in the Church for the believer. Nevertheless the considerations put forward in the present essay will not be concerned directly or exclusively with the positions taken up by Küng. These will be touched upon here and there as the subject-matter itself demands. But our theme for investigation is conceived of in broader terms, and intended to have a more radical meaning, for it to be regarded merely as a crossing of swords with Küng's thesis. Küng himself appears to be convinced of the fact that the Holy Spirit, by the power of his grace, constantly preserves the Church in truth even though this state of being preserved bears primarily and properly upon a truth which ultimately speaking lies behind any of those truths which are expressed in propositional form. Moreover the men of today are inclined to doubt even this ultimate assurance, which Küng himself upholds. And to the extent that this is true it is obvious that we both can and should

[1] German publication details: Einsiedeln, 1970; English translation: *Infallible*, *an Inquiry* (New York, 1971).

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conceive of our present theme in far broader and more fundamental terms.

In putting the question of whether the Church can offer any ultimate assurances and certainties to the believer we must begin by recognizing that the question itself has many different levels of meaning. Ultimate certainty – what does that really mean? There is a certain basic state or basic attitude (or whatever name we may choose to give to the reality referred to) that is wholly subjected to human freedom and decision: the attitude, namely of an ultimate trust in the meaningfulness of human existence, in the possibility of a full, all-embracing, and definitive salvation (as theologians are accustomed to expressing it). There are individual propositions, consisting of human concepts and words, which are put forward with the claim of being real and true – true and assured beyond [49] any shadow of doubt, and so offering ultimate certainties. If therefore it is asked whether the Church can offer the believer any ultimate certainties this question is *ipso facto* and in itself ambiguous. For what is it that is being asked? Is it whether and how the Church can offer the believer that attitude of an ultimate calm and assured basic trust in existence and leading to the hope of salvation, or is it an enquiry into specific individual propositions as taught by the Church which as such are intended to offer ultimate certainties? The question is all the more complicated inasmuch as, obviously, that attitude of basic and ultimate trust on the one hand, and these propositional truths which can be conceived of on the other hand, are not simply two entities immediately juxtaposed to one another, but rather mutually condition one another each in its own way, even though the certainty of basic trust and the certainty of propositional truths are not identical with one another. A further distinction has to be drawn, turning the question with which we are concerned in these considerations into a twofold question. For on the one hand we may be asking whether the Church offers the believer ultimate certainties to the extent that he already is such, while on the other we may be asking whether the Church guarantees ultimate certainties to him who seeks to assent to her as the guardian of salvation and truth. For manifestly it means something different for me to ask myself what kind of certainty I can have in accepting the Church and her teaching authority from asking myself what kind of certainties the teaching authority of the Church offers me, assuming that I have already in principle accepted the validity of this teaching authority. Although it is necessary to draw this distinction it itself in turn raises special difficulties because the realities just distinguished from one another are at the same time very closely connected with one another in a way that is difficult to describe.

Assuming the validity of the distinctions we have just drawn within the basic question as such we may now go on to state the following:

First, that radical and all-embracing attitude of basic trust in the meaning of existence, the ultimate hope of salvation referred to above, is not something which can, in any strict or proper sense, be sustained by the authority of the Church or, in that sense, ‘ecclesiastical’. Obviously an individual who already stands within the community of believers will find this ultimate and basic attitude of trust easier, and in this sense he does also have ah ecclesiastical element, if we like to put it so, entering into the concrete circumstances of his life. But this does not alter the fact that in principle this ultimate and basic trust is both logically and psychologically prior to belief in the authority of the Church, and is rather that which [50] sustains, than that which is sustained by, this belief in the teaching authority of the Church. Because this ultimate and basic trust, to which of course other names can be given (ultimate freedom from anxiety, ultimate readiness to believe etc.), embraces and sustains all things, and so too the specifically Christian faith, its contents, and therefore a convinced acceptance of the teaching authority of the Church as well, all assurances and certainties offered to man by this authority of the Church are from the outset incapable of being any surer or more certain than this basic attitude of trust itself. Indeed all assurances and certainties in the life of the Church actually bear within themselves the special quality of this basic attitude of trust on

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which, in all cases, they themselves are based. But there are two points to be made about this basic attitude of trust. First, as we shall have to explain in greater detail later, it is the most sure and most certain factor, and second that it is at the same time the factor involving the greatest exercise of freedom, that which is made subject to man's own responsibility, that which is constantly threatened, under attack by the ultimate temptation to a radical scepticism and cynicism, a temptation which can gain the upper hand even in one whose life seems to outward appearances to be very normal and governed by moral principle. It is necessary to recognize and understand this special quality of the ultimate and basic attitude of trust; to realize that it imprints its special character upon all else, and so too upon our faith in the teaching authority of the Church. And once we do recognize this it becomes obvious that even as Christians and members of the Church we should not in any sense expect her to hand down to us assurances and certainties such as would simply free us from our burdens or simply and in every respect be obvious and indubitable. No such assurances and certainties are to be found within the Church, because no such assurances and certainties can ever exist in human life at all. For even in the ultimate depths of his existence man is constantly assailed by temptations, constantly called upon to decide between light and darkness. The ultimate clarity and sureness of his own existence is bestowed upon him only in the ultimate and basic movements of his own heart, at a level at which it is no longer possible to distinguish between speculative reason and freedom. At this level, rather, either faculty conditions the other. If we understand the specifically ecclesiastical factors in the thought and action of a Christian we shall realize that it in no sense has the effect of freeing him from the task, the burden, and the secret blessedness of seizing upon the ultimate certainty only in an ultimate self-commitment in love and trust, of realizing that the first and last light that he is given is a reality indwelling the attitude of [51] trusting freedom itself, and cannot be borrowed from any other source. In the light of this it will become clear that the ultimate surenesses and certainties even of a Christian, and, moreover, even according to Christian doctrine itself are far from being so specifically ecclesiastical as we are all too easily prone to insinuate in an incautious apologetic on behalf of the Church and its significance for man. Augustine is quite wrong when he says that he would not believe the gospel if he had not been prompted to do so by the authority of the Church. We should understand the term 'gospel' here as signifying the liberating power of the Spirit of God, who bestows upon us this ultimate trust in existence to combat all ultimate mistrust and all despairing *angst*. And if we do take the term in this sense, then this statement of Augustine is certainly incorrect. It is the attitude of ultimate trust that sustains the authority of the Church, and not *vice versa*, even though it is easier for one who belongs to the community of believers to have this ultimate and basic attitude of trust, and even though the experience of the possibility of this ultimate and basic attitude of trust is constantly bestowed upon us Christians afresh in our encounter with all the realities which are imparted to us as Christians through the Church.

We now come to a fresh aspect of our general considerations, once we recognize that this basic attitude of trust sustaining all else, including the Church and her authority, is in fact in all cases achieved in the ultimate basis of our freedom, which is unexpressed and never fully reflected upon at the conscious level. It is only in this ultimate basis of our freedom that the ultimate and most primordial light of truth bums, though at the same time this is always imparted through the medium of an objectified knowledge expressed in propositional form. We cannot in the present context treat of the difficult problem of what the propositions are in which this objectifying knowledge of man can and must be expressed so as to give objective form to this basic attitude of trust on man's part, an attitude in which reason and freedom are one, and in which man finds his ultimate reference to God. Here we shall confine ourselves to making two points: first that such propositions do not necessarily have to have an explicitly metaphysical or religious content. On the contrary, man can achieve this basic and primordial

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attitude of trust and objectify it to himself in propositions which seem purely secular in character and to belong wholly to this world, provided only that he radically commits himself in his freedom through the medium of these propositions. The second point, however, is that explicitly metaphysical and religious propositions, in which the word of God etc. are expressly applied, are not an unnecessary [52] luxury nor even a mere inevitable stage in that inescapable process by which man comes consciously to reflect upon his ultimate and basic attitudes. On the contrary, for the concrete individual in a concrete situation such specifically religious propositions constitute, under certain circumstances, the necessary medium, obligatory so far as he is concerned, for his basic decisions such that without them as medium in a given concrete situation this particular individual is quite incapable of really achieving that ultimate and basic decision of his freedom without which he would be actually denying this basic decision, thereby incurring his own damnation. To put the matter simply: there are individuals who take their decision for God in the context of their secular everyday life without this decision of their's having anything to do with the word of God explicitly or as a matter of their own conscious objectification. At the same time, however, there are men who, in the course of their personal lives, encounter personal statements about God of a kind which they can really understand. And an individual such as this cannot truly leave this word of God out of account in arriving at his ultimate basic decision. There is – to speak once more in wholly general terms – a kind of consciously objectifying human knowledge which is expressed in terms which present the reality signified as object, and which shares in the special quality of the basic decision of man. In other words it participates in his ultimate sureness and certainty and in the temptations by which these are assailed in virtue of his human freedom. Let us take, for instance, someone who says that we must accord absolute respect to our fellow men in their dignity, and who in making this statement understands what it really means, making it without reserve despite all its questionableness and lack of ultimate precision, which he himself may recognize. Such a one makes his statement with that ultimate sureness, the outcome of a freedom which is exposed to assault, which belongs intrinsically to the attitude of ultimate trust in existence. There are many such statements which share in the nature of this ultimate sureness. Obviously they differ very much among themselves, and so too have very different ways of sharing in the sureness of the free act of basic trust which is under assault – that attitude of trust in which reason and freedom and the divine grace that liberates constitute a unity. We cannot here set forth statements of this kind in all their multiplicity, their various qualities, and their varying connections with this ultimate arch-certainty. But when we say that such statements, in the sureness and certainty belonging to them, draw their life from this ultimate trust in the meaningfulness of existence, this is the most basic statement concerning the original relationship between these two entities. At the same time, however, [53] this assertion is obviously not intended to gainsay the fact that conversely the free acceptance of this basic attitude of trust also in some respects itself draws its life from these statements which give expression to it. For one who assents to such statements and experiences their truth in those concrete ways in which they are proved capable of supporting life in the personal life of a concrete individual and within a concrete society will manifestly also find it easier to achieve that basic attitude of trust from which these statements truly draw their living force. But there is one further point of primary importance to be made about statements of this kind which derive their living certainty from this heart and centre of free human living: such statements may perfectly well have as their content elements of concrete human history. They can perfectly well relate to concrete realities in the personal life of an individual, to which in the end, at least in principle, the whole history of humanity belongs. For instance the statement that this or that man has in his own individual life a quality of absolute reliability, even though in theory we cannot absolutely rely upon any individual man, or the statement that this or that life which is of

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radical moral significance, and of which we have had living experience, cannot simply have been swallowed up in empty nothingness – these and similar statements have a content which is subject to the contingency of history, and yet at the same time draw their living force from that ultimate attitude of basic trust, and so share in the certainty and sureness belonging to it, and throw light upon this attitude of basic trust itself as constituting its concrete objectification.

We are speaking, then, of statements which on the one hand have an historical content, and on the other derive their living force from this ultimate and freely posited basic attitude of trust in the absolute meaning of existence, an attitude brought about by grace. At the same time these same statements give objective form to this attitude. Now for Christians statements about Jesus Christ the crucified and risen Lord as the absolute mediator of salvation are to be numbered among statements of this kind. There is no need for us here to enlarge upon these statements in respect of their content in any more precise detail. But in the message which they convey the believer, from his place in history, is enabled in the concrete to grasp that absolute and irrevocable self-utterance of God to which he assents with hope, albeit without consciously explicitating this in that attitude of ultimate and basic trust which is sustained by grace. 'What we encounter here in the experience of the believer is a relationship of mutual interplay and influence between the two entities, and to that extent in the last analysis a circular process – that ultimate attitude of basic trust [54] sustained by grace and breaking in upon the freedom of God which we call the grace of faith constitutes the enabling condition for recognizing Christ with real faith as the ultimate bringer of salvation, as the manifestation and guarantee in history of God's irrevocable act in turning to man. Conversely the experience of Jesus for the believer as Christian constitutes a living experience within his own personal history in which he finds the courage to accept in freedom this ultimate basic trust through the grace that is offered him. There is, then, a relationship between the historical experience of Jesus on the one hand and the achievement of the ultimate attitude of free and basic trust on the other such that each mutually conditions the other. Nevertheless the two factors involved in this relationship differ slightly in the manner in which each sustains an element of the other. For without entering into any more profound justification of the differences involved in this relationship of mutual conditioning, a Catholic theologian must make two points: first, that an ultimate and salvific acceptance of the basic attitude of trust offered by God's grace can be present in an individual even without any explicit reference to Jesus Christ, and second that we have to hold firmly to the position that it is impossible to have any real faith in Jesus in history without this grace of faith. It is in fact nothing else than precisely this basic attitude of trust, brought about by grace, of which we have just spoken that liberates man and opens the immediacy of God to him, regardless of whether he formulates this explicitly to himself or achieves it only at an implicit level.

But abstracting from this point, we can in all confidence arrive at the following conclusion: for the Christian there is an ultimate unity, consisting in a mutually conditioning relationship, between his experience of Jesus as the crucified and risen Lord who gives him the courage freely to accept the meaning of existence on the one hand, and that ultimate and radical basic attitude of trust in the meaning of existence which, in the full development of its nature, explicates itself in faith, hope, and love. At the same time, however, in this mutually conditioning relationship between the two elements, the second element, namely the attitude of basic trust in the meaning of existence, retains an ultimate priority for the Christian over the experience of the historical Jesus. And because of this, without denying in this matter that there is such a mutually conditioning relationship, we can, even with regard to the Christian, conclude the following: the believer's experience of Jesus Christ is in its sureness and certainty upheld by that ultimate basic attitude of trust in its sureness and certainty, even though, because it is free, it is also liable to the assaults of temptation. One who despairs in

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an ultimate manner, denying any absolute meaning [55] of existence and failing freely to maintain hope for himself cannot recognize Jesus either as him who by dying entered into the life of God and so as the final and definitive self-utterance of God to man in history. From this it obviously follows *ipso facto* that from the basic statements of Christianity about Jesus Christ we cannot truly expect any other certainty or sureness than that which is inherent in that ultimate basic attitude of trust: in other words a certainty that is always liable to the assaults of temptation, always to be achieved afresh in freedom and responsibility, one which is not simply given to us beforehand as an achieved reality, but is always too the free act of our own lives, which we ourselves sustain and only so are sustained by it. Indeed, from the points we have already indicated above we can as Christians and Catholics even go so far as to concede freely and confidently that the sureness and certainty relating to Jesus is in a certain respect a sureness that is more derived, more threatened, more fragile than the sureness of this basic attitude of trust in itself. 'While this is, as we have said, correct only in a certain respect, still it is something which we should freely recognize because ultimately speaking it imparts to belief in Jesus Christ a greater sureness and a greater facility than if we were falsely to claim for this faith that it possessed this certainty as an ultimate and intrinsic factor within itself such as no historically contingent fact can ever have. There are in fact countless individuals who find their salvation through Christ, and thereby in a true sense, through his grace and the hope arising from it, have arrived at the historical manifestation of salvation, even though at the level of their conscious and verbal objectification they know nothing of him or even suppose, at this level, that they have to reject him because even this situation can prevail without any fault on their part. But after all that has been said the fact still remains that there is an historical experience in faith of the historical Jesus as the absolute bringer of salvation, and this experience of faith is – at least *sensu positivo* – upheld and defined by the sureness and certainty attending upon this ultimate and grace-given basic attitude of trust.

We can now proceed a step further in our approach to the question of whether the Church itself can offer the Christian any ultimate certainties. First we must recognize that faith in Jesus Christ as the absolute bringer of salvation, as the ultimate messenger of God's self-utterance to the world from within the world is something which henceforward can never disappear. And this quality of indestructibility in such faith is itself an element in the content of this faith. If the believer failed to understand the content of his faith as enduring finally and definitively in the world in this [56] sense he could not recognize Jesus as the final and definitive Word of God's self-utterance to the world. Alternatively he would have to reckon with the fact that God has once more radically turned away from the world. Faith asserts its own indestructibility as faith in Christ and in the world and mankind in general, even though obviously the individual believer cannot assert that his own personal faith as entertained in the openness of his own life of personal freedom possesses the same quality of indestructibility. Faith as faith in Christ, in the manifestation of the grace of God imposing itself victoriously, involves faith in its own indestructibility in the world as a whole, not as the autonomous achievement of man but as the deed of God's grace which can impose itself within the freedom of man without suppressing it. Christ himself has promised that it will do this, so that faith in Jesus itself participates in the victoriousness of God's grace, which has been addressed to the world in Jesus.

If this is the case, then faith in Jesus Christ also implies faith in the survival of a community of faith gathered about Jesus Christ, which exercises, sustains, and bears witness to this indestructible faith in Jesus Christ. It is true that we cannot say that this community of faith called the Church always has a membership which is increasing in relation to the total number of mankind within the world, that it always has among the nations and within the world that social status which we experience it as having. All this and much else of a similar

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kind we cannot know, because the Church in history has, and necessarily must have, a future that opens upon the unknown. But that the community of faith gathered about Jesus will not cease throughout history, that Jesus, therefore, will always be acknowledged – these are points that belong to the very content of Christian faith, and which have, even though in a sense that is derived and exposed to danger, that sureness, certainty and liability to assault which shares in the ultimate and basic attitude of trust, a sureness and certainty which belong to Christian faith in general. To the extent that the individual believer shares in the faith of the Church as such, and draws his life force from this community of faith, albeit only as sustained by that basic attitude of trust brought about by grace, we can by all means go on to say also that the sureness and certainty of his Christian faith in general and in the indestructibility of the faith of the Church and therefore of the Church herself, receives a supplementary element from the Church herself even though this does not gainsay the fact that this faith too is ultimately sustained in this part of its content by that basic attitude of trust, the innermost certainty of which we are accustomed to call the grace of faith.

[57] Let us go a step further: faith in the indestructibility of the Church's faith, in the fact that she will abide in the truth of Christ, implies a faith in the fact that there are propositions in which, taken individually, this faith of the Church is articulated, and which at the same time share in the indestructibility of this faith. Christian faith means faith in Jesus Christ expressed in a historical mode and having a historical reference to Jesus Christ over and above the reference to him achieved through grace. Now it is quite impossible for this faith to exist otherwise than as expressed in propositions. For while it may be true that a historical connection with an earlier historical event need not be expressed solely and exclusively through propositions expressing historical tradition, still a connection of this kind can never in any case be established without such propositions. The indestructibility, the historical permanence of faith in Jesus Christ implies that certain propositions about him will endure permanently too, and of course this applies to true propositions, for erroneous ones as such cannot cause faith in him to endure permanently in any true sense. The certain and sure faith in the abidingness of Jesus Christ, of faith in him, and so too in the community of faith belonging to him, implies the abidingness of true propositions about him, and of course also about those realities (such as God etc.) without which Jesus himself cannot in any sense be understood and expressed. Faith in the indestructible permanence of faith and of the community of faith necessarily constitutes faith in the fact that the truth as expressed in propositions about Jesus Christ in the community of faith, the Church, is not destroyed. In this connection it is obvious that the Church must at least recognize certain propositions as belonging to the true and indestructible propositions constitutive of her own faith – that in other words it is impossible for the Church, while having such propositions, to be herself totally incapable of recognizing them as such in the individual concrete case. A point on which there cannot in fact be any doubt is that the Church is convinced that she actually knows of such true and indestructible propositions as such. At least it can be said that the most fundamental assertions about Jesus Christ as the Lord, the bringer of salvation, the unsurpassable presence of God with us, are propositions of this kind, which the Church recognizes as constitutive of her faith and declares to be true and ever-abiding propositions. These assertions are in ecclesiastical parlance called infallible and inerrant propositions. Propositions of this kind the Church expresses as objectifications of her own ultimate Christian basic understanding, and of her basic attitude of trust as brought about in her by the Spirit. She expresses them as belonging to her faith, as sharing in the certainty and [58] sureness with which she asserts her faith in general and as a whole, and she therefore assents to them with an irrevocable commitment of faith. To the extent that the Church believes in and proclaims such propositions as, in the sense described, infallible, she extends to those Christians who have united themselves with, and inserted themselves into the Church's

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understanding of faith as one and whole, ultimate certainties and surenesses with regard to these propositions in the sense previously ascribed to these terms, 'certainty' and 'sureness'. In this connection, however, two points, arising from the very nature of what has been said, have to be noticed: first, as applied to a specific proposition, this sureness deriving from the authority of the Church's own explicit faith taken as a whole can obviously be applied only to one who has in principle accepted in faith the abidingness of the Church in the truth of Christ, and that abidingness too which is communicated in propositional form. As we have already previously pointed out, this certainty which belongs to the acceptance of the Church herself as a whole comes to the individual believer in the Church primarily and in principle not properly speaking from the Church but from the experience of the Spirit and the encounter with Christ in the basic attitude of trust as brought about by the Spirit. This pre-Christian (if we may so express it) certainty upholds the certainty with regard to the Church in general, and thereby *a fortiori* that which relates to the individual propositions taught by the Church and not *e converso*. At the same time, however, the point we have previously made remains true, that namely concerning the mutually conditioning relationship which exists between the basic attitude of trust as brought about by the Spirit on the one hand, and the individual's membership of the Church on the other. There is now a second and further point to be noticed: the formal sureness belonging to a specific proposition taught by the Church (when the Church believes and teaches it with an absolute commitment), and from this communicated to the believer within the Church, does not simply replace that interior and, to a certain extent, material sureness which an individual Christian can have with regard to a particular proposition of this kind when he succeeds in arriving at and realizing for himself the intrinsic connection which exists between his basic attitude of trust as brought about by the Spirit, his grace-given basic Christianity, the ultimate basic statements of the Christian faith on the one hand, and on the other the specific individual proposition at the more derived level which the Church herself teaches. If an individual Christian in the concrete given case does not succeed in arriving at this intrinsic connection, then he will generally be permitted to leave an individual derived proposition [59] of this kind respectfully alone, or to some extent to regard it as a remote goal to be attained in the development of his own personal history of faith, which is still in process of achievement. At the same time, however, he must obviously not on this account *ipso facto* deny or reject the proposition concerned on the grounds that he himself cannot, or cannot as yet, arrive at it or recognize how it is derived from the original wellsprings of faith which he has attained to.

Before we go on to what is, properly speaking, a fresh and further step in our considerations, one further supplementary explanation remains to be added for a right understanding of what has just been said. An individual man lives not only by ultimate basic convictions which he recognizes as absolutely and permanently binding with an ultimate certainty so far as he is concerned. An individual man, rather, has at the same time many recognized points, convictions, opinions, norms of behaviour, which he regards as right and valid for him here and now. No one can live solely on the basis of ultimate basic convictions assented to as final and definitive. In the concrete decisions taken in human life it is impossible to eliminate from the outset opinions which are merely provisional, conditional, and capable of being revised. It is not only the absolute truths, but also provisional opinions that sustain life and personal development. The former give history its continuity, while the latter give it its movement and its openness to a future still unknown. Indeed the situation is far from being such that we can, in the concrete, press our conscious reflections upon these two kinds of propositions and the difference between them so far that we can in all cases and in concrete detail draw the precise line of distinction between the two kinds of propositions. It can even be the case within an individual man that in the course of the personal development of his own individual recognition of truth a specific proposition which formerly appeared to

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him as a mere provisional opinion now comes to be recognized and accepted by this same individual as a statement of absolute validity. Now what applies to the individual's life with regard to his quest for truth inevitably applies in a similar sense too to the Church in her conscious awareness of her own faith. She does not live out her Christian faith solely by those propositions which she herself has already recognized at the fully conscious level as belonging absolutely and irreformably to her awareness of her faith. In her life of faith in the concrete she also inevitably and necessarily has propositions which are merely provisional, which, under certain circumstances will later come to be recognized as erroneous. She does not even have any explicit, sure, and unequivocal awareness right from the outset in every case as to whether a specific [60] proposition which she firmly holds and teaches belongs to the class of infallible propositions or to the class of theological opinions and provisional interpretations of her faith. Theology, therefore, draws an obvious distinction between propositions of the Church which are 'dogmas' and others which, while under certain circumstances they are indeed taught with a certain authority and binding force so far as the individual is concerned by the Church, for the protection of dogma in the true sense and for its application in practical life, are not claimed by the Church on this account to be adhered to by the individual with an absolute commitment of faith such as is appropriate to dogma properly so called. A certain respect is due even to propositions of this kind, which are taught by the Church yet which are, in principle, reformable and possibly erroneous. The situation is similar to that of a man who follows the advice of a learned and conscientious doctor acting according to his best lights. This too, under certain circumstances, must be considered a matter of duty, even while recognizing that such medical advice is not infallible and may be rendered out of date by advances in medical knowledge or by a still more detailed examination. The Church has *de facto* very often made mistakes in the past in propositions of this kind. And obviously even though with the best will in the world it is quite unavoidable, this makes a Christian's life of faith difficult to the extent that such individual erroneous propositions may have very notable consequences for his practical life, while at the same time erroneous sentences of this kind may come so to be amalgamated with dogmas in the true sense that they can cause considerable difficulty too in giving the assent of faith to such dogmas. (Unfortunately it is not possible here actually to adduce examples of this.)

We can now advance yet a further step. We have made a number of points with regard to the truth and sureness of specific propositions included in the Church's awareness of her faith and as such imparting sureness and certainty to the faith of the individual Christian in the Church. These points must now be given further precision by a process of reflecting upon the structure of the Church herself. The Church is not solely and exclusively the sum total of those who, by their faith in Jesus Christ, are *de facto* gathered about him. It has actively to bear witness to this faith, and is in this respect a social entity capable of acting positively. In the present context there is one question which we do not need to decide: whether this social unity, organized structure, and constitution of the Church as witness to the truth of Christ flows solely and necessarily from the very nature of Christian faith itself, or whether it constitutes a [61] supplementary property of this community of faith called the Church. In any case it belongs to the conviction of faith, at least of the Catholic Church, that she constitutes a socially structured unity and, moreover, precisely to the extent that she remains abidingly in the truth of Christ and cannot depart from it. Furthermore she remains in that truth as expressed in propositional form. In other words (viewing the matter from the opposite side) she achieves her state of abiding in the truth and also standing by true propositions through her socially structured constitution and so, to put it in more concrete terms, through her established officials. That social constitution which is inevitable for any community – in other words its established officialdom – is, according to Catholic faith, related as an element in the Church not merely to the external social factors in the life of such

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a believing society but also to its true and proper nature, to its faith as such. The authority vested in officials in the Church, therefore, is also a teaching authority or *magisterium*, through which the Church's conscious faith realizes its own true nature more and more explicitly and clearly and becomes active in bearing witness to its faith within and without. This teaching authority of the officials in the Church is, it is true, itself upheld by the Spirit and through the activity of God, which preserves not merely those vested with official authority but also and primarily the believers, whether authorized officials or not, in faith in Jesus Christ. This teaching authority of the established officials of the Church can take effect in the lives of the individual believers, and give rise to specific doctrinal propositions in support of this certainty and sureness only if and to the extent that the Church and the teaching authority of the Church make affirmation to these individuals in a decision the sureness and certainty of which derive not from the Church as such but from the sureness and certainty of that ultimate attitude of basic trust, of the Spirit, of the experience of Jesus Christ of which we have already spoken. But assuming this affirmation to have been made, and also unreservedly accepted and applied in concrete Christian practical living, it must be said that according to Catholic faith in the Church there is a genuine teaching authority of the Church's officialdom as concretized in the pope and the college of bishops considered as a unity. Under certain circumstances which we cannot develop in any greater detail here this officialdom can actually teach a specific proposition as infallible, as dogma to be held and maintained by the Church with an absolute commitment of faith. When such a dogma is defined or is capable of being defined (whether it be by the ordinary or extraordinary *magisterium* of the Church) the individual Christian has a duty to give his assent of faith as already [62] defined in greater detail above. Thereby he also acquires the sureness and certainty that by assenting to such a proposition he is not departing from the truth of Christ. To this extent and in this sense the Church can also offer ultimate surenesses and certainties in virtue of her teaching authority even though on a precise view such certainties are not primary but rather derived, and even though these certainties are obviously liable to those assaults, that state of subordination to the free decision of the conscience which we ourselves must have recognized in our very first and most primary human surenesses and certainties. With these provisos (and a few others which still have to be explained in greater detail at a later stage) we can say that there are ultimate certainties with regard to the dogmatic propositions of the Church and that too as proceeding from her official teaching authority.

We have stated that in her propositions of faith promulgated by her official teaching authority the Church offers the believer an ultimate sureness and certainty. To this statement certain further essential precisions must now be added. We must reiterate once more what we have already said: the sureness of the Church, to the extent that it is intended to be a sureness for the conscience of the individual, is sustained by that sureness with which the Church and her teaching authority are assented to by the believing conscience of the individual without reliance upon the teaching authority of the Church itself, that the assimilation of an individual dogmatic proposition by an individual believer, while involving an acknowledgement of the Church's teaching authority, can take place in very different ways (ways which obviously are continually liable to converge, blend, or pass into one another); these ways of assimilating a specific dogmatic proposition may range from an attitude of leaving the proposition concerned unexplored and accepting it merely on the authority of the Church to an innermost understanding of it proceeding from the heart and centre of the individual's own Christianity as a personal living force; that even the understanding of such dogmatic propositions can be obscured and rendered more difficult in the individual and even for the Church as a whole at a specific point in time by unconsciously amalgamating the dogmatic proposition concerned with other theological opinions which are reformable, capable of error, and far from belonging intrinsically to the dogma itself. So far from this being the case, in fact, there is

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still more to be said, over and above this, on these dogmatic propositions and the sureness and certainty guaranteed for them by the Church's official teaching authority. Even propositions such as these, ultimately binding and valid as they are, and having an ultimate sureness [63] in them, are always expressed in terms which are conditioned by history from the standpoint of ideas which are historically conditioned and subject to change. The mode of their formulation is embedded in human awareness, which is itself subject to historical change and does not share in the special force of these propositions themselves. Even dogmatic propositions are analogous in character, i.e. they never give full or adequate expression to the reality signified. They view that which is signified from certain quite specific points of view, selecting these, whether consciously or, more often, unconsciously, from a whole range of other aspects which are in themselves also possible but *de facto* neglected. Such expressions are always, or almost always, bound up with a special parlance or style which is preferred, whether consciously or unconsciously, for the purpose of achieving a common agreement in the Church and a common language to be used by the teaching authorities of the Church even though one and the same dogma might be expressed in a different parlance. In view of the special qualities we have mentioned as belonging to a dogmatic proposition, we may even go so far as freely to concede that it is far from easy for the individual Christian and theologian to recognize clearly and unambiguously where he should draw the line between a proposition which though true is subject to these special limitations and historical conditions, and an erroneous proposition which, however, may depart from the truth only very slightly. And a further point which may also freely be conceded bears upon the awareness of an individual as influenced by his own subjective conditions and the way he comes to recognize the element of untruth (from a Christian point of view) underlying a given mode of expression, and constituting the *fons et origo* of it. He may find it easier to grasp this in a proposition which the teaching authority of the Church declares to be erroneous, or at least as unacceptable by the standards of its own mode of parlance, than in a proposition which is guaranteed to be true by the Church's doctrinal authority. The infallibility of a proposition promulgated by the teaching authority of the Church does not imply that this may not be replaced at some point in the future within the total development of the Church's awareness of her faith by another and better formulation, more easily assimilable to the men of the epoch concerned. Such a thing has often taken place in the past history of dogma, and obviously this history has not yet come to an end even today. Advances in it will be achieved only lf Christians and theologians, when confronted with such particular dogmatic propositions, make known their conclusions or their feelings as to how a particular dogmatic proposition has proved inadequate or is [64] capable of revision once it is viewed from the intellectual standpoints proper to these Christians and theologians. Dogma, even in its most ultimate and binding form, is open to the future. That which is truly signified in a given dogmatic proposition is open to a further course of development in terms of truth in the Church's awareness of her faith, even after it has been defined. And this course of development extends outwards into a future which it is quite impossible to calculate. In the light of this let us consider, then, a situation in which one man holds that, with the reservations and due distinctions mentioned above, a dogmatic proposition is certainly true and incapable of retrospective revision, and another who regards such a proposition as possibly erroneous while still acknowledging that the Church herself abides in the truth. It would almost be possible to say that judged in the light of our foregoing observations the disagreement between these two amounts to little more than an argument over words, because neither side can define precisely enough where the boundary is to be drawn in such propositions between one that is erroneous and one which all Catholic theologians would concede to be inadequate and capable of subsequent reform. But the very raising of such a question necessarily leads to the raising of a counter-question which will be found difficult to

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answer. It springs from the fact that some theologians who are, and who intend to remain, Christians, and so who give their absolute assent to the basic substance of Christianity, nevertheless run counter to the teaching of the Church, or at least to her authorized mode of parlance (for after all this too has its importance) in regarding it as possible for her dogmatic propositions to be erroneous. Now in the light of what has been said why should this be so? For after all what they are seeking to assert amounts to no more than what is in fact and in material substance already said by the Church's own theology, even when translated into normal terminology. Those who believe that a formulation such as that propagated by Küng is clearer and more honest must allow a further question to be put to them: when they feel that they must disavow as erroneous propositions which are genuinely dogmatic and not merely theological and subject to revision, is not this a way of avoiding the necessity of having to interpret earlier dogmatic formulations, constantly having to translate them into fresh terms, except on condition of being allowed totally to disregard any continuity in the process of expressing the faith in propositional form, as though the substance of Christianity in its concrete historical mode was something totally outside the statements contained in the New Testament and in the official proclamations of the Church? Unless we took this as our prior assumption we [65] would be able to achieve all that Küng is concerned with in real terms without adopting his thesis of the possibility of error in each and every statement of Scripture, of the Councils, or of the ordinary and extraordinary *magisterium* of the bishops and the pope.

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4

ON THE CONCEPT OF INFALLIBILITY IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

The title of this essay is deliberately, and without any false modesty, intended to cover *some* aspects bearing upon the concept of infallibility in Catholic ecclesiology.[1] Some aspects only will be treated of, if only because, for lack of competence, it is no part of my purpose to bring the concept of infallibility in Catholic ecclesiology into confrontation with similar concepts to be found in the history of religion, in philosophy, or in other disciplines. Equally it is no part of my purpose here to give an exposition of the traditional Catholic official teaching on the infallibility of the Church's teaching office. This doctrine taken as a whole can be assumed to be already known. So far as *our* consideration is concerned, therefore, the fact that the pope *and* the whole episcopate are to be accounted the subject of this doctrinal infallibility represents a secondary element in the content of this doctrine. It is taken as given that these two entities possess this charisma of infallibility only under quite specific conditions; that the charisma itself bears only upon the content of Christian revelation in the interpreting and upholding of it, and does not conduce to any increase of it. On the other hand what we mean is the dogma of infallibility in its traditional sense, in which it actually refers to the truth of the *individual* defined proposition as such, and so not *merely* in that sense in which, for instance, H. Küng and W. Kasper seem to interpret it, namely that the indestructibility and infallibility of the Church's faith bears ultimately speaking merely upon the abiding union [67] of the Church with her Lord taken as a single whole, so that even in 'definitions' errors in individual cases can occur again and again, and can exist temporarily. Here, therefore, only a few observations remain to be made, in which a Catholic theologian makes a tentative attempt, without any claims to a systematic treatment, at putting forward ideas concerning that which he has received, believes, presents, and defends as the doctrine of his Church, and of which he now seeks to achieve a better understanding. In this connection it must be recognized that the doctrine itself has a special function of its own, and we must begin by gaining some initial insight into this, realizing that such an approach constitutes a stage in the process of achieving our goal and arriving at a deeper understanding of this doctrine.

At this stage, however, there is only one point to be made by way of introduction. If we take the dogma of infallibility or the claim to doctrinal authority which it entails in isolation, then obviously it appears as though by it a process of arriving at new knowledge were being arbitrarily cut short at a certain point by the intervention of an authority external to itself, and as though thereby specific areas of the believer's convictions were being unlawfully immunized against that critique which belongs to the very essence of human knowledge, especially as achieved through an historical development. It seems too as though this privileged knowledge likewise implied according a social pre-eminence to an individual (because infallibility is subjected in a person), and as though the Church were in consequence ultimately speaking a totalitarian system, on the grounds that the Church (from being initially a system based on faith, and from this becoming a reality at the sociological level) is capable of being definitively fixed and frozen at any time by an individual element within this system. Now let us, with all brevity, indicate a few points bearing on this.

[1] This paper was composed for the conference held at Rome from the 5th to the 10th January 1970 on the occasion of the centenary of the dogma of infallibility, and for inclusion in the Symposium, 'L'Infaillibilité. Son Aspect philosophique et théologique'. On the same subject cf. W. Kasper, *Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes* (Mainz, 1965); *idem*, *Glaube und Geschichte* (Mainz, 1970); Y. Congar, 'Infaillibilité et indéfectibilité', *Ministères et communion ecclésiale* (Paris, 1971), pp. 141-165.

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First, a point that must not be overlooked is that, as distinct from the state, the Church is a *free* believing community, which we belong to only as a matter of our own free decision. Even if it were in fact an authoritarian or totalitarian structure, it would still only affect him who freely accepts it. But from the very outset it is surely difficult to describe any such system as 'totalitarian'.

On any existential-ontological approach it could be shown as a matter of *general principle* that an *absolute* assent to a proposition and an abiding attitude of criticism with regard to it are not mutually exclusive. This also applies to a dogmatic declaration arrived at on the basis of infallibility, the more so since every defined dogma is objectively open to further [68] development, and even the law of infallibility is (as we shall have to discuss further at a later stage) not self-authenticating, and so is incapable of being immunized by its own nature against critical enquiry.

With regard to a Church endowed with an official doctrinal *magisterium* of this kind it is obvious that the only kind of conviction which a believer in such a Church can have without viewing it as an authoritarian and totalitarian system is *that particular* conviction which involves belief in the assistance of the Spirit precisely at *this particular* point. Once we view the doctrinal laws involved in the constitution of the Church in isolation from *this particular* belief, it does indeed become in fact totalitarian, because within the dimension of her juridical and constitutional life as such she does not possess any absolute guard against the *possibility* of misusing her teaching authority in a totalitarian way. Yet the situation here is analogous to that of Christ Jesus the Lord. The Christian believes in him as the absolute mediator of salvation despite the historical dimension belonging to him. In the same way too, in an attitude of hope which is essentially eschatological, and which springs from his faith, he believes that the Church will *de facto* never fall victim to that danger which is really immanent in her very constitution. For this hope the sole final and definitive ground is simply Jesus Christ. Obviously in appealing in this way to Jesus Christ as the true and ultimate ground of faith, we are not in any sense pretending that the problems of speculative epistemology and sociological epistemology are *ipso facto* to be regarded as disposed of. On the contrary, even with this appeal to Jesus Christ they still remain. This applies, for instance, to the obvious question of whether this basis of faith does not merely lead us to assent to the content of faith as a whole as infallible, that is precisely to Jesus Christ, but also guarantees the infallibility of the individual defined proposition as such. And it also applies to the further question arising from this of how, in what sense, and in what manner this takes place. But these are questions which cannot be treated of at present. Yet motives can be pointed to which make it easier for the believer to have this hope nowadays, because the dogma of infallibility itself has a history of development of its own, which renders it in a certain sense less endangered and less 'dangerous' than formerly. And it is upon this history that we must concentrate here.

I. THE HISTORICITY OF THE DOGMA OF INFALLIBILITY

What does it mean for our understanding of the Catholic dogma of infallibility – this is the first question which we must pose – if we recognize [69] that element of historicity present in every human recognition of truth as applicable to this dogma too? In posing this question and attempting to find an answer to it we cannot develop the whole range of problems involved, and the whole meaning of, the *general* proposition of the historicity inherent in all human truth. We are therefore indeed aware of the lack of clarity in the prior assumptions involved in our own question. But we believe that even so we can gain from it certain useful insights into the dogma of infallibility. This is not to dispute the fact that in so far as our particular

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question is concerned we could achieve far better insights if we could presuppose a more detailed general theory of the historicity of truth.

The Dogma of Infallibility as an Historical Proposition

The Catholic theologian must begin by frankly and explicitly taking cognizance of the fact that the declaration of infallibility is a proposition which has a history and will have a further one, a history which bears both upon the existence of the explicit proposition itself and also upon its content, though this is not *ipso facto* or necessarily to deny the abiding identity of these within that history.

First and foremost the *dogma* of infallibility, as applied to the *pope*, is, regarded as an explicit proposition of faith, a datum of relatively late date. And even if we say that the infallibility of the Church as a whole in her faith, in scripture, in the councils, has been a conviction of the Church right from the first, this still does not make any difference to the point we have just made. This is not only because this *later* conviction in turn has an historical beginning, but also because of a further point over and above this: the *earlier* understanding of the infallibility of the Church related less strongly, less explicitly than today, to the infallible correctness of a *new* decision to be arrived at afresh on a question of truth under dispute. In earlier times it related rather to the possession of the reality of salvation in the Church as handed down and possessed in faith, and in this sense 'ancient', as something already given and abiding within her. And even if we say that the ancient councils too did, after all, arrive at certain decisions and formulated fresh propositions in fresh terms, we must still point out that they did this not with an awareness of having achieved anything fresh or creative within history, but rather with the awareness of merely formulating the ancient content of faith in different terms, and almost while denying that through this fresh formulation anything new had taken place with regard to the recognition of truth itself. So clearly [70] was this taken for granted as a self-evident fact that almost down to the *present* day the officially authorized theology denied that there was any '*objective*' development in the history of dogma.

This official position, into which we cannot enter in any greater detail at this point, does in any case show that one position is far from self-evident, namely an understanding of the fact that a doctrinal decision by council or pope is an *event* of truth or itself involves a history of truth. It shows that when the Vatican definition of infallibility was arrived at it did not entail any conscious awareness of the fact that this involved an acknowledgement of the historicity of truth; that the only way in which we can come to recognize the possibility of an infallible new decision about the ancient truth is if we ascribe an historical dimension to this (ancient) truth itself. For a fresh definition of this kind is precisely more than merely a formulation in different terms of an unchangeable proposition which remains quite unaltered by the new formulation itself.

There is a further point to be made about the two possible ways of understanding the infallibility of the Church in faith and doctrine. There may indeed be a necessary connection between them, and, moreover, precisely when we consider two points: first we should realize that the inalienable possession of the reality of salvation as a truth that is believed in precisely demands, in view of the historicity of man and his knowledge, a constant fresh appropriation of this reality of salvation in the form of a decision. Second we must not forget that even the modern, juridical, and actualizing interpretation of infallibility does not imply any absolutely assured knowledge of some kind of reality and truth which is quite new to us, but rather has guaranteed nothing else than that we shall abide in the ancient truth.

The two interpretations mentioned above are, nevertheless, still different from one another,

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and the development of the second from the first itself in turn demonstrates the historicity of the dogma of infallibility, even if we regard it as bearing upon the Church as a whole and not merely upon the pope in particular. This history, however, is not merely a history inasmuch as the explicit declaration on infallibility has not always existed with the character of a *juridical* obligation of faith. What we are speaking of, rather, is a history of the actual *meaningful content* of this proposition in itself. This meaning which it has has itself not always been in existence because it was not conceived of. The meaning which it has could not formerly take effect as it has taken effect, and continues to do so, *since* its formulation. This meaning appears again and again from ever fresh standpoints and under fresh aspects. The elements of meaning inherent [71] in it are themselves incapable of being fully or adequately defined once and for all. And so that which is consciously apprehended in these elements undergoes a constant and unending process of change. In a word: the *meaning* of a dogma of this kind has itself a history, and one that is obviously never concluded.

This historicity of the dogma of infallibility appears for instance in the fact that in its definition a hundred years ago no one consciously adverted to the fact that the exercise of an infallible teaching authority is determined not merely by the *subject* in whom that authority is vested and the *content* which the declaration is designed to convey, but also by the 'situation' in which the addressee of the declaration is involved, the modes of expression available to those promulgating it which are always restricted, the more immediate historical context (rejection of a heresy etc.), the predominant interests of the time (which can never fully be brought under control) with their special outlooks and limitations etc. These and much else besides are factors which do not appear explicitly in the declaration promulgated at a given point in time, and so serve to demonstrate the historicity of the declaration itself. In fact this proposition has, since 1870 (the point in history at which it appeared), *already undergone* a further history, though this is something into which we shall enter only in a second section and from a different point of view. But before this there is yet another question to be raised.

Is it Possible to Have 'New' Dogmas in the Future?

Can an *approaching* section of this history of the declaration of infallibility (together with the reality to which it points) already be indicated or estimated here and now to some extent by 'futurological' methods? It may *perhaps* be possible to supply a small part of the answer to this question: In the foreseeable future there will be no further really new definitions.[2] [72]

[2] I am conscious of the fact that in drawing a distinction (applying to some extent to the content too) between 'new' dogmas and those which merely repeat a former dogma, a distinction, that is to say, which will be repeatedly used in what follows, we are properly speaking being too hasty in assuming that a solution to a fairly difficult problem has been found, and our arguments in support of this are too sketchy. This is not only because there cannot be any absolutely new dogmas, since even those which are 'new' must have been present from the outset in some sense in the background of faith which has existed all along from apostolic times. A further reason is that any precise classification of dogmas from this questionable point of view is a problem in itself, and one which cannot be solved here. But for all this the distinction we have in mind does have its validity. If the pope were to define that Mary is the 'Queen of the world' (or even merely 'the Mother of the Church') then such a dogma would certainly be 'more new' (even though pious people may already have entertained some such ideas) than if the pope were to define that the resurrection of Jesus is not *only* an event which takes place within the individual subjectivity of the believer. Here we shall not be prolonging the discussion of how this distinction might be defined in more precise terms at the speculative level. It is possible to say for our present purposes that when we speak of dogma as 'new' in this sense we mean one that will surprise even the Christian believer in its newness, though he has entertained a lively belief in the substance of the faith as hitherto believed in (it would surprise him at least as a dogma). But dogma of the other kind would not surprise him at all. We might also say that 'new' dogma will be felt as in some sense additional, whereas the other kind will be regarded merely as defensive in character and not as 'increasing' the former stock of faith.

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The situation lying before us in the future makes it impossible for the Church's teaching authority to produce any further infallible definitions in the manner in which it was conceived to do so *formerly*. At the time of the First Vatican Council the anti-infallibilists waged an utterly distorted polemic, in which they supposed that a fresh papal definition would be recorded every day in the 'Times'. Not only these, however, but Catholic theologians too entertained the idea that the infallible teaching authority of the pope is (a) a kind of habitual power *of such a kind* that this power would be meaningless if it were not exercised from time to time and so actually gave demonstrations of its necessity, and (b) that this teaching authority, in the decisions it arrived at, led to a continual process of the formation of constant *new* individual propositions distinct from one another, so that the original revelation would be progressively unfolded and explicitated in these in a continuous 'process of development' resulting in a quantitative increase in the number of defined, and yet in some sense new, propositions.

Now the idea that the teaching authority will remain active in the (conceivable) future in producing definitions in *this* sense is one that we can hardly accept. For instance after the dogma of the assumption of Mary into heaven (1950) many theologians supposed that the exercise of the definitorial power of the Church's teaching authority would develop further in the same direction. They were already looking forward to new conceivable statements in Mariology which might be defined. Today no one any longer thinks of such a thing. Nothing was defined at the Second Vatican Council. Today a pluralism exists in regional cultures, philosophies, terminologies, outlooks, theologies, and so on which can no longer be fully reduced to any one synthesis, and so vividly has the Church become aware of this that I can no longer imagine that any specific, and [73] at the same time genuinely *new* proposition can so be expressed that it can be felt throughout to be an expression of the conscious faith of the whole Church, and so be capable of definition.[3]

To this a further point might be added. Every genuinely new definition, which does not merely repeat or defend an earlier one, requires for its formulation *one and the same* theology (with the stock of ideas, lines of reasoning etc., belonging to this), and moreover a theology accepted as that of the *whole* Church herself. This uniformity in theology, which was formerly to be found underlying all the differences between the schools, no longer exists today, and moreover can no longer fully be restored (at least in the foreseeable future). New

[3] When we say that despite the unity of the creed there is a pluralism of theologies in the Church which can no longer be eliminated in any adequate sense this statement is of course of fundamental importance in the present context, and should therefore be developed and justified in greater detail. This is not possible here. I may therefore refer to my article, 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', *Concilium* 5 (1969). But in order to realise the consequences following from this pluralism for our present question we have only to consider that dogma too is always formulated by means of and in terms of a theology, yet that for this purpose it is impossible to choose one theology among many which are in principle equally justified, seeing that a pluralism in theology is now in force. It might be said that in a new definition all that we do is simply and precisely to achieve a fresh grasp of the common and universally acknowledged stock of ideas etc. present in the previous proclamation of faith and the previously formulated dogma, which must in fact be respected by all theologies. But in saying this we are merely expressing in somewhat more veiled form the fact that we do not formulate any 'new' dogmas, but simply repeat the old ones (chiefly to guard against distortions of them). These distinctions are of course fluid and tend to pass into one another, so that no detailed prophecies can be entered into with regard to the more precise boundaries between old and reiterated dogmas and 'new' dogmas. It is of course also conceivable that one particular major individual Church within the universal Church gains control over a general theology which is understood and used chiefly in the subordinate Church in such a way that this subordinate Church could express a point that was binding in faith in terms of this common theology. On this basis it would be conceivable to regard the teaching office of a 'bishops' conference' as of more 'value' than we have been accustomed to think in the last thousand years. On pluralism in theology cf. also K. Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church", *Theological Investigations*, XI, (London & New York 1974) pp. 3-23

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definitions ('new' in the sense not only of a new approach but also of a new, i.e. expanded, meaning such as is conveyed by 'new' definitions) would have as their prior condition that lack of sophistication which fails to advert to the conditioning factors in history affecting any given language or standpoint, and the indeterminacy of the particular concepts employed etc., without actually denying that such factors are present. Properly speaking we should make use of concrete [74] examples such as can easily be found in contemporary theology in order to clarify our meaning. But unfortunately this is not possible here, although in the second section we shall be approaching the same material factors from the other side, and in somewhat more concrete terms.

We have arrived at a state, then, in which the possibility of any really *new* definitions being produced by the Church's teaching authority is at an 'end'. And it is now that the historicity of the dogma of infallibility is manifested at its most acute. But this means neither that from now on the dogma hitherto defined will retrospectively dissolve, nor that the infallible teaching office in the future will no longer have any function of its own.

The reason that past dogma does not retrospectively disappear is that it no longer has the *same* history in the future as it has had in the past, In order to understand this two points must be borne in mind:

(a) Man remains, even today, the historical being *par excellence*. In his faculty of memory, that is to say (regarding this as providing him with a critical standpoint[4] from which to judge his present in order to create his future) he emerges from his own past.

(b) This Christian *memoria*, which also embraces and expresses the totality of this past as pregnant of the future and as providing a critique of the future (although not as dominating the future) and of the content of it, is something very simple, which is *prior* to all future pluralism in conscious thought, namely this: that the ineffable mystery of our existence which we call God has victoriously addressed itself to us in Jesus, the dead and definitively delivered Lord, so as to communicate itself to us and to be our absolute future. Because all previous Christian dogma merely expresses this, it will be able to abide, and will abide, even though it no longer develops in its former manner in the 'development' of further distinctions within it.[5] This does not mean that it will become frozen or petrified, because the process of reducing the dogma handed down, and still abidingly valid, to this true and indissoluble reality of Jesus as the [75] historical and irrevocable self-utterance of God is something that has to be achieved ever anew, and it is this that renders this dogma living and implies an ever-fresh and unforeseeable history for it.

Furthermore the function of the infallible teaching office of the Church does not cease with the end of its history as understood in the sense of producing definitions which are in a true sense 'new'. The solemn delimitation of the ancient body of dogma to protect it against interpretations which would eliminate it is still even today an abiding task of the infallible teaching office of the Church. On the contrary in this connection it will still be able to appeal directly, and in a more enlightening way than in any possible 'new' definitions, to the conscious faith of the Church as a whole. Its function, certainly in itself distinct and autonomous, will thus in a certain sense become a more modest one than was envisaged in

[4] On this cf. J. B. Metz,' "Politische Theologie" in der Diskussion', *StdZ* 184 (1969), pp. 289-308, and esp. 296ff.

[5] This is only to apply to the history of dogma the objections which J. B. Metz has formulated in more general terms against an 'evolutive' and ultimately speaking uncreative conceptual model for history (partly against Teilhard de Chardin). The difference between this and the more general objection against a false understanding of history consists in our case, however, in the fact that here we have to consider that in any eschatologically correct understanding of the 'once and for all-ness' of the event of Christ the rejection of a process of explicitation and evolution which continues endlessly into the future achieves concrete form in the manner which we have attempted to indicate. The fact that this does not mean that dogma is cut off from history as that which is dead or frozen has been (or will be), it is hoped, clear enough.

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earlier times, since it will be brought into alignment with the totality of the Church's conscious faith.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOGMA OF INFALLIBILITY SINCE 1870

We can view the historicity of the dogma of infallibility and the reality signified in it from yet another point of view. During the First Vatican Council the opponents of this dogma had the impression – as non-Catholic opponents still have to this day – that with this dogma the Church, and above all the pope, were being given a sort of blank cheque such as no critical conscience in relation to truth could ever give, seeing that it has a responsibility either to give or to withhold its assent in any given case according to the content of the particular proposition involved. Here we have no intention of repeating the reply which the traditional school theology is accustomed to give to this serious consideration: the reply, namely, that this infallibility constitutes merely the gnoseological aspect of the indestructibility of the believing Church, which itself in turn is the outcome of the unique and eschatologically victorious event of Christ; that in their decisions Church and pope are bound by scripture and tradition, and by the previous decisions of the Church; and that we must not overlook that factor which we call the assistance of the Spirit. Our intention, rather, is to draw attention to an historical process which *has already* had its effect upon this dogma of infallibility in the developing history of the concrete situation in which it stands, a historical process which also, in a very empirical way, rules out (or at least reduces to a notable extent) the danger of that 'blank cheque', so that it is possible to [76] say, to a certain extent that this dogma has, in the last hundred years, already passed through its danger zone, in which, according to human estimation, that danger signified by the term 'blank cheque' has been at its most acute. In order to understand what is meant several factors have to be weighed in the balance. We must probe somewhat deeper and also not shrink from developing further incipient points which have already been mentioned in the course of our arguments in Section I. For it is obvious that the history of the dogma of infallibility which we have to foresee for the future, and that history which has already run its course since 1870, are intrinsically connected with one another, and ultimately either have emerged or are emerging from the same basis.

The Dogma of Infallibility Within the Totality of the Truths of Faith

So far as logic is concerned as a factor in Catholic theology, the declaration of infallibility is a strange one. Abstracting from the fact that as a consciously explicated proposition it has not always been in existence, we can arrive at the following conclusion: it is a proposition which, if it is assumed to be and accepted as valid, renders the *other* dogmatic propositions infallibly sure. It itself, however, can in itself not be sure in *that* manner which applies to those propositions which are guaranteed by it to be infallibly true. We say that a decision taken by the teaching authority of the pope in defining a specific dogma is, under certain specific conditions, infallibly correct. And this is something which it can guarantee, given the necessary subjective and objective conditions, with regard to all other propositions. The only proposition to which this does not apply is that concerning the infallibility of this doctrinal authority itself. The dogma of the First Vatican Council is different from all other dogmatic propositions in that it cannot itself in turn be based upon the infallibility of the pope. And if we say that it invokes the infallibility of a council, or that of the Church, then we are merely shifting the problem a stage further back, for even this proposition can be arrived at only on the basis of other propositions which we already believe in. And our belief in these is not

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itself in turn based on the validity of the proposition of infallibility. The dogma of infallibility is one individual proposition immanent within a system, and not the foundation of the system itself. The system of the Christian and Catholic truths of faith taken as a whole, and the subjective acceptance of this, are not based upon the statement of infallibility. On the contrary this is objectively and subjectively sustained by the system. From this basis its function is confined to that of a relatively secondary checking-point [77] within the system applicable to secondary cases of conflict, and in this it depends upon the system itself as its prior condition and does not itself call this in question in any direct sense. From this point of view it would be possible to say that this dogma is not itself infallible (i.e. not sustained by the infallible authority of the Church *quoad nos*), but merely renders other propositions infallible.

We shall not pursue the logical peculiarities of this state of affairs taken in itself any further at this point. But from what we have just said, namely that this proposition can render all other propositions infallible so far as we are concerned, itself only being excluded, we can conclude the following: this proposition is an application of the purely formal principle that that which provides a basis cannot be the basis of itself. Now taking this principle as correct, we must go on to give further precision and clearer lines of demarcation to the proposition as such. The declaration of infallibility can be accepted only if the 'system' (i.e. the real factors and the revealed truths which provide the basis of Christianity) is itself grasped and accepted without any *logical* appeal properly so called to the declaration of infallibility as such. (The question of whether, as a matter of concrete human *psychology* a certain mutually conditioning relationship can nevertheless prevail does not affect the point we are making here.) This means that logically speaking one has to be a believing Christian even before, and 'without' *ipso facto* having to believe in the infallibility of the pope (or the Church, or a council). It means further that the sureness entailed in the expectation that the pope or a council will not produce any false definitions cannot be greater, and subjectively speaking must not be greater, than the sureness with which the dogma of infallibility, without being based on itself, has come to be recognized. (Admittedly this is a statement about the sureness in terms of fundamental theology, and not about that of faith as such. But this latter sureness neither suppresses nor increases the former one.)

This secondary function of the dogma of infallibility, taken as a proposition which is rather sustained than sustaining itself, also makes it possible to ascribe a greater degree of historicity to it than applies to the basic dogmas of Christianity. This appears not merely from the circumstance already mentioned, that this dogma is far from having always been present in the explicit conscious faith of the Church, but chiefly from that history which it has already undergone since its initial proclamation, a historicity which we must gradually proceed to make still clearer. But even before this: if the dogma of infallibility is a proposition which is ultimately sustained by something outside itself rather than one which [78] sustains the system as a whole, then it immediately acquires another subjective 'value' in its significance for a specific subject in that this subject achieves a relationship to the 'system' as a whole which is in some respects different. Formerly the situation could be, and generally was, such (and this is something which is shown by the internal controversies between the Christian confessions) that the system itself, the (general) basic substance of Christianity, did not represent any special problem for human life in the concrete. Then, rather, the question was simply whether, for instance, a specific individual dogma such as that of infallibility did in fact belong to that system. Today the situation, differing in this from that of the First Vatican Council, is quite otherwise. Even for Catholics it is a question of the single whole directly and explicitly as such demanding the ultimate decision of the subject.

From this point of view alone the dogma of infallibility has a different value to the subject from that which it formerly had. It is by no means so 'vital' as in the times of a Pius IX

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simply because the radical question of whether and how we can be Christians at all nowadays absorbs the (always finite) attention and concentration involved in a radical decision of conscience. Admittedly anyone who has been able positively to arrive at *this* decision, *and at the same time* in doing so understands it from the point of view of the modern mentality (as contrasted with an individualistic liberalism of an earlier stamp) will once more return to a position in which he finds it easier to accept the ecclesiastical factor in faith – and that too as applied to the concrete Church – than it might perhaps have appeared to an individual of the nineteenth century. Admittedly precisely an individual of this modern type has a right to achieve an understanding of why and how he must not betray the heritage bequeathed to him from the earlier liberalism, a freedom of faith and a spirit of critical enquiry, a heritage which he too will defend in a 'socialistic' society, and which also raises a question for the Church with regard to the dogma of infallibility.

Teaching Authority as Having an Authorized Language

Every exercise of an infallible teaching authority involves, whether consciously or unconsciously, the use of an authorized language as one of its intrinsic elements. One reason for this is that this authority is addressed to a believing community and is intended to formulate the common creed of that community, indeed derives from and is upheld by the common faith of the Church as a whole. In other words it has, right from the outset and of its very nature, a sociological side; here at any rate truth and [79] society are involved with one another. But there is a further reason apart from this. An element of authorized terminology is involved in the exercise of teaching authority, because the very nature of the reality being taught is such that it is *incapable* of being expressed otherwise than in inadequate and analogous concepts. Now in relation to the truth being expressed in a proposition analogous concepts differ from univocal ones, which can be strictly defined and verified by directly empirical methods, in that substitute concepts are available which do not necessarily do violence to the truth of propositions capable of being expressed in several different ways, but remain unexpressed, or at any rate are not expressed in *that particular* way in which the defined proposition is – indeed perhaps even *should not* be expressed precisely in *that* way. Concepts such as person, nature, sin, and original sin, transubstantiation, eternity, glorification of the body, infallibility itself and so on are, as analogous, themselves necessarily not fully determined as concepts, so that a proposition in the opposite sense is not necessarily false provided that it is not intended merely as a formal contradiction or negation of the alternative proposition, but rather is taken as a proposition which itself is intended to make a positive statement.

The proposition, for instance, that there is such a thing as original sin, and the proposition that there is not any such thing as original sin can of course not both be true at the same time so long as the one is taken merely as a denial of the other. But it can be the case that each is understood as having a positive content of its own through which one expresses that which the other leaves open, must leave open, yet itself fails to express because of the analogous nature of the concepts used in it. And if this is the situation, then both propositions can be correct. The meaning of the statement 'There is no such thing as original sin' would then be: 'There is no state of guilt in God's sight of that kind which is incurred solely through man's inalienable personal decision taken in freedom.' From the point of view of dogmatics this statement is perfectly correct. It could just as well be the subject of a definition as the statement: 'There is such a thing as original sin.' In this *latter* case it would still remain a constant task and duty for theology to explain the fact that despite the non-existence of an 'original sin' (in the sense just mentioned) there is nevertheless an 'inherited guilt' (inherited

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deficiency, a collective situation conditioned by guilt). But this theological explanation would not be expressed in the form of a definition.

In this case, as properly speaking in all others in which concepts are used analogously, the reality signified is expressed in such a way that one [80] aspect is brought into the forefront as a. matter of conscious faith and doctrine, while the other, which would have explicated the merely 'analogous' aspects of the concept, remains in the background. And the fact that the reality is expressed in this way, and that there is a positive directive that it should be so expressed, brings out one factor which is purely the outcome of historical conditions: a particular authorized language or mode of parlance. On a precise view it must be recognized that one inevitable and essential element in the infallible teaching authority of the Church is the right to prefer one mode of parlance, which in itself might have taken a different form, to others in a believing community and a community bound together by a common doctrine. But this does not mean that the question of truth is *ipso facto* being unequivocally affected.[6] In the last few decades a clearer awareness of this fact has been achieved (as a result of a more explicit recognition of the analogous nature of dogmatic concepts, this in turn being due to the work of historians of dogma on the history of such concepts and the recognition of the inevitable pluralism in theology which prevails today etc.). And this in itself has the force of ushering in a new epoch in the history of the dogma of infallibility since the First Vatican Council.

On the Character of New Dogmatic Formulae

But this is not all. Within the last hundred years we have arrived at a situation in which a new definition can no longer be false because in any such new definition the *legitimate* range of interpretation is so wide that it no longer leaves any room for error outside it. A question which we may leave open at this point is whether the impossibility we have declared to exist is capable of absolute proof at the theoretical level, or merely a [81] practical one. But in order not to misunderstand from the outset the possibility of holding the thesis we have set forth two points have to be noticed:

(1) Any fresh dogmas which might possibly be conceived of would still in any case continue to relate to the former ones as remaining in force. A pope who altogether failed to recognize this fact in his new definition, and ran counter in it to earlier definitions, would show himself to be a heretic who had lost his doctrinal authority. This in itself is enough to show that the range of any possible dogmas has become very restricted in certain essential respects precisely *because* hitherto we have had a relatively great 'development of dogma'. This factor, therefore, so far from being an argument in favour of a further prolongation of the same kind of development actually points to the contrary. Any new definitions that are put forward (whether at the practical or the theoretical level) can only be put forward as interpretations and as upholding 'earlier' dogmas in which we already believe, which

[6] An authorized mode of parlance of this kind does not of course imply that theology should merely repeat propositions as thus regulated (in the style of leading arguments in the journals of totalitarian systems). Theology must in fact explain such propositions, enquire critically into their meaning, and make men explicitly aware of the merely analogous and historically conditioned elements in these propositions. Theology must even, under certain circumstances, offer formulations to the Church's conscious faith which are designed to replace the former authorized modes of parlance and gradually eliminate them from the linguistic usage of the Church (whether tacitly or as a matter of official declaration). (We may think of the way which leads from the Council of Ephesus to that of Chalcedon or of that leading from Augustine to the condemnation of Baianism and Jansenism). But on this account such authorized modes of parlance do nevertheless remain officially in force and run counter to such fresh formulations, amounting at least to a theoretical schism (which is then sometimes too hastily regarded as 'heresy'.)

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themselves in turn are and remain the norm of interpretation. If it is maintained that any conceivable 'new' dogma nowadays inevitably entails so wide a range of possible interpretations that it is no longer in any sense possible for it to be false, this still does not mean that on this showing it will necessarily be devoid of content or tautological, or that it must be in every respect and manner no longer capable of verification. For it remains, or would remain, related to those basic facts of the Christian faith which constitute the content and (on a right understanding) the verifiability of such theologically formulated propositions of faith. But must they then seek to say more than these basic facts? Can they draw upon the basic understanding of the teaching authority of the Church to say anything more at all, seeing that all that this contains is the revelation that has been 'closed'? In this abiding reference to the basic facts of the faith they have a content which is capable of being clarified by a 'fresh' dogma of this kind, and which perhaps *needs* to be expressed more clearly in the specific situation, even though the new dogmatic formula in itself cannot be counterbalanced by any compelling alternative to the contrary (unless one that amounts to a sheer denial of the basic facts of the faith) in comparison with which it must necessarily be either false or true, even though, in other words, the range of possible interpretations to be placed upon it is in itself so great that it is no longer possible for any proposition to be formulated which can be put forward with the claim of being correct, *and at the same time* such that it necessarily eliminates the 'new' dogmatic formulae absolutely (abstracting from the question of an authorized mode of parlance).

(2) This situation, in which a 'new' dogmatic formula is no longer [82] capable of being false, is not simply a mere abiding quality present all along in any declaration on the part of the teaching authority of the Church, but is rather a circumstance which has *come to prevail* in history. Let us take one example. It concerns the relationship between God and the world and the concrete possibilities of understanding this and interpreting it in the Church's conscious awareness of her faith in the concrete. Formerly the only way in which it was possible to define this *basic* relationship was in terms of 'difference'. It was necessary to entertain the conviction that in this the decisive point, and in fact one which was straightway comprehensible, had been stated (as in a definition, for instance, such as that found in DS 3023). This statement remains true, but *nowadays* it is inevitably made in the awareness that a process of interpretation is needed which can never be brought to an end. And if today it were to be defined (as a statement with a positive content of its own, and not as the mere empty negation of the definition given above) that God had taken to himself an identity with the world, then this would not necessarily imply (over and above the introduction of a new authorized mode of parlance) any elimination of that other definition, because this too would be arrived at in the awareness that in this case 'identity' is an analogous concept which is subject to the same process of interpretation which is never concluded as the concept of 'difference'. And it is precisely this that would apply if a definition such as that in DS 3023 were arrived at today in its turn as 'new'. The awareness that a process of interpretation is in principle incapable of conclusion, the awareness that all metaphysical and theological statements are limited, is, at least so far as a sociologically *effective* awareness of faith in the Church is concerned, an event which has only manifested itself, or even is only gradually doing so, within the last hundred years. This awareness makes any 'new' ecclesiastical definition, if it were to be arrived at, *ipso facto* 'old' from the outset. In other words even as it is formulated it is confronted with such a number of possible or conceivable interpretations that it does not signify any real 'advance' in clarification as compared with former statements of faith (except for introducing a certain perfectly reasonable and respectable authorized parlance and a new reference to the basic historical experiences and basic historical realities of Christianity). And, as we have already pointed out, this does not mean that the function of the teaching office of the Church or the meaning of the earlier dogmas are eliminated or

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destroyed.

(3) Now it might be objected that what we have said does indeed apply to that particular 'category' of dogmas in which it is sought to express a 'transcendent' (in the popular sense) or 'metaphysical' reality (e.g. the [83] Trinity, the hypostatic union etc.), in which the analogous character of the concepts employed is particularly clear. But there is a quite different 'category' of propositions of faith, to which all that we have said does not apply. And here we may refer above all to propositions of moral theology. Why, for instance, could the pope not define his moral theological teaching, such as that contained in '*Humanae Vitae*', without thereby so broadening the range of possible variations and interpretations open to us that it would no longer be possible to find any contrary proposition to it which could be regarded as an error? For our present purposes we must set aside the question of the (logical) 'categories' of propositions of faith even though it is in itself important and has nowhere been radically thought out. But in any such investigation it would emerge that the difference between propositions in moral theology which were apparently signed and sealed and concretely verifiable in their meaning on the one hand, and other 'metaphysical' propositions of faith on the other, is not so great or so clear as we might at first be inclined to suppose. For even propositions in moral theology of the kind we are thinking of must be, and are intended to be, propositions of faith. They imply a relation to God, and only achieve their true nature when our acceptance of them is accompanied by a realization of the relationship they bear to the absolute mystery. They are never *merely* norms of the natural law. Even as such they themselves in turn have their place in the unfolding history of truth. The concrete reality which they are designed to embody in the form of concrete imperatives is a dynamic one. It is in process of change, and leaves the question open of whether these propositions in their concrete formulation do not themselves presuppose a concrete dimension of reality which is no longer present, or is in process of disappearing, or the further question of whether as norms defining the *goal* to be aimed at they do not presuppose a reality which has still to emerge in the future. For these and many other reasons they are, at least today, never of such a nature that they cannot be interpreted in many different ways. And since in the case of many of the reasons for such a pluralism of interpretations (above all those belonging to the spheres of sociology, psychology etc.) it is impossible to achieve any full or adequate awareness of them, such a pluralism is not altogether to be excluded even in the case of formulations belonging to moral theology.

Furthermore the following three points about the teaching office of the church cannot be merely accidental:

(a) There are many questions of moral theology which are important for human living in the concrete, yet on which the Church has never [84] taken up any firm position, and so one which would materially speaking be of the highest importance and would serve to clear away controversies.

(b) In cases in which it has taught (though not defined) doctrine, it has often used concepts which, without the fact being noticed by it itself, never signified any unambiguously concrete reality at all (e.g. civic freedom, private property, revolution etc.), though as a matter of moral practice it has absolutely arrived at these realities.

(c) That the teaching office of the Church has hardly ever produced definitions on such questions (not even at the Second Vatican Council or in '*Humanae Vitae*').

With regard to the objection with which we are here concerned, therefore, we can confidently reply with the counter-question of where concrete examples are to be found for propositions belonging to the sphere of moral theology in which a definition is conceivable precisely as *new* which creates a lack of ambiguity such as had not been present formerly.

At the conclusion of these few remarks one anecdote may be added. About eighteen months ago I met a young Catholic priest in Scandinavia, and together with other Christians

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(the rest being Protestants) I fell into a theological discussion with him. My impression was that the priest had a fairly broad theological conscience. When I put the question to him in a certain context of how this fitted in with the dogma of the First Vatican Council he replied: 'Oh, that is something which we in the Catholic Church must gradually forget.' We neither will nor should forget it! But it has a history of its own. It has already been having it throughout the last hundred years, and will continue to have it in the future. And why not? Identity survives through change. The reality that exists in personal life and in the Church is as mysterious as this. We can in fact not even express the dogma of the Incarnation of the eternal Logos without doing justice to this paradox if we want to avoid distorting one or another aspect of this christological dogma.[7]

[7] cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 105-120.

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5

THE DISPUTE CONCERNING THE CHURCH'S TEACHING OFFICE

On the Problem of Non-Infallible Doctrinal Decisions on the Part of the Church

In 1967, in the course of what may be accounted an initial period following upon the Second Vatican Council, the German bishops undertook to produce a document in which they attempted to apply the claims of the Council to the special circumstances of the German Church. It is not our intention here to examine this document in its entirety. We shall confine ourselves rather to a few observations on a single brief passage in the document, and, moreover, from the standpoint of a particular episode of which we shall shortly have to speak in more detail.

The Document of the German Bishops

In order to avoid imposing upon the reader the wearisome task of having to search out the text referred to for himself,[1] let us repeat the relevant section of the document here:

'17. At this point a difficult problem arises, calling for realistic discussion. It is one which today more than formerly threatens either the faith of many Catholics or their attitude of free and unreserved trust towards the teaching authorities of the Church. We refer to the fact that in the exercise of its official function this teaching authority of the Church can, and on occasion actually does, fall into errors. The fact that such a thing is possible is something of which the Church has always been aware and which she has actually expressed in her theology. Moreover she has [86] evolved rules of conduct to cater for the kind of situations which arise from this. This possibility of error refers not to those statements of doctrine which are proclaimed as propositions to be embraced with the absolute assent of faith, whether by a solemn definition on the part of the Pope, a general council, or by the exercise of the ordinary *magisterium*. Historically speaking it is also incorrect to maintain that any error has subsequently arisen in such dogmas as proclaimed by the Church. This is of course not to dispute the fact that even in the case of such a dogma, while we must uphold its original meaning, it is always possible and always necessary for a development in our understanding of it to take place, involving a progressive elimination of any misinterpretations which may perhaps have been attached to it hitherto. Nor should we confuse the question which we have raised here with the manifest fact that side by side with the immutable divine law there is also a human law in the Church which is subject to change. Changes in this latter have from the outset nothing to do with error. At most they raise the question of how far some juridical decision in the remote or recent past was opportune.

'18. Now let us consider the possibility or the fact of error in non-defined statements of doctrine on the part of the Church, recognizing that these themselves in turn may differ very widely among themselves in their degree of binding force. The first point to be recognized resolutely and realistically is that human life, even at a wholly general level, must always be lived "by doing one's best according to one's lights" and by recognized principles which,

[1] The text was published by the Secretariat of the Conference of German Bishops in the autumn of 1967 as a semi-private document and disseminated at diocesan level. Hence it is relatively difficult to achieve access to it. cf. *Herder-Korrespondenz* 21 (1967), col. 549.

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while at the theoretical level they cannot be recognized as absolutely certain, nevertheless command our respect in the "here and now" as valid norms of thinking and acting because in the existing circumstances they are the best that can be found. This is something that everyone recognizes from the concrete experience of his own life. Every doctor in his diagnoses, every statesman in the political judgements he arrives at on particular situations and the decisions he bases on these, is aware of this fact. The Church too in her doctrine and practice cannot always and in every case allow herself to be caught in the dilemma of either arriving at a doctrinal decision which is ultimately binding or simply being silent and leaving everything to the free opinion of the individual. In order to maintain the true and ultimate substance of faith she must, even at the risk of error in points of detail, give expression to doctrinal directives which have a certain degree of binding force and yet, since they are not *de fide* definitions, involve a certain element of the provisional even to the point of being capable of including error. Otherwise it would be quite impossible for her to preach or interpret her faith as a [87] decisive force in real life or to apply it to each new situation in human life as it arises. In such a case the position of the individual Christian in regard to the Church is analogous to that of a man who knows that he is bound to accept the decision of a specialist even while recognizing that it is not infallible.

'19. At any rate any opinion which runs contrary to a current statement of doctrine on the part of the Church has no place in preaching or catechesis, even though the faithful may, under certain circumstances, have to be instructed as to the nature of, and the limited weight to be attached to, a current doctrinal decision of this kind. This is a point which has already been discussed. Anyone who believes that he is justified in holding, as a matter of his own private opinion, that he has already even now arrived at some better insight which the Church will come to in the future must ask himself in all sober self-criticism before God and his conscience whether he has the necessary breadth and depth of specialized theological knowledge to permit himself in his private theory and practice to depart from the current teaching of the official Church. Such a case is conceivable in principle, but subjective presumptuousness and an unwarranted attitude of knowing better will be called to account before the judgement-seat of God.

'20. It belongs intrinsically to the right attitude of faith of any Catholic seriously to strive to attach a positive value to even a provisional statement of doctrine on the part of the Church, and to make it his own. In secular life too far-reaching decisions have to be taken on the basis of fallible findings on the part of others, which have been arrived at according to their best lights. And it is no less true in Church matters that the individual need not feel any shame or diminishment of his own personality if in his findings he relies upon the Church's teaching even in cases in which it cannot be accounted as definitive from the outset. It is possible that in specific cases the development of the Church's doctrine proceeds too slowly. But even in arriving at a judgement of this kind we must be prudent and humble. For in any such development of doctrine within a Church made up of men subject to historical conditions time is needed. For it cannot proceed any faster than the task permits of preserving the substance of the faith without loss.

'21. We do not need to fear that in adopting the positions of the Church in the manner described we are failing to respond to the claims of our own age. Often enough the serious questions raised for us by our own age, and which we are called upon to answer on the basis of our faith, make it necessary for us to think out the truths of our faith afresh. It is perfectly [88] possible that in this process fresh points will come to be emphasized. But this is not to call the faith itself in question. Rather it contributes to a deeper grasp of the truths of divine revelation and of the Church's teaching. For we are firmly convinced, and we see that experience confirms us in this, that we need neither deny any truth for the Catholic faith, nor deny the Catholic faith for the sake of any truth, provided only that we understand this faith

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in the spirit of the Church and seek always to achieve a deeper grasp of it.'[2]

At a later stage we shall have a few brief remarks to make on the theological importance of this document in general and of the passage quoted in particular. The only observation to be made at this point is that an Italian version of the document appeared in the *Osservatore Romano* of the 15 December 1967 (in a translation commissioned, so it is reported, by the Secretariat of State). Incidentally I know that the document was read in the refectory in the presence of the learned professors of the Gregorianum and was received most favourably there. (It can hardly be as bad, therefore, as it is judged to be in the text which we are about to quote.) This text is particularly remarkable to the extent that so far as I know this is the first occasion on which this problem has been explicitly tackled at all in a (relatively) official document. Previously it had been left solely to the theologians to discuss.

Critique of the Document

At the current time (and probably for some time previously) a mimeographed paper has been circulating among higher ecclesiastical circles which amounts to a critique of this document. The passage in this text which is of special interest to us here is that which is concerned with the passage in the document of the German bishops cited above. On this it has the following to say:

'The "Document of the German Bishops Addressed to All Members of the Church who are Commissioned to Preach the Faith" of the 22nd September 1967 has made a very favourable impression here. Nevertheless the document is in error in the distinction it draws between the concept of a "provisional" statement of doctrine and an infallible doctrinal decision and when it says on this: "In such a case the position of the individual Christian in regard to the Church is first and foremost analogous to that of a man who knows that he is bound to accept the decision of a specialist [89] even while recognizing that it is not infallible" (p. 13).[3] A statement of doctrine on the part of the Church which does not claim to be infallible can *per accidens* prove erroneous, but this does not mean that it can be characterized as provisional. Whoever speaks in the name of the Church's teaching authority can speak and should speak only if he is convinced of the fact that the doctrine to be put forward is *true*. This means that he never meets the individual Christian in the role of a specialist, either "first and foremost" or at all. A specialist is subject to the basic principle: "*Tantum valet quantum probat*". In any statement of doctrine on the part of the Church the arguments adduced in support of it have in all cases merely the character of aids to the free and voluntary acceptance of the decision concerned, and it is in this again that the radical difference is to be found between the Church's teaching authority and theological science. The wrong estimation of the force of a non-infallible decision of doctrine has led, not least in the question of the acceptance of "*Humanae Vitae*", to the following journalistic formula appearing even in the Church's own press: "No infallible decision – conscience decides". This represents a complete distortion of the real function of conscience. A point that is overlooked is that in *any and every* human act the conscience is called upon to play its part, even in the case of accepting an infallible decision of doctrine. And a further point no longer recognized here is that the conscience of the Christian needs to be guided and directed by Christ, and so by her whom the Lord has entrusted with his mission.'

What is to be said of this paper? In a single word I maintain that this critique of the

[2] cf. pp. 12-14 of the official text.
[3] We should notice the word 'analogous', which the critic reads as though it were equivalent to 'absolutely the same'.

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bishop's document is theologically and practically speaking radically mistaken.

Interior Contradictions Within the Critique

First and primarily: the reader of this critique may ask himself with some amazement how in all logic the writer manages to make the accusation that the document concerned undervalues that very teaching office of the Church which derives exactly and precisely from the bishops and their teaching. After all we cannot, as a matter of sound logic, uphold an authority for the bishops which they themselves authoritatively reject. Of course it is possible to say that an episcopal document is not necessarily either infallible or correct in all its points, and so that one is justified in disagreeing with a document of this kind or with individual points in [90] it provided one has good reasons for doing so and has given full and mature consideration to it. That is perfectly correct. But the critic quoted above is in fact disputing the very conditions which make it possible for a critique to exist, and prescribes a more or less unconditional obedience to such doctrinal declarations even though they themselves make no explicit claim to be infallible, and even though *in this particular case* the author of the critique we have quoted is in fact contradicting his own general principle in regarding doctrinal pronouncements of this kind as not being beyond dispute. The real situation, however, is in fact this: our present-day Catholic authoritarians are only too ready to uphold pope and bishop so long as they teach what they themselves regard as right. Otherwise they dispense themselves from that very attitude of unconditional obedience to doctrine which they defend indiscriminately against the 'modernists' of today as a sacred principle. One of the points which, so the critique asserts, has been overlooked in the bishops' document is that the doctrinal authority of the bishops and the pope (even in cases in which no definitions are arrived at) is a distinct entity in its own right such that on the one hand we are obliged to assent to it and on the other it has to be distinguished from the material arguments adduced in support of the official doctrinal declaration and has a value of its own independent of these. Now in the authoritative doctrinal statement of the bishops there is no attempt whatever to identify in any sense these two factors: the material theological arguments and the teaching authority of the Church. The *comparison* which has led the critic to this totally false imputation is precisely one which, in common with all comparisons, has to be taken with a grain of salt. It is actually a sound and intelligible comparison. For when someone finds himself in certain circumstances obliged to submit himself to the (non-infallible) diagnosis of a doctor, then in this situation too he is acting not on the basis of the arguments put to him by the doctor, and which he is quite incapable of understanding, but on the basis of the doctor's authority, albeit this is ultimately speaking different in kind from the teaching authority of the Church. Are we unable to understand a comparison of this kind? After all the true *tertium comparationis* consists simply in the fact that one individual is presenting another with a decision which is clearly recognized by both parties to be non-infallible and capable of error. Hence while there are indeed solid grounds to support the decision (including, amongst other factors, that of 'authority' of the most varied kinds), still, since it is not infallible, the party addressed retains the right, under certain circumstances (notice we say 'circumstances', not mere capriciousness), to reject the proposal that [91] he shall come to this decision (in doctrinal matters etc.) so long as he believes that his reasons for doing so are good or better than those of the person proposing the decision to him.

Now it might be said that while it is true that formally speaking all this is quite correct it is not applicable to our present case because an individual Catholic theologian, or even a layman, is never in a position here and now (unless the decision concerned is revised by the teaching authorities themselves) to be *capable* of having good or better reasons to depart

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from the decision of the teaching authorities even though in principle it is conceded by both sides that this official doctrinal decision on the part of the Church is in itself and at basis capable of being revised. In such cases the position may be compared to that of a stone-breaker who declares that he regards the most recent theory of Professor XY on plasma physics as erroneous, for this professor does in fact admit that his theory is not absolutely certain. It is not for one moment to be denied that there can be, and often are, *cases of this kind* of dissent from the non-infallible doctrinal decisions of the Church, a dissent which is theoretically false and morally unjustified. Those who wish can confidently and reasonably go beyond this in maintaining that in cases of such dissent it is to be presumed that they are of this kind (whereas the opposite presumption is invalid). The bishops' doctrinal document too leaves no room for doubt that there are such cases and that any Christian who presumptuously or without grave reasons departs from the Church's teaching even when it does not contain any definition will have to answer for it before God.

But the alternative case is precisely possible too, and this is a point which is boldly and honestly expressed in the bishops' document. Cases may perfectly well arise in which a Catholic Christian has a right and, under certain circumstances, a moral duty, to depart from some official doctrine of the Church of this kind. This is something which the critic refuses to recognize yet which is true. This is not the place to give a more detailed exposition of the question of whether a distinction is to be drawn in this principle between the rights and duties of specialist theologians on the one hand and laymen on the other (any such distinction would be strongly dependent upon the nature of the individual case). Nor do we intend here to adopt a casuistic approach in enlarging upon the question of *what precise form* the attitude of the dissenter should take in such cases according to the traditional principles of fundamental theology and morals. Nor shall we attempt to establish, on the grounds of wholly traditional theology, the point that the principle expressed in the bishops' document is itself traditional. All this would take us too far afield.

[92]

Examples of Erroneous Decisions

I will adopt another approach by putting a simple question, arising from the practice of theologians, to the critic and giving some explanation of this. A brief but true anecdote may serve by way of introduction. During the modernist period the great Dominican exegete Lagrange had to listen to the following reproach from a friend in the course of a private conversation: 'In fact on this point (an anti-modernist declaration on the part of the doctrinal authorities of the Church of that time on a question of exegesis) the only response you can manage is a "*silentium obsequiosum*" (meaning that while you do indeed hold your tongue, you in fact interiorly reject this declaration).' To this Lagrange replied: 'That is true. But I would actually be committing a mortal sin (against my own conscience with regard to truth) if I were to act in any other way.'

Now let us consider the question itself in fuller detail. I have no time to search through Denzinger for official doctrinal decisions belonging to the last few decades which have proved false, and which virtually no Catholic theologian any longer accepts nowadays. Accordingly I will merely rummage a little through my own memory. For my purpose the fact that my examples are primarily of an exegetical kind makes no very great difference. Not all of them are of this kind however. For it has been explicitly stated at an earlier stage that the same weight is to be attached to such exegetical decisions as to the doctrinal decisions of other Roman authorities. Again we must ask to be excused if our approach is very unsystematic, and I shall not extend my researches further back than our own century. If these doctrinal decisions were all true or still valid for me today (they are never officially

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taken back with the same degree of explicitness and weight with which they were promulgated) then I would still today have to give my assent to propositions such as the following: Most of the psalms are by David himself; there are no post-exilic psalms; there are no Deutero-Pauline epistles; the discourses of Jesus in John are not theological compositions; the gospels were written in the same sequence in which we enumerate them today; there is no 'Q' Source; there is no Deutero-Isaiah; the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by Paul; the Pentateuch is 'a Mosaic text' (written virtually in its entirety by Moses himself), and not (as a French exegete once maliciously put it) 'une mosaïque de textes'. I must maintain it as certain that the baptismal formula in Mt. 28 was laid down by Jesus himself. I must be convinced that the Lucan gospel was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; I should be convinced that it is *ipso facto* modernism for me to call for any [93] alteration to the Holy Office or to support the abolition of the Index; I would not be allowed to give even a modest support to the idea that so-called polygenism is reconcilable with a right interpretation of the doctrine of original sin; I should regard any participation of clergy and laity in the government of the Church, whatever form it took, as *ipso facto* modernist. As I have said, I am quoting from memory. But the reader too, even without having to look up any of the numbers in Denzinger, can rely on the fact that these points are valid. Every specialist theologian is aware of them. And over and above these and similar examples we might quote many other propositions in which the condemnation of one implies, in practice, the acceptance of its alternative even though this is far from being much of an improvement upon the condemned proposition, and even though under certain circumstances condemnation may have been just.

In referring to these propositions I have no intention of writing a *chronique scandaleuse* of the life of the Church during the first half of the twentieth century. Anyone who takes the references I have given in this sense is being foolish, knows nothing of the burden of history upon the Church, is failing to take due cognizance of the context in which such erroneous decisions were taken, a context which also exists even though it cannot be included in our presentation here, is failing to understand how inevitable it is that even in the Church the developing awareness of faith and doctrine must proceed slowly (even though I hold the opinion that sometimes it has proceeded more slowly than was necessary).

Provisional Decisions and the Advance of Doctrine

My intention in this section is to put the following question to the critic of the bishops' document: What is my lord the critic's view, working from *his own* principles, of the advance which the Church has made in overcoming these erroneous decisions, the advance which has been achieved, at least tacitly on many points, since the decisions were initially promulgated? In terms of his principles I cannot find any place for it at all within my purview. But I certainly can find one according to the principles underlying the bishops' document. For whence can we achieve the insight we need into the erroneousness of such wrong decisions if, at least in practice (if not in theory as well), theologians and layfolk have nothing else to do than to regard these wrong official decisions in matters of doctrine as *absolutely* binding norms in virtue of the authority of the Church's official teachers as the critic recommends. Anyone at all – and [94] this includes any member of the Catholic Church itself – must, after all, take the initiative in saying that this or that point is simply not true and showing the reasons why. He must take this initiative even though according to Denzinger 2007 an 'interior assent' ('*assensus internus*') is required of him, and Denzinger 2113 threatens that the exegete incurs 'grave guilt' ('*culpa gravis*') if he does not submit to the decisions of the Biblical Commission. And all this even though no trouble is taken to draw even a few of the

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necessary distinctions, and even though it would have been possible even at that time to find from 'approved authors' that on this point those very distinctions have to be drawn which the German bishops have drawn in our own times.

Formerly anyone entertaining such doubts on a doctrinal decision of this kind was advised to keep silent about them even though they were, in the nature of the case, authorized. He was advised simply to be patient, and in the meantime to observe a *silentium obsequiosum*. One point to be made about this is that in contemporary society the constantly increasing communication of everyone with everyone else, reaching down into the most private spheres of human life, makes any such *silentium obsequiosum* quite impossible to maintain any longer. But quite apart from this the situation today is such that time is running out too quickly for us to be able to wait patiently in every case until the mental attitudes of the official teachers who set the standards has changed spontaneously and without conscious thought in such a way that they themselves, without noticing it, have, of their own volition, undertaken to bring about this change of views or feel that such a change as put forward by others no longer in any sense constitutes a deviation from earlier doctrines. (I recall an episode from the period of the Council in which a Roman cardinal assured me in all seriousness that in Rome there had *never* been any objection to the theory that on his physical side man is descended from animals.) Such cases of a gradual and unconscious change in theological views within the Church may still be going on even today. (One such instance can be found in the attitude of optimism of the Second Vatican Council with regard to the possibility of salvation for all men.)

But in general it is no longer possible to proceed by these methods alone. We have become too consciously aware of the factors involved and time is running out too quickly for this. Hence the question to the critic: How in your view is such a change to take place in the Church's awareness (not in the true and ultimate substance of its faith but in opinions which are put forward as matters of official doctrine yet are nevertheless erroneous) if there is never any case in which a Christian [95] has the right to disagree with a doctrine of the Church on well-considered grounds and, moreover, not merely some decades after this doctrine has been promulgated? The fact that the principle relevant to this question and expressed in the bishops' document can be misused does not make any difference to its correctness. Any example of such misuse in relation to such a principle has just as little to do with the question of its truth as if I (with perfect justice and adducing historical proofs which are ready to hand) were to say that the principle of the critic leads to heresy hunting, stagnation in Catholic theology, and the falling away of many from the faith.

Nor is it any argument against this to say that the principle expressed in the bishops' document is not in fact the sole principle, so that the application of it to a particular concrete case leads to delicate situations of conscience for the individual in which each one remains fairly isolated in his relationship with God and with his own conscience. The same might also be said of innumerable other cases in Christian life. For instance my eternal salvation may perhaps to a large extent depend on my choosing the right vocation. Here tool find myself thrown on my own resources by the official Church (apart from very general principles in matters the details of which involve life-and-death decisions) and rightly so. For this is how God has willed it to be. Now according to Catholic doctrine there is in fact no authority in this world constituting an absolute norm for the individual without the personal decision of his own conscience. The existence and justification of the Church's teaching office is something which each individual must in fact recognize and accept as such *without* being able to base himself on the authority of this teaching office. In other words he must act solely 'at his own risk'. And if this is the case, then why should it be so particularly surprising to concede that even *after* acknowledging the validity of this teaching office in principle, situations of personal risk of this kind still continue constantly to be present, *analogous* to

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those which existed and still exist prior to the individual accepting the validity of the teaching office (for this acceptance in fact constitutes a decision requiring constantly to be renewed)?

Obviously we should not overlook the point that 'the conscience of the Christian needs to be guided by Christ and so by that which the Lord has entrusted with his mission'. But is not this point constantly being reiterated throughout the whole of the bishops' document itself? And is this statement of the necessity of this guidance gainsaid when the document draws the distinction it does, and points out that in particular cases this guidance is, after all, precisely a provisional one and *therefore* gives [96] the one so guided, under certain circumstances a right and a duty, as a matter of concrete practice and not merely of abstract theory, to take such guidance for what it is and for what it is intended to be and nothing more, namely as provisional? And if the critic maintains that we should not describe a declaration of this kind of the teaching office as provisional on the grounds that in such a doctrine those entrusted with the teaching office are convinced that this doctrine is true, then his position becomes totally incomprehensible to me. Obviously the only doctrines they can teach are those which they are convinced are correct. But can they not be convinced in this way and yet, even in being so, be aware that they are *capable* of error? Or are they in that case no longer to teach at all? Yet even this course would in fact in its turn fail to measure up to the critic's statement that such a doctrine can be erroneous *per accidens*. After all a doctor may be convinced that his diagnosis is correct yet at the same time be aware that in this he can be mistaken. And he then has the right to express this diagnosis of his as correct and as something to be followed.

When, therefore, the critic quite explicitly condemns the term 'provisional' as used in the document and as applied to non-infallible doctrines of the Church's teaching office of this kind, then I must once more raise the question: How then are we ever to be in a position to reject doctrines of this kind seeing that they are never at any stage claimed to be irreformable, and have often in the past been shown to be erroneous? Supposing I had been alive when Leo X declared, against Luther, that the practice of burning heretics is fully in accordance with the will of the Holy Spirit, could I not even then have been in a position to think to myself: 'Thank God, this is only a provisional doctrine!'?

By way of conclusion I may be permitted one more earnest observation, even though to many it may sound somewhat pathetic. A few days ago I received the copy of a letter (I accept its genuineness because I myself have often heard similar things from behind the 'iron curtain'). The writer declares that he has spent twelve years in prison and suffered terrible things for his Catholic faith and his loyalty to the pope. He then came to the West only to receive the impression that in the Church here everything which he had suffered for was being squandered in unbelief. He would rather return once more to live in such a prison, for he was happier in it. I can understand this, for I myself have friends of the same kind in the East. It may be that many of the factors included in this condemnation of the West are to be explained on historical and sociological grounds, and that his condemnation of them does not *merely* reflect the mentality of the saint. It may be true that a Christian of the West views [97] this martyr for Christianity with a holy envy. But if anyone supposes that the problems of the Church of the West are to be solved by an attitude of stubborn conservatism and that the Church is thereby to be confirmed in her faith and unity he is deceiving himself.

Under God's disposing power history has presented us with these present-day problems, and only courage, truthfulness, resolution in the faith *and at the same time* in positive thinking, can solve them by God's grace. Remembering the theology of the Cross, our attitude to martyrs can be very favourable, whereas our attitude to mere reactionaries who are just as well off as the rest of us prosperous citizens is less so. But if we intend to fulfil the tasks of the future for the Church of the West, then there are elements from the Church's past which must be overcome, and among the methods for overcoming them is to be numbered that principle which the German bishops have expressed in the document we have been

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discussing. It is to be hoped that they will not let themselves be held back from recognizing it and acting upon it as well. It may be said that the unity of the faith (which does not mean union with the opinion of Mr XY), acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, loyalty to the Church, and much else besides, are factors which are *still more* important than the principle we are defending here. But this is something that we neo-modernists (the name which our opponents like to reproach us with) are aware of too. We would be happy not to be put in the position nowadays of having to conduct a special defence of this principle which the German bishops have taught us.

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6

THE CONGREGATION OF THE FAITH AND THE COMMISSION OF THEOLOGIANS

Strictly speaking all I have set myself as a task is to mention a few points calling for treatment by this commission[1] as a matter of priority and with special urgency. But in order to do justice to this task and to choose the sort of themes to which this description would apply certain prior considerations are necessary, for without them the task will not be discharged at all. For if we were to concentrate immediately upon those questions which everyone regards as 'actual and relevant' then nobody could know for sure whether he was pursuing a topic that was of real urgency or a subject which is today on everyone's lips, yet tomorrow will straightway be forgotten.

The Commission of Theologians has close connections with the Congregation of the Faith. These connections are altogether essential to it for without them it would constitute merely some random group of theologians concerning themselves with controversial questions in theology. It would be on the same level as innumerable other groups of the same kind, and would not possess any exclusive function belonging to it of its very nature. It is true that these close connections do not imply that the Commission of Theologians should not develop any special approaches of its own, or have its own spontaneity. It does not imply that it should be merely a subordinate instrument, so that any initiative it took would [99] depend solely on the appropriate directive of the papal Congregation. On the contrary, it is only by having its own spontaneity and responsibility that the Commission can act as an aid to the Roman Congregation. Yet its responsible and active collaboration must be *totally* ordered to the activity precisely of this Congregation. In itself this is obvious. The Commission is restricted in the number of its members and the choice of them is reserved to the Pope alone. For these reasons alone the group of theologians has neither the capacity nor the intention of being representative of all Catholic theologians throughout the world. Whether a collegiate body of this kind, representative of all theologians and distinct from those representing the bishops, is regarded as legitimate in itself is a different question and one not to be decided upon here. But at any rate there can be no doubt that this group does not constitute such a representative body, and it would be acting in contradiction to its own nature if it did not regard itself as an instrument of the papal Congregation and hence restricted its functions to those matters which really fall within the purview of this Congregation.

But this only makes the question all the more pressing of what the task of this commission is in itself and in particular what it is in the contemporary scene. A reply might be attempted merely in the sense indicated above, namely that it has to serve the Roman Congregation. But this would merely shift the question onto a different ground, for straightway the counter-question would have to be put of what this means and what the task is of the Roman Congregation itself. This is a question to which hardly anyone nowadays has a correct and practical answer to give. It is indeed clear, absolutely speaking, that the Congregation, as an organ of the pope, has the right and the duty to guard and defend the Christian and Catholic

[1] This paper is based on a report by the author to the first session of the International Papal Commission of Theologians of the 6 October 1969. Because of an indiscretion the article was published in a distorted and partly falsified form in *IDOC international*, no. 13 (of the 1 December 1969), pp. 46-62, and excerpts from it in *Informations Catholiques Internationales*, no. 350 (of the 15 December 1969), pp. 33-35. The author arranged for the German version to be translated from the Latin original by his colleague, Dr E. Klinger, so as to present an authentic text of the arguments put forward at Rome. cf. also K. Rahner, 'Die Freiheit theologischer Forschung in der Kirche', *StdZ* 184 (1969), pp. 73-82.

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faith against all errors and dangers to which it is exposed whether from within or from without. But it would be gravely erroneous of us to suppose that we could solve this question as applied to our contemporary world merely by an abstract answer of this kind and thereby imagine that in all other respects we could proceed in the future in the same accustomed manner as formerly. The abstract formulae applied to the Congregation hitherto and the practical activities in which it itself has engaged no longer correspond to the present-day situation with which it finds itself confronted in the concrete and in terms of which its concrete functions should be defined in their greater detail. The basic question concerning this commission, therefore, which has to be solved first and foremost, is the question of the nature and function of the Congregation of the Faith itself. Our answer to this will determine too the [100] special choice of themes to be treated of by the commission. Yet as I see it no full or adequate answer has yet been found to this basic question itself of the function of the Congregation of the Faith in the contemporary world. Hence I cannot refrain from mentioning a few of the obstacles which manifestly bar the way to such an answer.

I. THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE ROMAN CONGREGATION OF THE FAITH

The Situation

Permit me, by way of preliminary, to give a brief outline of the procedures of the Congregation of the Faith as followed hitherto. I readily concede that such an outline can only be very sketchy. If in addition to this deficiency it strikes this or that individual as insufficiently ‘respectful’, I must crave indulgence for this. Up to the present the Congregation has proceeded on the assumption that new ideas and theological theses which have been freshly developed, and do not seem at first sight to be in agreement with the traditions of the faith, derive from one and the same milieu as that of the Congregation itself, and that there are direct contacts between them and theology as handed down and as formulated elsewhere. The result of this would be that the same terminology, the same philosophical assumptions, the same cultural outlooks, could be assumed to exist and could be used on both sides, and that it would be easy enough to establish and discover any fresh differences of opinion that emerged. It was formerly considered that when faced with a new proposition which struck one as suspicious it was easy enough to adduce a definition from Denzinger so that it could be readily seen that this ran counter to the doctrine under attack.

In cases in which it was believed that some fresh doctrinal propositions had been rejected, they were regarded either as already familiar or as readily accessible to the average intelligence, or else were quickly translated into the kind of statements which were in direct contradiction to traditional doctrine. No attention was paid to the fresh outlooks, tacit assumptions, and experiences not yet worked out in terms of conscious theory forming the background from which the new doctrinal opinions emerged. The Roman censors working in the Roman Congregations were in fact undoubtedly acute and learned men in every way. But even they regarded their own mentality and their own intellectual and social milieu as the only one existing, and as accessible from the outset to all others. The historical factors influencing their own mentality and the [101] conditions affecting their own cultural, scientific, or even human milieux were things which they neither consciously recognized nor were able to take into account in the decisions they arrived at.

It is in the light of this that we must explain the fact that while in the Roman condemnations of the last century the true faith was indeed effectively defended, it was so, nevertheless, only in an extremely sterile and almost wholly repressive manner. No positive

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integration of the new problems was achieved by any such action on the part of Rome, and these problems were solved in other ways, whole decades too late, and generally speaking only by the kind of people who were regarded with particular suspicion by the Roman authorities. Undoubtedly the Catholic truth was defended even though its defence was often combined far too long with obsolete opinions drawn from the theological manuals. Thereby many were lost who would have agreed with this truth and who in themselves were actually ready to do so; yet they were lost to the faith. The reason was first that they lived in an intellectual and social environment far removed from that of the Roman doctors, and second that this doctrine was presented to them in a manner which was quite inappropriate to them. On any honest appraisal of the history of this Congregation over the last century it appears as an *historia calamitatum* and a history of lost opportunities, a history fashioned by people who, without prejudice to their legitimate authority and their task of defending the Catholic truth, were all too ready to present themselves as the *beati possidentes*.

Unquestionably the Church cannot escape from the burdens and the cramping effects imposed upon her by history. Unquestionably it is better to defend the Catholic truth in less agreeable ways than simply to surrender this even in its smallest detail. But even taking all this into account it would have been possible to avoid in this history much that is regrettable, many errors, and very many decisions which were objectively false. Let us not suppose that there have not been errors of this kind. Almost all the statements on biblical questions put forward by the Roman bodies in the last century prior to the Second Vatican Council are obsolete, and are no longer heeded by anyone. Modernism, it is true, is rightly evaluated as an amalgam of heresies, but even so it has to be said that the concrete condemnation under Pius X is full of over-hasty assertions which fail to do justice either to the importance of the problems involved or to the mentality of those against whom they are directed. Many of the statements of the popes in our own time on social and economic matters undoubtedly deserve the highest praise. Nevertheless the manner in which they are presented is often such as to suggest that [102] support can be found for all of them in the gospel or the eternal law of nature even though in many cases they were applicable only to a particular period or culture. Let us take, for example, the modern theory of evolution and the attitude of the Church to the modern sciences, psychology and sociology: for whole decades (for almost a whole century) the idea of a development of man from the universal sphere of life was suppressed. Even today the official rejection of polygenism has not been withdrawn. The reaction of the Church to depth psychology and all scientific progress has almost invariably, so far as the Roman authorities are concerned, been inspired by a spirit of conservative mistrust.

Once we consider all these factors honestly and in the light of history we find that nowadays there is a further point to be added: that prescribed attitudes of mind of this kind have become ineffective even within the Church itself. What we are nowadays observing is an immense upheaval in human ideas and society, the nature and consequences of which have been, up to now, to a large extent unknown. In earlier decades, when a decision was issued by the Congregation of the Faith or some other Roman body, any Christian or theologian affected by it had two courses open to him: either he submitted to a decree of this kind or he left the Church. Nowadays, however, cases are proliferating in which the Christian affected takes neither the one nor the other course. He neither accepts the teaching of such a body nor leaves the Church. Instead he continues to take part in the life of the Church, contenting himself with a so-called mere 'partial identification'.[2] To the objection that such a course is dishonest and perhaps even dishonourable he replies that it only seems so from the point of view of the authorities, whose pronouncements on doctrine he precisely rejects. From this it

[2] On the subject of partial identification in its wider aspects cf. the observations of Fr. Roustang, 'Le troisième homme', *Christus* 13 (1966), pp. 561-567.

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is clear that the procedures and policies customary in the Roman curias hitherto have to a large extent become ineffective. Nevertheless it must be insisted that the Roman Congregations have not only the right and the duty to defend the traditions of the faith, but that over and above this they are also obliged in the same way to seek for the most effective possible policies and procedures to make this defence of theirs really successful.

Now what we have said above is far from amounting in itself to a full or adequate description of the situation in its entirety in which the Congregation of the Faith has to discharge its office nowadays. It seems to me that a radical shift has taken place as compared with former times in our entire conscious attitudes even with regard to the relationship between [103] the theoretical and the practical reason. In the light of this it becomes easy to understand why it should be that, at least according to my modest experience, it is no longer possible to say that the majority of the younger members of the clergy in Germany regard all dogmas promulgated in the Church as absolutely true in every particular. But this does not seem to cause excessive disquiet to the younger generation because as a rule they do not trouble themselves very much about theoretical truth as such once one abstracts from the practical claims it makes upon us in our concrete human lives. In brief: the present-day climate in terms of human ideas and human society is totally different from what it formerly was, and that too in such a way that we cannot expect that the mere formal authority of a Roman Congregation will *de facto*, or in any effective sense, influence those to whom such decrees are directed. It is not enough to insist against this attitude that the individual involved must either agree to the papal pronouncements concerned or cease to be a Catholic. For first there is a *de facto* refusal to recognize this principle on the part of the people concerned, and second there is a lack of the concrete means to carry through such an axiom effectively under present-day conditions.

In addition a third reason, distinct from the above, must be explicitly adduced at this point, and one which calls in question the approaches and policies customarily adopted by this Congregation hitherto. Formerly we proceeded from the assumption that the Congregation is in a position to watch over everything affecting the faith within the Catholic Church. It was assumed that we could assign to the Index of Prohibited Books at least all those writings which are of Catholic authorship and represent a threat to the Catholic faith. Hence a watch was kept over all teachers of theology or at least there was a belief that this was being done. It was the custom to send out documents – in a fairly arbitrary manner – with regard to the choice of subject-matter. But the content of these documents seldom touched upon the really basic problems of the time or, when they aimed at doing this, the exclusively negative character of the decisions taken had the effect of leaving these basic problems more or less unresolved. Everything was worked out by a small group of theologians living almost exclusively in Rome, and their specialized knowledge and competence in the relevant fields was not such as to be beyond all question. For the purpose of such decrees the bishops functioned in practice as mere executive instruments or as the sort of officials who denounced to the Roman curias those whose teaching they suspected of being heretical. For many reasons an approach of this kind, after the manner of a ‘doctrinal police’, is unrealistic nowadays.

[104] One reason for this ineffectiveness must be specially emphasized. It is the task of the Congregation of the Faith to defend the Catholic faith and the acknowledgement of it by all. But the ways and methods formerly used for this purpose presuppose a quite specific unity between theology and faith such as *de facto* no longer exists today, and, moreover, is no longer capable of existing. Certainly there is an essential connection between theology and faith. Not merely has theology, as the scientific interpretation of faith, constantly to keep faith in view, but conversely every statement of faith inevitably and of its very nature contains right from the outset an element of reflection and hence of theology. Despite this this close

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relationship between the two does not imply an identity. For if theology always consists in a scientific interpretation of the faith, and this interpretation must presuppose much in the way of the philosophy, culture, and scientific experience of the age in which it is promulgated – thus the factors presupposed are subject to change and are not the same for all – then it follows not merely that there is a difference between theology and faith, but also that different theologies are possible, even though all of them refer to the same faith.

This difference is something that we are far more conscious of nowadays than was the case in the past. It is already felt to be insuperable nowadays because the prior assumptions underlying these different theologies of today are such that no one can any longer have a comprehensive view of them all at the same time, and use them to constitute a single theology reducing all the rest to a synthesis. In earlier times the Congregation of the Faith was able to assume and invoke for its work a theology that was common to all and which, moreover, everyone was perfectly well able to view as a comprehensive whole. Today, however, without prejudice to the unity of the faith, that theology which formerly all held in common is more and more being split up into the numerous different theologies which no one can any longer reduce simultaneously to one and the same common denominator.

Hitherto it has been extremely difficult to see how this Congregation, in view of the paucity of its members, can be familiar with, and distinguish, these different theologies or can couch its own doctrinal pronouncements in a language which will be effectively intelligible to all and recognized as appropriate for solving the particular questions arising within the single theology prevailing in any given age. Even today we observe disputes arising from this situation of theological pluralism. Some seek to reject a given proposition as heretical while others declare that this demand arises from a false interpretation of the statement objected to on [105] the grounds that this interpretation is not in conformity with the underlying assumptions in terms of terminology, philosophy, etc. on which such a proposition is based, and without which no true judgement of it can be arrived at. Formerly controversies arose as to the truth of a doctrine when no one had any doubt that the meaning of it was understood in the same sense by both sides. Nowadays each of the two parties to such a dispute argues that his opponent has failed to grasp the true meaning of the doctrine he is putting forward. Hence it comes about that the judgement we arrive at upon such a condemned proposition is often regarded not as a condemnation of the proposition itself but of the false interpretation placed upon it.

Consequences

What consequences are to be drawn from the situation briefly delineated here for the work of the Roman Congregation and the Commission of Theologians? Above all what conclusions are to be drawn for the choice of themes which are particularly pressing?

Before we can proceed with our special theme it seems necessary to make yet a few further remarks at a general level. If we have described the situation aright, then the first conclusion which we can draw from it is a recognition that we do not know what our precise attitude should be. The first mistake we usually commit consists in the conviction that we have a sound grasp of the situation in which we live and already possess the principles and norms which we need to master the situation, so that all that we have to do is rightly to apply them to it. We often suppose that the only oversight we can commit is to neglect the practical applications of principles the nature and value of which are beyond question. *De facto*, however, there are no cases in which we really penetrate to the roots of the situation in which the Church and her official doctrinal authorities find themselves. We interpret the situation of today and tomorrow in terms of the situation of the yesterday to which we have been

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accustomed. Yet ultimately speaking we are in no sense achieving any effective or radical view of what the real reasons are for so profound a change in the situation in terms of sociology and human ideas. We take for granted certain norms of behaviour which *de facto* men no longer observe nowadays. We lay down principles and maxims which may in themselves be very sound, yet which unfortunately have the defect that modern man is precisely refusing to recognize them as applying to him. We suppose that the modes and attitudes of thought, of feeling, and of living customary in a [106] clerical milieu also apply outside this milieu. We invoke in support of our position the universal authority of the Church and her teaching office in order to give assurance that a specific principle has been proclaimed by this authority, whereas in reality this principle might far better – as authenticated by its own content – provide the basis for acknowledging the authority in general.

The first step to be taken is the recognition in all honesty that we do not know the situation in which we ourselves stand in terms of sociology and human ideas. It is true that among ourselves we often say that fresh theological investigations are necessary. In fact, however, we often entertain the tacit conviction that everything that is in any way important for Christian life is undoubtedly already to hand, and only still needs to be defended and translated into practical terms, whereas those things which we do not know affect not merely the manner of presentation and preaching of the Christian truth but the actual content itself which, under present-day conditions, we have to preach. This is, it is true, the faith as revealed once and for all and to be preached in every age. But to the extent that it is precisely today that it has to be preached it is, without prejudice to its ultimate and basic identity with faith in the absolute, itself subject to a far-reaching historical change. The recognition of one's own ignorance undoubtedly signifies the first step towards an effective recognition of the true position and of what has to be done in it.

This point should also be emphasized in its application to recognizing the faith. For with regard to the object of knowledge here we are easily led into the erroneous supposition that we must either already know everything or are absolutely incapable of deciding anything for sure. In the past a developing process of maturity of this kind in our knowledge of matters of faith, i.e. the 'development of dogma', was achieved gradually, so that the individual steps were often hardly perceptible. And as a result of the gradual process of maturity in knowledge of this kind within the Church later generations hardly retained any awareness of the uncertainties of earlier ones. The earlier pronouncements of the official teaching authorities, though they may have run counter to some specific conviction held in more recent times, did not constitute any difficulties for the generation coming after them, if only because there was often a complete lack of awareness of them. Today, however, everything is developing more swiftly, so that the same peaceful maturing process of a doctrinal decision can hardly be expected. Hence the people of the Church, and even the members of the Roman bodies, must accustom themselves to the explicit withdrawing of past decisions. In individual cases these must frankly and [107] honestly be declared no longer to be in force, or even explicitly acknowledged to be mistaken. Unless we have the courage explicitly to withdraw past errors the teaching authorities of the Church of today will retain neither their credibility nor the trust reposed in them.

In all these questions, which need to be tackled afresh, there is much in terms of methodology which should be thought out and applied anew. In former times, when faced with questions calling for decision, it was more or less universal practice to have recourse to the doctrine and practice of the Church in the immediate past. Biblical and historical studies, which might have cast serious doubts upon this tradition of the practice and teaching of the immediate past, were *de facto* not adduced or applied. The more remote theological past was in practice always regarded as an evolutionary stage already left behind, and as the age of an

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obscurity which had already given way to something altogether better, clearer, and surer as a result of the efforts of more recent schools of thought. History was not really taken as providing a critical standpoint from which to judge present-day positions, but merely as the description of a way which had already attained its goal and could no longer be called in question.

The Congregation or Commission cannot continue to employ such methods in the future. The methods used must really be open, seeing that they will be used to seek that which is as yet unknown, however true it may be that that which we seek has not merely a theoretical interest but great practical importance as well. Other methods, e.g. the approach of higher criticism in exegesis, must be accorded their due value and given genuine scope to take effect even though the findings thereby arrived at may contradict the ideas of the traditional schools of thought. (In this respect even the exegetical methods of the Second Vatican Council still do not provide a good example for a future methodology. They quote scripture only as a storehouse of *dicta probantia* in order to give substance to theses already recognized and assured on other grounds.) A methodological 'legalism', devoid of any real regard for the milieu in which a given text emerged or the assumptions tacitly underlying it etc., and interpreting texts as positive juridical norms, is something that we must resolutely overcome. We must never forget that agreement with tradition on a particular question is still far from constituting any proof that the doctrine concerned belongs to divine revelation unless it has been established beyond dispute that such a doctrine has been unanimously accepted as revealed by God and that at the same time the 'more original' revelation necessarily contains all that the text appears to express.[3]

[108] This and many other points in methodology need to be tested afresh and translated into practice if the work of the Congregation and Commission is really to serve the interests of those who live in this situation of ours as it affects human knowledge.

II. TASKS FOR THE COMMISSION OF THEOLOGIANS

From the preliminary remarks which it has been necessary to make here we can now go on to treat of a few special themes which take priority and claim our special attention. We are not proceeding from the assumption that such themes should necessarily be the subject of a public and authoritative declaration addressed to the Church by the Congregation of the Faith. On the contrary it will be assumed that there can be themes which require to be considered and, as it were, pondered upon by the Congregation without such consideration having to lead immediately and *ipso facto* to a decree needing to be promulgated. All this taken as given, I shall draw a distinction between more general and more particular themes. Under the heading of more general themes I am grouping those which, without being the subject of public official doctrinal declaration, bear particularly upon the Congregation's own interpretation of itself even though such more general considerations may have secondary consequences for the doctrine and practice of the Church.

General Themes

The *first* theme touches upon the possibility, the limitations, and the methods which today, as

[3] The author is drawing a distinction between the 'original' revelation and the concepts in which it is objectified. On this cf. K. Rahner, 'Theology in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 23-41.

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distinct from the past, are used by the Church and her official teachers in the *defence and proclamation of the faith*. From what has already been said the range and complexity of such a consideration will be clear. What is to be done, for instance, in view of the fact that the attitude of modern man to theoretical truth is manifestly completely different from that of his predecessors so long as this theoretical truth is incapable of direct practical verification? How can the unity of the faith be defended – indeed even assured – in any sense if it cannot now be presented as it formerly was, directly in terms of a single theology using one and the same terminology and based on the same philosophical assumptions etc.? In these circumstances how can we still regard holy [109] Scripture nowadays as *norma non normata et omnia normans*, seeing that it itself is nowadays recognized as an entity which is in manifold ways conditioned by historical factors, one which depends upon many factors which have either ceased to exist nowadays, or at least seem to us not to be binding? How can the teaching authorities with their doctrines concerning specific subjects aim at making these doctrines effective, seeing that their formal authority itself is called in question and such questioning can with some justice adduce in its support many authentic instances in which these official teaching authorities have in fact erred? What is it which, regarded as the ultimate substance and innermost kernel of the faith, can be preached in such a way first that this basic preaching convinces the hearer of its living truth as a vital force in human living in virtue of the mystery and simplicity combined in it and of its affinity with the innermost will of man, and second that the authority which a truth of this kind carries evokes trust in its hearers? Are we in a position nowadays to distinguish between various fundamental kinds of preaching suitable to proclaim the one truth of faith? When an error against the faith is promulgated by a Catholic how can the official rejection of such an error be rendered effective straightway? Which are the cases in which such rejection is opportune, and which are the ones in which it is not so? Seeing that nowadays men require of even formal authority that it shall give the intrinsic reasons supporting its decision, the question must be raised of whether and how such a demand can be satisfied in the case of the decisions of this Congregation. A distinction which we have often adumbrated is that between the unity of faith and creed on the one hand and the pluralism among the theologies on the other. This is something which requires to be worked out with still greater precision. For first this distinction is far greater than formerly, and second, speaking about faith and creed in a so-called scientific age cannot be allowed to lead to a vague pietism.

In order to formulate such a theory as to the right methods to be used in the teaching of the faith we must also nowadays raise the question of what approach to adopt to the very great number of individuals who, as a consequence of their intellectual formation, in itself very advanced, are psychologically speaking hardly ready to accept the pronouncements of the doctrinal authorities merely in virtue of their formal authority as such so long as they are unable to integrate those pronouncements in a really positive sense with the rest of their ideas. On the other hand, however, in the intellectual and psychological situation in which they stand they themselves are in no position to achieve such a positive integration by their own powers. Such dilemmas as this were less frequent in earlier days [110] because men were either still so uneducated that on the subtler questions they simply left the doctrines of the Church's official teachers to their implicit faith or else were able to cope with the situation with that single common language of the educated classes in which the pronouncements on the faith were themselves couched. So far as we are concerned we have no particular theory to offer on this sociological question of cognition.

A *second* general theme concerns the question of *Church membership*. This question seems to a large extent already to have been clarified. For many centuries it has been familiar enough to theologians and seems to have been brought for the most part to a conclusion by the Second Vatican Council. Yet this is true only from certain specific standpoints. There are

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many other aspects of this question which still remain wholly obscure even today, although in themselves they have been of the utmost importance for the practice of the Church. Formerly every answer to this question was more or less based upon the assumption that it was easy to establish whether belief or unbelief was present in an individual in relation to the doctrines of the Church. Such an assumption, however, is no longer justified. We have already spoken of that peculiar state of merely partial identification with the Church and her faith, of that strange psychological and sociological attitude of mind in which two seemingly incompatible resolves co-exist: on the one hand the resolve to remain in the Church and to take part in her life, and yet on the other to maintain a fairly clear attitude of dissent from her authority and her teaching on many questions. How are we to judge an attitude of this kind in the individual's conscious awareness from the psychological and theological points of view? What attitude should the Church adopt towards such individuals?

It is easy to recognize that this question has consequences for ecumenism. For often we look more askance at many men as non-Catholics on the grounds that as a matter of Church sociology they live beyond the bounds of the Roman Church although so far as faith itself is concerned they are Catholics, than at many others who sociologically speaking do belong to the Catholic Church and call themselves Catholics. We are pointing, then, to a distinction between membership of the Church at the sociological level on the one hand and at a truly theological level (to be estimated on the basis of faith) on the other in the contemporary scene. We are suggesting that it is a distinction which in practice cannot be overcome. And even the question of whom we can regard as a believer is far more difficult than was formerly supposed. Now given that such a distinction does to a large extent exist nowadays, what course should the Church and her official teachers pursue in such a situation? Whom is she [111] to recognize as belonging to her? Whom is she to admit to the sacraments? To whom does she extend *communio in sacris?* Why does she extend this to one individual and not to another when there is no theological difference between them whatever?

The *third* general theme seems to me to be that concerning the distinction between *morality and justice in the Church*. One of the schemes projected for the Council was explicitly concerned with the duty of moralists to preserve a strictly defined distinction between the juridical and moral orders within the Church, and this for good reasons. But the basic question of where to draw the line of this distinction in itself and of the practical consequences following from it seems to me to remain unresolved. For we are accustomed tacitly to assume as obvious the view that the moral and juridical standing of a Christian within the Church is such that, at least so long as there is good will on both sides, both departments can so be brought into harmony that there cannot be any opposition between them. And yet such an opposition is possible. There is a kind of failure in morality which does not *ipso facto* involve a transgression of the law and is in this sense to be pronounced 'illegitimate' (i.e. contrary to a law to the extent that this is enforced by the Church under penalty of juridical or more general sociological consequences). There can be a kind of illegitimate behaviour, or behaviour deviating from the Church's law, which cannot *ipso facto* be said to constitute any real immorality in God's sight.

To regard the two factors as distinct and to some extent opposed in this way does not create any very great difficulties in secular society. But because the Church as such always has to guard and defend human morality in God's sight as well, the distinction and opposition which we have discerned do of their very nature entail notable difficulties so far as she is concerned. For at times, without any sufficiently exact thought on the principles involved, the juridical and legal claims for a particular course of action are urged without sufficient regard to its morality. There is a failure to admit that this latter factor has any concrete effects in the life of the Church. (For instance we allow a man to contract a Church marriage with one woman even though as a matter of deep personal involvement and for a long period he has united

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himself with another, albeit without concluding a juridically valid marriage with her.) Conversely we tend to refuse this juridical status to another even though from the standpoint of his *moral* situation such a status could have been accorded to him merely on the grounds that the legitimacy of this status cannot be established in the *forum externum* (for instance marriage is denied to a man when he cannot supply juridical proof of his freedom from the [112] marriage bond even though he is in fact free in this sense). There are many instances in canon law in which we can discern confusion and entanglements of this kind between the juridical and moral orders. For instance the idea of a punishment *latae sententiae*, a fairly strange conception, derives from confusing the two in this way. The effect of allowing the two orders to interact upon each other in this way is that we are all too ready to attach forthwith to any kind of irregularity in the juridical sphere a moral significance in God's sight which does not belong to it in itself at all except in those cases in which such irregularity really endangers the public order in the Church. If this danger were solved in principle and unambiguously then we could establish more easily and more precisely the borderline between the exercise of official authority in the Church and the conscience of the individual. Moreover the whole question is connected, as we can readily perceive, with that other question of whether and to what extent the individual may be pressed by his own conscience publicly to declare his opposition to a doctrine of the teaching authorities which, while it is indeed authoritative and authentic, has nevertheless not been defined. All the theologians regard an internal dissent as possible. The question would be, however, what degree of public, and perhaps even juridical value could be attached to such a withholding of assent without the attitude of the individual expressing it doing damage to the Church herself.

The *fourth* general theme seems to me to touch upon the concrete *constitution of the Church* and of the local and regional Churches. It is clear that the Church has of her very nature a constitution which is *juris divini* (even though it is not so easy as it appears to many to say in what this 'divine right' precisely consists). But many of the factors in the concrete organization and constitution of the Church do not belong to it as of divine right. Many factors may perhaps seem to have this status but in reality do not do so. The concrete constitution of human right or human law, however, which derives from the historical circumstances and the demands of a particular age, can nowadays not be left to the paternalistic discretion of the Church authorities. On the contrary there is need of prior reflection from the aspects of history, psychology, futurology, and sociology, and this is something which it is precisely for theology to achieve. It is true that here again the juridical changes require that the level of concrete organization belong to the sphere of administration of the Church's authorities, but it in no sense follows from this that these authorities can nowadays shape their course solely in accordance with their own 'well-informed' personal 'conscience' and fatherly benevolence. [113] Nowadays all these decisions call for a prior information which has to be acquired in new ways and by scientific methods, information as to tendencies and concerns which are *de facto* present in the Church. And while it is true that the Church authorities are not mere passive instruments dependent upon these tendencies and existing merely to give effect to them, still they cannot remain totally independent of them either, acting as though they were the overlords and nothing more.

I have deliberately avoided including among these more general themes the most basic questions of Christianity, the questions concerning God, the Incarnation, and similar truths. For while these questions are indeed of fundamental importance, it is not a Congregation or Commission of this kind which can give the answer to them in terms which are really appropriate to our particular age. On the contrary the giving of this answer is a task for the whole of Christian theology. It may indeed be true that in the future too there will be occasions on which the teaching authorities cannot avoid pronouncing an anathema through this Congregation in order to defend the faith. Nevertheless such merely negative decisions

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generally have a fairly limited effectiveness. And again no official Church institution nowadays can in practice achieve anything more than these purely negative decisions. It might be asked, however, whether and in what way an institution such as the Congregation of the Faith might indirectly call for positive and effective answers to these fundamental questions. This would be quite a different question. Undoubtedly it would militate against any such goal if the Congregation, from an untimely zeal to weed out the tares, were to destroy the good seed as well, as has often happened in the past.

Particular Themes

At this point a few *more particular* themes must briefly be indicated which primarily call for the attention of the Congregation of the Faith and the Commission of Theologians. These themes will be adduced only briefly, and we shall make no attempt to explain the importance of their subject-matter and the methods of enquiry to be followed in them any further.

(a) The *question of mixed marriages* still remains to a large extent unsolved today at both the theoretical and the practical level. Many questions bearing upon this theme have still not received sufficient attention. In practice there is often a complete failure to draw the necessary distinction between that which pertains to genuinely divine law and that which pertains merely to ecclesiastical law. Over and above this, it is often [114] wrongly assumed that everything in this sphere depends on the free consent of the Church's authorities, and there is a failure to recognize that the matter itself and the concrete circumstances prevailing today impose their own norms and limitations upon the Church's authorities. It is vital that in this sphere effective, imaginative, and practical laws should he devised, and that the preliminary deliberations leading to this should be embarked upon. These should be exact and detailed indeed, but also brisk and swiftly set in motion, and the laws they lead to should apply to all. Moreover these laws should be effective without innumerable special measures and legalistic procedures. Unless this is done then the only alternative will be that most of the members of the Church, and even the younger clergy, will cease to trouble themselves any longer about these laws.

(b) One question which is recognized to be very urgent is that of *communicatio in sacris*. There is a danger that in practice people will soon cease to pay any further heed to the prescriptions of both the Catholic and the non-Catholic Church authorities. The rules which have hitherto been in force in this sphere are not simple and imaginative enough and, on the contrary, give the impression of a somewhat illogical compromise. The basic question of what our attitude should be to unity in the sphere of ritual observance seems to me to remain unsolved, the more so since the prior question of what unity of faith can really be achieved, demanded, or looked for in the future still remains obscure.

(c) *Infant baptism* is also a question which seems likely soon to give rise to great difficulties among us. I believe that here too we must guard against the view, all too easy to fall into, that this question has already been solved in all its aspects.

(d) Another particular question of great practical urgency is concerned with the *indissolubility of a Christian marriage* which has been sealed and consummated. Even if we assume the basic principle of indissolubility – an assumption which is certainly not altogether free from historical and theoretical difficulties – many concrete and practical questions still always remain, calling for full and adequate answers. At what point, for instance, is that degree of intellectual and moral maturity present really and not merely presumptively, without which that consent which provides the basis for an indissoluble marriage is quite impossible? Can maturity of this kind be the same under any and every sociological and cultural conditions? Even if we accept the objective indissolubility of a Christian marriage,

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the question still remains open of whether all men can effectively 'realize' the duty of an objective indissolubility of this kind at the subjective [115] level and in terms of their own concrete human lives. And at least in the light of this the extremely obscure question then arises of what the attitude of the Church should be towards those who are subjectively convinced that it is permissible for them to enter upon a new marriage after civil divorce, and whose attitude on this point cannot easily be contested. This and much else besides seems obscure and still unsolved in relation to the indissolubility of marriage.

(e) I must confess my personal view that many of the factors connected with the *law of celibacy* call for fresh consideration even at the theoretical level. For not infrequently principles are invoked and urged upon us in defence of celibacy which, while they are indeed asserted as beyond question, can in fact perfectly well be challenged by others as unproved. In this question too, so it seems to me, we have not sufficiently reflected upon the bounds which the Church authorities too must observe. Here again in the eyes of many the legality of a prescription issued with the force of official authority is all too readily regarded as proof of the effectiveness of this prescription also, whereas in reality the converse is equally true. Those issuing the prescription must also have due regard to the question of its effectiveness if it is to be legitimate in *every* respect.

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7

ON THE THEOLOGY OF A 'PASTORAL SYNOD'

If the science of theology, as understood by Catholics, is to contribute to the preaching of the gospel and the life of the Church, then it has the right and the duty to make its message known in the concrete everyday life of the Church as well, and to play its part in throwing light upon the questions of the moment. It is in this sense that we should listen in particular to the message of theology in the preliminary considerations on the nature and task of a pastoral synod.[1]

It may be that the idea of a twofold teaching office in the Church approximately as maintained by Y. Congar or H. Küng,[2] is somewhat problematical. But at least this much is correct in it, that in an age of science and of growing intellectual and social differences in the Church the theologians have a task calling for their serious attention, and one which – viewed in concrete terms – only they can fulfil, regardless of how their more precise relationship to the official doctrinal authority of the bishops should be conceived of according to Catholic doctrine. In this undertaking the work of the theologians is related, of course, to the concrete [117] practice and decisions of the Church. But while fully recognizing this, we must also recognize that in this task of theirs the theologians have to perform the function of critical reflection, and thereby discharge their special task in the Church in relation alike to the bishops and to the people of God as a whole. Now all this makes the significance of this task for the theologian, as applied to a synod of the kind we are thinking of, not less but on the contrary even greater. For critical theological reflection – even abstracting from the creative freedom required for new charismatic discoveries and decisions – is the sole factor which makes it possible for the Church to avoid becoming entangled in the encumbrances of mere tradition and custom and so clears the ground from which she can develop her future. Indeed it can actually be said that nowadays that factor of the original and the charismatic which abides right from the Church's origins should to a large extent appear in the everyday garb of sober realistic reflection.

There is a further question which cannot be entered into here, that namely of the order in which the representatives of the individual theological disciplines should express themselves on the subject under consideration in view of the way in which these particular disciplines are related to one another as established by a preliminary consideration at the level of scientific theory. It is obvious that a dogmatic theologian, from the very nature of his particular science, can make only very general statements on a synod of the kind we are thinking of in the awareness that it is the concrete particular details which are of really vital importance here.

I would like *first* to attempt to make a few points on the theology of a *particular* synod. With regard to the relationship between the individual regional Churches and the one Church

[1] The original context of the ideas here expressed was the group lectures of the faculty of Catholic theology at the university of Munster/Westphalia on Problems in Preparing for the German Pastoral Synod held during the winter semester of 1969/70. The observations there put forward have been lightly revised for purposes of publication.

[2] On this cf. Y. Congar, 'Dogmatische Tatsachen und "Kirchliche Glaube"', *Heilige Kirche* (Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 371-388; also 'Die Grenzen der kirchlichen Autorität und ihre Ausübung', *Die Tradition und die Traditionen* I (Mainz, I965), pp. 274-280 (Hist. Material) as well as various articles in the more recent symposium, *Ministères et communion ecclésiale* (Paris, 1971).
Likewise see H. Küng, 'What Does Infallibility Mean?' *Structures of the Church* (New York, I965), pp. 305-351 and *Theologe und Kirche*, Theol. Meditationen 3 (Einsiedeln, 1964) as well as *Unfehlbar? – Eine Anfrage* (Einsiedeln, 1970) and the controversies included in the appendix to this work.

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the Church now finds itself in a quite new situation, so that it is not really so very surprising that it has so far not really been able to cope with this new situation. Ever since the Middle Ages there have always been Churches which were in some respect particular, each having special characteristics of its own, a special history, and a special way of life, and this is of course true, though obviously in a lesser degree even of the Latin Church. There have always been patriarchates, different rites, different theological traditions, particular synods, national synods, gatherings of the clergy of a particular nation, tendencies on the part of national states to absorb and appropriate to themselves in territorial and juridical terms the Churches existing within their dominions. There have been national protests against the claims and practices of the Roman see. In brief, the Church has never constituted a [118] unity of the kind which is constructed from parts which are absolutely homogeneous. But first and foremost it must be recognized that these internal differences have, after all, to a large extent been the outcome of a mere pragmatic and unconscious development. It is something which has rather been accepted as an inescapable *fait accompli* than positively affirmed. The difficulties and struggles which these differences between the particular Churches have of course entailed throughout the entire history of the Church have been sustained by an attitude which has always been taken for granted yet which is, basically speaking, nevertheless naive. For those living in earlier times have always held that that which is 'given' by their own tradition is also that which must be taken as the standard for everything else. The differences within the Church have been in this sense a rendering present of the past, but not a rendering present of and a task for, the future. A further point is that for all the respect accorded to the Churches of the East, it has been felt by almost all Catholics that 'Church' is identical with the Latin Church of the West. Now this Latin Church of the West has been, and still is, in all dimensions of Church life, homogenized to such an extent that it can hardly be seen how the process can continue any further. The result is that tendencies arise from time to time at the national level, or within particular Churches, which are hostile to this process of homogenization which has been continuously growing and extending ever since the early Middle Ages. And every time they do arise they have invariably ended in heresies and schisms, and thereby merely served to strengthen this tendency to unification within the Catholic Church. Hence this homogenized Church of the Latin West has in practice extended itself everywhere in the world by its missions ever since the beginning of the modern age, and despite the resolve which has repeatedly manifested itself to accommodate itself to the practices of other cultures. Furthermore virtually no attempt has been made in ecclesiology to achieve a serious theological reflection upon internal differences within the Church that are justified. The single overall uniformity within the Church was felt as something to be taken for granted and lived by, even though it involved the danger which is entailed by all those factors which are merely taken for granted whereas in truth they are merely the outcome of historical conditions. In fact men's attitudes have gone beyond even this, and they have come to regard the uniformity which exists in liturgy, law, Church practice, and the organization of the Church after the pattern of a modern state with a single centralized government as to a large extent an inevitable consequence of the dogma of the papal primacy. Again it is quite impossible to deny that right down to [119] the present day any tendencies which run counter to this uniformity are all too easily regarded by Rome as an opposition to the primatial function of the pope and are resisted as such. Now this situation has gradually begun to change. At the Second Vatican Council conciliar ecclesiology has for the first time entered upon a process of theological reflection as to the justification for having a pluralism of Churches within the one Church. The importance of the bishops in dogmatic developments, and thereby too the autonomy of dioceses, are becoming clearer. The latter are something more than mere administrative departments within a single centralized state. The de *facto* abolition (apart from minor remnants) of Latin as the language of worship in place of living

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languages, the growing importance of the national conferences of bishops which the Council has recognized, the higher regard paid to the Eastern Churches, the autonomy of many Churches which has inevitably developed here and there through external political circumstances – these and many similar symptoms show that the age in which the uniformity prevailing within the Latin Church was taken for granted is over. Admittedly on an honest appraisal this is still no very great gain. For it has to be recognized first and foremost that at the dogmatic level and as a matter of ecclesiology no more precise and generally recognized interpretation has really been arrived at yet which can provide the basis for a more concrete relationship between the unity of the Church as represented by her primate on the one hand, and the justified, and indeed necessary, pluralism of the Churches within the one Church on the other. In this matter the Second Vatican Council has, after all, advanced only to the extent of asserting the possibility and justification in principle of such a pluralism without thereby *ipso facto* making it clear precisely *how*, in practical and concrete terms, this is to be reconciled with the authority of the pope and the unity of the Church. Juridically speaking we still do not know whether the new code of canon law which must come will give sufficient scope to the autonomy and self-responsibility of the national Churches. The 'schema' of the extraordinary synod of bishops of 1969 put forward by the Roman curia as a working paper hardly goes beyond a vague and uncommitted statement on the kind of pluralism within the Church that is justified. The schema either cannot or will not say anything whatsoever which brings this question any nearer to a solution conceived of at the *juridical* level. But the decisive point is, after all, surely this: that apart from a few hostile reactions to Rome, which seem to be the outcome of 'allergies' to it, the individual Churches have still not in any sense come to recognize that in which their concrete character and function consists or should consist as particular Churches [120] within the one Church. It is certainly true that the ultimate individuality of an historical reality achieving its fulness through the exercise of freedom does not emerge in the test-tube of speculative theory and critique. But it is equally true that the individuality of a social entity of our time cannot take shape and live without decisions being arrived at at the conscious and reflective level and being institutionalized at the collective level. The individuality of a social reality of today is not a flower which blooms in a dreamlike and unconscious manner. But what the distinctive character of a given particular Church could and should be in fact and in the concrete is something which we do not know even so far as our own German Church is concerned. For this it is not sufficient to have the dogmatic thesis as expressed in 'Lumen Gentium', the thesis namely that a distinction between the Churches of this kind is both justified and necessary, or that it does not run counter to the unity of the Church but rather represents a blessing for the whole Church. All that this achieves is to give expression to an abstract principle which does little to advance our enquiry. There is a lack of certainty, then, in recognizing the distinctive identity of any given particular Church on the basis of abstract theory or by pointing to a past in which greater uniformity prevailed. But there is an additional circumstance making the question still more difficult. It is this: today, in the age of a world civilization which is one at the rational and technical level, the age of UNO and the age in which the destinies of all peoples are becoming ever more closely interwoven, there is certainly no lack of factors and influences at work which from many points of view must necessarily cause the unity of the Church, and inevitably thereby a certain uniformity within her as well, to increase. There can be no escaping this tendency if the Church is to be able effectively to fulfil its task for the *world*, quite abstracting from the question and the problem entailed in the fact that today too a unity of the Church which is necessary on the basis of faith is being threatened, and that the Church has to ward off such threats and has to allow this basic unity of hers to take form in the concrete at the historical and social level as well. It would be terrible – and after all this is no mere imaginary danger – if the Church were now to do something which she omitted to do

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in earlier times even though then it was reasonable and necessary, yet which would nowadays signify nothing else than an anachronism if we were at this stage to make it a 'compensatory requirement'.

The assertion of the principle of autonomy for the regional Churches should not be put forward nowadays within the universal Church in such a way as to sound somewhat like the programme of a Bavarian Nationalist [121] Party. Once we recognize this the following point becomes clearer: what the concrete individuality of our German Church should really be, and how it should differ from, and at the same time be united with, the Church as a whole, is something which, if we are completely honest, we basically speaking precisely do not know. But what we are saying is that the theoretical principle, at the level of dogmatic theology, that there is a plurality of Churches within the one Church, represents something more than a mere attitude of tolerance towards something that *de facto* exists. It also implies a positive task of achieving that which has still to be brought into being. And if this is true then the German Church cannot stick fast in an attitude of naive ignorance as to its own individual character. Can a regional or national synod recognize that there is a task for it here? I believe that we must answer this question in the affirmative. Obviously not in the sense that a pastoral synod of this kind constitutes a sort of mirror image of such a Church at the speculative level, indulging in idle disquisitions concerning the special character of this Church. But this task of the synod might be approached in such a way that the synod recognizes on quite concrete questions the right and the duty of this Church to a specific solution, even though this solution is not that of any other particular Church. This would have the effect that the synod would be championing the right of the German Church to arrive at a particular solution of this kind while remaining within the one Church. Why must the mixed marriage law, assuming perhaps that it may be appropriate to Spaniards, take exactly the same form in Germany? Why must a parish community among us be constructed on more or less exactly the same lines as in Sicily? Why must the relationship between bishop and clergy even at the purely juridical level be organized in exactly the same way as in a Latin country or in Indonesia. In taking action on behalf of the Third World, has not a country which is economically rich quite different tasks and duties from the Church in Portugal or Jugoslavia? If practical theology includes that element which it has been found possible with a certain justification to call 'political theology', without thereby falling into a clerical exercise of power in relation to the secular world, then a political theology in Germany must assume a different form from that which it takes in any other country, and can contribute towards a concrete process of self-discovery on the part of the German Church. The synod of a particular region has of its very nature precisely as belonging to *that particular* region a task which is proper to it alone, and which cannot be taken over from the regional Church which it represents by any other authority in the Church. Despite the current tendency towards [122] uniformity in the world, it is neither necessary nor desirable that the distinctive character of the individual nations in terms of civilization and even of institutions should simply disappear. On the contrary among the peoples of the world each must discover its own individuality, and this represents a fresh task for the future (regardless of whether it is taken seriously or merely played at). And if all this is true, then the discovery of the special character of a particular regional Church is a task for the Church concerned, and so for the synod which represents it as particular and regional. The most pressing and spectacular part of this task may be the justifiable defence of this character against attack from Rome. But it does not constitute the decisive factor or the most difficult one. The living concrete form which Christianity assumes in the future situation and conditions in which a given concrete nation has to live, and the special character which it thereby acquires as a national Church, is, from the formal point of view, the task of a particular synod at the national level.

Secondly I would like to make a few quite brief observations on the theology of a *pastoral*

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synod. The synod envisaged and planned for is called a pastoral synod. Hence we should also devote some theological consideration to the true meaning of the term 'pastoral' in all its ramifications. We might take this term as applying merely to the task of the clergy and other official functionaries of the Church. Or we might suppose that this term implies from the outset and in principle either a prohibition or a dispensation bearing upon the process of reflecting upon the gospel to be preached as to its content and the manner in which it should be preached, factors which mutually condition one another. But this would be to misunderstand the term 'pastoral'. A pastoral theology which is pursued with a view to arriving at practical decisions as to the nature of a pastoral synod is 'practical theology', which has to consider the concrete modes in which the Church *as a whole* has to achieve its own fulness in *all* of its members and in all its dimensions, and, moreover, in the light of the situation of the Church in the world as reflected upon theologically. Hence the theme and the task of the coming synod, if it is really to deserve the name of a *pastoral* synod, is this: to discover how the entire Catholic Church of Germany in all its members and in all its dimensions can achieve the fulness of its own nature by reflecting theologically on the situation of the Church and the world with a view to the future. This is of course not to deny that a synod of this kind must in practice, in its initial session, actually choose its themes for investigation. But if we take what has been said with all due seriousness, then we shall conclude that even the discovery of the concrete themes for discussion is an extremely difficult [123] task, that there is a danger that those taking part will be too self-assured and too self-willed, and so that they will overlook the most important and the most crucial themes because these will have remained quite undiscovered throughout their considerations. Certainly a further point is that a pastoral synod should not seek to present itself in any direct sense as having doctrinal authority. Certainly it should not seek officially and authoritatively to promulgate any new doctrinal decisions or declarations. But it might concern itself for instance, with the necessities of preaching in the pulpit and in schools. It might seek to define the task of the priest for today and tomorrow and to cater for this in special juridical enactments and pastoral directives. It might seek to formulate practical directives for the task of the people as a whole in the Church. Such directives and enactments would, moreover, be concrete, at least to some little extent while being at the same time taken in a spirit of responsibility for maintaining the Church's faith. But in the very process of undertaking all such tasks as these – and after all they certainly are the tasks of a pastoral synod – the synod will find itself inescapably confronted by theological questions which are anything but simple or already long since fully explained. This means that the synod will have to engage in theology. Why, for instance, should a pastoral synod, precisely as the synod of a particular region, in principle avoid the question of whether an age-limit should not be laid down from the outset for every bishop in the German Church, or whether a part-time priesthood is conceivable or desirable in our case? But such questions presuppose considerations of a theological kind, which still need to be clarified first, and in order to answer such questions and arrive at concrete decisions upon them we may perhaps first have to fight for the individual Church to have a place within the Church as a whole. Questions such as these must be considered in their theological aspects at a synod which is intended both to represent a particular region and to be pastoral in character.

A *third* theme on which certain observations have to be made is constituted by the question of what resolutions the synod as such should have legal powers to make. It is a known fact that in the projected plan for a statute for synods, despite many alterations and objections even at the development stages, the legal powers of decision ascribed to the synod have no higher status than that of mere recommendations to the conference of bishops or to individual bishops, according to whether, in any given case, the material under consideration is such as to be subject to a decision binding upon all the bishops of the bishops' conference or to the

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decision of an individual bishop. In the nature of the case, therefore, [124] although the bishops are included in the synod to help in advising it and in arriving at its decisions, the synod itself is merely an advisory organ of the bishops, at least so far as the juridical aspects of the synod as such are concerned. This small degree of competence ascribed to the synod as such obviously raises many questions: the question of whether another synodal constitution could have found any favour at all with Rome on this point; the question of whether, given sufficient boldness and sufficiently skilful tactics, such acceptance could not after all have been achieved; the question of how the public in the Church and in secular society would react to the synodal constitution on this point; the question of whether the expansion of the legal powers of decision of the synod in any essential respects would not lead inescapably to changes in many other prescriptions contained in the statute; the first and fundamental question of what is desirable at all in this matter; the question of what, on this assumption, the attitude of the members of the synod should be towards the synod; the question of whether the position of the synod will not be, to a certain extent, paracanonical, and whether it cannot in practice achieve a greater significance than that juridically accorded to it in virtue of the importance of the personalities taking part in it, the publicity attached to it, the power of its arguments, and the pressure of public opinion; the question of whether a different juridical status cannot and should not be striven for for later synods which must in fact come than is envisaged for this first one. To these and similar questions many more might be added concerning those prescriptions in the statute which, next to the paragraphs on the actual composition of the synod in itself, are surely the most important in the entire statute. In this present consideration on the part of a dogmatic theologian only one from among all such questions will be considered, yet one which is, after all, surely basic: the question of whether in view of the primatial and episcopal constitution of the Church regarded as *juris divini* such a synod can in principle have any greater juridical power of decision at all than that ascribed to it here by the proposed statute.[3] For it might be considered that the powers and authorities of the pope, the episcopate, and the individual bishop which, according to Catholic ecclesiology, belong to them inalienably and *jure divino*, cannot admit of [125] other authoritative institutions, and so for example a synod, to have any further rights whatever than those of recommending and advising, especially when the members of the synod consist principally of priests and laymen. It is this dogmatic question of whether this really is the case that will occupy our exclusive attention here. What we are concerned with at the moment, therefore, is not whether a greater participation of all members of the Church in her authentic decisions is desirable – in other words a greater 'democratization' in view of our contemporary social situation, nor the question of how such a thing can be achieved in the concrete without thereby endangering the true substance of the Church and her unity. All that we are concerned with here is the simple preliminary question of whether and in what sense any such thing is possible at all from the point of view of dogmatic theology.

We believe that it is possible from the dogmatic point of view for the synod as such to have a true right of decision which would in principle also be binding upon the conference of bishops and upon the individual bishop. In saying this, however, we are not taking any prior decision at this stage as to whether it is opportune to accord such rights to the synod or as to the concrete forms in which such rights might be granted to it. Furthermore certain important points still have to be made with regard to the intrinsic limitations of such rights.

In order to make the thesis we have put forward intelligible and to justify it we must enlarge a little on what we have said. We are assuming as recognized the distinction between

[3] We find a *prise de position* representing the viewpoints of the specialist in Church law and the historian in the following articles: J. G. Gerhartz, 'Keine Mitentscheidung von Laien auf der Synode? Erwägungen zum Beschlussrechts der Gemeinsamen Synode der deutschen Bistümer', *StdZ* 184 (1969), pp. 145-159, and R. Kottje, 'Probleme der deutschen Synode in historischer Sicht', *StdZ* 185 (1970), pp. 27-33.

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divine and merely human right in the Church. We are passing over the difficult question of what *jus divinum* really means if we are not to fall into an unjustified simplification of this concept. We are setting on one side the questions of whether this so-called *jus divinum* has itself undergone a process of development in the Church, at least in the apostolic age, and so at least down to the first decades of the second century; whether it is not conceivable that a further development of the *jus divinum*, still within its own true bounds, may not have taken place, extending beyond this point in history, precisely because the ultimately abiding nature of the Church demands urgently a change in the definition of right in accordance with a new historical situation, and this new conception of right can perhaps then with justice be called *jus divinum*. Let us set all these questions aside here. But surely one point can be laid down: once we recognize precisely and accurately the true nature of human right in the Church, we will see that it is not merely a supplementary right simply added on *ab externo* to the immutable principles of the *jus divinum* enclosed upon themselves; rather this human [126] right constitutes – at least in many cases – the concretization of the *jus divinum* such that without it this would have no reality at all. This means that on a right understanding this *jus divinum*, so far from constituting a concrete law capable of being put into practice solely in its own right, properly speaking serves merely to bring out the aspect of *continuity of law* in the Church's law, which according to a Catholic understanding of the Church must be ascribed to it as a society in its abiding identity and indestructibility. In order to throw some further light on what we mean by this let us begin by introducing a large-scale example. The First Vatican Council produced a dogma concerning the primacy of the pope, and the Second Vatican Council has reiterated this binding doctrine. Now at least at first sight it may strike us as surprising that a dogmatic ecclesiology, and even 'Lumen Gentium' at the Second Vatican Council, should be totally silent concerning the legally valid modes for instituting a pope or concerning the election of a pope, as we are accustomed to express it, already even here indulging in a naive concretization. And yet the real existence of the primatial power belonging to a pope depends totally on this mode of institution. Every theologian and every canonist will say that the law governing the choice of a pope as in force in the concrete is merely human law in the Church, if only because it has undergone certain very vital changes in the course of history. There is a further question, still totally unconsidered, of how we can say that everything in the way of juridical powers in the Church depends upon the agreement or tolerance of the pope, when the Church manages the appointment of her supreme juridical head – in other words a most crucial act of decision – without the collaboration of a pope. But abstracting from this question, the point which we have come to recognize from what has been said still always retains its force, namely that so-called human Church law constitutes the concretization of a *jus divinum* such that without it this cannot have any reality at all. It is totally untenable to object to this recognition on the grounds that the human law for the election of a pope is laid down by the pope using his executive power and promulgating these prescriptions as binding on the basis of the primatial power which he holds *juris divini*. For we have only to envisage the case (which is absurd but not impossible) of the college of cardinals being totally destroyed by physical power after the death of the pope and before it has chosen a new pope. In such a case the Church could certainly choose itself a pope, for instance through its united episcopate, and the mode of selection would fall under human 'law' and, moreover, law of such a kind that according to the positive law actually in force it would not exist at all. Such a law, since it [127] would not be laid down by any human juridical authority, would properly speaking constitute divine law or a homogeneous consequence flowing from it. Alternatively, if someone finds that too much to say, it would be a new concretization of the *jus divinum* of the primatial power such as had not existed previously. After all a simple example of this kind surely shows that divine and human law in the Church are one and continuous and interwoven with one another to an extent which is far

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greater and more complex than is generally recognized. If we were to analyse such an example in still closer detail it would become even clearer that divine law in the Church always and necessarily has a mode of concretization in so-called human law which is conditioned by history and subject to change, and that that which we customarily call *jus divinum* is not of itself, or taken in isolation, a law that can straightway be applied in practice. What the term stands for, rather, is the expression of an indestructible continuity of law in the Church. Yet at the unreflecting level of concrete practice and, it may be, even at that of explicitated theory, we proceed from the tacit assumption that the norms of divine law are, even taken in isolation, the kind of norms which can immediately be applied in practice. Every modification ('narrower application', if we like to put it so) *ipso facto* constitutes a violation of these sacrosanct norms.

Now let us apply our findings on this point as indicated above to our present question. The law of the bishops in the Church is not simply a law which can be formulated in abstract terms once and for all, and as such *ipso facto* a law that can straightway be applied in practice. It has always and inevitably a mode of concretization which is historically conditioned and subject to change. This mode of concretization as it *de facto* exists today has certainly a validity of its own such that it cannot be altered simply at will. But it is not immutable, and it is in principle perfectly possible for situations to arise in history which demand such change as a matter of moral principle and in the light of the gospel. If due heed is paid to such a demand of the particular moment in history, then in the concrete this means that, for instance, the bishops extend to others, their clergy and the people of God, the right to share in the process of decision-making as a human right within the Church and one which they will then recognize as binding upon themselves too in the concrete individual case. The fact that it is necessary *juridically speaking* for the pope and the bishops to give their assent to such new human law does not rule out a duty which may, under certain circumstances, exist at the *moral* level for the pope and the bishops to give such agreement. In the same way the fact that under certain circumstances such assent may be revoked does not [128] derogate from the binding character of such a right. There are innumerable legal decisions in the Church which are capable of being radically changed, for instance by the pope, and yet by which he is juridically or at least morally bound in the concrete. If we want to explain what we have just sought to convey in a different way, one that is less dependent upon the assumptions expressed above, we can also put it in this way: an arrangement which is immediately intelligible, for instance in the case of concordats, could also perfectly well be applied to the rights and powers of the pope and the episcopate. These rights and powers are partly *juris divini* and partly, as they *de facto* exist, *juris humani*. And it is perfectly possible for those vested with them so to restrict their application by human law that others can in concrete fact share in the exercise of them in arriving at binding decisions. It might of course be said that a right which was conceded in this sense would always and constantly be kept alive merely by the grace of those vested with official authority *jure divino*. And an abiding suspicion might remain that, to the extent that such human law within the Church would necessarily be devised by those vested with official authority *jure divino*, it would after all remain subject to the arbitrary decisions of the official authorities so that the people of the Church would have no abidingly stable role in the process of decision-making on the part of the bishops. It is, of course, true that in such an arrangement a certain element of uncertainty is constantly present. But *in practice* a law of this kind in the Church, even a merely human one, has, despite its dependence on those who are officials *jure divino*, an immense stability deriving from the historical situation, public opinion, and the power of custom, factors which still have their influence even upon the minds of popes. For centuries at a time the law of the Spanish kings relating to the nomination of bishops was less threatened – even though it was human law and as such capable of revision – than many of the norms of divine law within the

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Church. And over and above this, even *in principle* this attitude of mistrust towards such human law in the Church is unjustified. In a specific historical situation affecting mankind and the Church merely 'human' law of this kind within the Church can have the force of an absolute moral requirement or even be authenticated as a demand of the *jus divinum* of the Church. It can have the force of an absolute moral demand, arising from the very nature of the Church, that the abiding character of the Church as the community of free faith, hope, and love shall assume a form appropriate to a particular age precisely *in* this age and for it. In fact there are innumerable possibilities of juridical pronouncements and decisions by the official authorities of the Church which, though [129] conceivable in terms of the abstract nature of the authority ascribed to the Church's officials, have in fact never been realized because they were not justified even from the moral point of view by the concrete situation and the basic attitudes of the individuals within the Church. Conversely many structures and institutions have imposed themselves even despite any arbitrary decisions – in themselves conceivable – which might have been taken by individuals vested with official authority, even though in themselves such institutions did or do belong merely to the sphere of human law. 1f therefore, we conceive of the clergy and the people of the Church being accorded a more active role and one which is more strongly rooted in law in collaborating with the bishops in arriving at binding decisions, we should not seek to discredit efforts made towards this end from the outset by considering that such collaboration ultimately remains at the mercy of the free arbitrary decision of those in the Church vested with official authority *jure divino*. Conversely we should not maintain that such collaboration is irreconcilable with the concept of an official authority which is *juris divini*. This is just as incorrect as it is false to maintain that the choice of a bishop by the people of the Church is necessarily in contradiction to that constitution which belongs to the Church *jure divino*.

The resistance to such ideas which is fairly clearly being shown by Rome and by the bishops surely stems not so much from an undeclared and ultimately unchristian desire for power, or from some naive attitude of self-assertion, but rather from the fear that the result of such 'democratization' in the Church will be that among the people of the Church as they *de facto* exist the purity of faith, the truth of the gospel, and the abiding nature of the Church would be exposed to danger. In rejoinder we might of course recall the simple faith and hope that God's grace can ultimately speaking just as well preserve the people of God in the truth of the gospel as popes or bishops, and in fact that it will so preserve them because the people of God belong to the true Church just as vitally as those who hold official positions in it. But even apart from this we still must, on any showing, maintain this: the thesis we have formulated is that from the point of view of dogmatic theology it is perfectly possible for the people of God to have an active part to play, which belongs to them *jure humano* and as of right, in the decision-making of the bishops (just as in the actual choosing of these). This thesis does not exclude the fact that the bishops ultimately speaking continue to have a right recognized as binding to object to such decisions arrived at in common when they are outvoted *in those cases in which* the dictates of their consciences warn them that such a decision would damage the purity and integrity of the Christian [130] truth, that unity of the Church which is necessary even at the institutional level, and the union of particular and regional Churches with the pope. A conscience clause of this kind does not from the outset reduce such a decision once more to the level of a mere recommendation. For first there will be many cases of such decisions which in themselves will not be acceptable to a particular bishop or even to the majority of the conference of bishops, yet which nevertheless cannot be rejected by a conscience clause of this kind and so are binding in human law even for the bishops. And a further point which we will be able to make is that even in the secular sphere such cases of conflict can take the form of 'constitutional conflicts', cases of conscience, or emergencies, and can be subject to an ultimate right of veto. And this does not mean that such

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decisions, arrived at democratically and through parliamentary procedures etc., would from the outset or in all cases, cease to be binding in law. If for instance a law were passed in the parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany and by its government, and, moreover, without any objection on the part of the national constitutional courts, such that this law represented an encroachment on the basic rights of man in some essential respect, then unless we choose to adopt an attitude of absolute juridical positivism, we shall have to say that the individual nevertheless has the moral duty to resist, that such a law would be invalid, and that the true Germany would continue to exist among those participating in this protest. A protest of conscience of this kind on the part of the bishops (at least in those cases in which the entire episcopate came forward in union with the pope) would, on our assumptions, certainly not *ipso facto* constitute positive law solely in virtue of the decisions of these authorities since in fact *ex supposito* such law should be enacted by the episcopate and the people of the Church together, and the collaboration of the people of God belongs or can belong to the concrete modes in which the *jus divinum* of the Church's official authority is realized. But in the eyes of a Catholic ecclesiology a protest of conscience of this kind on the part of the episcopate would constitute an unambiguous sign of the fact that in the concrete case the authoritative body empowered to take the decision, and *ex supposito* made up of the episcopate and people together, no longer had in any sense that institutional and juridical continuity and identity with the Church which is necessary in order that such a decision may be the legal decision of the Church itself and as such binding in conscience. Thus with the above-mentioned provisos we can surely unreservedly commit ourselves to the following position: with regard to the arrangement whereby all members of a synod are given an active voice in the taking of [131] decisions, these decisions being themselves of their nature decisions of the German Church and not mere recommendations to the episcopate, this arrangement is perfectly reconcilable with the rights which belong to the episcopate *jure divino*, and might constitute the mode which does most justice to the contemporary situation for realizing in the concrete the rights attached to the episcopal office. We are declaring then without reserve at the level of dogmatic theology that the statute should be formulated in such a way as to give the synod as such the right to take part in the decision-making, and not merely to have an advisory function. But obviously even when we have said this we have still not answered the questions of whether such a formulation is opportune, whether really practicable ways can be found of carrying it out, and of whether it will not possibly turn out to be desirable to describe in more precise detail the subject-matter to be covered by juridical decisions of this kind. Likewise a further question would become still more pressing, that namely of what forms should be used in the election of members of the synod such that they would be chosen 'from below', and in order that these forms clearly would correspond to the nature of the Church, and would not contribute to the synod being composed in a way which would represent a threat to the nature of the Church or the purity of the gospel over and above that threat which all that is human constantly represents for the gospel. If we had really radically Christian and 'integrated' communities which knew who belonged to them, then the question of the forms of election to the synod would probably raise no particular problem. As matters stand today, however, such a problem does exist.

All these questions belong, however, not to the department of the dogmatic theologian but rather to that of the individual man and Christian of today as such, to that of the pastoral theologian and the canonist, to that presided over by those who have drawn their wisdom from scripture and the history of the Church and yet still remain bold and courageous in outlook. This contribution could only serve as a green light, ensuring that the Church is neither dispensed from nor hindered in the task of creatively shaping its future anew by dogmatic theology and the law actually in force.

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[133]

PART TWO

Questions in the Church

[135]

8

WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

The attempt to answer the question 'What is a sacrament?' within the compass of a brief article will inevitably occasion us some embarrassment. This question has almost two thousand years of history behind it in which fresh answers have constantly been put forward. It has been the subject of controversy among the Christian confessions for many centuries. In view of this, then, what new points shall we have to make about it? We need not go beyond the pages of A. *Skowronek*'s book on the Protestant theology of the sacraments today in order to realize how many different points of view have to be allowed for in treating of this question.[1] *E. Schillebeeckx*'s major work on the sacramental theology of Thomas Aquinas shows clearly that on the Catholic side too we have anything but an official theology of the sacraments which is uniform and accepted on all hands.[2] This means that if we are to attempt in any sense to make a useful contribution to the discussion on the question we have posed it can in the nature of things only take the form of a few observations, chosen somewhat at random. There can never be any question of a comprehensive reply according due weight to all aspects of it.

When we compare the age of the Reformation and the controversial [136] theology ensuing from it with the age of the Fathers and of the Medieval theologians we notice that in the former greater weight was attached to the question of the institution of the sacraments by Christ. One of the arguments used to support the rejection of several sacraments of the Catholic Church was that it could not be established from Scripture that they were instituted by Jesus Christ. The Council of Trent, on the other hand, laid down that all seven sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ in this sense, and according to established and orthodox ideas in post-Tridentine theology each of the seven sacraments was regarded as having been instituted by the explicit words of Jesus. The situation today, as I see it, so far as the historical question of the institution of the sacraments is concerned, is that both confessions have drawn together to the extent that even the Protestant exegete and theologian will no longer assert with such boldness and apodictic certainty that the institution of baptism and the eucharist in the New Testament goes back to explicit words of institution on the part of the historical Jesus. For the Protestant exegete and theologian, therefore, the situation with regard to the sacraments recognized in the Protestant Churches seems to be in principle no longer so radically different from the situation at which the Catholic exegete and systematic theologian

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[1] A. Skowronek, *Sakrament in der evangelische Theologie der Gegenwart* (Munich, 1971). But cf. also the discussion initiated from the Protestant side, with the Catholic viewpoint being put, in M. Köhnlein, *Was bringt das Sakrament? Disputation mit Karl Rahner* (Göttingen, 1971).

[2] cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentele heilseconomie. Theologische bezinning op S. Thomas' sacramentenleer in het licht van de traditie en van de hedendaagse sacraments problematiek* (Antwerp, 1952). But see also the numerous suggestions by the author, especially *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Edinburgh/London, 1963) and also, in the present volume, 'Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event' and 'Introductory Observations on Thomas Aquinas' Theology of the Sacraments in General'.

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had previously arrived from his own standpoint with regard to the institution of the other sacraments.[3] My only reason for referring to the new common ground which has thus been gained is in order to make it clear that the theologians of both confessions can and must seek afresh for a common point of departure in investigating the question of the institution and the existence of sacraments in the Christian Church. I believe that this point of departure is the distinctive theological character of the word uttered in the Church as the eschatological presence of God.

[137]

WORD OF GOD AND SACRAMENT

It is in fact correct to say that in Catholic theology, if we abstract from a few attempts in recent years, there has been hardly any developed theology of the word at all. The usual and officially accepted theology does, it is true, include among the various ramifications of fundamental theology, a doctrine of the word of divine revelation. Right down to the Second Vatican Council the approach of fundamental theologians, as upheld in the official and established theology, was to regard this word as the bearer of truths which were 'objective' and correct. Properly speaking it was taken into consideration only to the extent that this word proceeds from the original bearer of revelation. On this showing, then, this fundamental theology of the word can certainly not be regarded as that theology of the word in the absolute which is both necessary and possible today. This is not to deny that the *membra disjecta* of such a theology are not to be discovered at the most varied points within Catholic theology where they have been latent all along.[4]

A theology of the word in this sense could perfectly well become the basis for a theology of the sacraments in which the sacrament figures as the supreme human and ecclesiastical stage of the word in all its dimensions which has been uttered in the Church as such. One has the impression that in the past word and sacrament have been regarded as two different entities right from the origins, so that the only task for theology is to work out the difference between sacrament and word as clearly as possible.[5] This view has prevailed presumably since Augustine. It then appears chiefly in the controversies between Catholic and Reformation theologians, and even figures not infrequently in Protestant theology. The real position, however, seems to me to be this: we must first recognize clearly what happens to words between men as a result of factors in history and in concrete human living. They are liable to great variations. Furthermore we must work out the essential character of the word uttered in the Church and through the Church as event of grace – in other words as the word which is in principle exhibitive, and, moreover, [138] exists in the Church as the

[3] G. Ebeling, 'Erwägungen zum evangelischen Sakramentenverständnis', *Wort Gottes und Tradition* (Göttingen, 1964), p. 225, where we find: 'It is peculiar to the sacraments that they draw attention with absolutely penetrating insistence to the basic situation from which the gospel emerged. To suppose that the sacraments necessarily must have had their origins in some explicit act of institution on Christ's part is to interpret the fact that they are rooted in Christ in a sense that is short-sighted and over-rigid. For instance in order to maintain that Jesus is the foundation of the Church it is not absolutely necessary to say that Jesus founded the Church by some explicit act . . . It is the same with the sacraments too. They derive from Jesus in the sense that they bear witness to himself as the *summa et compendium evangelii*'. cf. also E. Jüngel and K. Rahner, *Was ist ein Sakrament?*, Kleine ökumenische Schriften 6 (Freiburg, 1971); *Das Sakrament — Was ist das?* By E. Jüngel, pp. 9-61.

[4] cf. for instance the author's article, 'Priest and Poet', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 294-317; 'The Word and the Eucharist', *ibid*. IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 253-286; 'Poetry and the Christian', *ibid*., pp. 357-367; 'Gottes Wort, den Menschen aufgetragen', *Knechte Christi* (Freiburg, 1967), pp. 45-56, and also the summarizing presentation on the proclamation of the word in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1970), pp. 237-317.

[5] cf. in this connection H. Fries, *Wort und Sakrament* (Munich, 1966).

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eschatological presence of God's salvation in the world. We must also recognize that the variability of the human word in general, as due to factors in history and in concrete human living, also applies to this word of the Church and in the Church. Now if we recognize all these factors then we can arrive at a concept of the sacraments in which the sacrament is understood as one quite specific word-event within a theology of the word. Nevertheless such a concept does not reduce the sacrament in its own specific character to the level of any other kind of words, the uttering of which has a justified place within the Church.

It is precisely the Catholic theology of the sacraments which should least of all dispute the fact that the word constitutes the basic essence of the sacrament and that by comparison with the word the 'matter', the *elementum* has at basis the merely secondary function of providing an illustration of the significance of the word. For the Catholic theology of the sacraments recognizes seven sacraments such that, however strongly we may have to emphasize the intrinsic differences between them, they have a common nature at least in an analogous sense. And yet in the case of matrimony and penance this theology of the sacraments recognizes two sacraments which consist merely in the word. All the speculations of medieval or modern times aimed at preserving a sacramental hylomorphism of matter and form, element and word, even in these two instances fail to escape from a needless splitting of hairs. According to Catholic teaching there are sacraments which are enacted in words alone, and it follows that the true nature of sacrament as such must consist in the word. In no sense, however, does this imply anything against the binding prescriptions governing the use of the element, the matter, in the case of other sacraments for the very reason that as a matter of quite general principle the validity and effectiveness of a word in a social dimension can be dependent upon conditions which are positively laid down to accompany or to be combined with the pronouncing of this word.[6]

A Protestant theology of the sacraments should on a true view really have the fewest objections of all to raise to taking the theology of the word as a point of departure in this sense for the theology of the sacraments. The most recent Catholic theology is actually orientated towards such a point of departure from several different points of view.

From among all such factors prompting us to take the theology of the word as a starting-point in this sense for our theology of the sacraments [139] we may confine ourselves to mentioning three in particular: the question already mentioned in our opening remarks of how we can give an intelligible account of the institution of the sacraments, and above all of those sacraments which are matters of dispute in theology, without coming into conflict with the findings of modern exegesis;[7] the doctrine made explicit in Catholic theology during and since the Second Vatican Council that already in the word itself the proclamation of a genuine presence of the Lord as bringing about salvation is achieved,[8] in other words the word pronounced at the behest of the Church always and in principle has an event character, an exhibitive character; the doctrine of the Church as the basic sacrament of salvation. I would like to enlarge a little on the two last-named ideas in order thereby to indicate at least

[6] The thesis that the material element of the sacrament is not the decisive factor is treated of and established at length by the author in 'The Word and the Eucharist', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 253-286.

[7] On this cf. the author's *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Edinburgh/London, 1963).

[8] cf. *Conc. Vat.* II 'Sacrosanctum Concilium' (Constitution on the Liturgy) no. 7, where we find: '. . . Christ is always present in his Church . . . In the sacrifice of the Mass . . . under the Eucharistic species . . . in the sacraments . . . in his word'; and 'Dei Verbum' (The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) no. 2: 'This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them.' Finally 'Lumen Gentium' (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) no. 19, 23 etc., where the proclamation of the gospel assumes pride of place throughout in the teaching of the Church's officials.

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the source from which we could probably arrive at a description of the nature of sacrament as such at the level of abstract theory.

THE SAVING CHARACTER OF THE WORD

I believe that it is a conviction common to all Christians, and in the last analysis transcending the differences between the confessions, that the word pronounced in the Church in the name and at the behest of God and Christ has in principle an exhibitive character, that it effects what it signifies, to express it straightway in the formula which is classic to the theology of the sacraments.[9] Obviously this character which the word has in the Church as event and as exhibitive can and must have been instituted at some specific point, and it would be possible to insist that what is involved in this act of institution, in which the character referred [140] to was imparted to the sacrament, is not merely some purely gradual process by which the distinctive qualities were introduced into it. But this would not contradict the thesis enunciated above. On the contrary, the overall 'event' character of the word in the Church regarded as word of God fully admits of further essential distinctions existing between different words which have this status.

This is in fact the case even at the level of secular terminology. Words conveying mere information, words properly belonging to the sphere of human intercommunication, words expressing personal and ultimate decision and imparting it to others etc., share in the single common nature of the human word and yet at the same time differ essentially from one another. But the difference involved here is after all one of degree. The words used have a greater or lesser depth in terms of concrete human living and of radical importance in their implications for society, and so in the various levels of significance which speaker and hearer alike are called upon to enter into when such a word is used. Hence the same can unreservedly be said of that word which the Church utters. The word conveying catechetical information has certainly not the same character as word as that which proclaims the death of the Lord or that which assures the individual in his concrete situation of the forgiveness of his sins. But in any case, so I believe, a point on which Catholic and Protestant theology could agree is that the truly kerygmatic and ecclesiastical word achieves the full realization of its own nature in those cases in which it has an exhibitive character, in which that which it expresses is actually brought about *through it*, or in which it is addressed to the hearer in ways that bring salvation to him. But what of those cases in which the word used does not have this true character of the Christian word? In such cases, while we can and should speak of a truly Christian word, what is in fact involved is a form of the Christian word which, while it is perfectly legitimate, is nevertheless of a deficient mode. And all such words have the function of preparing for, surrounding, or following from this true word, the exhibitive word of grace, and are orientated to it.[10]

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[9] On this cf. the author's *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputae 9 (Edinburgh/London, 1963), the explanations on the *opus operatum*. See also O. Semmelroth, 'Opus operatum – opus operantis', *LTK* VII (Freiburg, 1962), cols. 1184-1186.

[10] The word of God in its full and original sense is not to be conceived of as belonging to the level of instruction in propositional form 'about something', nor merely as pointing in an intentional sense to a state of affairs which for its part is totally independent of this instructional reference. Rather it is to be conceived of as an exhibitive word, a word that renders present. It is in it and through it that the reality designated is first and foremost given, and, moreover, in a relationship of mutual conditioning of such a kind that the word is constituted by the reality which thereby comes to be, and the reality comes to be in that, and because, it reveals itself in this way. All these are points which are established by the author in his article, 'The Word and the Eucharist', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 253-286; but see also *Conc. Vat.* II 'Dei Verbum' (The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), no. 2.

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The following point may be noticed in passing: If and to the extent that [141] the Christian community is something more than the mere sum total of the individual Christians who hearken in a spirit of grace and respond to the justifying grace of God, then it must be conceivable at least in principle that a word of God which is, in the strictest sense, exhibitive, and has an 'event' character in this way, is addressed to this single community as such. This consideration could open the way for, and actually lead to, an understanding of the fact that the eucharist can and must be called a sacramental 'word' event not merely or exclusively to the extent that the individual receives the body of the Lord for his own personal salvation, but also to the extent that the proclamation of the presence of the Lord's death as bringing about salvation takes place within the community as such and for it as such. But this is merely in parenthesis.

Evidently it cannot be our task here to establish this 'event' character – in other words this character which the Christian word in the strict sense has as being at basis and essentially sacramental from the theological sources. All that we need say in order to define in the most general terms the general area within Catholic theology where such a proof might be given is this: that apart from grace (at least as offered, albeit perhaps continuing to exist in conditions in which it has been rejected) the word of God as revelation would not really be, or continue to be, the word of *God* in any true sense at all. Rather it would be degraded to the level of a human word about God, albeit one which might perhaps have been caused *by* God.'[11] The word of God in the strictest and truest sense, therefore, can exist at all only as an event of grace. Hence it must have an exhibitive character. It must be a saving event. For that grace in which alone it can be hearkened to is at the same time itself the reality of salvation. As we have said, this is not to exclude the fact that there are specific degrees of sharing in the power of this word according to the way in which it is hearkened to in the concrete conditions of human living. To that extent too there are varying ways and varying degrees in which this word itself achieves its own true nature. In the light of this we can understand and take seriously what we are told in the theology of Paul VI too when he speaks boldly and uncompromisingly of a true presence of Christ in the word of preaching.

[142]

THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH AS SIGN

We have been speaking of a theology of the word which includes as intrinsic to itself and as its own proper supreme point a theology of the sacraments. A second approach to a theology of this kind is the doctrine of the Church as the basic sacrament of the salvation of the world.[12] For the moment we are not concerned with the relationship in terms of connection, distinction, and subordination in which the Church as basic sacrament stands to Christ as the historical arch-sacrament in whom God's self-utterance as forgiveness and divinization comes to its historical manifestation and its irrevocable fulness, It is in any case an explicit word of the Second Vatican Council, which itself in turn is connected with the patristic theology with its more comprehensive concept of the *mysterion* and *sacramentum*, the 'sacrament of unity', the 'sacrament, i.e. sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind' (*Lumen Gentium* no. 1). The Second Vatican Council never

[11] On this cf. the author's article, 'Wort Gottes', *LTK* X (Freiburg, *1965*), cols. 1235—1238.

[12] On this cf. O. Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt, 1953); P, Smulders, 'Die Kirche als Sakrament des Heils', *De Ecclesia* I, G. Baraúna ed. (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 289-321; J. L. Witte, 'Die Kirche "Sacramentum unitatis" für die ganze Welt', *ibid*., pp. 420-452; E. Schillebeeckx, 'Die Kirche als Dialogsakrament', *Gott – Die Zukunft des Menschen* (Mainz, 1969), pp. 100-118; *idem*, 'Die Kirche "Sakrament der Welt"', *Gott – Kirche – Welt* (Mainz, 1970), pp. 263-269; J. Groot, "The Church as Sacrament of the World" *Concilium* I/u, (January 1968), pp. 27-34.

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developed in any truly systematic or explicit way the concept of the sacrament of the salvation of the world which is the Church. For this reason it is not very easy to say what precisely is being expressed by this term in the mind of the Council. At best we will have to take as our starting-point the fact that ultimately speaking it is in virtue of her entire reality, and so above all through those factors which belong to her very nature as determinative and constitutive, that the Church constitutes this basic sacrament, and at the same time we shall have to apply to the Church precisely those basic properties which are familiar to us from the official and established theology of the individual sacraments. This latter approach is justifiable if only because the Church is in fact intended to be the sacrament of the salvation of the world and of the unity of mankind as a unity in God which brings about salvation – in other words between the Church on the one hand and salvation and unity on the other a distinction is drawn and at the same time a connection is established which is characterized as 'sacramental', signifying that in the concrete it can consist only in the fact that the Church is the sign in history which brings to manifestation at the [143] historical level, and thereby also 'effects', that will of God towards the world which creates salvation and unity.

This becomes still clearer when we take as our basis the nature of the Church and regard her as fulfilling two roles in *one*. She is both the proclaiming bearer of the revealing word of God as his utterance of salvation to the world, *and at the same time* she is the subject, hearkening and believing, to whom that word of salvation of God in Christ is addressed. Thus we regard the Church as the believing one who preaches and as the proclaiming one who believes both in one. In this view of the Church two aspects must be borne in mind. This word of revelation from God sustained by the Church both as proclaimer and as hearer is that which imposes itself as eschatologically irrevocable, unsurpassable and victorious. For it is the word which has not gone forth provisionally and in a manner which can be surpassed on the lips of some prophet, but is rather the ultimate and definitive word which God has pronounced in his own Son as his victorious self-utterance. At an earlier stage we said that for a Catholic theology of the word this word should be understood simply as that which is sustained in grace as the self-communication of God. To this we must now add a further point (to express it in the same scholastic terminology): the word of the gospel is always sustained by a grace which is *de facto* effective by the power of God and not merely by good will on man's part, at least so far as the world as a whole is concerned, a world to which in Christ not merely an offering of the grace of God is given so as to be simply subject to and made over to the capricious exercise of freedom in this world; rather a grace is bestowed which, however unconscious the individual may be of salvation, predestines the world as a whole to salvation and not to perdition. Finally this word of salvation in the mouth of the believing and proclaiming Church, regarded as a word that is eschatologically victorious, is directed not to the Church but to the world. In the documents of the Second Vatican Council the Church is in fact called the sacrament of the salvation of the world and of the unity of mankind as brought about by grace. The Church neither is nor needs to be conceived of as the holy remnant, consisting exclusively of those predestined to salvation. Rather she is the bearer of that eschatologically victorious word that creates salvation, of the self-utterance of God to the world. And with the Second Vatican Council we can at least say that this eschatological word of grace addressed to the world and sustained by the Church can still be victorious in ways known to God even in those cases in which the individual becomes a believer through this grace of God as proclaimed in this way, despite the fact that throughout his lifetime at the [144] conscious and empirical level this faith of his has not brought him through baptism into union with the Christian Church or Churches as constituting a visible society.

Our findings, therefore, can be stated as follows: in virtue of her faith, which she herself hearkens to in faith and proclaims in the grace of God as eschatologically victorious in Christ, the Church is the sacrament of salvation for the world because she points to and renders

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present that grace in the world as eschatologically victorious which will never more disappear from the world, and which is insuperable in impelling this world towards the consummation of the kingdom of God, whatever the pitfalls which may lie in its path. This sacramental sign of grace is an effective sign not inasmuch as it would call forth a resolve of God to bestow grace which would not exist without it, but inasmuch as through it precisely this will of God to bestow grace manifests itself at the historical level, and thereby at the same time also renders itself historically irreversible. The general effectiveness of the Church as sacrament, therefore, can be conceived of in the same way as we can reasonably conceive of the effectiveness of the individual sacraments precisely as signs of this kind (though obviously even in officially accepted Catholic theology there are many other theories with regard to the effectiveness of the individual sacraments than that which I have just indicated above, and which, if we want to have a term in which to express it, we might call the real and symbolic effectiveness of the individual sacraments). This means that we can attain to a theology of the exhibitive character of the Christian word from a theology of the Church as sacrament as well, just as, of course, a corresponding line of thought can be developed in the opposite direction.

CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS

On the basis of the considerations put forward above concerning the theology of the word and the Church as sacrament of the salvation of the world we can now surely go on to achieve an understanding of the special quality of the sacraments themselves. They constitute the highest stages in the word of grace in the Church in its character as exhibitive and as event. A word of this kind (this is in fact a point which we have already adumbrated in our foregoing remarks) can be pronounced as the word of grace to the community as such, in other words as that proclamation of the death and resurrection of the Lord which renders present in the community the reality of salvation. It is then called eucharist or Last Supper. [145] This word can be uttered to the individual by the Church and in the Church in situations which are, in the existing conditions, of radical importance in concrete human living. Then – though this is a point which we do not have to develop in detail here – we have the rest of the sacraments which are recognized by the Catholic Church and, moreover, in a sense which we must now go on to say something more about under the heading of the institution of the sacraments by Christ. Such a word has an exhibitive character. It is that word which, from God's point of view, he does not repent of, that word which is effective in itself, which is the manifestation of that effective grace which, from God's standpoint, predestines men to salvation, which is bestowed victoriously upon the world and in principle transcends its resistance. It should therefore be characterized as capable of being refused only to the extent that its nature as eschatologically victorious from God's point of view should not simply or undialectically be thought of as a denial of the possibility of a spirit of lovelessness and unbelief in the *individual*. In saying this we have *ipso facto* also expressed that which, in the theology of the sacraments, is signified by the Catholic doctrine of the sacrament as *opus operatum*. Basically speaking this doctrine expresses nothing else whatever than the victorious power which belongs, from the standpoint of God, to the exhibitive word of faith, which in fact achieves the true fulness of its own nature precisely in the word[13] of the sacrament.

[13] The Mystery of the word (*sacramentum*) consists, indeed, precisely in the fact that it is effective. The Church as *creatura Verbi* is based upon its *opus operatum*. On this cf. the author's article, 'Ekklesiologische Grundlegung', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg, 2nd ed. 1970), pp. 121-157, and also *ibid*., 'Die Sakramente als Grundfunktionen der Kirche', pp. 356-366. A further work which may be found helpful in this connection is A. Winklhofer, *Kirche in den Sakramenten* (Frankfurt, 1968).

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The impression is borne in upon me that by taking the starting-point for a theology of the sacraments indicated above we could also arrive at a solution of the old problem of the *institution of the sacraments by Christ* in a manner which avoids any great speculative subtleties or any historical improbabilities.[14] With regard to the theory that specific sacraments have [146] a direct historical connection with the pre-Easter Jesus and his words, this is a theory which, for our present purposes, we must neither accept nor deny prematurely. But we can adopt the following simple conclusion: the sacraments in general have been instituted by Christ because and to the extent that the Church as such derives from him.

In my opinion this statement can and must be taken as applying also to those sacraments which, as for instance in the case of the eucharist or even perhaps baptism, have a palpable historical connection with Jesus himself and his explicit words or deeds. For even in the case of sacraments such as these their ultimate nature as *opus operatum*, as effective, exhibitive word, can be rendered intelligible only in the light of the more general theological considerations indicated above concerning the nature of the Christian word and the Church. Only in a Church of the eschatological [147] word of Christ can the sacraments, which also held a special promise of grace for early Protestantism, be rendered intelligible in a genuinely theological sense precisely in this character which they have as promise. But if we then go on to the further consideration of what great difficulties present-day exegesis, whether from the Catholic or the Protestant side, meets with even with regard to these sacraments, then I cannot really see why we should deny this sacramental and exhibitive character to the rest of the sacraments acknowledged by the Catholic Church so long as there are sacraments in the Church at all. But this is, after all, a conviction common to all Christians.

If I were permitted to formulate one further hypothesis in this connection it would be this one: despite all the numerous difficulties and obscurities in the fields of dogma and the history of theology which go right back to the High Middle Ages and affect the Catholic

[14] Right down to the present day theology has failed to come to any unequivocal conclusion as to the precise significance of the expression 'institution by Jesus Christ'. On this cf. H. Lennerz, *De Sacramentis Novae Legis in genere* (Rome, 3rd ed. 1950); A. Vanneste, 'De instelling van de sacramenten door Christus', *Collationes Brugensis et Gandavensis* 1(1950), pp. 433-448; K. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Edinburgh and London, 1963), pp. 41-74; M. Schmaus, *Der Glaube der Kirche* II (Munich, 1970), pp. 279-280. It maybe noticed that both the Council of Treat and the medieval theologians who are the standard witnesses for this are thinking, when they use this term, not of the history but of the effectiveness of the sacraments, and this in itself is enough to show that an historicizing interpretation of the term is unnecessary. On this cf., amongst others, F. Scholz, *Die Lehre von der Einsetzung der Sakramente nach Alexander von Hales* (Breslau, 1940). There we find on p. 125, with reference to the Council of Trent: 'On the basis of the records which were kept there can be no room for doubt that the Council was confining its attention within the framework of the declarations provoked by the Protestants, and that what it sought to define, and in fact did define, when it spoke of the sacraments being instituted by Christ was intended in the sense of the sacraments being given their force by Christ.' The support of Lugo is invoked in the following further considerations on the subject on p. 126: 'The institution attributed to Christ by the Council, therefore, consists in an interior decree of the Lord whereby the statement of the conditions expressing the causal connection between the enacting of the rite and the imparting of grace achieves its validity. This connection established by the act of institution is valid in itself independently of whether it is in fact posited or recognized at all, if only Christ has effectively caused it. We would therefore actually be justified in saying that the sacraments were instituted by Christ even supposing that the fact that Christ actually had brought them into a conditional mode of existence (*causatio in esse condicionato*) had never been known to anyone, and supposing no individual sacrament had been conferred, i.e. caused actually to come into concrete existence. We find a similar view in Thomas Aquinas, namely that the sacraments, in virtue of their institution, have the power of conferring grace: 'It seems, therefore, that a sacrament is instituted at that point at which it receives the power to bring about its effect', *Summa Theologica* III, Q.66 a.2. On the question of the 'historical' institution of matter and form there were different interpretations both before and after Trent. The school of Löwen explicitly invoked the authority of the Council in steadfastly maintaining the thesis of an *institutio immediata sed generalis*. Word and spirit are ordered to one another to the extent that both have their same historical point of departure in Jesus. Where this can be discerned from our view of the basic living situations actually mentioned in Scripture, there we speak of a sacrament.

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Church's awareness of her faith, she has at the Council of Trent defined that there are precisely seven sacraments and no more.[15] It is true that the two sacraments which for Catholics are the sacraments of initiation, namely baptism and confirmation, are, even for the most orthodox Catholic theology, more closely interconnected than the rest of the sacraments. In other words even from this point of view there is a certain lack of precision intrinsic to the doctrine that there are seven sacraments. But let us abstract from this particular difficulty. A further point concerns the sacrament of order. This subsumes within itself a multiplicity of sacramental conferments of office, and it has not even clearly been laid down about these that the Church has not the power to decide what their number and content should be. In other words from this point of view too considerable problems arise in the average officially accepted theology with regard to the number seven. But again let us abstract from this. But apart from all these points we can perhaps even go so far as to say this: without denying that the sacraments derive from Christ the fact that there are seven such radical and exhibitive words of grace in the Church is not simply laid down as given by the authority of the Church alone, but implies an historical decision on the part of the Church herself (albeit one that was arrived at at a very unreflecting level), a decision in which the Church ascribed to these [148] words and to no others that absolute commitment of the Church which is necessary from the very nature of the case for a radical and exhibitive word of grace of this kind called a sacrament. Such a conception does not necessarily imply that the Church either now, later, or from some specific point in the past, could actually have created either more or less such words of grace called sacraments, in which she could actualize her own nature as basic sacrament, applying it to situations in the concrete life of the individual which were crucially important. For it is perfectly conceivable, as I have attempted to explain elsewhere, that the Church, in the linear advance of her history, arrives at irreversible decisions such that she can no longer turn back to her former state prior to taking them.[16] If we assume that what has been merely sketched out above is theologically speaking at least possible, then, I believe, we might achieve a juster and more impartial view of the *de facto* historical development both of the sacraments and also of the theology of the sacraments than is the case in Catholic theology and history of dogma, which hitherto has had to regard the sacraments as deriving from Christ in a manner which (except in the case of baptism and the eucharist) involves very great historical difficulties. It might perhaps be possible on this basis gradually to resolve and to bury the controversy between the confessions as to the number of the sacraments. A Catholic theology of the sacraments not merely does not need to – it actually must not – deny, as a result of the Council of Trent's decision, that the sacraments when compared with one another differ very essentially in importance among themselves.[17] And a modern Protestant theology which respects its own exegesis and is convinced of the exhibitive character of the word of God in the Church, and of the fact that humanly speaking it is necessarily subject to variations, does not need after all in principle to oppose the idea that in the Church there can be words of the Church to the individual which vary very greatly among themselves and yet have an exhibitive and 'event' character. The existence, meaning, and range of these are naturally to a large extent dependent on the will of the Church which utters them. All these points are, of course, merely indications by which we are attempting to show that in the

[15] How in more precise detail we conceive of the number of the sacraments is always dependent on the point of how we define the concept itself. On the various possibilities cf. J. Finkenzeller, 'Die Zählung und die Zahl der Sakramente', *Wahrheit und Verkündigung* II, *Festschrjft M. Schmaus* (Munich, 1967), pp. 1005-1033. On the symbolic interpretation of the number seven cf. J. Dournes, 'Why Are There Seven Sacraments?, *Concilium* I/4 (January 1968), pp. 35-44.

[16] cf. the author's article, 'Reflection on the Concept of "Jus Divinum" in Catholic Thought', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 219-243.

[17] cf. Y. Congar, 'The Idea of "Major" or "Principal" Sacraments', *Concilium* 1/4 (January 1968), pp. 12-17.

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discussion between the theologies it is by no means so necessary to remain stuck fast in those controversial blind alleys in which we nowadays seem at first sight to find ourselves trapped.

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[149]

9

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS ON THOMAS AQUINAS' THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

Thomas Aquinas has devoted five questions of his *Summa Theologica* to the doctrine of the sacraments in general.[1] Even from a purely formal point of view the structure of this small treatise appears extremely simple and clear. It opens with the question of the nature of a sacrament. From this it goes on to treat of the reality and necessity of the sacraments in the various sections of saving history. Only then does he come to consider the New Testament sacraments proper, above all under the aspect of the relationship they bear to the grace imparted by them. Thomas speaks here of the instrumental causality of the sacraments in imparting grace, and of the manner in which this instrumental causality is related to God and Christ. In addition to the grace which they cause some of the sacraments also confer a further special effect, that namely of sacramental character, a question to which Aquinas devotes a special exposition at this point. Finally there are certain further causes and conditions to be discussed which are necessary for a sacramental sign to be brought about, whether in its initial institution or in the specific act of conferring it in the concrete. In conclusion one more question has to be investigated, that concerning the number of the New Testament sacraments, as also the way in which they are interconnected. Since Thomas regards the effectiveness of the sacraments as a distinct question in its own right, the doctrine of the sacraments in general, as he approaches it, gives rise to five main themes. Following upon this he then presents his [150] considerations of the individual sacraments in the sequence which he himself has established.[2]

After this general view of Aquinas's presentation of the doctrine of the sacraments in general, and bearing in mind the difficulty of the subject-matter involved, it cannot be regarded as any criticism of Thomas if we feel bound to conclude first and foremost that this initial impression of simplicity and clarity in the structure of the treatise is after all not altogether correct. Indeed the order in which the individual themes are developed, and above all the internal arrangement of them into a series of articles, turns out to be problematical. Nor does it make any difference to this fact to find that the beginning of the treatise, represented by the first two questions, is wholly convincing. For here the sacraments are presented in a context of general anthropology (as we might call it). Yet the first point that is spoken of is the character of the sacraments as signs and, as a concomitant of this, their setting in saving history (we might almost speak of a general perspective of history of religion). For in fact such signs, in their nature and existence, are not confined to the New Testament age of salvation.

Admittedly as the exposition continues from this point onwards the development of ideas in it becomes less clear. For one thing the place assigned to many of the articles is far from convincing. And again the overall context within which this or that individual subject is treated of seems disproportionately broad. Moreover ideas which are quite disparate are set

[1] cf. *Summa Theologica* III, Qq. 60-65. But see also St Thomas Aquinas, *Opusculum* 5 (*De articulis fidei et Ecclesiae sacramentis*). [It subsequently served as a model for the 'Decretum pro Arrneniis' at the Council of Florence; cf. DS[34] 1310-1328.] We should notice A. Ferland's work, *Commentarius in Summam D. Thomae* – 'De Gratia. De sacramentis in communi' (Montreal, 1938).
[2] cf. *Summa Theologica* III, Q. 65, art. 2.

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side by side.[3] But surely the ultimate reason for this lack of clarity, over and above all these others, is the fact that the relationship between the 'sign' function[4] and the instrumental causality[5] of the sacraments as Thomas presents them is not fully thought out in its ultimate significance. Yet it is emphasized that both aspects belong to the sacrament. The first represents a further extension of the ancient theological tradition of Augustine, and the second – probably developed more by Aquinas himself – is designed to overcome a danger which – it is evident – Thomas himself clearly recognized, the danger, namely, that the sacraments themselves might be regarded merely as sheer external manifestations of an event of grace which in itself is totally independent of these signs.

[151] These, then, according to Aquinas, are the two basic aspects under which we have to view the sacraments. Yet in his own treatment the precise connection between them has still not been conveyed in an adequate manner. Hence his presentation of the duality of these two aspects has subsequently led to the most varied interpretations of his doctrine as to the nature and effectiveness of the sacraments. These variations in interpreting Thomas' doctrine have followed almost perforce according to whether the one aspect or the other has been regarded as the predominant one. But this is a point which cannot be entered into in any greater detail here.[6]

It is true that even on this doctrine of the sacraments in general a modern theologian will derive great profit from the work of Thomas Aquinas.[7] But there is no need for him to refuse to recognize that in this work much remains unsaid which nowadays calls for explicit and extensive consideration in the doctrine of the sacraments. In the present context we must take up some of these points and throw them into stronger relief.

It must be remembered that the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas does not include any developed ecclesiology, and that the treatise on the sacraments follows immediately upon that of christology, which is itself included only at relatively late stage. In view of these facts it is of course impossible for there to be any really effective treatment of the Church as [152] 'basic sacrament'[8] as a distinct theme. This inevitably has a damaging effect on the doctrine of the sacraments in general too, for the connecting member, so to say, is missing. Or to put it in other terms: the truly ecclesiological dimension of the sacraments is not taken into consideration. Even at those points at which Thomas interprets sacramental character as

[3] We might, for instance, conceive of art. 4 of Q. 65 equally well as an article of Q. 61. For instance the fact that the treatment of sacramental character occupies six articles seems disproportionate. We may also compare the very disparate themes discussed in Q. 64 etc.

[4] On this above all Q. 60.

[5] On this above all Q. 62.

[6] On this cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentele heilseconomie. Theologische bezinning op S. Thomas' sacramentenleer in het licht van de traditie en van de hedendaagse sacramentsproblematiek* (Antwerp, 1952); *idem*, *De Christusontmoeting als sacrament van de Godsmoeting* (Antwerp, 1957); E. Fritsaert, 'La definition du sacrement dans S. Thomas', *Nouv.Rev. Th.. 55* (1928), pp. 401-409; J. Menessier, 'Les réalités sacrées dans le culte chrétien d'après S. Thomas', *Rev. Sc.Ph. Th.* 20 (1931), pp. 276-286, 453-471; M. Gierens, 'Zur Lehre des hl. Thomas über die Kausalität der Sakramente', *Scholastik* 9 (134), pp. 321-345; A. M. Hoffmann, 'Der Begriff des Mysteriums bei Thomas von Aquin', *Div.Th.* (Fribourg, Switzerland) 17 (1939), pp. 30-60; B. Brazzarola, *La natura della grazia sacramentale nella dottrina di S. Tommaso* (Grottaferrata, 1941); H. Dondaine, 'La définition des sacrements dans la Somme théologique', *Rev.Sc.Ph.Th.* 31 (1947), pp. 213-218; P. B. Garland, *The Definition of Sacrament According to St Thomas* (Ottawa, 1959); O. Semmelroth, *Vom Sinn der Sakramente* (Frankfurt, 1960); J. M. R. Tillard, 'La triple dimension du signe sacramentel. A propos de Summ. Theol. III, 6o, 3', *Nouv.Rev.Th.* 83 (1961), pp. 225-254. But see also the various studies by the author, especially in the present volume, 'What is a Sacrament?' and 'Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event'.

[7] On this cf. merely the studies of the author in Vol. XJII of this series, 'Homage to Thomas Aquinas' and the attempt at a dialogue on material points in 'The Truth in Thomas Aquinas'.

[8] On this cf. *Conc. Vat.* II, 'Sacrosanctum concilium' (The Constitution on the Liturgy), nos. 5 and 26.

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deputing the subject concerned to the Christian cult,[9] and at which, as a result, there is a suggestion of an ecclesiological view of the sacraments, the Church is still not clearly included as a vital factor. For as Aquinas presents it this Christian cult is precisely viewed too much as a task of the individual functionary officially appointed in each case.

Obviously the theological tradition of the Church has right from the outset included many statements about the word of God as proclaimed by the Church and its effectiveness in imparting grace. But this is still far from saying that there is any explicit or systematic theology on the subject. Hence in the theology of the sacraments too the unity and the distinction between word and sacrament remain ultimately obscure.[10] It would do no harm if we were to regard the doctrine of the sacraments in general as one quite specific section of the theology of the word of God and its exhibitive force.[11] For then we would understand the sacraments as those words in which that which is expressed by them is rendered present by this expression itself when these words are addressed by the Church as basic sacrament to the individual man with a radical commitment as the irreversible and historical presence of the grace of God to him. But so far as Thomas Aquinas is concerned this connection between a theology of the word and a theology of the sacraments still remains wholly in the background. In drawing attention in this way to the limitations of a great theologian such as Thomas we are not in any sense detracting from his greatness or his relevance for today.[12] All we are doing, rather, is to point out that there is something further, extending beyond the works of Aquinas, which should not simply be forgotten: the still greater riches of the whole theological tradition as well as the tasks which confront the [153] theology of today, and which could not possibly have emerged into relevance in the thirteenth century.

Introductory observations such as these cannot have the function of providing a direct commentary on the text of Aquinas. Such a commentary would have to present first and foremost in the form of explanations everything which can be gleaned from the text itself. As we have already said above, the purpose of these observations is quite different, They are intended to draw attention to certain points, aspects, and dimensions in Thomas Aquinas' teaching on the sacraments in general which would not be recognized clearly enough on a simple reading, but which must not be overlooked by any modern theologian in the use he makes of the teachings of Aquinas. In this connection what we are concerned with is not so much to provide a full or comprehensive treatment as to present a few random examples and starting-points, and so to afford fresh insights and to habituate our readers to an approach which is indispensable if we are to take due account of the work both of Thomas Aquinas and of tradition in general in a way which is necessary and fruitful even today.

Right at the beginning of these observations[13] Aquinas makes it clear that according to his convictions the primary and most radical point of departure for our understanding of the sacraments is to be found in the concept of 'sign' and so of 'symbol'. This is a point which must not be forgotten precisely when in his subsequent treatment of the New Testament sacraments Thomas goes on to emphasize their instrumental causality.[14] This causality, which is described only in very formal terms, is not to be interpreted as a causality *added on ab externo* to the (eschatological) signs of the New Testament, but rather as a power of

[9] cf. Q. 63.
[10] This remains valid despite some isolated indications to the contrary in Thomas. cf. e.g. Q. 60, art. 6.
[11] On this cf. the author's study in the present volume, 'What is a Sacrament?' and also 'Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event'.
[12] On this cf. the author's study in *Theological Investigations* XIII, 'Homage to Thomas Aquinas'.
[13] cf. Q. 60, art. I. From this point onwards we shall normally be following the development of ideas as presented by Thomas Aquinas in the five questions. From time to time we shall include notes to contribute to a wider orientation for those interested.
[14] On this cf. Q. 62.

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originating which belongs to these *signs* as radical acts of self-realization on the part of the Church as being of her very nature (as sign) the eschatological basic sacrament.

It is noteworthy that right from the outset St Thomas presents the seven sacraments (in the proper sense) within a broader context of religiously symbolic realities, and thereby from the outset prevents them from being isolated in a sense which would be unjustified both from the point of view of Christian religious practice and from that of the history of religion. Man is in principle always he who achieves his innermost relationship with God in and through the religious symbol.

[154] A further point which is of basic theological importance is the threefold orientation of the sacramental sign. The sacrament of the New Covenant is *signum rememorativum*, *demonstrativum*, and *prognosticum*. Here the modern theology of the future, of promise, of hope, might find a starting-point in Thomas Aquinas in its aim to integrate within itself the idea of the sacraments precisely as signs of eschatological promise and hope.

But this would also serve to bring to light the task of evaluating the sacraments still more effectively in their special quality from the point of view of the unity of man's nature as composed of body and spirit.[15] Yet at the same time we would have to pay due heed too to the human word as *res sensibilis*, if only so as to achieve a true appreciation of specific sacraments, such as those of penance and matrimony, within the general framework of this conception. These sacraments are in fact conferred through words alone without any 'element' distinct from and supplementary to the words themselves.

A further point which might be re-expressed in terms of present-day problems,[16] and which would call for consideration here, would be the historical contingency of the concrete sacramental signs, which despite the fact that they are mere representations, are nevertheless binding for each individual according to the particular stage of development in the history of mankind to which he belongs.

Following the development of Aquinas' ideas, we should then emphasize the intrinsic mutual interrelationship which exists between the ritual actions and the *word*, for it is in virtue of this that the factor of ritual is from the outset inserted into the dimension of history as well, and does not merely belong to that of nature.

The unity of word and sacramental 'element' (including gestures) is made particularly plain in Thomas by means of a sacramental 'hylomorphism'. Yet this conception also has all the disadvantages which have arisen in the course of time and which are entailed in an excessively physical understanding of such a hylomorphism. In the light of this a certain reserve is advisable for the modern theologian, though in the same connection he will certainly gladly take cognizance of certain points of departure for an approach through linguistic philosophy.[17]

The following considerations of Thomas might be taken as a starting-point [155] for a theology of the history of the Church which might serve to enable us to understand the factors of continuity and distinction in the history of the sacraments. As a matter of historical fact the sacraments have in the past undergone an extraordinary number of changes in their rites, the place they occupy in Christian life, and the theological interpretations placed upon them, so that precisely today there are many who feel themselves disquieted and deprived of their security when they discover this fact.

The anthropological arguments for the necessity of the sacraments as seen by Thomas should serve to warn us not to be too one-sided in regarding these as depending *solely* on a positive act of institution by Christ. Such an act of institution itself in turn presupposes those

[15] On this cf. the author's study in *Theological Investigations* XIII, 'The Truth in Thomas Aquinas', where he treats explicitly of the body-spirit constitution of man and its significance for knowledge.
[16] On this cf. Q. 60, art. 5.
[17] On this cf. Q. 60, art. 7 ad 2 and ad 3.

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grounds which Thomas sets forth in their own right.[18]

The force of the arguments in the ensuing development of ideas[19] is somewhat questionable when compared with the first *ratio* which Thomas had previously presented. But in any case a more significant effect of Aquinas' presentation is to suggest that we should view the sacraments within the totality of the history of religion in general as well as within the universal history of salvation, the central point of which is Christ himself. This naturally suggests the idea that in other places too and at other periods within the history of religion, i.e. outside the New Testament revelation, analogates to the Christian sacraments may be discovered. But to return to the Christian sacraments proper. They are interpreted as *signa protestantia fidem*, i.e. a unity becomes discernible within the duality such that – as early as the writings of St Paul – justification is attributed sometimes to faith and sometimes to baptism. Faith is the deciding factor. The sacrament is the proclamation (obviously in an exhibitive sense) of this faith.

The article which now follows is, in Aquinas' conception, one of the most important ones.[20] Thomas is right when on the one hand he presents the sacraments as being 'in a certain manner' a cause of grace and on the other simultaneously qualifies this causality, which he cautiously accepts as affirmed by tradition, as merely instrumental in character. But this instrumental causality is not interpreted on the basis of the sign itself, and the instrumental causality as such also remains at a very formal level. As the subsequent history of theology shows, it is still open to the most varied interpretations. The axiom that Thomas formulates in this [156] connection, *efficiunt quod figurant*, is a fine one, but one which surely calls for considerable further thinking out.

In this connection in Thomas' presentation[21] a good point of departure is offered from which we could cease to regard the individual sacraments merely as designed to meet particular situations in Christian living, but would also interpret them precisely as manifestations ('signs') of basic acts in which the fulness of Christian existence is achieved in the visible and manifest life of the Church. For the grace which they signify is no abstract grace, but rather the human radicality and the divine depths of those acts in which the fulness of human existence itself is achieved.

What follows basically speaking represents merely a translation of the ideas of Hugo of St Victor according to which the sacraments contain grace as in a 'vessel' into the demythologizing language, so to say, of Aquinas.

In this connection the concept of instrumental causality is still further developed, though on a true reading there is still a failure to reach beyond the formal abstraction of the concept of instrumental causality. We must guard against an excessively 'physical' interpretation of the '*virtus*' together with its '*esse transiens*' which is conferred in the sacrament by God as the true cause of grace. But the question now arises of how the Christian sacraments impart 'objective redemption', i.e. render it present in the achievement of the fulness of existence on man's part as sustained by grace. The key word here is the *humanitas Christi* as the instrument of redemption which is united with the Godhead. Yet this should not be interpreted as though it were merely the 'glorified Lord' who was referred to, or as though we did not also at the same moment have to think of the crucified and risen Lord in his place in concrete history. Only so long as we keep clearly in mind the identity between the historical and the glorified Lord can the instrumental causality of the humanity of Christ be conceived of as an effective element for communicating grace through the mediation of the sacraments, and only so can we avoid falling into an incomprehensible 'ideology'.

[18] On this and on what follows cf. Q. 61, art. 1ff.
[19] Here we are treating of Q. 61, art. 2.
[20] On this cf. Q. 62, art. 1ff.
[21] cf. Q. 62, art. 2.

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But this in itself indicates an expansion leading to a whole theology of the history of salvation with its unity, with the essential difference between its various sections, with the special eschatological quality of the 'new and eternal covenant' in which alone, in virtue of this special quality which it has, the sacraments can constitute an *opus operatum* (i.e. a promise of his grace on God's part which from his point of view is eschatological, and of which he will not 'repent').

[157] Sacramental character was subsequently defined at the Council of Trent, and the interpretation of it as a *deputatio ad cultum* is reasonable and has, moreover, come to a large extent to win general acceptance in the theology subsequent to Thomas. But we should still avoid any excessive separation of this sign in the '*soul*' from the *sensibile sacramentum*. For unless we do this, according to Thomas Aquinas too it would in fact no longer have any 'sign' character. In the same way, in order to do justice to the earliest theological tradition concerning sacramental character we should not overlook the ecclesiological dimension of this sign. Character in fact imparts a quite specific place and function to its subject in the *visible* Church as worshipping community. Properly speaking, character is 'invisible' only in the sense in which other social relationships too are not simply visible in a direct sense and capable of being verified by our eyes.

If sacramental character is interpreted as a commissioning to divine worship according to the rites of Christianity, then obviously it also implies a 'spiritual power'. Admittedly it is noteworthy that Thomas uncompromisingly regards this divine cult itself in turn as consisting either in the *reception* of a gift from God or as the further transmission of such gifts to other men – in other words as itself in turn an act of *God* in relation to us.

The development of ideas which follows can be interpreted as a doctrine of the universal priesthood of all Christians as consisting in a participation in the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ. In this way the universal priesthood of the Lord will not have to be interpreted as something that is derived in a weakened form from the priesthood of the official ministry of the clergy.

This will lead to emphasis being laid on the dynamic, 'operative', and functional characteristics of the sacraments, as well as on the grace bestowed in them, and upon the sacramental character in relation to these characteristics. As a general approach for our understanding of the further arguments developed by St Thomas we may recommend the recognition that the freedom of man as an historical factor still in process of achievement in time is already comprehended by the eschatologically definitive decree of God for man. This will lead on to a further and connected idea concerning the more recent theology of marriage. It regards the indissolubility of the marriage bond as an abiding promise of divine grace, and recognizes in this that marriage bears a certain resemblance to those sacraments which imprint a character.

After these very particular developments the next line of argument [158] returns once more to the central point. Here Thomas throws into relief the absolute sovereignty of God's grace even in the sacraments, and rejects in unmistakable terms any kind of magical interpretation of this sign as misconceived, as well as any kind of clericalism such as might represent a threat to the immediacy of man to God. Thomas does in fact again and again pose questions to himself even though his answers frequently – and in this case too – remain at a very formal level. So far as the historical question is concerned of the institution of the sacraments by Jesus Christ (as the Council of Trent has defined it for all the sacraments), and of the precise form and manner in which this would have taken place, obviously no such answer can be adduced even in broad outline. If we come to speak, in connection with this question, of the rejection of Donatism, then we should avoid any ill-considered transition from the dispenser of the sacrament to its recipient. For the true effect of the sacraments as conferring grace is achieved in the case of the adult only in a genuine personal belief and in an actual disposition

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of love on the recipient's part. The doctrine that the personal dispositions of the conferrer of a sacrament too should be in conformity with his sacramental act does in fact ultimately show too that the Church taken as a whole, in which, under certain circumstances, sacraments can be conferred even by sinners, not only should be, but actually *is* holy, i.e. taken as a whole it never lacks that grace, the basic sacrament of which is the Church itself in the world.

St Thomas then goes on to remind us of a principle[22] which it is all too easy to overlook again and again, and which may remain unheeded both in theory and practice: God has not attached his power to the sacraments in such a way that he could not also impart the effects of sacramental grace even without the sacraments themselves. Now taking this as our starting-point we can adopt an approach to the entire theology of the sacraments which is the opposite of that usually envisaged. According to this, what is brought to effective manifestation in the dimension of the Church in the sacraments is precisely *that* grace which, in virtue of God's universal will to save, is effective everywhere in the world where man does not react to it with an absolute denial.[23] Thomas is further concerned to reconcile the objectivity of the sacrament as *opus operatum* with the recognition that if ever the sacrament ceased to constitute a personal [159] act and at the same time (which does not imply any opposition) an act of the Church as society, and, moreover, in relation to its conferrer as well, it would be reduced to mere magic. He then takes up once more his anti-Donatist defence of the objective validity of the sacrament, and it is here that we find the statement that the conferrer of a sacrament 'acts in the person of the Church as a whole'. In this it is the nature of the sacraments precisely as factors in the life of the Church as a society that achieves clear and forcible expression, still more clearly than if Thomas was speaking only of the fact that the conferrer acts as an instrument of Jesus Christ. It is noteworthy too that Thomas envisages only the case of heretical baptism in which the sacrament is valid indeed but does not impart any grace. Today we would surely regard the other case as the normal one.

In his considerations Thomas Aquinas can assume as already given the development, in the history of dogma within the Church, which had led to the conscious distinguishing of the true sacraments as contrasted precisely with other ecclesiastical rites, and thereby too to the fact that they are seven in number. Against this background he finds ready to hand a speculative argument *ex convenientia* in support of this idea. Yet it cannot be denied that the place thereby assigned to the Eucharist among the other sacraments is such as to reduce it too much to the same level as they, and that an unbalanced view of the importance of marriage is arrived at whereby it is regarded merely as a means to counter concupiscence and to promote human reproduction. But even of Thomas it must be said on the one hand that he cannot really transcend his age or his environment, while on the other that he cannot say everything whatsoever that deserves mention.

For the rest the further points to be found in the text of Aquinas are wholly convincing only if we have already taken as established beyond question the traditional sequence of the sacraments. In any case Thomas is fully aware of the problems arising from the fact that we subsume, and reduce to a single uniform level, under the concept of 'sacrament' ways in which the Church achieves the fulness of her own nature which essentially differ from one another.[24] It may be observed that in the case of [160] baptism Thomas says that it is

[22] cf. Q. 64, art. 7.

[23] cf. on this the various studies by the author including in their titles the key term 'anonymous christian', and in the present volume, 'Observations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian"' and the literature there adduced.

[24] Obviously the only case in which the concept of 'sacrament' can justifiably be described as reducing all to the same level is if it is regarded and used in an explicitly univocal and horizontal sense and reduced to a few purely formal characteristics. But if we include in our view of it a reference to its origins and its history, then we arrive at the idea that the manifestation of Jesus Christ was itself a sacrament, that the Church as a whole is a

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necessary for salvation only in a conditional sense when he is treating of the baptism of adults, even though he holds the opinion (which is nowadays disputed) that for the immature it is necessary for their salvation in an absolute sense.

These brief and almost catalogue-like observations arising from a reading of Thomas Aquinas' arguments on the doctrine of the sacraments in general provide, it is true, no more than indications, and do little to complete the picture. Yet we can perhaps precisely on this account offer a useful key and a line of approach which promises to be fruitful – not merely for the text of Aquinas but also for the questions which have been mentioned.

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sacrament in the sense of a sign effecting salvation. Since the Second Vatican Council an explanation seems to have been arrived at even in conceptual terms which it is helpful to keep firmly before our eyes in order to retain a more comprehensive and more appropriate view of the sacrament as such and of the concrete sacraments in particular. According to this Jesus Christ is to be appealed to as the 'arch-sacrament' while the Church is to be characterized as the 'basic sacrament', so that its derived character is made clear. But the idea of the Church as sacrament is of basic importance in its turn for the individual sacraments conferred within the Church, which hitherto have constituted the almost exclusive, and in many ways isolated, subject-matter of the doctrine of the sacraments in dogmatic theology. For the indications provided by the Second Vatican Council see n. 8.

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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE PERSON IN THE SACRAMENTAL EVENT

In the considerations which follow we shall be examining the active role of the person in the conferring of the sacraments. We shall, of course, be including within our purview all those sacraments in which the full consciousness and living faith of the subject is engaged in his act of receiving them. In practice, therefore, only infant baptism will remain outside the scope of our present considerations. However, since the theme is so broad in scope, we shall concentrate chiefly on the Eucharist. Here the distinction between the sacrificial act and the reception of the sacrament will be left in the background. Yet for our present purposes the Eucharist is taken as representative of all the sacraments. One who is theologically educated can easily apply our statements about the Eucharist and the points which apply first and foremost to it to the other sacraments, each according to its special character, and there is no necessity to provide a special exposition of this in each particular case. While, therefore, we are treating explicitly of the Eucharist, our remarks are intended to apply to all the sacraments.

We have set ourselves to state, to justify, and to elucidate certain principles, and to show them to be orthodox in terms of dogmatic theology. This implies something like an application of a Copernican approach[1] to the general conception of the sacraments, consisting in an [162] intellectual and spiritual movement of the sacramental event outwards to take effect in the 'world', and backwards in a spiritual movement leading from the world to the sacrament. This way of putting it may sound somewhat grandiose, and is presumably still not wholly comprehensible. The whole of the considerations which follow are intended to contribute towards an elucidation of this initial statement. Only so can the religious significance of this 'Copernican application' effectively be rendered intelligible. In this connection we are of course aware that in order to clarify our special concern we must in some respects simplify, and must separate and draw contrasts between realities which in concrete life always exist in unison, albeit in varying proportions and with some more apparent than others.

THE OLD MODEL: SACRAMENT AS ISOLATED ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

How does the average Catholic Christian feel about a sacrament as he customarily receives it? We might describe this act of receiving (though of course with the provisos already mentioned) as follows: the Christian feels that he lives in a secular world. He is aware that his life in this world is subject to commandments of God which are difficult to fulfil. He is aware of being summoned by God and set upon a course which leads him out of this present life through the gates of death and beyond into the eternity of God. He has to maintain union with

[1] This special approach has to be applied within the context of a distinction which is fundamental for any sacramental theology, the distinction namely between the sacrament itself and the effectiveness of grace in personal life. To clarify this cf. also, therefore, the following articles by the author: 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 109-133; 'The Eucharist and Suffering', *ibid*. III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 161-170; 'Formale Grundstrukturen der Heilsvermittlung', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* 11/I (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1966), pp. 55-79. Similarly E. Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentele heilseconomie* (Antwerp, 1952); *idem*, *Christus – Sakrament der Gottbegegnung* (Mainz, 1960).

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God, his true future and the law-giver presiding over his life even in the present. He passes to and fro from this secular world into a sacral sphere a 'fanum' or 'temple'. It is only here (and in a true sense exclusively here, so far as his personal feelings are concerned, whatever his head may tell him from its stock of theological knowledge) that it is possible to achieve any real encounter with God in which this God meets him not merely as making moral demands upon him but as sanctifying him and bestowing grace and strength upon him. This is achieved precisely in the sacraments and above all by holy Mass in the Eucharist. In these sacraments God's actions upon humanity touch the individual as it were from without, penetrate him, sanctify him, and transform him (at least carrying these processes a stage further, although for the most part the effects are experienced as very transitory and in a sense peripheral). Here man encounters God and Jesus [163] the Lord so that afterwards he can (ideally speaking) be sent by him to go forth once more into a secular world, there to pursue his monotonous everyday duties in a certain sense remote from God. Here in the sacrament (as in no other circumstances) man achieves closeness and union with God. Here he has left the secular world behind him. Here, and in a true sense here alone, that takes place which renders life meaningful and 'religious' (i.e. united to God).

In the achievement of Christian living is such a viewpoint really the only possible one in the light of our understanding of the Christian faith – a viewpoint in which the sacramental event constitutes the true apogee of Christian living? This can be doubted and indeed denied. But in denying it we are not rejecting the legitimacy of this common conceptual model of the place which the Eucharist and the sacraments have in general in our lives. What we are rejecting, rather, is the idea that we are compelled to accept this viewpoint as the only possible one. We can also 'experience' the sacraments in a quite different way.

We may begin by stating quite freely that the earlier conceptual model we have described is nowadays much under attack. Modern man's awareness of reality is such (it makes no difference whether this in itself should be subjected to critical questioning or whether it is anything but an absolute norm) that the sacraments as taken in this sense are all too easily thought of as religious rites which bypass the dimension of 'real reality' or 'real life'. The sacraments fall under the suspicion of being empty ritualism, so that it is only in terms of an ideology which is nowadays difficult to achieve or to maintain that they can be felt as important or as an effective force in human life. In this conceptual model we all too easily receive the impression that the sacraments, the Mass, are 'useless', that they are incapable of bringing about any real effects in human life, that after Mass everything goes on as before and as it would go on even without Mass. If the 'religious man' attributes 'consolation' and strengthening to his religious experiences, which after all he undergoes in receiving the sacraments, then the less 'religious' man will reflect that the other is fleeing from the harsh realities of life into an ideological world of unreality, albeit one of a psychic unburdening, and that this world of unreality on the one hand does nothing to alter the 'realities' of life while on the other it endures only so long as we fail to see through the psychic mechanisms and techniques involved in such 'consolation'. And if we are then called upon to 'take out with us into our everyday life' the sacrifice of Christ, to let the sacraments take effect in our lives, then this is merely to set up a moral norm and obligation the powerlessness of which is something [164] from which it is sought to flee precisely through the sacraments. For (on this view) it is not the sacraments which carry the individual out into life by their power, but rather the individual himself who must carry them out into life by his own new moral strivings to meet and so to fulfil the claims of morality which they make upon him. That which we experience as their power is in reality the, special new moral striving which we regard as required of us in order to fulfil their ideals. More acutely than in former times we have the feeling that the numerical frequency of our reception of the sacraments does not *ipso facto* have any true religious significance (even when it is undertaken with good will) unless

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we regard the reception of the sacraments as being itself in turn a 'good work', the value of which increases *ipso facto* according to the number of times it is repeated, in which case we are running counter to the intrinsic meaning of the sacraments themselves.[2] The present-day tendencies, even within the Catholic sphere, towards a 'desacralization' of Christianity and of Christian living may in many respects be false or questionable. But in any case they do produce unease with regard to sacral and sacramental activities. With regard to the statement of the Second Vatican Council that the Mass constitutes the supreme point of Christian living it may be doubted whether, even if we confine ourselves to serious Christians only, this *ipso facto* expresses their real attitude of mind.[3]

It is not only fashionable tendencies towards 'secularization' of one kind or another that nowadays represent a threat to the free use of the sacraments. A far more basic danger is represented by that recognition, which is nowadays becoming clearer, of the difference between a genuine and authentic achievement of human living on the one hand and our conceptual models of, and reflections upon it at a secondary level on the other. What do we mean by this? If, for instance, someone prays: 'O God I will love you with my whole heart. This is my conscious, free, and unconditional decision', then surely everyone will admit that even in any genuine and well-intentioned declaration (in prayer etc.) of this kind the individual concerned is still far from really loving God 'with his whole heart'. By a process of objectification he has, in his own conscious reflections, constructed a conceptual or verbal model of a whole-hearted love [165] of this kind, and has also in some sense affirmed it. But this replica of whole-hearted love is not the whole-hearted love itself. For this latter (if it is present at all) is achieved at a more basic level seeing that freedom is more basic than the reflective concept of it by which we name it (even when we may be seeking to achieve it). A further point is that even at its more basic level freedom is far from being empowered at every moment of the individual's personal history to achieve that towards which it is of its very nature orientated: radically to control the total and ultimate reality of the person in all dimensions in such a way as to determine its final and irrevocable state. Now of their very nature the acts in which we receive the sacraments are attempts, as a matter of the radical decision of our freedom, in a spirit of love and from our whole hearts to orientate ourselves irrevocably to God. Yet precisely in the light of his experience of the nature of freedom, which always remains ultimately beyond the scope of any conscious manipulation on the part of the subject, modern man feels himself beset by problems in his reception of the sacraments precisely when this takes place very frequently and without any special reference to the unfolding process of freedom in the true sense and the *kairos* it contains, which it is not given to the subject to decide upon at will. Modern man all too easily has the impression of acting ungenuinely and even dishonestly, and precisely in those cases in which this reception of the sacraments is related excessively and exclusively from the outset to the individual's own personal saving history taken in isolation. For in this act of receiving the sacraments it is not always possible for something particularly decisive to take place such as can be readily brought to fruition through the ritual celebration of a sacrament. Evidently such problems are not fully disposed of by that factor which we are seeking to treat of here, namely the broadening of the awareness of the recipient of the sacraments so as to view saving history within world history as a whole or by relating them in faith to that grace which constitutes the dynamic force and the *entelecheia* of this whole saving history, drawing the individual man

[2] The author has already discussed this question at length elsewhere. Cf. *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer*, Quaestiones Disputatae 31 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2nd ed., 1966); 'Messopfer und Jugendaskese', *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck, 4th ed., 1966), pp. 148-183; 'The Meaning of Frequent Confession of Devotion', *Theological Investigations* m (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 177-189.

[3] On this cf. the author's article, 'Das Gebet des Einzelnen und die Liturgie der Kirche' in *Gnade als Freiheit* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1968), pp. 101-112.

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into this history and shaping its own manifestation in the sacramental sign within the individual life. Nevertheless these problems are diminished and made easier to solve if the recipient of the sacrament is conscious from the outset of being drawn into this 'cosmic' history of grace.

[166]

A NEW MODEL: USING THE WHOLE OF LIFE TO BRING THE SACRAMENT TO ITS FULNESS

But is there another view of the Eucharist and of the sacraments? Yes there is. It is based upon the simple fact of dogmatics that that which we call sanctifying grace and divine life is present *everywhere* where the individual does not close himself to God who creates salvation by a real and culpable denial, and further on the fact that in a real sense, albeit to some extent unconsciously, this grace is brought about and made manifest in the concrete conditions of history and of human life wherever men live and die so long as this life of theirs has not come to imply mortal guilt. We have no intention here of developing, justifying, or defending this fact of dogmatics in any greater detail here.[4] All that we shall do is to elucidate it in its further implications for an understanding of the sacraments that either has been, or is to be transformed, and that too as concretely as possible.

GOD'S GRACE AS CREATING SALVATION AT THE ROOTS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

The world is permeated by the grace of God. The sacraments are specific events of God's grace as forgiving, sanctifying, and imparting the divine nature. But while they have this significance this does not mean that it is solely in the moment of the sacramental act that the grace of God impinges upon a world that is secular and devoid of grace as from without, as though it sought to penetrate this world and, in the very act of so seeking, gradually lost its pristine force and receded until a fresh act of the same kind renewed it once more. The world is constantly and ceaselessly possessed by grace from its innermost roots, from the innermost personal centre of the spiritual subject. It is constantly and ceaselessly sustained and moved by God's self-bestowal even prior to the question (admittedly always crucial) of how creaturely freedom reacts to this 'engracing' of the world and of the spiritual creature as already given and 'offered', the question, in other words, of whether this creaturely freedom accepts the grace to its salvation or closes itself to it to its perdition. Whether the world gives the impression, so far as our superficial everyday experience is concerned, of being imbued with grace in this way, or whether it constantly seems to give the lie to this state of being permeated by God's [167] grace which it has, this in no sense alters the fact that it is so. And without this belief and hope that the world has been endowed with grace in precisely *this* sense, the appeal to the sacraments as almost intermittent moments when such 'engracing' takes place would seem to modern man unworthy of belief. He would be unable to avoid the impression that what is involved in the doctrine of the sacraments is an ideological elevation of a world that is hideously secular, and one which conceals the truth without really changing the world itself.

At the present moment the time is not ripe to enquire what meaning the sacraments can then have, if they are not to be thought of as the particular moments in which God

[4] On this cf. the author's article in the present volume, 'Observations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian" ', and the further literature there adduced.

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'intervenes' in his world from without. If we say that grace has all along possessed reality from the innermost heart and centre of the world and of persons as spiritual, then this too is still to express the matter in terms which are far too abstract. It is true that we can speak of God as the nameless and incomprehensible mystery only in very abstract terms. And for this reason too the reference of man to God, the fact that his existence is open to and orientated towards the mystery of God has of its very nature something unnameable in it. How could it be so easy to describe the path, seeing that it leads into the pathlessness of the inconceivable God? How could we find it easy to describe in words the ultimate act of man in which, surrendering himself, hoping, loving, adoring – in a word believing, he allows himself to fall into this ineffable mystery which constitutes the innermost basis, *and at the same time* the infinite remoteness of his existence that draws him out of himself? And if grace constitutes precisely that power which enabled him to achieve this making over of himself to the absolute mystery and that most special quality given by God enabling him to achieve this, how then can it be easy to speak about it in 'intelligible' terms?

But one point must be emphasized about this grace precisely to the extent that it proceeds from the innermost heart and centre of the world and of man: it takes place not as a special phenomenon, as one particular process *apart from* the rest of human life. Rather it is quite simply the ultimate depths and the radical dimension of all that which the spiritual creature experiences, achieves and suffers in all those areas in which it achieves its own fulness, and so in its laughter and its tears, in its taking of responsibility, in its loving, living, and dying, whenever man keeps faith with the truth, breaks through his own egoism in his relationships with his fellows, whenever he hopes against all hope, whenever he smiles and refuses to be disquieted or embittered by the folly of everyday pursuits, whenever he is able to be silent, and whenever within this silence of the [168] heart that evil which a man has engendered against another in his heart does not develop any further into external action, but rather dies within this heart as its grave – whenever, in a word, life is lived as man would seek to live it, in such a way as to overcome his own egoism and the despair of the heart which constantly assails him. *There* grace has the force of an event, because all this of its very nature (i.e. precisely through God's grace which has all along broken open mere 'nature', leading it beyond itself and into the infinitude of God) no longer has any limits or any end but (as willingly accepted) loses itself in the silent infinitude of God, is hidden in his absolute unconditionality in the future of the fulness of victory which in turn is God himself.

And precisely here one further point must be made concerning this grace which constitutes the innermost depths and the mystery of human life at its average and everyday level: this innermost dynamism of the normal 'secular' life of man as it exists always and everywhere has found in Jesus of Nazareth its clearest manifestation, and in him has proved itself as real, victorious and attaining to God. And it has done this precisely in a life of this kind, in which he has become like us in all things, in other words in a life which is completely everyday in character, a life bound up with birth, toil, courage, hope, failure and death. Something which cannot be set forth *here* (though in itself it is perfectly possible to do so) is this: anyone who believes in the fact that in the human life of Jesus (and so in his death and in his resurrection as the radical dimension of *his own* everyday life) the victory of his personal life has irrevocably and definitively been promised him, and that in this (not in any other fact) the ultimate and definitive, the unsurpassable word of God has been promised him, this man also *ipso facto* (with greater or lesser degree of explicitness or implicitness) affirms in faith that which is stated about Jesus in the classic and traditional christology. A further factor *ipso facto* given in this is that anyone who seizes upon the grace of God as the radical dimension of his own personal life, as its ultimate and definitive hope, has *ipso facto* posited an assent to the historical manifestation of the definitive nature of this grace in Jesus Christ, whether or not he explicitly recognizes this definitive assent as having been posited in the dimension of

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his own personal history.

And finally: this grace unites us to one another in love and participation in the common lot of all. Abstracting from all more profound considerations, this is something that we recognize once we recognize that grace constitutes the innermost meaning and the holiness of the secular dimension, and this in virtue of the fact that this life, provided only that [169] our acceptance of it is genuine, true, and loving, itself mysteriously unites us in that each one in his own personal destiny experiences and accepts that of all the rest, and conversely each one recognizes and discovers himself once he directs his gaze into the life and death of the rest.

SACRAMENT AS A SYMBOLIC MANIFESTATION OF THE LITURGY OF THE WORLD

On the basis we have defined above the sacraments constitute the manifestation of the holiness and the redeemed state of the secular dimension of human life and of the world. Man does not enter a temple, a fane which encloses the holy and cuts it off from a godless and secular world which remains outside. Rather in the free breadth of a divine world he erects a landmark, a sign of the fact that this entire world belongs to God, a sign precisely of the fact that God is adored, experienced and accepted everywhere as he who, through his 'grace', has himself set all things free to attain to himself and a sign that this adoration of him takes place not in Jerusalem alone but everywhere in spirit and in truth. The sacrament constitutes a small sign, necessary, reasonable and indispensable, within the infinitude of the world as permeated by God. It is the sign which reminds *us* of this limitlessness of the presence of divine grace, and *in this sense* and in no other, precisely in *this particular* kind of anamnesis, is intended to be an event of grace. Now it is a lasting and tragic misunderstanding for us to turn these sacramental signs once more into a circumscribed enclave, such that it is in this alone that God is present, and that the event of his grace takes place.

Let us attempt to clarify what has been expressed in abstract terms by re-stating it in somewhat more concrete ones, and moreover concentrating especially upon the Eucharist. The world and its history are the terrible and sublime liturgy, breathing of death and sacrifice,[5] which God celebrates and causes to be celebrated in and through human history in its freedom, this being something which he in turn sustains in grace by his sovereign disposition. In the entire length and breadth of this immense history of birth and death, complete superficiality, folly, inadequacy and hatred (all of which 'crucify') on the one hand, and silent submission, responsibility even to death in dying and in joyfulness, in attaining the heights and plumbing the depths, on the other, the true liturgy of the world is present – present in such a way that the liturgy which the Son [170] has brought to its absolute fulness on his Cross belongs intrinsically to it, emerges from it, i.e. from the ultimate source of the grace of the world, and constitutes the supreme point of *this* liturgy from which all else draws its life, because everything else is always dependent upon the supreme point as upon its goal and at the same time sustained by it. This liturgy of the world is as it were veiled to the darkened eyes and the dulled heart of man which fails to understand its own true nature. This liturgy, therefore must, if the individual is really to share in the celebration of it in all freedom and self-commitment even to death, be interpreted, 'reflected upon' in its ultimate depths in the celebration of that which we are accustomed to call liturgy in the more usual sense. This 'must' primarily expresses simply that necessity in virtue of which man must accept such manifestations *when* they are present and *when* they confront him, otherwise he

[5] On this subject cf. chiefly the world of ideas of Teilhard de Chardin, e.g. *Hymn of the Universe* (London and Glasgow, 1965).

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himself is denying and giving the lie to those existential modalities which thereby manifest themselves to his own perdition (unless he eliminates these too).

But there is a further point, just as valid and indeed still more radical: we are understanding this liturgy only in the usual sense of the term. We can only achieve a genuine enactment of it, without causing it to degenerate into an empty ritual attitudinizing, full of unbelief (so far as our participation in it is concerned) if we draw our strength from this liturgy of the world, from the liturgy of faith as expressed in concrete 'this worldly' terms, which is identical with the history of the world as rightly enacted.

THE EUCHARISTIC MEAL

It is in this spirit, then, that the individual goes to Mass. He is filled with the knowledge of that drama into which his life is constantly being drawn: the drama of the world, the divine tragedy and comedy. He thinks of the dying who face death with the death rattle in their throats and with glazed eyes, and he knows that even now this fate has its roots within his own being. He senses within himself the sighing of creaturehood, of the world, as it yearns for a brighter future. He entertains a feeling for the responsibility of statesmen with their decisions, which call for all their courage, and yet have to be launched into an unknown future, something of the laughter of children in their unclouded joy in the future, of the tears of hungry children, of the pains of the sick, of the disappointment of love betrayed, of the dedicated realism of scientists in their laboratories, of the dedicated austerities of those who struggle for a liberated humanity – something of all these is in him. He is also aware; even though he may [171] be living day after day with a heart full of withered superficiality, that he *cannot* give pride of place here and now to this entire history of mankind, that even this primitive and uncultivated crudity of a dried-up heart still demands in its turn, and with anguish, to be filled with all that which moves the world. And he is not surprised when the secret essence of world history, something as it were numbing and stimulating at the same time, rises up from the depths of his own inner life and floods over the dry land of his heart. He is not surprised to find that all this too is the experience of the grace of the world, which permeates the whole of history as judgement when it is denied, as a blessed future when it is accepted, and that precisely in the Cross of Jesus it has achieved its supreme point, the point at which it is no longer possible for victory to be lost to it. In his faith the Mass attender experiences the fact that this Cross still constantly is and remains a present fact right to the end of all history. He knows that those who mourn weep the tears of Jesus, those in prison sit in the cell of the Lord, those who rejoice share in the joy of Jesus, those who are lonely share his lonely nights, and so on. He knows that it is only in this indissoluble polarity between man and the Son of man that mankind and he can be understood, because it is only in him that the mystery of mankind can be grasped in its inconceivability and the hope for the future which it contains, and because it is only in the light of the meaning of humanity and in sharing in its lot that we can avoid degrading the presence of Jesus in us to the level of a mere abstract ideology. The attender at Mass, even before he has arrived at it, has already been drawn into the drama of Golgotha that was, that is, and that shall be, the drama that is world-wide, the drama that has all along taken him up in its unfolding process even before he explicitly adverts to it, that embraces 'head and members' alike, Jesus and all men in the same measure and in a relationship of mutual conditioning (albeit one that is special to each individual). For the Son of man too is willed by God 'for our salvation' because God wills a humanity consisting of 'divine beings', because a firstborn among many brethren is conceivable only among these many, so that the Spirit of Jesus is from the outset the Spirit of the world as it has been willed by God.

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And so the individual goes to Mass. What is initiated there is not something which does not exist anywhere else in the world, but something which is there brought to manifestation at a conscious level and celebrated in a cultic enactment, something which really takes place in the world as God's deed of salvation and pertains to the redeemed freedom of mankind. The Cross of Jesus is not, properly speaking, set up afresh, but [172] rather its mysterious presence in the world is proclaimed. This individual allows something which is already alive in his heart to come to the fore, to proclaim itself. For this he himself posits his explicit assent (even if he knows that the most real assent – something that God and life decide and not he through his liturgical calendar – may perhaps be posited outside the context of cultic celebration in the compassion he shows in his average everyday life or in those hours in which life reaches its ultimate extremity). Under the forms of bread and wine he offers the world in that he knows that it itself is already ceaselessly offering itself up into the inconceivability of God in rejoicing, tears and blood. He looks with praise at the ineffable light of God for he knows that this looking of his only really takes place at that point at which man's eyes see death drawing near. He knows that he is proclaiming the death of the Lord because and in that this death, as that which was died once and for all, is constantly present in the world and has already been inserted into the innermost centre of the world and in a true sense continues to be died in everyone who, whether he explicitly recognizes it or not, 'dies in the Lord'. He knows that in the Mass he is proclaiming the coming of the Lord because the Lord actually *is* in the process of coming in the world in everything which impels the world forwards towards its goal. In the holy sign he receives the true body of the Lord in that he knows that this would be useless if he were not in communion with *that* body of God which is the world itself with its destiny, that he is receiving the former body so that in the reality of his own life he may stand in an abiding communion with the latter body. He hears and utters the word of God who reveals himself in the Mass in the awareness that this word constitutes the verbal expression of that word which God himself utters in that he utters the world as his word and eternally utters himself to this world itself in his Word. He hears this word in the 'liturgy of the word' in order that it, together with the world, may become that other word, may utter it, hearken to it and accept it, that word which, though it is uttered everywhere (as nature and grace) so often falls only upon deaf ears, and 'strengthened' and in turn reflected upon in this word, seeks to make its impact in this way too at the human level.

A man goes to Mass. In doing so he is not necessarily called upon always or exclusively to fulfil in an explicit sense the claims of his oneness in destiny with the world and history as a whole. It can also be enough that in his conscious mind he opens himself to the depths of grace contained in that life which is his in a narrower sense. For this life too is in itself, and as part of the great drama of the world, broken into by the [173] grace of God and orientated towards the inconceivability and absoluteness of God. In fact provided this man seizes upon this seemingly everyday life in a spirit of faith (that is in a willing and unreserved acceptance of the movement of this everyday life in itself) he experiences every day in it that this everyday life is sustained by the movement towards God. This is what takes place when someone loves unconditionally and even in situations in which his love is exploited and not returned, in which someone really forgives without 'gaining anything' from it (not even the feeling of being the better man) when someone experiences the miracle of love which is bestowed upon him, he does not know why, when a man is suddenly struck with fear by some insight into the majestic inexorability of truth, when someone remains faithful to the claims of his conscience even though this faithfulness of his is exploited and used against him, and so on. In innumerable occurrences of this kind in everyday life there is always something more mysteriously present than the data yielded by direct experience. There is always a sum which defies all reckoning, an account which cannot be brought into balance by the addition of any one specific assignable item. Always in this there is a tacit reference to God who by

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his grace frees us in our everyday life, admitting us to his own freedom, assuming that we recognize and acknowledge this claim in our everyday life, and do so through that death which egoism can die unnoticed in our everyday lives, and assuming too that we allow ourselves to be set free for the life of God.

The individual concerned need not fear that his basic conviction of faith is under assault if he suddenly finds himself tempted to regard the sacramental rites as 'empty ceremonies', if he experiences that which takes place at the altar as a 'game' which, while it may be touching, initially makes the same impression upon him as the sacrificial ceremony of a Vedic priest who feeds the gods and believes that by his actions he is keeping the world in harmony with them. Faced with such temptations a Christian of this kind does not need merely to formulate an additional ideological postulate by which, so to say, he *adds on* to these rites which he seeks to keep a divine event which would not take place apart from such ritual (though in that case, surely, the divine event would not freely and personally be appropriated!). But there is something which he has to 'add on in his mind', something in the light of which he must view these rites. Yet it is something which he does not have to create from his own ideology. In other words he does not, in any true sense, have to add it on in his mind at all (though he certainly can and should consciously reflect upon it). This extra 'something' is the divine depths inherent in real life, [174] which are constituted always and everywhere through the grace of God with Christ as its focal point and in the self-bestowal of God upon the world. It is from this that these rites derive, to this that they point back, and without this 'something' whence they derive and towards which they tend they would truly be empty, and any other content would indeed merely be added on in the mind. He who is assailed by the fear of engaging in a ritualism which is at basis empty, which is merely filled out with ideological notions conjured up at will, must have recourse to the experience of God and of grace in his seemingly secular life, and so must say: 'This experience and the "subject matter" precisely of *it* are made apprehensible at the cultic and ritual level.' Obviously this presupposes that we have actually made an experience of this kind in our everyday life of the divine depths inherent precisely in this 'secularity' and of the grace they bring. Anyone who says that he fails to find any such experience in his life (an experience which always comes through faith, but a faith which really is 'experienced') should be answered as follows: So long as he *really* has experienced nothing of this, the sacraments must inevitably seem to him to be mere magical ritual, and according to Christian doctrine he should not even receive them, because this doctrine unequivocally forbids anyone to receive the sacraments without faith (that is without a believing experience). It would be necessary to provide such an one with instruction *and* mystagogy in the religious experience of grace in this sense, such as cannot of course be provided *in the present context*. (In this connection a point which should admittedly be taken into account is that such an individual is all along making this experience in itself, but is incapable of reflecting upon it and objectifying it in sufficient measure, and it is at *this* process of reflection and objectification that all instruction and mystagogy is aimed, and not at a process of indoctrination *ab initio*.)

THE EUCHARIST AND THE LITURGY OF THE WORLD

If this individual sees the Mass simply as a sign in miniature of the Mass of the world, to which obviously Christ himself belongs, then it follows that the Mass is after all not so unimportant to this individual. Only in a very conditional sense can he regard it as the 'supreme moment' of his life and the source of his life. It is a 'supreme moment' only to the extent that he allows God to determine *which particular* moment of his life, and under which particular 'forms', whether sacred or profane, he will encounter in his life that decisive

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moment, that sidereal hour, in which his [175] ultimate self-surrender to God is really achieved for him – that self-surrender which definitively determines what is to be for him for all eternity. It is a 'source' only to the extent that he is aware in all this that this source is only derived from the real source of God who creates salvation in his supra-worldly and absolute primacy, and of the unique and definitive event of the death of the Lord that creates salvation. Furthermore it is a source only to the extent that in all this he knows that provided only he opens his heart in faith, hope, and love, the whole of his existence will be permeated throughout as a land from the depths of which flow the waters of eternal life. And if the objection were put to him that after all it is only at Mass that he receives the Body of the Lord really and substantially, then he would rejoin that while he gratefully acknowledges this unique gift of grace of Christ within his Church, still in responding to this substantial presence of Christ the only way in which he can avoid occupying the seat of a Judas next to the physical presence of Christ at the Last Supper is for this Lord to rise up, together with the whole yearning of the entire world and together with its destiny from the midst of his own personal life, and to bestow his grace from this (a grace that is called love for God and for mankind). This is what must take place before he can say that he is physically near to him and *also* bears witness to him in *such a way that* he loves him to the end.

But all this does not make the sacrament superfluous or meaningless. It bears witness to a truth which is otherwise so much hidden in the darkness of the world and the depths of one's conscience. It gives a better opportunity to look outwards from the harmonious recollection of a cultic event into the world, and there to recognize what threatens again and again to disappear from the flagging spirit and the despondent heart within its midst. The sacrament does not dispense us from striving in the night of the world as Jacob strove by night with the angel until he had blessed him. Rather it brings home to us *the fact that* this struggle of life is a striving like Jacob's. It paves the way for, and is the promise of the same victorious outcome. If the sacrament is the sign of the *res sacramenti*, the reality designated, which is identical with the whole unfolding history of the world (because it is a *signum commemorativum*, *exhibitivum* and *prognosticum*, as we may express it in the terms of Aquinas, for everything which takes place in saving history from the beginning to the end which has still to come), does it follow from this that the significance of the sacrament becomes smaller and less important than if it were a procedure of a bare individualistic pastoral care in which it was no longer possible really to believe that anything was taking place there that could really and [176] seriously be believed in as significant for salvation? In other words could such a thing really be believed in as something which is in God's sight the definitive and irrevocable outcome of freedom, abiding and never more able to be overthrown?

Let it not be said that to celebrate the sacrament in this sense implies any denial or obscuring of its sacramental 'causality'. It is no denial or obscuring of the significance of the baptism of an adult either if we say that even as he enters upon it he is acting in accordance with the just claims of faith and love, and so is already justified as he comes to receive the baptism of water. Nor are we denying or obscuring the significance of the sacrament of penance when in accordance with the whole of traditional theology we say that in the normal instance the Christian approaches this sacrament of reconciliation as one who has already been justified through charity – indeed that, as Thomas Aquinas held, he must approach it in this state. Obviously Peter in no sense underestimated baptism when he conferred baptism upon Cornelius precisely *because* he had already received the Holy Spirit and not because he had not yet experienced it. In accordance with traditional theology we hold firm to the position that it is far from being necessarily the case that the recipient of the sacraments does not yet have that which the sacrament confers upon him and declares to have been conferred upon him. In this traditional formulation of the question we also really understand what is

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properly meant by this grace which the recipient of the sacraments already possesses, namely a state of having been drawn into the dynamic process which holds the world together, impelling it towards its goal, the inconceivability of God, uniting all earthly realities and spirits and blending them into a single history of the world as the coming of God through his self-bestowal. And it cannot be said that the approach to the sacraments suggested here in any sense tells against their significance or necessity. It may be that it is not easy or even possible to explain down to the last detail the harmony between these two truths: that of the grace which is always already present and effective from within, and that of the sacramental sign as posited from without at a particular point in time. But any theology in any case is faced with the task of showing that such a harmony exists. It is not a special difficulty arising only from the approach to the reception of the sacraments suggested here.

[177]

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SACRAMENT IN THE SIGN

But in still more precise terms: What, in terms of this basic conception, is to be made of the 'effectiveness' of the sacraments?[6] If we emphasize the 'sign' character of the sacraments, then we are straightway in line with the best and earliest theological traditions. If we are to speak of an effectiveness belonging to the sacramental sign, then it is in accordance with this tradition that the effectiveness referred to is not to be conceived of as something added on to its 'sign' function from without, but rather is to be envisaged as an effectiveness inherent in the sign precisely *as* such. The development of the modern theology of the sacraments likewise tends in this direction even in those areas in which it is in no sense concerned with the special points which are of interest to us here.[7]

This effectiveness of the sign as such (the sign of that grace of God which is already taking effect always and everywhere throughout the world right from its very roots!) can be explained in several stages. First the concrete process by which man in his physical exteriority brings himself to his fulness in his own personal history always has from the first the character of a sign, a physical expression of that which is already present in the basic attitude of a man, *and at the same time* of the fact that there is a counter influence proceeding from the sign and affecting the basic attitude. Thus this concrete process of self-fulfilment is itself all along and in all cases a 'real symbol' under which the individual brings to fruition this basic attitude of his, his *option fondamentale*. Precisely *in the fact that* he expresses himself man posits that which is expressed. In the gesture that he makes the interior disposition of the individual asserts itself. This is not simply (at least not in all cases) the *mere* subsequent promulgation such that in itself it would be unimportant for the existence of the reality promulgated. The real symbol[8] is the sign which [178] promulgates in the unity of the body-spirit *compositum* which is man, and *at the same time* is the 'cause' of that which is promulgated. It is not a cause which acts *ab externo* to posit something subsequent to and quite different from itself. Rather it is a cause to the extent that the true cause, the interior

[6] cf. the author's article 'Sakrament' V in *LTK* IX (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1964), cols. 227-230, and also in the present volume, 'What is a Sacrament?'

[7] cf. R. Schulte's summarizing article 'Sacrament', *Sacramentum Mundi* V (London and New York, 1970), pp. 378-384; also A. Winkelhofer, *Kirche in den Sakramenten* (Frankfurt, 1968). The relevant enactments, to which the Eucharist belongs, nowadays also have a decisive bearing on our understanding of the Eucharistic presence of the Lord. On this cf. the relevant studies by B. Welte, E. Schillebeeckx and J. Ratzinger. The Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council likewise points in this direction. Cf. the author's article, 'The Presence of the Lord in the Christian Community at Worship', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 75-83.

[8] cf. the author's 'The Theology of the Symbol', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 221-252, and P. de Jong, *Die Eucharistie als Symbolwirklichkeit* (Regensburg, 1969).

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decision of freedom, can posit itself only in that it brings itself to its fulness by issuing in this its promulgation.

From this basic standpoint it is now easy to advance a step further: first all what has just been said also applies to the act of the free individual as brought to its fulness in grace. This *free individual* brings himself to his fulness as an event of grace in this sense *in that* he expresses himself and this expression is, in the sense explained, the cause of the act imbued with grace and of the grace itself. (In the light of this the point made by the traditional established teaching of the Church is perfectly reasonable, namely that in the case of one who has already been justified receiving the sacraments, this grace – which produces a fruitful reception of the sacraments! – is always still further 'increased'.)

And finally: this grace is bestowed upon the world as such from its heart and centre. It is constantly offered as the innermost finality of the world's history. It unfolds itself in the history of salvation and revelation, and brings to manifestation, and precisely in virtue of this, that which we call the sacraments when it brings to fruition this decision, taken in its power at decisive moments in the individual human life, and, moreover, in a manifestation which is posited by the Church as the basic sacrament of grace, her own nature being fully engaged in this.[9] On this showing, then, a manifestation of this kind is not merely a subsequent promulgation of something which is in any case present even without such promulgation. Rather it is something *in which* the reality promulgated brings its own individual history to its fulness and so extends its own real nature in that it integrates within its own individual history more 'material'. In this sense, then, the manifestation is the 'cause' of that which is manifesting. Now it follows from all this that in terms of our basic conception too a true causality, precisely a causality in signifying (that of the 'real symbol') can be ascribed to the sacramental sign.

[179]

THE CHURCH AS THE BASIC SACRAMENT OF THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD

We shall understand this whole approach still better if we reflect upon the relationship between the world and the Church. According to what probably is both the most relevant and the most original statement in the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council the Church is the 'sacrament of salvation' for the *world*.[10] What does this mean? The earlier view was that the Church is the sign of salvation for those who already positively belong to her, the sheltering ark in the Flood of the world the sheepfold which protects the flock of Christ and that which points the way of salvation to those who are gathered in this ark or in this fold. On this view the world constituted the sphere of perdition which was set over against the Church as the realm of the evil one. Now this view is certainly not regarded as simply false. There is a world which is in an evil state, a world dominated over by those principalities and powers which are hostile to God, a world made up of spirits and of men. [11] But today it is recognized more clearly that as an historical and social entity the Church is precisely not in any possible sense simply or primarily the promise of salvation for those who are 'within' her. Rather she

[9] Apart from the well-known studies by O. Semmelroth, E. Schillebeeckx and others, cf. also the author's *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Edinburgh and London, 1963), as well as 'Ekklesiologische Grundlegung der Pastoraltheologie als praktischer Theologie', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* I (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2nd ed., 1970).

[10] On this cf., amongst others, E. Schillebeeckx, 'De ecclesia ut sacramentum mundi', *Acta congressus internationalis de theologia Concilii Vaticani* II, E. Dhanis, A. Schönmetzer edd. (Rome, 1968), pp. 48-53.

[11] Of course this 'world' is also constantly present within the sphere which we call in an empirical and social sense, the Church. This in itself should make us cautious in drawing this traditional distinction between the realm of God and that of sin.

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is this for those who are 'still' without, and those who are perhaps destined never to belong to her in this present age in a sociological or empirical sense. For there are men who have been sanctified and redeemed by grace who have never belonged to the Church in an empirical sense, and the reason is that God never denies salvation in his grace to anyone who follows his own conscience, not even when he has not yet explicitly come to recognize the existence of God. For these men who have been sanctified and saved at an anonymous level, for these redeemed ones (there is no need whatever to use the term 'anonymous Christians' if it is found unsatisfactory) the Church is the social and historical sign of salvation, the basic sacrament of that promise which applies to such as these, because she constitutes the visible community of those who acknowledge that in the deed of God salvation is victoriously present for the whole world through the death and resurrection of his Christ. Those who explicitly belong to the visible [180] Church are not so much those who are called and predestined to salvation, as though there could not be any others similarly called and predestined. Rather they are those who, through their life, their confessing, their membership of the Church, have to make salvation manifest sacramentally to those *others* within the solidarity which embraces all men within a human race which has been redeemed by Christ. The members of the Church in the true sense work out their salvation precisely *in that* they fulfil to the full this function which they have to the rest. This does not exclude the fact that in principle all men are called to such a function, i.e. that it cannot in principle, or from the outset, be said of anyone that this particular concrete individual certainly does not enter a situation in which he develops his own individual saving history to the point at which he cannot only receive salvation, but also, precisely *in order to* receive it and to maintain it, must proclaim it too as an element in this basic sacrament called the Church.

In the light of this the relationship between world and Church is not one between the sphere of the godless and the sphere of the holy, between the Flood and the ark, but resembles rather a relationship between a hidden reality on the one hand, which is still seeking to express itself to the full in history, and on the other the full historical manifestation of this, in which that reality which, though hidden, was already present in the world achieves its own fulness in history, expresses itself and so enters upon that mode of existence towards which it has been orientated from the outset.

The true *entelecheia* of the Church is present in the world at its innermost heart and centre, but in a manner which is already recognizable to her believers in the light of her own nature. This is not to contest the fact that this hidden *entelecheia* of the Church within the world is not the 'natural' dynamism of the world or of history, but rather is constituted by the grace of God – indeed ultimately by God himself in his self-bestowal upon the world. Nor is it contested that the Church is an extremely imperfect manifestation of this ultimate and victorious *entelecheia* of world history such that it is still guilty of selfishness, still precisely of such a nature that it is only gradually that it can fulfil its task of integrating within itself the particular elements in this manifestation which are constituted 'outside' the Church by this grace-given *entelecheia* present within the history of the world and the history of salvation.[12]

[181]

SACRAMENT AS SELF-FULFILMENT OF THE CHURCH

It is on this basis that we now have to view the individual sacraments: they are nothing else than acts in a process of concrete self-fulfilment on the part of the Church as the basic

[12] The 'adaptation' of the Church to the world is at basis the recognition of the factor of 'anonymous Christianity' and of the Church as a factor in the world and in its history, not the condescension of the divine power stooping to a godless world.

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sacrament of salvation for the world as applicable to the individual and to the specific situation of his own personal life.[13] The abiding union of the Church with Christ, which cannot be destroyed, achieves a further projection in the individual sacraments as positive concretizations of the basic sacrament. At this level it is called *opus operatum*, which properly speaking does not imply any opposition to the *opus operantis*, but is rather a quality inherent in a specific *opus operantis* (which is in fact posited both in the conferrer and the recipient of the sacraments), the fact namely that this *opus operantis ecclesiae* (and of her minister) is posited with the full involvement of the Church as such, and so of its very nature cannot fall outside the sphere of Christ's grace.[14] If therefore the sacraments are projections and actualizations of the 'sign' function of the Church as the basic sacrament, then it follows from this that the sacraments designate and promulgate at the level of society and history that grace which is designated and borne witness to by the basic sacrament of the Church. In other words they constitute signs of the grace of the *world*, that grace which is present and effective within the world constantly and from the first. That grace of God which is implanted in the world also sustains the Church and her sacraments. In the reception of the sacraments this too is precisely something which must be 'realized'. If that is realized or made real, then the sacraments are no 'extrinsic' processes touching upon an unhallowed world from 'without', but rather the pro-cesses (in the etymological sense!) of the grace of the world which even within the world is perceived by him who, through word and sacrament, has experienced the fact that the life of himself and of the world has all along been sanctified and opened up to the inconceivability of God as no longer concealed.

[182]

THE APPLICATION OF THE SACRAMENT IN THE CONCRETE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HUMAN LIFE (THE FREQUENCY OF THE SACRAMENTS)

This conception, though not strictly speaking new, is intended to bring out more clearly a point which is of special importance today. Against the entire conception, however, it might be objected that it lays excessive demands upon the average recipient of the sacraments. In rejoinder it must first be said that every conception of the sacraments demands too much of the recipient. For each individual has, in the concrete circumstances of his personal life, to achieve a personal encounter with God. Yet in attempting such a thing how can he escape from having too much demanded of him on any conceivable interpretation of the sacraments? The fact that this is perhaps less clearly borne in upon us in our usual way of receiving the sacraments comes from sheer custom, which causes us to suppose that we understand and fully go through with the realities expressed by terms such as grace, means of grace, causality of the sign of grace etc. We can freely assert that the way of approaching the sacraments put forward and recommended here demands nothing more than what is always demanded in any such approach: to realize in concrete personal terms what is meant by the grace of God, and to realize it *in such a way* that the idea of receiving such grace is also really credible. Properly speaking all that we are attempting in this interpretation is to convey a concept of grace which modern man can feel to be verifiable because it proceeds from everyday experience and regards an individualistic narrowing down of the idea of grace as something to be avoided. Of course it may be asked whether in the concrete practice of life it is possible

[13] The utterance of salvation is the concretization of the basic sacrament in the life of the individual. A point constantly to be borne in mind in this connection is that this individual, even within the Church in which he is an element in the constitution of the basic sacrament, always remains at once a recipient of salvation and a seeker for salvation just as much as he who is still 'outside' it.

[14] cf. O. Semmelroth, 'Opus operatum – Opus operantis', *L TK* VII (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1962), cols. 1184-1186.

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to achieve a reception of the sacraments such as we are attempting to describe here so frequently as has been regarded as genuinely possible and worth striving for by traditional piety over many centuries (especially in the case of the Eucharist and penance). But what we are concerned with is the question of a genuine reception of the sacraments in their fulness in the concrete personal circumstances of our lives, without which any mere numerical accumulation of such receptions of the sacraments becomes meaningless. In no conceivable sense does it really increase grace, and it leads merely to a legalistic and mechanical approach to the sacramental event. But whatever interpretation we may put upon the sacrament in the concrete, this question has to be posed, and no one will find it very easy to answer. It does no harm whatever if in our devotion we avoid deciding how frequently we ought to receive the sacraments simply on the basis of [183] the almost magical idea that the more often we receive them the better provided only that a right intention and a certain amount of good will is present, to increase the 'treasury of grace' through the sacraments. Moreover, according to the way of receiving the sacraments which we are suggesting here, it is manifestly far from desirable to receive them so often as to demand too much of the recipient in the sense of over-straining his capacity to realize the significance of his act in the concrete circumstances of his personal life. But this tells against receiving the sacraments too often for us fully to realize their significance, and not against the conception we are putting forward here.[15] Each of the two factors involved must be taken as a criterion for determining the other: frequency of reception on the one hand, and genuine realization of what is involved on the other. But obviously a further factor constantly to be taken into account is the due claims of everyday life. Again the supreme point which, when it is fully achieved, can and will enable us to orientate our lives as a whole towards their final consummation is first of all exceptional and at the same time needs to be fitted into the claims of our everyday life in such a way that it acts upon us as though it were actually being achieved in the here and now. Our everyday living must very broadly approximate to that which constitutes its true significance, the supremely decisive factor in our lives, in such a way as in a certain measure creatively to anticipate such moments of radical fulness. Only in this way shall we really achieve them aright and avoid wasting the *kairos* for them, the crucial moment at which it is possible really to receive them. The phrase 'I love you' can also be uttered in our everyday lives and moreover should be, even though it is a phrase which properly speaking applies to the fulness of those crucial moments in life, And this can also be said of the sacraments, even though when we do so we have not once more any intention of denying what has just been said with regard to adopting a critical attitude towards an indiscrete frequency in receiving them. Presumably there are 'styles' conditioned by the particular epochs to which they belong, and determining where we strike the balance between the supreme demand which the sacraments in their fulness represent and so which they make upon man on the one hand, and the tribute which the individual can freely and willingly pay to his everyday conditions, which also still plays its part in characterizing that which is supreme in his own life. In fact we have no objection to make either to the individual intercessions which we formulate in the liturgy: on behalf of the hungry, the dying, those subjected to political persecution etc., even though such intercessions often seem to [184] come 'from the heart' only to a small extent so far as we are concerned. Should we on this account omit them, or should we not rather allow ourselves to be warned by them ever afresh to make sure that our hearts do not stick fast in a primitive form of egoism (albeit perhaps a religious one)?

RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR

[15] On this see n. 2.

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Now that we have put forward our theory on the basis of the usual data of traditional theology, with all the circumstantial details inevitably entailed in this, we should now once more develop this theory quite simply and independently of this our starting-point. In this way it should be possible to make it clear far more effectively how possible it is to 'realize' it and to verify it in religious terms. Man is not in any explicit sense endowed with religious instincts of his very nature. He easily feels all that is explicitly religious as almost impudent, and in any case excessively burdensome. Yet once we have so made clear our thesis we should be in a position to say: What is here being achieved is simply a plainer and more explicit awareness of what takes place in my life, and what precisely need not after all be suppressed or denied expression, that to which I must give my explicit adherence, however much I may be tempted to venerate all this merely silently, and however much I may be justified in claiming that there is a limit to the saving efficacy in certain forms of religious expression of this sort or in the frequency with which they are repeated. And he who is already 'devout' would notice that his 'spiritual life' does not constitute any dispensation from the responsibilities of his secular life, or even, properly and ultimately speaking, a point of transcendence in relation to this. Rather it is precisely the explicit taking over of this life which only seems to be secular. But it is no longer possible to set forth the conception of the sacraments we have in mind here without 'taking the long way round' with the traditional form as our starting-point for the kerygmatic statement itself. This is no longer possible however desirable it may be, however true it may be that only thus would it become effective in our religious lives. In theology proper it is something else. For this always has to answer precisely for its doctrine to the earlier history of faith.

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[185]

11

ASPECTS OF THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE

In the ideas which follow we shall be assuming as accepted the Catholic doctrine concerning the episcopal office, on a balanced view of it in which all elements in it are taken into account. In this approach it is admittedly no part of our intention to put forward objections from the point of view of pastoral theology,[1] for instance as to what kind of image the bishop of today ought to present, which are the crucial points for our present age within the total scope of a bishop's task, what form ought nowadays to be given to those institutions on which he has to rely for the fulfilment of his task, etc. As against this a point we shall seek to demonstrate in this study is how broad a scope is still left, from the point of view of pastoral theology, for considerations and decisions with regard to the concrete form which the episcopal office ought to assume in our own times, even while we recognize the doctrine of the Catholic Church on this point which is effectively and dogmatically binding. The scope still left by this is far greater than is commonly assumed, and hence offers the pastoral theologian, provided he understands his task and includes within it the *jus condendum*, great opportunities but at the same time corresponding responsibilities too, which are likewise greater than is supposed on the common view.

For when we speak of office, of a bishop, of episcopal authority, a monarchical episcopate etc. in doctrinal statements, we are unconsciously filling these formal and very broad concepts with a concrete content which is *de facto* bound up with these concepts in our own experience of the Church. We do this even though we should have learnt from the history of the Church from the New Testament onwards how wide the variations [186] can be in the concrete forms in which these concepts are realized, and so too possible from the point of view of dogmatic theology. This should be enough to tell us that for the future too we are offered a broad scope for creatively re-shaping this office, and that this is a task which we must tackle genuinely and seriously. The study which follows is intended to help in laying bare still more the further and unexplored areas for the reshaping of these ideas. What we are concerned with here is not the task of presenting possible models for the office, the different content of which has already been determined by historical factors or at the theoretical level For this would precisely be the task of the historian who may perhaps discover such different concrete forms of the office already present at earlier stages in history – forms which, even though now forgotten and having fallen into desuetude, could nowadays perhaps once more be revived and renovated.

The pastoral theologian and canonist, on the other hand, has the special task of creatively filling out with new concrete ideas those formal and, to some extent, empty concepts which the dogmatic theologian supplies him with when he shows on dogmatic grounds that this factor of the empty and the unexplored in his concepts is dogmatically justified, and by doing so also makes it right for the Church to provide scope for creative freedom for her pastoral theologians, canonists, and also those vested with her offices. In this negative task of the dogmatic theologian (one, that is, which creates scope in theory and practice for the pastoral theologians), we have a longer path to tread, for there are many factors and circumstances to be considered, so that a considerable degree of patience is called for. For in such

[1] The considerations put forward in this study were prepared for a conference of pastoral theologians. It is from this that the ideas it contains acquire their theological bearing and their special character, something which belongs essentially to the present considerations.

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considerations there is much that must remain problematical and uncertain. The ultimate certainty that a future measure is legitimate can be achieved only in the free decision to embark upon this future measure, and not in the preliminary considerations leading up to it. If we sought to achieve a certainty of this kind, assuring us that these unexplored areas for further development were present and doctrinally justified even prior to any such decision on the part of the Church, then it would be clear from the outset that we had totally failed to discover any such areas for a true and effective future, and that we were only projecting forwards into the future in an innocuous manner the already justified present as modified for that future. The considerations are prior only in the sense that on the basis of the different approaches, which are in no sense all brought under a single overall system, we feel our way towards the existence of the free scope for further development of the kind we are speaking of for the future concrete realization of the episcopal office. [187] Hence it is also superfluous to enumerate these different approaches by way of preliminary. After these introductory remarks, let us now proceed directly to tackle the question itself.

It is of immediate and primary importance for our entire question to be clear upon one point: the sense in which, on the basis of the exegesis and biblical theology of the New Testament, and of the earlier history of the Church, we can nowadays assert that the historical Jesus did found a Church. The fact that this question is of radical importance for our entire theme hardly calls for any special explanation. It is also obvious that all that need be stated here is a quite simple and summary answer, without any special justifying arguments. While it is true that 'Lumen Gentium', the document of the Second Vatican Council, has said nothing in this context that is false concerning the hierarchical structure of the Church, provided that we interpret its doctrines in broad outline (which is perfectly justifiable from the point of view of dogmatics), still even this doctrine of the Council does not provide a really positive picture of the present position on the question of the founding of the Church by Jesus with all the problems this entails and the possibility of their solution.[2] When we ask 'Did Jesus found the Church?' it may be that this is a somewhat inappropriate way of framing the question in view of the matters to be found here, and which we now have in mind. Alternatively we must achieve a clear recognition of what is meant by 'founding' here, and the special kind of variability involved in it, and we need not presume that the only way of applying this idea in practice in the case we are considering is precisely that way which we ourselves quite arbitrarily associate with it. For it is possible to conceive of the founding of a society as signifying that way of bringing it into being that necessarily involves a conscious and clear idea of the constitution of that society, together with the will to bring it to reality in the human awareness of the 'founder'. Now it cannot be established as a matter of historical fact that the historical Jesus either willed or carried through the founding of the Church as understood here. Even at this early stage we may draw attention to something which we shall have to enlarge upon later in these considerations of ours, namely that something like a revealed constitutional law of the Church – in other words a *jus divinum* of a juridical and constitutional kind – is conceivable. Later we shall have to show how this can be. [188] Obviously Jesus did have a group of disciples about him. It is perfectly possible that this group also had, in the broadest sense, a juridical structure in conformity with Jesus' own will, one which accorded a special place within this group of disciples to Peter. As a matter of their experience the disciples of Jesus knew him as the crucified and risen Lord, and so recognized him and his message (or his new message, and in this himself also) as the unsurpassable word of the living God, of the ultimate freedom. And to the extent that they did so experience him

[2] On the subject of the institution or founding of the Church by Jesus cf. the author's study, *Inspiration in the Bible* (Edinburgh and London, 1961), pp. 39-42, and also, in the present volume, 'Considerations on the Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event'.

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it was obviously also the case that this group of disciples, which as a society of persons necessarily must have had a social and juridical constitution, must also remain, right to the end of history, as a community of faith in Jesus and as the upholder of his message. In the light of this it is absolutely possible and necessary to assert that the Church derives from Jesus, is in this sense founded by him, even though he himself in his genuinely human awareness presumably never formulated any clear or conscious idea of what kind of social constitution the community of his message would have, how it would achieve it, or under what forms it would continue to exist, that community made up of those who believe in the liberating proximity of God and of those who lay hold of this message as something eternally inseparable from himself and his fate. On these grounds alone it is evident that it is only in a very limited and indirect way if at all that the office of the bishops in the Church can be traced back to any decision to found this office on the part of Jesus himself. In any case the episcopal office is not to be authenticated by claiming that Jesus founded it in the sense of explicitly and consciously adverting to it in itself, for this is something which cannot be established as a matter of historical fact. The existence of this office is justified, rather, on the grounds that in the concrete it constitutes the legitimate and, in the long run historically speaking, indispensable way of ensuring the necessary continuity of the community of Jesus with its origins. It is in the light of this that we have to allow for the wide range of possible variations we have spoken of, in which such a factor as the episcopal office can be given concrete embodiment.

If we assume that the foregoing points are correct, can we then still speak of a *jus divinum* for the basic constitutional structures of the Catholic Church?[3] This question arises directly from what we have said above, and is also of vital importance for any interpretation of the episcopal [189] office with a view to finding concrete models for its embodiment in concrete reality. I believe that this question can be answered along the following lines: the episcopal office derives from the will of Jesus to found the Church as interpreted above in a process which, while in the eyes of modern theologians it seems to be conditioned by historical factors, is nevertheless in terms of its meaning perfectly reasonable and irreversible. Now to the extent that this is true there is a perfectly sound and valid sense in which we can speak of a *jus divinum* of the episcopal office. In this statement we are assuming two principles: First according to the witness of history it seems that at one time the monarchic episcopate existed side by side with other community structures in the apostolic age, and that at the time these were not regarded either as illegitimate or as embryonic or provisional. The monarchical episcopate, then, seems to have imposed itself and to have rendered these other structures obsolete, though of course this took place at a very early stage. A further factor to be taken into account, of course, in all this is that the concept of a monarchic episcopate is abstract in the extreme and was given concrete embodiment in early times in the most varied forms. The result is that in the constitution of any given local Church it is after all only particular elements which are brought to the fore by means of such a concept. Other elements of very great importance were *de facto* implicit in it side by side with these, and these other elements modify this absolute concept very greatly when compared with the form which the present-day monarchic episcopate assumes.[4] The second point which our statement about the *jus divinum* inherent in the monarchical episcopate asserts is this: without prejudice to the historical contingency of this episcopate which we have just established, this *jus divinum* can and indeed must nevertheless be regarded as an abiding element in the constitution of the

[3] On what follows cf. the author's article, 'Reflection on the Concept of the "Jus Divinum" in Catholic Thought', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 219-243.

[4] The doctrine of the monarchic episcopate is accounted as fully worked out by the beginning of the second century in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch. Nevertheless it is disputed how far the general situation of the contemporary Church is reflected in these.

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Church. The reason is that the concept of a reality that is contingent and brought about in historical freedom is far from necessarily implying that that reality can once more be withdrawn from the stage of history. On the contrary, under certain circumstances it is in principle perfectly consistent with a contingency of origin of this kind for such a contingent reality to be permanent and irreversible. This is not the place to demonstrate how or why a reality emerging from the free course of history in this sense, the history of human decision, may in principle have this character of being [190] permanent and irreversible. This would lead us too far afield. Yet it would be naive and ultimately less than human to suppose that we have to deny the true nature of historical freedom by saying that it is impossible for the Church to recognize in her faith that a given decision can have an eternal validity in this sense once that decision has been freely posited. For even though it cannot be perceived that that decision follows necessarily from the very nature of the case, still it is in harmony with the nature of the case. The historical decision of the Church that her own constitution should include a monarchic episcopate was arrived at towards the end of the apostolic age, albeit as the outcome of a long process of development, and in the Church's conscious faith this decision can perfectly well be irreversible and, because in conformity with her own nature, albeit not in any demonstrable way following necessarily from that nature, can still justifiably be regarded as a *jus divinum* and as intrinsically involving the factors of authentic derivation from a Church that has been willed by God and of the irreversibility and permanence that belong to the institution of this. A further point that is of course likewise clear from all this is that the dogmatic concept of the episcopate can have a wide range of variations in the forms in which it is realized in practice. For the criterion by which its concrete form can and must be measured is whether it actually and effectively has fulfilled and is capable of fulfilling those dispositions and functions which are entailed by the origin of the episcopate as thus determined. In any case it is clear that we cannot use the concept of the *jus divinum* to justify and defend any and every factor which is present in the concrete in the present-day form of the episcopate. On the other hand there is no need to cast doubt upon the monarchic episcopate as an abiding factor in the Church by reason of its having emerged as a free and contingent phenomenon. Two points must be borne in mind here: first, regardless of whatever forms the concrete juridical constitution of a given society may assume, the powers vested in that society must be borne by individuals; second, even a monarchic episcopate, as it exists within a community, must be, and *de facto* in the Catholic Church actually is – surrounded by collegiate organs. Now in the light of these two points there is properly speaking no valid meaning any longer in casting doubt on the monarchic form of episcopate. In terms of its actual meaning the only question which still remains open – though in practice it is not an unimportant one – is how we should devise rules in greater detail to ensure the necessary collaboration between the primary holder of the office within a community, who is quite indispensable, and the collegiate bodies which are also inevitably present within it. We have [191] to devise rules for this collaboration in such a way that taken together as a single whole the bearers of the office in the Church are really capable of discharging the functions pertaining to that office. At most the question might be posed of whether it might not be possible to recognize such collegiate ('presbyteral') elements in the constitution of a community as covered by the *jus divinum* when, in a given concrete situation, they are felt to be here and now indispensable, even though this indispensability which is binding upon us is clearly present only at a later epoch of the Church's history and not already at the end of the apostolic age, and even though it emerged from the concrete historical and social situation of the community.[5]

[5] On the basis of historical researches Y. Congar concerns himself with various aspects of the relationship of the episcopal office to the pope, Church, and communities in several studies in his most recent work, *Ministères et*

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As I see it, we could in principle and as a matter of abstract speculation even go a step further and put the hypothesis that it would not be unequivocally contrary to the Catholic doctrine of the episcopal office to say that this episcopal authority could be borne by a *collegium*. What is asserted in the doctrinal declarations of the Church with regard to the episcopal office refers to the nature, the origin and the scope of this office. In these declarations it is indeed tacitly assumed as self-evident, in view of the *de facto* conditions prevailing in the Church, that at times this office is vested in an individual person. But whether this fact of history, that the office is vested in individuals, is necessarily identical with the episcopal office as such and of its very nature – this is a point on which, so it seems to me, no ultimately binding statement has been made. Surely too it is at least conceivable that it is possible from the point of view of dogmatic theology for the episcopal office to be vested in a collegiate body. The difference between the presbyteral constitution of some non-Catholic Churches of the Reformation on the one hand, and the monarchic constitution of the Catholic Church on the other points (if we abstract from the question of the papacy) not so much to a difference in the conception of the office holder, but rather to a difference as to the nature of this office itself. (Merely in passing it may be remarked that at the Council of Trent many factors which were legitimately present in the Church, but which had emerged as a result of free decisions on the Church's part, are presented as though they had been directly posited *jure divino* by divine revelation itself. This is a point that must also be borne in mind in our case by anyone who seeks to invoke the authority of Trent.) The fact [192] that we should not be too hasty in assuming that it would be contrary to the very nature of the Church according to a Catholic understanding for the episcopal office to be vested in a collegiate body in this way becomes apparent once we recognize the fact that a collegiate entity, namely the college of bishops in union with the pope as the head of this college, is as such the bearer of the powers of the Church in their fulness.[6] Now this consideration should not give the impression that we are seeking to imply that it is opportune for individual Churches to have a presbyteral constitution of this kind, one in which the bearer of the episcopal office as Catholics understand it should be a *collegium* (which in the nature of things would be small). All that we are seeking to make clear by this consideration is that at least at first sight the relationship of a bishop to the directive bodies subordinate to him and collaborating with him within a local Church can be conceived of in very varied ways, seeing that it is not simply or certainly contrary to Catholic doctrine to conceive of a local Church having a truly collegiate form of leadership at its head. The importance of directive bodies which are collegiate in character working with and under the bishop can certainly be greater than it *de facto* is nowadays according to the valid juridical norms without the dogmatically valid juridical constitution of the Church necessarily being threatened thereby.

This brings us to a further consideration. The relationship of the bishop to those other bodies who share in the direction of a local Church could juridically speaking assume more precise and more intelligible forms without the prerogatives certainly or probably belonging to the bishop as a matter of dogmatic theology being threatened or diminished thereby. In order to throw light upon this statement let us begin by pointing to an analogous case in which the example intended to throw light upon the question actually constitutes the higher analogate. In 1970 the International Commission of Theologians at Rome unanimously declared that it was desirable for the pope himself juridically and as a matter of principle, though obviously *jure humano*, to devise rules for the way in which he might collaborate

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communion ecclésiale (Paris, 1971).

[6] On the subject of the relationship between the episcopate and the primate cf. the volume published by the author in collaboration with J. Ratzinger: *Episkopat und Primat*, Quaestiones Disputatae II (Freiburg, 2nd ed., 1963), and the article, 'On the Relationship between the Pope and the College of Bishops', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 50-70.

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with the college of bishops rather than for him to decide the forms which this collaboration should take intermittently and according to the particular case involved. They declared that so far from [193] being in contradiction to the prerogatives certainly belonging to the pope as a matter of doctrine, this would actually be opportune nowadays, and would conduce to the efficiency and credibility of his office. Just as a pope can draw up rules in collaboration with a secular sovereign for the nomination of a bishop by means of a general concordat (and not a fresh concordat for each individual case), and just as these rules are in principle binding upon him, so too he can *a fortiori* arrive at a juridically speaking more precise set of rules governing his collaboration with the episcopate, and of course such rules would also be binding upon him (as in the case of a concordat with secular powers) even when in particular cases he found this less agreeable, or when it led to consequences in which he did not find himself involved when such general rules did not exist. As we have said, the International Commission of Theologians declared that such a course was not only doctrinally possible but was actually opportune for present-day conditions because through it the rule of the pope would achieve a higher intelligibility and effectiveness, and thereby too this office would acquire a greater credibility. Now *a fortiori* the same applies to the bishop in his office in relation to those other directive bodies and the rest of the institutions within his diocese. And this remains true even if we assume that the episcopal office is monarchic in character. The decisions which a bishop arrives at in virtue of those powers attributed to him alone within his Church are bound by the nature of the matters involved. It is true that according to the Church's laws as at present in force, apart from the pope there is no higher authority to test whether a given decision on the part of a bishop is in conformity with the nature of the matter involved so far as the practical validity of such a decision is concerned. At the same time when we say this we have no intention of disputing the fact that it is possible for bishops to take decisions which a Christian can and must refuse to obey as a matter of his conscience. But since in any case the decisions of a bishop are objectively bound by the nature of the matter involved and cannot be arrived at arbitrarily, it is necessary for the bishop to arrive at a preliminary judgement before taking any such decision. Now it is certain that included among the factors which a bishop must first take into consideration before arriving at such a decision are those various bodies which exist within a diocese and which can contribute their specialist knowledge and counsel in the process of arriving at the prior judgement. Obviously such counsels are, and always have been, available to him. But the point we are concerned with here is the recognition of the fact that it is perfectly consistent with the nature of the monarchic episcopate, and actually opportune for the [194] effectiveness, intelligibility and credibility of the bishop's office, for the collaboration between these consultative bodies and the bishop to be juridically regulated, and moreover in general terms, not in a way that is always dependent from case to case upon the prudent estimate of the bishop alone. To put the matter in blunter and more general terms: it is not contrary to the nature of the episcopal office for the bishop, in specific cases governed by general rules, to be dependent in his decisions upon a *votum deliberativum* over and above a *votum consultativum*. In such a case the right of recourse to the Holy See would still always remain open to him, and even, in extreme cases, the right of reserving his conscience in virtue of which he could refuse his consent to a decision by which he would otherwise be juridically bound, thereby rendering the decision invalid. But these two possibilities, which leave intact the power of decision belonging to a monarchic episcopate, still do not rule out the possibility of formulating juridical rules of a general kind governing that collaboration between a bishop and his official bodies which he needs in order to arrive at decisions which do due justice to the matters involved. The precise form which such regulations should assume in terms of diocesan laws or general laws applicable to all dioceses cannot be set forth here by a dogmatic theologian. Diocesan synods should apply themselves to such questions, and should not be too hasty in

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allowing themselves to be frustrated in decisions on this question by assertions (such for instance as that put forward against the Synod of Meissen) that such rules derogate from the inalienable rights of the bishop. Rules of this kind could for instance perfectly well include the setting up of a court of appeal such that even a bishop, at least in normal cases, would be bound by its decisions.

By means of such rules it would be possible gradually to eliminate from the Church and her officials a certain paternalism which certainly does not belong to the *jus divinum* in the Church, yet which is nevertheless very often present and, moreover, still present even in the Church of today and in her official ministers. I believe that instances of such paternalism are to be found when the official concerned is too hasty in having recourse merely to his formal authority, and in which he makes it impossible to achieve any insight into the reasons justifying his decision or feels that his formal authority is being attacked and is unwilling to submit his judgement to a critical examination by some other authoritative body (whether in a theoretical or a juridical sense). Paternalism arises in those cases in which the chief shepherd of the flock feels himself to be in the position of a 'father' who, in virtue of his own 'experience' or of the Holy Spirit, knows better in all matters than his immature children, even though in [195] the case we are supposing we are concerned neither with children nor with those who certainly do not recognize the Holy Spirit. Paternalism arises in those cases in which the decision and the formulation of it lack that intelligibility which they might have. To counteract paternalism of this kind the framing of positive juridical rules governing the relationship and collaboration between bishop and other authoritative bodies in the diocese would be very valuable, though of course only provided that these juridical rules did not make the opinion and judgement of these other authoritative bodies once more answerable merely to the prudent estimation of the bishop alone. In this connection what we have in mind is obviously not the kind of rules which merely generate a sort of bureaucracy by some kind of Parkinson's law, frustrating the freedom and personal initiative of all, or even merely the personal charism of a bishop. Rightly framed rules can perfectly well be means of setting freedom itself free, and act precisely as a guard against any regimentation of it.

Many further dogmatic considerations could certainly be put forward, which would still further promote a creative re-shaping of the episcopal office for today. For instance a point which might be considered in greater detail is that the election of the pope at least emerges from a collegiate body which arrives at a juridical decision of supreme importance. Again in this connection we may consider that not all the problems entailed are solved merely by saying that it is the designation of the person that is in question and not the handing over of an authority possessed by the elective body itself. And if we bear these points in mind then we shall at any rate recognize that an election from below need not necessarily be in principle inconsistent with the nature of the Church seeing that the creation of the supreme official in the Church takes place in no other way whatever than by election from below.[7] Furthermore there are very many dogmatic questions which still remain completely open and which need to be thought out concerning the precise relationship between the episcopal office and the priesthood. And the answers to these questions would also be important for our present-day understanding of the episcopal office. Thus for instance the usual distinction between *potestas ordinis* and *potestas jurisdictionis* is far from being unambiguously clear and fully able to be applied, and the problems involved in it were to some extent recognized even at the Second Vatican Council. For instance the power of the priest to celebrate the Eucharist, which, according to the traditional theory can never wholly be withdrawn from him, *eo ipso*, on a [196] right understanding of the Eucharist constitutes the power of presiding over the

[7] cf. the author's observations on the principles involved in 'The Episcopal Office', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 313-360.

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supreme celebration of a community. And if this is the case how can the usual theological teaching deny to a priest any kind of fundamental *potestas jurisdictionis* unless he holds it as a power that is totally distinct from the *potestas ordinis* as a result of a special act on the part of the bishop? On this showing the question would then arise, for instance, of whether the formation of a Christian community under the direction of a priest can be conceived of altogether in these terms as the formation of a further extension of the sphere of authority by an act of the bishop from above, as after all it is commonly conceived of. These and similar questions which the dogmatic theologian poses to himself could be pursued further, and the answers we find to them could presumably also bring us a more enlightened understanding of that doctrine which really is dogmatically binding of the episcopate and of the scope which remains open to us for a future re-shaping of it. But we cannot enter in any greater detail into such questions at this point.

The problem can also be used from a quite different theological aspect. The question can be posed of whence we can really adduce a valid criterion for the concrete shaping of ecclesiastical office. Here we are proceeding from an assumption which, it is true, is not universally accepted by all theologians, yet which is perfectly sustainable, the assumption, namely, that the Church herself has been given the power to articulate the Church's own official ministry, which is ultimately *one*, and to break it down into specific offices of various kinds and degrees according to the demands of the time. The triad which is current among us of bishop, priest and deacon, therefore, is regarded as *jus divinum* to the extent that the one office in the Church which she must have of her very nature has such a hierarchical structure, but it is not assumed that the dividing up of this one office into these three offices is the only possible way in which it could be divided. If we take this assumption as our starting-point – and in itself it does not imply any prejudice against this triad as inopportune for today – then the theological question arises of what the criterion is for dividing up this office in a way that is appropriate to the particular conditions. Of course it is possible to reply to this question that it is the fulfilling of the function of the Church that constitutes this criterion; that the official ministry must be divided up and formulated in positive terms among the particular officials in such a way that this function of the Church can be fulfilled in the most effective way possible. And we might add to this reply that the function of the Church is rightly to preach the gospel and to dispense the sacraments throughout the ages, that faith, hope and charity may be [197] present in as many individuals as possible and in the most radical forms possible, and that this may be manifested even at the social level and in the constitution of the Church herself. This statement, together with the further precisions which can be made within it, is certainly correct. Yet we must after all be conscious of how formal and abstract, and of how ineffectual this reply is, factors which are still present even if we assume that we know in quite precise terms what is meant by preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. We should ask ourselves whether it is clear that the present-day forms in which the official ministry of the Church is structured as they *de facto* exist at a quite concrete level, together with all the offices and institutions they entail, are really capable of being traced back to so formal a principle as this. And we have only to put this question to ourselves for it to become clear to us that we must reply to it in the negative, that this principle is inadequate to determine the concrete forms which the episcopal office should assume, even if we take into account that in such matters there is much that is matter for human estimation and which in no sense needs to be based on profound arguments. Perhaps, therefore, without seeking to provide any more precise justification for the point we are making, we might formulate the 'principle' we are seeking in the following terms: the principle and criterion for arriving at the concrete forms in which the Church's official ministry is to be articulated, and so too for the episcopal office, are to be deduced from the encounter at the empirical level which this official ministry makes with the concrete general social conditions, and, on this basis, the

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ecclesiastical conditions too affecting the preaching of the gospel.[8]

All that can still be attempted here is to give some little explanation of the meaning and possible effectiveness of this principle, without claiming to provide any precise justification for it in theological terms, or to pursue it in its concrete consequences, the more so since this latter course is precisely the concern of the pastoral rather than the dogmatic theologian. In the principle we have formulated we have spoken of an empirical encounter. Here we are proceeding from the conviction that the practical application (and so too the ways in which we institutionalize the official ministry in practice) is not the mere application of prior general principles, but is rather an event of freedom, and thereby of a future which is unique in each particular case and as such has an autonomy of its own, being something more than merely the handmaid of theory. If this is correct, [198] then in order for the concrete forms in which the Church's office is institutionalized to be right the discovery of them can be arrived at only at the level of concrete experience and by experimentation. In this process we are of course right from the outset working from an enlightening awareness of what the Church is and what the preaching of the gospel is. But even this knowledge, which guides us in our experimentation, is merely present to us in its special historical concretion, which is constituted by the concrete situation of the present, yet constantly open to the future; a situation which, as the situation of the Church herself, of a society, is obviously in a primary sense a social situation. In consequence of this, in its concrete modalities and in the conceptual models and models for action which it contains this knowledge too is constantly subject to change in its encounter with the concrete social situation of the Church. And precisely on this account the discovery of the principles for the concrete forms in which the official ministry of the Church is institutionalized, forms which have to be continuously arrived at afresh, consists not merely in the application of an *a priori* theological knowledge of ecclesiology which we already have, but is matter for a process of experimentation in which theological ecclesiology itself without being deprived of its own nature, is subjected ever afresh to the pressures of the social situation in which the gospel has to be preached. This situation, therefore, is not one which exists over against the Church's awareness of her own nature as a concrete exterior reality upon which the Church acts from within itself. Rather it constitutes an intrinsic element in the Church's own concrete understanding of its own nature as it continuously discovers this afresh in a process of experimentation, an understanding which is discovered afresh only in a living process of experimentation of this kind, the outcome of which cannot be established beforehand.

We may now in a quite incidental way provide a few indications intended to show what is entailed in the principle we have just developed, which inevitably always remains at a still very abstract level. The exterior and interior situation of the Church is a situation which no longer needs to be monocultural, European or Western, one which albeit in varying degrees, survives in a diaspora situation in the midst of a pluralist environment or one which is in principle and in its institutions hostile to the Church itself. For the Church itself has either lost or not yet gained for itself not merely individuals but broad social groups. Everywhere it encounters a secular society which tolerates large marginal elements, i.e. groups with a notable range of variation which are not integrated into the society. Here we should surely discover and give an intelligible account [199] of an intrinsic connection which exists between those groups which are peripheral in a social sense and those which are so in an ecclesiastical sense. (It would be possible and important for the preaching strategy of the Church if those groups which have become alienated from the Church or have never really had any connections with her were also shown to be the groups which are socially

[8] cf. the author's 'Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 361-368.

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disintegrated, if it could be established that the Church can only seriously come close to these groups and render itself credible to them for the preaching of the gospel if it seriously and effectively achieves solidarity with their social situation and their struggle, albeit in a manner appropriate to the Church as such.)

If any clear analysis of the social situation of the Church were arrived at with a view to its preaching and as an intrinsic element in its own understanding of itself, then surely it would become clear that the Church as it exists in its communities can only live in solidarity with those groups which are marginal in an ecclesiastical and social sense, and can only make its mission effective as a missionary Church. From being a national Church the Church either is or is of necessity becoming in the situation of today and tomorrow a Church of free believers in the midst of a diaspora situation. (Obviously this does not mean that the Church should not strive to awaken the greatest possible number of individuals to the faith in order to avoid becoming a sect in a defeatist sense.) The focal point for the Church to discharge its function, to achieve credibility and to perform its task of preaching the gospel, therefore, is now to be found in the local community at the roots of society, for it is here that its encounter with the special social situation is achieved, here that faith must emerge ever afresh, that faith which is no longer sustained by a homogeneous Christian public opinion or a socially homogeneous society. Here is achieved that solidarity with the struggle of the socially marginal groups. In the light of this it cannot be the case that the normal parish, i.e. the living community of the faith as based upon society and the Church, can continue to remain an extension of the administrative authority of a bishop as organized from above. If this way of putting it had not already been applied to a quite specific concrete attempt at forming such a community, and hence were not capable of provoking misunderstandings, we could say in all confidence: the life of the Church today is primarily lived in an ‘integrated community’. At this point we may permit ourselves a digression. The relationship between the bishop and the kind of priest, generally called a parish priest, who presides over a genuine, living, and fraternal community of the faith in fact remains theologically and historically speaking unexplained right down to the present day. This much can [200] confidently be asserted: in the old days the leader of such a community would have been called a bishop. And the question may be raised whether present-day bishops, by the standards of the patristic theology of the episcopate, are not somewhat in the position of supreme bishops or metropolitans or similar higher officials. This is no idle question of terminology. For behind this terminology a crucial fact might under certain circumstances lie concealed, the fact, namely, that by our use of this term ‘bishop’ we have deprived the leader of the concrete community, who, for the theology of the early Church is a bishop, of those tasks, powers and liberties which should really belong to him. The further question might then arise of whether what is asserted in theology of the college of bishops should not properly speaking apply, from a theological point of view to the college of parish priests, and whether that which we nowadays call the college of bishops is not after all at basis simply the inevitable organizational body representing the college of the parish priests = bishops. This question should not be regarded from the outset as heretical. We may for instance remember the many hundreds of Italian bishops who, by our standards, are after all simply parish priests of so many larger parishes. This digression acquires a practical significance the moment the basic community in the Church achieves a new importance, the moment that such a community, for all its union with the universal Church, forms itself from below by charismatic forces. For it has to be a ‘parish of persons’. It must be the kind of community in which it is a far more crucial question whether it has the power to win over afresh an individual from the secularized world than to preserve ten individuals from the remnants of the traditionally Christian society which still remain. Once a community of this kind has come to be the normal type of parish (and presumably it must so become), then the concrete reality of a diocese and of the episcopal office must alter too. In the case

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supposed the diocese is made up of such communities of free believers in a secularized world, of communities, that is to say which acquire very varied structures in the way in which they find themselves socially committed as the concretizations of the fraternal love of Christians, communities which differ very notably from one another in their relationship to the ordained leader of the Eucharistic celebration, and so too to the leader of their community (assuming that these two personages are and are intended to remain identical). As a result the institution of them by the bishop, to the extent that any such institution is demanded by the unity of the Church, is in any case achieved in quite different forms of collaboration with the community itself than has formerly been the case. A diocese [201] composed of such communities of its very nature implies a different kind of bishop than that to which we have hitherto been accustomed. He will be one who has proved himself through the power of his charismatic personality, in virtue of which he has won fresh ground in the missionary field and has not merely presided over traditional territories inherited from the past. Presumably in the future the individual community will have a greater autonomy, and on this showing it would actually be conceivable that the bishop, as representing the unity of such communities, would be one of the (episcopal) parish priests presiding over one such community. And this in itself would be enough to ensure a fraternal union with his fellow parish priests. Perhaps – this is something which appears to follow from what has been said – we should conduct real experiments among ourselves as well and not for instance merely in Latin America or in the missionary countries in the usual sense of the term. Perhaps the attempt should be made to found new communities existing in genuine solidarity with those groups which are marginal in a social and ecclesiastical sense even though these might initially cut across the normal territorial boundaries of the local parishes. We should in all confidence put up with the resulting mixture between the two. Such communities, which we would be attempting to integrate in a quite new way in an ecclesiastical and social sense with the groups which are socially and ecclesiastically marginal should in this respect develop their structures from within themselves in a manner appropriate to this task. It would then *ipso facto* emerge at the empirical level (obviously in combination with a theological process of reflection, which is indispensable) what structures, what offices a community of this kind needs, how it can live in a vital and fraternal union with other communities both of the new and the old kind, and what supra-communal juridical structures are necessary for such a union to be achieved. A form of diocese and a form of episcopal office of a new kind would gradually be developed without the historical continuity with the earlier form of diocese and episcopal office having to be lost. It would surely appear that the true theological nature of the episcopal office continues to be maintained by the ultimate identity of the Church through all ages, though this does not mean that the concrete form of the episcopal office, in which this true nature is concretized, simply has to maintain itself in petrified form with the result that the fulfilment of the functions which a bishop of today and tomorrow has would be frustrated. But, as we recognize, the dogmatic theologian is already going beyond his brief and entering upon an area in which it is the task of the practical theologian to operate.

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12

HOW THE PRIEST SHOULD VIEW HIS OFFICIAL MINISTRY

What we are concerned with here is the dogmatic principles in thee light of which a priest of the Catholic Church should view his official ministry. Obviously within the limited setting of an article these will not be expounded as systematically or as fully as would be necessary in a treatise on the sacramental theology involved. Our present intention, rather, is simply to bring out a few aspects which are commonly less clearly recognized, and which, therefore, may also be accounted as of special interest.[1]

It is probably possible appropriately to define this narrower theme from two aspects which, in a manner that is strange and far from self-evident, converge so as to demarcate the question. The first aspect consists in the fact that the social image of the priest of today has come to be a problem, although one that arises in different ways and in different degrees according to the differences prevailing from country to country. The priest of today is prompted by theoretical and practical considerations arising from within the Church as well as by others arising from the conditions of secular society, to ask himself afresh, and with a certain insecurity, what function he can still credit himself with in a Church in which the laity have become mature, and what role he can still regard himself as playing in a society which has become secular.

[203] The second aspect which can contribute to a precise demarcation of the theme lies in the sphere of biblical theology and the history of dogma. The findings of modern theology here – though admittedly they had not yet emerged so clearly at the Second Vatican Council – show us, namely, that down to the first few decades of the second century the official ministry of the Church had not yet acquired that clear and firm shape and place in the Church as a whole and in the individual community, nor yet that threefold articulation into diaconate, priesthood and episcopate, which we have become accustomed to in the Church from the second century onwards. Yet hitherto we have more or less taken it for granted that this goes back to the very origins of the Church. As we have said: these two viewpoints converge.

The position of the priest today within the Church and also in secular society seems to make it advisable or necessary to introduce wider possibilities of change in the outward form of the priesthood. At the same time, as we see it, the recent insights afforded by biblical theology and the history of dogma into the development of the official ministry in the Church during the apostolic age justify us, from the point of view of dogmatic theology, in allowing for a wider variation in the outward form of the priesthood without on this account calling in question its abiding nature, its genetic constitution or genotype (if we may express it so). It is from these considerations that the subject of our present brief remarks arises.

In a first section we intend briefly to indicate the findings and the scope in terms of doctrine (at least within Catholic theology) of these recent insights arising from the study of biblical theology and the history of dogma. In a second section certain consequences will be drawn from this with regard to possible variations in the concrete form of the official

[1] The author has put forward similar attempts from a theological point of view in the following studies: ‘The Point of Departure in Theology for Determining the Nature of the Priestly Office’, *Theological Investigations* XII (London and New York, 1974), pp. 35-38; ‘Theological Reflections on the Priestly Image of Today and Tomorrow’, ibid., pp. 39-60; from the spiritual and intellectual point of view the following of the author’s works should be mentioned: ‘Priestly Existence’, *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 239-262, and *Knechte Christi. Meditationen zum Priestertum* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1967); also, *Einübung priesterliche Existenz* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1970).

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priesthood, consequences which admittedly we shall here be stating merely as doctrinally possible (a point which we shall have to emphasize still more strongly at a later stage). This is not *ipso facto* intended to imply any decision on the question of whether such variations are or are not opportune on ecclesiastical, pastoral or spiritual grounds, or from the point of view of secular society.

We have said that biblical theology and the history of dogma have yielded fresh insights into the history of the priestly ministry in the apostolic age. Admittedly it is important to understand aright what the 'new features' here consist in. Protestant biblical theology and history of dogma has already long been emphasizing these findings, though in a manner which makes them appear irreconcilably opposed to Catholic [204] doctrine on the official priesthood. Probably it is partly for this very reason that it is only in the most recent times that Catholic exegesis and history of dogma for its part has come explicitly to uphold these findings and also to maintain that they are wholly reconcilable with the Catholic doctrine of the priesthood as rightly understood. Obviously we cannot here provide any proof of the assertions we are putting forward in terms of exegesis and the history of dogma. To attempt any such proof from the sources of the New Testament and of history would take too much time.

For our present considerations it is unimportant whether the theses we are putting forward are fully developed as they stand, whether they call for further precisions etc. Nevertheless for the study we propose in the second section of our considerations it is important firmly to recognize that the theses we have in mind are not inconceivable from the point of view of dogmatic theology. In other words we can take them as our starting-point for our practical considerations.

In order to understand the statements which we shall have to make explicitly and directly concerning the priesthood in the apostolic age certain preparatory investigations would be advisable. In itself a presentation of the so-called *jus divinum*[2] in Catholic ecclesiology should be adduced. Here, however, we can make only a few brief statements on this point. The *jus divinum* in the Church does not necessarily have to be traced back to any explicit declaration on the part of Jesus or of an apostle as one endowed with revelation (any more than many propositions which doctrinally speaking are absolutely binding). The *jus divinum* can also be implicitly present in other realities of revelation or in propositions relating to these, and may emerge from such realities or propositions in the conscious awareness of the Church only by a gradual process. The realities which we nowadays declare to be *juris divini* within the Church were not necessarily all present right from the origins in the primitive Church. We say that revelation closed only 'with the death of the last apostle', and by the same token not all the realities which are *juris divini* need necessarily have been present from the origins. At least within the apostolic age (and we should avoid naively identifying the end of this with the physical death of Paul or the last of the Twelve),[3] such realities could appear for the first time, could acquire firm form and then come to belong to the irreversible and eternally valid stock of realities belonging to the Church [205] throughout all ages. They do not on this account forfeit their character as being of divine right. It cannot in fact be proved that a reality of the kind we are speaking of was present in all areas or in all the decades of the apostolic age, nor is it possible in any way to prove the contrary as a matter of more or less certain historical fact. Here we are passing over the question of whether, and in what sense, it may even be possible or conceivable to speak of a development of the *jus divinum* (and not merely of our conscious awareness of it) in the post-apostolic Church.

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[2] On this cf. the author's article, 'Reflection on the Concept of "Jus Divinum" in Catholic Thought', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 219-243.
[3] On this cf. the author's *Inspiration in the Bible* (Edinburgh and London, 1961).

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These then are the preliminary remarks we need to make concerning the historicity of the *jus divinum* in the Church. This in itself makes it possible to conceive of a degree of variation in the official ministry which is not inconsiderable. But following upon these preliminary remarks we may now put forward a few theses with regard to the official ministry in the Church of the apostolic age. As we have said we are doing this without presenting the arguments from biblical theology and the history of dogma supporting these theses.[4]

If we want to achieve a right understanding of the official priesthood, one that does justice to its nature and is historically credible, we should not simply assume as self-evident the position that right from the very origins of the apostolic age there were three offices in the Church, namely bishop, priest and deacon, and that these and only these were always present within her as clearly distinguished and defined. Even abstracting for the time being from the question of whether there were not yet other offices in the Church at the end of the apostolic age, such as for instance that of the *didaskolos*, abstracting too from the further question of how on this showing any place is left for the Petrine office, whether as included in or as presiding over this triad, it is in any case uncertain that this triad existed in all parts of the apostolic Church or in all decades of the apostolic age in such a way that we should regard the episcopate as an official leadership, monarchic in character and presiding over the *presbyteroi* within the Church. This, it is true, is the picture which seems to be reflected in Ignatius of Antioch, though here it applies primarily to the Syrian Church. We wish to authenticate the nature of the Church's official ministry, and especially of the priesthood as doctrinally [206] defined, on the basis of scripture and the apostolic age. And precisely because of this we must first proceed from the single ministry found in the local Church in the concrete, for it is here that the Church as such achieves its manifestation. By comparison with this single official ministry we can regard as secondary the ways in which it is subdivided and articulated into several possible higher or lower offices regarded as subordinate functions within the single supreme official ministry in the Church or in a given local Church. At the same time, as we have already pointed out in our introductory remarks, this position does not necessarily imply that we cannot any longer regard this way of subdividing the official ministry as of *jus divinum*. This single official ministry, i.e. the single power of direction within an ecclesiastical community in all its dimensions does, it is true imply an apostolic succession to the extent that even according to the very earliest tenets to be found in the records of the Church she must have had an official leadership of this kind, and to the extent that the Church relies eternally upon the witness of the apostles and upon that which she herself was right from the origins in the apostles and through them. It is also clear that when we say that this necessary and ultimately single official ministry within the Church has authority to claim allegiance in faith and conscience from the individual, this authority is based not upon the will of the officially appointed leader, but upon the authority of the Church as one and whole which was brought into being by the Christ-event, and upon the fact of being authentically derived from her. This means that this authority must be called apostolic and deriving from Christ in the fullest sense. Scripture bears witness to the uniqueness of the apostolic office, though it is not something which constitutes merely the first stage, in a temporal sense, of the official ministry in the Church. Yet with regard to this apostolic office we should be cautious in calling the bishops the successors of the apostles in a sense which goes beyond what has just been said. After the apostles the officially appointed ministers in the Church (however they may figure, whatever names they may be called by in

[4] In this context attention should also be drawn to the *Letter of the German Bishops on the Priestly Office – a Biblical and Doctrinal Aid*. This document was issued on the 11 November 1969, and a special printing of it was disseminated (Treves, 1969). In the following period the subject emerged at the level of the universal Church with the preparations for the Synod of Bishops of 1975 at Rome, and was brought increasingly to the fore. Here we need only to remind ourselves of this discussion.

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the New Testament itself) did not simply receive the powers of the apostles (only a few special privileges being withheld). What they received, rather, was an official ministry which was necessary and which carried the apostolic Church forwards, one which, even though deriving from the apostolate and of its nature closely similar to it, nevertheless represents a new official ministry with a line of succession of its own. The situation here is precisely parallel to that of the post-apostolic Church which is not simply the apostolic Church itself as projected into a subsequent age, even though it is permanently based upon this apostolic [207] Church. As a matter of principle, and precisely in its bearing upon our later considerations, it is important to recognize that the articulation of the single official leadership in the Church into several distinct offices with distinct functions of their own is secondary. In this sense it seems that in the apostolic Church as it existed in various regions and in various decades there were variations of constitution among its communities, some being more presbyteral and collegiate in character, while in others a monarchic form of episcopate was more prevalent. Here we can set aside the question of what the various national and cultural backgrounds and origins of these variations of constitutions in the different communities may have been, how far, for instance, the characteristics they display are in part Judaeo-Christian and in part Hellenistic. A further question which must remain undiscussed here is how these communities, with their sharp divergencies of structure, gave expression in historical, social and institutional ways to that unity of the Church which is, on any showing, conferred upon them by Christ himself, and which, according to the tenets of the apostolic age, must also be given concrete manifestation. As we have already said, yet a further question which must remain unexplored for our present purposes is how far and in what way this ministry was articulated and subdivided according to the special needs of a given community to cater for further functions over and above those which in a later sense are called the episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate. In the situation as we have presented it it is also obvious that we cannot establish any firm or definable boundaries, as consciously recognized at that time, between the official ministry and ministers in the strictly juridical sense of the term on the one hand, and the free charisms which existed in the Church on the other, which were recognized as a necessary part of her life, and which under certain circumstances were not immune to a certain process of institutionalization. It is important to notice also that on any realistic view of biblical theology we are not in any position to establish that in New Testament times a special power was recognized with regard to the celebration of the Eucharist such that it was reserved only to a few and conferred by the laying on of hands. All that we can establish from this is that at the Last Supper the Lord entrusted his Church with the anamnesis of his death. This is obviously not to dispute the fact that it must have been borne in upon the Church's conscious awareness ever more clearly that the normal celebration of the supreme mystery had to take place under the direction of her officially appointed leaders, and that the recognition of this as it developed can perfectly well be conceived of as having been achieved even within the apostolic stage of the history of [208] the *jus divinum* in the Church.[5] At the end of the apostolic age, in the Deutero-Pauline epistles, we see that the normal way of appointing an individual to the leadership of a community was through the laying on of hands. There is no difficulty in conceiving of the conferring of this official ministry by the laying on of hands and as accompanied by prayer as a sacrament and also as having been instituted by the Lord. For undoubtedly in virtue of its content and its function within the Church founded by Christ an official ministry of this kind does imply an irrevocable promise of grace by God such that, by the assistance which God causes to be imparted to the official ministry, he continuously assists his Church and

[5] On this cf. in the present volume 'What is a Sacrament?' and also the earlier study, *The Church and the Sacraments*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Edinburgh/ London, 1963).

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guarantees her effectiveness to save and her indefectibility. Again the sacramentality of order is based upon the Church as derived from Christ and upon her special quality as the eschatologically victorious sign of God's will to save.

If therefore we seek to determine the task of the priest as official minister on the basis of the New Testament, we should not take as our starting-point the power to celebrate the Eucharist, even though since the apostolic age this has, at least in normal cases, been reserved to the priesthood. The legitimate starting-point in the New Testament for determining the nature of the official priesthood is to be found, rather in the function of official leadership of a Christian community. A further factor, corresponding to this, is that the lines of demarcation between episcopate and presbyterate in the New Testament are still very fluid and indeterminate. 'Leadership of a community' still includes both. It is obvious that leadership of a community is not to be conceived of according to the model of leadership functions in a secular society, but rather must be conceived of on the basis of the nature of the Church itself as the fruit of salvation and as mediating salvation. On this basis – and this also means on the basis of the Church as the single community of the faith and of avowed missionary commitment – the preaching of the gospel cannot be excluded from this function of leadership. The 'ministry of the word', as an official commission, is certainly to be numbered among the functions of any such official leadership in spite of what we find, for instance, in Ephesians 4. Here the relationship between the 'shepherds' and the 'teachers' is still not sufficiently clearly defined, and hence we have to allow for the possibility that in the theology of some later writings of the New Testament a certain basic autonomy is ascribed to the teachers as [209] compared with the shepherds, the bishops. (These 'teachers' and 'shepherds' belong to the beginning of the post-apostolic age, as distinct from the apostolic age in the strict sense.) We must consider the nature of the word of preaching and of faith uttered on the basis of Christ's commission, i.e. the radical 'event' character and exhibitive character of the word of preaching in general. In the light of this the connection between the power to preach and the power to dispense the sacraments as vested in the official leaders of the Church is relatively easy to understand. The word that is effective *ex opere operato*, that which is uttered in the sacraments, is the word of preaching in general in its most intense form. It is the word which the Church utters with an absolute commitment to the individual in significant situations in the concrete circumstances of his life as emanating from the Church's own irrevocable promise of grace. A further point, arising from what has been said, bears upon that conception of the priesthood which was put forward at the Council of Trent, and which throws into relief the Eucharistic and reconciliatory power attached to it. While in its positive content this is in no sense disputed, it probably does need to be freed from that one-sidedness which is the outcome of the Counter-Reformation bias, and to be set in a broader context, one which is attested not only by the New Testament but also by tradition as a whole. Hence it is unnecessary here to provide a further special interpretation on the basis of the official teaching of the Church of these theses formulated on the basis of the New Testament concerning the doctrinally binding quality of the official priesthood. Such interpretations have already explicitly been made, chiefly at the Fourth Lateran Council, at Trent, and also in more recent papal encyclicals and at the Second Vatican Council.[6]

The precise point we are concerned with in these brief remarks, largely unsupported as they are by justifying arguments, is this: the Church has at her disposal an extremely wide scope for developing variations within her necessary and ultimately *single* official ministry, in accordance with the needs of a particular age, the variations of cultural milieu etc., and of

[6] Obviously the discussion contained in the preparatory documents for the Synod of Bishops at Rome, 1971, as also the debates on this compilation itself, should be noticed for a fuller treatment of this point. Nevertheless they themselves for their part could not achieve any further progress on the most essential and important aspects of the question.

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subdividing that official ministry into various individual offices, regulating the relationships between these offices, establishing and defining the functions of the particular officials, and, without prejudice to the sacramentality of the process by which offices are conferred, defining [210] the concrete conditions under which they are to be handed on. Perhaps even it is open to the Church to distinguish between a normal way of conferring its official ministry and an extraordinary way, justifiable in cases of need. Possibly too it might arrange that the selection of an official minister should be by election on the part of the members of the Church or other bodies having the right to vote. All this remains fully within the scope of what is doctrinally possible, even though the justifiable concrete forms which all these matters assume in a given age or a given situation are to be decided not merely on the basis of what is doctrinally possible, but also on the basis of the *jus humanum* of the particular age involved and in accordance with its special conditions. Even if we say that the threefold division of the official ministry into episcopate, diaconate and presbyterate is binding upon the Church, and as a prescription is irrevocable and *juris divini*, something which has been developed in the apostolic age and is already abidingly present at the outset of the post-apostolic age – even then, the following point still always remains to be borne in mind: even on this showing the precise content of these three offices is still far from clear, and is surely capable of modification by the Church. Incidentally the same thing also appears in connection with other factors in the theology of order. For instance priests can confirm, and there is nothing against the position that they have a positive, albeit restricted, power to ordain others as priests. Properly speaking, therefore, the prerogatives of the episcopate can be regarded as consisting merely in a *potestas jurisdictionis* and not in a *potestas ordinis*. But the one point that cannot seriously be disputed is that such a division of the *potestas ordinis*, introducing wide variations of form and degree into it, is possible and to a large extent at least is subject to the judgement of the Church itself.[7]

A further way in which it can be shown that this single official ministry within the Church can admit of variations in the way in which it is subdivided, despite the existence of this triad of offices, is this: it is doctrinally speaking not inconceivable to suppose that the Church might consciously act in the same way as it presumably did at the end of the Patristic age and in the Middle Ages, in devising subdivisions of sacramental order. Today too the Church could create new subordinate degrees of its official ministry such as would correspond to the needs of the age without our having to deny from the outset or perforce that these had the character of [211] a sacrament. In the case of the episcopate, despite its sacramental character and its derivation from Christ, the appointment of a bishop can be conceived of as taking place in the most varied ways without thereby derogating from its doctrinal nature or denying that every such appointment must take place in a spirit of harmony with the entire Church and so too with the pope. In the same way also the relationship of a bishop to the *presbyterium* is subject to wide variations, for it falls virtually completely within the sphere of the *potestas jurisdictionis*. It is true that the episcopate (taken in the sense of an official power belonging to specific individuals rather than all the bishops collectively) is *juris divini*, i.e. an episcopal power consisting of an official teaching authority, an official priesthood, and an official pastoral position must exist in the Church. But however true this may be, I still do not believe that it is unequivocally certain that this episcopal power as such necessarily has to be vested in a single individual, and could not be vested in a *collegium*. If we envisage the possibility of an episcopal power having a collegiate subject then the possibility of variations in the relationship which the episcopate bears to the presbyterate becomes still clearer. Even in the

[7] The prerogatives of a bishop, in virtue of which only a bishop can consecrate other bishops, is relatively unimportant the moment we realize in principle that all other episcopal powers in respect both of the *potestas ordinis* and the *potestas jurisdictionis* can also be found in the so-called simple priest.

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case supposed there would always be a difference between bishops and priests, and yet an 'episcopate' of the kind we are thinking of as it existed in a particular Church, would have a 'presbyteral', i.e. a collegiate, structure. Although we weigh up all these doctrinal possibilities this does not *ipso facto* mean that we are recommending that they should be put into practice. Other aspects have to be taken into consideration so that not everything that is doctrinally possible is *ipso facto* advisable. It is important to ensure the continuity of a tradition which, although it may not be doctrinally compelling, is nevertheless historical. Because of this, because of pastoral requirements, because of conditions within the Church or in secular society, certain possible courses which are doctrinally conceivable may be wholly ruled out as practical measures in the concrete. Indeed the conditions of a particular age may perhaps make them morally impermissible because of the evil consequences which would ensue if they were put into practice. Thus though we are now about to draw further consequences for the re-shaping of the priesthood in our own times from the theses put forward in the first section of these considerations of ours, still we are in no sense *ipso facto* coming to any particular decision as to whether such possible courses are opportune in the concrete. On the other hand, so it seems to me, our present-day situation within the Church and in secular society is such that it is no mere futile playing with ideas for us to raise such questions concerning these possible ways of re-shaping [212] the priesthood as an official ministry which are doctrinally possible and yet widely different from one another in their outward aspect compared with the form the priesthood has taken up to the present. Nowadays many circles and groups of priests in the most widely contrasting lands are in fact engaging in considerations of this kind. Hence it is reasonable for us to put these theses contained in our first section to the test to see whether, they are doctrinally possible, even though we are still in no sense arriving at a decision from the pastoral point of view, and even though we must unquestionably guard against the temptation of concluding that a given course is advisable merely on the grounds that it is new. It is also obvious that changes in the concrete form of the priesthood, to the extent that this form has been established by juridical decisions which are *juris humani*, can take place only with the assent of the competent representatives of this human law. (In this connection, admittedly, the question of the formation of a legitimate *consuetudo contra legem* has to remain open.) But considerations of this kind with regard to the doctrinal possibility of new forms of the priesthood are reasonable even if they can be brought to realization only in a future epoch. Even the priest of today in his life and his official ministry has a certain scope for freedom and thereby for responsibility. Realities of the future must be prepared for, and moreover they must be prepared for 'from below' because it is in no sense the case that they can be brought to realization solely by a sheer sudden decree 'from above'. The affairs of the future call for preliminaries in the present. New 'phanotypes' are prepared for by micromutations in the present. This also applies to the priesthood. And hence the priest of today must positively assume responsibility for the priesthood of tomorrow and the forms which it will assume in the concrete. This is why we are enquiring into some of the characteristics which may perhaps be conceivable in the: future, which are fully within the scope of the nature of the priesthood as doctrinally defined, because this has a far greater degree of flexibility than is commonly supposed. For we are all too ready unreflectingly to identify the nature of the priesthood with the concrete forms of it to which we ourselves are accustomed in our own lives. But this will suffice by way of introduction to this second section. In what follows we shall now proceed to mention, though not in any systematic order, some of the possible: variations of this kind which seem to us at least worth considering for the future of the priesthood.

Probably it would be possible to have many more specialized priests and types of priests who were more clearly distinguished from one another. The tasks, functions and ministries within the Church which its [213] priests have *de facto* fulfilled in the course of Church

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history have all along varied very greatly. The priest has figured as the pastor of a concrete local community, as an expert in theology, as a contemplative monk, as a missionary among pagans, as a travelling preacher, chiefly in the apostolic orders, as an administrative official, as a politician or a poet. These and many other concrete forms of the priestly office are already to be found throughout the course of history. Yet it has been left more or less to the Church's powers of improvisation or to chance and the random changes of history to produce them. These differentiations have not been institutionalized and it has remained to a large extent obscure whether forms of this kind as they exist in concrete life have constituted variations of the priesthood as such or merely external supplementary functions in the life of the priest such that properly speaking they have nothing to do with his priesthood even though not irreconcilable with his priestly office. Today and in the future there is a question which we may perhaps have to raise precisely in view of the abundance of functions and ministries in the Church of the New Testament which mutually condition one another and which we are still far from having been fully defined. The question is whether we should not plainly reflect upon and actually institutionalize quite specific types of functions and ways of life which, while clearly different from one another, nevertheless constitute variations of the single essence of the priesthood. This question has a wholly practical bearing. In view of the social, cultural and individual differences between the men of today we may ask ourselves whether entry into the priesthood could not be opened to younger, and especially to older Christians, even when they are incapable or unwilling to undertake in principle the whole spectrum of priestly duties which we of today still regard as belonging to or concomitant with the priesthood. Perhaps side by side with the 'all-rounder' priest as we think of him we can imagine a type of priest for the future who from the outset is deputed only to a much more narrowly defined function and who has received a correspondingly more specialized formation. Such a one would be able to perform still more as a specialist in this more narrowly defined function than the priest of today is able to since the latter still has to be able to do everything that falls within the scope of his functions (at least according to the official theory). These new and more limited types of priesthood would not need simply to coincide with the earlier specialist types already recognized and put into practice though not in any proper sense institutionalized. Possible examples of such new types of priest would be the priest as artist, as a man of secular learning, as a psychotherapist, as a journalist, as a social worker, [214] as the leader of specific forms of Christian communities developed from below which would not be identical with the local parish communities etc. There is no need to object to all this that the powers of celebrating the Eucharist and forgiving sins are powers which cannot be eliminated from our idea of the essence of the priesthood. For obviously a priest of this kind would likewise have these powers. But even while these general priestly powers would be conferred upon him he would in normal cases be ordained by an ordination which was, in a certain sense, relative, with a view to the particular human groups which his specialized task was designed to cater for. Obviously the existence of many such specialized types of priesthood would give rise to the question of whether the special functions to which they were deputed could not just as well be exercised by laymen. But while we do not intend to discuss this question in any greater detail at this point, this much at least should be said: this problem is already present in many concrete types of the priesthood as it exists today in which the assigning of such specific functions to priests excludes laymen from the same functions. In any case the priesthood as it exists in the concrete today and tomorrow cannot be restricted exclusively to those tasks which, on a doctrinal interpretation (at least in normal cases) are ascribed to the priest alone. For otherwise we would in fact have to withdraw even the office of preaching from the realm of priestly functions.

In this context we may at least make mention of the problem of combining the priestly office with a specifically secular calling which is not integrated into the priestly function as

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an intrinsic element in it but is exercised rather on other grounds by an individual who is at the same time a priest. Since Paul the tent-maker such ways of combining the priesthood with a secular calling have constantly recurred for reasons of necessity, because of particularly strong and unsuppressible gifts in a specialist field, or on grounds which turn out in the end to be missionary in character. Surely we do not need to explain at any length the fact that in the concrete circumstances of human life, albeit not from the viewpoint of working skills, in such a case the priestly calling must be the truly decisive and determinative factor, the true *entelecheia* of a life of this kind despite the twofold calling. To this extent in normal cases no individual should become a priest unless he is willing to engage his whole life in this priestly function, and this remains true however many specialist forms of the priesthood there may be which are consistent with this principle. Yet in view of the ever-increasing lack of priests we should boldly raise the question of whether it would not also be possible to have one or other of the above-mentioned specialist types of priest, one who in [215] his mature years might take over the direction of a small local Christian community which would otherwise remain without a priest, and who would be ordained priest after a theological and religious formation sufficient for this purpose. For such a one would not have any further priestly functions taking him outside this small group. In such a case it would after all be conceivable that a priest might also exercise, i.e. retain, a secular calling as well.

The functions of leader of the community and itinerant preacher-instructor appear to have been combined as the outcome of a historical development at the end of the apostolic age. (It is reflected, for instance, in the Didache.) Thus the proclaimer of the word, despite the eminently priestly function bound up with his task, was in no sense attached exclusively to a particular region or a particular community. Nowadays we are faced with a great lack of priests in general and a great need of specialist priests. And in view of all this changes may be introduced in the future into parishes as they have existed hitherto. Up to now they have often covered small areas in which all the more important ecclesiastical functions were performed and were able to be performed by one priest. In the future such parishes will no longer necessarily remain simply the basic type for the organization of pastoral care in the same way as hitherto. We might conceive of teams of priests living together, their members specializing in particular fields in the manner already described and having a wider area deputed to them as their ‘Church’. In any case no objection can be raised against a pastoral strategy of this kind on the grounds of the nature of the priesthood itself.

The kind of priest we are accustomed to is in a position analogous to that of a state official. He receives an academic formation as a social functionary from the leaders of the society as a whole, and is then appointed from above to a specific position as a functionary of this kind. Yet all this has properly speaking nothing to do with the doctrinal nature of the priesthood. On the basis of the New Testament and the doctrinal nature of the priesthood we can however conceive of the priestly leader of a community in quite different terms. It is true that for the due exercise of his office he needs the approval of the leader of a wider regional Church called a bishop, who for his part must once more live in union and harmony with the universal Church and so with the pope. This basic approval granted by the individual leader of the community is granted by the sacramental laying on of hands, which certainly in its turn requires specific prior conditions in the individual to be ordained. But the more integrated an individual community was from within itself, i.e. from below, [216] in terms of faith, communal Christian love, the energy of neighbourly love, and common responsibility for the world, the more it would in a true sense have the right to present from within itself an individual Christian known to it, living with it, integrated within it for the office of leadership, a Christian who had the necessary qualities for this position of priestly leadership and who would be recognized as such a leader by the sacramental laying on of hands on the part of the authorized bishop. Perhaps it will come about that the lack of priests which is

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becoming ever greater will compel us to admit the need for priests of this special kind and to allow them to be ordained, priests who come from the specific community concerned and 'from below'.

A further point must be mentioned concerning the doctrinal possibility or impossibility of a priesthood 'for a limited period', for this is a question which has been raised in very recent times. The meaning of this question might be to enquire whether someone might be ordained to the priesthood with the explicit proviso made from the outset that he would place himself at the disposal of the Church in the priestly office only for a specific period. Alternatively it might be a question as to whether an individual could of his own initiative ask to be relieved of the priestly ministry with a certain right to have this request granted on the part of the Church even though no such time limit to his ministry had been paid down beforehand. There is an inclination to answer such a question in the negative on the basis of the defined doctrine of the Council of Trent concerning the indelibility of the priestly character. Yet it appears to me that this question cannot be answered on the basis of the *character indelebilis*, for this doctrine, on a precise view, is concerned merely with the impossibility of ordination being repeated. In my opinion it does not even include for certain any statement that it would be absolutely impossible for the Church, even if she wished it, so to restrict all priestly powers on justified grounds that any exercise of them would be not only unlawful but actually invalid. Furthermore on any unprejudiced evaluation of practices of *de facto* dispensing from office by degradation, secularization etc., practices which have always been in force, we shall find it impossible to assert that the Church can undertake such a course of dispensing a priest from his official ministry only when serious moral or religious offences against the priesthood and the Church have been laid before the Church. There are no clear or apparent reasons why there should not be other grounds, and moreover not merely those connected with priestly celibacy, grounds which do not presuppose any faults, and yet morally justify the priest concerned in petitioning the Church to grant him a dispensation from the [217] priestly ministry. Already at various points in the past history of the Church such laicizations have certainly occurred. Thus we may ask, at least without having to fear a veto from the outset from the point of view of dogma, whether such cases might not become more frequent in the future on the most varied social, cultural, and psychological grounds, and whether it would not even be possible to devise juridical forms for the granting of such dispensations which would be laid down from the outset and as of general application. All this is not of course intended to dispute the fact that it is at least doctrinally conceivable that the free decision of an individual to answer God's call to the priesthood is in itself intended to be an unreserved commitment of his whole life to God and to the priestly ministry. Yet we should bear in mind the temporary vows, by means of which, according to the mind of the Church, the individual binds himself to the evangelical counsels for a time even though this can certainly not be the ultimate meaning of the evangelical counsels. And in view of this we should exercise caution when we find ourselves inclined not to allow that something analogous may be involved in the decision to embrace the priesthood.

A further point which surely arises from the considerations we have put forward in the first section is that on doctrinal grounds it is possible to conceive of the relationship between bishop and priests as subject to a greater variability than we are nowadays normally accustomed to suppose. The Second Vatican Council has developed a theology of the episcopate, and that too quite independently of the narrower question of the significance of the universal episcopate in the direction of the universal Church, which actually goes against the medieval theology of a Thomas Aquinas when he regards the episcopate as the truest and fullest mode of realization as the *primum analogatum* of order and of the priesthood in general, so that by comparison with the episcopate the presbyterate appears almost a little one-sided, as a mere instrument for the assistance of it. I believe that this view of the

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relationship between episcopate and presbyterate is devoid of any possible theological justification, and is determined by a certain 'episcopal-ideological' one-sidedness. Certainly we can conceive of the priests of a diocese as a senate, and the bishop as monarch. According to the laws currently in force this presbyteral senate of a bishop has certainly a subordinate position in relation to him just as the universal episcopate has a subordinate position in relation to the pope. For this universal episcopate, working with and under the pope, constitutes the subject of the supreme and full power in the Church, something which we certainly cannot say of the *presbyterium* of a diocese according to the [218] prevailing laws. But all this is still not enough to express any clear and absolutely unchangeable relationship of the *presbyterium* of a diocese to its bishop. In concrete terms this relationship can again be conceived of in very different forms. In the concrete attitude of bishop and priests and in conformity with a possible human law in the Church it could perfectly well be the case that the bishop acts as, and is felt to be, the head of a *presbyterium*, who holds this *collegium* together, represents it, and makes it effective. This in turn would not necessarily have to imply that even at the level of some possible *jus humanum* the bishop would merely be *primus inter pares* and the executive instrument of the presbyteral college. It is possible to conceive of a temporal limitation of the office of a bishop. We may also weigh up how many functions and tasks are *de facto* gradually transferred from individual bishops to conferences of bishops. We may also consider the increasing importance of auxiliary bishops and subordinate bishops of local areas. And a further point which should not be overlooked is how variable the individual episcopal sees are in terms of size and importance for the Church in general. Nor should we forget those other questions of doctrine which remain open between bishops and priests which have already been spoken of in the first section, and which make it difficult to establish any clear lines of demarcation between the episcopate and the presbyterate. And if all these points are borne in mind then, so I believe, we are left with a broad scope for re-shaping this relationship in a manner appropriate to the times, the more so since the election of a bishop by the clergy of the diocese concerned is not doctrinally speaking impossible even though it is not provided for in the canon law now in force. No legal formula, taken by itself alone, is sufficient to express the entire human and Christian relationship between bishop and priests in all its fulness. Not everything which is not juridically institutionalized is on this account *ipso facto* secondary or unimportant. Not everything which the law prescribes is *ipso facto* also enjoined upon us by love and genuine humanity. Much that was formerly entrusted to the Christian and human resources of the bishop alone could and should be institutionalized today as a legally enforceable right of the priests. And this does not of itself imply any assault upon the doctrinal essence of the episcopate. It is possible to envisage the *presbyterium* in two distinct roles: on the one hand as a consultative senate of a monarchic bishop and as an instrument to assist him, on the other as a collegiate *presbyterium* as the bearer of the office in the diocese in union with an episcopal 'head' having the special rights proper to himself. These are not conceptual models which in practice need necessarily exclude one another. The very [219] fact that the relationships within the communities had already assumed very varied forms even in the apostolic age should serve to warn us against any rigidity in raising either one of these conceptual models to the status of an absolute norm.

We have put forward a whole range of hypothetical points concerning the priesthood, its history, its future, and even its nature as well. Such questions, hypotheses and differences of opinion are inevitable in an age in which the social changes everywhere also make it necessary to have a fresh appraisal of the abiding elements in the priesthood and the elements which are subject to change. But in all these questions, which seem so urgent to us and render us insecure and threatened even in our understanding of our own priesthood, we priests should not forget that ultimately speaking we do after all know what we are and what we

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have to do. Jesus Christ the crucified and risen Lord, his grace, the inconceivable mystery which pervades our life, imparts himself to us as our goal and as the strength of our life which we call God. It is these factors which always remain, yesterday, today and tomorrow, the living force by which we live. If we believe this with our whole hearts then we can also utter it in the name of the community and with the commitment of our whole life to our brothers and sisters with an effective word, a word that embodies the presence that we preach. Now if we do this then we are priests. There are many further questions concerning the priesthood, but the first and last of these questions is after all that concerning our faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord, in whom the infinite Mystery has uttered itself to us in forgiveness and so as to endow us with divinity.

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13

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL SPIRITUALITY AND WORK IN THE ORDERS

Our treatment of this subject will take the form of an enquiry into life in the religious orders as such from the standpoint of Catholicism and the Church in general.

In principle such an approach implicitly contains a generation problem. Obviously the question of the precise relationship between personal and communal spirituality[1] and work in the orders is with us in all ages and in every sphere. Nevertheless our only reason for applying ourselves to this subject here and now is the special relevance which it has for us. What I mean when I say that it involves a generation problem is that the question we are concerned with is one of special urgency and importance nowadays as between the younger and older members of the orders. A further reason, however, is that this relevance arises not merely from factors present in every age between the generations within a community, but is conditioned by the development of personal attitudes and outlooks such as have precisely not always existed as they now manifest themselves on the contemporary scene.

In other words that generation problem in the narrower and commonly accepted sense of the term – i.e. the abiding tension between old and young – is rendered *essentially* more acute because in the development of our ideas and attitudes we find ourselves in a period of transition which perhaps we may characterize with all due provisos as a transition between an epoch of nineteenth-century individualism on the one hand and one of socialism on the other. Precisely in *this* situation the two generations respectively become the representatives of these two epochs. The result [221] is that the problem assumes the same radical proportions as are always involved in the process of transformation and transition from one major epoch to another. But all this is something which cannot be entered into in any very explicit way here. In the light of this alone, and abstracting from many other considerations, it is obvious – to put it briefly – that our present-day situation viewed as a whole is specified by conflicting tendencies: the single situation in which we all live is specified by the contrasts between young and old, between individualism and socialism (taking both in a very general sense, and no value judgements being implied). The result is that each of these two entities possesses in its turn its own interior dialectic within itself while each generation is faced with a task which it genuinely has the capacity to accomplish, yet at *the same time* at which it can fail, the task namely of responding aright to the claims which the future makes upon it by maintaining in a way that endures and yet is ever new those elements concealed within the past which validly demand to survive and to persist.

In all this I am aware that I am viewing the matter from the standpoint of one who is *old*. Obviously too one of the older generation should view a problem of this kind as objectively as possible. He should strive to do justice to the other side. Yet something that is precisely involved in this objectivity which has to be striven for in this particular case is the awareness that we are incapable of experiencing in our own intimate personal feelings the fact that we are old; that that which an old man finds himself faced with as the outcome of tradition can very easily be apprehended by him as that which is new; that the only way in which he can arrive at an understanding and due respect for that which is new is invariably by a certain

[1] At a different level the author has defined his position on this question in his article, 'Das Gebet des Einzelnen und die Liturgie der Kirche', *Strukturen christlicher Existenz*, H. Schlier, E. v. Severus, J. Subdrack, A. Pereira edd. (Würzburg, 1968), pp. 189-198.

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process of intellectual self-denial. From this it follows that in principle the same subject-matter should also be treated of by a young man, to whom that which is traditional and old is in a certain sense alien, whereas that which is new is self-evident. Only then, by bringing the old and the young face to face in this sense, by each of them voluntarily conceding to the other that which still remains insuperably alien on grounds of ultimate freedom – only then could this theme be treated of in an objectively adequate manner.

In speaking of the young and the old in this sense I am of course aware that these two concepts are very obscure. There is a biological sense of being young or old; there is a young-ness or old-ness which is a matter of one's own personal development. There are sociological grades of 'oldness' based on the milieu from which an individual may stem. This may either belong to, and be orientated towards, the more traditional factors [222] of the past, or *alternatively* may imply the kind of social grouping which strives for a better future. And all these possible shades of meaning which may be attached to the terms 'young' or 'old' are in their turn combined in the individual in the most varied and even paradoxical ways. When therefore we simply use the terms 'young' or 'old' we are speaking very imprecisely.

In the present context when we speak of 'the orders' the realities subsumed under this heading vary very greatly among themselves. As they exist in the concrete the orders exhibit the widest variations. Despite the tendency of modern canon law to reduce all to the same level, and despite the influence of the (economic, intellectual etc.) necessities of modern life, which affect all in common, the distinguishing features of the orders are still very different in each case so that we may ask whether anything more than a vague and analogous concept can be found capable of covering them all. Yet if we take a concept of *this* kind as our starting-point we all too easily incur the danger of failing to realize the character of the individual order as a concrete reality. This is a state of affairs which must be recognized. It bears upon the judgements which we have to arrive at in the present study. There may be individual orders to which they are far from applying in any real sense. If this is the case then it is something which must be understood and excused in the light of the state of affairs described above.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY INDIVIDUALISM AND SOCIALISM

One last preliminary point: we are proceeding from the assumption that the situation of a modern kind of individualism prevailing in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries was *the* situation which most of all left its mark upon the orders, their spirituality and their work. This is not to dispute the fact that the degree and depths to which it did leave its mark upon the individual orders varied very greatly according to their histories, their geographical regions, their functions and tasks, and above all the social milieu from which they drew their members. Nevertheless all of them shared, each in its own way, in this common lot, even in those cases – indeed precisely in those cases – in which they sought to adopt a critical attitude towards their own times or even rejected them. Obviously I am aware that the concept of 'nineteenth-century individualism' is imprecise and obscure to a degree for the very reason that it is almost always impossible to sum up in a single term that which characterizes oneself in one's historical development and in terms of special [223] qualities which it is impossible ever to realize consciously in their fulness. The modern individualist is a man who is convinced of the special qualities of his own individuality, who attempts to reflect upon them, feels them to be of positive value and as something which he has to cultivate. The modern individualist, therefore, feels that the rest of society, apart from a small circle of relations and friends, is that which is extra, alienating and threatening. To him the population at large constitutes the masses which he is inclined to despise. Hence he seeks to

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be free, first in his thinking to the extent that he feels that his convictions are not identical with the convictions of society as a whole, though obviously he cannot be excused from interpreting these for himself. They are not the intelligent reproduction of the collective convictions of society. On the contrary, they are opposed to these and constantly threatened by them. He seeks also, therefore, free scope for the exercise of his powers as the sphere for his own personal and individual decisions. He is convinced of the importance of the great personalities whom he honours for the history of society as a whole. He is elitist in outlook. He lives in a world in which unconsciously and unquestioningly the necessary conditions are already provided ensuring that he is able to live individualistically in this sense. There is a society which is ready to serve the needs of this particular individual. The modern individualist is... We could prolong our description much further, but in doing so would always be open to the objection that the individual we are constructing is one who either does not or should not exist, one who we ourselves would never wish to be, even those of us who belong in the fullest sense to this age. But I believe that despite this there is such a figure as a modern individualist. He is an historical reality and can be such precisely because despite their common nature men are not always and everywhere the same.

Now let us turn to a further assumption from which we are simultaneously proceeding. It is this: much that is observable nowadays in society, and that is beginning to stamp social living and also, to an increasing extent, the spirituality and the work of the particular orders, is such that without injustice it both can and should – albeit with many provisos – be brought under the heading of the socialistic factor. Obviously the modern individualistic factor can, as it were, be metaphysically purified to a point at which only that element of the personal remains which exists, or should exist, always and everywhere, where that which is human in the true sense is to some extent achieved in its undiminished fulness. Again we can metaphysically sublimate the socialist factor to a point at which only that remains which, considered as an orientation [224] towards the social and the communal in human living, belongs precisely to the very nature of the finite personal spirit which is in man. But in this context we are using the term ‘personal’ in a sense belonging to modern individualism, and obviously too in a sense which is morally and metaphysically entirely neutral and involves no hostile judgement. Again we are using the term ‘communal’ as characterizing the coming age, and again one which does not imply any hostile judgement or any glorification either. Yet in using these terms we are assuming from the outset two points: first that the *basic* metaphysical substance inherent in these two terms has an abiding validity in *every* epoch of human history, second that at the same time within the individual epochs the historically conditioned form of these two essential structures of human living and development can vary very greatly. And if all this is true then surely we are in a position to say that from the nineteenth century onwards the presentation of the orders in terms of spirituality and work was ‘individualistic’ in character, whereas in the coming ages the presentation of the orders in terms of spirituality and work will rather bear a ‘socialistic’ stamp. This of is course not to deny that this ‘socialistic’ factor in the approaching epochs will assume a very different guise from that which far-seeing people and prophets envisaged for it when they began to speak of it in the nineteenth century.

REALITY IN THE ORDERS

We older members of the orders are at basis nineteenth-century individualists. Obviously we have maintained community life and still willingly do maintain it. Perhaps even in a sense that is yet more obvious than among the younger members of the orders we have accepted a common task, a common work of collaboration, and have carried it out uncomplainingly and

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without raising many problems. Certainly too there are orders which from the very nature of their traditions have made this common task part of their lives and have carried it out in a way that is obvious to them and belongs very closely to their most intimate personal lives. And certainly, from the very nature of the Church itself, and as heirs to an ancient past, the orders have not *merely* been societies made up of nineteenth-century individualists, but also in this respect a *complexio oppositorum*. But this mixture of mutually opposed elements which is present in all human life did nevertheless have a specific form, a particular balance between the opposite qualities involved which does not remain in force for all ages or binding upon them. Hence I still believe that it is [225] justifiable for us older members of the religious orders to say that we have all been nineteenth-century individualists. It might be asserted, albeit with a certain element of exaggeration, that we have even existed in our large communities somewhat as institutionalized hermits. In fact we have been individuals who as such have lived and worked together. Particular friendships were frowned upon. On the whole it was not usual for individuals to open their hearts to one another. Each man stood on his own feet in coping with his own life. Alone he met his own interior needs and arrived at his own decisions of conscience, or at most he discussed them with a spiritual director, and even in these cases there was a certain impression of an official advisory board. The communal 'rule' which we strictly observed in the orders was at basis not so much the social institutionalization of the *community* as such, but the rational order within which it was possible at once to maintain the due rights of many individualists and at the same time their common work. Abstracting for the moment from the human factor, something which always exists among normal men, we could say that our community was primarily functional in character but was not concerned with men as such or with their personal union as distinct from their merely functional one. Even the kinds of work which we performed in common were clear in themselves, so that they did not require much discussion, at any rate not once the basic decisions had been arrived at so that all that still remained to be carried Out was already fixed and clear beforehand in the plan devised for such work.[2] Obviously in practice other factors were always present at the same time: the emotional factor, friendships possibly of a very individualistic stamp, traces of inculpable eroticism, and as a matter of practical experience a sense of belonging together which went beyond that which was prescribed on the basis of our common concerns and of a somewhat aseptic interpretation of what love of neighbour should mean. Nevertheless all this was, after all, not *in principle* catered for in religious life as stamped by the nineteenth-century individualism. It was not consciously reflected upon. In fact the conscious realization of it was rather suppressed, and in any case it was hardly institutionalized or reduced to forms and modes of conduct which as such belonged to the religious life which it sought to develop. In accordance with this the relationship which individual members of religious orders bore to their superiors likewise always contained a strong element of officialdom and remoteness even in [226] those orders in which the superiors were frequently changed. What has been sketched in here as the mode of life of us older men really amounts only to a quite vague approximation, and should not be taken as a condemnation of it. All that we are seeking to achieve is to sketch in a mode of living conditioned by a particular age, which is, or has been, at least as legitimate and capable of fulfilment for its own times as any other which may be lived by today or tomorrow and which is justified in its own right. It was a harder more masculine mode of living, which had its greatnesses, its limitations, and not infrequently too its tragic elements in the form of petrification and lack of real warm-heartedness (this often being wrongly interpreted as the fulfilment of duty). It has in fact the same limited scope as in fact is inherent in all that is

[2] cf. the author's articles on the situation and the viewpoints involved, 'Die Zukunft der Orden in Welt und Kirche von heute', *Geist und Leben* 43 (1970), pp. 338-354.

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human. We older members have a life to live in common with younger ones, who bring their own special qualities into the common life and have the right to do so. This is the context in which we live and of which we must take cognizance. Yet in this context we for our part have the right to continue to live in our former mode even though, from an objective historical point of view, this can be designated as a nineteenth-century individualistic mode. We can freely concede – always taking into account the demands which common life makes upon old and young alike – that we do not view concelebrations with the same favour as the young, that we are less inclined than the younger generation to engage in long discussions and conferences,[3] that we prefer to be by ourselves, to meditate alone, than to engage in group religious discussions; that this experience of ours of a sound old tradition that has been tried and proved is not mere illusion or something that has *merely* seized upon factors belonging exclusively to the past. We must bring this personal outlook of ours – though obviously without any reactionary or intransigent hardening of attitudes – into the life of the religious orders of today in which we are and remain unreservedly involved. We must bring to them that which we have become through our own personal history. Only so can we ensure that on the one hand the true heritage of the more recent past continues to be maintained in our orders, these too being constantly and rightly bound by their own history, while on the other hand that which is abidingly valid, which was developed in a form belonging particularly to us and conditioned by our age remains alive in the future of the orders, albeit in new and altered forms.

[227]
TRANSITION

Nevertheless we are living in a period of transition in which the socialistic factor or, to formulate it more cautiously, the communal factor in the orders is also seeking to achieve formal expression. This statement might perhaps be regarded as paradoxical, for it is in fact religious communities that are being treated of, and this makes it difficult to understand how the communal factor in such groups can seek to achieve a new significance special to the particular epoch. Yet this is in fact the case. What is being sought for is a fraternal community formed from below and constantly undergoing fresh creative formation to a greater extent than is provided for at the individual level simply by canon law. It is obvious that a stronger sense of community cannot simply be achieved by reviving the social modes of earlier communities. Rather it seeks to introduce the greater maturity, education and individuality of the person into the new forms of community life, and to have a 'democratic' form of community at the level of its social institutionalization. This does not gainsay the assertion that there is a shift of emphasis in the life of the orders towards the communal. There is a tendency to favour small communes either as wholly, autonomous or as the sort of units into which a more large-scale community is subdivided so as to achieve a fully human way of life. In the decisions which have to be arrived at in the religious life and in the work of religious communities it is sought to aim at processes of collective counselling in which all participate, each in his own way, and in which the democratic and collegiate structures still surviving from the earlier histories of the orders are effectively brought to life once more, and moreover in a way that is meaningful for modern times. These, it is felt, must be something more than mere façades designed to conceal authoritative decisions arrived at exclusively

[3] On this cf. in general the author's article, 'Alte und neue Frommigkeit', *Theologische Akademie* IV, K. Rahner and O. Semmelroth edd., (Frankfurt, 1967), pp. 9-28, and also 'Dialogue in the Church', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 103-121.

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from above.[4] Here and there groupings of members of religious orders are to be discerned which are to some extent paracanonical. In this way they seek more readily to bring home to the official authorities in the orders what their aims are. There is pressure for a greater degree of intelligibility for *all* elements in the regime of religious orders, right down to their economic workings. The younger members of the orders, who are still undergoing their formation, are nowadays unwilling any longer to be treated as mere subjects for the older generation to educate. Instead they want to contribute positively to the life and activities of the order. When and if the liturgy as such is still taken [228] seriously it is in principle and obviously an affair of the community, not merely in theory but in its concrete forms as well. In the orders an attempt is made to achieve a community which is sustained by a *more personal* commitment of the individuals *to one another*. Where the work is being done in common it should on this account be sustained to the widest possible extent by a sense of charismatic vocation and personal inclination on the part of the individuals, it should as fully as possible spring from spontaneous creativeness and invention, and should be not so much the dutiful carrying out of a plan and a task which are already laid down as such beforehand and may not be called in question. The teamwork itself should then be sustained by a conception of creative work of this kind. It is for the team to produce the plan, and for it and only it to authorize it and put it into practice. The team should not merely consist in the sum total of those engaged in the work who merely carry out a project designed independently of the team itself. Admittedly on this showing it becomes a far more difficult question how the concept of a common function can still take into account the fact that for whole decades or still longer the same task was carried out by the same order and its members. Discussions are favoured and long communal sessions. Religious conversations with an individual stamp are nowadays more frequent and more taken for granted than solitary meditation, just as in general (at least at present among us) human fellowship is in the eyes of the young, if not the only factor then at least the one which alone renders intelligible and justifiable everything else in the religious life and in the life of the order. It is no longer the official juridical structure of an order which sustains the personal life of the community at the practical level, for the younger members view these official structures and laws with a certain coldness, and do not have the impression that such things must always remain the same. The converse is true: it is the personal community life which renders the official social forms justified and bearable if and to the extent that this community life is felt to be liberating and demanding in a human sense. These juridical and official forms of social living are not laid down beforehand without question on the basis of the Church and as valid in all cases, such that they are responded to in an attitude of loyalty, this in itself being the attitude and the decision of a religious individualist and being felt to be valid and binding even when his relationship to the rest of the members of the order has become extremely questionable. Instead we are living in a kind of community which produces certain juridical structures of its own. Where therefore the sense of community as such has been lost the juridical factor is no longer felt to be binding in any [229] true sense. On this basis (and of course on many other grounds, as for instance a far more functional interpretation of the religious life as compared with former times) we can also explain the fact that the attitude of the younger members to their order is far more subject to conditions. It is an attitude which often shocks us older men. An individual who leaves the order is no longer regarded as having failed or fallen by the way, nor is his act felt to be the outcome of an unsuitability for this order. On the contrary, it is felt to be a failure of the order itself to meet the just claims of this individual who departs from it.

[4] On this cf. H. J. Walraff, 'Mitgliedschaft und Mitverantwortung in den Orden heute', *Geist und Leben* 41 (1968), pp. 47-59.

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THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE PERSONAL AND THE COMMUNAL ASPECTS

On the basis of these assumptions we are seeking to speak of the relationship between personal and communal spirituality and work in the religious orders. In doing so we are not concerned with the approach or the findings of a metaphysical or theological anthropology in relation to these two factors. For basically speaking all that would still remain to be said is something which for any Christian anthropology is obvious: ultimately speaking the personal and the communal are not factors which are in conflict with one another or exclude one another. On the contrary they mutually condition one another and grow or diminish *in interplay with one another*. All that could then be said is that communal living in the true sense can only grow and remain vital as the outcome of a decision and a responsibility on the part of the individual which is wholly personal in each case, and that the truly personal factor consists at basis in a loving orientation of oneself to others, i.e. to one's neighbour and to God. Admittedly the physical side of human nature is such that any community among men also implies those prior conditions and further effects which are entailed in the *social* forms of communal living, and these in turn can assume the most varied forms according to the particular human grouping of which they are the expression. Of course in a metaphysical and theological anthropology many difficult questions would have to be considered with regard to the attitudes involved in the personal and social factors in the individual, and the answers to these would have to be applied to the life of the religious orders. But all this will not be discussed in the present context. Here rather we shall be considering from the point of view of an older member who is individualistic precisely *why* it should be that today even in the orders a shift of emphasis from the personal to the communal is justified in terms of the particular epoch even when we older [230] members feel it rather as fairly inappropriate to ourselves and as a threat to us; even when in the religious orders there is a further question which still remains to a large extent unsolved, that namely of the actual forms in the *concrete* which this communal factor is to assume, so necessary and pressing as it is today, and when this new mode of living, in itself justified, also carries with it a threat to that which properly speaking must constitute the life of an order and which implicitly contains its function in the Church for mankind.

An *initial* reason for a more intense and a new kind of communal living in the orders is to be found in the essentially more complex realities in which even the orders have to live and work nowadays. Formerly we had clear principles to guide us. The concrete conceptual models which we used in expressing these principles to ourselves, and which we made our own, were likewise stable even though in our particular case this society was merely that of the Catholicism of the nineteenth century, easily falling into a defensive ghetto-like attitude and being somewhat bourgeois. In that setting it was in fact possible to maintain a mentality of this kind more or less homogeneously because this kind of Catholicism was intellectually, socially and politically screened off from the rest of the world, and even as such could still command large numbers of adherents. In such a context life in the orders was relatively simple. We knew quite precisely what we should believe and think and the positions taken up by friend or foe. We had our principles and also very concrete patterns for putting them into practice. All that we had to do was already set forth clearly and beyond all question beforehand in the principles and the concrete conceptual models for applying them in practice. Today all this is different. Even for those who preserve an unconditional loyalty to the principles of the faith, and also to genuine Christian tradition, over and above that which is binding in a strictly dogmatic sense, it is often no longer so unequivocally clear what these principles imply and what under certain circumstances they do not imply. This is the outcome of the fact that the Church, if she is not to degenerate into a minor agglomeration without

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significance (something quite different from the 'little flock' that the Church should be, is, and will be), must apply herself in fresh and courageous ways to the social and intellectual situation as it actually confronts her today, and must not screen herself off in an artificial world which she has thought out as right for herself.[5] Christianity and the Church must not conform to 'the world'. Under certain circumstances they must take up a radically [231] *critical* attitude towards the tendencies and fashions and factors which are presumed to be self-evident in the current age. But this is precisely something that is possible only if we really commit ourselves to the world. The prolongation of the ways of earlier times in the life and work of the Church, together with its assumed clarity, uniformity and sureness, is simply no longer possible nowadays. Even when and where the Church has to be the sign of contradiction towards a sinful and straying world, we must proclaim her contradiction in such a way that it is really hearkened to. She must adapt her message to the perspectives and outlooks of the world of today. This does not mean any strained, artificial or pedagogic transition from the world that is proper to her into that of the others, but, at least in principle, an unreserved acceptance of the world in which we Christians and members of orders inescapably have to live from the outset. On the basis of this situation it is not so clear and obvious what we mean by our *principles* of dogma and of Christian morality even though this is not to say that we can no longer have any global understanding of them or any ultimate loyalty in faith towards them.

The concrete *models* for applying these Christian principles in practice have become still more lacking in clarity. Questions must arise as to precisely *what* inescapable compulsion and the kind of freedom that there ought to be signify in their relationship to one another in life and in society; precisely *how* personal power freely to decide one's material values is related to social theories precisely of these values, or *how* we of today can communicate to an individual who has become secularized a pristine experience of God;[6] what in a true sense constitutes Christian education; how the sacraments should be conferred today in such a way as to avoid the impression that we are practising magic or empty ceremonies of an almost folklorist kind; how we can boldly accept the factor of sexuality without falling into a shallow libertinism. To these and a thousand other questions of human and Christian living we can, it is true, still to some extent readily formulate certain answers of principle as a normative framework. But precisely *how* we should answer these questions in the *concrete*, or what form the concrete models of application should assume today in which these principles are put into practice – in a world that has become interiorly and exteriorly dynamic – these are human questions which do not really have any one clear answer even though it is questions of fact and questions of morality both at once that [232] we are faced with. In such a world, in which that which is signified in the principles, and still more the concrete models for applying those principles in practice have become less clear, it is impossible for the life of the orders to proceed from the assumption that the norms governing *their* lives at any rate are clear and unequivocal, that they have already been tried and tested countless times in tradition, and that we should merely loyally continue to follow them. We members of religious orders too have to accept and endure the uncertainty and fluidity of our age as it progresses into a future that has still not clearly been recognized. That is the initial postulate if we are gradually to develop and to provide for other Christians a credible model of Christian living in the future. Precisely within the religious life, however, considered as a communal form of life, such a task calls for a far more intensive collaboration, and so too a

[5] Here cf. the author's article, 'Konziliare Lehre der Kirche und künftige Wirklichkeit christlichen Lebens', *Sckriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, 2nd ed., 1968), pp. 479-498; 'Christian Living Formerly and Today', *Theological Investigations* VII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 3-24.

[6] cf. the author's article, 'Theological Considerations on Secularization and Atheism', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 166-184.

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dialogue among the members of the orders, than was formerly necessary. If the religious life is to remain intact experiments must be taken in it in common. If we are to undertake such experiments in common, i.e. if new concrete models are to be tested out as a matter of practical experience in the life and apostolic work of the orders, then we must first and foremost discuss with one another and so consciously reflect upon the possibilities for the future. Some may suppose that they can confine themselves to directives from above, albeit assuming a mature consideration on the part of superiors. They may regard such a procedure as still effective even for today. They may proceed on the basis that all principles and concrete models for applying them in practice are already clearly and unequivocally present, and so need only to be carried out by those who are specifically selected for the task precisely by the command of the superior. What is called for is the most active collaboration possible on the part of as many members of the order as possible in the decisions which are necessary for life and work. This is not in the first instance a postulate emanating from some romantically thought-out democratic ideal, but rather something demanded by the very nature of the case which can be discovered only if as many individuals as possible who are to bring it to reality collaborate in this process of new discovery. Orders too must avoid becoming a mere minor agglomeration *through their own fault*, becoming societies, that is to say, which still manage to sustain themselves at a cost of being reduced to a pitiful number of individuals deriving from a socially and intellectually backward milieu, and so still ready to appropriate these ideals in their outmoded form.

[233] We must guard against taking spirituality in too ideological a sense. Rather we must understand it as the Christian element and the ultimate depths of life as it exists quite normally and in the concrete. And if we do this then what has just been said will also be accounted as spirituality. Nowadays this too stands in need of experimentation, of discussion, of the community and its collaboration more than in former times. What we are seeking to express in all these rough indications is simply this: life in the religious orders of today and tomorrow is different from what it formerly was in that it calls for a greater sense of community. This can become a living force only in the personal responsibility and active commitment of every individual. And it cannot be brought about by force solely by institutions. But this deeper sense of community is necessary because it is called for by the special qualities of our own age. Obviously it is not prescribed by the contemporary situation as something which cannot fail. The situation which calls for this deeper sense of community on the part of the orders at the same time raises threats and obstacles to this sense of community. The reason is that today, by comparison with former times, there is a far greater number of different tendencies and possibilities, and in view of this this community sense is precisely not something already given that can be taken for granted, but something rather that has to be established by conscious effort with sacrifices and renunciations.

There is a quite different second aspect from which the sense of community in religious life appears more urgent nowadays than was formerly the case. The interior world of the individual is far wider, more complex and more subject to threat. Now this manifestly calls for a greater sense of community between members of religious orders as an aid for coping with this threatened interior world. We older men in the orders do in fact experience how the younger ones draw closer to one another, open their hearts to one another and, when taking the most intimate personal decisions, seek to arrive at them in community intercourse of this kind. Yet this phenomenon is manifestly not to be explained simply as sentimentality, helplessness or lack of self-sufficiency. In earlier times we had the impression (though naturally this is to put it in a somewhat simplified form) that the individual depended in his life on the force of reason and the principles embodied in this as propositionally formulated, as well as on a formal free will which either did or did not put these principles into practice. A very clear example of this approach is to be found in the unmistakable conviction of the

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usual moral theology that a man who is more or less normal can certainly fulfil a duty once he has undertaken it even [234] throughout his whole life, provided only that he *wills* to do so, the more so since the grace for fulfilling such a duty can never be lacking to him (through the prayer necessary for this).[7]

Today, however, the individual, and even the member of a religious order, has a quite different experience. The powers of reason or of freedom seem to him to be only very incomplete elements in his life. He feels himself as one exposed to conditions and forces of which he can never be aware, or at any rate of which he can never have any adequate conscious knowledge. For him his personal history is something more than merely the history of his autonomous freedom. Even abstracting from the external circumstances which he cannot control, he feels his future not as something planned and realized merely by himself of his freedom, but at least equally as the fate which rises up from the unfathomable depths within his being, and which he has to endure. He has no impression that so long as normal conditions in civic life endure it is clear that the individual can always perform what is prescribed by a duty once undertaken or by a law imposed from without. The man of today feels himself as one who is threatened by himself, not as one who has sovereign control over himself. His own reality and life strike him not as a reality fully open to his understanding and possessed by him from the outset, but rather as that which gradually unveils itself to him only in the course of an unfolding development which he can never in any full sense whatever guide and direct. He feels that he can see through us older men. For him our loyalty to principles is not due to any moral excellence or real maturity on our part, but is to a large extent the outcome of the fact that we have matured and grown old in a milieu that is intellectually and socially homogeneous. And truly not everything in this evaluation is false. We older men are also the product of a milieu which the young neither have nor desire. It cannot be our task here to interpret this experience which man has of himself in its truth or in its limitations, or to assign it its rightful place within the total scope of human life. This experience will be taken as given. Our purpose is simply to explain from a new aspect why man embarks on a new and urgent quest for community life, for community discussion even to the point of psychotherapy. He flees from his inner state of threatenedness and obscurity to his fellow man. In the encounter with his fellow he [235] comes a stage nearer to achieving clarity about himself. The fact that the same thing happens to his fellow gives him the courage to accept the inscrutable factors in his own life. Prescriptions for life and work seem more effective as guards against the innermost uncertainty and obscurity with regard to the future even within man's own soul when they are arrived at and approved in common as the outcome of discussion with others. The fact that it happens to others as to himself gives him the courage to accept himself.

WHAT REMAINS AND WHAT FOLLOWS

We have been considering two of the reasons (certainly two among many others) for placing the chief emphasis on the communal rather the individual and personal at this particular epoch. Before proceeding to draw certain practical consequences from this it remains to be said that the member of a religious order must always – and so today and tomorrow too – be the man who is capable of living in personal responsibility as an individual and in solitude with God. Christianity is the religion of man's personal relationship with God, and it can

[7] On the duties of the members of orders cf. the ideas put forward by the author, 'On the Evangelical Counsels', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 133-167, and also the earlier remarks in 'Laie und Ordensleben. Überlegungen zur Theologie der Säkularinstitute', *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck, 4th ed., 1966), pp. 359-391.

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never be reduced to merely human relationships. Christianity is the religion of dying in solitude with Jesus into one's own radical weakness and into the mystery of God as utterly outside our control. As a religion of this kind Christianity is not an ideological supplement to a life which in itself could certainly be rounded off even without this ideology. It is this rather because this solitariness and inalienable *uniqueness* in the life of man are factors which are inescapable. They may indeed be suppressed through faults or suffering, but they can never be eliminated even though there is a constant temptation and danger of excluding this solitariness and inalienable uniqueness from human life. If the life of the religious orders is intended to be a pattern of Christian living,[8] then it cannot be dispensed from the task of enduring the inalienable uniqueness of man and the solitariness of death which pervades life. Only so can it really come to know what is meant by 'God' and how we can have a personal relationship with him. Only where a Christian attitude of this kind succeeds will something more emerge from the communion between men than the putting into practice of a herd drive and the flight of man from himself into the anonymity of mankind in the mass. This is not to say that there cannot be a genuine sense of human community even without any explicit reference to God. [236] But to present such a thing is certainly not the sole task of the sense of community of a religious order. Even a human fellowship which is at first 'this-worldly' and 'secular' – and it is to such a community that men seek to reduce Christianity in a process of 'horizontalism' – either penetrates to the ultimate depths of its own nature and so attains to God (although, it may be, only in a very unconscious sense), or alternatively it perishes in its own tragedy, the impossibility of all human love attaining its consummation. From this it follows that that which at first seems merely to be the transitory form of religious life in the nineteenth century is nevertheless something more. For all the natural and inevitable process of change in its concrete form, in its truest essence it is something which must be introduced as redemptive and salvific into that sense of human community which is to be the sign manual belonging to the particular epoch of the religious life of the future. Even in the life and work of the orders of today and tomorrow the mentality of the older members, who have hitherto been willing to live as institutionalized hermits, has an abiding function. If Christianity has to be something more than merely the due recognition of a specific mode of life belonging to a particular age, if it is also and always to provide a critique of this and to be its redemption, if it is always true that any genuine community can be truly itself only if those belonging to it can accept themselves and endure themselves in their solitariness (with God), without which all human community would become merely a sheepfold, or would necessarily imply excessive demands of a false and worldly kind, then it follows that the old ways of religious life too in terms of life and work have an abiding importance despite their conditional and transitory character in virtue of the essence that is brought to reality in this conditional state. This function of handing on an abidingly Christian element to the future would constitute an especially urgent task for the older men of the orders. Admittedly the only way in which it can be fulfilled by these older men is on condition that the personal solitariness of the individual as he finds his self-sufficiency in God alone is not misused so as to withdraw himself from an attitude of loving openness to community with his fellow. On the contrary this solitariness and self-sufficiency of his must serve as a prior condition enabling him really to give himself selflessly to his fellows. Only if the younger members notice that the heritage which we older men are seeking to hand on serves precisely to provide a basis for that genuine community which the younger members seek will we succeed in introducing into the future of the religious orders the ancient heritage in an altered form. Only so shall we be able to apply the name 'religious order' in any Christian [237] sense at all to the future communities historically descended from the present-day orders.

[8] On this cf. 'Theological Observations on the Concept of "Witness"', *Theological Investigations* XIII.

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Inevitably the foregoing observations have been at a very abstract level. In conclusion, therefore, certain further consequences following from what has been said must be put forward. While these cannot rid our earlier remarks of their abstract character, they should nevertheless do something to mitigate it.

In the religious life the way is undoubtedly being paved for a shift in the relationship between the individual and personal factor in its concrete form and the communal factor. This remains true even though, it may be, precisely in the orders of the future the personal factor, unique in each case, will be, in its character as inalienable and as isolated, that which is destined to become an ever-fresh task and in a sense a mark distinguishing these orders from other secular forms of society. It is in fact not the case that history must necessarily or always constitute a continuous ascending process to the higher good or the higher beauty. It could equally well be that over what might be a long period the socialistic factor might really come to predominate over all else in the form of a humanity that is manipulated in the mass, of the higher grade of domesticated animal, leading to a destruction of human freedom in the interests of a smoothly running system. It could be the case that the Christians must precisely be numbered among those who have remained pent up in the citadels of refuge of their own personal spirit of freedom and of inalienable responsibility, those who can still sustain their individuality as freedom and a state of being brought face to face with the mystery of God.[9] But even viewed in this light the communal factor in the orders of the future remains that which gives them their special quality as compared with the orders of the past. In saying this it must be admitted that our statement is to be understood in very divers ways according to whether in any given case the communal factor too in the various orders has hitherto already had a different degree of value ascribed to it. The result of this is that there are different degrees of clarity in the way in which the individual orders of the future will be distinguished from those of the past in respect of this communal factor which they will have.

The process of discovering the concrete forms which this communal factor will assume in the life and work of the orders will necessarily be gradual. Indeed it may be presumed that in a world that is dynamic and [238] will continue to be so this process of discovery cannot be understood in any sense as the discovery of a fixed form of life and work for the orders, which will then in its turn remain fixed over a long period. On the contrary, since the situation will continue to remain changeable in- the extreme, we may presume that there will be a continuous process of fresh improvisation in the life and work of the orders. Viewed from without, and in a spirit of unbelief, this process of improvisation which never wholly ceases will perhaps strike some as the mere prolongation of the vegetable life of an institution which was in the past so gloriously clear, unequivocal, powerful and aware of itself but which now can neither live nor die. Nevertheless for him who believes and hopes, and does not regard himself as the lord of history, this process of improvisation making ever-fresh advances into a future that is unknown can perfectly well be accounted a mode of life which is specifically Christian in character.

Even though we constantly regard our way of life and our activities as that which is provisional and transitory, still this is not to say that the way of life which we are at present following does not, in many areas and many respects, lag behind the way of life and work prescribed for the orders of today. This is of course too generalized a conclusion, and great variations should be allowed for before we can apply it to the individual orders. The discovery of new ways for the orders in their life and work cannot be achieved without the courage to experiment. It is true of many human affairs that it is quite impossible to achieve a

[9] The ideas put forward by the author in the following article should also be understood in this sense: 'The Function of the Church as a Critic of Society', *Theological Investigations* XII (London and New York, 1974), pp. 229-249.

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sufficiently clear knowledge of them merely by theoretical consideration. An indispensable factor is concrete experiment in life itself and that too even at the risk of failure and of recognizing only too late that we have taken a wrong path. Superiors in the orders should have the courage, if not actually to inaugurate such experiments for themselves, still at least to allow them. Only so can fresh forms of communal living and communal work be discovered in an order. Initially such new forms will obviously be paracanonical, and will exist side by side with the traditional and officially institutionalized forms of life and work of the orders. This cannot be avoided. But we should also have the courage not to delay *too* long before officially sanctioning and institutionalizing such fresh forms of community life and work. We cannot at once be convinced of the value for human life of the juridical and institutional and yet at the same time hold out for a long time before allowing the new forms of religious life to be sanctioned and institutionalised. Otherwise we cannot with any justice be shocked to find that such new forms, which the younger members inaugurate [239] and maintain, very quickly vanish once more as mere expressions of a passing fashion and so undergo a fate which they are far from having deserved and which might have been avoided for them if they had been responded to more helpfully by the official authorities in the orders. We cannot let a little plant wither by refusing to water and care for it and then sarcastically use the fact that it has so withered as an argument to show that this plant was never worth anything. This is not to dispute the fact that such processes of fresh institutionalization, which follow more swiftly than in former times upon life and its developments, are more improvised and more swift to pass away than was formerly entertained in our thinking or way of life. A further point is admittedly that a fresh attitude towards law and institution is also necessary, one which does not treat of the institutional factor as a mere trifle on the grounds that it is more improvised and more transitory than formerly, and *at the same time* does not erect it into a petrified idol either, as though it were absolutely final and definitive.[10]

However noteworthy the reforms of the liturgy up to the present may be, I do not believe that in them we have yet discovered that form of the liturgy, able to be brought to practical reality, which will bring the liturgy to its fulness as an activity of the community and at the same time as a radically personal event. Fresh forms of the liturgy as they have been and will be prescribed, however sublime and beautiful they may be, still do not remove the radical dilemma that as a matter of general principle forms which have become firmly fixed constitute a threat to the genuineness and spontaneity both of the communal and of the personal factors, if indeed they do not actually make these impossible. On the other hand forms which are absolutely free are in danger of giving free reign to arbitrariness, capriciousness and subjectivity on the part of the individual. Nevertheless if we cannot leave the concrete shaping of the liturgy (over and above its ultimate and essential structures) to chance, to the mood of the moment, to the crudity and one-sidedness of a liturgist devising free forms, still the only way out of this dilemma would surely be an intensive theological and spiritual formation of liturgists, to whom we could confidently leave the free shaping of the concrete forms of the liturgy within the framework of its essential structures. Whether such a thing is possible, whether and how religious communities might carry out creative experiments in this field – these are all questions which must remain open. But [240] we should at least recognize in the liturgy the need to bring the personal and the communal factors in it to their fulness, and despite all the changes in the liturgy since the Second Vatican Council these have lagged behind. Can we not discover fresh forms of religious life apart from the liturgy? I do in fact believe that meditation, as a private activity of the individual, must at all costs remain as a factor in the religious life even though such a

[10] Attention should also be drawn to the considerations put forward by the author in the present volume, 'Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church'.

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postulate is still far from having determined the question of *how* such private meditation and solitary prayer to God is to be achieved in the concrete, and how it should be rooted in the totality of human activity on the part of the individual religious. But over and above this there are certainly new forms of religious activity as well, which are or would be in keeping with the times, and which have not yet been sufficiently developed in the average life of the orders. The older members adopt a sceptical attitude which is fully justified on rational grounds from the point of view of Christianity towards certain phenomena in contemporary religious communities especially in the USA. These appear sometimes after the fashion of New Testament glossolalia, sometimes in the form of group dynamics which are insufficiently guided by reason. But in adopting such an attitude we should still remind ourselves that we are not doing justice to the need expressed in such phenomena merely by a rigid and conservative adherence to what is old. The only right attitude towards them is to have the courage to accept new forms which measure up to the justified demands for a religious life sustained by the spirit of community. Have we already seen the after effects (in concrete and tested form) of group dynamic experience, or of those experiences which have been achieved through psychotherapeutic discussion? Would it not be possible to have a 'religious exercise' which consists neither in liturgy nor in private meditation but is sustained by a group as such? If there were such proved and to some extent institutionalized 'religious exercises' carried on by smaller groups it might be possible to avoid a misunderstanding which according to my observations often arises in the orders. Many wrong tendencies and mistaken developments occur among the members of orders which, because they do not occur in the canon of traditional moral theology, are not resisted in the orders either, and against these the religious community is powerless. It would be possible to resist such mistaken human tendencies and wrong developments without having forthwith to condemn them as sinful on moral grounds by the reaction of a group in a communal religious exercise of this kind. It might be possible to avoid much that is 'less than human' in the orders which is now present either simply because it has come to be accepted as inevitable, or [241] which has forthwith to be resisted by means of a moral condemnation which for the most part remains ineffective.

New forms could certainly also be devised for an order to perform its apostolic work in the outside world on a new community basis. Obviously such communal work in the apostolic field has always been carried on in the orders. Conversely there will always be types of work and tasks in the orders which the individual can take upon himself without entering into any teamwork in the true sense with his own religious brethren. We may accept two points here. Religious communities in the sense of the orders properly so called, as distinct from the secular institutes, can probably not in the long run survive and cohere without *also* having a *common* task, a common work, even though not absolutely every individual member must take part in this. Second, for many reasons nowadays community must develop fresh forms for itself. And if these two points are true then what we have said also applies to the necessary community work of the individual orders. It cannot simply be carried on absolutely in the same style as is traditionally the rule. It is for instance conceivable that within a communal grouping of an order (not simply an individual abbey but one that embraces a broader region with several houses) the individual houses will each have its own distinctive character, different from the rest, and that these differences will in some sense be institutionalized. In practice something of this kind has in fact existed all along through force of circumstances. But it should be more consciously recognized, accepted and institutionalized. A house of the order lying in a poor quarter can and should have a different character, consciously institutionalized as such, from a house of the same grouping within the order which is for instance devoted to higher studies or is a house of typical intellectuals. As we have already pointed out, the concrete modes of discovering work and devising forms for

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it nowadays in the light of the contemporary situation requires an essentially more organized and more institutionalized form of collaboration on the part of all the members of the order concerned, and in this sense needs to acquire a more 'democratic' form.

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[243]

PART THREE

The Church in the World

[245]

14

SOME PROBLEMS IN CONTEMPORARY ECUMENISM

The subject of this chapter is headed 'Problems in Contemporary Ecumenism'. Many times in the past we have concerned ourselves with special questions in ecumenism,[1] and it would be possible here too to seize upon questions with a theological content from the range of connected subjects, and thereby to show by means of one or several concrete examples what current ideas are on the subject of the problems of ecumenism at the present day.

Yet nowadays it seems more important to concentrate upon the nature of ecumenical theology itself, albeit in an abstract and formal manner. By this method we may perhaps remain excessively pent-up at the level of generalizations and principles, and may expose ourselves to the objection that the real difficulties begin precisely at that point at which we come down to the concrete details. And yet the other and more general way of posing the question may perhaps be neither false nor inappropriate. What I mean by this is that particular questions in ecumenism often become difficult and even insoluble precisely because we have not achieved a sufficiently deep realization of what ecumenical theology really *is*, its starting-point and its aims. Thus we shall probably be in a better position [246] to solve particular questions of this kind once we theologians have clarified our ideas as to what ecumenical dialogue is truly and ultimately concerned with. I will now attempt to give my answer to this question in the form of two theses. The first thesis will be concerned with the ultimate assumption on which ecumenical theology is based; the second, by contrast, will be concerned with its future form.[2] But let us begin with a few simple remarks on the problems of ecumenical theology today in general, and at the same time by attempting to strike a personal balance in judging of the possibly critical situation in which this dialogue stands.

THE CRISIS OF ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

One who has taken part over many years in ecumenical discussion among the specialist theologians of the various separated Churches will find it somewhat difficult to take a hopeful view with regard to the outcome of such ecumenical theology. Whereas ecumenical

[1] Cf. 'On Conversions in the Church', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 373-3 84; 'Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 189-218; 'The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 287-311; 'Some Remarks on the Question of Conversions', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 315-335 'What is Heresy?', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 468-512; 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 218-230; 'On the Theology of the Ecumenical Discussion', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 24-67.

[2] The author has given a still fuller account of his position on the future form of ecumenical theology in the present volume in the article entitled 'Ecumenical Theology of the Future'. Here the basic theme of the present considerations is developed further and on somewhat different lines.

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discussions among everyday Christians all too easily fall into the error of confessional relativism, and tend over-hastily and over-facilely to bypass the doctrinal differences between the confessions, ecumenical discussion among specialist theologians, by contrast, generally relates to the classical differences of doctrine already established by tradition. Generally speaking such discussions do not achieve any advance on the problems involved, even though nowadays the theological assumptions presupposed in formulating these doctrinal differences are concerned with modern exegesis, the historical sciences, and the differences between philosophical modes of expression and ideas which have now become almost insuperable. Certainly in the last few decades we have spoken with one another more than formerly. The separated Churches have taken an interest in one another's theology. A greater exchange of subject-matter, viewpoints, methods etc. has been and is being achieved. But when we enquire as to the end-product of this ecumenical dialogue so far as the unification of the Churches is concerned we will after all be compelled in all realism to admit this end-product is very slight. Certainly this is not merely due to the fact that we have not yet come much closer to agreement on the traditionally controversial doctrines. The main reason for the paucity of results may well lie in this: on the one hand the orthodox Roman theology is on the whole still a long [247] way from having made the dogmas of this Church really intelligible to the average Protestant Christian. On the other hand within the Protestant Churches differences are to be found as to the most basic interpretation of Christianity, and the leaders of these Churches cannot, or perhaps merely will not overcome this state of affairs (perhaps because they regard such a course as in itself contrary to the principles of Protestant freedom of belief). And these differences are so great that on these grounds alone any unification between these Churches collectively as they now stand and the Roman Church is impossible. For the latter is compelled to reject many interpretations of Christianity as heretical on the basis of her understanding of her own faith even though the same interpretations are tolerated in the Protestant Churches, and indeed to a certain extent recognized as legitimate.[3]

Obviously there are other and more general grounds for the current crisis in ecumenical theology. There are for instance those questions which now confront the whole of Christian theology and all Christian Churches, the questions of secularization, atheism, pluralism of ideas in Church and society, the osmosis between the Church and the world, the process by which to an increasing extent the national Church is being transformed into smaller communities of believers living in a diaspora situation on the basis of their own personal faith etc.[4] It is not our purpose here to treat of these questions. Rather we seek to draw attention to a certain immobility in the internal life of the Churches, a lack of movement which represents an obstacle to any ecumenical progress, and an impasse for ecumenical theology.

What we have said in abstract terms with regard to the limits of ecumenical theology is repeatedly confirmed by our experience of ecumenical work. Indeed it is a strange phenomenon. All speak of unity, declare their will to achieve unity between the Churches and their conviction [248] of the duty to work for this unity. Nor have we any right, at least in principle, to cast doubts upon the genuineness of this attitude and this resolve to work for unification. And yet as a matter of historical fact nothing or almost nothing ever happens. For

[3] On this, however, cf. also the author's remarks concerning the lack of certainty in the Catholic Church as to what heresy is. Cf. 'What is Heresy?', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 468-512, and in the present volume, 'Does the Church Offer Any Ultimate Certainties?' Cf. also 'Schism in the Catholic Church' and 'Heresies in the Church Today?', *Theological Investigations* XII (London and New York, 1974), pp. 98-115, 116-141.

[4] In other passages the author has fully defined his position on such questions as the diaspora situation, secularization etc. Cf. 'Theological Considerations on Secularization and Atheism', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 166-184; 'Church, Churches and Religions', *Theological Investigations X* (London, 1973), pp. 30-49; 'On the Presence of Christ in the Diaspora Community according to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council', *Theological Investigations* X (London, 1973), pp. 84-102.

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the overall organization of the World Council of Churches neither is nor seeks to be a Church in its own right, and the situation is that for all the friendly contacts and discussions between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church these have not only failed to produce any real unification – something which in fact we could still understand – but have not even brought them discernibly closer to one another. Despite all ecumenical resolves the real frontiers still remain stiff and immovable.[5]

The two theses put forward quite simply represent an attempt to discover a deeper starting-point for ecumenical theology today, and so a way of helping to escape from the impasse with which the dialogue is threatened.

THE ULTIMATE BASIS FOR ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

I am enquiring into the ultimate basis for ecumenical theology. My initial answer to this question takes the form of a brief thesis which I will then try to explain in greater detail. The thesis runs as follows: the ultimate basis for ecumenical theology is the unity, apprehended in hope, of a belief in justifying grace which already exists and is identical on both sides, yet which, so far as theology is concerned together with the credal formula which gives it conceptual expression, is still in process of being achieved.

What is the force of this thesis in more precise detail? First it must unreservedly be conceded that for ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical theology in their contemporary form a liberal humanism, with its defence of freedom of opinion and freedom of belief within a pluralistic society has been and continues to be the only possible occasion and setting such that without it present-day ecumenical theology as it actually exists would be quite inconceivable. When we conduct an ecumenical dialogue or pursue ecumenical theology with one another despite the fact that we are divided among many Churches, then the ultimate basis for this is after all that we mutually recognize one another as Christians. But what precisely and in genuinely theological terms does this mean? Certainly it means not [249] only that we take into account the fact that the other partner to the dialogue regards himself as a Christian. It does not only mean that we mutually credit one another with the fact that all have been validly baptized – supposing that in this we regard baptism first and foremost in its empirical reality as an external cultic act. Nor does it merely mean that despite all credal differences we empirically establish that we agree upon certain convictions more or less in the sense of the basic formula of the World Council of Churches. What it means rather is that in hope if not in an act of recognition which can be ultimately expressed in theoretical form we are convinced of the fact that the partners to the dialogue on both sides live in the grace of God, are truly justified by the Holy Pneuma of God, and are sharers in the divine nature.[6]

This conviction has not been self-evident for Christians of every age. It is only very gradually and with great toil that it has matured in the Church's understanding of her own faith to the point – so far as the Catholic Church is concerned – of achieving clear expression in the Second Vatican Council. But this conviction is now actually present on both sides.

We must now proceed straightway to discuss the question of how on a Catholic understanding of faith the significance of the Catholic creed as conducing to and necessary

[5] cf. also, however, the author's observations concerning the difference between the official representatives of the Churches and the simple believers in the article entitled 'Ecumenical Theology of the Future' in the present volume.

[6] Some years ago the author attempted to work out the significance of hope for faith and theology. Cf. 'On the Theology of Hope', *Theological Investigations* X (London, 1973), pp. 260-272. See also his remarks on 'Salvation optimism' in the article 'Considerations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian"' in the present volume.

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for salvation can be reconciled with the simultaneous conviction that some who do not share this faith nevertheless possess salvation. All that we are asking here is what this conviction means on both sides for the possibility of ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical theology. And this is something to which the thesis formulated above supplies an answer. This dialogue is possible because despite the difference in the creed as objectified and verbally formulated – in other words despite the differences of faith in this sense – we are not merely seeking for a unity of faith but are mutually crediting one another with already having it; for each of us is aware in faith, hope and love that the other is possessed by the Spirit of God, without whom there can be no belief and with whom there can be no unbelief. This statement obviously compels us to draw a distinction within that which faith signifies in the true sense. Yet while we seek neither to overlook nor to impugn the differences in the credal formulae of the faith, nevertheless each of us [250] recognizes the presence in the other of the divine Spirit of unity with the truth of God, of enlightenment and of faith. Each of us acknowledges in the other the interior witness of the Holy Spirit. And if all this is true then it becomes inescapable to draw a distinction of this kind if we are to avoid simply entertaining two contradictory positions side by side. All sorts of different interpretations may be placed upon the reality which we Catholics call sanctifying grace and which Protestant theology calls justification and salvation. It is in any case a deed of God upon us of his grace, which truly transforms us from sinners into justified men regardless of how in more precise detail we may interpret this saving event of justification, or what forms of expression of varying provenance we may use to express it.

The postulate thus arrived at of a true and common faith underlying the differences of faith between various groups of Christians as expressed verbally in their creeds is not a factor which cannot be used as a basis for any of their ideas merely on the grounds that it must manifestly lie under and beyond any process of formulating ideas in doctrinal statements. If we Christians are to overcome the confessional boundaries to the extent of mutually crediting one another with having the Holy Spirit of grace, then manifestly we must still say that the ultimate and innermost *testimonium spiritus* is present in all or must at least be presumed to be so, that the *illustratio et inspiratio* – concepts by means of which tradition seeks to clarify the movement of grace – that the wordless weeping and uttering of Abba by the Spirit in the depths of our hearts,[7] that the Johannine anointing which instructs us,[8] is present in us all even though this innermost reality of Spirit and faith is objectified and set forth verbally and conceptually in different forms in the individual confessions. We may then go on to add to this that for any anthropology of human thought or freedom which takes a somewhat deeper view, a difference always prevails (one which can never fully be overcome or eliminated) between an ultimate and basic state of mind, i.e. an unconscious self-possession on the part of the free subject, an understanding of himself on man's part which is never fully reflected upon on the one hand, and man's objectified awareness of himself, his subjectivity and his free decisions as an object on the other.[9] And if this is true, then we can see what the postulate we have formulated on theological grounds implies, the postulate namely of a general but true faith on the part of the separated Christians through and [251] beyond that objectified faith which they formulate in concepts and words. It does not signify merely something which could not provide the basis for any explicit understanding. In the Spirit of God all of us 'know' something more simple, more true and more real than we can know or express at the level of our theological concepts. Here of course we must pass over the question of why even a true faith of this kind, pre-conceptual and present in the midst of our human lives in the

[7] See Rom. 8:15.
[8] See 1 Jn. 2:20, 27.
[9] On this cf. the author's article, 'Thomas Aquinas on Truth', *Theological Investigations* XIII.

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power of the Spirit of God, does not render the faith that is objectified in concepts meaningless. This common faith at the heart and centre of human life through the power of God's grace, which is the same in all and true beyond all distortion, constitutes the true basis and the ultimate condition for ecumenical dialogue and an ecumenical theology. Given this basis the ecumenical dialogue is not a discussion in which one or other or both of the two parties involved seeks to communicate some point of doctrine to his partner for the time purely *ab externo*, such as that partner had formerly absolutely failed or refused to recognize and had rejected as an error of faith. It is not this even in those cases in which it is conducted on one or both sides with an absolute agreement of faith on the particular propositions of faith being upheld at the time. Rather it is the attempt to render comprehensible to one's partner in the dialogue that that which is put to him in terms of concepts is merely a more correct, a fuller, and a more precisely defined expression of something which that partner has already grasped as his own faith through the power of the Spirit at the ultimate depths of his own human existence as justified, and which he has laid hold of as his own truth. Thus our consideration of ecumenical theology returns to that answer to the question which constitutes its true and ultimate theological basis. This is that faith which is prior to any kind of theological reflection or theoretical and social objectification, being already present in all Christians of good will through justifying grace. On this basis ecumenical theology can and must say this: the reason that we must arrive at unity of faith at the level of conscious reflection and social living as well is that we already possess this unity at the level of God's justifying grace. The unity of faith which exists at this level implies both the possibility and the necessity of ecumenical theology. For of course we cannot say this: Because we already possess the unity of faith in the basic state in which Christians stand through grace, we no longer need the unity of faith at the level of theological objectification and social living. On the contrary we must say this: Because we possess the former kind of unity we must also strive for the latter kind, which constitutes the incarnatorial consummation of that former and more basic unity. On this basis [252] the Catholic will understand the Lutheran at the heart and centre of his existence as one who is already an anonymous Catholic, while the Lutheran will regard the Catholic as an anonymous Lutheran at the centre of his existence. Which of the two of us is right is a point on which we are not at one, a point which ecumenical theology considers in a genuine dialogue between the Christians. But the fact that we can so understand ourselves, that we do not seek to pass from an absolute division to unity but rather that we can and must strive, from that unity already achieved in grace and that truth of God already possessed, for the unity of the truth within the one Church – it is this that constitutes the value and the hope of ecumenical theology.

THE FUTURE OF ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

This brings us back to the danger which threatens the ecumenical dialogue, and the need to reflect more deeply upon that which specifies ecumenical theology and its future task or tasks. In this connection we have a second thesis to propose: that which most of all constitutes ecumenical theology is the theology of the future, which has to be worked out by all the Churches each from its own point of departure as already laid down by its past history.

In the present context what I mean by my use of the term 'theology of the future' is not a theology of the futuricity of man, the hope and the making valid of the 'apocalyptic factor' in Christian faith, of political commitment etc. By theology of the future I mean far more simply that theology which is necessary as a prior condition for any preaching of the gospel in order that the gospel may appear credible in a future characterized by science, technology,

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cybernetics, social unity among men or on a global scale, a future which has already begun.[10]

In the ecumenical situation of today there is after all, over and above that hope against all hope which has been offered to the Christian, only *one* real chance. Only when the theologies of the separated Churches devote themselves intensively to the task of creating the theology of the future is there any hope or prospect that the theologies in the future will achieve an encounter at one and the same point. This is not to say that direct and face-to-face discussion of controversial theology should be broken off. This is necessary and does in fact yield certain partial results in the 'public opinion' of the theologians, even though it has produced [253] virtually no change at all in the immobility of the Church leaders over and above eirenic words and friendly gestures. But still it seems to me that a greater chance for ecumenical theology lies in working for the Christian theology of the future. All theologies and Churches must learn, each on its own account, to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that is credible and intelligible to the man of the future which has already begun. If that man is to be a believer they must avoid imposing any further unnecessary difficulties upon him or demanding more of him than the necessary *metanoia* which involves the whole man. At the same time these theologies of the future must not betray the true gospel by any fashionable accommodations. And if they do all this then, so I hope, these theologies of the future as they exist in the separated Churches will become more assimilated to one another and draw closer to one another than the traditional theologies which are immediately and decisively shaped by the controversial questions of the past. I like to think, therefore, that the most important work of ecumenical theology, so far from consisting in a theology which is conducted in the form of an explicit dialogue side by side with the rest of theology in the separated Churches, will be developed within their theology as a whole and in all the disciplines belonging to it. For after all, ultimately speaking when viewed as a whole it has no other task than to investigate the question of how the gospel can be preached in a way that awakens, and claims the allegiance of faith, and that too not merely for a traditional remnant of individuals who still continue to survive for historical reasons, but for men who are to become Christians in the future from the basis of their own future situation. Viewed in this light ecumenical theology coincides with theology in general. Ecumenical theology, therefore, is to be taken as the theology of the future. This theology of the future must be pursued in the closest possible collaboration between the theologians of all confessions. If this is done, then this will of itself become ecumenical theology.

[10] Perspectives on and conclusions from this are developed in greater detail in the present volume in 'Ecumenical Theology of the Future'.

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[254]

15

ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY IN THE FUTURE

The question of an ecumenical theology of the future is focused upon *ecumenical theology*[1] as such, and so not upon that which constitutes first and last the basic task of all ecumenical concern, namely unity between the Churches. Thus it presupposes that there will be Churches that are separated from one another at least for the foreseeable future, and that in the immediate future there will still also be ecumenical theology, i.e. the discussion which the theologies of the separated Churches pursue with one another.

In setting myself to speak of the ecumenical theology of the *future* my underlying conviction is that this ecumenical theology does not simply remain the same as that which has been pursued in the past, for otherwise it would be possible to speak of an ecumenical theology of the present and one of the future simply in the same breath. On the other hand this theme cannot be taken in a sense which implies that the ecumenical theology of today and that of tomorrow no longer have very much in common. On the contrary that which they have in common is of the utmost importance, Hence it is manifest that my purpose in undertaking this task can only be as follows: I shall take as given those essential traits of any ecumenical theology of any period which always remain the same, and shall [255] not treat of them explicitly here. Here rather I intend to set forth some of those special characteristics which distinguish the ecumenical theology of the future from that of the present day. In real human history the border-lines marking the transitions between present and future are of course fluid, and it follows that the same also applies to the ecumenical theology of today and tomorrow.

DIALOGUE WITH A SECULARIZED WORLD

An initial distinction between ecumenical theology up to the present and that of the future will consist in the fact that the ecumenical theology of the future will proceed not so much from those themes which, on the basis of the past and of the classical credal formulae of the individual Churches, have emerged from themes of controversial theology. Rather this new theology will proceed from the common task of the separated Churches and their theologies and will be concerned with the theological study of the common substance of the Christian faith and with preaching it in such a way that it can be assimilated afresh and in more effective ways by men in the so-called Christian countries even when either explicitly or tacitly they have become remote from the gospel message despite the fact of still outwardly and publicly retaining their membership of these Churches.

This first thesis calls for some clarification. I regard it as obvious that in his work an

[1] The author has long been treating of questions of ecumenical theology. Here only a few of the more significant articles may be mentioned by way of illustration. Cf. 'Membership of the Church According to the Teaching of Pius XlI's Encyclical, "Mystici Corporis"', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 1-88; 'On Conversions in the Church', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 373-384; 'Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 189-218; 'What is Heresy?', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 468-512; 'Zur "Situationsethik" aus ökumenischer Sicht', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Einsiedeln, und ed., 1968), pp. 537-544; 'On the Theology of the Ecumenical Discussion', *Theological Investigations* Xl (London and New York, 1974), pp. 24-67.

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ecumenical theologian must always proceed from two starting-points: not only ecumenism but *also* the more or less official convictions of faith of his Church; that ecumenical theology as a whole will always also be thinking out afresh the classic questions of controversial theology; in other words that in addition to the fresh ecumenical ground it breaks it must also achieve progress along the same lines as formerly. The fact remains, however, that the situation for this ecumenical theology has changed precisely as the general situation of the Churches and their theologies has changed. Formerly the churches and their theologies had only each other as partners and 'opponents' in the discussions at least so far as Europe was concerned. Today it is different. Although the majority of Europeans still adhere in a public and official sense to the Christian Churches, nevertheless all the Churches and their theologies today, individually and collectively, find themselves in a diaspora. Society at large is to a great extent secularized. The majority of the population of Europe has divested itself of any Church influence and, so far as its 'philosophy of life' is concerned, cannot be described as Christian in any real sense. Hence the first and decisive partner to the discussion for the [256] Churches of today must be the 'post-Christian' pagan. If Christianity and the Churches are not forever more to be reduced to a ghetto-like form which can be viewed as a historical relic from former ages continuing to live a sort of vegetable existence in the shadows of real history and ever waning in strength,[2] the Churches must take a fresh stand towards this present age as it really is. It is an age of culture of the masses, of increasing unification of spheres of human history in the world which were formerly separated, of rationalism and enlightenment, of the technology of the mass media, and whatever terms we may choose to characterize still further along these lines this age which is our own. Theology consists in conscious reflection upon the message of the gospel in a quite specific situation in terms of the history of the human spirit, in coming to terms with a quite specific *Zeitgeist*. It must view that message in the light of perspectives, and with a view to achieving perspectives, which are prescribed by a specific age. In terms of the *history of the human spirit*, therefore, and in terms of *social* life our age is a post-Christian one; one, that is, in which Christianity no longer constitutes a decisive force in society as a whole. It follows that any Christian theology must be post-Christian precisely in the sense described, i.e. it must make this secularized world which is already confronting it its partner in discussion.

The process of forming a theology which is post-Christian in this sense has of course been continuing ever since the Enlightenment – perhaps too slowly and too timidly, perhaps with too little success, perhaps with too little courage really to commit itself to the new situation of the secularized world. Perhaps too it has met with failures and not infrequently attempts to smear it on the part of Christianity itself, though true Christianity cannot endure such attempts and the contemporary world does not at basis expect them either on any true understanding of itself. This process of developing a Christian theology that is post-Christian has however been accelerated in a way that we can understand within the last few decades, and it must also be still further increased very notably. What we mean is this: the process of intelligent reflection called theology, in which Christianity attempts to understand its own nature in relation to a world that is secular, indeed post-Christian and anti-Christian, and to address itself to this world is undoubtedly nowadays the chief task and the crucial characteristic [257] of the theology of the Christian Churches. Their primary and crucial partner in discussion is no longer the particular theology of any other Church at any particular time. The theologies of the Christian Churches have now not so much to discuss with one another as to speak together with a partner common to them all who is different from them

[2] The author has given his opinion on these problems – admittedly under different headings – in 'Theological Reflections on the Problem of Secularization', *Theological Investigations* X (London, 1973), pp. 318-348, and 'Theological Considerations on Secularization and Atheism', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 166-184.

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and the same for both Catholic and Protestant. This is the world that has become worldly, which is itself actively steering its own course towards its future, the world which is no longer primarily the subject of philosophical contemplation but of active forces of change, the world whose sciences are methodically atheistic.[3] In the selfsame moment in which the theologians of the individual Churches have discovered a quite new partner, one who at times is in conflict with them, the ecumenical theology of the past has perforce obtained another and lesser status within theology as a whole. The stagnation to be observed in ecumenical theology in very recent times finds at least a partial explanation in this fact and it makes this phenomenon less grievous and easier to understand than it may seem at first sight.[4] The theologies of the various Churches must simply speak to a greater extent than formerly with the world of today, and hence have inevitably less time to discuss directly with one another. We might perhaps be able to establish in detail that those theologians of all confessions who have pressed forward with the dialogue with the contemporary world (albeit when compared with one another in varying ways and with varying degrees of success) were not ecumenical theologians in any explicit sense. Again we may probably be able to establish the converse of this as well, that those theologians who are concerned with a direct ecumenical dialogue between the Christian theologies have *in general* achieved less for an interpretation of Christianity which is really capable of assimilation by the secular world of today. But – and this is now the crucial point – if the Christian theologies in general speak boldly and far more intensively than in former times with their new partner the secularized world so as to achieve a fresh formulation of Christianity within the perspectives and viewpoints belonging to that world, if in other words they pursue a theology which appears to be not an ecumenical theology at all, then such a discussion with the secular world is precisely *the* ecumenical theology of the future. For then the [258] various theologies of the individual Churches will discover that when they enter into discussion with this new partner of theirs concerning the basic substance of Christianity they will be speaking to him in the same way and with the same content, the more so since the themes under discussion which are necessary here have hardly any direct points of contact with the earlier themes of controversial theology. Among themselves these theologies will view the old disputed questions in quite new lights from new standpoints, and thereby, while never ceasing to uphold their standards on the question of truth, will learn a fresh reappraisal of these themes also, the importance of which has greatly diminished by comparison with former times. Thus new theologies may emerge within the various Churches which are identical with one another or at least converge in a far clearer manner than was formerly the case.

An additional point is that the common application of contemporary scientific methods, especially of the historical sciences in exegesis, and a common terminology which is achieved as a result of coming to terms with modern philosophy, will likewise contribute to such new points of convergence. Of course this is a development which has already long since begun. Thus it is already clear that on many theological questions the frontiers themselves are no longer in any sense identical with those 'official' boundary lines which separate the confessions, but rather cut across them.[5]

What has just been said should not be misunderstood in the sense of supposing that there is a unified theology to be found in every Church, or that these unified theologies will come to be more in harmony with one another. On the contrary, in every confession the pluralism

[3] On this cf. 'Christianity and the "New Man"', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 135-153, and also 'Kirche und Welt', *Zehn Jahre Kath. Akademie in Bayern* (Würzburg, 1967), pp. 9-27.
[4] On this see also the author's ideas in the present volume, 'Some Problems of Ecumenism Today'.
[5] On this cf. also the author's remarks in the present volume entitled 'The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World', but also the article, 'Possible Courses for the Theology of the Future', *Theological Investigations* XIII. Here the author treats explicitly of the ecumenical aspect.

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among the theologies has become greater. This applies not only to the Protestant Churches but to the Catholic Church as well. But even so these manifold theologies as they exist in every Church have even now more or less clearly found their points of agreement in the other Churches. Even among us, for instance, there are theologies which are developed on the basis of exegesis or biblical theology to a greater extent than was formerly the case in scholastic theology. And this manifestation obviously finds a theology corresponding to it within the Protestant Church. Nowadays in Germany there exists in both Churches a 'political theology'. It would be possible to find in both Churches theologians in agreement with one [259] another who, more clearly than in earlier times, have commonly found a certain partnership in developing a philosophical reappraisal of the Christian message with the help of modern philosophies since Kant. Commentaries on biblical books written in collaboration already exist, and these do not have an ecumenical purpose in any direct sense but are simply written from the feeling that the exegetical methods and assumptions are the same from the outset, so that it is possible on these grounds alone to arrive at the same results, at least to a very notable extent. Similar tendencies are to be noticed in the field of Church history writing. In this connection too we can mention at least in summary form all those efforts which are conducive to a co-ordination or at least partial identification of theological work and theological instruction in the organizational and institutional areas, efforts which in America have already achieved more far-reaching progress than among us and have already found a certain acceptance in the decisions of Rome concerning theological studies and their organization. The point I am concerned with here is simply this: the new and urgent task for a theology directed towards the secular world and based on its requirements leads in all the Churches to what might be called an indirectly ecumenical theology, and it may be presumed that this can be more effective than the former ecumenical theology even though this, as has already been emphasized at the outset, must of course continue and progress as well.

'NON-THEOLOGICAL' ASPECTS OF AN ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

Of its very nature what-we have just said concerning this new indirect ecumenical theology of the future includes a second point which must now be developed and clarified in its own right. The former kind of ecumenical theology, working in terms of controversial theology, had in view at least by and large the doctrinal differences between the confessions in their theological content and the opposition between them, the only further point which it took into consideration being at most the origin and history of these doctrinal differences as developed within theology itself. This view of ecumenical theology is of course justified and must remain as long as it continues to be a mistaken view that theology has to resolve itself into other sciences.[6] Nevertheless it might be a [260] useful and valuable task to view the theses of controversial theology in their difference and opposition from new and non-theological standpoints, and to consider the non-theological origins, conditions and consequences of this kind which lie behind such theses. We might call these fresh aspects under which an ecumenical theology is to consider the controversial themes among the Churches 'non-theological' aspects. But in doing so I am very conscious of the problems entailed in the term 'non-theological', for it could very well precisely be the case that at an unconscious and hidden level such aspects are in fact far more 'theological', i.e. for instance conditioned by grace or as a matter of history of specifically Christian origin, though they are now present in

[6] On these ideas cf. the author's article in *Theological Investigations* XIII, 'Theology as Engaged in an Interdisciplinary Dialogue With the Sciences' and also 'On the Relationship Between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences'.

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a Christianity which has become anonymous so that we are simply failing to discern at first sight the Christian element which has become anonymous in such aspects. When therefore we say that a new ecumenical theology has to consider the theses belonging to controversial theology between the confessions from 'non-theological' aspects the term 'non-theological' as used here is intended in a very provisional and deliberately marginal sense, and signifies everything which is not explicitly affirmed to be Christian. Probably there are many such aspects and they could be more clearly apprehended if the interdisciplinary discussion of theology with the contemporary sciences, the arts, the natural sciences and the social sciences were more energetically pursued, and also more effectively planned from an organizational point of view than is commonly the case. Here, therefore, we shall be referring simply by way of example to this or that non-theological aspect which might be significant for ecumenical theology.

Thus for instance we might investigate the secular causes, in terms of the history of thought and the *development of society*,[7] leading to the divisions between the Churches of East and West, and subsequently within the Western Church itself. Obviously such causes, belonging as they do to the history of human thought and society, have already all along been taken into account as incidental factors, especially in secular history and the history of the Church. But by and large the only ways in which they have been taken into account have been such that the recognition of them has never been accorded any special importance in [261] controversial theology or ecumenical theology. Obviously all such secular causal factors belonging to the history of human thought, politics or society, and so leading first to the divisions between the Churches, and as a result continuing to take further effect within the separated theologies, would be contributing factors, prior conditions etc. such that these opinions in controversial theology could not be resolved into them by bypassing the true and essential question of theological truth. Yet we may for instance take the case of the doctrine of the First Vatican Council. The fact that it did achieve its existing formulation and that it was *de facto* decided upon presupposes a quite specific situation in terms of the history of ideas, and without this it would in real terms be totally inconceivable even though this does not of itself imply any decision whatever with regard to its claim to truth. Now if we recognize this then a point for investigation in an ecumenical theology too (by means of individual examples or in more basic terms) would be whether, in what ways, and perhaps through what further historical developments this explicit doctrinal decision might affect and claim the allegiance of those Christians who have not yet, or perhaps never in any sense, experienced that particular situation in the history of human thought in the light of which alone this doctrinal decision is really conceivable as their own particular historical situation. When we take this into account it could in fact be the case that, for instance, a doctrinal decision of the kind promulgated at the First Vatican Council need not explicitly be denied by the Churches of the East. The reason is that by such a denial, just as much as by the contrary affirmation, the Churches of the East would be entering into a situation in terms of the development of ideas, whether really or in an unrealistic theorizing, which is in truth in no sense their own, while at the same time, so far as these Churches are concerned, this doctrine would not be presented in the concrete form in which it actually appears or with the practical

[7] The author has explained his position still more fully on the importance of the interpretation of history for his own special field in three articles under the general heading 'History of Theology' in *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966). Cf. 'History of the World and Salvation History', *ibid*., pp. 97-114, 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', *ibid*., pp. 115-134, 'Christianity and the "New Man" ', *ibid*., pp. 135-153. Here this aspect is still further entered into.

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consequences which it rightly has for Western Catholicism.[8] There is much affecting concrete life, laws and liturgy which the Roman Church, whether willingly or reluctantly, does in fact concede to the uniate Churches of the East, and which it is ready to concede also to the other Eastern Churches. Now in considerations of the kind we are speaking of, and within an ecumenical theology working with the methods indicated, such factors as these could be interpreted in a notably deeper [262] manner and also with certain practical consequences. This is of course only a single small example, and only an indication of the task for an ecumenical theology in enquiring into the theses of controversial theology as to their origins and preconditioning factors in secular and social history.

Another aspect from which the theses of controversial theology might be presented in a new ecumenical theology would be their *social relevance*.[9] Ever since Max Weber attention has been drawn – whether rightly or wrongly, we do not need to investigate here – to connections between the spirit and social structure of capitalism and Calvinism. Whatever positions we may adopt with regard to this particular example, there is an interchange of influences, which pass to and fro between religious and social movements. Attitudes which are objectified in terms of theology have also a social relevance, and under certain circumstances may be clearer and more capable of critical appraisal from the point of view of this than if they are viewed solely at the level of theology. Now this can be important for an ecumenical theology. It can come to achieve a better recognition of its own subject-matter by considering the social relevance of this. In the majority of cases such an approach will presumably not be able to lead to any decision on the question of truth, but nevertheless under certain circumstances it can lead very clearly to a recognition of the deficiencies, omissions and obscurities in a particular theological statement put forward by a particular confession. Now when confessional theses of this kind are exposed in the manner suggested, and their one-sidedness, omissions etc. are recognized and then remedied, such an approach can also demand that the confessional theologies shall be drawn together. We may take, for instance, the example of the strange and still certainly problematical union of the Catholic Church with conservative and reactionary forces since the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century almost down to the present day (and, moreover with theological motivations as well). Could not an investigation of all this assist in discovering the biases, dangerous shifts of emphasis, and indeed errors even within the official doctrine of the Church? Could it not be the case that the changes thereby attainable within Catholic theology might make even *this* more comprehensible and more capable of assimilation for non-Catholic theologies? Could not something similar take place with regard to the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, with regard to their social and political relevance, or in the light of this relevance? [263] Thus union might emerge from this, so I believe, for ecumenical theology itself as well once we enquire into the disputed theses of controversial theology from the point of view of their social relevance. A further point to be noticed is that this approach can probably also be applied to theses and disputed treatises in controversial theology of a kind to which it might not be supposed at first sight to apply because of their 'lack of worldly relevance'. This remains true even if we leave the question open of whether every theological doctrine should have a relevance of this kind or else not be regarded as theologically serious at all.

The third 'non-theological' aspect from which the doctrines which are controversial

[8] On the subject of doctrinal differences cf. the author's articles in the present volume, 'On the Concept of Infallibility in Catholic Theology', 'The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church', 'The Doctrinal Authority of the Church as a Subject of Dispute' etc.

[9] With reference to the sociological relevance cf. the author's article in *Theological Investigations* XIII, 'Institution and Freedom', and also *Freiheit und Manipulation in Gesellschaft und Kirche*, Münch. Akad. Schriften 53 (Munich, 2nd ed., 1971).

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between the confessions might be viewed is perhaps the *aspect of the languages involved*,[10] in which these confessionally distinct doctrines were originally conceived, even if the first fathers of the oppositions which grew up in the Reformation in the sixteenth century in all the Churches formulated their ideas more or less in 'two languages'. Thus for instance as a theologian Luther wrote in German and Latin, Calvin in French and Latin, and their Catholic opponents of course did not confine themselves to Latin either in their writings. While recognizing this point we may perhaps recognize also that in many cases at least the whole distinctive genius of a particular language may have a special affinity with a particular confession. On this point, it is true, we shall have to exercise great caution. We shall not be able to decide the ultimate question of truth even by an approach such as this, nor may we reduce it to a relative status any more than we can invoke the evidence of history to prove that the religion of one of the higher cultures can be the most appropriate one for a particular ethnic group. Nevertheless if for instance we say that [264] Catholic Church life in its concrete historical form has a special affinity with Latin, with the objectivity and juridical qualities inherent in that language, if the German of a Luther and his theology may perhaps have, at least in part, a mutually conditioning relationship one to the other, if a similar point can be made about the theology and the French tongue of Calvin, then the study of the theological languages with their special characteristics in the original formulations of the individual confessions could be very fruitful, at least so far as the special character of the thought is concerned, in establishing the limits and the deficiencies of the theology of any given period, and it could be helpful to each particular confession in arriving at an attitude of self-criticism towards its own historical form. This in turn could have the effect of promoting the convergence between the confessional theologies which we are striving for in ecumenical theology. Again this is merely an indication, which once more implicitly demands an interdisciplinary discussion between theology and the science of linguistics, a discussion which presumably already exists in its incipient stages, although I have no information to impart on this from my own knowledge. We are pointing, then, to a 'non-theological' aspect from which ecumenical theology might be approached. We are not concerned, therefore, with asserting that no such thing exists at all in ecumenical theology in the history of the Churches or the public utterances of the confessions. What we are concerned with, rather, here is the opinion that such a method might be developed in fuller detail in ecumenical theology and applied in greater measure than in fact is the case.

CHURCH CHRISTIANS WITHOUT ANY CONFESSIONAL AWARENESS

Yet a third question might in my opinion produce notable changes in the ecumenical theology of the future. I refer to the question of the *theological relevance* of the fact, surely indisputable, that far the greatest part of the Christians who have grown up in the various

[10] The author has frequently treated of the importance of linguistic forms for theological and religious statements from various aspects. We may recall the articles on the development of doctrine as for instance 'The Development of Dogma', *Theological Investigations* I (London, 1961), pp. 39-76; 'Considerations on the Development of Dogma', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 3-35, or works such as 'The Word and the Eucharist', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 253-286; 'Priest and Poet', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 294-317; also 'Poetry and the Christian', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 253-286. Here it is a direct theology of the word that is in question; or more technical studies may be mentioned such as 'The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 323-346. Reference may also not least be made to the manifold expositions on prayer and forms of expression of devotion. The reader will readily find further expositions for all these areas of enquiry among the articles of the present volume.

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ecclesiastical groupings do not have any real knowledge of the differences constituting the confessions,[11] or if they do have such knowledge do not attach any very great importance to those differences, and furthermore that where such Christians outside the circle of ecclesiastical officials and theologians do know of the differences between the confessions and regard them as important to themselves what is in question is often those differences to which the [265] official theologies of the Churches do not ascribe any crucial importance for justifying the divisions between the Churches. I cannot enter into any greater detail in establishing a fact which is here formulated only in very abstract terms. From my own experience it seems to me that it is a fact recognized by all and would probably be easy to establish demographically. In any case in my view if, as we have said, we abstract from the ecclesiastical officials and the theologians, it does seem to apply to the vast majority of Christians belonging to different confessions. It also seems to me that the situation is not that there are Christians who, as a matter of personal decision profess themselves adherents of different confessionally formulated creeds as expressing their own personal convictions (as properly speaking might after all be expected in view of the relationship between faith and Church), but rather that there are Christians differing from one another confessionally because there are confessionally different Churches.

This fact, in itself very noteworthy and far from being self-evident, manifests itself in historical and social terms and (if we like to put it so) in terms of secular psychology in the fact that these different ecclesiastical groupings in earlier history came into being through the decisions of a few individuals, the territorial overlords, small leading groups and classes, without which at that time it would of course have been to a large extent quite impossible for the members of a given Church in their broad masses to arrive at any personal decision of their own. It is also to be explained by the fact that such decisions have had a diminishing effect right down to the present day. Even today the great mass of the members of the Churches have still been born into these Churches and do not give their adherence to any particular Church as the outcome of a specifically confessional decision of faith. Historically speaking this fact that the members of a Church are constituted as such in the sense indicated in all the Churches is intelligible in view of the force of social tradition and the fact that to a large extent it would inevitably be to demand too much of the average individual to enter into controversial theological doctrines. It is psychologically speaking not very surprising either. On no account should it be maintained that there is anything new or surprising in this fact as it has been established, but I do believe that ecumenical theology has not really concerned itself theologically with this fact, or at any rate not in sufficient measure, perhaps precisely because it is historically, socially and psychologically obvious.

Yet it is a theological question too: what are the implications for a theological, as distinct from a psychological and social-empirical, sense of [266] creed[12] and Church with regard to their differences, if it is quite impossible to say that the majority of Christians formed in a particular Church tradition know of the doctrinal differences dividing the Churches or have made them their own? What does it mean once we recognize with regard to the different

[11] cf. the author's study, 'On the Structure of the People of the Church Today', *Theological Investigations* XII (London and New York, 1974), pp. 218-228.

[12] On the question of the creed or the confession of faith cf. chiefly the author's studies on a basic formula of the faith. In the nature of things the problem of confessional formulae too is touched upon in this context. Cf. 'The Need for a "Short Formula" of Christian Faith', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 117-126, and also 'Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devising a Short Formula of the Faith', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 230-244 (together with the further literature there adduced). But the following should also be noticed: 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974) pp. 3-23. Here the problems are approached from a different standpoint. For an overall survey cf. a study by one of the author's collaborators, R. Bleistein, *Kurzformel des Glaubens*, *Prinzip einer modernen Religionspädagogik* (Würzburg, 2nd ed., 1972).

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Churches to the extent that they signify not institutions but men that they are constituted by men and Christians of this kind who in a *theological* sense are in no possible sense confessionally divided from one another? Obviously I do not deny that in every confessionally divided Church there are individuals who have in fact grasped the distinctive doctrines of their own particular Church and made them their own. In fact I presume that I myself am to be numbered among them, and so that I am in a sense that is theological and not merely pertaining to the sociology of religion a Catholic. But this does not dispose of the question of what the significance of this fact is: that the vast majority of the members of all Christian Churches are, from the point of view of the sociology of religion, members each of one such Church on specifically historical and psychological grounds, but not properly on theological grounds, even though despite this fact, recognized by everyone, ecumenical theology as practised on all sides properly speaking proceeds from the opposite position, i.e. acts as though within the individual Churches it were imparting its message to a great number of men who were confessional Christians in a specifically theological sense. I believe that any ecumenical theology in any Church must take a far deeper and fuller cognizance of the simple fact we have mentioned as a subject of extremely disturbing, and properly theological, enquiry.[13]

[267] How this question is to be answered, what conclusions will emerge from a theologically bold and exact attempt at answering this question, it is difficult to say. And obviously it is not possible within so brief a compass as is available to us here even to sketch out an answer to such a question. Thus for instance the question would have to be posed of what status within the faith of a given Church and for the justification of a Church a doctrine could have which on the one hand is declared to be constitutive of that particular confession, while on the other it never so much as comes to the fore in the conscious faith of the vast majority of the members of such a Church on any realistic view of the matter from the aspect of the theology of faith. In this connection these individuals as they exist in the concrete circumstances of their lives and in history can no longer be regarded as represented by a territorial overlord or a small leading group, a sociological elite as may perhaps have been possible in earlier centuries not merely at the sociological level but at the theological one as well. Theological considerations of this state of affairs which belongs primarily to the sociology and psychology of religion could lead to consequences which might contribute to finding the answer to different and more practical ecumenical questions. We might think, for instance, of the question of religious instruction in common for children of different confessions, of the question of an ecumenical form of marriage, of the question of so-called intercommunion, i.e. a fellowship at the altar going beyond that which is even now already admitted, or beginning to be admitted, in this respect in the separated Churches. Such questions will certainly not be able to be answered solely on the basis of the initiative here indicated. But abstracting from minor and marginal considerations with regard to a common viewpoint as to the nature of the Eucharist, we are in my opinion far from having devoted sufficient thought to what is implied for the questions we have mentioned by the fact that the majority of Christians in the separated Churches, while they are indeed separated from one another institutionally and at the level of religious sociology, are not so in a properly theological sense, i.e. in relation to the faith which they have *de facto* made real to themselves in their heads and hearts. This is a faith which in practice does not include

[13] Among the disquieting aspects we should also include a question which, though much discussed, has surely not yet been thought out aright, that namely of intercommunion with all the difficult problems it entails. A few brief remarks on this are to be found in what follows. For the present we may confine ourselves to noticing two studies together with a relevant bibliography: H. Bacht, 'Zum Problem der Interkommunion', *Catholica* 24 (1970), pp. 270-291, and also, amongst other works, K. H. Neufeld, 'Abendmahlsgemeinschaft – für und wider', *Der grosse Entschluss* 24 (1969), pp. 421-424.

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confessional differences, at least in those areas in which, according to the theologies of these Churches themselves, it could justify any separation between the Churches. Yet it is clear that these questions, together with their possible implications, [268] cannot be thought out any further in the present context, the questions namely touching upon the difference between the kind of separation that is the outcome of religious sociology on the one hand, and the unity at the level of faith and theology of the majority of Christians within the different Churches on the other.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE A CHURCH THAT IS INSTITUTIONALLY ONE?

Only one last question must be appended to what we have said in pointing out this noteworthy difference. To put it in a somewhat simplified and over-generalized form: we have Churches which are separated from one another institutionally and in terms of religious sociology. In this respect they are wholly separated from one another, whereas in terms of faith the same Churches are at one so far as the majority of their members are concerned, and in this connection are separated only so far as minor groups within them are concerned, groups with a higher degree of theological awareness, and so constituted particularly by officials and theologians.[14] Could we not make the converse true without thereby harming the conscious faith either of the majority of Christians or of those Christians who are aware of the theological differences involved? In other words could we not form a Church which was *single* in institutional terms and in terms of religious sociology in which of course the plurality of creeds upheld by those maintaining theologically distinct doctrines would be recognized as legitimate within this institutional unity? Against this it might be objected that the conscious faith of those Christians divided on theological grounds does in fact demand precisely specific institutions within their Church or alternatively excludes such institutions on grounds of faith. This would mean that a Church that was institutionally *one* in this sense would perforce run counter to the conscious faith of such individuals divided on theological grounds. For instance some would feel obliged to demand a pope while others would reject any such authority. [269] But in response to this a counter-question might be put: would it not be possible, while according a place to such Church institutions (e.g. pope and bishops, a multiplicity of sacramental rites etc.) within the unity of this Church at the level of religious sociology still so to apply them in concrete practice that they would not do violence to the conscious faith of those who formally rejected such institutions while for the rest who formally demanded them they could be provided and so be interpreted by these according to their conscious faith with regard to the concrete application of such institutions that they were also in accordance with their tenets.

All this is intended merely as a *question* which we might go on precisely to point to in fuller detail. Yet a question still remains which has not been sufficiently clearly raised so far in ecumenical theology: the question of what conclusions arise from the fact that all Christian Churches must ascribe the fact of being separated, as distinct from any conscious faith at the theoretical level, to circumstances in the past, circumstances to which, according to their own doctrines, they should not accord any influence bearing upon the question of unity or

[14] Even in the case of the structures of institutional leadership there is surely still a wider scope available for new forms and conceptions than we are accustomed to suppose. Consequently not every possibility is yet cut off from this aspect either. This is a point which arises from the author's article in the present volume, 'Aspects of the Episcopal Office'. The proposal put forward here, therefore, is to be taken as a conceptual model. No definitive value judgement is necessarily intended either in a positive or in a negative sense. What the author was primarily concerned with was to point out lines of development and possibilities which should not simply be overlooked or forgotten.

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separation, and that the separation that is truly based on faith, which should correspond to the institutional separation, is in no sense present in the great majority of the members of all these Churches. The reasons for these members still belonging to *either* this *or* that Church even today are, it is true, the outcome of a long historical line of succession. But properly speaking these reasons are not covered by those decisions of faith which could justify a separation between the Churches. Clearly this third path of renewal in ecumenical theology has been indicated in a very over-simplified and unguarded form.

The ecumenical theology of the future will be different and more comprehensive if it consists not merely in discussion between the two theologies, but actually draws new partners into the discussion: the world of today, the secular sciences, the fact that the ecumenical dialogue, from a theological point of view, is far from being such that it can *ipso facto* be conducted by the theologians in the name of the rest of Christians.

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[270]

16

THE UNREADINESS OF THE CHURCH'S MEMBERS TO ACCEPT POVERTY

Ever since the Second Vatican Council we have been talking freely and at length about the 'poor Church' or the 'Church of the poor', a Church, that is, which by its poverty must show the world that its message is worthy of belief.[1] It has a duty to range itself on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the under-developed peoples. It must bring the rich face to face with the sorrows of Jesus and so fight against the contemporary structures and the dominance of capitalism and imperialism, and in so fighting against these structures with their unjust dominance it must of course begin with itself. The religious communities in the Church, the orders, are exhorted to give a new and modern sense, and a new importance to that poverty which in fact they have vowed themselves to all along.

Obviously only very little can be said here, within the compass of a brief article, on all these questions of poverty[2] as a problem for the *Church*. Anyone who fails to discover here what he believes that he is justified in seeking should bear in mind the difficulties entailed in this question. Precisely on this account too we have no intention of developing the question 'systematically'. Only a few observations are possible. Perhaps in spite of that we shall be able to make a contribution to the evaluation which the most recent Synod of Bishops (Autumn 1971) has [271] undertaken, or at any rate has sought to undertake.[3] For the general theme of how the Church can contribute to bringing justice in the world to reality must surely include a consideration of what chances there are for actually carrying out this task of the Church.

Even in the New Testament itself we can discover a strange dualism: poverty is that which men seek to strive against in their fellows with the help of love of neighbour, a love which must not be taken as confined to one's private circle. At the same time it is that living context, voluntarily created, which is intended to make it possible for one's own life to be truly Christian. Of course it may be said that the two senses of 'poverty' are far from having the same meaning. But is that altogether true? And are the social conditions presupposed in this biblical message concerning poverty still present today as well? Whatever answers we feel we must give to these difficult questions, the situation today is at least such that a connection does exist between these two kinds of 'poverty', the 'voluntary' poverty regarded as a moral or ascetic ideal for Christians is intended to contribute to helping our fellows in their poverty. The 'coat' which one man forgoes is intended to warm his fellow.

There are poor even today who should not be such. There are underdeveloped peoples among whom poor of this kind are to be counted in millions, and because – at least first and foremost in principle – something *can* be altered in this, it follows that something *must* be altered in it. The Lazarus before the gates of the rich reveller is nowadays represented first and foremost by the under-developed peoples. The boundary line between Lazarus and the

[1] On this cf. Y. Congar, 'The Place of Poverty in Christian Life in an Affluent Society', *Concilium* 5/2 (1966), pp. 28-39, with extensive bibliography for the French-speaking sphere, for which this subject has a special prominence. A series of significant passages in this discussion is to be found in P. Henrici ed., *Die christliche Armut* (Frankfurt, 1966).

[2] On the theme of poverty cf. the following articles by the author: 'Reflections on the Theology of Renunciation', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 47-57, and also 'On the Theology of Poverty', *Theological Investigations* VIII (London and New York, 1971), pp. 168-124. A further work which should be mentioned here is J. B. Metz, *Armut im Geiste* (Munich, 1962).

[3] On the problems involved in the theme of 'social justice' as treated of at the Synod of Bishops at Rome see the reports in *Herder Korrespondenz* 25 (1971), pp. 457-460; 472-478.

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reveller is the north-south line encircling the entire world. In addition there are of course poor people enough even in the highly industrialized and privileged nations, people who sheerly and simply have not enough to eat, people who have been squeezed out of the work force against their will after forty years, victims of racial discrimination or unjust political persecution, people prevented from achieving a reasonable and possible rise in living standards, people living on small fixed incomes and scraping a wretched living throughout their lives, sick people who might be helped if the will to help them was there, people who cannot help themselves in life because right from the outset they have never been given the possibility of a start in human or economic terms, and so on – people who are genuinely poor. And even if we dislike criticisms of society in the form of lyrical laments, still we, who cannot [272] number ourselves among these poor, are rich (by some standards, however varied these may be), and rich, *moreover because* (notice the 'moreover' and the 'because' here!) those poor people are poor. As for 'alms' in the biblical sense, which should still be being given today and should conduce to greater justice as producing changes either of an evolutionary or revolutionary kind in the social structures, we either fail to give them or do not give them in sufficient measure. And here the Church quite certainly should have – indeed has – the task of preaching justice for the poor to herself, her members and the world, of recognizing and searching out these contemporary poor everywhere where the conditions and structures of wealth and power make some wretched and pitiful while according unjust privileges to others, regardless of whether this wretchedness is the direct outcome of withdrawing economic benefits or consists in other injuries. What is primarily in question nowadays, therefore, is the will to *eliminate* this poverty as rightly understood, and not directly the will to be poor. This latter kind of will is relevant – at least primarily and under existing conditions – only to the extent that the will to eliminate the poverty of *others* implies the renunciation of goods for oneself, and to that extent one's own 'poverty'. (It might be asked whether if there were no poor in any true sense the will to accept personal poverty, consumer ascesis, voluntary restraint in the fact of an uncontrolled emphasis on the enjoyment of goods, would not still always be reasonable and necessary for men and Christians. But this is a question which does not need to be raised for our present purposes.)

It is here that we begin to encounter the problem which in the following study will be restricted to the conflict between north and south. In our treatment of it we shall be assuming, without actually producing an array of statistics, that the 'world' is *de facto* failing to do what should be done to overcome this conflict; that the 'aids to development' (whatever the form they should take or whatever name should be given them) are totally inadequate. Now precisely *how* should the *Church* be a credible witness to this message that is necessary to will the struggle against poverty as understood here? The actual situation is this: a form of preaching which remains more or less socially ineffectual over a long period loses its credibility. For when the demand that something should be believed in remains on the whole ineffectual, men refuse to believe in its credibility. This may or may not be justified, but in any case we do not need here to investigate when it is right to adopt such an attitude and when not. In any case it *actually is so*. And this leads to a vicious circle. The Church preaches that it is necessary actively to will the elimination [273] of poverty in the world, but its message is more or less ineffectual for reasons which we are just about to consider. And the ineffectualness of the Church's preaching renders her message unworthy of belief and so in its turn still more ineffectual.

Why is the exhortation to this resolve by and large ineffectual? The reasons most often adduced for this are generally speaking very superficial and emotional ones. The Church, it is alleged, does not herself practise what she preaches. She is rich. Those within her who set the standards, the pope, bishops and priests, themselves have standards of living which are too high in the advanced countries. They fail to achieve any really firm social awareness. They

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prefer to adhere to the rich, to the establishment in the capitalist and imperialist countries, and so on. And, so the accusation continues, even if much that we might demand or expect of these people would not make any very great difference so far as real poverty is concerned throughout the whole world, still it should be demanded as a sign and protest, as a manifestation of good will. It should not be dismissed as trivial on the grounds that after all it would not be of any use. Abstracting from *those particular* grounds which we shall straightway be showing to be valid in relation to the members of the Church in general, and which to that extent obviously also apply to the clergy of the Church, the arguments customarily adduced for the ineffectualness of the Church's preaching of poverty do not seem to be very convincing. Despite all the outcry against them the riches of the Vatican are not very great, granted the legitimate aims which it has to strive to achieve. If the pope were to sell his art treasures a fresh outcry would be raised against papal philistinism, just as it is now raised against papal riches. The clergy in our countries, priests and bishops alike (at least among us Germans, though in other countries, France for instance, it straight-way becomes a different matter), certainly share far too much in the standards of the modern consumer society. They live too expensively. The story of the German bishop who either used to drive or still drives a large car, yet sought to have his episcopal standard mounted on a more modest one is perhaps after all not wholly untypical. But in all this the clergy are, after all, merely sharing in *that* deafness to the preaching of poverty which is universal. It might of course be said that the clergy should precisely take the lead in setting a good example. They may perhaps be exercising consumer restraint but they should be somewhat readier to let their light shine before men in this respect as a sign of what our attitude in the Church really ought to be. The situation is, however, that nowadays it is taken as a sign of the maturity of the laity that they [274] are constantly seeking to enlarge upon the unimportance of the example set them by the clergy. And finally in the present context what is in question is precisely not a sign, but the far more real question of how we can bring effective help to the 'poor'. And on this showing it must after all be said that if anyone is to help it is not the Church as represented by the clergy, but the Church of all Christians, the Church of the laity that should provide this help. This brings us to a simple question: will it be possible for the Church (in the sense of the clergy) really to mobilize the Church of the laity in this resolve and this struggle against the poverty of the world?

If we are to find an answer to this true and practical question one point must be made from the outset. The actual *attempt* to achieve this mobilization, this change of awareness and attitude in the Church, must be made by individuals in the Church (clergy and laymen alike) who are aware of the situation and of this objective duty on the Church's part. This remains true even if it has to be said that the question as posed will have to be answered (by and large) in the negative. There are precisely human and Christian situations in which a course of action is demanded of one even though, on any realistic view, it is condemned to failure. (Otherwise Jesus too would not have died on the Cross.)

This is a point to which we shall be returning at a later stage. But assuming it as correct for the present, we must say this: the prospects are that the Church will not succeed in leading the struggle against poverty by means of her own 'poverty', even though in itself she has a duty to do this. The Church will not, in any adequate sense, succeed in mobilizing the Church. There is an unreadiness to accept poverty.

The first point to be made on this thesis is one that is intended to explain how in general terms it is possible to arrive at such a judgement. If we take Church history into consideration, and take serious cognizance of the teaching that the Church is a Church of *sinners*, then we cannot say that it is impossible from the outset for the Church to be capable of failing in major historical situations, or *alternatively* that such a thing is unforeseeable

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under certain circumstances.[4] A failure of this kind is not impossible [275] because on any human estimation it has *de facto* taken place often enough in the past. Or are we to say that, for instance in the case of her confrontation with the cultures of Eastern Asia, in the dispute on rites, the Church really emerged successfully (to consider merely the more recent history of the Church)? Has she really 'coped' adequately in any positive sense with the Enlightenment? Has she reacted against modern nationalistic movements in the manner really demanded of her? Has she managed to reject the movement towards the Church state *at the right time*? Is it not through her own fault (her historical fault!) that she has in large measure lost the 'proletariat' in many countries? And so on. The case with the Church as with other societies is *mutatis mutandis* the same as with the individual man. He fails to meet the demands of a particular situation, even though it cannot and should not be said (in order to create an alibi from the outset for this failure) that he did not already have 'within himself' and from the outset the possibility of meeting this demand which his situation made upon him. Thus the Church too, as a great mass of average individuals, finds herself again and again in situations in which the requirements of the gospel, in their concrete application as determined by the particular situation, simply 'can' not be recognized with sufficient clarity and force. (The theologians would perhaps have to use the term *necessitas consequens* at this point, but it remains a 'must' pertaining to the opposite of saving history really to take that course of action which properly speaking should be taken.) We recognize an obligation and at the same time fail to recognize it. We respond to a demand, but in such a way that our response is so weak as to have no result at all, or at any rate very little. The borderline between the duty which in itself does exist and its opposite are so fluid and obscure that we can hardly ever see the situation in which the individual stands so clearly that we can say to him, 'For a Christian that is absolutely ruled out.' Again and again we find ideological justifications to give the Christian a good conscience for doing the opposite of his duty (in a given situation). (We may recall the theological justifications adduced for the apartheid policy.) The obligation is divided up among everyone in such a way that no one can be held responsible for discharging it. The preaching of high ideals is made an alibi for real deeds. Those individuals who do fulfil radical demands of the situation of this kind, at least in so far as they recognize them or are able to fulfil them, are held up as an excuse for the rest. (We may think of a Peter Claver or a Martin Luther King and similar [276] figures in Church history.) Even today we are still setting up monuments to the prophets in order to avoid having to obey what they preached. There is a tendency to feel that we have established that something is impossible even with the best will in the world *before* we have really tried every possible course. The doctrine of original sin is invoked, or that of the inescapable dialectic of all human realities, or the statement that the poor are always with us, the doctrine of the sublime meaning of suffering and misfortune (even when, at basis, it is solely the outcome of our own fault), or the doctrine of eternal life, the recognition that absolute social equality is neither beneficial nor possible, these and a thousand other reasons are adduced merely to avoid having to take the course of action which a given situation really prescribes. We are exhorted to advance very slowly and cautiously. The praises of evolution in preference to revolution are sung. We are reluctant to make mortgage payments which will only benefit the

[4] It may seem that some will seek to use this as ammunition against the Church in an anti-apologetic sense. To these it may simply be pointed out that according to this thesis of a possibility in principle the Church is merely sharing in the common lot of mankind and of the rest of society. In any case she is no worse in this respect than the rest of individuals or societies. Thus from a theological standpoint the question can be at most whether we can establish how far the Church should be better than the 'rest'. When we speak of failure and the possibility of this two questions still remain quite open: the question of how it is judged in God's sight and the further question of its bearing on the decision for salvation. What we are treating of here is that which is customarily called 'historic guilt'.

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next generation. We say we cannot when what we really mean is we will not. Our way of formulating this may seem too 'moralizing' in tone, though this is no part of our intention, although those who describe the historical guilt of the Church in earlier ages and condemn it are all too eager to step forward with aggressive accusations and moral condemnations. Yet the fact remains: even in the Church and despite the Church's existence historical faults of the greatest magnitude are possible. Why should not the same situations apply in the case of epochs and peoples as apply in the history of individuals, situations, that is, which can only rightly be responded to by an act of 'heroic virtue'? And on this showing why should not epochs, peoples, and societies too be such that for the most part they fail to rise above these situations? After all these too are made up of very average individuals. Should we not then expect such failure from them still more than from individuals, though admittedly this fact is far from being any firm reason for excusing such failure in situations of the kind we are speaking of? (Any more than the Church in times of persecution can simply permit an average Christian to apostatize in order to preserve his life or his wellbeing.) The great mass of mankind is in fact seldom or never ready for heroic deeds (even when such are necessary, and even men who are not Christian are still subject to the impulses of the Holy Spirit). And if this is true how can we expect any such thing within the Church at all times, seeing that she is made up precisely of these individuals, who also constitute secular societies? There have always been heroic individuals in the Church. But does this *ipso facto* mean that there has been a heroic Church? The ecclesiologists should see how they can solve this dilemma. The fact we [277] are pointing to is still far from having been adequately thought out at the theological level even though there are people enough nowadays who regard the Church as discredited by it to such an extent that for them it has become totally unworthy of belief in its claim to have been founded by God.

A case of the kind we are speaking of now seems to be in prospect, a failure, namely, of the Church with regard to the will to personal poverty undertaken to eliminate the poverty of the under-developed world. We have to say that all the prospects are that the will that is really required of the Church in this respect will not be brought to bear any more than that of secular society in the same field. The Church will act more or less in exactly the same way as secular society, perhaps very slightly better but by and large just the same. We see and yet we do not see, we will and yet we do not will, we do something and it is too little. Our unreadiness to accept poverty remains. The necessary process of changing our basic attitudes is simply too slow to meet the necessities or to ensure that what is really required will be achieved in the foreseeable future so long as it is not forced by the sheer physical facts, so long as it is subjected merely to moral appeals. The creative imagination is not there. The utopian ideal has (still) no strength behind it. The influence which the Church can bring to bear on such changes of attitude is dependent not merely upon the intrinsic power of the gospel, but also upon the general historical and social milieu. Certainly this influence of the Church – as a *partial* cause which takes effect at what may be a very invisible level – constantly works within history to change the intellectual and social situation of the secular world. But the converse is equally true. It is only when *this* situation has come to coincide with what the Church demands, and that too through a whole range of causes not under the control of explicit Christianity or the Church, are Christians in a position really to recognize precisely and effectively what course of action they should truly adopt and should long since have been adopting. Now for the most part changes of this kind in secular attitudes take place slowly, all too slowly. And because of this we cannot seriously expect that this process will be accelerated in the Church. It is much in itself if the Church does not simply form the rearguard in this action, a role which, after all, it has in many respects adopted since the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. For during this period it recognized the signs of the times only when these had already become more than signs, hard simple facts which no

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one in the Church could any longer evade, moreover no longer wished to evade, and which made it obvious that there was no longer any necessity to evade them. The present day is still a time in which the Church is unready to accept poverty. [278] The only way in which the Church's members could be induced to be poor and to embrace poverty would be for them to recognize this 'poverty' as a condition for eliminating poverty in the under-developed world. Now in practice, though in itself this inducement to personal poverty does exist it is not recognized in the Church regarded as the great mass of believers to the extent that would be necessary in order to eliminate poverty in the under-developed world. We do not see, we will not see, we cannot see. How precisely the position should be defined may remain an open question. The end result remains the same. Despite all the discussion, all the heroic efforts on the part of individuals both within and without the Church we remain indifferent towards the poverty of the world, unready to accept personal poverty. The prospects are that we will stick fast at the level of small instalment payments, the executing of half-hearted manoeuvres which serve to evade the problem, not to overcome it in any genuine sense. This will be the line of action in the Church and in secular society, each depending upon the other in this question too. Nothing more can be expected in practice even from those forced to accept what is, by our standards, a more modest way of life, any more than it is from the rich and prosperous. For no one among us likes to pay enough for a banana to ensure that the banana picker can be given a really just reward for his labour. The student who campaigns against capitalism and imperialism still enjoys his holiday trip to Tunis. The theology professor sees nothing wrong in having a house of his own (or in some circumstances two) for the pursuit of his profound studies. And so on. And it is also very difficult to say how the individual could seriously rise above the economic and social forces which are impregnated by sin – forces which can rarely actually be said simply to be sinful in themselves and of their very nature, even though they belong intrinsically to the 'acquisitive' constitution of the world, impel us to sin, are born of sin, and are there to put us to the test (*ad agonem*) in a struggle in which all of us are only too prone to succumb, falling into personal sin or making our personal contribution to the 'sins of the world' in other ways. For man is precisely a sinner both in his private and in his public life, both within and without the Church. How far this objective state of sinfulness in God's sight can be brought home to him personally or in an ultimate sense – this is in turn another question. In any case he is a being in process of becoming. He is meant to be something more than he in fact is. He recognizes this deficiency and must accept (in order to advance at all) that it is greater than can really be justified even on 'moral' grounds. And this precise point also applies to the question of the rich and the poor in the [279] world. This is why in practice there is, even within the Church, an unreadiness to accept poverty so as to make others rich. Anyone seeking to analyse this state of affairs with greater theological precision needs only to recall the traditional theological teaching that it is impossible to avoid all sins, an impossibility that is dialectically coexistent in man with the possibility of avoiding them. Such a one needs only to transpose this teaching onto the social plane and to apply it to our special problem.

Let no one say that these terrible conclusions of ours are such as to ennervate or to kill all will to embrace poverty so as to eliminate poverty. For when we stand before the judgement-seat of God no one of us will be able to offer as a sure defence of his conduct that he was simply going along with the herd. Everyone must struggle even when he foresees that he will be defeated. And it can even be the case that God may perhaps spare this present-day world of ours taken as a whole (obviously we can, if we like, put this in secular terms) so long as he can find among its inhabitants the few just men whom he failed to find among the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus the question is thrown back from the Church to the individual of whether he too – and perhaps through a real fault in God's sight – is too rich really to help the poor.

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF THE 'ANONYMOUS CHRISTIAN'

THE central theme of the remarks which follow will be that summed up in the key phrase 'anonymous Christian'. It is recognized that the subject being treated of here is first and foremost a controversy internal to Catholic theology. I myself have given my opinions on this theme several times.[1] A. Roper has made this phrase the title of a book which has appeared in German, English, Italian and Spanish.[2] Klaus Riesenhuber has presented a comprehensive survey on this question.[3] In Japan Hans Waldenfels reacted favourably to my thesis,[4] whereas other European missionaries in the same area took up an emphatically hostile attitude to this thesis of the 'anonymous Christian'.[5] Hans Urs von Balthasar[6] and Henri de Lubac[7] likewise expressed their opposition to it, [281] while E. Schillebeeckx too expressed certain objections to it.[8] These references are intended not to provide any exhaustive bibliography on the controversy, but rather to make it clear that it will perhaps be worth while to present a few further observations on the theme. Admittedly in doing so we cannot have any intention of repeating in precise or explicit terms everything which has already been said on the subject. A somewhat random selection from among the various possible aspects must be permitted.

By way of preliminary it may be pointed out that a distinction should be drawn between the question of what constitutes the best possible terminology from every point of view, and the further question of the actual reality signified by the phrases 'anonymous Christian' or 'anonymous Christianity'. So far as the terminology is concerned I do not deny that this too has a certain importance, and that not every opinion to the effect that the terminology 'anonymous Christian' or 'anonymous Christianity' are to be rejected on the grounds that many find it misleading *ipso facto* or necessarily implies a rejection of the actual reality signified thereby. But anyone who holds that the reality signified by the above phrases, or the material content they point to are of such great importance that they must be condensed within a precisely formulated terminology of this kind in order to be used in other theological considerations must, if he merely rejects the above terminology, suggest some other terminology which according to his opinion is less misleading. Now this will probably prove very difficult. I know of no convincing suggestions which have been put forward in this respect. We may concede to de Lubac that with regard to the justification of the terms which have been called in question there is a certain distinction to be drawn between 'anonymous Christian' and 'anonymous Christianity', that the term 'anonymous Christian' may more readily be admitted than that of 'anonymous Christianity'. Some therefore may prefer to avoid the term 'anonymous Christianity', while being ready to use the term 'anonymous Christian' etc. They can count on my agreement on this point. All I would draw their attention to in this

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[1] On this subject cf. the earlier publications by the author: 'Anonymous Christians', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 390-398, and also 'Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church', *Theological Investigations* XII (London and New York, 1974), pp. 161-178.

[2] A. Roper, *Die anonymen Christen* (Mainz, 1963); but see also on this the critical review by H. Vorgrimler, 'Ober die 'anonymen Christen' ', *Hochland* 56 (1963/64), pp. 363-364.

[3] K. Riesenhuber, 'Der anonyme Christ, nach K. Rahner', *Zeitschr. f. Kath. Theol.* 86 (1964), pp. 276-303. Riesenhuber attempts to give a comprehensive and co-ordinated presentation of all the Various statements Ly Rahner on rhe question.

[4] H. Waldenfels, ' '. . . omnes homines vult salvos fieri . . .' (i Tim. 2:4). De sententia P. Caroli Rahner SJ. circa voluntatem salvificam Dei universalem', *Shin-gaku Kenkyu* (Tokio, 1962), no. 12. Cf. also *idem,* Theologische Akkomodation', *Hochland* 58 (1965/66), pp. 189-204.

[5] cf. e.g. L. Elders, 'Die Taufe der Weltreligionen. Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie Karl Rahners', *Theol. u. Glaube* 55 (1965), pp. 124-131, and also H. Kruse, 'Die 'anonymen Christen' exegetisch gesehen', *Munch. Theol. Zeitschrift* 18 (1967), pp. 2-29.

[6] See H. U. von Balthasar's observations in *Cordula oder der Ernstfall* (Einsiedeln, 1966).

[7] cf. H. de Lubac, *ParaJoxe et Mys&re de VEglise* (Paris, 1967), pp. 153-156-

[8] cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Glaulensinterpretation* (Mainz, 1971), pp. io8f.

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respect is that 'Christianity' can have two meanings: not merely that of 'Christendom', i.e. the sum total of Christians, and so for practical purposes the Church, but also the meaning of the 'being Christian' of an individual Christian. In this sense, then, we can speak of 'anonymous Christianity' so long as we are willing to speak of an anonymous Christian. But this is as far as we shall go in concerning ourselves with the purely terminological problem.

[282] The Reality of the 'Anonymous Christian'

The actual subject-matter with which we are properly and ultimately speaking concerned here is such that, as I believe, it neither can nor should be contested by any Catholic Christian or theologian. But two points are involved in this subject-matter:

There are men who stand outside the social unity of the Church or of the Christian Churches, who have not been reached by the explicitly Christian message, or at any rate not in such a way that their failure to embrace Christianity in any explicit sense signifies any serious personal fault in God's sight so far as they are concerned. At the same time, however, these same individuals stand in a positive and salvific relationship to God. In other words to put it in the usual theological terminology and in a somewhat abbreviated form, they are justified. They are living in the state of grace. Even those who at the level of their conscious thought interpret themselves as atheist may be numbered among such individuals, although the concept of the 'anonymous theist' who regards himself as an atheist and the concept of the 'anonymous Christian' are not identical.[9]

But the thesis of the 'anonymous Christian' includes a second point as well, and it is this that primarily and properly speaking gives it its importance and at the same time its difficulty. This individual who is justified even though he is a non-Christian is justified through the grace of Christ and through a faith, hope and love for God and mankind which are to be qualified as specifically Christian in a special sense, even though this triad, constituting the single way to salvation and possession of salvation, is something of which they are not objectively aware in the sense of having consciously explicitated their specifically Christian dimension to themselves. Merely in passing it may be remarked that we might actually apply the term 'anonymous Christian' to every individual who, in virtue of Goers universal will to save, and thereby in virtue of the 'supernatural existential',[10] is inescapably confronted with the offering of God's self-bestowal and is totally unable to escape from this situation. In other words according to this terminology absolutely every man is also an 'anonymous [283] Christian'. But we prefer the terminology according to which that man is called an 'anonymous Christian' who on the one hand has *de facto* accepted of his freedom this gracious self-offering on God's part through faith, hope, and love, while on the other he is absolutely not yet a Christian at the social level (through baptism and membership of the Church) or in the sense of having consciously objectified his Christianity to himself in his own mind (by explicit Christian faith resulting from having hearkened to the explicit Christian message). We might therefore put it as follows: the 'anonymous Christian' in our sense of the term is the pagan after the beginning of the Christian mission, who lives in the state of Christ's grace through faith, hope and love, yet who has no explicit knowledge of the fact that his life is orientated in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ.

The Theological Meaning of the Reality Signified by the Term 'Anonymous Christian'

So far as the first element is concerned I believe that there should be no room for doubt

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[9] cf. also the author's article, 'Atheism and Implicit Christianity', *Theological Investigations* IX (London and New York, 1972), pp. 145-164.

[10] On these earlier ideas of the author's see 'Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations* I (London, 1961), pp. 297-317, and also 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 235-263.

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among Catholic theologians or Christians. There can be, and actually are, individuals who are justified in the grace of God, who attain to supernatural salvation in God's sight (and, moreover, to Christ as well), yet who do not belong to the Church or to Christendom as a visible historical reality as a result of having been touched by the preaching of the gospel in any concrete 'this worldly' sense at any point in their lives. No truly theological demonstration of this thesis can be supplied here from scripture or tradition. Such a demonstration would not be easy to make, because the optimism of universal salvation entailed in this thesis has only gradually become clear and asserted itself in the conscious faith of the Church. We can trace a course of development from the optimism concerning salvation for unbaptized catechumens in Ambrose, through the doctrine of the *baptismus flaminis* and the *votum ecclesiae* in the Middle Ages and at the Council uf Trent, down to the explicit teaching in the writings of Pius XII to the effect that even a merely implicit *votum* for the Church and baptism can suffice. From this we can trace a further and more arduous course of development of the emergence of conscious faith in this regard which was even more difficult than the development of the conviction that there can be heretics and schismatics who are in good faith even outside the Church, and whose salvation cannot be doubted. Whatever may be the course of this development, whatever theological grounds there may be for justifying it, it can at all events be said that at least since the Second Vatican Council there can no longer be any room [284] for doubt that the Catholic Church, as a matter of her conscious faith, regards it as established that it is possible even for such men of good will to be justified and to attain to supernatural salvation even though at the level of their concrete 'this worldly' circumstances, and at the level of personal history and of the kerygmatic and institutional Church, they are not Christians at all. In this connection it should be noticed that this possibility is positively asserted by the Second Vatican Council. It is not merely that in presenting a theology of the necessity of the gospel and of baptism for salvation it has been added on as a negative point that in emphasizing this necessity of the gospel and of baptism we are nevertheless imposing no limits to the sovereign freedom of God's grace. The Second Vatican Council positively asserts that it is possible for the non-Christian to attain salvation, though at the same time it declares that such salvation is achieved in ways that are known to God alone. In a tacit but noteworthy correction to the officially received theology which had hitherto been more or less unanimous on this point, it was declared at the Second Vatican Council that atheists too are not excluded from this possibility of salvation, though here the distinctions between positive and negative atheism, between atheism of greater or lesser duration, usually accepted up to that point were not applied at the Second Vatican Council. The only necessary condition which is recognized here is the necessity of faithfulness and obedience to the individual's own personal conscience. This optimism concerning salvation appears to me one of the most noteworthy results of the Second Vatican Council. For when we consider the officially received theology concerning all these questions, which was more or less traditional right down to the Second Vatican Council, we can only wonder how few controversies arose during the Council with regard to these assertions of optimism concerning salvation, and wonder too at how little opposition the conservative wing of the Council brought to bear on this point, how all this took place without any setting of the Stage ur any great stir even though this doctrine marked a far more decisive phase in the development of the Church's conscious awareness of her faith than, for instance, the doctrine of collegiality in the Church, the relationship between scripture and tradition, the acceptance of the new exegesis etc.[11]

We now come to the second element which we have previously pointed [285] out in the doctrine of the anonymous Christian. This salvation of the non-Christian is achieved through an act of faith in the true sense. The doctrine of the anonymous Christian as it is nowadays presented precisely does not involve the belief that anyone can attain to justification and final

[11] On the whole cf. Cone. Vat. II, 'Nostra aetate' (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions); 'Gaudium et spes' (Pastoral Constitution) (above all the first main section: The Church and Man's Calling), and also 'Ad gentes' (The Decree on the Missions).

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salvation even without faith in a strictly theological sense merely because he does not act against his own moral conscience. It is true that the theory of a 'faith', a *fides late dicta,* which at basis amounted merely to a recognition of God at the philosophical level was sufficient for justification was rejected by Innocent XL[12] But this has certainly no very great theological importance for our present consideration, especially since the theory of A. Straub at the beginning of the present century concerning the justifying power of a readiness to believe in principle, a *fides virtualis,*[13] never incurred the official censure of the Church. But both in Pius XII's declaration against the rigorism of Feeney[14] and in the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council it is after all clearly assumed that even in these cases of a justified pagan a *fides supernaturalis* is necessary. What is not stated in these official doctrinal declarations is how a truly supernatural faith of this kind in the strictly theological sense can come to be in the cases which concern us here. In the document of the Second Vatican Council, 'Ad gentes' No. 7, it is stated (albeit merely in an aside) that God can bring men who are ignorant of the gospel through no fault of their own to faith by ways which he knows, and that without this faith it is impossible to be pleasing to him. And in this formula what we chiefly sense is a scepticism as to whether it is possible at all, even in the most formal way, to find an answer to the question of how such a faith could ever be present in a man when this man has no contact whatever with the gospel. This sense of scepticism also finds expression in a further document of the Second Vatican Council, 'Gaudium et Spes', and moreover in almost the same words (No. 22). This then is concerned with finding the answer to the questicn of *how* it is possible apart from the preaching of the gospel for a true and supernatural faith to be present in a 'pagan' of this kind, i.e. an assent to God as he imparts himself in freedom and in a way which transcends any certainty which the world can offer. But the fact that we cannot find the answer to this question should not prevent the theologian from pondering it more deeply. For if he simply renounces any attempt to find an answer at all however formal, then [286] either the universality of God's will to save towards non-Christian humanity or the necessity of personal faith for this becomes incredible. Yet we cannot invoke either a natural knowledge of God or a primitive and ultimate kind of revelation to answer this question, for such answers will fail to solve it. The first course has already been rejected by Innocent XI and Pius XIE as well as by the declarations of the Second Vatican Council. With regard to the second course, i.e. the invoking of a primitive and ultimate revelation, the way in which this has customarily been presented hitherto is in the form of a handing down of an original revelation of this kind from paradisal sources. Nowadays this is impossible both because of the findings of modern palaeontology and anthropology and also because of the findings of modern exegesis, which regards the narrative of Genesis neither as an eye-witness account of God himself as having participated in the events concerned nor simply as a record that has been transmitted through the centuries of human history. But the converse can be stated. The more we can make intelligible the possibility of a personal faith even in a 'pagan', and moreover on the basis of the normal data of theology as self-evident in other contexts, and so without any supplementary arguments constructed arbitrarily, such as have not infrequently been adduced in the past (special enlightenment at death etc.), the better can the doctrine of the possibility of justification and salvation for a 'pagan' be fitted into the totality of the Christian faith, and the clearer and more intelligible too will the doctrine become of a real, effective, and infralapsarian universal will to save on God's part. Admittedly any such theology of the possibility of a true and saving faith even in the 'pagan' must be so formulated as to avoid obscuring the importance of an explicit Christianity, with its concomitants of gospel and Church, and the necessity of the missionary preaching of this Christianity to all nations and all men. Even when all this is successfully achieved one fact remains, so I believe,

[12] cf. DS[34] 2123.
[13] See A. Straub, *De anafysi fidel* (Innsbruck, 1922). Some of the studies here published go very far back in time.
[14] DS[31] 3872.

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concerning the breakthrough of this optimism concerning salvation for all men which (so far as our present question goes) can be prevented only by the grave personal guilt of the individual, and which at the same time regards all salvation, wherever it is present, as specifically Christian. This optimism with regard to salvation remains one of the most astonishing phenomena in the development of the Church's conscious awareness of her faith in this development as it applies to the secular and non-Christian world, the awareness of the difference between saving history as a whole and the history of explicit Christianity and of the Church. For it is true that we must not say that the Old or the New Testament simply rule out any such optimistic interpretation of universal [287] salvation, which in the power of the Holy Spirit can hope to find a near brother even in one who is apparently most far removed. But we shall not be able to say either that this development of the conscious awareness of faith is already very clearly set forth in the New Testament or that it does not have to overcome very great obstacles which are inherent in the New Testament statements concerning the necessity of salvation coming through the gospel which is preached in its power.

How Could It Be Possible for there to Be an 'Anonymous Christian'?

Now how can we conceive of this possibility of faith in the 'pagan'? In attempting—nothing more than an attempt is intended—to answer this question some anthropological insights may surely be taken as given which should be explained and established more fully elsewhere: the difference and the unity between objective knowledge and that which is known on the one hand, and a non-objective, non-thematic awareness and the reality thus known on the other—in other words between 'this worldly' knowledge and transcendental knowledge, between that which is expressed in conceptual form and the further levels of significance not consciously adverted to of a given statement, between the material object and an *a priori* formal object concomitantly present with the capacity to know, between the object of knowledge and the further perspectives of knowledge—or whatever name we may choose to apply to the distinction we are seeking to draw, though in this it remains unimportant for our present purposes whether the concepts we have adduced historically speaking, and in the application of them here intended, mean precisely the same, or whether further and more precise distinctions should be introduced into them in their turn.[15] For our present purposes what we are chiefly concerned with is of course the distinction between the pairs of concepts we have mentioned. Yet it is net disputed that between them there always remains also a certain unity (not identity!). That which is capable of being expressed in 'this worldly' categories mediates the transcendental and *e converse,* although this mutually conditioning relationship is itself to be thought of not as a fixed entity, but rather as having a history of its own so that this relationship and its history are quite incapable of being expressed thematically in any full sense. If we take these [288] concepts of formal anthropology as read the theory of the possibility of personal faith in a 'pagan' makes two assumptions: (i) The supernatural grace of faith and justification offered by God to men does not need to be conceived of as an isolated intervention on God's part at a particular point in a world which is itself profane. On the contrary it can perfectly well be interpreted on the basis of God's universal will to save as a grace which, as offered (!), is a constantly present existential of the creature endowed with spiritual faculties and of the world in general, which orientates these to the immediacy of God as their final end, though of course in saying this the question still remains wholly open of whether an individual freely gives himself to, or alternatively rejects, this existential which constitutes the innermost dynamism of his being and its history, an existential which is and remains continually present.[16] God's universal will to save objectifies itself in that communication of himself which we call grace. It does this effectively at all times and in all

[15] On these observations by the author cf. 'Thomas Aquinas on Truth', *Theological Investigations* XIII, and the basic studies: *Gelst in Welt* (Munich, 3rd ed., 1964) and *Horer des Wortes* (Munich, 2nd ed., 1963).
[16] cf. n. 10.

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places in the form of the offering and the enabling power of acting in a way that leads to salvation. And even though it is unmerited and 'supernatural' in character, it constitutes the innermost *entelecheia* and dynamism of the world considered as the historical dimension of the creature endowed with spiritual faculties. It does not need to be consciously and objectively known as a dynamism of this kind, and even without such knowledge it is still present. (2) This grace constantly implanted in the nature of the creature and the historical dimension belonging to it as the dynamism and finali-zation of the history of man is, however, something of which man is *aware* in the manner in which such a reality does impinge upon human awareness. This awareness does not *ipso facto* or necessarily imply an objective awareness; it is present in the *a priori* formal objects, in the further levels of significance in the spiritual and intentional capacities of knowledge and freedom. Whether man explicitly recognizes it or not, whether he can or cannot reflect upon it in itself and in isolation, man is, in virtue of the grace offered him and implanted in him as his freedom in the mode of a formal object and of a spiritual perspective *of an a priori* kind, orientated towards the immediacy of God as his final end.[17] He brings his spiritual life to its fulness in knowledge and freedom in such a way that God in himself constitutes the ultimate point of orientation of his whole historical development in knowledge and freedom, and that too not as the God of metaphysical knowledge, as the God of infinite remoteness, but as the [289] God who in himself and of himself, in his own unique reality and sovereignty, constitutes the goal, as the God of eternal life.

This orientation of the spiritual dynamism of man towards the immediacy of God, which is both known and unknown, is, it is true, in order to be known at all (which does not mean reflected upon as an object or capable of being adequately reflected upon by the individual) mediated through the realities of his world assignable to 'this worldly' categories. But this mediation does not necessarily need to be an explicit object of revelation. All those forms of mediation belonging to the dimension of 'this worldly' categories are sufficient for this which confront the individual in himself as a subject endowed with intellect and freedom. We are suggesting that grace brings about a change of awareness through a new *a priori* formal object, even though this change of awareness cannot be reflected upon directly or certainly by the individual as such. Now this is not a thesis discovered *ad hoc,* but a view which has always been upheld in Thomist theology even though hitherto it has probably hardly been applied to our present question—simply because we have regarded the prevenient and elevating grace too much as an isolated event taking place at a particular point, and only under specific circumstances. But if we regard the self-communication of God (considered as that which is offered to man in his freedom) as an abiding existential of the creature endowed with spiritual faculties, and thereby as the innermost dynamism of the world in general, then, assuming the validity of the above-mentioned Thomist thesis, it is clear from the outset that the total process by which man brings his intellectual nature to its fulness, in which he comes to be in act as spiritual and in his totality, is orientated by grace towards the immediacy of God in a dimension of *a priori* awareness. On any right understanding of the relationship between the dimension of transcendental *a priority* and that of categorial historicity in man it is clear that this supernaturally elevated transcendentality of man, of which he is aware but WiiiCii is not *ipso jwcto* Known in itsciA as sn c^cct, \^ocs no*, ^svc a specie history apart, or does not persist in any sense in a non-historical state of fixity, but rather has a history of its own within the concrete history of the individual as its innermost form and dynamism in a manner similar to that of logic, which has its initial history not in the history of the logic that is the subject of conscious philosophical reflection, but in the history of the active spirit of man himself as he shapes his world.

In the light of this we can then go on to say that the total history of mankind is nothing else than the historical mediation, in terms of historical and 'this-worldly' categories, of the supernaturally elevated spirituality [290] of man to man himself. And at that stage at which

[17] On this cf. the author's article, 'Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace, *Theological Investigations* I (London, 1961), pp. 297-317.

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this history comes explicitly to exhibit this supernatural dynamism, so that its presence is consciously recognized within the history—at that stage it is revelation history and the history of faith. But this is a point which cannot be entered into in any more precise detail here. What can on any showing be said, however, is this: this grace-given elevation of the transcendentality of man, i.e. the orientation of this to the immediacy of God as its final end, gives reality to the concept of revelation already at the stage of an *a priori* awareness. And it does this even though this awareness (the supernatural formal object, as the Thomist would say) has not yet been objectively apprehended at the level of conscious thought or expressed in words. And when man of his freedom accepts himself together with this *a priori* awareness which is already revelation, then that is present which can in the true and proper sense be called faith, even though this faith has not yet been objectively explicitated or conceptualized as the absolute openness of man to the immediacy of God in his act of self-imparting. Yet this *a priori* awareness of man (called revelation) is always accepted in faith wherever and whenever an individual in unreserved faithfulness to his own moral conscience accepts himself in freedom as he is, and so too iii the as yet unrecognizable implications of the dynamism underlying the movement of his own spirit. It is only in the light of this that we can achieve a full theological understanding of what the Second Vatican Council says in 'Lumen Gentium' No. 16: 'Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who, through no fault of their own, do not know the gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.' A point expressly to be noticed here is that in the following sentence this doctrine is declared to apply also to those who are inculpable atheists. And the same point is likewise made in 'Gaudium et Spes'.

On a first simple reading of this declaration we might receive the impression that what the 'pagan' is being promised here in the statement concerning the fulfilment of the dictates of conscience is a salvation which comes to be even without faith. Moreover, the emphasis on divine grace, by means of which alone obedience to the dictates of conscience can be achieved, still does nothing of itself to alter this impression. Yet salvation of this kind without true faith is ruled out by the declaration of Pius XIC and the Missionary Decree of the Second Vatican Council, as we have already mentioned above.

> This grace, therefore, must produce faith, and that too even in cases [291] where no knowledge of the gospel exists. It follows that theology has an obligation to explain how such a faith is conceivable in the conditions described. We have attempted to give such an explanation and the theological data we have adduced for this purpose are only such as are already recognized in other contexts: the universal will of God to save, the supernatural specification of man entailed in this and constantly present in him, in virtue of which God's act of self-communication implanted in the innermost being of man (as offered to his freedom), that *a priori* transcendental change of awareness which is concomitantly given with this grace, and which is present even when it is not yet or not at all consciously adverted to. Anyone who rejects this theory of a possible faith in God as revealing himself and communicating himself, on whatever grounds, then incurs the task as a Catholic theologian of explaining in other ways how true supernatural faith in revelation can be present in an individual without any contact with the explicit preaching of the gospel. For the fact that such a thing is possible is explicitly declared in the official doctrinal statements of the Church cited above, even though they themselves refrain from making any theological declaration on this fact.

Further Implications of a Thesis

The theory of the 'anonymous Christian', therefore, states (though we do not insist upon the term 'anonymous Christian') diat even outside the Christian body there are individuals—and they are to be found even in the ranks of atheists—who are justified by God's grace and possess the Holy Spirit. The theory further states that the difference between this state of salvation and that of those who are Christians in an explicit sense is not such that these 'pagans' are acceptable in God's sight even without any true faith (together with hope and

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love) as it were in virtue of a merely natural morality which they possess, whereas the Christians and only they achieve their justification through a faith in salvation. On the contrary the theory ascribes to these justified pagans also a real, albeit enexplicitated or, if we like to put it so, rudimentary faith. This is of course not to deny that this faith as it exists in the pagan is properly speaking designed to follow its own inherent dynamism in such a way as to develop into that faith which is objectified and articulated through the gospel, that faith which we simply call the Christian faith. The seed has no right to seek not to grow into a plant. But the fact that it is not yet developed into a plant is no reason for refusing to give the name which we give to die plant destined to grow from it to the seed as well.

[292] It is possible, then, to envisage a man who is in possession of that self-imparting of God called grace as the innermost heart and centre of his existence, one who has accepted this in unreserved faithfulness to his own conscience, one who is thereby constituted as a believer in a form which, while it is not objectified in words, is nonetheless real, a man, in other words, who even as a 'pagan' already possesses the blessing of salvation, that blessing which ultimately speaking is the sole point of concern for Christianity together with the gospel belonging to it and all its institutions, and in relation to which everything else is merely a means, a historical objectification, a sacramental sign, a social manifestation. Now if this is true, then I cannot see why we should not call such a man an anonymous Christian, seeing that as Catholic theologians we may not doubt that such men both can and actually do exist. For after all he does possess, even though in a way hidden to himself and to others, that which constitutes the essence of what it is to be a Christian: the grace of God which is laid hold of in faith. If we are unwilling to go on from this, and to speak of an anonymous *Christianity* then I will raise no protest against this refusal. All that is involved here is simply a question of what constitutes the terminology that best suits the purpose and so a question of judgement on which I have no fixed opinion whatever. Admittedly I do regard the term 'anonymous Christian' as inescapable so long as no one suggests a better term to me.

Perspectives

Obviously many further questions would still remain to be treated which cannot be resolved here. We should have to enquire how all those new perspectives of saving history and the history of faith entailed in the theory we have put forward are to be reconciled with the viewpoint from which the New Testament regards the process by which salvation is gained and also saving history itself, alheit with very notable variations. A further point which should be discussed is the question already mentioned above as to the meaning and necessity of the mission of Christianity, a question in the light of which it is very often believed that this theory should be rejected. Admittedly in this connection there is actually a particular example to be mentioned: a Japanese who is a student chaplain in Japan has told me that the theory put forward here constitutes the indispensable condition for him such that it is only on this condition that he can perform his missionary work, precisely because he can then appeal to the anonymous Christian in the pagan and not simply seek to indoc-[293]trinate him with a teaching *ab externo.* A further question which would have to be resolved is what aspects (on the basis of the theory we have put forward) are brought to light for the appraisal of the non-Christian religions, even though this question cannot be answered *solely* on the basis of the theory of the anonymous Christian. This theory, therefore, remains ultimately speaking neutral in relation even to such controversies as have, for instance, very recently arisen between Schlette and Seckler.[18]

[18] Both authors have stated tfwir respective positions on the problems involved several times. Cf. H. R. Schlette, *Die Religionen als Thema der Theologie,* Quaestiones Disputatae 22 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1964} and the review of this work: M. Seckler, 'Eine Theologie der Religionen', *Hochland* 57 (1964/65), pp. 588-590. But see also H. R. Schlette, 'Einige Theses zum Selbstverstandnis der Theologie angesichts der Religionen', *Gott in Welt* II (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1964), pp. 306-316 and *Colloquium Salutis - Christen und Nichtchristen heute* (Cologne, 1965). On the other hand cf. M. Seckler, 'Das Heil der Nicht-

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The question might be raised of whether a new conception of the primordial revelation cannot be developed precisely in the light of the theory put forward here, a conception which avoids those elements which are either improbable or impossible from an anthropological and historical point of view, yet which are entailed in the usual conception of the primordial revelation. It is obvious that the assumptions, in terms of existential ontology which this theory works with call for further clarification and explanation. A distinction is drawn between two factors: an original event of revelation consisting in the self-communication of God as addressed to all in virtue of his universal will to save and taking place at a preconceptual level in the roots of man's spiritual faculties on the one hand, and the objectification at the historical and conceptual level of this revelatory self-communication of God in that which we call revelation and the history of revelation in a more normal sense on the other. This distinction, which it has been necessary to draw here, could be the occasion of fruitful considerations for many other problems of theology. But, as has been said, these and many other points cannot be discussed any further in the present context. The man of today is first and foremost a man who feels himself at one (at that point at which he truly achieves the fulness of self-realization) with mankind as a whole. For all his harsh experiences of what it is to be a historical being and of history itself, whenever it is the ultimate in man, man as a whole and as final and definitive that is in [294] question, he feels himself at one with all. He does not seek any heaven from which some other man is excluded from the outset. If at the same time he still seeks to uphold nowadays the claims of Christianity to be absolute, its universal significance for each and for all, if he wills to recognize, and as a Christian must recognize a *single* meaning and a *single* dynamism running through the whole history of mankind, then he must simply have a single answer as to how and in what way he can recognize in every one of his fellows a brother in the sense in which Christianity recognizes every individual as a brother, a sense, that is, which is not merely humanist but truly Christian. There must be a Christian theory to account for the fact that every individual who does not in any absolute or ultimate sense act against his own conscience can say and does say in faith, hope, and love, Abba within his own spirit, and is on these grounds in all truth a brother to Christians in God's sight. This is what the theory of the anonymous Christian seeks to say, and, in so far as it is valid, what it implies.

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evangelisierten in thomistischer Sicht', *Theol. Quart. Schrift,* 140 (1960), pp. 38-69, and also 'Nichtchristen III. Systematisch', *HThG* II (Munich, 1963), pp. 239-242 and 'Sind Religionen Heilswege?', *StdZ 186* (1970), pp. 187-194. A. Darlap has presented a general survey on the whole area of 'the Theology of Religions' in *Sacramentum Mundi V* (London and New York, 1970), pp. 284-287.

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18

THE CHURCH'S COMMISSION TO BRING SALVATION AND THE HUMANIZATION OF THE WORLD 'HORIZONTALISM' IN CHRISTIANITY AND IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

There have always been heresies which threaten Christianity, the Christian life, and a right understanding of the Church's task. They constitute a danger which has always accompanied the earthly life of faith and of the Church. In earlier times such heresies emerged, as the word 'heresy' = 'division' implies, within the Church herself and were chiefly related to specific and particular points of Christian doctrine and Christian life with the result that even at the conceptual level it was customary to distinguish heresy from apostasy, meaning a falling away from Christianity as a whole. Today Christianity and the Church are threatened by a form of teaching and a way of life which, while they have indeed emerged from the Church, are far from being explicitly presented as a rejection of Christianity or as seeking to draw men out of the Church, and yet which in reality already imply in a true sense something far more than heresy. For in reality they take a course which leads to an elimination of Christianity. In other words they constitute that which, in the traditional terminology, should be called apostasy. In this connection one question which does of course remain quite open is that of the subjective dispositions of those who uphold such tendencies in the doctrine and life of the Church. We mean here the view that that which constitutes the true essence of Christianity, the true heart and centre which alone is signified in all its doctrines, the true task of the Church, consists in something which can simply be called 'love of neighbour' or (because this term has perhaps too individualistic or pietistic a ring for the upholders of this movement) 'commitment at the level of social politics and criticism of society', 'responsibility for the world'. This tendency has already been designated by the term pure 'horizontalism'.

[296] It makes no difference for our immediate purposes where or in how many individuals or individual Churches within the totality of the Church this movement finds its support, or whether it is really supported in all its radical one-sidedness or more as a matter of emphasizing one tendency without excluding more orthodox ones. This question of the current position in Church history and Church politics is one with which we shall not be concerned in the present study. What we are referring to here is a radical horizontalism. In other words that doctrine and that interpretation of life which regards Christianity, its doctrines and in truth the task of the Church as properly speaking consisting in one thing alone: a responsibility for mankind, for the human society. 'God' is reduced to a mere cipher (old-fashioned and replaceable or for various reasons not indispensable). It stands for mankind itself, its unassailable dignity, the future which it still has to strive to achieve for itself. What we are referring to here is that doctrine and that way of life in terms of which all theological concepts, all cult and all prayer are merely things which have gradually to be replaced or perhaps things which may even have an abiding usefulness, key terms and practices which precisely bring this active responsibility to reality, a responsibility which each individual accepts for his fellows. In terms of a movement of this kind, then, Jesus is simply the most fruitful and perhaps (whatever the reasons which may be adduced, for these are not altogether clear) indispensable example of this commitment on behalf of one's neighbour and of a better society in what may even amount to a life-and-death struggle against the ruling forces in religion and politics. For this movement prayer is nothing else than a self-critical examination in which we remind ourselves of our neighbour and of our

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duty towards him. The Eucharist is the celebration of the true spirit of community in the light of Jesus as its most fruitful example and in its ultimate essence nothing beyond this. Correspondingly the other propositions of faith belonging to Christianity have also to be reinterpreted in the same sense, though this is something which cannot be set forth in detail here.

Obviously the activity of the *Church as such*, so long as she is not acting against her own true nature in belonging or seeking to belong, to those forces which defend their own position, which are established and oppressive, consists in a progressive education of men leading to an individual and collective commitment of this kind on behalf of their fellows, and in the concrete taking over of such social commitments on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, the exploited, the suffering within particular nations and on the international plane. The function of the Church which does justice to this interpretation of Christianity can only consist in the humanization [297] of the world, otherwise it will, at least today, come perforce to stand for a turning away of men from their true task to a defence of oppressive forces in society, to being an opium of the people which is no longer necessary because nowadays it is really possible to deliver man from the multiplicity of his enslavements and factors leading to self-alienation so that there is no longer any need for any algesic against the pain of that self-alienation which existed in former times, and which could not be overcome in any other way.

For our immediate purposes it makes no difference whether, or to what extent, a horizontalism of this kind in doctrine or life manifests itself in its true chemical purity and absolute radicality, or whether in this respect the conditions within the individual Christian Churches are exactly the same, or whether the upholders of a horizontalism of this kind regard it rather, and perhaps with a happy illogicality, as a mere shifting of emphasis within Christianity as a whole which is demanded by the conditions of the present times, they themselves being still always ready to accept Christianity as a whole in this sense. Even if we were here prepared to assume that a horizontalism of this kind was justified, a horizontalism which, in the radicality intended, is far from being frequent in any consciously recognizable form within the Church, a consideration of this kind still has its importance. For it cannot be doubted that among Catholic and Protestant Christians alike, i.e. among those who belong to the Church right from the outset and are unwilling to withdraw from it, this radical horizontalism does exist, so that to pronounce a decided ‘no’ to it is not to campaign against an opponent who does not exist at all. Furthermore it is useful to make clear the further consequences which lie latent and hidden at an unconscious level in attitudes and customs of life which still bear too much of the imprint of the Church’s doctrine of earlier times for them straightway or explicitly to be able to agree to a radical horizontalism of this kind.

In order to prevent any misunderstandings arising from this it must be explicitly emphasized that the serious upholders of a so-called ‘political theology’ have nothing to do with this radical horizontalism, and are therefore in no sense being pointed to in our present remarks. In our present thesis, as its heading explicitly suggests, we are concerned with the function of the *Church as such* of bringing salvation to men. The question we are asking, therefore, is whether this task of the Church as such is concerned merely with the humanization of the world and nothing beyond this. But in order to cope with this theme in a way that really goes to the roots of the matter this radical horizontalism itself has to be [298] considered precisely in its very roots, and it has to be asked what a Christianity that is genuinely and totally understood really has to say to it. For only then does the question arise of the content and the ultimate and true orientation of the task of the *Church as such*, which belongs to her of her very nature.

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WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF 'HORIZONTALISM'?

We shall first be enquiring into the reasons for the sudden appearance of this radical horizontalism in the Church. We might in fact immediately consider that what is in question here is simply that non-religious love of neighbour, that secular humanism, that ethically based socialism that has already long been in existence outside Christianity and the Church, and this might lead us to wonder why and how such a thing should suddenly become the teaching which now manifests itself within the Church herself and as the most recent and the only true interpretation of Christianity and of the task of the Christian and of the Church. To explain the fact that a secularized interpretation of human existence of this kind should now suddenly be presented as true Christianity in itself there must be reasons to be found such as did not exist in earlier times, and, moreover, as a force that is effective upon the Church herself. I believe that three such reasons might be pointed to, which in their interaction upon one another, and of course not as taken in isolation, can be held to account for this secularized horizontalism.

1. The Tendency Towards Demythologizing

The first of these reasons to be pointed to is that which might be called the tendency to '*demythologizing*'.[1] Obviously this is not the place to set forth the causes, meaning, limits, overstepping of the limits or historical development of this demythologizing movement within Christian theology, in exegesis, or in the Church. The only point that needs to be made here is quite a simple one. In this movement all historical realities are consciously regarded as subject to historical change and conditional. In other words this is a kind of historicism. And a further factor has been that process, which lasted, of course, over several centuries, by which an ancient image of the world which still dominated the Middle Ages has [299] gradually been changed into the modern image of the world, the outcome of a rational approach to the natural sciences, of a modern psychology and of the modern social sciences. And in the light of all these factors in their bearing on the totality of the Christian faith it must be asked what the special content of each of them really means within the overall perspectives of modern ideas and outlooks, where and how the boundary lines must be drawn between that which is really intended and permanently binding in faith on the one hand, and conceptual models on the other, which obviously have been helpful for understanding the faith but are no longer valid now. Again it has to be asked where these conceptual models should still be retained, or where they merely make it more difficult or even impossible for us to understand what is really meant as binding in faith. To that extent, of course, some kind of 'demythologizing' is necessary and urgent today, and will be recognized as necessary by the Church's theologians, although at the same time it must be said that all theology throughout all the centuries has always been concerned with what is the essential point of such demythologizing to the extent that by it we understand nothing else than an encounter which it is necessary to achieve ever anew: an encounter between the faith which inevitably has to express itself in concepts subject to the conditions of the particular age concerned on the one hand, and the secular interpretation of existence which is constantly subject to change on the other. Yet it must be recognized that this task of demythologizing as thus understood has

[1] The term 'demythologizing' was first used in 1941 by R. Bultmann in the context of exegesis. But it quickly won general recognition as a theological category. Cf. R. Malé, 'Demythologization', *Sacramentum Mundi* II (London and New York, 1968), pp. 65-69.

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become more all-embracing, more urgent and more swiftly developing nowadays. And because of this a temptation and a danger has increased too, that namely of coming into opposition to those truths of Christianity which must not be surrendered by maintaining that they do not belong to what is true and essential to the meaning and the life of Christianity at all, but are merely old and now outworn modes in which an earlier age of Christianity sought to bring home to itself what the true meaning and purpose of Christianity really is. In the light of this a first cause of the movement towards a radical horizontalism becomes apparent. For this movement God too is to be numbered among those old and outworn terms by means of which Christianity objectifies to itself its innermost essence, precisely a loving responsibility for one's neighbour, finding it possible in this way to achieve a more intelligible mode of presenting it. God, therefore, is one of the ideas which must be demythologized, just as in principle the critique of religion of a Feuerbach or a Marx[2] had already demanded. Once [300] we demythologize the idea of God only man remains. Because it was believed impossible in former times really to take man in this sense seriously in his infinite claims he came to be made a mythologem himself and called God, though admittedly only at the cost of thereby alienating man from himself also and in his claims upon us.

2. The Experience of God in a World Coloured by the Natural Sciences

A second cause of this radical horizontalism in the Church of our times, and no longer merely as it exists outside Christianity as embodied in the Church, is to be found in the fact that a man of today can no longer experience God so easily or so directly as a man of former ages believed to be possible. The man of today is a man who is above all influenced by the rationalism of the natural sciences, by approaches to experience and to knowledge in which every phenomenon which can be experienced is reduced to some other one in the closest possible functional interconnection. To the scientific learning of the modern age, but also so far as the direct feelings of the rational man are concerned, it is clear that in such a world God is not to be met with as one particular phenomenon among others. When within the context of our various experiences we fail to find an explanation for a particular phenomenon, i.e. when we cannot so account for it as to co-ordinate it with other phenomena already known to us, then we put a question-mark against it. We hope that in time some possible way of explaining it by the exact sciences may yet emerge. But what we do not say is this: 'Here God is at work in a special way.' We do not say: 'Here we find a special intervention of his in the world's course.' Nowadays we no longer want in any sense to have a God who has to be invoked as a stopper of the gaps so as to illumine to ourselves some point which still remains obscure, and to show its connection with the particular phenomena of our experience. The modern natural sciences work – and, moreover, entirely justifiably with a methodological a-theism, and while this does not assert that God does not exist, it does make it impossible for the exact sciences to invoke God as an explanation of that which is still unexplained, or of 'this worldly' phenomena which are capable of explanation. But then it is all too easy to go on from this mental attitude, which primarily belongs to the exact sciences, and to regard it as the only legitimate mental attitude for modern man in any sense. From this it can readily be understood how an individual comes to receive the impression that while he cannot positively assert that God does not exist – since we [301] must be very cautious in making such assertions on a purely negative point – still such a thing as God does not figure in his own

[2] L. Feuerbach presented his programme, 'Auflösung der Theologie' in *Das Wesen des Christentums* and *Das Wesen der Religion* (1845). On the programme of K. Marx cf. *Thesen über Feuerbach* (1845) and *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (1846) (written in collaboration with Fr. Engels).

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personal life; it is an idea which cannot be verified. He feels that life still goes on as before even without it, as the example of the atheists shows, and theists are in no sense different from them when we come to examine their lives apart from this difference of opinion which remains at the level of pure theory. Now here it is neither possible nor any part of our intention to demonstrate in positive terms how a genuine, and even inescapable experience of God can be made even today, although one which we can, and very often do, suppress. The only point to be recognized here is how this basic outlook, which is at least apparently a-theistic, on man's part leads to that radical horizontalism which is so much a force today. The Christians who uphold this horizontalism have the impression that they cannot overcome the experience in themselves, and even more in others, that God is not there so far as they are concerned. Yet for the most divers reasons, which cannot be analysed here, they still want to remain Christians and members of the Church. From this it is natural to lay hold of the theory of demythologizing, to make a virtue of necessity, and to explain that the true essence of Christianity, so far from being the true and full relationship of man to God which has been bestowed upon him by God himself in Jesus Christ in forgiveness and in raising him to a divine level, is simply the dignity and the task and goal of man himself which we, hopeless in the face of the experience of man's suffering, have projected onto an unknown 'X' in the hope that from that we shall actually return to man himself once he has put himself in a position to realize his own future and to win back for himself that glory which he has ascribed to a God. We then say not only that God is now dead, but that precisely this 'death-of-God' theology is the true secret doctrine of Christianity itself which is only now coming to light in our present-day situation at the intellectual and social level, and which must now boldly be proclaimed. Obviously on this showing, and for a Christianity thus interpreted, Jesus becomes the first a-theist. It is only that he was not yet in a position to say precisely what he really thought and achieved in his own life.[3]

3. The New Responsibility for the World as the Meaning of Human Life

The third cause, which, together with the two already mentioned, contributes to the shaping of this radical horizontalism and exercises an influence precisely on those who view an a-theistic position with no very great [302] enthusiasm, and are at most regretful a-theists, those who fear that the 'death of God' will shortly be followed by the death of man as well, consists in the fact that the active self-responsibility of man and of humanity today has increased to an extent which could never really have been dreamt of even a hundred years ago, in other words prior to the new stage which has been ushered in within the totality of human history. Nowadays mankind is no longer living in an environment already pre-determined for it such that it can change only the smallest details within that environment. It has begun to plan its own environment and to determine its goals, to subject it wholly to the human genius. It has made the world in which formerly it simply lived into a quarry for building a world which man is prepared to recognize only as his own world. Furthermore man has begun to alter, to plan and to reshape his own nature genetically, psychologically and socially. This new phenomenon may yet stick fast in its incipient stages. We may have to fear catastrophes in this Promethean undertaking. But this active alteration of man and of his environment by man himself has already been initiated, and in principle it can no longer be halted. This obviously lays an immense burden of responsibility upon man, such as formerly he never had to recognize or to assume. For manifestly something we are already noticing today is that this development does not simply imply an unhindered triumphal progress into a

[3] This interpretation is put forward e.g. in F. Jeanson, *Vom wahren Unglauben* (Munich, 1966).

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glorious future of freedom and carefree happiness. This development can just as easily become a gateway to fresh tyrannies, absurdities or ruin. The new burden of responsibility now laid upon man, which he partly lays claim to and is partly forced upon him so that the unity between these two aspects is impossible to analyse, now so preoccupies the public awareness and the attention of the individual that society and the individual receive the impression that with the best will in the world we can no longer concern ourselves with anything else except this task which man constitutes for man himself, and with the almost overpowering responsibility which it entails. Prayer, worship, and in general the intercourse with realities such as God, grace, the forgiveness of sins, salvation in the next world etc. are foreign to this view as so many childish preoccupations which carry us into a dream world and must be rejected by *that* man who faces up to the reality of his world as it really is. Thus we receive the impression that the old attitude to religion, if it still survives, is at most a matter for old people who are already excluded from this responsibility for the world and need some consolation in their old age. From this it is a natural step to yield to the temptation of making a virtue even of this necessity, reinterpreting Christianity (for the most divers reasons, connected either [303] with its intrinsic message or with tactical considerations, there is a reluctance explicitly to pronounce it defunct) and declaring that Christianity consists in nothing else than this responsibility which man has for the world, which has come to be recognized only in these present times and which must now be his sole remaining concern.

THE RESPONSE OF FAITH TO THE CHALLENGE OF 'HORIZONTALISM'

In so brief a study as this we have surely devoted enough consideration now to the meaning and origins of that radical horizontalism which seeks to reinterpret the salvific task of the Church, and even to assign it new practical functions, by reducing it to a mere responsibility for the world. The question we have now to ask ourselves is what response is to be made to a radical horizontalism of this kind in the name of Christianity and of the Church. In the answer we give to this question we must not content ourselves with any cheap 'not only but also'. We must not simply set horizontalism and verticalism side by side as the two dimensions of Christian living. It would also be too cheap and over-facile to regard love of neighbour simply as a moral duty and nothing more, arising from man's religious attitude to God as the simple consequence of this and as something imposed upon man by God as the Lord of all men and of the world, and as the guardian of the world order created by him. We must not think of it as a duty in this sense which has to be discharged if man seeks to live in peace with God and to attain to him as his goal. In the very nature of the case, and in the light of a deeper understanding of Christian tradition, and finally too in view of the necessity really to do justice to the elements of truth in a modern radical horizontalism, it must be said that a far greater unity exists between man's relationship to God and that which he bears to his fellow men. Jesus himself conceives of love of God and love of neighbour as a unity[4] into which the whole nature of man and his task is concentrated. And in the teaching of 1 John this unity is given a radically theological dimension and depth. And these in themselves are enough to demonstrate the fact that Christian tradition knows far too much about love of neighbour for it to be a mere moral demand upon man which God has made as a condition of his favour towards man. The doctrinal tradition of Christianity has always emphasized that there is no [304] experience of God for pilgrim man on this earth which has not been mediated through

[4] On this cf. the author's article, 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249.

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an experience of the world. Even the immediacy of man to God as constituted by God's self-bestowal in grace, in which man becomes a child of God and can truly call upon him by the name of Father, and truly has to do with him as such in prayer and worship and in the hidden sphere of his own personal love, is always mediated through the experience of the world which man finds already about him, and in which, right from the outset he has to act and be acted upon when he assumes his personal reference to God and necessarily brings his relationship to the world into this.

Now this relationship to the world, which acts as a medium in this sense, as Christian philosophy and theology consciously recognize with increasing clarity, does not consist primarily or originally in a relationship to a material environment in which, among many other factors, *men* are to be found also. Rather it is primarily a relationship to a society, the human Thou which constitutes not merely *any kind of* object in the experiential world of man, but is rather an original and constitutive element for his self-understanding as subject and for his relationship to the world. It is only in terms of this personal, social environment that man can be brought to a realization of himself as subject, and it is only in terms of this that those transcendental experiences of freedom, responsibility, absolute truth, love and personal trust are borne in upon man in which alone it can be made intelligible to him what is meant by God. For this God is not any kind of particular object side by side with many others (albeit of a peculiar excellence) which impinge upon him, but rather is present to him as the ground, the horizon, and the ultimate goal of man's own personal movement outwards towards his social environment in all its complexity. It is true that this God, in the movement of his gracious self-bestowal upon man and in verbal revelation, has assumed a relationship to man in which he functions on man's behalf not merely indirectly as an ultimate ambience of his encounter with the world, remaining forever outside his conscious awareness, but a relationship in which he himself, in a verbal revelation that is personal, in a covenant that belongs to saving history, in the implanting of his divine Spirit in the innermost heart and centre of man, becomes a direct partner of man himself. But this in no sense alters the basic fact that man can be a partner of God in this sense in a relationship that is immediate only as he who, in his relationship to his *social environment*, is always basically and inalienably orientated to God. Once this is recognized it is obvious that the relationship to God which is basically and inalienably mediated through man's relationship to [305] his social environment can be achieved aright, and can accept and sustain the grace-given elevation precisely of this relationship by God himself only if the relationship of man to his social environment is such as it must be, i.e. if it is a relationship of ultimately unreserved trust towards his fellow man, a relationship of self-commitment to him, a relationship of responsibility for him, a relationship of love. Only on this condition can man truly realize what is meant by God to whom he is really committing himself when he begins to love God. We must go a step further. Man's total relationship in knowledge and freedom to his environment is sustained by the achievement of his transcendence over any given particular factor within this experience, and it is in this transcendence that his orientation to God is already concomitantly given and concomitantly achieved. The free achievement of a right understanding of man to his social environment, to the Thou who is his fellow, is right from the first a right understanding of God, albeit one that he may not consciously have explicitated to himself, a relationship which, as sustained by grace, also has a salvific import even when the man concerned does not explicitly or consciously recognize this and does not specifically or consciously objectify to himself in a form that can be put into words that he has already entered into relationship with God in a form that has not been expressed. In other words: where someone, by recognizing the absolute claims of his conscience in real and selfless love, is able really to rise above himself in reaching out to his neighbour, a movement towards God is already in process and has been accepted in very truth, albeit unconsciously, a movement which is

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initiated and elevated by grace. And this signifies a salvific event in the strictest sense of the term, and moreover even in those cases in which the man concerned, through no fault of his own, has not yet arrived at any explicit recognition of the first ground and ultimate goal of this movement which proceeds horizontally and vertically *at the same time*. This remains true even if, so far as his conscious awareness is concerned, he still believes that he is an a-theist. Of course all this does not mean that once a man has arrived at conscious knowledge of the ultimate implications of his positive and loving relationship to his social environment through revelation and grace, and therefore knows that in it he is inescapably in contact with God, he can justifiably allow this relationship to God, already implicit and inescapably present in his relationship with the world, to fall back into the level of the unconscious and unobserved. To take such a course really, seriously, and in full freedom would be to deny, if not actually to break off, even the implicit and subconscious relationship to God in freedom, and would thereby also be to break off [306] the loving relationship to the Thou of one's fellow men by using one's freedom to deny the ultimate ground and goal of this relationship. For all this, however, the fact remains: there is a mutually conditioning relationship between our relationship to our neighbour and our relationship to that which we call God. Either of these two relationships can be more or less explicitly reflected upon and objectified in words. In the connection between the two the most manifold combinations and variations can be conceived of or actually exist. But both relationships mutually condition one another. It is true that horizontalism and verticalism can be present in man in the form of a free acceptance of love or in the form of a rejection, of hatred. But whichever form they assume both are mutually and inescapably dependent upon one another. Hence it can even be the case that the presence of God as explicitated in words and upheld by the consensus of public opinion can appear so obvious that love of neighbour appears merely as a secondary moral consequence following from this presence of God. And the converse can also be the case, that because of the absence of any theism in public opinion the individual arrives at an experience of God only or seemingly as a secondary factor when he rises above himself in committing himself to the Thou of his fellow men, in assuming a responsibility in which ultimately he stands alone without reward and as it were without any withdrawal to his own egoistical 'I'. Whatever historical changes the relationship may undergo between the vertical and the horizontal element in the self-transcendence of man, the basic relationship between horizontalism and verticalism remains the same.

Here, then, we have an ultimate, original, and indissoluble interpenetration in the reference to God and to his neighbour inherent in man's nature. And it is only within this that we can understand what God really is and also what one's neighbour really is. And it is this that constitutes Christianity's basic understanding of man. This means that Christianity does not add on the vertical dimension in man as something new and supplementary to the horizontal dimension. It does not impose *two separate* duties upon him so as to divide him. Rather it lays bare the ultimate radicality, the ultimate dignity, and the ultimate hiddenness of the relationship which man bears to the Thou of his fellow men only when speaking of God in that which, in a very imprecise and misleading image, we may call the vertical dimension, verticalism. A point that must be explicitly emphasized is that God is not thereby reduced to a cipher standing for the dignity and the future of man, so that basically speaking after all all that remains is man alone and the horizontalism of his nature. Man is, once and for all, that being which only possesses, discovers and [307] consummates itself when it transcends itself in reaching out to that without which this being would stick fast in finitude, that being which is itself infinitely more than man. We can or could of course say with Pascal that even man himself *is* infinitely more than mere man, and on this basis we could also say that in the term horizontalism everything in man is expressed that is to be expressed about him, provided only that we really take this saying of Pascal's concerning man who is infinitely more than man

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with all due seriousness. And the seriousness with which we take this remains clear and is realized only if man precisely recognizes that he has discovered himself and accepted himself in his ultimate truth only if, in a spirit of adoration, thankfulness, and indeed blessed joyfulness, he surrenders himself to that which is infinitely more than man, and precisely as such has willed to become in grace the innermost and definitive life of man himself.

Finally then, after all, if we are to avoid misunderstandings and radical and fatal distortions in man's understanding of himself, we must stand by the unity and the mutually conditioning relationship of horizontalism and verticalism. And in the unity which we recognize here it is obvious that the verticalism which orientates us towards God, in so far as it can and must be distinguished from the horizontalism that orientates us towards man, has a higher dignity and of itself implies a more radical duty on man's part. Now if we say this we must straightway add once more that both dimensions are absolutely mutually conditioning, and that we cannot discover God except in our neighbour, that there cannot be any true love for God – especially in virtue of the fact that God has become man – which has not shared its utter radicality in love by extending it to man. He therefore who seeks to emphasize the higher dignity and the more radical duty of love of God, and in principle is right in doing this, should not thereby suppose that he has two entities which are in competition with one another in such a way that he can only give everything to one of the two by taking something from the other. Christianity, on any true understanding, upholds verticalism because it recognizes that without it horizontalism cannot in the long run endure, or at most will survive in a blessed illogicality in which God is explicitly denied or neglected by it in order once more implicitly to assent to him precisely in the absoluteness of love of neighbour. He who seeks to uphold a logical horizontalism must ask himself, and render account of his findings on this point to others, how much remains of man if he is not the man of God. Such a man would, after all, precisely be the mere shortlived product of a blind nature, a being brought face to face with its own misfortune, with an [308] awareness of its own finitude, ultimately condemned in itself and in its works to ruin. Yet it is possible for one to take this man, caught as he is in an attitude of heroism for which no grounds can be adduced, with absolute seriousness. Yet the question can be put to him of why he really does this, why he does not simply regard his fellow man as a particular individual to whom he is ultimately indifferent, one particular example of a transitory human species caught up in a state of conflict which is far from being avoidable in all cases. Such a man must also allow the question to be put to him of why he strives so obstinately and despairingly against the implications which basically and ultimately speaking he has after all assented to in his absolute love of neighbour, implications in which God is included, why he does not have the still greater courage in hoping against all hope that his radical love of neighbour will issue into blessedness and, in the midst of the absurdity of existence, to believe.

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 'HORIZONTALISM' AND 'VERTICALISM' WHICH HAS EMERGED IN OUR PARTICULAR EPOCH

On the basis, then, of Christianity's abiding understanding of its own nature as this has existed right from the origins it holds firm to the indissoluble unity in the midst of distinction between love of God and love of neighbour. But this is not to deny that in our own times a new relationship has emerged between horizontalism and verticalism, one that is proper to this particular epoch. Many times already in the course of our earlier considerations we have delineated this new relationship between the two abiding and mutually conditioning dimensions in man. This is an age in which, so far as society and public opinion are concerned, the existence of God and a right understanding of what is meant by this term at all

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are no longer self-evident factors. In such an age the mystery of that love for a Thou, in reaching out to which man irrevocably transcends himself in a certain measure, constitutes the ever new and indispensable generative spark at which the faith of the individual in God is kindled, a faith that is now lonely, no longer sustained and protected by public opinion, a faith that must emerge ever anew. For this love of neighbour, then, an eternal validity is claimed. It is in this love of neighbour that the outward movement of man from himself is achieved most radically in knowledge and freedom. And it is only in the love of neighbour as thus conceived that it becomes clear for the man of today what is meant by God and the existence of God – clear in a sense in which it never needed [309] to be made clear at all in earlier ages. Now it follows than an experience of God that has emerged in this way has a clarity and radical depths in the life of man such as it did not have in earlier times, when, after all, there was a constant temptation to make a mere external indoctrination concerning the existence of God a substitute for this authentic experience of God. In this sense horizontalism nowadays takes a certain priority over verticalism. But this must not be allowed to contradict the basic truths of Christianity's understanding of its own nature. Nowadays in its preaching to man the Church should cry out to him 'Love thy neighbour! Love him with a love that transcends the immediate circumstances of your own private life which are constantly suspected of being tainted by egoism! Love him even when this love, in its ultimate consequences, appears to you to amount to a fatal surrender of yourself! Only then will you keep peace with the times in learning deeply what is meant by God and love for God! For this you have to surrender yourself in an act of unreserved trust to this single movement of your existence.' And if the Church were to cry this message out to modern man, then she would simply be preaching that ultimate and essential truth which she has all along been attempting to bring home to man.

A factor which we have already pointed out in connection with the third cause for the threat which horizontalism represents for us nowadays is that there is a need for a shift of emphasis of this kind in the preaching of the Church of today such as did not exist in former times. Nowadays man acquires a quite new responsibility in a world that has become dynamic. This responsibility has not yet come to be self-evident and is not yet being acted upon to a sufficient extent. And in these circumstances it must be especially emphasized and brought into the foreground even though other factors are thereby thrust into the background for a long period in view of the finitude of human awareness at the individual and collective levels. The situation in the light of the Church, therefore, is no different from that prevailing in the life of the individual. That which is most urgent and most of all demanded in the immediate circumstances of any given time, that which has to be preferred before all else and has to be acted upon even at the cost of neglecting other factors for the time being, does not always or necessarily have to be that which is objectively speaking the most important and the most valuable. If a Christian finds his house ablaze on a Sunday then he can quench the fire in his house precisely on Sunday even at the cost of neglecting his duty to worship God in the Eucharist on that day. When faced with the danger of a general conflagration of our world the Church too can, under certain circumstances, [310] emphasize the duty of love of neighbour more radically than she has done in earlier ages, because the Christian's responsibility for the world now includes quite fresh tasks and duties such as simply did not exist in former times. If a horizontalism were to seek nothing else than to awaken and disseminate the conviction that Christians must recognize and put into effect their responsibility for the world in a far more radical manner than formerly, taking this at last as the task for the hour, then a horizontalism of this kind can only be praised as a characteristic of this particular epoch, this particular age of the Church. Obviously, however, even while putting into practice a new horizontalism of this kind, the one Church with all her complexity cannot simply lay up her cult, her theology, the cultivation of an interior religious orientation

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to God, as some naively idealistic souls suppose. Even in wartime the function of society is not simply to produce cannon fodder to be shot down. Even the most radical protagonists of a secularized form of responsibility for the world, for the under-developed peoples, even the most radical campaigners who take up arms against the injustice in the world sometimes go for walks, take recreation, enjoy life etc. Even a Christianity that is radically aware of its responsibility for the world should still pray, still pursue theology, still rejoice in God and his peace, thank God and praise him. And on a closer examination of all these matters it can be noticed that in the long run they are very necessary precisely for those who seek with all due seriousness their radical responsibility for the world.

WHAT HAS THE CHURCH TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE HUMANIZATION OF THE WORLD?

At this point we can apply ourselves directly to the subject of our considerations as formulated at the outset. What is the position with regard to the salvific task of the Church *precisely as such* in its attitude to the humanization of the world? We have to observe all due brevity and to be aware of the fact that any exhaustive answer to this question would have to be far more complex and include far more distinctions than is possible within the scope of this present study of ours. But before attempting to find an answer to this question one further preliminary observation must first be made.

Love of neighbour means not merely an attitude but concrete action in which the individual comes to the help of his fellow in a way that is selfless and involves personal sacrifice, and moreover is realistic as well. The giving of realistic help, in which love of neighbour must be made real, is to a [311] large extent a matter which calls for human experience, one in which collaboration between individuals who interpret human life in the most divers ways is both possible and necessary. In other words it is a matter which, in the concrete forms it assumes, is by no means subject to, or capable of being subject to the guiding power of the Church as vested in her officials. This remains true however much this task may be and may remain a matter for the Christians of the Church. Even to this extent the humanization of the world, the concrete forms in which responsibility for the world is put into practice and organized, are far from being directly or even exclusively a matter for the official Church or for social organizations. There is a good sense in which the world is secular, the world as it exists with its possibilities and its self-elected goals, with its institutions and organizations, with its pluralism and the antagonism which this inevitably entails. This is a world which is not (either in fact or in principle) subject to the direct guidance of the official Church. It is a world which, on the contrary, is autonomous. And all this is explicitly recognized as a fact by the Church herself. This in itself *ipso facto* implies that that in which the humanization of the world is immediately subjected, in other words the process in which the horizontal task of man is in a direct and immediate sense undertaken, put into concrete practice and carried through is far from being identified with or capable of being identified with the Church. In other words to identify this subject with the Church in the sense supposed would basically speaking amount to a marked clericalism and sacralism. We cannot seriously demand of the Church, therefore, that she should feel herself to be the subject most directly responsible for the task of modern humanity in relation to the world. The Church can and must bring home to modern man, to the extent that this is possible at all, his responsibility for the world, the ultimate depths of this responsibility, with its implications of eternal salvation or perdition for man. She has the function of laying bare and disclosing these to the man of today. The Church can repeatedly stir up groups from among the Christians belonging to her and organize them in the service of this humanization of the

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world, and in this she can allow herself to be inspired by ultimately Christian motivations. In this process she can invoke these Christian motivations still more powerfully when her right to take this course is disputed by other Christians or Christian groups. In her official life the Church can even go on to give help to secular institutions in their efforts when this seems desirable or profitable, and when the immediate goals of these are unequivocally designed to serve the dignity and freedom of man, and can on these grounds be recognized as Christian [312] too. The Church *as an official Church*, however, is not the immediate or proper subject for realizing in the concrete the humanization of the world. She must be ready to declare that she is not qualified in this respect, yet at the same time she must live by and represent respect for the freedom and dignity of man in an exemplary manner in her own life in ways that are appropriate to our own times. And precisely if she does this she can act as a body empowered to criticize, partly through her officials, partly through her other members in relation to the social conditions which prevail, together with all that needs to be changed in these either in an evolutionary or a revolutionary way.

Only if the Church recognizes the world's right in this sense to enter upon its own responsibility, which the Church in no sense seeks to deprive the world of, will she herself be free to undertake what is her own true saving function which she alone can fulfil. It is true that salvation itself is achieved by man in the whole scope of his life as pervaded throughout by the moving power of God's spirit. It is true that there is in this sense no sphere marked off as sacral, such that this is the only area in which man has to do with God. But it must be recognized that the whole of human existence, and so the entire world in all its dimensions, ultimately reaches out to the life of God; that there is no horizontal dimension which is *entirely whole and complete* in itself without a vertical one; that it is only through God's grace that we are set free in such a way as to be able to use and enjoy the world, and open ourselves unreservedly to our neighbour without becoming enslaved by this social and material environment of ours, without having to idolize it in order to be able to endure it. All this is a message which must be preached to the world ever anew. All this must itself be offered and communicated to the world ceaselessly in the physical sign of God also, in the power of his grace as the innermost *entelecheia* of the world itself. And over and above all this God himself must be adored in spirit and in truth. The historical embodiment of his self-utterance in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be accepted and celebrated ever anew precisely because this self-utterance of God takes place in the *world* as such. All this is included in the salvific function of the Church.

Let it not be said that this is merely to setup an impotent and ineffectual ideology which does nothing to alter the real course of the world in its horizontal dimension. Even a realistic Marxism recognizes that the ideological superstructure has effects which redound upon that which constitutes its real basis. Any realistic estimate of the meaning of human life which is based on a really broad view in terms of space and time recognizes [313] that the so-called ideological factor is itself a part of reality such that without it even the other factors in man could not exist. Because even in his so-called natural state he is incapable of existing without culture. Ideology is not a luxury which man can actually dispense with. Thus the salvific function of the Church, even in its vertical orientation to God, has a direct significance for the task of man in his own sphere. If the sun of God were ever really to set, if man ever really exhausted the resources of his past history in terms of 'ideology' to a point at which nothing was left of it, if the Church were no longer to exercise her salvific function, which seems so useless and *precisely in virtue* of so doing is indispensable – only then would it appear that man had actually lost himself, that that which he was formerly tempted sceptically to reject as illusion is absolutely necessary to life itself that he possesses and is able to endure himself only if he reaches out beyond himself in faith, hope and love to that mystery which we call God. It is that mystery which constitutes the supra-human mystery of man himself, and it is

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that mystery that it is the function of the Church to serve. The better she fulfils this salvific function of hers the more uncalculating she is, the more she seems to forget man in his needs, the more she protects and preserves man even in his worldly task, the humanization of his own world.

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19

ON THE THEOLOGY OF REVOLUTION

We cannot initiate a theology of revolution in response to a transitory fashion of the modern world or of contemporary theology with the aim of making theology modern, making contact with those who otherwise have no interest in theology, nor can we attempt to develop a theology of revolution on the grounds that today theology is rightly or wrongly producing a feeling of frustration, and it is supposed that its ineffectualness in present-day society can be compensated for by transforming it into a theology of revolution or interpreting it along these lines.[1] For if we took as our basis this factor of a modern demand, then nothing more would emerge than a supplement to moral theology in a particular sphere, and the whole problem could basically speaking be reduced merely to the question of whether or not it is permissible to use physical force, possibly amounting even to bloodshed, in order to bring about social changes. It would be reduced to the question of the 'killing of a tyrant' or something similar. An additional danger which would arise if we took this as our basis would be to suppose that revolution is at most a question that concerns Africa, Latin America, or central Asia, but not one for Europe or North America.

Nor should a theology of revolution proceed from the assumption that there must in all circumstances be such a thing as a theology of revolution. For if we assume this as self-evident from the outset it will lead to an over-hasty identification of religion with so-called 'positive theology' ('God's action in history'), and so too to a false identification of religion with a kind of 'orthodoxy of the left'.

Nor again should we suppose that the necessity for a revolution, or even for a revolution that is permanent, can be deduced directly or solely [315] from the data of Christian revelation. On the contrary it must be shown in later arguments that a theology of revolution, to the extent that such a discipline exists at all, must proceed from the concrete experience of the situation with which we Christians and the Church as a whole are simply confronted nowadays, and which must produce its effects nowadays everywhere throughout the whole of theology, so that it should not be regarded as a supplement to a special department of moral theology.

At the same time, however, it must be emphasized that the concept of revolution is precisely *not* to be regarded as, for instance, the sole key concept of theology, or the *fons et origo* of it all, as not a few appear to suppose nowadays. We say that God's action upon man is the most effective and the most radical act of all, and that on the one hand it belongs totally to God, while on the other it is nevertheless brought to its fulness in and through the activity of man himself. But this does not mean that we can call this action of God 'revolution', for this would be a misuse of the term, and would merely have the effect of obscuring or even distorting the true nature of revolution properly so called. Again we should not call Jesus a revolutionary on the grounds that he was unmistakably opposed to the religious and political strivings of the Pharisees and Zealots. Precisely because, and to the extent that, Jesus distinguished his own mission from any directly political involvement, the work of Jesus acquires and retains a supreme social effectiveness of its own, and that too even in its effects upon secular society. What we have in mind here is a theology which includes within its

[1] On this subject cf. E. Feil and R. Weth edd., *Diskussion zur 'Theologie der Revolution'* (Munich/Mainz, 1969) and the bibliography there assembled by W. Darschin, 'Bibliographische Hinweise zur "Theologie der Revolution" ', pp. 365-373.

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purview the social and political implications of the whole of revelation in all its parts, and in this sense is intended to be a 'political theology'. Now precisely a theology of this kind must, ultimately speaking, resist any attempt to identify it with a theology of revolution. In no circumstances can a theology of revolution be regarded as the true heart and centre or the supreme point within theology as a whole. Any true and genuine theology must always be, in, all its parts, a theology of eschatological hope, and it is only indirectly, and through the medium of political ethics, that a theology of this kind can determine and provide the basis for norms of human action at the secular level. To expand the concept of 'revolution' so as to cover this would merely be to render it ineffective, and could contribute nothing to the true inspiration and guidance of human activities. Obviously much that might provide a basis for a theology of revolution must be passed over here, as for instance a more detailed investigation of the relationship between the speculative and the practical reason, of the mutually conditioning relationship between reason and freedom, of the relationship [316] between society and the individual, of the relationship which various societies of different degrees of development bear to one another, of the theology of power in general and that of the kind of power to be found in the social order as it exists in the concrete and as influenced by original sin, and so a society which, among other characteristics, always bears the stamp of sinfulness.

CONCEPTS

I would like to begin by indicating a few factors bearing on a function to which the Church is committed in general, that namely of *acting as a critic of society*. I am assuming that any radical horizontalism is not and cannot be a true interpretation of Christianity. Christianity has of its very nature something to do with the living God as such, and the name God is once and for all not an old-fashioned cipher standing for man, his dignity, and the task which man has in relation to his fellows and the society in which he lives.[2] Obviously I cannot here enter into the mutually conditioning relationship between horizontalism and verticalism, nor can I set forth the reasons for holding that these two terms in themselves, representing as they do an attempt to interpret the different dimensions in man, are capable of misunderstanding and do not rightly express the true nature both of the unity and of the distinction between God and man or of the relationship between God and man. There is on the one hand a relationship to the world, a responsibility for the world, a love of neighbour, an orientation towards one's neighbour, which constitutes the absolutely necessary and ever-abiding condition and medium for the relationship which man bears to God. On the other hand this relationship to God, even as expressed in the cult or in prayer, is not simply an old-fashioned term which, once demythologized and re-interpreted, would at basis express nothing more than 'man' and 'the relationship of man to man'.

There is a further point. Given that man has a responsibility for the world of this kind, such as in earlier times was called – perhaps quite naively – 'love of neighbour', and which must be understood as the absolutely indispensable medium for our relationship to God,[3] then there [317] is nowadays a love of neighbour that is socially orientated. It is not enough to say that man is a social being. On the contrary society itself is in a true sense always something more than the mere sum total of its individual members. And this also applies in the dimension of salvation and of the communicating of salvation. It also applies in the dimension of the Church. To that extent love of neighbour, regarded as the indispensable medium and

[2] On this cf. the author's article in the present volume, 'The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World'.
[3] On this cf. the author's article, 'Reflections on the Unity Between the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249.

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condition enabling us to have a relationship to God, must not be misinterpreted as a mere personal, or perhaps even sentimental, reference of the individual to the individual. Rather in the fluid society of a world that has become dynamic love of neighbour as applied to the Christian and as the medium of his relationship to God necessarily implies a responsibility for, and a commitment to society as such. And in the light of this it becomes possible to formulate or to envisage such a thing as – if we like to call it so – a 'theology of revolution'. This can be admitted if and to the extent that revolution means nothing else whatever than a specific way (one which still awaits more precise definition) of changing social conditions, structures and institutions to man's advantage – in other words a factor which manifestly must of its very nature be present in any social commitment, which must be undertaken first and foremost by the man of Christian hope, the man committed to striving for a future that is absolute, the man inspired by love of neighbour in the true sense.

We now have something to say concerning *the concept of revolution*[4] itself. In saying it I would like once more to emphasize a point which I have already made at the outset: a study of this kind can offer nothing else whatever than a few modest considerations presented with all due provisos, and aimed at some degree of further clarification of the concept so as to achieve an understanding of all that is expressed in it. This means two things: first, we are not concerned with any revolutionary enthusiasm; second, I cannot, in order to avoid raising a middle-class bogey, disguise the fact that there may also be a legitimate possibility – indeed a duty – to undertake such a thing as a revolution in life, in society and in the world, and even for Christians, and that it is possible for this to be covered over by the narrow-minded or the bourgeois. I shall have something further to say on this latter point at a later stage.

Before we come to the concept of revolution itself I would like to emphasize one further point: in treating of the concept it would be wrong [318] for us to proceed from the outset from the concept or the reality *of force*.[5] Obviously the history of revolution as it *de facto* exists has always had something to do with force. But the concept of revolution should not in the first instance *ipso facto* be interpreted on the basis of the concept of force or even of violence as that through which, under certain conditions, social or political change will be, or should be introduced into a society. Unless we make this proviso we should have right from the outset an exact knowledge of what 'force' in the theological sense truly signifies, and this is by no means all that easy to define. To adopt this approach would also obscure the fact that at least today and in the future a revolution can take many forms such as cannot be brought into line with any of the usual senses in which force was used in former times. Now the difference between social and political 'evolution' and revolution is that revolution arises in those cases in which change is brought about in a political, social and cultural system by means of forces which exist outside this system as such and so proceed according to principles which are not recognized in this society itself as such either in the sense of being embodied in laws or catered for by means of other social institutions. Obviously any revolution invariably draws upon evolutive means as well such as are present in a society on the basis of the industrial and technical tendencies and forces present within it, and which are actually recognized as belonging to the very nature of the society concerned. But this does not alter the fact that the decisive forces which a revolution brings to bear are such as are not immanent within the system.

In describing the concept of revolution in these terms one point has been abstracted from: *the precise goal aimed at*, in view of which this changing of a society through means which are not immanent within its system takes place. But if we are to adopt a terminology

[4] For a comprehensive survey on this see K. Hecker, 'Revolution', *Sacramentum Mundi* V (London and New York, 1970), pp. 359-365, and the literature there adduced.
[5] On this cf. the author's article, 'The Theology of Power', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 391-409.

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nowadays accepted by the average man we may call such a process of changing a society revolutionary only provided that subjectively and objectively it is aimed at a greater scope for freedom and an increase in justice and harmony among all.

Even then it is obvious that the term 'revolution' cannot be applied if the forces and the protagonists involved in a social change are not merely such as are not immanent within the system but such as belong to a foreign power – in other words if what they bring to bear is not revolution but invasion.

The revolutionary process has a negative aspect: a critique or an attempt [319] to eliminate conditions which are socially unjust or repressive; and it has a positive aspect: the introduction of social relationships and conditions of a kind in which men can be given the widest possible scope for freedom in which to be able to live out their social relationships. A critique and an attempt to eliminate earlier social conditions without any new and effective alternatives for the setting up of a more just and more free society cannot be called revolution either. On the contrary it often implies danger and injury for any true revolutionary struggle.

We now come to the potentialities for social change present within a society yet not immanent within its system. They are sustained by a group of individuals within the society concerned which is numerically not wholly in a minority. Such a group will have two characteristics: first it will not be integrated into this society in such a way that it can exercise a real and recognizable influence upon the society as a whole so as to achieve its purpose or to be able to achieve its own aims within the society concerned as such; second, the group will be of such a kind that despite its usefulness for society as a whole in terms of economic benefits, freedom for the society, other cultural benefits etc., it will not have an adequate share in the shaping of the society. Unless the group concerned is of this kind the changes it brings about can only be such as are immanent within the system itself. The human group we are envisaging here is then compelled, in order really to be able to survive, to struggle for the elimination of the conditions of life actually prevailing, and in this sense becomes the subject in which the revolution is vested. Hence we can and must arrive at a concept of revolution such that physical or even violent force does not enter into this concept of its very nature. And despite this fact we can still distinguish revolution as conceived of here from any kind of social evolution.

In any revolution we can surely distinguish three dimensions:

The dimension of original motivation: the revolution is raised against injustice that is laid upon the oppressed until their frustration is such as to stir up a revolutionary movement.

The dimension of the recognition of certain norms: the original motivation becomes an occasion for recognizing the possibility of changing the social conditions within a given society. A new structure comes to be conceived of capable of producing a better society, and in the light of this and in its 'feedback' effects the original motivation becomes clearer and more concrete.

The dimension of the general and particular revolutionary strategy: [320] various methods are conceived of through which the new society can be brought to reality. These various methods are examined as to their effectiveness in the actual situation prevailing, and the selected methods are brought to a stage at which they are capable of being applied in practice. Finally the new structures of society are given concrete reality by the specifically revolutionary procedures.

In this connection something more should be said concerning the concept of the so-called '*permanent revolution*'. This has been put forward in the most varied forms, e.g. by Herbert Marcuse and by the Maoists of China. But simply in the light of the points we have made above it follows that the concept of a permanent revolution cannot be accepted. For if and to the extent that the *actual principle* of a social change that is *continuous* within a society were to become institutionalized as such, and to the extent that any such thing is possible at all,

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what is actually involved in an institution of this kind, a dynamic factor of this kind becoming embodied as an effective force in society so that it belongs to society itself, constitutes in our terms something that is from the outset precisely not a revolution but an evolution. For in fact the principle of change comes to be conceived of as immanent within the system of the society thus affected.[6] And there is a further point. For the most varied reasons, sociological, futurological and even theological, it is impossible for the principle of change within a concrete society as such to become fully institutionalized so as to affect all its aspects and to become recognized as an absolute principle of this society. The concept of an absolutely totalitarian state such as integrates everything within itself is ultimately absurd and cannot be carried out in practice. Yet only a state of this kind, which would imply the diametrical opposite of freedom, could bring such a thing as a permanent revolution to reality. Yet precisely because, for reasons which I will not mention here, there cannot be any such thing as a truly *absolute* totalitarian system,[7] there cannot be such a thing as a permanent revolution in the true sense either, for precisely the principle of a continuous social change and transformation cannot ultimately speaking in any full or adequate sense be immanent within the system. Even Trotsky recognized that there would be periods of calm within a permanent revolution of this kind, periods in which development [321] would take evolutionary forms. Even according to him, therefore, there is no really permanent revolution in any true sense.

This is not to deny that by accelerating the development of sciences and technology social changes too will develop more swiftly in the present and future than in former times, but these are still evolutionary in character even though the forms in which they manifest themselves are almost such as were formerly achieved only in revolutions. But the converse of this must also be insisted upon here: we are assuming two things: first that no society can integrate within itself all the forces of progress and change by institutionalizing them as such. Hence too authentic revolutions become necessary again and again, proceeding from forces which transcend the system itself. Secondly, we can regard the alternating evolutionary and revolutionary phases in the history of a society taken together as so many *unified* major social processes. Assuming the validity of these two points, and on this approach, it is also possible under certain circumstances to speak of a permanent revolution.

What is presupposed is the position, regarded as a tenet of faith, that in the course of the phases of her history the Church preserves an essential identity, and hence it would be possible to describe the permanent revolution as a sociological analogate in which the history of the Church might find a certain model in terms of which to interpret her own nature. For a Church can never always remain, or seek to remain, at the same level within society. This remains valid so long as she constitutes the people of God on pilgrimage and so long as she is not merely the institution which, as remaining always the same, fixed or frozen, as it were, confines herself to delivering that which is produced by souls who have already been saved and are in heaven. The Church, then, is always on the way, and tending towards a kingdom of God, an absolute future, which can never wholly be established within history, and which despite this constitutes the goal of this people of God so that the Church as always in need or reform has phases within her history which can be compared to evolutions.[8] The evidence of history shows that revolutionary phases in the past history of the Church coincided with revolutionary phases in the past history of secular society – indeed that they even emerge from these. And to that extent a comparison between a secular permanent revolution in the

[6] In this connection the function of a 'political theology' should be noticed. Cf. J. B. Metz, 'Political Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi* V (London and New York, 1970), pp. 34-38.
[7] On this cf. the author's observations in *Freiheit und Manipulation in Gesellschaft und Kirche*, Münch. Akad.-Schriften 53 (Munich, 2nd ed., 1971).
[8] On this cf. the author's article, 'Immanent and Transcendent Consummation of the World', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 273-289.

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sense which I have just set forth as conceivable and that permanent revolution which the Church herself is is something more than simply an [322] artificial comparison. It actually makes clear to some extent the close mutual relationship which exists between the fate of the Church and that of the world. Precisely as the outcome of the experience which the Church has in the midst of secular revolutions, she conceives, in forms which are new and relevant, of that which in itself has all along been known to her as the outcome of divine revelation, and yet which at the same time she has to learn ever anew. And to the extent that the Church hearkens to divine revelation and to the call of the particular age both at the same time, she can through her doctrine and through her life supply the world and its societies ever afresh with that motivation which these need for the attainment of their goal and for the changes which are necessary for this.[9] This is admittedly true only provided that the Church does not think of herself as one called to be a merely conservative force. For ultimately and basically speaking she least of all is this. She must really believe that God himself constitutes her absolute future and at the same time she must recognize that she can only effectively make real this faith of hers and this hope in the absolute future – and moreover at the level of society also – provided that this absolute hope is mediated through the daring, the readiness, under certain circumstances, to undergo change herself within the course of 'this worldly' history to the extent that the summons to undergo change of this kind reaches her from the times through which she is passing. How are we as Christians credibly to demonstrate and to live out what it means to say that the Church is advancing towards a goal which transcends all these earthly realities if we seek merely to cling onto the current state of society? To do so would be to render the eschatological hope of the Church in a true sense unworthy of belief. He alone is truly a Christian who so bears witness to his hope that under certain conditions he can let go the sparrow in his hand in favour of the dove on the roof, even though for the most part worldly prudence seems to prescribe the opposite course.[10]

I must now say something about the concept of the *revolutionary situation*. A revolutionary situation exists when firstly a sufficiently large group within a society exists which, nevertheless, is not integrated into it; secondly when a revolutionary potential exists; thirdly if this group has become sufficiently aware of its situation; fourthly if it has a sufficient [323] social organization. To express it in other terms: a revolutionary situation of this kind – though not one that necessarily signifies revolution itself – can exist either in a specific individual society taken in isolation or in a multiplicity of societies which are in a certain sense dependent upon one another, or even in the world as a whole, to the extent that these societies are so mutually interdependent in their existence and their prosperity that the revolutionary situation of one of these societies inevitably affects all the other societies as well. When we say in this sense that a revolutionary situation can become *global*, this obviously does not mean that such a situation is homogeneously present in all parts of the world. Despite the universality of a global revolutionary situation, such a situation can be absent in a particular society taken purely in isolation. Hence a revolutionary situation, to the extent that it exists so far as one particular society is concerned purely as an external factor, i.e. in other societies throughout the world, is not simply the same as when it is present in those societies affected by this global situation.

On any just and unprejudiced view of the present-day state of the world we must say that a global revolutionary situation does exist. In asserting this I must of course emphasize once more that this statement is valid only if we assume the concept of revolution I have just

[9] On this cf. the author's ideas in 'The Function of the Church as Critic of Society', *Theological Investigations* XII (London and New York, 1974), pp. 229-249, and the literature there adduced.
[10] On this cf. the author's article, 'On the Theology of Hope', *Theological Investigations* X (London and New York, 1973), pp. 260-272.

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described, and only if we assume the concept of the revolutionary situation as global, which can nevertheless arise in this world as the outcome of societies in which a particular revolutionary situation is present such as does not exist in some other society taken in and for itself.

The thesis that a global revolutionary situation does exist is put forward on the assumption of the ideas developed above based on an evaluation of the economic and social situation prevailing in the southern hemisphere, i.e. in the under-developed nations. This thesis is put forward independently of and prior to the question of whether a revolution of this kind – as distinct from the revolutionary situation – already exists or is shortly to break out everywhere or in many countries of the world, and it is totally independent of the question of what means or methods will be used or should be used in order to carry out a revolution of this kind in itself. However, this global revolutionary situation does exist today because in the first place there is so close an interdependence between all the countries of the world that it is no longer possible for one part of the world to exist as a social entity without the other, and second because in many areas, and precisely in the under-developed countries, at least as applied to the country concerned itself, a revolutionary situation, or even an actual revolution already exists, and third because in this world [324] there is an extremely explosive tension between the northern hemisphere and the southern, in other words, therefore, between the part containing the developed nations and that containing the under-developed ones, so that this contradiction really should be called global.

By way of summary, therefore, the following must be laid down: if a revolutionary situation does objectively exist in one part of the world, and if all of us in the world of today are necessarily and inevitably in the same boat (even though we egoistic Europeans of the western industrialized countries are not really willing to recognize it), and the fact that we are in one boat in this sense is becoming still more plainly manifested, then a global revolutionary situation does exist in the world of today even though this revolutionary situation may perhaps not derive from the internal structure of our particular society.

CHURCH AND REVOLUTION

We now come to the question of Church and Revolution. From the nature and the vocation of the Church, and from the means at her disposal, in view of her relative smallness measured by the world as a whole, it may be concluded that the Church cannot be the proper protagonist of the revolution which can legitimately emerge from the global revolutionary situation as universal revolution, though this is not to say anything on the question of what form such a revolution must take in itself precisely so as to supply an appropriate response to this revolutionary situation of the world.

The Church as such is not the primary or proper subject of that revolution which in itself could and should provide the answer to this global revolutionary situation in the world. Nevertheless the Church can and must act as follows: first she must recognize the justification for a revolution of this kind at least in general terms, for this revolution, the point of departure for which we have said already exists, is necessary if the underdeveloped world is really to obtain a share in the benefits they justifiably demand. The process of arriving at a just balance of this kind between the northern and the southern hemispheres cannot properly be called evolution, for the attainment of this just balance is at least in practice, i.e. in view of the outlook actually prevailing in society, a process which cannot be described as immanent within the system. How those forces which transcend the system can and should conduce to the striking of such a balance, what means can be used in order to arrive at it – this is another question. Because and to the extent that in the developed industrial [325] countries of

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America and Europe those who seek to achieve this just balance and the resources for carrying it through are *de facto* not really immanent within the system, we must according to our terms call the process of arriving at a just and necessary balance of this kind a revolution.

One possible position is that a global change of this kind in the world should be carried out without force, and those who hold this opinion may feel themselves obliged, as a matter of duty, to use peaceful methods of revolution of this kind. But even so they cannot deny that what is in question here is a revolution. And it seems that even a peaceful revolutionary of this kind should boldly give the name of revolution to the position he is advocating, for if he appeals *merely* to good will and to principles which in practice are already recognized in this society, then he will achieve nothing.

Under Pius XI the Church has explicitly recognized that a social situation, at least within a particular country, can be so unjust and so contrary to the basic rights of man that it is possible for it to be right to use physical force against it.[11] According to Paul VI's encyclical, 'Populorum Progressio' a right to revolution exists, and moreover for Christians also, in the case of grave corruption in a state. It is true that in any theological ethics we have to examine what principles should be invoked in order to answer the question of when and under what conditions we may in practice claim the right to initiate a revolution. It may be true that the utmost prudence is called for here. Yet the fact remains that the concrete application of these principles to a revolution which may possibly be morally justified is no longer the task of theology or of the teaching authorities of the Church proper, and at the theoretical level, but is rather a matter for secular sociology, a matter of the practical reason, which admittedly is enlightened by faith and even guided by charismatic inspiration. In other words ultimately speaking it is a matter for free decision such as can no longer be theoretically reflected upon in any full sense, even though this is not to give free reign to any and every kind of frenzied primitive aggressivity on the part of the individual, without reason, without plan, without responsibility, without reflection. But a further point following from this is that a retrospective ideological justification for a concrete revolution of this kind once it has been carried through is not the task of theology either, for thereby it would be reduced to a mere cringing lickspittle fawning upon a revolution once it had succeeded. It has no need of any such theological justification and it is not the function of theology for its part to give its approval in this sense.

[326] If and to the extent that physical force in the proper sense can legitimately be used in order to safeguard or to restore fundamental human rights, if and to the extent that the use of such force on the part of groups transcending the system in order to achieve fundamental rights is likewise justified, the use of such force can also justifiably be called revolution. And conversely if the use of force is morally justified, then it also follows that the revolution carried through by means of it can be pronounced morally justified, and indeed under certain circumstances obligatory to the extent or in the degree that this use of force is morally justified or obligatory for one who avails himself of this use of force with sufficient prospect of success for the achievement, the defence or the restoration of fundamental human rights of freedom. A point which must always clearly be recognized in this connection is that the concrete forms which such fundamental rights to freedom assume are obviously influenced by temporal and historical factors and the conditions prevailing in a particular age. Hence under certain circumstances nowadays man's basic rights and his right to freedom can include factors which they did not include in the immediate or more distant past. The Church must exhort and arouse Christians to take part in this global revolution in a way appropriate to their position in society and the possibilities open to them as a duty of Christian conscience, for this is not restricted in its function to catering for the salvation of the

[11] The encyclical, 'Firmissimam constantiam' v. 28. III, 1937; cf. DS[34] 3775-3776.

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individual. This is not to say that participation of this kind by the Christian in the global revolution as thus defined is merely a matter of his own *private* conscience or his own individual ethics. Precisely because this is not the case a theology of revolution or a theological theory of revolution must in fact be developed such as does not yet exist as manifestly or clearly as is necessary. If the Church too in her official authorities does not constitute the direct subject for carrying out a revolution, still she can nevertheless as a subordinate society be the upholder of a certain Christian motivation for such a revolutionary movement, and moreover in such a way that through her way of acting in the sphere *interior* to herself she manifests herself as a fruitful example in which the effectiveness of such motivations can be recognized, while conversely she can arrive at such ever-fresh courses of action *as a result* of her contact with the contemporary social situation.

In order to achieve a still better understanding of the theological connection which exists between the Church and the contemporary global revolutionary situation the following point must also be considered: a *mutually* conditioning relationship exists between the recognition of the situation in which Christian life has to be led in the concrete [327] and those principles and motives deriving from revelation which determine this Christian life and give it its motive force. It is not merely that the Church applies revelation to a specific historical situation in which she is living at any given time. It is also true that from the situation itself the Church develops a new theoretical and above all practical recognition for this life as shaped and motivated by Christian revelation. Otherwise a group history would, for instance, be totally inconceivable and the life of the Church would be reduced to a mere uniform application of Christian principles to human courses of action as a material which properly speaking would remain permanently external to this life. From her own nature and for the sake of her own goal the Church seeks, therefore, to achieve a close contact with her worldly situation. I say from her own nature as most proper to her. She does this in order to realize her own self in the manner demanded of her in a specific situation. The Church must learn ever afresh from her situation as constantly subject to history in this sense and never static how the word of God must be preached and the sacraments administered in the concrete, how she herself has to strive for that kingdom of God which constitutes the eschatological salvation of mankind as such and as a whole, and how she must do this as a society and not merely as an agglomeration of individuals in a purely material sense. There is a mutual interdependence a mutually conditioning relationship between love of God and love of neighbour. These two factors are neither wholly identical one with the other nor capable of being living forces independently of one another. Neither in theory nor in practice can Christianity and the Church be understood solely in terms of a sociological horizontalism or a spiritualistic verticalism. This applies not merely to the individual Christians but also to the Church as such.[12] The Church herself cannot serve God without this worship of God in adoration and love being mediated through her service of man.

This function of the Church as serving man, through which the true and genuine cult of God is mediated and made real, demands ever-fresh experiments in concrete social living because only through the experience of these can the Church be made aware of the ever-fresh forms in which this service of man can and must be fulfilled, the more so since it is a service of society as such that is in question, and, moreover, nowadays of a society which is changing very quickly. Through her gospel the Church deputes the Christian to a worldly task which both in terms of its material content and also in its *immediate* motivation remains worldly, and so in [328] terms both of this material content in itself and of the *immediate* motivation is common to Christian and non-Christian alike, or at least could and should be common to

[12] On this cf. the author's article in the present volume, 'The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World'.

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them both. This worldliness becomes apparent from two factors taken together: first the distinction between the natural and supernatural orders and second the impossibility of working out a *concrete* normative world order for a Christian motivation as such in a world that is never totally freed from every consequence of sin.[13] Correspondingly the task of the Christian as such for the world is not subject to the immediate jurisdiction of the Church's official authorities nor even to the immediate or direct guidance of these. Nevertheless this task for the world does have something specifically and properly Christian in it, and it should not be concluded from what has been said that the Church herself does not have any task for the world of this kind. Work undertaken for the world in this sense, and giving practical expression to responsibility for the world, can be attributed to the Church herself from the most varied points of view: first in as much as this task for the world is engaged in by individuals belonging to the Church whose ultimate and deepest motivations are expressly Christian because and to the extent that these Christians are instructed by the official teaching of the Church in the general norms and principles of social behaviour, principles which, despite their universality, do have or can have in the fullest sense a social effectiveness; further to the extent that the Christians of the Church can form groups which together take upon themselves a task for the world of this kind as something demanded by their Christian conscience, and, in so far as they are still able to do this – as is explicitly stated in 'Gaudium et spes' – even if the Christian dimension in their work is disputed by other groups of Christians. A Christian motivation, a declaration of the Christian element in a concrete social task is not dependent upon the recognition or approbation of this Christian element by all Christians or all authorities in the Church (cf. 'Gaudium et spes', Nos. 41, 43, 75), finally to the extent that the official authorities of the Church can also be under certain circumstances the ones who involve themselves in interventions of a Christian, charismatic and practical kind which cannot be deduced in any compelling sense from the Christian principles at the level of official doctrine, and yet are responses to the demands of the time and the situation to the extent that this situation is interpreted by a practical and creative intelligence.

[329] This experience of the world, then, is one through which the Church interprets ever afresh her own insights into revelation in the Spirit which, precisely in this way, introduces them in all truth. Through them the Church must learn and must reform the activities required of her in her own sphere ever afresh in order in this way to provide an effective motivation for the world in its development and in its revolution. Thus the Church learns that she has to help the poor in their present-day social situation in a way which must be quite different from that which formerly prevailed and was followed in the Church. She learns that the poor must be set free from their self-alienation, and so not have merely to be given alms. If the Church understands this today she is recognizing that she has to manifest herself as the Church of the poor in a different way from that which was formerly the case.[14] If she presents herself in this way she is offering a fresh motivation for, and fresh examples of the attitudes and policies which secular society should adopt in relation to the poor today. In similar ways the Church learns afresh from contemporary history what concrete consequences follow for men from the so-called human rights in their general formulation. The Church must make real these human rights within her own sphere in a way which corresponds to our *contemporary* age. When she does this genuinely and honestly she is offering an example of how such rights are to be safeguarded and put into practice in the world as well. Without this process of a mutual interinfluence between world and Church, in which the Church too changes herself in fulfilling her task in and for the contemporary world, without this congruence between the

[13] Here we should notice the author's observations in his article, 'Theological Considerations on Secularization and Atheism', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 166-184.
[14] On this see the author's article in the present volume, 'The Unreadiness of the Church's Members to Accept Poverty'.

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task of the Church within her own sphere and that which is directed outwards to the world, her credibility would suffer and she would be reduced to a sect surviving in the backwaters of history and no longer playing her part in shaping the course of the secular world.

Finally – and in order to bring this study to an end – I would like to add the following point: it is true that the Church has no need to set up any great lament over her past. At the same time, however, she should not be silent about her historical guilt which she has incurred in the course of time by an unjust defence of social conditions under which men in the most divers social groups have had to suffer the most divers forms of injustice and severe hardship. Only through this attitude of self-criticism towards her own past and present on the Church's part can she hope to achieve credibility in any adequate sense, when she ranges herself, as is her right and duty, among those who criticize and condemn the social conditions [330] through which a revolutionary situation has been provoked in the most varied regions of the world. The Church as a whole must also be bold and unequivocal in loosing all those ties of mutual protection and defence which still exist even today between the Church's authority and structures on the one hand and rulers and oligarchical and feudalistic social structures on the other. Such ties are to be surrendered not from considerations of sheer expediency or on the grounds that the Church sees advantages for herself in such a course, namely when the oligarchic social structures are finally overthrown by a revolution. On the contrary the Church must do this because she is obliged to do so of her very nature and in terms of her divine vocation to bring salvation to men.[15] And finally: everything which still in any sense is subject to the Church's authority must be performed in such a way that murder and torture on political grounds is eliminated from the world even though the perpetration of such terrors has hitherto not infrequently been at least tolerated by the Church or, shall we say, individuals within the Church.

Obviously all that I have said so far contains little that has any bearing upon a theology of revolution. I have sought neither to set up a revolutionary programme nor to condemn a revolution which, under certain conditions and in specific situations may be necessary on Christian principles. I have sought to present only a few considerations which, after all, must be put forward if ever any really clear and well thought out theology of revolution is to be developed, a theology which, by and large, and despite all the contributions from South America, still does not exist today, and for which, obviously, any revolutionary mood or revolutionary enthusiasm can never be a substitute.

[15] cf. also the author's article, 'Institution and Freedom', *Theological Investigations* XIII.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Antonianum	*Antonianum*. Rome 1926 ff.
Bijdragen	*Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie*. Nijmegen 1938 ff.
CCHL	*Corpus Christianorum seu nova Patrum collectio*. Turnhout/Paris 1953 ff.
CSL	*Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*. Vienna l866 ff.
D	H. Denziger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*. Freiburg/Br. ^{30}1955.
DACL	*Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. F. Chabrol and H. Leclercq. Paris 1924-53.
DS	H. Denziger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*. Freiburg/Br. ^{34}1967.
DThC	*Dictionnaire de théologie carholique*, ed. A. Vacant and E. Mangenot, cont. by E. Amann. Paris 1903 ff.
Duchesne LP	*Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne. 2 vol. Paris 1886-92. Reprinted Paris 1955. Vol. 3, ed. C. Vogel, Paris, 1957.
EThL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*. Bruges 1924 ff.
Fischer	J. A. Fischer, *Die Apostolischen Väter*. Munich 1956.
FlorPatr	*Florilegium Patristicum*, ed. J. Zellinger and B. Geyer. Bonn 1904 ff.
FStud	*Frankiskanische Studien* (*Münster*). Werl 1914 ff.
GCS	*Die Griechischen christlichen Schrifsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*. Leipzig (since the Second World War, Berlin) 1897 ff.
Gr	*Gregorianum*. Rome 1920 ff.
GuL	*Geist und Leben*. (See ZAM.)
HDG	*Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, ed. M. Schmaus, J. Geiselmann, A. Grillmeier. Freiburg/Br. 1951 ff.
HdKG	*Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, ed. H. Jedin. 6 vols. Freiburg/ Br., Basel, Vienna 1962 ff.
Hennecke	*Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, ed. E. Hennecke. Tübingen ^{2}1924.
HPTh	*Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, ed. F. X. Arnold, K. Rahner, V. Schurr, L. M. Weber. 5 vols. Freiburg/Br. 1964-72.
HThG	*Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. H. Fries. 2 vols. Munich 1962-3.
IER	*The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. Dublin 1864 ff.
JThS	*The Journal of Theological Studies*. London 1899 ff.
König W	*Religionswissenschaftliches Wörterbuch*, ed. Fr König. Freiburg/Br. 1956.
LThK	*Lexicon für Theologie and Kirche*. 2nd fully rev. edn ed. J. Höfer, K. Rahner. 10 vols. Freiburg/Br. 1957-67.
Mansi	J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*. 31 vols. Florence/Venice 1757-98. Reprinted and ed. L. Petit, J.-B. Martin. 60 vols. Paris 1899-1927.
Meyers Kom.	*Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament*, founded by H. A. W. Meyer. 16 vols. Göttingen 1832 ff. (several edns).
MThZ	*Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*. Munich 1950 ff.
NTD	*Das Neue Testament Deutsch*. ed. P. Althaus, J. Behm (Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk), Göttingen, 1932 ff. (several edns).
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne. 161 vols. Paris 1857-66
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. and 4 vols. index. Paris 1844-55
QD	*Quaestiones Disputatae*, ed. K. Rahner, H. Schlier. Freiburg/Br. 1958 ff.
QS	J. Maier, *Die Texte vom Toten Meer*. 2 vols. Munich/Basel 1960.
RAC	*Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. T. Klauser. Stuttgart 1941, 1950 ff.
RBén	*Revue bénédictine*. Maredsous 1884 ff.
RET	*Revista Española de teologia*. Madrid 1941 ff.
RHE	*Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*. Lyon 1900 ff.
RHLR	*Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuse*. Paris 1896-1907, 1910 ff.
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*. Paris 1880 ff.
RNT	*Regensburger Neues Testament*, ed. A. Wikenhauser, O. Kuss. 10 vols. Regensburg 1938 ff.

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RQH	*Revue de questions historiques*. Paris 1866 ff.
RSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*. Paris 1910 ff.
RThAM	*Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale*. Louvain 1929 ff.
Sacramentum Mundi	*Sacramentum Mundi*. *Theologisches Lexicon für die Praxis*, ed. K. Rahner, A. Darlap et al. 4 vols. Freiburg/Br. 1967-9.
SC	*Sources Chretiennes*, ed. H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou. Paris/Lyon 1941 ff.
Scholastik	*Scholastik*. Freiburg/Br. 1926 ff. (Since 1966 *Theologie und Philosophie* = ThPh.)
Strack-Billerbeck	H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud and Midrasch*, I-IV. Munich 1922-8, reprinted 1956. V (*Rabbinischer Index*), ed. J. Jeremias, K. Adolph. Munich 1956.
ThGl	*Theologie und Glaube*. Paderborn 1909 ff.
ThPh	*Theologie und Philosophie*. (See Scholastik.)
ThQ	*Theologische Quartalschrift*. Tübingen 1819 ff., Stuttgart 1946 ff.
ThRv	*Theologische Revue*. Münster 1902 ff.
ThSt	*Theological Studies*. Baltimore 1940 ff.
ThW	*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. N. G. Kittel, cont. by G. Friedrich. Stuttgart 1933 ff.
TU	*Teste and Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*. *Archiv für die griechisch-christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*. Lepzig/Berlin 1882 ff.
VS	*Verbum Salutis*. *Commentaire du Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Huby, S. Lyonnet. Paris 1924 ff. (several edns).
WA	M. Luther, *Werke*. *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (‘*Weimarer Ausgabe*’). 1883 ff.
Wasserschleben	H. Wasserschleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*. Halle 1851 (reprinted Graz 1947).
ZAM	*Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik* (Innsbruck, Munich). Würzburg 1926 ff. (Since 1947 *Geist und Leben* = GuL.)
ZKG	*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschicte* (Gotha). Stuttgart 1876 ff.
ZKTh	*Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* (Innsbruck). Vienna 1877 ff.
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*. Giessen 1900 ff., Berlin 1934 ff.

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PREFACE

In this book the reader will find gathered together the studies which I have made on the history of the practice and of the theology of penance in the early Church. It is true that these essays hail from an earlier period of my theological work; but I do not think that they have been outdated. For, on the one hand, historical work on the questions considered in this volume has hardly made any progress in the last two decades. (It is remarkable, for instance, that J. Grotz's major study, which appeared in 1955, has not been anywhere critically examined on the matter of its theses which represent a radical challenge to the notion of the history of penance which has become traditional since Poschmann.) On the other hand, the essays in their present form have been thoroughly revised, and the reader is made conversant with the literature which has appeared up to today on the history of penance. The essays in this book are on the *history* of penance. Systematic studies on the theology of penance are not included here, especially since a large number of them have already appeared in previous volumes of *Theological Investigations* (cf. 'Forgotten Truths Concerning the Sacrament of Penance', II, 135-74; 'Guilt and Its Remission: The Borderland between Theology and Psychotherapy', II, 265-81; 'The Meaning of Frequent Confession of Devotion', III, 177-89; 'Problems concerning Confession', III, 190-206; 'Guilt-Responsibility-Punishment Within the View of Catholic Theology', VI, 197-217; 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time', VI, 218-30; 'Penance as an Additional Act of Reconciliation within the Church', X, 125-41 – to mention but a few of the studies which deal with these questions directly and explicitly) or are easily accessible in my other works (for example, in *Sendung und Gnade*: *Handbuch der* [viii] *Pastoraltheologie*, etc.). This fifteenth volume of *Theological Investigations* obviously differs very basically, therefore, from the previous volumes: whereas the previous volumes contained explicitly only systematic studies, this fifteenth volume contains only studies on the history of dogma and of theology. Nevertheless, I think that it is justified to present these historical researches together as a volume of *Theological Investigations*, because all the volumes of these writings are collections of my brief researches on specific points and they all bear a sub-title which marks them off from one another and thus makes each individual volume into a self-contained unit. I consider, therefore, that this collection of individual studies, *Penance in the Early Church*, can form a volume in the whole series.

The introduction of the volume into this series has, however – I must 'confess' – yet another reason. I am suspected by many people of being only a speculative theologian who works without reference to history and who, in some circumstances, attempts to dispel difficulties which arise in understanding statements of the Church's magisterium by the merely speculative interpretation of such statements. I am absolutely convinced that genuine Catholic theology must always proceed on the basis both of exegesis and of the history of dogmas and theology, even if it must be the free choice of the individual theologian whether, in a study of a particular point, he wishes to work 'speculatively' or 'historically'. It is possible, therefore, that the present volume will dispel the suspicion that I have no appreciation of historical theology.

In fact the themes of this volume show that today's theory and practice of church penance will not make any progress without a continually new confrontation with their own history. For example, questions concerning the nature of the mortal sins which must necessarily be submitted to the sacrament of penance in the form of a detailed confession, concerning the ecclesial aspect of penance and the sacrament of penance, concerning the nature of the so-called penitential service, etc. (cf., for example, my essay '*Bussandacht und Einzelbeichte*': StdZ 190 (1972) 363-72), cannot be answered without a thorough study of the history of

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church penance. It is for this reason that the patristic studies in this volume are preceded by a brief survey of the history of penance as a whole. This context serves to clarify the significance and the distinctiveness of the view of each of the Fathers considered.

[ix] The revision of these essays is due to the necessary previous help of several friends and pupils. I wish to name expressly here: Herrn Dr Leo Karrer (Münster), Frau Dr Helga Modesto (München) and Fraulein Marlies Mugge (Hannover). My special obligation to P. K.-H. Neufeld is evident from the title of the book. Finally, I wish also to thank most sincerely Herrn Professor Dr Paul Mikat, who, as director of the Görres-Gesellschaft, energetically expedited the publication of this volume.

Karl Rahner

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PART ONE

Introduction

[3]

1

THE HISTORY OF PENANCE

At first sight, the notion of the 'history of penance' appears to be clear and comprehensible. Upon closer examination, however, its meaning becomes increasingly complicated. This is because penance itself, and when it is properly considered, is always essentially a historical phenomenon, since it implies alteration and change. Although there are other kinds of penance, the one with which we are concerned here is the Christian penance which we have frequently attempted to survey in contributions to various dictionaries.[1] For this reason it is obvious that very little new material is offered here. Indeed it would be useful and desirable for the reader of the present volume to have ready access to such a comprehensive treatment. It is only in the wider theological and historical context that the meaning of these studies will be fully understood and that they will be able to produce an impact far beyond that of a particular theme of the history of dogma, capable of interesting only a small number of specialists.

I. EXPLANATION OF THE NOTION AND OUTLINE OF THE PROBLEM

Penance is primarily and generally speaking man's moral and religious attitude in reaction to sin, given by Christ's grace. It is conversion to God and aversion from sin. Its specific and central act is sorrow, but, in addition, in its various forms it includes essentially absolutely all the interior and exterior attitudes of the Christian towards [4] what is called sin. It is evident, therefore, that a more precise notion of penance will correspond to the notion of sin and the

[1] Cf. the following comprehensive articles by the author. They are partially repetitive. They also contain references to further literature:

'Busse, christl.' in: König, F., *Religions-Wissenschaftliches Wörterbuch – Die Grundbegriffe* (Freiburg/Br. 1956), pp. 142-44.
'Das katholische Verständnis von Sünde und Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament und in der Busspraxis der alten Kirche' in: *Die Sündenvergebung in der Kirche* (Evgl. Akademie, Bad Boll – Akademie der Diözese, Rottenburg, 1958), pp. 33-50.
'Bussdisziplin, altkirchliche', pp. 805-15; 'Busse', pp. 815-18; 'Bussakrament', p. 826, in: LThK vol. II (Freiburg/Br. 1958).
'Die Busse' in: *Kirche und Sakramente* (QD 10) (Freiburg/Br. 1960), pp. 83-5.
'Penance' in: *Sacramentum Mundi* 4 (New York/London 1969), pp. 385-99.
'Pastoraltheologie des Busssacramentes' in: *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* vol. IV (Freiburg/Br. 1969), pp. 128-44 (this article includes references to the author's treatment of systematic and practical questions concerning penance which are not considered in the present volume).
'Penance' and 'Penance, Sacrament of' in Rahner/Vorgrimler, *Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd edn (New York 1981 [= *Concise Theological Dictionary,* London]), pp. 370-75.

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nature of justification. In the Christian view both sin and justification presuppose the effective revealing word of God himself. For his part, man must respond to his word with a zeal both for the fear of God and for his own authentic existence, despite all 'suppression'. This zeal, in its turn, is due to previous grace. It is only in this way that man can have the right attitude towards his past and with a willingness which is itself a gratuitous gift allow God's revealing word to destroy in him pharisaic self-righteousness and convince him of sin. As for the future, this experience produces the decision to renounce the permanent menace of sin and the determination to fight against it with the biblical means of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, etc.[2] In the effort to change his ways man places his confidence in God's grace which proves itself victorious in human weakness but is opposed by the desire and the world that is concupiscence. All this is naturally accompanied by the readiness to receive the sacrament of the forgiveness of sins as well as to suffer the consequences of sin. Likewise, it calls for cooperation in the fight against sin in the Church and the world, sharing in the burden of sin as it becomes manifest in misfortune and need and the intention to make satisfaction and expiation.

As all other Christian activity, this response to God's revealing word derives from God's unmerited grace and it is a tangible accomplishment of justifying faith and a participation in Christ's cross. The fact that, in the Christian view, sin is a *free* act of man and is guilt before God and that, conversely, penance is also man's freely undertaken aversion from his guilty act is not altered by the dependence of penance upon grace. Precisely because penance is necessary for salvation – it is the way in which God's free mercy grants salvation to the free creature[3] – its notion includes the freedom of the saving act; penance is the act of man which, nevertheless, clearly shows that it is God's action upon us that forgives sins and not sorrow, in so far as this sorrow on our part can and must be distinguished from God's activity.

In the Bible this attitude and its many expressions are covered by the notion of 'metanoia', the change of attitude, which is expressed and explained in tangible acts. For Christians this is first and foremost the radical decision which is expressed in baptism. Although, [5] in this case, the notion may be less explicit there is here an act of penance which, nevertheless, both according to the Church's tradition and of its very nature happens only once. This uniqueness is peculiar to the attitude of penance which is expressed in baptism. And this gives rise to the problem of relating the continuing, permanent attitude of Christian penance with the unique, definitive character of baptism. For there can be no doubt that when Scripture refers to penance it is always a matter of tangible, expressed acts and never exclusively of a purely interior attitude which would not be expressed exteriorly. Moreover, there is no reason to deny that even after baptism radical sins can be committed which can be countered only by a correspondingly radical act of penance. But this raises the question of the possibility of such an act of penance after baptism. If our view is correct, this possibility did exist at the time of the New Testament,[4] and it is here that the foundations of the Church's public treatment of this question lie. For it is reflected precisely in the New Testament in the form of a clear distinction between the universal exhortation to repentance and the proclamation that all sins are forgiven by God. Both are connected, however, since the whole being and activity of the Church is a denial of sin. The Church comes into its own as the judging and forgiving presence of Christ in a world of sin by the ministry of reconciliation, by exhorting men to

[2] Cf. Matt. 6:1-18; 9:15; Mark 9:29.
[3] Cf. DS 1525-6; 1551-4.
[4] This is particularly clear in 1 Cor. 5:3-5 and 2 Cor. 2:5-11, even if the traditional exegesis of these passages is not correct. These passages also suggest a re-examination of the conclusion reached by H. Thyen in his work: *Studien zur Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament and Seinen Alttestamentlichen and jüdischen Voraussetzungen.*

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allow themselves to be reconciled with God by God himself.[5] For man this entails a movement towards a new life, beginning with his conviction as a sinner in a variety of ways: in baptism as the basic sacrament of forgiveness,[6] in the celebration of the Eucharist as the memorial and proclamation of the Lord's death for the forgiveness of guilt,[7] in the Church's own confession of guilt,[8] in penance with prayer and fasting,[9] in concern for the concrete situation of the individual by prayer for the sinner,[10] in fraternal correction,[11] in the 'ostracization of the sinner' by an official,[12] if the fraternal exhortation has no effect, by an official reprimand[13] and, finally, by the act of the Church which is its strongest judging or, more properly, forgiving reaction to sin: the binding and the loosing of the sinner.

Just as, therefore, according to Scripture there are sins of the baptized – although it has not yet been considered how these sins are precisely described and classified – so according to the New Testament and the early Church there is a forgiveness of these sins. The idea that there is only one definitive forgiveness of guilt in baptism [6] and that every subsequent sin is either unforgivable or simply already forgiven by baptism in anticipation is entirely foreign to the New Testament. Just as sin or, more precisely, *sinning* can exist after baptism as something which need not and should not have happened, so there is also a forgiveness of sins *after* baptism. This is a new occurrence of God's grace, distinct from baptism, which, although it was promised in baptism, is still a *grace* and, therefore, cannot be derived from baptism with mechanical certainty but remains a new occurrence. Despite its high esteem of baptism, the New Testament recognizes that Christians do commit sins – from the every-day faults due to our weakness to scandals which do not occur even among pagans, including the perversion of the truth of the gospel and the reversion to paganism or Judaism.

II. THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN PENANCE

I. The Teaching of Scripture

But what is the basis for the Church's official attitude towards sin? For Catholic theology this relationship originates in an official authorization of the leaders of the community by Jesus which represents a specific and new expression of the effective proclamation of forgiveness to baptized Christians and which, therefore, according to Catholic understanding, provides the basis of specific sacrament independent of baptism.

In order to establish this teaching, the Council of Trent appealed principally to John 20 as the classical text for the institution of the sacrament of penance.[14] In my opinion, however, John's witness becomes much clearer and more enlightening in the setting of the life of the earliest community if Matthew 16 and 18 are taken as the starting-point. Moreover, this approach rejoins an old tradition; for, from the penitential controversies in Tertullian's day to the high Middle Ages, Matthew 16 and 18 were more frequently and explicitly adduced as

[5] Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18 ff.
[6] Cf. Acts 2:38; Rom. 6; 1 Cor. 6:11.
[7] Cf. Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:26.
[8] Cf. Matt. 6:12.
[9] Cf. Matt. 6:1-18; 9:15; Mark 9:29.
[10] Cf. 1 John 5:16.
[11] Cf. Matt. 18:15.
[12] Cf. 2 Thess. 3:14.
[13] Cf. 1 Tim. 5:20.
[14] Cf. DS 1670. The council takes great care to formulate that Jesus instituted the sacrament *praecipue* by this saying.

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the basis of the power of the keys in the sacrament of penance than was John 20. Indeed in the tradition the power of the keys was considered to be the power to forgive sins.

Furthermore, this practice has antecedents in the practice of imposing [7] a ban found in the synagogues and in the 'Rule of the Sect'[15] of Qumran, although its proper nature in the Christian setting can be determined only by the self-consciousness of the 'church' of Jesus, given by the Lord and its unity with him, precisely because of the institution of this new covenant. Because the Church is holy it must react with the ban against a member's sin which is incompatible with its own nature.[16]

Admission into the Church through baptism and reconciliation with it is the expression of reconciliation with God. Now, both in theory and in practice such a power for binding and loosing in the Church must be expected from the beginning. It is, therefore, irrelevant to ask how far the direct statements in Matthew 16 and 18 are influenced by the 'theology of the community'.

In fact, according to Matthew 16 and 18, the apostles and Peter, as those authorized by Jesus to be leaders of the Church, possess the power so 'to bind and to loose' that a corresponding act has validity also in 'heaven'. The idea that the sentence of an earthly judge has an effect in the other world in God's eyes was widespread at that time.[17] In this regard, the demonological background – in the original and generally accepted sense of this term – should not be overlooked.[18] Nevertheless, Matthew 18 shows very clearly that it is a matter of the power to impose or to lift a ban with regard to a brother who, by his behaviour, radically and obstinately opposes the nature of Jesus' community or who, conversely, wishes to be reconciled with it again. It is the authority to impose an exclusion which has real meaning before God and which places the guilty person outside the community of salvation that is the Church. Conversely, it is the authority to allow readmission into the Church which has meaning before God and which delivers man from the damning power of the devil. Thus the saving power of loosing has in fact the effect of forgiving the sins on account of which the ban was imposed. From the very nature of the case, this authority in the community can belong only to the authorized leaders of the Church, although their exercise of it is the act of the Church.[19] Provided that the notion of an effective, revelatory, that is, sacramental word, according to which what is said to a person happens to him, is not totally eliminated from the theology of the New Testament, the effect of this authority for man's salvation presents no more difficulties than the word of baptism or that of the eucharistic celebration.

[8] What is said in Matthew in more archaic expressions recurs in John 20:19-23 in a more familiar formulation. This latter coincides perfectly with Jesus' manner of speaking and is not at all specifically 'Johannine'. In order to continue Jesus' mission the apostles, and they alone, are endowed with the authority either to forgive[20] or to retain the sins of individuals (τιμων τα_φ α(μαρτι/αφ). Both of these actions do not merely express an already presupposed fact but have as a consequence that it really is before God as the apostles say. This authority to decide between two possible courses of action, each having its own effect,

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[15] Cf. 1 QS VI 24-VII 25 in: J. Maier, *Die Texte vom Toten Meer*, 2 vols. (Munich/Basel 1960), vol. i, pp. 34-6.

[16] Naturally a thorough justification of the Church's power to forgive sins should not lose sight of the notion which the early Church had of Jesus' own power to forgive sins, as well as of the way in which he applied it. This notion of the early Church is particularly evident in Matt. 9:8, especially by comparison with Mark 2:12. In the present context, however, we must content ourselves with the simple reference to this vital connection.

[17] Cf. Strack-Billerbeck I 741-4.

[18] Jesus understands his power as a superior 'binding' force (Mark 3:27) which overcomes Satan by 'loosening' his bonds (1 John 3:8); cf. Luke 11:20 etc. He communicates a similar ε0χουσι/α to the disciples (Matt. 10:1). Paul also understands the ban in this way (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Tim. 1:20).

[19] Cf. Matt. 18:17 and 1 Cor. 5:3 f.

[20] Similarly only the Son of Man has the power on earth really to forgive sins, even though only God is able to do this in fact; Mark 2:11-12 etc.

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cannot be identified either with the commission to preach the gospel of reconciliation to all men or the authority to baptize.[21] It must, therefore, here be a matter of what the text says: the authority exercised in a judicial decision either to forgive a member of the Church his sins so effectively that they are thereby also forgiven in God's eyes or to allow them to become effective as the cause of the ban. If the Church is not merely an external religious organization but the body of Christ[22] alive with the Spirit, then the loss of grace through sin entails necessarily also a change in the (continuing) relationship of the sinner to the Church. This change is 'confirmed' by the ban in the form of an exclusion from the Eucharist in every case of mortal sin.

2. The Teaching of the Fathers of the Church

The second century marks the end of the apostolic age.[23] It is in Hermas that we have the first theological reflection on this practice, although couched in obscure imagery. As long as the Church of this time is still developing, the person who, as a sinner, has alienated himself from it is able to be reincorporated into it and so find salvation.[24] In view of the imminent end of the world Hermas proclaims just one further possible penance, but he is by no means the first to open up this possibility, as if it did not exist previously. Hermas' once and for all penance[25] was subsequently detached from its original basis and became a principle of penitential practice, in the West for the whole of the patristic age,[26] although in the East only in Alexandria.[27] It did not, however, become a dogmatic principle. This tenet was later justified as a rule against a certain laxity within the Church, but without thereby depriving the sinner who falls again [9] of the possibility of salvation. Neither in Hermas[28] nor elsewhere[29] are schismatics, heretics or fornicators who are truly contrite excluded from reconciliation with the Church. There is no indication of capital sins which are fundamentally unforgivable. If one wished to introduce into the practice and theory of Christian penance in the second century the distinction between a forgiveness which is granted by God and one which is refused by the Church for its own legal reasons this would be purely arbitrary. Where the Church recognizes that God forgives, there it also recognizes its own right to grant full church forgiveness. And the view that God always forgives the person who is repentant is in evidence everywhere. This does not exclude the fact that, in the question of reconciliation or its refusal, individual Churches proceeded exceptionally according their own norm whereby they maintained that the proof of subjective repentance is seldom reached very quickly and

[21] The person who is outside, that is, is not yet baptized, is not judged, that is, he does not have the ban imposed upon him; cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-13.
[22] Cf. DS 3807-8.
[23] The letter of Clement of Rome to the Church in Corinth, however, represents an important hinge-document (cf. 51.3 and 52.1). In the edn of the letter in the collection *Sources Chrétiennes*, p. 50, A. Jaubert says: 'Il semble que Clément n'ait eu qu'à puiser dans une mine toute préparée', by which she means the Jewish background, which she considers under the heading 'Courants pénitentiels'. On p. 51 she says: 'On pourrait a l'aide de ces passages reconstituer les textes et les exhortations qui servaient à une cérémonie pénitentielle dans la communauté chrétienne et l'on pourrait y joindre les passages qui ont pour thème la remonstrance au pécher.' These observations are important for an understanding of Hermas, since he too, according to the generally accepted view, is writing in Rome. This means that even if he were not already acquainted with the text of the letter of Clement, he must certainly have known the tradition which gave rise to this letter.
[24] Cf. Hermas, Sim. VIII 11.3; IX 21.3 f.; Mand. IV 1; Vis. III 7.6; Sim. IX 14,2 etc.
[25] Mand. IV 1.8; 3.6.
[26] From Tertullian, De paen. 7.11 up to can. 11 of the third synod of Toledo, AD. 589.
[27] Clement of Alex., Strom. II 13,57,1; Origen, Lev. 15,2.
[28] Sim. VIII 11; Mand. IV 1.8; 3.1-7 etc.
[29] Ignatius of Antioch; Dionysius of Corinth; Polycarp; Justin; Irenaeus; Clement of Alex.; etc.

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brought to bear aspects of church discipline which, according to the contemporary view, made readmission into the Church appear to be impossible, even given previous repentance. This explains why individual Churches[30] well into the fourth century refuse reconciliation to certain sinners in particular instances, even when this is not clearly demanded by the subjective unrepentance of the sinner. Nevertheless, the dogmatic question appeared only when the Church's *right* to reconcile those guilty of capital sins was contested as a matter of *principle*. In general, the refusal of one (first and final) reconciliation even on the death-bed[31] was tantamount to the cruelty associated with the Novatianists. Nevertheless, even the case of Cerdon[32] does not prove that the West recognized the possibility of several reconciliations.

The third century is marked by the two Western heresies on the subject of penance: Tertullian's Montanism and Novatianism. Neither of these is to be seen as the defence of an old radical rigorism against a gradual erosion of the unforgivable nature of capital sins (impurity, murder, apostasy). Rather, Tertullian invents the theory which elevates the old possibility of a practical-disciplinary rigorism to the absolute dogmatic obligation to exclude permanently those guilty of capital sins. In reaction to this, the Catholics appeal to the parallel with baptism,[33] to ancient practice and to the authorization by Christ according to Matthew l8.[34] They define their ancient practice in dogmatic-deliberated declarations as in a decree of the [10] metropolitan of Carthage and in the conclusions of the synods of Carthage[35] and Rome about the middle of the third century.[36] Apart from being a defence against Novatian, the lengthy and detailed synodal legislation in Cyprian's Africa is concerned not with the question of a fundamental possibility of reconciliation for apostates but with the practical administration of penance in different cases, as with the length of the period of penance, speedy reconciliation in danger of death, before martyrdom, etc. In the controversy between Hippolytus and Pope Callistus there seems only to have been a question of Callistus readmitting schismatic Christians to the Church without further performance of penance, while not enquiring whether they had committed other sins when they were in schism.[37] Moreover, the liturgy of Hippolytus recognizes that the bishop, in virtue of Christ's authorization of his apostles, can loosen *every* bond of evil.[38]

At this time also the *form of penance* is the penance of excommunication. The Church establishes that a person is a sinner and that he has, therefore, placed himself in opposition to the Church. Thus he is at least excluded from the Eucharist. If he confesses his sins privately before a bishop – which may be simply a way of inquiring whether his sins are really mortal sins and, therefore, have to be submitted to the penance of the Church[39] – and if he is truly sorry, then he is admitted to church penance proper. This access is already a sign of the Church's favour, but it is not yet reconciliation with the Church. The penitent is singled out by his dress, by his particular place in the celebration of the liturgy and by penitential obligations, such as fasting, etc. After some time he is reconciled with the Church by an imposition of hands on the part of the bishop (and of the clergy), accompanied by prayer and

[30] For Africa cf. Cyprian, Ep. 55,21; for Spain: the synod of Elvira and still in A.D. 380 the synod of Saragossa; see DS 212.
[31] The council of Nicaea; DS 129. See also DS 212 and 236.
[32] Irenaeus, Adv.haer. III 4.3.
[33] Tertullian, De paen. 12.9.
[34] Not yet John 20; see Tertullian, De pud. 21.9.
[35] Cf. D 43.
[36] Cf. the texts in Mansi I, 921-34, as well as the results of more recent textual-critical investigations of these questions.
[37] Hippol., Phil. IX 12.
[38] Cf. G. Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome* (London 1937), p. 5 (new edn 1972).
[39] Cf. Origen, In Ps. 37 hom. 2,6.

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in the East sometimes even by an anointing which later evokes the idea of a repetition of confirmation. The performance of penance lasts different lengths of time: sometimes it comes to an end only on the death-bed,[40] but it could last only two weeks. In the latter case it would probably be preceded by a period of personal reform.[41] The necessity of a long-lasting personal penance was based on the not very clear idea that only baptism which is received once and for all is pure remission by grace (α)/φεσιφ) and that, therefore, later sins 'cannot be *forgiven* in the Church'[42] in this sense. Rather, such sins are to be expiated by the performance of personal penance (μετα&νοια) before God.[43]

[11] There is a clear awareness of the *sacramental nature* of church penance, in so far as the necessity of public church penance is stressed,[44] reconciliation with the official Church is considered necessary for salvation,[45] even for martyrs, and the renewed bestowal of the Holy Spirit is ascribed to the rite of reconciliation and not to subjective penance.[46] The access to the reconciliation with the Church, which itself reconciles men with God, is brought about by the bishop.[47] The intercession of confessors supports the sinners' personal penance and may, therefore, help to expedite reconciliation, but – given the definite episcopal structure of the Church at this time – it could not deprive the bishop of the last word. There is no trace of a 'private' sacramental penance. But the degree to which the official penance is made public may vary according to the circumstances. The effectiveness of reconciliation before God is explained with reference either to the infallibly efficacious prayer of the Church[48] or to the Church's authorization by Christ,[49] without a precise definition as to whether it is a matter either of the forgiveness of sins or of the communication of the Spirit. Sinners who are clerics are treated at this time still as other sinners. In theory it is recognized that all sins which destroy the grace of baptism should be submitted to church penance.[50] In practice, however, because of the difficulty of church penance and the view that it cannot be repeated, it is especially capital sins that require penance in this sense, although these sins are taken very broadly. Thus it is not only a question of apostasy, murder and adultery.[51]

In the following high patristic age it is above all the great legislative activity of synods, bishops (especially in the East) and popes in questions of penitential discipline that should be underlined. In the East are elaborated stages of penance, that is, a gradual exclusion or, conversely, readmission with regard to the liturgy and the Eucharist.[52] In the West there are also elaborated lasting consequences for the period after reconciliation, for example, the prohibition of marital intercourse, the interdiction of occupations which present a danger to morals, the impossibility of becoming a cleric.[53] Thus the duration of the actual period of penance becomes irrelevant and in the West it seems to be blended with Lent when, perhaps after a successful conversion, the actual church, liturgical celebration of penance was

[40] Cf. the synod of Ancyra (A.D. 314), of Elvira and Toledo (A.D. 400), Siricius, Ep. 1, 3.6.
[41] Cf. Didascalia Apost. II 16,2.
[42] Herm. Mand. IV 3.3 f.; Tertullian, De paen. 7.10; Origen, Ex. 6.9.
[43] This is the meaning of Origen, De or. 28.
[44] Tertullian, De paen. 10-12.
[45] Cyprian, Ep. 66.5; 55.17; 72.2; Origen, Ios. 3.5; In Ps. 36,2.4.
[46] Cyprian, Ep. 57.4; cf. Ep. 15.1; 16.2; 17.2; Origen, Lev. 8.11; Didasc. Apost. II 41.2.
[47] Cyprian, Ep. 17.2; 43.3.
[48] Tertullian, De paen. 10.6.
[49] Tertullian, De pud. 21.
[50] Tertullian, De paen. 8; De pud. 9.
[51] Cyprian, Ep. 16.2; 17.2; 4.4; Origen, Lev. 14.2.
[52] It is only in this way that a full readmission to the Church can be realized, so that all the stages of penance are variations of the penance of excommunication.
[53] B. Poschmann, *Busse und Letzte Ölung* (HDG IV/3), p. 55.

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incorporated into the beginning of Lent.[54]

Nevertheless, the external form of the penitential discipline is, as [12] previously, the penance of excommunication. There is no form of a truly private sacramental kind either in the *correptio secreta* (= the dispensing with public liturgical reprimand, while it remains unclear whether church penance itself is abandoned because it is not practicable or whether the usual *paenitentia publica* is carried out without this reprimand)[55] or in other practices which are only adaptations of the one *paenitentia publica* to particular circumstances.[56] In any case, these practices do not appear to be sacramental. The sins which are subject to this penance are the same as before. In particular, the penitential legislation of the East makes it clear that the notion of capital sins should not be taken too narrowly but means everything that even today would normally be considered subjectively serious sin.

The West maintains even more radically that there is only a single possibility of church penance.[57] Here and there this principle is toned down by the clever use of casuistry in borderline cases.[58] In practice penance is more and more postponed to the death-bed and this practice is even approved;[59] synods[60] warn against undertaking church penance before a mature age, since this – because of the once and for all nature and the lasting consequences of church penance – would be bound to lead to insoluble conflicts.

Gradually special forms of penance are elaborated, such as penance for clerics, which consists of deposition from office (without a further performance of penance) and admission to the community of the laity,[61] or particular ways of reconciling heretics who, having been such from their birth, are reconciled by an imposition of hands without a further performance of penance.[62] Although here generally there is no explicit mention that a sacrament is involved, this is clearly attested with regard to penance. The Church is able to reconcile *all* contrite sinners; since Nicea[63] Novatianism is clearly tantamount to heresy and is explicitly attacked by the Fathers. In this controversy Christ's authorization of the Church to forgive is underlined and confirmed by the parallel with baptism.[64] Penance and reconciliation remit sins.[65] There is an awareness that both the public and the secret destroying of the relationship to the Church by sin is a forfeiting of salvation. Thus there is often an anxious effort to achieve reconciliation with the Church just before death.[66] In so far as the Church's activity is explained not only with reference to Christ's commission, the *pax cum ecclesia* is considered the means of [13] reconciliation with God. Reconciliation always means reconciliation with the Church and, therefore, the 'deprecatory formula of absolution' is to be regarded rather as the Church's support of subjective penance by its prayer.[67] The act of the bishop, in his official capacity, reincorporates the penitent fully into the Church, where he receives the

[54] Innocent I, Ep. 1.7; Leo I, Sermo 45; 49.3.
[55] Cf. Augustine, Ep. 82.8,11.
[56] Thus, for example, heretics who were not actually guilty of heresy were reconciled immediately; the same applied to those who were seriously ill.
[57] Cf., Jerome, Ep. 80.9; Ambrose, De paen. 2; Augustine, Ep. 153,3,7; Siricius, Ep. 1.5.
[58] It is possible that at the point of death even the *viatecum* was administered, although without *reconciliatio absolutissima;* cf. for example Siricius, Ep. 1,5,6; Innocent I, Ep. 6.2; Leo I, Ep. 108.4; 167.13.
[59] Cf. Caesarius of Aries, Sermo 258.2; Avitus, Ep. 18; and others.
[60] For example, the council of Agde (A.D. 506) can. 15; the third council of Orleans (A.D. 538) can. 24.
[61] Cf. Siricius, Ep. 1,14.18; Basilius, Ep. 188 can. 3; Leo I, Ep. 167 inquis. 2.
[62] Cf. the council of Aries (A.D. 314) can. 8 (=DS 127); Siricius, Ep. 5.8; Augustine, Ep. 185.10; Leo I, Ep. 167 inquis. 19.
[63] Cf. DS 127, together with DS 183 and 216.
[64] For example Ambrose, De paen. I 8.36; Pacian, Ep. 3.7; Jerome, In or. III 12.
[65] Even in Augustine the remission of guilt is attributed explicitly to the action of the Church; cf. Sermo 96,6; In Io. tract. 49.24.
[66] Coelestin I, Ep. 4.2; Innocent I, Ep. 3.2; Augustine, Ep. 228.2; and others.
[67] Cf. below where it will be a question of the 'absolutions'; see DS 308-9; it is very clear in Augustine.

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Holy Spirit, in so far as it is the Church of the *sancti spirituales*.[68] This applies even when the official is without the Spirit and, therefore, cannot himself give the Spirit. Occasionally[69] there may appear a purely declaratory view of the Church's activity, although in such texts it is not simply the subjective penance that is stressed as the necessary precondition of effective reconciliation.

With the end of the patristic age the transition to the new system of repeated 'auricular confession' becomes increasingly evident. In theory even now the ancient 'public' penance of excommunication remains in force. It is upheld, for instance, by the synod of Toledo in A.D. 589. But it is imposed by the Church, so long as the sinner is healthy, only in cases of public scandal. Generally it is received on the death-bed as penance of the sick. From the sixth century this then becomes the custom, indeed the legal obligation,[70] for all Christians, including the saints.[71] This death-bed penance loses its defamatory character, even though it is really only a secondary form of public penance. Where this public penance still takes place, the form, duration and obligations are the same as previously. Nevertheless, from the middle of the fifth century exceptional cases are made to perform penance in special groups after the fashion of the Eastern penitential stages.[72] At this time excommunication appears in some cases as a mere ecclesiastical penalty, separate from the whole of church penance, to be imposed and lifted independently without the involvement of actual church penance. This church penance remains to be performed on the death-bed after the excommunication has been lifted.[73] In the seventh century Spanish councils still refer to lasting consequences to which those who have undertaken penance are committed. Only when penance has been undertaken without necessity (that is, not in danger of death) can such a 'penitent' still become a cleric.[74]

From the sixth century in the islands of the Irish-Anglo-Saxon region, and from the beginning with the knowledge that this was different from the continental practice, church penance is not practised once and for all.[75] This fact has not yet been fully explained [14] with regard to its causes (the impracticability of the lasting consequences, the influence of monastic confession, etc.), but as a datum it is indisputable. Once given this practice, it was, on the one hand, impossible to impose a penance which had life-long consequences while, on the other hand, it was possible to subject less serious sins to church penance. It may very well be that these considerations actually gave rise to the practice.

In any case it was in this way that the performance of penance was able to be effective in life itself and not only on the death-bed. The sacrament could, therefore, again be productive in life itself without the necessity to change much of the ancient practice or theory. There was an awareness of the connection with the old form of church penance, all the more so as the early Church's legislation on the times for doing penance, on the duties, etc., were applied to the new form. The only innovation was that the repeated absolution was granted in a simple form by the priest and not in the solemn form by the bishop. Moreover, it was possible on any day and no longer only on Shrove Tuesday. In this sense also it was no longer 'public'. The frequency of confession and the variety of sins which were mentioned in confession necessitated a modification of the obligations which were imposed in penance. The old times for doing penance and the demands made upon the penitents had to be commuted and given

[68] Augustine, Sermo 99.9; In Io. tract. 124.7; De civ. Dei XX 9.2; Sermo 71,23.37.
[69] Jerome, In Mt. III 16.19; Consultationes Zachaei et Apollonii n. 18; Gregory the Great, In ev.hom. II 26.6.
[70] Synod of Barcelona (A.D. 541) can. 9; Isidore of Seville, De eccl. off. II 17.6.
[71] Cf. Isidore of Seville in: PL 81.30-3.
[72] Felix III, Ep. 13; cf. J. Grotz, pp. 1-10.
[73] Cf. for example, Avitus of Vienne, Ep. 15 and 16.
[74] Thus the synod of Gerunda (A.D. 517) can. 9; the fourth synod of Toledo (A.D. 633) can. 54.
[75] Cf. the Paenitentiale Theodori I 13.

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substitutes, and thus originated the new kind of book used in the celebration of penance. In the seventh century, with the Irish-Scottish mission, the new system of penance came to the Continent.[76] In any event, the penitential of Columban[77] shows that it was there. Since the old form was practised almost only as penance of the dying, the new form had hardly any opposition. The penance books show that in the eighth century the new practice had spread all over the Continent.

3. The Theology of the Sacrament of Penance in Theologians Since the Twelfth Century

For the further development it is obvious that only a few basic trends and themes can be suggested.

Since the time when the currently accepted notion of the sacrament gave rise to the teaching that there were only seven sacraments, that is, about the middle of the twelfth century, penance also [15] belongs to their number. Alger of Lüttich[78] already cites penance under *his* notion of sacrament; Robert Pullus[79] attempts an explicit proof of its sacramental nature. Where the contemporary notion of sacrament is present – in the *Sententiae divinitatis*, in Simon Magister and the glossators of Gratian's Decree – penance is expressly taught as a sacrament. In local synods of the first decades of the thirteenth century the teaching is already presupposed as self-evident.[80] Never a doubt, capable of disturbing the practice, arose over the teaching received from the ancient tradition that this sacrament was absolutely *necessary* for those guilty of mortal sins, although this necessity was understood in different ways.[81] This remains true even in spite of certain expressions of the synod of Chalon-sur-Saône[82] which will later be quoted by canonists like Burchard of Worms and Gratian.[83] These expressions refer either to the questionable necessity of private confession, so long as the older form of penance still existed, or to the view that forgiveness was already obtained by sorrow before the still necessary sacrament was received. Nevertheless, individual canonists of the twelfth century questioned whether the *paenitentia solemnis* alone was an actual sacrament. The undisputed acceptance of the sacramental nature of penance did not, however, prevent scholastic theology up to the middle of the thirteenth century (up to Thomas Aquinas) from contesting that the priestly absolution effectively influenced the forgiveness of guilt as such (the *reatus culpae*). All the theologians of the twelfth century are above all convinced that true sorrow obtains the forgiveness of sins before confession.[84] In the period of High Scholasticism, until Thomas Aquinas inclusive, it was, therefore, considered normal, indeed obligatory, that a person should be justified already before the actual reception of the sacrament. This view gave rise to various insufficient theories on the effect of priestly

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[76] This is first attested by the synod of Châlons (between A.D. 639 and 654) can. 8; this point is, however, contested by C. Vogel (Cf. 'Bussbücher' in: LThK 2, 802-5).

[77] *Liber de poenitentiarum mensura taxanda* (end of 6th cent.) in: *S. Columbani opera,* ed. G. S. M. Walker (Dublin 1957); cf. J. Hennig, 'Kolumban' in: LThK 6,403 f.

[78] PL 180,886; cf. B. Geyer, 'Die Siebzahl der Sakramente in ihrer historischen Entwicklung' in: ThGl 10 (1918), pp. 325-48; sec especially p. 329.

[79] *Sententiae* PL 186,910.

[80] Mansi XXII 1110, 1173 ff., XXIII 396 f., 448.

[81] P. Anciaux, *La théologie du sacrament de pénitence au XII*e *siècle* (Louvain 1949), pp. 31-6, 164-274, 392-490.

[82] Can. 88; Mansi XIV 99.

[83] Cf. PL 140, 1011 and Gratian, De paen. I c. 90.

[84] Provided, however, that there is present the *votum sacramenti*; cf. Anselm, PL 158, 662; Bruno of Segni, PL 165,137; Abelard, PL 178,664 f.; Roland Bandinelli, according to: A. Gietl, *Die Sentezen Rolands* (Freiburg/Br. 1891), p. 248; the circle of the Victorines, PL 176, 565.

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absolution. The declaratory theory[85] teaches: the priestly absolution is the authoritative expression of the forgiveness which has already been given by God alone. Another theory[86] tries to find an effect of absolution in the other world: the Church does not indeed forgive guilt, but remits the eternal punishment[87] or changes God's conditional forgiveness of guilt into an absolute forgiveness.[88] It is first William of Auvergne, Hugo of St-Cher, William of Melitona, Bonaventure, Thomas[89] and subsequently theology in general who allow the forgiveness of sins to be an effect of the sacrament as such. At first they argued from the [16] long-recognized influence which absolution had on sorrow. Now, however, they no longer considered it from this psychological angle. Rather, they saw it as a sacramental cause of grace and thus having an effect on forgiveness, without, however, excluding or neglecting sorrow itself as a cause. The question was further complicated by the different theories (physical-dispositive, intentional-dispositive, effective) of sacramental teaching in general on the effect of the sacraments on grace. Thus until Thomas inclusive the personal and the sacramental events still remain interrelated (grace *for* sorrow). It is only in J. Duns Scotus that absolution effects the 'infusion' of justifying grace when there is present a sufficient sorrow (*attritio*), this being considered a mere moral *pre*condition. In this case the justifying grace is no longer communicated and received by an act which corresponds to its nature (genuine contrition). The theological progress attained in the thirteenth century is, therefore, quite clear and established for the future, although this was at the cost of a proper appreciation of the role of the person in the theology of grace and the sacraments. Following in the footsteps of Thomas Aquinas, theology today ought to rediscover this appreciation.

For Thomas from the beginning, as for an even earlier tradition, the sacramental sign consists of the acts of the penitent, considered as the matter, and the absolution, considered as the form of penance. It is only in the Summa theologica III q. 84 a. 1-3; q. 86 a. 6 that he ascribes within this whole an effect of the matter upon grace. *Res et sacramentum* is the *paenitentia interior*.[90] The penitent has to produce such a sorrow[91] that he approaches the reception of the sacrament already justified. If he is lacking this sorrow *bona fide*, although he seriously turns away from sin, then – provided that sin poses no obstacle – his attitude is perfected by the justifying grace given by the sacrament and changed to *contritio*: *ex attritio fit contritus*.[92] The justifying sorrow must, however, be sustained by the corresponding grace and even consists of the existential acceptance of the infused grace. This grace is communicated by the act of acceptance, and therefore the instrumental causality of the sacramental sign – if it is correctly understood – refers not to an *ornatus animae*[93] but only to the justifying grace itself. Thus the place remains open for *res et sacramentum* in Thomas' terms: either it does not exist as a distinct entity or it must be something other than the *paenitentia interior*. This also fits in well with the fact that in the Summa Thomas seems to

[85] Anselm, PL 158, 662; Abelard, PL 178, 664 f.; Peter Lombard, IV Sent. d. 17 c.1; William of Auxerre, cf. V. Heynck, in: FStud 36 (1954), pp. 47-57 f.; Alexander of Hales, cf. P. Schmoll, *Die Busslehre der Frühscholastik* (Munich 1909), pp. 146-50; Albert the Great, cf. ibid., pp. 133 f.
[86] This was the view held by the Victorines.
[87] Cf. Hugh of St Victor, PL 176,564.
[88] Cf. Richard of St Victor, PL 196,1165; Praepositinus, cf. Schmoll (Anm.85), pp. 83-8.
[89] The precise evidence for this is provided by V. Heynck, 'Zur Busslehre des hl. Bonaventura' in: FStud 36 (1954), pp. 1-81.
[90] Thus already Guido of Orchelles, William of Auxerre, Alexander of Hales, William of Meitona, Bonaventure and Albert the Great.
[91] This is already the effect of the power of the keys, working in advance; thus Albert the Great, as opposed to Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure.
[92] At the time in question, this teaching was practically universally accepted; cf. Peter Lombard, IV Sent.d. 22 q. 2a. I sol. 3.
[93] This is what Thomas Aquinas, in his youth and with regard to his general sacramental teaching, saw and taught as the immediate, dispositive effect, that is, the *res et sacramentum*.

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[17] have abandoned the dispositive view of the effect of the sacraments on grace in favor of an instrumental-effective view.[94]

In the Patristic period since Tertullian ceremonial confession was already increasingly stressed as a necessary presupposition of the celebration of church penance. Even here, however, there is a development both in theory and in practice. Since the Fathers of the Church considered confession to be rather the natural presupposition for the undertaking of church penance – being the expression of attentiveness and the occasion of exhortation[95] – with the introduction of more frequent penance it becomes noticeable for light and secret sins as well as for the more serious and public ones. Thus confession itself becomes, as it were, an actual penitential work with expiatory value, to such an extent that a further confession is considered to be a penitential obligation. The shame involved in making the confession effects reconciliation for the penitent. Whereas in the early period satisfaction was the basic theme of penance, from the eighth century this becomes the confession; this remains the case, but at the time of the Reformation it received particular emphasis. Penance becomes 'confession'.[96] For a long time the obligation to confess lacked a solid basis and was by no means always justified by the *ex institutione sacramenti* of the Council of Trent.[97] From the twelfth century onwards it is sorrow and its relationship with absolution that becomes the main theme of the scientific-theological study of penance.

It remains to be noted that the whole of early and high scholasticism handed on the teaching of the patristic period, according to which one effect of the sacrament is reconciliation with the Church. This is universally verifiable for the eleventh and the twelfth centuries.[98] This idea is still found in Bonaventure,[99] in Hugo Ripelius' *Compendium theologicae veritatis* and in Thomas,[100] although it later disappears. The doctrine, levelled at Wycliffe and Hus, that the sinner still belongs to the Church, because it was an unqualified generalization, must have obscured this insight. But even Luther was still aware both of the ecclesial aspect of sin and its forgiveness[101] and of its connection with the strictly theological aspect of these realities. Today this idea is clearly becoming increasingly accepted (B. Xiberta, B. Poschmann, M. de la Taille, H. de Lubac, M. Schmaus, et al.) and has been endorsed by Vatican II.[102]

This survey explains the meaning and the significance of the studies [18] contained in this volume. They present, as it were, cross-sections of the institution of penance and of its

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[94] On the special question of Thomas Aquinas' teaching on penance, cf.: R. M. Schultes, *Reue und Busse* (Paderborn 1906); P. de Vooght, 'La justification dans le sacrement de pénitence d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin' in: EThL 5 (1918), pp. 225-56; id., 'À propos de la causalité du sacrement de pénitence. Théologie thomiste et théologie tout court' in: EThL 7 (1930), pp. 663-75; R.Marine, 'La reviviscenza dei meriti secondo la dottrina del dottore Angelico' in: Gr 13 (1932), pp. 75-108; H. Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris 1944); G. N. Rus, *De munere sacramenti paenitentiae in aedificando corpore Christi ad mentem S.Thomae* (Rome 1944); M. Flick, *L'attimo della giustificazione secondo S.Tomaso* (Rome 1947); Ch.R. Meyer, *The Thomistic Concept of Justifying Contrition* (Mundelein 1949); P. de Letter, 'Thomistic Theology of Sacramental Forgiveness' in: Bijdragen 13 (1952), pp. 401-9.

[95] It occurred first as 'exhomologesis'.

[96] It appears as the title of a specific writing: *confessio sacramentalis* in Peter of Blois; cf. PL 207,1077-92.

[97] It was justified, for example, with reference to the OT or by appeal to Jas. 5. In some canonists, however, as the *Glossa ordinaria* on Gratian and Nicholas de Tudeschis, the obligation to confess is derived only from the law of the Church; cf. on this point P. Anciaux, *La théologie da sacrement de pénitence au XII*e *siècle* (Louvain 1949).

[98] Cf. P. Anciaux (n.97); A. Landgraf, 'Sünde und Trennung von der Kirche in der Frühscholastik' in: Scholastik 5 (1930), pp. 210-47.

[99] According to him the indicative part of the formula of absolution has precisely *this* effect.

[100] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, IV Sent. d. 16 p. 1 a. 2; q. 5 dubium.

[101] Cf. WA I 539.

[102] Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) II; cf. A. Grillmeier's commentary on the passage in: 'Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil I' (LThK) (Freiburg/Br. 1966), pp. 187-8.

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theology which, at the same time, show in the sources discussed a certain corresponding theoretical and practical position on the attitude towards sin. This result is no substitute for either the systematic or the pastoral-theological and pastoral consideration of penance; for this consideration the reader is here referred to the relevant text-books and manuals. Nevertheless, we consider that research into the history of dogma is not irrelevant to contemporary objective and practical questions in connection with penance. Although this point cannot be developed properly here, it should not be overlooked.

III. RESEARCH INTO THE HISTORY OF PENANCE

Finally, something must be said about a part of the research into the history of dogma; this is because our studies belong to a context which perhaps today is no longer very well known. Moreover, the individual studies originated, more or less, in the discussion with other views,[103] to which we ourselves owe a great deal, both where we have agreed and where we have differed. Every scholar knows that, roughly speaking, about the turn of the century the question of penance belonged to those themes which were most contested in apologetics and theological controversy. Indeed, the institution of penance was taken, not entirety without justification – although this view would need to be modified today – as the key to understanding the Catholic view of the Church, as the basis for the differences in the consideration and the understanding of God's saving work, of man's vocation and freedom, etc., in the not infrequently passionate discussions between Catholic and Protestant theologians. Whereas other questions remained in the background and, in any case, received only occasionally a detailed treatment with the new means of historical research, from the beginning the theme of penance was the centre of attraction. One has to see clearly the role which A. von Harnack, for instance, ascribes to penance, penitential discipline and the sacrament of penance for the development of the Catholic view of the Church and of dogma in *History of Dogma*. Thus it is not surprising if this question held a dominant position in theology up to the end of the First World War. Our bibliography alone should be a sufficient proof of this fact.

[19] It was only in the years between the two World Wars, however, that Catholic theology found, in a certain detachment from immediate controversy, the opportunity for those fundamental studies[104] with which our essays are immediately connected. First of all, B. Poschmann's *Paenitentia secunda*[105] must be mentioned here. This is a huge study in the history of dogma, objective, precise, with a scientific analysis of the individual texts and a creative dependence on previous literature. The preparations began before the First World War. Thus it is a question of a slowly maturing work. Because of this growth, the eventual result was, already in 1940 – the year of its publication – not surprisingly new. In the main lines of his development Poschmann adheres to the notion already expounded by Esser, Stufler, d'Alès and Galtier. This involves the clear rejection of the theory that there was ever a time in the Church as a whole when certain sins were totally excluded from the celebration

[103] For the details, see the following essays themselves. For the moment, we shall content ourselves with the observations which we consider essential for an appreciation of the orientation of our own work.
[104] Of special importance in this regard are G. Bardy, H. von Campenhausen, P. Galtier, to mention but a few alongside B. Poschmann and the important work of J. Grotz. For the details of the relevant literature, see the bibliography.
[105] Even today this book, which appeared in 1940 in Bonn, is still considered a standard work, offering a most useful introduction to our subject.

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of church penance. Neither Hermas' penitential teaching[106] nor the bishop's decree in Tertullian or the moderation in Cyprian should, therefore, be construed as fundamental alterations with regard to the earlier penitential teaching. The same applies even with regard to the earlier penitential practice. Poschmann, however, examines this view again with reference to the texts and defends it convincingly against recent divergent interpretations of the history of penance (especially by H. Koch). In several secondary questions of the history of dogma Poschmann has been widely accepted by Catholic scholars. Thus today the *episcopus episcoporum* of Tertullian is no longer simply identified with the bishop of Rome, nor is the effort made to discover at this time a sacramental penance which was not *paenitentia publica*. Poschmann also took up Xiberta's insight that the *pax cum ecclesia* is the *res et sacramentum* of divine forgiveness and the means of grace. He has developed this idea with greater historical precision and has shown that, on this assumption, many historical difficulties can be resolved easily and in a way that is dogmatically unobjectionable. Nevertheless, we believe that, by having recourse to Matthew 16 and 18, we have reached a better basis than Poschmann and Xiberta, by which, it is also possible to eliminate a certain vague terminology[107] which is found in Poschmann. For the sake of this clarity, one ought not, even in a historical work, simply to refrain from detailed dogmatic references,[108] such as we have made here repeatedly in this survey, without, however, wishing to enter into an actual systematic exposition of penance. [20] In our opinion there is also lacking in Poschmann the clear emphasis on the fact that Christian penance developed primarily and exclusively as *paenitentia publica* with all its external and juridical character. He does not explain either why it took so long to realize which sins cause a loss of the Spirit (of grace) in the individual.[109] It is by reflecting on this question that it becomes understandable how, when the number of such sins was originally so small, the institution of penance assumed a form which, when the number of those sins which were subject to penance increased, could no longer be maintained and therefore had to be changed.

Because of the unfavourable time at which it appeared, Poschmann's work was unable to produce an immediate effect. The shift in emphasis in theological work in general after the war from the historical approach to the more speculative approach prevented two further studies by Poschmann from entering the limelight. Nevertheless, they complete the work of this exponent of the history of penance in the early Church and in the early Middle Ages, and they mark a stage in the research for Catholic theology which even today must still be considered fundamental. In 1948 appeared *Der Ablass im Licht der Bussgeschichte*[110] and three years later *Busse und Letzte Ölung* in the *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*.[111] A few appropriate remarks are made here on both of these publications. In the first-mentioned study it is obvious that only the ideas on the history of penance are of interest here, while the

[106] With regard to Hermas, R. Joly has recently propounded yet another view which does not involve the complete rejection of the 'penance jubilee' theory. If we understand his justification of his position aright, then it is really the mere number of proponents of this view, considered quantitatively, that has forced him to his own compromise. It is our contention that an examination of the context in which Hermas wrote, together with the traditions with which he could have been connected in his Roman milieu, ought to decide the question clearly today. In any event, the proposed compromise is hardly convincing.

[107] Cf. on this point Poschmann, p. 12, where the peace with the Church 'effects' peace with God and coincides with it 'in fact', if not also 'formally'; or p. 485, where the *pax cum ecclesia* is rejected as 'efficient cause' and accepted only as the 'presupposition or condition' of divine forgiveness. This dogmatic formulation is not very felicitous.

[108] We have in mind here such questions as: in what sense is the person guilty of mortal sin outside the Church; what part does (the ancient penance of) excommunication play in this regard; how is the ordering of the different effects of church reconciliation to be construed logically?

[109] Cf. on this point chap. 2 in this volume, 'Sin as Loss of Grace in Early Church Literature'.

[110] B. Poschmann, *Der Ablass im Licht den Bussgeschichte* (Theophaneia 4) (Bonn 1948).

[111] B. Poschmann, 'Busse and Letzte Ölung' (HDG IV,3) (Freiburg/Br. 1951).

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application to the history of indulgences lies outside the scope of our present discussions.[112]

In this work Poschmann presents first of all the elements of the early Church's teaching on penance: the necessity of subjective repentance for sins committed after baptism as a factor in the remission of sins, with no distinction made between guilt and punishment; the support of this subjective repentance by the cooperation of the Church (community, martyrs, charismatics, etc.) and, especially, by the intercessory prayer of the priests which must be distinguished from the proper act of reconciliation with the Church and thereby with God, and which should not be construed as absolution with the deprecative formula in the modern sense. Next are considered in detail the nature, the forms and the effects of 'absolutions' in the early Middle Ages, both outside and inside the sacrament of penance. These 'absolutions' are the authentic continuation of the priestly intercession for the sinner and, despite the repeated appeal [21] to apostolic authority and the power of the keys which they contain, they are to be interpreted as an intercessory prayer, albeit authoritative, of the Church for complete forgiveness of the sins of the penitent which includes the remission of the *punishment* of sins, but not as the infallible act of jurisdiction granting freedom from the temporal punishment of sin.

This interpretation is based on the occurrence of these 'absolutions' (even quite early) outside the sacrament (especially even in the case of 'general absolutions'), on their style and their involved clauses, as well as on the early scholastic theories concerning the nature and the range of priestly activity in the sacrament of penance. Poschmann takes this opportunity to bring out the historical and theoretical factors which have contributed to the change in the institution of penance from public to private penance with the anticipation of reconciliation before the performance of church penance. This leads to the formal distinction between the actual guilt of sin and the punishment due to it, so that now the subjective penance is more clearly related to the remission of the temporal *punishment* due to sin, and the absolutions are considered as the Church's assistance in the remission of these *punishments*. The absolution is the successor of the early Church's priestly penitential intercession. It is essentially intercessory and ought not to be identified simply and formally with actual reconciliation. For Poschmann even here it is the *pax cum ecclesia* that is the *res et sacramentum* of the forgiveness of guilt before God. Thus the intercessory formula in no way formally represents the act of reconciliation as such. Poschmann, however, saw in this teaching of the early Church only an obsolete theory which is useful for the explanation of ancient penitential practices from the point of view of the history of dogma but which cannot command an important place in contemporary theology. Thus Poschmann's otherwise important studies have had only an indirect influence on Vatican II's re-valuation of this teaching for our time.[113] Nevertheless, it is obvious that the parallel – if temporally distinct – development of the institution of penance and indulgences from the viewpoint of the history of dogma, as far as their basis in Scripture, the notion of a juridical act, etc. are concerned, can help to renew and contribute to a further explanation of church penance. In this sense the results of Poschmann's study of the history of indulgences from the viewpoint of the history of dogma, although they [22] are sometimes superficial, still today represent a good starting-point for further studies.

Poschmann himself set the pace in this field with his sketch of the theology of penance in the history of dogma which in an admirable way presents very succinctly the state of research as it was at the beginning of the fifties. This work comprises a vast amount of fact, detail of sources and literature, and personal scholarship. Its main lines have already been developed

[112] Cf. ZKTh 71 (1949), pp. 481-90.

[113] The person who should be named directly in this regard is rather M. de la Taille, who has shown courageously that the early Church's notion of penance is more justifiable than today's and is in accordance with the teaching of Trent on penance. H. de Lubac, M. Schmaus and others have made similar contributions.

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above, and they have been widely accepted. Since its appearance this survey has obviously become obsolete on individual points here and there,[114] for instance, on the point that the position of Thomas Aquinas in the question of penance was not that of a complete innovator, as it was understood for a long time. But this does not alter at all the over-all value of Poschmann's work: it is even today still the best comprehensive presentation of the whole of the history of penance.

As far as older studies are concerned, the readers are here referred to book reviews.[115] The discussion with J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bußstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* is in our essay, 'The Penitential Teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas'. Research on individual points has obviously progressed until the present day and, despite the revision of the present essays, it has not everywhere received the attention which it perhaps might have deserved. Moreover, we did not think it appropriate to deprive these studies of the character which they have from their origin.

Useful editions of texts, like the collection of H. Karpp,[116] and increasing scientific collaboration even on this question[117] make it clear that there is a new interest in the history of penance. Moreover, pastoral and pastoral-theological demands and many actual serious discussions in this field evince a readiness in the life of the Church to reach new forms. If these new forms are to bring a real deepening of appreciation and new vitality, then one cannot dispense with a serious awareness of what the history of penance is and of its importance.

[114] Cf. V. Heynck, 'Zur Busslehre des hl. Bonaventura' in: FSt 36 (1954), pp.1-81.
[115] Cf. our reviews of P. Galtier, *De Paenitentia*; E. F. Latko, 'Origen's Concept of Penance' in: ZKTh 72 (1950), pp. 116-18; and of C. Vogel, 'La discipline penitentielle en Gaule' in: ZKTh 76 (1954), p. 498; etc.
[116] H. Karpp, *Die Busse. Quellen zur Entstehung des altkirchlichen Busswesens* (Traditio Christiana I) (Zurich 1969).
[117] Pastoral practice and pastoral psychology give rise to a whole range of questions which suggest the need for new forms of penance. In this connection we could mention other questions, concerning authority, freedom, sociological conditions, which are discernible outside the religious sphere, for instance, even in criminal law. All these questions are directly relevant in the field of education. These few observations must suffice to show – contrary to what might be a first impression – the various dimensions which our question has today.

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2

SIN AS LOSS OF GRACE IN EARLY CHURCH LITERATURE

Every Catholic treatise of dogma considers in the section on grace or in the section on sin the loss of sanctifying grace as the consequence of actual serious sin and the essence of habitual sin. Fundamental to all the considerations of this question is the affirmation that there are sins which deprive the justified person of the interior personal grace, received at the moment of justification. However this assertion may be formulated, it is at the basis of the Catholic notion of the essence of serious sin. The personally culpable loss of sanctifying grace is the specific mark of serious sin which the justified person commits. This study[1] is an attempt to cast a little light on the historical beginning of this teaching of faith. It is intended as a contribution to the history of dogma, which has previously had little to say about this teaching,[2] at least as far as the explicit and directly posed question is concerned. It is also a contribution to the method of presenting this teaching in Catholic dogmatic treatises which in this question content themselves in general with very flimsy arguments from Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.[3]

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[1] This essay, although revised, appeared first in: ZKTh 60 (1936), pp. 471-510. This explains both the rudimentary nature of the theme and the elementary way in which it is developed. If it were tackled afresh today it is obvious that all the published works which have appeared in the meantime on the relevant exegetical, textual critical and hermeneutical questions would have to be considered. It was, however, that original approach, in the form which we have preserved, that instigated and, to a certain extent, determined the author's studies on the history of penance which are collected together in this volume. It ought, therefore, to serve principally both as a clarification of the question in hand and as an announcement of our main theme, and this precisely in the form in which it affected both historically and in fact the subsequent studies. Thus the author is perfectly aware that this essay, if undertaken in today's circumstances, would have quite a different appearance. For the same reason, the reader of all these present studies must bear in mind their original historical context.

[2] After an intense, but only brief, interest in questions concerning the history of penance in the 40s and the beginning of the 50s – an interest which, however, was unable to make any special impact on theology in general – studies on this theme have become rare in recent years. Even these generally concern the pastoral aspect and do not allow much weight to the systematic-dogmatic side. This observation alone, therefore, provides some justification for the history of dogma today. Mention should be made, however, of the specialist works of B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda* (Bonn 1940); id., *Busse and Letzte Ölung* (HDG IV,3) (Freiburg/Br 1951); J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Busstufenwesens in den vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg/Br. 1955); G. Teichtweier, *Die Sündenlehre des Origenes* (Regensburg 1958); C. Vogel, *Le pécheur et la pénitence dans l'Eglise ancienne* (Paris 1966).

[3] Cf. on this point: S. Schiffini, *Tractatus de gratia divina* (Freiburg/Br. 1901), n.342; G. Lahousse, *De gratia divina* (Brugge 1902), n.326 ff.; C.Mazzella, *De gratia Christi* (Rome 1905), n.1102 f., 1112 f.; Chr. Pesch, *Praelectiones dogmaticae* V (Freiburg/Br. 1916), n.372 f.; id., *Compendium theologiae dogmaticae* III (Freiburg/Br. 1941-2), n.319; J. M. Herve, *Manuale theol. dogm.* (Paris 1925) II, n.65; B. Beraza, *De gratia Christi* (Bilbao 1929), n.951; H. Lange, *De gratia* (Freiburg/Br. 1929), n.467, 471; H. Lennerz, *De gratia redemptoris* (Rome 1934), p. 260; H. Rondet, *Gratia Chnisti* (Paris 1948); L. Lercher, *Instit. theol. dogm.* III (Innsbruck 1951), n.644; M. Schmaus, *Kath. Dogmatik* III/2 (Munich 1951), pp. 234-9; J. Pohle/J. Gummersbach, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* II (Paderborn 1956), p. 783 f.; J. Brinktrine, *Die Lehre von den Gnade* (Paderborn 1957), p. 208 f.: L. Ott, *Grundriss der kathol. Dogmatik* (Freiburg/Br. 1957), p. 318 f.; A. A. Tanquerey, *Synopsis theologiae dogmaticae* II (Paris/Rome 1959), n.171; F. Diekamp/K. Jüssen, *Kath. Dogmatik* (Münster 1959), p. 564 f.; H. Lais, *Dogmatik* I (Kevelaer 1965), p. 236.

Of its very nature, the question which we are considering does not concern a specifically Catholic problem. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that the corresponding manuals on the Protestant side normally do not even touch on the question. It is only exceptionally, and even then in a rudimentary form, that some information is found, as in W. Elert, *Den christliche Glaube* (Berlin 1940), p. 592 ff. [*Das Problem der Perseveranz* (*in der Rechtifertigungsgnade*)]; W. Trillhaas, *Dogmatik* (Berlin 1962), pp. 197, 203 f.

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I. THE QUESTION

Already according to the New Testament the Christian, by his baptism, has left the kingdom of this world, the kingdom of darkness. He has died to sin and has become a child of knowledge and freedom, [24] who must lead a new life, who must and can allow the holiness given to him in baptism to become effective in a morally perfect way of life. Nevertheless, however great and good this new life of grace given by baptism and confirmation may be, however radically and far it separates the sanctified person from sin, it still remains threatened by sin. Even the Christian, the 'saint', can sin. The New Testament is acutely aware of the irreducible opposition between this new life and sin, and stresses it so strongly that one almost receives the impression that for the person in grace sin has become completely impossible (cf. I John 3:9). Nevertheless, it is just as keenly aware of the danger of sin which still threatens even the saint. It mentions sins and vices which occur among Christians. It exhorts, warns and continually threatens in order to preserve the saints, body, soul and spirit, from sins. All this inevitably raises the question of God's attitude towards the Christian's sin, towards the sinful Christian or-in other words-of the effects of the Christian's sin.

In order to see clearly by means of a historical approach what the New Testament and the Fathers of the Church teach about the Christian's sin, one ought not to consider the effects of sin without any differentiation and simply as a whole, as still happens in the textbooks of dogmatic theology on this question. This is the case when statements to the effect that sin begets death, that the sinner does not have life, that he has been rejected, that he will not inherit the kingdom of God or that he has lost righteousness are simply taken as expressions of one and the same truth: serious sin entails the lost of sanctifying grace. The undifferentiated use of all these phrases as a proof of the truth in question already, at first sight, appears questionable. If one wishes to trace the history of this truth in the available literature, then one must consider the different effects of sin separately.

Both from the nature of the case and from the historical data there are three different ways of considering the effects of sin. The first is the juridical-ethical or moral approach. In it sin is considered a transgression of the divine law, by which man becomes morally inferior and bad, antagonizes God and provokes his anger, offends against God's holiness and justice, causes a scandal both for his fellow Christians and for non-Christians, burdens himself with guilt before God, etc. These and similar ways of speaking about sin have this in common that they all, in one way or another, pin-point the juridical and ethical side of sin in the different relationships of this [25] sin to God, to other men and to the sinner himself. Without wishing to deny the real differences of meaning between these various expressions one can say that they represent a juridical-ethical or moral approach to sin and its consequences.

The second approach we would call the end-of-time or eschatological approach. The person who sins incurs God's judgement; he renders himself liable to eternal death and does not arrive at the final resurrection. He will not inherit the kingdom of God and will be punished with hell-fire. He will not obtain salvation, etc. These and similar expressions attempt to explain the nature and the consequences of sin with reference to man's final destiny. Thus they can be grouped together to represent the eschatological approach.

In any event, in all these studies the earliest development of the teaching of the loss of grace through sin, as this is evinced in very sparse indications, is completely overlooked. Nevertheless, these indications may very well represent notions such as those which H. Thyen attempts to derive and prove in *Studien zur Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament und seinen altestamentlichen und jüdischen Voraussetzungen* (Göttingen 1970).

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The third approach is from the point of view of grace. The person who sins destroys the life which he has received in baptism; he expels the Spirit from his innermost being and destroys the seal which he received in baptism. He is already dead. Such expressions describe the immediate consequences of sin for the Christian's life of grace, for his own interior grace. It is in this sense that we speak of an approach to the consequences of sin from the viewpoint of grace.

There are two conclusions to be drawn from this simple distinction. In the first place, these different approaches are really closely linked together. All three correspond necessarily to the very nature of sin. For this reason it is naturally sometimes difficult to assign a particular expression describing the consequences of sin clearly and surely to one of the approaches. In practice these approaches often overlap one another. When, for instance, 'death' is mentioned as a consequence of sin it is not always easy to say whether 'eternal death' means damnation (the eschatological viewpoint) or the death of friendship with God (the juridical-ethical/moral viewpoint) or spiritual death as the loss of interior grace (the grace viewpoint). One can justifiably assign such an expression to the third approach (from the point of view of grace), this being the least evident, only when one has already clearly verified the occurrence of such expressions in this sense in the author in question.

Secondly, once the inner connection of these three groups of expressions is presupposed in dogmatic theology, all of them have the same value in practice for a dogmatic proof in a particular question, and one can take the place of the others. When in the Bible, for instance, the consequence of a sin is described in one of the three ways, then this description can be used as a proof that in the case in [26] question it is a matter of serious sin according to the Bible. Similarly, from one group one can deduce the others. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the present essay, it is important to distinguish these three groups clearly.

Although for speculative dogmatic theology this distinction may have only little value, for the establishment of the historical course taken by the teaching of the consequences of sin it is inevitable and of the greatest importance. The real and objective connection between the different consequences of sin is one thing; the knowledge of this connection quite another. The knowledge of one particular consequence can be more explicit in the consciousness of the faithful than the knowledge of another consequence. The awareness of the connection between the three consequences can itself be obscured, and it is possible that, for various reasons, only one particular consequence is continually stressed and the others not even mentioned. Also, as far as this objective awareness is concerned, it is easy to think of the juridical-ethical and the eschatological approaches as being connected. The approach from the point of view of grace, on the contrary, stands out clearly from the two others and can even recede into the background before them.

These apparently purely *a priori* distinctions and possibilities have, however, had a concrete historical form. In the course of the period of time which we are here considering, i.e. from the New Testament until the middle of the third century, we can observe a real shift in the use of the three kinds of expressions. More precisely, the approach from the point of view of grace – together with its associated expressions – is, at first, scarcely present. It then receives attention, is more clearly formulated and, finally, forms the starting-point for new theological reflections. This is always the clearest sign that a truth has become both clearly grasped conceptually and a sure, undisputed and generally recognized fact. The course and the causes of this development must now be expounded in greater detail.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT

The teaching of the New Testament on the consequences of serious sin can be resumed

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briefly as follows: the juridical-ethical and the [27] eschatological consequences are clearly and strongly stressed, whereas the meaning of sin for the interior state of grace acquired by faith and baptism is hardly touched upon or – if it is – receives no emphasis and is mentioned only in passing.

I. The Juridical-Ethical and the Eschatological Approaches

Jesus' teaching on judgment and hell as the punishment for sin[4] is stressed remarkably strongly and emphatically by the synoptics. The Lord refers repeatedly to these consequences of sin. Because the teaching on grace receives very little emphasis in these Gospels it is not surprising that this view on the consequences of sin does not envisage Christians who are in a state of grace. Nevertheless, the early Christian literature, immediately following the New Testament, shows how powerfully effective the idea instigated by Jesus' teaching was that God's judgement and eternal damnation are terrifying punishments even for the sins of Christians. Already in Jesus' discourses on the judgement his return, the day of judgement and the damnation of the wicked are intimately connected. This triad represents the last things also in the teaching of the Apostle's letters and in the Johannine writings. Here, too, God's judgement, damnation and eternal death are taught as the fruit of sin.[5] Likewise, the consequences of sin are viewed eschatologically in Paul's catalogues of vices.[6] Sin is not explained as being incompatible with grace, but it is stated: θεου= βασιλει/αν ου0 κληρονομη/σουσιν.[7]

2. The Approach from the Point of View of Grace

Besides the texts which present juridical-ethical or eschatological perspectives for considering the consequences of sin, there are here and there in the New Testament passages in which the loss of grace appears to be suggested as a consequence of sin. Expressions like ε0κπι/πτειν τη=φ ξα&ριτοφ, υ9στερειν α)πο τη=φ ξα&ριτοφ, ε0νυβρι/ζειν το_ πνευ=μ α τη=φ ξα&ριτοφ, α)δυ/νατον πα&λιν α)νακαινι/ζειν, etc., describe the effects of sin and seem to be understandable n this sense. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes evident that, because of the conciseness and vagueness of the expressions, such an interpretation [28] remains questionable. These ideas could also be assigned to the other two approaches. Perhaps they mean to convey no more than a general falling away from God, a departure from the kingdom of his benevolence and contempt for his saving works. In any case, they do not have to refer definitely, explicitly and directly to the interior grace which is the personal possession of the individual Christian. Even if one or other of these expressions is understood in the sense of the loss of interior grace, they are all still so brief and stand in a

[4] Cf. the recurrence of the following key words. *Judgement*: Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36, 41 ff.; 16:27; 24:30 f.; 25:31, 32, etc.; Luke 10:14; 11:31; 20:47; John 5:22, 27, 29; 12:48. *Eternal damnation*: Matt. 3:10, 12; 5:29 f.; 8:12; 10:28; 13:30, 41 f., 50; 18:8 f.; 22:13; 23:33; 24:51; 25:30, 41, 46; Mark 9:43, 47, 48; Luke 3:17; 13:28; 16:22 ff.; John 15:6.

[5] *Judgement*. In Paul: Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5 ff.; 2:16; 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:13; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 4:1. In Heb. 6:2; 9:27; 10:27, 30 f. In James 2:13; 5:12. In Jude 15. In Peter: Acts 10:42; 1 Pet. 4:5; 2 Pet. 2:3, 9. In John: 1 John 2:28; 4:17; Rev. 11:18; 20:12, 13. *Eternal damnation*. 1 Thess. 5:3; 2 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 10:27; Jas. 4:12; 2 Pet. 2:3 ff., 17; Jude 7:13; Rev. 14:11; 19:3; 20:10, 14 f.; 21:8; 22:15.

[6] 1 Cor. 6:9 f.; Gal. 5: 19-21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5-6 (the o)ργη/ is God's final judgement as in Rom. 2:5; Rev. 6:17; etc.); similarly Rev. 21:8.

[7] 1 Cor. 6:9. This passage represents the classical biblical reference for our question in the textbooks.

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context which draws the attention in another direction. For the teaching of the loss of grace by sin to be believed consciously, clearly and explicitly at least a further impulse from outside was still necessary.

A closer examination of the relevant texts will make this point clearer.

A) PAUL

In Romans 11:16-24 it is first of all a question of the 'excision' of the Jews from the olive tree, and then of the danger that the same thing could happen to the Christians of Gentile origin. The section should be interpreted with regard to the situation of the whole letter. Thus its theme is not that the individual man can lose his interior grace. The olive tree is Judaism or the messianic kingdom issuing from it while remaining linked with the Patriarchs. The Gentiles have been received into this kingdom, although, because of their origin, they do not have a right to it as do the Jews. The latter are the children of the Patriarchs, the first-born, but by their unbelief they have been excluded and 'excised' from this kingdom. This can also happen to the Gentile Christians.[8] This comes near to saying[9] that a loss of interior grace is possible. But this idea is not yet directly expressed, because here it is a question of the relationship of the whole Jewish people to the messianic kingdom. Thus the individual Gentile Christian cannot stand in contrast to the Jewish people.

When Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:27 expresses his fear that he himself, through his own fault, could become α)δο&κιμοφ, and when in 1 Corinthians 10:12 he envisages the possibility of a 'fall' for Christians, he has not yet relinquished the ethical-moral approach. It remains unclear how this 'disqualification' (α)δο&κιμοφ) and this 'fall' effect the interior grace. The same applies to expression like α)πο&λυσθαι (John 3:16; 10:28; Rom. 2:12; 14:15; 1 Cor. 1:18; 8:11; [29] 2 Cor. 2:15; 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:10; 2 Pet. 3:9, etc.) and φθει/ρεσθαι (1 Cor. 3:17; 2 Cor. 7:2; 11:3; 2 Pet. 2:12). Here either the purely eschatological sense predominates or these expressions speak very vaguely of an ethical catastrophe.[10]

In 2 Corinthians 6:1 we read παρακαλου=μεν μη_ ει0φ κενο_ν τη_ν ξα&ριν του= θεου= δε/χασθαι υ9μα~φ. Even if here ξα&ριφ were to mean the interior grace,[11] the sentence is still only an exhortation to take care by our ethical life that the reception of grace does not remain vain and useless. What happens to this grace when our ethical behaviour does not correspond to it is not said.

Galations 5:4 remains to be mentioned: κατηργη/θητε α)πο Ξριστου= οι#τινεφ ε0ν

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[8] Cf. R. Cornely, *Commentarius in epist. ad Romanos* (Paris 1896), p. 599 f. This interpretation is generally supported by exegetes, even if the precise meaning is variously interpreted in the different commentaries. Cf. J. Sickenberger, *Die beiden Briefe des heiligen Paulus an die Korinther und sein Brief an die Römer* (Hl.Schrift.NT V) (Bonn 1921), p. 238, where the passage is interpreted far too rapidly in the sense of Catholic dogma; M. J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul Epître aux Romains* (Paris 1922), p. 281 f.; O. Holtzmann, *Das Neue Testament* II (Giessen 1926), p. 663; O. Kuss, *Die Briefe an die Römer, Korinther und Galater* (RNT6) (Regensburg 1940), p. 92; A. Nygren, *Der Römerbrief* (Göttingen 1954), p. 287; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Meyers Kom. 4) (Göttingen 1957), p. 246, where particular attention is given to the meaning of 'standing' and 'falling'; J. Huby/S. Lyonnet, *Saint Paul* (VS 10) (Paris 1957), p. 397; F. J. Leenhardt, *L'Epître de saint Paul aux Romains* (Neuchâtel/Paris 1957), p. 163 f. P. Althaus, *Der Brief an die Römer* (NTD III) (Göttingen 1958), p. 105.

[9] Cf. R. Cornely, p. 605, together with the other authors mentioned in n.8. J. Sickenberger actually draws the conclusion.

[10] For what follows, cf. especially H. Conzelmann, ξα&ριφ D. *Neues Testament*, in ThW IX, pp. 381-93 (Stuttgart 1971).

[11] ξα&ριφ is here synonymous with καταλλαγη_ in 5:19 and δικαιοσυ/νη in 5:21. Thus it has a wider meaning.

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νομω| δικαιου=σθε, τη=φ ξα&ριτοφ ε0χεπε/σατε. This passage means: the person who hopes for δικαιοσυ/νη from the observance of the law 'has no more to do with Christ';[12] he is separated from Christ and has 'fallen out of grace'. Ξα&πιφ here does not mean simply interior sanctifying grace, since then one could not say: man falls out of grace. Rather it is the whole economy of salvation of the New Testament that is meant. Only if this is the case can Ξα&πιφ be construed as 'kingdom', as an 'area' out of which the Judaizer steps to fall back into the slavery of the law.

B) THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

The following texts from the Letter to the Hebrews come quite near to an approach to the consequences of sin from the point of view of grace. Hebrews 6:4-6 describes interior grace sufficiently clearly with the expressions φωτι/ζεσθαι, γευ/εσθαι τη=φ δωρεα~φ τη=φ ε0πουρανι/αν, μετο&ξουφ γι/νεσθαι πνευ/ματοφ α(γιου. All of these expressions refer to an inner state of man. Sin is characterized primarily as a παραπι/πτειν (α. λ. in the NT), as a falling away and an aberration. Παραπι/πτειν means simply: (by falling away from faith) 'to sin'.[13] By this expression alone, therefore, nothing is yet said about the consequences of sin. Of those who 'have fallen away' we read: α)δυ/νατον πα&λιν α)νακαινι/ζειν ει0φ μετα&νοιαν. This phrase presupposes that such α)νακαινι/ζειν ει0φ μετα&νοιαν has already taken place, and that this α)νακαι/νωσιφ ει0φ μετα&νοιαν has subsequently been lost. Thus in theory a second a α)νακαι/νωσιφ would be necessary. Now if one observes only the α)νακαι/νζειν τινα& (therefore here του∴φ φωτισθε/νταφ etc.), then the meaning of the phrase would be: it is impossible to renew again such apostates and to [30] return them to the state which has just been described.[14] In this way it would without a doubt be presupposed that this α)νακαι/νωσιφ had already taken place once. Thus it is identified with the enlightenment, the tasting of the heavenly gifts, the participation in the Holy Spirit, in fine, interior grace. And it is precisely this grace that has been lost. Since, however, the text does not run α&δυ/νατον α)νακαινι/ζειν του∴φ φωτισθε/νταφ etc., but α)νακαινι/ζειν ει0φ μετα&νοιαν, it cannot be explicitly a question of the renewal of the interior grace of the baptized but the renewal of the attitude of μετα&νοια in these Christians. The object of the eventual renovation is, therefore, the μετα&νοια which, as the active form α)νακαινι/ζειν indicates, is considered as being performed by the preacher (apostle).[15] If, however, the α)νακαι/νωσιφ is referred directly to the interior grace, then neither the active of α)νακαινι/ζειν[16] nor the preposition ει0φ μετα&νοιαν is explained. This ει0φ makes it clear that the μετα&νοια is the object of the *renovatio*. If the renewal referred immediately to the interior state of grace, then the μετα&νοια would not be its object but the presupposed means of the renewal of the interior state of grace. In this case the ει0φ would have to be translated by 'through' or 'in the place of' (Estius) or *accedentes, en*

[12] This is the meaning of καταργε/ω; for this cf. F. Zorell, *Lexicon Graecum Novi Testamenti* (Paris 1931), p. 682.
[13] Cf. F. Zorell, ibid., p. 997. W. Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des NT und der ubrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin 1958), p. 1232; W. Michaelis παραπι/πτω, in: ThW, VI, pp. 170-3 (Stuttgart 1959).
[14] That is, enlightenment by the Holy Spirit, the tasting of the heavenly gifts, participation in the Spirit, etc.
[15] The correct meaning of α)δυ/νατον is thus obvious: it is a matter of the moral impossibility of changing, through the preaching of an apostle, a person who has completely fallen away from the faith. It is not, therefore, a matter of the impossibility of a new acquisition of interior sanctifying grace.
[16] If this were the case, then α)δυ/νατον α)νακαινι/ζεσθαι would be expected here.

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les amenant inserted between α)νακαινι/ζειν and ει0φ μετα&νοιαν (Estius, Crampon).[17] The illumination, the tasting of the heavenly gifts, etc. are, therefore, to be construed as indications which explain the impossibility of a renewed access to μετα&νοια. How can the person who has experienced these things and then apostasized be brought to change his attitude? It is nowhere stated, therefore, how the παραπι/πτειν effects the interior grace itself.

In Hebrews 10:29 sin appears as a spurning of God's Son, as contempt for his blood of the covenant which sanctifies us and, above all, as το_ πνευ=μα τη=φ ξα&ριτοφ ε0νυβρι/ζειν. This expression is possibly an allusion to Zechariah 12:10, where it is said of the Spirit of grace that it is 'poured out' on us. Thus this expression could evoke the interior grace. 0Ενυβρι/ζειν means 'to behave improperly', 'to behave proudly and impudently', 'to abuse a person', 'to inflict an injury on someone'.[18] Generally this verb is used absolutely or with reference to the person against whom the insult is directed. In so far as the πνευ=μα τη=φ ξα&ριτοφ is considered as a person,[19] the expression here means: to behave insolently and proudly towards this person of the πνευ=μα. Sin is, therefore, characterized only in its [31] immoral nature. That this insult against the Pneuma brings about the loss of the Father's gift of grace is by no means explicitly stated.

Finally, we read in Hebrews 12:15 that the Christian must take care that he does not υ9στερω~ν α)πο τη=φ ξα&ριτοφ του= θεου=. Ecclestiastes 6:9 and Hermas, *Mand*. IX 4 should be compared with this expression. It always has the meaning of 'to lack', 'not to obtain', 'to be excluded because of one's own hesitation' or also, as in Hebrews 4:1, 'to delay', 'to arrive too late', therefore: 'through one's own fault to arrive too late to receive something'.[20] But the expression never has the meaning of 'to lose'. Thus here it cannot be primarily and explicitly a question of the loss of something which was already once possessed. Moreover, ξα&ριφ is so general and vague that it can be taken quite justifiably here in the wide sense of 'benevolence' or 'salvation'. Thus the whole sentence ought to be translated along these lines: 'Be careful that no one fails to receive God's salvation, that he does not obtain God's favor.' There is no mention, therefore, of a loss of grace.

c) DEATH AS THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN

The death which results from a committed sin (Jas. 1:14-15) is, in the first place, the eternal death which is opposed to eternal life.[21] An indication of this is James 2:14 ff., where, as if in opposition to 1:14 f., it is said that faith and works save man for eternal happiness. These passages should be compared with James 5:20, where θα&νατοφ is clearly used metaphorically of the eternal damnation of hell.

The New Testament speaks often about 'death'. It is certain that in the following passages spiritual death is meant in the eschatological sense: Rom. 1:32; 6:16, 21, 23; 7:5; (8:2); 2 Cor. 2:16; (2 Tim. 1:10); (Heb. 2:14b); Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8.[22] Also for the possibility of the spiritual death of grace, here and now, which entails eternal death the following passages may

[17] Cf. W. Estius (1542-1613), *Commentarii in omnes Divi Pauli epistolas* (Douai 1614-16 and finally Paris 1892) on the passage and the edn of the NT by J. Th. A. Crampon (1826-94) (Tournai 1885).
[18] Cf. F. Zorell, p. 449; W. Bauer, p. 535; G. Bertram, υ#βριφ, etc. in: ThW VIII, pp. 295-307.
[19] This person is, however, given to us by the grace of the Father and lives in us as in his temple.
[20] Cf. F. Zorell, p. 1383; W. Bauer, p. 1679; U. Wilckens, υ3στεροφ, etc., in: ThW VIII, pp. 590-600.
[21] This is how it is understood by J. E. Belser, Die Epistel des hl. Jakobus (Freiburg/Br. 1909), p. 60, and M. Meinertz/W. Vrede, Die katholischen Bniefe (Bonn 1932), p. 23 f.
[22] Cf. F. Zorell, p. 578; W. Bauer, pp. 693-5; R. Bultmann, θα&νατοφ, etc., in: ThW III, pp. 7-25.

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be adduced: John 5:24; 8:51; Rom. 7:10, 13, 24; 2 Cor. 3:7; Jas. 1:15; 5:20; 1 John 3:14; 5:16. But even if 'death' in these passages is not to be construed purely eschatologically and also concerns this present life, what is its precise meaning? Does it mean loss of grace or, at least explicitly and directly, only 'death of the moral life', 'death of sinlessness' or 'death of relationship and friendship with God'? In the later Fathers of the Church death certainly means 'death of grace'. But this is by no [32] means clear with regard to the New Testament. In John 5:24 it is possibly mainly a question of 'moral death', with the further implication of bodily death considered as the counterpart to the final resurrection of the body. This reference to the resurrection, together with the parallel with the judgement (5:22), calls for an eschatological interpretation. It is possible to grasp the profound nature of this death, opposed as it is to 'life', only by taking the whole Gospel into consideration. Only in this way could it perhaps be shown that the Johannine notion of death includes, as a secondary meaning, the idea of 'death by the loss of grace'. In John 8:51 'death' ought certainly to be understood eschatologically,[23] while in Rom. 7:10, 13 it is only a question of moral death through sin.[24] Nevertheless, Paul's notion of the nature of death can be derived only from his theology as a whole. In Romans 8:6 the eschatological meaning is obvious. Φρο&νημα means the 'thinking and effort' directed to a goal and then, metonymically, this goal itself.[25] Θα&νατοφ is, therefore, the last goal and the end of sinful activity and thus is meant eschatologically. 2 Corinthians 3:7 has an ethical-moral meaning; 2 Corinthians 7: 10 refers to eternal death,[26] while 1 John 3:14 envisages a death which is already present. Nevertheless, it is only in the light of the whole of Johannine theology that it can be established that this death consists essentially of the loss of grace and, as far as the present life is concerned, is not to be understood merely as the punishment of a fault which entails eternal death but concerns the loss of a personal life of grace. In 1 John 5:16 θα&νατοφ means the complete falling away from faith and the total denial of Jesus[27] but not the loss of grace which is associated with a serious sin. By way of conclusion, it remains true to say that θα&νατοφ can mean 'moral, spiritual death'. A consideration of the theology of the whole of the New Testament can eventually point to the loss of grace as the inner nature of this death; but this is never directly and explicitly expressed.

In 1 John 3:8-10 sin and righteousness are explained with regard to man's true character. In their effects they are the revelation (ε0ν του&τω| φανερα&) that one is either a child of God or a child of the devil. Nevertheless, it is not stated that a person who became a child of God through grace becomes a child of the devil through sin and so loses grace. The ου0

[23] The eschatological meaning is brought out very clearly especially in the commentaries of J. Knabenbauer, *Comment. in Evang. sec. Joan*. (Paris 1906), p.313 and F. Tillmann, *Das Johannesevangelium* (Bonn 1931), p. 185, while R. Cornely, p.366, stresses the ethical aspect of the passage in Rom. 7. For the meaning of 'death' in John 8:51 cf. also R. Bultmann. *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Meyers Kom. II) (Göttingen 1952), p. 246, who remains, however, strangely hesitant, and A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes* (Stuttgart 1948), p. 218, who refers to Luke 2:26 and Ps. 89:49 with regard to the 'not to see death'. A.Wikenhauser, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (RNT 4) defends an eschatological meaning of the passage. The interpretation of the passage in the letter to the Romans which is prevalent today appears to owe its origin to Protestant thinking and considerations about the law (gospel). Because justification was the focal point of all the discussion, whenever death was considered the accent was placed on the nature of sin as death before justification. Hardly any attention was paid to sin as a possibility or as a fact or to the way its nature was affected by justification *after* justification (by faith and baptism), and this despite the formula *simul iustus et peccator*. The different approaches which we are considering here do not, however, have much relevance to sin in this sense. Cf. O. Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* II (Regensburg 1959), pp. 444-48, 450 and H. Thyen, loc. cit.

[24] Cf. R. Cornely, p. 366: *mortem obii vita innocentiae iustitiaeque privatus*.

[25] Cf. F. Zorell, p. 1416; W. Bauer, p. 1713; G. Bertram, φρη=ν, etc., in: ThW IX, pp. 216-31 (Stuttgart 1970).

[26] R. Cornely, *Comment, in Epist. ad Corinth. alteram* (Paris 1892), p. 205.

[27] Cf. M. Meinertz/W. Vrede, *Die katholischen Briefe* (Bonn 1932), p. 177.

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δυ&ναται α(μαρτα&νειν ο#τι ε0κ του= θεου= γεγε/ννηται seems rather to suggest another meaning. In the light of this passage [33] and seen in its own context the meaning of the observation in 1 John 3:15 is clear. The 'murderer' who hates his brother does not have 'life dwelling' in him and must, therefore-precisely because of this-hate those brothers who, being different from him, do possess this life. It is for this reason that we should not be surprised at the hatred of the world (1 John 3:13). Nevertheless, there is no mention of the fact here that a person loses the 'life dwelling in him', which he once already possessed, when he begins to hate his brothers. According to 1 John 3:8 ff. hatred of the brothers is rather an indication that the 'murderer' never possessed life. What is more, the phrase ου0κ ε1ξει ζωη∴ν αι0ω&νιον ε0ν αυ0τω~| με/νουσαν does not have the same sense as η9 ζωη∴ αι0ω&νιοφ ου0 με/νει ε0ν αυ0τω~|.

D) IMAGES AND PARABLES

In theological tradition biblical parables have been repeatedly applied to the interior state of grace and its loss. Nevertheless, these parables are far too vague to be able to support on their own such a precise theological notion. Pride of place, in this connection, is usually given to the prodigal son who, upon his return, receives a new garment and a new ring (Luke 15:22); this signifies God's loving acceptance of the sinner. The application of the garment to sanctifying grace, however, goes far beyond the literal meaning of the text.[28] Similarly treated is the man who appears at the royal wedding banquet without a festal robe (Matt. 22: 12) and is, therefore, turned away from the table. This seems to be saying[29] that everyone must strive to acquire a wedding garment by leading a life in conformity with the demands of the gospel. The participation in the meal of eternal life is, therefore, connected with the fulfilment of certain conditions. But it is not said that these conditions are tantamount to the preservation of the interior state of grace. Rather, they ought to be interpreted in the light of Matthew 7:21 f. A third image which is adduced here is the destruction of God's temple in which the divine Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 3:16 f.; cf. also 1 Cor. 6:19). According to the whole context, however, ναο_φ θεου= must here mean not the individual Christian but the community and the individual Church,[30] in much the same way as Ephesians 2:21 f. and 2 Corinthians 6:16 refer to the universal Church. The φθει/ρειν is the disintegration of the community by false teachers. The φθει/ρεσθαι which threatens the [34] false teacher is to be understood eschatologically, being the φθορα& which, as in Galatians 6:8, is opposed to ζωη∴ αι0ω&νιοφ. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, however, it is a question of individuals considered as God's temple. Nevertheless, what effects the sins of the flesh have upon the temple of God remain unclear.

John 15:6 seems to be the best New Testament candidate for a consideration of the consequences of sin from the point of view of grace. 'To remain in Christ' is the activity of the disciples themselves. It is also primarily meant as a moral relationship, and therefore 'not to remain in Christ' belongs to the juridical-moral approach. The images of separation, rejection[31] and burning can be construed eschatologically.

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[28] Cf. L. Fonck, *Die Parabeln des Herrn* (Innsbruck 1909), p. 911, and J. Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Göttingen 1956), pp. 113-16.
[29] Cf. L. Fonck, p. 418, but see also J. Jeremias, pp. 154-7, who explains the meaning of the parable in terms of justification.
[30] F. Zorell, p. 864, and R. Cornely, *Comment. in priorem Epist. ad Corinth*. (Paris 1890), p. 93, together with W. Bauer, p. 1055 f. and O. Michel, να&οφ, in: ThW 1 IV pp. 884-95 (esp. p. 892) (Stuttgart 1942).
[31] This rejection is here expressed by a gnomic aorist.

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We can sum up this rapid survey of a few important New Testament passages in this way: the juridical-ethical and eschatological consequences of sin are well known and are strongly emphasized. On the other hand, the consideration of the consequences of sin from the point of view of grace and, therefore, the teaching of the loss of sanctifying grace through sin appears only indirectly. In any event, this idea is not prominent in the New Testament.

The reasons for this phenomenon are not hard to find. In the first place, baptism, the simple fact of becoming a Christian, was considered such a decisive and definitive break with sin that the immediate consequence of a further serious sin could hardly be envisaged. Among Christians, at least in general, intense moral effort was taken for granted. Moreover, the approach to the consequences of sin in the Old Testament and in the synoptics, that is, in the original tradition concerning Jesus' message, succeeded in fixing the attention of the other New Testament writings more on the moral and eschatological consequences than on the effects of sin upon the state of grace. The return of the Lord, the day of Christ and the imminent judgement are part and parcel of the living expectation of Christians in the early community. This is why they were warned against sin with reference to these ideas. In this context there was no pastoral necessity as yet to refer to the loss of grace. All the relevant biblical texts warn against sins which have not yet been committed. The approach to the consequences of sin from the point of view of grace, however, must necessarily be concerned rather with sins which have actually been committed.

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III. THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

As far as the question of the effects of sin in the writings of the 'Apostolic Fathers' is concerned, these writings may be divided into two groups. The first group would contain those witnesses which were certainly composed at the beginning of our period, that is, in the first half of the second century: the First Letter of Clement, the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, the Didache, the Letter of Barnabas and the Letter of Polycarp. The second group of the Apostolic Fathers comprises the writings of the middle or the second half of the second century: the Second Letter of Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas. The Martyrdom of Polycarp and the Letter of Diognetus have no relevance for our question. This chronological division coincides with an objective difference of content, as we shall now show.

1. The Early Apostolic Fathers

The witnesses of this group consider the consequences of sin in more or less the same way as does the New Testament. The juridical-ethical and eschatological approaches predominate almost exclusively. This observation can be confirmed by expressions culled from these writings. Thus it is said that idolatry destroys the covenant with God,[32] that sin relegates man again among the pagans,[33] that it makes him a slave of the devil.[34] Consequently God is

[32] Barn. 4,7.8 (Th. Klauser, Doctrina duoDec.ap. – Barn.ep. [Flor.Patr.I], Bonn 1940, p. 36 no. 34). Cf. also the new edn in the series 'Sources Chrétiennes': *Epître de Barnabé* (SC 172), ed. P. Prigent/R. A. Kraft (Paris 1971) with a comprehensive introduction (pp. 9-70).

[33] Polycarp 2,11,2 (Fischer, Munich 1956, p. 260 f. nos. 17-19). For the 'Apostolic Fathers' we are using the edn of J. A. Fischer. The reader is also referred, however, to the edn in the series 'Sources Chrétiennes': *Clément de Rome, Epître aux Corinthiens* (SC 167), ed. A. Jaubert (Paris 1971). Particularly valuable in this edn are the comprehensive introduction (pp. 13-96), where, in particular, the question of 'Courants pénitentiels?' (pp. 50-2) in Judaism is considered, and the glossary (pp. 231-74).

[34] Ign.ad Smyrn. 9,1 (Fischer, p. 212 f. nos. 1-4); cf. Ign.ad Rom. 7,1 (Fischer, pp. 188-91 nos. 19 f. and nos. 1 f.); Ign.ad Philad. 6,2 (Fischer, p. 198 f. nos. 5-8); Polycarp 2,7,1 (Fischer, pp. 256-9 nos. 18-21 and no. 1).

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unfavourable towards the sinner and becomes his enemy,[35] because he hates sin[36] and curses it.[37] Sin entails misfortunes and dangers.[38] It is the object of a curse,[39] since God will not be mocked,[40] and peace and righteousness are far from the sinner.[41]

The eschatological viewpoint is especially evident in the following expressions: sin is a road leading to death, that is, to eternal damnation, a road of darkness and a death-trap.[42] It leads man to death.[43] Thus sin is threatened by the judgement of God and of Christ.[44] Warning against sin often contains a reference to the end of time.[45] At the judgement the sinner will receive a just punishment,[46] damnation[47] and hell.[48] Quite often Paul is cited verbatim.[49]

Naturally even in these early Apostolic Fathers there are some [36] texts which one could be tempted to interpret in the sense of an approach from the point of view of grace. Quite a few of these passages seem to reflect this approach – those, for instance, which present death as already having been introduced by sin. Thus we are inclined spontaneously to interpret them immediately with regard to grace. If, however, the principle of interpretation is maintained, according to which general and vague phrases can justifiably be understood in a precise sense only if the idea in question occurs clearly in at least one other place in the same author, then these passages cannot be understood in the precise, unambiguous sense of the loss of interior grace. This idea is found nowhere unambiguously in the early Apostolic Fathers. Thus there is no foundation for a precise interpretation of more general expressions in the sense of a loss of grace.

Nevertheless, a series of these texts should still be considered more closely in order to explain and to justify the point which has just been made with reference to the expressions themselves. It is stated in the Didache 16,1:[50] γρηγορει=τε υ9πε∴ρ τη=ϕ ζωη=φ υ(πω~ν. This phrase suggests the possibility of the loss of grace, the loss of 'life'. Nevertheless, because the vigilance in question is based upon our ignorance of the moment of the Lord's coming, it is obvious that the life over which we should keep watch should be understood es-

[35] 1 Clem. 2,3 (Fischer, p. 26 f. nos. 7-10); 36,6 (Fischer, p. 70 f. nos. 15 f.); 48,1 (Fischer, p. 84 f. nos. 19-22).
[36] 1 Clem. 30,6 (Fischer, p. 62 f. nos. 3 f.); 35,6 (Fischer, p. 68 f. nos. 9-11).
[37] 1 Clem. 30,8 (Fischer, p. 63 f. nos. 6-8).
[38] 1 Clem. 14,2 (Fischer, pp. 40-3 no. 28 and nos. 1-3); 47,7 (Fischer, p. 84 f. nos. 15-l8); 59,1 (Fischer, p. 98 f. nos. 9 f.).
[39] Ign.ad Trall. 8,2 (Fischer, p. 176 f. nos. 18-20); 1 Clem. 46,8 (Fischer, pp. 82-5 nos. 28 f. and no. 1).
[40] Polycarp 2,5,1 (Fischer, p. 254 f. nos. 4 f.).
[41] 1 Clem. 3,4 (Fischer, pp. 26-9 no. 25 and nos. 1-6).
[42] Didache 1,l (Th. Klauser, Doctrina duodec. ap. – Barn. ep. [Flor. Patr.I], Bonn 1940, p. 14 nos. 5-7); 2,4 (ibid., p. 16 nos. 10-12); 5,1 (ibid., p. 20 nos. 1-10); Barn. 5,4 (ibid., p. 38 nos. 31-6); 19,7.8 (ibid., pp.. 14-31).
[43] Barn. 10,5 (Klauser, op. cit., p. 50 nos. 25-34); 1 Clem. 9,1 (Fischer, p. 36 f. nos. 6-9); Ign.ad Magn. 5,1 (Fischer, p. 164 f. nos. 8 f.). cf. Ign. ad Trall. 6,2 (Fischer, p. 176 f. nos. 5-7); 11,1 (Fischer, p. 178 f. nos. 8-10); Ign. ad Smymn. 7,1 (Fischer, pp. 208-11 nos. 16-19 and nos. 1 f.).
[44] Barn. 19,10 (Klauser, op. cit., pp. 66 f. nos. 36 f. and nos. 1-6); 1 Clem. 13,2 (Fischer, p. 40 f. nos. 17-21); 21,1 (ibid., p. 52 f. nos. 6-8); 28,1 (ibid., p. 60 f. nos. 4-6); Polycarp 2,6,2 (Fischer, p. 256 f. nos. 9-12).
[45] Barn. 4,1 ff. (Klauser, op. cit., p. 35 nos. 13 ff.); Didache 16,1 ff. (ibid., pp. 29 f. nos. 23 ff.).
[46] Barn. 4,12 (Klauser, op. cit., p. 37 nos. 26-31).
[47] Barn. 21,1 (Klauser, op. cit., p. 68 nos. 18-25).
[48] 1 Clem. 51,3,4 (Fischer, p. 88 f. nos. 13-16); Ign. ad Eph. 16,2 (Fischer, p. 154 f. nos. 15-18).
[49] Ign. ad Eph. 16,1 (Fischer, p. 154 f. nos. 14 f.); Ign. ad Phibad. 3,3 (ibid., p. 196 f. nos. 6-8); Polycarp 2,5,3 (ibid., pp. 254-7 nos. 13-17 and nos. 1 f.); cf. also Barn. 4,13 (Klauser, op. cit., p. 37 f. nos. 33 f. and nos. 1 f.). With regard to Ign. ad Eph. 16,1, Fischer remarks (p. 155, no.71): 1 Cor. 6:9 f.; (see also Matt. 24:4; Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8; 1 Cor. 15:33; Gal. 6:7; in effect the formula μη_ πλανα~σθε was also current in diatribe: A. Vögtle, *Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament* (Münster 1936), p. 123. See also Eph. 5:5. Those who ruin houses are firstly those who destroy family life, that is, adulterers who, for example in Lev. 20:10 (cf. John 8:5), are threatened with death, and then (v. 2b), in a figurative sense, the adherents of sects. The same applies to Polycarp 2,11,2 (Fischer, p. 261 n.128).
[50] Klauser, op. cit., p. 29 nos. 23 f.

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chatologically as eternal life.

In the First Letter of Clement (57,2)[51] it is stated that it is better to be found ε0λλο&γιμοφ and μικο&φ than by pride ε0κριφη=ναι ε0κ τη=φ ε0λπι/δοφ αυ)του= (sc. Ξπριστου=) A similar image and a similar idea are found in Barnabas 2:10 and already in Galatians 5:4. Thus the expression here could also be rendered: 'by pride be deprived of the hope (of eternal life)'. In Ignatius 5,2.3[52] the υ(στερει=ν του= α!ρτου του= θεου= and the ε9αυτο_ν διακρι/νειν signifies separation from Christ in the wide sense for the person who does not stay in communion with the bishop. There is no mention of a loss of interior grace in this passage.

Expressions like ου)κ ει]ναι του= θεου=,[53] διαφθει/ρεσθαι,[54] τη=φ ε0λπι/δοφ [= Ξριστου=] ε0κτρε/πεσθαι,[55] after conversion θεου= ει]ναι,[56] νεκροφο&ροφ[57] (describing the person who denies Christ) are too vague to evince with certainty the approach from the point of view of grace, in addition to the evident juridical-moral approach.

There are, however, passages in Ignatius which speak of a death [37] caused by sin. Thus false teaching is a θανα&σιμον φα&ρμακον,[58] of which a person dies. Of those people who do not participate in the Eucharist, it is stated: α)ντιλε/γοντεφ τη|= δωρεα~| του= θεου= συνζητου=ντεφ.[59] About the proud Ignatius says: α)πω&λετο,[60] and about the person who elevates himself above the bishop: ε1φθαρται.[61] The α)ποθνη/σκειν of Smyrn. 7,1 can certainly be understood eschatologically, because in the same place Ignatius continues: συνε/φερεν αυ0τοι=φ α)γαπα~ν (i.e. to celebrate the agape-Eucharist), ι3να και∴ α)ναστω~σιν. Now this resurrection can hardly be understood as other than eschatological. The same applies to Ephesians 20:2,[62] where the Eucharist is praised as φα&ρμακον α)θαναστι/αφ, and the term 'resurrection' is certainly understood to include eternal life. Similarly, false teaching described φα&ρμακον θανα&σιμον is to be understood eschatologically. Ad Polyc. 5,2 does indeed refer to a direct consequence of sin, but it does not explain further the nature of the ruin which has already been experienced. The expression of Trall. 11,1[63] comes near to the approach from the point of view of grace. Similarly to Ad Polyc. 5,2, there is a mention of an immediate (παρə αυ0τα&) death. In the light of this passage, Smyrn. 7,1 could also be understood in this sense. Nevertheless, in Trall. 11,1 this immediate death is not explained in any detail. There is no explicit reference of this death to the life of grace.

When, in the exhortation to harmony within the community and to subordination to the

[51] Fischer, p. 96 f., nos. 13 f.
[52] Fischer, p. 146 f., nos. 3-6.
[53] Ign. ad Magn. 10,1 (Fischer, p. 168 f. no. 7).
[54] Ign. ad Magn.10,2 (Fischer, p.168 f. no. 9).
[55] Ign. ad Magn. II (Fischer, p. 168 f. no. 19); cf. the use of this expression in 1 Tim. 1:1 and see Col. 1:27.
[56] Ign. ad Philad. 3,2 (Fischer, p. 196 f. no. 5).
[57] Ign. ad Smyrn. 5,2 (Fischer, p. 208 f. no. 5). Sec Fischer's n.34: the person who does not confess Christ as σαρκοφο&ροφ is himself a νεκροφο&ροφ: just as he lacks true faith, so he is bereft of true life and of any claim to a blessed resurrection; cf. Sm 2.
[58] Ign. ad Trail. 6,2 (Fischer, p. 176 f. no. 6).
[59] Ign. ad Smyrn. 7,1 (Fischer, pp. 208-11 no. 19). Cf. John 4:10; 2 Cor. 9:15.
[60] Ign.ad Polycarpem 5,2 (Fischer, p. 220 f. no. 6).
[61] Ibid.
[62] Fischer, p. 160 f. no. 1. On this point see Fischer's note 98: the φα&ρακον α)θανασι/αφ or α)νιτδοτοφ α)θανασι/αφ was an elixir which Isis was supposed to have discovered. Certainly the notion of an antidote to death played a role in both the magic and the mystery cults and in the Jewish tradition; cf. R. Buitmann, α)θανασι/α, in: ThW III, 24; Th. Schäfer, *Antidotum* in: RAC I, pp. 457-61.
[63] Fischer, p. 178 f. nos. 8-10.

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bishop, it is stated in Philad. 8,l:[64] ου[δε∴ μερισμο&φ ε0στιν και/ ο)ργη/, θεο_φ ου) κατοικει=, this must apply here to the community as such. God does not live in a disunited community. This passage is, therefore, not relevant to our present purpose. Obviously the texts which we have just considered and quite a few others already contain the clear foundations for the teaching of the loss of grace as a consequence of sin. These foundations can be developed further as soon as an external factor demands a greater emphasis on the relationship between morality and grace as well as a more explicit formulation of this relationship. But this is not yet the case here. The teaching itself appears as such only later, although it can easily be related with the foundations which we have just seen.

As far as the writings of the early Apostolic Fathers are concerned, the juridical-moral and the eschatological approaches to the consequences of sin predominate. The reasons for this are undoubtedly the same as those given for the case of the New Testament.

[38]

2. The Later Apostolic Fathers

As we have already said,[65] it is especially the so-called Second Letter of Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas that have any importance for our question. In these writings the approach to the consequences of sin from the point of view of grace appears very clearly. In comparison with the witnesses of the earlier period, it is noticeable that there is here a change of interest in a new direction and a further development in the formulation of the idea. The two other approaches are still in evidence, but the view with which we are presently concerned is so prominent that we are now able to concentrate exclusively on it.

In the Second Letter of Clement it is stated: η9μειφ ε0α_ν μη∴ τηρη/σωμεν το_ βα&πτιστα α(γνο_ν και∴ α0μι/αντον, ποι/α| πεποιθη/σει ει0σελευσο&μεθα ει0φ το_ βασιλειον του= θεου=,[66] and in another place:[67] τω~ν γα_ρ μη∴ τηρησα&ντων . . . τη∴ν σφραγι=δα ο(σκω&ληξ αυ0τω~ν ου0 τελευτη/σει και∴ το_ πυ=ρ αυ0τω~ν ου0 σβεσθη/σεται. And in the next chapter:[68] τηρη/σατε τη∴ν σα&ρκα α(γνη∴ν και∴ τη∴ν σφραγι=δα α!σπιλον, ι3να τη_ν αι0ω&νιον ζωη_ν α)πολα&βωμεν. First and foremost, the preacher warns against sin with reference to its eschatological consequences. But – and this is what is new – between sin and what it finally entails – hell – an immediate effect of sin is mentioned: the loss of baptismal grace for the Christian. For its part, the punishment of hell follows from this immediate consequence of sin. The person who sins does not 'keep' the 'seal', does not preserve baptism safe and sound.

In the Shepherd of Hermas we find the same kind of expression. In Sim. VIII 6,3[69] it is stated of the Christians: ει0ληφο&τεφ τη_ν σφραγι=δα και∴ τεθλακο&τεφ αυ0τη_ν και∴ μη_ τηρη/σαντεφ υ9γιη=. And Hermas means that they will receive the σφραγι/φ back if they do penance. This term here means the baptismal grace, the life which is received in baptism, as, for example, Sim. IX 16,3.4[70] clearly shows. Many Christians have broken this seal and have not preserved it in innocence. But they can recover it by penance.[71] This passage teaches unambiguously the loss of baptismal grace which is so decisive for man's

[64] Fischer, p. 198 f. no. 23.
[65] Cf. the introductory remarks to III above: 'The Apostolic Fathers'.
[66] 2 Clem. 6,9 (K. Bihlmeyer, *Die Apostolischen Väter* [Tübingen 1924], p. 74 nos. 5 ff.).
[67] 2 Clem. 7,6 (ibid., p. 74 nos. 19-21).
[68] 2 Clem. 8,6 (ibid., p. 75 no. 4 f.).
[69] Cf. M. Whittaker, *Die Apostolischen Väter* I. *Der Hirt des Hermas*, Sim. VIII 6 (GCS 48) (Berlin 1956), p. 71 nos. 17 f.
[70] GCS 48: p. 89 f. no. 31 and nos. 1-6.
[71] Sim. VIII 6,3 (GCS 48: p. 71 nos. 17 ff.).

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eternal destiny. Just how important the possession of this baptismal grace is for Hermas can be seen from his assumption that the righteous men of the Old Testament – in the underworld, as they are – must receive this seal by baptism through the apostles if they are to be able to enter into the kingdom of God.[72] The expression: [39] 'breaking' (θλα&ω) of the seal through sin and the fact that the penitents, according to Hermas, recover it from the angle of penance (μετανοη/σωσιν λαβο&ντεφ υ9πο_ σου= σφραγι=δα)[73] show that it is a question of an actual loss of the seal which here means baptismal grace. The other more imaginative expressions, such as the sullying of the seal or of baptism can, therefore, justifiably be understood in the same sense as the loss of baptismal grace. Because of the close relationship between the Shepherd of Hermas and the Second Letter of Clement, this observation is valid for both writings. In Sim. IX 17,4.5[74] many people having received the σφραγιφ have sullied it again. Thus they have fallen back into their previous state (before baptism) or into a worse state still.

Although, up to this point, the Shepherd of Hermas and the Second Letter of Clement agree in their way of speaking, yet another expression for the loss of grace after baptism is found in Hermas. This is not so clearly discernible in the Second Letter of Clement. Here it is a question of πνευ=μα α#γιον being used instead of, but clearly synonymously with, σφραγι/φ. The person who sins 'sullies' the Spirit.[75] Sin 'expels' the Spirit which dwells within man.[76] It 'injures' the Holy Spirit[77] and brings it about that it 'abandons' man.[78]

This teaching of the loss of grace through sin is developed still further in Hermas in a direction which is quite peculiar to him. Since this point is without great importance, a brief reference to it will suffice for our present purpose. The expressions used by Hermas suggest a kind of physical activity, when, for instance, he speaks of the soul as a container which has a certain capacity. This is filled either with the Holy Spirit or with the wicked spirit. If the latter forces himself into the soul, then the good Spirit becomes 'compressed' and finally leaves man completely.[79]

The following expressions can be understood unhesitatingly in the sense of the loss of grace as a consequence of sin: λυ/πην ε0πα&γειν τω~| πνευ/ματι τω~| σεμνω~| και∴ α)ληθη=|,[80] λυπει=ν το_ πνευ=μα το_ α#γιον[81] or πονηρα_ συνει/δησιν μετα_ του= πνευ/ματοφ τη=φ α)ληθει/αφ μη_ κατοικει=ν.[82] Similarly, Hermas speaks of the Spirit becoming old, diminishing and becoming powerless.[83] On the other hand, the recovery of the Spirit is α)νακαινι/ζειν το_ πνευ=μα.[84] The exhortation to avoid sin is now expressed in this way: *reddite ei Spiritum integrum*, *sicut accepistis*.[85] At least by way of allusion, the

[72] Sim. IX 16,2-7 (GCS 48: p. 89 f. nos. 28-31 and nos. 1-18).
[73] Sim. VIII 6,3 (GCS 48: p. 71 no. 19).
[74] GCS 48: p. 91 nos. 4-12.
[75] Sim. V 6,5 (GCS 48: p. 57 nos. 17-19); Sim. V 7,2 (GCS 48: p. 58 nos. 8 f.).
[76] Mand. X 2,1 (GCS 48: p. 38 nos. 26 f.).
[77] Mand. X 2,5 (GCS 48: p. 39 no. 9).
[78] Mand. X 2,6 (GCS 48: p. 39 nos. 10-12).
[79] Cf. especially Mand. V 1,1-4 (GCS 48: p. 29 nos. 5-16); Mand. X 2,6 (GCS 48: p. 39 nos. 10-12); Mand. XI 2.3.9.13.14 (the application of this notion to true and false prophets) (GCS 48: p. 40 f. nos. 6-14; nos. 3-8; 17-25).
[80] Mand. III 4 (GCS 48: p. 25 nos. 10-14).
[81] Mand. X 2,2.4 (GCS 48: p. 38 f. nos. 27ff. and nos. 5-8).
[82] Mand. III 4 (GCS 48: p. 25 nos. 10-13).
[83] Vis. III 11,2 (GCS 48: p. 17 nos. 20-3).
[84] Sim. VIII 6,3 (GCS 48: p. 71 nos. 15-21); Sim. IX 14,3 (GCS 48: p. 88 nos. 13-17).
[85] Sim. IX 32,2 (GCS 48: p. 103 nos. 1-4).

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image of the 'robe [40] of grace',[86] which will become so frequent later, is already found in Hermas. Thus we read:[87]

> *Si sic igitur tu doles de vestimento tuo et quereris, quod non illud integrum recipias, quid putas dominum tibi facturum qui spiritum integrum tibi dedit, et tu eum totum inutilem redegisti, ita ut in nullo usu esse possit domino suo? Inutilis enim esse coepit usus eius cum sit corruptus a te. Nonne igitur dominus spiritus eius propter hoc factum tuum* (*morte te*) *adficiat?*

Now, once the teaching of the loss of grace as the consequence of sin has been established – as we have seen it to be in the above-mentioned passages – then phrases which speak about the denial of life,[88] of 'to inflict death on oneself'[89] or, conversely, about the renewal of life[90] may also be interpreted in the same sense.

It is a reasonable assumption that the cause of the development which we have discerned in the teaching on the loss of grace through sin, together with its clear formulation, is a reaction to a fundamentally different way of thinking. Only such a reaction could explain the explicit and clear expressions which we have seen. Now the anti-Gnostic character of the Second Letter of Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas is abundantly clear.[91] This tendency is discernible in what could be called the 'teaching on grace' in both of these writings. The Gnostic teachings on the pneuma, on the divine 'seed', on the particle of the 'Father' and on the pleroma could be understood as the opposing 'teaching on grace'.[92] This teaching is fundamentally amoral, and neither in encratistic nor in actually immoral Gnosticism is this Gnostic 'grace' designed to sanctify and to enlighten the whole man. This is because man's material and psychic part, being the fall-out of a pre-human 'original sin', can have nothing at all to do with the pneuma. On the other hand, according to this view, man's immoral behaviour cannot do any harm to this Gnostic 'grace'. Thus we can justifiably assume that the Second Letter of Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas considered themselves called upon – in reaction against this teaching – to declare that the grace received in baptism is lost by sin. This explains how the approach to the consequences of sin from the point of view of grace came in to complement the traditional juridical-moral and eschatological approaches. This assumption is confirmed by the fact that some occurrences of the new formulations appear in sections where there is a [41] direct polemic[93] against Gnosticism. Furthermore, the notion of σφραγι/φ as a description of the gift of grace received in baptism was a favourite term among the Gnostics.[94] Thus the expression that the σφραγι/φ is lost through sin would have naturally

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[86] Sim. IX 32,3,4 (GCS 48: p. 103 nos. 4-14). Cf. also Sim. VIII 2,4(GCS 48: p. 67 nos. 18-20): δου∴φ αυ∴τοι=φ ι9ματισμο_ν λευκο_ν και σφραγι=δα.

[87] Ibid. (GCS 48: p. 103 nos. 11-14). [This is the passage in Whittaker's edn: *unde si tu de vestimento tristis efficeris et rixaris quia non integrum recipis, quid putas dominum esse facturum, qui tibi spiritum dedit integrum, et tu iliud totum ita inutile fecisti, ut domino suo in usu esse non possit, quia usus ipsius spiritus a te inutilis esses coepit et corruptus?*]

[88] Vis. II 2,7 (GCS 48: p. 6 nos. 10-13).

[89] Mand. IV 1,2 (GCS 48: p. 26 no. 3).

[90] Sim. IX 14,3 (GCS 48: p. 88 no. 17).

[91] Cf. for example F. X. Funk, *Patres Apostolici* I (Tübingen 1901), pp. lii, cxxx.

[92] Cf. F. Mitzka, 'Gnosticismus und Gnadenlehre' in: ZKTh 51(1927), pp. 60-4.

[93] 2 Clem. 8,6-9,5 (K. Bihlmeyer, *Die Apostolischen Väter* (Tübingen 1924), p. 75 nos. 3-12; Hermas, Sim. V 6-7 (GCS 48: p. 57 f. nos. 5-25 and nos. 1-16).

[94] Obviously the notion is not only found in the Gnostics. It is already found in Paul (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; cf. also Rev. 7:3). Nevertheless, its use in the NT could hardly account for the surprisingly frequent occurrence of the notion in the Gnostic writings. It occurs 20 times, for instance, in the (Gnostic) Acts of Thomas (cf. DThC 11,1 col. 205); in the Pistis Sophia c. 86, c. 91 and often elsewhere (W. Till, *Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften* I [Berliner-Akademie Ausgabe] originally ed. C. Schmidt (Berlin 1959), p. 127 no. 18 and p. 134 no. 27; cf. the

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suggested itself.

The approach from the point of view of grace was fully developed, therefore, in the struggle against Gnostic notions of grace. The Shepherd of Hermas, however, had other opponents with whom he had to enter into the lists on essential aspects of our question. In the penitential controversies Hermas played an important role, in so far as he was the first person to pose explicitly the question[95] of the fate of a fallen Christian who had lost the grace which had been given to him in baptism. One of the most important questions for Hermas is whether there is a further conversion, a second μετα&νοια for such an unfortunate person and under which conditions it is possible. In the second and third centuries this question provoked a whole series of theological controversies and led to schisms and heresies. The most notorious of these are Tertullian's penitential rigorism, inspired by his Montanism, the schism of Hippolytus in Rome, the differences of opinion on the celebration of penance at the time of Cyprian of Carthage and his adversaries Novatian, Felicissimus and Fortunatus and, finally, the Novatian schism in Rome. Generally, these controversies are considered solely from the point of view of the Church's increasingly emphasized conviction that it has the authority to forgive sins and of the practical and lenient exercise of this authority in the face of a rigorism which is heretical at least in practice, if not in theory. It is obvious that in these controversies the teaching of the loss of grace through sin had to be recognized ever more explicitly and clearly. It is from this point of view that we must now consider the penitential controversies further, albeit very briefly.[96]

IV. THE RIGORISM OF MONTANISM

The Apologists of the second century may be passed over, since their own interests provide little opportunity for them to speak about the loss of grace as the consequence of sin. Even the intention of Irenaeus of Lyons in his Adversus Haereses is so peculiar to him that we can hardly expect him to provide details on our theme. [42] Nevertheless, the idea itself is clearly expressed by him: δια_ τη=φ πι/στεωφ και∴ τη=φ α(γνη=φ α)ναστροφη=φ συντηρει=ν το_ Πνευ=μα του= θεου=, ι3να μη_ α!μοιροι του= θει/ου Πνευ/ματοφ γενο&μενοι α)μοτυ/ξωμεν τη=φ βασιλει/αφ τω~ν ου0ρανω~ν.[97] In this passage the loss of grace as

glossary (ibid. p. 396); in the first book of Jeu c. 33 and often elsewhere (W. Till, p. 290 no. 3; cf. the glossary); for a general survey of its meaning and use see G. Fitzner, σφραγι/φ, etc., in: ThW VII, pp. 939-54 (esp. p. 952 ff.) (Stuttgart 1964). For its use among the Church Fathers cf. the following witnesses: Clemens Alex., Ed. proph. etc. (O. Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus* III [GCS 93,17] (Leipzig 1909)140,19; 188,18; 185,12); see O. Stählin, *Clemens Alexandrinus* IV – Register [GCS 39] (Leipzig 1936) 737; Excerpta ex Theodoto 80,3 (Fr. Sagnard, *Clement d'Alexandrie*: *Extraits de Theodote* [SC 23] reprinted Paris 1970, p. 204 f. no. 1); 83 (SC 23: p. 208 f. no. 2); 86,2 (SC 23: p. 210 f. nos. 6-9). Hippolytus, Philosophumena V 10,2 (P. Wendland [GCS 26] (Leipzig 1916)103 no. 18). Hippolytus calls this work κατα_ πασω~ν αι3ρε&σεων ε0λεγκοφ = Refutatio omnium haeresium; for the external in the Gnostics cf. Irenaeus, Adv.haer. I 20,4 (W. Harvey [Cambridge 1857; reprinted 1949] I 210) (I 25,6 [PG 7,685]); Epiphanius, Haer. I 27,5,9 (K. Holl [GCS 25; 31; 37] (Leipzig 1915/33) 308 nos. 3 ff.).

[95] Cf. A. d'Alès, L'édit de Calliste (Paris 1914), p. 52: *le deuxième siècle ne nous a légué aucun document plus considerable pour l'histoire de la pénitence, que le Pasteur d'Hermas*. Apart from M. Whittaker's edn in the GCS, which we are generally using here, we refer the reader to the revised and extended edn in the series 'Sources Chrétiennes' 53 bis: R. Joly, Hermas-Le Pasteur (Paris 1968).

[96] See the detailed historical studies on the penitential teaching of Hermas, Irenaeus of Lyons and especially Tertullian in this volume. In the present essay these individual authors are considered principally from the viewpoint of the loss of grace; the other studies in this volume attempt rather to summarize the whole penitential teaching of these individual authors and so to determine their place in the development of the nature of church penance.

[97] Irenaeus, Adv. haer. V 9,3 (Ad. Rousseau, et al. [SC 153] (Paris 1969), pp. 114-17 nos. 58-61).

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the consequence of sin is clearly inserted between the sin and the eschatological loss of the kingdom. of God. Similarly, we read elsewhere: *ut non amittentes eum, qui nos possidet Spiritum amittamus vitam*.[98] Of the Gnostics Irenaeus says: *propter suam incredulitatem aut luxuriam non adipiscuntur divinum spiritum et variis characteribus eiiciunt se vivificans Verbum*.[99] Thus the heretics are *in mortem demergunt sibi credentes*[100] . . . *letaliter vulnerantes*.[101] In Irenaeus, therefore, the connection between sin, the loss of grace and exclusion from the kingdom of God is clearly expressed.[102] Apart from this, the few passages in Irenaeus which touch on the question of the practice and the theology of penance in the early Church offer little help for the problem with which we are presently concerned.[103]

Although the idea that grace could be lost was already clearly expressed before Tertullian, in the witnesses which we have questioned so far this was rather indirectly and in contexts where the main emphasis was on exhortation, even though they included a sharp attack on the heretical notions on grace. In the discussions about the Church's power to forgive sins which break out so acutely towards the end of the second century with Tertullian there begins the actual theological consideration of this question. The attempt is now made to prove the idea from the Bible and to establish more precisely which sins have this effect and which consequences this loss of grace itself further entails, etc. Thus this problem becomes an object of 'theology', i.e. one of the explicit and direct truths of the faith.

The attention which has been given to Tertullian's position regarding the possibility of a

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[98] Irenaeus, Adv.haer. V 9,4 (SC 153: p. 120 nos. 89f.).
[99] Irenaeus, Adv. haer. V 8,3 (SC 153: p. 104 nos. 86-9).
[100] Irenaeus, Adv.haer. IV praef. 4 (Ad. Rousseau et al. C 100] (Paris 1965), p. 388 no. 48).
[101] Ibid., p. 388 nos. 59 f.
[102] The same idea is often found elsewhere in Irenaeus. Evil men α)πε/στησαν α)πο_ τη=φ του= θεου= ξα&ριτοφ (II 54; W. Harvey, I 308; II 33,5 PG 7,834). The 'perfect' are those *qui et Spiritum semper perseverantem habent Dei et animas et corpora sine querela servaverint* (V 6,1 SC l53: p. 80 f. nos. 52-5). The most perfect expression of Catholic teaching on grace in this respect is found in Adv. haer. 11,12 (W. Harvey I 57) (I 6,4 [PG 7,509]: η9μα~φ (the Catholics) με/ν γα_ρ ε0ν ξρη/σει τη_ν ξα&ρον λαμβα&νειν λε/γουσιν (the Gnostics) διο_ και∴ α)φαιρεθη/σεσθαι αυ0τη=φ; αυ0του_φ (the Gnostics) δε∴ ι0δια&κτητον α!νωθεν . . . συγκατεληλυθυι=αν ε1ξειν τη∴ν ξα&ριν και∴ δια_ του=το προστεθη/σεσθαι αυ0τοιφ. This statement reflects both the Gnostics' view of the Catholics' notion of grace and their own view. Its meaning is best rendered as follows: 'According to us Catholics, say the Gnostics, grace is received as a loan, but according to them (the Gnostics) it is received from above as a personal gift and, therefore, it can only increase.' The contrast 'according to us . . . according to them (in our view . . . in their view)' is demanded by the overall meaning of the sentence, since the whole passage transmits the notion of the Gnostics. According to them, Catholics (the psychics) do not receive 'grace' in the same way as do the 'pneumatic' Gnostics. Otherwise they would already have the right of access to the pleroma, which is not the case, since the 'psychic' Catholics lead a good life (cf Irenaeus, Adv.haer. I 1,12 [W. Harvey, I 59]; I 6,4 [PG 7,152]). Thus this statement of the Gnostics cannot ascribe the possession of 'grace' to the Catholics. It formulates the Catholic view of the nature of grace in opposition to the Gnostic notion. But it does provide us with a poignant formulation of the Catholic notion of grace in the words of the Gnostics. The Gnostics themselves obviously considered that their own view was superior to that of the Catholics: grace is not an inalienable possession; it can be taken away from a man if he does not lead a moral life which corresponds to the mules propounded by the one who dispenses this grace.
[103] On Irenaeus' penitential teaching cf. DThC VII, 2 col. 2496; A. d'Alès, 'La Discipline pénitentielle au II^{e} siècle en dehors d'Hermas' in: RSR 4 (1913), pp. 201-22; B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda* (Bonn 1940), pp. 211-29; J. I. Hochban, 'St. Irenaeus on the Atonement' in: ThSt 7 (1946), pp. 525-57; H. Holstein, 'L'Exhomologèse dans l "Adversus haereses" de S. Irénée' in: RSR 35 (1948), pp. 282-8; cf. the author's 'The Post-baptismal Forgiveness of Sins in the Regula Fidei of Irenaeus' in the present volume. In Adv.haer. IV 27,4 (SC 100: p. 748 f. nos. 159 f.) it is stated: *iniusti et idolatres et fornicatores vitam perdiderunt*. This very probably refers also to those who are already baptized. Thus the 'life' in this text should be understood as the life of grace. The remaining texts in Irenaeus have nothing more to say about the question of penance in so far as it concerns us here. Adv.haer. IV 40,1 (SC 100: p. 974 f.) and V 11,1 (SC 153:pp. 132-7) do not draw any distinction between baptized and unbaptized penitents; the distinction is between the baptized and the unrepentant who postpone baptism.

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forgiveness of sins after baptism has perhaps led to a certain neglect of the theological presuppositions which underlie Tertullian's teaching on penance itself. We will here outline one of these presuppositions, since it is relevant to our question. After a general consideration this notion of Tertullian will be examined further in more detail.

In his Montanist period in order to justify and to promote theologically his penitential rigorism Tertullian had to explain, first of all, why certain sins cannot be forgiven after baptism. And to do this he [43] had to touch, at least briefly, on the idea of a loss of baptismal grace. Only after he had done this was Tertullian able to conclude with his trenchant dialectic:[104] what baptism has given to a man, namely the Spirit, grace, is lost again through sin. Now a man is able to receive baptism only once. Through serious sin after baptism, therefore, there occurs a loss which cannot be made good again. The one and only way remaining to do this is the other baptism which God still gives, the baptism of blood in martyrdom. Otherwise, all that remains is the uncertain prospect that God will perhaps still be gracious towards a life-long penitent. In any case, for such sins there is no forgiveness by means of a precise ritual, analogous to baptism,[105] which would restore baptismal grace to the sinner. This would mean the introduction of a second baptism.

It is possible today to underestimate the force of this argument in Tertullian. Thanks to the sacrament of penance, the possibility of a second bestowal of grace has become accepted, and the nature and effects of penance are considered in such a way that the definitive character and the uniqueness of baptism are not thereby neglected. In Tertullian's day, however, this view was by no means quite so clear. Tertullian could be quite justified, therefore, in thinking that he had a decisive argument for his thesis that certain sins were unforgivable. He reasoned as follows: either the baptized person does not lose the baptismal grace through sin or – if he has lost it – he cannot recover it and is for ever dead. The first solution was not acceptable, being recognized as Gnostic and considered false. Against the second solution was the witness of the teaching of the Bible and the Church's self-awareness which was expressed in its practice and, to a greater or lesser extent, in its teaching. How are both of these truths to be reconciled without detriment to the decisive significance of baptism – a point on which all were profoundly agreed?[106]

As often happens elsewhere, the Church's awareness of its faith here appears to contain two contradictory truths. And there is a temptation to sacrifice one truth in order to save the other. Nevertheless, in his De paen. the reconciliation of these two truths does not yet appear to have presented any difficulties to Tertullian; thus it is not here that we should look for the basis of his erroneous teaching on penance. In his De pud., however, he later saw the problem clearly and there solved it in a false sense on the basis of practical [44] rigorism supported by his rigid dialectic. The Church's answer to this question in Tertullian's time consisted simply

[104] This argument should not, however, be considered either the first or the most important one for Tertullian's teaching on penance. There are several other factors which gave rise to this teaching. The principal reason for his false teaching on penance must be seen in both his practical rigorism and his exaggerated idealism. His montanist view of the Church also played a role at this point. Nevertheless, his speculation on the subject of the loss of grace must also have exercised considerable influence on the development of this penitential teaching. Certainly he would have wanted to corroborate the already established teaching on the unforgivable nature of the capital sins with any supporting arguments.

[105] Tertullian maintained that only God could forgive capital sins, either in the next life or already here through montanist prophets by a special impulse of the Holy Spirit. This does not contradict our explanation of his thought. The forgiveness which is impossible is that through an act of the hierarchical Church, that is, of a bishop, such as is the case in baptism as the Church's sacramental application of Christ's redemption. It is only this possibility which, according to Tertullian, would jeopardize the definitive nature of baptism, which alone can give sacramental grace.

[106] Cf. the texts of the Church Fathers which stress emphatically the uniqueness of baptism in J. Stufler, 'Die Verschiedenen Wirkungen der Taufe und Busse bei Tertullian' in: ZKTh 31 (1907), pp. 372-6.

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in maintaining these two apparently contradictory truths. It was only at a later period that the Church succeeded in showing how these two truths were not mutually exclusive. In the Fathers of the Church there are only the first elements of the distinction which has to be made in order to resolve the question.[107] Apart from Origen, however, these witnesses hail from a century after Tertullian. As in other cases, theological progress in this question was made possible by the clear distinction between the recognition of a truth of the faith, on the one hand, and the speculative justification of this truth, together with its integration into the body of all the truths of the faith, on the other. This process is demanded by the very nature of revealed truth.

Although, in this essay, we are not concerned with the penitential controversy as such, Tertullian' s way of arguing is still of some importance. It shows how the teaching on the loss of baptismal grace is already a presupposition for Tertullian from which other views can be derived. We have already been able to trace the historical development of this teaching up to its explicit formulation. For his part, Tertullian now considers its consequences and how it is connected and compatible with the other truths of the faith. This is surely an indication of how clearly at this point of time the teaching of the loss of baptismal grace was already recognized.

On yet another question Tertullian' s view of penance proved to be important. If, with his teaching that serious sins are unforgivable, he wished to take any account of the daily life of Christians he had to restrict the number of these sins as much as possible.[108] He could not make such strict moral demands that would include the majority of Christians among those sinners who were excluded from the Church. Thus he had to compensate the exaggeration in his view of the consequences of sin with an excessive leniency in his judgement of the gravity of the sins themselves. Only a few sins, therefore, entail the loss of baptismal grace. In this way he arrived at his teaching on capital sins,[109] which, as a special group, are sharply distinguished from other sins. Only the former are 'serious' or mortal sins in today's sense. Although even the distinction which Tertullian drew between serious and light sins was a false one, this view still remains the first attempt we know of to make a distinction between serious and venial faults, in the sense of essentially different [45] categories, especially in reference to their effect on grace. We must now examine these main lines of Tertullian's teaching in greater detail.

1. The Loss of Grace in General

Tertullian's teaching on the possibility of the loss of grace in general did not change when he passed over to Montanism. Thus there is no need to make any distinction here between his writings from his Catholic period and those from his Montanist period. He certainly does not waste many words on this question. The Shepherd of Hermas and Irenaeus of Lyons, both of whom he knew and used, had a clear position on this question. At the same time, Christian experience, the practice of the Church and the teaching of the Bible pointed clearly in the same direction. Thus the question no longer called for explicit treatment. Tertullian merely reiterates it clearly and succinctly.

We are *templum Dei illato in nos et consecrato Spiritu Sancto* and must beware *ne Deus*

[107] Cf. J. Stufler, ibid.
[108] Tertullian himself gives the reason why all sins are not *peccata ad mortem*. We are so often tempted and we sin so often *ut, si nulla sit venia istorum* (of daily sins), *nemini salus competat*. De pud. 19 (CSL 20) 265,20 f.
[109] For Tertullian's teaching on capital sins cf. A. d'Alès, *L'édit de Calliste* (Paris, 1914), p. 197 ff. The indeterminateness of capital sins, with regard to both their number and their nature, only shows that the teaching was invented as a compensation for the previous error.

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ille qui inhabitat inquinatam sedem offensus derelinquat.[110] Without the virtue of patience, which 'safeguards the Spirit', the Spirit cannot stay long in man. If this virtue is lacking the Spirit of God cannot withstand the assaults of the enemy and, therefore, will not remain in us.[111] The confessors are admonished by Tertullian not to sadden the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 4:20): *et ideo date operam*, *ut* (*Spiritus Sanctus*) *illic vobiscum perseveret*.[112] Tertullian presupposes, therefore, that the Spirit of God, who previously helped the confessors to bear imprisonment, can be lost. He recognizes, therefore, that it is possible to lose the Spirit.[113] Indeed, in another passage he teaches clearly that the Spirit received in baptism is in fact lost, along with all his gifts, through several sins. This is how Tertullian describes the gifts of grace which the Christian receives as his mysterious fortune (*substantia*) and as his inheritance as the child of God: *remissio delictorum*, *absolutio mortis*, *regeneratio hominis*, *consecutio Spiritus Sancti*.[114] In baptism we receive the Holy Spirit[115] and are enlightened by him;[116] we put on Christ.[117] Thus baptism is a *regeneratio caelestis*,[118] a *nova nativitas*.[119] In baptism we receive the image and likeness of God and the Spirit with all his heavenly gifts (*bona caelestia*), in other words, everything which [46] Adam lost in paradise.[120] Tertullian is talking, therefore, about the reception of interior gifts, about the Spirit and grace which are bestowed on the soul in baptism. However, the Christian loses these gifts completely if he commits a serious sin after baptism. Penance before baptism prepares in man a pure dwelling for the Holy Spirit, *quo se ille* (*Spiritus Sanctus*) *cam caelestibus bonis libens inferat*.[121] If a person does not take seriously the conversion which is required for baptism he must reckon with Tertullian's warning that what God is about to give in baptism can be lost again after baptism: *Non enim multi postea excidunt? Non a multis donum illud aufertur?*[122] To lack true seriousness when receiving baptism is to run the risk of losing the baptismal grace, the *donum*

[110] Tertullian, De cultu fern. II,1 (CSL 70) 71,8.11-12. The text here runs: *templum dei simus*, *inlato in nos et consecrato spiritu sancto* . . . and: *ne deus ille qui inhabitat inquinatam sedem offensus derelinquat*. This terminology is found already in the Shepherd of Hermas. For instance, in Mand. X 2,5 we read: μη_ θλι~βε (corresponding to Tertullian's *offensus*) το_ πνευ=μα το_ α#γιον το_ ε0ν σοι∴ κατοικου=ν μη/ποτε . . . α)ποστη= α)μο_ σου= (GCS 48: p. 39 nos. 9 f). There are similar reminiscences of Hermas when we read in Tertullian's De spect. 15 (CSL 20: p. 16 nos. 21-4): *deus praecepit spiritum sanctum*, *utpote pro naturae suae bono tenerum et delicatum*, *tranquillitate et lenitate et quiete et pace tractare*, *non furore*, *non bile*, *non ira*, *non dolore inquietare*. Cf. Hermas, Mand. V 1,3 (GCS 48: p. 29 nos. 11, 14 f.) the πνευ=μα α#γιον is τρυφερο&ν (*tener*) and, therefore, lives only in the person who is μακαρο&θυμοφ. It retires when ο_χυξολι/α enters into a man's heart. Another parallel to this is Tertullian, De or. 12 (CSL 20;p. 188 nos. 12-17). The στενοξωρει=σθαι in Hermas, Mand. V 1,3 (GCS 48: p. 29, 11) corresponds to the *angi* of the Holy Spirit in De pat. 15 (CSL47: p. 23 no. 17).

[111] De pat. 15 (CSL 47: p. 22 no 21 and p. 23 nos. 12 ff.).

[112] Ad mart. 1,3 (CCHL 1) 3 nos. 15 f.

[113] Cf. also De cultu fem. 11,2 (CSL 70: p. 73 no. 9).

[114] Adv. Marc. I 28 (CSL 47: p. 329 f. no. 29 and nos. 1,2 f., 4 f., 7).

[115] De Anima I (CSL 20: p. 299 nos. 21 f.); De bapt. 6/7 (CSL 20: p. 206 f.). According to Tertullian the communication of the Spirit occurs only through confirmation which is conferred together with baptism. This is a point which we need not consider further here, especially since Tertullian himself makes this distinction in other passages; cf. Adv. Marc. IV 17 (CSL 47: p. 474 no. 21).

[116] De carn. resur. 8 (CSL 47: p. 37 no. 3).

[117] De fuga in persec. 10,2 (CCHL II: p. 1147 nos. 16 f.); Adv. Marc. III 12 (CSL 47: p. 393 no. 1).

[118] De carne Christi 4 (CSL 70: p. 197 no. 31); De carn. resur. 47 (CSL 47: p. 96 no. 28).

[119] De carne Christi 17 (CSL 70: p. 232 no. 11); De bapt. I (CSL 20: p. 201 no. 13); De exhort. cast. 1,4 (CCHL II: p. 1015 nos. 17 f.).

[120] De bapt. 5 (CSL 20: p. 206 nos. 10-14); De paen. 2,3 (CCHL I: p. 322 nos.8-14); de anima 41 (CSL 20: p. 368 f. no. 30 and nos. 1-3).

[121] De paen. 2,6 (CCHL I: p. 323 no. 30).

[122] De paen. 6,13 (CCHL l: p. 331 nos. 49 f.). Cf. ibid., p. 331 nos. 48 f. (6,12): *quis autem promittit permansuram et quod tribuerit invitus?*

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again, supposing that it is received in the first place. Similarly, in De paen.[123] Tertullian presupposes the loss of baptismal grace when he says to the sinner faced with The second penance: *Amisisti quod acceperas* (that is, in baptism). This is even more clearly expressed in De pud.: the person guilty of impurity is completely dead.[124] There are sins, therefore, which are mortal.[125] The sinner is a lost son who has lost and squandered completely the property which he has received in baptism from God his father (*substantia baptismatis*).[126] It is precisely here that Tertullian describes particularly clearly the nature of this lost baptismal gift: it is the *indumentum Spiritus Sancti*, the *signaculum lavacri*, the *substantia utique baptismatis*, *utique Spiritus Sancti*.[127] The person who has sinned seriously no longer has any wedding garment, he is *spoliatus*, *exutus bonis mentis*.[128] The person guilty of impurity expels the Lord from his body instead of glorifying him and bearing him in his body.[129] The sinful flesh kills the Spirit: *spiritum elidit*.[130] In De pud. 9 Tertullian says that, in baptism, the pagan receives *vestem pristinam*, *statum scilicet quem Adam transgressus amiserat*.[131] Moreover, in the same chapter it is stated that, according to the Catholics, the repentant apostate will receive back the *vestis prior*.[132] Thus both Tertullian and the Catholics presuppose that an apostate has lost the *vestis prior*, i.e., the position which Adam had in Paradise.[133] Tertullian frequently explains the nature of this *status* of Adam. Even in De paen. already the sinner is the lost son[134] who, after squandering his father's goods, returns naked. Taking part in idolatrous shows is a *signaculum rescindere*,[135] this being Tertullian's translation of Hermas' θλα~ν τη.∴ν σφραγι=δα.[136]

[47]

2. The Consequences of the Teaching of the Loss of Grace

Tertullian uses this teaching of the loss of grace to arrive at further theological conclusions. In his Montanistic period he derives from this teaching the idea that certain sins are unforgivable, and it is in this connection that he draws a distinction between sins which entail the loss of grace and those which do not have this effect. The latter point is of special importance for our present purpose.

Along with other considerations, Tertullian derives his view that some sins, which he calls capital sins, are unforgivable from the fact that these sins destroy the baptismal grace.

[123] De paen. 7,11 (CCHL I: p. 334 no. 40). Tertullian does not seem to have been very clear on the question of whether a person who did not undertake a serious conversion before baptism would really receive the grace of baptism. He contents himself with the observation that such a 'baptized' person is at least in danger of losing this grace again.
[124] De pud. 7 (CSL 20: p. 233 nos. 4 f.). Tertullian says of heretics*, de vivis mortuos faciunt,* in De praescr.haer. 30,17 (CCHL I: p. 212 no. 47).
[125] De pud. 2 (CSL 20: p. 224 nos. 6-11).
[126] De pud. 9 (CSL 20: p. 236 nos. 27 ff.).
[127] De pud. 9 (CSL 20: p. 237 nos. 8 f. and p. 236 nos. 28 f.).
[128] De pud. 9 (CSL 20: p. 237 no. 12; p. 236 no. 30).
[129] De pud. 16 (CSL 20: p. 253 no. 27; p. 254 no. 1).
[130] De pud. 22 (CSL 20: p. 273 no. 22).
[131] De pud. 9 (CSL 20: p. 238 nos. 3 f.).
[132] De pud. 9 (CSL 20: p. 236 nos. 27 ff.; p. 237 no. 8).
[133] Cf. for example Adv.Marc. II 2 (CSL 47: p. 335 nos. 19-27); II 6 (CSL 47:p 341 nos. 13-22); II 8 (CSL 47: p. 345 nos. 8-13); De bapt. 5 (CSL 20: p. 206.11-14); De spect. 2 (CSL 20: p. 3 nos. 20 f.; p. 4 nos. 11-14); De pat. 5 (CSL 47: p.no. 1); De cultu fern. I 1,2 (CCHL I: p. 343 no. 19); De anima 16 (CSL 20: p. 321 nos. 21-23); 41 (CSL 20: p. 368,18-369,7); De carn. resur. 26 (CSL 47: p. 63 nos. 11-2.
[134] De paen. 8,6 (CCHL 1: p. 335 nos. 21-32).
[135] De spect. 24 (CSL 20: p. 24 no. 17).
[136] Hermas, Sim. VIII 6,3 (GCS 48: p. 71 no. 18).

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Although this is not the only and the most important reason for his view, it is still very clear. According to Tertullian, man is redeemed by Christ's unrepeatable suffering on the cross. This redemptive offering is appropriated by man at baptism which, however, he is able to receive only once. If a man has lost the gift of baptism, he has no further means – at least, no sacramental means of the institutional Church – of regaining the baptismal grace. *Homo cum inquinatur*, *occiditur*.[137] The sinner is not only 'lost' or 'wayward', he is 'dead'.[138] Baptism has been lost.[139] Thus the sinner has ceased to have God as the source of his existence.[140] The incestuous person is *mortuus*, *devoratus*,[141] as Tertullian puts it. And this consequence, this loss of the baptismal grace is caused by the serious sins. They are *delicta ad mortem*.[142] Of the sins which Paul enumerates in 1 Corinthians 6:9 f. Tertulhian observes: *delicta ista . . . post lavacrum irremissibilia constituit* (*scl*. *Paulus*), *siquidem denuo ablui non licet*.[143] But this means only that a baptism through which these sins would be able to be remitted is no longer possible, i.e. these sins cannot be forgiven. Tertullian does not develop this idea any further. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that he bases the fact that these sins cannot be forgiven on the impossibility of repeating baptism. Thus Tertullian must presuppose that only those sins which he describes as unforgivable destroy the baptismal grace totally. What, according to him even in his Montanistic period, can be forgiven[144] by the Church cannot, therefore, have this totally destructive effect. If these sins, too, caused the total loss of the baptismal grace, then the same would apply to these *leviora delicta*: *irremissibilia siquidem denuo ablu*, *non licet*. But Tertullian in fact declares that sins other than capital sins do not annihilate the baptismal [48] grace. The person who frequents the circus or the dubious theatre, who tries to compromise himself with ambiguous formulas when making his confession of faith, who provides objects for the worship of idols, etc., is aberrant and a *vivens adhuc peccator*.[145] His faults are *sordes*, but not irremissible *maculae*.[146] Even those sins of which Paul disapproves in Corinth – apart from incest – do not, according to Tertullian, bring it about that a sinner is lost totally. Rather, he remains a *salvus*.[147]

As a proof that some sins are unforgivable we read in Tertullian: *quis enim timebit prodigere* (*scl*. *substantiam utique baptismatis*, *utique Spiritus Sancti*, *et exinde spei*

[137] De pud. 5 (CSL 20: p. 227 nos. 18 f.).
[138] De pud. 7 (CSL 20: p. 232 no. 15; p. 233 no. 7).
[139] De pud. 13 (CSL 20: p. 246 nos. 2 f.: *baptismate amisso*).
[140] De pud. 19 (CSL 20: p. 265 nos. 7 f.).
[141] De pud. 14 (CSL 20: p. 248 no. 18; p. 249 no. 16).
[142] De pud. 2 (CSL 20: p. 224 nos. 6-16); 19 (CSL 20: p. 265 no. 29; p. 266 no.7).
[143] De pud. 16 (CSL 20: p. 253 nos. 1 f.).
[144] De pud. 18 (CSL 20: p. 261 no. 26).
[145] De pud. 7 (CSL 20: p. 232 nos. 19 ff.; p. 233 nos. 3 f.). In De pud. 19 20: p. 265 nos. 15-21) Tertullian mentions yet another group of *delicta non ad mortem*, namely the *delicta cotidianae incursionis.* It should be noted that, in Tertullian's Catholic period, taking part in *spectacala* was considered *rescindere signaculum* (De spect. 24 [CSL 20: p. 24 no. 17]). In his montanist period, however, such a sinner is *vivens adhuc peccator,* who sins *non moriendo sed errando* and thus is reckoned as *salvus* (De pud. 7 [CSL 20: p. 232 nos. 19,20 f.; p. 233 no, 3]). This laxity on the part of a rigorist Tertullian is comprehensible only on the assumption which we have already explained: if such sinners were also in Tertullian's later view dead and complete devoid of baptismal grace, then logically he would have to deny them any possibility of having their sins forgiven. In order to avoid this conclusion he maintains that these sins are not mortal.
[146] De pud. 16 (CSL 20: p. 255 nos. 27 f.); 12 (CSL 20: p. 241 nos. 21 f.).
[147] De pud. 14 (CSL 20: p. 249 no. 20): *nihil de transacto praecavetur, sed de adhuc salvo.* With sheer consistency Tertullian considers that only those guilty capital sins are outside the Church, while all other sinners are still in it. Cf. De pud. (CSL 20: p. 233 nos. 17 f.): *intra domum dei ecclesiam licet esse aliqua delicta*; in the case of capital sins, however, *statim homo de ecclesia expellitur* (ibid., nos. 23 f.) The man guilty of a capital sin no longer has the *solacium navis ecclesiae* (ibid., p. 2 nos. 20 f.); he belongs to those *extra ecclesiam proiectis* (ibid., no. 25).

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aeternae)[148] *quod habebit postea recuperare*. This presupposes, however, that in the case of sins which can be forgiven by the Church there is no loss of the baptismal grace. Otherwise, it should also be said of these sins: *Quis timebit prodigere, quod habebit postea recuperare, quis curabit perpetuo conservare quod non perpetuo poterit amittere*.[149] Elsewhere also Tertullian's train of thought presupposes this idea. Thus, in his view, for some sins there is only the penance of baptism. The pagan sinner is a *semel diluendus per gratiam Christi semel pro peccatis nostris morte functi*. [150] Thus Tertullian argues from the unrepeatable character of Christ's death on the cross to the unrepeatable character of baptism, considered as the application of Christ's offering to men, and then to the conclusion that capital sins are unforgivable.[151] These sins are indeed forgiven at baptism but if they are committed afterwards they annul the effects of baptism. This is not the case with those sins which Tertullian considers forgivable. The same conclusion follows from Tertullian's idea that there is only one way that such sins committed after baptism can be forgiven: the baptism of blood.[152] Thus it is *martyrium . . . quod solum omni substantia prodacta restituere filium poterit*.[153] There are *crimina non nisi proprio martyrio diluenda*. This is because martyrdom is an *aliud baptisma*.[154] Already, in earlier writings, Tertullian had called martyrdom *secunda regeneratio*, *secunda intinctio*, *secundum lavacrum*.[155] Against this background the statement that some sins, by which the whole property of the son is squandered, can be forgiven only by the second baptism – itself only possible once – that is, by martyrdom, has a meaning only if the sins which can be forgiven by the Church have not dissipated the whole baptismal gift and, therefore, have not made a second baptism necessary.

Let us now resume the whole of Tertullian's train of thought as we have traced it in our interpretation. He expressed its premisses, albeit in a different sense, already in his Catholic period. In De bapt. he says:[156] *semel ergo lavacrum inimus*, *semel delicta diluuntur, quia ea iterani non oportet*. Here already he speaks of the baptism of blood in exactly the same way as later in De pud: *hic est baptismus qui lavacrum . . . perditum reddit*.[157] How is this to be understood in Tertullian's Catholic period? It has been taken to mean[158] that according to Tertullian penance has indeed the power to forgive sins but does not bring about readmission into the community of the Church. Since this distinction is totally alien to Tertullian, such a view is patently false. In De paen. he teaches clearly that there is a readmission into the Church.[159] Moreover, other Fathers of the Church use the same expressions and they also recognize a readmission into the Church. Indeed, as a Montanist, Tertullian understood the

[148] De pud. 9 (CSL 20: p. 237 nos. 5 f. and for the explanation in brackets ibid., 236 nos. 28 f.).
[149] Ibid., p. 237 nos. 5-7.
[150] De pud. 18 (CSL 20: p. 261 nos. 14 f.).
[151] Ibid.; cf. also De pud. 17 (CSL 20: p. 257 nos. 3-6); 9 (ibid., p. 237 nos. 9 f.): *rursus illi mactabitur Christus*.
[152] Tertullian leaves open the further possibility of forgiveness by God himse1f, either in the next life or through the mediation of some prophets specially inspired for the particular task. This element of indecisiveness does not, however, affect the argument put forward. The latter concerns only the exclusion of every certainly effective *ex opere operato* means which is administered after the manner of baptism by the *ecclesia numerus episcoporum* (De pud. 21 [CSL 20: p. 271 nos. 9 f.]). In effect Tertullian seems to have considered the pardon by God in the next life as a last, undetermined hope, of which theme was no certainty.
[153] De pud. 9 (CSL 20: p. 238 nos. 25-7). If baptism in blood is the only sure means of forgiveness for those guilty of capital sins, then the *omnis substantia* (of baptism) cannot be destroyed by those sins which can be forgiven without martyrdom.
[154] De pud. 22 (CSL 20: p. 272 nos. 23-5).
[155] De pat. 13 (CSL 47: p. 21 no. 4); Scorp. 6,9 (CSL 20: p. 158 nos. 3-10); De bapt. 16 (CSL 20: p. 214 no. 14); Apolog. 50,13.15 f. (CCHL I: p. 171 nos. 60 f. 67-70).
[156] De bapt. 15 (CSL 20: p. 214 nos. 7 f.).
[157] De bapt. 16 (CSL 20: p. 214 nos. 22 f.).
[158] Cf. F. X. Funk, 'Das Indulgenzedikt des Papstes Kallistus' in: ThQ 88 (1906), pp. 543, 554 f.
[159] Cf. A. d'Alès, *L'édit de Calliste* (Paris 1914), p. 154 ff.

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whole relationship between God's forgiveness, which we receive already in this life, and the *pax* of the Church in a sense which is exactly the reverse to that suggested by the above-mentioned view. *Satis denegavit* (*Spiritus Sanctus*) *veniam eorum quorum custodiam elegit*. . . *Hinc est quod neque . . . pax ab ecclesiis redditur*.[160] Because God, therefore, does not forgive sinners, neither do they receive a *pax*. Otherwise these sinners receive no *pax*, even though God gives them forgiveness. During his Catholic period Tertullian recognized a complete divine and church forgiveness for all sins committed after baptism. In this case, what is the meaning of the passage in De bapt.: *semel delicta diluuntur, quia ea iterari non oportet*? The attempt has been made to explain the view expressed in these words with reference to later Fathers of the Church.[161] But it always remains unsatisfactory to have recourse for an explanation to expressions which arise a hundred or a hundred and fifty years later. Certainly the sentence could be a paraphrase of the *semel lavacrum inimus*, which would mean that the uniqueness of baptism were stressed without, however, a penance which has partly the same effects as baptism being at all contested. Nevertheless, what is the reason for such a stress on the uniqueness of baptism? Certainly the second penance – especially in the practice of that time – was the more onerous. But this difference ought not to be exaggerated. A change in moral behaviour was also demanded of candidates for baptism, as is evidenced both by Tertullian with his exhortations in [50] De paen. and the numerous formulas of renunciation demanded before baptism. It is possible that the reason for a stress on the uniqueness of baptism is the existence of false teachings which recognized repeated baptism.[162]

But what are the reasons for the stress on the *semel dilui peccata*, in particular, and what did Tertullian as a Catholic understand by this phrase? It is, after all, somewhat vague and ambiguous. At that time there was no clear idea either of its meaning or of its compatibility with the possibility of a further penance after baptism. Tertullian was able to understand the phrase in De bapt. quite correctly, while some twenty years later he could give it a precise but false meaning from which he was able to derive a new penitential teaching. Nevertheless, the expression which is already found in De bapt. does not provide a definite key to Tertullian's view in De pud. In the latter text he was able to define the meaning of phrases in a way which previously one would not even have suspected. Nevertheless, the new teaching could receive a basis which the original and previous meaning of the formulas could not provide. Against this explanation it may be objected that Tertullian afterwards in De pud. recognizes a penance for sins[163] which can only be interpreted as venial, i.e. do not entail the loss of baptismal grace. But this admission does not seem possible. Nevertheless, this contradiction concerns not only the explanation which is offered here: it has its basis in Tertullian himself. Moreover, it is not the only case of contradiction in De pud. This case, however, can be explained without great difficulties. Tertullian wished to prove the unforgivable character of capital sins. To do this he uses the line of argument which we have explained. On the other hand, he is aware of the church institution of penance which he cannot simply explain as false and reprehensible. He simply ascribes to it, therefore, the treatment of the other sins, without considering further whether the institution of penance was actually superfluous for these sins alone, since now it is a question only of 'venial' sins.[164] Despite his restricting the number of

[160] De pud. 12 (CSL 20: p. 242 nos. 25-7).
[161] Cf. J. Stufler, 'Die verschiedenen Wirkungen der Taufe und Busse nach Tertullian' in: ZKTh 31 (1907), pp. 372-6; with regard to De bapt. 15 (CSL 20: p. 214 nos. 7 f.).
[162] Cf. for example Hippolytus, Philosophumena IV 41,2 (GCS 26: p. 172 nos.21 ff.); 42,1 (ibid., p. 173 nos. 13 f.); IX 15,1 (ibid., p. 253 nos. 10ff.); IX 13 (ibid., p. 251 nos. 22 ff.). On the work of Hippolytus cf. n.94 above.
[163] De pud. 18 (CSL 20: p. 261 nos. 25 f.); 21 (ibid., p. 270 nos. 30-2).
[164] The sins for which, therefore, public penance is appropriate are those mentioned in De paen. There appears to be no reason to see here a reference to private church penance. Authors who think that there is are: A. d'Alès,

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actual serious sins, there still remained faults which were in fact sufficiently 'serious' for the institution of penance. The idea that capital sins are the only actual serious sins was not completely outlandish at that time. This is borne out by the fact that even later only those sins count as *materia confessionis* which are hardly less grave than Tertullian's capital sins.[165]

It is not necessary to inquire here, in particular, which sins according [51] to Tertullian belong to the mortal sins which cannot be forgiven. Even the principles governing such a distinction are not of importance here. Basically, sins against God are not to be forgiven, whereas faults against men can receive forgiveness. In any case, this principle works when applied with reference to Tertullian's capital sins.[166] In some passages he has attempted to define these sins in detail with the help of biblical expressions.[167] As far as the number of these faults is concerned, a certain oscillation is noticeable. In De pud. idolatry, impurity and murder are usually mentioned, although accompanied by seven or more such sins.[168]

For Tertullian, therefore, the *delicta irremissibilia* are not only sins which, because of their

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L'édit de Calliste (Paris 1941), p. 437, and P. Galtier, *L'église et la rémission des péchés aux premiers siècles* (Paris 1932), p. 272 ff. The sins which Tertullian, even in his montanist period, allows to be submitted to the institution of penance are serious ones, both objectively and in so far as previous practice is concerned. It should be assumed, therefore, that they are submitted to public penance, even if Tertullian presents them as *leviora delicta* by comparison with capital sins. Tertullian himself does not seem to have averted to the fact that since such sins have become 'venial' in his theology they no longer require church penance. Similarly he did not see that, in the light of his own opinions, theme was no longer an essential difference between the *leviora delicta* and the *delicta cotidianae incursionis*. Tertullian would have been decidedly aware of these contradictions in his theory only if, before him, the difference between serious and venial sins had already been explained reflexively with regard to their effect on grace. But there is no indication that this was the case.

[165] Thus, for example, Augustine attacked the notion that only capital sins were serious sins; cf. De fide et operibus 19 n.34 (J. Zycha, S.Aur.Augustini . . . [CSL 41] 79 f. nos. 15-23 and nos. 1 f.); Speculum 29 (Fr. Weihrich, S.Aur. Augustini . . . [CSL 12] 199 f. nos. 25-9 and nos. 1-4). He appears, however, to have held in practice this view which he rejected in theory; cf. K. Adam, *Die kirchliche Sündenvergebung nach dem hl. Augustin* (Paderborn 1917), p. 27. Caesarius of Arles draws a distinction between *capitalia crimina* and *minuta peccata*. The latter include not only gossip in the church but also *iuramenta*, *periuria*, *maledicta*, *sordidae cogitationes, voluptuosa delectatio aurium*; cf. Sermo 64,2 (G. Morin, S.Caes.Arel.Sermo I [CCHL 103] p. 264 nos. 3-8); the group of the *capitalia*, however, includes more than the three well-known major sins; cf. Sermo 179 (G. Morin, S.Caes.Arel.Serm. II [CCHL 104] p. 684 nos. 29-32). Gregory of Nyssa, Epist. can. 7,6 (PG 45, 232 f.), deplores the fact that there is traditionally no church penance applicable to certain sins, even though he holds that these faults arc serious. But in general they must have been considered otherwise. Basil, De iud.Dei 7 (P031,669) appears to take a similar practice and theory for granted, while deploring it. At that time the institution of penance was obviously still administered as *paenitentia publica* in the form which it had previously. The only sins which were considered with certainty to destroy grace were capital sins. Then in Augustine's day theme was an ever-increasing general awareness of the much wider circle of serious sins. This had to give rise to certain difficulties, since church penance in its previous form was not applicable to this enlarged circle of sins. However, the form of the traditional institution of penance was not to be altered so easily and so quickly. Thus the idea arose gradually that certain serious sins could be remitted in the same way as venial sins. All that this required was the sinner's personal penance without the mediation of the Church (cf. K. Adam, *Die kirchliche Sündenvergebung nach dem hl. Augustin* (Paderborn 1917), p. 20 f.; K. Jüssen, *Die dogmatischen Anschauungen des Hesychius von Jerusalem* II (Münster 1934), pp. 97 ff., 103 ff.). The criterion for deciding which sins arc to be submitted to church penance and which sins are to be expiated by personal penance cannot be found, therefore, in the way these sins deprive men of grace or leave grace intact. It became necessary to introduce into penance at this point another way of distinguishing sins (sins of deed/sins of thought; public, notorious sins/secret sins; etc.).

[166] Cf. A. d'Alès, *L'édit de Calliste* (Paris 1914), p. 208 ff.

[167] For this he takes as his basis the decalogue, the decree of the Council of Jerusalem, the sentence passed on the incestuous person in 1 Cor. and similar texts.

[168] In De pud. 5 three capital sins are mentioned: *idolatria*, *moechia* and *homicidium*, cf. De pud. 12 (CSL 20: p. 226 f.; ibid., p. 242 nos. 4 f.); in De pud. 19 (ibid., p. 265 nos. 23 f.) it is a question of *homicidium*, *idolatria*, *fraus negatio*, *blasphemia*, *utique et moechia et fornicatio et si qua alia violatio templi dei*; Adv.Marc. IV 9 (CSL 47: p. 441 nos. 28 f.; p. 442 no. 1) names seven capital sins. Cf. A. d'Alès, *L'édit de Calliste* (Paris 1914), p. 205 ff.

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gravity, God does not forgive. Rather, they form a group of faults by which the baptismal grace is destroyed, i.e. mortal sins.[169] There is really no difference between what we call mortal sin and Tertullian's *delictum irremissibile*. Tertullian's *delictum ad mortem* has the same effect on baptismal grace. Thus he can say: . . . *aut neges moechiam et fornicationem mortalia esse delicta aut irremissibilia fatearis*.[170] The deadly effect of these sins demands that they should be unforgivable. Tertullian speaks of these sins above all with reference to 1 John 5:16, according to which one should not pray for the *delicta ad mortem*. Nevertheless, all the explanations given refer to the understanding of mortal sin in today's sense.[171]

Tertullian attempts, therefore, an explicit definition of the difference between light and serious sins precisely with regard to their effect. It is here that we meet this distinction explicitly for the first time, although – from the very nature of the case – it was already clear to the conscience. Serious sins destroy grace, light sins, according to Tertullian, let it remain, at least essentially. Further, he begins to establish in detail which sins in fact belong to each group. This attempt, as far as it was carried out, was a failure. The statement that for mortal sins, in the sense outlined, there is no forgiveness is even false. Nevertheless, a certain

[169] The expression 'mortal sin' must have been drawn from 1 John 5:16. Thus already in Tertullian, besides *delictum ad mortem* (De pud. 2 [CSL 20: p. 224 no. 101 and De pud. 19 [ibid., p. 266 no. 2]), is also found the expression *mortalia delicta* (Cf. I De pud. 19 [ibid., p. 266 nos. 8 f.]). Corresponding to this, Cyprian also has the notion, *mortale crimen* (De bono pat. 14 [CSL 3,l: p. 407 no. 21]). In Origen we find α(μαρτη/ματα μη_ θανατηφο&ρα (In Matth. XIII n.30 [GCS 38: p. 264 no. 16]) and in translations of his works *crimen mortale*, *culpa mortalis* (In Lev.hom. XII n.3 [GCS 29: p. 489 nos. 13 f.]) and *mortale peccatum* (ibid., p. 460 nos. 1,5). The same expression is then also found in Pacian, Epist. 3 ad Sympronianum (PL 13,1063).

[170] De pud. 19 (CSL 20: p. 266 nos. 8 f.).

[171] This notion of the *delicta mortalia* in Tertullian is disputed by other authors who hold that Tertullian considered the *delicta leviora* to be mortal sins in today's sense. Thus for example B. I. Döllinger, *Hippolytus und Kallistus* (Regensburg 1853), p. 137; B. Poschmann, *Die Sichtbarkeit den Kirche nach den Lehre des hl. Cyprian* (Paderborn 1908), p. 143; P. Galtier, *L'église et la rémission des péchés aux premiers siècles* (Paris 1932), p. 272 n.5. Certainly it is possible to conclude from Tertullian that, according to the Catholics also, the *leviora delicta* were the object of church penance, that is, that they were necessarily treated as serious sins (cf. P. Galtier, p. 273 f.; A. d'Alès, p. 437). Nevertheless, it is not correct to conclude that Tertullian, in his own theory, considered such faults as mortal sins in our sense. Those guilty of such sins are styled 'lost' (cf. De pud. 7 [CSL 20: p. 232 nos. 20 f.]), although the context demands that the term is used here in a wide sense. According to Tertullian, the parables of the lost sheep and the lost drachma can be applied to Christians who have sinned. It is in this sense that a person guilty of such a sin is 'lost'. The precise nature of this 'being lost' needs to be underlined particularly in relation to these parables: *Licet enim perisse dicatur, erit et de perditionis genere retractare* (cf. De pud. 7 [CSL 20: p. 232 nos. 17 f.]). It is here a question of an erring, not of a destruction (*quia et ovis non moriendo, sed errando et drachma non interiendo, sed latitando perierunt*; ibid., nos. 19-20). 'In this sense it could be said (finally) that what is "lost" is (actually) still safe' = *ita licet dici perisse, quod salvum est*; ibid., nos. 20 f. The following *perit igitur* must, therefore be placed in quotation marks if full justice is to be given to this meaning. It is only this that enables Tertullian to say immediately afterwards of such a sinner that he is not lost (in the strict sense), provided that he does not refuse penance (*quod potest recuperari, non perit, nisi foris perseveraverit*; ibid., p. 233, nos. 2 f.). The sinner is still *vivens adhuc peccator*, as opposed to the person guilty of capital sin who dies immediately after his deed. Tertullian deduces from these different conditions ('being lost' in the wide sense and actual death) the fact that the respective sins arc forgivable or unforgivable. Thus these notions cannot simply be other expressions for the forgivable or unforgivable character of the sins concerned. Rather they explain the fact that the one sinner has preserved the fundamental grace of baptism, while the other has lost it. In other words, it is a question here of venial sins, on the one hand, and of mortal sins in today's sense, on the other. The expression *extra gregem datus* (ibid., p. 232 no. 26) can, therefore, only be understood as a reminiscence of Tertullian's Catholic period. It no longer fits in with the new notion of the *delicta leviora.* Nevertheless, Tertullian has to hold on to this idea because the penance which was considered necessary for such sins at that time included such an excommunication. At the same time, Tertullian's new notion of the *delicta leviora* entailed logically that there are *delicta mediocria intra domum dei ibidem delitescentia mox ibidem et reperta* (ibid., p. 233 nos. 17 ff.). In clear contrast to this, it is said of the person guilty of a capital sin*: statim homo de ecclesia expellitur nec illic manet*. This phrase *nec illic manet* (ibid., p. 233 no. 24), following the *expellitur*, makes sense only if Tertullian wishes to stress the contrast with the sinner who, despite his sin, remains within the Church.

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progress in the knowledge of the nature of different kinds of sins was achieved.

V. THE BASIS OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

What follows in the further course of the penitential controversies and in the development of penitential teaching during the first half of [52] the third century is, as far as our question is concerned, rather a continuation of these positions than an elaboration of truly new aspects. The Montanist errors died out. There remains the clearly expressed doctrine that man loses baptismal grace through serious sins. The distinction is maintained between the two main groups of sins, a difference based on their nature and their effects on grace. A few random and by no means complete references will serve to illustrate this, by way of a conclusion.[172]

The loss of grace through sin is clearly expressed by Cyprian of Carthage. Just as in Tertullian, so in him we read that by baptism we have become the temple of God and must now take care, *ne quid immundum et profanum templo Dei inferatur*, *ne offensus sedem quam inhabitat derelinquat*.[173] The *lapsi* are dead,[174] the sinner has lost his wedding garment, he is naked and mortally wounded,[175] spiritually dead he carries his own corpse around with him.[176] The baptized person loses grace if he does not preserve his innocence.[177] By this 'grace' is certainly meant interior grace, since according to Epist. 70,2[178] the baptized has *in se gratiam Christi*, and according to Epist. 64,3[179] the 'grace' of baptism is the Holy Spirit. The sinner loses this 'grace of the life-bestowing bath'.[180] Even children who with their

[172] We are here leaving aside Hippolytus and Clement of Alexandria. Hippolytus reprimanded pope Callistus for not deposing bishops even when they have sinned 'mortally' (cf. Philosophumena IX 12, 22 [GCS 26: p. 249 nos. 21 ff.; cf. n.94]). What Hippolytus understood precisely by such sins is difficult to say. Already Dollinger, p. 136 f., could only surmise. Mortal sins, for Hippolytus too, must have been identifiable with *delicta irremissibilia*, but it is not at all clear precisely which sins these were or whether he considered them mortal sins only in today's sense. In one passage he enumerates the three well-known capital sins (cf. Fragm. zu den Proverbien XXI [GCS 1: p. 163 f.]). But it is not clear whether this is intended as an exhaustive list of the capital sins. Even Tertullian frequently mentions these three, although he recognizes others. What Clement of Alexandria contributes to our question corresponds to what we have found in the Shepherd of Hermas. Without any doubt, in the question of penance Clement of Alexandria depends entirely on Hermas (cf. A. d'Alès, p. 74 ff.). He clearly expresses the loss of grace through sin. At the same time, he does not give us a clear answer on the question of the difference between sins with regard to their effect on grace. The sinner passes his own death sentence (cf. Quis dives salvetur 39,2 [GCS 17: p. 185 no. 18]); he is left for dead by the Logos and the Holy Spirit, since that which is holy ought not to be sullied. The sinner, however, offends God, who dwells within him, and defiles the Logos (Paed. II 10,100, 1 [GCS l2: p. 217 nos. 9 ff.]; cf. Paed. 1110,100,4 [GCS 12: p. 217 nos. 20ff.]). Thus the sinner has died, as far as God is concerned (Quis dives salvetur 42,9 [GCS l7: p. 189 nos. 16 ff.]); he is already dead to God (Paed. III 11,81,1); the image of God is no longer in his soul (Paed. III 2,4-5,1 [GCS l2: p. 237 ff.]). Thus conversion is a real rebirth, a second baptism (Quis dives salvetur 42,14 [GCS 17: p. 190 no. 11]); a true παλιγγενεσι/α ζωη~φ (Strom. II 23,147,2 [GCS 15: p. 193 no. 26]); once sin has been set aside God can once more take up his residence in man (Quis dives salvetur 39,2 [GCS 17: p. 185 nos. 18 f.]). Clement recognizes the variety of sins (cf. for example Strom. II 15,62,1 ff. [GCS l5: p. 146 ff.]); he quotes 1 John 5:6 (ibid., II 15,66,4 f. [GCS l5: p. 148 nos. 20 ff.]). Nevertheless, he does not examine the differentiation of sins according to their effect on grace.

[173] De habitu virginum 2 (CSL 3,l: p. 188 nos. 23-5).

[174] Epist. 15,2 (CSL 3,2: p. 514 nos. 16 f.); Epist. 21,1 (from Celerinus; CSL 3,2: p. 530 no. 17); Epist. 33,1 (CSL 3,2: p. 566 nos. 18 ff.); De lapsis 8 (CSL 3,l: p.242 f. no. 14 and no. 1).

[175] Epist. 30,7 (CSL 3,2: p. 555 no. 5); De lapsis 30 (CSL 3,l: p. 259 no. 16); 35 (CSL 3,1: p. 262 no. 26).

[176] De lapsis 30 (CSL 3,l: p. 259 no. 24).

[177] Test. III 27 (CSL 3,l: p. 141 nos. 17 f.).

[178] Epist. 70,2 (CSL 3,2: p. 768 no. 15).

[179] Epist. 64,3 (CSL 3,2: p. 719 nos. 6-9).

[180] De lapsis 24 (CSL 3,l: p. 254 nos. 20 f.).

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parents are involved in apostasy lose what they received immediately after their birth.[181] Nevertheless, the two groups of sins do not appear as clearly distinct with regard to their effects on grace in Cyprian as they do in Tertullian. Nevertheless, the further development in this regard in Tertullian is not proper to him. It has already been noted that according to Cyprian there are sins which destroy grace. He even knows already the notion of *mortale crimen*[182] which is used for sins such as *adulterium*, *fraus* and *homicidium*. This expression already means at this time the 'sin causing the death of the life of grace' and not simply the sin which finally entails the death of hell. Moreover, Cyprian knows the group of unforgivable sins against God[183] mentioned by Tertullian which certainly denote the death of grace. Besides these he also knows other sins to which he is clearly unwilling to ascribe such deadly effects for the life of grace. According to him no one is completely without sins and faults.[184] We all fail daily[185] and are never quite without a wounded conscience, even if we are *sancti*.[186] The Our Father reminds us of daily sin[187] and so, even after the *gratia baptismi*, we are still often burdened with sin.[188] It can certainly be assumed, therefore, that the bishop of [53] Carthage was clearly aware of the distinction between sins which annihilate the life of grace and those which allow the radical grace to remain.

This idea is also found in Origen. The soul is alive when no *mortale peccatum* lies on it; otherwise it is dead. Christ does not then come to it.[189] The person who 'sins to death' does not preserve the baptism of the Holy Spirit.[190] Every mortal sin (*peccatum ad mortem*) means death.[191] The person who commits mortal sin loses the Holy Spirit, since Origen says that the penitent recovers the Holy Spirit, the garment (of grace) and the ring.[192] All this expresses in Origen the loss of inner grace by sin. Whether only these α(μαρτη/ματα θανατη/φορα are mortal sins for him in today's sense or whether still other sins, which he describes as α(μαρτη/ματα μη_ προ_φ θα&νατον, are also to be regarded as such, depends upon the way this distinction in his writing is to be understood. To attempt to give an answer to this question here would lead too far from our present study.[193] But that there are several kinds of sins and that these have different effects on grace is self-evident in Origen.[194]

Similarly the Didascalia Apostolorum, which originates from the first half of the third century, teaches that sin expels from the soul the Holy Spirit who otherwise dwells permanently in the baptized person, and allows access to the evil spirit.[195] If a person has sinned, then he recovers the baptismal grace, the Holy Spirit, by being reconciled through the

[181] De lapsis 9 (CSL 3J: p. 243 nos. 10 f.).
[182] De bono pat. 14 (CSL 3,I: p. 407 no. 21).
[183] Test. III 28 (CSL 3,l: p. 142 nos. 6 f.); in the case of Cyprian, however, these sins are not actually unforgiveable. Cf. A. d'Alès, p. 312 ff.
[184] Test. III 54 (CSL 3,l: p. 156 no. 5).
[185] De dom. orat. 12 (CSL 3,l: p. 175 nos. 4 f.).
[186] De op. et eleem. 3 (CSL 3,l: p. 375 no. 3).
[187] De dom. orat. 22 (CSL 3,l: p. 283 no. 19).
[188] De op. et deem. 2 (CSL 3,l: p. 374 nos. 17 f., 24).
[189] In Lev.hom. XII, 3 (GCS 29: p. 460 nos. 1-7).
[190] In Jer.hom. II,2-3 (GCS 6: p. 19). This idea is derived from the context. Origen considers the person who preserves the baptism of the Holy Spirit (τηρει=ν το_ βα&πτισμα του= α9γι∴ου πνευματο/φ: ibid., [GCS 6: p. 19 no. 22]) fortunate, as opposed to the person guilty of mortal sin.
[191] In Lev. hom. XI,2 (GCS 29: p. 452 nos. 8 f.).
[192] In Lev. hom. VIII,11 (GCS 29: p. 417 nos. 12 ff.).
[193] On the question of the different classes of sins in Origen cf. 'The Penitential,. Teaching of Origen' in this volume.
[194] In any case α(μαρτη/ματα μη/ θανατηφο&ρα, which Origen mentions in Matth. XIII,30 (GCS 6: p. 264 nos. 16 ff.) are not considered as destroying the state of grace.
[195] Didascalia Apost. IV,21,1.2.4.5.6. (F. X. Funk, *Didaskalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* I [Paderborn 1905], p. 368 nos. 12 f., p. 370 nos. 3 f., 20 f.; p. 372 nos. 1f., 13 ff.

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imposition of the bishop's hands.[196]

These examples show how the progress in the question considered in this essay, which seems to have presented itself clearly as such only with Tertullian, is to be observed generally. The need to arrive at greater clarity in the penitential questions and discussions pushes the question and its development to the fore. Everywhere the concern is expressed to preserve what man has received in baptism. Everywhere is expressed the Christian conviction that God's free mercy lifts man to the mysterious participation in the divine nature and the divine life. This participation transcends human comprehension. Nevertheless, man has to safeguard it by a way of life which corresponds to his call to share in the life of God.

[196] Didascalia Apost. II 41,2 (F. X. Funk, p. 130 nos. 1-5).

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PART TWO

The Roman Tradition

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3

THE PENITENTIAL TEACHING OF THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

Anyone who has been at all interested in the history of the practice and the teaching of penance in the early Church knows the important role which the 'Shepherd of Hermas'[1] with his teaching plays in this question. There is a vast amount of literature on this subject.[2] Nevertheless, after the penetrating study of this teaching by B. Poschmann[3] one would be tempted to think that the last word had been said on the correct understanding of it. This is so in so far as Poschmann has proved convincingly that the Shepherd of Hermas cannot be adduced as evidence for the view that it was only in the second century that there was opened up a further possibility of penance after baptism, whereas previously the Church, considering itself sinless, had precluded a further possibility of forgiveness after baptism. According to this view, it is only in the Shepherd of Hermas that a new, previously unheard-of, jubilee of a second penance was announced through a new revelation.

I. THE STATE OF THE RESEARCH

More recently, however, since Poschmann' s major study, a quite new situation has arisen with regard to the interpretation of Hermas' penitential teaching, in so far as it has been taken

[1] This essay, which is here presented in a revised form, appeared originally in ZKTh 77 (1955), pp. 385-431.

[2] J. Stufler, 'Die Bussdisziplin der abendländischen Kirche bis Kallistus' in: ZKTh 31 (1909), pp. 433-73; Vanbeck, 'La Pénitence dans le Pasteur d'Hermas' in: RHLR nouv. série 2 (1911), pp. 389-403; A. d'Alès, *L'édit de Calliste* (Paris 1914), pp. 52-113 (with references to previous literature); H. Koch, *Die Bussfrist des Pastor Hermä* (Festgabe A. v. Harnack) (Tübingen 1921), pp. 173-82; C. D. Watkins, *A History of Penance* I (London 1920), pp. 47-72; M. Dibelius, *Der Hirt des Hermas* (Handbuch zum NT, Ergänzungsband) (Tübingen 1925); A. d'Alès, *De sacramento paenitentiae* (Paris 1926), pp. 17-21; J. Hoh, *Die kirchliche Busse im zweiten Jahrhundert* (Breslau 1932), pp. 10-34; L. Kogler, *Busssakrament und Ablass* (Linz 1931); J. Lebreton, 'Le développement des institutions ecclésiastiques à la fin du II^{e} et au début du III^{e} siècle, in: RSR 24 (1934), pp. 124-64; E. Amann, 'La pénitence dans le "pasteur" d'Hermas' in: DThC XII/l (Paris 1933), pp. 759-63; B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda* (Bonn 1940), pp. 134-205; P. Galtier, *De paenitentia* (Rome 1950), n.238-45; S. Prete, 'Cristianesimo antico e riforma ortodossa. Note intorno al "Pastore" di Erma (II.Sec.): Convivium', Raccolta nuova 1950, pp. 114-28; P. Galtier, *Aux origines du sacrement de la Pénitence* (Rome 1951), pp. 132-44; J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bussstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg 1955), pp. 13-70; R. Joly, 'La doctrine pénitentielle du Pasteur d'Hermas' in: RHR 147 (1955), pp. 32-49; id., *Hermas le Pasteur,* SC 53 bis (Paris 1968), pp. 22-30; W. Doskocil, *Der Bann in den Urkirche* (NThSt Kan. Abt. vol. 11) (Munich 1958), pp. 160-91; S.Giet, *Hermas et les Pasteurs. Les trois auteurs du Pasteur d'Hermas* (Paris 1963), pp. 123-34, 174-8, 189-94, 230-4; C. Vogel, *Le pécheur et la penitence dans l'église ancienne* (Paris 1966), pp. 16-18, 62-6; K. Baus, *Von der Urgemeinde zur frühchristlichen Grosskirche* (HdKG I) (Freiburg 1962), pp. 364-6, 166 f.

[3] B. Poschrnann, *Paenitentia secunda. Die kirchliche Busse im ältesten Christentum bis Cyprian und Origenes* (Bonn 1940). Ch. 3: 'Die Busslehre des Hermas', pp.134-205.

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as the starting point in a very important attempt to place the penitential teaching of [58] the early Church on an entirely new basis. What is referred to here is the important study of Joseph Grotz.[4] It is neither our task nor our intention here to expound the content of this book and to adopt a critical stance with regard to the theses which are defended therein. In the present instance, rather, the penitential teaching in the Shepherd of Hermas will be explained in its own right without much polemic or discussion with other views on the subject. This approach[5] (which was already completed some time before the appearance of Grotz's study) receives a further justification from the study just mentioned, although – at least incidentally – there must be some discussion with the interpretation which the penitential teaching in the Shepherd of Hermas receives at Grotz's hands.

It is for this reason that, by way of an introduction, a few observations on Grotz's study in general cannot be avoided. As for his interpretation of Hermas, this will be considered in the course of the exposition of the penitential teaching of Hermas itself.

What were the main lines of the previous interpretation of the penitential teaching of the early Church? Certainly there was a difference of opinion among Catholic historians of dogma on the question as to whether besides the *poenitentia publica* which generally, for some decades, was considered the normal basic form of the ancient penitential discipline, there also existed a 'private' sacramental penance, and from which point in time such a penance was in evidence. But, apart from this disagreement, it was fairly unanimously accepted that public penance, which could be designated as penance of excommunication, was also the normal basic form of the ancient penance, that it was concluded at the end of the whole process with the reconciliation of the sinner with the Church and with God in one act,[6] and that the 'excommunication', the 'binding', was the natural expression of the fact that the sinner (and precisely because of all the sins which are subjected to this penance) has placed himself in contradiction to the Church, and thus this 'excommunication' represents an essential aspect of this whole penitential process.

Against this view Grotz now defends the following basic thesis: The actual essential form of sacramental church penance, from the very beginning, has had nothing to do with such an excommunication. This excommunication was introduced only in the second century before the actual penitential process, and then only in certain, specially determined cases; it is not an essential element of the actual [59] sacramental penance but an external measure of church discipline. It is not lifted at the time of reconciliation, at the end of the whole period of penance, but earlier so that the readmission into the community of the Church and the bestowal of divine peace are not only in reality but also temporally two distinct acts of the Church which have no intrinsic relationship the one to the other. From this period of excommunication, which was inserted before the penitential period proper, there arose,

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[4] J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bussstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg/Br. 1955). Part One: 'Die Busslehre des Hermas', pp. 11-70.

[5] We are obviously unable to avoid repeating a great deal of what has already been said by others (especially by Poschmann). Nevertheless, we consider it more appropriate to give a synthetic view of the whole of Hermas' penitential teaching than merely to criticize and supplement the conclusions of others. The latter approach may render some service to the specialist, but it would inevitably remain incomprehensible to the reader who lacks the necessary background.

[6] Cf. for example Galtier's thesis 17, *De paenitentia* (Rome 1950), n. 270, p. 224: '*Cum constet mentem fuisse Ecclesiae antiquae remissionem peccati haberi in "reconciliatione" post peractam paenitentiam publicam, dicendum omnino videtur eam "reconciliationem" fuisse sacramentalem nec ei praemissam esse de iure privatam peccati absolutionem*.' Thus even those who, like Galtier, defend the existence of private penance in the early Church acknowledge that in the case of public penance reconciliation with the Church is also sacramental absolution. Neither Galtier nor Poschmann separate these two realities temporally. This is in no way altered by the fact that Galtier, in his thesis, is only contesting the view according to which sacramental absolution *precedes* the lifting of excommunication. Grotz holds that the opposite order is the one which is historically verifiable.

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through a refinement of the procedure by the Church's discipline, the ancient grades of church penance, which are to be found both in the East and in the West. This more original form of penance, which Grotz is reluctant to style private (because it also represents the second phase of 'public penance'), occurs, precisely because it is the more original, not only within public penance for specially determined cases but also, during the whole of the patristic period, outside public penance and, indeed, for other serious sins. It became so frequently practised that Grotz even suggests that it could explain the great number of priests (beside the bishop) in many Churches.

Already, from this brief exposition of Grotz's basic thesis, it is clear that he is attempting to make a frontal attack on the thesis which is generally accepted today by Catholic historians of dogma. He maintains that there is not only (as Galtier and others hold), alongside the public form, a private form of sacramental penance which, apart from the main institution of penance, has its own distinct existence, but this private form (even if it is not called such) is precisely, from the beginning, the basic form which continues in public penance. It is only for want of close examination that this form could not be discerned within public penance. And it is for the same reason that B. Poschmann, K. Rahner and others could not see that this form of sacramental penance, completely unconnected with excommunication, was clearly practised besides public penance. Grotz begins his study of the history of penance prior to the Council of Nicea with the Shepherd of Hermas. It is here that he attempts to establish for the first time the presence of a church penance without the process of excommunication and which will be the principal norm of church penance.

As already stated, it is not our intention here to give a critical appraisal of the whole of Grotz's study, otherwise we would have to examine carefully his interpretation of penance in Cyprian, Origen [60] and others – all of whom are important for the development of his thesis. Nevertheless, a few more basic and general remarks on Grotz's work are called for, in order to avoid overloading either the actual exposition of Hermas's teaching or the assessment of Grotz's views on this particular topic.

Grotz's thesis presents the whole of the history of penance in Christian antiquity as a unilinear development. This approach meets what the modern dogmatic theologian considers to be his needs. Whereas previously the development of penance in the early Church often appeared to the dogmatic theologian to have been somewhat tortuous, he is now able, starting from what (for him) are the all-important dogmatic theses, to explain this development easily and confidently as follows: what is today recognized and practised as the essence of the sacrament of penance was also previously and on its own the *essence of this sacrament*, and everything else which may have been involved with it, even in the early Church, is a subsequent addition on the part of church discipline having nothing at all to do with the sacrament as such – and this already at that time. But is this reconstruction correct? Only a precise examination of Grotz's argumentation would yield an answer to this question. This argumentation, however, represents such a massive and complicated construction of indirect arguments that such a precise examination would be a mammoth task, requiring as much space as the work of Grotz itself. Nevertheless, it is still possible to submit certain weighty objections which, for their part, need very exact and as direct as possible arguments to be confuted.

In the first place, he has to confine himself to very subtle, indirect arguments. Wherever he pretends that his thesis is to any extent directly attested, it is always a question of texts which have been widely quoted in previous literature. Both the defenders of a private penance existing alongside a public penance and their adversaries used these texts to support their own view. I must say quite frankly that Grotz's interpretation of these texts offers me no more light than that of Galtier and others who defend a private church penance. As far as the numerous other more indirect arguments are concerned, it seems that the texts in question are

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evidence of the view expressed only for the person who is already convinced of the correctness of the thesis.

In so far as the precise proof for this observation has to go beyond [61] the Shepherd of Hermas, it cannot be given within the limits of this essay.

What appears more important to me is that no dogmatic theologian can doubt that every serious sin also involves the relationship of the sinner to the Church (and not only to God). One may view this change of relationship to the Church, as one wishes, in order to accommodate it with the teaching that the sinner, even as sinner, still remains a member of the Church. But the only person who can doubt that this relationship does change, in so far as the Church is holy, is the person who sees the Church in a nestorian, external and naturalistic way as a purely social entity and construction and who does not recognize in it the body of Christ enlivened by the Holy Spirit. Now this comprehensive and, especially, pneumatic view of the Church was current in the early Church and, indeed, to a greater extent than was the case later after the aberration of Donatism, Wyclif, Hus and the Reformers: the Church is the *holy* Church. To accept this one does not have to share the exaggerations of Windisch.[7] If this is the case, then one ought to expect that when serious sins committed after baptism are remitted the ecclesial aspect should be in evidence. But one can only think along these lines in so far as the Church expressly adverts to this aspect of sin in the celebration of penance and reacts accordingly, that is, regards the sinner as such (irrespective of which sins are involved) as in some sense 'excommunicated'. Such an 'excommunication' is obviously quite different from the excommunication of modern church law where it is only a disciplinary measure against certain sins. On the contrary, in the early Church excommunication followed from the nature of sin and was, as it were, made explicit by the church community; it is, therefore, the confirmation and the response, on the Church's part, to the sinner's change of relationship to it. This excommunication is just as much present (at least in its theological essence) today as it was in the early Church, even though it is not so apparent. Even today the sinner is excluded from the Eucharist. If one does not consider this as a consequence of sin *iuris divini*, one must recognize this exclusion – because it is *iuris ecclesiastici* – as a kind of excommunication by the Church.

Grotz lacks a precise consideration of what an excommunication is. He implicitly takes as his starting-point the modern notion. Where this notion is not verified, there is, according to him, no [62] excommunication and, therefore, no penance of excommunication. It also follows that excommunication, where it was granted as having been present, is treated as lifted, even though there is still exclusion from the Eucharist. This notion is also modern, but it is certainly not envisaged by the early Church, in which a Christian who was excluded from this central act of the Church and from its holiest part did not count even as a normal Christian but as a sinner who had to be alienated from the church community because he was unworthy of its holiness. From this brief glance at the early Church, it is not to be expected that at that time there was recognized a celebration of penance which had nothing to do with 'excommunication'. This does not mean, however, that this 'excommunication' was not susceptible of various degrees and modifications.[8] Our view that all penance in the early

[7] Cf. H. Windisch, *Taufe und Sünde im ältesten Christentum bis auf Origenes* (Tübingen 1908).

[8] The remark of C. Chartier, 'L'excommunication ecclésiastique d'après les écrits de Tertullian' in: Antonianum 10 (1935), pp. 301-344, 499-536 (cf. esp. 334), that there were in the early Church several forms of excommunication which ought not to be confused is quite correct. However, this fact, which is recognized both by Poschmann and by myself (cf. Grotz p. 438), does not have the significance which it is often given. What Chartier calls 'partial' excommunication ought not to be minimized and made into a non-literal excommunication. In the view of the early Church this is where the decisive theological point lies. We may regret that this alienation of the sinner (of every sinner!) from the Eucharist and, therefore, from fellowship with the Church is not expressed more felicitously than with the notion of 'excommunication', and that the corresponding penance is consequently described as 'penance of excommunication', that is, with words which

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Church was 'penance of excommunication' (and *therefore* was 'public') does not exclude an 'excommunication' which would correspond more to our modern notion. The person who is no longer bothered about his Christian life and who in no way has the intention to do penance and mend his ways was naturally excluded from the Church in a way (as can be clearly seen, for example, in Cyprian) which does not correspond simply and in every respect with that 'exclusion' which is imposed on a repentant sinner who has been admitted to penance and is striving to reform himself. This access to penance was already an important step towards a purification of the relationship between the sinner and the Church and, on the other hand, it represents a specific act of grace on the Church's part which is tied to certain conditions. Nevertheless, one cannot conclude from all this that, in those cases where an excommunication has been imposed, this can already have been lifted in the sense attested in the early Church and that all that had to follow was the non-ecclesial, purely sacramental part of penance, that is a simple reconciliation with God through the Church (not, however, any longer a reconciliation through the Church *with* the Church). In any case, I cannot find sufficient proofs for this theory of Grotz. From the early Church's viewpoint, it seems self-evident that in every case where there is an exclusion from the Eucharist (and not even Grotz can deny that such an exclusion is imposed until the definitive reconciliation with God) there is also a kind of excommunication. This follows from the fact that the Eucharist is precisely the sacrament of full church unity.

[63] Moreover, Grotz appears to have committed a fundamental methodological fault in that he begins his investigation with the Pastor Hermae and not with the New Testament. It is true that everyone can begin his theme where he wishes. One may consider patristic theology while presupposing biblical theology. Nevertheless, if one holds that the penance of excommunication is a subsequent and additional secondary form of an original type of penance, and if this development occurred already before the middle of the second century, then the question poses itself whether this was already the case in the New Testament which, after all, is relatively near this time. Without wishing to give detailed proof, we feel justified in claiming that a close exegesis of Matthew 16 and 18, considered in itself and in the context of the Old Testament, the customs of the synagogue communities at the time of Jesus and the practice of sects and groups at that time, together with a precise understanding of the life of the community, as this is attested in Paul's letters, lead to the conclusion that the original biblical notion of church penance is that of a penance of excommunication. The person who sins seriously, who gravely offends the holiness of the community of those who are called, is 'bound' and he *must* be 'unbound'. The loosening forgiveness of sins is the lifting of this binding on earth by which the loosening in heaven, therefore the forgiveness of guilt before God, becomes effective. If, according to a correct interpretation of the text of Matthew 16 and especially Matthew 18 it must be a question of the power to forgive *sins*, and if here the binding is understood as 'banning' and the loosing as the lifting of this ban and precisely as the forgiveness of sins by the whole Church – if, therefore, these texts attest a penance of excommunication, then it is already totally unlikely that we do not have here the actual and original form of the sacrament of forgiveness which Christ left to his Church. Further, if one observes that this excommunication was applied in the Church of the apostles and the way it was applied, and one notices that, in Paul, the catalogue of sins which exclude people from the kingdom of God (therefore all serious sins) coincides with the list of those sins which require an 'avoidance' of the sinners by the Church until they have mended their ways, then a

almost inevitably today conjure up the idea of procedures of modern canon law. Nevertheless, this difficulty of terminology ought not to obscure the fact that not only did these 'excommunications' exist in the early Church, but also they represented a decisive aspect of the very notion of penance. They were an element which explained so many other aspects of penance (especially with regard to its public nature) and which, therefore, was found in one form or another in every penance of the early Church.

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penance of excommunication for the apostolic Church has such evidence in its favour that there is no longer any place for another kind of church penance. Also in this regard, it is hardly to be expected that such a penance with excommunication [64] should have been a secondary development; on the contrary, the possibility has to be faced that the practice of such a penance of excommunication became more variegated and underwent developments and refinements corresponding to the increasingly complicated conditions of the early Church. But this is something quite different from the subsequent appearance of this penance from (or, in addition to) a form which originally had nothing whatsoever to do with such an excommunication.

For methodical progress in the question under discussion there is, therefore, the basic expectation that church penance is *penance of excommunication*, by which is meant excommunication in the theological and not in the modern church law sense of the term. For this assumption to be rejected it must be clearly proved – in the present case, therefore, for the Shepherd of Hermas – that there is a group of sinners which, on the one hand, according to the notion of the early Church needs an actual sacramental measure of the Church for the remission of its sins and for reconciliation with God, but which, on the other hand, does not have to be reconciled with the Church in any way. In this case, one would not have to see any change in the relationship with the Church, either in the sin or in the reconciliation. If such proof cannot be adduced in respect of the Shepherd of Hermas and if, indeed, the very contrary is indicated in his case for all sinners who certainly need a second metanoia, then at least Hermas is excluded from the witnesses to Grotz's theory. This point will be proven here by a positive exposition of the penitential teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas. It is only accidentally, in the course of this exposition, that a position will be taken with regard to Grotz's interpretation of this teaching.

II. THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS – THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK [9]

Without going into the many obscure literary questions which are still posed with regard to the Shepherd of Hermas,[10] we may take the following points as being generally accepted. According to the latest results of research, which are partly hypothetical, the composition of

[9] On this question cf. Poschmann, pp. 136-40, and especially R. Joly, pp. 11-21, together with his bibliography (pp. 69-74). More recent French publications on the Shepherd of Hermas express a general reserve and disagreement with regard to the results of researches published in German (thus R. Joly, p. 25; S. Giet, p. 125), without, however, providing either detailed reasons or preferable opinions. In his work mentioned above S. Giet attempts to conclude from the threefold division of the whole of Hermas' s composite work to the existence of three different authors. It must be said, with J. A. Fischer (cf. ThRv 61 [1965], p. 308), however, that the deriving of three different authors, simply from what are certainly in the main three distinct parts, does not appear to be justified (cf. on this point also R. Joly, pp. 12 f.; 16 ff.; 140 f.; E. Peterson, *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis* [Freiburg 1959], p. 272; J. A. Fischer, p. 307 f.). One 'author' (who could have sketched the writing at different periods) or a final redactor could have easily composed the whole work from material belonging to different traditions and from drafts of various stages of edition. Also in a work of this period we should not expect to find highly differentiated and precise theological terminology, even if this does not mean that it evinces a naive mentality. Differences of terminology and the clear notion of the differences of doctrine which they presuppose can serve only in a very limited way here as an indication of different authors, since at that time doctrinal disputes and their solution were generally expressed in another form.

[10] A review of the state and the history of the text is given in the introduction to Whittaker's edn, *Die Apostolischen Väter* I. *Der Hirt des Hermas* (GCS 48) (Berlin 1956) IX-XX. The work itself is composed in the style of an allegory and belongs to the category of apocalypse. For this reason alone, it is obvious that to explain this work historically, indeed to interpret it at all, is a difficult task.

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the entire work in its present form is to be placed between c. A.D. 75-175[11] (while it is not possible to ascribe it to the time of Clement [65] of Rome). A Roman tradition, based on the Muratorian Canon, identifies the author Hermas as the brother of the Roman bishop Pius I (A.D. 142-55).[12] What Hermas, who undoubtedly hails from a Judaeo-Christian milieu,[13] recounts about himself and his family, especially in the first four visions, is hardly a mere literary fiction.[14] It is difficult to deny that these accounts contain a genuine autobiographical core; but this latter has been considerably elaborated with later reflections and developments.

The most important passages for the penitential question in the Shepherd of Hermas are: Vis. I 1,9 (GCS 48: p. 2,14-17); ibid., 3,2 (GCS 48: pp. 3,16-4,2; here the possibility of penance is already assumed!); Vis. II 2,2-3,4 (GCS 48: pp. 5,18-7,4; the content of the 'booklet' which the Church in the guise of an old lady transmits as the great revelation in a vision); Vis. III 2,4-8,9 (GCS 48: p. 9,14-15,16; the vision of the construction of the Church as a tower: the 'allegory of the tower'); Mand. IV 1,4-3,7 (GCS 48: pp. 26,5-28,19; the instruction on marital purity by the 'Shepherd': the singular character of post-baptismal penance; the relationship between baptism and penance after baptism; the justification and the limits of the view of 'certain teachers' on this point); Sim. VIII (GCS 48: pp. 65,18-76,5; the differentiation of various groups of penitents, their examination by the Shepherd and their respective destiny); Sim. IX (GCS 48: pp. 76,7-105,16; appendix and summary: the second 'allegory of the tower').[15]

The problem posed for the history of dogma by the penitential teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas consists in the fact that a forgiveness of all the sins which have been committed after baptism is announced as being possible only once.

Now is this possibility according to Hermas a new and previously non-existent possibility which, as such, needed to be communicated through a new revelation? Is it, therefore, an extraordinary concession made to those who have been Christians for some time, a kind of 'jubilee' which presupposes that previously both in theory and in practice (or at least in practice) a forgiveness (by the Church) was no longer possible for capital sins committed after baptism? (This view could be called the 'baptismal theory' and is held by Funk,[16] Batiffol, Windisch, Preuschen, Schwartz, H. Koch, Dibelius, Weinel, Puech, Laun, v.

[11] Thus for example S. Giet; J. Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (Tournai 1958), p. 48 f. Cf. also R. Joly, p. 14 f.

[12] Origen, Eusebius and Rufinus know nothing of this tradition. S. Giet proposes Pius I's brother, whose name is unknown, as the author of at most the nine parables (p. 288), while he ascribes to 'Hermas' the four visions (which, according to his three-author hypothesis represent the 'first book'), since they evince a Latin and at times a clearly Roman environment as the milieu of composition.

[13] Cf. J. Daniélou, pp. 43-9; see also E. Peterson, pp. 254-309.

[14] On this question cf. R. van Deemter, *Der Hirt des Hermas - Apokalypse oder Allegorie?* (Delft 1929); A. V. Ström, *Der Hirt des Hermas. Allegorie oder Wirklichkeit* (Leipzig-Uppsala 1936). Deemter and Ström reject the thesis of a purely literary fiction. Others, on the contrary, for instance D. van den Eynde, *Les normes de l'enseignement chrétien dans la littérature patristique des trois premiers siècles* (Paris 1933) p. 89 f., and G. Bardy, *La Théologie de l'Eglise de saint Clement à saint Irénée* (Paris 1945) p. 117 f., think that it is a literary fiction, at least as far as Hermas' personal relationships are concerned. R. Joly (pp. 17-21) also inclines towards this view. S. Giet leaves open the possibility of '*un cadre biographique*' at least for the visions.

[15] These texts have recently been presented in a carefully prepared edn: H. Karpp (ed), *Die Busse. Quellen z. Entstehung d. altkirchl. Busswesens* (Zurich 1969) (Traditio Christiana, vol. 1); see the general introduction and bibliography. In the interpretation of the individual 'penitential' texts and in the analysis of the texts a special place must be afforded within the work as a whole to the first four visions. If S. Giet's thesis of three authors is correct, then a greater independence must be assumed for the ninth parable. Nevertheless, the generally accepted view today is that *one* author established the eventual form of the work, albeit with the use of several traditions.

[16] For further references to the authors named, see in Poschmann, p. 134 f.

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Harnack, Loofs, Seeberg, Adam, Rauschen, Hoh, Amann)[17] Or does the Shepherd of Hermas attest the existence of a [66] previous practice and theory of the Church, so that the actual significance of the new revelation lies not in the possibility of the forgiveness of all sins but in the urgency of penance in view of the imminent end of the world, in the personal assurance of actual forgiveness to Hermas and his family and in the exhortation to all sinners to do penance in the assurance that such penance will be effective (thus Stufler, d'Ales, Hunermann, Tixeront, Galtier, Poschmann)?

A third possibility, which would count as a middle course between the two views mentioned above, is that Hermas is countering the rigorists who are unwilling to admit a post-baptismal penance. He would be doing this in view of the imminent end of the world. It is possible that in Rome at the time of 'Hermas', because of a strong rigoristic current, there began to emerge a more definite and more urgent tendency which advocated a post-baptismal penance (cf. R. Joly, pp. 23-7). Perhaps we have here, therefore, the attempt to do justice to both tendencies: on the one hand, the possibility of a penance after baptism is presupposed, while, on the other hand, this possibility is limited and confined practically to a single opportunity. It is obvious that Hermas wishes to avoid a head-on clash with the rigorists.[18]

III. THE LIMITATION OF THE ACCEPTED POSSIBILITY OF PENANCE

First of all, we must prescind from the question of whether and how the Church can be a cause for the remission of sins.[19] In any case, Hermas teaches that all sins (including those which will later be the so-called 'capital sins') can be forgiven by genuine sorrow and repentance. According to him, this possibility for those who are already baptized Christians is not a *new* grace which is merely announced through his revelation as a kind of 'jubilee'. Although it is offered only once for sins committed after baptism, it was still previously recognized by the Christian Church. All that Hermas does is to modify this traditional belief by limiting it eschatologically in view of his conviction that the end of the world is imminent. For him personally the renewal of this ancient truth by the 'old woman Church' and the 'shepherd', as far as it concerns himself, his family and his relatives, represents an urgent exhortation, a consolation and assurance [67] of their own salvation, all rolled into one. It is worthwhile considering each of these points in turn.

1. Forgiveness is Possible

A) ALL SINS ARE FORGIVABLE

Hermas certainly recognizes *a kind of apostasy from faith* for which, he says, there is no question of a metanoia. He describes this apostasy (clearly with reference to Mark 3:29 par.)

[17] The Catholic historians of dogma among those mentioned modify this thesis with regard to the extent of the supposed penitential rigorism and on the question of whether this rigorism concerns only the practice of church reconciliation or includes other areas.

[18] This means that a great deal of the obscurity in the Shepherd of Hermas is to be construed not simply as a literary elaboration of a more original part, but in relation to the context and the concrete situation of that time. On this assumption, the final redactor would have had to avoid writing too concretely and too clearly to a given situation. Both the obscure style and the literary form were, therefore, understandable as a 'defence-mechanism', which allows a great freedom in the interpretation of what is actually meant. The composition and structure of the work evince different levels, traditions and stages of redaction. It is, therefore, also probable that, in the course of composition, new addressees and changed circumstances had to be considered and that, consequently, the attempt was made to harmonize historical necessities with 'pastoral astuteness'.

[19] Cf. Sim. VI 2,3; VIII 6,4; 8,2; IX 19,1.3; 26,3.5; cf. also Vis. I 4,2; III 7,2.

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as a 'blasphemous' offence and as completely deliberate (ε0κ καρδι/αφ: Sim. IX 26,5 [GCS 48: p. 95 n. 26 f.]). Upon close examination, it becomes clear that what makes these sins irremissible is not the objective gravity of the action itself but the obstinacy and remorselessness associated with them (see, e.g. Sim. VIII 6 [GCS 48: pp. 71,7-72,10]). Thus, for our purpose, it does not matter whether, in the relevant cases (i.e. where the angel of penance makes a distinction between the repentant and the unrepentant), Hermas regards this irremissible character as being only tied to this apostasy in fact, or whether he considers it as following with a moral or absolute necessity from the very nature of the sins in question.[20] In any case, he does not mean that a sin for which a person is sorry and does penance is unforgivable. This is clear by the way he stresses that there has been no sorrow for these sins: despite exhortation, not one of these sinners has done penance (Sim. VIII 6,4 [GCS 48: pp. 71,21-72,1]), they have fallen away definitively (Sim. IX 26,3 [GCS 48: pp. 95 n. 18-21]), thy persist in their decision (Sim. VIII 7,3 [GCS 48: pp. 72,17-73,2]) and *therefore* do not receive any penance from God, that is, God does not give them the grace to enable them to answer his call to repentance, since they will only simulate repentance and blaspheme his name still further (Sim. VIII 6,2 [GCS 48: pp. 71 n. 11-15]). Even in the case of this blasphemous apostasy it is unrepentance that is the reason for the fact that it cannot be forgiven. This point is made clearer by the fact that the same designation of 'those who do not have' penance is applied to sinners who belong to the same class as others who, precisely because of their sorrow, do receive forgiveness (Sim. VIII 8,2 f. [GCS 48: pp. 73,16-74,4]; IX 23,2.4 f. [GCS 48: p. 94, 7-11,14-22]); which means that Hermas (as he himself concedes: Sim. IX 19,3 [GCS 48: p. 92,13-20]) has not been able to distinguish [68] and to categorize sins clearly according to their objective gravity in such a way that it becomes evident why some receive forgiveness while others do not. Such a distinction can express and, to a certain extent, explain only a difference in the spiritual attitude towards penance. It does not represent a difference between what is forgivable and what is unforgivable which is independent of sorrow and repentance or unrepentance. The sin of apostasy does not, therefore, even according to Hermas himself, contravene his general principle: penance for sins entails life, unrepentance entails death (Sim. VI 2,3 [GCS 48: p. 60,2-7]) ; VIII 6,6 [GCS 48: p. 72,5-10]); the person who repents from the bottom of his heart and so purifies himself from the sins mentioned, to the extent of not committing them again, will receive from the Lord the healing of his earlier sins (Sim. VIII 11,3 [GCS 48: pp. 75,20-76,3]). Following this principle, Hermas promises forgiveness even to the gravest sins: adultery (Mand. IV 1,8 [GCS 48: p. 26,16-20]), falling away from faith (even after a long time: Vis. I 3,2 (GCS 48: pp. 3,16-4,2). In this regard, it is worth noting that Hermas' children had fallen away from the faith and had denounced their parents: Vis. II 2,2-4 (GCS 48: pp. 5,18-6,4); 3,1 (ibid., p. 6,18-23); Sim. IX 21,3-4 (GCS 48: p. 93,14-20); 26,5-6 (GCS 48: p. 95,25-32).[21] Hermas promises forgiveness to false teaching in Sim. IX 19,2 (GCS 48: p. 92,7-13).

[20] In Sim. IX 26,6b it is stated clearly that penance is possible even for those who have previously fallen away from the faith. It may be that this is an allusion to a specific church practice following a persecution. Cf. R. Joly, p. 27 f.

[21] It is immaterial whether, with Dibelius (p. 586) and Grotz (p. 27), we read ποτε/ in Sim. VII 4 or follow the traditional text πα&ντωφ (or παντελω~φ). In any case Hermas's children are promised full forgiveness, provided that they do penance in the prescribed way; for then their hearts are 'clean from every wicked deed'. Any element of uncertainty or the hypothetical in such cases consists (apart from the gravity of the sins in question) in the question of whether penance is really done conscientiously and completely but not in any doubt of whether, given such a penance, complete forgiveness will be really granted. The fact that Hermas' children are doing complete penance is evidenced by their undergoing the trial imposed by God and still continuing, and not only by their good intention, to do penance which is taken for granted and is described as 'wholehearted' penance. If, without any justification in the text, the πα&ντωφ is corrected to a ποτε/ this can only signify uncertainty with regard to the conditions and consequently with regard to divine forgiveness. For it is certainly

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In general Hermas sees very clearly that certain sins destroy the grace of baptism, and even for these sins he teaches that there is a forgiveness which restores the baptismal seal (Sim. VIII 6,3 48: p. 71,15-21]). He rejects, therefore, the principle by which, from Tertullian onwards, the unforgivable character of capital sins will later be justified: sins which destroy the grace of baptism can be remitted only by a second baptism which (apart from the baptism of blood in martyrdom) does not exist. Already, on the basis of this theological principle, there can be no sinners who, according to Hermas, can be refused the possibility of forgiveness because of the objective seriousness of their faults. Such fundamental gravity must show itself, if anywhere at all, in its detrimental effect on the grace of baptism. But since, according to Hermas, the baptismal seal is restored by penance, on the one hand there can be no unforgiveable sins in his view (granted the presence of penance) and, on the other hand, penance, considered as the remission of sins, is clearly seen as parallel to baptism.

[69] These sinners who, according to Hermas, in general and without exception have a possibility of penance when they are compared with one another evince considerable differences with regard both to the objective seriousness of their sins and to their attitude to penance and their intention to be converted. There is naturally a connection between these two aspects: the more serious the sin the less likely it is (in normal circumstances) that the sinner has the will to repent. Hermas draws the distinction between the different groups of sinners especially in Vis. III (GCS 48: p. 7-19). Grotz has analysed these groups carefully (in our opinion rather too subtly and exactly). There is no need for us to enter any further into these distinctions here. Since, even if Grotz denies that the sinners of some groups are excommunicated, while renouncing the possibility of church reconciliation for other groups (thus, according to him, the stones who are simply rejected in Vis. III 2,7a-5,5 [GCS 48: pp. 926-7; 12,11-17] are not excommunicated, whereas the stones which have been cast far away in Vis. III 2,7c [GCS 48: p. 9,28-9] and 2,9-6,1 and 7,1-3 [GCS 48: pp. 10,3-8; 12,18-22; 13,20-14,6] are, in his view, excommunicated in the fullest sense and can no longer receive a church reconciliation), he nevertheless allows a possibility of salvation for all sinners, at least by means of subjective penance, even if, in this case, the assurance of salvation is not very great.[22] In agreement with Grotz, therefore, we have to make the following observation: there is simply no exclusion from salvation for the sinner who has committed sin after baptism, purely because of the gravity of his fault and quite independently of whether or not he intends to do penance. On this score, at least, even a church reconciliation cannot be impossible.

B) THE LIMIT

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complete healing that is promised (παντω&φ, here being connected with the total purification of the heart, must mean not ‘certainly’ but ‘completely’). To translate this word by ‘certainly’ or ‘surely’ is to create a contradiction, in so far as the forgiveness, the uncertainty of which has been stressed, is now certain once the condition for it has been fulfilled (cf. Grotz). If, therefore, certain sinners have proven that their conversion is genuine (such would be excommunicates, according to Grotz), then it is no longer possible to speak of the uncertainty of healing in their regard. Moreover, this text speaks explicitly only of forgiveness by God. The question of how the Church should behave towards such a genuine and tested excommunicate is not considered at all. In the case of a complete pardon by God, however, a complete forgiveness on the part of the Church also ought to be presumed, in principle. The idea that the Church, for its part, should not grant forgiveness, despite God’s pardon, was introduced first by Tertullian and was opposed by the Catholics who showed that the notion was nonsensical. For reasons other than those of Tertullian, this view later played a considerable role, for example, with Augustine, in respect of the many recidivists after the first penance. Because at that time already church law prescribed that penance could only be granted once, the bishop of Hippo did not know any other way of helping such people who had fallen but were again repentant The τινα healing promised in Sim. VII 4 (ibid., 65.2) should not to be given too much weight, since it is immediately explained and modified by the following πα&ντωφ.

[22] Cf. J. Grotz, pp. 21, 36 f.

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That the possibility of penance is in fact only limited is a point often made by the Shepherd of Hermas. In the great and decisive revelation concerning penance in the second vision it is established that for the 'saints' (i.e. for baptized Christians who, although they may be sinners, are still given this name by Hermas) penance 'from the fixed day' on is no longer possible, since the days are fulfilled and Christians can no longer expect salvation from the sins committed from now on (Vis. II 2,4-5 [GCS 48: pp. 5,25-6,8]; similarly Vis. III 5,5 [ibid., [70] p. 12,11-17]; 8,8 f. [ibid., p. 15,9-16]; 9,5 [ibid., p. 16,5-8]; Sim. IX 9,4 [ibid., p.83,26-9]; 19,2 [ibid., p.92,7-13]; 20,4 [ibid., p.93,2-6]; 21,4 [ibid., p. 93,17-20]; 26,6 [ibid., p. 95,27-32]; Sim. X 4,4 [ibid., pp. 111,18-112,4]). But in these passages the reason for the limitation is clear: the end of the world is imminent (for Hermas this seems to be announced by the dreaded, near 'tribulation' of a persecution: Vis. II 2,7 [GCS 48: p. 6, 10-13]; 3,4 [ibid., p. 7,2-4]) and there is no το&ποφ (Vis. III 5,5 [GCS 48: p. 12,11-17]) for penance. Because the judgement is coming soon and, therefore, the 'tower' is about to be completed, beforehand there is only a το&ποφ for doing good and so for true penance (ibid. 9,5 [GCS 48: p. 16,7-8]). Thus penance must be done 'rapidly' and not delayed (Sim. IX 19,2 [GCS 48: p. 92,7-13] and cf. VIII 9,4 [GCS 48: p. 74,21-5]).

If in Vis. II, 2,5 (GCS 48: p. 6,4-8) the days for penance for the saints are declared as being fulfilled, while the opportunity for (baptismal) penance is still offered to the pagans until the 'last day', the suggested difference between the deadline for the possibility of penance for Christians and that of baptism does not contradict the explanation given above. The Christian must have finished his penance by the last day and cannot begin it only then. If he wishes to complete it he must have begun it quite a while before this day. The critical moment for his penance, therefore, occurs already before the last day and, indeed, is determined by the threatening imminence of the end of the world, whereas for the pagan there is still the possibility of baptism right up to this day. (The idea that the Christian must not merely begin his penance but already have finished it is expressed e.g. in Sim. VIII 7,3 [CGS 48: pp. 72,17-73,2]; 8,3.5 [GCS 48: p. 74,1-10]; 9,4 [ibid., p. 74,21-5]; 10,1.3 [ibid., pp. 74,26-75,3.6-11]; it is even stressed that only after a long penance and after the completion of its conditions will sins be forgiven: Sim. VII 4 [GCS 48: pp. 64,17-65,21]). It might also be asked whether the distinction between a critical deadline for the penance of Christians, on the one hand, and for pagans, on the other, evinces a view which was widespread in Hermas' time, namely that before the actual end of the world and before the judgement there would be a 'reign of a thousand years' in which the pagans would still be able to be baptized, while bad Christians would have no further possibility of penance (since the good Christians would already have begun to reign with the Lord).[23] Moreover, Vis. II 2,5 (GCS 48: p. 6,4-8), translated [71] literally and verbatim, runs: 'The days of penance for the saints are fulfilled; *and* for the pagans, though (δε/) there is penance up to the last day.' Thus the δε/, because of the previous και/**,** establishes an opposition only between the saints and the pagans[24] but not between the limits of penance themselves; rather, the και/ stresses the identity of these two limits. Why, therefore, should Hermas not stress that for the pagans *also* the possibility of baptism ends with the last day? According to his expressed opinion the righteous who have died in pre-Christian times can and must be baptized in the underworld. Thus it can hardly be said that it is impossible that he stresses that from the now imminent day onwards there is no

[23] Galtier, *De paenitentia,* n.233, p. 162, n.l, believes that there is a chiliastic notion in this disputed text. L. Atzberger, *Geschichte der christlichen Eschatologie innerhalb der vornicänischen Zeit* (Freiburg/Br. 1896), p. 89 f., contests that Hermas was a chiliast.
[24] Cf. R. Joly, p. 92, n. 2.

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longer any possibility of salvation in the next life and that, therefore, the pagans and the faithful should strive to avail themselves of this last and quickly fading chance of salvation.

The day which in Vis. II is announced as the deadline for the possibility for penance and which here, at least, practically seems to coincide with the day on which this limit is promulgated in the vision to Hermas must not, however, be treated as a rigid and fixed term. In the course of the revelations throughout the book it is repeatedly postponed.[25] Hermas does not understand the exact determination of the term very precisely: it arrives with the completion of the tower, the final construction of which has been interrupted, precisely to allow the possibility of penance (Sim. X 4,4 [GCS 48: pp. 111, 18-112,4])!

In any event, in the whole book the limit for penance remains determined by the last day, expected as imminent, and the completion of the tower. If, therefore, because of the imminent end of the world there is for the faithful still a possibility for the remission of faults, but only if they are zealous and do penance immediately, then it is easy to understand that Hermas can deny to those who still have to receive baptism (and for this, at that time, a long preparation was necessary)[26] the possibility of finding the opportunity of further penance after baptism solely because of the nearness of the last day: Mand. IV 3,3 (GCS 48: p. 28,3-7); Vis. II 2,5 (ibid. p. 6,4-8).

The decisive reason for the principle 'Only one, unique remission of sins in baptism' is certainly other than that just mentioned; it is the 'ideal' principle for neophytes and the newly-baptized, which is proposed to them but which does not preclude the possibility of a further penance after baptism.[27]

[72]

2. The Situation before Hermas

A) THE POSSIBILITY OF A PENANCE FOR ALL SINS

In Vis. II the decisive revelation on penance is given to Hermas in the form of a booklet which he must transcribe and only after a long time be able to decipher (1,1-2,1 [GCS 48: p. 5,3-18]). This revelation concerns Hermas himself and his family (2,2 [ibid., p. 5,18-22]), but also all 'God's elect' (1,3 [ibid., p. 5,7-11]).

According to this vision his family (which has sinned) and 'all the saints' (who are also sinners), together with the church leaders (who also must mend their ways) will be forgiven their sins which they have previously committed (but only these) by God's mercy, provided that they do penance (conversion is taken for granted), change their ways, do not doubt God's readiness to forgive and undergo the 'tribulation' which precedes the end of the world

[25] For further details on this point cf. Dibelius, pp. 447, 453, 511 ff., and Poschmann p. 146. In the first four visions which have a special place in the whole work, the deadline for the possibility of doing penance appears to be immediately imminent. Thus the summons to penance in expectation of the imminent end of the world is the urgent *leitmotif* of these visions (cf. S. Giet, p. 123 ff.). In the *mandata* and *similitudines* we already meet a comparative 'diluted eschatology'. The end of the world is delayed, and this affects the doctrine of penance: the building of the tower is immediately interrupted (Sim. IX 5,2; 14,2) in order to postpone the Parousia (cf. R. Joly).

[26] In Hippolytus' Paradosis (17, Dix p. 28), which codifies the traditional Christian practice in about A.D. 220, a period of three years is envisaged for the catechumenate. Although such a long period may not yet have been customary in Hermas' circle (Justin, for instance, does not yet appear to be cognisant of such fixed periods), it is reasonable to assume, granted Hermas' picture of the general state of the Church, that is, as being considerably diminished in its original idealism, that already at this time (as later at the time of Hippolytus) great care was taken in the admission of neophytes and quite long probationary periods were imposed.

[27] On this point cf. P. Galtier, *Aux origines du sacrament de la Pénitence,* p. 132, n.34, together with R. Joly's criticism of d'Alès and Poschmann in *La doctrine pénitentielle du Pasteur d'Hermas,* p. 41 ff.; id., *Hermas le Pasteur,* pp. 24 f. and 158ff.

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without renouncing their faith (2,2-3,4 [GCS 48: pp. 5,18-7,4]). This is the content of the 'new' revelation.

Now what is the actual meaning of this revelation? Does it mean that previously there was no such possibility for the forgiveness of sins, so that now, for the first time, by means of this new revelation this possibility is offered by God for sins which have been committed after baptism? Or is it merely a question of the promise of the actual conversion of Hermas' family, of the limit for penance and, therefore, of the relative impossibility of being able to do penance later for new sins, both of these circumstances, together with the divine assurance of an actual forgiveness, being the (psychological) reason for the actual conversion of his family?

The second interpretation is the only one possible, and this for the following reasons. In the first place, even before this new revelation Hermas considers it completely self-evident that his children will be inscribed in the book of life along with the saints (Vis. I 3,2 [GCS 48: pp. 3,16-4,2]), if they do penance wholeheartedly, and that only pagans and *unrepentant* apostates (Hermas' children were also apostates) will be really rejected (Vis. I 4,2 [GCS 48: p. 4,18-21]). The possibility of a forgiveness of sins is, therefore, presupposed as self-evident in the first vision, without the murmur of a word to the effect that the promise made is something previously unheard-of. The content of the revelation on penance itself corroborates this observation: if Hermas communicates it as 'the Lord's oath' to his [73] family, it entails the forgiveness of sins because of the change of heart which is thereby elicited (this communication certainly cannot effect anything else; it is obviously not to be considered the reason for the immediate forgiveness itself) (Vis. II 2,4 [GCS 48: pp. 5,25-6,4]). The Lord's oath (2,5.8 [ibid., p. 6,4-8,14-17]), according to the obvious sense of the text, does not have as its subject the first opening of a possibility of penance (there is no mention of this), but the limitation of this possibility for penance. It is easy to see that such a communication can have the announced effect, already mentioned, namely the actual penance and the subsequent forgiveness of the sins of his family. This makes for an increase in the subjective and personal assurance of the forgiveness of sins (which, because of the uncertainty of fulfilling all the conditions necessary for forgiveness, is not absolute), and in turn this certainty becomes a new motive for an effective conversion, in so far as it facilitates the overthrow of doubt and despair (cf. Vis. III 11 [GCS 48: pp. 17,20-18,2]) which otherwise easily have a detrimental effect on the will to do penance.

The content of the revelation is, therefore, not the opening of a new, previously non-existent possibility of penance, but the impossibility of a later penance; and this not simply as a threat but as the effective motive for conversion which is *still* possible 'now', 'in these days'. This interpretation is confirmed by the observation in Mand. IV 3,4-5 (GCS 48: p. 28,7-13) that God, in his providence, has allowed for a penance for the faithful even after baptism because he knew that men, because of their own weakness and the devil's guile, would sin again after baptism.

The fact that Hermas 'has heard from certain teachers[28] that there is no other penance than that by which we descended into the water and received absolution of our earlier sins' (Mand. IV 3,1 [ibid., pp. 27,21-28,2]) cannot be adduced as a proof that the possibility of the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins is opened up for the first time by this revelation. The angel of penance verifies Hermas' grasp of the teachers' thesis (3,2 [ibid., p. 28,2-3]), but the manner in which this is done shows that there must always have been the possibility of

[28] On the identification of these 'teachers' cf. Poschmann, p. 165, and P. Galtier, op. cit., together with R. Joly. G. Bardy prefers to see them as a particular group and connects them with the teachers reprimanded in Sim. VIII 6,5 and IX 19,2 f.; 22,14; cf. G. Bardy, 'Les écoles Romaines au second siècle' in: RHE 28(1932), pp. 501-32 (on Hermas see pp. 503-6). Nevertheless, the praise in Mand. IV and the reprimand in Sim. VIII/IX hardly refer to the same group of teachers, even though they all spread erroneous theories on penance.

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penance for sins after baptism. The principle of the 'teachers' is not interpreted as being obsolete, as if it were previously correct but now had been abolished by a new revelation; rather, it is presented as a still valid formulation of the *ideal* prescription (which earlier no [74] less than now excludes the possibility of a second penance): 'You have heard correctly [with this principle of the "teachers"]. It is so. Because the person who has received pardon for his sins must sin no more but must persevere in purity.' The ε1δει in the imperfect implies (as, e.g. in Vis. III 4,3 [GCS 48: p. 11,14-22]; Sim. VI 4,2 [ibid., p. 62,12-13]), as opposed to a δει= (Mand. IV 1,8 [ibid., p. 26,16-20]; Sim. VII 1 [ibid., p. 64,2-7]), that the person who was baptized earlier ought not to have sinned, but he has still done so, whereas a present δει= simply expresses the strict moral necessity without reference to its being contradicted by the reality. Since this ε1δει is brought in not as an opposition but as the basis for, and as a more precise explanation of, the teachers' principle (γα&ρ!), this principle, according to the angel of penance (i.e. according to Hermas) is intended to express nothing more than the *prescription* to preserve the grace of baptism.

The rest of the angel's explanation shows that this interpretation is correct, i.e. that it is a question of the compatibility of two axioms ('pardon only by baptism'-'penance for sins after baptism') and not of their mutual exclusion. The angel does not wish to go any further into his explanation (the δηλω&σω does not say any more, since the possibility of penance has been known to Hermas for a long time already and, therefore, does not need a new 'revelation'). But, with this explanation, he does not wish to give any opportunity for sinning to either present or future newly-baptized persons. In fact, these newly-baptized persons (the following sentence in Mand. IV 3,3b [ibid., p. 28,5-7] is, as the γα&ρ indicates, only intended as the justification of the intention not to give a pretext for sin, but not as the content of the announced 'explanation') do not have μετα&νοια but the (baptismal-) pardon of their sins; i.e. therefore they must (because they have no pretext for sinning) simply realize that they have to preserve this forgiveness of their sins (3,3b.4 [GCS 48: p. 28,5- 7.7-11]).

There now follows the announced further explanation as to why and how there is still a possibility of penance for sins committed after baptism, notwithstanding the ideal axiom of the teachers (3,4-6 [ibid., p. 28,7-16]): those who have been Christians for some time have (and ought to know that they have) a penance for their sins, because God, in his providence, knows men's weakness and the devil's guile and has, therefore, in his great mercy (it is called great [75] and not new!) granted such a possibility for penance. Thus the person who, after baptism (this is the 'great and holy calling'),[29] being tempted by the devil, falls into sin has still one (and only one) possibility for penance and forgiveness. The precise explanation of the meaning and the limits of the teachers' axiom and the justification of the single possibility of penance for those who are already Christians is based not on the fact that an earlier, stricter principle has been replaced by a new, more lenient one – there is no mention of such a change – but on the fact that God, in his mercy, has created such a possibility for forgiveness. Thus this principle of the teachers is more an ideal norm than a principle which does not admit of exceptions in practice.

If it were a question of a 'jubilee' which is to be proclaimed through a new revelation, then the problem of how the opinion of the teachers is to be understood and to be justified as still

[29] A. d'Alès, *L'edit de Calliste,* pp. 73-8, has proven quite convincingly against Zahn, Funk, Rauschen and Watkins that this call does not mean a 'jubilee of penance', which Hermas supposedly announced, but that it is to be understood of baptism. This point is generally no longer disputed today; but cf. R. Joly (SC 53b) p.25.The 'call' is also baptism elsewhere in Hermas (cf. Sim. VIII 1,1; IX 14,5), and in Sim. VIII 11,1 the 'mission' of the angel of penance is explicitly distinguished from the 'call' by God's son. Thus it cannot be deduced from Mand. IV 3,3.4.6 that it is only after Hermas' preaching of penance that those who are already Christians have a single possibility of penance. Rather it was there from the time of their baptism. Clement of Alexandria also understands this 'call' as baptism (cf. Strom II 13,56 f.).

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valid would hardly arise; rather, it could just be said that this axiom has now been abrogated. But then a distinction between 'pardon' in baptism and 'penance' for sins committed after baptism would be completely superfluous; then the possibility of penance for those who are already Christians would not be demonstrable with reasons which are universal, always valid and always known by God; then the inefficacy of a further possibility for penance after the single post-baptismal μετα&νοια (Mand. IV 3,6b [ibid., p. 28,14-15]) must appear more clearly and must have its basis in *God* and not in the doubtful state of the human conscience, as it always has according to Hermas.[30]

When Hermas says that, after this explanation of the angel, he 'lives again' (Mand. IV 3,7 [ibid., p. 28,16-19]), this does not mean that he experienced something completely new from the angel; the phrase belongs more to the rhetorical conclusions of a rather clumsy stylist. Hermas was already aware of the possibility of penance (irrespective of how he may have envisaged it). Nevertheless, there was sufficient reason in the angel's explanation for a 'new life'. Even if the fundamental possibility of a remission of sins after baptism was previously recognized and, therefore, presented no purely theoretical problem, the doubt over the effectiveness of post-baptismal penance could, nevertheless, have very well been a practical problem. If one were convinced that a long and tiresome effort was required, [76] that this had to be *metanoia* and not only *aphesis* of sins, then even Hermas could be very unsure about the actual effectiveness of penance (despite the already known theoretical principle). The new explanation of the old possibility must have helped him and his readers to surmount the weakness of their spirit, caused by age and doubt (Vis. III 9,2 [ibid., p. 15,25-7]), and to become sure that their previous sins have really been forgiven, in so far as, from now on, they sin no more (Mand. IV 3,7 [ibid., p. 28,16-19]).

In conclusion we can say, therefore: neither in Vis. II nor in Mand. IV is there any mention of the fact that the announced possibility of penance for sins committed after baptism is a new, previously unheard-of privilege of God's grace. What is new is the eschatological limitation of this possibility of penance and the assurance of its effective success in the present cases.

For the correct assessment of this teaching of Hermas we should keep the following point in mind: as much as this eschatological notion of penance in Hermas with regard to the imminent arrival of the last day is based on subjective and erroneous assumptions,[31] it also contains a nucleus of truth which today is only too easily forgotten: the person who sins after baptism puts himself in a situation which, despite the fundamental possibility for penance and forgiveness, from man's viewpoint contains no guarantee of a new forgiveness. This is because the sinner is deprived of the certainty that he will in fact have again the interior (he has sinned as a believer!) and the exterior (he can always die) possibility of a conversion. If then this possibility is indeed granted to him, it is not simply the mere application of a universal, institutional possibility of forgiveness, but an 'actual', always 'once and for all' grace of God, over which he has no control, which always comes to him as a new miracle, as a 'revelation', and in which there is no guarantee that it will be granted to him ever again if he should squander it. Hermas is more correct than he appears at first sight if, according to our view, he does not announce a 'jubilee'. The sentence directed to the concrete existence of a man, 'Penance is granted to you', must affect the man of today, as it did Hermas then, as an unexpected gift, which one has to doubt when he thinks of the irrational depravity of the man who, while believing, still sins, and when he thinks of his inevitable lack of control over his present existence.

[30] If it were merely a question of God's will to forgive being limited, then Hermas need only have said: from now on or after the *paenitentia secunda* God will no longer forgive, even though a person does penance. However, he always says: there is no further forgiveness, because either penance is not done or is not possible.
[31] These conditions are especially clear in the first four visions, above all in Vis. II 2.

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[77]

B) BAPTISM AND FURTHER PENANCE

Although this question has already been touched upon briefly, it still needs to be examined separately. This examination will, in its turn, act as a confirmation of the findings of the last section. In Mand. IV 3,3 ([GCS 48: p. 28,3-7]) Hermas makes a distinction between a *metanoia* after baptism and the *aphesis* in baptism. Alongside the general notion of every conversion (cf. Mand. IV 3,1 [ibid., pp. 27,21-28,2]) he knows, therefore, of a narrower, specific kind which applies only to sins committed after baptism. It has already been said that, in connection with Mand. IV 3, such a distinction would be completely superfluous if the post-baptismal forgiveness were simply a matter of a new act of God's grace which was determined only by God's good pleasure. In this case, Hermas would only have to explain that new Christians have no such possibility since it was not granted to those who have been Christians for some time. Indeed, it would be superfluous to explain that new Christians ought not to count on a *metanoia*, but must preserve the *aphesis* (which is obviously meant as the greater and better and, therefore, not to be squandered).

Nevertheless, it is still not yet clear what makes the difference between this *aphesis* and the *metanoia*. This is precisely what is not said. Thus it may be assumed, despite the literary device of an instruction by an angel, that the distinction was already known. And this would be a confirmation of the fact that the possibility of penance after baptism was not an unheard-of novelty. If we wish to explain, at least indirectly, the difference between these two notions, then we could consider that, according to the view of the Shepherd of Hermas, *metanoia* was a difficult and long-lasting operation,[32] a 'humiliation and purification of the soul', emanating from a fresh insight (Mand. IV 2,2 [ibid., p. 27,9-16]), living according to the commandments (2,4 [ibid., p. 27,19-20]), praying for forgiveness Vis. 11,9 [ibid., p. 2,14-17]), being corrected by others (Vis. I 3,2 [ibid., pp. 3,16-4,2]) and especially by church officials (Vis. II 4,3 [ibid., p. 7,14- 18]) who have a right to administer discipline in the community (Vis. III 9,10 [ibid., p. 16,18-21] and Sim. IX 31,5 f. [ibid., pp. 100,11-101,17]) which can extend to excommunication (cf. Mand. IV 1,8.9 [ibid., p. 26,16-23]: if a private relationship with the adulterous wife has already been broken off, then she cannot be tolerated in the community either). To all these would certainly be [78] added fasting (cf. Vis. III 10,6 [ibid., p. 17,7- 10]; Sim. V 1 [ibid., p. 52,2-19]), almsgiving (Vis. III 9,4-6 [ibid., p. 16,4-11]; Sim. V 3 [ibid., pp. 54,11-55,13]) and similar works of neighbourly love (Mand. VIII 10 [ibid., pp. 35,21-36,4]; Sim. IX 20 [ibid., pp. 92, 21-93,6]) and finally the patient bearing of the tribulations imposed by God himself (Sim. VI 3,4-6 [ibid., pp. 61,12-62,8]).

It is in such a regulated penance which only slowly (cf. e.g. Sim. VI 4 [ibid., p. 62,9-21]) leads to man's 'healing' and to the 'purification' from sins (healing: Vis. 11,9 [ibid., p. 2,14-17]; Mand. IV 1,11 [ibid., p. 27,2-5]; purification: Vis. III 2,2 [ibid., p. 9,9-12]; Sim. VII 2 [ibid., p. 64,7-13]) and only in this way to the pardon of sins which Hermas ascribes to *metanoia* (Vis. II 2,4 [ibid., pp. 5,25-6,4]; Mand. IV 4,4 [ibid., pp. 28,27-29,3]; Sim. VII 4 [ibid., pp. 64,17-65,2]; Sim. IX 33,3 [ibid., pp. 104,11-105,15]) that there can be seen a difference from the *aphesis* of baptism in which the forgiveness of sins is obtained more speedily, more surely and with less effort. This is one way of understanding the view of the 'teachers' who know only a single *metanoia* of baptism which leads immediately to a full *aphesis* of sins without the long way of penance.

[32] Cf. S. Giet, p. 192, and P. Aubin, *Le problème de la* '*conversion*' (*Théologie historique* I) (Paris 1963), p. 85 ff., together with J. Hoh, p. 14 ff.

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In this way it also becomes clearer that the angel, despite the possibility of a penance after baptism, does not have to contradict the view of the teachers, since *such* an *aphesis* without penance in the narrow sense of a long-lasting performance of penance is, even according to his message, given only once, and that in baptism. Whether Hermas himself thought exactly along these lines is not easy to prove from the brief reference in Mand. IV 3,3 (GCS 48:28,3-7). Nevertheless, it is a plausible explanation of the difference in question. Also later tradition,[33] beginning with Clement of Alexandria, knows this distinction and explains it in the way we have proposed. If this whole later tradition does not depend upon the brief reference in Hermas, just as it was hardly invented by Hermas himself, then this explanation of his expressions becomes all the more reasonable.

Nevertheless, the difference between the baptismal remission and *metanoia* after baptism should not be exaggerated. As we have said, the early Church knew a very real performance of penance for catechumens, as the successful organization of the institution of the catechumenate in the second century shows. Hermas himself suggests this, since in Mand. IV 3,1 (ibid., pp. 27,21-28,2) the *metanoia*, [79] taken literally, means not baptism itself but 'penance' on the occasion (ο#τε) of baptism.

IV. THE UNREPEATABLE CHARACTER OF THE GRANTING OF PENANCE

The possibility of receiving the forgiveness of all sins committed after baptism is, therefore, according to Hermas, not given for the first time by a new revelation. But it is granted for one occasion only.

[33] Thus *2 Clement* 8,6 states: 'Keep the flesh pure and the seal unsullied, so that we may receive eternal life.' This life is, accordingly, attainable only if the baptismal seal has never been lost. But even *2 Clement* recognizes a post-baptismal penance (cf. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda,* pp. 124 ff.). In Dial. 44 *Justin* says that the unique hope is to continue to live without sins after the α!φεσιφ in baptism. Nevertheless, he also holds that every repentant person receives forgiveness from God (cf. Poschmann, p. 209 f.). *Origen* declares: outside baptism there is no α!φεσιφ of sins (Exhort. ad mart. 30), yet he does not dispute the fact that even the most serious sins can be remitted by a subsequent penance. (On this point cf. chap. 8 in this volume, 'The Penitential Teaching of Origen'.) In another context, in In Jerem. hom. XX 19,4, Origen develops a whole theory of the salvific aspect of error (for example in the ethics of marriage). These ideas are relevant here since this theory includes the error over the extent of God's mercy. In his Catholic period, when he taught the possibility of a remission of even the most serious sins, *Tertullian* tells the catechumens quite simply: *semel delicta diluuntur, quia ea iterari non oportet* (De bapt. 15). Indeed in cap. 18 he uses this as the basis for his principle that baptism should not be received too early. Nevertheless, he speaks to Christians only very reluctantly about a post-baptismal penance: *Nihil iam de paenitentia noverint, nihil eius requirant. Piget secundae, immo iam ultimae spei subtexere mentionem, ne tractantes de residuo auxilio paenitendi spatium adhuc delinquendi demonstrare videamur* (De paenit. 7,1-6). *Pacian* preaches to his neophytes: *semel liberamur . . . tenete quod accepistis* (De sancto bapt. 7), and yet he is one of the most outspoken opponents of novatianist rigorism. In Epist. I n.5 he develops explicitly a theory about the pedagogical value of silence with regard to a second possibility of penance as far as neophytes are concerned: *sed nos hanc indulgentiam Dei nostri miseris, non beatis, nec ante peccatum, sed post peccata detegimus*; *nec sanis medicinam, sed male habentibus nuntiamus*. (Cf. also his description of the capital sins, which is obviously intended in the first place to give the impression that such sins are unforgivable, while – as is clear from what follows – he only wishes to invite those guilty of such sins to undertake public church penance: Paraenesis de paenitentia 4-5. *Chrysostom,* In Hebr. hom. 31 n.2 speaks of Paul's pedagogical silence in the letter to the Hebrews in connection with a further possibility of penance. *Jerome* says of baptism: *solum potest peccata dimittere* (In Isaiam I 1 v.16; PL 24,35). Although this may have been intended as an opposition to the Jewish rites of purification, it still shows how naturally an author could stress the uniqueness of baptism with regard to the forgiveness of sins without being a novatianist. Even for *Augustine* church penance after baptism is something which in fact ought not to occur in the life of a Christian, something on which one should not count: Epist. 265,2; Sermo 352 cap.3 n.8.

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1. The Fact of the Unrepeatable Character

In two passages Hermas says that this *metanoia* announced by him is once and for all: Mand. IV 1,8 (ibid., p. 26,16-20); 3,6 (ibid., p. 28,13-16). Here we have the first tangible witness for such an unrepeatable character. Now was Hermas the first to formulate this principle or did he merely take up a previously existing principle? Does this unrepeatable character concern the possibility of a unique granting of *church* penance and reconciliation or does it mean that the sinner can receive the forgiveness of his sins only once from *God*? An answer to this question is possible only (if at all) in so far as the basis of this unrepeatable character in Hermas is clarified.

2. The Basis and Meaning of the Unrepeatable Character of the Granting of Penance

The reasons for the unrepeatable character of penance after baptism according to Hermas are varied. In the first place, the notion of the limitation of penance plays an important role in this connection. Since absolutely every possibility of penance will cease with the imminent end of the world,[34] while the completion of penance requires a certain amount of time, for this practical reason alone Hermas cannot envisage a repeated penance. This idea is many times expressed and, given this assumption, the unrepeatable character of penance is not at all surprising or problematical. This limitation is precisely the decisive point in Hermas' prophecy on penance, even [80] if it is not the unique reason for the unrepeatable character of penance.

Hermas also often emphasizes that a performance of penance which is hesitant, doubtful and does not really come 'from the heart' can only with difficulty hope for forgiveness. The reason why certain sins will not be forgiven is that there is a lack of true repentance. Similarly, Hermas considers a falling back after the first post-baptismal penance as a sign of unrepentance and lack of sincerity in the previous repentance and, because of the hopelessness of the situation, holds a further penance as impossible. In practice, it was always a question, in those days, of a person who had been separated or excommunicated from the Church, who after a long penance had been accepted by the Church again and then, once more, had fallen away from it. Thus it is hardly strange that the decisiveness and seriousness of such a person's penance should have been called into question and that he should have been considered as a 'hopeless case'. We might think of today's practice of the 'refusal of absolution' in the case of a recidivist sinner. In those days one could arrive psychologically more easily at a judgement of unworthiness, arguing from the point of view of admission into the holy community of the Church, than we can from our contemporary viewpoints. Certainly such a judgement had a meaning for God and the Church, but it could, nevertheless, leave the 'hopeless case' to God. If[35] sinners, who sin υ(πο_ ξει=ρα, really 'continue' to sin

[34] As we have frequently observed, the expectation of the end of the world in Hermas is found above all in the visions. But it then appears to recur gradually in the *mandata* right through to the *similitudines.* Cf. S. Giet, pp. 190, 229 f.

[35] We say 'if', for it is by no means certain that υ9πο& ξει=ρα α&μαρτα&νειν means 'to sin continually, repeatedly'. 9Yπο& ξει=ρα is not witnessed elsewhere in the sense of 'continually', 'repeatedly'. In Hermas the expression is found in Vis. III 10,7; V 5*;* Mand. IV 3,6. In the ancient Latin translations it is rendered by *confestim* or *subinde.* But *confestim* does not mean 'continually'. And if – as is perfectly possible – *subinde* is construed in the same sense, then the ancient translations provide no proof for the sense which we have suggested. *Subinde* does usually mean 'often', but this meaning is not compelling. What is more, it would still have to be shown that the translation really understood the Greek text correctly. *Dibelius*' explanation (p. 478) of the possible evolution of υ9πο& ξει=ρα from its use attested by the papyri to the sense which we suggest here is enlightening only if this suggested sense is already taken for granted. In fact the meanings in the papyri

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(increasingly) and wish to do penance (Mand. IV 3,6 [GCS 48: p. 28,13-16]), then in this passage the assumed unrepentance of such a sinner is more or less explicitly suggested as the reason for the single meaningful penance after baptism.

Moreover, one could consider that, according to Hermas, this post-baptismal penance stands in a clear parallel to baptism (Mand. IV 3,3 f. [ibid., p. 28,3-11]). It is possible to understand this parallel in such a way that the unrepeatable character of baptism is ascribed to post-baptismal penance. This is at least (and even only) possible in the sense that Hermas, for pastoral-pedagogical reasons – as when he keeps quiet about the possibility of a penance after baptism before neophytes – speaks only of a single possibility of penance to those who have been Christians for some time, in order to give them no pretext for sin and, even in the case of sinful people who have been Christians for some time, to appeal to the 'ideal' principle: [81] there is only *one metanoia* open to us. These presumed reasons for the unrepeatable character of penance concern the question of the effectiveness of this penance before *God*. They do not allow the conclusion that Hermas thinks that a further *church* penance, which would no longer be performed, is impossible, while it always remains possible to expect the forgiveness of sins before God. Explicitly in the whole of Hermas' treatment of penance it is always a question of whether and in which circumstances the sinner can find forgiveness from God. In any case a further church penance is denied because (and not even though!) there is no longer the certainty that God will still forgive.

Has, therefore, the unrepeatable character of penance nothing to do with church penance? Without going into this question, we should make it clear here that in Hermas this notion, in the final analysis, is not based on church discipline. Nevertheless, there is in fact a connection between this single possibility for penance and the reality of the Church. This is shown already by the parallel with the unrepeatable character of baptism (the great and holy calling; cf. Mand. IV 3,6 [ibid., p. 28,13-16]), therefore, with a tangible and even juridical event which is once and for all and precisely therein ecclesial. If one does not consider the ecclesial character of penance, then one cannot envisage anything further of its 'unrepeatable character'. Indeed, what can it mean at all if it is understood merely as an event between the conscience and God? How can an actual forgiveness of sins be conceived, after which a further forgiveness would be meaningless, so that it could be said: from now on, therefore, something is no longer possible? It is precisely the matter-of-fact way with which the principle of the single possibility of penance is introduced which shows that, in Hermas' view, penance in some way (yet to be determined) occurs before the Church and even there receives its clear conclusion.

The above conclusion can be discounted only on the assumption that the unrepeatable character of penance rests on nothing other than the eschatological limitation. Certainly it makes no sense to allow a recidivist access yet again to penance, since this, because of the threatening end of the world, arrives too late. But the limit for this world and the limitation of the possibility of penance do not coincide. In Mand. IV 3 the unrepeatable character is mentioned without reference to the imminent end. It seems there to have as its [82] cause the

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are far from clear. The meaning of υ9πο& ξει=ρα just mentioned for Vis. III and V is not proven with certainty from the context. Certainly it makes sense there, but the question remains whether this sense is the correct one. Yet another meaning, such as *sans gêne* would suit these passages. The Latin *sub manu* (which is another possible translation of the Greek) does not mean 'continually'. In other words, we have no proof that the υ9πο/ ξει=ρα in Mand. IV 3,6 is not intended as the opposite of the preceding υ9πο& του= διαβο&λου, which was already the view of Windisch (p. 364). Accordingly, Hermas would have in mind the sin of obduracy, for which theme was no prospect of true sorrow. At most this sin could be accompanied by the semblance of 'penance' but allowed for no doing of 'wholehearted' penance. In so far as Hermas (as Clement of Alexandria will do so explicitly later, Strom. II 13,57.4) recognizes in a relapse after penance just such an act of malice, an interpretation of Mand. IV 3,6 as a sin of obduracy would amount in fact to the same meaning. Cf. Poschmann, p. 165 n. 1.

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unrepentance of the sinner, a reason, therefore, which is independent of eschatological considerations. Nevertheless, the single possibility of penance is proposed in such a matter-of-fact way, without an actual justification, that it appears unlikely that Hermas is the first person to have formulated it. Even if he were not the only author of this principle, we ought to assume that it emanated from the same considerations which we can suppose in Hermas' background. But even with this we have not made much progress. It is by no means certain and self-evident (despite the high esteem which the Shepherd of Hermas enjoyed in the early Church) that the later witnesses of the single possibility of penance (already from Clement of Alexandria onwards, where indeed it is understood as *purely ecclesial*) depend solely on Hermas. Would this be sufficient to explain the self-evidence, the universality and the tenacious, long duration of this teaching? On this point there remain questions which do not admit of a complete solution.

What is sure is that in Hermas the single possibility of penance after baptism is discernible for the first time. The reasons which may be supposed for this notion, however, do not prove that this principle could claim to be a universal, always valid and immutable dictate of the divine law. Once, however, this obscure and polyvalent principle was expressed, be this only with the authority of Hermas or with others as well, then it worked even further on its own, independently of the psychological and eschatological ideas which had once determined its origin. From a theological principle (the unrepeatable character of penance before God) it becomes a principle of church law, according to which penance before the Church is possible only once (in Tertullian this passage is fairly easy to discern).[36] It can even (e.g. in Augustine)[37] receive a new justification which almost contradicts the old one; it remains in force because the deviation from such a strict principle always smacks of laxism for an uneducated conscience and, therefore, requires a courage which is not at all common among men. Finally it can be discarded, only because it could die, still without actually being killed.

Nevertheless, there still lives in this principle of Hermas of the single possibility of penance an imperishable nucleus which is usually overlooked. Just as one cannot love truly without excluding in the act of love the thought that it could be revoked and come to an end, so one cannot repent of one's guilt before the unconditioned [83] that is God if this sorrow is not intended as irrevocable and once and for all. Only from the outside and by one who is not involved can it be said that it could happen often.

3. The Fate of Recidivists

On the question of the fate of those who, after the single post-baptismal penance, fall back again, the first point to be noted is that Hermas did not consider cases of this kind very often. The sinners he knew best were those to whom his exhortation to a first penance actually applied. Even in those cases where he has doubts about there being sufficient *metanoia*, he is thinking about unrepentance after baptism and not such an unrepentance after post-baptismal penance.[38]

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[36] Obviously Tertullian, in his Montanist period, had to leave some hope of forgiveness by God even to the sinner to whom he refused church reconciliation. In fact he did this much more clearly than did Hermas. Thus the way was prepared for the Catholic presentation of the tenet that recidivist sinners can still be forgiven by God, even if the Church denies them a second reconciliation.

[37] Augustine, Epist. 153,7 attempts to justify the once and for all character of church reconciliation, quite independently of doubt concerning the sinner's disposition and of the doubt of God's forgiveness to which this gives rise: *ne medicina vilis minus utilis esset aegrotis, quae tanto magis salubris, quanto minus contemptibilis fuerit*.

[38] J. Grotz (p. 20) considers that the men who are described in Vis. III 2,7c are 'recidivists'. But this is difficult to prove. These people arc near the Church and have not, as the 'alienated', broken off all relationship with the

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This could apply especially to the case of Maximus (Vis. II 3,4 [GCS 48: p. 7,2-4]), who belongs to this category in so far as Hermas does not consider the danger of a new fall as excluded for this Christian who has often fallen and been repeatedly received into the Church. It is not surprising that we do not have concrete examples, since the Christian faith at that time hardly provided material advantages, was entirely a matter of personal belief and was menaced throughout the whole world. In this situation it would be unusual to find sinners who, after an official penance (unless it is official it could not be conceived as 'once and for all'), come to the Church after a second, notorious fall and again receive penance.[39]

Thus the men Hermas has in mind are those who, after baptism, have fallen away, become traitors, have alienated themselves from the life of the Church or who otherwise no longer observe the externally tangible obligations of a Christian. He is hardly thinking of men who have already expressed sorrow for such faults in a tangible form (so that they have already done 'penance'), who have fallen again and now wish to rectify their defection. In reality there is no pressing problem of the recidivist, at least as a general phenomenon. Only the latter would lead to a thought-out theory, while previously eventual individual cases were solved – positively or negatively – according to an indefinite norm.

This is also the best explanation of the fact that the whole question of the fate of recidivists is a peripheral one and is 'solved' only [84] vaguely. Thus in Sim. VIII 7,5 (GCS 48: p. 73,6-9) those who have been reinserted into the tower are warned that they will be ejected again and will lose their life if they fall back into their old sin of quarrelsomeness. In this warning there is no assumption that the addressees will do penance once again (either because the will or the possibility is not available for it). But this says nothing about the fate of the recidivist who still *repents*. For this case there remains only Mand. IV 3,6 (ibid., p. 28,3- l6),[40] provided that it is here a question of those who fall away after a post-baptismal *metanoia*. Then there would be a reference to those who, in some sense, do penance again (or at least give this impression). Of these Hermas says: 'Ασυ/μφορο&ν ε0στι τω|~ α0νθρω&ποω| τω~| τοιου/τω|: δυσκο&λωφ γα_ρ ζη/σεται. The second half of this passage must be understood as the justification, not as the consequence, of the 'uselessness' of such a penance after backslidings (with Poschmann, 169, it is best to relate the υ9πο_ ξει=ρα to both the act of sinning and the doing of penance). The person who oscillates between sin and penance in this way can only with difficulty arrive at a complete revival of freedom from sin in this life. Thus such a penance is useless (as Poschmann suggests, the 'life' in question is that of Vis. III 8,3 [GCS 48: p. 15,11-16]; III 11-13 [ibid., pp. 17,20-19,3]; Sim. VIII 7,6 [ibid., p. 73,9-13]; IX 14,3 [ibid., p. 88,13-17]), that is, the present interior life of the person who is genuinely and sincerely repentant). In the Shepherd of Hermas δυ/σκολοφ means only 'very difficult'[41] but not 'impossible' (Mand. IX 6 [GCS 48: p. 37, 4-7]; XII 1,2 [ibid., p. 42,21-6]; Slim. VIII 10,2 [ibid.,p. 75,3-6]; IX 20,2 [ibid., p. 92,24-9]; 23,3 cp. 23,5 [ibid., p. 94,11-22]). Because of the clear lack of sorrow and repentance envinced in the new fall Hermas considers the recidivists to be in a fairly hopeless situation thus he rejects the performance of

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Church (cf. Vis. III 2,9). They may also have had the opportunity of penance, but it is not possible to prove that they were recidivists in the strict sense, that is, that they had fallen again into their old sins after having completed their penance and received church reconciliation. They could just as well be hypocrites who, despite their (exterior) faith, remain full of wickedness, who after their baptism have never really led a Christian life or have reverted to a non-Christian way of life, although exteriorly they remain united with the community, and who finally have remained irresponsive to exhortations and attempts to bring about their conversion. Similarly it is easy to see those who are supposed as possible (but not as actual) recidivists in Sim. VIII 6,2 as those who have sinned after baptism, but not after a post-baptismal completed penance.

[39] This lack of examples is, therefore, not a proof that, before Hermas, church penance with excommunication did not exist.

[40] Cf. R. Joly, p. 161 nn.4-7.

[41] Cf. S. Giet, p. 194.

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'church' penance as useless (better: as unfeasible) – and, moreover, he renounces any clear prospect for their further fate.

Hermas holds that the interior, subjective condition of such sinners is vague and, therefore, the forgiveness of their sins by God is uncertain. Thus they cannot be received back into the Church, and in this sense penance after baptism remains necessarily a single possibility. Certainly no definitive judgement can be made about the personal fate of these sinners in the next life. According to Hermas, therefore, no further *metanoia* can be made available to the recidivist sinner *because* it is not known whether he has made himself [85] worthy of the forgiveness of his sins before God by real penance. This view corresponds entirely with the notion that there are sins of such gravity that they do not admit of genuine penance 'from the bottom of the heart', any more than they can be forgiven by God.

Even today, however, it is easy to think of cases in which absolution would inevitably be refused, even though there is no absolute certainty about the unrepentance of the person concerned. Even today, therefore, there is something like a 'once-and-for-all penance' where a person has sorrow 'with difficulty'.

V. CHURCH PENANCE

1. The Church and Salvation

Without a doubt the Church plays an important role in the theology of Hermas. For him it is not only the community of believers, but a transcendent and spiritual reality which was created before all other things and is above all the aim and the meaning of God's creation (Vis. II 4,1 [GCS 48: p. 7.5-10].[42] The fate of all men, that is, their salvation or their perdition, is determined by their belonging or their not belonging to the Church. This is because human destiny is dependent upon both penance in baptism and penance after baptism. The effectiveness of this penance is discernible for Hermas by a man's being integrated into the tower of the Church or his being rejected from it (Vis. II 2,3-8,10 ; Sim. IX 3,1-10,5 [Ibid., pp. 78,8-84,27]; 11,9-33,3 [ibid., pp. 85,28-104,15]; X 4,4 [ibid., pp. 110,20-112,4]). This tower is certainly not simply identical with the actual, visible church community on earth, since it also counts as its members, and even in its first rank, the righteous dead (Sim. IX 15,4 [ibid., p. 89,14-18]; 16,5 [ibid., p. 90,6-11]; 25,2 [ibid., p. 95,6.11]). At the same time, according to Hermas, there are in the earthly Church men who have been ejected from the tower. In quite a few cases one can hardly take it for granted that such men (as apostates) are always separated from the Church (Vis. III 6,4-6 [ibid., p. 13,3-6]; Sim. IX 20,1 f. [ibid., p. 92,21-9]; 21 [ibid., p. 93,7-20]; 22,4 [ibid., pp. 93,30-94,4]).[43]

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[42] In the first four visions the Church appears above all as pre-existent and as a spiritual reality. In parables IX (which is strongly Christological) and X it is presented at a later stage of development and less spiritualized. In the *mandata* and the first eight *similitudines* it is scarcely mentioned explicitly. On the Church in Hermas and its mole in his view of penance, cf.: R. Joly, pp. 28-30, 34-41; S. Giet, pp. 108-21, 169-73, 228 f.; *C.* Vogel, p. 18, together with W. Doskocil, pp. 169-77.

[43] In Sim. III 3 it is stated: 'Just as in winter trees which have lost their leaves resemble one another, making it impossible to know which are withered and which have vitality, so in this world the righteous are not distinguishable from sinners but all resemble one another.' According to this idea, the tower is not simply to be identified with the earthly Church, since in the tower sinners and the righteous arc separated, which is precisely not possible in the case of the earthly Church. We could put this more precisely: in the tower sinners and the righteous *are made* separate, in a way which clearly underlines the relationship between these two groups. This analogy also shows, however, that the idea of an earthly Church which is a pure community of saints is totally alien to Hermas. But why should he be so opposed to the reconciliation of a repentant sinner with this Church, if in this world it is never possible to distinguish Sinners clearly from the righteous?

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Nevertheless this Church of Hermas' visions is not simply a pure [86] ideal being which has nothing to do with the visible earthly Church. This 'ideal' image is rather the empirical Church, which is based on baptism as a tangible event, which needs purification (Sim. IX 18,2 [ibid., p. 91,15-20]), which, being involved in the sins of its members, is old and weak, so that it can be rejuvenated only by their penance (Vis. III 11-13 [ibid., pp. 17,20-19,3]).[44] The Church in Hermas' visions is, therefore, the *earthly Church*, which is entered by baptism (Sim. IX 17,4 [ibid., p. 91,3-9]), which is still being built (Vis. III 5,5 [ibid., p. 12,11-171; Sim. IX 14,2 [ibid., p. 88,8-13]; X 4,4 [ibid., pp. 110,20-112,41) and which can be soiled. Nevertheless, it is viewed from God's standpoint; empirically it evinces a clash between the reality and the appearance, without, however, there being two quite independent realities: an ideal and an empirical Church.

Visible belonging to the Church (especially by baptism) is in the first place so necessary for salvation that, according to Hermas, mankind before Christ still needed baptism (Sim. IX 16,5 ff. [ibid., p. 90,6-18]). At the same time, however, mere empirical belonging is still not an absolute guarantee of salvation, since, in some cases, it does not express an inner reality and the men in question – from God's viewpoint – are not actually in the tower. In fact even sinners belong to the Church (at least externally), and therefore the 'holy church' (Vis. 11,6 [ibid., pp. 1,17-2,3]; 3,4 [ibid., p. 4,7-15]; IV 1,3 [ibid., p. 19,8-12]) cannot consider itself holy in the sense that it has nothing at all to do with sin and sinners.

2. Church and Penance

A) PENANCE OF EXCOMMUNICATION

The Church, however, is so 'holy' that it wishes to express in its earthly reality the fact that its sinful members do not actually belong to it, which fact is evident to God. Thus the Church 'excommunicates'[45] sinners, while it remains irrelevant whether, by so doing, it has actual success. In the case of apostates and others who themselves break their external relationship with the Church such a specific act of the Church is obviously superfluous (cf. Sim. IX 26,3 [ibid., p. 95,18-2 1]). In other cases, however, e.g. in the case of adultery, such an act can be necessary and is even prescribed: [87] Mand. IV 1,5 (ibid., p. 26,8-11). This passage concerns only the innocent partner who must break up the marriage relationship, but it is unthinkable that, at the same time, both partners should continue their fellowship with each other within the Church.[46] The obligation to separate (1,9 [ibid., p. 26,20-4]) is immediately changed into a fundamental and universal principle ('If a person [masc.!] remains in such works and does not do penance, keep yourself far away from him and do not live together with him, otherwise you share in the guilt of his sin'), so that it is reasonable to suppose that the empirical Church tries – as far as it can – to respond to the sin which separates a man

[44] The justification for the Church's 'old age' in Vis. III 11,2 is derived from the presentation in Vis. II 4,1 and is developed further.

[45] W. Doskocil, pp. 160-93, considers the close connection between excommunication and penance in the Shepherd of Hermas.

[46] In this question we should obviously not have in mind our modern church life, where one 'attends church anywhere', without in any way affecting practically the rest of the individual's personal and social relationships. Rather we should conjure up the life of a community such as is presented to us, for instance, in Hippolytus' Paradosis. In this context the idea of a secular 'boycott' without an ecclesial significance is impossible (cf. J. Hoh, p. 18 f.). If 'concubinage' (in the ancient sense) and certain professions were punished by excommunication, and if a catechumen (even according to Justin) was not allowed to take part in the actual liturgy, then the cessation of married life inevitably signified an excommunication by the Church as well, however this may be envisaged as having taken place. In this regard, it is worth bearing in mind that for several decades before Hippolytus community life was even more narrow and more strict.

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interiorly from itself with institutional measures ('excommunication'), this being considered the natural and prescribed reaction to sin (how this actually took place the text does not say).[47] Precisely because the Church is necessary for salvation and yet belonging to it offers no guarantee of salvation, the attempt is made to resolve the tension between these two points by expressing in the external sphere what has happened within man by sin. If perdition is seen as involving loss of relationship with the Church, the Church itself will appear as holy, salvific and necessary for salvation even in its empirical reality.

Now Grotz is convinced, by his thorough analysis of the text of Hermas, that he has provided the proof that there is mention in Hermas of sinners who have need of sacramental penance and yet are not excommunicated. He thinks that he can recognize a group of such sinners in the people who in Vis. III 2,7a (ibid., p. 9,26 f.); 5,5 (ibid., p. 12,11-17) (Grotz, p. 19) 'therefore have not strayed far away from the tower, because they will be very useful for the building when they have done penance'. These people are certainly different from those who do not lie by the tower but have been expelled far from it (in Grotz the group E: Vis. III 2,9 [ibid., p.10,3-8]; 7,1-3 [ibid., pp.13,20-14,6]). But does this mean sinners who are not excommunicated? The answer to this question will naturally depend upon the view that one has of excommunication. If it means that the 'relations with the tower, i.e. with the Church have been broken' (Grotz, ibid.) then obviously this group is not excommunicated. It is readily granted that the relationship of these men to the church community, according to Hermas' image, is radically different from that of the group E. The latter have been driven away from the tower and this – as Grotz rightly stresses – because they have themselves [88] defected from the Church as apostates with a certain definitiveness through their own decision and without having the intention of doing penance in any way. Nevertheless, this in no way proves that the group C2 (Grotz distinguishes this group from C3 and E) cannot be treated as excommunicated. Grotz overlooks the basis for the whole of Hermas' image: all those who have to do penance find themselves outside the place in the tower itself where they were and should be because of their baptism. This applies also to the group C2. One may only unwillingly call this state of being outside the tower 'excommunication'; one may stress that those who are 'cast right out' are in a totally different position from the men of group C2, because they are not influenced at all by the Church's penitential concern, because the Church-at least for the time being-does not bother about them any more and has practically given up hope of their conversion. Nevertheless, one ought not to overlook what is also for Hermas obviously the most important point and what is presupposed by the Church's actual penitential concern, having as its aim the reincorporation into the tower: even these well-disposed sinners near the tower are not in the tower itself. They are not, therefore, merely sinners with a destroyed relationship with God, but they also do not stand in the relationship with the Church to which they were introduced by their baptism. Even their penance is, therefore, not only a reconciliation by the Church, but also a reconciliation with the Church. Such a penance can still be called meaningfully 'penance of excommunication', provided that one is clear that 'excommunication' in this context has a different sense from the one which it has in modern church law.

The above consideration is not weakened by the fact that (as Grotz, e.g. p. 21, stresses) 'excommunication' considered in itself has nothing to do with penance. It can obviously exist in cases where there is no intention, either on the part of the sinner or on the part of the Church, of obtaining the reincorporation into the tower of the Church by penance. But this does not affect Hermas' assumption that, whenever it is a question of penance, the sinner is

[47] Cf. W. Doskocil, p. 174 ff. (especially the summarizing remarks on p. 177). The word 'excommunication' in the sense of a church disciplinary measure or of the early Christian ban is observable for the first time about the beginning of the 5th century in the synod of Carthage (A.D. 390) (cf. Mansi III, 695, c.8); cf. E. Valton, 'Excommunication' in: DThC V,2 (Paris 1913), p. 1735 f.

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also outside the tower (whether near or far is irrelevant), and still less does it affect the result of this penance (not its presupposition), namely the actual incorporation into the tower. In Vis. III 5,5 (ibid., p. 12,11-17) we read: 'If they do penance they are fitted for the building.'

Whether the penance of those who are cast far away has several [89] levels (first the appearance before the angel of punishment and then the correction of the angel of penance), what this means in the life of the community and how the effect of the penance of these people might appear, i.e. whether they are inserted into a 'lesser place' or right into the tower again-all these questions do not alter the fact that the Shepherd of Hermas, contrary to Grotz's view, in Vis. III does not know of any men who, on the one hand, are subject to church penance while, on the other hand, are not to be considered in any way 'excommunicated'. And even if Hermas were to know sinners who do penance, i.e. have to mend their ways, without seeing them outside the tower, i.e. without hinting at an excommunication of these sinners, then this would not prove that the penance of such sinners should be understood as sacramental, even if the Church plays a role in it. Not every concern of the Church over the penance of a sinner has to be understood as sacramental, either in Hermas' sense or in the sense of modern theology. According to the Shepherd of Hermas a distinction between a sacramental and another kind of penitential help offered by the Church for the conversion of a sinner (if one wishes to pose the question in this way at all) can be made only by asking whether or not it is a question of the restoration of baptismal grace (of the seal), of the reincorporation into the tower of the Church. If this aim and this necessity are not present, then it is no longer possible to say for certain in what a sacramental act of the Church consists according to Hermas' theology and how it would be distinguished from other exhortations to penance, from the assistance afforded by prayer, etc.

Before considering (e.g. in the conclusion to Vis. III 2,7a-c [ibid., p. 9,26-9] in Grotz p. 19) which of the groups of sinners listed are excommunicated, it is first necessary to clarify what it means for them, in general, to be no longer in the tower. This common characteristic is just as important to Hermas as is the following differentiation according to a greater or lesser proximity to the tower. In explaining this common characteristic (which really presents no difficulty) one could more easily understand that only those sinners who are alienated far away from the tower must be really excommunicated, if among them are found only those who, according to today's theological notion, have placed themselves 'outside the Church' by the kind of sin which they have committed (e.g. heresy or schism). But this is not the case; according to Grotz himself, the adulteress [90] (p. 30 f.) and especially the obstinate sinners (p. 30, etc.), even when it is not a question of sins against faith, are excommunicated (whether definitively or temporally is irrelevant). If, therefore, even sins which are not against the faith entail excommunication, and if, at the same time, according to Hermas,[48] excommunication is not simply imposed or not imposed at the Church's whim (as it is according to modern church law in the lower levels of excommunication of those who are not

[48] Hermas never appeals to a specific legislative act on the Church's part by which certain sins are punished by excommunication. In his view the excommunication is demanded immediately by the very nature of the sin itself. The question of Hermas' principle of the exclusion of sinners, which is not a positive canonical prescription, cannot be solved simply with reference to the obstinacy of the sinner. That would only raise the further question of why the Church excludes the obstinate sinner without a positive prescription. If the answer is that such a state of sin is incompatible with membership of the Church in the full sense (even though theme is no sin against faith itself, and the sinner concerned, according to today's teaching, remains a member of the Church), then the principle is implicitly justified. The man who has excluded himself from grace violates his own membership of the Church, which is the holy Church of the Holy Spirit. Thus with all the Fathers of the Church it must be said: wherever there is serious sin, there is necessarily this kind of excommunication. This means: every penance for such sins is penance of excommunication (and this still applies even today, since it is only reconciliation that restores the right to celebrate the Eucharist).

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vitandi),[49] then he must have a principle for excommunication which differs from the modern practice of excommunication. Today, in fact, two kinds of excommunication are recognized: one which involves no actual exclusion from the Church, another which involves an exclusion which the sinner has already brought about objectively, *iure divino*, by his own fault. The point of this observation is that it is methodologically false to read the modern notion of excommunication into the Shepherd of Hermas. Indeed, this notion does not cover the excommunication which even Grotz allows in Hermas. In other words, it should be asked what Hermas himself thinks about the matter. What becomes fundamental then is his idea that all serious sins (of deed) lead men away from the tower. This basic state of affairs may be expressed in this way: since every serious sin causes the loss of the Spirit of the Church, the seal of baptism, every sinner, according to Hermas, is 'excommunicated' – bound, as one would say in biblical terminology.[50]

Thus one can hardly gather from Mand. IV with Grotz that there are sinners who have committed mortal sins and yet are not excommunicated. In Grotz's interpretation in this passage Hermas receives the commission or the concession that a man ought to live with his wife who has committed adultery but afterwards has repented (1,5 [ibid., p. 26,8-11]). From this Grotz (pp. 30-3) concludes (and obviously this can be no more than a conclusion) that the woman could not be excommunicated, since the husband otherwise would not be permitted to live with her. The assumption here (which Poschmann and we ourselves share with Grotz) is that the prohibition of married life together with an adulterous and unrepentant wife (1,9 26,20-4]) is based on a measure taken by the Church in the form of an excommunication. Grotz (p. 32) identifies the case of the adulterous but immediately repentant wife with his group C2 of Vis. III and thus places himself in an unfortunate position at the outset. Certainly, the identification itself appears to us to be correct, but precisely [91] the group C2 must be thought of, according to the phraseology of the vision, as being outside the tower (even if, to use Grotz's expression, in its 'forecourt') and is, therefore, to be considered as a group of those who are excommunicated (in the theological sense). This would apply, therefore, also to this adulterous, even if immediately repentant, wife. Indeed, what does Hermas himself say about this? All that we have is: 'But if the husband notices the sin (of his wife) and his wife does not repent (μερανοη/ση) but persists in her impurity, and the husband (in these circumstances) lives with her, then he will share in the guilt of her sin and take part in her adultery' (1,5). From this it is concluded that in Hermas the husband must leave his wife if she persists in adultery (1,6).

But does all this warrant the conclusion drawn by Grotz? In no way. In the first place, it is certainly clear for Hermas that the husband of an unrepentant adulteress must separate from her. Nevertheless, it is by no means self-evident for him that the separation of the spouses is only the mere effect of a church excommunication. It is rather demanded by the principle that a Christian should not share in the sin of another (by tolerating, condoning, etc.). From the fact that the communal married life has ceased one can conclude that the church fellowship no longer exists either, since two people separated in their private lives for *religious* reasons could not communicate with each other in the Church. But the opposite conclusion does not necessarily follow: where two people are united in their private life their ecclesial relationship (to the Church and to each other within the Church) must also be in order. Even

[49] On this point, cf. A. Gommenginger, 'Bedeutet die Exkommunikation Verlust der Kirchengliedschaft' in: ZKTh 73 (1951), pp. 1-71, and K. Mörsdorf, 'Exkommunikation' in: HThG I (Munich 1962), pp. 375-82.

[50] In this context it should be remembered that Paul has the same catalogue of vices for sins which exclude a person from the kingdom of God and for sinners who should be 'avoided' by the community or the bishop (Gal. 5:19-23; 1 Cor. 6:9 f.; Eph. 5:3-9; Col. 3:5-9; cf. Rom. 13:12 f.). Paul, therefore, recognizes a norm for banning which presupposes that every mortal sin in today's sense is 'deserving of excommunication' (in the ancient sense). S. Wipping, 'Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im NT' (ZNW, BH 25) (Berlin 1959), p. 115 ff.

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in modern church law not every excommunication causes a secular separation of the person who is excommunicated.[51] Thus it is perfectly conceivable that a man should live with his wife when she, at least by sorrow and renunciation of the adulterous relationship, has abandoned sin, without it being any longer possible to maintain that, by living with her, he shares in the guilt of her sin.

Nevertheless, the question of the relationship of this woman to the Church-whether she is already again 'in the tower' or comes to full reconciliation only after a long penance before the Church-is still not necessarily decided. We have the right, therefore, to say, even according to Grotz: it is here a question of a well-disposed sinner who, in the sense of Vis. III 2,7a (ibid., p. 9,26-7) is truly repentant (5,5) but, as far as the Church is concerned, still belongs to those [92] who have been 'cast away'. For Grotz's conclusion to be absolutely convincing, it would have to be proven first of all that the secular and the ecclesial relationships of two people correspond to each other exactly. But such a presupposition is purely gratuitous. In fact it is a question of a wife who is sorry and who is willing to do penance (however the husband may establish this fact). On the supposition that indeed the performance of church penance is already in progress, but not yet completed – even though, because of the wife's good disposition, it is bound to achieve good results – it is precisely a question of *a* church penance (Mand. IV 1,8 [ibid., p. 26,16-20]). The full reconciliation with the Church and with God is guaranteed, if not yet actually achieved. On these hypothetical suppositions, is the idea impossible that Hermas allows the husband already to live with his wife? And could it not then be concluded, since Hermas has made this concession, that the assumptions which we have just mentioned do not exist, i.e. the wife is not considered as being 'outside the tower'? In my opinion, the person who argues in this way derives from the text points which it will not support and which, moreover, are precluded by the fact that Hermas considers even a repentant sinner as still a stone lying outside the actual tower. It is not only a question of the cessation or the continuation of married life in the strict sense but of whether the household community should be continued or whether the wife – to put it simply – should be turned out of the house. Now Hermas lays it down that a wife who has been, ejected from the house should be accepted back if she – albeit only later – repents. What would be the sense of turning her out of the house, if, because of the sorrow she has expressed, it is already established that she can and ought to return to the house? Or should one really believe that all excommunicated sinners either then or later when they do public penance are also, on this account, to be punished with a secular boycott? Where, for example, did Hermas' repentant children live while, as even Grotz does not dispute, they were under a penance of excommunication? It is obvious that they lived with their father so that he shared their affliction.

Grotz has to admit that a wife who is not definitively obdurate in her adultery, but has not immediately repented, is under a 'provisional excommunication', a 'revocable excommunication'. This is because, on the one hand, he must grant that such a wife can still come to a complete penance, while on the other hand he knows that [93] Hermas still considers her as excommunicated (p. 31 ff.). We should prescind from the problem posed by a 'provisional', 'revocable' excommunication which has no clear basis in the sources and has to be constructed indirectly. This notion appears to be problematical already in Hermas himself, since, from what he says, it is by no means clear that he knows an excommunication which occurs for any other reason than the sinner's unrepentance, even though he is convinced that it is automatically associated with certain sins. But if this is the only reason

[51] Already in the ancient ban from the synagogue there were cases in which the actual relatives of the sinner were not obliged to avoid him, while he had to be avoided by others.

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for the continuation of an excommunication, then every excommunication lasts until penance is done and is temporary.

Nevertheless, we could ask a further question: if Hermas had not considered the act of adultery (as opposed to the mere sin of thought: Mand. IV 1,1-2 [ibid., pp. 25,22-26,3]) as the reason for an excommunication, would he then, as Grotz also stresses, have justified a (provisional) excommunication by the persistence in this adultery? Obstinacy derives its moral value from the evil of the state in which one persists, even if it aggravates this sin. Moreover, Hermas presupposes that the husband of an adulterous wife does not sin by living with her if he knows nothing of his wife's sin (Mand. IV 1,5 [ibid., p. 26,8-11]). This self-evident observation would be meaningless if the husband is only to interrupt his married life when a church excommunication has already taken place. if, however, this is not the case, then the husband can have reasons for interrupting, continuing or recommencing his married life which do not coincide simply with those of the Church for its excommunication or the lifting of this excommunication. If one considers further that Grotz demands that the adulteress who only later comes to her senses must do a long penance and provide visible proof of her conversion (p. 30), then surely the husband who keeps his sinful wife because she is doing penance must demand such a visible and tangible document proving her conversion. Is this not precisely where church penance comes in? The undertaking of this penance can, therefore, be just as well considered as the reason for the husband's obligation to dismiss his wife, as the non-dismissal can count as a proof that there is no excommunication. Even according to Grotz the adultery of the wife who is immediately repentant demands a 'church penance' (p. 33) which obviously must have 'nothing to do with excommunication' (ibid.).

[94] But how does Hermas envisage concretely such a church penance which on the one hand is sacramental, while on the other is not a penance of excommunication? Grotz does not seem to give an answer to this apposite question. In Hermas, wherever there are serious sins of deed to be expiated, there is always found a penance which involves that the sinner, after along time of penance, is again incorporated into the tower, therefore a 'penance of excommunication'. In the light of these observations the existence of sins in Mand. IV which require church penance without entailing a 'penance of excommunication' must be questionable.

Along with Hoh, Grotz (p. 51 f.; p. 32) also wishes to recognize in Sim. IX sinners who are indeed submitted to church penance without, however, being excommunicated. According to Grotz, the reason for this is that these sinners (certain kinds of stones) still lie beside the tower and are found in a place which belongs to the rock on which the actual tower is raised. But the objection already raised against the interpretation of Vis. III also applies here. It has already been granted that the tower in Sim. IX signifies the empirical Church (p. 47 f.). This Church is built upon the rock which has a door (2,2 [ibid., p. 77,18-21]; 3 [ibid., p. 78,8-23]). The stones for this building are brought to the rock through the door (3,4 [ibid., p. 78,18-21]; 4,1 [ibid., pp. 78,24-79,4]); the tower thus consists of many stones (4,1-8 [ibid., pp. 78,24-80,4]). In this regard, it is noticeable that the stones have the right colour, i.e. the qualification for being inserted into the tower. This insertion is carried out by virgins (the virtues) who carry the stones through the door (4,5-7 [ibid., p. 79, 16-26]), which is the Son (12,6-8 [ibid., p. 86, 17-27]).[52] Thus both faith in the, Son of God in baptism and virtue are necessary in order to arrive at the tower. Even if only virtue is lacking, the stone remains lying in its black colour beside the tower (4,6 f. [ibid., p. 79,20-26]). If a white stone (i.e. a faithful and virtuous man) is inserted into the tower and then, under the influence of the spirits of the vices (they black-clad women, 13,8 again and, upon examination by the Lord of the tower,

[52] Cf. S. Giet, p. 157.

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shows his black colour, then he will again be ejected from the tower (6,5 [ibid., p. 81,13-15]; 7,1 [ibid., p. 81,26-8]). If such stones still lie on the rock, this is indeed an indication that they are not considered as having fallen totally from the faith and that they have not bee completely abandoned by the Church. But this does not alter the fact [95] that they no longer occupy the place which they held in virtue of their sincere conversion and their baptism. As opposed to the time immediately following their baptism, they now lie *beside* the tower, if even still on the rock of faith and so within the door.

All this expresses that alienation from the Church and by the Church which we have called excommunication in the theological sense and which makes a penance of excommunication necessary. It is only after such a penance that one can be reinserted into the tower. That the still worse stones in this allegory are alienated much further from the tower (7,2 [ibid., pp. 81,29-82,1]; 8,1 [ibid., p. 82,19-21], etc.) does not change this state of affairs radically. It hits already been established that, according to the Shepherd of Hermas, there can be grades of the sin of obstinacy and, therefore, of alienation from the Church by excommunication which-at least temporarily-even hold such a sinner back from an actual church penance. But this does not prove that only such sinners are 'excommunicated'. All those concerned in Sim. IX are no longer in the walls of the tower and must first again arrive at the tower. The state of no longer being in the tower is not, in itself, a means of salvation. It cannot be said (p. 55), however, that excommunication is not a means of penance and, therefore, concerns only those sinners who offer no prospect of penance. The condition of no longer being in the tower makes the situation of the sinner as sinner clear. Whether immediately afterwards, later or never, there follows conversion and consequently readmission into the Church depends, according to Hermas, upon the different dispositions of the sinners. On the one hand, all the sinners in Sim. IX are taken out of the walls of the tower, but, on the other hand, they all have the radical possibility of coming back to the tower, since in all the different groups mentioned there is an explicit reference to the possibility of a reinsertion into the tower. Wherever it is presented as being impossible in fact (not actually as *a priori* impossible) it is a question of a lack of disposition (which Hermas obviously assumes to be present here and there somewhat categorically), not, however, of a refusal of forgiveness by God and the Church which is independent of the state of mind of the sinner concerned.

Moreover, it is worth noting that according to Grotz those who, by reason of sins of deed, need church penance enter a special place as penitents but without, according to him, being excommunicated. [96] This special place beside the tower is thought of primarily for these well-disposed and, therefore, not excommunicated sinners. But in fact, in certain circumstances, other sinners who are already (provisionally) excommunicated come to this place (without the prospect of proceeding further).

But how can one arrive at the idea of a special place for penitents (irrespective of whether this is considered either a symbol of the relationship of sinners to the Church or more materially a special place to be occupied during the celebration of the liturgy), if for these men the idea is fundamentally excluded that a sinner, by his fault and the corresponding reaction of the Church, enters into a different relationship with the Church than the baptized who have not sinned? In Grotz there is no answer to the question of where the 'life setting' or the 'theoretical setting' for the idea and the practice of a special place of penance could be sought. The fact that Hermas' notion of penance (even there where according to Grotz there is no penance of excommunication) is completely determined by the idea that the sinner is rejected from the tower and has a special place for his penance, shows very clearly that his basic idea of penance – in so far as it is church penance – must be of a penance of excommunication. Conversely, it follows from this that wherever Hermas considers an obligatory church penance, sin, of its very nature, is so conceived that, of itself and by the reaction of the Church (so far as this is possible), it leads to a kind of excommunication.

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This stress that according to Hermas all serious sins of deed objectively exclude the sinner from the tower and, therefore, in so far as they are known, are met by the Church with an 'excommunication', so that penance is always a penance of excommunication, does not derogate in the least from the wide variety of penitential procedures which exist despite this common denominator in all the individual cases. The useful and meaningful observations of Grotz on this point are to be fully recognized. The treatment of certain groups of sinners by the punishing angel *before* they are handed over to the angel of penance only at a later point of time and after a certain performance of penance at the hands of this angel of punishment, only then to arrive at the place which is fixed for the usual penitents (near the tower itself), can certainly have its counterpart in the treatment of sinners by the Church itself. This may be a way of expressing the grace and favour of the Church in allowing a man who is guilty of [97] particularly serious sins (apostasy, etc.) to have access to actual penance, as well as the prerequisite for this penance, namely another kind of previous penance in which the willingness to do penance and the readiness for a performance of church penance in the strict sense are already expressed (cf. Sim. VI and Grotz, pp. 23-6). We do not, therefore, reject the idea of a graded penance already in Hermas. All that is rejected is the idea that only the group under the punishing angel is to be considered as excommunicated. Even according to Grotz the place to which these sinners come after their treatment by the punishing angel, 'the lesser place' (Vis. III 7,5-6 16]), is in practice identical with the place for the usual penitents (Grotz, pp. 21-3; 26). But also there from the beginning are those who are outside the actual tower and, therefore, ought to be considered as excommunicated, even though they did not have to pass first through the examination of the punishing angel.

B) THE CHURCH FORM OF PENANCE

Hermas' intention is not to describe church penance but to stir the conscience of sinners. He is a preacher of penance, not a dogmatic theologian or a canonist. We cannot expect him to say a great deal, therefore, about the form of penance with which his addressees were familiar or about how or how widely this form was used. The explanations which we have already given, however, suffice to give us some idea of the way in which the penance of a Christian sinner was performed within the Church in those days.

It has already been shown that a church excommunication is discernible in Hermas, at least in so far as he recognizes the obligation to 'avoid' certain sinners. But this must also be worked out in the sphere of the Church, which is obviously possible only if the sinner is in some active form expelled from the community. This does not mean that such an excommunication in fact occurs in the actual Church in all those cases where Hermas exhorts to penance and thereby theoretically presupposes that such it sinner no longer belongs to the tower in God's eyes and, therefore, ought to be treated correspondingly by the Church (cf. all the different sins in Sim. VIII and IX). To this extent, Hoh is right (p. 32) in stressing that, on this supposition, the Church would be 'de-peopled', since even according to Hermas himself there are only a few in the Church who do not belong to one or other of the groups of sinners distinguished by him [98] and urged to penance. For many of them it is practical only to think of the doing of subjective penance. Nevertheless, this does not prove that in these cases it is a question of a 'private' (because it is without an excommunication) but still sacramental penance,[53] since in Hermas there is not the slightest trace of an act on the Church's part

[53] This is the opinion of K. Adam, 'Die abendländische Kirchenbusse im Ausgang des christlichen Altertums' in: ThQ 110 (1929), pp. 1-66 (for Hermas cf. p. 26). He finds evidence only of an inner church (but sacramental) penance for all offences. J. Hoh also recognizes only an inner church penance, but he does not appear to consider it sacramental.

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which could in these cases clearly be styled sacramental.[54] In these cases, in fact, one can detect a lack of theological consistency in Hermas. For, on the one hand, even for these groups of sinners he presupposes a loss of the baptismal seal, the loss of life, the expulsion from the tower (Sim. VIII 6,3 [ibid., p. 71, 15-21]; 7,3.5 [ibid., pp. 72,17-73,9]; 8,3 [ibid., p. 74,1-4]; 9,2.4 [ibid., p. 74,17-25]; 10,1.3 [ibid., pp. 74,26-75,11]; Sim. IX 14,2 [ibid., p. 88,8-13]; 19 [ibid., p.92,4-20] 21,1.4 [ibid., p. 93,7-20]; 22,3f. [ibid., pp. 93,26-94,4]; 23,2 [ibid., p. 94,7-11]; 26,2 [ibid., p.95, 14-18], etc.); on the other hand, because of their great number, it is impossible to think of a church penance in their regard. It would be asking too much to put such theological consistency in practice. Such theological 'inconsistency' can be met even in Augustine, although in his case it has been the subject of some reflection.[55]

Be all this as it may, there is in Hermas an excommunication which is presented as self-evident and in no way as his own invention. Moreover, it is applicable to sins such as adultery, etc. which do not simply, of their very nature (as apostasy), automatically bring about excommunication as a separation from the community. The fact that he does not insist on its application in every case where he presupposes a separation from the Church or from the 'tower' springs from his strict theory of moral theology, which recognizes 'serious sins' (in the modern sense) precisely where he cannot treat them according to his own principles.

It would be false, however, to conclude from this inconsistency that according to Hermas, as a matter of principle, serious sin (which destroys the baptismal grace) is not always and everywhere, as in the case of adultery, to be countered with a church excommunication.

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[54] It is possible that such sinners have also experienced correction and exhortation by the pastors of the Church in a 'preaching of penance'. But this alone can hardly be the exercise of that power of the keys which is conferred on the Church in Matt. 16 and 18. This would be difficult to prove, particularly with regard to the sacramental character of this function. Hermas himself must have performed a voluntary but church penance for his own sins of thought (according to Grotz, p. 50 f.). According to the principles enunciated by Hermas (Mand. IV 1,1 f.) this would be possible (Vis. I 2,3 f.). Although he distinguishes sins of thought from those which, as deed, 'bring death', he may, granted his dynamic notion of the struggle between different spirits for man's heart, have been of the opinion that such a sin of thought deprived a person of the seal of baptism because it expelled the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, this assumption is not easily confirmed. For this to be the case, it would first of all have to be shown that the μεγα&λη α(μαρτι/α in Mand. IV 1,1 coincides with our notion of mortal sin. When there is a mention of death in the context of sins of thought (Vis. I 1,8), this could be understood as the consequence of such sins, in so far as they lead to action. In any event, it need not necessarily be a question of the inner aspect of the sin of thought as such as opposed to the deed. Moreover, it would still have to be shown that Hermas' personal penance (Sim. IX 10,6-11,8, in so far as penance really is involved here) was *ecclesial* in the strict sense. Obviously it could be stressed that Hermas' nightly meeting with the virtues, as his eating of God's word, occurs on the forecourt before the tower, therefore, on the place of the stones which are to be dressed, that is, of the penitents. Before such vague allegories are interpreted so widely it should be noted that the place before the tower is introduced as being perfectly purified (Sim. IX). Hermas precisely is not handed over to the pastor of penance, but he sequesters himself to play with the virtues (Sim. IX 10,6 f.). Hermas does not belong to the stones which have to be dressed for penance (Grotz, p. 50), but it is precisely this symbol of the stones which can be inserted into the tower only when they are dressed which refers to the penance which is imposed on sinners (Grotz, pp. 48-50). One can hardly recognize in this scene, therefore, a symbol of the fact that Hermas has undertaken a voluntary church penance on account of his sins. The fact that Hermas has spiritually 'rejuvenated' himself by the practice of the virtues, prayer and reading the Scripture is not only a part, but the whole, of the explanation of this symbol.

[55] Cf. for example Augustine, Sermo 98,5 593-4: in some circumstances sins of thought were considered mortal and, therefore, remitted *intus inter latebras conscentiae tamquam inter domesticos parietes.* Even if here there may have been a private sacramental penance in the sense of K. Adam (as opposed to Poschmann), this text still affords proof that the recognition of a mortal sin by the Fathers does not allow us to conclude that they knew of a private sacramental penance, since in the instance given there is no question of penance of excommunication. In fact these mortal sins of thought are certainly in Augustine's view remitted only by subjective penance. If, therefore, much earlier Hermas acknowledged sins of thought, which arc mortal sins, and if he demanded penance for them, this does not prove that he was thinking of a sacramental penance.

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Apart from this, it is possible to discern directly further acts of the Church in the overall performance of penance. The leaders in the community doubtless play an important role in this regard. Thus Hermas receives the commission to transmit his revelation to the presbyters and leaders of the Church (Vis. II 4,3 [ibid., p.7,14-18]); [99] the latter must obviously subsequently take the corresponding measures. It appears incumbent on the church leaders, 'God's chosen', to take charge of discipline (παιδευ/ειν): Vis. III 9,7-10 (ibid., p. 16,11-21). If the sheep stray from the flock through their fault they are answerable for it: Sim. IX 31,5 (ibid., p. 100,11-13). Thus there is clear evidence for the Church's active right to exercise penitential discipline over its members.

It is, however, possible to make further indirect conclusions. Although the angel of penance in Hermas may not be simply a symbol of a church official (say, of the bishop), there is in Hermas an emphasis on the comparison with the 'shepherd' of the empirical Church: '. . . I *also* am a shepherd' (Sim. IX 31,6 [ibid., p. 100,11-13]). This even suggests the idea of the heavenly shepherd of penance 'being called to account' by God over his activity (Sim. IX 31,6 [ibid., p. 100,13-17]; VIII 2,7 [ibid., pp. 67,27-68,4]), which is doubtless a transfer of an earthly reality into the heavenly world. This reflection is the justification for concluding to the existence of other activities of the earthly shepherd which correspond to other aspects of the heavenly angel of penance's activity. This applies particularly to those aspects which cannot be easily understood as the explanations of the general idea of the influence of angelic powers on men's subjective penance. If, therefore, the angel of penance examines sinners and tries as hard as possible to lead them all to penance, if he feels himself responsible for them, drives them from the tower and abandons the obstinately impenitent to their fate, then it becomes difficult to dispute that, in these cases, (especially in Sim. IX) there are transferred to the activity of the angel of penance aspects of the work of church leaders which are obviously presupposed as already existing and not introduced here for the first time.

The same must be said of the activity of the angel of penance when he inserts those people who are repentant but not yet fully healed not yet into the tower itself but into the 'walls', therefore into a 'lesser place' (Vis. III 5,5 [GCS 48: p. 12,11-17]; 7,6 [ibid., p. 14,10-16]; Sim. VIII 2,5 [ibid., p. 67,20-5]; 6,6 [ibid.,p. 72,5-20]; 7,3 [ibid., pp. 72,17-73,2]; 8,3 [ibid., p. 74,1-4] and even in this case only gradually, according to their (relative) worthiness (Sim. VIII 2,5 [ibid., p.62,20-5]). This 'lesser place', these 'walls' are not in or on the tower itself;[56] it is a question of a place which is distinguished from the actual tower of the Church itself. To this place come sinners [100] who are indeed doing penance, after they have been brought to their senses and to conversion by the external punishments of the angel of punishment (Sim. VI 3 [ibid., pp. 61,4-62,8]; Vis. III 7,6 [ibid., p. 14,10-16]), but who have not yet completed their penance. What is meant, therefore, is a place which explains the situation of a sinner before the completion of his penance, and indeed directly his situation in this world (even if this obviously has its counterpart in the next world, in the event of his penance not being completed before the final construction of the tower). This is because even a person who lives in the 'walls' can certainly move up into the tower and has to remain only temporarily in the walls on account of the long duration of his penance (Sim. VIII 8,3 [ibid., p.74,1-4]; 6,6 [ibid., p. 72,5-10]). The lesser place outside the tower itself buy in the walls which surround it is to be understood, therefore, as a symbol of the situation of those penitents who have indeed begun their penance (and thus are sure of their salvation), but have not yet completed it and so do not yet actually belong again to the tower of the Church. It is impossible to deny that Hermas has here spiritualized a reality existing in the empirical sphere of the Church: the

[56] Cf. for example Sim. VIII 7,3: to dwell in the tower and to dwell in the walls are clearly distinguished. In this regard it should be noted that to be inserted into the external part of the tower is, according to Hermas, a particularly honourable position. The 'walls', therefore, cannot signify the external part of the tower: Sim. IX 7,5; 8,2.4.5.6; 9,3.

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access of repentant sinners to church penance and their relationship to the Church before the definitive and complete readmission into it. Without such a real background it is difficult to find a sufficient explanation for such an elaborate idea. This does not mean that there was in Rome in the middle of the second century already the kind of structured institution of penance which appears fifty years later with Tertullian. It is not only possible but even probable that these two institutions differed from each other in much the same way as the catechumenate in Justin (Apol. 61; 65,1; 66,1) differs from the catechumenate attested in the Paradosis of Hippolytus (17 ff.; Dix p. 28 ff.). (The most that one can think is that Hermas' theology of baptism and penance is closer to the theology of Hippolytus than is that of Justin, in so far as Hermas also ascribes an important role to demonology, considering sin as possession by demons and liberation from sin as their expulsion.) So the structure of penance may have been fairly improvised, according to the cases which occurred. But there certainly was such a structure, since 'excommunication' and the community leaders' right to administer discipline are clearly discernible.[57] Both of these were naturally exercised in certain forms which must have demanded more precise regulations as the Church and the number of sinners and penitents increased.

[101] In this context, after the explanation we have just given of the 'lesser place' for certain penitents, it is necessary to broach the question of whether, according to Hermas, as Grotz maintains, there are also such penitents who are refused definitively and permanently an actual church penance. These would be precisely those people who come only to the lesser place (Vis. III 7,6 [ibid., p. 14,10-16]) and are not inserted into the tower itself. Grotz is of the opinion that this place is identified not formally but practically with the place for penitents (p. 22 f.). If one considers that a certain penance is necessary in order to arrive at the place for penitents i.e. to be allowed access to the official church penance, then the 'meaningless tautology' of Vis. III 7,5.6 (ibid., p. 14,7-16) of which Grotz (p. 22) is afraid and which hinders him from identifying the lesser place simply with the place for penitents is resolved. But, despite this, Grotz only admits that the lesser place is 'practically' identified with the place for penitents (p. 23). He holds that those who are once (definitively) excommunicated go no further beyond this place (pp. 23; 25 f.; 65; 68), that excommunication is definitively absolute and that consequently certain groups of sinners never again become full members of the Church (p. 27). Rather, they must remain permanently in the 'lesser place' which Grotz (p. 68) compares with the 'first walls' (Sim. VIII 6,6 [ibid., p.72,5- 10]; 7,2 f. [ibid., pp. 72,13-73,2]); 8,3 [ibid., p. 74,1-4]), even though he hits previously sharply distinguished the 'first walls' from the place for penitents (p. 44 if.)[58] and sought this mysterious middle position between the outside of excommunication and the inside of the church fellowship principally in the other world (p. 46).

Thus the question poses itself: does the residence of certain repentant sinners in the lesser place, in the first walls, mean the final, impassable point reached by their penitential efforts independently of the intensity of their penance, and this only because they were once (according to Grotz, definitively) excommunicated? We think that this question should be answered in the negative. Naturally this question does not include the group of those who, after a church penance, have again fallen away and who, therefore, according to Hermas'

[57] Cf. R. Joly, pp. 29 and 40 f.; S. Giet, p. 116.

[58] The argument against the identification of the place of penitents with the 'first walls' (cf. Grotz, p. 44 f.) disappears once it is realized that even the access to officially controlled penance presupposed a certain repentance (just as in the case of the catechumenate), even though the actual penance still remained to be done. Thus penance can be both the condition of access to the 'first walls' and then that which is imposed there. Furthermore, it is not surprising that access is gained to the penance of the place of penance by penance and that through (a greater and more intense) penance it is possible to arrive not only in these first walls but also in the tower (cf. the interpretation of Sim. VIII 6,6 by Grotz, p. 45).

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principle, can no longer be allowed access to a further church penance. This case, however, because of the conditions which it supposes, arises only theoretically and peripherally. Leaving aside the radical hope of God's mercy, which is open to all penance, nothing can be concluded, therefore, from the Shepherd [102] of Hermas about this group of sinners or about another form of penance to which they may be allowed access. Nevertheless, these men are not among those who have been fitted into the lesser place, the first walls. Our question concerns those who, having been excommunicated (definitively), do penance for the first time. Are they, as Grotz maintains, radically unable to pass further beyond the lesser place? This question calls for further clarification, since Hermas does in fact assume that there are certain cases, at least in practice, in which some sinners do not pass beyond this stage.[59] It should be noted, however, that in the passages where these cases are mentioned by Hermas the long duration or the late commencement of the penance is given as the reason. Our question does not, therefore, concern the fact that, because they began their penance late or because it lasts a long time, penitents in fact do not complete their penance and, therefore, are taken unawares by this day, being outside the tower although near it, and consequently, according to Hermas, are neither completely lost nor able to share in the happiness of those who are perfect. On Hermas' assumptions this situation needs no further explanation. The question we have raised, therefore, is only whether the Church refuses a full reconciliation to penitents who have once been excommunicated, and for this reason alone, and leaves them permanently on the place for penitents and indeed even if they demonstrate every possible and effective attitude of repentance as well as a clear improvement in their way of life. What precludes this view, in the first place, is the fact that Hermas knows of men who actually come to the tower again from all the classes of sinners, and indeed from the same groups from which others are banished to the outer walls (Sim. VIII 7,2.3 [ibid., pp. 72,13-73,2]; 8,4.5 [ibid., p. 74,4-10]); 9,2 [ibid., p. 74,17-18]); 10,1.4 [ibid., pp. 74,26-75,3.11-13]). The difference of effect seems to have no other reason than the different intensity of penance which the individual performs (even because, for example, he has begun sooner or later with his penance or undertakes it more seriously, etc.).

It can hardly be objected against what we have just said that the tower into which people are incorporated in Sim. VIII refers not to the earthly Church but to the final salvation (p. 35 f.). Even if this were the case,[60] our observation would still be correct, since, even according to Grotz, there is a mere existence in the first walls which, [103] while expressing a reality in the Church of this world, is also a symbol of the final state in the next world. Now irrespective of what may be in the foreground, membership of the tower similarly has its earthly and heavenly counterpart; otherwise it is not possible to see why Hermas claims that some people (he has definite cases in mind) are already inserted into the tower of the next world before they are allowed access to the Church of this world. Thus Hermas recognizes men in all groups of sinners, apart from the apostates in Sim. VIII 6,4 (ibid., pp. 71,21-72,1) (therefore, such sinners who have not simply denied the faith, but as enemies and traitors of the Church have in fact fully, unrepentently and obstinately separated themselves finally from it), who return to the tower. The fate of having to remain in the walls must, therefore, relate to the deficient subjective penance. Grotz's attempt to prove anything different from this rests solely on the fact that in some cases nothing more is said than that these people come into the

[59] Sim. VIII 7,3; 8,3 must be understood in this sense, since the distinction between those who come into the tower and those who arrive only at the walls would hardly have much meaning if in fact this second group also came into the tower.

[60] There is lacking, however, a clear proof of this, since the fact that here Hermas is thinking more of interior penance is not a convincing proof. In this respect, it should be noted that Sim. VIII 7,5 allows for the fact that a person who has re-entered the tower could still leave it again. This could hardly apply to the Church of the next life.

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walls, that is, to the lesser place. But when we read in Vis. III 7,5.6 (ibid., p. 73,6-13) that those who are rejected 'are not able to enter into the tower, but are suitable for a far lesser place and only after they have been tested', then to make this meaningful we should insert the phrase 'not immediately' (come into the tower). From the Church's answer to Hermas' question one can work out the distinction between the penance of those who are rejected and that of those who are lying near the tower. The latter are able, by their penance – under the angel of penance – to be reincorporated immediately into the tower, while the former are only led by the punishing angel to that attitude of, and readiness for, penance, by which they become ready and worthy to assume church penance in the strict sense in the actual place of penitents. That they are later able to proceed further is not excluded by the text. Indeed, such a progress is implied in the prospects which Hermas offers these sinners in Sim. VIII. If in Sim. VI there is mention only of their being handed over to the angel of penance, but not of an eventual end to this time of penance, this is no proof (as Grotz assumes, p. 26) that this time simply has no end.

All that is really excluded by these texts is an 'immediate pardon' (cf. Sim. VII 4 [ibid., pp. 64,17-65,2]).Thus, just as Hermas' children are refused an immediate forgiveness of sin (ibid.), so, in all Probability, all that is rejected in Vis. III 7,5.6 (ibid., p. 14,7-16) is an immediate arrival at the tower, and what is taught is an arrival at [104] the outer walls (= the place for penitents, for those arriving to do church penance) as the first, not the definitively last, step on the way of penance. When one considers that it is perfectly reasonable that those sinners who came from far off should first of all do penance in order to be allowed access to church penance, therefore before they are handed over to the angel of penance, and when one considers further that the handing over to the shepherd of penance (Sim. VI 3,6 [ibid., pp. 61,20-62,8]) is, of its very nature, a transfer to a further penance, now conducted by the Church, then one cannot say (cf. P. 26) that the penance of those who were previously remaining near the tower and that of those coming from far off are essentially different and that this is proven by the fact that the second group obtains a confirmation of faith, but otherwise nothing more is said.

Moreover, the point is made about these sinners that, as a result of the discipline under the shepherd of penance, from now on they serve the Lord with a pure heart (Sim. VI 3,6 [ibid., pp. 61,20-62,8]). How is this possible, if not by penance under the leadership of the angel of penance? But why should the aim of the angel of penance, namely the reincorporation into the tower, not be achieved in this instance? In any case the text of Hermas does not exclude this explicitly and clearly. Moreover, if the people (of Grotz's group D) in Vis. III (ibid., pp. 9,29-10,3) are the same as those sinners who, according to Sim. VIII, are inserted into the walls by a long penance (p. 43), and if, still according to Vis. III 2,9 (ibid., P. 10,3-8); 7,1-3 (ibid., pp. 13,20-14,6), they belong to those who are ejected farther than the men of the group D but who are still able to return to the tower itself, according to Sim. VIII (e.g. those who err in their faith: Vis. III 7,1 [ibid., p. 13,20-4] and Sim. VIII 6,5.6 [ibid., p. 13,6-16]), then it is impossible to see that for the group D the first walls are the impassable goal of their penance.

Grotz's assumption also implies a distinction between a definitive excommunication and one which is only temporary, this latter not excluding a full reconciliation with the Church. The sole criterion for such a distinction, even according to Grotz, is obduracy (cf. P. 31 f.; 57ff.; 66f.), which is expressed in the refusal of penance.[61] But in this case the only explanation for a permanent excommunication is the sinner's continuing obstinacy.

[61] It is worth noting here that according to Grotz not every refusal to undertake the obligation of penance makes excommunication definitive (cf. Grotz, p. 32). Provisionally obstinate sinners have the same possibility of penance as those who are converted immediately after their sin.

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Now if a person does not go any farther than the place for penitents, not as a mere matter of fact, i.e. because he dies or the Lord arrives before he completes his personal penance, but as a matter of [105] principle, then there would be a permanent excommunication which is not based on the definitive obstinacy of the sinner. But, if this were the case, how can the adulteress, for example, still come to full penance, even if she has been obstinate for a short time? In fact those people who, according to Grotz, have been definitively excommunicated because they have not responded to the first call to penance have done nothing worse than she has done (p. 66 f.)

How can Grotz write: 'When we consider once again in order the groups of sinners to whom, according to Sim. IX, the notion of a *temporary* excommunication applies, it becomes immediately obvious that it is a question of the same sinners who, according to Sim. VIII, arrive, in certain circumstances, at the "first walls" and who are, as we have seen [p. 41 ff.], in turn identical with those of the group D in Vis. III' (p. 67)? A temporary excommunication can still (even according to Grotz) end with a full reconciliation. Must not those, therefore, who (in our view, first) come to the first walls also not be able to proceed further if they were only temporarily excommunicated? Grotz avoids this conclusion with the idea that there are people who belonged to group D but then, because they did not complete their penance quickly enough, have been definitively excommunicated and for this reason, with the help of the penance already undertaken, have only been able to arrive at the walls (p. 68). But a definitive excommunication based solely on the refusal – which is itself understood as necessarily provisional – of penance is a hypothesis which has not the slightest support. In fact, how could a precise deadline be fixed by the Church for the end of the toleration of a temporary obstinacy (as in the case of the adulteress who does not repent immediately)? Why does Hermas say nothing at all about this point? If a person is definitively excommunicated he certainly does not belong any longer to group D.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the idea of a penance which is granted merely once is precisely based on the assumption that the sinner, in this single penance, is really reconciled with the Church and indeed by an act of the Church. This possibility is offered to all sinners without exception or reserve (apart from those sinners who in fact are unrepentant). A reserve must be expressed if it really exists. What would be the point in proclaiming solemnly such a Possibility if, from the outset, it remained inaccessible to a whole group of sinners?

This is our conclusion: it is not proven that Hermas recognized an [106] excommunication which, independently of the sinner's definitive obstinacy, excludes him from full communion with the Church, even though he has not yet received the one *metanoia*, and which banishes him as a matter of principle and for ever to a 'lesser place'.

C) CHURCH RECONCILIATION

But is it possible to show that Hermas knew a church reconciliation of sinners? Does the church-regulated penance end with the reacquisition of full church rights, or is it not possible to discern such an act on the Church's part in the Shepherd of Hermas, which of course does not mean that it did not exist or that he did not know such an act? The only passage which speaks explicitly about the 'readmission' of a sinner into the empirical sphere of the Church is Mand. IV 1,8 (ibid., p. 26, l6-20.)[62] A sinner who is converted must be received (παραδε/ξεσθαι), again, and indeed only once, and the husband must treat his adulterous but repentant wife, from whom he had separated himself, accordingly.

[62] R. Joly, p. 29, sees also in Maximus (Vis. II 3,4) a person who was at one time a *lapsus* but who was reincorporated into the community.

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It has been claimed[63] that this 'readmission' refers only to the access to church penance, but does not include a church reconciliation. Apart from the fact that, in general, it supposes before Hermas an absolute rigorism in the treatment of sinners which in reality cannot be proven, this opinion is based on the observation that the prerequisite demanded for the readmission is only a μετανοει=ν, but not the previous performance of penance. This reason is certainly not tenable, since, as Poschmann (p. 193) rightly says, μετανοει=ν even in the present can be used of a person 'whose heart is already clean from every evil work' (Sim. VII 5 [ibid., p. 65,2-7]) and thus is already fully healed (p. 4). If, therefore, there is no reason to understand the readmission as only an access to penance, it can be taken to mean a proper, full readmission into the Church. We find the term in Ignatius, Smyrn. 4,1 (Fisher: 206,10-14) (only repentent heretics ought to be 'received'), where it is obviously understood of a full church communion.

According to Hermas, the 'readmission' can take place only once, since only one penance is granted to God's servants. Such a readmission can refer only to full church communion, since it presupposes an exclusion which is very difficult to envisage for an access to penance. Otherwise, this exclusion would have to be conceived as a public renunciation of penance before the Church, after which no further access to church penance would be allowed. But there is not [107] the slightest trace of such a refusal to do penance in the early Church. A further penance later was impossible, however, only when a person fell back into sin after the church reconciliation. This did not apply to relapses during the time of penance itself. As the case of the Gnostic Cerdon in Rome at the time of Hermas shows, this was already church practice at that time (Irenaeus, Adv.haer. III 4,3).[64]

Moreover, according to Hermas, the fully completed performance of penance doubtless reopened the possibility of integration into the tower of the Church, at least as an interior community of grace and salvation, and indeed already in this life, before the 'completion' of the tower (cf. e.g., Sim. VIII 6,6 [GCS 48: p. 72,5-10]; 7,3.5 [ibid.,pp. 72,17-73,9]; 8,2.3.5 [ibid., pp. 73,16-74,10]; 9,2.4 [ibid., p. 74,17-25]). If this is correct and implies that at least certain sinners were excommunicated by an act of the Church, then it is unthinkable that such a sinner should not be received back into full external fellowship with the Church by an act of the Church, once he has completed the performance of penance. If full *inner* church communion is granted to such a sinner how can the Church still refuse him the external fellowship? Again, if Hermas makes a distinction between a full insertion into the tower and an existence 'beside the tower in a lesser place in the walls round the tower', and if this latter

[63] Thus for example H. Koch and J. Hoh.

[64] According to Irenaeus' text the 'correction due to his false teaching' must have taken place often during the period of Cerdon's penance; this shows that he must have alternated between appearing in the community as a penitent, on the one hand, and spreading his false teaching, on the other. Quite correctly Poschmann says: 'In this case our passage attests that heretics were not only admitted to penance, but even after a relapse they ought to be readmitted' (op. cit., p. 221). This opinion, which is shared not only by d'Alès but also by H. Koch (in ZNW 9 [1908], p. 38), should be maintained, despite the protestation of Köhne (in ThGl 35 [1943], p. 33). Kohne himself admits that Cerdon performed exhomologesis, that is, appeared in the liturgy as a penitent, several times. Now the ποτε∴ ε0λεγξο&μενοφ, translated as 'now to be corrected', is placed in strict parallel to the 'now appearing as a false teacher' and 'now appearing as a penitent', and so it is eliminated by the α)φιστα&μενοφ, the definitive exclusion from the community. It is to be concluded from this text that it was often the case that Cerdon, during the period of his penance (that is, at that period when he appeared repeatedly as a penitent at the celebration of the liturgy) continued to spread his false teaching, and that he was alerted to the fact that these two kinds of behaviour were incompatible. Cerdon probably did not accept this, since he obviously wished to belong to the main community and attempted to achieve this through his penance, and at the same time he tried to remain in his esoteric circle. On this supposition (without which it is impossible to understand Cerdon's behaviour) it is easy to see that he does not attach much importance to the secrecy of his circle and that, consequently, it was always possible to recognize the formation of his gnostic, esoteric group.

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position of the penitent, as we have already seen,[65] reflects his relationship with the empirical Church at least, then the full insertion into the tower must be expressed exteriorly in such a way that, also in this position, such a penitent differs from the one who is only 'by the tower'. He must receive complete reconciliation with the Church. This is all the more proper, in that this belonging to the Church was in no way considered an absolute guarantee of grace, since it was recognized that even those who had lost the seal of baptism still belonged to the external community of the Church. How could one, therefore, have refused this external communion with the Church to a repentant person after a long period of serious penance?

Finally, even Tertullian (to whom this testimony was very inconvenient) had to admit that Hermas was a witness for the reconciliation of adulterers (De pud. 10,12 [CSL 20: p. 241,10-19];20,2 [CSL 20: p. 266,20-4]). He stood fairly near to Hermas' time and was not disposed to accepting such a testimony.

If there had been another way of interpreting the evidence Tertullian [108] would not have derived a reconciliation from the Shepherd of Hermas. 'We must have very convincing reasons to ignore Tertullian's judgement on our question' (Poschmann, p. 199). Naturally, we can hardly expect any theories on the meaning which this church reconciliation has for salvation from Hermas. The healing of the sinner takes place through the personal act of penance of the sinner himself; he is accepted into the tower only after he has completed his penance. To this extent, the accent is here entirely on the subjective side. Nevertheless, since the visible Church into which one is received by baptism and – as we can now say, by reconciliation – is necessary for salvation the saving significance of the Church's act is still, in principle, sufficiently guaranteed. In the final analysis, the whole of Hermas' theology of penance revolves around the question of the right relationship of sinful man to the *Church*. Even if this relationship is put in order again principally by the penance of the sinner himself, it is still important for this theology that man's penance directs him to the *Church*. And just as in the case where new Christians are inserted into the tower, the accent is placed on their subjective conversion (Vis. III 7,3.5 [ibid., p. 14,1-6,7-10];6,1 [ibid., p. 14,17-19]: to become a Christian only in appearance; Sim. IX 31,1 f. [ibid., pp. 98,10-100,4] Mand. IV 3,1 [ibid., pp. 27,21-28,2]: penance *in* baptism), without the sacramental significance of baptism being contested, so something similar ought to be assumed for reconciliation by the Church. If the 'seal', despite penance which is a necessary condition for its reception, is given only by baptism, how can this seal be restored by subjective penance alone?

VI. CONCLUSIONS ON HERMAS' PENITENTIAL TEACHING

We have come to the end of our exposition of Hermas' penitential teaching. In it we have also tried to examine J. Grotz's exposition of this teaching. Our conclusions differ from his on a whole series of points which it is now worthwhile to resume.

It seems historically certain that wherever in Hermas there is a question of an intervention by the Church in the penance of a sinner which can actually be considered a sacramental act, it is always a question of a sinner who is considered 'excommunicated'. In other [109] words, penance as a church-sacramental event and penance of excommunication are identical in the Shepherd of Hermas. He shows no sign of any kind of church penance other than that which considers the sinner alienated from the Church. Hermas' book on penance cannot be taken as a historical witness, therefore, for the view that *before* the actual church penance, and indeed only in certain cases, there preceded a phase of excommunication.

[65] Cf. above for further details on this point.

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All that can be observed here is that the access to actual church penance, in which the sinner is not yet considered reconciled with the Church, is itself an act of the Church which is only granted after a certain examination of the sinner's genuine repentance and sorrow. This examination will lead to a positive result more or less easily, according to the particular cases presented; i.e. the sinners who, despite their very superficial Christian life, have never lost their close relationship with the community will obviously very easily and without many formalities be given access to actual church penance. Others, on the contrary, who have separated themselves from the community by a very clear and 'secular' defection from the faith or a radically un-Christian way of life will be given access to penance only after a more probing examination.

This difference, however, does not alter the fact that basically all penitents were considered to be, in some sense, 'outside' the Church (which does not mean: without relation to it) and that, consequently, the performance of their penance – considered as the work of the penitent and the act of the Church – is seen precisely and principally from the viewpoint of the Church: the act of the Church is the incorporation into the Church of the penitent who has expiated his sins. It is only by this act-that the penitent is assured of his salvation. The act of the penitent is his effort to prove to the Church that he is worthy of such a full reincorporation. This basic structure of Hermas' teaching on penance is exactly what we would expect after our consideration of the teaching and practice of penance attested in the writings of the New Testament.

We cannot here examine critically other sections of Grotz's major study, i.e. especially his explanation of church penance in the writings of Cyprian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, the Didascalia, etc.[66] This would be possible only in a detailed work which follows, step by step, Grotz's own development. Nevertheless, the result of this examination of his interpretation of Hermas' teaching [110] on penance does not augur well for any of Grotz's further conclusions. The reason for this scepticism is obviously not simply that, in our opinion, his interpretation of the Shepherd of Hermas contains errors. Rather, we consider it entirely improbable that, if from the New Testament and from the first work on penance by a Father of the Church the penance of excommunication is met as the first actual type of sacramental penance in the Church, penance in a different form can present itself at a later time with the claim of representing the pure and original essence of sacramental penance. This observation prescinds from the fact that the dogmatic theologian (even if he is not a historian of dogma) can say: this is not possible because it cannot be possible, since every penance which concerns serious sin sacramentally means something which excludes man *iure divino et iure ecclesiastico* from the Eucharist, the Church's central celebration. It is, therefore, something which establishes him in a broken relationship with the Church and brings it about that the sinner no longer belongs to the Church in the same sense as does the baptized person who is just. (All this applies only if the Church is regarded as more than an external juridical organization.) Thus every sacramental penance and absolution of a serious sin is also a reconciliation with the Church. And this presupposes that the person to be reconciled is actually 'excommunicated'. Every sacramental penance – at least for serious sins – is, therefore, a penance of excommunication. This was recognized not only by the patristic age but also by the whole of the Middle Ages, although it is not so central in modern theological thinking. This strange fact in the first centuries of the Church, that wherever the sacrament of penance appears clearly, it always has the form of a penance of excommunication, is perfectly comprehensible on dogmatic grounds and is to a certain extent

[66] Only in J. Grotz's work is it stressed that the central form of penance had nothing to do with a penance of excommunication. In contrast, previous historians of dogma, for example K. Adam and P. Galtier, had allowed only a modest and insignificant, peripheral existence to a 'penance without excommunication'.

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to be expected *a priori*. It is also evident that it should be explained in the light of this dogmatic nature and not by a subsequent and slowly developed notion and practice of excommunication springing from church law. If, therefore, the penance of excommunication, which is the essence of sacramental penance, has a dogmatic and still valid nature, and if, the further one goes back in time, one discovers more and more of a process of excommunication in the external and tangible form and practice of penance, then it cannot be false to understand this external, tangible and clear process of excommunication historically as the concrete expression of the nature of penance and [111] not as something which only in the course of time and subsequently is connected with penance.

So it seems to us most likely that the process of development went in the opposite direction to that thought by Grotz. Excommunication in the modern sense of church law has not become connected with penance subsequently and as a purely disciplinary measure. Rather, it gradually became separated from penance and developed into what is today called excommunication. Obviously this is not the place to demonstrate these *a priori* ideas. Nevertheless, from what has been said it appears unlikely that we will be able to discover the older and more original form in later Church Fathers if in Hermas we can only trace a secondary type of the sacrament of penance.

These objections could be countered by the observation that excommunication in the sense envisaged by us is not disputed. At the same time, that other kind of excommunication in the Shepherd of Hermas occurs only for certain groups of sinners but not for all. Thus we are talking at cross-purposes. Now it is agreed that the ‘excommunication’ which, in our opinion, is (always) in the early Church a hall-mark of every church penance is not explicitly contested by Grotz. But the point is that he appears not to have noticed it even once. And this must be considered as a fundamental defect in a history of penance. In this work the application of a modern notion of excommunication hides the basic structure of the institution of penance in the early Church, as this appears in the sources. This entails that other things too are distorted. Thus, for example, it is indisputable that for the Shepherd of Hermas the place of penitents (the lesser place, the first walls, whether these are formally or only practically identical with the place of penitents) can be reached even by people who come from far away, who therefore, according to Grotz, were excommunicated – at least temporarily. But when they arrive at the place of penitents does the excommunication still continue? If this is not the case, why do they not also come into the tower (at least after further penance)? By what right can one dispute the possibility of explaining such a permanent exclusion from the Church as an excommunication? But if the excommunication persists, then what wits previously a temporary excommunication has changed into a permanent one. Thus penance brings only further punishments, without really improving the situation. Moreover, the penitents are no better off than they were before they came to the [112] place of penitents, since even where they were (i.e. disconnected from the community) they could receive pardon for their sin and hope for God’s grace. If, therefore, Hermas is convinced that there is a way into the Church, the excommunication must be able to be lifted in principle. But if that is possible, then in those days one did not have to reckon with a definitive and permanent exclusion from the Church for such sinners.

The modern notion of excommunication only leads to constructions which raise new problems not envisaged by Hermas. At the same time, the same problems cannot be applied to the case of those who fall again after *metanoia*, who indeed even in our opinion were refused a further church penance. On the contrary, it is simply to be observed that Hermas (rightly or wrongly is in this context irrelevant) considers these people definitively unrepentant. For him, therefore, the assumption that there are sinners who are excommunicated by an act of the Church and who are no longer allowed access to full church fellowship, although they are recognized as repentant, poses no problem. The same notion of

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excommunication must then lead further to the attempt to prove later, by a subtle dialectic, that in Cyprian, et al. the lifting of excommunication and the absolution of guilt before God are two different and temporally distinct acts. This, however, does not correspond at all to the data provided by the sources. This view could contain a grain of truth[67] in so far as perhaps those groups of sinners are alienated from the Church not only because of their own serious faults and their own separation from the life of the community but also through an actual and clear act of excommunication on the Church's part, as in the case of those sinners for whom 'excommunication' consists only in the fact that, by their own confessions and their own repentance, they have put themselves in the class of penitents and then have been considered 'excommunicated'. Such an explicit act of excommunication could easily have existed. And perhaps in this sense the Shepherd of Hermas contains the basis of the modern practice of excommunication.

Nevertheless, this assumption cannot be sustained on the basis of the text itself. This is not to dispute that, in certain cases, even the early Church could and did excommunicate (e.g. in the case of heretics who were not willing of their own accord to abandon fellowship with the Church) already in the form which the excommunication of church law later acquired. But it remains impossible to say. [113] Everyone has the right to look for such things in connection with the penitential practice of the early Church and to distinguish them from the actual essence of penance.

What is opposed, however, is the attempt to dispute that the penance of the early Church was, as such, a penance of excommunication. Such an attempt does not only contradict the sources but also incurs the risk either of denying that the penance of the early Church was more than an external event of church discipline (namely a sacrament) or of having to look for the sacrament in another place, where one can find it only because one looks. Or one simply disputes – because no penance can be found which is not a penance of excommunication – that there was a sacrament of penance in the early Church.

[67] In this connection we might at least raise the question, which will still remain to be considered, of whether behind the possible two-tiered church ban in Hermas there is a double ban which is already discernible not only in the practice of the synagogue but also in the New Testament and in the apostolic communities: the simple ban and the (solemn) ban accompanied by a curse. If this were the case, it would make it clearer that in Hermas also the first level in any case involves a real excommunication and that, at the same time, the ban accompanied by a curse in the New Testament and, therefore, the intense form in Hermas do not imply that the sin of the person banned is unforgivable. For the simple ban cf. Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:9 ff.; 2 Cor. 2:6; 13:2; 2 Tim. 3:5; Tit. 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:6 ff.; Rev. 2:2. For the solemn ban accompanied by a curse cf.: Acts 5:1-11; 8:18-24; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Gal. 1:8 f.

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[114]

4

THE POST-BAPTISMAL FORGIVENESS OF SINS IN THE REGULA FIDEI OF IRENAEUS

There is no doubt that the Regula Fidei, in which Irenaeus of Lyons summarizes the faith which the universal Church recognises as the inheritance which it has received from the apostles and their disciples and which it carefully preserves, belongs to the most important texts of Christian antiquity (Adv. haer. 1,2; edition of W. Harvey I: 90 f.). Certainly it is easy to understand Irenaeus' teaching on penance[1] quite independently of this text; and, in any case, the Regula Fidei offers nothing at all new on the subject. Nevertheless, in interpreting such a rule of faith which presents itself as the clear expression of the belief of the whole Church, it is not without interest to ask whether or not it provides any evidence for the possibility of a penance after baptism.

I. EXPLANATIONS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF PENANCE ACCORDING TO IRENAEUS

If Irenaeus does testify to such a possibility of penance and forgiveness of sins in this context, that is, as part of the Church's universal belief from the beginning, then he certainly cannot count as the last advocate of the old ideal of holiness and as the representative of a rigoristic theory of baptism, as, for example, H. Windisch,[2] H. Koch[3] and G. N. Bonwetsch[4] consider him to be. In fact, several [115] scholars, in their researches into Irenaeus' teaching on penance, have found evidence for a post-baptismal possibility of penance and forgiveness of sins, even in this passage. This is the case of the earlier authors Feuardent (1575)[5] and Grabe (1702),[6] and the more recent Stufler,[7] d'Alès[8] and Hoh.[9] Nevertheless, B. Poschmann,[10] in the excellent exposition of Irenaeus' penitential teaching which forms part of his comprehensive work on church penance in early Christianity up to Cyprian and Origen, has contested this view. It would seem, therefore, that the question of whether or not Irenaeus in fact attests the possibility of a post-baptismal penance in this Regula Fidei merits a re-examination.

For the above-mentioned advocates of a positive answer to this question the text itself appears to be so clear that they do not offer an actual proof for their view. Thus there is no need to consider them further here. Poschmann's negative answer is based on the fact that the

[1] The present study is a revised and extended version of an original one which appeared in ZKTh 70 (1948), pp. 450-5. The basic text of the Regula Fidei can also be found in (PG 7) I 10,1 cols. 550 f. On our theme cf. in general J. Hoh, *Die kirchliche Busse im zweiten Jahrhundert* (Breslau 1932), pp. 89-103; B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda* (Bonn 1940), pp. 211-29; H. Holstein, 'L'Exhomologèse dans l'Adversus haereses de saint Irénée' in: RSR 35 (1948), pp. 282-8. There is a comprehensive bibliography in B. Altaner/A. Stuiber, *Patrologie* (Freiburg/Br. 1966), pp. 118-25.
[2] Cf. H. Windisch, *Taufe and Sünde im ältesten Christentum bis auf Origenes* (Tübingen 1908), p. 404.
[3] Cf. H. Koch, 'Die Sündenvergebung bei Irenäus' in: ZNW 9 (1908), pp. 36-46.
[4] Cf. G. N. Bonwetsch, *Die Theologie des Irenäus* (Gütersloh 1925), p. 131 f.
[5] Cf. the remarks of F. Feuardent, reprinted in the 2nd vol. A. Stieren's edn of Irenaeus (Leipzig 1848), p. 613.
[6] His remarks are reported by W. Harvey I 91.
[7] J. Stufler, 'Die Bussdisziplin der abendländischen Kirche bis Kallistus' in: ZKTh 31 (1907), pp. 433-73; J. Stufler, 'Die Sündenvergebung bei Irenaus' in: ZKTh 32 (1908), pp. 488-97.
[8] A. d'Alès, *L'édit de Calliste* (Paris 1914), p. 123.
[9] J. Hoh, p. 93.
[10] B. Poschmann, p. 220, n.2.

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two classes, named in the text, of those who reach salvation mean not two classes of men but angels and men. The ones who 'from the beginning' persevered in love are to be understood as the good angels, and the others, who 'by penance' remain in love, are, accordingly, men 'who all, after Adam's fall, can regain it [grace] only by way of penance'. Poschmann sees the proof that these two classes must refer to angels and men in the fact that, in the same context, there is also a mention of the judgement and the rejection of fallen angels and of sinful men. In the case of those, therefore, who, through the judgement, attain happiness, it must be a question of angels and men.

As is usual in confessions of faith, in the Regula Fidei the final phrases of the disputed text refer to eschatology (Adv. haer. I PG 7 10,1). First of all, the belief is here expressed that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again from heaven in the glory of the Father to gather everything together. He will raise up all flesh, the whole of mankind, so that the knee of everyone in heaven, on the earth and under the earth may bend before our Lord and God, the Saviour and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, and that every tongue may praise him. Then the Regula Fidei continues:[11]

> Then he will hold a righteous judgement over all; the wicked spirits and the disobedient angels, who deserted God, and the godless, unrighteous, transgressors and blasphemers among [116] men he will commit to everlasting fire. But to the righteous, the pious, those who have followed his commandments and remained in his love – some from the beginning, some by penance – he will grant life as a grace, give immortality and provide eternal glory.

It is, therefore, a question of the judgement which Christ will hold, acting as judge, at the end of time. It is stated *who* will be judged and *what* the content of the verdict (or its effect) will be. Those judged and the corresponding verdict are divided into two classes: the wicked, for whom eternal fire is reserved, and the good, who receive ζωη/, α)φθαρσι/α and δο&χα αι0ωνι/α. The wicked are, for their part, again clearly subdivided into two groups: the wicked angelic powers, who err (παραβεβηκο&τεφ) and fall away, and men who, as a sub-group, are more closely characterized by four adjectives: α)σεβει=φ, α!δικοι, α!νομοι, βλα&σφημοι.[12] On the other side, the class of the good is similarly described more precisely by four characteristics,[13] and then is still further divided in another sense, so that one part belongs to this class α)π' α)ρξη=φ and the other belongs to it ε0κ μετανοι/αφ. Now the question is whether, in this class of the good, we have to reckon with angels who have remained faithful, so that those who are good α)π' α)ρξη=φ means precisely the angels who have remained faithful, and those who are good ε0κ μετανοι/αφ means men who, since Adam's fall, are all in need of a penance. Or is the whole class of the good to be understood only of men, of whom some have persevered in Christ's love 'from the beginning' of their Christian life, while others have done so only after a (second) penance?

II. THE REFERENCE TO MEN

[11] Our translation changes the opening clause, which – in the original – depends upon the previous sentence, into an independent sentence.

[12] Since this group is determined syntactically by the final phrase τω~ν α)νθρω&πων as well as by the initial unique article (as is the case with the group of wicked angels) it is obvious that these four adjectives refer only to men.

[13] The four descriptions of this group are also bound together as a unity by the unique initial article. Thus the following phrase τοι∴φ (με/ν) – τοι∴φ δε/ must refer to this whole group of descriptions as a unity and cannot be understood merely as a differentiation within the last description.

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Our view is that only the second possibility does justice to the interpretation of the text itself. First, this view is demanded by the striking fourfold description of the class of the good, which is quite clearly paralleled to the class of wicked men, this class itself being more closely characterized by four types.[14] Second (and this is a point of particular relevance to such a traditional formulation),[15] the idea that *good* angels would be judged by Christ during his judgement at the end of time is totally alien to the tradition before [117] Irenaeus. Rather, they appear as the judge's companions, as his court, as assistants and executors of his sentence; in no way do they appear as those who are judged.[16] This is all the more striking in that the idea is freely current that the *wicked* angels will be judged at this judgement.[17] Third,

[14] The adjectives (or participles) used here: δι/καιοι, ο#σιοι, τετηρηκο&τεφ and διαμεμενηκο&τεφ would, at least in an absolute form, have been unusual as a precise description of angels. In some circumstances, 'holy' could refer to angels (cf. for example 1 Thess. 3:13), even when the term is used absolutely. But this hardly applies to the expressions used here.

[15] The precise point at issue here should be kept in mind: it is not a question of the actual legitimacy or the possibility of deriving from biblical expressions or those found in the early Church the fact that even the good angels will be judged in some sense of the last day, but only of whether the expressions of such a notion, which is quite possible in itself, were at that time part and parcel of the current view about the future judgement of the world, and this to the extent that they could be expected to figure here in this brief confession of faith, even though there is nothing in the text itself which would demand such an interpretation.

[16] Cf. for example Matt. 16:27; 25:31; Luke 9:26; 12:8 f.; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:7. On this point see ThW I 83. Jewish theology at the time of the New Testament knows the same idea: the good angels accompany God at the judgement and are the executors of his sentence on men and demons, but they are not judged themselves. Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum NT aus Talmud und Midrasch* I, pp. 672, 973 f.; P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Tübingen 1934), pp. 276 f., 303 f., 316. The only text which constitutes an exception to this general view and perspective is Henoch, pp. 61,6 ff., where the Son of Man appears to judge *all* angels and men. But it should be pointed out that, first, it is unique in the whole of the relevant literature and, second, it is not consistent with the New Testament perspective. Above all, this unique occurrence hardly affords sufficient explanation of such a perspective in a short confession like the Regula Fidei. The most that can be said is that in 1 Cor. 6:3 it could be presupposed that in the end all angels (even the good) will be judged and that consequently such a perspective could have been familiar to Irenaeus. All that need be said on this point at present is that it seems more reasonable today to understand this text too, following Sickenberger, B. Weiss, Lietzmann, Förster (cf. Foerster, W. in ThW II 18) and H. D. Wendland, NTD III (Göttingen 1965) (but contrary to Cornely, Allo and others) as referring to the judgement of the fallen angels. The decisive factor for this question, however, must be that all of the Greek and most of the Latin Church Fathers (beginning with Tertullian, who was the first Latin author to interpret this text which is not found in Irenaeus) understood this passage as referring only to the judgement of fallen angels. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that Irenaeus would have been familiar with the idea of a judgement of the good angels on the basis of this Pauline passage. A further observation confirms this conclusion: the confession of the future judgement by the returning Lord is usually modified in a 'regula fidei' or in the confessions in general by the statement that it will be a judgement of living and dead men, but never a judgement of angels. Only very exceptionally are those to be judged further distinguished into good and bad (as in Irenaeus). Although this distinction is found in the traditional formulations of the 'regula fidei' which are closest to Irenaeus, it is abundantly clear that here it is only a question of good and bad men: Tertullian, De praescr.haer. 13 (CSL 70: p. 18,14-17), and Origen, Peri archon, I,5 (PG 11) 118. Moreover, the idea of a judgement of the good angels is not found elsewhere in Irenaeus. In fact this idea seems to be totally alien to the whole of early Christian literature, which is remarkable, in view of the fact that the teaching of a final judgement of the demons appears to have been generally widespread. Cf. L. Atzberger, *Geschichte der christlichen Eschatologie innerhalb der vornicänischen Zeit* (Freiburg 1896). An isolated passage in the fragment of Hippolytus Adv.Graecos 3 (PG 10, 801 A) contains a remark which could refer to a judgement of the good angels. Origen's idea, however, that the guardian angels of men would have to render an account of their activity at the judgement (In Luc.hom. 13 [GCS 35] 92) is so incidental that it cannot be considered relevant to our question. In fact this idea seems to have been introduced by Hermas, Sim. IX 31,6 (GCS 48: p. 100,13-17).

[17] Cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6. That the fallen angels, despite their previous condemnation, will be finally and definitively condemned only at the last judgement is a view which is very familiar to Jewish theology; cf. Strack-Billerbeck III, p. 783 f. The earlier Church Fathers already witness to the fact that the wicked angels are among those who will be judged in the end. Cf. Atzberger, pp. 107, 160, 162, 282, 330, 412, 598 n.3. This idea is found in Irenaeus not only in our passage; cf. Adv.haer. I 10,3; V 26,2; III 23,3; IV 40,1; Epideixis 85 etc.

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according to Poschmann's interpretation, the text would suggest that it is only at the judgement that good angels receive life and eternal glory. And this, again, is an idea which contradicts the world-view of early Christianity, according to which the angels belong from the beginning to the world of the God of the living and appear with Christ at the judgement already in the glory of the Father.[18] Indeed, according to this interpretation, it is only at the judgement that they receive even α)φθαρσι/α, a prerogative which is theirs precisely in contrast to man, who is bodily and therefore mortal.[19] Fourth, if by those who remain in Christ's love from penance onwards are meant *all* men (Christians), and by μετα&νοια something concrete and specific is to be understood, which, in this instance, can only be baptism, then the text would say that all those – and only those – who have preserved their baptism will be saved. But this view clearly contradicts Irenaeus' teaching (even according to Poschmann' s interpretation). In the class of the good, therefore, it is a question only of good men. And it is said of them that they will all be saved, both those who have kept Christ's love from the beginning of their Christian life and those who, after a later penance, have persevered in this love until death.

The terminology in which this situation is expressed cannot be brought to bear against this interpretation. It is neither surprising nor unusual that the beginning of the Christian life should be described simply as α)π' α)ρξη=φ.[20] For this, one has only to consider, for example, especially 1 John 2:7; 2:24; 3:11; 2 John 5:6; Martyrium Polyc. 17,1; Polyc. Epist. ad Phil. 7,2, apart from Hb 3,14; 5,12; 6,1. It is not in the least surprising,[21] either, that the post-baptismal conversion is described simply as μετα&νοια after the Shepherd of Hermas, which Irenaeus considers 'Scripture'.[22] Thus there are in Irenaeus two groups of Christians, just as they are already described repeatedly by Hermas. The one group of believers

> are as innocent children, whose minds are entered by nothing that is evil and who have never learnt what sin is, but who remain always innocent; now these will certainly obtain a dwelling [118] place in the kingdom of God, because they . . . have persevered all the days of their life in the same innocent attitude of mind (Sim. IX 29,1 f.).

The others all belong to the different categories who have kept the 'seal', only after a second post-baptismal penance.

A further point deserves attention: if – as is easy to see – the whole of Irenaeus' Regula Fidei is loaded with certain anti-Gnostic nuances, then it is already understandable why what appears, at first sight, to be a subtle and far-fetched differentiation for the group of those who are saved at the judgement should be made. Such a differentiation is, in fact, anti-Gnostic in a

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Irenaeus is fond of quoting explicitly the passage of Matt. 25:41; he understands it in the sense that the fire is still to be prepared even for the devil. Nevertheless, this in no way implies the idea of a judgement of the good angels. For, in the case of the future judgement of the wicked angels, Irenaeus makes certain presuppositions which are not relevant in the case of the good angels: thus, in his opinion, the wicked angels share in the fate of the imperfect world (cf. IV 16,2). Cf. on this point D. Petavius, *Dogmatica theologica*, *De Angelis lib*, *III cap.4*; R. Massuct, *Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis et martynis detectionis et eversionis falso cognominatae agnitionis*, *seu contra haereses libri quinque* . . . (Paris 1710) Diss. III art. 8, and A. Stieren (edn of Irenaeus) (Leipzig 1848) II 341 f. In Irenaeus himself, Adv.haer. V 26,2. Otherwise, Irenaeus generally speaks only about the judgement of men; cf. Adv.haer. II 22,2; III 4,2; 5,3; IV 22,2; 33,13; V 27,1; Epid. 69.

[18] Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Jude 8; 2 Pet. 2:10; Cf. ThW II 255 and I 81ff.

[19] However Irenaeus may have envisaged the nature of angels (cf. on this R. Massuct, Diss III), they are certainly not σα&ρχ (Adv.haem. III 20,4) but, of their very nature, as opposed to the flesh, immortal (V 4,1; 7,1; 13,3).

[20] Cf. ThW I 480 f.

[21] Adv.haer. IV 20,2.

[22] Hermas, Mand. IV 3,3 f. (GCS 48: p. 28,3-11); 1,8 (ibid., p. 26,16-20); cf. R. Joly, *Hermas-Le Pasteur* (SC 53b) (Paris 1958, 1968), p. 159 f., and the introduction, pp. 22-30 ('These intermédiaire', p. 24); cf. chap. 3 in this volume, 'The Penitential Teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas'.

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polemic sense, because it is directed against the Gnostic notion that the Spirit is an inalienable quality of those who have received it just once (either by baptism or already from eternity).[23] The same point is anti-Gnostic in an irenic sense, because it invites recusant Gnostics to penance and conversion to the Church by opening up the possibility of salvation after baptism.[24]

It must be said, therefore: according to Irenaeus, it is part of apostolic faith that even those who have sinned after baptism attain salvation, provided they have returned to the love of Christ by means of a new *metanoia* and have remained in it until Christ's return in judgement. It is not stated explicitly how often such a *metanoia* is possible. But since the main emphasis of the passage is on the fact that man will be saved in so far as, at the judgement of Christ, he is found to be in Christ's love[25] only through *metanoia* (considered as personal conversion), this text precludes the idea that there can be sins which, because of their objective gravity, are unforgivable, even if a man has turned away from them by penance. There is no mention in this text of the once-and-for-all character or of the possibility of repeated *church* penance, least of all of a relationship of this penance to the Church, therefore, of a readmission into the Church. But this can hardly be expected, since these questions do not fit at all into the context given. Nevertheless, on the basis of this text alone, it can be said: If it belongs to the deposit of faith that a man, even after baptism, can return to Christ's love through penance and so will find grace in Christ's judgement, then the Church, even at this time, must have drawn the conclusion from its own conviction, at least in general, and have extended *its own* love again [119] to the man who is in Christ's love (cf. 2 Cor. 2:8),[26] that is restored to him the full church fellowship.

III. THE TEXT

To help the reader, the text of Irenaeus' Regula Fidei is reproduced here in its Latin form, as it is presented by W. Wigan Harvey and in the English translation by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.) in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.[27] For the sake of completion, the English text of the Regula Fidei is also reproduced in the form which this has in the 'Proof of the Apostolic Preaching'.[28] Since these texts are not usually included among the witnesses to the practice and the theology of penance in the early Church, and since our brief remarks refer to them directly, it seems appropriate to reproduce them here. In any case, it should be kept constantly in mind that it is here a question primarily of a confession of faith on the part of

[23] According to Adv.haer. I 6,3, the Gnostics maintain that they have grace as an inalienable personal possession (ι0διο&κτητοφ). On this, cf. chap. 2 in this volume, 'Sin as Loss of Grace in Early Church Literature'.
[24] The apologetic tendency explains why it is that, in the description of the men who come before the judgement, no attention is paid to humanity before Christ. Irenaeus obviously knows that even these men, in so far as they have lived virtuously before Christ's arrival, are saved and that, consequently, in the history of salvation (Adv.haer. IV 22,2) there have 'from the beginning' been men who would withstand the judgement. But there can be no question of these men here. For if it were a question of the whole of mankind, including the generations before Christ, then it would be saved as a whole and not only partially by μετα&νοια. In fact Irenaeus recognizes that in Adam all men have lost the Spirit, which is necessary for salvation (Adv.haer. V 16,3 etc.; cf. R. Massuet, n.115) and that, consequently, even the 'righteous' of the Old Covenant have to receive the forgiveness of their sins through Christ (Adv.haer. IV 27,2 etc.).
[25] Such unqualified statements arc found frequently in Irenaeus. Cf. B. Poschmann, p. 218 ff.
[26] For the juridical notion of κυρου=ν, which is used when a community grants its 'love' once more to a person who has been excommunicated, cf. ThW III 1098 f.: love is 'granted officially'.
[27] Translator's note: the text which we have used here is the American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edn, published by The Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo 1887.
[28] Translator's note: the translation which we present here is that of J. P. Smith, *St. Irenaeus*, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* (*Ancient Christian Writers*, no. 16) (Westminster, Md/London 1952).

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the Church which has only been adopted by Irenaeus.

1. W. Wigan Harvey, *Sancti Irenaei . . .* , cap. II

'Ecclesia enim (et quidem) per universum orbem usque ad finem terrae (dis)seminata, et ab Apostolis, et discipulis eorum accepit eam fidem, quae est in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, qui fecit coelum et terram et mare, et omnia quae in eis sunt: et in unum Christum Jesum Filium Dei, incarnatum pro nostra salute: et in Spiritum Sanctum, qui per Prophetas praedicavit dispositiones Dei, et adventum, et eam, quae est ex Virgine generationem, et passionem, et resurrectionem a mortuis, et in carne in coelos ascensionem dilecti Jesu Christi Domini nostri, et de coelis in gloria Patris adventum eius, ad recapitulanda universa, et resuscitandam omnem carriem humani generis, ut Christo Jesu Domino nostro et Deo, et Salvatori, et Regi, secundum placitum Patris invisibilis omne genu curvet coelestium, et terrestrium, et infernorum, et omnis lingua confiteatur ei, et iudicium iustum in omnibus faciat: spiritualia quidem nequitiae, et angelos transgressos, atque apostatas factos, et impios, et iniustos, et iniquos, et blasphemos homines in aeternum ignem mittat: iustis autem et aequis, et praecepta eius servantibus, et [120] in dilectione eius perseverantibus, quibusdam quidem ab initio, quibusdam autem ex poenitentia, vitam donans incorruptelam loco muneris conferat; et claritatem aeternam circumdet.'

2. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), *Irenaeus Against Heresies* (The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I) Buffalo 1887, pp. 330-1

'The church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: (She believes) in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His (future) manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father 'to gather all things in one', and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, 'every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and that every tongue should confess' to Him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all; that He may send 'spiritual wickednesses', and the angels who transgressed and became apostates, together with the ungodly, and unrighteous, and wicked, and profane among men, into everlasting fire; but may, in the exercise of His grace, confer immortality on the righteous, and holy, and those who have kept His commandments, and have persevered in His love, some from the beginning (of their Christian course), others from (the date of) their repentance, and may surround them with everlasting glory.'

3. J. P. Smith, *St. Irenaeus*, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* (Ancient Christian Writers, no. 16) Westminster, Md./London *1952*, pp. 51-2

'And this is the drawing-up of our faith, the foundation of the building, and the consolidation of a way of life. God, the Father, uncreated, [121] beyond grasp, invisible, one God the maker of all; this is the first and foremost article of our faith. But the second article is the Word of God, the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, who was shown forth by the prophets according to the design of their prophecy and according to the manner in which the Father disposed; and through him were made all things whatsoever. He also, *in the end of times*, for the recapitulation of all things, is become a man among men, visible and tangible, in order to abolish death and bring to light life, and bring about the communion of God and man. And the third article is the Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied and the patriarchs were taught about God and the just were led in the path of justice, and who in *the end* of times has been poured forth in a new manner upon humanity over all the earth renewing man to God . . .

. . . for none shall escape immune from his judgement, neither Jew nor Gentile nor sinner among the faithful, nor angel. But those who are now sceptical of His kindness will know His power in the judgement, as the blessed apostle says: 'Knowing not, that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance, but according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up for thyself wrath, in the day of wrath, and

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revelation of the just judgement of God, who will render forth to every man according to his works (Rom. 2:4-6).'

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[123]

PART THREE

The African Tradition

[125]

5

TERTULLIAN' S THEOLOGY OF PENANCE

The role of Tertullian, especially in the theological tradition of North Africa, but also of the whole Western Church, has remained in the background for a long time. This is doubtless due to the fact that, in his later writings, he veered towards Montanism. It is only in recent times that his thinking has been placed in the limelight, even if earlier there were not wanting a few authors who tried to exploit his voluminous and well-authenticated writings with regard to specific thematic questions.[1] These include his teaching on penance, which has received repeated treatment.[2] Nevertheless, we consider that this question has not yet received a detailed consideration in relation to his thought as a whole.

Our intention, however, is to highlight aspects and points which perhaps have been either overlooked or forgotten today. Such a treatment of Tertullian's theology of penance must obviously involve that a great deal of what is already known be presupposed or even repeated.[3] Revising familiar material in this way is never very satisfying. But, perhaps for that very reason, it is all the more necessary to do.

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[1] The essay which is presented here in a revised and extended form appeared originally in *Abhandlungen über Theologie und Kirche* (Festschrift K. Adam), ed. M. Reding (Düsseldorf 1952), pp. 139-67. On the same theme cf. B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda* (Bonn 1940), pp. 283-348; id., *Busse und Letzte Ölung* (HDG IV,3) (Freiburg/Br. 1951), pp. 20-7. For general considerations see also M. Spanneut, *Tertullien et les premiers moralistes africains* (Gembloux/Paris 1969), as well as the detailed study of J. Moingt, *Théologie trinitaire de Tertullien* (4 vols.) (Paris 1966-9). In recent years Tertullian's thought has attracted great interest in ecclesiology (and in this context it has given rise to information and considerations on penitential discipline): cf. E. Altendorf, *Einheit und Heiligkeit der Kirche* (Berlin 1932); W. Simonis, *Ecclesia visibilis et invisibilis* (Frankfurt/M. 1970); U. Wickert, *Sacramentum Unitatis* (Berlin/New York 1971); R. F. Evans, *One and Holy* (London 1972).

[2] Cf. the works mentioned above. There can be no question here of repeating the results of these studies. Our intention is rather to re-examine independently Tertullian's expressed views themselves and so, hopefully, obtain both more satisfactory *Ecclesia visibilis et invisibilis* (Frankfurt/M. 1970); U. Wickert, *Sacramentum Unitatis* out will be to uncover in Tertullian's theology of penance principles which are hardly present in today's systematic theology but which could very well be of great importance for the teaching on penance.

[3] B. Poschmann, p. 283 ff., lists all the important literature up to 1940. Later works which should be mentioned are: P. Galtier, 'Comment on écarte la pénitence privèe' in: Gr 22 (1940), pp. 183-202 (esp. 188-93); J. Köhne, 'Zur Frage der Busse im christlichen Altertum' in: ThGl 35 (1943), pp. 26-36; E. Dekkers, *Tertullianus en de geschiednis der liturgie* (Brussels/Amsterdam 1947), pp. 217-30; G. H. Joyce, 'Private Penance in the Early Church' in: JThS 42 (1941), pp. 18-42 (on R. C. Mortimer, *The Origins of Private Penance* [Oxford 1939]); C. B. Daly, 'The Sacrament of Penance in Tertullian' in: IER 69 (1947), pp. 693-707, 815-21; 70 (1948), pp. 731-46, 832-48; H. von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen 1963), pp. 243-61; K. Baus, *Von der Urgemeinde zur frühchristlichen Grosskirche* (HdKG I) (Freiburg/Br. 1962). pp. 367-73; B. Altaner/A. Stuiber, *Patrologie* (Freiburg/Br. 1966), pp. 162 ff.; J. Quasten, *Patrology* II (Utrecht 1953), pp. 332-5; J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Busstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg/Br. 1955), pp. 343 -70.

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It is obvious that what is found in Tertullian's writings does not, in itself, have any dogmatic binding force. This would be the case, only if one of his statements could be proven to be a unanimous opinion of the Fathers of the Church. Such direct bases of later opinions are, however, not very numerous in Tertullian. His influence is to be seen [126] elsewhere, since he stands at the beginning of a line of theological development in North Africa which leads, via Cyprian of Carthage, to Augustine and from him to the whole medieval theology of the Western Church. Many of his instigations had only a negative effect, but they did have an effect, nevertheless. This ought to become a little clearer in a historical essay on the question of penance, even if, in this context, that probing from the dogmatic viewpoint is hardly possible which can show up the theological significance of many aspects which, though today somewhat forgotten, are very clearly emphasized by Tertullian. In this essay we are concentrating on the actual theology of penance.

In this consideration of Tertullian's teaching on penance, therefore, the whole question of the existence or non-existence of limits to the Church's power to forgive sins in relation to certain (capital) sins, as they could have existed in the teaching and practice of the Church in Tertullian's time, must be precluded at the outset. What could be said about these limits does not come within the ambit of this investigation, which is concerned with Tertullian's theology of penance in the strict sense.

I. THE OBJECT OF PUBLIC PENANCE [4]

In his work *De paenitentia*, where he considers church penance, Tertullian speaks only about serious sins which cause the loss of grace (cf. De paenit. 2,6.7.8 [CSL 76: p. 143,25-36]). But since penance is here conceived as the restoration of the state which was given to the Christian at baptism (7,10 ff. [CSL 76: pp. 159,33-160,45]; 8,8 [ibid., pp. 162,27-34]; 12,9 [ibid., pp. 169:34-170,40]), he would surely have agreed with the general theological principle that all sins which destroy the grace received in baptism should be submitted to church penance. Obviously, this does not mean that Tertullian concluded from this idea precisely which sins are in fact serious and, therefore, submitted to church penance.[5]

It does mean, however, that, in Tertullian's view, all those sins which he considers as destroying the grace of baptism, entailing death, etc. are, of their very nature, the object of church penance. The only way to see which sins these actually are is to consider his work as a whole. Thus, in the present context, it is not important to [127] discuss which criteria Tertullian uses to distinguish these faults from those others which do not have such an effect and are, therefore, in today's terms, 'venial sins'.

Tertullian did not draw up a systematic, fixed list of serious sins. Certainly, in his view, these sins are not simply identifiable with the three capital sins,[6] in the strict sense of the term. The 'triad' appears first of all in the work De pudicitia 5 (CSL 20: pp. 226,4-228,2)[7] which hails from Tertullian's Montanist period. And here it is one of his polemical devices. The triad is designed to name the sins which are unforgivable. As Poschmann has convincingly shown, even according to De pud., *moechia* at least did not previously count among such sins. At the same time this triad itself, according to De pud. 19 (CSL 20: p. 262,27-30; p. 265,22-5), is in no way an actual exclusive and clearly-defined group of sins;

[4] On this cf. chap. 2 in this volume, 'Sin as Loss of Grace in Early Church Literature.'
[5] Even today this is not possible. Loss of grace is indeed the essence of mortal sin, but it is still not the precise criterion for the distinction between mortal and venial sins.
[6] This means in practice apostasy, murder and fornication. On this cf. J. Grotz, pp. 356-64.
[7] Edns of the text: E. Preuschen (Tübingen 1910) and P. de Labriolle (Paris 1906). The text which we are using here is that in the relevant volume of the *Corpus scriptorum latinorum* (CSL), published in Vienna.

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since here it includes: *homicidium*, *idolatria*, *fraus*, *negatio*, *blasphemia utique et moechia et fornicatio et si qua alia violatio templi dei*. If even here, therefore, the number of unforgivable sins exceeds the three 'capital sins', there can be no question that Tertullian would maintain that the sins which are to be submitted to church penance are identifiable with the three capital sins.

In fact, in his Catholic period, he recognizes that many more sins destroy grace and are, consequently, the object of church penance. In the work De paen. he includes among these: *concupiscentia carnalis*, *inlecebrae saeculares*, denial of faith out of fear of worldly power, heresy (*perversae traditiones*) (7,9 [CSL 76: p. 159,28-33]), *stuprum*, *idolothytorum esus*, *perversa docere*, *fidere divitiis* (8,1 [CSL 76: p. 160,1-6]). In Apol.2, the following are enumerated as offences forbidden to Christians: *homicidium*, *adulterium*, *fraus*, *perfidia et cetera scelera* (CSL 69: p. 6,2-3). According to Apol. 11, these deserve hell: *impii quique in parentes*, *et incesti in sorores et maritarum adulteri et virginum raptores et puerorum contaminatores et qui saeviunt et qui occidunt et qui furantur et qui decipiunt* (CSL 69: p. 32,16-19). Tertullian's treatise in moral theology De spectaculis sets out to prove that the offence of *Deo excidere* can exist,[8] even when there is no argument to be drawn from a scriptural commandment aimed directly against this sin, so that, for instance, taking part in circuses and in pagan spectacles, etc. belongs to the sins which separate men from God. Similarly, deceit is counted among the sins which are incompatible with the grace of baptism.[9] Obviously, various [128] occupations associated with pagan worship, such as that of a master of gladiators, a provider of incense, a seller of sacrificial meat, are likewise also considered as being seriously sinful and punished by exclusion from the community (De idol. 11 [CSL 20: p. 41,16-19]). In view of Hippolytus' Paradosis (16, Dix p. 24 ff.), this can hardly be considered as Montanistic rigorism. The same applies to everything that counts as idolatry, such as the fabrication of the images of idols (De idol. 5 [ibid., pp. 34,29-35,2]; cf. De pud. 7,15 f. [ibid., p. 232,21-6]), soothsaying (De idol. 9 [ibid., p. 39,11-14]; cf. De pud. 7,16 [ibid., p. 233]). Thieves, deceivers, robbers also obviously do not enjoy any church fellowship (De idol. 5). Nevertheless, in other cases Tertullian's Montanistic rigorism later explained things as serious sins which are not such according to Catholic teaching, and then also refused church fellowship to such 'sinners' as, for example, those who marry a pagan (Ad uxorem 11,3; De monogamia 11), or who marry a second time (De pud. 1,20 [CSL 20: p. 222,2-6]). Also, it is clear from De pat. 5 (CSL 47: pp. 8-9) that belonging to the major offences against God are not only idolatry, murder and impurity, but also enmity, avarice, robbery and hatred.

Thus, neither in his Catholic nor in his Montanist period does Tertullian acknowledge a fixed and exclusive triad of mortal sins. Rather, in his view, the number of sins, with regard both to the loss of baptismal grace and to exclusion from the Church, is very much greater. Nevertheless, all these sins are submitted to church penance.

Theoretically, Tertullian acknowledges more mortal sins in his Catholic period than later, although even then, for example (cf. De pud. 7 [CSL 20:233]), the person who takes part in pagan games is described as *vivens adhuc peccator*. Later he restricts the number of mortal sins because they cause the loss of baptismal grace and, therefore, are unforgivable. For practical reasons, therefore, he cannot accept too many mortal sins.

It is possible to see which sins he regarded as being remissible by church penance, in his Catholic period, by considering De pud. and, particularly, those faults for which he prescribes church penance in his Montanist period: the *mediocria delicta*, such as taking part in chariot races, gladiator fights, the theatre, pagan feasts, idolatry and astrology (De pud. 7,15 [CSL

[8] Cf. De spect. 8.
[9] Cf. De bapt. 4; De spect. 3,20.

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20: p. 232,21-6]). He must have considered these sins earlier as mortal sins, since in De pud. 7,15 f. [129] (CSL 20: pp. 232,26-233,3)[10] he concedes it as quite self-evident that they alienate men from the Church; such sinners are *extra gregem* and *foris*. It is unthinkable, however, that he should consider a sinner in a state of baptismal grace as being separated from the Church or excluded from it by excommunication. Thus these sins are *leviora delicta*[11] only by comparison with the capital sins. They are here presented precisely as the object of church penance and should not be confused with the *delicta cotidianae incursionis* (De pud. 19 [ibid., p. 265,15]), to which all are subjected. But, since Tertullian considers church penance something which actually ought not to exist, it is hardly possible to assume that, in his opinion, all men have to undergo church penance. Christ is intercessor in the event of daily faults (De pud. 19 [ibid., p. 265,21-2]), but this does not mean that he always plays this role in exactly the same way as he does in actual church penance, where he is intercessor in an official act of the Church through the bishop and the community (De paen. 10,6 f. [CSL 76: p. 165,20-7]). The daily faults are not mortal sins and must not, therefore, be confused with the *mediocria delicta* which are serious sins for Tertullian in his Catholic period. For Tertullian in his Montanist period only those sins properly belong to the obligatory object of church penance which, in his opinion, cannot be forgiven by the Church: namely, the frequently mentioned triad of idolatry, impurity and murder (De pud. 5 [CSL 20: p. 227 ,28-9]).[12] According to De pud. 19,22 (ibid., p. 265,15-20), he counts among the daily faults of all Christians: anger, acts of violence, cursing, white lies, etc., which, in his opinion, can all be remitted without church penance.

This is all that we can say about Tertullian's 'theory' of the obligatory object of public church penance. The field in which this 'theory' could be applied is very wide, especially if one considers that even secret sins are explicitly included (De paen. 10,8 [CSL 76: p. 165,27-9]). Even sins of thought are understood, in some circumstances, to be just as serious as sins of deed, at least in theory (De paen. 3,4 ff. [CSL 76: p. 145,13-24]). The 'practice', however, was quite different. The situation with regard to church penance in those days may have been the same as that of excommunication as a church punishment today: in theory, it is very frequently in order, but it occurs very seldom in practice, because there are sufficient reasons why 'in this particular case' the excommunication is not [130] verified. Tertullian himself observes that very many people not only repeatedly postpone church penance but probably try to 'flee from' (*suffugere*) it (De paen. 10,1 [CSL 76: p. 164,1-5]), that is they find reasons for considering their fault not so serious that it should demand church penance in fact. Thus it must remain doubtful whether the practice of such a church penance extended beyond the publicly known cases of capital sins. In the light of this practice, it is understandable that later, despite the protest of 'theologians', there is a tendency here and there to restrict the number of actual mortal sins which should be submitted to church penance to the three capital sins. Nevertheless, this number almost always includes other sins.

II. THE PERFORMANCE OF PENANCE

1. The Obligation to Do Penance

[10] Nevertheless, this is, as such, a logical contradiction of the Montanist view that these sins are not in fact mortal sins.
[11] Cf. De pud. 18,18.
[12] Even in De pud., however, as in De pud. 19,25, further sins are added to these: *fraus*, *negatio*, *blasphemia* . . . *et si qua alia violatio templi Dei*; similarly Adv. Marc. IV 9.

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The obligation to do public church penance for serious sins is emphasized by Tertullian in De paen. 10-12. All false shame is to be set aside; it ought not be repeatedly postponed; the difficulties of penance should not frighten sinners, because it is only penance that liberates them from the 'hell in their hearts'. Without penance, there is no salvation, and this applies even to secret sins: *an melius damnatum latere quam palam absolvi?* (De paen. 10,8 [CSL 76: p. 165,27-9]).

2. The Confession

Penance consists first of all of the confession, the exhomologesis (De paen 9,5 [ibid , p 163,18-22]), in the *publicatio sui* (De paen. 10,1 [ibid , p 164,1-5]). The sin must not be deprived of the *humana notitia* (De paen. 10,7 [CSL 76: p. 165,25-7]). This public confession to which Tertullian exhorts and which he explains as necessary for salvation consists above all of the undertaking of the public penance itself (cf. De paen, 9-10 [CSL 76: pp. 162-5]). The sinner appears before the community dressed as a penitent, implores his fellow-Christians [131] for their intercession and installs himself in the place for penitents in the church. It is in this way that he 'confesses' that he is a sinner.[13] This public avowal is difficult to do, it is the *actus* which oversteps the limits of the *conscientia* (De paen. 9,1 [ibid., p. 162,1-31). Thus Tertullian does not mention, in the first place, a detailed confession of sins before either the bishop or the community. This was least of all demanded in cases where the sins were already known and had perhaps even provoked a spontaneous intervention on the part of the church leaders. This intervention could be thought of either as an excommunication or as the imposition of church penance with exclusion from the Eucharist. Nevertheless, according to Tertullian, sinners should also do public penance for secret, serious sins (De paen. 10,8 [ibid., p. 165,27-9]). In this case, was a general avowal, implied in the announcement of public penance, sufficient, or are we to think that, at the beginning of such a penance, we have a detailed confession of the sinner, at least before the bishop? We ought to assume the latter case. Such a confession before the bishop is implied in the request for penance. The *castigatio* does not depend on the judgement of the penitent alone. At least as far as its duration is concerned, penance varied according to the sins in question. This would have been very difficult to justify solely on the basis of the degree of the sinner's sorrow or repentance[14] (although this may have played a role). And this applies to Tertullian's time as it does later. On this presupposition, it is possible to have a clear idea of the significance of the *censura divina*, the *iudicari magno cum pondere* in God's presence until the excommunication (Apol. 39 [CSL 69: p. 92,14-18]) which, according to Tertullian, occurs in the liturgy. Thus, either before or after the liturgy there must have been a *censura divina* by the bishop by which *castigationes*, that is, church penance (besides a mere excommunication),[15] were imposed. A precise determination of this church penance in the case of secret sins, however, presupposes a detailed confession at some point of time before the bishop.[16] This could also have been the occasion already – as it is later attested by Origen

[13] Cf. also De or. 7: *exomologesis est petitio veniae, quia qui petit veniam delictum confitetur*.
[14] This obviously played a role, and not only later. For the penitent begs the clergy and the community not only to intercede for him but also to grant him the *pax* (De pud. 1; 3; 13). At that time all this certainly meant more than a mere liturgical ceremony. Whether it bore fruit sooner or later depended, therefore, on the impression which the penitent actually made upon the community.
[15] This is to be understood as an enforced excommunication, in the case of sinners whose faults had become known without their own confession and who were, nevertheless, not prepared to undertake church penance. The only course of action was to exclude such sinners.
[16] This is particularly clear in Cyprian; cf. De lapsis 28. Even the mere thought of an offence is confessed *apud sacerdotes Dei dolenter et simpliciter*. Whether an actual church penance is imposed for these *prava et modica*

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– for the sinner to ask whether in fact church penance was really necessary in his particular case. Nevertheless, it is not possible to tell from Tertullian's statements whether a precise confession of sins, even for secret sins, was required to be made publicly before the whole community. Certainly [132] this was not required later. Leo the Great (cf. DS 323) maintains that the strict personal confession of secret sins before the bishop is the unique *apostolica regula*.[17]

3. Penitential Practices

Penance also comprises certain penitential practices which, initially, are of a more private nature, such as fasting, the wearing of a special penitential garb and other practices (including abstention from taking a bath) (cf. De paen. 9,4). It would be natural for the sinner to undertake these practices as soon as he comes to his senses, since when, during the liturgy in the church, he begs to be admitted to the Church's official penance he already appears as a penitent.[18] According to Cyprian a person is able to do private penance in this manner for some considerable time before bothering about church penance and only then take on the exhomologesis proper (cf. Epsit. 16,2). This private 'pre-penance' is perfectly understandable. The period of exhomologesis done during the public liturgy may be experienced as particularly humiliating and difficult. A previous private penance, while not alleviating the serious obligation to do penance for sins, makes it possible to shorten the period of public church penance.[19] In any case, these private penitential practices were also continued simultaneously with actual church penance. It is worth noting that Tertullian considers them in De paen. only after his treatment of the exhomologesis. To this private penance are then added specifically ecclesiastical practices: in virtue of his confession the sinner incurs first of all a *censura divina*: *a communione orationis et conventus et omnis sancti commercii relegatur* (Apol. 39). He is denied the *communicatio ecclesiastica* (De pud. 18), that is, he is 'excommunicated'. Obviously this excommunication in no way coincides with our modern canonical notion of excommunication. Nor did it at that time denote, in every case, the introduction of the performance of church penance.[20] There was naturally an exclusion of unrepentant sinners from the community and from the liturgy. This was considered a purely punitive measure, at least until the sinner's willing conversion. Nevertheless, in this period excommunication belonged to the very essence of church penance. The penitent's aim was, precisely through his penance, to regain peace with the Church and church [133] fellowship. Moreover, in the case of secret sins, it was not a matter of his simply being already 'outside' because of the act in the sense that all that was required

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vulnera may remain an open question. There is only mention of a *exomologesis conscientiae* before the bishop. It remains unclear whether subsequently such people either willingly or compulsorily undertake public penance. It is even less certain that the *salutaris medela* which the bishop may recommend outside the actual church penance includes a sacramental penance. In any event, Tertullian indicates that in the case of secret sins confession before the bishop was the first step towards penance.

[17] On this cf. B. Poschmann, *Die abendländische Kirchenbusse im Ausgang des christlichen Altertums* (Munich 1928), pp. 11-16. The reader will find here further literature on the question of the public confession of sins in the early Church.

[18] In certain circumstances, such a sinner would already have tried also to obtain the intercession of an imprisoned confessor (Ad mart. 1,6; De pud. 22,1). Such a 'pre-penance' can be supposed in the background to De paen. 10,1: the sinner is repentant, but he repeatedly postpones the *publicatio sui*.

[19] Such a private 'pre-penance' is clear in the Didascalia Apostolorum. On this cf. 'Penitential Teaching and Practice According to the Didascalia Apostolorum' in this volume.

[20] Cf. K. Baus, p. 370. On this question cf. also the details in 'The Penitential Teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas' in this volume.

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was his official reconciliation with the Church. At least in order to have access to the performance of church penance an official act of excommunication is necessary. In the act the bishop doubtless had the decisive word, even if priests and the faithful co-operated in the decision. 'To put a person outside the church' (*extra Ecclesiam dare*) is the duty of the leader (*praesidentis officium*) (De pud. 14,16). The exclusion is clearly expressed. The sinner has to stand at the church doors (*pro foribus ecclesiae*; De pud. 3,5; 4,5), at *limen ecclesiae* (De pud. 1,21; 4,5), where the faithful proceed to 'disown' him (De paen. 10,4). There *in vestibulo* (De paen. 7,10) he begs on bended knee the bishop, the priests and the faithful to receive him back into the community of the Church (De paen. 9,4.6; 10,6; De pud. 1,21; 3,5; 5,14; 13,7). Already at the time of Tertullian church penance appears to have taken place in two stages. In the first place the sinner, dressed in sackcloth and ashes, and standing before the actual church building, asks the community to be admitted to penance.[21] The granting of this prayer is already an opening of the *ianua paenitentiae* (De pud. 6,1). Then follows the actual penance in the church itself. It is carried out almost according to the same rite as the penitential prayer outside the church, that is by a prayer on bended knee both for the community's intercession with God and for full church communion, only it occurs now after an *inducere in ecclesiam* (De pud. 13).[22] Also according to De pud. 18,13 the exhomologesis appears to take place in the church itself.

The penance which took place inside the church, however, was not a single act. It lasted a fairly long time (cf. De paen. 11,4-6). Thus the penitents obviously had to be present for a long time in their penitential garb on Sundays in the liturgy and to address the above-mentioned prayer repeatedly to the community. For such an exhomologesis they obviously needed a great deal of patience (cf. De paen. 15). The *poenitentiae ambitus* (De pud. 18,12) must have varied in length according to the different cases. Nevertheless, Tertullian obviously does not know of a penance which lasts a life-time (in so far, that is, as he recognizes a church forgiveness at all). This is clear from the fact that he considers the king of Babylon's seven year penance (Dan. 4:33) as already very long (De paen. 12,7).

[134] The fact that liturgical penance does not always terminate only on the death-bed can be derived from the warning that penance is only possible once and that, for this reason, one must beware of a further fall (*iterato beneficio gratus esto*, *nedum ampliato*; De paen. 7,11).

4. Reconciliation

Normally penance came to an end not only at a particular point of time (De paen. 12,9: *exomologesi . . . restitutus*), but was certainly concluded by an act of church reconciliation.

[21] On this cf. De pud. 3;5; De paen. 7, 10: *in vestibulo* is a second penance which is still to be opened as a doom; De pud. 4: the Montanist will no longer grant access even to the threshold (*limen*) of the Church in the case of unnatural impurity, as opposed to natural impurity. But this obviously presupposes that, according to the Catholics, there are two stages of church penance.

[22] It could also be that this introductory rite was performed only at the conclusion of the period of penance, that is, as the actual beginning of the exhomologesis, which then ended with the reconciliation. At least De pud. 13, 7 gives the impression that reconciliation follows immediately upon this introductory rite and the exhomologesis (*inducens-indulgens*), unless, that is, Tertullian is here combining rhetorically two acts which are in fact quite distinct. In this case, it could be assumed that the repeated exhomologesis took place during the long period of penance *foris* and *in vestibulo*. Nevertheless, it is by no means clear what is meant by the *vestibulum*, from which the penitent is led into the church (or its interior): is it an area in front of the church or a place at the entrance to the church? Accordingly, the exhomologesis *in vestibulo* (De paen. 7, 10) would be identical either with the prayer to be readmitted into the church (cf. De pud. 5; 3) or with the rite within the church (De pud. 13; 18). In any case the two phases in the exhomologesis must be distinguished; all that remains obscure is which lasts the longer, that is, whether the first is only an introductory rite or the latter is only a concluding rite and, accordingly, the other has the meaning of the exhomologesis of the long period of penance.

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This involves a *restitutio* (De pud. 9), a *venia ab episcopo* (De pud. 18). It is not very easy to visualize how this would occur liturgically. Obviously it followed the sinner's last exhomologesis in the appropriate liturgy. Details of such a ceremony are still discernible in De pud. 13,7 ff., even despite the smokescreen of Tertullian's mockery. The sinner is once more led into the liturgical assembly (or is he brought forward from the place which he has occupied as a penitent at the back of the church?), and on bended knee he begs for the community's intercession and for readmission into the community. The bishop gives a sermon on the gravity of sin and the mercy of God, and then follows the forgiveness. Tertullian does not say how the actual rite of forgiveness appears as the readmission of a penitent to full church fellowship. But since already in Cyprian[23] the imposition of hands accompanied by prayer was used quite naturally for this purpose and the same ritual was practiced generally in the Church,[24] it is reasonable to suppose that it was employed already in Tertullian's time.

However reconciliation may have appeared liturgically, De pud. leaves no doubt about a proper act of forgiveness by the Church. The aim of the whole work is precisely to dispute that the bishop had the ability of an *Ego. . . dimitto* with regard to certain sins and to reject the claim of the *numerus episcoporum* (21) to the *potestas* (3; 21; 22) to forgive sins. At the same time, it is precisely this power that is defended, at least since the polemic against Montanism, with explicit reference to Matthew 16:18 f. (De pud. 21,9 f.).

Already according to De paen., however, the penance described by Tertullian as being demanded for all serious sins committed after baptism had to be concluded by a church reconciliation. This reconciliation is indeed not explicitly mentioned – or, at least, not as explicitly as in De pud. The notions of *absolvere* as an act of the [135] bishop, of *pax*, *communicatio* and *communicare* do not occur, although later in De pud. they are very common. Also, already in De paen. penance is seen very clearly as the concern of the Church, in so far as it is to be performed before the Church, that is, publicly in the presence of the community, if it is to avail to salvation. Moreover, it must be supported by the intercession of the Church, if it is to find a hearing with God and obtain the forgiveness of sins. This is because the prayer of Christ's body is the infallibly efficacious prayer of the Lord himself (10,6 f.). Nevertheless, there is no mention of an official act of absolution by the bishop. But that such an act must have existed at this time is clearly suggested by other expressions in De paen.

The difference between Tertullian's two works on this point does not appear to be very considerable.[25] In the later period he contested the Church's claim to be able to grant full forgiveness even for sins of impurity. In this context he naturally had to deal explicitly with an official act on the Church's part. Earlier, however, he was concerned only to exhort sinners not to stay away from penance but to accept it willingly. Such a penitential preaching considers naturally the situation of the sinner but not that of the Church.

We need not consider here whether the Catholics (the 'psychics') at that time, either before or after the bishop's edict which Tertullian challenges in De pud., exempted certain ('capital') sins from the Church's absolution. In fact there is no proof that Tertullian as a Catholic did not recognize a church reconciliation in respect of those sins for which he prescribes penance in De paen. Certainly there are indications from this period of Tertullian's life (Apol. 2; De corona 11; De monogamia 15) – that the Church punishes certain sins with excommunication and does not tolerate in its midst those who commit them, as long as they are unrepentant. But there are no indications that these sinners are not to be readmitted if they

[23] Epist. 15,1; 16,2; 17,2; 18,1; 19,2; 20,3; 71,2; De lapsis 16; Sent. episcop. 8.22.
[24] Thus in Origen and in the Didascalia Apostolorum still in the 3rd cent.
[25] At least this difference is not very striking, although between De paen. and De pud. Tertullian changed over to Montanism.

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stop sinning and do penance. Moreover, these texts say nothing about a permanent and irrevocable exclusion.[26]

At the same time, there seem to be positive proofs that at the time of De paen. a church reconciliation was possible. Penance is compared with baptism. It is *paenitentia secunda* (7,10.12; 9,1), the other *planca salutis* (12,9). It restores the lost baptismal grace, and this after a precisely measured period of time in this life, so that one can be afraid of losing it again (7,11).

If penance and baptism are compared in this way, at least as far as [136] their internal effect is concerned, that is to say, if there is the awareness that, through penance, a sinner recovers everything that he received in baptism but, as a prodigal son, had squandered (8,8), then it is unthinkable that he remains permanently excluded from full church fellowship. What he receives again is the baptismal grace which previously had established his full church membership. Moreover, Tertullian considers that this *paenitentia secunda* is unrepeatable (7,10 f.), although its effect can be lost again (7,11). But how can this unrepeatable possibility be established, known and determined in relation to a further penance if it is not followed by a church reconciliation? Naturally a penitent can fall again into sin during the period of his penance without this affecting the single opportunity for penance. This is because any further attempt (which is not allowed anyway) at penance would only count as a new penance if it were previously established that the penitent has already in fact recovered the lost baptismal grace and that he has precisely lost it a second time. Tertullian states explicitly that a further penance after the *paenitentia secunda* is impossible precisely because the penitent has already recovered the baptismal grace a second time and, therefore, ought not to lose it again (7,11). Thus the knowledge that reconciliation has been achieved concludes penance and also clearly distinguishes it from a further possibility. But the sinner can have this knowledge only by being readmitted explicitly into the community of the Church. Otherwise, he would have to do penance for the whole of his life. Penance can be unrepeatable only if it has a tangible conclusion, which is conceivable only as an act of the Church. Accordingly, the *palam absolvi* (10,8) also indicates that Tertullian must be thinking of a church reconciliation. Certainly the absolving subject here is God himself or perhaps also the sinner's personal penance (cf. 9,6), the latter, as church exhomologesis, being already public (*palam*). Nevertheless, the forgiveness which God grants to the sinner in view of his penance is not in itself public and man's public penance is not, on its own, a *palam absolvi*. This expression obviously means more than: to deserve an intangible forgiveness by means of public penance. But how can forgiveness itself be tangible, if not by an act of the Church which expresses full fellowship and peace with God, in the same way as the enmity with God caused by serious sin was expressed by excommunication? Finally, Tertullian says that the *ianua ignoscentiae* which was once opened to him in [137] baptism is indeed closed to the baptized person who sins, but that the *secunda paenitentia* is offered to him by God *in vestibulo* as a door which gives the sinner who is knocking free access to the Church (*patefaciat*) (7,10). This image applies directly only to the access of the penitent who is knocking to penance in the church, since he is standing *foris* and desires to be invited in (cf. De pud. 3). Thus it is irrelevant whether this penance is envisaged as a single act or as a long-lasting exhomologesis. The access to penance in the Church signifies already, therefore, an opening of the *ianua paenitentiae* (De pud. 6). Nevertheless, according to Tertullian, it is quite clear that for him, even in his Montanist period, the access to this penance, the opening of the *ianua paenitentiae*, introduces a process which ends with an act of forgiveness by the Church. As a Montanist he refuses those guilty of sins of impurity access even to this penance (De pud.

[26] For further details cf. B. Poschmann, pp. 293-300.

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13).[27] If this penance did not necessarily end with a forgiveness by the Church, which the Montanist Tertullian will not admit with regard to impurity, it would be impossible to see why he refuses this penance, since, in his opinion, penance must certainly be done for these sins. The access to such a penance would in no way affect the divine privilege of the forgiveness of sins, which must be denied to the Church in the case of these sins. Thus the only reason why Tertullian refuses those guilty of sins of impurity access to church penance is that it necessarily, both previously and even according to his Montanist notions, concluded with an act of forgiveness by the Church. At the same time, he does in fact apply to church forgiveness yet other expressions which, in themselves, refer only to access to penance. This actually contradicts the very principles of Montanism, according to which penance and forgiveness by the Church are not necessarily any longer connected. When, for instance, he wishes to say that the Catholics grant church forgiveness to those who are guilty of sins of impurity, he formulates the idea as follows: this is a *fornicationi quoque paenitentiae ianuam expandere* (De pud. 6), a *fornicationem paenitentia donare* (9), a *secundam paenitentiam promittere* (20). In other words, even for Tertullian as Montanist access to actual church penance is so intimately and indissolubly connected with the idea of forgiveness by the Church that he has to deny access when he does not wish to grant forgiveness and when he formulates the refusal of the possibility of forgiveness in terms of the refusal or the possibility of access. In De paen. it is a question of access to [138] actual church penance for all sins. From what we have seen, this must be taken so unconditionally that this penance ends with an act of forgiveness by the Church. The penance in question here is the *paenitentia secunda* which, because of the concluding church forgiveness, stands in clear parallel to baptism, which makes God's own remission 'public' and which is already so symbolically connected with absolution by the Church that it can no longer be granted if this act of reconciliation by the Church is lacking. To this extent the ideas of Tertullian the Montanist represent the Catholics' argument: penance is meaningless, if *venia* is not granted by the Church (De pud. 3). This is a description of the ancient and traditional nature of church penance. Thus all sins for which Tertullian prescribes church penance in De paen. receive church forgiveness after the appropriate period of penance. All the sinners whom he here exhorts to penance ought to hope for *venia*, the *pax* of the Church and *communicatio*. Among the sins in question Tertullian counts the following: *stuprum*, *idolothytorum esus*, *docere perversa* (8,1). His exhortation to sinners and his justification of God's readiness to forgive are so general (8; 10,6 f.) that as far as he is concerned at this period in his life it is impossible for there to be sinners who would be totally ineligible for this church penance. His later division of sins in respect to a forgiveness by the Church into *peccata remissibilia* and *irremissibilia* (De pud. 2; 9; 12; 16) was not yet known to him at that time, despite his own reference to a change of opinion on the subject (1,10). It is to all sinners that he directs his instruction to re-enter the Church through the door of penance. This entrance through the *paenitentia secunda* (De paen. 7,10) which opens itself to the person who knocks is the access to forgiveness by the Church.

Finally, it needs to be underlined that the act of reconciliation is performed decisively by the bishop. It is a fact that according to De paen. the intercessory prayer, which as the prayer of Christ is bound to be heard, is the act of the whole Church, and that the bishop is not mentioned as having a special part in it (De paen. 9,4). The *presbyteri*, the *cari Dei* (confessors) and the brethren, who have been asked to make intercession, are all placed on

[27] Correspondingly, the actual rite of public penance (*presbyteris advolvi*, *caris Dei adgeniculari*, *omnibus fratribus legationes deprecationis suae iniungere*: De paen. 9,4) is likewise no longer granted to those guilty of capital sins (De pud. 13), although such a penance, which, therefore, would not end in church forgiveness could no longer affect God's unique prerogative to forgive sins, once he has certainly allowed those guilty of capital sins to appear before the Church as penitents (De pud. 3,5).

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the same level. Since it is here a question of obtaining everyone's intercession (Tertullian wishes to describe what the penitent himself has to do), there is no need to spotlight the bishop's role. Moreover, at that time the African Churches were clearly organized along the lines of a monarchical [139] episcopate. Tertullian himself in his Catholic period unambiguously testifies to the position of the episcopate as that of a church institution which receives its authority in virtue of the apostolic succession[28] and not merely of a function of a democratic community. There can be no doubt, therefore, that already at the time of De paen. the bishop had the decisive word in the reconciliation of the penitent. This is also evident from the fact that penance began with the excommunication of the sinner which was necessarily expressed by the bishop.[29] The reconciliation of a penitent with the Church must, accordingly, be primarily the prerogative of the bishop,[30] in the same way as baptism, considered as reception into the Church. In De pud. the role of the bishop is clear: he is the one who, through his *potestas*, makes church fellowship possible again for the sinner and who 'remits' sins.[31]

But, given this role of the bishop, what is the meaning of the co-operation of the whole community, as this is attested not only in De paen. but also in De pud.? Naturally the whole community intercedes with God on the sinner's behalf: for the Church *ad remedium conlaboret necesse est* and indeed through its intercession (De paen. 10,5). This act of intercession, which is considered the act of Christ himself, is the work of the Church as such, even if it is expressed in the activity of a particular community and in the prayer of individual Christians. When one considers that in Origen and still in Augustine[32] the Church as a holy community has a genuine part to play in the forgiveness of sins, and this without impugning the bishop's unique authority, even though this is no longer (or not so clearly) expressed 'liturgically', then one might well ask whether this intercessory prayer of the community represents a function of the Church which is even more fundamental than this intercession itself and can still operate even when this prayer is no longer present. It is because the whole Church as such has a significance for the forgiveness of the guilt of the individual sinner that it prays for him. This significance for the sinner's recovery of holiness, therefore, does not reside merely in the fact that the Church prays for him. This significance of the universal Church, representing Christ in the world (*ecclesia vero Christus*: De paen. 10,6) does not necessarily mean that the members of the community share in the sacramental and special

[28] *Hane episcopatus formam apostoli providentius condidereunt* (De fuga 13,6). In the Catholic churches theme is an *ordo episcoporum ita per successionem ab initio decurrens* (De praescr. haer. 32). The question here is not whether Tertullian has done full justice to the nature of the episcopate in his ecclesiology. He does, however, testify to the existence in his time of an episcopate which had the final decision in all church questions and practice. Obedience to the bishop's teaching distinguishes Catholics from heretics (De praescr. haer. 42), the *summus sacerdos* has the right to baptize all others *non tamen sine episcopi auctoritate* (De bapt. 17). He also prepares the body and blood of the Lord and distributes them to the faithful (De idol. 7; De cor. 3); he lays down the rules for fasting (De ieiunio 13). Even the Montanists still maintain that excommunication resides *in praesidentis officio* (De pud. 14). Tertullian draws a sharp distinction between priests and the laity; the priest is *servus maioris loci* (De fuga 11,1) as opposed to the lay person, the *servus minoris loci* (De ieiunio 13).

[29] This is still the case in Tertullian's Montanist period, when he could hardly have had an interest in stressing the role of the bishop (De pud, 14). He leaves to the bishop *disciplinae solius officia* (De pud. 21,6). Cf. also Adv.Praxean 1, where the bishop of Rome refuses the *litterae pacis* to the Montanist communities in Asia and Phrygia.

[30] Also here what is important is only the fact and not the theological justification which Tertullian gives of this *ius* of the *summus sacerdos*.

[31] De pud. 1; 13; 21. At the same time, the bishop of Carthage is otherwise constantly singled out and attacked as an adversary.

[32] On Origen cf. 'The Penitential Teaching of Origen' in this volume. On Augustine cf. B. Poschmann, 'Die kirchliche Vermittlung der Sündenvergebung nach Augustin' in ZKTh 45 (1921), pp. 208-28; 405-32; 497-526 (esp. 413-20).

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power of the bishop (and even less that they have transmitted it to him). Even though he has received it as a special power through the apostolic [140] succession, that is, from Christ through the apostles, he can exercise it nevertheless as a power within the Church, that is, as an authority which is only at all thinkable and meaningful because the holy community of the redeemed exists in Christ. Thus the application of this power involves a participation in that Spirit which is the essential life of the Church and which cannot be received apart from the Church. In this sense it can be said: the Church forgives as a whole. Naturally this is to be understood not in the terms of an active competence which resided initially with the whole Church and was only subsequently transmitted to the bishops by the faithful, but rather as a permanent ability to sanctify. When this is applied to a sinner by a representative of the Church deputed by Christ for this task, then it is communicated to him as the sanctifying reality of the Church. There is an analogy in the Eucharist: only the priest has the power to offer the Eucharist. Nevertheless, he offers it only as the offering of the Church. The community shares in the offering, therefore, and needs to express that it really is a question of its own offering. Similarly, when the bishop forgives in virtue of his unique power the Spirit of the Church is again communicated to the sinner. But in order to express that this Spirit is the Spirit of the Church which from the incarnation onwards and in Christ's crucifixion has bound itself indissolubly with the Church[33] the whole community prays together with the bishop for the forgiveness of sins. The customary form of the sacrament of penance today would correspond to a priest's private mass,[34] that is to say, the co-operation of the whole Church in the celebration of this sacrament is no longer discernible liturgically. But even today, during the mass and on other occasions, the whole Church prays for the forgiveness of its faithful's guilt and thus expresses the fact that all forgiveness is a gift of its own Holy Spirit. This reflection cannot be based on Tertullian's writings. But it does provide a plausible explanation as to why one meets everywhere in these writings the idea that the forgiveness of sins by the bishop and the readmission of a sinner into the Church is connected liturgically with such a prayer by the community. These elements of a reconciliation liturgy are not something which even today's dogmatic theology can treat lightly. The dogmatic theologian ought to be able to see something more beyond the doubtless correct observation that the exclusive power of bishops and priests in the celebration of the sacrament of penance even in the sense in which [141] this sacrament was understood in Tertullian's time was not contested. Without wishing simply to revive the ancient penitential liturgy with its community prayer, he will recognize in this liturgy a reality which still belongs to this sacrament today and which deserves to be brought to the attention of Christians: that he finds reconciliation with God only because he receives in and from the Church that Spirit which lives there in all its holy members.

There is no basis in Tertullian for the idea that a sacramental absolution from sins was granted either before reconciliation with the Church or apart from it. To hold this would be a purely gratuitous assumption. It is with one and the same act that the bishop, at the conclusion of the performance of penance, lifts both the excommunication and the sins. This excommunication is by no means a mere act of discipline on the part of an external church organization. It is the expression of the relationship which exists between the sinner and the mystical but visible body of Christ (*non posse corpus unius membri vexatione laetum agere*; De paen. 10,5).

[33] Thus it becomes the Spirit of the Church, which it was not previously, so that there was not yet an actual sacrament in the New Testament sense.

[34] Naturally there are in general more practically important reasons for this form in the case of the sacrament of penance than in the case of the Eucharist.

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III. THE EFFECT OF PAENITENTIA

When Tertullian speaks about the effects of penance he is referring to penance as a whole, that is, comprising all the parts which we have just described. There is no justification, from either the dogmatic or the historical viewpoint, for separating these elements and ascribing the effects of penance to just one of them while considering the others mere conditions or unnecessary elaborations. Certainly in De paen. the penitent's subjective penance is emphasized. The *ianua ignoscentiae* of baptism, that is, of simple α!φεσιφ (as one may say with some caution)[35] is closed, and the sinner has, therefore, to expiate his further sins through intensive penance: he must *pro delictis supplicare* (11,2), *mitigare* God (9,2), *reconciliare* (11,3), *aeterna supplicia expungere* by means of his *temporalis afflictio* (9,5). All this must not only take place interiorly, within the individual's conscience. It must also

[35] Cf. De paen. 2,6. A man must be purified already before baptism. This penance before baptism is a *satisfacere* (De paen. 5,9; De pud. 9). It is *pretium* for the *merces* of the baptismal grace (De paen. 6,4); it is *compensatio* for the remission of the punishment due to sin (ibid.). Despite Poschmann's claim (p. 288 n.1), Galtier, *L'église et la rémission des péchés* (Paris 1932), p. 51 f., was right on this point. The penance which Tertullian demanded before baptism may certainly be identical in some respects with the renunciation of sin and the exercise of Christian virtue (De paen. 6,1), and to this extent it is essentially less in evidence than penance for sins after baptism. This difference may be explained simply by the fact that for Tertullian the sins of a baptized Christian are by far the more serious (De paen. 7,12). Nevertheless, the effect of penance before baptism on sins and their punishment is described in such a way that it is difficult to consider it as a mere condition for the remission of sins which occurs at baptism, and only at baptism. Indeed, in De paen. 2,6 the relationship seems to be presented in such a way that it is the penance that remits the sins, while baptism subsequently admits the Holy Spirit into the soul which has already been purified for its dwelling. Similarly in De bapt. 6: the *ablutio delictorum* is granted through faith, and thus the way is opened for the *superventurus Spiritus sanctas*. According to De bapt. 13 baptism appears almost as a mere form and *external covering* of faith, legally prescribed in the New Testament period. It is really faith that effects salvation, even if this is no longer without its legal form in which it must be professed. Likewise in De paen. 6,17: the neophytes must come to baptism *corde iam loti*. This idea contradicts the affirmation of De paen. 6,9, in so far as theme the unrepentant neophyte receives through baptism (if this happens to be administered to him) not only the Holy Spirit (which is conceivable in view of an obscure idea of the relationship between freedom from sin and possession of the Spirit) but also the *abolitio delictorum*. All this only shows that in Tertullian baptism does not evince a clear relationship between the subjective and the sacramental factors, and that it would be fatuous to attempt to clarify this obscurity at any cost. It is possible to discern a Montanistic way of thinking in this 'subjectivism' (cf. K. Adam, *Der Kirchenbegriff Tertullians* [Paderborn 1907], pp. 111 ff., 219 ff.). But, in the final analysis, such ideas have their origin in the biblical and Catholic understanding that the sacrament does not replace or supplement man's interior act which he makes in faith and penance, but that both – each in its own dimension – can and must contribute to the proper relationship between man and God in grace. This is not to deny that Tertullian expresses the teaching which was already at least intimated before him by Hermas and later clearly attested that in the *paenitentia secunda* subjective penance plays a more important role than in baptism. It appears also in a somewhat exaggerated form in De pud. 10 to be contradicted by Tertullian. But this difference is not so great and clear as totally to obscure the sacramental nature of the *paenitentia secunda* as opposed to baptism, as if, in Tertullian's view, the latter were only an *opus operatum*, while the former were only an *opus operantis*. In both cases the effect of grace is ascribed freely now to the one, now to the other of the two concurrent factors, in the case of baptism more often and more explicitly to the sacramental aspect, in the *paenitentia secunda* more to the subjective aspect. Later theology will have the task of uniting both aspects in such a way that they both make their full contribution, while, at the same time, preserving the traditional distinction between baptism and post-baptismal penance.

Finally, in the historical interpretation of the penitential teaching of this time (for example in Cyprian too) we have to reckon, more than we have previously done, with the fact that remission of sin through penance and re-acquisition of the Spirit were not, for the theology of that time, so obviously one and the same event, but could be understood as two distinct and temporally separate events. If, in these circumstances, the remission of sins occurs through subjective penance (alone), this does not mean that the communication of the Spirit as such cannot be envisaged, even according to this theology, as being made through the imposition of hands at reconciliation or through the baptism of water. Cf., with regard to Origen, the corresponding essay in this volume.

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issue in an actual performance of penance (9,1). This penance is essentially church penance. Thus it would be futile and meaningless to wish to do it only privately and without exhomologesis in the Church. According to Tertullian, subjective penance itself only has a meaning as church penance. It is true that [142] the *publicatio sui* is also an external penance, but this in itself does not explain why sins can only be expiated by the performance of church penance. Tertullian does not give any reason for it; he just takes it for granted. It could be that only the effective intercessory prayer of the Church makes personal penance fruitful (10,6); but the mere support of the individual's prayer for forgiveness could hardly explain why penance must always be in the Church. Or perhaps penance is only effective because of the subsequent reconciliation with the Church. Both of these reasons reflect the same idea and are hardly distinguishable in Tertullian's way of looking at penance. In any case, according to him subjective penance is effective only in the Church and only public exhomologesis extinguishes hell (12,1). Thus one can neither separate these two aspects of penance nor play one off against the other.

This observation receives further confirmation from Tertullian's theology of the Church in his Catholic period.[36] The Church is the 'mother' of our life (cf. De orat. 2; Ad mart. 1; De praesr. 42). It is the ark of salvation (De bapt. 6) and its judgement is, therefore, a *summum futuri iudicii praeiudicium* (Apol. 39). What then are the effects of this unrepeatable penance?

1. The Pax with the Church

From the mere fact that excommunication belongs to the performance of penance it can be deduced that the first effect is renewed access to the fellowship of the Church. This is what the penitent prays for at the doors of the Church (De pud. 1,21; 3,5). The performance of penance ends with the *recipere in communicationem* (De pud. 15,5), with the *communicare Ecclesiae* (De pud. 3), *concorporari Ecclesiae* (De pud. 15,6) and is an *in castra Ecclesiae reverti* (De pud. 14), with the consequence that the penitent becomes a Christian again in the fullest sense (De pud. 10). It is a question, therefore, of a restoration of peace with the Church: *pax ab ecclesiis redditur* (De pud. 12,11).

2. Reconciliation with God

The parallel with baptism already implies that penance also means the remission of sins before God. It is, therefore, the second plank of [143] salvation, alongside baptism (De paen. 12,9), the *secunda paenitentia* after the original admission into the Christian community (De paen. 7,10). Already in Tertullian it amounts to a *secunda post naufragium tabula*, as Jerome later will call it (Epist. 130,9). Thus penance effects an *absolvi* before God (De paen. 10,8), a *venia* (De pud. 2; 3; 4; 10; 12) and a *reconciliari* (De paen. 7,14). By his sin the Christian has lost the baptismal grace;[37] by penance he has recovered it. Like the prodigal son he returns naked to his father, but he is welcomed back into grace (De paen. 8,6-8). He is presented with the *vestis prior*, the *indumentum Spiritus Sancti*, the *signaculum lavacri* and the *substantia. . . sacramenti* (De pud. 9,8-11).

From a consideration of the controversy with the Montanists it is obvious that the bone of contention (De pud. 3 and 21) was whether the Church possessed the power to forgive guilt

[36] Cf. K. Adam, *Der Kirchenbegriff Tertullians* (Paderborn 1907).
[37] De cultu feminarum II,1; De pat. 15; Ad mart. 1; De paen, 6,12 f.; 7,11; De pud. 9; 22, etc.

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before God. Nevertheless, we should try to understand more clearly how Tertullian connects what we have seen to be the two component elements of the one penance with the reconciliation with God and the forgiveness of guilt before God.

From the subjective viewpoint, the penitent pleads with God with his prayer for forgiveness and makes expiation for his sins by his penitential practices. These include the humiliation which he experiences by making his exhomologesis in the Church. It is by making *satisfactio* (De paen. 7,14; 8,9) that the sinner receives divine forgiveness. Quite apart from the fact that, according to Tertullian, grace did not enter into the possibility to make satisfaction, the relationship between subjective penance and the divine forgiveness is clear and understandable.

But how is the act of forgiveness on the Church's part related with the pardon before God? This question evokes two ideas in Tertullian which, superficially, appear irreconcilable. For, at first sight, they are two different theories on how the efficacy of the Church's acts is related with the remission of guilt before God.

The first idea is based on the infallibly efficacious prayer of the Church. When the Church and Christ himself in the Church pray for the sinner, the prayer is sure to be heard (De paen. 10,6 f.). This idea is also found still in De pud. (5; 13; 18,l3).[38] This prayer (*facile impetratur semper*, *quod filius postulat*) is, therefore, not merely an additional support of the sinner's personal prayer which, even with this support, is still not assured of success. Rather, it is connected essentially with the forgiveness of sins, so that this *ad remedium* [144] *conlaborare* (De paen. 10,5) on the Church's part is necessary. For this reason it should not occur in those cases where the Church knows for certain that God will not forgive (De pud. 19,28). Granted that the necessary conditions on the penitent's part are fulfilled, therefore, this intercessory prayer works automatically, that is, in virtue of its value as the prayer of Christ active in the Church. This theory does full justice to the sacramental aspect of penance; ευ0ξη/**,** like that of the anointing of the sick in James 5:15, can constitute the sacrament. This idea is only a reflection of the Church's intercession for sinners, as actually practiced, and in its turn it influenced the liturgy of the Church's forgiveness of sins. But this liturgy must have originated from the same basic ideas and thus shows that the theory is not merely Tertullian's private view, but has clear roots in the faith-consciousness of his day. The 'deprecative' form of absolution must not only still be possible but evokes a state of affairs which theology has a positive duty to elaborate, without, however, obscuring what is expressed by the indicative form of absolution. The full Latin liturgy of absolution which even today still combines both formulas is worth maintaining.

But there is in Tertullian yet another idea about the effectiveness of the Church's act for the remission of guilt before God. This is the theory of absolution. Nevertheless, it is only in De pud. that it is discernible as a Catholic teaching. Since, however, Tertullian is not contesting an innovation but attempting to justify his own standpoint, this theory was possibly indeed elaborated in the polemic against the Montanists, but it was already traditional in its essence.[39] It may even have been the more strongly accentuated by Tertullian himself in order

[38] The members of the community are often implored, as in De paen., to join in an intercession. The Christ who is presented as *exorator patris* in De pud. 19 is doubtless meant to be the one who is praying to the Father through the Church. Thus if he does not pray in the case of certain sins (De pud. 19), neither can the Church pray for the sinners in question (De pud. 19; 2). But if the Church-Christ prays (cf. De paen. 10,6), then the prayer is heard.

[39] The bishop preaches on the occasion of the reconciliation of penitents (cf. De pud. 13). This would provide the opportunity not only for a repudiation of those who contest penance but also to provoke reflection upon what has just happened. Given this, why was more attention given to the parable of the lost sheep (De pud. 13) than to Matt. 16:18 (De pud. 21)? Neither of these texts says anything explicitly about the extent of the possibility of the forgiveness of sins by the Church. Thus Matt. 16:18 could hardly be adduced simply in view of this question. In fact a decision on the extent of possible sins which could be remitted by church penance need not

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to facilitate his polemic, it being easier to attack the emphasized claim to a *potestas*. According to this theory, the Church's act is considered as the forgiveness of sins in the name, and in the place, of God. The Church has a *ius* (2 1,9), it can *delicta donare* (21), it has a *potestas delicta donandi* (21) and a *delictorum eiusmodi remittendorum potestas* (21). The bishop explains: *ego . . . delicta paenitentia functis dimitto* (1), he has the *potestas solvendi et alligandi* (21) and the *fructus paenitentiae*, the *venia. . . in sua potestate* (3). It is possible that in one or other of the passages mentioned it may only be the right to grant the peace of the Church, the forgiveness of guilt before the Church as such that is intended. But in general it is a question of the forgiveness of guilt before God in the [145] name and in the place of God. This power of binding and loosing is paralleled with the forgiveness of sins, the *solvere alligata retro delicta* which Peter exercised in baptism. The discussion between the Catholics and the Montanists turned around the question as to whether the bishops possess that power which was the original and unique prerogative of the Lord himself and which, according to Tertullian, only the prophets inspired immediately by his Spirit are able to exercise in his name (21). For Tertullian this power belongs so exclusively to God that he puts it on the same level as the ability to perform wonders in God's name (21). It is participation in the *potestas Christi* (22). This view may derive from his polemical stance. Nevertheless, throughout De pud. it is possible to discern a Catholic notion of the forgiveness of sins, according to which the bishop forgives guilt before God by absolution in God's name and as his representative.

It is impossible to distribute these two ideas neatly between Tertullian's two writings. They are not only present in both writings, but they have the same weight in both cases. We can only conclude from this that Tertullian at least did not see a contradiction between the two ideas. We can, however, only surmise how they arc inter-related, so long as we confine ourselves to Tertullian's thinking. It is certain that, according to the second view, the Church's declaration, made with authoritative power, refers explicitly immediately to the forgiveness of guilt before God. But this does not necessarily exclude the existence of an intermediary between the act of the Church and the *venia* which, without being explicitly mentioned, binds the two moments together. The second view is correct, especially if there exists between the authoritative act of the Church and the forgiveness of guilt an essential and effective connection which is clear and objective. This connection would be expressed simply by the fact that this act of the Church forgives guilt. On this assumption Tertullian's middle term would be God's 'hearing' of the Church. In so far as, in the final analysis, guilt is forgivable by God alone (only he can restore the lost baptismal grace and definitively re-bestow his purely gratuitous love on man), the act on the Church's part is never something which God needs or which renders his own action superfluous, but is related to God's 'hearing' of the Church's prayer. With regard to man, however, this action of the Church

necessarily be reached in the Catholic sense only by stressing the *potestas donandi delicta* (the Catholics could just as easily have said: the Church can and ought to pray in the case of all sins). Thus it is not easy to see why this theory of absolution had its origin only in the Montanist controversy. Much less is it possible to hold, with Poschmann (p. 345), that Tertullian invented this theory 'in order to be able to challenge more effectively this "power" claimed by the officials of the Church'. Indeed, the Catholics themselves often appealed to Matt. 16. If they say, according to De pud. 21: *sed habet potestatem ecclesia delicta donandi*, and Tertullian 'expects' this objection 'as self-evident' (Poschmann), this objection being formulated precisely in the terms of the second theory, then Tertullian cannot be the inventor of this theory. He would have found it easier to contest the forgivable character of sins of impurity if he had not had to contend with this theory. Nevertheless, granted that it already existed and, therefore, had to be contested, it is quite possible that he, for his part, presented it in a very much accentuated form, so that he could contest it the more easily. Poschmann considers that this *potestas* is conceivable only if it coincides directly with forgiveness by God, which as such is possible only in a prophet who is immediately inspired by God. Accordingly, the whole notion must originate in Tertullian's spiritual view of the Church. But the power in question need not necessarily be viewed in this way; Tertullian's explanation could be a polemical artifice on his part. This does not mean, however, that the Catholics, for their part, did not claim that they could forgive sins 'in the name' or 'in the power' of God.

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which is heard by God is the word addressed authoritatively [146] to him in God's name.[40] It is this word which achieves forgiveness and gives man assurance of this forgiveness. Thus, in forgiving sins, the Church remains always in dependence upon God and his action. But the merit of the second view is that it does make clear that the Church really can do this in God's name. Both views express the same realities but in different terms. Both views finally make the same point. Thus for Tertullian they must have been connected and complemented each other. Certainly he must have had a more or less clear idea on this subject. In fact as much as, during his Montanist period, he contested the validity of the Church's power and prayer with regard to capital sins, he did not do so earlier, even though the second theory must have been known to him. And even as a Montanist he clearly allowed this power to the bishop in respect of the *leviora delicta* (De pud. 18,18). This would be illogical for a Montanist as such, since according to the fundamental conviction of this movement it is only individual, inspired prophets who arc able to forgive sins in God's name (De pud. 21). But for Tertullian, who developed even further this fundamental conviction, it shows that the theory of the bishop's power to forgive sins is no novelty, which he would certainly not have invented in this question. Thus he must have had some idea of how this view could be combined with the other theory of the infallibly efficacious prayer of the Church in Christ for the forgiveness of sins by God alone.

3. The Inter-Relationship between Both Effects of the Church's Act

With this 'harmonization' of the views on the way in which the act on the Church's part is related with the forgiveness of guilt before God all the relevant questions are still not yet solved. The Church's act of reconciliation achieves both *pax* with the Church and *venia* before God. But how are the *pax cum ecclesia* and the *venia* before God related with each other?

Obviously *pax* is only to be granted when God is ready to pardon. Tertullian bases his argument on this point: because God does not grant *venia*, neither must the Church give *pax* (De pud. 12). Thus the Church's judgement is only a *praeiudicium* of God's definitive judgement (Apol. 39), since the Church's decision can be erroneous.[41] Moreover, we have already noted that the Church's judgement [147] brings about the remission of guilt before God in association with the penitent's penance and is not a mere external act of church discipline which lifts the excommunication.

Nevertheless, it is precisely this 'power', considered as the authority to reconcile with the Church, that is questioned in De pud. For it is precisely in this work, where Tertullian as Montanist still holds out the absolute possibility of a forgiveness before God in the next life for those guilty of capital sins, that he contests the right of the Church to grant the pox of the Church and *communicatio* to such a sinner (3). At the same time, the Catholics take it for granted that this *pax* and *communicatio* include the pardon of sins before God, that is the actual fruit of penance, since they consider that penance without this *pax* is futile. According to the notions at that time, therefore, on the one hand, the *pax* cannot be identified simply with the forgiveness of guilt before God. Otherwise, Tertullian would have no cause to reject the granting of the *pax* while holding out the prospect of a *venia* before God, at least in the next life. On the other hand, both arc essentially related in such a way that the *pax* ought not to be considered a mere external formality of church law, since then the Catholics would not be able to hold that without *pax* penance has no effect. In so far as the Church's judgement is

[40] God has in fact promised the Church that he will hear it.
[41] Cf. the analogy with baptism according to De paen. 6,10.

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considered as *praeiudicium* of God's judgement, the *humana pax* (De pud. 3) must, therefore, be the actual effective cause of reconciliation with God. Only as such does it precede this reconciliation as *praeiudicium*, is distinct from it (as the cause is from the effect) but is nevertheless indissolubly connected with it.

The act of reconciliation performed by the bishop brings about the forgiveness of sins by means of the reconciliation of the sinner with the mystical but visible body of Christ.[42] Only in this way is it possible to understand why what seems to pertain to mere 'church law and discipline', that is 'public penance', is presented as being so inextricably linked with the reality of the sacrament.

But there still remains the further question of how the notion of peace with the Church is to be understood more precisely as the middle point between the act of the Church and the forgiveness of guilt before God. Moreover, the view that the content of the Church's act is, first and foremost, the granting of peace with the community of the Church, has to be related with those two notions concerning the forgiveness of guilt by the Church which we have [148] distinguished and attempted to reconcile. The first question could be answered simply by saying that the peace with the Church is a condition that man's subjective penance will be met by God with the forgiveness of guilt. In this case this peace would be in no way causally related with the forgiveness of guilt. It would be merely the external condition for the possible effectiveness of man's subjective penance, as the unique cause on his side, and for the acceptance of the performed *satisfactio* for forgiveness on God's side. This is Poschmann's solution (p. 345). It commends itself by its clarity and does full justice to Tertullian's stress on subjective penance as the cause of the forgiveness of guilt before God. Nevertheless it neglects other aspects of his overall view. In fact, even when it is a question of the effects of baptism (*the* sacrament), he ascribes the same efficacy (at least in part) to man's subjective action, yet without in any way contesting that baptism itself is the real cause. Indeed, one ought to say rather that he has a too 'materialistic' view of the causality of the baptismal rite.[43] But this does not mean that, according to Tertullian, the subjective acts of the person being baptized arc merely the external condition for the effectiveness of baptism, simply because even as a ritual baptism possesses a causal efficacy with regard to baptismal grace. Similarly, with regard to penance, it does not follow that the peace with the Church is merely a condition, just because subjective penance affects the forgiveness of guilt.

What is more, Tertullian ascribes to the Church a *potestas donandi delicta*, an idea which would be meaningless if this activity were a mere precondition for the *donare delicta* which would never be performed by the Church. It seems, therefore, that in Tertullian, where it is a question of the *paenitentia secunda*, the same effects are ascribed to both the subjective and the church factors, with a particular stress on the former. The later theory which attempts to justify both factors as the cause of the effectiveness of penance ought also to be a valid and clear interpretation of Tertullian's teaching. In any case the peace with the Church cannot be construed as a mere external and juridical precondition and presupposition for the forgiveness of guilt. Such a view assumes a too external and juridical notion of the church community which obviously conflicts with Tertullian's own vision.[44] Only if the Church is understood as a purely external organization can belonging to it be considered a mere precondition for the possession of the Spirit which removes guilt. Now [149] for Tertullian the Church is more than a mere confessional organization. It is *vera mater viventium* (De anima 43), the *corpus*

[42] Following de la Taille and Xiberta, this view is still defended in modern theology by B. Poschmann, 'Die innere Structur des Busssakraments' in: MThZ 1 (1950) no. 3, pp. 12-31.
[43] Cf. De bapt. 4: *supervenit enim statim spiritas de coelis et aquis superest sanctificans eas de semetipso et ita sanctificatae vim sanctificandi combibunt.*
[44] Cf. K. Adam, *Den Kirchenbegriff Tertullians* (Paderborn 1907), pp. 88-95; J. C. Plumpe, *Mater Ecclesia. An Inquiry into the Church as Mother in Early Christianity* (Washington 1943), pp. 45-62.

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Christi (De bapt. 6), so that it is there where the Trinity is (De spect. 25; De bapt. 15; Adv. Marc. III 24). Nevertheless, in his Catholic period Tertullian does not place the Church on the same level as the Spirit itself (as he does almost in De pud. 21), but he considers it at the same time as the *ecclesia quam . . . Apostoli struxerant* (De bapt. 11; cf. De virg. vel. 2: the *una ecclesia* is the unity of the Churches *quas et ipsi Apostoli vel apostolici viri condiderunt*). If the Church is thus considered 'as a physical means of grace, like a secondary source of grace',[45] then Tertullian would hardly view belonging to it as a mere external precondition of grace. The fact that the peace with the Church granted by a church official is no guarantee for fellowship with God by grace does not contradict this notion. Such a possibility of a sacrament being valid but fruitless is verifiable in other instances. And this does not prevent Tertullian from having a very realistic view of the effect of baptism.

The second question is rather more difficult to answer. If insertion into the fellowship of the Church, itself being seen as a means of grace, is to some extent a middle member between the Church's act of the reconciliation of a penitent and the forgiveness of sin before God, how does this idea fit into the thought of an act of the Church as the forgiveness of guilt? Tertullian seems to suggest the second idea which we discussed above well before he expressed the idea of the role of an intermediary. But this idea, with its theory of 'absolution', does not exclude an 'intermediary' between the act of the Church and the remission of guilt, that is, God's hearing of the Church's prayer. In discussing the question of the meaning of the whole Church's intercessory prayer, we have already seen that this ought to be viewed as the expression of a profound reality, that is, of the fact that the Spirit which remits sins is the Spirit of this Church and can be received only in it and from it considered as a whole. Granted all these notions, we can bring all the elements of our question together: the bishop's official act receives the sinner back into the organism of grace that is the Church, and in this way the sinner again becomes a member, so that the Church, as the body of Christ, can concern itself about his salvation. Thus the Church both suffers and Prays for his salvation. And by suffering with and praying for the sinner in its Spirit the Church is 'heard by God'. It also allows this [150] Spirit to take possession of this, its member, once more and in this way reconciles him with God. It does not matter whether these images fit together harmoniously, as long as they show how the individual elements affect the whole reality. Each image represents only a part of this total reality and spotlights only one aspect of the whole event. Taken together, they present a more adequate view of the subject, than when, for the sake of greater clarity, attention is centred on one alone. In so far as it is the actual bearer of the Spirit, the Church is the indispensible mediator of grace. Thus reconciliation with God necessarily presupposes a reconciliation of the sinner with the Church, into which he has to be reincorporated. This is penance considered as reconciliation with the Church. Once he is again newly incorporated, the penitent experiences the Spirit in the Church. He benefits from the participation which the Church has had in his condition by its suffering and intercession. The Church gives him its Spirit, which always remains a grace (even with regard to the Church as a whole), even if it is inalienably its Spirit, in so far as the Church lives indissolubly united with Christ. This is church penance considered as the answered prayer of the church community for the sinner. It is through this prayer that he recovers, as his own possession, the Spirit, the *indumentum Spiritus sancti*, the *signaculum lavacri* (De pud. 9,11), and that his guilt is remitted. This is church penance considered as the absolution of guilt by the Church.

In conclusion, it may still be asked how the penitent's subjective penance is related to this whole procedure. Without a doubt, Tertullian considered the penance of personal satisfaction too exclusively as the work of man alone. But how is this subjective penance supported by

[45] Cf. K. Adam, p. 89.

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the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of the Church? Tertullian seems to have conceived this aspect of penance too much like the Stoics or the Semi-Pelagians as the work of man himself.[46] Nevertheless, in De paen. 10,6 he does state that Christ himself operates also in the repentant sinner and not only in the community, for whose help he is pleading: *non potest corpus de unius membri vexatione laetum agere . . . in uno et altero ecclesia est, ecclesia vero Christus*.[47] Thus both the Church and Christ live already in the penitent and in his penance. If he seeks grace, returns to the Church and asks for its Spirit, then he is already influenced by the Spirit and considered a member of the Church who is asking for unity with the whole body of the Church and healing from his guilt. Tertullian [151] indicates here that even man's subjective penance, which appears to deserve forgiveness so independently, is to be understood as the work of Christ's body, accomplished by the Spirit. All that remains is for the whole of penance to be seen as one event, both personal and ecclesial, as the activity of man and the act of Church. But this enterprise was accomplished – and even then only for a short time – by Thomas Aquinas.[48]

[46] This is still the case with Cyprian, whereas with Origen it is different. In Origen subjective penance appears to be the expression of the grace of the interior, purifying fire of judgement. Cf. the author's relevant essay in this volume.

[47] Hans v. Campenhausen, p. 249 n. 2, interprets this passage differently, referring the *in uno et altero* to the members of the community who have 'remained holy'. But he does not justify this interpretation.

[48] According to Thomas the acts of the penitent are an interior part of the essential matter of the sacrament itself. Indeed, for him they arc the more self-evident part, so that all that he has actually to prove is that the priestly absolution as such contributes effectively to the remission of sins. On the whole, even where Thomistic terminology is maintained, the Scotist view has prevailed: the action of the penitent is still only a precondition and no longer an essential part of the sacrament.

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6

THE PENITENTIAL TEACHING OF CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE[1]

So much has already been written about the penitential teaching of Cyprian of Carthage[2] that there is hardly any hope of saying something new on the subject in this present study. Nevertheless, even today a detailed and comprehensive treatment of this topic need not be entirely superfluous. There is a whole range of disputed points which it can discuss precisely and by showing their relevance. It can highlight certain forgotten themes (e.g. the question of the penitential liturgy), take a fresh look at questions which have been overlooked and attempt to give a bird's-eye view of the whole of Cyprian's penitential teaching. The scope given to the present study means, however, that no consideration will be allotted to the question which has been treated often and in detail, namely, whether in Cyprian's time, and because of his influence, there was a notable relaxation in the Church's penitential discipline. In the present essay the penitential discipline in Cyprian's time in North Africa and Rome is of less concern than is the penitential liturgy and his corresponding theology.

I. THE EXTERNAL FORM: THE PENITENTIAL LITURGY

Cyprian's writings do not present an essentially different picture of the form of penance from that which is already discernible in Tertullian. [153][3] It is usually possible to distinguish three stages[4] in the penitential process as a whole: the performance of penance (*paenitentiam agere*; *delicta expiare*), the 'exhomologesis' (*exhomologesim facere*; *ad exhomologesim venire*), the reconciliation by the imposition of hands on the part of the bishop (and of the clergy).[5] What appears to be most important is that these three stages always occur in this order.

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[1] The original form of this revised essay appeared in ZKTh 74 (1952), pp. 257-76, 381-438.

[2] A list of the most important works up to 1940 will be found in B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia Secunda* (Bonn 1940), p. 369. Poschmann himself (pp. 368-424) provides the most precise presentation of the history of the penitential question during the persecution of Decius and in Cyprian's theology of penance up to that time. Later works: J. Köhne, 'Zur Frage der Busse im christlichen Altertum' in: ThGl 35 (1943), pp. 26-36; G. H. Joyce, 'Private Penance in the Early Church' in: JThS 42 (1941), pp. 18-42 (for Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen); J. H. Taylor, 'St. Cyprian and the Reconciliation of Apostates' in: ThSt 3 (1942), pp. 27-46; F. de Saint-Palais d'Aussac, *La réconciliation des hérétiques dans l'Eglise latine* (Paris 1943); J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklang des Bussstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg/Br. 1955), pp. 73-171; S. Hübner, 'Kirchenbusse und Excommunication bei Cyprian' in: ZKTh 84 (1962), pp. 49-84, 171-215; B. Altaner/A. Stuiber, *Patrologie* (Freiburg/Br. 1966), p.180; K. Baus, *Von der Urgemeinde zur frühchristliche Grosskirche* (HdKG I) (Freiburg/Br. 1962), pp. 373-6; J. Quasten, *Patrology* II (Utrecht 1953), pp. 380-1; H. von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt and geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen 1963), pp. 310-18.

[3] Cf. 'Tertullian's Theology of Penance' in this volume.

[4] These stages arc to be understood differently from those which J. Grotz describes with the expression 'stages of penance'. In his study J. Grotz draws a distinction between a purely canonical stage prior to the actual church penance, the so-called penance of satisfaction, which was to be performed outside the community of the Church, and the actual sacramental penance ('exhomologesis'), the 'actual church penance', which was to be performed essentially within the community. Between the two Grotz inserts the place of the *communicatio*, which is not the conclusion of church penance but the prerequisite for its beginning in the proper sense. Thus, according to Grotz, the *communicatio* is quite different from the *pax* which was granted only at the end of the penitential process. This thesis is contested above all by S. Hübner, who gives a precise analysis of the basic ideas in Cyprian's theology of penance.

[5] Cf. Epist. 15,1; 16,2; 17,2; 59,13; De lapsis 16.

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1. The Performance of Penance

It is easy to understand what is meant by *paenitentiam agere*. It is a matter of works of penance by which the sinner, on his part, attempts to reconcile himself with God. It is like *satisfacere* and *satisfactio*, which consists in prayer, fasting, wearing penitential garb, abstaining from baths, renouncing pleasures, carrying out vigils, sleeping on a hard bed, almsgiving, etc.[6] In so far as this penance is performed at the Church's instigation (cf. De lapsis 32), and to the extent that, of its very nature, it is observable publicly in the life of the Church and is accompanied and supported by the prayer of the Church, this penance is not only a purely subjective, 'private' penance of the sinner, but also a public act of the Church, even if it is considered as the activity of the sinner himself.[7] This also follows from the fact that, with regard both to its necessary duration and its sufficient intensity, this penance is subject to the Church's judgement. During the time of his penance the penitent is naturally excluded from the Eucharist. According to Cyprian this is obviously a direct effect of sin itself and does not require a specific act on the Church's part. In his view those sinners who have not been the subject of a specific act on the Church's part (cf. De lapsis 25 f.) receive the Eucharist unworthily.

2. The Exhomologesis

Cyprian always introduces exhomologesis as the second stage of the whole penitential process. He does indeed recognize a wider meaning of the word which, according to its etymology, signifies simply 'confession' in the widest sense (De test. III 114; De lapsis [154] 31.28). But the usage of the word in these passages makes it clear that it is not a question of the specific, technical sense of the term (*exhomologesis conscientiae*; *exhomologesim Deo facere*).[8] In its technical sense the word always signifies the second stage of the penitential process, and when he uses it Cyprian means neither the whole process nor an introductory confession in view of penance before the bishop.[9] When, in danger of death, the first stage, that is, the sinner's performance of penance, has perforce to be omitted, either totally or partially, the exhomologesis is obviously the first stage to occur. But this does not change its nature. Consequently, even in this context (Epist. 18,1; 19,2) the word cannot assume another meaning. It is easy to understand from Tertullian what exhomologesis is. According to him exhomologesis means the sinner's performance of penance, in so far as it is carried out publicly in the Church, that is, the 'liturgical' acts. This is because a 'confession' that one had sinned is necessarily connected with these 'liturgical' acts, even if the sins in question are not individually and explicitly made known to the community. Cyprian emphasizes the 'liturgical' character of exhomologesis more than does Tertullian. For him, therefore, exhomologesis is that part of the penitential process which takes place before the community. In every case it occurs immediately before the reconciliation by means of the imposition of

[6] Cf. De lapsis 24.30.35 etc.
[7] This is not made sufficiently clear in J. Grotz, p. 73 if. On this cf. S. Hübner, p. 71ff.
[8] It is precisely this strict, technical sense of 'exhomologesis' that J. Grotz ought to have considered. Nevertheless, he derives (p. 132 ff.) his understanding only from the interpretation of this notion in the wide, general sense, as it is found in B. Poschmann and others.
[9] Contrary to the view of J. Grotz, according to which the original meaning of 'exhomologesis', 'confession', must have been that of today's confession. It is then only gradually that this notion developed to become church penance in the strict sense.

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hands. A clear idea of this can be gathered from Tertullian: the sinner prays for reconciliation on bended knee before the bishop, the clergy and the community. It is not clear, however, whether this happened frequently during the time of penance or whether it is just a matter of the unrepeatable beginning of the whole rite of reconciliation. The above-mentioned passages (cf. also Epist. 4,4) all give the impression that the exhomologesis occurs immediately before the reconciliation. Also, in the reconciliation of the sick, where the exhomologesis certainly occurs only once (Epist. 18,1; 19,2; 20,3), it is presented in exactly the same way as for the usual performance 01 penance in the Church. One must assume, therefore, that in fact it took place only at the end of the time of penance or that – to put it more precisely and cautiously – liturgical works of penance and blessings of the penitent during the time of penance were not called exhomologesis. It is possible to prove the existence of such acts before the actual exhomologesis from Tertullian's writings. Even in Cyprian's time they must have existed, at least in so far as the [155] penitent had his special place *in vestibulo ecclesiae*, and thus, because of his place, his dress and his non-participation in the Eucharist during the celebration of the liturgy was known as a penitent.[10]

If, therefore, the exhomologesis in Cyprian does not mean the confession before the bishop, there can still be no doubt (as even Koch[11] admits) that a confession of the sinner before the bishop precedes the introduction to the official performance of penance. In Epist. 55,29 there is a distinction made between *confessio* and exhomologesis. Unless this is a mere tautology, then the *confessio* must be understood as distinct from the exhomologesis, that is, as referring to that confession which is made before the bishop at the introduction of penance. In De lapsis 28 there is explicit mention of an *apud sacerdotes Dei dolenter et simpliciter confiteri*. Even if it is not sure here whether in fact an actual church penance ensued, other cases where there was such a penance must have involved a previous confession. This is evident from the fact that penance had to be done for secret sins[12] and that the *examinare causas singulorum* (Epist. 55,6) and the establishment of the *iustum tempus* for penance (Epist. 17,2; 64,1) was not possible without a confession of the precise guilt.

Of its very nature, therefore, the penitential process had to begin with an actual *confessio* before the bishop. In the case of a sin which was already known, this *confessio* may have been quite informal. But it is no way proven that the exhomologesis before the reconciliation included a detailed confession of guilt, even when this guilt was not publicly known. Nevertheless, at the time of reconciliation the people had to express its opinion and give its agreement (Epist. 64,1), and thus the duration of penance and the completed performance of penance was publicly established at the exhomologesis: *exhomologesis fit inspecta vita eius, qui agit paenitentiam* (Epist. 17,2). It is difficult to see precisely how the fulfilment of the conditions for reconciliation was established at the exhomologesis, whether on the basis of the penitent's own testimony or through the testimonies of others. The procedure may be imagined along the lines of the examinations before baptism, when the catechumen and witnesses are questioned by the bishop and his clergy about the life of the candidate during the time of preparation for baptism [13]

[10] Cf. also Epist. 30,8, where in the case of Rome a *professa frequenter . . . detestatio factorum* is presupposed in the penitent. This must refer to the time prior to his illness.
[11] H. Koch, *Cyprianische Untersuchungen* (Bonn 1926), p. 280.
[12] According to Epist. 4,4 and De lapsis 28, a secret sin of thought, by which a person toyed with the idea of renouncing his faith, was not necessarily exempted from church penance.
[13] Sponsors are already attested in Tertullian and certainly do not pertain primarily to the baptism of infants (cf. De bapt. 18). In any event, before Cyprian in the Paradosis of Hippolytus there is clear evidence of the custom that a Christian had to verify that the neophyte had led a life according to the principles of Christianity during the time of his catechumenate. Cf. E. Dick, 'Das Pateninstitut im altchristlichcn Katechumenat' in: ZKTh 63 (1939), pp. 1-49. In view of Cyprian's demand that the confessors should carefully examine penitents with regard to the kind and gravity of their guilt, their seriousness to do penance, the length of their penance, etc.

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[156]

3. *Reconciliation by the Imposition of Hands*

The third stage is the reconciliation through the imposition of hands[14] by the bishop. Cyprian is the West's first witness to the fact that this reconciliation, the meaning and effect of which will be discussed later, occurs through an *imposition of hands*. The same rite occurs earlier in Origen (In Levit. horn. 2,4),[15] and the Didascalia Apostolorum (II 18,7; 41,2; 43,1) already in the first half of the third century recognizes such an imposition of hands as self-evident in Syria. Thus it could not have originated in Africa but is considerably older than Cyprian, even if 1 Timothy 5:22 is left out of consideration as a reasonable witness for it.[16] According to Cyprian the bishop and the clergy impose hands.[17] This counts as an imposition of hands *in paenitentiam* (Epist. 15,1, etc.). In the East this is accompanied by an anointing of the sinner.[18] But Cyprian shows no evidence of this for the West and it must have been totally missing there. Also at the time of Cyprian the imposition of hands was naturally accompanied by a prayer, as Tertullian already mentions – although not in close, connection with the concluding rite of reconciliation. This prayer is the intercession of the Church for the forgiveness of guilt and for the re-bestowal of the Holy Spirit which was lost through sin and which remits the guilt by its return. The last point becomes still more clear in Cyprian. In the Didascalia Apostolorum (II 41) there is also evidence for the intercession of the whole community on the occasion' of the imposition of hands.

A) THE ORIGIN OF THE RITE

What is the origin of the imposition of hands as a rite of reconciliation? This is a relevant question, regardless of whether this gesture was used already in the beginning (1 Tim. 5:22) or only later in reconciliation. It is a question which can be subdivided into two further questions, although historically they may coincide with each other. In the first place, is the imposition of hands intended as Confirmation? And then it should be asked: if it is not to be understood as an actual Confirmation, then what meaning does it have? It could at least be modelled on the administration of Confirmation, or it must have an entirely different origin. The usual imposition of hands in penance (that is, where it is not a matter of the reconciliation of heretics) is generally considered an independent rite which is comprehensible [157] in itself without further explanation. All that is normally asked is

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before recommending them to the bishop for reconciliation (Epist. 15,3), it is probable that competent witnesses like the confessors were employed at the exhomologesis to ascertain that the penance had actually been done (cf. Epist. 26). This would be analogous with the questioning of witnesses from the clergy and the people about the worthiness of a candidate for ordination (Epist. 38,1).

[14] The designation of the imposition of the hand as a 'rite of reconciliation' ought in no way to predetermine its meaning. It merely expresses the fact that after this last penitential act the penitent is once more allowed access to the Eucharist as a complete Christian. It is not yet decided whether the imposition of the hand is only the last penitential act or the solemn juridical granting of the *pax*. The *manus impositio* always had to be performed by the imposition of the right hand, since *manus* is always used in the singular. Cf. for example B. J. Bohm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum* (Leipzig 1911), pp. 82, n.1; 87, n.; 98 f. J. A. Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten* (Innsbruck 1932), p. 36.

[15] Origen here inserts into the passage of Jas. 5:14 the phrase *imponant ei manus* and appears to refer the text not to the anointing of the sick but to the previously clearly described penance. Cf. J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains* (Paris 1925), p. 41 f. Cf. also the relevant details in the essay in this volume on Origen's penitential teaching.

[16] Cf. P. Galtier, *Aux origines du sacrement de la pénitence* (Rome 1951), pp. 95-106.

[17] Cf. Epist. 15,1; 16,2; 17,2; 18,1; 19,2; 20,3; 71,2; De lapsis 16; Sent. episc. 8.22.

[18] Cf. J. Coppens, p. 377.

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whether the imposition of hands in the reconciliation of heretics is identical with the usual reconciliation or with Confirmation. Moreover, the question is posed in this way on the supposition of our modern theological awareness, according to which it is taken for granted that Confirmation cannot be repeated. Thus Confirmation can naturally have no relevance for the (usual) reconciliation of penitents. Apart from this presupposition, however, a simple glance at the rite suggests that the imposition of hands in the reconciliation of heretics cannot be so clearly distinguished from that used in the usual reconciliation of other penitents. At the same time, there exist close relationships between this imposition of hands and that used in Confirmation. The problem posed by these relationships is universally recognized. For these reasons, we consider it methodologically correct to pose our first question.

B) THE IMPOSITION OF HANDS AND CONFIRMATION?

This is the answer to this question:[19] At the time of Cyprian the imposition of hands in penance is not simply the imposition of hands used in Confirmation. These rites are to be distinguished clearly from each other. As proof of this assertion it should be observed first of all that the institution of penance existed long before the middle of the third century, without this reconciliation with the Church as a community of grace being in any way considered the repetition of a sacramental act of Christian initiation. Quite on the contrary, it needs to be underlined that in the early Church baptism and Confirmation are so tightly bound together[20] in the one rite of initiation that it is very difficult to distinguish within this rite two distinct sacraments. In this regard, it can be said that in Paul's baptismal theology (as distinct from that of the Acts of the Apostles),[21] which was stronger in the East than in the West, 'baptism' has the comprehensive meaning of the one Christian initiation which includes together both baptism and the bestowal of the Spirit associated with Confirmation in the modern senses. Now one of the basic principles of the theology of penance, as this is evinced already in Hermas and Tertullian, is that 'baptism', that is, precisely the whole rite of Christian initiation is unrepeatable and once-and-for-all. A later *metanoia* is, therefore, something quite different. Already, for this reason, it is quite unlikely that the conclusion of the Church's penitential process [158] should be conceived as the actual repetition of a part of Christian

[19] Further literature on this question: P. Galtier, 'Absolution ou Confirmation? La réconciliation des hérétiques' in: RSR 5 (1914), pp. 201-35, 339-94 (on Cyprian: 342-51), 507-44. P. Galtier, 'Imposition des mains' in: DThC VII (Paris 1923), pp. 1397-408; A. d'Alès, *La théologie de S. Cyprien* (Paris 1922), pp. 237-48; J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains* (Paris 1922), pp. 374-92; F. de Saint-Palais d'Aussac, *La réconciliation des hérétiques dans l'Eglise latine* (Paris 1943). Galtier and Coppens contain numerous references to previous literature.

[20] This connection, however, must have been much clearer in the East than in the West.

[21] On these differences in the theology of Christian initiation between Paul and the Acts of the Apostles, which represented the starting-point for the difference in the theology of Confirmation between the East and the West, cf.: P. Galtier, 'La consignation à Carthage et à Rome' in: RSR 2 (1911), pp. 350-83; id., 'La consignation dans les églises d'Occident' in: RHE 13 (1912), pp. 257-301; id., 'Onction et confirmation' in: RHE 13 (1912), pp.467-76; id., 'Imposition des mains' in: DThC VII (Paris 1923), pp. 1319-24; 1343-93; P. de Puniet, 'La liturgie baptismale en Gaule avant Charlemagne' in: RQH 28 (1902), pp. 382-423; id., 'Onction et confirmation' in: RHE 13 (1912), pp. 450-66; id., 'Confirmation' in: DACL III, pp. 2515-43; C. Ruch, 'Confirmation dans la sainte Ecriture' in: DThC III (Paris 1908), pp. 975-1026; G. Bareille, 'Confirmation d'après les Pères grecs et latins' in: DThC III (Paris 1908), pp. 1026-58; J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains* (Paris 1925); J. B. Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung* (Freiburg/Br. 1920); J. B. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium* III (Paris 1930), pp. 126-44; B. Welte, *Die postbaptismale Salbung* (Freiburg/Br. 1939); H. Elfers, *Die Kirchenordnung Hippolyts von Rom* (Paderborn 1938), pp. 101-60; id., 'Gehört die Salbung mit Chrisma im ältesten abendländischen Initiationsritus zur Taufe oder zum Firmung?' in: ThGl 34 (1942), pp. 334-41; D. van den Eynde, 'Notes sur les rites postbaptisnaux dans les églises d'occident' in: Antonianum 14 (1939), pp. 257-76; E. Dekkers, *Tertullianus en de geschiednis der liturgie* (Brussels/Amsterdam 1947), pp. 197-205.

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initiation. Although the second *metanoia* does indeed restore the (partial) loss of the effects of Christian initiation, this penance is, nevertheless, only a substitute for, and an addition to, baptism as a whole. It is, therefore, not a repetition of a part of Christian initiation and was in this sense conceived as a 'second' baptism by Hermas, Tertullian and the Didascalia Apostolorum.

Furthermore, in the very place where, apart from in Cyprian, the imposition of hands is clearly mentioned, namely, in the Didascalia Apostolorum,[22] this penitential rite is indubitably distinguished from Confirmation. Although in this passage Confirmation still appears to be administered by means of a simple imposition of hands without an anointing (II 32,3),[23] the author places the imposition of hands of penance in parallel not with the imposition of hands after baptism[24] but with baptism itself (II 41): *quemadmodum igitur gentilem baptizas ac postea recipis, ita et huic* (the penitent) *manum impones, omnibus pro eo precantibus, ac deinde eum introduces et participem facies ecclesiae, et erit ei in loco baptistmi impositio manus*; *namque aut per impositionem manus aut per baptismum accipiunt participationem Spiritus Sancti*. The bestowal of the Spirit as the effect of both rites (baptism and the penitential imposition of hands) is the same. It is indeed self-evident, then as today, that the forgiveness of sins is achieved through the communication of the Holy Spirit. But what is striking is that *baptism* and the penitential imposition of hands are compared with each other. Certainly it could be said that 'baptism' is a comprehensive notion which also includes the imposition of hands of Confirmation. But if the Didascalia Apostolorum really intended to draw attention to the identity of the imposition of hands of Confirmation with that of reconciliation, then it would surely have underlined the imposition of hands in baptism, just as in II 32,3, for example, it distinguishes baptism from the *impositio manus episcoporum* in the same initiation rite. Indeed, such a stress is all the more to be expected, in that the imposition of hands of confirmation in the Didascalia Apostolorum is not the only imposition of hands by the bishop in the whole initiation rite (there is already an imposition of hands at the anointing before baptism, III 12). If, therefore, one is looking for a close parallel to the penitential imposition of hands in the baptismal rite, it would not be completely impossible to consider the imposition of hands before baptism just as well as the imposition of hands [159] of Confirmation. In fine, therefore, according to the Didascalia Apostolorum, the penitential imposition of hands is a rite which, as a bestowal of the Spirit, takes the place of the whole of baptism and is not the repetition of a particular part of the initiation rite.

Cyprian's own position on this point is somewhat more difficult to ascertain, because he appears to consider the reconciliation of heretics parallel with, indeed a repetition of, the imposition of hands at Confirmation. What needs to be demonstrated first of all, therefore, is that, in his view, the reconciliation of heretics, at least in the practice which he represents, is identical with the usual penitential reconciliation through the imposition of hands. Such a conclusion would still be very important in itself, even if, thereby, our actual problem were not yet solved. The penitential imposition of hands is always administered to reconcile a sinner with the Church, to *admitti ad Ecclesiam* (Epist. 4,4; cf. 16,2), even in cases where there is no question of sins-against faith, as, for example, in the case of sins against purity. From the whole theology of the relationship between membership of the Church and the possession of the Spirit, as this is developed by Cyprian in the controversy over the baptism of heretics it is abundantly obvious that, in his view, even in the case of these sins such an

[22] Which originates in the first half of the third century; on the date, cf. P. Galtier, *Aux origines du sacrement de pénitence* (Rome 1951), pp. 189-221.
[23] The anointing with the imposition of hands of III 12 is a pre-baptismal anointing; on this cf. 'Penitential Teaching and Practice According to the Didascalia Apostolorum' in this volume.
[24] Which would be expected if it were considered a second Confirmation.

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imposition of hands signifies the re-bestowal of the Holy Spirit.[25] Tertullian had also already proposed this as an effect of the *paenitentia secunda*, and the Didascalia Apostolorum mentions it explicitly with regard to the imposition of hands for sinners of every category. If, therefore, Cyprian, along with his contemporaries,[26] explains the imposition of hands at the reconciliation of heretics as a re-bestowal of church fellowship and a bestowal of the Spirit, then this, on its own, is neither completely surprising nor a proof that any other imposition of hands is involved than that of the usual penitential reconciliation.

The imposition of hands alone which Pope Stephen I wishes to be applied at every reconciliation of heretics must be done *in paenitentiam*.[27] This pope's denial of a (new) baptism of heretics is based on the fact that the mere imposition of hands in such cases is an ancient *consuetudo* (Epist. 74,1; cf. De rebaptismate 1.6), and this fact is not disputed by his adversaries (Epist. 71,2.3; 73,13.23; 74,2; 75,6; Sent. episc. 30.64.77). Even Cyprian dates his own contrary practice in Africa only from the time of Agrippina (Epist. 7 1,4; 73,3). This suggests that even in Africa the imposition of hands, which Cyprian [160] himself used for the reconciliation of heretics baptized in the Catholic Church, must have been the rite of reconciliation of all heretics at the beginning of the third century. Pope Stephen's appeal to traditional procedure shows, however, that the principle was not determined by theological considerations but by ancient practice.

C) THE IMPOSITION OF HANDS AND THE RECONCILIATION OF HERETICS

What, therefore, is the origin of this practice, if it is not based on radical theological considerations? The first point which must be made is that certainly those heretics who were baptized in the Catholic Church (and these were obviously the original cases) were reconciled through the imposition of hands. The ancient teaching concerning the unrepeatable character of baptism (as it is found already in Hermas) did not allow any other practice, in the form of a full or partial repetition of the rite of initiation, in their regard. This practice was then maintained and applied, without considerable theological reflection, where it was a question of the reconciliation (readmission and bestowal of the Spirit) of those new heretics who were baptized outside the Church. That is Cyprian's own explanation of this practice in Epist. 7 1,2, and we have no reason to doubt his word. In reality, therefore, every reconciliation of a heretic must originally, and even for Stephen, have been understood as a normal penitential reconciliation.[28] Thus Stephen's description of it as being performed *in paenitentiam* is, without a doubt, the most exact notion possible. This is confirmed by Cyprian's own description of the imposition of hands for heretics and apostates who were originally Catholics as *in paenitentiam* (Epist. 71,2; Sent. episc. 8; Epist. 15,1; 18,1; 19,2). Since Cyprian recognizes the notion,[29] at least for these sinners, his own terminology evidences both the original conception and Stephen's practice as a penitential imposition of hands. If, however, the reconciliation were originally intended as a new imposition of hands of Confirmation, then this must apply to every case of the penitential imposition of hands. But this is completely out of the question, both because of the awareness of the unity of baptism-

[25] The person who receives the *pax* receives the Holy Spirit; cf. Epist. 57,4: *pace recepta recipere Spiritum Patris*. This statement was made in respect of a reconciled sinner.
[26] For instance, Pope Stephen, the author of De rebaptismate, and the bishops of the synod held on the subject on the controversy over the baptism of heretics on 1 September A.D. 256.
[27] Cyprian, Epist. 74,1.2.3.
[28] This means a reconciliation as it was practised in the case of a validly baptized and confirmed person. Thus it cannot be understood as a new Confirmation, since at that early time the rite of initiation was considered to be unrepeatable.
[29] Cyprian himself does not know of a mere reconciling imposition of hands for those baptized outside the Church. Thus he can have no term to designate it.

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Confirmation, on the one hand, and of the unrepeatable character of baptism, on the other. Such a theory has also to reckon with certain serious difficulties. It would render incomprehensible the fact that the ancient tradition (Hermas-Tertullian-Cyprian) a more considerable role is given to the performance of subjective penance in the [161] remission of sins committed after baptism than in baptism itself with regard to previous faults. This is because in the reconciliation of penance only an essential part of initiation *in remissionem peccatorum* was repeated.

What is more, there can be no doubt that, as far as Stephen I is concerned, the imposition of hands for heretics meant the usual penitential reconciliation. If indeed this were thought of as a renewal of Confirmation,[30] then obviously its characteristics and effect could be described only in terms of the latter, and this only in so far as Confirmation is considered distinct from baptism. Now the principal characteristic and the specific effect of the imposition of hands in penance is in general the *pax cum ecclesia*, the *communicatio*. But it can hardly be maintained that this is also the characteristic hallmark of the imposition of hands in Confirmation, as distinct from baptism in water.

After all this, it still remains to be shown that even in Cyprian no decisive arguments are to be found for the assumption that the meaning of the ancient and traditional imposition of hands in penance is a renewal of Confirmation.

Against the conclusion which we have just reached it might be objected that Cyprian supposes that Stephen, in imposing hands upon heretics, intends to confirm them. There can be no doubt that Cyprian does have this impression. Indeed he expounds Stephen's view (Epist. 73,6) accordingly, as if the imposition of hands offered by him to the heretics were a *manum imponi ut spiritum sanctum consequatur et signetur*,[31] while he himself is of the opinion that, in the reception of heretics, either both, that is, the *baptizari in remissam peccatorum* and the *consequi Spiritum Sanctum* through the imposition of hands should be given or neither.[32] In other words, if he says that the imposition of hands *ad accipiendum Spiritum Sanctum* is insufficient and the baptism must be administered as well (but not instead of the imposition of hands), it is clear that this observation implies the supposition mentioned above (Epist. 72,1). Otherwise, the prescription that *sacramentum utrumque* should be administered to the heretics would be superfluous (Epist. 73,21; Sent. episc. 5; cf. also 16). It also has to be admitted that even the rather clumsy defender of Stephen's position in De rebaptismate (cf., for example, 10. 12) considers the imposition of hands for heretics as Confirmation.

But is this interpretation of Stephen's view on the part of his [162] adversaries and indeed his unskillful theological friend the correct one? In other words, did he himself see clearly and consciously in this imposition of hands for heretics that previously valid ritual which belongs to Christian initiation? This question cannot be simplified by the suggestion that Stephen has in mind only the Novatians who had not administered Confirmation in their initiation ceremony. If this were the case, then Confirmation could be prescribed for these heretics with impunity and without the suggestion that a Confirmation actually administered

[30] This cannot be excluded in principle, since in the early Church there is no explicit statement that the imposition of hands at Confirmation, considered in itself, cannot be repeated. Such a statement is still not found in Augustine. Augustine's frequently quoted word, from his Contra litteras Petiliani Donatistae II 104.239, is not a witness for the unrepeatable character of Confirmation, since the *sacramentum chrismatis* mentioned here is the post-baptismal anointing which is not identical with Confirmation as the communication of the Spirit by a mere imposition of hands. On this cf. W. Roetzer, *Des heiligen Augustinus Schriften als liturgie-geschichtliche Quelle* (Munich 1930), p. 172 f. Similarly H. Elfers, *Die Kirchenordnung Hippolyts von Rom* (Paderborn 1938), pp. 115-18, as opposed to J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains* (Paris 1925), pp. 297-303.

[31] In Cyprian the term *signari/signaculum* is a typical expression for Confirmation; cf. Epist. 73,9.

[32] It still remains to be shown that Pope Stephen attributed the *remissa peccatorum* to baptism administered by heretics.

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by heretics was invalid (as d'Alès holds).[33] Without any doubt Stephen has in mind heretics in general, and all his adversaries presuppose that these possess an initiation which includes an imposition of hands. Nevertheless, the interpretation of Stephen's view on the part of his adversaries need not be exact in every respect. What is certainly correct is that Stephen presupposes that when the heretic comes to the Church he does not possess the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that he receives the imposition of hands. Everything else is mere interpretation. As such it may perhaps even be relevant and not contradicted by Stephen himself. But it appears rather as a conclusion from his position than as a presentation of this view itself. Basically, this position consists in maintaining the traditional practice. But this practice does not indicate an imposition of hands in the sense of a new Confirmation. Thus it is really indifferent how Stephen himself would have interpreted this practice, had he been pressed to give a precise theological interpretation of it.

Obviously it is not only as a conclusion from Stephen's practice (cf., for example, Sent. episc. *5*; Epist. 69,11; 70,3; 72,1) but also precisely as his own explicit teaching (Epist. 69,10; 74,5; 75,8) that Cyprian propounds that heretics do not possess the Holy Spirit and that they receive it only through the Catholic imposition of hands. This is tantamount to saying that, at least as far as the end-product is concerned, the heretics' imposition of hands is ineffective. Cyprian would not have received this view ready-made from out of the blue, and he is, therefore, undoubtedly correct when he constantly presupposes that the reconciling imposition of hands is, in Stephen's view, a rite *ad accipiendum Spiritum* (Epist 69,11 72,1 73,6 74,5) But is it thereby proven that Stephen considers the reconciliation of heretics and penitents as an imposition of hands of Confirmation which is either valid for the first time or repeated? This teaching [163] could be just as much the simple expression of Stephen's practice as the mere description of it. Stephen imposes hands on the heretic as on every other sinner because he does not in fact possess the Spirit as a result of his sins and, therefore, must receive it.[34] According to the theology of that time every serious sin entails man's loss of both the *substantia baptismi* and the Holy Spirit. It is understandable, therefore, that the imposition of hands which concludes the sin-remitting penance should be described as *ad accipiendum Spiritum Sanctum*. This designation is justified without any thought of Confirmation and without any clear previous reflection as to how this Spirit-bestowing imposition of hands administered to penitents and heretics is related with that other imposition of hands belonging to baptism. *In paenitentiam* and *ad accipiendum Spiritum Sanctum* are expressions which can indicate the same imposition of hands without thereby referring to Confirmation. Stephen certainly sees in the imposition of hands for penitents and heretics a communication of the Spirit. Nevertheless, Cyprian's interpretation of this view with reference to Confirmation says nothing as to whether Stephen would have agreed with this interpretation or whether he would have proposed another elaborated and clear idea of the communication of the Spirit through the imposition of hands for penitents which would have clearly distinguished it from that of Confirmation.

The critical point of our problem is reached, however, only when, according to the explicit statements of Cyprian and Firmilian, the baptism by heretics is not only held by Stephen to be valid, legitimate, that is, in the modern sense (as already recognized by Augustine), *validum*, but also when he ascribes to it an effect which – to use our terminology – is tantamount to the 'fruitfulness' of baptism. According to the account of his adversaries, baptism by the heretics in Stephen's opinion effects: *gratia Christi*, *gratia baptismi regeneratio* (*caelestis*) *secundae nativitatis*, *remissa* (*remissio*) *peccatorum*, an *innovari et sanctificari* (Epist.

[33] A. d'Alès, *La théologie de saint Cyprien* (Paris 1922), p. 246 f.
[34] Obviously we cannot expect him to provide a precise and profound explanation of why the sinner or the heretic does not possess the Spirit. He is only concerned with the simple fact that it is a question of a heretic or a sinner.

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73,4.16.17.18.20; 74,5.6.7; 75,8.9.12.14.16.17.18.22.23.25). This account cannot be simply false, since the view which it relates is even expressed – if only briefly – where Stephen is quoted verbatim (Epist. 75,18: *gratia Christi*). On the one hand, therefore, Stephen (contrary to Augustine) acknowledges in the baptism by heretics the production of grace, even if this is not also the possession of the Spirit.[35] On the other hand, he denies to the initiation by heretics the possibility of bestowing [164] the Holy Spirit in such a way that, as it were, it accompanies the heretics when they approach the Catholic Church, since it is only there that it is first bestowed. This position of Stephen may strike us as being somewhat strange, indeed completely illogical. This is certainly how it appears to his adversaries, since their arguments concentrate on the observation that the principle by which he ascribes the production of grace to baptism by heretics ought also to be applied to their imposition of hands. Their contention is that these effects which he ascribes to baptism by heretics are only conceivable if heretics who are about to be baptized or already baptized also receive the Holy Spirit. But this considerable logical difficulty in Stephen's view is not a sufficient reason to dispute it as a fact. In the light of the theology of that time, this view is not as inconceivable as it may appear at first sight, and this on two scores. Firstly, Tertullian (De bapt. 6-8) already conceived the effect of baptism and distinguished it from the effect of the post-baptismal imposition of hands in such a way that it was only the imposition of hands that bestowed the Holy Spirit. Baptism itself, however, has other effects which are all resumed in the *remissio peccatorum* considered as the mere preparation of man for the possession of the Spirit.[36] Stephen was able to follow this line, by ascribing even to the baptism by heretics the effects of baptism understood in this very restricted sense, while denying them the possession of the Spirit and, therefore, the efficacy of their post-baptismal imposition of hands. Moreover, Tertullian already teased out the question of the effectiveness of the baptism of a person who is unrepentant. He tried to answer this question by supposing that the actual administration was effective, but that the effect was immediately lost again (De paen. 6). If Stephen had thought of this case in a similar way he could hold that the baptism by heretics with the imposition of hands was a means of grace, while still allowing the heretics to come to the Church so that they could there receive the Spirit anew by the imposition of hands. If it was not only the interpretation of his adversaries but the actual opinion of Stephen himself that the heretics' imposition of hands was absolutely ineffective in the communication of the Spirit, then the first explanation of his position has the better chance of corresponding to his true opinion. The latter, however, was certainly not very consciously elaborated. In our present context, all that need be said is that Stephen holds the heretics' imposition of hands, as opposed to their baptism, as so absolutely ineffective, that in fact he considers it [165] to be invalid.[37] Thus the following interpretation of his teaching at least becomes probable for his adversaries and for the author of De rebaptismate: the imposition of hands with which, according to Stephen, heretics are received is the imposition of hands of Confirmation. In other words, if one considers an earlier imposition of hands ineffective and invalid, then one is compelled to think that the imposition of hands which is presently being administered is specifically identical with that of the heretics, the validity and effectiveness of which is being contested. Otherwise the imposition of hands of Confirmation would remain denied even to reconciled heretics.

[35] In his opinion heretics receive the Spirit only through the penitential imposition of hands.
[36] This idea of Tertullian is discernible, for example, in Cyprian too in this baptismal controversy, when he says, or his opponents present him implicitly as saying, that in baptism, as distinct from the imposition of hands, theme is a forgiveness of sins, a sanctification and a spiritual renewal, by which a man is *ad accipiendum spiritum idoneus factus* (Epist. 74,5; cf. also Epist. 74,7), that is, through the following imposition of hands.
[37] Even in the case of baptism he does not distinguish between an effective and a merely valid administration, but considers it to be effective because it is valid.

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It also has to be admitted that in Stephen's private theology there are very considerable obscurities and even no less important contradictions, of which his opponents take full advantage in their theological arguments. Nevertheless, the content of this theology did not enter into his actual decision on the question which we are discussing. But this does not mean that the considerations of his opponents were always correct, since they were hardly able to make the distinction between a valid and a fruitful administration of the sacraments. As far as Stephen is concerned this fact shows only more. Clearly that this theological position cannot have been at the origin of the practice which he is defending, but is rather an unfortunate theory invented subsequently to justify an already existing practice. Indeed had it evolved from this theory it would not have succeeded, since without the pre-existing practice it would have been shown to be logically impracticable. This is clear in Cyprian and Firmilian. In other words, by logic alone it would be obvious that one cannot recognize that heretics have the one rite of initiation which is actually effective, while at the same time withholding the same recognition for the other rite of initiation. However, the practice could not have emanated from such a consideration, and heretics would even have had to be received without imposition of hands if this were in fact considered Confirmation. This last observation obliges us not to explain the practice in the same way that Stephen tried to do. Thus, despite the obscure theory of Cyprian's contemporaries, we maintain our own interpretation: the imposition of hands for heretics is the general imposition of hands for penitents. This was used first in the case of apostates who were baptized as Catholics and then, without much theological reflection, was extended to the reconciliation of those who had become Christians outside the Church.

The Church maintained this practice universally and without its [166] being questioned. Thus the consequences which ensued for the validity of the sacraments administered by heretics are legitimate and correct, even though both the first attempt at a theological justification of this practice and its implications were problematical. This penitential imposition of hands is a 'substitute' for baptism, that is, for Christian initiation as a whole, in so far as it restores the original effects of this initiation. Thus it can be described without hesitation as *ad accipiendum Spiritum Sanctum* and is in no way the repetition of just the last part of Christian initiation, that is, Confirmation. Originally, this initiation was practically always considered 'baptism' as a whole, and this was clearly unrepeatable.

It is, however, possible to discern in the middle of the third century the bases of a theological development which will bring about an association between Confirmation and the imposition of hands for heretics. The effects of these will become significant only later. They are of no concern for our present purpose.

Although these inquiries into the theological obscurities of the early Church may appear to be entirely negative, one positive result which they produce needs to be stressed. The fact that at this time the penitential liturgy had developed to such an extent that there was a danger of going beyond the evident ritual parallel and identifying it with a part of the sacramental rite of initiation shows that there must have been a strong awareness of the sacramental character of penance. If the theology at that time considered baptism as a whole to be a sacrament, then this must also have applied to penance and its imposition of hands.[38]

D) THE MEANING OF THE IMPOSITION OF HANDS

We must now turn to the second question mentioned above. If the imposition of hands used at the reconciliation of heretics and penitents is not identifiable with a (first or repeated) rite

[38] Obviously this is not to deny that in the third century there was simultaneously a trend of thought which, taken on its own, deviated from a sacramental view of the institution of penance.

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belonging to Christian initiation, what meaning does it have and why precisely is it used in reconciliation? The first point which must be made in answer to this question is that reconciliation concerns the restoration of those lost interior gifts of grace which the Christian originally received in baptism (considered as a whole). This restoration is fittingly expressed through the imposition of hands, since this gesture always expresses the communication of that which the person imposing the hands possesses, and because the first bestowal of these [167] gifts was symbolized in this way. Now there were several different kinds of imposition of hands. Is, therefore, the imposition of hands in penance to be understood as a parallel to (but not as a repetition of) the imposition of hands in Confirmation, because it bestows the Spirit, or is it to be construed as one (or as the last) imposition of hands of those blessings of penitents which without any doubt at a later date often occurred during the time of penance?

In the latter case it would appear to be very similar to those impositions of hands of exorcism which already in Cyprian's day were applied to catechumens. The first hypothesis seems 'the more likely. Already in the Didascalia Apostolorum the imposition of hands of reconciliation is presented as a gesture signifying a communication of the Spirit, and thus it is seen in parallel to the bestowal of the Spirit at Confirmation. Even if Cyprian's erroneous interpretation of Stephen's view is rejected, namely, that the latter understands the imposition of hands for heretics simply as Confirmation, this interpretation is hardly conceivable if the imposition of hands in penance were not understood as being similar to Confirmation, that is, as a rite *ad accipiendum Spiritum Sanctum*. Later in the West and even more so in the East there was a strong tendency towards the identification of the imposition of hands for heretics, and partially even that of penitents, with Confirmation. After the Schism this identification became actual and clear for the Greek Church. This development is all the more easily comprehensible if, from the beginning, there was an affinity between both rites, that is, if already originally the imposition of hands of penance was modelled on that of Confirmation.

Nevertheless the second hypothesis mentioned above is not entirely unlikely. At least it must have had some influence on the elaboration of the imposition of hands of penance. The exercises undertaken during the time of penance (fasts, prostrations, exhortations) also show many similarities with elements of the catechumenate. Thus it is not unlikely that a considerable amount of this particular time of preparation served as a model for the organization of the time of penance. At the beginning of the third century, at least in the church order of Hippolytus (Dix, pp. 30-2) frequent impositions of hands used as exorcism for catechumens are already an established part of the catechumenate. In Cyprian such an exorcism is found at least immediately before baptism (Sent. episc. 1.8.37) and [168] similar impositions of hands seem to be attested by him elsewhere (Ad Demetr. 15; Tertullian, Apol. 23). Later in Africa sinners were frequently blessed during the time of penance by impositions of hands (Augustine, Sermo 232,8).[39] Such blessings must be understood as parallel to the repeated impositions of hands during the catechumenate, as indeed Augustine mentions.[40] Thus it is not completely unlikely that the imposition of hands at penance, as we find it in Cyprian and his contemporaries as the conclusion of the time of penance, is either one or perhaps even the last imposition of hands which was considered analogous to the exorcism of the catechumenate. An observation from the viewpoint of the history of the liturgy is relevant here. It is self-evident for Cyprian that in the imposition of hands at penance, given that the other *acta paenitentia* have been carried out, this can be performed by the presbyter, while the imposition of hands by a deacon counts in a case of necessity (Epist. 18,1). In the more 'normal' imposition of hands by the bishop the clergy also takes part (Epist. 17,2). On the other hand, it appears that at this time, at least in the West, Confirmation

[39] Cf. J. A. Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten* (Innsbruck 1932), pp. 12 f., 34 f., 298 ff.
[40] Augustinus, De peccat.mer. et rem. 2,26; De fide et oper. 9; Sermo 227.

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was reserved absolutely to the bishop, so that it happened that a person could be baptized and die without Confirmation or a person could be baptized by a presbyter and finally confirmed by a bishop.[41] This striking difference seems to indicate that the imposition of hands at penance was seen rather as an exorcism than as a strict parallel to the imposition of hands of Confirmation, reserved exclusively to the bishop, which concluded initiation. An imposition of hands which, in certain circumstances, could be performed even by a deacon must have been considered at that time to have quite a different character from Confirmation, which was so exclusively reserved to the bishop and which was still administered by him even when a priest performed the baptism. The imposition of hands at penance is described as being performed *in paenitentiam*; whereas the exorcism before baptism is aimed at a 'purification' (cf. Hippolytus, Par; Dix, p. 31) which should give the bishop the assurance that the candidate is now truly 'pure'. Even on this score there is an inner connection between both rites. Augustine explains later that the imposition of hands is repeatable since it is nothing more than a prayer over a man. In this context he must have been thinking of the imposition of hands more as an exorcism applied to catechumens and penitents in the time of penance. Since, however, he could hardly have derived this principle [169] from the once-and-for-all imposition of Confirmation and the definitive reconciliation of penitents (De bapt. III 16,21) he must also have seen the concluding imposition of hands for penitents rather in the same category as the other impositions of hands during the time of penance. In any case the use of the imposition of hands for catechumens and sinners during the time of penance shows that already in Cyprian's day it was not necessary to relate the imposition of hands of penitential reconciliation only to Confirmation, but that this gesture was fairly indeterminate, enjoying fluidity and an applicability beyond the communication of the Spirit in Confirmation and Ordination. Its use for penitents and heretics, therefore, does not have to be seen necessarily in the light of Confirmation, although this is not to deny that already in the third century there exist the foundations of the later development.

As will be made clearer below, already at this time personal subjective penance is stressed in a way which does not make particularly easy its connection with the Church's objective activity in the reconciliation of man with God. Now would such an insistence on the personal-subjective performance in penance have been at all possible if the reconciling imposition of hands had been seen in a line with the bestowal of the Spirit in Christian initiation? Or is this phenomenon not easier to understand when the imposition of hands of penance is taken rather as one of the many impositions of hands in the sense of exorcisms or blessings as they also occur before baptism and which, despite the importance accorded to them, leave the decisive role to the catechumens' subjective conversion? This also, explains more satisfactorily why in the case of a hasty granting of *communicatio* by priests in the absence of their bishop, a practice which Cyprian condemns (Epist. 15,1; 17,2), the imposition of hands was omitted. Since in a case of necessity this imposition of hands can be performed even by a priest and a deacon (Epist. 18,1: 19,2) it is difficult to explain why it was omitted if it was considered to be the specific formal rite of reconciliation.[42] This fact is

[41] Cf. Cyprian, Epist. 73,9; De rebaptismate 4; Council of Elvira, can. 38 and 77; DS 120 and 121; Hippolytus, Paradosis (Dix, p. 38).

[42] In Epist. 16,2 and likewise in Sent.episc. 8 and 22 there is indeed mention of a *per manus impositionem . . . ius communicationis accipere*. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether Cyprian wishes to state here that the imposition of hands as such designates the formal act of absolution. In De lapsis 16 the *manus sacerdotis*, like the *sacrificium*, is a means for the *pugare conscientiam*. Would the imposition of hands be designated by the *terminus technicus manus impositio in paenitentiam* (Epist. 15,1; 18,1; 19,2; 20,3; 71.1.2.3; Sent.episc. 8), if this were understood as the formal gesture of reconciliation? This does not appear as obvious as it is often thought. Moreover, full justice is not rendered to the *per* if the imposition of hands is viewed as a part of the whole rite of exhomologesis, that is, as an indispensable and sufficient condition of the access which itself occurs subsequently *via facti* without further formalities.

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more easily understood if the imposition of hands stands in the last place, along with the exhomologesis, as one act of penance beside others. Just as the *lapsi* were dispensed from the *agere paenitentiam* by these laxists, so they were dispensed from the exorcism which is the priest's support of the exhomologesis. In other words, they were dispensed from the Imposition of hands which is conceived more as a part of the [170] humiliating penance than as the formal act of reconciliation. The latter was seen, therefore, rather in the actual granting of communion, albeit expressed in words, and in the participation in the Eucharist.[43] This itself is supported by the symbol of the imposition of hands as *prius* before the *venire ad communicationem* (Epist. 17,2).

A radical solution to our question has been attempted by contesting its presuppositions, namely, that at that time in the West the imposition of hands was the decisive rite of Confirmation.[44] On the assumption that here at that time the anointing was the actual rite of Confirmation a great deal becomes clear. The two questions with which we began this essay are easily answered. The imposition of hands for heretics and indeed for usual penitents does not move at all in the 'dangerous' proximity to actual Confirmation, and the meaning of the imposition of hands in penance can be sought with impunity in another direction without so much as a glance at Confirmation. Nevertheless, such a solution for Africa of the third century and later is impracticable. At this time the episcopal imposition of hands and it alone is the actual rite of Confirmation and not the anointing. The attempt of Saint-Palais d'Aussac to demonstrate the opposite thesis cannot be recognized as convincing.[45]

A perfectly clear and unified explanation of the imposition of hands in the reconciliation of penitents and heretics in Cyprian's day on the basis of the available material is not possible today, and it probably did not exist even in the third century. This imposition of hands can indeed be sufficiently distinguished from Confirmation in so far as it cannot be intended as a repetition of Confirmation. But its positive meaning, that is, whether it was considered either as a gesture for the (re-)bestowal of the Spirit or as prayer in the sense of an exorcism, or whether at that time these two functions were not so clearly distinguished – all this cannot be clarified with certainty. It would appear that such a differentiation was unknown at that time. This observation tends to support the argument for the apostolic origin of the imposition of hands in penance. If it were a later, entirely new liturgical creation, and indeed by reflected, conscious analogy with a certain other imposition of hands, then its meaning would have been known as being precisely different from that of other, similar gestures. If, however, the rite of reconciliation is just as old and original as the other impositions of hands, then it is more easily explained that both for us and for the time which we have [171] been studying there appear analogies with all these other impositions of hands. Thus our final word on this

[43] In Dionysius of Alexandria, also about the middle of the third century, reconciliation was not necessarily connected with the imposition of hands. It could also come about *via facti* through simple access to the eucharistic community (Eus.Hist. Eccl. VI 42,5.6; 44,2-6). Cf. B. Poschmann, pp. 275-9.

[44] It is in this direction that Saint-Palais d'Aussac looks for a solution to the problem. We cannot here enter into an actual critical appraisal of his attempt, since we must confine our attention to Cyprian's time. Saint-Palais, however, includes the whole of the Latin Patristic literature in his research. What is more, such a discussion belongs necessarily to the study of Confirmation in the early Church from the viewpoint of the history of dogma, and thus goes beyond the bounds of a work on the history of penance. This is the decisive point: in Africa during the third century the actual rite of Confirmation is the episcopal imposition of hands and not an anointing. The literature which Saint-Palais d'Aussac did or could not use is sufficient evidence for this: H. Elfers, *Die Kirchenordnung Hippolyts von Rom* (Paderborn 1938), pp. 101-27, according to which even in Augustine's day the imposition of hands is still clearly the actual rite of Confirmation; H. Elfers, 'Gehört die Salbung mit Chrisma im ältesten abendländischen Initiationsritus zur Taufe oder zur Firmung?' in: ThG1 34 (1942), pp. 334-41; E. Dekkers, *Tertullianus en de geschiednis den liturgie* (Brussels/Amsterdam 1947), pp. 197-204. Cf. also W. Roetzer, *Des heilgen Augustinus Schriften als liturgie-geschichtliche Quelle* (Munich 1930), p. 171 ff.

[45] F. Saint-Palais d'Aussac, *La réconciliation des hérétiques dans l'Eglise latine* (Paris 1943).

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subject should be that the dilemma should not be posed in such a way that this imposition of hands of penance should be definitely, clearly and solely explained by one or other of the similar rites.

II. THE THEOLOGY OF PENANCE

1. The Sins of Daily Life and Their Private Remission

As much as Cyprian values the holiness, splendour and power of the man who, being newly born in baptism, is able to do everything through God's gratuitous and immense grace (Ad Donat. 4 f. 14 f.), he still knows that the sanctified Christian continually falls into daily faults: *cotidie deesse non potest quod peccetur in conspectu Dei* (De op. et eleem. 18); *sine aliquo conscientiae vulnere esse non possumus* (ibid., 3). This is because we have to fight with the devil, the flesh and the world (De mort. 4-5).[46] According to Cyprian the 'filth of daily sins' must be continually removed, even though he was reasonably clear that the *sanctjficatio et vivificatio* of the baptismal grace (which obviously must be protected) is not lost through such sins (De dom. or. 12). If he states *non deesse sanatis* (through baptism) *quaedam postmodum vulnera* (De op. et eleem. 3), this expresses the idea that even the justified person still sins, just as, by sinning, he does not cease to be a person who is sanctified in baptism. Already here in the struggle against sin in general[47] there is a clear distinction between the post-baptismal remission of sins and the *remissa peccatorum* in baptism. Sins committed before baptism are remitted *Christi sanguine et sanctificatione*, *semel in baptismo*, whereas sins committed after baptism find forgiveness through *assidua et iugis operatio*[48] of man himself (De op. et eleem. 2), therefore by prayer, fasting, almsgiving, etc. (ibid., 5.18, etc.). The *remissa peccatorum* is granted only once in baptism[49] (De op. et eleem. 2). Any sins

[46] Further evidence in Cyprian: *cottidie delinquimus* (De dom.or. 12); *instraitur et docetur peccare se cottidie, dam cottidie pro peccatis iubetur orane* (De dom.or. 22); cf. also Test. III 54.

[47] In his general exhortation on the subject of the remission of sins, De op. et eleem., Cyprian does not understand sin as serious in today's sense.

[48] The *operatio*, that is, the simple good 'work' as opposed to the 'words' of prayer, is, strictly speaking, a *terminus technicus* in Tertullian for fasting which is accompanied and supported by prayer. Cf. Tertullian, De or. 18; De ieiunio 4.8.9.13; on this see J. Schümmer, *Die altchristliche Fastenpraxis* (Münster 1933), pp. 78, 174, 224 n.82, 225. By *operatio* (*opera*, *operari*) Cyprian appears to understand principally almsgiving. Cf. De or. 32: fasting and almsgiving; De lapsis 35: *largiter fiat operatio* and the other passages (CSL 3,3; 440-1). Shortly after Cyprian the Church organized, on a great scale as it were, private penance for daily sins by means of fasting and prayer: the forty days' period of fasting. Originally, this was not an actual preparation for Easter and thus ought not to be confused with the more ancient Passover fast, even if it was placed in the period before Easter and before the actual Passover fast. With the fourth century the observation of Quadragesima becomes established as a penitential fast for all Christians. Thus when later actual church penance draws on this practice, this is fully in keeping with the earlier sense of this penitential fast for all Christians. Cf. Schümmer, op. cit., pp. 201-3. Obviously already in the second and third centuries theme were individual ecclesiastical fast days, more or less obligatory, which represented the early Church's 'confessions of devotion'. It was in this way that the Church took care of the *iugis et assidua operatio* of the private penance for the daily sins of Christians. Such occasions would be the partial fasts of the stations, the Friday fasts, fasting on Saturday.

[49] The *semel* (De op. et eleem. 2) can be referred not only to the *in baptismo* but must also apply to the *remissa peccatorum*, In other words it is intended as a fundamental contrast to *iugis operatio* and, therefore, should be rendered by 'only once'. Now stress on the once-and-for-all character of the actual baptismal rite would be out of place in this context. What is meaningful here, however, is the insistence that there is only one, single *remissa*, that is, a once and for all, gratuitous and complete forgiveness of sins, granted independently of personal penance. After this there is only a personal expiation of sins by means of the *iugis operatio*. This is clear from the fact that in the same context the necessity of a personal penance for sins committed after baptism is called for and inculcated and the scriptural texts cited (Prov. 16:6 = 15:27; Sir. 3:30) are referred to this penance and not to baptism.

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committed after baptism must be expiated by the sinner himself, so that the ensuing forgiveness, by reason of the sinner's own *operatio*, is not a *remissa* in Cyprian's sense. He is perfectly consistent in the terminology which he uses to describe this distinction between a purely [172] gratuitous forgiveness of the guilt of sins in baptism and the remission of serious and daily sins committed after baptism.[50] This is already abundantly clear from the way in which the notion of *remissa*(*-io*) *peccatorum*, *remittere* is reserved for baptism.[51] The exceptions to this restricted usage are only apparent.[52] The distinction between the forgiveness of sins in baptism and the remission of sins committed after baptism which Cyprian elaborates especially for serious sins also applies, therefore, to other sins committed after baptism.[53] All of these sins must be remitted through the sinner's own penance, since they are not forgiven simply by grace in view of Christ. This general penitential teaching of

[50] As opposed to J. Grotz, who (p. 102 ff.) says that Cyprian designates the forgiveness of sins both in baptism and in penance as *remissio*. (For more details on the terminology involved see n.52.)

[51] The relevant text is in A. d'Alès, *L'édit de Calliste* (Paris 1914), pp. 233-4. *Remissa*(*-io*) is applied to baptism about thirty times.

[52] Epist. 59,16 (*remitto omnia*) does not belong to our present discussion. It is here a question of the 'permission' of the access of all men to church penance and of the fixing and curtailing of the periods of penance. It is, therefore, not a question of the 'remission' of sins as such. The *delictis remittendis* (ibid.) is, accordingly, to be understood in the same context. In De lapsis 18 a *remissio peccatorum* with *praepopera festinatio*, that is, without the demand for and the observance of a long period of penance on the sinner's part, is rejected twice. Thus it is doubtful whether the remission of sins which Cyprian promises to those who perform this penance can still be styled *remissa*. The text itself does not provide an answer to this question; and in the light of Cyprian's usual terminology it should be answered in the negative. The same applies to Epist. 27,3, where Cyprian says that an imprudent martyr is demanding for his clients a *pacem dari et peccata dimitti*, and this precisely without their having to do church penance. Here too it is doubtful whether the granting of the *pax* after a full church penance would be described as a *remissa*, In this case, the question is to be answered in the negative not only from Cyprian's general terminology but also by a consideration of the context of the text itself. In fact in the martyrs' letters of freedom all that is found is the request for the *pacem dare*; this is always demanded in the *libelli* (Epist. 19,2; 22,2; 23; 26; 27,3; 35). If Cyprian, interpreting this, inserts a *peccata dimitti*, this is only to emphasize the abuse of such a *libelli pacis*. For such a request refers to a *peccata dimitti* which is possible only in baptism. It includes necessarily a remission of sins without penance, as this occurs in baptism. Thus Cyprian implies that the remission of sins which he still considers possible is not a simple *dimitti*, is not a *remissa*. That is why he opposes the request of the martyr Paul to baptism. Only as a request for a *remissa* could it be said logically to occur in *Pauli nomine*, because it does not happen in the name of Christ, who achieves a full remissa only in baptism. It is obvious that such a *remissa* does not occur either by the sinner's personal penance. Thus the contrast with baptism is not only in the sense underlined by P. Galtier, *L'église et la remission des péchés aux premiers siècles* (Paris 1932), p. 38 f. In Epist. 21,3 theme is a mention of a *remittere peccatum* through the martyrs. Here, however, it is a question of their intercession in the next life, that is, at the last judgement (De lapsis 17). Thus this passage is not relevant to the question of a *remittere* in this life. The only text remaining then is De lapsis 29: *satisfactio et remissio facta per sacerdotes*. It will be shown later that the *per sacerdotes Dei* refers also to *satisfactio*. Thus this passage concerns only a post-baptismal *remissio* which occurs essentially on the basis of the *satisfactio*. With this clear stress that here we have a restricted meaning of a term which is generally used in another sense, Cyprian was able to use the notion of *remissio* once without being afraid of causing a misunderstanding about the specific and strict sense of this term. J. Grotz does not enter into considerations of this kind. For example (p. 106 if.) he does not see any essential difference between the forgiveness of sins in baptism and that of church penance. On this cf. S. Hübner, pp. 201-5.

[53] If it is a fact that Cyprian uses and can only use the notion of *remissa* (*-io*; *remittere*) in the sense of the actual forgiveness of sins only in the case of baptism, then this negative conclusion also has a positive aspect. Cyprian certainly recognizes a forgiveness of sins committed after baptism. If this forgiveness in his view is not a *remissa* then it must be distinguished from the *remissa* only in the way that Cyprian himself repeatedly stresses: the post-baptismal forgiveness is granted only to the *assidua et iugis operatio* (De op. et eleem. 2), the *longa et continua satisfactio* (Epist. 43,2). This is what makes it different from the forgiveness of sins in baptism. Thus if Cyprian (Firmilian) refuses to admit that a bishop can grant a *remissio* (*remittere*) of sins committed after baptism (Epist. 75,4; De lapsis 17), what is meant and rejected is the *remissa* without a *longa continua satisfactio*.

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Cyprian on the necessary performance of penance by the sinner himself for sins committed after baptism already provides the basis for his idea of the remission of those sins which, as opposed to the sins of every day, entail the loss of the grace of baptism. The general difference between the pardon of sins in and after baptism is not obliterated by the fact that a *satisfactio* through *paenitentia* is necessary to obtain *venia* even for the catechumens (Ad. Demetr. 25). That the difference still maintains here is evident from the expectation of salvation *sub ipso licet exitu*, *sub ipsa morte* on Cyprian's part. This expectation does not apply to post-baptismal penance even on the death-bed (Epist. 55,23).[54] At the same time, it is not as obvious as Poschmann[55] thinks that the penance prescribed before baptism refers merely to the renunciation of previous sins and to the intention to lead a Christian life, considered as a precondition for baptism. This is not stated explicitly in the text, and it harmonizes neither with the notion of *satisfacere* nor with the theology of Tertullian, whom Cyprian must be considered to follow until the contrary is proven. All that can be said is that here is an obscure point in Cyprian which should not be exploited in favour of unwarranted harmonizations. On the one hand, the pure *remissa* that is baptism does indeed presuppose a real penance which is considered as a satisfaction. On the other hand, after baptism a remission of sins is possible only through penance which, as making satisfaction, expiates sins because there is no longer a simple *remissio*. Thus this notion of the post-baptismal forgiveness of sins acquires a certain semi-pelagian nuance,[56] despite the fact that it is based on scriptural expressions concerning the remission of sins through good works. This impression is not cancelled out by the fact that the forgiveness, despite the *satisfactio*, is seen as a [173] free act (*venia*) of the Lord acting as judge, *qui peccata nostra portavit . . . quem Deus tradidit pro peccatis nostris* (De lapsis 17). The fact that the *satisfactio* is itself the work of divine grace remains totally unexpressed and in the background, which explains why Cyprian is very anxious about the adequacy of this *satisfactio* in individual cases.

2. The Nature of Serious Sin

Apart from the everyday faults of those who have been justified, there are also, according to Cyprian, sins which in today's terminology have to be styled 'serious'. Although the terminology in Cyprian is not so elaborate, the fact is clear. Cyprian does not call everyday sins *crimen*, but applies this term (along with others) to 'serious' or 'mortal sins'. Certainly in his terminology even daily sins are *peccata* (De dom. or. 22; Test. III *54*) and *delicta* (De op. et eleem. 2). The unusual expression *mortale crimen* is, nevertheless, obviously not yet an actual *terminus technicus* for mortal sins, just as in Cyprian there is still wanting an established special expression for daily sins. The expression *peccata* (*delicta*) *minora* is also used in comparison with the more serious sins of a kind which, as the object of church

[54] Neither does Cyprian grant reconciliation on the death-bed to everyone who asks for it; cf. Epist. 30,8 and Epist. 18,1.
[55] Cf. ThRv 32 (1933), pp. 259-67 (esp. 262).
[56] H. Koch, *Cyprianische Untersuchungen* (Bonn 1926), p. 275, sees in the principle that sin is remitted only when the punishment incurred has been fully carried out an influence of Stoicism on Cyprian. This is probably not totally unjustified, since it is a Stoic notion that punishment should not be remitted but carried out (cf. the evidence in H. Koch, p. 274). Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that in the case of a forgiveness of the *aeterna supplicia* (De lapsis 7) by God theme can be no question of a full performance of penance. Moreover, Cyprian speaks here about God's 'mercy' as a necessary condition of the *venia*, which directly contradicts the Stoic principle *neminem misericordem esse nisi stultum et levem* (Cicero, Pro Mumena 29,61). Nevertheless, it is not clear in the Bishop of Carthage that Christian penance itself, which expiates the punishments of sin, is actually a grace of God, and this in the sense that a simple 'remission' of 'punishment' (in the sense of a mere cancellation) would be no greater grace and, consequently, no more complete a *venia*.

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penance, obviously have considerable gravity (Epist, 16,2; 17,2). At the same time, the image of sin as a 'wound' is used for daily sins (De op. et eleem. 3), as well as for the serious sins which are subject to church penance (Epist. 30,3). The same applies to a purely relative category of expressions such as *graviora peccata* (Epist. 64,5). The notion of *peccatum in Deum* (an inheritance from Tertullian) does not concern the distinction which interests us at present and in itself remains vague, since it is used both for sins committed before baptism (Epist. 64,5) and, in practice, for all the faults which later jeopardize salvation in any way at all.[57] This expression, therefore, does not suppose any real counterpart, although Cyprian can explain on one occasion that even such sins *quae non in Deum committuntur* (Epist. 17,2)[58] have to be submitted to church penance. He does this probably to stress the seriousness of the apostates' sin.

Thus the terminology is very unclear, but in reality the distinction is obviously made by Cyprian. While daily sins do not destroy grace, [174] Cyprian recognizes alongside these faults on account of which God *offensus sedem, quam inhabitat, derelinquat* (De hab. virg. 2). Sinners are such, *de quorum pectoribus excesserit Spiritus Sanctus* (Epist. 66,2). The *lapsi* are dead (Epist. 15,2; 21,2; 33,1; De lapsis 8), they have lost their wedding-garment, they are naked and mortally wounded (Epist. 30,7; De lapsis 30.55), and they carry their own corpse around with them (De lapsis 30). Also the baptized person loses grace when he does not preserve his innocence (Test. III 26). This certainly means interior grace, since according to Epist. 70,2 the baptized person has *in se gratiam Christi* and according to Epist. 64,3 the baptismal grace is the Holy Spirit. But the sinner loses 'the grace of the life-dispensing bath' (De lapsis 24) and even children who were involved in the fall of their parents lose what they had received immediately after their birth (De lapsis 9). Cyprian's expression *mortale crimen* (De bono pat. 14), therefore, must be understood not only as 'sin which brings about the death of hell' but as 'sin which causes the death of the inner life of grace in the Holy Spirit'. Alongside this consideration of sin from the viewpoint of grace there are found in Cyprian obviously more ancient and already traditional viewpoints, that is, the moral and the eschatological, for determining the nature of sin. It is *offensa . . . indignantis Domini* (De lapsis 16.19), an *abicere legem Dei* (De lapsis 21) by which man exposes himself to the present and future judgement of God and to eternal punishment (De lapsis 7,23-6). From both of the last-mentioned viewpoints sin must almost inevitably appear above all as the object of

[57] Also the misuse of temporal goods (De hab. virg. 11), deceit and fornication are sins against God (Epist. 55,27). *Moechia* is a more serious sin than that of the *libellaticus* (Epist. 55,26). Also insubordination with regard to the authority of the Church is apparently considered by Cyprian a sin against God, as his hesitation concerning the forgiveness of this sin shows (Epist. 66,9). The author of De aleatoribus (*c.* A.D. 300) also considers fornication a *delictum in Deum* (De aleator. 10). In practice it is not possible to distinguish between sins against God and other faults, nor is this seriously envisaged. What is stressed is the seriousness of the sin and not how it differs essentially from other sins.

[58] It is not legitimate to deduce from this distinction that there is an objective difference in the penitential process, as if Cyprian would have known that he could forgive authoritatively sins *non in Deum* differently from offences *in Deum* (contrary to B. Poschmann, p. 422). If the penitential process was completely identical and even the *iustum tempus* of penance was prescribed for the *delicta quae non in Deum committuntur*, if included among the sins remitted in this way there is, for example, *moechia*, which elsewhere is characterized as *in Deum* and is comparatively more serious than the sins of certain *lapsi*, then it can hardly be supposed that Cyprian was convinced that he remitted these sins 'of his own authority'. Epist. 17,2 (see also Epist. 59,1) describes some offences as *non in Deum* only by comparison with other sins, in the terms of an *argumentum ad hominem*. This is to show that the *lapsi*, more than any others, must do church penance. This argument is valid, even without the distinction in question (cf. Epist. 16,2). De lapsis 17 speaks about *peccata in Deum commissa* only to show that God alone can forgive them because (not: in so far as) they have been committed 'against God'. Both the notion and the use to which it is put in the argument preserve their meaning, even if there are no other sins besides those committed *in Deum*. What is more, there is no mention here either of another means of forgiveness nor of sins *non in Deum*.

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a judgement. This is important because in his theology of the forgiveness of sins Cyprian pays only scant attention to this interior nature of sin, that is, in so far as it concerns grace. Although he knows well that the reconciled sinner receives back the Holy Spirit (Epist. 57,4),[59] he does not exploit any further the theology of the nature of sin as a loss of grace in relation to the forgiveness of sins in the Church Rather, he considers sin almost exclusively from the moral and eschatological viewpoints. Through his fault the sinner" has become God's enemy and must expect a judgement; accordingly, the remission of sin is more of a reconciliation with God and an assurance that one will be able to withstand the judgement and not incur eternal punishment.[60]

Nevertheless, Cyprian does still consider serious sin from an ecclesial viewpoint. Sin 'separates' man from the fellowship of the [175] Church, from peace with the Church and from the central mystery of the Christian life, the Eucharist. In the case of apostasy from the faith, which in Cyprian's theology and polemic (because of the circumstances of his day) receives special prominence, these effects are obvious. These sins, however, separate the sinner from the Church not only in so far as they are an explicit denial of faith and of the gospel but also because they entail the loss of baptismal grace. And this is a characteristic of all serious sins. Only on this presupposition is it understandable that even the reconciliation of those guilty of sins of impurity is considered an *accepta communicatione ad ecclesiam admitti* (Epist. 4,4). The same is said of the other *minora delicta/peccata* which are obviously not sins against faith (Epist. 16,2; 17,2).[61] Naturally, although those guilty of such sins, unless through their own unrepentance they have broken off all connection with the Church, still have a relationship with it, that is, they have not simply 'left' the Church (Epist. 57,1.3; 65,5), they are, nevertheless, in a true sense separated from it as a community of grace. In Cyprian there are no precise statements about the exact limits and the actual relationship of a sinner's belonging (at *limen Ecclesiae*: Epist. 57,3; 30,6) and not belonging to the church community. Nevertheless, not belonging to the community should not be understood merely as the consequence of excommunication by the bishop,[62] as it was later expressed at the beginning of the penitential process. According to Cyprian this is evident from the automatic and immediate exclusion from the Eucharist, which follows from even secret sins (De lapsis 15.25 f; Epist. 16,2; cf. also Epist. 75,21).[63] There are no further considerations of the question why according to Cyprian every serious sin entails the loss of grace in some sense.

[59] If penance brings about a return to 'life', then this must certainly be understood from the point of view of grace and not only from the moral and eschatological viewpoints (Epist. 55,22). The return to life is seen as analogous to the liberation from death in baptism.

[60] *Venia*, with the sense of 'remission', is a very frequent expression in Cyprian. It means essentially 'remission of punishment', as Seneca had already defined it: *venia est poenae meritae remissio* (De clem. II 7,1). Hosius (Teubner 1914), p. 250.

[61] Contrary to J. Grotz, p. 106 f. There the 'exhomologesis' is only an act by which the Church pronounces its sacramental word of forgiveness, through which God forgives all guilt. The exhomologesis does not, however, have the mole of readmitting the sinner to the community of the Church.

[62] This would be logically impossible for Cyprian, since he rejects the notion of a baptism which is valid but fruitless from the point of view of grace.

[63] It could be said in the first place that Cyprian condemns the reception of the Eucharist after an unrepented sin as sacrilegious. Nevertheless, in the whole of his polemic against the presumption of the *lapsi* he presupposes as the only obvious 'sorrow' that which as church penance is finally confirmed by the *pax* and *communicatio*. Thus the sin which is not yet forgiven by the Church excludes from the Eucharist. Without *pax* with the Church, a person is, according to 1 Cor. 11:27, *eo ipso* unworthy of the Eucharist. This is Cyprian's basic and enduring idea. It applies explicitly also to sins which remain secret. This exclusion must derive, therefore, not from an official excommunication (*ferendae sententiae*) but only from the sin itself. It would be purely arbitrary to postulate here as it were the implicit remission of a general merely church excommunication *latae sententiae*. For Cyprian it is the law *iuris divini* that normally only the sinner who has been absolved by the Church should approach the Eucharist.

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But it is easy to see the reason for this from his theology as a whole. The sinner received the Holy Spirit in baptism. Indeed it is the specific theme of the controversy with the heretics that the baptism which bestows the Spirit is valid. By sinning the Christian has lost this Spirit. Now the Church is the only place where this Spirit can be received, since in baptizing it is the mother of the divine life in the faithful. This too is a fundamental principle in the controversy with the heretics. Thus it is self-evident for Cyprian that an offense against the Spirit of the Church is also directed against the Church itself and that this means a separation both from the Spirit and from the Church. For the same reason reconciliation with the Church and [176] reception of the Spirit belong together (Epist. 57,4). Following the view of Hermas, Callistus and the author of the Didascalia Apostolorum the bishop of Carthage also knows that in the Church there is cockle along with wheat (Epist. 54,3-4; 55,25). It would be presumptuous to wish to distinguish the one from the other neatly at the present time. And the Lord's judgement will concern those *quos in ea* (*Ecclesia*) *intus invenerit* (Epist. 55,29). This means, however, that in the Church there are people of different moral standings. But this does not lead Cyprian to overlook the fact that sin does entail a change of relationship between the Church and the baptized. As is clear from the controversy with the heretics, his position forced him to understand the 'cockle' in the Church to be those who belonged to it purely formally. This view was not totally superseded later, even by Augustine.

Now which faults have these moral, theological and ecclesial effects of serious sin? In the first place, at least theoretically, the sins of Paul's catalogues of vices which exclude people from the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19 ff.; 1 Cor. 6:9) are offences *quae mortem pariant* (Test. III 64 f.; Epist. 59,4). Naturally one cannot expect here a more precise consideration of the basic criterion by which these faults are distinguished from daily sins. Cyprian contents himself with passages from Scripture and common sense, everyday moral judgement. The sins which are included in this group are those which are *in concreto* submitted to church penance. This applies primarily obviously to all sins against faith (apostasy), and indeed even in those cases where Cyprian himself is aware that they must be treated very mildly and leniently.[64] This applies even to cases which have remained secret (De lapsis 25.26.27). But still other sins, such as concubinage and illicit living together, by those who are unmarried,[65] impurity (Epist. 55,20), adultery, frequentation of brothels, fraud (Epist. 55,26 f; 59,14 f.) etc. are subject to church penance. In general it seems that *idolatria*, *adulterium* and *fraus* formed a kind of triad for such sins, while murder is not explicitly mentioned (but cf. De bono pat. 14). Among sins against faith were also counted schism and insubordination to church authority (cf., for example, Epist. 59, 14. 15; 66,9; 69,6.7, etc.). On the one hand, therefore, serious sin and offence subjected to church penance coincide in theory, but, on the other hand, the circle of offences subjected to church penance is so much restricted in practice that it remains relatively small, and therefore the number of penitents is normally not very great.

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3. The Necessity of Personal and Church Penance for Serious Sins

Before we consider the meaning and effect of the individual 'parts' of penance in Cyprian's view it is necessary to take a look at the necessity and the unity of the whole penitential process. For both sins against faith and for *minora delicta* the bishop of Carthage prescribes the one penance which we have described above. If, instead of allowing the immediate access of the *lapsi* merely on the basis of the letters of martyrs, he prescribes the *legitima*

[64] Cf. Epist. 55,14: the situation of the *libellatici*; Epist. 55,13; De lapsis 13: different cases *of sacrificati*; Epist. 52,2: Novatian is worse than a *sacrificatus*; De lapsis 25: the secret 'sin' of an infant; Epist. 55,26: a *moechus* is worse than a *libellaticus*.
[65] This applies particularly to virgins consecrated to God; cf. Epist. 4,4.

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paenitentia, then he bases this mostly on the need for a long-lasting personal penance for sins in order to move God to forgiveness (De lapsis 17). But even this penance is considered as being imposed by the Church. It is performed by the Church in the exhomologesis, controlled by it, supported by its prayer and sacrifice, and concluded by it in the granting of the *pax*. No other possibility of forgiveness is in any way considered. The struggle against the laxists is at the same time a demand for personally hard penance and an exhortation to submit oneself to the exhomologesis and to receive the *communicatio* from the bishop who alone is authorized to give it. Laxism undermines both of these points in the same way (Epist. 15,1; 16,2). The personal penance which Cyprian stresses so much is never in his view merely an individual, private, interior performance which has nothing to do with the Church. This would still not be the case even if, in his view, the concluding rite were only the solemn elaborate end of a personal penance.[66] It is impossible to say today exactly how the laxists justified their practice. It seems, however, to be derived from the understandable desire to participate again in the Eucharist as a complete Christian, from grounds for pardon which could be made applicable to the *lapsi*, from appeal to the intercession of the martyrs and perhaps also with reference to John 20 (cf. De cath. eccl. un. 4).[67] Indeed, even on the part of the laxists penance is considered an indivisible totality, and therefore both its personal side and its ecclesial side are neglected: *ante actam paenitentiam*, *ante exomologesim . . . te manum ab episcopo . . . impositam* (Epist. 15,1; 16,2; De lapsis 16). For his own part, in order to justify his requirement Cyprian argues that the person who has sinned 'against God' can receive pardon from God alone and must, therefore, merit it by a long penance (De lapsis 17). For us today this would imply simply that the sinner has to perform 'subjective' penance, whereas for Cyprian it entails the necessity of a penance which itself clearly has an ecclesial [178] aspect. He does not consider further, however, how his argument can justifiably cover this point. For him the ecclesial aspect of guilt was so evident that it obviously had to be considered in the remission of guilt. Although the sinner can separate himself from the Church by his own act alone, the new *pax* is the gift of the Church itself. It can, therefore, be granted only by the episcopal representative of this Church who alone can 'bind and loosen' (Epist. 57,1; 33,1) and who alone is *ad tempus iudex vice Christi* (Epist. 59,5). Since this *pax* is necessary for salvation,[68] penance for a sin which separates a person from the Church can reach its goal only when the penitent receives the peace with the Church from the bishop once more. *Nec ad communicationem venire quis possit, nisi prius illi ab episcopo et clero manus fuerit imposita* (Epist. 17,2).[69] Even in this case the general principle: *habere non*

[66] This point is clearly stressed in recent publications; cf. K. Baus, p. 375; J. Quasten, p. 380 f.; H. von Campenausen, p. 310 f.

[67] Cf. in this chapter under II 5,b: 'The Effect of the Reconciliation by the Church'.

[68] Actual membership of the Church is so necessary for salvation that even a martyr who is an unreconciled *lapsus coronari in morte non poterit* (Epist. 55,17). This rigoristic viewpoint necessarily rejects the notion that baptism of desire and 'perfect contrition' are sufficient for salvation, even in a case of necessity. It is not clear how it is compatible with the possibility which Cyprian himself proclaims, namely, that even a person who is exteriorly separated from the Church *cor tamen . . . semper in Ecclesia fuit* (Epist. 49,2). The contention of A. d'Alès, *La théologie de S. Cyprien* (Paris 1922), that Cyprian recognized a baptism of desire is, however, incorrect. Although he is familiar with a baptism of blood for catechumens (Epist. 73,22), the only evidence for a baptism of desire is Epist. 73,23, where he dares not refuse salvation to heretics who are *simpliciter admissi* in *Ecclesia* without baptism, since they, contrary to his principle, have not been (re-)baptized. Similarly Firmilian, Epist. 75,21. But this is only a reluctant concession to practice which does not give rise to considerations of principle. He makes this concession, because otherwise the loss of salvation for such heretics by birth, who had been simply reconciled without baptism, would represent a very 'existential' argument against his own teaching in the controversy over the baptism of heretics.

[69] Contrary to J. Grotz, p. 156 ff., who makes a clear distinction between *communicatio* and *pax*, with regard both to their exterior position in the penitential process and their effects. In this view *communicatio* is a purely canonical act which introduces the 'actual church penance' (the exhomologesis). *Pax*, on the other hand, is a

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potest Deum patrem, qui Ecclesiam non habet matrem (De cath. eccl. un. 6) is valid, since sin denies that God is father and the Church mother (De lapsis 9). Thus both of these aspects demand the one personal-ecclesial penance, and this necessary penance is personal-ecclesial. Moreover, as a support of this view Cyprian appeals to the *scripturae caelestes* (De lapsis 23), the *Domini ac Dei lex* (De lapsis 15), the *Domini praecepta* (De lapsis 18; Epist. 15,1), the gospel (De lapsis 20; Epist. 16,1), the *evangelii lex* (Epist. 15,1). The ecclesial aspect of this evangelical law is not explained in any detail. Cyprian did not even consider this necessary, since he knew that he had both tradition and private relations (Epist. 16,4) on his side.

4. *The Effect of the Personal Act of Penance*

The sinner must, therefore, do personal penance for the faults which he has committed after baptism. As we have seen, when Cyprian considers the remission of sins he views sin almost exclusively from the moral and eschatological viewpoints. God is *graviter offensus* (De lapsis 16), since sin is essentially *in Deum*. Thus the sinner has deserved *aeterna supplicia* (De lapsis 7; Epist. 30,7). In any case, it is only God who can forgive his sin: *solus Deus misereri potest. Veniam peccatis, quae in ipsum commissa sunt, solus patest ille largiri qui peccata nostra portavit* (De lapsis 17).[70] Now God does not forgive the sins committed after baptism in exactly the same way as he does [179] in baptism itself, *quia semel in baptismo remissa peccatorum datur* (De op. et eleem. 2). The sinner cannot expect and hope to receive the forgiveness of sins through the Church and its representatives in the manner of a simple baptismal *remissa*. This is the meaning of the following: *homo Deo maior non potest esse*[71] *nec remittere aut donare indulgentia sua non potest, quod in Dominum delicto graviore commissum est* (De lapsis 17). Thus what Firmilian writes about the activity of the bishops must also contradict Cyprian's view: *non quasi a nobis remissionem peccatorurn* (*lapsi*) *consequantur, sed ut per nos ad intelligentiam delictorum suorum convertantur et Domino plenius satisfacere cogantur* (Epist. 75,4).[72] The Church cannot simply forgive (*donare*) sins

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purely gratuitous interior event bringing about the forgiveness of sins at the conclusion of the whole penitential process. For details on this point see S.Hübner, pp. 195-201. This is obviously not to deny that the Church's mite of *pax* communicates the Spirit. However, it remains an act of the Church; cf. the further details on this point in this essay.

[70] This statement is not made in itself and directly of God's behaviour as opposed to his action in baptism. *Quae in ipsum commissa sunt* in this context can be very well translated: 'because (not: in so far as – somewhat in contrast to other sins) they are directed against God'. It should not be inferred from this statement, therefore, that theme are other actual sins which are to be forgiven either by the Church or by man more or less on their own authority, either in baptism, since they were committed before baptism, or afterwards, and this because they were not committed *in Deum*. All that this statement wishes to show is that a forgiveness of God is necessary for these sins. This leads to the idea that man must do something to obtain this pardon. This is the purpose of Cyprian's reasoning in De lapsis. Obviously this enterprise presupposes that theme is no longer a *remissa peccatorum* as in baptism. But, once this is granted, it is clear that man must propitiate God only through his own *satisfactio* if he wishes, despite the *semel* applying to baptism, to obtain forgiveness for his further sins.

[71] For the meaning of this expression, cf. Epist. 54,3: *esse non potest maior domino suo servas*; and yet that is precisely what the servant wished to be when he wanted to separate carefully the wheat from the cockle in the Church. Thus laxity can be presumption just as much as rigorism.

[72] At least the negative part of this statement agrees entirely with De lapsis 17, etc. The view that the positive part must describe fully and adequately the priestly activity would give too much importance to the text. For, leaving aside the activity of reconciliation as such, as it is attested by Cyprian, there is, in any case, no mention in the positive part of the statement of the priestly intercession for the penitents by prayer and sacrifice. Yet this figures explicitly and frequently in Cyprian. With regard to De lapsis 17, etc., P. Galtier, *L'église et la remission des péchés* (Paris 1932), p. 43 ff.; and in RHE 30 (1934), p. 532 ff., goes too far when he wishes to relate the text to general synodal regulations concerning penance, according to which obviously not every individual

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committed after baptism as it does in baptism.[73] God has to be propitiated. And man has to do this himself by his penance. If this applies already to daily sins, it is even more appropriate for serious ones.

This *assidua et iugis operatio* (De op. et eleem. 2) of *satisfactio*[74] in a *longa et plena paenitentia* (De lapsis 16) means a *Dominum promereri* (Epist. 19,1; 26), a *rogare, deprecari Dominum* (De lapsis 16), a *Deum* (*offensam . . . Domini*) *placare* (De lapsis 16,29,35; Epist. 43,2) and thus a *delicta redimere* (De lapsis 35; Epist. 59,13; cf. De habitu virg. 11). The satisfaction that is penance is, therefore, directed towards God in order to change his attitude and it succeeds in this, as it were, by the payment of sins which are conceived as *debita* (De dom. or. 22). This exoneration of guilt lasts a long time and it can also be presented by the image of a long healing process[75] from wounds (Epist. 30,6; 3 1,6.7; De lapsis 35). And Cyprian is aware of the contrast between this process and the totally different event which occurs in baptism.(cf. Epist. 59,13: *gratia quae de baptismi sanctificatione percipitur – paenitentia per quam culpa curatur*). In some circumstances this exoneration of guilt can be continued in the next life (Epist. 55,20). Cyprian already has a place for this purpose, since even the just still seem to wait for the day of judgement and the arrival of the Kingdom of God in 'paradise', in *refrigerium*.[76] The only exception to this arc the martyrs who are immediately crowned, united with God and enter into possession of the *regnum caelorum*. In any case Cyprian considers that the payment of 'guilts' through satisfaction in order to propitiate God will be definitively effective only at the general judgement. After the destruction of this world and this age the people of Christ will stand before its judge (De lapsis 17). [180] Christ will 'examine' (*recensere*) this people and its enemies and pronounce judgement on everyone according to his deserts (Epist. 58,10). As opposed to the martyr who is crowned immediately after his death, the penitent has to wait *ad sententiam Domini* (Epist. 55,20). Although he certainly can hope for forgiveness, especially since he can at this moment count on the great help of the *martyrum merita et opera iustorum* (De lapsis 17), this assurance does not dispense with the actual and definitive decision. The final decision is made in the next life, considered spatially and, above all, temporally (Epist. 57,1), and everything which happens previously (personal penance and reconciliation with the Church) is, by comparison, only an interim (Epist 55,29) and reserves the sinner and his salvation

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sinner received the forgiveness of his sins through bishops.

[73] In Epist. 73,7, for example, the subject of the *remissam peccatorum dare* at baptism is explicitly the Church in its *praepositi*. This is confirmed by the explanation in Epist. 75,4

[74] *Satisfactio* (*satisfacere*) is undoubtedly the most characteristic notion which Cyprian uses to describe this operation. Alongside and after *paenitentia* it appears most frequently and describes in the best way possible the activity of the penitent and its effect. The actual requirements of *satisfactio* are comprehensively enumerated in De lapsis 35. For the recurrence of the word, cf. CSL 3,1: 227,11; 247,9; 248,1; 249,25; 258,16.19.22; 260,2.7.25; 262,7.8; 263,27; 264,6; CSL 3,2: 516,11; 518,15; 567,2; 592,4.18; 594,16; 597,1; 631,22,24; 632,5; 644,16; 646,4.10.11; 680,7.18; 681,15; 683,2.8; 686,11.21.24; 688,9; 717,10.14; 722,1; 725,13; 733,20; 812,28. Apart from making amends, that is, actual works of penance, *satisfactio* can also mean the result of these efforts. Cf. Epist. 15,4: *paenitentia satisfactioni proxima*, that is, a penance which has almost obtained reconciliation with God, so that the intercession of the martyrs is now really able to supply the rest.

[75] At least in Epist. 30,3; 3 1.6.7 this image shows that penance was not experienced merely as the removal of a punishment which had been imposed juridically from without, and that it cannot be expected to end without an interior healing and a restoration of complete moral health. This is an indication, therefore, that at that time satisfaction cannot have been the only and comprehensive means of removing guilt. In fact the two letters quoted are not both by Cyprian himself. The same image with the same conceptual background is found also in Tertullian, De paen. 7,13; Didascalia Apostolorum II 41,3-9.

[76] Cf. A. d'Alès, *La théologie de S. Cyprien* (Paris 1922), pp. 33-5. Nevertheless, this explanation of Cyprian's eschatology is not very clear, either terminologically or objectively. The question needs to be investigated afresh. Cyprian seems to distinguish between paradise and *regnam coelorum*, between the immediate fate of the martyrs and that of the rest of the righteous. But in Ad Fortunatum 13 even the martyr is offered only the prospect of paradise.

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always to God.[77] Certainly Cyprian knows that even in this life *satisfactio*, after a certain time determined by human standards, can have blotted out the guilt of sin (cf. Epist. 15,4; 56,1 f.),[78] that the penitent in this life already can be a *curatus* (Epist. 55,19) with a *purgata conscientia* (De lapsis 16), who has the Spirit of the Father (Epist. 57,4). Nevertheless, Cyprian always views the final effect of penance eschatologically.[79] Even in the place where he considers a three-year penance sufficient *ad deprecandam clementiam Domini*, he makes this point quite clear when he says: *puto his indulgentiam Domini non defuturam* (Epist. 56,2). Forgiveness is granted eschatologically as the actual goal of penance.[80] But the penitent can count on receiving it. Cyprian evinces no serious doubt about this future forgiveness, provided that full penance is done. Wherever there is any doubt expressed this concerns not God's readiness to forgive but the fulfilment of the conditions prescribed for it on the sinner's part. The frequent mention of a *potest clementer ignoscere* (*misereri*)[81] highlights precisely the future character[82] of the forgiveness together,' with the possibility

[77] This *domino reservari* which is stated with regard to the repentant and reconciled sinner (Epist. 55,29; 55,19) means, on the one hand, the refusal of a *praeiudicare Domino* (Epist. 55,18) on the question of whether he will find the sinner's penance *plena et iusta* or revoke the *sententia servorum*. On the other hand, the phrase has the nuance of 'preservation' and 'protection'. The repentant and reconciled sinner is 'protected' by his penance and the community of grace that is the Church both from a further fall and from the condemning judgement of God. For this use of the term, cf. Epist. 55,22: . . . *Dei . . . punientis ut corrigat et cum correxerit reservantis*; Test. III 57: *fidelem emendari et reservari* (cf. further the biblical passages quoted as an explanation of the meaning: *morti non tradere, misericordiam non avertere, emundare*. Similarly De op. et eleem. I.

[78] At least in the ideal case reconciliation presupposes the conviction that the penance done has satisfied divine justice, that is, that the *paenitentia* can even be *plena* (De lapsis 16; Epist. 55,18). Nevertheless, in practice almost all cases of reconciliation, at least where the *lapsi* are concerned, arise out of other considerations which always militate to some extent against this principle. Illness, the *necessitas temporum*, the threat of another persecution, etc. mostly play a role. Practically the only case in which Cyprian sees evidence for the complete performance of penance is that of an erstwhile *lapsus* who becomes a martyr or even a confessor (cf. De lapsis 13; 36; Epist. 19,2; 24-5; 55,4.7; 60,2). The unique cautious exception is the case in Epist. 56,1-3.

[79] Contrary to J. Grotz, p. 106 ff. According to him, Cyprian holds that the forgiveness of sins takes place not only at the last judgement but immediately at reconciliation. Merely from the point of view of the language which Cyprian uses, this position does not appear to be tenable, cf. n.77, as well as S. Hübner, p. 206.

[80] Moreover, the *paenitentiae fructus* is always the peace with the Church (Epist. 55,29).

[81] Thus this word occurs five times in De lapsis 36; it is found once in Epist. 57,1. In De lapsis l7 *potest* has a present sense.

[82] This is clearly expressed in Epist. 57,1. When it is stated there: . . . *et legem dederit ut ligata in terris et in coelis ligata essent, solvi autem possent, quae hic prius in Ecclesia solverentur*, it is not a question of an '*audacieuse atténuation du texte biblique*', cf. Capelle in: RThAM 7 (1935), p. 233. Since it must necessarily have been done consciously, it can hardly be ascribed to Cyprian without a precise proof. Rather it is here a question of a formulation which Cyprian was unable to avoid, since he introduces an element of time in the biblical statement (*prius – illic*). Thus he can hardly write: *ut . . . solverentur autem, quae . . . in Ecclesia solverentur*. What he wants to say is that the heavenly loosing will occur at the future judgement. The *possent is* only a substitute for the future tense which does not exist. Cf. *habere* with the infinitive as a substitute for the future in Cyprian: CSL 3,3:429; Bardenhewer II 457. For *posse* with the infinitive, particularly in the passive, as a circumlocution of the future passive in Latin, cf. Stolz-Schmalz, *Lateinische Grammatik*, newly rev. by M. Leumann and J. B. Hofmann (Munich 1928), p. 557, with examples and further bibliography. The last chapter of De lapsis obviously wishes to end on an optimistic note (. . . *nec solam iam Dei veniam merebitur sed coronam*). Thus, with its five-fold *potest* it surely wishes to inculcate not uncertainty of the divine forgiveness but its real possibility. This meaning is clearly underlined by reference to the biblical passages Isa. 30:15; Ezek. 33:11; Joel 2:13. That Cyprian reckons on a certain forgiveness in the next life, provided the necessary conditions have been fulfilled, as opposed to Tertullian as a Montanist, is clear, for example, from Epist. 16,2: . . . *possunt agentes paenitentiam veram Deo qua patri et misericordi . . . satisfacere . . . erigere se possunt*. It is certain that theme are confessors who have already expiated their fault throughout their life and have become free from *omne delictum* because of their confession. But this is not obvious from the theological viewpoint (Epist. 25). Cyprian's protest against the premature reconciliation of the priest Victor *antequam paenitentiam plenam egisset et Domino . . . satisfecisset* (Epist. 64,1) obviously presupposes an actual *paenitentia plena* which satisfies God. The statement of De lapsis 18: *ante est ut sciamus illos* (*lapsos*) *de Domino impetrasse*

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that the conditions on man's side may not be fulfilled, but it in no way suggests that God may not be ready to pardon. The penance which Cyprian prescribes is totally orientated to man's position before God's judgement. In God's verdict it is revealed whether his penance, as well as the intercession of the martyrs and the Church, has been completely successful in absolving the guilt of his sin.

This conception is easily derivable from the actual form of the institution of penance. But it also coincides with the long duration of this penance and, in any case, is one of the fundamental views of the [181] Patristic age, as the distinction between baptism and penance already shows. It is for this reason that we will consider the dogmatic significance of this conception somewhat more closely in order to pinpoint its deficiencies and its advantages. Two points are particularly worthy of note: the notion of sin and its remission as the incurring of punishment and punitive expiation, respectively, and the opposition between the post-baptismal forgiveness of sins and that of baptism.

As has already been shown, a consideration of sin, its effects and its forgiveness from the viewpoint of the theology of grace is not entirely alien to Cyprian. He is also aware of the loss of baptismal grace, its recovery by reconciliation and the parallel between penance as *satisfactio* and baptism. Nevertheless, all of these points arc peripheral to his theology, as can be seen particularly from his theology of *satisfactio* and its particular effect. In general on this question the Bishop of Carthage passes over the consideration from the viewpoint of the theology of grace in order to focus on the eschatological judgement. This judgement is seen not as manifestation of the fact that a person has or has not grace, but as a decision on the question whether God is satisfied with the sinner's performance of penance and the co-operation of the Church therein and, for this reason, no longer insists on punishment. Since Poschmann it has often been said that Cyprian does not make a clear distinction between guilt and liability to punishment and, therefore, considers that sin is 'forgiven' only when the *reatus poenae* is totally remitted. This is correct in so far as even in Cyprian there are present only the bases of a consideration of sin and its forgiveness from the viewpoint of the theology of grace: To this extent he does not consider the *reatus poenae* exclusively as the essence of habitual sin. He also recognizes the existence of a profound assurance of salvation even before the guilt of sin is completely 'paid up'.[83] Thus he also provides a basis for the modern distinction between *reatus culpae* and *reatus poenae* as well as for the more recent notion of 'forgiveness' in anticipation of a remission of the punishment due to sin. Nevertheless, all these are no more than bases. Thus, simplifying somewhat, we may still say that for Cyprian habitual sin is liability to punishment and the remission of sin is the elimination of this liability by penance. In addition to what we have said explicitly on the subject, this follows from the way in which Cyprian considers the remission [182] of daily sins to be essentially identical to that of serious sins. In fact De op. et eleem. 2 is concerned primarily with the forgiveness of daily sins.

It would be wrong, however, to concentrate only on the lack of the said distinction in this view. Indeed this defect has a positive significance. Where the distinction between *reatus culpae* and *reatus poenae* is taken too much for granted, the view imposes itself in fact and

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quod postulant, tunc facere quod (*martyres*) *mandant,* presupposes a point of time when the request of the confessors that the *lapsi* should be granted peace with the Church is fulfilled. But this means that they have previously received this peace from God in forgiveness. This is not contradicted by the view that it is only at the last judgement that it will be clearly decided whether all this is really valid. Before this judgement there can be only a moral certainty whether the penance is adequate. In any event God's fundamental readiness to forgive is here taken for granted. This is demonstrated in Epist. 55,22-3: *quod utique ad paenitentiam Dominas non hortaretur, nisi quia paenitentibus indulgentiam pollicetur. . . nec iram paenitentibus. . . sed veniam magis et indulgentiam pollicetur*.

[83] This will be shown more clearly when we consider the meaning of church reconciliation.

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spontaneously – if perhaps not yet theoretically – that the remission of the *reatus culpae* is brought about as a more or less self-evident sacramental (*ex opere operato*) infusion of grace. The precondition of this infusion, namely, 'sorrow', as opposed to 'penance', is fairly easily attained. This entails that 'doing penance' is inevitably oriented to the remission of the 'punishment' due to sin and loses its meaning for sorrow and for the remission of guilt. And since, after all, once the guilt has been forgiven, the 'punishment' is not a radically existential question (of salvation), the remission of punishment is relegated to a position of second importance. Cyprian's own view, on the contrary, makes it easier for him to 'realize' that true sorrow is penance in action. In fact his theory of sin and the remission of sins presupposes as self-evident and supporting his whole view the idea that genuine sorrow is penance. This is true, however problematical and imperfect this view may be when considered in itself.

It is not surprising that for Cyprian *paenitentia* and *satisfactio*[84] are *termini technici*, while a corresponding notion for 'sorrow' in the modern sense of a mere change of 'attitude' is unknown to him. The only sorrow which he knows is the one which is just as clearly and really effective as was the sin in question. Thus he prescribes a *longa et plena paenitentia*. This theory of sin and the forgiveness of sins is so consonant with his thinking that the bases of a more nuanced view which we discussed above do not show themselves effectively. A further development which would not depart from the basic living principle is possible only if it goes beyond even the generally accepted theory in contemporary theology; and this is a task which one can hardly set for the Bishop of Carthage.

This view is not only an interpretation and a construction which exceeds what is empirically tangible in Cyprian himself. He provides many sufficient indications of the fact that for him genuine sorrow must be just as real an act as the sin which is being expiated, and that [183] assurance of its genuineness and its success before God is given to the extent that it really is an act. One has only to consider the general line of argument followed by Cyprian in De lapsis or in the corresponding letters to realize that for him the refusal to take on a *paenitentia* with a long-lasting *satisfactio* is, in itself, tantamount to a lack of 'sorrow', so the question does not arise at all why one cannot be satisfied with the sorrow of the *lapsi*. A *pax* without previous doing of penance is only a useless appearance (De lapsis 15-16). Not surprisingly (cf. Epist. 55,18), despite the real difficulties involved in a speedy reconciliation, Cyprian knows only the distinction between a *paenitentia plena et iusta* and the *paenitentiae simulatio*.

Once one presupposes that in Cyprian sorrow and doing penance are completely identical, then the postponement of sorrow until the point of death becomes understandable. If there is no *paenitentiam agere* present, the true *dolor delictorum* is also lacking (Epist. 55,23). This notion that 'sorrow', to be really effective, must be realized in the doing of penance is well expressed in Epist. 31,6 by the apparently nonsensical formulation (*paenitentia . . . paenitentiam probat*). Here we read: *sed pudor*, *sed modestia*, *sed paenitentia*,[85] *sed disciplina*, *sed humilitas atque subiectio . . . hoc est quod paenitentiam probat*. Penance as an act is the real proof of penance as an attitude even for the person who is doing this penance himself. There are many other indications which could be adduced in support of this view. Although the psychology which it implies, even when it is applied to a complicated individual case, may appear to be somewhat crude, nevertheless its importance and its practicality immediately become apparent once one asks how genuine 'sorrow' is to be established both by the Church and by the sinner himself. His desire to be at peace with the Church, his regret of having been in a situation in which he 'had' to deny, his fear of God's

[84] In his view the remission of sin is attached absolutely to the remission of the punishment due to sin, which is quite different from our modern view.
[85] The variant *patientia* of the Codex Baluzianus and several older editions before Hartel must, in view of the witness of the other codices, be considered an error.

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judgement and his subsequent repudiation of his fall (*secundum quid*) are all possible without excluding the fall itself and, therefore, do not necessarily amount to and express true 'sorrow'. As long as the existential situation, brought about' by sin, lasts, how can a person really be sorry for this sin other than by behaving in a contrary manner? If this is a valid argument, then a person can be 'sorry' for a denial of faith only by a renewed confession (Epist. 55,4; 19,2). If a person is not able to produce such a sorrow, he can rectify his unjust act only by an act of penance which shows that the position and attitude which led to his [184] sin have been radically altered for the good. This is because Cyprian is convinced that such sin usually springs from guilty attitudes which are already previously present and come to light in the sin (De lapsis 21/22; Epist. 65,3). Such attitudes are not eradicated by a mere 'regret' of the act alone. If, for instance, the love of material possessions leads to a fall from faith, then one cannot normally be existentially and convincingly sorry for this fault without giving up the corresponding material advantage (cf. De lapsis 35). Behind the 'still imperfect' theory of the remission of sins, which does not distinguish between the punishment due to sin and the guilt of sin, the Bishop of Carthage holds, therefore, an insight which is obscured by the too self-evident distinction between the incurring of guilt and the incurring of punishment, an insight into an existentially realistic psychology of true sorrow and, therefore, of the true nature of guilt itself.

The background of Cyprian's penitential teaching becomes even clearer when it is asked: how does he know that sins committed after baptism have to be remitted in a way different from those committed before baptism? The 'argument from Scripture', according to which good works remit sins (cf. Sir 3:30; Tob 4:10, Luke 11:40), without relating to the baptismal remission in Christ's blood so that there remains only one other object of this remission, namely, sins committed after baptism, is too artificial and complicated to have been the real basis of this teaching. Indeed it is a proof (De op. et eleem. 2; Epist. 55,22) which already presupposes its conclusion.

A reason for Cyprian's view could also be the *semel* of baptism which he mentions in this context. Since, according to tradition (Eph. 4:5; cf. Heb. 6:4),[86] there is only 'one' baptism, and this expression, right from the beginning, means not only the specific unity of every valid baptism but also the fact that it is possible only once for every individual,[87] Cyprian and his predecessors who, as he, taught the difference between the remission of sins before and after baptism, could have concluded that here there was not only an external, ritual difference but a profound, real one. A mere ritual difference would involve that there was simply one pardon of sins.

In connection with the idea of the unrepeatable possibility of 'baptism for the pardon of sins', and based upon it, the teaching of the intrinsic difference of the post-baptismal forgiveness of sins was always a more or less explicit part of the apostolic tradition. Nevertheless, [185] everything is not clear on this point. Like Tertullian, Cyprian also does not make any distinction either between guilt and punishment or between their remission. If in baptism guilt is forgiven and washed away, it must follow necessarily that in baptism the punishment is waived. Moreover, this waiving of the punishment is only another expression for the pardon of guilt, and not something additional to the teaching of the forgiveness of

[86] Cf. Melito, Fragm. 12 (Otto IX 418); Hermas, Mand. IV 3,1; Tertullian, De bapt. 15; De paen. 7,10; De pud. 18,15; Clemens Alex., Paedag. I 6,29,5-30,1; Hippolyt, Philosoph. VI 41,2 f.; Origen, Exhort. ad mart. 30; Didasc. Apost. VI,12,2. As is generally known, the ε3ν βα&πτισμα ει0φ α!φεσιν τω~ν α(μαρτιω~ν is explicitly confessed later in the Eastern symbols (cf. Hahn, *Bibliothek der Symbole*, pp. 130, 134, 135, 137, 138, 146, 153, 165, 166). For Cyprian, cf. Epist. 63,8: *baptisma . . . semel . . . sumitur nec rursus iteratur.*

[87] In Tertullian, De bapt. 15 both of these aspects of the one baptism are mentioned together, to enable him to deduce from this unity both the fact that heretics are unable to baptize and the fact that baptism itself cannot be repeated.

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guilt, as it is so considered by us today, and which, therefore, requires its own proof and a special declaration. This is the meaning of the following statement of Tertullian: *exempto scilicet reatu eximitur et poena* (De bapt. 5). It is precisely the possibility of concluding to the pardon of the *poena* from the remission of the *reatus* that shows that both are here the same and, therefore, arc remitted at the same time and together. Clement of Alexandria holds the same view (Paed. I 6,26,2). The verbal difference between α(μαρτι/α and ε0πιτιμι/α does not indicate that he is aware of different possibilities for the remission of guilt and punishment, but rather the contrary, since it is presupposed as self-evident that in baptism the ε0πιτιμι/α is forgiven along with guilt.

The ancient teaching, already traditional before Cyprian, on the complete remission of guilt in the one baptism does not explain how a possible remission of sins after baptism comes about otherwise than in baptism itself. On the contrary, this possibility itself is difficult to account for logically. Nevertheless since it was a firm datum of tradition and, at the same time, baptism was unrepeatable, it was necessary and natural to look in another direction for such a unified remission of guilt and punishment in the case of sins committed after baptism. For this purpose all that could be considered was a *paenitentia plena* which takes away the *reatus culpae* and the *reatus poenae* simultaneously.[88] If this conclusion were the only actual theological reason for the existence of the post-baptismal penitential practice and for the difference between it and the forgiveness of sins in baptism, then it is difficult to see how a pelagian interpretation can be precluded from the assertion that the person who sins after baptism can and must obliterate his faults through his own works without the grace of 'Christ's blood'.[89] In any case, it would seem to make the well-attested intervention on the Church's part unnecessary. The accusation of pelagianism cannot be avoided by maintaining that the works of penance themselves remit 'only' the punishment [186] due to sins, since according to Cyprian it is certainly sin itself that is remitted through the works of penance. It is also of little use, in this regard, to hold that these works of penance are only at all effective by the power of Christ's redeeming grace.[90] Although this point is undoubtedly valid, it actually serves to highlight the opposition between the remission of sins in baptism and in post-baptismal penance. It might be thought, therefore, that it is only in baptism that sins and punishments were forgiven together gratuitously, whereas in penance only the guilt but not the punishment was forgiven in this way. But this would be a distinction alien to Cyprian, and it would not explain how and from what source he knows about these two kinds of forgiveness. If he knew about it from an explicit theoretical tradition, then it is no longer possible to say why Cyprian did not consider the distinction between guilt and punishment more explicitly. Indeed it is only the fact that he did not so consider this question that makes the acceptance of such a tradition thinkable.

We are left, therefore, with the following dilemma: either the explicit tradition mentioned above had the dogmatic meaning that the post-baptismal remission of sins occurs by one's own efforts without the grace of Christ's blood, in which case this theory can simply maintain an opposition between baptism and penance and disregard the distinction between guilt and punishment, or this tradition is simply a matter of a practice in the Church, according to

[88] J. Grotz appears to be simply unaware of this explanation. Cf. S. Hübner, p. 74.
[89] Obviously Cyprian does make statements about the necessity of grace for all good actions. *Dei est, inquam, Dei omne quod possumus* (Ad Donat. 4). *Nemo suis viribus fortis est* (De dom.om.14). *Tantum nos posse, quantum credimus* (Test. III, 42). These statements, however, are not applied to the theology of *satisfactio*.
[90] Obviously both the OT and the NT say that good works remit sins. But this evidence, which Bossuet already used in Cyprian's defence, is not relevant. For in the Bible these statements are not used to establish the contrast between the two different methods of remission which Cyprian has in mind. In other words, in the Bible it remains debatable whether or not good works remit sins precisely because and in so far as they are an appropriation and effect of Christ's grace, that is, of redemption which is granted gratuitously.

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which penance has to be done for sins committed after baptism. The explanation of this practice on the part of Cyprian and those who followed him would then be simply a theologumenon having no dogmatic significance. The first possibility is totally unacceptable for dogmatic reasons and is also historically at least unlikely. According to the second possibility, Cyprian is interpreting a tradition which has already been handed on to him. For its part, this tradition does not appear to have arisen from previous thinking. Nevertheless, the last point must be proven. As far as its theoretical presuppositions are concerned, it must also have been semi-pelagian. But this cannot apply to Cyprian. Moreover, if it is understood in the strict sense of the term, it applies even less to the time before Cyprian. Now if the practice did not emanate from such a theory, then the question remains, where could the difference of treatment of catechumens and those who have sinned after baptism have come from, since every practice has a theoretical background? The reason must have been [187] that a greater doubt is objectively justifiable with regard to the sincerity of a new change of attitude after baptism than with regard to the *metanoia* in baptism. This doubt is shared by both the penitent himself and the Church.

Thus in Cyprian's teaching the question of the distinction between the remission of sins in and after baptism brings out the same insight which had already been in evidence in his way of considering the nature of sin and the remission of sins. Despite a certain obscurity, the specific origin of Cyprian's teaching about the *paenitentia iusta* is his living awareness that only the act of penance is proper sorrow, giving the assurance of the genuine 'attitude' to which God grants his forgiveness. From this it follows almost self-evidently that something different and 'more' is demanded from a sinner who is baptized than from the catechumen. At his conversion to Christianity the latter breaks both from his whole past and from the surrounding pagan world. In the 'baptismal vows' of the *abrenuntiatio* he expresses in the most real and vital way possible an attitude which leaves absolutely nothing to be desired. He 'experiences' his new birth to the divine life in baptism at a depth and an intensity which leaves him in no doubt about the complete forgiveness of his guilt.[91]

The person who sins after baptism, however, has lost all this and has shown by his action that the radical Christian attitude and condition is not alive in him (any more). Thus the mere fact of being a Christian was not an existential proof of a true Christian attitude. He could consider this 'Christian' life, along with its wishes and sentiments, only with a more bitter scepticism. In view of this shattering experience, the question must have arisen concerning what would reassure both himself and the church community that he would struggle to recover that attitude which would make him worthy of the Spirit of God and of peace with God. Not 'sorrow' in feeling and words but only hard action could restore to a worthy man faith in his attitude. This experience, therefore, must have been the simple but continually effective starting-point from which the early Church prescribed, regulated and supervised personal penance, while the tangible forms and obligations of penance (prayer, fasting, penitential garb, etc.) merely continued the penitential practice of the synagogue.[92] For the

[91] For this experience of regeneration, cf. Cyprian's composition Ad Donat. 3-4. It is a question of the experience which the regenerated man has of the power given by God. He overcomes immediately the old, radical addiction to sin which seemed to him previously to be invincible. Because of the experience of this heavenly, God-given vitality he knows already that one day he will stand justified before God. But what is the effect of a further sin after such an experience? This question spotlights what *paenitentia* is in its living source: it is the attempt of a man striving relentlessly for his salvation to restore himself slowly to that original state.

[92] Cf. J. Schümmer, *Die altchristliche Fastenpraxis* (Münster 1933), pp. 184-7. It is worth noting that already in the synagogue good works were demanded of a person who had been banned. Thus this is to be understood as a self-evident and traditional practice and not as something which was newly developed from a theory of penitential practice for those who were excluded from the Church. The subsequent theory explains the practice correctly and it turns out, in agreement with the whole of Christian teaching, to be logically and genuinely Christian.

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latter there was no need of a special discovery. They needed only to be filled with new spirit and life and to be energetically prescribed.

[188] Cyprian's theory about this institution, which was already traditional for a long time before him, combines elements which are correct with those which are only provisional and indeed questionable. It is still possible to discern its *Sitz im Leben*. Thus the bishop of Carthage orders the confessors to observe *actum et opera et merita* of the individual penitents in order to discover *quorum paenitentiam satisfactioni proximam conspicitis* (Epist. 15,4). In this way the confessors were able to ascertain not the 'absolution' of guilt before God but only the genuineness of the penitents' sorrow, proven by their deed. But Cyprian is still not satisfied with this. His practice demands less than his teaching, but it still demands a great deal. It is in fact inspired by another conviction than that which he develops in his theory, namely that God forgives the person who is truly sorry and that this sorrow expresses itself in, and is proven by, *paenitentia*: *paenitentia . . . paenitentiam probat*. In this practice, which is simpler and also clearer than the theory, the *paenitentia* is for Cyprian what makes a sinner into a *reformatum et depositis prioris vitae delictis ad sobrios et bonos mores et ad innocentiae disciplinam poenitentiae dolore correctum* (Epist. 55,23). God is able to forgive the guilt of such a person by his grace. Cyprian also considers those worthy to receive the peace of the Church who, after their fall, have made a new confession, without suffering death for it (Epist. 25). He thinks that such a deed is a clear indication that one *commissi vere et firmiter paenitet et fidei calor praevalet* (Epist. 55,4). Moreover, attention has already been drawn above to the notion of *satisfactio* as an interior healing of the sinner. This need not be understood only as an 'image' of the strictly juridical notion of *satisfactio*. The 'payment of guilts' could just as well be seen as an image drawn from the juridical sphere to describe a *paenitentia* which in deed and truly heals the sinner from the interior consequences of sin in the very depths of his person, including his body. Only after this process is man free from all the 'punishments' of sin. Indeed in the early Church the principal 'works' of penance that were fasting and prayer[93] were frequently and insistently characterized as exorcism. It is the deed and not only the mere 'attitude' that transforms man and expels the 'forces of darkness'. Finally, Greek theology too, beginning with Clement of Alexandria, in its theory conceives the works of penance very clearly as an inner healing of man. Could it not be that this conception has just as much right to our attention as a correct and original [189] explanation of the penitential prescriptions practised in the early Church?

Despite this explanation of the real basis of penitential practice in the early Church, it is still possible to derive from it the teaching which has in fact long since been taken from it, namely, that in the sacrament of penance all the 'punishments' of sin are not necessarily and always forgiven. This constitutes a difference between baptism and penance which naturally can and must be shown in greater detail. Just the experience of an existentially limited intensity of conversion, due to the after-effect of previous guilt, includes, on its own, the persistence of a punishment of sin. Nevertheless, 'punishment' here is not to be understood as only imposed from outside, without an intrinsic relationship to man's moral situation and as a mere extrinsic reality. On this supposition, the real theological problem consists not in the question of why the punishments due to sin[94] can persist, despite sorrow, but rather in the question of why they arc totally waived in baptism. This question, however, only presented itself at the periphery of consciousness in the early Church. This is easily explained by the

[93] Cf. Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29; Tertullian, De ieiunio 8; Excerpta ex Theodoto 83.84; more in J. Schümmem, *Die altchristliche Fastenpraxis* (Münster 1933), pp. 175 f., 215 f.; F. J. Dolgem, *Der Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual* (Paderborn 1909), pp. 80-6; J. Behm, νη=στιφ etc. in: ThW IV (Stuttgart 1942), pp. 925-35 (esp. 927,930: *der apotropäische Charakter des Fastens im im Heidentum und Judentum*).

[94] The punishments due to sin are understood here as the interior consequences of the punishment which are not necessarily taken away *eo ipso* by a change of attitude which is sufficient for salvation.

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enthusiastic experience of the new birth in baptism on the part of the whole man. In any case, an objective answer to this question can be expected only from a systematic treatment of the subject.

5. The Effect of Reconciliation by the Church

A) THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH'S ACT IN PENANCE (APART FROM IN THE ACTUAL RECONCILIATION)

The Church's activity in penance is not confined to the re-bestowal of church fellowship – as we would say today, the 'absolution'. The whole Church with the bishop and the people and, especially, the confessors lend the penitent their support primarily in so far as they share in penance through prayer and the eucharistic offering. Thus the bishop prays daily for the penitents with tears asking for the *plenissima pax* (Epist. 43,6; De lapsis 32) and offers sacrifice for those who have fallen (De lapsis 16).[95] The confessors pray in a similar vein (De lapsis 36). As in Tertullian so also for Cyprian an intercession by the whole church community at the time of the liturgical exhomologesis would have been self-evident; it also gives its consent to the reconciliation [190] (Epist. 64,1). The Bishop of Carthage obviously visualizes all this as a support of the penitent's own *satisfactio*. He even recognizes a *per episcopos et sacerdotes Domini Domino satisfacere* (Epist. 43,3).[96] Since in Cyprian *satisfactio* is clearly distinguished from reconciliation itself, as its necessary prerequisite, it can be achieved only by such a support given to the penitent by intercession, but in no way exclusively *per sacerdotes*. The effect of this intervention, being a wish for divine pardon, is viewed just as eschatologically as the penitent's personal *satisfactio*. It, too, is effective at the judgement (De lapsis 17,36). In so far as the impositions of hands (?) at the exhomologesis are considered an exorcism, they too, by their scope and effect, are a similar support of the sinner's personal satisfaction through penance on the Church's part. This is the best way of understanding two otherwise quite unconnected elements which Cyprian brings together:[97] *purgare conscientiam*[98] *sacrjficio et manu sacerdotis* (De lapsis 16). The Bishop of Carthage

[95] An *offerre pro illis*, that is, the *lapsi* who are not yet actually reconciled, an *offerre nomine eorum* is indeed just as unlawful as the granting of the Eucharist (Epist. 15,1; 16,2; 17,22; 34,1). But what is meant there is obviously an offering of the Eucharist for the *lapsi* who, because of the provision of their gifts for the offering (cf. Epist. 34,1; 65,3), claim this as their right as full Christians, or their own celebration of 'private masses' for themselves in small circles (cf. Epist. 63,16; 57,3; 5,2). Cf. J. A. Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia* I (Vienna, 1952), pp. 274, 280. This does not mean, therefore, that the bishop cannot offer the sacrifice for the conversion of sinners as a help to their *satisfactio*, as *purgare conscientiam sacrificio . . . sacerdotis* (De lapsis 16). J. Grotz, p. 82, simply identifies *offerre* with *purgare*, whereas *purgare is* the precondition of *offerre*. On this cf. S. Hübner, p. 66.

[96] Accordingly, in the phrase of De lapsis 29: *satisfactio et remissio facta per sacerdotes*, the *per sacerdotes* can refer perfectly well to the *satisfactio*. Thus it becomes clearer how Cyprian envisages the *remissio* as being brought about *per sacerdotes* without his having to deviate from his usual strict notion of *remissio*, If, in his view, *remissio* means the complete remission of sin, including the punishment which this involves, and if, after baptism, this is attainable only by a *plena satisfactio*, then it is only really possible in so far as the priests contribute their support to the *satisfactio*. It is impossible to derive from De lapsis 29 the notion of a *remissio* through the absolution of the priest as distinct from the *satisfactio*.

[97] The sacrifice and the imposition of hands occurred at the same time and the same place, in so far as the imposition of hands was probably performed during the celebration of the Eucharist. But Cyprian does not intimate at which precise stage of the liturgy it occurs. The order (*sacrificio – manus*) suggests an imposition of hands towards the end of the mass, as was later the case in Augustine and the Gallican liturgy. Cf. J. A. Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten* (Innsbruck 1932), pp. 167,300 ff.

[98] The *purgare* does not have only a juridical sense, as Capelle, in RthAM 7 (1935), p. 230 f., remarks appositely. Nevertheless, it is impossible to prove that Cyprian regarded the purification of the conscience as a consequence of the imposition of hands precisely in so far as the latter is the act of reconciliation. It is more

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does not say explicitly how far he considers this aspect of church penance to be necessary for salvation. Nevertheless it is for him an actual part of the one essential church penance, without which there is no reconciliation with God. The ecclesial aspect, therefore, shares in this necessity.[99] But this does not necessarily mean that sacrifice and the prayer of the Church have to be explicitly connected with the individual performance of penance. If this connection does not exist today, this is, therefore, no proof that such an intercession on the Church's part is unnecessary.

Thus this aspect of the penitential process in the early Church, should not be neglected as if it were irrelevant for the sacrament, even if it is generally overlooked in modern dogmatic treatises. This aspect implies an awareness of the manner in which the *satisfactio* of the sinner effects grace, an awareness which appears only too briefly in Cyprian's explicit theory. In other words, this aspect supposes a living consciousness of the union between all the members of the Church. Where the Church's intercession is conceived in this way as being more or less necessary, it is completely impossible to experience *satisfactio* as an autonomous extinction of 'guilts' before God by one's own efforts. For Tertullian the intercession of Christ present in the Church, being assured of a hearing, was one of the notions by which he grasped the Church's decisive act in the *paenitentia secunda*. This can no longer be said of Cyprian, since he [191] considered the granting of the *pax* and the *communicatio* alone as the decisive act of the Church. But this does not necessarily mean that the importance which he accords to the Church's intercession is any the less. The Church is an organism which communicates grace. *Spiritu eius* (*Ecclesiae*) *animamur* (De cath. eccl. un. 5) . . . *haec nos Deo servat* (ibid., 6). This organism does not communicate grace as a static reality, however, but continually applies to its members grace and Spirit-dispensing influence through sacrifice and prayer which can never fail it. Sacrifice and prayer belong inalienably to the very nature of the Church. It is for this reason that it is the mother of life who dispenses and grants the Spirit. The bestowal of the Spirit incorporates people into this Church which offers sacrifice, prays and, in so doing, again bestows the Spirit. This intercession precedes the reincorporation into the Church; it refers the sinner to God[100] and as co-operation with the sinner's own penance is indispensable for the success of this penance.

B) THE EFFECT OF THE RECONCILIATION BY THE CHURCH

The decisive act of the Church with regard to the sinner who has separated himself from the Church and thereby lost his right of access to the Eucharist is the readmission.

This reconciliation takes place through (or on the occasion of) the imposition of hands and has an immediately tangible effect in the sphere of the Church. Cyprian speaks of an *in Ecclesiam suscipi* (*recipi*) (Epist. 55,29; 4,4), *ad Ecclesiam redire* (Epist. 4,4; 19,2), of the *ius communicationis* (*communicationem*) *accipere* (Epist. 16,2; 19,2), *ad communicationem venire* (*admitti*) (Epist. 17,2), of the *pax* (Epist. 18,1; 19,2; 20,3; 55,29; 57,1.4), of the *Ecclesiae reconciliari* (Sent. episc. 8,22), of a *pax data et communicatio concessa* (Epist. 66,5). The actual *communicatio* is evident above all in the active participation in the sacrifice and in the legitimate reception of the Eucharist (Epist. 15,1; 16,2.3). The granting of the *pax* is the exclusive prerogative of the bishop[101] (Epist. 15,2; 16,1.3; 17,2; 19,1; 64,1). Only in a

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prudent and more correct to ascribe this effect to the imposition of hands and the sacrifice only in so far as they are the support of the penitent's own *satisfactio*.

[99] On the necessity of the unanimous prayer of the whole Church for the forgiveness of guilt, cf. also De dom. or. 8.

[100] Every *spiritualis oratio* presupposes the Spirit which Christ sends. De dom. or. I.

[101] This is already evident from the fact that normally the imposition of hands by the bishop is required. Cf. the details in the first part of this essay.

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case of necessity can the peace of the Church be granted by a simple priest or even by a deacon (Epist. 16,1; 17,2; 18,1; 19,2). The action of the bishop is described as a 'judgement'. He is *iudex ad tempus a Deo datus* (Epist. 66,3), *ad tempus iudex vice Christi* (Epist. 59,5) and in virtue of this office in the Church he Judges individual cases even in the case of sinners (Epist. 57,5; 66,5) [192] and passes a *sententia* (Epist. 55,18). It is obvious that, as far as its reference to salvation is concerned, this judgement does not prejudice in any way Christ's last judgement[102] (De lapsis 17; Epist. 55,18.20.29; 58,3), but this does not mean that for Cyprian it is not a true judicial sentence.[103] Thus he has no need to fear any difficulty arising from an opposition between the bishop's judgement and that of Christ, because they do not refer immediately to the same object. The judgement reserved to Christ alone concerns directly the remission of guilt by a *plena satisfactio*. The declaration of the bishop, however, is the new recognition of full church fellowship. Generally the bishop should pronounce this judgement only when he has reason to believe that the *satisfactio plena* has been reached. Nevertheless, Cyprian knows cases where such a judgement on the bishop's part is I valid and is to be upheld although full satisfaction has not yet been made (Epist. 64,1; 55,13). A *pax* which is granted after too short a penance or on the sick-bed is recognized as valid, although Cyprian is conscious that under the force of circumstances, even where the official requirements of penance are concerned, he is falling short of the ideal (Epist. 59,16; 55,7). Nevertheless, he does know cases in which the granting of the *pax* is simply void. A *pax* without any penance[104] at all is an *inrita et falsa pax . . . et nihil accipientibus profutura* (De lapsis 15). The same applies where the will is lacking to renounce a sinful decision (Epist. 57,3). [105] Also the *pax* granted by a bishop who does not hold his power legitimately (Epist. 66,5)[106] is invalid, as it is when it is bestowed by *non communicantibus* (Epist. 59,13). A more precise and basic consideration of when a reconciliation is valid[107] is still wanting. The bishop's judicial power which he exercises in the new recognition of full church fellowship is based primarily, apart from a general appeal to the *evangelii vigor* and the *Domini ac Dei lex* (De lapsis 15), on Matthew 16 and 18,[108] that is, on the power of binding and loosing there

[102] We will return to this point later.

[103] Thus the observation of Capelle, in RThAM 7 (1935), p. 225, goes too far: *Cyprien répudie donc clairement l'idée que la réconciliation puisse se faire par un jugement de l'Eglise*. Once it is granted that for Cyprian reconciliation occurs in the first place with the Church, then it can be said that it is based on a *sententia*, a *statutum* (Epist. 55,18) or an *examinatio* (Epist. 66,5). How could the *ius communicationis* (Epist. 16,2) be granted otherwise?

[104] In view of what has been said earlier, it is obvious that Cyprian makes no distinction here between 'contrition' and the works of penance. The absence of the works of penance is, at least according to De lapsis, evidence of the lack of contrition, since the intention to have sin remitted (our 'contrition') is for Cyprian the intention to settle the *debitum*, that is, to do penance.

[105] This is how this passage should be interpreted theologically. A *non proeliaturus lapsus* is one who has not the slightest intention of avoiding to deny his faith on every occasion in the future. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the *proeliaturus* is only the person who in fact confesses his faith in the blood of martyrdom. There is 'no evidence that Cyprian had this idea. If a *non proeliaturus* gains the *pax* on false pretences, *se ipsum fallit et decipit*. Thus Cyprian must have considered such a *pax* objectively invalid. In fact this must also have been the case (Epist. 55,18) when a sinner *paenitentiae simulatione deluserit* the bishop.

[106] For Cyprian this is the immediate consequence of the bishop's sinfulness. Both baptism and penance are invalid (Epist. 66,5), if a person 'has ceased to be a bishop' (Epist. 66,4) because of acts which are dubbed *incesta*, *impia*, *nefanda* (Epist. 66,7). Cyprian's 'donatist' presuppositions are clearly in evidence here. But this notion also shows how necessary the *pax* must be for salvation and how it communicates the Spirit if it can be granted only by a person who himself possesses the Spirit.

[107] Cyprian considers the *inrita pax* of De lapsis 15 to be such for several reasons which vary considerably: the absence of the performance of penance, the irregular granting of reconciliation by the bishop, the omission of the exhomologesis (Epist. 15 etc.). What is the most decisive element is not considered. Cyprian stresses most the absence of the performance of penance, and in De lapsis exclusively so.

[108] It is not a question of a verbatim quotation. Thus it is not clear whether the bishops, with their paraphrase

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promised by the Lord (Epist. 57,1). The context in which Cyprian uses this passage shows clearly that he understands the *ligare in terris* as an *Ecclesiam cludere* and the *sovere illic* as a granting of the *communicatio et pax*. The more immediate object of the power of binding and loosing is, therefore, the relationship of men to the Church,[109] but only in so far as the positive relationship is *subsidium* and *pignus* of eternal salvation. That which is bound if this positive relationship is lacking is, as Cyprian makes clear from his free quotation of the Matthew passage, also already *eo* [193] *ipso* bound in heaven; there is no further possibility of salvation. Nevertheless the person who possesses this *pignus* really receives the possibility of withstanding the future judgement (*solvi possent*).[110]

Apart from his application of the heavenly loosening to the last judgement, Cyprian's interpretation of Matthew 16 and 18 corresponds exactly to the immediate meaning of the biblical words themselves. The direct application of the binding and loosening on earth to the relationship of man to the Church is thoroughly justified.[111] In the letter of the forty-two African bishops to Pope Cornelius the biblical foundation of the institution of penance in the early Church is again in evidence, as it is already in the polemic against the Montanists and indeed with the main emphasis on the ecclesial interpretation.[112] Indeed without this emphasis the concrete form assumed by the celebration of penance, that is, as an exclusion from and readmission into the Church as a fellowship of grace, remains finally unintelligible. In view of the appeal to Matthew it is, at first sight, surprising that Cyprian never has recourse to John 20. He quotes John 20:21 f. only with regard to the general authority of the apostles and bishops and especially with regard to the power to baptize (cf. De cath. eccl. un. 4; Epist. 69,11; 73,7; 75,16). Nevertheless this fact is not particularly significant. For one thing, Matthew 16 is also cited in the same context (De cath. eccl. un. 4; Epist. 75,16), and in Cyprian's view this passage can certainly refer to the bishop's power in penance. Moreover it is easy to understand why the Bishop of Carthage refrains automatically from adducing John 20 in favour of the power of penance. The *remittere peccata* mentioned here is taken by him quite spontaneously and self-evidently as the *remissa peccatorum* in the strict sense. Thus this text is excluded as far as penance is concerned. Applied to penance it would have suggested that the bishops have the same power to forgive post-baptismal sins which Cyprian attributes to them only in baptism. Thus Cyprian confines his use of the text to baptism. His preference for Matthew 16 is probably best explained by the fact that this text brings out more clearly the unity of the episcopate with the one Peter (cf. De cath. eccl. un. 4) than Matthew 18 or John 20. Cyprian considered that this aspect was particularly important, even in the question of penance, when faced with the laxists among his clergy who attempted to reconcile sinners off their own bat and to emancipate [194] themselves from the bishop. It may even be possible to deduce from De cath. eccl. un. 4 that these laxists in the Carthage

(. . . *legem dederit ut ligata in terris et in caelis ligata essent, solvi autem possent illic quae prius in Ecclesia solverentur* [Epist. 57,1]), are thinking of either Matt. 16 or Matt. 18. Cyprian never quotes Matt. 18 elsewhere (cf. D. J. Chapman, in RBén. 27 [1910], p. 449). Thus the reference to Matt. 16 is the more probable here.

[109] The *spei salutaris subsidium* which is mentioned only in this context is again membership of the Church, in so far as this has a salvific significance. *Pignus vitae in data pace percipiant* (Epist. 55,13). The possession of the *pax* is the *pignus vitae*, the *spei salutaris subsidium*. It is worth noting that the letter, deviating from Matt., modifies the loosing with the phrase *in Ecclesia* in the place of *in terris*. In the case of the binding, however, it preserves the *in terris*. Thus the loosing has a special connection with the Church. Certainly in Epist. 73,9 (cf. also Sent.episc. 48) there is the unique mention of a *peccata solvere* which occurs in baptism. Here, therefore, the immediate object of the *solvere* is the guilt as such. But this is mentioned only once here in connection with baptism and it cannot be applied to penance. For the *solvere* must be understood of a *remissa* which, according to Cyprian, does not exist in penance. On the other hand, the *solvere* in Epist. 57,1 should be explained in the light of its own context. And this requires an ecclesial interpretation.

[110] Cf. the relevant details given above.

[111] This could be demonstrated by a more precise exegesis of the Matthean texts.

[112] Cf. 'Tertullian's Theology of Penance' in this volume.

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clergy themselves appealed to John 20, because the *quamvis* . . . seems to suppose a contrary opinion. This must have made use of John 20:21 f.[113] What is more, it is a fact that the schismatics attacked in this writing rebelled against Cyprian because of the question of penance.

This second reason for Cyprian's reserve with regard to John 20 does not contradict the one already mentioned. In fact the laxists had simply readmitted sinners without reference to the bishop or the unity of the bishops in council. This is what Cyprian would call the straightforward *remissa peccatorum*. It is not unlikely that they appealed to John 20 in this sense and that, precisely for this reason, Cyprian did not enlist the aid of this text for his own notion in the question of penance.[114]

The power of binding and loosing promised in Matthew 16 and 18 finds its immediate application in the exclusion of a sinner from the Church and his readmission into it. Moreover, Cyprian considers that this power is exercised not merely 'on the occasion of', that is, 'also' along with the forgiveness of sins. Rather, he sees it, along with the Church's support of the sinner's own *satisfactio*, as the Church's own and direct act in the whole penitential process. There is never any question of another act on the Church's part.[115] The bishop's authoritative act is always the granting of the *pax* and the *communicatio*. All the other effects appear always as essentially and intrinsically connected consequences of the restoration of peace with the Church. Moreover, Cyprian interprets Matthew 16, in so far as this passage mentions an act of the Church, quite naturally in terms of exclusion from and readmission into the Church. Any exposition of Cyprian's view of the salvific effect of the Church's penitential process must, therefore, give explicit attention to this middle role played by the Church. If, and in so far as, he considers the act of the Church to have sacramental effects, that is, to cause grace, these effects flow from the act whereby the sinner is reconciled with the Church.

Now reconciliation with the Church has real effects with regard to grace in the next life. Negatively speaking, the blessing of belonging to the Church, which the unreconciled sinner lacks, is so indispensable for his salvation that without it he is lost. The *perdere pacem* is a *perdere salutem* (Epist. 36, 2). Even a martyr who is *extra Ecclesiam* [195] *constitutus* and thus *ab unitate atque a caritate divisus* cannot receive the crown through his death (Epist. 55,17). Men who, by following schismatic priests, have fallen away from the Church and died in this situation *extra Ecclesiam sine communicatione et pace perierunt* (Epist. 72,2). Thus full church membership is an absolutely indispensable precondition for a real possibility of salvation. To reject it means a *spei salutis subsidium denegare* (Epist. 57,1), whereas the reconciliation is a *pignus vitae percipere* (Epist. 55,13). Thus the former represents a binding realized also in heaven, while the latter opens up the possibility of a loosening at the last judgement (Epist. 57,1). If a person, through the granting of an invalid peace with the Church, prevents anyone from seeking a valid peace with the Church legitimately, he hinders the *communicatio ad salutem* (De lapsis 16). The person who is not in the Church is already a *semetipso damnatus*, so that there is no longer any need for an actual judgement passed by the Lord (De un. 17). On the other hand, the person who is again readmitted to the Church is

[113] This would obviously presuppose that this biblical passage already figured in the recension B of De unitate (enumeration according to Battifol) in A.D. 251 and that it was not introduced by Cyprian only in A.D. 255-6 after the subsidence of the polemic against the laxists. D. van den Eynde believes the latter to be the case, because the biblical quotations added to recension B are not to be found previously in Cyprian. Cf. D. van den Eynde, 'La double édition du "De unitate" de S. Cyprien' in: RHE 29 (1933), pp. 5-24.

[114] On this, cf. H. Bruders, Matt. 16:19; 18:18 and John 20:22,23 in 'Frühchristlicher Auslegung: Afrika bis 251' in: ZKTh 35 (1911), pp. 79-111.

[115] If theme is a mention of a *venia* which is granted immediately by the Church (Epist. 31,6; 72,2; cf. De lapsis 135), this can be understood perfectly well of the peace with the Church, since it is precisely the latter which is demanded vehemently by the *lapsi* as their right (De lapsis 35).

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enabled with this peace to pass over to the Lord (Epist. 18,1; 20.3). There he comes into judgement and must 'stand in wait for forgiveness' (*ad veniam stare*) (Epist. 55,20). It is an advantage that the Lord is coming to his Church and that he will judge (only) those *quos in ea* (*Ecclesia*) *intus invenerit* (Epist. 55,29). Certainly a *deprecari in die illo* is still necessary, but only the person who is in the Church (Epist. 65,5) is capable of it. As opposed to the martyrs who enter 'immediately' into glory he must still *pendere in die iudicii ad sententiam Domini* (Epist. 55,20), but in the Church he has the firm assurance that when the Lord comes in judgement acknowledging a *paenitentia plena et iusta* he will also ratify as valid the granting of church fellowship (Epist. 55,18). This applies particularly with regard to the completion of the penitent's own penance through the intercession of the Church in its martyrs and priests (De lapsis 36).

The renewal of church fellowship by the bishops is, therefore, of salvific importance for the penitent at least in so far as it provides the indispensable precondition for salvation at the judgement. Since the *satisfactio* is definitively effective only at the judgement, the renewal of church fellowship is just as necessary for salvation as *satisfactio*.[116] This is not only the theology of a bishop but a practical conviction which dictates the behaviour of Christians. If peace with the Church did not have in itself any meaning for salvation, then Christians would [196] hardly have been so bothered about it on the death-bed, when indeed the earthly tangible consequences,[117] such as access to the liturgy, must have been meaningless. But this is not all. The legitimately communicated peace with the Church conveys the possibility of receiving the sacrament of the Lord's body (Epist. 15,1; 16,2; 17,2). Granted the necessity for salvation which Cyprian ascribes to the reception of the Eucharist,[118] the possibility of a non-sacrilegious participation in this sacrament is very important. The unworthiness to receive this sacrament resides primarily in the sin and not only in the excommunication. Nevertheless it is the imposition of hands in penance and not the mere *satisfactio* which belongs to the prerequisites for worthiness to receive the Eucharist, which means that through *satisfactio* and the imposition of hands an interior change is accomplished in the sinner which makes him worthy to receive the Lord's body again. Cyprian does not devote any special considerations to the precise nature of this change in this context. He knows, however, that *Spiritum Sanctum consecutis ad bibendum calicem Domini pervenitur* (Epist. 63,8).[119] Thus his eucharistic thought seems to suggest that the reason for the renewed worthiness to receive

[116] At this point of our analysis of Cyprian's teaching on penance we are in a position to make yet another distinction: at the judgement *satisfactio* is the cause of the *venia*, but fellowship with the Church is its indispensable prerequisite. Nevertheless, this would be too neat and too clear a formula which does less than justice to Cyprian's idea. If it is true that *satisfactio*, especially in De lapsis, appears as a moral cause of the *venia*, it is still too hasty to conclude that the *pax* could count only as a precondition for the *venia*.

[117] The mere naming of a cleric as the executor of a will had the effect of excluding the dying person from sacrifice and prayer for the peace of his soul (Epist. 1,2). This was doubtless the case with an unreconciled sinner, who was known as such. In this case (differently from that in which it is a question of a person who was recognized as a *frater*) the punishment is due to the fact that a sinner is no longer a member of the Church in the full sense and, therefore, being dead, has even less of a right to *communicatio* with the Church's saving benefits than he had during his lifetime (Epist. 15,1; 16,2; 17,2).

[118] Cf., for example, Test. III 25 (John 6:53) and 26: a person must be *baptizatus* if he is to attain the Kingdom of God. In view of the quotation of John 6:35 baptism here includes implicitly communion which was granted for the first time at initiation (Epist. 63,8). Good works had still to be added to baptism and the Eucharist. What is more, Cyprian testifies to the practice of giving communion to infants (De lapsis 25). He could not be surprised, therefore, by any objection against the idea of the necessity of the Eucharist for salvation which might arise from another practice. The Eucharist affords salvation to the person who receives it worthily (De lapsis 26), and it is indispensable for the successful endurance of martyrdom (Epsit. 58,1.9; 57,2.4).

[119] Cyprian is here thinking primarily of baptism, although he does recognize that sin which renders a person unworthy of the Eucharist also deprives him of the Spirit. Thus it cannot be far from his mind that the reason for a renewed worthiness after a sin must be a repossession of the Spirit.

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the Eucharist consists in the possession of the Spirit which is communicated by the imposition of hands.[120]

In fact for Cyprian the passage between a *manus imposito ad accipiendum Spiritum Sanctum* and a *mantis impositio in paenitentiam* is so fluid that he is able to explain the imposition of hands in penance defended by Stephen quite simply as a communication of the Spirit. If these two impositions of hands had been completely distinct for the bishop of Carthage, this misunderstanding would be hardly thinkable. Even independently of our present question the imposition of hands of reconciliation is understood either simply as a gesture of the communication of the Spirit, on at least it stands very close to it conceptually. Finally, the peace with the Church is also considered explicitly as the reason for the new reception of the Spirit: *quomodo potest ad confessionem paratus aut idoneus inveniri, qui non prius pace accepta receperit Spiritum Patris* (Epist. 57,4). Cyprian says this to justify a premature reconciliation in face of the threat of a new persecution. The Spirit is accordingly necessary to undergo martyrdom. It can only be present for a person who has sinned previously, however, if he has received it again *pace accepta*. Thus in this case even a premature communication of the *pax* is [197] justified. Already the knowledge of the connection between *pax* and possession of the Spirit leads to practical consequences, even if this is naturally not their only reason. This knowledge can hardly have originated out of the top of his head. Moreover, this is not the only passage in Cyprian's work where he links explicitly the usual reconciliation of a sinner with the bestowal of the Spirit.[121]

What was concluded for the connection between *pax* and possession of the Spirit in Cyprian, both from the fact that a sinner is again made worthy to receive the Eucharist and from the rite used to effect reconciliation, shows that this connection is not an idea derived from Cyprian by argumentation and by using Epist. 57 as a proof text. Despite the fact that it is rarely attested, it must have been a commonplace for him, as well as not being entirely unknown to the tradition of his day (Hermas, Tertullian, Didascalia). The same idea appears even more clearly in Cyprian's general theology of the Church. What is more striking, however, is the fact that the rebestowal of the Spirit is never placed by Cyprian in relation to *satisfactio*. Given the importance which he ascribes to the latter for the forgiveness of sins, this may be surprising at first sight. This applies particularly where the remission of sins is considered as the bestowal of grace. Nevertheless, upon closer consideration, this observation is seen to be self-evident. This is because for Cyprian the *satisfactio* is the long-lasting payment of the 'guilts' of sin which receives its definitive answer from God's side only with the last judgement. It is not possible to connect any bestowal of the Spirit, considered as an actual and present event, with such a notion as this, as long as it is not broadened on modified. This is also why in Cyprian the communication of the Spirit was too closely linked with an external, temporally fixed ritual (baptism-confirmation).

In our opinion, this observation and its explanation justify us in understanding the statement of Epist. 57,4 clearly in the sense that Cyprian, in speaking of the reception of the Spirit through the *pax accepta*, is really thinking only of the *pax* itself and in no way of the *satisfactio* as the cause of the communication of the Spirit. This maintains, despite his demand for at least a sufficient *satisfactio*, as a precondition of the *pax*. It is not the *satisfactio* which bestows the Spirit[122] but the *pax*. Thus the relationship existing between

[120] This possession of the Spirit is nowhere placed in an immediate causal relationship with *satisfactio* as such.
[121] The teaching of Pope Stephen may also be relevant here. He understands the imposition of hands for heretics as an imposition of hands of penance, and still states explicitly that it communicates the Spirit. But Stephen is very obscure on this matter. Cyprian does not acknowledge this imposition of hands for heretics and, moreover, he interprets it as Confirmation.
[122] How little Cyprian considers linking the reacquisition of the Spirit with *satisfactio* as such is clear from Epist. 25: even after they have been purified from their crime and their fault by means of their confession, the

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satisfactio and *pax*, as it was explained above, is in fact now reversed. Whereas previously the *pax* was the precondition (*pignus*) for the [198] effectiveness of the *satisfactio* as the cause of the forgiveness of sins at the judgement, now a certain[123] *satisfactio* is required so that the *pax* may effectively bring about the communication of the Spirit. This will have to be borne in mind when we come to discuss the relationship between personal penance and church reconciliation with regard to the unity of their effects.

But perhaps it could still be asked here whether Cyprian saw the communication of the Spirit in the granting of the *pax*, that is, the actual ritual, or in the renewed church membership, considered in its duration, allowed by the bishop's act. The way in which this discussion of the problem appears in Augustine[124] shows that this question should not be peremptorily rejected as too subtle for a Father of the Church. At the same time, no clear answer to it is found in Cyprian. On the one hand, he considers the bishop's possession of the Spirit the indispensable prerequisite for the effectiveness of his administration of baptism and his granting of the *pax* (Epist. 66,5). Thus one could ascribe the principal cause of the communication of the Spirit to the episcopal act of reconciliation as such. On the other hand, it is not completely clear that the penitential imposition of hands, on its own, is anything more than a gesture which supports the sinner's own exhomologesis. This exhomologesis, however, is a part and an indication of his *satisfactio* which is followed less 'formally' by the *pax*. Thus it is not to be simply excluded that it was the full church membership (*in facto esse*) which was considered the actual and immediate principle communicating the Spirit.[125] The restoration of church fellowship through the bishop's authoritative verdict as such, therefore, has an essential salvific importance and brings about effects concerning grace and the communication of the Spirit.

In order to appreciate the precise reason why according to Cyprian the renewed recognition of full church membership has this salvific meaning and is a cause of grace it is necessary to refer to his theology of the Church. *Salus extra Ecclesiam non est* (Epist. 73,21). *Christianus non est, qui in Christi Ecclesia non est* (Epist. 55,24). *Habere non potest Deum patrem, qui Ecclesiam non habet matrem* (De cath. eccl. un. 6). *Ut habere quis possit Deum patrem, habeat ante Ecclesiam matrem* (Epist. 74,7). *Quomodo potest esse eum Christo, qui cum sponsa Christi atque in eius Ecclesia non est?* (Epist. 52,1). *Haec nos Deo servat* (De cath. eccl. un. 6). These statements about [199] the necessity of the Church for salvation cannot be understood merely in terms of an external precondition which simply precedes the actual event by which man is saved. The Church is here seen rather as itself bringing about salvation, and this Church is the actual, historical, tangible Church. Even if we leave Cyprian's theology of baptism out of consideration, this is evident from his view of penance. This view demands the actual granting of peace with the Church, realized through the imposition of hands by the bishop alone, which entails legal and empirically verifiable consequences. This peace with the Church[126] communicates the Holy Spirit to the man to

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lapsi are still *sub diabolo quasi prostrati* until they have been granted the *pax*, even though they have a right to this *pax*. Cyprian could not have said this if he knew that they were already in possession of the Spirit through *satisfactio* alone; in his view Spirit and the grace of baptism, on the one hand, and the exclusion of the devil from within man, on the other, coincide exactly (Epist. 69,15-16).

[123] Cyprian knows of an effective *pax* even in those cases where the *satisfactio* is not yet recognized as *plena*.

[124] Cf. B. Poschmann, 'Die kirchliche Vermittlung der Sündenvergebung nach Augustinus' in: ZKTh 45 (1921), pp. 208-28, 405-32, 497-526 (esp. 413 ff.). In the case of Augustine this way of posing the question obviously arises from the anti-Donatistic situation: where does the Spirit come from if, in this perspective, the bishop cannot bestow it because although he dispenses the sacraments validly he does so without possessing the Spirit himself?

[125] Cf. the details in n. 69.

[126] The sacramental ('instrumental') causality of reconciliation becomes much clearer in the case of the effect of baptism which is brought about by the water sanctified through the priest's word (Sent. episc. 18). It is effective

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whom it is announced. In the context of the question of penance it is not explained why this is so. The fact of such an efficacy of the peace with the Church with regard to grace follows self-evidently from the view which he holds of the necessity of the Church for salvation. It is for him a self-evident theological axiom which is not disputed even by his adversaries in the controversy over the baptism of heretics. In any case, it follows from Cyprian's theology of the Church[127] that only the Church of the bishops who derive from Peter and are united under him is the 'Church'. As visibly, legally constituted it is the Church of Christ which he 'has prepared through his own blood' (Epist. 72,2). It is his body (Epist. 63,13) and, therefore, bound to him alone and united with him (Epist. 74,6). As this visible Church of Christ, it alone possesses the Spirit[128] and transmits it to the members who belong to it legitimately by baptism. *Spiritu eius animamur* (De cath. eccl. un. 5). This life-giving influence is exercised in the Church, however, not only in the once-and-for-all act of baptism but also through the continuing possession of life by its members who, therefore, must remain always united with it. *Quidquid a matrice discesserit seorsum vivere et spirare non poterit, substantiam salutis amittit* (De. cath. eccl. un. 23). Thus Cyprian's ecclesiology would be violated by the view which sees in church membership a mere juridical precondition that man can withstand God's judgement in the question of his salvation – which salvation, however, he has to achieve by his own efforts. It is only in the Church that man enters into life-giving contact with the Spirit of Christ which, emanating from the Church, continually inspires man. And it is for this reason that the *pax* with the Church is the means by which the Spirit is communicated.

[200]

6. The Unity of Satisfactio and Pax in Their Remitting of Sins

Does Cyprian's theology shift from the idea of *satisfactio* as man's act which remits sins to that of reconciliation as the act of the Church which conveys the Spirit? Does this mean that there are contradictions or, at least, important inconsistencies in the penitential theology of this Father of the Church? It is certainly difficult to understand logically that *satisfactio* as the

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in the case of infants (Epist. 64,5). *Neque enim Spiritus sine aqua separatim operari potest neque aqua sine Spiritu* (Sent. episc. 5). Cyprian's whole teaching of the *remissa peccatorum* without personal *satisfactio* in baptism points in the same direction; similarly the fact that he does not recognize a 'Baptism of desire', since in *his* view the baptism of blood is not to be interpreted as baptism of desire. If, therefore, Cyprian is familiar with the idea of a sacrament as *opus operatum*, then the notion that the *pax* causes the possession of the Spirit cannot be discounted as being alien to him.

[127] Cf., for example, C. A. Kneller, 'Sacramentum unitatis (Zu Cyprians Schrift an Donatus)' in: ZKTh 40 (1916), pp. 676-703; A. d'Alès, *La théologie de S.Cyprien* (Paris 1922); H. Koch, *Cathedra Petri*: *neue Untersuchungen über die Anfänge der Primatslehre* (Giessen 1930); B. Poschmann, *Ecclesia principalis*. *Ein kritischer Beitrag zur Frage des Primats dei Cyprian* (Breslau 1933); E. Mersch, *Le corps mystique du Christ* II (Paris 1936), pp. 15-34; E. Altendorf, *Einheit und Heiligkeit der Kirche*: *Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung der altchristlichen Kirchenbegriffe im Abendland von Tentullian bis zu den antidonatistischen Schriften Augustins*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 20 (Berlin 1932), pp. 44-116, cf. RHE 29 (1933), p. 1049; J. Zeiller, 'La conception de l'Eglise aux quatre premiers siècles' in: RHE 29 (1933), pp. 571-85, 827-48; M. Bévenot, 'Episcopat et Primat chez Cyprien' in: EThL 42 (1966), pp. 176-95; C. B. Daly, *Absolution and Satisfaction in St. Cyprian's Theology of Penance*, Studia Patr. II. TU 64 (Berlin 1957); M. Jourgon, *Cyprien de Carthage* (Paris 1957); G. Klein, 'Die hermeneutische Struktur des Kirchengedankens bei Cyprian' in: ZKG 68 (1957), pp. 48-68; R. Hardowirgono, 'S. Cypriaan: Het Heil in de Kerk' in: *Bijdragen* 19 (1958), pp. 1-21,137-61; J. Colson, *L'evêque, lien d'unité et de charité chez Saint Cyprien de Carthage* (Paris 1961); K. Delahaye, *Ecclesia Mater chez les Péres des trois premiers siècles* (Paris 1964); A. Demoustier, 'L'ontologie de l'Eglise selon Cyprien' in: RSR 52 (1964), pp. 554-8; W. Simonis, *Ecclesia visibilis et invisibilis* (Frankfurt 1970); U. Wickert, *Sacramentum Unitatis* (Berlin/New York 1971).

[128] The whole of Cyprian's argument in the question of the baptism of heretics flows from this axiom. Cf., for example, Sent. episc. 34: *solo possideat gratiam Christi et veritatem*.

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remission of sins achieved by the penitent himself is a presupposition of reconciliation,[129] while this reconciliation appears at the same time as a presupposition of the forgiveness of sins by God. Nevertheless this difficulty need not have existed for Cyprian.

Cyprian does not demand a *plena satisfactio* as a prerequisite for reconciliation in every case. At least in those cases where it is not required one and the same *satisfactio* cannot be the presupposition for church reconciliation and for the full forgiveness of guilt at the judgement. Thus the *satisfactio* can only be the condition for the reconciliation which then, in its turn, is required so that full *satisfactio* made on earth or in the next life achieves forgiveness by God. Nevertheless, apart from these cases, even when Cyprian normally demands a *plena satisfactio* as a condition for the *pax* of the Church, he does not actually prescribe the forgiveness of guilt by God as a condition for church reconciliation. If this were the case reconciliation would always arrive too late to have any effect on the forgiveness of guilt. Rather he expects a *satisfactio* which offers the prospect that later at the judgement God will forgive the guilt. For such a future forgiveness the peace with the Church can still have an important meaning. This solution of the difficulty corresponds totally to Cyprian's view, according to which God will answer the *satisfactio* with *venia* definitively only in the future at the judgement. He considers the peace with the Church explicitly as an indispensable pre-requisite for this *venia*. For all this, however, the real difficulties in Cyprian's two-sided theology of penance are not yet eliminated. If church reconciliation alone is the cause of the renewed reception of the Spirit, then thereby the remission of sins is achieved, and indeed here and now. But then what is the position of *satisfactio* which will not have this effect until the judgement?

It is fairly easy to answer this particular difficulty in Cyprian's [201] theology of penance in the light of today's common theological distinction between the liability for guilt and the liability for punishment. The forgiveness of guilt itself occurs on the supposition of a certain *satisfactio* ('sorrow') by means of the communication of the Spirit in church reconciliation. This 'forgiveness' is required so that full *satisfactio* (which, according to Cyprian, will be achieved at the last judgement) can usher in the total remission of the punishments due to sin (that is, quite simply the *venia* according to Cyprian). Thus both church reconciliation and personal *satisfactio* count as causes of forgiveness without being relegated to a mere 'precondition' for the remission of sins. Certainly, to regard *satisfactio* as mere 'sorrow' would not correspond to Cyprian's view. On the other hand, to consider the *pax* only a precondition would jeopardize the 'sacrament' as *opus operatum* and would not adequately represent the view of the Bishop of Carthage. But is this suggested solution of the difficulty in this theology of penance one which Cyprian himself could have envisaged?

The distinction between guilt and punishment, remission of guilt and remission of punishment is not so common and familiar for Cyprian, even if it is not totally foreign to him, that one can take it for granted that for him there could arise no serious tension between the remission of sins through *satisfactio* and the remission of sins through reconciliation. What is more, in view of Cyprian's basic tendency, such a solution undermines considerably the importance of the *satisfactio plena*. This *satisfactio plena*, in his view, is in some way decisive for salvation, and there subsists an uncertainty about this salvation so long as there is no assurance that the *satisfactio* has been carried out to a sufficient degree. On the other hand, in this 'solution' salvation is already fundamentally assured through the possession of the Spirit, and in comparison with this the remission of guilt remains a secondary matter. It could also be observed that even in our modern way of thinking the certainty of possession of the Spirit because of reconciliation, granted the subjective and necessarily presupposed disposition of the penitent, always remains questionable and thus allows for that radical

[129] *The pax* is *fructus paenitentiae* (Epist. 55,17,29).

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uncertainty about salvation which Cyprian stresses. Against this last point, however, it should be remarked that Cyprian, far from emitting any uncertainty about the possession of the Spirit, regards this as a characteristic of the [202] situation in which the sinner finds himself after baptism. In the solution offered, however, this uncertainty would apply just as much to the newly baptized.

We must, therefore, be content with the observation that, as yet, a perfect accord between the different assertions in Cyprian's theology of penance has not been found. It is worth noting, in this regard, that the Bishop of Carthage, despite these tensions in his theory, did not succumb to the temptation simply to sacrifice one of the two aspects. The original, essential importance of reconciliation for the reception of the Spirit and the remission of sins (at least in fact) is underlined just as much as the causal importance of personal activity for the remission of sins and thus, at least in fact, for the reception of the Spirit. Perhaps, on the whole, this theology of penance is even better than the penitential teaching common today. The latter, as opposed to Thomas Aquinas, considers it possible to safeguard the causality of the Church or sacramental activity with regard to the communication of grace and the remission of sins only by relegating the *satisfactio*, considered as 'sorrow', to the mere precondition for the grace of the sacrament of penance. A truly thomistic theology of penance would vindicate Cyprian on this point and show that the full importance of the sacrament as *opus operatum* can be safeguarded without such a depreciation of the *satisfactio*.

Let us then leave Cyprian's theology of penance simply in its own historical position, without trying to force his statements into a synthesis which he himself does not provide. Nevertheless, it is possible to pose a further question: how could Cyprian stop short here psychologically without experiencing the need for a more precise synthesis and without the temptation to sacrifice one of his two basic principles in the theology of penance for the sake of the other? The answer to this question is of some historical importance, since it can show that it is completely unjustifiable to hold an interpretation of Cyprian in which one or other of these basic statements is depreciated. This is precisely what has happened with Galtier on the one hand and H. Koch on the other,[130] as if it were psychologically totally impossible that both statements, being the starting-points contrary interpretations, could not have originated in Cyprian's mind. Moreover, the answer to our question is relatively simple: possession of the Spirit and freedom from guilt are not so closely [203] connected for Cyprian that every time communication of the Spirit is mentioned he had to think *eo ipso* clearly of the remission of guilt, and *vice versa*. We do this today quite automatically. And indeed Cyprian also recognizes that the Holy Spirit leaves a man on account of serious sin, that is, that sin is a loss of grace.[131] Nevertheless, in his explanation of the remission of sins as such he never exploits explicitly and immediately the notion of the rebestowal of the Holy Spirit. He uses this notion to describe the effect of the *pax* but never directly the nature of the remission of sins. This is less surprising than it may appear today. In the Bible the consequences of sin are considered exclusively from a moral and eschatological viewpoint.[132] The description of the consequences of sin from the point of view of the theology of grace is totally lacking here. Thus in the Bible there can be no explanation of the renewed remission of sins in terms of a rebestowal of grace and of the Spirit. In the second century polemic against the amoral, gnostic notion of grace, the loss of grace through sin had to be stressed. Thus developed the

[130] Koch maintains that according to Cyprian the remission of sins (implicitly = the acquisition of grace) is the work of the *satisfactio*. Thus penance cannot be a sacrament, since then the sacramental sign would communicate grace. According to Galtier (De paenitentia, n. 150) it is reconciliation which communicates the Spirit (implicitly = the remission of sins). Thus *satisfactio* for the guilt, leaving aside the question of the mere 'punishments' of sins, can be only a precondition; and thus penance involves a real sacrament.
[131] Cf. the previous considerations on 'the nature of serious sin'.
[132] For the different approaches possible, cf. 'Sin as Loss of Grace in Early Church Literature' in this volume.

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explicit notion of sin as a loss of grace. But naturally this development was not so rapid that this viewpoint predominated immediately over the moral and eschatological approaches. It took even longer for the post-baptismal remission of sins considered as the regaining of grace, under the influence of the idea just mentioned, to become the dominant viewpoint.

It is therefore not surprising if, with regard to the remission of sins, the moral and eschatological viewpoints predominated much longer. Certainly Cyprian, following Tertullian, knew the notion, of the *mortale crimen* (De bono pat. 14) as sin which brings about the death of grace. Nevertheless such offences are much less clearly differentiated from other sins by means of the treatment from the viewpoint of grace in Cyprian than they are in Tertullian.[133] The more ancient approach to sin is still prevalent. It is therefore hardly surprising that the consideration of the nature of sin from the viewpoint of grace is not exploited by Cyprian in the theology of the remission of sins. Presumably a consideration of the forgiveness of sins from the point of view of a theology of grace did not emanate exclusively from such a view of sin itself, but developed rather from an ecclesiological reflection: the person who sins separates himself from the Church. This is an idea which was understandable even [204] without a clear consideration of sin from the viewpoint of the theology of grace. The person who returns to the Church receives the Holy Spirit through it as the mediator of grace.

Despite a determination of the nature of sin from the viewpoint of grace in certain cases, at that time the idea was completely unthinkable that the Holy Spirit and the guilt of sin could coexist simultaneously in a man. We could perhaps visualize such a possibility, since for us the possession of the Spirit is justifiably compatible with a venial fault. At that time, however, the clear knowledge of the essential difference between a serious and a venial sin was only beginning to show itself. It would take much longer before it became clearly and commonly accepted. Can we say, therefore, that at that time the possession of the Spirit and the remission of certain sins which were only vaguely distinguished from other 'venial' sins must have been quite self-evidently identical? In fact all that Tertullian, for example, can say when faced with a casually-minded and unrepentant catechumen is that, even if, against all expectation, he receives baptism, he will lose the Spirit again soon afterwards. He does not dare, therefore, to state categorically that unrepentance and possession of the Spirit are always and everywhere incompatible. We have already referred to similar points of obscurity in Pope Stephen. On the other hand, at that time it was perfectly possible to envisage a purification from sin which was followed only later by a communication of the Spirit. This is directly observable in Tertullian. But it is essentially no different in Cyprian. Certainly in his view possession of the Spirit is necessary in order to be able to dispense the pardon of sins in baptism (Epist. 69,10 f.). Nevertheless, for him the purification and sanctification of baptism which forgives sins, on the one hand, and the imposition of hands which communicates the Spirit, on the other, are two 'sacraments' (Epist. 72,1; 73,9.21; 74,5.7; 75,8.l8).[134]

Thus the idea of a purification from sins, in so far as it is effective already here on earth, by means *of satisfactio*, allowing for the new communication of the Holy Spirit in reconciliation

[133] Thus it is mentioned in De op. et eleem. 2 that we can be *post gratiam baptismi sordidati*, and yet *denuo* purified by the *iugis operatio* which, as opposed to baptism, bestows God's forgiveness *rursus*. This thought continues without any interruption in the third chapter and becomes an exhortation for us to heal our sins in this way, since no one is without sin.

[134] Cyprian never ascribes a communication of the Spirit to baptism, as distinct from the imposition of hands after baptism. If, for example in Epist. 74,4.5, he stresses the cooperation of the Spirit in baptism itself, it is obvious that, unless he is contradicting himself, he is referring only to the active co-operation of the Spirit on the side both of the person who is administering the baptism and of the water (cf. Epist. 75,9; Sent.episc. 5). In any event this cannot mean a communication of the Spirit to the neophyte. How far it is possible for us to deduce logically such a communication of the Spirit at baptism from the effects which Cyprian ascribes to baptism is quite a different question.

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through the imposition of hands, is not totally out of the question for Cyprian. According to his way of thinking, however, there could be no question that the bestowal of the Spirit would be brought about by penance considered more on less as man's own effort.[135] If, according [205] to the ideas of that time, this activity can purify from sin, then this is only in so far as the purification itself is considered from a moral viewpoint. It cannot communicate the Spirit of God which, according to Cyprian, is given by God through the sacraments of initiation. Given the state of theological reflection at that time, therefore, it is not at all surprising that in Cyprian the theology of the remission of sins and that of the communication of the Spirit went their separate ways. The importance of all this for us is that we are not justified, for the sake of pure logic, in depreciating either Cyprian's theology of *satisfactio* as a cause of the remission of sin and the remission of guilt on his theology of *pax* as the Church's act communicating the Spirit. Cyprian rightly insisted on both aspects, and, differently from us, he still experienced no problem in holding both of the assertions. In so far as this theology, being a reflection of the teaching of the Church at that time, has a claim to lasting relevance, we have the task of grasping the subjective act of man and the act of the Church in their unity in such a way that one causality can be predicated of both acts with regard to the one effect which is both the reception of the Spirit and the remission of sins together. Once this unity of *satisfactio* and the act of the Church has been grasped, and the penitent's role within this unity is seen as being caused by grace, then the semi-pelagian tone of Cyprian's teaching on satisfaction is eliminated.

7. The Sacramental Nature of Church Penance

We can resume what has been said above by broaching the question: does Cyprian in his theology of penance bear witness to the existence of a sacrament of penance? That church penance is not called a *sacramentum*,[136] as are baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, is irrelevant, because even these sacraments are not so called for the reason which today justifies this designation. In any event, how important the bishop's power in the granting of reconciliation was for the Bishop of Carthage is evident, for example, from Epist. 66,5. He points to the consequences of Puppian's challenge of his episcopal power with reference to the fact that very many Christians Would die *sine spe salutis et pacis*. He explains this fact more precisely [206] by saying that some would not be validly baptized and, therefore, would not receive the Spirit, while others would not be validly reconciled with the community of the Church[137] Thus baptism and the granting of reconciliation are both fundamental acts on the

[135] When Tertullian in his Montanist period wishes to praise fasting, he says on one occasion (De ieiunio 8) that through fasting the Holy Spirit *inducitur*, just as the wicked spirit is expelled. Nevertheless, according to De bapt. 6.8; De paen. 6,17, in comparison with 2,6, for Tertullian too personal penance and purification from sins arc only a preparation and a prerequisite for the communication of the Spirit in the sacrament. In other words, they are not the immediate cause of the communication of the Spirit itself.

[136] Cf. J. de Ghellinck, *Pour I'histoire du mot 'Sacramentum'* I (Louvain/Paris 1924) (J. B. Poukens, pp. 153-220). Poukens (p. 215 f.) considers that it is not certain in which of the many senses *sacramentum* is intended when Cyprian uses this term to designate baptism. confirmation and the Eucharist. Thus it is clear how unimportant this designation is for reconciliation. In Epist. 74,4, for instance, Cyprian accuses Pope Stephen of deriving the *disciplina ad celebranda sacramenta* from the heretics, since these sacramenta, according to Stephen's own testimony, were celebrated at II the reception of 'heretics' only by an imposition of hands. According to Cyprian this meant that the behaviour of Christians was being dictated by anti-Christians. In view of all this, it is not totally unlikely that Cyprian gave the name of sacrament to the imposition of hands at baptism.

[137] In my opinion (as opposed to B. Xiberta, *Clavis Ecclesiae* [Rome 1922], p. 41) Cyprian does not make an essential distinction here between baptism and the reconciliation of penance. He describes both by stressing their immediate effects (*Spiritus Sancti gratia–communicatio*). It is obvious, however, that in the disputed

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bishop's part which are decisive for salvation.

The ability to perform these acts rests, according to Cyprian, on an authorization by Christ. It is a matter of an authoritative, indeed judicial, activity of the bishop which is performed by means of a visible sign, that is, by the imposition of hands and prayer. This act is decisive for salvation and thus the sinner is strictly obliged to submit himself to it. It is the cause of effects which concern grace. In today's terminology we would call such an act a sacrament Although the comprehensive description of reconciliation which we have given still lacks elements which in today's notion of sacrament clearly distinguish the sacrament itself from signs which are associated with it, such as sacramentals, etc., these elements were no more consciously emphasized in the early Church with regard to the other sacraments, for example, in baptism as opposed to the accompanying 'ceremonies', than here in the case of the reconciliation of penance. Cyprian attributes the strictly eschatologically effective removal of sins, as he understands it, to *satisfactio* as its cause. This does not deprive the church reconciliation of its sacramental character since, on the one hand, for Cyprian the effect of this reconciliation as far as grace is concerned does not coincide simply with the remission of sins and, on the other hand, he understands the whole of penance as a unity[138] consisting of *satisfactio* and reconciliation, which parts should never be separated or thought of as being effective separately. The difference between this sacrament and baptism has already been sufficiently emphasized above. In penance there is not a simple *remissa peccatorum* because the reconciliation presupposes a *plena satisfactio* and because the complete sacrament includes this *satisfactio* as an essential clement. To this extent, it can be styled, even in Cyprian's sense, as a sacrament of the remission of sins committed after baptism, even if the reconciliation and the *pax*, together with the bestowal of the Spirit which they entail, are not directed towards the immediate and full remission of sin. The sacramental character of this remission is also implicit in the fact that *satisfactio* itself includes a co-operation on the Church's part.

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8. Lasting Consequences after Complete Reconciliation?

In the later history of the Patristic development of penance the penitent still has to observe, even after his reconciliation, prescriptions and obligations which imprint the mark of penance profoundly on his subsequent life. Now did such obligations, which in time made the whole of the ancient penitential practice impracticable, exist already in the third century? In general this question has to be answered in the negative. A probable indication to this effect is the fact that at this time penance itself, at least in principle, lasted a very long time and, even more than later, was determined by the judgement of the individual bishop. The bishop could make it last until he saw that the *plena satisfactio* was reached. Later, however, there were fixed points for reconciliation, which meant that there was a general reconciliation for all those who had done penance up to a particular point of time. It was this state of affairs, rather than that existing at Cyprian' s time, which prompted the suggestion that further penitential

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passage the second and third *ne*-clauses (CSL 3:p. 730 nos. 16 and 17) provide a more precise justification for the first *ne*-clause (no. 13). What this says is why many would die without hope of salvation, if Cyprian were not a legitimate bishop. That is why Cyprian links baptism with reconciliation in respect of their importance for salvation. This does not detract from the stress on the difference between baptism and *satisfactio* which is found in other passages, since *satisfactio* means something different from *pax et communicatio*. The latter can easily be seen as a parallel to baptism. Nevertheless, the 'parallelism' between baptism and penance (De op. et eleem. 2; Epist. 55,22), which in fact underline the difference between the two, should not be made into an argument for the sacramental nature of penance.

[138] Cyprian does not consider in any detail either how this unity is to be envisaged more precisely or how it comes about.

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obligations might be necessary even after the reconciliation. Nevertheless already in Cyprian's time there are indications of the lasting consequences of a church penance or, better, of the fault which led up to this penance. Thus the priest Trofinus, being converted from schism, is received again in Rome only as a layman (*ut laicus communicet*) (Epist. 55,11). The same principle applies to bishops, priests and deacons who have apostasized or become schismatics and wish to do penance. Pope Cornelius, with the agreement of the bishops, already lays down the general principle that penitents, even if they have fallen into sin as lay people, should not be allowed access to the *ordinatio cleri atque sacerdotalis honor* (Epist. 67,6; 72,2). Pope Stephen and other bishops, however, appear to have been somewhat more lenient in their judgement in certain circumstances in the case of bishops who have fallen (cf. Epist. 67,5.9).

As a further 'lasting consequence' it might be mentioned that a person who has once received church reconciliation is not able to do so a second time. Nevertheless this principle is not stated explicitly in Cyprian. It is already present in the Pastor Hermae, however, and is explicitly mentioned by Tertullian as a principle for the African Church. And this is still the case later, for example in Augustine. [208] Thus it is without a doubt current in the middle of the third century. The fact that Cyprian himself does not mention this principle explicitly allows us to conclude that in everyday practice it did not apply to many cases which demanded his attention.[139] Indeed this principle helps us to understand why Cyprian could make the granting or the refusal of church reconciliation appear more like a disciplinary than a dogmatic question (Epist. 55,21). All the Churches refused reconciliation in this particular case. The Bishop of Carthage could believe, therefore, that a person who refused reconciliation in other cases did not necessarily have to hold a different dogmatic view on the right, authority and obligation of the Church with regard to sinners. In the struggle against Novatianism, however, he recognized that a kind of rigoristic penitential practice could exist which was to be rejected radically for dogmatic reasons. This is because the person who explains the refusal of reconciliation as the refusal of a necessary *pignus vitae*, and at the same time is convinced that the Church could grant this *pignus vitae*, implicitly teaches that the Church is obliged to give this guarantee of' salvation, at least in normal cases. Cyprian did not consider how this principle could be reconciled with a refusal, albeit exceptional, of reconciliation to a repentant sinner. This refusal was linked necessarily with the once-and-for-all character of the granting of penance. The notion of a 'substitute' for a sacrament through the *votum sacramenti* was completely unknown to Cyprian. It is only with Augustine that both theoretically and explicitly a possibility of salvation is opened to a sinner who is excluded from a second church reconciliation. This is all the more noteworthy in that Augustine, throughout his whole life, could not bring himself to a clear idea on the possibility of a 'baptism of desire'.

9. A 'Private' Sacramental Penance in Cyprian?

A) THE QUESTION AND ITS TREATMENT

It is already difficult to pose precisely the terms of the problem with which we are now concerned at the end of this exposition of Cyprian's theology of penance. In fact, since this question arises again especially in the high Patristic age, a more precise determination of the *status quaestionis* is called for than the situation of Cyprian himself [209] would seem to require. In general the question may be formulated as follows: in the third century is there,

[139] Cf. S. Hübner, p. 50, n.8.

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beside the 'public', another 'private' but sacramental[140] penance by which the Church forgives sins? This question is not as clear as it may appear at first sight, since, it may be asked, when is a sacramental penance public and when is it private? Thus in order to pose our question more precisely we need to clarify the difference between these two notions. Now this is a difficult task from both the 'liturgical' and the 'historical' viewpoints.

In earlier periods of the study of the early Church's penitential discipline from the point of view of the history of dogma 'excommunication' was regarded as something added to penance itself in the sense of a modern punishment by the Church (cf. on this point J. Grotz). At least in so far as the sinner was also reconciled with the Church, excommunication occurred in many or even in all incidents of the penitential-process in the early Church. Nevertheless, according to this approach it always occurred as only accidental to the actual sacramental event. The theory has even been propounded that the sacramental 'absolution' from sin occurred at the beginning of the penitential process so that at the end of it only the excommunication, considered a mere punishment of the Church, was lifted *in foro externo*.[141] On this basis it was easy to establish the difference between public and private penance. A public penance is one which occurs between the introduction and the absolution of an excommunication, this last being considered a punishment of the Church and, therefore, concerned with the *forum externum*. In all other cases penance is 'private'.

This view of the situation is, however, certainly false. In the early Church every serious sin was considered the deprivation of full peace with the Church.[142] Reconciliation restores this peace with the Church, but it was also considered as entailing the effects of grace in the next life, the rebestowal of the Holy Spirit and, in this sense, the removal of guilt. This viewpoint of the early Church makes it impossible, therefore, to distinguish a 'public' church penance from a supposedly sacramental 'private' one by claiming that the one presupposes and revokes an 'excommunication', while the other does not.

In fact even from a modern dogmatic viewpoint it is not possible to establish the distinction in this way. For a very long time there has [210] been an *excommunicatio latae* and one that is *ferendae sententiae* which is not connected with every sin and which does not follow necessarily from it but is appended as a subsequent punishment by the Church for certain sins, in addition to the consequences which sin naturally entails. But this practice does not supersede the view of the early Church. Even modern theology recognizes the fact of the removal of full church fellowship, the deprivation of the unrestricted participation in the visible and invisible blessings of the Church. This deprivation is entailed always and necessarily by serious sin itself and is made good only by sacramental absolution. What we

[140] On the supposition, that is, that private penance can be shown to be sacramental. Every one agrees that there was a private penance in the Church Fathers in the sense that the sinner remitted his own light sins through his own penitential efforts or at least without an actual intervention of the Church which acted as a sacrament.

[141] The following specialists in the history of penance defend this theory: F. Frank, *Die Bussdisziplin der Kirche* (Mainz 1867), p. 811 ff.; F. Probst, *Sakramente und Sakramentalien in den drei ersten christlichen Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen 1872), p. 368 f.; H. J. Schmitz, *Die Bussbücher und die Bussdisziplin der Kirche* I (Mainz 1883), p. 28 f.; II (Düsseldorf 1898), p. 75 f.; J. Stufler, 'Die Sündenvergebung bei Origenes' in: ZKTh 31 (1907), pp. 193-228 (cf. 207); id., 'Einige Bemerkungen zur Busslehre Cyprians' in: ZKTh 33 (1909), pp. 232-47 (cf. 245). The dogmatic theologians followed this theory almost unanimously for a long time. Cf., for example, D. Palmieri, *De paenitentia* (Prati 1896), p. 508 ff.; H. Hurter, *Compendium theol.dogm*. III (Innsbruck 1903), p. 498 (n.501) nota; Ch. Pesch, *Praelect. dogm*. VII (Freiburg/Br. 1920), p. 138 ff. (n.263 ff.). In this context we should also mention J. Grotz. He posits the existence of a purely canonical stage of penance, in the form of an exclusion and a readmission, before the actual sacramental church penance. But he, too, separates the two very carefully. For the discussion of this view, cf. the essay 'The Penitential Teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas' in this volume.

[142] The only difficulty against this view for the period which we are considering comes from Tertullian. We will consider it below.

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are talking about is the exclusion from the Eucharist.[143] In the penitential practice of the early Church, therefore, excommunication and its removal by the granting of the *pax* is seen in its actual theological essence and precisely not as pertaining to canon law (*iure ecclesiastico*). Moreover, this point is not overlooked in today's practice of 'private' sacramental penance on the occasion of every sacramental absolution of serious sin. Thus the 'excommunication' so understood dogmatically is of no use in establishing the distinction between 'public' and 'private' sacramental penance, as if one could then use this notion historically.

In the third century 'excommunication' always (or almost always) had the effects which followed automatically from serious sin, that is, exclusion from the Eucharist. By his serious sin the sinner placed himself in the 'position of 'being a penitent' because at that time everyone communicated and placed the highest value on the exercise of this right. Thus the penance in the early Church which is called public by everyone should in fact be styled 'private' in the sense that it does not involve the lifting of an additional, specifically imposed punishment by the Church, that is, the liberation from an 'excommunication' in today's canonical sense. In those days it was more a question of the abolition of the connatural, albeit ecclesial too, effect of sin itself. If, therefore, this idea of excommunication is to serve as any basis at all for the distinction between the two notions under discussion, this can be only with regard to greater or lesser explicitness or solemnity of the excommunication. But how is this to be done?

For 'liturgical' reasons such a distinction is not easy simply by looking at the actual celebration of penance. The penitential practice of the early Church, which is usually called 'public', is in fact public in very many different degrees. At the same time, even today's form [211] of administering this sacrament, which is dubbed 'private', is not entirely devoid of all public aspects. In the 'public' penitential institution of the early Church there may have been occasionally a public individual confession of the sins themselves. But it is false to maintain that such a confession, as distinct from the performance of penance itself, was necessarily or even usually public. Thus the public character of the confession cannot be legitimately considered as a criterion for distinguishing between public and private penance; it is just not always verified in those cases where everyone would speak about 'public' penance. The public character of the performance of penance, however, was so varied and subject to so many different, fluid and vague nuances that such a penance could lack practically all public character, just as today's private penance does. On the other hand, it frequently appeared no different to the consciousness of that time from the normal 'public' penance. If, for example, in Cyprian a sick person was reconciled because of the letter of a martyr, then he received the peace of the Church through the imposition of hands and he kept it when he recovered his health. Thus he appeared practically never publicly in the 'class of penitents', so that on the one hand his penance was very 'private', while on the other hand it was still nothing other than 'public', although adapted to concrete circumstances. Doubtless Cyprian was not aware that he was here granting a special sacramental penance which differed in any way from the normal church penance. If one wishes to call this instance of what is generally called 'public' church penance 'private', this is merely a question of arbitrary terminology.

Nevertheless this way of approaching our question leads easily to the impression that the Fathers of the Church themselves subscribed to two independent forms of church penance. For this reason it is better to avoid such terminology. There arc enough examples from the fourth century and afterwards to show that for practical reasons the normal basic model of 'public' penance is taken so much for granted in certain cases that there is no longer even a mention of the word 'public'. And even here it is only a question of practical variations of this normal form of penance which is usually called 'public'. Even today's 'private' penance,

[143] This applies at least where this exclusion is considered as *iuris divini*.

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however, has a certain public character. A sacrament, considered as a visible rite, is always by this very fact in a certain sense 'public'.

The fact that a person is making a confession and receiving absolution is even today not the object of the secret of confession and can, [212] therefore, be easily known. The external form, such as the times of confession, the confessional in the church, etc. entails this public, knowledge, at least as far as the intention to receive the sacrament of penance is concerned. It is perfectly possible to envisage a situation in which at some time and for some reason it was known that venial sins were not to be confessed. In this situation a confession in today's style (without anything otherwise being changed) would make its 'public character' real even with regard to serious sins. In general the penance of the early Church is called public when the penitent was placed in the class of penitents. Similarly there would be a private sacramental penance wherever this enlisting did not take place, irrespective of how this 'private' forgiveness of sins actually occurred. The completion of this penance itself could obviously vary a great deal. Now there certainly were classes of penitents in the early Church. Later Augustine[144] calls them the *proprie paenitentes* who have to submit themselves to the *paeniientia major et insignior*,[145] the *paeniteniia qualis agitur in Ecclesia*.[146] The consequences of belonging to the class of penitents are even fairly easy to describe: exclusion from the Eucharist, obligation to do certain works of penance even publicly, a special place at the celebration of the liturgy and even partial exclusion from it, submission to determined church penitential rituals, for example, impositions of hands, public reconciliation as well as tangible lasting consequences after reconciliation. Without a doubt this *paenitentia*, because of these consequences manifestly public in the Church, was also called *publica*.[147]

But which elements, constituting the public character of this penance, are essential to it and which, in certain circumstances, can be wanting without its ceasing to be 'public'?[148] If explicit excommunication and its abolition do not belong to these essential characteristics, since by these alone a sinner does not necessarily have to appear in the class of penitents (cf. Epist. 4,4), then what is in fact the most important element is excluded. Excommunication and its abolition constitute the most basic organizational principle of 'public' penance in the early Church. Moreover, their absence from the explicit ritual is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of to-day's private penance. Thus such an exclusion is not logically possible. If, however, the actual entry of the sinner into the class of penitents by his public performance of penance is stressed as being essential to the penitential state in the strict sense, then it is possible [213] to prove the existence of a 'private penance' in the early Church (the reconciliation of heretics, the penance of the sick, the penance of clerics). In this case, this penitential process 'of the early Church becomes a specific form of penance clearly distinct from public penance. In the mind of the early Church itself, however, it represented only the practical applications of public penance to concrete cases and circumstances. This is clear from certain indications, such as lasting consequences of penance, the unrepeatable character of penance of the sick, etc. Thus the one notion of private penance would embrace

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[144] Epist. 265,7; Sermo 352,3,8; De fide et oper. 26,48.
[145] Augustine, Epist. 151,9.
[146] Augustine, Sermo 392,3.
[147] Thus in Ambrose, De paenit. II 10: *paenitentia quae publice agitur*; De obitu Theod. 34; Council of Toledo (A.D. 400) can.2 (Mansi III 999); Paulinus, Vita S. Ambmosii n.24; Augustine, Sermo 392,3; Rufinus, Hist, eccl. 2 (II), 18; Leo the Great, Epist. 167. Penance was called *publica* both because of its notoreity and also by contrast with the private performance of penance for daily sins, but not as opposed to a private sacramental penance. Augustine's *corripere in secreto* (Sermo 82,8,11) does not alter this picture. See the evidence for this in Poschmann.
[148] If in a community today all the participants were obliged to communicate, then the person who is excluded from the Eucharist by serious sin would in fact become a 'public' sinner. But this reception of the sacrament of penance would still remain private.

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different, otherwise unassociated elements which individually suit public penance, such as the ancient, unrepeatable penance of the sick with its lasting consequences and the (supposed) sacramental *correptio* in Augustine or even in our modern private penance.

But for penance to become public must the sinner belong to the class of penitents only *de iure* on also *de facto*? If we consider those cases in which a sinner in fact did not appear as a penitent, as in the reconciliation of a person who is dying, and in which the Fathers of the Church were conscious of conferring the usual penance,[149] it is very difficult, from both the dogmatic and the historical viewpoints, to prove the existence of a specifically private penance. This usual penance was generally 'public' and was deprived of its (greater) public character in the cases mentioned only by force of circumstances. Nevertheless, such a penance which is public juridically can in fact not be public. Moreover, it would be at least very difficult to prove that our modern 'private' penance is not 'public' in this juridical sense. This would be so, even if this notion required certain elements of even a practically public nature which no longer exist in today's penance. In our view it is even more difficult, indeed it is impossible, to prove the existence of such a private penance alongside this public penance, as we understand it, in the early Church. At that time, whenever there is evidence of a sacramental penance there is also the awareness, indeed also the explicit expression, of a reconciliation with the Church. In other words, there is the conviction that the penitent belongs *de iure* to the class of penitents and must be transferred from it into the status of a complete Christian. All this means not that the notion of a 'private' penance becomes theoretically impossible[150] but that it is not met in fact in the early Church. A very clear indication of this, at least as far as the early [214] Latin Church is concerned, is the awareness that reconciliation is always a reconciliation with the Church. It could be asked, however, what it is that makes a penitent in fact a member of the class of, penitents, although it is difficult to find an answer to this question if one refuses to draw arbitrary distinctions which obscure rather than clarify the issue.

Against all these somewhat circumstantial considerations, it may be objected that historically there is no doubt that, at least from the seventh century onwards, when a private penance clearly distinguished from 'public' penance was indisputably accepted, these two notions were clearly distinguished from each other. This distinction between these two notions is, therefore, a historical fact and needs no further verification. It is an undisputable fact. The *paenitentia publica* and the *reconciliatio publice statuta* is clearly mentioned for the first time, in opposition to sacramental private penance, in Theodore's penitential book.[151] From this time onwards, the term *publica* is certainly no longer merely a more precise description of the one penance but a *differentia specifica* distinguishing it from another form of the umbrella notion of church-sacramental penance. On the basis of this clear historical starting-point, it should be easy to maintain convincingly the distinction between these two notions. However, in reality these historical notions are far from clear and definite. On the contrary, they contain confusedly very heterogeneous elements have undergone considerable changes even since the seventh century. In the *paenitentiale Theodori*, for example, the notion of public penance includes explicitly the fixed day of reconciliation (*coena Domini*), the reconciliation *intra aspidem*, and indeed (normally) by the bishop, the public performance of penance,[152] together with the unrepeatable character of penance and its lasting

[149] Cyprian makes this clear by the way he formulates the nature of such a reconciliation of the sick. It has precisely the same form as the usual reconciliation. Moreover, later, when the sinner had recovered his health, he had the same obligations as after a normal 'public' penance.
[150] At least this is not the case if the rite of reconciliation in public penance requires an explicit mention of reconciliation with the Church.
[151] Cf. Paenitentiale Theodori 112; Wasserschleben, p. 197.
[152] This is the meaning of the statement: *reconciliatio ideo in hac provincia publice statuta non est, quia et*

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consequences. On the other hand, it is difficult to say what Theodore understands by penance which is not public. He does not use the term 'private'.[153] And it is obviously not possible to exclude from this notion all the characteristics of his public penance. His practice of private penance clearly places no value on the secret performance of the duties of penance and it involves a long-lasting exclusion from the Eucharist. Moreover, here also reconciliation is granted only after the performance of penance. In the ninth century even for what was explicitly called 'private' penance reconciliation was normally required on Maundy Thursday;[154] thus even this element could not have belonged specifically to the essence of public penance. In other words, [215] it is clear that the ritual of private penance during the first centuries of its proven existence was normally still very complicated.[155] It involved a fairly large amount of public knowledge. Thus, from the historical point of view, the only characteristic of this new Anglo-Saxon 'private penance', distinguishing it from the ancient 'public' penance, is its lack of the unrepeatable character and the lasting consequences which were present in the ancient penance. But if one wishes to make such a difference the decisive distinguishing mark, is this sufficiently well expressed by the two notions 'public' and 'private'? 'Repeatable' and 'unrepeatable' penance would seem to be sufficient and indeed clearer notions. In any event, it may be asked whether the early Western Church provided a reasonable context in which a clear, concrete case for the notion of 'private' penance could be found. It is difficult to discover the normal practice of such a form of sacramental penance in the early Church. Certainly there is no question of two different forms of penance – the one private, the other public – between which one could make a free choice. It must be said, however, that the uncritical use of these two notions tends to lead almost inevitably to such a view. At least it suggests the idea that in the early Church there was a sacramental private penance which was generally available if and when a once-and-for-all, unrepeatable, 'public' penance was no longer possible. Such an idea, flowing from certain dogmatic assumptions,[156] is really based on the previous desire to prove the existence of private penance in the early Church. If, however, it is readily admitted that such a 'private' penance does not in fact alleviate substantially the dogmatic problem posed by the unrepeatable public penance, then the real use of this vague distinction for the early history of penance becomes very meagre indeed.[157] This applies even if, presupposing the corresponding development of the notion, it is possible to prove the existence of this distinction in the early Church, since the practice of denying a second sacramental penance still subsists, at least in many cases, and even in Augustine, despite his *correptio secreta*. Thus it needs to be asked why some have recourse to these notions as a support for their own theses and are not content to expound them as notions of that time, in their original meaning, and to say what people of that time understood

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publica paenitentia non est. Since the *paenitentia* is distinguished from the *reconciliatio*, it must refer to the performance of penance.

[153] As a fixed term, *privata paenitentia* appears, for example, besides *publica paenitentia* in the ordo paenitentiae *Praemonere debet* of the Fulda manuscript (Fulda II) from the tenth century (cf. Schmitz II 57; Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten* [Innsbruck 1932], p. 176 ff.), while in the earlier manuscripts of this instruction (Fulda I: cf. Jungmann, p. 178; the Pontifical of Poitiers: cf. Morinus App. 55; Ps.-Alcuin, De div.off. 13) the difference is not so pronounced. The term is also missing in the inscription of the penitential ordines of the ninth century from Fulda (cf. B. Opfermann, 'Zwei unveröffentlichte Fuldaer Bussordines des 9.Jh' in: ThGl 36 [1944], pp. 47-51).

[154] Cf. J. A. Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten* (Innsbruck 1932), p. 270 f.

[155] Confession and absolution were separated; the absolution was granted only after the completion of the penitential duties; finally reconciliation was performed by the bishop; the penitential rites were very complicated, including long and numerous prayers, kneeling before the altar, certain bodily postures, etc.

[156] The view that the Church could not deny reconciliation to a repentant sinner, even in particular cases, and that, therefore, there must have been a 'private' reconciliation if the public one could not take place is such an assumption.

[157] P. Galtier recognizes this, *De paenitentia* (Paris 1931) th. XVII, n.307-11.

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by them.

To take our modern 'private penance' as the historical starting-point is to incur similar difficulties. This approach involves taking our modern penitential practice as the classical normal case of 'private [216] penance' and, on this basis, attempting to determine precisely what is private and what is public penance. The 'private' character of our modern penance is made up of many different elements. The Church's act in this penance represents an ideal case of the mere *forum internum*. There is no explicit, tangible imposition and lifting of an excommunication which is expressed in the rite. The penitential duty which is imposed remains secret and its execution is not done openly. It is generally minimal and is decided by the confessor on the spot. Normally the penitent receives absolution immediately. It remains secret whether a serious sin is involved or not. There are no after-effects of this penance. There is no difference between the treatment of clerics and that of the laity. The sacramental rite is reduced to an absolute minimum. Moreover, this penance is able to be repeated. These are all the elements which make today's form of penance, as opposed to that of the early Church, appear 'private'.

But what, among all these elements, is really essential for a private penance? In fact even today there still exists the exclusion from the Eucharist, that is, excommunication in the sense of the early Church. Whether or not this is expressed in the rite of penance itself makes no difference to the fact. Even in the early Church, given certain circumstances, the public character of the performance could be very little in evidence. Even then reconciliation could be granted immediately. This was done with the awareness that it was only the adaptation of the one usual public penance to special circumstances, which shows that even this form was modelled on the penance of excommunication. In Cyprian the normal public penance has no lasting consequences. A penance could exist in merely desisting from the fault in question, that is, it was possibly minimal and insignificant, and even then reconciliation was considered as the lifting of excommunication, that is, as a shortened public penance. The fact that, in today's confessional practice, a serious fault remains a secret is due purely to the external circumstance that confessions of devotion are common, even though they are not obligatory. But this practice is irrelevant to the nature of penance and its correct celebration. Indeed the same circumstance is perfectly compatible with a public penance. When, towards the end of the early period of the Church's history, it became common for everyone to undertake penance on his death-bed, this penance lost its public defamatory character, even though this penance at the point of death [217] was thoroughly public, as its ritual and its lasting consequences in the event of a subsequent recovery show. Thus a circumstance which is purely external and accidental to both forms of penance can make 'private' penance public, for example, if confessions of devotion were no longer practised. Similarly, a public penance can become private if it is freely undertaken by everyone. In other words, there is only one element in our actual modern private penance which clearly distinguishes it from the penance of the early Church, and which has nothing at all to do with either its 'public character' on its 'private character', and that is the fact that it is repeatable. And this element is best left with its proper name. Thus even on the basis of today's form of 'private penance', it is not possible to arrive at a useful notion of a specifically private penance.

All these considerations lead to the conclusion that, although church penance remains exactly the same in its essence, with regard to the degrees in which it is expressed publicly it is susceptible of an extraordinary number of variations. This variety of degrees and levels in the public character of penance is such that it would be purely arbitrary to dub certain forms of it 'public' and others which evince hardly any differences making them at all or only occasionally less public, on the contrary, 'private'. The Fathers of the Church were well

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justified, therefore, in calling the whole of church penance simply 'public'.[158] This does not mean that they simply overlooked the practical and perhaps considerable differences in the public character of this penance. If one wishes to describe, in this regard, today's penance in relation to the form of the early Church, one ought to say objectively and cleanly: through a whole variety of means and for different reasons the public character of today's penitential process has become considerably restricted. This is better than saying that today public penance has been superseded by private penance. The real difference between the penance of the early Church and that of today, a difference which ought to be called by its proper name, lies in the unrepeatable character of penance in the early Church, as opposed to the repeatable character of today's penance since the early Middle Ages. This is a clear difference, intelligible both conceptually and juridically.

In today's penitential rite the change in relationship between man and the Church is no longer formally expressed and is, for the most part, no longer clearly recognized, even if, in fact, it is undoubtedly [218] objectively present. It is unfortunate and only leads to misunderstandings when the historian of dogma today simply wishes to present the different forms of penance in the early Church as 'public' or 'private'. It would be more correct to describe the many, and not only the two, different forms in which the one penance appears, according to what they have in common and their peculiarities, and thus to determine the precise degree of their public character. This would naturally also involve discussing whether penitential practices with a very limited public character (*correptio secreta*, monastic penance, etc.) could be counted as sacramental-church penance.

If, however, an answer is sought to the badly posed question of whether the Church before the seventh century knew a sacramental 'private' penance besides the 'public' penance, then it must be in the negative. In the West at least, the only penance which was sacramental was the one unrepeatable penance which also reconciled men explicitly with the Church and which, despite the considerably different degrees in its public character in its individual instances, was always experienced as one and the same penance. Talk about a private penance, however, is apt to obscure this basic insight, even if, by drawing attention to certain notions, what it conveys is not necessarily false.

B) A LOOK BACK AT TERTULLIAN

Galtier is of the opinion that in Tentullian[159] there are several 'species' of penance which are essentially different from each other. The one is defended by the Catholics for capital sins but rejected by Tertullian in so far as it concludes with reconciliation. The other concerns the *delicia leviora*. The latter is related to the former as a *castigatio* to *damnatio*. It is a forgiveness by a bishop for a sin which, although serious, is relatively less so than the capital sins. Thus it must be a church-sacramental penance but it cannot count as a public penance, since the *castigatio* was distinguished from the *damnatio* of public penance and does not include an excommunication.[160]

It is a fact that Tertullian speaks about two species of *paenitentia* (De pud. 2; 3; 4; 18). And

[158] This penance is called 'public' only by contrast with the purely subjective, independent performance of penance for daily sins, without a sacramental mediation of the Church, but not as opposed to another kind of sacramental remission of sins by the Church. This point needs to be repeatedly stressed.

[159] P. Galtier, *L'église et la rémission des péchés* (Paris 1932), pp. 273-82, and id. 'A propos de la pénitence primitive: Méthodes et conclusions' in: RHE 30 (1934), pp. 517-57, 797-846 (esp. 809-12), connects Tertullian with Cyprian in the question of private penance. In Tertullian we meet for the first time '*une rémission du péché distincte de celle qui s'obtient pan la voie de la pénitence publique*' (p. 809).

[160] Nevertheless, P. Galtier (RHE 30), p. 811, concedes: *il peut même lui* (*au coupable*) *arriver d'être mis pour un temps a l'écart du tropeau*. But how does this measure differ from an excommunication?

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the Catholics did have a *paenitentia* for the *delicta leviora*. But the two species are only introduced by Tertullian by his differentiation of penance according to its effect (*discriminatur conditio paenitentiae*; De pud. 2), that is, in so far as the one penance [219] ends with the *venia* of church reconciliation, while the other can never reach this pardon.

But what Galtier has not proven is that the Catholics made an essential distinction between the penance for capital sins and that for the *leviora peccata*. The impression that the penance for *leviora delicta* does not begin with an 'excommunication' (De pud. 7) comes only from the fact that Tertullian in his new theory of sin, with which he attempts to underpin his rigorism, can no longer recognize the *leviora delicta* as serious sins. Thus he accommodates his interpretation of the parables of the lost drachma and the lost sheep to this view by explaining 'that the sinners whom they intimate are still 'alive', just as the lost sheep and the lost drachma were still in the house, which stands for the Church. This was just his way of providing the theological basis for his opinion that those guilty of capital sins, because they have lost the grace of baptism which was granted only once, cannot be received back into the Church, whereas those sinners with *leviora delicta* are still alive, that is, they have not lost the grace of baptism and, therefore, can be reconciled with the Church.[161]

The *castigatio* is here (De pud. 2) certainly opposed to the *damnatio*. But since, in this passage, the *damnatio* clearly signifies the eternal exclusion from the Church because of a *delictum irremissible*, the *castigatio* cannot mean a species of penance alongside another *paenitentia* among the Catholics which is called *damnatio* and alone entails an actual *poena*. The distinction between *castigatio* and *damnatio* is introduced in the passage by Tertullian only to facilitate the distinction between *remissibilia* and *irremissibilia*. Thus in this context *castigatio* must have the general meaning of 'correction', which is also able to be a characteristic of the public penitential process, at least in Tertullian (De paen. 11,6).[162]

Thus is not to deny that, even among the Catholics, sins were treated differently according to their gravity, in so fan as the duration of the penance was concerned. But it is by no means evident that the *leviora delicta*, which they considered as serious sins entailing the loss of grace, were treated differently from capital sins. This explicit difference between sins was also introduced only by Tertullian, but, nevertheless, he also recognizes even for the *leviora delicta* an extra *gregem dari* (De pud. 7). Thus it seems more than unthinkable that such an *excommunicatio* would be imposed only as the beginning of a penance for the *leviora delicia*, whereas it would not be demanded in [220] other cases, so that penance would at one time be 'public' and at another 'private'.

C)VARIATIONS OF THE PENITENTIAL PROCESS IN CYPRIAN

It is certain that penance in Cyprian has a great variety, as far as its duration and its public

[161] On this point, cf. 'Sin as Loss of Grace in Early Church Literature' in this volume.

[162] To claim that the list in Apol. 39, *exhortationes*, *castigationes et censura divina*, represents only clearly distinct *termini technici* is to force the meaning of the text. Cf. P. Galtier, loc. cit. (RHE 30), p. 812. If this were the case, *castigatio*, as opposed to *censura divina*, could never mean in Tertullian the excommunication which he mentions, by way of conclusion, in similar contexts. From De pud., however, it is clear that, in a possible new terminology, *damnatio* = excommunication without the prospect of a reconciliation. Accordingly, *castigatio* could here mean every punishment by the Church which does not preclude this prospect. But Galtier has not proven that in De pud., granted Tertullian's Montanistic presuppositions, the *castigatio* cannot refer to an excommunication which is removable and that the *leviora delicta* were punished without such an excommunication. This excommunication would always be a mild *castigatio* by comparison with the definitive exclusion (= *damnatio*). At the same time, in itself *castigatio* (*castigare*) can also mean a hard punishment (cf. *Thesaurus linguae latinae* III, p. 530 ff.). Cf. also B. Poschmann, in: ThRv 32 (1933), pp. 257-72 (cf. 264); id., *Paenitentia secunda* (Bonn 1940), pp. 309, 306 ff.; C. M. Chartier, 'La discipline pénitentielle d'après les écrits de saint Cyprien' in: Antonianum 14 (1939), pp. 17-42 (cf. 20 n.1).

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character are concerned. Thus, for example, an immediate restitution of church fellowship is envisaged for a deacon and a virgin who have lived together but without having had sexual relationship. If the case is more serious than this, however, both partners must perform a *paenitentia plena* (Epist. 4,4). There was a considerable difference between the treatment of the *libellatici* and that of the *sacrificati*. In danger of death even the *sacrificati* receive reconciliation immediately, even if their time of penance has not yet ended. Heretics, too, are reconciled immediately in certain cases (Epist. 55,11; 59,16).

But does this possibility of different forms of penance justify us in speaking about the existence of a private penance alongside public penance? Certainly Cyprian does not distinguish between these two forms verbatim, even if he may have recognized their existence. Moreover, both 'species' of the penitential process have this in common that they both include the granting of the *communicatio*, an *admitti ad Ecclesiam* (Epist. 4,4). This applies even to the milder,' process. Thus even this process is conceived as being accompanied by a kind of excommunication, even if this is not visibly and tangibly expressed in terms of the obligation to a long penance and a public exhomologesis.

In Epist. 16,2 and 17,2 in fact penance for the *minora delicta* (*peccata*) described in the form of a 'public' penance. Obviously these *minora delicta* can only have been presented as light by comparison with actual complete apostasy. Nevertheless these *minora delicta* which are subject to public penance are still described as *non in Deum commissa* (Epist. 17,2). On the other hand, sins *in Deum* included obviously not only apostasy but also, for example, adultery and fraud (Epist. 55,27), and this certainly not in any vague sense.[163] Rather, it applies to them in the technical sense of Epist. 17,2 since, by the use of this expression, Cyprian shows that, as far as their forgivable character is concerned, apostasy and adultery ought not to be distinguished. If, however, even the lesser sins like adultery and fraud were submitted to 'public' penance[164] it is highly unlikely [221] that there would have existed, besides this form of penance, one which was still essentially different from it. If this were the case, it would be difficult to visualize which sins it would cover.

Obviously the *iustum tempus* for the penance (Epist. 17,2) for certain *minora delicta* could be reduced to the period of time between the sin itself and confession, followed immediately by absolution (Epist. 4,4). Since already the sin alone and not only the official declaration brings about the *excommunicatio* as the separation from the Church, the body of Christ, this period of time can be counted as the duration of the excommunication. This means that those guilty of such sins do not in fact appear among the penitents. Now, as important as this difference may seem to us, from the point of view of the practice of the early Church it was obviously a question only of a differentiation within the one penitential system. And this differentiation has its, basis solely in the differing seriousness of the sins subjected to penance; Even in these cases the sinner was considered as having been at first separated from the Church. The prerequisites and the guarantees of his genuine repentance, which were demanded of him before he could be readmitted to the Church, depended upon the seriousness of the sins in question. Thus the penance prescribed must have been very varied in practice. Nevertheless the procedure always followed the same schema, that is, exclusion followed by reconciliation with the Church. There is no indication here that this difference was either conceived or considered as one between a 'public' and a 'private' penance. It is merely a question of variations of the one form of penance. It is, however, correct to say that these differences were very much in evidence in everyday practice.

Finally, it may be asked-which 'kind of penance' is involved in De lapsis 28. It is here recounted that zealous Christians make an *exomologesis conscientiae* to God's priests in

[163] As is the opinion of P. Galtier, *L 'Eglise et la rémission des péchés* (Paris 1932), p. 288.
[164] This means a penance of excommunication.

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seeking a remedy for their small wounds. Without having actually fallen, they have nevertheless played with this idea (*quoniam de hoc vel cogitaverunt*). The unusual phrase *exomologesis conscientiae* makes it quite clear that here it is only a question of a private confession before the *sacerdotes Dei*. The meaning of this confession is the unburdening[165] of the anxious conscience (*animi sui pondus exponere*) and the prayer to the priests for a *salutaris medella* (*medellam exquirere*). Nothing more is said in this passage.[166] It is not possible to say, therefore, what the *sallutaris medella* comprises. Obviously it was not clear even to the [222] people who were asking exactly how the small guilt was to be healed. Were they, therefore, to learn from the priests precisely what they had to do themselves? The *medellam exquirere* (= inquire about) need not mean more than this. Or should the priests actually give the remedy to them? But, in this case, what did this remedy consist of? One could think of a brief penance of excommunication (cf. Epist. 4,4) or of the offering of the sacrifice for this small guilt. Even the real *lapsi* do not appear to have rejected this (Epist. 15,1; 16,2). Or was it a question of a prayer for the sinner? It is not possible to answer this question. In any case it is not possible to prove, from this text, the existence of a sacramental 'private penance'.[167] Not every priestly intercession is necessarily an actual sacrament. Even today we have a votive mass *pro remissione peccatorum*.

[165] As *deponere*, *exponere* also in Cyprian means 'to liberate oneself from something' (cf. the passages: CSL 3,3:425). Since, however, the *medella* for guilt as such must be sought and applied, this expression can mean only the psychological unburdening of the conscience through the confession of secret guilt, and not convey the idea of the remission of objective guilt. Contrary to P. Galtier, *L'Eglise et la rémission des péchés* (Paris 1932), p. 295.
[166] The following sentences (cf. CSL 3,1: 258,2) resume the general exhortation addressed to actual *libellatici*, begun in cap.27.
[167] Cf. S. Hübner, p. 183 ff., esp. 185.

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[223]

PART FOUR

The Tradition of the East

[225]

7

PENITENTIAL TEACHING AND PRACTICE ACCORDING TO THE DIDASCALIA APOSTOLORUM[1]

For a surprisingly long time the penitential teaching and practice of the Didascalia Apostolorum[2] received scant attention as far as the history of the sacrament of penance was concerned. It was occasionally cited in works on this subject. But, apart from E. Schwartz[3] and H. Achelis/J. Fleming,[4] who dedicate two brief pages to the penitential teaching of the Didascalia, it is really only B. Poschmann[5] who has attempted a more detailed treatment of this topic. As the studies of P. Galtier, J. Grotz and H. von Campenhausen[6] show, this has meant that the topic is once more the focal point of studies in the history of dogma. Thus it is obvious that the history of penance can in no way omit the witness of the Didascalia Apostolorum.

This 'Teaching of the Apostles' is a relatively early source for the history of penance and therefore provides valuable information, from the canonical, liturgical and dogmatic points of view, on the teaching and practice of penance in the early Church. It may even transpire that this text is, to a certain extent, unique, when compared with the other witnesses of the first

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[1] The first version of this revised essay appeared in ZKTh 72 (1950). pp. 257-81. The edn of the Didascalia generally quoted in this essay is that of F. X. Funk (cf. n.2).

[2] For the literature *on penitential teaching* in the Didascalia Apostolorum, cf. E. Schwartz, *Bussstufen und Katechumenatsklassen* (Strassburg 1911), pp. 16-20; H. Achelis/J. Flemming, *Die Syrische Didaskalia* (TU 25,2: Leipzig 1904), pp. 298-307; R. H. Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford 1929), pp. liv-lvi; P. Galtier, *L'église et la rémission des péchés aux premiers siècles* (Paris 1932), pp. 191 f., 353 f., id., *Aux origines du sacrement de la pénitence* (Rome 1951), pp. 157-221; E. Amann, 'Pénitence', in: DThC XII/I (Paris 1933), p. 790; B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda* (Bonn 1940), pp. 476-8; J. Janini Cuesta, 'La penitencia medicinal desde la Didascalia Apostolorum a S. Gregorio de Nisa' in: RET 7 (1947), pp. 337-62; J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bussstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg 1955), pp. 371-91; H. von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen 1963); K.. Baus, *Von den Urgemeinde zur frühchristlichen Grosskirche* (HdKG I) (Freiburg 1962), pp. 384-6. Edns of the text: F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* I (Paderborn 1905). E. Tidner was responsible for a new edn of the traditional Latin version of the Didascalia, which comprises a little more than a third of the whole work: *Didascaliae apostolorum*, *Canonum ecclesiastricorum*, *Traditionis apostolicae versiones latinae* (TU 75: Berlin 1963).

[3] E. Schwartz, *Bussstufen und Katechumenatsklassen* (Strassburg 1911).

[4] H. Achelis/J. Flemming, *Die Syrische Didaskalia* (*Die ältesten Quellen des orientalischen Kirchenrechts* II) (TU 25,2: Leipzig 1904).

[5] B. Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda*: *Die kirchliche Busse im ältesten Christentum bis Cyprian und Origenes* (Bonn 1940).

[6] P. Galtier, *L'église et la remission des péchés aux premiers siècles* (Paris 1932), and *Aux origines da sacrement de la pénitence* (Rome 1951); J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bussstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg 1955); H. von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen 1963).

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half of the third century. This is because it does not recognize the sole opportunity for the performance of church penance which for many centuries was of profound significance for the history of penance in the whole of the West. These introductory remarks on the history of penance in general should serve to justify a more detailed examination of the teaching [226] and practice of penance according to the Didascalia Apostolorum.

I. THE QUESTION OF PENANCE

According to the latest research the Didascalia Apostolorum[7] was composed in northern Syria certainly in the first half of the third century and possibly even in the first decades of that century. The penitential teaching of this writing is perfectly at home in the setting of the other views on church penance which are known to us from the third century. It is possible, as A. von Harnack and E. Schwartz believe, that, in its present form, it contains statements which are directed against the Novatians. These would naturally have to be considered additions, if the original work is taken to be prior to the Novatian controversy.[8] Nevertheless, this by no means proves that the supposed original work was in any way rigoristic. It is possible to construct an original work of this tendency for the Didascalia Apostolorum only on the false supposition of a radical rigorism which excludes those guilty of mortal sin definitively from the Church and which is in evidence wherever there is a mention of excommunication (when the contrary is not expressly stated). Consequently, every time a condemnation is pronounced as a result of sin, both conversion and the removal of this condemnation must be considered impossible.[9]

It is perfectly possible that even an early edition of the Didascalia underwent anti-Novatianist modifications.[10] These would then have been merely the expression of, and stress on, a point of view which was already present in the original writing. But it is impossible to prove the contrary. On the one hand, the teaching about the practice of excommunication in its many forms is so current throughout the whole of the Didascalia that it is impossible to

[7] Cf. J. Quasten, *Patrology* II (Utrecht/Antwerp 1953), pp. 147-52; A. Stuiber, *Patrologie* (Freiburg/Br. 1966), p. 84 f.

[8] Recent research inclines to the view that the supposed anti-Novatianist elements are not absolutely demonstrable for the work itself. In every instance they could be explained as later additions. Cf. P. Galtier, p. 189 ff.; H. von Campenhausen, p. 269.

[9] These are the only reasons which E. Schwartz and R. H. Connolly (who finally remains undecided) adduce. This way of stressing the bishop's power of binding by omitting all explicit mention of his power of loosing is clearly evidenced in Origen at about the same time. Cf. the relevant study of Origen's teaching on penance in this volume. Even when the power of loosing is mentioned, it is not intended simply as the counterpart to the binding, since it can be exercised without a binding (although this is obviously not permissible in the case of mortal sins). Thus it is not surprising that only the power of binding is mentioned (II 11,2) if the intention is to impress upon the bishop his obligation with regard to those guilty of mortal sins. As is the case with Origen in De oratione 28, the primary aim is to emphasize both the need for excommunication and the bishop's duty not simply to leave such a sinner in the Church (II 9/10).

[10] This is not absolutely certain. In fact the actual opponents of the lenient treatment of sinners (II 14,3.10.12; 15,1; 18.6) seem to be rather zealous, strict and somewhat misanthropic lay people in the communities of the bishops addressed. Even without supposing a theoretical Novatianism, it is possible to understand such 'zealous Christians' who were pressing for discipline and order in the community and thus wished to alienate once and for all those persons who were responsible for scandals. So long as the institution of penance for the forgiveness of sins was identified materially with a disciplinary procedure within a small community, such difficulties and demands were bound to arise from everyday practice. In that situation there were always people who refused to associate either in the liturgy or in civil life (which were very closely related, in any case) with men of questionable life-style. To that extent, the danger of Novatianism was already present, even without (theoretical) Novatianism. Achelis/Flemming (p. 302 n. 1) dispute that the opponents of the Didascalia where penance is concerned are Novatians.

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assume or explain the whole teaching on the questions concerning penance as a later addition – as if originally in every single passage there were only a mention of excommunication with no consideration of the question of what was to happen to repentant excommunicates. On the other hand, there is, in fact, not the slightest trace of an early rigorism in the original writing. Thus it is scarcely possible to detect and to separate the anti-Novatian additions which are eventually present, [227] in order to be in a position to consider the penitential teaching of the supposed original writing purely on its own. The teaching of the Didascalia is, therefore, to be considered as a whole and is to be assessed as a witness for the teaching on penance in Syria about the middle of the third century. It remains legitimate, however, to accept this witness as a whole even for the first half of the third century.

II. THE THEOLOGY OF SIN

The theology of sin in the Didascalia Apostolorum is not very precise. There are naturally different degrees of guilt, all of which do not entail eternal punishment (I 3,3-5). At the same time, sin committed after baptism which deserves the punishment of hell is usually designated simply as sin (e.g., I 3,3; II 7). Only once is there a mention of 'sin unto death' (V 9,5).[11] But this does not include every fault, since everybody sins (II 18,4.6) and is, nevertheless, able to be without 'sins' (in the sense of mortal sins) (II 18,1; II 13,1.3). Mortal sin does not only entail the punishment of hell. It is also the loss of life (I 3,11; 8,18), in so far as it expels the Holy Spirit which was received at baptism (VI 21,1.2.3.4.5.6). A person guilty of such a sin is 'mortally injured' and has an 'incurable' wound (II 63,5; VI l4,10).[12] This (mortal) sin has an ecclesial aspect: on the one hand, through his act the sinner separates himself from the Church (II 4,3; 43,2.3; 56,2),[13] indeed he is no longer a Christian (II 8,3), while, on the other hand, the Church is marred by the sin of such a 'Christian' (II 10,1; VI 14,10).[14]

III. EXCOMMUNICATION

Those guilty of mortal sin must be excommunicated (VI 14,10). Precisely who is affected here is ascertainable more by practical directives than by theoretical explanations. Obviously heretics are included in this group of sinners (VI 14,1). Nevertheless, it is generally stated that the person who has done something 'evil' (*iniquum*; *mala opera*) (II 8,3.4; II 9,1; 39,5) should be excommunicated. Such bad behaviour includes quarrelsome and slanderous

[11] The *adversus Deum peccare* in II 56,2 is to be understood in the fullest sense, as 'sin against God' was understood elsewhere at this time. Cf. II 31,3: *delinquere in Deum omnipotentem*.

[12] The Didascalia clearly states that, provided there is sorrow, all sins can be forgiven. Thus the incurable mortal sin mentioned here is to be understood as it is in Origen: a sin which has induced the death of grace and has thus showed itself to be previously incurable, that is, it cannot be prevented from causing the death of the soul. Cf. on this point the essay on 'The Penitential Teaching of Origen' in this volume. Cf. also J. Grotz, pp. 378-81.

[13] This applies to everyone who disturbs the peace of the Church.

[14] In II 14,3.9.13 the point is made in polemic against rigorism in penance that the sinner does not defile the Church. This could refer to the repentant, converted sinner who has returned to the fellowship of the Church. However, it is then stated that not even Judas could harm the Church, were he to take part in its worship. Such inconsistencies arise in the heat of polemic. The fact remains that the Church has to remove such sinners if it is to stay undefiled (VI 14,10). Only when it is physically or morally impossible to apply this principle, when a man is unable to discern clearly the ultimate dispositions of another and where it is a question of a repentant sinner, is it correct to say that, according to the view of the Didascalia, the Church is like Noah's ark (II 14,9) and that, in the Church, the sin of the one member does not harm another (II 14,10.13).

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behaviour (II 46,4), [228] the disregarding of the excommunication of another person (III 8,5), false accusation concerning a fault deserving excommunication (II 42,5; 43,1), lying (II 39,5.6), schismatic tendencies (VI 3; 4,3-4), 'confusion, quarrels, calumnies, murmurrings, bickerings, insults, accusations, reproaches and vexations'[15] (II 43,3; cf. 43,2; 32,3).[16]

As is obvious, the circle of sins which call for the penance of excommunication is very wide. There is no mention of a narrowly defined category, along the lines of the 'triad of sins'.[17] If excommunication is simply the most effective pedagogical means which the bishop has, but one which must be applied judiciously and only after the less drastic means of correction has failed (II 41,3-9), then it must be appropriate for all sins which are in any way serious but which do not belong to the 'small imperfections' of the just (II 18,5). Also those people are to be 'avoided' who have become guilty of offenses which occasion conflict with the civil penal law (V 2,1-2). Thus they are also excommunicated officially by the Church.

Not to appear at the celebration of the liturgy was tantamount to the destruction of the 'body of Christ' (II 59,1); thus it could be concluded that those people who habitually absented themselves from the liturgy were officially excluded from the 'body of Christ'. Similarly, the *condemnatio* by the whole community which the person who curses his fellow-Christians incurs (II 32,3) ought also to be considered an excommunication.

In the passage IV 5-8 there is a fairly long consideration of the question of the person from whom the bishop ought not to accept alms. The section ends with the conclusion that nothing ought to be accepted from those who are excommunicated until they once more become full members of the Church (IV 8,3; cf. also 6,9). Thus the sinners who are here rejected as givers of alms must refer not merely to pagans but also to Christians who, through the sins mentioned, have incurred excommunication.

The description of the sins liable for excommunication is, therefore, very vivid: to imprison a person unjustly, to abuse slaves and the poor, sexual offences, misuse of authority on the part of civil, rulers, the fabrication of idols, the procuration of false testimony before the court by lawyers and witnesses, fraud in working with precious metal, the falsification of weights and measures, the diluting of wine, predicting the future through dreams, murder, participation in capital punishment, unlawful soldiery, usury, idolatry, theft, etc. This list evinces great similarities with the catalogue of professions [229] and occupations which, according to Hippolytus, exclude a man from the catechumenate.[18] It is, therefore, only logical that such sins should be liable to excommunication. In fact it seems that elsewhere there was less willingness to extend this list than there was in the Didascalia, especially where, as in the West, the possibility of only one penance was the clear norm. According to II 38, it may be assumed that excommunication was generally applied wherever the gradually intensified exhortation of the bishop, according to Matthew 18:15-17, remained ineffective, and that it was basically appropriate (when there was no sign of improvement) wherever the bishop could meaningfully intervene with either exhortation or reprimand.[19] Origen's problem, namely, that even in the absence of improvement one could not excommunicate in all the cases where the evangelical procedure of reprimand was necessary, is not yet found in the Didascalia. It is much quicker in its use of excommunication, and is able to be so because – as we shall see later – it knew nothing of a unique opportunity for reconciliation.

There are various reasons for excommunication: allowing the person guilty of mortal sin to

[15] This tr. is taken from H. Achelis/J. Flemming, p. 58, 6-8.
[16] Cf. J. Grotz, pp. 375-78.
[17] These are generally understood to be apostasy, fornication and murder. On this point, cf. J. Grotz, pp. 347, 356-64.
[18] Cf. Hippolytus (Dix, pp. 24-8). Didascalia II 39,5-6 shows that the author was aware of the parallel between the treatment of catechumens and that of sinners.
[19] Cf. J. Grotz, p. 383 f.

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remain in the Church taints it (II 10,1) and constitutes a danger for the morale of Christians (II 10,1.2; 17,4; 43,5); the exclusion, on the other hand, effects a salutary fear in the other Christians (II 17,5; 49,4; 50,4).

The actual carrying out of the exclusion is fairly complicated. It would appear that, in fact, a distinction has to be made between two events which here may be called the real and the liturgical excommunication.[20] The justification for this distinction will appear in the following exposition which attempts to situate the unconnected individual data of the Didascalia in their proper place. This reconstruction is itself justified in so far as it affords an understanding of the individual data and avoids the many superficial repetitions which a continuous reading would inevitably entail. But this procedure is justified above all by the way it inserts the penitential teaching of the Didascalia, especially with regard to its strictness, in the context of the other data known to us from this time.

1. The Real Excommunication

The *real* 'excommunication' has its first step – and this would also have been its original form – in the voluntary withdrawal of the sinner [230] from the liturgical and social life of the community; he does this either because in his new religious and moral situation he no longer places any value on such a participation or because he is aware of the interior and exterior contradiction in his relationship to the Church and therefore avoids the liturgy (II 10,3). All this implies a long self-exclusion from the Church.

It can also happen that, in the case of a less 'tactful' person (*inerubidus*: II 10,4) who, despite his fault, remains undisturbed in the Church, the initiative has to come from the community. After all, the bishop exercises a certain supervision over the behaviour of the Christians entrusted to him (II 6,4; 5,2; 18,7; 20,2-5; 21,2; 37,1-3, etc.). He is supported in this task by the deacons (II 17,2; 28,6; 44,3 f.; 57,6; 58,1), while the co-operation of the laity in this regard (through advice, accusation, etc.), although it was obviously customary, was rather underplayed because in practice it inevitably led to strife and unrest in the community (II 37,2-3; 42,1-6; 47,3). Thus a bishop could exclude a Christian sinner *motu proprio* if he had not separated himself from the church community of his own accord (II 10,4, etc.). Such an exclusion obviously had to have a public character. To begin with, it would often be preceded by an accusation on the part of other members of the community which would demand an impartial, careful and lenient verdict, in order to avoid an unjust excommunication. This care was also required in order that unjust accusations which derived only from personal animosity could be energetically counteracted, even eventually with the excommunication of the accuser (II 42; 43,1; 49,3-4; 48,1-3; 56,2). If in this process it is established that there is an objective reason for an expulsion, then the bishop has to effect the real excommunication: he reprimands the sinner in the assembly of the community and expels him from it (II 10,4-5). This judicial sentence (II 11,2; 6,11) of an unerring bishop (II 6,4) could be accepted by the person who is expelled repentantly and sorrowfully (II 10,*5*) or even obstinately.[21] Since in the individual case it is in no way established whether and when

[20] J. Grotz's arguments in favour of two radically distinct institutions of penance appear to be inconclusive. Cf. our discussion of his basic ideas in our essay 'The Penitential Teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas' in this volume.

[21] The deacon posted at the church entrance (II 57,6) also had to ward off obstinate excommunicates who believed that they were excluded unjustly. There were also people who were not excommunicated because the bishop, on account of his own life-style, could not confront them with the necessary authority, or who had acquired the bishop's indulgence by presents and alms (II 9; IV 8,3). In other words, people were not always prepared to undergo an excommunication willingly and repentantly.

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the sinner would be able to be readmitted into the community of the Church, at this moment a later reconciliation would still be unsure. This is because it is not at all clear either that the excommunication to be imposed would be accepted repentantly by the sinner or that he would in fact reform himself. All that is certain is the general principle that a possibility for reconciliation must be offered to repentant sinners.[22]

[231] It is also obvious that this excommunication was, first and foremost, a matter of church discipline. Indeed, it must have frequently happened that such a real excommunication took place in the sinner's absence, simply because the latter did not appear. The reason for the sinner's voluntary absence, however, need not be his religious indifference. It could very well be the Christian's sorrow and real penitence (II 10,3), making him decide to announce himself in the Church again only when he has actually reformed himself and therefore has eradicated the original cause for the excommunication. Nevertheless, even in such a case as this, for perfectly comprehensible theological[23] and pastoral[24] reasons, the repentant sinner is not simply 'forgiven' his excommunication. This doubtless explains why the real excommunication which was practically nonexistent was compensated liturgically and an attempt was made to prelude the already possible reconciliation with at least a short, more ceremonial period of penance, so that excommunication and reconciliation did not coincide.

It even appears that there is in the Didascalia already that stage in the development of the penitential process[25] at which even the person who had previously been really formally excommunicated was submitted to the subsequent liturgical excommunication just mentioned. But this development will come as no surprise to anyone conversant with the laws of liturgical progress. In any case it is the best explanation of the two to seven weeks of the period of penance mentioned in II 16,2: what is meant there is not the actual time of penance and conversion[26] but a more liturgical-ceremonial interval between the liturgical

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[22] The passage II 10,4-5, as opposed to II 16,1-2, refers to this meal, official and publicly valid excommunication. This distinction between the real and the liturgical excommunication becomes clear in II 43,1, where a false accuser is excluded from the Church. After some time he is summoned again and has to promise – obviously in the way described in II 16,1-2 – that he will do penance during the period which is then imposed upon him (II 16,2). He is admonished (II 16,2; 43,1), and thus begins his period of penance in the strict liturgical sense. When these weeks are up (II 16,2; 43,1) he receives reconciliation by the imposition of hands. The same structure of the penitential process is found in II 50,4: first the sinner is judged and excluded; he has to do penance, that is, he must really be converted. Then he comes to the bishop and prays for readmission, while confessing his guilt and promising to do further penance, that is, the still outstanding liturgical penance which begins with the liturgical exclusion (II 16,2) and which already determines when the readmission will take place. The same procedure is found in II 13,4; *iudica eum* (the sinner) *primum severe* (the real excommunication) *et deinde* (that is, after the real penance) *suscipe eum cum benignitate et misericordia* (at the liturgical excommunication at which it is already decided in practice that the future reconciliation will take place after a couple of weeks), *si promiserit se paenitentiam acturum esse* (a promise which he must have already made previously in order to be admitted to the present rite and which the penitent is only too pleased to repeat at this stage) *et increpa eum, ange eum* (the official reprimand and exhortation of the liturgical excommunication), *persuade ei ac succurre ei* (the bishop's co-operation in the sinner's penance during the coming liturgical period).

[23] At least previously, the sinner was out of right relationship with the Church. This situation must be expressed visibly, since there can hardly be an actual sacramentally visible 'loosing' if there has not been previously a corresponding 'binding'.

[24] This could have appeared as preferential treatment to those who had, as it were, been surprised by a spontaneous excommunication on the bishop's part.

[25] Cf. II 43,1; 50,4.

[26] We have no more precise information about this particular period. Apparently at this time there were no fixed penitential duties in the circle of the Didascalia. In II 43,1 there is mention only of *aliquod tempus*. II 50,4 demands that such a period should last until the sinner has done penance, that is, until (II 16,2) it is possible to establish by examination that he deserves to be readmitted. In these circumstances the length of the penitential period must have varied considerably. Given the general leniency found in the Didascalia and the reasonable demands which the bishop made in determining the period of penance to suit each individual case, this period

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excommunication and reconciliation which was naturally characterized by prayer, fasting and solitude (II 16,2). Thus this time limit does not prove an exception to the general penitential practice of that century and one must discount Connolly's argument, according to which the Didascalia shows signs of a twofold penitential practice.[27] At the same time, this interpretation of the brief time limit of II 16,2 confirms the existence of two distinct kinds of excommunication in the Didascalia.[28]

2. The Liturgical Excommunication

The precise procedure for the *liturgical* excommunication is laid down in II 16,1-2.[29] According to this passage, the bishop summons [232] the repentant sinner first of all into the church assembly; at this point the sinner himself is actually outside the Church, even though he is already repentant, that is, he has already done penance and is still doing it. Thus he is able to be called in and examined concerning his worthiness for readmission to the Church (II 16,2). Now this makes sense only if he has not just fallen into the sin for which he has been expelled from the Church's fellowship. Next the penitent confesses his guilt within the community (II 50,4), begs forgiveness and promises that he will mend his ways (II 16,4). Then he is examined as to whether he has really already done penance (II 50,4a) and is still doing it and therefore whether he basically deserves reconciliation. The bishop admonishes and exhorts the penitent and gives him instructions about the following short penitential period of a few weeks, during which the penitent has to pray, fast and be alone. At the same time the bishop determines the precise length of this penitential period (two to seven weeks),

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could not have been generally more than a couple of years, at the most.

[27] Cf. R. H. Connolly, pp. lv-lvi.

[28] It is not surprising that the real excommunication could fall into disuse sooner than the liturgical excommunication. The latter was, for theological reasons, in a certain sense necessary for the introduction of the reconciliation process. The real excommunication could hardly serve this purpose, since it did not, as such, establish that the reconciliation had in fact already begun. Thus the real excommunication could fall into disuse wherever, on the one hand, its real significance as an actual exclusion from the community was diminished by the fact that the sinner willingly avoided the community and undertook his own conversion, and, on the other hand, the theological-sacramental emphasis (which had originally been placed on it) shifted more and more to a liturgical-ceremonial rite of excommunication. Thus it is possible to see here clearly for the first time that a separation is gradually taking place between excommunication considered as a measure of church discipline and as a punishment, on the one hand, and excommunication considered as an introduction to a sacramental process of reconciliation, on the other. The ultimate practical reason for such a separation, which is given already by Tertullian, Cyprian and others, is that not every necessary excommunication can reckon on the repentance of those concerned. Where this is not the case, then it necessarily deteriorates into a mere church punishment. On the distinction between the two penitential periods and the establishment of the length of the liturgical period of penance, cf. also J. Schümmer, *Die altchristliche Fastenpraxis mit besonderer Berücksichgung der Schriften Tertullians* (Münster 1933), pp. 195-9.

[29] This means that II 16,1 is considered as a summary of what is repeated somewhat clumsily (from the literary viewpoint) in II 16,2, that is, after the author has interrupted himself with his theological consideration of why we should pray for sinners in the community (cf. F. X. Funk, p. 60,14-16). This is certainly the simplest way of understanding these two verses. Nevertheless, it is not totally excluded that 16,1 refers to the real excommunication, while 16,2 refers to the liturgical excommunication. This interpretation would make no substantial difference to our view. J. Grotz (p. 388 f.) naturally explains the period of liturgical excommunication, according to his basic thesis, as a church penance which is imposed after the lifting of excommunication or even without a previous excommunication. Nevertheless, it must be granted even with regard to this full church penance (in Grotz's terminology), that the penitents, although no longer *eiecti*, are still *segregati*, that is, they do not yet stand again in *communio* in the strict sense (J. Grotz, p. 389 f.) and therefore cannot take part in the actual liturgy. These penitents arc, therefore, 'excluded' or excommunicated, unless excommunication is taken in the purely arbitrary sense of a situation in which the person excommunicated has absolutely no relationship with the Church and can take no part whatsoever in the liturgy (of the Word).

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according to the seriousness of the penitent's guilt. After this the sinner is dismissed and is to be considered by every one as an outsider.[30] It would appear that this dismissal is itself expressed by the penitent's being led ceremonially out of the church (by the bishop, deacons or laity?), since there is a mention of a subsequent return into the church. After the penitent had been thus ostracized, the whole community would (sometimes) have ratified the bishop's sentence.[31] Finally, a general prayer was said for the penitent. With this the act of liturgical excommunication comes to an end. From now on the sinner is 'bound' not only by his own sinful condition (II 21,1; VI 19,3) but also body and soul through the visible act of the official Church, exercising its heavenly power (II 34,4; cf. also II 11,2 with 1110,4-5; 21,1).

The separation of the penitent from the Church during the penitential period just mentioned[32] is, however, only a relative one. If the bishop did not bother about the penitent during these weeks, it is obvious that the salvation of the latter's soul would be seriously jeopardized (II 21,3). Since the bishop is called to bear the burden of other people's sins (II 25,7-9. 12), as a mediator between God and men (II 25,7; 26,4; 35,3), so he must look after the penitent and help him in his penance (II 21,2; 40,2): he must visit him, talk to him, trust him and lead him to complete conversion. At the same time the penitent must also take part in the liturgy, even if, like the catechumens, he remains excluded from the celebration of the Eucharist (II 39,6; 40,1; VI 14,1).[33]

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3. The Effects of Excommunication

The juridical excommunication, expressed by the bishop, is not a mere measure of the Church's temporal discipline. By this excommunication the sinner is excluded from the Church. But this Church is God's vineyard (I praef.), the living and life-giving mother of the faithful (II 61,4), the bearer of the Holy Spirit (VI 14,7), the body of Christ (II 59,1), outside of which there is no salvation (II 20,5; 21,7.8; 47,3). This means that the person who is legitimately excommunicated is bound body and soul by a heavenly and divine authority (II 34,4), he has lost life and eternal glory and is shameful in men's eyes and guilty before God (II 47,3).

With regard to the effect of an excommunication which was either inflicted or upheld illegitimately, the Didascalia appears to be hesitant in its view. In one passage it stresses that such a measure has no validity before God (II 48,2-3) and works only to the detriment of the

[30] This means that subsequently the excommunicated person should be avoided, which was not possible in the previous period of real excommunication in some circumstances, for example, when the penitent withdrew himself discretely from the community. Even alms for the support of the poor were not accepted from him (IV 8,3); since the care of the poor was essentially the duty of the bishop and of the Church, such an attitude is understandable. Otherwise, almsgiving is generally treated as a means of penance (III 8,3). The penitent would give alms in order to be assumed of the prayers of others in respect of his own sins (IV 7,1-3; 8,1-2).

[31] This need not be meaningless and superfluous, since, after the penitent's expulsion everything depended on his being avoided in practice by the members of the community. The penitent has 'to remain humbly on his own' and so publicly confess his guilt. But this also demands a corresponding behaviour on the part of the rest of the faithful. Such a general agreement with the bishop's excommunication appears to be intended also in II 32,3.

[32] This obviously applies also, in certain circumstances, to the period of real excommunication; especially since the following statements cannot be applied with certainty to penance either before or after the liturgical excommunication.

[33] The *permitti in Ecclesia*, as it applies to repentant heretics, refers to the liturgy of the Word, whereas obstinate heretics are excluded from both the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of prayer (*neque per verbum neque per orationem communicare*). The repentant sinner was allowed access to the liturgy of the Word before the actual liturgical excommunication. This *is* evident both from the reason given for this access and from the fact that the relevant passages in the Didascalia do not apply absolutely only to the period of liturgical penance.

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salvation of the person who excommunicates illegitimately (II 48,5). On the other hand, it is also stated that an illegitimate excommunication (or the refusal of reconciliation) involves more harm for the person who is excommunicated than is caused by the murder of a just man, since such an excommunication thrusts the person who is expelled from the Church into hell (II 21,7 f.; 56,2). What this second statement certainly shows is how profoundly convinced the author of the Didascalia was of the other-worldly effect which is, in principle, connected with an excommunication.

IV. RECONCILIATION

Provided that they are repentant, all those who have been excommunicated can be reconciled with the Church again, since God forgives all repentant sinners (II 12,1-3; 13,4; 14,1-3; 14,11; 15; 16; 18,1-3.7; 20,2-11; 21; 23; 24, etc.). Even idolatry, murder, adultery and heresy find το&ποφ μετανοι/αφ (II 23,1; 24,3; VI 14,1).[34] The idea that God and the Church could treat the repentant sinner differently, that is, that God could grant forgiveness while the Church still had to refuse reconciliation, is totally unknown to the Didascalia. The one forgiveness necessarily calls for the other. The only unforgivable sin is the obstinate rebellion against God (α(μαρτα&νειν ε0κ παρατα&χεωφ) (II 23,2), as well as the obdurate perseverance in heresy or unbelief [234] (VI 14,2-7), interpreted as a sin against the Holy Spirit – in other words, actual unrepentance.

1. The Rite

As we have already seen, the rite of reconciliation takes place several weeks after the liturgical excommunication. It consists of a reception of the penitent by the bishop before the assembled community (*recipe eum*), the episcopal imposition of hands[35] accompanied by the prayer of the whole community (*tota Ecclesia pro eo orante ei manus impone*), and the reinstatement of the penitent in his previous place in the Church (*ac deinde permitte ut in Ecclesia sit*) (II 18,7),[36] where he is able once more to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist with the community and the bishop.[37]

By analogy with the procedure for baptism, we need to distinguish the actual place of reconciliation from that of the celebration of the liturgy. Otherwise it is not possible to understand the *introducere* (II 41,2) which follows the imposition of hands.

2. The Meaning of the Rite

[34] Cf. K. Baus, p. 384.
[35] Presumably this was also accompanied by a prayer on the bishop's part.
[36] These instructions are not to be understood abstractly and juridically. The individual aspects follow each other in temporal and succession and are, therefore, rules for the liturgical ceremony. The clearly distinguished classes of Christians had their fixed places in the Church. The deacons had to ensure that these places were respected and, occasionally, to show visiting strangers to their proper places (II 57,2-58,6). Since this was also the duty of the deacons on other occasions (II 57,7.9; 58,5), it is easy to imagine that after the imposition of hands and at the bishop's command the deacon leads the penitent to his previous place in the community which he has rot been able to occupy during his period of penance because of his exclusion from the liturgy. II 41,2 also contains the real distinction between the *manum imponere pro eo precantibus* and the *deinde introducere et participem facere ecclesiae*. In the corresponding place of the Constitutiones Apostolorum (II 41,2; F. X. Funk, p. 131,8) the *introducere* is explicitly interpreted as a 'leading back to his previous place (νομη/)'.
[37] The latter is obviously intended, once the *communicare* is distinguished from the *recipere* (II 38,4).

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Now how is this external service of church reconciliation[38] to be understood? The Didascalia is clearly aware of the parallel of this rite with the form of initiation (II 41,2). A part of this parallel is perfectly comprehensible and presents no difficulty at all: after baptism *and* after the penitential imposition of hands, both of which occur outside the actual precincts of the church (however one may visualize this location at the time of the Didascalia), the newly baptized person or the reconciled penitent is introduced into the actual place where the liturgy is celebrated so that he can take part in the subsequent celebration of the Eucharist.[39]

In both cases it is a question of the same event having its basis in the fact that the preceding rite has made the person a fully legitimate participant in the worship of God. This does mean, however, that, in the case of baptism, the *whole* of the rite of initiation, as it was required at this time for access to the celebration of the Eucharist (that is, including today's Confirmation[40]), must have preceded this [235] introduction. Thus, following the parallel just mentioned, the imposition of hands of reconciliation in penance corresponds to baptism and Confirmation. 'Baptism' here means the whole of the rite of sacramental initiation.

But what is the precise import of the parallel in this respect? To begin with, the text states only that the penitent receives the imposition of hands at the place of baptism.[41] Accordingly, the comparison lies in the effect (the communication of the Spirit) despite the difference of the rite itself. In other words, it is important to notice that, according to the precise wording of the expression, the Holy Spirit is not bestowed in the penitential imposition of hands *in the same way* as in baptism.[42] Rather, *at the place of* the baptismal rite an imposition of hands is administered which has the same effect, namely, the bestowal of the Spirit. This is the only way to understand the sentence: *aut per manus impositionem aut per baptismum accipiunt participationem Spiritus Sancti*. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that in the Didascalia the once-and-for-all possibility of baptism[43] is a self-evident principle (VI 12,2). Thus the penitential imposition of hands is not envisaged here as the formal repetition of the rite of initiation or of one of its parts. The parallel – in so far as it is apparent – consists only in an identity of the effect of baptism and the penitential imposition of hands. The Didascalia, as opposed to the Constitutiones Apostolorum,[44] does not stress that baptism also involves an

[38] On the imposition of hands, cf. also II 43,1. It is obvious that the bishop took this opportunity to express his joy over this event in an address: *gratanter autem paenitentes suscipite gratulantes* (II 15,3).

[39] Cf. II 41,2: *Quemadmodum gentilem baptizas ac postea recipis, ita et huic manum impones ac deinde introduces et participem facies ecclesiae*. Cf. also II 41,1: *ad orationem eum* (the penitent who is reconciled) *admitte sicut gentilem* (after baptism).

[40] Thus it is here simply presupposed that 'Confirmation', according to the Didascalia too, is a part of the rite of initiation.

[41] The Constitutiones Apostolorum have preserved this sentence verbatim: και∴ ε1σται αυ0τω~| α)ντι∴ του= λου/σματοφ η9 ξειροθεσι/α (II 41,2; F. X. Funk, p. 131,8 f.). This needs to be underlined here, since the following sentence no longer agrees textually with the Didascalia but stresses that in baptism also the Spirit is bestowed by the imposition of hands. In the Didascalia, however, the text continues: 'Since the Holy Spirit is received either through baptism or through the imposition of hands'. Even granted that 'baptism' here includes an imposition of hands, the difference between the two events is clear both in form and in content.

[42] This can be deduced from the text of the Constitutiones Apostolorum mentioned in the previous note; and perhaps this idea is even intended there. If this were the case, however, it would entail a contradiction to the first sentence (και∴ ε1σται . . .) which the author himself does not appear to have noticed.

[43] Thus the imposition of hands of Confirmation is still an inseparable aspect of the single rite of initiation that is 'baptism'. In II 32,3 it is the ξειροθεσι∴α of the bishop which communicates the Spirit 'in baptism'. In VI 21,1 it is simply stated that we receive the Holy Spirit 'through baptism'. 'Baptism' here, therefore, is a comprehensive notion which embraces the imposition of hands of Confirmation.

[44] The re-wording of the text of the Didascalia in the Constitutiones Apostolorum is an indication that in the Eastern Church the process had already begun which leads to an increasingly stronger identification of the reconciliation of heretics (penitents) with Confirmation. In fact it may be asked whether, in both cases, it is not a question of the same imposition of hands (considered either materially or formally), so that the imposition of

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imposition of hands by which the Spirit is communicated. It does not give the slightest hint that the penitential imposition of hands could be a repetition of the imposition of hands in confirmation, considered either materially or formally. Indeed, such a repetition of the imposition of hands in confirmation is rather excluded both by the once-and-for-all possibility of baptism and by the opposition which the Didascalia emphasizes between the two rites. The passage in II 41,2, *Quemadmodum igitur gentilem baptizas ac postea recipis, ita et huic manum impones . . . ac deinde eum introduces . . .*, does not contradict the opposition just mentioned. The *et* here does not stress that the hand is imposed as in baptism. It merely underlines the general parallel between the two rites (baptism and penance) with regard both to a man's access to the liturgy (cf. II 41,1) and to the communication of the Spirit. The *et* requires no other explanation than this parallel (cf. Connolly 104,21).

Obviously there is also an imposition of hands in baptism; but it is [236] incorrect to hold that it is precisely on this point that the Didascalia sees the parallel in question. Otherwise, it would be completely impossible to understand why the baptismal imposition of hands is never mentioned, whereas *baptism* is mentioned three times. Now if the author of the Didascalia already considered the imposition of hands after baptism as an independent part which, as such, does not belong essentially and necessarily to initiation (either because the actual bestowal of the Spirit took place through an anointing as at confirmation or because the imposition of hands had already become to be considered as totally independent from the actual baptism), then he would naturally have been 'free' to adduce this rite as formally identical (as a repetition of 'confirmation') or at least as materially so (as applicable to another purpose) in another place – in the present instance, therefore, with regard to reconciliation. But these assumptions are not verified in the case of the Didascalia, since otherwise it could not be said that *baptism* communicates the Holy Spirit or that it is communicated *in baptism* by the imposition of hands. If, therefore, the imposition of hands after baptism still belongs essentially to the one initiation and is thereby unrepeatable, then the Didascalia could not consider the penitential imposition of hands as a repetition of this post-baptismal imposition of hands.

Nevertheless, the question of the meaning of the penitential imposition of hands is not yet actually answered. If reconciliation was conceived as a parallel to baptism (if only in the sense explained above), then it is possible that the imposition of hands of confirmation after baptism served as a model for a similar rite in reconciliation, simply because in both cases it was a matter of expressing the communication of the Spirit. But is the imposition of hands of confirmation after baptism the only possible model which could have served in the production of the penitential imposition of hands? In fact there is in the Didascalia yet another imposition of hands, associated with an anointing of the head by the bishop (III 12,2-3),[45] an *ungere in manus impositione*, and one which occurs *before* baptism. In accordance with the other data of the history of the liturgy, this anointing must be seen as an exorcism.[46]

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hands at penance would be the repetition of the imposition of hands at Confirmation. A further witness to the same development at the same time (the end of the fourth century) is the inauthentic can. 7 of the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). According to this, it appears that the validly baptized heretic is reconciled by Confirmation (the sealing with *myron* accompanied by the Eastern formula of Confirmation); cf. C. J. Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte* II (Freiburg 1875), pp. 26-8; H. Elfers, *Die Kirchenordnung Hippolyts von Rom* (Paderborn 1938), p. 132 f.

[45] For the explanation of this difficult text, cf. H. Elfers, p. 143 f.

[46] Nevertheless, this rite is placed on the same level as the anointing of the king and the priest in the Old Testament. But this is probably only to explain that, in the case of women, the bishop could be satisfied with an anointing of the head. For parallels to this anointing-imposition of hands as an exorcism in preparation for the act of baptism proper, cf. in Clemens of Alex., Excerpta ex Theodoto 83-4 (GCS 17:132, 15-23) [should number 20 here not read as ε0πθε/σειφ ξ., instead of the conjecture ε0πα&ρσειφ ξειρω~ν?]; The Acts of Thomas 157 (Hennecke, Neutest. Apokryphen 287; Lipsius/Bonnet II 2,266 f.); Hippolytus, Paradosis (Dix, pp. 30-2);

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The connection of anointing and imposition of hands in this instance does not necessarily exclude the possibility of a parallel with the penitential imposition of hands. In fact in Origen also the rite of reconciliation appears to have been connected with an anointing. In any case, later in the East such [237] a connection was common. It is difficult to prove, despite the silence of the text on this point, that this connection could not have been the real background for the teaching of the Didascalia.[47] Nevertheless, it is not possible to prove this assumption positively. In the Didascalia it is the anointing that is clearly emphasized in this exorcism before baptism. Thus it is rather unlikely that an eventual imposition of hands employed in connection with the exorcism before baptism could have been singled out as the model for the penitential imposition of hands.

We are left, therefore, with the imposition of hands after baptism, to which the Didascalia ascribes the communication of the Holy Spirit (II 32,3; 33,1; 33,2; VI 7,2).[48] Here there is no mention of an anointing.[49] Now the penitential imposition of hands is also considered as a communication of the Holy Spirit – and indeed without mention of an anointing. It follows that, in all probability, the Didascalia intends the penitential imposition of hands to be understood as an imitation (not as a formal repetition!) of the imposition of hands of confirmation. In other words: according to the Didascalia, the rite of reconciliation is an imposition of hands because, and in so far as, this is a gesture which bestows the Spirit, and not because it has a healing character (i.e., is an exorcism). Obviously this does not mean that it is only the imposition of hands in confirmation, considered as a rite conferring the Spirit, that was the unique model for the creation of the rite of reconciliation. The mere fact that the imposition of hands as a gesture of the communication of the Spirit is not the prerogative of

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Cyprian, Sent. episc. 1; 8; 37 (CSL 3,1: 436; 441; 450); Cyprian, Epist. 69,15. These parallel passages from the same period attest clearly the exorcism character of the anointing-imposition of hands or the simple imposition of hands before baptism and thus show how the imposition of hands in the Didascalia is to be understood. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that this anointing before baptism is not followed by any further anointing. This point has been demonstrated by R. H. Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford 1929), p. xlix f. n.8 with reference to 'The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai' (Cambridge, 'Texts and Studies' VIII/I, 1909), p. xlvii ff. and on the Syr. tr. in general xlii-xlix. In the Syrian Church a (first) communication of the Holy Spirit was already attributed to this anointing, as Connolly illustrates with a whole succession of Syriac texts. Subsequently in the consciousness of that time the anointing as an exorcism and as a rite of the Communication of the Spirit were more or less fused together. Cf. also the texts of J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains et les rites connexes* (Wetteren 1925), p. 281 n.6. Moreover, the Didascalia also knows of an imposition of hands with prayer as an exorcism which, with the permission of the bishop or the deacon, may be performed even by widows (III 8,1-3). This practice is known at the same time also by Ps.-Clement (De virginitate I 12 [F. X. Funk, *Patres Apost*. II^2, p. 11]) and even previously by Tertullian (De praescript. haeret. 41).

[47] In penance the bishop is considered a 'physician' who has to heal the wounds of sin (II 20,10-11; 41,3-9). The notion of a healing anointing which acts as an exorcism cannot be far removed from this idea. Nevertheless, Origen's witness reflects a usage in the circle of the Alexandrian Church, making a conclusion for the Didascalia difficult. Moreover, the rite of reconciliation, differing according to different regions, must have corresponded to the development of the rite of initiation. In fact the anointing of Confirmation acquired precedence over the imposition of hands of Confirmation in the Alexandrian Church well before this happened in the Syrian Church. Thus the anointing at reconciliation also must have gained acceptance later in Syria than it did in the Alexandrian area.

[48] In the chronological list of II 33,2 the expression *Spiritu Sancto replere* follows the expression *per aquam regenerane*. This indicates that the communication of the Spirit by an imposition of hands (II 32,3) cannot occur through that imposition of hands (III 12,2-3) which takes place before baptism. Rather a second imposition of hands is to be assumed after the baptism of water, even though nothing is mentioned about this in III 12,2-3. In fact what is the role of the deaconesses in the rite of initiation? They complete the anointing of the head before baptism with an anointing of the whole body, but they have nothing more to do with imposition of hands after baptism. This would explain why, in this context, the first imposition of hands is mentioned but not the second.

[49] As generally in the Syrian Church, as opposed to the Alexandrian Church, the anointing at Confirmation was lacking for a long time. Cf. H. Elfers, pp. 141-7; J. Coppens, p. 330 ff.

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confirmation[50] makes this impossible. Moreover, this symbol is so old and self-evident and appropriate that it imposes itself wherever it is a question of the bestowal of the Spirit. Nevertheless, after all that has been said above, it is obvious that a parallel was perceived between the imposition of hands of confirmation and the penitential imposition of hands, in so far as both communicate the Holy Spirit. This is not only a simple fact which is stated explicitly in II 41,2. The expression, *per impositionem manus . . . accipiunt* (in penance) *participationem Spiritus Sancti* could always be understood by synecdoche; that is, the imposition of hands is, in itself, a prayer of the bishop which helps the penitent to purify himself from his sins and is, therefore, merely a penitential rite at the conclusion of the penitential process which itself ends with the renewed possession of the Spirit. If, however, our explanation is the [238] correct one, then the imposition of hands is intended precisely as the communication of the Spirit and expresses the fact that this possession of the Spirit is not only the immanent effect of the sinner's own penance but is granted to him by the Church along the lines of initiation.

3. The Theological Meaning of Reconciliation

We must now turn to the theological meaning of reconciliation and its rite. The bishop represents almighty God and, according to Matthew 18:18, has the power to forgive sins (II 18,2). The 'loosing' by virtue of this scriptural text occurs in the remission of sins (*solve per remissionem*: II 18,2). This heavenly and divine authority frees not only the body – as the power of kings would do – but also souls (II 34,4). It is worth noting that in the Didascalia the notions of binding and loosing clearly have the double meaning which they have in the New Testament in Matthew. Thus binding and loosing are to be understood both as the imposition and relaxation of a generally obligatory norm and as the imputation and lifting of an individual state of guilt.[51] The bishop undertakes the lifting of personal guilt 'in God's place' (II 18,2). It is through the bishop that the Redeemer says to the sinner: Your sins are forgiven you (II 20,9), and the bishop grants the α!φεσιφ from sins (II 18,1.2.7). Thus this authority of loosing – in so far as there is a question of explicitly stressed moments – is understood as 'binding in heaven', that is, as a direct if, naturally, representative remission of guilt before God, not however as a 'loosing' as the bond of guilt imposed by the Church 'on

[50] The bishop was also consecrated by the imposition of hands; cf. II 2,3.

[51] For the first notion, cf. I 6,7-9; II 5,4; VI 16,6; 17,6 (binding as the imposition of a law); I 6,10; II 34,7; 35,1; VI 16,1; 12,11; 17,1 (loosing as the abrogation of a law); II 21,1; VI 19,3 (binding as a self-induced state of guilt); II 11,2; 34,4 (imposition and lifting of exclusion from the Church having a heavenly effect); II 18,2-3; 20,10; 33,2 (loosing as the forgiveness of guilt in baptism or penance). On this, cf. V. Brandner, '"Binden und Lösen" in der altsyrischen Kirche' in: *Katholik* 95, 1 (1916), pp. 220-32, 287-304 (for the Didascalia 225-7, 287-9). This ε0χουσι/α του= λυ/ειν (Const.Apost. II 18,3 [F. X. Funk, p. 65,26] corresponding to Didascalia II 18,3) is now in the Didascalia simply a *solvere per remissionem* as God's representative (II 18,2; Connolly, p. 55,6 f.: loose by forgiveness). The loosing of the guilt here implicitly dispenses with the intermediary of reconciliation with the Church; (at least as far as the explicit meaning of the text is concerned) it means directly forgiving guilt in God's name. Through the bishop the redeemer says to sinners: your sins are forgiven (II 20,9). Thus reception into the Church appears rather as a consequence of the redeeming forgiveness of sins than as its cause. This is also clear from the unhesitating use of the notion of α!φεσιφ for the forgiveness of sins after baptism by the bishop without any inkling of the narrower and stricter use which it normally has with regard to baptism alone, in the Pastor of Hermas, in African theology from Tertullian to Cyprian, in Clement of Alexandria, in Origen and in Firmilian. Cf. II 18,1-2; 18,7; 20,9, as well as II 13,1; 16,2.3; 18,5; 23,2; 26,2. The most that can be said is that in V 9,1-6 something of the earlier use of this notion in the sense of a completely gratuitous forgiveness of guilt is discernible. But here also it is stated that in martyrdom sins are 'covered' – which is elsewhere an effect of the old α!φεσιφ in baptism. For Origen, however, 'to cover' was rather a notion which expressed an opposition to the α!φεσιφ of baptism and martyrdom.

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earth' which has a subsequent heavenly effect. The same conclusion follows from the teaching that the bishop bestows the Spirit in the same way through his imposition of hands in reconciliation as he does in baptism (II 41,2).[52] Here baptism and penance are paralleled not only in their effect (in such a view the sinner's personal penance could still be seen as the decisive moment), but also the bishop's imposition of hands (therefore the act of the Church) is paralleled with baptism, with the result that the urgently demanded penance of the sinner himself appears more like a precondition[53] for the bishop's announcement that the penitent's sins are remitted. This is an anticipation of part of the Scotist theory of penance.[54]

[239] Naturally this does not mean that the ecclesial aspect of penance is simply lacking. Grave guilt entails radically and necessarily the separation from the Church. And the exercise of the power to forgive sins as God's representative is always seen as an act in which the penitent is again reconciled with the Church (II 18,7; 20,4.10-11; 24,2; 33,3; 43,1; IV 8,3; VI 14,1). Nevertheless, this readmission into the Church is seen more as the consequence of the remission of sins and healing through the bishop than as the means of the remission of sins and the communication of the Spirit: *sanans suscipe*: II 42,2.[55] In any case in the Didascalia the authoritative forgiveness of sins is independent of incorporation into the Church as a means of salvation. Thus its sacramental character is more clearly attested here than elsewhere: the parallel with baptism, the teaching on the bishop's representative power to forgive sins in God's name and the idea of the communication of the Spirit as an initiation express with all the clarity desirable not only the sacramental nature of penance as a whole but also that of the bishop's part in the penitential process.

At the same time, there is nothing to indicate that the correction and exhortation of a sinner by the bishop which is private or carried out before two witnesses but which does not include an excommunication has a sacramental character and, therefore, represents a 'private' sacramental penance (II 37,1-3; 38,1-3). In this case it is a question of those doctrinal and educative measures which the bishop as doctor and educator of the faithful ought not to withhold from the sinner even in the penance of excommunication, without, however, in any particular case having a sacramental character in themselves. They are obligations which pertain to the bishop's simple pastoral charge (cf., e.g., II 5,2.3; 20,2; 41,3-8, etc.). The

[52] Obviously before this, even in Cyprian, reconciliation and the communication of the Spirit were related causally. Nevertheless, this view was then more clearly counterbalanced by the teaching that the forgiveness was not simply as in baptism but the mere effect of the hard μετα&νοια on the part of the penitent himself.

[53] Penance is only the cause and the proof of the fact that the penitent is 'worthy' to receive the α!φεσιφ: II 16,2 (cf. II 16,3). Elsewhere, too, subjective penance appears repeatedly as a condition of forgiveness and readmission to the Church; cf., for example, II 18,7; 13,4; 24,2; 38,4; 39,6; 41,1; 43,1; 50,4. In itself this is not surprising, since penance is always and everywhere a condition of reconciliation with God and the Church. But in the Didascalia subjective penance as a cause of the remission of sins is emphasized less than elsewhere in the third century. Even the *sanare*, *vivificare* and *sublevare* happens through the bishop and the α!φεσιφ conferred by him (II 18,7; 24,2; 33,3).

[54] On this, cf.: N. Krautwig, *Die Grundlagen der Busslehre des J. Duns Scotus* (Freiburg 1938); W. Dettloff, *Die Lehre von der acceptatio divina des Johannes Duns Scotus mit besonderer Berucksichtigung der Rechtfertigungslehre* (Werle 1954), pp. 203-31.

[55] This interior sequence of aspects is clearly reflected in the course of the penitential liturgy: the imposition of hands which communicates the Spirit precedes the *introducere et participem facere Ecclesiae* (II 41,2). Thus whereas in Cyprian (Epist. 57,4) the person who receives the Spirit of the Father is the one who has been granted peace with the Church (cf. 'The Penitential Teaching of Cyprian of Carthage' in this volume), here the reverse is the case: it is the person who has received the Spirit who re-enters the *participatio Ecclesiae*. Obviously it should not be overlooked that the Church is aware of being *susceptorium Sancti Spiritus* (VI 14,7), which comes near to saying that it is precisely the incorporation into this Church that grants a shame in its Spirit. The faithful live in the living and life-giving mother (II 61,4). In II 33,3 the 'readmission' is placed before the 'coming alive'. Nevertheless, this could mean, as in II 13,5, admission to the official liturgical penance occurring in the liturgical excommunication, which precedes the restoration to life through reconciliation and the actual incorporation into the Church.

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bishop even shares this pedagogical and intercessory activity with the laity, as, for example, widows, who fast together with the penitents (III 8,1-3).

4. *The Repeatable Character of Reconciliation*

Now is this forgiveness of sins by the imposition of hands explained by the Didascalia as a possibility which is presented once and for all or not? It is never clearly stated that it is possible only once. Nevertheless, this alone is not sufficient proof that the author of this work [240] is unaware of such a once-and-for-all possibility. One has only to remember that in Origen's numerous and detailed views on penance it is only once mentioned that this penance is possible only once to realize that the silence of any text on this question can hardly be construed as an adequate argument that this principle was not held in the circle represented by the text in question. Certainly a declaration on this subject should be expected in a book which considers thematically questions of church discipline, especially here, since the detailed considerations of the Didascalia offer sufficient opportunity to discuss such a principle. There is frequent stress on the fact that sins can be forgiven before God and also before the Church, and those who contest such a church reconciliation as impossible are often taken to task. Thus it would have been appropriate at least once to refer to the fact that church reconciliation is possible only once, in order to convince the sinner that he should not count on the Church's unlimited leniency and to demonstrate to the rigorist that his strictness is understood. For these reasons the silence of the Didascalia is surprising, to say the least.

In one passage, however, there is a positive hint of the possibility of a repeated reconciliation. In II 43 there is mention of the treatment of a troublemaker in the community who, by his false accusations against a fellow-Christian before the bishop, causes strife in the community and who even, through his unjust incriminations, causes the bishop to excommunicate the person who is wrongly accused (II 42). Now, for his part, the bishop must react against this miscreant with excommunication (II 43,1). If he subsequently mends his ways and does penance for a certain time (*aliquod tempus*), then he should be readmitted into the Church (II 43,1). If, afterwards, he shows, however, that he is continuing his bad behaviour, then he must be excluded from the church again (II 43,2). This measure is justified on a broad basis and in detail: this sinner brings only harm and shame to the Church as long as he lives in the fellowship of the Church. In reality he is not a member of the Church, even though he appears to belong to it. Just as a doctor amputates superfluous fingers and excises cancer without depriving the body of anything but only effecting its own perfection, so also the bishop must confidently exclude the troublemaker a second time since the Church can only thereby benefit (II 43,2-4). That he cannot be readmitted again after this second excommunication is not explicitly stated, but it is intended. [241][56] Otherwise, the long justification of the renewed exclusion would not make sense; since it is more than obvious that the repetition of a fault which is the reason for a just excommunication, in view of an explicit promise of reform (II 43,1), is a still more serious reason for an exclusion. The expression, *Cum enim bis ex Ecclesia egressus fuerit, recte abscissas est* (II 43,4), is therefore to be understood in the sense of a permanent exclusion. This does not constitute a contradiction to the penitential principle of the Didascalia, since in this case the sinner is obviously unrepentant and obstinate; that is, the conditions which are always necessary for reconciliation appear to be permanently lacking. Now if this *permanent* exclusion is specifically justified, and this at considerable length and in detail for this particular case, then the author of the Didascalia cannot be aware of a principle which self-evidently, generally

[56] As F. X. Funk, I 134 (n. on II 43,2-4), also stresses. Similarly H. Achelis/J. Flemming, p. 302.

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and without exception would preclude the readmission of a person who has been excommunicated a second time. Otherwise, he would only have to recall this principle of the μι/α μετα&νοια, and the permanent exclusion envisaged here would have a far better justification as an individual example than the one which it has in fact. Thus it must be concluded that the Didascalia does not appear to know the principle of the one *metanoia*.[57]

This observation is by no means as unlikely as it may appear at first sight. Wherever we meet the contrary principle in the second and third centuries it is clearly derived from the Pastor Hermae: in Africa with Tertullian or in the area of Alexandria with Clement and Origen, who both cite Hermas explicitly and even treat him as canonical scripture. The Syrian author of the Didascalia, however, certainly knew nothing of the Latin literature. According to Connolly,[58] neither has he undergone the literary influence of Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Moreover, this applies to a greater extent to all questions of church discipline which are less easily changed than ideas. Although the author of the Didascalia may indeed have known Hermas (according to Connolly),[59] the allusions to him in this writing are, nevertheless, fairly slight.[60] But a knowledge of Hermas still does not mean an acceptance of his penitential principle. If one does not start out from the false supposition that Hermas himself represents an unheard-of innovation from strictness towards leniency, so that the once-and-for-all penance after baptism was already to be considered a concession,[61] then there is no longer any argument to [242] the effect that a greater leniency than that found in Hermas is unlikely as long as it is not demonstrated by the strictest proofs which remove all doubt. The difference between the Didascalia and the Alexandrian tradition from the point of view of the liturgy of penance has already been noted. Thus it is not at all unlikely that this difference applies also to penitential discipline, that is, that the once-and-for-all possibility of penance after baptism is unknown to the Didascalia. Further observations confirm this impression that in fact the Didascalia does not know the one *metanoia*.

Achelis/Flemming (p. 306 f.) remark that there is no trace of the triad of unforgivable sins[62] in Syria according to the Didascalia and the Constitutiones Apostolorum. Although this is correct, this observation must be seen in its proper perspective. The striking point about this fact is not that in the Didascalia there are no unforgiveable sins but that the group of sins which are subject to excommunication is hardly limited in any way and, above all, is less determined than elsewhere. Where, however, the principle of the unrepeatable character of church forgiveness is in force the group of sins which are subject to excommunication must, in practice, be defined as narrowly as possible, if one wishes to avoid falling into insoluble difficulties in all too many cases where the penitential discipline is concerned. In fact it is remarkable that wherever the principle of the once-and-for-all penance is in force there is in practice the tendency to submit to excommunication more or less only the triad of sins and similar offences also punishable by civil law, although in theory there is the awareness that the circle of mortal sins is somewhat wider. All these problems do not burden the Didascalia.

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[57] J. Grotz, arguing from the case of the false accuser, makes the generalization that reconciliation after an excommunication was possible only once: 'it was not repeatable' (p. 385). But in a note (p. 385 n.9) he states: 'Obviously this does not justify us in believing that it is non-repeatable as a matter of rigid principle.' Since no further justification is offered, it is reasonable to hold that – outside the sphere of influence of the Alexandrian Church – a once-and-for-all penance did not exist in the East. This affords the simplest explanation of why in the East there was nowhere a controversy over the abolition of such a principle: it simply had never existed.

[58] Cf. R. H. Connolly, Didascalia Apostolorum (Oxford 1929), p. lxxxiii.

[59] Cf. R. H. Connolly, p. lxxix.

[60] F. X. Funk, p. 220, notes with a question mark IV 3,2 as a reference to Hermas, Mand. II 5. This also appears to Connolly to be the best evidence, as he stresses in his index (p. 278).

[61] A concession which could only have been introduced on the authority of Hermas and, therefore, only through the recognition of the notion of the once-and-for-all character of penance.

[62] On this, cf. n.l7.

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It is much freer with excommunication, treating the three capital sins no differently from the essentially lighter offences and, *vice versa*, punishing the latter as capital sins, that is, with excommunication. Given this wide possibility of excommunication, it is difficult to conceive that a relapse after an already completed penance did not occur more frequently than where in practice only the most serious offences were punished with a very lengthy penance of excommunication. In view of the great emphasis on the possibility of forgiveness for repented guilt in the Didascalia, a person who has relapsed with regard to a slight fault can hardly be refused a new reconciliation in principle,[63] provided he has subsequently submitted himself to excommunication.

[243]

5. Parallels to the Ban Practice of the Synagogue

The whole of the practice of excommunication in the Didascalia, down to the slightest details and more clearly than elsewhere, has the characteristics of the ban practice of the synagogue, although both the theological background and the purpose of the two institutions remain quite different. Given the spiritual and geographical proximity of the Didascalia to Judaism and its community life[64] (despite its controversy with Judaism) this affinity is not surprising. The parallels[65] between the penitential practice of the Church, as this is presented in the Didascalia, and the synagogal practice of the ban are clear: a consequence of the *nezipha* (reprimand) and the *nidduy* (simple ban) was that the person so punished had to 'withdraw to his own house and in this way manifest his sorrow for what he has done'.[66] Similarly, the bishop prescribes for one who is excommunicated: *ut humiliter secum maneat et oret rogetque in diebus ieiunii*. It is striking that here the co-operation of the community in the penance is not confined, as it is elsewhere, to prayer for the sinner and assent to the reconciliation by the bishop, but is also expressed 'liturgically' in the excommunication itself by a general ceremony of indignation and condemnation on the part of the whole community: *Irascantur ei et iudicium de eo faciant* (II 16,1; similarly II 32,3). This also has an even more impressive parallel in the synagogal ban.[67] The reasons for the exclusion, from the very nature of the case, obviously often vary between the two communities, but even here there are remarkable parallels. For instance, a person who describes his fellow man as 'slave' may

[63] This does not exclude that reconciliation would be refused in those cases where *it* was believed that the sinner was incorrigible.

[64] The anonymous author of the Didascalia displays a detailed knowledge of Jewish teaching and practices. He calls the Jews explicitly 'brothers' (V 14,23). On this, cf. L. Goppelt, *Christentum und Judentum im ersten und zweiten Jahhundert* (Gütersloh 1954), p. 205 ff.; W. Bauer, *Rechtglaübigkeit und Ketzerei in ältesten Christentum* (*Beiträge zur histor. Theologie* 10) (Tübingen 1964), pp. 253 f., 256-60. *Kirche and Synagogue*: *Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden*, vol. i, ed. K. H. Rengstorf and S. von Kortzfleisch (Stuttgart 1968), p. 69 ff.

[65] 'Parallel' does not mean an immediate dependence of the practice in the Didascalia upon the custom of the ban in the synagogue. Prescinding from the general oriental background, this phenomenon can be explained as the preservation in a conservative setting of a practice received originally from early Christianity. It is merely one more instance of the relationship which is known to have existed between the synagogue and the Christian Church, especially in the field of the liturgy. Cf., for example, A. Baumstark, *Vom geschichtlichen Werden der Liturgie* (Freiburg 1923), pp. 13-21; id., *Liturgie comparée* (Chevetogne o..J. [1940]) pp. 11, 87 f., 114 f., 137, 175; M. Simon, *Verus Israel*: *Etudes sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'Empire romain* (Paris 1942).

[66] Cf. Strack/Billerbeck, IV 1, pp. 293, 304. Since (ibid.) a funeral rite was prescribed for the person who was banned, he would surely have to fast during the time of his withdrawal. This does not mean, however, that he was excluded from visiting the temple, any more than the excommunicates were refused participation in the liturgy of the Word.

[67] Cf. Strack/Billerbeck, IV 1, pp. 302, 327: 'In the act of banning the banned person should be cursed, castigated, struck, have his hair torn out, be entreated, bound, tied and even forced into a narrowly confined area' (p. 302). 'Both the simple ban and the solemn ban were expressed with curses' (p. 327).

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be banned.[68] The Christian community 'judges' solemnly the person who insults his brother by calling him 'fool' and *raca* (II 32,3). The verdict of the synagogue in a contention between two Jews which is itself a civil matter may be imposed by the ban.[69] In the Didascalia, too, an actual civil contest between two Christians, in which the bishop is the arbiter, can end with the excommunication of one of the parties.[70] To the principle that the person who bans unjustly himself incurs the ban[71] there corresponds in the Christian context the instruction that anyone who allows another person to be excommunicated because of false accusations before the bishop must be excommunicated (II 42,5; 43,l).[72] It is also noticeable that both in Judaism and in the Didascalia the incidence of exclusions from the community is very great.[73]

[244] These examples, which could be multiplied,[74] are explicable, in part, by the very nature of the matters which they involve, and do not suppose even a mediate dependence on the one side or the other. There are some aspects, however, which are explicable only on the assumption that the practice of the synagogal ban has been applied in its external form to church excommunication, as this is represented in the Didascalia, without many elaborations, since the time of the early Church. Now the ban of the synagogue, either in its simple form (*nidduy*, *shamta*) or in its acute form (*cherem*), is not possible only once. Even less is it insoluble.[75] Indeed, from the very nature of the case, it could hardly be otherwise. *Every* ban is able to be dissolved, therefore. In view of the affinity of the Didascalia's excommunication practice with these Jewish practices, it is difficult to believe that excommunication could be lifted only once, especially since this excommunication is applied frequently and lightly and leniency is preached with regard to sinners.

What is more, the Constitutiones Apostolorum do not appear to recognize a once-and-for-all granting of reconciliation. In Const. II 40,1 the 'second stumble', which is treated exactly as the first, can not really mean a second stumble before the first undertaking of penance.[76]

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[68] Cf. Strack/Billerbeck, IV 1, p. 310.

[69] Strack/Billerbeck, IV 1, pp. 298, 310.

[70] II 47, 1-2 is to be construed in the following way: on the Monday the bishop should try to make a decision in a lawsuit between two Christians in such a way that neither party opposes the bishop's verdict but that both guard the peace with one another. Otherwise (which appears to be the logical corollary), it can inevitably happen that 'the sentence of condemnation of the earthly tribunal' must be passed by the bishop on one 'who is nevertheless a brother'. This sentence is passed only if one of the parties opposes the bishop's verdict and does not comply with it during the course of the week. Thus what is meant can only be excommunication and not a verdict in civil law. For the notion of the 'earthly tribunal' cf., for example, Strack/Billerbeck, I, p. 742, the rabbinical distinction between a 'lower' and an 'upper tribunal'. The latter confirms the ban of the latter 'on earth'.

[71] Cf. Strack/Billerbeck, IV 1, p. 313.

[72] For understandable reasons, the Didascalia seems to evade the question of what ought to happen to a bishop who excommunicates unjustly. Here he is threatened only with the consequences of his behaviour in the next life (II 43,5 etc.).

[73] Cf. above under 3: Excommunication. Apart from the 24 reasons officially recognized in about the middle of the third century, Strack/Billerbeck, IV I, pp. 309-13, lists eight others (cf. ibid., pp. 313-18).

[74] Cf. the obligation of others to avoid a person who has been banned: Strack/Billerbeck, IV 1, pp. 304, 328; Didascalia III 8,5; the ban because of the profanation of a feast day: Strack/Billerbeck, IV 1, p. 311; Didascalia II 59,1; the question of whether the gifts of a person who has been banned should be accepted: Strack/Billerbeck, IV 1, p. 305; Didascalia, IV 5,1-8,3; III 8,3.

[75] Strack/Billerbeck, IV I, p. 320: 'Every simple ban can be loosed. Although this principle is nowhere explicitly stated, it is self-evidently implied in all the prescriptions concerning the lifting of the ban.' P. 328: 'The assumption, which is still held by Schurer, that the *cherem* was not able to be dissolved . . . is to be totally rejected. The *Shulchan Arukh* takes completely for granted that the *cherem* can be dissolved.'

[76] F. X. Funk, I, p. 128 n. 1, also emphasizes this, even though he wishes to exclude a repeated granting of penance for capital sins. But the assumption that there is such an essential distinction within the penance of excommunication is a purely arbitrary one. Wherever a second reconciliation was refused, this refusal must have affected all those who simply had to undertake a penance of excommunication.

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Now if the Constitutiones Apostolorum do not know of one *metanoia*, then it is also unlikely that the Didascalia was aware of it.

An *argumentum e silentio* always presents difficulties. Where, however, a practice is not known it cannot be expected that its absence should be explicitly noted. At the same time, it may be expected that in a work of church order or church law such an important principle should be mentioned if m fact it were m force On the supposition that the principle of the once-and-for-all possibility of church penance was never generally in force in the East, it is possible to explain much more easily why the passage from public church penance to sacramental private penance was able to be achieved in a less striking and a less reflexive way than in the West.

The Didascalia gives us, therefore, an excellent picture of the nature of penance in the Eastern Church in the first half of the third century. There is an elaborate penitential liturgy, a clear consciousness of the sacramental character of public church penance, as well as an application of this penance to practically all the kinds of sin which we today would call 'serious' (at least if we prescind from [245] mere sins of thought). There is no mention of a sacramental private penance without excommunication existing alongside the public church penance of excommunication. In this respect the Didascalia still belongs completely to the earliest period of the history of penance. At the same time, it does not recognize the once-and-for-all character of this church penance of excommunication. It provides, therefore, testimony to the effect that the Western practice, emanating from Hermas, of granting penance only once cannot simply and without proof be presented as the 'more ancient' practice. The parallels with the synagogal practice of the ban also support this. It follows from this, as indeed a close examination of Hermas would also show, that the unrepeatable possibility of penance after baptism in the Western Church represents a canonical measure which was undertaken for pastoral reasons, and that it does not derive from a dogmatic principle. The Didascalia also shows very clearly that the assumption of a linear 'evolutionary' principle for the history of penance, according to which the development proceeds inevitably from a definite strictness towards an ever-increasing leniency, with progressive concessions made to sin, is not justified on historical grounds.

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[246]

8

THE PENITENTIAL TEACHING OF ORIGEN

With Origen the history of penance enters the realm of theology in the proper sense of this term. He is the first theologian of the Church in the strict sense, that is, one who attempts to organize the data of the transmitted revelation into a powerful 'system'. This necessary and, in the final analysis, inevitable enterprise is undertaken with the explicit intention of making more comprehensible the Word which has been revealed and is transmitted within the Church. Nevertheless, this approach incurs the risk that the structure of the system, together with the basic notions which are used as explanations, may dominate and violate the transmitted doctrine to be believed. A correct appreciation of Origen's teaching on penance presupposes an acquaintance with some of his own fundamental methodological preconceptions. It is for this reason that we begin this study with a brief consideration of his theology as a whole.[1]

I. TEACHING ON PENANCE, THEOLOGY AND THE CHURCH

Origen does not wish to be anything other than a man of the Church. Consequently, what is prescribed by the gospel and taught by the Church are, for him, the inviolable and self-evident norm of the whole of his thinking.[2] Although he offers a more profound explanation and understanding (*gnosis*) of the transmitted teaching of the [247] faith and of the Scriptures which must remain inaccessible to the majority of ordinary Christians, he does not do so by appealing to a secret tradition, after the manner of the Gnostics. Rather, it is here a matter either of a theologico-speculative interpretation of this doctrine to be believed, which doctrine still remains an obligatory norm for this explanation, or of a consideration of questions which were previously open. It can, nevertheless, also be a question of the gradual, ever-ascending search for that inaccessible 'truth' which lies behind, as in its 'parable', the immediate meaning and expression of the doctrine and practice of the faith. This 'truth' does not, however, simply render redundant this more immediate level of truth and reality. On the contrary, it confirms its validity. What is meant, therefore, is an investigation which is possible and permissible for a man only to the extent that he continually purifies himself and approaches the higher reality in love.[3] Naturally, this theology has not always been fortunate

[1] The present, thoroughly revised study appeared in its original form in a French tr., under the title 'La doctrine d'Origène sur la Pénitence' in: RSR 37 (1950), pp. 47-97, 252-86, 422-56. In 1964 it appeared unchanged in Italian in the vol.: K. Rahner, *La penitenza della Chiesa* (Rome), pp. 707-876. It appears in German here for the first time. For the abundant literature on Origen's teaching on penance, cf. the general bibliography in the present vol. and H. Crouzel, *Bibliographie critique d'Origène* (*Instrumenta Patristica* VIII) (The Hague 1971).

[2] De princ. I praef. 2 (GCS 22: 8,18-20.25-8); Matt XII 6 (GCS 40) 77, 26-29; Matt XII 13 (GCS 40) 94,26-32; Lc 16 (GCS 35) 109, 15-20; Jos 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,11-15; Num 9,1 (GCS 30) 54,20-25; Lev 7,4 (GCS 29) 383,7-9. Cf. G. Bardy, 'La règle de foi d'Origène' in: RSR 9 (1919), pp. 162-96; D. van den Eynde, *Les normes de l'enseignement chrétien dans la littérature patristique des trois premiers siècles* (Gembloux/Paris 1933), pp. 227-34; G. Bardy, *La théologie de l'Eglise de S. Irénée au concile de Nicée* (Paris 1947), pp. 128-65; R. Cadiou, *La jeunesse d'Origène* (Paris 1935), pp. 164-7, 267 ff., 383, *et passim*; H. Crouzel, *Origène et la 'connaissance mystique'* (Brussel/Paris 1961).

[3] This question cannot be considered in detail here; but cf. J. Lebreton, 'Le désaccord de la foi populaire et de la théologie savante dans l'Eglise chrétienne de III[e] siècle' in: RHE 19 (1923), pp. 481-506; ibid., 20 (1924), pp. 5-37; J. Lebreton, 'Les degrés de la connaissance relgieuse d'après Origène' in: RSR 12 (1922), pp. 265-96; D. van den Eynde, *Les normes de l'enseignement chrétien dans la littérature patristique des trois premiers siècles*

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enough to maintain, in fact, its connection with its own basis. Nevertheless, its proper fundamental orientation is unmistakeably clear. It is, therefore, usually quite easy to distinguish in this theology the testimony of the tradition of the faith in teaching and practice, on the one hand, from the theologico-systematic explanation of this tradition by Origen, on the other, provided one begins with the basic philosophical and theological notions. According to these principles of Origen, we even can and must rank his testimony of the Church's teaching, in its 'common' formulation for the 'masses', not as of an inferior value but precisely as the continuing norm of his actual theological endeavour. Wherever, therefore, in a particular case Origen's theological explanation does not conform to this norm, as he himself represents it, then one ought to disagree with him in his own name. Moreover, it would be false to recognize in the Church's consciousness of the faith attested by him only that which survives his incidental theological interpretation.

For a correct appreciation of Origen's theological ideas it is vital to bear in mind the specific manifold character which, in his own view, belongs to the general object of theology. Concern about any particular intended realities must consider the μυστη/ριον,[4] which according to a fundamental Platonic notion, in general, and to the idea that the whole of reality is in a condition of becoming, for Origen in particular, is the principal object of theology. The becoming [248] in question consists of a *unique* movement of spirits from God and back to him which has many different stages. Thus, according to Origen, the universe of angels, demons, men, matter and spirit is not merely a collection of disparate things held together by the transcendent creator, but an interiorly interrelated and hierarchically structured reality. Everything – nature and history – is included in this reality and organized by the one Logos which is both the image of the one God and the revelation of the unity to which the world is destined. Every level and degree of reality is, therefore, a shadow, a resemblance and an image of the eventual highest level. Each level refers inevitably to this last where the 'truth' finally lies. This truth is the meaning which is finally intended by all the other levels, their fulfilment, even their 'suppression' in the terminology of Hegel. Naturally the lower level is not, as such, destroyed or radically denied and threatened in this way. On the contrary, it is only by its corresponding higher reality that it is seen in its true light.[5] Thus everything, when seen in its proper order, is the image and likeness of the one Logos. This applies just as much to earthly, external history as it does to the 'phenomenal' character of the interior history of spirits in their free relationship with God. The body acts as the image of the fallen *and* redeemable soul; the Old Testament is the *typos* of the New, and this, in its turn, is the image of the eternal Kingdom in which God will be all in all.[6] Likewise, the Church acquires a sacramental structure in all its aspects: in the preaching of Christ and about Christ, as the Church itself, in the Scriptures, the hierarchy, the liturgy and the actual sacraments.[7] In each case there is an external level, for instance, Jesus' body, the words of the Scriptures, the external institution of a hierarchy, the visible offering, the elements of the

(Gembloux/Paris 1933), pp. 152-6, 230-3; H. U. von Balthasar, 'Le Mystérion d'Origène' in: RSR 26 (1936), pp. 513-62 and 27 (1937), pp.38-64.

[4] Cf. on this H. U. von Balthasar, 'Le Mysterion . . .', and H. Crouzel, 'Origène' ,pp. 25-209. This structure represents both the object of theology and the mode of knowledge which is most appropriate to this object. However, Origen does not expound it in terms of abstract principles. He generally assumes it when considering particular questions and applies it unconsciously. In what follows no attempt is made to demonstrate this structure. The general reference to the conclusions of von Balthasar and Crouzel seems to be sufficient for our present purposes. Cf. also J. Daniélou, *Origène* (Paris 1948), as well as *Origenes, Gesit und Feuer – Ein Aufbau aus seinen Schriften* by H. U. von Balthasar (Salzburg 1951), pp. 11-43 (Introduction).

[5] This is evident from Origen's teaching on the transformation of the body, as distinct from its destruction.

[6] Cf. 1 Cor. 15:28.

[7] On this, cf. the author's systematic considerations under the title 'Was ist ein Sakrament?' in: *Schriften zur Theologie* X (Einsiedeln-Zurich-Cologne 1972), pp. 377-91.

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Eucharist, baptism in water, etc. All this is the sign, the body, the visible aspect of the corresponding hidden spiritual reality which is present within these things and active through them. The inner truth thus both hides itself and reveals itself at the same time. It is in this way that are revealed the interior union of all men with the Logos, the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, the interior hierarchy of the Church according to how near men are to God's Logos, the interior sacrifice of Christ himself and of Christians, union with the Logos in the eucharistic meal and the interior purification by baptism in the Spirit.

These two 'levels' of the Church are neither opposed to each other [249] nor are they merely juxtaposed. The external level is the 'bodily' aspect of the interior level, which latter expresses itself and is effective in the former.[8] Corresponding to this external level in the Church is the external hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons, which Origen recognizes unhesitatingly as a divine institution, so that, in his view, a Church without them would be unthinkable.[9] This hierarchy cannot, therefore, be something which is merely exterior, like the reflection of merit or fault in a pre-corporeal existence.[10] With its inalienable duties, it is the revelation of the truth contained typologically in the historical levitical priesthood. According to Origen, it is, on the one hand, indeed only the reflection of the eternal hierarchy, itself still considered to be in some way 'external', in which Christ himself will be the 'true' bishop in the definitive Kingdom of God. On the other hand, it is the expression of the 'true' interior hierarchy of the faithful.[11] The latter is of particular importance for our present purpose. The grades of this interior hierarchy are measured by the corresponding participation in Christ's offering and in the union with the Logos in obedience towards the Father. The activity of the external officials is valid and legitimate. Origen underlines this explicitly with regard to the offering of sacrifice,[12] along with the authority to teach.[13] Moreover, in any one individual case the interior and the external hierarchy *ought* to coincide. Thus priests and bishops should enter the rank in the interior hierarchy which corresponds to their external dignity.[14] For his part, Origen knows very well that, in his day,

[8] On this, cf. Origen's teaching on baptism according to H. U. von Balthasar, 'Le Mystérion . . . ', pp. 54-8.
[9] In Ezech. hom. 8,1 (GCS 33) 402, 5-8. Cf. A. von Harnack, *Der kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag der exegetischen Arbeiten des Origenes* I (TU 42,3) (Leipzig 1918), p. 129 f. It is obvious that Origen considers the bishop's teaching office more important than his other duties (cf. Cant. III [GCS] 189, 6-11). He sees the priest and the bishop as *didaskalos*, and he himself had to be ordained priest in order to be able to teach legitimately. This emphasis which stresses the teaching office before the other duties of the hierarchy does not, however, change in any way its usual structure, as Origen also recognizes. Cf. D. van den Eynde, p. 233 f.; J. Daniélou, p. 57 f.
[10] Cf. Ad Rom. IX, 2 (PG 14) 1213.
[11] In Matt. X 15 (GCS 40) 18,24-19,3; ibid., XIV, 22 (GCS 40,2) 336,20-337,7: the exterior hierarchy, divided into three levels, is συ/μβολον of the realities mentioned after it; In Luc. hom. 13 (GCS 35) 91,22-5: every Church has a visible bishop, who is νοντο&φ. On this, cf. H. U. von Balthasar, p. 45 ff.
[12] In Lev. hom. 6,6 (GCS 29) 367,25-368,7; H. U. von Balthasar, p. 49 f. The section Ad Rom. IX,42 (PG 14) concerns not the Eucharist but the blessings for ordinary meals and the sanctification which they afford if they arc made in the right spirit (as opposed to G. Bardy, p. 141). The 'exception' to this principle will be considered below in detail in connection with the power to forgive sins.
[13] This is not to dispute the fact that Origen, as distinct from Tertullian, for example, did not elaborate very clear *criteria* for deciding between what was important and unimportant in church teaching and, consequently, in the obligations which emanate from this teaching. Cf. D. van den Eynde, p. 230. Since, however, even the Scriptures had to be interpreted according to the tradition of the Church and the role of judging the heretics falls to the bishops (cf. Origen, In Num.hom. 9,1 [GCS 33] 54, 20-9), there can be no doubt that Origen recognized a fundamental teaching authority (at least a negative one). This is connected with the office, but not with the bishop's personal holiness. Nevertheless, this does not mean that in certain aspects of positive teaching personal holiness was not considered a necessary prerequisite. This was all the more important in that, according to Origen, even an unjust decision on the Church's part is to be borne humbly and patiently (Cf. In Ezech. hom. 10,1 [GCS 33] 417, 15-17). In his view, theme is no earthly court of appeal against the Church.
[14] In Lev. hom. 6,3 (GCS 29) 362,23-363,15; ibid., 6,6 (cf. n.13).

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this is not very often the case[15] and he frequently laments the fact. At the same time, he recognizes that there are many Christians in the interior hierarchy who are far worthier of a place in the external hierarchy than many actual priests and bishops.[16]

The event of salvation within this Church, as it is accomplished, for instance, in the forgiveness of sins, must therefore be connected necessarily with all these 'levels' of the *mysterion* of the Church.

But did Origen himself see within his own system these relationships to the different levels of reality of the Church, and say as much, at least with regard to the role of the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism? Did he apply these connections and relationships, as they, in his view, existed in general and principally between the external and interior Church, also to the forgiveness of sins? These questions themselves indicate that in this study particular [250] care will be taken to refer the individual assertions of Origen on the forgiveness of sins to the correct level of the reality of the Church and to assess precisely their theological import. These preliminary remarks dictate sufficiently the structure of this explanation of Origen's teaching on penance. Nevertheless, before the objective, church aspect of the forgiveness of sins, we will describe firstly the 'subjective' aspect: the penance of the sinner himself, in so far as he does it under the influence of grace.

II. THE PERSONAL PENANCE OF THE SINNER

1. Sin Committed after Baptism

The Church has never claimed to be an actual sinless community of saints. The letters of Paul make it abundantly clear that a Christian was capable of sinning after baptism and that this frequently happened. The images of the dead branch on the tree of the Church, of the mixture of wheat and chaff on the threshing-floor of the Church, of Noah's ark with its clean and unclean animals-all these are quite frequently applied to the community of the Church in the second and at the beginning of the third century. Nevertheless, it may still be said that it is only with Origen that 'the early Christian dream of God's sinless bride . . . came to an end'.[17] For it is only with him that the harsh reality of everyday Christian life is confronted theologically and reflectively with the knowledge of a holy Church without wrinkle and stain.[18] This point will be considered in greater detail below. In any case the progress in the Church's self-awareness with Origen is evidenced by the fact that the enthusiasm for baptism, even in comparison with Cyprian of Carthage, is remarkably less intense. Without any doubt, Origen fully appreciates the power, the efficacy and the fundamental importance of baptism as the basis of the whole of the spiritual life. And he certainly has not overlooked the once-and-for-all, immediately effective meaning of baptism,[19] which is the foundation of all further progress, in favour of a merely interior, slow and gradual moral-mystical ascent of man towards God. But he knows much more clearly than any of the theologians [251] before him that, more often than not,[20] when baptism is mentioned in the sense just outlined, it is a matter

[15] Cf. A. von Harnack, p. 129 ff.; J. Daniélou, p. 56 f.
[16] In Num. hom. 2,1 (GCS 30) 9,22-7.
[17] Cf. *Origen*, *Geist und Feuer*, p. 28 (introduction by H. U. von Balthasar).
[18] Cf. In Jos. hom. 21,1 (GCS 30) 428-429,14; In Jem. hom. 15,3 (GCS 6)127, 25-7; In Num. hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 68-71; In Gen. hom. 2,3 (GCS 29) 31,10-14.
[19] Cf. H. Rahner, 'Taufe and geistliches Leben bei Origenes' in: ZAM 7 (1932), pp. 205-322 (against the one-sidedness of Völker); J. Daniélou, pp. 65-74; H. U. von Balthasar, pp. 548.
[20] Origen never thought of a renewal or a repetition of baptism. He made the distinction between baptism *secundum typum Ecclesiae traditum* (Ad Rom. V,8 [PG 14] 1038-40) and the interior dying with Christ by the reception of the Spirit without thereby considering the baptism in water a mere meaningless formality. This

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of what it *should* be, rather than of what it in fact is. In his view, the newly baptized often receive 'today' only the *typus tantummodo mysteriorum* without *virtus eorum ac ratio*.[21] If a person perseveres in sin he does not receive the α!φεσιφ α(μαρτιω~ν[22] in baptism, and Origen knows that this is only too often the case [23] Even if baptism is not actually received unworthily, according to Origen it is still only a *beginning*, albeit a fundamental and indispensable one.[24] Even Cyprian still considered that baptism was the sudden and complete change of the whole man, which communicated the Spirit in its fullness and which then only had to be preserved. Origen no longer shares this view.[25] It is by effort and exertion that a baptized person, who was previously ensnared by vices, is able to free himself slowly from his previous habits.[26] Thus man is always a sinner.[27] Compared with the definitive, eschatological purification of the rebirth in Spirit and fire, the purification of baptism is only a 'prelude', 'in a mirror and likeness'.[28] A relapse after baptism is, therefore, only to be expected, without, however, man's being totally deprived of God's mercy.[29] Origen views the sins of the baptized clearly and dispassionately. These sins are numerous and found in Christians of all conditions and classes, beginning with the bishops.[30] What is more, he tries to make sense of this fact and its precise theological nature. We will consider later more closely the change of the relationship of the baptized to the Church which is caused by sin. For the moment we must look at the other aspects of the nature of sin, that is, the sin of baptized Christians. What Origen has in mind are the actual sins of real men with all the degrees of guilt which these sins have within the developed psychological situation of an individual Christian. It is not surprising, therefore, if the obscurity and the complexity of this concrete situation prevents Origen's theology of sin[31] from being expressed in well-known and neat categories. Thus the *formae et modi et numeri peccatorum*[32] are more fluid in his thinking than they are in today's moral theology. His 'distinctions' are frequently more like descriptions and often have no clear theological basis at all.[33] Nevertheless, it is obvious that

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would be a contradiction of his basic notion of the relationship between τυ&ποφ and the interior reality (cf. H. U. von Balthasar, p. 56). Thus his notion corresponds to today's distinction between a 'fruitful' and a (merely) 'valid' baptism. The fact that he makes this distinction so clearly – Tertullian, for instance, still did not have the courage to do so – shows how the situation has changed.

[21] Ad Rom. V, 8 (PG 14) 1040.

[22] In Luc. hom. 21 (GCS 35) 140,1-7; In Num. hom. 3,1 (GCS 30) 14,1-6.

[23] In Luc. hom. 22 (GCS 35) 145,25-30; cf. J. Daniélou, p. 67 f.

[24] Cf. H. Rahner, p. 214 ff.

[25] The transformation does not take place *ad subitum*: Ad Rom. VI, 10 (PG 14) 1092; In Cant. II (GCS 33) 171,13-17.

[26] Contra Celsum III, 65 (GCS 2) 259,2-7 [SC 136,150,18 ff.]; cf. In Jos. hom. 6,1 (GCS 30) 321,21-322,6; In Lev. hom. 8,7 (GCS 29) 405,11-14.

[27] Ad Rom. II, 14 (PG 14) 918; In Num. hom. 10,1 (GCS 30)68-71; In Jos. hom. 21,2 (GCS 30) 431,11-14; Contra Celsum III 69 (GCS 2) 262,13-15 [SC 136, 158, 35-40]; In Joan. XX 26/27 (GCS 10) 362,20-2; 363, 30-4. On the question whether the 'perfect' can reach impeccability, cf. the dissertation of P. D. Huet (1630-1721) (PG 17) 955 ff. Cf. also: W. Völker, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Orgenes* (Tübingen 1931), pp. 162-8 (with further references to the previous literature); A. Lieske, *Die Theologie der Logosmystik bei Origenes* (Münster 1938), p. 90 ff.

[28] In Matt. tom. XX 23 (GCS 40) 416,32-417,5.

[29] In Ezech. hom. 6,7 (GCS 33) 385, 13-19.

[30] Cf. the material in A. von Harnack, I 65ff.; II 114ff., 129 ff.

[31] On the whole question, cf. the thorough study of G. Teichtweier, *Die Sündenlehre des Origenes* (Regensburg 1958), which we will have occasion to refer to again.

[32] In Ezech. hom. 5,1 (GCS 33) 372,21.

[33] Thus, for example, sin as θα&νατοφ–α)σθε/νεια–ζημι/α: In Joan. XIX 13-14 (GCS 10) 312,22-313,15; the distinction between α(μαρτι/α–ρ(υ/μοφ which, in the case of ρ(υ/μοφ can range from a morally light blemish to a pollution of the whole body: In Luc. hom. 14 (GCS 35) 96,20-98,10; In Jer. hom. 2,2 (GCS 6) 18,26-19,8; he also asks himself whether sins which, in themselves, are not 'mortal' but which, because there is no repentance, lead to a justifiable ban on the Church's part (therefore become mortal sins): In Matt. tom. XIII 30

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Origen maintains the distinction which is fundamental for the theology of penance, namely, that between those sins which cause the loss of grace and those which do not have this effect.

A) THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SINS

Origen considers, in the first place, that the different seriousness of individual sins[34] is a teaching attested by the Scriptures. This difference, however, is not one merely of degree. This is because many sins destroy the grace of baptism, while others do not have this effect. Thus Origen generally distinguishes, in his terminology, between mortal sins and non-mortal sins: *mortale peccatum*,[35] *peccatum ad mortem*,[36] α(μα&ρτημα (α(μαρτι/α) προ_φ θα&νατον,[37] and, on the other hand, α(μα&ρτημα μη∴ θανατη/φοπον (*non ad mortem*),[38] *levis culpa*,[39] *peccatum leve*,[40] *minus peccatum*[41] and *parvum peccatum*.[42] This opposition is also found figuratively in the distinction between illness and death, expressed by the notions of *vulnus facile* and *insanabilis plaga*,[43] that is, of sin which does harm and that which destroys.[44] On the basis of these notions alone, it is still not clear whether the distinction involved corresponds to today's realities of mortal sin and venial sin. All the same, as we shall see, it is basically a question of the same distinction.

B) LIGHT SINS

Origen frequently considers the *levis culpa* of the α(μαρτη/ματα μη∴ θανατη/φοπα as not destructive of grace. The person who has only the ρ(υ/μοφ of sin which does not lead to

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(GCS 40) 264,6-25; 266,7-21; 268,12-25; the only criterion which he recognizes for an essential distinction between sins is simply whether the sinner is ready to do penance or not: In Num. hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 68-71; the three-fold distinction between sins (according to 1 Cor. 3:12) which, according to their gravity, are like wood, grass or straw: In Lev. hom. 14,3 (GCS 29) 482, 10-19 and *passim*. Weakness, illness, somnolence: In Matt. tom. X 24 (GCS 33,19-30; the five-fold relationship to mortal sin: In Matt. tom. XII 35 (GCS 40) 149,18-33; *impius*, *infirmus*, *peccator*: Ad Rom. IV 11 (PG 14) 999; *peccata pingua–tenuia–subtilia*: In Luc. hom. 35 (GCS 35) 214,22-215,4. In addition there is the division into sins of deed, word and thought: In Cant. IV (GCS 33) 239,3l-240,1; In Ex. hom. 6,3 (GCS 29) 194, 18 f.; ibid., 3,3 (GCS 29) 166,15 f.; In Lev. hom. 9,7 (GCS 29) 430,2-10; In Is. hom. 4,3 (GCS 33) 261,14 f. (This division is taken from Philo.) On the divisions of sins, cf. further in G. Techtweier, ch. 5; 'Die Arten der Sünde, pp. 210-81, and W. Capitaine, *De Ethica Origenis* (Münster 1898), p. 163 ff.

[34] In Ezech. hom. 9,2 (GCS 33) 408, 16-24. It is interesting that Origen refuses to accept the idea that sexual faults are the most serious sins.

[35] In Lev. hom. 12,3 (GCS 29) 460,1.

[36] In Lev. hom. 11,2 (GCS 29) 452,7; In Matt. tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 262.14 f.; In Ex. hom. 10,3 (GCS 29) 249, 20; In Lev. hom. 4,5 (GCS 29) 322,11 f.; Fragm. ad libr. X Strom. (PG II) 103; In Lev. hom. 8,7 (GCS 29) 405,15 f.; ibid., 5,4 (GCS 29) 341,17.

[37] De or. 28,10 (GCS 3) 381,16 f.; In Joan. XXVIII 6 (GCS 10) 396,33; ibid., XIX 23 (GCS 10) 325,11; In Jer. hom. 2,2 (GCS 6) 19,2.

[38] In Matt. tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 264,14-16; In Ex. hom. 10,3 (GCS 29) 249,22 f.

[39] In Jos. hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,3; In Matt. tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 264, 26. It is obvious that here *levis culpa* is meant as the opposite of mortal sin.

[40] In Lev. hom. 15,2 f. (GCS 29) 481,13; 482,14.

[41] In Jer. hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 296,3; ψιλο_ν α(μα&ρτημα: Fragm. on 1 Cor. 3:14 (PG 17) 40.

[42] In Jer. hom. 2,12 (GCS 33) 302, 15-18. It is debatable, however, whether this distinction is entirely exclusive. Certainly any proof which pretends to demonstrate a further differentiation within mortal sin itself is subject to serious doubts, especially if the text In Lev. hom. 15,2 is taken as the only decisive indication of this assumption. Here, as we will reiterate below when we consider this text more closely, it is advisable to exercise a certain amount of reserve from the viewpoint of literary criticism. Cf. n.106.

[43] In Jem. hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 295,24.29.

[44] In Ex. hom. 10,3 (GCS 29) 249,17-19. In the three-fold distinction: θα&νατοφ–α)σθε/νεια–ζημι/α of In Joan. XIX 13-14 (GCS 10) 312,22-313,4 the two last members correspond to the *damnum* of In Ex. hom. 10,3.

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death is a τηρη/σαφ το_ Βα&πτισμα του= α(γι/ου πνευ/ματοφ;[45] he counts as one who is burdened by α(μαρτη/ματα μη∴ θανατη/φοπα, and as long as he does not prove himself to be unrepentant he remains a brother in the fullest sense of this term and must not be excluded from the Church.[46] It is even quite clear from In Num. hom. 10,1[47] that Origen holds that a certain coexistence of (light) sin and holiness is possible. In this passage he explains at considerable length how one can be a 'saint' (radically and initially) and still at the same time and inevitably a sinner. This 'holiness' consists precisely in the continual ever-renewed striving to purify oneself increasingly from sins. The only person who is not holy is the one who does not make this effort.[48] Now if there are in this sense *sancti iidemque peccatores* (GCS 30: p. 70,16), then there must be sins which do not simply drive the Holy Spirit out of man. Mortal sins are not compatible with the indwelling of God and Christ in a man. This *simul iustus et peccator*, therefore, can refer only to those sins which Origen considers *non ad mortem*, as *culpa levis*. In In Luc. hom. 2 (GCS 35)[49] he suggests that in fact it is perfectly possible [253] for a person who has once been justified not to sin any more. Unless, therefore, one wishes to make Origen crudely contradict himself (cf. In Num. hom. 10,1), then this possibility of not committing further sins must be understood of the avoidance of mortal sins. On the other hand, the inevitable sins (In Num. hom. 10,1) must be construed as α(μαρτη/ματα μη∴ θανατη/φοπα. Indeed the distinction as a whole is meaningful and understandable only if light sins can be compatible with the preserved baptismal grace. But this means that they must be venial sins in today's sense. Origen here talks about damages

[45] In Jer. hom. 2,3 (GCS 6) 19,22. The expression evokes the terminology of Hermas (Sim. VIII 6,3) (GCS 48: p. 71,18-21). Cf. also 2 Clement 6,9; 7,6; 8,5. For the notion of keeping with regard to baptism in Origen, cf. In Luc. hom. 24 (GCS 35) 158,23-6: *habere priorum* (as opposed to the eschatological baptism in fire) *baptismatum* (in water and the Spirit); *aquae et Spiritas lavacra servare*.

[46] In Matt. tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 262 ff.: only the person who commits the *grandia* (263,14), that is, mortal sins, is an α)δελφο_φ ο)νομαζο&μενοφ (263,14), so that even in the case of a person who perseveres obstinately in a non-mortal sin, it has to be left to God to decide whether he still belongs truly to the Church (268,20-5). The *levis culpa* does not deserve the Church's ban: In Jos. hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,2-5 (at least if there is present a firm purpose of amendment). Origen could not have said this if he were thinking of a guilt which was only relatively light but which still destroys the grace of baptism. For, in his view, such an act in itself separates a person objectively from the Church. A person guilty of a sin of impurity (in Origen's view a *peccatam mortale*: cf. In Matt. Tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 262,13-26) is already, by that very fact, separated from the Church and, consequently, should also be officially excommunicated, in so far as this is possible: Fragm. in Jer. 48 (GCS 6) 222,10-14. Similarly In Lev. hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,22-6, where *peccatum* means a mortal sin. As we have shown, not every sin separates a person from the Church, but in this instance Origen is thinking of those sins mentioned in 1 Cor. 6:9 f. (GCS 29) 481,5-10; In Jud. hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 478,22-479,10, where likewise the simple *peccatum* is to be understood of mortal sin, because it is described as an abandonment on God's part, ibid. (GCS 30) 479,18-23. As we have already seen, Origen does not consider that this happens in the case of every sin. It is, however, a part of his description of mortal sins as opposed to other faults; we will return to this point later. In Jem. hom. 15,5 (GCS 6)127,26 (when we fall we are only still νομιζο&μενοι ει}ναι α)πο_ τη=φ ε0κκλησι/αφ).

[47] Cf. (GCS 30) 68-71. For a similar emphasis on sinfulness in general even in the case of the saints, cf. In Is. hom. 3,2 (GCS 33) 255,12-14; In Num. hom. 6,3 (GCS 30) 32-5.

[48] Obviously Origen is not thinking here of mortal sins. Since he does not recognize the person guilty of a mortal sin as being any longer a brother, he could hardly count him as a 'saint'. The many examples adduced from Paul (cf. ibid. 69,14-18 and 70,6-16), which are elsewhere counted by Origen, without any doubt, as mortal sins, obviously only serve to show that the Christian ought not to consider himself automatically immune from sin. They do not imply that the Christian, in spite of these sins, can still be a saint at the same time. This is all the more true in that Origen always sees in mortal sin that lack of a genuine purpose of amendment which is incompatible with holiness. What is more, Origen considers that, in the case of mortal sins, exhortation to amendment within the Church without excommunication is futile:
In Matt. tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 263,4-12.

[49] Cf. ibid. (GCS 35) 13,5-20,4.

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but not about destruction, about injuries but not about mortal wounds.[50]

This agreement between Origen and today's theology on the question of this basic distinction can be brought out even more clearly by another consideration. If these notions are not in fact identical, then Origen could make the difference between mortal and non-mortal sin, between sin which causes damage and sins which kills, intelligible only with regard to its eschatological effects. In this case, mortal sin, as opposed to a non-mortal sin, would be conceivable only as a fault which in fact causes eschatological death and leads to definitive destruction. In other words, it is not possible to find another meaning for the distinction in question in terms of the present state of grace than that of today's theology. Now, even apart from the fact that an exclusively eschatological understanding of this question does not fit into Origen's system – involving, as it does, the definitive salvation of *all men* – such a conception is already precluded because, in his view, even mortal sins can be remitted in this life.[51] Thus the θα&νατοφ which these sins entail can refer only and immediately to the present life of grace, while non-mortal sins precisely do not have *this* effect.

Indeed the condition in which the sinner guilty of such a *culpa levis* remains corresponds to his preservation of baptismal grace. He still lives within the area of the Church's grace. He is still truly a brother.[52] Immediately, and without the need for this connection to be renewed, he is still under the helpful and salvific influence of the Church's fellowship. His brothers, the officials in the Church and in the heavenly groups of angels – which also belong to the interior reality of the Church[53] – can still intercede for and help him. In so far as the

[50] Although according to In Is. hom. 3,2 (GCS 33) 255,12 and In Num. hom. 6,3 (GCS 30) 32-5 *every* sin (*peccat enim omnis homo*: ibid. [GCS 30] 255,12) appears to exclude the continuing presence of the Spirit, this ought to be understood, in the context, as referring to the *full* presence of the Spirit, with *all* his gifts as well as his *actual* influence on man's questionable acts. Origen even excludes such a presence in respect of the conjugal act which he, nevertheless, in the same context explains as being free from sin (ibid. [GCS 30] 35,16). All this indicates that Origen has a more actualistic notion of the indwelling of the Spirit than either we are accustomed to or, indeed, he himself presupposes when he speaks about the preservation of baptism, etc. Nevertheless this actualistic view ought not to blur the essential distinction which Origen consistently draws between mortal and non-mortal sins. At the same time, this particular view of the relationship between the Spirit and man should be kept in mind in the prudent interpretation of In Lev. hom. 15,2 (GCS 29) 487-9. If it is there stated that with every actual sin (*communia*, *quae frequenter incurrimus*: ibid. [GCS 30] 489,20 f.) a person 'sells' his or her 'heavenly house', then, once the exegetical basis for these ideas is taken into consideration, nothing more is being said here than in the texts mentioned above. The passage of In Lev. hom. will be considered more closely below.

[51] In Lev. hom. 15,2 (GCS 29) 489,19-22; In Joan. XXVII 6 (GCS 10) 396,32-6; Fragm. ad libr. X Strom. (PG II) 103; In Ezech. hom. 3,8 (GCS 33) 357,32-358,1; In Jer. hom. 20,9 (GCS 6) 191 f. Cf. below for a more precise consideration.

[52] Cf. n.48 above.

[53] Corresponding to Origen's view of the intrinsic unity of punishment and means of salvation, this activity, too, is to be understood as simultaneously both a punishment and a means of salvation. In contrast to the reaction to a *plaga insanabilis*, however, it does not come immediately from God himself. The *vulnera facilia* of the *minora peccata* are punished and healed by God's 'servants': In Jer. hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 295,17-20; In Ex. hom. 4,8 (GCS 29)181,26-182,5 contains a similar idea. We are unable to pursue further this profound idea: in the case of venial sins, where man remains connected with the totality of all the means of grace, or is still open to it, this totality still works salvifically in all its dimensions and dynamism for the perfection of man's life of grace: the angels: In Jer. hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 295,15-18; instruction and correction by the brethren (especially the τε/λειοι); In Lev. hom. 3,2 (GCS 29) 302,2-6; In Matt. tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 268,15-21; ibid., XII 11 (GCS 40) 86,24-31; De or. 14,6 (GCS 3) 333,11-16; In Num. hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 68,4, etc.; the intercession of the blessed martyrs and saints: In Num. hom. 10,2 (GCS 30) 71,25-72,2; De or. 11,2 (GCS 3) 322,14-18; the activity of the priests of the Church, by which they correct, participate in penance and offer sacrifice: In Matt. tom. XVI 8 (GCS 40) 496,21-8; In Jos. hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 332,22-333,5; In Lev. hom. 5,3 (GCS 29) 339,11-17; ibid.,5,4 (GCS 29) 342,9-15; ibid., 13,3 (GCS 29) 471,25-7; etc.; the punishing effects of guilt in the world through suffering, illness, etc.: In Joan. VI 58 (GCS 10) 166,23-167,5; In Num. hom. 8,1 (GCS 30) 51,10-24; In Ps. 37,5 (PG 12) 1385, etc.

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Christian, after committing venial sins, still lives within the fellowship of grace that is the Church and only in it and by the grace [254] of the Church, which is constantly made actual in its life and activity, he can achieve the forgiveness of his sins. This is what Origen means when he speaks quite generally of the Christian's being able to have his *peccatum* remitted only by the help of priests and the *meliores*.[54]

C) MORTAL SINS

Now what about mortal sins, those faults which incur death? According to Origen, 'death' is the most common characteristic of sin. It is appropriate, therefore, that our reflection should begin with this notion. We have already seen that by death Origen means the nature or the necessary consequence of the sins in question, that is, a present and not an immediately eschatological reality. Sin causes death at the very moment when it is committed. Now what does such a death through sin mean for Origen? After such a fault the Christian is dead because Jesus, who is life itself, no longer lives in him. Or, expressed against the background of a more actual notion of grace: Jesus 'no longer enters' into the *anima defuncta*.[55] This is because in this soul is preserved neither the Spirit of baptism nor its gifts as these are described in Hebrews 6:4.[56] This man has lost the Holy Spirit, the 'robe', the 'ring' (cf. Luke 15:22) and his sonship[57] and has, as it were, returned to Satan by a miscarriage of the child of the Logos.[58] He is expelled from God's Kingdom,[59] is dead among the dead 'outside'[60] and belongs to the devil.[61] In a certain sense he no longer exists as far as God is concerned.[62] This is what Origen means when he uses the notion of 'dead'.

This spiritual death is often the result of a longer or shorter process leading up to it or of an illness which is considered a mortal wound. Sin is 'incurable', that is, its development cannot be influenced favourably, death cannot be halted.[63] Thus the expressions 'incurable' and

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[54] In Num. hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 68,4-13. This passage evinces the two-fold level of the Church's mediation in the healing of sins: through *meliores* and *sacerdotes*.
[55] In Lev. hom. 12,3 (GCS 29) 459,20-460,7.
[56] In Luc. hom. 24 (GCS 35) 158,23 ff.; In Joan. XXVIII 7 (GCS 10) 397,29-34.
[57] In Lev. hom. 8,11 (GCS 29) 417,12-18; In Joan. XXVIII 15 (GCS 10) 408,11-16; In Lcv. hom. 4,3 (GCS 29) 318,18-23.
[58] In Ex. hom. 10,4 (GCS 29) 250,20-6.
[59] In Lcv. hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 481,3-11. It is worth noting that the sin mentioned here as 'against God' is, according to In Lev. hom. 4,5 (GCS 29) 322,8-11, identical with the *peccatum ad mortem*.
[60] In Joan. XXVIII 7 (GCS 10) 397,29-34; 398,3-5.
[61] In Ex. hom. 6,9 (GCS 29) 200,15-20; In Ezech. hom. 12,3 (GCS 33) 435,23-436,2.
[62] In Jer. fragm. 71 (GCS 6) 232,26 f.; In Joan. XXVIII 6 (GCS 10) 396, 28: νεκρο_φ τω θεοω~|.
[63] Cf. In Joan. XIX 13 (GCS 10) 312,22-313,16, where it is clear that mortal sin is considered 'incurable' because and in so far as the 'illness' cannot be treated by the physician (Christ and his assistants) in such a way as to prevent death. At the same time theme are diseases and weaknesses which are certainly 'curable' and thus do not entail death. Contrary to Poschmann, p. 473 f., the notion of mortal sin is not used here in the sense of 'sin' which, because of definitive voluntary unrepentance, leads in fact to eternal death. Even according to Poschmann (op. cit. p. 435 f.) this would not correspond to Origen's use of the term elsewhere. It fits neither the context here nor the application of the notion in his commentary on John XXVIII 6 (GCS 10) 396, 33 f. The allusion to the night into which the soul enters (cf. Luc. 12,20; In Joan. XIX 12 [GCS 10] 312,20) *is* no proof of Poschmann's interpretation. It is not clear from Origen's allegory that by this night he means physical death which sin makes definitive. The prognosis on the part of the physician Christ that the illness will end in death refers to the fact that the illness of the 'Jews' will end in death. This illness was already at a critical stage, although it had not yet led to actual death of the soul. But this will occur because the Jews did not *wish* to be healed (In Joan. XIX 11 [GCS 10] 311,13-14; In Jer. hom. 2,12 [GCS 33] 302,2: *irremediabilis nolentisque curari*). The expression α(μαρτι/α α)νι/ατοφ is found already in Hermas, Mand V 2,4 (GCS 48:31,4); likewise also: Didascalia apost. VI 14,10; cf. Const. Apost. II, 37,2; 41,7; VI, 18,10; Ps.-Cypr., De sing. cler. 6 (CSL 3,3; 179,18); Ps.-Cypr., De aleatoribus 5 (CSL 3,3: 97,18); Cyprian, epist. 30,7 (of Novatian); Cyprian, De lapsis 15 (*letalis plaga*); the synodal documents of the council of Antioch of AD. 269 (sec in Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. VII

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mortal sin are almost identical for Origen. Sin is 'incurable', however, because it leads to death, but not because the person guilty of mortal sin cannot be raised again to a new life.[64] Such an idea is to be excluded from any consideration of 'incurable' sin according to Origen.

Mortal sin is not only a loss of grace in the sense of a relegation through a 'relapse into pagan behaviour'[65] to the state prior to baptism. It is a specific loss of grace which is clearly distinct from the pre-baptismal state. The sins of Christians, whom God has loved, [255] are worse than those of pagans and heretics;[66] there are sins against the Holy Spirit which can be committed only by those who possess this Spirit. This presupposes the presence of the Holy Spirit which is communicated to the believer through Christ's death in baptism.[67] Thus, in Origen's view, 'sin against the Holy Spirit' (Matt. 12:31 f.) does not suppose a special obstinacy but is present wherever a Christian o(kai.\ paro&ntoj au0tou= (*sc.* to_ paro_n pneu=ma a#gion): GCS 10: p. 408, 24) e0n th|= yuxh= a(marta&nwn.[68] This corresponds to the situation of Hebrews 6:4 ff. The sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable, since it is committed in clear opposition to the sumbouli/a and su/mpnoia of the e0nu/parxon pneu=ma.[69] It is even its complete 'reversal' since in to_ th=j yi9oqesi/aj pneu=ma with every good deed one is continually reborn from God in the Spirit as a son of God with Jesus Christ.[70] The sin against the Holy Spirit cancels this new participation in the life of the Trinity and, therefore, spells death. The person who is guilty of such a sin opposes himself immediately to God, who is present within him, and this in direct contradiction to the inner dynamism of his own state of grace. Thus he stands before the wrath of God and not only in contradiction to his world: *non per ministros retribuet Babyloni Deus, sed ipse retribuet, quod meretur*.[71] Afflicted with the *plaga insanabilis* of mortal sin, man is no longer open to the salvific influence of created reality, the 'servant of God'.[72] Thus he falls

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30,12 [GCS 9,2: 710,25]). In all these texts there is nowhere a mention of the fact that a person who has 'died' of an 'incurable' sin cannot be revived. The contrary is either presupposed or expressed (cf. H. Koch, *Cyprianische Untensuchungen* [Bonn 1926], p. 441 f.; P. Galtier, *L'Eglise et la rémission des péchés aux premiers siècles* [Paris 1932], p. 191 ff.). For the identification of the a(marti/a pro&j qana&ton with the a)ni/ata tw~n a(marthma&twn and ei0j ku/rion in Origen, cf. De or. 28,8-10 (GCS 3) 380,12; 381,10 f. and 15 f. For the idea that a terminal illness cannot be halted by angels, etc., cf. In Jer. hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 295,24-296,2; ibid., 2,12 (GCS 33) 300-2; In Lev. hom. 8,5 (GCS 209) 402, 15-18; In Jos. hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,2-7; In Ps. 37,1 (PG 12) 1372.

[64] In Joan. XX VIII 6 (GCS 10) 396,32-4.

[65] In Joan. XXVIII 7 (GCS 10) 397,34.

[66] In Ezech. hom. 10,2 (GCS 33) 419,1-7. Cf. Ad Rom. IV 12 (PG 14) 1002; In Ezech. hom. 5,3 (GCS 33) 374,1-26.

[67] Cf. the long researches in In Joan. XXVIII 15-20 (GCS 10) 408-15; esp. 15 (ibid., 408,4-409,3). On the basis of these ideas Origen is easily able, for instance, to forgive Peter's denial; the sin of a Christian is greater and more serious because he has already received the *spiritus gratiae* (Heb. 10:29: In Matt. ser. 114 (GCS 40) 236,29-239,32.

[68] In Joan. XXVIII 15 (GCS 10) 408,25.

[69] In Joan. II 11 (GCS 10) 66,10-17.

[70] In Jer. hom. 9,4 (GCS 6) 70,12-27. On this cf. A. Lieske, p. 157. On the whole section of reflections on sin, cf. also G. Teichtweier, who nevertheless recognizes only the presence of the legal-ethical viewpoint. He thus opposes a consideration of the consequences of sin from the viewpoint of grace, and this by appealing to the lack of an adequate distinction between nature and grace (loc. cit. p. 134). In general and as a matter of principle, the first point which must be made in this regard is that from the very nature of the case there is already an inner connection between the individual consequences of sins, making the isolation of any one approach inappropriate. Teichtweier, following his own presuppositions, understands 'death' as the consequence of sin uniquely as the expression of the intensity of the lapse into sin; that is, in this case the sinner stands in an irreducible opposition to God, the source of life (p. 141 f.). This means, however, that both the Church as a community of grace and consequently the theological significance of reconciliation are overlooked.

[71] In Jer. hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 295,10 f. Cf. In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1372: there are sins which can no longer be punished by the law, the bishop or the angel of penance but only by God himself.

[72] In Jem. hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 295,20-2; In Lev. hom. 4,4 (GCS 29) 319,23-320,7; In Jer. hom. 13,1 (GCS 6)

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completely under the influence of the *sinful* forces in the world. To a certain extent he has become the property of the devil[73] and stands in a kind of spiritual-personal relationship to him;[74] he is 'consecrated'[75] to him, begotten by him[76] and a member of the *corpus peccati*, whose head is the devil himself.[77]

For such a sin against the Holy Spirit there is no *aphesis*:[78] ου0 γι/νεται α!φεσιφ τω~| ει0φ αυ0το_ (το_ πνευ=μα) η9μαρτηκο&τι. The person who offends in this way is a α)συ/γγνωστοφ.[79] Nevertheless, it is not easy to say precisely what is meant here by the *aphesis* which is no longer possible after mortal sin. It is obvious that on this point Origen is dependent on a traditional teaching which he has received from Hermas through Clement of Alexandria. For his part, he does not appear to sense any need to explain this notion more clearly. He certainly does not mean that mortal sins against the Holy Spirit simply cannot be remitted.[80] This point will be demonstrated later in greater detail. Thus the *aphesis* is not

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102,28-103,3.

[73] Cf. n.61 above.

[74] In Matt. tom. XII 4 (GCS 40) 75,3-5; ibid. XI 6 (GCS 40) 44,8-10; In Jer. hom. 9,4 (GCS 6) 70,3-11.

[75] In Num. hom. 20,3 (GCS 30) 193,9-29.

[76] In dependence upon John 8:44 and 1 John 3:8: In Joan. XX 10 (GCS 10) 339,26-30; ibid., XX 13 (GCS 10) 343,19-23; 344,10-14. The fact of being engendered by the devil appears here to be more the presupposition of, and reason for, the (new) sin than its consequence.

[77] Ad Rom. V 9 (PG 14) 1046.

[78] In Joan. II 11 (GCS 10) 66,11; ibid., XXVIII 15 (GCS 10) 408,18-21; Exhort. ad mart. 30 (GCS 2) 26,20-4; In Matt. series 114 (GCS 40) 239,5-20; In Jer. hom. 16,5 (GCS 6) 137,21-3; In Lev. hom. 2,4 (GCS 29) 295,18-20.

[79] In Matt. ser. 114 (GCS 40) 238,8. In Joan. II 11 (GCS 10) 66,13 συγγνω&μη is synonymous with α!φεσιφ; cf. ibid. (GCS 10) 66,6.9.11.

[80] That such sins can in fact be remitted is abundantly obvious from the texts just mentioned and from their context. In Exhort, ad mart. 30 Origen mentions simply without any qualification α(μαρτη/ματα which can be granted an α!φεσιφ through baptism and martyrdom. In the abstract – and this may indeed be the case elsewhere – it is conceivable that α(μαρτη/ματα designates *only* mortal sins; cf. n. 33 above. In the present context, however, this is unlikely. For if this were the case, would Origen take it so easily for granted that the friends – Ambrose and Protoctetus – whom he is exhorting, together with their companions who are threatened, do in fact need to remit mortal sins? If, however, α(μαρτη/ματα here refers to all sins, including those which are not mortal, then α!φεσιφ cannot mean the remission of sins at all. For no one disputes that according to Origen at least non-mortal sins can be remitted apart from baptism and martyrdom. Moreover, this does not necessarily mean an α!φεσιφ, although it could do if α!φεσιφ were to have this comprehensive meaning. Just before the passage In Joan. XXVIII 15 there is ibid., XXVIII 7 (GCS 10) 397,15-19, that is, the text which contains the resurrection of Lazarus. This resurrection provides a symbol of the restoration to life of the person who is guilty of mortal sin, that is, who has sinned in the sense of Heb. 6:4 f. and has reverted to a pagan way of life. In Matt. ser. 114 it is stated that sinners who behave according to Heb. 10:29 no longer have hope of a *remissio* either in this world or the next. But Origen adds immediately that such a sinner ought *not* to say: *peccata nostra in nobis sunt et quomodo vivemus*. For God says: *vivo*, *quoniarn nolo mortem peccatoris sicut paenitentiam* (Ezek. 33,10 f.), and he knows which penalties he inflicts *super denegantes et paenitentes*, as opposed to the *denegantes et non paenitentes* (cf. In Matt. ser. 114 239,23-8). It is, therefore, clearly presupposed that penance is always effective, even though *remissio* is no longer possible. In In Lev. hom. 2,4 he has his audience saying: *apud nos una tantummodo est venia peccatorum*, *quae per lavacri gratiam in initiis datar*; *nulla post haec peccanti misericordia nec venia ulla conceditar*. This is merely the principle which had been in force since Hermas. It refers to mortal sins, since it is these, above all, that arc remitted in baptism. But it never occurred to any one to deny that a forgiveness for non-mortal sins was possible. It is obvious that Origen, in his answer, does not intend to dispute this ancient principle – once it has been correctly understood – especially since he himself enunciates it just as unhesitatingly elsewhere. Now if, in order to prove that, despite this principle, Christians are not worse off than Jews, he enumerates seven *remissiones*, then it follows that at least one of these must refer to mortal sins. Otherwise he would only have evaded the objection. Thus the *septima remissio* of public penance is placed at the end of the list as the climax and decisive argument (cf. In Lev. hom. 2,4 [GCS 29] 296,17-22). Likewise, the *remissio* of In Lev. hom. 15,2 (GCS 29) 488,23 f., according to the context (cf. ibid., 489,19 f.), also includes the remission of mortal sins by means of the once-and-for-all public penance. As could be shown from the actual context, this *remissio* in Lev. hom. 2,4 refers to mortal sins not only *de facto* but also absolutely *de iure*. It is a *remissio peccatorum*. The single *venia* – whether in the

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simply identifiable with *every* remission of guilt. But this is only a negative definition of this notion. [256] What does it mean positively? The answer to this question requires, in its turn, a more precise definition of the specific character of the post-baptismal remission of sins and is, therefore, important for us at this point. Nevertheless, the answer is to be given here only in so far as it does not presuppose the whole teaching of the nature of the remission of sins committed after baptism – a point which will be considered later. Rather, it will be derived provisionally from those texts which themselves speak explicitly and immediately of *aphesis*. In the narrow, technical sense in these texts *aphesis* appears first in connection with baptism, where it is in a special sense unique to Christian initiation. The only conceivable application of this sense to mortal sins committed after baptism would be by way of a possible baptism in blood in martyrdom.[81] But the unique possibility could explain the nature of *aphesis* only if there were no longer any possibility of the forgiveness of later sins after baptism. In this case the *aphesis* would simply mean the once-and-for-all forgiveness of sins which was only possible in baptism. But this hypothesis is not verified. Thus the connection of baptism which is possible only once with the *aphesis* allows only one conclusion, which is that the latter is a *special* forgiveness of sins – indeed possible only in baptism. If, however, this special

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Greek it is α!φεσιφ, συννω&μη or another word that is behind it is irrelevant, since these expressions can have the same meaning; elsewhere Origen conveys its sense with α!φεσιφ – does not exclude a *remissio* in a wider sense. According to In Lev. hom. 2,4 (GCS 29) 296,17, it is *dura et laboriosa*. Thus in this passage α!φεσιφ is not used in the strict sense of a simple remission of sins. The only text which does not admit of a clear interpretation on this question in function of its context is In Joan. II 11. Nevertheless, in this work the fact that mortal sin against the Spirit is able to be overcome is so clearly expressed that it would be absurd to interpret this passage differently from the other texts or – as, for instance, G. Rauschen, *Eucharistie und Busssakrament* (Freiburg 1908), p. 179, does – to assume that Origen changes his opinion in the same work. Moreover, if In Joan. II was composed substantially earlier (after A.D. 220) than, for example, In Joan. XXVIII 15 (after AD. 233), then both texts say the same thing. For just before In Joan. XX VIII 15 occurs the section In Joan. XX VIII 7: the teaching on the restoration to life of the person guilty of mortal sin. Thus there is no reason why In Joan. can and must be interpreted differently from the other texts. That the contrary of α!φεσιφ is not unforgiveness but another kind of remission of sins is obvious from Selecta in Ps. 31,1 (PG 12) 1301: α)φι/ενται με.ν αι(α)νομι/αι δια& του= α(γι/ου Βαπτι/σματοφ, καλυ/πτονται δε. αι9 α(μαρτι/αι δια_ τη=φ τικρα~φ α(μαρτι/αφ μετανοι/αφ. Even though the formulation of this sentence may derive more from Evagrius than immediately from Origen (cf. H. U. von Balthasar, 'Die Hiera des Evagrius' in: ZKTh 63, [1939] pp. 86-106), it nevertheless resumes faithfully Origen's idea of the difference between α!φεσιφ and the notion which is actually opposed to it. It is also possible to think that the sentence is a summary from *Didymus*, Expos. in Ps. 31,3 (PG 39) 1320. But even in this case, we have an idea which is peculiar to Origen: on the one hand, α!φεσιφ, συγγνω&μη in baptism for sins committed *before* the law; on the other hand, no α!φεσιφ but an ε0πικα&λυψιφ of sins, in virtue of μετα&νοια for offences committed after baptism. For the origin of this formula in Origen, cf. Ad Rom. II 11 (PG 14) 872: *quorum remissae sunt iniquitates per baptismi gratiam vel quorum tecta sunt per paenitentiam peccata*. We will have to consider the text In Jer. hom. 16,5 more closely later. It is evident, therefore, that α!φεσιφ and every kind of remission of sins are *not* absolutely identical. Certainly α!φεσιφ can have a narrow technical sense, and does so necessarily in several passages. Nevertheless, this obviously does not mean that in other passages it cannot have a wider non-technical sense and then means, quite simply, any kind of 'forgiveness of sins'. This is the case in De or. 28,5 (GCS 3) 378,5 f.; ibid., 31,3 (GCS 3) 396,23; ibid., 33,1 (GCS3) 401,21; In Is.hom. 6,2 (GCS 33) 270,29; 271,5; In Lev.hom. 5,3 (GCS 29) 339,13 f. compared with 340,1 f.; Exhort.ad mart. 30 (GCS 2) 27,5; In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 99,5; In Num.hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 68,9.11; in Lev.hom. 2,4 (GCS 29) 295,26-296,22. In the last passage the contrast between the technical and the more general use of the notion is very clear: *una tantummodo venia peccatorum* (ibid., 295,18) – many *remissiones* (ibid., 295,26). It is also clear, therefore, that the technical usage is traditional: Origen makes his audience raise the lament over the *una venia peccatorum* as a self-evident axiom.

[81] Cf., for example, Exhort.ad mart. 30 (GCS 2)26,20-4. Very often baptism and the remission of sins are simply mentioned together without it being at all evident from the texts that the remission in question is an effect which is proper to baptism. Thus, for example, in Cant. III (GCS 33) 226,16 f.; In Lev.hom. 8,3 (GCS 29) 398,11 f.; ibid., 8,7 (GCS 29) 405,11 f.; In Jos.hom. 15,7 (GCS 30) 393,11 f.; In Luc.hom. 14 (GCS 35) 98,13; ibid., 21 (GCS 35) 139,1-3.18 f.; 140,3.

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forgiveness differed from other possibilities of forgiveness after baptism *only* by virtue of the sacramental and unique *rite*, then a stress on the once-and-for-all character of the baptismal *aphesis* would be superfluous. A mere warning not to forfeit the grace of such a *once-and-for-all* forgiveness in baptism would be meaningless. Thus the difference between the *aphesis* in baptism and that after baptism cannot refer only to the rite of the sacrament of initiation.

On this question In Joan. II 11 provides further help. Since sin committed after baptism is more serious than the faults committed before baptism it does not receive the same forgiveness as the latter. It is a sin against the Holy Spirit, and only if it were lighter than this would a remission by a συγγνω&μη be considered.[82] Even if baptism could be repeated it still does not appear, therefore, to be able to remit sins committed after baptism. The *aphesis can* only apply to sins which are not committed as a conscious contradiction against the dynamism of the Holy Spirit which is given to man in baptism. Thus the impossibility of a renewed *aphesis* does not depend upon the unrepeatable character of sacramental baptism (and the forgiveness [257] which it involves). Neither does it depend, however, on the fact that God does not wish to grant a further *aphesis*. The only criterion here is the intrinsic nature of the guilt to be remitted. The nature of a further possible means for the forgiveness of sin must, therefore, obviously correspond to the intrinsic nature of the sin to be remitted. This is not the case, however, of baptism and the *aphesis* which is granted with it, in regard to the sins committed after baptism. We have already described in some detail the nature of mortal sin committed after baptism. It follows from what we have said that the remission which this sin calls for cannot come about by way of a direct and immediate effect of the Church's usual and normal activity, that is, for Origen the activity of priests, the faithful and angels. This activity of the Church naturally includes sacrifice, prayer, instruction and correction, all of which are effective only in those cases where the sinner has not, through 'death', fallen out of the fellowship of grace itself. In the latter case he must be given up as 'incurable', which means that he can no longer be preserved from death, even by 'God's servants'. At the same time, this idea also implies that *aphesis* for sins which do *not* incur death is, according to De or. 28,9 f., obviously possible by means of prayer and sacrifice.[83] With regard to sins committed after baptism, therefore, *aphesis* would mean that forgiveness of sins which is brought about by the συνεργει=ν [84] of the Church for one of its living members who is still united with it. But it is precisely no longer possible if this living relationship has been disrupted through the death of sin.

This view fits well into Origen's theology of serious and light sins. Nevertheless, it has the disadvantage of dissociating the *aphesis* of baptism from that for sins committed after baptism, despite the similarity of the two ideas. Before baptism the candidate is not yet a member of the Church and, therefore, he is not yet in a position where the 'sin-remitting' activity of the Church can affect him. The most that can be said is that a non-baptized person does not block himself off directly and explicitly from this influence of the Church, as does the person who commits serious sin after baptism.

This discrepancy does not, however, detract from the approach to a solution which we have suggested. The genuine meaning of the formula of once-and-for-all *aphesis* in baptism does not have to coincide completely and in all respects with the notion of *aphesis* which is derivable from Origen' s theory of sin committed by a baptized [258] person. In order to do full justice to the technical notion of *aphesis* in Origen's work it is, in any event, necessary to make a further observation. This is that for Origen α!φεσιφ is the opposite of κο&λασιφ.[85]

[82] Cf. In Joan. II 11 (GCS 10) 66,13-15.
[83] Cf. De or. 28,9 f. (GCS 3) 380,25; 381.5.10.15.
[84] Cf. ibid., 381,8.
[85] In Joan. fragm. 12 (GCS 10) 494,10: it is through the α!φεσιφ, which here obviously refers to baptism, that

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By this he means a remission of sins without the suffering of the consequences of sin. The place where this notion appears most clearly is In Jer. hom. 16,5-7.[86] The person who has received the α!φεσιφ α(μαρτημα&των in the bath of regeneration and subsequently, despite the light of faith which he has received (ε0ν γνω&σει: GCS 6: p. 137,30), backslides into sins must, as opposed to the α!φεσιφ of baptism, α)πολαμβα&νειν τα_φ α(μαρτι/αφ (GCS 6: p. 137,18-27). Obviously what are meant here are sins which are not only 'hay' and 'straw' but 'wood' (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11 f.) (138,8 ff., 15ff.; 138,23 f.) and which bring about the condition envisaged in Hebrews 10:26 f.,[87] in other words, faults which are without any doubt mortal sins. In this passage the α)πολαμβα&νειν τα_φ α(μαρτι/αφ stands in opposition to the α!φεσιφ achieved in suffering the punitive fire of God in the next life, a fire which destroys sins and so eradicates the evil in man. It frees from guilt (α)φανισμο_φ τω~ν κακω~ν: 139,3) and thus prepares the purified but not to be 'burned' 'image and likeness' (138,22) of God in man for the reception of salvation and the rewarding even of those good works done in life. From this text it is clear, therefore, that κο&λασιφ (139,3), as opposed to α!φεσιφ, is to be understood as a 'medicinal'[88] punishment for the remission of sins. The *aphesis* in baptism is, accordingly, a forgiveness without the need to suffer the consequences of sins. It is irrelevant that the text here presents the remission by 'punishment' as taking place in the next life. For it will be pointed out later that the contrite penitent is able, already in this life through his penance, to anticipate the purificatory baptism of fire[89] in the next life, through which sins committed after the baptism in water and the Spirit are remitted. That these ideas are based on the esoteric notion of the *apocatastasis*[90] and that there is no distinction made between those who are repentant and those who leave this life in their obstinacy does not affect in any way the fundamental idea of a pure *aphesis* as opposed to a salutary suffering of punishment. Nevertheless this idea is not to be seen as opposed to the refusal of every forgiveness.[91] By way of conclusion it may be stated that,

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the punishment imposed for sin according to the law is lifted. Origen's notion of κο&λασιφ must be completely disassociated from any idea of a purely vindictive punishment, such as would contribute nothing to the actual remission of guilt. Such a notion does not exist in Origen's thinking. In his view punishment is always destructive of guilt (at least in so far as it is considered in itself). Thus where α!φεσιφ occurs, as opposed to κο&λασιφ, it is a question of a remission of guilt which is not brought about by the expiatory suffering of the punishments due to sin. α!φεσιφ is, therefore, the remission of sin without punishment which, nevertheless, obviously allows of a forgiveness precisely through the suffering of such punishment.

[86] Cf. In Jer.hom. 16,5-7 (GCS 6)137-9.

[87] This passage states explicitly that sins such as those mentioned in Heb. 10:26 f. can be remitted through undergoing punishment. This also clarifies how In Jem. hom. 13,2 (GCS 6)103,15-104,18 should be understood. This text is repeatedly adduced as a proof that, according to Origen, mortal sins are unforgivable. It is here stated, with regard to the sins of Heb. 10:29 and 6:4 ff., that the sinful Jerusalem, that is, the soul which, after baptism, has relapsed into sin and become unbelieving, cannot count on forbearance, pity and prayer for reconciliation, not even that of Jesus himself. However, this need not mean any more than what is said of the same sins in In Jem. hom. 16,55 ff., namely that such sins can be remitted only by undertaking the punishment which is appropriate to them.

[88] Cf., for example, παιδευ/ων πο&νοφ: In Jer.hom. 12,3 (GCS 6) 91,5.

[89] The same idea of a purifying and not merely vindictive baptism of fire for sins committed after baptism figures in: In Jer. hom. 2,2 f. (GCS 6) 17-20. (It is said explicitly, cf. ibid., 19,3; 18,28 f.: with regard to mortal sins, as opposed to ρ(υ/μοφ sins, that the sins which are remitted in the fire of judgement are mortal sins.) In Luc.hom. 24 (GCS 35) 158; In Is.hom. 4,5-6 (GCS 33) 262; In Lev.hom. 9,8 (GCS 29) 432,17-27; In Ex. hom. 13,4 (GCS 29) 275,18-23; In Ezech.hom. 1,3 (GCS 33) 324,7-27; Ennarr. in Job 20,25 (PG 17) 76.

[90] Cf., for example, Comm. in Gen. tom. III 7 (PG 12) 68; in Matt. tom. XV 11 (GCS 40) 379,20-380,6; Contra Celsum VI 26 (GCS 3) 96,11-17.

[91] It is entirely another question whether this forgiveness of guilt in baptism is entirely compatible with Origen's notion of the salvific meaning of suffering, which latter both emanates from guilt and finally destroys it (thus not to be punished signifies God's most intense anger: In Jer.hom. 2,5 [GCS 33] 294,21-5; In Ex.hom. 8,5 [GCS 29] 230,8-13, etc.) or with the teaching that bad habits, etc. (which are also in Origen's view the punishments

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because of their special gravity, there is no longer any *aphesis* for mortal sins committed after baptism. This is because, on the one hand, the rite of baptism can no longer be considered appropriate [259] for their forgiveness, and, on the other hand, they cannot be remitted by the immediate operation of the Church's prayer and sacrifice. Rather, they must be expiated through the undergoing of the punishment which they have deserved. From the very nature of the case, it is obvious that the last aspect is a corollary of the ineffectiveness of the Church's prayer and sacrifice in such cases. This ineffectiveness rests, however, on the nature of mortal sin which excludes from the Church's inner fellowship of grace and causes the spiritual death of the sinner, precisely because man has opposed himself to the Holy Spirit.

D) CONCRETE MORTAL SINS ACCORDING TO ORIGEN

Which sin, according to Origen's view, leads to death and which does not? Origen obviously considers sin not so much in its objectivity as in the way that it occurs in the actual life of the individual with all its unforeseeable circumstances. Thus he states with regard to the question just posed:[92] *Quae autem sunt species peccatorum ad mortem, quae vero non ad mortem, sed ad damnum, non puto facile a quoquam homine posse discerni. Scriptum namque est: delicta quis intelligit?* It is later added that it is possible, nevertheless, to have some idea of these *ex parte aliqua* from the Scriptures (*in evangelio per parabolas*). In fact Origen renounces all attempts to establish any theoretical objective norms for such sins.[93] He simply stands by the statements of the Scriptures and the actual practice of the Church as it occurred in the exercise of the Church's penitential discipline at that time, and thus used a purely human criterion to distinguish between mortal sins which were subject to the penance of the Church and other faults. Thus for him the following are those guilty of mortal sins: *masculorum concubitor, adulter, homicida, mollis, fornicarius, avarus, idolorum cultor*,[94] the person who commits a *blasphemia*,[95] the *maledicus in Deum* and *in proximum* and the other sinners whom Paul names in 1 Corinthians 6:9 f. and excludes from the Kingdom of God.[96] In De or. 28,10 the following are spelt out ει0δωλολατρει/α, μοιξει/α, πορνει/α, ε0κου/σιοφ φο&νοφ.[97] In Joan. 28,7 the expression of reversion to the ε0θνικο_φ Βι/οφ means a mortal sin[98] which concerns not only falling away from the faith but lapsing into every 'pagan' vice.[99] Thus it is stated that through murder, adultery, theft, perjury, violence, etc., a person becomes the property of the devil,[100] with the obvious implication that these are mortal sins.

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for previous sins) are not yet remitted by baptism. What is clear is that Origen feels himself bound by the Church's teaching of a single α!φεσιφ in baptism, and when he considers or evaluates it he understands it in the traditional way of a forgiveness which abrogates punishment.

[92] In Ex.hom. 10,3 (GCS 29) 249,21-3.

[93] He is obviously clearly aware of the different degrees of subjective imputability which sin can involve. Cf., for example, In Lev.hom. 14,3 (GCS 29) 482,28-483,1: sins *non ex corde, non voto et animo iniquo*; Ad Rom. V 11 (PG 14) 999; ibid., II l (PG 14) 871 f.; In Num.hom. 28,2 (GCS 30) 282,26-283,9. Cf. E. R. Redepenning, *Origenes. Eine Darstellung seines Lebens und seiner Lehre* (Bonn 1841-6; rep. Aalen 1966) II, p. 424.

[94] In Matt.tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 262,15-20; 263,17-26 (with reference to 1 Cor. 5:11); 264,3-5 are also listed: φο&νοφ, φαρμακι/α, παιδοφθεορι/α η1 τι τω~ν τηλικου/των.

[95] In Lev.hom. 15,2 (GCS 29) 489,14. Cf. Fragm. 48 in Jem. (GCS 6) 222,13.

[96] In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 481,5-14. It is here a question of the deliberate and habitual tendency to blaspheme.

[97] Cf. De or. 28 (GCS 3) 381,14; 380,23. Origen does not have in mind here a fixed group of three, since he adds: η3 τινοφ α!λλου ξαλεπωτε/ρου πται/σματοφ (ibid., 380,28-318,1).

[98] *Cf.* In Joan. XXVIII 7 (GCS 10) 397,34.

[99] Cf. In Joan. XXVIII 6 (GCS 10) 396,33 f.

[100] In Ex.hom. 6,9 (GCS 29) 200,16-201,5. For adultery as a mortal sin, cf.: Fragm. ad lib. X Strom. (PG 11) 103; for fornication: Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 247,23.

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The [260] cursing of one's parents also seems to be reckoned with these faults.[101] The state of the conscience of the Christian people on this question at that time is particularly well expressed in a passage of In Jer. hom. 20:[102] 'And every one of us [Origen is speaking reproachfully] who has not practised idolatry, who has not committed an act of impurity (would that we were indeed clean in this respect at least!) believes that, on leaving this life, he will be saved.'

On the other hand, according to Origen, the following, by way of example, are not mortal sins: λοιδορι/α, φυσι/ωσιφ, πολυποσι/α, λο&γοφ ψευδη∴φ και/ α0ργο&φ *aut talis aliqua culpa levis, quae etiam in illis, qui videntur proficere in ecclesia, frequenter inveniuntur*.[103] Otherwise, not a great deal is said about individual venial sins which may be explicitly distinguished from mortal sins.[104]

There is, however, a further question to be considered. Did Origen maintain only the double distinction of sins into mortal sins and non-mortal sins, or did he also make a further essential distinction within the category of mortal sins? By this is not meant a distinction in the vague sense that even the individual mortal sins can differ considerably from each other *pro qualitate vel quantitate*. This is a point which Origen also stresses.[105] It is more a question here of *two* radically different *classes* of mortal sins. In general it appears that such an idea is not demonstrably present in Origen.[106] Indeed, in view of his reserve with regard to the

[101] In Lev.hom. 11,3 (GCS 29) 452,28-453,3. In general those offences which, in the Old Testament, were punished by death Origen considers, according to the New Testament, to be mortal sins which are subject to church penance *in interitum carnis*; cf. In Lev.hom. 11,2 (GCS 29) 451,1-13. It is obvious that Origen still recognizes here the traditional distinction between *peccatum in Deum* and *non in Deum* (*in hominem*). De or. 28,9 (GCS 3) 381,9-11; 28,3 (GCS 3) 376,25-7; In Lev.hom. 8,10 (GCS 29) 408,5; ibid., 4,5 (GCS 29) 322,9-11; In Num.hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 68,10-12; In Ezech.hom. 5,4 (GCS 33) 375,25-8; Exhort.ad mart. 17 (GCS 2) 16,19-23. But the content of the notion is just as vague as it is elsewhere. In In Lev.hom. 4,5 'sin against God' is identified with 'mortal sin'. For this reason alone, therefore, 'sin against God' does not mean simply sin against faith. In In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 481 it is stressed that both the *maledicus in proximum* and the *maledicus in Deum* are excluded from the kingdom of God.

[102] Cf. In Jer.hom. 20 (GCS 6) 181,13-19.

[103] In Matt.tom. XIII (GCS 40) 264,21-9.

[104] It is not clear, for example, whether or not Origen (In Lev.hom. 9,9 [GCS 29] 437,29-438,3) regards as mortal sins the frequenting of the circus, the races and the gladiatorial games, which were considered sins in themselves.

[105] In Lev.hom. 14,3 (GCS 29) 482,19 f., etc.

[106] G. Teichtweier maintains that theme is a further subdivision of mortal sin. To do so he proceeds from the different terminology which Origen uses to designate sins. According to this, he holds, more than a mere two-fold distinction is required. Teichtweier sees a confirmation of this assumption in the parallel with the Montanist Tertullian's teaching on sin which implies a three-fold distinction. Cf. op. cit., pp. 237-9. The distinction between mortal sins and non-mortal sins is obviously upheld throughout Origen, as Teichtweier also observes, op. cit., p. 237. But then, in order to justify the further sub-distinction of mortal sins, Teichtweier appeals to what is, for him, the indispensable evidence of the text In Lcv.hom. He does so, however, without discussing the literary-critical problem which this passage presents. This is all the more surprising in that in an earlier work, *Das Sein des Menschen*: *Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie des Origenes* (Diss.Tübingen 1951), p. 28, he voiced deep doubts about Rufinus' translation. A. von Harnack, *Der kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag der exegetischen Arbeiten des Origenes* I (TU 42,3) (Leipzig 1918), pp. 78-87, and II (TU 42,4) (Leipzig 1919), pp. 126-9, had already expressed certain reservations about the tradition represented by Rufinus. J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bussstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg 1955), p. 176, agrees with this, without, however, applying these doubts to the text In Lev.hom. 15,2. With regard to this text in particular, Teichtweier comes to the conclusion that, in all probability, it transmits faithfully Origen's basic teaching (cf. *Das Sein des Menschen*, p. 22). Nevertheless, the disputable nature of the text must be kept in mind. J. Grotz interprets the alleged distinction between *culpa mortalis* and *crimen mortale* in such a way that by the *culpae mortales he* understands mortal sins which are not subject to the punishment of excommunication. This provides him with his proof for the difference which he holds between a repeatable penance without excommunication and a non-repeatable penance with excommunication (cf. p. 289). We have paid particular attention to Grotz's basic thesis in the essay on the penitential theology of the Shepherd of Hermas.

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simple distinction between mortal and non-mortal sins, it is hardly to be expected. Nevertheless, one text, namely In Levit. hom. 15,2, does seem to express this idea. The text in question[107] makes the distinction between *culpa mortalis* and *crimen mortale*. At the same time, the *culpa mortalis* is compared with the *sermonis vel morum vitium*, with the *communia quae frequenter incurrimus*.[108] The *crimen mortale*, on the other hand, is put on the same level as the *blasphemia fidei*.[109] interpretation arises from the way in which the text is actually formulated. Most specialists in the history of penance, therefore, have taken the text in this sense, exactly as it is presented.[110] However, in its present formulation this text does arouse serious doubts. It is indeed stated that through the *culpa mortalis* one sells one's house to the devil,[111] even though on each occasion and even if this should happen repeatedly, a redemption always remains possible. Now, as we have already seen,[112] this idea is not necessarily connected with Origen's idea of *mortal* sin. Moreover, 'house' here seems to be meant in such a sense that it can be applied to every *individual* virtue.[113] Thus one [261] could possess many 'houses', and, given Origen's essential gradation of beatitude,[114] it would be perfectly conceivable to sell one 'house' without totally losing beatitude. This applies even apart from the notion of the *apocatastasis*. Thus the general meaning of the text does not indicate that here it is a question of *culpa mortalis* distinct from a *crimen mortale*. On the contrary, it gives rise to serious doubts about the actual existence of such a distinction in the original Greek text which is lost. As we have seen, this distinction is not found anywhere else in Origen. The *sermonis vitium*, which in our text would count as a *culpa mortalis*, is *not* considered elsewhere as a mortal sin.[115] And is it likely that Origen would in fact compare a *culpa mortalis* with the *communia quae frequenter incurrimus*, when *frequenter inveniuntur* is elsewhere precisely a characteristic of the *culpa levis*?[116] In any case, the sharp distinction between *blasphemia fidei*[117] and another *culpa mortalis* is not made elsewhere, with regard to church penance, either by Origen or by other authors. Once it is considered that according to Origen's theology every *mortal* sin (therefore even a *culpa mortalis*) in itself separates the

[107] Cf. In Lev.hom. 15,2 (GCS 29) 489,13-15.
[108] Ibid., 489,15.20-2.
[109] Ibid., 489,13-15.
[110] Cf.. for example, P. Galtier, *L'église et la rémission*, p. 268 ff. He prefers to make this *culpa mortalis* the object of the sacramental absolution without excommunication. Cf. B. Poschrnann, p. 346, who accepts the text as it stands, without, however, accepting Galtier's conclusions. For further details about the interpretation of this text, cf. E. T. Latko, *Origen's Concept of Penance* (Quebec 1949), p. 115 f. Cf. also J. Grotz, p. 248 f., and G. Teichtweier, *Die Sündenlehre*, p. 258.
[111] Origen interprets typologically the prescriptions of the old law (Lev. 25:29ff.) concerning the possibility of buying back a house which has been sold, according as it *is in urbibus muratis* or *in vico* or is a *domus levitae vel sacerdotis*.
[112] Cf. esp. nn. 50, 63 and 80 above.
[113] Cf. In Lev.hom. 15 (GCS 29) 488,11 (*simplicitas* is the house of Jacob; *timor Dei that* of the *obstetrices*).
[114] Cf., for example, In Jos.hom. 10,1-3 (GCS 30) 357-61; In Lev.hom. 14,3 (GCS 29) 481,22-484,7; In Luc.hom. 17 (GCS 35) 121. Cf. L. Atzberger, *Geschichte der christlichen Eschatologie innerhalb der vornicänischen Zeit* (Freiburg 1896), pp. 395-8; *C*. Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria* (Oxford 1913), p 279 f.
[115] Cf. esp. nn.33 and 48 above.
[116] Certainly Origen is not worried about describing the sinful state of the community in dismal terms, so long as he is speaking in *general* and *simply* about sins. But when it is a question of mortal sins in the strict sense, then he becomes much more circumspect and no longer takes it simply for granted that practically all his hearers are sinners in this sense. For then he states: *vereor, ne etiam aliquos de his, qui in ecclesia sunt, aliquos de adstantibus, dum nescimus* . . : In Ex.hom. 6,9 (GCS 29) 204,5-7. Does this notion fit in with the idea that *communia quae frequenter* (we all !) *incurrimus* could be mortal sins? Cf. similarly in Ps. 36 hom. 1,5 (PG 12) 1328: *si quis vestrum, licet non optem esse in loco conventu talem aliquem* (a fornicator) . . .
[117] According to the context (the house in the town which can be bought back only once = *fides quae muro ecclesiastici et apostolici dogmatis cincta est*) only the *blasphemia fidei* is considered a *crimen mortale*, although there are also *culpae mortales* present.

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sinner from the fellowship of the Church, and that the penance of excommunication, which in fact is granted only once, is the appropriate expression of this separation, then it would appear that a remission for an actual *culpa mortalis* without church penance and excommunication *semper . . . et sine intermissione* is excluded. For these and other[118] reasons we consider that the term *mortalis* as the description of the *culpa* in this text should be omitted. It is probably a question of an early dittography, arising from the expression *crimen mortale* in the Greek text or even in Rufinus' Latin translation.[119] Its omission makes the text more intelligible.[120] In any case, this distinction between *culpa mortalis* and *crimen mortale* here is so unique and doubtful that it would hardly be methodologically justifiable to derive from it consequences for Origen' s theology of penance which do not fit into the view which he expresses elsewhere.

2. The Forgivable Character of Sin

It is not here a question of the possibility which the *Church* has of forgiving mortal sins. Through his own fault alone the sinner has in fact incurred 'excommunication' and normally he is also explicitly charged with a declaration of excommunication on the Church's [262] part. Whether the Church is able to receive him back into its full fellowship after the remission of his sins or how it participates in this supposed remission does not interest us here. Rather it is a question of whether a person guilty of mortal sins can remit his sin before God and indeed in *this* life. According to Origen's eschatology there is no definitive and eternal rejection for a sinner who dies unrepentant. Through the purifying fire of the future age, even in his case, God's love will so conquer the wickedness of created freedom that, in the final analysis, the whole of created freedom will be saved for ever.[121] Thus in this

[118] For instance, are *crimen* and *culpa* in fact such clearly distinct notions for Origen and his translators that this distinction remains even after the addition of the *mortale/-lis*? In Num.hom. 1,1 (GCS 30) 69,18 there is a mention of the *crimen infiationis*, which is, however, only a venial sin. In Lev.hom. 5,4 (GCS 29) 341,6-9 Origen stresses that the Bible generally does not distinguish between *peccatum* and *delictum*. If ever a distinction is made, then *delictum* means the lighter sin.

[119] According to an oral remark, B. Kotting (Münster) also holds the *mortalis* here as not corresponding to Origen's way of thinking, and he recommends that it should be omitted. In his view, it is Rufinus who has introduced the notion of a *culpa mortalis*, which should not be considered as a mortal sin.

[120] The text becomes more comprehensible and clearer, because between *culpa* and *crimen* there is obviously an opposition intended. On the one hand, however, this is hardly expressed in the mere notions *of culpa* and *crimen*, while, on the other hand, it is completely cancelled out if both of these notions are qualified by the same adjective, *mortalis*. It is possible that Rufinus himself had a hand in this deterioration of the text, since, on his own testimony, he translated the homilies on Leviticus very freely (cf. Rufinus, Peroratio in explanat.Origenis super Epist.Pauli ad Romanos [PG 14] 1293). Already E. R. Redepenning, II 51 f. n.*5* omitted the *mortalis* after culpa and, in so doing, referred both to A. Anrauld and C. de la Rue (cf. [PG 12] 559 n.26). Arnauld's idea, *De frequenti communione liber* (Lovanii 1674), pp. 198-200, that *culpa moralis* should be read in the place of *culpa mortalis*, is supported by In Num.hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 70,6 f., where a distinction is drawn between *delicta moralia* and *fidel crimen*. Arnauld's conjecture is, therefore, not arbitrary, as D. Petau, *De poenitentia publica et praeparatione ad communionem* lib. VI cap. 9 (Paris 1867), pp. 360-2, maintains. Moreover, Petau's arguments against Arnauld on this matter are too *a priori*. O. D. Watkins, *A History of Penance* I (London 1920), p. 138, is likewise of the opinion that the original text has been altered by the translation. W. A. Baehrens, the editor of GCS 29; 30; 33, does not record in the apparatus of his edition the four MSS. in which C. de la Rue claims to have observed the absence of the *mortalis* after *culpa* (cf. [PG 12] 559 n.26). Neither does he mention this absence in several manuscripts in his *Überlieferung und Textgeschichte der lateinisch enhaltenen Origeneshomilien zum Alten Testament* (TU 42,1) (Leipzig 1916). If, however, the observation of C. dela Rue was correct, then it must have been a question of later MSS. – de la Rue himself refers to this fact – which were not considered for Bahrens' text. Nevertheless, it is still possible to recognize in this omission a critical correction of the text on the part of later copyists.

[121] Cf. E. R. Redepenning, II, pp. 444-51; L. Atzberger, pp. 387-418; J. Daniélou, pp. 271-83. We believe that

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definitive perspective there is no problem whatsoever of the forgiveness of mortal sins for Origen. Everyone is agreed on this point. Origen also tries to withdraw this teaching from the existential reach of the man who is not yet purified, for whom it is obviously a temptation. For this eschatology he appeals to God's essential goodness and establishes his thesis with the application of metaphysical principles. In this way, however, he enters into contradiction with the teaching of the Church, and the question of whether he recognizes the fundamental possibility of the forgiveness of mortal sins in this life becomes even more poignant. If this were the case, then this forgiveness would be limited only by man himself and his refusal, which would be the free rejection of God's offer of forgiveness. To pose the question in this way is not in itself to contradict the teaching of the Church. And it is only this question which is relevant to the history of the controversies about penance and to the Church's theology of penance of that time and today.

Now Origen does not defend any kind of rigorism according to which a divine forgiveness for mortal sins in *this* life would be impossible or even only doubtful. His theology of the freedom of the spiritual creature, of the love of God and of the saving significance of all punishment is already so weighted against a negative answer in this question that it would be astounding if, despite all this, he still came to another conclusion. This conclusion, in fact, flows from his basic metaphysical principles upon which his world-view and his theology are built. Nevertheless, it also has very concrete consequences for the everyday life of the Christian and for the practice of the Church. Even in these views Origen still wishes to be a man of the Church, and thus it is unthinkable that he would have formulated them in opposition to the Church's teaching or that he would not have noticed the contradiction. Thus his answer to our question, [263] despite the fact that some of its presuppositions do not agree with the teaching of the Church, can certainly be regarded as a witness of the tradition of the *Church*. What is more, he felt that in propagating his view he was doing nothing more or less than defending the tradition of the Church against a heretical Gnostic fatalism which, he was convinced, regarded man's ethical stance as the necessary consequence of his particular φυ/σιφ.[122]

Neither the notion of an 'incurable' sin nor the denial of the possibility of an *aphesis* for mortal sins committed after baptism has anything whatsoever to do with the challenging of the fact that such sins are forgivable. This means that already the principal arguments for the view that Origen is a witness for an 'early Christian' rigorism are obviated. Rather, he teaches positively the possibility of forgiveness for mortal sins. But it still remains to adduce several indications which stress that in the statements concerned it really is a question of a possibility of forgiveness *in this life*. Since it is obvious that Origen's teaching on penance has not undergone a theological development, a precise chronological ordering and treatment of the relevant witnesses either here or in what follows would contribute nothing. It can, therefore, be omitted.[123]

In In Exod. hom. 6,9 Origen explains that through murder, adultery, perjury, robbery and violence, which he means to be considered as the price paid by the devil, a person becomes

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H. U. von Balthasar is right when he says (*Origenes*, *Geist und Feuer*, loc. cit., Introduction, pp. 33 and 544) that it is contrary to Origen's view that the world's process recommences, once, after several aeons, it is completed and God has become all in all, since this teaching, according to Origen, figured among those which were philosophically debatable (this is how Contra Celsum VIII 72 [(GCS 3)] 289,9 f. is to be explained) and not among those which are to be held. Cf. Ad Rom. V 10 (PG 14) 1052 f.; ibid., VII 12 (PG 14) 1134; Fragm. of the commentary on Romans in J. A. Cramer, *Catenae Graecorum Patrum in Novum Testamentum*, 8 vols. (Oxford 1838-44), vol. iv, pp. 155-7. See further literature on this question in W. Volker, p. 29 n.2.

[122] Cf., for example, In Jer. hom. 2,12 (GCS 33) 300,15-19.

[123] We will consider later the only objection which may be levelled against this view and which is derived from De or. 28. This is because it concerns rather the power of the Church. It has already been shown above that the notion of 'incurable' sin which also occurs here does not, in itself, mean that the sin in question is unforgivable.

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the property of Satan, just as he becomes the property of Christ through Christ's blood. He was himself afraid that even some *qui in ecclesia sunt* might in this way have again become the possession of the devil in secret, since he is intent on sowing his weed among the wheat. *Et tamen, si quis forte huismodi pecuniam a diabolo deceptus accepit, non usquequaque desperet*: *misericors enim est et miserator Dominus et creaturae suae non vult mortem sed ut convertatur et vivat*. *Poenitendo, flendo, satisfaciendo deleat, quod admissum est*. *Dicit enim propheta quia, cum conversus ingemueris, salvus eris*.[124] Thus, in Origen's view, actual mortal sins can be remitted through penance and not only by means of the purifying fire in the next life. The 'earth' as it were 'swallows up' by the *mors admissi sceleris* the person guilty of impurity. *Nec tamen penitus desperandum est*. *Possible namque est ut, si forte resipiscat, qui devoratus est, rursum possit evomi, sicut Jonas*. And since this event is distinguished from the liberation of sinners from the underworld by Jesus Christ, this [264] return and its saving effects must concern something which happens in this life.[125] In In Ps. 36 hom. 1,5[126] the Christian who commits impurity is told: *per exhomologesim . . . revela ea* (the guilt) *Domino et spera in eum, et ipse faciet . . . spera in eum, quod possis ab eo veniam promereri, et ipse faciet*. *Quid faciet? Sine dubio sanum te faciet*. At the same time, the preacher of this homily expresses the hope that none of his hearers has become guilty of *fornicatio*. Thus Origen seems here to be thinking of a mortal sin. Moreover, there is no indication that the restored health in question is promised only for the next life.

In In Ps. 36 hom. 4,2[127] this instruction is given to a sinner whose fault has separated him from the Church (*quomodo ad Ecclesiam redire?*) and who has forfeited his salvation (*quomodo possum ego salvus fieri . . . iam nulla spes est*): *non iaceat post casum, ne prosternatur, sed exsurgat et emendet culpam, expurget paenitentiae suae satisfactione commissum*. What Origen clearly has in mind here[128] is *fornicatio, impudicitia* and those cases which correspond in some way to Peter's denial or the sin of David with Uriah's wife.[129] The sinner must begin his reform immediately and thus the exhortation is intended as a message of confidence to the simple Christian who knows nothing about the theory of the final salvation of all things. This is abundantly clear from the question quoted above. This exhortation, therefore, must concern an effect which takes place in this life; indeed it concludes with a *redire ad Ecclesiam*. In In Levit. hom. 14,4[130] it is explained why a less

[124] Cf. In Ex.hom. 6,9 (GCS 29) 200 f. The passage quoted is found ibid., 201,13-16. I consider it excessive to wish to derive from this text a clearly defined 'juridical notion of sin and its expiation' (cf. Poschmann, p. 432). The notion of selling is dictated by the scriptural passage. The image of 'payment' is not applied to penance itself. *Satisfacere* for sins occurs here, but also elsewhere in Latin translations (In Num.hom. 9,3 [GCS 30] 57,28: *satisfacere pro delictis*; In Num.hom. 9,8 [GCS 30] 66,16: *paenitentiae tempus et satisfactionis locus*; In Ps. 36 hom. 4,2 [PG l2] 1353: *safisfacere Domino*; *poenitentiae satisfactio*); it is difficult to say, however, which Greek word originally corresponded to this Latin term, since it is not clear either that it was always the same Greek notion or that Rufinus, in transmitting such a term, was not paraphrasing. In the translation of Gregory of Nazianzus' Oratio apologetica, Rufinus, the translator of Origen's Homilies, translates the notions υ(περαπολογει∴σθαι, α)πολογι/α, πρεσβει/α with *satisfacere*, *satisfactio* (cf. A. Deneffe, 'Das Wort satisfactio' in: ZKTh 43 (1919), pp. 158-75; for Rufinus see p. 162). Nor is it important what Rufinus himself understood by the notion of *satisfacere*. It need not have expressed anything more than 'to ask', 'to request', etc. In any case, for Origen *satisfactio* is in fact punishment which is voluntarily undertaken. This punishment, however, in Origen's view flows connaturally from sin as its intrinsic consequence and has, as its essential function, the interior healing of sin. In a certain sense it overcomes sin and eliminates it. Thus it is obvious that Origen does not have a juridical notion of the relationship between guilt and punishment (penance), although he may use juridical metaphors to clarify this relationship.

[125] In Ex.hom. 6,6 (GCS 29) 197,11-198,5. The quotation is found ibid., 197,28 f.

[126] In Ps. 36 hom. 1,5 (PG 12) 1328.

[127] Ibid., 4,2 (PG 12) 1351-4.

[128] Ibid., (PG 12) 1353 C.

[129] Ibid., (PG 12) 1351 D.

[130] In Lev.hom. 14,4 (GCS 29) 484-87.

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grievous sin like taking God's name in vain is treated more seriously in the Old Testament than a greater offence like blasphemy: the punishment of death for the less grievous was, at the same time, its remission, so that this did not require further punishment in the next world.[131] The serious sin, on the other hand, was not expiated by a punishment in this life and *manet illis aeternis ignibus extinguendum* (485,9). According to Origen, Paul was cognisant of this (486,20). And thus the apostle punishes the sinner guilty of impurity in 1 Corinthians 5 'with death', that is, he hands him over to Satan *in interitum carnis* in this life so that his spirit will then be saved in the next world. This spiritual death consists in the *afflictio corporis*, *quae solet a poenitentibus expendi* (486,26 f.). This leads to the following consequence: *Unde et si nunc quis forte nostrum recordatur in semetipso alicuius peccati conscientiam, se qui se obnoxium novit esse delicto, confugiat ad* [265] *paenitentiam et spontaneum suscipiat carnis interitum ut expurgatus in praesenti vita spiritus noster mundus et purus pergat ad Christum Dominum nostrum* (486,28-487,3). Thus, according to Origen, the sin of the incestuous person at Corinth can be fully remitted in this life by the *interitus carnis*. Moreover, this sinner is for Origen the biblical type *par excellence* of the one who is subject to church penance. The *interitus carnis* is the *paenitentia*, which consists of the *afflictio carnis quae solet*[132] *a penitentibus expendi*. A similar train of thought is found in detail in In Levit. hom. 11,2.[133] There it is expressly a question of those sins which correspond to Hebrews 10:28 f.,[134] therefore, of *peccata ad mortem*. In the new covenant the punishment for such sins is no longer bodily death, since the bishop ought not to impose such a punishment.[135] Rather, what is now appropriate for the remission of sin is *paenitentia*[136] in so far as this is freely undertaken.[137] If this is not the case, *nobis ultio reponitur in futurum*.[138]

In In Jer. hom. 20,9[139] there appear two sinners who have become guilty of the same offence of impurity. One of these, however, is unrepentant, while the other is conscience-struck and does hard penance, not only for a few days but for a long period of time. Thus in his heart is already burning the purifying fire of judgement. Indeed the more intense this is, the greater must be his trust in God and the more rapidly will he find mercy. Penance in this life is sufficient 'period of punishment' for him, if it lasts as long as in the case of the incestuous person in Corinth. When Paul saw that this person had undergone sufficient affliction he ordered that love should be allowed to take over so that the penitent should not be destroyed by affliction. Origen concludes from this:

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[131] Origen applies this principle to Ananias and Saphira: In Matt. tom. XV 15 (GCS 40) 393. Even here (393,5-8) there is a mention of the α)πολαμβα&νειν το_ η9μαρτημε/νον which represents the opposite of α!φεσιφ. Because the avaricious couple were in fact believers, they were judged 'to conceive sin' ε0νθαυ=τα, that is, in this life and thus to be purified through bodily death.

[132] Origen clearly has in mind here quite definite traditional penitential practices, namely the obligations of actual church penance.

[133] In Lev.hom. 11,2 (GCS 29) 449-52.

[134] Ibid., 450,20-6.

[135] Ibid., 451,4-7.

[136] Ibid., 452,1.25 f.

[137] Ibid., 452,1-4.

[138] Ibid., 452,20 f. At the end it is said of such a person guilty of mortal sin: *Quod et si aliquis est qui forte praeventus est in huiuscemodi peccatis, . . . ad auxilium confugiat paenitentiae, ut si semel admisit, secundo non faciat, aut, si et secundo iam aut etiam tertio praeventus est, ultra non addat*. This refers to a repeated lapse before the first (and unique) church penance, without any mention at all of whether this penance itself is possible more than once. It is certain that the logic of Origen's thought demands that a sinner who had relapsed even after *the* once-and-for-all church penance (In Lev.hom. 15,2 [GCS 29] 489,19 f.) is still able to be saved before God. Nevertheless, Origen does not mention such a case explicitly. In any event, it is obvious that, for the reasons given earlier, even in his circles, such a case must not have occurred very often.

[139] In Jer.hom. 20,9 (GCS 6) 191,16-192,15.

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> Every one of us examines his own conscience and sees wherein he has sinned; for he must be punished for his sins. He asks God that the fire which was in Jeremiah and then on Simon and Cleophas[140] should also come on him so that he will not be destined for the fire of the next world. For the person who does not undergo fire here, but remorselessly sins again, will be set aside for that fire.

Thus the interior fire of penance remits sin, and indeed even mortal sin, here on earth, exactly as the fire of judgement in the next world.

[266] What Origen says on one occasion, therefore, applies also to mortal sins:

> *. . . Qui audiunt, sciant scriptum esse quia cum conversus ingemueris, tunc salvus eris et scies ubi fueris. Et si dixeris tu peccata tua prior, ego exaudiam te tamquam populum sanctum. Audisti quomodo, etiam si peccator fuisti, tantum si conversus es et desisti a peccato, iam sanctus appellaris? Nihil ergo desperandum est his, qui compunguntur, et convertuntur ad Dominum: non enim superat bonitatem Dei malitia delictorum.*[141]

Mortal sins are remissible in this life, even if after baptism this requires no longer the *aphesis* but the interior fire of penance.[142]

3. Penance

A) THE FIRE OF PENANCE

In the following section we will consider more closely the subjective penance of the person guilty of mortal sin. Penance is first and foremost a grace. Now it is obviously impossible to give here even the briefest sketch of the whole of Origen's teaching on grace.[143] Nevertheless, we must have some information about this teaching, even though we shall confine ourselves essentially to those questions which are connected immediately with the teaching on penance. Origen has often been accused of holding a semipelagian, purely external 'synergism' between grace and human freedom. Nevertheless such a description appears too superficial and schematic to be able really to do justice to Origen's basic ideas. In any event, for Origen 'grace' is not merely a divine help given to man to enable him to lead a human, moral life. Man is called to a real participation in the life of the Logos by possessing the Holy Spirit and moving towards the Father. The 'supernatural' character of this possession of the Spirit by which man as an inalienable reflection of the Logos is enabled to share really, ontologically in the life of the Logos by faith, gnosis and love is not developed explicitly. Nevertheless, this does not mean in any way a denial of this supernatural or purely gratuitous character of the divinization of the created spirit. It is only the result of the way

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[140] Origen is thinking of Luke 24:32. The 'was not our heart burning' is also adduced in a similar context. Cf. In Ex.hom. 4,8 (GCS 29) 180,23: *ignis paenitentiae* is this burning of Luke 24:32; In Exh.hom. 7,8 (GCS 29) 216,23-9; In Ex.hom. 13,4 (GCS 29) 275,16-23.

[141] In Lev.hom. 9,8 (GCS 29) 435,5-l1.

[142] Further evidence to this effect will be offered in *the* following context.

[143] Cf. Fr. Wörter, *Die christliche Lehre über das Verhältnis von Gnade und Freiheit von den apostolischen Zeiten bis auf Augustinus* (Freiburg 1856), pp. 201-81; G. Capitaine, *De Origenis ethica* (Münster 1898); p. 104 ff.; C. Bigg, p. 245; W. Völker, p. 38 ff.; H. Rahner, pp. 205-23; H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 42 n.9; H. Rondet, *Gratia Christi*: *Essai d'histoire du dogme et de théologie dogmatique* (Paris 1948), pp. 84-6; A. Lieske, *passim*. Völker contains references to earlier literature on the question. Other works which might be usefully consulted: K. H. Schelkle, 'Erwählung und Freiheit in Römerbrief nach der Auslegung der Väter' in: ThQ 131 (1951), pp. 17-31, 189-207; and E. Maurial, *Origenis de libertate arbitrii doctrina* (Montpellier 1856). In the following considerations we shall use the material from Origen's work which has been made available through these studies.

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Origen considers the created spirit as it actually is. Accordingly, he has no occasion to distinguish this situation [267] explicitly as 'supernatural' from another merely 'purely natural' one. He also takes it for granted that we do not have this life 'from ourselves'. The ability to be modelled on the Logos is increased by the activity of the Holy Spirit and this strengthens the reciprocal activity between human freedom and the divine help. Now if this co-operation is seen, in itself, 'synergetically' and if it is asked which factor of this co-operation has the initiative, then it must not be forgotten that Origen, in face of the gnostic naturalism of his time, had every reason to stress human freedom. It was obviously of prime importance that the inalienable image and existence of the Logos within man's η9γεμονικο&ν, being the starting-point for every possibility of salvation and for man's inheritance of salvation, is not to be understood in the sense of mere 'nature'. Today also theology must recognize within man, as he actually is, an aspect of his existence which, on the one hand, is supernatural but, on the other, is an indispensable, real, ontological characteristic of his true nature.[144] It is certain that Origen does not stress very explicitly that the actual decision in favour of the good, as the exercise of free choice with regard to good and evil, is itself still a special grace. But could he see this clearly if, on the one hand, he propounded a radical eschatological optimism, according to which – as he certainly intended it to be understood – all men would be saved and, on the other, he attacked gnosticism, for which freedom is not an inalienable reality in man?

In any case, according to Origen a person guilty of mortal sin has lost the Spirit of grace and is really dead. His rebirth to life is, therefore, above all a work of God himself. This is true, even if Origen in his preaching repeatedly exhorts man as he actually is to penance and conversion, that is, to an activity which he himself must freely undertake and see through. Despite all this, the new beginning of life is always the work of God. Mortal sin, as opposed to that fault which does not incur death, is no longer able to be healed by created power alone.[145] In the case of a *plaga insanabilis*, therefore, the *magnus medicus* himself must intervene;[146] *sacrificia sacerdotum* and the *obsecrationes pontificum* are, in this case, unable to effect a cure, and an improvement through the *scientia divinae legis* is impossible. Thus we read of these sins: *ipsius Domini agere virtutem*.[147] Nevertheless, the Lord has arranged that others should have a special responsibility for loosing the bond of death incurred by the person who commits such a sin against the Holy Spirit. This applies [268] above all to the angels. They play an important role in the very first stirrings of the new beginning of the

[144] How otherwise could the loss of the *visio beatifica be* experienced existentially *as* a loss? In the case of Origen, it should also be considered that, at least in one perspective – that of the two-tiered Platonism of a natural, physical and human world, on the one hand, and of the spiritual, divine world on the other – he can and must recognize the natural virtues of 'pagans' (cf. H. U. von Balthasar, p. 42 n.9; G. Capitaine, p. 106 n. 1). Nevertheless, he must not, thereby, dispute the absolute necessity and importance for salvation of the virtues given spiritually by God. This implies the distinction between the natural and the supernatural orders (cf. also G. Capitaine, p. 49), while at the same time precluding absolutely a crude *synergismus* between God and man on the same level.

[145] This obviously does not exclude that, in the overall process of the healing of the person guilty of mortal sin, these powers are again effective, once the new creative impulse from the side of God/Christ has occurred. Thus the texts which stress the batter point represent only an apparent contradiction of this basic principle.

[146] In Jem.hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 295,24-296,9. The fact that here the activity of the great Physician himself, as opposed to that of his *ministri*, is seen principally as a punitive retribution does not dissolve Origen's viewpoint of the material identity of vindictive and medicinal punishment, from which he considers the matter here. Even in the case of *retributio* it is a question of an activity of the *Physician*.

[147] Cf. in Ex.hom. 4,8 (GCS 29) 181,26-182,5. Cf. also In Ex.hom. 4,3 (GCS 29) 173,30-174,1. It is not absolutely certain from the text alone that Origen is here thinking clearly about the mortal sins of a baptized Christian or of his interior impenitence. But even this text is clear in the bight of De or. 28. For there, too, it is a question of explaining that the healing of mortal sins is impossible for a baptized person only by the prayer and sacrifice of priests.

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spiritual life. For surely, it is first and foremost always Christ's prayer and command that call the dead from the grave of sin.[148] Nevertheless, as far as the idea of the remission of mortal sin is concerned, there is no further explanation[149] of how the living command, reserved to Christ alone, actually operates in raising men from the death of sin and precisely how it is distinguished from the activity of the other forces, that is, of angels and of the Church, which certainly co-operate in this remission. It is, however, possible to derive a clearer idea of the nature of this divine initiative from Origen's more general views. The most important of these, for our present purpose, is doubtless the assumption that conversion requires a divine impulse, but could subsequently be understood as an act of human freedom. This would correspond to our modern notion of *gratia efficax*, and undoubtedly it ought to be thought of in this way. For if a sinner is to be summoned from the grave by a divine command this is a matter of God's action with regard to a person who is repentant, but not with regard to one who is obdurate. Nevertheless, the effect of this divine action cannot be identified with *gratia efficax* in the sense of modern theology. For Origen does not seem to have conceived the actual *doing* of good, once the free choice between good and evil has been made, as grace. In his view God gives the possibility to do either, and then all the rest is left to the decision of man himself.[150] If, however, this motion on the part of God and Jesus Christ is understood exclusively in the sense of a prevenient grace which makes conversion possible, then this idea, as far as its positive content is concerned, would be perfectly appropriate,[151] even though it would remain fairly formal and undetermined. For we would then immediately have to ask what it is precisely that constitutes this impulse of grace for Origen. The specific character of this revivifying motion on God's part must, therefore, be looked for elsewhere.

According to Origen, the grace which makes conversion possible must reside in the experience of divine judgement on sin. If angels and men desire to preserve the sinner from mortal sin, that is, if they wish to heal him but, nevertheless, have to face the fact that their effort is futile, then there is nothing else that they can do. As opposed to a *parvum peccatum*, which does not entail a judgement which reaches up to heaven, the *crimen* of mortal sin calls for the [269] judgement of God himself, a judgement which corresponds to the seriousness of the fault committed.[152] This judgement consists in a rejection of the sinner on God's part and it can occur in two quite different ways. Either the sinner does not notice it at all, and this is the most dreadful form of God's anger with regard to man,[153] or else the Logos, which is

[148] In Joan. XXVIII 7 f. (GCS 10) 397-9.
[149] Actual penance by means of the sin-remitting suffering of the punishments due to sin, which is Origen's more precise theme, already does not strictly belong any more to the activity which is reserved exclusively to God.
[150] De princip. III 1,20 (GCS 22) 234,5-235,8. Origen does not appear to have relinquished this position essentially, although he also stresses that a help of grace on God's part is necessary for salvation. Without it man is unable to do anything good, and thus true salvation absolutely needs this help. It is not stated explicitly that the actual acceptance of the possibility offered by God is itself a grace. Even In Matt. tom. X 19 (GCS 40) 25,11-26,28 and In Lev.hom. 16,7 (GCS 29) 505 seem to say nothing on this point (contrary to H. U. von Balthasar, p. 42 n.9). Here, too, there is only a mention of the necessary help of grace which obviously achieves its effect. This grace could be construed as prevenient, but even then, according to Origen, it is explicitly no more than the grace which *facilitates* conversion, as, for example, in De princip. III 2,4 (GCS 22) 251,12-19. In any event, it is a question of the granting of ι9κανο&τηφ; cf. In Joan. VI 36 (GCS 10) 145,1-12.
[151] Cf. the texts quoted in n. l50.
[152] In Jer.hom. 2,12 (GCS 33) 302.
[153] Cf., for example, In Jer.hom. 2,5 (GCS 33) 294,23: *magna ira est a Deo tormenta non perpeti*; In Luc.hom. 10 (GCS 35) 73,3-7: we are 'anaesthetized' against *the* domination of the spiritual enemies; In Jer.hom. 6,2 (GCS 6) 48-50: a long consideration of the two kinds of sinners; there are those who die so quickly that they no longer feel their inner condition and punishment, and theme are those who still feel these things; In Ex.hom. 8,5 (GCS 29) 230,8: *hoc est terribile*, *hoc est extrernum*, *cum iam non corripimur pro peccatis*; In Ps. 37 hom. 1,3 (PG 12) 1376.

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united with his soul and accuses him, gives him a 'synesthesis' of his faults and their punishment. But the latter is already the beginning of blessedness, the first sign that the soul is alive again. On the other hand, to experience no pain at all[154] is the most terrifying experience of all. The person who does not come to judgement has simply lost his salvation. Thus no one should wish to flee from God's 'judgement', even if he had the possibility of doing so.[155] The sinner should even pray for the inner fire of judgement, so that he may become worthy to receive it in his heart.[156] For this fire is, in the final analysis, nothing other than the Logos of the Lord itself.[157]

In order to appreciate this idea properly, it is necessary to bear in mind Origen' s teaching on the inalienable existence of the Logos in created spirits.[158] The person who, in this regard, approaches judgement or, more precisely, is already near it, is the one who allows the fire which is within him to achieve its full effect as judgement on his sins.[159] The intrinsic contradiction between the Logos existing radically within the soul and mortal sin is not always experienced. But when this does happen, then the 'burning fire' of God's Logos becomes the fire of judgement in the depths of man's being. It purifies the soul and punishes invisibly and spiritually. But it also illumines and is simultaneously a grace which has been requested and a judgement quite different from the fire which is prepared for the devil.[160] By committing an 'incurable' sin a man has, as it were, done all that he is capable of. And God has allowed him to go into this extreme situation where he is placed in utter darkness and thus in this gloom experiences the meaningless of sin,[161] since the Logos rooted within the soul cannot be completely eradicated by sin. Thus man vegetates in his state of interior confusion which flows from sin, and the experience of this is the effect of God's fire within man.[162] And the sinner's desperate attempt to persevere in his fault is weakened by its α))λογι/α.[163]

This notion of Origen's of an impulse to conversion has its weak points. Certainly he recognizes that this fire of the interior Logos can [270] even temporarily harden a man *pro ipsis motuum morum qualitatibus*[164] and that God can impose a greater punishment. For a man does not necessarily have to experience the burning and radical opposition of his sin to the permanent presence of the Logos. Moreover, there is always the danger that sin may appear as a necessary phase, as it were, in the process of man's development, provoking, in its turn, dialectically the very judgement which sooner or later effects the cure.[165] It is only when the existence of the Logos within man is considered as purely gratuitous that the judging and healing experience of the radical opposition of sin to it can itself be understood

[154] In Jer.hom. 6,2 (GCS 6) 48,26-32; 49,15-22. Insensitivity is a kind of demonic possession and madness: In Num.hom. 8 (GCS 30) 52,13-16.
[155] Ad Rom. II 2 (PG 14) 874.
[156] In Jer.hom. 20,9 (GCS 6) 191,16; 192,11-15.
[157] Ibid., 190,14; In Ex.hom. 7,6 (GCS 29) 213,14-16; In Ps. 37 hom, 1,1 (PG 12) 1372 C/D.
[158] Cf. the texts in A. Lieske, pp. 109-14.
[159] In Jos.hom. 4,3 (GCS 30) 311,18-22. It is here that the famous agraphon is quoted: *qui approximant mihi, approximant igni*. The same quotation is found also in In Jer.hom. 3,3 (GCS 33) 312; 25 f. in this form: *qui iuxta me est, iuxta ignem est*; likewise Didymus, In Ps. 88,8 (PG 39) 1488.
[160] Cf. also In Is.hom. 4,5 f. (GCS 33) 262; in Job 20,25 (PG 17) 76; In Ezech. hom.1,3 (GCS 33) 324,7-13; In Lev.hom. 9,8 (GCS 29) 432,17-27; In Ex.hom. 13,4 (GCS 29) 275,18-23.
[161] Cf. In Matt.tom. XVII 24 (GCS 40) 651; De or. 29,13 (GCS 3) 388,6-12.
[162] In Ezech.hom. 8,4 (GCS 33) 422,5 f.: sin – *nervos animae succidit*; In Ezech.hom. 5,1 (GCS 33) 371,18-372,5: the fiery sword of the interior judgement, which itself cuts in two; Fragm. In Osee (PG 13) 828 C: the interior disintegration of the sinner who falls out of unity.
[163] In Luc.hom. 17 (GCS 35) 115,2-5 [Greek fragment]
[164] In Cant.hom. II (GCS 33) 128,10-14.
[165] Cf., for example, De princip. III 1,7-15 (GCS 22) 204-23; In Num.hom. 14,2 (GCS 30) 121-5; In Matt.tom. XIII 23 (GCS 40) 242,18-243,13; De or. 6,5 (GCS 3) 315: Paul; J. Daniélou, p. 277 f.

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as a grace. But Origen himself is not clear about this gratuitous character.[166] What is more, the *actual* experience of the interior fire, as opposed to the insensibility on the part of a person who is obstinate, must be considered as a special grace. This is something more than is possible merely by reason of the indwelling of the Logos. Only on these conditions would the specifically gratuitous character of the impulse to conversion be fully safeguarded. The notion of just such an impulse is widely accepted today and, from what we have said, gains in both importance and clarity through Origen's thought. This grace is not merely a question of an extrinsic psychological stimulus to a change of attitude, a stimulus which would be connected with its very formal supernatural (ontological) elevation of this act. Rather, the impulse is determined concretely by the actual situation in which the sinner finds himself. This impulse is the awakening experience within the human being of the burning contradiction which created freedom cannot exclude from its nature, the contradiction between one's personal decision and the inalienable, real, ontological, supernatural orientation towards God which is an indelible mark of human existence. It is at this point, at the very ground of being, that God's fire burns, that God's voice continually calls the sinner from the grave of his sin.

In this view of Origen we meet for the first time a major theology of *attritio*. However, it is not considered here, as it is from Augustine down to the present day, principally as an imperfect act of conversion from sin by reason of its imperfect motive. Rather, Origen considers first and foremost the experience and the recognition of the radical opposition to God on the part of the sinner himself. The conversion from sin follows not only because of the punishment, which is a misfortune for men, but because of the judging holiness of [271] God, who is a consuming fire. Origen knows very well that, in the final analysis, it is only love that can move created freedom with a definitively free 'necessity'.[167] Nevertheless, quite rightly, he does not see conversion from sin primarily as a free movement of love which, with a freedom of indifference, turns itself towards God. Rather, he considers this movement as a consequence of the experience of God who burns like a fire within man and who, as such, is the first thing to make man aware that he is destitute by virtue of his sin. The first grace of a sinner is not that which represents his highest and final activity, namely love, but the experience and the acceptance of what he actually is: man within whom God's judgement is already burning.

B) THE PENANCE OF THE SINNER

The experience of the fire of judgement at the ground of being does not, however, represent the whole of penance. This fire would only consume sin. According to Origen's thought, however, corporeity as such is already a manifestation of original sin and the means of overcoming it.[168] Thus that which occurs at the very core of a spiritual creature must also be expressed externally and bodily, as reflecting and adumbrating the 'true' realities. But this means that God himself (or the Logos), considered as the real physician who heals mortal sins, is obliged to intervene with burning and cutting in a way which begins in the sinner's heart but extends to include his *whole* reality. Man must not only bear all this passively, but even do it actively by his penance which, in its turn, is influenced and helped by the whole of

[166] Obviously this indwelling of the Logos is that of the *personal* logos of God, that is, of Christ the Logos (cf. A. Lieske, p. 110 ff.). As such a personal relationship, it is perfectly able to be considered from the viewpoint of *grace*. Origen also often stresses that the actual function of the *hegemonikon* in directing man towards the divine requires the help of God's grace. Cf. A. Lieske, pp. 107-109. Moreover, it ought not to be overlooked that the inalienable character of the indwelling of the Logos is not an argument against its purely gratuitous character.
[167] Ad Rom. V 10 (PG 14) 1052 f.
[168] Cf., for example, De princip. I 8,1 (GCS 22) 94-7, etc.; J. Danièlou, pp. 207-17; H. U. von Balthasar, pp. 535-8.

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created reality. The purpose is the *spontaneus interitus carnis*, the destructive overthrow of man's sinful reality as a being of flesh, and this as a free act of his own penance. This is what we must now consider in more detail.[169]

God has many different ways of forgiving sins.[170] The fire burning in man's heart spreads over the whole man.[171] It begins as a punishment of the conscience and a torment of the heart[172] and burns more fiercely than an external fire which torments martyrs.[173] It consists in disgust over the sin which has been committed.[174] Man is completely paralysed by the terror of the interior judgement, he no longer wishes to eat and drink,[175] he weeps with groans coming from his heart.[176] Then this penance becomes active, a *spontaneus carnis interitus*;[177] man himself chooses the *afflictio corporis*, *quae solet a* [272] *paenitentibus expendi*, and thus brings about himself the *interitus carnis* which consists in the *afflictio*.[178] To this belong the *abstinentia cotidiana*,[179] the *severitatis austeritas*,[180] in other words, the external works of penance, as they were customary in the *dura et laboriosa paenitentia*,[181] the τικρα_ α(μαρτι/αφ μετα&νοια.[182] Because the *interitus carnis* also consists in spontaneity above all, a man can be exhorted to undertake it actively. *Spontaneum suscipiat carnis interitum*.[183] Through this free undertaking the terror caused by God's judgement can really take effect and the *sensus carnalis* or, as it is also called, the *cupiditas carnalis*,[184] can die out. This is the death which, as opposed to the death of sin, is caused by God himself. It is the *laudabilis carnis interitus*, the *mors laudabilis*, *qua peccato quis moritur*, in which also the flesh dies to sin and vices.[185] Viewed from the purely temporal angle, this 'death and becoming' can occur very quickly,[186] although, in comparison with the brief moment of sin, this process can last a very long time.[187] Nevertheless, this whole active penance on the sinner's part is only the willing acceptance and performance of that penance which is imposed upon him by God and by the fact that he is a sinful man. It includes the readiness to suffer purifying afflictions which are laid down by God sickness of the body, loss of earthly possessions, death of relatives and all those external sufferings which are attributable to God's providence.[188] In addition to all this, it is still necessary to undergo the obligatory *correptiones* of the church community with patience.[189] The supraterrestrial created spirits, too, take part in this varied

[169] For the moment, we are not considering the church aspect of this penance.
[170] In Joan. VI 58 (GCS 10) 167,2-5; In Ezech. hom. 3,8 (GCS 33) 356,20-9.
[171] In Jer.hom. 20,8 (GCS 6) 190, 33-191,3.
[172] Ibid., 20.9 (GCS 6) 191,19.
[173] Ibid., 20,8 (GCS 6) 190,29-32; In Joan. XIII 23 (GCS 10) 247,1-6.
[174] De or. 29,13 (GCS 3) 388,9. This κορεσθη=ναι is the counterpart of the κο&ροφ τη=φ θει/αφ α(γυ/πηφ, which is the essence of original sin; cf. De princip. II 8 (GCS 22) 159,7.
[175] In Jer.hom. 20,9 (GCS 6)191,25.
[176] In Ex.hom. 6,9 (GCS 29) 201,15; In Jer.hom. 20,9 (GCS 6) 191,28. With teams also: Selecta in Ps. 115 (PG 12) 1577 D; In Lev. hom. 2,4 (GCS 29) 296,18 f.; ibid., 15,2 (GCS 29) 488,26.
[177] In Lev. hom. 14,4 (GCS 29) 487,1.
[178] Ibid., (GCS 29) 486,26 f.
[179] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,2 (PG 12) 1376.
[180] Ad Rom. VI 6 (PG 14) 1069.
[181] In Lev. hom. 2,4 (GCS 29) 296,17.
[182] Selecta in Ps. 13,1 (PG 12) 1301.
[183] In Lev. *hom*. 14,4 (GCS 29) 487,1.
[184] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,2 (PG 12) 1375.
[185] Ad Rom. praef. (PG 14) 834; ibid., VI 6 (PG 14) 1068.
[186] Ibid., praef. (PG 14) 834. Origen himself remarks that this *interitus carnis* of the incestuous person in Corinth occurs in the brief period of time between the two letters to the Corinthians.
[187] In Ezech.hom. 10,3 (GCS 33) 421,13-19; In Num.hom. 8,1 (GCS 30) 51,15-24.
[188] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,5 (PG 12) 1385 (one of the most moving penitential prayers of the early Church); In Lev. hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 486,1-8.
[189] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1370 f.

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penitential suffering in order to change man by his salutary death. The *interitus carnis* of a person guilty of mortal sin is achieved by a 'handing over to Satan', an event which is reflected externally in excommunication by the Church In any case the devil takes the place which God has relinquished in the Christian who has committed mortal sin.[190] The devil, however, is not only man's enemy but also ε0κδικητη/φ, and this means God's punishing agent.[191] Thus it is better to experience his 'curse' rather than a 'blessing' in *miseriae et supplicia* and to bear these with patience.[192] This applies even to the inner 'state of confusion' (σπαρα&σσεσθαι) caused by these 'Babylonians'.[193]

According to Origen, even the consequences of sin caused by demons have a salvific meaning. Thus he does not distinguish these from the punishments of sin which have been prescribed for man's salvation by the good angels.[194] This may be due to the fact that in [273] his view all angels, albeit in differing degrees, are fallen.[195] In any case, the good angels also have a role to play in the punishments which are administered to sinners in penance.[196]

Up until now we have considered only the objective penance of the sinner, that is, apart from its ecclesial aspect. In this way we have tried to determine the actual content of the α)πολαμβα&νειν τα_φ α(μαρτι/αφ which, as an alternative to a simple *aphesis*, remits sins after baptism. A proper understanding of Origen's view, however, requires further clarifications.

It is obvious that, according to Origen's way of thinking, punishment has an essentially medicinal character.[197] An exclusively vindictive punishment, which would be merely the expression of the objective value of the moral law, is totally alien to him. He considers the punishment of sin, first and foremost, as the intrinsic and connatural *consequence* of sin, flowing from the very nature of the offence.[198] Such an idea of the punishment of sin does not necessarily imply that this latter must come to an end. Nevertheless these two ideas are linked together by Origen. In fact it would be conceivable that an intrinsic consequence of sin, which should actually facilitate and encourage conversion, in the event does not achieve this aim. It is, after all, possible that a man remains definitively unrepentant for other reasons. Thus this notion of the punishment of sin as an essentially medicinal *consequence* of sin can hardly be rejected on the supposition that it makes the general idea of the *apocatastasis* inevitable. Obviously in the present instance it is a question of punishment only because and in so far as this is a consequence of sin, and not *vice versa*. Moreover, it cannot be said that such a notion *necessarily* includes the denial of an *external* punishment of sin, a position

[190] In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 478,21-3; 479,11-18.
[191] In Jer. hom. 19,14 (GCS 6) 71,4; Contra Celsum VIII 33 (GCS 3) 249,1-4; In Num.hom. 13,7 (GCS 30) (117; cf. J. Daniélou, p. 239.
[192] In Ezech. hom. 12,3 (GCS 33) 436,23-5; 437,7-13. On the question of the demons as the causes of plagues on Earth, see E. R. Redepenning, II, p. 355.
[193] In Jer. hom. 1,4 (GCS 6) 3,18.
[194] Cf. in Jer.hom. 2,6 (GCS 33) 295,17-20; Origen believes that non-mortal sins can be healed by the punishment on the part of either good or bad angels.
[195] Cf., for example, De princip. I 7,4 f. (GCS 22) 89-94; ibid., I 8,1 (GCS 22) 94-8; E. R. Redepenning, II, pp. 112ff., 348 ff.
[196] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1372, with reference to the Shepherd of Hermas.
[197] In Jem.hom. 20,1 (GCS 6) 176,15-177,9; In Ezech.hom. 1,2 (GCS 33) 321,10-12: *si non esset utile conversioni peccantium adhibere tormenta peccantibus, nunquam, misericors et benignus Deus poenis sclera puniret*. This idea is found already in Plutarch. Cf. J. Daniélou, p. 98 f., who on this point sees a particularly clear influence of 'middle Platonism' on Origen.
[198] Cf. Ad Rom. II 6 (PG 14) 883; De princip. II 10,4-8 (GCS 22) 177-183. Inhere explaining the punishments in the next life as the effect of sin, Origen remains consistent, since a punishment which derived only from God's anger and was in no way (also) an effect of sin could only make the illness worse and would not be medicinal. It follows from this, therefore, that the punishment ceases automatically once the interior conversion has been completed: cf. Ad Rom. II 1 (PG 14) 873.

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which Jerome actually accused Origen of holding.[199]

In other words, it is perfectly possible to understand a punishment of sin as a consequence which flows necessarily from the nature of sin itself. This would be the clash between the sinner's guilty act and condition – which could even be definitive – and the objectively imposed structure and order of his true reality. In this sense it could be described as an 'external' punishment. Origen is perfectly able to grant this[200] without relinquishing his basic speculative principle that in the religious sphere there are no punishments which could be considered vindictive. The latter would be punishments which are not the intrinsic consequence of guilt and which are imposed by an [274] external cause only as a vindictive reaction to sin. 'Punishment' arises as the consequence of sin from the clash between guilt and the objective ordering of reality which exists for itself and not primarily in view of the punishment of the sinner. Thus this reality also reveals the transcendence of the moral order. In this sense one could *also* speak of a 'vindictive' aspect, of δι/κη α#μα και∴ ι0ατρει/α.[201]

This notion of the medicinal nature of the punishment of sin obviously raises several questions which are not answered explicitly by Origen. How, for instance, could such punishments really overcome sin? They can certainly not be understood as the execution of a purely juridical sentence. We will go into this question in more detail below. At the same time, there can be no question here of what one may call an automatically effective self-destruction of evil.[202]

Such a notion would be gnostic and would be in direct contradiction to the concept of freedom which Origen directs against Gnosticism. If, in his view, guilt springs essentially from freedom, it follows that it can be taken away only by freedom. It may appear from many passages in his work that moral evil is taken away simply by the fact that, being suffered by God's longanimity, it leads finally *ad absurdum* or, as non-existent darkness, it is dissolved necessarily by God's light.[203] Thus it would seem that, in the final analysis, in the light of the general teaching of the restoration of all things, the distinction between a punitive consequence of sin which is accepted freely and one which is suffered merely passively is only secondary and provisional. Nevertheless, for Origen man's freedom is an original datum, and thus in his view punishment can have a salvific meaning only if it is undertaken willingly. If, therefore, God's punishment is to have a meaning for man's salvation, it must be able to persuade man to undertake this punishment freely.[204] Even on this supposition, however, it is still not possible to avoid the question of how punishment, considered as the consequence and manifestation of guilt in the flesh, can, by being freely accepted, be so changed as to become a cure for the guilt. In other words, how is it that guilt, which becomes punishment and enters into the instrument of the flesh, is able to be so ambivalent that it can also become the manifestation of, and even an impulsion towards, the free return of the spirit towards God which removes guilt? To answer this question from Origen's thought would presuppose at least a precise treatment of his metaphysics and theology of σα&ρχ. For the 'flesh' means two things: the manifestation of guilt and the means of taking it away. [275]

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[199] Comm. in Ep. ad Eph. III 5 (PL 26) 522: *nec extrinsecus adhibenda tormenta*; Apol. adv. Rufinum II 7 (PL 23) 429; Ep. ad Avitum (PL 22) 1065.

[200] Illnesses, temptations of the devil, the πυ=ρ καθα&ρσιον of the end of the world (cf., on this point, L. Atzberger, p. 407), etc.

[201] Thus Contra Celsum V 15 (GCS 3) 16,7 f. with regard to the πυ=ρ καθα&ρσιον of the end of the world.

[202] K. Rahner, 'Gnosis' in: LThK 4 (1960), pp. 1019-21; H. Rahner, 'Gnostizismus, christlicher' in: LThK 4 (1960), pp. 1028-30.

[203] Cf., for example, In Joan. II 27 (GCS 10) 84,20-6; In Joan. fragm. 3 (GCS 10) 386, 29-387,19; De princip. III 4,3 (GCS 22) 267,28-268,15; In Joan. fragm. 41 (GCS 10) 516; De princip. III 1,12.13.17 (GCS 22) 214-18; 225 ff.; J. Daniélou, p. 277 ff.

[204] Cf.In Jer.hom. 20,2 (GCS 6) 178,20-5; De princip. I 2,10 (GCS 22) 44,1-1l.

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Such an undertaking, however, in the context of this study would lead us too far astray.

It follows from Origen's view of the nature of punishment that there can be no question of a juridical notion of penance. This penance can be nothing other than the voluntary undertaking of the punishments of sin. Its purpose is man's inner restoration to health, and it ends as soon as this end is reached. In such a way of thinking it is impossible to have the idea of a juridical relationship of guilt between the sinner and God, a state which would be independent of man's moral condition and so would require a punishment which, even after man's complete conversion, would still be in order. If occasionally it does appear that Origen does entertain such an idea,[205] this is only a question of images and comparisons with human relationships which ought not to be exaggerated. This observation is confirmed by another consideration. According to Origen, actions and even sins 'form' men. They do not simply fade into the past in such a way that they can, nevertheless, still be reckoned juridically. Rather, they leave in man a τυ/ποφ which remains imprinted on his heart,[206] *secundum sui qualitatem agentis mentem imaginantur et formant*.[207] *Notae quaedam et signacula relinquantur* in the depth of the heart.[208] The object of reforming penance is the real, ontological condition of man.[209] Such an idea of the meaning of penance implies that this could not be thought of as the execution of a purely juridical sentence. While in Cyprian 'healing' was used essentially as an image for the endurance of a punishment, in Origen it is precisely the contrary.

With reference to what we have already seen, the observation which we have just made clarifies two points. First, according to Origen, despite his theological reflection on the question, the difference between sins, that is, between mortal sins and non-mortal sins, cannot be as clear-cut as it is for us today. *Every* sin leaves behind its τυ/ποφ, which has to be remitted by penance, if not always by official church penance. This means that the difference between serious and light sins is also made somewhat unimportant, especially since the remission of the τυ/ποφ of a mortal sin is always in fact possible, at the very latest by means of the fire of judgement in the next life. This may be a reason why in the early period there are only a few witnesses for mortal sin as a loss of *grace*[210] or, indeed, for non-mortal sins as not radically destroying the grace of baptism.

Second, it is impossible to observe in Origen a clear differentiation [276] between 'guilt' and 'punishment'. For instance, punishment is corporeity, man's inner confusion and division, his contradiction of God, of the inner fire and, especially, of the structure of his given reality. All this, however, is so essentially a consequence of guilt that, according to Origen, the latter is only actually finally remitted when it is destroyed by penance or the fire of the next life. In other words, when the reality through which guilty freedom has operated and expressed itself is transformed by the *interitus carnis*. Thus it is possible to understand why Origen appears to know no other moment for the remission of guilt than the completion of penance itself. Leaving aside the baptismal *aphesis*, the remission of guilt is seen as an event and a process, not as the infusion of grace at a particular moment. Although mortal sin is also considered as a loss of baptismal grace and although certain consequences are derived from this for the prescribed penance, no further account is taken of the specific nature of

[205] Cf., for example, In Luc.hom. 35 (GCS 35) 212-15.
[206] In Jer.hom. 16,10 (GCS 6) 142,5-9.
[207] Ad Rom. III (PG 14) 873.
[208] Ad Rom. II 10 (PG 14) 894; De princip. II 10,4 (GCS 22) 178,5 f.
[209] Ad Rom. II 1 (PG 14) 873. The fact that these τυ/ποι reappear at the judgement as enduring realities need not be seen as a contradiction: the whole of man's spiritual past can, on the one hand, be really, ontologically and physically 'resumed' in his present, while on the other hand being essentially marked by later decisions (for example, to do penance). Thus penance 'marks' the past rather than 'extinguishes' it.
[210] On this point, cf. 'Sin as Loss of Grace in Early Church Literature' in this volume.

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mortal sin in the question of the nature of forgiveness. As in the case of all other sins, it is here a question of overcoming the *moral* condition which man has acquired through mortal sin. Origen is less explicit about the direct regaining of baptismal grace. Certainly he knows clearly that the Holy Spirit is bestowed in baptism in a way which would not be possible through a mere moral transformation of man's conscience.[211] Nevertheless, he hardly looks at penance from this point of view. Penance achieves forgiveness by man's moral reformation. Obviously the idea of a reacquisition of grace by penance is not radically excluded, for Origen also knows that the Holy Spirit is the cause of men's sanctification.[212] He does not, however, look at penance explicitly[213] from this point of view, even though it is obviously implied in his notion of mortal sin. This is clear from the opposition which he establishes between baptism in the Spirit and baptism by fire,[214] the latter including penance in this life.[215] This penance is seen by Origen more in its opposition to baptism in water and the Spirit than as a new reception of the Spirit. Both baptisms are similar, however, in that they remit sin.[216] In the case of baptism proper this applies *de iure*, at least, if not in fact. But this

[211] In In Lev.hom. 6,2 (GCS 29) 361,7-11 the moral conversion through personal effort as a condition of effective penance is clearly distinguished from the reception of the *gratia Sancti Spiritus* through baptism. The same distinction between μετανοει=ν and α!φεσιφ α(μαρτιω~ν is found in In Luc.hom. 21 (GCS 35) 139,1-5; 140,1-4. G. Teichtweier, p. 290, also rightly places a great deal of weight on the distinction between α!φεσιφ and μετα&νοια. He says: 'Αφεσιφ and μετα&νοια or ε0χομολο&γησιφ are, therefore, different ways of forgiving sins.' This is contrary to J. Grotz, pp. 257-60, where this distinction is explicitly rejected, since even forgiveness of sins by the Church consists exclusively of α!φεσιφ, that is, of the forgiveness by *the* prayer of the priest, independently of the sinner's personal act of penance. Accordingly, only in serious cases is this 'actual penance' preceded by an excommunication (p. 260; cf. on this point ibid., p. 259: 'The *remissio* means precisely remission without any personal activity'). For the specific effect of baptism, cf. In Joan. VI 33 (GCS 10) 142,23-143,1. For the interpretation of this text, cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 55 f. Although the centurion Cornelius received the Spirit even before his baptism (In Num.hom. 3,1 [GCS 30] 14,6-11; ibid., 11,3 [GCS 30] 81,13), nevertheless, as a matter of principle, the penance and *the* conversion of the catechumen is a mere precondition for the reception of the Spirit which is bestowed in baptism. Thus, although the virtuous life of pagans deserves a reward by God in the next world, only a baptized person can enter into the actual kingdom of God: Ad Rom. 117 (PG 14) 888. Before baptism, a person can already believe in Christ and invoke him, but it is only in baptism that he receives the Spirit and becomes a living member of the Church: Ad. Rom. VIII 5 (PG 14) 1166 f. For the reception of the Spirit in baptism, cf. also: In Ezech.hom. 6,5 (GCS 33) 383,15 f.; In Luc.hom. 26 (GCS 35) 165,8-16; De princip. II 10,7 (GCS 22) 181,5-9.

[212] Cf. A. Lieske, pp. 141-46.

[213] The following passages, however, could be invoked: In Num.hom. 6,3 (GCS 30) 32,22 ff.: *requiescit enim Spiritus sanctus . . . in his, qui purificant animas suas a peccato*; In Jos.hom. 3,2 (GCS 30) 303,17-23: the aim of all *paenitentia et conversio* is *sancti Spiritus gratia*, which is not said only with regard to baptismal conversion; In Lev. hom. 8,11 (GCS 29) 417,12-18: *non solum purgationem consequi possit is, qui convertitur a peccato, sed et Spiritu sancto repleri, quo et recipere priorem stolam et anulum possit et per omnia reconciliatus Patri in locum Filii reparari*. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in these texts the purification from sins and the reception of the Spirit are not necessarily envisaged simply as two aspects of one and the same event. These texts arc perfectly comprehensible if the purification from sins is seen as the necessary precondition for the reception of the Spirit, which itself can depend upon causes other *than the* penitent's mere moral striving after his own purification.

[214] In Jer.hom. 2,3 (GCS 6) 19,9-15; In Luc.hom. 24 (GCS 35) 158. Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 56 ff.; C. M. Edsman, *Le baptême de feu* (Uppsala 1940), pp. 1-15 (Edsman makes too much of a differentiation within a notion which, in Origen's view, is ultimately unified.)

[215] In Jer.hom. 20,8 f. (GCS 6) 190-2.

[216] A basis for the notion that penance = a new reception of the Spirit is provided by the teaching that, according to Paul, the *interitus carnis* occurs for the recovery of the πνευ=μα. Since, however, this recovered πνευ=μα is the personal spirit of the sinner himself (cf., for example, In Lev.hom. 14,4 [GCS 29] 487,2: *spiritus noster mundus et purus*; In Ezech.hom. 12,3 (GCS 33) 437,4 f.: *spiritus traditi*; ibid., 437,16: *spiritus eius*), and yet for Origen the ψυξη/, and the νου=φ are man's πνευ=μα, in so far as man's spiritual principle possesses the πνευ=μα of God, included implicitly in the recovery of the πνευ=μα by *the interitus carnis* is its interior restoration to grace. On the notion of πνευ=μα, cf. Ad Rom. II 10 (PG 14) 893; In Joan. XXXII 18 (GCS 10) 455, 17-22; De princip. II 8,2-3 (GCS 22) 154,18-15,12; E. R. Redepenning, II, p. 369 f.; G. Bardy in: DThC XI

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observation also has a positive aspect, along the lines of Cyprian's theology: once the bestowal of grace is not tied clearly and explicitly to subjective penance it becomes possible to see the bestowal of the Spirit as the effect of the Church's action in the remission of sins. In the case of penance this does not appear to be [277] so. It still remains to be considered, however, whether and how Origen himself thinks along these lines.

All that has just been said raises once more the question of the relationship of personal penance to grace. Here is one way of answering this question: 'He [Christ] brings forgiveness of sins, we receive it in baptism . . . but this forgiveness is confined to those sins which were committed *before* baptism. The sins which we commit later . . . must be expiated by ourselves'.[217] 'The baptized person must obtain for himself the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism'.[218] Such a view is surely correct. If the remission of post-baptismal sins, as opposed to the *aphesis* at initiation consists in the fact that one 'takes it upon oneself' (α)πολαμβα&νειν τα_φ α(μαρτι/αφ) and pursues it and its bitter consequences to the end, then this remission appears not to demand directly the redeeming grace of *Christ* but to be performed by man 'himself'. We have already seen that it is at least *possible* to conceive, even in Origen's system, the beginning of conversion and the experience of the interior fire of judgement as grace. Already the mere fact of this experience means that God has desisted from his great anger, which would otherwise make the sinner insensitive to the fire. The very presence of the fire is itself a grace, since the contradiction implied in sin would not exist at all if God did not preserve the supernatural existence of the Logos within man. It is in this way that he prevents man from remaining imprisoned in his complacent carnal existence as a being of this transitory world.

However, all this does not answer the question posed above. For the actual penance which is required for the *interitus carnis* goes beyond the interior fire of judgement. Now the question is: should this additional element be considered as itself a grace or as the work of man alone? Can such a penance be a grace *Christi* and, in particular, be related with his actual work of redemption on the cross? Indeed, even the interior fire of judgement could be an 'ideal' grace of the Logos, having no connection whatsoever with the salvation which God's incarnate Son obtained on the cross. What makes this difficulty even more acute is the fact that the *interitus carnis* which remits sin is, in fact, to be undertaken for mortal sins outside the community of the Church, so that thereby the sinner may become worthy to share once again in the Church's fellowship of grace.[219] This fact could indicate that penance is to be understood as man's [278] own work. Against such a view, however, it must be stressed that, according to Origen, the *misericors et miserator Dominus* has provided the possibility of a penance for sins committed after baptism, precisely because he did not wish the sinner to die.[220] But does this necessarily mean that the remission of sins through personal penance,

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1534 f.; A. Lieske, p. 143 n.56.

[217] E. R. Redepenning, II, p. 25. As a proof for this opinion he refers to Ad Rom. III 8 f. (PG 14), although here it is a matter of the redemption through Christ in general. Cf. Contra Celsum III 62 (GCS 2) 256: here also it is a question only of the need which all men have of salvation; In Lev.hom. 2,4 (GCS 29) 295,18-296,22 (the passage which we have already considered on the once-and-for-all *remissio* in baptism and the six other possibilities for the remission of sins); Ad Rom. II l (PG 14) 872: the difference between the *remissio* in baptism and the *tegere peccata* through *paenitentia*. The strength of the proof, therefore, consists only in the difference between baptismal α!φεσιφ and personal penance which remits sin. The question remains, therefore, whether or not this penance can still be grace.

[218] E. R. Redepenning, II, p. 424, with a reference to p.25. Poschmann also appears to be of essentially the same opinion; cf. his study, p. 432: 'Thus, in its effect, penance appears as a counterpart to Christ's blood: while the latter redeems us from the Devil – in baptism – through penance it is the sinner himself who must provide his own ransom.'

[219] We will discuss this point in more detail below.

[220] Thus also B. Poschmann, p. 432. In Ex.hom. 6,9 (GCS 29) 201,18 f. Certainly no more on the subject of God's mercy can be derived from this passage. Thus Poschmann's view appears to be exaggerated: 'Certainly

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which is doubtless necessary, is itself a grace? Certainly Origen recognizes that there are graces which are effective even *before* actual membership of the Church.[221] Thus penance outside the Church with a view to regaining membership with it *need not necessarily* be a work devoid of grace which a man has undertaken on his own initiative. If this were the case, then he would only have finished with sin in so far as he has expiated it completely on his own.

Penance, however, in so far as it is *interitus carnis*, is in fact precisely a participation in the death *Christi*;[222] the renunciation of sins, in so far as it is a conversion, is a crucifixion with the Lord.[223] It is Christ himself who is poor and weak in those who are spiritually weak and poor; with them he suffers in the prison of the world,[224] while the sinner hangs invisibly with him on the cross.[225] The Lamb of God continues to take away the sins of *every* individual until sin has been totally eliminated from the entire world.[226] If, in reality, the mystery of the incarnation and of the death of the Logos consists in the fact that the dominion of the devil and the sinful flesh is overthrown,[227] then penance is a participation in Christ's own destiny. For, in the final analysis, it is his coming in the flesh and especially his death which make possible the experience of the opposition between flesh and spirit[228] and elevate the order of the flesh to that of heaven.[229] Thus the *interitus carnis*, far from being the conquest of sin by man himself, is a part of Christ's continuing destiny in this world. Indeed, it is, in a certain sense, the most important part of this destiny, since it is more essential for him to triumph in us than for himself alone.[230] But this means that penance is a grace. Moreover, it should now appear to the impartial observer that the teaching of the *aphesis* in baptism is even more problematical than the victory over sin by post-baptismal penance. For if every sin leaves its τυ/ποφ in man, if especially the whole of man's fleshly existence is an expression of the creature's sinfulness, and if Origen explicitly recognizes that baptism represents not the end

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he (the sinner) would not be capable of doing this (providing the ransom) on his own; he has only the *misericors et misserator Dominus* to thank if his penance has that result' (p. 432). If it were a grace *to undertake* the penance imposed, then without a doubt the remission obtained through it would also be a grace. But such a juridical conclusion has no place in Origen's view of penance (being an inner healing by the destruction of sin). But is every possibility to do penance itself already grace? The same applies to In Lev.hom. 15,2 (GCS 29) 488,23, where it is a question of the *pietas et clementia legislatoris* which allows us to redeem the house of heaven which has been sold to the Devil.

[221] Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 42 ff. The principal passages quoted are Selecta in Ps. 47,9 (PG 12) 1440 in connection with In Joan. XX 20 (GCS 10) 351,33-352,35 and In Cant. III (GCS 33) 215 f.; Ad Rom. V 8 (PG 14) 1166; In Matt. ser. 63 f. (GCS 38) 145,10-151,18.

[222] Ad Rom. V 7 (PG 14) 1335 ff.: *si ergo commonitus quis morte Christi, qui pro impiis mortuus est, poeniteat in his omnibus et velut pessimum regem regnantem in sua carne depellat alienumque se ab eius desideriis faciat ac praeceptis, iste vere per mortem Christi peccato mortuus esse dicitur*. There is no reason for wishing to understand this only of baptismal penance. Cf. Fragm. in I Ep. ad Thess. (PG 14) 1300: *in Christo autem mortui, qui plena ad Deum mente conversi sunt*; In Num. hom. 12,3 (GCS 30) 102,23-103,9.

[223] In Matt.tom. XII 24 (GCS 40) 122-5. Such expressions in Origen are to be understood very realistically. Christ is and suffers in the members of the Church as the soul in the body. Cf. also In Matt. ser. 73 (GCS 38) 172,18-174,23.

[224] In Matt. ser. 72 (GCS 38) 168-70. Granted the fact that in Origen's system of thought there is finally no separation between the Church and the world (cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, pp. 42-5), there need be no contradiction in the fact that the penitent guilty of mortal sin, on the one hand, is still outside the Church while, on the other hand, in his situation and in his act of penance he is united with Christ.

[225] In Jos.hom. 8,3 (GCS 30) 338,5-339,3: the well-known passage of the 'double cross', on which hang both Christ and the devil, but also man himself as both holy and sinner.

[226] In Joan. I 32 (GCS 10) 42,3-7.

[227] Cf. J. Daniélou, p. 264 ff.

[228] In Jer.hom. 11,1 (GCS 6) 79,20-80,5.

[229] In Lev.hom. 1,4 (GCS 29) 286,20-287,3.

[230] In Num.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 48,6-12.

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but only the beginning of the complete destruction of sin in the flesh,[231] then his notion [279] of the *aphesis* in baptism appears to fit less comfortably into *his* system of *Christian* redemption than his teaching on penance. In other words, the mere remission of the 'punishment' due to sin must inevitably appear as a retention of the medicine which heals, since punishment and the means of healing are materially identical, and thus the healing is not yet complete through baptism alone. It follows that Origen must have accepted the *aphesis* teaching as part of traditional teaching and handed it on without having integrated this idea into his system and experience.[232]

In view of all this, it would be erroneous to wish to explain Origen' s notion of *metanoia* solely on the basis of the *aphesis*. It would also be misleading, on the same basis, to understand *metanoia* as an expiation of sin, without grace, by man's autonomous moral effort. Rather, it is a matter of a specifically Christian event, in so far as it is a participation in Christ's redeeming death. This is, however, an event which is possible not only at its onset but also in its final execution only 'in Christ' and, in this sense, must be a grace. Baptism in water and baptism in fire are *sacramenta* in the Lord's hand.[233] *Omnis purificatio peccatorum, etiam haec, quae* (as opposed to baptism, the grace of which is granted only once) *per paenitentiam quaeritur, illius ope indiget, de cuius latere aqua processit et sanguis*.[234]

III. CHURCH PENANCE

1. The Ecclesial Meaning of Penance

So far we have been concerned with the personal penance of the sinner himself. Now we must consider this penance further; that is, in so far as it occurs within the Church and is accompanied and met by the activity of the church community. First of all, however, we must consider an aspect of sin itself which, although we have not previously given it much attention, is very important in the present context. This is the fact that sin itself has an ecclesial aspect. According to Origen, the sinner 'dies' through his mortal sin, in so far as he becomes impervious to the healing influence of the Church which is able to preserve him from death. If, later, we are going to [280] understand Origen's view on the nature of excommunication, we must at this point stress that he considers every sin an immediate contradiction of the Church, in so far as this latter is a holy community and the body of Christ himself. In this church community the illness of sin is by no means the private affair of the individual affected. No one in the Church is able to say: *quid hoc ad me spectat, si alius male agit?* For it is a matter of: *polluitur enim ex uno peccatore . . . plebs universa*. To tolerate sin would be a *universae ecclesiae, moliri interitum*, since then God's anger is directed to the whole people.[235] Also just a little leaven corrupts *totam unitatis conspersionem et consensus* in the Church.[236] The person who is guilty of a sin of impurity, for example, offends not only his own body as the temple of God but also the body of the Church. *In omnem ecclesiam videtur delinquere, qui corpus suum maculaverit, quia per unum membrum macula in omne*

[231] Cf. above under nn. 80 and 91.
[232] In this context it is worth noting that Origen ascribes to Martyrdom a greater purifying role than to baptism In Jud. hom. 7,2 (GCS 30) 507,16-508,18. In his view martyrdom is both baptism and the highest form of penance in one.
[233] In Ezech.hom. 5,1 (GCS 33) 372,7-12.
[234] In Lev.hom. 8,10 (GCS 29) 411,7-9.
[235] In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 332,21-334,20.
[236] In Matt.ser. 89 (GCS 38) 205,1 f.

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corpus diffunditur.[237] Because of this effect' which the sin of every baptized person has on the church community Origen is fully aware that the Church is a Church of sinners. This is true not only in the sense that sinful humanity, like the prostitute Rahab or the sinful woman in the gospel, is accepted by Christ and saved from sin,[238] but also in the sense that in this world sinfulness is a *permanent* mark of the Church itself. The Lord weeps over the Church as he wept over Jerusalem,[239] and in this world it can never be totally cleansed from sin.[240] At the same time Origen still considers the Church to be holy. This means that there is a kind of dialectic at work in the relationship of the sinner to the Church. On the one hand, the sinner still belongs to the Church, since before excommunication he is still one of its members, at least externally, and is a νομιζο&μενοφ ει]ναι α)πο_ τη=φ ε0κκλησι/αφ.[241] And this 'reckoned as belonging to the Church' cannot be a mere illusion for the man who, in his earthly experience, is unable to separate the cockle from the wheat, the vessels of mercy from those of anger, the good fish from the bad. The fact is that both are found together in the one Church at this time.[242] If this were not so, the Lord would not be able to weep over her.[243]

On the other hand, the sinner stands in permanent opposition to the holy Church. Thus, even without being excommunicated, he is, because of his sin, already in fact 'outside'.[244] This is why Origen is able occasionally to count as belonging to the Church only the saints and to exclude from its fellowship those who πιστευ/ειν νομιζο&μενοι [281] ε0κκλησιαστικοι//.[245] It is not possible to resolve this dialectical relationship of the sinner to the Church in Origen's thought[246] simply on the assumption that the sinner is allowed membership of the visibly hierarchical Church but not to the 'spiritual' fellowship of the Church. In any case, it is easy to show[247] that for Origen these two realities are not independent of each other. This point is particularly clear in the question which we are now discussing. It is precisely the connection and the relationship between these two sides of the one Church that explain why the loss of grace through a mortal sin constitutes a contradiction not only against the spiritual interior fellowship of Christians who are with and in the Lord but also against the *visible* Church. It is for this reason that a person guilty of such a sin should, in principle, always be excommunicated, unless this is practically impossible. Mere leniency, however, could not prevent it.[248] Origen could certainly subscribe to the idea that

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[237] In Jos.hom. 5,6 (GCS 30) 320,8-13.
[238] Cf., for example, In Matt.tom. XII 4 (GCS 40) 75,7-15; In Jos.hom. 3,4 f. (GCS 30) 304-7.
[239] Fragm. in I Cor. (J. A. Cramer, *Catenae Graecorum Patrum*, V 11); In Jos.hom. 21,1 (GCS 30) 427,12-429,14; Selecta in Ps. 73,3 (PG 12) 1529 C/D; In Jer.hom. 15,3 (GCS 6) 127,25-30; In Luc. hom. 38 (GCS 35) 223,5-9; 224,11; In Matt.tom. XVI 21 (GCS 40) 546,7-549,21; In Luc.hom. 2 (GCS 35) 14: the sin of the ε0κκλησιαστικο&φ which stains the Church obviously occurs in the Church and is not envisaged as existing prior to baptism. It is considered as being repeatedly remitted; In Jer.fragm. 31 (GCS 6) 215,1-17; In Matt.ser. 35 (GCS 38) 68,4-9.
[240] In Jos.hom. 21,1 (GCS 30) 428,15-18.
[241] In Jer.hom. 15,3 (GCS 6) 127,26.
[242] In Jer. fragm. 31 (GCS 6) 215,7-11; In Ezech.hom. 1,11 (GCS 33) 334,30-335,23; In Gen.hom. 2,3 (GCS 29) 30,17-31,12.
[243] Cf. above under n.239.
[244] In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,22-4; In Jer. fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,16 f.; cf. also In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 479,6-10; In Lev.hom. 12,6 (GCS 29) 465,1-4.
[245] In Matt.tom. XII 11 f. (GCS 40) 88 ff. Cf. also In Matt.tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 263,13: α)δελφο_φ ο)νομαζο&μενοφ, who in reality is not a brother.
[246] Origen clearly experienced this dialectic. In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,27-480,2 he says: *Qui . . . inter nos est et peccat, ex una quidem parte, qua Deo credit* (at least through his external membership) *Israeliticae videtur originis*; *ex ea parte, qua peccat, de Aegyptio genus ducit*.
[247] Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mysterion*, p. 40 ff.; A. Lieske, p. 84 ff.
[248] In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,18-26 these three 'separations' are clearly distinguishable: separation from the spiritual aspect of the Church: *exire a via iustitiae . . . a lege Dei*; contradiction to the visible fellowship of the Church, even before the official church excommunication: *per ipsum peccatum . . . quamvis intret* (*peccator*)

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the sinner still remains a member of the visible Church. However, the more this truth was understood undialectically, in the sense that the Christian's relationship to the Church had in no way changed by his sin, the more, insignificant excommunication appeared as a measure which was appropriate to every mortal sin. It was felt less and less that membership of the church community was the prerogative of the saint and that, for the sinner, it was a contradiction of his interior condition. Thus exclusion from the fellowship of the Church was considered less and less as an essential part of the penitential process, even though it is still present today in the exclusion from the Eucharist. Because of the way in which excommunication was understood and practised it was inevitable that it should come to be regarded as an additional means of punishment for specific mortal sins. This development originated only with Augustine's polemic against the Donatists and did not begin with Origen. It is necessary to understand this if we are to appreciate properly Origen's insistence on a 'binding', that is, excommunication for mortal sins.

2. The Church's Saving Action with Regard to the Sinner

Mortal sin, of its very nature, demands a clarification and an explanation of the relationship in which the sinner stands to the Church. His membership has, in fact, become ambiguous, and thus it is necessary [282] to make it clear that he no longer belongs to the Church 'in truth'. The sinner must, therefore, be excommunicated. Since, however, according to Origen, every consequence and punishment of sin must, in the final analysis, be salvific, even this death must issue in a new life of the spirit.[249] Excommunication is, therefore, the Church's first saving act with regard to the sinner.[250] Nevertheless, Origen does not appear to recognize a precise technical term for this excommunication.[251] *Tradere in interitum carnis* includes excommunication, since it concerns the actual *paenitentes*. Nevertheless, this is a general

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ecclesiam, eiectum esse et segregatum a consortio et unanimitate fidelium; separation by excommunication: *abici per episcopi sententiam*.

[249] In Lev.hom. 144 (GCS 29) 486,23-8; In Num.hom. 19,3 (GCS 30) 183,2-4.

[250] It is necessary to say a word here about J. Grotz's fundamentally different understanding of excommunication; cf. also the thorough discussion of his view in the essay contained in this volume: 'The Penitential Teaching of the Shepherd of Hermas'. According to Grotz, excommunication is first and foremost a disciplinary measure of the Church with regard to specific offences. To this extent, therefore, excommunication is purely and simply an accidental element of the Church's penitential procedure, which is effective within the *communio* (cf. pp. 280, 292). As a consequence of historical development, it became taken for granted that sacramental church penance, that is, the *paenitentia secunda*, in the case of mortal sin in the strict sense (which Grotz distinguishes from mortal sins in the wide sense by means of a juridical criterion) can be supplemented by the disciplinary element of excommunication (pp. 299-307). All this, however, amounts to an unjustifiable introduction of today's canonical understanding of excommunication into the penitential theology of the early Church. Above all, the assumption that the *communio* continues while exclusion from the Eucharist is imposed is incompatible with the ecclesiology of the Church Fathers. At the same time, Grotz grants that *communio* in the full sense contains the right to the Eucharist (p. 264) and that exclusion from the Eucharist is included in excommunication (p. 263).

This fundamental position gives rise to a separation between *communio* and *pax cum Ecclesia*. The ecclesiological aspect of reconciliation with the Church becomes a disciplinary action which is effective only in certain cases, while the supernatural effect of the forgiveness of sins is ascribed only to reconciliation with God. According to this view, the readmission into the Church, in so far as it is a purely canonical event, has no sacramental effect whatsoever. This assumption, however, is in open contradiction to the theology of the early Church which teaches the saving significance both of the church community and of membership of it. Cf. on this point S. Hübner, 'Kirchenbusse und Exkommunikation bei Cyprian' in: ZKTh 84 (1962), pp. 49-84, 171-215.

[251] In one passage the Latin tr. has: *propter peccata . . . excommunicare*; cf. In Matt. ser. 14 (GCS 38) 27,32.

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concept, since it also includes the *afflictio corporis*.[252] Although κο&λασιφ and *correptio* are expressed. most poignantly in excommunication, they still signify any correction of a sinner, even when he is not excluded from the Church on account of a mortal sin.[253] Apart from the question of terminology, the fact of excommunication is expressed quite simply as an expulsion from the Church, and this in both the active and the passive sense. The result in either case is that the sinner is 'outside'.[254] The notion of *ligare* (δε/ειν) seems to be used by Origen almost in the technical sense as an expression for the excommunication of a sinner. The bishop's power of *binding* is exercised precisely in the act of excommunication and even in those cases where the exclusion can, in principle, be lifted and is intended for only a certain time. Thus binding and loosing are not, at least conceptually, contradictory or mutually exclusive notions but, even supposing the intention to bind really, two successive phases of one dynamic event.[255]

Excommunication is imposed by the bishop. The exclusion from the community is

[252] Cf. Ad Rom.pracf. (PG 14)834. In our view, however, it is particularly important that the *tradere in interitum carnis* (*in manus Zabuli*, etc.), at least when this action does not take place only before God in secret, includes an *a corpore Christi separari*, *a pelli de ecclesia* by the priests: cf. In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 478,18-479,10; In Ezech.hom. 3,8 (GCS 33) 357,30-2.

[253] Cf. In Matt.tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 261-8; In Lev. hom. 3,2 (GCS 29) 302; In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 333,24-334,5; In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1370 ff.

[254] For example, α)πελαυ/νειν του κοινου=: Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 247,18; ε0κβα&λλειν: In Jer.fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,16; In Jer. hom. 12,5 (GCS 6) 92,17; Ibid., 14,14 (GCS 6) 120,12 f.; ibid., 7,3 (GCS 6) 54,2; *expellere de ecclesia*: In Matt.tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 262, 20-6; In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 333,6; ibid., 21,1 (GCS 30) 429,1; *abscindere a conventu ecclesiae*: In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371; In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,4; *de ecclesia pellere*: In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 479,3 f.; *foras mittere*: In Lev.hom. 14,3 (GCS 29) 483,12; *eicere*, *proicere*: Ad Rom.praef. (PG 14) 834; In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371 A; In Ezech.hom. 3,8 (GCS 33) 357,30; *a corpore Christi separare*: In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 478,27; πο&ρρω ει]ναι τη=φ ε0κκλησι/αφ: In Joan. XXVIII 4 (GCS 10) 393,27; *foris esse et segregatus a conventa fidelium*: In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,25 f. *abici a conventu bonorum et segregari a coetu castrisque sanctorum*: In Lev.hom. 8,10 (GCS 29) 408,18 f.

[255] Cf., for example, In Matt. tom. XIII 31 (GCS 40) 269,3-5; In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 478,23-479,1. Here we *are* not considering De or. In the passages mentioned, however, it is obvious that *ligare* is identical with excommunication. We have already shown that the *interitus carnis* included in excommunication is, at least in principle, not thought of as a permanent condition, but actually effects the forgiveness of sins. It can, in principle, end with readmission into the Church, as is explicitly stated: Ad Rom.praef. (PG 14) 834: the *interitus carnis* achieves for the incestuous person in Corinth *a Ecclesiae membris associare*, even though he was *eiectus*; Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 248,2-5: those who have been ejected are again allowed access to the Church; In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371: *Paulus eiectum reconiungit ecclesiae*; In Ezech. hom. 3,8 (GCS 33) 357,32-358,1; *et in praesenti quidem potest quis egrediens de populo Dei rursum per paenitentiam reverti*. It is clear from this general principle that the case of the incestuous person in Corinth is seen by Origen not as a single case of exclusively apostolic authority but as a typical example of general church practice. Thus the notion of binding does not exclude a subsequent reconciliation with the Church. On the other hand, the notion of 'loosing' does *not*, in itself, necessarily imply a previous 'binding' on the Church's part (excommunication). For Origen gives us to understand that, at least occasionally, even in the case of mortal sins which have been brought to the bishops' attention, the attempt was made *ad gratiam iudicare*, without excommunication, therefore, obviously not merely to tolerate the sin (according to Origen's own witness, this often happened: In Jos.hom. 7,6 [GCS 30] 332,22-6), but also to forgive it (In Lev.hom. 12,6 [GCS 29] 465,1-5). The same conclusion is apparent from In Matt.tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 262,10-263,12, where Origen discusses (if only to reject) the opinion of others that it is necessary for *a* person guilty of mortal sin only *expelli de ecclesia* if after his deed and despite exhortation he refuses to mend his ways; otherwise it is possible *statim eum dicere lucrifactum* (ibid. [GCS 40] 262,20 f.). At least the attempt, therefore, to 'loosen' was actually made, even if it is held by Origen to be ineffective in the case of mortal sins. Moreover, it is clear from In Matt.tom. XIII 31 (GCS 40) 269,11-18 that Origen himself recognizes *the* notion of a λυ/ειν of sin (by exhortation, correction, etc.) without its being preceded by an excommunication, although also only in the case of non-mortal sins. It remains clear, therefore, that 'binding' on the Church's part means excommunication, but not a definitive excommunication, at least not necessarily. 'Loosing' is a liberation from sin, but one which does not necessarily have to be preceded by an explicit binding on the Church's part.

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expressed *per episcopi vocem*,[256] *per episcopi sententiam*,[257] *ab episcopo*,[258] *per sacerdotes*,[259] *per eos qui ecclesiae praesident et potestatem habent non solum solvendi sed et ligandi*,[260] with reference to an *apostolica auctoritas*[261] of the *episcopus arguens*.[262] All these expressions reflect the *actual* practice in Origen's day. There is no doubt that the bishops at that time claimed this power for themselves not only in practice but also as their theoretically justified right. Origen himself explicitly attests this fact.[263] Indeed, given the actual position of the bishop in the Church at that time,[264] it is unthinkable that anyone else other than he could have exercised such a right of excluding people from the Church. Nevertheless, it is possible that Origen recognized, at least theoretically, in others than the bishops a power of binding and a right to excommunicate. [283] In any event, it is no argument against the bishops' exclusive right to 'bind' that good Christians 'avoid' those people who, through their influence, could corrupt them but who for some reason or other either cannot be excommunicated or have not in fact been excommunicated.[265] In behaving so, these Christians are merely following the exhortation of 2 Thessalonians 3:6. In any case, it is a private practice of individual Christians which does not alter the official position of a sinner with regard to the Church. It was obviously not at all infrequent that Christians did not want to have anything to do with others whom they considered, rightly or even wrongly, to be a 'scandal' for the Church and for the liturgical assembly in particular.[266] Origen approved of this behaviour of privately avoiding sinners. He held the view that where it was a question of lighter sins for which no actual excommunication was imposed but which were not renounced one could regard those Christians who committed such sins according to Matthew 18 *privately* as 'pagans and public sinners'.[267] This 'binding'[268] is obviously an expression of

[256] In Lev.hom. 14,3 (GCS 29) 483,8.
[257] In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,23. The exclusion is a *iudicium eorum qui praesunt ecclesiae*: In Lev.hom. 14,3 (GCS 29) 483,9 f.
[258] In Lev.hom. 12,6 (GCS 29) 465,2.
[259] In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 479,3.
[260] Ibid., (GCS 30) 478,25.
[261] Ibid., (GCS 30) 478,21.
[262] In Ps. 37,1 (PG 12) 1371 B.
[263] Cf. In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 98,28-99,13: the bishops claim the power of binding and loosing by appealing to Matt. 16. Origen recognizes this claim (cf. ibid. [GCS 40] 99,7), even if only on certain conditions, to which we will return. De or. 28,8-10: the τινεφ (cf. [GCS 3] 381,12), whom Origen here reproaches for exceeding their powers, are described as successors of the apostles (ibid. [GCS 3] 381,l), who have received their Spirit (ibid. [GCS 3] 380,8), who lay claim to a ι9ερατικη∴ α)χι/α (ibid. [GCS 3] 381,12 f.). Since Origen also recognizes a certain kind of power of binding and loosing in other depositories of the Spirit, his polemic here against *exceeding* this power can, in reality, only apply to the bishops. In no way could it apply, in this context, to all Christians merely because they belong externally to the Church. The bishops' claim is attested in the present text. Moreover, in other places too, Origen, while recognizing the bishops' fundamental power, inveighs against its practical use; cf. A. von Harnack (TU 42,3), pp. 69 ff., 73 ff., (TU 42,4) 129 ff. Apart from the bishops, it is just possible to think of the confessors, as they appear in Tertullian and Cyprian with their claims. There is, however, no trace elsewhere in Origen of such claims on the part of the *confessores*. It is possible to conclude from In Ezech.hom. 4,8 (GCS 33) 368,31-369,3 that occasionally even Origen placed too much trust in the intercession of martyrs. This, however, has nothing to do with the claims of the martyrs themselves. With regard to the efficacy of the *death* of martyrs for the forgiveness of sins, cf. also: In Num.hom. 10,2 (GCS 30) 71,25-72,16. Accordingly, De or. must also concern bishops. This also implies that, for the justification of their power with regard to penance, they appealed not only to Matt. 16 but also to John 20. Cf. De or. 28 (GCS 3) 380,5-15.
[264] Cf. Harnack's detailed considerations in the passages mentioned in n.263.
[265] In In Jos.hom. 21,2 (GCS 30) 430,17-20 this state of affairs is clearly discernible.
[266] Cf. In Ezcch.hom. 1,11 (GCS 33) 335,15-18; In Ps. 37 hom. 2,4 (PG 12) l384 C; ibid., 2,1 (PG 12) 138l B. This practice on the part of 'good' Christians could also be an obstacle for those who wished to undertake public penance, since such a penitent would then be 'cut off'.
[267] This is certainly the meaning of In Matt.tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 264,6-268,25. The emphasis is on the

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the sinner's moral situation before God and in no way affects the bishop's exclusive right to bind in the strict sense. The meaning here is quite different from the official exclusion from the Church.

It does seem, however, that according to Origen all the τε/λειοι also have, along with Peter, the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, just as they all also have the power mentioned in John 20:22.[269] Thus *omnis fidelis*, who is Peter by virtue of his heavenly profession of faith and a way of life which corresponds to it, has the keys of the Kingdom of heaven not only in so far as he enters into the Kingdom of heaven through the door of his own virtues,[270] but also to the extent that his sentence of binding and loosing with regard to others is the judgement of God 'invested' in him. Obviously this applies only when such a sentence emanates from one who is truly a Peter, a τε/λειοφ.[271] But precisely how are these views of Origen to be understood? Later we will consider more closely his idea of the 'binding' on the part of a perfect spiritual person; this need not concern us at the moment. Where it is a question of a 'binding', it would appear that Origen is not thinking only of the hierarchy. We will examine the actual reason for this later when we consider the question of the 'loosing'. What needs to be said here, however, is that basically, according to Origen's fundamental conception, every external [284] hierarchy, together with its activity, must have corresponding to it necessarily an internal hierarchy within the Church, together with its activity. Nevertheless, Origen is unable to describe this 'binding' concretely. His view on this point remains abstract, unclear and general. If ever he wishes to provide a concrete content for, or a meaningful example of, this idea of the possibility of 'binding' on the part of an authentic Peter or, *vice versa*, the impossibility to do this on the part of those who are not Peter, then he refers to the episcopal power of binding.[272] This shows that in fact in the Church of Origen's day there was no other 'binding' than that which was performed by the bishop. And this is why he could not evoke a concrete example of another kind. But the question needs to be asked: what is the nature of a binding on the part of a spiritual person who is not a bishop? Certainly, within a community led by bishops, there can be no question of a recognized and official excommunication existing alongside that of the bishop, let alone contrary to his will.[273] At the same time, a purely internal binding would be meaningless, since Origen himself never tires of stressing that the sinner is bound before God merely by his deed.[274] It would be possible, however, for

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exhortation: *you* – if not the official Church – can treat the sinner as a pagan and public sinner (ibid. [GCS 40] 268,15); thus the *nos* (ibid. (GCS 40) 260,20) refers not to the official Church but to those who have in fact exhorted the sinner in vain. Poschmann (p. 443) misunderstands the meaning when he sees even in this case an official excommunication about which there is only a doubt whether it is also valid in God's eyes. This practice of private avoidance seems to be recommended also in the Epistola Clementis ad Jacobum n.18 (PG 2) 53 B, when a bishop is unable, for whatever reasons, to perform an excommunication officially, even though he would clearly wish to do so.

[268] This is what In Matt.tom. XIII 31 (GCS 40) 269,3-270,6 calls the attitude of individual Christians towards an unrepentant fellow-Christian who is not excommunicated.

[269] In Matt.tom. XII 10 f. (GCS 40) 84-8. The quotation from John 20 figures ibid. (GCS 40) 87,16-22.

[270] In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 96,5-97,9.

[271] In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 98,5-100,26.

[272] In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 98,28-100,26.

[273] This was already excluded by the clearly episcopal structure of the Church *at* that time. Moreover, Origen himself complains that there are people in the Church who ought to be excommunicated and in whose regard the bishops are neglecting their duty (In Jos.hom. 7,6 [GCS 30] 332,21-333,3). This reproach makes sense, however, only if the bishops are in fact the only persons who have the power to excommunicate. Origen also says explicitly that *episcopi*, *presbyteri* and *diaconi* are those *qui iudicant eos*, *qui intus sunt*, and that the judgement of souls has been entrusted to the *Ecclesiarum iudicibas*: Ad Rom. II 2 (PG 14) 873; In Jud.hom. 3,3 (GCS 30) 484,2-4.

[274] In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,22-6; In Jer.fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,16 f.; In Lev.hom. 12,6 (GCS 29) 465,1-4; ibid., 14,3 (GCS 29) 483,6-8; In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 479,6-10.

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a spiritual and charismatic person to 'bind' meaningfully in the sense that, either privately or publicly, he exhorts, warns and rebukes sinners and thus makes them aware of their unconfessed sinful condition. This role of the spiritual person in the Church, which could be even more effective when related to the avoidance of sinners on the part of strict Christians which we have already seen, is perfectly feasible. It would have been very important and, in fact, would have been no different from that played by all the great 'preachers of penance' throughout the history of the Church. It is indeed a role which is indispensable to the constant need of spiritual renewal within the Church, which must always begin with the acknowledgement that it is 'bound' by sin. From the dogmatic point of view such a role is thoroughly compatible with the bishop's exclusive right to the official 'binding'. Thus it can be styled a 'binding' only by analogy.

But all this does not answer fully the questions concerning the authority which is at the origin of excommunication. Does Origen demand as part of the episcopal authority which imposes an excommunication that the bishop himself be a spiritual person? In other words: if a bishop were a sinner would he so lose his power that his [285] excommunication would be invalid? Is Origen in this sense to be understood as a forerunner of Donatism?

In the general introduction to this study the point has already been made that Origen's *general* orientation in ecclesiology is *not* Donatist.[275] But is this still the case with regard to this particular question? What we are doing here is to confine the question of the requirements for the validity of the penitential measures taken by a bishop to the validity of 'binding'. For its part, the 'loosing' of sin and of the sinner is not only the counterpart to 'binding' but includes more than the mere lifting of excommunication. Thus in the case of loosing the situation and the circumstances can be quite different from those in the case of the binding. In the first place, we need to note that Origen recognizes an excommunication which he holds as invalid and illegitimate.[276] We must, however, look more closely at what he means by this. For Origen an excommunication is above all 'invalid' when it does not express clearly and effectively the actual exclusion from the Church which has occurred through sin. But this does not mean that it is not present visibly within the Church, at least as a fact, albeit juridically invalid. Nor does it mean that it should be considered non-existent. This is why, in the case of an unjust excommunication or, for example, deposition from the clerical state, Origen's advice is very simple: bear it patiently.[277] Even when a bishop acts unjustly his external authority is not to be ignored. Even in the case of an invalid sentence, this authority must be respected with patience. In this respect, therefore, according to Origen the bishop's authority with regard to excommunication is not dependent upon the moral rectitude of his behaviour and judgement. It follows that it depends even less upon his personal holiness. Nevertheless, an unjust excommunication can do no harm to the person excommunicated in

[275] Cf. the details above in the introduction to part III: 'Church Penance'.

[276] In Lev.hom. 14,3 (GCS 29) 483,8-14: if the bishop's *iudicium* is not *rectum*, because there is no mortal sin, then theme arises *a* situation which is not distinctly and clearly specified by Origen: the person judged is in some way *draussen* (*depellitur et foras mittitur*). This is, however, only 'appearance' (*videtur expulsus*), and he is in fact still inside the Church (*intus est*). These two simultaneous statements can be justified only by saying that the actual exclusion from *the* community (the liturgy, the Eucharist), which, given the circumstances at that time, could not in practice be lifted from the person judged unjustly (except in the case of schism, etc.), since it was simply the material effect of excommunication, is only an appearance, in so far as this fact is not really the expression of the man's inner separation from the Church's community of grace. Obviously the texts of Origen do not allow us to answer the question whether this is a matter merely of *a* simple fact or of a fact *juridically* valid *in fono externo*.

[277] In Ezech.hom. 10,1 (GCS 33) 417,12-418,10. It is worth noting *the sive digne, sive indigne* (ibid. [GCS 33] 417,21) as well as the *boni* (ibid. [GCS 33] 418,3). If the details concentrate more on the deposition of the cleric than on the excommunication, the latter is always included, since it is explicitly mentioned at the beginning of the passage (*a populo Dei separari*: ibid.[GCS 33] 417,13 f.).

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the internal sphere of grace and salvation. But this is self-evident.

What we have just seen, however, seems to be contradicted by Origen's teaching that only the *holy* are able to 'bind', and this only with a just judgement.[278] In order to resolve the apparent conflict between this view and the previous result of our study we need to examine the *Sitz im Leben* of Origen and his theology. It is obvious that the view which smacks of Donatism has a double origin in his theology. First, Origen wishes to preclude the view that unjust excommunications have a salvific value in God's eyes. His own bitter [286] personal experience is in evidence here. Thus the fact that the bishop must be a τε/λειοφ can be understood as a defence against an *unjust* excommunication. For it is obvious that Origen did not wish to hold that practically all excommunications, even those of people who were really sinners, were null before God simply because the bishops concerned were not τε/λειοι.[279] Indeed, the picture which Origen paints of the moral condition of the episcopate of his day hardly gives the impression that he considered the majority of bishops at that time to be perfect spiritual people or even good Christians. Thus the conditions which he lays down for a valid excommunication sound more Donatist than they were intended; they are in fact directed against the religious significance of unjust excommunications.

Second, Origen considers the conditions for binding always in connection with the conditions for 'loosing' and the remission of sin. Given his comprehensive notion of 'loosing', he was able to lay down such conditions without their having to be understood in a Donatist sense. The rigorous application of the same conditions to the binding, however, would lead to false conclusions. In fact Origen was much more concerned with the question of correct loosing than with that of binding.[280] If he strays from the text which he wishes to interpret he considers binding and loosing somewhat unguardedly, carelessly and imprecisely in the same category. It is only if this phenomenon is forced that Origen is made to contradict what we have seen to be his notion of unjust excommunication, as well as to maintain a false opposition to the anti-Donatism which he otherwise holds. When it is seen in its true light, therefore, Origen's view of excommunication is that it is declared by the bishop in so far as he is an official and not because he is a spiritual person.

3. Excommunication

A) THE OBJECT OF EXCOMMUNICATION

All mortal sins, whether they are publicly known or secret, *are subject to* excommunication. This basic principle is of the greatest importance for a correct understanding of the institution of penance in Origen. That is why we must consider it in more detail at this point. In the first place, it is obvious that without any doubt the (three) [287] capital sins considered 'irremediably' to lead to death *have to be* bound. For these even the attempt at a remission through 'prayer' without binding is forbidden and ineffective.[281] Apart from these, 'mortal

[278] In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 98,5-100,26; cf. De or. 28,8 (GCS 3) 380,7-15.

[279] He also stresses that the holy Christian must be subject to, and obey, the less holy bishop, just as Jesus behaved towards his step-father Joseph: In Luc. hom. 20 (GCS 35) 133,17-134,6. It is clear here that, according to Origen, the inner hierarchy of the Church, based on holiness, does not have to be transferred purely and simply also into the Church's external hierarchy.

[280] Cf., on this point, De or. 28 (GCS 3) 375-81.

[281] De or. 28,10 (GCS 3) 381,12-16: here the following are explicitly named as mortal sins which have to be bound and retained: ει0δωλολατρει/α, μοιξει/α, ποινει/α. Cf. De or. 28,9 (GCS 3) 380,28 which names ε9κου/σιοφ φο&νοφ as belonging to the same group. This is not a question of a narrow triad of such sins, since with murder and adultery is also compared α!λλο ξαλεπω&τερον (ibid., 380 f.). Adultery and fornication arc, of their very nature, not always 'public' and remain mostly unknown. Thus these three capital sins should not simply be identified with public sins.

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sins' are mentioned as the obligatory object of excommunication. This applies – although with some reservation – even before the sinner, after repeated exhortation, has shown that he is clearly unrepentant.[282] Beyond what we have already seen Origen provides only a little information about the individual sins which are submitted to excommunication. Explicitly named in connection with excommunication are α)σε/λγεια,[283] *incesti scelus*,[284] impurity and blasphemy,[285] but also heresy and offences against the *disciplina ecclesiastica* and the *Evangelii regula*.[286] Otherwise, sins deserving excommunication are hinted at only very vaguely.[287] In general all mortal sins have to be bound, while the mortal sins in question are to be understood in the sense which we have already outlined. What is important, however, is the special stress which Origen puts on the fact that even secret sins have, in principle, to be submitted to excommunication, although it is also obvious to him that many of these sins escape episcopal excommunication since they are not self-evident. The 'sin against God' after baptism (*in fide*) must not, however, be kept secret but is to be made known to 'all' in order that it may be remitted by the *interventus* and the *correptio* of all.[288] If a person should 'remember' later that he has burdened himself with serious guilt, then he must 'of his own accord' undertake the *interitus carnis* (*spontaneum carnis interitum suscipiat*).[289] If public penance is described as an occasion when the sinner *non erubescit sacerdoti Domini indicare peccatum*,[290] this presupposes that, on other occasions, the priest has no knowledge of the

[282] In Matt. tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 262,10-263,6. He presents as examples of those guilty of mortal sin: *masculorum concubitor* (certainly usually secret), *adulter*, *homicida*, *mollis*. The reservation (*cum qui taliter sentit, non arbitror ad utilitatem communem ista sentire*) concerns the negative reply to the question whether a person should be 'ejected' only after repeated warning. At the same time, if it is said in this context that excommunication ought not to be *actually* imposed for light sins, such as often occur even among good Christians (ibid., 264,20-9), even after a warning and a relapse (ibid., 265,4-10; 266,14-21; 268,13-25), this concerns sins which are clearly light ones. In Origen's view, this does obviously not exclude the possibility of sins which are serious both subjectively and objectively precisely because the sinner has not repented after repeated warning and so must be excommunicated. In his opinion, there can also be sins which demand excommunication only after a private and public warning: In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,3-7. The text In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,20-2: *postmodum cum confutatus fuerit pro peccato, exit etiam de coetu et congregatione sanctorum*, on the other hand, obviously concerns the case where a secret sin, or at least one which was at first unknown to *the* bishop, was committed, but which has already caused an interior separation from the Church (cf. ibid., 479,19 f.), so that the exclusion on the part of the Church has to take place as soon as the fact is known by the bishop – be this by the confession of the sinner himself or in any other way. For this case, cf. also In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 479,2-6.

[283] Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 247,23.

[284] Ad Rom.praef. (PG 14) 834.

[285] In Jer.fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,10. 14.

[286] In Jos.hom. 7,6 f. (GCS 30) 334,13 f.; 335,9-13; In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 480,8-11.

[287] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1370: *gravissime delinquere*; In Ezech. hom. 3,8 (GCS 33) 357,31: *digna abiectione*, etc.

[288] In Lev.hom. 8,10 (GCS 29) 408,3-8. The *omnibus publicentur* need not, in itself, mean any more than the fact that the penitent is undertaking public penance by which he becomes known as having committed a mortal sin. It does not say that he makes a detailed confession of the way in which he has precisely become guilty.

[289] In Lev.hom. 14,4 (GCS 29) 486,28-492,3. It is really *a* question of public penance: *quae solet a poenitentibus expendi* (ibid., 486,27) with reference to the person guilty of incest in Corinth (ibid., 486,20-3). On the other hand, it is not certain that In Lev.hom. 3,4 (GCS 29) 308 concerns anything more than the confession of sins before God, by which the devil's role as accuser at the judgement is anticipated. Similarly, this is all that is involved in In Ps. 36 hom. 1,5 (PG 12) 1328. Although the *tradere carnem in interitum* (In Lev.hom. 3,4 [GCS 29] 308,15) is mentioned, it is difficult to think that Origen would consider sins *in sermone solo vel etiam intra cogitationem secreta as* the object of public penance. Cf., for example, in Lev.hom. 12,6 (GCS 29) 465,7-9, where sins of thought are distinguished as a 'blemish' from sins of deed which make a man exteriorly or interiorly an *abiectus*. It ought not to be overlooked that the *interitus carnis* also includes works of penance. Thus it can mean only these, even if they are not done precisely within the official, public penance of the Church.

[290] In Lev.hom. 2,4 (GCS 29) 296,19-21.

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guilt in question. Thus public penance did not exist merely for generally known scandals but also for secret sins. In any case, the exhortation to seek the advice of an experienced doctor of souls in order to discern whether a secret sin is a *languor*, *qui in conventu totius ecclesiae exponi debeat et curari* shows that secret sins were not as a matter of course and without consideration exempt from obligatory public penance. It was a question of deciding in each individual case whether the guilt was so great that a public penance was absolutely necessary, that is, whether it really was a mortal sin.[291] Origen expresses the same exhortation to confess secret sins publicly, despite the fear of humiliation and being despised by others, in another passage of the [288] same homily.[292] Origen's basic ideas also lead to the same conclusion. For if, on the one hand, even secret sin separates a man interiorly from the Church[293] and if, on the other hand, it is *only* the practical impossibility that hinders the community of the Church from imposing of its own accord, as in the case of *peccata manifesta*, excommunication,[294] then this view presupposes that an interior 'excommunication' which exists in God's eyes *should* be expressed in exclusion from the Church. Whenever a sinner earnestly wishes to expiate his own fault this excommunication which he introduces, himself and which is, in this sense, the *sponataneus interitus carnis*, must be his first step towards penance.

In the case of the *levis culpa*, however, there is no question of an excommunication.[295] And in those cases where it is not a matter of the spontaneous confession of serious guilt but of an intervention on the Church's part against sins, allowance is made for moderation and leniency

[291] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,6 (PG 12) 1386. This interpretation of the passage appears to me to be the only one possible. Cf., on this point, B. Poschmann, p. 449 ff. The question to be decided by the physician of souls is whether the sin *has to* be expiated publicly. This text does not say that the all-important and decisive viewpoint for making this decision is the eventual edification of the community. In fact A. Vanbeck, 'La pénitence dans Origène' in: RHLR, NF 3 (1912), pp. 544-57; 4 (1913), pp. 115-29; ibid., p. 557, would like to derive from this text the idea that only offences causing scandal require a public penance. On this point it must be said, however, that it is here precisely a question of secret offences which, as such, cannot give rise to scandal. Nevertheless, it is perfectly possible that they must be subjected to public penance. Also, it seems to me that nothing more is demanded of public confession than that which is inevitably involved in public penance. Given the small number of sins which were subject to public penance and which was even smaller in practice than in Origen's theory, penance also required a relatively precise public confession, even if an individual confession was not made before all the faithful. Obviously this may have happened sometimes out of penitential fervour. On the other hand, the previous confession before the physician of souls had necessarily to be detailed, because it had to be decided whether there was present an actual mortal sin to be submitted to public penance. Apart from this decision, however, the examination of conscience, which Origen recommends in any case in the same context, requires *a* more precise expression. To conclude to the necessity of a detailed confession of sins before the community either by the sinner himself or by the bishop in the process of correcting the sinner, by reason of the difference between the expressions *languorem exponere* (= before the community) and *causam languoris exponere* (= before the physician of souls) appears to force the words unduly. And would the confession of secret sins be as 'edifying' as it is supposed to be? A detailed *correptio* in the case of a public scandal can have such an effect along with reconciliation. It is very doubtful, however, whether it would have this effect in the case of a painful revelation of secret sins.

[292] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,1 (PG 12) 1380 f. The text makes sense only on the supposition that without such a confession the sin *cannot* be healed. For, if this were not the case, why should the sinner take upon himself the social disgrace, described in such vivid colours, in order to undertake the exhomologesis (the word occurs here twice) for his secret sins (*crimina nullo . . . arguente*)?

[293] Cf. above under n.244.

[294] In Jos.hom. 21,1 (GCS 30) 428,15-429,14. It is always supposed that the Church *must* always be actually free from sinful 'Jebusites' and that everything must be done at least to come near to this state: *eos saltem eiciamus, quos possumus*. Origen could not speak in this way if it were accepted as a matter of principle that secret mortal sins are in no way considered the object of excommunication. The same supposition lies behind In Jer.fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 256,17-29. If it is explained that even the secret sinner is actually separated from the Church, and at the same time it is said that the person cast out of 'Jerusalem' is able to return there only if he does penance outside for *a* considerable period of time, then this obviously applies to secret sins as well.

[295] In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,4 f.

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in the sentence passed. In these cases excommunication should be applied *sparsam*.[296]

B) EXCOMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE

The bishops exercise a kind of supervision over the Christian life of their communities. They are strictly obliged to ensure, without any respect for persons, that the *ecclesiastica disciplina et Evangelii regula* are correctly observed. They are the guardians of the community, who must follow the example of the Lord and, as the 'eye' of Christ's body, are responsible for the whole Church.[297] This supervision enables the bishop to know the religious and the moral life of every Christian in the community, although he is undoubtedly supported in this matter by the other members of the community.[298] They not only have to admonish the sinner privately but they are also obliged to report him to the Church if he is not showing any sign of improvement. For the same reason they ought not to refuse to appear before the bishop as trustworthy witnesses against a person who is accused of a fault.[299] It is obvious that such a supervision of the way of life of every individual Christian was a difficult task for all those concerned: the bishop, the clergy and the faithful. Thus the clergy were not infrequently afraid of being slandered by the accused. This applied even to bishops, few of whom were saints. The temptation was to appear not strict but lenient. Thus there was [289] a continual risk of turning a blind eye even to offences which were clearly subject to excommunication.[300] Indeed, some sins were explicitly declared to be curable without excommunication,[301] if it were anticipated that there would be a violent opposition from those concerned, who were unwilling either to be corrected or to be deprived of their rights as members of the Church. Given the defamatory nature of excommunication, all this is understandable.[302] If, however, a bishop is conscientious he must take the necessary measures, once it becomes known that a member of his community is guilty of a serious fault. He may become aware of this fault by his own observation, by information from a third party[303] or even by the spontaneous confession of the sinner himself.[304] In these circumstances, the following should happen, at least according to Origen's theory: if it is a question of definite and indisputable mortal sins, such as unnatural impurity, adultery and murder, the sentence of excommunication should be declared clearly and decisively.[305] If the

[296] In Matt.tom. XVI 8 (GCS 40) 496,21-9.
[297] In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 332,21-334,20.
[298] In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 333,12 f. The 'morals police' which had to supervise the catechumens (cf. Contra Celsum III 51 [GCS 2] 247, 13 f.) remain effective in some form or other even after the catechumenate (cf. ibid., 247,15-16).
[299] In Lev hom. 3,2 (GCS 29) 302,15-30; In Jos.hom. 21,1 (GCS 30) 429,6-8.
[300] In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 332,22-333,7.
[301] De or. 28,10 (GCS 3) 381,12-18; In Lev.hom. 12,6 (GCS 29) 465,3: *ad gratiam iudicare*.
[302] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1370 f.; In Ezech.hom. 10,1 (GCS 33) 417,13-20; In Jer.hom. 14,1 (GCS 6) 120.
[303] In this case the correctness of this information must be established by a regular procedure. Ad Rom. II 10 (PG 14) 894A.
[304] Cf., on this point, the considerations in n.291.
[305] In Matt.tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 263,4. Given the reserve with which Origen presents this principle in theory, it is questionable whether this always happened in practice, especially in the case of adultery, which the bishop could know about only by the sinner's personal confession. Because it was practically impossible to apply the theory, it became customary in this case *ad gratiam iudicare*. This also provided the justification for that practice which, because it was applied too widely and was perhaps even based on a false premiss, is attacked by Origen in De or. 28. In In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 332,21-334,20 also it seems to *be* supposed that the *fornicans* too (ibid., 333,11) in certain circumstances is excommunicated only if he persists after having been warned and reprimanded (ibid., 333,3-7). It should not be forgotten that to determine precisely what is serious sin both objectively and subjectively was, and is, not an easy business. Given the severity of the penitential procedure at that time, the church authorities were forced unwillingly in practice to impose excommunication only where it was also the thorough conviction of the community which participated in this procedure that it was clearly a

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position is not so clear, as is often the case with a spontaneous confession to a doctor of souls, then the director of conscience has to decide whether a penance of excommunication is required.[306] If the sin was made known to the church authorities in any other way, then the sinner should be corrected by the bishop privately, with the possible cooperation of witnesses, or even publicly before the whole community. This official and possibly even public correction could take place quite independently of an excommunication. In fact it (*correptio*, *confutatio*) occurred more often than excommunication.[307]

If this correction is ineffective and if the sinner perseveres in his fault which is certainly not a *levis culpa*, then he must be excommunicated.[308] Obviously the excommunication was performed before the whole community with a certain official and liturgical solemnity.[309] Thus its defamatory character was obvious.[310] Of its very nature this ceremony would include a repeated *correptio* and if, at this moment, the sinner were repentant he would confess his guilt.[311] At least as far as previously secret sins are concerned, it is very possible that this public confession was not very detailed.[312] The admission that one was guilty of mortal sin was already in itself a *publicare delictum* which was defamatory. Moreover, in fact and in practice there was very little difference between an actual individual [290] public confession of sins and excommunication in the presence[313] of the penitent, who accepted this exclusion from the community. Certainly people were not reflectively aware of this difference, as theoretically important as it may appear to us today. When the guilt was already known publicly before the sinner's confession, the bishop had no need to exercise any reserve in his *correptio*. Origen suggests that such a public confession often found an echo of deep pharisaism in the community of 'good Christians'.[314]

The whole event took place with the active participation of the bishop, who used his

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question of mortal sins. This is possibly what gave rise to the *consuetudo* in this question that, in practice, only those were excommunicated *qui manifesti sunt in magnis delictis* (cf. in Matt.ser. 89 [GCS 38] 204,31), *qui manifeste et evidenter criminosi sunt* (cf. In Jos.hom. 21,1 [GCS 30] 428,21-429,1). In making this assessment of the practice, we should not overlook the fact that there was also at that time the clear theoretical awareness that there could also be secret sins which kill the sinner and render him excommunicated in God's eyes, and that he had to undertake penance of excommunication of his own initiative.

[306] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,6 (PG 12) 1386.

[307] In Matt.tom. XVI 8 (GCS 40) 496,13-17.22 ff.; In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334;3-5; In Lev.hom. 3,2 (GCS 29) 302,18-25; In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371 f. In this passage priests and deacons are explicitly presented along with the bishops as 'those who correct'.

[308] In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,2-7.

[309] Cf. In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,14 f.: *in uno consensu ecclesia universa conspirans*; *interventus et correptio omnium* (In Lev. hom. 8,10 [GCS 29] 408,7) doubtless refers to the same activity, since *interventus et correptio* are thought of as following the public confession of guilt.

[310] In Ezech.hom. 10,1 (GCS 33) 417,13 f.

[311] In Lev.hom. 8,10 (GCS 29) 408,6 f.: 'sins against God' *omnibus publicentur*; In Ps. 37 hom. 2,1 (PG 12) 1381 f.: *procedat in medium et ipse sui accusator existat . . . ego ipse mei accusator efficior . . . ipse me arguo, ipse me confuto* (says *the* sinner); ibid., 2,6 (PG 12) 1386: *languorem in conventu totius ecclesiae exponere*. Cf. also Selecta in Ps. 56,10 (PG 12) 1472; in Jer. hom. 20,8 (GCS 6) 189,19-23. These instructions should be understood as realistically as possible. The confession really takes place before the assembled community: *coram hominibus* and with *the iracundia episcopi arguentis* In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371.

[312] Ad Rom. VI 9 (PG 14) 1090 refers to Daniel's exhomologesis *in ieiuniis et cilicio et cinere* and thus to his general confession of sins (Dan. 9:5 f.). It is explicitly noted, however, that in the Bible no sins are ascribed to Daniel, because he is a saint, differently from the case of David. Origen is able, therefore, to envisage a penitential exhomologesis which does not involve a precise, detailed confession. Besides the exhomologesis before God or men (cf. In Ps. 36 hom. 1,5 [PG 12] l328B; In Ps. 37 hom. 2,1 [PG 12] l38lC) Origen seems to know of a still broader notion of exhomologesis: cf. Selecta in Ps. 135,2 (PG 12) 1653-6.

[313] Unrepentant sinners, who had become known as such through those who supervised the morals of the community, were indeed excommunicated, even though they had totally withdrawn themselves from the public act of excommunication and the life of the Church.

[314] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,1 (PG 12) 1381: *exprobrant . . . confitentem et notant vel irrident*.

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discretion to impose the excommunication whenever it appeared *to him* to be appropriate. From the very nature of the case it is obvious that, at least where it was a question of previously secret sins, this act on the bishop's part had to be preceded by a private avowal and confession by the sinner before the bishop. This provided him with the reason for his decision and its execution. We need not concern ourselves here with the question of whether the doctor of souls who, in the case of secret sins, was to be consulted, had always to be, in Origen's theory, a bishop or a priest. In any case, what is confided to him in private confession has also to be brought before the bishop in the form of a personal avowal, at least in the sense that, where a public penance is necessary, it is essential that confession is also made to the bishop.[315]

There are only a few obscure indications in Origen concerning the excommunicated penitent's external condition. As far as those who are truly repentant are concerned, the exclusion would be lifted after some time and the intervening period represented a kind of second catechumenate.[316] Since it had to be a period of hard personal penance,[317] the connection of the penitent with the bishop during it could not be severed entirely. Obviously the penitents had to provide proof of their conversion.[318] At the same time, it does appear that they were excluded from the liturgy itself and not only from the Eucharist. For expressions such as *exire de coetu et congregatione Ecclesiae*,[319] *a conventu Ecclesiae abscindi*,[320] which make a distinction between the Church itself and the meetings of the Church, should be understood as literally as possible. Thus those who are excommunicated are not only juridically ostracized from the fellowship of the Church and from the Eucharist but they are also forbidden to take part in any way in the liturgy of the community. *Ciciuntur ab oratione communi*.[321] Nothing more is said, however, about how [291] the penitents were supervised or how the exclusion from the liturgy was carried out in practice. Nor is it said that this

[315] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,6 (PG 12) 1386. Similarly In Luc.hom. 17 (GCS 35) 119,1-8. That the physician of souls to be asked first is always the bishop seems to be excluded by the fact that, if this were the case, then the *choice* recommended by Origen would be impossible. If, however, the non-episcopal (priestly or non-priestly) physician of souls were to decide that the penance of excommunication was necessary, then this would have to be made in dependence upon the bishop. This would make a private confession before the bishop inevitable. This is what is meant by the statement: *non erubescit sacerdoti Domini indicare peccatum* (In Lev.hom. 2,4 [GCS 29] 296,20). This is a necessary part of public penance. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that non-priestly, experienced physicians of souls were just as rare in those days as they are nowadays. Thus in the vast majority of cases the confession of sins which Origen recommends to be made before fellow-Christians *qui possunt mederi vulneribus nostris atque peccatis* (In Luc.hom. 17 (GCS) 119,3-5) was made before priests, even though in theory it could be made before others, provided it was not a matter of the immediate undertaking of the penance of excommunication. B. Poschmann, p. 449 n.3, is correct when he sees in the private consultation of the bishop with a view to making this confession a reason why Origen considers this practice to be the fulfilment of Jas. 5:14.

[316] Cf. Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 247,1-248,5.

[317] Cf. the texts referred to above in nn.170-96.

[318] Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 247,1-248,5.

[319] In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,20-2.

[320] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371.

[321] In Matt.ser. 89 (GCS 38) 204,31 f. This happens *propter honorem orationis* (ibid., 205,8 f.). This exclusion obviously does not necessarily mean that penitents should not attend the liturgy at all. Cf. Origen's remark in In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371. It can quite simply mean that the penitents were present in a special place outside the rest of the assembled community. At this time there were already churches built according to such rules; cf. In Jos.hom. 2,1 (GCS 30) 296,20. This custom would, therefore, correspond to the later προ&σκλαυσιφ, as it is discernible, for instance, in Gregory the Wonderworker. In the texts quoted, however, the emphasis could lie simply on *the oratio*, so that all that is being said is that *the* penitent ought to take part in the service of reading and the preaching of God's word but not in the service of prayer. This distinction is found later in the Eastern penitential practice. Origen also certainly is acquainted with this order of the liturgy: cf. Fragm. In 1 Cor. (J. A. Cramer, *Catenae Graecorum Patrum*, V, p. 69).

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exclusion was really complete.[322]

C) THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF EXCOMMUNICATION

According to Origen the separation of a sinner from the Church is not an additional church punishment which the bishop imposes arbitrarily in the case of serious public scandals. Rather, he holds that it flows always and necessarily from the very nature of mortal sin itself. It expresses what mortal sin always brings about and what has already happened in God's eyes: the inner separation from the fellowship of the Church. This means that external participation in the life of the Church has become hypocrisy and must be purified.[323] A Church which did not do this would be corrupt and would itself incur hell together with the sinful and dead member.[324]

We must look more closely, however, at the meaning of this separation from the Church. It is only in this way that we will be able to grasp clearly the salvific meaning of the official lifting of excommunication which we will examine later. Thus the topic which we are now considering has a special importance. By excommunication the sinner is cut off from the *community* of believers,[325] separated from the body of Christ,[326] alienated from his homeland, that is, the Church,[327] and from the people of God,[328] his city which is built of living stones.[329] This separation from church fellowship means, in particular, exclusion from the Eucharist.[330] This gives rise to the situation which we have already described. The sinner finds himself under the dominating power of the devil[331] and is at the same time subject to God's anger[332] which is no longer mediated by created punitive powers, such as the Church, angels or the law. A close examination of this separation which occurs in excommunication shows clearly that the Church is not seen here merely as an external organization but as a fellowship which is necessary for salvation. Obviously excommunication is an external act of the hierarchical Church, having all the evident consequences of exclusion from the liturgy. Nevertheless, the more important effect of this exclusion from the fellowship which is a source of grace is the loss, at least temporary, of salvation. For the separation from the homeland, from the body of Christ, from the heavenly Jerusalem and, quite simply, from the community means being handed over to darkness and the [292] divine anger. 'How can I achieve complete happiness . . . how can I return to the Church?'[333] Both of these questions have the same meaning for the excommunicated penitent. If Origen stresses the necessity of the Church for salvation, and indeed precisely in the context of the exclusion from it of the one who previously

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[322] To have *a* clearer idea of the supervision of the morals of the community, it would be useful to consult the Didascalia Apostolorum – a work which is close both in time and in place of origin to Origen. On its penitential teaching, cf. the essay 'Penitential Teaching and Practice According to the Didascalia Apostolorum' in this volume.
[323] For further details, cf. above n.248.
[324] Cf. In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS) 334,16-18: . . . *quam mecum ire in gehennam*. If exclusion from the Eucharist is considered to be *iuris divini*, then even for today's dogmatic theology every mortal sin still involves an inner separation from the fellowship of the Church's grace, which manifests itself in the sacramental-*visible* dimension (and is, therefore, a kind of *excommunicatio latae sententiae*).
[325] In Lev.hom. 14,2 (GCS 29) 479,20-2.
[326] In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 475,25.
[327] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,6 (PG 12) 1380.
[328] In Ezech.hom. 3,8 (GCS 33) 365,30; ibid., 10,1 (GCS 33) 417,13.
[329] In Jer.fmagm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,8 f.
[330] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,6 (PG 12) l386D-1387; In Joan. XXVIII 4 (GCS 10) 393,25-30.
[331] In Jud.hom. 2,5 (GCS 30) 479,2; In Jer.fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,9-14.
[332] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1372.
[333] In Ps. 36 hom. 4,2 (PG 12) 1353.

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belonged to it,[334] then the Church which he has in mind is the actual Church which, in his view, is always, at one and the same time, an inner fellowship of grace *and* an externally, hierarchically organized Church.[335] The internal detrimental effect which excommunication has on salvation, that is, on the relationship between man and God, is in no way diminished by the fact that Origen ascribes this effect already to mortal sin itself, even when there is no official church excommunication present.[336] *Both* views are correct and the one ought not to be disputed in favour of the other. Origen does not attempt to explain how they are to be reconciled logically. The question is: if a man is already, by reason of his sin, 'outside', that is, outside the inner fellowship of grace, what interior effect in God's eyes can the explicit excommunication still have upon him? But this is to pose, with regard to the particular case of excommunication, the central question of sacramental theology. How can a sacrament have the same effect which is also achieved by the personal act of man himself? In Origen's sacramental theology, and indeed still later in the Church, this question was not experienced as a dilemma[337] which was to be resolved one-sidedly, either in favour of the sacramental sign or in favour of the personal action. However, this does not give us the right simply to evade the question, even with regard to excommunication. Excommunication is 'only' the expression for man's act and, as the τυ/ποφ of this act, it brings about what the sinner has done. He has fallen away officially from God's grace, and this is expressed by excommunication. A closer consideration of Origen's teaching of the Church as the community which opposes sin at all its levels,[338] and of the Eucharist which establishes a living contact with the flesh of the Logos and in which God and man are united,[339] would show even more clearly the significance of excommunication as the separation from this community and from the body of Christ.

The further questions concerning excommunication, such as the lifting of it, its consequences, etc., will be answered in what follows, when we consider the further action of the Church which is aimed at the remission of sin.

[293]

4. Reconciliation by the Whole Church

A) THE DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH COMMUNITY

Scholars are still divided in their interpretation of the texts in Origen's work which are concerned with the question of the positive role of the Church in the remission of mortal sins committed after baptism. At first sight it appears that Origen teaches that the Church has a role in the remission of sins which is the prerogative of the holy bishop in so far as he is spiritual, or even of the lay person, provided that he, too, is spiritual, that is, 'perfect'. It

[334] In Jos. hom. 3,5 (GCS 30) 307,8-10: *nemo ergo sibi persuadeat, nemo semetipsum decipiat*: *extra hanc domum, id est extra ecclesiam nemo salvatur*; *si quis foras exierit, mortis suae ipse fit reus*. Cf. In Jer.hom. 5,16 (GCS 6) 45,30-46,2.

[335] Cf., for example, the ideas mentioned above in nn.l16 and 248.

[336] Cf. above under nn. 248 and 250.

[337] Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, pp. 552 n.l; 49-51; 53-62. The 'exception' which is here made with respect to penance in Origen's general sacramental teaching does not exist in reality. For further details, cf. below.

[338] Cf., for example, In Ezech.hom. 9,1 (GCS 33) 405,13-406,9; In I Reg.hom. 1,4 (GCS 33) 5-7; Frag. 1 Cor. (J. A. Cramer, *Catenae Graecorum Patrum*, V, p.182).

[339] In Lev.hom. 4,8 (GCS 29) 327,3-27; In Joan. VI 33 (GCS 10) 142; on this point, cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, pp. 39 f., 55 f.; Contra Celsum III 28 (GCS 2) 226,6-18. Moreover, on his eucharistic teaching, see C. Bigg, pp. 264-7, E. R. Redepenning, II, p. 438 ff.; G. Bardy in: DTh XI, 2c 1558 ff.; J. F. De Groot, *Conspectus historiae dogmatum* (2 vols., Rome 1931), vol. i, p. 200 ff.; H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, pp. 548-53, 59 ff.

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would seem, therefore, that on this point Origen' s teaching on penance contradicts his overall and basic anti-Donatist position which recognizes an objective validity and efficacy of the hierarchy and of the sacraments. In order to clarify this important question it is not sufficient merely to consider in general Origen' s view of plurality and diversity within the Church. We must also try to see how this aspect of the Church both appears and is effective particularly in the Church's *reconciling* activity. On this point at least Origen himself is clear in principle. Now once this point is established, it becomes methodologically essential, when confronted with the individual statements of Origen on the Church's reconciling activity and their presuppositions, always to ask which level of the Church they refer to. If account is not taken of the precise function within the Church to which these statements refer, then it is hardly possible to avoid serious misunderstandings concerning Origen's teaching on penance. Moreover, at the outset of all our considerations it is vital to observe that Origen does recognize a *sacrament* of penance. This does not mean, however, that this sacrament should be considered in isolation, as it usually is today. To consider it in this way would hardly be helpful. It would in fact be submitting it to the disadvantage of modern sacramental theology which considers the sacraments individually. If it were viewed in this way it would be an event separated from the general life of the Church, which must be a continually reconciling and sanctifying fellowship. It would subsist only by reason of an 'institution' by Jesus Christ and, quite apart from baptism, would be the only expression of the Church's reconciling activity, while in all other cases where sins are forgiven it is man himself who 'alone' brings about the remission of his sins by sorrow and penance. If we today reflect on this commonly accepted understanding of the sacrament of penance, we can see immediately how unsatisfactory it is. The Church [294] offers the sacrifice of the altar for the forgiveness of sins. It prays and does penance. Every conversion of a sinner is in fact supported by the intercession and the expiation of the whole Church, long before the actual 'confession'. The example of the holy members of, this community also has a role to play, as well as the call to penance announced by the preachers of the gospel of justice and grace, which the Holy Spirit is constantly giving as a grace to the Church. Every profound *metanoia* of an individual is part of the living experience of the Church. It originates in the Church and, in its turn, affects the Church. For this Church throughout its history is on a continual journey from Adam to Christ. Thus the experience of sin, consisting in its awful sense of loss and separation from God, is a grace for the Church, although this is possible only in Christ, himself deserted by God on the cross, who in this sense too is head of his Church. The remission of sin is complete only when the 'punishments of sin' have been fully changed and destroyed in us.[340] All this is soon clear upon reflection. And yet none of it is found in previous treatises on penance, although that is where it all ought to be. In general the work of Origen, or of a Church Father, is approached with only those questions about the sacrament of penance which relate to penance as it is currently known to us. It is hardly surprising, therefore, if

[340] The Church's reconciling activity, which we are discussing in this section, need not necessarily always take place temporally between the excommunication and its lifting. This obviously cannot be the case, since this activity is certainly effective even where there is no question of penance of excommunication. We will return to the question of the relationship between this activity of the Church and the lifting of excommunication when we come to the detailed discussion of the latter. It is far too peremptory to consider those 'punishments' which remain after the remission of 'guilt' simply as a 'sentence of punishment' consisting only in God's 'decree'. The picture changes, however, once we ask what it is in objective, existential reality on *our* part that corresponds to this decree of God: guilt and punishment move closer together. Our 'fleshly condition', the Godless aspect of our un-enlightened being, with all its consequences, is the remaining expression of our guilt and its punishment, even after forgiveness. In the final analysis, therefore, punishment is really reducible to guilt and is its expression. As such, it is something which ought not to be. The remission of the punishments due to sin, therefore, is a theme not only of the teaching on indulgences but must be included in the considerations on penance as a genuine part of the teaching on the *forgiveness of sins*.

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these works are found to contain a detailed treatment of those points which, while being acknowledged as 'also' important, do not come within the ambit of our rather arbitrarily defined dogmatic treatises. Similarly, points which we would consider important are often treated only peripherally and indistinctly by the Church Fathers, while the main point of their discussion is often found elsewhere than where we would expect it to be. If, therefore, any effort is made to integrate the insights of the witnesses of the early Church into the artificial setting of the contents of modern treatises of penance, it is difficult to avoid misunderstandings. Moreover, if these insights are not viewed in a wider context, then the picture of, say, Origen's teaching on penance does not only become incomplete and distorted but it also loses those characteristics which could be so important for developing the teaching on the sacrament of penance today.

At least in his teaching on penance Origen was very much aware of both the Church's manifold nature and its activity in the remission of sins. Something has already been said on this topic.[341] If Christ is both priest and sacrifice in the forgiveness of sins, then for Origen it [295] follows necessarily that the *ministri et sacerdotes ecclesiae secundum imaginem eius, qui sacerdotium ecclesiae dedit* participate in the remission of sins.[342] For the present we need not consider precisely *how* this co-operation takes place or which of its aspects is emphasized in this passage. What is more important is the fact that Origen appears to take it as self-evident that there is a correspondence between the head of the Church and its members in the remission of sins. Thus it is that bishops correspond to angels, because the one Church has two levels – *duplex ecclesia una hominum, altera angelorum*. The correspondence also applies obviously to the various duties.[343] Origen also takes this correspondence for granted in his notion of penance in which both angels and bishops have their part to play.[344] There is not only a correspondence between the exterior and interior hierarchy, in such a sense that the external function does not eliminate or supply for the interior function, or in any way coincide with it. But even *within* the level of the external hierarchy the lower members are dependent on the higher in the remission of sin. Even in the dimension of this visible unity the lower member needs the co-operation of the higher in the forgiveness of every sin.[345]

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[341] Cf. above the texts and details in connection with nn. 270-4.

[342] In Lev.hom. 5,3 (GCS 29) 338,10-13; 339,11-14.

[343] Cf., for example, In Luc.hom. 12 (GCS 35) 84-7; ibid., 13 (GCS 35) 91,20-5; ibid., 23 (GCS 35) 156,25 f.; ibid., 35 (GCS 35) 208,19-22. It is immaterial whether all the speculations on angels are correct (an individual guardian angel for each community; angels which do not exercise their 'episcopal office' properly, etc.). All that matters is that, according to Origen, in the one Church angel and bishop are 'bishop' in their own way. They do not compete with one another.

[344] Cf. In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371 f. All that we need to observe here is the natural way in which Origen transfers the idea of the *correptio* by bishops (priests and deacons) to a corresponding *correptio* by angels. In view of his general notion that there is only a relative difference between angels and spiritual persons, the angels, in the exercise of their role, have essentially the same status in the Church as perfect spiritual persons. This implies that the respective moles of the bishop and the spiritual person are no more mutually exclusive than those of the 'visible bishop' and the invisible angel-bishop. Indeed Origen's system as a whole would suggest that the contrary is the case.

[345] In Num.hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 68,4-12:

> *qui meliores sunt, inferiorum semper culpas et peccata suscipiunt . . . Israelita si peccet, id est laicus, ipse suum non potest auferre peccatum, sed requirit levitam, indiget sacerdote, immo . . . pontifice opus est, ut peccatorum remissionem possit accipere. Sacerdos autem, si delinquat aut pontifex, ipse suum potest purgare peccatum, si tamen non peccet in Deum; de huiusmodi enim peccatis non facile remissionem aliquam videmus in legis litteris designari.*

Despite the Old Testament terminology, all this refers to the men and the hierarchy of the New Covenant(cf. In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 [PG 12] 1372). Since there is also a mention of the sins of bishops and priests, it must be *a* question of offences committed after baptism, although not only of mortal sins. The special difficulty which the

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These examples illustrate Origen's basic conviction that the various aspects of the Church which are neither reducible to each other nor mutually exclusive are at work in its activity of reconciliation. But this obviously does not mean that the distinction and demarcation of all the functions of the individual 'levels' of the Church are always clearly made. Rather it is a question of the same activity ascribed both to the external official and to the interior 'perfect'. Thus there is no explicit and clear emphasis on the idea that the official hierarchy possesses a special duty, that is, of officially lifting official excommunication, besides that which it has in common with the 'perfect'. The fact that in this case it would appear that, contrary to the general principle, the duties of the individual groups do not only correspond to each other without competing with each other but even partially overlap and replace each other is due, in the first place, to the very nature of the general principle and, in the second place, to the nature of the sin which has to be remitted. From the point of view of our method, this observation provides an indication of the perspective in which we should treat Origen's teaching in what follows. In other words, should we consider the power of spiritual lay people to lift official excommunication apart [296] from official reconciliation as an exception or even as a usurpation of' the prerogative of the official hierarchy, or indeed *vice versa*. It is, therefore, necessary to examine a little more closely this apparent exception to Origen's general basic ecclesiological thought.

In the first place, the overlapping mentioned above is a corollary of the very basic principle which we have explained. In fact, according to Origen the interior and the exterior hierarchy are not to be distinguished in such a way that they simply lie side by side or the one beneath the other without being related. Despite the fact that its own specific acts are fundamentally valid, the exterior hierarchy must be the expression and manifestation of the Church's interior hierarchy. Thus it ought to correspond to the latter in *such a way* that the leaders of the one hierarchy are in fact always the leaders of the other. Ideally, therefore, the one responsible for the duties and functions in the interior hierarchy, that is, the spiritual person, is the depositary of the powers of the exterior hierarchy, and *vice versa*. This ideal agreement, however, is not always realized. Nevertheless, its absence does not deprive the exterior hierarchy as such of its proper character. It is an ideal which should be the object of continual striving.[346] In this regard, it is worth recalling what has been said earlier about the perspective in which Origen regarded the nature of sin. If, in his view, there is not and in fact cannot be a clear distinction

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remission of the mortal sins of bishops presents to Origen resides in the fact that, in their case, the penance of excommunication meant *the* permanent exclusion from office (Contra Celsurn III 51 [GCS 2] 247,1-248,5) or that, at that time, a cleric was simply not allowed access to public penance. From the context and considering In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1372, where the three groups of the hierarchy (deacons, priests, bishops) co-operate in the reconciliation of men, we can see that, in this passage too, it is these three groups of officials, and not three grades of holiness, that are meant. Consequently here (at least principally) *meliores* is not to be understood as the counterpart of *inferiores* in the sense of moral qualities or spiritual prerogatives. It is a question of grades of offices, from the laity to the bishop. Their reconciling activity must be sought, therefore, on this level of hierarchically ordered and visible sacramentality. In practice, this may be defined as supervision and official reprimand, including the penance of excommunication (In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1, etc.), the offering of sacrifice and the administration of the Eucharist (Contra Celsum VIII 33 [GCS 3] 249,5: the Eucharist as 'healing'; in Num.hom. 16,9 [GCS 30] 152,4-5: we drink *sacramentorum rita* the blood of him who was wounded for our sins; In Ex.hom. 4,8 [GCS 29] 182,1; De or. 28,9 [GCS 3] 381,4-6). For further details, cf. H. U. von Balthasar, Le *Mystérion*: the Eucharist as the manifestation of Christ's eternal reconciling sacrifice. In every case, therefore, the right of the different officials in the Church is recognized. The lay person, regardless of whether he is spiritual (or whether other lay persons supporting him arc also such) cannot dispense with the higher grades of the hierarchy, while these, on their respective levels, have no need of those who are under them, since they, for instance, offer sacrifice. For further examples, cf. below: the martyrs and their death, *the* saints in this world, etc.

[346] Cf., on this point, H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 49 f.

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between guilt itself and the punishment due to sin,[347] then it follows that, according to him, the remission of sin must necessarily include the overcoming of the whole of man's carnal character. But this does not come about merely through the sacrament of penance as such. Not only could Origen assume this as part of tradition and teach it himself,[348] but it is also evidenced by man's immediate, experience of his moral life. Given this concept of sin, it follows that any inquiry about an *ecclesial* means of reconciliation must be directed towards that activity of the Church by which the carnal side of a humanity bound together within the Church is purified and transformed. This activity is nothing other than the redemptive penance undertaken by the saints with and under the direction of Christ their head. This entails, however, that the Church as a whole and in all its dimensions must be opposed to sin as the indispensable instrument of salvation. Thus its interior hierarchy, that is, the ever increasing holiness of its spiritual members, must exercise a reconciling function Moreover in the ideal situation – which really ought [297] to be the 'normal' one – the officials of the exterior hierarchy should play a part in this activity of the interior hierarchy. In other words, they exercise their office properly only when they also reconcile *as spiritual persons*. In any event, the bishop, the priest and the deacon are συ/μβολον α)ληθινω~ν κατα_ ο)νο&ματα ταυ=τα πραγμα&των in the full sense only in so far as they realize in 'truth' what they represent symbolically in the sacramental sign. This ideal performance of the duty of the interior hierarchy on the part of the bearers of official hierarchical power is a participation in the function which is originally the prerogative of the interior hierarchy. It is only good method, therefore, to take the latter as the starting-point. Thus Origen's recognition of a reconciling function exercised by spiritual persons is not to be considered as an unjustified extension of the episcopal official power to the laity. Quite the contrary. The bishop, in so far as he is himself a spiritual person – which is what he ought to be – participates in a function which belongs originally and inalienably to the saints, each according to his place, within the body of Christ. Nevertheless, in so far as he exercises a specific visible function, the bishop has to have a role in the whole process of reconciliation which is reserved to him and which he does not share with the spiritual person. These requirements are implicit in Origen's notion of the fundamental relationship between 'groups' within the Church. But they must be confirmed by reference to the texts themselves. This applies particularly to the idea that a specifically reconciling function within the Church has its starting-point with the spiritual persons and then becomes the right of the bishops, even if this method does not account for the full episcopal power in the forgiveness of sins. In other words, our methodological principle is to be pursued without prejudice to the specific power which is reserved exclusively to the official church.[349]

B) RECONCILIATION ACHIEVED BY THE CHURCH OF THE SAINTS

The previous considerations have led to the expectation that Origen recognizes a sin-remitting activity on the part of the 'interior' hierarchy, that is, of the Church of the saints. Such an activity, therefore, is exercised not only by the exterior officials of the Church, even though these latter may have a part to play in it. The question which now remains to be asked is *whether* in Origen's view the 'saints' in fact contribute to the remission of sins and whether the *bishops* also [298] do this as 'saints'. Thus we must try to see the precise nature of this activity and what it presupposes in those who exercise it.

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[347] Cf. above under n.340.

[348] Both aspects are in fact implicit in his teaching on the difference between the baptismal α!φεσιφ and the *poenitentia dura et laboriosa*.

[349] Cf., on this point, H. von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen l963), pp. 262-91; also G. Teichtweier, pp. 339-40; J. Grotz, pp. 206-229.

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It is not only Peter and the other apostles who are the rock on which Christ has built his Church, but πα~φ ο(ξριστου= μιμητη/φ, all 'perfect believers' (τε/λειοι) have the keys of heaven, that is, the power to bind and to loose. Everyone who has the ε1ργον of Peter, that is, not only the traditional faith in Christ but also that which is inspired from above, together with freedom from sin through the virtues which open the individual heavens, is able to loose and forgive in such a way that his activity takes effect also in heaven.[350] The holier a person is, therefore, the greater is his power of loosing.[351] As is obvious from the text taken as a whole – the 'saints' observe the command of fraternal correction laid down in Matthew 18 – it is a question of the 'saints' here on earth and of their activity. Certainly it would be a misunderstanding of Origen to see in these 'saints' a narrow and sharply defined caste which is clearly distinguishable from 'ordinary' Christians. *Every* Christian, to the extent of his inspired faith and his particular freedom from sin, must belong to them.[352] The only ones who are excluded are those who are bound by their own sins.[353] In the final analysis, *all* Christians must convert their brothers and heal their sins.[354] In other words, sins have to be remitted *interventu et correptione omnium*.[355] In fact the circle of the Church's reconciling α#γιοι must be drawn even wider, since both martyrs and angels also belong to the circle of powers which, as the 'interior Church', contribute to the remission of sins.[356] Indeed, although their activity in this regard is naturally, at least partially, different from that of the other saints,[357] they can nevertheless be included with the saints because their activity has its basis in their personal activity and holiness; they are also members of the Church of the saints.

Now this power of the 'saints' includes a whole lot of activities which the 'saints' are able to do. Thus the spiritual person is simply appointed by God himself, as was Jesus the friend

[350] Cf. In Matt. tom. XII 10-14 (GCS 84-100; esp. Ibid., 84,24-86,5; 88,6-13; 96,6-15; 98,6-28). The question of the power of binding, which is here being considered somewhat vaguely together with the question of the power of loosing, has already been discussed in some detail above. In the present passage the power of loosing is described as ε0χουσι/α (ibid., 98,6). The Christians who possess it are called, in addition to *Petrus*, τε/λειοι (ibid., 86,7 f.24), α#γιοι (ibid., 88,31), *homines spirituales* (ibid., 88,20), *fideles* (ibid., 96,7), imitators of Christ (ibid., 86,1 f.; 88,16) and *stabiles in fide* (ibid., 85,20). The content of their power is described only very vaguely: binding and loosing (*passim*), to open heaven in such a way that the one loosed is free (ibid., 98,22-4), to obtain α!φεσιφ in heaven (ibid., 87,16-22; 99,5). In fact all that is said is that the saints have the effective power of reconciliation. How and by what means this power is exercised is not specified. It would be methodologically false to press the images (that of judging, etc.) which are contained in the text which is itself to be interpreted. We must look for an answer to this question elsewhere in Origen. It would be purely arbitrary to attempt to explain this power of reconciliation simply by the notion which we today recognize as the official priestly power of the sacrament of penance for the forgiveness of sins. The same ε0χουσι/α as in Matt. tom. XII is also ascribed to the α#γιοι in De or. 14,6 (GCS 3) 333,12. 14-16.

[351] In addition to the text already cited (esp. ibid., 96,15-97,27: every individual virtue is its own door to heaven and its own heaven; all together constitute the whole kingdom of heaven), cf. In Matt. tom. XIII 31 (GCS 40) 269,28-271,9.

[352] This follows from the principle already mentioned concerning a power of reconciliation *increasing* with the degree of virtues.

[353] In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 99,12-22 (Latin text).

[354] In Luc.hom. 34 (GCS 35) 205,7- 14.

[355] In Lev. hom. 8,10 (GCS 29) 408,7. Although this refers specifically only to sins subject to public penance, it still applies analogously to all sins.

[356] We have already mentioned several times angels and their activity in the forgiveness of sins. Cf. under n.344. In fact after his own resurrection the person guilty of mortal sin is delivered by God and Christ to the angels of his respective Church (In Luc.hom. 34 [GCS 35] 204,24). They then have to 'loosen' the remaining fetters of his sins (In Joan. XX VIII 8 399,21-4). For the case of martyrs, cf. Exhort. ad mart. 30 (GCS 2) 26,28-27,5; In Num.hom. 10,2 (GCS 30) 71,18-72,27.

[357] As will be shown below, the reconciling activity of the saints occurs on two levels: first, through their interior proximity to God by prayer, sorrow, suffering, struggling with the demons, etc., second – although still by reason of their personal holiness and precisely not strictly as officials – in the visible Church through exhortation, teaching, etc., including the visible sacrifice of the altar, in the case of priests.

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of sinners, to live among sinners in order to work for their conversion.[358] Just as Jesus himself, despite his α)πα&θεια, suffered the condition of the poor and the sick,[359] so also the perfect persons weep with those who weep and especially grieve over those who do not wish to do any penance.[360] As compassionate doctors of souls they have the gift of mourning and suffering with sinners, the *disciplina condolendi et compatiendi*.[361] By prayer, fasting and the exercise of virtues they [299] also fight for the rest of the people and for those who are weaker than themselves.[362] They strive for the weak and for sinners against the demonic powers.[363] Their most sublime deed with regard to the reconciliation of their brothers in the Church is the shedding of their blood in martyrdom, in imitation of Christ's sacrificial death: in this way they effectively destroy the power of the demons, they drive away sins and thus redeem at least some.[364] Through their intercessions the spiritual persons intervene for sinners so that they may obtain forgiveness. They may even be asked spontaneously for this intercession.[365] Obviously they will observe above all the gospel precept concerning fraternal correction which is incumbent on all Christians.[366] Since, however, the 'saints' are like Peter and Paul,[367] there applies to them that which is said of Paul, namely, that they, inseparable from the love of Jesus, 'by sacrificing, not by transgressing', wish themselves to be anathema in the place of others in order to gain salvation for their brothers.[368] This *assumere peccatorem et monendo, hortando, docendo, instruendo adducere eum ad poenitentiam, ab errore corrigere, a vitiis emendare et efficere talem, ut ei converso propitius fiat Deus* is explicitly described as a *delicta repropitiare*.[369] The *hostiam iugulare verbo Dei et doctrinae sanae victimas offerre* is called *purgare a peccatis conscientias auditorum*, indeed even *remissionem peccatorum tribuere*.[370] Thus it must be that these means for the forgiveness of sins are in fact tantamount to the power of 'loosing' which in Origen's view is the prerogative of the τε/λειοι. There is nothing in Origen's work which warrants another explanation. In other words, he holds that the 'loosing' of sins is an essentially wider and more comprehensive notion than the official lifting of an excommunication imposed by the

[358] Selecta in Ps. 27,3 (PG 12) 1285-8.
[359] In Matt.tom. X 23 (GCS 40) 33,3 f. Cf. W. Völker, p. 171.
[360] Selecta in Ps. 60,3 (PG 12) 1480 f.; Selecta in Threnos I (PG 13) 608C; 629C.
[361] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,6 (PG 12) 1386; Ad Rom. IX 15 (PG 14) 1221 f.
[362] In Num.hom. 25,4 (GCS 30) 238,4-14.
[363] Cf. the texts in W. Völker, p. 175 f.
[364] Cf. the references in W.Völker, p. 176 f. According to Origen there is also a martyrdom of every day: In Ps. 118,157; cf. in J. B. Pitra, *Analecta sacra Spicilegio Solesmensi parata*, 8 vols. (Paris 1876-83), vol. iii, p. 307 f.
[365] De or. 14,6 (GCS 3)333,11-16. After all that has been said previously on the subject of the 'saints', there should be no doubt that here they do not only forgive any guilt incurred against themselves, but 'make us worthy (passively) to participate in the power which has been given to them to forgive guilt (in *God's* eyes)'. This applies despite De or. 28,8 (GCS 3) 380,5, where there is mention of an ε0χουσι/α to forgive precisely guilt incurred against the person who is forgiving.
[366] Cf. above under n.299.
[367] De or. 14,6 (GCS 3) 333,14 f. See further texts placing them in parallel with the apostles in W. Völker, p. 186.
[368] Ad Rom. VII (PG 14) 1139 A/B.
[369] In Lev.hom. 5,4 (GCS 29) 342,11-15.
[370] In Lev.hom. 5,3 (GCS 29) 339,11-14; 340.1 f. Both of these passages in fact refer to the bishop. The fact, however, that the *tribuere remissionem peccatorum* and the *purgane conscientias* are explained in such a way that they can refer also to spiritual persons and only express what Origen certainly ascribes also to spiritual persons shows, on the other hand, that it is precisely this influence, by means of exhortation, pleading, prayer, etc. that *we* must bear in mind when we consider the power to forgive sins which is ascribed to them. Whether *the* bishops' power to forgive sins is totally *identified* with this spiritual activity of the saints (which Origen obviously asks also of bishops), or whether they *have* a still wider function to play *in* this question, which is their sole prerogative, is a point which remains to be considered.

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Church.[371] Thus he does not ascribe to the saints any more than that which is recognized even by contemporary church teaching. What this binding power *necessarily* presupposes, then as today, is holiness and the living, grace-giving union with the holy Church, the body of Christ.[372] Even today any well-balanced teaching on the Church's activity in the remission of sins must take account of this role played by the 'saints' and not concentrate solely on the sacramental powers exercised in the two sacraments which remit sins in the strictest sense. It is obvious that throughout all this consideration of the act of reconciliation Origen has in mind not only mortal sins, at least not primarily, but all sins in general.

Now, since according to this way of thinking even the members of [300] the official hierarchy must be spiritual people, it follows that they possess this power only if and in so far as they are spiritual. Although it is undeniable that Origen recognizes a binding and loosing which is reserved exclusively to the bishop, he still holds that he has a power to remit sins which is his *in so far* as he is a spiritual person and not because he is a bishop.[373] This is because the bishop, as such, *must* also be 'holy'. We have already considered the nature of the bishop's activity in this regard.[374] Now if, on the one hand, the 'saints' effect the forgiveness of sins by their intercession and, on the other hand, the forgiveness of sins is attributable to the bishops who also exercise this role through their 'prayer',[375] then there is surely no reason for the assumption that the episcopal 'prayer' for the remission of sins must be of a radically different kind from that of the other saints. Nevertheless, even prescinding from the fact that the bishops enjoy the power to impose and lift excommunication and thus of binding and loosing, this does not mean that the bishops' power to remit sins has to be identical in all respects with that of the other spiritual people. Already in the case of the *correptio* it is necessary to distinguish between one which is private and one which is official.

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[371] It could still be said, however, that if the 'binding' does indeed *include* the lifting of excommunication (and, in view of In Matt.tom. XII 10-14 and tom. XIII 30, there can be no doubt that it does), then spiritual persons must *also* possess even this power to reincorporate penitents into the Church through the loosing of excommunication, since they can certainly 'loose'. Nevertheless, this would be a form of argumentation which rests upon Origen's obscure terminology and certainly is not in line with his true thinking. We have already shown that it cannot be seriously doubted that, in Origen's view, real excommunication is the prerogative of the bishops. If this is the case, then it follows that only they can *really* loose it.

[372] Cf. In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 98,28-99,22 etc.

[373] In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 99,11-22. According to the whole section, this precise power of loosing belongs also to the spiritual person who is not a member of the official hierarchy. The bishop's holiness, therefore, is presented not only as, the mere condition of the effectiveness of his official power but as itself the real cause of and reason for the effectiveness of this loosing.

[374] *Cf.* in Lev.hom. 5,3-4, loc. cit.

[375] Cf. in Ex.hom. 4,8 (GCS 29) 182,1 f.: we are purified from sins (other than mortal sins) *per obsecrationes pontificum*. This purification is placed on the same level as the purification *per scientiam divinae legis* and is distinguished from the liberation from mortal sins which requires the immediate intervention of God. It from this that the purifying prayer of priests is not to be thought of as sacramental in the strict sense, since Origen holds that the *scientia legis* is certainly an apanage of spiritual persons who do not hold an office (cf. W. Völker, p. 169 ff.). He does, however, recognize in principle a prayer which remits sins. Accordingly, the remission of sins by the bishops through mere 'prayer' is to be understood as that which Origen admits in De or. 28,10 for sins, with the exception of mortal sins. Certainly the bishops lay claim to this prayer clearly in virtue of their ι9ερατικη∴ α)χι/α (cf. [GCS 3] 382,12f.). They attribute to their 'prayer' for sins a special efficacy deriving from their episcopal status and which is not given to others. This may refer especially to liturgical prayer. Nevertheless, this is still no argument in favour of a meal, essential difference (both objectively and according to Origen's view). Objectively this 'priestly' prayer could still be understood as 'sacramental' in the modern sense. It need not be taken as the formula of an actual sacrament. As far as Origen himself is concerned, he does not look for the explanation of the effectiveness of this prayer in the priestly status. All that he is concerned to do is to dispute the effectiveness of prayer alone for mortal sins in particular. Since he seems in this passage to concede such a power of prayer for the forgiveness of sins only to *spiritual* bishops (cf. ibid., 380,8-15; 381,4), it would seem all the more appropriate to understand this power in such a way that, along the lines of In Matt.tom. XII 14, it belongs to the bishop *because* he is spiritual.

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The latter is without any doubt the prerogative of the clergy.[376]

Origen also recognizes sacrifice as a means of reconciling the sinner. Certainly by 'sacrifice' for sin he often means the interior sacrifice of the contrite heart and the corrective and converting word of God pronounced by the priest.[377] Nevertheless, since he also talks about the *sacrificia sacerdotum*, as distinct from the *obsecrationes* and the *scientia divinae legis*, and since he explicitly ascribes to these a sin-remitting efficacy,[378] there can be no doubt that for Origen the actual liturgical sacrifice of the Eucharist belongs to the spiritual bishops' reconciling activity.[379] Thus there are two points at which the bishop's spiritual power to remit sins is expressed in an exterior official act of the Church. In other passages it is not at all clear what Origen has in mind when he ascribes a reconciling activity to bishops and priests.[380] It could refer to a wide variety of activities: the simple charismatic role, in the strictest sense, played by a spiritual person, the official *correptio* just mentioned, the offering of sacrifice and, finally, that act which we will later have to describe as specifically sacramental, that is, the authoritative loosing from the actual excommunication from the Church imposed by the bishop.

[301] If we wish to describe the whole of the reconciling activity of the Church of the saints theologically we could say: the Church of the saints, being affected by the sin of one of its members, guards its solidarity with this sinful member. It is, therefore, obliged to do what the sinner himself has to do for the remission of his sins. Only he, however, has to actually α)πολαμβα&νειν τα_φ α(μαρτι/αφ. He has to face up to the reality of his sinful condition, which is itself the most severe guilt and punishment. At the same time, he must renounce all his apathy with regard to his own condition and allow the immanent fire of judgement to destroy his sin completely in both his interior and his exterior being. But likewise the Church 'takes' this guilt 'on itself'.[381] Having itself become sinful by the sin of its member, it expiates the sin together with the sinner.[382] Everything that the Church does in its saints is only this process of taking sin upon itself in all the various forms which correspond to its manifold nature.

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[376] In Matt.tom. XIII 30 (GCS 40) 262,16-26; 264,9-12; In Lev.hom. 3,2 (GCS 29) 302; In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 333,3-7. In the last passage it is also clear that the bishops themselves could, in the first instance, undertake a quite private *correptio* of the sinner (obviously in the appropriate cases), before they proceed to an official *correptio*. In the first instance they behave precisely as any spiritual person and every good Christian who likewise has a responsibility *secrete convenire* (ibid., 333,4) as a physician.

[377] In Lev.hom. 5,3 f. (GCS 29) 337,28: *contribulati spiritus hostia*; ibid., 340,1: *hostia verbi Dei et doctrinae sanae victima*; ibid., 342,22 f.: *offerre pro peccatis, id est a via peccati convertere peccatores*.

[378] In Ex.hom. 4,8 (GCS 29) 182,1. Here, likewise, it is not a question of *sacrificia sacerdotum* for mortal sins.

[379] Theme is no reason why the sacrifices offered for specific groups of sins in De or. 28,9 (GCS 3) 381,4-6 cannot refer to the actual liturgical sacrifice, with the same proviso as was made with regard to the text mentioned in the previous note. We might even, with A. von Harnack (TU 42,3) 79, read In Lev.hom. 3,6 (GCS 29) 310,19-21.26-30 as showing that at that time already the question had arisen of how a poor person without money could come to such a sacrifice.

[380] Thus, for example, In Num. hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 71,7-9: *qui sancti sunt, pro peccatis poenitudinem gerunt, vulnera sua sentiunt, intelligunt lapsus, requirunt sacerdotem, sanitatem deposcunt, purificationem per pontificem quaerunt*. Or In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1369: *omnes, qui post Apostolos in Ecclesia positit sunt, quibusque curandorum vulnerum disciplina commissa est, quos voluit Deus in Ecclesia sua esse medicos animarum*. Such formulations are obviously very general and comprehensive and it would be unjustifiable to think that they refer only to the bishop's strict sacramental activity.

[381] In Lev.hom. 5,3 (GCS 29) 339,12 f. The *peccata occipere* in imitation of Jesus is said here of the *sacerdotes Ecclesiae*. In Num.hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 68,4: *meliores . . . inferiorum semper culpas et peccata suscipiunt*.

[382] Cf. also Selecta in Ps. 29,3 (PG 12) 1292D. 1293A; the Church, which feels itself in solidarity with sinners; In Num.hom. 10,2 (GCS 30) 71,15: Christ with the apostles and martyrs *sumit peccata sanctorum*; In Lev.hom. 7,1 f. (GCS 29) 373-80: the solidarity of the whole Church with Christ in heaven and on earth in the reconciliation of all men.

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5. *The Official Power of the Church*

A) THE LIFTING OF EXCOMMUNICATION: THE FACT AND THE TERMINOLOGY

According to Origen mortal sins are subject radically and necessarily to church excommunication which is imposed by the bishop. By this excommunication a sinner is handed over to Satan in order to have his sin remitted. Excommunication is essentially able to be lifted and, after suitable penance, it can be reversed in such a way that the sinner is once more reconciled with the Church as a real member. We need not consider for the moment whether such a reconciliation is feasible in all concrete cases. What is certain is the fact: there is a reconciliation in the sense just described. Even after an official *proici* there is for the *egrediens de populo Dei a rursum per poenitentiaam reverti*,[383] a προι/εσθαι of those who have been excluded to the κοινο&ν of the Church,[384] an *ad Ecclesiam redire*.[385] Granted that there has been sufficient penance outside the Church, there is a ε0πανιε/ναι and κοινωνει=ν τη=| ε0κκλνησι/α|,[386] a *revocare* and *Ecclesiae membris associare*,[387] as happened in the case of the incestuous person in Corinth, a *reconiungere eiectum Ecclesiae*.[388] Now although the lifting of excommunication and the reincorporation of the excommunicated within the visible community of the Church is of a different nature than the reconciling activity of the Church by the saints as [302] described above, and although with the term 'loosing' often, if not mostly, he means precisely this latter activity, he still appears also to designate the lifting of excommunication as *solvere*. Certainly 'binding' means first and foremost excommunication. It would be astounding, therefore, if 'loosing' did not *also* mean the exact opposite. Thus if, in one and the same context, Origen speaks of the bishops' *potestas solvendi et ligandi* and if he understands by *potestas ligandi* the power of excluding people from the Church,[389] then one ought to interpret the *potestas solvendi* as the power of reconciling the penitent with the Church. After all we have seen, there is no need to prove that it is the bishop who performs the reconciliation. Nevertheless, this point is not stressed as explicitly as might be expected. But he is certainly the one who imposes the excommunication. Origen maintains that the bishops base their claim to the power of binding and *loosing* on Scripture. Moreover, the bishop has a very prominent role to play elsewhere, for instance, in supervising morals, in hearing the confession, in administering the *correptio*, and he appears – at least in practice – as the most important person in all the other reconciling activity of the Church. Thus there can be no doubt that he is the one who executes the reconciliation of the penitent with the Church. Given the strictly monarchical-episcopal structure of the individual Churches at that time, as is evident also in Origen, and the fact that

[383] In Ezech.hom. 3,8 (GCS 33) 357,30-358,1.
[384] Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 248,3.
[385] In Ps. 36 hom. 4,2 (PG 12) 1353. Origen's stress on both the possibility and the effectiveness of penance in this passage shows that the question raised by the doubting sinner: *Quomodo ad Ecclesiam redire* must be answered basically in the affirmative.
[386] In Jer.frag. 48 (GCS 6) 222,16,21.
[387] Ad Rom.praef. (PG 14) 834.
[388] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1371. This is also said of the incestuous person in Corinth, the type of a repentant sinner.
[389] In Jud.hom, 2,5 (GCS 30) 478,23-479,1. It would, however, be false to understand the 'loosing' in such cases exclusively of the lifting of excommunication. According to Origen, 'loosing' in the case of bishops who are really what they ought to be is a wider notion. In In Matt.tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) also this notion retains its indeterminate character, which obviously does not exclude the lifting of excommunication but also includes much more than the bishop has as a spiritual person. In Matt.hom. XIII 31 (GCS 40) 269,11-18, for example, shows that, in Origen's view, there is a 'loosing' by means of a simple once-and-for-all νουθεσι/α, therefore without excommunication.

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only the bishop is able to impose an actual excommunication and that on this point there is not the slightest trace in Origen of 'competition' on the part of, say, the confessors or any others, it is obvious that for him it was only the bishop who, both in practice and in theory, has the right to perform such an official reconciliation.

There is one allusion to a *rite* of reconciliation, if we accept that Origen sees in public penance the fulfilment of the instruction laid down in the letter of James 5:14 f.[390] Since in this text there is a mention of an imposition of hands accompanied by prayer, and since both in the West in Cyprian and in the East[391] this is also attested at this time, there can be little doubt that Origen also at least thought of it. For him, therefore, reconciliation takes place by imposition of hands accompanied by prayer. The whole community would be present and praying, thus providing a suitable parallel to the act of excommunication. The fact that the Didascalia Apostolorum attests such a co-operation on the part of the whole community at the reconciliation [303] of penitents[392] would confirm this reconstruction. It remains to be asked, therefore, whether, according to James 5:14 f., Origen and his contemporaries envisaged an anointing which accompanied the imposition of hands. Later in the East it is clear that in some places reconciliation includes an anointing. Leaving aside Origen himself, the first traces of this practice are discernible in Syria about A.D. 300.[393] Thus it is highly likely that Origen also knew of this practice and considered it the 'carrying out' of the passage in James with regard to the reconciliation of penance.[394] The conclusive text from In Lev. hom. 2,4, according to which the reconciling imposition of hands was already in Origen's view accompanied by an anointing, receives a further confirmation from In Lev. hom. 8,11.[395] There is here mention of a *olei imago* in the sense that the penitent, having been purified of his sins, again receives a share in the graces given by the Holy Spirit. Since the reference here is not to the newly baptized but to the man who is to be justified again, because he has fallen into sin after his baptism,[396] the real anointing in question must be the reconciliation of

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[390] In Lev.hom. 2,4 (GCS 29) 296,17-297,3. Both *in quo et impletur illud, quod Jacobus Apostolus dicit* (ibid., 296, 22 f.) and the fact that this forgiveness of sins according to James is not counted as a new (eighth) possibility makes it clear that Origen wishes to relate this text to the seventh possibility of forgiveness in his list, that is, to *dura et laboriosa per poenitentiam remissio peccatorum* (ibid., 296,17 f.) and not to the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. This explains why Origen transforms the words 'they should pray over him', in the text of James, into 'they must impose hands upon him', thus clearly modelling the text on the liturgy of reconciliation. The only question that can be asked is whether, in Origen's circle, *all* the elements listed in Jas. 5:14 f. (imposition of hands by the *presbyteri Ecclesiae*, anointing, 'prayer of faith') occurred as aspects of the forgiveness of sins or whether Origen regarded the text as sufficiently 'fulfilled', even if, for example, at that time an anointing was not yet customary. Cf. J. Coppens, *L'imposition des mains* (Wetteren/Paris 1925), pp. 41 f., 374 ff.

[391] Cf. Didascalia Apost. II 18,7 (F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* I [Paderborn 1905], p. 66); ibid., II 41,2 (F. X. Funk, p. 130): ibid., II 43,1 (F. X. Funk, p. 134).

[392] Cf. the texts mentioned in the previous note.

[393] Thus, for example, in Aphraates, Demostr. XXIII 3 (Patr. Syr. Pars I vol. ii [Paris 1907] 10). For further witnesses, cf. F. Dölger, *Den Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual* (Paderborn 1909), pp. 148-51; J. Coppens, pp. 377-9.

[394] Origen also seems to know of a post-baptismal anointing; baptism occurs, that is, *in aquis istis visibilibus et in chrismate visibili*: Ad Rom. V 8 (PG 14) 1058. Cf. also In Lev. hom. 6,5 (GCS 29) 367,11: *unctio chrismatis*. The parallel with baptism, which is already a characteristic of the penitential process, is further confirmed by a parallel anointing.

[395] Cf. ibid. (GCS 29) 417,12-18.

[396] H. Elfers, *Die Kirchenordnung Hippolyts von Rom* (Paderborn 1938), p. 137, appears to understand the text as referring to confirmation. Nevertheless, the sinner, with whose progressive and gradual purification the whole homily of n.5 is concerned, is obviously already a Christian and no longer *a* catechumen. In the whole section, beginning from n.5, it is always a question of the contrast between the *sanctus* (*iustus*, *mundus*) and the *peccator* (ibid. [GCS 29] 393,22; 408,18 f.; 413,3; 412,21). It is never there a question of the contrast between pagan (catechumen) and Christian. The six kinds of leprosy-sins which are considered are all applied to sin which was committed *after* baptism (ibid. [GCS 29] 404,1-5; 405,11-17; 406,5-11; 407,12-21; 408,6) and which is to be

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penance.

What is the precise meaning of these ceremonies according to Origen? If we are to answer this question we must first of all recognize that Origen views the period of penance as parallel to the period of the catechumenate, as a kind of intense catechumenate.[397] Thus we can assume that the liturgical forms of the catechumenate and of its conclusion were transferred to the corresponding phases of the period of penance. It is certain that Origen knows of an imposition of hands which has the character of an exorcism.[398] In view of the evidence provided by the church order of Hippolytus and the practice attested in Cyprian, it is probable that such impositions of hands occurred also in the circles known to Origen during the period of the catechumenate and in the immediate preparation for baptism. The most obvious meaning of these impositions is as exorcisms or gestures of prayer, since they were formally distinguished from the authoritative granting of new access to church fellowship. In fact they form part of that intercessory reconciling activity which we have already described as the duty of bishops. Such an imposition of hands would be preceded by others during the period of penance and would only attract special attention if in fact it coincided with the end of this period and with reconciliation. At the same time, Origen also recognizes the imposition of hands as a rite for the bestowal of the [304] Spirit after baptism.[399] Similarly in the Didascalia Apostolorum[400] and in Firmilian of Caesarea, Origen's pupil,[401] the imposition of hands is a gesture for the bestowal of the Spirit. Likewise in In Lev. hom. 8,11[402] the reconciliation,

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submitted to public penance, because it is 'against God' (ibid. [GCS 29] 408,5) and 'mortal' (Ibid. [GCS 29] 405,16; 408,6-8). In the description of the purification of such a sinner (ibid. [GCS 29]) the misunderstanding that it is a question of a new baptism, because there is a mention of 'living water' (Ibid. [GCS 29] 411,6-9), is explicitly rejected. In contrast to baptism, it is more a question of a *purificatio peccatorum . . . quae per poenitentiam quaeritur* (ibid. [GCS 29] 411,7 *f.*; cf. also 414,5). Then in n. 11 of the homily *the* gradation of this purification is considered (ibid. EGCS 29] 411,16-417). The expression 'to wash', found in the biblical text cited, recurs frequently, but it is never applied to baptism (ibid. [GCS 29] 413,15-18). The readmission into the *castra* (ibid. [GCS 29] 413,19; 414,16; 416,9) is intended as the counterpart to the exclusion from the camp, that is, the excommunication of the Christian sinner (ibid. [GCS 29] 408,17-20). It is then stated of *these* gradually purified sinners:

> *sic ergo conversis a peccato purificatio per illa omnia datur, quae superius diximus* (that is, this gradual purification), *donum autem gratiae spiritus per olei imaginem designatur, ut non solum purgationem consequi possit is, qui convertitur a peccato, sed et Spiritu sancto repleri, quo et recipere priorem stolam et anulum posit et per omnia reconciliatus Patri in locum Filii reparari.*

It is thus clearly a question of the penance of *a* Christian after baptism. Certainly the term 'oil' also occurs in the biblical text being interpreted. It is perfectly possible that the communication of the Spirit is 'signified' by the 'oil' as a simple metaphor and not through a real anointing. Thus G. Teichtweier has rejected the assumption of a real anointing on the grounds that all that can be discerned in the overall context is an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament purification ceremonies. According to the text Selecta in Ez. XVI (PG 13) 812, Teichtweier understands 'oil' exclusively as a symbol which signifies the communication of the Spirit (cf. G. Teichtweier, p. 326). An anointing at reconciliation is, however, attested for the East at this time, and In Lev.hom. 2,4 suggests that Origen is familiar with it. Thus it is justifiable to think here of a real liturgical anointing with oil, through which the gift of God's grace is meaningfully signified. In Origen *imago* does not necessarily mean 'metaphor', figurative speech. It can quite simply mean a real symbolic event: τυ/ποφ. Thus no objection against our interpretation can be derived from the use of this term.

[397] Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 247 f.

[398] In Jos.hom. 24,1 (GCS 30) 448 f.

[399] Cf. De princip. I 3,7 (GCS 22) 58,20 f. Cf., on this point, J. Coppens, p. 289.

[400] Didascalia Apostolorum VI 7,2 (F. X. Funk, p. 316); II 41,2 (ibid., p. 130). In these texts it is precisely a question of the imposition of hands at the reconciliation of penance. Cf. Ibid., II 33,1 f. (ibid., pp. 114-16): the 'hand' of the bishop is precisely that which fills the faithful with the Holy Spirit.

[401] Cyprian ep. 75,7 f.18 (CSL 3,2:815.822). On the dependence of Firmilian on Origen: Eusebius, Hist.eccl. VI,27 (GCS 9,2) 580, 16-21.

[402] Cf. above under n. 396.

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more precisely, the rite of reconciliation, because it includes an anointing, ought to be seen as a communication of the Spirit. Thus it is more likely that the imposition of hands with an anointing is not intended – at least, not primarily – as an exorcism but as a sign of the bestowal of the Spirit. This means that in a certain sense the rite of reconciliation should be considered a liturgical parallel to the rite of confirmation, on which it appears to be modelled. This does not entail, however, that Origen must have considered this rite a formal repetition of confirmation. Such a view is precluded by the fact that, on the one hand, confirmation is still too much bound up with initiation while, on the other hand, the once-and-for-all character of this initiation in baptism is explicitly stressed.

B) THE EXTENT OF THE CHURCH'S POWER OF RECONCILIATION

The question which we must now ask is: can the bishop receive back into church fellowship *all* sinners who are genuinely repentant and after a sufficient period of penance? Or are certain sins *eo ipso* excluded from such a gracious act? As we have already seen, Origen does not know any mortal sins which cannot be forgiven by *God* himself. Thus in this life, and quite independently of the theory of the *apocatastasis*, all faults can be forgiven by God by means of penance. This means that Origen would hardly be likely to restrict the Church's power of reconciliation. In his view the relationship of man to God ought to be reflected in man's relationship to the Church of God. The person who is separated from God has not only fallen foul of the Church interiorly and invisibly but must also be visibly separated from the Church *per sententiam episcopi*. If, therefore, *all* sins are able to be forgiven in God's eyes, then it would be a crass contradiction in Origen's thinking if he did not allow *all* those sinners who are reconciled with God the possibility of also being reconciled again with the Church by the word of the bishop. Such a contradiction is tenable only on the basis of firm proof from the texts of Origen himself. Now such proof is not forthcoming. The only text which could support it with any degree of probability is De or. 28. We will consider this text presently. All the other texts which are adduced on [305] this question concern not the forgiveness of sins by the Church but God's forgiveness, and these have already been considered. Moreover, Origen has no reason to introduce a further essential distinction into his notion of mortal sin. And it is only such a distinction which could make it possible to treat a particular class of mortal sins, as for example the three 'capital sins', in a different way from that provided for the other mortal sins. Thus if Origen submits mortal sins to church penance without making such a differentiation, and if this penance ends in a reconciliation with the Church, then he must have *all* mortal sins in mind, that is, *every* person guilty of mortal sin who is repentant is able to return to the Church. And this is in fact the case. According to Contra Celsum III 51,[403] a late work, the Church excludes sinners who have committed fornication or some other α!τοπον, from its fellowship and allows them back only after a long period of penance. With this observation Origen is attempting to counter Celsus' accusation and to stress how strict Christian morality really is. Given this perspective, he would surely have stressed the fact if there had been any sins which totally and radically were excluded from such a reinstatement. But he does not know of any such sins. A similar universal and unrestrictive expression about the reconciliation of those guilty of mortal sins with the Church is found in In Ezech. hom. 3,8:[404] *iuste autem proicitur, qui digna facit abiectione, ut auferatur a populo Dei et eradicetur ab eo et tradatur Satanae. Et in praesenti quidem potest quis egrediens de populo Dei rursum paenitentiam reverti*. Since this particular

[403] Cf. Ibid. (GCS 2) 247-8.
[404] Ibid. (GCS 33) 357,30-358,1.

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possibility of a return is opposed to a return in the next life,[405] there can hardly be any sins *in praesenti* which exclude people from the Church totally and permanently. If there were, then the view expressed in this passage would be groundless. Further, such expressions about the possibility of those guilty of mortal sins being reconciled without any restrictive conditions are found frequently elsewhere in Origen.[406] Thus in practice he declares explicitly that the Church is able to forgive almost all those sins which, because of their seriousness, would seem to warrant a definitive exclusion: impurity to the extent of incest,[407] blasphemy[408] and sins against faith.[409]

There remains, however, the view expressed in De or. 28. Does this agree with Origen's overall teaching on the Church's ability to forgive *all* mortal sins? As far as our present purpose is concerned, this text simply says the following: bishops should not presume to [306] forgive on their own, through their own sacrifice and prayer, 'against the Lord', idolatry, prostitution, adultery, voluntary homicide and other serious sins which are 'incurable mortal sins'. Rather such sins ought to be 'retained', since the bishop should 'remit' (α)φιε/ναι) only what God also forgives. This is all that this frequently-quoted text actually provides on our subject. From it we may take two main points: if it implies that every church forgiveness is excluded for the sins in question, then, all other things being equal, a *divine* forgiveness is also excluded, since the latter is the condition of the former.[410] In this case, Origen would be denying the ability not only of the Church but also of God to forgive *all* mortal sins.[411] We have already seen, however, that such a horrifying rigorism is totally alien to Origen's writings. Moreover, since this text does not exclude every kind of divine forgiveness[412] for all mortal sins, it follows that it is not possible to contest every form of church reconciliation in these cases.

In the second place, the interpretation of this text just outlined would completely deprive the Church's institution of penance, ending as it does with reconciliation, of this object and indeed would render it redundant. For the text withdraws *every* 'serious' case, *every* mortal sin from such a power of prayer enjoyed by priests. Thus if this power is identical with that

[405] Ibid. (GCS 33) 358,1-7.

[406] Cf. In Lev.hom. 8,10 (GCS 29) 408,3-8: the sin 'against God' obtains *venia* by means *of interventas omnium*, provided it is publicly 'confessed' and subjected to church penance. Origen could not speak in this vein if this *venia* did not also include that of the Church. In Jer.fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,7-223,6 simply mentions the sinner who, after doing penance for a sufficient period of time, is again received into the fellowship of the Church. The allusion to 1 Cor. 5:5 and 1 Tim. 1:20 shows that these sinners also include those guilty of incest and blasphemy. In Lev. hom. 14,4 (GCS 29) 486,20-487,3 says, in the context of and with regard to *public* church penance, that through it our spirit is purified in *praesenti vita*. Now to claim that public penance is the cause of an effect obtainable in this life would not make sense unless it were possible for this process to come to an end, that is, without the reconciliation of the sinner with the Church.

[407] Ad Rom.praef. (PG 14) 834; In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1370 f.: the incestuous person in Corinth is here presented as the typical case of both exclusion from the Church and penance.

[408] In Jer.fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,12-22, in so far as the case of βλασφημει=ν in 1 Tim. 1:20 is considered susceptible of church reconciliation.

[409] In Lev.hom. 15,2 (GCS 29) 489,19 f.: the *gravioro crimina* also include the *biasphemio fidei*, *quae muro ecclesiastici et apostolici dogmatis cincta est* (ibid., 489,14 f.). The *locus poenitentiae* is granted to these offences, even if only once. The stress on this once-and-for-all character of penance makes sense only if the possibility of penance was really offered: a penance, however, which does not terminate in this life cannot be granted once and refused a second time.

[410] The successor of the apostles, being a spiritual person, α)σιη/σιν α# ε9αν α)φη= ο(θεο&φ De or. 28,8 (GCS 3) 380,12.

[411] The following sins are beyond the reach of the spiritual bishops' power of prayer: τα_ α)νι/ατα (De or, 28,8 [GCS 3] 380,12); μοιξι/α ε9ξου/σιοφ φο&νοφ α!λλο καλεπω&τερον πται=σμα (ibid., 380,28 f.); ει0δωλολατρει/α, μοιξι/α, πορωει/α (ibid., 381,14); α(μαρτι/α προ&φ θα&νατον (ibid., 381,17).

[412] It should be remembered that in Origen α)φιε/ναι, α!φεσιφ does not necessarily mean every kind of forgiveness of sin.

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power which is the basis of the official penance of church excommunication and reconciliation, then it must be asked whether such an institution would still have any object at all. In this case, Origen would be denying the very justification of such an institution, whereas in fact it is obvious that in this text he is only concerned about the misuse which 'some' are making of it.[413] In view of the fact that Origen is a man of the Church, he can hardly be credited with the rejection of such a longstanding institution of the Church. For all his radicalism, not even Tertullian dared to do that. Perhaps, then, Origen assigned only light and daily sins to the penance of excommunication. This idea is in direct contradiction to his own statements.[414] Moreover, it would again lead to consequences which are impossible in practice. How, for example, can all sins which are not 'serious' be made the necessary object of a penance of excommunication, in the expectation that such a rule will be taken seriously in practice? These considerations alone lead to the conclusion that in this text the power to forgive sins by means of prayer and sacrifice, which Origen is here restricting, [307] can hardly be the power of church penance of excommunication and the power to forgive sins which is exercised within it. In the light of all that we have said earlier, it is not difficult to see what is meant positively by this power to forgive sins by means of prayer and sacrifice. It is the sin-remitting activity of the Church of the saints, undertaken principally but by no means exclusively by the bishops as spiritual persons and even outside any process of excommunication. It is the Church's support of the penitent by prayer, sacrifice, exhortation, correction, penitential practices, etc., even by sharing in the burden of sin. It is an activity which has always been practised and must continue to be in the community of the saints. In other words, this is what Origen is saying here: mortal sins cannot be remitted *solely* by *this* reconciling activity. Rather they must be 'retained', that is, subjected to excommunication. In this case, the bishop should not simply *ad gratiam iudicare*,[415] that is, bypass excommunication and attempt to apply to incurable sins that medicine which is effective only for sins which have not caused spiritual death, namely, prayer and sacrifice alone. In this passage Origen does not say explicitly that the prescribed penance of excommunication will end with a reconciliation, provided that the sinner is repentant. But this is self-evident for him and indeed precisely in respect of the sins referred to in De or. 28. If he were not to take this obvious principle for granted even in this passage, then he would be contesting the fact that any penance of excommunication, imposed for any mortal sin whatsoever, could end with a church reconciliation. De or., therefore, denies the possibility of a remission of mortal sins by 'prayer' alone, but not the possibility of pardon by means of the 'death' of the penance of

[413] De or. 28,10 (GCS 3) 381,12. This fact also shows that it is not essential in the discussion of our question to arrange the writings of Origen chronologically. If he recognizes the institution of penance as a whole, as it must already *have* existed *with* a church reconciliation at least several decades before Contra Celsum III 51, then he must know of a church reconciliation after the penance of excommunication already when he is composing the De oratione. He does not challenge this institution, even though he repudiates the abuse which 'some' make of it. If, however, in De or. he had contested the Church's ability to forgive any sins at all, then he would have opposed this institution. G. Teichtweier, p. 290, holds a similar view. J. Grotz, p. 260, however, considers this passage, where Origen is concerned with the abuse of the α!φεσιφ for serious sins, precisely as a confirmation of a power of absolution which can precede an excommunication and be completely separated from it. It is only in this priestly absolution that 'the real sacramental penance' is performed, and this as a kind of *opus operatum* without the sinner's co-operation by penance; cf. p. 255.

[414] It is impossible to be excommunicated for a *levis calpa*: In Jos.hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 334,2 f; however, *a levis culpa* is only that which remains after the ambit of that which is here outside the bishops' power of prayer alone is considered. In fact the latter is exactly identical with what was earlier established as the object of excommunication, that is, as serious sin. The same conclusion follows from In Lev.hom. 15.2 (GCS 29) 489,20 f.: the *communia quae frequenter incurrimus* do not belong to the object of the penance which is granted once and for all.

[415] In Lev.hom. 12,6 (GCS 29) 265,3.

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excommunication.[416]

What it is contesting is reconciliation by 'sacrifice' alone, but not reconciliation through μετα&νοια τελει/α.[417] Even when, according to 1 Corinthians 2:25 and 1 John 5:16,[418] both 'sacrifice' and 'prayer' are useless, the *anima contribulata* and the *spiritus humilitatis* are still effective.[419] Indeed the very reasoning of De or. includes the idea that the 'servant' alone cannot heal a mortal sin. This requires the intervention of God, which itself must be expressed by the sinner being excluded from the Church and surrendered to Satan for the destruction of his flesh.[420] This *interitus carnis* brings about the man's salvation and he is subsequently reconciled with the Church. As opposed to this 'taking of sin upon oneself' by the penance of excommunication, [308] any attempt to remit mortal sins by prayer and sacrifice alone would be to presume that an *aphesis* by God and the Church (in the technical sense of this term in Origen)[421] were possible for these sins. But such an *aphesis* for these sins does not exist in God's eyes. Thus the Church should not have the presumption to wish to grant it. In other words, in no way does De or. 28 exclude a power of reconciliation in respect of those who have been excommunicated. What is disputed here is the possibility of remitting serious sins solely through the bishop's prayer. Moreover, this prayer is not the prayer which is operative in the reconciliation of excommunicates. Origen is not saying anything different, therefore, from what he maintains elsewhere when he contests the possibility that incurable sins can be remitted by the prayer of the bishop alone. The person guilty of mortal sin must be excommunicated. His sin must be 'retained'. The text does not say that after sufficient penance he ought not to be 'loosened', but it does exclude this both logically and in fact. Otherwise there would be no penance of excommunication ending in reconciliation for mortal sins. And this would stand in contradiction to the whole of Origen's teaching on penance. For he recognizes for every person guilty of mortal sin both forgiveness before God and reincorporation into the Church. Thus De or. 28 is perfectly comprehensible within the general framework of Origen's teaching on penance, without giving rise to any kind of rigorism. Even in this passage the possibility of reconciliation for those who are excommunicated is not restricted. What is restricted, however, is the range of the charismatic remission of sins, and this in favour of, the penance of excommunication.

All this leads to yet another conclusion which, although it does not belong strictly to the

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[416] In Lev.hom. 11,2 (GCS 29) 452 f.; ibid., 14,4 (GCS 29) 484-7.

[417] Fragm.in 1 Reg. 3,14 (PG 17): only 'simple' sins of 'ignorance' can be forgiven by 'sacrifice', the rest only διə ε1ργων και∴ μετανοι∴ας τελει/αφ. It is a question of the story of Heli which in De or. 28,9 is also one of the biblical examples used to illustrate the principles developed here. The ε0ν α)γνοι/α και∴ ψιλα_ πλημμελη/ματα of 17,40, which can be remitted by sacrifice, correspond well to the α)κου/σια μλημμελη/ματα of De or. (cf. ibid. [GCS 3] 380,27), which *can* be expiated by 'sacrifice' alone. To the sins by which 'God himself is affronted' correspond in De or. the 'sins against the Lord' (cf. ibid. [GCS 3] 381,10 f.). These parallels show that the fragment is in the spirit of Origen. Thus it is a commentary on De or. the rejection of prayer and sacrifice is not a denial of the efficacy of the τελει/α μετα&νοια. Prayer and sacrifice alone can, therefore, be ineffective, and the sin can still be forgiven. G. Teichtweier, p. 292, lays particular emphasis on the need for the sinner's personal performance of penance, in the sense of a μετα&νοια. In his view, 'the decisive factor in a post-baptismal remission of serious offences is precisely the sinner's personal performance of penance and not the priest's prayer of forgiveness.' Cf. also ibid., p. 308 ff., and esp. p. 319, where the official absolution by the organs of the Church does not play too preponderant a role.

[418] This text is adduced in De or. 28,9 as a proof the principle being defended.

[419] In Lev.hom. 4,5 (GCS 29) 322 f.

[420] Cf. above under the nn. 61, 73, 324 and 331, together with the relevant details.

[421] That Origen knew of this traditional α!φεσιφ-notion at the time of De or. is evident from the contemporary work Exhort. ad mart. 30 (GCS 2) 26,20 ff. Although he disputes that the α!φεσιφ is possible outside baptism and martyrdom, he still assumes that sins can be forgiven, in so far as martyrs, through their vocation, mediate to others (ibid. [GCS 2] 27,5) an α!φεσιφ in the wider sense (as θεραπει/α: ibid. [GCS 2] 26,29). Obviously this happens under the usual conditions which are precisely underlined in De or.

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present context, may be considered briefly. The, bishop's priestly prayer for the forgiveness of sins which is effective outside the penance of excommunication, that is, not with regard to mortal sins, should be understood in today's sense as the sacramental absolution from venial sins outside public penance. Indeed it is 'only' the prayer of the saints for sinners, which the bishop has to offer primarily as a spiritual person, but which is not his official prerogative. It is rather an ε0χουσι/α which he shares basically with every saint who is filled with the Spirit. This is because the whole Church of the saints can and must συνεργει=ν[422] along with the sinner who is doing penance.

[309]

C) THE CONCLUSION OF RECONCILIATION

We now need to raise the question of the duration of the penance of excommunication. From what we have already seen, it is to be expected that the duration of the period of penance varied in length according to the different cases. The criterion for measuring the length of the period of penance was not only the objective and subjective seriousness of a sin as such but also the extent to which this period provided evidence to the leaders of the community and to the community at large of the sinner's sincere, serious and effective intention to mend his ways.[423]

Thus the length of the period of penance necessarily differed from case to case. The excommunication could even be imposed by the bishop himself acting against the will of the member of the community in question. The situation could arise, therefore, in which such a sinner obstinately, and despite the excommunication, was unwilling to eliminate the cause which occasioned it. He consequently remained banned by the Church until he later changed his attitude and the excommunication itself, after being a predominantly disciplinary measure, became an actual part of the institution of penance. With this came the prospect of a proximate lifting of the excommunication.[424] This could also account for the varied duration of excommunication. We cannot tell how long the period of penance lasted in the majority of cases. What is clear is that penance lasted longer than the catechumenate. This point is stressed explicitly.[425] Such a comparison is meaningful, however, only if the two periods

[422] Cf. further details above under nn. 350 and 351, together with the relevant text.

[423] Cf. Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 248,1-3: the conversion must be made clearly visible, that is, the penitent should be readmitted only when he has proven that he has mended his ways by a visible way of life. This obviously required a longer or shorter period of time, according to the particular case.

[424] This could also be at least part of the *Sitz im Leben* of the later clear distinction between two stages of penance (cf. Didascalia Apost. II 16,1.2; Dionysius, fragm. ep. ad Canonem [see J. B. Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici Graecorum historia et monumenta* (Rome 1864-8) I 545]; Gregorius Thaumat., Ep. can. [J. .B. Pitra, 1562 ff.]). In the first instance, the sinner is either moved by his own guilty conscience or forced by the bishop's ban (cf. Didascalia Apost. II 10,3-5; 16,1) to keep away for *a* fairly long time from the life of the community, that is, at least from the actual liturgy, until he has re-established his moral relationships and until he can be sure that the dust has settled over the scandal which he has caused. Only then will he have truly sought reconciliation. Before he receives it, however, a further short period of penance in the strict sense is required (Didascalia Apost. II 16,2). A further period is inevitably needed for the verification of the penitent's conversion, the questioning of witnesses on the subject, etc. The other part of this *Sitz im Leben* must obviously have been a similarly graduated time of preparation in the catechumenate. This 'gradation' is what J. Grotz means by 'stages of penance'. According to him, we must make both in Origen and in all his predecessors in the theology of penance a distinction between excommunication as a stage prior to actual church penance and the much more frequently applied 'real' sacramental church penance without excommunication. 'Excommunication' is imposed only in quite serious cases, where the sinner is obstinate, and in itself has 'nothing to do' with church penance and the forgiveness of sins (J. Grotz, p. 281 f.). In his view, real penance is that which 'has essentially the same characteristics as Cyprian's exhomologesis' (ibid., p. 307). The difference between the two stages is that the unrepeatable excommunication is imposed only in particularly serious cases, whereas the repeatable church penance without excommunication is often performed alone (ibid., p. 248,2 f.).

[425] Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 248,2 f.

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belong, more or less, to the same 'order of importance'. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that Origen, as Hippolytus,[426] envisages a catechumenate lasting several years. This means that the penance of excommunication could easily last several years, so that a penance of more than three years would not have been considered abnormal. Nevertheless, the possibility of a substantial reduction of the amount of penance required would not have been discounted,[427] if there were evidence of particular zeal and real conversion. Without feeling himself to be out of step with the penitential practice of his day, Origen is able to make capital out of the fact that, in the brief time-lapse between the two letters to the Corinthians, the incestuous person was both excommunicated and reconciled again with the Church.[428] Nevertheless, it would appear that Origen detects a special zeal for penance operating in this case; thus it would be wrong to conclude [310] that in the circles known to him the penance of excommunication usually lasted only a few weeks. This would contradict his own testimony to the effect that the period of penance must be longer than the period of the catechumenate.[429] At the same time, he stresses that the period of penance should be measured with moderation and that, in the determination of its duration, the case of the incestuous person in Corinth is typical.[430] In any event Origen does not evince any notion of a life-long penance.

6. The Meaning of Excommunication

A) THE LASTING CONSEQUENCES OF EXCOMMUNICATION

Reconciliation does not mark the end of all the consequences of excommunication. What we have seen in Cyprian is also found in Origen. Above all, the reconciled person remains a Christian of diminished rights, since he is permanently excluded from holding ecclesiastical office.[431] Naturally this would concern, in the first place, those penitents who were simple Christians when they had, fallen into sin and had done penance. Subsequently they were barred from ecclesiastical offices. Nevertheless, at the same time both in the East and in the West those sinners who, previously, had held ecclesiastical office were treated in the same way.[432] The question which can be asked, however, is whether every kind of

[426] Traditio Apostolica 17,1 (G. Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome* [London 1937], p. 28). Although here a catechumenate of three years is required, the author adds immediately that if the catechumen is very zealous he can be received more quickly, since it is not time but behaviour that counts.

[427] Especially since it was obviously necessary to overcome strong resistance against public penance on the part of Christians and in general there was a tendency to be too lenient rather than too strict. Moreover, the question always had to be decided whether in fact a public church penance had to be imposed or not: De or. 28,10 (GCS 3) 381, 12-22; In Jos. hom. 7,6 (GCS 30) 332-4; In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 137 ff.; In Ezech.hom. 10,1 (GCS 33) 416-18; In Jer.hom. 14,14 (GCS 6) 120,4-14. Cf. on this point Jerome's translation (PG 13) 422. In Jer.hom. 12,5 (GCS 6) 92,10 ff.

[428] Ad Rom.praef. (PG 14) 834.

[429] The fact that in the Didascalia Apost. II 16,2 (F. X. Funk, p. 60) theme is *a* question of a period of penance lasting only a few weeks can hardly be used as an objection against this point. For it must be assumed, following E. Schawamtz, *Bussstufen and Katechumenatsklassen*, (Strassburg 1911), p. 19ff., and B. Poschmann, p. 477, that this length of time refers only to penance in the strict sense of the word, by which the penitent is tested after his prayer to be reconciled with the Church to see whether he is really converted. Naturally this conversion must already have taken place previously. At the *beginning* of this second stage, the penitent is examined to see 'whether he is worthy to be received into the Church'. The proof of this worthiness must, therefore, already be present and is not merely to be produced in the next few weeks of meal penance. Cf. also In Jem. hom. 12,5 (GCS 6) 92,12 f., where it is emphasized that reconciliation ought not to take place too quickly lest the whole Church suffer harm.

[430] In Jer.hom. 20,9 (GCS 6) 192,3-10; In Joan. XXVIII 4 (GCS 10) 393,7-14.

[431] Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 248,3-5.

[432] In fact the principle applied was that the higher a person's rank in the Church is, the harder he is to be

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excommunication imposed on a bishop or a priest was in fact experienced and considered as an excommunication of penitents and, accordingly, entailed this lasting consequence even after it was lifted.

Yet another consequence which remained permanently after reconciliation was the impossibility of a second church penance: *in gravioribus enim criminibus semel tantum poenitentiae conceditur locus*.[433] The principle of the unrepeatable character of church penance of excommunication was clearly received from Hermas and Clemens and was practised in Origen's day. It is presented as being self-evident and not needing further justification. Moreover, Origen does not appear to have seen any problem in reconciling this principle of church discipline with his theological principle that God always accepts genuine penance. It may be that cases of this kind did not occur frequently enough to necessitate theological reflection. Or perhaps the principle was quietly and discretely simply not applied [311] in all its rigour to such cases. Nevertheless, given the salvific importance attributed to the Church in the theology of that time, it is doubtful whether any would then have ventured the theory which is found later in Augustine,[434] namely, that a Christian who has fallen back into sin again could receive salvation even without church reconciliation, provided that he did penance.

B) THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF OFFICIAL CHURCH RECONCILIATION

We have now reached the decisive point in our discussion of Origen's teaching on penance. For all that the remission of sin, even quite independently of excommunication and its being lifted, was not only a matter of what happened within the private individual but was also achieved by the co-operation of the Church of the saints, it remains a fact that this involvement of the whole body in the guilt of one of its members should not be styled 'sacramental' in today's sense of this term.[435] Apart from the case of the reconciliation of a person who is excommunicated, the texts of Origen provide evidence only for an ecclesial but not for an ecclesial-sacramental remission of sins. Can, therefore, the official reconciliation of an excommunicate be considered as a sacramental act? It has already been sufficiently proven that this act was performed by the hierarchical Church with the awareness that it has been empowered to do so by Christ. But this does not entitle us to call it sacramental. Our question can be answered only when a further question is settled: does Origen ascribe to this act a meaning which goes beyond that of a purely church disciplinary measure? This obviously also implies the question of how such an assumed transcendent meaning of the act of reconciliation fits into the whole celebration of penance and how it is related to the reconciling activity within this celebration of both the sinner himself and the Church of the saints. It is only by keeping these questions in mind that we will avoid the danger of ascribing to reconciliation a meaning which it does not have in Origen's view. He provides very little information either explicitly or thematically on this problem. Thus we will find an answer to our question partly by paying careful attention to significant motifs and indications in other areas of his teaching.

In considering the theological significance of excommunication, we have made it

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punished: In Ezech.hom. 5,4 (GCS 33) 375,2-9. Although this refers in the first place to the punishments of the next life, it also applied within the Church itself – at least in theory. On this point, cf. G. May, 'Bemerkungen zu der Frage dem Diffamation und der Irregularität der öffentlichen Büsser' in: MThZ 12 (1961), pp. 252-68.

[433] In Lev.hom. 15,2 (GCS 29) 489,19 f. This does not concern the possibility to repeat penance; cf. In Lev.hom. 11,2 (GCS 29) 452,21-5. It is here *a* question of penance after a repeated sin, which ought not to be a reason for finally abandoning penance.

[434] Augustine, Ep. 153,7 (PL33) 655 f.

[435] This is also the view of G. Teichtweier, p. 325.

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sufficiently clear that reconciliation with the Church [312] is not purely a matter of discipline. If the Church is the necessary means of grace and salvation, and this precisely in so far as it is a visible community of salvation, then it follows that reconciliation, considered as a readmission, must have a decisive meaning for salvation.[436] If the excommunicated person, by virtue of his legitimate exclusion, is 'handed over to Satan' and thus stands outside the possibility of salvation – even if, in Origen's view, this 'being outside' still has a mysterious salvific meaning – then everything depends on the return to the homeland and to the people of God, and on the reincorporation into the unity of Christ's body. How can man be saved? How can he return to the Church? For Origen these questions are two sides of the same coin.[437] Here we have a parallel to what we have already seen with regard to excommunication: the saving significance of official reconciliation as readmission into the fellowship of the Church which is necessary for salvation is not undermined by the fact that this official act only achieves officially what must have already taken place 'interiorly' somehow by the conversion of the sinner himself. This corresponds to the fact that the sinner is already 'outside' the fellowship of grace before he is exteriorly and officially excommunicated. In fact in the present instance the position is even clearer. If, according to Origen, the person guilty of mortal sin, who is already 'outside' in God's eyes, must also be unconditionally and necessarily excommunicated, and if it would be presumption on the part of those in authority and even worse presumption on the part of the sinner himself to attempt to bypass this phase by relying on the interior reconciliatory power of the Church (its prayer), then it follows that a person guilty of mortal sin cannot be genuinely repentant if he does not have recourse to the penance of excommunication. He cannot return to the church interiorly, therefore, without being prepared to submit himself to exterior excommunication. But if *this* is necessary, then the same applies to its official lifting by the Church, that is, to the reconciliation by the bishop.

This is also what happens at baptism. Origen makes it abundantly clear that before baptism a person must dissociate himself interiorly from sin. In so doing, however, it is far from Origen's mind to cast doubt on the necessity, the efficacy and the saving significance of

[436] J. Grotz, pp. 304-6, sees in In Joan. XXVIII 7 (GCS 10) 397 f. a proof for his own view that the granting of the *communio* and sacramental reconciliation are not one and the same thing. In fact he understands readmission into the fellowship of the Church as an exclusively canonical measure. In view of Grotz's interpretation of the allegory of Lazarus, it must be asked how a granting of the *communia* can be understood if there is still exclusion from the Eucharist. Grotz must grant that such a granting of *communio* does not mean full integration into the community of the Church. At the same time, the text suggests the continuation of an excommunication, in so far as the description of the Christian summoned out of the grave is not compatible with one who shares in the fellowship of the Church. This is evident from the following: '. . . he is still wearing the bonds of death of his earlier sins and a band round his eyes, and he does not see, nor can he go anywhere or do anything because of the bonds of death, until Jesus orders those who can untie him to let him go' (ibid. [GCS 10] 397). 'There the person who follows Jesus can see how such a person does indeed come out because of Jesus' call but is still bound with the cords of his sin and tied by them; because of his sorrow and his listening to Jesus' voice he does indeed live, but he is still hound hands and feet with the bonds of the grave, the shackles of death, because he is not yet delivered from the chains of sin nor free to do anything properly' (ibid. [GCS 10] 397-8). 'And because death still dwells in him, he is not only bound hands and feet but also blindfolded' (ibid. [GCS 10] 397-8). For *the* tr. of the texts, cf. also H. Karpp, *Die Busse*: *Quellen zur Entstehung des altkirchlichen Busswesens* (Zürich 1969), pp. 235-9. According to this text, therefore, by Jesus' call the sinner becomes aware of the helplessness of his separation from the community of the Church's grace and reveals his readiness to return. Even after his summons from the grave the sinner is still bound and does not yet enjoy the freedom to realize his return on his part. Grotz, however, considers that at this point *the communio is* already given, although he does so in function of an external, juridical notion of the Church which does not consider its interior effect on grace. This, however, contradicts Origen's ecclesiology. He calls *the* immediate effect of the 'loosing' man's freedom which allows him to attain fellowship with Christ. This is realized in the participation in the Eucharist.

[437] In Ps.hom. 2,4 (PG 12) 1353.

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visible sacramental baptism.[438] Both the interior and the exterior act have the same aim, but we shall have to consider more closely, with [313] the help of Origen himself, precisely *how* they are interrelated. The point which needs to be made for the moment is that Origen considers reconciliation an indispensable, visible reincorporation into the interior fellowship of grace which is necessary for salvation. This obviously means that, in his view, it already has a transcendent effect and should in this sense be described as 'sacramental'. In later terminology it would represent *at least* 'the necessary condition', without which any further activity on the part of the penitent or of the Church would be useless, since the penitent would remain outside the community which was necessary for salvation. Thus according to the Scholastic theory reconciliation would have at least a *causalitas dispositiva*. The *dispositio exigens formam* which was acquired by it was not an *ornatus animae*, as it was called up until Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the Sentences, but the frilly effective membership of the body of Christ who communicates his Spirit and his salvation to all his fully legitimate members. Nevertheless, this distinction need not prevent us from seeing a genuine sacramental causality in this way of conceiving the effect of reconciliation. The fully legitimate membership of the Church of grace would be the *res et sacramentum* of complete salvation and, as such, the immediate effect of the official church reconciliation.

But does this translation of Origen's teaching into more recent categories not betray his original thinking? Does it not ascribe to reconciliation an effect which, according to Origen, is really the result of the sinner's personal penance, albeit supported by the cooperation of the Church of the saints? This objection raises the question of the relationship between reconciliation and the other reconciling activities. It is obvious that Origen himself did not experience any more difficulty on this point than he did with regard to the relationship between the personal purification from sin as a preparation for baptism and the forgiveness of sins through the sacramental act of baptism. Today we do not find it very easy to envisage a purification from sin which is not purely and simply identical with the communication of the Holy Spirit. But Origen did not experience this difficulty. Thus he was able to ascribe that purification from sins to the personal preparation for baptism[439] and to consider the communication of the Holy Spirit as an effect of the sacrament.[440] We can, therefore, say that according to Origen, despite all the penance performed during the time of the catechumenate and the purification [314] from sins which is gained thereby, it is only the incorporation into the Church by baptism that communicates the Holy Spirit. The principle, *si desit eis gratia Spiritus*, *nec membra esse Christi corporis possunt*,[441] can therefore be reversed: it is only by being a member of Christ's body in the full sense that a person can also posses the Holy Spirit. In view of the fact that Origen conceives the period of penance of excommunicates as

[438] Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, pp. 54-6.
[439] Cf., for example, In Luc.hom. 21 (GCS 35) 139 f.: it could here be a question simply of giving up sin, without any reference to an actual purification from previous sins. Nevertheless, the thinking seems to be moving in that direction. In Luc. hom. 22 (GCS 35) 145 f.: here the idea is somewhat clearer; the catechumens must no longer be a *generotio viperarum*. when they come to baptism. Ad Rom. V 8 (PG 14) 1037-41. Here the idea is clear: the catechumen must be already dead to sin, the old man must be already dead and must discard all impurity, if he wishes to be buried with Christ in the new grave of baptism and receive the Spirit. Cf. also Contra Celsum III 59 f. (GCS 2) 254 f. This conception must have presented few difficulties for Origen, since he unconsciously recognized that even the unbaptized were capable of supernatural virtues. Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 42 ff.
[440] Cf. Ad Rom.; this teaching receives its clearest expression in the fragment of Origen which Athanasius has transmitted to us; cf. Ep. IV ad Serapionem n. 10 (PG 26) 649-52: the Son is already at work in the catechumens, but the Holy Spirit only in those who have received him through the gift of baptism. This notion lies at the basis of the idea that only the baptized can commit sins against the Holy Spirit. Cf. above nn.65-71 and the corresponding text. Accordingly, John's baptism is already 'purifying' but does not fill converts with the Holy Spirit, as does Jesus' baptism; cf. In Joan. VI 32 (GCS 10) 141,22-7. Cf. H. Rahner, pp. 208- 14.
[441] Ad Rom. IX 2 (PG 14) 1215.

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a kind of second catechumenate and reconciliation as a *reconiungere membris Ecclesiae*, there is no reason why this idea should not be applied to penance. It is by reconciliation that the purified penitent is reincorporated into the fellowship of the Church and so recovers the Holy Spirit which he had lost. We have already seen[442] that Origen considers personal penance less as an acquisition of the Holy Spirit than as a moral purging of the interior state of sin, in other words, as a destruction of the 'flesh'. This fits into what we have just said.

Moreover, the *interitus carnis*, Origen's comprehensive key expression for the personal penance of the excommunicate, also corresponds very precisely to the 'death' which according to In Rom. V, 8 the catechumens have to undergo before receiving the Spirit in baptism. In this connection, it should not be forgotten either that the imposition of hands in reconciliation appears to be considered as a gesture for the communication of the Spirit. Origen obviously gives great prominence to personal penance, and this interpretation of its relationship to reconciliation does not diminish its importance. For, according to Origen, reconciliation always presupposes excommunication. It is this excommunication that occasions that which is most fundamental: conversion. The sinner is shaken out of the insensitivity of his sinfulness by grace and experiences the interior fire of judgement which burns for his salvation. This fire is the Logos itself. It is in this way that sin reaches its furthest limit and so actually becomes a means of redemption. The actual reversal in man's development is, therefore, the work of God alone and occurs before the intervention of the Church with its reconciliation.[443]

The conclusion which we have just reached somewhat indirectly is confirmed by the text In Lev.hom. 8,11.[444] It has already been shown that this text concerns penance for sins committed after baptism.[445] Here there is a clear distinction made within penance between a *purgatio* (*purificatio*) from sins, on the one hand, and a receiving of the *donum gratiae*, a replenishment by the Holy Spirit, a reacquisition [315] of the 'robe' and the 'ring', that is, sonship, on the other hand. The purification is achieved by conversion from sin, by a gradual process, through which the sinner by his own effort, but also supported by the priest, abolishes sin and continually eradicates the consequences of sin. In other words, it occurs by 'subjective penance'.[446] The communication of the Spirit, however, *per olei imaginem designatur*. Even if it is considered uncertain that Origen knew of a liturgical anointing which was associated with the well-attested imposition of hands, the clear distinction between purification from sins and reception of the Spirit must imply a distinction also in the *causes* of these two events – just as there is in baptism and the preparation for it. Once this is granted, then the only possible cause of the reception of the Spirit is the rite of reconciliation. If the text is allowed its most obvious meaning,[447] that is, if the *olei imago* is taken in the

[442] Cf. above under nn. 89, 198, 211, 213 and 316, together with the corresponding considerations.
[443] This is obviously the case in today's theology too. It is necessary for God to have touched man's heart with his grace before he can produce the 'sorrow' which is essential for the sacrament and its effect. This is self-evident. Nevertheless, our treatises on the sacrament of penance sometimes give the impression not so much of denying this truth as of forgetting it. They take it so much for granted that they usually give a very scant theological reflection on this purely divine beginning of man's conversion.
[444] Cf. ibid. (GCS 29) 417,12-18.
[445] This still applies, even if the real liturgical anointing with oil at reconciliation is not accepted as proven.
[446] The *profectus quidam purgationum* (In Lev.hom. 8 [GCS 29] 412,4) bring it about that gradually the person arrives *ad summam puritatis* (ibid., 412,6). These purifications consist, for instance, in the renunciation of all sins and all their harmful consequences, in thoughts, words and deeds (Ibid., 412,18-413,2; 41,16), in the renunciation of *arrogantia* (ibid., 414,12), in the positive conversion to God through virtue (ibid., 415,6 ff.), in the production of new virtues (ibid., 415,11 ff.). After these purifications (cf. the three-fold *post*: ibid., 417,4.) the Spirit is communicated.
[447] It should not be overlooked that Origen applies the text Jas. 5:14 f. to penance and, in so doing, introduces into it an imposition of hands. This is understandable only if a real imposition of hands did occur in penance. Thus, it is also unlikely that the anointing with oil which is likewise mentioned in Jas. 5 did not figure in the rite

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sense of a real anointing which accompanies the imposition of hands, then it expresses immediately what is meant: the purification from sins *datur per illa omnia quae superius diximus* (that is, through the progressive destruction of sin by means of the *poenitudinem gerere* (415,6), the *deponere peccata* (414,10), etc. But the communication of the Spirit occurs in the act of reconciliation by the *olei imago*.[448]

The only objection that could be levelled against this view is that it follows the lines of current modern sacramental theology in ascribing one effect to man's personal act and the other to the sacramental act of the Church. In other words, it overlooks the fact that, in Origen's view, the visible act of the Church, in so far as it is effective, is the *typus ecclesiis traditus*,[449] that is, the manifestation of that which is accomplished in the depths of man's being as an encounter between God and man. Accordingly, for this objection there would be no act of the Church having an effect which 'otherwise' would not happen and which occurs *after* that which man has done previously with God's grace alone.

Against this it must be stressed that for Origen excommunication and reconciliation are two phases of one simple event. They both have the same aim. Excommunication is not merely a vindictive punishment which is to be lifted as quickly as possible, even in view of penance. It is rather a τυ/ποφ of the fact that the person guilty of mortal sin is now in *the* situation of grace in which alone he can be cured, that is, in the immediate grace of God's own judgement. After [316] the failure of the Church's created saving powers the sin is pronounced 'incurable' and, by excommunication, the sinner is handed over to the judgement of God who is his physician. Thus excommunication and reconciliation *together* 'cover' visibly in the Church as a τυ/ποφ the one event which happens in fact. The sinner who recognizes the 'truth' of his sin, that is, his 'being outside', is redeemed. But it is precisely because this 'outside' is itself also included in the grace of Christ in virtue of his death that the sinner returns as he does, sharing in that death by his own *interitus carnis*.

It is only *within* the one event, which, as a *whole*, has an ecclesial *and* an interior aspect and occurs with these two aspects interacting inseparably that the relationship which we have stressed between an individual moment of the ecclesial dimension and an individual moment of the interior dimension is understood and justified.[450]

To complete our view on this question we need to make two further points. The sinner's personal interior penance and even the reconciling activity of the Church of the saints are both visible within the Church, even though they are carried out as an event of the 'interior' Church in virtue of the Spirit of its holiness. Thus even the sinner's personal penance occurs publicly in the Church, since it is an exhomologesis which is under church supervision and, in certain circumstances, may even be enforced officially. The reconciling activity of the Church of the saints is visible in the exhortation of fellow Christians and of the bishop as well

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of reconciliation. If this were not the case, there would be no reason why Origen thought of referring this text to reconciliation at all. After all, he is the one who introduces the imposition of hands into the text. Thus he must have discovered another indication in the text which suggested to him that here James was thinking of *a* remission of sins apart from that granted during a meal illness. Now such an indication could only be the anointing with oil, since this was also used in the reconciliation of penitents. That Origen in Lev.hom. 8,11 (GCS 29) 416,1-417,1 understands the application of the oil 'mystically' is not an argument against the actual use of real oil in reconciliation, but means only the quest for the higher 'truth' contained in the real symbols of the liturgy.

[448] G. Teichtweier, p. 326, rejects this decisively, since 'according to the whole context of this passage . . . it is all only an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament purification ceremonies'. The passages which he adduces, however, esp. Selecta in Ez. XVI (PG 13) 812, do not contradict the observations made above.

[449] Cf. Ad Rom. V 8 (PG 14) 1038.

[450] This general theological observation alone renders questionable the dividing of the event of penance into a purely canonical excommunication, on the one hand, and a sacramental, 'real' penance, on the other (cf. J. Grotz).

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as in the offering of sacrifice by priests.

C) A SYSTEMATIC SURVEY

Moreover, although the beginning of penance, consisting of the immediate, divinely inspired awareness of the interior fire of judgement, and its end, consisting of the direct reception of the Holy Spirit, are both essential for the person guilty of mortal sin and his penance, this does not mean that a mediation of created sanctifying powers, acting in all their human and ecclesial dimensions, is in any way excluded. In fact God's immediate act of conversion leads man back into this reality of the created sanctifying powers and subjects him to their influence Christ honours the angel of the Church', who has to lead the sinner to full health and who, therefore, like the good Samaritan, brings the sinner back into the inn of the Church.[451] God hands the sinner over to the 'angel of penance'.[452] We have already [317] seen that even the devil, to whom the person guilty of mortal sin is 'handed over', has, in Origen's system, a positive role in penance which he carries out unwillingly as God's agent. Thus the process of penance as a *whole* is visible as a reality of the Church in all its phases. It takes place in all the dimensions of created reality in the ambit of the visible, hierarchical Church, just as it does in the Church considered as an interior community of grace and in the depths of man's personal freedom, that is, at the point where man is in direct contact with God. The process comprises three phases which do not necessarily succeed each other chronologically. It begins with insensitivity and the immediacy of God which is experienced within it as a radical judgement; it passes into and through the medium of the created punitive and, thereby, healing reality of the Church and of man's flesh; it ends with the immediate awareness of God, this, time experienced as radical love in the reception of the Holy Spirit. If we distinguish in this way the dimensions and the development of the penitential process and represent it schematically we obtain a record of all its aspects in the schema produced on page 318 which is designed to illustrate both the complexity and the unity of Origen's view of the penance of Christians.

This schema ought to be fully comprehensible, for the most part,[453] in the light of what we have already seen. This applies even to most of the connections between the individual elements of the penitential process. The following considerations are intended to facilitate a further understanding, particularly concerning the sacramental nature and efficacy of the process.

The first striking aspect of this schema is that the three dimensions of the penitential process which it distinguishes obviously evince a relationship with what later theology will call *sacramentum – res et sacramentum – res sacramenti*. This relationship becomes clear immediately *res et sacramentum* is understood in its most meaningful and objective sense and not as a formal, abstract, juridical or ontological concept. This notion really means an

[451] In Luc.hom. 34 (GCS 35) 204,14-26.
[452] In Ps. 37 hom. 1,1 (PG 12) 1372. It should not be forgotten that this activity of the created heavenly powers is also the 'truth' of the τυ/ποφ which happens in the Church, where the bishop, the angel's earthly counterpart, has an analogous role in the education of penitents.
[453] For the sake of the clarity and simplicity of the schema, we have attempted to express here Origen's notion that the whole penitential event is also an 'image' of the eschatological purification of man, who must endure the future fire of judgement. This 'prospective' tendency of every sacramental event towards an eschatological truth should not be overlooked. Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 56 ff. What is here said concerning baptism also applies to penance: *ego puto quad et post resurrectionem ex mortuis indigeamas sacramento eluente nos atque purgante*: In Luc.hom. 14 (GCS 35) 99,8-12; cf. In Matt.tom. XV 23 (GCS 40) 416-18. In fact, according to In Jer.hom. 20,8-9 (GCS 6) 190-2, the penitential fire of this life is an anticipation of the eschatological fire which will purify man definitively.

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inner relationship of the recipient of the sacrament to the Church.[454] It is brought about by the sacramental sign. It is specific to each individual sacrament, and through it a special grace is communicated. On this view the *sacramentum* is the visible event in the dimension of the official Church (of the *potestas ordinis*), the *res et sacramentum* is the relationship of man to the Church as the means of grace, signified and

[318]

		Direction of the Progress of the Penitential Process		
		God alone in grace as *judgment* ▶	the created powers as the grace of reconciliation ▶	◀ (again) God alone in grace as *salvation*
The Dimensions of the Penitential Process	The exterior Official Church	official church excommunication as the image of the expulsion into the 'outside' that is God's judgment ▼	public penance and official *correptio*, sacrifice of the Church, 'prayer' ▶ ▼	◀ official reconciliation (reverti ad Ecclesiam) ▼
	The Interior Church of the Saints	▲ the interior separation from the Church as a means of grace ▼	the interior reconciling activity of the Church of the saints by means of the co-redemptive 'assumption' of the sinner's guilt ▼	full participation in the Church as the means of grace (*reconiungi corpori Christi et membris Ecclesiae*) ▼
	Man as Spirit and Flesh	the experience of God as the interior fire of judgement ▶	*interius carnis ut spiritus salvus fiat* ▶	reception of the Holy Spirit

effected by the *sacramentum*, and finally the *res sacramenti* is the grace of the Church which accrues to man as a result of this relationship and which effects his whole activity and being. The relationship between the three notions of later theology and the three dimensions of the penitential process which are discernible in Origen should now be quite clear. The events or effects which we have just outlined in fact are each produced by one of the three dimensions.

[454] Cf., for example, M. de la Taille, *Mystenium fidei 3* (Paris 1931), p. 581, where this relationship of *res et sacramentum* to the Church, especially in penance, is already fairly clear. It is certainly evident in Augustine's teaching on the Eucharist: the Eucharist is also essentially *sacramentum communionis ad Ecclesiam*, and it is perfectly comprehensible to present this most profound unity with Christ's mystical body as the *res et sacramentum* of the Eucharist.

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The peculiarity [319] of Origen's view consists solely in the fact that the sacramental event (*sacramentum*) and its immediate (*res et sacramentum*) and mediated (*res sacramenti*) effect itself have three stages in each of these dimensions. They are to be considered, therefore, as a dynamic process and not merely as static entities. It is only when each dimension is seen in relation to the others that its full significance can be assessed precisely.

The three stages which are discernible in the schema with regard to the direction and the succession of the development in the penitential process could obviously be put in a different order. Origen's thought would probably not be violated if the second and third stages were transposed. For the handing over of the penitent to the saving powers of the interior Church can also be understood as the *consequence* (as well as the presupposition) of a change of an intimate awareness of God as anger and judgement to an awareness of him as love. In this sense God would deliver to the Church the person who is already saved. The awareness of his judgement is already a grace for him, so that the first and the third stages of the schema are practically only two aspects of one and the same act by which God transforms man. Such a transposition is not made unfeasible by the fact that in the dimension of the visible and official Church public penance and the official *correptio* obviously and clearly take place *before* church reconciliation. For it should not be forgotten that the reconciling activity of the Church, both as official and as holy, like the interior work of penance, the *interitus carnis*, which ends only with actual death, continues beyond reconciliation, even if somewhat less explicitly than previously. The Church's teaching about penance, the sacrifice on its altars, its prayer, the interior expiation of the saints, the offering of the martyrs and the death of the elderly – all these are permanent features of the Church which exercise a saving influence on the sinner. Thus reconciliation, in so far as it is a readmission to the Church, may very easily be considered as an incorporation into this Spirit-permeated, reconciling and *active* medium of grace that is the Church. The Church bestows the Spirit on the new and the renewed member not only through its being but also through its permanent life.

This clarifies a point which previously was probably left vague and, when expressed, did not appear to correspond very well to Origen's own thinking. Reconciliation bestows the Spirit. Provided that this [320] is correctly understood, it is what Origen means. In this view reconciliation confers the Spirit in so far as it means the incorporation into the static and active medium of grace that is the inner Church of the saints. In other words, this middle term in Origen's system must not be overlooked. Origen is so insistent that the personal possession of the Spirit is an indispensable condition in everyone who, by prayer, exhortation, etc., contributes to the reconciliation of others, that it is unthinkable that he should renounce this principle *completely* where it is a question of the bestowal of the Spirit by official reconciliation. It can certainly be applied here without the implication of Donatism. We have already established that Origen does not lean in this direction in the case of the other sacraments, and this would also contradict his view on the teaching of penance. The person who is reconciling does not transmit *his* Spirit of grace but reincorporates the penitent legitimately into the visible Church. But, in so doing, he places the penitent within that medium of grace which as a whole possesses this Spirit perpetually and inalienably and, therefore, communicates it to all those who legitimately belong to it. Thus the Church achieves in them that victory of the Spirit over the mortal flesh which is the condition for the personal possession of the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is every indication, therefore, that Origen's view of the effects of church reconciliation is already similar to that which will be held later by Augustine.[455] Accordingly, reconciliation does not simply transmit the Spirit from the person who is reconciling, as the Donatists would have it, or even from God to the

[455] Cf., for example, B. Poschmann, 'Die kirchliche Vermittlung der Sündenvergebung nach Augustin' in: ZKTh 45 (1921), pp. 208-28; 405-32; 497-526.

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penitent through the instrumentality of the person reconciling, after the fashion of the usual way of explaining sacramental causality. Rather it communicates the Spirit in so far as it incorporates the penitent into the community which already possesses this Spirit, namely, the Church. And this happens irrespective of whether the person reconciling possesses this Spirit personally or not. Nevertheless, the person who claims the right to take part in the Church's reconciling activity must also possess this Spirit himself. The person who is not holy, therefore, communicates the Spirit only when and in so far as he incorporates the penitent into the permanently holy body of Christ. If this body were ever to be deprived of the Spirit – which of course is absolutely impossible – then the sacrament would be ineffective. The fact that the interior personal state of the individual dispensing the sacrament is irrelevant to the effect of the sacrament [321] should not lead to the conclusion that the possession of the Spirit by the Church of the saints is also irrelevant to the power of its sacraments. The reconciling activity of the Church of the saints is only the necessary expression of its holy reality. Thus this activity is the indispensable condition of the effective communication of the Spirit by official reconciliation. Consequently, the individual phases which are discernible in the process of penance suppose each other and are *interdependent* to such an extent that, in the final analysis, one of them cannot be isolated from the others and stand in relation to them completely and independently as an efficient cause to its external effect. The individual phases are supported by the whole and it is only within this whole that it is possible to ascribe to one phase a 'causal' relationship with regard to another. Obviously all this throws some light on Origen's notion of the causality of the sacramental sign.

The schema also illustrates the fact that, according to Origen, what happens visibly in the sphere of the official Church is not only the tangible embodiment of the *Church's* activity, having an effect in the depth of man's soul, but also the expression of man's interior journey of conversion. This man meets God in his fire of judgement burning immediately within him. He is, therefore, 'outside' the Church and begins again to allow himself to be influenced by the saving grace of Christ's body. It is for this reason that he does penance publicly and then receives the Holy Spirit by dying in penance. He is then once more in the fellowship of the Church. For Origen the sacramental sign is the embodiment of the act of God *and* the act of man as they occur within the Church. Later Thomas Aquinas will say that the 'acts of the penitent' are the interior constitutive elements (*materia*) of the sacramental event. We have something similar in Origen, although without the notion of hylomorphism. Moreover, the sacramental sign is so organically articulated in the penitential institution of the early Church that *everything* is clearly at the same time the expression of the act of God and the act of man. This made it impossible for Origen to ascribe a part of the visible sacramental event exclusively to man's interior act and another part exclusively to God's act.

All these considerations justify us in treating the whole external event of penance, from excommunication up to reconciliation, as the expression of that which is happening in the interior reality of the [322] Church and within the personal depths of the man who is converting himself. Considered as the unity of the visible activity of the hierarchical Church and of the public activity and suffering of the penitent within the Church, this event is what Origen calls συ/μβολον,[456] in the case of baptism. This applies to what happens interiorly

[456] Cf., for example, In Joan. VI 33 (GCS 10) 142,28; Contra Celsum III 51 (GCS 2) 247,10; In Jer.hom. 19,13 (GCS 6) 169,22 f.; Ad Rom. V 8 (PG 14) 1038; συ/μβολον, πυ/ποφ are here distinguished from the καθα&ρσιον ψυξη=φ, the δυ/ναμιφ of the event or – as we can also say with Origen – from the α)ληθινα_ κατα_ τα_ ο)νο&ματα ταυ=τα (which designate the symbol) πρα&γματα. In Matt.tom. XVI 22 (GCS 40) 338,10-13: it is here said of what is the interior 'truth', the signified reality of the officials of the hierarchy. Obviously this does not mean that τυ/ποφ and συ/μβολον (which are also often used elsewhere as synonyms by Origen) *only* or even principally have this meaning of sacramental sign and image (which is fulfilled by the reality signified). Mostly these words have the meaning which today's theological terminology still knows by

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and we have here perhaps some more light thrown on the *way* in which Origen envisages the efficacy of the sacrament. It is no longer a question here of showing that with regard to the sacramental event in general or to penance in particular this event is the *effective* sign of the interior event of grace. This has also been already treated elsewhere.[457] What we wish to consider at the moment is how to define more precisely the *way* in which the visible event is effective. Now, according to Origen, all the phases of the penitential process in its different dimensions are so interdependent that the interior and exterior aspects should be considered to be related to each other reciprocally as cause and effect. This is the only way of doing justice to Origen's own testimony. It is possible that the notion of τυ/ποφ (συ/μβολον) will help us to answer the question of how such a relationship of *reciprocal* dependence of the individual phases in the one process can be conceived. However, this relationship should not be depreciated by making the συ/μβολον a mere subsequent and, ultimately, unimportant reflection of an event which exists independently in itself. At the same time, it ought not to be exaggerated in the sense that it can no longer be considered the expression and consequence, that is, the 'manifestation' of the interior aspect. On one occasion Origen[458] calls the bodily gesture of prayer συ/μβολον and ει0κω&ν of the free interior attitude of prayer[459] which is visible in the body and so impresses on it an 'image' of the ι0διω&ματα of the soul. Indeed, in general for Origen what is perceived by the senses is essentially only a sign and an image of what is true and real.[460] But the relationship between the body and the soul is the most simple and the most intelligible case illustrating what A. von Harnack says on the subject of the 'symbol' of the ancients:

> We today understand by symbol a thing which is not what it signifies; at that time symbol was understood as a thing which in some way was what it signified; at the same time, according to that previous way of thinking, the true heavenly reality always lay in or behind the manifestation, without coinciding with it completely on earth.[461]

[323] The scholastic theory of the relationship between the soul and the body still provides us today with perhaps the best access for our thinking habits to an understanding of the ancient notion of συ/μβολον. Origen himself justifies such an approach, since he holds that the corporeal is a συ/μβολον of the psychic. Now if the corporeal is understood not merely as the juxtaposed expression of a spiritual reality which is itself independent of this expression, but rather as a manifestation in which the spiritual, even though it is distinct from the manifestation, *must* be expressed in order to be *itself*, then it is possible to understand how the interior and the exterior aspects are related to each other in the symbol of the sacrament. The symbol is the expression of grace in the mystery, in the sense that this grace is expressed only there and depends upon it, in the same way that the symbol depends upon the grace. The 'incarnation' is the way in which the grace becomes present. By being given a body it is given existence. According to Origen the sacrament-image is not, as in modern sacramental

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the word 'type'.

[457] Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 55.

[458] The drawing of this parallel (the body as συ/μβολον of the soul) seems justified, because Origen himself in his teaching on the sacraments speaks about an 'embodiment' of the power of grace: In Joan. VI 33 (GCS 10) 142,26: σωματικω~φ γι/νεσθαι.

[459] De or. 31,2 f (GCS 3) 396,12 f.; 396,23 f. On this parallel between the spiritual and bodily expression (*signum*): In Num. hom. 2,2 (GCS 30) 10-12.

[460] Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Le Mystérion*, p. 517 f.

[461] A. von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* I (Tübingen 1931), p. 476. On this Platonic-early Christian notion of image, cf. A. Lieske, p. 212 ff., and the literature which he cites; G. Söhngen, *Symbol und Wirklicheit im Kultmysterium* (Bonn 1940), p. 55 ff., points out that such a notion could also find an application in today's theology.

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theology, 'image' because it is effective, or even 'image and effective', but it is precisely 'effective as image' or 'effective, because it is image'. Grace is produced and is present because and in so far as it is embodied within its symbol, just as there are spiritual attitudes which are only present if they are realized by the bodily gesture which they themselves produce. Thus the συ/μβολον of the sacrament is a cause by being the image of that which is caused.[462] This is not the place to give a more precise definition and explanation of this συ/μβολον which is simultaneously cause and effect of the reality signified. We believe, however, that with it we have reached to some extent Origen's notion of συ/μβολον in relation to the sacramental event, and that we may apply it to the process of penance. If we wish to understand Origen's view of the way that the visible aspect of this process is effective, then we must accept that this whole process is a unity of the act of God and the act of man within the Church. By his penance man exposes himself to God's judgement which is grace and manifests this visibly in the Church. This act is only effective in so far as it is simultaneously a consequence and a cause, that is, an image which renders the reality present in expressing it. But similarly God also reveals the saving act of his judgement within the Church. This is evident in the word of binding and loosing expressed by the Church. It is in this way, and only in this way, that God's grace is really present. The Church's word of judgement and of pardon is, therefore, also simultaneously the consequence [324] and the cause of the same creative word of God which is here and now expressed in the depths of the sinner who is to receive grace.[463]

7.Penance as a Sacrament

A) CHURCH PENANCE AS A SACRAMENT

We are now in a position to raise the question of the sacramentality of church penance, even though we have previously already used the terms 'sacrament' and 'sacramental' unhesitatingly to describe what we have found in Origen's work. In fact all has already been said on this subject. According to Origen penance leads to an interior pardon for man by the reception of the Holy Spirit. This process is also visible in the dimension of the official-hierarchical Church. This visible aspect is, on the one hand, necessary, since Origen clearly sees the need for the penance of excommunication in the case of mortal sins, and, on the

[462] In Scholastic terminology, we must say: the sacramental sign should not be considered as the efficient cause of something which is completely different from itself, but belongs to that category of causality which is difficult to define, lying, as it does, between efficient and formal-material causality. Accordingly, the sign is itself only in so far as (exactly like a *forma*) it is at work in its *formandum* and *formatum*. Thus, on the one hand, the *actus* of this *formatio* is different from the sign, and, on the other hand, the sign would not be itself if it did not establish this *actus*.

[463] Although both grace and judgement should be manifested exteriorly in order to exist, Origen knows that they can also exist without having their normal manifestation always and in every case. According to Origen, it is possible for a person to be 'outside' in God's eyes, while still appearing to be in the Church. With regard to the grace of baptism (therefore giving a positive case), he stresses that, in certain circumstances, it is able to exist without the sacrament, that is, without its exterior manifestation: In Num. hom. 3,1 (GCS 30) 14,1-17. Nevertheless, this does not alter the principle that, according to Origen, 'in this lower, visible world, to which we now belong, every interior reality must be manifested exteriorly' (E. R. Redepenning, II, p. 421 f.). How the 'exception' is reconcilable with this principle presents a problem even for theology today, when, on the one hand, it maintains the *necessitas medii* of the sacrament, while, on the other hand, it grants that it is possible to be justified by the mere *votum sacramenti*. Simply because Origen recognizes that in certain circumstances the reality can exist without its full manifestation does not mean that he considers the συ/μβολον in the sacramental event to be only a subsequent sign having no importance for the reality signified, any more than the teaching that purely 'interior' faith and love effects justification allows us to accuse modern theology of denying the necessity of the sacramental sign.

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other hand, it is prescribed by the hierarchical Church in virtue of an explicit authorization by Jesus Christ with reference to John 20 and Matthew 16.[464] Now where the visible aspect of a grace-giving process is so necessary that this process cannot exist without it – and it is only in this way that it can be thought of meaningfully as necessary – and where the power to establish this visible aspect is given by Christ himself, there we have, in today's terminology, a sacrament. The question of precisely *how* the causal relationship between the sacramental sign and the grace signified by it is to be considered in no way alters the fact that there is a sacrament. Even if *this* further question, when viewed in the light of a later and possibly theologically necessary solution, was not answered very exactly by a previous theologian, this does not justify the conclusion that this theologian either denied or overlooked the existence of the sacrament.[465] Origen knew of a *sacrament* of penance.

At the same time, this sacramental process is still firmly embedded in the general reconciling activity of the Church. Origen does not only recognize *alongside* the penance of excommunication other forms of the Church's reconciling activity which, incidentally, he overlooks less willingly than generally happens today. He also implicates the reconciling activity of the Church of saints *within* the sacramental [325] process itself. According to the most probable interpretation of his views, the repentant sinner is reincorporated into the mystical body by reconciliation in such a way that he thereby receives the Holy Spirit. In view of these considerations, it can hardly be reckoned a deficiency if sacramental church penance rather than being totally isolated remains organically connected with the whole life of the Church which is constantly renewing its holiness by penance.

B) 'PRIVATE' SACRAMENTAL PENANCE IN ORIGEN?

Is there, according to Origen, in addition to the penance of excommunication, yet another remission of sins which would be sacramental in the modern sense, that is, a 'private', 'secret' absolution from sins by the priests? Since we have already answered this question in essence, all that is required here is a summary. There is no evidence of a real sacramental 'private penance' in Origen.[466] Certainly, even in his view, the Church, in the person of its official representatives, supports the effort of the sinner, even when it is a matter of the remission of sins which are not subject to the penance of excommunication as mortal sins. Thus he refers to private exhortations, corrections, intercessory prayers, sacrifices, pastoral counselling, etc., on the part of priests. It could even be said that Origen considers such a support to be necessary and, therefore, as obligatory for the laity.[467] Nevertheless, this is not

[464] Cf. De or. 28,9.10 (GCS 3) 380,16-19; 381,12 f.; In Matt. tom. XII 14 (GCS 40) 98,28-99,9. It should be noted that Origen explicitly attests that the episcopate make its appeal for this power to these texts. Thus this power refers explicitly to the penance of excommunication. It is, therefore, immaterial that Origen himself under-stands the binding and loosing also, although not exclusively, in a sense which refers to the reconciling activity carried out by others than the official hierarchical Church.

[465] We have already seen that in those places where Origen's view of the causality of the sacrament is obscure, there are also difficulties which even modern theology has to discuss.

[466] The idea of a sacramental 'private penance' in Origen is also rejected by G. Teichtweier, p. 322, as well as by B. Altaner/A. Stuiber, *Patrologie* (Freiburg 1966), p.207. Even J. Grotz, p. 299, would wish to avoid the misunderstanding which might arise as a consequence of his interpretation of Origen's theology of penance, namely the assumption of a private penance. Thus he stresses that excommunication and penance without excommunication are not two completely independent kinds of penance-which would allow the conclusion that sacramental penance without excommunication is a kind of private penance-but that excommunication is 'only a preliminary stage for real church penance'.

[467] On the reasonable assumption that In Num.hom. 10,1 (GCS 30) 48,4-9 really is concerned also with non-mortal sins. Only subsequently, in the question of how the priest, as opposed to the lay person, remits his sins is the distinction drawn between ordinary sins and mortal sins (ibid., 68,10-12). Nevertheless, upon closer analysis, this text shows how Origen thinks of the reconciliation of the lay person by the priest in the case of

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sufficient proof that this obligatory measure taken by the official Church was a sacrament in the strict sense, that is, as distinct from liturgical prayer, from the Church's supervision of morals and from the eucharistic sacrifice in general. It has already been shown that De or. 28 contains nothing more than this.[468]

In Lev. hom. 15,2[469] presents no more of an argument in favour of a sacramental private penance. Obviously Origen also recognizes the existence of mortal sins which in fact do not entail excommunication. This does not, however, warrant the conclusion that these sins *ought* not to be remitted by a public church penance. But even if it were accepted that this false conclusion[470] were in fact correct, it would still have to be demonstrated that such sins could be remitted not only with the help of the Church but by a specifically sacramental means, that is, private penance, which is distinct from the other aids which the Church offers for reconciliation. The private confession [326] before the physician of souls,[471] who does not consider that a public penance is necessary, does not in itself represent a private performance of penance. For, even supposing that this doctor of souls was normally a priest, it should not be forgotten that according to Origen, at least in theory, every spiritual person possesses the power to loosen, in the sense which we explained earlier. Thus it is hardly possible to decide in the cases in question whether Origen is thinking of priests as such or of a spiritual person, who is in fact either a priest or a lay person.

Moreover, no further precision is given on the role of the physician of souls in the case of non-mortal sins. It needs to be proven specifically that this role is other than the Church's usual reconciling role, which we have seen to exist alongside the penance of excommunication and which is not sacramental in today's sense. This cannot be presupposed. It is methodologically false to understand the remission of sins by the Church in any form as a 'private' sacramental absolution provided it is done by 'the Church and does not involve a lifting of excommunication. This is because, according to Origen, a third possibility is conceivable. This is not to be considered sacramental, however, since it is open to every

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non-mortal sins: it is done through the same priestly functions by which the priest *ipse suum potest purgare peccatum* (ibid., 68,10). It is a question, therefore, of functions by which the priest can reconcile himself, but which are refused to the lay person because he cannot exercise these functions. If it were here a question of sacramental absolution, then both priest and lay person would be in the same position, since no priest can absolve himself any more than a lay person. It must, therefore, be a question of functions which the priest as such can exercise in general – and in his own favour. These are easy to name: the knowledge of truth, in which the official διδα&σκαλοφ is not dependent upon others as the lay person is, the official liturgical prayer of the Church for reconciliation, in which the priest is able to include himself and the liturgical sacrifice. Thus it is obvious why Origen disputes the possibility of a reconciliation of oneself only in the case of *mortal* sins (ibid., 68,10-12). In this case, according to Origen's system, the priest, too, is the mere object of the Church's hierarchical activity. This assumes, however, that there is not a sacramental absolution outside the penance for mortal sins. The same applies to texts like In Num.hom. 10,1 (GCS 10) 71,3-12. The *requirere sacerdotem, the peccatum suum per pontificem curare* certainly includes here the remission of mortal sin, for otherwise the result would be an in *peccatis suis mori* (ibid., 71,7). In the case of *other* sins this need mean nothing more than the disciplinary, admonitory and liturgical support of the penitent by the Church, without this support being an actual sacrament.

[468] Cf. above under n.421, together with the relevant text.

[469] Cf. ibid. (GCS 29) 489,11-22 and above under nn.107-11, together with the relevant text. Even apart from the question of whether here *culpa mortalis* is really to be read as opposed to *crimen mortale*, it is not in any case mentioned at all that the *communia, quae frequenter incurrimus* and *sine intermissione redimuntur* are remitted by means of a specifically sacramental act of the Church. Otherwise it would have to be assumed that at that time confession occurred extraordinarily frequently (*sine intermissione*, for example, the *sermonis vitia* [ibid., 489,15], etc.). This, however, is a very unlikely notion.

[470] We have already seen that, according to Origen, even secret mortal sins are, as a matter of principle, subject to public church penance. Such a sinner must likewise 'do outside the Church, for a sufficient period of time, what he has to do': In Jer.fragm. 48 (GCS 6) 222,14-16.

[471] In Ps. 37 hom. 2,6 (PG 12) 1386.

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spiritual person. And even if it were reserved to the priest, it could only represent those powers which cannot be identified with the actual power to perform the sacrament of penance.

The only possible inkling of a private sacramental penance in Origen is found in De or. 28, which presupposes that the priest is able to remit at least certain sins without excommunication by his 'prayer', and in so doing he acts in the awareness of the power mentioned in John 20. In this case there is an objective sacrament, irrespective of whether the priest is explicitly aware or not of the sacramental character of his action, say, in parallel to baptism or to the reconciliation of an excommunicate. In fact he intends to exercise the sacramental power conferred in John 20 and thus his 'prayer' for forgiveness is more than a mere prayer of intercession. This theological deduction, however, comes up against a whole series of difficulties.

Does the appeal to John 20, when the sins for which the power of remission is being sought are not mortal sins, represent a special biblical basis? Is the binding and loosing in this text, when applied to such 'light' sins, to be understood any differently from what lies within the capability of a spiritual lay person? Is it to be supposed [327] that, when and wherever such a 'prayer' occurs, the other preconditions, especially confession, necessary for the dispensing of a sacrament, are fulfilled? If this 'prayer' is construed as sacramental, it must be admitted at the same time that Origen in the same text and elsewhere allows it efficacy only if the priest is a spiritual person. There is a hint of Donatism here which tends to speak against the sacramental view of this 'prayer' and suggests that it is the intercession of a friend of God, for whom it is decisive that, as an intecessor, he is an ε0μπνευσθει/φ, who is 'known by his fruits'.[472] Origen does not display any Donatist tendencies elsewhere in his sacramental teaching or in his teaching on penance. It is, therefore, methodologically correct not to assume such tendencies in this passage, so long as the 'prayer' of the priests in De or. 28 can be interpreted as other than sacramental. This is obviously possible and is not excluded by the appeal to John 20:23. If this passage really does refer to a specific act of the Church, other than the accompaniment of the personal penance of every Christian, then one could expect that this would also be mentioned in In Lev. Hom. 2,4.[473] where Origen takes the opportunity to enumerate as comprehensively as possible the many different ways in which sins may be remitted. In this passage, apart from baptism, martyrdom and public church penance, there is mention only of the subjective performance of penance. Finally, it is difficult to see for which category of sins such a private sacramental penance would be appropriate. The attempt to prove in Origen a third group of serious sins between mortal sins which are subject to public church penance and venial sins must be considered futile. Even secret mortal sins are subject to public church penance. Today, our own practical daily experience, contrary to theory and liturgical ceremony, knows of only a sacramental intervention of the Church for the remission of sins. This is why we tend to think that every form of the remission of sins which is clearly attested in Origen is to be interpreted as sacramental. But there is no real basis for this interpretation. In any case, Origen considers 'prayer' for the forgiveness of sins to be so much a part of the priest's other activity for the remission of sins (*monendo*, *docendo*, *instruendo*[474] – *per sacrificia sacerdotum et obsecrationes pontficum . . . per scientiam divinae legis*)[475] that he hardly appears to be aware of a special power which is not already

[472] Cf. De or. 28,8 (GCS 3) 380,8 f.
[473] Cf. ibid. (GCS 29) 295, 26-297,3.
[474] Cf. In Lev.hom. 5,4 (GCS 29) 342,12 f.
[475] Cf. In Ex.hom. 4,8 (OCS 29) 182,1-5. The fact that the *obsecrationes* of the bishops are listed here under other means for the remission of sins of a more therapeutic kind and that all together are opposed to the remission of mortal sins (*difficiliora*, which require God's own intervention: ibid., 182,4 f.) shows that Origen himself sees in these *obsecrationes* a contrast with church penance. He hardly means, therefore, that the mere

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implied in the rest of the priest's activity. He considers, rather, that these other priestly functions (moral correction, [328] prayer, sacrifice, teaching), with their corresponding power, are also able to remit sins.

In the reconciliation after an excommunication we have a function which is clearly reserved exclusively to the bishop, even though in its effect it is related with the activity which the whole Church exercises in the remission of sins. The only proper sacrament discernible in Origen is the penance of excommunication. Apart from this, there are indeed acts of the hierarchical Church which are directed towards the forgiveness of sins, but these cannot be called sacramental in today's sense.

'prayer' of the priest for the remission of sins is a special sacramental event.

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[vii]

FOREWORD

This new volume of the *Theological Investigations* brings the series up to sixteen volumes (12 in the German) Once again this collection consists of a wide variety of essays, talks and writings, which the author was asked to produce on different occasions. From this one would expect a miscellaneous and random result, but in fact even a first, swift glance at the writings which originated in this way over the last few years and which seemed appropriate for such a collection reveals the quite clear emergence of a particular topic, namely the question of the Holy Spirit and his activity in the Church and in theology.

This is hardly surprising, since the charismatic movements in North America and in Europe have aroused interest in the gifts of the Spirit, in charisms and the guidance of the Spirit, and interest which came overnight to occupy the centre of the public, religious stage. It is indeed obvious that this type of experience of the Spirit raises a question which theology cannot and may not evade. For in the first place it seems as though a long forgotten Christian theme has once again taken on new life. But this brings with it the charge against theology that it has not been concerned with this important aspect of the life of faith. Today it is precisely non-theologians, the ordinary faithful, who must remind those 'responsible for Christian belief', i.e. theologians, of their neglect and forgetfulness, through the living proof of spiritual power. Furthermore the concrete expressions of this activity of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues or healing, to mention only the most well known, seem to call in question the traditional theological enterprise, the whole way in which theologians think and reason. Effective Christianity would then detach itself from the realm of theology and find once more its original place in the charismatic faith of Christians.

[viii] Without being able to investigate more closely the rights and wrongs of these charges, which, though mostly unspoken, are commonly felt, we may at this point simply note that they recall one of our earliest theological enquiries, from which an unbroken thread may be traced throughout our theological work. These enquiries have not been prominent for a long while in the German speaking world and have not, in consequence, received much attention. If they are now taken up in this volume, the purpose is to present the above mentioned theme in a somewhat clearer light, for it is from this concern that our writings over the last few years on the subject of the activity of the Holy Spirit have originated. In this way the collection presented here has acquired its unified theme and focus, which is expressed in the subtitle: 'Experience of the Spirit: source of Theology'. A few short remarks may at least indicate the exact meaning to be attached to this phrase.

As in earlier volumes of my *Theological Investigations*, the point of stress summarised in the subtitle should not be taken to suggest a systematic treatment of the topic. It may be said only to expose the underlying shape which is shared to a greater or lesser extent by the individual essays. If in the present volume that consists in the experience of the Spirit, then at least a theme is formulated, or rather a basic stance indicated, which extends beyond the particular texts which have been brought together here and is of crucial importance for the whole theological activity of the author. This implies not only the general truth that genuine Christian theology can only speak through the Holy Spirit and in that measure already presumes and includes the experience of his power. Rather it should point to that quite specific experience to which St Ignatius Loyola wished to guide and direct spiritual practice through his Exercises. This experience is characterised by discernment of spirits, by the process of choice, by the practical search for the will of God, to mention only a few aspects. Proper to such experience is the basic tendency, strengthened and stimulated by meditation on the life of Jesus which shapes and surrounds it, to seek for the appropriate theological

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expression by which the immediate experience may achieve greater depth and clarity. From spiritual decisions, which are essential for the life of faith, whether of the individual or of the Church, there follows an inevitable exchange between experience and reflection. This in turn permits the ecclesial and theological activity and structures to possess the necessary flexibility and reference to particular situations in the [ix] transmission of truth. This may be clarified more concretely if one recalls the author's earlier works, for instance the Quaestiones Disputatae, '*The Dynamic Element in the Church*' or '*Visions and Prophecies*', or the various utterances on freedom and on public opinion in the Church, on the task of the layman and his relation to the hierarchy. The attempts to find a solution to these and similar questions all involved the serious application of the same basic concept of the working of the Holy Spirit. This theme appears also in a more spontaneous and perhaps livelier form in the author's published papers on the subject of spiritual practice; one may mention here '*Spiritual Exercises*' (1965) and '*Meditations on Priestly Life*' (1970). In such practices the Christian attempts to lay himself open directly to the instinctual faith of the Church, to ratify and make his own those insights of faith which the Church has achieved over the centuries through the guidance of the Spirit.

In this context awareness of the Spirit is in no way restricted to the intense emotional experience of the individual; it is alive also in the broad stream of the Church's awareness of the Spirit. But this does not mean that on the basis of a sober, rational theology and psychology such intense experiences should without more ado be rejected or treated with sceptical doubt in every case. It is rather that men, who are still on pilgrimage through time and history, should never imagine that they have received an absolutely certain and final assurance of the Spirit. What better way, indeed, is there of maintaining a lively awareness of this state than to insert one's own experience into the activity of the Spirit in the broad mass of the Church?

One can see from these few remarks that on the one hand the reality of the Spirit in Christian faith confronts theological reflection with limit questions, with problems which Christianity is forced to face in order to come to terms with itself, its past, its present tasks and its power to fashion the future: namely, the foundation of faith, the experience of grace, living from faith, etc. The present era is not the first to raise questions like these, but perhaps the answers which belong to the Church's history of spirituality have in the meantime been partly buried and forgotten. But we can even today grasp with relative ease the theological statements on the topic. Naturally theology has always attempted in various ways to formulate its answers by listening to Scripture and this point of departure is one to which contemporary theology also remains bound.

On the other hand reflection on spiritual experience impels [x] Christian faith into the heart of the mystery from which arises the question of God and of Jesus Christ in his unity and difference with regard to the Father. And, since the Christian has to understand himself both in relation to Jesus Christ and at the same time in contrast to him, the question can at this point no longer be suppressed, the question, that is, which man is to himself. The ecclesial community should help to answer this existential question, for its claim and its ministry remain, as does man himself, under the influence not only of the purely divine activity of the Spirit but also of the operations of the world, if indeed this conceptual antithesis is here allowable. But the effects of the world are not at all so unambiguous, or so easily evaluated, for the contemporary Christian as appears to have been the case in the past. For in these effects, too, the Spirit can be at work; it can present signs of the times to the Church. Thus the scope of spiritual discernment is broadened almost beyond measure. There is today a widespread feeling of oppression, fear and insecurity, a sense of being lost. The countless Variety of opposing questions and problems threatens to cripple the Christian. For however joyful and good the strict application of spiritual judgement may be in helping to solve this or

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that particular problem, it inevitably sharpens the perception of the relentlessly mounting number of similar questions. These the individual is no longer in a position even to survey by himself, still less to hope that he can make a substantial contribution to their solution.

In this sense what has been said so far, and indeed the whole collection of writings presented here, may leave the reader very dissatisfied. For the texts assembled here mostly deal with very specific problems, to which moreover the author has already addressed himself on various earlier occasions. So the volume may not appear to promise very much in detail, nor a great deal that is new. However the matter may be seen in quite a different light when the overall viewpoint, 'Experience of the Spirit: source of Theology', is allowed to coordinate and unify the contents and to offer a fresh perspective. This will bring to light connections and relations which scarcely come into view when the particular essays are read on their own. In wishing the reader to tackle this volume of the *Theological Investigations* in this way, the author is not so much concerned with the historical fact mentioned above that his own theological thinking sprang from the practice of the Ignatian Exercises and so in fact was fashioned in the light of reflection on the effective operation of the [xi] Spirit. Rather he is moved by a consideration which is grounded in the very substance of theology. In every case theology must be built out of a living experience of faith which is given, in the author's opinion, when hope transcends particular expectations and is enveloped by a promise deeper than words, when responsibility is freely accepted and borne, even without the explicit ratification of utility or success, when freedom is lived and death is grasped as the entry into the unimaginable assurance of salvation. Everyone must dig out his own experiences of this sort from the rubble of his daily activity. In all these moments, so we affirm, God, and his liberating grace, is present and in them we experience what Christians call the Holy Spirit. And this awareness remains alive even at times of inevitable oppression. It is offered to us for our free acceptance, if we do not wish to barricade ourselves against it in a hell of freedom.

This experience comes to every man, albeit in an endless variety of forms according to the personal and historical situation of the individual. But the Christian knows that the Spirit of God, which is offered to him for salvation or judgement with continual urgency, has been guaranteed to man as finally victorious in the crucified and risen Jesus and has entered into a permanent and irrevocable covenant with the history of mankind. Thus the Christian is assured that this Spirit, which has been poured out on all flesh and is at work over the whole earth, is no longer to be driven from the world by the despairing rejection of the individual; it is indeed the Spirit of the Father of Jesus, the Spirit of Jesus himself. We trust in his effectiveness and in his victory, if we cast our gaze on Jesus and his victory in death and no longer do we overlook the government of the Spirit at work even in our own lives.

At this deeper and more fundamental level, we find that the particular questions and problems, which threatened to fragment, once more come together. Here Christians and theologians can discover the courage and the joy which they need in order to carry on. On this level, too, the intense charismatic experiences are to be grounded, so that they may transmit the power of Spirit intended by Christianity. If this collection should contribute to this progress, if it can in the best sense have theological repercussions in the world of spiritual experience and awareness of faith, if it can promote consciousness and awareness of a spiritual kind, and if finally it should encourage concentration on the pressing demands of particular problems, without thereby breaking the connection with the [xii] underlying framework, then these essays may continue the work which was intended as the purpose of the earlier volumes.

For the publication of this volume the author has once again relied on the assistance of Fr Karl H. Neufeld S.J., D. Phil. Because of many obstacles and numerous obligations, the author has scarcely had the chance to deal personally with the final draft and arrangement of this volume, in so far as the proposed texts required attention at various points, so as to avoid

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repetitions, remove superfluous material and add valuable notes. For this labour the author has his assistant to thank.

In conclusion I would once more express my joy in being able to dedicate this volume of *Theological Investigations*, even if rather belatedly, to my mother on the completion of the hundredth year of her life.

Munich, June 1975

Karl Rahner

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[1]

PART ONE

Faith and Spirit

[3]

1

THE FOUNDATION OF BELIEF TODAY

The foundation of belief today is a large and difficult question and from the start one should expect only a few fragmentary remarks in the way of an answer.[1] Necessarily we cannot avoid being selective in our considerations and this may lead to some vital points receiving insufficient attention. In modern society, however, we become aware of various needs, requirements and desires which are relevant to the underpinning of Christian belief. This enterprise indeed always contains a risk and we need therefore to be convinced that it is *necessary* today to seek to establish some *grounds* for Christian belief.[2]

As long as Catholic theology exists – indeed we may assert from the very beginning of Christianity – apologetic has been undertaken and fundamental theology taught, even if in a variety of ways, with changing methods, points of departure and perspectives. But the conviction has always remained that Christianity, its faith and its theology must be missionary. Therefore appeal must be made to the unbeliever, the doubter and those on the way to faith. Catholic theology has never maintained the view that faith was a sort of leap in the dark into a world to which there was no other access except through the totally irrational decision to believe. The Catholic mind always included respect for human intelligence, for reflection and for [4] intellectual reasoning and argument. Naturally such reasoning may proceed in a variety of ways depending on the exact topic under discussion and today, for example, it is rightly emphasised that Christianity has to find not only a 'rational' but also a 'narrative' or 'historical' foundation.[3] The Christian message that salvation is accessible in history cannot be expressed in terms of metaphysical reasoning alone, but must also be 'narrated' as the history of salvation. But even such 'narrative' theology is in fact rational, a point that the explanatory statements 'God became flesh', 'Jesus died on the cross', 'Jesus rose from the dead' themselves make plain. This in turn, of course, makes possible theoretical reasoning and metaphysical reflection in theology.

A first deduction follows from these preliminary remarks: whoever is to reach belief has the right to demand that the preachers of the Gospel 'give an account of our hope'[4], as we already find it expressed the New Testament. Such a grounding of faith has an external and an internal aspect; it is at the same time rational and spiritual. Certainly since the 19th century

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[1] On the question of the foundation of faith, cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests', *Theological Investigations* VI (London & Baltimore, 1969) pp. 113-138.
[2] The following reflections were written for a lecture given to preachers and catechists at the IVth Theological Conference at the Bildungshaus Stift, Zwetll in December, 1973. They have been revised and expanded for publication here.
[3] Cf. J. B. Metz, 'Erlösung und Emanzipation' in *Erlösung und Emanzipation*, Quaestiones Disputatae 61, L. Scheffczyk ed. (Freiburg i.Br., 1973), pp. 120-140, esp. 137-140; also J. B. Metz, 'A Small Apology for Narrative', *Concilium* 5/9 (May 1973), pp. 84-89 and H. Weinrich, 'Narrative Theology,' *ibid.,* pp. 48-56.
[4] 1 P 3: 15.

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Catholic theology has not paid sufficient attention to the interior foundation of faith. Current apologetic and fundamental theology has been carried out in too rationalistic a manner. This point must be granted without further dispute.

It was said that, since revelation is evidently guaranteed by miracles, it follows that in the Old Testament, in Jesus Christ and in the Church derived from him, a historical revelation has been given. This fact was, as it were, proved as a whole and the intention was to extract specific truths of faith from divine revelation, demonstrated by such formal reasoning, and present them to the individual with the rider: this is revealed truth; you must believe it; it does not matter whether you understand it or not, or whether you find any interior, personal access to it. Even today it must be admitted that Church authorities still behave in a manner which appeals too exclusively to the formal authority of the Church and the magisterium. On the basis of this authority alone the individual is required to accept specific articles of faith without any effort being made to render such truths credible [5] from within their own horizon of meaning.[5] What exactly is meant, however, by the 'internal' and 'external' aspects of the grounding of faith, or by its 'rational' and 'spiritual' side, must be more clearly indicated in the course of the following reflections.

THE SITUATION OF BELIEF TODAY

The *external* situation of Christian belief, of the possibility and duty of faith, is characterised by the crucial fact that Christianity and the Church are, in the expression of Peter Berger, a cognitive minority.[6]

What was the situation like in the past? For at least 1500 years the Church, and its theology and apologetic, existed in a historical and intellectual world formed by a more or less homogeneous Christian society. Faith constituted public opinion: it was accepted and taken for granted as self-evident. God's existence, for example, was regarded by St Thomas Aquinas as an assumption requiring no discussion for the ordinary mortal, for belief in God was an assumed fact in society to which everybody referred without question and with perfect right. Today the situation is quite different. Christianity and the Church are no longer publicly supported without question by society, or at least such backing is rapidly crumbling away. Thus Christian faith today is ever more plainly in a state of 'gnoseological' or 'mental concupiscence.'[7] This expression may seem to some an awkward, modish or odd description. Perhaps it should be briefly explained.

The fact of concupiscence, of that excessive desire which is a consequence of original sin, is already attested in ch.7 of the Epistle to the Romans as well as in the dogma of the Church and the teaching of the Council of Trent.[8] According to the Tridentine text, the state of concupiscence cannot be completely overcome, so that even the justified Christian must struggle 'ad agonem' with it in his Christian life. Until now it has only been considered and discussed with reference to the [6] ethical (or unethical) impulses in man. Man always feels

[5] On the problem of Extrinsecism' cf. A. Lang and H. de Lavalette, *LThK* III, 1321-1323; also cf. K. Rahner, 'Remarks on the Importance of the History of Jesus for Catholic Dogmatics,' *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975) pp. 201-212, esp. 203 *sq*.
[6] Cf. P. Berger, *Rumour of Angels* (London, 1971) pp. 12 *sqq*.
[7] For this expression, cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Relationship between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences,' *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975), pp. 94-102; also in this volume, 'Faith between Rationality and Emotion'.
[8] Cf. the Decree of the Council of Trent on Original Sin, *Denz.* 1515.

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himself driven by various forces and desires.[9] These impulses are not integrated and harmonised; they war one against another. In this state a man must live out his life. Even when he wishes clearly and freely to choose God, he will be impelled by quite different forces, that is, by egoism, or, as one used to say, by 'the flesh'. A man is unable in some measure to reach real peace and genuine integrity in his moral behaviour or to achieve the complete ordering of his life. He is and remains, as it were, two people: when he makes a wholehearted, personal decision in one direction, he is acutely aware that he cannot entirely reconcile the 'other' active within him to this commitment by means of his own choice of direction. But concupiscence, in the Christian sense of the term, is more clearly evident today in the realm of human knowledge as well as in the moral domain. In the 16th or 17th century a theologian, or even an ordinary Christian, could organise his knowledge into a more or less well-structured system. His questions and problems were open to solution. Moreover it was known and recognised at that time that a unified, well-organised and comprehensible world picture could emerge in which everything found its proper place and nothing had to stand in opposition to anything else. Centuries earlier St Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologiae*, had already created such a system, in which the human knowledge of the day, the possible questions and answers, were all taken into account. The result of this unified synthesis was that each proposition was treated as an absolute and definite assertion. Either one accepted that God is a Trinity or one did not; tertium non datur. If one said no, then the denial possessed the same absolute and definite quality as the positive affirmation.

The present situation, however, is characterised by the above mentioned 'mental concupiscence'. Our minds are fed with disparate insights and pieces of information from a great range of sources of knowledge and these do not admit any longer of a positive and complete ordering into a coherent whole. When I began my theological studies forty years ago, I was far cleverer than I am today, if I take all the possible branches of knowledge and intellectual problems as my [7] criterion of measurement. For today there is such a vast number of questions and areas of knowledge of a historical, metaphysical, philosophical, linguistic, sociological and religious kind that in the face of this mass of theological material I feel much stupider than I did then. Christian Pesch,[10] whose manual of theology I followed, could still be firmly convinced that he had dealt with all the relevant theological material in his 9 volume '*Theologia Dogmatica*'. He had in some measure worked out a positive, theological synthesis in the then prevailing intellectual climate. Such a thing is quite impossible today. One would have to have some knowledge of, say, Aramaic, modern linguistic philosophy and sociology. To this must be added a thousand other things, so that a mass of phenomena, of whose existence we at least have some inkling, confronts us as questions to be answered and tasks to be undertaken. This enormous range of knowledge and intellectual possibilities, a range which can no longer be adequately covered, brings plainly to the fore that human limitation which I have tried to describe with the phrase 'mental concupiscence'. In the past men have been conscious of limits in the moral sphere imposed by concupiscence and in a similar way today the problem is felt in the realm of knowledge.

In this situation the individual is no longer in a position *adequately* and *positively* to organise in his mind all the knowledge which is important for his picture of the world. We ought not to behave as though a synthesis of faith and contemporary knowledge were still a possibility for the individual. We may rightly believe, however, that Christianity contains the final truth and meaning for man and the world. We may also be granted the conviction that ideally an ultimate synthesis must in itself be possible and that no data of knowledge exist

[9] For this notion cf. Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* 'On the Discernment of Spirits' (313-336). The rules do not merely seek to create an awareness of the phenomenon; they also offer the individual practical help in dealing with it.
[10] Chr. Pesch, *Praelectiones Dogmaticae,* 9 Vols. (Freiburg i.Br. 1914-1925).

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which are so mutually opposed that one set must be accepted as true and the other rejected as false. Of course this ideal can only be approached asymptotically: it always lies before us and will presumably move away to an ever increasing distance. Limitations of time, strength, intelligence and memory remain even for modern man, despite all the available means of assistance, while the material to be gathered into any synthesis, coming from every branch of modern knowledge and from the whole range of human experience in history and in society, is ever on the increase.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE MODERN SITUATION

If we now turn to the question of the foundation of faith, the state we have described above forces us to concentrate first of all on the basic essentials of Christian revelation. The Second Vatican Council was justified in speaking of a hierarchy of truths even though it did not specify exactly what the expression meant.[11] It is immediately obvious that the individual articles of faith may be related either more closely to, or more distantly from, the fundamental centre of Christian faith. In this sense the idea of an objective hierarchy of truths is straightforward enough. But clearly we must reflect more carefully upon the subjective hierarchy of truths.[12] In fact the two are so closely intertwined that they share a common dependence upon the original revelation. What else can a man do if he is in a state of 'mental concupiscence', faced by an incomprehensible mass of knowledge which can neither be digested nor fitted into a synthesis, except to return to the original, central revelation? There must be such a centre which I can make my basic support and from which I can calmly accept the totality of Christianity. This I can do without having first achieved the perfect, but unattainable, synthesis of all Christian truths, even those of secondary importance, with contemporary knowledge and the modern mind. In today's world even the theologian who has spent a lifetime of study in his field has the right to say that, not being an exegete, he cannot give an exact account of how Mt 16:18 can be positively reconciled with the papal office as it exists and is conceived in the Catholic Church today. For this, particular specialist knowledge is demanded which is scarcely to be found in mind of one person. The earlier assertions of fundamental theology on this point certainly do [9] not suffice as an objectively adequate answer to the question. They do no more than point in the direction in which an answer is to be found. But the Christian and the theologian must positively come to terms with truths of this sort, even if a direct synthesis of the kind outlined above is not obtained. So the only possible first step is for me to return once more in a conscious fashion to the innermost kernel of my faith.

In order to provide grounds for belief we can begin quite happily with man. There is no need to fear that this anthropological starting point necessarily leads to a subjective or reductionist version of Christian faith which is limited to one epoch. Certainly one thing is quite clear: the man who has no questions hears no answers, even though of course the question stays more plainly in a man's awareness if the answer is also heard, for question and

[11] On the notion of the 'Hierarchy of Truths' cf. Cone. Vat. II *Decree on Ecumenism,* Art. 11, commentary by J. Feiner in, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II,* II (London and New York, 1967), also K. Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology,' *Theological Investigations* IX (London, 1972), pp. 28-45; 'The New Image of the Church', *Theological Investigations X* (London, 1973), pp. 3-29; 'On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion,' *Theological Investigations* XI (London, 1974), pp. 24-67; 'The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church,' *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 24-46.

[12] The author has already discussed the problem of the subjective hierarchy of truths some years ago under the title 'Gestaltwandel der Haresie,' cf. *Gefahren im heutigen Katholizismus* (Einsiedeln, 1954); cf. also K. Rahner, 'What is Heresy?' *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 468-512.

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answer hang closely together.

The more precise the question, the more care and attention will be paid to grasping the answer. Similarly the answer given in revelation clarifies the question a man asks. If one is aware from the start of the complementary relationship existing between the anthropological starting point and the theological answer, then one should not permit any further attack on the proposed point of departure. A man can say that he is only interested in answers for which he has a question; so God can only communicate with a person on a level which concerns that man's innermost core of existence. Why should this lead of necessity to an abridgement of Christian faith? Man is essentially a questioner; indeed he is an absolute question which does not stop at any given point. An objective curiosity is part of his nature, for a person is endowed, even before he begins to ask questions, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is rooted in the centre of his personal being. He is given the capacity to ask for infinity and to lay himself open to the infinity of God. If we do not hold back our questions, needs and desires from this natural right and this horizon of meaning, then we experience ourselves in the concrete situation of salvation as a question which can only find an answer in the self-communication of God in the Holy Spirit and in Christian revelation.

To the possible objection that I for my part have no interest in the trinitarian nature of God or that I cannot awaken any feeling for the Trinity in someone else who has questions of his own which I am trying to answer, then one may reply: examine the questioner more closely and at the same time reflect more deeply upon the meaning of the Trinity (original sin, purgatory, etc.). Bore down, as it were, into the depths of human existence and make a real effort to grasp the [10] meaning of the objective dogmas of the Church. Then it will become apparent how the human, existential question and the concrete answer of revelation come together and how the essential kernel and experience of revelation are brought to light. Out of this experience a valid hierarchy of truths of faith is established. Of course the official teaching of the Church exercises normative power in directing the process of grounding Christian faith, but today this must necessarily consist in personal initiation and in arousing an inner experience of faith.[13] This is even the case when someone asserts that he is unaware of any experience of faith and has no interest in such a phenomenon. In fact in his actual existence a man has a thousand experiences which he does not reflect upon, which he even represses or pushes to the edge of his consciousness and which he does not explicitly trouble himself over, and yet they are still there. If they are brought to life in the right way, they can illuminate the content of Christian faith, for a man is always summoned by divine grace, which lies ever before him and is continually operative in his life. Naturally one cannot avoid a certain rift, a certain tension between the doctrinal teaching, on the one hand, about God, man and salvation history, which comes from without, and the inner experience of faith, on the other, which is proper to each individual. One reason for this is the finite and subjective nature of human consciousness, which is far from possessing the inner strength and vitality to be capable from its own resources of developing the whole content of Christian faith. There is the additional factor that human subjectivity, raised up by grace, only achieves a sufficiently objective level when operating in the framework of the *whole* of human history and the total process of salvation and revelation. For this reason the individual is always obliged, and justified, in referring himself to this historical objectivity. The grace which is at work in man produces the complete fullness of the reality of revelation and faith. Therefore grace not only possesses an inner point of connection with human existence but also a seed in every man out of which the whole history of human salvation and revelation may grow, both in Christianity

[13] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Die Notwendigkeit einer neuen Mystagogie', *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* lI/I (Freiburg, 1966) pp. 269-271; also 'Die Rücksicht auf die verschiedenen Altersstufen in der immer erneuten Glaubensmystagogie', *ibid.,* III pp. 529-535.

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and in all the great religions. To proclaim Christian faith, one must always be seeking for new ways to awaken to life this interior disposition and capacity. Christianity cannot be put over as indoctrination in the way [11] school children are taught that Australia exists, that is, by being told: you yourselves have not yet been there but others have travelled there and geographers have proved its existence. So you must accept that there is such a country. If one wants to communicate Christian faith in this way from the outside by appealing to the formal authority of the Church or to some generally accepted social institution, then one would not be preaching the message of God in the manner demanded by the present age.

At this point a second consequence may be briefly mentioned. Christians must be constantly brought to realise that, even apart from faith or theology, it is quite natural for people today simply to endure the fact of mental concupiscence. How much there is in our world that can no longer be gathered together into a positive synthesis! We may consider merely the enormous variety of conditions under which men achieve salvation. How many never reach the full use of their intelligence and are, as it were, taken up into a blessed fulfilment free and gratis. Others, on the other hand, seem condemned by God to have to work out their salvation in fear and trembling, with possible failure as the end result. Why do we not belong to the number of those who, according to the usual teaching of the textbooks, gain beatitude without any free decision? What can a man say in reply to questions like these except: I do not know? Here neither airy hypotheses and theological speculation are of any assistance, nor the view that all past assertions on the topic are now nonsense. It seems to me that one simply has to accept that in the present situation there are many things presented by both experience and knowledge which cannot be arranged into a neat pattern. Despite Küng's investigation, for example, I am convinced of the truth of the dogma of the First Vatican Council about the teaching authority of the Pope and hope to remain of this mind until the day I die. But I am equally aware that this teaching raises a thousand question marks. But that does not force me to the assertion that the doctrine of the papacy proposed up to now is simply out of date.

If one asks the average Sunday churchgoer whether he is convinced that the Pope is infallible, then perhaps only a fraction would reply, yes. So we are faced with the fact that only a few Catholics out of all those baptised really possess the mind of faith which is presumed by the Church as a matter of course: I believe everything which the holy, Catholic Church presents for belief. Now are the others, the great remainder, not Catholics? Two reasons militate against such a deduction. [12] First a great proportion of these Christians base their lives on the essential substance of Christianity, even if perhaps they do not consciously reflect on it, and secondly they grasp, at least in some manner, the essential reality of faith. Now this appears decisive in the present case, for the outlook of mental concupiscence which is to be presumed today is not such that assertions which either really or apparently contradict the faith are held and proposed with *absolute* conviction. The religiously informed person does not in fact say: I am utterly and completely certain that the Pope is not infallible. If one interprets more carefully a statement which sounds like this, then it turns out to mean something like: I can't get a first grip on the assertion of papal infallibility; it does not seem to me at all probable; I am inclined to the opposite position, etc. If one tries to explain this outlook more clearly, one runs up against the pressure of mental concupiscence and its many-sided conditioning, which in practice excludes a *positive* and explicit commitment of faith to the statement of the First Vatican Council. In the present situation this ought not to be treated as a loss of faith. Whoever does see it in this way might be told: an absolute, all-embracing and final decision about the teaching authority of the papacy can be left aside. The difficulties and problems can be freely admitted but this too should not lead one to want to set up another absolute system. One should rather accept that it is in a certain sense impossible to acquire the requisite knowledge. Whoever agrees with this

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position can today in my opinion legitimately be and remain a Christian.

FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF FAITH TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BELIEF

A man desires to be free, to possess hope and understanding, to grasp his own freedom in such a way that it comes to fulfilment in the course of his life and realises the potential that lies within him; he wants to be a man of fidelity, love and responsibility. In practice the process of genuine, free self-determination comes about in all the opaque details, the doubts and obscurities, the incongruous events and apparently purposeless beginnings which flood into our life. For a man's biography is directed in freedom to a point of absolute decision and in fact already contains such a decision within it, since it is life as a single whole for which one is answerable and this life does not simply gutter out in the darkness of particular events.

Philosophers and other theoretical thinkers can of course reflect [13] endlessly about concepts such as freedom, responsibility, love, altruism, etc. Indeed such notions are not clear and transparent to any of us. But they do nevertheless possess a meaning and give a direction to one's decisions in the thousand trivialities of daily life. The impression can force itself upon one that these words can all be explained away in psychoanalytic, biological or sociological terms, that they can be unmasked as the unavoidable superstructure of much more primitive realities which in fact constitute the real essence of human existence. But in all these endeavours one and the same subject is at work and is the responsible agent. Thus in the final analysis all these attempts to dissolve what is specifically human must be false. A man cannot and may not escape being a genuine subject and the freedom and responsibility this entails; I accept myself, I take myself on.

This self-affirmation is uttered without ultimate protest but still with full consciousness of the limitations and accidents of biological and historical existence, even if it is accompanied of course by the right and duty to alter and improve what is oppressive in these conditions. Nevertheless not all is open to such improvement; not everything which I must become is the result of my own decision alone. In the ultimate analysis I can either reject myself in radical protest or accept myself in the total and concrete reality of life, even though this remains opaque and oppressive and cannot be manipulated so that I have full and complete control over it. It remains full of pain and obscurity. However I can accept it in hope.[14] But the hope which embraces and sustains everything does not provide ultimate certainty that we possess it; rather it offers the promise that the incomprehensible element in all that is beautiful will in the end be made plain and that this meaning is final and blessed. That is my hope.

Can one be persuaded and convinced that such hope is a false and cowardly utopia and that to indulge in it is worse than letting oneself fall into a radical scepticism? But in fact this scepticism, however theoretically possible, cannot be sustained in the actual business of living, where I carry responsibility, where I love and am loved. An ultimate trust in the complete and all-embracing meaning of human existence is not simply a free floating ideology. It covers everything and is covered by everything which is encountered elsewhere in [14] human life.[15] It is the free and basic act of human existence which can only find halting expression in human words. It reaches out finally to what we call God. Certainly the word 'God' is obscure but what is meant by it comes out in a man's life, or at least can do so, even when the word itself is absent. Today what is meant by it cannot easily be expressed

[14] Cf. K. Rahner, *Meditations on Priestly Life* (London, 1973); 'Self-realization and Taking up one's cross,' *Theological Investigations* IX (London, 1972), pp. 242-259.
[15] On absolute trust cf. K. Rahner, 'I Believe in Jesus Christ,' *Theological Investigations* IX (London, 1972), pp. 165-168; 'A Fragmentary Aspect of a Theological Evaluation of the Concept of the Future', *ibid.,* pp. 235-241; 'On the Theology of Hope,' *ibid.,* pp. 242-259.

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within the frame of reference of the 'world architect', as was possible in the period of the Enlightenment. Furthermore we are acutely aware that great crimes have been committed under the banner of the word 'God' and that monstrosities and stupidities have been justified by appeal to it.

And yet the ultimate ground of my hope in the act of unconditional acceptance of my existence, this I can reasonably call God. God is far from being thereby made the projection of my hope into the void. For the moment I think of him as a projection, he becomes meaningless and ineffective in my life. On the other hand I can no more give up the ground of my hope than I can surrender the hope itself. So God must be what is most real, what embraces and sustains everything, for only thus can he be both ground and goal of my hope as I conceive it in the act of trust by which I accept my own existence. This God is an unfathomable mystery, for the hope in which freedom and reason form an indivisible unity reaches out beyond all expectations. Hope cannot provide a goal of its own making, since every individual item in life's reckoning is provisional and determined and threatened by another. The final destination of our hope in an unlimited existence must therefore be sought elsewhere.

The act whereby personal existence is accepted in trust and hope is therefore, as long as it is not the victim of self-deception, a letting go of oneself into the incomprehensible mystery. Christianity is far from being a clarification of the world and existence; rather it contains the prohibition against treating any experience or insight, however illuminating it may be, as conclusive and intelligible in itself. Christians have less answers (at their disposal) than other mortals to hand out with a, 'now everything is clear'. A Christian cannot enter God as an obvious item in the balance sheet of his life; he can only accept him as an incomprehensible mystery in silence and adoration, as the beginning [15] and end of his hope and therefore as his unique, ultimate and all-embracing salvation.

From the innermost heart of his experience a Christian knows that he himself is sustained by this mystery in his trust and hope for the fulfilment of his being. So he calls this movement towards God at work within him, 'grace', 'the Holy Spirit', even if he does not necessarily have to reflect on it and may even repress it, although he cannot destroy it. The movement directed to the immediate presence of God he interprets as faith, hope and love. A Christian must grant every man who is faithful to his conscience this interior movement towards God, even when the other does not think of it in these terms and has not yet grasped its historical appearance in Jesus Christ in explicit Christian faith.[16]

A Christian is afraid that he is able to reject this inner movement of human existence in either open or hidden unbelief. But he is also hopeful, for himself and for others, that this movement will pass through every darkness and superficiality of life and reach its final and 'eternal' goal. Thus a man's existence remains in the last instance under the threat of his capacity freely to deny himself. This threat is continually overcome by the hope that the history of man's freedom, which is enveloped and determined by the freedom of the incomprehensible mystery, will, as a whole, achieve a blessed outcome through the power of God, even if no theoretical statement about the salvation of the individual person can be deduced from this hope.

JESUS CHRIST: THE SYNTHESIS

[16] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Observations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian" ', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London, 1976), pp. 280-294, where references to earlier publications and to the discussion of this concept are to be found.

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All that has been said up to this point is brought together in a mysterious way for the Christian in the encounter with Jesus Christ. The basic human hope and the experience of Jesus sustain and justify each other in an ultimately indestructible bond, which may be grasped by a man of integrity and reasonable conscience, as long as he assumes a stance of what Christians call humility in the face of the incomprehensible mystery.

The encounter with Christ is mediated both through the Gospel of [16] Christianity and of the Church based on the message of Jesus and also through the ultimate hope in God's grace.

What does a Christian see in Jesus? The answer may originate from various elements of experience and so the following considerations cannot represent the only possible description of the encounter with Jesus or one which is universally binding. On the other hand, the experience itself, for all its different aspects does possess a unity. The history of Christianity, which has its own unique importance, envisages one man who loves and is faithful even unto death, whose whole human existence, embodied in word and action, lies open to the mystery which he himself calls, 'Father', and to which he surrenders himself in trust even when his world is shattered. The dark chasm of his life is for Jesus the sheltering hands of his Father. He stands fast in his love for men; he is sure in hope, even when everything seems to collapse in the destruction of death. He was convinced that in him and his message the kingdom of God was at hand, that is, that God in direct love and forgiveness victoriously pledges himself to man, transcending all the good and evil forces which influence human existence. For the person who listens to the message of Jesus a new and decisive opportunity for man has come about, which is never to be surpassed. This experience also means that we are faced by a man who, in his life and death, does not fail to match up to the demands which are involved in being human. Thus Christianity is convinced that, despite every reason for scepticism in our experience of man, we may with innocent trust and total abandon surrender ourselves to one man in absolute dependence. Jesus' followers shared the experience of Good Friday without any illusions. And yet they then became aware, as a gift from Jesus himself, that his life is not in ruins, that his death is in fact a victory and that he is the one totally and finally accepted by the mystery of God. In a word they experienced the fact that he is risen. Of course one should not conceive of this resurrection as a return to the limits of a life restricted by space and time and the facts of biology; one should rather think of it as the ultimate salvation of the one complete man, body and soul, in God.

The mystery is the 'incomprehensible God' and so the manner of this acceptance cannot be given imaginative form. But whenever the absolute hope of man and the experience of the life and death of Jesus meet, we can no longer reckon with the destruction of Jesus without thereby denying this absolute hope and allowing the self-abandonment of man, whether willingly or not, to emptiness and [17] futility. If on the contrary we search for the historical personality who permits us to trust that in him our hope is fulfilled, then we cannot find any other to name except the one presented by the witness of the apostles. The experience of Jesus gives us, in so far as we freely commit ourselves to our own hope, the strength and the heart to affirm from the centre of our own experience, and from the hope that lies within it, that he is risen. The basic human hope and the historical experience of Jesus are bound together for a Christian as a unity. Jesus of Nazareth is accepted by God and in Jesus God has answered the question which man constitutes in his unlimited, incomprehensible nature. Human existence is here finally and gloriously blessed and the sceptical human question, fashioned in guilt and futility, is transcended. The courage to hope is sealed. So Jesus is the ultimate answer which can never be surpassed, because every conceivable question is annihilated in death and he is the answer to the all-consuming question of human existence in that he is the risen one. As Word of God, he answers the question which we ourselves pose.

From this starting point there arise the statements about Jesus Christ contained in the traditional teaching and theology of Church, i.e. orthodox Christology. But the reverse is also

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true: whoever accepts Jesus as the insurpassable Word of God, as the final seal of his own hope in history, is and remains a Christian, even if he cannot follow the traditional Christological formulations or finds great difficulty in doing so, because they come from a framework of meaning not easily intelligible today.

Cross and resurrection belong together in the authentic witness to Jesus and in genuine and responsible faith in him. The *cross* means the stark demand for a man to surrender himself unconditionally before the mystery of his being which he can never bring under his control, since he is finite and burdened with guilt. The *resurrection* means the unconditional hope that in this surrender the blessing, forgiveness and ultimate acceptance of man takes place through this mystery.[17] It also [18] implies that if a man abandons himself to this movement, no further destruction lies in store. Cross and resurrection clearly show how this self-abandonment is taken up by God in the fate of Jesus and how the possibility of self-surrender, the hardest task of our life, is irrevocably promised to us in Jesus Christ. For the Lord is an absolutely concrete fact. A man need only involve himself with this specific individual in unconditional love and he then possesses everything. Certainly one must die with him; no man escapes this fate. Why not, then, utter with him the words, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'[18] or 'Into your hands I commend my spirit'?[19] In the destiny of Jesus every human philosophy receives for the first time a truly specific and concrete form. What exactly this philosophy looks like or should look like is not especially important. Once a man has reached Jesus, then it contains this simple message: just to be prepared to make the final act of hope and self-surrender to the incomprehensible mystery. Yet this covers everything because the fate of Jesus, a death which is life, has brought this philosophy into being, not of course in mere talk about death but in the actual experience and suffering of death.[20]

For us this moment still lies in the future. Our life is directed towards it without our knowing exactly when it will appear in our life. But only then has the essence of Christianity been grasped and conceived. A man can and should, however, prepare himself to be open to this event. The glory of our present existence is not thereby removed. Rather it gives everything its proper value and makes the burden light. Christianity is thus simplicity itself because it embraces the totality of human existence and leaves all the details to the free responsibility of man, without providing an exact recipe for them. At the same time it is the hardest thing of all, a grace offered to all which can and is received, even when unconditional hope has not yet discovered its seal in Jesus of Nazareth.

THE TASK OF THE CHURCH

Many people today seem to find Jesus more easily in anonymous hope without being able to call him by his historical name. But whoever has [19] a clear enough encounter with Jesus must also recognise him for who he is; otherwise he would be denying his own basic hope. The raising of Jesus from the dead cannot be the victorious pledge of the presence of the divine mystery which forms the fullness of our life, unless the eternal validity of Jesus's

[17] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Frühe Bussgeschichte in Einzeluntersuchungen', *Schriften zur Theologie* XI (Zurich, 1973), where the author deals extensively with this aspect of the forgiving and saving will of God. This background should be taken into account if the reflections proposed here are to be properly understood. On the importance of the historical investigations into the sacrament of penance in the work of the author, cf. K.-H. Neufeld, 'Fortschritt durch Umkehr: Zu Karl Rahners bussgeschichtlichen Arbeiten', *StdZ* 192 (1974), pp. 274-281.
[18] Mk 15:34.
[19] Lk 23:46.
[20] Cf. K. Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, Quaestiones Disputatae 2 (Freiburg and London, 1961), esp. III 'Death as a Dying with Christ', pp. 64-88.

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resurrection were not also the object of the *faith* of many. Thus there comes into being the community of those who believe in him as the one crucified and risen. Within this community they discover the answer to the problem of their own existence and learn to become aware of the mystery in which he is both near at hand and far away, if we place ourselves in its presence. This community is called the Church. Those who believe in Jesus cannot be individualistic in their religion, if only because of their common relationship to the Lord. Moreover faith in Jesus can only be awakened through active witness and therefore demands the social structure of a community of faith which is gathered around Jesus Christ. Furthermore Christianity is ecclesial because man has a social nature, which means that the history of his freedom is worked out in the context of the community. Finally it seems contradictory today, at a time when there is growing emphasis on the need for greater human solidarity and social involvement, for individuals and groups to imagine that Jesus must be reached apart from his Church. This outlook reveals an out of date individualism which, even from a purely secular and historical point of view, has nothing to offer for the future. Also the most convinced individualist in matters of faith depends upon the Church for Scripture, tradition and religious language, even if he wants to sever his connection with the Church. In general truth has something to do with an open and at the same time critical attitude towards society and institutions. Without such an outlook even so-called personal truth would lapse into arbitrary whim and lose its meaning even for the individual. The precise value of the Church is of course assessed very differently by the various Christian bodies but Christianity universally recognises institutions and affirms an ecclesial orientation which is vital for its existence. Baptism is acknowledged by practically all Christians as the rite of initiation into the Christian community and this implies the recognition of the Church as a concrete and historical institution in society.

Every genuine Christian will certainly suffer as a result of the actual social form of the Church in history. For the concrete embodiment of the Church never matches up to its true nature. It preaches a message which questions its own empirical structure. It is, namely, a Church of [20] sinners, whose members deny in actions what they affirm in words. The history of the Christian Church has plenty of horror and misery in it, and in the end there only remains the question: where else should we go if we leave the Church? Could we be more faithful to the liberating Spirit of Jesus if we, sinful egoists that we are, set ourselves up as the 'pure' at a distance from the poor, miserable Church? For our part the misery can only find a remedy through our sharing the burden of poverty for which each one of us himself bears the guilt. As a Christian in the Church a man carries the responsibility for changing it from within, for the Church always remains 'ecclesia semper reformanda', as the Second Vatican Council[21] emphasised. If we discover something genuinely Christian within us and really find out what it means, how can we then object to letting it benefit in a selfless way the community of sinners? By the power of Jesus Christ the Church will pass through its miserable history and come to the fulfilment which has been promised in the death and resurrection of the Lord.

Christians have had a basic awareness that the relation of hope and love to the incomprehensible mystery of their life which they call God can only be acknowledged, expressed and given credible form in an unconditional love of their neighbour, for this alone is capable of forcing open the hell of human self-centredness.[22] This love is not to be treated as something self-evident, otherwise it becomes corrupted into an expression of hidden egoism. As the liberating grace of God it stretches us continually beyond our capacity and is

[21] Cf. Conc. Vat. II, *Lum. Gen.* Art. 8.
[22] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 231-249.

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for this reason only really possible if a man, consciously or not, allows himself to surrender to the incomprehensible mystery. Then the Spirit of Jesus is at work, even if it is not explicitly acknowledged, as Mt 25 makes plain. Let us, therefore, hope that the grace of God performs this miracle in us too; everything depends on it.

At a time when there is of necessity a growth in human solidarity and social involvement, love of neighbour can only be authentic if it also takes a form which goes beyond the realm of private, individual relationships. Before all else love must today be expressed, though not exclusively, in Christian responsibility for the social sphere. The individual, groups and the Church as a whole has this task, each in its own [21] way. To fulfil it requires hope in eternal life, the stimulus of the Christian spirit in the Church and the Spirit of Jesus himself. By recalling his death and resurrection the Church acquires a critical distance from its present state which prevents it from making into an absolute either the existing shape of things or some plan for the immediate future. Were the Church to dissolve into a humanitarian enterprise, it would betray its proper function, for it has the duty of declaring to the world the ultimate seriousness and the incomprehensible value of love of neighbour. This is, however, only possible through witness to the unfathomable mystery which the Son of man, Jesus Christ, has entered in faith, hope and love. But even today there seems great danger of not taking love of neighbour seriously enough, especially the neighbour who is encountered in secular society. And yet only in this love can a Christian find God, to whom he desires to surrender himself totally with Jesus Christ, *because* he is the incomprehensible mystery which Jesus did not resolve but rather accepted in faith and hope.

Christianity and the Christian churches also obtain in this way a new and balanced relationship to the non-Christian world religions, which in the past lay outside the orbit of Christian culture. Now Christianity cannot let go of the claim both to have received the definitive and all-embracing word of grace in Jesus, crucified and risen, and still to preach this word today. But this is not to deny that the liberating Spirit of God is active in all finite human affairs, within every perplexity and error. The non-Christian world religions witness in their own fashion not only to human limitation but also to the Spirit of Jesus. Certainly many of their major experiences can provisionally be included in the comprehensive answer of Jesus, because the history of the Christian message is far from complete.

Atheism has become a world-wide phenomenon, which affects millions today. But here too it should not be assessed by Christianity simply as an absolute human denial which expresses only the refusal to surrender oneself to the unsearchable mystery of God. It is rather to be seen as a stage in the history of the experience of God which clearly renders God a mystery more radical than a mere object of petitionary prayer, a mystery which cannot be manipulated by men either conceptually or practically, or fitted into any human frame of reference, but is solely to be trusted in hope.

Thought and action often tend to lead to a kind of bewilderment which admits of no resolution. At first glance it seems as though one [22] had simply to carry on in the face of such perplexity, even without knowing where the path is leading. But the urgent question remains of what lies hidden beneath this silent, faithful and patient endurance. Here one runs up against the hope which human experience has formulated in two words: mystery and death.

Mystery means here that perplexity contains hope; death contains a veto against our masking or stifling this perplexity, or forcing it into a false optimism which is merely stupid and futile. If we gaze upon the crucified Jesus, we should realise that we are to be spared nothing. In hoping in his death, I dare also to hope that in a shared death lies the ascent to a blessed mystery. Despite every dark shadow such a hope permits life even now to emerge in its proper beauty and be filled with promise.

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Christianity offers a simple task, a burden both heavy and light, as the Gospel asserts.[23] If a man carries it, then it begins to carry him. The longer life lasts, the heavier and the lighter the burden becomes. Christianity calls for a whole-hearted and straightforward profession of hope, amidst all the mysterious twists and turns of our life, and assures us that in this mystery there lies what we call God, eternal life, ultimate value and the salvation of our being. The message is proclaimed: look at the crucified Jesus who achieved eternal fellowship with God and not merely the validity of an ideology, and follow at his side the way into the unfathomable mystery. In this lies the whole of Christianity. Within our world and in our own life a mass of queries and tasks remain, for which there are no simple recipes or programmed solutions. For they remain our tasks, for which *we* are responsible. Christianity is straightforward and credible. For who can seriously forbid a man from fixing his gaze of Jesus and, even after 1500 years, prevent him from recognising in him today the seal of his hope? Whoever takes this step and holds firm to it despite every darkness in his life, that man is a Christian. No one can assert with absolute certainty that he in fact does this, just as no one can say that the whole business of Christianity is the result of external indoctrination and social support and is a mere facade behind which so-called Christians and messengers of the Gospel conceal their ultimate hopelessness and despair. I hope in my hope and in Jesus who seals this hope, that is, I hope to be a Christian. Certainly this is not harder to carry than the burden of existence which is laid on every man and which no one can [23] shrug off Christianity is a total whole, and therefore at one and the same time simpler and more mysterious, harder and easier than anything else. In this sense we can all of us merely say: I hope to be a Christian.

[23] Cf. Mt 11:30; 1 Jn 5:3.

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2

EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT AND EXISTENTIAL COMMITMENT

If we look closely at the topic of the experience of the Spirit and existential commitment, we find that the subject is in fact limitless[1], for even a first glance makes it clear that it is only a variation of the theme, 'Transcendence and History'. Although this fact is not yet taken as self-evident in the usual manuals of theology, it is nevertheless true that the gift of grace through the Spirit of God is in the first instance a genuine self-communication of God to the transcendent human self and not an internal or external categorial reality of human consciousness, material, as it were, for the free decisions of the human person. The topic of transcendence and history cannot receive complete clarification here; on the other hand we cannot simply presuppose it as a suitable theme for discussion. Only a few comments are possible at this point and these may only provide scant illumination, so that one must be content with their fragmentary character.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTENTIAL COMMITMENT

The following comments, while especially important for subsequent reflections, should not give the impression that the essence of existential commitment is to be completely defined. Within Christian theology existential commitment signifies the free act of a human being in [25] which he has ultimate control over himself before God.[2] In the last analysis it is relatively unimportant whether in this decision the 'before God', i.e. the acceptance or rejection of God, is made explicit in words or not.[3] Since the exercise of freedom with respect to a purely categorial object and to a finite value, or one conceived as finite, is not possible without a prior, transcendent grasp of absolute being and absolute good – a thesis no Thomist would deny –, it therefore follows that every genuine, free decision must contain a reference to God on the part of the free subject. As stated above, the conscious analysis of this state of affairs is immaterial, because a man's behaviour with regard to the obvious and given categorial objects which always surround our historically conditioned use of freedom and through which that freedom is mediated, such behaviour can only be free if it occurs within the transcendent horizon of freedom, in the unlimited, prior grasp of absolute good, i.e. of God. In any case the basic tenet of Christian anthropology is to be formulated thus: a man's free behaviour is not limited to the categorial and finite object of his free choice or to a concept of God in his objective consciousness but extends to God himself. The transcendent nature of freedom not only enables us to make a *categorial* choice which has moral consequences, since it is assisted by various concepts bestowed by God as the guardian of that divine law of which we have an intellectual grasp; it is also its own object of freedom.

[1] This study originated in an essay written for the Festschrift for E. Schillebeeckx. Since this essay is closely related to other studies found in this volume and partly covered the same ground, the text was revised to avoid tedious repetition; cross-references were also added.
[2] This notion should not be understood in the sense of a hypothetical decision as L. Boros proposes in *The Moment of Truth* (London, 1965). The author has never supported this hypothesis and his conception is much broader. Nothing is stated here about the historical moment in which a man actually takes this decision.
[3] On this cf. the study, 'Anonymous and Explicit Faith', in this volume and the author's earlier publication on the topic of the 'Anonymous Christian' with the ensuing discussion; references are to be found in 'Observations Problem of the "Anonymous Christian" ', *Theological Investigations XIV* (London, 1976), pp. 280-294.

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For activity subject to categorial limits not only takes place within a transcendent horizon which is open to the absolute, it also radically alters this horizon itself. This means that such activity must be described as a possible, freely constituted acceptance of the self-communication of God, and so of salvation, or of damnation if and when this self-communication permanently comes to nothing.

In all this we have of course been speaking of the transcendent nature of man which is raised up by *grace* and which, through grace, is [26] ordered to the direct presence of God himself. This is not to attack the legitimacy of a limit concept of 'pure nature', that is, the idea of a transcendence of knowledge and freedom which does not bestow any promise of, or claim on, direct union with the ultimate goal of man, a goal which can only be approached in an asymptotic fashion. But this is really a question of a limit concept which cannot be used any longer as the starting point for any anthropological deduction. Now, however much the explicit notion of human transcendence raised up by grace may stem from Christian revelation, nevertheless it cannot essentially, and not merely historically, be drawn from the language of Christian revelation. If an experience of the Spirit occurs and if this appears, from a Christian point of view, to lie outside the explicit, institutional bounds of Christianity and even outside the range of its language, and if it is a genuine case of a revelation event, then the concept of 'graced transcendence' may be applied in an anthropological investigation, and not merely subsequently through an appeal to positive theological data. This is true even though the notion receives its best and purest expression in explicit Christianity and acquires greater clarity from this source. Nor is the truth of the above assertion affected by the fact that the meaning of graced transcendence implies that revelation is a genuine reality.

Whenever a man speaks of unbounded transcendence and does not stifle his spirit in the face of it but rather surrenders himself without reserve to the absolute reality of his transcendent nature and has some experience of it, then he is raised by grace to communion with the direct reality of God. This is true whether he reflects upon it or not, whether indeed he is capable of pursuing such reflections or not. It is also the case even if no reference is made to that event which we Christians call the explicit history of revelation.

Man's free control of his own transcendent nature, raised up by grace, either in acceptance or rejection, comes about through an existential decision which always involves historically limited, categorial material. This is where freedom is expressed and mediates the subject to itself.

How is the freedom which involves the categorial object related to the freedom of the subject towards himself and God? The relationship is a very complex one, but we should start from the fact, which is not immediately obvious, that there exist decisions which are objectively wrong but which do not destroy a man's positive relationship to God, so-called 'objective' sins which carry no 'subjective' guilt. An absolutely [27] fixed relationship between the categorial content and the transcendental significance of a free decision cannot be given if by the 'content' of such a decision is meant the object of explicit, conscious awareness, i.e. all that can be put into words, empirically and historically comprehended and subsequently assessed. For this would be to ignore the transcendent element which is always involved in such an act and forms part of a man's awareness. With respect to this knowledge no discrepancy can exist between the evaluation of the act before God and by God and the act in itself. The alteration of the transcendental consciousness raised up by grace, mentioned above, is brought about by the categorial decision and does not, therefore, always correspond to the categorial content of the decision. Nor does it possess a univocal relationship to this content which can be determined by reflection. This is confirmed by the Catholic teaching that no one can form an absolutely sure judgement about himself and no one knows on the

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basis of reflection with certainty whether he is in a state of grace or not.[4]

One cannot deduce from the transcendent nature of man, raised up by grace, – in so far as it is open to explicit, thematic investigation – a determinate object of choice which is clearly differentiated from the goal of this transcendence. Conversely a particular, categorial object of choice, even if it is materially correct and conforms to the objective structure of man and the world, cannot guarantee for certain that its choice will bring about a positive relationship to human transcendence and its goal.[5]

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Before we begin a more detailed elaboration of our theme, something must be said about experience of the Spirit. Without offering further evidence here, we may propose the thesis as a basic assumption for our later exposition that the essential nature of genuine experience of the Spirit does not consist in particular objects of experience found in human awareness but occurs rather when a man experiences the radical re-ordering of his transcendent nature in knowledge and freedom [28] towards the immediate reality of God through God's self-communication in grace. In addressing ourselves to the question whether a man freely accepts this experience or rejects it, we must remember that experience of the Spirit is not constituted by a particular divine operation 'from without', working upon the human spirit conceived as an already finished entity. It comes about rather through God's self-communication to the human spirit ('uncreated grace')[6] by which God becomes a constitutive element of human transcendence.

Experience of the Spirit is, therefore, experience of the radical and permanent nature of human transcendence, which goes beyond itself towards God because it is constantly impelled by his self-communication. This innermost depth in man can be presented as 'nature' or in the form of free acceptance or the protest of rejection. Under 'nature' one should include everything which is presupposed for the existential self-determination of human freedom as the condition of its possibility. It is immaterial whether it is the simple, finite reality of creation or the unmerited gift bestowed upon this nature in its own proper way as the 'being' of man.

Like any other experience, the transcendent experience of the radical nature of the Spirit is mediated through categorial objects, for the finite, spiritual essence of man only comes to self-expression in relationship to what is other, and in the ultimate analysis this other must be *personal*. The above certainly applies to the normal case but does not touch the question whether a mystical experience may be imagined in this life in which the transcendent elevation of man by the grace of the Spirit is really grasped without the mediation of any categorial, a posteriori object coming from without.[7] In any case such a transcendent experience, in so far as it happens at all, can certainly be given objective form and, in this

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[4] *Denz.* 1534; 1540-1541.

[5] One should at least take note at this point of the highly controversial issue, whether a specifically Christian morality exists with regard to its material content. It seems to us that the reflections proposed here could be used at a starting point for such a discussion.

[6] On the theme of grace cf. the article 'grace', *Sacramentum Mundi* II (London and New York, 1968), pp. 412-426. On the question of 'uncreated grace', cf. K. Rahner, 'Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 316-346; see also under the heading 'The Self-Communication of God', *Sacr. Mun.* III, pp. 114-118; *ibid,* IV, pp. 297-305; *ibid.* V, pp. 348-355.

[7] On the question of mysticism cf. the other studies in this volume which deal explicitly with the topic, especially 'Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of the Spirit'; 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats'; 'Faith between Rationality and Emotion'.

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way, becomes a definite object of human awareness. Indeed transcendent experience as such is not the same as [29] the objective form in which it is conceived and the two should not be confused. Consequently it should not be tacitly assumed that the grace-filled experience of radical transcendence only occurs when an objective concept is also produced in the form of a categorial content of knowledge or when the experience is mediated to human consciousness through overtly 'religious' material.

Our thesis ultimately rests upon the view that every categorial object and the experience of it are finite and that no essential distinction can obtain between such objects, whatever may be the case in individual instances. To suppose the existence of such a distinction, by which a number of such objects appear as a result of a special, direct operation of God while the rest do not, is fundamentally to adopt a mythological understanding of the relationship of God to the world.

COMMITMENT AND THE SPIRIT

How are the experience of the Spirit and existential commitment related to each other? Existential commitment means in this context, for example, the choice of a particular career, a specific form of behaviour towards another person, the decision to marry, a particular religious act, etc. Of course such actions must bring into play a definite, positive relationship to the prior, transcendent nature, raised up by grace, and so to God in himself. But this raises the question how exactly the categorial object of an existential decision is connected to the basic significance of this decision, that is, the establishment of our actual transcendence in freedom, the acceptance or rejection of God, who communicates himself as the ultimate dynamic of our transcendent nature. Obviously this creates a difficult problem. A categorial object of choice can be in itself wrong and yet at the same time make possible the achievement of a positive relationship to God. On the other hand an object of choice which is right according to human criteria, in terms both of people and of things, and which lies within the objective norms laid down by God, such an object does not necessarily provide an absolute, unambiguous guarantee that by making such a choice a man really achieves a positive relationship to God, in which God communicates himself as God in grace. For one must not assume that psychological freedom of choice and its realisation with regard to a categorial object necessarily involves real, existential self- determination. Otherwise one could not make sense of 'venial' sin 'ex [30] imperfectione actus'[8] and correspondingly of an 'impaired act of freedom'.

Furthermore an object of choice which is correct by human standards cannot guarantee the clear fulfilment of the existential commitment, since the latter refers to the transcendent experience of the Spirit and to God, while in a concrete situation of free choice several categorial objects can be presented at the same time. These may in fact appear under certain conditions as more or less equally possible in themselves, but only one may seem to be willed by God as the necessary, concrete means which must be chosen here and now to achieve a positive attitude to the experience of the Spirit and of the existential relationship to God. It is not immediately self-evident in the case of a choice between several objects, in themselves legitimate and 'good', that it really matters, with respect to the relationship to God, which decision is taken. But we can take it for granted here that it does matter, since it is the view of those who possess genuine spiritual experience and knowledge that for something to be

[8] Cf. the classical textbooks of moral theology, e.g. D. M. Prümmer, *Manuale Theologiae* I (Freiburg i.Br. 1923) no. 370 (Thomist); J. Aertnys, *Theologia Moralis I* (Turin, 1928), no. 258 (following Alphonsus Liguori); H. Noldin, *Summa Theologiae Moralis I,* (Innsbruck, 1956), no. 300.

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willed by God it is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition that it should be objectively right, i.e. conform to the 'Laws of God', be humane and in accord with the mind of the Church. But this condition is not in itself sufficient to establish it as willed by God. This view is not incompatible with the hypothesis that in some cases the subject may be thrown back *by God* in his decision upon the ambivalence and openness which is intrinsic to human freedom with regard to objects of choice. It is not possible to appeal to other experience in the face of such a spiritual experience, for this may be explained as the hypothetical case mentioned above and offers no argument against the necessity imposed by God of deciding between objectively good alternatives.

THE PROBLEM OF CHOICE

How can a man come to an existential decision in the face of a number of worthwhile possibilities, if he is to proceed, not arbitrarily, but before God and in conformity with a choice willed by God? In daily life the ordinary man of piety usually experiences little difficulty and this simplicity should certainly not be disturbed. He has the personal [31] impression that God 'tells' him what choice he should make out of those open to him; God 'enlightens' and 'inspires' him so that he knows quite concretely what is the will of God in a particular instance.

Now theology does not allow the possibility of 'new revelations' even for the most important decisions in the life of the Church and this rules out any regular intervention of God to determine which object of choice is here and now the right one. One cannot escape this conclusion by pointing out that in this case it is 'merely' a matter of the private sphere of human life, for this is just as important as the 'public' life of the faith of the Church. Such intervention would form a 'private revelation'[9] and while this can of course happen, it cannot be the presupposition for all such decisions, and that is what is at issue here. How, therefore, can the actual choice be made in an existential decision between various possibilities which are of the same, or similar, worth according to objective moral norms, but only one of which is willed and commanded by God? Given the above assumptions, a specific choice is only possible, unless one is to appeal to a mythological explanation, if one allows a synthesis of the transcendent experience of the Spirit and the encounter with the categorial object of choice freely offered here and now.

This synthesis allows for the experience of one morally possible choice in preference to others as God's purpose for us. Now the transcendent experience of God's self-communication in grace is not directed to a thing, or to a merely necessary being, but to a personal reality in freedom, to whom a man surrenders himself when he freely responds with faith, hope and love to God, who is present to him in what is necessarily a transcendent experience. Whenever human freedom is realised, it is experienced, whether this is thought out or not, as the free gift of God and as the continuation of his creative act in the life of the creature, for the creature owes both its essential being to God and also its free development. From this point of view a synthesis of the transcendent and the categorial is certainly conceivable. The categorial which is freely willed can be experienced as the fixed purpose creatively determined by God's freedom.

A word should be added about the meaning of the synthesis of the transcendent and the categorial, by means of which a *choice*, given by God, can be put into effect among various possibilities. First of all this [32] synthesis is not to be ruled out where a categorial object of choice does not mask and disguise the transcendent experience but rather allows both the

[9] Cf. K. Rahner, *Visions and Prophecies,* Quaestiones Disputatae 10 (London and Freiburg, 1963).

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experience itself and the reflection which tests it to occur unhindered. This is not immediately obvious because it is assumed that the categorial object of choice is morally good and at the same time cannot be chosen by man on his own. A person may have the experience of being unable in a free and uninhibited way to fit a particular object of choice, even one that is morally good, into the movement of knowledge and freedom which is involved in the transcendent experience of the Spirit. He may reflect upon general principles and norms and seek to assess a particular object by reference to them. In doing so he may not come up against any objection to the choice of a particular categorial object, and yet somehow he has not *got it in him* to make the choice and this constrains and obscures for him the free impetus of the transcendent spirit in quite a different fashion from other cases where this experience does not occur. Of course a number of objects could be included on an equal footing in such a synthesis without there being only one which masks the transcendent experience of the Spirit. In this case all the objects would be possible not only on the basis of their human and rational legitimacy but with respect to God as well. This free selection would in fact be divinely intended and God's will would not have foreseen only one particular object. Here it is not of any particular importance either before God, or for the experience of the Spirit, which is in fact chosen among the various possible options.

Finally the synthesis intended by God between a particular categorial object of choice and the transcendent experience of the Spirit can and should be experienced in a more positive way. For the freely accepted transcendent experience of the Spirit is only possible here and now through concentration upon one distinct object of choice among others. This means that this object does not in any way lessen or distort the experience of the Spirit but rather provides a concrete and practical means of expression for it. According to what was said earlier an object of choice which by human standards is not in itself right, i.e. not in conformity with the norms of the moral law, can in practice mediate the free acceptance of the transcendent experience of the Spirit. Of course if this objective moral contradiction were clearly perceived and affirmed, then there would be no place for the experience of the synthesis of transcendent, spiritual experience and a categorial object of choice. To suppose otherwise would be to imply [33] that the will of God, the creator, bore absolutely no relationship to the structure of the created world and was quite indifferent to it. In the last analysis, however, the will of God, together with his world, is precisely the object of transcendent experience. In a case where someone with full knowledge and consent willed what was objectively wrong by human, moral standards and wished in this way to attempt a synthesis of an essentially wrong object of choice and a freely accepted transcendent experience of the Spirit, his intention would remain unfulfilled and would not lead to spiritual experience. Such a synthesis simply cannot be achieved in this manner.

So far all that has been said about the connection and the complementary dependence of spiritual experience and existential decision has been on a very abstract and general plane. Certainly it could all be more clearly and precisely described, but the scope required by the topic has not allowed detailed consideration of the psychology of the transcendent experience of the Spirit in grace, of the logic of existential commitment or of the nature of freedom which cannot be neatly fitted into a logic proper to theoretical reason.[10] Nor can we deal with the various pieces of evidence offered by theological tradition which witness more or less clearly to the unity of the transcendent experience of the free spirit (of God and man) and existential commitment. In this connection, for instance, the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius could be adduced as evidence,[11] although this would require the treatment of texts whose

[10] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola', *The Dynamic Element in the Church,* Quaestiones Disputatae 12 (Freiburg and London, 1964), pp. 84-156.
[11] Cf. in the present volume the reflections contained in the essay entitled, 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats'.

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exact meaning is still disputed today. My own view, however, is that they point to this unity of spiritual experience and existential decision.

This short study has contained not merely speculations and mental fantasies which have nothing to do with the concrete business of living. If this objection should be raised, the counter question must be put whether sufficient attention has been paid to the very real distinction between an unthought out transcendent experience which forms part of a specific object of consciousness, without itself being a categorial object, and the concept of such a transcendent experience which has been thought out, given objective form and expressed in words. If such a concept does not normally occur in daily life, this by [34] no means proves that the transcendent experience of the Spirit is also lacking.

Furthermore if someone were to maintain that he never experienced such a synthesis of transcendent experience of the Spirit and the objects of an existential decision, then again a counter question may be asked. Is it absolutely essential for the truth of the position outlined here that such a synthesis can frequently be experienced as a distinct, clear object of reflection? Or is not also conceivable that such basic options and commitments happen relatively infrequently and then directly determine the rest of a man’s life?

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3

RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GRACE

The comments of a dogmatic theologian upon enthusiasm in the Church cannot take into consideration either exegesis and biblical theology or the phenomenology and history of religion, or church history, in so far as these are relevant to the topic.[1] However there are certain phenomena which merit our attention: experiences of the Spirit, glossolalia (speaking in tongues), the experience of a radical transformation of the 'old man' into a new person brought about by the Spirit of God, a radical conversion, and similar events which occur today in the various charismatic movements in the churches and which offer a real and concrete expression of Christianity.

We cannot give an exact description of such phenomena here nor can we assert with certainty that the comments we wish to make from a dogmatic viewpoint really bear upon their concrete and specific characteristics. We intend here to do two things. First we must [36] delineate an area from the standpoint of traditional theology in which a phenomenon such as charismatic enthusiasm can be described and located in dogmatic theology. Secondly we must attempt to give some basic guidelines about the discernment of spirits. We must, that is, at least touch upon the question under what conditions a charismatic phenomenon can in any sense count as an experience of the Spirit, which, according to the dogma of the Church, is the grace-filled, divinising gift of God to justified mankind. In trying to provide at least the bare outlines of the 'locus theologicus', as it were, in which such enthusiasm can be rooted, we leave the question open whether the specific and concrete phenomena and experiences which are reported in the life of the Church today are in fact dealt with at all in our account. The question also remains open whether even the beginnings of an effective spiritual discernment can in fact be provided by such a dogmatic method or whether discernment of spirits,[2] if it is really to distinguish between the genuine and false elements in movements of religious enthusiasm, must supply much more specific criteria with greater human and psychological content than those offered from a purely dogmatic perspective.

We cannot simply proceed in our investigation from the definitive and infallible teaching of the official Church. In this area statements which are binding for a particular Christian denomination are not sufficient. Even if a complete theology of grace, whether Catholic or Protestant, were assumed, this would still be the case. If one restricts oneself to the Catholic theology of the Holy Spirit, the question still remains open according to the official teaching of the Church whether a direct experience of the Spirit can in fact occur in the sense determined by Catholic teaching on grace at the 6th session of the Council of Trent,[3] that is,

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[1] The concept 'enthusiasm' requires some clarification. In the usual Catholic dictionaries, even in the '*Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*' (Paris, 1932), it is not to be found. In Protestant circles it has been interpreted since Luther to mean emotional excess, cf. W. Trillhaas, *RGG II* (Tübingen, 3rd ed. 1958) and similarly Y. Congar, 'Enthousiastes', *Catholicisme IV* (Paris, 1956), pp. 262 *sqq*. From this background enthusiasm was seen above all in connection with prophetic proclamation, cf. Fr. Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion,* (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 274 *sqq*.; 281 *sqq*. In more recent times the positive aspects of religious enthusiasm have received more prominence, cf. W. J. Hollenweger, *Enthusiastisches Christentum. Die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Wuppertal and Zurich, 1969). For the general concept cf. *Brockhaus Enzykl* V (1968) 562 and E. Fink, *Vom Wesen des Enthusiasmus* (Essen, 1948). Cf. also, R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford, 1950).

[2] On 'Discernment of Spirits' see 'Discemement des esprits', *asc. et. mysi* III (Paris, 1957), 1222-1291 (J. Guillet, G. Bardy, Fr. Vandenbroucke, J. Pegon, H. Martin) and H. Wuif, *LThK X* (Freiburg, 1965), 533-535.

[3] Cf. *Denz.* 1525; 1529-1530; 1553-1554.

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the experience of the Spirit which gives justification, of sanctifying grace, and of the infused virtues.

Naturally Catholic teaching contains the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring of the Spirit and its presence in men, justifying grace, the presence of the trinitarian God,[4] but unfortunately the question still remains unanswered in Catholic theology whether the Spirit enters the realm of human consciousness [37] as the Spirit or is only accepted as a present reality through the external indoctrination, as it were, of Scripture and the teaching of the Church, but which we know lies beyond our own spiritual experience. Here we can leave aside the question of the exact manner and means by which the Spirit can be given to us at all. The discovery and establishment of such a basic division within Catholic theology may seem surprising. For the traditional Catholic theology of grace must obviously be familiar with some sort of experience of the Spirit. Actual grace which is declared to be absolutely essential, in the face of Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism, for every saving action, is understood as an inner inspiration and illumination. Experiences of grace which help to overcome concupiscence are known as are ones in the sense of the 'Imitatio Christi'. Ignatius Loyola was familiar with such experience, a sense of consolation, and he regards it as beneficial for the whole of Christian spirituality.[5] But a closer investigation of post-Reformation theology, at least since the Baroque period, reveals quite clearly that for a major school of theology, in which the Jesuits are also represented, a real experience of the so-called supernatural grace of justification, either habitual or actual, simply does not enter the picture; for this school the proper reception of the justifying Spirit of God, even when such justification brings about subjective human acts, lies beyond conscious awareness and is a purely ontological reality.[6] Obviously, given such an assumption, the whole problem which engages us here does not arise at all. For on this reckoning any form of charismatic enthusiasm, although it is not denied as a purely empirical phenomenon by this school and may indeed be cultivated in its spirituality, is something which in the last resort must be judged according to natural, human and moral criteria alone. Of course there may be talk in some sense of the experience of grace in such a school, but strictly speaking its conclusion must be that such experiences are natural events of a psychological kind which must be empirically investigated from a variety of viewpoints by different methods and judged according to human criteria. In addition one may say that these experiences fulfil the human and religious conditions for being 'ontologically raised up' by the grace of God but that this elevation by [38] the Spirit is a reality whose occurrence transcends human consciousness. According to the pre-suppositions of this school of theology, religious enthusiasm may be regarded as a very important phenomenon, perhaps even as absolutely necessary and indispensable for justification, but nevertheless as a phenomenon which, in the language of such a school, belongs to the pre-conditions required for acts of salvation. To put the matter more concretely: a supernatural act of faith which confers salvation consists for this school in objects of consciousness which are mediated verbally and doctrinally by the teaching of the Church. These objects can basically be heard, received and known by a purely natural act and can be related to human freedom of a merely natural kind. The only qualification added by this school of theology is to the effect that, when such acts are freely undertaken as acts of faith, then they are in reality 'ontologically' elevated by the Holy Spirit into an event which takes place beyond consciousness. This act of faith, in so far as it has been ontologically transformed by grace, is the bearer of *salvation*, which it would not be were it a purely

[4] Cf. *Denz.* 3329-3331.
[5] Cf. Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises,* nos. 6-10, 313-336.
[6] It is essential to see these remarks in the general context of the theology of grace; cf. the author's article in *Sacramentum Mundi* II (London and New York, 1968), pp. 412-426; also F. Stegmuller, 'Molina' and 'Molinismus', *LThK* VII (Freiburg, 1962), 526-530.

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natural occurrence. But from the point of view of human consciousness the credibility, meaningfulness and revealed character of the content of faith can be shown, according to this school of thought, without recourse to the supernatural assistance of the Holy Spirit which is necessary for salvation. Only in the moment when the act of faith becomes a saving act is it raised ontologically by grace beyond the scope of conscious awareness, so that in this sense it possesses an ontological character substantially different from that of a purely natural act.

All this, however, takes place outside the realm of consciousness. All the elements open to psychological comprehension which play a part in the occurrence of such an affirmation and decision of faith can indeed be spoken of as grace from the point of view of the actual providence of God, etc. But in the last resort this grace is essentially regarded as *natural*, medicinal grace which must be sharply distinguished from the properly pneumatic element, the purely ontological elevation of the psychological event which we call religious awareness, the experience of faith or the affirmation of faith.

If, then, we want to speak of Christian enthusiasm from the standpoint of dogmatic theology, we must from the start make a clear and definite break with this approach which has been traditional in the Jesuit school. We are convinced that both Scripture and a more representative and genuine theological tradition within the Catholic [39] Church point to a different understanding of grace. Grace, the Holy Spirit, the working of the Spirit of God in the proper sense of divinising grace which is radically new and really contains the Spirit of God, all this is something which in our view, to put the matter cautiously, operates within human consciousness. Pneuma means for us, in the strictly theological sense of grace which raises up and divinises supernaturally, a genuine *self*-communication of God in himself.[7]

Even if we set ourselves completely apart from the position mentioned above, which has an extensive following in Catholic theology, we must nevertheless clearly and realistically admit that at first glance the opinion of this school which we have rejected seems to have a great deal to recommend it. That is to say, if we consider the rather naive and self-conscious wave of pentecostal enthusiasm which has appeared on the contemporary scene and get to work on it with the tools of the psychology, history and phenomenology of religion, then we might well be tempted to say: all this enthusiasm which has come to the fore in modern Christianity is psychological, an expression of natural, human capacities which appear elsewhere in the history of religion taken as a whole. One could say that the phenomena of the gifts of the Spirit, of charismatic enthusiasm are basically universal religious events and are perhaps to be found in a more or less pure, confused or distorted form in every religion. One might feel that, since they are present everywhere, they do not imply any peculiarly Christian phenomenon. They occur under various guises in different religious sects, both inside and outside Christianity; they appear within various Christian denominations, cultural groups and social classes; they may be found in a variety of psychological or cultural types, but in essence they point to purely human capacities, which in the last analysis have nothing to do with Christianity as such. From this perspective one might attempt to defend the basic position of the Jesuit school of thought outlined above by suggesting that only such a stand can rescue the specific essence of Christianity from the onslaught of charismatic enthusiasm, which, on psychological, historical and phenomenological grounds, would reduce it to the level of other religions. Only in this way can we locate the specifically Christian element firmly in the supernatural elevation of man by the [40] Spirit which lies beyond the scope of human consciousness. This would provide a safe refuge from the psychological and phenomenological scepticism of today. One could treat the whole phenomenon of religious enthusiasm either positively or negatively, with benevolence or scepticism. One might in

[7] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The self-communication of God', *Sacr. Mun.* III (London and New York, 1969), pp. 114-118; *ibid.* IV, pp. 297-305; *ibid.* V, pp. 348-355.

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certain circumstances regard such phenomena as very useful or as an inevitable concomitant of religion, but the exact elucidation of their origin would be a question in which dogmatic theology could happily declare itself to have no interest.

OUTLINE OF A CONTEMPORARY THEORY OF GRACE

First of all we must select and sketch out the theory of grace which we are to take as axiomatic, in so far as grace is regarded as the sanctifying and justifying self-communication of the Spirit of God himself. Obviously our remarks here can only take the form of a thesis proposed without further theological reasoning to support it. What justification there is for the thesis in this context consists in the usefulness which we hope it has for a theological interpretation of the phenomenon of religious enthusiasm, which is the concern of the present study.

I mean by the essence of grace the self-communication of God to the transcendent spirit of man. In virtue of this self-communication the transcendence of man is permanently and necessarily ordered to the direct presence of God, whether this be the object of conscious or thematic reflection or not. Furthermore God's self-communication is a dynamic force which transforms the inner, transcendent reference of the human spirit to God so that this transcendent, spiritual movement finds its fulfilment in the beatific vision, the direct knowledge of God face to face in love, in which God is possessed without the mediation of any created reality. Grace is thus understood as the radical transformation of human transcendence so that God is not merely the final goal of human striving which one may come nearer to but never reach. He is not only the ultimate objective which, asymptotically approached, opened up the whole spiritual movement and intellectual history of mankind and kept it in motion. Grace is also that which makes it possible for this movement to *reach* God in himself. Naturally, therefore, grace divinises man and bestows upon him a share in the holiness of God.[8] Such a preliminary understanding of grace in [41] relation to human transcendence makes it possible first of all to allow grace to operate in cases where apparently a directly Christian communication of justifying grace is not present, where the conscious interpretation of the elevation of human transcendence does not occur, or, if it does, is only expressed in a very obscure manner. The notion of the specific essence of grace outlined here does not in fact result in insoluble conflict with the problems and difficulties which the Jesuit interpretation of supernatural grace mentioned above sought to avoid. According to the latter view, grace is a divinisation of man which takes place ontologically beyond the realm of consciousness and which properly speaking, at least in normal cases, is present for the first time in human awareness only in the beatific vision. It takes as its starting point the problem that all other specific, categorial religious phenomena which can be described and empirically analysed are to found outside Christianity and beyond the bounds of any spirituality proper to the Church. Now on this view it seems very difficult, if not impossible, to explain their existence through the operation of what in all seriousness we can call the Holy Spirit, the self-communication of God. Such an interpretation is based on the conviction, expressed in scholastic terms, that this grace essentially and properly consists in the *self*-communication of God, i.e. in what scholastic theology calls uncreated grace, in contra-distinction to any habitual or actual grace, however sublime, which is created in us by God. Uncreated grace is thus God himself, the goal and ground of those acts which are related to God in himself. According to our thesis no particular, categorial object of consciousness is assigned to this grace, which is present rather in transcendent experience.

[8] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Grace' *Sacr. Mun.* II (London and New York, 1968), pp. 412-426.

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This latter can, however, subsequently be the object of historical and categorial reflection and in fact must be reflected upon, since no transcendent experience is to be found without some complementary historical expression. This account of the matter avoids a conception of divine grace which would make of it a particular, inner-worldly phenomenon which comes from without (a conception to be rejected on theological as well as philosophical and historical grounds). For the peculiar type of divine causality of grace that this assumes seems to lack credibility in the face of secular arguments.

Finally we must make it even more plain that we did at the beginning that the competence of the dogmatic theologian does not extend to the question, however important, whether the various experiences and events which one is considering in speaking of religious [42] enthusiasm can be brought to some degree under a single, common heading. It is presupposed in the dogmatic reflections offered here that this is possible, at least in some measure, even at the cost of neglecting very great differences amongst the particular experiences of religious enthusiasm. If the term 'religious enthusiasm' does not contain any theological common denominator, then our reflections would have to be parcelled out, as it were, to cover the various, disparate experiences of religious enthusiasm. We proceed from the position, admittedly far from certain or free from problems, that in fact all these experiences do have something in common and that this consists in a transcendent experience which touches the centre of the religious subject and in which the subject has an experience of God. Of course the assertion of a common element in such charismatic phenomena is problematic in itself because it is questionable whether this radical, transcendent experience does occur in all such phenomena, even if they are judged to be genuine in themselves from a phenomenological point of view; one might feel on the contrary that some phenomena of this type may precisely inhibit or distort transcendent experience. It is furthermore obvious that to assert a common element is not to define the specific peculiarities and distinguishing characteristics of the various charismatic phenomena. Finally the proposal of a common factor in the different expressions of religious enthusiasm does not imply that a similar transcendent experience of God may not be present in religious phenomena which we would not normally call 'enthusiastic' or charismatic, phenomena such as intense meditation, contemplation, mysticism, as well as moral decisions which lay claim on human freedom in its most ultimate as well as its most superficial aspects. However the assertion of a common element does seem to us to make sense for various reasons. First it makes it possible for theology as such to have something to say about such phenomena; secondly if these phenomena do not possess some generic essence in common, they could be of no religious significance at all but would merely count as strange, psychic occurrences which might attract the interest of a para-psychologist or perhaps a psychiatrist. The obvious criticism might of course be made that if some common factor is attributed to these expressions of religious enthusiasm which covers them all without exception, then the specific character of these expressions is not in any way affected. So appeal to the common element does not enable one to say anything at all about religious enthusiasm as such. But in our view this criticism is in the last resort not valid, since all these [43] expressions of religious enthusiasm, if and when they are genuine (which is by no means always the case), bring more clearly to a person's consciousness the experience of transcendence, an experience which may of course be found elsewhere and in other ways; they make it easier for a person to objectify this experience and mediate it to human freedom in a more intense form than would mostly, though not always, be possible for the majority of mankind in the normal unfolding of the history of individual and collective piety, if this is seen as the history of grace-filled experience of transcendence. To put the matter in summary form: a clear dose, as it were, of grace-filled, transcendent experience is a rare and sporadic

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occurrence; it is usually found, if at all, in homoeopathic states and in unreflective mysticism[9] (by mysticism is meant here a transcendent experience through grace which is not categorial). It follows that there is and must be transcendent experience in the form of religious enthusiasm. This is true even if the categorial element plays a much greater role in the objectification of the experience from the point of view of the subject than is the case in genuine mysticism. This means that there is much greater likelihood of distortion and corruption in the former than in the latter. Religious enthusiasm is, as it were, mysticism in ordinary dress. It may be noted here, in order to forestall possible objections, that mysticism can be interpreted as an entirely Christian phenomenon, as an expression of faith; properly understood it is the realisation, whether consciously grasped or not, of that 'kenosis' which took place in the death of Christ and was borne, accepted and answered by God through his own self-communication, in which alone ultimate freedom can be achieved. But with these remarks we find ourselves at the end of our preliminary reflections and already embarked upon the thesis which is to be proposed in this essay.

THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM

Our thesis concerning the theological interpretation of the phenomena of religious enthusiasm amounts to this: it may be admitted first of all that expressions of enthusiasm, in so far as they differ in their particular characteristics from other religious occurrences, are not of necessity specifically religious or experiences of grace. However, through [44] these phenomena a man comes face to face in a particular way with his own transcendence and through it with his freedom and so with his inner reference to God. This goes beyond his day-to-day experience of transcendence and makes him confront in a free and conscious manner the fact that his transcendence is raised up by grace and ordered to the direct and immediate presence of God, in so far as it is accepted with the free consent of faith. Thus in the *totality* of the phenomenon of religious enthusiasm there occurs an experience of grace. This thesis must be spelt out in greater detail but two basic reasons may be given to justify it. First it provides a meaningful framework in which to locate the theological data and enables one, at least in a general way, to interpret the experience of religious enthusiasm as a genuine experience of *divine* grace, a point already made clear in Scripture. Secondly it leaves one room to include all the psychological phenomena, all the oddities and problems of a religious kind which an honest observer can neither ignore nor interpret in their brute reality as manifestations of the divine Spirit, whose operation is essential for their occurrence.

What is the situation, then, of ordinary Christians in their daily piety? They have at their disposal a large store of religious concepts, propositions, motivations and patterns of behaviour which all perform an important function in guiding their daily life and action. But in their day-to-day affairs they do not encounter with any clarity either the heart of their own subjectivity or God himself in his true self-communication. They meet with the conceptual and verbal objectifications of these two principles, which form the poles of tension of Christian and religious life. Of course the genuine realities are 'intended' in the conceptual objectifications of consciousness if the daily piety is itself authentic, a fact which may normally be taken for granted. Moreover it can and should not be disputed that some experience of human transcendence and its radical re-ordering by grace to the direct presence of God is obtained through such everyday piety, even if it is not the object of conscious reflection. But the day-to-day awareness of the pious Christian rests on these conceptual and

[9] To supplement these remarks cf. K. Rahner, 'Mystische Erfahrung und mystische Theologie', *Schriften zur Theologie* XII (Zurich, 1975), pp. 428-438.

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propositional expressions; it is dissolved and remains fixed in them; it confuses, in the words of Scripture, the letter with the spirit, the word about God with the Word of God and with God himself. It is a secondary matter here whether this resting in the expressions of religion happens quite naively and is not felt as the problem of God's distance but rather as consolation, joy, liberation, security and nearness, or whether the pious Christian *suffers* in his daily life from the [45] mediation of true religious reality through conceptual expressions and has the terrible sensation of remaining fixed in a purely human realm without any authentic experience of God himself at all.

How can this imprisonment in the objective and categorial reality of everyday existence, even religious, be broken? When can a man experience his own freedom for what it is in a clearer and more radical fashion and become aware of the ultimate and decisive self-determination of the one, total subject before God, and not merely be faced with this or that object of choice, over which he possesses some control according to certain objective moral norms? How, that is, will we come to a clear and inescapable experience of the real self-communication of God in which he is grasped as the goal of our transcendence and as the underlying ground of our very experience of God? For this is in fact what the Christian doctrine of grace asserts of every religious act, although, as we have pointed out earlier, it then consigns the experience of grace to an objective realm beyond conscious awareness. How will we transcend in our religious acts the endless conceptual objectifications of God which enable us only to relate to him and his word through their mediation, so that God himself remains a remote being, only accessible through conceptual, linguistic and cultic images? When will we grasp this teaching on grace not only in propositional formulae but also in clear and inescapable experience?

If, as I say, we abstract from the phenomenon of the radical 'emptying' characteristic of a mysticism of faith in which a person shares in the descent of Jesus into death, we can say: all expressions of religious enthusiasm, whenever they are to some degree genuine and in earnest, are spiritual events in which the grace filled transcendence of man comes plainly to the fore and in which the subject freely experiences God as both the ultimate goal of this transcendence and the very ground of the experience itself. We do not mean that these phenomena of religious enthusiasm consist *only* in such grace-filled experiences of transcendence and in nothing else besides. This is certainly not true of them as it might be asserted of genuine mysticism. For they possess categorial content of different kinds and are caused by a great variety of factors. But they also contain a genuine, grace-filled experience of transcendence which has an inescapable impact quite different from the grey mask of everyday normality usually superimposed on such experience: In them a man passes 'outside himself'. The true meaning of religion is hidden and made remote by the dominance of its traditional, [46] everyday expressions, even though their real function is to be a sign and pointer towards this meaning. Through religious enthusiasm the objectification of religion is dislodged from its system. The experience of being taken out of oneself makes what is normal and organised in the institutional Church seem provisional and questionable, incommensurate with the meaning it is supposed to signify. A man is thrown back upon his own subjectivity, which no longer appears manageable to him in terms of conceptual expressions and propositional criteria. He then has the courage to entrust himself to something within him which no longer has to be tested and sanctioned by categorial norms but is experienced, at least in a preliminary way, as not being subject to such control, as the realisation of freedom which occurs in the act of self-surrender to the sovereign mastery of God, a mastery which lies beyond our justification. All this at least enables a person to experience in a clear and inescapable manner his own transcendence and inner reference to God, itself sustained by God's self-communication. It is true that these charismatic experiences do not bring about such a grace-filled awareness of God's presence in entirely

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pure and clear form, for they can distort the real experience of grace in a new way precisely because they break through the imprisoning objectivity of everyday religious awareness. But the experience of religious enthusiasm does make plain the provisional character of all that is, in the broadest sense, 'institutional', i.e. rational language, sacraments and law, and shows clearly that the whole institutional structure, although it can never disappear entirely in this life, is nevertheless in itself a sign which is destined to destroy itself and disappear at the appearance of God. To this extent these experiences render the immediate reality and given-ness of the grace-bearing experience of God more evident and inescapable than is normally the case in everyday, religious existence where the sign all too easily takes the place of the reality which it signifies.

To explain all this more clearly and to establish its truth more firmly, one would have to examine specific experiences of religious enthusiasm, for these vary enormously amongst themselves. Only then would one be in a position to show how each experience mediates in its own way a purer and more radical experience of grace than those which occur in everyday, religious practice, limited as it is to objective categories. But such an exposition is not possible here, if only because I do not regard myself as competent to describe particular expressions of religious enthusiasm from a psychological and phenomenological [47] point of view. One would have to indicate a category in which to locate religious phenomena, in such a way that on the one hand their human reality could be appreciated and, at the same time, critically examined, and on the other hand they could be judged, at least under certain conditions, to be in fact what they claim to be, that is the action of the Spirit of God.

CONSEQUENCES

If we understand mysticism in the sense indicated above, i.e. a radical experience of faith which destroys the conceptual and the categorial in so far as these claim to be ultimate realities, we may regard religious enthusiasm as a sort of mysticism of the masses. Now if this enthusiasm is an experience of the grace of faith, which expresses the grace-filled awareness of transcendence more clearly because the circumstances are psychologically and existentially out of the ordinary, it is evident first of all that, in so far as they are to be distinguished from the experience of grace itself, they are rightly subject to human, critical analysis; their origin and nature, their possible consequences and distortions are to be assessed by human, secular criteria. The one condition for this analysis is the conviction that genuine experiences of grace do exist and that they can in principle occur in experiences of religious enthusiasm, although they are not limited to them. Indeed under certain conditions they may be felt more clearly and with greater impact in these phenomena. A further assumption is that the rational version of man found in the western world, especially amongst intellectuals, is not necessarily the model and paradigm for the whole of humanity. What emerges as the essential character of religious enthusiasm may not in itself be the unsullied manifestation of the 'Holy Spirit', but may possess a particular analogical affinity to him, at least in certain important respects. But given these assumptions, the phenomenon of religious enthusiasm in itself can be assessed by psychology, depth psychology, para-psychology or whatever else, each in its own way, without this being an irreligious and profane attack upon such enthusiasm, an attack which is bound to misunderstand their specific character and importance. We are not faced with the alternatives of being forced either to recognise expressions of religious enthusiasm, at least when they are genuine, as the unadulterated operation of the Holy Spirit, or to discount them from the start, [48] even from the human point of view, as 'rubbish', the result of human religious impulses going off the rails.

It must be granted that with respect to their categorial content and conceptual framework,

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their particular imagery and distinct prophetic utterances, and the actual impulses which an individual, a community or a society experience in them, they are of human origin and cannot be interpreted simply as divine inspiration which would give their particular categorial content an unambiguous sanction and a heavenly guarantee.[10] But this precisely does not mean that a genuine, grace-filled experience of transcendence cannot be present in those feelings of enthusiasm whose categorial content arouses justified misgivings or even should be rejected altogether on a number of possible counts. Even prophets, for example, who were filled with the Spirit of God, have made mistakes, if one looks at the matter from a purely historical point of view. The language of the charismatically inspired can be psychologically conditioned either individually or socially, even when the experience is genuine, and can be extremely limited and primitive in character. A man who is deeply moved by religious feeling and bewails his sinfulness can be lamenting something which a psychologist of human development may explain as a harmless human weakness, and yet the man's contrition can be quite justified. Someone in a moment of religious enthusiasm may have a 'conversion experience' whose content later proves highly questionable and dated; nevertheless it may have been a genuine experience of conversion in the sense that through a very dubious categorial medium a person can achieve a radically free self-determination and an unconditional acceptance of the sovereignty of God.[11] Critical analysis of the categorial content of religious enthusiasm does not necessarily place in question the basic experience of grace and of the Spirit. Whether this is present, whether the subject has experienced his own freedom and in it grace, this question must be decided so far as possible by other criteria than that of the rightness or wrongness of the content of such experiences taken by itself *alone*. This is especially true in cases where the content of an experience may be quite acceptable and yet the experience itself hardly qualifies as a case of religious enthusiasm, since it is existentially far too shallow and superficial to count as a clear and radical experience of [49] the transcendent impact of transforming grace. In Catholic theology such criteria are mostly to be found in mystical theology, in ac much as this is not only concerned with the transcendent experience of grace in its intrinsic purity (such as in the exclusively mystical images, pictures, appearances, or terms of a John of the Cross)[12], but also takes into consideration mystical phenomena which possess categorial content and in addition treat such content seriously. This means that it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish them from those experiences which today would be put under the heading of religious enthusiasm, especially such things as prophecies, proclamations, missions, which may appear less within charismatic communities (because of the mechanics of communication), but which can be aimed at such communities as the audience addressed. But no more will be said here about such criteria. If the correctness of content cannot be made into a clear and decisive criterion for the presence or absence of a genuine religious experience of grace, it cannot function in this way either for the value for a community of such an experience of religious enthusiasm.

The above remarks should not be taken to imply that the categorial content of such experiences is simply irrelevant. Other things being equal, an experience of this type has more chance of being genuine, that is, of being a real transcendent experience of grace which touches the core of personal freedom, if the categorial content is objectively correct, i.e. if it is in some measure an appropriate objectification of the experience of grace. However it

[10] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Mystische Erfahrung und Mystische Theologie', *Schriften zur Theologie* XII (Zurich, 1975), pp. 428-438.
[11] On the theology of freedom the author has published a collection of his own writings, *Grace in Freedom* (London and Freiburg, 1969).
[12] On St. John of the Cross cf. I. Behn, *Spanische Mystik* (Dusseldorf, 1957), pp. 463-742; A. Winkelhofer, *Die Gnadenlehre in der Mystik des hl. Johannes v. Kreuz* (Freiburg i. Br. 1936); A. Brunner, *Der Schritt über die Grenzen. Wesen mid Sinn der Mystik* (Wurzburg, 1972).

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should not be overlooked in this case that the objective validity of the categorial content can create the danger of seeming to guarantee the intense and radical character of an experience of grace, simply because the categorial content gives no cause for objections. In order to test the authenticity of the categorial content of such an experience we should use all the normal rules which are valid for the assessment of theological statements and events in general: conformity to the message of the Gospel, to Scripture, to the faith and mind of the Church, etc. Here we will not go further into the matter, except to say that our case raises the question which applies to all Christian statements and theological texts but in a more acute form than elsewhere, the question, that is, of how the original experience of [50] grace which took place in the encounter with the historical Christ event is related to the explicit teaching of Christianity in Scripture and tradition. For the latter is after all nothing more than the historical interpretation which has proved valid and authentic for the community of the Church of the original process of the experience of grace mediated through Jesus. But even if this question becomes particularly urgent in the case of religious enthusiasm, nevertheless it is a problem which comes up in all theological discourse and does not require special treatment here.[13]

The dogmatic question should be raised at this point of how the relationship of religious enthusiasm to the Christian community, to the Church, can be assessed and tested. In contrast to the central core of mysticism the expressions of religious enthusiasm make themselves felt precisely within the Christian community as such. This applies both in cases when something like a prophetic message, etc. is directed to a community or to the Church and in cases when an intense experience of individual conversion occurs publicly in the community and seeks recognition through the community. But the relationship of religious enthusiasm to the community and the Church can be referred to that part of ecclesiology which deals with the charismatic element in the Church, with its validity and role vis-à-vis the institutional structure of the Church, and with the obvious tension between the charismatic and institutional elements.[14] One should also call attention to the teaching on 'discernment of spirits', a topic much neglected in contemporary theology, which should enable the authorities in the Church, and others as well, to distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic expressions of religious enthusiasm. But nothing more will be added on this subject here.[15]

It may be noted that the question we have touched does in fact lie concealed within other departments of dogmatic theology, which cover the topic in an analogous way, although this fact is not immediately evident. At root, for instance, the same problem is involved [51] when one considers the question, acute in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, of the relationship between traditional fundamental theology and the apologetic of immanence. The same issue is at stake when the function of the grace of faith is discussed as the reception of the message of the Gospel which comes from without; when the relation of the letter and the spirit in the text of Scripture is considered; when in sacramental theology the exact connection between 'sacrament' and the 'res' of the sacrament is examined; when the Church as the presence of the Spirit and the Church as institution is discussed in ecclesiology. In all these cases it is a question of the relation between two realities which should neither be identified nor completely separated. This relation reappears in phenomenon of religious enthusiasm in that, however spiritual the experience may seem at first, one must distinguish

[13] On the mediating role of Jesus Christ, cf. the author's theological meditation, *Ich glaube an Jesus Christus* (Zurich, 1968).
[14] The author has dealt fully with this topic in the writings collected in *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, Quaestiones Disputatae 12 (London and Freiburg, 1964).
[15] For the discernment of spirits according to Ignatius Loyola, cf. in this volume, 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats'; bibliog. references will be found there.

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between the real, fundamental experience of grace in the transcendent being of man on the one hand and the categorial content on the other. For this content can both be the cause and medium of a clearer and existentially more radical interiorisation of the transcendent experience of grace and also be its complementary expression, which under certain circumstances may seem in retrospect highly dubious from a historical or individual point of view.

In conclusion we may note that elements are present in a theology of human freedom which involves the historical and corporeal nature of man, as well as in traditional moral theology and in mystical teaching, which could be used for a theological interpretation of an intense experience of conversion, of the reception of the Holy Spirit, and of baptism in the Spirit (leaving aside the question whether baptism admits of different levels) and other such phenomena. The distinction, for example, drawn in moral theology between an act which, though free, is relatively insignificant and one which is of decisive importance for life (a distinction which unfortunately is rarely applied in Catholic theology to any but sinful actions), and the teaching on being ‘confirmed in grace’ and on the possibility of interiorising this reality, which is found in mystical theology, both contain, despite the as yet unsolved problems they possess, many theological insights which could be of value for the assessment of religious enthusiasm.

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4

ANONYMOUS AND EXPLICIT FAITH

The topic to be discussed here is the possibility of 'anonymous faith' and its relationship to 'explicit faith'. By anonymous faith is meant a faith which on the one hand is necessary and effective for salvation (under the general conditions which are required for justification and final salvation, i.e. hope and the love of God and neighbour) and on the other occurs without an explicit and conscious relationship (i.e. conceptual and verbal and thus objectively constituted) to the revelation of Jesus Christ contained in the Old and/or New Testament and without any explicit reference to God through an objective idea of God.

We combine in the concept of 'anonymous faith' a lack of an explicit relationship both to Christian revelation and to God, although it can of course happen that faith has a clear conceptual and verbal reference to God and only lacks an explicit relationship to Christian revelation. We are disregarding for a number of reasons the distinction much stressed elsewhere in contemporary theology between faith explicitly addressed to God but without express reference to Christian revelation in historical form and the 'faith of an atheist'. First the question of the salvation of those who feel obliged to affirm atheism is an urgent one. Secondly the Second Vatican Council takes account of such cases.[1] Thirdly the notion common in the past that a 'natural' revelation or even a private illumination could provide a relationship to God which is not a mere metaphysical affirmation of God's existence but involves a genuine faith in the self-revelation of God, this notion is no longer tenable because of the contemporary view of the length of human history and because atheism is a worldwide phenomenon.

[53] We are taking for granted here the theological doctrine that genuine faith is necessary for justification and salvation. This is the general teaching of theologians and was repeated by the Second Vatican Council. We are assuming as well that mere 'good will' based on a purely natural knowledge of God is by itself quite inadequate for salvation and justification, so that the view of Straub, for instance, cannot be sustained that in cases of necessity good will, founded on a formal readiness to believe, without actual faith, i.e. fides virtualis, is enough.[2]

We find ourselves, then, in the following theological situation: genuine faith in revelation is necessary for salvation. But it is not immediately plain what is exactly meant by 'faith universally necessary for salvation'. We are theologically justified in our definition of saving faith if we take into consideration that the teaching of the Church allows a man a chance of being saved, as long as he does not grievously offend his conscience by his actions, even if he does not come in the course of his life to an explicit acceptance of the Christian message in faith. But it must nevertheless be affirmed that a purely natural, metaphysical knowledge of God can never replace faith. On the other hand the Church today allows even for non-Christians and atheists who do not act against their conscience a real chance of supernatural salvation and the Second Vatican Council explicitly reckoned on such a possibility.

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[1] Cf. Conc. Vat. II *Lumen Gentium* no. 18; *Gaudium et Spes* no. 22; *Ad Gentes* No. 7.

[2] Cf. the studies, some much older, collected in: A. Straub, *De analysi fidei* (Innsbruck, 1922), with the idea of a 'fides stricte dicta, sed virtualis'; cf. also K. Rahner, 'Membership of the Church according to the teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical "Mystici Corporis Christi"', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963) pp. 1-88.

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FAITH NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

The question, then, is: how is it conceivable that these men could possibly achieve the faith which is necessary for salvation? Earlier explanations offered to cover this eventuality simply do not merit serious consideration any longer, e.g. private illumination, possibly at the moment of death; natural revelation which is mediated to a man through tradition; the acceptance of the distant possibility of faith which never reaches a more practical, explicit level of belief because of the personal fault of the individual 'heathen'. These solutions no longer hold water because, since the Second Vatican Council, we must [54] also reckon with a genuine possibility of salvation, and therefore of faith, being available to those who, without personal guilt, believe quite consciously and explicitly that they are obliged to profess atheism. It is no use saying in this case that a conscious atheist cannot remain free of guilt for long, that either he must in a short time become a convert to explicit theism or his atheism becomes culpable.

We are offering here an optimistic answer with regard to the possibility of salvation. There can exist an 'anonymous faith' which carries with it an intrinsic dynamism and therefore an obligation to find full realisation in explicit faith, but which is nonetheless sufficient for salvation even if a man does not achieve this fulfilment during his lifetime, as long as he is not to blame for this. Naturally such a person would deny, both to himself in his conscious awareness and to others, that he has such anonymous faith and in consequence this doctrine is not directly available for apologetic use. But this does not prevent a Christian from holding that his non-Christian or atheist fellow human being may be an anonymous believer.

The question now follows: what is to be understood by 'anonymous faith', and how is it to be conceived as a real possibility on the basis of valid theological principles? (The question whether such a possibility of salvation, which is universally available and offered to every man, is in fact freely accepted and realised, this question will not be pursued here.) We start from the assumption that the attempt to find an answer is not forbidden by the declaration of the Second Vatican Council that in such cases faith occurs in ways known only to God.[3] For this remark should evidently be taken to mean no more than that the Council itself is neither able nor willing to use its binding authority to lay down anything more precise on the subject. But if the theologian does not venture on his own responsibility and at his own peril to search out these mysterious ways of God, he would be laying the Church's teaching open to the objection that it was simply self-contradictory in that it asserted both that salvation was possible for all men and that faith was necessary.

To answer our question we may proceed from two pieces of data drawn from Christian anthropology, understood in both a theological and a philosophical sense. First there is the doctrine of the unlimited, transcendent nature of the human spirit in knowledge and freedom and secondly there is the dogma of God's universally effective will [55] which offers to all men the possibility of reaching their 'supernatural destiny' in the direct possession of God. The heart of our thesis is that, because the universal and supernatural will of God is working for human salvation, the unlimited transcendence of man, itself directed of necessity towards God, is raised up consciously by grace, although possibly without explicit thematic reflection, in such a way that the possibility of faith in revelation is thereby made available. Thus one can speak of genuine faith on condition that a man freely accepts his own unlimited transcendence which is raised up by grace and directed to the immediate presence of God as its final goal. We will now try briefly to expound this thesis.[4]

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[3] Cf. Conc. Vat. II *Gaudium et Spes* no. 22; *Ad Gentes* no. 3.

[4] The author has treated the themes briefly summarised here more fully elsewhere; on the 'transcendent nature of the human spirit' cf. the author's studies in the philosophy of religion; on the 'salvific will of God' cf. the article in *LThK,* V, 165-168; also *Sacr. Mun.* V (London and New York, 1970), pp. 405-409.

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THE TRANSCENDENT CHARACTER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Man is the being who possesses unlimited transcendence of knowledge and freedom. The inner dynamism of his spirit is directed to absolute being, to absolute hope, to the absolute future, to good in itself, to what is unconditionally right, and thus to God (or whatever one calls the goal of human transcendence which goes beyond all that can be grasped in objective categories). The transcendent reference of man to God is mediated through categorial objects (at least in cases other than genuine mystical experiences). But this object does not necessarily have to be a religious concept. The transcendent reference to God can be found in the mediation of ordinary, secular material, as long as a man by means of this material freely comes to a position of complete responsibility and self-determination. There then exists a conscious reference to God which can be freely accepted, although this is not explicitly reflected upon or treated under the heading of 'God'.

Even if a man does not think of God as part of his conscious vocabulary or even feels that he has to reject such a concept as self-contradictory, he is nevertheless always and inevitably involved with God in his secular awareness. Without reflection he accepts God when he freely accepts himself in his own unlimited transcendence. He does this when he genuinely follows his conscience with free consent, because by such an action he affirms as well the condition of possibility [56] of such a radical option which is implicitly bound up with this decision, i.e. he affirms God. So an explicit atheist is always involved with God. He cannot avoid this reference to God since it stems from the necessity of transcendence. At the same time he can be an anonymous theist when he recognises in his positive moral decision the unconditional call of conscience, for which the ultimate condition of possibility is the reference to what we call God. Explicit atheism is either culpable or involves an implicitly affirmed theism. This is, however, the precondition for a faith which in a strict sense responds to God's self-revelation; it is the 'potentia obedientalis' for such faith.[5]

THE SAVING WILL OF GOD

The second piece of theological data which is relevant in this context is the universal and supernatural will of God acting for salvation. This is expressed concretely in the communication (at least as an offer) of supernatural grace, whose transforming power is the condition of possibility of genuine saving acts and therefore, most fundamentally, of the act of faith. Two aspects of this supernatural grace should be specially noted here. First the offer of such grace should not be thought of as an occasional event happening periodically in a man's life, at least so long as he is not justified. This grace can in fact exist in the form of a mere offer (as in the case of baptised children), but in the case of adults who have not yet achieved justification grace cannot merely be an intermittent offer. Without prejudice to its gratuitous character, it should be conceived as an abiding possibility of human freedom and can be expressed either in the form of an offer alone, or as an acceptance which brings justification, or as a direct and deliberate rejection.

The second point to be made about such grace is that it transforms human consciousness. Here we can appeal directly to Thomist teaching, according to which supernatural, elevating grace is not a purely ontological reality beyond the scope of consciousness; it also brings a new, a priori, formal object with it which lies beyond the reach of a natural act of the human

[5] Cf. K. Rahner, *Hearers of the Word* (London and Sydney, 1969).

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spirit. This formal object is not to be thought of as a new, distinct item of conscious awareness which is a direct object of reflection, still less as a particular concept or word. It is rather the radical nature of the unlimited transcendence of man itself which is consciously known, though not necessarily perceived as an object or fully thought out. This transcendence is ordered by the transforming power of grace to the direct presence of God as its final goal, so that God does not merely remain the distant end point to which human transcendence tends asymptotically through knowledge and freedom, but is constituted as its proper goal. Since God seen as end point of spiritual transcendence and God regarded as immediate possession both form the a priori nature of the human spirit and cannot be simply differentiated by pure reflection, the thesis of the a priori consciousness of grace does not mean that it must be possible to distinguish grace as such from the natural spiritual essence of man by means of reflection upon particular objects of consciousness. This is all the more true given that question whether a person has freely and concretely accepted this grace or not cannot be decisively settled by pure introspection.

The process by which human transcendence is given new depth and purpose and is ordered to the direct presence of God is universal in time and place, because God's saving will is universally operative, even if it cannot be distinguished or given conceptual shape by individual reflection. If God's self-communication is free and if it is consciously grasped by a person, even if this occurs without thematic reflection, then the two conditions for supernatural revelation are realised in the strict sense of the term. Traditional theology also recognises an intrinsically transcendent revelation, even if under another label, in its teaching that historical revelation can only be grasped and understood for what it is through the grace of faith, which is nothing else than the self-communication of God to the human spirit in the depths of its being. If one adds at this point the Thomist doctrine of the new, supernatural, formal object given by grace, then one has already found what we are describing here as transcendent revelation, or, perhaps more accurately, the transcendent factor in revelation.

'ANONYMOUS' FAITH[6]

If a person by a free act in which he accepts himself unconditionally in his radical reference to God raised up by grace, also accepts the basic [58] finality of this movement of his spirit, even if without reflection, then he is making a genuine act of faith, for this finality already means revelation. If this supernatural finality is freely accepted, without explicit reflection, then there exists what we term 'anonymous faith'. Such a transcendence, which is supernaturally raised up and implies revelation, is of course always mediated through some object and therefore is, in the widest sense, mediated historically. This mediating, categorial objectivity, in which a man becomes present to himself and to his own transcendence, does not have to be an explicitly religious act. It can be formed by a particular moral decision in which a man is responsible for himself and accepts (or rejects) himself. To this extent the acceptance of human transcendence in faith, which is supernaturally elevated and so reveals God, can be found in an atheist as well, given that he is absolutely obedient to the dictates of his conscience and so accepts himself and God, at least unreflectively, in so far as he actually realises his own transcendence.

At this point we must state more carefully what is the relationship between this transcendent revelation and the anonymous faith which it makes possible on the one hand,

[6] The author has frequently considered the question of the 'anonymous Christian' in his writings, although in a slightly different perspective to the one adopted here. The above reflections are meant to supplement these other writings from another point of view.

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and the historical, Christian revelation on the other. It must also be shown why the transcendent revelation and the faith offered through it to human freedom does not make the historical, verbal revelation superfluous, but rather underlines and reinforces the latter's obligatory character.

If historical, Christian revelation is understood as the process, willed by God in his saving providence and demanded by human nature, by which the transcendent revelation becomes present to itself in history, then there exists no insuperable obstacle to the solution of the problem. Transcendent and historical revelation have a mutual reference: the former acquires historical form and shape in the latter, just as in other cases the transcendent being of man is mediated to itself through history. Historical revelation only realises its proper character through its transcendent counterpart, since it is only effective for salvation if through it the transcendent self-communication of God finds historical expression, the communication, that is, to which we give the name of the grace of faith and justification.

If during his life a person is offered, in a manner which is credible to him, the chance to give objective structure and shape to his being (and therefore an opportunity of supernatural elevation), and if he rejects this possibility, then he is deliberately denying his grace-filled transcendence as well. It is not possible to have 'anonymous faith' when its [59] thematic expression in the Christian belief in revelation is culpably rejected. But as long as a person is not guilty of this and at the same time accepts himself in a moral decision, he assumes at the same time his own radical transcendence, which is ordered to the direct presence of God, and so possesses anonymous faith. This remains true even if the acceptance happens without conscious reflection and the object which mediates this moral decision is not necessarily grasped in a religious or 'theist' manner.

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FAITH BETWEEN RATIONALITY AND EMOTION

The above title, which concerns the relationship between faith, rationality and emotion,[1] forces us to feel our way slowly to what I believe to be the heart of the topic. It is perhaps wiser, therefore, not to state at the outset what exactly is meant to the crucial assertion in the following reflections. First of all a few preliminary remarks may be in order, so as to provide a broader survey of the question and thus open the way to the central theme.

THE APPROACH TO FAITH

Faith, rationality and emotion all appear in the title and are set in a certain relationship: it is suggested that faith lies somehow between emotion and rationality. No attempt is to be made here to articulate the notion of faith as it is found in the self-understanding of Christian faith and in Catholic theology. For the central question we are tackling implies that the other two concepts are to be used in order to reach a definition of the idea of Christian faith. Such an attempt to define the essence of Christian faith apparently from without may seem surprising, and indeed hopeless, if one accepts the account of faith normally given in Catholic theology. But the effort should still be made and indeed this is the task, as will gradually become evident, with which these reflections are concerned. Let us, furthermore, leave aside the question of the exact significance of the word 'between' in the title. [61] The term is not very clear because it can either be understood as the mere 'between' of a third object lying between two others on the same level, or it can be taken to mean an 'over', so that the middle term in fact contains within it the over-arching and essential principle of unity for the other two terms, *between* which it apparently stands. The words, rationality and emotion, are obscure as well: they do not have an unambiguous clarity which can easily be described, thus making it possible to get to grips with the topic.[2] This does not mean that the subject proposed for discussion is illegitimate. For there are of necessity cases, especially in anthropology, metaphysics and religion, in which it is not possible to proceed in a straight line, as it were, from clear fixed concepts and so reach a new concept, a fresh insight which leaves the starting point undisturbed. Every point of departure of one's limited reflection (and there is always something unavoidably arbitrary about what point one chooses) is to some extent redefined and altered by the feedback which the result of one's investigations produces. It is only at the end of the path that one finds out at exactly what point one stepped on the road.

At first glance rationality seems a perfectly straightforward term. Wherever rationality is present, language and conceptual operations are dominant with ever new conceptual distinctions, logic, discussion, argument and the critical analysis of propositions. Rationality

[1] The original text served as a basis for a lecture which was one of a series delivered to the Catholic Academy of Bavaria; cf. K. Rahner (ed), *1st. Gott noch gefragt? Zur Funktionslosigkeit des Gottesglaubens* (Dusseldorf, 1973). The reflections presented here are the result of further revision; cross-references have been added to the author's other writings.

[2] For the basic concepts cf. philosophical lexicons, e.g. J. Hoffmeister, *Wörterbuch der Philosophischen Begriffe* (Leipzig, 1944), p. 236 (Emotion) and pp. 576-578 (ratio/rationalismus); M. L. Falorni, *Enciclopedia filosofica I* (Venice and Rome, 1957 ff), 1868-1871 (Emozione) and F. Borgato, *ibid.* III, 1884 (Razionalità). Usually, however, one is referred to 'Affekte', 'Gefühl', etc., as in *LThK*.

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as such is not directed in the first instance to the particular content of a proposition; rather it is ordered, in a constantly new way, to the methods and validity of the connection of propositions to one another. It is aimed, therefore, at least approximately and within distinct areas of human consciousness, at the building of systems. It seeks as far as possible, by connecting the propositions in question in a way that is open to systematic control, to analyse their content in the framework of the formal, propositional structure, or at least to trace back in this manner the propositions whose content remains irreducible to as few axioms or basic assumptions as possible.

Rationality poses the question of verification, especially with regard to those propositions which cannot be proved through their clear, [62] formal relationship to each other and through appeal to the rules of valid, propositional logic. Rationality also makes a critical investigation of the pre-suppositions which, though external to the propositions in question, nevertheless have an effect upon them: ones concerning their setting, their place in history, their dependence and effect upon social conditions, their ideological use and abuse, their dependence upon a historically conditioned language, and their general horizon of understanding, both conscious and unconscious. It is also to be noted of course that these 'external' assumptions, which are open to critical and rational scrutiny, mutually condition one another. These characteristics of rationality should suffice for the moment. We will leave aside the question of what ultimate assumptions of transcendental necessity are laid down by rationality, even though this question alone makes clear the fundamental relation between faith and rationality. The position of Catholic theology on this point is that the relationship must be a positive one. For the notion of faith itself forbids one to regard it as an absolutely irrational phenomenon and to locate it altogether outside the sphere of reason. If the totality of such rational questioning is tentatively described as 'philosophy', then there is such a thing as philosophical faith, at least in the broad sense of the involvement of faith with rationality. Propositions of Christian belief cannot be contrary to reason without faith being obliged by its own principles to destroy itself.

Obviously much more could be said about this relationship, but for the following discussion an important, preliminary decision has been taken which will not receive any further justification at this point. At any rate faith and rationality have something to do with each other. Faith is a λογικη_ λατρεια&, a 'rationabile obsequium' (Rom 12:1), a reasonable act of worship, as the First Vatican Council explicitly emphasised .[3]

It is more difficult to define the word emotion, even in a provisional fashion. It could simply be asserted that emotion signifies everything in human consciousness, both individual and collective, which escapes the control, in practice even if not in principle, of rationality as we have defined it, in so far as rationality can be carried on in a finite, reasoned process of reflection and work through the contents of human consciousness. This of course only provides a negative [63] definition of emotion and one that is determined by rationality. This negative definition of the term assumes that to some extent emotion is amenable to rational reflection and that ideally emotion and rationality are to be brought into harmony, so that emotion, in so far as it is legitimate, appears reasonable and rationality is accepted as desirable by the emotions. This is true even if the ideal can only be approximately achieved and never totally realised. Our definition does not concern itself in a systematic way with emotions which are rationally determined and verified as legitimate. We are considering emotion in so far as it is not covered by reason. Thus it is crucial for our case that in fact such an element exists in emotion which is not rationally thought through and organised, which cannot be analysed adequately in any conceivable finite process and which is rationally

[3] Cf. specially Ch. 4, 'De fide et ratione' from the dogmatic constitution, 'Dei Filius' and the corresponding canons, *Denz.* 3009, 3016, 3017, 3033.

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recognised as such. Reason is, therefore, presented with a problem with which it must come to terms in advance of its natural striving to subject everything to rational analysis. On this definition, however, the emotional element includes feelings of the greatest variety and diversity.

If we leave aside those phenomena which lie outside the realm of clear awareness, we would still have to enumerate a great variety of things, both individual and collective: particular moods and individual dispositions, patterns of behaviour biologically determined and conditioned by historical development, impulses and repressions, aggression and fears, both individual and collective, unthought out ideals, opinions, realms of understanding which are biologically, racially or socially conditioned and have an effect prior to any rational justification or analysis. At this point there is no need to give a more detailed account of this emotional element, nor to try to fit it into a conceptual framework which provides clear means of discrimination. What is meant, however, should be relatively comprehensible.

A completely different category of emotion, however, must also be mentioned: the reality of freedom and its objective expressions in history. These phenomena come under the concept of emotion as we have defined it here for a number of reasons. First free decisions and objective expressions inevitably are based on something and a condition of their possibility lies in all the emotional states which we described above. If these are not subjected to sufficient rational analysis, then the free choices which flow from them are subject to the same limitation No motivation, however rational it may and should be, can be sufficiently thought through (in the sense defined earlier) and justified, so that all emotional factors are excluded. Any reflection [64] upon such motivation is always affected by particular forces which themselves cannot be adequately examined because this would lead to an endless process of reflection.

Another point is that freedom of its essence cannot be subjected to adequate rational investigation. For freedom as such, i.e. the choice amongst a number of possibilities, is independent of its biological, psychological, social, etc. presuppositions. It is creative, which means that it does not, in its own self-realisation, merely put into effect what is sanctioned by reason, but sets goals in a creative manner which cannot be justified by a purely functional rationality. The latter indeed can only present hypothetical models of behaviour of which not even a selection can be justified by reason which operates in terms of function and hypothesis. Rationality is primarily concerned with the effectiveness of means and not with the creative establishment of ends and their justification.

It is not possible here to develop a philosophy and theology of freedom[4] and thus to demonstrate the irreducible originality of freedom with respect to rationality. A mere mention must here suffice. But even if freedom does possess its own peculiar character, nevertheless it is a reality which, in its individuality, can be counted as belonging to the emotional element in man. If one were able to develop a theology and a philosophy of freedom, it would become clear that freedom constitutes the very essence of emotion in comparison with which all other emotional factors would appear derivative, being mere conditions of possibility, a sign of the finite and passive character of created freedom and in the end analysable in terms of freedom.

FAITH AND FREEDOM

From the position now reached we may express the topic, faith between rationality and emotion, more precisely in the form, faith between rationality and freedom. This more exact

[4] The author's most important writings on the theology of freedom are to be found in '*Grace in Freedom*' (London and Freiburg, 1969), esp. pp. 203-264.

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formulation does not mean that the relation between faith and the emotions of the first type mentioned does not pose difficult questions in human life. Faith is indeed in part determined by such emotions and is continually placed in question by the rational process of critical analysis made of these emotions. This process faith must both permit and sustain. But it [65] must always be remembered with regard to faith that just because psychological, social and historical conditions cannot be sufficiently analysed, it does not mean that any possibility of an absolute commitment of faith is thereby destroyed, any more than is the case for other absolute decisions in human life. For these are not rendered impossible and illegitimate in being conditioned by emotions not open to adequate rational reflection. But here we would prefer to restrict our attention to the relationship between faith and the particular emotional factor which is caused human freedom and the decisions which result from it.

I would state as a thesis, without offering any further argument to support it, that the essential nature of freedom is not in itself a neutral possibility either to act or not to act with regard to this or that particular categorial object of choice experienced in an a posteriori manner. Although freedom is always mediated through a particular categorial act, it consists much more in the capacity of the spiritual subject to exercise definitive control over himself, even if this self-determination occurs in space and time, in the length and breadth of an individual's history and therefore cannot be tied down by personal reflection to a particular moment of a man's life. The subject and object of freedom is constituted by the whole man acting with ultimate decision. Freedom means the capacity to act once and for all for oneself without being a mere point of intersection of influences which come from without and lose themselves in the impersonal web of objective causes which we call the world.

If we take this concept of freedom for granted, then our thesis runs that according to Christian understanding the realisation of freedom is identical with faith. This means that faith is not a free activity of a distinct categorial kind which is concerned either with a particular object reaching us from without in an a posteriori experience or with a specific item of knowledge; it is the united and fundamental totality of freedom itself. Wherever freedom as decisive self-determination is positively realised and the object of freedom, namely the human person, is unconditionally accepted for what he is by the subject of freedom which is that very same person, wherever, that is, a person does not reject himself in a final denial, and does not utter an ultimate protest in total scepticism or despair, even though this acceptance is mediated and obscured by categorial objects of choice, then there is present what Christians call 'faith'. This is true even though this identity can be mediated in different ways and ideally should be mediated [66] through the explicitly affirmed content of Christian faith (as 'fides quae').

The thesis of the identity of freedom in its fundamental realisation and faith may sound surprising, and even scandalous, to the religious sensibilities of the average, practising Christian. But at root this position rests only upon assumptions which are indisputable in Christian theology. I will attempt to enumerate the most important of these in the belief that, if they are accepted, a little further reflection will certainly throw light upon the thesis we are proposing.

THE REFERENCE TO GOD

Faith is a *free* act. Even if this assertion, which is expressly stated in the First Vatican Council, is understood to mean merely a particular free action alongside which there exist acts of freedom involving other objects of choice, nevertheless one must ask how the fulfilment of this individual free act is related to that primordial freedom which is whole and undivided and enables a man to achieve ultimate self-determination.

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One should add that a genuine and radical philosophy of freedom can and must demonstrate that the essential nature of freedom is only conceivable in and through the transcendent reference of the human spirit in knowledge and freedom to that being, or rather person, whom we call God. Thus the realisation of freedom understood in this fundamental sense inevitably implies the affirmation or denial of God, irrespective of whether the reference to God is the object of conscious verbal reflection or not.[5] Freedom is freedom for or against God; to become aware of this goal of freedom, whether reflectively or not, is to experience for the first time what is really meant by God and is to affirm or deny implicitly or explicitly his reality. To this insight it must be added that human transcendence, ordered to God in freedom and knowledge, is always and inescapably deepened, whether this is accepted or rejected, by what in Christian terms is called grace. In other words this transcendence is raised up by the self-communication of God and brought into direct contact with his presence in what we [67] call the vision and possession of God.[6] If a man freely accepts himself as he is, even with regard to his own inner being whose basic constitution he inevitably has not fully grasped, then it is God he is accepting. As long as it is a matter of the conscious, though unreflective, acceptance of God in his authentic self-communication, the acceptance is of the self-revelation of God and is therefore faith.

The justification for such an assertion lies ultimately in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, that genuine faith, whose object is revelation and whose consequence is salvation, is possible for *all* men. It can be found in people who consciously believe they are and must be atheists, as long as they are completely obedient to the absolute demands of conscience, that is, to use our terminology, they accept themselves unconditionally, without self-rejection, fulfilling that primordial capacity of freedom which involves the subject as a whole.[7] If this teaching of the Second Vatican Council is accepted, one can in my opinion only answer the question of how, from a theological point of view, to justify a faith which is universally available and can be realised even by atheists, by accepting the position outlined here of a fundamental identity of faith, taken in a Christian sense, and freedom, of emotion as freedom.

We must return to the question of human rationality as this is currently understood, and, without undermining its value, try to deepen it with regard to its basic presuppositions, even if once again we cannot give detailed arguments to support our account. We may express our thesis thus: the ultimate condition of possibility of rationality is the transcendent reference of man to the unfathomable mystery we call God.

The objective, functional connection of particular phenomena established by empirical reason is grounded as a single whole in the dynamic structure of the human spirit. The reference of the latter transcends the mastery of particular items of information and their systematic arrangement into the totality of possible categories of knowledge and is focused upon the ultimate goal of the whole movement [68] of the human spirit, which we call absolute mystery[8] or God. This reference, which goes beyond all particular, intelligible

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[5] The background of these ideas is to be found in the author's two older works: *Spirit in the World*, (London and Sydney, 1968) and *Hearers of the Word* (London and Sydney, 1969). The position outlined there should however be supplemented by the works listed in note 4 dealing with a theology of freedom.

[6] Cf. 'Self-communication of God', *Sacr. Mun.* III (London and New York, 1968) pp. 114-118; *ibid*. IV, pp. 297-305; *ibid*. V, pp. 348-355. This idea is central to the author's position as B. van der Heijden (*Karl Rahner, Darstellung und Kritik seiner Grundpositionen*) has correctly seen, although his broader interpretation does not always do justice to the author's views.

[7] Cf. Conc. Vat. II, *Gaudiurn et Spes*, Pt. I, ch. 7, Arts. 12, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21.

[8] On the concept 'Mystery' cf. esp. the author's article in *Handbuch der Theologischer Grundbegriffe* I (Munich, 1962), pp. 447-452 (bibliog). Since the notion is easily taken to mean the unknown or what is as yet unknown (i.e. a question), a thorough account of the exact sense in which the term is being used is reasonable and necessary. In the ultimate analysis a Christian can only accept the existence of genuine mystery, if it

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objects to the incomprehensible mystery, is not just an inescapable fact, an additional possibility set beside rationality; it is precisely the condition of its possibility. If this dynamic reference to the incomprehensible mystery is called 'irrational', in a sense not yet discussed in these reflections, then the inevitable conclusion follows that this irrationality permanently remains the innermost core and condition of possibility of all rationality. Because we possess a primordial reference to the incomprehensible mystery, *therefore* we are able to set ourselves at a critical distance from every individual object and item of knowledge; we can distinguish and arrange particular objects of experience; we are capable of recognizing each individual piece of knowledge as provisional, ideologically suspect or open to improvement.

RADICAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH GRACE

The reference to the unfathomable mystery of God, which is above reason and yet belongs to the inner being of rationality, is radically transformed, at least in the form of a universally available offer, and directed to the immediate presence of God by what in Christian language is called grace. This radical process no longer leaves God at a distance, approached but never attained, the far off mover of the impulses of the human spirit acting through knowledge and freedom; it makes God in himself an attainable goal, though he still remains an abiding mystery, even in the beatific vision. Thus the process can and should be described as revelation because it touches on the gratuitous self-communication of God to the human spirit. But this is not a reference merely to a particular piece of the history of revelation and salvation through God's self-communication, but forms its essential heart. The whole of the history of revelation and salvation of mankind can and should be understood as the *history in which* the radical reference [69] of human rationality and freedom to the direct presence of God as abiding mystery comes to ever clearer expression under the guidance of God's saving providence.[9] The history of revelation is the history of human rationality, in as much as through the Holy Spirit, through God's self-communication in the Holy Spirit, rationality is laid open in its innermost being to the immediate reality of the incomprehensible mystery and comes to full self-realisation in and through history. The history of revelation is the history of rationality under the influence of grace in which reason grasps ever more plainly this mystery as its foundation and master and freely accepts it.

The history of revelation, then, fundamentally coincides with that of human rationality, understood in this radical sense. This intrinsically universal history of revelation becomes the revelation history contained in the Old and New Testaments to the extent that it is recognised as permanently made valid by Jesus Christ and not as corrupted by the free rejection of man. The revelation history which occurs in *Jesus* and is grasped by us in faith should not in the first instance be treated as a particular occurrence, however unique in character, within the totality of salvation history, but rather as that event in which the universal gift of God, bestowed upon the whole of mankind in the Holy Spirit and radically transforming human rationality, achieves clear and definitive historical expression in an irreversible, eschatological form. Christian faith is explicitly present whenever human rationality, transformed by grace and ordered to the direct reality of God, is freely accepted, given that in this acceptance it is understood and recognised that the self-gift of the absolute mystery finds

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embraces human rationality in its proper sense and does not endanger the real responsibility (freedom) which rationality brings.

[9] On the problem of salvation history cf. K. Rahner, 'History of the World and Salvation History', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 97-114; *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 99-101; more fully, A. Darlap, 'Fundamentale Theologie der Heilsgeschichte', *MySal* I, pp. 3-156.

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decisive, historical realisation in Jesus Christ and is definitively accepted through the death of the man Jesus on the part of mankind.

Christian faith is not, therefore, a particular event among others, which occurs in the, history of human rationality (history taken in a collective and individual sense), but is the primordial act of human rationality as such, which at the same time achieves through faith historical and eschatological self-realisation. The only assumption to be made is that rationality grasps its own disclosure and basis in the mystery, that it recognises its own liberation through God's grace and [70] its ordering to the immediate presence of this mystery, and accepts the historical mediation of Jesus for its own self-realisation. Christian faith always achieves its full development through the medium of history and ultimately through Jesus, in so far as he has freely accepted the unfathomable mystery in his death and is himself saved and accepted once and for all in what we term his resurrection. But the historicity of Christian faith is not of an arbitrary sort, but rather the one in which human rationality, set free in its very roots for the direct presence of God, is mediated to itself.[10]

Thus Christian faith is not some particular event which could be limited and located anywhere in the area of rationality and emotion, and which must struggle hard to find a place somewhere 'between' these two realities. It is rather the ultimate event of rationality and emotion as a single whole, given only that rationality is grasped as rooted in the mystery of God and emotion is seen as the freedom by which a person comes to definitive self-acceptance and in which rationality, rightly understood, first discovers its genuine fulfilment in the acceptance of the mystery. Since Christian faith forms the totality of rationality and emotion and binds them together, it cannot be determined by any other reality outside itself, or by the experience of such reality, as long as we grasp the basic meaning of faith. It is rather the self-realisation of rationality and emotion coming to free and eschatological fulfilment in history.

This totality, which cannot be determined from without, is at once the simplest thing and the hardest, and the same is true of Christian faith, which consists in the fulfilment of the single human whole. It is the simplest thing in the world, the acceptance, that is, of the unfathomable mystery bestowed upon us,[11] and of the experience of this merciful self-communication as it is victoriously and irrevocably established in human history by the faith and death of Jesus. Christian faith possesses, then, of its essence no particular categorial content which is exempt from the doubts and threats attached to such facts, nor is it immune to the process and experience of ideological criticism. [71] For the ungraspable mystery which, in the strictest sense of the term 'name', is nameless, is not a particular datum of fact. Jesus is only understood as the Christ, that is, as the definitive and victorious self-communication of mystery to the world, if his cross, his *death*, are accepted as the salvation and surrender of a man to this mystery, through which a human being transcends the complexity and the ambiguity of particular facts and experiences and enters the silent mystery of God.

All the remaining content of the Christian faith, and especially the social expression of this faith, namely the Church, does indeed consist in categorial data and particular formulations of these data, but it does not form an independent and additional element to this faith which can only be taught from without; it is rather deduced from the primordial fact of revelation and faith, which is the acceptance of the absolute mystery, first in Jesus and then derivatively in us. The inevitable, categorial expansion of this basic reality into many distinct propositions is

[10] The thesis of a transcendental Christology is summarised in : K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie, systematisch und exegetisch*, Quaestiones Disputatae 55 (Freiburg L. Br., 1972), pp. 15-78.

[11] It is essential for this encounter that the incomprehensible mystery is communicated to man as a force of forgiveness i.e. as demanding and effecting a conversion. Cf. K. H. Neufeld, ('Fortschritt durch Umkehr',) *Std Z* 192 (1974), pp. 274-281.

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a matter of history; it is a process carried on by the collective bearer of the history of revelation through reflection upon it and comes after Jesus and stems from him. It is not primarily undertaken by the individual. But this does not alter the fact that the freely accepted experience of this simple and basic reality must take place in every individual; only then is it an experience of the grace of faith and therefore genuine Christian faith. This process is very different from the indoctrination of propositions which, supported by formal authority, are brought to a person from without and must be accepted as the doctrine of experts not open to verification.

A faith which operates from the most simple and basic datum has the simplicity of the whole but also presents great difficulties. For it must find the verbal expression necessary for its articulation in concepts and realities which are not external and prior to it but rather subsequent, specific and derivative. Faith cannot be defined as a point in a larger frame of reference of human rationality and freedom, but forms the free acceptance of this frame of reference itself, the internal harmony of subject with himself. This is the reason why it is so hard to formulate in human conceptual thought what Christian faith is.

In considering these difficulties one should never forget that the essence of faith as the free acceptance of the single totality of rationality and emotion is never simply identical with any completely successful formulation of it in terms of conceptual reflection. Faith itself does not stem originally *from* the verbal communication of conceptual [72] thought about it but occurs in a great variety of historical forms. These come about whenever a man accepts human existence composed of rationality and freedom in unconditional fidelity to his conscience. This means that the conceptual formulation of faith in the Christian message is in a sense secondary, although not superfluous, in comparison with the primary embodiment of faith.

The Christian message as it develops in revelation and faith may be secondary but this does not mean that the explicit, moral obligation of faith becomes unnecessary. For this message is the legitimate objective form of the primary reality which necessarily seeks historical expression and formulation. Furthermore to refuse to accept such an objective expression would be to deny the primary reality of faith and would therefore be unbelief in the most fundamental sense. Conversely a Christian can only be satisfied with his conformity to the articles of faith handed on to him through the teaching of the Church and often originating in an earlier historical period, when he has as intense an awareness as possible of the interior revelation which is given with the self-communication of God and is usually called grace. He must experience in every part of his life the inner direction of his being in knowledge and freedom to the unfathomable mystery of God. Spiritual instruction in this area, which embodies real vitality and energy, is rarely to be found in the Church today, so that it is hardly surprising if many people try to obtain the experience through mental techniques which either avoid the practices and scrutiny of the official Church or are found outside Christianity. In this respect the Church must have the courage to return afresh to its own experience of spirituality and mysticism which was much more alive in earlier times.[12]

TENSIONS

In proposing the fundamental thesis that at root faith, emotion and rationality form a unity, we should not overlook the tensions and opposition of a derivative but nevertheless essential kind that exist between them. A distinction has been drawn between the basic reality [73] of

[12] The different essays in this volume of the Investigations are intended to show how religious experiences of a spiritual or mystical kind can overflow and be transposed into the idiom of theological reflection. In this way the rift, all too common even today, between lived piety and abstract theology may be bridged.

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revelation and faith as the fulfilment of rationality and freedom on the one hand, and the conceptual reflection and verbal formulation of this primary fact on the other. If one considers this verbal expression and the scientific and systematic reflection upon it which is known as theology, then problems naturally arise between faith understood in this sense and human rationality and emotion. On this topic a few comments should be made which touch on the contemporary understanding of these three realities. We are dealing here with the objectified content of faith existing in human consciousness, that is, 'fides quae' (faith as object); we are not speaking of the primary realisation of 'fides qua' (faith as personal act) with which we have been mainly occupied up to this point.[13]

First of all it must be freely and honestly recognised that for an educated person today the mass of knowledge arising from the discoveries of the modern sciences, with their attendant problems and diversity, is too great to be mastered by a single individual and therefore generally prevents a person achieving an adequate positive integration and synthesis of the content of his mental world and the formulations of faith. This inevitably creates a state of tension between faith and rationality. It is true that a synthesis between 'fides quae' and modern 'scientia quae' (the objective content of science), if such an expression may be allowed, remains a desirable ideal, a goal to be aimed at even if never attained both for the individual and for the ecclesial community of faith. But in earlier periods knowledge and thought were of comparatively small dimensions and at least an alleged synthesis between the object of belief and the objects of secular knowledge was attainable. What distinguishes us from the past is that today such a synthesis is empirically beyond our reach. This does not mean that a man can allow, with an easy descent into irrationality, assertions of faith and propositions of secular science to exist side by side in a state of evident contradiction. What is to be done in the individual consciousness when someone is totally convinced that he perceives such a contradiction is not under discussion here, since as a Christian a man can and should be assured that such an opposition cannot objectively exist.[14]

[74] This conclusion does not, however, settle the matter, for between straight contradiction of known propositions on the one hand and a positive synthesis of diverse items of knowledge drawn from various sources of experience and knowledge on the other, there lies a third possibility which is the fate of people today, believers included. This third state is one of plurality of propositions of faith and secular knowledge which an individual cannot work through or integrate into an adequate positive synthesis. This plurality is a burden for us and involves our emotions in the widest sense of the term in pain and suffering. We know too much today to be able as believers to integrate all our knowledge with our faith ('fides quae') and create out of them both a harmonious view of the world. We can, however, see from the theological point of view that this situation is not in fact to be wondered at. Christian theology has always recognised that a variety of good and evil impulses exist in man which can never be properly brought together in a person's fundamental stance vis-à-vis God, and has called this state concupiscence or inordinate desire. Today we have become more clearly aware than in earlier times that, in addition to the state of moral concupiscence, that is, plurality on the emotional level, there exists also a state of gnoseological or mental concupiscence, the plurality[15] of diverse secular and theological branches of knowledge.

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[13] The author has said something about the distinction between 'fides qua' and 'fides quae' in his study, 'What is a Dogmatic Statement?' *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 42-66.

[14] On the subject of conscience, cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Encyclical 'Humanae vitae', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974) pp. 263-287; 'Heresies in the Church Today?', *Theological Investigations* XII (London, 1974), pp. 116-141; 'Perspectives for the Future of the Church', *ibid.,* pp. 202-217; 'Kirche im Wandel', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Zurich, 1968), pp. 445-478.

[15] On the question of intellectual pluralism today and the 'mental concupiscence' of human knowledge, cf. K. Rahner, 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church,' *Theological Investigations* XI

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These all condition the human situation despite, and in virtue, of their mutual disparity and lack of harmony, and so maintain human consciousness in a state of basic inner conflict. But given that Christian faith has always taken cognisance of this, at least in the field of moral decisions, such mental concupiscence is hardly surprising. A man may freely take account of it and to be a Christian he does not need to behave as though this situation did not obtain. There are guidelines about how one can face the matter in patience and hope without [75] having to deny its existence or sweep it under the carpet. A man can be a Christian and deal honestly with the situation; he is not allowed to use his faith to deny it. Complete success in creating a world view which integrates faith and secular knowledge in a positive and harmonious synthesis is not an ideal which it is open to a Christian to believe attainable during his earthly life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RELATIONSHIP

There is a history involved in the relationship between rationality and the content of faith (‘fides quae’) in which we must live as believers. If one were to list the special characteristics which determine the relation between ‘fides quae’ and ‘scientia quae’ *today*, one might put it as follows.[16]

The relationship between Christian faith and the natural sciences was from the origin of these sciences very tense but has now become more harmonious and relaxed. For no proven discoveries of the natural sciences can be formulated against which Christian faith is obliged to protest. The results of biology, palaeontology, etc no longer meet with opposition from theology. Christian philosophy and theology can maintain an entirely positive stance towards a secret ideal of the natural sciences which foresees as a methodological and heuristic principle the development of as close a unity as possible of all known material phenomena. This ideal theology can applaud, provided only that the natural sciences do not go beyond their methodological assumptions and become blind to the internal structure of the one world which is essentially varied and diverse.

On the other hand the relationship between faith and science is not simply settled in this way. It is a matter much less of a minimal, negative reconciliation between particular theological and scientific statements than of the tension still existing today between a scientific and a religious or metaphysical *mentality*. Here we can merely observe that the enduring burden of this tension belongs to the mental plurality or concupiscence which we have already considered. The coexistence of both outlooks in the same mind is entirely possible if one looks at the evidence offered by the lives of scientists of the highest rank.

[76] With regard to the historical sciences, it is to be noted that here many particular problems have been resolved, in so far as theology has grasped the lesson that in the case of theological statements as well as others a more exact distinction can and must be drawn than before between the meaning of a theological statement and the propositional model and its horizon of understanding, which is conditioned by historical factors. It has been shown that the independence of past and present theological statements and their proper meaning can be maintained despite the fundamental and legitimate process of demythologisation occasioned by the distinction drawn above. Human history understood aright is open to God and contains

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(London and New York, 1974), pp. 3-23; ‘The Future of Theology’, *ibid.,* pp. 137-146; ‘The Current Relationship of Philosophy and Theology’, *Theological Investigations* XII (London, 1975), pp. 61-79; ‘The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church’, *Theological Investigations* XIV (London, 1976), pp. 24-46.

[16] Cf. K. Rahner, ‘Theology as engaged in an Interdisciplinary Dialogue with the Sciences’, *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975), pp. 80-93, esp. pp. 90-93.

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in itself what must be called divine revelation, without thereby implying miraculous interventions in an otherwise secular world. Nevertheless there persists here too a state of concupiscence in the relationship between secular history with its limited methods and theology as the ultimate interpretation of history which goes beyond history to the mystery of God.

From modern psychology and especially from depth psychology theology has learnt more clearly concerning its own material that man is bodily and not just an abstract subject of spirit and transcendence, a fact which was always known in theology but never filled out with sufficient content. Man is thus a psychic being with an inner shape which can be exactly ascertained and exists prior to the free spiritual activity of the personal subject; he exhibits a structure and mechanisms which cannot be adequately controlled by the spiritual subject. Furthermore techniques exist for the individual and collective direction of the pre-personal psyche which cannot be displaced by a rational and moral appeal to a person as a free spiritual subject.[17] If for this reason theology has had to take a more modest stance concerning man and can no longer claim to the sole representative of anthropology, but is in a position of open dialogue with other sciences, that is all to the good and in fact corresponds to the basic meaning of faith and theology.

Over and above the earlier philosophy of law and the state, there are today a whole range of social sciences, whose existence and rationality faith and theology must be prepared to face. This is of the greatest importance for theology, even though these partners in dialogue did not exist in the past. Such an interchange gives rise to new and difficult [77] questions. One need only consider the philosophy and sociology of language to see its significance for the theology of the word; one might note also the critical analysis of ideology, the research into the secular and social pre-conditions of religion and its institutions, the whole question of the relationship between truth and institution, the critiques by sociology of the traditional ethical models and the traditional understanding of natural law. Of course the critical rationality of the social sciences raises a question mark for theology. But at the same time it must be said that these sciences do not succeed in reducing religion to a historically conditioned phenomenon which is now out of date, if only because of the particular starting point of their methods of analysis and the questionable nature of their philosophical roots.

We must now break off our reflections. In a situation of insuperable pluralism of knowledge and endeavour characteristic of the present age, faith will always be the object of dispute and opposition, and it cannot in practice reckon on being universally recognised.[18] But it is not the case today that the conceptual and verbal formulation of faith need be in deadly opposition to the rationality of modern science and the general intellectual climate. The presupposition for this hope, which must constantly be re-assessed, is twofold, first that these sciences no longer assert that from their particular categorial starting point everything legitimately falls within their province, and secondly that faith is not essentially understood as a limited body of propositions within the whole social, psychological and historical range of consciousness, but rather the realisation of the single totality of rationality and freedom. The single totality of the reality of man does not exist in a state of hostile competition with the partial dimensions and expressions of human existence, as long as we assume that a man has a task to perform which concerns him as a unified whole and that he has the capacity and duty to give objective expression to this whole, even though the form of expression is limited,

[17] Cf. K. Rahner and A. Görres, 'Der Leib in der Heilsordnung', *Schriften zur Theologie* XII (Zurich 1975), pp. 407-427.

[18] These remarks should sound a note of necessary realism but should not be taken to imply resignation or defeatism. The author's views on responsible thought and action may be seen, for example, in *Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance* (Freiburg i. Br., 1972).

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historically conditioned and open to the absolute future of the divine mystery.[19]

[78] If the essential nature of faith is understood as the single totality of rationality and freedom, it does not follow that possible conflicts and tensions between the *conceptual expressions* of faith on the one hand by which faith comes to have a place, even if in a derivative sense, within the field of conceptual rationality and science, and categorial rationality of a secular kind on the other, that such tensions are ruled out from the start or are already positively resolved. But the believer need not see a fundamental and irreconcilable clash between the conceptual expressions of faith and secular rationality. He will accept the mental concupiscence of plurality in his mind with patience and tranquillity and try to master it as far as possible. And he will go forward in the hope of the promised reconciliation of this plurality which he will obtain on entering the eternal mystery, no longer looking forward to unity in diversity as a mere promise but being able to experience the diversity through the possession of the single mystery. Anselm of Canterbury once coined the phrase: 'irrationalia rationabiliter cogitare',[20] to think out the irrational in a rational manner. If one treats the term 'irrationalia' not in the sense of a primitive irrationality in the face of which basic rational efforts are abandoned as hopeless from the start, but rather as implying the unfathomable mystery which is experienced at the root of our rationality and freedom, then the phrase says exactly what is meant here. Faith is not of its nature something which has to struggle laboriously for a place between rationality and emotion; it is rather the single fundamental whole composed of rationality and freedom. It is, therefore, possible to reflect further on this in a rational way ('rationabiliter cogitare'), to meditate upon faith and its objective expression in freedom and tranquillity, because this meditation itself belongs to faith.

[19] The author's studies on the 'Theology of the Future', taken from *Theological Investigations* Vols. IV, V, VI, VIII, IX, have been collected in the Wissenschaftlichen Reihe des Deutschen Taschenbuch Verlags (dtv 4076; Munich, 1971).

[20] This term is meant to cover the famous principle of Anselm, 'Fides quaerens intellectum'. The actual word, however, has not been found as yet in Anselm's writing.

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[79]

PART TWO

Spiritual Theology in Christian Tradition

[81]

6

THE 'SPIRITUAL SENSES' ACCORDING TO ORIGEN

If religious, and especially mystical, experience seeks to express the inexpressible despite all the obstacles that lie in the way, then inevitably it must go back to images which come from the realm of sense knowledge.[1] Mystics are happy, therefore, to speak of sight, hearing and taste of a spiritual kind in order to describe their experience of the realities of which they were conscious. Modern mystical theology retains this imaginative language and tries to interpret it.[2] It would seem, therefore, a worthwhile undertaking to sketch the history of the idea of the spiritual senses. One might discover that perhaps not every epoch or school compares mystical experience with the working of the same sense faculty and that their analogies are borrowed primarily from one or other sense perception. This diversity of modes of expression might then be traced back either to a variety of mystical experiences or to the human way of understanding in which the mystical experience was interpreted in different schools and historical periods.[3]

[82]

THE POINTS OF DEPARTURE IN ORIGEN

We have a modest goal in view here. Our concern is to investigate more closely the points of departure in Origen of the concept of spiritual senses and their influence on the later spiritual literature which arose from them. This essay is thus limited in two ways: first, only a short period is being considered and secondly, numerous religious texts will remain unexamined in which only a single faculty is employed for the metaphorical portrayal of spiritual experience.[4] For one can only speak properly of an idea or doctrine of spiritual faculties when these partly imaginative, partly literal expressions such as to touch God, to open the eyes of the heart, etc. are found in a complete system in which five instruments are involved in the

[1] This text, published for the first time in German, goes back to the first major theological study written by the author, which appeared in French in *RAM* 13 (1932), pp.113-145. Here it has been simplified and abridged, and is included because the theme it deals with is closely connected to the other writings which form this collection. It is also of decisive importance for the author's ideas, and points to a line of thought which remained operative, albeit in a concealed way, in his later work.

[2] Cf. A. Poulain *Celsum*, *The Graces of Interior Prayer* (London, 1950), pp. 88 *sq*. In the first decades of this century this book played a considerable role in Europe in the discussion of the spiritual senses.

[3] P. Bainvel, editor of the 10th edition of Poulain's work, says in the introduction, p. 19: 'On the lower levels mystics refer particularly to the touch, taste, feel or breath of God which are present in them. Understanding and especially sight are only spoken of the higher levels.' Bonaventure, on the contrary, places 'touch' on a higher level than 'sight' in mystical experience. These variations of expressions contain more than a terminological difference; rather they clearly point to a basic divergence of speculative understanding of mystical experience.

[4] Cf. e.g. PS 33:9; 8:9; Ac 17:27; 2 Cor 2:18; Eph 1:18.

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spiritual perception of immaterial realities.[5] If an author then clearly speaks of five spiritual faculties, we are justified in taking into account texts which only refer to a single faculty.[6]

Origen seems to be the first to have formulated such a doctrine of five spiritual senses[7] and he frequently comes back to this topic. We have to wait until St Bonaventure in the Middle Ages to find similarly extensive treatment of this notion.[8] We see the teaching of Origen continued in the literature of the Greek world, and this later stimulated speculation among the Scholastics, but the theme very obviously is the result of tradition and loses its vitality. We may obtain a first impression of Origen's idea from the following piece of his writing:

[83] 'After thorough investigation one can say that there exists, according to the word of Scripture, a general sense or faculty for the divine. Only the blessed know how to find it, as we read in the Wisdom of Solomon, "You discover the divine faculty of perception." (Prov. 2:5). This sense, however, unfolds in various individual faculties: sight for the contemplation of immaterial forms, as is evidently granted to the Cherubim and Seraphim, hearing for the discrimination of voices, which do not echo in the empty air, taste in order to savour the living bread which came down from heaven to bring life to the world (John 6:33), and even a sense of smell, with which Paul perceived those realities which caused him to describe himself as a sweet odour of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15), and finally touch, which possessed John when he states that he has touched with his own hands the Word of life. (1 John 1:1). This sense for the divine was discovered by the prophets . . . '[9] 'Solomon already realised that there are two modes of sense perception, one mortal, transient and human, and the other immortal, spiritual and divine.'[10]

How did Origen arrive at this doctrine? As far as can be discovered, he must have drawn it from no other source than Scripture.[11] Those passages in particular come into question in which religious understanding is expressed in terms which manifest the operations of sense powers.[12] Nothing need be said here about the exegesis of these passages, which in fact simply contain well chosen metaphors and do not involve any doctrine of five spiritual sense faculties.

As mentioned above, Origen bases his conceptions upon the text of Prov 2:5, but he also refers to Heb 5:14. He reads the Old Testament text after his own fashion and does not follow the Septuagint and other translations in interpreting the passage to mean the knowledge [84] of God as the fruit and reward for labours endured; rather he extracts and emphasises the sense character of the knowledge, from which he deduces that man possesses, over and above his bodily faculties, 'a sense for the divine, which is completely different from the senses as normally described' or simply 'divine faculties of sense'.

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[5] This definition is not meant to prejudge the question of the form which the doctrine takes in the individual writers.

[6] The goal of A. Poulain is different from ours, and so he appeals to different texts.

[7] The most important texts in Origen are: *De principiis* 1. Ic. 1 n. 7. 9. 11; 1. II c n. 3; c. 9 n. 4. *Contra Celsum* 1. I n. 48; 1. VII n. 34. *In Levit* hom. 31 n. 7. *In Ezech*. hom. 11 n. *In Cant*. *Cant*. 1. I and 1. II. *In Matth*. *comm*. *ser*. n. 63-64. *In Luc*. fragm. 53 and 57. *In Joan*. t. X n. 40; t. XIII n. 24.

[8] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Doctrine of the "Spiritual Senses" in the Middle Ages: the contribution of St. Bonaventure', in this volume.

[9] *Contra Celsum* 1. I n. 48 (GCS 2) 98,9 *sqq*.

[10] *De Principiis* 1. I c. 1 n. 9 (GCS 22) 27,8 *sqq*.

[11] Philo is not familiar with this doctrine as it is found in Origen. Yet many of his expressions point to it in a preliminary way. References are to be found in the French edition of this study. Clement of Alexandria uses the two scriptural references (Prov 2:5 and Heb 5:4) which served as a starting point for Origen. Apart from 'bodily senses', Tertullian is familiar with 'intellectual senses', whose object is the 'immaterial powers' of the soul (such as good, evil, etc.); he also speaks of the eyes and ears of the inner man, with which Paul saw and heard the Lord.

[12] The scriptural passages used by Origen are: Eyes: Ps 18:9; Eph 1:18. Ears: Mt 13:9; 2 Cor 12:2 *sq*. Taste: Ps 33:9; Jn 6:32 *sq*. Smell: 2 Cor 12:15. Touch: l Jn 1:1.

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In the New Testament passage the early Christians are blamed for not digesting the solid nourishment of the higher knowledge proper for adults and for still needing the milk of the basic elements of Christian teaching. Here it is added that this 'solid food' is the nourishment of 'the perfect', whose faculties are trained to distinguish between good and evil. The commentators interpret this to mean the capacity for moral discrimination[13] but Origen understands the passage in the same way as the Old Testament quotation from Proverbs. The New Testament statement fits even better into his system in that only the perfect (the exact significance of the term requires closer examination) are endowed with these spiritual faculties, which they have brought to a higher level of operation through constant practice.

Origen appeals also to Jer 4:19.[14] His allegorical and systematic method of exegesis tends naturally to read into these texts a theory of five spiritual senses.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA

In his polemic against Celsus, Origen took his teaching a stage further. Celsus had concluded from the Christian dogma of the resurrection from the dead that Christians believed in a material, sense knowledge of God.[15] This notion Origen rejects. When Scripture speaks of eyes, ears, etc., with which God is perceived, then what is clearly meant are eyes, ears and hands which only have the name in common with the bodily organs. And Scripture also refers, which is more remarkable, to a sense faculty for the divine which is radically different from everything which men call sense faculties at all.

At this point the personal tendency of Origen to interpret all genuine religious experience in psychological terms come into play; he [85] does this even in the case of mystical experience. It is no accident that the most beautiful and searching exposition of this teaching is to be found in the commentary of the Song of Songs, which since Origen is *the* book for mystics and in which, in his own words, 'Solomon uses the image of bride and bridegroom to awaken in the soul love of heaven and longing for divine blessings and instructs the soul how to climb the path of love of neighbour right up to union with God.[16]

Looked at more closely this view means that beside our five bodily senses we possess five more, the sense faculty of the soul,[17] the divine faculties,[18] the faculties of the interior man,[19] the faculties of the heart,[20] spiritual senses,[21] a 'kind of sense faculty which is immortal, spiritual and divine',[22] 'a sensuality that has nothing sensual in it',[23] 'a higher sense faculty which is not bodily'[24] or 'a divine sensuality, completely different from this reality as normally defined by men'.[25] Frequently he simply speaks of five senses.[26]

Origen derives the existence of these faculties from the scriptural references already quoted

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[13] It is interesting to note that the exegetes saw in this expression from the Letter to the Hebrews a correspondence with the language of Philo which must have been known to the Alexandrian Origen.
[14] *In Matth*. *comm*. *ser*. 66 (GCS 38).
[15] *Contra Celsum* I VII n.33 (GCS 3)183, 24. Origen rejects this conclusion, cf. *ibid*. 1 VII n. 34.
[16] *In Cant*. prol. (GCS 33) 76,14 *sqq*.
[17] *Ibid*. (GCS 33) 105, 31 and 167,25 *sqq*.
[18] *In Luc*. fragm. 57 (GCS 35) 260 *sq*.
[19] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 105, 5:16; *In Lev*. hom. 3 n. 7 (GCS 29) 312, 15 *sqq*.
[20] *De Principiis* 1 II c. 4 n. 3 (GCS 22) 131,5.
[21] Cf. *De Or*. 13,4 (GCS 3) 329,14.
[22] *De Principiis* 1 I c. 1 n. 9 (GCS 22) 27,8 *sqq*.
[23] *Contra Celsum* 1. I n. 48 (GCS 2) 98,22.
[24] *Ibid*. I VII n.34 (GCS 3) 185,13 *sq*.
[25] *Ibid*. I VII n.34 (GCS 3) 184,26.
[26] *Ibid*. 1 I. n. 48 (GCS 2) and I. VII n.34 (GCS 3).

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and other passages, where seeing, hearing God, etc. is mentioned and where it cannot be a question of the bodily senses. Celsus already knew of the 'eyes of the soul', of which he had heard from the Greeks.[27] But this notion was common among Christians even earlier.[28] The 'animal man' and the unbeliever make a great joke of this doctrine and from their point of view this is hardly surprising, but the believer must allow himself to be instructed by the word of God.[29] Unbelief is shown precisely in the lack of the spiritual senses in certain people, who are then naturally incapable of perceiving spiritual realities.[30]

[86] The character of the spiritual senses becomes clearer if one investigates more closely what sort of men possess them, what reality they grasp and how they operate and develop. There are people, as we have seen, whose spiritual sense of sight is blind, of hearing dumb, of smell dull. Origen says explicitly that not every man possesses these spiritual faculties.[31] Thus, for example, the eyes of Adam were closed after his sin.[32] Certain people may develop a particular sense but never come to the full use of all five. So the 'virgins' in the Song of Songs only possessed the sense of smell from following the bride,[33] because they had not yet reached the 'summa perfectionis'.[34] Only the 'perfect', the 'blessed' and the 'just'[35] have control over the use of all the faculties, and here these terms must be given their full breadth of meaning proper to Origen. Such figures as, for instance, Isaac, Moses, the prophets, John and Paul belong to the number of the perfect, as well as the blessed in heaven.[36]

To the possession of the spiritual faculties is allied the knowledge of the 'intellectualia',[37] the 'blessings from above and those which are beyond man',[38] 'of the spiritual',[39] and 'of that which is better than the body'.[40] In basing himself upon Scripture, Origen is able to define the object of each particular sense, as in the following text:

'Christ is grasped by every faculty of the soul. He is characterised as the true light which illuminates the eyes of the soul. He calls himself the word so as to be heard, the bread of life to be tasted. He is called the oil of anointing and nard, so that the soul rejoices in the sweet aroma of the Logos. He became the Word made flesh which can be expressed and comprehended, so that the inner man may lay hold of [87] the Word of life. This same Word of God is all this (Light, Word, etc); it comes to be through the fire of intense prayer and leaves none of the spiritual faculties empty of grace.'[41]

Origen expressly states that only a single reality can affect two faculties simultaneously and each sense grasps the reality in a different manner according to its own specific perfection.[42]

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[27] *Ibid*. 1. VII n. 39 (GCS 3) 189,22.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 106 *sq*. and *In Luc*. fragm. 57 (GCS 35) 260 *sq*.
[30] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 107, 7 *sqq*.
[31] *In Luc*. fragm. 53 (GCS 35) 259,47. *Contra Celsum* 1. II n. 72 (GCS 2) 194,18; *ibid*. 1. VIII n. 19 (GCS 3) 236,30.
[32] *Contra Celsum* I. VII n. 39 (GCS 3) 190,2 *sqq*.
[33] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 103,19.27.
[34] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 110,32.
[35] *In Joan*. t. XIII n.24 (GCS 10) 248,25 *sqq*. *In Luc*. frgm. 53 (GCS 35) 258,9 *sqq*. *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 105, 1 *sqq*. *De Principiis* 1. I. C. 1 n. 9 (GCS 22) 27,8 *sq*. *In Luc*. fragm. 57 (GCS 35) 260,3.
[36] *Contra Celsum* 1.I n. 48 (GCS 2)98. *De Principiis* 1.II c. 4 n.3 (GCS 131), 4 *sqq*. *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 104,17 *sqq*.
[37] *De Principiis* 1. IV c. 4 n. 10 (GCS 22) 364, 10.
[38] *In Luc*. fragm. 57 (GCS 35) 261,4.
[39] *In Joan*. t. x n.40 (GCS 10) 218,8; *ibid*. t.XIII n.24 (GCS 10) 248,6.
[40] *Contra Celsum* 1. I n.48 (GCS 2) 98,13. *In Luc*. hom 3 (GCS 35) 20,18: 'superna et divina'.
[41] *In Cant*. II (GCS 33) 167,25 *sqq*.
[42] *Ibid*. III (GCS 33) 180,25 *sqq*.; *ibid*. II (GCS 33) l72,8 *sqq*.

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THE EXERCISE OF THE FIVE SENSES

How are the spiritual faculties to be developed? A person does not possess them in the measure which enables him really to grasp 'superna et divina'. The ear may be spiritually deaf.[43] The cause of such insensitivity is to be sought in sin. So Origen alludes to 'contentio' and 'iactantia'.[44] The sinful obstacles he calls 'ignorantia et imperitia' as well as 'malitia' in his system of asceticism.[45]

In order to vitalise the spiritual faculties, both grace and practice are indispensable. For their correct use the Logos itself is the foundation, who bestows light to the eyes of the soul and grace to the spiritual senses, in that through grace he makes room for himself in our faculties.[46] The angels can also influence them and in any event the reality must permit itself to be grasped by the faculties,[47] without the human agent being able thereby to abandon his efforts.

The physical faculties are strengthened by constant practice; it is just the same with the spiritual senses.[48] The efforts of the bodily senses must be followed by the mastery of spiritual faculties,[49] where indeed a great deal of training is required.[50]

[88] The first and most important condition for this is faith. In addition Origen speaks of 'eruditio' and 'industria' as well as attentiveness to the mystical sense of Scripture.[51] At the same time a man must free himself from domination by the physical faculties, so that the eye of the soul has clarity of vision to the extent to which we close the eye of the body.[52] Above all it is prayer which exercises the spiritual faculties.[53] Everyone who trains himself in this way becomes one of the 'perfect'. No one who has really grasped Christ with his senses can be turned aside by anything else. Christ is everything for him; what he sought he has found in Christ. The divine senses first achieve total fulfilment at the moment when we enter into direct communion with Christ. Then we are finally set over great things having been faithful in small things.[54]

To connect this notion to the rest of Origen's psychological ideas, one should first of all point to the well known distinction between soul and spirit. The exact relationship between the two in his mind is not easy to work out, but the basic idea is that the spirit becomes soul as it voluntarily sets itself apart from God and the soul is transformed into spirit by being cleansed in the material world, its place of purification, and by return to God.[55] But the terminology of Origen is not entirely clear. Often spirit and soul mean the same thing,[56] so

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[43] *Contra Celsum*. 1. II n. 72 (GCS 2)194,18.
[44] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 107,10 *sq*.
[45] *Ibid*. 1 (GCS 33) 105,22 *sqq*.
[46] *Contra Celsum* 1. VI n. 151 (GCS 3) 202, 17; *ibid*. 1. VII n.39 (GCS 3) 190,2 *sqq*. *In Matth*. comm. ser. n. 63 (GCS 38); *In Matth*. t. XVI n. 11 (GCS 40). *In Cant*. III (GCS 33) 203,28: 'sensibus mihi animae videtur lumen praebere'; *ibid*. II (GCS 33) 168,4 *sq*. *De Principiis* I. II c. 9 n.4 (GCS 22) 167 *sq*.
[47] *In Matth*. *comm*. ser. n.64 (GCS 38); according to the general principle that angels can cause contemplation. cf. *De Principiis* 1. III c. 2n. 4 (GCS 22) 250,20 *sqq*. *In Luc*. hom. 3 (GCS 35) 20-23: this idea runs through the whole homily. *Contra Celsum* 1. II. n. 72 (GCS 2) 194,11 *sqq*.
[48] *In Ezech*. hom II n. 1 (GCS 33) 423 *sq*. *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 105,14 *sqq*.
[49] *In Levit*. hom 3 n. 7 (GCS 29) 312,15 *sqq*.
[50] *In Luc*. fragm. 53 (GCS 35) 258,10 *sq*.
[51] *In Cant*. II (GCS 33) 166,19 *sqq*. *In Matth*. *comm*. ser. n.63 (GCS 38). *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 105,23.
[52] *Contra Celsum* 1. VII n.39 (GCS 3) 190,6 *sqq*. *In Joan*. t. x n.40 (GCS 10) 218,4 *sqq*.
[53] *In Cant*. II (GCS 33) 168,3-5. *Contra Celsum*. 1. VII n.44 (GCS 3)195 *sq*. *De orat*. 9,2 (GCS 3) 318,26 *sqq*.
[54] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 103,27 *sqq*. and 104,17 *sq*.
[55] *In Principiis* 1. II c. 8 n.3 and *ibid*. 1. Ic. 8 n.4 (GCS 22); cf. *DThC* X1/2 (Paris 1931) 1532-1534 (G. Bardy).
[56] Cf. *De Orat*. 27,2 (GCS 3) 364,23 *sqq*., where several ideas are used in the same sentence with the same meaning. Similarly *Contra Celsum* l. VII n.4 (GCS 3), 156,4 *sq*.

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that they appear, especially in his ascetical writings, to be two aspects of man set over against each other.[57] This obscure mode of expression explains why Origen often speaks of the 'faculties of the soul', although knowledge of the divine is restricted according to his teaching to the 'spirit'.[58] But [89] the expression 'faculties of the spirit' is also to be found.[59] This implies that the spiritual faculties should be treated as organs of the spirit directed to the understanding of spiritual realities. Their specific functions are attributed by Origen to the 'spirit', which recognises the 'incorporea' and 'intellectualia' and discovers the divine sense, while the intellect only reaches a certain higher level of insight.[60] The 'spirit' alone grasps invisible and spiritual blessings.

When reference is made to the five spiritual faculties as organs of the 'spirit' by which spiritual realities are perceived, one must not overlook the analogy which rests behind the employment of the names of bodily organs for the capacities of the spirit. These concepts are to a greater or lesser extent to be taken in an imaginative sense.[61]

Did Origen really conceive of five distinct organs operating in religious knowledge? Or were spiritual sight, hearing, etc. not rather for him different imaginative expressions for the 'spirit', the real organ of perception? The first alternative seems the more probable, since Origen can also characterise the spiritual senses as powers of the soul,[62] which are, as it were, different species of the general divine sense, as appears in the works of Solomon.[63] In his view the power of the soul is to be distinguished in the spiritual faculties from the power of taste[64] in the same way as the bodily senses differ among themselves. According to Origen not every man possesses all the spiritual senses, but often only one or other of them. When he stresses the imaginative significance of these expressions, he means to point out that these scriptural terms are to be understood in an imaginative sense in that they can be ascribed to spiritual sense faculties and not to physical ones.[65]

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THE PLACE OF SPIRITUAL FACULTIES WITHIN THE SYSTEM

How does this doctrine fit into Origen's thinking as a whole? Two basic principles of his spiritual system must first be outlined, although we do not of course have the scope here for a

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[57] Cf. *De orat*. 24,2 (GCS 3) 353,24 *sq*. *In Joan* fragm. 3 (GCS 10), 486,32 *sq*. *Contra Celsum* 1. VIII n.52 (GCS 3) 267,24. cf. also *DThC* t1/2 (Paris, 1931) 1534.

[58] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 105,31; *ibid*. II (GCS 33) 167,25 *sq*. *In Ezech*. hom. II. n. I (GCS 33) 424, 1 etc. It also comes before the 'taste of the soul', the 'smell of the soul', etc.

[59] *De Principiis* 1. Ic. 1 n.7 (GCS 22) 24,8.9

[60] *De Principiis* I. lIc. 8 n.2 (GCS 22) 154,27 *sqq*. and *ibid*. 1. IV c. 4 n. 10 (GCS 22) 364. The close relation between the 'spirit' and the sense of the divine is particularly evident here.

[61] *Contra Celsum* 1. VII n.34 (GCS 3) 185,11 and *ibid*. n. 38 (GCS 3) 188,21 and *ibid*. I. VI n.61 (GCS 3) 132, 3. *In Luc*. fragm 53 (GCS 35) 259,30. *De Principiis* 1. IC 1 n. 9 (GCS 22) 26,15 *sqq*. *In Exod* hom 10 n.3 (GCS 29) 247,22. *In Cant*. prol (GCS 33) 65,15 *sqq*.; 66,4 *sqq*.

[62] *De Principiis* 1. I c. I n. 9: Powers of the soul; cf. *In Luc*. fragm 53.

[63] *Contra Celsum* 1. I n.48 (GCS 2) 98,12.

[64] *In Joan*. t. xx n.43 (GCS 10) 386,23 *sq*.

[65] What is said about the relationship of the 'spirit' to the spiritual senses, applies also to the relation of the 'principale cordis' (according to the translation of Jerome and Rufinus) to these senses, so that the two are synonymous. Jerome also uses the term 'mens', i.e. precisely in the sense of 'spirit'. This is the favourite usage of Origen for the principle of religious knowledge; cf. *In Jer*. hom. 5 n. 9 (GCS 33) 39, 7-8.11; *In Num*. hom. 10 n.3 (GCS 29) 63,19: 'principale . . . quod solum recipere potest mysteria veritatis et capax esse arcanorurn Dei', also *In Cant*. II (GCS 33) 170,14 *sqq*. The perceptions of the spiritual senses can also be explained by their effects upon the 'principale'; cf. *Contra Celsum* I. I n.48 (GCS 2) 97,32 *sqq*. Thus Origen can see perfection in the possession of the spiritual senses and can call it either 'the kingdom of God' or 'the blessed state of the spirit'; cf. *De orat* 25 (GCS 3) 359,9 *sq*.

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detailed exposition of his ascetical and mystical teaching.

Normally a division within the spiritual life between an active and a contemplative side is deduced from the distinction between 'soul' and 'spirit', a contrast, that is, between 'praxis' and 'theory',[66] between 'men of action' and 'men of theory'.[67] It is easy to see the relation of these two aspects of *Way of the Lord*[68] in Origen's psychological doctrine. According to him the 'soul', in contrast to the 'spirit', possesses two sides, aggression and desire, as he repeatedly remarks.[69] The moral danger for the soul ultimately lies in the passions and errors to which it is prone. So the task of the spiritual life is to combat these passions and errors in order to purify and sanctify the soul. This is the role played by the active, practical life. In Origen's language the obstacle to be tackled is called 'bad' or 'evil', and the goal to be striven for virtue, proper behaviour, righteousness or the observance of the laws of God.[70] At the highest point of the 'active life' a man arrives at [91] 'indifference' or 'apathy'[71] and close to this point, or at least on the same level, there appear love and purity.[72] Such an active life necessarily precedes the contemplative, for, as we saw, purity is the precondition for knowledge of God, which forms the heart of the contemplative life. Only knowledge of God removes the labour of the active life.[73] In this sense praxis comes before theory;[74] practical men have their place in the forecourts of house of the Lord, while men of theory dwell in the house itself.[75] This ordering of the stages of the spiritual life is not reversible.[76]

The realm of the 'spirit' is 'theory'[77] and the essence of the contemplative life is precisely 'spiritual knowledge',[78] a bread, in Origen's words, 'which contains what is hidden and makes clear faith in God and knowledge of the things of God',[79] and stands therefore in direct

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[66] *In Luc*. fragm. 13 (GCS 35) 283,8; *ibid*. hom. I (GCS 35) 9,26-10,1, etc.
[67] *Select. in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1652 C; 1249 D; 1581 D); cf. *In Joan* fragm. 36 (GCS 10) 512,23.
[68] *In Joan*. t.VI n. 19 (GCS 10) 127,29 *sq*.
[69] *In Luc*. fragm. 54 (GCS 35) 260,10 *sq*. *In Ezech*. hom. 1 n. 16 (GCS 33) 340,3 *sq*. 20 *sq*. *In Gen*. hom. 1 n. 17 (GCS 29) 20,23 *sq*.; *ibid*. hom. 2 n. 6 (GCS 29) 38,16 *sq*. etc.
[70] Cf. *Select in Psalm*. (PG12, 1304 B; 1552 D; 1684 D). Surprisingly enough the clearest formulations of Origen's spiritual teaching are to be found in the *Selct. in Psalm*. However, it is not certain that the whole work is authentically that of Origen and should only be used therefore with reservation. But the undoubtedly genuine writings of Origen provide enough evidence of his spiritual teaching to guarantee the accuracy of our account. On the *Select in Psalm* cf. E. de Faye, Origène (Paris 1923), t.I. pp. 210-213.
[71] *Select. in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1085 B; 1672 C). Apart from the *Select in Psalm*, the expression 'apathy' is rarely found in Origen.
[72] If the whole meaning of the active life consists in meditation, then the significance of love and purity rests on their close connection to theory. Only the pure man is capable of it. cf. *Contra Celsum* 1.III n.60 (GCS 2) 255,7; *ibid*. I IV n. 96 (GCS 2); also *ibid*. I VI n.69; 1 VII n.33 and 45 (GCS 3) 196,17 *sq*. etc. It is characteristic of love that the fall of the spirits is presented as the separation from love and contemplation; love is above all the other virtues and above every form of knowledge. Despite this, the intellectual aspect of perfection is over-emphasised.
[73] *Select in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1644 b).
[74] *Ibid*. (PG 12, 1173 B).
[75] *Ibid*. (PG.12, 1652 C).
[76] *Ibid*. (PG 12, 1641 D-1644 A). Knowledge of God and not innocence makes man blessed. (cf. PG 12, 1588 C).
[77] *In Ezech*. hom. I n.16 (GCS 33) 340,21.
[78] Cf. footnotes 66 and 67.
[79] *In Levit*. hom. 13 n. 3 (GCS 30) 472,4 *sq*. Here and at similar places we touch on a problem that can only he mentioned in passing. What connection is there between Origen's spiritual doctrine of the distinction between the active and the contemplative life and his idea, suspect to many, of two classes of Christian? The one class is content with faith, observance of the commandments and the foolishness of the cross, while the other achieves perfection, and Possesses divine wisdom through a deeper revelation of the word of God and a secret tradition. The doctrine of the two classes of Christian could paradoxically either be expressed in the two levels of the spiritual life or be an erroneous opinion of gnostic origin, as J. Lebreton believes; cf. *RSR* 12 (1931) pp. 165-196: 'Die Stufen der religiosen Erkenntnis nach Origenes'; G. Bardy, *DThC* X1/2 (Paris, 1931), 1514-1516; E. de Faye, *Origène*, t.I-III (Paris, 1923).

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contrast to the normal bread of the observance of divine commands. The obstacle to be overcome here is the 'spirit's' absence of knowledge.[80] [92] Without hesitation Origen stresses the priority of contemplative over the active life[81] and values the latter merely as a preparation for the former. However in his view one cannot exist without the other.[82] Thus even the ordinary Christian has some understanding of the Trinity, which is precisely the summit of the contemplative life.[83]

'Theory' affects the active life to the extent to which it is set apart from what is of the physical senses. Origen is even able to point out the dangers of higher knowledge.[84] But what does this 'theory' exactly consist in? This will become clearer if we take a closer look at the three stages of the spiritual life, which Origen recognises in addition to the distinction between the two aspects of the soul alluded to above.[85] For he often distinguishes 'praxis', 'physical theory' and 'theology'.[86] A similar triple division is evident in the distinction between 'mystical', 'physical', and 'ethical' dogmas.[87] Numerous examples of this could be adduced.[88]

In any event, according to this triple division, the knowledge of the Trinity, that is 'theology', appears as the 'perfectio scientiae'.[89] More detailed exposition of these three levels is to be found, using other terms, in Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs, where he distinguishes between the 'ethica', the 'physica' and the 'enoptica'.[90] [93] Rufinus calls these 'moralis', 'naturalis' and 'inspectiva' in his translation.[91]

The 'moralis' corresponds to 'praxis', although it signifies a science rather than a rule.[92] Because of his obedience and observance of the commandments Abraham is the model for this type of knowledge,[93] for whoever has reached this level corrects his behaviour and observes the commandments.[94]

The 'physica' is called 'natural where one refers to the nature of the whole of reality, so that nothing happens in life contrary to nature and everything serves the purpose for which it was brought into being by the creator.'[95] Whoever understands this recognises 'by distinguishing between the cause and the nature of things that he must overcome the vanity of vanities and strive for what is eternal and permanent'.[96] So the 'physica' is 'knowledge and discernment of transient beings'.[97] Its goal is the insight that 'all that is visible is corruptible

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[80] *In Joan*. fragm. 3 (GCS 10) 486,32. *In Luc*. fragm. 54 (GCS 35) 260,8. *Select, in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1429 A; 1545 B; 1549 C).
[81] *Select in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1581 D; 1652 C). Martha is regarded as less perfect than Mary: *In Luc*. fragm. 39 (GCS 35) 252,5 *sq*. 21 *sq*.
[82] *In Luc*. fragm 39 (GCS 35) 252,4. A life of virtue flows from constant prayer; cf. *De orat*. 12,2 (GCS 3) 324,25 *sq*. *Select in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1088 AB).
[83] *In Levit*. hom. 5 n. 3 (GCS 29) 340, 17 *sq*. *Select, in Ezech*. 6 (PG 13, 785 BC).
[84] *Select in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1644 A). *In Ezech*. hom 9 n. 5 (GCS 33) 414, 27 *sq*.
[85] This division is found in many passages of Origen which are not mentioned here; thus a distinction is drawn for example between 'agnitio (ratio) fidei (intuitus et inspectio contemplationis)' and 'perfectio operum'; cf. *In Cant*. III (GCS 33) 216,3 *sqq*.
[86] *Select in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1641 D).
[87] *In Jer*. fragm. 14 (GCS 33) 241,3 *sqq*. Origen adds a 'perhaps' and indicates a certain hesitation; cf. *In Cant. prol*. (GCS 33) 75,9 *sq*., where he still keeps this triple division.
[88] *In Con*. hom. 14n.3(GCS29) 123,25 *sq*; 124,l7 *sq*.; hom 6 n. 2; *ibid*. 67,28 *sq*.; 68,19 *sq*.
[89] *In Num*. hom. 10 n.3 (GCS 29) 74,6 *sq*.
[90] *In Cant*. prol. (GCS 33) 75,8 *sq*.
[91] *Ibid*.
[92] *Ibid*. (GCS 33) 75,17 *sq*. Also: 'vitae instituta componens'; *ibid*. 76,8 *sq*. and *ibid*. 77,29 and *ibid*. 78,15 *sq*.
[93] *Ibid*. 78,23.
[94] *Ibid*. 79,13.
[95] *Ibid*. 75,19 *sq*. and 76,10 *sq*.
[96] *Ibid*. 78,2 *sq*. and 79, 14 *sq*.
[97] *Ibid*. 78,16 *sq*.

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and fragile, so that anyone striving for wisdom grasps it in this way; he disdains it without hesitation and esteems it lightly, renouncing all that is earthly and stretching out for the invisible and eternal'.[98] The model for this is Isaac, 'who dug wells and discovered the depths of reality'.[99] Obviously the 'physica', therefore, presents a religious outlook on the world and has a moral rather than a scientific purpose. But does the 'theory of the immaterial' belong still to the 'physica' or to the 'inspectiva'? The answer is not entirely clear[100] but the matter is of no great importance.

'Inspectiva' means the sort of knowledge 'in which we go beyond what is visible and grasp something of the divine and heavenly reality, perceiving through this faculty alone that the latter things surpass bodily appearance'.[101] The object in this case is the same as in the Song [94] of Songs: 'the love of the perfect soul for the word of God',[102] which leads to 'the contemplation of the godhead'.[103] The soul strives for the invisible and the eternal; the model for this is Jacob, 'because of the contemplation of divine things' [104]

Each of these stages corresponds to one of the books of Solomon: the book of Proverbs belongs to the 'ethica'; Ecclesiastes corresponds to the 'physica', and the Song of Songs to the 'enoptica'.[105] The Song of Songs stands in the final place because only someone with the 'ethica' and the 'physica' already behind him can understand it.[106]

We are now in a position to fit Origen's idea of the five spiritual senses into his overall system of thought. As already stated, only the perfect are in possession of all five spiritual faculties. In consequence only they can make use of the five senses since they have gone through the active life and reached a state of 'apathy', of freedom from the passions; they have arrived at perfect purity and love through observance of the commandments. They are persuaded of the vanity and transitoriness of the visible world and thus the way lies open for them to the kingdom of God, to insight and 'theory'.[107] Therefore the 'pure spirit'[108] can ascend to the contemplation of divinity itself, the Trinity and the divine Word. All five spiritual senses come into operation, each one being touched by the grace of the Word.

These conclusions are not mere deductions since Origen himself relates the activity of the spiritual senses to the ascent of the soul to the 'enoptica'. In this sense he explains the passage in the Song of Songs, 'the aroma of your ointments surpasses all other fragrance' (1:3), to mean the state in which the soul has mastered for itself all learning, [95] whether this is 'ethica' or 'physica'.[109] All this knowledge was aroma for the soul, yet, as he continues, at the moment when the soul comes to awareness of the divine mysteries and truths and is permitted to cross over the threshold and arrive at wisdom itself, which comes neither from

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[98] *Ibid*. 78,5 *sq*.
[99] *Ibid*. 78,29 *sq*.
[100] According o Origen the 'scientia incorruptibilium' belongs to the naturalis', while knowledge of all immaterial realities is proper to the 'inspective',
[101] *In Cant*. (GCS 33) 75,21 *sq*.
[102] *Ibid*. 78,14 *sq*.
[103] *Ibid*. 78,17 *sq*.
[104] *Ibid*. 78,30 *sq*.
[105] *Ibid*. 77,30 *sq*.
[106] *Ibid*. 78, 10 *sq*. The same triple division is found in other passages, e.g. *De Principiis* 1. III n.3 (GCS 22) 259,18 *sq*. . . . 'sanctae et immaculatae animae cum se ommi affectu omnique puritate voverint Deo et alienas se ab omni daemonum contagione servaverint et per multam abstinentiam purificaverint se et pus ac regliosis imbutae fuerint disciplinis participium per hoc divinitatis assumunt, et prophetiae ac ceterorum divinorum donorum gratiam promerentur'. The division of 'theory' or rather the triple division of the spiritual life is found also in: *In Joan*. t. 1 n. 28 (GCS 10) 36,14 *sq*. *Contra Celsum* 1. VII n. 46 (GCS 3) 198,13 *sq*. *In Joan*. t. XX n. 34 (GCS 10) 371 *sq*.
[107] *Select, in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1581 D).
[108] *Ibid*. (PG 12, 1304 C and 1424 C).
[109] *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 100,12 *sq*.

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the world nor from its masters but is God's own wisdom accessible only to the perfect, at this moment it has reached the stage where it may grasp the unutterable mysteries and can properly say, 'odor unguentorum'. This spiritual and mystical knowledge surpasses all the aromas of moral and natural philosophy.[110] The soul, guided by Christ, follows his scent like 'the soul which is practised in the moral and then also in the natural sphere'.[111] 'And this only happens in so far as his aroma (that of Christ) is taken in. What do they (that is, the companions of the bride in the Song of Songs) do when their hearing and sight, feeling and taste are filled with the Word of God and each is endowed with its proper virtue corresponding to its nature and capacity?'[112] 'And so those who have reached the highest degree of perfection and blessedness rejoice with all their senses in the Word of God.'[113] This agrees exactly with Origen's conception of the 'perfect', when he explains the Word of God and God himself as the object of the spiritual faculties.[114]

THE USE OF THE SPIRITUAL SENSES

One requires a special grace from God in order to be able to make use of the spiritual faculties. This is true both for 'theology' and for 'enoptica'. 'For with this (sc. grace) a man comes to the contemplation of, and longing for, unseen and eternal blessings. But in order to obtain them properly we have need of mercy. The only condition for this is that after realising the beauty of the divine Word, we can allow ourselves to be set on fire with saving love, so that the Word itself deigns to love the soul in which it has encountered longing for it.'[115]

'It is possible for us with the grace of God to recognise the truth but [96] it does not rest with us whether we are counted worthy of spiritual knowledge.'[116] Thus the spiritual senses can grasp nothing if God does not bestow his merciful grace upon a man. Origen's doctrine of the five spiritual senses consists in his psychological notion of 'theology', which he treats as the highest degree of the spiritual life.

Did Origen intend to use his doctrine to give a clearer account to the psychology of mystical experience in the proper sense of the term?[117] This point is not easy to settle and a sure answer would require a special investigation. For Origen does not appear to separate clearly popular knowledge of God from mystical experience. All knowledge of God according to his account is more or less mystical, without it being absolutely necessary for someone to have genuine mystical understanding.[118] So one should not immediately try to

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[110] *Ibid*. 100,21 *sq*.
[111] *Ibid*. 102,28 *sq*.
[112] *Ibid*. 103,27 *sq*.
[113] *Ibid*. 105, I *sq*.
[114] *Contra Celsum*. I. VII n.34 (GCS 3) 184,14 *sq*.; *ibid*. n.39 (GCS 3)190,3 *sq*. *De Principiis* I. I c I n.9 (GCS 22) 26,15 *sq*.
[115] *In Cant*. prol. (GCS 33) 79,17 *sq*.
[116] *Select in Psalm*. (PG 12,1424 B).
[117] Cf. the controversy about the mysticism of Origen, which has remained inconclusive: C. A. Kneller, 'Mystisches bei Origenes', *St. M-L* (1904), pp. 238-240 and H. Koch, 'Kennt Origenes Gebetsstufen?', *ThQ* 87 (1905), pp. 592-596.
[118] For Origen, God belongs to every form of knowledge; cf. *Select, in Psalm*. (PG 12, 1164 B); however he allows a natural knowledge of God as well which arises from creation, e.g. *In Rom*. 2, 13 (PG14,892 B); *De Principiis* 1. I c. 1 n. 7 (GCS 22) 24,19 *sq*.; *Contra Celsum* 1 VIII n.37 (GCS 3)188,2 *sq*. Externally it seems heavily influenced by mysticism, although it should not be regarded as genuine mystical experience (Plato's influence). Origen writes: 'We make it clear that man is by nature quite incapable of feeling God and of finding him in a pure form, unless the one sought comes to his aid', *Contra Celsum* 1. VII n.42 (GCS 3) 193, 16 *sq*. Cf. A. Miura-Stange, *Celsus und Origenes* (Giessen 1926) pp. 64 *sq*. To this notion corresponds the strong

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find a description of mystical experience in such language of Platonic enthusiasm. Also the way in which ecstasy is definitely excluded makes it doubtful whether Origen had really experienced mystical states.[119] He speaks rather of the difficulty of finding charisms.[120] This prevents us, however, [97] from seeing a psychology of mystical experience in his doctrine of the five spiritual senses. Nevertheless it must be granted that Origen applies this notion to a type of knowledge which is of a mystical character, although he sets it clearly apart from general religious understanding. The spiritual senses remain active in his view in eternal bliss. They comprehend the angels, the Cherubim, and even God, though it is assumed that these latter allow themselves to be so perceived; otherwise every effort of the spiritual eye would be fruitless.[121] Furthermore Origen uses his teaching of the spiritual senses to explain prophetic inspiration.[122] He proposes a 'deep' interpretation of the story of Isaias and Ezechiel.[123] He mentions, too, in connection with the doctrine of the spiritual senses the two events which counted in tradition as the high points of biblical mysticism, the vision of God by Moses and the rapture of Paul into the third heaven.[124] It is evident, then, in Origen that the spiritual senses can be the organs of mystical knowledge.

THE LATER INFLUENCE OF THE DOCTRINE

A few remarks may be added here to show the later influence of Origen's teaching, although no comprehensive survey will be attempted.

Evagrius of Pontus is a disciple of Origen in this matter as in his whole spiritual teaching.[125] Thus we read: 'The "spirit" possesses five spiritual senses which are its means of perception and with which it fulfils the purpose of creation. Sight reveals to it the essence of things; hearing allows it to grasp their foundations; with the sense of smell and pure and holy aroma is sensed which is pleasing to it and its house; through touch genuine trust develops'. Elsewhere he writes: 'Just as every art demands a living faculty which is suitable for it, so the [98] "spirit" as well needs a spiritual sense for the discernment of spiritual things'.[126]

Evagrius' manner of expression is more accurate than that of his master; the 'spirit' possesses five spiritual faculties corresponding to its nature. He speaks of the spiritual eye, of the eye of the soul or of spiritual sight, etc.[127] The fact that they are organs of the 'spirit' clearly proves that their operation relates to the 'theoretical' dimension. The 'praxis' and its

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emphasis laid on the moral dispositions which are required for knowledge of God, e.g. purity. It seems difficult to find in Origen 'the outline of a theory of mystical knowledge', (cf. G. Bardy, *DThC* X1/2 (Paris, 1931) 1536).

[119] *Cf. De Principiis* 1.111 C. 3 n.4 (GCS 22) 260,27 *sq*. *In Ezech*. hom. 6 n. I (GCS 33) 378,6 *sq*. *Contra Celsum* I. VIII n.3 and 4 (GCS 3) 154 *sqq*. Cf. A. Zöllig, *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes* (Freiburg i.Br. 1903), pp. 69-70. Evidently Origen attracts a 'manic ecstasy'; whoever is filled with the Spirit must be completely free without ecstasy and can reject the inspiration of the Spirit. This does not fit genuine divine ecstasy, which Origen did not consider at all. Similarly with regard to mysticism of a Montanist type; cf. Fr. Leitner, *Die prophetische Inspiration*, (Freiburg i.Br., 1896), pp. 119 *sq*.

[120] *Fragm in Prov*. (PG 13,25 A).

[121] *In Luc*. hom. 3 (GCS 35) 20 *sqq*.

[122] On this inspiration, cf. Fr. Leitner *op*. *cit*. pp. 142 *sq*. and A. Zöllig, *op*. *cit*. pp. 58 *sq*.

[123] *Contra Celsum* 1. I n.48 (GCS 2) 98,9 *sq*.

[124] *De Principiis* 1 II c.r n.3 (GCS 22) 131,3 *sq*. Similarly *In Joan* t. XXXII n.27 (GCS 10) 472,31 *sq*. *Contra Celsum* I. IV n.96 (GCS 2) 369, 14 *sq*., and 1. I n.48 (GCS 2) 99,15 *sq*. Cf. also, *In Cant*. I (GCS 33) 109,11 *sq*. *In Jesu Nave* hom,23 n.r (GCS 33) 446,25 *sq*.

[125] On this dependence cf. W. Bousset, *Apophthegmata*, (Tübingen, 1923) and M. Viller, 'Aux Sources de la Spiritualité de saint Maxime', *RAM* 11 (1930) 11 (1930) pp. 156-184; 239-268.

[126] W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus* (GAb, NF XXII/2) Berlin, 1912) Syriac with Greek translation; cr. *ibid*. pp. 155 and 79, and also W. Bousset, *op*. *cit*. p.318.

[127] *Cent*. II, 80; VII, 44; II, 28; VII, 27; II, 62 (Frankenberg, 183; 461; 147; 451; 175).

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goal, namely 'apathy' or freedom from passion[128] are pre-supposed here. His use of terminology seems to create a problem for knowledge of the Trinity which he sometimes distinguishes emphatically from any other type of knowledge.[129] But even in this case it is a matter of 'sight' and a 'way of seeing' and a 'perceiving'.[130] Given these expressions, Evagrius must regard even knowledge of the Trinity as dependent on the spiritual senses. Their operations, however, are envisaged in the following manner: the bodily senses perceive sensual things;[131] in comparison with the spiritual organs of perception, they grasp only a part and not the whole of the perceived object.[132] This is surpassed by the 'perception of the spiritual organs', which penetrate more deeply the reality already grasped by the bodily senses and discover much more about it than do the latter.[133] The spiritual faculties, in fact, either comprehend nothing or the whole reality, whose deepest meaning they communicate.[134] [99] They have, therefore, a more difficult role. For here 'theory' should become evident,[135] in which the individual senses are apportioned, each in a different way. The eye perceives the existence of these immaterial beings, spiritual hearing grasps their inner meaning, the sense of touch lends certainty to these perceptions and finally smell and taste comprehend them in a more affective manner.[136] It is from this point that the human gaze ascends to the light of the Trinity.

Although one of the faculties, the eye, is apparently the organ of 'theology', as has already been pointed out, its operation is quite different here than in 'physical knowledge'. At this level the perception of the spiritual senses is closely linked to the activity of the bodily faculties, so that each is brought into operation by the other.[137] This entirely material point of departure disappears on the higher level. In this 'state beyond the forms', in pure prayer, the spiritual eye perceives more as the light of the Trinity, the light without images.[138] This light is ultimately the highest that exists and yet remains at the same time 'eternal unknowing'.[139] In order to reach this point an ever increasing purity is needed, which can be achieved with angelic assistance.[140] Indirectly Evagrius implies that not everyone possesses all the spiritual senses and may here and there only have control of one or another of them. Many men can in

[128] Cf. M. Viller, *op. cit.* p. 168; this seems also to be the meaning of *Cent* 1,37 (Frankenberg, 81).
[129] Cf. *Cent* II, 16; III, 41; V, 63 and epist. 58 (Frankenberg, 141; 217; 347; 607). Cf. M. Viller, *op. cit.* pp. 244, 246 and 164; *Cent.* II 47; VII 19 and epist. 29 (Frankenberg 161; 429; 587).
[130] *Cent.* V.51.52.57.63; *Gnost.* 151; *Antirr.* (Frankenberg, 339; 341; 343; 347; 553; 547).
[131] *Cent.* V.57 *sq.*, *ibid.* I.34; II,80 (Frankenberg, 343; 79; 80). All these expressions carry the same meaning and describe bodily sense perception.
[132] *Cent.* II, 28 and 80 (Frankenberg, 147 and 183).
[133] *Cent.* II, 80; V,58 (Frankenberg, 183; 343).
[134] *Cent.* II, 28 and 35. (Frankenberg, 147 and 155). What is said here only refers to the perception of immaterial realities, i.e. spiritual phenomena in the strict sense. One does not rightly grasp now the physical sight of bodily realities differs from spiritual perception, unless spiritual perception consists in the knowledge of the foundation of things.
[135] *Cent.* V.34 (Frankenberg, 341) has the same meaning: the deepest sense of physical realities from a religious and moral viewpoint. Babai interprets it in this way in his commentary on *Cent.* V,54 and 58 (Frankenberg, 343 and 345). Origen explained the 'physica' in the same way; *Cent.* 1,33; 11,80; V,57 (Frankenberg, 79; 183; 343).
[136] *Cent.* II 35-36; II 27'and V.54 (Frankenberg, 155, 147, 341).
[137] This is certainly the meaning of *Cent.* 11,80. (Frankenberg, 183). Cf. *Cent.* II 80; V,57. 60. 61. (Frankenberg, 183; 343; 345). *Cent.* V,6I must accordingly be interpreted as follows: physical perception arouses the awareness of the deepest spiritual meaning which can be drawn from these sense realities (*Cent.* 11,80, 35 *sq.*) Conversely this awareness awakes the memory of the physical perception of these objects. The relation between physical perception and 'theory' in the 'physica' assumes that 'theory' is dependent on physical perception. On this point *Cent.* IV, 85 (Frankenberg, 315) and V,56 (Frankenberg, 343) agree, as do other passages in Evagrius, cf. M. Viller, *op. cit.* pp. 248-256.
[138] *Cent.* II, 29; IV, 87; V,51 and 61; VI, 26; VII,4 and 30 (Frankenberg, 149; 315; 339; 345; 415; 427; 455).
[139] *Cent.* III,88 (Frankenberg, 257).
[140] *Cent.* V.52; 57; VI,35 (Frankenberg, 341; 343; 383).

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his opinion perceive the smell of demons.[141] [100] This, then, forms the main outline of Evagrius' teaching. The many passages which are parallel to Origen's own writing do not require separate mention here.

It is evident, however, that Evagrius does make additions to the theory of mystical experience. This development would become clearer if one were to pursue his spiritual teaching in detail, an investigation which exceeds the scope of this essay.[142] The view of Bousset seems to us mistaken when he says about Evagrius's conception of the five spiritual senses: 'His spirituality is taken to extremes and takes on a new physical and sensual force.'[143] However it is true that the following passage from the 'Mirror of the Nuns' does seem to provide a certain justification for this opinion: 'The eyes of the virgins see the Lord, the ears of the virgins hear his words, the mouth of virgins kisses the bridegroom, their sense of smell is attracted by the aroma of his perfumes, and their hands touch the Lord.'[144]

As is well known Diadocus Photicus is heavily influenced by Evagrius.[145] But he is not familiar with any doctrine of five spiritual faculties, but only of 'one spiritual sense', 'a sense of the spirit', etc. On this topic P. Horn has made a closer investigation.[146] The differences between the two views are easily understood. Diadocus is more or less familiar with an experience of knowledge coming from the indwelling of God in the purified soul. The soul recognises its right relationship to God and experiences divine consolation, which gives a man total fulfilment. On this basis Diadocus can state that the purified person possesses a single perception in contrast to the five bodily senses.[147] [101] He has no difficulty in referring to the eyes of spirit, to the perception of the divine light and its illumination.[148] It is surprising to discover how often he uses the images of tasting and savouring to describe religious experience.[149] In one passage he even speaks of 'sniffing out the aroma of supernatural good deeds'.[150]

Pseudo-Macarius maintains more accurately than Diadocus the doctrine of the spiritual senses in his spiritual homilies. Bousset has rightly affirmed that he too lies under the influence of Evagrius and, at least indirectly, of Origen.[151] The question of the authorship and authenticity of these homilies does not concern us here; the solutions attempted by Stoffels, Stiglmayr, Marriott, Villecourt and Wilmarts are well known. [152]

In any event Pseudo-Macarius accepts that there are five spiritual senses of the soul which are sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit and are then truly 'wise virgins'.[153] This image makes on suspect a direct dependence upon Origen, who had already compared the five

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[141] *Cent*. V.78 and VII, 44 (Frankenberg, 353; 461).
[142] For this, parallels can be found in Origen, at least if one restricts one's attention to the actual content of the texts. However, a considerable difference exists between the writers. One finds a concern in Evagrius, but not in Origen, to detach mystical from ordinary knowledge and to highlight its peculiar characteristics.
[143] W. Bousset, *op. cit*. p. 318; cf. F. Cavallera, 'Bespr. zu Bousset', *RAM* 6 (1925) pp. 80-83.
[144] Cf. H. Gressmann (ed.) *Mönchs-und Nonnenspiegel* (Greek) (TU 39,46; Leipzig, 1913), p.151.
[145] Cf. R. Reitzenstein, *Historia monachorum und Historia Lausiaca* (Gottingen 1916), cap. V: 'Evagrius und Diadochus von Photike', pp. 124-142. Cf. M. Viller, *op. cit*. p. 263.
[146] 'Le sens de l'esprit d'après Diadoque de Photice', RAM 8 (1927) pp. 402-419.
[147] *De perfectione spirituali*, cap. 24; 25; 29; ed. Weis-Leibersdorf (Leipzig, 1912); new edition: E. de Places, *Diadoque de Photice*. *Oevres spirituelles* (SC 56; Paris, 1955), pp. 84-163.
[148] Cf. J.E. Weis-Liebersdorf, Vorwort 5,2; cap. 9 (10,25); cap. 14(16,17); cap. 40(46,5); cap. 71(88,11); cap. 85(116,17).
[149] Cf. *ibid*.
[150] Cf. *ibid*.
[151] W. Bousset, *op. cit*. p. 319; J. Stiglmayr, 'Makarius der Grosse im Lichte der kirchlichen Tradition', *ThG1* 3 (1911), pp. 274-88. The author refers directly to Origen (*ibid*. p. 280).
[152] Cf. O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichcn Literatur* III, (Freiburg i. Br., 1912), pp. 87-93; also J. Stiglmayr, Pseudo-Makarius und die Aftermystik der Messalianer', *ZkTh* 49 (1925) pp. 244-260.
[153] *Hom*. 4 n. 7 (PG 34, 477).

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spiritual faculties to the wise virgins in the Gospel. These powers are brought into operation by the temptations of evil forces as well as by the graces of the Holy Spirit.[154] Pseudo-Macarius regards these five spiritual senses as natural faculties, since, according to him, their operations can remain on a purely natural plane, i.e. without grace.[155] In prayer God can enter the soul through all the senses[156] and Christ, who sanctifies a man and fill him with his own divine spirit, bestows new eyes, new ears and a new language upon him.[157] Through sin the eyes of the heart are so blinded that they no longer see the glory of God, which Adam could see before the Fall. Satan has darkened the [102] eyes of the inner man and made his ears deaf. But Christ gives back health to the inner man. A divine light illumines the spiritual eyes, which were previously darkened by sin.[158]

A section from the 4th Homily, relevant to our topic, is found in Simeon Logothetes (Metaphrastes) in the second half of the 10th century;[159] he quotes the text practically verbatim, but adds an explanation which completely alters the meaning.[160] Apparently the Greeks of the period had already entirely forgotten the earlier teaching of the five spiritual senses.[161]

Finally we should note traces of Origen's doctrine to be found here and there outside spiritual writings. Basil the Great, for instance, is clearly referring to Origen in the way he tries to prove the doctrine of the five spiritual senses from scriptural passages. He uses the names of the bodily senses for the powers of the soul.[162] Still more obvious is the influence of Origen upon Gregory of Nyssa. In his exposition of the Song of Songs the theory of the five spiritual faculties is explicitly presented as a teaching of the 'philosophy' of the Song of Songs. Further evidence is here unnecessary.[163]

Traces are also to be found of a doctrine of five spiritual senses in the Latin patristic literature, although it would be hard to prove the influence of Origen in this case. But in this connection mention should at least be made of Augustine and Gregory the Great.[164]

[103] The influence of Origen's ideas clearly makes itself evident in the speculations of the Scholastics. Numerous texts prove the point beyond doubt. A passage from the 3rd homily on Leviticus serves as one of the important patristic sources and is continually quoted in support

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[154] *Hom*. 50 n.4 (PG 34, 829 A).
[155] *Hom*. 4 n. 7 (PG 34, 477).
[156] *Hom*. 33 n. 1 (PG 34, 741 B).
[157] *Hom*. 44 n. I (PG 34, 780 A).
[158] *Hom*. 45 n. 1 (PG 34, 785 D). *Hom*. 33 n. 4; *Hom*. 28 n. 4 *sq*., *Hom*. 25 n. 10; *Hom*. 14 n. I and 6 (PG 34, 744C; 712 *sq*; 673CD; 569 D; 573 C). Cf. W.. Bousset, *op*. *cit*. p. 319.
[159] Cf. 0. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur* IV (Freiburg i. Br. 1924), p. 89.
[160] *De elevatione mentis* n. 4 (PG 34,893A).
[161] In the 7th Century Maximus the Confessor matched the five spiritual senses with the powers of the soul which were familiar from other sources; cf. *Ambig*. *liber* (PG 91,1248A).
[162] *In princ*. *prov*. hom. 12 n. 14 (PG 31, 413-416).
[163] Gregory himself refers to Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs, *In Cant*. *prooem*. (PG44, 764AB). In addition there are numerous points of contact between the two commentaries; cf. *In Cant*. hom. 1(PG44,780CD) Gregory interprets Prov 2:5 in the same way as Origen.
[164] Origen naturally has a certain influence upon Latin thinking through the translations of Jerome and Rufinus. For Augustine, cf. *Serm*. 159 C. 3 *sq*. (PL 38,869); the proof of the 'sensus interiores' recalls the use of Scripture in Origen. Cf. also *Tract in Joan*. 18 c. 5 n. 10(PL 35, 1542); *De civ*. *Dei* XI c. 27 n. 2 (PL41,341), *Soul*. 1 c. 6 n. 12 *sq*. (PL 32,875 *sq*.); *Conf*. X c. 6 and 27 (PL 32,782 *sq*., 795). Augustine was familiar with *De Principiis* by Origen (cf. *De*. *Civ*. *Dei* XI c. 23- PL 41,336). The idea of the spiritual senses may come from this source. The comparison of the senses with the five prudent virgins is also common in Augustine. *Epist*. 187 c. 13 n. 4d (PL 33, 847) is important for scholastic speculation about the five spiritual senses. For Gregory cf. *Moral*. VI c.33 (PG 75,973 *sq*.) among other references, where the 'sensus mentis, sensus animi, sensus interni' are discussed. There is also frequent mention of the 'occuli cordis', e.g. *Hom*. *in Ezech*. II hom. 1 n. 18 (PL 76,948B).

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of the theory of spiritual senses.[165] But the ideas of the Scholastics themselves on the spiritual senses are not here our topic of discussion. The purpose of this investigation was to provide a historical study of Origen's doctrine of the five spiritual senses, without intending to add a great deal about their value and importance.

[165] Cf. *In Levit*. hom. 3 (GCS 29) 31Z. This text was better known that the rest, since it was to be found in the usual glossary (Lev 7:5). It was used by e.g. Alexander of Hales, *Summ*. *Theol*. II inq. IV tract. I sect. II qu. 3 tit. 1 memb. 3c 1 (Quaracchi, 1928, n. 381 *sq*.), also by Albert the Great, *In III sent*. dist. 13 A art. 4 (ed. Borgnet t. 28,239); by Bonaventure, *In III Sent*. dist. 13 dub. c litt. magistri (Quaracchi t. III, 291); by Thomas Aquinas, *In III Sent* dist. 13, exp. textus (Parma t. VII, 145 *sq*.).

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7

THE DOCTRINE OF THE 'SPIRITUAL SENSES' IN THE MIDDLE AGES

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ST BONAVENTURE

We have already investigated the origins of the doctrine of the five spiritual senses.[1] In this essay the historical development of this notion will be pursued further. The fullest account is to be found in the mystical theology of St Bonaventure, so that it is obviously advisable to deal primarily with the work of this doctor of the Church. Earlier and later testimony can and should only be introduced to give the main outline of the history of the idea of the five senses without any attempt being made to treat the matter fully.

In the case of Bonaventure also only those texts will be considered which deal explicitly with the five faculties. Wherever only one or other spiritual sense is mentioned, or there is a purely metaphorical reference to religious experience, the testimony is too uncertain to be relevant for our concern.[2]

We have already drawn attention in a summary way to traces of this doctrine in the works of the Latin fathers, especially in those of Augustine.[3] Despite the brief and general character of these texts, they [105] are important for their influence and confirmation of later scholastic speculation on the matter. For after Origen Augustine was the real master for medieval theology on the subject of the five spiritual faculties. Certainly one has to move to the classic scholastic writers before one comes across any original conception of the spiritual senses after the patristic period. All that was achieved in the time between Origen and Bonaventure was to prevent the doctrine from passing into complete oblivion. Among the 12th century mystical writers one finds only three who mention the teaching, Bernard of Clairvaux, his friend and biographer William of St Thierry and his disciple Alcher of Clairvaux. But even Bernard's remarks do not go beyond the division, allegories and parallels,[4] which remained common in the Middle Ages. He remarks in a sermon: 'Just as the soul bestows sense powers to the body, so the soul of our soul, that is, God himself, furnishes our soul in his own way with five senses. They are nothing else than the various possibilities of loving each corresponding reality: sight is the love of God.' According to this, Bernard basically recognised only a single spiritual sense, which is fundamentally directed to religious phenomena. William of St Thierry is completely dependent upon Bernard and repeats in his work 'De natura et dignitate amoris'[5] the latter's ideas. In his writing only sight has a religious character, even if he does say: 'Through the five spiritual senses the soul is bound to God with the help of love'. At another point in the same work he relates each spiritual sense to a particular period of the history of salvation.[6] This recalls similar notions in Origen.[7] But

[1] Cf. in this volume: 'The spiritual senses according to Origen' and also the fuller French version of the text in *RAM* 13 (1932), pp. 113-145. The present essay also appeared first in *RAM* 14 (1933), pp. 263-299 in French. A section was published in German in *ZAM* 9 (1934), pp. 1-19. The text has been abridged and slightly revised for publication here.
[2] This means that certain passages are excluded which are quoted by other authors in their treatment of the 'spiritual senses'.
[3] On Augustine cf. the essay referred to in footnote 1. Strangely enough *Sermo* 159, 3-4 (PL 38, 869) was never used in later periods, although it is a clearer proof of Augustine's knowledge of the doctrine of the true spiritual senses (even if not in a mystical sense) than *Confess*. X 6,27.
[4] *Sermo* 10 de diversis 2-4 (PL 183, 567-569).
[5] Cf. *ibid*. cap. 6 n. 15 (PL 184, 390-391); cap. 7 n. 16-20 (PL 184,391-394).
[6] Cf. *ibid*. cap. 10 n. 26 *sqq*. (PL 184, 397-399).

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on the whole the statements of Bernard and William are too general in character to admit of a definite conclusion whether the sense intended here is really meant. But they should not be ignored since in the high Middle Ages they frequently serve as authoritative testimony on the question of the spiritual senses.

The contribution of Alcher of Clairvaux on this topic is of greater importance. In his small treatise *De spiritu et anima*,[8] which in subsequent centuries was generally ascribed to Augustine, he presents [106] a good summary of the earlier psychological tradition.[9] He speaks of the spiritual faculties in two places: 'the senses of the outer man, it must be stressed, are to be found in a similar fashion in the inner man, for spiritual realities are accessible, not to the bodily, but to the spiritual senses'. In the same way as Origen and Augustine before him he attempts to find scriptural proof for the existence of these spiritual faculties.[10]

Other writings influenced the speculation of the classic scholastic authors on the subject of the five spiritual senses in addition to the testimony of the 12th century Latin mystical thought. Mention should be made of the *Glossa ordinaria* and the quote from Origen it contains through which, in addition to the work of Augustine, an idea originating in Greek mystical writing penetrated the Middle Ages. There was also another basis for the new development of the doctrine which played a part at the time. Peter Lombard stated in one passage[11] in his *Sentences* that in Christ the head of the mystical body, all the senses are to be found, while the saints only possess the sense of touch. This remark in the manual apparently contradicted the assertion of Origen, which was well known from the *Glossa ordinaria*. The solution to the problems this caused gave the commentators on the Sentences the chance to discuss the spiritual faculties.

Finally reference should be made to the indisputable influence exercised by the meaning of the word 'sensus' in classical Latin and at later periods. Apart from sense knowledge the word also signified the highest spiritual principles and their operation. In the religious terminology of the 12th century we find a 'sensus spiritualis'[12] in contrast to the 'sensus carnalis', and similarly a 'sensus cordis', a 'sensus animae' and a 'sensus intellectualis'. It was not long before the parallel of 'sensus carnalis' and 'sensus spiritualis' influenced the discussion of the five spiritual senses.

Building upon these elements the medieval scholastics developed the notion of the spiritual senses, showing the greatest respect here, as [107] in other questions, to the tradition of all the ancient concepts, distinctions, etc. But logical thought had already evolved too far for it to be possible to regard everything as acceptable simply on grounds of antiquity. On the other hand such material could not be used without distinctions being drawn. So many ancient notions, which writers did not want just to abandon, came to convey a meaning which could be retained in the period when in themselves they were forgotten; for they no longer expressed something which could not be stated more simply without their use.

The process was similar in the case of the spiritual senses. They were commonly explained in a manner which set their content firmly within the framework of more reliable ideas and rendered them in fact superfluous. Only when direct mystical experience and lively interest in

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[7] *Comm. in Matth*. t. XV n. 33 (GCS 40). The same idea also appears later in Gerson.
[8] This work is only attributed to Alcher; the text is in PL 40, 779-832.
[9] Cf. Ueberweg-Geyer, *Die patristische und scholastische Philosophie* (Graz, 1951), p. 260.
[10] Cf. *De spiritu et anima* cap. 9 and 49 (PL 40, 785 and 815); Dt 32:39; Ps 33:9; Lk 8:46; 2 Cor 2:15; Rev 2:29.
[11] Cf. the work referred to in footnote 1; III *Sent*. dist. 13 with reference to Augustine's *epist. 187 to Dardanus* cap. 13 n. 40 (PL 38, 847).
[12] A few examples: Hugh of St. Victor, *Miscellanea* 1. I tit. 24; tit. 162 (PL 187, 490 and 559); Richard of St. Victor, *Beniamin minor* cap. 5 (PL 196, 5), etc.

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its significance occurred, was any attempt made to find a genuinely meaningful interpretation of mystical theory. This is, however, exactly the case with St Bonaventure.

THE IDEA OF THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

The doctrine of the five spiritual senses is to be found for the first time in the classical scholastic period in the *Summa aurea*, the commentary on the *Sentences* by William of Auxerre.[13] The question is treated in the section dealing with heavenly beatitude. Essentially, however, he is familiar only with one spiritual sense, the intellect, which reaches perfection through faith. But we are entitled even here to speak of five spiritual senses in as much as the intellect can have various acts which are distinguished 'in their working and their enjoyment' although not at all in their essential principle of operation. Evidently the question, known from other sources, of the relation of spiritual senses and powers is summarily resolved in the sense that every other power apart from the intellect and will is denied. But in this way the spiritual senses are still merely different modes of activity of the intellect, which completely envelops God.

The direction in which future speculation about the spiritual senses was to develop remained true to this assumption. William of Auvergne maintains this position.[14] Yet he does not speak directly of [108] these five senses but combines them in a group, 'gustus spiritualis, visus spiritualis, olfactus spiritualis, odoratus spiritualis'. Surprisingly he connects 'gustus spiritualis' with the 'donum sapientiae', and apportions the different senses partly to the intellect and partly to the will:[15] sight and hearing belong to the intellect, while taste and smell are identified with the 'virtutes motivae'.

A little later than these two writers, Alexander of Hales also deals with the five spiritual senses in his *Summa*. What is novel in his treatment is that he clearly inserts the idea into his whole system of psychology. Having discussed the intellectual powers of the soul, he turns to the act of the power of insight.[16] He states that insight is also called the spiritual sense. There is no doubt here that the spiritual sense is understood as an act and not a power. By analogy to the bodily senses, the intellect (sensus spiritualis) is described as the spiritual sense. However there are five spiritual senses, not because so many different powers exist, but because the intellect can grasp the same object in various ways.[17] At any rate it is clear that such a conception fits a disembodied soul or an angel, which are directed to 'intelligibilia', and would only be hindered by the activity of bodily powers.[18] Evidently it is a question for Alexander of Hales of the idea of the five spiritual senses, but his interpretation is so oversimplified that the notion is in fact superfluous.

A more important contribution to the problem is provided by Albert the Great, for he connects the five spiritual senses with mystical knowledge. This idea does not figure in

[13] *Summa aurea* 1. IV (Paris, 1500) fol. 300-301. William died in 1231 or 1237, cf. *LThK* X (1965), 1128-1129.
[14] *De virtut* cap. 11 (Orleans, 1664; reprinted, Frankfurt, 1963), 145-147; *De Universo* II pars 2 cap. 13, *ibid*. 856.
[15] *De Virtut*. op. cit. 146.
[16] *Summa* pars II q. 69 (Venice, 1675), 115-118; Quaracchi, 1928, t. II inq. IV. tract. 1 s. 2 q. 3 tit. 1, membr. 1-2 n. 368 *sqq*, pp. 446 *sqq*. *Ibid*. q. 70, Quaracchi 1928, m. 3 n. 381 *sqq*, pp. 459 *sqq*.
[17] *Ibid*. pars II q. 70 m. 1 p.118-119 and Quaracchi 1928, m. 3 c. 1 n .381, pp. 459-460; also m. 2 p. 119 and Quaracchi cap. 2 n. 382, 461.
[18] *Ibid*. m. 3-6, p. 119-120 and Quaracchi 1928, c. 3-6. n. 383-386, S.462- 464; cf. J. A. Endres, 'Die Seelenlehre des Alexander von Hales,' *PhJ* 1 (1888) pp. 24-55; 203-225; 257-296 (esp. 283-284).

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Alexander's thinking at all. In Albert we have to some extent all five spiritual senses,[19] and he also describes them as acts ordered to the intellect and will. Spiritual taste and feeling are expressions of the will, which experiences the blessings [109] of God. To the objection that a spiritual sense is a form of knowledge and therefore must be related to the intellect, Albert gives the perceptive reply that, in addition to the knowledge received from without, there is also knowledge coming from the experience which enables a man to perceive divine reality. For according to a phrase of Pseudo-Denis, a man suffers the divine reality and experiences this in spiritual taste and feeling.[20] The other senses belong to the perception of the truth, i.e. to the intellect.[21] By analogy to the bodily senses the spiritual senses belong metaphorically to the intellect which knows God. The angels also possess them. As far as we can tell, Albert is noteworthy for his view that feeling and taste are of lesser importance than the other senses. This is also the form in which the doctrine appears in the works of Anthony of Padua and Thomas Aquinas.[22]

ST BONAVENTURE

There is a notable literature written on Bonaventure's doctrine of the five spiritual senses.[23] Before embarking on a closer analysis of his [110] ideas, a problem raised by P. Bonnefoy must be resolved. In his view Bonaventure does not always mean the same thing when he speaks of the spiritual senses in different parts of his writings. On the contrary, the same words express different realities which are quite disparate: spiritual perceptions, the principle behind such perceptions, gifts of grace in the order of knowledge and the affections, habits of knowledge, and natural powers. In treating the investigations of other scholars he merely remarks: 'The basic error of these attempts to bring together the various statements on the subject lies in the view that all the passages in which Bonaventure speaks of "sensus

[19] We leave aside here Albert's problem of the extent to which Christ, as head of the mystical body, possesses these senses. i.e. graces, which do not pass to the members of the body. In III *Sent*. dist. 13 art. 4 (edit. Borgnet) t. 28, p. 240.
[20] Cf. *De caelest. hier*. cap. 15 S 5 (edit. Borgnet) t. 14, p. 414; all the spiritual senses seem to be described as acts of the intellect, but even here the object of taste and touch is the *good*.
[21] In III *Sent*. loc. cit.
[22] *De caelest. hier*. cap. 15 S 5; cf. edit. of Borgnet, p. 417; it is not easy to see how this fits with the identification of 'cognitio experimentalis' and the senses of touch and taste, for Albert regards the sense of smell as the highest and thus explicitly disregards the order of value among the physical senses. The remarks about angelic faculties are not taken into account here, *op. cit*. S 5-6 (p. 415-422). Cf. J. Heerinckx, 'Les sources de la théologie mystique de S. Antoine de Padoue', *RAM* 13 (1932), p. 239 and idem, 'S. Antonius Pataviensis auctor mysticus,' *Antonianum* 7 (1932), p. 69 *sqq*. On Thomas Aquinas, in III *Sent* dist. 13 expos. (ed. Parma) t. VII p. 145-146; *In Philipp*. cap. 21. 2 *ibid*. p. 513; *In Psalm*. 33 n. 9 *ibid*. t. XIV p. 266.
[23] Cf. E. Longpré, 'la théologie mystique de S. Bonaventure', *AFrH* 14 (1921) esp. 51-53; idem, 'Bonaventure', *DSAM* I, 1768-1843; Fr. Andres, *Die Stufen der Contemplatio in Bonaventure Itinerarium* (Munster 1921); R. Carton, *L'expérience mystique de l'illumination interieure chez Roger Bacon* (Paris, 1924), esp. pp. 242-245; B. Rosenmoeller, *Religiöse Erkenntnis nach Bonaventura* (Munster, 1925), passim; D. Dobbins, *Franciscan Mysticism* (New York, 1926), esp. pp. 51 *sq*; J. M. Bissen, *Les degrés de la contemplation* (Paris, 1928/30); J. Bonnefoy, *Le Saint-Esprit et ses dons selon S. Bonaventure* (Paris, 1929); Et. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (London, 1938): St. Grünewald, *Franziskanische Mystik* (Munich, 1932); J. Bonnefoy, *Une somme bonaventurienne de théologie mystique* (Paris, 1934); H. Koenig, *De inhabitatione Spiritus Sancti* (Mundelein 1934); St. Grünewald, 'Zur Mystik des hl. Bonaventura', *ZAM* 9 (1934), 124-142; 219-232 (a discussion of our study); F. Beauchemin, *Le savoir au service de l'amour*. (Paris, 1935); F. Imle, *Das geistliche Leben nach der Lehre des hl. Bonaventura* (Werl, 1939); J. Friederichs, *Die Theologie als spekulative und praktische Wissenschaft nach Bonaventura und Thomas von Aquin* (Bonn 1940); R. Guardini, *Systembildende Elemente in der Theologie Bonaventuras* (Leiden, 1964); A. Elsässer, *Christus der Lehrer des Sittlichen* (Munich, 1968). The works of Bonaventure are quoted from the 10 volume critical edition of Quaracchi (1882-1902).

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spiritualis" deal with one and the same phenomenon'.[24] The search for 'a synthesis' is for him anachronistic. But in our opinion P. Bonnefoy is wrong. One must start with the clear statements of Bonaventure that the spiritual senses are acts and not new powers.[25] Here he is saying nothing new and is not contradicting, *pace* Bonnefoy, any earlier mystical tradition.[26] These acts touch on the intellect and will, which are perfected by three operations: by means of the virtues, the gifts of grace and the blessings of beatitude. If one sticks to this line of thought, which presents no internal contradiction, then there is no reason to interpret the different texts on the spiritual senses as though they referred to quite disparate phenomena.[27] Otherwise one must allow with P. [111] Bonnefoy that in a single text the same word can be used with completely different meanings, with the result that no coherent thought can be obtained from it.[28]

What is the nature of Bonaventure's doctrine? Surprisingly he does not include it in his treatment of psychology but refers to in connection with grace. This already clarifies to some extent the mystical character of the spiritual senses.

For Bonaventure the soul in a state of grace has three modes of operation: through the virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the blessings of beatitude.[29] By these means the powers of the soul are corrected (habitus virtutum, potentiae rectificantur); their activity is made easier, they develop and become stronger (habitus donorum, potentiae expediuntur); finally they are brought to the perfection which a man can achieve on earth (habitus beatitudinum, potentiae perficiuntur). Although these three modes of operation are already present in the soul in a state of grace, they do not have their full effect at the same moment;[30] rather each of them corresponds to one of the three stages of the spiritual life: beginning (purification), development (enlightenment) and perfection.[31] The perfect man enjoys the sevenfold gifts of the blessings of beatitude and reaches the state of profound peace. But through the gift of wisdom love is also made easier, which is a preparation for the blessings of peace and finds its fulfilment in it.[32] When the soul has acquired such peace, then it experiences of necessity spiritual joy, the fruits of the Holy Spirit. At this point a man is on the threshold of contemplation, which is exercised precisely in the acts of the spiritual senses. Consequently it is a question here not of new modifications or powers but rather of acts, that is, applications of [112] the modifications which already have names to describe them in contemplation.[33]

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[24] J. Bonnefoy, *Le Saint-Esprit et ses dons Selon S. Bonaventure* (Paris, 1929), p. 214.
[25] *Ibid*. p. 212. Cf. *In III Sent* dist. 34 pars 1 art. 1 (T. III 7376).
[26] *Ibid*. p. 214. The long prevalent error that Poulain regards the spiritual senses as new powers of the soul seems ineradicable, although he himself expressly affirms the opposite; cf. *Katholik* 92 (1912), p. 291.
[27] Here it is a question purely of 'sensus stricte acceptus' (*III Sent* dist. 13 dub. T. III 291 b). In this sense the spiritual sense in Bonaventure is one-sided. The word 'sensus' can in itself mean a new power, so that the expressions of Bonaventure in the context of the 'sensus spiritualis' can often suggest the idea of a power. But these ideas lose nothing of their force if one sees in them the perception of the sense rather than the sense itself; the corresponding statements are quite intelligible if they are given this meaning. The acts can have their principle either in the intellect or in the will. The soul in possession of the three theological virtues regains the acts of experiential perception, since it has gained the theological virtues which form the principle of their operation. Bonaventure treats the senses as perceptions and so as acts. In summary we maintain that a 'comprehensive viewpoint' can be found in the texts of Bonaventure, in the sense that he is always dealing with acts of the soul which is perfected by the threefold modification of the virtues. This remains valid even in cases when the actual form of words points rather to powers.
[28] J. Bonnefoy, *Le Saint-Esprit et ses dons* . . . (Paris, 1929) pp. 210 and 212.
[29] Cf. *Breviloquium* V 6 and III *Sent* dist. 34 art. 1 q. 1 (edit. Quaracchi t. V 285 *sq*. and III 735 *sq*.)
[30] III *Sent* dist. 34 art. 1 q. 2 (III 739 *sq*.)
[31] *Ibid*. 1. 3 (III 7426); *Brevil*. V 6 (V 256 ab).
[32] *Brevil*. V 5-6 (V 2576-2596).
[33] *Brevil*. V 6 (259-260) and III *Sent* dist. 34 art. 1 q. 1 (III 7376); Rosenmoeller does not bring out clearly the act quality of the senses in Bonaventure. It was Bonaventure, and not post-Tridentine Scholasticism, who was

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A closer examination of the principles of these acts, that is, of the spiritual senses, leads to the same conclusion as that drawn by P. Bonnefoy, namely that the operation of the highest principles, the blessings of beatitude, is involved.[34] But the result for contemplation is that, for Bonaventure in contrast to modern mystical theology, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are of secondary importance. This is clearly stated in Bonaventure and in the Breviloquium comes first in the arrangement of the contents. But Bonaventure's doctrine of the blessings of beatitude is too little known to allow one to gain from it a deeper understanding of his thinking on *all* the spiritual senses.[35]

The two other modifications of the soul, the virtues and the gifts of grace, are so closely connected to contemplation that they also provide a real deepening of the spiritual senses. One should take note of the operation of the blessings of beatitude in the case of some of the senses, and so be able to work out what is the specific character of the sense in question. The two ultimate principles in the treatment of these senses are intellect and will; given Bonaventure's view of the relationship of these two powers of the soul,[36] it is hardly surprising that he can refer the same operation to two faculties. It is natural for him to regard the five spiritual senses as acts both of the intellect and of the will.[37] But just as the various operations relate in a different way to the intellect and the will according to their own particular character, so do the spiritual senses.

Spiritual sight and hearing are closely associated to the intellect; [113] taste, smell and touch relate rather to the will. This also determines the way they are connected to the theological virtues. Thus faith is first of all rooted in the intellect; from faith proceed spiritual sight and hearing[38] as soon as the corresponding operation of gifts and blessings have their effect. Hope, and especially love, are rooted in the will, from which the spiritual sense of smell and the higher senses, the taste and touch of love, proceed.[39] It is to be remarked at this point that the gift of understanding and the blessing of purity of heart correspond to the virtue of faith, while the gift of wisdom and the blessing of peace[40] are ordered to the virtue of love. As acts, the spiritual senses arise from three determinations of the soul; spiritual sight from faith, the gift of understanding and the blessing of purity of heart; taste and touch from the virtue of love, the gift of wisdom and the blessing of peace. Thus the principles of the spiritual acts of contemplation, i.e. the spiritual senses, are worked out as far as possible.

THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE 'SPIRITUAL SENSES'

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the first to overcome the oversimplified schema of Aristotle, here intelligence, there will, in the case of the spiritual senses.

[34] J. Bonnefoy, *op. cit.* pp. 97-98. The exact nature of the contemplation whose acts are constituted by the spiritual senses requires further study.

[35] It is well known that in Bonaventure the theological virtue of hope is connected with the gift of counsel, as it is in another aspect with strength and fear. In addition, hope has to do with the spiritual sense of smell.

[36] Cf. I *Sent*. dist. 3 pars 2 art. 1 q. 2 (I 84-87); *II Sent* dist. 24 pars 1 art. 2 q. 1(II 560); III *Sent* dist. 27 art. 1 q. 1 (III 591), where Rosenmoeller speaks of a 'mutua circumincessio' of the powers of the soul; cf. Rosenmoeller, *op. cit.* (bibl.)

[37] III *Sent* dist. 13 dub. 1 (III 292a).

[38] Cf. III *Sent* dist. 23 and 27 (III 475 *sq*. and III 604b); also *Itin*. cap. 4 n. 3 (V 306b). The presence and effectiveness of the other two series of operations are implicitly assumed here. The spiritual senses are not identical here with the 'habitus', as Bonnefoy, *op. cit.* p. 313, believes. The account in the *Itinerarium* corresponds closely to that of the *Breviloquium* where these senses are explicitly described as acts (V 258b).

[39] III *Sent* dist. 26 art. 2 q. 5 (III 579 *sq*.) and *Itin*. cap. 4 n. 3 (V 3066).

[40] III *Sent* dist. 34 pars 1 art. 2 q. 1 (III 744b); *Brevil*. V 5 (V 257b); *ibid*. V 6 (V 259b); *de Donis Sp. S.* coll. 2 n. 3 (V 463a).

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In a general way Bonaventure describes the object of the spiritual senses when he speaks of the 'perceptiones mentales circa veritatem contemplandam' or the 'usus gratiae interior respectu ipsius Dei', or even of the 'usus spiritualium speculationum'.[41] But to avoid misinterpreting Bonaventure's view point, we must be careful about these descriptions for two reasons. First it cannot be deduced from these accounts that the 'contemplatio' and 'speculatio' which are proper to a man on his long journey from sense perception to ecstasy are realised by the spiritual senses, or, in other words, that these acts are simply spiritual senses in Bonaventure's use of the term.[42] Such a conclusion [114] runs counter to the fact that the doctor of the Church regards the spiritual senses as acts which are concerned with the stages of perfection and with the acquisition of the highest 'habitus' of the blessings of beatitude.[43] Secondly one should not assume from this description that these gifts possess a definite intellectual stamp, for some of them belong primarily to the realm of the affections. In summary we may say that the account describes the general manner of their operation rather than a series of exact distinctions. It implies that as acts of contemplation the spiritual senses simply have God as their primary object grasped as a present reality, without providing a more precise analysis.[44]

Some of the texts in Bonaventure give a clearer picture of the object of the spiritual senses, particularly when the perception of a particular phenomenon is attributed to a given sense.[45] These passages will be referred to frequently in what follows. A comparison between the two main passages from the *Breviloquium* and *Itinerarium* points to Christ as the reality grasped by the spiritual senses, the 'verbum increatum, inspiratum, incarnatum'.[46] Spiritual hearing grasps the 'verbum increatum', so that the soul hears its voice and highest harmony. Spiritual sight perceives the Word, because the soul is dazzled by its light and brilliant beauty. The spiritual sense of smell perceives the 'verbum inspiratum' when the soul experiences the lofty aroma of the Word. Spiritual taste savours the 'verbum increatum' when it enjoys [115] the sublime delight of its sweetness. The spiritual sense of touch grasps the 'verbum incarnatum' and its powerful grace.[47] This description of the object of the spiritual senses undeniably possesses both depth and beauty, but it must also be admitted that the attempt to discover a special object for every sense, a 'ratio' through which it perceives the Word, is rather forced. Even though Bonaventure's dialectical skill and his ingenuity in drawing distinctions can cope with this difficulty, the impression remains that, despite the parallels with the physical senses and their object (splendor, harmonia, fragrantia, dulcedo, suavitas), a genuinely

[41] *Brevil*. V 6 (V 260d); III *Sent* dist. 13 dub. 1 (III 291b); *Brevil*. V 6 (V 258b).
[42] This is the view of R. Carton, *op. cit*. pp. 245-246; 249-250. In *Brevil*. V 6 (V 260a) the sentence 'quae quidem contemplation . . . Sed consummatur in gloria sempiterna' must be understood as an additional comment to the foregoing 'circa veritatem contemplandam'. But this does not allow one to say that the spiritual senses can be referred as intellectual acts of perception to every possible object of the 'speculation' which is then described.
[43] *Brevil*. V 6 (V 258b). Here contemplation must be taken in the strict sense. That this operation signifies the highest level of perfection is clear from II *Sent* dist. 34 pars 1 art. 1 q. 1 (III 737a); *ibid*. dist. 36 q. 2 (III 795b); IV *Sent* dist. 1 pars 1 q. 6 (IV 28b); *Brevit*. V 4 (V 256a-b). Of course, the senses can be perfect in different ways and so correspondingly can the acts of contemplation.
[44] Cf. R. Carton, *op. cit*. p. 246; the assertion that God is the principal object of the senses must be brought into harmony with another idea of the senses whereby they are the perception of 'spiritualis refectio', i.e. of created grace. Cf. *III Sent* (III 738a).
[45] *Brevil*. V 6 (V 259b); *Itin*. cap. 4 n. 3 (V 306b); cf. *Coll. in Hexaem*. III n. 22 (V 347a); *Sermo 9 in Epiphan*. (IX 166b-167a). These texts were used by the *Centiloquium*, Hugh of Strasburg, Rudolf of Biberach, Peter of Ailly, Nadal, Polanco; vide infra.
[46] In Bonaventure e.g. *Coll. in Hexaem*. IX n. 1-4 (V 372-373).
[47] For the order of the senses we follow the *Itinerarium* which assesses them according to the principles from which they originate (will higher than intellect); cf. *III Sent* dist. 13 dub. 1 (III 292 a). In the *Brevil* the sense of taste includes 'sapientia . . . comprehendens . . . verbum et splendorem.'

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penetrating analysis of the specific character of the spiritual gifts as acts of contemplation has not been achieved. From another point of view, however, one can go further, but only for sight, touch and spiritual taste.[48]

Putting the various texts together one can see that spiritual sight is indebted to the act of faith, the gift of understanding and the blessing of purity of heart, in so far as we can refer to a spiritual sight which belongs in a general way to the five senses, although this only applies when the highest mode of operation, purity of heart, is at work. To these three modes of operation there correspond according to Bonaventure three stages of the supernatural knowledge of God[49] and he connects them explicitly with the acts of these three modes of operation. Thus it follows that the act of the third and highest stage of divine knowledge is nothing other than the spiritual sense of sight, the act of purity of heart.[50] The three stages are characterised as follows: the first consists in the simple acceptance of revealed truth in virtue of faith and understanding, in the measure that such truth allows itself to be discovered in the 'traces' of the mysterious divine life found in material things. The second stage bestows a deeper understanding of these mysteries according to their internal principles, in as much as they can be reached by the gift of understanding through consideration of the 'likenesses' and 'images' of God existing in spiritual creation.[51] But it is the third stage which alone is of particular interest [116] here; this consists in the simple vision (simplex contuitus) which is reserved to purity of heart, which 'alone is permitted to gaze upon God'.[52] For an account of the 'simplex contuitus' we need only follow P. Bonnefoy.[53] It involves a vision of the first truth which is immutable, and of its eternal ideas which form the ultimate principles of all creation. This 'contuitus' finds its internal unity in our becoming aware of the direct operation of eternal truth upon our own spirit. Of course this simple vision of God is not a direct perception of the divine essence free of any intermediary. Such a thing would be an impossible occurrence in the mystical realm in this life, if one leaves aside the extraordinarily rare case of 'raptus'. 'Non videtur in sua essentia sed in aliquo effectu interiori cognoscitur.'[54] Thus the 'contuitus simplex' is 'an infallible fore-knowledge of the eternal foundations which comes through particular images bestowed upon our spirit.'[55]

With regard to the highest act of the will, the sense of taste corresponds to that of sight. Although it is far from easy to determine exactly where Bonaventure locates spiritual taste in the overall framework of his mystical theology, one can obtain a perfectly correct idea of its character by saying that it is an appreciation by the affections of the influence of created divine grace with regard to the direct experience of God. Taste is for the will what sight is for the understanding. Spiritual taste consists in 'suscipere ab ipso (Deo) delectationes'.[56] Certainly Bonaventure states quite categorically that taste is less perfect than feeling or touch which, as will be shown shortly, signify the direct union of love with God through ecstasy. Consequently taste can only be the direct, affective experience of created salvation, a created 'dulcedo', which allows God to be grasped as the principle of this 'dulcedo'. Bonaventure explains this experience as the essence of taste,[57] yet it also seems to be the stage of mystical

[48] Cf. *De reduct. artium ad Theol.* n. 10 (V 322b); another division in, *Sermo 14 in Epiphan.* (IX 168b-169a).
[49] For the following, Cf. J. Bonnefoy, *op. cit.* pp. 180 *sq.*
[50] Ibid. p. 191.
[51] III *Sent* dist. 34 and 35 (III 737a and 778f); *Brevil.* V 4 (V 256b).
[52] III *Sent* dist. 35 q. 3 (III 778a).
[53] Cf. J. Bonnefoy, *op. cit.* pp. 182-183.
[54] II *Sent.* dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3 (II 544).
[55] J. Bonnefoy, *op. cit.* p. 183; For the philosophical angle, cf. B. A. Luyckx, *Die Erkenntnislehre Bonaventuras* (Munster, 1923) pp. 205 *sq.*
[56] *Itin.* cap. 4 n. 3 (V 306b).
[57] *Brevil.* V 6 (V 259b).

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development which proceeds the ecstatic union of love.[58] In summary we may conclude from all these remarks that spiritual taste appears to [117] be the act of the will which can be directly felt with complete fulfilment.[59]

The 'simplex contuitus', vision, is the final goal of human understanding on earth, and yet it is not the last step of mystical progress or the highest form of contemplation in this world. For 'contuitus' only offers, according to Bonaventure, a 'contemplatio mediocris' in contrast to 'contemplatio perfecta', the 'excessus ecstatici'.[60] The most fundamental reason for this distinction is that spiritual sight, the act of the blessing of purity of heart, is not direct union with God but rather knowledge 'in interiori effectu'. The 'excessus ecstaticus' is, by contrast, the experience of the will, the union with God of a more direct love. Its act is 'spiritual touch', the highest spiritual sense. Ecstasy and spiritual touch are one and the same.

ECSTASY[61]

How is the nature of ecstasy to be understood in contrast to mystical knowledge 'in effectu interiori', and how is the relationship of spiritual touch to ecstasy to be interpreted?

In the first place ecstasy is to be distinguished from 'raptus',[62] which is an extraordinary occurrence. The latter is a direct, clear vision of God through the intellect, and is a foretaste of the beatific vision as an 'actus gloriae'.[63] This is a privileged and exceptional state which Bonaventure thinks, for instance, St Paul enjoyed, but not Moses.[64] Thus 'raptus' and ecstasy should be clearly distinguished, as in fact Bonaventure explicitly does. For him ecstasy is not extraordinary and he attributes qualities to it which 'raptus' cannot possess.[65]

[118] As was indicated above, ecstasy is set apart not only from 'raptus' but also from a knowledge of God which is mediated by the created effects of grace. In this regard we are essentially at variance with the interpretation of Longprés and Grünewald[66] and in basic agreement with Gilson and Rosenmoeller.[67] It is, however, impossible here to investigate more closely the essence of 'cognoscere Deum in effectu interiori', since this would demand clarification of the question whether this stage of knowledge of God in Bonaventure is a mystical phenomenon as this is currently understood.[68] Here it is sufficient to stand by the assertion; 'Non videtur (Deus) in sua essentia sed in aliquo effectu interiori cognoscitur'.[69] Ecstasy, on the contrary, is to be sharply distinguished from intellectual experience of the

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[58] *Serm 1 in Sab. sancto* n. 3 (IX 269a). Ecstasy proper here corresponds to 'amplexus'.
[59] Cf. III *Sent*. dist. 34 pars 1 art. 1 q. 1 (III 738a).
[60] *Coll. 20 in Hexaem*. n. 9 and 10 (V 427a); cf. .J. Bonnefoy, *op. cit*. p. l95.
[61] The basis of what follows is to be found in the section of this study already published in an expanded form under the title, 'Der Begriff der ecstasis bei Bonaventura' in *ZAM* 9 (1934), pp. 1-19. Since the original version was too long, it has been shortened for publication here.
[62] In addition to the concept 'ecstasy', the expressions 'excessus mentalis', 'amplexus', 'excessus anogogici', 'amor ecstaticus' and 'anagogica unitio' are also used in Bonaventure to refer to mystical experience.
[63] Cf. *Coll. 3 in Hexaem*. n. 30 (V 347b-348a) and II *Sent*. dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3 (II 544b).
[64] II *Sent* dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3 (II 544b); III *Sent* dist. 35 q. 1 (III 774b).
[65] For Bonaventure ecstasy is 'docta ignorantia', 'caligo', 'ignote ascendere', etc. This does not correspond to 'raptus', which is 'actus gloriae'; cf. II *Sent* dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3 (II 546a).
[66] Cf. E. Longpré, *La théologie mystique de S. Bonaventure* (Florence, 1921) and St. Grünewald, *Franziskanische Mystik* (Munich, 1932).
[67] Et. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (London, 1938) and B. Rosenmoeller, *Religiöse Erkenntnis nach Bonaventura* (Munster, 1925).
[68] Grünewald assumes a mystical quality for 'cognoscere in effectu gratiae'; i.e. ecstasy is 'cognoscere in effectu gratiae' and yet mystical. He makes use of the texts accordingly.
[69] II *Sent* dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3 (III 544b). This text is rightly quoted to exclude a direct intellectual vision of God. But this does not necessarily mean the exclusion of all direct union of love with God.

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created effects of grace, even of a mystical kind, since it is the direct experience of God, direct in the proper ontological sense, and not only in the sense that the experience of the created effects of grace (which are, therefore, recognised) allows a practically direct knowledge of God as their underlying cause (in the form of a 'medium in quo'). Bonaventure makes the distinction quite clear: 'Cognitio viae[70] multos habet gradus; cognoscitur enim Deus in vestigio, cognoscitur in imagine, cognoscitur et in effectu gratiae, cognoscitur etiam per intimam unionem iuxta quod dicit Apostolus: Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est. Et haec cognitio est excellentissima, quam docet Dionysius quae est in ecstatico amore et elevat supra cognitionem fidei secundum statum communem.'[71] Here a clear separation is made between 'cognoscere in effectu gratiae' and 'cognitio per intimam unionem', which represent different degrees of knowledge of God. The higher of the two, which is not achieved through the medium of the operations of grace, is described as a knowledge through 'intima unio', which consists [119] in ecstatic love and is the one taught by Denis. It is not hard from this text to understand the connection between knowledge of God, 'unio' and ecstatic love: ecstatic love (an act of the will) effects union with God, which permits an experience of God that surpasses any in which God is perceived in the created operations of grace. The experience of God contained in 'intima unio' is not 'raptus'.[72] For the latter is, according to Bonaventure, not a 'cognitio viae'. Furthermore it would be hard to understand why 'raptus' should be characterised as ecstatic love, whereas in other places ecstasy is described as 'amor ecstaticus' and as 'intima unio'.[73] Moreover the background reference to the teaching of Denis is elsewhere not given for 'raptus' but for 'ecstasis', and in exactly those passages where the latter is plainly distinguished from 'raptus'.[74] In consequence it is ecstasy which in III *Sent*. dist. 24 dub. IV is clearly distinguished from 'cognoscere in effectu gratiae' as the higher stage.[75]

Another text makes it clear that, far from treating ecstasy as a form of knowledge of God which is mediated by the created operation of grace, we should rather regard it as the direct experience of God in the proper sense of the term, that is, without any intermediate perception: 'Est cognoscere Deum in se et in suo effectu. Est cognoscere Deum in effectu, hoc est videre per speculum et hoc dupliciter: aut per speculum lucidum et oculum et sic videbat primus homo ante lapsum; aut per speculum obscuratum et sic videmus nos modo . . . Alio modo cognoscitur Deus in se; et hoc dupliciter: aut clare et hic modo a solo Filio et a beatis; alio modo in caligine, sicut Beatus Dionysius de Mystica theologia. Et sic vidit Moyses et sublimiter contemplantes, in quorum aspectu nulla figitur imago creaturae. Et tunc revera magis sentiunt quam cognoscant.'[76]

According to Bonaventure, therefore, we should assume a 'cognoscere' or better a 'sentire' of God which is a direct process ('in se') without any intermediary means of perception (not 'in effectu'). This [120] experience is to be distinguished both from the knowledge of Adam[77] in paradise and from the 'visio beatifica'. It is naturally true that this 'sentire Deum in Se' is contrasted with 'cognoscere in effectu', and appears beside 'visio' as a direct experience of

[70] 'Viae' is stressed in contrast to 'patriae' according to the context. 'Raptus' cannot be meant here.
[71] III *Sent* dist. 24 (III 531b).
[72] According to Bonaventure 'raptus' is not a 'cognitio viae'. Consequently, he does not need to mention it in this list.
[73] *Coll. 2 in Hexaem*. n. 29 (V 341a).
[74] II *Sent* dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3 (II 544b).
[75] Longpré wrongly appeals to this passage to prove that even ecstasy is a 'cognoscere in effectu gratiae'. But all that is stated is that ecstasy is not 'conspicere Deum in claritate suae essentiae'.
[76] *Coll. in Jona*. I n. 43 (IV 255b-256a).
[77] The knowledge of Adam in the garden of Eden is for Bonaventure the standard of mystical experience, in so far as it is an intellectual experience of God. Thus, II *Sent* dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3 speaks without distinction of Adam's knowledge and of the mystical knowledge of the intellect.

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God. It is not a matter of a psychological impression of something which in fact is a mediated knowledge of God. Rather we are dealing here with a directness which is also characteristic of the beatific vision. And yet in Bonaventure's view there must also be an essential (that is, qualitative and not merely quantitative) difference between ecstasy and the beatific vision. This is the reason why he speaks of 'sentire' rather than 'cognoscere', that is, of experience rather than knowledge. This remark of Bonaventure should make us wary of putting too much weight on expressions such as 'knowledge', etc. used in his account of 'ecstasy'. It is a question of a mysterious experience, not of intellectual knowledge.[78]

This 'feeling God himself' is not 'raptus' but ecstasy, that is, the highest (normal) mystical experience, which Bonaventure describes in II *Sent*. dist. 23 a.2 q.3. The text runs as follows: 'Concedo tamen nihilominus quod oculi aspectus in Deum figi potest ita quod ad nihil aliud adspiciat, attamen non perspiciet vel videbit ipsius lucis claritatem, immo potius elevabitur in caliginem, et ad hanc cognitionem elevabitur per omnium ablactionem, sicut dicit Dionysius in libro de Mystica theologia, et vocat istam cognitionem doctam ignorantiam. Haec est, in qua mirabiliter inflammatur affectio, sicut eis patet qui aliquoties consueverunt ad anagogicos elevari excessus.' It is generally agreed that this description refers to ecstasy and this is clear from the account itself. For 'raptus' is plainly distinguished from this mystical experience by the following phrase: 'Quod si Deus aliquid ultra faciet, hoc privilegium est speciale, non legis communis'. 'In caligine sentire Deum in se' is identical with ecstasy, as we can see from a comparison with *In Joan*. I n.43:

[121]

II *Sent*.	*In Joan*. I n.43
a) oculi adspectus in Deum figi potest ita quod ad nihil aliud adspiciat	a) in quorum adspectu nulla figitur imago creaturae
b) in caliginem	b) in caligine
c) sicut Dionysius dicit in libro de Mystica theologia	c) sicut Dionysius dicit de Mystica theologia
d) mirabiliter inflammatur affectio	d) magis sentiunt quam cognoscant

If one recalls that in II *Sent*. ecstasy 'in caliginem' is to be distinguished from 'raptus' and from 'visio', and that it also appears in *In Joan*. I n.43 where 'in quorum adspectu nulla figitur imago creaturae' is only a variant upon 'sentire Deum in Se', then there can be no doubt of the identity of the experience described in these two passages. Similarly it is clear that this experience is different both from 'raptus' and from the mediated knowledge of God. Consequently the reference must be here to ecstasy, regarded as an ontologically direct experience of God.

The attempt has been made to explain the crucial text from *In Joan*. I n.43 by means of 'raptus'[79] but this attempt cannot be regarded as successful. For if one wanted to reconcile 'raptus' at this point with the remark in John's Gospel (1:18) that no man has seen God, it would not be necessary falsely to assert that 'raptus' was 'in caligine' (how is that possible, since it is 'actus gloriae'?) Instead one would merely have had to repeat that 'raptus' is an experience of those who enjoy what is a special privilege for 'men on the way', to whom the assertion of John 1:18 applies. For these and other reasons the text must be dealing with ecstasy, an immediate experience of God.

[78] This distinction between 'sentire' and 'cognoscere' shows where the solution to the problem lies of how there can be a direct experience of God which is not the 'visio beatifica'. On this level of knowledge in the broadest sense, Bonaventure characterises the experience of ecstasy as 'sentire'. In consequence, he ascribes it to the 'affectus' alone. At the same time, he distinguishes it from 'videre', the term he uses to describe 'visio' and 'raptus' (II *Sent* dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3).

[79] Cf. St. Grünewald, *op. cit*. p. 88, note 199; also p. 43, note 57.

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This is not contradicted by the text from the commentary on the Sentences, although this passage is normally regarded as the classic proof for the view that even in ecstasy God is only grasped by means of the recognition of the created operations of grace. To interpret this text correctly, one need only hold that Bonaventure wished to exclude direct, *intellectual*[80] vision of God on this earth, for such vision would, at most, be quantitatively different from the beatific vision. If one is looking for a direct or indirect understanding of God, then there is no need to speak of ecstasy, since it is not relevant to the question of what [122] kind of intellectual vision of God was possessed by Adam. A more precise understanding of ecstasy reveals a qualitative difference from the beatific vision, since it consists essentially and exclusively in an experience of God in the 'apex affectus'.[81] Ecstasy does not figure in the question posed in this text, and is only mentioned by Bonaventure in a couple of asides.

Bonaventure shows why even a weaker form of the beatific vision is not to be attributed to Adam: the highest level of normal perception on earth is 'ignote ascendere' according to Dens. Vision itself, even of a weaker type, would be something more perfect in comparison with this. Therefore Adam's intellectual knowledge of God can only be a 'cognoscere in effectu interiori', which is definitely to be distinguished from 'ignote ascendere'.[82] Bonaventure summarises his point of view by saying that it is only glory, 'in qua non solum aspeceret divinum effectum, sed etiam ipsum vultum desideratum . . . Concedo *tamen* nihilominus quod oculi adspectus in Deum figi potest ita quod ad nihil aliud adspiciat, attamen . . .'.[83] The qualification makes the contrast mentioned above unmistakably clear: Bonaventure evidently presumes that 'docta ignorantia' is a direct experience of God, while denying that it is a 'vision of the brightness of the light itself'. On the other hand, this knowledge is not mediated by the created effects of grace; that is to say, ecstasy has a quite specific quality. This is confirmed with still greater clarity by a more precise investigation of the nature of ecstasy. One merely has to show that ecstasy is an act of the 'apex affectus', while 'visio' is primarily an act of the intellect. Thus Bonaventure does not fall back into the previously rejected notion that only a quantitative difference of clarity obtains between earthly mysticism and the vision of the blessed.[84] Attempts to weaken the directness of the ecstatic experience of God as taught by Bonaventure would only involve one in contradictions.[85] Ecstasy, however, also forms a contrast to the knowledge of God bestowed by the operations of grace.[86]

[123] How can this direct experience of God be made comprehensible? As we said above, ecstasy is the direct union of the soul with God, and this contact is realised essentially and exclusively in the 'apex affectus', that is, in an affectivity which is higher and more interior than the intellect.[87] In the experience of the direct spiritual union with God in the highest point of the soul every activity of the intellect as such is excluded. The reason for this is that the innermost part of man lies beyond the intellect.[88] Here God dwells exclusively, which

[80] A 'visio intellectualis' (II 546a), in which God is directly 'intellectui praesens', means a more or less clear vision of God.
[81] As 'sentire Deum *in se*', Bonaventure can set it together with the 'visio beatifica' over against 'cognoscere in effectu' (cf. *Coll*. *in Jona*. I n. 43).
[82] II *Sent* dist. 23 art. 2 q. 3 (II 544b and 546a).
[83] *Ibid*.
[84] *Ibid*. (II 544a).
[85] Cf. St. Grünewald, *op*. *cit*. pp. 87-110.
[86] Our interpretation agrees with that of Gilson; similarly Rosenmoeller, *op*. *cit*. pp. 185 *sqq*. 'Unmittelbarkeit der Gotteserfassung der Ekstase.'
[87] *Itin*. cap. 7 n. 4 (V 3126); *Coll*. *2 in Hexaem*. n. 30 (V 341b); *Serm*. *4 in Epiph*. (IX 162b); cf. also *Brevil*. V 6 (V 260a); III *Sent* dist. 24 dub IV (III 531b).
[88] Cf. *Coll*. *2 in Hexaem*. n. 29-31 (V 341 a/b).

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means that no one else can touch this highest point of the spirit,[89] the innermost depths of a man. A man may, however, enter the innermost part of his spirit through ecstatic union and here he reaches the highest point of his soul. The whole mystical enterprise up to this point was nothing other than the gradual return of a man to the interior domain, as ascent to the highest point of the soul. Because this can only be reached in 'affectivity', a man must leave behind him all intellectual activity at a certain point on his mystical path on this earth.[90] This assertion should not be qualified in the sense that what is proposed is in fact an imperfect act of knowledge, such as is always required by a finite intellect in relation to the infinite. The truth is rather that ecstasy does not involve the intellect at all. This explains why mystical union is an entry into darkness, into a divine obscurity. This 'night' and the exclusion of the intellect are essential to ecstasy, since it is not a weaker form of direct intellectual vision of God, for this only realises its fulfilment (excessus), that is direct contact with the essence of God,[91] in the beatific vision (and in 'raptus'). Ecstasy, by contrast, is the obscure experience of the direct union of love with God. Thus the difference from 'visio' is qualitative and not merely quantitative.

How are we to conceive the direct experience of a union of love? The principle that nothing can be willed which is not first known raises a notable difficulty here. According to Bonaventure this union [124] can and must be experienced in some real way. Admittedly it is of a peculiar kind[92] compared with other forms of knowledge, but what is particularly obscure is how to interpret it except as intellectual knowledge. This is precisely what Bonaventure seeks to do. He did not explicitly address himself to this problem, but he could have offered the following reflections which would fit in with his basic line of argument. In every act of will and of love the object is not already grasped by the will in virtue of its intentional presence to the intellect; rather it must enter the will on its own account.[93] The direct ecstatic union of love is realised without the assistance of the intellect; therefore the reality of God's own essence must be the 'informing object' of the will (more precisely of the 'affections') in its innermost being. For in ecstasy the 'apex affectus' is 'transformed'[94] completely into God. In Bonaventure's view an object can under certain conditions be perceived without the creation of a rational representation to make perception possible, because the object is itself present as a principle of perception. Thus in our case it happens that the 'apex affectus', in which God is present, is not merely a capacity of the same order as the intellect. As the highest and most interior element in the soul it belongs to a deeper level of reality than the intellect and all that is related to it in the same order of being and can be characterised as will or normal 'affection'. Now this highest point of the soul (according to the genuine Franciscan model) bears a closer resemblance to the will than to the intellect.[95]

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[89] *De myst. Trinit*. q. 1 art. 1 fund. 10 (V 46a); II *sent* dist. 8 pars 2 q. 2 (II 226/7); I *sent* dist. 1 art. 3 q. 2 (I 41a), and *de scientia Christi* q. 4 fund. 31 (V 20b).

[90] III *Sent* dist. 35 1. 3 (III 779b); cf. *ibid*. dist. 31 art. 1 q. 1(III 689a); *coll. 2 in Hexaem* n. 32 (V 342a); *ibid. 20 in Hexaem* n. 11 (V 427a).

[91] *Itin*. cap. 7 n.4 (V 312b); *coll. 2 in Hexaem* n. 30 (V 341b); *de scientia Christi* q.7 (V 40 *sqq*.)

[92] Bonaventure says 'sentire' and not 'cognoscere' in order to describe the experience before 'theory' which he then develops from this experience.

[93] One should note the scholastic doctrine of 'pondus amoris' which was coming to play a role in speculation on the Trinity. It does not seem to be found in Bonaventure, but he does explicitly affirm an 'information' of the 'apex affectus' by God in 'ecstasy'.

[94] *Itin*. cap. 7 n. 4 (V 312b); cf. also *ibid*. n. 3 and 6. Because every other created 'information' of the apex of the soul is excluded (and on the other hand this 'information' by God far surpasses the creative power of the apex), Bonaventure also calls ecstasy 'sapientia nulliformis'. Cf. *Coll. 2 in Hexaem* n. 8 (V 337b) and *ibid*. n. 28 (V 340b).

[95] Bonaventure states this principle in respect of the intellect. Cf. B. A. Luyckx, *Die Erkenntnis Bonaventuras* (Munster, 1923), pp. 175 *sqq*; 182-183. It is then extended to the experience of God by the 'apex affectus'. The

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Nevertheless this 'apex' lies deeper than the will and is the ground of the soul which supports the capacities of both understanding and will. If, according to a general scholastic notion of [125] the metaphysic of the soul, the capacities of intellect and will spring somehow from the deepest and innermost ground of the soul, then the soul must possess these capacities as a unity in the depths of its being, capacities which develop 'outwards' into two separate faculties. Now if God touches this deepest point from within, giving form to it, as it were, then the 'apex affectus' will become conscious of this direct union of love without the intellect taking any active part.[96] Naturally the soul experiences God directly in the ground of its being only as the motive power of ecstatic love which leaves all knowledge behind it, and in consequence the experience remains obscure until the intellect as well is flooded, without being blinded, by the dazzling brilliance of God in the beatific vision. But at any rate God is here the dark fire of love.[97]

After this description of the main outline of Bonaventure's theory of ecstasy, a number of questions remain open which cannot be pursued in detail here. In summary we might say that in itself the account given by Bonaventure should be regarded as a remarkable attempt to resolve the problem of reconciling the specific character of the mystical life of grace, which cannot be reduced to the experiences of the normal life of grace, with the fact that direct vision of God face to face is the reward of heaven and not the lot of pilgrims. It is not the only conceivable solution to this problem but it is the one which falls least into the error of reducing the specific character and the sublime heights of mystical experience. It is also significant how strongly in this theory the darkness, the 'night character' of the highest mystical experience is stressed. Certainly the influence of the Areopagite makes itself felt at this point. But the way this idea is taken up, and the way the darkness of mystical experience is clarified by means of a metaphysical system quite foreign to Denis shows that the theme of the night in the mysticism of Bonaventure is not just a piece of tradition. In his theory the darkness, the night (if we may use the terminology of John of the Cross) is not so much a preparatory state of testing [126] prior to the highest mystical experience, but the experience itself. Recent investigations into the mysticism of John of the Cross[98] show that in this point also Bonaventure anticipated the deepest ideas of the mystical doctor of the Church.

ECSTASY AND SPIRITUAL TOUCH

In brief one may say that spiritual touch is nothing else than the act by which the soul grasps the substance of God in ecstasy. Thus the examination of the nature of ecstasy was in no way a diversion from the main topic; it was rather an attempt to determine more precisely what Bonaventure understood by spiritual touch. Ecstasy and spiritual touch belong together and this identification can be shown in a number of ways. First of all it is noteworthy that, when Bonaventure treats of the spiritual senses in a general way, ecstasy is mentioned.[99] Further in his view feeling and touch form the highest and most spiritual sense since it unites a person

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'virtutes interiores' are 'quasi circulus intra circulum' according to Bonaventure; cf. *Serm. 4 in Epiph.* (IX 162b). Cf. also St. Grünewald, *op. cit* p. 83, note 182d.

[96] In ecstasy the powers of the soul flow back in some measure into the ground of the soul and remain suspended in the higher state (*Serm. 4 in Epiph.*). If this is the explanation of how the 'apex affectus' can really experience the union of love without the aid of the intellect, then Bonaventure is not a forerunner of the mystical theory (e.g. of Vincent of Aggsbach) that the mystical union of love occurs without any knowledge; for in Bonaventure the apex experiences it in ecstasy. Cf. E. Vansteenberghe, *Autour de la docte Ignorance* (Munster, 1915).

[97] *Itin.* cap. 7. n. 6 (V 313b) and *Coll. 20 in Hexaem* n. 11 (V 427a).

[98] Cf. J. Baruzi, *Saint Jean de la croix et le problème de l'expérience mystique* (Paris, 1931).

[99] *Brevil.* V. 6 (V 259b-260a); *Itin.* cap. 4 n. 3 (V 306b).

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most fully with God, the highest spirit, and signifies the experience of union with God.[100] The highest blessing, that of peace, is to be found in spiritual touch. Ecstasy, however, arises from peace and this is expressly referred to spiritual touch: 'ut *transiens* in illud (Verbum) per *ecstaticum* amorem recuperate . . . tactum'.[101] In the Breviloquium he writes about spiritual touch: 'Adstringitur summa suavitas sub ratione Verbi incarnati inter nos habitantis corporaliter et reddentis se nobis palpabile, osculabile, amplexabile per ardentissimam caritatem quae mentem nostram per *ecstasim* et raptum *transire* facit ex hoc mundo ad Patrem.'[102] Here it is made quite clear that touch is the act of love in ecstasy. When we review the character of ecstasy in Bonaventure's account, it strikes us at once that this experience is best rendered by the term 'contact'. The [127] mystic experiences of the direct presence of God in 'a totally obscure encounter', as Meister Eckhart expresses it.[103] The two characteristics of directness and darkness in the experience of God are best expressed by the word 'contact'. Bonaventure offers the term in the spirit of his philosophy and theology and discovers the principle of this 'night' in the essentially *affective* nature of the direct grasp of God.[104]

The speculative power and the mystical depths are indeed remarkable which Bonaventure has applied to the traditional teaching of the five spiritual senses in order to clarify the nature of mystical experience. Bonaventure has also managed to integrate the traditional material into his own system of mystical theology.[105] The number five remains perhaps a trifle arbitrary and as a result Bonaventure was not entirely successful in assigning to each sense distinct mystical experience as the specific object of perception. Thus the sense of smell and hearing remain more or less superfluous for the account of spiritual contemplation and its various levels. In this there lies a certain weakness in the rigid doctrine of the five spiritual senses. However this proves how successful were Bonaventure's efforts to give content to the rather a priori and schematic teaching and bring it a little closer to reality. His partial success makes one able to assert that the doctrine of the five spiritual senses is not merely a period piece, a speculative a priori game which has no contact with the real world. If his success was not complete, the fault lies not in Bonaventure but in an inescapable flaw inherent in the doctrine of the spiritual senses. Within the scope of this essay it is not possible to make a critical assessment of the content of Bonaventure's teaching and come to a conclusion about the extent to which his views on contemplation and ecstasy correspond to reality. Rosenmoeller has raised a question about the sources of Bonaventure's teaching of the spiritual senses.[106] We are conscious [128] that in this study we have drawn attention only to a few of Bonaventure's predecessors; however the few examples we noted indicate that Bonaventure added nothing new to the substance or the many particular details of this teaching. At any rate even the discovery of new sources could not rob him of the achievement

[100] III *Sent* dist. 28 art. 2 q. 1 (III 604b); cf. *ibid*. dist. 13 (III 292a).
[101] *Itin*. cap. 4 n. 3 (V 306b). On the spiritual senses, cf. also the fact that not all acts of a lower sort are here like those of cap. 7. It is already a question of the soul which 'purificatur, illuminatur et perficitur' through the three theological virtues. That is, the soul is 'perfect', and so these acts should not be regarded merely as preparation for mystical experience (cf. E. Longpré).
[102] *Brevil* V 6 (V 259b). Gilson and Rosenmoeller both believe that the spiritual senses play an active part in ecstasy. But they do not connect ecstasy so closely to touch as we do.
[103] Cf. Traktat 11 (Ausg. Fr. Pfeiffer, *Deutsche Mystiker des 14 Jahrhunderts* II, Stuttgart 1857/Reprint 1924, 507, 29). This edition is poor, but a more recent one is not available.
[104] Understandably, this ecstatic union is linked to the experience of the highest beatitude (at least in general terms). Bonaventure uses images and expressions of the sense of taste to describe it. However, subjective feeling should not be regarded as the mark of ecstasy. Taste is less perfect than touch in Bonaventure. Yet it can occur in ecstasy since it is rooted in the 'affectus' and is not affected by the exclusion of the intellect.
[105] Cf. *De plant*. *parad*. n. 16 (V 579a); *Soliloq*. cap. 1 n. 44 (VIII 43); *Serm*. *2 in dom 12 post Pent*. (IX 401b-402a); *De S. Agnete serm*. 2 (IX 510b).
[106] *Op*. *cit*. p. 201

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of being the first of the Scholastics to have given to this doctrine real content which expresses the direct experience of mysticism.

Finally we must complete this account of the spiritual senses by adding a few remarks about the later development of the doctrine. In the same century as Bonaventure mention should be made of Roger Bacon.[107] Although his brief comments do not suffice to show whether he was directly dependent on Bonaventure, nevertheless the fact that he allotted the spiritual senses to the fifth stage of the 'scientia interior' between the blessings and the fruits, indicates at least kinship, if not dependence, with the teaching of Bonaventure. To the 13th century there also belongs the *Compendium theologicae veritatis* of Hugh Ripelin of Strasbourg. In the section on the spiritual senses he takes over, with no great understanding, the exposition found in the *Breviloquium* of Bonaventure.[108] Here there is also a connection in his teaching between the blessings and the fruits; the fact that this is found in the 'most well known and complete manual of the Middle Ages'[109] provides clear evidence for the spread of the doctrine in this period. The *Centiloquium* also takes over the ideas of Bonaventure with almost as close a verbal similarity; it is the work of an unknown 14th century writer. If one remembers the extraordinary dissemination of these two manuals, then an echo of the teaching is almost certainly to be expected in the German mystics. Meister Eckhart offers eloquent witness of this.[110] Precisely because he lacks any clear theoretical doctrine, his expressions provide a notable example of the use of the idea of the five spiritual senses for the description of higher mysticism. A clear witness of the growing influence of Bonaventure is found in the middle of the 14th century in another German, Rudolf of Biberach. In his *On the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit*[111] he scarcely makes any use of [129] Bonaventure's ideas, but in his *On the seven ways of eternity*[112] greater originality is evident. Here the operation of the five senses is a sign of the influence of love in the life of the soul. However in their activity they meet with the corruption of our nature and with their own omissions. Only the grace of Christ and concentration on the interior life can overcome these obstacles. In particular Jesus offers in the eucharist the nourishment necessary to enable the soul not to lose these faculties. The bread 'strengthens all the interior senses; it arouses them so that each can lay hold of its proper object. All the senses recognise God made man, who is hidden in the sacrament.' This reference to the eucharist is the most original element of Rudolf's teaching on the spiritual senses.

In the 15th century five authors deserve mention, Bernadine of Siena, Peter of Ailly, his disciple Gerson, Denis the Carthusian and Harphius. Bernadine describes how in heaven the souls savour their bliss with every spiritual sense and how these senses are tortured in the sufferings of hell.[113] The *Compendium Contemplationis* of Peter of Ailly devotes the whole third tractate of 13 short chapters to the spiritual senses.[114] They are different from the bodily senses but their nature is hard to determine. He holds to the view of a 'quidam' which is the same as that of Bonaventure. The senses communicate to us a 'experimentalis notitia' of spiritual realities. In the fourth chapter these senses are divided according to three faculties:

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[107] *Opus maius* II, edit. S Jebb (Venice, 1750), p. 338. On Bacon's doctrine of the five spiritual senses, see R. Carton, *op. cit.* pp. 242 *sqq*.
[108] Cf. *Comp. theologicae veritatis* V cap. 56 (Edit. Borgnet XXXIV 191 Alberts d. Grossen). He forgets sight and says 'sub ratione splendoris audit.'
[109] Cf. *DThC* VI 902.
[110] Cf. footnote 103.
[111] Pars 1 cap. 3 (edit. Vives VII 590) and pars 2 sect. 7 cap. 2 (ibid 637).
[112] Dist. 4 art. 2 (edit. Vives VIII 443 and 464-472). This forms the fullest medieval account of the spiritual senses.
[113] *Op. omn.* (edit. de la Haye; Venice 1745) I 301B *serm.* 57 *de gloria corporum beatorum* art. 2 cap. 2; II 72A, *serm. 11 de indicio generali* art. 3 cap. 3.
[114] Cf. *Tractatus et sermones compilati* . . . Petro de Ailliaco (Argentinae, 1490) fol. 23-25.

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'memoria, potentia intellectiva, potentia affectiva seu volitiva'. The subsequent chapters describe the nature of the act of the senses and its object. Finally individual senses are considered, the obstacles to them and, in conclusion, the means of salvation. Gerson is also familiar with this teaching but does not add anything new.[115] Denis the Carthusian writes in his commentary on the *Heavenly hierarchy* of Denis the Areopagite as follows: 'Denique hi quoque quinque sensus interiores in nostris sunt animabus'.[116] In fact they refer here only to intellectual joy which is [130] treated in its various forms. Finally Harphius gives a complete account of the spiritual senses[117] without going further than Bonaventure. Because of the success of his *Theologia mystica* it is not without importance that in this area he transmits the tradition of Bonaventure.

In the 16th century Blosius witnesses to this teaching.[118] Like Peter of Ailly he relates the senses to the three powers of the soul: memory, intellect and will. At this period what is particularly interesting is the attempt to connect the doctrine of the five spiritual senses with the 'Use of the Senses' in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola. Various outlines and preparatory drafts from this period, which appeared before the official 'Directory' of 1599, make use of Bonaventure's teaching or that of Rudolf of Biberach in order to clarify the 'Use of the Senses'. Thus Polanco and a 'Directorium Granatense' wish to leave the possibility open of employing Bonaventure's doctrine for the explanation of the 'Use of the Senses'.[119] Gilles Gonzales, however, declares himself against this method.[120] In the official Directorium the 20th chapter entirely omits any reference to this teaching.[121] This is not the place to treat the question of the correct interpretation of the Ignatian use of the senses. The connection between it and the ancient doctrine of the five spiritual faculties is only one of the many indications which favour such an interpretation of the use of the senses. The latter was very widespread before the official Directory and it was not seen as an easy exercise, nor was meditation regarded as 'more intellectual' and 'generally higher' in comparison. On the contrary the use of the senses was regarded as 'more intellectual' and as 'a certain participation in vision', as a 'higher form … more difficult' than meditation.[122] In this view the use of [131] the senses was placed next to the prayer of the heart and of simplicity. Taken as an allusion to Bonaventure this is less remarkable and unreasonable than may at first sight appear. The justification of seeing a relationship between Bonaventure and Ignatius will not be discussed here. It should merely be stated that the idea of the five spiritual senses was well known to the Jesuits of the first generation; Nadal and Peter Faber provide evidence of this.[123]

The two great classical figures of Spanish mysticism, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, are not familiar with the doctrine in the form which has been investigated here. In their

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[115] Gerson, *Op. omn. serm. 2 de omnibus sanctis* (Antwerp, 1706), III 1523 *sq*.
[116] Cf. Art. 77, *op. omn.* (Tournai, 1902), XV 254; *Enarrat. in Boetii de cons. philos.* II prosa 1 art. 1 (Tournai 1906), XXVI 159; cf. cap. 15 3 (PG 3) 332 A-B, where the bodily senses are used in an allegorical way for the intellectual powers of angels.
[117] *Theologia mystica* 1 cap. 15; cap. 38; II pars 5 cap. 35 (edit. Rome 1587), 153; 221 *sq*; 833.
[118] *Institutio spiritualis*, praef. (Opera, Antwerp, 1632), 297.
[119] *Monum.. hist. SJ*, *Monum. Ignat.* ser II, 812-813 (Polanco) and 961 (Granatense).
[120] *Ibid*. 901; 918-919; 1047-1048.
[121] *Ibid*. 1150-1151.
[122] For this interpretation of the senses cf. *Monum. hist. SJ*, *Monum. Ignat.* ser II 1096-1097 n. 15; A. Gagliardi, *Commentarii seu Explanationes in Exercitia spiritualia S.P. Ignatii de Loyola* (Bruge, 1862) 22-24; L. Palmensis, *Via Spiritualis* V. 1 1. 3 cap. 7 (edit. Nonell; Barcelona, 1897), 397-400. Here we are not dealing with those who later held this view, since we merely wish to explain how it was that before the appearance of the Directorium in 1599, Bonaventure's doctrine was connected with the use of the senses. The writers quoted above all received their spiritual formation before 1599.
[123] *Monum. hist. SJ*, *Monum. Nadal* IV 677 *sq*; cf. K. Rahner, 'Über die Gnade des Gebetes in der Gesellschaft Jesu', *Mitteil. aus d. deutschen Provinzen SJ* 13 (1935) 399-411 (Transl. of the relevant text); *Monum. hist. SJ*, *Monum. Fabri Memoriale* n. 69, 527; n. 343, 656; n. 345, 657 and n. 436, 693.

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main writings which expound the psychology of mysticism, only the empirical foundations of the doctrine are present; the direct character of mystical experience can more easily be expressed through images taken from immediate sense perception and the peculiarities of a particular mystical experience have their analogue in the expression of one or other of these senses. Thus Teresa writes: 'The first stage of supernatural prayer, as I have experienced it, is an interior concentration which is felt by the soul. It seems to possess new senses in itself which roughly correspond to the external senses.'[124] John of the Cross speaks of the feeling of the soul, of spiritual hearing and spiritual eyes, of the 'sense of soul', 'spiritual sense', 'rational and higher sense' and of 'spiritual taste'.[125] He also compares the four ways of pure spiritual perception (vision, revelation, hearing, spiritual sensations) with the different sense perceptions.[126] It can be presumed that he has in mind a similar division to that of Bonaventure when he distinguishes between 'knowing him (God) through his effects and works' and the essential communication of his divinity; the latter is characterised as 'the touch of naked substances, the knowledge of the soul and divinity'.[127] Evidently John of the Cross is inevitably as Bonaventure drawn to 'touch and feel' when [132] it is a question of portraying the highest mystical experiences. Naturally he employs images derived from all the physical senses in order to describe mystical states.[128]

Is the absence of a specific doctrine of the five senses in classical modern mysticism a real reason for the disappearance of this notion, which previously received such emphasis and importance? In fact E. Lamballe was even capable at the beginning of this century of imagining that the whole idea originated from A. Poulain. Or have perhaps the flaws inherent in the doctrine itself been the cause of its demise? In any event it plays scarcely any part in the exposition of mystical occurrences, even in cases when it receives mention. It suffices to refer to Luis of Granada, du Pont, Sandaeus, Surin, Nouet, Angelus Silesius, Honoré de Sainte-Marie or Scaramelli to illustrate this point.[129]

In the more modern period the doctrine of the five spiritual senses attracted fresh attention. This is due to the influence of A. Poulain, who gave greater importance to it than is usually the case in the definition of mystical prayer. Among the other writings which deserve specific mention is an article in *Katholik*, as well as the work of Saudreau, Lamballe, Tanquerey, Grabmann, Richstaetter, Maumigny, Hamon, Juan de Guernica, Arintero, Seisdedos, Bainvel and Dorsch. In addition reference should be made to works on the Exercises of Ignatius published by Sinthern, Maumigny, Maréchal and Brou, as well as the studies of Bonaventure's teaching mentioned above.[130] A [133] direct mystical experience which makes

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[124] Letter to Rodrigo Alvarez, cf. Bouix, *Lettres*, t. 1 (Paris 1861), 379 = Letter 78.
[125] Cf. the references in J. Baruzi, *Saint Jean de la croix et le problème de l'expérience mystique* (Paris, 1931) p. 361.
[126] *Subida* II 21 (E.C. I 223).
[127] *Cantico str*. XXXII V. 2 (E.C. II 589). Similar expressions are often found in John of the Cross.
[128] Cf. J. Baruzi, *op. cit*. 362 and 719, where mention is made of M. Carré-Chataignier, *Essai sur les images dans l'oeuvre de Saint Jean de la Croix*.
[129] *Guia de los pecadores* I 1. 1 cap. 5, 1; *Meditationes* t. I, Praef. 11; *Clavis pro theol. mystica* (Cologne, 1610); on this cf. *Katholik* 92 (1912), p. 107; *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* 1. 3 cap. 6 (Paris, 1879), pp. 142-143; *Conduite de l'homme d'oraison dans les voies de Dieu* 1.6 entret. 14 (Paris, 1856), t. II pp. 269 *sqq*; *Cherub. Wandersmann* V, 351 (Munich, 1924) p. 351 (Silesius is dependent upon Sandaeus); *Tradition des Pères et des auteurs ecclesiastiques sur la contemplation* t. I pars 2 dist. 10; on this cf. *Katholik* op. cit., *Dirett. mist*. III cap. 5 and 13.
[130] Cf. *Katholik* 92 (1912), pp. 97-112, 171-182: 'Zur Theorie von den fünf geistlichen Sinnen'; cf. *ibid*. pp. 291-298, 372-375 and 446-447. Saudreau often mentions the spiritual senses in his discussions with A. Poulain; cf. *Les degrés de la vie spirituelle* II (Paris, 1912), p. 69; *L'état mystique* (Angers, 1921), pp. 310 *sq*., 320 *sq*., 341; *La contemplation, principes de théologie mystique* (Paris, 1913), p. 28; *Precis de théologie ascétique et mystique* (Paris, 1924), p. 848; *Wesen und Grundlagen der Kath. Mystik* (Munich, 1923), pp. 50-51; *Mystische Gebetsgnaden und ignatianische mystik* (Innsbruck, 1924), pp. 208 *sq*.; K. Richstaetter, P. Maumigny,

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use of the 'spiritual senses' is to be found in the accounts of an Ursuline nun, Mother Salesia Schulten.[131]

This brings us to the end of our outline of the history of the doctrine of the five spiritual senses. B. Rosenmoeller has expressed the hope that a history of this idea could provide solid information about the psychological and epistemological foundations of modern mysticism. We fear, however, that it has not been possible in this first attempt to realise this hope. The direct character of mystical experience is always described in images which are derived from the world of sense perception. Even the finest shade of difference between various mystical experiences can best be clarified for the layman with the assistance of comparisons which stem from the realm of physical sensations; of course this also touches on the limits of analogy. If one assumes five different faculties which correspond analogically to the bodily powers of sensation, then one is going quite a long way beyond the empirical data. If one wants to avoid this difficulty – and attempts to do so have nearly always been made – and one describes the senses as acts of intellect and will, then it is no longer obvious why there should be exactly five types of such intellectual activity. This move in fact undermines the raison d'être of the whole notion, for it does not provide any fresh knowledge and says nothing more than could be said without it. This remains true even if in the meanwhile well-chosen metaphors are selected from the realm of sense perception. If one tries, like Bonaventure, to fill out the a priori vacuum with empirical content, then one reaches the conclusion that analogies drawn from direct sense experience are indeed necessary and valuable but that a doctrine of *five* spiritual senses, taken as exactly parallel to physical [134] senses, is superfluous.[132] Only the conservatism of the medieval mode of thinking provides a reason for the long continuance of the teaching, which had become unnecessary in its ancient form. Furthermore its interpretation as exemplified by Bonaventure's exposition shows that it is not without significance whether the metaphors used to portray mystical experience are derived from the sense of touch or sight. For a difference of metaphor can clarify a difference of mystical experience. The problem we were considering was a limited one; the only conclusion it leaves us is that progress in this question demands an examination of the common linguistic usage of mysticism prior to an idea of five senses, i.e. an investigation of the whole use of the images which come from sense experience.[133] In this broader context some of the partial results of this study could acquire greater significance. Research into the language of mystics and their use of metaphors and images could then perhaps open up the area in which the mystic depicts his experience in the most original fashion, and where, consciously or unconsciously, he is least influenced in his expression by the categories of his

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Katholische Mystik (Freiburg, 1928), pp. 171-176; *Pratique de l'oraison mentale* II (Paris, 1909), pp. 29-38, 338-339; *DThC* V (1891); *Introducción a la Mística Franciscana* (Buenos Aires, 1925); on this, *RAM* 8 (1927), p. 421; *Evolución mística* III (Salamanca, 1930), pp. 575-581; *Cuestiones místicas* (Salamanca, 1927), pp. 70 *sq*., *Principios fundamentales de la Mística* III (Madrid, 1914), p. 355; A. Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer* (London, 1950); *Präsideskorrespondenz* 20 (1926), p. 96; G. Harrasser, *Studien zu den Exerzitien des hl. Ignatius* I (Innsbruck, 1925), pp. 78-70; *Saint Ignace, maître d'oraison*, (Paris, 1925), pp. 181 *sq*.

[131] Cf. K. Richstaetter, *Mater Salesia Schulten und ihre Psychologie der Mystik* (Freiburg i. Br. 1932), pp. 105, 160-163, 166-167, 169, 173, 175, 177, 179 *sq*., 190, 200, 203, 211.

[132] One would be tempted to register an objection based on this assertion. If the medievals merely saw metaphorical expressions of the mystical acts of intellect and will in the doctrine of the five senses, then the doctrine should not be treated by itself without something being said about the use of these metaphors. But such a study would require a series of preliminary enquiries which far exceed the limits of a single essay. Moreover, the history of the five spiritual senses does form a clearly defined chapter in the history of metaphors which are drawn from the realm of sense perception and used to portray mystical realities.

[133] Of course special attention should be paid to the accounts of mystics who have had genuine mystical experience and have an original, personal style of describing it. One should exclude everything which is not based on experience or stems second hand from mystical accounts for which images, concepts, etc., are followed without discrimination.

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philosophy. This might lead to a more independent presentation of secondary, reflective descriptions of mysticism. These secondary accounts always mirror the outlook existing outside the world of mysticism. The partial answer contained in this study leads, therefore, to a more important problem which cannot be discussed here.

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MODERN PIETY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF RETREATS

The topic proposed here doubtless opens up a number of perspectives and this unavoidable range of options could easily lead to disappointed expectations. It should, therefore, be clearly stated at the outset that here the subject to be discussed is the place occupied today in the history of spirituality by the Ignatian Exercises. The exact meaning of this provisional description of our topic will become plainer in the course of the following reflections, but the stress lies as much on the term, 'history of spirituality' as on the word 'today'.[1]

Our task is to bring together the historical and spiritual background of the Exercises and the contemporary situation of today and tomorrow, a situation whose main characteristics are likely to increase in intensity. Put somewhat differently, it is a question of seeing how the Exercises are affected when they are taken from the world in which they originated at the beginning of the so-called modern period, which both gave them their characteristic stamp and which in turn they decisively marked, both in religious and secular terms. For today they must enter a new historical and spiritual context at the 'end of the modern period',[2] one in which they are not so naturally at home. These thoughts may seem at first glance abstract, laboured and far-fetched to those who are looking for modern retreat models or [136] want to test their practical effectiveness in the modern world. And yet such reflections may contribute to a clearer understanding of all the doubts and questions which surround the modern retreat. What in fact is going on when one tries to give a retreat today without simply slipping unthinkingly into the old formulae? What should a retreat look like which fits into our spiritual and historical landscape? The presuppositions and character of these questions involve much that is uncertain and hypothetical; they also perhaps neglect a great deal and do not permit a comprehensive survey or an obvious arrangement of the material. Still the search must be pursued in good heart.

PRESUPPOSITIONS

In order to locate the problem of retreats today, we should at least remind ourselves briefly what is the context of our search, namely that the Church possesses a genuine history in which its reality can develop. This means that the Church remains itself in all its aspects and yet at the same time lives a true and authentic history, which does not merely involve external accidents, clearly recognised as such, but implies an actual historicity of its substance, dogma, worship, the composition of 'iuris divini' (and not only 'iuris humani'), spiritual life and the relation to the world. Of course the dialectic thus proposed of the enduring and essential identity of the Church and its authentic historicity raises a host of difficult problems, particularly because permanence cannot be regarded as a static characteristic nor historicity as a set of changing externals separate from the substance of the Church. The one cannot be so clearly divided off from the other. Without being able here to go into the matter more closely, we may assume here that the relation of change and identity in the Church cannot simply be expressed in terms of the model of substance and accidents (dogma – theology,

[1] This essay is based on a talk addressed to retreat givers in Vienna in the autumn of 1974. The text has been considerably revised and a shorter version was published in *Gul* 47 (1974), pp. 430-449.
[2] This expression goes back to the title of a well-known work of Guardini, *The End of the Modern World* (London, 1957), which appeared in Basle 1950, and later in Wurzburg (1959).

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divine law – human law, etc.). This would lead at best either to a purely verbal harmony or to a trivialising of the Church's historicity. The causes of change need not occupy us here, how far that is, the control of the Spirit as the innermost realisation of the Church is to be grasped as something over and above the secular influences which are unquestionably at work. In any event we can be sure that the Church of Jesus Christ does experience something genuinely 'new' in its life, which is neither 'the way things have always been' nor something reduceable to superficial triviality. Historically new phenomena can occur in the Church even if they cannot be [137] completely grasped as such by the historical subject. This is particularly true when what is new first appears and forms the immediate destiny of the subject who reflects upon it for whom the new future emerges slowly amidst doubt and pain. Traditional Church history tends to remain too tied to directly comprehensible facts and to be unclear in its reflection and designation of the newness of an epoch. It often characterises periods of history as divisions which are defined in relation to world history external to the Church and to its influence upon the history of Christianity. However the newness of an epoch is always prepared for in advance in the abiding essence of the Church and thus it can be interpreted in retrospect, when its true character becomes clearly apparent, as what in fact has always been there; it can be discovered as a lived, conscious reality which was already present in an earlier form. Yet at the same time the novelty of an epoch is genuinely something fresh. This is shown by the fact that it only emerges for what it is against the opposition of those who, being of a conservative caste of mind, act in defence of the permanent substance of the Church and only discover new elements to be what has always been known and lived when the novelty has proved itself and is already taken for granted by a later generation.

Newness as a mark of a whole period of Church history does not of course simply dissolve and disappear because of later developments, even if it is also true that in a subsequent era it does not retain the same form it once possessed as the characteristic stamp of a particular period of history. Once new, it underlies the changes of later history and remains embedded in subsequent phenomena. In this it no longer plays the part of simple novelty but retains an irrepressible vitality and a future effectiveness. This is in fact already given in the reality of history if it is to remain faithful to itself.

In detail it is hard to determine in the face of the continual ebb and flow of history what is transitory in a new development and what is permanent, when the form of novelty, though not the actual content, is overtaken by a later period. This truth applies even to the reality and knowledge which the Church has grasped in a historical process of development as dogma which is permanently valid even in future ages. Even in this case the distinction between abiding essence and specific form cannot be made without ambiguity and possible mis-understanding. Even a new dogmatic expression comes to light and finds clear definition under transitory historical and social conditions.

These remarks should make it plain that, although something new [138] which has appeared at a particular period can be permanently maintained, we do not regard Church history simply as a process of evolution which always produces higher levels of perfection. This is true even if we leave aside the fact that human history, in contrast to non-human evolution, always involves freedom and this applies also to the Church, so that there is a history of refusal, guilt and infidelity to what perhaps should be maintained. The point of mentioning these presuppositions of change and continuity was to render the following observations more intelligible.

THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AS A CHARACTERISTIC DOCUMENT OF THE MODERN PERIOD

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The first thesis may be formulated as follows: the Exercises of St Ignatius[3] are a fundamental document of the post-Reformation Church, which had a decisive influence upon its history; the Church of this period corresponded to the general western culture of the modern era, even if it also possessed its own specific character; the Exercises brought something genuinely new into the Church which in the present situation of 'the end of the modern period' is both passing away and being maintained in a remarkable fashion. It is worth illustrating and verifying this thesis and spelling out the consequences for the Exercises.

A) THE MODERN FOUNDATION

However bold the venture may seem, we must first take a look at the modern period in the secular meaning of the term. The question here is not when exactly it began, whether as early as St Thomas Aquinas and the anthropocentric shift[4] embodied in his thinking or with the rise of Nominalism in the late Middle Ages, with its attack on universals in favour of the individual being, or with Luther's Reformation, [139] or Descartes's philosophy of the transcendental subject, or with the rise of modern science with its exact method of quantification, whose start is itself hard to date.[5] Naturally it cannot be denied that in many ways the modern period was shaped in advance by the history of Greek and western culture and that the spirit and history of Christianity were of essential and irreplaceable importance for the formation and the background of the modern period.

Medieval man thought and lived on God and the world, on universals and order formulated in appropriate norms. His personal reflection upon himself, his spirit and his freedom was conducted, if it occurred at all, in relation to these objective realities in which he knew from the start he was included as a part in the whole. Naturally the groundwork existed for a philosophy and theology of the free personal subject; indeed this was inevitable given the background of the Christian doctrine of grace, redemption, predestination and individual salvation history. However they formed only a partial beginning and did not provide a point of departure and a foundation for the trust and commitment to the objective reality of God, the world, nature and order.

The modern period radically altered this picture. In this context it is not of great significance that the modern period of the individual subject finds self-expression in an enormous variety of ways, which are often self-contradictory. The central fact is that of the individual subject itself, which applies even when the person freely and deliberately accepts and appropriates the traditional realities of a 'philosophiae perennis' and of Christian faith, i.e. when the subject belongs to the Church and maintains this connection, regarding himself not merely as a member of a profane world but as a person directed to God. In the transcendent, a priori structure of his being the crucial starting point is this initial subjectivity, which is revealed as the primary certainty. The state of creative freedom can no longer be understood as an instance and application of a general norm. It is set over against the surrounding world and is no longer experienced as part of an already given order of reality.

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[3] Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* (London, 1963, trans. by Thomas Corbishley S. J); cf. J. Leclercq, A. Rayez, P. Debongnie, Ch. Schmerber, 'Exercises spirituels', *DDSp.* IV (Paris, 1961), 1902-1949; also I. lparraguirre, G. Dumeige, G. Cusson, 'Ignace de Loyola', *DDSp* VII (Paris, 1971), 1226- 1318; for the background cf. H. Rahner, *Ignatius von Loyola und das geschichtliche Werden seiner Frömmigkeit* (Graz and Salzburg, 1949).

[4] This is the thesis proposed by J. B. Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik* Munich, 1962).

[5] Cf. on this question from the point of view of the natural sciences, P. E. Hodgson, 'Zweifel und Gewissheit in den Naturwissenschaften', *StdZ* 193 (1975), pp. 187-198.

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The other characteristics of the modern period need not be discussed here. It will be enough to recall the type of rationality by means of which the world is not only confronted and reflected upon, but which also seeks to control the [140] world as the object of creative and free planning, and thereby shapes it as a living environment. Modern man uses his technical intelligence to transform the natural world and create society and is thus driven to question inherited tradition. He seeks to unite different areas which have been separated by a historical no-man's land into a single world civilisation. He possesses the basic tendency towards critical analysis, excluding nothing a priori from the range of his enquiry.

B) SELF-DISCOVERY BEFORE GOD

The Ignatian Exercises were both an influential factor and a significant document of the modern age, or so our thesis ran. This claim must be studied more closely. It cannot of course be disputed that Ignatius and his work are, and will always be, bound up in many ways with earlier epochs of the Christian faith and the Christian Church, precisely because of the enduring effects of the modern era. But it is not surprising that Ignatius, both at the beginning and later, was suspected of being an 'Alumbrado'.[6] We cannot dismiss it as a matter of course, nor regard it as a biographical triviality, that the religious path of Ignatius starts with a subjective experience of consolation and desolation[7] which cannot properly be the object of 'objective' control. If we take the words in his autobiographical account seriously and do not treat them as a pious exaggeration, thus rendering them ineffective, then we cannot but be aroused and deeply disturbed when we read, for instance, that mystical experiences provide the whole content of faith, the totality of our understanding of God and the world, even supposing the Scriptures were to be lost.[8]

Let us turn at once to the basic conception of the Exercises. Through their use the creator and creature should be placed in solitary contact with each other. In this situation the retreat master can quite happily be regarded as the Church's representative, but in Ignatius's view the less he enters the solitude of creature and creator the better.[9] [141] Now this principle is far from being obvious or customary; on the contrary as an explicit principle it is radically modern.[10] In the Exercises a fundamental and free decision of life-long importance should take place. Such a choice essentially comes to be made according to Ignatius not simply by applying general human, Christian and ecclesiastical norms to a specific case, which is merely a concrete instance however complex of a universal principle, but rather by deciding

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[6] On this concept cf. the corresponding article by J. Vincke, *LThk* 1(1957), 407; also H. Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian* (London, 1968).

[7] *Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola* (New York, 1974); cf. the interpretation of L. Bakker, *Freiheit und Erfahrung. Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen über die Unterscheidung der Geister bei Ignatius von Loyola* (Wurzburg, 1970), pp. 69-147.

[8] Cf. Autobiography of St. Ignatius, nos. 29 and 30.

[9] Cf. Ignatius Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, no. 15.

[10] It is of course, possible to interpret this statement of Ignatius in a trivial sense by saying that the direct presence of God is given in the context of the Church and world which is experienced as a prior, valid reality. In practice, this is usually the case in ordinary piety. This priority must be formally considered and recognised by the individual free subject as something which is permanent, and cannot be eliminated or properly thought through. But the subject must (as a solitary individual) experience the rest of the world and the Church as threatened and placed in question by the immediate advent of God and the sovereignty of his will. In this light, the actual world and Church cannot be taken for granted any longer as functionally representative. If subsequently they regain their natural validity, then this is only because they have been confirmed in this role by the immediate proximity of God. It remains true, therefore, that the first sentences of the Spiritual Exercises assume the uniqueness and historical originality of the individual subject in the sense current in the modern period.

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upon the unique, individual destiny willed by God which transcends all general norms.[11] The will of God is not, therefore, simply and entirely transmitted through the objective structures of the world and the Church. The subject goes beyond what is universally valid and seeks through his choice his own unique truth, setting himself at a distance (termed 'indifference') from every particular existing object. This can only be chosen in a free decision as what is here and now important and subjectively accepted by a person, if his subjectivity is set free. By God is meant the guarantee that such absolute [142] freedom is available to every individual and that it can and should be offered and required of a person.

Naturally in addition to the phenomenon of fundamental choice Ignatius was also familiar with the apparently more rational process of reflection, i.e. with the act of choice as the point of intersection of general human, Christian and ecclesiastical norms. But he regards this as a secondary and derivative version, which applies if and when the fundamental choice is either impossible or unsuccessful.[12] All this highlights the free subjectivity of a person in which the individual himself is directly confronted by the ground and guarantee of his radical freedom, i.e. by God.

The Exercises are an influential factor and an important testament of the modern era, even if they do not at all reject the past heritage of the Christian Church but rather seek to preserve it. But this is done from the typically modern starting point of a transcendent subjectivity radically transformed, we must add, and raised up by grace. Grace should here be understood as the direct presence of God to the unique subject, not as a general principle. In the context of Christianity and the Church the Exercises mean that this subject appears as something genuinely new and is a formative influence in the modern era of the Church. This is not contradicted by the fact that the customary practice of piety usually trivialised this crucial event of the modern era and still continues to do so. Even the Jesuit theology of the high Baroque period only partially and hesitantly studied and developed this modern Ignatian starting point.[13] The battle to preserve what was ancient and permanent in Christian tradition made theology in many ways incapable of using the new point of departure to lay hold of the lasting element in tradition.

C) THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE CHURCH IN THE EXERCISES

The radical point of departure of the modern period allows one to understand why the Church does not figure as the active subject in the Exercises. This fact should nevertheless be a cause of deep interest to the thoughtful reader. 'As *active* subject' is the operative phrase; what is intended here is often treated as a matter of course or accepted without question, and is thus frequently overlooked.

[143] Naturally the Church is found in the Exercises as something to which the individual is related as *object*. Ignatius reflects upon the history of salvation and therefore upon the heart of the Church. He aims at a completely personal relationship between the retreatant and Jesus

[11] Ignatius developed a logic of existential decision by means of his rules of choice, which had not existed in this form before, despite the traditional doctrine of the discernment of spirits. Since then, there has never been sufficient theological study of the real meaning and presuppositions of this Ignatian innovation. Its importance remains valid today, but it must be removed from the context of the choice of a vocation in the Church and clearly expressed in terms of its general significance for human existence. Hesitation and opposition in the mind of the Church against the spirit of the modern period prevented the real understanding and the proper expansion of this logic of existential and practical reason, which cannot be given an adequate theoretical basis. Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola', The Dynamic Element in the Church, Quaestiones Disputatae 12 (Freiburg and London, 1964), pp. 84-156.
[12] Spiritual Exercises, nos. 177, 179-188.
[13] Cf. in this volume, 'Reflections on a New Task for Fundamental Theology'.

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Christ, the Lord of the Church. In this way he brings him to an experience of his calling by Christ to serve the kingdom of God and the Church. According to Ignatius the individual perseveres in his choice which has been made directly before God and his will in the context of hierarchical Church, the holy Mother, the bride of Christ.[14] But this perseverance arises also from the free decision of the retreat-ant, who in virtue of the direct presence to the subject of God acknowledges these limits.[15] In this sense he accepts the commandments of the Church, papal norms, Church fasts, etc. In Paris Ignatius expressly added to the Exercises as originally conceived at Manresa the rules for thinking according to the mind of the Church.[16] In passing he mentions the retreatant's attendance at Mass and Vespers and the Divine Office. One can see, as did Ignatius, a function of the Church being exercised by the retreat master; there are directions for general confession and confessors aimed to relate the retreatant to the Church. Our Lady and the saints are to pray for the retreatant. But despite all these references and many others the Church is merely a reality to which the individual is related before God. Here the question cannot be discussed how and why the reference to the history of salvation, the life of Jesus and the Church as normative can follow from the modern starting point found in the Exercises, and how much reflection Ignatius gave to the connection between the subject and the Church, a connection which the subjectivity of the modern age made far from obvious. No injustice would be done to Ignatius, living as he did at the break between the Middle Ages and the modern period, if one did not expect too much reflection on his part on this point, even if one must admit [144] that the well known problems he had with the Church's Inquisition made him sensitive to such questions.

However human subjectivity and the role of the Church are related to each other, the fact remains that the Exercises are a solitary event proper to the individual person and that in this process the Church does not figure as the controlling agent. It is no argument against this claim to say that in the Exercises the sacrament of penance, confessor, Mass and even the Divine Office in choir have a place. As long as one does not read into these practices modern attitudes and interpretations which were certainly foreign to Ignatius, then they do not involve anything more than aids offered by the Church to the individual which operate from without. Retreatant and Church remain different subjects of action, in so far as the latter is active at all. Even external common prayer is at the most an active realisation of the Church *addressed to God*, which remains external to the real heart of the Spiritual Exercises, i.e. the existential choice and the achievement of absolute freedom before God (termed indifference), and the experience of the radical immediacy of God in the comfort of the 'first' and the 'second time of choice'.[17]

So the Church does not emerge as the active subject in the Exercises, or more precisely in the decisive central part of the Exercises. This may perhaps provide some answer to the bemused inquiry how it could work any other way. Can the Church play any other part in the decisive process of the Exercises, i.e. in the act of choice, than the one it actually has, that is to be the context and point of reference for the solitary decision of the individual subject who makes his decision before God himself who alone offers it to him? This is not an obvious query and cannot easily be given a simple negative answer, even if the real problematic can only be clearly seen today. For we are in a position today to ask whether the Church in the

[14] Spiritual Exercises, no. 170.
[15] Anyone familiar with the 19th century teaching of the Church on the justification and necessity of a 'rational' fundamental theology, which formally, even if not temporarily and psychologically, precedes the assent of faith of the believer and so his membership of the Church, will not be surprised at this assertion. Church membership is not the primary datum of religious existence. This leaves it open how far Ignatius considered this question, but in this context the ultimate independence from Scripture mentioned above must give food for thought.
[16] Cf. L. Bakker, op. cit. (footnote 7), pp. 55-58.
[17] Spiritual Exercises, nos. 175 sq.

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form of a small specific community cannot itself be the subject of a religious and existential act of choice, of the discernment of spirits and of the experience of consolation in the sense intended by Ignatius. This line of thought of course would not merely include the official Universal Church and its doctrinal decisions in so far as they affect the life of the individual believer in relation to the world, in the Church's sacramental worship and in the formulation of law; it would also include the Church as subject of a specifically religious decision, of which the individual acknowledges [145] his membership and in which he finds personal self-expression.

Before pursuing this line of argument and trying to come to some tentative conclusion, two further considerations should be mentioned. One involves a closer examination of Ignatius himself and the other is expressly concerned with the end of the modern era and its effect on the secular world and the Church.

IGNATIUS AND THE 'END OF THE MODERN ERA'

The following assertion is unusual and appears to contradict the traditional interpretation of Ignatius of Loyola and his work and yet it may at least be proposed today as a suggestion: Ignatius in founding his order and in his later life is not only the man of the Exercises in the sense of a solitary spiritual process in which the subject is directly confronted by God and involved in a personal existential decision as it appears in the Exercises. How far he himself was conscious of the additional factor in his life and work whereby he points beyond the modern era of the Church which he helped to found, need not detail us here. But we may note in passing that Ignatius did not regard himself as the single founder of his order,[18] but rather saw the group of his first companions, united by the spirit of the Exercises, as the real founders of the order. We are not, I think, justified in dismissing this notion simply as the expression of saintly humility. For he knew and practised the 'deliberatio communitaria' with his companions (deliberation not only *in* the group but *of* the group),[19] where the logic of existential choice was to apply and operate for the group as a whole. In the same way he treated the static general norms and constitutions of an order not simply as a fixed structure existing prior to behaviour, but rather as something which can and should become valid and effective through a dialectical process of shared testing and decision making [146] which was to take place dynamically in such a group.[20] These facts reveal a tendency in Ignatius which cannot merely be traced back to the text of the Exercises as this now stands; rather they foreshadow a period of time which only now appears to be dawning at the end of the modern age.

What is meant by the end of the modern age, by the new epoch which is gradually but plainly emerging, in which the specific characteristics of the Exercises as they are explicitly contained in the text will embody something of lasting value but will no longer bear the stamp of their age in the same way as before? This is the difficult question which we must now tackle with whatever success, if we wish to discover the proper place of the Exercises in

[18] Cf. P. Dudon, Saint Ignace de Loyola (Paris, 1934), pp. 622-625; A. Ravier, Ignace de Loyola fonde la Compagnie de Jesus (Paris, 1973), pp. 96 sqq., 121.
[19] Cf. Dudon, op. cit. pp. 335 sqq., 354 sqq.; Ravier, op. cit. pp 82 sqq., 230 sqq; D. Bertrand, Un corps pour l'Esprit (Paris, 1974). Cf. the following studies from Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits: J. C. Futrell, 'Ignatian Discernment' (April, 1970); J. J. Toner, 'A Method for Communal Discernment of God's Will' (September, 1971); J. C. Futrell, 'Communal Discernment: Reflections on Experience' (November, 1972); L. Orsy, 'Toward a Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment' (October, 1973). Also, J. G. Gerhartz, 'Vom "Geist der Ursprungs" der Gesellschaft Jesu', Gul 41(1968), pp. 245-265.
[20] Cf. A. Ravier, 'Hat die Gesellschaft Jesu das Recht, ihre Konstitutionen zu ändern?', Gul 47 (1974), pp. 422-430.

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the contemporary Church from a spiritual and practical point of view. In this we cannot rely upon a description of the present epoch which appears to be dissolving the modern period, in so far as this epoch is a general historical and secular phenomenon characteristic of the whole of humanity. Men are searching today for higher forms of social structure, given that western civilisation with its rational and technical methods is becoming dominant all over the world. These social structures seek to reconcile the dignity and value of the individual with the social character of man and also face the social and material demands which are necessary for survival both now and in the future. It should at least be clear by now that these higher social formations are something new, even if their form remains the object of strife between the existing systems of society found in east and west, north and south, in developed and developing nations. Nor is their novelty eliminated by the variety of historical and social conditions under which this struggle is being conducted. This new phenomenon will stamp the emerging historical epoch, however obscure this process may appear now and however much it is interpreted within the framework of understanding proper to the age that is now passing away, i.e. the modern era.

THE CHURCH AFTER THE END OF THE MODERN ERA

There is no doubt that the Church must also enter the new age and its higher forms of socialisation. It may quite correctly appear that the Church of the Second Vatican Council is only now for the first time [147] catching up with the backlog of demands raised by the modern period in the various areas of its life (doctrine, liturgy, law, etc.), so that it may come to terms with the spirit of this age while maintaining a critical distance from it. However it is also, we may hope, noticeable that tentative efforts are being made amidst the present changes in the Church to discover new forms of social structure which correspond in the realm of the Church to the characteristics of the era now emerging. There are various signs of this new search which deserve mention. The new discovery at the Second Vatican Council that the Church is not just the hierarchy but is the pilgrim people of God in which each has an active part and a specific task; the search for ‘democratic structures’ in the life of the Church which are not mere appendages to the democracy of the modern period but embody higher forms of socialisation in the ecclesial community; the call for vital basic communities which build up the Church from below and are not individualistic groups founded on mutual sympathy, but are genuine communities in society based on shared faith in the Gospel and the power of the liberating spirit of Jesus; the liturgy as the real expression of a community’s life and not merely an officially conducted ritual which the individual pious Christian attends, a change which the reform of liturgy may have brought about in principle but which is far from being completely carried through. This list could be extended further if one reflects that new structures of law will be developed in the Church in which the freedom of the individual may be safeguarded without destroying the Church as a body, but rather revealing its unity and its spiritual power to integrate the individual in a new and clearer way. One might also take into consideration that the contemporary Church has the chance to develop within itself models of new social structures for which secular society is also seeking, with the result that the Church would not be forced to follow belatedly the social forms developed by secular society. In all these activities the Church is also seeking higher forms of human socialisation, even if as yet there is perhaps little conscious reflection upon this process.

To grasp this point in a creative and imaginative way, one should concentrate more on local communities and less on the universal Church. One should consider living basic communities, for these are not mere refuges for individual Christians who feel put off by the official institutional system of the Church and suffer from a sense of loneliness and

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abandonment in their experience of life. Rather they represent new types of genuine community life which correspond to [148] the new groupings in society for which mankind is searching today. These inadequate and vague comments about the new situation emerging in the Church may of course be trivialised by an appeal to prior tendencies supposedly existing in the permanent structure of the Church, which would render the new state of affairs merely a superficial modification of what has always been the case in the life of the Church.

NEW QUESTIONS – NEW PRAXIS

These last remarks cannot receive further elaboration and proof here, but the perspective they have opened up allows us to take a new look at the Exercises of Ignatius. As we have already pointed out, the 'whole' Ignatius is not to be found in the explicit text of his Spiritual Exercises; rather we can discover in him anticipatory signs of community understanding and expression which are important for the notion of the Church and its life which is being developed today. From this the question arises: are we to expect today and in the future the appearance of new forms of the Exercises arising from the cultural and ecclesial demands of the new epoch, in which the Church can act in a previously unknown way? This would imply that the Church would not merely be an objective reality with which the retreatant has to reckon but rather an active subject finding expression in a specific community of believers; it would not consist just of the sum of participants in the retreat, but would be an independent subject to which the individual feels bound in his personal religious existence. This model goes beyond what has been the centuries old practice in common retreats, because in the latter case the retreat master for practical reasons would address many individuals at the same time, without their forming a united group or Church. If one gives an affirmative answer to the question whether such a new form of retreat should exist, despite the formal and vague description of the model, then two other problems immediately become pressing.

How are we to conceive in practical terms of a retreat as the active self-expression of the Church, as an ecclesial event and as something genuinely different from individual retreats happening at the same time? Secondly can and should, in addition to this new form, the type of retreat continue which follows the text of the Ignatian Exercises and corresponds to its original conception? In contrast to these questions it is immaterial whether, if one says yes to the first, one applies the term [149] 'retreat' to this new form of ecclesial expression in which the Church acts as subject. If this form of active community self-expression clearly exists as a living reality, then its title depends upon the history of its development. The fact that nothing can be said on this point at the moment is of no particular importance.

The first question should, I believe, receive an affirmative answer. To grasp this it is important, indeed vital, to take note of what was said earlier about the tendency existing in the Church towards new and higher forms of socialisation. But this is not in itself sufficient. For it is not yet clear whether and why these social formations in the Church and its life should have anything to do with retreats, and whether something which might possibly be called a retreat could be an event in which the Church achieves active self-expression. The first question might be answered from various points of view depending on whether one approaches the matter from an empirical stand-point or from a more fundamental theological angle. Here we will use both methods because this seems unavoidable in the area under discussion.

From an empirical point of view there are today new group activities which are beginning to have an effect on the arrangement of retreats: one thinks in this context of sensitivity training, group dynamics and similar practices, irrespective of whether the word 'retreat' is given to the application of these techniques or other names are preferred, such as days of rest

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or days of recollection etc. These arrangements make use of discussion or similar types of group dynamic organisation; we will not discuss this question in detail here.

For our task of more fundamental analysis the question is crucial whether such changes and, additions which are made to enrich retreats merely involve the use of modern psychological techniques to help achieve the retreat's proper goal which was also the aim of earlier individual retreats, or whether by contrast it is entirely a matter of offering useful psychological and perhaps religious assistance to an individual or a group in solving pressing problems of life. In this latter case the processes of group dynamics, etc. should not be termed a 'retreat', because despite their utility they have little or nothing to do with the nature and goal of the classical retreat. A third conceivable possibility would be that at least in specific cases and under particular conditions they could be in a theological sense what we have called the new self-expression of the Church in a given small community. Here the necessary conditions for 'community' in this sense would not necessarily imply a stable institutional group in the form of a parish or [150] a religious community. One's answer here need not be an exclusive choice of one of the three possibilities as the only one that is feasible and legitimate. The first two can contain continual extensions to the third possibility. Our question is centred upon this third option: does there exist something like the self-expression of a community in the discernment of spirits and the act of choice? Does *this* self-expression apply to the community (Church) as such? Before giving an affirmative reply the question must first be answered whether there can be Ignatian Exercises which would embody, in addition to the permanent traditional model, a new form of spiritual activity to correspond to the specific character of the new epoch which appears to be bringing the modern period to an end?

THE EXERCISES: A POSSIBLE SELF-EXPRESSION OF THE CHURCH

First of all it must be noted that the Church can achieve self-expression over and above the acts of the official institutional Church in doctrinal teaching and legal norms, and this occurs in the life of the ecclesial community. It is immaterial here what sort of concrete structure such a community should have to ensure the claim that its modes of expression are properly acts of the Church as such. A eucharistic celebration in which all members of the community present actively participated is certainly a case of genuine ecclesial self-realisation in a concrete community. No theologian would assert that such eucharistic worship is merely the sum of the actions of the celebrant and the faithful present, regarded as individual worshippers. Rather the Church comes into being in the Mass, although the theologian and the social anthropologist may find it hard to make clear how the community proper, that is the Church, is to be distinguished from the sum of its members in such a shared communal activity. I would hold also that the Church is realised as Church in the choir office of a religious community and that it is not on psychological grounds alone that many individuals come together in common prayer. One common result of discussion of the nature of the Church's liturgy is to raise the question of when to characterise common prayer and celebration as liturgy in the strict sense, i.e. when it should count as the self-expression of the Church as such and is therefore genuinely liturgical. In summary, however, we may say that the Church can certainly achieve self-realisation in the local community.

The further question to be asked is whether a particular community can under certain conditions and in specific situations undertake, in a clearly comprehensible manner, a decision making process, a discernment of spirits in which the community as such reaches a decision and makes the Church a reality in a sense at least analogically related to that occurring in the celebration of the Eucharist and common prayer. I myself would answer

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affirmatively. As far as I am aware the question has never previously arisen, and indeed could never before have even been posed, since such decisions affecting the life of the whole community have up to now either been taken only on secular matters or have occurred within the framework of a paternalist structure in which one *individual* decides for the group and not the group itself. The problem can be clearly formulated today and reflects a contemporary awareness and a modern demand that decisions affecting a group should be made by the group itself. In this way they possess greater objectivity and clarity, quite apart from the human and formal structure of the group and whether each member of the group is assigned in a formal democratic manner the same role in the decision making process. Certainly one cannot derive from the nature of the Church the conclusion that a group decision is less 'ecclesial', i.e. less the self-expression of the Church, than when the decision is made for the group by an individual (Pope, bishop, etc.) in a monarchical fashion. After all the college of bishops is, with the Pope, a collective entity which is entrusted with the highest authority in its decisions; the Pope is selected by a college in an act of choice which is of fundamental ecclesial significance. Collective acts of decision made by an ecclesial group, a community, can therefore be ecclesial and be, in the strictest sense, self-expressions of the Church.

If these communal acts of decision occur in the religious context of discernment of spirits and involve the Ignatian rules of choice, as they are proposed in the Exercises for the individual's decision, then we would have a form of spiritual exercises proper to the era following the modern period. We cannot find this in Ignatius himself by following the literal text of the Exercises, since there the Church does not appear as active subject. But why today should not communal decisions in this sense be taken in 'spiritual exercises' or retreats. The formation of such a community, which must be an ecclesial body if it is a question of the self-expression of the Church in the discernment of spirits, must obviously involve more than retreats, for otherwise the participants would not come to a common decision but would at most offer mutual assistance in reaching a decision in accord with the [152] method of group dynamics, and this would still leave us on the individual plane. But there are specifically ecclesial communities, involved in the Exercises, which have to make important decisions and could do so in the manner prescribed in the Exercises. Religious orders, secular institutes, etc. would certainly belong to this number.[21]

The question arises whether one could conceive in addition to these ecclesial communities of other groups which might be ready to reach decisions in the way proposed in the Spiritual Exercises, groups such as the presbyterium of a diocese, a Chapter, a parish council, or a group which is gathered together for a religious purpose and wishes to remain together. But this question does not require further investigation here. What is of interest to us is to ask whether the act of decision which can under certain conditions be made collectively could be undertaken in the manner envisaged in the Exercises. One's first impulse is simply to say: why not?! Obviously many changes would have to be made to create a form of Ignatian Exercises which was genuinely collective and much would be done differently from what is prescribed by Ignatius in his handbook. Methods for a practical process of communal decision making would have to be developed in order to preserve the essential character of the Ignatian choice. Only then could one speak of a genuinely religious decision in the sense intended in the Exercises. Any process of group dynamics should therefore be tested to see whether and in what way it can be used as a technical psychological aid to assist communication and thus collective decision making in such Exercises. Given the specific

[21] On attempts to form small spiritual groups, regarded as Churches, both within existing ecclesial communities (religious orders, etc.) and outside them (groups of laity and religions, married and unmarried), cf. R. Soullard, 'The Future of Religious Life', *Conc.* 10/7 (1974), pp. 84-92; also M. Delespesse, 'Neue Gemeinschaften und Ordensleben', *Conc.* 10 (1974). In these studies the difficulties are apparent which face religious orders in particular.

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character of a particular group and keeping in mind the goals and subject matter of the decision in question, continual transitions may easily occur between common retreats of a number of individuals or group discussion upon a particular problem requiring resolution conducted with a more secular type of group dynamics on the one hand, and the type of Spiritual Exercises we are speaking of on the other, which involves a process of existential commitment as envisaged by St Ignatius, i.e. the decision of an ecclesial group. The logic of such a decision is specifically Christian and religious in that it is basically 'mystical' and [153] leads therefore to the self-realisation of a Christian community and thus to the self-realisation of the Church. We would hold that an entirely new form of ecclesial self-realisation is here being proposed, but that despite its novelty it is just as legitimate as the self-realisation of the Church in the activities of the hierarchy or in the liturgical community. It could indeed be one of the characteristic marks of the Church of the post-modern period, because, as we have noted above, up till now ecclesial groups have either passively accepted decisions affecting them being made by one individual or, in the case of collective resolutions, have used methods common in the secular world.

PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

In the Exercises the Church as such can be the active subject of decisions in communities and groups using the method of Ignatian choice; it can therefore achieve self-realisation as the Church. In the actual text of the Exercises this is not the case, but it could occur, as we have shown, in modern Spiritual Exercises. As the Spiritual Exercises in their traditional form, in which the solitary subject faced God and his sovereign will, bore the stamp of the Church of the modern period and deeply influenced its development, so today the Exercises in the form described here could bring about the self-realisation of the Church by preserving what was once new, and so become a characteristic sign and an influential element in the Church of the post-modern era. In this form they would not merely be an arbitrary variant of the earlier Exercises, built up with the help of group dynamics and minor concessions to collective psychological needs; they would rather represent something specifically new. This new element was indeed already foreshadowed by Ignatius himself but it does presuppose the higher degree of socialisation proper to the post-modern age. It also carried this socialisation beyond the purely secular versions and achieves it within the Christian framework. If one takes seriously the process of a genuinely collective discernment of spirits, which takes place in an ecclesial group and is regarded as of crucial existential and religious importance for the members of the group, then one must concede that here there is something which is both new and specifically ecclesial.

Modern movements in the Pentecostal movement often appeal, even within the Catholic Church, to experience of the Spirit, by which is meant an experience which cannot be objectified or controlled. But [154] what is entirely lacking here is the Ignatian logic of existential decision which, while not seeking to displace direct experience of the Spirit, teaches the retreatant to distinguish it clearly from other experiences and thus enables it to operate effectively as the foundation and criterion of a particular decision. An essentially new type of Exercises, which can be envisaged and tried for the first time in the post-modern era, is not meant to exclude the classical format of 'common' retreats which have their own value. Furthermore the new kind of retreat understood as the self-expression of the Church can only be outlined in rather abstract and formal terms; more is impossible at the moment. But whoever has to conduct retreats today may, either because of trends he has experienced and which may seem to him suspiciously fashionable or because of experiments in new collective types of retreat, come to a better understanding through these reflections of what is actually

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his own real concern, although he has not been fully aware of it until now. He should be encouraged to try to work out with suitable groups a new model in which the Church can achieve new practical forms of self-expression today.

Individual retreats in the original sense also retain their importance, and should be practised and developed in the future. But they are no longer the characteristic mark of the present era of the Church's history, even if they do and must remain the new element of the Church's modern period. But now their novelty has been overtaken by the post-modern state of the Church. The special quality of the Ignatian Exercises can be expressed in the new form of a collective retreat as the self-expression of the Church, without the traditional type of Exercises losing its worth. For individual and social elements remain transcendent human characteristics which are related to each other, although each has its own irreplaceable mode of realisation. Even if the individual person possesses no private existential world which lacks social reference and significance, nevertheless he does have his personal, autonomous life which can find its legitimate place and its proper fulfilment in individual retreats.

In addition modern experience shows that even higher forms of socialisation lead to an increase of individual loneliness which is to be accepted and cannot fundamentally be removed. The acceptance and the existential and religious interpretation of loneliness in the face of the mystery we call God, whose very silence is a mode of speech, form an essential part of individual retreats and can only be properly dealt with in this context and not in group retreats. The life and death of the [155] individual always remain unique events, even if these should be brought into the higher forms of the religious community life and into their self-expression through the new type of retreat, and should be accepted in the group as an element of its own life. There are, then, crucial decisions of an existential and religious kind which must inevitably be borne by the individual on his own. Who, for instance, can decide except the individual person about whether to belong to a particular ecclesial group with its own characteristics which are specific to it and not universally binding? Even given higher forms of socialisation in society and Church, the personal choice of profession, the organisation of one's life style, etc. are matters that fall within the scope of individual freedom. The 'upper room' of the Gospel to which the believer retires in order to speak with God will remain necessary in the future. For men without the courage to pray privately could scarcely be members and representatives of a society containing higher forms of socialisation as these are being sought today. Such people, on the contrary, could only establish mediocre communities in which the individual would not be consciously alert to the radical subjectivity of the modern period, which must also be preserved in the post-modern age and included as part of the groups existing in it. Individual retreats in their classical form do not, therefore, lose their importance and urgency in the new situation.

After what has been said, it should now be plain that the classical type of individual retreat on the one hand, and the group retreat on the other, by which is meant a self-realisation of the Church, mark the two extreme points of what may be termed Ignatian. Between these two points many variations are conceivable which veer in a greater or lesser degree towards one or other extreme. In this basic framework the numerous retreat models proposed today may be more clearly located from the point of view of the history of spirituality and piety. But the primary purpose of these reflections is to encourage both individual retreats and the attempt to work out the new form of retreat outlined here, a form which could bring the Church to self-expression. It is this we are looking for, whether consciously or not.

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REFLECTIONS ON A NEW TASK FOR FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

The following pages, written in honour of J. Salaverri the renowned fundamental theologian, contain no more than a brief and provisional outline of a line of thought which is meant to indicate a new but important task for fundamental theology today.[1] Throughout this essay the provisional character of the present sketch and the rough indications of the direction of thought should be kept in mind. Naturally the existing tasks and methods of fundamental theology are not being questioned nor is any doubt being raised about their importance. This too should not be forgotten. Our concern is rather to point out a new task for fundamental theology which can no longer be overlooked today, and to bring it more clearly than before to the attention of theologians. It follows from the nature of the material that this also indicates a goal for the so-called 'analysis fidei', for this is implied by the close connection between fundamental theology and dogmatic theology caused by the nature of faith and by their mutual interaction.

THE STATE OF FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY TODAY

We are assuming here as a definition of fundamental theology that it involves scientific and systematic reflection upon the grounds of credibility of Christian revelation and the obligation of faith. It is not our concern here to examine precisely how this task of fundamental theology is interpreted in particular theological schools and in relation to [157] the various theories of the 'analysis fidei'. We do not intend to enquire either whether fundamental theology should lay claim to other problems and topics. We are primarily interested here in the cultural and human situation which faces traditional fundamental theology today, if on the one hand it tries to be scientific, and on the other hand seeks to make contact with men today whose faith it is supposed to serve.

The history of fundamental theology since the Enlightenment shows that its practitioners have always worked upon the material and the problems which were found in the particular period in question and have used the methods available at the time. At least ideally fundamental theology extended its awareness of the problem as far as, but of course no further than, the general cultural problematic demanded and made possible. Thus it was engaged in the questions of the time and made use of the scientific methods, so far as these were available, embodied in philosophy, history and the social sciences. In the face of these sciences and the results and problems they raised, it sought to justify the credibility and the credentials of faith by using the methods customary in such sciences. This attempt had quite legitimately an apologetic thrust in order to make real contact with men of the times, at least those of the educated classes.

The intellectual world today, which is a conditioning factor of fundamental theology, is such that one must really speak of a qualitative change in the situation facing fundamental theology. The mass of philosophical problems, the range of methods, the variety of starting points and goals, the ever-increasing wealth in the humane sciences are all factors of significance for fundamental theology. In addition, there are the difficulties encountered in

[1] For a good general survey of the situation and prospects of fundamental theology today, see H. Bouillard, 'La táche actuelle de la théologie fondamentale', *Le Point Theologique* 2 (Paris, 1972), pp. 7-49.

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the application of methods of analysis, the increasing influence of religious studies, for example the psychology, sociology and history of religion. All this means not merely a quantitative but rather a qualitative change in the situation facing the fundamental theologian.[2]

Today, therefore, the sort of fundamental theology in the form of a handbook does not exist any more, one, that is, which has really covered the intellectual scene and has confronted directly and adequately the problems it raises. The lack of comprehensive expositions of fundamental theology bears eloquent testimony to this observation. [158] There are no fundamental theologians, and cannot be any longer, who could bring together in their own person and in their own head the necessary knowledge, questions and methods required for a modern fundamental theology in the full sense of the term, without failing to do justice to the pluralism of the contemporary situation.

In order to come to terms with the apparently hopeless state of affairs in which fundamental theology finds itself, one may appeal to the possibility of team work. But however necessary such combined efforts may be, they simply do not occur, and in the end it appears an impossibility that they should exist. For in contrast to the natural sciences, the questions and discoveries of one person in philosophy and history cannot be simply taken over by another, if a decision of faith is at stake or the construction with others of a coherent and unified fundamental theology. To take over the results of another assumes that one has oneself worked through the problems under review and come to the same conclusions. We do not mean by this that teamwork has no value or that fundamental theology conducted with the earlier direct methods has become impossible as a science, at least as an ideal to be aimed at. But the present situation is basically new. The goal of creating a comprehensive and well-grounded system of fundamental theology through direct work is no longer feasible. In earlier periods people studying in this area were always conscious of the fact that the work was always open to improvement and clarification, and that in the course of time new questions would constantly arise which would then require new answers. But one could quite justifiably be convinced that one had given satisfactory, positive answers in one's own fundamental theology to the questions raised by the intellectual needs of the day. Even today one can yield to the temptation of wishing to continue in the old style. But this means confining oneself to a philosophical and historical frame of reference which is no longer relevant to the present age. This need not imply that all one's statements and ideas are simply false, but it does mean that one does not make contact with the assumptions and outlook of others. If this were not the case, there could scarcely be so many atheists and other non-Christians alive today.

What fundamental theologian could seriously imagine that he has a comprehensive grasp of existentialism, linguistic philosophy, Anglo-Saxon positivism and structuralism? In this area who could suppose he has such a precise knowledge of Jewish theology at the time of Christ that he can provide an exact scientific exegesis of Mt 16 which is [159] correct from the point of view of fundamental theology, unless of course he specialises in this one narrow field, thereby losing his grasp of the thousand other problems facing fundamental theology? Who can claim as a fundamental theologian, as exegete or as historian of the early Church to be able to give a detailed and accurate account of the history of the Church's early development? In such an account the fundamental theologian must provide the necessary results in this area without giving up the attempt to be an expert in the numerous other fields of fundamental theology which are just as important. One could extend this list of questions indefinitely.

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[2] Cf. on the question of pluralism in theology: K. Rahner, 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), pp. 3-23; 'Possible Courses for the Theology of the Future', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975), pp. 32-60.

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We do not wish to question the value of the labours of earlier fundamental theologians who have tried to gain direct mastery of the problems they have encountered, but nevertheless a sober assessment forces one to conclude that this science with its established methods has ceased to be a practical possibility and has become a limit case, a remote ideal which may be aimed at but can never be fully realised. This situation naturally demands more detailed analysis from the angle of scientific theory but the above description may suffice for our purposes.

INDIRECT METHOD IN FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY?

What then is to be done if *the* fundamental theology is no longer available to modern man in the present situation, a science, that is, able to provide answers to the unavoidable problems of pluralism which the individual is no longer capable of mastering adequately in a positive and direct way? A method must be found to enable fundamental theology to study this situation in an indirect manner. Initially this leaves the question of what in fact is meant by 'indirectly' entirely open.

People are often faced by situations in which an absolute commitment is possible and necessary without their being able in advance rationally to reflect upon all the presuppositions and reasons which are involved in the decision. Thus the description of fundamental theology as it affects those who use it to help them reach decisions of faith is not an isolated or unique case. Rather it is obvious and commonplace that a person is often unable to subject the assumptions, reasons and motives of a free decision to sufficient rational reflection and objective analysis. This applies above all in cases when the decision is absolute and irrevocable. This fact does not require extensive explanation here. [160] Its basic cause is that all reflection which seeks to offer grounds for a decision is conducted within a given horizon of understanding and is affected by particular lines of interest. This does not mean that reflection should not be attempted at all or that it cannot at least be partially successful, but it does imply that it is influenced by psychological, cultural and social conditions which themselves cannot be the object of adequate study without engaging upon an infinite regress. Of course it is often the case that such conditions entirely escape attention and in fact such awareness is not an absolute requirement. But the man who makes a decision is then under the impression that he is aware of the conditions, reasons and motives for his decision, even if this turns out in fact to be an illusion. In other cases a person may be explicitly conscious of the inadequacy of his reflections. In this situation the problem arises for him of how he can legitimately reach a considered and carefully prepared decision, when his process of reflection is incomplete. The decision is more absolute than the reflection, for the latter is inevitably conditioned and provisional.

The fact that decisions are of this sort is confirmed by the theological observation that, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent,[3] no one has absolute conscious certainty about his state of grace, and therefore about the quality of his commitment to a relationship of faith, hope and love to God. There is a disparity in this case between rational reflection prior to a decision on the one hand, and the absolute quality of the decision itself on the other. This disparity is also noted in the 'analysis fidei' when one considers the relationship between the relative human certainty of the arguments provided by fundamental theology for the existence of a divine revelation and the absolute commitment of faith. The same problem is evidently involved here, whatever solutions are offered by the various theories of the 'analysis fidei'. At this point we cannot enter into further discussion of these solutions, nor is there any need

[3] *Denz.* 1540, 1565 sqq.

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to do so.

In any event the various theories are scarcely satisfactory. Either they do not pay sufficient attention to the radical difference between the grounds of faith provided by fundamental theology and faith itself, or they simply appeal to the decision of 'the will'. But today it is precisely the former difference which is most strikingly evident. As regards the latter solution, the will is supposed to overcome the disparity mentioned above but it is never made clear what justifies a man in [161] making the absolute assent of faith. Recourse is made in this connection to illumination of grace through the Holy Spirit, to the grace of faith; now obviously this is a reality, but one must give some clearer indication what exactly it is, how it works and how it can overcome the disparity.

The question then remains: is there any theological theory to explain how the inadequacy and limitations of one's awareness of reasons and motives for an absolute decision can be overcome in a justifiable and at least 'manageable' way, when it comes to making such a total commitment?

METHODS OF 'CHOICE'

The elements at least of such a theological and spiritual theory seem to me to be present in Christian tradition, although it has not been properly considered in the 'analysis fidei' and in fundamental theology in general, nor fully worked out from a theological point of view. The clearest introduction to it is to be found, albeit more in the form of technical spiritual instructions than of a fully developed theological exposition, in the rules of choice contained in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius.[4] This applies especially to the instructions which are called the first and second time of choice.[5] Naturally we cannot here undertake a detailed exegesis or a theological exposition of the teaching of Ignatius about choice. In fact this teaching has recently been subjected to extensive and penetrating analysis and considerable differences of theological opinion exist among scholars.[6] For our brief sketch it is [162] enough to say that the doctrine of Ignatius in its general outline can and should be used to resolve the contemporary problem of fundamental theology which concerns us here, assuming that the doctrine receives a clearer theological interpretation. For this purpose it is not necessary to go into the differences of theological interpretation given to the ideas of

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[4] Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* (London, 1963) nos. 169-489.

[5] *Ibid.* nos. 175, 176.

[6] A bibliographical survey of the more recent studies is given by D. Gil, *La consolacion sin causa precedente* (Montevideo, 1971), pp. 121-128. In this work the author tries to provide an overall survey by means of a historical investigation of the relevant texts and commentaries. Recent investigations can be attached to the publication of the 'Monumenta Ignatiana'. In general, three important groups of interpretation evolve from this starting point: a Spanish, a French and a German. While the Spanish interpretations seem to concentrate on the exact analysis of the texts themselves, the French and German studies try to confront the contemporary situation. In the French context the *Dictionnaive de Spiritualité* (Paris, 1937 sqq.), initiated by M. Viller, became an important source and point of reference (8 vols. so far). In addition the influence of G. Fessard, *La dialectique des 'Exercices Spirituels' de Saint Ignace de Loyola* (Paris, 1956; new ed. 1966, two vols.), has become steadily stronger. For the present topic, see especially Vol. 1, 'Passage de l'avant a l'après', pp. 68-103. Cf. also the investigations in the periodical *Christus* (since 1954). In the German field of studies, see especially E. Przywara, *Dens semper maior. Theologie der Exerzitien,* 3 vols. (Freiburg i. Br., 1938-40). Of this work, H. Rahner said *(ZkTh* 64, 1940; p.171) that it 'leads theologically into the heart of the infinity of God, whence alone everything becomes clear'. H. Rahner should also be mentioned: most of his works on the subject are collected in *Ignatius the Theologian* (London, 1968). In this context, the author's study should be noted, since the basic ideas considered there are applied here to fundamental theology: 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola', *The Dynamic Element in the Church,* Quaestiones Disputatae 12 (Freiburg and London, 1964), pp. 84-156.

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Ignatius; we need only state that this teaching belongs to the study of fundamental theology and the 'analysis fidei', quite irrespective of how particular theologians interpret it in detail.

The above claim requires fuller justification. What does Ignatius intend with his rules of the first and second time of choice? The content of choice which interests him (e.g. a religious vocation) is of course rather different from our concern. But this does not alter the fact that in contrast to the third time of choice, Ignatius's goal is total commitment to the will of God recognised as such, without this knowledge being solely derived from rational reflection upon the legitimacy and necessity of the object of choice itself. An absolute decision to embrace the will of God founded upon rational consideration of the object is left by Ignatius to the third time of choice, but in his view this takes second place to the two others since it applies to cases where no decision has been possible at the first and second time of choice. Thus he assumes that reflection on the object does not provide a clear indication that it is the absolute and unambiguous will of God. In this he is considering a decision situation which corresponds exactly to the one we are discussing. Through rational reflection upon an object the person who has to make a decision considers the object in itself and asks whether it is right for him. The result is a relative certainty of a greater or lesser degree about the will of God. The conviction that it is in fact God's will and demands an absolute commitment arises only from the experience of grace. This [163] implies a lived synthesis of the categorial object of choice and the absolute freedom of the spirit directed to the immediate reality of God. God is present in this experience 'without intermediary' and is not displaced by the object of choice.[7]

It is evident that we have here a spiritual guide and at least the elements of a theological theory which can and should be transferred to the 'analysis fidei', and to fundamental theology in general.[8] For the categorial content of faith and its rational foundations which are proposed in fundamental theology certainly form an object of choice of the requisite kind. It can be grasped as the 'will of God', as genuinely willed by God and 'revealed', just in the manner which Ignatius described in the first and second time of choice.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 'CHOICE' FOR FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

We need not discuss further here the difficult problems involved in the precise theological meaning of the rules of choice. The cultural and historical background and the general conclusions arising from this teaching which are relevant to a theological and philosophical

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[7] Cf. G. Dumeige, 'Ignace de Loyola II. Experience et doctrine spirituelles', *DD Sp* 7, 1277-1306. Apart from the works already mentioned the following should also be noted: J. H. T. Van den Berg, *De onderscheiding dergeesten in de correspondentie van S. Ignatius* (Diss. Maastricht, 1958); H. Hagemann, 'Ignatian Discretion', *Woodstock Letters* 88 (1959), pp. 131-138; L. M. Estibalez, *Discernimiento de espiritus* (Bilbao, 1960); L.B. Bakker, *Die Lehre der Ignatius von Loyola von der Discretio spirituum* (Diss. Rome, 1963); F. Marxer, *Die inneren geistlichen Sinne* (Freiburg i. Br, 1963); M. A. Fiorito, 'Apuntes para una teologia del discernimiento de espiritus', *Ciencia e fe* 19 (1963), pp. 401-417 and 20 (1964), pp. 93-123; J. Ayestaran, *La experiencia de la divina consolacion* (Diss. Rome, 1964); P. Sbandi, *Eine Untersuchung zur zweiten Wahlzeit in den geistlichen Ubungen* (Diss. Innsbruck, 1966); E. Hernandez Gordils, *Que su santisima voluntad sintamos y aquella enteramente la cumplamos* (Diss. Rome, 1966); L. Marchand *El Espiritu Santo en los Ejercicios espirituales* (Diss. Rome, 1967); C. Lofy, *The Action of the Holy Spirit in the Autobiography of St. Ignatius* (Diss. Pierre, South Dakota, U.S.A., 1967); G. Bottereau, 'La Confirmation divine d'après le journal spirituel de S. Ignace', *RAM* 43 (1967), pp. 35-51.

[8] It seems that this was, almost unconsciously, investigated by P. Rousselot, *Les yeux de la foi.* The articles appeared in 1910 in *Les Recherches de Science Religieuse,* pp. 241-259 and 444-475. The fact that he did not make this dependence clear is overlooked even in recent studies: cf. E. Kunz, *Glaube-Gnade-Geschichte.* Die Glaubenstheologie des Pierre Rousselot S.J. (Frankfurt, 1969).

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anthropology cannot be dealt with in detail here. The significance of these rules of choice for our problem also depends on the detailed theological [164] interpretation given to the ideas of Ignatius. However the spiritual writers are not themselves agreed today precisely on this point. Nevertheless the truth remains that a theory dealing with a categorial object of choice which is regarded as embodying absolute divine obligation cannot but be of importance for fundamental theology, if it is seriously and realistically to get to grips with the contemporary situation. This applies exactly to the understanding of the object, rational yet incomplete, which in the last analysis is ascribed to God and to the experience of his grace-filled and direct presence.

A task for any genuine fundamental theology is to develop a theology of the Ignatian choice as a precondition of the availability of an absolute decision of faith. Such an openness must at least theoretically contain the process of reflection proper to fundamental theology, a process which never reaches a definitive conclusion. It is not a question of the 'technical' assistance of a 'man of God', if one may put the matter thus. In the Exercises this is the case since the purpose is to bring the individual person to a concrete decision in faith in his own particular situation. Certainly there will always be this task for 'mystagogues' or masters of the spiritual life, and for preachers of the Gospel. But there is also the theoretical demand for fundamental theology to try to bridge the gap mentioned above between the grounds of credibility of Christian revelation and the actual decision to believe. This has always been a topic discussed in fundamental theology but the question was never satisfactorily worked out. Today it seems an impossible task given the methods used up to now. The logical structure of the practical reason operating in matters of faith and the grammar of existential commitment[9] must be subjects for fundamental theology to discuss, but these are materially identical with the rules of choice proposed by Ignatius Loyola. At any rate it is beyond doubt that he tackled the heart of the problem in his Exercises.

Modern theology seeks some connecting link in its treatment of the 'analysis fidei' between the relative certainty of the insights of fundamental theology and the absolute character of the assent of faith by appealing to the illuminating power of the grace of faith,[10] and this certainly provides the elements of a satisfactory solution, but the grace [165] of faith must not appear as a theological postulate, a 'deus ex machina' which lies quite beyond verification, and this demands that some indication is given about what exactly the grace of faith is like. It must be made clear how it is to be grasped as the radical reference of the transcendence of man to the immediate reality of God, and therefore as a fundamental element present in human consciousness, i.e. a 'supernatural' formal object. Finally it has to be explained how this grace-filled reference to the immediate presence of God forms a synthesis, in a manner which is basically open to verification, with the categorial object of revelation, so that revelation acquires credibility and thus enables a man, albeit with total freedom, to give the absolute assent of faith.

J. H. Newman attempted to bridge the same gap with his theory of the 'illative sense' which created a unified credibility out of converging but disparate items of knowledge.[11] The positive elements in this doctrine certainly remain of permanent value but the question is still left open of what exactly this spiritual power of synthesis signifies, if it is not taken merely as a capacity proper to practical reason which seeks to retain its independence in every area of life in the face of the logical processes of theoretical reason. Clearly a decision of the practical reason is involved, and one which is directed to God himself and his free presence

[9] Cf. K. Rahner, *op. cit.* (footnote 6).
[10] Cf. in addition to P. Rousselot (footnote 8), H. Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone: the Way of Revelation* (London, 1968). Balthasar regards the interpretation of the Exercises given by G. Fessard as 'very dangerous', and himself agrees with E. Przywara.
[11] Cf. J. H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Granunar of Assent* ch. 9.

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in the contingencies of history which evade a totally rational analysis. The decision has a quality of uniqueness which cannot be covered by the general structure of the illative sense proper to practical reason. If one seeks to discover the specific character of this sense from a theological point of view, one may be led quite reasonably to consider the theology of the choice of an object in history. This object is recognised as the 'will of God', although the one making the choice is unable to reduce the divine volition entirely to the objective legitimacy of the object chosen. Again we return to the postulate of a theology of decision of a kind at least intimated by Ignatius of Loyola.

Perhaps the somewhat depressing assertion would not be out of place that Jesuit *theology* has not always and in every respect brought the heritage of Ignatian spirituality into effective use in the course of history. One could point to many lines of thought found in this spirituality whose unique qualities have not been translated into theological reflection or accorded the weight which their intrinsic importance merits. One has the impression that Jesuits have regarded [166] Ignatius as a pious and holy man whose achievements earned him an important place in the history of the Church. But he has scarcely been treated in his own right as one of the central figures in the development of spirituality at the beginning of the modern period. Thus Jesuits have a duty towards the founder of the order which has not yet been fulfilled in their theological work.[12] To the retort that Ignatius was no theologian, one should point out that he was more, not less, than a theologian, and that in consequence he can set tasks even for tomorrow's theology. One of these tasks we may have indicated in the brief compass of this essay.

[12] This statement is made without regard to the works mentioned in the above footnotes because these works have had practically no effect in the realm of theology.

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[167]

PART THREE

Listening to Scripture

[169]

10

THE ACCEPTANCE IN FAITH OF THE TRUTH OF GOD

In every period of history the experience of human need and guilt arouses the expectation among men of an answer from God which would bestow forgiveness and salvation upon man, both individually and in his existence in society and history. This gives depth and clarity to what one can say about the mutual dependence of faith and knowledge.[1] These ideas should now be brought into critical contact with a contemporary situation which may seem to make man deaf to the call of faith, but could perhaps bring him to a more acute sensitivity in a new way.

THE PRESENT SITUATION: A GOD-LESS WORLD.

Until the beginning of the modern period the human picture of the world was so modest and transparent that nearly everywhere the limit was soon reached; its spatial and temporal dimensions were so constructed in human thought that God was for actual experience practically a piece of the world, who dwelt perhaps in heaven but in a sort of heaven which was a continuation, in the same mode, of the spatio-temporal world. Today the picture of the world has been transformed and deepened to an extraordinary degree and the whole situation has altered. The world has become a self-contained whole which is not [170] open to God at particular points and does not flow into the divine sphere; it does not experience the impact of divine causality at specific individual points which are open to human observation (prescinding for the moment from the supernatural history of salvation). It is only as a whole, and therefore in a less demonstrable manner, that it points to God as its precondition. This easily leads to the conclusion that God cannot be found anywhere, for everywhere it is the world that one meets.

Towards the end of the 18th century and during the 19th there existed a theoretical and practical atheism which was so criminally naive and culpably superficial that it asserted God's non-existence with complete certainty. It produced no men of genius and now it belongs basically to the past, although it is still today a mass psychosis and the dogma of a militant world view. The case is rather different with the 'atheism of anxiety', if the phenomenon we have in mind may be so described. The horror at God's absence in the world, the dismay at his silence, at his self-imprisonment in his own remoteness, at the meaningless secularisation of the world's laws, where this involves man and not nature, this

[1] This essay was originally published as thesis XVIII in the collection, '*Warum Glauben?' Begründung und Verteidigung des Glaubens in einundvierzig Thesen,* eds. W. Kern and G. Stachel (Wurzburg, 1967) pp. 169-176. There the author referred to what was said by the other writers, since it was necessary to bring out the transition from the first part of the work, 'Man and God', to the second part, 'Jesus Christ and his Church'.

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whole experience leads a man to suppose that he must profess theoretical atheism; it is in fact a genuine intuition of the depths of existence with which for long the customary thinking and speech of Christianity has not come to terms. At root it is the experience that God does not belong inside one's picture of the world, that he is really God and not some demiurge or the main spring of the universal clock, and that for every normal event a cause exists which is not God himself.

This experience is falsely interpreted if one supposes that only this-worldly, a-theistic experience is granted to man. The point is to show how man always transcends this experience and that the experience of the 'atheism of anxiety' basically indicates the growth of God in the spirit of man.

PRIOR CONDITIONS

A man never fashions his picture of the world with complete originality or freedom from prior assumptions. He always starts with an inherited world view. We begin with a 'given' world, not only a world of objects but also a mental world. This mental world, behind which we cannot entirely penetrate, has a double face, one metaphysical and one historical. The metaphysical assumptions consist of a series [171] of propositions which are continually being partially 'verified' by experience but can never be actually proved, propositions of the kind that 'worldliness' is a universal phenomenon which always and everywhere conforms to the law of non-contradiction, that everything has a sufficient reason. Such preliminary, a priori structures of thought and being only reveal their legitimacy to those who freely entrust themselves to them; there is no point of reference outside them from which they can be justified.

We do not inherit merely a set of metaphysical principles; we also receive an already formed world picture which has been moulded by tradition. Even if we regard it with the greatest mistrust, engage in revolutionary protest against it, we are nevertheless not free of it; we are still involved with this world view and not with another. Even in the natural sciences we only discover what can be found in the direction in which investigation has been conducted. The discovery can never disclose what was overlooked or missed, or prove that the missing element would not have been of greater importance than the one found. Neither an individual nor a historical period can break out in every direction simultaneously and make a total discovery of everything; every conquest is also a renunciation. The only question is, how to make the sort of renunciation in one's conquests which does not involve a *fatal* loss.[2]

THE BASIC FIRST PRINCIPLE

If the scientific picture of the world is so conditioned, then it cannot claim to be the primary and most fundamental element of human existence. The truth of religion, the knowledge of God and faith in his historical revelation comes before it. We must always hold fast to the conviction that there are not two truths, which contradict each other and are mutually exclusive. In fact in cases of apparent conflict both sides must engage in honest self-criticism and try to discover the cause of the seeming contradiction. But religion is not simply to be

[2] Only in this sense may the shortened form of the doctrines of faith be used, a 'dangerous' expression in theological discussion. In any event a lively awareness is required which basically admits that every gain is bought at the price of a loss and that, in consequence, the vital preservation of the Christian message in a living form is only to be expected from the community of believers as a whole.

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handed over to science and its world picture. Religion is a higher reality since [172] it arises from a prior and more fundamental level of existence. Every process of constructing and imagining a world, every attempt to order and comprehend the multiplicity of things occurs within the prior horizon of understanding, is directed to the incomprehensible, the unimaginable reality we call God. This reality is not a part of the world or of a picture of the world; it is an incomprehensible infinity[3] lying behind the world's multiplicity. In so far as it is the transcendent source and goal of knowledge and cannot be conceived in objective categories, it must be thought of as a personal spirit,[4] since it is also the foundation of all personal beings existing in the world.

The transcendence of God has been an explicit and permanent theme of Christian metaphysics. It has been realised that God does not belong to the world picture as the ultimate hypothesis, but rather forms the precondition of the world and knowledge of the world, in such a way that direct human perception of God is impossible and only indirect knowledge lies open to man. He is grasped as the unconditioned, to which the experience of multiplicity and its limits points without consigning its inner reality to human comprehension. Nevertheless it is only in the contemporary situation that this knowledge is explicitly entering the realm of lived emotion and the real heart of human existence.

CHRISTIANITY AND RELIGIONS

Set in the general context of religion and the encounter with God, Christianity does not stand as a rival to the scientific picture of the world which so deeply marks our contemporary thinking. But Christian faith does not merely consist of the silent worship of the nameless God; it is also the word of God addressed to man in human language which must name in a range of particular conceptual propositions the reality of God which lies beyond names. This faith consists, therefore, of history, institution, authority, commandment.

[173] In this more concrete sense competition is more evident between Christianity and a world picture, and this seems to produce antinomies and conflict. The revelation of God is expressed in human words and concepts which are in part conditioned by pictures of the world. We do not need at this point to discuss the well known tensions which over the past centuries have burdened the relationship between the Catholic doctrines of faith and modern science, the question, for instance, of the post-Copernican system, the age of the world, the theory of evolution as applied to the physical nature of man, and similar topics. Over the years the apparent contradictions between the two sides which these questions contain have been overcome, and the topics themselves are today only of methodological interest in that they constitute a warning to each side against the transgression of proper limits.

More fundamentally we can say that we are more sensitive than earlier and less complex generations to analogical terms applied to God, his truth and his saving acts. Expressions such as 'Jahweh roars', 'it grieves God', which appear quite naturally in the Old Testament, are not so easily employed today. Whether this is altogether an advantage is a matter we can leave open at the moment. To lessen the imaginative clarity of an expression represents a more serious danger than is often supposed. But in general the constricting sense of the inexact and pictorial character of talk about God, even if it appears in revelation, is simply an

[3] Cf. W. Kern: Human knowledge always goes beyond itself to the infinite mystery of God, which only God himself can reveal to us. Thus, knowledge and faith are dependent upon each other. *Warum Glauben?* (Wurzburg, 1967), pp. 151-159.

[4] Cf. J. de Vries: The intentional ordering of life proves the existence of a spirit which transcends the world; also O. Muck: Human knowledge and will, which naturally strive for infinite being and value, are only possible if God is the goal of this striving. Both in: *Warum Glauben?* (Wurzburg, 1967), pp. 100-109 and 118-127.

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unavoidable fact of our times, and one which may in some ways be a blessing. For to grasp that God is an incomprehensible and inexpressible being who transcends all our propositions is a blessing, and means a growth in the knowledge of God. This knowledge is bought at the cost of the sadness of wandering in shadows and images, in the words Cardinal Newman had written on his tomb. But this is no justification for doubting the truth and importance of the meaning intended by these inadequate propositions. The knowledge they contain is more valuable than all worldly knowing. To be able to stammer about God is in the end more important than to speak precisely about the world. Theology knows well enough that stammering is all it can do. The difficulty attributed to theology by men today is seldom as novel as they imagine since they are unaware of the centuries of labour and effort which has been expended in the attempt to expound and interpret the revealed word of God.

But however untiring the efforts to provide clarity and meaning, theologians also realise that *fundamentally* they are reduced to stammering [174] when it comes to speaking of God. All possible explanation leaves the mystery of God intact. Theology is not the unmasking of the mysterious in the self-evident but rather a gaze into the bright darkness of divine mysteries. Total clarity would be a sure sign that the spurious self-evidence of human rationalism had been mistaken for the truth of God.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE

There are other ideas arising from the inadequacy *of all* human concepts in speaking of God which have a closer connection to the scientific picture of the world of an earlier age. When we say, God is in heaven, the Son of God came down to earth, descended into hell, etc., then a world picture is evidently assumed which is no longer ours, although it retained its validity in theology until the 18th century. The collapse of this picture of the world seems to demand a ‘demythologisation’ of the biblical message. This question takes us into the territory of exegesis but one basic observation is in order as a preparatory move to make one more sensitive to the word embodied in historical revelation. Considered from a more fundamental standpoint, demythologisation is not required for two reasons: first ‘mythological’ statements retain their meaning even after the disappearance of the world picture in which they originated.[5] Secondly this meaning is the same as that originally intended. It can be shown that even at the time the intended content of the statements were not basically identified with the material provided by the current world view. It is true that in past ages there was little conscious reflection on the distinction between the form and content of propositions. But it was realised, even if on the edge of consciousness as it were, that such a distinction was both possible and necessary. In the case of eschatological statements, for instance, which presuppose the ancient cosmology, such freedom and so little consistency is employed that even at the time it was clearly recognised that not everything could be taken with absolute literalness. Today indeed, the intended meaning can be given a more valid sense, which is independent of the shift of world view. Just as the ancients evidently realised that ‘sitting on the right hand of God’ is an [175] imaginative construction, and yet still expresses genuine meaning, so we can recognise today that the ascension into heaven does not mean a change of location in our physical space, and yet has a valid significance.

Plainly, then, these statements have not become poorer in content for us, and yet the awareness of faith today does share the increasing opacity common to the general scientific

[5] On the exegetical validity of a limited demythologisation, cf. A. Vögtle: not every form of a ‘demythologisation’ of the New Testament is false to Scripture; in, *Warum Glauhen?* (Wurzburg, 1967), pp. 209-220.

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level of consciousness (the developments of modern physics would be a case in point). But the fact of diminishing transparency does not need in the long run to lessen the vital impact of statements of faith. But, as was suggested earlier, greater opacity betokens a gain as well as a loss. It lessens the danger of the naive reduction of religious realities; the inexpressible greatness of God and of human existence before God become clearer. Certainly modern man must first settle down to this new situation and such a process of change demands time.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

The change we have described does not mean the escape from the limits of history into a non-historical mastery of the message of revelation; rather it points in a new way to the necessity for man of grasping the word of God in so far as it bestows meaning from within his given situation. He cannot embrace this situation totally in advance by reflection. The reverse is in fact true: revelation first answers the question for him which is signified by his actual situation. The specific historical and metaphysical existence of man cannot be constructed by scientific reflection even on the intellectual level. Religion, seen as the knowledge of God and reception of his revealed word, is prior to the reflective, scientific picture of the world. The 19th century belief that science by itself could provide a basic structure for human existence which was free from any prior assumptions expresses an outlook which, historically speaking, is now dying. That in fact the enterprise could not succeed is not of any particular importance. It has become plain that to expect science to serve as a ‘creed’ for the foundation of human existence is to overburden its capacities.[6] A scientific picture of the world cannot manufacture a picture of man. The reverse is in fact true: prior to and behind science there lie metaphysics and faith, higher [176] and more comprehensive forces which with all the knowledge belonging to them are essentially ordered to freedom and commitment.

A serious attempt to come to terms with this insight necessarily yields a directive of crucial importance: to prevent reflective science becoming a poisonous and random curiosity and a relativistic capacity of instant creation, the roots of the unreflective understanding and harmony of being must not be cut off; rather they must penetrate at least as deeply into the subsoil of existence as the objectifying reflections of science which range ever further in the world of secular experience in all its extent and variety.

The remarkable thing about the present situation is that science itself is coming to this realisation and does not have to be forced to accept it from outside. In the same way philosophy is aware of its limits, without the constant reminder of an opposing religious faith being necessary. By referring to history and tradition in this way man learns to listen to the word of God which is the object of his hope, the saving answer given by the living God in human history which offers meaning to man. It is spoken in the shadows and parables of human language, for how else could it be understood? But it contains the promise of absolute truth which justifies and makes possible all the creative thought and action of man.

[6] Cf. K. Rahner, ‘Science as a “Confession”?’ *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 385-400.

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[177]

11

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIAN DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

The title of this essay might arouse expectation for an exegetical study.[1] The following reflections, however, are concerned with the question of how a dogmatic theologian can deal with the books of the Old Testament, given that he maintains the dogmatic principles of inspiration and inerrancy in the Old Testament and has an impartial attitude to the results of modern exegesis.

It is not an easy matter to bridge the gap between dogmatic theology and exegesis in the case of the New Testament, and so it is hardly surprising that the same task is still more difficult in the case of the Old. The question is one of course which has occupied the attention of Christian theology at every period. From the very beginning the Church claimed the Old Testament to be its own holy book and proclaimed *its* God, i.e. the father of Jesus Christ, to be the author of the history and book of the Old Testament.[2] In this connection rules of hermeneutics necessary for the understanding of [178] the Law and the Prophets, as the New Testament described the Old,[3] had to be thought out; various suggestions were put forward to solve the problem. In the same way the biblical encyclicals of the last hundred years from Leo XIII to Pius XII were intended to facilitate the understanding of the Old Testament by emphasising the basic criteria of interpretation, so that modern exegesis of the Old Testament and dogmatic teaching about the bible should be in harmony. It should not be doubted or disputed that these pronouncements of the Church's magisterium and the theological opinions they support were quite justified and still retain their value. The basic idea that none of the very diverse literary genres present in the Old Testament is necessarily an obstacle to its being the inspired word of God naturally retains its significance, and its application resolves a whole series of questions are connected to the problem mentioned above. The same applies to the important notion that the meaning these literary genres express is in harmony with the inspiration and inerrancy of the bible, given an unbiased, precise and correct understanding of the genre in question.

THE RANGE OF THE TOPIC

Does this idea really solve all the relevant questions? Or must the answers gained by its use be considered within a larger and more comprehensive framework, without diminishing their importance in the slightest, in order to find a really satisfactory solution. From this point of view it must be verified whether the usual appeal to the various literary genres in the case of problems raised by the Old Testament can give adequate and convincing weight to the

[1] On the problem of the relation of exegesis and dogma, cf. K. Rahner, 'Exegesis and Dogmatic Theology', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 67-93; on the importance of the Old Testament, 'Old Testament Theology', *Sacramentum Mundi* IV (London and New York, 1969), pp. 286-290 (bibliog.). 'Theos in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 79-148; 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966); 'The Secret of Life', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 141-152.
[2] This was especially important against Marcion; cf. H. Rahner, 'Markion', *LThK* VII (Freiburg, 1962), 92 sq.; J. Quasten, *Patrology* I (Utrecht and Brussels, 1950), pp. 268-272; B. Altaner, *Patrology* (Freiburg and London, 1960), pp. 143-144.
[3] For this expression, cf. Mt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Lk 16:16; 24:44; Jn 1:45; Rev 24:14; 28:23; Rom 3:21.

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inspiration and inerrancy of these books. If not, then it would be necessary to propose explicitly another principle in addition to the literary genres. This principle is often overlooked, although its application can alone make the idea of biblical inerrancy, as this is traditionally deduced from inspiration, clear and intelligible. Of course such efforts would be superfluous from the start, were we to adopt the position taken by many Catholic theologians today, which is opposed to the pronouncement of the magisterium, or at least to its manner of formulation, and which allows for the occurrence of error even in the inspired text. The distinction used to be made between propositions of a historical and scientific kind and those of a properly religious type, and the [179] possibility of error was allowed in the former case but not in the latter. Today, however, this distinction is frequently not drawn. If it is allowed or asserted that erroneous propositions can and do occur in the bible, then this usually includes statements of any kind, and it is only the substance of Scripture as a whole which is regarded as free from error.

This tempting possibility of resolving the problem in one swift blow will not be pursued here since we share the traditional view that in the Old Testament, at least statements of moral and religious import do not contain error. Of course this means excluding errors only on condition that the properly intended meaning embodied in the literary genre under consideration is correctly understood. With this proviso genuine errors which concern religious truths of the Old Testament cannot be admitted. The question, however, remains open whether in fact the solution proposed here is net in harmony with the true intentions of those who support the possibility of scriptural error. It would then simply be a matter of a difference of terminology and of the binding force, if any, of the official terminology of the Church upon a theologian.

SPECIFIC DIFFICULTIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The solution we propose has grown out of consideration of specific difficulties which arise for the dogmatic theologian today in dealing with the Old Testament. Our first task is to point these out in order to make the ensuing line of thought intelligible. The difficulties we mention can be overcome by means of the solution which should be added to the traditional theory, or, to put the matter slightly differently, should be worked out on the basis of the latter theory. This does not mean that the theologian wishes to offer the exegete new material. Rather he is simply presenting the problems in a straightforward manner without providing the complete body of exegetical proof. Certainly the theologian will put in some reflections of his own here and there in course of his exposition, in order to clarify the difficulties as he perceives them on the basis of his theological convictions. The modern exegete may of course take a different view, since he has been accustomed to leave the task to the theologian of showing how the Old Testament text can be reconciled with the dogmatic principle of scriptural inerrancy. Here we are not claiming to enumerate all the problems or to arrange them in an enlightening systematic structure.

[180] A first well known problem for the theologian is the *heno-theism*[4] contained in the older parts of the Old Testament which stands in a certain opposition to the monotheism proper of the Jewish religion. For these early texts provide evidence that Yahweh was the only God to be worshipped by the people of his covenant, but that this position did not exclude the existence of other gods belonging to other nations. It is true that many Old

[4] Cf. W. Holsten, *RGG* III (Tübingen, 1959), 225; J. Haekel, *LThK* V (Freiburg, 1960), 233. For the Old Testament question, both general and particular, see Fr. Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion* (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 323, 460.

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Testament passages merely bear witness to the *historical fact* of henotheism and in this sense are true; one cannot derive from these statements any conclusion about the objective validity of henotheism, since it is here a matter of historical narrative and not of theological truths. This explanation may apply in a number of instances, especially in cases where elements from an earlier understanding of the world and from a more primitive language were used as poetic texts at a later period. But all this does not rule out the view that there are henotheistic assertions in the Old Testament which, at least at an early stage, were meant in a theological sense. To point out in answer to this that such texts would have received a new meaning when included in the broader framework of God's inspired word seen as a whole is merely, in my view, to push the problem one stage further back. For if such statements are transposed into a new context which relativises and transforms them, if, that is, an appeal is made to the 'analogia fidei',[5] then it would still be necessary to work out their meaning more clearly and explain how the text in question was in origin essentially open to such new interpretation and suited for it. But this already leads us to the theory which we wish to offer as a solution.

A second question affecting the inerrancy of the Old Testament arises from the fact that the more ancient layers of these books know nothing of individual survival after death regarded as a positive phenomenon. In this case, too, the lack of knowledge does not necessarily imply that the unknown state of affairs is denied. Further it could be shown that pessimistic assertions about death and sheol do not refer to the condition of the dead *after death*, but rather to the experience of death itself. Or we might say that such statements may [181] be regarded as entirely correct in that they express a permanently valid and tenable notion of the 'limbus patrum'[6] in the history of salvation. But even so explanations of this kind do not offer an entirely convincing answer to the problem. For the pious Jew in the Old Testament experienced death as his exclusion from the saving history of God and his people, and so from the saving power of God himself. He gave religious expression to this feeling and drew moral and religious conclusions from it. So his ignorance of existence after death and its positive worth passed over to a direct denial of such an existence. This on the face of it appears a case of basic error.

A third problem centres quite understandably on the egoistic nationalism which is given religious expression in the Old Testament and for which theological justification is sought. Leaving aside the later prophets, we see Yahweh taking so primitive and exclusive a stance in favour of the people of his covenant that political and military victories are quite naturally treated as acts of Yahweh, and the ensuing death and destruction of other nations accepted without question as the simple consequence of his partisan support for Israel. Even the cruelties of the contemporary war ethic are quite logically traced back to the positive will of God, who desires the extermination of his enemies and watches over obedience to this commandment with threats of punishment. Earlier attempts have been made to answer these questions by saying that God is the sovereign Lord of the life of all men, and therefore can champion the cause of one nation in order to forward his providential designs for salvation; thus he is able not merely to allow the extermination of enemies but even to command it.[7] In this connection there can be no doubt of the moral quality of this seemingly egoistic nationalism: the people of the covenant were positively allowed to act in a way which was held to be immoral for other nations. On this ground we are justified in regarding this as nationalism. The conception of the covenant was not that of an ideology which merely sought

[5] Cf. L. Scheffczyk, 'Analogy of Faith', *Sacramentum Mundi* I (London and New York, 1968), pp. 25-27. More fully, E. Mechels, *Analogie bei Erich Przywara und Karl Barth* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1974).
[6] Cf. P. Gumpel, *LTHK* VI (Freiburg, 1961), 1057-1059.
[7] Examples of this line of argument are to be found in moral theology text books; cf. also, N. Peters, 'Die spezielle Sittenlehre', in G. Esser andJ. Maus bach, *Religion – Christentum – Kirche* II (Kempten, 1923), pp. 83-96.

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to give positive value to a normal antagonism between nations.

Finally there are the well known difficulties arising from the prophecies and the historical and theological interpretations made by prophets living at the time of the fall of the kingdom and after. The [182] future they proclaim contains contradictions which cannot be simply resolved by an appeal to the element of freedom constituted by faith or apostasy which would determine the actual shape of these future events. In conclusion we should mention the problem which stems from the acceptance of religious and theological conceptions found in the world surrounding the Old Testament, for these have an influence upon the theological statements contained in the Old Testament and lead to results which cannot easily be given internal consistency. This brings us to the question whether such assertions and laws can really claim to be divine revelation.

All these difficulties have only been briefly noted here but they can scarcely be resolved by means of literary genres alone without doing violence to the facts, even though the latter principle does in general offer a solution to numerous problems.

THE HIGHER UNITY OF THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS

Where can we discover the appropriate principle and context by which to understand and explain the difficulties we mentioned, in such a way that error is not included? The answer presupposes that the theological character of the statement in question is taken into careful consideration. For only as theological assertions can they claim to express divine revelation in the proper sense of the term. It is only, too, from this perspective that the meaning of inerrancy and error can be accurately defined with reference to these statements. Of course they can be declared true or erroneous in so far as they correctly describe the object to which they correspond. But it remains to be shown nevertheless that the intended object in theology is *God* and nothing else. All that is other than God can in principle only constitute the material content of a statement of revelation and therefore possess a corresponding inerrancy if and when this content is related to God. Taken in isolation by itself it cannot be the object of revelation since, as an inner worldly state of affairs, it is in principle open to secular human understanding and is thus not the right sort of object to be revealed in a personal, divine self-disclosure.

For this reason perception of an inner-worldly reality can only be an instance of revelation if, and in so far as, the object itself and knowledge of it are set within the spiritual movement by which a man accepts in faith the personal self-communication of God through grace and the Spirit which constitutes the primary event of revelation. In [183] this way he can appropriate the inner-worldly reality, since in it the relationship to the self-revelation of God unfolds.[8] The description of such an inner-worldly state of affairs would not in this case be erroneous, in the sense of a revealed truth, to the degree to which the statement and its content did not displace the openness of the spiritual movement to the direct reality of God. With regard to revelation inerrancy of this sort does not demand essentially and in every instance that such a proposition, considered by itself apart from its place within this spiritual movement, i.e. according to purely secular standards and criteria, should correspond to the facts and in this sense be free from error.

The positive inclusion of such a statement and its content within the primary revelation, i.e. the movement of the spirit caused by God's self-revelation and directed to the immediate divine presence, can occur in a provisional way if the statement is experienced and accepted,

[8] Cf. K. Rahner, *Hearers of the Word* (London and Sydney, 1969); 'Theology and Anthropology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London, 1972), pp. 28-45.

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without reflective awareness of its goal, as an ongoing process open to an unplanned future. In addition, however, the absolute goal of this movement, i.e. the immediate divine reality, can be explicitly and consciously recognised as the fundamental horizon of understanding and of interpretation of all inner-worldly propositions. Furthermore it is possible that the successful attainment by this spiritual movement of the direct presence of God may be affirmed and experienced as a reality and not merely as a possibility. In the first case where the ultimate horizon of understanding, which constitutes revelation and inerrancy, is grasped and made actual in particular objects of knowledge, we find the manner of revelation proper to the Old Testament. If one goes beyond this to the direct presence of God, then we encounter the mode of revelation proper to the New Testament.

THE OPENNESS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

To gain a better understanding of what has been said, we should note that only Christianity possesses, or rather establishes, a single binding canon of Old Testament books.[9] The extent and the binding theological character of the books collected in the Old Testament can only be [184] defined for us, and indeed in itself, by reference to the New Testament, even if this collection of books existed before Jesus Christ and was respected as sacred scripture in pre-Christian Judaism. However the canonicity which may be attached to them cannot for Christians pass over, independently of Jesus Christ, to the sacred writings of other religions despite the recognition that these books are in some measure special.

We must also reflect that the individual books of the Old Testament, and still more particular statements within them, can only be interpreted as possessing theological significance in so far as they are read and understood within the framework of the whole of the Old Testament. The inclusion of a particular writing in the corpus of the Old Testament can be recognised as valid for us by reference to Christ, in that this corpus forms a written expression and description of the history of salvation, which, though pre-Christian, leads directly to Christ and possesses normative value for a Christian. In this process of inclusion the actual event of inspiration is to be located; only within the totality of the Old Testament can the particular statements of particular books be correctly interpreted and understood as being free from error.

Thirdly we should remember that the Old Testament collection is a record of the history of God and his people and thus expresses a spiritual movement which is open to the uncontrollable activity of the God of history. Theoretical assertions should not be separated from this record, if they are to be correctly understood and are true. Of course the absolute goal of this open-ended movement is not consciously grasped on this level, as it is later in the New Testament when the goal is achieved in Jesus Christ. If the openness of the history, contained in the covenant and promise and governed by the sovereign and unpredictable freedom of God, is recognised as the basic principle of understanding proper to the Old Testament,[10] a principle which is explicitly expressed and widely assumed, then there is available a hermeneutical principle by which to understand the particular statements of the Old Testament and to make intelligible the real inerrancy of these truths. This inerrancy is to be found in the fact that the particular phenomena and the statements referring to them are always open to the spiritual movement of history ordered to the sovereign mastery of God. This openness is permanently present and is accepted in faith. [185] The spiritual movement

[9] On the canon of scripture, cf. K. Rahner, *LThK* V (Freiburg, 1960), 1283 sq.; on the Old Testament, P. Katz, 'The Old Testament Canon in Palestine and Alexandria', *ZNW* 46 (1956), pp. 191-217.
[10] This concept is intended to cover both pre-Christian Jewish history and the book which witnesses to it.

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is of course brought about by the self-communication of God in grace.

What has been proposed so far may seem more or less self-evident. The position, however, we have adopted becomes more critical when it is assumed that there can be statements about inner-worldly phenomena in this positive revelation which can be 'true', although considered in themselves outside this ultimate horizon of understanding they do not correspond to the intended inner-worldly reality, and on this level are false. In other words inner-worldly states of affairs which in themselves are not grasped correctly and 'false' interpretations of them can nevertheless positively assist the absolute movement towards God. In so far as they achieve this, they can and should be rightly described as true in the sense of truth which consists in the open-ended movement to God arising from God's own self-communication and the grace and revelation it contains. Thus, to put the matter briefly, inner-worldly error can lead to absolute truth. This error must then be itself 'true' because it is taken up into the movement directed to the absolute divine reality.

This possibility seems to me to be the critical point of the theory put forward here. And yet nothing new is being proposed except the application of a well known and accepted principle to our basic problem. It cannot seriously be denied that an inner-worldly confusion and the error attached to it can be the medium of saving action, through which faith, hope, and the love of God come to fulfilment. In consequence it can and should be called true in cases where it is properly established that it is positively integrated in the spiritual movement directed to God himself. Of course in most instances in real life we cannot have certain knowledge of this. We can only, therefore, measure the inner-worldly misinterpretations according to inner-worldly criteria, understand them in a secular horizon of meaning and ultimately treat such confusions and our comprehension of them as cases of error.

But if it is established in a particular case that something which is mistaken and incorrect from an inner-worldly standpoint positively assists the absolute movement towards God, then we are justified in declaring such an interpretation to be true, as long as we do not intend to use the analogy of 'simul justus et peccator'[11] and prefer to call these propositions simultaneously 'true and false'. The latter option appears [186] untenable both because it creates a scarcely intelligible paradox and because the linguistic usage of the Church stands against it.

Since the history of the Old Testament from Abraham on is the direct pre-history of Jesus Christ, it is positively directed as a whole to the immediate presence of God. In so far as particular events and propositions are recognised as legitimate parts of this history, the propositions must be treated as true; their legitimacy means here that the historical movement can only find practical realisation through particular phenomena and their interpretation.

THE APPLICATION OF THE SOLUTION

The solution we have reached to the interpretation of particular Old Testament statements which can be considered true, despite all the difficulties attached to them, should now be applied to the line of thought to which the fact of their truth gives rise. Thus it should be made clearer how the assertions in question can be made intelligible and shown to be true. Here we can only offer a few brief and simple comments on the practical application of this theory. For example, is a man who regards himself only as a henotheist not nearer to the God of salvation history, and therefore closer to the truth, if a state of polytheism exists around him which he cannot personally remove, than a person who attempts in this situation the

[11] Cf. K. Rahner, 'What is a Dogmatic Statement?', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 42-66.

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impossible task of being a monotheist? Under these conditions the latter could perhaps mean no more than the abandonment of the God of a specific history of salvation, the God, that is, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in favour of the shadowy figure of the God of the philosophers. If, on the other hand, he declares his exclusive loyalty in a henotheistic sense to the God of the covenant, then by maintaining the contrast between theoretical henotheism and exclusive allegiance to Yahweh he achieves the clearest recognition of the living God open to him. In this situation henotheism is the goad of absolute acknowledgement of Yahweh and as such possesses greater truth than the abstract form of monotheism.

The history of truth is one which cannot satisfactorily be organised by means of our system of logic. If we are placed because of this history in an existential situation in which we are explicitly summoned by the hope of eternal life, whether we wish it or not, then there is no way back for us to the condition in which the people of the Old Testament found themselves and which prevented them from looking beyond their collective and inner-worldly concept of salvation history. [187] If we did do so, we would be denying our ultimate destiny in the direct experience of God. By contrast, in the context of the Old Testament, this state of affairs possessed a positive function in the history of salvation, for it was the means of achieving a relationship of total surrender to the sovereignty of God's freedom. At that period it could be an expression of the truth since it was the only real way available of treating life with absolute seriousness.

The egoistic nationalism of Old Testament Judaism was certainly not revealed as such and was only willed by God in the sense in which the whole history of the world is willed; here, however, we cannot without ambiguity apply the distinction between 'willed' and 'permitted' to specific historical periods. But in a particular historical period exclusive, egoistic nationalism could, at least partially and over a long stretch of time, be one practical way in which a man could put himself totally at the disposal of God as Lord of this history. Thus statements about such a form of nationalism could be true. The war ethic, with all its cruelties, was perhaps the only means, given the circumstances of ancient Israel, of enabling Israel to assert its identity as the people of the covenant, so that the war ethic could be perceived at that time as the will and revelation of God. In that period it could be the only possible, and therefore the true, medium of obedience to the God of history. The predictions of particular prophets made as a result of the national catastrophe in Israel may be contradictory taken in detail. However in the circumstances of the time the individual prophet could only perhaps give expression to his hope in the saving Lord of history and the absolute future through these particular prophecies. Despite their internal contradiction they could, then, be counted as true in a deeper and more comprehensive sense, just as if the material content of their predictions were in simple harmony with each other.

The truths brought into the Old Testament from alien religions and cultures over a long historical period cannot easily be reconciled either with each other or with the basic assertions of belief in Yahweh. In addition the difficult problem can arise, for instance in the case of belief in angels or the devil, that conceptions originating outside the Old Testament could either be asserted absolutely or only within the hypothesis, which was in the end left undecided, that they were valid in themselves. The questions we have mentioned demand further investigation. However, whether the material content, which came from a variety of sources, is correct in itself or only assumed as a hypothesis, the statements under discussion did express the religious [188] truth of radical openness to the sovereign freedom of the grace of God.

THE CONCEPT OF TRUTH

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The interpretation of religious truth we have briefly sketched assumes a certain concept of truth which, though not opposed to the formal notion of truth in the usual sense, has nevertheless a specific character in the realm of religious truth. The conformity of a proposition to the reality it signifies, i.e. the general nature of propositional truth, refers in our case to the conformity of reality and proposition (with respect to the concrete, free self-surrender of man in faith) to the direct self-communication of God. The material and categorial content of the corresponding proposition cannot always be reconciled, either for the individual or for the human community, with the innermost personal act of commitment to God's self-communication. To this extent, therefore, propositions, even taken in a religious sense, can be false with respect to their material content and should in consequence be rejected. But on the other hand not all material content which is incorrect both in itself and with reference to the reality it signifies need be irreconcilable with a successful and authentic commitment of faith to God. This is certainly true, for example, in the case of practical judgements which lead to an action which is *subjectively* right but whose categorial content is *objectively* wrong.[12]

To show that the use of traditional terminology without such a conception of truth cannot solve the problem we are considering, we need only mention the 'expectation' of Jesus. Jesus may, though the issue is not important, have rejected the demand to give the exact time of the coming of the kingdom of God, but he did presumably operate on the assumption in his preaching that the kingdom would come soon. We can then ask whether taken as it stands this assumption was true or false. If one considers the 'soon' in isolation and does not integrate it into a higher unity with the unknown character of the day [189] of Yahweh – a synthesis for which scarcely any evidence can be discovered in the consciousness of Jesus – then one can speak of an 'error' in the expectation of Jesus. In this 'error' he would then have merely shared our human lot, for to err is better for historical man, and therefore for Jesus, than always to know everything. But if one assumes the concept of truth we have outlined *here* and maintains it consistently out of respect for the terminology of the magisterium, then there is no reason to speak of an error in Jesus' expectation. A genuine human consciousness must have an unknown future before it; the expectation of Jesus was the right way for him in his situation of realising an absolute commitment to the call of God's proximity. Only if human propositions are located in a static realm with no regard for history, on the assumption that human commitment for or against God can take place beyond time and history, only then can Jesus' objectification of the decision of salvation cause surprise or be regarded as erroneous.[13]

THE SOLUTION AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Finally we must add a cautionary word against wishing to apply the theory we have used to explain Old Testament statements to the theological truths of the New Testament in too naïve and hasty a manner. This does not mean that the theory has no significance at all for New Testament writings, though we cannot develop this point more fully here. But in the ultimate analysis Christianity appeals to the fundamental assertion that Jesus has surrendered himself

[12] Cf. on 'situation ethics', K. Rahner, 'On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics', *Theological Investigations* II (London and Baltimore, 1963), pp. 217-220; 'Zur "Situationsethik" aus ökumenischer Sicht', *Schriften zur Theologie* VI (Zurich, 1968), pp. 537-544. For the idea of 'mental concupiscence', cf. K. Rahner, 'On the Relationship between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975), pp. 94-102.

[13] On the notion of truth, cf. K. Rahner, *Zum Problem Unfehlbarkeit. Antworten auf die Anfrage von Hans Küng,* Quaestiones Disputatae 54 (Freiburg i. Br., 1971), pp. 9-70.

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to the incomprehensible reality of God in his death, i.e. in the destruction of the categorial, and has been accepted by God in this radical self-surrender. This statement contains a categorial, and therefore falsifiable, content if it is taken by itself, but its content is guaranteed in a radical and a priori manner from factual falsification in that it explicitly enables the categorial content, both in its appropriation (faith) and in its objective referent (fides quae: the victorious death of Jesus) to be handed over to the incomprehensible being of God. There is a basic difference between the statements of the New and Old Testaments, and so the specific concept of truth proper to the New Testament must be treated on its own. We must assert that the hermeneutic of the Old [190] and of the New Testament, in a theological and not a philological sense, must be distinguished, even though God is the author of both Testaments.[14] The propositions of the Old Testament are true on condition, and for the reason, that they signify the realisation of a commitment to the God of an unknown and open-ended promise; the propositions of the New Testament are true in that they proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus, in which the absolute future has already arrived and is no longer a mere possibility presented to the freedom of man.

[14] Cf. the confrontation with Marcion, summarised in the works referred to in footnote 2; more recently, B. Aland, 'Marcion, Versuch einer neuen Interpretation', *ZThK* 70 (1973), pp. 420-447.

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[191]

12

ON THE 'HISTORY OF REVELATION' ACCORDING TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The relationship between exegesis and dogmatic theology[1] labours under considerable difficulties. Scholars on both sides seem to grow further apart rather than come closer together. What can a dogmatic theologian say to an exegete in these circumstances?[2]

An important area of common effort could be the dogmatic constitution of the last Council which more than any other is relevant to exegesis: the dogmatic constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum*.[3] In this study only the short section 3 from the 1st Chapter of this conciliar text will be considered and a few critical remarks formulated to serve as a stimulus offered by a dogmatic theologian for an encounter between the two disciplines.

We do not intend here to dispute or doubt the central statement of this short passage; the purpose or our critical comments is rather to [192] make plain the degree to which such a conciliar text leaves open questions which demand an answer, if the concept of the *history of revelation*, which is of fundamental importance for the exegesis of scripture as written revelation, is to be clarified, so that it can in some measure be integrated into the contemporary horizon of human understanding. These remarks may serve to pinpoint the relevant questions without attempting to offer a solution.

THE TEXT AND ITS PRESUPPOSITIONS

For the sake of convenience the section in question will be given in the official translation, although when compared with the original Latin text it is not entirely satisfactory.

'3. God, who creates and maintains all things through the Word (cf. Jn 1:3), offers men of every age evidence of himself in created things (cf. Rm 1:19-20). Because he willed to open the way of supernatural salvation, he made himself known, in addition, to our first parents from the beginning. After their fall he restored them to hope for salvation by promising the redemption (cf. Gn 3:15). Without intermission he concerned himself for mankind in order to give eternal life to every man who seeks salvation by persistence in good works (cf. Rm 2:6-7). Later he called Abraham in order to make him into a great people (cf. Gn 12:2-3). After the patriarchs he brought this people through Moses and the prophets to recognise him as the only living and true God, as a loving father and a just judge, and to look forward to the promised saviour. So through the ages he prepared the way of the Gospel'.[4]

In the context of the 1st chapter, the place of this section is easily intelligible. There the

[1] This essay was originally written for the Festschrift for R. Schnackenburg, *Neues Testament und Kirche* (Freiburg i. Br., 1974). It has been revised for publication here, but the original occasion of its composition influenced the choice of topic and the formulation of the question.

[2] On the topic of exegesis and dogmatic theology, cf. K. Rahner, 'Theology in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 23-41; 'Exegesis and Dogmatic Theology', *ibid.* pp. 67-93; 'Scripture and Theology', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore, 1969), pp. 89-97; 'Scripture and Tradition', *ibid.* pp. 98-112.

[3] A scholarly commentary is given in: *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* III (London and New York, 1968), pp. 155-272. Introduction and Commentary by J. Ratzinger, A. Grillmeier, B. Rigaux. Cf. also the highly readable commentary on the introduction and ch. 1 by H. de Lubac, *Dieu se dit dans l'histoire – La Révélatjon divine,* Foi vivante 159 (Paris, 1974).

[4] Cf. og. lit., III pp. 172-175.

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topic discussed is revelation and its acceptance in faith, to which the teaching of the transmission of revelation can then be attached. This in turn introduces the main theme of the Constitution, i.e. Scripture. The earlier sections of the 1st chapter offer a brief formal account of the nature of revelation; the section following then speaks of the climax of revelation in Jesus Christ. The text quoted above describing the history of divine revelation from the beginning right up to the climax in Jesus Christ discussed in the next section is quite understandably placed between the two. If one ignores the fact that the schema has an 'objectivist' structure, i.e. it deals with revelation [193] in itself without then or previously answering the question of how a man can expect or recognise in the realm of his own existence something like a divine revelation at all, then the external sequence of the topics considered in this chapter seems quite reasonable. If one then turns to the text itself, one is struck by the way in which the very first clause speaks of what is usually regarded as the 'natural revelation' of God in his creation.[5] This implies that the text confirms the view, not explicitly but as an unspoken assumption, that the natural revelation of God is an obvious and universal phenomenon. This phenomenon provides a man with the best starting point from which to gain an understanding of divine revelation in the strict sense. Behind this line of thought there lies a mental model of the relationship of nature and grace, i.e. of the natural knowledge of God and the self-disclosure of God in revelation proper, a model which has remained constant in the development of theology since the Enlightenment. While recognising a legitimate distinction between nature and grace, one can no longer assert that this model is self-evident in modern theology or indeed wholly valid. For beyond space and time there exists a saving will of God which is universally effective and which directs man everywhere to his 'supernatural goal', i.e. the direct possession of God. This relationship to God is given a radical orientation by divine grace to God's self-communication and self-revelation, at least as an offer presented to man's free decision. This fact highlights the essential unity, ordained by God, of the relationship to God in spirit and in grace, which man experiences. In the factual order the so-called natural knowledge of God and the self-revelation of God in the strict sense are *inter-related*. For these reasons the divine revelation proper should not be assumed a priori to be a phenomenon located in a particular space and time. On the basis of this assumption the section we are considering can too easily take natural knowledge of God as a self-evident starting point.

STAGES IN THE HISTORY OF REVELATION

The account of the *history* of revelation (presupposing here the general character of revelation given in section 2) divides this history up to the climax in Jesus Christ clearly into three stages: the original revelation of God to the first parents; the period between them and the Old [194] Testament history of revelation starting from Abraham and Moses; the Old Testament history of revelation itself up to Jesus Christ. Let us take a brief look at each of these three very different sections of the history of revelation before Jesus Christ.

First of all the primal revelation:[6] we may pass over here the break which in the text is built into the original revelation as a historical event, namely the fall of the original parents. This event separates the revelation of the 'way of supernatural salvation' and the revelation of hope and promise of redemption. Even if we abstract from this point, the text raises a number

[5] On the idea of 'natural revelation', cf. H. Fries, 'Die Offenbarung', *MySal* I (Zurich, 1965), 159-238, esp. 163-165.
[6] On the 'original revelation', cf. J. Heislbetz, 'Urofferibarung', *LThK* X (Freiburg, 1965), 565-567 (bibliog.); also K. Rahrier and J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition,* Quaestiones Disputatae 17 (Freiburg and London, 1965), pp. 9-25.

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of questions for contemporary man which remain unanswered, although a genuine understanding of this passage can scarcely dispense with either the questions or the answers. To register a critical note is not, to make the point clear from the start, to demand that a conciliar text of this type should itself offer answers to such questions, in so far as the answer is still an object of controversy amongst theologians, or for a variety of reasons is not fit material for an official statement of the magisterium. The purpose of the critique is merely to point out that the text might have been formulated in such a way that it would have been clearer to the modern reader that at least these problems were recognised and taken into account, and that a traditional formula had not Simply been chosen, a formula which taken literally may seem somewhat naive and far removed from a contemporary horizon of understanding. How is one to conceive of this revelation to the 'first parents', when they lived perhaps two million years ago, originated from the animal world by evolution and so must be imagined as 'primitive' beings? And yet they are supposed to recognise the path of 'supernatural salvation'. Furthermore what is one to make of this account if, with some justification, one assumes a state of polygenism with regard to the origins of mankind?[7] Why should not the whole story be an incredible myth? Has our knowledge of this original revelation been transmitted from the revelation itself by an unbroken tradition right from the beginning, or is the description [195] of it an inference projected back to the origins, an aetiology[8] (either mythological or empirically justified, or a mixture of the two)? Such an aetiology might come from a later experience of salvation and revelation and contain the insight that, because of the unity of human history and universal salvific will of God, the basic structures of human history must have been present right from the start. As an extrapolation with a universalist thrust of the Israelite experience of salvation and revelation in relation to the God of its later history, the subsequent aetiology could also have influenced the account of paradise and the fall of the first parents given in Genesis and so make intelligible the development of this account and the precise limits of its meaning. But can one put this original revelation, which is an inferred postulate projected into the past, on the same plane as the later, historical and articulate revelation in the way evidently proposed in the text here? A further query is whether one can blithely assume that this revelation explicitly referred to 'supernatural salvation' in the modern sense of the term. The same questions could of course also be asked with regard to the fall of the first parents. In summary the portrayal of the original revelation is located in a traditional framework of meaning and ignores too many questions to allow a contemporary reader to make sense of it.

The second stage of the history of revelation which is described in our text is the period of time between the first parents and Abraham and Moses. The first thing that strikes us about this account of an enormous stretch of time, which makes the period from Abraham until today seem a brief moment by comparison, is that there is no mention of revelation taking place in this period, but only of a history of the saving providence of God, which is not necessarily the same thing at all. Did a genuine history of revelation take place in this time? How is it to be conceived? Can one operate here with once feasible notions derived from a time when the history of mankind was understood to have lasted a mere few thousand years, and imagine that revelation during this vast stretch of years consisted in the transmission of the original revelation? If not, then did some *new* history of revelation occur in the course of this enormous period of time? Or was there at this stage a history of supernatural salvation

[7] On 'Polygenism', cf. K. Rahner, 'Theological Reflections on Monogenism', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 229-296 (bibliog); also *HThTL* 5, Herderbücherei 455 (Freiburg i. Br., 1973), pp. 100-104.

[8] On 'aetiology', cf. K. Rahner, 'The Sin of Adam', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York, 1974), p. 247-262. Also, *LThK* I (Freiburg, 1957), 101 1-1012; *HThTL* 1, Herderbücherei 451 (Freiburg i. Br., 1972), pp. 148-150.

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without revelation? [196] But then how could faith in a strict theological sense conceivably have happened in this period? At this point the dogmatic constitution is not as advanced in its theology as other conciliar decrees, in that it treats the question of faith and revelation in this period, understood as the conditions for salvation operative even at that time, with much greater caution and timidity. In the decree on the missions it is regarded as self-evident that faith leading to salvation (and therefore revelation which is its precondition) is both possible and necessary,[9] even though the decree declines to explain more clearly this possibility of faith. In the dogmatic constitution on the Church and on the pastoral constitution, saving faith is assumed and stated to be a possibility for every man who follows the demands of his conscience.[10] It would thus have created no problems to affirm the existence of revelation in the true sense in the period stretching from the beginning up to the Old Testament patriarchs, and so to assert the possibility of genuine faith in revelation. But in fact this is not to be found. Why? The need to treat salvation and revelation history of this period very briefly hardly explains by itself the restriction to the mere saving providence of God in a passage which really required mention of the history of revelation. It does seem as if the issue was passed over too lightly and questions left aside to which the modern reader requires at the least the first elements of an answer, or at the minimum the explicit statement that no answer was possible. To fail to do so is to frustrate a legitimate interest in the unity of man and his history. What is more important, the present account makes the history of revelation following this period seem a quite new and unexpected age with no connection with the whole history of mankind. To the modern man such an age appears then as a sheer miracle, even if he is basically ready to grant the occurrence of new and unexpected events in history.

We have now come to the third phase, which is presented in our text as the history of revelation up to Jesus Christ. We may leave aside here the fact that the history of Old Testament from the time of Abraham seems to have been regarded perhaps in a rather too optimistic light, and conceived practically as the uniform and unbroken preparation of the chosen people for Jesus Christ. We can also overlook [197] the total lack of reference to the dualism of law and Gospel (promise) which is characteristic of the Old Testament period. What does, however, demand our attention is the fact that revelation to Abraham and the prophets occurs in a manner quite unrelated to the universal history of salvation and revelation which has certainly taken place. Now a person schooled in the history of Old Testament scholarship will ask whether it is possible to attribute so easily to an 'Abraham' the *historical* role which is given him here following the fashion of an age which was quite unaware of modern critical study of the Old Testament. In our text the intention is to portray genuine history in the modern sense. Can Abraham simply be made the father of the nation which is the bearer of the history of revelation available to us in the writings of the Old Testament? Can one adopt the style of e.g. Gen 12:2-3 and merely repeat formulae, if one wishes to explain the reality, origins and significance of the Old Testament history of revelation to Christians today, who can approach the Old Testament in faith only on the basis of Jesus Christ? Even if one does not just speak of an Abraham saga and is prepared to grant a genuine historical core to the figure described in the Old Testament, even so the failure to take into account the enormous temporal gap between Abraham and Moses and the consequent silence on the subject remains somewhat surprising. One could make the same comments about Moses: he is fitted rather too smoothly in our view into a continuous list with the prophets of a far later period, who can be grasped even by us today as historical figures, each with a particular individual stamp. Is not Moses also conceived in a rather naive

[9] Cf. *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*, no. 3. cf. *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* IV pp. 87 sqq.; cf. in same decree nos. 8,9,14, 15, 17.
[10] Cf. Dogmatic Constitution in the Church, no. 16 and 17. cf. Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II 1, pp. 182-185. Also, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, nos. 22, 26, 38, 41, 57.

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and unsophisticated manner, following the style of Old Testament presentation and without regard to the results of contemporary study of the history of the Near East and modern exegesis? And is not the whole history of Old Testament revelation presented without any connection with the rest of the history of religion, which can readily be understood as a single history of revelation, even if corrupted by sin and error? For without in any way wishing to dispute the dignity and value of the Old Testament, we may say that in this general history the revelation of the Old Testament is clear and verifiable in so far as it forms the immediate (regarded, that is, from the point of view of the history of man and salvation) and quite short preparation and context for the Christ event. It is this latter event which provides the only guarantee of the continuing validity and normative status of the Old Testament for us even today.

In conclusion we want to repeat that this critique of the text contained [198] in Section 3 does not demand that all the questions raised by this passage should be answered. The point of these critical remarks was to show that, if the authors of the text had clearly perceived and reckoned with these questions as ones which are urgent and necessary today, then they would have composed the text differently. In all probability they might have altered the entire conception of the pre-Christian history of revelation and not presented it, as they have, in the framework of a simple *time* series, a model which is not intelligible to us. Instead they might have treated it retrospectively, taking as their starting point Jesus Christ,[11] who alone makes the event of revelation intelligible to us. From this view point they could have looked backwards and offered a survey of the whole of human history as the history of salvation and revelation, providing a careful outline of the particular history of salvation which we call the history of the Old Testament. This section, quite small in spatio-temporal terms, of the universal history of revelation still affects us in that it forms the immediate and proximate history of the Christ event. It would then perhaps also have been feasible to have developed the theme of section 3 on the assumption that the saving will of God is both supernatural and universal. On this basis the necessary and universal character of revelation in every age (despite our inability to say exactly how this occurs) could have been presented as a theological deduction and not as a piece of historical description. The exegesis of the New and Old Testament did not play the part it should have done in the Council. In general an honest effort was made to give expression to traditional theology and to strengthen these statements with traditional proof texts. Of this our text is a good example.

[11] Cf. also the speculative methods mentioned below. The author has tried to combine both methods in: K. Rahner and W. Thusing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch*, Quaestiones Disputatae 55 (Freiburg i. Br., 1972), 'Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie', pp. 15-78. This also provides a practical example of collaboration between exegesis and dogmatic theology.

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[199]

13

THE ONE CHRIST AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF SALVATION

The purpose of this enquiry is to throw some light on the question of the one Christ and the universality of salvation as a theme of systematic theology.[1] The precise meaning of this topic may become clearer in the course of these reflections.

Our method here will be to use both the binding statements of the Church's magisterium and broader theological opinion to underpin the ideas presented. For it is in fact impossible to formulate a systematic account of the teaching of the Church, in a form that can be personally appropriated in a contemporary setting, without free theological opinion playing a role whose limits can often not easily be separated from dogma proper. Christian faith at any particular historical period needs theological opinion in order to be given appropriate expression; no theology can be made up of the defined propositions of the Church's magisterium alone, for theology must be explained and explanation necessarily requires the use of concepts, assumptions and contexts of meaning which are subject to chance. At any rate theological opinion does enter in either explicitly or in a disguised form; the boundary between it and the binding dogmatic truths may be clearly marked or ill-defined and the theological weight of this opinion may be of various types. But such opinion is always present, even for instance in the 'Credo of the people of God' of Paul VI.[2] Here, however, we can dispense with explicit definition of the [200] various theological 'notes', in as much as the topic under discussion directly embodies only one statement of a dogmatically binding sort and even this has perhaps not been explicitly defined as such. I refer to the truth that the achievement by any man of his proper and definitive salvation is dependent upon Jesus Christ. How that is to be conceived is the subject of this enquiry.

Naturally other propositions possessing either dogmatic force or a high theological 'note' will be employed in the course of this investigation. But to clarify the truth of the universal significance of Jesus for the salvation of every man, any meaningful and reasonable proposition can rightly be used which is appropriate for the explanation of this dogma.

THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE QUESTION

We are speaking in the first place of the basic possibility of the salvation of all men and not of the extent to which, according to Christian understanding, salvation will in fact be achieved, i.e. whether the 'apocatastasis' of all men is a legitimate hope or not.[3] Here the question is *the possibility* of salvation, not its actual realisation. Contrary to the view of St Augustine, this possibility is a real one in a fallen world: no man is excluded from salvation simply because of so-called original sin; a man can only lose the possibility of salvation through serious personal sin of his own. Salvation here is to be understood as the strictly supernatural and direct presence of God in himself afforded by grace. This, of course,

[1] A student of the author has investigated the question of the universality of redemption from a historical perspective in a dissertation: A. Bsteh, *Zur Frage nach der Universalität der Erlösung*. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihres Verständnisses bei den Vätern des zweiten Jahrhunderts; Wiener Beitrage zur Theologie XIV (Vienna, 1966).
[2] Published in *AAS* 60 (1968), 436-445.
[3] Cf. J. Loosen, *LThK* 1(1957), 709-712.

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excludes, despite the statement of *Pius* V1[4] on the subject of limbo, a purely natural state of blessedness. The direct 'vision' of God is the only salvation for all men. How the many stages of this long journey to the final union with God are to be conceived is not a matter of concern here. Indeed in certain cases the journey may not even be terminated by death. The traditional teaching about a 'place of purification' embraces a multitude of assumptions and modes of interpretation whose possibilities have by no means been exhausted and which can substantially alter the common popular notion of purgatory.

The fundamental proposition which is the proper subject of theological investigation refers therefore to the universal possibility of supernatural salvation for all men after original sin. This possibility [201] must really be given to *all*. By this is meant all those throughout human history who have come to a free realisation of their existence. The question is here excluded of the salvation of those who are clearly human beings but who have probably never achieved the full exercise of their freedom. Theological reflection upon the universal possibility of salvation involves, then, all those who have reached complete self-determination as free persons and have thus explicitly or implicitly taken a free decision for or against God. Whether this definition implies a real restriction of universality or not is a matter about which we have no certain knowledge. In any event it means all men who have existed from the beginning of human history proper, even if this beginning can scarcely be defined with any theological precision. To this group all men of course belong who have never had direct tangible contact with the Gospel and its preaching. In this context the question raised by Billot[5] is of fundamental importance, whether, that is, every man who did not die as a child and could lead a more or less normal life, given the changing cultural circumstances, was capable of reaching the realisation of freedom necessary for the achievement of supernatural fulfilment. In the light of the actual historical and cultural conditions of life experienced by many individuals and groups, one may doubt whether many so-called adults do in fact reach a level of freedom which is effective for salvation. There is no simple means of resolving this question. Either one can appeal to the fact that subjective freedom in certain circumstances can be achieved despite lack of thematic reflection and scanty material, which means that the number of adults 'under age' with respect to their salvation is of no importance. Or one asserts that many so-called adults do exist who, with regard to their salvation, never go beyond the stage of unbaptised children who die young. We know as little about the fate of such men as about the destiny of those who die as embryos or infants.

Without proper evidence one can only say about such men that we are entirely ignorant of their fate. If one were to claim knowledge, one would merely be projecting theological data, in itself correct enough, into the absolute future in a one-sided and inadmissible manner, and the outcome of such a procedure is questionable. The significance of this is to indicate the limits of any theological proposition about the universal possibility of salvation.

[202]

GOD'S SALVIFIC WILL IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH

Given these assumptions the theological truth of the universal possibility of salvation may be taken without reserve to possess binding dogmatic force. It may be that it has not been defined but there is no doubt that it belongs to the contemporary understanding of faith and may be considered as the explicit and official teaching of the Church. As such it is to be regarded as absolutely binding. The truth in this matter was not always seen with such clarity

[4] *Denz.* 2626.
[5] L. Billot S.J. (1846-1931), Professor at the Gregorianium, Rome and important speculative theologian.

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to be part of the faith of the Church as it is today, despite the numerous scriptural passages[6] which are used today by theological textbooks to prove the universal salvific will of God. For even if the notion that God's salvific will is limited to the predestined is rejected as heretical[7] and even if God's salvific will is taken to apply to non-believers and St Augustine's particularism about salvation is considered a restriction which is now overcome, nevertheless the truth that God wills the salvation of all men can be so loaded with 'ifs' and 'buts'[8] that it can hardly be characterised as a formal dogma in the sense intended here.

Now, however, the Second Vatican Council has recognised the possibility that even non-Christians, polytheists and atheists can live in a subjective state of freedom from serious sin. At the same time the Council reckons with the possibility of supernatural salvation in such cases. Thus it is an evident part of the contemporary understanding of faith that there is no human state which allows one to draw definite conclusions about the personal sinfulness of a man and thus deny him the possibility of salvation. This is the meaning of the proposition that all men have the possibility of being saved, as this proposition is understood today. This implies that there is no human situation which can be empirically verified and conclusively established, that certainly rules out salvation from the start. At the same time salvation is only achieved in fact when a man acquires faith, hope and love, and so overcomes the contrary tendencies in him. The Second Vatican Council, in contrast to the previous tradition of the schools, reckons with the possibility of the saving activities of faith, hope and love being found even in the case of atheists who remain attached to their belief. So the possibility cannot be denied to any other group of men, whatever their externally verifiable attitudes and beliefs. A man may be [203] disposed in whatever way he will as far as empirical criteria are concerned, but the direct possibility of salvation cannot thereby be denied to him. Only if we grant this, can we take seriously the biblical injunction that we can judge no man.[9] How the real and direct possibility of salvation can co-exist with a human situation which objectively ought not to be[10] is a matter to be considered later.

The Second Vatican Council offered no definition of the truth of the universal salvific will of God, but this truth has never before in history been so clearly a part of the understanding of faith as it is today. One can, therefore, either offer the sort of theological description we have provided above or define the proposition as 'sentientia fidei proxima',[11] with L. Ott for example. The topic of our deliberations is not the proposition in itself but rather its Christological reference; thus the above remarks may be considered sufficient explanation of its theological significance, its limits and its theological 'note'. Further proof of its validity and a more detailed treatment of its history are not in any event necessary here.

THE DIRECT AND SAVING PRESENCE OF GOD

In every conceivable historical and social situation of life a man can have direct saving access to God without necessarily being required to leave his objective situation 'de necessitate medii absoluta', in order to be able to discover the direct reality of God somewhere else. Naturally the actual discovery of this immediate presence demands 'metanoia', faith, hope and love, but the universal possibility of salvation, as it is understood here, means precisely that the necessary turning to God can be achieved, either reflectively or unreflectively, from

[6] Cf. 1 Tim 2:4.
[7] Cf. *Denz.* 623 sq., 1567, 2005, 2304 sq.
[8] This must apply at least until the Second Vatican Council.
[9] Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37.
[10] E.g. an objective sin, a theoretical or practical atheism.
[11] Cf. L. Ott, *Grundriss der Katholischen Dogmatik* (Freiburg i. Br. 1959), pp. 288 sq.

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any conceivable existential standpoint, in so far as it is the given historical, cultural or religious situation which is in question. This possibility is a categorial one and belongs to the basic structure of human freedom and human self-realisation. It may often occur in the case of a particular human life that the refusal freely to alter his own existential situation means a denial of God and the destruction of the chance of salvation. But this assumes that the prior historical situation of a man is directly open to the saving presence of God, in so far as it is not [204] formed or maintained by the personal sin of the individual. In purely human terms we can never assert with total certainty of any situation that its existence is only possible because of the personal guilt of the individual living in it, and that it is therefore a sign of the loss of God's direct saving presence.

In an *ultimate* sense God is equally near everywhere. The narrow gap can everywhere be bridged through faith, hope and love with the help of whatever aid the particular historical circumstances provide. Conversely the faith which is effective for salvation never enters so clearly into any situation that its presence or absence enables one to make a certain judgement that the situation is open or closed to salvation. In saying this I do not at all mean to question the importance or the objective value of a moral act, the validity of the confession of faith, or of actual membership of the Church, or to relativise these values with regard to the subjective salvation any man. However a more thorough treatment of these questions would divert us from the topic under discussion.

The world is drawn to its spiritual fulfilment by the Spirit of God, who directs the whole history of the world in all its length and breadth towards its proper goal. This means that every man, whatever his situation, can be saved. The Christ event, however, seems at first glance to be the effect and not the cause of the dynamic of divine spiritual communication to the world. How can one claim, then, that salvation comes entirely from Jesus Christ? This question forms the focal point of our reflections, given the necessary clarifications we have provided.

THE PROBLEMATIC

We live in a world in which each and everything is inter-dependent, in which every event is in some way important for every other, at least if it comes later in time, a world in which Sirius wobbles in its course when a child throws a doll out of its cradle, to quote the telling remark of one modern physicist. But this physical unity of space and time does not offer a suitable basis for the solution of our question. For we are not dealing with a framework or a unity in which every element is significant for every other, but rather with a single, specific, historical event which is supposedly important even for the periods of history before it. This event, taking place within history, is meant to be absolutely fundamental for every other event occurring at any time [205] from the beginning to the end of that same history. And yet this must be understood as a history of freedom operating at every particular moment, i.e. events continually occurring which cannot be dependent for their very essence, the decision for or against God, on other events, however much these latter may form the conditions and context for the exercise of freedom. In the realisation of salvation the freedom of the individual is irreplaceable.

One could offer the answer that freedom must be exercised under prior conditions and circumstances which are independent of it, since human freedom is finite. One might add that the 'objective redemption' through Jesus Christ forms part of the condition of freedom as far as salvation or damnation are concerned. But this raises at least the question of how redemption understood in this way can apply to those who lived *before* Christ. Furthermore how can this situation be of relevance for the free action of those who, though living after the

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time of Christ, have either no knowledge of him at all or knowledge of a kind which does not impel their freedom to an ultimate decision? Finally in what way is the objective redemption to be analysed as constitutive of human freedom and its exercise?

The 'objective redemption through Christ' can be a specific and characteristic element in the basic structure of human freedom, which includes numerous other elements as well. It would then possess a unique place among these elements, which is higher than all others, since it forms part of the predestination of freedom ordained by God. This predestination is assumed in all schools of Catholic theology, whatever their exact interpretation, to be something which can be reconciled with human freedom. But this is merely a statement of the real problem. Whether we should speak of a general (or particular) predestination of human freedom to salvation or simply of the saving will of God does not make any difference to our investigation. Our enquiry concurs the *how* of the connection of such a saving will, or divine predestination, with the Christ event.

A quick and easy answer to our question which consists in an appeal to the 'cosmic Christ' should be avoided. Of course the pre-existing Logos of God can be conceived without difficulty as a creative, sanctifying, reconciling and divinising force operating in the world and in history. Human salvation depends on the Logos and all salvation is related to it. The eternal Logos of God gives himself to the central core of human freedom as the condition of possibility of a supernatural response to the self-communication of God. He thus constitutes the [206] redemption or the redemption event. On the basis of the 'communicatio idiomatum' one can say of Jesus that he is the salvation of the world, just as he can say he is creator of the world.

But all this does not provide a satisfactory answer to our question, for the self-communication of the divine Logos to the world is conceived not as a single event within history but as the ultimate dynamic orientation which operates universally and is the ground of the whole of history. One may leave aside here the further problem of how the function of the Logos in its work of salvation and its guidance of the world is related to the activity of the Holy Spirit, and how, or rather with what justification, the disciples of Jesus moved from the experience of him as the one crucified and risen (cf. the letter to the Colossians, the writings of John and the letter to the Hebrews) to the pre-existent, creative and saving Logos embodied in Jesus. But that still leaves the question unanswered how the particular historical event of the death and resurrection of Jesus, which happened at a particular time and place, can be of fundamental importance for the salvation of all men, It may be that the question cannot be answered without reference to the pre-existent Logos in Jesus, but this appeal by itself does not provide the solution we are looking for.

SELF-REDEMPTION AND REDEMPTION BY ANOTHER

In Christian apologetics a distinction is usually drawn between self- redemption and redemption by another. We mention this point in order to avoid the danger of making greater demands than are theologically necessary upon the redemption of all men in Christ and upon his death and resurrection. Otherwise people today are forced into a situation of meaningless confusion from which they cannot escape. The Christian doctrine of faith, hope and love, of the union in grace with God and of the free reception of God's self-communication can well be understood in the sense of a true self-redemption. The person who redeems himself in freedom, i.e. places God in the centre of his own free existence, is a creature who is constituted by the creative freedom of God and is therefore given the capacity to accept God's self-communication. God, however, shares himself with man both through uncreated grace which forms his very being and through the supernatural capacity which arises from

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grace and belongs to man in his freedom. God is himself the condition of possibility of human salvation from which man freely realises his salvation. Naturally it is [207] taken for granted in Christian theology, in contrast to any form of Pelagianism, that the free acceptance of salvation is also a gift of God's grace and thus forms the very core of the human person and of human freedom.[12]

If, however, self-redemption means that a man can achieve his fulfilment without God, then any form of self-redemption is foreign to Christian teaching. Christian salvation can only be understood as self-redemption in the sense that a man does not merely receive his salvation in a passive manner but rather realises it with total, and not just partial, freedom. The very possibility of freedom, however, is established by God through nature and grace. To gain a proper idea of this grace one should not conceive of the grace in which a man achieves salvation as an external means but rather as the innermost core of human freedom which is freely constituted by God.

If self-redemption is presented in Christian faith in the above sense, and if the cross of Christ (rooted in the incarnation of the Logos and reaching fulfilment in the resurrection) is made the cause of our salvation as the 'redemptio objectiva', then the causality of the cross must *be* understood in relation to the general and the individual conditions of possibility of self-redemption. But how this is to be conceived still remains unclear.

CROSS: CONSEQUENCE OR CAUSE?

It follows from what we have said that the event of the crucifixion, taken as 'redemptio objectiva', cannot be the cause of the uncaused salvific will of God, at least not in the usual sense of the term. For according to common understanding, cause means a physical or moral operation which brings something about. By contrast we must say: because God wills salvation, therefore Jesus died and rose again, and not: because the crucifixion occurred, therefore God wills our salvation. God is not transformed from a God of anger and justice into a God of mercy and love by the cross; rather God brings the event of the cross to pass since he is possessed from the beginning of gratuitous mercy and, despite the world's sin, shares himself with the world, so overcoming its sin.

[208] What mode of 'causality' is to be attributed to the cross for the salvation of all men, is precisely the question which is at stake here. This is also a version of the real difficulty of the so-called Anselmian theory of satisfaction,[13] which in a crude or a more subtle form has determined the doctrine of the redemption in western Christianity, at least where the crucifixion has not been denied any form of causality and the cross and resurrection treated only as ground for *our* faith and *our* trust in God. The satisfaction theory requires a series of tortuous distinctions in order to make plain that the one making satisfaction and the one accepting it are in our case one and the same. This seems to make the theory untenable as a model for the understanding of the causality of the redemption. We can see from the history of preaching and theology how this theory consistently obscured the simple fact that the event of the cross did not originate in an angry God who demanded reparation, but from a God of gratuitous and merciful love. This is not to deny that God's holiness and justice are evident on the cross or to dispute the value for religious teaching of certain elements of the satisfaction theory, which are entirely to be approved. But the theory, almost of necessity, introduces the metaphysically impossible idea of a transformation of God and obscures the

[12] Cf. A. Hamman, *LThK* VIII (1963), 246-249. Also the more recent study of the position of Pelagius by G. Greshake, *Gnade als konkrete Freiheit.* Eine Untersuchung zur Gnadenlehre des Pelagius (Mainz, 1972).
[13] Cf. W. Kasper, Jesus *the Christ* (London, 1976), pp. 219-221.

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origin and cause of the crucifixion which is the mercy and love of God. This love can only include sin in the world because, as God's yes to man, this love was meant to prove itself Victorious over man's no to God.

The satisfaction theory requires the ultimately inconceivable notion that Jesus is man's representative and is opposed to the correct understanding of self-redemption outlined above. In addition the Pauline formula 'υ(πε_ρ η(μω~ν' is interpreted in an unconvincing manner which forces the sense of Paul's words.[14] But how could the apostle of the gentiles know and speak of this 'υ(πε&ρ' in the light of the experience of the death and resurrection of Jesus of the first disciples?

THE MERIT OF CHRIST

Official doctrinal pronouncements of the Church as well as traditional theological opinion both refer to the fact, e.g. in connection with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary,[15] that grace and salvation were guaranteed man 'intuitu meritorum Christi'. Yet this [209] comment, while perfectly correct in itself, expresses no more than the truth from which these reflections originated and which requires further elucidation. This line of thought connects human salvation with the cross of Christ, without explaining how the connection is to be conceived. At least it makes it easier to understand how pre-Christian mankind and men living outside Christianity could be dependent for their salvation upon the cross of Christ, in that the idea of God's eternal fore-knowledge of this event in time is brought into play. This makes intelligible a possible effect of Christ's cross operating before the time when he himself became a historical event.

There is here the problem that the elements of the history of salvation, which should be inter-connected to form a single salvation history, are in this account bound together by forces operating outside history, that is, by the eternal fore-knowledge of God. This fore-knowledge does not belong to salvation history as such, since all historical and temporal moments are equally and eternally present to it. But even if we leave this difficulty aside, the fact remains that the proposed 'intuitus meritorum Christi' does not explain the real meaning of the statement that God wills human salvation 'because of' the cross of Christ.

In the light of what we have said the cross of Christ cannot be the cause of human salvation in the sense that it brought about the will to save in God which otherwise would not have existed, or that it bestowed upon men a type of salvation which takes no heed of human freedom. Despite all these objections does a connection exist between the cross of the Lord and the salvation of all men, a connection which is more than an appeal to the moral impact which the death and resurrection of Christ has on us? Any attempt to discover such a connection should not ignore the fact that *all* men are involved. Let us start our investigation with Jesus himself and then turn to ourselves; the double perspective will open up questions which otherwise might have been overlooked.

JESUS AND ALL MEN

The relationship of *Jesus* to all men raises a series of questions relevant to exegesis and fundamental theology which cannot be systematically investigated here. Only one will be mentioned: how did the pre-Easter Jesus conceive of his death? Did he approach it with full

[14] Cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:4; 3:13; 1 Cor 1:13; 11:24.
[15] Cf. *Denz.* 2803.

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knowledge and consent and accept it in ultimate unconditional faith and trust? Did [210] he realise the soteriological significance of his death? Under what assumptions and in what framework of meaning can Jesus' knowledge of the soteriological importance of his death be conceived? What is the minimum required by dogma and fundamental theology to enable us to attribute to the pre-Easter Jesus a soteriological value for his death in a historically tangible form?

Without being able here to go further into these and similar questions, we will simply assume that the death and resurrection of Jesus, taken together, *do possess* soteriological significance. We take this to be the teaching of Scripture and the Church, and there is sufficient evidence to connect its content with the reality of the pre-Easter Jesus. Here the only question to be asked is how the connection between the death of Jesus and the salvation of all men can be imagined without our getting enmeshed in the conceptual tangle we mentioned earlier.

Of course we should remember first, that Jesus possesses *that* relationship to every man which connects all men together in the many dimensions of life within the framework of a single humanity and history. The existential, ontological, historical, philosophical and theological grounds for this assertion cannot be listed or developed here, except to say that humanity and history form a genuine unity and do not merely consist in a sum of individual human beings and isolated biographies put together by our thought processes. This unity affects not only the common physical and biological basis of man and his world, but also the human reality of man and his freedom and history, which cannot easily be explained. It is obvious that such a specifically human unity, and not one with merely material and biological foundations, is important for the soteriological connection between Jesus and the whole of humanity and should not be obscured or undervalued. It plays a role in the doctrine of redemption found among the Greek fathers, in that in their view humanity has a form of existence which enables the eternal Logos to enter into communion with the single race of mankind. But even the western theory of satisfaction presupposes a unity among men to which Jesus belongs as well, irrespective of whether this unity, in which Jesus in his representative function can act for all, is thought of as the result of divine -decree rather than as a natural unity of mankind to which the incarnate
Logos of God also belongs. Yet however necessary it is to reflect upon the unity of man and his history, nevertheless it is not sufficient by itself to make what is meant here intelligible.

If one wanted to say that the redemption was achieved through the [211] incarnation alone, then the universal significance of the Christ event could be explained on the basis of the unity of mankind alone. Humanity is one and is saved as a single whole through the incarnation of the eternal Logos in this unity. He must share the ultimate salvation with man which necessarily belongs to him as the Logos of God; otherwise the unity of human history would be destroyed, if the necessary salvation of one of its members were irrelevant to the destiny and possibility of salvation of the whole of mankind. Certainly these considerations have positive meaning and validity and they should therefore be included in a theology of the cross and its significance for salvation. But if the cross of Christ, his death and resurrection, are regarded as a saving event affecting all men, then even the notion of a universal communion of race and history shared by the Logos is not sufficient by itself. The death and resurrection of Jesus must possess universal importance in themselves for salvation and cannot merely be regarded as isolated events, of no significance in themselves, in a life which only has universal relevance for salvation in being the life of the eternal Logos. It is this Logos which entered the unity of mankind and took on a human nature, thus taking on and saving the whole of humanity.

As we have seen earlier, the 'causality' of the saving death of Jesus for the salvation of all men must be the consequence and not the cause of the self-giving of God to the world in

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grace. It does not mean a transformation in God, for God brings the crucifixion to pass out of grace not out of anger, although the meaning of the cross does not consist alone in its power to convince us of the love and forgiveness of God. If the causality of the cross with regard to salvation were exclusively interpreted in this way, then any universality would be out of the question, since the majority of mankind have no explicit knowledge of the cross and since, according to Paul's notion of the saving effect of the cross, the death of Jesus is set within the category of sacrifice. However we may here with caution assert that the Pauline ideas of 'sacrifice', 'ransom', 'reconciliation through blood' do not reflect the original understanding of the saving significance of the Cross of Jesus for all men; they are legitimate ideas but they are secondary notions which must be explained in the light of the primary and original data and are aimed to bring home the significance of Christ's death for our salvation. In other cultures and historical periods such ideas do not so easily achieve this goal, even if we do not mean to imply by this that, for us today for example, these models of thought should be entirely rejected.

[212] The question, therefore, of the mode of causality remains open. One is tempted to demand from the start the abandonment of the idea of 'causality' altogether. But the fact remains that it is part of the Christian confession of faith that the death of Jesus *means something* for the salvation of all men, that it was for us that he died. Such formulations express the same content as the 'causality' of the death of Jesus with regard to the salvation of all men. The problem remains the same whether one speaks of 'causality', 'meaning' or 'for us'. In any event all forms of causality of a physical or moral type fail, so that a causality of the death of Jesus is suggested which is precisely one that should not come into question.

To resolve this dilemma one may pursue a number of paths. Here we will choose one which discloses the causality of Jesus' death we are seeking with a concept which is familiar in a different theological context and has been extensively investigated.

We may assert the following: the cross (together with the resurrection of Jesus) has a primary sacramental causality for the salvation of all men, in so far as it mediates salvation to man by means of salvific grace which is universally operative in the world. It is the sign of this grace and of its victorious and irreversible activity in the world. The effectiveness of the cross is based on the fact that it is the primary sacramental sign of grace.

SACRAMENTAL SIGN AND GRACE

The salvific causality of the cross should not be *subsumed* under the sign causality of grace which is characteristic and familiar from sacramental teaching, or rather from *one* possible and legitimate version of that teaching. The specific character of the effect of the cross must be obtained from theological investigation of the cross itself. Of course this can lead to a notion of causality which evidently agrees with the sign causality of the sacraments. Such a conception can then easily be adopted, although the proposed causality is not to be found elsewhere and is not to be subsumed under the other familiar notions of causality. Sufficient proof of this is provided by the fact that the new concept in sacramental theology is recognised as sign causality, a type of causality, therefore, which is proper to the sign as such and is not some- thing added to the sign. In sacramental theology it is not that the qualities sign *and* causality are attributed to the sacramental processes [213] with regard to grace and then other categories of instrumental causality of a physical or moral type are applied to cover this sign causality and interpret it. It is rather the case that the sign is the cause. 'Sacramenta causant gratiam, quia et prout significant gratiam'. We are not of course assuming here that every sign of a thing can also be treated as its cause. But in so far as a sacrament can and should be conceived of as a 'real symbol', as a historical and social

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embodiment of grace, where grace achieves its own fullness of being and forms an irreversible gift (opus operatum), to this extent the sign is a cause of grace, although the sign is caused by this grace.

The mutual inter-dependence prevents one regarding grace and the sign of grace as two quite separate realities set over against each other as cause and effect. We should rather speak of two moments in a process of historical and ontological fulfilment, even if the conditions of each are different. In this sense the sacramental sign is a cause of grace. The sign belongs to the essential actualisation of this grace which thereby finds irreversible historical expression. The sign is in fact brought forth by grace as its 'real symbol', so that grace itself achieves fulfilment. The ontological and pneumatological implications of sign causality and its connection with the bodiliness and the historicity of man require fuller clarification but these remarks about the notion of sign causality must suffice. Its legitimacy in any event is independent of the following reflections and thus can serve as theological evidence in their favour.

What is to be said in our case? God's saving will embraces everything and so permits even the sin of the world. His self-communication which consists in an offer made to human freedom touches the innermost nature and goal of man and therefore of salvation history. In this process each thing is important with and for every other, since every individual in this single salvation history is willed by God's saving purpose *as* an element within it. The solidarity of man in salvation history is not of the same character for every individual as this history unfolds in time, nor does it consist merely in a temporal succession of individual histories of salvation. It tends towards a goal and a fulfilment of the whole of salvation history, in which the being of God as self-giving love and the freedom of God find an irreducible and historically tangible expression. Under these conditions it is at least conceivable that the ambivalence of human and divine freedom which is a primary feature of this history will be resolved by a free and historical act before the universal culmination of the total historical [214] process. The outcome would then be fixed and irreversible from within history.

The logical possibility is assured if the irreversible outcome, appearing within history, of the historical process of human and divine freedom is positive, i.e. signifies the salvation of the world which could not then be totally lost. This would be possible if God were to communicate himself to a man in such a unique manner that this man would become the definitive and irreversible self-gift of God to the world. He would also freely accept the divine self-gift in such a manner that this too would be irreversible, i.e. through his death as the definitive culmination of his free actions in history. If salvation history is irreversibly directed in this sense to salvation, and not to damnation, through a concrete event, then this historically tangible occurrence must be a sign of the salvation of the whole world in the sense of a 'real symbol', and so possesses a type of causality where salvation is concerned. To this we wish to apply a well known theological concept and call it 'sacramental'.

Christian faith sees in Jesus, his cross and resurrection just such an event. Given the unity and solidarity of mankind, we have here before us the sign of an irreversible positive outcome of the one historical process. Before this event took place the positive ending of salvation history was not assured with tangible historical certainty, but was obscured by the ambiguity of human and divine freedom. Thus we may predicate of this sign of the salvation of the whole world the type of sacramental causality which was mentioned earlier. *Because* Jesus died and rose again, therefore salvation is offered and given to the whole of mankind; taken together cross and resurrection are the 'cause' of the salvation of all men. To avoid the problems alluded to above, this 'causality' must be thought of in terms of 'sacramental sign causality', which is brought about by the prior divine will to save mankind and is not itself the cause of this divine will. If the Second Vatican Council emphasises that the Church is the

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sacrament of the world's salvation[16] and explains this statement by describing the Church as the basic sacrament of salvation,[17] then Jesus Christ may be [215] called the *primary* sacrament ('Ursakrament'), which is the original 'sign and instrument of the innermost union with God and of the unity of the whole of mankind'.[18] In this way the Constitution on the Church speaks of the Church, deriving its description from the nature of Christ.

The quotation refers to 'sign and instrument', which can be easily interpreted according to a particular sacramental theology as, 'instrument because sign'. The objection may be raised that a sign, which can only be directed and addressed to men, may possibly be a significant cause of their awareness but cannot be the cause of the reality signified, i.e. the salvation of men. In reply to this it should be pointed out that a notion of 'sign' is here being assumed which is quite inappropriate for a sacramental sign. Certainly this form of explanation does not do full justice to the causality of Jesus and cross where salvation is concerned, or entirely explain the dogma of the redemption through the cross. But in a sacramental sign the saving will of God and grace find historical expression. Sign and signified are essentially one, in contrast to the above assumption, so that the reality signified comes to be in and through the sign, and the sign therefore, in this specific and limited sense, causes the reality signified.

This applies in a fundamental way to the relationship between the saving will of God and grace which is the innermost purpose of the whole history of the world, on the one hand, and the cross of Jesus on the other. In consequence the cross can and should be understood in this sense as the cause of the salvation signified and not merely regarded as the cause of our awareness of salvation in faith. Of course the cross possesses this latter function for us and our faith as well, but the cross of Jesus as the universal primary sacrament of the salvation of the whole world expresses more than this, and indeed says everything, always assuming that 'sacrament' is correctly interpreted and is seen to possess the specific type of causality which is proper to the cross as the instrument of salvation for all men.

The explanation we have offered does not of course exhaust the subject matter. Much has been left without proper proof or development, e.g. the solidarity of all men and the history of individual freedom within the totality of human history, the connection between God's self-communication in grace and the death of Jesus, the theology of death, the unity of the death and resurrection of Jesus, etc. On [216] many of these topics we have spoken elsewhere; others are deliberately left open here. For the thesis we have proposed is not meant to include at any price under the notion of the primary sacramental causality of signs all that objectively belongs to the salvation brought about by Jesus and the universal significance of his cross and resurrection. Our theory does not in the least exclude other factors which have not been mentioned here and which could not be included under this concept, as long as the thesis is not itself placed in doubt by such alternative possibilities. Our purpose here is to show, by moving from Jesus to humanity as a whole, how a single historical event may be seen to possess universal meaning. This meaning is unique and does not arise simply from the importance which any particular occurrence in history possesses for the totality of human history.

MAN AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST

[16] Cf. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (LG), nos. 1, 8, 48, 59; *Decree on Ecumenism* (UR), no. 2; *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* (AG), no. 1; *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (GS) no. 45.
[17] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Kleine Vorüberlegung über die Sakramente im allgemeinen', *Die siebenfaltige Gabe. Über die Sakramente der Kirche* (Munich, 1974), pp. 7-18.
[18] LG, no. 1.

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It was stated at the start of this enquiry that the universal significance of the cross of Jesus for human salvation must be seen from the point of view of the whole of humanity. It is plain that this significance is only present and intelligible if the relationship is *mutual*, if, that is, not only is Jesus related to mankind but also mankind is related to him. In part this is presupposed, in part proposed as a thesis. But this poses new problems which acquire proper focus and depth if we leave on one side those with faith who believe explicitly in Jesus and redemption on the basis of the Christian Gospel and concentrate on those who, for no fault of their own, have never really been touched by the explicit message of Christianity. To this number belong the whole of mankind living before Christ as well as non-Christians since the time of Christ and all those who consciously and explicitly believe that they are required by their conscience to refuse the Gospel of Christ as this is presented to them. In this last case it is not a question of sin offering a threat to salvation. All these groups ultimately belong to a single category, since for a variety of reasons they have not been reached by the Gospel of Jesus and yet their rejection of the Christian message does not mean an existentially serious sin. Seen from this point of view, therefore, such people form a single group as far as our topic is concerned despite all the differences amongst them, for their problem is a common one.

To answer this question two assumptions must be made: first, that all men only achieve salvation through Christ. This is not self-evident [217] and is sometimes not given sufficient consideration in contemporary theory when the question of non-Christian religions and the universality of salvation is being discussed. Further treatment of this point is not needed here, however, since we have already shown how the universality of salvation may be conceived in relationship to Jesus.

The second assumption is still less obvious and both as fact and possibility requires clearer proof. It states that all men who reach salvation must have a relationship to *Jesus Christ* in their saving faith and that the fact that Jesus is the universal cause of salvation implies that all men are related to Jesus by means of the faith that is necessary for salvation.

The fact and possibility of this raise two different questions of which the ‘how’ question will receive most of our attention. On the fact itself a few prior comments will be made so that its possibility can be intelligibly discussed. As a result of the Second Vatican Council it must be accepted that salvation is open to any adult human being on the basis of a strictly supernatural faith in revelation brought about by grace. This is true of all men, even for ‘heathens’, and this means that in no case can faith in any way be replaced by anything else, as could be proposed at the beginning of this century by Straub,[19] for example. All such suggestions contradict the teaching of the magisterium. The theological difficulties this raises are made plain by the repeated assertions of the Council that God alone knows how such a faith is in fact possible in certain circumstances and under certain conditions. Specifically this applied to pagans and those living before Christ who were untouched by the Old Testament. But despite this evident embarrassment the Council held fast to the conviction that supernatural faith in revelation in the proper sense of this term was necessary for all men and rejected the view that in place of faith a purely metaphysical knowledge of God, freely accepted, would suffice. A free self-revelation of God is thus demanded, which is to be accepted by man. Without going any further into this problem, the possibility and intelligibility of a supernatural faith in revelation for all men must simply be presupposed. Otherwise we would have to discuss the possibility of salvation and faith for atheists and the question of anonymous theism, as was done at the Council.

Let us suppose, then, that a faith which is directed to the self- revelation of God is possible even when a person has not been in [218] contact with the explicit revelation contained in the

[19] Cf. A. Straub, *De analysi fidei* (lnnsbruck, 1922).

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Old and New Testaments. We may note in passing that this does not mean accepting the theory of an 'original revelation in the Garden of Eden' in the usual sense, or supposing that this primitive revelation was transmitted through several million years of human history. The only matter to be discussed is whether the faith, whose possibility we are assuming, may conceivably contain, in a manner analogous to the implicit and unthematic presence of God, an implicit but still genuine presence of Jesus Christ, especially in the case of so-called atheists. Only under this condition would such people not only be drawn into the redeeming action of Jesus, but would also possess a relationship to this act of salvation through their faith, thus creating a two way connection.

This brings us to the often discussed question of 'anonymous Christians',[20] a topic which in the space available here can only be briefly touched on. Recently the phrase has occasioned massive objections, which sometimes contain considerable misunderstandings. It is absurd and ridiculous, for instance, to assert that supporters of this notion merely want to use it to console Church members for the diminishing number, both in relative and absolute terms, of those confessing explicit Christian faith. It was never just a matter of a 'tranquilliser' to counter the disappearance of Christian belief. In fact the theory arose from two facts: first, the possibility of supernatural salvation and of a corresponding faith which must be granted to non-Christians, even if they never become Christian; and secondly, that salvation cannot be gained without reference to God and Christ, since it must in its origin, history and fulfilment be a theistic and Christian salvation.

One can only escape this conclusion if one adopts the pessimistic outlook common in the past and disputes the possibility of supernatural salvation for such people, thereby consigning them to hell or limbo, or if one grants salvation merely on the basis of human respectability without reference to God and Christ, or if, finally, one refuses to think about the Christian character of salvation in these cases, thus endangering the universality of Christ's redeeming action, which should on the contrary be firmly maintained.

As we said years ago, it is not a question of the name, 'anonymous Christian' or 'anonymous Christianity'.[21] The issue clearly arises from [219] the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. In addition we should have learnt enough from psychology, depth psychology and a genuine metaphysical understanding of human knowledge and freedom to realise that a man does not know and deliberately put into practice only those things which he can state in words as objects of his conscious awareness or can freely affirm. It is obvious that a contradiction can exist between the way a person takes free possession of himself in an unthematic and unreflective manner and the way he interprets himself as an object in words and concepts, and this contradiction does not have to be noticed by the person concerned, who may indeed expressly deny it. Is it surprising that in certain circumstances the real situation and the basic self-understanding of a person may be grasped more clearly by someone else than by the person himself, who may in fact strongly resist the other's interpretation? This fact must be accepted; it cannot be avoided or explained away, since it frequently happens that one man interprets another differently from the latter's own reading of himself.

I must assert as a Christian and a metaphysician who holds that the spiritual element in man cannot be reduced to matter that even a materialist philosopher does those free, spiritual activities which I objectify in a philosophy of spirit, even if the empiricist affirms that such activities do not in fact exist. A Marxist philosopher of history certainly interprets my role as a priest differently from the way I do. From a formal point of view, then, there is no problem

[20] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Observations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian" ', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London, 1976), pp. 280-294. Bibliog. and references given there.
[21] Cf. the introduction to the article referred to in footnote 19, *op. cit.,* pp. 531 sq.

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in my treating someone as an anonymous Christian, even if he energetically denies my interpretation and rejects it as false or incoherent; Nishitani the well known Japanese philosopher, the head of the Kyoto school, who is familiar with the notion of the anonymous Christian, once asked me: What would you say to my treating you as an anonymous Zen Buddhist? I replied: certainly you may and should do so from your point of view; I feel myself honoured by such an interpretation, even if I am obliged to regard you as being in error or if I assume that, correctly understood, to be a genuine Zen Buddhist is identical with being a genuine Christian, in the sense directly and properly intended by such statements. Of course in terms of objective social awareness it is indeed clear that the Buddhist is not a Christian and the Christian is not a Buddhist. Nishitani replied: Then on this point we are entirely at one.

Of course an anonymous Christian is different from an explicit Christian. Otherwise he would be an explicit Christian and not an [220] anonymous one. He lacks nearly all or most of those characteristics which on the level of objective understanding and social life go into making a Christian. The idea of the anonymous Christian does not mean that the realities which the anonymous Christian lacks, such as the explicit profession of Christian faith or baptism, are unimportant for salvation and for being a Christian, even if it is not possible here to explain more clearly their significance for salvation.[22] It is more important that the heathen in his polytheism, the atheist in good faith, the theist outside the revelation of the Old and New Testaments, all possess not only a relationship of faith to God's self-revelation, but also a genuine relationship to Jesus Christ and his saving action. It is in fact not easy in the case of the relationship to God to solve the question why such men do not merely have an unthematic, transcendent relationship to the God of philosophers but also possess a relationship to the God who communicates himself to man in grace and bestows a supernatural self-revelation on man.

A CHRISTOLOGY OF QUEST

The actual history of Jesus Christ, the particularity of his cross in space and time, makes the relationship to him difficult, more difficult at any rate than the transcendent relation of man to God. In contrast to the possibilities open to believers, Jesus cannot be meant to be an explicit theme in the cases we are considering, nor be presented as a concrete historical point of reference which would make possible an encounter with his unique spatio-temporal location. Otherwise the reference to Jesus embodied in faith of this type would not differ from that possessed by an explicit Christian. One way out of the cul-de-sac created by the demand for a relationship to Jesus for which a concrete historical possibility cannot seemingly be discovered, may be offered by the suggestion that such a relationship can actually be established by a person's alignment, correct in terms of faith, to realities which are objectively and historically connected to Jesus and his history. This would mean that a man would be related to Jesus without this involving any subjective implications. This notion need not be false, but it leaves the proposed relationship so 'thin' that it does not suffice by itself. For the relationship would have, in part at least, a purely objective [221] character and would not enter at all into the existential realm of the life of faith, or at least not in an intelligible fashion. The objective part of the relationship remains so general and abstract that it provides less explanation than is here required. Finally the whole theory is based on the single truth that, given the unity of history, each part is connected to the whole.

[22] The importance for salvation of the realities which constitute explicit Christianity may be explained as the response to a command or as a necessary means of salvation or in a variety of other ways.

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We can only find a real way out of this difficulty if in such cases we attribute a 'Christology of quest' to all men of good will and regard it as sufficient to answer our question. A person who is searching for something which is specific and yet unknown has a genuine existential connection, as one alert and on the watch, with whatever he is seeking, even if he has not yet found it, and so cannot develop the relation to the object of his quest to its full extent. The reality of the relationship to this object and its inner connection to the goal becomes clear, since the relation to the goal is always characterised by a new and more radical search. If this were not true we could not speak of the growth of faith and the quest of hope in the case of the justified. If searching belongs to the essence of the pilgrim state of having found what is being sought, then the real connection of the search to its object cannot be denied, even if the object of the quest has not yet been found. At this point it will be clear that the search is brought about by grace, which has found its historically tangible expression and its irreversible force in Jesus. This means that if the search is caused by this grace, a person engaged on such a quest is directed in some measure to this goal. We are assuming here that such a Christology of quest involves hope and expectation of an Advent kind and that a person who is caught up in the actual process of history demands some factual guarantee of the successful fulfilment of his eschatological hope. Its realisation means the end of his history, the fulfilment of his own transcendent nature which consists in the reference to God and his own self-realisation in freedom. This realisation, however, does not occur in an isolated transcendence apart from history, but takes place in the specific and common history of all men.

For further clarification of the relationship of eschatological hope to Christ, as it is found in the actual fulfilment of human existence transformed by divine grace, three different claims upon human existence should be distinguished. Human existence is always directed to the freedom of man. In accepting freedom a man gives assent in his quest to the absolute source of salvation which is tangible in history, although these three claims do not in themselves exhaust the basic [222] structure of human existence.[23] They are united by the fact that a man who approaches them without reserve is always engaged upon a 'Christology of quest' in his human existence. The difference between such a person and an explicit Christian is that in the Christology of quest a man does not know that it is in Jesus of Nazareth that what he is seeking is to be found. Because a man engaged upon the Christological quest is prepared without conditions or qualifications to accept the goal wherever and however it can be found, this Christological search is in fact directed to Jesus, for it is Jesus who in reality is its proper goal. This means that the Christological quest possesses a relationship to Jesus, even if a man does not know how to call him by his proper name. This relationship plainly differs from that of a professing Christian to his Lord.

THE CLAIMS UPON HUMAN EXISTENCE

First of all there is the demand for an absolute love of neighbour, in the form presented in Mt 25. This must be taken with radical seriousness and approached, as it were, from 'below', from the love of the particular neighbour. If one adds an 'as if' to the statement of Christ that *he* himself is genuinely loved in a neighbour, or if one adopts a theology of purely legal attribution, then one distorts the sense of Jesus' words which is taken from the real experience of love. The true meaning is that through radical and unconditional love of

[23] Similar ideas, though from another point of view, form the basis of the author's study, 'Das konkrete Verhältnis zu Jesus', *Ich glaube an Jesus Christus* (Zurich, 1968), pp. 49-65. They have also been used for various proposals for a short formulation of faith; cf. R. Bleistein, *Kurzformel des Glauhens* II (Wurzburg, 1971), pp. 86-94.

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another, a man makes an implicit act of faith and love in Christ. This is indeed true, for any man, being both finite and unreliable, cannot rationally justify from his own resources the offer of absolute love in which a person dares to commit himself without reserve or qualification to another. In himself he could only be the object of a limited love, a love in which the lover either holds himself back or ventures into a realm which may be without meaning. If this dilemma could be overcome *purely* by an appeal to God as the guarantee and limit of the absolute character of love, then this might be feasible in an abstract and speculative sense with reference to the general concept of absolute love. But if a man experiences the absolute quality of love, it is plain that love demands [223] more than the permanent and transcendent guarantee of God. Love does not find its full realisation out of its own resources but from the radical unity it has with the love of God in Jesus Christ. It implies a unity of the love of God and the love of neighbour, in which the love of neighbour is the love of God and so has an absolute quality, even if this lacks thematic expression. Love searches for the God-man, i.e. for the one who can and may be loved as man with absolute commitment proper to the love of God, not as an idea but as a concrete reality. Ideas cannot be loved: it is the reality which is desired, whether this be already present or lies in the future. This notion depends of course upon the assumption that men form a single totality and that genuine love is not an isolated, individualistic affair. It always tends rather to embrace all men with all the practical implications demanded by love, and conversely it must find concrete expression in the love of the particular individual. Furthermore we are saying that the existence of the God-man within the single totality of mankind makes possible absolute love of another person.

Secondly there is the demand to be prepared for death. Normal preaching tends to concentrate in the case of the death of Jesus, despite its crucial significance for salvation, too much upon the particular, categorial event which takes place alongside many others on the world stage and has its own specific character. But the particular character of this death does not make plain much of the innermost being of the world and of human existence, or bring it to fulfilment. One moves too quickly to a consideration of the external causes and the violent nature of this death and treats it in the context of a theory of satisfaction as the purely external and meritorious cause of the redemption. But in a theology of death the event of Jesus's death can be more closely related to the basic structure of human existence. Death is the one act governing the whole of life in which a man as a free being has total self-determination. This means, or should mean, the acceptance of absolute control in the radical powerlessness which is acutely experienced in death. If a man, whose freedom signifies being responsible for his own destiny and the desire to control it, freely and willingly accepts this radical powerlessness, and if this is not an acceptance of the absurd which could be rejected with justifiable protest, then in this acceptance a man is looking forward to death as reconciliation with expectant hope, or giving assent to it in these terms. For a man does not give assent in the ultimate analysis to abstract norms and concepts but rather to that present or future reality found in his own [224] history as the basis of his existence, in which the enduring dialectic between action and powerless suffering is finally reconciled in death. But this is only possible if the dialectic at the root of human existence is resolved through being attributed to the one who is himself the ultimate ground of this duality.

Finally we should mention the demand for hope in the future. A man has hopes and plans and at the same time projects himself into the unforeseeable which lies ahead. In so doing he moves towards his own future. In this process he is continually striving to overcome the inner and outer self-alienation and to lessen the gap between what he is and what he wishes and ought to become. Does this absolute reconciliation, both individual and collective, remain a distant goal, ever approached but never reached, or can it be achieved as the absolute future, without its achievement destroying the finite and being swallowed up in the absolute being of

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God? If the absolute future of God is really our own future, does the reconciliation still lie ahead of us as a final goal, or does it already belong- to history, so that history even now embodies the definitive pledge of the goal and, though still incomplete, is moving *within* its final purpose? The man with authentic hope must hope that the reality of history gives an affirmative answer to the second alternative in each question. This hope offers a Christian an insight into that which faith in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, understood as the definitive beginning of the coming of God, professes to be the absolute future of the world and of history.

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[225]

PART FOUR

Questions About God

[227]

14

THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD

'God is dead' is a modern slogan which is now beginning to ebb and fade away. 'How should we speak about God?' is a question raised by not a few theologians in the attempt to come to grips with the actual realities of understanding, thought and intelligible language on this subject. 'God is hidden', 'He is a mystery, indeed he is the absolute mystery'. So speaks a long theological tradition, and it is on this tradition that a dogmatic theologian would like to offer a few reflections here.[1] The paucity of the data, familiar to every school of theology,[2] allows no more than an abstract treatment [228] of the subject. All the striking and concrete information drawn from biblical and historical theology must here be omitted. Still this investigation will be undertaken *in* the hope of presenting a somewhat more radical analysis of the problem which lies behind the phrase, 'the hiddenness of God'.

First of all we should review the traditional data found in manuals of theology on the topic. By the theology of the manuals is meant Catholic theological endeavour in so far as this has influenced contemporary textbooks without achieving any very penetrating investigation into the richer and more colourful history of this theological proposition about God.[3] If such a phenomenon should also be found in the realm of Protestant theology, then this must be left aside since the author is not competent to deal with it.

The second stage will be to consider the problematic, raised by the propositions found in

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[1] For the relevant statements of the Church's magisterium, cf. *Denz.* 294, 501, 525, 800, 804, 3001.

[2] See the remarks which are usually made in the chapter on the possibility of knowledge of God. These ideas are normally proposed for the knowledge of God after death only as an appendix. M. Premm, *Katholische Glaubenskunde* I (Vienna, 1951), pp. 86-88; J. Pohle and J. Gummersbach, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* I (Paderborn, 1952), pp. 151-155; 174-176; Joh. Brinktrine, *Die Lehre von Gott*, I (Paderborn, 1953), pp. 39-42; Fr. Diekamp and Kl. Jüssen, *Katholische Dogmatik* I (Munster, 1958), pp. 129-131; *Die Katholische Glaubenswelt* I (Freiburg i. Br., 1959), pp. 396 sq.; H. Lais, *Dogmatik* I (Kevelaer, 1965), pp. 43-45. The topic is easier to grasp and is approached by different authors in *Mysterium Salutis* II 'Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus,' (Zurich, 1967), pp. 35, note 7; 289 sq., 300, 345, 349.

Our reservations in embarking upon the Protestant treatment of the question are based on the great diversity among different writers which seems to have existed in discussions of the 'hiddenness of God'. Even a cursory glance at the following accounts by dogmatic theologians gives evidence of this: W. Elert, *Der christliche Glaube* (Berlin, 1940), pp. 176-184 (Gotteserkenntnis); P. Althaus, *Grundriss der Dogmatik* (Gütersloh, 1959), pp. 31-33 (Der verborgene Gott); W. Trillhaas, *Dogmatik* (Berlin, 1962), pp. 97-119 (Gottes Verborgenheit und Gottes Erkenntnis) above all the extensive treatment by Karl Barth is to be noted *Church Doqmatics* II Pt 1 (Edinburgh 1957) pp. 179-204 (The Hiddenness of God).

[3] Cf. the references given in footnote 2. In general one may say that on the Catholic side there is a tendency to treat the question in a narrow and restricted way. At any rate there is little attempt to go beyond the statements of the magisterium. On the Protestant side, however, a whole range of topics are touched on under this heading, so that the meaning is hard to grasp clearly. The treatment is normally extensive and almost indeterminable. Here only the textbooks in German are considered, but they scarcely differ from works in other languages, at least on the Catholic side. *Mysterium Salutis* is also available in other languages.

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this theological school, which has not itself received sufficient attention within the school. Finally some attempt will be made to bring together the contributions of a systematic theologian into a positive synthesis.

'THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD' ACCORDING TO CLASSICAL THEOLOGY

If I am not mistaken, the concept 'hiddenness' is less frequently used in Catholic theology than that of 'incomprehensibility'. This fact is of some significance. Does it mean that a metaphysical treatment of the question is preferred to an investigation from the perspective of the history of salvation and revelation? Of course the theologian knows from revelation that vital knowledge of God is given to man through the revealed word, knowledge of which he would otherwise be quite ignorant despite its crucial importance for salvation. God emerges, as it were, from his hiddenness in revelation and makes himself known to man as the author of salvation.[4] And yet the revealed word of God [229] is seen from the point of view of the 'incomprehensibility of God' as something which is hidden and can only be illuminated through the word of revelation, in so far as this is intrinsically possible. Here the metaphysical or essential aspect is dominant. The basic assertion of classical theology refers to the incomprehensibility, the 'incomprehensibilitas' of God. This incomprehensibility follows from the essential infinity of God which makes it impossible for a finite created intellect to exhaust the possibilities of knowledge and truth contained in this absolute fullness of being.

This does not mean, however, that in God some things are known (at least in the final vision of heaven), while others simply remain unknown. Rather one and the same God is known and is at the same time fundamentally incomprehensible, even if the investigation of the question is not normally taken any further, i.e. how one can speak in the same breath of the 'knowability' and the 'unknowability' of one and the same 'object'.

The incomprehensibility of God is then defined more precisely by the observation that the being of God and the mystery of the Trinity are not 'transparent' to man. This applies at least in the case of the possibilities of knowledge open to man during his life of pilgrimage when his natural intellectual capacities do not permit him to obtain a speculative and philosophical grasp of the Trinity. He can only know of the Trinity through the word of revelation which man does not naturally merit and which in this sense is supernatural. Even then, after revelation, the Trinity escapes conceptual mastery and remains a mystery.[5]

In addition the attempt is made to ground the necessity of revelation in the fact that God is free with regard to the world, and that even through the act of creation God has not experienced any restriction of his freedom. Thus the possible realm of free divine decisions is not completely exhausted by creation and its structures. God can behave as a free agent towards the world once it is a given reality. Such free decisions could on this account only be known by man through revelation. In so far as a sort of hiddenness is attached to these free 'decrees' precisely because of their origin in freedom and as long as they are not [230] objectified, God remains in this free relationship to the world the one who is hidden. Why and how far the free decisions of God retain their hidden and incomprehensible character after revelation are questions which scarcely receive any detailed analysis. Wherever such a free self-disclosure of God reveals something which is and remains a mystery in virtue of God's own inner nature, a quality of mystery is evidently attached to these decisions because

[4] Cf. Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* nos. 2 and 3, where however our question is not explicitly mentioned.
[5] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73; *The Trinity* (London, 1970).

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of their content. Essential incomprehensibility and the necessity of historical revelation are closely connected in such a viewpoint.

The reference to the free decrees of God in relation to a world which is already created make it possible to pursue the theme of salvation history in the question of the hiddenness of God, for God freely emerges from his hiddenness into history. But the doctrine of God's free decisions with respect to the world is not very clearly related to the fact of God's ontological incomprehensibility. In consequence the theme of God's hiddenness in relation to salvation history, though briefly touched on, remains secondary to the main idea of his essential incomprehensibility.

Classical theology adds a second crucial assertion: God remains incomprehensible even in the beatific vision. One might remark that this notion is already covered by the way in which God's incomprehensibility is grounded in relation to the human mind. For this line of reasoning rests less upon the special features of human existence in its earthly form than upon the incommensurability of the finite capacity of knowledge proper to man with the infinite nature of God. In other words the argument is conceived in terms of metaphysics and not of salvation history. But the fact that classical theology holds firm to God's incomprehensibility even in the beatific vision must nevertheless be underlined. For scholastic teaching differs from Scripture in that the state of human salvation, of ultimate blessedness, is more radically centred upon the beatific vision. This is conceived as the fulfilment of man's theoretical intellect. In this perspective the absolute and direct contact between the human intellect and the being of God is stressed and this contact is no longer mediated by any finite reality. This the difference must be brought out and emphasised between the pilgrim state on the one hand, in which knowledge of God remains obscure and is mediated through the created world and finite language in riddles and images, and the radical and direct self-disclosure by God in the beatific vision on the other hand. If the incomprehensibility of God is still affirmed despite the emphasis laid [231] upon his self-revelation in the beatific vision, then this is a striking assertion of God's mystery which is far from self-evident. Of course it poses the question how God can still be incomprehensible if he is directly perceived and if, at least in this state, man is said to be 'capax infiniti'. The problem, then, is how such a vision can exist and what it is supposed to entail, if God still remains incomprehensible.

THE PROBLEM OF GOD'S INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

These propositions of classical theology are not free of problems. In this theological endeavour one is struck by the predominant desire for theoretical understanding. From the start the incomprehensibility of God is so firmly based upon a certain conception of knowledge and of truth obtained by such knowledge that God's incomprehensibility merely forms the presupposition for a negative assertion of the finite nature of man. Man can never entirely or exhaustively grasp God. One might almost add, unfortunately! The horizon of understanding which is assumed here, the criterion by which human knowledge is measured so that God remains incomprehensible, represents a conception based on a model of knowledge in which an object is penetrated and mastered. In comparison with this paradigm of knowledge, human perception of God on earth and even in the state of final fulfilment remains deficient. God is, unfortunately, always incomprehensible, however much a man may know of him and however directly he may perceive him in heavenly beatitude.

In such an ideal of knowledge the Greek desire of absolute gnosis and the modern understanding of knowledge as a process which leads to the mastery of an object come together, whether the mastery in question is conceived in terms of German idealism or of the natural sciences. In this context the incomprehensibility of God is the ground for the

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permanent finitude of the creature negatively conceived, even though it must be granted that the assertion of such finitude gives God the glory which, in an absolute sense, is proper to him alone. This must be stated in the face of any temptation to make human subjectivity the event of absolute consciousness or to suppress the pain of being finite in any other way. It only remains to ask whether with the predominance of the desire for theoretical understanding the radical recognition of God's utter incomprehensibility does not naturally lead to an indifference on man's part towards something which he cannot understand, that is, to a kind of practical atheism. And how can the [232] state of human beatitude be conceived if man is thrown headlong into direct contact with God's incomprehensibility which is utterly beyond his powers, and if his capacity for knowledge is not meant to be directed to the experience of incomprehensibility[6] but rather to comprehensive mastery? This means that he must be resigned to being trapped within his finite capacity of knowledge in the face of the incomprehensible God.

This theology raises a second problem about God's incomprehensibility. It is quite understandable that the free decisions of God with regard to the world must remain hidden as long as they are not communicated through specific verbal revelation. But it seems that the hidden character of God's personal freedom in relation to the world is not so easily intelligible as classical theology apparently imagines. One need only recollect that the free decisions of God towards his world must, it seems, be given objective expression in terms of worldly realities in a manner similar to the divine purpose in the creation of the world. But then the free decisions of God seem to possess no special hidden quality beyond that belonging to any free personal decision before it is made known through a freely created objective form. As long as the free decrees of God are not related to his intrinsic reality of incomprehensible glory, then they are necessarily linked to those realities which he freely creates (e.g. the salvation of men). Such realities belong to the finite realm and cannot be more incomprehensible to a man with a finite capacity for knowledge than other realities in the world. Being finite they are intrinsically commensurable to a finite intellect of a fundamentally unlimited, transcendent kind. If one wanted to understand the incomprehensibility of God from the point of view of the freedom of his decisions and the necessity of revelation it implies, then the 'deus absconditus' must come out of his hiddenness in order to become 'deus revelatus' in such a way that his whole revelation would be comprehensible. It would then be a matter of indifference to us what he might perhaps keep hidden, for the 'incomprehensible' element of the 'deus revelatus' would merely consist in the human fear that God could behave towards men differently from the way in which he in fact does behave. The God who treats sinners with mercy and grace could also be a God of pure anger and judgement, or, to put the matter in Catholic and scholastic terms, he could be a God who denies the chance of supernatural destiny. But this fear [233] must be removed by the experience that in reality God *has* freely acted as the God of forgiveness and absolute nearness. But this would be intelligible as a statement about us, even if it rests upon the freedom of God, and so cannot be any more incomprehensible than we are ourselves. At any rate this is how it seems until it becomes clear that the actual content of God's free decisions in relation to us consists precisely in the presence of his incomprehensibility. Only in this way can the doctrine of essential incomprehensibility and the idea of the divine hiddenness of salvation history be mutually related.[7] For this to occur it is not enough to say that through revelation God has freely determined to manifest those mysteries which lie hidden in him and which retain their mysterious quality. For the question still remains open, what is the exact relationship between the process of revelation and the content of revelation, between

[6] In this experience the issue is the incomprehensibility itself and not what is grasped and known.
[7] This is not only possible, or merely provisional and only factually overcome.

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'revelatio qua' and 'revelatio quae'.

In general it is not clear in classical theology that the problem arising from the direct vision of an incomprehensible God can only be solved in the context of love. It is not a matter here of the scholastic dispute, whether the essence of beatitude consists in the intellectual fulfilment as such, i.e. in the 'visio', or in the fulfilment of the will in love for which direct vision merely provides the precondition in the form of knowledge, or in both. The traditional diversity of opinion and the various scholastic theories are of no interest as long as one does not realise that knowledge of the incomprehensible God himself in direct vision can only cease to be the opposite of fulfilment, if knowledge itself achieves perfection by being 'raised up' into love. Otherwise knowledge, taken in the sense usual in western tradition, would itself founder on the alien and-inhospitable rock of God's incomprehensibility. If the fundamental character of knowledge is understood, not in the sense of 'seeing through' an object, but rather as a possible openness to the mystery itself, then the question becomes at once more straightforward. Knowledge in the traditional sense would then be regarded as a derivation of the basic meaning of knowledge. The mutual perichoresis of knowledge and freedom occurs naturally and settles the question of the primacy of knowledge or love by focusing upon a more fundamental and essential spiritual unity which finds expression in the duality of knowledge and love. In the traditional conception of the direct vision of God[8] no answer is usually given to [234] the question of why knowledge does not come to grief when faced with the vision of God's incomprehensibility, or of why it does not despair and give up when confronted with his enduring hiddenness. If it is assumed that knowledge means comprehensive mastery, then the object grasped in such knowledge, even when it reaches fulfilment, must be qualified with the negative predicate of incomprehensible. Vision in this account can only be a radical version of the insight that we never reach God.

Finally we should notice a further problem inherent in the classical doctrine of God's incomprehensibility. Whenever the necessity of a supernatural verbal revelation is grounded in the fact that God is hidden in himself from the human spirit, distinctions are made between various grades of 'mysteries'. We do not want to pursue this point further here, but it is clear that it is simply assumed even in the case of the highest level of the mysteries of faith and revelation that there are a specific *number* of such mysteries. It is asserted of 'mysteria stricte dicta' that they could only be made known through the revelation of God and even after this revelation they remain impenetrable to man. There is scarcely any attempt made to answer the question whether this impenetrability is maintained for *each* of the 'mysteria stricte dicta' in the direct vision of God. It is supposed rather that the number and type of mysteries communicated through divine revelation depends simply upon the free decision of God.

The concept of divine incomprehensibility, as this is grasped by the human mind, naturally implies that it can be spelt out in an indefinite number of mysteries, always assuming of course that such a 'multiplication' does not contradict the basic notion of incomprehensibility. This assumption, however, hardly receives any explicit consideration. Scholastic teaching takes it as a matter of course that 'mysteria stricte dicta' in the sense outlined above can refer not merely to the explicitation of the incomprehensibility of God, as for example, the mystery of the Trinity. They can also be present in realities which embody God's actions 'ad extra' such as transubstantiation. We have already said that such an assumption is far from obvious or illuminating. In any event it is evident that the doctrine of the *multiplicity* of 'mysteria stricte dicta' is not related in this account to the primary mystery of divine incomprehensibility. No answer is given to the question, and perhaps it is not even seen as a question, of how any finite reality, created by God [235] and distinct from him, can

[8] Here one must overlook Bonaventure and a few other theologians who were aware of the value of the 'ecstatic' in the being of man.

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be a 'mysterium stricte dictum' for an intellect possessing unlimited transcendence. If the axiom is valid that being, intelligibility and knowledge increase and diminish in the same measure and are ultimately identical, as St Thomas took for granted and regarded as self-evident,[9] then a finite reality of this type cannot be fundamentally impenetrable. If one starts from the position that the quality of mystery in the sense of a 'mysterium stricte dictum' can only be predicated of God alone and of no other reality, then the question of the 'number of mysteries' is seen in a new light. If such a number exists, then it must in any case be related to the incomprehensibility of God himself.

OUTLINE OF A SYNTHESIS

We should now address ourselves to trying to give a positive answer to the problems we have found in classical Catholic theology with regard to the incomprehensibility, hiddenness and mystery of God.

In such an attempt to discover a positive synthesis we should not be worried about whether we are concerned with philosophy or theology. The following reflections may seem philosophical and speculative but in fact they proceed from a conviction of faith, that is, from a strictly theological proposition. This states that perfect beatitude granted to man by God consists in immediate access to God, i.e. God is himself the fulfilment of man. All communication in the created order, in so far as this can be conceived or is to be found in traditional theology (lumen gloriae), must be understood in relation to the direct access to God as communication with his immediate presence. It cannot be a question here in any sense of a created reality originating in God which merely represents God and only makes him indirectly present to man as the cause of the fulfilment which is properly ours. Of course this theological assertion can be taken as an interpretation of the experience of faith which can be directly grasped in Scripture. The proposition as defined by Benedict XII,[10] which counts as dogma for Catholic theology, cannot be anything else than the expression of a *radical* human hope in the Spirit of God, despite all the other possible formulations of this proposition. God himself in his own very being wills to be the beatitude of man. This fulfilment of the 'capax infiniti' [236] through the 'infinitum' may not be weakened by an appeal to other modes of communication which are of a more finite and intelligible nature. This 'metaphysic' need involve no more than the assertion that God himself and nothing else is our eternal life, however he may be understood by us here and now. This theological proposition forms the basis of all the reflections which are contained in this essay. However philosophical and speculative the line of thinking may appear, its only purpose is to make the primary theological statement intelligible and to prevent it being weakened or undervalued.

'*The* Truth' occurs in the basic experience of the mystery itself. Such knowledge is not in origin a defective mode of real knowledge, in the usual sense of the term. For such knowledge is directed to what can be comprehended and penetrated and only fails in this endeavour in a particular instance, without the object which is partially perceived becoming something totally unknown. What is called knowledge according to the common usage originating in the western tradition of philosophy, i.e. comprehension and mastery, consists in the ordering of data in a horizon of understanding and system of coordinates which is evident to us as the object which we possess identically with ourselves. But it is this which is a defective form of the true knowledge in which the mystery itself unfolds. If knowledge in the ordinary sense is regarded as a secondary and defective form of the real nature of knowledge,

[9] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Thomas Aquinas on Truth', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975), pp. 13-31.
[10] Cf. *Denz.* 1000-1001.

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then it is of no importance whether ordinary knowledge is understood in the sense of the creation of functional connections between the primary data of an original experience, or treated as the vision in which what is seen is comprehended. For the essence of knowledge lies in the mystery which is the object of primary experience and is alone self-evident. The unlimited and transcendent nature of man, the openness to the mystery itself which is given radical depth by grace, does not turn man into the event of the absolute spirit in the way envisaged by German idealism or similar philosophies; it directs him rather to the incomprehensible mystery, in relation to which the openness of transcendence is experienced. Man as transcendent subject is not the shepherd of being but the one protected by the mystery. In the primary realisation of his being (dasein) and in the philosophical reflection derived from it, man comes to be himself and here he does not experience himself as the dominant, absolute subject, but as the one whose being is bestowed upon him by the mystery. *This* is the reason why, in forming any concept, he understands himself as the one who reaches out beyond the conceptual into the nameless and the [237] incomprehensible. Transcendence grasped in its unlimited breadth is the a priori condition of objective and reflective knowledge and evaluation. It is the very condition of its possibility, even though it is ordered to the inexpressible. It is also the precondition for the freedom which is historically expressed and objectified. Thus the experience of the nameless mystery as both origin and goal is the a priori condition of all categorial knowledge and of all historical activity; it is not merely a marginal phenomenon at the end of the road. Otherwise it would merely be a matter of a journey into the bright light of categorial and ultimately scientific understanding, a journey on which a man grows weary in the pursuit of knowledge, leaves what is still unknown to itself and gives the name of mystery to this unmastered realm of the intelligible. In contrast knowledge in the primary sense is the presence of the mystery itself. It is being addressed by what no longer has a name, and it is relying on a reality which is not mastered but is itself the master. It is the speech of the being without a name, about which clear statements are impossible; it is the last moment before the dumbness which is needed if the silence is to be heard, and God is to be worshipped in love. If one insists that knowing in the basic sense consists in a piece of clear and ordinary understanding and in the science based upon it, then what we have said would have to be formulated in a different way. The manner of formulation is ultimately of no special consequence. The origin and goal of knowledge in the mystery is one of its constituent elements. In an unthematic way this is experienced in day-to-day knowledge and may be called ‘primary’ in the sense of the a priori condition of possibility of all knowing, even though it only becomes thematic in a secondary sense through subsequent reflection upon its own a priori presuppositions. There may be many truths. They can be clear and can guarantee control over reality. But they all stem from the unfolding of the mystery itself, from the *one* truth. This is not merely a later collection of truths but precedes them as the condition of their possibility. The presence of the one truth is of course unthematic, since it exists in the first instance as the condition of possibility of spatio–temporal and categorial–historical experience. It can therefore be overlooked and suppressed; its silent presence can be ignored in the face of immediate phenomena which in their variety and particularity can fill the space of life and consciousness. Where, too, this one truth is expressed in word in the ultimate courage of existence and, almost against its own nature, finds objective form, it can be confused with other objective [238] expressions and so lack truth and credibility. But this does not alter the fact that the one truth is the primary event of the spirit; it is the mystery which endures and unfolds and establishes the essential human capacity for truth.[11] In other words the ‘deus absconditus’ is the source of truth for

[11] Cf. The author’s studies in the metaphysics of knowledge: *Spirit in the World* (London and Sydney, 1968); *Hearers of the Word* (London and Sydney, 1969); ‘Thomas Aquinas on Truth’, *Theological Investigations* XII

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man, which is freely bestowed upon him and determines his identity. Man always stands before the 'deus absconditus', even when he tries to look away and refuses to accept the truth that clear knowledge of the reality of the world, which gives him mastery over the world, comes from this 'deus absconditus'. Knowledge is primarily the experience of the overwhelming mystery of this 'deus absconditus'.

Divine revelation is not the unveiling of something previously hidden, which through this illumination leads to an awareness similar to that found in ordinary knowledge of the world. Rather it means that the 'deus absconditus' becomes radically present as the abiding mystery. This mystery presents itself through revelation as the source of forgiveness, salvation and an eternal home. Revelation does not mean that the mystery is overcome by gnosis bestowed by God, even in the direct vision of God; on the contrary, it is the history of the deepening perception of God *as* the mystery. This continues in the direct presence of God afforded by what we call the beatific vision and can only be sustained in the loving surrender to the enduring mystery. It is the lost and not the blessed soul who perceives everything as infinite variety and so perceives nothing at all. The blessed abandons himself unconditionally to the direct self-communication of the mystery of the 'deus absconditus' from which come love and salvation. If the theoretical intellect is understood as the capacity for conceptual mastery and comprehension, then beatitude means that the theoretical intellect is set free to love the mystery, which lays total hold of us by its direct presence. The history of revelation, then, consists in the growing awareness that we are involved with the permanent mystery and that our involvement becomes ever more intense and exclusive. If revelation is seen in this perspective, there is certainly a great deal more to say about it than we usually find in discussions of revelation. But if the climax of revelation, the communication of the Spirit of God himself, takes place when a man loses everything in death except God, and *in* [239] *this way* achieves blessedness,[12] then the history of revelation can well be written in the manner proposed here. In any history nothing can ultimately be explained without reference to the ending. In our case the ending is the advent of God who is the enduring mystery and is accepted in love. In that history, therefore, the mystery is not removed by a slow process of attrition; rather all the provisional realities are dismantled which can lead to the belief that we can only achieve a relationship to God through what we believe we know about him. But such knowledge only offers figures and images, either good or bad, which represent and shape him to our needs. This process only lasts until we finally let go of everything in the assurance that God, the one who fundamentally cannot be shaped to our needs, becomes through his self-gift the being who alone is fitted to us. For through his own very being God has granted to us that the measure of our knowledge, desire and activity need not be ourselves but is the immeasurability of God himself. The fulfilment of the created order consists in the fact that God, who is our absolute future, is the incomprehensible mystery. This incomprehensibility is not to be taken as the limit of fulfilment but rather signifies its limitlessness which is loved and experienced as such. Of course this doctrine represents a danger for man. If he derives enjoyment from its theoretical and objective expression and turns it into a secret idol, then the highest fulfilment is distorted into a terrifying disorder. Only if the incomprehensible mystery is itself the object of love, if knowledge goes beyond the self and knowledge and love penetrate the mystery through such ecstasy, no longer returning to the self, only then is the final and greatest danger removed, the danger, that is, of turning the doctrine into a sublime gnosis in which once again a man replaces God with self. One cannot escape this danger by refusing really to accept that it is the will of God to be *himself* the absolute future of man and to be his proper fulfilment. He desires to be the

(London, 1975), pp. 13-31. All these studies were written in the same period.

[12] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Ideas for a Theology of Death', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975) pp. 169-186.

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beatitude of man in his incomprehensibility and not despite it, and this is the key to man's own self-understanding. The incomprehensibility of God as the blessed fulfilment of man, if one wished to develop the metaphysical line of thought any further, is the same reality as the incomprehensibility of God in his own being and in the free gift of the mystery to man in his individual concrete history. This is realised in the single 'free decree' of God, which is at root beyond understanding since once again it is identical with God [240] himself, who is the fulfilment of man and his reconciliation and forgiveness. This applies to the sinner as well as the justified, for the sinner is resolved in himself to reject God, because he wishes to escape from the incomprehensibility of God and seek refuge in the intelligibility of his own knowledge and action.

One further consideration must here be added, if we are to give a positive and systematic answer to the problems arising from the classical treatment of the hiddenness of God, and this concerns the manner in which an appreciation of God as the mystery which always lies beyond knowledge can be related to the understanding of other theological statements within a Christian dogmatic system, in order to give them new depth. Thus, for example, we must confront the doctrine of the Trinity with the notion of the hiddenness of God. It would then have to be shown that the 'Father' as the original source of both the processes within the godhead and of the creation of the world, means the being who transcends conceptual mastery and cannot be subordinated to any overarching system. He persists in this mode of being when he unfolds his identity through grace and vision in becoming totally present to man. 'Pater immensae majestatis'. The 'Spirit' would then signify the divine possibility of direct self-communication to man as mystery. The 'Son' means that God can give historical shape to this ultimate truth, which is himself, and bestow it upon humanity in a man who freely accepts his salvation in death and thus makes the divine self-gift of the mystery a definitive and credible reality. Because God himself and not some created representation of God is involved in the free self-gift of God as mystery, the three-fold form belongs directly to God in his relationship to man. Thus the economic Trinity of salvation is ipso facto the immanent Trinity.[13] What knowledge we possess from the history of revelation and faith about the threefold relationship of the single divine self-communication, which confronts us directly with the mystery itself, also applies to the immanent divine Trinity, whose 'mystery' is none other than the 'mysterium' which communicates itself to man and endures for eternity.

For a systematic Christology we should also reflect that Jesus stands as a human being in faith before the inexorable mystery which is an object of love precisely in its incomprehensibility. This makes it intelligible that his death is not just one of a series of events in his human [241] life but is the climax of his existence. For as long as a man accepts death unconditionally with faith and hope, he comes naked before the incomprehensibility of God, since all else has been destroyed. Classical Catholic theology, in dealing with the question of the knowledge and self-consciousness of Jesus as man, has a strange, if touching, tendency to ascribe as much positive and specific knowledge to the mind of Jesus as possible, while refusing to predicate divine omniscience of Jesus' human consciousness. In this theological account it would in fact be more important to stress the humanity of Jesus and emphasise that he surrendered himself unconditionally in his mind to the incomprehensibility of God and accepted with love, and without any attempt at repression, the ultimate 'beata ignorantia'.[14] Seen in this light the ignorance of Jesus, for which there is ample evidence in

[13] Cf. K. Rahner, *The Trinity* (London, 1970); 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate" ', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 77-102.
[14] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-consciousness of Christ', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 193-215; 'The Two Basic Types of Christology', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975), pp. 213-223.

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Scripture, does not point to a deficiency, but rather to a positive merit in his acceptance of this ignorance.

We have already alluded to the significance of the doctrine of God's incomprehensibility for an investigation of revelation and its history in theology. In the teaching on grace and justification, the fact and reason for God being in himself the justifying grace of man would be illuminated by treating the incomprehensibility of God as the positive goal and definitive fulfilment of man. It could then be shown that the doctrine of 'gratia increata', which is found in classical Catholic theology, is central to any radical treatment of grace and justification. Unfortunately the doctrine is usually presented as a mere effect of grace understood as a created characteristic of man. The Tridentine teaching of the infused 'habitus' of divine virtues in justification can and should be regarded as expressing the fact that the direct self-communication of God genuinely reaches man, without the 'infusi habitus' being a replacement or substitute for the self-communication of the mystery.[15] This might perhaps lead to a better understanding within classical Catholic theology of the forensic notion of justification found among the Reformers, always assuming that this [242] conception is itself not given a false mythological interpretation, but is taken rather to express the fact that man is justified by God if God *himself* acts directly towards man and makes him just through his own being.

The connection between the enduring incomprehensibility of God as the source of beatitude and eschatology has already been made clear in this essay. Only if eschatology points to God himself as the absolute future of man can it avoid being unmasked as a mythological (and therefore open to demythologisation) presentation of the tasks and goals which man should achieve through his own powers, albeit in an unending evolutionary process. The human future only becomes the true God in himself when man recognises it as always lying beyond his comprehension, or better, places his hope in it. Otherwise the future would merely be the object of human comprehension and control and so be immanent in the world. Alternatively it would be a cipher for the endless human progress into the future which can never be said to have reached its definitive goal.

These reflections should make it clear how vital the doctrine of the abiding incomprehensibility of God is for a theology of history,[16] not only of the individual but of humanity and society as a whole. The critique posed by Christians of the historically given state of any society comes from the power of hope in the absolute future[17] which one cannot dominate or plan. The absolute future is to be trusted and not treated as an enemy which one should reject or escape. Such a critical stance can be radical, patient and courageous; it implies neither a conservative glorification of the present situation, underpinned by ideology, nor a destructive impatience which seeks violent means to force a new world into existence by sacrificing the men of today.[18]

Finally the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of the absolute future of man, which is a promised gift, must be seen in connection with the meaning of the word 'God'. One might, for instance, enquire whether [243] the content of the scholastic idea of the infinite being of God, which could very easily be misunderstood as an inadmissible exaggeration of the

[15] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 316-346; 'Gnade', *LThK* IV (Freiburg i. Br., 1960), 991-1000; 'Selbstmitteilung Gottes', *LThK* IX (Freiburg i. Br., 1964), 627.
[16] Cf. A. Darlap, 'Fundamentale Theologie der Heilsgeschichte', *MySal* I (Zurich, 1965), pp. 3-156; 'History and Historicity', *Sacr. Mundi* II (London and New York, 1969), pp. 31-39.
[17] Cf. the author's collected studies, *Zur Theoloqie der Zukunft* (Munich, 1971).
[18] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Function of the Church as a Critic of Society', *Theological Investigations* XII (London, 1974), pp. 229-249; 'The Church's Commission to bring Salvation and the Humanisation of the World', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London, 1976), pp. 295-313.

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experience of the finite, could not better and more clearly be explained with reference to the incomprehensibility of our divinely inspired hope in the absolute future.[19] If the classical Catholic theology of the incomprehensibility of God were seen in this radical perspective, it would also be plain that a genuine 'theologia gloriae', for which Catholicism is often criticised, is still, if rightly interpreted, a theology of 'deus absconditus'. The 'gloria' is nothing other than the loving surrender of man to the incomprehensibility of God which is now a directly present reality. This is not to deny that essential differences exist between the theology of the pilgrim condition and that of fulfilment in glory, and that theologians in this world still need to be warned that they must be conscious in their theology of their condition as pilgrims. But the accusation, usually levelled from both sides, of a presumptuous transgression of boundaries could be considerably blunted, if it was mutually conceded that any 'theologia gloriae' always concerned the glory of the incomprehensible God. In every theology there is always the danger of imagining that the 'lumen gloriae' clarifies everything and even illuminates the mystery of God in such a way that at least in this 'gloria' God becomes transparent to the human mind. Conversely, however, it is not true that the 'deus absconditus' is the sort of God who desires that we should not recognise him at all. He does not share one part of himself with us and conceal the other; rather he bestows his whole being upon us. In communicating himself as 'deus revelatus' he becomes radically open to man *as* the 'deus absconditus'. From this mystery man is no longer able to escape: he accepts God as he is, as the mystery of incomprehensibility who, once recognised, is the very truth of man and, once loved, is his blessed fulfilment.

[19] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Observations on the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics', *Theological Investigations* IX (London, 1972), pp. 127-144; 'On the Theology of Hope', *Theological Investigations* X (London, 1973), pp. 242-259; 'Immanent and Transcendent Consummation of the World', *ibid.,* pp. 273- 289. On the question of God, cf. K. Rahner, *Gotteserfahrung heute* (Munich, 1972), pp. 1-16.

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[244]

15

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD IN ST THOMAS AQUINAS

The purpose of the few brief remarks presented here is to supplement and develop various questions connected with St Thomas Aquinas's[1] doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God. We will, therefore, assume the basic substance of his teaching that God always lies beyond the understanding of any finite created mind, even that of angels and of men in a state of ultimate fulfilment, and of the created soul of the God-man. Thus the fact that the state of blessedness can vary with the individual beholder is made intelligible.[2]

[245] The reason for this incomprehensibility lies, according to Aquinas, in the disproportion, even in the case of the beatific vision, between the self-communication of the infinite God, the source and object of direct vision, on the one hand, and the finite character of the beholder on the other, who remains limited even when raised up by grace and the light of glory and given the capacity to have the beatific vision. It is this question which we would like to consider briefly from a hermeneutical point of view, without setting out the whole theory or assembling the numerous texts of Aquinas[3] on the incomprehensibility of God so as to form a single system. The object of these remarks is to caution against too simple and straightforward an interpretation of Aquinas's teaching on this point, for in fact his theory opens up all the heights and depths of Thomist theology and philosophy. In a sense the theory of the incomprehensibility of God is itself an incomprehensible doctrine; the mystery[4] which the doctrine concerns turns back, as it were, upon itself and transforms it into an inexpressible

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[1] This essay, originally conceived as a lecture, appeared under the title, 'Über die Unbegreiflichkeit Gottes bei Thomas von Aquin', in the collection ed. by L. Oeing-Hanhoff, *Thomas von Aquin 1274-1974* (Munich, 1974), pp. 33-45. It was further revised for publication here. The author owes a debt for the ideas it contains to the as yet unpublished dissertation of his student P. Siller, *Die Incomprehensibilitas Dei bei Thomas von Aquin* (Innsbruck, 1963). This topic has engaged the author's attention a great deal recently, for which further evidence is contained in the essay published in this volume, 'The Hiddenness of God', which tackles the question in a more general context.

[2] Cf. a number of studies on this question: R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le sens du Mystère et le clair-obscur intellectuel: nature er surnaturel* (Paris, 1934); A. M. Hoffmann, 'Mysterium bei Thomas', *DTh* 17 (1939), pp. 30-60; G. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being* (London, 1950-1); J. Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas* (London, 1957); V. Richter, 'Logik und Geheimnis', *Gott in Welt I* Rahner-Festschrift (Freiburg, 1964), 188-206; E. Schillebeeckx, 'The Non-Conceptual Intellectual Element in the Act of Faith', *The Concept of Truth and Theological Renewal* (London and Sydney, 1968), pp. 30-75. P. Siller, 'Unbegreiflichkeit', *LThK* X (Freiburg, 1965), 470-472 (bibliog.); A. Halder, *Aufklärung und Geheimnis* (Freiburg, 1967); G. Ebeling, 'Profanität und Geheimnis', *2THK* 65 (1968), pp. 70-92; J. Splett, 'Hegel und das Geheimnis', *Phil]B* 76 (1968), pp. 317-331; P. Wess, *Die Incomprehensibilitas Gottes und ihre Konsequenzen bei Thomas von Aquin und Karl Rahner* (unpubl. diss. Innsbruck, 1969); P. Wess, *Wie von Gotf sprechen?* Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Karl Rahner. (Graz, 1970), pp. 91-109; K. Rahner, 'Geheimnis', *LThK* IV (Freiburg, 1960), 593-597. K.Rahner,'The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology' *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 36-73.

[3] This is based on the following passages in Aquinas: *Super ep. ad Eph.* c.3 lect. 5; *ibid.* c. 5 lect. 3; *In Evang. Joan. expos.* c. 1 lect. 11; *Super I ep. ad Tim.* c. 6 lect. 2; *In III sent* dist. 14; *In IV Sent.* dist. 49 q. 2; *De Verit.* q. 2 a. 2 ad 5; *ibid.* ad 6; q.8 a.1 ad 5; a.2; a.4; q.20 a.4; a.6; *S.c.g.* III 51-56; *S. th.* 1 q.12 a.7; a.8; a.9; a.10; q. 56 a.1 ad 1; q.57 a.5 ad 2; q.62 a.9; q.107 a.3; I/Il q.93 a.2. It is unnecessary here to quote the commentaries, especially those on Pars I of the Summa.

[4] On the concept of 'mystery', cf. the author's works referred to in footnote 2; also more recently, 'Theology as engaged in an Interdisciplinary Dialogue with the Sciences', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London, 1975), pp. 80-93, esp. 87-89; 'On the Relationship between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences', *ibid.* pp. 94-102, esp. 96-100. Also, K. Fischer, *Den Mensch als Geheimnis.* Die Anthropologie Karl Rahners (Freiburg, 1947); the review article by K. H. Neufeld, *Std2* 192 (1974) pp. 429 sq.

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mystery, which is *the* ultimate mystery of man himself.

THE PROPOSITION OF FAITH

In any attempt to assess Thomist teaching on the incomprehensibility of God, it must be made quite clear from the start that for the master [246] of Scholasticism this incomprehensibility is a statement of faith which is to be found in the witness of Scripture[5] and tradition.[6]

For Thomas, therefore, the heart of the matter is not a philosophical doctrine which remains within the self-evident horizon of philosophical understanding, even though confirmed by revelation. For Thomas, and here we encounter at once the difficulty of this doctrine, the incomprehensibility of God must always be considered in relation to the possibility of the direct vision of God, which is only made known to us through revelation. The question of how precisely the nature and process of revelation should be conceived is not relevant here.[7] In this vision there is no longer a 'species' in the intellect of the creature which represents the object of the vision. The reality of God himself fulfils the function of a 'species', even though Thomas is firmly convinced that the self-communication of God which causes this vision can only find a human response if the intellect of man is adapted to it through the light and grace of glory, which raises the natural human capacity to a higher level. This statement of faith which affirms the possibility of a direct vision of God alone gives depth to the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, as well as causing problems for this doctrine. The incomprehensibility of God should not then be regarded as a distant reality, for it increases rather than diminishes in the vision of God, in which alone it becomes an inescapable event. It does not describe the remnants of something which, sadly, remains unknown, but rather points to the immediate object of the experience of God in heaven, an object which is present in the mind overflowing with the fullness of God's self-communication. From the hermeneutical point of view we must read and interpret the Thomist doctrine of God's incomprehensibility by confronting it with his teaching on the direct vision of God, if its positive qualities and its limitations are to be correctly evaluated. The theory of the direct vision of God poses an incomprehensible mystery for us and conversely the reality (and thus the possibility) of the mystery of this vision in eternal life is experienced precisely in the direct encounter [247] with the *incomprehensibility* of God. But if this is so, then in the ultimate analysis the *mystery* of the direct vision of God does not cease to exist in heaven; rather the incomprehensibility is experienced as the reality which offers itself directly to human vision. For it is God in his simplicity *as a whole* who is perceived. His incomprehensibility cannot be understood as a 'part' of God which remains beyond the visual field. The assertion of the direct vision of God and assertion of his incomprehensibility are related for us here and now in a mysterious and paradoxical dialectic. They seem to destroy each other, for it cannot be the case here that God's incomprehensibility means that a particular part of the 'simple' God is clearly perceived, while another remains beyond sight. In its ultimate and most radical meaning the incomprehensibility of God is itself an internal factor in the awareness, through revelation, of the possibility of the direct vision of God. Only if this point is clearly understood, can one scale the heights which Thomas's doctrine possesses in its totality, even if not in every individual text on the topic.

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[5] Cf. Phil 3:12; 1 Cor 9:24; Jer 32:18 sq.; Rom 11:33; Job 11:7.

[6] According to the commentaries of Aquinas on Eph 3; Jn 1; Rom 9; Eph 5; 1 Tim 6, Thomas finds evidence for this idea in tradition in Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Denis the Areopagite and John Damascene.

[7] For the idea of 'revelation' in K. Rahner, cf. numerous studies elsewhere; a preliminary account is to be found in: *Sacr. Mun*., V (London and New York, 1970), pp. 343-355; also 'Offenbarung', *Rahner-Register* (Zurich, 1974), pp. 144 sq.

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THE INTERPRETATION OF AQUINAS

In dealing with the question of God's incomprehensibility, Thomas makes repeated use of his 'metaphysic of light'. This has of course a long tradition before his time and has a quality of self-evidence for him which makes it readily available as a conceptual and verbal instrument. In the infinity of his unlimited and pure being, God has an absolute identity transcending the duality of subject and object. He is the being who is absolutely in and by himself; in this unity of reality and knowledge he is the pure light who both makes the object intelligible and luminous when finite knowledge exists, and renders the subject capable of grasping the object in his activity and bringing it to the level of his own activity, so that the subject is illuminated as well. The exact meaning of the metaphysic of light in Thomas, how it differs from the theory of illumination in Augustine, its Aristotelian twist and yet its fidelity to Augustine's basic intention,[8] these are all questions which [248] need not occupy us here. They can readily be left aside without damaging our understanding today of Thomas's doctrine of God's incomprehensibility, as long as one pays careful attention to its real meaning and the extent to which it can be understood even without reference to the concept of light.

To read Thomas properly, of course, one needs to know what is his central concern. Here however the metaphysics of light can be left to one side, since it is no longer helpful in the context of contemporary metaphysics, which inevitably comes into play in any interpretation of the medieval master. Furthermore the real meaning intended by Thomas can be expressed in terms of Thomist ontology which is immediately intelligible today and can be directly related to the modern question of being. If we exclude the metaphysic of light from our considerations and try to state the content of theory by means of Thomist ontology and ontological theology, then one immediately meets a double problem, at once philosophical and theological. The first concerns the relationship between divine being, in which pure existence forms the 'essence' of God, and finite being in which essence and existence are distinct and the essence forms and determines the manner and degree to which the being shares in the divine existence as a 'similitudo' of God. The second question refers to the relation between the self-communication of God afforded by grace and glory, without which the direct vision of God is impossible according to Thomas's metaphysics of knowledge, and the grace-filled, illuminating and elevating disposition, termed the light of glory, without which a direct perception of God is similarly inconceivable for Thomas. Both questions must be recognised and considered if one wants to understand Thomas's doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God. For the direct vision of God must be conceived in such a way in Thomas that the incomprehensibility of God, far from being removed, is in fact opened out to the one who sees God. Conversely the incomprehensibility of God must be thought of in such a manner that it does not contradict the directness of the vision of God. It is obvious that the problems raised by this question necessarily lead back to the larger issues mentioned above.

It is, then, not surprising that Thomas cannot bring fully into play the whole extent of his philosophical and theological anthropology concerning the basic relationship between God, who is pure existence, and a finite being and his knowledge in the realm of nature and grace, whenever he speaks in particular texts of the incomprehensibility of [249] God. Thomas, like any other thinker, cannot make the whole range and depth of his thought present in every sentence, although his very *formal* model of speech does allow him to maintain an openness

[8] On the question of the 'metaphysic of light', cf. G. Söhngen, 'Thomas von Aquin über Teilhabe durch Berührung', *Die Einheit in den Theologie* (Munich, 1952), pp. 107-139; J. Ratzinger, 'Licht und Erleuchtung–Erwägungen zur Stellung und Entwicklung des Themas in der abendlàndischen Geistesgeschichte', *StudGen* 13 (1960), pp. 368-378; L. Oeing-Hanhoff, 'Licht II. Philosophisch', *LThK* VI (Freiburg, 1961), 1023-1025.

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to the totality of his theology and metaphysics in individual statements, despite the limitations of the horizon of understanding present in each case. We cannot and should not go more fully here into these two issues here, although they must always be kept in mind for hermeneutical purposes, if the texts of Thomas dealing with divine incomprehensibility as it is found in the direct vision of God are to be properly evaluated and their depth of expression and their difficulties plainly seen. A few remarks may clarify where a discussion of the problems frequently found in these texts may lead.

With regard to the first question: if the whole of Thomas's thought concerning the relationship between absolute being and finite existence is given, due weight, then insights into this relation clearly emerge which are of a more radical and discriminating kind than is often apparent both in the school of Thomism and in many texts of Aquinas himself.[9] The relationship between absolute 'esse' and the 'esse commune' of finite reality can be made intelligible in a somewhat over-simplified philosophy and theology, using the notion of creation which is itself modelled, albeit analogically, on the causality known to us in world. On the basis of the idea of creation an ontology of participation can then be built up. But usually the concept of creation is based in too primitive a fashion upon the idea of causality accessible to us in other ways. If one thinks of the idea of creation as a unique phenomenon, then one must ask what is the source of this idea, for it cannot occur subsequently to a genuine knowledge of God in his own existence. Furthermore the question arises about the relationship which must obtain between an agent and an effect when the separation between them is not the precondition of their relationship but is established originally by the agent and the difference is basically maintained by the agent itself. This makes the relation between absolute being and created reality very problematical and means that it cannot simply be inserted into a scheme of general causality. The transcendental uniqueness of the concept of creation and of the relationship between [250] absolute being and a finite reality must be brought to light or, to use an alternative formula, taken back into the darkness of its incomprehensibility. Only from this starting point can the ontological relation between the self-communication of God and intellect engaged in the direct vision of God be properly understood, and the incomprehensibility of God in the direct vision be conceived as the climax of that impenetrability which necessarily obtains for finite reality in its ontological relationship to pure being. If the relation of pure being to finite reality is not carelessly conceived on some general causal model, in which the difference between agent and effect already exists as the condition of possibility of the process of cause and effect and is not established by the agent itself, then the ontological intelligibility of a self-communication of the being of God to a created being no longer lies outside the scope of an ontology of the relation between God and creature, even if the mystery of the possibility of the vision of God offered in revelation is not thereby removed. For the absolute being of God freely establishes us *for ourselves* as beings distinct from God *and* maintains this distinction in himself because established by him alone. This means that for the absolute being of God the same distinction does not exist which he imposes upon us as our mode of existence. The vision of God is the radical form of the general ontological relationship between the being on the one hand whose self-communication establishes distinction (for us) and identity (for absolute being), and finite reality on the other hand. This vision involves an *ontological* self-communication of God[10] to the created intellect which is not the result of direct vision but its ontological condition, in the same way that the 'species', as the real actualisation of the intellect, is the

[9] Cf. L. Dümpelmann, *Kreation als ontisch-ontologisches Verhältnis*. Zur Metaphysik der Schöpfungstheologie des Thomas von Aquin (Freiburg, 1969); J. Pieper, 'Kreatürlichkeit. Bemerkungen über die Elemente eines Grundbegriffes', *Thomas von Aquin 1274/1974*, ed. L. Oeing-Hanhoff (Munich, 1974), pp. 47-71.

[10] The author has constantly spoken of the 'self-communication of God'; for a brief summary, cf. *Sacr. Mu,,.* III, pp. 114-118; *ibid.* IV, pp. 297-305; *ibid.* V, pp. 348-355.

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condition of possibility of actual knowledge of an object. Thomas sometimes eases the difficulty of showing how a direct ontological self-communication of God to a created spirit is possible, without either making God finite (as the 'form' of the finite intellect) or dissolving the creature in its infinity, by drawing a distinction between the orientation of a creature to *being* and the orientation to *knowledge* (modus essendi-modus cogitandi). But this distinction, though quite valid in its intention, leaving as it does God incomprehensible and infinite and the intellect with vision finite and limited, does not really solve the problem, if the ontological nature of the [251] divine self-communication in the vision of God is taken seriously. Of course it is not necessary to 'solve' this problem since it is a part of the divine incomprehensibility which unfolds rather than diminishes in the vision of God. But clearly the general ontological relationship between pure being and finite reality must be thought of in a way that gives some genuine content to the ontological relationship between God and creature in its state of beatitude. Conversely one has only reached a sufficiently radical understanding of the general relationship if it bears the formal characteristic of rendering conceivable a relation between God and the creature which is found in the vision of God as the condition of its possibility. In all these respects hints and suggestions are to be discovered in Thomas in his comments on the incomprehensibility of God, which compel one to go back to the general ontology of the relationship between the pure being of God and finite reality, if one wishes to gain an authentic and creative interpretation of the text. It must be stressed that such a reference must give thematic expression at one and the same time to the conceivability (which does not mean the perspicuousness) of a direct vision of God and to the divine incomprehensibility. Only in this way can one prevent the doctrine of incomprehensibility from becoming an opaque, but sadly inevitable, element in God which remains unknown in the vision of God. At the same time it opens up the possibility of making divine incomprehensibility the positive content of the vision of God, since this vision is the supreme climax of the ontological relationship between God and the creature. This relationship signifies a positive finite state and not a block which fixes the creature in his finite condition in the face of infinity. For then the finite state would always be surpassed and made superfluous by the infinity of God and would in the end become unbearable.

On the second main issue we mentioned, the following observations may be permitted. In a reaction against Peter Lombard, who simply identified the grace of justification with the Holy Spirit, Thomas rightly emphasised that this grace essentially signified a *created* determination of the substance and capacity of the one justified, or at least necessarily implied it. In consequence Thomas correctly postulates a created 'lumen gloriae' which, being finite, makes the permanence of the divine incomprehensibility, even in glory, intelligible. But on closer inspection the relation between the created grace of justification and the 'indwelling' of God in the one justified is much more complex than appears at first glance. It is clear that for [252] Thomas,[11] as opposed to an over-simplified scholastic theology, 'uncreated grace' is not simply a consequence of finite, created, habitual grace. For, leaving aside all other considerations, this would be impossible for Thomas since the 'visio', the fulfilment of grace, is grounded in an ontological self-communication of the reality of God himself to the created spirit, and this cannot be derived from any created grace. It is no divergence from the Thomist theology of justification and glory to make use of insights hinted at by Thomas and to interpret created grace and created light of glory as a disposition which is formed by the self-communication of God in grace and glory as its effect and the condition of its possibility. As is quite common in Thomas, there is a mutual relationship between act and potency which is fully disposed for the act, so that each is the condition of the other. For Thomas, however, the incomprehensibility of God is not simply and entirely made plain, even in direct vision of

[11] Cf. S. Dockx, *Fils de Dieu par grace* (Paris, 1928).

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God, through the finite light of glory which he postulates. Rather it must be made clear why and how the self-communication of infinite being to the direct vision of a finite spirit does not merely permit the continued existence of divine incomprehensibility but rather demands it of its own essence and that of man. So, despite the doctrine of the created light of glory, which is quite correct in itself, we are still dealing here with the pure mystery of faith, incomprehensible in itself and experienced as such, the mystery namely, that the incomprehensibility of God can make itself directly present in an encounter with a created spirit, for whom there exists the experience of incomprehensibility which gives God his ultimate name.

THE FINITE NATURE OF MAN

Any interpretation of the Thomist doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God should not overlook the fact that this doctrine is primarily a statement about man, about his finite nature and its positive quality. Only in a highly derivative and tenuous sense should one regard divine incomprehensibility as an ‘attribute’ of God himself. If one starts by making divine incomprehensibility a (negative) attribute of God, then it would simply become one of a number of attributes which we predicate as ‘names’ of God, despite his simplicity and infinity. The doctrine of divine incomprehensibility could not then be given its proper weight or value for a theological and metaphysical anthropology. [253] The most radical and ultimate statement of this anthropology is that man is a being who is endowed through the free self-communication of God in grace with the infinite incomprehensibility and incomprehensible infinity of God, and so shares in his own being in divine incomprehensibility. A closer examination of Thomas’s doctrine clearly shows that God’s incomprehensibility is a theme of his anthropology. The doctrine presents itself most often in the context of the knowledge of angels, of man and of Jesus. The basic thrust of the Contra Gentiles makes it plain that here too the doctrine of incomprehensibility is fundamentally a topic of philosophical and theological anthropology, since it deals with the ‘finis’ of man, i.e. the God of men. It is true that in the Summa, in the first section of the Prima Pars, the doctrine of incomprehensibility is included as part of the treatment of the divine attributes, but here we should not forget that in qu.12, and especially art.7 of qu.12, qu.3-11 are repeated with an anthropological twist in which the divine attributes, having first been described with reference to God himself, are once more analysed to see how God ‘in himself’ is at the same time the God of men. If the crucial significance of the doctrine of incomprehensibility for a genuinely Christian anthropology is overlooked, then it is almost impossible to prevent divine incomprehensibility from appearing merely as an attribute of God, which man, as a result of a purely negative experience of finite limitation, can only accept of necessity with more or less resignation. This obscures the basic truth that divine incomprehensibility is of vital importance for human self-understanding: it affects all man’s knowing and does not only emerge when man is specifically concerned with God. If the affirmative synthesis in human thought always and inevitably refers to ‘what’ to a ‘something’ beyond it, while necessarily distinguishing the two, then ‘esse’ itself is affirmed as the point of reference of the predicative statement, as the reality which is not comprehended. Thus the controlling presence of divine incomprehensibility is also affirmed. All human knowing, despite the possible intelligibility of the ‘what’ which is predicated, is enfolded in an incomprehensibility which forms an image of the divine incomprehensibility where God reveals himself as the one without a name.

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‘EXCESS’ IN GOD

For Thomas the incomprehensibility of God is present in an ‘excessus’, in an ‘excedere’. This ‘excessus’ should not simply be identified [254] with the ‘via eminentiae’, even though it is the latter’s ultimate foundation. It is the primary movement of the spirit and of its activity (intellectus agens) directed to the unlimited being and incomprehensibility of God, which is the ground of all knowing. It is only if a man permits this ‘excess’ to operate in the free act of his existence and *accepts* it as the real kernel of his own self-realisation, that he recognises divine incomprehensibility as his own blessed fulfilment, It is not enough to treat this superabundance as a transcendent characteristic of the human intellect operating (even if unthematically) in every act of knowledge, a characteristic which determines the essential nature of the ‘intellectus agens’ as it shares in the light of God and itself gives illumination. It must be seen, too, as the free human act in which a man accepts his own being ordered in grace to the incomprehensibility of God, and surrenders himself unconditionally to this incomprehensibility as the true source of his own fulfilment, Only then do we find the reality we call faith, hope and love, assuming only that the ‘excessus’ is taken to be direct and immediate encounter with divine incomprehensibility brought about by God himself. The theological dispute among the Schoolmen about the real nature of eternal beatitude is familiar enough, as is the explicit teaching of Thomas on the question. But in my opinion we should take seriously Thomas’s doctrine of a perichoresis (if we may put it thus) of the transcendent determination of a being as distinct from its categorial determinations which are closely connected to one another, and introduce his notion of ‘excess’ at this point. If we then give full value to his assertion that particular capacities unfold in their multiplicity from the original unity of the essential substance, then the ancient controversy need not be settled by a cheap compromise (as perhaps in Suarez), but can really be transcended in an authentic and original way. Freedom and love can be seen as identical in origin with the intellect (given the ‘ordo’ between them), and the intellect only achieves its own fullness of being when in hope and love, in a freedom which properly belongs to it, it surrenders itself to incomprehensibility as its own beatitude.

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[255]

16

THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

Christian theology must always address itself to the Trinitarian confession of faith. In so far as such statements do not make up a coherent framework, they are open to systematic correlation, explanation and even criticism.[1] Thus a theologian who has developed and expounded these formulations in his theological reflections and wishes to state his opinion about these ideas is faced by considerable difficulties.

We will, however, leave this problem aside, simply because the topic of the Trinity is enormously important and involves a central question of Christian doctrine and preaching. No individual angle or particular theological investigation should occupy the limelight; the quicker individual contributions are absorbed into a general understanding of the mystery which has contemporary relevance and [256] pastoral vitality, the happier the theologian should be.[2] For the issue itself should not be forgotten in modern theology or in the contemporary awareness of faith in the Catholic Church, or relegated to a backwater. This is in fact in danger of happening today in one of two ways. Either the Trinity is taught in a way that merely conforms to received formulations and has no interest in, or connection with, the realities of Christian life and spirituality. Alternatively the doctrine of the Trinity is forgotten in an exclusive concentration upon a distorted political theology or a theology of liberation which is unable to see beyond itself, or in a Christology exclusively concerned with Jesus from below. All these attempts fail to do justice to the fullness of New Testament teaching. A few reflections are offered here though they do not provide a systematic or comprehensive treatment of the question.

As we have observed above, it is not a matter today merely of reproducing other people's formulations of the mystery. Any attempt today to present the Christian doctrine of the Trinity must involve a 'liberation' of the usual traditional propositions from their 'splendid isolation', in which they have been encapsulated in scholastic theology. We must try to make the doctrine of the Trinity fruitful for practical Christian living, given that the doctrine has a 'sitz im leben' and that the Trinity is of crucial importance for actual Christian life and spirituality. Furthermore the teaching cannot even have the right 'speculative' content and form, unless it meets these demands in Christian life.

For this purpose a collection and systematic arrangement of the author's theological statements and insights on the Trinity was necessary, since these are scattered in a variety of

[1] This essay originally appeared in Brazil in Portuguese and formed an accompanying note to the study by M. de Franca Miranda on the self-communication of God in the trinitarian theology of K. Rahner. Here the personal reflections have been expanded and contents revised. The remarks contained here are an obvious addition to the author's trinitarian theology which is not spelt out here. A few references may help to orientate the reader: 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise ''De Trinitate" ', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore, 1966), pp. 77-102; 'Nature and Grace', *ibid.* pp. 165-188; 'The Theology of the Symbol', *ibid.* pp. 221-252; 'Theology and Anthropology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London, 1972), pp. 28-45; 'Observations on the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics', *ibid.* pp. 127- 144. The scriptural basis is to be found in: 'Theos in the New Testament', *Theological Investigations* I (London, and Baltimore, 1961), pp. 79-148. For a short summary, cf. 'Trinity' and 'Trinity in Theology', *Sar. Mun.* VI (London and New York, 1970), pp. 295-308. A more extensive treatment is available in: *The Trinity,* (London, 1970).

[2] This line of reasoning is to be understood in the light of the general theme of spiritual experience which forms the main topic of this volume. This experience, which most of the essays deal with, or presuppose, is certainly not only a private and personal event in the spiritual life of mystics, but is also a social phenomenon, which is clearly evident in the community insofar as the concrete demands of God's will are expressed in the actual faith of Christians, in and through which they find then real salvation.

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writings and are not for the most part included in the author's more extended and systematic treatment of Trinity.[3] Because of his age, the author was unable to join together these 'membra disiecta' into a single whole and wishes to express his gratitude for the achievement of this task.

[257] Such a collection, however, does create a certain problem in that lines of thought and ideas appearing outside the context of the Trinity must be taken into account and these items, being isolated and incomplete, can scarcely be integrated with any clarity into a systematic presentation of the Trinity. This applies, for instance, if we recall the impression given by this systematic approach that Christological data have been neglected, while general anthropological factors have been given preference. But if it is a cause for criticism that insufficient attention is paid to the awareness of sonship in Jesus which is clearly to be found in Scripture, then it should be remembered that in traditional treatises on Christ and the Trinity this awareness of sonship is understood in direct relation to the 'immanent' sonship of the eternal Logos. Now the New Testament evidence suggests that the awareness of the sonship of the Lord is a far more complex and difficult matter than is suggested by this approach, even though it remains the permanent basis for knowledge of the 'immanent' Trinity. From an exegetical viewpoint Jesus' consciousness of divine sonship, whose unique character distinguishes it from that of the justified Christian, cannot simply be identified with the process by which the eternal Logos originates from the Father.

The task of exegesis and biblical theology this entails can scarcely be tackled successfully by one who is an amateur in New Testament exegesis. However he may be able to escape being too severely criticised for the lack of Christological material in the treatment of the Trinity if he explicitly recognises that his reflections could well be deepened and supplemented in this area.

A further objection concerns the excessively formal character of the thesis that the justified possess real relationships to the Trinitarian God and not merely those of appropriation.[4] It is to be welcomed that the thesis of the existence of such relationships is assumed and basically accepted, for even today it is not one that necessarily commands general recognition as part of the common deposit of Catholic theology.[5] Obviously one should have no hesitation in trying to fill out this assertion with more 'material' content and to explain it more clearly. Stress is in fact laid on the eternal significance of the humanity [258] of Christ as the mediation of the direct contact between God and those in a state of grace and even of final beatitude. This also is not to the same degree common in contemporary theology. Naturally it is important to bring out more fully and clearly the significance of this for a real understanding of the relationships of man to the Trinity and vice versa.

The objection, however, that no clear distinction is made between self-communication and the self-communication of God is hardly reasonable. If God is really God, i.e. absolute reality, with a personal spiritual nature, then self-communication must be the same as the self-communication of God. If God is Trinitarian and is really related to man and not merely by appropriation, then the communication of being and of self by God must also be Trinitarian. If in this self-communication he possesses as 'Father' a specific relationship to man, one can also speak quite naturally and without contradiction of the self-communication of the one God, as one can of the self-communication of the Father in his 'originality'.

The formula we proposed of 'distinct modes of subsistence' is of course no more than a formal abstraction which is of only limited use in making it easier to understand the religious life, and especially the prayer, of a Christian. The real content of the economy of salvation

[3] Cf. K. Rahner, *The Trinity,* (London, 1970).
[4] Cf. M. Schmaus, 'Appropriation', *LThK* I (Freiburg i. Br., 1957), 773-775.
[5] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for our Relationship with God', *Theological Investigations* III (London and Baltimore, 1967), pp. 35-46.

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and of the immanent Trinity must be seen in the 'distinct modes of existence', if they are to be of any 'spiritual' assistance. In the traditional teaching of the Church and in theology, reference is made to 'persons', which means that there is a real distinction from the 'numerically' single reality of the one God. This distinction is brought together in a 'general concept' (i.e. person) in a manner which is quite unique and original. If this occurs in the mode of speech authorised by tradition, the new concept of 'mode of subsistence' is also be justified. Of course all the reservations and qualifications apply to it which one may reasonably make in the case of the concept 'person'.

To conclude our reflections on the mystery of the Trinity as it is presented in the faith and theology of the Church, we may point out in general terms the direction in which a contemporary theology of the Trinity can and should be developed in the future. It is at any rate certain that the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity must be taken seriously. Even if we are resolutely concerned out of fidelity to tradition to guard the deposit of faith as is demanded by contemporary conditions, we must start out from the fact that an interpretation of faith is prevalent in which the economic and [259] immanent Trinity are not regarded as self-evidently identical. It is therefore easy to see why formulations are to be found today which do not appear to do justice to the basic thesis mentioned above, although this does not necessarily imply that the thesis itself has not been taken to heart.

It is not a question here of setting the immanent and economic Trinity in a narrower and clearer relationship, which nevertheless always assumes the prior existence of two separate realities. The goal of our efforts is rather to bring out a prior and original identity and unity of the two realities, in relation to which the immanent and economic Trinity offer developments, clarifications and aspects of this underlying unity. If this point is fully grasped, then it is no longer possible to assert that a 'speculative' doctrine of the immanent Trinity may (still) be possible but that it does not (any longer) arouse much interest. Such statements betray a basic misunderstanding, alluded to above, that a 'pure' dogma of the immanent Trinity can evolve which is totally different from the doctrine of the economic Trinity. In clarifying the *one* doctrine of the Trinity, as we have tried to do here and elsewhere, further advances can certainly be made in understanding the being of God in himself. In this endeavour it should not be taken as a foregone conclusion that the development of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity must be limited in its formulation of new insights to the concepts used by traditional scholastic theology. We may hope that any material could be pressed into service in the attempt to destroy once and for all the false conception that a 'speculative' doctrine of the immanent Trinity may perhaps be conceivable today, but that it is a completely idle and irrelevant undertaking, possessing neither spiritual nor religious interest to the modern Christian and theologian.

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[260-263]

VOLUME 16

LIST OF SOURCES

THE FOUNDATION OF BELIEF TODAY
A paper given to preachers and catechists in the Bildungshaus Stift, Zwettl in December, 1973. The hitherto unpublished text was revised and expanded for publication.

EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT AND EXISTENTIAL COMMITMENT
Originally composed as a contribution to the Festschrift for E. Schillebeeckx on his 60th birthday (1974). The text was revised and cross-references added for publication here.

RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GRACE
A paper given at the day conference of the Swiss Theological Society in Berne in November, 1973. It was first published under the title, 'Das enthusiastisch - charismatische Erlebnis in Konfrontation mit der gnadenhaften Transzendenzerfahrung' in: C. Heitmann and H. Mühlen (editors), *Erfahrung und Theologie des Heiligen Geistes* (Hamburg and Munich, 1974), pp. 64-80. The text was further revised and in part expanded for publication here.

ANONYMOUS AND EXPLICIT FAITH
Originally published in, *StdZ* 192 (1974), pp. 147-152. In this edition the footnotes were added in order to integrate the ideas into the author's complete works.

FAITH BETWEEN RATIONALITY AND EMOTION
Originally a paper given at the Catholic Academy of Bavaria. It was first published in: K. Rahner (ed), *Ist Gott noch gefragt?* (Dusseldorf, 1973), pp. 125-144. For this edition the text was further revised and expanded.

THE 'SPIRITUAL SENSES' ACCORDING TO ORIGEN
This essay, published for the first time in German, was the author's first major theological work. It comes from the period of his theological training and yet in a remarkable way traces of later questions and of their possible solution can already be discerned in it. The original text was substantially shortened for this edition and the excessive number of footnotes considerably reduced, in order to fit the essay into this collection. For detailed references to the works of Origen one should consult the original French edition: 'Le début d'une doctrine des cinq sens spirituals chez Origène', *RAM* 13 (1932), pp. 113-145.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE 'SPIRITUAL SENSES' IN THE MIDDLE AGES: THE CONTRIBUTION OF BONAVENTURE
First published in French under the title, 'La doctrine des "sens spirituels" au Moyen-Age en particulier chez Saint Bonaventure', *RAM* 14 (1933), pp. 263-299; a larger, expanded section appeared in German under the title, 'Der Begriff der ecstasis bei Bonaventura', *ZAM* 9 (1934), pp. 1-19, and started a controversy with St. Grünewald, cf. *ZAM* 9 (1934), pp. 124-142 and 219-232. The essay has been included in this collection because of its fundamental importance for the author's later work in the philosophy of religion and because of the striking similarity of theme it bears to the questions which have principally occupied the author's attention over recent years (cf. the previous essays).

MODERN PIETY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF RETREATS

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A shortened version was published under the title, 'Über den geistes - geschichtlichen Ort der ignatianischen Exerzitien heute', *GuL* 47 (1974), pp. 430-449. The text is based on a paper given to retreatgivers in Vienna.

REFLECTIONS OF A NEW TASK FOR FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY
Published in *Estudios Eclesiasticos* 47 (1972), pp. 397-408 (Homenaje al P. Joaquin Salaverri S.J.).

THE ACCEPTANCE IN FAITH OF THE TRUTH OF GOD
First published as Thesis XVIII in: W. Kern and G. Stachel, (eds.) *Warum Glauben?* Begründung und Verteidigung des Glaubens in einundvierzig Thesen (Wurzburg, 1967), pp. 169-176, under the heading: 'Nicht das Weitbild der modernen Wissenschaft vermag dem Dasein letztlich Sinn zu geben, sondern erst die glaubende Annahme der geschichtlich uns zugesprochenen Wahrheit Gottes.' The text has been slightly revised for publication here.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIAN DOGMATIC THEOLOGY
A paper given in Regensburg in 1972. It has been revised and expanded, and is published for the first time here.

ON THE 'HISTORY OF REVELATION' ACCORDING TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
Originally a contribution to the Festschrift for R. Schnackenburg, *Neues Testament und Kirche* (Freiburg i. Br., 1974), pp. 543-549. It was published originally under the title 'Kritische Anmerkungen zu Nr. 3 des dogmatischen Dekrets "Dei Verbum" des II Vaticanums'. The text was further revised and expanded for publication here.

THE ONE CHRIST AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF SALVATION
Previously unpublished.

THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD
A contribution to *the* Festschrift for Y. Congar, *Le service théologique dans l'Eglise* (Paris, 1974), pp. 249-268. Published for the first time in German.

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD IN ST THOMAS AQUINAS
A slightly revised version of the essay in the collection, *Thomas von Aquin 1294-1974* (Munich, 1974), pp. 33-45. It appeared there under the title, 'Über die Unbegreiflichkeit Gottes bei Thomas von Aquin'.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY
The text is based on an explanatory note by the author for the study written by M. de Franca Miranda, cf. p. 255 of this volume, footnote 1. For this edition the essay has been shortened and footnotes and cross-references added, in order to fit it into the complete works of the author.

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[1]

PART ONE

The Experience of Jesus

[3]

1

CHRISTMAS IN THE LIGHT OF THE IGNATIAN *EXERCISES*

It is easy to feel that to attempt to say anything to an audience trained in theology about the mystery of Christmas in our time – the real mystery of the holy night – is too difficult a task. This is especially true nowadays when the interpretation of the scriptural texts demands an exegetical knowledge and expertise to which only a few people can lay claim.[1]

Having hesitantly pointed to these difficulties, I should like here, as a dogmatic theologian, quite simply to make an attempt which may seem rather hazardous: I should like, in a few reflections, to try to show a connection between a basic approach characteristic of St Ignatius in the *Exercises*, and the mystery of Christmas. This connection may perhaps lead us into the Christmas mystery in a new way, making its *Sitz im Leben* – its situation in life – a little clearer. The attempt is a risky one, but I should like to make it all the same.

INDIFFERENCE

Jesuits will of course be convinced – and I hope they are right – that they know what indifference in the Ignatian sense means.[2] None the [4] less, it may be useful, at the beginning of these brief reflections, to make sure that we are aware of the precise meaning of this attitude, and to say quite clearly and definitely what this key notion of Ignatian piety means.

It is probably correct to say that indifference is the same as what Paul calls the freedom conferred by the Spirit of God himself – freedom with regard to all the individual powers and forces in our human existence, both in our inner life and in our external situation. Indifference, that is to say, sees things from the point of view of the person who arrives at his decisions in freedom; whereas biblical freedom as we find it in Paul views them from the aspect of God's liberating grace. Paul sees freedom in the light of God, who gives himself directly and without mediation, and radically transforms our transcendental nature, directing it towards himself. In this way he liberates us – both inwardly and outwardly – from every individual thing in our existence to which we should otherwise be subject or enslaved, either with or without guilt. Indifference and freedom, seen as one and the same thing, signify the infinite and open space in which God becomes the event we encounter in our existence – God

[1] The present text is based on a Christmas sermon preached to a Jesuit community in 1974. Apart from slight stylistic revisions, the original character has been preserved. A few notes have been added for the sake of the reader who is less familiar with Ignatian spirituality.

[2] Cf. Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* no. 23, (London 1963). *See* in general G. Bottereau and A. Rayez, 'Indifférence' in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascetique et mystique* (*DSAM*) VII (Paris 1971), pp. 1688-708; also K. Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus' in *Mission and Grace* III (London 1966), pp. 176-210, esp. pp. 199-210, and *Meditations on Priestly Life* (London 1973), pp. 30-8.

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himself, not God represented by anything finite. Of course, here this event still takes place in a kind of emptiness and darkness, in dumbness and mute adoration of the ineffable mystery which shelters us namelessly in its infinity, without offering us any one resting place from which we can survey the whole.

ASSIGNMENT TO ACTION

But what does this freedom and indifference mean, this deathly reaching-out into the darkness of God[3] beyond the circumference of our own existence which we can name and mould in freedom? We can never know with certainty, by means of our own reflection or our own judgement about ourselves, whether we ourselves have achieved this result, or whether it is really conferred on us. No, this encountered event can only be the continuing object of our own wavering hope. But in the search for this experience should we not have become the mystics of an expressionless spirituality, or Buddhists, for whom [5] the world and history have dissolved, together with individual action and responsibility? Should we not be something quite other than Christians and men who know themselves to be sent on a mission for which concrete action is ultimately decisive?

In the face of this question it is essential to appeal to another fact of Ignatian spirituality; because for Ignatius Loyola 'indifferent' freedom for the tremendous mystery of God does not mean, simply and exclusively, we have found a home where we can abide, so as never again to have to return to the here and now of our everyday earthly life. On the contrary, it is an encountering event which, without itself disappearing, sends us back from itself into the concrete reality of our life for particular decisions and actions. For Ignatius himself, the event is truly conferred (and not merely in mystical ideology) only when we also let ourselves be sent back like this again and again into earthly existence. That is why for Ignatius indifference and freedom come into being only when people, out of this infinite freedom which, when it is experienced, he calls 'consolation', arrive at choice; when against this background they freely allow themselves to be given the specific assignment that is sent to them out of the freedom of God. But what is sent must at the same time be penetrated and reclothed, without adulteration and division, by that absoluteness, that eternal divine validity and glory out of which it is sent to us.

In this way Ignatian choice is, in unadulterated and undivided unity, the place at which divine freedom, the consolation of indifference and our earthly decision in freedom for something specific are simultaneously consummated. In Ignatius himself the mystery of this unity in the existential logic of decision may remain largely unexplained and continue to be a nuzzling problem for theologians and philosophers.[4] But it seems to me all the same that in Ignatius Loyola we find that the experience of such unity is possible and is actually achieved. It lets us perceive how we can be, and must be, 'detachedly' lost in the incomprehensibility of God, in order in this very way to find the true reality of our unique existence in its own specific history. On the other hand, however, it also lets us discover how this world and the beyond, history and transcendence, can be bound into an [6] unadulterated and undivided unity, so that God is to be found in everything – or, better still: that he is to be found in the

[3] On the question of the darkness of God, see 'The Hiddenness of God' and 'An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St Thomas Aquinas', both in *Theological Investigations* XVI (London 1979), pp. 227-43 and 244-59 respectively.

[4] Cf. K. Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (London 1964), esp. 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius of Loyola', pp. 84-170; also 'Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace' and 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats', both in *Theological Investigations* XVI (London 1979), pp. 35-51 and 135-55 respectively.

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particular concreteness and uniqueness which is demanded of individual freedom in any given case, without any loss of identity. But this confronting event of infinite freedom takes place at the very point when in freedom we seize the specific, particular thing assigned to us – what God has provided for us, as distinct from other possibilities, because the Absolute only unites itself with this but not with that non-absolute, giving it its own eternal validity. In Ignatius indifference and choice of the particular possess an ultimate unity in diversity; freedom becomes concrete and what is concrete becomes free.

CHRISTMAS?

What I have said can only point to something in stuttering terms, without any theological and philosophical precision. Consequently we must go on to ask: what has all this to do with the mystery of Christmas? The answer can be summed up as follows: Christmas is the supreme instance of this unity of transcendence and concrete freedom, though of course it is unique, unsurpassable and exemplary. This unity, according to Ignatius, opens up a way of approach for us in our own experience to an understanding of what, for Christian faith, has happened in the birth and life of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the death he achieved. In saying this we are certainly not drawing Jesus down to the level of our own existence; on the contrary, we are merely establishing that human existence, in its unity of transcendence and historicity, is the potentiality of what theology generally calls the hypostatic union of God and an undiminished and untruncated humanity. But if we let the potentiality for this hypostatic union (which is what being man means) interpret and fulfil itself in the experience of that mysterious unity of indifferent freedom and specific decision, then we come to understand what being man is; and I am sure we are not acting incorrectly.

What is certain, however, is that here we have a particular access to the mystery of Christmas in the light of Ignatius' spirituality. In confessing the incarnation of the eternal divine Logos in our flesh, we certainly talk in faith about the 'ontological', 'substantial' unity of the Word of God and the full humanity of Jesus in unity and difference. Here nothing must be denied or repressed. But this unity of God and man reaches its own goal and essential perfection only [7] when it is thought of in *completion*; when, that is to say, the divinely descending freedom of God (which wills each particular thing in its finitude) meets the freedom of man which it sustains; and when it frees this freedom for the absoluteness of God and for the obedient acceptance of that absoluteness – the absoluteness which therefore confers the freedom of God on the unique existence of the individual person.

If, now, this takes place in Jesus (as distinct from in us) to a comprehensive, exemplary and manifest degree, then this is itself an efficacious promise to us. For such unity also achieves fruition accordingly in the framework assigned to us as well – which is by no means a matter of course. And we experience what grace means as the act towards us of the divine freedom – an act on which we have no claim. In this way the correspondence and the difference between Jesus and ourselves is brought out so clearly that here we find a special starting point for an understanding of Christmas.

These suggestions remain highly theoretical and fragmentary, especially those of real christological significance. All the same, we may say that the practice of Ignatian indifference, as the freedom which loses itself willingly in the mysteriousness of God, and the finding a home in the specific existence uniquely given to every one of us, allows that unadulterated and undivided unity to grow in us. We then find God in that unity, even in the down-to-earth triviality of our everyday life; and we cease to be the slaves of that triviality. We cannot of course subjugate that unity to ourselves, but we can let it happen and lay hold of it, die and live. When that happens it is Christmas; Christ is born and the mystery of that

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birth lays hold of us as our own salvation.

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2

ON THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE EASTER FAITH

Properly speaking, every truth of Christian faith has a relation to the Christian's spirituality, i.e. to the conscious and (to some extent) methodical development of faith, hope and love. For everything has been revealed for our salvation, and so aims at man's perfection. This anthropological purpose of the whole of revelation (as God's act and word) does not involve any anthropocentric narrowing down of revelation. It does not mean that revelation is thought of according to the limitations of finite man.[1] For the man of revelation is precisely the man who, through God's self-communication – or through 'God in himself', or through God in his own glory – is to be pardoned and brought to perfection. Consequently the proposition that every tenet of faith can and must be questioned with regard to its anthropological significance is absolutely justified. And this means that every tenet of faith must also be questioned for its significance to the spirituality of the Christian.

What, then, does the Easter faith mean for the Christian's spirituality, if by the Easter faith we mean Christianity's acknowledgement that Jesus, the One who was crucified, lives, is risen, saved by the power of the living God?

When we put this question to earlier text-books of dogmatic theology, we generally receive a very meagre and existentially unsatisfying answer which more or less evades the question as it affects the [9] here and now. The statements about Jesus' resurrection in our text-books are generally made from the point of view of *fundamental* theology: the mission of Jesus, his teaching and the saving significance of his death are confirmed, sealed and made credible to us through the 'miracle' of Jesus' resurrection, seen in the light of fundamental theology and apologetics. The resurrection is the greatest of all miracles and can be effected directly by God alone.[2] But this establishes a merely indirect connection, at most, between Jesus' resurrection and our spirituality. In this view of the resurrection of Jesus, which belongs purely to fundamental theology, we do not perceive directly what this resurrection could have to do with the consummation of our own pardoned and deified existence. One might have the impression that, for our spiritual life as such, there would have been no real difference if the teaching of Jesus and the satisfaction for our sins made by Jesus on the cross had been authenticated for us by means of some corroboration other than the resurrection; or if the risen Christ had been snatched up into a dimension in which he had no relation to or meaning for us apart from the significance of his earthly life.

At all events, the meaning of Jesus' resurrection in terms of fundamental theology cannot offer any obvious *spiritual* relevance as long as the inner relationship between Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection has not become clear as being the *single* event of our redemption. For if the resurrection really belongs to the redemption on the cross as an intrinsic aspect, not merely as an event that follows the cross in time and confirms it

[1] For another aspect of the subject cf. 'Dogmatic Questions on Easter', *Theological Investigations* IV (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 121-33. Recent theological discussion seems to impute 'an anthropocentric narrowing down of revelation' somewhat too carelessly and indiscriminately. It is not always really clear what this imputation actually means, or whether it can be justly and appropriately levelled against the statements of others.

[2] As an example of the way of looking at things I have described, cf. thesis 34 on the resurrection of Jesus by M. Nicolau in *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* I (BAC 61), 4th edn (Madrid 1958), pp. 375-96. From the exegetical side, however, valuable attempts at finding an answer to our question have been made; cf. H. Schürmann, *Jesu ureigener Tod* (Freiburg 1975), pp. 66-96 ('Das Weiterleben der Sache Jesus im nachösterlichen Herrenmahl').

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outwardly, then it is part of the spiritual significance of the event of the cross for us. But we must go on to discuss this from another starting point.

Beyond this aspect of Jesus' resurrection for fundamental theology, former text-book dogmatic theology concerned itself more or less only with the substance of the doctrine of the resurrection, in so far as it touches on Jesus' individual destiny and its accomplishment. In short: the resurrection as an actual 'mystery of salvation' which is [10] related directly to our Christian existence is not stated very clearly.[3] If we look at the spiritual life of Christians themselves as we find it in traditional Catholic piety, then we can observe a curious phenomenon – or so it seems to me. If I try to make this clear here, I do not mean that in actual devotional life the relationship of the devout man or woman to Jesus Christ is found precisely and distinctly in the two forms that we are here distinguishing so sharply, so as to make them clear. But a difference of the kind I mean here does exist, and the unity of what is being divided forms precisely what we can call the spirituality of the Easter faith. For that reason it would seem justifiable to start with these contrasting models of the devout person's relationship to Jesus.

One kind of devotion to the person of Jesus is loving participation in the actual life of Jesus, in his earthly history, from the beginning of his life to his death and the crowning victory of that life in the resurrection. Even here, however, the resurrection is still seen as the final phase of this historical life, to which the believer turns in loving participation and personal involvement. This type of devotion can be found from the early Middle Ages onwards – especially since Bernard of Clairvaux – down to our own time. Of course the devout man or woman knows, in contemplating the life of Jesus as the norm of his or her own life, that this Jesus is the Son of God, the Word of the eternal Father, who appeared in history for our salvation. But their gaze still turns *backwards* into past history and is directly concerned with the historical details of Jesus' life. They undertake a pilgrimage back into history, so to speak, as one makes a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The historical aspects of the life of Jesus have for this group of believers, as regards their immediate impression at least, a significance similar to other historical events which affect later people as a challenge or an example. This historical narrative may indeed differ from other historical material through its content, and thereby, of course, also through its existential meaning for us; but not through our mode of *access* to it.[4]

[11] At the centre of the other type of devotion to the person of Jesus stands the invocation of the transfigured Lord, prayer to Jesus in his own blessedness and glory. But in this direct, trusting, loving and adoring relationship to the transfigured Lord there is still (purely descriptively, not fundamentally) no clear distinction between the relationship of the devout person to the eternal God as such (whether, in this religious relationship, he is explicit as the one or as the triune God) and his relationship to Jesus as the God-*man*; although, because of the unmixed duality of natures in Jesus Christ, the relationship to Jesus as the transfigured man must not be fundamentally and simply merged in the relationship of the devout person to God. In this relationship to the transfigured Lord, the earthly history of Jesus hardly plays a role any more; the believer turns to the now-ruling Pantocrator, who in his power and glory reaches new decisions (the hearing of prayer, the granting of grace etc.); or he may perhaps appeal to 'the bridegroom of the soul', to the all-ruling Logos of the Father, who forms the innermost centre of a person's own existence. Whether Jesus mysticism, or Logos mysticism,

[3] On the idea of 'the mystery of salvation' or the mysteries of the life of Jesus, cf. K. Rahner, 'Mysterien des Lebens Jesu', *LThK* VII, 2nd edn (Freiburg 1962), pp. 721-2; 'Current Problems in Christology', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore 1961), pp. 149-200.

[4] One of the most highly developed examples of this viewpoint is to be found in the considerations of the life of Jesus in Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises.* But these are always linked with the other aspect which is brought out here.

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or the adoration of the heavenly Pantocrator is predominant in this second type of devotion is not here decisive. But there is, nevertheless, a danger that the history of Jesus may disappear from the field of vision of the person praying and meditating, as being 'something in the past'. Jesus' history may have been exemplary and of saving efficacy, but it is none the less a thing of the past, and has been replaced by God in himself and in his Spirit – the Spirit which has always sustained and ruled all history. Through this Spirit we have such direct access to God that in that access history is no longer to be found.

Even if we were to say (and of course we should, fundamentally speaking, be right) that these two types of Christian piety and religious relationship to Jesus are always present *together* in a living and unrestricted Catholic devotion, and in individual Christians, this would not really eliminate the difficulty which is meant and which we are discussing here. The gaze of the devout person would still have two different directions: backwards into a past which no longer exists 'now', and upwards into the eternity of God, which is ultimately outside history.

Of course the inward problem which is inherent in this double direction of vision in Christian devotion involves what is in fact the really basic problem of theology in general. We might characterise this basic problem briefly as being the question of the unity between transcendence [12] and history. How can history have significance for salvation and achieve eternal validity, when man in his transcendental nature, radically altered through grace, has direct access to the infinite God in himself? And when this God lives as the infinite and unchangeable One, beyond all history, and in his infinite fullness of being holds in advance and from eternity everything that happens in history, in finite being and in particular events? How can a history made up of finite events and beings have a meaning that is absolute and ultimate in kind before an infinite God? Why does not history pass away, as something provisional and without substance, for the spiritual subject who has been raised by grace, once that subject has acquired a direct relationship to the God who is above all history? Of course we cannot treat this fundamental problem in detail here. It is a basic problem of the Christian faith, and hence of Christian devotion as well. But I wanted to touch on it at this point in order to indicate, at least, the deeper background to the question of the spirituality of the Easter faith.[5]

For this Easter faith postulates an indissoluble unity between transcendence and history. It demands that the Christian's devotional life should vividly realise this unity in its undivided and unadulterated nature. It demands, that is to say, that devotion should let the God of infinite, eternal and unassailed fullness of life be in truth the God of a history of abiding validity; and, conversely, that devotion should lay hold on the God of history (who – at least seen in the light of the eternal Logos – actually carries on his own history in his world and does not merely passively sustain it, being himself beyond the world) as being the God of fullness of life and reality, already possessed from eternity to eternity. In this unity of transcendence and history, the two aspects certainly cannot coincide for us in lifeless identity; the Chalcedonian 'unmixed' character of Christology applies here, too. But the Easter faith enjoins us – and especially in the light of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One – not to overlook this 'undivided' unity of history and transcendence, above all in the completion of history. It insists that we do not simplify it through a mere parallelism of the two aspects, but that we understand that the consummated [13] encounter with God as he is in himself actually means encounter with the consummated history that is ours.

Seen in the light of the spiritual 'realisation' of the Easter faith, this means the following:

[5] On the problem of history and its significance for salvation, see among K. Rahner's more recent writings: 'Possible Courses for the Theology of the Future' and 'Experience of Self and Experience of God', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London 1975), pp. 32-60 and pp. 122-32 respectively; 'On the Concept of Infallibility in Catholic Theology' *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 66-85.

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when we turn to the exalted Lord in faith, in hope and in love, we find none other than the crucified Jesus, in whose death his *whole* earthly life is of course integrated. When we are told that that the crucified Jesus is to be found in the risen Christ, then this statement expresses considerably more than is clear from the duality of viewpoint on the part of the devout person which we mentioned earlier. The risen Christ is not merely the One who at some earlier time lived a human life, was crucified and died, but has now simply left all this behind him as the no-longer-existing past, and now leads a different, new life – a life which is linked with the earlier one only through the identity of the substantial bearer of both lives (or phases of life), beyond that claiming for itself only the moral qualities of that earlier life. No, the risen Lord *is* the One who was crucified. This 'is' does not merely indicate the identity of a substantial subject, who now sustains a different life from before. The 'is' states that this very earlier life itself is completed and has found eternal reality in and before God.

We must not trivialise the identity between the earthly Jesus and the exalted Lord – either through a mere recourse to the identity of the substantial subject, or through the notion that in the risen Christ the same 'character' is present as in the earthly Jesus. His eternal life is rather the ultimate form of his earthly life itself. What he leads in the 'Now' of eternity is not a new and different life (even though it exists in homogeneity with his earthly life). His life in eternity is the ultimate form of his history, so that when the devout person turns to the risen Christ, he finds the Jesus who was crucified, and vice versa. Of course much in the earthly life of Jesus is simply 'past and gone' and no longer exists. To deny that would simply be to assert that the history of Jesus is not *completed*. But for that reason this earthly life of Jesus is not after all simply past and gone: it *is*; it is completed and eternally valid; it has itself been accepted by God and acknowledged as real; from the human subjectivity of Jesus, it has been gathered out of the mere flux of earthly time into the Now of eternity, and taken into irrevocable possession.[6]

[14] Our understanding of history's consummation remains inevitably dialectical, allowing history to be truly 'passing', *while* preserving it as ultimately abiding; and we cannot of course transfer this to a unity which is in itself directly accessible to us. We have to come to terms with this dialectic. It is the same for us as for Paul, when in chapter 15 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians he describes the resurrection body as being totally different from the earthly body, and yet holds that it is this very resurrection body which signifies the concrete character of our earthly history.

We ought really now to go on to show, by means of biblical theology, that in the New Testament the exalted Lord is essentially understood as being one with the crucified Jesus, and vice versa. The evidence for this cannot be given here.[7]

We could also go on to show that the piety documented in the tradition of theology and spiritual writings has always tended towards a unity of the two viewpoints which we have described above in deliberately exaggerated form. When the devout person turns in prayer to the exalted Lord, he sees, like Stephen, the Son of man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56); and when in his meditations he follows the paths of the earthly Jesus, he knows that what he contemplates so lovingly is now eternal reality, which has found its ultimate form in the life of the eternal God. When Jesus' 'resurrection' is correctly understood, as faith really believes it to be, then it does not mean the living-on of an identical subject, whose life, having gone through a past phase, now has a new content; the resurrection means the ultimate, God-given form of the earthly life belonging to history. And this history has an

[6] On the whole subject, cf. K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), esp. 'Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie', pp. 15-78.

[7] I should like to draw express attention to W. Thüsing's questions and comments in K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), pp. 123-233. I am indebted to him for a number of points.

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ultimate meaning because in the incarnation and cross of the eternal Logos it is the history of God himself.[8]

Of course we ought also now to go on to show that in history itself something eternal is already taking place as an encountering event and is to some extent already open to experience; and that this eternal happening 'takes place' through freedom, but is through that very freedom established as something final and irrevocable, not as [15] something transient. So that eternity comes about *in* history and does not merely tack itself on *behind* history as something new and different. But here we can point only in the most cursory way to this more general problem of the relationship between freedom, time and eternity.

We have perhaps been talking about the spirituality of the Easter faith in very unspiritual terms, i.e. in merely abstract theological language. And even so, we have failed to mention many conclusions which might be drawn from the basic approach to an understanding of the risen Christ that we have indicated, and from the relationship of the devout person to this risen Christ. For example, we could go on to draw conclusions about the real nature of the heavenly intercession of the risen Christ with the Father; for this is not a new 'occupation' on the part of Jesus (*sit venia verbo*), provoked by us, but is identical with the validity of Jesus' earthly life and his cross, which he eternally possesses in knowledge and freedom. It is impossible to say any more here. My intention has been really only to encourage the devout man or woman to turn without reserve to the exalted Lord in prayer, because direct access to God also means direct access to the history which God has accepted as his own reality, finally confirming it as his own in the resurrection of Jesus.

[8] Cf. K. Rahner, 'The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for our Relationship with God', *Theological Investigations* Ill (London and Baltimore 1967), pp. 35-46.

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[16]

3

JESUS' RESURRECTION

SOME OBSERVATIONS DRAWN FROM SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

It is possible to enquire about Jesus' resurrection today (if we are to do justice to the facts and talk in a way that inspires confidence) only if we take into account the whole of what philosophy and theology have to say about man. Here we must start from the assumption that the hope that a person's history of freedom will be conclusive in nature (a hope which is given in the act of responsible freedom and which is transcendentally necessary) already includes what we mean by the hope of 'resurrection'. Whether this hope is accepted or rejected is initially unimportant in the context of a question of this kind. At all events this hope must include knowledge of what is really meant by resurrection.

It is only in the light of this starting point that a distinction which we can also observe in the history of revelation can be made comprehensible. I mean the distinction which exists between hope for the resurrection of 'the righteous', and the expectation that even the people who have finally, as part of their freedom, missed their calling will also 'be raised'.[1] The second 'resurrection', for the purpose of judgement, can be understood only as the presupposition and implication of hope for the resurrection of the morally perfect. It must consequently be essentially different in kind and can, so to speak, be only a borderline concept.

But hope for the conclusive nature of one's own history of freedom, because of its absolute responsibility, also includes the idea of 'the resurrection of the body', because the hoping person as such basically affirms his own unity and his own history in space and time; consequently [17] he is prevented from the outset from confining his hope merely to one part or excerpt of his reality. Of course such a hope can then always be differentiated, in the case of a particular individual; but it cannot be split up. That depends on the elements of his being and the particular interpretation which he gives to the quite natural differentiations of his single existence in its different aspects.

It is therefore quite possible (depending on the particular philosophical and anthropological interpretations of man's make-up we choose) to conceive of a considerable variation in the precise interpretation of what resurrection could mean for that particular aspect of man's being which we normally call his 'body'. Nor will this breadth of variation, philosophically speaking, be limited by the facts of the Christian revelation, as long as these facts themselves are carefully interpreted. Consequently, if we see the matter in the light of our own historical time, and judge it as belonging to the event of a person's being perfected in all the different elements of his being, we can leave the question open, theologically speaking, whether temporality is to be objectively included or not. In other words, it may remain an open question whether the perfecting of the individual person in his 'physical being' is an event which takes place 'later', as his personal perfecting, or whether it takes place when he dies; i.e. whether we have to expect the resurrection of the individual 'in the body' as part of a general resurrection of all men at the end of history, or whether it is 'co-existent' with historical time, which meanwhile continues to run its course.

At all events, we should be giving a temporal character to the perfection of man in a quite mythological way if we were perhaps to assume, with contemporary biblical scholars, that the

[1] Cf. 1 Cor. 15:12-58; John 5:29.

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one resurrection of men and women takes place *after* a period of complete non-existence on the part of the dead. This would make it impossible to talk seriously at all any more about a true identity between the person who has died and the person who is raised. On the contrary, we must cling to the fact that 'the resurrection' in its theologically valid sense refers primarily to the acquiring of a final and ultimate form by the whole, individual person in his own history of freedom; it applies to his 'body' only in a secondary and derivative sense.[2] But it is just this [18] which also corresponds to the facts of the Christian history of revelation. A doctrine of the resurrection 'of the body' which neglected this or was not prepared to accept it as true would be subscribing to mythological notions.

On the basis of what we have said, we might now formulate the proposition that the knowledge of man's resurrection given with his transcendentally necessary hope is a statement of philosophical anthropology even before any real revelation in the Word. But we should have to counter this by saying that, at least initially, the elucidation of man's basic hope as being the hope of resurrection was in actual fact made historically through the revelation of the Old and New Testaments. It was there that man was taught to take his existence in space and time and in the body really seriously. So at least in actual fact and historically, this hope always remains theological.

Secondly, we should have to stress that – at least conceivably – the actual and absolute hope for the ultimate consummation of our own history of freedom – hope which is really lived as being actual and absolute, and which finds the courage to express itself clearly – is due, at least *sensu positivo*, to God's grace, which is always active in men and women. For it is this which first gives human nature a claim to finality of this kind; as 'pure nature' man simply could not have it at all. This aspect of hope cannot be eliminated 'experimentally', however. So the actual, specific hope of resurrection is founded on grace and therefore remains theological, even in the light of its own reality; although this is not a claim that it could be fundamentally objectified and identified simply on the basis of the positive evidence of Christian revelation (Scripture and tradition).

THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

We said at the beginning that belief in Jesus' resurrection is possible only within this transcendentally necessary hope of resurrection. This applies not only to the fact of Jesus' resurrection but also to its meaning – if by meaning we understand, as we must, both 'meaning in itself' and 'meaning for us'. This does not exclude – it expressly includes – the fact that because of the circle that links all transcendental and historical experience, the secure objectification of the transcendental hope of resurrection is brought about by the experience of Jesus' resurrection. We therefore can and must say: *because* Jesus is risen, I believe in and hope for my own resurrection.

[19] For that reason we are now bound to interpret Jesus' resurrection as the final and conclusive form of this person and his actual history before God and with him. The statement 'he lives in the glory of God'[3] is therefore more primal and basic than the individual accounts of the visions and 'appearances' of the risen Jesus – in fact, and not only according to the biblical tradition.

Thus the fundamental experience of being saved and the enduring finality and conclusiveness of Jesus and his history are not simply identical with whatever can be reported

[2] Cf. here 'Der Leib in der Heilsordnung' in K. Rahner and A. Görres, *Der Leib und das Heil* (Mainz 1967), pp. 29-44. The text is printed in the present volume, pp. 71-89.
[3] Cf. here Matt. 22:44ff (following Ps. 109:1); Rev. 2:25 (following Ps. 16:9-11); Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 10:12; 1 Pet. 3:22; etc.

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directly and 'tangibly' in the experience of 'the appearances', in concepts drawn from time and space. On the contrary, what is really at stake is an experience of faith in the Spirit – the experience that Jesus is alive. And this experience is fundamentally open to every Christian. He has only to accept believingly and trustingly his own transcendental hope of resurrection and, therefore, also be on the look out, implicitly or explicitly, for a specific event in his own history, on the basis of which his hope can be believed in, as something that has been realised in another person. He has certainly also to hope for others just as much as for himself. But in view of Jesus and his history it becomes possible to believe that this Jesus has undergone an event whose liberating power can have an effect on the believer. In spite of this, the Christian experience of Jesus' resurrection remains bound to the apostolic testimony, because without that testimony our own resurrection could no longer be mediated to ourselves through Jesus, as an actual named individual. The search for the actual event towards which our own resurrection hope is directed, as its historical verification and mediation, would run into the sand without the testimony of the apostles. At the same time, faith in this testimony is not just the same as mere belief in a witness because he is competent and credible; for example, when we are told about an event whose facts we can no longer verify for ourselves.[4]

The *theological*, and not merely the philosophical, justification for the close link between our own personal existential hope of resurrection and the evidential character of Jesus' resurrection is to be found in the fact that the Lord's resurrection can of course be believed in [20] only with the help of God's *grace*. This internal reasoning is admittedly really circular, as modern theology has understood ever since Rousselot's writings on the relationship between faith and credibility.[5] But this grace to believe must not be thought of as a purely neutral and colourless divine aid towards the act of faith; or as an essential 'supernatural elevation' of that act. It is in its very nature hope for *our own* 'resurrection' because it is God's eschatological communication of himself for our final salvation. It must therefore be attributed from within to the historical experience of a specific resurrection.

There is no doubt at all that the accounts of 'the empty tomb' belong to the oldest tradition in the New Testament. Yet we must not forget that this fact alone does not give us any real knowledge about Jesus' resurrection. The empty tomb ought rather to be judged as an expression of a conviction which had already spread for other reasons – the conviction that Jesus was alive. A secondary point is that we must also probably leave the question open of how the mention of the empty tomb is related to the accounts of the appearances, and what significance must be attributed to this report in view of the literary nature of the appearance narratives. This is simply a point to be mentioned here.

Finally, the 'facts' of Jesus' resurrection must simply be determined in the light of what we have to understand by our own 'resurrection'; and this must be decided first of all, quite apart from the significance for us of Jesus' resurrection in the context of salvation history. If we began by taking our bearings from the notion of the revival of a physical, material body, we should be bound from the outset to lose sight of the general meaning of 'resurrection'; but we should also no less miss the meaning of Jesus' own resurrection. For unlike everything which the Old and New Testaments report elsewhere about the raising of the dead, the Lord's resurrection means the ultimate deliverance of actual human existence by God and before him. This means that human history acquires its real validity for the first time; it neither simply goes on continuing into vacuity, nor is it simply destroyed. In view of this, death, without which this ultimate conclusiveness is impossible, is the essential and radical renunciation of every concept of the 'how' of this conclusiveness, whether it applies [21] to

[4] Cf. here 'Theological Observations on the Concept of Witness', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London 1975), pp. 152-68 (which contains an extensive bibliography in n. 1).
[5] P. Rousselot, *Die Augen des Glaubens*. With intro, by Josef Trütsch. (Einsiedeln 1963); cf. E. Kunz, *Glaube, Gnade, Geschichte*: *Die Glaubenstheologie des Pierre Rousselot S.J.* (Frankfurt 1969).

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'the body' or to 'the soul' of any human life.[6] From the very outset, the resurrection does not mean any kind of continuance on the part of a human existence which would be neutral towards man's salvation; it means that existence's acceptance and deliverance by God. That is why the person cannot be separated from the activity or 'cause' that animated his earthly life, when we are considering the resurrection and its interpretation. The real activity or 'cause' – if we do not give it an idealistic, ideological sense – is always whatever is brought to fulfilment in the actual existence of the human person. Consequently in saying that this is what has permanent validity, we are saying that what is permanently valid is the validity of the person himself. So when we say that the resurrection of Jesus means that his 'cause' did not come to an end with his death, then we must at the same time stress, positively and critically, what we have just said in the previous sentence, if we really want to exclude an idealistic misunderstanding of the cause of Jesus;[7] for otherwise the continuance of the cause would simply mean the validity and efficacy of an 'idea', which is continually engendered and wins ever-new acceptance.

We should also have to go on to ask why, when we talk about Jesus' cause, it still remains clear that – at least during the lifetime of the Lord – this cause remains indissolubly bound up with his person. He himself, after all, was deeply convinced of this, according to his own sayings and his own behaviour. But to talk about his cause seems to suggest that he himself could simply have perished, leaving his cause to live on – though this cause would then no longer really be *his* cause.

But if Jesus' resurrection continues to be the final, conclusive existence of his person and his cause, and if this person-cause does not simply mean that some man or other and his history go on existing, but that the *victory* of his special claim to be the absolute mediator of [22] salvation is endorsed once and for all – then *faith* in his resurrection is an inner aspect of that resurrection itself. It does not simply mean registering a certain fact, which by its very nature could just as well exist even if we did not register it at all. The resurrection of Jesus is accordingly the eschatological victory of God's grace in the world. But for that very reason it cannot be conceived of without the free faith in it which actually exists; for it is only in this that its own essence is fulfilled at all. In *this* sense we can and may well say that Jesus is raised 'into' the faith of his disciples.[8] But this faith into which Jesus is raised is not really and directly faith in this resurrection; it is the faith which is experienced as liberty from all the forces of finitude, guilt and death. It is liberty brought about by God and it knows itself to be warranted by the fact that this liberty has come into being in Jesus himself and was revealed in him for us. If faith henceforth counts as being hope for our resurrection, then it must believe in *this* resurrection of Jesus' first of all, and cannot replace his resurrection by something different, without any specifiable 'content'. Of course in the last resort the *fides qua* (faith as personal act) and the *fides quae* (faith as object) are always indissolubly linked. But every *fides qua* as the subject's act of absolute freedom derived from and directed towards God, for him is already, at least implicitly, the *fides quae* of our own resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection, finally, takes on a unique salvation-history character because through faith we recognise it as being the eschatologically irreversible, historical appearance of God's

[6] Cf. K. Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (Quaestiones Disputatae 2), 2nd edn, (London 1969); 'Ideas for a Theology of Death', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London 1975), pp. 169-86.
[7] The expression 'the cause' (*Sache*) of Jesus is taken from W. Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth* (ET S.C.M. Press, London 1970). The present author has discussed the problem of the resurrection in the light of Marxsen's views in K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), Lehrsatz 25: 'Der Sinn von "Auferstehung" ', pp. 36-8. The following section is based on these earlier remarks, some of it word for word.
[8] Cf. here K. Hollmann, 'Die Interpretation der Osterbotschaft durch Bultmann', *Existenz und Glaube* (Paderborn 1972), pp. 146-9; H. Häring, 'Der kirchliche Sinn der Auferstehung', *Kirche und Kerygma* (Freiburg 1972), pp. 48-50; 65-9.

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promise of himself to the world. Of course this takes for granted that the disciples did not experience Jesus' resurrection merely as being the final and conclusive deliverance of a particular person, let alone as merely the revival of a dead person in our era of time and space, with its continuing history. It presupposes that they saw the Lord's resurrection as the final confirmation by God himself of the claim made by Jesus before Easter: the claim that the word, the fate and the person of the Lord means the nearness of the kingdom of God, and that this is a fact that cannot be rescinded. The disciples must have been conscious of this claim of Jesus' in some form or other, even though [23] we cannot define it more closely here. If this were not so the mere conviction 'he is alive' would have no meaning for us in the context of salvation-history. Of course to say this does not mean calling in question the fact that, against the background of contemporary Jewish theology, the resurrection could only be understood at all as an eschatological event – i.e. it was impossible to interpret it simply as just another event in history. Equally we re not overlooking the fact that the experience of the final deliverance of Jesus by God and with God also in retrospect facilitated and helped to sustain the radical interpretation of the claim made by Jesus before Easter. But at all events this kind of interpretation of the Easter experience is sufficient to make us see and hold fast to what Christian faith has to say and has to acknowledge dogmatically today about the soteriological significance of Jesus' death – if it is a faith that is consciously held and has been responsibly arrived at.

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CHRISTOLOGY TODAY?

For Christians, questions about Christology are always topical. As believers, and also, it may be, as people in the service of the Church as proclaimers of the message of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One, the mediator of our salvation, we cannot be indifferent towards questions of Christology today; for we are at the same time people in a situation in life where this message is not simply a matter of course, but where it is controversial, doubted and rejected.

Of course there are innumerable questions of this kind. We cannot even list or name them here. How, for example, can a person outside definite 'committed' Christianity arrive at faith in Jesus Christ at all, in the sense in which the fellowship of believers acknowledge him? In the face of questions like these we must confine ourselves to a more limited subject. The only point we can and ought to discuss here is the following: how can a person who acknowledges Christ in principle (even if his confession of faith is perhaps somewhat vague and is still involved in a process of search) come to terms with things, when he is also convinced that his personal understanding of this Jesus cannot, and must not, be merely an individualistically isolated opinion, but has essentially to be related to the faith of the Church? For it is the Church, after all, which has passed the Gospel of Jesus Christ on to him in the first place.

TRADITIONAL CHRISTOLOGY

It must be said at once that contemporary Christology too must not simply emancipate itself from the classical position. Christology developed from the New Testament writings (especially Paul and John) [25] down to the statements of the Council of Chalcedon (451).[1] Since that time this Christology has remained valid in the Eastern churches, in the Roman Catholic Church and – we may cautiously say – in the Reformed Churches, at least until the nineteenth century. It certainly cannot now be a question of simply deducing this classical Christology from its sources as being obligatory for our time and in the future too. And by 'sources' I mean, ultimately, a person's original experience with this Jesus of Nazareth (which is still open to us today) and, together with this experience and as part of it, the New Testament itself At the same time I am quite convinced that this process is entirely possible, in spite of all denials by a liberalistic exegesis or by pamphlets such as that of Rudolf Augstein.[2] But it is a task that is primarily the function of proclamation and theology as a whole. It cannot be adequately summed up here in the space at our disposal.

First of all, however, a Christian who wants to lay claim to being 'a churchman' must note the following: we cannot simply leap over fifteen hundred years of classical Christology or push it aside as if it were a matter of indifference. We cannot do this if there is an enduring Gospel of Jesus Christ as the One who gives us an ultimate trust and an ultimate hope for the

[1] Cf. the formula Denzinger-Schönmetzer (Denz.), *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Barcelona 1965), 301-2. For information about the background, development and significance of the Council's decision, cf. the now classic volume, A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon. Geschichte und Gegenwart,* I-III (Würzburg 1951-4). It has frequently been photomechanically reproduced.

[2] Cf. R. Augstein, *Jesus Menschensohn* (Gütersloh 1972). For criticism, cf. K. Rahner, 'Das Christentum – ein explosiver Irrtum?', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 Oct. 1972 (No. 233), supplement; later printed in R. Pesch and G. Stachel (eds), *Augsteins Jesus* (Zürich 1972), pp. 40-9.

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eternal significance and final validity of our existence; if we derive this ultimate attitude from the Church; and if we are convinced that this bond with Jesus Christ, in spite of all the history and historicity which surrounds it, is fundamentally valid for all future ages and therefore has a genuine continuity in the historical life and historical Word of Christianity. On the contrary, we must accept it as being binding on ourselves, too, fundamentally and as a whole. One reason is that for almost two thousand years Christianity has acknowledged this Christology and lived according to it. It is in this Christology – not through by-passing it – that Christianity has [26] found Jesus Christ to be the mediator and Lord on which it has based its life and death.

Another reason is that this classical Christology still has a meaning and a message for us today. If it were simply no longer comprehensible because of the change in the boundaries of understanding (which is of course undeniable) then we should not even be able to talk about it at all or to reject it with apparent justification. Consequently we should also beware of cheap and hasty lamentations that Christology in its traditional form has become alien, and that 'it just doesn't appeal any more' because the presuppositions behind it, which are necessary for its understanding, no longer exist.

From many points of view a person who attempts today to assimilate this classical Christology must overcome greater difficulties. For instance, its historical pre-conditions and premisses (which are not simply self-evident to us from the start) may loom larger for us with our greater historical awareness. Nevertheless the meaning of this classical Christology can still be understood, and furthermore it can still be seen to be legitimately derived from a more primal experience of Jesus which is open to us now even though it is still historically mediated. Consequently we can come to recognise it as being authoritative and binding for ourselves also, provided we do not adopt the foolish idea that we can produce a new Christology of our own, as its 'only begetters', without the need for living bonds to connect our own Christianity with the history of the Christian faith itself

Christology – like the Christian faith itself– is inconceivable without at least an ultimate continuity of genuine historical tradition, though this continuity is not something external to actual word or concept. Consequently the Christology of the early Church and the Fathers cannot be merely the object of an antiquarian historical interest; it must be binding on us. And this binding quality must not be opposed to the living and primal quality of faith in Christ today. If we were simply to declare that we could not make anything of classical Christology any more, this – if correctly interpreted at least – would not be a reproach to Christology. It would be a reproach to ourselves, and to our own spiritual and mental laziness, the stuntedness of our historical sense, and our bondage to a fashionable present which is not aware of its paltry limitations.

We can and must acknowledge today, too, that in Jesus the eternal divine Logos has entered our history, becoming man in time, the One who was pre-existent in the divine eternity, for whom it was no [27] presumption to be equal with God. We can and must still confess with the Council of Chalcedon that the specific reality which meets us in Jesus (provided that we do not let it come to an end at a point determined by ourselves and our own arbitrary choice) was and eternally remains true man and true God in a unique and incomprehensible unity; so that we can and must talk about this one reality as being really and truly divine and human, without intermixture and division, in spite of the unmixed different elements that constitute it.[3] These Chalcedonian christological statements may sound strange to us at first. The road that leads to them from the simple Gospel may seem to us long and winding. But these classical christological formulations are binding and beneficial, if only because they continually face us with the inexorable question: do we

[3] Cf. Denz. 301-2 and the appropriate canon 303.

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ourselves meet Jesus at such a radical level that in him we meet God himself – and meet him in a unique and irreplaceable way, as he is in himself – the forgiveness of our guilt, our salvation, and our eternal life?

The classical formulations of Christology are one way (others are also perhaps conceivable) of compelling us, inexorably and inescapably, to take Jesus absolutely seriously – not simply to see him as just one religious genius among others, as a prophet who might be followed by others of the same kind, or perhaps even by greater ones who would supersede him; but to understand him as the unsurpassable and irreversible Word of salvation to ourselves – as the Word of God *per se*.

Any christological formulation which on the one hand allows Jesus to be quite objectively man, in the most radical sense, and which on the other hand allows him to be, in his life and death, the unsurpassable Word of God for us, could be enough; because it would then also be stating what is really meant by the classical christological formulations. But of course such a formulation was itself first given in this classical form. It does not exist anywhere else in such inexorable clarity, and at the same time in this generally adopted or received form.

That is why classical Christology still remains binding on us today, and is also irreplaceable. We have no reason to be ashamed of the Christology that has been passed down to us. Since today (in contrast to earlier more rationalistic eras) the feeling is growing that one can only talk very paradoxically, analogously or dialectically (or however [28] we may like to put it) about God and his redeeming relationship to us, we have no need to hide from our contemporaries the paradox which is also ultimately concealed in the apparently calmly ontological phraseology of classical Christology; for we have no need to feel that these formulations, even though they may be necessary, are somewhat old fashioned.

THE LIMITATIONS OF CLASSICAL CHRISTOLOGY

But are we therefore also compelled to overlook, forget or ignore the limitations of classical Christology today? These limitations were certainly not so clearly seen earlier, and were not so clearly thought about; for that was, largely speaking, impossible at the time. In our own period, at all events, we should quite freely indicate what these limitations are.

First of all, classical Christology clearly stresses that Jesus Christ was true and perfect man, without any curtailment, except for actual sin (i.e. a real 'no' to God's grace and love). But as it developed, this Christology did in fact tend so to idealise this true man – and to idealise his human dimension especially – that *even here* he appeared as a kind of semi-god,[4] instead of being the Word of God for us *just because* he shared in the very reality and fate of a real historical person, including his death. So in actual fact classical Christology not infrequently strayed unintentionally into a monophysitism which was basically criticised for the emphatic distinction it made between the divine and the human. Instead of this distinction there was a mingling of the two in a curious deification of the man, in place of a radical acceptance of the bitterly finite character of the person in whom God appeared among us. The fact that Jesus also believed, hoped, searched and was tempted, and unavoidably capitulated before the incomprehensibility of God may not have been obscured in the loving devotion of believers to the One who was crucified; but it was to some extent obscured in textbook theology.[5] Today's sober exegesis, which emphasises [29] the historical dependency of Jesus

[4] The present author has already complained of this in a number of earlier essays, cf. K. Rahner, 'Current Problems in Christology', *Theological Investigations* I (London 1961), pp. 149-200.

[5] Here something might be said about the importance of living piety for textbook theology; for influence by no means flows only in the reverse direction. As the other essays in the present volume make clear, my main intention is not only to discover what theology has to say, but to quicken it in the light of the experience of lived

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and his doctrine, also makes us clearly aware of the limitations of classical Christology, as this was actually expounded, when it did not always remain true to its own principles; and it enjoins us to take Jesus' historicity seriously. A vertical Christology of descent,[6] which was the approach of classical Christology, must today no longer overlook the fact that what the Logos who descended from the glory of God desired to take upon himself was precisely the sombre facts of historical existence with its limits, dependency and baseness, without which there can be no true and full humanity. Today classical Christology certainly has to go on considering what has to be added to Christ's human reality as well, so that it can fulfil its function in salvation-history. With this in mind Christology can, for example, certainly not avoid, even in our period, talking with the Epistle to the Hebrews about Jesus' sinlessness as a man.[7] But what it can and must avoid doing is so to transfigure Jesus even in his earthly life that it is no longer evident that he took our human, poverty-stricken and sombre fate on himself, fully and completely, redeeming us through that very fact.

Classical Christology presents a doctrine of the descent of the pre-existent Logos through his assumption of a human 'nature'; it is an incarnational Christology. For that reason it is further limited by the fact that it does not sufficiently and directly make clear the connection between the incarnate Logos and his function as the mediator of salvation. Of course it established this connection. It attempted to do so either by talking about the sending of the eternal Son into the world for its salvation in the way that Eastern theology did, seeing the taking-on of flesh (i.e. of human nature) as being in itself the saving and deifying acceptance of human nature, or man as a whole; or it proceeded as Western theology did, understanding the Incarnation as the establishment of a divine-human subject who, by obediently accepting the death for which he was destined, can offer God [30] in his holiness expiation and satisfaction for the guilt of mankind. But a connection that is conceived of in either one of these ways will either work very platonically and speculatively, taking as its presupposition a unity of divinity and humanity in one and the same nature (a platonic train of thought which it is difficult for us to follow today); or it will make use of the solution that adopts the categories of Germanic legalistic thinking in the theory of satisfaction. In this case it will draw on the postulate of the divine decree by which the incarnate Logos is appointed to be the atoning representative of sinful mankind. Today these patterns of interpretation come up against considerable difficulties, which we cannot go into here.

But above all a vertical incarnational and 'descent' Christology of this kind, considered in isolation, involves a limitation and a danger. For it first talks only about the adoption of a human nature which remains abstract. It does not simply begin from the very outset with the actual, specific reality of Jesus' life and death. Yet after all it is this which we experience first of all, and it is this that we grasp in faith and hope as what is saving and liberating for ourselves.

The vertical Christology of the incarnation and a horizontal Christology of salvation-history are generally insufficiently related to each other.[8] One might also say that in traditional incarnational theology there is too little Christology in the sense of 'fundamental' theology. That is to say, too little weight is given to the experience of Jesus which grasps him

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faith, as this mediates actual salvation, or fails to do so. As an example, I should like to draw attention to an earlier essay on this subject: *Heilige Stunde und Passionsandacht* (Innsbruck 1949, Freiburg 1955).

[6] CL here K. Rahner, 'The Two Basic Types of Christology', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London 1975), pp. 213-23; the beginnings are already to be found in the New Testament, cf. the christological hymn in Phil. 2:5-11.

[7] Cf. Heb. 5:1-10; 7:22-28.

[8] For one particular attempt to relate the two for the whole of Christology, see the doctrinal statements 'Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie', in K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), pp. 15-78.

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as being the saving Word of God to us which cannot be superseded, and which finds him in the specific reality of his life and his redeemed death. This is not clearly enough incorporated from the very outset in the incarnational Christology we have described. Up to a certain point it has even been replaced by a doctrine which looks from God to us and not from us to God. This is supported only by some sayings of Jesus about himself, which are historically and exegetically difficult to interpret, and not by his death and resurrection. We might also say that in classical Christology there is too wide a gap between the substance of the doctrine and its function. 'Christ for us' does not lead on to 'a Christ in and for himself'. Instead a Christ-in-himself, conceived of in a doctrinaire [31] way, is made the starting point for what might be called an attempt to arrive retrospectively at a Christ for us, by way of connections set up in the way we have indicated.

But in our time at least it must be clear that we have to find our faith in a living encounter with Jesus the Christ – an encounter which is of course sustained by the Spirit.

NEW APPROACHES

Today a whole number of new approaches to Christology are crystallising. These neither deny nor mean to call in question what classical Christology is aiming at. The point at issue is not even to dispute the permanently normative character of classical Christology, although these new approaches for their part are also absolutely necessary today if access to faith in Jesus as Christ and Lord is not to be made unduly difficult for modern men and women.

To state that these new christological approaches exist does not of course also mean that the new approaches are absolutely novel or that they could or must be developed into a full systematic Christology, which would then stand parallel to classical Christology as something completely fresh and utterly different. It is rather a question of something more modest: the fact that the statements of classical Christology can also be formulated in simpler statements which we find more accessible today and yet which underlie those of classical Christology. But if we are to take this assertion seriously in a really radical way, then these statements already incorporate the whole of classical Christology in themselves. On the other hand they also preserve classical Christology from its intrinsic danger of being misunderstood in a monophysite sense – the danger, that is, of thinking of Jesus simply as God, who merely appears on earth in a human livery.

New approaches of this kind are not to be rejected just because there have already been a number of attempts in this direction since the Enlightenment – attempts which have come to grief because of their rationalism. Of course, no one will expect these to be followed up here in systematic accounts of the Christologies of Protestant[9] or Catholic theologians. That would take us too far and involve the risk [32] of simplifying through brevity or of distorting these attempts at a Christology. Neither are we saying here that behind all these modern attempts there is *only one* Christology, either Catholic or Protestant, of the kind which we have indicated under the somewhat too portentous title 'new approach'. On the contrary, we can also find very modern christologies, with considerable intellectual and religious power, which are radical Christologies of descent, to such an extent that the death to which Jesus was destined threatens to become the inner destiny of God himself, in an almost gnostically monophysitic way. But I do not intend either to describe or to criticise all that here.

What I mean here by 'new approaches' is really something very simple: quite plain statements about the meaning of Jesus and what he did for us, statements which give us the

[9] Cf. one of the author's earliest essays, 'Die deutsche protestantische Christologie der Gegenwart', *Theologie der Zeit*, Theologische Beihefte zum 'Seelsorger' 1 (Vienna 1936), pp. 189-202.

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impression that, in spite of their *relatively* easy accessibility, they still contain in full the classic, essential Christology. This requires that on the one hand they are taken really seriously, in a thoroughly radical way; and that, on the other, people do not again interpret them in a monophysitic sense (even, it may be, unintentionally and non-thematically) and then claim that these new functional approaches must support and provide evidence for this latent misunderstanding.

In order to make the precise intention and real meaning of these 'new approaches' clear, let us begin with the quite simple experience of faith in Jesus. Jesus is a person who loves, who is faithful, who serves others, and who does not evade – either inwardly or outwardly – the death for which he is destined. In his death he experiences the ultimate God-forsakenness, and in that very situation yields himself and his fate into the Father's hands. We now believe that the abyss of death in which he was swallowed up is the blessed fullness of divine life; that he lives, and that his history of failure was accepted and ratified by God; that it is now valid for ever; and that he is the risen One. We experience this redeemed destiny of Jesus as God's answer to us, since we are the absolute question which we ourselves cannot answer. It is God's answer to us because Jesus has identified himself with us to the ultimate degree, and because, on the other hand, we cannot do anything else than see our own fate in the fate of our neighbour. Otherwise we would be merely isolated monads, not people who can only find themselves in others by loving them.

[33] This answer for us is Jesus as the One who died and is risen.[10] That is what remains the definitive and irrevocable Word of God to us. God may indeed say many things to us through creation and through history. The history of revelation even shows that a second word of God, which moves into a certain place in our history, can supersede a first word and reduce it to provisional status. Indeed it may itself remain provisional, seen against the incalculable number of possibilities in which God will encounter us in the course of history. But when the whole of our existence and history is all at once withdrawn from us and struck out by what we call death – when such an all-annihilating 'nay' is heard and this, just this and nothing else, becomes the divine 'yea' – then such a divine Word must necessarily be irrevocable and definitive.

God can doubtless, therefore, say something else to us before this, though not afterwards; even if that 'before' may undoubtedly occur in a still current history and although the definitive death-word of God, which means his victory, has already been uttered in that history. This word has been uttered in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is definitive because after death no history continues and no new possibilities offer themselves.[11] But it is irrevocable because in death, if it is really taken seriously, only God can offer himself unless nothingness is to engulf us. Jesus was crucified and is risen into the incomprehensible darkness of God. This means that he is *the* Word of God to us, not simply *a* word. But if in this Word-for-us God promises himself to us irrevocably, then that Word has a unique relationship to God himself. It is a relationship that is specifically different from the ones that speak through the many words of God within the course of our history, which do not irrevocably promise God himself but simply some gift and task which is provisional in comparison with him.[12] This irrevocable and *real* Word of God to us [34] (real because it is given with Jesus' redeemed destiny to die) could, abstractly considered, naturally have been

[10] Cf. K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), pp. 15-78, esp. IV: 'Die Theologie des Todes und der Auferstehung Jesu', pp. 35-50.
[11] Cf. K. Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (Quaestiones Disputatae 2) (2nd ed., London 1969) and the essays in the present volume, 'The Liberty of the Sick, Theologically Considered', and 'The Intermediate State', pp. 100-13 and pp. 114-25 respectively.
[12] For a brief summing up of the author's ideas, see 'God's Self-Communication', *Sacramentum Mundi* V (New York and London 1970), pp. 353-5 (bibliography).

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uttered in some other person. But in fact it let itself be heard in its primal quality and non-derivability only in Jesus. At the demarcation line of death, all other words fall back on the question of man. But it is only in Jesus and nowhere else that we hear this irrevocable Word of God's blessed promise of himself in the absolute calling in question of death; if all other promises of prophets and sages turn into questions in the face of death; if even the doctrine of the immortality of the soul (which is in itself quite rational) can really only offer the continuance of the subject and the limitless question he represents, but not the comprehensive answer to the question which makes everything else questionable; if all this is so, then an absolute relationship to Jesus is our right and duty, in spite of his impenetrable facticity in the midst of possibilities of thought which remain empty. Unless we want to miss encountering him from the very beginning, then we can only accept him as the absolute Word of God's promise of himself to us, in which God himself is involved, which has a history and does not simply sustain that history as if it were a foundation beyond history.

Unless it is untrue to itself, the simplest experience of faith with Jesus, the crucified and risen One, therefore leads inescapably to statements which in actual fact include an ontological Christology of descent and incarnation, but which also from the very beginning simultaneously include, seriously and effectively, the horizontal Christology of salvation history and fundamental theology.

This modest indication of what we mean by 'new approaches' is by no means intended as a claim that everything has undoubtedly been said in a sufficiently express and clear way, though this is essential and indispensable for new approaches too, if they are really to stand up to examination. These new approaches are based on faith's experience of Jesus, his destiny, his death and his resurrection; and we are convinced that it is only this resurrection (the proof of his destiny's enduring validity before God) which lends his testimony to himself and interpretation of himself in the proclaimed Word as its ultimate meaning and ultimate importance. But this does not mean that the experience of Jesus that is meant here has been achieved or can be bestowed on the basis of the bare fact of the resurrection of just anyone; for this fact is necessarily constituted in part by the self-understanding of Jesus as a specific person, the specific Jesus who has himself interpreted himself through his Word in the life he lived. [35] After all, this resurrection of the Lord is not merely to be understood apologetically as an external verification of his self-testimony. We must see it as the inner, essential element of Jesus' testimony to himself, which can only arrive at complete fulfilment in his history.

A person's basic experience of Jesus and his history as we have indicated it ought perhaps to be clarified by even more explanations of this kind, or by similar ones. Of course we could also describe this basic experience under quite different aspects and against the background of quite different horizons of understanding. What seemed most important first of all in this brief essay was only to show that it is possible to make a statement about the experience of Jesus which is ahead of (or perhaps behind) the ontological Chalcedonian Christology of descent and incarnation. Classical Christology still provides, and will go on providing, the norm for us. But, when all is said and done, it belongs from the very beginning within a much wider field of possible christological statements. It, too, belongs to a system of co-ordinates allowing viewpoints and critical questions which go beyond it, though this does not mean that it can really be superseded. To say this is certainly important and involves many consequences; but in spite of that it is really a matter of course, because even in the New Testament, among the many and varied Christologies there, the statements which led to the classic Christology of Chalcedon do not always provide the foundation and beginning. Moreover, the important thing here was also to stimulate the conviction and insight that those christological statements which derive from the original experience of Jesus, the crucified and risen One, lead to Chalcedonian Christology through an inner correspondence and

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equivalence. The only presupposition is that both the experience and the statements should be taken seriously and that their claims should be pressed without any rationalistic omissions or trivializations. At the same time, we still do not need to fear that classical Christology will founder in these statements, as something that was merely provisional. Nor, conversely, do we need to suppose that these statements are really no more than an ultimately dispensable preparation for the ancient ones.

It would now be useful, and indeed necessary, to work out more precisely and in more detail this mutual correspondence between a new Christology, deriving from the experience of the Lord in salvation-history, and classical Christology. But that is impossible [36] here.[13] I hope, however, that even the indication of these new approaches has been clear enough for us to discover through it (if we look carefully) the contours of Chalcedonian Christology as well. One observation, however, may give a little extra depth to the subject at this point. It would be pointless to try to see essential, ontological Christology and functional, existential Christology as being from the outset mutually exclusive alternatives, between which we have to choose. Of course when classical Christology talks about hypostasis and person (in the earlier sense of what subsists individually and as a whole, but not in the modern sense of a subjectivity whose liberty has been given it by God), about nature and substance, about unity, unification and difference, it is employing terms and categories which can ultimately be traced to the experience of being *in general*, but not to an experienced subjectivity and its fulfilment. But wherever existentially ontological terms are drawn on in order to describe the relationship of the human reality of Jesus to God – and that seems absolutely possible – an ontological Christology is really also being pursued. Nor does this necessarily involve falling victim to a rationalistic Christology of the consciousness, which would interpret Jesus merely as a particularly good and devout person. For the terms used here are onto-logical in a radical sense, even more than those which are first derived from some arbitrarily chosen objective being.

In addition, every statement which sees itself as ‘functional’, ‘existential’, ‘actualistic’, etc. (if it is not simply to be merely the senseless self-utterance of the speaker) is inevitably related to something in itself, which even the most functional thing must refer to and speak about as its own reality, in the conviction that it is saying something *about it*. All christological terms, correctly understood, have ultimately an ontological sense. The essence is recognised by its function. That is why a statement about function is always basically a statement about essence. If we talk in any Christology whatever about the existential relationship of the man Jesus to God as something not arbitrary but unique, understanding by this that this unique relationship to God is of course based again on the act of God for this person, then we are pursuing ontological Christology. If in a similar way we then express the relationship of Jesus to man as being also unique and as being the foundation *per se* of our salvation, then we again have onto-logical Christology – whether this is the result of deliberate [37] reflection or not. For the terms which are unavoidably used in the process are basically more ontological than the ones which underlie classical Christology, even if they are not derived directly from the being which is ‘onto-logical’ because in spirit and freedom it opens on to the absolute being of God, and this direction constitutes its essence.

In addition, classic terms such as ‘hypostatic union’, for example, can really be made comprehensible only if one explains them by going back to a predicative communication of idioms[*]; and this ultimately also involves going beyond a merely ontic Christology.

Moreover in classical Christology the ‘is’ in statements of communication of idiom such as

[13] But see reference in n. 10.

[*] *Editor’s note:* The term ‘communication of idioms’ (idioms = properties) ‘primarily means that because of the hypostatic union the properties of both natures can and must be predicated of the one Person Jesus Christ’. Cf. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary* (London 1965), p. 90.

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'Jesus is God', 'God is man', does not mean *identity* between subject and predicate, as it does in our other 'is' statements.[14] It only means a unity and a link. If we held the contrary to be true, we should be denying the 'unmixed' character asserted by the Chalcedonian view and should be holding a heretical opinion. The statement that God is 'in' Jesus at least means neither a heresy nor necessarily a truncation of orthodox Christology, provided only that we are aware that God's being 'in' Jesus, in the sense in which it is meant here, indicates a unique relationship which makes the Lord the unsupersedable Word of God for us, and which involves God himself, bringing him into our history.

We may sum up what we have been saying as follows: We must acknowledge classical Christology and yet see that it is not the only possible one, in the sense that there could be no other orthodox statements of a christological kind. For there are in fact statements which also lead to classical Christology and which protect it better and more effectively from misunderstandings than it can protect itself today simply by means of the history of its interpretation. Indeed the [38] usual interpretation of classical Christology urgently and imperatively needs true deepening and supplementing. So the new approaches today would seem useful above all because the monophysitic misunderstanding of Christology is still a real and indisputable danger, both for believers who misunderstand the Church's dogma, and for unbelievers who presuppose that this misunderstanding of the dogma is the doctrine of the Church, and therefore reject it. But every concept of the incarnation which views Jesus' humanity, either overtly or implicitly, merely as the guise God takes upon himself in order to signalise his speaking presence, is and remains a heresy.[15]

[14] On this subject, cf. the author's controversy with Cardinal Höffner, 'Karl Rahner antwortet Kardinal Höffner', *Münchener Katholische Kirchenzeitung* 64 (1971), 31 Jan. 1971, pp. 12-13; also 'Über die Gottheit Jesu Christj und über die Unauflöslichkeit der Ehe. Ein Briefwechsel zwischen Joseph Kardinal Höffner/Köln und Professor Dr. Karl Rahner S.J../Münster', *Kirche und Leben* 26 (Münster 1971), 24 Jan. 1971, p. 6, ET *The Month,* April 1971, pp. 104-7.

[15] For further development, cf. 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', *Theological Investigations* IV (London 1966), pp. 105-20.

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[39]

5

JESUS CHRIST IN THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

What do we mean precisely and specifically when we say that Jesus Christ is to be found in non-Christian religions as well? That is the question we shall be considering here.[1]

First, it must be said in introducing the subject that we shall be considering the question dogmatically, not in the light of the history or phenomenology of religion. In this matter the Christian dogmatic theologian cannot be a substitute for the religious historian, who works *a posteriori*. After all, his own sources of faith, which are binding on him, are derived from the Old and New Testaments, and even from the Church's doctrinal explanations, which were based on those Testaments; they have developed without any direct contact with most of the non-Christian religions (though we may perhaps except here the Declaration on the non-Christian religions made by Vatican II). Consequently the material drawn from the history of religion which is germane to our question has not been assimilated in these sources at all. In addition, if these sources do deal with the non-Christian religions at all, even from afar, they do so, for understandable reasons, in a rather dissociating and defensive way. Consequently they are highly unfruitful for our question. A dogmatic [40] theologian has to think *a priori* here, unlike the religious historian, whose task is to discover Christ as far as possible *a posteriori* in the non-Christian religions. This means that the dogmatic theologian's reflections can provide only something like a provisional indication for the religious historian, which may perhaps guide and sharpen his seeking glance in a task of which the dogmatic theologian cannot relieve him. The question here is, therefore, simply this: what dogmatic principles and reflections have we to postulate prior to a historical investigation, with regard to the question to be formulated and the probable result, when we are considering whether Christ can be present in the non-Christian religions? Whether the religious historian can then himself fulfil this expectation *a posteriori*, whether he falls short of it in the facts he discovers, or whether he perhaps goes even further – that must remain an entirely open question here.

There are two presuppositions to be made in answering the dogmatic question which we have narrowed down in this way. First of all, we are presupposing a general supernatural divine will to salvation which is really efficacious in the world.[2] This makes possible a belief in supernatural revelation everywhere, i.e., in the whole length and breadth of human history. This presupposition is also expressly taught by Vatican ll.[3] Vatican II is certainly extremely reserved with regard to the question of how such a redeeming faith in a real divine revelation in the strictest sense can come about outside the sphere of the Old and New Testaments. But this does not forbid the theologian's asking in what way there can be such a universal opportunity of faith; and it cannot, either, really release him from asking a question of this kind. The answer to this question – or at least one possible answer to it – does not really have

[1] The ideas developed here are of course closely connected with what the author has already said under the familiar heading of 'the anonymous Christian' and in connection with a transcendental Christology. Consequently some of the material may well be familiar, though for details the reader should turn to the relevant essays themselves. Cf. 'Observations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian" ', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 280-94, where references to earlier work are also given. Cf. also *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), pp. 15-78.

[2] This general will to salvation was emphatically stressed by Vatican II. Cf. *Lumen gentium* (Church), n. 16; *Nostra aetate* (non-Christian religions) n. 1; *Ad gentes* (mission), n. 7.

[3] Cf. n. 2 above, but also the general statements in *Gaudium et Spes* (the Church in the world), n. 2; 10; 22; etc.

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to be given here but may be presupposed (even if, somewhat in the style of Heb. 11:1-40, it still does not clarify the christological character of redeeming faith of this kind). We may just briefly observe that the elevation by grace of man's 'transcendental nature', with a supernatural formal object (*objectum formale*) which is thereby given (even if this is not objectified and the object of reflection), already crystallises the concept of a supernatural revelation, [41] and (if accepted freely) the concept of faith, into the question,[4] what historical and objectifying mediation the acceptance of such a supernatural and revelatory elevation really has.

If it is permissible to assume that this question can be positively answered and that it is already more or less clarified, then we really only have to ask whether and how such a redeeming faith in revelation can and must reach out to Christ even outside the sphere of an explicit Christianity; or whether, since this is impossible, it is unnecessary; so that in this respect impossibility and good-will release the non-Christian from the christological character of a faith which is in other respects possible everywhere.

The question also remains whether or not the non-Christian religions as specific historical and social phenomena have a positive importance in the coming into being of such an act of faith, interpreted in either the one way or the other – i.e. christologically or non-christologically. The question whether Christ is present in the non-Christian religions or not must then be answered accordingly.

There is a second presupposition too. When a non-Christian wins salvation through faith, hope and love, the non-Christian religions cannot be thought to have played no part, or only a negative one, in this winning of justification and salvation.[5] This statement does not mean asserting a particular Christian interpretation and evaluation of any specific non-Christian religion. Nor is it a question of putting a religion of this kind on a par with the Christian faith as regards its importance for salvation. It is no denial of its vitiated character or its provisional place in salvation-history. Nor does it deny that any such specific religion may also have a negative influence on the genesis of the salvation event in an individual non-Christian.

But having said this, we must go on to say the following: if a non-Christian religion could have, from the outset, no positive influence at all on the supernatural event of salvation in the individual [42] Christian – or if, from the outset, no such possible influence is conceded to it, then the salvation event in a given individual would be seen in completely non-social and unhistorical terms.[6] But this fundamentally contradicts the historical and social character of Christianity itself. The possibility of private revelations, extraordinary visions (especially at the hour of death) and so forth has certainly been envisaged, in order to bring the divine revelation to the non-Christian who has not been reached by the Christian proclamation. But these are arbitrary and improbable postulates, and one cannot see why they should be permitted to take place only in extraordinary and special cases. And quite apart from that, these expedients contradict the basic character of the Christian revelation and the nature of man. For even in his most personal history man always remains a social being, whose

[4] For a more detailed explanation of this idea, cf. K. Rahner, 'The Existential, B. Theological, in *Sacramentum Mundi* II (New York and London 1967), p. 306; also Existence: II 'The Existential, B. Theological', *Encyclopaedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), pp. 494-5.

[5] Not only is this notion contradicted by Vatican II's declaration on the relationship between the Church and the non-Christian religions (*Nostra aetate*); the basic attitude reflected in the declaration is also opposed to any such viewpoint. This basic attitude goes far beyond the declaration itself, and we are attempting to develop some important aspects of it here.

[6] So Vatican II's declaration about religious freedom, *Dignitatis humanae*, also says (n. 4) that the freedom from compulsion in religious matters which is due to the individual must also be conceded to people who are acting as a group. For the social nature of man, as well as the social nature of religion itself, demands the existence of religious groups.

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innermost decisions are mediated through the specific form of his social and historical life. They do not take place in some special reserve, cut off from the rest from the very outset. In addition, in a theology of salvation history, which takes God's universal will to salvation seriously and remembers the tremendous distance in time between 'Adam' and the Mosaic revelation in the Old Testament, the whole intermediate period between the two points (which even Vatican II's constitution *Dei verbum*[7] passes over somewhat too quickly) cannot be conceived of as empty of divine revelation. And this cannot simply be cut off *per se* from the whole history of specific religions. For if one simply imagines the world without all these religions, there is no way of saying at all where God and his history of salvation and revelation can be found in the world.

If we want to bridge this intermediate period by postulating a tradition, a 'primitive revelation',[8] then it must once more be said [43] that a postulate of this kind is highly problematical in view of the immense duration of human history. Above all, only the historical and socially constituted religions can really be considered as being the bearers of such a tradition, which is supposed to reach the individual, for it is these which awaken and keep alive the possibility and obligation of man's relationship to the mystery of existence which challenges him, however particular religions may interpret this primal mystery of existence, and whatever concrete form they may give to man's relationship to it – perhaps even vitiating it in the process.

This would suggest that, even allowing for a universal and efficacious divine will that all men since the fall should be saved (with the concomitant universal possibility of a redeeming faith in revelation), we cannot get along without conceding a positive saving function to the pre-Christian religions, at least in this interim period. There would seem to be no prior reason in principle, therefore, why we should (even if we could) deny the non-Christian religions a similar and at least partially positive function for people who have not yet been reached by the Christian message in a way which is directly binding on them. We do not have to discuss here the specific ways in which a non-Christian religion can have a positive function for the possibility of a real faith in revelation. That may remain an open question.

Having made these assumptions let us now turn to the real question at issue. How can Jesus Christ be understood as being present and efficacious in the non-Christian religions, in the light of Christian dogmatics – which is to say *a priori* to an *a posteriori* description drawn up in response to this question? We must first of all state quite openly and soberly that the answer is directly related to the question: how is Jesus Christ present and efficacious in the faith of the individual non-Christian? Other considerations, such as the social and institutional aspects of the non-Christian religions cannot come within our scope, in view of what we pointed out at the beginning, however regrettable this may seem. Anything that may perhaps be said about the presence of Christ in the non-Christian religions apart from his presence in the redeeming faith of the non-Christian, is a matter for the theologians who are concerned with the history of religion, and who work *a posteriori*.

With the presuppositions and qualifications we have mentioned, Christ is present and efficacious in the non-Christian believer (and therefore in the non-Christian religions) through his Spirit. An [44] assertion of this kind is first of all a matter of course, dogmatically speaking. If the non-Christian can have a redeeming faith and if it is permissible for us to

[7] Cf. the dogmatic constitution on divine revelation (*Dei verbum*), n. 3., where, however, the initial development of revelation is described in somewhat too uniform and unilateral terms.

[8] Cf. here H. Fries, 'Primitive Revelation', in *Sacramentum Mundi* V (New York and London 1969), 355-8 and 'Primitive Revelation', in *Encyclopaedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), pp. 1468-71. Also K. Rahner, 'Revelation; B. Theological Interpretation' in *Sacramentum Mundi* (New York and London 1969), 348-53, and 'Revelation: I B. Theological Interpretation', *Encyclopaedia of Theology,* pp. 1460-6.

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hope that this faith really exists on a wide scale, then such a faith is, of course, made possible and sustained by the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit.[9] And this is the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, so that as the Spirit of the eternal Logos he can and must, at least in this sense, be called the Spirit of Christ, the incarnate divine Word.

But although this is a matter of course, dogmatically speaking, the statement we have just made has not yet been really taken in, in its meaning and its justification. For the question is simply whether the Holy Spirit's supernatural grace, which confers faith and justification, can be called the Spirit of Jesus Christ when it is active in the person who has not been baptised; and if so, what this really means. Every Catholic textbook of dogmatics will doubtless give an affirmative answer to the first question, and try to make it comprehensible by declaring that this Spirit which makes faith possible and which justifies is given everywhere and at all times *intuitu meritorum Christi*;[10] and that it can, therefore, rightly be called the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This statement is initially certainly justified and will also be deemed comprehensible (more or less, at least); and it can, therefore, serve as the starting point for our further reflections. But the statement certainly does not answer all the questions which can be raised here. First of all, the connection between the grace of the Spirit on the one hand (which is given everywhere and at all times) and the historical event of the cross on the other (which constitutes a point in space and time) is not after all as comprehensible and clear in this statement as might appear at first sight. Is (we may ask) the connection between these two realities made only via the knowledge and the will of the [45] God who transcends even salvation-history, so that there is after all no true connection between the two realities themselves? Can the event of the cross be thought of as exerting an influence on God, 'physically' or 'morally'? So that as a result of this influence, which in a certain sense proceeds from the world and has its effect on him (even though it is always foreknown), he has always poured out the Spirit's grace on the world? But if this cannot be said in the real sense, because God in his sovereignty cannot be influenced and is unmoved and unalterable, what does it mean when we say that he gave this Spirit because of Jesus Christ's merits, as the morally meritorious cause of this Spirit? If we say that the statement in question does not link Jesus' sufferings (as God's motivation) with God himself, but with the grace of the Spirit (just as one must say of a prayer of intercession, for example, that it is not the cause of God's decision to hear the prayer, but is the moral cause – with which God freely associates himself – of the reality of God's hearing of prayer), then we must ask what this is really supposed to mean. Especially since this inner-worldly moral cause, which is not supposed to 'influence' God himself, is much later in time than its effect.[11] It might be pointed out that in the case of the second example (intercessory prayer) it would probably not occur to anyone to intercede with God for some reality in the world that had already taken place; although this ought also to have a point if the commonly accepted interpretation of *intuitu meritorum* makes sense.

We must also add the following to these questionable points. We can and must see God's free will to salvation as the *a priori* cause (a cause conditioned by nothing outside God himself) of Christ's incarnation and cross as well; so that from this point of view, too, it is not

[9] This can already be deduced from the statements of the First Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius* (cf. Denz. 3008 and 3009) even though this is principally concerned with the way the Christian arrives at faith.

[10] This expression is to be found in the papal Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (cf. Denz. 2803), in a context which can seem surprising at first glance. But the definition of the Immaculate Conception is also important for our question, because this is a matter which must be placed *before* the historical-categorial saving work of Jesus Christ, although it is related to and founded on that. One might also point to the event of justification, which is always an individual event in each given case (cf. Denz. 1530, etc.), but which cannot come about without express knowledge of the historical appearance of Jesus Christ.

[11] For the author's further ideas on this point, the reader should turn to K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), pp. 47-50.

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easy to see how the cross of Christ could be the reason for God's saving will towards other people, if this saving divine will after all precedes the cross of Christ, as its cause and not as its effect, and must then be viewed as being related to all men. For a saving will related solely to Christ would be meaningless from the beginning and would contradict the fact that through the saving will of God Jesus Christ is meant from the very beginning to be the redeemer of the world.

[46] We can only emerge from these difficulties (and others which we have not mentioned) if we see the incarnation and the cross as what scholastic terminology calls the 'final cause' of God's universal self-communication to the world, given with God's saving will, which knows no reason outside itself and which we call the Holy Spirit; and if we view the incarnation and cross in this sense as the cause of the imparting of the Holy Spirit at all times and in all places in the world. This Spirit is always, everywhere, and from the outset the entelechy, the determining principle, of the history of revelation and salvation; and its communication and acceptance, by its very nature, never takes place in a merely abstract, transcendental form. It always comes about through the mediation of history. Consequently this communication is from the beginning directed towards a historical event in which this communication and its acceptance, in spite of their freedom, are irreversible and can be grasped historically even in this triumphant eschatological form. But this comes about in what we call the incarnation, cross and resurrection of the divine Word. Since the universal efficacy of the Spirit is directed from the very beginning to the zenith of its historical mediation, which is the Christ event (or in other words the final cause of the mediation of the Spirit to the world), it can be truly said that this Spirit is everywhere and from the very beginning the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the incarnate divine Logos. The Spirit communicated to the world has itself, as such, an inner relation to Jesus Christ (not merely in the divine intention which transcends the world, which would be external to the Spirit). Jesus is the 'cause' of the Spirit, even if the reverse relationship is equally true, as is the case in unity and difference, and the mutually conditioning relationship between efficacious and final causes. Since the efficacious cause of incarnation and cross (i.e., the Spirit) has its goal within itself, as inner entelechy, and fulfils its own being (as communicated to the world) only in the incarnation and cross, the Spirit is from the outset the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Since this Spirit always and everywhere sustains justifying faith, this faith is from the outset, always and everywhere, a faith that comes into being in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is present and efficacious in all faith, through this Spirit of his.

Jesus Christ is always and everywhere present in justifying faith, because this is always and everywhere the seeking *memoria* of the absolute bringer of salvation, who is by definition the God-man, who [47] arrives at his consummation through death and resurrection.[12] We cannot discuss this statement more exactly in all its aspects here, because that would take us too far. Above all, we cannot go on to explain in more detail that the historical bringer of salvation (who makes God's gift to the world an irreversible event and as such brings it to manifestation) is necessarily the incarnate divine Logos, whose earthly reality is fulfilled through his death and resurrection.[13] Nor can we show the precise connection between the first proposition and the second. The two are of course closely connected; but we shall not go into that in detail here. In the context of what we are considering at present, the only important thing is to clarify to some extent what is meant by the proposition that the seeking *memoria* of every faith (wherever it comes into being) moves towards the absolute bringer of salvation; though again we cannot consider here the question of how far the goal of this

[12] On the following ideas, which are somewhat sketchily outlined here, cf. J. B. Metz, 'Erinnerung', in *HphG.* Munich 1973. Here *memoria* is considered in more detail, especially in its more comprehensive function.
[13] In this connection let me remind the reader of the remarks at the beginning of this essay.

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seeking *memoria* has to be explicit, or whether it need only be implicit. (Indeed we do not even have to differentiate according to whether the sense of faith is meant collectively or individually.) When we talk about *memoria*, this concept seems from the beginning to contrast with the special character which we ascribe to it when we say that *memoria* 'seeks'. In the common interpretation of the word, *memoria* always seems to be related only to what has already been discovered in the past. It does not apply to something which has still to come, generally or for the individual – something which still has to be found, and is therefore still to be sought for. But if we think of Plato's doctrine of anamnesis,[14] or Augustine's doctrine of *memoria* (though we cannot go into these here), we see immediately that the matter is not so simple. This is indicated, ultimately, by the whole problem about, the relationship between transcendence and history, and between the *a priori* and *a posteriori* nature of knowledge. Man can only find and retain what he encounters in history if there is an *a priori* principle of expectation, seeking and hope in man's finding and retaining subjectivity. And – following a tradition that [48] can be traced through the whole history of Western thought – we may call this principle *memoria*.

Memoria in this sense must not be understood as if it were the mere capacity for receiving everything and everyone. It is not the simple, empty space into which the chances of history indiscriminately and arbitrarily gather everything which may have happened. *Memoria* has itself *a priori* structures, which certainly do not simply anticipate what is free and unexpected in history, but which first of all offer possibilities of perceiving something in this history, of distinguishing it and of assigning it a certain place. *Memoria* is the *a priori* possibility of historical experience *as such* (as distinct from the *a priori* conditions for the possibility of the *a posteriori* knowledge of things, which we find in the natural sciences). This general doctrine of *memoria* can of course only be touched on here.

The really important thing is the following: *memoria* is (or is also – or is indeed above all) the anticipation of the absolute bringer of salvation. It seeks him and is on the watch for him in history (though it leaves open the possibility of formal experience and consequently suffers history without anticipating it in its specific form). In his transcendental nature as spirit and liberty, man always experiences his dependency on the incomprehensible mystery which we call God.[15] He experiences in himself the hope that this dependency is so radical that it will find its fulfilment in the direct self-communication of God, and will be freed, given radical form and sustained by supernatural grace; though this is not a hope he can claim by right. But this transcendental nature of man's to which grace gives radical form is always a matter for reflection, at least at the beginning, and is freely accepted or rejected. Consequently it is communicated through historical experience; for it is through the content of historical experience that man becomes conscious of his own transcendental nature.

This historical experience which mediates his own transcendental nature, elevated by grace, can certainly be of the most varied kind. It does not even always and everywhere necessarily have to be religious, as long as it mediates man to himself as the one who disposes freely over himself, as an individual and a whole. But as history (which is not merely an amorphous mass of things, lying side by side [49] in space or time) it has a structure in which all its individual aspects have their particular place in space and time, and do not all have the same significance. The seeking anticipation of this structure belongs to the nature of this *memoria*. History is a history of freedom, and freedom is not simply the capacity continually to make new, arbitrary choices; it is the capacity to decide for what is ultimate and final.[16] Consequently those decisions belong to the structure of history

[14] Cf. here C. Huber, 'Anamnesis bei Plato', *Pullacher Philosophische Forschungen* VI (Munich 1964).
[15] The author has already repeatedly discussed this experience under different aspects, cf. 'The Experience of God Today', *Theological Investigations* XI (London 1974), pp. 149-65.
[16] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Freedom; III Theological' in *Sacramentum Mundi II* (New York and London 1968), 361-2,

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expectantly anticipated by *memoria*, through which history is brought, partly or wholly, to freely realised finality from the open plurality of indifferent (or equally valid) potentialities. If we once presuppose that in still continuing history the finality that has to be achieved in history can as a whole arrive at all at historical manifestation and tangibility, and that this does not simply have to be identical with the abolition of history in general, then we can say that the *memoria* of man's transcendental nature, raised by grace, seeks hopefully and in anticipation for that event in history in which the free decision for a saving end of all history is made and is within our grasp; and where this decision is made in the light of the liberty of God and man alike, and for the one history of mankind as a whole. This event, which is sought for and expected by *memoria* in this way, is what we call the absolute bringer of salvation.[17] This is the anticipation of *memoria* which is present with every faith.

It is, of course, another question (a question which can ultimately be answered only *a posteriori*, by the history of religion) whether and how far, how explicitly or how implicitly, in mythology or history, this anticipation of the absolute bringer of salvation by the *memoria* of faith is demonstrable. As we have already said, at this point the dogmatic theologian must pass the question on to the religious historian and to Christian interpretation of that history of religion.[18] Here it seems to me ultimately a secondary question, dogmatically [50] speaking, whether the seeking expectation is objectified in myths about a saviour, or whether it is projected on to historical figures to whom the character of saviour is ascribed – whether the saviour be provisional or final. From his own presuppositions, the dogmatic theologian can say only that religious history must be asked in kindly but precise terms whether saviour figures of this kind are to be found in it, and how. He will say that from the dogmatic point of view there is no reason to exclude such discoveries from the outset, or to write them off contemptuously, as if they stood in such contrast to faith in Jesus, as the eschatological, unsupersedable saviour, that they can only be judged negatively. Saviour figures in the history of religion can certainly also be viewed as signs that – since man is always and everywhere moved by the Spirit – he gazes in anticipation towards that event in which his absolute hope becomes historically irreversible and is manifested as such.

With these two theses about the presence of Jesus Christ in justifying faith (which is made possible everywhere by God's grace and, consequently, is possible in the non-Christian religions, too) we have of course no intention of saying that in view of these theses *all* aspects

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and 'Freedom: II. Theological' in *Encyclopaedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), pp. 544-5.

[17] Cf. the account of transcendental Christology in its basic features in '13. Lehrsatz' in K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), pp. 21-4.

[18] The division of labour between the dogmatic theologian and the religious historian which is described here must not of course be misunderstood: there is no suggestion that we should draw back from the scientific treatment of the positive material of systematic and dogmatic theology, as if the end of positive theology were even being heralded. The point at issue is rather the attitude of the Christian dogmatic theologian towards positive facts about the non-Christian religions. In any case, the proposed attempt is only to be understood as one possibility among others.

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of the one presence and efficaciousness of Jesus Christ can be seen and expressed in the faith of the non-Christian, and of non-Christian religions. Perhaps one might even have the impression that everything that has been said about our question is a matter of course anyway. But it seems to me, first of all, that simply from the standpoint of Christian doctrine we cannot easily go further than this answer to the question we have raised. It appears to me that the main task here has to be performed by the religious historian, who interprets history in Christian terms. If this interpretation were carried out more clearly and precisely, it could well be that this *a posteriori* religious history of the presence of Jesus Christ in all religions would draw the dogmatic theologian's attention to implications in his own doctrine of that presence which he had hitherto overlooked.

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PART TWO

Man in the Spirit

[53]

6

THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE QUESTION ABOUT MAN

The subject which we are going to be discussing in the following pages – the theological dimension of the question about man – might also be put differently: we might call it the theological dimension of anthropology. But from what aspect can we begin to deal with a subject of this kind? Let us first of all define our points of departure by means of a few preliminary remarks which are essential – or at least useful – both for our understanding of what follows, and for our method of approach.

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

If we are to talk about the theological dimension of the question about man (or anthropology), then this presupposes that there really is something like an anthropology – a question about man that can be asked with some prospect of an answer.[1] This premise is by no means a matter of course.

Of course there is a whole series of sciences which tell us something about man, and whose statements we may here assume to be correct. But to say this is by no means to declare that the question about man is a possible one, or one that makes sense as such. It might very well be said with some justice that the human sciences (i.e., the sciences dealing with man) as well as contemporary criticism of 'humanisms' in our present culture are seemingly bringing man to the point of [54] dissolution. Today human sciences, whether ethnology (Levi-Strauss), sociology, social psychology or depth psychology, are displaying the tendency so to formalise everything about man, and to trace it back to abstract structures that the actual, specific person, as someone who is always unique and bestowed on himself, is disappearing. Modern philosophical anthropology tends to suggest that the interpretation of man as *animal rationale* has a merely *limited* character and is purely *Western*; while in structuralism it allows man as subject to disappear altogether. Modern criticism of the different 'humanisms' and different patterns of culture call in question both the ideal of the *honnête homme* (which belongs to the tradition of the Enlightenment) and the tragic humanism of the existentialist pattern, as well as Marxist humanism of the Promethean type. They want to make man so sceptical and so bare a figure that he knows that he is poised 'over nothingness', as Augstein's book puts it.[2]

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[1] For a concise survey of theological anthropology (with bibliography), cf. *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopaedia of Theology* III (London 1969), art. 'Anthropology (theological)', pp. 365-70. For a more comprehensive account cf. K. Fischer, *Der Mensch als Geheimnis – Die Anthropologie Karl Rahners* (Freiburg 1974); also K. Rahner's letter on the subject, ibid., pp. 400-10.

[2] Cf. R. Augstein, *Jesus Menschensohn.* Gütersloh 1972; also the present author's discussion of the book, *Das*

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The presupposition that there is such a thing as anthropology is therefore not as self-evident as our theme would at first seem to suggest. We shall, therefore, at least implicitly, have to consider at the same time why and how there really is something for which we seek to find a theological dimension.

Another preliminary remark which has to be made is this: if in our reflections we seem to be considering methods rather than content, at least at first sight, this is no cause for criticism. For on the one hand we have to answer the question: where precisely the question about man (which has inevitably to be asked and re-asked) definitely offers a point of contact for a theological enquiry. That is to say, it is a methodological question that has to be put. And on the other hand it is a matter of course that we cannot present a full Christian anthropology here.

There is yet another, third, preliminary point. I do not believe that what I have to say is peculiar to any one Church, or that it cannot equally well be said to Protestant *and* Catholic teachers of religion, and to other teachers as well.[3] Perhaps I am deceiving myself, and [55] am too little consciously aware of my own theological background. But if my remarks should seem to be too rational and philosophical, and too little based on the Scriptures, perhaps I may ask you to consider the following.

We cannot confront the people we have to do with today with the Scriptures, assuming, simply and from the very outset, that these have formal authority as the Word of God. What the Bible says, what it tells us about ourselves, what the truly central thing is in this statement and promise about us men and women must convince us through its *inner* truth. *This* is what must convince us of the authority of Scripture. But it is just this unique content of Scripture which, if we are to put it clearly and succinctly, can also be expressed even without a directly biblical method of exegesis and theology. And it is this, and the preliminary reflections that are required for it, which are what we have been and are still engaged in here.

QUESTIONING MAN

There is no need for a lengthy exposition of the proposition that the question about the theological dimension in anthropology is a fundamental one.

Today above all, the Christian proclamation must appeal to a person who is concerned about himself. This fundamental concern of man with himself does not have to be suspected of being un-Christian from the outset; for after all, Christianity sees itself as a message about *man's* salvation. If we really come down to fundamentals, a theocentric theology (which we must always have) is not opposed to what one might call an anthropocentric theology.[4]

For the whole point of the message of Christianity is that God, in his own unrelated sovereignty and glory, can be the content and centre of human existence, and in the liberty of his grace actually desires to be so. We, therefore, by no means have to do with a God who 'really' has nothing to do with us. So theocentricism, rightly understood, is, therefore, transformed into anthropocentricism through the grace which God himself communicates. And conversely [56] man can find himself only when he gives himself up in adoration and

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Christentum – ein explosiver Irrtum? in R. Pesch and G. Stachel (eds), *Augsteins Jesus* (Zürich 1972), pp. 40-9.

[3] The present essay was originally a lecture delivered on 9 Sept. 1972, in Dortmund, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the '*Religiöse Schulwochenarbeit*' in Westphalia. It was published in Donauwörth the same year, under the same title as our present essay.

[4] Here and for what follows, cf. 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', *Theological Investigations* VI (London and Baltimore 1969), pp. 231-49. It should be noted that this essay develops ideas drawn from spiritual theology, on the possibility of the veneration of the saints; cf. ibid., p. 231, n. 1.

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love into the free incomprehensibility of God, i.e. when he himself transforms his anthropocentricism into theocentricism. An anthropocentric question, as it is put to us here, therefore, has no need to by-pass the essence of Christianity. It is no contradiction of Christianity's essence when we view this anthropocentric question as being a fundamental one and – if one may so put it – enter unabashed and quite 'naïvely' into the fundamental interest which man has in himself, in order to try to understand what God and Christianity mean from that standpoint.

If we are to discuss the theological dimension of the question about man – the theological dimension of anthropology – then we must immediately register a fundamental reservation with regard to this formulation of the subject.

We can certainly talk initially about different dimensions of the question about man, or anthropology. That seems obvious enough, if only because on the one hand there are a number of different human sciences, while on the other these human sciences (today at least) do not see themselves as mere handmaids of a metaphysical anthropology – a philosophy which is recognised as the sole spokesman of man as such. Nor do they recognise a clear relationship of super-ordination and sub-ordination among themselves, even though each of these empirical human sciences tends to set itself up, by a process of extrapolation, as the sole and universal one.

The actual and insurmountable pluralism of the human sciences is enough to show that man is a being with many dimensions, and that these dimensions cannot adequately be traced back to one another, or to a single systematic starting point, which could be arrived at by means of scientific and empirical reflection.[5] So it seems at first a matter of course, or at least harmless, for us to talk about a theological dimension too, in the question about man (or anthropology), and in man himself.

It cannot be denied that, whenever a Christian anthropology based on revelation allows the validity of the other human sciences as at [57] least partial and limited anthropologies, it often puts itself too naïvely and innocently on the same level with these other sciences, as if it were just another of the same kind. At the most, it cherishes the conviction that in this group of human sciences it has the most important and ultimately decisive thing to say about man.

This self-understanding on theological anthropology's part is a limited interpretation of its own role. It is essentially encouraged by the fact that, although theological anthropology sees itself as founded on revelation, it views this revelation as one individual, particular source of knowledge alongside others belonging to secular empiricism and the philosophy of man. From this standpoint it seems to it a matter of course that it – theological anthropology itself – should assert particular facts about man which can be known only through its own source of knowledge and which differ from what the secular human sciences have to say.

But it is not really as simple as this. Christian anthropology, if it interprets itself properly, is not one 'limited' human science among others, differing from these others simply through its source and perhaps also because what it says is more important.

In justifying this assertion, we shall dispense (for reasons of brevity) with a consideration of the exact character of theological talk about man, compared with the kind of statements made by the secular human sciences.[6] Nor shall we consider what precisely theological anthropology says about man, and whether what it says can simply be added to the statements

[5] On pluralism in science and theology, and on theology's relationship to the multifarious sciences, cf. the following essays in *Theological Investigations* XIII (London 1975): 'Possible Courses for the Theology of the Future', pp. 32-60; 'Theology as engaged in an Interdisciplinary Dialogue with the Sciences', pp. 80-93; 'On the Relationship between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences', pp. 94-102.

[6] On the question of the importance of the human sciences for theology, cf. the essays cited in n. 5; also 'Reflections on Methodology in Theology' and 'The Future of Theology', *Theological Investigations* XI (London 1974), pp. 68-114 and 137-48.

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of the secular anthropologies. For it could well be that a consideration of what theological anthropology has to say will itself make its comprehensive character clear, and will make it evident that (as we shall see later) theological anthropology does not just add something new (even if it is something of the greatest importance) to the statements of the secular anthropologies. It actually bursts these secular anthropologies radically apart, thereby making access possible, for the first time and finally, to the one mystery which we call God.[7]

[58] In justification of this proposition, we shall first say only one thing here. If we understand a *theological* anthropology as one limited anthropology among others, parallel to the secular, empirical anthropologies and perhaps (if these are still prepared to put up with such a thing today) parallel to a metaphysical anthropology, we are making this theological anthropology unconvincing for people today – something into which they cannot enter at all. For this inevitably means presupposing *a kind* of divine revelation which the modern man or woman does not find (or no longer finds) in the realm of his own experience.

A particular factor called God, who makes himself felt as one reality among others but who influences these others, so creating a present which is cut off from other realities in our world of inner or external experience – this simply does not exist. Or at least a factor of this kind is merely the notion, reduced to a number of categories, of what is really meant by God.[8]

We cannot substantiate this proposition any further here. We can only support it by appealing to the feeling about life shared by contemporary men and women. The proposition is not denied by the Christian conviction that God and the world are not identical; we must be clear about this once and for all. For the non-identity in itself, and our recognition of it, still do not make God one special, individual reality, *parallel* to the realities of the world. It means a difference of a completely unique kind; and to state and bring out this difference truly is one of the most difficult tasks of a Christian theology. It is a task which we cannot, of course, follow up here and now as a separate theme.

If we presuppose this interpretation of the relationship between God and the world, then it is also clear that a revelatory self-manifestation of God in the *ultimate* resort cannot be thought of only as a particular event in time and space, within the world and its history. We can also no doubt understand without more ado that an interpretation of revelation as being *initially* and *solely* historical is opposed to modern mentality, which thinks 'regionally'.[9]

[59] Such a proviso with regard to a common understanding of revelation naturally does not mean a denial that a revelation which (being God's self-communication) already takes place in the most fundamental structures of the world and the spirit, and always constitutes their radical depth, takes objective form; and that it necessarily arrives at objective reflection in what we describe in Christian terms and in our usual vocabulary as revelation. Nor do we deny that the original essence of revelation really has a 'limited' and particular history.

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[7] On the possible part to be played by a metaphysical anthropology in the eyes of the theologian, cf. 'The Current Relationship of Philosophy and Theology', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1975), pp. 61-79.

[8] We have frequently discussed the modern question about God and the possibility of talking about God today, cf. especially 'The Experience of God Today', *Theological Investigations* XI (London 1974), pp. 149-65. P. Weβ attempts to discuss this point in *Wie von Gott sprechen? Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Karl Rahner* (Graz 1970).

[9] At the same time this observation is not simply intended to mean that history is always arid solely a science restricted to a particular area. We cannot consider the problem of history in detail here. We have also discussed it in connection with the question of the development of doctrine; cf. K. Rahner and K. Lehmann 'Geschichtlichkeit der Vermittlung' in *MySal* I, 2nd edn (Zurich 1975), pp. 527-91. For an initial survey, cf. the relevant articles in *Sacramentum Mundi* III (New York and London, 1969); A. Darlap and J. Splett, 'History and Historicity', 31-9; P. Hünermann, 'Philosophy of History', 39-43; W. Kasper, 'Theology of History', 43-47; see also A. Darlap, 'Faith and History' in *Sacramentum Mundi* II, 326-9. These articles may also be found in *Encyclopaedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975) under the following titles: 'History and Historicity', pp. 618-27; 'Philosophy of History', pp. 627-32; 'Theology of History', pp. 632-5; and 'Faith and History', pp. 514-18.

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The basic point at issue in these suggestions is this. If we regard theological anthropology simply as a 'limited' anthropology, even though furnished with new, factual content, but numbered among the other anthropologies, with which it is then bound (necessarily and inevitably) to exist in a situation of confrontation, competition and conflict, then we should inevitably be presupposing a concept of God and revelation which would be deeply opposed, at least, to contemporary mentality. We must remember this when in our reflections we talk about the theological *dimension* of the question about man (or anthropology), and ultimately the theological dimension of man himself. There cannot really be a *special* theological dimension of this kind within a pluralism of other empirical secular dimensions.

MAN'S EXPERIENCE OF GOD

But then what can talking about a theological dimension possibly mean? In the first place the problems associated with discourse of this kind leave one fact unconsidered: the fact that the Christian and Christian theology are convinced that the reality which we call 'God' [60] exists; that there is a quite particular relationship between man and God; and that consequently statements can and must be made about man which include the word 'God'.
How to reconcile this Christian conviction about a theological anthropology with the rejection of a particularist and 'limited' theological anthropology, of course, depends ultimately on a more precise, and really primary, understanding of the relationship between God and man. If we really come down to it, therefore, it depends on the answer to the question: can a place be found in man's self-understanding for the experience of God which will allow this relationship and this God himself to become after all more than a particular individual fact? For that would mean that theological anthropology itself would become a limited human science, and we should then today be bound to have the impression that its earlier object had long since become secularised and had been taken over by the secular human sciences.

We originally asked: 'where is the theological dimension in the question about man – a question which has other dimensions as well?' In order to progress more rapidly in what we are trying to say, let us now ask instead: 'How and why can and must all questions about man (irrespective of the legitimacy of all provisional anthropological questions) be given so radical a form, and be pinned down so firmly to that form that they themselves all turn into *the one theological question* which by itself offers the answer for man's free affirmation of faith?'

Perhaps this re-formulation still does not make the question itself properly comprehensible. It will, or would, probably become more or less clear only through its answer. But I hope that it is already evident now that this re-formulation takes us, at least methodologically, out of the predicament we talked about. What we are seeking now is not a reality *parallel* to the human realities with which the secular human sciences are concerned. It is the radical form of these human realities themselves. The theological dimension of the question about man is identical with all the dimensions of man which the secular anthropologies contemplate, provided only that these dimensions are seen and accepted in their whole radical depth and are consciously considered as such, becoming a theme of their own.

This thematisation of the question about man in its ultimate, radical form – the question which is ultimately man himself and which he does not arbitrarily ask or cease to ask – is not a limited or an [61] additional anthropology, if only because this radical form of the question is nothing other than man's initiation into the incomprehensible mystery which we call 'God'. So that all statements made by a theological anthropology can be read as – and are only correct if they are read as – warnings not to stop in an anthropological statement at any point

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short of the one where these statements in an apophatic anthropology are dropped into *the incomprehensibility of God*.[10] Theological anthropology is only truly anthropological when it really sees itself as *theology* and loses itself in that. But theology is theology only when it becomes the acknowledgment of God's incomprehensibility, before which we can only fall dumb in adoration; before which and towards which we exist, whether we wish to or no; being able only to choose whether to accept this exposure to the mystery *per se*, entering into it in believing liberty, or whether to repress it sceptically.

Really this understanding of a theological anthropology is a matter of course for a Christian theology, if we start from the fundamental facts of such a theology.

What else could a Christian theology of revelation say about man (if it is not to be made superfluous by the secular anthropologies) except to assert the free relationship of God to man, which cannot exist in a finite reality different from God (and hence a reality explorable by man himself) but which has to be identical with God himself, if we are to be able to think of it as the first and last and unsupersedable object of divine revelation?

But how would God really be understood as God if he were thought of, not as the incomprehensible mystery, which cannot be carried over into the system of co-ordinates of our intellectually penetrating and dominating understanding as one, individual reality, but as if he exists as the incomprehensible ground of an understanding that comprehends everything? An understanding which is always and everywhere already present, sustaining and revealing, at the point where man begins to set up the system of co-ordinates of his understanding of things, where he begins to assert things in science and, [62] in a continual process, increasingly to perfect them or to call them increasingly in question.

But if man is comprehensible theologically only in his dependence on God, and if apart from this relationship (of course with all its presuppositions, implications and consequences) nothing more can be said theologically about man at all;[11] and if this means that God is truly taken seriously as God – i.e. is accepted as the eternally incomprehensible mystery – then the interpretation of a theological anthropology we have proposed is really a matter of course.

But it must be taken seriously. It must not finally disappear again after all, behind the multiplicity of theology's anthropological statements, which are put forward as if they were additions that can simply be made on top of the statements of the secular anthropologies. For to do this is ultimately to misunderstand them.

We should have to examine all the statements of a Christian theological anthropology one by one, showing in each case that every assertion is the radical, critical form of a secular anthropological statement, in which this secular statement is broken up and cast into its own incomprehensibility. In the incomprehensibility of the statement the incomprehensibility of God comes to be experienced, and every secular statement of this kind is forbidden, as if in a court of law, to interpret itself as final, as wholly understood, or as the basis of an absolutely unequivocal self-manipulation on man's part.[12]

When the individual secular anthropological statements are given this radical form, so that they enter into the mystery of God, these statements are set in a certain relationship to one another. It is a relationship which forbids every individual secular anthropology to see itself

[10] The present author's recent reflections here may be found in *Theological Investigations* XVI (London 1979): cf. 'The Hiddenness of God', pp. 227-43, and 'An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St Thomas Aquinas', pp. 244-54.

[11] Cf. 'Man (Anthropology): Theological' in *Sacramentum Mundi III* (New York and London 1969), 365-70, with extensive bibliography; also *Encyclopaedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975) 'Man (Anthropology): III. Theological', pp. 887-93.

[12] This of course also applies to statements about man as such. In fact it applies to these especially, because their relative nature allows man's dependency on God to find expression.

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as self-sufficient, and as the mistress of all other secular anthropologies, capable of bringing man as a whole under control in the light of this particular, individual point of departure.

The nature of theological anthropology as the apophatic, radical form of secular anthropology will perhaps be most easily grasped by the average Christian mind if we try to see the dialectical relationship [63] of the various theological statements to one another. We then see clearly that there is no theological anthropology which could really be seen as a system in the true sense, i.e., as a complex of statements which could be built up from any other axiom except this: that man is the being who loses himself in the incomprehensibility of God and can accept this as his innermost salvation without being identical with it. But it is precisely this single fundamental axiom of a theological anthropology which prohibits a real anthropological system.

This emerges, however, as we have already said, in the definitive dialectic in which the individual statements of theological anthropology are related to one another. It is this which causes the lack of system (even to the point of seeming contradiction) and the obscurity of a theological anthropology.

For this Christian anthropology, therefore, man is a being of temporal and spatial history, even to the point where his salvation is concerned, which is to say always and everywhere. And yet he is not totally absorbed by space and time. He is the subject of a liberty that is unique in each case. And yet in that liberty he is a person who lives in a collective history of salvation and is also *as such* partly determined by it in his individual, unique history of freedom, which he cannot transfer to anyone else. For Christian anthropology, man is essentially the historical being for whom divine revelation and salvation are encountered through his specific history. At the same time he is the being who is always already endowed by what we call the Holy Spirit of grace with the saving reality of God himself, as offer made to his liberty, which can be realised in *all* history. He is always the sinner who cannot justify himself before God and who is yet surrounded by God's self-communicating love, so that he really always already stands beyond death's demarcation line, which distinguishes God from finite creation.[13]

One could go on for a long time making statements of this kind about theological anthropology. The dialectical relationship in which the statements stand always points beyond these statements themselves into the mystery of God, which cannot be reduced to a system; [64] and without this self-transcendence the statements would neither be true nor theological.

If we could analyse the meaning of these individual statements of theological anthropology more closely, it would emerge that they are really only the radical form of secular anthropological statements. And it would, of course, also be possible to do the same thing in the reverse direction: what are apparently merely secular anthropological statements prove to be secretly theological assertions, if they are only taken seriously in the radical form which is implicit in them.

Thus it could be shown, for example – and shown in both directions – that what we call faith, even in the strictly Christian meaning of the term, is nothing other than the freely accepted, radical form of man's rational nature. The provision is only that this faith should really be understood as being sustained and empowered by the transcendental nature of this very rationality, in which the latter is merged into the incomprehensible mystery we call 'God' with which we inevitably have to do in this experience of our transcendental nature,

[13] We have followed up the dialectic of statements like these in a number of essays, trying to bring out differences and contrasts, without falsely trying to relate them or – something that would be equally false – to divide them. This seems to have been overlooked by some critics. Essay titles in all the volumes of *Theological Investigations* point to this dialectic, which not infrequently provided the starting point for the treatment of a particular question.

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whether we consciously define that dependency or not.[14] So it might be shown that the experience of human liberty and responsibility, without which man cannot live, ultimately has its foundation of reconciliation towards all inexorable necessities, absurdities and futilities only if this freedom from a responsibility which cannot be transferred and is yet in need of redemption knows itself to be safely cherished in the forgiving and self-communicating mystery which gives itself as eternal peace in all – but also beyond all – irreconcilabilities and contradictions in man's history of freedom. The doctrine of the incarnation of the divine Logos and his act of reconciliation on the cross is the radical form of the conviction that even man's most radical subjectivity is realised historically; and that it again reaches its final form only when it also takes tangible and irrevocable form in historical happening.[15] The doctrine of the Church merely gives radical form to the doctrine of the social nature of man, and allows this [65] social nature to have continuing importance even in the history of man's most personal uniqueness.[16]

One might go on in this way and see all theological statements about anthropology as the radical form of secular anthropology, which forbids these seemingly merely secular statements to take themselves absolutely seriously and also enjoins them, as individual disciplines, not to set themselves up in such absolute terms that a system is built up which allows man to rule over himself in what is ultimately a cynical way, since it means that he sees himself as being transparently futile and null.

THE LOSS OF REVELATION

When we say that Christian anthropology is 'only' the radical form of secular anthropology, in our sense of the phrase, then the Christian has no need to fear that this statement means the dissolution of a theological anthropology based on revelation and its transformation into a secular anthropology based on rationalism and science, or into a mere secular humanism.

For to give radical form to all the dimensions of anthropology and of man himself means recognising that man is not comprehensible simply in himself alone; but that the experience of his own incomprehensibility and the incomprehensibility of the world and, as part of that, the incomprehensibility of experience means what we call 'God'.[17]

If we give anthropology this radical form, man is to be understood as the being who – at least in the form of the offer made to his freedom – is always and everywhere inescapably endowed with God's self-communication – the Holy Spirit of grace. It is in this that he already experiences the fundamental event of what we call Christian revelation. To see revelation in this way as fundamentally taking place in God's self-communication does not contradict the traditional concept of revelation. For it is a matter of course that this grace which communicates God and so reveals him, which always comes into being in man's transcendental dependency on God (which it elevates) [66] can – and indeed must – for man become a self-given fact which he reflects upon only in the context of mankind's history. It is in history, wherever this reflection authentically takes place, arriving at its zenith in Christ,

[14] The author already developed these ideas in detail before the war in his well-known book on the foundations of a philosophy of religion, *Hearers of the Word* (London 1969). Later an attempt was made to carry the ideas further in reflections on man's freedom and responsibility.

[15] For the basic principles of the author's attempt at a 'transcendental Christology', cf. K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch – Arbeitsgrundlagen für eine interdisziplinäre Vorlesung* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), pp. 15-78.

[16] For the author's ideas on 'the Church', cf. the essays gathered together under the heading of 'ecclesiology' in *Theological Investigations* X (London 1973).

[17] Cf. 'Experience of Self and Experience of God', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London 1975), pp. 122-32.

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that we can talk about Christian revelation in the traditional sense of the word.

After all, man in his innermost nature is a historical being, and consequently the radical form of the dimensions of his being, which are merged by the grace of God into the history of God himself, also means that his history takes on the radical form of salvation-history. For it is precisely that which is the history of man's free acceptance of the transcendental gift of grace, which leads him into the incomprehensibility of God himself.

If we consider these three facts, then it is impossible to say that the radical form of the secular dimensions of man which are open to experience cannot lead to his supernatural destiny, to theology, and to a real theological anthropology. Grace simply means giving radical form to man's being. It is not a new, additional storey planted on top of what is really a self-contained sub-structure known as the nature of man.[18] Consequently a secular anthropology in its radical form is already theological anthropology. Of course this is not based primarily on the arbitrary private reflections of the single and non-historical individual. It develops in the event which we call the history of mankind, which is ultimately the history of man's being as it is in grace. It is not simply some merely static being, lingering behind and beneath history.

What we have tried to indicate up to now are really only hints about the direction in which secular and theological anthropology must move if they are to discover their unity (which does not mean [67] uniformity), and if they are to ensure that a theological anthropology is not seen as something supplementary to the secular anthropologies. It must be seen as their innermost centre, which has found itself, and in this conscious reflection gives man a task of his own once more: the task of an explicit religion.

INSIGHTS AND PROCLAMATION

But even if we grasp these ideas and believe that they are correct, what do they mean for the proclamation of the Christian message today?

First of all they allow orthodox Christian teaching to start unabashedly with man, with his experience of himself, with his existence. And – understood correctly – they allow us to end with man, too. Today this ought not (or ought not any more, at least) to give the impression that things about man which are additional to his own experience and indeed are quite simply beyond what he experiences in his own existence are to be taught. The Christian message which is to be conveyed to men and women does not mean conveying something alien and external. It means awakening and interpreting the innermost things in man, the ultimate depths of his existence's dimensions.

We certainly must not presuppose that man in all the dimensions of his existence is no more profound than he appears to be in the shallowest head and the most superficial heart. We must certainly not expect that the interpretation of his own existence which gives it its most radical and objective form will be actually understood by a process of reflection and accepted by every individual, in every phase of life. Even the most objectively correct and the

[18] Cf. 'Grace: Theological' in *Sacramentum Mundi II* (New York and London 1969), 412-22, with extensive bibliography; also *Encyclopaedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), 'Grace: II. Theological', pp. 587- 94. B. van der Heijden takes the present author's earlier essay *De gratia* for the starting point of his account in *Karl Rahner – Darstellung und Kritik seiner Grundpositionen* (Einsiedeln 1973). This is not the place to discuss this, but a historical comment on the essay *De gratia* may put some of van der Heijden's comments in a different light. As p. 3 shows, he evidently knew only the fifth edition of 1959-60, not the third. For reasons of space the foreword to the earlier editions had to be left out. But this shows that the essay was written in 1937-8 under the pressure of difficult circumstances, while much of it is indebted to H. Lange, *De gratia* (Freiburg 1929); cf. also and especially the preface to the third edition of 1951.

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subjectively most human proclamation will often fall on deaf ears because of the private and collective situation of the listeners; and this is a difficulty which is often practically unsurmountable. But all this does not affect the right and the duty to present the Christian message in such a way that it is really nothing other than the interpretative call of the reality which is experienced and present in the listener himself, even if it is not understood.

This is not intended to be the propagation of a shallow humanism or a secularization of religion;[19] because in asserting this we are after [68] all convinced – and have to be convinced, if we want to be Christians – that what is preached from the outside has been present as a reality in every man and woman, long before our preaching, in the form which we call the Holy Spirit. It is present at least in the sense of being an offer made to man's liberty. We are convinced, too, that the historical content of our message is simply this: that in Jesus we have the firm historical and revealed assurance that this inner endowment with the Spirit conferred on man's existence is and remains, finally and victoriously, the innermost entelechy or determining principle of mankind's history.

If in the actual history of theology in all denominations this approach by way of man's own understanding of himself has often failed to lead to an orthodox theology, or to a theology whose content is sufficiently differentiated, this is not because starting from man's experience of himself was basically wrong or inadequate, or was bound to stick fast in a rationalistic humanism or horizontalism. It is because this approach is not carried through radically and courageously enough. Moreover, individual efforts in that direction do not sufficiently take their bearings from the way this approach has been carried out in the past – for it has always existed, if we take the history of Christianity and the Church as whole. [20]

Today more than ever, it is impossible simply to begin with the formal authority of Scripture or the doctrinal authority of the Church, if only because, when all is said and done, even the acknowledgement of this authority as source or norm of a Christian theological anthropology also needs a reason and justification. But this legitimation is ultimately simply dependent on man's recognition that the essence of his own existence comes to meet him clearly and convincingly through the agency and authority of Scripture and Church – something which he has always already experienced but which he cannot by himself clearly enough objectify through the processes of reflection, and from which even his own liberty recoils because of the uncanny mystery with which it is faced.

If this means that we are maintaining the thesis that the theological dimension of the question about man is nothing more than the radical depth of all other, seemingly merely secular dimensions of anthropology, [69] we may and should start from just that proposition, without fear of being unorthodox.

It is undoubtedly possible to arrive at the Christian faith by way of the Jesus of history, the sole proviso being that we do not distort the Jesus of history through an abbreviated presentation of him; and that we do not interpret the Christ of faith monophysitically, either openly or in a concealed but implicit way, regarding this misinterpretation as being the very height of orthodoxy.[21] In the same way, even a seemingly secular anthropology leads to a theological one, always providing that we really face up to the incomprehensibility of man's existence, do not avoid it out of embarrassment, and do not think that because we can only stammer over this incomprehensibility, we can let it alone. And always presupposing, too, that we understand the content of the Christian message in that unity and sublime simplicity

[19] On the question of humanism, cf. K. Rahner, 'Christian Humanism', *Theological Investigations* IX (London 1972), pp. 187-204; and on the problem of secularisation, 'Theological Reflections on the Problem of Secularisation', *Theological Investigations* X (London 1973), pp. 318-48.
[20] On 'horizontalism', cf. 'The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 295-313.
[21] Cf. 'Current Problems in Christology', *Theological Investigations* I (London 1961), pp. 149-200.

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which belongs to it, in spite of an unavoidable two thousand years of reflective differentiation.

Of course I realise that to lay down a proposition and postulate of this kind is not much more than to formulate a formal and abstract imperative.

We ought now to analyse the individual dimensions of human existence, showing how all of them – each for itself, and all of them because of their common incalculability – together pull man into the incomprehensibility of God and offer this incomprehensible God of inexpressible mystery as the One who in giving himself provides the goal and content of human existence from within. We ought to show how all dimensions point to the history of man and mankind, in which the irrevocable victory of this promise is manifested in Jesus, the crucified and risen One.

We should have to call upon the dimensions of man as the being of an absolute truth (at least in the form of a limitless, critical question) and the radical responsibility conferred by liberty; the dimension of the private and political existence of man with man; the dimension of man's origin and his futurity. And we should have to show that all their unfathomable depths really conceal in themselves the mystery of God in his turning to man.

All these dimensions could, if we liked, provide brief formulations of the Christian faith in which the radical nature of these dimensions [70] and the traditional content of the Christian faith are defined, and in which the radical nature of these dimensions and the traditional content of the Christian faith reflect each other and make each comprehensible.[22]

But of course all that is impossible here. Nor have we the space to answer the question of how all that we have said can be translated into statements which are more easily accessible to the mind that is less well trained theologically. Another problem we cannot consider here is how far the different anthropological points of approach to which we have referred each have their different importance and their greater or lesser accessibility, according to the point in the history of thought at which they are advanced, and according to the affinity they have to a particular phase of human life.[23] Here we must simply point to other work in which we have tried to provide an answer to these questions too.

[22] In this question I am indebted to R. Bleistein, *Kurzformeln des Glaubens* (Würzburg 1971). An accompanying volume of texts offers specific illustrations. The present author has also considered this question since 1966, cf. also 'The Need for a "Short Formula" of Christian Faith', *Theological Investigations* IX (London 1972), pp. 117-26.

[23] This would be the problem of a 'mystagogy' in the Christian faith, which we have repeatedly discussed. For the most detailed consideration of the subject, cf. 'Die Notwendigkeit einer neuen Mystagogie', *HPTh* 2/1 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 269-71, and 'Die Rücksicht auf die verschiedenen Altersstufen in der immer erneuten Glaubensmystagogie', ibid., 3, 2nd edn (Freiburg 1972), pp. 529-35.

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7

THE BODY IN THE ORDER OF SALVATION

We shall be dealing with this subject here from the dogmatic point of view.[1] But what can Christian dogmatics contribute to this question? Not very much, it would seem at first sight; for it is a very general discipline to which we are looking for an answer, a discipline unavoidably somewhat remote from the specific needs and anxieties of everyday life. But let us recall some theological statements about the body, and from that basis try to work out some theological principle for the elucidation of the particular truths of faith. Let us try, that is, to bring out what all these statements of Christian faith have in common, and to form a theological concept of the human body.

REVELATION BY WAY OF THE BODY

In recalling some theological statements which are part of Christian belief and underlie any subjectively coloured theology, the fundamental thing for us to remember is that *the body is created by God*.[2] God is the creator of the human body as well as of everything else.

That is to say, the God who is pure spirit, the ineffable mystery, who is incomprehensible and nameless, who dwells far off in unlocated majesty, has also created this body – this actual, visible body [72] that we see, with which we have to cope, whose pleasures and pains we experience. It has been directly willed by God. This body is not just something that came about by chance; nor was it fortuitous in the sense that God really intended something different. It is not merely a by-product. It is not only something which came about by way of man's history – for example, because the spirit turned away from God in some history that took place before the foundation of the world, acquiring this concrete form as a result. Space and time – and therefore history – and therefore the human body – and therefore human sexuality – are not things which God did not *really* desire. All of them are created by the One whom we call the creator of heaven and earth. Even if it is not a truth of faith, we Christians can and must supplement this today by saying that somehow this specific bodily nature of man's, as it actually is, owes its existence to God's direct, creative intervention. (At least this is what follows from doctrinal statements of the Church which, though they are not properly speaking definitions, are still largely valid, according to a ruling of the Biblical Commission.) This has nothing to do with the question of evolution, for the statement can quite well be made in an evolutionary context too; but I do not need to go into that here. I should only like to emphasise the fact so that we can see how much the Church's teaching authority stresses the fact that man's bodily nature was created, willed, by the one, eternal, holy, just and incorporeal God, and puts this in the foreground of faith's consciousness.[3]

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[1] This essay was originally based on A. Görres' remarks in 'Der Leib und das Heil: Caro cardo salutis' in K. Rahner and A. Görres, *Der Leib und das Heil* (Mainz 1967), pp. 7-28. The present writer has discussed the subject in detail in *Geist in Welt: Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin,* 3rd. edn (Munich 1964).

[2] Cf. Denz. 3896 *(Humani generis* v. 12. VIII 1950 'de humani corporis origine').

[3] On this question, cf. the present author's article 'Monogenism', *Sacramentum Mundi* IV (New York and London 1969), 105-7 (with bibliography); also 'Monogenism', *Encyclopaedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), pp. 974-7. Cf. also 'Theological Reflections on Monogenism', *Theological Investigations* I (London and Baltimore 1961), pp. 229-96; 'The Sin of Adam', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York 1974), pp. 247-62; 'Evolution and Original Sin', *Concilium* 3 June

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Secondly, *this body is made out of the dust of the earth*. The vivid account at the beginning of Genesis, which tells us how God formed man from the dust of the earth, like a potter, and breathed life into him, may seem childlike, primitive and pictorial, but it is fundamentally a tremendous and moving story. It is tremendous and moving not only because man, as a specific reality, stands in an immediate relationship to the eternal God, but also because we are told again that God takes what he makes in this way from the dust of the earth.[4] [73] That is stated about the God who can in principle make things with a free, creative 'let there be'. We are told that this independent God (who in his creative activity is not dependent on any presupposition in the way of matter) made man from the dust of the earth. We are not told that he made man's *body* out of dust – though that is our modern, platonic interpretation. He made *man* out of the dust of the earth. And that means that from the very outset he took him and set him in the whole world in its totality, by creating him to be his direct partner in a dialogue with himself. The Scriptures let us feel this tremendous tension and the problems involved, even in this simple story, in which God acts as the direct creator, who makes something out of the dust of the earth. It lets the tension and the problem remain, without softening them or trivialising them – the tension and the problem that are involved in the fact that man is created out of dust and is yet created by God.

There is a third point which we must remember about this fact of theology. *Original sin is transmitted through procreation*.[5] Not, of course, because there is anything sinful or inferior about the act of procreation. But because it is the plain, simple fact that everyone belongs to this one, particular human race, where everyone is related to everyone else by blood; and this makes a person a member and sharer in what we call original sin. We may briefly remark here that original sin simply means that man, because he is a descendant of Adam, belonging to this historical, human family, ought to possess divine grace but does not do so. Grace is conferred on him only if he is also one who has been redeemed by Jesus Christ. But both things are based on this bodily community of shared descent: the fact that according to God's plan man was to be endowed with sanctifying grace, divine life, divine nearness and divine glory; and the fact that he does not actually have all this.[6]

[74] The fourth thing we must remember in this connection is the saying in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, 'And the Word became flesh.' We do not need to describe in detail here the whole depth and breadth of the Johannine concept of *sarx*. That concept is a more complicated and more subtle one than we need here.[7] But at all events the sentence states that man – and hence the divine Word as well – is truly flesh. We are, therefore, told that the eternal Word of God, by uttering himself into what is not God out of the inner divine silence in which he is with the Father, becomes just what we call *sarx* – man; but truly physical man, man indeed who bears the marks of death, suffering man, man in his tribulation. We cannot consider all these things here. Let us simply hold on to one thing: that it is a fact of faith that

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1967.

[4] Cf. Gen. 2:7.

[5] In addition to the articles cited in n. 3, cf. 'Original Sin', *Sacramentum Mundi* (New York and London 1969), 328-34 (with bibliography); also 'Original Sin', *Encyclopaedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), pp. 1148-55; P. Overhage and K. Rahner, *Das Problem der Hominisation,* (Quaestiones Disputatae 12/13) (Freiburg 1961).

[6] For a summing up of the results of the present author's numerous essays on the theology of grace, cf. the articles 'Zur Theologie der Gnade', 'Gnadentheologie' and 'Gnade und Freiheit', *Sacramentum Mundi* II (Freiburg 1968), 450-65, 465-9 and 469-76 (with bibliography); also 'Grace: II. Theological', *Encyclopaedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), pp. 587-95.

[7] On the concept 'flesh' in John, cf. E. Schweizer in *ThW* VII (Stuttgart 1964), esp. 138-41; cf. also R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments,* 2nd edn (Tübingen 1954), pp. 386-96, ET *Theology of the New Testament*, (London 1965), vol ii, pp. 227-46; R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannes Evangelium* I, 2nd edn (Freiburg 1967), pp. 241-9, ET *The Gospel According to St John* I (New York and London 1968), pp. 371-3.

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when God desires to manifest himself, it is as man that he does so.

I admit that the formulation I have just used really goes beyond what is defined in faith and is an interpretation which the individual theologian has to justify. But I should like to put forward this interpretation here, because it is of great importance for a real understanding of what we are concerned with. If we really want to understand the saying 'And the Word became flesh' in its total depth, then we simply must not assume that we already know what flesh is, or what man is, or – to put it theologically – what human nature is. If we knew all these things, in saying that 'the Word became flesh' we should only virtually be saying: 'We have long since known what the eternal Logos of the Father became; it is something of which we have our own personal experience.' We must go about things in exactly the opposite way. If we want to know what man is, or what flesh means, then we must, so to speak, choose this theological definition of the statement 'And the Word became flesh,' saying: flesh, man as a bodily, concrete, historical being is just what comes into being when the Logos, issuing from himself, utters himself. Man is therefore God's self-utterance, out of himself into the empty nothingness of the creature.

Of course this does not make what man is, or what man as a bodily [75] creature is, any clearer. For all those exact definitions and ways of expression which we have acquired as a matter of course through the sciences and through metaphysical anthropology, etc., are left behind and what man is, is thrust into the absolute mystery of God. For if it is true that what we are is just what comes into being when the eternal Logos utters himself, then it is clear that we ourselves are the absolute mystery. We might say: if an anthropology that sees itself not merely as provisional but as absolute fails to talk about God, it is a heresy. It is not, and cannot be, a Christian anthropology. So when we have to talk, and want to talk, about man in the ultimate, most radical and absolute sense – not about man's spirituality, but about bodily man, man in the flesh, about the *sarx*, which always means the whole man, but in his actual, bodily nature – then we really have to talk about God. So when as Christians we ask what bodily man is, in the ultimate meaning of the word, then – if we want to give a final answer, not a provisional one – the only answer we can give is, 'And the Word became flesh.' The *sarx* is what comes into being when the Logos becomes something which it is not already in itself, in its divine nature. It is what comes into being when the Logos desires to be less and to become less than it is of itself. It is what comes into being, what is present, when the Logos manifests itself in the sphere in which it does not desire to be the infinite, blessed, intrinsically luminous Word of the Father, but issues from itself and speaks whither only the finite, creaturely Word can be heard. The flesh which is man is the self-utterance of God himself.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, let me stress that here I am going beyond the clear, simple facts of Catholic teaching in so far as they are binding on Catholic Christians. I am doing so in the consciousness that I am not saying anything heretical, though I am equally aware that in giving this interpretation I am not – so to speak – covered by the explicit teaching of the magisterium. But I think that my interpretation is correct. And I think that it is necessary to say this today. The being of man is what comes into existence when God utters himself into the otherness of nothingness; and that means man, in so far as he is *sarx*.

A fifth thing must be said at the same time as we state these theological facts. *As human beings we are all redeemed through Christ's death*. That is a statement which directly affects the body too. This means that if we were only to say what Scripture *also* says – we have been redeemed by obedience, through the obedient love of the incarnate [76] One – then we should certainly have said something that is true; but we should not have stated this true fact in its concrete, bodily form. When we say that we have been redeemed through the blood of Christ, through Christ's death, through his sufferings on the cross, then we must not mean by this that a spiritual event of love and obedience was unfortunately or strangely accompanied by

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rather unpleasant circumstances. (That has been a danger in standard Catholic scholastic theology ever since the Middle Ages.) We must not consider that it was really a matter of chance or externals, which has nothing to do with what was really intended, nothing to do with the obedience and love of this incarnate Word of the Father's. The statement that we have been redeemed through the death of this Son of God, and through the shedding of his blood (i.e. a bodily event) is the concrete, bodily form of what we express in abstract and formalised terms, as it were, when we merely say that we have been redeemed through the Son's obedience and love, and his readiness to sacrifice himself.[8] We have been redeemed through an event which is, of course, spiritually free and personal in its nature. But according to the Father's will, it took place, and could only take place, in this entirely concrete, bloody reality, given over to death. The place where this love and obedience are to be found is therefore this bodily existence, if love and obedience are what they are intended to be – i.e. redemptive. And this event could be redemptive for us only because it took place as the love of the Son and the obedience of the Son in his actual, specific bodily nature, which we called his death, or his Passion, in which we from the outset communicate with him and are united with him through the unity of the human family.

Let us suppose for a moment – in a kind of hypothetical theology – that the Logos had become an angel. He could then also, of course, have loved God, have trusted him, have obeyed him in this angelic, created and creaturely nature; but he could not have redeemed us through it. This event would not be one which would by its nature take place in a dimension which touches us from the very beginning. In other words, we have been redeemed through Christ's suffering and death, because this event by its nature, as a redemptive act, took [77] place in an actual bodily existence; and we were able to be redeemed through this bodily event, because what takes place in this sphere is from the outset a *patrimonium commune*, a common heritage for all those who belong to one another in this community of the body, this blood-relationship which binds them in Adam to a common destiny.[9] We may remember the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin.'[10] Here we can perhaps see most clearly what Tertullian already said 1600 years ago, 'The flesh is the hinge of salvation – *caro cardo salutis*.'[11]

Another article of faith is *the resurrection of the flesh* (not the body, as we shall see). The basic Christian acknowledgment of man's perfecting, his absolute validity before God, is not expressed by saying that we save our souls, but by affirming that we believe in the resurrection of the flesh. Again flesh here, of course, means the whole person. There, are also doctrinal statements made by the Church which talk about the resurrection of the body. But the resurrection of the flesh is the statement which means precisely body *and* soul, in that very unity in which man is flesh. For if he were simply body, then he would not be flesh at all in the Biblical sense. Flesh means *that* person who is on the one hand the frailty, the threatenedness, the inexplicableness, the weakness, the obscurity of this individual, concrete, specific entity, and who at the same time knows this and is afraid. In other words, flesh means the one person – it is almost impossible to say 'who is made up of spirit and flesh'.

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[8] A. Grün has recently attempted to express this idea in his monograph, *Erlösung durch das Kreuz. Karl Rahners Beitrag zu einem heutigen Erlösungsverständnis* (Münsterschwarzach 1975). But this book is somewhat diffuse and is not entirely satisfactory.

[9] We cannot give separate consideration here to the important problem of monogenism and its relationship to original sin, but cf. K. Rahner, 'Erbsünde und Monogenismus' (published as an appendix) in K.-H. Weger, *Theologie der Erbsünde* (Quaestiones Disputatae 44) (Freiburg 1970), pp. 176-223. This expressly supersedes some of the work cited in n. 3. Unfortunately the author was unable to complete for publication the more considerable monograph on the subject which had already been announced in some quarters. Other commitments and reasons of health prevented him from carrying this project through.

[10] Cf. Heb. 2:11.

[11] Cf. Tertullian, *De carn. resurr.* VIII (CSL 47) 36, 27-8 and (CCL 2) 931, 6-7.

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We shall see later that although this formula is a common one, and is quite justifiable, and although it also corresponds to what the catechism says, it, too, really fails to bring out clearly enough the facts of the true reality of the Christian view of existence. At all events we must say that in as much as Christianity confesses the resurrection of the flesh [78] – and confesses it as a central article of its faith, which expresses in this single formula the whole of man's future hope and the acknowledgement of his one, total, final validity – it has included from the outset in man's unity what we, in our modern Western way, call the body, and really acknowledges only this single person.[12]

A seventh point which we deduce from these facts about the Church's teaching is that *man is a unity made up of body and soul*. The doctrine of the Church – its express, defined doctrine, – does not merely state that man consists of body and soul. It also obliges us to maintain the real, true, radical, substantial, original unity of body and soul.[13] Not, of course, in the sense of identity or uniformity, and not, of course, in the sense that the one can simply be deduced from the other. (We cannot simply derive what we call the body from its spirituality, in the spiritualistic sense; and even less can we deduce man's spirituality from his bodily nature, in a materialist sense.) But although that is impossible; and although the Church has made doctrinal statements – e.g. at the Fifth Lateran Council – about human spirituality and about the immortality of the human soul; and although the Vatican Council of 1870 condemned the people who were not ashamed to say (as the Council put it) that nothing exists but matter – yet the real, true, original unity of body and soul is an article of the Catholic faith, and was particularly defined at the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. [14]

THE CONSEQUENCES OF A THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

We need only briefly point here to the results of the theological facts we have discussed, for the aspects that suggest themselves are in any case so numerous that we cannot mention them all. So we must first understand why the Church as a concrete, bodily, sociologically constituted community sees itself as the Church that is necessary for salvation. And this is understandable if the Church teaches that sacraments consisting of physical elements are necessary for salvation. (Why and in what sense, in spite of this statement about the necessity for salvation of certain sacraments, other people may none the less [79] expect to be saved who do not belong in actual bodily terms to this visible Church – e.g. are not even baptised – is a question that need not concern us here.)

At all events, we see that from this theology of bodily existence (which runs through the whole of Catholic dogma) it also follows that the Church cannot merely be a spiritual power of conviction or opinion, and that it does not merely begin at the point where we pass beyond what is sociological, social, earthly and tangible into a pure spirituality of the mind. This bodily existence also asserts itself in the doctrine of the Church and the sacraments.[15] We might put it paradoxically and say that the average Christian almost has the impression that the world is concerned with the body, with visible tangible realities; while the Church and its

[12] Cf. 'Jesus' Resurrection' in the present volume, pp. 16-23.
[13] Cf. the constitution 'Fidei catholicae' of the Council of Vienne (1312): 'De anima ut forma corporis', Denz. 902.
[14] Cf. 5th Lateran Council (1513), Denz. 1440; Council of Trent (1546), Denz. 1512; 1st Vatican Council (1870), Denz. 3002 and 3022.
[15] The present writer has already expressed his views on the theology of the sacraments several times, cf. *Kirche und Sakramente* (Quaestiones Disputatae 10) (Freiburg 1961); 'Die Sakramente als Grundfunktionen der Kirche', *HPTh* I (Freiburg 1964), pp. 323-32; *Die siebenfältige Gabe. Über die Sakramente der Kirche.* Munich 1974.

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pastoral care is concerned with that strange thing called the soul, which is so difficult to grasp. To put it even more paradoxically and in perhaps exaggerated terms, we might almost say that the exact opposite is true. Christianity is continually concerned with the body. It is a bodily, concrete, shaping, speaking, acting, organised, ecclesiastical, sacramental religion, a religion which concerns itself in its dogmas with concrete things, and expresses something through these dogmas. And it leaves entirely to God, and God alone, whatever elements of this spirit-endowed body go beyond the purely physical.

We might point to a whole number of things here. Even though the Church allegedly deals only with the soul, it does not judge the innermost heart. It sticks to what is tangible. It says: this or that formulation is correct. But what you have thought in your ultimate, deepest, innermost, most subjective heart of hearts – that I neither know nor have any control over. And if you want to think something new and clever and deep in your theology, or in metaphysics and philosophy, then you must express it in such a way that it fits into this community, so that it sounds comprehensible to other people, and so that it can be written into a catechism. We might say, even the teaching authority of the Church is concerned with what is bodily. And this is true of pastoral care and the sacraments too. The same [80] may be said about the truths of faith: there are none which do not also touch on man's bodily nature.

But then we might well ask: what about the mystery of the Holy Trinity? Of course God does not have a body in our sense. I am not attempting to conjure something bodily into God by some subtle means or other. But the fact remains that we have heard about the Holy Trinity and we are concerned with it only in so far as, and because, the Logos has become flesh, since he uttered himself to us in bodily form. He did not even do so merely in a human word – although that too would have been something bodily. He uttered himself in the human concreteness of a fleshly, bodily history. That is the reason, and the only reason, why we have anything to do with the mystery of the Holy Trinity.[16] And I believe – though this again is more of a theological statement than a directly expressed truth of faith – that we must also say that the beatific vision, the direct contemplation of God, is based on a grace which would not exist, and probably could not exist, unless the divine Logos had taken, and remained, flesh. We must never forget that the Christian, authentically Catholic truth of faith about the Incarnation of the Father's eternal Word does not mean that God put on some kind of overall called humanity, because his world had somehow broken down, contrary to his original plan, so that he had to repair God the creator's original plan down here in this world of ours. It means that God is man to all eternity, so that to all eternity we cannot think rightly about this God or express him properly unless we add to our thinking what we men and women all are as well. There is no longer any theology, to all eternity, which is not anthropology too.

a) *The Fundamental Concept of the Body*

The doctrine we have described, with all it has to say, obliges us to make a distinction, but also to realise that this distinction excludes the possibility of an existential cleavage between body and soul. People have reproached Greek (which is to say Western) theology, to some extent unjustifiably and in too wholesale a way, with having broken up the ancient biblical anthropology of unified man (which belongs to the New Testament as well as the Old) into a Greek [81] duality of *anima* and *corpus*, soul and body, thus distorting or even corrupting the original biblical message.[17] This is certainly an exaggeration. We do not need to agonise in

[16] Cf. the brief remarks under the heading 'The Mystery of the Trinity', *Theological Investigations* XVI (London 1979), pp. 255-9.
[17] Cf. here 'The Unity of Spirit and Matter in the Christian Understanding of Faith', *Theological Investigations* VI (London 1969), pp. 153-77; also, as summing up, J. Splett, 'Leib-Seele-Verhältnis', *Sacramentum Mundi* III

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this connection as to whether what we have to understand theologically by body and soul can really be made to coincide entirely with what Graeco-scholastic philosophy understands by the same words. Let us confine ourselves to theology. If we do, I believe, in view of normal theological usage and the teaching authority of the Church, that we can and must say that it is undoubtedly legitimate to go on making a distinction between body and soul. To say this is by no means simply to state the obvious – what everyone knows and accepts. If we start from the anthropology of the Old Testament and the New Testament too, the distinction is correct, but by no means an absolute matter of course. When the New Testament talks about the soul, it means something which does not have very much to do with what we understand by the term. According to biblical theology it is quite possible to hold that the whole anthropology of the New Testament is still entirely the same as the biblical theology of the Old; and in Old Testament theology there is really only the one, bodily person who – since he is God's partner – is of course what we call 'spirit' as well, but in such a way that the Old Testament never really distinguishes between the body and the spiritual soul in our philosophical (platonic), scholastic sense. Still, however that may be, I believe that the distinction between something which we call body and something which we call soul – a distinction which is made and assumed as a matter of course in the Church's doctrinal statements – is quite legitimate. So the Council of Vienne, for example, could define the substantial unity of body and soul and say that the *anima* (soul) was the *forma corporis* (the form of the body). And so the Fifth Lateran Council could define the immortality of the soul as a truth of faith which is binding on us, the body of course not being immortal in this sense.[18]

This being so, there is no need for me to justify the statement any further when I say that to make a distinction between body and soul is not merely possible but is also theologically correct, is required by [82] the teachings of the Church, and is completely justifiable. But this distinction does not mean that it is possible to make a cleavage in the real or existential sense between what we call body and what we call soul; and in our context this is the important thing. In other words, this distinction is a metaphysical one – one might even say a meta-existential one. Not that it does not have great importance for man's existence, for the actual conduct of his life. Of course it does. But it is a metaphysical and meta-existential distinction in the sense that in actual fact man never encounters mere body and never encounters pure soul. What we call 'inwardness', our innermost heart, is the inwardness of an actual, bodily spirit, an incarnate spirit. And what we call man's externals are the external form of this very same incarnate spirit.[19] Wherever we encounter ourselves, wherever we are within our own grasp, as it were, inwardly or outwardly, we have to do with an actual, concrete person. And we can never so to speak materially separate these two from each other. The loftiest spiritual thought, the most sublime moral decision, the most radical act of a responsible liberty is still a bodily perception or a bodily decision. It is still incarnate perception and incarnate liberty – and hence, even by virtue of its own nature, it is still in interplay with everything that is not free, not spiritual, and so on. And conversely, even the most external thing about man is still something that really belongs to the realm of his spirituality; it is still something that is not just mere body.

b) *Indivisible Unity*

(Freiburg 1969), 213-19 (with bibliography); also 'Body', *Encyclopaedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), pp. 157-61.

[18] Cf. references to the conciliar statements in nn. 13 and 14.

[19] For the author's basic ideas here cf. K. Rahner, *Geist in Welt: Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin*, 3rd edn (Munich 1964).

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According to the doctrine of the Church, we have to go further than what we have just said. We must even maintain that an existential cleavage between the body and the soul is actually *impossible*.

Catholic doctrine is convinced that the Logos as its very self not only took up his dwelling in the summit of the human soul, as it were, but really became flesh. When we remember what we said about our having been redeemed through the death of Jesus Christ and through his passion, then we are bound to conclude that it is impossible to draw a smooth existentially pure line of demarcation, [83] so to speak, between the bodily nature of the Logos and his human spirituality. For if that became possible, I should of course have to say that whatever actually lies beyond that demarcation line – the line drawn between Christ's human spirituality and his bodily nature – can no longer be of any significance for redemption. But it is! We have been redeemed through Christ's death and his blood. This must of course include his obedience and his love. But the converse applies equally. In this obedience and love of Christ the whole concrete and specific character of his passion is embodied in such a way that the two are not actually divisible. In other words, the unity of man has been originally so designed by God the Creator that although man knows that he is a unity of different elements, in the existential implementation of his existence he can never, as it were, get behind this unity, so as to take sides purely with the spirit or purely with the body.

As a result there is, for example, no Catholic ethic which could leave the concrete fact of bodily existence and what happens in it on one side as being irrelevant. And consequently there is no consummation of salvation through the sacraments which could detach itself from this sphere as being a matter of indifference. It is the impossibility of any existential cleavage of this kind which really emerges from the theological facts which we talked about earlier.

But we must now look at these facts again in somewhat more detail. And that brings us to the theological and metaphysical essence of the bodily condition, which emerges, in my view, as a theological conclusion from these theological facts.

c) *Man as Spirit*

In order to make my meaning clear, I should like to begin again with another point. I have already stressed that it is permissible for us to say – and indeed that we must say – that man is made up of body and soul. This is of course frequently stated in the catechism. All the same I believe that every Thomist theologian and philosopher will be bound to agree with me when I say that this mode of expression is really an empirically inexact one. It only conveys man's essential being in a highly primitive way, because man is not really built up out of body and soul, but out of spirit and *materia prima*, or 'first matter' – what one might translate as empty otherness. To say this is to make a statement in terms of Thomist philosophy or metaphysics; [84] but this seems to bring out and integrate the facts of theology which I have been talking about, better than other possible Catholic philosophies. But what does this Thomist statement tell us?

When I say that man is made up of body and soul, I am assuming (even if this is not what the Church's teaching as such intends to say) that another true, concrete human bodiliness is being encountered which in its specific form has not as yet anything to do with man's spirit; the spirit is then added, and the whole is then man. But when I look at the matter thomistically, then I have to say that what I experience as man's bodily nature is itself the reality of the spirit, yielded up into that mysteriousness which is only accessible to metaphysics and which scholastic, Thomist philosophy calls 'first matter'. The body is already spirit, viewed in that aspect of self-consummation in which personal spirituality yields itself up in order to encounter directly and palpably what is different from itself.

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Bodily existence is not, therefore, something which is added to spirituality; it is the concrete existence of the spirit itself in space and time. Physical nature or the nature of the human body is not something already existing in itself. It is the self-expression of the spirit reaching out into space and time.

If we want to be sure whether we have understood the point at issue here, we only have to ask whether we find it self-evident to say that the body can be seen, but not the soul. If the answer is, 'Yes – of course that is so,' then we have not understood exactly what the point at issue is. I am naturally assuming that the answer to our question is, 'No – that is not the case.' If we wanted to give a Thomist answer, we should have to say, 'Yes, the soul can be seen, but only in part' (though 'part' does not here mean a quantitative section); in an ambiguous sense, I can see man's spirit. What I see the spirit of man in space and time to be is, in an ambiguous sense, precisely what I call body.

And if we say that, all the same, the body is still what I can see with my eyes; and that what I experience when I shut my eyes and think about God or my mother – i.e., what is 'within' me – belongs to the soul, then we ought, more correctly, to say, 'No, that is a different part of my reality, but it is just as much body-and-soul as what I can look at from the outside.' The intensity of the spirit's presentation as body can of course differ considerably. If I put someone like Kant on the scales and see that he weighs ten stone, then of course I have seen less of Kant than I would have done if I had talked [85] to him. The intensity of the spirit's bodily existence can be great or small, inwardly or outwardly. But what I call the body is the outgoing of the spirit itself into the emptiness of space and time, which we call 'first matter', in which this spirituality now itself appears; so that outgoing into its bodily form is the condition which makes spiritual and personal self-discovery possible, not an obstacle in its way. There is no coming to oneself except by way of exit into the bodily reality into which the spirit first reaches out and finds itself, forming itself and going out of itself. And it is only this which makes personal, spiritual freedom possible. Of course this bodily nature, as the spatial and temporal existence of the spirit itself, is always an entering into the truly Other.

d) *Christian Dualism?*

It would be wrong to interpret what we have just said as being an absolute and radical metaphysical expressionism. The bringing-oneself-to-manifestation means bringing oneself truly to view in a truly other. And consequently this bringing-of-oneself-to-manifestation in another is really the bringing-of-oneself-to-manifestation in another through a subjection of oneself to an alien law. And if we now object that this really comes down to the same thing – that here we have the same dualism between body or spirit and first matter which we challenged when we met it earlier in the form of dualism between body and soul – then the following must be said. Of course in a Christian anthropology we have a dualism which is never ultimately abolished in man himself but only in the transcendent divine unity of the Creator of heaven and earth, of spirit and matter. But even in a dualism of this kind we do not fall back into the Greek or neoplatonic dualism of body and soul, which we objected to earlier; because in *our* dualistic conception – if we want to call it dualism at all – we are clear that what we actually encounter is always what has already been unified.

This has tremendous consequences. Everything that I experience as effect from outside in the sphere of my bodily existence, I experience from the very outset as the reality formed by me, which comes to me from outside. There is no suffering which I do not already experience as action, and there is no action which is not already suffering. There is no impression from without which is not already expression from within. What can actually be encountered is always [86] the already completed synthesis of what is alien and what is already given from

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within. This metaphysical doctrine about a true difference between *materia prima* and spirit can maintain this without, therefore, having to fall back into a primitive empiristic dualism between a directly encounterable so-called body and a directly encounterable so-called soul – a dualism which, as it were, risks an existential cleavage.

But this means two important things. Firstly, since man, out of the substantial roots of his spiritual personality, utters himself into matter (this utterance being bodily identity itself) this utterance necessarily becomes ambiguous for man. Why? Whatever can actually be encountered by psychology, physiognomy, and so on is really the spirit. But it is the spirit which has uttered itself inwards into the otherness, the other form of being of *materia prima*, of space and time, of determination from without inwards. Whatever can be encountered is always merely the synthesis of the two. This one, already united synthesis between personal *actio* and *passio* cannot be completely abolished by man; for otherwise, as self-investigating spirit, he would have to be able to take up a position in which he 'would not always have to carry out the synthesis. In other words, he cannot existentially say exactly that one aspect of a particular concrete thing comes from within and another aspect of it comes from without. The bodily nature of man is man's utterance about himself which has become ambiguous. For man it is necessary and remains necessary for ever, for himself and even more, of course, for others. That is one of the points that emerges from what we have said.

The second point picks up a number of things which we mentioned before, in the first part of our discussion, and is this: this utterance in which man presents himself and completes his own spiritual and substantial foundation is an utterance into the common sphere of space and time. In other words, man utters himself and constitutes himself in his concrete nature and thereby opens himself by that very fact to the break-through from outside. In his bodily nature he enters into a sphere which does not belong to him alone. Now of course we might say that this is merely an abstruse way of stating the most obvious truism one can imagine. For whoever doubted that since I have a cheek, someone else can smack my face? And that since I have a head, a brick can fall on it? Or that since I have a body, I must have a mother? Of course this is a truism. But we now have to understand this truism in such a way that we really grasp the fact that these truths belong so radically to man's nature that they cannot be overridden [87] in any way at all, and indeed ought not to be overridden either. Consequently it is precisely man's task to be true to this nature of his and not to try to escape from it. There is no area in which what we have just said is not true. There is no 'inwardness' which does not also stand open, as it were, to what is without. The ultimate, most personal freedom, which is to be found where man is inevitably himself, without any substitute or any excuse, at the heart of his being (or however we like to express it) – the place, that is to say, where he is virtually the absolute and irreplaceable subject – is where he still has something to do with Christ, and with all other men and women too. For there are no spheres which can be cleanly separated from one another in an existential cleavage.[20]

Although this seems so obvious, it has its tremendous consequences. It means, for example, that it is not a matter of indifference for me as spiritual person how the material sphere in which I live is constituted. I cannot and must not say, 'What is out there is a matter of indifference. That is not the important thing. I shall withdraw to the unconquerable fortress of my innermost spiritual personality.' That would be Stoicism or something else of the kind – perhaps something splendid in itself; but it would be completely un-Christian. Two thousand years ago someone died on the cross in all the darkness of his death out of love for the Father. And this took place from the very outset in a sphere which is my own reality. How I am now

[20] Here personal 'intersubjectivity' (for the neglect of which the present writer has often been criticised) also has its place. This was admittedly not sufficiently prominent in the account; but all the same the criticism in its usual form is inaccurate and unjustified.

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to react to it is another matter.

e) *Our Reality as Open System*

Through bodiliness the whole world belongs to me from the start, in everything that happens. Of course we must not get the impression in this connection that our body stops where our skin stops, as if we were a sack containing a number of different things, which clearly ceases to be what it is where its 'skin', the sacking, stops. No. Let us think in quite simple terms (without going into details) about modern physics. In some sense we are an open system. Of course I can say, 'This chair is not part of my body.' But when we ask in terms of physics what that actually means, then the matter becomes very [88] obscure. If there were no moon or no sun, our bodies would be different, too. In a certain sense – and I am exaggerating here, in order to make what I want to say clearer – we are all living in one and the same body – the world. And because that is so (and this is really the metaphysical, theological premise) something of the nature of original sin, and something of the nature of redemption can exist too. This one total physical existence as the common space which makes intercommunication between individual spiritual subjects possible from the start – this one concrete space can of course be accepted by the individual spiritual subject in various ways: it can be loved, put up with, or hated.

Let me draw attention to one small result of this, although it really takes us too far. The transfiguration of the End-time, therefore, means the resurrection of the individual, and a new earth and a new heaven. And let us just ask ourselves whether what we call blessedness, heaven and hell, might not be thought of as being distinguished for us in a matchless way by the manner in which a particular person accepts this common reality. Since everyone, as spiritual person, lives essentially in the space of existence that is common to all, into which he continually acts – and acts into the whole – and from which he continually receives, he is continually active and continually passive. What he specifically experiences as himself is always the unity of the act suffered, committed by everything towards him, and the self-fulfilment from within, which he actively expresses outwards. We can see in this way what the communion of saints really means. This one 'concrete' existence in which we consummate our own spiritual, final liberty, is itself involved in a dynamic history which sometime ends in transfiguration, in a reality not only of the spiritual person, but also of his common sphere of being.[21] The question then arises: how do I accept the final condition of the sphere in which I necessarily am? Do I accept it as the transfigured world, or as what the Bible calls hell fire?

The body is therefore nothing other than the self-consummation of the spirit in space and time. But this self-consummation of everything except God is of such a kind that it is essentially ambiguous and takes place in a sphere of existence in which all men and women communicate with one another from the very beginning.

[89] In the narrower sense of the word, the body is that through which I fulfil myself in the one world in which all spiritual persons exist. And it is from this starting point that we should have to think through anew the individual and more specific features of a Christian view of the body.

[21] This one, all-embracing history is one of Christianity's essential features. To use a traditional term, it may be described as 'catholic'.

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8

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

The only purpose of the ideas I am about to develop is to peg out the ground for what is dealt with – and what can be dealt with – in a Catholic theology of mysticism; for there is really no generally accepted theology of mysticism, as a distinct part of Catholic theology.[1]

What we do have, however, are great mystics who testify to their own experience. Among these, and among the classic Spanish mystics particularly, there are some who have tried to some extent to reduce their experience and their mystic 'way' to a theological system. But reflections on mystic experience which attempt to reduce that experience to a system always run across the conceptions of faith and theology which a mystic inevitably brings with him. For it is these that he applies when he tries to describe or systematise his original experiences so as to be able to fit it into the co-ordinate system of his other philosophical and theological opinions and convictions.

That is why classic Spanish mysticism in particular displays an unusual variety of accounts and systematic summaries of mystical experiences, although this does not imply any doubt about the real experience that lies behind them. Apart from works of this kind, we must at least mention the spiritual literature, which cannot be overlooked, in which mystical experience continually finds expression and is clearly the ultimate source of its genuineness and vitality. But of course it is even less possible to talk about a generally accepted [91] theology of mysticism in the case of these occasional testimonies to mystical experience which only become influential now and again.

One of the most important presuppositions for a theology of mysticism is still lacking in spite of a few beginnings – an adequate study of the relationship between Christian and non-Christian mysticism. The same may be said about the relationship between mystical and parapsychological phenomena. Of course attempts at a systematic theology of mysticism have been made, even if they have not been expressly called that. We can find them from the period of Spanish mysticism at least down to our own time.[2] But unfortunately interest in a mystical theology of this kind seems largely to have died away today.

It must, however, be said that such attempts as we have, generally deal too briefly and in too simple-minded a way with the *ultimate* fundamental questions. Their various sections often more or less repeat descriptions of mystical experience and the mystic way which were already worked out in Spain in the classical period. Sometimes in the course of this repetition they smooth out or blur fundamental distinctions, or use somewhat superficial arguments to prolong the dispute over the question of whether 'infused contemplation' or other mystical graces belong to normal Christian strivings for perfection, or whether they are merely special gifts, relatively seldom conferred, which can even be lacking in 'the heroic virtues of the saints'. These representations of mystical theology are often somewhat too naïvely and unreflectively dominated by an 'extrinsic' conceptual scheme, according to which direct

[1] The original version of these ideas is to be found in the preface to C. Albrecht's book, *Das mystische Wort: Erleben und Sprechen in Versunkenheit,* ed. H. A. Fischer-Barnicol (Mainz 1974). The present writer knew the author personally and feels indebted to him in more than one respect.

[2] I am deliberately avoiding the problem involved today in the very term 'mysticism'. Here it is used in a wide and formal sense; but these remarks do suggest starting points for an understanding of the way the term is really interpreted, and what are the experiences supposed to be summed up and described by the term, cf. H. Fischer, 'Mysticism', *Sacramentum Mundi* III (New York and London 1969), 136-42 (with bibliography); also 'Mysticism', *Encyclopaedia of Theology: a Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London 1975), pp. 1004-11.

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divine 'intervention' is thought of in the case of mystical phenomena. What contemporary theology has to say about the relation between 'nature' and grace, and about the unity of the two, is hardly brought to bear at all here.

THE MYSTIC AND HIS EXPERIENCE

The first basic problem which a theology of mysticism would have to elucidate is how the mystic stands in relation to what he experiences [92] as having been conferred on him in 'absolute proximity'.[3] For if, and to the extent in which, the 'mystical' subject is not, in mystical experience, merely thrown back on himself through objects belonging to the categories of everyday, but encounters the 'mystery' *per se*, or reality itself, or God (or whatever name we may give to this 'something' which is not *from the outset* identical with the mystical subject) then identity and difference in this experience become a problem. For there is simply no other way of talking about religious mysticism. Experience can basically present the experiencing person and what he experiences as being one; or it can at this precise point bring out and really actualise for the first time the difference which still exists between God and the creature, even in the highest degree of grace. Seen in the abstract, this remaining distinction in mystical experience could be overlooked for various reasons, although a true metaphysics and a true Christian theology must require it to be present. Perhaps a conceivable 'mystical' experience of the unity between subject and '*world*' is also too quickly equated with an experience of the unity between the mystical subject and *God*. Possibly, too, the elimination of egoistical, particularist individualisation in a mystically experienced radical love for the self-communicating God simply leads, in subsequent reflection, to a mistaken belief in an absolute cessation of the finite subject. All these reasons and possibilities would make it seem particularly interesting to hear what the mystic himself has to say. How does he feel and interpret his experience? For we should not depend solely on the views of the metaphysician on the human spirit and its absolute transcendental nature, nor merely on the theologian, with his account of the difference between God and created being. We must also hear the views of the person who himself experiences most clearly and with the least distortion the relationship which exists between the human subject and the reality which we call God.

GRACE AND FAITH

But mystical theology is immediately faced with a second problem. This arises when we come up against the relationship between grace [93] and faith on the one hand and mystical experience on the other. Yet, traditional mystical theology continually finds itself in considerable difficulty when it calls mystical experience 'grace(s)', because behind mystical experience it would like to perceive a special intervention on God's part, confined to a particular point – a totally undeserved intervention, in which the inaccessible God communicates himself in a quite special way. But what is the relation between this grace and those other graces which Christianity proclaims as God's offer to *all* men? Even if mystical grace is basically viewed as the development of the supernatural capacities of justified man, the answer to this question remains unclear. This becomes most evident in the question about

[3] Cf. for example the two essays about the doctrine of the spiritual senses in Origen and Bonaventure, 'The "Spiritual Senses" according to Origen' and 'The Doctrine of the "Spiritual Sense" in the Middle Ages', *Theological Investigations* XVI (London 1979), pp. 81-103 and 104-34 respectively.

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the difference and the similarity between mystical experience and that 'experience'* which we term Christian faith and which is sustained by God's Spirit. According to the usual account, God is supposed to communicate himself so 'directly' in mystical illumination and mystical unity that it is really no longer possible to see why faith is not superseded by this mystical light, at least at the moment of illumination itself. A true theology of grace, faith, possession of the Spirit, the indwelling of God etc., deals with realities which cannot be merely understood as objective gifts, existing beyond the consciousness, as a modern Molinist misinterpretation would suggest. It cannot possibly interpose between faith and the experience of grace on the one hand, and glory on the other, some intermediate state which differs essentially from both, theologically speaking.[4] That would have to transcend the gift of grace to the Christian, which is always associated with the *experience* of grace. It would have both to surpass it specifically, in the true sense, and in its significance for salvation. It would not be a temporary participation in the contemplation of God which (contrary to certain views in some mystical theologies) is after all supposed to be reserved for those who through death have entered into the true finality itself. The deification of man and the possession of uncreated grace, which Christianity grants to all the justified, cannot in a real sense be surpassed by anything which is not glory and the direct contemplation of God. But these are reserved for man's final consummation. Mystical experience cannot [94] leave behind it the sphere of 'faith' and the experience of God's spirit which faith confers, by means of a new experience which would no longer be faith at all. On the contrary, mysticism can be conceived of only within the normal framework of grace and faith.

This means that whenever mystical *theology* aims to be more than 'parapsychology' in the broadest sense of the word (which covers everything which average, everyday consciousness knows nothing of) it can only – according to its own principles – be part of genuine dogmatics. This proposition involves two things. On the one hand, it does not say that the dogmatic theologian as such can and must say something about mystical experiences to the extent in which these differ *psychologically* from the everyday experiences of Christian grace. If this were to be the case, even down to 'essential' differences *of a psychological kind*, then either the mystic himself or the empirical psychologist would be the competent authority; it would certainly not be the dogmatic theologian. The dogmatic theologian can only determine that on earth there cannot be any higher experience in the *theological* sense than the experience of faith in the spirit of God. But this means that every genuine mystical experience (as distinct from natural phenomena of interior absorption or suspension of the faculties etc.) can also be understood as merely one mode of the experience of grace in faith. Probably even the mystic himself and the psychologist would have to explain more precisely where this mode of Christian experience of grace in faith comes from.

Secondly, the proposition I have put forward does not assert either that a theology of mysticism can be worked out only with the usual methods and sources which traditional dogmatics work with, too – i.e. the Scriptures, the doctrines of the Church, its tradition etc. If mystical experience is distinguished strictly from conceivable natural (and hence basically learnable) phenomena of interior absorption or suspension of the faculties, as well as from parapsychological phenomena in the normal sense of the word; and if it is just one variety of the experience of the Spirit offered to everyone; and if therefore a theology of mysticism is part of dogmatics – then the specific object of that experience of the Spirit through grace which is given to people with faith, hope and love in God's communication of himself must belong to the mystic's domain. The unique *mode* of this experience of the Spirit may include

* The German word for experience – *Erfahrung* – originally meant 'to travel through – a correct and significant indication here.

4 On 'the grace of faith' cf. especially 'Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974), pp. 161-80.

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elements of a 'natural' kind. But, described empirically, it will certainly belong to the theology of revelation, because this experience tells us about real, deifying grace [95] and because even customary revelation in the Word only objectifies in words through a process of reflection what fundamentally happens and is experienced in God's self-communication through grace. This is also true because the pure and authentic objectification of God's self-communication has actually found expression in Jesus Christ, as its irreversible climax and zenith, and afterwards in Christian doctrine as statement of the truth.[5] The experience of grace is, therefore, possible in non-Christian mysticism as well, and a corresponding theology of mysticism could be a piece of revelation theology, even though it would always continue to take its direction from the theology which is related expressly to the crucified and risen Jesus. For in Jesus the mystical event of the surrender to God as he really is finally succeeded through his saving death, and has therefore become historically and victoriously manifest.

NATURE AND GRACE

The relationship between nature and grace inevitably brings us to a third basic problem of mystical theology.[6] Both terms are, of course, understood here in their strict theological sense. As we said above, mystical experience must not be interpreted as something which fundamentally transcends and supersedes the supernatural experience of the Spirit in faith. That is why the 'specific difference' of such experience, as distinct from the Christian's 'normal' experience of the Spirit, must belong to man's 'natural' sphere. It would consequently be the special mode of an experience of transcendence and 'return' to the self which is in itself natural. This does not contradict what we have just said about mysticism as the experience of grace. *Psychologically* mystical experiences differ from normal everyday processes in the mind, only in the natural sphere; and in so far as they are fundamentally learnable. Like every other act of man's – for example a [96] conscious act, a free act or an act of reflection – these really natural spiritual processes can also be 'elevated' through God's self–communication, habitually or at any given moment. That is to say, they can acquire radical form, in the direction of the immediacy of the self-communicating God. This normally takes place in the normal 'supernatural' acts of faith, hope and love, which constitute the Christian life as such.

The particular psychological, and really natural, character of such experiences can help to make them take deeper root existentially in the person's inmost being, so that as supernaturally exalted acts they can in a higher degree give their stamp to the whole subject, forming him through and through. This greater personal profundity of the mystical act also brings with it a greater reflectiveness in the experience of transcendence, which is really natural, though exalted by grace. A *theology* of mysticism by itself cannot decide whether this experience is achieved in some miraculous way (preternaturally), or whether it can also be attained by natural means, through practice, on the basis of certain pre-conditions; or whether both may be possible, according to the level at which the phenomenon occurs. Open though the question therefore is, the possibility of purely natural phenomena of interior absorption would of course also be conceivable – phenomena, that is to say, in which the

[5] This problem is more closely, if briefly, formulated in 'Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie' in K. Rahner and W. Thüsing, *Christologie – systematisch und exegetisch* (Quaestiones Disputatae 55) (Freiburg 1972), pp. 15-78.

[6] The present writer has frequently, and in detail, expressed his views on the relationship between nature and grace. For his fundamental viewpoint, cf. 'Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations* I (London 1961), pp. 297-318; also later discussions about the concept of the 'supernatural existential'.

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mediation of the experience through categories was wholly or partly lacking. If we then want to talk about 'natural mysticism', no fundamental objection can be raised;[7] – but it would undoubtedly be better to keep the term 'mysticism' for those psychologically unusual experiences which we referred to above, which are exalted by grace and really include supernatural experience of the Spirit.

In this case we should still have to answer the more precise question whether existentially central neutral phenomena such as interior absorption and so forth, are really *only* natural, or whether they are [97] simply apprehended as such in the process itself and in the reflection that follows, although they are actually always exalted supernaturally by what we call Christian grace. This is a question for *the theology of grace*. If we now see the supernatural elevation of the spiritually personal acts of man (acts of really unlimited transcendence) only as intermittent – as taking place in time and space, at a certain point only, and as happening under certain predetermined conditions – then the answer must be in the first sense, that there are natural phenomena of suspension of the faculties which are really *only* natural. But if another theology of grace assumes, legitimately enough, that man's transcendental nature was always and everywhere and from the very beginning finalised and given radical form by God's self-communication in grace, which streams from the midst of existence outwards in the direction of the divine immediacy, then we should have to answer in the second sense.[8] Here it is also a matter of indifference whether the supernatural gift of grace takes the form of a mere advance gift, or the form of acceptance or rejection, as one aspect of human liberty. Every natural act of suspension of the faculties and so forth, would in this case always and everywhere be elevated by grace, and hence be an act of real mysticism and an act of salvation, even if this unique character of the mystic event were not yet particularly clear, or were perhaps overlooked in subsequent reflection, or were misinterpreted subsequently, in line with pantheistic 'mysticism', as a manifestation of undifferentiated unity.

Our own reflections here make us decide in favour of the second answer to the question, even if the space at our disposal makes it impossible to present the presuppositions and viewpoints of the theology of grace which are behind this choice. For mystical theology it is essential to make clear at this point that mystic experiences sustained by the Spirit, which make God's spirit accessible, do not differ from normal Christian existence because they are of a higher nature simply by virtue of being *mystical* experiences of the Spirit. [98] They are different because their natural substratum (for example an experience of suspension of the faculties) is as such different from the psychological circumstances of everyday life.

THE NORMAL WAY OF SALVATION AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

After what we have just said, an approach might perhaps also be formulated which would

[7] We have already indicated the problem involved in the use of the word mysticism today (cf. n. 2). Individual writers give the term their own particular emphasis, in accordance with their way of looking at things and their own approach. Cf. C. Clemen, *Die Mystik nach Wesen, Entwicklung und Bedeutung* (Bonn 1923), but also the work of C. Albrecht – *Psychologie des mystischen Bewußtseins*. (Bremen 1951); *Das Mystische Erkennen* (Bremen 1958), – where the concept of 'suspension of the faculties' is worked out. D. Baumgardt makes a distinction in the mysticism of inwardness, nature and history, according to the object or place; cf. his *Mystik und Wissenschaft* (Witten 1963).

[8] Contrary to B. van der Heijden's opinion in *Karl Rahner. Darstellung und Kritik seiner Grundpositionen* (Einsiedeln 1973), the present writer's theology of grace is not initially derived historically from a treatise of traditional theology. It is based on much earlier attempts at a theological consideration of the experience of grace, which Ignatian spirituality is particularly aware of, and which is also of special interest to people concerned with that spirituality. The experience of grace is continually shared by every Christian in the forgiving encounter with God in the act of repentence.

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make it possible to answer the question whether mystical 'experience' is a normal stage of development on the way to Christian perfection, or whether it is an extraordinary phenomenon which is not to be reckoned with, even in a highly intensively lived Christian life. Following what we have said, we must again stress here that mystical experience, where it touches on man's union with God through grace and on the believer's experience of the Spirit, does not represent a 'higher' stage of the Christian's life in grace. That could at most be claimed *indirectly*, in so far as the mystical phenomenon can, as cause and effect, be an indication that a Christian has accepted the offered grace of God's communication of himself to an existentially intensive degree. Apart from that, however, this question, too, would have to be left to empirical psychology. Always presupposing that psychology is capable of saying something about man as the singular and plural subject of an ultimate history of freedom before God (a history directed towards finality), it ought to try to make us understand how such radical self-discovery of the subject is possible in the unconditional surrender to the mystery which we call God – a surrender which comprehends the whole of existence – *without* these natural phenomena of suspension of the faculties. If this were possible, then our new question would have to be answered in the negative. Not every personal and Christian maturing process in the direction of an asymptotic – a continually approaching – perfection, which the Christian hopes to achieve in this life, also includes natural phenomena of suspension of the faculties, even though these may possibly be a useful auxiliary. That is why mysticism is not necessarily part of every Christian life.[9]

If, in reply to this conclusion, the appropriate psychology were to explain that these really natural phenomena – where the faculties are [99] suspended and so forth – are necessarily part of a personal maturing process, even if they are not always 'technically' cultivated and are perhaps frequently not subjected to reflective processes, then mysticism in the true sense would also be a normal manifestation. It would be part of the process of becoming a complete person and a complete Christian. At the same time, it would still be an open question whether, how far, and with what result, such mystical experience is a matter of conscious reflection, in the good or bad sense.

As we said at the beginning, what we are concerned with here is merely to find guidelines, or a framework, or certain premises for a theology of mysticism. This is necessary today if Christian life is not to be secularised and to end up as a flat, humanitarian affair, and if the 'charismatic' movements which are everywhere gaining a footing in the Churches in our time are to find the way to a genuine self-understanding, and come to terms with themselves in a self-critical way.[10] Finally, a mystical theology must also acquire new life in the West so that we can enter into a sympathetic and critical dialogue with the mystical theology and the

[9] It will be clear from what has already been said that this conclusion is dependent on the content one associates with the word 'mysticism'. The choice arrived at here, however, is supported by general linguistic usage; cf. also I. Behn's well-known book, *Spanische Mystik* (Düsseldorf 1957).

[10] A number of other essays in this volume take as their starting point the modern phenomenon of 'charismatic' movements. These essays should also be taken into consideration as supplements to the question we have been dealing with here, and as deepening the viewpoint. On the presuppositions for possible dialogue with Christians in the Eastern churches on the basis of their experience, cf. V. Lossky, *Die Mystische Theologie der morgenländischen Kirche* (Graz 1961), ET *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge 1957).

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mystical phenomena of the East.

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9

THE LIBERTY OF THE SICK, THEOLOGICALLY CONSIDERED

An essay on the liberty of the sick, seen from a theological standpoint, is not just the same thing as an account of the Church's doctrinal statements on the subject. Of course this essay is not intended to go beyond the limits of what the Church's official doctrine says about the liberty, of the sick, either directly and expressly, or indirectly and implicitly. But in so far as the teaching of the Church has actually been formulated, it does not come to grips closely enough with what we mean by the phrase 'the liberty of the sick'. Consequently, however carefully the theologian may take the Church's doctrine into consideration, he is bound to try to say something about this subject on his own account and at his own risk, in the light of the theological data and using theological methods.

Here we shall be limiting the subject to those illnesses in which the sick person is confronted, objectively and subjectively, with death as something that is threatening him and that is pressingly close.[1] A cold, an upset stomach, or any illness which does not really force the person affected out of the circle of the people who are actively able to control their lives freely, does not present any theological problem of its own.

In the first section we shall say something about the nature of liberty as the theologian sees it. From the theological standpoint, [101] liberty is something other than a merely psychological freedom of choice in the individual act, and it differs, too, from a purely legal and civic responsibility for one's actions. Of course this first, theological section is bound to be no more than a fragment; and it stresses – and to some degree isolates – those elements of liberty, in its theological essence, which are of particular importance for our question.[2] In the second part we shall ask what the liberty of the sick as such consists of and we shall finally inquire about the invalid's claim to liberty where this touches on his relationship to his doctor.

ON THE ESSENCE OF LIBERTY

First of all we must mention a number of features of human liberty which are specifically theological and which are of particular importance for our subject. When the word 'liberty' is used in the secular sphere, it is either understood sociologically, as the absence of social compulsions and estrangements; or it is meant psychologically, as the person's freedom of choice in any given act of decision – always provided that we do not adopt the determinist view, which denies the existence of psychological freedom of choice in general, and tries to interpret responsibility, social sanctions and so forth without the concept of free choice. The theological concept of liberty certainly implies the concept of psychological freedom of choice, but it is more comprehensive and more radical.

The theological concept of liberty is theological in the first place because it explicitly or

[1] The original text of this essay was published in *StdZ* 193 (1975), pp. 31-40, but notes and cross-references have been supplied for the present volume. Some points considered here have already been dealt with by the present author in *Zur Theologie des Todes* (Quaestiones Disputatae 2), 4th edn (Freiburg 1963); ET *On the Theology of Death* (Edinburgh and London 1961). The new angle from which the subject is treated here may, however, open up some fresh aspects.

[2] On the problem of liberty, cf. especially *Gnade als Freiheit,* Herder Bücherei 322 (Freiburg 1968), with the second group of essays: 'Ermächtigung zur wahren Freiheit', pp. 31-89.

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implicitly includes the thesis that whenever there is a radically responsible, true freedom of choice, there is also a definite relation to God. This is so even though in certain circumstances – in fact very often – this relation is not conscious or considered, in any explicit sense. Real, personal freedom of choice is possible only when individual good and individual value are exceeded – even if unconsciously – in man's transcendental self, in anticipation of the Good in general and *per se*. But this means the existence of a theological dimension of liberty – relatedness to God – even if this is not the subject of conscious reflection. And this is inescapable, whether this relatedness is conscious and reduced to terms and terminology [102] or not. It is inescapable, whether liberty accepts this relatedness in true self-affirmation, or whether it rejects it in that ultimate denial of the self to which we theologically give the name of sin.[3]

Liberty in the theological sense, therefore, deeply and fundamentally, is not merely the ability to do one thing rather than another, let alone the possibility of always being able to do the opposite of what one has done before. It is rather the possibility open to the free subject or person of disposing totally and finally of himself and his life, as an individual and a whole. Liberty in the theological sense means, first and last, the one and total subject himself in so far as he is object for himself – in so far as the actor, the act, and what has been performed are one – in so far as the one and total life is set in irrevocable finality through this act of liberty; in so far, that is to say, as what we are accustomed to call the eternal being of man comes into existence. And by eternity we do not mean an endlessly continuing time that succeeds our earthly life. We mean the freely ordered finality of the person and his earthly life before God.

These indications of the theological nature of liberty show that there are two different groups of related problems which we must consider in a little more detail. The first is the problem of the relationship between liberty in the theological sense, and the individual, empirical, single object, which can be objectified and expressed in words. The second is the problem of the relationship between liberty and time.

As far as the first problem is concerned, we must here briefly say that the fulfilment of human liberty (by which we mean the self-determination of the total subject in the direction of finality) is, of course, inevitably mediated through some individual object of an *a posteriori* kind, existing in space, time and history. It is to this that liberty chooses to be related in its act of choice, though of course in order to establish its own real nature, which is the self-fulfilment of the person or subject. But this individual object, which is indispensable if liberty is to be consummated, in itself gives no final and certain information as to what the self-consummation of the subject really [103] is, and whether it is for good or evil. It is possible for a person to align himself with God for his salvation, at least unconsciously, because he lets himself fall into the incomprehensibility of his existence in serene hope; though it may well be that the object on which this saving disposal of the self is exercised is materially not only very unimportant and limited, but even ought not to exist, and ought not to be realised at all, if it is tested against the obligatory norms and circumstances of this world.[4]

It is therefore, fundamentally speaking, quite possible for personal liberty to be fulfilled

[3] For additional material which may give added depth to our view of the subject, cf. what has been said about 'choice' in the following essays in *Theological Investigations* XVI (London 1979): 'Experience of the Spirit and Existential Commitment', pp. 24-34; 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats', pp. 135-55; and 'Reflections on a New Task for Fundamental Theology', pp. 156-66.

[4] For the idea of decision as fundamental option, the author is indebted to Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises.* His theological work has been continually influenced by the desire to work out the theological implications of the spiritual stimulus he has found there, and to make that stimulus fruitful theologically, cf. the essays quoted in n. 3.

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even when the material for decision which is offered to the actual free subject *a posteriori* can no longer be fitted into the 'normal' contexts of human life and society, with its structures and norms, where the person who is 'served' by his experience only in this way is no longer 'responsible' in the civic and psychiatric sense. It is quite conceivable, basically speaking, for a free and personal self-ordering of the subject to get along with a much smaller amount of mediating material than we have to assume and demand in normal civic life if we are to concede responsibility to someone. It is conceivable that a particular objective material which is presented to a person from outside and is in itself conceptually understood, may not be eligible at all as material for the person's real self-fulfilment, because of the actual structure or make-up of the person himself.

The second problem is the obscure relationship between liberty and time. Theologically, liberty must be understood as the personal self-determination of the subject, through which he completes himself as a whole, together with his whole earthly life, in the direction of its final and ultimate form.[5] But then the conceptual scheme which Christian practice and pastoral care employ is insufficient. For there the assumption is that the final fate of men and women, in the sense of salvation or perdition, is simply determined by the final free act [104] in time, in the history of a given individual. It is decided by an act which stands at the end in temporal isolation, as it were, and this act by itself governs the whole of the person's previous life. On the other hand, the fundamental option of a person over the totality of himself as subject and over a life extending over a period of time, cannot be thought of as simply taking place outside time and history, and as revealing itself from this meta-historical point only in the many temporally distributed acts of the person. Even free acts, in which the person orders himself and his life in its totality, must take place in history, and must have a place in time and space within the history of the person himself. Otherwise history – and salvation-history above all – becomes a semblance without an essence, on to which a liberty which is above time is projected.

Because of the incongruence we have already indicated between the material through which liberty is mediated and the original act of liberty as the self-ordering of the personal subject himself, the place and time at which such an act of liberty takes place in a person's life can never be unequivocally stated. Nor should we maintain that a fundamental option of this kind is possible only once, and that it cannot be revised later by the same existentially radical act of decision in the form of a later choice. It is true that human liberty as self-ordering does not imply the arbitrary revisability of its decisions, as if these decisions could continually be remade indefinitely; it wants these decisions to take the form of final decisions. But as liberty that is finite and materially mediated, it always exposes itself to still current time; and so it arrives at the fulfilment of its own nature only through the fact that time stops, because of an event which is not simply within the power of liberty itself, although by virtue of its own nature it lays itself open to that event.

THE LIBERTY OF THE SICK PERSON

Here the liberty of the sick means quite specifically the liberty of the sick person in his confrontation with death. This relationship between liberty, in the theological sense, and death is of a quite particular kind. But it is easily understandable if we remember what we have just said about liberty in the theological sense; and if at the same time we take into

[5] On the question of time, seen theologically, cf. the essays on the subject which have been gathered together from the different volumes of *Theological Investigations* and printed in paperback form in K. Rahner, *Zur Theologie der Zukunft* (dtv 4076) (Munich 1971).

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account the Christian conviction that in death a person's free history assumes its final form. This means that the final 'Judgement' of the person takes place. It means that the person who in his [105] liberty always has to do consciously or unconsciously with God, finally finds him or loses him.

The situation of approaching death is really an unusual situation for liberty. For death brings to an end the time and space in which a person orders himself in the direction of finality. At all events the free subject cannot be certain that a radical, fundamental choice has already been made in his lifetime in such a way that there is no longer any danger of its being upset again in sickness or dying. This means that the situation of approaching death is really a radical challenge to liberty to decide finally for God on the very basis of the 'material' offered by the process of dying, with its helplessness and loneliness. It should decide for God by accepting serenely and hopefully this 'hopeless' situation of radical helplessness and of being engulfed by the incomprehensibility of what we call God.[6]

This means that a person ought to die 'consciously' as far as possible. He ought not simply to *suffer* death but should also paradoxically *suffer it actively* as an act of liberty. He therefore has the right to know that he is going to die, and when. If and in so far as this knowledge can reach the dying person only by means of a communication made to him by the people round him, this communication must not be withheld. If the moment when this communication is made, and the way in which it is made, are chosen properly, it does not have to come as a frightening shock to the dying person. The very helplessness which the patient experiences inwardly can awake a gently composed awareness of death as the situation confronting him. For unless it is a completely sudden death, biologically speaking, the dying are aware of the situation they are in, even if they suppress their awareness for a while.

Because, and in so far as, death (or the act of dying) is a special situation for liberty in the theological sense, man has a right, and even something of a duty, to mould the situation in such a way that it offers as many opportunities for liberty as possible, even in an empirical sense. An alleviation of suffering which does not simply reduce the sick person to unconsciousness, but leaves him conscious and makes a greater serenity of spirit possible than would be the case if he were overwhelmed by pain in the physiological sense, is therefore [106] not merely a claim made by the vital self-assertion of the patient himself. It is also a demand of liberty in the theological sense, which rightly desires to win for itself as extensive a space as possible and, as far as possible, right up to the frontier of death. The alleviation of pain is not merely important for the patient's physiological and psychological well-being. It is also important in the struggle for the greatest possible area of liberty in the theological sense – an area where a history of salvation may be played out.

What we have just said, however, is not a final answer to the problem of an alleviation of pain which makes the sick person more or less unconscious and incapable of responsible decision. In our present context we need only say that there is no need to dispense with an alleviation of this sort, as long as it does not mean directly killing the patient, and as long as the nature and violence of the pain would in any case permit no more extensive area of liberty.[7]

'STYLES OF DYING'

[6] In view of the process of dying, the present author does not share the familiar 'hypothesis of a final decision' which is supported by L. Boros in *The Movement of Truth: Mysterium Mortis* (London 1965).

[7] On the problem of illness and the sick person cf. especially 'The Saving Force and Healing Power of Faith', *Theological Investigations* V (London 1966), pp. 460-7; 'Proving Oneself in Time of Sickness', *Theological Investigations VII* (London 1971), pp. 275-84.

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In the course of Christian history, the awareness that death (i.e. the act of dying, as distinct from the state of having died) is a special situation for liberty in the theological sense has given rise to what Arthur Jores has called different 'styles of dying'.[8] It is not merely a question of administering the 'sacraments of the dying' (which is not simply and directly obvious). There is not merely a special sacrament for the sick who are near death.[9] Formerly there was also a social and religious ritual for dying, which has largely faded into disuse today. Dying was not merely seen as a biological happening. It was a personal, historical, free event, which quite actively brought life to its final state: eternity. The dying person gathered his family round him, gave them his final blessing, expressed his last wishes, affirmed his [107] faith and hope in a gracious God, prayed the prayers for the dying with those round him and so on. All this can be significant as the completion and proclamation of the task of dying as part of a person's own history of freedom. The sober courage befitting the Christian in the hour of death, and indeed a great deal else in this traditional style of dying, may seem to be the reflection of a genuine kind of liberty in the face of death. All the same, this particular 'style of dying' is, when all is said and done, historically conditioned in many ways, and need not in itself be permanently adopted. (We shall come back later to the sacraments of the dying, which are distinct from the other 'stylistic' elements of dying in its traditional form.)

That is one side of the matter. But it is impossible to maintain that the total and final consummation of liberty on the part of the human subject in the direction of finality – i.e. death as total act of liberty – always takes place in immediate proximity to death in the medical sense. In most cases the doctors will have before them a dying person whose condition in any case makes it difficult to conceive (without arbitrary hypotheses) how he could be capable of any radical personal act in this situation – by which I mean an act through which he freely disposes of himself and the ultimate meaning of his life in a thoroughly radical way. Moreover, there is no cogent theological reason for postulating the opposite of what the medical situation would lead us to suppose. The act in which a person freely orders himself in the direction of finality can, even in the case of a 'responsible' person, take place much earlier and can, for internal or external reasons, be the final act of this kind even though it takes place a considerable time before death in the medical sense. Dying in the medical sense and dying as an act of liberty need not coincide chronologically. What took place and could take place in life as an act of free and final disposal of the self, on the basis of a relatively modest and not at all explicit 'material' for the exercise of liberty, is not necessarily also possible in the case of dying in the medical sense, not even if the 'material' there is more explicitly religious and the situation of the dying person is a 'devout' one.

HUMAN AND RELIGIOUS HELP IN DYING

There are people who under certain circumstances are called to help the sick person to arrive at a clearly religious death and an explicitly religious act of liberty in dying. (This help does not always have to [108] be an official pastoral duty. It may also be a humane and Christian duty of love on the part of nurses and doctors.) For these people what we have just said has particular consequences. These helpers should draw on the gift of 'testing the spirits', so as to try to help the dying person to the attitude which is open to this particular individual in the light of his life history and his religious knowledge and capabilities. A helper of this kind should not therefore exploit the sick person's weakness in order to clothe his death with the

[8] cf. A. Jores, *Menschsein als Auftrag* (Bern 1964), especially pp. 114-17 and 121-34.
[9] On the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, cf. K. Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente* (Quaestiones Disputatae 10) (Freiburg 1960), especially pp. 100-4; 'Bergend und heilend – Über das Sakrament der Kranken' in K. Rahner, *Die siebenfältige Gabe – Über die Sakramente der Kirche* (Munich 1974), pp. 115-37.

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hastily donned garment of a religious act which he is not actually able to perform existentially, and which, therefore, contributes nothing to his eternal salvation. If a dying person rejects the visit of a priest or pastor, or any other religious help, his wish should be respected. There should be no attempt to enlist the indiscreet help of relatives or nurses, in order to influence him to the contrary. These people may perhaps be more concerned about social 'respectability' than about the religious meaning of the anointing of the sick and the viaticum, or the eternal salvation of the sick person. (But this is not intended to lay down rules for a person who is charismatically endowed and who can trust himself to achieve a deeper and more genuine conversion or repentance in the spirit of the sick person.) When a dying person is no longer able to arrive at an obviously religiously articulated acceptance of death, or a free and saving act, the question of his salvation is completely open for the person who is at his side. It is a question he cannot decide. For the dying person the personally decisive hour of salvation may have taken place much earlier, while he was still in the midst of life, and the material for his free act may not have been expressly and verbally religious at all.

When it is possible to help the dying person to find an expressly religious significance in his death, and when this is accepted by the sick person, the most important thing, even for Catholics, is that the dying person should arrive at a religiously existential attitude towards death. Receiving the 'Last Sacraments' is only secondary to this. In the case of a Catholic who has practised his religion with normal zeal, these things normally coincide. But this is not true of people who have hitherto been used to little or no expressly religious observance. With these people it may be possible under certain circumstances – and it is also theologically legitimate – to help them to acquire a right inner attitude to the possibility of death (hopeful resignation to their fate etc.). There is no need to expect them immediately to accept a sacramental act. That would only overtax and shock them. Of course [109] in a situation of this kind an earlier sacramental practice, which the dying person was accustomed to a long time previously, can be revived without any great difficulty, so that the sacramental event, in its tangibility and clarity, may facilitate and confirm the act of hopeful resignation to death as God's decree. But this is not always the case, and where there is any doubt the decision should be in favour of help in the existential acts of the dying person. Nobody should force a sacramental event on him which, quite innocently perhaps, he cannot really endorse, and which for that reason he quite rightly refuses.

Of course a position of this kind also means that the people surrounding the sick person are not simply released from the outset from the duty of giving any kind of religious help, just because the invalid is incapable of receiving the sacraments or rejects them. Explicit contrition for the sins of one's past life is really an essential part of a free and living act at the hour of death – if, and in so far as, this sense of sin is alive in the person or can be awakened out of its suppression. But the hoping act of acceptance of one's own situation can be implicit contrition. A person may sometimes succeed in achieving that more easily than in finding an express relationship to past events, to which he no longer feels related. This must also be remembered in connection with religious help for the sick – for example, with regard to the content of prayers said in the presence of the sick person.

THE FREE CHOICE OF DOCTOR

When we come to the claim which the liberty of the sick makes on the physician, we must first of all say something about the free choice of doctor. This is an essential sphere for the liberty of the sick person. If illness were a purely biological event which took place in some realm detached from the actual free person himself, it might be judged an open question

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whether the sick person must basically have the right to choose his doctor freely, or whether the State could prescribe a health-service functionary, in the same way that it prescribes other functionaries without asking our permission first.

But for the free person as such, a severe illness means a particular and unique situation. In order for him to fulfil his inner liberty, a person must in principle be conceded as wide a sphere of liberty as possible. Consequently the free choice of doctor is one of the essentials for liberty. Institutions and procedures such as the licensing of medical [110] personnel, the appointment of official doctors for particular groups of people, the compulsory medical examinations required by the State – all these things should continually lead us to ask whether they are not reducing the free choice of doctor more than is absolutely necessary. And 'absolutely necessary' means more than is legitimately required by circumstances and by the legitimate pursuit of other benefits for society as a whole.

It is undoubtedly true that the free choice of doctor is often a mere faded ideal, which for social and economic reasons is largely becoming an illusion. Where this is the case, these social and economic conditions must be altered, in order to facilitate, in real terms, as free a choice of doctor as possible. Of course the right to a free choice of doctor must continually be a matter of fresh compromise with other human values and rights. We must not see it in isolation. But we might also ask whether the possibility of choosing one's doctor freely is not restricted by the unjustifiably high fees which doctors themselves charge. We might well ask whether it is right for doctors' fees to be thrown open to free competition, like the prices of other commodities, and whether to do so is not a contradiction of the sick person's right to choose his doctor freely.

THE RIGHT TO DIE

Part of the sick person's liberty with regard to his doctor is the right to die. We need not inquire here whether under certain circumstances the sick person may even have a duty to claim this right. At all events, the patient, as a free person, is not simply the object of the doctor who allows himself to be guided solely by his aim to prolong the biological life of the sick person for as long as possible, without any reference to other points of view held by the patient himself or by society. There are other values and aims which may make the sick person (or, it may be, someone close to him who represents his interests and is also called to defend his other rights too) freely express the wish not to be prevented from dying.

It is true that, according to the general Christian and Catholic view, it is not objectively and morally legitimate to will an action which is aimed directly at causing the death of the sick person. That is to say, no direct control over a person's biological life as a whole can be morally justified. But according to the view of Catholic moral theology, this does not mean that the patient or the doctor has the [111] positive duty to apply every conceivable and actually possible means to prolong biological life. It is the generally accepted view of Catholic moral theology that the application of measures for a positively useful purpose – for example the relief of pain – is permissible even when these measures involve a certain curtailment of the patient's life, if this is an unintentional though known and accepted side-effect. For this is no different from what happens at other times in human life, when a person puts up with something which is harmful from a purely biological point of view if he can thereby arrive at a higher quality of living.

There are theoretical obscurities about these specific rules, which try to distinguish between the legitimate permitting of a person to die, and direct killing. These need further clarification. This clarification might perhaps bring about a considerable re-structuring of the answer to the problems we have touched on here. There are also practical difficulties about

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the actual application of these rules. But since it is impossible simply to get rid of the problems themselves, we may and must meanwhile work with rules and distinctions of this kind, in order to find a 'middle of the road' between euthanasia on the one hand (by which we mean the direct killing of a sick person at his request) and an absolute, unconditional will to preserve biological life, without taking any other points of view into account. If we reject euthanasia in the sense in which we have defined it, and if we hold the preservation of biological life at all costs (even at the cost of inhumanity) to be wrong, then we shall have to accept the validity of the rule-of-thumb view we have indicated. We must simply see it *as* a pure rule of thumb, and hope that the moral theologians will clarify the problem further in the future. [10]

A more specialised question arises in this context too. Does the sick person's right to be allowed to die merely *permit* the doctor to accept his wishes, or does it actually lay on him the *duty* of allowing the patient to die? In a conflict between the patient's wish for a speedy end, and the doctor's will to preserve life for as long as possible, the doctor will in practice generally have his way and will override the patient's wishes. This will be the case especially if he has the impression that the patient's desire is the expression of his illness and his [112] pain, rather than a genuine, personal decision; and if he is understandably reluctant to do anything except fulfil his primary task as doctor – to defend and preserve life. But this is not a solution to the problem. Does the genuine, personal, carefully considered decision and will of the sick person to accept death, even if it could be postponed for a certain time, correspond on the doctor's side to a real moral duty to carry out his patient's wish? For as doctor he has not merely entered into the service of a physiological defence of life. When he accepts a sick person as patient he accepts the duty to serve a person and his total and entire life history (even if under a particular aspect).

It might be said that a problem of this kind is highly academic and arises only in rare cases, because it can only be a question of the will of a sick person during his illness, not while he is still in good health. A decision of this kind made in health cannot simply be accepted as being valid in the situation of illness. In illness itself a truly personal will of this kind seldom exists, and the doctor is seldom able to discern unequivocally that it exists. But we cannot view such cases as impossible, and that means that the problem exists. In addition there is the problem of whether the relatives of an unconscious and dying person can on his behalf express the will to allow him to die, and can express it in such a way that the doctor has the duty to carry out their wish.

The question seems an obscure one. For in general a person's wish, even though it may be morally legitimate, does not imply another's duty to enable him to carry out his intention. Also – unless there is an express agreement between patient and doctor – it is impossible to prove that the acceptance of medical duties towards a particular patient necessarily implies the readiness to carry out the patient's wishes in this particular respect. Admittedly the opposite cannot be proved either, in view of the doctor's role towards the patient as a total person. We must also consider whether a doctor can opt out of a doctor-patient relationship which was freely entered into on both sides, if he is clearly confronted with the sick person's will to be allowed to die. This question is hard to answer too; for on the one hand a relationship that has been freely entered into can equally freely be terminated; on the other hand, a sick person in the cases we are assuming here will find it hard to find another doctor.

Basically speaking, I incline to the view that the doctor does have the duty we have been discussing. This is the only way in which an inhumane and undignified prolongation of life can be prevented. And [113] a doctor who recognises this duty will more easily get over his

[10] For moral theology's view of euthanasia, cf. the articles by W. Schöllgen in *LThK* III, 2nd edn (Freiburg 1959), 1207-8, and H. Vorgrimler in *LThK* IX, 2nd edn (Freiburg 1964), 1053-4; also the bibliographies.

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understandable reluctance to let a person die, even though he could have preserved his life for a while longer. But in these questions even Christian ethics no longer succeed in formulating rules which are factually unambiguous, directly applicable and generally comprehensible.

Liberty is a mystery. In its fundamental character, it is the necessity imposed on man to decide freely for or against the Incomprehensibility which we call God. It is the possibility of letting oneself fall in hope and in unconditional trust into this Incomprehensibility as goal, bliss and human fulfilment. The highest power which liberty has is consummated in the helplessness of death. The doctor, too, is drawn into this individual history of liberty and death. He can really fulfil his very own, specific task (as distinct from other human acts) only if he is more than a physician – if, in the fulfilment of his medical task, he is truly man and even (anonymously[11] or expressly) a Christian. For that reason the liberty of the sick person, which arrives at its final frontier and its completion in the process of dying, cannot be a matter of indifference to him. He, too, is fighting for the space for, and the right to, this same ultimate liberty. He – as well as the sick person – should resign himself in silent and serene hope to the mystery of death, after he has fought for this earthly life to the last possible moment. The doctor is a servant of liberty.

[11] For 'anonymous' in this sense, cf. 'Anonymous and Explicit Faith', *Theologica1 Investigations* XVI (London 1979), pp. 52-9.

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[114]

10

‘THE INTERMEDIATE STATE’

How dogmatically binding is the concept of what we call ‘the intermediate state’? I should like to offer a few ideas on this subject here. What is meant by the doctrine of the intermediate state is that between the death of any individual person, if it takes place before the general eschatological perfecting of all men, and the final consummation of all history (which we generally call ‘the resurrection of the flesh’ and ‘the Last Judgement’) there is an intermediate temporal state. Initially, we need not go into what the word ‘temporality’ could mean here, or how precisely we ought to conceive of it. What we are interested in is that, according to the definition of Benedict XII,[1] the glorification of the body does not take place ‘simultaneously’ with the personal state of the beatific vision, or purgatory or damnation, which ensue immediately after death.

My intention here is not to deny the doctrine of the intermediate state. I should only like to point out that it is not a dogma, and can therefore remain open to the free discussion of theologians. We shall leave the question open, whether in our time the doctrine of the intermediate state does not perhaps enjoy a certain merit on kerygmatic or didactical grounds, or for reasons connected with religious instruction, or with the history of thought. Where this intellectual framework is still alive and undisputed, and where it can without difficulty make clear to people what is really meant – the blessedness [115] of their souls and the glorification of their bodies – no objection can be levied against it, even today. There is no reason against the proclamation of the real truths involved in the form of this particular notion. But again we need not go into that here.

Basically, I should like to postulate only the following: it is by no means certain that the doctrine about the intermediate state is *anything more* than an intellectual framework, or way of thinking. So whatever it has to tell us (apart from statements about the commencement through death of the final form of man’s history of freedom, and about the inclusion of the body in this final form) does not necessarily have to be part of Christian eschatology itself. We might put the matter differently and say: no one is in danger of defending a heresy if he maintains the view that the single and total perfecting of man in ‘body’ and ‘soul’ takes place immediately after death; that the resurrection of the flesh and the general judgement take place ‘parallel’ to the temporal history of the world; and that both coincide with the sum of the particular judgements of individual men and women. As long as he can produce good reasons for his view he can go on maintaining his opinion, always provided that he does not mean that the time scheme of world history itself can also be eliminated from his theological statement.

If we are properly to appreciate the arguments for the latter thesis, in the form to which we have narrowed it down, we must not overlook the fact that it is essentially a negative one. That is to say, it explicitly does not aim to offer any stringent proof which would lead to a direct denial of the intermediate state. However, we can here only briefly indicate the line of argument; for my aim is merely to encourage a further investigation of the question.

The doctrinal statements of the Church as we have them, in the dogmatically binding form in which Benedict XII and others put them forward, were not really concerned thematically

[1] Benedict XII, pope 1334-42. Cf. his constitution *Benedictus Deus* of 1336 (Denz. 1000-2). According to the preliminary remark in DS this is a *definitio ex cathedra,* cf. A. Ahlbrecht, ‘Zwischenzustand’, *LThKX,* 2nd edn (Freiburg 1965), 1441-2 (with bibliography).

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and directly with the question which we have defined above. They are concerned to make other assertions, even though they do rest on the assumption that there is such a thing as an intermediate state (a presupposition which they do not really consider as if it were a separate question of its own). For this is what seems to follow from the fact that the glorification of the body has not yet taken place, although the person has already passed through death. It is this unconsidered assumption, therefore, which lies behind the doctrinal statements we have referred to. The statements themselves talk about the things which they want [116] to say clearly and unequivocally, in the light of this assumption; but they do not teach the assumption itself as a truth that is binding for faith. There is no doubt that what the defined statements want to do is to stress the perfecting of the soul and the glorification of the body as Christian truths. Anyone who thinks that he can maintain this doctrine in all its fullness without continuing to presuppose an intermediate state in the sense in which we have defined it, is not compelled to go along with the underlying assumption behind the doctrinal assertion. We might illustrate this by taking just one specific example from the recent history of theology: monogenism – the idea that mankind stems biologically from a single pair of ancestors. Anyone who can make it plain today that we can adhere to the doctrine of original sin even without the notion of monogenism, is not bound to acknowledge monogenism for the sake of original sin; even though traditionally and hitherto the two tenets have always been formulated together.[2]

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

But is not the tradition we have mentioned in connection with our question really derived from holy Scripture? In other words, ought we not to judge the presupposition too as belonging to revelation? In order to understand and interpret the statements of Scripture correctly here, we must remember that in the Scriptures ‘the resurrection of the flesh’ is not understood as being the final destiny of the body as such. On the contrary, the statement always means the destiny of the one and total person who as such *is* ‘flesh’.[3] It is true that Scripture is also familiar with the phrase ‘to be with Christ’, which belongs to the Christian’s death – that is to say, entry into paradise ‘today’, at the moment of death.[4] But the two assertions belong to two quite different series of statements or statement complexes, and they are not harmonised in the Scriptures by means of the notion of the intermediate state.

[117] If we are to see this clearly, we must notice the origin and history of the two statement complexes in the New Testament. The relatively late doctrine about the future resurrection of the righteous, and then of all men (which was still disputed at the time of Jesus), was based on the conviction that God demonstrates his mighty will to salvation for his people of the covenant.[5] This divine will salvation is subsequently applied to the individual as such, because this individual is to participate in the final salvation of God’s people, even if he dies before that people is finally redeemed by God. He must be saved, he must ‘rise again’. But this salvation means the one and total person, not merely his body; for even the ‘Sheol’

[2] For details see the recent account by the present author in the digression ‘Erbsünde und Monogenismus’ in K.-H. Weger, *Theologie der Erbsünde* (Quaestiones Disputatae 44) (Freiburg 1970), pp. 176-223. Here the author also considers his own earlier remarks on the subject.
[3] Cf. also the essay ‘The Body in the Order of Salvation’, pp. 71-89 in this volume.
[4] C. Luke 23:43; John 5:24.
[5] Cf. Paul’s behaviour before the Sanhedrin, Acts 23:6-8; also Luke 20:27; Acts 24:15, 21.

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of the Old Testament[6] is anything but the *salvation* of the 'soul'. Consequently we can in no way appeal to 'Sheol' for the idea of a (happy) intermediate state. So when we read in the New Testament that at the moment of death a person is already 'in paradise', or 'with Christ', this only means that death, too, belongs to the powers and forces which ultimately cannot harm the man or woman who lives through his faith in Jesus Christ. The actual way in which this idea is to be realised (and above all the way in which it can perhaps be harmonised with the doctrine about the eschatological raising of the dead) is not considered in any detail in the Scriptures. Can the two statement complexes be made to coincide, partially or wholly? That is the very question which must remain open. Traditionally, people have tried to reconcile the two ideas theologically by means of the notion of the intermediate state. But the success of the attempt is just what we are calling in question here. At all events, this idea must be laid to the account of this late theology; and it is that theology which risked this formulation. It is not in itself New Testament doctrine. In this connection it is interesting to note that, in interpreting the liberation from Sheol of the people who died before Christ by the dead and risen Christ himself, the great majority of the Fathers understood it in the light of Jewish teaching about the resurrection. They saw it as a *physical* resurrection, not as the freeing of the soul alone for the contemplation of God. The attempt to harmonise the statements of an individual and a collective eschatology is accordingly a problem of theological history in the first place. At [118] the period of Benedict XII it received an answer to some degree, and at least temporarily, through Benedict's decision, according to which the soul was assigned a perfection of its own, which is completely independent of the future fate of the body. But even this decision does not forbid anyone to teach that the soul may possibly enjoy *greater* blessedness *after* the resurrection of the body.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HISTORY OF THEOLOGY

After all that we have said, we must come to the conclusion that the genesis of the idea of an intermediate state in the Middle Ages was a stage in the history of theology, but no more than that. It is the attempt to reconcile the collective and the individual view of eschatological perfection. But the word 'intermediate' is not really covered by what is meant. It has to be understood as the 'intermediate' point between two other points in a movement of thought which, though it starts from two different statement complexes, is supposed to come together today in complete identification, by way of the partial identification of the statements with the help of the notion of the intermediate state. But to see and formulate the matter in this way by no means involves asserting that in our own time we no longer need to think about the nature of collective, cosmic perfection, simply because we want to bring together the collective aspect of eschatology, in the resurrection of the dead, and the individual eschatological blessedness of the individual soul, without any such intermediate state – that is to say, without an intermediate period of time. For we ought at least to read what we have said about the individual into the concept of the final consummation, as one element of a progressive transformation of world history and the cosmos in general.

But the idea of the intermediate state also comes up against considerable intellectual difficulties, even if we ignore for a moment the problems which could not even be entirely suppressed in classical theology. These difficulties are above all those which are related to the question of 'time' 'after' death. The assumption of an intermediate state raises new,

[6] For an explanation DB points to '*enfer*' (hell) and Hades; cf. *DBS* II (Paris 1934), 1063-76. Haag, *Bibel-Lexikon,* 2nd edn (Zürich 1968), 1537, refers the reader to '*Hölle*' (ibid., 758-9) and '*Totenreich*' (ibid., 1773-4).

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difficult problems here, which do not crop up at all if the one and total person is removed from empirical time through his death. How are we to think of time and the temporality of a departed soul, if on the one hand the soul is already with God in its perfected state, but on the other hand has 'to wait' for the reassumption of its function towards its own body? Does not a word such as [119] *aevum*, or the like (which designates the duration of a finite but completed substance, no longer possessing a free history of its own), simply cover up the problem, instead of illuminating it? Do not words of this kind smack somewhat of mythology? Do they not blur what is really a radical difference – the radical difference between, on the one hand, a temporal state which is not merely our experience of time in the sense of physics, but which has freedom as its very essence; and, on the other hand, the final consummation of the history of freedom which can then no longer be thought of in terms of time at all? For otherwise we should be immediately faced once more with the question, why in such an *aevum* (or whatever we like to call this 'time') free history is no longer possible. Here, however, as we said above, we shall leave these problems about time on one side, although people were highly conscious of them earlier as well, in connection with the notion of the intermediate state. But there are still other difficulties today.

The classical doctrine of the intermediate state must reckon speculatively with an *anima separata*. But this idea leads to a number of dilemmas, which seem insoluble if we take as our premise the doctrine of the soul which defines it as being the *forma corporis*, and which asserts the real, substantial unity of body and soul.[7] For if we really take seriously this doctrine of the *anima* as being the *forma corporis* through its own substantial reality, the act whereby the body is 'informed' by the soul is not an additional and (in the scholastic sense) 'accidental' determination of that soul. The informing is identical with the soul itself. A denial of this statement would mean the abolition of a real substantial unity of man, whether this be admitted or not.

But then, how can there afterwards still be an *anima separata*? Can the soul lose something with which it is identical, without itself ceasing to exist? Earlier, I myself tried to avoid this dilemma by postulating a cosmic relation between the finite human spirit and matter, that is to say, the *one* matter of *the world*. This relation would then still remain and would be preserved even when the precise way in which, during its earthly life, the body is formed through this relation between matter and spirit ceased to exist. But it must be admitted that the whole problem becomes much easier if this enduring relation between spirit and matter is expressed scholastically as the [120] enduring 'informedness' of the glorified body by the perfected spiritual soul. Indeed, probably no metaphysically thinking theologian would continue to maintain today (for either philosophical or theological reasons) that the identity of the glorified body and the earthly body is only ensured if some material fragment of the earthly body is found again in the glorified body. For this kind of identity cannot even be found in the earthly body, because of its radical metabolic processes. And this kind of thinking is completely inconceivable with a modern conception of matter, since for modern natural philosophy it is extremely problematical, if not impossible, to split up mere matter into so many 'substantial' and clearly divisible particles, as pre-scientific experience believed could be done. How would it in any way serve the identity between the earthly and the glorified body if we were to think into the resurrection body a material particle of this kind, which had earlier been the 'property' of the earthly body? Anything of this kind is today simply no longer tenable or conceivable. For us, identity consists, now and in the future, of the identity of the free, spiritual subject, which we call 'the soul'. That is why even empirical experience of the corpse in the grave can no longer provide an argument for there having been no 'resurrection'. So why should we not put the resurrection at that particular moment

[7] Council of Vienne, 1312: Constitution *Fidei catholicae,* cf. Denz. 902.

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when the person's history of freedom is finally consummated, which is to say at his death?

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

A modern philosophy may be able to affirm and go along with the doctrine of the real distinction between body and soul, since this also makes it comprehensible that the person as subject of what is transcendent without limit, and therefore as the subject of freedom, cannot simply be matter in the normal sense of the material objects with which we are otherwise familiar.

But this means that for such a philosophy man counts empirically and ontologically, first and last, as being *one*. A pluralism of substance in him can only be viewed as the multiplicity of metaphysical elements, that is to say, ontological *principia entis*. It cannot be seen as the fundamental multiplicity of substantial realities, thought of as existing in themselves. At all events, contemporary philosophy only recognises man's spiritual life in so far as it is also and at the same time material in any given case. It simply does not exist in any other [121] way and cannot be understood by philosophy in any other way either. Even the most spiritual act of man always has in reality a material element. An act of this kind may perhaps be thought of in abstract terms as being purely spiritual, but this is simply a process of intellectual conceptualisation.

On these presuppositions, the evidence for man's 'immortality' offered by a metaphysical anthropology cannot mean that the 'soul's' immortality has been established. On the contrary, the aim must be to show here that man, as a being of transcendence and freedom and of absolute responsibility in hope, must not think of himself in any way other than as a being who, through his own history of freedom, acquires finality before God. I believe that it is quite possible to show that this is so. In other words, in modern philosophy generally, what we traditionally distinguish (talking about the immortality of the soul on the one hand, and the resurrection of the body on the other) can only be grasped as *being one*.

But this means that the notion of the intermediate state recedes from the outset behind the questions which a philosophical anthropology is faced with today. It must be noted here, however, that the dogma of the resurrection of the body – as long as it is not misinterpreted in a mythological sense – can by no means be known only by way of revelation. Consequently it may be said that, in view of its understanding of the unity of man, modern metaphysical anthropology can never (or only with the greatest reservations) consider that an intermediate state, or an absolutely non-material mode of existence on the part of the spiritual subject, is possible.

The traditional scholastic doctrine about the *anima* as *forma in se subsistens*, which can then also exist as *separata*, is, in its own sense, not directly affected by this. That is to say, it can remain correct and meaningful, provided that it is no longer intended to mean more than that through his death man is not destroyed, but arrives at perfection. If, on the other hand, the doctrine is linked also with the notion that a soul can go on existing just by itself (since it no longer has its body), then *this* proof (which is really the only one which scholasticism puts forward) rests on an assumption for which there is no evidence. Indeed it can quite well be disputed, as is clear from what we said above. For it means quite simply the soul's absolute liberation from the body after death.

But quite apart from this assumption, *a forma in se subsistens*, which can be free of the body, has no sound reason in itself. For – once one [122] has penetrated the determining conditions – why should a doctrine of the intermediate state still be forced on to a contemporary anthropology? For it is not at all certain that in theology this notion was ever more than a conceptual aid, designed to make clear (in the light of existing secular

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philosophical or vulgarly empirical views) that the Christian may be responsible before God for the final nature of his own free history. At the same time he would understand from this standpoint, too, that he cannot on his side exclude from this promised finality, *a priori* and platonically, what we know as his specific historical character, which is to say his body.

THEOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS

But the theologian might still have something more to say here. Against the view we have expounded, he might put forward the idea that the doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into eternal glory 'in body and soul'[8] proves after all the very fact that apart from Jesus other men and women are not granted such a destiny immediately after their death. But the definition of the Blessed Virgin's assumption does not tell us that this was a privilege which was reserved for her alone. Whether, when this dogmatic declaration was drawn up, those involved may privately have thought something like this is unimportant today. The patristic tradition (which there was certainly no intention to disavow through the dogma) often talks about such finally glorified persons. We may think, for example, of those whom the risen Lord liberated from Sheol. At the same time, there is a factual difference in the case of the Virgin Mary which also lent the express assertion its special cogency, for – other than the rest of the saved – she enjoys a position in Christian salvation history which is hers alone. For this reason it was quite justifiable to state the truth explicitly, even if it really applies to everyone who achieves blessedness. At all events we cannot view it as illegitimate to make this statement. After all, the degree of theological certainty differs according as to whether one and the same statement is made about Mary, the Mother of the Lord, or about the redeemed in general. However that may be: if we want to defend Pope Pius XII's dogma convincingly and effectively (especially to Protestant theology) the task is made considerably easier (and has considerably more chance [123] of success) if we assume that it is superfluous to posit an intermediate state in considering the eternal salvation for which all men and women are destined.

Of course numerous other objections can be raised against this proposition, with the help of Scripture and tradition. There seem to be texts enough in which the matter is described in such a way that there would seem to be an intermediate state of this kind – texts which in no way reckon with the possibility that the human body, too, could already be glorified at death. But, as we have already said, do these texts really intend to expound an intermediate state as a truth binding on faith? Or do they merely presuppose it because at the time when they were formulated, in the aftermath of Platonism and under the influence of a naively empirical view of the corpse in the grave, nothing else could be said with regard to what they had to expound clearly as being a genuine part of actual Christian faith? That is the hermeneutical problem with which we are presented here.

After what we have said, however, we may now venture an answer to this. If earlier these questions were not distinguished, and if they could not be distinguished at the time (for reasons which although by no means genuinely theological, were connected with the history of thought), this does not mean that today, too, we are obliged to neglect the distinction between the binding content of a statement and temporally conditioned modes of expression based on an intellectual framework belonging to a particular period. Anyone who wanted to call this hermeneutical principle in question today would have to cling to other intellectual frameworks or ways of thinking as well, as if they, too, were statements of fact, even though they have meanwhile been abandoned, with the tacit or express approval of the Church's

[8] Const. Ap. *Munificentissimus Deus,* of 1 Nov. 1950; cf. Denz. 3900-4.

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doctrinal authority. This would mean that we should have to believe that the earth is the centre of the universe, and that animal species are constant. We should have to adhere to monogenism, a 'materialist' view of the resurrection body, hell-fire in the physical sense, and the idea of a unified 'substance' in the eucharistic bread. We should have to believe that angels are located between the earth and the moon; that the longevity of the human race is strictly limited; that hell is to be found in the centre of the earth, and so forth.

In my view, the idea of the intermediate state contains a little harmless mythology, which is not dangerous as long as we do not take the idea too seriously and do not view it as binding on faith. Seen in that light, the strenuous efforts we have made here have [124] perhaps used rather too heavy an artillery. On the other hand, it is impossible to overlook the difficulties many people find in this idea today. For these people it may be a help to say that the idea is not really strictly binding from a theological point of view, and that consequently it is open to the individual believer to follow the theological arguments which he finds convincing. And, as we said at the beginning, that is all we intended to establish here.

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[125]

PART THREE

The Ministry and the Spirit

[127]

11

OPPOSITION IN THE CHURCH

THE POSSIBILITIES AND THE LIMITS

Criticism and opposition are part of human life in all its dimensions. But as a general rule they have a point only when the subjects and aspects concerned have a positive significance, fundamentally speaking, and therefore demand the courage for affirmation and inner open-mindedness. Anyone who can only criticise and oppose out of irritation repudiates himself, not the reality he is criticising. An allergic reaction, aggression, criticism and opposition can certainly be justified when someone is faced with any of the real facts of experience. But these are not a person's ultimate and sustaining basic attitudes.

When we talk here about opposition in the Church, we are not talking about criticism from outside, or about opposition in which someone says 'No' to the Church because he is outside it and – for whatever reasons – rejects it fundamentally and wholesale. What we are considering here is opposition within the Church. And this presupposes that the opponent still has a basically positive relationship to the Church. But we must realise at the very beginning that a positive relationship of this kind to the Church (and hence the position from which opposition within the Church operates) can be very varied and very intricate, both theoretically and practically. Accordingly the opposition itself will vary too; and the possibilities and limits of that opposition will not be the same for everyone.[1]

[128] A person may be baptised as a baby; as he grows up he may have some connection with the Church's doctrine and life; he may support the Church financially; may draw on what the Church has to offer religiously, to some extent or other; and may not think of leaving the Church, for individual psychological and social reasons of the most varied kind – reasons which may perhaps be judged in a thoroughly positive way. Yet that person will not necessarily have that relationship to the Church which it fundamentally requires of its adult members, in the light of what it understands itself to be. For this relationship to the Church exists only when faith in its true Christian sense exists, too, and when, together with this faith, the Church is affirmed as well, as an integral part of its reality. That is to say, there is a proper relationship to the Church only when, in an absolute commitment of one's own existence, the God is apprehended who promises himself once and for all in Jesus, the crucified and risen One; and where, in this ultimate commitment to God in Jesus, the community of faith sustained by his Spirit is also accepted, as the irrevocable place of this faith; and is accepted in its fundamental institutional character as well.

[1] The term 'opposition' generally means 'contrast' or 'resistance'. It is used mainly in politics and sociology (cf. *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* XIII, 17th edn 1971, 762) for groups who want to destroy the influence of another group. The term is not used in that sense here (cf. below). On the contrary, here it means the attitude of independent criticism, or an independent opinion.

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But many Catholics who belong to the Church as a social institution do not have this real, believing relationship to the Church, or do not possess it clearly enough. They are members of the Church, perhaps because of family or social background, or the way they were brought up, or because they have a respect for it – all of which are reasons that precede faith. Because of the permanent temptation even to genuine faith, it is impossible to say with well-considered certainty in any specific, individual case, whether a Catholic has that relationship to the Church which is founded on faith, or only has faith's more limited, preliminary forms.

The nature of this relationship to the Church will also mean that opposition within it will take essentially different forms too. And individual Catholics will define the limits of their opposition in very different ways. If a person's relationship to the Church is merely a provisional one and is in no way based on faith's ultimate decision for God in Jesus Christ, that person will probably also consider that in certain circumstances opposition in the Church can be accentuated to the point of leaving it altogether. On the other hand, the person who takes the absolute character of his believing commitment to God in Jesus Christ with radical seriousness will not view a withdrawal of this commitment as being for him a real, inner possibility. In so far [129] as he then makes this 'yes' to the Church part of his absolute commitment, he can and will quite unequivocally understand opposition and criticism in it only within the context of the Church itself. These varying forms of criticism and opposition ought not to be ignored. But here the important thing is above all the critical attitude which a believing – that is to say absolute – relationship to the Church presupposes.

THE POSSIBILITY AND NECESSITY OF CRITICISM WITHIN THE CHURCH

The first thing that must be said about our subject is that, fundamentally speaking, there can and must be opposition and criticism in the Church, as one of its inner elements. Of course this critical opposition, which is part of belonging to the Church, must immediately be differentiated according to the actual facts which are the subject of criticism in any given case. A critical question about the sense of a defined dogma in the faith of the Church is quite different in kind from opposition to the Church's legal, pastoral or liturgical practices; for the Church itself declares that these things are historically conditioned and can be changed. A basic calling in question of the Church's authority in general and as a whole is something different from a protest against a concrete measure which, for example, a bishop may enforce, appealing thereby to the authority of his office.

But for the moment we will leave all these necessary and indeed highly essential differentiations on one side. They must not be allowed to obscure the basic thesis: the thesis that the Church's self-understanding and its own faith do not merely permit the Catholic to have an oppositional relationship to the Church (at least in the sense we have described), or make this unavoidable. An attitude of this kind is actually required of us.[2]

Even as a Christian, the Christian is a human being first of all. As human being he is unavoidably and rightly a critical being; and the scope of his 'criticism' is fundamentally identical with the scope of [130] his existence. It is true that he must always be aware that critical reflection never adequately catches up with the assumptions on which he lives; and that consequently the human person, with a certain quite legitimate naivety and originality, still has the right to live according to principles which he has not adequately reflected about

[2] The attitude meant here is anchored in a basic attitude of mind which is essential for the Christian: repentance, or readiness for a new beginning. It is not only absolutely necessary for the individual Christian, but is also essential for the Church as community. On these related ideas in the thinking and work of the present author, cf. K. H. Neufeld, 'Fortschritt durch Umkehr – Zu Karl Rahners buβgeschichtlichen Arbeiten', *SdZ* 192 (1974), pp. 274-81.

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in a critical way. But in spite of that, man – and therefore the Christian too – is a critical being. And this also applies to the faith to which he is totally committed. Absolute commitment in faith can certainly coexist with critical enquiry about that faith in any specific individual, and the two do not have to be mutually exclusive – even though considerable theoretical and practical difficulties are inherent in a co-existence of this kind.

From its own point of view, the Church undoubtedly desires to be a power which is open to critical questioning. Its faith and the basic character which derives from that faith can be grasped only in free assent. And a free assent of this kind is possible only when the actual, specific existence of the assenting person is involved also.

The faith of the Church and the specific existence of the human person therefore exist in a permanent correspondence. On the one hand the Church is invoked by faith and, on the other, that faith is critically questioned by the believer. It is only in this way that the believer can grasp faith existentially – and because of man's historical character this is a continually new task. In the case of the true believer this critical undertaking will be continuously underpinned by an absolute assent of faith. It is borne up by a continuously renewed hope that in the future, too, this critical process will never destroy the ultimate commitment of faith.

Other realities in the Church are even more open to question, because of what they themselves understand themselves to be; for they view the Church itself as historically conditioned, as resting on human decisions, and therefore as alterable. Every member of it is empowered and obliged to help to shape this historical process of the Church, in proportion to his function and the possibilities open to him. In its fundamental nature the Church is a community of faith, faith in Jesus as the crucified and risen Lord, and in the eschatologically abiding historical presence of this faith (of course also in a basically institutional form). Apart from this fundamental character, the Church's constitution is alterable and hence open to criticism. The same applies to its liturgy and sacraments to a large extent. It applies even more to its concrete relationship to the historical, cultural [131] and social situation in which it lives. And it applies also, naturally, to the specific and individual decisions of its office-holders.[3]

In short, from the point of view of the Church's self-understanding, a critical attitude on the part of the Catholic Christian to it is an essential characteristic of its nature. It does not mean any weakening of its character as Church, let alone a calling in question of that character itself. This applies both to the individual and to groups in the Church, who have no need to be empowered 'from above' before they can be set up. Of course in all this we must not overlook the fact that criticism cannot be the first and the last thing, either in human life or in the Church; and that criticism, if it is to be criticism of the Church from within, must rest on the basis of an ultimate assent to the Church's message and its self-understanding.

THE POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS WHICH CRITICISM OF THE CHURCH FROM WITHIN MAY TAKE

When we enquire in what direction criticism within the Church should be directed, we must remember that criticism does not necessarily have to be of an explicit and formal kind. Nor does it always have to be sustained by groups which have been formally constituted. It can also crop up under quite different names, and diffusely, so to speak.

Criticism can first of all take the form of a demand that the official proclamation of the

[3] Cf. some fundamental observations on the subject in 'Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 3-23.

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faith make a more adequate attempt to bridge the gap between our contemporary awareness of things and the concrete way in which faith is proclaimed. This is, therefore, a criticism of theology, and of the proclamation of faith which is dependent on theology. This criticism is, of course, useful only when its demands respect the faith of the Church, its permanent identity and its historical continuity. But the boundary between permanent faith and an obsolete statement of that faith cannot always be drawn immediately and unequivocally. In this sector, too, petrified conservatism is just as possible as fashionable progressivism. This means that criticism and counter-criticism are often long-drawn-out processes which produce a sense of bitterness on both sides. We have to see them through with mutual tolerance, patience and hope; and all parties must clearly acknowledge [132] Christianity's one and abiding faith in God in Jesus Christ.

Legitimate opposition and criticism may also be levelled at the Church's lack of commitment in its task towards 'the world' (that is to say, modern society, with all its individual structures and tendencies), or at the insufficiency of that commitment or its wrong orientation. This is fundamentally important but it is often fashionably distorted. Such criticism is justifiable and necessary if the Church is to fulfil its critical function towards the world and society truly and decisively. In this sector no one in the Church – neither authority nor critics – is safe from mistaken attitudes and false decisions which can have unforseeable historical consequences. Discretionary judgements and decisions must continually be made. The Church cannot be exempted from this task, and is even so continually exposed to the danger of blunders and errors. That explains the necessity, and the difficulty, of all criticism.[4]

These two somewhat arbitrarily chosen examples of the direction opposition and criticism may take, show that the objects of the criticism vary considerably. When we talk about criticism and opposition, we tend to think – perhaps too much as a matter of course – of authorities: priest, bishop, episcopal conferences, the pope. Of course the authorities and office-holders are at the receiving end of opposition and criticism. But we must not overlook the fact that criticism can and must be directed towards other people as well. The Church as a whole, in its different formal and informal groups, can be the recipient of criticism. For it is not as if only the office-holders cherish attitudes and make decisions which are open to criticism. The narrow-minded mentality of individual parishes, the traditionalist theology which is animated by academic historicism rather than by the problems of human existence today, the institutions supported by the laity, which only defend the *status quo* – in short, every kind of, false and anachronistic attitude shown by individuals or groups in the Church – are at least just as important targets for opposition and criticism, especially since it is not as if reactionary authorities, with all their limitations, were confronted by an enlightened laity filled with positive aspirations for the future. It happens just as often that the office-holders, together with their outlook and the decisions [133] which emerge from it, merely reflect the mentality and attitudes of a large proportion of the rank and file of the Church. And it is by no means always certain from the outset that the critics are always right. So criticism always necessarily evokes counter-criticism.[5]

[4] The present author's short book *Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance*, Herder Bücherei 446, 3rd edn (Freiburg 1973); ET *The Shape of the Church to Come* (London 1974), was written with the aim of concrete criticism and stimulus of this kind.

[5] On the 'uncontemporary Church' cf. *Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance,* Herder Bücherei 446, 3rd edn (Freiburg 1973), pp. 38-41, ET *The Shape of the Church to Come* (London 1974), pp. 35-7; and for the ideas arising from a particular case, 'Die Pflicht zur Diskussion' in *Chancen des Glaubens,* Herder Bücherei 389, 2nd edn (Freiburg 1971), pp. 227-37; ET 'The Duty of Discussion', in *Opportunities for Faith* (London 1974), pp. 40-5, 214-22.

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FORMS OF CRITICISM WITH THE CHURCH

What possible forms of criticism can there be within the Church, and what forms ought we to reject? What must be rejected in the first place is the attempt to undermine the Church, and to give it a completely new function. We may leave on one side here whether there have already been attempts of this kind in Church history, if perhaps under a different name. Today, at all events, one can notice here and there (and not only in Western Europe, but also in Latin America, for example) that people do not leave the Church, even though they reject what it understands itself to be and the substance of its faith, as this has been passed down to us; instead they want to remain within it in order to undermine it and reshape it completely. The underlying conviction here is that the Church, with its considerable membership and with its extremely powerful and differentiated institutions, still represents an immense power potential, even in today's secular societies. The idea is that, instead of patiently letting the Church die, in a long-drawn-out process, it should be altered in such a way that both it and its social power potential are placed unequivocally and solely at the service of those secular social aims and purposes which are viewed as being the right ones, with the greatest promise for the future. In other words, the aim is to reshape the previous dynamic of a vertical eschatological hope into an exclusively horizontally directed utopian power for worldly and secular changes in society; and here it makes no difference whether these goals are to be realised in an evolutionary or a revolutionary way.[6]

[134] We do not find these tendencies only – or even primarily – where totalitarian States put the Church (in so far as it is not already dead) at the service of their own political goals, and at most allow her a provisional right to existence in that light, preferring to make a pact with an official Church which inclines to too rash and too shortsighted a compromise, rather than to co-operate with the living and critical forces in the Church. There are tendencies towards undermining and remodelling among ourselves, in the 'critical Catholicism' of the West as well. It goes without saying that the true Christian believer will reject these tendencies, and must do so; for Christian faith is faith in God and in an eschatological salvation for all. It is not merely a hope for a future, emancipated humanity which is to be realised in some transcending but untranscendental utopia.

An attempt of this kind is doomed before it starts, in the sense that it has no true chance of becoming an ultimate Christian decision of faith. A Church which, according to this view, would merely be the old-fashioned precursor of a secularised, emancipated society, is too uninteresting. It would be dead historically before it had even been modified along these new lines. And it would only be the executive officer of a secular society which has no need of a Church of this kind at all. People who stay in the Church – really only because of their individual background and upbringing – and want to remodel it into a secular association for humane purposes, or to make it a buffer against the upholders of an established social power, would be better able to pursue their intentions usefully and effectively outside it. The Church is not a suitable medium for these aims. One can perhaps undermine parties, and try to change their self-understanding; but the Church is not a suitable object for an undertaking of this kind, even from a worldly point of view.

If we ask about the possible forms of internal criticism and opposition in the Church, then we must not overlook the fact that there can be, and are, informal, non-institutionalised forms of opposition and criticism in the Church as well. These are ultimately perhaps more decisive than criticism and opposition, which see themselves as such and therefore institutionalise themselves. Ways of thinking and movements which – without being expressly 'against'

[6] On the problem of 'horizontalism' and 'verticalism', cf. 'The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 295-313.

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something – develop new living energies directed towards positive ends, can in actual fact; through their persuasive character, exert a highly critical function, because the better and more living thing they are aiming at constitutes a silent but effective criticism of what is merely traditional.

[135] We could give examples from the history of theology and thought, down to most recent times. Ways of thinking and conceptions have almost silently made their way, in a kind of meta-historical process, and have been absorbed into the total consciousness of the Church, without having been preceded by the fierce questionings and controversies which might have been thought appropriate to the significance and profundity of these changes themselves. We may cite the absorption of Greek metaphysics into theology from Origen onwards; or the victory of Aristotelianism in Western theology in the thirteenth century; or we may call to mind the contemporary attitude to universal salvation, compared with Augustinian pessimism. Of course these changes were accompanied by struggles and crises. But compared with the extent and profundity of the process itself, these struggles and crises were trivial.

Informal criticism and opposition of great influence do therefore exist in the Church itself, and not merely in the theological sphere. We find it even more in questions of attitude, in Christian life, in liturgy, in the relationship of believers to the world, and so forth. We can always have the hope that living forces in the Church will bring about changes, even when they do not expressly declare themselves as criticism and opposition.[7]

Of course there can and must be formal criticism in the Church as well. In most cases (though not necessarily and exclusively) it will be directed against the Church authorities, and will call in question alterable structures or specific decisions and actions on the part of those authorities. To have real prospect of success, such criticism will generally be sustained by groups and not by individuals.

GROUPS AND PARTIES

The actual, specific form of critical groups of this kind can, of course, vary greatly. There can be groups which exert a considerable critical function, even though their real and primary intention is directed towards positive purposes, and not criticism at all. We may think, for example, of the different religious orders which (at least in their early years) exerted a critical function of this kind. Today we may [136] think of the various ‘charismatic’ or ‘pentecostal’ movements, which have become quite widespread in the United States.[8] They do not see themselves as critical groups. All the same, they probably have a not unimportant critical significance for the Church. We may think of groups of worker priests in France, or of similar groups in Spain and Latin America, for whom social criticism plays a greater part. These groups pursue directly positive goals in secular society; but they none the less have a critical task to perform in the Church’s particular situation.

It is, further, quite conceivable that critical groups should grow up within ecclesiastical institutions themselves: in parish councils, pastoral councils, diocesan clerical councils, synods etc. The critical intention of groups of this kind, within a particular institution, will

[7] The great spiritual uprisings which led to the foundation of the great religious orders, of course, belong to this context (cf. below). It must be stressed in general that all the energies of a living Christianity can be implemented only in a process which must inevitably have a critical component.

[8] On the ‘pentecostal’ movement in the Catholic church, cf. K. and D. Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals* (New York 1969); E. D. O’Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1971); D. L. Gelpi, *Pentecostalism. A theological Viewpoint* (New York 1971); and *Pentecostal Piety* (New York 1972).

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normally play a prominent part. For it is this that gives them their specific function, especially since it must be presupposed that they fundamentally endorse these institutional bodies themselves, with their advisory functions or powers of decision.

Should we (or must we) talk about parties or about groups in this context? It is largely a question of terminology. But it depends on the facts as well. We may associate the term 'party' with a political grouping in a parliamentary democracy. In that case we understand by the word 'party' a group striving for political power, which aims to fulfil goals which are not shared by all members of the country, or citizens of the State, and which has a permanent organisation. In that case we ought not to talk about parties in the Church. Nor should we aim to have critical groups which incline towards acquiring a monopoly of power, in the way that political parties do.[9]

For various reasons, which do not need to be developed here, parties of this kind are hardly adapted to the nature of the Church, even though we might say that the formation of parties within it is [137] primarily a political question, not a dogmatic one. Organised parties in the Church would lend an institutional, absolute, permanent and fixed form to religious differences. People and groups would remain permanently at enmity with one another. Ecclesiastical parties would be mixed up with political parties and different political systems. The result would be nothing less than the danger of a schism in the real sense. Consequently there were no parties at the Second Vatican Council, however distinct the various trends may have been. In all the decisions that were taken, great weight was laid on achieving a bigger majority than any individual group could produce by itself, even if that group alone was actually in a position to provide a majority as such.

A warning like this against the formation of parties in the Church is not of course intended to recommend or legitimate a state of affairs in which individuals or individual groups have no influence at all on the people who are in positions of power in it. That would really be precisely the same thing as the establishment of a particular party with absolute power, even though it rejected the name as such and wanted to give the impression that it alone was the representative of the whole, true Church.

There is, therefore, no objection to be made if groups are formed within the Church's institutions with distinct ways of thinking and aims. On the contrary, there is much to recommend it. These are party groups in a certain sense, and can provide a greater and more comprehensive flow of information among their members, can offer a better opportunity for intensive discussion, and guarantee a more regular, intelligible solution of conflicts within the institution in question. But there must be no party discipline in these groups, and no 'party whips'; that would be contrary to the nature of the Church. They should have ever-open doors, should be self-critical, and should not view their opponents as enemies. Moreover, they should not, out of group fanaticism, reject the compromises which are always necessary, in view of differences of mentality in the Church. They should not be worshippers of a mere formal democracy. They should also be able to leave controversial questions open. And they should prefer to elect persons, not the representatives of a particular 'party line'. Otherwise groups of this kind could damage the very character of the Church. For it ought to be the very place in which social antagonisms are overcome and absorbed, not multiplied by ecclesiastical antagonisms as well.

[138] Even in the institutional sphere the Church must present itself as the community of faith, love and prayer in spiritual unity, in free consent and concord, and with mutual open-mindedness. The Church confesses Jesus as the One who was victorious in defeat; and one of

[9] For a detailed consideration of the problem of 'democratisation' in the church, cf. 'The Teaching Office of the Church in the Present Day Crisis of Authority', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974), pp. 3-30; 'On the Theology of a 'Pastoral Synod', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 116-34.

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its fundamental convictions is that the goals we have described cannot be seized by force, or by means of institutions and their power. We can arrive at them only through the bold powerlessness of the Spirit and of hope. Neither should groups within the Church view its authorities arrogantly as mere 'adversaries' of the Spirit, whom they reserve for themselves. They should rather try to activate the potential of hope (if we may so describe it) and to draw on that; and today this is often much greater among office-holders than resentful critics of the Church in its existing form believe. The attempt must be made. If the groups we have talked about were expressly or tacitly to be transformed into real, organised parties, then it must be feared that elements of essential importance would simply wither away, namely the living enthusiasm which is so necessary in the Church especially; the creative imagination that reaches out towards an unknown future; and the courage to think or do the unusual.[10]

[10] Cf. here 'Angst vor dem Geist' and 'Über das Experiment in christlich-kirchlichen Bereich', both in *Chancen des Glaubens,* Herder Bücherei 389, 2nd edn (Freiburg 1971), pp. 52-7 and 238-47; ET 'Fear of the Spirit' and 'Experiment in the Field of Christianity and the Church' in *Opportunties for Faith* (London 1974), pp. 40-5, 214-22.

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[139]

12

'*MYSTERIUM ECCLESIAE*'

ON THE DECLARATION MADE BY THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

On 24 June 1973, the Congregation for Doctrine published a 'Declaration (*Declaratio*) in defence of the Catholic doctrine on the Church against certain errors of the present day'. The Declaration was accompanied by the observation that Pope Paul VI had confirmed the declaration on 11 May 1973, and had ordered its publication.[1] In spite of its papal *imprimatur*, the *Declaratio* is of course the work of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and has not the same authority as an act issuing from the pope himself. As a declaration of this kind, it cannot contain anything to [140] which a Catholic Christian has to give the absolute assent of faith; it is not, and does not claim to be, an 'infallible definition' of the magisterium. Of course this does not mean that many statements which represent the dogmas of the ordinary and extraordinary magisterium may in fact require this absolute assent of faith, because of their content and their binding character; but in this case the binding character is not lent by the document itself. Of course this general statement leaves many specific questions open, especially since the Second Vatican Council (which is frequently quoted in the Declaration) was not prepared to issue any new statements of faith. This means that, in spite of the appeal to definitions laid down by the First Vatican Council, the exact 'theological note' remains an open question in many other cases.

The Declaration is therefore an 'authentic' expression of the Roman magisterium. What this means in more precise terms does not have to be explained again here. The reader should turn to the letter on the magisterium issued by the German episcopal conference on 22 September 1967.[2] On the basis of that it must be said that, however much we may recognise the positively binding character of the document, the possibility that it may contain errors cannot *a priori* be excluded. Consequently a question of this kind may be investigated without reserve by Catholic theology, even though in the case of official definitions or

[1] ET *What We Believe: Declaration in Defence of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church against Certain Errors of the Present Day* (London 1973). For the official text of the Declaration, cf. *AAS* 65 (1973), 396-408; Cf. also 'Irrtümer über die Kirche? Eine Dokumentation zur Erklärung der Glaubenskongregation vom 5. Juli' in *Herder Korrespondenz* 27, pp. 416-21 (German text) and 421-2 (comment by the secretariat of the German episcopal conference); 'Die Erklärung der römischen Glaubenskongregation "Mysterium Ecclesiae" in *Herder Korrespondenz* 27 (1973), p. 487. It is generally accepted that the immediate occasion for the Declaration was the debate on infallibility started by Hans Küng. The original text of the present essay had to take express account of this topical question, which, however, may count today as superseded, at least from this point of view. Consequently the sections of the essay which had a particular bearing on that point have been omitted here, particularly since the present author's views on this particular case are sufficiently well known; cf. *Zum Problem Unfehlbarkeit: Antworten auf die Anfrage von Hans Kung* (Quaestiones Disputatae 54), 2nd edn (Freiburg 1971), and 'Schluβwort unter eine Debatte: Rahner-Küng' in *Publik-Forum* No. 11, pp. 12-15 (1 June 1973).

[2] The 'Schreiben der deutschen Bischöfe an alle, die von der Kirche mit der Glaubensverkündigung beauftragt sind' ('Letter from the German bishops to all who have been entrusted by the Church with the proclamation of the faith') was distributed as an offprint by the secretariat of the German episcopal conference (2nd edn, Trier 1968). Cf. 'On the Encyclical "Humanae vitae" ', *Theological Investigations* XI (London and New York 1974), pp. 263-87, and 'Heresies in the Church Today?', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974), pp. 116-41. The above letter is considered in detail in 'The Dispute Concerning the Church's Teaching Office', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 86-97.

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dogmas of the ordinary magisterium (where these really are such, and are properly interpreted) no errors in the real sense may be detected. The interpretative possibilities which the document expressly concedes as regards magisterial declarations (and even dogmas) of course apply to the document itself as well.

The document has six sections, as well as an introduction. These sections are sometimes only loosely linked with one another. They deal with the following subjects: (1) The oneness of Christ's Church; (2) the infallibility of the universal Church; (3) the infallibility of the [141] Church's magisterium; (4) the Church's gift of infallibility not to be diminished; (5) the notion of the Church's infallibility not to be falsified; and (6) the Church associated with the priesthood of Christ (the general priesthood, and the official priesthood of its ministers). In the following pages we shall try to give a brief account of what is said in these different sections, and to add a critical appraisal. And here we shall allow ourselves the right to discuss the different points at greater length or more briefly, as the case may be.

The One Church of Christ

We shall pass over the introduction and turn directly to the first section, on the Roman Catholic Church as the 'one Church' of Christ. In view of the importance of its subject, this section is extremely brief. Broadly speaking, it merely repeats statements made by the Second Vatican Council.[3] Of course, one of the convictions of a Roman Catholic Christian is that he cannot quite plainly and simply concede the character of being the Church of Christ to the various other Christian Churches or ecclesiastical communities to an equal degree. An ecclesiological indifference of this kind is not practised, and cannot be practised, by the other Christian Churches towards one another either. All the same, we might have expected – and perhaps had the right to expect – that the document would show more of an ecumenical will towards real progress in the direction of Church unity here.

The fact that the Roman Catholic Church traces its origin to Jesus and his declaration to Peter is undeniable; but here it is stated too simply, from a historical point of view. We read that the Roman Catholic Church contains 'the fullness of the means of salvation', 'all divinely revealed truth', and 'the original Apostolic tradition, living and intact, which is the permanent heritage of doctrine and holiness of that same Church'; but it would not have been out of place to add at least a word to the effect that in the Catholic Church as it actually exists, the whole 'fullness' of what the Church contains is actually realised in its different parts and aspects to a very varying degree, and that much exists only potentially – especially if we compare merely [142] potentially given elements of this kind with the degree in which they are realised in other Churches.

Why does this text avoid the issue by means of the statement that the Church is a Church containing many sinners, which is of no relevance in this particular context? Why does it not talk about the fact that in the course of history this sinfulness (if we see it properly) has also produced a frightful number of errors and distortions of the Christian spirit 'in the head and the members'? And that the Church is not merely a sinful Church, but an erring one as well, even though it cannot fall away from the truth of Christ when it teaches and believes with the absolute assent of faith?[4]

Why was the dividing line between the Roman Catholic Church and the other Churches not also seen in the light of the fact that the actual relationship between the Churches has changed

[3] Especially the dogmatic constitution on the Church 'Lumen gentium' (text in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbott (London 1966), pp. 14-101.

[4] Cf. here the present author's more recent reflections: 'Schism in the Catholic Church?', and 'Heresies in the Church Today?', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974), pp. 98-115 and 116-41 respectively.

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considerably since our divisions began? At least we can find no trace of this idea. When the document says that a Catholic must not imagine that the Churches, though 'divided, still possess a certain unity', that is simply not correct. The Churches today do 'still possess a certain unity', and it is this very fact which enables and obliges us to strive for full unification.

Apart from this point, everything which is said in the first section may be binding on a Catholic. But many things are not said at all which ought to have been said, if we want really to reach the spirit and heart of the 'divided' brethren. In the spirit if not in the letter, this text lags behind the Second Vatican Council, although in the Council's spirit it might have taken us further by means of its theological reflections on the unity and division of the Churches, and on the self-understanding of the Catholic Church. For according to this very self-understanding, the Catholic Church is only what it ought to be, according to the will of Christ, when it has come to terms with the things in its own history which, whether culpably or not, have contributed to the division of Christendom (and even an orthodox Christian may doubt whether enough has been done here), and when all the Churches have once more become one. The first section would not have had to be much longer in order to say something clearer in this direction, and something with more promise for the future.

The Infallibility of the Church

The second section of the document is divided into two parts. The first deals with 'the infallibility of the universal Church'. The second stresses the special function of the bishops' magisterium for the faith of the whole Church. This leads on to the following three sections. As far as the first part is concerned, we must first of all stress with satisfaction that the treatment of the Church's magisterium, which is infallible in certain circumstances, is subordinate to the statement that it is the Church as a whole which abides in the truth of Christ (though of course this truth is also articulated in the form of particular tenets). This is an advance which should be appreciated, and it is expressly and gratefully acknowledged.

Admittedly, when we read that the new people of God is itself infallible in faith, through 'a certain shared infallibility', bestowed by God, 'and restricted to matters of faith and morals, which is present when the whole People of God unhesitatingly holds a point of doctrine pertaining to these matters', then we might have wished for a more precise and careful formulation. For one thing, the limitations indicated by the word 'shared' must not be overlooked and ought to be considered by theologians much more carefully. For another, have there not also been convictions 'unhesitatingly' shared by 'the whole people of God' (in so far as this is an empirically comprehensible entity, and consequently at all relevant for the determination of faith) that this or that was part of faith, even though this firm conviction was mistaken? Instead of 'unhesitatingly holds' the document should have talked about 'an absolute assent of faith'.

Of course in this case another question would have become even more inescapable: how can we empirically determine this absolute 'assent of faith' as distinct from other firm convictions and opinions? For even 'generally shared' and 'firm' convictions can be erroneous. The difficulty we are faced with here is, therefore, very considerable, because in the case of particular dogmatic statements dating from earlier times we have to distinguish between the assent of faith and other 'general' and 'firm' convictions; and yet today we cannot clearly decide by historical means alone whether this distinction was consciously made. (When we are considering the period of the Council of Trent, for example, how are we to distinguish historically between the assent of faith to original sin – which was correctly understood – and the firm conviction of monogenism?) But again, we are grateful [144] to the

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document for deciding, with Paul VI, that the official doctrine of the Church 'is nourished by the ecclesial life of the whole People of God'. That is to say, there is no one-way relationship between the two; it is a mutually conditioning relationship.

The second part of the second sanction is concerned with the special function of the Church's magisterium as represented by the pope and the bishops, compared with the total faith of the Church. Of course the pope and the bishops are not merely 'experts in Catholic doctrine'. Of course the pope cannot merely represent an already existing, silent consensus in the Church. Of course, in certain situations and according to certain norms (which no one will expect this section of the document to discuss), he can make a decision about a disputed question which is really a question of faith – a decision which can even be ultimately binding.

But must these axioms be formulated by saying that the hierarchy '*alone*' has the 'exclusive' task of teaching the Gospel 'authentically'? G. Philips warned about 'exclusive' formulas of this kind at the Council, on an occasion when the 'highest authority' intervened. Of course, the specific task of the hierarchical magisterium can be defined in such a way that this authority belongs to that hierarchy 'exclusively'. But even in the Church there is an authority of 'the thing itself', an authority of theological scholarship, an authority of the person who is charismatically endowed, and so forth. And without these the one authentic doctrine of the magisterium and the authority of the hierarchical magisterium cannot exist. Even less can it be efficacious; because all the elements in the Church always condition one another. The 'considerable assistance' which the fifth section says the theologians offer to the magisterium is in fact an indispensable aid, seen historically and theologically, which in no way detracts from the magisterium's dignity and specific function. The actual carrying out of the functions of the hierarchical doctrinal office is never 'exclusive', and it is not a one-way process. It is never merely 'from above', because it presupposes the life of the whole people of God, and presupposes, too, that this people 'abides in the truth'.[5]

A more fundamental desideratum must be understood in this light. The function of the magisterium is not linked clearly enough or with sufficient inner cogency with the infallible faith of the whole Church. [145] It would have been more in keeping with contemporary theology and with vital and active acknowledgement of the authority of the hierarchical magisterium, if the magisterium's authority had not simply been based on the formal, 'legal' authorisation of Peter and the other apostles, and therefore of bishops and pope. We might wish that its existence and unique character had been made comprehensible in the light of the Church's character as the eschatologically definitive community of faith.

The Church is governed by a mutually conditioning relationship, as must be the case in a unity consisting of pluralistic elements: the community of faith would not exist at all if it did not have institutional form; in that way the faith of the whole Church is essentially co-conditioned by the specific function of its authentic teachers. On the other hand, their function is conceivable only as one aspect of the eschatologically indestructible community of faith. It does not supervene from outside, by means of an authorisation which is simply conceived of in juridical terms. A true understanding of the Church's infallibility is possible only if we heed this relationship between the authority of the magisterium and the whole Church's invincible grace of faith, from which even the office-bearers, with their specific function, live.

The Infallibility of the Magisterium

The third section repeats in the briefest possible terms the traditional doctrine about the

[5] Cf. the essays on ecclesiology in *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 3-134.

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'charism of infallibility' which makes it possible to utter statements which are 'necessarily immune from error'. There is no attempt to give a reason for the First Vatican Council's definition of this infallibility.[6] It may of course be said, pointing to the first paragraph of the document's final declaration, that nothing of this kind was intended, and could not be attempted in view of the brevity required. But if what is in question is not an individual doctrine of faith (which can be safeguarded by an appeal to the general formal authority of a council or a papal definition), but is the formal authority of councils and the pope in general, then it is not enough to counter opponents, doubters and interpreters of this doctrine simply by quoting the statements this authority has made about itself. And this is [146] especially the case because today not only the infallible authority of the pope (which Vatican I taught in its capacity as council) but also even the authority of councils themselves is being called in question or narrowed down. A section of this kind does very little to substantiate the teaching of the two Vatican Councils, especially since it issues from an authority which is itself subordinate to the authority of pope and councils.

This brings us to a question of which the Church's authorities have up to now shown insufficient awareness and to which they have provided no adequately clear answer. To put it honestly and soberly: the Roman authorities apparently proceed from the assumption that they have to state correct doctrine and issue the correct edicts, appealing to their formal authority; and that when they have done this they have performed their task adequately. They still presuppose as a matter of course that what they have in front of them is an obedient flock. But today, more than in earlier times, they must see to it, not only that they are right, but also that they are seen to be right. They ought to present their authority in a more living and primal way, deriving it from the centre of the Christian faith. They ought to interpret their authority to contemporary believers persuasively. And they must not simply assume that the faithful are convinced of the authority of the papal office and the bishops, simply because they want to live in the Catholic Church.

A Roman theologian once said to me, when I pointed this out, that these things were the function of theologians and preachers, not the function of the magisterium itself. Of course theologians have tasks of which the magisterium should not and cannot relieve them. But this does not free the teaching authority from its duty, which is not simply to repeat the old formulations but as far as possible to present them in a modern and persuasive way. Otherwise progress in the official doctrine of the Church would be superfluous. All progress could lie only in the realm of theology. But this would contradict the document itself and would make a clear-cut distinction between statements of faith and statements of theology which does not and cannot exist.

Let me draw attention to one other statement in this section: the Church's doctrinal authorities must apply 'appropriate means' in order to ensure that its teaching really does represent divine revelation in any given case. For in this task it does not receive any 'new revelations' – nor, consequently, is it revealed that a particular, already [147] existing doctrine is actually part of revelation. It is good that this should be said, although it has already been expressed in the proceedings of the First Vatican Council and in the text of the Second. But could not the magisterium say more clearly what these 'appropriate means' are? And what kind of procedure must it adopt, or does it intend to adopt, in the intellectual and social climate of today, in order to make a judgement?

As long as he is left in the dark about the nature of these necessary processes in arriving at a judgement, before decisions are made about doctrine, the average Christian and theologian has all too easily the impression that, without admitting it, Rome is convinced that it can operate with new revelations (at least where what is at issue is whether a particular statement

[6] Cf. 'Constitutio dogmatica I "Pastor aeternus" de Ecclesia Christi' of the First Vatican Council, Denz. 3074-5.

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is included in revelation). It is not then surprising when some people mulishly kick against the magisterium. In order to make its authority effective, the magisterium ought today to make clearer and more transparent what the document calls the necessary processes by which it arrives at a decision. To take one specific example, something like this was attempted by commissions of bishops and theologians at the order of the pope in connection with '*Humanae Vitae*'. Unfortunately the final decision bypassed these commissions entirely. A doctor of the Church, Cardinal Bellarmine, gave an urgent warning against proceedings of this kind a long time ago.[7]

Warnings

The fourth section is a warning against any diminution of the Church's infallibility. We are told that 'the faithful are in no way permitted to see in the Church merely a fundamental permanence in truth, which, as some assert, could be reconciled with errors contained here and there in the propositions that the Church's Magisterium teaches to be held irrevocably, as also in the unhesitating assent of the people of God concerning matters of faith and morals'. The doctrine put forward here about the nature of truth and the freedom from error of the Church's dogmas is complex and subtle. Its expressly [148] formulated statements give rise to a whole number of further problems, so that the theologian feels confirmed in his ultimate uncertainty. For this document does not say clearly what an erroneous theological proposition is, or how such a proposition is really to be distinguished from propositions whose historical character and imperfection this document admits, even in the case of dogmas. In fact, to put it briefly, the sentence we have quoted from the beginning of the fourth section of our document is correct. Apart from that little more can be said about this section.

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council about 'the hierarchy of the Church's dogmas' is reiterated. But when the document goes on to say that 'all dogmas must be believed with the same divine faith', this is too easy a way out; and the existential and ecclesiastical significance of the hierarchy of truths becomes illusory. Of course a Catholic Christian cannot absolutely deny any of the dogmas. But does every Catholic have to affirm every single dogma as such with a positive, absolute assent? If we presuppose this, then the doctrine about '*fides implicita*', the theological question about the extent of what has to be explicitly believed as necessary for salvation, and really the teaching about the hierarchy of truths as well, would in fact no longer have any practical significance. We cannot go on to show here the great ecumenical import of this question. Of course, I do not mean to maintain that our text intends to say that every dogma has to be explicitly 'believed' in the sense we have rejected as inadmissible here. But would it not have been possible more clearly to avoid misunderstandings of this kind which harm the cause of ecumenism?

The Historical Character of Dogmatic Formulations

The fifth section seems to be the best in the whole document. The first part deals with the historically conditioned character of all statements of faith. Here the theologian can read statements which were largely foreign to the magisterial statements about the development of dogma. Up to now – really until Paul VI – it was conceded to a certain degree that dogmatic

[7] Cf. 'Epistola ad Clementem VIII circa controversiam de Auxiliis' (1602). The Italian original is printed in I. von Dollinger, *Beitrage zur politischen, kirchlichen und Cultur-Geschichte* . . . , vol. iii (Regensburg 1882), pp. 83-7; German translation in I. von Döllinger and Fr Reusch, *Die Selbstbiographie des Cardinals Bellarmin* (Bonn 1887), pp. 260-4.

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formulations have a history of their own. But, broadly speaking, it always seemed as if the magisterium admitted only to an *earlier* history, which had now reached a culmination never to be surpassed, (and which could not really proceed any further). Moreover, the terms used in the present dogmatic formulations [149] were insistently claimed to be unambiguous and easily understood by everyone.[8]

What we hear in the first part of the fifth section is more courageous and more in accordance with historical reality. From the point of view of the stage reached by theology, what is said here could and should really have been said in Pius XII's encyclical '*Humani generis*' (1950). But let us be glad that this teaching has been formulated now, even if very late.[9]

The document establishes first of all that the transmission of divine revelation is impeded by historical situations. Even dogmatic formulations are conditioned by terms which are dependent on the language and total situation of a particular era of thought. In this section it is assumed as if it were self-evident (and hence all the more significantly) that the Church's magisterium cannot simply on its own, in complete self-sufficiency as it were, form and determine the terms which it wants for its statements. The document stresses that a dogmatic truth may be imperfectly defined first of all, and that later, in the wider context of other truths of faith and other naturally communicated knowledge, it may be stated more fully and completely, so as to answer new questions, or in order to distinguish the truth of faith from newly arisen errors. The declaration says explicitly that the Church's magisterium can under certain circumstances enunciate dogmatic truths in terms which bear traces of 'the changeable conceptions of a given epoch'. We are told, however, rather curiously, that anything of this kind only happens 'sometimes' and that there are also truths of faith which could be expressed without historically conditioned terminology of this kind. Here the authors of the document are evidently still influenced by the earlier notion of 'natural' and general human terminology, which can always and everywhere be understood without further explanation, and which is independent of the wider context of the history of thought as a whole.

[150] But ultimately that is a matter of indifference for a theology of dogmatic development. If there can ever be dogmatic formulations using terminology which is historically conditioned, then it is not difficult theologically to concede this to all theological statements. Whether this happens sometimes, or is really always so, is a question of dogmatic and theological history that has no essential theological relevance. We are also told that certain dogmatic formulas remain living and fruitful (always providing that they are newly explained), but that others can be, and have been, replaced by new formulations which give clearer and fuller expression to what is meant by the old ones. Dogmatic formulations do not always communicate their real meaning to the understanding of faith 'to the same extent'.

All these statements in the text are made in somewhat too 'retrospective' terms. There is no very explicit look at the future (even though we are told that not all the ancient formulas will have permanence to the same degree). But even so it is clear that the document is aware that, even today, the history of dogma and theology has not come to an end. It will and must continue. Old dogmas will have a continuing history which we cannot foresee.

Of course other things are stressed too. Firstly, that changes of this kind in dogmatic statements have to take place under the control of the magisterium; secondly, that in the historical succession of the formulations, what is really meant remains the same; thirdly, that

[8] We cannot discuss in detail here what is really an important presupposition of the document: that the history of dogma and theology is really progressive purely in the positive sense, with improved formulations etc. This tacit assumption is problematical (in general, but also in view of the rank and dignity of the New Testament etc.). Basically speaking, we ought probably to reckon with the contrary development as well; or at least the history of dogma ought if possible to be conceived of without any 'progressive' pattern of this kind.

[9] Cf 'Humani generis' in *AAS* 42 (1950), 561-78 (of 12 Aug. 1950).

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the old formulations are still quite suited to define revealed truth if they are understood correctly – and that John XXIII taught nothing else at the opening of the Second Vatican Council, even if he and Paul VI stressed that the ancient dogmas must be so expressed that they truly reach the minds and hearts of the people of our time.[10] If it is denied in this context that dogmatic formulations are merely '*commutabiles approximationes*' (alterable conceptions, which only represent what is meant approximately), we must distinguish more precisely than the text does in its attempt to ward off 'dogmatic relativism'. If, as the text expressly says, statements of this kind can be replaced by new ones, which are better and more in accordance with the particular intellectual and spiritual situation, then this presupposes a certain, [151] perhaps necessary, change. Dogmatic formulations are therefore not simply '*incommutabiles*'. And if one dogmatic statement can express the same content in a better, more living, more fruitful, more complete and more perfect way than another (as the document says), then the term *approximatio* does not necessarily have the heretical sense of a dogmatic relativism. It can also mean exactly what this document intends. If a dogmatic formula were to be totally identical with the reality meant – if, that is, it was not an *approximatio* in any way at all – how could there ever be a history of dogma, which the document itself says exists? How could we then talk about better or less adequate dogmatic formulations, let alone about formulations that have to be superseded?

What the document teaches about the historical character of dogmatic formulations is certainly still abstract and formal. Nor has it completely resisted the temptation to make things easy for itself by making a simple distinction between modes of expression and content (though there can never be content without a certain mode of expression). But all the same it contains important implications which are no longer avoidable if this doctrine is to be reconciled with other undeniable facts and perceptions. Like the document, we may start from the conviction that an incomplete or imperfect statement does not necessarily have to be wrong; and that a more complete and more perfect statement does not falsify the one it supersedes. But what does this common conviction mean exactly, when it is applied to particular dogmatic statements, if we read these statements in their earlier historical context (which the document actually requires of us, so that we may determine their true, permanent meaning), remembering thereby that the Church's magisterium can err, and has often erred, in non-defined statements? And that such errors (since they affect the total intellectual consciousness) also influence the actual, apperceived sense of the dogmas? What is the meaning of the statement that there are more imperfect and more incomplete dogmatic statements, if we assume (as we must) that the incompleteness of a statement cannot be taken to mean that, while part of the subject considered is absolutely clearly, perfectly and completely formulated, another, different part of what is meant is left unstated – if, that is, one is unable to escape from this difficulty by quantifying the statement's content?

What is the position when a new statement has to be added to an old formula so that it may be perceived in living and fruitful form, [152] and in its original sense (a proceeding which the document also views as necessary); but when this new statement is not in fact provided, or not yet provided, by the magisterium or by the majority of theologians? This possibility cannot be excluded *a priori*, if there is such a thing as a history of dogma, which has to lead to newer, better reformulations necessary for a particular period, but if (as many examples show) this history proceeds too slowly. What is the position with regard to ancient formulas which can no longer perform their proper service in a later period? If we say with the document that they have only to be explained in the proper way by the magisterium (with the

[10] Cf. *The Documents of Vatican II,* ed. W. M. Abbott (London 1966), pp. 710-19 (Pope John XXIII's opening address), and 'Das Zweite Vatikanische Ökumenische Konzil' in *Herder Korrespondenz* 18 (1963/4), pp. 76-83 (Pope Paul VI's opening address).

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valuable help of the theologians) for them to remain living and fruitful, that is all well and good. But it helps only if we assume that these explanations are actually made (and are in some way or other permitted by the magisterium) when the new need arises because the ancient formulations have proved inadequate. But this is very often not the case. What happens when ancient formulas, which remain, or which have to be replaced by new ones meaning the same thing, actually incorporate errors? What happens when this incorporation is not consciously recognised, or when it is not immediately admitted that the connection between true and false can be dissolved once this connection begins to cause difficulties?

Let me give one example of what I mean. For a long time the inspiration of Scripture was understood in such a way that inspiration was held to exclude pseudonymity, in cases where today we quite calmly admit it. Indeed this was an interpretation which took a long time to crumble away. To take another example – we are still labouring today over the question of whether the tridentine dogma of original sin can be reconciled with polygenism; that is to say, whether the monogenism which was associated with this doctrine can be detached from it, even though ancient theology never thought of such a possibility, or could do, when it formulated this dogma.

Finally, there is one more thing that must be considered. The fifth section of the document somehow starts from the assumption that it is possible to distinguish the real meaning of a dogma from its changing formulation. It assumes that we can grasp the two things separately, compare the one with the other, and so determine the lesser or greater aptness of a dogmatic formulation. But if this is not the case (as a comparison between 'the thing in itself' and its interpretation in any given instance shows) – if, therefore, we can never determine and overcome the historical character of a formulation by means of a [153] non-historically conditioned formulation – how are we to think of this historical development, which the document itself concedes? Is it possible to conceive of it in such a way that it covers the identity of faith, the continuity of the formulations of faith, and also the legitimacy of new formulations?

Of course it is impossible to expect the document to give a clear and unambiguous answer to all these questions, especially since the magisterium receives no new revelations, and theology, up till now, has failed to present the answer in an adequate and generally accepted way. But we can see from these reflections how difficult it is to determine where an 'incomplete', historically conditioned formulation (which must none the less count as being true for all time) stops, and what is really an error begins. With regard to the distinction between incomplete and erroneous statements, there is another point as well. Basically speaking, it is very hard to determine the background of understanding of a statement, and hence the point from which we have to determine its meaning, and, therefore, its quality as being true or erroneous. This is so, at least, in the case of 'metaphysical' and religious statements, where indeed reflection cannot determine these things adequately at all. This applies to earlier periods as well. That is why the meaning of a particular formula in the light of an earlier interpretative standpoint cannot be clearly determined by historical means alone. We can see this, too, from the difference in the interpretation of ancient and new formulations by the different theological schools.

In short, truth and error cannot be so easily and unequivocally distinguished without recourse to linguistic prescriptiveness in Church and society; or to the tenet that fundamentally the Church abides in the truth; or to the other constitutive elements of the Church's unity; or to the experience of a unity existing between experience of the Spirit and statements of faith.[11] We must not think that the question of this distinction between truth and

[11] This phrase may indicate how this essay can be fitted into the overall theme of the present volume, cf. also below.

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error can be settled on the pattern of statements like 2 + 2 = 4, which are directly verifiable or which we find self-evident. Nor is it enough to point out that a statement is true if it does not miss the mark of the reality that is meant. For we are still faced with the question of what the statement, which is supposed to correspond to a particular reality, [154] really means. There is no other way of deciding the question of the truth, since, after all, the statement cannot be compared with, or checked against, the reality it represents. If we appeal (of course rightly) to the formal authority of the magisterium or of revelation, then we are only pushing the question out of theology into fundamental theology.

Now, I have certainly no intention of maintaining that there is no answer, and can be no answer, to questions of this kind; or that the problems they present justify dogmatic relativism or scepticism. But even if these problems cannot be worked out here, it will surely be permissible – with all respect for a document of this kind – to ask whether, in view of the implications of what it says, it was drawn up with the necessary awareness of the problem, and of the consequences (even disciplinary ones) which follow – or do not follow – from these declarations, once one becomes aware in this way of the problems involved.

The Priesthood of the Church

The sixth section deals with a completely new subject: the universal priesthood, and the particular, ministerial official priesthood. One may well have the impression that the document (deliberately or at least in fact) is also directed against the recently published memorandum of the German ecumenical university institutes, which is concerned with the possibility of a mutual recognition of the ministry of the different Churches.[12] It cannot be said that the document makes much progress, or introduces much ecumenical hope into this question. The doctrine about the sacramental character of priestly ordination is too rapidly adopted as the starting point and foundation for the doctrine of the priestly office; whereas that doctrine really seems rather to be a conclusion drawn from an interpretation of the official priesthood which can be apprehended even before the doctrine of its sacramental character. It may be pointed out to theologians and ecumenically concerned people who are disappointed by this section that [155] the document itself declares that the essence of the sacramental character is explained in different ways by theologians, and that the celebration of the Eucharist without an ordained priest is declared to be invalid only if it is wilful and presumptuous (‘*proprio ausu*’). The question of when ‘wilfulness’ of this kind exists, therefore, remains an open one. Equally open is the question of how the permanent character of priestly ordination has more precisely to be constituted and explained.

Why should a theologian not admit to a certain helpless perplexity at the end of reflections of this kind? Why should he not say that, even though he views the substance of the document as binding, he is still unclear what disciplinary measures are to be envisaged – or perhaps not to be envisaged – for the, people against whom this document is directed? Why should not a theologian honestly say, on his own account and at his own risk, that the whole complex of questions which is dealt with here does not seem to have been clarified to such a degree that practical consequences ought now to be drawn? Why may he not hold the opinion that (as the first part of the fifth section says) there is much more to be discovered and formulated, in a further process of theological clarification, if the ancient formulations (which a theologian must not deny) are to be clarified and modulated in such a way that they can be

[12] Cf. *Reform und Anerkennung kirchlicher Ämter. Ein Memorandum der Arbeitsgemeinschaft ökumenischer Universitätsinstitute* (Munich, Mainz 1973). For the present author’s views on this memorandum, cf. ‘Vom Sinn und Auftrag des kirchlichen Amtes’ in *Frankfurter Aligemeine Zeitung* (no. 38) of 14 Feb. 1973, p. 8 and *Vorfragen zu einem ökumenischen Amtsverständnis* (Quaestiones Disputatae 65) (Freiburg 1974).

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understood and assimilated today to the degree we may expect, in view of our contemporary intellectual and spiritual situation, and in the light of the present state of dogma? Is it not permissible to think that it would not be particularly beneficial for the Church, its doctrine, and the authority of its magisterium, if a purely formal declaration of obedience were to be demanded or exacted of the faithful, if this were really to leave all the factual questions open?

It seems to me as if neither side has really said exactly what it means by 'error' in dogmatic statements. And there seems, therefore, no need to put an end to the controversy as yet. If on the one hand there is understanding for the difficulties of theology, and on the other a clearly perceptible respect for the Church's magisterium, a provisional continuation of the controversy does not seem to me to be damaging for the Church. Especially since – with the two provisos we have named – no tangible difference would have to be made in the practice of the Church's life, even in the dimension of faith.

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[156]

13

THE AREA BISHOP: SOME THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In the summer of 1968 Cardinal Döpfner divided up his diocese (Munich and Freising) into three pastoral areas, entrusting each of them to one of his three auxiliary bishops.[1] The one Vicar-General retained authority for the whole diocese, but each of the auxiliaries was to have an 'ordinary, representative authority' for the area entrusted to him. The idea was that the auxiliary, as episcopal vicar, should devote himself to constant contact with the parishes and parish priests; that he should make visitations; and that he should relieve the diocesan bishop in his episcopal functions. As auxiliaries, they are subject solely to the archbishop and are ordinary members of meetings of the ordinarial sessions.

What we are about to consider here are not questions of Canon Law, or pastoral care or theology. Nor are we concerned to evaluate as such the measure which provides the immediate occasion for these remarks. We shall only try to gather together a few ideas – most of them open to discussion – about the task of a regional bishop. These ideas belong to the framework of ecclesiology and sacramental theology. Whether they can throw any light at all on this particular task (which goes beyond the general theological problem presented by the 'suffragan' or 'auxiliary' bishop) must emerge from the reflections themselves.

[157]

PRESUPPOSITIONS

Here we can only indicate the background for what we want to say, in terms of our general thesis. We cannot give a proper theological justification. In the first place, even in the Church social realities can present themselves in various forms and interpretations, without being really different in essentials. This applies to the sacraments too (since they are public events in the community or society of the church) if, for example, these sacraments confer an office, or in some other way alter the circumstances of an individual in the Church as society. What happens in a proceeding of this kind, and what is intended, can be very different from what the minister or recipient of the sacrament explicitly 'thinks' at the time. An example might be a sacramental marriage between non-Catholic Christians who are convinced that the wedding ceremony has no sacramental character. Or a mediaeval bishop who administers the sacrament of episcopal ordination, even though he shares Thomas Aquinas's opinion that this ordination is not a sacrament at all. Or a bishop who, in earlier times, ordained an acolyte or sub-deacon, believing that in doing so he was administering a sacrament. We can recall the distinction, which may have existed objectively, but not subjectively, in the consciousness of a priest in pre-mediaeval times, when he anointed a healthy person on the one hand, and then again someone who was seriously ill. Here we need not explain the reasons for the difference we mean; nor do we have to describe how the difference can be bridged, so that one can talk in a humanly significant sense about the administration of a sacrament even though one actually believes that no sacrament exists. Here, initially, it is perhaps enough to show how the distinction can be applied: a sacrament can in fact be conferred even if the person who administers it does not think he is conferring one; and a sacrament is not necessarily present

[1] Cf. *Amtsblatt für das Erzbistum München und Freising,* 1968, no. 13, pp. 260-1; also Vatican II, *Christus Dominus* (bishops' responsibility for pastoral care), nos. 25-7, in *The Documents of Vatican* II, ed. W. M. Abbott (London 1966), pp. 414-17; and Pope Paul VI, Motuproprio 'Ecclesiae Sanctae' 6 Aug. 1966, nos. 13-14; in *AAS* 58 (1966) 757-87, especially 765-6.

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even though the minister believes that he is conferring one.[2]

The ministry of the Church is really indivisible. As such, as one and entire, it corresponds to the nature of the Church as the presence of God's irreversible, eschatological promise of salvation in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord; and as the community of faith, [158] which inevitably has an institutional form. This Church *as such* possesses a governing ministry whose fundamental authority lies in the proclamation of the public, manifesting Word of eschatologically victorious grace.[3] Since the eschatological community of faith rests on the Christ event, as God's final saving act in history, the ministry of this community also derives from Jesus Christ and is founded by him. This means that a derivation of ministry in the Church from the historical Jesus which can be expressed in historical terms cannot be denied, in so far as this can really be historically proved or shown to be probable. If we see the historical Jesus as 'founder' in this way, then it is really a matter of course that this ministry, or its authority, can be expressed, divided and subdivided in different ways, vertically and horizontally, according to the requirements of the Church in its particular, specific situation. Of course this does not call in question the one, comprehensive Petrine ministry in the Church – all the less because ministry in the Church, besides being generally derived from Jesus Christ (as we have just indicated), also has a direct and obvious foundation in Scripture. It should also be clear that the development of the Church's constitution in the form of this one ministry, and the way it has been divided up, implies irreversible decisions in particular cases, if not in all. (This at least applies to the apostolic period, which we may view as having continued for as long as it took for the New Testament writings to come into being.) And these irreversible decisions can therefore be seen as '*ius divinum*'. But – always presupposing these defining guidelines – the ministry of the Church is fundamentally much more flexible in configuration and specific form than people think. This normally applies both to the traditional division of the one ministry (as *potestas ordinis*) into its three grades of bishop – priest – deacon, and to the more precise content of this vertical division. But it also applies to the question whether the transmission of another, separate, important individual ministry in the Church can have a sacramental character; and whether a particular ministerial authority can be possessed, at least in essentials, by a collective holder as such.[4]

[159]

THE AREA BISHOP

What really 'happens' when a priest is consecrated as auxiliary bishop, and is entrusted with

[2] What is said here again rests on certain presuppositions. For example, not only has the consciousness of administering a sacrament changed in the course of time. The concept of 'sacrament' has altered, too. Here we are using the word 'sacrament' in the strict, contemporary sense.

[3] Cf. 'What is a Sacrament?', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 135-48.

[4] This question cannot simply be answered in the negative from the outset; for the entire episcopal body is the collective holder of the Church's supreme jurisdiction and teaching authority; and it can be viewed historically as the collective holder of sacramental power in Eucharist, penance, the anointing of the sick and ordination. In this connection, therefore, it is possible only to ask whether, through a decision *iuris humani* in the Church, such a collective holder of sacramental power can be nominated as the *sole* legitimate one. Seen from both aspects (and taking into account the very close correlation of the power of jurisdiction and the power of order) the question remains open – at least partly – as to whether a 'synodal' governing body in the Catholic Church is not fundamentally conceivable even today, where we have a 'monarchical' holder of authority. This question has nothing to do with the assertion that a change of this kind is also desirable. Nor does it in any way deny that such a 'synodal' body would possess *those* powers that are described in traditional ecclesiology. The question is only whether, and to what degree, the holder of this authority has to be an individual, or can also be a group – as, for example, in the case of the Church's supreme governing body, in the episcopal college. For more detail, cf. 'Aspects of the Episcopal Office', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 185-201.

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the tasks of an area bishop? In this question we shall be guided by the caution enjoined by our preliminary remarks; but it will probably be permissible to leave the problem of the correct Canon-Law terminology and its development on one side.[5] In the first place, a number of problems do not arise at all in the case of the institution of *area* bishops which otherwise exist at episcopal ordinations; for the area bishop has no territory of his own and/or (in the case of a 'personal bishopric') has no group of people actually assigned to him as his own 'flock'. Usefully and legitimately, even people who have no territorially defined area of their own can belong to the highest administrative body of the whole Church (the entire episcopate with, and under, the pope). This cannot be denied, above all, by the person who sees the essence of the episcopal office (even in the case of a 'local' or diocesan bishop) as lying precisely in his adherence to this highest administrative body, or at least as being most clearly tangible there. All other definitions of the essence of the episcopal office (as distinct from the priesthood) can in fact be maintained only with difficulty and inconclusively; because all the bishop's territorially limited powers of jurisdiction can also be held by someone who has not been ordained as bishop; and because it is at the very least uncertain whether a simple priest does not possess the sacramental power [160] to confirm and to ordain other priests.[6] But in the Roman Curia (and to some extent outside it as well) there are not a few titular bishops; and there seems to be no reason in their case why they should have been co-opted into the Church's supreme governing body through episcopal ordination, even though they really have a subordinate function, and certainly are not – with others – the collective holder of the Church's supreme leadership.

Compared with these, the area bishops have a clearer legitimation: they have a real, tangible flock; in the cases which give rise to our present discussion, this flock is bigger than many a diocese whose bishop counts as part of the episcopate as a whole, without being any problem or question about it. In view of these facts, consecration of an area bishop of this kind can certainly be understood as being 'relative' to a certain flock, irrespective of whether the official Canon Law interpretation holds an ordination of this kind to be absolute or relative. This may be said even if, according to *Christus Dominus* (nos 22-6), there can be no doubt that 'the primary aim is to divide up dioceses of excessive size. The appointment of auxiliary bishops is only a subsidiary measure – if, that is to say, a division of this kind, though really required, seems to be impracticable.'[7] But in, actual practice the simple division of excessively large dioceses cannot be appropriate for today (cf. *Christus Dominus*, no. 22, which relates to dioceses consisting of large cities, which are to be made better adapted to their task by a new *internal* structure); and in these cases the appointment of an area bishop is quite legitimate, even though this is really a measure that is 'subsidiary' to the division of a diocese.

[161] But the real theological problems which arise from the institution of an area bishop have hardly emerged from these practical and legal definitions. First of all we must consider the fact that, according to *Christus Dominus* and the Motuproprio of Pope Paul VI's,

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[5] Cf. here K. Mörsdorf in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican* II, ed. H. Vorgrimler (New York and London 1968), vol. II, pp. 243-5.

[6] In relation to the individual diocese the power of active episcopal ordination would really be superfluous if one really presupposed that every priest had the power of confirmation and priestly ordination, even if this power were restrained. *Here* the idea we have indicated is intended only to show that the distinction between bishop and priest is not as simple as people sometimes think; and that (though we cannot maintain his opinion today) Aquinas was not so wide of the mark when he held that the distinction between priest and bishop is only one of jurisdiction. But if for this reason membership of the Church's supreme governing body is not simply to be thought of as merely *following on* the episcopal office, but is essentially and primarily *co-constitutive* of it, then it is easier to understand why this membership does not necessarily and always presuppose a territorial diocese; for this characteristic of the 'normal' episcopal office cannot constitute the office *as such*.

[7] Cf. n. 1 and n. 5.

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'*Ecclesiae sanctae*', it is even possible to conceive of '*vicarii episcopales*' who are not bishops at all.[8] We may, therefore, ask whether the pastoral situation of a large diocese really requires area *bishops*, if their function can also be carried out by simple priests. The fact that this is possible cannot be denied, as far as the power of jurisdiction and the powers to confirm are concerned. Quite apart from the fact that, dogmatically speaking, the valid ordination of a priest by another simple priest does not appear impossible (given the necessary conditions), the necessity of active ordination cannot be used as a legitimation of the institution of an area *bishop*, especially in view of our contemporary shortage of priests. Priestly orders can easily be conferred by the local or diocesan bishop himself. He needs no episcopal auxiliary for that. But it would be wise to avoid conferring any particular lustre on the exercise of the episcopal vicar's functions through episcopal consecration, and the latter should not be used in order to win particular status for this office. If the theology underlying the sacrament of order is taken to be genuine and true, only the content of the actually intended and actually existing power can provide the legitimate reason for the sacramental transmission of ministry. But this transmission should not aim through its sacramental character to give the ministry itself any higher significance or any special lustre. That is why the episcopal consecration of some Roman curials is felt to be unsuitable and nonsensical. But what is the position with regard to the episcopal consecration of the area bishop, if at first sight he is no more, and has no more extensive powers and functions, than a non-episcopal vicar would have who is not himself a bishop?

ORDINATION

We shall try to give a double answer to this by no means easy question about the significance of episcopal ordination. We shall assume that the office of an area *bishop*, since it actually exists, must to a certain degree have some theological significance.

We may presuppose that it is quite legitimate that very many [162] members of the entire episcopate, as the Church's highest governing body, should be the representatives of numerically small groups of believers, since there are about 2300 *ordinarii loci* in the whole Catholic Church and – since the Church as a whole numbers 560 million members – under each of these local ordinaries there will be on an average about 240,000 Catholics. (For the purposes of our discussion we are, quite legitimately, including in the number of local or diocesan bishops the non-episcopal ones as well.) From this point of view it seems to be quite right that a diocese of several million believers should be represented in the total episcopate by *several* bishops. For legitimate reasons (which are actually connected with what a diocese is, namely the local church which represents, to a more or less adequate degree, the whole Church in all its contemporary complexity) such a diocese can and should, perhaps, not be divided. If we acknowledge the validity of this reasoning, then we must admittedly also, to be consistent, really concede to an area bishop the powers and rights which naturally emanate from his membership of the entire episcopal body. And it must honestly be said that this reason for the existence of an area bishop as episcopal vicar can be given validity only if these bishops also actually have something to do with the episcopate as a whole, as the Church's supreme governing body. This would hardly be the case if an area bishop could be active in this respect only at a General Council, and if the Roman episcopal synod were a barely tolerated institution where 'merely' regional bishops did not *a priori* count at all.

There is another answer to the question as well. In order to make it more comprehensible, let me start from a fictitious case. Given the necessary preconditions and legitimate reasons, a

[8] Cf. n. 1. The Motuproprio is dated 6 Aug. 1966, cf. no. 13-14.

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bishop nominates one of his priests to represent him in a certain area of his diocese, but without having any intention of consecrating this priest as bishop. Let us suppose, for the sake of simplicity, that the bishop makes this 'nomination' using the rite of the laying on of hands, and the prayer for grace to exercise the ministry properly. In this case, or so we would maintain, this transmission of ministry would be a sacrament, even if the bishop were not actually and consciously aware of it.[9] The ecclesiastical ministry is conferred *eo ipso* in a sacramental rite when an important and new part of this ministry is conferred and where [163] there is that tangibility and legitimacy in the public eye of the Church which is necessary for a sacrament. The sacramental character of a transmission of ministry is not an arbitrary addition to that transmission (supposing it to take place under the necessary conditions); the one is given *ipso facto* with the other. For we must simply assume that the Word of the Church (which fundamentally has an exhibitive character, because of her eschatological nature) is *opus operatum* and a sacrament when it is uttered with the full commitment of the Church in a critical situation in the life of an individual, or as the highest realisation of the fulfilling commitment of the congregation (the Eucharist). If this is not the case, it is impossible to give a theologically convincing justification for the sacramental character of most sacramental happenings. For they are lacking in adequate biblical justification; and there is no explicit, sufficiently obvious evidence from tradition going back to apostolic times. But if we start from the assumptions of a sacramental theology such as we have merely indicated here, then we must say (in our fictitious case) that what we have here is a sacramental transmission of ministry. An important, new and highly central ministry now exists, one which cannot simply be seen as an unimportant or merely external modification of a ministerial authority that is already possessed. Something new and more important is conferred, as for example when a layman is consecrated as deacon. But the inner nature of the event when part of the one ministry of the Church is conferred on someone, makes that event a sacrament (always given the presuppositions which we do not have to consider in detail here). It is not that a sacramental event is arbitrarily added, for incomprehensible reasons, in some cases where the partial gift of ministry is concerned, while in other cases it is not –even though the cases are factually of equal importance. We must point back to the presuppositions we have named here.

It might be objected to this notion, that if this is correct, then every conferring of the ministry of episcopal vicar would be a sacrament; but that in fact, as has already been said, there are episcopal vicars who are not bishops. Many objections might be raised here. Without lapsing into heresy, it might well be maintained that even the episcopal vicars would be sacramentally appointed to their ministry through an episcopal consecration; for the considered interpretation of this event as it is generally understood by theologians and canonists [164] does not necessarily have to be correct.[10] Can the appointment to this ministry not very well be sacramental without its having therefore to be understood as a real *episcopal* consecration? It is by no means absolutely certain that an important and new transmission of ministry which, by reason of its inner nature, is then also a sacrament, can actually be conferred *only* in the *three* ordinations of deacon, priest and bishop. But quite apart from all that (and if we go back more specifically to the fictitious case we started from), we can simply say that what is in question from the outset in the appointment of a mere

[9] Cf. n. 2. The meaning of 'sacrament' is differently defined in the present case.

[10] If, according to Pius XII, the three stages of ordination which we also recognise intellectually are conferred only through the laying on of hands, then we might still ask whether such a positive ecclesiastical directive is also applicable to the conferring of ministries which are not envisaged in *Sacramentum ordinis*. This mode of the transmission of a ministry through the laying on of hands is certainly not divine Law. Really such a transmission of ministry can be thought of as taking place in any way, provided it is evident and clear. Cf. Vat. II, *De Ecclesia,* n. 29, and Pius XII, constitution *Sacramentum ordinis*, 30 Nov. 1947, Denz. 3857-61.

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episcopal vicar who is not a bishop is the temporary conferring of a ministry. But this ministry has no new sacramental authority (for confirmation and active ordination); and consequently the appointment of a mere episcopal vicar is essentially distinguished from the transmission of ministry which we are considering here and maintaining to be sacramental. For this reason the conferring of ministry on a mere episcopal vicar does not take place with that absolute involvement on the part of the Church (and the recipient) which is actually given in our case (irrespective of whether this is consciously perceived or not) and which is necessary – but is also a sufficient presupposition – for a sacramental event as such. One could finally point to the fact that, at least in fact, the Church does not recognise as a sacramental event (i.e. that total involvement on the Church's part which makes its word *opus operatum*) any transmission of ministry that is not associated with, and illustrated by, the laying on of hands. Should not the Church recognise certain transmissions of ministry as sacramental (at least as part of the one *Ordo*) because these ministries – by reason of their importance – undoubtedly enjoy the divine promise of grace, and because this promise must consequently be manifested by the Church in its social and historical apprehensibility too through a sacramental act? But as far as our actual question is concerned, that may be passed over. The objective difference between [165] a mere episcopal vicar and the diocesan bishop which we had in mind in our fictitious case, seems to be considerable enough to warrant our interpreting the conferment of the former ministry as non-sacramental, and the conferment of the latter as sacramental.

But what significance does this fictitious case have for our actual subject? It shows that we cannot think of the ministry given to an area bishop (which is at least in some respects understood as being irrevocably conferred) as being non-sacramentally conferred. If we leave on one side (as we shall no doubt be permitted to do) the possibility we have suggested above – that is to say, a sacramental assignment of ministry which would be neither priestly ordination nor a real episcopal consecration – and assume that this office is passed on through the laying on of hands, then we can say that the appointment of the head of a large area within a diocese carried out in *this* way, together with the powers conferred with this appointment, and conferred to some extent irrevocably, *cannot* be understood in any other way than as a sacramental, episcopal consecration.

SUMMING UP

An area bishop is appointed through a sacramental transmission of ministry because, and in so far as, he is co-opted into the whole episcopate – appropriately so, since he is the legitimate co-representative of an unusually large and indivisible diocese; and because, and in so far as, the appointment to this ministry (which is conferred through the laying on of hands) is so new and important, compared with the merely priestly office, that it is *eo ipso* a sacrament – to be specific: an episcopal consecration.

In saying this we have of course not even glimpsed most of the theological questions raised by the appointment of area bishops, let alone the questions which arise for Canon Law and pastoral theology. One question, for example, might well be, how and why the *equal* position of an area bishop in the whole episcopate (where he is quite evidently not subordinate to his diocesan or local bishop) is reconcilable with his subordinate position vis-à-vis his local bishop in his particular diocese. We can certainly not escape from this difficulty simply by calling to our aid the distinction between the power of order (in which the two bishops are equal) and the power of jurisdiction (in which there is a distinction between the two); for it is the whole episcopate which is the supreme holder precisely of the power [166] of teaching and the power of jurisdiction in the Church. We might again ask, even more earnestly,

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whether and why the character of a member of the Church's supreme governing body is reconcilable theologically with a simultaneously subordinate position in relation to another bishop. The Church's ancient patriarchal and metropolitan constitutions and structures do not provide a theologically adequate justification for this because on the one hand we can raise the same question in regard to these constitutions, and because, in the ultimate resort, it is still an open question whether some minor 'bishop' in early or later times, though certainly bearing a bishop's title and going under this legal designation, was not in actual fact merely a priest or 'itinerant' bishop, without perhaps really being a bishop at all. Even today, no truly definable border-line can be clearly and convincingly drawn between priest and bishop which is *absolute* as regards the power of order; and, as far as jurisdiction is concerned, many a simple bishop was in hardly a better position towards his patriarch or metropolitan than a dean or other head of part of a large diocese. But we cannot go on to talk about these questions and others like them here, even though they inevitably arise in connection with the institution of area bishops.

Let me, in closing, just say one thing. It is not in accordance with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council or with the character of an auxiliary bishop as a fully authorised member of the entire episcopate (and if he is not to be that, then he should not be consecrated as bishop at all) if bishops of this kind are to be viewed and treated in an episcopal conference more or less as semi-undesirable members of merely secondary rank.

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[167]

14

TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE CHURCH AND SECULAR SOCIETY

Do transformations in the Church perhaps have some effect on secular society today? And if so, what kind of effect? I should like to try to answer this question here, at least in broad outline.[1] But before we can start to consider the subject we have defined in this way, we ought to agree about the sense in which we are talking about the changes and transformations of and in the Church. We may, however, take it to be a statement of fact when we say that, for a considerable time now, the Church has been involved in a process of change; and that in the coming decades this process will probably be more widespread and more evident all over the world. What is actually happening in this process, however, has been described in a multitude of bewildering interpretations; and the word 'transformation' or 'change' certainly suggests many things that are not meant here.

In the first place, it cannot be a question of a transformation which would affect the very nature of the Church – the Church which a definition that has come down to us from scholastic theology describes [168] as *iuris divini*.[2] Of course this term itself is not as clear as people casually suppose; and that means that it is weighed down by particular problems of its own. Naturally there is nothing in the Church which is in itself plainly and simply, quite expressly and in the abstract, *iuris divini*, and which in actual, specific fact is not also historically conditioned and subject to change. So a transformation of the Church cannot mean that there can ever be a time when the living fellowship of believers ceases to confess, as the incomprehensible foundation and goal of all history, the living God who in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, has irrevocably promised himself to the world as victorious grace and forgiveness. The transformation of the Church will not mean, either, that sometime or other the petrine and episcopal structure of the ecclesiastical society will cease to exist. And yet it is a matter of course that this Church will continually experience changes which it cannot estimate in advance, particularly in the dimension of its social character and its Law. And even the papal and episcopal function in its specific, ecclesiastical form is therefore not excluded from far-reaching changes.

WHAT TRANSFORMATION?

The following ideas are designed to centre on those lasting and, above all, institutional

[1] This essay is based on the revised manuscript of a lecture given at a symposium in Madrid in the spring of 1974, in which the present author took part, together with Professors Jürgen Moltmann and J. B. Metz. The subject was chosen by the organisers of the symposium and was based on the little book *Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance*, Herder Bücherei 446, 3rd edn (Freiburg 1973); ET *The Shape of the Church to* Come (London 1974). In the analysis of the various situations, the reader will discover much that has already been said; but the essay as a whole contains sufficient fresh material to justify its inclusion in the present volume.

[2] Cf. 'Reflection on the Concept of "Ius Divinum" in Catholic Thought', *Theological Investigations* V (London 1966), pp. 219-43; also in *Theological Investigations* XIV (London, 1976), the following essays: 'On the Theology of a Pastoral Synod', pp. 116-34; 'Aspects of the Episcopal Office', pp. 185- 201; and 'How the Priest Should View his Official Ministry', pp. 202-19. Recently, in connection with reflections on the Church's office and ministry, the present author has also proposed the creation of a 'law based on the nature of the Church', as the foundation for its hierarchical structure; cf. *Vorfragen zu einem Ökumenischen Amtsverständnis* (Quaestiones Disputatae 65) (Freiburg 1974), especially pp. 35-9.

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changes in the Church which have already been made or which we may expect in the foreseeable future, on the basis of the fact that, in all countries, and even in the so-called Christian parts of the world, the Church has become, or is beginning to become, the gnoseological minority. Of course it is true that the points of departure for this vary greatly, just as the development itself is coming about with varying swiftness and in ways which differ from case to case. But the living space of the Church today – which is to say the secular pluralistic or even authoritarian anti-Christian societies and [169] States – brings with it a minority status which either already exists or can be foreseen for the near future. This minority status inevitably brings change with it, even if the changes are slow and meet with resistance in the Church. And these changes are to be found even in places where Christians who belong to the Church are still in the majority numerically, in that particular society as a whole. According to the principles of civic tolerance (which after all are religious and Christian principles as well[3]), Christians must in this case recognise the social legitimacy of large minorities of considerable cultural and political importance; and they must, therefore, submit to the Law of a pluralistic society.

What emerges for the Church in the way of change in this situation, where the Church is part of modern, secular society, or what suggests itself in that direction, particularly where the Church's institutional form is concerned, can – as we have already said – vary in nature, extent and urgency in the different countries and continents. But it is self-evident that, in view of the minority status of Christians and the Church, changes in ecclesiastical structures will come, even if they are opposed by the Church in its official character, and in spite of the dislike of traditionally attached groups of Christians. Moreover, since ultimately these changes rest on a common cause, they will generally crop up everywhere in similar form. But we should be better able to recognise and interpret them if we could investigate their cause more exactly – that is to say, the conditions that contribute to these changes in the history of thought, in social and political life, and no doubt in salvation-history, too. Of course, we cannot carry out this investigation here. In our present discussion we shall give only a few indications which may help to illustrate the transformation in and of, the Church, before going on to consider in more detail the possible influence of this process on secular society.

A first characteristic of these changes in the Church is the fact that its mind is no longer identical with the mind of the public as a whole. On the contrary, the two are related to each other in an inevitable process of mutual dependence and reciprocity. Seen empirically, the secular mind of society shows itself to be, if not the *all*-powerful part of this relationship, at least clearly the *more* powerful part. We cannot overlook the fact that now this secular social consciousness, which [170] sees itself expressly as non-Christian, none the less includes, if anonymously, much that is Christian; and it can be partly marked by what a Christian calls sin. Consequently it is not a question of Christianity and the Church on the one hand, and a neutrally secular and secularised consciousness on the other. The mutual relationship is much more complex than that; for again, the actual consciousness of people in the Church itself is also partly sustained by the contemporary secularised consciousness of the society around them – quite apart from the fact that even the Church's awareness can also be distorted by sin and error in particular cases.

This closely interrelated relationship between awareness in the Church, as a minority group, and the pluralistic mentality of secular society, determines a second characteristic of change for the Church. Its proclamation of its faith, and the theology required for this, present themselves today in a much more 'pluralistic' form than formerly. For by reason of its nature and of the task assigned to it, theology is a reflection about Christian faith in its actual

[3] Cf. here especially Vatican II's 'Declaration on Religious Freedom'; text in *The Documents of Vatican* II, ed. W. M. Abbott (London 1965).

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relationship to reality and to the task man is entrusted with in life. This means that from the very beginning it is necessarily related to the whole of human existence. But, even before theological reflection, man is a pluralistic being who can never adequately synthesise the protean manifestations of his reality, his history and his experience – and today less than ever. The human situation cannot be abolished, but it is only today that people have become more clearly and more fully aware of what it is. Of course, this situation also has its effects on the theology of the Church, particularly because theology (as distinct from faith, which derives from the experience of Jesus and the incomprehensibility of God) contains in itself a number of different approaches and outlines for the future in this world. The influence of all these different secular, pluralistic backgrounds to understanding derives from man's free position in finite time. For that reason it can never be entirely compensated for, which is one reason among others for the pluralism in theology which people are very conscious of today but which is insurmountable. There will never be another scholastic theology, which could be understood by everyone in the same way and could be practised by everyone. It is impossible to show in detail here what this assertion means for the Church's magisterium and what consequences that magisterium ought to draw. But these consequences already exist, even if they have not yet been sufficiently recognised and taken into account in official quarters.

[171] A third characteristic arising from the Church's minority status in our time is the new and growing importance of the rank and file, or the 'grass roots' of the Church's people.[4] For the real, specific impact of its office and ministry depends to an increasing degree on this rank and file. However, the theological legitimation of the Church's official ministry may be thought of in a Catholic ecclesiology as coming 'from the top'; today at least its real effectiveness, its 'power', is no longer simply presented as a given fact for the response of the rank and file, as it was in earlier times. Today it follows from their good will and is dependent on that. Whether one welcomes this phenomenon or not makes no difference to the facts. However long the process, which began with the Second Vatican Council, may continue before tangible and established results become crystallised, it may already be said now that, through the dependency of the Church's ministry and office on the grass roots which we have already mentioned, the mutual relationship between the two is going to assume a more democratic form.[5] The rank and file of the Church will also acquire a legally institutionalised and important influence on the 'official' Church in some form or other; and the latter will no longer exercise its function in a closed circle of officials, who make all the decisions themselves.

THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR SECULAR SOCIETY

Having said that, let us break off our brief discussion about the transformation of and in the Church. Can we now perhaps go on to talk about the effect of these changes on secular society? Before we consider this subject, it must be emphasised that we have no intention here of describing and elaborating all the real, essential services which the Church can perform in secular society, in the light of its nature, its mission and its life. In the future as in the past, it will continue to be of the greatest importance for secular society that the Church believes in the living Lord of all history, and in the blessed end of this history which he has promised; that, contrary to all the hopelessness which this history continually reiterates, the Church goes on [172] hoping; that it prays for, and feels responsible for, the poor and the

[4] On this term cf. K. H. Neufeld, 'Berufung auf die Basis?' in *Entschluß* 28 (1972/3), pp. 469-81.
[5] Cf. 'The Teaching Office of the Church in the Present-Day Crisis of Authority', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974); and in the present volume 'Opposition in the Church', pp. 127-38.

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oppressed, for people who have not had their fair share of things in this world, and for the dead; that the Church stands in the way when people want to turn history into a mere tale of victors and survivors;[6] and that in the world the Church continually upholds with vital force a position from which both proved tradition and the tempting future can be quite soberly and critically called in question, and in the face of which no tangible historical reality can claim to be God, either theoretically or practically. All this and much more besides is of vital importance for secular society too. And, of course, this is more important than anything which we can now mention as being the result for secular society of changes in the Church determined by a particular period.

But all the same, we must, because of our subject, address ourselves to just this possible influence. Now that we have narrowed things down, we shall think in more detail of two possible effects of structural alterations in the Church. Even so, not all the details can be described in our present framework, especially since it is fundamentally not at all clear whether the unique features of the transformation we have described can really have any effect on secular society – whether ecclesiastical changes of this kind can be translated at all into secular contexts and can encourage similar manifestations there. If we once presuppose that this is possible (i.e. that these alterations, which are wrung from the Church, so to speak, because of its minority status, could provoke analogous effects in secular society), then in spite of its actual situation the Church could perhaps play a part even in a pluralistic society, in which it would not simply run after the secular historical transformation, but actually set an example by running ahead of it. For its status as a minority no longer allows the Church to surrender its development to the law of inertia, as secular society still does. A swifter and more deliberate implementation of necessary changes can therefore give the Church the position of a pace-setter in the society around it. But we must quite certainly not make our Christian faith and our church membership dependent on a hope of this kind.[7] So ought we simply to deny that hope from the [173] very beginning, as if it were quite certain that the power of the Church to influence world history to any considerable degree has been exhausted once and for all? We do not share this opinion either.

a) *Shared Basic Convictions*

In my view, the initial contribution which transformations in the Church can make to secular society seems highly remote. But even a secular society with its institutions cannot – in spite of its liberal and pluralistic self-understanding – live and get along without a certain basic stock of common convictions which are respected by everyone in that society. This basic stock cannot simply be replaced either by particular maxims and institutionalisms which happen to be obviously useful, or by the pure brute force of the State, any more than it can consist of an inexhaustible heritage of tradition stemming from the past, or can automatically renew itself again purely and simply out of the depths of human nature itself, as it were. On the contrary, society itself has the task and the duty – and indeed is continually faced with the necessity – of quite deliberately preserving this basic stock of common convictions by its own methods; and where necessary it also has the task and duty of regenerating and changing these shared convictions.

The power and possibility of preserving this basic stock of convictions and altering it in accordance with the times, certainly belong to *everyone*, basically speaking, because of the

[6] CI the lecture given by J. B. Metz on the occasion of the same symposium in Madrid, 'Kirche und Volk', printed in *StdZ* 192 (1974), pp. 797-811.
[7] This would seem to be the case, for example in G. Hasenhüttl, *Herrschaftsfreie Kirche* (Düsseldorf 1974).

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dignity every individual enjoys. But in fact this power and possibility have principally to be implemented by the people who actually have the power to do so, and who bear special responsibility in this direction – that is to say, the representatives of the State. In saying this we are already presupposing that State and society are never quite identical as historical entities, and that an identity of this kind would not even be desirable. So when it is a question of breaking down structures of dominance and constraints and human self-alienation (to name in catchword form some of the generally familiar basic social and political demands), then the power to do this lies with particular individuals or groups. For it is they who define the sphere of freedom open to any individual, and they define it before the individual is consulted at all. For it is simply impossible for everyone adequately to think through all the processes of decision, irrespective of whether they affect them as individuals or whether they affect society. And this means that it is [174] equally impossible to institutionalise these processes of decision in such a way that they are sufficiently clear to everyone. We must therefore start from the assumption that there will always be more powerful people and less powerful people in a State, and that the more powerful ones are given in a special way the task and responsibility of preserving the basic stock of convictions that we have been talking about.

The question that emerges can, therefore, only be *how* the power of the State can specifically attempt to achieve the necessary regeneration of this basic stock of common convictions and norms which is essential for society – a regeneration which must be tackled again and again; and how they can do this without infringing the individual's freedom of conviction and way of living, which must be safeguarded to the greatest possible degree. It is not an easy task, continually to try afresh to reconcile, on the one hand, freedom of conviction, and the opportunity to proclaim that conviction publicly and to realise that freedom in specific terms, and, on the other hand, the positive cultivation and maintenance of common social basic convictions. A glance at societies and States in the world today – whether they are predominantly democratic or authoritarian in form – shows clearly that this effort cannot be avoided simply by making a radical choice for one alternative or the other. But we have no need to enter into that in any more detail here.

If we take the historical character of all human truth seriously, then of course no ready-made principles can be put forward in this question either – principles which we should only have to apply for the problem in a specific society to be solved once and for all. Faced with this historical decision, no one can be spared the difficulty of searching, of experiencing, of struggling without the benefit of any tangible arbiter. On the other hand, this does not exclude the possibility of perhaps evolving patterns which are better adapted than the earlier ones to help us hold our ground in this ever-new and ever-necessary struggle between freedom of opinion and the need for a common social 'ideology' (to use the word in an entirely neutral sense); and for holding our ground without infringing the respect due to one another. The result will in any case be a precarious one and can never be any more than a temporary balance between the two co-existent entities. The need for these new patterns is becoming increasingly clear in all the secular societies of the world; but it will probably be [175] legitimate to maintain, without any further proof, that they are still largely lacking.

b) *The Formulation of Fundamental Convictions*

In this sense transformations in the Church and the new structures arising out of them could provide a model for secular societies, too. It is true that the Church is still involved in the process we have indicated, but it ought to survive in such a way that the new equilibrium between authority and freedom in its own life may ultimately bring with it patterns which

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may be of use beyond the sphere of the Church itself. There is no doubt that in the past the Church has preferred authoritarian forms, and has cultivated them especially for the protection of the common convictions of its faith. In view of its present-day minority status, and since the 'secular arm' can no longer be counted on for support, these forms are no longer effective. This is true even where a person against whose views the protest of the Church and the magisterium is directed, basically recognises the Church's teaching authority. That is why today a relatively wide consensus in the Church's general sense of faith, and in theology, is a necessary precondition even for authentic declarations by the magisterium, so that it can act legitimately and can count on being really effective.

We have already said enough about today's pluralism; we have pointed to the lack of a common background of understanding, shared as a matter of course. This, and conscious historical examination of the historical influence and contingency of ideas which were up to now, largely speaking, unquestioningly shared, are now, to a previously unknown degree, hampering utterances on the part of the Church's magisterium which would be both generally binding and generally comprehensible. If the authorities concerned, therefore, wanted to fall back on authentic but non-defining declarations, they would renounce their binding character and could reckon only with a limited effect on the actual awareness of the church member. On the other hand, however, in our time, in contrast to earlier situations of mind and faith, new definitions presuppose a whole series of conditions which are difficult to fulfil. For that reason, in the future we shall probably only seldom, or never, have to reckon with definitions[8] [176] which are more than an emphatic repetition of earlier statements.

In addition to all earlier difficulties, today the historically conditioned conscious or unconscious variety in backgrounds of understanding (which cannot really be synthesised at all in the actual consciousness of either the individual or even the representatives of the Church's magisterium) raises an alarming question: are the existing, officially valid formulations of faith really so alive in the consciousness of individual church members or church groups that they really cover and express the same convictions of faith? For example, the notion of a hierarchy of truths, which found expression at the Second Vatican Council,[9] also shows that agreement in the sense of faith (which used normally to be presupposed) is not so tangibly and susceptibility present as had probably been assumed. The ecumenical strivings towards unity in faith point in the same direction, since they reckon as a matter of course with differences in the histories of faith in the future too. In earlier times, when the Church's teaching authority was exercised, a uniformity of faith was usually assumed to be both the premise and the goal; at the very least, this goal cannot be so easily reached or determined as people once thought.

Moreover, in our period the magisterium also has to take account of a series of unique features in the human situation which used to be treated differently. For today the *bona fides* of the individual believer and theologian must be taken into consideration in a totally different way, if they seem to stray from the Church's sense of faith. It is impossible to do anything else in a society which in general proclaims freedom of conscience, if the Church does not want to lose all credibility with regard to its own message. One could say and add many things here. But in spite of everything, I will not pretend that we in the Church already know exactly *how today* (in contrast to earlier times) the authority of the ecclesial community of shared faith can be reconciled with the authority of freedom.

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[8] Cf. 'Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church', *Theological Investigations* XI (London 1974), pp. 3-23; 'The Future of Theology', pp. 137-48; 'The Teaching Office of the Church in the Present-Day Crisis of Authority', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974), pp. 3-30; and above all 'On the Concept of Infallibility in Catholic Theology', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 66-85, esp. pp. 71-5.

[9] Vatican II: 'Unitatis redintegratio' (Decree on Ecumenism), no. 11, in *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbott (London 1966), p. 354.

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[177] What institutionalisms would then have to exist in the Church today, for the abiding authority of the magisterium to co-exist in a positive way with freedom of conscience – even though the co-existence may perhaps always have to be one of agonised tension? For it is in the conscience that the Church's sense of faith continues to develop; and this process cannot simply be controlled by the official authority of the Church. What must be preserved, finally, is also the legitimate liberty of theology, and difference in the development of the sense of faith in individual Christians, whose living conviction also has the right to be openly expressed, even if it does not simply coincide with the Church's sense of faith.

Now, of course, secular society should not, and cannot, simply take over or imitate the methods whereby the Church has to master the difficulties which still have to be solved for the future. The consciousness of society and Church are too different in origin, content and goal for that. But the new problems which force themselves on the Church and on secular society have a common origin, generally speaking;[10] so if the former were to arrive at a decision more quickly, it could develop practicable solutions for its problems which would also be of significance for secular society. In order to do this, without falling back into a mediaeval state of mind, or without continuing to maintain an attitude of this kind, it would have to find a way to preserve freedom of thought on the one hand, and yet to preserve and develop a common basic conviction (without which every society collapses) on the other.

How we are to conceive of this in concrete terms – how there is, and can be, a free, anti-authoritarian and yet effective magisterium in the Church – ought to be developed here at more length than space allows. Only a few somewhat random ideas may supplement and clarify this suggestion.

When all is said and done, secular society, with its state organisation, is also distinguished from the Church in our pluralistic world by the fact that no one can opt out of secular society, whereas he certainly can from the Church. This gives rise to a highly complicated dialectic of a double kind as regards the rigour and flexibility which [178] are called for with regard to membership of the one or the other society. For this question one ought to consider the possibility of an ecclesiological 'marginal group', since here traditional ecclesiology can offer only the sterile, inappropriate and insufficiently differentiated word 'catechumen'.

What ought to be developed, too, would be a theology of coexistence, starting from statements which are apparently simply contradictory, logically speaking, but which, because they belong to different levels, existentially and socially, are not truly 'irreconcilable' after all. What ought to be brought out here is ultimately only this: with an eye to the possible co-existence between liberty of faith and the mutually binding confession of faith of the ecclesial community, the Church ought to develop new modes of action and new institutionalisms. Here its opportunity would be that, because of its minority situation, it is under great pressure from outside to push forward with these developments much more rapidly than is possible elsewhere. In this way it could become something of a model for secular society, which is faced with similar problems. For secular society does seem to stand in some perplexity before the dilemma of a social and state ideology enforced by authoritarian means on the one hand, and the increasing disappearance of common basic convictions on the other. But basic convictions are necessary for society, too; otherwise it would degenerate into anarchy, for which the 'remedy' would then probably again be the tyranny of a coercive ideology.

c) *The Role of the 'Grass Roots'*

[10] Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 39, 7 (CCL 1), 151. On the problem of the connection between the Church and secular society in general, cf. also 'The Function of the Church as a Critic of Society', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974), pp. 229-49; also *Freiheit und Manipulation in Gesellschaft und Kirche* (Munich 1970).

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At the beginning we mentioned, among other things, that in a Church whose official authority is no longer supported by secular society, the 'grass roots', freely developing groups of believers, takes on an entirely new importance for the Church, and for the effectiveness of its office and ministry. What does this statement really mean? An assessment would require us to trace the beginnings of a free activity of this kind from 'below' – the beginnings, for example, which found expression in the Second Vatican Council. We should have to know what tendencies were (and are) of determining importance for the further development of these beginnings; why such attempts have undergone considerable setbacks since the Council; whether and under what conditions these personal 'grass roots' communities are [179] conceivable as the fundamental cells of the Church which are required today; how they are related to traditional parishes; and what new conceptions about the priest and his function could emerge as a result.

Unfortunately we cannot do more here than merely mention these points. But their bearing for our subject as a whole can be summed up with considerable clarity. The Church, in its present minority situation, where it is no longer supported by the secular powers of society, can only *be* the Church – and can only continually *become* the Church – by deliberately being the Church from below. Sociologically, it can no longer be a Church which is *presented to* the rank and file and *confronts* it. But this means that the relationship between the basic community and the authorities must also take a very different form from the one we have hitherto been used to. Nor will this new form leave structures and institutions untouched.

The problem in secular societies, seems to me to show entirely analogous features. For whether we look at the Western democracies with the different nuances they give to their 'concept of democracy', or at the Socialist countries, with their different party oligarchies – everywhere in the world the relationship between the masses, the basic community, the people and the elite – the leaders – seems to be disturbed. The gap between them, at all events, is a wide one. Parliamentary representation is increasingly losing its earlier standing, and not infrequently gives the impression of being a mere façade behind which other powers and forces exercise their influence without any control at all. In that way it becomes ultimately unimportant which small and largely anonymous groups obtain this dominating position.

In the Socialist countries, the people are claimed to be the active upholders of economy and State; but even so, here, too, the observer of the different attempts at finding practicable models sees the same problem: how huge masses of the people – now educated anyway to a point where they can no longer be treated as minors – can remain in sufficient contact with the indispensable apparatus of higher officialdom for decisions to be made by the people (always assuming that something of the kind is really wanted).

Where this problem is concerned, the situation, the task and the means are certainly very different in the Church and secular society. But there will probably be no argument about the fact that the problem of active participation by the rank and file in the decisions of the leadership in both does exist. On both sides people are searching [180] for forms and structures for a participation of this kind. We too should not simply think that this problem has already really been solved, and that our task is just to remain true to the democratic constitution, and at most to purify it in its already existing form.

After all that we have said, it will probably now no longer appear far-fetched to seek for models for secular society in the Church. But really this is nothing new. We can read of Christianity's early period: 'See how those Christians love one another'; so might it not later also be said of us: 'See how they really live *together*, in liberty and without coercion?' This hope may sound highly utopian, especially since the insight and will for profound alterations still seems hardly to exist in the Church. Perhaps the inexorable results of its minority status

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will have to force themselves even more urgently and inescapably on its consciousness. All the same, we believe that the Christian's sense of responsibility for secular society, which was newly proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council, can certainly enable us to perceive our duty and strengthen our determination to see that the relation between the rank and file on the one hand, and the official ministry on the other, is embedded in the structure of the Church in such a way that it may even take on, to some degree, an exemplary significance for secular society; and that in this way out-of-date patterns of inter-human relationships will cease to be cultivated when they have been abandoned everywhere else.

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[181]

PART FOUR

Signs of the Times for the Church

[183]

15

THE ONE CHURCH AND THE MANY CHURCHES

Our subject is the one Church and the many Churches.[1] We might also say, the one Church of God and of his Christ, and the many Churches of men and women. When we talk about the many Churches, we are looking at the Church as a historical specific social entity, with a human word, in which the Word of God finds expression, with sacramental signs and tokens, with institutions, with an office and ministry, and with everything else that belongs to a human society. It is obvious to us that the Church and the Churches do not consist merely of what belongs to them in their character as historical, social entities. We know that their real theological essence means the Spirit and grace; and that for them the decisive things are the faith, hope and love which in them come to fruition – indeed that these realities are to be found beyond the Churches themselves, wherever a person overcomes his own nature and listens to the voice of conscience. And we know, too, that all the tangible social realities to the Church and the Churches have significance only to the extent in which they are the sign, the incarnation and the mediation of these realities of grace, which link man with man, and so with Jesus Christ, and hence draw men and women into the mystery which we call God. But when we talk about the one Church and the many Churches, we also have to remember their historical and social dimension. For it is in relation to that, that the question of unity, diversity and division is raised.

[184]

THE PRESENT SITUATION AS AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL PROBLEM

Interpreting the question in this way, we can approach it from various directions. For a Catholic dogmatic theologian it would seem most obvious to start from dogmatic ecclesiology – which means, in specific terms, the theological self-understanding of the Catholic Church; and from *that starting point* to ask how we have to understand the unity of the Church theologically. We would then enquire how, in principle, even in a Catholic ecclesiology, the one Church is the communion of many particular Churches, with their own history, their own form, and each with the unique character of its own life. We would ask what difference in the particular Churches is irreconcilable with the theological character of the one Church, and therefore ought not to exist; what relationship the latter has to these

[1] The same question is considered by the present author in somewhat different form in ‘Church, Churches and Religions’, *Theological Investigations* X (London 1973), pp. 30-49; ‘On the Theology of the Ecumenical Discussion’, *Theological Investigations* XI (London 1974); ‘Perspectives for the Future of the Church’, *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974), pp. 202-17; also ‘Theologische Deutung der Gegenwartssituation als Situation der Kirche’, *HPTh* II/1 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 233-56.

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many Churches; what positive theological status this Church can none the less concede to these many Churches; and why, how, and with what reservations the Catholic Church in its specific existing form sees itself as *the* Church of Christ.[2]

But here – for reasons which will soon emerge – we shall first of all choose another starting point, and shall pick a different approach. We shall search for a starting point and approach that is empirical, and begins with the sociology of religion. In doing so we are of course well aware that with this method we shall reach only part of the questions raised by this subject. When we talk about the many Churches, we do this almost inevitably under the influence of an interpretation of them – a way of looking at them – which may be theologically justifiable and even necessary, but which does not correspond to reality where the sociology of religion is concerned, or which – better – leaves out this sociological aspect altogether. For we do not merely conceive of each of these Churches as what it undoubtedly is – a social institution, with its different sections, its officials, a particular law, a particular history, and so forth; we tacitly assume that in every religious organisation of this kind a certain, clear conviction or profession of faith is to be found, a creed which plays [185] a prominent part for the people united in this society, and is binding on them, and which therefore, distinguishes it from other ecclesiastical societies; because it is these credal discrepancies which divide these churches.[3]

From a historical and theological viewpoint, this way of looking at the Churches and their divisions may be correct. Formerly it was certainly the only way. For earlier it was this confession of faith that held each Church together; and every confession of faith that distinguished one Church from the other Churches took the form of a clear conviction – at least among the church leaders, who were also the socially authorised representatives. These leaders also really did have behind them the people in the Church whom they represented and could certainly feel themselves to be their spokesmen and representatives. For on the one hand these people, in so far as they had a theological opinion at all, did not (and could not, sociologically speaking) have any opinion other than that held by these representatives, who were also authorised by society and by the State. And on the other hand, these representatives succeeded to a certainly considerable degree in mediating to their people the denominational creed which divided one Church from another. This meant that in each Church they succeeded, practically speaking, in producing a homogeneous denominational consciousness with an individual impress of its own. In this sense the Protestant Churches, too, were themselves, by way of their theological representatives, clerical, in spite of the wide individual theological differences which existed between them down to the end of the nineteenth century, in spite of their acknowledgement of the universal priesthood of all believers, and in spite of the sects and revival movements which continually sprang up from below. That is to say, a sociologically demarcated and institutionally formal group (of pastors, with the princes as supreme episcopate)[*] were, in theory and practice, responsible for their particular people as a whole. In this way (and this is also true from the point of view of the sociology of religion) each Church, divided from the others, was able to form a homogeneous denomination.

[186]

[2] On this terminology, cf. *Vatican II*; *Decree on Ecumenism*, art. 3 and 19, as well as the 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church', art. 15, in *The Documents of Vatican* II, ed. W. M. Abbott (London 1966), pp. 345-6, 361-2 and 33-4 respectively. Cf. the commentary in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican* II, ed. H. Vorgrimler, vols I and II (New York and London 1967 and 1968).

[3] Cf. 'Transformations in the Church and in Secular Society', pp. 167-80 of the present volume.

[*] The author's analysis here is based on the historical character of the Protestant Churches in Germany [translator].

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THE SITUATION OF THE CHURCHES FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

But what is today the real situation sociologically, and what is the relationship of the many Churches to one another, seen in this context? If we want to describe this situation and this relationship by means of common sociological terms, without making any claim to expert knowledge of the sociology of religion, we can and must probably say something like the following. For historical reasons, a great many people – what we may call the rank and file of the Church – live under the cover of a particular religious organisation. Each of these separate religious organisations has a 'statute of association', which is known as a profession of faith, and this is regarded as more or less binding, even though the compass of this profession and its binding character may vary greatly in the individual Churches. But the specific character of this statute of association and its difference from that of other Christian religious organisations is, practically speaking, known only to the administrative officials and the professional theologians. For the rank and file in the Church in its widest sense it is unknown or of no interest. When the rank and file of the Church itself (assuming that they know and affirm the separate character of these religious organisations) find the other religious organisations alien and reject them, this is usually for historical, cultural, psychological and institutional reasons. Yet according to the unanimous judgement of the functionaries and theologians of the divided Churches, reasons of *this* kind are not necessarily bound to divide them at all. We may think here, for example, of external differences in forms of worship, or religious customs, or differences of a cultural kind, or a historically conditioned style of Christian living, and so forth. What the rank and file receives from its particular Church, practically speaking, is largely common to all Christians: belief in God as the guarantor and goal of the moral order; hope for the forgiveness of sins; recognition of Jesus Christ as the mediator of salvation in some form or other, even if it is a cloudy one; prayer; hope for eternal life. One might put it very crudely and say that the 'official' reasons for the division of the Churches are not known at all, or hardly at all, to the ordinary members of the different Churches; while the sociological reasons, which in actual fact cut off the Churches from one another, are theologically and officially for the most part irrelevant. To put it in a somewhat malicious and certainly [187] exaggerated way: from the point of view of the sociology of religion, the divided Churches are like shops next door to one another, in which the customers buy the same things, because the same things are on sale in all of them; and where the thing which is to be had in only one of the shops is not bought at all.[4]

Today this is the case not only in the Protestant Churches (where philosophical or ideological pluralism and the mental and spiritual differentiations of society make a swift and clear impact, because of the fundamental understanding of the Church and faith). It is true of the Catholic Church, as well. There, too, there are enough people for whom the seven sacraments, papal infallibility, veneration of saints, and of Mary, indulgences and much more, play no part in their real religious lives. There will probably be even more of these people in the future; and they are to be found not only among the 'modern pagans' – the indifferent, the merely baptised, and the people who only pay their financial dues – but even among the people who practise the basic substance of Christianity in the Church. These people deny, doubt or ignore in practice all the tenets we have mentioned, without of their own initiative feeling that this is a reason for leaving the Catholic Church, and without the authorities of the Catholic Church having any easily applicable, practicable ways of excluding them 'officially' – at least unless these differences make themselves clearly evident

[4] The situation analysed here has been of concern to the present author for a considerable time, and has given rise to a number of theological reflections. It is also the basis of the ideas in the essay, 'Third Church?', pp. 215-27 of the present volume.

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in the Church's public life.

DANGERS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

We have done no more than mention this sociological situation, without being able to go into the reasons for it. But what does this situation mean for the question of the one Church and the many Churches?

Union without Regard for the Question of Truth?

First of all we might think – and many Christians really do think today – that the historical and sociological transformation of religion has long since overtaken the traditional differences between the Churches. To take an example: in the actual consciousness of the [188] Protestant Christian (as distinct from the professional theologian) the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* about the merely imputative justification of man through fiducial faith alone no longer really plays an important part; and the position is no different, sociologically and psychologically, on the Catholic side. So we might well think that a union of the Church (even an organisational one) no longer presents insurmountable difficulties today (provided only that we really take this sociological and psychological attitude on the part of church members seriously), or that the difference in religious organisation between the individual Churches is unimportant when we come to the theological unity of the Church.[5] In terms of the very broad metaphor we used earlier, we might think that the various shops could well amalgamate, because in fact they simply sell the same goods anyway, and the old white elephants (which will never be sold any more) could be taken out of stock right away. Or we might say that the actual number of these shops, even if they continue to exist, makes no difference to their similarity and hence fundamental unity; indeed it even offers the advantage of a certain useful competitiveness and avoids an undue organisational concentration.

There are many practical indications that a number of Christians in the various Churches do think like this – indications which we cannot consider in detail here. We need only consider the movement for complete intercommunion, ahead of the settlement of doctrinal differences between the denominations, or tendencies towards a fusion between Catholic and Protestant student congregations; or the movement towards common church congresses, and the participation of Protestant Christians and theologians in Catholic synods – even though things of this kind are still open to varying interpretations.

Actual Facts and Norms of Existence

But in reality the matter is not as simple as it seems if we look at it only on the basis of these facts, drawn from the sociology of religion.

First of all, attention must be drawn to one basic truth. It is in general a dubious matter simply and without closer inspection to proclaim existing facts as being the norms of existence without more ado, thus making a *de jure* out of a *de facto*. In our case we must ask [189] if to do this would not be like deriving sexual morality as it should be from the facts of

[5] This subject is developed further in the essay 'Is Church Union Dogmatically Possible?', pp. 197-214 of the present volume.

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the Kinsey Report. But we shall not develop that any further here.[6]

A Secularisation of the Church?

Before we draw conclusions for our subject from the facts we have indicated, which are drawn from the sociology of religion, we must seriously consider something else. A large number of people who today still help to determine the sociological picture of the different Churches and make the unique character of these Churches and their difference from the others indistinct, are actually, if we look at them more closely, no longer Christians at all. People like this are often 'enrolled' or 'registered' members of their respective Churches because of their social background, or their parents, or their earlier education in a church school, or because of a social code of behaviour. They are not members because of a real, fundamental Christian conviction. This can very often be the case even if the person in question has not as yet noticed it. He may actually be intensively engaged in working for a transformation of the Church's image, in terms of church politics. If we look more closely we shall notice that people like this are chiefly animated by what is of course a highly estimable humanitarian involvement – perhaps especially in the direction of social politics – and, it may be, by a very vague and diffuse religious feeling, a kind of philosophical and ethical theism. They are not impelled by convictions of faith which, according to the origin and the common basic conviction of all Christian denominations, are specifically Christian and indispensable for a true Christian Church. That is to say, these people do not even vitally share, as a living and absolute conviction of faith which has to be adhered to, what the basic formula of the World Council of Churches describes as being the common profession of faith of all the Christian Churches.[7]

[190] Men and women like this are of course, as people, often of the first order; but theologically they are Christians only in a social sense, for some fortuitous historical reason, even if they have not noticed this consciously. And people of this kind will actually explicitly or implicitly try to undermine the Church, so to speak. That is to say, they will try to make their own mentality the legitimate, even officially recognised 'creed' of their Churches, beyond which nothing may be demanded in that Church in the way of creed and conviction of faith.

Purely empirically and sociologically we cannot, of course, even know with certainty *a priori* that such an attempt to elevate what is really an individual's secularised mentality into the character and creed of his own particular Church will not succeed. Nor can it be known in advance how far such an attempt (which does not have to be undertaken explicitly and purposefully) will succeed in any individual Church.

The success of such an attempt would transform the Church in question into at best a movement and institution for a kind of moral rearmament, furnished with a few traditional ornaments of a Christian folk lore. It would take from the Christian Churches the chance of being truly Christian and would ultimately dissolve them into a secularised society with their own ethical ideas. But apart from that, *the Catholic Christian, at least, will cling stubbornly to the hoping conviction of his faith* that this attempt to secularise his Church (even if it be not called that) will not in fact succeed, even if in overcoming this trend the Catholic Church in

[6] On this problem, cf. K. Rahner, 'Theoretische und reale Moral in ihrer Differenz', *HPTh* (Freiburg 1966), pp. 152-63.

[7] For the text of this declaration, cf. *Die Einheit der Kirche. Material der ökumenischen Bewegung,* Theol. Bücherei 30 (Munich 1965), pp. 82f. (also pp. 83-93). For a critical discussion, cf. R. Bultmann, 'Das christologische Bekenntnis des Ökumenischen Rates', *EvTheol* 11 (Munich, 1951/2), pp. 1- 13. For its history, cf. R. Rouse and S. C. Neill, *History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948* (London 1954).

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its abiding Christian sense were to become numerically very small.

It is quite conceivable that to maintain the basic Christian substance of faith as the indispensable creed and essence of the Church and the Churches will lead to a numerically considerable emigration of many people, if these people have hitherto belonged to them for historical and social reasons, and if this basic Christian substance of faith (which they no longer really share) does not really provide the true theological and existential foundation for their membership of the Church.

FROM THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH TO THE COMMUNITY CHURCH

If we once presuppose that this will be the situation in the future, then the problem of the Church and the Churches presents itself in a quite different light from today. For today the dogmatic problem of the relationship between the Churches is overlaid and obscured by [191] the sociological situation of the still existing established ones. If the members of the future Churches (which will not be established, or at least not to the extent in which they have been hitherto[8]) want truly to live from the free personal assent of faith to the real fundamental substance of the Christian faith, i.e. the living God in the immediacy of grace, Jesus Christ as the absolute and eschatological bringer of salvation, and the eternal life which transcends the possibilities of this world – and if they want to form the Church in the light of all this, then two points presumably emerge for the relationship between the denominationally divided Churches.

Growing Consciousness of Denominational Differences [9]

First, the people belonging to these future Churches could find that the denominational differences which used to separate them had once again become alive and relevant, in a certain sense and to a certain extent. For although historical reasons have played a very considerable part in the story of the divisions between the Churches of the West, yet in earlier times Christians did, all the same, experience their denominational, 'dividing' conviction as the articulation and result of the ultimate decision of their Christian faith. They did not feel that denominational differences were simply controversies which were added on top of an absolutely clear, basic Christian conviction common to all; their differences seemed to them to emanate quite conclusively from their ultimate, fundamental understanding of Christianity. So they always asked themselves – in spite of the Apostles' Creed which they had in common, and in spite of their one, common baptism – whether they really had the same fundamental Christian substance in common, or whether the denominational differences, secondary though they might appear in certain sense, did not all the same betray an ultimate difference in the fundamental understanding of Christianity. If this ultimate, basic substance of [192] Christianity again becomes radically evident, and if it moves again into the centre of Christian existence, because the Churches are detaching themselves from a secularised (even if thereby humanised) world, the people who then still belong to them could really become conscious of these denominational differences in a much sharper and more challenging way.

[8] On the concept of the 'established' Churches in the particular German sense of *Volkskirchen,* cf. K. Rahner and N. Greinacher, 'Religion und Kirche in der modernen Gesellschaft', *HPTh* II/1 (Freiburg 1966), pp. 231-3.

[9] These ideas seem at first sight to contradict what is said in the essays 'Is Church Union Dogmatically Possible?' and 'Third Church?', both in the present volume (pp. 197-214 and 215-27 respectively). But here it is a question of a deepening of the 'basic Christian substance' – which these other essays also presuppose as being necessary.

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It is quite possible that someone will then say, out of the very personal involvement of his faith, 'Because I believe in Jesus Christ as the sole mediator of salvation, I can only (for example) reject the primacy of the pope, in a final primal, Christian protest.' And another will say, 'Because I believe in the permanent incarnational, and thus social, presence of Christ's eschatological grace in the Church, the primacy of the pope is really for me self-evident.' It is, therefore, on the one hand quite possible that through the sociological transformation from 'established' Churches (into which one is, in a sense, born), into Churches that are dependent on personal decisions of faith, the theological difference between them will again become clearer; and that in this way the question about the many Churches and the one Churches will again take on existential importance.

The Meaning of the Fundamental Substance of Christianity

But this, secondly, does not mean that our question returns us to the historical point at which it first became a question, in the sixteenth century. For there is a radical difference between the situation at that time, on the one hand, and the situation of faith now and in the future on the other. It may well be that the ultimate basic understanding of Christianity was not adequately considered or sufficiently differentiated, and expressed itself only indirectly in what were, after all, secondary differences of doctrine. But even though this has not been clearly enough recognised, that basic understanding was still taken for granted on all sides of the confessional dispute. It was the starting point of these controversies, but not really the question on which everything hinged. Faith in the living God, in his verbal revelation, in Jesus Christ, in eternal life, in the possibility of addressing God personally in prayer, were matters of course – unquestioned assumptions – in some sense static parameters of understanding. And within these parameters the denominational controversies centred on questions which were of relatively secondary importance.

Today things are radically different. The traditional points of controversy [193] dividing the Churches can still be seen as genuine questions from the standpoint of these basic Christian convictions; but the real, fundamental question of the person of today, if he wants to be a Christian, is concerned with the basic substance of Christianity itself. In specific and existential terms, he will be a member of a Church tomorrow, not because he takes the basic substance of Christianity for granted, and chooses that particular Church to be his own because it corresponds to his own conviction in its articulation of the secondary questions of Christianity. He will be a member of a Church because he affirms this basic substance of Christianity in faith, and is therefore determined to become a member of the Church as such. The basic substance of Christianity will itself be formative of the Church, since it is this that is called in question and consequently affirmed in a personal decision of faith. And the traditional points of controversy will be clearly felt to be secondary.[10] In such a situation, which crystallises only slowly, the traditional points of controversy between the individual Churches will simply take on a quite different importance. They will still be genuine questions of faith – indeed they will become so again – but any particular question will be enveloped by a much more radical question of making a decision of faith which is intellectually honest and existentially realisable and which relates to this real, basic substance of Christianity. In this situation, we may expect and hope, the question about the traditional points of controversy between the different denominations can be raised in a much more

[10] cf. here the notion of the 'hierarchy of truth', which has its special significance precisely in questions of this kind; Vatican II, 'Decree on Ecumenism' No. 11 in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbott (London 1966), p. 354; commentary by J. Feiner in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. H. Vorgrimler, vol II (New York and London 1968), pp. 118-20.

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relaxed manner, freed from a great many emotionally laden factors; for it will be raised by people who are searching together in a totally new way for the innermost centre of the Christian faith, which at heart is no longer the self-evident presupposition of all Christians but is common to them all as their real task, their burden and their salvation.[11]

[194]

Easier Conversation between the Churches

If in this way, the denominational points of controversy, despite taking on a quite new lease of life, move away from the real centre of the actual Christian decision of faith and really shift to its fringe, then there is much more hope that they can be cleared up, and that we may progress in the direction of a common Christian profession of faith, even in secondary, denominational points of controversy. We may at least hope for this, because the realities in the Churches, to which these theoretical differences of doctrine are related, will present themselves in a quite different historical and social form from the one they assumed in the Reformation period. We only have to realise how much the image of the Catholic Church empirically experienced in the sixteenth century differs from that of the twentieth – how differently the papacy, the Mass, the relationship of Catholic theology to Scripture, indulgences, and many other things, presented themselves then and present themselves today.

In short: in a future situation which has already begun, a situation in which what is radically at stake in all denominations is the question of faith in the ultimate essence of Christianity as a whole, there will be a more genuine opportunity to solve the denominational differences of the past.[12]

The sociological state of affairs within the individual Churches certainly cannot make the question of truth appear unimportant, but – if it still exists in the future, in spite of the departure of a not inconsiderable number of people from all the Churches – it will still be able to help to overcome *the immobility of the Churches' leaders* who almost unavoidably think and work more for the preservation of their own *status quo* than for a further development of the Churches towards a future of the one Church.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE FUTURE AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Although it would have been quite legitimate to do so, we have not taken as our starting point the question of truth; though it is this which stands between the individual Churches, and it is the varying [195] answers to this which prevent the unity of the many Churches in the unity of the same confession of faith. We have rather, very empirically and *a posteriori*, started from a sociological situation in the Churches which, at first glance, could almost suggest the view that the differences in theological doctrine have long since become out of date and unreal. But through this very approach we have come to see that this sociological situation engenders the theological question about the truth in a new and notable way. This has to be so, ultimately, simply because a free society of a religious kind cannot come into being in any way other than through a common creed. Otherwise it inevitably sinks into an ultimately uninteresting affair of folk lore – into a social relic which can only be explained historically and awaits complete dissolution. Today, and tomorrow, too, the question of the one Church and the many Churches cannot be decided irrespective of the question of truth, even though it

[11] cf. the present author's attempt in 'Mitte des Glaubens' in A. Exeler, J. B. Metz and K. Rahner, *Hilfe zum Glauben*, Theol. Meditation 27 (Zürich 1971), pp. 39-56.

[12] *cf.* the brief meditative essays by the present author collected under the title, 'Grundfragen', *Wagnis des Christen – Geistliche Texte* (Freiburg 1974), pp. 13-56.

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may be a separate question what truth means in this connection, and how truth is to be realised in a Church. But this very sociological starting point has also shown that the question of truth really does present itself in a different way nowadays, compared with 450 years ago, and that this new situation also offers new opportunities for a common answer to the real question of truth.

For the Catholic who is a real Catholic – theologically, not merely in a sociological sense – one element of his Catholic faith is the living conviction that, if at some time or other there is to be a single Christian Church in our present era, it will be in a theological sense Catholic. But of course it will be *the Catholic Church of the future*, which will certainly show a legitimate, historical continuity with the present one, but is all the same not just the Church in the specific form in which it now presents itself to historical and empirical observation.

This Church will very clearly be the *communio* of the Churches which, in the light of their own historical origins and presuppositions, will bring and incorporate into this one Church all that God has given them in the way of positive Christian truth.

Once it has become clearer that all positive concerns of the Reformation Churches can also find a natural home in the Catholic Church; and when it has become even clearer theologically than hitherto that the threefold *sola* of the Reformation is absolutely Catholic (as long as it is not understood heretically but in a Catholic sense, i.e. positively as 'yea' and not as 'nay') – *then the Reformation Churches* [196] *can also be asked, at* least with hope, whether they cannot acknowledge that the legitimate and full historical continuity between the present-day Churches and the Church of our beginnings is not to be found most clearly in the Catholic Church. They can be asked whether they cannot also recognise this in concrete terms, in shaping and unifying the Church, without having to feel that they are merely returning to an existing unity. Even under these pre-conditions, they could see themselves as Churches forming a unity of Churches, which is the sole hope of the future.

Whether such a unity of all the Christian Churches will one day be achieved in actual fact within world history, or whether Christ will be the Shepherd of the one flock only when history has come to an end – that we cannot know. But as Christians we must continually remind ourselves of one thing: we have to do what we can so that out of the many Churches the one Church of Christ may develop, even as an historical concrete reality; but we must not permit this to mean the simple abolition of the diversity of the Churches as communion in the one Church.

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[197]

16

IS CHURCH UNION DOGMATICALLY POSSIBLE?

There is a considerable difference in all the Christian Churches between 'official' teaching and what is really believed by most members of the Church in question. It is this fact, at first sight surprising, which has provoked the following reflections.[1] But first of all we must say more precisely what we mean, before we consider its theological significance. After that we can go on to indicate its possible consequences.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND ACTUAL BELIEF

What we mean here is something that can be found in all the Christian Churches. That may be said, even though the 'official' doctrine in the different Churches is not upheld by the same body and has a different value, in accordance with the self-understanding of the individual Churches; and even though the gap between what is actually believed and what is officially taught may vary in extent.

This difference has by no means to be merely – or even primarily – one which takes the form of a real, direct and, as such, observed contradiction between an official statement of the Church which is declared to be binding, and the conviction which an individual member or group of members in that particular Church holds and maintains; although contradictions of this kind can exist too. It is rather that the actual awareness of what faith involves differs in its whole [198] structure from official doctrine. It may perhaps have a less explicitly expressed content; it may stress things differently, where the significance and binding character of particular theological statements are concerned; or it may take a different view of the significance of a particular doctrine for the actual life of the Christian.[2]

As we have already said, this difference can be found in *all* the Christian Churches. It is true that the gap is most clearly evident and most easily discernible in the Roman Catholic Church, because there we have a directly tangible, active magisterium and a precisely tangible or definable official church doctrine whose binding quality can be exactly stated and graded. But in the other Churches, too, there is something like an official doctrine. All the Christian Churches have their confessions of faith; all recognise Holy Scriptures as binding (at least in principle, even if the theological interpretation of what the word 'binding' means can again vary considerably); all of them have something like ministers, who feel themselves to be the representatives and spokesmen of their Church's convictions of faith; and all have something like professional theologians, who in some way or other claim to speak in the name of the Churches, with at least some degree of binding authority. Yet if here, too, we may speak of an 'official' doctrine, that doctrine is by no means certainly and from the outset identical with what actually goes on in the heads and hearts of church members.

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[1] The author admits that he has often thought about this. Cf. 'Ecumenical Theology in the Future', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 254-69, and elsewhere. But these essays do not cover exactly the same ground.

[2] This was already a much earlier finding of the present author's; cf. *Gefahren im heutigen Katholizismus* (Einsiedeln 1950), and the various remarks on the subject of heresy, e.g., 'Schism in the Catholic Church?', *Theological Investigations* XII (London 1974), pp. 98-115; and 'Heresies in the Church Today?' ibid., pp. 116-41.

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The fact that we are considering here is, of course, first of all a self-evident truism. Churchmen and theologians in all the Churches are well aware that a large proportion of church members who belong 'officially' and sociologically to that particular Church, and who are also more or less practising members, are not particularly interested, are poorly informed, and are influenced in their actual sense of faith (beyond the doctrine and proclamation of the Church itself) by a great number of secular factors, which may be sociological, or may belong to the history of ideas and the climate of thought, or to the psychology of the individual. This means that it is quite impossible for the actual faith of most church members to be simply a pure and [199] unclouded mirror of the 'official' doctrine of faith or of the 'pure Gospel'. Here and there people have also given theological consideration to this fact: for example in Catholic theology, when its fundamental theology considers how the *rudes* can arrive at an adequate judgment of credibility about the existence of a divine revelation; or when elsewhere theologians have considered the meaning of *fides implicita*; or when the question was raised about what a person must definitely and expressly believe for him to achieve salvation, or for him to count as a member of the Christian Church; or when closer consideration is given to the question, under what circumstances and conditions an erroneous opinion (if it is obstinately maintained in public, for example) excludes a person from the Church.[3] The same considerations lie behind the continually formulated, brief summaries of the Christian faith, which are based on the assumption that the average Christian does not explicitly know very much more than this about the substance of faith. Something similar will also be found in the doctrine and practice of other Churches. The possibility of disciplinary proceedings in doctrinal questions, for example, makes this clear.

But in spite of this (or so it seems to me, at least, in the light of my limited experience), this difference between official doctrine and the actually existing sense of faith hardly plays any part in ecumenical theology and ecumenical dialogue as it is actually carried on. Or if it does, it is only very recently, and then it is a point taken up at the 'grass roots', rather than by churchmen and theologians. Ecumenical dialogues pursue their ecumenical purpose by comparing the official doctrines of the various Churches. Controversial theology is a controversy between the various confessions of faith writings. This is how theologians talked to theologians until very recently. For them it was an obvious assumption (even if it is really not obvious at all) that they were able to speak in the name of the actual persuasions of the members of their particular Churches. This tacit assumption, which was acted on almost up to the present, is simply a relic from earlier times, in which an elite (whether it was 'the powers that be' in the Church or the State, or whether it was the professional theologians, who alone were competent for these questions) considered [200] themselves to be the representatives of a particular conviction. They therefore felt they could expect the rest – 'the man in the street' – to hold the same opinion; or that this ordinary member of the Church would in actual fact be brought to hold that opinion, through the power of secular or ecclesiastical social institutions; or that at least he would not raise any sort of socially relevant opposition against this view. In the light of this mental and sociological situation, it is understandable that the only question asked in ecumenical conversations was about the compatibility of the official teachings of the various Churches. Indeed faith as it actually existed in the Churches was hardly the subject of theological discussion at all.

THE NORMATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF ACTUAL FAITH

[3] cf. C. Pesch, *Praelectiones Dogmaticae* VIII, 4th-5th edns (Freiburg 1922): 'De fide theologica', esp. n. 297ff., and 'De necessitate fidei', n. 426ff.

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This means that theology ought to reflect more explicitly on the theological relevance of this actual faith, before considering what ecumenical significance *this* faith has. First of all one thing ought to be seen more clearly, and more explicitly stated. *This* faith is what is actually meant, or ought to be meant, when we are talking theologically about the faith of the Church – *this* faith, primarily, and not the official faith the Churches profess. For it is this faith, and not initially the faith of the official creeds, which exists in the minds and hearts of people who are Christians. This is the faith that is lived, which counts before God and brings salvation. That is really a matter of course. But we lose sight of it as a natural assumption if, at the moment when we inquire about the saving faith of Christians – the faith that finds salvation – we immediately think about the faith which is officially taught by the Church, and cease to ask ourselves at all how much of this faith really exists in the actual faith that is held and personally implemented by the individual Christian in the Church. Of course we can say that even a real faith of this kind has its implications and inherent powers and unreflected backgrounds and depth; and that these are more clearly objectified in the official doctrine of the Church. That is to say, we might claim that, when all is said and done, the actual faith of the Christian still implies, in an unreflective way, the official doctrine of the Church. Of course we can also, in a sublime theology, describe the most essential and ultimate facts of Christian faith (even in its official interpretation) so formally and existentially, trying thereby to discover its essential saving character, that not very much material content is required to [201] constitute this faith, and on the other hand a faith of the loftiest theology, seen in this way, can also be regarded more or less convincingly as being shared by every Christian.

A Catholic theology of faith can appeal to *fides implicita*,[4] saying that the normal Christian always and from the outset relates his faith (as *fides quae* – faith as object) to the faith and creed of his Church. Though this faith may be highly fragmentary, this personal faith of his is therefore always more than it first seems to be; and because of its relationship to the Church's understanding of faith, the individual may still be considered to hold this 'official' faith of the Church. All that may be quite correct. But it does not do away with the gap between faith as it is actually lived and the official faith of the Church. For it is precisely this distinction that is presupposed in the attempt to bridge the gap we have described.

In addition, the following criticism must be made, especially where a Catholic theology of faith appeals to *fides implicita*. In earlier times the theologically uninstructed Christians belonging to the Church, with their rudimentary faith ('rudimentary' always in the sense of *fides quae*, not necessarily as *fides qua*, or personal faith) may have related this faith of theirs clearly and firmly to the teaching authority of the Church. This was partly due to their general attitudes of mind (with its willing acceptance of authority) and their sociological background. And in their case *fides implicta* may well – for highly understandable reasons – have fulfilled the function which the scholastic theological tradition ascribed to it. But nowadays, even in the Catholic Church, the authority of the Church's magisterium, generally speaking (even where its own definitions are concerned), no longer in fact provides that absolute fixed point and unquestioned presupposition which is necessary for a *fides implicita* in the Church and which throws open the individually conditioned subjectivity of a person's faith to the Church's sense of faith as a whole. This means that even a Catholic theology of faith can no longer so easily bridge the gap between actual belief and official belief by appealing to the *fides implicita* of the Catholic Christian.

The following must also be said about the theology of actual, existing faith. It is not merely

[4] On fides implicita cf. C. Pesch, *Praelectiones Dogmaticae* VIII, 4th-5th edn. (Freiburg 1922), n. 195. Cf. also 'Dogmatic Notes on "Ecclesiological Piety" ', *Theological Investigations* V (London 1966), pp. 336-65.

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– in distinction to official doctrine – [202] the faith by which Christianity lives and which brings the Christian salvation. We have continually to ask anew – and not merely theologically – how and why this faith can exist and can be a saving faith, even in its most rudimentary and implicit form (for example, in a person who maintains in good faith that he feels forced to be an atheist). The official faith of the Church is by no means simply and in every respect the factor that hovers over faith in its actually existing form, as a reality still to be attained, and as the absolute norm which actual faith merely has to reach. Of course we can quite well view the official teaching of the Church as normative for actual faith. People do so in all the Churches, even if in different ways and with different theological justification. But we must not forget that this official *fides quae*, in the sense in which it really exists for us and in which we can really grasp it, is itself an objectification and a historically conditioned codification of an actually lived faith on the part of the Church. So much so that this is even true of that official doctrinal faith which is normatively given in Scripture itself. The faith of the Church's teaching authority cannot therefore ultimately have a normative power for the actual faith of the Church in so far as it is qualitatively quite different from the latter. It can have that normative power only because, and in so far as, it is the successful reflection of just this actual faith of the Church, which includes the faith of many men and women, many different experiences of faith, and the faith of many different periods.

Nor does a view of this kind have to come into conflict with Catholic ecclesiology and its doctrine about the authoritative magisterium of the Church. For this magisterium means precisely the concrete, socially institutionalised way in which the Church's actual faith (which always logically precedes the teaching of the magisterium) becomes more clearly aware of itself, and brings its binding significance to bear on the individual.[5] It is therefore always true that the Church's actual sense of faith *ultimately* has its normative power and its critical authority within itself. It does not derive these things from any magisterial teaching. This is also true for a Catholic fundamental [203] theology and ecclesiology, contrary to what a first glance would suggest. It is true, if only because the Church's magisterium is not at all a primary datum of faith, sustaining all the rest, even in a Catholic understanding of the Church. It is itself sustained by a *fides quae* and a *fides qua* which are ultimately based, not on the conviction of the Church's teaching authority, but solely on the power of the Gospel of God and his Christ, which is given by the Spirit. If this means that actual faith has its own self-critical energy, this does not exclude – but (at least according to Catholic interpretation) includes – the fact that where this actual faith of absolute commitment (which Catholics call *fides divina et catholica*), has taken objective form in a particular statement, this commitment remains fundamentally valid for all time. This means that a statement of this kind can, as expressing the Church's teaching authority, still be implicitly normative later on for actual faith, where this faith again falls to some extent behind its earlier objectification (and of course it must not deny this objectification altogether).[6] Consequently, always assuming that this actual faith is seen as having its own self-critical mobility and indebtedness to its own history, we can quite well say that it is even a critical court of appeal against the official teaching existing at any given time, since this teaching itself in a sense a 'snapshot' of actual faith, deriving from an earlier period, even if it is successful and hence authoritative.

As I have already said, this correct and important statement, (which really reverses the

[5] The present writer has frequently discussed the problems associated with the magisterium today. What is to some extent a summing up may be found in the following essays, all in *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976): 'Does the Church Offer Any Ultimate Certainties?', pp. 47-65; 'On the Concept of Infallibility in Catholic Theology', pp. 66-85; and 'The Dispute Concerning the Church's Teaching Office', pp. 86-97; etc.

[6] Attention may be called here to the collection of essays edited by the present author and also containing his own views, *Zum Problem Unfehlbarkeit – Antworten auf die Anfrage von Hans Küng* (Quaestiones Disputatae 54) 2nd edn (Freiburg 1972).

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usual interpretation of the relationship between actual and official faith) does not entitle us, in a purely empirical, demographic and statistical way, to elevate this *de facto* faith into the sovereign judge of the official faith in the Church pure and simple. What we have said, that is, does not mean permitting average Christians, out of a very superficial awareness, to vote on what is binding in the official doctrines of the Church today, and what is not. A view of this kind is not infrequently to be heard today. But it is not the conclusion to be drawn from the real priority of actual, existing faith compared with 'official' faith; indeed it springs from a misinterpretation of that actual faith.

But though we must presuppose and clearly maintain all this, it [204] ought to be possible to bring out the correct priority and the normative significance of the actual faith of the Church for official teaching in the Christian Churches and in their theologies, and to bring it to bear more courageously and unreservedly. If this actual faith is in fact the real faith which creates salvation, why are we theologians generally so suspicious of it in its actual form, its actual structure, its 'dosage', its perspectives, and so forth? Why do we generally feel this actual, existing faith to be merely a regrettable dilution and fashionable distortion, simply because we are much more familiar with the earlier historical objectivation of the actual faith which we – basically correctly – call the official faith of the Church, which we see as normative for present-day *de facto* faith? As I have already stressed, it is not a question of simply denying the truth and obligatory claim of particular individual statements of faith laid down by the magisterium, just because these statements are not part of – or are no longer part of – the superficial and empirical findings of present-day, actual faith (though these findings must not simply be identified with the actual faith itself), or because they are not found to have the same clarity and binding force they had formerly. To this extent theologians certainly always remain the advocates of giving a binding significance to the historical experience of faith of earlier times, which has taken objective form in earlier definitions, confessions of faith, etc., and without which the Christian would fall victim to the blind fashion of his own limited point in time, and his own shrunken present. But this does not seem to alter the fact that in the theologies of the Church, in ecumenical dialogues, and in the actions of the Churches' teaching authorities, the normative significance of actual faith does not carry sufficient weight. What makes itself felt in this faith is not infrequently too hastily viewed merely as danger, impoverishment, one-sidedness, fashion, or superficial modernism. If there is a 'hierarchy of truths' in the Christian sense of facts, if there is not merely an objective hierarchy of truths but also an existential one, which necessarily changes, individually and collectively, why is theology such a poor reflection of this existential hierarchy of truths, which always exists historically at any given time?[7] Or why is the reflection so long delayed? These questions, though I have expressed [205] them very vaguely and generally, are probably of the greatest importance for ecumenical discussion, because this actual faith does not, or does not seem to, vary nearly so much in the different Churches – as might be thought when, in ecumenical discussions, it is more or less taken for granted that Christians of individual Churches will also embody in their actual faith just *those* controversial theological points of doctrine about which the theologians and churchman of the divided Churches are at variance, or at least were at variance earlier. If we were more clearly convinced in actual practice about the normative power of faith as it really exists, much of our ecumenical discussion would perhaps have to be different, to be better, and to move more quickly than it does today, in the stagnating work of the ecumenical movement.

But really something else ought to be said first about the theology of actually existing faith. We ought above all to investigate the different degrees of assent with which the actual faith

[7] Vat. II: *Unitatis redintegratio* (Ecumenism) n. 11; for comment cf. 'The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 24-46.

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of the Christian is related to individual theological tenets; and we ought to interpret this theologically. This differentiation is not simply identical with that which Catholic theology makes with regard to the 'qualification' of theological statements.[8] For what is under consideration there is an objective difference in the binding character of individual theological statements. And we are not now discussing how far it is possible to establish this, or in what way it is ultimately connected with, and dependent on, what we mean *here*. For what we are discussing here are the degrees of subjective assent to theological statements in the actual faith held by Christians in the actually existing Church. What we are concerned about is only that in the Christian's actual sense of faith, in regard to individual theological statements, there are variations in firmness of assent – or rejection – and in personal involvement; and the extent to which the statements are taken seriously varies too. Moreover these variations are not simply and in every case identical with variations in the theological 'qualification' which the Church's official teaching and theology make for these statements for and through themselves. These to some extent 'subjective' qualifications – which are of the most varying kind and gradation – in the [206] actual sense of faith of Christians (in all the Churches, ultimately) also depend largely on the extent to which these theological statements contradict the content of the *secular* scientific and pre-scientific consciousness, and also on the different degrees to which that content is taken seriously. Though it may be that in general this contradiction is not very explicitly thought about.

In this connection one point is probably important. The subject-matter of man's consciousness is gradually becoming unsurveyable, and it is increasingly difficult, or indeed impossible, for him to integrate that subject-matter into a controllable 'system'. This means that he has perhaps a greater feeling than he had earlier for the provisional and hypothetical character of his knowledge and convictions, their openness to doubt and revision. So he is inclined to judge them as provisional opinions rather than as convictions which he has to hold and defend in an absolute way. This does not merely apply to the theological assertions he consciously holds. It is also true of what he knows in the secular sphere. He is inclined to view all knowledge of this kind as provisional working hypotheses, which for the moment help him to come to terms with life, until he arrives at a better explanation, once new experience of life has shown him that the previous working hypothesis is not after all quite sufficient – though this does not mean that he would have to reject the hypothesis wholesale – as totally erroneous, in the old absolute style.[9]

This open attitude towards the provisional nature of knowledge which dominates the theological and secular consciousness of the man or woman of today, ought probably to be more explicitly reckoned with, in ecumenical discussions as well, than has usually been the case hitherto. Up to now, people let controversial theological statements of a more or less absolute kind rebound against one another; and the only question was which statement would win. This earlier way of thinking was not basically surmounted even if under certain circumstances a certain theological statement might be declared as not objectively absolutely binding, and so could be eliminated from real controversial theology (for even that was a decision which was fundamentally supposed to count as binding); or by introducing into the field of controversial theology a more closely differentiated theological [207] statement which could supersede the previous polemical opinion. Even so, fundamentally speaking, both sides always presupposed that absolute decisions had to be made, of which only one could be correct and capable of commanding real commitment in a cogent and binding way.

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[8] Cf. A. Kolping, 'Qualifikationen', in *LThK* VIII, 2nd edn (Freiburg 1963), pp. 914-19; 'What is Heresy?', *Theological Investigations* V (London and Baltimore 1966), pp. 468-512, where the term is applied in connection with the believer.

[9] P. E. Hodgson clarifies the character and origin of this modern way of thinking from the scientist's point of view in 'Zweifel und Gewißheit in den Naturwissenschaften', *StdZ* 193 (1975), pp. 187-98.

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The logical irreconcilability of the statements was taken as a matter of course – as evidence that the ways of thinking which formulated them were equally exclusive. But working hypotheses, provisional opinions and statements of this kind, and the attitudes that are embodied in them, have not at all the character which were ascribed to statements as a matter of course in earlier theological controversy.

Now, in saying this I do not mean to maintain that in theology it is permissible to work simply with a modern mental attitude of this kind; for in the sphere of faith and – as an offshoot of that – in the sphere of theology, there are absolute decisions as well (dogma, acknowledgement of a statement as being *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*); nor should we ignore the danger of an ultimately cheap and comfortable relativism in a mentality of this kind. But this mentality is also to be found, and is actually at work, in the real, existing faith of Christians today and could, if it were applied at the proper point, very well have a positive function. All differentiations in the 'qualification' of theological statements, even in the actual sense of faith of Christians and the Churches, are ultimately the result and expression of the historical nature[10] which belongs to the faith of people and Churches, and which is today as such the subject of reflection. This reflection makes possible and permissible explicitly formulated and accepted ways of behaviour which only used to be matters of fact, without our reflecting about them *as such*, and without their being fully implemented. Perhaps the ecumenical significance of these notions will be clearer if we now try to draw a fundamental conclusion for our ecumenical task from what we have said.

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR AN INSTITUTIONAL UNION OF THE CHURCHES

What fundamental conclusions can be drawn from these reflections for our ecumenical task? We must allow for the possibility, basically, [208] that other facts which we have not considered here may involve conclusions which could nullify what the ideas we have put forward would seem to suggest. But with that proviso, we should probably be correct if we maintained the following: actual, *de facto* faith as we find it in the Churches does not today stand in the way of church union on an institutional level.

In saying this we are not thinking primarily of the fact that, in my opinion, ecumenical conversations at the summit level of expert theology – even where the official doctrine of the Churches is concerned – are hardly aware any more of any really insurmountable points of controversy – points which one cannot see how to eliminate (at least apart from the question of the papal office, as this was defined by the First Vatican Council and as it is binding on the conscience of a Catholic Christian). The Reformation's three-fold *sola* no longer means any doctrine about which the theologians of the Christian denominations could not agree, as long as they really desire union, and do not use their theological acumen to discover and play up new denominational differences once the old ones have been overcome. But, as we have said, this is not what we are discussing here.

What we are thinking about is the actual, average sense of faith of Christians in the different Churches. We are thereby presupposing the normative character of this actual faith, which I have – I hope cautiously – defined, and which requires the official teaching of the various Churches and their theologians to take this *de facto* faith seriously. We are further presupposing that the variations in the sense of faith indicated above are quite legitimate in the context of the existential hierarchy of truths which belongs to faith, and in the context of

[10] On the question of historical contingency, cf. also 'The Historicity of Theology', *Theological Investigations* IX (London 1972), pp. 64-82; cf. also 'On the Concept of Infallibility in Catholic Theology', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 66-85.

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the 'qualification' of the theological statements, etc., are part of faith. But given these presuppositions we would say: the average faith of contemporary Christians in the various Churches hardly shows any differences. And so we must ask: why, really, should the official doctrinal differences between the individual Churches forbid that institutional unity which is the expression of a factual identity in the actual faith held in the individual Churches?

First of all, it will surely be permissible to say that what we have said really represents the true state of affairs. We are not talking about the theologically highly nuanced sense of faith of churchmen and professional theologians. We are talking about normal Christians in the different Churches, and certainly include the people who participate keenly in the life of their Church. But of these people it can be [209] said that their sense of faith (always presupposing the breadth of variation in that sense within every individual Church) is identical with that of Christians belonging to another denomination. They believe in God; they entrust their lives to this living God of grace and forgiveness; they pray; they are baptised and celebrate the Lord's Supper; they recognise Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, as the definitive guarantor of God's saving bestowal of himself on them; they live the gospel; they know, too, that to be a Christian in this sense obliges them to participate in a corresponding *community* of faith, the Church. The traditional points of controversy between the Churches (if we leave the papacy on one side for the moment) are unknown to them, or are unimportant, or are at most noted and accepted as part of that provisional and relative character which we indicated above (which is in itself not necessarily existentially unjustified), and which is accepted nowadays as belonging naturally to the historical contingency of the human situation. This description of the actual faith which is identical in the different Churches cannot of course be substantiated more precisely here. But can this assertion seriously be disputed? Of course there are very many differences in the various Churches with regard to actual church practice, devotional style, and so forth. But quite apart from the fact that there are at least just as many differences of *this* kind in one and the same Church, if we look at different countries and social groups, differences of this kind between the denominations cannot claim to legitimise the division of the Churches theologically (or if they do, the claim is an illegitimate one, even according to the official principles of the Church). Faith as it is actually experienced is today the same in the different Churches, among average Christians. Has this fact consequences for the possibility and legitimacy of an institutional unity?

Before we venture to answer this question with an outright affirmative, we must clear up a number of difficulties, some of which have already been indicated while others which will seem obvious, at least to a Catholic theologian and churchman.

1. First of all, under the *doctrinal* aspect, it will be said that in this one Church at which we are aiming (which must also be a Church with a creed and teaching), there must be safeguards for the conviction of faith of people who, for example, hold the Roman Catholic faith – people, that is, who view as irrevocable elements of their faith doctrinal statements which are not shared by other Christians. We can first of all counter this objection, however, by saying that Christians [210] who view a certain doctrine as being co-constitutive of their Christian faith must maintain this conviction in this united Church; and the chance to do so must be given them in that Church, both humanly and institutionally. But the objection can also be answered by another question. Does this conviction of faith also involve the doctrine that *everyone* who lives in the same Church as this believer has to share the conviction in question *positively* and explicitly? Or is it enough if this doctrine is not positively condemned by the teaching authorities and is not so publicly and decidedly rejected by the individual members of the same Church that the rejection amounts to a genuine commitment of faith. The objection we are considering (on the part of the Catholic Christian, in this hypothetical case) could be answered by asking whether the person who makes this objection can deny that one can legitimately decide, theologically, for the second alternative with which we

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countered the objection (i.e., tacit acceptance)? Can he deny this in view of the actual sense of faith within the Catholic Church and the official reaction to it – which either does not exist, or is quite content as long as a doctrine defined by the magisterium is not explicitly and officially denied and declared incompatible with true Christianity? In other words: if in the Catholic Church today, and in the actual sense of faith of its average members, many dogmas outside the real core of the Christian faith – on the 'fringe', that is, of the hierarchy of truths – are either not known at all or are at least not consciously, inwardly realised with a final commitment of faith; and if the official Church tacitly accepts this situation – not seriously protesting against it at least, as long as such an officially absolute, binding doctrine is not expressly and publicly rejected outright by a church member – one could, even from a Catholic standpoint, well consider that a similar attitude on the part of the Church's authority would be theologically possible in this institutionally united Church of the future.

From the doctrinal standpoint, we should then only have to ask whether most Protestant Christians, who would have to help to implement an institutional union of this kind, would feel absolutely bound in conscience, because of what they believe, decidedly to reject a particular Catholic doctrine as undoubtedly contrary to the gospel? In today's state of scholarly ecumenical dialogue, and in view of the actual sense of faith within the Protestant Churches, we may be permitted to answer this question in the negative. The Protestant conscience, in its bearing on faith, does not perhaps in its existing [211] form positively assent, with a believing affirmation, to quite a number of specific Catholic doctrines; but, provided that these Catholic doctrines are themselves properly interpreted, the actual, average Protestant, in his sense of faith, will not meet these Catholic assertions with a positive anathema. Nor does the theology taught in these Churches oblige him to do so.

Of course, even if we agree with what has just been said, we cannot reckon on the fact that simply all the people who have been baptised and call themselves Christians could in conscience join such an institutionally united Church, or that they would do so. There are certainly many Christian denominations and sects who would not agree with the expressly confessed and taught basic substance of the Christian faith which would have to be the confession of faith of these united Churches (the substance that is stated, for example, in the confession of faith of the World Council of Churches, with its christological and trinitarian content). And the same would, of course, have to be said about many individual Christians.

But if in the case of the major Protestant and Orthodox Churches we may assume that the actual sense of faith of the average Christian (even in its empirically and directly tangible form) has a positive, open relationship to the official teaching of these churches – even if the actual sense of faith is not simply identical with official teaching – then we could after all expect a great proportion of Christians in all these Churches, and in the Catholic Church too, to agree with such a differentiated unity of faith, which would in no small degree be left to further historical development. The 'sometime' Catholic Christian in a Church united in this way could hope that the further history of the faith of this united Church would lead to the point when the 'sometime' Protestant or Orthodox Christian could give an absolute assent of faith to doctrines which were hitherto specifically Catholic. (And this is the hope he must have even now in his present Church, with regard to many individuals and many groups, if he wants to come to terms theologically with their actual sense of faith). The 'sometime' Protestant or Orthodox Christian (particularly if he is a theologian) will hope that the further historical development of the (actual and official) sense of faith of this united Church will arrive at the point where – as far as the more precise theological interpretation of Catholic doctrines is concerned, as well as their more precise practice-determining value – these doctrines will become so 'Protestant' or so 'Orthodox' that they will seem to him, not merely acceptable, [212] but the positive expression of his own fundamental conviction.

But given these presuppositions, and since it is this hope that already sustains all

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ecumenical work, why should it not be possible to live this hope today, letting it find living expression *within* a Church which is sufficiently united, but not to a unifying degree? For in actual (and as such normative) faith the Christians united in this Church would be one. 'Sometime' Catholics would of course, in appeal to the faith experienced in the history of the Church, cling in faith to those doctrines which they have hitherto believed and which they can and should maintain in this united Church. (In a similar way, even today a Protestant theologian may maintain a certain doctrine as 'in itself' belonging to the Protestant faith, although his view is not generally accepted in the Church to which he belongs.) A 'formerly Catholic' doctrine would be nowhere decidedly condemned as contrary to faith – at all events not by the teaching authority. Within the limits we have indicated, only that unity of faith would be institutionally ratified which already actually existed. And as far as actually existing faith is concerned, unity is no greater than this today even in a single individual Church.

2. A second difficulty must be explicitly named and answered – a difficulty of a directly *institutional* kind. When he is faced with the notion we have put forward of a possible unification of the Churches, the Catholic will ask: 'What about the *papacy*? Because for us Catholics the papal office is not merely a dogmatically binding doctrine; it is a concrete entity which is constitutive of the Church.' This Catholic will perhaps say that he could agree with the Church we are striving towards, if it were only the papal office as *doctrine* that we had to take into account. But it is an actual institution, with rights and claims, and he cannot conceive of any Church in which this institution was not existent and operative.

The answer to this is as follows. Of course a Catholic Christian and theologian, for whom – in so far as he is these things – the doctrine of the First and Second Vatican Councils is of course binding, cannot conceive that any Church could be acceptable in which the papacy, as papal office, did not exist. Of course the Catholic Christian and theologian will interpret this petrine ministry, inasmuch as it exists in the Church of today and tomorrow, in accordance with faith, in the sense of the two Vatican councils. But can the papal office as a concrete institution in a future Church only be thought of [213] in such a way that the powers which it *actually* claims and realises would have to founder immediately on the absolute protest of faith made by 'sometime' Protestant or Orthodox Christians?

I think we can say 'no' to this question. But of course in saying no, we must make two assumptions, although we may take it that they are assumptions that could be fulfilled. On the one hand, the relative independence of the particular Churches (with their different historical origins and traditions) must be conceived so broadly, and must be so guarded institutionally and legally that there will be no danger (at least in practical terms) of Rome's appealing to the prerogative of the papal office and the self-concept of the Roman Church, and intervening in the life of these particular part-Churches. There must be no danger, at least, of its intervening in such a way that these Churches would inevitably be faced – in human or institutional terms, theologically, historically, and so forth (whether in the absolute or merely relative sense is irrelevant here) – with a contradiction which would lead to schism. According to Catholic dogmatics it is certainly possible for the full authority of the papal office to impose a legal self-limitation on itself (*iure humano*), as it does in a similar way in a concordat. In this way the feared dangers of a papalistically unified Church could be eliminated.

Secondly, there is no need to fear that the teaching authority of the pope expressed in decisions *ex cathedra* will be so fully taken advantage of and realised in the future that the conscience of 'sometime' Protestant and Orthodox Christians will be faced with the dilemma of having to accept *positively* the Vatican's interpretation of the papal teaching authority as binding on faith, or of having to reject – even in actual content – supposedly 'new' *ex cathedra* papal decisions. For reasons connected with the mental climate and the history of thought (which initially have nothing to do with ecumenical strategy and tactics) we shall not

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in the future have to reckon with *ex cathedra* decisions by the pope which go beyond the continually reiterated assertion of the basic substance of Christianity in accordance with particular historical situations. In actual fact we shall have to reckon with them even less, as Christians and Christian faiths bring their own weight into a unified Church.

Here we cannot describe and justify in detail this thesis about a material limitation to what the First Vatican Council stated to be the formally unlimited papal magisterium – a limitation conditioned by [214] the historical situation of theology and thought.[11] But if we assume for other reasons that this thesis is sufficiently cogent, then the acceptance of the papal office, even as magisterium, in the sense to which we have narrowed it down, does not need to lead to conflicts with Protestant and Orthodox Christians and Churches which would make such a union of Churches seem inopportune from the outset, or would undo it again. We must remember here that no Christian in any Church at all can be absolved from the hope that the Church to which he is attached (in whatever way) will be prevented from any development that would lead to an absolute conflict between the individual conscience of the Christian and a decision made by that Church itself. So why should we not be permitted to demand this hope in a unified Church, and in the direction of a unified Church? Why should it not be a hope required of all Christians, each in his own way and in accordance with his own historical origins?

Having narrowed things down in this way, and having formulated these provisos and limitations, we can, I believe, answer our original question in the affirmative. We can in fact say: the major Christian Churches of today could unite, even institutionally; their sense of faith presents no insuperable obstacle. If this is correct, then today the ecumenical question is a question for the authorities in the Churches, rather than a question for the theologians. The authorities in the different Churches must not behave today as if they could do nothing at all for the present, because the theologians cannot come to an agreement.

[11] On the limitation of the papal magisterium in the light of the history of theology and thought, cf. especially 'On the Concept of Infallibility in Catholic Theology', *Theo1ogical Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 66-85.

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[215]

17

THIRD CHURCH?

CHRISTIANS BETWEEN THE CHURCHES

Protestant and Catholic Christians today can think together about the Reformation and talk about it because, in their different ways, they have been determined by this tremendous event in church history and world politics for more than 450 years.[1] Christians may disagree about the deeper theological interpretation, but they are all affected by it, because they all confess Jesus Christ as the centre of their faith and the Lord of their lives.

But the antecedents of Christians in their unity and disruption are only comprehensible in terms of an abiding task, as a future for which all are responsible and which all have to recognise as the charge laid upon them by their common Lord. Under this aspect one must take an especially questioning look at those Christians who in fact, or at least in some kind of religio-sociological way, stand *between* the institutionally constituted Churches, and who seem to form something like a third Church.[2] In using the expression 'third Church', however, we must always remember the question mark that follows the title. But to say this gives us the starting point for a genuine question.

NEW PARTNERS

In recent decades, new partners have joined the controversial theological and ecumenical discussions between the different Churches of [216] the West. These partners did not exist earlier, and to exclude them, or overlook them, would inevitably make the dialogue we are seeking an antiquated affair. These new partners are the secularised, secular and pluralistic world; its widespread and sometimes militant atheism; the modern secular sciences; the forms of Christianity which have developed outside Western civilization and culture; rational or rationalistic positivism, with its new horizons of understanding; and so on. But, partly as a result of the new dialogue situation we have described, one of these new partners in the discussions between the Christian Churches is what we may call the 'third Church'–although we still have to explain what we mean by the term. We shall go into that first, and then consider the question of how the Churches themselves ought to react towards this new phenomenon in the sociology of religion.

What does this catchword mean? Let us ask first of all: what used to be the position? Then the reasons that have led to the emergence of the 'third Church' will become clear by themselves. Until well into our own century, the Christian Churches of central Europe had almost everywhere their own clearly defined geographical areas, in which they lived. Generally they had political, governmental powers assigned to them which offered protection to the particular denominational Church in that area, through a kind of symbiosis between Church and the public life of the secular State. Different territories had their own denominational character, and this helped to determine public opinion prevailing in that particular area. Moreover, in the existing structure of society, it was almost unavoidable, in

[1] The present essay is based on a lecture given on Reformation Day, 1972, in Munich. An extract was published in *Evangelische Kommentare* 6 (1973), pp. 14-17.
[2] The essay 'Is Church Union Dogmatically Possible?' pp. 197-214 above, takes more account of the theological aspects of this subject.

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terms of secular and religious education, that the determining religious convictions of a particular territory should have depended more or less on a social elite, which sustained both public power and education. In concrete terms where Christians views were concerned, the spokesmen of the élite were the Church's ministers and theologians. The convictions of 'the upper echelons' were passed down to the rank and file. Here, too, exceptions only prove the rule. It may remain an open question whether the identification of a territorially limited society with a particular denomination was especially Christian or not. At all events there were reasons enough for this trend, and without these reasons the denominational homogeneity of such a society (and hence its separation from other groups with a different denominational character) could not be explained.

But nowadays the secular sociological reasons for the earlier homogeneous [217] denominational Churches and their ties with a particular territory no longer exist. The Churches in question have slowly been transformed into the confessional communities which are usual today; and in the course of this development what evolved too, almost by itself, was the phenomenon of 'the third Church'.

For in Europe today other Christian denominations and Churches are to be found on what was once the territory of one particular Church, even if the discrepancy in the percentage of members generally still betrays something of earlier conditions. But even if we take that into account, conditions are levelling out. So today the Christian who belongs to a particular Church has to live in the *diaspora* – the dispersion –[3] even if the extent to which this is true still varies very much.

Modern pluralistic, secularised and largely atheistical society, at all events, no longer offers the Christian Churches any support by means of public opinion, or state religion, or accepted models of individual and social life. At least where these supports still exist at all, they are in the process of being torn down.

Under the influence of this situation, earlier assumptions belonging to a particular stage in the history of thought, earlier ways of living and of looking at life, all of which led to, or were connected with, confessional doctrinal differences, are, of course, also receding into an ever more remote past, in the awareness of modern men and women. They are, largely speaking, no longer realised at all, so that the modern Christian can hardly enter into the problems of controversial theology that used to exist, or feel in any way personally touched by them; and so he is bound to remain largely uninterested in the settlement of these questions, unless he clings out of pure loyalty to the denomination which has been passed down to him and to which he belongs as a simple matter of fact. Generally such questions seem to him one aspect of those historically conditioned distinctions which exist between the old denominational Churches but [218] which are really a matter of culture and folklore, having no actual theological significance which could be constitutive for the Church.

For ultimately the whole consciousness of modern men and women (even from a Christian and theological standpoint) is co-determined today by innumerable new influences which used not to exist at all for the individual and collective consciousness. Nowadays these influences are almost inevitably shifting the content of traditional theological awareness, or giving it a different – and in fact a lesser – importance.[4]

What we have called the 'third Church' can now be seen against this background. These

[3] The present author has been concerned for years with an analysis of the '*diaspora* situation' of the modern Christian. But he still has the impression that it is even now too little understood and accepted in its pressing reality and challenge. Cf. 'The Christian Among Unbelieving Relations', *Theological Investigations* III (London 1967), pp. 355-72; 'The Christian in this World', *Theological Investigations* VII (London 1971), pp. 88-99; and above all *Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance,* Herder Bücherei 446, 3rd edn (Freiburg 1973).

[4] On the notion of the 'pluralism' of the modern mental and spiritual situation, cf. for example 'The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrine of the Church', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 24-46.

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are people who, in what they see Christianity to be, in their style of living and their interpretation of themselves, hardly differ from one another; and moreover they do not want to be distinguished from one another, in spite of their religio-sociological adherence to this or that denomination.

PEOPLE BELONGING TO THE THIRD CHURCH

Of the group we have named, we must pay special attention, in the framework of our subject, to the people who more or less think and live *only* in terms of the 'common Christian' ground, without therefore also wanting to leave their traditional denomination publicly and decidedly. For their intention is by no means to live as Christians outside the major 'denominational' Churches. They do not want to live completely without any Christian community, nor as members of a group which, from the point of view of the major Churches, could be classed theologically or in the sociology of religion as a 'sect'. The 'third Church', as we see it here, grows up *within* the traditional Churches – for the moment, at least. Its members ascribe no importance to the traditional doctrinal differences between the Churches, while for themselves they do not see that differences of this kind provide a sufficient reason for forming a separate Church. Perhaps they cannot even formulate these differences, or do not know what they are. When Christians of this kind none the less give their own Church a preference over others (and with a certain emphasis) it is for reasons which the officially valid *theology* of the Churches, on the other hand, does not judge as dividing one from another. This [219] kind of choice between the Churches is in fact rather like the decision of two Catholics, one of whom prefers High Mass with music by Mozart, whereas the other prefers a modern Eucharist in the vernacular.

But it may be that these 'third Church' Christians even *explicitly* consider that the controversial theological differences which divide the churches are unimportant, theologically and for faith. They generally go on to demand that the different denominations should be united as quickly as possible; or they emphasise firmly that the differences between the various Churches are only of a historical, cultural, sociological or institutional kind, and have no real theological importance. This means, they say, that the real unity of the Christian Church in faith and theology has as such existed for a long time and does not have to be re-created. They have the impression that they have long possessed a common creed, which reaches beyond the limits of the separate denominations: belief in God, the hoping conviction that God has promised himself to them, forgivingly and savingly, in Jesus Christ, practical experience of the meaning of prayer, hope for eternal life.[5] This creed could undoubtedly be differently formulated, and then differently interpreted, but that is not of decisive importance. At all events, beyond a fundamental, simple confession of faith of this kind, these Christians discover nothing which really absolutely plays a part in their own decisions of faith, and which would really essentially distinguish them from the great majority of Christians belonging to other denominations. If they are, in addition, a little better instructed theologically than the average, they believe that they are right in their impression that the old differences of controversial theology between the Christian Churches have been eliminated by the theologians in their ecumenical dialogue. The interpretation of hitherto disputed points of doctrine which is aimed at convergence seems to confirm this; and so does the discovery that denominational differences of opinion are no longer given the importance which used to

[5] Properly understood, this question touches on a subject often considered by the present author: the short formula of the faith. Cf. 'Reflections on the Problems Involved in Devising a Short Formula of the Faith', *Theological Investigations* XI (London 1974), pp. 230-46. On the discussion about this subject cf. also R. Bleistein, *Kurzformel des Glaubens,* 2 vols (Würzburg 1971).

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be taken for granted.

The phenomenon of the 'third Church', of course, displays highly varying degrees and nuances, according to the areas in which it is [220] found, the degree of Christian and denominational education which its members enjoy, and the social and cultural situation in general. What is more important than these variations is the fact that today the 'third' is an indisputable fact.

THE THIRD CHURCH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE

The 'third Church' is making itself felt in the Church's own life too. For example, common ecumenical services would be impossible and meaningless if the participants had the impression that *all* and *everything* in the Christian faith of people who are denominationally divided always and unequivocally has a denominational impress. In theory and practice, there is also the problem as to whether it is possible and opportune to have a common Christian religious instruction which – even though bi-confessional – would not merely be confined to information about religion as a scientific study, but which would also be designed to be a common Christian witness. 'Mixed marriages' no longer count, generally speaking, as undesired by both Churches, or as only possible, in human and Christian terms, in particularly favourable cases. They are often even regarded as desirable; and the impediments put in the way by canon law are correspondingly challenged as un-Christian. There is a call for ecumenical wedding ceremonies. People are demanding common versions of the Bible, common liturgical formulas, and common prayers. Intercommunion or open communion is more or less taken for granted by many people, so that the resistance of the official Churches is rejected as incomprehensible and un-Christian. Different revivalist movements of a 'charismatic' kind – the Jesus people, the pentecostal movement, and so on – unite Christians from the most varied denominations. Common undertakings of social action or protest, in shared Christian responsibility for society and the world, are now widely taken for granted.[6] All these signs of unity and common ground between the Christian Churches are, of course, neither theologically nor practically simply conditioned by the phenomenon of [221] the 'third Church'. But the actual power and matter-of-factness of all these ecumenical activities in the Churches, which their 'official' authorities often find a nuisance, are due to the fact that the actual upholders of ecumenical initiatives of this kind largely belong to the so-called 'third Church'.

The question about the correct view of this phenomenon, and the answer to it, must be directed in the first place to the people who, in some form or other, belong to this third Church. But it is also a question for the Church's official ministers and theologians, since these are socially the most obvious representatives of the distinction between the different denominations. According to the description we have given, that means nearly everybody, though in different degrees, corresponding to their theological training, the particular character of their attitude to faith and the closeness of their relationship to a particular denomination in its institutionally tangible form.

What should we say to the Christian who more or less belongs to the third Church? Of course to lump these believers together is a problem in itself, because they differ considerably from one another. But for the moment let us leave on one side the question whether these Christians simply experience and live by what is common between the denominations –

[6] The theological presuppositions and basis for the common action of Christians belonging to different denominations have certainly not been sufficiently considered and clarified; indeed the question itself has perhaps not even been seen. The present essay is designed to offer some stimulus in this respect. Cf. also the ideas in 'On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion', *Theological Investigations* XI (London 1974), pp. 24-67.

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whether this is what they feel the Christian faith to be – or whether in addition they basically judge denominational differences to be meaningless for faith and theology, seeing them as purely historically conditioned, external circumstances. Of course here we can only address ourselves to the people who preserve and cultivate some concrete link or other with their traditional denomination. To these people alone, but to all of them, let me say the following.
The ecumenical features of Christianity and the Church will not be realized solely by a third Church which simply by-passes the existing Churches and their history, their traditional institutions and specific offices – a third Church which tries to arrive at unity between Christians through complete indifference toward the Churches that have existed hitherto. Complete indifference towards the authorities in the denominations, or perhaps actual, even state-registered withdrawal* [222] from the Church cannot do justice to the reality of Christianity. The true way to realise our Lord's charge to live in his one Church and to bring about the unity of Christians, cannot therefore bypass the denominational Churches. A third Church which tried to do so would bring about an increasing erosion in the substance of the Christian faith, right down to the innermost heart of the message about the living God and the one mediator. What has to be united cannot be united simply by dissolving the subjects of the union.[7]

The attempt to establish the third Church as something on its own would lead to this very thing. For the unity of creed necessary even for this Church could be achieved only by continually curtailing more and more of the substance of its own beliefs. Why? Because on the one hand this Church, too, would have to bring out clearly what Christians have in common, if it wanted to sustain the unity of a genuine and living Church effectively. On the other hand, the formulation of a Church creed which was no longer upheld by the beliefs of the 'previous' Churches and supported by the power of their history, would be bound to lead to an ever-thinner and ever more non-committal expression; and in the end the third Church would find itself in the position already occupied by mere humanism of a purely horizontal kind. But if the third Church were to tend towards a churchless Christianity, then – apart from real theological considerations – we can say only one thing, and it is this. Especially in a period when, in order to be able to exist at all, men and women have to overcome a great deal of the individualism which has determined the spirit of the West ever since the Enlightenment, truth and fellowship cannot be preserved and disseminated if people settle down outside institutions.[8] Christians certainly do not all have the same ideas about what the Church is and ought to be; but it has none the less been the permanent conviction of the whole of Christianity, in doctrine and practice, that faith and its liberating power need to be upheld by a fellowship which is also socially institutionalised – in this sense the Church. And the attitude of mind and experiences of our own time do not allow us, of all people, to disavow this conviction.

[223] The simple, basic elements of the Christian conviction of faith, which the 'third Church' shares as well, can be the innermost centre from which a Christian can live, and should live, in his accustomed denomination. These basic elements do not provide a valid reason for more or less leaving his Church in actual practice. As long as the Churches have

* In West Germany, members of the Roman Catholic and Evangelical (Protestant) Churches register as such, since the State (on the Churches' behalf) collects a church tax from these registered members. It is possible, however, to opt out of either Church, and to pay taxes to neither; but this choice is also officially recorded by the State [the translator].

7 Cf. 'Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 3-23; and 'Does the Church Offer Any Ultimate Certainties?', ibid, pp. 47-65.

8 Cf. 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats', *Theological Investigations* XVI (London 1979), pp. 135-55, where the post-modern phenomenon of higher forms of socialisation are considered in detail.

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not arrived at Christian unity, they are the specific place where the common Christian conviction has to be lived, if it is not slowly to melt away and become ineffective.[9]

That is why the third Church must not by-pass the existing Churches; it must make itself effective in the right way *within* them. Anyone who is convinced of the human, Christian and theological weight of the ideas which lead to the third Church, should also have the courage for the long march through the ecclesiastical institutions, to express it in modern catchword terms. In our contemporary social situation, we cannot overcome old-fashioned traditionalism and outmoded ways of proclamation and styles of living by way of extremely tiny sects. Yet it is these sects which would be the inevitable result of the completely unreal and utopian attempt to found a genuine major Church (parallel to the previous denominational Churches), whose substance would be contributed in every respect by the third Church. If we do not want to lose ourselves in intangible ideas, thereby losing sight of the Church, and ultimately of our own historical character, too, in the process, then Christians of the third Church have only one task. That is: out of the shared Christianity that exists and is lived, and seriously and fairly taking account of official doctrine and the actual history of the denominational Churches, they have to draw even closer to the institutional Churches (and not in theology alone) until they, too, represent and embody the one Church of Jesus Christ, in spite of all their local and particularist differences.

This general principle does not of course solve all the separate problems. Intercommunion, mixed marriages, common and effective witness to the gospel in our contemporary world with its needs – all these things still call for numerous detailed solutions. Under certain circumstances Christians of the third Church should emphatically urge the official ministers of their Churches to find a Christian answer [224] to these special questions. It is surely self-evident, and needs no special emphasis, to say that in finding these solutions we must keep the unity of the Church in mind; and also that the third Church itself has the right to expect the theological respect it deserves, as well as an appreciation of its sociological position in the existing Church. But there should be no attempt to provoke anarchy in the Church through over-hasty radical cures, which really only mean a relapse into an old-fashioned individualism and can only exacerbate the plight of divided Christendom even more.[10]

Up to now we were really only supposed to be listening to sober everyday experience, not to learned theological arguments. Anyone who suffers in the Spirit from the Churches within the Churches will not give himself over to the impious utopia of a third Church as an isolated power parallel to the others. On the contrary, he will live actively in his Church and, out of his own immediately apprehensible experience of faith, find the open courage for the greater riches of the Church, which earlier lay in its doctrine and life, and are still to be found there today. We shall not ultimately advance the Church if we become disheartened, or take up an ultimately arrogant attitude towards the Church of sinners and the official ministers who, like the rest of us, fall continually short of the Gospel of Jesus, which always demands too much of us all. It is in love for these Churches, enslaved and poverty-stricken though they are, that we shall make progress. It is not the destructiveness of indifference or purely corrosive criticism that can achieve anything. It is the all-renewing Spirit of the Lord; this is especially true because this Spirit is still alive in us only because the Churches have existed. This all applies in a quite particular degree to the solution of the ecumenical question. But if we look at the results of ecumenical efforts in the last thirty or forty years in the different Churches, then we have really no reason to doubt that the task of the third Church, *properly* understood

[9] On the substance of faith which has to be preserved, cf. 'On the Theology of Ecumenical Discussion', *Theological Investigations* XI (London 1974), pp. 24-67.

[10] Except in this briefly indicated sense, it is impossible to understand attempts – however well meaning they may perhaps be – such as G. Hasenhüttl's new contribution; cf. his *Herrschaftsfreie Kirche. Sozio-theologische Grundlegung* (Düsseldorf 1974).

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and lived, has the promise of fulfilment in the Churches.

[225]

THE THIRD CHURCH AND ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

The fact of the third Church does not only pose a problem for those Christians who feel they could belong to it. It also poses a question to official ministers of the individual Churches,[11] though this is in no way to be seen as an accusation. In this connection a whole series of aspects emerge which these officials perhaps do not always see and appreciate sufficiently.

Officials in all the Churches are always subject to the temptation to identify the faith of their own Church, tacitly and if as a matter of course, with the faith which is formulated in their respective articles of belief, or in the heads and books of the theologians of that particular Church. That is why official ministers and theologians often view the actually existing faith of Christians purely and in every respect as a cruder and more rudimentary version of the faith they know and administer. That is why the official ecumenical dialogue is almost always, as a matter of course and without any further inquiry, a discussion designed to overcome differences of doctrine between the denominations in their *official* creeds. But the question whether these official differences exist at all for the faith of most members of the divided Churches, or whether they play any serious part, simply does not arise. In saying this I do not mean to deny the particular and irreplaceable importance of theologically differentiated faith, as it is expressed in the official doctrines of the Churches. But in the question we have raised here, what is at issue is something different.

Has it really become clear theologically that the faith that saves is not the faith of the creeds and articles of belief, but the faith that actually lives in the heads and hearts of contemporary Christians? If faith really means the salvation of *people*, then we must first of all make this fact clear to ourselves. But in the official ecumenical practice of the Catholic Church, for example, the statement of the Second Vatican Council about the 'hierarchy of truths'[12] even now sounds [226] like the title for a book that still has to be written.

If we were to take the common faith of the third Church in the divided Churches completely seriously, then we ought surely to ascribe greater importance to it, in our ecumenical dialogues too. Moreover we should have to take into account the fact that today, in the case of many statements if not yet all, *the statements that divide us* have a much lesser logical and existential importance than the statements which express our common, fundamental Christian convictions. This is a fact that has not yet been sufficiently appreciated at the theological level. Epistemologically, many statements have a provisional character. They are hypothetical and hence replaceable by other statements which are better, more subtly nuanced, or have more integrating power. Perhaps all that is meant is that something is not realisable here and now, but does not therefore have to be denied altogether. These and other characteristics of the statements which still divide Christians today must be perceived more clearly. For the official ministers, what emerges naturally from this is a question: given certain other provisos which we cannot go on to consider here, could the faith of the third Church provide a sufficient foundation for a unity of faith among the Christian Churches? At all events, the theological relevance of the third Church (beyond its mere significance for the sociology of religion) has not yet been sufficiently thought about. And the consequences for

[11] Of course we are not considering here the ecumenical interpretation of the official ministries of the Church, which has been under recent discussion; on that cf. *Vorfragen zu einem ökumenischen Amtsverständnis* (Quaestiones Disputatae 64) (Freiburg 1974), where the present author develops his ideas on this subject.

[12] On the 'hierarchy of truths' cf. Vatican II: '*Unitatis redintegratio*' (decree on Ecumenism) n. 11, and the present author's comments in 'The Faith of the Christian and the Doctrines of the Church', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 24-46.

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the Church's actions and the actions of its official representatives have certainly not been grasped.[13]

Ultimately the term 'third Church' in the positive sense in which we have used it here, is only a term for the great and decisive 'one' in which the Christians of the different denominations and Churches really do already come together today when, each in his own way, they confess the triune God and Jesus Christ as sole mediator. It is not true that the denominational differences – weighty though they indisputably are – divide us to such an extent, and in the different Churches so determine what we have in common, that this common ground is pure illusion – though this is what people on all sides have sometimes maintained in their excessive polemical zeal. Common Christian ground really does exist. It binds us together even now. In [227] all of us it creates salvation for eternity and gives us the power to persevere in the time in which we live. It goes further than mere human solidarity and tolerance. It makes possible and governs everything which already exists today in our ecumenical closeness and our common ecumenical activity. So the ecumenical movement must not peter out and become resigned to failure. What we have in common must become still more vitally realised in all the Churches; it must find new forms of expression and determine the actions of all Christians more forcibly. Paradoxical though this may sound, it must discover its own presence and reality at the very point where there is apparently only a secular world, because the breath of the Spirit who builds the Church also blows through the highways and by-ways of the world. This common Christian ground of the third Church must not be interpreted overhastily, or in too simple-minded a way, as a contradiction and denial of the existing denominational Churches – even though it certainly calls in question the actual existing form of all the Churches and is a breakthrough in the direction of that unity in faith which is laid upon us all. On the contrary, it is that very 'oneness' which God in Jesus Christ gave to all the Christian Churches, the oneness which was accepted by them all, from which they all live, and which is to be the living seed from which the fulness of unity can flower.

[13] Cf. 'Ecumenical Theology in the Future', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 254-69; esp. the section 'Church Christians Without Any Confessional Awareness', pp. 264-8.

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[228]

18

RELIGIOUS FEELING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

There is a kind of piety that springs from the Church, is upheld and sustained by it, and is related to it.[1] By piety we mean here the personally adopted and freely accepted relatedness of a person to God in faith, hope and love; but a relatedness that is Christian, being mediated through Jesus Christ. The faith in Jesus Christ which sustains this kind of piety rests on the Church's message. It knows that it is related to the sacrament of baptism (which incorporates a person in the Church) and to the historical phenomenon of God's salvific turning towards man in Jesus Christ. But though it is this divine turning to the individual person himself which empowers his devotion, the devout person experiences it as having taken place through God's turning to his people as a whole. God's efficacious manifestation of himself in the sacrament belongs to the mutual relationship between God and man. Thus piety, since it is the relatedness of the whole person to God, necessarily has a common and even a social dimension as well. But it is something truly belonging to the Church itself, rather than smothered by external legalism and ritualism, only when all the attitudes and acts which are related to the social character of the Church are really animated by the innermost, free turning of man to God which is sustained by God's grace.

CHURCH PIETY

The church-relatedness of personal piety is highly variable and has its individual and collective history. For man's relatedness to God, and [229] the nature of that relationship as it is related to the Church are certainly connected, but are not identical. There is a piety which effects salvation and is yet outside the Church. (We shall later describe and specify what we mean by this.) But within the piety of the Church, there are quite legitimate different forms in individuals, in social groups, and in different periods. Ultimately all these variations will be parallel to the historical possibilities available.

In piety, both elements, the Church and the individual, are related to each other. The nature of man makes it impossible for either one of them to be fully eliminated; and yet the mutual relationship of these two factors is not rigid and unalterable. The Church's part in piety can be subjectively experienced as the sustaining foundation for its understanding, its certainty and its vitality; but this ecclesiastical form can also be experienced as something secondary, as a kind of merely tolerated appendage of piety in its solitary relationship to God, the certainty and power of which come from within. From what we have said it has already become clear that we cannot expect very much of the contribution of the Church to the piety of the individual. In the practice of the Church and in its edicts there is something like a minimum requirement in this respect (Mass on Sunday, confession once a year, Easter communion, the baptism of infants, etc.). But here almost everything is a fluid, variable offer on the part of the Church, and its pastoral and human expediency must continually be reassessed. The contribution of the Church to personal piety can also vary in accordance with the picture of the Church which is viewed as the standard and model. This varies between the Church seen as an institute for salvation, and the Church seen as the community of the saved.

[1] The ideas in this essay grew out of a working paper which the author prepared for a commission of the German Episcopal Synod. It has been extensively revised.

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Accordingly the individual feels himself to be either the guided recipient of the Church's saving gifts, or as the co-sustaining and co-responsible member of the Church's fellowship. The Church's part in piety can also vary according to whether the individual experiences the Church as the Church universal – the Church extending to the whole world – or as the individual congregation of brethren.

In considering the different ways in which piety is related to the Church, we ought not to try to reconcile the variations through an all too hasty 'both-and'. Pastoral life and the life of the Church as a whole must permit these variations and endure the tension between them. It must not, by means of a tactically shrewd – or slick – 'both-and' demand all degrees of attachment to the Church from every [230] individual. For in doing this it would force many people, who seem to be less devout in the Church's sense, into the situation of 'fringe' Christians. On the other hand, there can also be new forms of piety in its Church-related form, whose intensity of practically lived brotherly love must not from the outset be measured against the average type of normal church practice.

Piety in its churchly guise can also occur in mistaken forms. The partial debasement of this form of piety may even characterise a lengthy period in the Church's history; though this may not be explicitly thought about, and the collective conscience of the Church may not react to it with sufficient emphasis. There is always a deterioration when church forms of piety are given independent importance, compared with piety itself, so that piety, which is something absolute in itself, is turned into the instrument for binding people to the Church; or when devotion to the Church is judged, clearly and unequivocally, as the criterion for a person's relationship to God; or when piety understands the Church as a sect and tries to turn it into as closed a social ghetto as possible; or when there is triumphalism; or when attachment to the Church degenerates into group egoism, so that freedom of the spirit to see good outside the Church is lost; or when the individual uses his membership of the Church as a protection against God; or when people forget that the Church is there for the world, and not the world for the Church; or when the smooth running of the Church's life and activities is made too much of an ideal; or when the Church's institutions and proceedings cease to be continually challenged by the question whether they really bring about faith, hope and love in the world; or when a brotherly relationship between hierarchy and the faithful remains pure theory; and so on. The struggle against mistaken forms of this kind is important. For experience of them seriously blocks access to an understanding of and true attachment to the Church for non-Christians and non-Catholics.

At all events, attachment to the Church must basically be judged only as a particular and, in the true sense, secondary element in piety. It is particular and secondary because piety and attachment to the Church are so much to be distinguished from each other that there can be a saving piety which is not bound to the Church at all. For fundamentally, even in the Church's own piety, the experience of God and Jesus Christ is more primal than the experience of the Church. This at least is true for the basic structure of the objects of [231] faith and the reasons for faith. It is by no means a denial, either of a mutually conditioning relationship between all the springs of faith (of which the experience of the Church is one), or of the fact that 'normally', devotional experience does in fact generally come about in the fellowship of the Church.

PIETY OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

There is a piety outside the Church, even apart from the plurality of the Christian Churches and the forms of devotion which are specifically related to any one of them. The statement is at first self-evident to everyone who knows the history of the non-Christian religions, which

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is not yet simply at an end, even in the so-called Christian countries today. But what is meant is also that there is a specific Christian piety outside the Churches as such, and Christian groups or sects – a relationship to God, that is, which knows itself to be in some way or other empowered by Jesus Christ.

This non-church piety can very well be efficacious for salvation. The Christian ought not to see it as a mere human attempt to set up a relationship to God 'from below'. For it is really inwardly sustained by the free grace of God, which is offered everywhere and effects salvation wherever man obeys the absolute command of his conscience, and realises and objectifies this obedience, at least in some form of devotion, as an explicit relation to God. So the Catholic Christian and theologian can basically recognise that in fact all conscientious, honest piety is saving, is sustained by grace, and is in this sense already Christian in the anonymous sense.[2]

The Christian message aims to make real, explicit Christians, and is hence not simply the indoctrination from outside of some hitherto unknown fact. It is the awakening of something which is really already existent through grace and is already experienced, even if it is not the object of explicit reflection. It is in a sense the ontogenetic repetition of a phylogenetic human history, as God's self-communication to the world, which is always already sustained by grace. To give ecclesiastical form to this saving piety as it exists outside the Church means the complete self-realisation of a piety that has always [232] existed through grace, in explicit encounter with Jesus and his institutionally constituted community of faith. So incorporation in the Church is not the beginning but the end of the grace which, in its sovereign freedom, calls some people among others. These people form the Church, which is the historical sign of the victorious presence of God's grace in the world, and is therefore (in spite of the universal trend of Jesus' message) an actual, particular sign in human history of the fact that God is present through his grace in all piety, wherever conscience obeys that call than which there is nothing higher here and now.

Even in a piety of this kind, as in every free human act, we have to distinguish between the ultimate, primal, free and grace-sustained alignment of knowledge and freedom towards God, and its material, historical objectification in space and time, and in word and deed. The objectifications we come across in society and history can degenerate to a greater or lesser degree without this necessarily meaning that they have completely lost their ultimate alignment with God and their significance for salvation. Analogously, we might point out here that an objectively erroneous but subjectively good conscience can perform acts which contradict what is actually enjoined by the moral law; yet in these acts obedience to conscience and to God may none the less be realised. Of course we cannot go into the different social and individual shapes and forms of such degenerations. The greater the debasement of the religious act, the more the chance will be diminished that its final subjective intention will after all be related to God himself. In our present religious sub-culture outside the Church, it would be useful at some point or other to give a more precise account of such more or less explicitly religious practices, in their typical manifestations and degenerate forms; because such phenomena are not usually viewed clearly enough for us to form any kind of link with them, whether it be acceptance or rejection.

This piety has, of course, its socially conditioned patterns and origins. We only have to think, for example, of the common forms of superstition or of popular astrology, and so forth. In our cultural sphere much of this still has a Christian origin and frequently still bears the partial impress of the earlier teachings of the Christian Church.

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[2] The author has discussed numerous other aspects of the same basic problem under the heading of the 'anonymous Christian'. For further details, cf. 'Observations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian" ', *Theological Investigations* XIV (London 1976), pp. 280-94.

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[233]

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD AS PIETY OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

The most primal and sustaining ground of all piety outside the Church is the experience of God.[3] It is only in the light of this experience that its nature and existence can really be interpreted. We have to distinguish here between a primal experience of God, and a reflective, verbally objectifying knowledge of God. For there is a fundamental difference between personal spiritual experiences (for example, love, joy, fear) and their verbal objectification in reflective form (for instance, talk about the existence and nature of joy, love and fear, which attempts to define these experiences). Of course there is a connection between the two as well. Consequently the verbal objectification of such primal experiences can be inadequate, and indeed wrong.[4] Primal experience can certainly be related in intention to an object different from itself (for example, true, primal love for another person, which precedes any theoretical, reflecting interpretation by the loving person). An 'object' of this kind could exist in an *a posteriori* experience or in information coming from without (for example, the knowledge of a certain beloved person). But it is conceivable that an originally intentional act of this kind, simply through its *a priori* intentionality, is already aware of an object or its necessary structure.[5]

Such a primal experience of God, as distinct from a verbal, objective knowledge of him, really does exist, irrespective of the way this knowledge of God may be considered as having come about. Of course, if we are to avoid ontologism and the mysticism which appeals to particular experiences, the primal experience of God can only be thought of as the experience of God which belongs always [234] and everywhere to man's transcendental nature, as the direction towards which this transcendental nature tends.

The traditional distinction between nature (man's natural spirituality) on the one hand, and grace (his elevation through grace) on the other, is not of decisive importance here. For if we pre-suppose that man is always and everywhere (at least potentially, since the offer is made to him) 'elevated' through grace, because of God's universal will to salvation, then a primal experience of God can exist and can be appealed to; there is no need to make a more precise distinction as to whether a particular aspect of this experience already belongs to man's natural spirituality, or only occurs (even if always and everywhere) because his spiritual nature has been elevated by God's self-communication through grace. For grace can only be understood from the outset as the radical form of the fundamentally unlimited transcendental nature of human knowledge and liberty, which tends towards the immediacy of God, and whose culmination and consummation is the direct vision of God himself.

The experience of God we mean here is of transcendental necessity. It therefore exists always and everywhere, whenever man implements his spiritual knowledge and freedom, even if this is often not explicitly formulated. It exists even when he denies this transcendentally necessary relationship to God, explicitly and in objectively verbal form. If

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[3] Cf. 'Experience of Self and Experience of God', *Theological Investigations* XIII (London 1975), pp. 122-32.

[4] A materialistic anthropologist may very well misinterpret the nature of love, liberty, responsibility, etc., even when he himself genuinely experiences these things. He does not necessarily have to notice the contradiction between his own primal experience and his interpretation.

[5] From the logic of what he knows, which is experienced *a priori*, a person is aware, for example, that every object which he encounters at any time or in any place will correspond to the fundamental conditions of the human act. In this light the difference between a primal experience of God and a theoretical doctrine about God must be comprehensible, at least conceptually. And here it is unimportant that this doctrine is communicated through others and may in certain circumstances be seen as being information about an object which is in this way communicated to the listener for the first time, or whether it is conceived of as the correct interpretation of a primal experience.

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this transcendental necessity were denied, then we should have to understand God as an arbitrary object, the experience of which could be either avoided or permitted with equal justification. An appeal to the supreme objective significance of God would come too late to legitimise the necessity and the value of the knowledge of God. There would be simply nothing in the constitution of the perceiving subject which could oblige us to ask whether a reality such as God exists at all, especially since he certainly does not belong to the objects of *a posteriori* experience which force themselves on our attention. Man's *a priori* transcendental experience (like everything which is consciously existent in man) can be present in both modes – as free acceptance or as rejection. And again, acceptance and rejection can exist without their being the object of explicit reflection; or they can be parallel to, or be the result of, an explicit objectification of this transcendental relation to God. This would be the point from which we should have to trace the different possibilities of supposed or real atheism.

THE EXPERIENCE OF TRANSCENDENCE

The foundation for this transcendental experience of God is man's own experience of transcendence. Both are expressions in man of one and the same reality, though the first only expressly stresses the ultimate trend and goal of man's transcendental nature. A more precise phenomenology of the experience of transcendence (if this analysis were carried through correctly and more or less exhaustively) should show that its trend does actually reveal an understanding of the real God.

Here we can only describe the experience of transcendence very incompletely. Its essential characteristic is that man's knowledge and liberty always reach out beyond the individual object of inner and outward experience; that this anticipation is the condition that makes objective knowledge and the free act possible, since it is absolutely unlimited, going beyond every declarable object, because every conceivable limitation in the act of being thought of is already exceeded. In so far as the experience of man's transcendental nature really establishes itself, experiences itself as being sustained by the direction in which it tends, and knows that Nothingness is nothing – this goal towards which transcendence tends can only be thought of as the infinite, unlimited reality which remains at root a mystery: that is to say, God. This goal as incomprehensible mystery is – though not as object in the sense of ontologism – really the beginning of the movement of transcendence.

Of course this experience of transcendence, which has God as its direction and its goal, cannot be grasped, in its concrete, specific originality, in the abstract terms we have used to describe it here. A mystagogic pointer to this experience must therefore remember that the person who is not himself trained in philosophy has this experience as a matter of course, but in quite definite shapes and forms. We are not concerned here with the transcendental in absolute and diffuse form, for that is always a given element in the implementation of knowledge and freedom; it is a matter of more intensive realisations which force this experience of transcendence more clearly on the reflective consciousness as well. In this way these realisations make it possible for the 'ordinary' person to reflect upon his experience of transcendence with the help of an explicitly verbal thematic treatment of the subject of God, which is already to be found in the sociological environment.

[236] In the nature of things, these primal experiences always arise where the movement of transcendence allows the finite character of the specific object as such to be experienced.[6]

[6] By a specific object we mean here in the first place the other, finite and immediate 'Thou' – the people with whom we share and experience the world, not simply the environment.

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Through them, the finite character of specific objects, as something that can neither be overcome nor fulfilled, can become the express subject of reflection, just as much as the affirmation of a fulfilment no longer finite, which still none the less exists even in a 'negative' experience of this kind. Pre-eminent experiences of transcendence may be experience of the fear that threatens everything, and experience of surpassing joy; experience of an absolute responsibility, faithfulness or love, which are no longer adequately justified specifically; and experience of the absolute logic which substantiates the individual object but cannot be substantiated by the object itself. We must of course distinguish between forms which coalesce through a free acceptance, and those which come into being in the radical disintegration between the transcendentally necessary affirmation of God, which is not the express subject of reflection, and rejection of God made in an act of human liberty, whether this be the express subject of reflection or not. For one and the same subject experiences himself, knowingly and freely, as being exposed to several experiences of transcendental necessity; and this subject, in his own unity, feels that these have to be reconciled with one another – though the subject himself can never reconcile them.

But wherever someone still unconditionally hopes beyond all empirical hopelessness; wherever a particular joy is experienced as the promise of a joy that is limitless; wherever a person loves with unconditional faithfulness and resolve, although the frailty of such love on both sides cannot possibly legitimise this unconditional determination; wherever radical responsibility towards a moral obligation is maintained, even when it seemingly leads only to disaster; wherever the relentlessness of truth is experienced and unconditionally accepted and grasped; wherever the unsurmountable discrepancy between what is individual and what is social in the plurality of man's different destinies is endured in a seemingly unjustified resolve of hope for the meaning and blessedness which reconciles everything – a resolve which cannot even be given objective form – in all these situations God, as the condition which makes all this possible, is [237] already experienced and accepted, even if this is not expressly and objectively formulated. This is true even if the word 'God' is never heard and is never used as the term for the direction and goal of the transcendental experiences known in this way.

Experiences of transcendence of this kind are not just sporadic. They are more widespread than that, and may occur in any given event of human knowledge and freedom, without so much as the beginnings of an express and objective formulation. As the condition that makes knowledge and freedom in everyday life possible, this transcendental experience of God is experienced in its necessity and inescapability, so that the person is faced with the question whether he will also make this inescapability the centre of his existence, in free, primal trust; or whether he will suppress it by escaping to the surveyable individual realities in his life which he can control.

But this does not mean any depreciation of the explicit doctrine of God, or of objectifying reflection about this experience. Man is not merely a transcendental creature; he is also a creature of history and reflection. The fundamentally highest stage is reached when he reflects on the transcendental conditions of objective knowledge and of historical experience – when, that is to say, he reflects about the trend and goal of man's transcendence in whose framework history is pursued. But the individual cannot legitimately escape from the common awareness of mankind. He must explicitly want to have to do with God. On the other hand, the conscious verbal and social formulation of the primal experience of God in history and society means for the individual a radical possibility of reflecting on his own transcendental experience of God and of entering into the history of this reflection as purely and completely as possible.

All that we have said up to now is inevitably abstract and very general. Of course it must be translated into different language if it is to be effective in religious education or

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catechetical instruction or missionary work. But people must be warned against demanding today the pure and simple 'concrete', graphically descriptive language that was possible once. The reason why religious language that sounded much more concrete used to be possible was that people felt able to localise God's workings at particular points in the world and history far more unreservedly; and from these points they could talk about God specifically, so to speak. We cannot go into the question here of whether and in what sense a more or less specific experience of God of this kind is still possible today. At all events, in a radical [238] sense, for us God is only conceivable at all as the final ground and ultimate goal of reality; he is experienced within the sensory world at most indirectly. In view of this, contemporary language cannot, ultimately speaking, avoid being abstract to some extent. This abstractness does not need to frighten us, because man is becoming increasingly aware that language which helps him practically to understand and deal with his material environment is also becoming more abstract. This defence of abstract talk about religion is, of course, not meant to suggest that the language used here is the only one possible, if we want to talk about God.

THE POSSIBILITY OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD

People must be warned against appealing too quickly and without closer inspection to particular religious, more or less 'mystical' experiences, in order to demonstrate that an experience of God is possible. 'Mystical' experiences are either very intensive cases of an experience of God which is basically open to all; or they rouse the suspicion that they are psychological phenomena which can be explained by particular psychical causes. The grace of a transcendental experience of God that is given essentially radical form by his elevating grace is open to everyone, at least in the sense of an offer which a person can freely accept or reject. That is merely a translation of the binding Catholic doctrine about the universal and efficacious divine will to salvation. It is probably true that not everyone has the grace of free acceptance and love at every moment in his life. But we can hope – even though we cannot know with certainty – that the history of every person ends in perfected salvation, and that therefore the effective grace freely to accept the transcendental experience of God will be given at some time or other.

But the grace of acceptance is something which in everyone cannot be reflected on with certainty. Proper reflection on the transcendental experience of God in a knowledge about God which is consciously formulated is certainly again grace, which experience teaches us is not given to everyone. According to the conviction of Vatican II, it does not even have to be given as offered and sufficient grace to every person in every social and historical situation. But this only means that the particular person, in his own psychological and social situation, is not actually in a situation when he can sufficiently reflect on his existing transcendental experience of God, and recognise it again [239] in what is said to him about God from outside. This basically happens, however, even when an intelligent person in his own particular situation finds it impossible to understand calculus, for example, even when it is explained to him by a mathematician. The claim that the grace of experiencing God has not been given must not assume a mystical-psychological misunderstanding of this grace; nor does it dispense us from a continually renewed attempt to help others to a reflective understanding of their own transcendental experience of God, and thus to make theists of them, even in the dimension of objectifying awareness and of religious society.

A definite mystagogy in the individual's reflection on his personal transcendental experience of God would admittedly have to be slowly developed, in a better way than hitherto. We do not have to think that the word 'God' has to stand at the beginning here. In a situation in which religious language no longer enjoys undisputed rule in society, the word

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'God' will be more likely to come at the end. But this allows a concept of God to be formed which will not later produce a highly dangerous crisis of religious consciousness because of its infantile nature. This mystagogy in the self-realisation of the transcendental experience of God must of course link up with experiences which the consciousness declares are clearly and existentially important and which bear in themselves the transcendental experience of God in such a way that they compel the person to a conscious formulation of this experience. These experiences are always embedded in the whole of existential human experience. Where this perhaps more or less miscarries in early childhood – because the experience of love, faithfulness and security between people, and so forth, is not adequately attained – conscious formulation of the primal experience of God is of course very difficult too. Only where life is freely accepted in general as having a sheltering significance, in an ultimate primal trust, will man in his freedom be also prepared to carry out the conscious formulation of this primal trust in the direction of God. The awakening of this primal trust does not take place effectively merely through words. It comes about through participation in the life of another person who, in his serenity and love, may be able to provide a fruitful model for this primal trust.

From this standpoint we can also acquire an understanding of the connection between the experience of God and man's relatedness to Jesus Christ. Christ is the 'fruitful model' *per se* for a committed reliance on the mystery of our existence, which we call God. The [240] believer calls the absolutely radical form of our transcendental relatedness to God, the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is in looking at the history of Jesus that the Christian finds the historical legitimisation for committed reliance on God, whom Jesus called his Father. Transcendental experience of God and the historical experience of Jesus come together in a mutually conditioning relationship; Spirit and history are a unity in which God is at once man's origin and his end.

It is of course also conceivable for someone to have been indoctrinated about God by the religious society, without himself being able to enter very clearly into this expository process in the light of his own personal transcendent experience of God. He too 'can of course let the philosophical and theological dynamic that is also part of this objectified concept of God work on him, so arriving at an ever more purified and more subtle concept of God. On the other hand, he does not need to be pestered with the difficult expository process at all, unless his individual or social situation makes such an attempt necessary. In people with a sound philosophical training, this expository process is not necessarily always facilitated by their education; it can actually be made more difficult as well, so that in certain circumstances they stop short at a 'troubled atheism' in the reflective dimension, where the horror of being without God is seen, admitted and suffered, and yet this state cannot be specifically overcome on the level of knowledge about which they can reflect.

THE ONENESS OF PIETY IN THE CHURCH AND OUTSIDE IT

History is the material on which every transcendental experience works. This applies even to the transcendental experience of God. Church piety is therefore nothing other than the fulfilling completion of the transcendental experience of God that is given everywhere, and which is reflected upon in the contemplation of the historical fact of the dead and risen Jesus of Nazareth. The historical contingency of this material gives church piety its obvious

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tangibility and concreteness; but it also lays it open to attack.[7] This means that today the piety of the Church must always be clearly 'fed back' into that primal experience which is its basic material and which it interprets. Otherwise [241] it cannot be lived without reservation in its historically contingent form (in the human word, and in the worship and law of the Church); nor can it stand up to its openness to attack from atheistic humanism or from people who point to the many other existing religions.

The question here is not whether there is or can be a transcendental experience of God which is reflected upon without the mediation of any specific object. An intensive transcendental experience of God will certainly be possible where the mediating, finite object recedes: where the nameless reality of God is experienced in quiet recollection, in silence, where the conditions of space and time recede, where emptiness is experienced as plenitude, where silence speaks, where death is seen as the life that presses forward to meet us, and where earthly reality is pure, unalloyed promise. Here religious life has an immeasurable field of profundity, down to the phenomena which we usually call mystical. For the Church to make this experience again its own, in a fundamental sense – that is to say, to make it part of its life in the Spirit, for which everything else is merely the instrument – means completing the unity between piety within the Church and piety outside it. Initiation into meditative experience ought to be an art in which the spiritual adviser, the 'director of souls', is proficient. It is one aspect of the contemporary priest's uncertainty about the role he has to play that there is so little understanding of this in the Church. Today's priests have nothing to say about the experience of God.

Against these ideas, the objection may be raised that here everything is too much based on theologumena which are open to dispute and are, at the very least, not generally accepted. This might be countered by saying that no dogma can be preached without the use of theologumena. But if we take seriously God's universal rule for the salvation of all mankind, if we presuppose that a person cannot find salvation without some encounter with God, and if we do not make this into some sort of mystical miracle which can just as well be denied as affirmed – then every Christian is bound to assume that everyone has had some encounter or other with God which already precedes God's proclamation in the Word; for even the person who has not encountered this proclamation in the Word in an effective way, or at all, is to find salvation. Every preacher must say what he thinks about this experience of God, which inevitably precedes his preaching, and must explain how he thinks he can appeal to it. But [242] the question remains whether an answer which is really different in fact from the one we have given here can be formulated in a different terminology.

[7] The material could even be different and would still in any case retain its contingent origin. This is necessary, but it is hard to endure, precisely because it is supposed to be, and is, the concrete form of a transcendentally necessary relationship to God that is universally valid.

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[249-252]

VOLUME 17

LIST OF SOURCES

CHRISTMAS IN THE LIGHT OF THE IGNATIAN EXERCISES
Hitherto unpublished text of a sermon preached at Christmas 1974 before a Jesuit community; slightly revised for print.

JESUS' RESURRECTION
The text is based on hitherto unpublished material used for a lecture which the author gave on the occasion of receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Louvain. The original character has been retained in spite of some revision and expansion for print.

CHRISTOLOGY TODAY?
The text is based on a hitherto unpublished lecture given at the University of Saarbrücken in December 1973. It has been revised for the present edition, and notes and cross-references to other work of the author's have been added.

JESUS CHRIST IN THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS
Published in *Offenbarung, Geistige Realität des Menschen. Arbeitsdokumentation eines Symposiums zum Offenbarungsbegriff in Indien*, ed. G. Oberhammer (Vienna 1974), pp. 189-98.

THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE QUESTION ABOUT MAN
Lecture held before those responsible for the Religiösen Schulwochenarbeit in Westphalia on 9 Sept. 1972, in Dortmund. The original text was published in a collection under the same title as the present contribution (Donauwärth 1972), pp. 9-28. It has been revised for the present edition.

THE BODY IN THE ORDER OF SALVATION
Originally published in K. Rahner and A. Görres, *Der Leib und das Heil* (*Probleme der Praktischen Theologie - Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Weihbischof Josef Maria Reuss*), vol. iv (Mainz 1967), pp. 29-44. Stylistic improvements have been made for the present edition; and above all notes have been added.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY
Revised text of the preface to C. Albrecht, *Das mystische Wort. Erleben und Sprechen in Versunkenheit*, H. A. Fischer-Barnicol (Mainz 1974), pp. vii-xiv.

THE LIBERTY OF THE SICK, CONSIDERED THEOLOGICALLY
Published in *StdZ* 193 (1975), pp. 31-40. Notes and cross-references have been added for the present edition.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE
Written for a Spanish periodical. Here published for the first time in German.

OPPOSITION IN THE CHURCH
Originally published in *StdZ* 192 (1974), pp. 812-20. Notes and cross-references have been

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added for the present edition.

‘MYSTERIUM ECCLESIAE’
First published in *StdZ* 191 (1973), pp. 579-94. Matter of purely ephemeral interest has been omitted. Notes and cross-references linking the material more closely with the author’s other work have been added.

THE AREA BISHOP: SOME THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS
Originally published in *Weltkirche, Festgabe für Julius Kardinal Döpfner*, ed. H. Fleckenstein, G. Gruber, G. Schwaiger, E. Tewes (Würzburg 1973), pp. 478-87.

TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE CHURCH AND IN SECULAR SOCIETY
The text is based on a hitherto unpublished lecture, given in spring 1974 in Madrid at a symposium. It has been revised and notes have been added for the present edition.

THE ONE CHURCH AND THE MANY CHURCHES
The article is the revised text of a lecture held in June 1968 in Münster, published in *Orientierung* 32 (1968), pp. 155-9, and in expanded form in *Philosphia. Festschrift für J. I. de Alcorta* (Barcelona 1971), pp. 477-89.

IS CHURCH UNION DOGMATICALLY POSSIBLE
Originally published in *ThQ* (1973), pp. 103-18. The text has been slightly revised and cross-references have been added.

THIRD CHURCH
Lecture held on Reformation Day 1972 in Munich. Already published in shortened form in *Evangelische Kommentare* 6 (Stuttgart 1973), pp. 14-17. Revised for the present edition.

RELIGIOUS FEELING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH
Based on a working paper for the German Episcopal Synod. Originally published in *StdZ* 191 (1973), pp. 3-13.

SOME CLARIFYING REMARKS ABOUT MY OWN WORK
Originally written to accompany P. Eicher’s book, *Die anthropologische Wende. Karl Rahners philosophischer Weg vom Wesen des Menschen zur personalen Existenz*, Dokimion 1 (Fribourg 1970), ix-xiv. Some purely personal remarks by way of introduction and conclusion have been omitted in the present edition.

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[1]

PART ONE

Theological Hermeneutics

[3]

1

YESTERDAY'S HISTORY OF DOGMA AND THEOLOGY FOR TOMORROW

The author of the following reflections from the field of systematic theology is not at all sure if he is right to assume that he is raising what to some extent is a new question or whether it only seems to be new because of his inadequate knowledge of the relevant literature. Even then however he could take comfort in the thought that many others might also lack this sort of knowledge and consequently that his reflections could be useful to them.

To anticipate formally the basic question to be considered, it may be stated as follows: From the period of Catholic modernism – that is, roughly speaking, from the beginning of the present century – reflection has been largely concentrated on the nature of the development of dogma as such. It was not a question only of describing in a historical sequence the history of particular dogmas (this had been done from the time of Petavius [d.1652], with increasing interest of course and with continually improved methods), but mainly of examining the more general problem of the nature of development of dogma as such and as a whole and of the limits to this development. In this connection various theories were put forward, all of which aimed on the one hand at upholding the permanent identity of the Christian faith and on the other hand at recognizing without embarrassment the undeniable fact that the Church's faith and dogma have had a history, and at seeing these two realities as compatible, at reconciling the identity of faith and its actual history. It is no part of our task here to set out these different theories of the development of dogma, which tended mainly toward an increasingly relaxed acceptance [4] of the true historicity of dogmas, in order to avoid seeing this history of dogma simply (as happened at first) as a logically conclusive explication of what had always been said, simply restating the old truth in new words. What is important here however seems to be the hitherto too little or perhaps not at all considered feature of the theology of development of dogma, that it has been too retrospective within the field of Catholic theology: in other words this theory of the history of dogma made too little effort to develop out of its historical observations methodical and hermeneutical principles which could and should be applied to open questions of a current or future development of dogma.

In the first half of the twentieth century there were historians of dogma (we may recall, for example, great historians of theology such as Martin Grabmann or A. Landgraf) who tacitly or expressly favoured the opinion that (apart from marginal areas like Mariology) the history of dogma had more or less reached its close, that – admittedly after a very long process of development – dogmas had now been given their definitive formulations, and consequently that theological science (apart from passing on its final achievements in systematic theology) could continue to work as an academic study almost in principle merely as a retrospective survey of the history of dogma. Certain papal doctrinal statements too (as recently as those of Pius XII) on the Catholic understanding of the development of dogma give the impression of admitting a history of dogma for former times, but of regarding the results now attained (especially with reference to the terminology involved) as unsurpassable, not in need of any

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further interpretation and no longer open to any real modification in the future.

It is however really obvious that the history of dogma (in the widest sense of the term) continues and must continue. The task of transposing Christian faith into modern horizons of understanding is not one which the Church and its theology have yet adequately fulfilled, although this does not mean that the task has not been appreciated at all or is not yet being slowly taken in hand. But there is still a vast amount to be done in regard to this task, which has existed from the time of the Enlightenment. The history of dogma therefore continues and must continue. But then the question arises whether it might not be possible to derive from what has happened hitherto in the history of dogma and the history of theology insights [5] and principles (of the most varied kinds), the knowledge and application of which could be useful and perhaps indispensable for current and future history of dogma.

It seems obvious that a question of this kind must in principle be answered in the affirmative. But has there been sufficient reflection on these experiences in the course of the history of dogma and on the insights and principles drawn from them for the progress of this history? Are these insights and principles available to the history of dogma at the present time, when new controversies and new confrontations between the magisterium and academic theology are emerging, when ‘new’ interpretations of the old dogma are being put forward? Are they stated clearly enough to be able to determine this theological development, to allow it perhaps to run its course more peacefully and rapidly, to help to avoid unnecessary conflicts between the magisterium and modern theology, between ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ Catholics?

Whether this is an old question or a new one is in fact irrelevant. But if we observe or are involved in those concrete events in the Church today which can be subsumed under the notion of development of dogma, we shall not be able to say that the answer to the question is so clear as to make an adequate impact on the course of these events on all sides in theological controversies. Otherwise, would it have been possible, in the schemata prepared by the commission of the Second Vatican Council before the latter’s opening, to put forward as definable truths propositions which twenty years later can scarcely count on a majority among the theologians in the world or among the ordinary believers: propositions, for instance, like those on monogenism or on the limbo of infants? Otherwise, how are we to explain the widespread discontent of many theologians (and especially of moral theologians) in regard to declarations of the magisterium after the last council, theologians who have the greatest respect for the Church’s teaching authority and its intentions but who also have the impression that in these declarations too little account is taken of the historicity and historical relativity involved in former statements of the magisterium? Too much of what was said in the past is merely ‘repeated’; statements are made with too little open contact with the modern human sciences or even with contemporary theology.

The following reflections will be concerned with these insights and [6] principles. And it is a question here only of quite simple, really obvious insights and principles, not of profound and difficult hermeneutical theories in the light of which the present course of the history of dogma and theology would, as far as possible, have to be guided. A deeply probing theory of hermeneutical principles of this kind for the further course of the history of dogma is not possible here, if only because this sort of thing would presuppose an exact and definite theory of development of dogma as a whole, which of course does not exist in any generally accepted form and certainly could not be worked out here. The insights and principles to be put forward here are derived – as will become apparent – from the straightforward observation of events of the history of dogma up to the present time. These will simply be mentioned. At the same time there will be no attempt to work out a system even of these insights and principles; they will merely be placed one after another in a somewhat arbitrary sequence, since a ‘system’ of such principles and its substantiation is of course also

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impossible here. The principles will be illustrated and authenticated by brief allusions to particular occurrences in the history of dogma. At the same time there is no need to offer historical documentation for these examples from the previous history of dogma, since they are well known and the documentation of the historical sources is easily accessible for anyone who is interested in it.

With these occurrences from the previous history of dogma (together with the history of theology) it is not of decisive importance for us here whether it is a question of the history of a dogma in the strict sense of the term or merely one of the history of a doctrine put forward by the magisterium as indeed 'authentic' but with minimal binding force. There is no need to explain the special reasons why in the present context this distinction, important as it is in itself, can be neglected with reference to our examples, which are themselves presented unsystematically. But what is important in regard to these examples is the fact that in many if not all of them this development led to 'new' dogmas or to 'new' doctrines presented as authentic by the magisterium. This means that the hermeneutical principle implicitly involved in such a doctrinal development (if the implications can be clearly shown) are tacitly recognized as legitimate by the magisterium itself; not only the new teaching, but also the way that led to it (by and large), is recognized by the magisterium as legitimate [7] and thus as applicable at least in principle to other cases to the extent to which the magisterium accepts this 'new' doctrine as its own and puts it forward as binding. What exactly is meant by this will be seen from the examples with which we are attempting to illustrate and authenticate the insights and principles to be put forward for a still continuing and future history of dogma and theology. With these reservations and demarcations of our theme we may now attempt to come directly to the essential problem.

I

In the future also the history of dogma will be beset with friction, accompanied by struggles, conflicts, denunciations. All this happened so often in the past that we cannot expect things to be different in the future, even though the human style of these bitter controversies as a driving force of history today and (it is to be hoped) in the future is assuming by and large more humane and more tolerant forms.

In the past the Church's official declarations and determinations of obligatory teaching generally presented the matter as if the true doctrine had 'actually' always been clear and obvious even before these official determinations, as if the opponents of these teachings had been stupid and malicious and as if the doctrine concerned – being obvious and comprehensibly explained directly in Scripture or in earlier tradition – had been questioned and disputed only out of malicious impiety. Countless examples of this could be cited, but we shall spare ourselves the trouble of enumerating them here. This denunciation of opponents as stupid and malicious was (it might almost be said, from the New Testament onward) the style that declarations of the Church's magisterium formerly simply took for granted, which today seems to have been abandoned.

But, as opposed to this interpretation of history, it is obvious that, after achieving the result of a particular teaching, this history itself Continued in the midst of many difficulties, obscurities, and frictions that cannot be blamed unilaterally on stupid and malicious heretics, but are involved in the very nature of the case and amount to the toll exacted by the historicity of human knowledge, even in the dimension [8] of faith. As new questions emerge in a way that cannot be blamed simply on the malice or human presumption and pride of theologians, it cannot be maintained that everything is actually clear from the outset or that an answer is immediately available for every question. This way of thinking is possible only in

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the light of a theory of development of dogma that sees the latter as a purely logical explication of what was already present and the concrete occasions of an historical character for such a logical explication as purely external stimuli, without which the explication could still have taken place in principle. But such a theory of the development of dogma fails to appreciate the historicity of truth itself and will scarcely be seriously maintained today.

The average theologian today may simply take it for granted that the Council of Chalcedon was right and that it interpreted the Council of Ephesus correctly. But what difficulties, obscurities, and terminological confusion had in reality to be overcome in the couple of decades between the two councils and how great were the difficulties afterwards which well-meaning defenders of a Cyrillic Christology of Ephesus felt after Chalcedon (actually up to the present time) in pursuing this path as the right and necessary one?

If the history of dogma and the history of theology went on in the past only in the midst of friction and bitter struggle, we cannot simply expect to be spared this sort of thing today and tomorrow. There has been, if for once we may be so rash as to use the term, a change of emphasis in the Church's awareness of the truth. Where the stress was formerly laid on the objective dignity of truth as such (which was also assumed only too readily to be clearly evident in itself or in its fundamental theological presuppositions and to be accessible to every intelligence [cf., for example, DS 3009, 3013]), there is now a recognition and respect for the dignity of the subjective conscience in regard to truth, which can never be eliminated and which found its distinctive confirmation, again after considerable conflict, at the Second Vatican Council. It is to be hoped that this respect for conscience will determine more than formerly the style of such controversies (including the very practical consequences which must be thought out more carefully than they have been hitherto). The result will be that a questioning of this change of emphasis can never be explained again as formerly almost solely by stupidity or malice and that it will be impossible to declare the questioner a 'subjective' heretic.

II

In the future also the history of dogma can continue with considerable revision of former (authentic) declarations of the Church's magisterium. The situation is not, as is frequently implied in textbooks of the history of dogma, that the history of dogma and theology runs only from what is less to what is more clear, from global to more articulate statements, that it is merely a beautiful and undisturbed 'unfolding' of the original substance of faith.

While the development of dogma in the strictest sense may run definitely and, in the last resort, on a 'single track' – in other words, an actually attained and absolute assent of the Church's sense of faith is not revisable (as 'erroneous') retrospectively (although this process which led to an absolute assent of faith remains open to the future) – that is not to say that a development of faith and theology has taken place and will take place in the future only in the sense of a frictionless explication. On the contrary, this development is very often also marked by wrong decisions on the part of the magisterium, wrong decisions which add a further element of friction to that which is necessarily always involved in the historicity of truth, disturbing the course of historical development and making it humanly more difficult and more bitter.

Again, all this is obvious if we look back, but not readily noticed by the Church's magisterium in the present course of history. In practice, the magisterium not infrequently acts as if its authentic but basically revisable (and therefore possibly erroneous) doctrinal statements were factors to be respected for ever. Consequently these doctrinal statements then refer to earlier examples, even though the latter as such are not absolutely binding, that is,

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strictly speaking, they prove only that the earlier teaching was the same as the present and therefore scarcely give a greater weight to the new statement than it would possess without such a quotation; this is evident today since, after learning from the history of dogma of the temporally long duration of an authentic teaching, as distinct from former times we shall not attach so much importance to proving its objective correctness. (We may recall for instance the approval of torture and of the burning of heretics from Innocent IV, against Nicholas I [DS 648], up to Leo X [DS 1483] or the prohibition of usury even in times when it certainly could no longer be justified by the existing economic structure.)

[10] At the present time also it is scarcely possible to find a declaration of the Church's magisterium in which the universal principles of any normal fundamental theology even of the most orthodox kind in regard to the degrees of binding force of such declarations are provided expressly and openly together with the particular declaration in question. Even today, for dubious ('educational') reasons, the impression is given in such authentic declarations that they are obviously not open to revision and that they could not possibly turn out later to be mistaken and to place an obstacle on the path that the history of faith and theology will actually follow in the future. But there are and there will continue to be such obstacles, since the Church's magisterium can err and often has erred in its authentic declarations, and this is obviously possible also in future.

It is scarcely necessary here to cite further examples from history of these wrong decisions. For the fact itself was quite frankly acknowledged in a letter by the German episcopate. Nor is this the place to consider how precisely the respect due to such doctrinal statements can be combined with the necessity and permissibility of allowing for the possibility of error in these declarations. In this connection it need only be said quite frankly and without prejudice that this question was not given a sufficiently clear answer even in *Lumen Gentium* at the Second Vatican Council, since it is not explained (no. 25) how the recognition of the 'supreme magisterium' and the 'sincere adherence' demanded for merely authentic doctrinal declarations of this magisterium can co-exist with a critique of these statements which may be the right and even the duty of theologians.

III

Even truths that are absolutely binding dogmatically can be stated and handed down with ideas actually held at the time, with conceptual models and accepted modes of understanding, which are transmitted inseparably and as a matter of course with the essential statement and later turn out to be entirely without binding force or even to be false.

It can and must rightly be said (as we mentioned above) that the history of dogma properly speaking moves along a single track and [11] cannot be revised retrospectively in such a way that a defined proposition could later be declared to be absolutely erroneous; nor could this happen even if the kind of explication of faith used in this connection cannot be established conclusively in a purely logical argument from more fundamental data of faith. None of this however excludes the possibility that in the transmission and expression of dogmas properly speaking there may be inseparably mingled ideas, interpretations, etc., which are not part of the binding content of the article of faith concerned but which have not been explicitly separated from this article at a particular epoch in history by traditional theology or even by the Church's magisterium, and for historical reasons cannot be separated up to a certain point in time. There may be such amalgams (if we may use this admittedly problematic expression) even with dogmas properly so called.

Not every idea then that was actually but without further reflection brought to bear at a particular time on the elucidation of the meaning of an article of faith is in principle really an

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indissoluble part of this article itself. This must be clearly understood today in regard to the future history of dogma and realistically taken into account in interpreting the teaching of Vatican I in particular that a dogma must continue to be upheld for ever in the 'sense' it had at its first proclamation. There are amalgams of this kind; in view of the historicity of truth they are simply unavoidable; they will remain (even though in such a way that the elimination of one such amalgam means that another takes its place).

If, for instance, it is shown historically that the Fathers of Trent in their teaching on transsubstantiation unanimously assumed as a matter of course a particular meaning of the 'substance' of bread and wine, this is far from saying that this notion of substance, actually held at Trent and not excluded from what was really meant in a dogmatic sense, still remains binding today for the interpretation of transsubstantiation. If Augustine regarded a directly paternal procreation and the libido involved in it as the necessary vehicle for the transmission of original sin (with the result that, even up to recent times, the very fact that Jesus had no earthly father was seen as a reason why he was free from original sin) and explained original sin in this way as Catholic dogma, this is far from saying that we should or even could consider *this* understanding of original sin today as dogma. If Pius XII (and after him the preparatory commission of the [12] Second Vatican Council) still thought that monogenism is an indispensable and unrenouncable (even directly definable as dogma) element of the Catholic doctrine of original sin, we may nevertheless hold a different opinion today and, while upholding the doctrine of original sin and its essential meaning, eliminate a monogenistic interpretation of this doctrine as an historically conditioned amalgam, even though the theology of former times and the magisterium never thought and could not have thought of this possibility. Pius XII declared that it is part of the Catholic faith (DS 3896) that the human soul is directly created by God. But, as could easily be proved historically, in this statement (correct in itself) he had in mind a conceptual model which is not shared today by many theologians (with their theory of the self-transcendence – even as essential – of the living person), and Pius XII did not think of such a possibility of distinguishing between what is really meant in the dogma and the conceptual model that can be eliminated from it.

If today, as a matter of course, we stick to the teaching that Jesus 'founded' the Church and instituted seven sacraments, we shall see, in the light of historical studies, a number of things differently in these statements and eliminate interpretations accepted at first without reflection, even though the possibility of these distinctions was not appreciated in former times. In the traditional doctrine of inspiration could we not distinguish between a kind of 'authorship' of God as part of salvation history, which can truly be predicated of God, and a literary 'authorship' that must not be predicated of him, and thus eliminate from this doctrine of God as the author of Scripture amalgams which can be made intelligible today only with difficulty? Otherwise we must qualify the statement that God is the 'author' of Scripture in a literary sense with so many reservations about its purely 'analogical' meaning that any understanding of Scriptural inspiration is made more difficult instead of being facilitated.

In the light of the history of faith and the history of ideas, perhaps the most significant and almost terrifying example of an historical development of dogma as understood here can be seen in both the unity and the distinction between the imminent expectation on the part of the historical pre-Easter Jesus and what the Church today thinks is really meant in this imminent expectation. While our faith remains the same also in regard to this question, the distinction [13] became evident only in a long process which can be seen at work already in the New Testament itself but even today is not completely closed and yet is legitimate. Of course many other examples could be produced of such amalgams in a dogma and of their elimination from that dogma in its obligatory sense. But those mentioned will be sufficient.

Such a process of elimination must of course make simultaneously clear that the sameness of the dogma in the old sense is assured and the effort to do this must not be regarded in

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principle as dubious, as a feeble and cowardly compromise between holding on verbally to a traditional doctrine and its formulations on the one hand and a new perception on the other which, if expressed honestly, would presumably be bound to exclude the previous teaching as erroneous. This is not the situation. But neither must the proof of the preservation of a doctrine under old and new, mutually diverse conceptual models, interpretations, etc., be handled in such a way as if it had to be shown with historical certainty that this distinction had been clearly seen even in earlier times and the old interpretation understood even then as no more than an interpretation.

It is of course obvious that such processes of distinguishing will continue also in future, without there being any need to prophesy which of them will crop up today or soon. It is really obvious that the processes of elimination will go on only in the midst of friction and struggle. For what is involved is precisely the question (at first obscure) of whether something is part of what is really meant or merely an historically conditioned interpretation of the latter, belonging to a particular period and able to be eliminated at a later period. It not infrequently happens that the Church's sense of faith (as the sum total of historically conditioned convictions of the faithful and also of the teachers in the Church) has to get accustomed psychologically only slowly and with difficulty to the knowledge that the elimination of such an amalgam and the new interpretation formulated in the light of new horizons of understanding really maintain the dogma intact. If this is true, the magisterium and theology must at times allow patiently for shorter or longer periods during which the justification or nonjustification of this sort of elimination remains uncertain, when a decision for one side or the other cannot be quickly and impatiently enforced (periods which must be endured with patience and confidence). (We may recall, for instance, new [14] interpretations of the doctrine of transsubstantiation or the question of the precise sense in which a pre-existence of the Logos present for us in Jesus is to be understood.)

All this of course presupposes a religious education of the faithful, to prevent them from assuming that these periods of some uncertainty always and in every case represent a threat to the actual substance of faith and ought to be brought to an end as quickly as possible by a decree of the Church's magisterium. It also presupposes that in a period of this kind the theologians, too, will not proclaim their new interpretations too apodictically and 'infallibly'. Such periods formerly could in a sense be taken for granted simply because a slow tempo was imposed purely as a result of the sociological and technological preconditions of theological dialogue; today we would have to create deliberately the pauses for reflection that are necessary for the magisterium and theology. In many cases the magisterium ought not to try to reach a quick decision, but should stimulate and gently accompany such a process of reflection.

We may be permitted to extend these reflections with the aid of some further considerations, even though the latter perhaps reach a little beyond our essential theme. For the sake of brevity we shall refrain from illustrating them with examples. If however a concrete case is required for the elucidation of these further considerations, we may recall the above-mentioned example of Jesus' imminent expectation. We shall continue to make use here of the term 'amalgam', even though we are aware that what it means is objectively very complex and would, and perhaps should, be much more precisely stated and differentiated epistemologically and hermeneutically; but that is not possible here. We are starting out from the phenomenon already observed, that a particular truth was stated at a particular epoch only together with such an amalgam, that it could not then have been stated differently at all (since at that period a different conceptual model or anything of the kind was simply not concretely available as an amalgam), and that the objectively possible distinction between the truth as it was actually meant and the amalgam could not by any means be explicitly perceived.

We distinguish now between the question (1) how a statement of this kind as a unity of

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what is really meant and its amalgam is to be evaluated against the background of the historical period in which it emerged, and the question (2) how it is to be assessed (in its unity [15] between what is meant and its amalgam) at the present time when this distinction is explicitly perceived and the opportunity exists in principle of possibly excluding the amalgam itself as false or perhaps false or as dispensable and replaceable by a different conceptual model.

The first question is meaningful with reference to the evaluation of the statement as made at that time only if this evaluation is made in the light of the present time. For, without this present point of reference, the question cannot be raised at all. Seen in the light of that time (even though it belongs to that time) the problem simply does not exist. Are we to say that the statement was 'erroneous' also at that time (even though this can only now be perceived), since it was in fact made in a unity with an (*ex supposito*) erroneous amalgam, since the possible distinction between what (according to our present-day judgment) was really meant and the amalgam itself was not explicitly considered, and since moreover purely historically it is not certain that the amalgam itself was not then expressed with the same absolute assent with which what was really meant as the content of faith was affirmed? We think that such a statement in the situation of its own historical period cannot be qualified as erroneous or, if it is so qualified, such linguistic usage should be expressly noted: that is, attention should be drawn to the fact that the qualification of error itself in reality withdraws the statement in question from its own original historical situation. For a statement that cannot in a particular historical period express what is supposed to be true otherwise than in the light of a particular conceptual model, etc. ('amalgam'), may not be qualified as erroneous, since in that historical situation it is the only possible way of expressing the truth that is really meant. Anyone who made such a statement at that time was speaking the truth at that time. It must also be remembered that a 'present-day' distinction between what is really meant and the amalgam is not made in such a way that now what is really meant is stated 'in chemical purity', for its own sake alone, but this statement is again made in the light of different and still historically conditioned conceptual models; which does not of course mean that the models and horizons of understanding involved in this exchange must simply be regarded as absolutely equal in value and equally good among themselves.

We come to the second question. If and in so far as such a statement [16] is transferred into a different situation of understanding, if nevertheless it is considered as a unity of what is meant and its amalgam, if in this transposition into a new situation of understanding the amalgam is seen explicitly as false or as not binding or as replaceable, then of course the statement involved (in its unity with the amalgam) can be qualified as 'erroneous'. But then it really is not today in any sense the statement that was formerly made. It was not erroneous, but it has become erroneous, because it is now made in the light of horizons of understanding which were by no means those involved in its original form of expression.

All that we have been saying here refers objectively and methodically to specifically religious statements. We have no intention of making any statement of universal hermeneutical significance. Nor are we going to consider the problem of an elimination of such amalgams which might lead eventually to the elimination of what is 'really' meant, a process of elimination leading eventually to the destruction of any real meaning of a religious statement, ultimately depriving it of all meaning. On this it need only be said that a religious statement in the last resort points not to what is drained of meaning, but to the ineffable mystery that we call God, and it is this reference alone which makes a statement a religious one. In other words, these processes of elimination are basically continually recurring events pointing to that mystery and must occur over and over again in the history of abiding religious truth, since this liberating and hopeful approach to the mystery of God must take place in the light of continually new historical situations of truth.

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IV

In this history of dogma, in its further course and in its presentation, there must always be a recourse to a more fundamental global approach to faith, from which, if often only with very little reflection, a particular theological doctrinal statement emerges, a statement to be examined and tested in the light of the past history of dogma and theology and of possible future developments; this recourse to the actual point of origin of a particular statement can also provide a criterion for the correct understanding of the statement and for a [17] possible and perhaps necessary elimination of traditional interpretations from it.

In the light of its nature and according to the evidence of an actual *history* of dogma, the Church's dogma, in the form of its individual statements and articulations, can be understood and expressed today less than ever as a purely additive sum total of individual propositions, each of these being presented as based themselves on individual statements of Scripture or of former declarations of the magisterium. Each individual statement must be presented in its coherence with the faith as one and whole and with the original and unitive centre of the reality of faith. Otherwise the teaching of Vatican II on the 'hierarchy of truths' amounts to idle talk or a feeble excuse.

The original one and unitive event of the definitive, eschatological revelation in Christianity is not something made up subsequently (not even subjectively) by adding together a sum total of individual statements to be simply accepted, seen as communicated separately by God as and when he chose to do so. It is the one event of God's most authentic self-communication, occurring everywhere in the world and in history in the Holy Spirit offered to every human being; as such it has itself the character of revelation of the truth and finds in Jesus crucified and risen its complete historical tangibility and eschatological irreversibility. (This description of the most fundamental event of revelation is not meant to be taken as the only possible or even as the only adequate characterization; but there is in fact and in content such a basic substance of the most fundamental event of revelation in the light of which individual articles of faith can and must be both positively and critically understood, even though conversely this most fundamental event of revelation itself must be grasped over and over again through the individual events of revelation and through the individual statements objectifying these events: that is, there is a mutual interdependence – a 'circle' – between these two factors.)

This recourse to the most fundamental event of revelation is often necessary and legitimate also with reference even to individual statements of the New Testament and is in fact used (more or less deliberately) in order to define more precisely in the light of the analogy of faith the actual meaning or the real status of individual [18] statements of Scripture. This of course is not to say that this fundamental event of salvation history, grace, and revelation, together with its eschatological irreversibility in Christ, is not also attested expressly and thematically already in Scripture itself. A recourse of this kind is particularly necessary in order to make clear (possibly with the aid of distinctions) the meaning and limits of later declarations of the Church's magisterium. This continually fresh recourse to the original and unifying centre of faith (which is always active in the history of dogma even though it may often occur metahistorically and cannot be shown historically to be very clearly involved in individual cases in the course of the past history of dogma) certainly does not mean at all (as already pointed out) that development of dogma (that is, the explicitation of the original and global experience of revelation) follows anything but a one-track course into individual statements; on the contrary, it can be shown to be quite compatible with the fact that an explicitation of this kind, if and when it has led to an individual, particular statement, can no longer be

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revised retrospectively in the sense that the statement in question might later be declared to be erroneous. Nor could it be so described even if such an explicitation of faith, which took place at an earlier stage, cannot be reconstructed and shown rationally to be conclusive in a purely logical argument.

This understanding of the development of dogma in the Catholic sense however does not exclude but in fact includes the necessity of a further question about the original understanding of faith. Otherwise the systematic theologian, for instance, would need to practice only Denzinger theology and could spare himself the trouble of doing biblical theology or might even regard the latter as no more than historical curiosity. (May it perhaps be suggested, to take one example, that the Credo of the People of God of Paul VI on the whole follows too closely the style of a Denzinger theology – that is, states too positivistically the Christian faith, making too little attempt to derive it from what we understand here as the basic substance of the event of revelation and thus makes it more difficult for people today to assimilate the meaning and status of the individual articles of faith?)

If, for example, we want to know what the doctrine of the sacramental character is supposed to mean today and in what sense it is binding for us, it is not sufficient to appeal merely to Augustine's [19] teaching or merely to collect and interpret and systematize the later declarations of the magisterium; we must also ask how Augustine came to know all this four hundred years after the Gospel; we must ask what was the point of origin (up to a point, to be inferred only metahistorically) of this doctrine of the sacramental character; what the character implies and what it does not imply; consequently in what sense the traditional teaching is really dogmatically binding, how much of it is interpretation and free theological speculation: a question which can certainly be addressed also to declarations of the Church's magisterium, while answers to it must be worked out in the light of declarations still to be made by the magisterium. There are also many other questions which must be regarded today as open in sacramental theology and which have no prospect of finding a real and convincing answer, if we appeal only to 'Denzinger' or other explicit declarations of the magisterium in the past. On the one hand we must form a truly historically convincing idea of the meaning of the statement that (or how?) the sacraments have their origin from Jesus ('instituted' by him) and on the other hand we must consider what is the connection of the individual sacraments with the nature of the Church as 'basic sacrament' of salvation. Only in this way can we hope at the present time to find a plain answer, for example, to the question of who can be a recipient of the sacrament of holy orders (a woman?), what sacramental signs may perhaps be sufficient in extraordinary cases, how the one sacrament of holy orders may possibly be differentiated into individual sacramental functions (differing in character and grade), etc.

The further questions, of which we are thinking here and which may certainly serve as a critical criterion in regard to the traditional understanding of a theological statement, appear generally in traditional textbook theology under the heading of 'reasons of convenience'. But this way of categorizing them only tends to conceal the actual nature of this recourse and prevents a correct appraisal of the process of development of a dogma and of its continually new reconstruction in the light of the most authentic original centre of the event of revelation.

At least one example of what is meant here may be mentioned. In the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* in 1950, on the bodily assumption of Mary into definitive salvation, there is first of all a long historical survey of testimonies from the theology and [20] piety of the past to this dogmatic statement. Taken by themselves, these testimonies may perhaps be considered unsatisfactory, since they appeared at so great a distance in time from the New Testament and the primitive Church and may perhaps show that the later Church held this view but cannot make the doctrine absolutely convincing as a truth binding in faith. But then the constitution (DS 3900-3901) uses also what we have

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described here as a 'recourse' behind an individual statement to a more fundamental and global understanding of faith. We are not discussing here whether this recourse in the present constitution is satisfying in every respect (there is no appeal, for instance, to general eschatology; the body-soul unity of the human person is not always and everywhere made sufficiently effective). But the constitution nevertheless looks to the global and original understanding of faith as one and whole that the Church has of Mary and her function in salvation history and in that light justifies the statement there defined.

Even if it is not directed to the originally one revelation, but to a fundamental particular reality of faith dependent on the former and at the same time related to the theological statement in question, such a recourse is not simply to be depreciated as based on reasons of convenience produced subsequently to support an already established statement. For if it is decided with adequate historical certainty that this dogma cannot seriously be understood as a statement explicitly and formally taught from apostolic times, this recourse is in principle the real source of the statement, whether the explication of the latter from that source (as in the constitution above-mentioned) is sufficiently clear and comprehensive) or whether in this connection (theologically speaking) a great deal is left to be desired.

Such a recourse (to return to our general reflections) is not necessarily and always a recourse to what has always been more clearly and explicitly formulated; the recourse can certainly be from an explicit statement already present (in Scripture or tradition) in the Church's awareness of faith to a global but more fundamental reality lying behind it, a reality which itself becomes clearer and more explicit in this recourse but which thus in its comprehensive unity becomes more clearly evident as indispensable to the Church's awareness of faith than the very statement from which the appeal was made in the first place.

The recourse to this originating reality of faith, either already [21] explicitly present or only more clearly reflected in itself, is wholly suitable to provide a critical criterion for determining the exact meaning and the limitations of a theological statement, even though the latter has itself been established dogmatically as binding.

How, for example, is the question to be decided (if it should turn out to be unavoidable) whether a material identity of the risen body with the glorified body is implied in the dogma of the resurrection of the body (as very many theologians have maintained, even as a dogma, up to very recent times) if there is no recourse behind the individual dogmatic statement about the resurrection of the body to a more fundamental conviction of faith in regard to the abiding unity (even in salvation history) of the human being as body and soul and to the basic conviction of that person's definitive coming to be with God, even though recourse to such a basic conviction would mean that the latter was all the more clearly formulated? How are we to grasp properly today what is really meant by transsubstantiation without such a recourse to a more fundamental, more global understanding of the eucharist? How are we to avoid today an always latent tritheism (which, despite all verbal orthodoxy, appears illogically but actually to affect our explanations of the doctrine of the Trinity) and to interpret correctly the dogmatically binding teaching on the 'immanent' Trinity, unless we continually and repeatedly reflect on its actual point of origin for us, on the doctrine of the Trinity of God in the economy of salvation? How can we make historically credible today the doctrine of the institution of all the sacraments by Jesus Christ, if we do not have recourse to the doctrine of the Church as the primordial sacrament originating in Christ, of the Church as the abiding presence of God's irreversible self-promise made historically tangible in its word? Recourses of this kind of course do no more than reconstruct as well as possible the ways in which the Church's sense of faith extends from its global and fundamental knowledge to particular statements and forms of expression which have already appeared in the course of the history of faith and which from that standpoint alone acquire their formal binding force as matters of faith; they are not however merely pious arguments based on subsequently discovered

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reasons of convenience, but the way in which we can and must today genuinely achieve an understanding of faith. They provide also a critical criterion which however must in principle respect the authority of the [22] Church's magisterium, but which may question purely authentic interpretations of a dogma when they hand on the latter together with uneliminated amalgams.

All that has been said is still very vague; it could be formulated and substantiated more precisely only in a comprehensive and multidimensional theory of the development of dogma. But what has been said seems anyway to provide an understanding which results from the previous history of dogma and consequently is of considerable importance for the further course of the history of dogma and theology, which in future must not go on almost entirely without reflection but, in the light of earlier history, can and should be more explicitly aware of the principles by which its course is governed, even though it will still be far from coming under an autonomous and adequate control by people in the Church or even by the Church's authorities.

It would therefore be desirable also for the Church's magisterium in its pronouncements not merely to appeal to its formal authority or to recall former individual statements which themselves contained explicitly the teaching now to be put forward, nor simply to quote individual statements of Scripture which are perhaps not so unambiguous exegetically as is often assumed in these doctrinal pronouncements, but here, too, to show that there has been that recourse of which we spoke to the original centre of faith. Today the magisterium should not simply say or tacitly assume that this is purely a task for theologians. The magisterium must not merely take for granted its formal authority (which cannot be denied to it), but must make an effort really to gain the assent of believers to its teachings. Moreover a recourse of this kind seems more or less indispensable today, particularly since the formal authority of the magisterium is not an absolutely fundamental datum of faith, but itself as such and particularly in its effectiveness rests on this original basic substance of faith, which for the faith of the individual is prior to his acknowledgment of the magisterium.

V

The rules of biblical hermeneutics, which have slowly entered from the time of the Enlightenment into the Church's reflex awareness [23] and after a long and difficult development have by now been explicitly or tacitly recognized also by the magisterium, must be seen and acknowledged also (*mutatis mutandis*, of course) as rules of interpretation for the later teachings of the magisterium.

Considered objectively, this statement may perhaps seem to be no more than a different way of expressing what has already been said. But it is useful to look once more at the interpretation of declarations of the magisterium (which lead also to the further interpretation of the history of dogma) from the standpoint of the experiences which the exegete and the theologian have had with Scripture texts, especially from the time of the Enlightenment. For the fact cannot seriously be disputed that in both cases the same questions are involved at least wholly in principle and in the last resort, particularly since biblical theology is largely the description of what happened by way of history of dogma in the Old and also in the New Testament, a history of dogma which certainly exists even in the New Testament and without which the true meaning of many individual statements of Scripture cannot be discovered, neither with reference to the extent to which these statements in their true sense are binding in faith nor with reference to what cannot be so regarded.

On the other hand however the hermeneutics of biblical statements seems to have reached a stage of exact and discriminating reflection beyond that of the hermeneutics of later

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statements of the magisterium, so that the former could be useful and exemplary for the latter, even though this exploitability has scarcely yet been taken in hand and from the nature of the case must certainly be treated with caution. Here indeed there lies an important task of theological hermeneutics with reference to declarations of the Church's magisterium which has not yet been properly faced. For the exegete and biblical theologian today it is, for instance, quite obvious that the real meaning as far as it is binding in faith of a biblical statement can be discovered only by a precise and discriminating inquiry into the literary genre of that statement. Is there also an explicit and considered theory in the theological hermeneutics of Catholic theology of the different literary genres of a theological statement on the part of the magisterium? Why should there not be something of this kind?

Is it *a priori* certain that this sort of thing cannot exist, perhaps because of a greater uniformity of literary stylization of these declarations [24] of the magisterium? Are there not also, for example, in papal encyclicals a kind of language of piety, doxological statements, etc., with a literary genre that must be considered if the meaning and scope and binding force of these statements are to be precisely determined? Is it possible to discover in pronouncements of the Church (for example, in the social encyclicals from the time of Leo XIII) a literary genre which might be described as that of 'directives' (which certainly exist in Scripture), representing an historically conditioned synthesis between an abiding principle and an imperative or counsel which involve the application of the principle to a particular situation and is not meant at all to be valid for ever and in all situations, without this literary genre really present in such statements being explicitly distinguished from a statement intended to be perennially valid? What is meant, for example, when it is said (DS 3917) that Mary's abundance of grace at the very first moment of her existence excelled that of all the saints? Without disputing a statement of this kind, we may have the impression that it does not belong to the literary genre of a plainly objective dogmatic statement.

Is there perhaps a literary genre in which the legitimacy of a practice of the Church is defended for the present time (and really no more than that), although at first sight this statement is put forward in the style of a perpetually valid essential statement? Does the teaching of Trent, for instance, on the justification and benefits of indulgences imply that indulgences will continue to be granted in the form of the medieval practice of indulgences for all future times? Does this teaching of Trent amount to a promise that in the Church's practice indulgences will be explicitly 'gained' even in the distant future? From the standpoint represented here ought not also the declarations of the Council of Trent on the indissolubility of Christian marriage to be considered again more urgently, if the literary genre of the rejection of divorce in the New Testament is defined in its meaning and scope? If the biblical statements on the possibility of a final perdition (existentially of course to be taken absolutely seriously) are to be interpreted as 'threatening speeches', could not statements of the magisterium on this theme also be interpreted in the same way, even though at first they sound doctrinally like those simply about facts known for certain in advance?

Speaking more generally, if on the one hand statements of the [25] magisterium seem merely to pass on biblical statements and thus merely to refer back to the latter for their own more precise meaning and its limits and if on the other hand today we determine and define more closely exegetically the meaning of these biblical statements (for example, with reference to the position of women in relation to men in Paul's writings) in so far as they are binding in faith, can we not also transfer this restrictive determination to later declarations of the magisterium? Is not this the way in which modern theology works with reference, for example, to monogenism? In the light of the precise definition of the literary genre of the statements concerned it finds in the Bible that there is nothing about monogenism that is binding in faith and consequently interprets the declarations of the magisterium (for instance, in the fifth session of the Council of Treat) based on these biblical statements in the same

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way.

Here however questions are involved which, since they are unanswered, cannot yet even be clearly formulated or distinguished. The enormous difficulties which Catholic biblical hermeneutics had to face but which have now been largely overcome, with results that are recognized (at least tacitly) by the magisterium, should be a warning not to regard a similarly exact hermeneutics of statements of the magisterium as impracticable merely because it will come up against great difficulties.

VI

Declarations of the magisterium (even in the form of definitions and thus also dogmas) contained occasionally in the past and will also contain in the future an element of linguistic usage for the common statement of truths in the Church: a linguistic usage which on the one hand is not simply the necessary and sole possible way of stating what is meant, but can be considerably different and even apparently the very opposite, and which on the other hand in such a statement of the magisterium is not expressly identified as linguistic usage (which in principle and as such could be different and thus up to a point is freely adopted).

What is meant here is not only that in such statements of the magisterium new terms appear which were not used hitherto and which were introduced into the Church's official language only in a [26] slow historical process. It is true that this alone implies an established usage, in so far as later proclamation and theology can no longer simply ignore such terminology of the statements making use of it. But more than this is meant when we speak of 'linguistic usage'. For when such terms have been accepted and are used in the declarations of the magisterium the impression may be gained that they are the only possible terms and that these alone will be legitimate in the future; that (from now on) what is meant can be expressed only in this way; that these terms are adequate at least for the expression of the objective meaning in the sense that a statement making use of them brings out what is meant in a way that cannot be improved and as exhaustively as possible. Nor is this impression removed by the fact that every theologian of course knows that these terms have to be explained again – and this in fact is an important part of the business of theology – and that obviously different expressions and terms have to be used in these explanations; in other words, a further process of explanation of this kind is in principle never finished. Even after all this is considered, the impression may persist that these further explanations in reality continually lead us back necessarily to the term explained and are adequately summarized and safeguarded in that term and consequently that the linguistic usage cannot be detached from the objective statement. But this impression is wrong, at any rate in many cases.

Let us consider a single example from the history of dogma. As distinct from the theology of the Eastern Church, Western theology from Augustine up to the present time has been committed to the use of the term 'original sin'. Declarations of theology and the magisterium on original sin give the impression that what is really meant cannot be expressed without using the term 'sin', that the latter is irreplaceable, and therefore that there is no question here of a linguistic usage in the sense explained. For some centuries at least theology has become increasingly clearly aware that the term 'sin' in the teaching on original sin is used only 'analogously', since it means, primarily subjective, personal sin and the state of the actual sinner resulting from this. But in such an analogy it is clear that the two analogates differ in every respect from one another as much as they agree with one another. If this is true, it might be just as well to avoid a common term for the two analogates (in order not to obscure or overlook the difference) as it is to bring out the resemblance by seeing them together under a common but analogous term.

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[27] In our case this means that, as far as ‘linguistic usage’ goes, without having to deny or conceal what is meant by ‘original sin’, the term might have been avoided or prohibited, in order not to obscure its very profound difference from personal sin: that is, on the assumption that a different and certainly possible way would have been found of expressing what is described in Western theology and the teaching of the Church’s magisterium, with considerable danger of misunderstanding, as original sin. Here obviously we have an example of linguistic usage in the sense explained, for on the other hand it cannot be denied that even a modern theology may not simply disregard the term ‘original sin’, however much its task today must be to bring out the purely analogous use of the term as compared with that of personal sin.

These linguistic usages may even be revised and changed also by the magisterium itself. If today we were to keep to the usage of the Council of Orange, we would have to say in the language of Augustine that every act of a person who is not justified is a ‘sin’. But this is the very thing that seems to be forbidden to us by the usage which Pius V adopted against Baius. It is also possible for several mutually inconsistent usages to be present side by side in declarations of the Church’s magisterium. It may perhaps be said that the terms ‘hypostasis’ and ‘person’ are used in the same sense in official teaching on the Trinity (at least if we prescind from the element of rationality and freedom in the notion of person). But this in no way alters the fact that the two terms in their origin and further history can be made compatible with each other only with difficulty; in other words, we have here a dual and not a single linguistic usage. If we have to allow for such linguistic usages, which are not simply required solely by the nature of what is to be expressed but which up to a point are freely chosen in the light of the development of ideas, this means for the future history of dogma that we may well expect to find this aspect of linguistic usage present in existing statements of the magisterium, even if it has not hitherto been explicitly recognized as such. It would however take us too long to suggest possible examples of this sort of thing here.

It is also possible for a process tending toward a definition based on a linguistic usage to come to a halt and eventually to be broken off. In the fifties of the present century there was a considerable movement toward defining the position of the blessed Virgin as ‘mediatrix’. Today this movement seems to have slackened and to have [28] no prospects in the foreseeable future. Despite descriptions of Mary in papal encyclicals as ‘mediatrix’ and ‘co-redemptrix’, we now hesitate to use the one term (even analogously) to describe the function of Jesus Christ in salvation history and that of the most blessed Virgin (which bears only the most remote resemblance to that of Christ) since it seems obvious that the use of such a term, even if its analogous character is subsequently stressed, obscures the radical difference that exists between the two ‘mediatorships’. Here then the policy in regard to linguistic usage seems to be following a trend opposite to that which we observed in the use of the term ‘original sin’, where the dubious character of the analogous term was accepted without much embarrassment. Might not the discovery of purely ‘verbal’ heresies, which really amount to a ‘schismatic’ rejection of a linguistic usage on the part of the Church’s magisterium, be part of a history of dogma in the future as well as of an ecumenical theology?

VII

Despite appearances to the contrary, the fact that one ‘party’ in a theological dispute is admitted to be right does not mean that the other ‘party’ (as it actually existed historically) was purely and simply wrong.

This observation may sound like a truism; humanly speaking however it is very important when a controversy is still raging or immediately after it has come to an end (provisionally or

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'definitively') as a result of a decision of the magisterium. The point of this observation is that the 'victor' in such a dispute may not triumph over the 'vanquished', nor need the latter think that he has utterly lost the battle. He need not assume this even if he cannot really say himself how his essential 'concern' can still be basically assured even after the decision has gone against him.

It is right to assume of course that the complete negation of a positively affirmative statement of the magisterium (disregarding for the moment its theological qualification) must be false. But in a concrete dispute in theological history contentious theological statements are not opposed to one another as purely contradictory and consequently the confirmation of one statement by the magisterium [29] is far from implying an absolute rejection of the other statement opposed to it in the course of the controversy. The latter may well include concerns, elements of truth which are not present in the officially approved statement, but which can be right and significant and can have a future even if the other party with its frequent triumphant shouting will not admit this, even indeed when the losing party at the very moment of condemnation cannot itself clearly see what can be rescued of its basic concern.

Was everything false, for instance, that Pelagius and Julian of Eclanum had to say against the apparently completely victorious Augustine, or have they not later been proved right in many respects in the course of a slow development up to the present time, when the doctrine of limbo, for instance, seems to have been abandoned and the Augustinian doctrine of original sin has been quite considerably modified? And has not all this led to the introduction of greater precision into Augustine's doctrine of sin and justification, through a clearer distinction between nature and grace which was not known to Augustine and which goes a long way toward the rehabilitation of his opponents? In other words, was Pelagius actually a heretic objectively, in regard to the matter of the dispute as such, or only in the interpretation (understandable humanly speaking and in the light of the historical situation) of Augustine, who could not in fact understand Pelagius in any other way and therefore attacked him as a heretic and successfully established his own linguistic usage in the Church? Was monophysitism in some churches in the East after Chalcedon of an objective or purely verbal character, in a sense more 'schismatic' than heretical, since its supporters felt unable to follow the linguistic usage of Chalcedon? Is it absolutely certain that the doctrine of justification (and sanctification), as commonly understood and regarded as binding in the Protestant churches, is quite clearly opposed to the teaching of the Council of Trent on justification? Did Bossuet turn out to be absolutely right against Fénelon? After the severe condemnation of modernism (under Pius X), how much of its aspirations and the problems it raised slowly came to be accepted subsequently in Catholic theology and biblical studies, and how often in fact did this happen contrary to the official rejection of individual propositions of the modernists by the Church's magisterium?

Decisions of the Church's magisterium, too, even in the form of [30] definitions, never incorporate the entire and complete truth in all aspects and in all dimensions of the reality of faith; even after the settlement of a controversy, history goes on, so that the 'victors' in the conflict must be modest and circumspect and the 'vanquished' can always hope for a better understanding of their real concern (and also of a great deal of what they have explicitly said) on the part of the institutional Church in the future.

VIII

The history of dogma and theology remains history: that is, in the last resort unpredictable and not under the control of human beings or of the Church's authority.

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No matter how much the history of dogma (together with the history of theology) can be seen as an 'organic' process of explication of the real basic substance of revelation (and it is thus possible to attempt retrospectively to make this process intelligible as 'logical' sequence), it remains nevertheless in the last resort a history of freedom to be accepted in its indissoluble facticity as gift and as burden. This must be so if only because there is an indissoluble relationship of mutual dependence between the history of dogma and theology on the one hand and the universal history of ideas, of civilisation and even economics, on the other; but this history is and remains precisely history and cannot even subsequently be logically deduced. In the Christian view it is true that the history of faith and dogma is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and certainly has its supreme entelechy in that Spirit; but the Spirit is effective in this history because he is also the secret and, for us in the last resort before the end of history, the inscrutable innermost principle of history as such. That is why it is not possible to make unambiguous and secure prognoses for the future history of dogma and faith.

In view of the 'single line' course of this history, we are certainly bound to assume that truths once grasped with an explicit and absolute assent of faith in the Church cannot simply be 'forgotten' again, since the Church's ever present sense of faith remains the same only by retaining also the memory of its own history. But this tells us little in regard to the future about the existential and consequently [31] theological status which such a truth will retain concretely in the Church's sense of faith and in its practice. This is particularly true for theological statements and views with a lesser degree of binding force.

Such shifts in the existential and theoretical status of truths can easily be observed in the past. How long did it take, for instance, for the ecclesiology accepted under the influence of Bellarmine in the sixteenth century to be changed again, after a recourse to older tradition, into the ecclesiology which found expression in Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis* and in *Lumen Gentium* at the Second Vatican Council? Will the widely developed doctrine of confessions of devotion keep up practically and theologically the role it has played in the treatise on the sacrament of penance for a long time up to the present? Popes from Leo XIII onward have produced a detailed teaching on devotion to the Sacred Heart. In the nineteenth and in the present century there have been almost innumerable Roman declarations on Mary and Marian devotion. Will the official theological declarations on such devotion retain the status that they once claimed as a matter of course in the life and in the theology of the Church?

We cannot really foresee the future history of dogma and theology. If however we attempt with a little futurological imagination to form a picture of humanity in the coming centuries, to envisage its quantitative, economic, sociological, mental, and political changes, there can be no doubt that the Church's history of faith and dogma will bring with it changes which we can scarcely imagine today.

IX

It might perhaps be said that the material of the future history of faith and dogma of Christianity and the Church will differ considerably and characteristically from that of the history lying between the end of the great patristic age and the Enlightenment (the dates are very provisional and imprecise, and it might perhaps be better to speak of the Constantinian turning point and the beginning of the Imperial Church instead of the end of the great patristic age and to speak, not of the Enlightenment as such, but of the acceptance of [32] the Enlightenment in the modern Church, an acceptance which has only now been completed and which required a hundred and fifty or two hundred years of the age in which we are still living).

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The whole period, which might be thus marked out on the one hand against the first three centuries of Christianity and on the other hand against the modern age from the time of the Enlightenment, was characterized by the fact that this history of faith and dogma went on by and large in a homogeneous milieu which, despite everything new that entered into it, bore in all dimensions (even the secular) of human life the Christian imprint and was actually threatened only from outside.

The first three centuries of Christianity and perhaps the century and a half after these (as the continuation and completion of the influences of the first period) represent therefore a history of faith and dogma in a militant confrontation with and a simultaneous assimilation of a non-Christian intellectual and cultural milieu. On the other hand (despite the continued influence of ancient Platonism, despite the acceptance of Aristotelianism and the internal crises of Christianity resulting from the schism between the Eastern and Western churches and from the Reformation of the sixteenth century), this long intermediate period was a time of explication and differentiation of the substance of faith from its centre into increasingly systematized distinctions, which, because of their one starting point from within and the absence of any really serious confrontation with external opposition, could be worked out in a more or less uniform terminology accepted by all as a matter of course. This was the time of the summas and, simultaneously and for the same reason, the time when it was possible (since the whole scheme was taken for granted) to plunge with immense theological passion into individual questions and almost to be lost in them. It was at this time that the modern greater catechisms emerged and what we have come to describe as Denzinger theology. It was the time when lengthy papal encyclicals dealing with comparatively detailed questions of Christian faith could be taken as a matter of course; when the magisterium reacted meticulously and swiftly to real or supposed infringements of particular teachings from this detailed system; when it was assumed that the system as a whole was clear and scarcely open to further development (threatened at most in the present century from outside by liberal exegesis and theology and [33] modernism) and that consequently any serious development could only be in regard to individual questions (for instance, in Mariology), so that the main work of theology was concerned retrospectively with its own history, the ‘great’ theologians being historians and not systematic theologians.

Today (naturally, after a long period of gestation from the Enlightenment onward, a period to which the argument conducted defensively with liberal theology and modernism belongs) we have undoubtedly entered into a new phase of the history of faith and thus also of the history of dogma and theology. It is a question today no longer of an increasingly detailed explication of the basic substance of faith within a homogeneous milieu, with its own common horizons of understanding; on the contrary, it is a question of acquiring a new understanding (while preserving, of course, the traditional substance of faith) of the faith as one and whole in a non-Christian milieu, in a new period of a global world civilisation into which new world cultures which were never Christian have entered; it is a question of a history of faith and dogma in a new diaspora where there must again be both radical confrontation and radical assimilation in face of this new situation, which bears the imprint of the most diverse forms of atheism and is marked also by a despair of the possibility of the survival of religion at all. In that sense there is a formal similarity between the period of the history of dogma now dawning and its first period, which we distinguished, even though the material and the tasks of the first and the third periods are radically different.

The history of faith and dogma will presumably go on in the future, not in the style of the second period as an evolutive explication and systematizing differentiation of the basic substance of faith, but as a transposition of this abiding faith into new and pluralistic horizons of understanding, horizons of today and tomorrow. In view of the incommensurable and not adequately synthesizable pluralism of present and future horizons of understanding of the

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dawning historical situation, the transposition of faith into these horizons of understanding will have to be brought about by a pluralism of theologies, a pluralism which will also be impossible to synthesize adequately, despite all the readiness for necessary dialogue on the part of these theologies with one another for the protection and continually new discovery of the one faith.

[34] In this new period now begun the task of the magisterium therefore will scarcely consist any longer in the definition of 'new' individual dogmas, in meticulously looking out for real or alleged deviations from traditional individual teachings, but in maintaining the faith as one and whole in its basic substance; and even this, not by 'censoring', but by positively encouraging cooperation in the task imposed on us today of interpreting the old faith afresh in a new and by no means originally Christian milieu. This new task may well demand far too much from the means (material and personal) at the disposal of the Roman authorities on matters of faith; even in the last decade the Roman magisterium has continued by and large to work in the old style and with the old machinery and consequently, while maintaining its autonomy and special function in the Church, must search creatively for a new style in both its doctrinal and its disciplinary measures if it is not only to be right but also effectively to be accepted as right in the sense of faith of the people in the Church.

In brief: the history of faith and dogma will continue, since salvation history will continue in a new world history; but it will have a different character, not so much the character of a history of individual, newly articulated statements of faith and theological reflection on these, but the history of the new expression of the old basic substance of the faith confronting and assimilating the future horizons of understanding. It is obvious that this history will no longer be merely the history of dogma as formulated in the West and of its theology (to be exported to other countries), but the history of faith and dogma of a world Church, however little we can imagine its material and formal implications. What has been said does not exclude but includes the possibility that the new conception of the transposition of the substance of the Christian faith as one and whole will also have consequences for the interpretation of many or of all individual doctrines.

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2

PSEUDO-PROBLEMS IN ECUMENICAL DISCUSSION

Our intention here is to say something about questions of dogmatics which remain open, although the institutional Church regards them as definitively answered. We are speaking of the institutional Church in a somewhat vague sense, in so far as it gives effect in practice to its teaching policy (in appointing professors, in censoring books – at any rate, until recently – and in other ways) in its general teaching and in its authentic doctrinal statements other than definitions. Hence it is not a question here of definitions of an absolute character of the supreme magisterium by *ex cathedra* decisions of the pope or definitions of a council. These decisions on dogmatic questions will be considered here (if at all) only if, while being absolutely binding, they can also leave open questions that were not directly answered by the definition, either because they were simply not noticed or because it was assumed that they had already been answered, although a determination of the exact meaning of the definition in question may show that this is by no means the case. In that sense even in final definitions it is possible up to a point to discover open questions which are only assumed to have been answered by the definition. But in speaking of open questions regarded by the institutional Church as already answered, we have in mind mainly authentic declarations, not definitions of the Church's magisterium. It can also be a question of those teachings which were qualified in traditional scholastic textbook theology at least up to the time of Vatican II as 'theologically certain' on the basis of a general consensus of theologians and therefore treated in practice as no longer open. These are teachings which can [36] also properly be included here, since the Roman magisterium usually has recourse to them when it feels that a declaration is required.

Among these questions, which are only apparently settled by the magisterium while in reality remaining dogmatically still open, we are dealing here *only* with *dogmatic* questions and not with those of canon law or pastoral theology. It may, for example, be dogmatically an absolutely open question whether wheaten bread alone can be the matter of the eucharist. This is a question that can be declared open without necessarily drawing any conclusions about possible changes in the concrete practice of the Church. Consequently dogmatically open questions need not *always* be a problem for the practical action of the Church.

Our theme of course is set against an ecumenical background. In other words, the questions to be considered here will be those which are important for ecumenical discussion among the traditional Christian churches. We are therefore disregarding from the outset all questions of moral theology which are relevant today, which are dealt with by the Church's magisterium at the present time in authentic declarations put forward as definitive, although they cannot by any means claim to be such. These moral theological problems we are leaving aside here, although it cannot be denied that Roman declarations of this kind actually make ecumenical dialogue more difficult. We are also leaving aside declarations on exegesis and biblical theology from Pius X onward in which the Church's magisterium overreacted to modernism and imposed on Catholic exegetes norms that brought them into conflict with Protestant exegesis and thus certainly also made ecumenical discussion more difficult. These questions can be disregarded here since the antimodernistic doctrinal statements of the magisterium by and large have become obsolete and have been tacitly dropped by the Roman magisterium.

If we restrict ourselves therefore to dogmatic questions in the strictest sense of the term, the theme still remains far from clear. In itself it would be appropriate and useful in regard to this theme to initiate general and fundamental reflections of a theological epistemology to show

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(also generally and fundamentally) how and why it is continually possible in the Church's sense of faith, even though not in an absolute commitment of faith, to reach the conclusion that a certain teaching is the answer to a particular question, deciding this equation unambiguously and definitively, although this is not in [37] fact the case. With the aid of such general and fundamental reflections of a theological epistemology the attempt might be made to show what are the reasons arising from the historical and political development of ideas why we suddenly discover that the traditional teachings do not by any means answer the questions facing us today, even though we had assumed that they would. But, in view of the brevity of these reflections and the obscurity of the general problem, we must refrain here from such an undertaking. We shall restrict ourselves therefore to a few brief observations on certain individual dogmatic questions to which the magisterium and traditional textbook theology assumed too quickly and too spontaneously that they had found an answer.

It may sound odd, but I think that we can also disregard the three great groups of questions of controversial theology which are summed up under the headings of *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*. As far as the doctrine of justification is concerned, it can no longer be said today that the teaching of the Augustan Confession and that of the Council of Trent are certainly absolutely opposed to each other. The same holds for the idea of justification by faith alone in the sense actually understood by Lutheran theology. As for *sola scriptura*, we need do no more than refer to the fierce controversy during the Second Vatican Council, when the question of the exact relationship between Scripture and Tradition was deliberately left open, with the result that the teaching on this relationship which had become traditional since the Council of Trent was now likewise turned into an open question. I think then that we can leave aside here the traditionally fundamental controversial questions of the Western churches. At the same time of course it may be asked how all institutional churches would have to respond officially to the question of what must be done if they suddenly observed that the dissent which was once the source (and the sole source) of division between the churches has now disappeared. We shall therefore deal only with a few secondary questions which we regard, contrary to the traditional view, as open. At the same time no importance can be attached to a systematic treatment of these questions. Nor, with the questions as limited in this way, can an explicit *comparison* be made between absolutely binding Catholic positions and Protestant views. In regard to the Catholic positions, we must restrict ourselves to pointing out open questions, different possibilities of interpretation, [38] etc., so that from this standpoint it becomes clear that an absolute contradiction of the Protestant positions is not as clear and obvious as it might seem at first sight.

We may begin with some observations on the doctrine of the sacraments in general. The Council of Trent teaches that there are seven sacraments, instituted by Christ. If as Catholics we reflect honestly today on the facts of the history of the sacraments, we shall have to say that as actual basic realizations of the nature of the Church the sacraments have their origin from Christ in the sense that the Church is 'instituted' by him, has its origin from him, without having to seek or postulate generally explicit words of institution spoken by Christ with reference to individual sacraments, even though such explicit words of institution cannot be denied in regard to the eucharist. This conception of the sacraments in general as just suggested, which sees the sacraments as actualizations in the word of the basic sacrament, the Church, which is the presence of the invincible salvific act of God in Jesus Christ, ought to be acceptable to Protestants, since in this way the true meaning of *opus operatum* can be made intelligible and the sacraments can be understood also from the Catholic standpoint as the most intensive event of the exhibitive word of the Gospel; it is possible also to point out to modern Protestant theology that, for its present-day exegesis, baptism, recognized by the Reformation as a sacrament, cannot be shown more clearly or more certainly than the other sacraments to have its origin from Jesus. In a Catholic sense, too, the fact that the sacraments

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are a matter of divine law must be understood as a legitimate and irreversible decision of the apostolic Church. But from this there emerges an opportunity of interpreting the Tridentine teaching on the sacraments which on the one hand seems acceptable for Protestant sacramental doctrine today, while on the other hand admittedly raising new questions on the Catholic side, but also opening up new possibilities of pastoral action which had not hitherto been considered. In a modern Catholic sacramental theology doing justice to the historical data and with a Catholic theology of the word (unfortunately only very gradually developed today) it is no longer possible and no longer necessary to portray the Catholic Church as the Church of the sacraments and the Protestant Churches as Churches of the word.

In this connection it should be noticed that the doctrine of the [39] sacramental character as conferred in some sacraments leaves open more questions than is apparent from our textbook theology. The very fact that the Church in certain sacraments grants within itself an irrevocable status (which to all intents and purposes it will never withdraw and which it imparts as such) conveys all that we must regard as binding in the doctrine of the sacramental character without leaving scope for further speculations.

We come to the question of the understanding of ministry in the Church, in so far as here too there are very many more open questions than is commonly thought. Ministry in the Church as understood in the light of Catholic faith obviously implies that there must be a ministry of leadership in the Church as an historical and sociological reality and that its special characteristics, functions, and powers are to be derived from the nature of the Church and must be made intelligible from this standpoint. If we exclude here for the moment the papacy and its powers, in order to give them special consideration at a later stage, then the foregoing statement really covers everything that can and must be said with absolute dogmatic binding force about ministry in the Church. This holds of course in its whole extent for *those* holders of such a ministry who have the leadership of a major and (apart from its link with the Church as a whole) self-sufficient Church and are traditionally known as bishops. In practice this one ministry, as it is now sacramentally transmitted, is divided in the Roman Church into the three grades of episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate. But it does not seem to me that this tripartite organization of ministry is absolutely certainly a matter of divine law. The triple gradation of ministry certainly does not go back to an explicit institution by the historical Jesus. I think it is possible but not absolutely certain that the triple ministry developed so irreversibly in the primitive Church of apostolic times as to be in this way a matter of divine law and unalterable. Even if these three grades are acknowledged as of divine law, the Church can nevertheless divide up its one ministry further and grant a share in it in different ways. In practice this is precisely what it does. Neither is it proved nor, in view of the medieval doctrine of the sacramentality of the minor orders, is it even probable that other forms and grades of participation in the one ministry of the Church cannot also be conferred sacramentally.

In the light of all this it is not *a priori* certain that Protestant [40] Churches which might want to be united with Rome would necessarily have to adopt precisely the division of ministry as it exists in the Roman Church. Neither does it seem to me to be absolutely certain, from the purely dogmatic standpoint, that episcopal authority as it has been defined from Trent to the Second Vatican Council, and as of course it will always be valid, must necessarily be held by an individual as a ‘monarchical’ bishop. Not of course that there is anything to be said practically and concretely against the monarchical episcopate. But when the nature of episcopal authority or the power of leadership over a major Church is described in the Church’s doctrinal pronouncements, when this authority (which is and will remain valid) is described as a matter of course as held by one man, since that is the way in which it is actually exercised everywhere, this does not seem to me to imply in the sense of a dogmatic statement that episcopal authority as one and whole cannot be held also by a small

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collective. The Catholic doctrine of the episcopate as a whole as the supreme governing body in the Church shows that collegial constitutional structures cannot simply be *a priori* essentially alien to the nature of the Catholic Church. But for our part, at any rate, we must distinguish more clearly between the question of the nature of the Church's ministry and the question of the individual or collective holder of such a ministry. The nature of ministry must be seen in the light of the Church's nature and is by that very fact different from the nature of a function of leadership in a secular society. If this is or could be recognized by all sides in ecumenical discussion, it might be possible to agree freely on many other aspects of the concrete structuring of ministry and of its holdership in the one Church formed out of many particular churches which have had different historical patterns of growth.

If ministry in the Church stems from the Church's theological nature and *thus* from Christ, if in this sense it comes from above and not by being freely set up from the base of the Church, nevertheless the question of *how* the holders of such a ministry can and should be chosen and appointed is actually still completely open and is not properly a dogmatic question. Or it is such at most in the sense that a new holder of the episcopal ministry (if his authority is to be legitimate) needs the consent of the pope and the episcopate as a whole. But this does not mean that the actual appointment and choice of a bishop according to divine law must lie with the pope. This may be [41] and is appropriately and usefully part of the positive law of the Church, but it is not by divine law a papal prerogative. This is evident also from the whole history of the episcopate. It can be shown that the determination of the holder of a ministry by an election from below and in fact by an historically conditioned electoral body cannot be contrary to the Church's nature, by the very fact that the appointment of the holder of the supreme ministry, the pope, comes about by an election from below, today by the very obviously historically conditioned College of Cardinals.

Of course, in whatever way he is chosen from below, a holder of the episcopal ministry only comes into the full possession of all episcopal powers when he is not only accepted into the unity and peace of the episcopate as a whole, but when he is also sacramentally ordained by other bishops and thus in this respect, too, enters into the apostolic succession. But this does not mean on the other hand that an election from below is impossible or contrary to the nature of the Church. In principle, unity and peace with the Apostolic See in Rome are indispensable. But this does not necessarily mean that the granting of this unity and this peace must necessarily as a matter of dogma be the central and essential event in the appointment of a particular holder of the episcopal ministry. The pope would renounce a prerogative that is not, dogmatically speaking, everlasting but acquired only in the course of history, if he were to refrain in a union with separated churches from appointing a bishop in the way hitherto envisaged in the Latin Code of Canon Law of the Church.

In this connection something must certainly be said about the obscure question of the recognition of the ministries of the Churches of the Reformation separated from the Roman Church. I stated my views on this question in my book on preliminary questions in regard to an ecumenical understanding of ministry (*Vorfragen zu einem ökumenischen Amtsverständnis*, Quaestiones Disputatae 65 [Freiburg, 1974]). As far as I can see, what I said there scarcely found any response and it is tacitly disavowed by declarations of the Roman magisterium and the German bishops. But, since these declarations certainly cannot claim to be irreformable, I still think that what I tentatively suggested in that book remains worth discussing. According to Vatican II there can be no doubt that these ministries as exercised in the separated churches can have a positive importance [42] for salvation. I also think that as legitimate and at least in many cases (which of course must be distinguished from others that are not legitimate) they are also sacramental in their transmission (ordination) and in their exercise (eucharistic celebration); this is true, I think, not only of the Eastern Churches separated from Rome, but also of the Reformation Churches. If this sort of

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opinion is to be understood, it must first of all be remembered that these churches may not be judged now from the Catholic side, as they were judged (rightly, in principle) at the very time of the Reformation, at the point of separation, as distinct from their present separated state. Then it must also be recalled that there is a kind of essential law that is prior to statute law and simply flows from the nature of a particular individual or a society. This is something that is possible also in principle in the Church, since the latter has a nature that precedes its juridical constitution and comes to it with the definitive and irreversibly victorious event of salvation in Jesus Christ and with the faith in him unconditionally granted in that event. It is from this basic nature of the Church that realities of a sacramental character can flow – at least this is conceivable in principle, even though they do not come to be in virtue of the normal, accepted procedure, if the latter is inculpably omitted.

Unless something of this kind is assumed to have taken place, it is impossible to do justice to the facts in the history of the Church. When a priest or bishop is living in undisputed possession of his powers in the Church, is he to be denied these powers if it is assumed that, according to the normal law of the sacraments, the succession has been interrupted at some point? Was Martin V (recognized as pope by the whole Church) a legitimate pope only if it can first be established that his predecessors either were invalidly elected or actually voluntarily renounced the papacy? If a Catholic priest were to celebrate the eucharist with rice bread if and because it seemed at that point that there would be no wheaten bread in the foreseeable future, would that celebration not really be sacramental? How could medieval theologians regard confession to lay persons in an emergency as sacramental? If non-Catholic Christians marry, thereby effecting a sacrament, and if this sacrament comes into existence in virtue of the basic sacramental nature of the Church, then it is not because the pope by a positive legal act makes this form of contracting matrimony a sacramental sign for such Christians, [43] even though the Tridentine form is not observed, that such a marriage is a sacrament today. Otherwise we would have to come to the absurd conclusion that the pope could require even these Christians to observe the Tridentine form and thus deny to non-Catholics the sacramentality of their marriage. The sacramentality of these marriages belongs to them directly in virtue of the basic sacramental nature of the Church, since these baptized Christians have a right to this sacrament, even though, in their good faith, it cannot be conveyed to them by the normal sacramental signs. It should also be remembered that the rite of conferring an ecclesial ministry is entirely at the discretion of the Church and need not by any means consist necessarily in an imposition of hands. In the light of these reflections, which of course as such ought to be much more detailed and precise, it seems to me not impossible to recognize to a much greater extent than hitherto in the traditional view the sacramental character of ordination and the exercise of the ministry based on this in the Churches of the Reformation. In regard to this question, which is of considerable importance for the possibility of a union of the Churches, I must again refer to the above-mentioned little book of mine. If as Catholic theologians we have a duty to bear in mind everything that can possibly help toward union, we should not be too readily satisfied with the traditional but superficial answers to the question of recognition of ministries in the Churches of the Reformation.

We come now to the main impediment to Church unity: the question of the papacy and the Roman primacy. Paul VI himself acknowledged that the papacy is today the greatest impediment to the union of the churches. In regard to this question also a great deal appears to be more open than is generally thought. Theologians and popes ought also today to consider more precisely what is really part of the inalienable substance of faith in the doctrine and practice of the Roman primacy and what is not. And in regard to what is not essential, although people cling to it in practice, the Catholic theologians and especially the popes ought to make their position much clearer. This is all the more important now that there is

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evidently a growing inclination on the part of Protestants to recognize a Petrine ministry in the Church as necessary to or at least in accordance with its nature. But there is scarcely any visible sign in Rome of a clarification of the self-limitation of the Roman primacy that is dogmatically [44] possible and in the present situation advisable; there is no sign that the first step is being taken toward agreement on this particular question. There is no doubt at all that much of what the Roman See still claims even today by way of powers and rights acquired in the course of history is not part of the inalienable nature of the primacy. Nor of course is there any doubt about this in Rome. But Rome ought also to say clearly what is not essential in this respect and what it is prepared to give up in regard to the churches seeking unity with Rome. Whether these sacrifices are to be made only for the sake of the churches prepared for union or whether they should hold also for the Latin Church of the West is again a very different question which cannot be discussed here.

The basic question is really to be answered not by drawing up an inventory of what Rome can renounce in principle, but by circumscribing what Rome can *not* renounce in the light of fundamental dogma. If the question is answered in this way, it is of course necessary to explain also what the pope's universal primacy of jurisdiction over all the churches as ordinary power of the primacy means and what it does not. There is no need to prove expressly that very many questions remain open in this respect or that a great deal of what Rome regards as an obvious exercise of this primacy of jurisdiction is by no means obvious dogmatically. (The possibility of various ways for Rome to participate in the appointment of bishops has already been discussed. The fact has also been mentioned that to a large extent presbyteral, collective constitutional elements are not dogmatically excluded even in the Catholic Church or in its particular churches.) In regard to the unlimited authority of the Roman primacy according to the letter of the law, certain qualifications need to be considered and more explicitly stated. Unlimited as this authority may seem to be according to the letter of the law, the pope is limited, not only by the fact that he cannot change the nature of the Church insofar as this is a matter of divine law; that is, he not only cannot abolish the episcopate as it is understood by Vatican II, but neither can he in practice undermine its autonomy in such a way to reduce the bishops really to the status of mere regional representatives of the pope in a development which has not ceased to be a threat even today. A further limitation of this apparently unlimited primacy arises from another side and should be explicitly stated much more clearly than actually occurs. In other words, the exercise [45] of the plenitude of jurisdiction of the primacy is tied to Christian moral norms, in fact to norms that are not always purely materially the same, but can be *different* in different historical situations. In practice it seems to be assumed in the Church that it is obvious and not open to any doubt that the pope always keeps to these moral restrictions of his power. And of course it is not to be denied that this is what generally happens. There may however be some doubt about whether this is *always* the case.

It is quite possible that certain moral restrictions on the pope's power inevitably emerging out of the mental climate and sociological situations today are present as such, but in practice are not seen and therefore not respected. It is, for example, quite conceivable in principle that in publishing *Humanae Vitae* Paul VI in good faith actually infringed norms for arriving at a papal judgment which were available as such. It is quite conceivable that Roman authorities may interfere in the life of the particular churches in a way that objectively infringes the principle of subsidiary function in the Church. It does not seem obvious or unquestionable to me that the law of celibacy has to be enforced uniformly from Rome in the whole Church. It is not *a priori* clear that every recourse to the universal primacy of the pope is always and in every case in practice also morally justified. (If, for instance, a ruling on celibacy from Rome alone for the universal Church is morally legitimate, then the pope has this right in principle also in regard to the Eastern Churches. Could it then seriously be asserted that the pope has

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the moral right also to forbid priestly marriage for all the Eastern Uniate Churches?) There can of course be disagreement on the exact details of the restrictions imposed on the pope's universal power of jurisdiction by moral principles and in particular by moral principles varying with different situations; but there ought to be an open and lucid dialogue in the Church, even if in a case of doubt and where the pope does not clearly order something positively immoral the presumption is that the pope is right. But it would be very important for the progress of ecumenism if Rome itself were to define concretely and clearly and in detail just what it could renounce in the light of its own self-understanding.

From the ecumenical standpoint the most difficult of the questions associated with the papacy is of course the definition of the pope's infallible teaching primacy. We cannot get rid of this difficulty by [46] seeing it in the way Hans Küng sees it and more or less interpreting out of existence the infallibility of the pope when he makes an *ex cathedra* decision. But it is possible to bring out more clearly what this Catholic dogma means and what it does not mean. As far as the past is concerned, the only difficulties in regard to this infallible teaching authority of the pope that arise in practice are connected with the two Marian dogmas defined by Pius IX and Pius XII. As we hope to show later, these difficulties can certainly be cleared up. The real difficulty of Protestant Christians relates to possibilities of the future, to conceivable future *ex cathedra* decisions by the pope. In this connection, even if a Protestant is prepared in principle to recognize a Petrine ministry in the Church, he does not think that he is in a position to make out a kind of blank cheque for the future. It does not seem to him clear and unequivocal that divine providence, which keeps the Church in the truth of Christ, is necessarily bound to be effective when the pope defines something and not on other occasions or in a different way. To the Protestant, the Catholic idea of the concentration of the efficacious grace of truth, granted to the Church, precisely on a particular and juridically determinable act of the pope, seems to be a human materialization and legalization of the grace of truth, which is incredible. It seems so incredible also because history shows that on the one hand in authentic doctrinal decisions the ordinary magisterium of the popes was often involved in error, at least up to the present time, and, on the other hand, Rome put forward and insisted on such essentially reformable decisions as if there could be no doubt about their definitive truth and as if any further discussion was unbecoming for a Catholic theologian. Against such reservations on the Protestant side purely theoretical arguments on our part will have little prospect of success in practice. We could however attempt to show better than we have done hitherto that the concrete procedure before and for a papal *ex cathedra* decision now and in the future will certainly take such a form that a Protestant need not fear in practice and concretely that his blank cheque will be filled out with a papal teaching which he is bound in faith and conscience to oppose. In this respect two considerations may be useful.

First of all, it is clear and conciliar teaching that a pope, who does not receive any new revelation even for an *ex cathedra* decision, must prepare his decision by making use of all means at his disposal [47] in that particular situation. But the moral norms implicit in this principle could be more clearly articulated and codified today, even though the observance of these norms in a concrete case would not be open to legal verification by an authority higher than that of the pope. If such norms for arriving at the truth in regard to a papal decision were not only present and observed in practice (which can be assumed on the whole to have been the case in the past, even though they could be and ought to be more differentiated now and in the future), but were also explicitly formulated and codified, there would be far less need for a Protestant to fear a future papal *ex cathedra* decision which might be contrary to his faith and conscience. If in the First and the Second Vatican Council it is said that the pope or his decision is infallible as such (*ex sese*) and not in virtue of the consent of the Church, this means merely that the pope's *ex cathedra* decision does not acquire its definitive validity only by virtue of the juridical verification of its correctness by a higher legal authority in the

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Church distinct from the pope. But this *ex sese* of the two Vatican Councils does not mean that the pope possesses an infallibility that is independent of God's irreversibly victorious promise to the Church as a whole.

In an *ex cathedra* decision the pope *as* head of the Church and of the episcopate as a whole acts as an authority that is restricted by the Church as a whole and its infallible faith. Consequently, in preparing *ex cathedra* decisions, the pope must necessarily have recourse to the sense of faith of the whole Church. If this were not so and if it were not necessary, a papal *ex cathedra* decision would be the proclamation of a new revelation. But the pope neither possesses nor receives any new revelation. He is the authoritative spokesman of the Church's sense of faith and for this he has the assistance of the Spirit, an assistance which must not be understood as psychological inspiration but in the last resort means the success coming from God of his recourse to the infallible sense of faith of the Church as a whole. This reference to the whole Church's sense of faith of course takes different forms at the different stages of the Church's history in the light of the opportunities available at the time. Today certainly in this respect a recourse to the episcopate as a whole is absolutely necessary, both morally and from the nature of the case. And again this recourse may take a variety of forms. But it is now not merely a laudable practice, observed by Pius IX and Pius [48] XII (though perhaps in ways that were not entirely satisfactory), but an absolute requirement.

Such an explicit recourse is technically quite feasible today. But in that case it is also a moral obligation. How could a pope today honestly say that he had done all that was humanly possible and morally required to be humanly certain that his teaching was a part of the assured sense of faith of the whole Church, if he had wanted to dispense with this consultation of the episcopate as a whole? It is obvious that such a consultation ought to take place and ought also to be publicly clear today in certain forms now possible of explicitness, transparency, easier dialogue, consultation of theologians, investigation of the believers' sense of faith, etc., even though it is evidently not yet clearly considered and practised in Rome, as can be seen also from very recent authentic if not defining dogmatic statements. If such procedures were clearly articulated, explicitly shown to be operative, and applied in practice, even a Protestant Christian would be largely relieved of the fear of an arbitrary manipulation of the papal teaching authority contrary to the true spirit of Jesus and the Church.

A *second* consideration may be added to the first. The Catholic faith in the existence of a papal teaching power, that is always involved in the permanent nature of the Church, does not imply that the actual exercise of this power is the same at all times (which is not true of the past), does not imply that it is independent of any historical and variable preconditions. Because of the history of dogma of the first two thousand years of the Church, we have become accustomed involuntarily to think of this history as an increasingly progressive explication and articulation of the basic substance of faith into more and more new and explicit individual statements and consequently to think naturally also of the papal teaching primacy as being actively involved in producing these new and differentiating statements. We involuntarily regard the exercise of the pope's teaching primacy, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, as an explanation of statements which, even though ultimately implied in the tradition of faith, seem materially new and were formerly scarcely explicitly perceptible: for instance, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception or the Assumption of Mary into heaven or even the doctrine of Mary as mediatrix of grace propagated some twenty years ago with a view [49] to a dogmatic definition. But it is completely unproven and seems to me not at all probable that the exercise of the papal teaching authority will continue in this way in the future. The future history of doctrine of Christianity and the Church seems to me to be tending, not toward a further material differentiation of the substance of Christian faith, but toward a new expression of the ultimate basic substance of Christianity required and made possible by the

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new mental climate and sociopolitical situation. The concrete exercise of the papal teaching primacy would also have to be understood *accordingly* if it is to endure in the future.

Unfortunately, it is impossible here to offer a precise substantiation of this prognosis of the future history of dogma and thus also of the concrete way in which the papal teaching primacy will be exercised. Otherwise it would be necessary to offer a precise analysis of the mental climate of the world and of world civilisation, of the present-day irreversible pluralism in a world that is nevertheless one, and thus to clarify the secular historical background to the life of faith in the modern world-Church. But this, too, is not possible here. I am sure however that from this standpoint a prognosis would be possible for the future exercise of the papal teaching primacy, a prognosis making clear to the Protestant Christian that the papal magisterium in the future will inevitably and readily be concentrated on the defence and a new up-to-date statement of the basic substance of Christianity which is just as dear and as natural to that Christian as it is to us Catholics. To sum up, it could be said that if the future themes of the papal teaching authority and the direction of its impact were clearly and frankly stated by Rome and if at the same time the *procedure* now possible and necessary for Rome to arrive at the truth and make a decision were made clearer and more patently observed, the Vatican doctrine of the papal teaching primacy should no longer be as hitherto a spectre disturbing the faith and conscience of the Protestant Christian. At the same time the question remains entirely open whether in the foreseeable future any papal *ex cathedra* decisions at all need be expected or whether there are reasons for assuming that this is unlikely.

Finally, a word about the open questions involved in the two Marian dogmas defined by Pius IX and Pius XII. In themselves and as the only really concrete examples of *ex cathedra* decisions by the [50] pope alone, they are also among the stumbling blocks for Protestant and Orthodox Christians in regard to the Roman Church created since Trent.

As far as the first of the Marian dogmas is concerned, I venture to suggest that a possible orthodox further development of the dogma of original sin may make it easier to prove than by an appeal to revelation in the strict sense and thus to remove also the offensive and incredible features that Protestant Christians see in it. If we want to elucidate the dogma of original sin today with reference to *all* human beings *and* at the same time equally clearly and unmistakably to grasp by faith the fact that every Adamite human being, even in an infralapsarian state, always and from the very beginning comes within the scope of God's supernaturally beneficent salvific will (a salvific will that does not merely imply an intention on God's part, but is a supernatural existential of the offer of grace presented always and everywhere), then original sinfulness is not simply a state chronologically prior to the offer of grace to freedom: it is 'dialectically' co-existent with the offer of salvation and grace as a determination of man, who is always and everywhere in his situation of freedom descended simultaneously from both Adam and Christ and freely ratifies one situation of freedom or the other. If it is recalled that Mary also is redeemed by Christ – that is, she is in need of redemption and this need is among the permanent existentials of her existence – then the normal infralapsarian human being and Mary are not really distinguished because of a difference in a period of time at the beginning of existence, but because Mary receives the offer of grace to her freedom in virtue of her predestination to be the mother of Jesus and consequently as an offer efficaciously prevailing and as such also perceptible in salvation history. A Protestant theology of pure grace, efficacious as such, should not really find this distinction offensive. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception does not necessarily imply that the beginning of grace for her is different in a temporal sense from what it is for us, who likewise do not receive grace for salvation as a permanent existential of our freedom for the first time only in baptism.

It might be almost easier to achieve an agreement with Protestant theology on the second

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Marian dogma. For the content of the doctrine of the Assumption does not imply that Mary's 'bodily' assumption into heaven is a privilege granted (apart from Jesus) to her [51] alone. It was obvious, for instance, to the Fathers of the Church that the Old Testament patriarchs in limbo at the time of Christ's resurrection entered bodily into their eternal bliss. If today, as against a Platonizing interpretation of the 'separation of body and soul' at death, we may certainly hold that every human being acquires his risen body at death, 'at that very moment' (in so far as terms relating to time make sense in this respect), a view often maintained in Protestant theology and quite legitimate with the aid of a little justifiable demythologizing, then this dogma does not refer to something granted to Mary alone, but to what belongs generally to all who are saved, while appropriate to her in a special way in virtue of her function in salvation history and consequently more clearly understood in the Church's sense of faith than it is in other human beings. It can therefore be said that even in regard to these two Marian dogmas there need be no insuperable point of controversy, if the open questions undoubtedly involved also in these dogmas are clearly recognized.

On the whole, the Catholic theologian may rightly assume that there are no theological opinions today that can be shown with certainty to be absolutely binding on one side or the other in a sense that would necessitate and authorize a division of the churches. We are speaking of the present time. It might of course be said that, if there are no such diversities of opinion today justifying a division of the churches, they could not have existed in the past, which however is unlikely. Against this objection it must be said that an agreement on articles of faith, always possible in principle, needs also to be explicitly grasped as possible and this requires time and history, the length of which cannot be *a priori* decided and defined. Moreover it must be remembered that the schism of the sixteenth century involved not only the fact that no explicit agreement had been reached, but also an illegitimate disagreement in which both sides were at fault in regard to a linguistic usage on the part of the Catholic Church: a rejection of a common language which was not necessarily an objectively existing *heretical* opposition, but which in any case had a schismatic character, even though this opposition does not perhaps persist everywhere today.

If we say that present-day theology no longer sees any insuperable points of dogmatic controversy or any antagonism implying a clear and straightforward mutual contradictory opposition between the [52] teachings of the actual churches, if, that is, we think that in ecumenical questions the task is no longer really one for theologians but for the authorities in the Church, that the latter may not regretfully shrug their shoulders and blame everything on the disagreement of the theologians, this of course does not mean that the theologians no longer have any ecumenical task. The possible, already existing, or emerging agreement between the teachings of the separated churches must of course be much better elucidated and worked out in detail. It is the task of the theologians to make clear to the Church's magisterium in Rome, which is still a long way from adequately assimilating present-day entirely orthodox theology, that in theological terms agreement already exists today or is immediately possible: these theologians must seek to gain an understanding in Rome for different theological languages which could legitimately bring the separated churches into the unity of the Church; they must gain an understanding in Rome for the fact that there is a legitimate pluralism in the theologies of the one Church of the one faith, a pluralism that can certainly have an effect on the understanding of faith and the practice of the life of the particular churches. If a dogmatic agreement of the separated churches is considered possible today, the question of course remains open as to who on the Protestant side is the authorized partner, who can decide that an agreement on faith is binding. For within the Protestant Churches there are of course groups and theologies with which this agreement cannot be established, since these groups and theologians are plainly opposed to the basic substance of Christian faith and consequently cannot be positively included in this agreement. This means

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of course that new questions are raised that cannot be discussed here.

Traditional neoscholastic theology, in which we were trained and which still prevails in Rome despite Vatican II more or less as a matter of course and is put forward without hesitation also in present-day Roman doctrinal statements, overlooked many questions which the binding dogma of the Church leaves open. This neglect of open questions then leads all too easily to a tacitly accepted interpretation of the binding dogma which is simply amalgamated with that dogma as if this interpretation were an intrinsic element of the dogma itself. But then there arise misunderstandings of the actual dogma which make it difficult or impossible for Protestant Christians to rediscover in Catholic teaching their own Christian [53] faith. Here lies an important task of modern Catholic theology as a part of its ecumenical work. It is a question not only of misunderstandings existing among *Protestant* Christians in regard to Catholic dogma, but of those which *we ourselves* – Catholic Christians and theologians – have and wrongly identify with Catholic dogma. Our work therefore consists, not merely in the enlightenment of non-Catholic Christians and theologians, but before that in enlightening ourselves and in purifying our own faith from misunderstandings which we ourselves overconfidently and apathetically continue to drag along with us.

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3

MAGISTERIUM AND THEOLOGY

The theme ‘magisterium and theology’ is certainly not without current interest for the educated Catholic, if we think of the new conflicts which have arisen recently between the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and theologians all over the world and which have gained the interest also of a wider public. The educated Catholic is concerned with conflicts of this kind, since the questions raised are not restricted to the narrower field of specialist theology, but also affect the life of the ordinary Catholic; he is also concerned because in these cases at the present time on the one hand his sympathies are mostly on the side of the ‘progressive’ theologians and yet on the other hand as a devout Catholic he is prepared to respect the Church’s magisterium. Our theme then may be expected to interest the educated Catholic, even if he is not a professional theologian.

It is clear in the first place that only a few observations on this theme are possible here, since a comprehensive and exhaustive treatment would require a very large book. Even then the theme might be discussed in a variety of ways. It would be possible to attempt to state more or less precisely and to justify the teaching of the Church’s magisterium about itself, which alone would be a considerable and difficult task. But this is not the procedure to be adopted here. Certainly, this teaching of the magisterium about itself must be briefly recalled at the beginning. But then, as far as this is possible in a brief space, there ought to be some discussion of problems, viewpoints, and connections between theology and magisterium, which are not adequately considered in the teaching of this magisterium but are nevertheless important for the present-day relationship [55] between magisterium and theology and have to be understood up to a point also by someone who is not a professional theologian but who shares in the life and thought of the Church.

First of all then we may recall as briefly as possible the more important theological statements made by the Church’s magisterium about itself as the content of its self-understanding, assuming that these statements are presented by the magisterium on the whole as absolutely binding, as *dogma* of the Catholic Church. The Church is instituted by Jesus Christ, has its origin from him, however this institution or origin is to be precisely understood, which is also something that cannot be discussed here. As a result of this provenance the Church is to form the permanent presence of Jesus Christ in the world, the public presence of the faith that in Jesus Christ the irrevocable and victorious word of God’s promise went out into the world and will never perish. The Church, understood in this way, has a sociological structure also by the very fact that it is a community of *faith*. It is not merely a community of believers forming a unity in Christ; it has a mandate and a mission to attest and proclaim this faith to the world. It can fulfill both these requirements (unity of the same faith and mission of proclamation) as a sociologically structured entity only if there is in it a concretely palpable and legally competent authority, which provides in a special (but not exclusive) sense for the task of the unity of faith in the Church and the active proclamation of this faith to the world.

It is true that such an official legal authority is obviously not something confronting the Church as superior to the latter, but is itself fundamentally sustained by the victorious power of the Spirit of Christ, who alone in the last resort guarantees the permanency of the one faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and the strength to make the Christian message effective. But this very fact means that the historical sociological character of the Church as Jesus’ community of faith does not exclude but includes the presence in this community of a

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personal, legally competent authority, who undertakes the task above-mentioned in a special way in the power of the Spirit of Christ. According to Catholic ecclesiology, the concrete bearers of this function, who form this authority, are present in the whole episcopate of the Catholic Church with and under the Bishop of Rome, the pope; the latter is not purely and simply *primus inter pares* in the episcopal college, but (without canceling the fundamental [56] and ultimate magisterial authority of the episcopate as a whole) as an individual official person combines in himself this teaching authority of the entire episcopate, although at the same time the pope acts precisely *as* legally competent head of this episcopate as a whole. This supreme teaching authority, itself composed of pope and total episcopate in unity, exercises its function either in the activity of what is called the ordinary magisterium (that is, by the normal doctrinal proclamation which takes place generally everywhere in the most varied shapes and forms in the Church) or in an extraordinary way (as, for instance, in councils); but we shall not be concerned with the question of which ways of utilizing this magisterium belong precisely to its ordinary or to its extraordinary activity (whether, for example, a papal encyclical represents one form or the other of the magisterium).

According to the Catholic understanding of the Church, this magisterium has also a formal authority: that is, while it obviously must justify its individual doctrinal statements from the heart of Christian faith, from Scripture, in the light of the assured faith of the whole Church, this authority of the magisterium, in order to make its impact on the faith and conscience of the individual Christian, must be recognized by the latter in a decision of faith which is not itself based on the authority of the magisterium, but has a more fundamental character. In other words, the authority of this magisterium for the Catholic Christian is not justified merely by the weight of the relevant arguments presented by the magisterium for its individual doctrinal statements or by the appreciation of the individual Catholic of the importance of these arguments, but by the very fact that this teaching authority as it is grasped in principle from the outset in faith speaks in virtue of the legitimate utilization of its mandate. It is impossible here to develop the Catholic teaching on the *criteria* according to which the formal legitimacy of this magisterium can and in principle also must be established for the particular case.

In its ordinary and extraordinary teaching, however, the magisterium can make use of its authority in very varying degrees and in fact simply cannot concretely avoid this gradation. It can speak with ultimate binding force (that is, it can demand for its teaching a real and definitive assent of faith) and in this sense impose its teaching as irreformable and finally binding: it can proclaim a dogma. But it can also teach in such a way that a theological doctrine is put forward as [57] ‘authentic’ (as it is usually described) and yet not as ultimately binding, and thus the question remains open (even though this is generally not expressly stated) as to whether this teaching may not turn out later to be in need of completion or even to be erroneous. It is important for the educated Catholic today to understand that the magisterium can not only exercise its function by proclaiming dogmas properly so-called, that is, it need not be faced from the outset by the dilemma of proclaiming a dogma or simply of being silent. In order to be able to present the Christian faith as one and whole concretely, vividly and in a way that corresponds to particular historical situations, the magisterium must be able to put forward also provisional, more or less problematic and yet not simply nonbinding statements, since without these the Christian faith as one and whole cannot be vividly conveyed and really assimilated by the faithful in a particular historical situation. The sense of faith of the Church as a whole is like the self-understanding of a particular individual, which is always a synthesis involved in an historical process, a synthesis on the one hand of maxims grasped with absolute assent and on the other of provisional understandings formed by a person to the best of his knowledge and judgment: a self-understanding that is quite impossible without such a synthesis.

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Even though theology formulates quite manageable principles, according to which it is possible to distinguish between a dogma and a merely authentic teaching, in the concrete case doubts and differences of opinion can persist also in regard to this distinction, particularly since the concrete practice of the Roman magisterium today with reference to these merely authentic declarations is almost always to avoid any explicit statement to the effect that it is a question merely of an authentic but not definitive comment of the Church's magisterium. It cannot be denied that such an authentic doctrinal pronouncement not only *can* in principle be erroneous, but in the course of history often *has been* actually erroneous; this is expressly admitted in a pastoral letter of the German episcopate on the magisterium, even though the Roman authorities on the doctrine of faith scarcely ever explicitly withdraw such concrete errors at a later date and prefer tacitly to bury them. Even according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council the Catholic theologian is not simply free and uncommitted in regard to such an authentic teaching of the magisterium he owes it respect. But *how exactly* this respect for the [58] teaching can co-exist with the possibility of error in that teaching (that is, with the possibility and necessity of allowing for error and thus with the progress of theological discussion) is something on which no sufficiently clear information can be found in the teaching of the Church's magisterium. In their pastoral letter previously mentioned, the German bishops made some suggestions in this respect which were important for their Königstein declaration on *Humanae Vitae*. But the Roman magisterium itself can hardly be said to have spoken at all hitherto about the precise question of how the acknowledgment of a certain binding force of a purely authentic doctrinal declaration on the one hand can co-exist with the necessity and possibility of allowing for an error in that declaration on the other hand in the theoretical consciousness and in the conscience of the theologian and the believer, without cancelling each other out. To facilitate the understanding of such a possibility, we may certainly point to the situation in practical life of an individual consciousness where there are norms and principles of action which are understood and regarded as provisionally valid with the reservation that a later and better insight may lead to their revision.

As we said, the holder of this teaching authority in the Church is the episcopate as a whole with and under the pope. But, in connection with their teaching, the theologians, too, of course have a definite and necessary function in the Church, particularly if in the light of the Church's history it is assumed as an inescapable fact that the function of the theologian and that of the holder of the teaching office properly so-called are generally not combined in one person, but in practice today and for a long time have been assigned to different persons. From the nature of the case there will be more to be said later about this function of the theologians. There has been some talk here and there of a 'magisterium' of theologians and even attempts to refer to biblical evidence for this. But, without prejudice to a real and indispensable function of the theologians, it is better to avoid the term 'magisterium' in this connection, because it leads to misunderstandings arising from the fact that in one and the same society with reference to the same task there cannot really be two *offices* distinct from one another. In statements by the magisterium of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the relationship between magisterium and theologians is described on the whole in a way that assigns to theologians only a function of further and more subtle [59] interpretation of the teaching of the magisterium and of defending this teaching by showing that it is contained in the original sources of revelation: theologians are thus assigned merely a subordinate auxiliary function in the service of the magisterium. We shall see shortly that this view, taken by itself, does not do justice to the actual data or requirements of the Church's proclamation. But what has been said up to now may suffice to indicate the traditional teaching of the Church's magisterium about itself. We are coming only now to our proper subject matter which, as we pointed out at the beginning, does not consist in the repetition and substantiation of the Church's teaching on the magisterium as it actually exists, but is

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concerned with a further and unclarified question which may be of interest, not only to the professional theologian, but also to the educated Catholic of the present time.

It is not easy to pinpoint in advance in a few words what is to be the object of our reflections, to state the 'thesis' to be defended here, to indicate from what different aspects the matter under consideration can be approached. Without putting forward a systematically formulated thesis, we may now suggest a number of observations which seem to be important for a more exact clarification of the relationship between magisterium and theology, but without setting out these observations systematically. First of all, in the whole history of dogma and theology it can be observed that the actual dogmatic substance of faith as put forward by the magisterium in the Church's proclamation is itself always theology. In this statement 'theology' means the fact or circumstance that the dogma to be stated and proclaimed is formulated with the aid of concepts, horizons of understanding, terminologies, selective considerations, shifts of emphasis, etc., which in a particular mental climate are or can be quite legitimately and concretely unavoidable and necessary, but on their own account do not themselves possess the dignity of dogma as such. The dogma is inevitably always formulated with the aid of theology, which itself is not dogma: that is, it is not as such revealed and irreformable. Even dogma properly so called is always a synthesis of what is properly and originally revealed and of human reflection, which is not actually revealed but is, precisely, theology. The *successful achievement* of such a synthesis, when it is a question [60] of a dogma properly so called, can be guaranteed by the defining authority of the magisterium, but a statement of this kind always remains a synthesis: a statement whose dogmatic validity and irreformability does not exclude but includes the fact that, despite its inerrancy, it is open to the future for a new form of expression, to be worked out with the tools of a different theology, to be stated in different terms, against different backgrounds of understanding, under the influence of different theological truths, etc. If this were not the case we could not speak even of a legitimate pluralism of theologies in Scripture, new and hitherto unknown terms now sanctioned by the magisterium could not appear in dogmatic statements: in a word, there would be no history of *dogma*, but at most a history of theology.

Unfortunately it cannot be illustrated here by concrete examples from the history of dogma, but the fact is that theology is always at work in the formation of dogma itself, that theology cannot simply be *merely* the subsequent reflection on dogma, not affecting the dogma itself. Theology therefore is an intrinsic element of that very process which is behind the Church's proclamation and carried out by the magisterium. This is true even when concretely and in practice the representatives of the magisterium and the representatives of speculative theology are not identical. When representatives of the magisterium teach and define, they have themselves also been theologians or have made use, explicitly or implicitly, of the help of theologians. This can be seen even more clearly when we consider that the actual history of the activity of the magisterium has scarcely been under the latter's own control. In practice in its defining or authentic doctrinal statements the magisterium sanctions a development of the Church's sense of faith which had been stimulated and sustained by unofficial theology *before* this sanctioning. In this respect the magisterium is always and in principle dependent on theology, even though this dependence is not of a *legal* character, even though it follows from this very fact that the representative of the magisterium in the exercise of his task cannot by any means avoid being himself something of a theologian, since (as it is stressed, for instance, in the Second Vatican Council) he must make sure that his decision is authorized by the original sources and data of revelation, by Scripture and binding tradition, by Christian teaching as a whole; in other words, the function of his office may not be confused [61] with a magico-mechanical process on the basis of its purely formal authority.

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Theology does not merely *precede* the proclamation of the magisterium in the sense described (since any proclamation from the very outset inevitably contains an element of reflection, which as such is not simply identical with the primordial event of revelation) but also necessarily *follows after* this proclamation, a subsequent reflection which cannot be regarded as unimportant for the proclamation of the magisterium itself. Any dogmatic proclamation of the Church by the ordinary or extraordinary magisterium, if it is really to be understood, must be able to 'get across', must always also be interpreted, explained, adapted to the general and even secular horizons of understanding of those who hear it, although this task could not be said or expected to be adequately accomplished solely by the magisterium itself in its official proclamation. This is not the case, nor could so much be expected from the magisterium when it is actually teaching authoritatively. The very fact that this teaching is imposed as binding means that it inevitably falls short to some extent of the presentation of the proclamation of faith as the latter actually 'gets across' to the particular hearer in his own intellectual, cultural, and historical situation.

Strictly binding formulation of doctrine by the magisterium, valid for the Church as a whole, is inevitably something traditional in an 'old fashioned' way; it brings the Church's memory with binding force into the present, without on that account being able always to make this memory completely an actual possession of the present time. This of course does not mean that a pope or bishop cannot preach in a way that will make the message completely topical. But by that very fact such a representative of the magisterium is acting as a theologian, he works with terms, horizons of understanding and ways of access to the message which belong to the present time and with which at least generally he has no absolute guarantee that his synthesis between the binding content of his message and his present-day means of expression will certainly and entirely succeed; at the same time he is also necessarily always 'only' a theologian who speaks on his own account and at his own risk and must wait to see whether and how the concrete shape of his preaching and proclamation is recognized in the Church's sense of faith as a successful synthesis of the old faith and the present-day understanding of it.

[62] A further task of theology, subsequent to the Church's teaching but indispensable and continually to be observed in its actual achievement, consists in examining again and again the synthesis just mentioned between what is really consciously accepted in faith and its historically conditioned means of expression, to see whether it can still be adequately assimilated in faith or whether it needs to be expressed in ways more easily accessible today; it is particularly necessary to discover whether the older formulations, while remaining permanently valid, do not actually contain amalgams which, notwithstanding the normative character of the formulations, can and even must be eliminated. In this connection some of the many concrete examples from the history of dogma would facilitate a better understanding, but it is impossible to cite them here. At least one example however can be mentioned.

Up to the time of Pius XII all formulations of the permanent Catholic teaching on original sin had taken monogenism for granted. Today we can and must see that this assumption is uncertain or false, that it is an amalgam which is not binding and can be eliminated from the permanent teaching on original sin, precisely in order to render credible the proclamation of this dogma. From this indispensable task of theology, subsequent to the function of the magisterium, it becomes clear that statements of the magisterium (not only authentic statements but also definitions of dogma) do not simply represent an endpoint, a conclusion which needs only to be repeated and defended, but are continually involved in an unfinished and never to be completed process which itself is not actually inaugurated and cannot be completely controlled by the magisterium and the results of which in the future cannot clearly be foreseen. This continuing process – as the history of dogma shows – can of course again

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lead to new statements which are put forward as binding by the magisterium itself and guaranteed by the latter's formal authority. It can often but need not always be like this. But, either way, the history of faith with reference to a particular reality of faith is not closed but continues.

Even from these few observations, which can be made in regard to the Church's history of dogma and doctrine and which might be complemented by many others more exact, it can be seen how complicated is the relationship between magisterium and theology. For faith and its history the magisterium is not the primary and most [63] fundamental datum, since its existence and formal authority must be established and grasped by revelation and faith as prior to the magisterium itself; the magisterium always works with a theology which always precedes it as the means of its own proclamation, although this theology may not be adequately and thoroughly considered in its origin, in its usefulness, and in its pluralism by the magisterium, but is used by the latter in a trust in the power of the self-revealing Spirit of God who is not really subject to the reflection of the magisterium. If and when the magisterium has fulfilled its function for the time being on any particular occasion, the work of theology continues and does not consist merely in proving the legitimate derivation of statements of the magisterium from the sources of revelation and in defending these statements in face of critical reason, but also always leads again beyond the statements and by that very fact provides the magisterium again with an opportunity to say something new and not merely to repeat the old formulations. The magisterium and its statements are therefore a normative authority for theology, but conversely theology is an indispensable condition of existence and effective survival for the magisterium, without which the latter itself could not exist or act at all. Between magisterium and theology then there is a relationship of *mutual* dependence with a character of course proper to each occasion: a mutual dependence in which neither of the two elements can be completely derived from the other, a mutual dependence whose indissoluble unity is guaranteed in the last resort, not by the magisterium itself, but only by the unity of the Church, by revelation itself and the power of the Spirit of God. Within this unity the magisterium has its own and necessary function, but it is not the whole and not really the most fundamental datum from which all the rest could be deduced. Despite the commission of the apostles and their episcopal successors, its function from God and Jesus Christ is only a *partial* function in the Church, which is conceivable only in the totality of the Church (which is more than the magisterium) and can be shown to be legitimate and become actually effective only within this totality.

Between the individual constitutive elements of the Church (original revelation, continually renewed reflection on it in practice and theory, magisterium as event of perceptible unity concretely coming to be again and again in faith, sacrament, etc.) there exists a continual reciprocal causality, which is the history of the truth of the [64] Church and as such history sustained, controlled, and freely governed by the Spirit of God and not in the last resort by the magisterium itself. This history, never completely under the control of human beings, not even of officeholders in the Church, also always contains the relationship between magisterium and theology within its ceaseless course and thus always implies also an irremoveable historicity of the magisterium itself, of theology in the Church, of the mutual relationship between these two, a historicity consequently which maintains their permanency while continually transforming the concrete shape of their relationship, without any possibility of foreseeing clearly what this concrete shape will be in the future. The legal structure of the magisterium therefore, despite a formal definability in itself and in its relationship to theology, in its concreteness is always involved also in a process of historical change. What must be *concretely* the relationship of the magisterium to theology and of theology to the magisterium is not something clearly evident once and for all, but is always to be discovered afresh through new experiences in new forms.

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I am acutely aware of the fact that I have spoken very abstractly about the relationship between magisterium and theology. Unfortunate as it may be, it was not possible to elucidate the meaning of this with the aid of concrete examples and individual cases. It may all become a little more clear and understandable if in what follows an attempt is made to put forward some more or less concrete and practical *conclusions* from these considerations of principle, which may be of some importance also for the non-theologian.

(1) Not only on the part of theologians, but also on the part of representatives of the magisterium, there must be a genuine will for dialogue. It has often been said and not entirely incorrectly that the magisterium does not discuss, but decides. It is of course true that it is not a question here of a dialogue in which the partners have the same function. But it would be wrong to suggest that the magisterium itself is dispensed from practising theology in this dialogue, that it can rely as if by magic on its formal authority and the justification of this *alone*, that it need not allow for error in its purely authentic doctrinal statements, that it cannot also fall short in decisions involving a definition; it would be wrong to assume that even definitions cannot turn out better or worse, may not be more or less easy to assimilate, that they cannot integrate into themselves to a [65] greater or lesser extent the totality of what was to be defined; it would also be wrong to claim that even definitions may not include assumptions, use terminology, or imply amalgams that are inadequate or even false and therefore can be eliminated, even though these need not always be noticed explicitly by the representatives of the magisterium at the time of the definition. If the representatives of the magisterium are clearly aware of all this, it will become clear that they can exercise their function properly only in a genuine dialogue with theology, even though the partners to the dialogue do not have the same function in this respect.

(2) From this it follows certainly that declarations of the magisterium today and in future will have to show more evidence than was generally shown formerly of the necessary preceding dialogue with theology and a greater readiness for dialogue on the part of representatives of the magisterium. It may and must indeed be *definitely established* that these declarations of the magisterium are not simply expressions of opinion on the part of a few Roman theologians who happen to be engaged in dialogue with one another, expressions of opinion which are worth no more than the arguments put forward, the importance of which is to be judged wholly and entirely by those to whom they are submitted. But none of this excludes the necessity for the magisterium today also to put forward expressly and clearly arguments of its own, which of course it must have, and the desirability of an explicit indication by the magisterium in its declaration of the extent to which its teaching is binding, in other words, whether the declaration is presented as authentic or as dogma properly so-called. Any such explicit qualification has been omitted by the Roman authorities up to the present time. It is assumed that the qualification will be immediately obvious to theologians in the light of the traditional rules; an explicit qualification is omitted evidently because it is thought that an official dogmatic statement will not be taken sufficiently seriously or respected if it is expressly assigned by the teaching authorities themselves the quality of merely an authentic (that is, in principle reformable) teaching, if the impression is not created that the teaching put forward is basically irreformable.

Apart however from the fact that a procedure of this kind creates among theologians and other believers the impression of a certain lack of sincerity and can lead to conflicts of conscience which are objectively entirely superfluous (we may recall, for instance, *Humanae* [66] *Vitae*), the method does not help the dialogue between magisterium and theology. Even when it is a question of teaching that is absolutely binding, of a dogma, this dialogue is not closed but can and must always be carried forward; but it is particularly appropriate when it is a question of merely authentic statements of the magisterium. But the exact form of dialogue is often different and the opportunities are greater when it is settled from the outset and

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clearly and expressly stated that it is a question merely of authentic teaching, which certainly must be taken seriously by the theologian and which acquires in virtue of the formal authority of the magisterium a different importance from that of any odd theological opinion; nevertheless it is in principle reformable and can be scrutinized and questioned by theologians in an entirely different way from what is possible with a dogma properly so-called, which cannot really be doubted, even though it can and occasionally must always be open to an interpretation leading with the aid of different conceptual methods to a better, more comprehensively integrating formulation. The Roman authorities on faith should not think that they are forfeiting their effectiveness and power if they make immediately clear by such a qualification the possible and justified continuation of dialogue with the theologians. Even faith and still more purely authentic teachings of the Church, which at least hitherto have been just that, are involved in a history that is not and cannot be closed. This history however should not be carried on by confrontations between magisterium and heretical positions of theologians, but by dialogue in which both partners unequivocally respect the unrenounceable function of whoever happens to be the other partner at the time. This respect demands from the magisterium in theory and practice an appreciation of the fact that theology is not merely the executive assistant of the magisterium, does not merely prepare the way for it or define it, but has a critical function that goes further and is irreplaceable. This is all the more important since the Church's sense of faith in practice and theology is much richer, more differentiated and active than could be objectified and set out by declarations of the magisterium *alone*.

(3) In this dialogue magisterium and theology must always allow for the fact that they take up positions in regard to one another which are absolutely correct, even binding in faith, and are expressly presented as such, but which nevertheless (although this is [67] not always immediately noticed by both sides) are amalgamated with ideas, terms, horizons of understanding, etc., which are not binding in faith and perhaps can be and, at a particular stage in the history of ideas, must be eliminated. If and when on the one hand such amalgams have perhaps turned up in statements actually binding in faith, but on the other hand were not noticed by one or other or both partners to the dialogue, there emerge the real situations of tension between magisterium and theology would could by no means have been avoided from the very outset, even though they are solvable in principle. The important thing in this respect of course is not the term 'amalgam'. In a more subtle and exact philosophical and theological theory of truth and its historicity it would certainly be possible to dispense with the term 'amalgam' and replace it by something better. But, since a theory of this kind is not possible here, this term can bring out our meaning sufficiently.

If, for example, it is stated as teaching binding in faith that the Church is founded by Jesus, that the sacraments are likewise instituted by him, that a conversion of the substance of bread and wine takes place in the eucharist, that three 'persons' must be really distinguished in the unity of the one God, etc., the fact is that in former times it was more or less taken for granted that terms like 'institution', 'substance', 'person', used in these formulations were quite unambiguous and clear and consequently that there could be no doubt about the exact meaning of such statements. But today in the light of history, biblical theology, and the history of ideas we can see that such terms are not as unequivocal as they were once thought and assumed to be and that on the contrary particular forms of imagery, traditional assumptions, and horizons of understanding spontaneously occur, reverberate, or are implied in them, which have by no means the binding force of irreformable statements of faith but can or must be eliminated. Without questioning, for example, the dogma of transsubstantiation as defined at the Council of Trent, we cannot think of the substance of bread today in exactly the same way as the Fathers of Trent thought of it in the concrete. In view of Jesus' imminent expectation of the kingdom of God, admitted today even in Catholic

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biblical theology, it is impossible to understand what is meant concretely by his institution of the Church in precisely the same way as the magisterium and theology implied in former times when they proclaimed their assurance that Jesus [68] founded the Church, which (as we also obviously maintain) has its origin from Jesus and the enduring faith in his unsurpassable importance for salvation. In the light of the ever continuing history of ideas (not, obviously, under the control of the magisterium), it may well be doubted whether the term 'person' today in the doctrine of the Trinity produces more clarity and lucidity than misunderstanding and obscurity, without at the same time raising any doubts about the permanent binding force of the dogma of the Trinity.

The amalgamations just indicated between permanent dogma and historically conditioned terminology, conceptual models and assumptions, really provide perhaps the most important object of the dialogue between magisterium and theology. Up to the present time this has occurred, as can easily be understood, particularly in the field of morality, since in its traditional formulations (for example, with reference to what is known as 'natural law', to sexual morality and socio-ethical principles) inevitably very many historically conditioned elements are contained which can have no claim to permanent validity. In this connection the question of religious freedom discussed at the Second Vatican Council would be a good example, since the processes of elimination of amalgams from the hitherto traditional teaching here took place at the council itself. None of this means that the magisterium cannot also have the right and duty to draw attention to newly formulated positions of theologians which not only eliminate time-conditioned amalgams, but perhaps even violate what must be the permanent substance of the dogma concerned. If, for example, a theologian were to deny outright the real and necessary origin of the Church and the sacraments from Jesus or to formulate a theory of God which simply eradicated what belongs to the essence of the dogma of the Trinity, the magisterium would then obviously have the right and duty unambiguously to oppose such positions. But, since in a dialogue of this kind between magisterium and theology it may often remain uncertain for a long time whether a new formulation by a theologian merely legitimately eliminates traditional amalgams or violates or denies the substance of the dogma, it is not surprising that these dialogues need time, involve conflicts, lead to justified and also unjustified and avoidable disciplinary measures of the Church going as far as the removal of a theologian from office, and cannot quickly be ended on one side or another by an authoritative decision, which theologians also often permit themselves.

[69] Hearing of these conflicts with their unnecessarily lengthy processes of clarification, the person who is not an expert in theology, the ordinary believer, can scarcely avoid a feeling of insecurity or impatience; he is inclined to declare that everything has become confused and blurred in the Church's life of faith and in its proclamation, that he no longer knows where he stands. Objectively speaking, this is not entirely true since, for the Christian who really wants to believe and who respects the magisterium of the Church, the real basic substance of his faith even today remains clear and obvious, and since, when periods of uncertainty and of controversies between magisterium and theology have to be endured, patience and confidence can be required also from the normal Christian. This is all the more obvious since a close examination reveals the fact that there were similar periods in early Church history and we may well think that they were brought to an end too quickly as a result of a pronouncement of the magisterium on one question or another, so that at least contradictions which were verbal but looked like objective heresies were consolidated, although they really could have been avoided if only more patience and readiness for dialogue had been shown on all sides at those times.

In any case the question of a new and more exact interpretation of the Church's teaching and also of its dogmas with the aid of a possible elimination of amalgams handed down at the same time is one of the most important objects of the dialogue between magisterium and

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theology and inevitably brings with it conflicts that are not always easy to settle between magisterium and theologians, conflicts that are simply part of the historicity of revelation. These conflicts cannot be avoided if only because a theologian before publishing his views cannot inquire first from the magisterium whether these are acceptable and because processes of learning are unavoidable and necessary also for representatives of the magisterium itself: for their own and (properly understood) normative sense of faith is not simply a rigid norm free from all historicity, but has itself a history. Of course the demand for dialogue does not mean (as theologians today often seem to think it means) that 'dialogue' has to go on until agreement is reached between like-minded people, rendering any actual decision of the magisterium superfluous. In a dialogue of this kind real decisions of the magisterium can and sometimes must be made in virtue of its formal authority, they must be respected by theologians to the extent required by their particular binding force. [79] But neither does the fact of such a decision and the duty of theologians to respect it mean that after these declarations of the magisterium all dialogue is at an end and the theologians have nothing more to do but to hand on and defend the decision. Even after such a decision the dialogue can and must go on, albeit with new assumptions. For such a decision does not leave everything quite clear, since respect for it still leaves open the question of what it does and does not contain, whether it also implicitly transmits amalgams which are not purely and simply binding, how the decision can be conveyed to the Christian of today in a way that is perhaps better than the way adopted by the magisterium itself, whether there may not be an error in purely authentic doctrinal statements. The dialogue can and must go on.

(4) In such a dialogue between magisterium and theology something else is desirable, on which we touched at an earlier stage. When the magisterium claims to be exercising its formal authority, it would be desirable and it would help toward a more exact shaping of the continuing dialogue if the magisterium itself were to state explicitly and in a new, hitherto undeveloped and unconsidered way the degree of binding force (which is not always the same) to be attached to its declaration, thus making clear what is known as the theological qualification of the latter.

This of course has happened in the course of the last hundred and thirty years when there was a question of properly *ex cathedra* decisions involving a definition. But ultimately binding decisions of this kind are rare and have actually occurred only twice in the course of the centuries since the Council of Trent. In former times however, at least up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, a theological qualification was often added to declarations of the magisterium; but after that, it was almost always omitted. In earlier times there was an enormous number of such abstract and formal theological qualifications, the terminology and meaning of which can now be grasped only with difficulty. Today certainly there is not much to be done with these traditional qualifications. It would therefore be a task for theologians, which has not yet been tackled at all, to produce a meaningful and manageable system of these formal qualifications: a task which could be accomplished by the magisterium only with difficulty. But if a theologically well-founded, simple and yet meaningfully articulated scheme of such graded qualifications [71] was freshly worked out from the very beginning and was available, the magisterium could be expected to add an explicit qualification indicating the degree of binding force to be attached to its individual declarations. The theologian and also the interested non-theologian would then know better for theology and practice what was really involved, exactly what measure of respect (certainly not the same in every case) they had to bring to such a declaration; neither would then so easily get the impression that the magisterium was demanding a higher and more binding degree of assent than can be required in the light of its own general principles. In this question the magisterium should not tacitly assume that its declaration would not be respected at all and would simply disappear in the subsequent dialogue, if it were itself to note explicitly in a new

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and really practicable way the limits of the binding force of that declaration. To get to this stage however, the theologians would have to do some preliminary work that they have not yet really tackled.

(5) A final point should be noted with reference to the relationship between theology and magisterium: we cannot restrict the formal legal competence of the latter as such more closely than it is restricted by the magisterium itself. But the magisterium defines its competence as extending to all that has to do with faith and Christian morality (*de rebus fidei et morum*), even though this does not clearly answer in every respect the question as to exactly what in the field of morality falls within the competence of the magisterium (as recent controversies have shown about the competence of the magisterium in regard to what is known as natural law, when the latter as such cannot simply be declared to be revealed) and even though it means that the question of the competence which the magisterium claims for itself seems to be still obscure and unsettled. But, however that may be, the fact remains that the task of the magisterium changes in practice to no small extent with the changing mental climate in which it has to operate in the course of history.

In our time we are faced by a pluralism that can no longer be adequately integrated – of philosophies, anthropologies, cultures not now restricted only to Europe – existing even within the Church itself, so that in the light of all these things theologies, too, are slowly but increasingly clearly emerging in the plural in the Church, theologies which, although centered on one and the same Christian faith, cannot be adequately integrated into one and the same theology [72] as it existed more or less until the middle of the present century, when in Japan, Africa, and Australia in the priests' seminaries the same theological textbooks as in Europe were used without any hesitation. Assuming that the existing Roman magisterium in all its necessary and also active efforts to gain an understanding and contact with all these plural theologies will continue at least in the immediate future to bear a European stamp and cannot represent all of them uniformly, then it can certainly be understood that the task of this magisterium in the time that is coming will not be so much the supervision of the detailed work of theology as the defence and vivid and up-to-date expression of the basic substance of the Christian faith. For the most varied reasons, which cannot be explained in detail here but largely result from the mental climate of the present time, we cannot in practice expect in the foreseeable future really new definitions like the two Marian dogmas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is evident from the fact that the Second Vatican Council refrained from such dogmatic definitions in the strict sense of the term. For quite practical reasons in the immediate future the magisterium will have no other option but to leave for a longer time and more patiently to the theologians themselves and their work and discussion many individual theological questions in which it intervened very quickly and very decidedly in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth. Any other way would simply be impossible and would represent a dangerous waste of the practical effectiveness of the authority of the magisterium. This does not mean that the importance and the task of the magisterium are diminished, but only that they are moved into another field, which is much more fundamental and important.

At a time of worldwide secularism and atheism, threatening the basic substance of Christianity and at the same time giving a fresh shape to its themes, the magisterium ought constantly and with all the resources of the Spirit to find a way of conveying both uncurtailed and vividly that basic substance to today's and tomorrow's humanity, and particularly outside Europe. This is something which the magisterium has really scarcely attempted in the past centuries; it has been occupied with marginal areas in the hierarchy of truths of the Christian faith and beyond that has perhaps encouraged a number of special forms of Christian piety and Christian life, but very largely left the living testimony of the Christian faith in its basic [73] substance to preachers, teachers of Christian spirituality, and theologians. It seems that

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in this respect the task of the magisterium will have to change. It will have to be not so much merely doctrinal in regard to traditional teaching, but prophetic in such a way that the old faith and the questions of the day are brought into both vital and critical contact with each other. What this means concretely and how it could be concretely carried out is something that cannot be considered here. But it might perhaps be said that the magisterium could well become a little more theological, could undertake up to a point and in its own way tasks of the theologians that it may hitherto have left too much to the theologians and the preachers of the faith who were dependent on them. If we keep in mind the interconnection and mutual dependence of magisterium and theology of which we spoke, this new orientation of the task of the magisterium need not in the future come up against the protest that what is demanded of it is a living theology instead of the fulfillment of its specific task, which is not quite the same thing as theology. In the power of the Spirit of Christ, by common consent, magisterium and theology must work at the one task: to bear living witness to God and his crucified and risen Christ, to witness to the faith in which the final destiny of the world in the glory of God himself is victoriously grasped for all time.

Between magisterium and theology then there exists a very special relationship that makes it impossible to regard the magisterium as a factor with an impetus entirely of its own, as completely self-sufficient. If we may apply a trite comparison, it is a relationship akin to that between the bones and muscles of the body. The two differ in nature and function. And yet the bones can exercise their proper function only with the aid of the muscles and vice versa. The coordination of the two as such is guaranteed neither by the bones nor by the muscles alone, but only by the totality which is prior to the two factors, and lies in the power neither of the one nor of the other independently. So, too, not only is theology dependent on the magisterium, but the magisterium is also dependent on theology and inconceivable without the latter; and the connection and unity of the two is again not under the control of the magisterium but only under that of the Spirit, who directs the whole course of history.

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[74]

4

ON BAD ARGUMENTS IN MORAL THEOLOGY

This article is intended to deal with an epistemological question in the field of moral theology, admittedly with the reservation that only a few vague remarks are possible in so brief an article on such a difficult theme, a theme that inevitably thrusts us very quickly from the particular concern with which we started into the most general questions of philosophical and theological epistemology.

It is a question in the first place of a quite straightforward observation which, at least in the author's opinion, continually occurs to anyone who is occupied with questions of moral theology. Moral theology contains arguments. In order to substantiate moral precepts, proofs, often very rigorous and subtle, are adduced; and yet we gain the impression that these proofs tacitly and without reflection really assume from the outset the very conclusion at which they aim, that the conclusions are, so to speak, smuggled into the premises of the argument (in good faith, of course) and that the proofs are convincing only to someone who was convinced of what was to be proved even before any proof was forthcoming.

We are not going to produce examples here to support the correctness of this observation. The reason for this omission *here* is easy to understand: we should otherwise have to enter into lengthy discussions as to whether the example fitted, whether, that is, the proof of a moral precept is evident only to someone who is convinced that the maxim is true prior to any proof. If then we wanted to produce proof of the appropriateness of the example to the observation just made, we would have to enter into considerations which go beyond [75] the scope of our present reflections. The reader is therefore requested to look for such examples from his own experience of moral theological discussions. If he finds them, well and good. If he thinks that he has never met with such experiences in his moral theology, this article has not in fact been written for him.

If however the observation to which we appealed is correct, it cannot be dismissed as the sort of trivial remark that occurs as a matter of course in any field of human study, simply because *petitiones principii* are found *everywhere*. In the light of an innocuous, normal logic of ordinary life and learning, it could indeed be said that this sort of thing does of course occur in moral theology, but only because it is part of the whole field of human error and must be eliminated as far as possible by continual strenuous efforts.

It is not however as simple as that – least of all in moral theology. Even though cases of this kind occur not only in moral theology, they are particularly evident there and for reasons that belong to the very nature of moral theology itself, in so far as the latter is a theoretical science which studies the *practical* behaviour of human beings. Here then we shall consider briefly the right and limits, not precisely of the observation from which we started out, but of what lies behind it and is not simply false. We are speaking of right and limits.

First of all there is the *right* of what lies behind the observation or indeed of what is in fact observed. When moral theology seeks with the aid of reflex argumentation to establish precepts for action, it is a question always (or almost always, or in ordinary life) of precepts which were put into practice in a person's behaviour even before they were given expression in theory. Theoretical reflections on norms of practical behaviour emerge from and are necessitated by what has already always occurred in practice. But, since it is supposed to be responsible and moral and when it is such, this practice has in itself in principle its own immanent experience of its rectitude. Hence (this is a truism, but one which is often overlooked in academic moral theological polemics on both sides of a dispute about the

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conclusiveness of a particular argument) it is possible that a necessarily subsequent theoretical reflection on a previous practice possibly containing its intrinsic evidence in itself does not by any means take in this evidence, interprets and conceptually objectifies it wrongly or inadequately, and yet the badly interpreted and [76] badly substantiated precept is right. Of course, this is always apparent to formal logic which insists that a conclusion can be true even if it does not follow from the premises, whether because the premises are false or not proved, or simply because this conclusion does not logically follow from correct premises.

This reference to formal logic however does not touch the real heart of the matter. For it in no way indicates whether and how the truth of the 'conclusion' can be known otherwise than by a correct argument. But in principle this is possible in the field of morality. In that field there can be a global, still implicit, but perhaps entirely correct and effective insight which is prior to theory, to conceptual articulation and objectification, which is itself the inner light of practice as such. This is something not to be forgotten in the appraisal of a moral theological argument. The appraisal may suggest that in a particular case this argument (taken purely in its explicit conceptuality and logical coherence) is wrong or not conclusive; but in such an appraisal it must not be forgotten that the argument criticized is really (also and in the first place) to be read as an appeal and reference to a global experience in which more can be contained than what becomes conceptually and logically explicit in the course of the argument. Any attempt to deny this would in principle mean starting out from an understanding of the relationship between practice and theory that is problematic or even false. (Here of course it is impossible to go into the difficult epistemological problems of the relationship between theory and practice, problems which constitute a large part of modern philosophy and fundamental theology.)

A bad argument in moral theology then is not simply 'disposed of' by showing that it is not logically conclusive. The person who rejects it must at least explain the fact of its existence and whether it is sufficient to say that it is false or not conclusive and only reveals the stupidity of those who argue in this way; the one who rejects the argument can be asked if he cannot see behind the terminology and conceptual reasoning the wisdom of a more fundamental experience struggling to break through its clumsy expression. A counter-question of this kind is justified and important particularly when the argument declared to be false or not conclusive is upheld, not merely by a single individual, but by many people, and was even perhaps put forward without opposition for centuries in the Church and is still widely maintained.

If these further questions are not raised, going behind the disputed [77] arguments of moral theology, there is a danger of a moral theological nihilism or scepticism *or* of a commonplace moral theological positivism, appealing solely to the simple fact of the existence of these badly proved convictions in the Church and leaving it at that. In other words, people see everywhere in moral theology an empty formalism with nothing but bad arguments and hair-splitting, insinuating what cannot really be proved; then they become sceptical in regard to all 'legality' (taking refuge in a *pure* 'situation ethic') *or* simply entrench themselves behind the formal authority of the magisterium, forgetting that this very magisterium in its purely authentic declarations can be subject to time- and situation-conditioned errors.

Seen more closely, what this sort of argument, inadequate in itself, implicitly indicates can be different in kind and quality. It can be a global knowledge of revelation, badly objectified in detail; it can be a question of an 'instinctive' human insight of a 'natural' character, which itself can be understood as taking on a variety of forms and perhaps as coming to be in a variety of ways in the course of the history of humanity.

The justifiable 'respect' given to a bad argument is bound to vary according to the special character of the truth that may lie behind it. If, for example, a correct global understanding of

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Christian *revelation* can be presumed behind an argument questionable in itself, then the latter must obviously be treated differently from another argument open to criticism where it is obvious from the outset that behind it there is a purely human preconception, which itself, much more easily than in the first case, can be problematic and historically or sociologically or culturally conditioned.

Admittedly, in order to be able to distinguish from the outset between the two approaches, it is necessary to have formally a principle to decide what can (and what cannot) really be regarded from the beginning as divine revelation. But this problem of a formal criterion has never or scarcely ever been considered in normal textbook theology, even though for understandable reasons it could be of great importance particularly for moral theology, if only because the competence of the Church's magisterium in the field of revelation properly so called is certainly not identical with its competence in the field of what is known as (pure) natural law. But these of course are problems that cannot be pursued further here.

If then the Church's magisterium defends a particular moral precept [78] and (which is quite possible) does so with bad arguments, the critic of these arguments, the individual moral theologian, must certainly allow for this possibility. He may perhaps therefore have the task also of defending the correct precept with better arguments and of making it more intelligible than the magisterium is able to do, for in these things the latter cannot expect to bring a higher enlightenment to its reasoning but must make use of the arguments generally found in the Church's moral theology.

So much then on the 'right' that can exist behind a bad argument in moral theology, presented perhaps in a certain way without meeting any opposition and often sustained by a long history of moral theological teaching in the Church, since the conviction of the correctness of what was to be proved prevailed long before the appearance of the proof itself – now however we must look at the *limits* of this right. And these are perhaps more important for the practice of the Church's moral theology and of the Church's magisterium. The tacitly and implicitly operating prior conviction of the correctness of what is to be proved can also arise from causes which are quite problematic or which have led, as a result of their own historical relativity, to false global prescientific convictions. There are also *false* (historically time-conditioned, global, instinctively operating) convictions which then seek objective expression in explicit conceptual 'proofs', so that to anyone who shares these convictions the proofs are very obvious and they are put forward and defended with the absoluteness with which people cling to such a prescientific global conviction, even though the latter is false or at least questionable. In life, too, prior to any scientific reflection, there are judgments that are not inspired by the wisdom of experience but are 'prejudgments', which are historically, culturally, and sociologically conditioned, are changeable, can be erroneous always or in a different situation. The actual development and history of moral theology in the Church has to do largely, not only with the destruction of incorrect or uncertain theological arguments purely as such, but with the demolition of such prescientific instinctive convictions which are false or unproved, but hitherto made the explicit arguments seem 'obvious'.

At the same time unfortunately the untenability of such moral theological arguments is actually realized and recognized very often (even though not always) in the Church only when the global prescientific [79] conviction, based on *other* reasons (of history, of sociological changes, of changes in the human psyche, etc.), *behind* the arguments has been demolished. Examples might perhaps be cited also of explicit counter-arguments against the reasons used to support false moral precepts, counter-arguments which led to the breakdown of these false global convictions; it will often also be necessary to allow for a long historical process in the course of which in many questions there is a *mutual* interaction between rational counter-arguments and a breakdown of preconceptions for other reasons. But it may certainly be honestly admitted that the Church's moral theology and its arguments very often

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cleared the field of certain positions and recognized the untenability of earlier arguments for these positions only *after other* historical factors had already destroyed the preconceptions on which, whether they noticed it or not, people had based their arguments. This may be understandable, but it is not very edifying for the historian of the Church's moral theology. It may be said that the Church is conservative in the light of its task of safeguarding the deposit of faith, that this conservatism gives it a legitimate albeit limited function in the history of ideas which is not to be underestimated and may not be depreciated from the very outset. But it is in fact also part of the tragic and impenetrable historicity of the Church that in practice and theory it defended moral precepts with bad arguments, based on problematic, historically conditioned preconceptions, 'prejudgments', which it did not itself abandon but which other historical causes eliminated; only then did the Church finally find the new conviction obvious and (unfortunately) proceeded to act as if the new global conviction was obvious and the Church had never had any doubts about it.

How many examples can a moral theologian produce without more ado of occasions when the Church's magisterium also *expressly* acknowledged such revisions of its own standpoint and at the same time admitted that it owed this better understanding to causes other than its own efforts to break down prejudices? I do not think that the average moral theologian could produce many such examples immediately. But it would be fine if things were different.

This dark tragedy of the Church's history of ideas is all the more depressing, since it always or often involved questions which have a profound influence on the concrete life of human beings, for such false precepts (which objectively were never valid or had long become [80] obsolete through cultural and economic changes not at first recognized by the institutional Church) imposed burdens on human beings (at the same time endangering their salvation) which were not at all legitimate in the light of the freedom of the Gospel.

If what we have said is more or less right, it means that moral theology in its own field has the task of analyzing much more closely, critically, and courageously the provenance and historico-sociological relativity of those preliminary decisions which are at work behind the arguments of traditional textbook theology and also of the Church's magisterium. More concretely it means that a distinction is to be made especially in the field of moral theology much more clearly and courageously between a tradition that really carries on an indubitable divine revelation and one that is merely 'human' and possesses no guarantee of its correctness and supratemporal validity, even if it has been held universally and unquestioningly in the previous history of Christianity and the Church. In regard to the critical distinction between these two 'traditions' it must also be remembered that a 'human' tradition may even have been absolutely right for a particular time, because it deduced the right precepts *for that time* from the human and sociological conditions and the fact of the situation which then prevailed but were not themselves unchangeable. Under certain conditions such an instinctive basic conviction was indeed morally binding for that time, but *only* for that time. If we consider such changes and possibilities of change, if in the light of an established (but not yet sufficiently thoroughly considered) theory of the real nature of strictly supernatural revelation we perceive that only very few individual moral precepts (which?) are a part of actual revelation as such, then we can have an idea of the changes possible in 'Christian' morality, despite the history of these prior convictions enduring almost two thousand years but largely containing only 'human' tradition.

If then it is entirely a task for moral theology in a good conservative spirit perhaps often to preserve the genuinely human element of historical moral tradition, even if the content of that tradition is historically conditioned and is explicitly recognized as changeable in itself (since not everything that is changeable must necessarily be changed), it is also the task of academic moral theology, not only to expose as such what is unproved in the course of the argument, but also to work to break down the preconceptions behind it, if these are [81] themselves

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historically conditioned and no longer correspond to the concrete 'reality' they are meant to support and which they reproduce without further consideration. This is a difficult task for which the Church's magisterium with its conservative attitude (understandable but perhaps also unjustified) generally shows little gratitude.

If moral theology thus has a history in its actual process of knowledge (which is by no means conditioned solely by theoretical reflection and argument since it is also conditioned by factors that do not belong to the field of theoretical reflection at all and for that reason alone simply *cannot* be eliminated and since theory always rests on a pretheoretical realization of human and Christian existence) then moral theology is an ongoing process which in the last resort cannot be foreseen, which cannot exclude all friction, conflict, and danger, indissolubly linked as these are with the history of ideas. The courage to take risks, to face opposition and criticism, is therefore among the virtues of the moral theologian (as we respect and admire them, for instance, in a person like Bernard Haring) since, for the reasons indicated, the moral theologian cannot be merely the interpreter and defender of the traditional teaching of the magisterium, but also its critic who helps the magisterium to understand better and more effectively to defend before humanity the teaching of Christian revelation and of man's self-understanding in the history of his morality.

It would be possible to develop the suggested starting point further. It would be possible to reflect on the fact that the concepts used in *any* moral theological argument always form a unity of concept and image and the argument is based on a *conversio ad phantasma* (to adopt the terminology of Aquinas) and is impossible otherwise; that any argument, if it is to be understood at all, always appeals *also* to the concrete reality already grasped in experience and action, that is always also culturally and sociologically (in fact historically) conditioned. (For when the moral theologian speaks of money, authority, family, truth in intercommunication, sexuality, and so on in the course of his argument, how can he prevent the involvement or reverberation in these terms of something that is historically conditioned and not perennially valid?) Of course in an argument so unavoidably historically conditioned something of these historically conditioned representational and visual models [82] becomes explicitly visible, can be criticized and perhaps eliminated and replaced by a different (again necessary) representational model, which admittedly itself remains historically conditioned, so that it is impossible to aim at a 'chemical purity' of the concept as such as distinct from the visual model. But the critical discrimination between concept and image is always possible only up to a point and is never completed. There is always some part of a representational model that is not seen and considered in its historical relativity, but is nevertheless secretly at work in such a moral theological argument. Hence there are two points which the moral theologian must keep in mind in his arguments.

First, the argumentative process (which must take the form of a dialogue) never reaches an absolutely definitive conclusion; the concrete representational models (especially those in a transitional stage), without which any concept would be empty, must continually be investigated under new historical conditions for their validity, their changeability and the possibility of their elimination; the experience must continually be made and permitted of the constant temptation in a moral theological argument (which is a historical process) to get away from what is really being considered, because the latter has changed in the meantime or is actually being changed.

Second, a moral theological argument is always or frequently (although mostly implicitly but unavoidably) also an appeal in a historical decision to uphold that concrete although historically conditioned reality which, as concrete, lies behind even the abstract argument as its 'visualization', without which there is no concept and no argument. Whether a latent appeal of this kind, implicit in the argument, reaches its goal, persists, and brings it about that a future history (at least history in the immediate future) also really *wills* it to remain not only

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as 'proved' in the argument but also as implicitly *required* as a postulate of practical reason, the future will decide, not the person who is arguing. He may be successful or he may not. He can indeed be convinced that his argument will continue to be effective also in the future, *if* and insofar as that argument gets to the really metaphysical, transcendentally necessary nature of the case (that is, of man). But, since he cannot ascertain this with utter clarity by an absolutely adequate distinction between (metaphysical) concept and (historically conditioned) visualization, he still cannot be absolutely clear as to whether the argument which he firmly maintains [83] as valid is one that is really metaphysically conclusive, one that will continue to be effective for all future time and that participates in the permanent validity of the metaphysical nature attained by it, or one that can be regarded as valid only if and insofar as the factor of an appeal (explicit or implicit) is also accepted.

The moral theologian need not be upset about this situation. For in principle he certainly has the right involved in every free, always unavoidable historical decision to want the concreteness of the visualization, to which he perhaps appeals without reflection or really adequate discrimination, to persist and not to be changed, even though he does not know whether this historical will of his own (that is perhaps also still concealed in such an abstract argumentation) will actually be effective. But in any case it becomes clear that the theory to be supported by argument is itself also a part of practice, whether this is known or not.

In our reflections up to now we started out from the tacit assumption that there are purely and simply *two* kinds of argumentation in moral theology: right and wrong (or unproved). But now we certainly ought to make some more precise distinctions. Right (correct, true) can *either* be one that gets at the transcendentally necessary nature of man and is consequently bound to proceed in the hope that it will continually be effective. (We are leaving aside here the question of whether and how there are positive precepts given by divine supernatural revelation which in themselves and in their demonstration do not really come under the first type of argumentation and yet possess the hope and the claim to continually enduring validity.) *Or* the argumentation can be right, because and if it derives its correctness (explicitly or mostly implicitly) also from the representational model with which the concepts of the argumentation are put forward.

If an argument of this kind is or is supposed to be right, two further possibilities can be conceived. (1) *Either* this representational model is generally accepted and undisputed, even by those against whom the argument is directed; in other words, the argumentation proceeds in the light of an anthropological, cultural, and sociological situation which generally prevails and is recognized within the concrete milieu of the argumentation, even though as such it is historically conditioned and not of metaphysical necessity. In such cases for the most part no absolutely clear borderline can be [84] drawn at all between the metaphysical element of the concepts used and the historically conditioned visual model. This kind of argumentation may certainly be described as true, particularly since even historically conditioned situations, as long as they remain unchallenged, can really give rise to a moral imperative, even though the latter need not be always and perennially valid. (2) *Or* the visual model used (explicitly or mostly unthematically) in the argumentation is actually imperiled in the situation of the person arguing, but in itself it is meaningful; in a case like this the argument carries an implicit 'appeal' (as we described it) for the maintenance of the situation envisaged by him in his historical decision, whether this character of an appeal as part of the argument is deliberately intended or (which frequently or mostly will be the case) not. If there is a chance in the foreseeable future that the appeal implicit in such an argumentation will be successful, the argument can safely be described as 'true', even though this 'truth' is also established by a (meaningful if not also theoretically conclusive) decision of practical reason itself, which is also implied in its own right in apparently purely theoretical argumentation. It may be admitted that the qualification of this kind of argumentation as 'true' presupposes a concep-

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tion of the relationship between theory and practice in which practice is not purely and simply the application of the precepts of theoretical moral reason, but has also an underivable autonomous status, sets up truth and does not merely accept it. But these are problems of course which cannot be pursued further here.

A moral theological argument is false, untrue, not only if it cannot deduce what it asserts from the transcendentally necessary nature of reality, but also when even the representational model is lacking with which it has to work in order to be able to be recognized as true. The absence of such a really sustaining representational model can again be understood in *two* ways, even though these two ways coincide up to a point.

Either (*first way*) an appeal is made in this argument to an historically conditioned state of man (which provides the representational model) which is simply no longer universally valid (for the group involved in this dialogue) and is taken for granted as universally valid by the person who makes this appeal only because of his historical and sociological backwardness and his failure to keep up with the times, although (and this is presupposed) it cannot by any [85] means be said that man's historically conditioned state is required by his metaphysical nature or that it is disregarded only through man's (objective) fault. With the lack of historical and cultural simultaneity on the part of human beings, despite their chronological simultaneity, it cannot be denied that wrong arguments of this kind frequently occur also in the Church and are at the bottom of a good many moral theological controversies.

Or, the *second way* in which this wrong argumentation occurs lies in the fact that it not only cannot legitimately deduce its assertion from man's metaphysical nature, but implies an appeal to an historical decision that in practice has no serious chance of success, because the historical situation to which the appeal is made is admittedly not yet passed, but is so imperiled, so patently disintegrating, that it can be foreseen that in the long run this appeal will in fact remain ineffective. The argumentation in this second way can be described as untrue for the same reasons as those on account of which an argument with an implicit appeal to an implicit historical decision offering ample prospects was previously described as true. The two forms of wrong argumentation in moral theology naturally tend to overlap, without being able to be distinguished with absolute certainty from one another, since the judgment on the chances of success of the appeal mentioned is a matter of practical reason and can have no theoretical certainty.

All that we wanted to do here was to put forward a few considerations and ideas about bad arguments in moral theology. If these reflections once more give rise to the most obscure and difficult questions of human knowledge of the most general character (questions which were noted here without attempting to provide a clear and certain answer to them) this lies in the nature of the case. The moral theologian knows that actions which are to be described concretely as immoral always, contrary to their intention, implicitly affirm the incomparability of good in relation to evil, the inescapable dependence of man on the absolute good, the sacred dignity of conscience. But all this really means also or makes immediately evident the fact that, even in a wrong moral theological argument, at least implicitly, but really, that light is affirmed which is inherent in freedom and love and which in the last resort comes from the absolute love and freedom which we call God.

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[87]

PART TWO

Theology of God and Christology

[89]

5

THE HUMAN QUESTION OF MEANING IN FACE OF THE ABSOLUTE MYSTERY OF GOD

Every age has a number of expressions, key terms which serve to sum up its task and its longings in the light of the special character of its own situation. Christians will always count faith, hope, and love among these key terms, even though they have varied the emphasis from one to another of them in the course of the history of Christianity. Logos was certainly one of the many key terms; it played an important part in the history of ideas in late antiquity. Order was regarded as a key term in the philosophy and theology of the High Middle Ages, particularly in the work of Aquinas. Enlightenment, emancipation from self-alienation, utopia, and hope are also terms of crucial importance intended to invoke human existence as a whole and ringing in our ears today. Whether key terms are genuinely of Christian origin or come to Christianity and the Church more or less from outside, critically, perhaps accusing, and in any case challenging, Christians and their theologians are certainly called upon to confront the proclamation of the Christian message with them, to measure the message by them and them by the message and thus bring about a historical kairos which satisfies both Christianity and its unsurpassable message and also the task and longing of the particular historical moment.

Among such key terms, with their evocative power and their terrible ambiguity, the term ‘meaning’ may also be included. Christian theology at the service of the Church’s proclamation is therefore called upon to look at what this term is supposed to convey, to examine it critically, to be examined by it critically, even to struggle [90] with the term as Jacob struggled with the angel, so that out of the struggle a blessing may come both for the person looking for meaning and for theology itself and thus also for proclamation. In the following brief reflections there can be no question (this would require more space than is available) of summoning up all the resources of theology in order to confront them with the question of meaning. Instead, we shall restrict ourselves to a single datum of Catholic theology in order to relate it to the question of meaning. This one datum is God’s incomprehensibility – here, always, and for all eternity. We are asking then: What is its relevance to the question of meaning within a Christian theology and proclamation, when as Christians we acknowledge the incomprehensibility of God? In such a question of course, however much it expressly refers to ‘meaning’ and looks for an understanding of that term in the light of God’s incomprehensibility, the term ‘incomprehensibility’ in its turn is also called in question.

GOD’S INCOMPREHENSIBILITY IN DOCTRINE AND THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

First of all, some observations must be put forward on the doctrine of God’s incomprehensibility, but without confronting this teaching for the time being with the question of meaning. The Church’s teaching refers quite frequently to the

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incomprehensibility and ineffability of God. The word *incomprehensibilis* occurs at an early stage of the history of the Church, in Leo the Great (DS 294), likewise in Martin I (DS 501); in the Eleventh Council of Toledo in 675 it is said that God is ineffable in his essence (DS 525). In the famous profession of faith of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 God is described as incomprehensible and ineffable (DS 800, 804). Likewise in the declaration of the First Vatican Council, God is called incomprehensible and it is said of him that he is ineffably exalted above all that is or can be conceived apart from him (DS 3001).

In the Church's professions of faith, then, it is taken for granted that incomprehensibility and ineffability are among the attributes of God which are meant to bring out what is really to be understood by God as such. This incomprehensibility of God, which appears even in the Old Testament, not however as the incomprehensibility of his [91] nature, but as that of his creative action on his world and its history, is celebrated in the same sense in Paul's letters when he not only extols God's saving deed as a whole in Christ as mystery, but also expressly describes it as impenetrable and inscrutable (Rom. 11:33). From this starting point, 'negative theology' then developed the idea of the incomprehensibility of God's nature, in the East particularly with the Cappadocians and in the West with Augustine.

This negative theology of the incomprehensibility of God's nature, justified as it is, must however not be allowed to obscure the fact that incomprehensibility is also characteristic of God's free decrees and that it was from this source that the appreciation of his incomprehensibility as such was originally acquired. Leaving aside here the Franciscan metaphysic of freedom and love, which as such certainly has a fundamental importance for our question, it can be said in the light of Pius Siller's research that in medieval philosophy and theology the doctrine of God's incomprehensibility likewise acquires an outstanding place and rank in the work of Aquinas.[1] For the latter it comes within the scope, not so much of a metaphysical characterization of God, as of revealed theology, in anthropological eschatology, Christology, and theological hermeneutics; it is this incomprehensibility of God alone which for Aquinas makes possible the revelation of God as such, without man becoming God.

Here we shall refrain from developing more closely the subtle theology of God's incomprehensibility in Aquinas and thus also in Siller and refer the reader to these two authors themselves for a discussion of this precise question of incomprehensibility as a mode of understanding in general and of the incomprehensibility of God in particular. We may be satisfied here with a rather simpler idea of the incomprehensibility of God, particularly since the Church's official theology and theology generally do not take too much trouble to explain this concept. Here in the first place it need only be observed that according to this traditional teaching the incomprehensibility of God persists also in the immediate face-to-face vision of God: that is, it is not merely something peculiar to the knowledge of God in the [92] pilgrim's earthly life, but also determines his relationship to God in its eternal consummation.

HOW CAN THE ETERNALLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE GOD BE THE MEANING OF OUR LIFE?

We can be satisfied with these few hints, since we have to reflect, not really on this incomprehensibility of God in itself, but on the human question of meaning (admittedly insofar as the latter is confronted with the dogmatic teaching on faith on the

[1] Cf. the essay of the present author 'An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St Thomas Aquinas' in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 16 (London/New York, 1979), pp. 244-54. In this essay I was grateful to be able to make use of the researches of my student Pius Siller in his dissertation 'Die Incomprehensibilitas Dei bei Thomas von Aquin' (Innsbruck, 1963).

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incomprehensibility of God). Obviously the situation cannot but be one in which a confrontation of this kind occurs continuously in religious experience, in a metaphysic and in theology, in which the *adoro te devote latens Deitas* ('the devout adoration of the hidden deity') is a basic determination of religious experience and speculation. This is certainly not to be denied. Nevertheless it may be said that in the Church's official teaching and in traditional textbook theology the incomprehensibility of God is *one* of God's attributes *in addition* to many others, is taught as a particular theme, but does not actually occupy a really systematically and completely dominating position, sustaining everything else, for the totality of the teaching on God and our relationship to him. When a good deal has been said and many things have been discussed about God and our relationship to him in nature and grace, it is then *also* added that he is incomprehensible; we talk of God, his existence and his knowability, his relationship to us in nature and grace, without from the very outset making God's incomprehensibility the starting point always and everywhere determining the understanding of his nature and of its peculiar and unique character. Moreover, when we acclaim the immediate vision of God as the one, proper and alone fulfilling goal of man, when we pray *ut te revelata cernens facie visu sim beatus tuae gloriae* ('that I may see your face unveiled, be blessed in the vision of your glory'), we have forgotten in practice that this blessedness of eternal glory means coming immediately into the presence of the *incomprehensibility* of God. After extolling the pure infinite light of the eternal deity, which finally descends into the mind and heart of the creature and drives all earthly darkness away for ever, we gently observe as a kind of afterthought that even here God remains incomprehensible; [93] but this incomprehensibility is regarded more or less as a marginal phenomenon, as a tribute to be paid to our own finite creatureliness in a beatitude as enjoyment of what is seen and comprehended in God. God's incomprehensibility is not what is seen, but what is not seen, from which we avert our gaze.

If then God's incomprehensibility, which is nowhere denied in Christianity, is seen from this odd twofold aspect, even though merely implicitly and unthematically and basically in a way contrary to its proper meaning, it is not surprising that the theme of God's incomprehensibility is not brought out really clearly and firmly in the traditional treatment of the question of meaning.

This forgetting of God's incomprehensibility at the point where we recognize God as ultimate, sole, all-illuminating answer to man's radical question of meaning seems to me to be blatant. For us the person who does not know God is wandering in darkness; but that person walks in the light who knows God and brings him into his calculations for living as the item that throws light on all the rest of his accounts. God is extolled by us as the one comprehensive meaning of our existence, ultimately solving all our dilemmas, in which alone all partial experiences of meaning find their true place and their integration. God enlightens, combines, organizes, resolves discords, is the refuge-tower abiding in a blessed, pure unity in himself: the stronghold in which we can take refuge away from all that is unreconciled in life and knowledge. For us he is light, eternal peace, reconciliation, unity purely and simply, the point (which is in fact attainable for us) from which all the terrible discords of nature and history blend in a pure, meaningful harmony. He is *meaning* pure and simple and, when we make this statement, which is of course correct in itself, we think spontaneously of meaning in our sense, as that which is seen, that which is understood, controlled, that which is justified in *our* sight and is given into our hands, put at our disposal, so that finally the pain of the emptiness of meaning of the unanswered question ceases.

All this invocation of God as the one and comprehensive answer to the one and entire infinite question that is man is really not to be rejected. Difficult as it may be to say explicitly what is really to be understood by meaning, there are partial experiences of meaning and all these partial experiences show the way to the one point lying within the infinite at which the

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particular experiences of meaning [94] come together, are anticipated and reconciled with one another in a fundamental unity, so that we rightly call this most fundamental, all-unifying, utopian, and for that very reason most real meaning purely and simply God. But when we thus sense and demand the highest with all our strength of mind and heart, in theory and practice, do we not again then fall from the supreme height of our existence into the empty abyss of meaninglessness, if we say that this highest is incomprehensible? How can the incomprehensible and nameless be the meaning that *we* have? We cannot however understand this incomprehensibility as a special characteristic of God, which he has *together with* the other attributes different from that, which then yield the fullness of meaning for which we yearn. These other attributes of God, which we declare to be the meaning of our existence, are themselves incomprehensible; this incomprehensibility is not one attribute of God alongside others, but the attribute of his attributes. The question then remains of how this incomprehensibility can be our meaning.

As a precaution a specifically theological observation must be made at this point. On the ground of Christian faith we cannot say that God is the guarantor and content of the meaning of our existence only in so far as he creatively produces a finite something that (*formaliter*, as the scholastics would say, as distinct from *efficienter*) amounts on the one hand to our fulfillment of meaning and on the other hand, being finite and consequently not incomprehensible, escapes the apparently insurmountable hopelessness in which we are involved. A solution of this kind is impossible because for Christian faith it is not a finite reality, even though created by God, but God in himself that is, even though by sheer grace, man's immediacy, goal, and fulfillment of meaning.

In order to clarify the difficulty, it must moreover be added that this incomprehensibility obviously radically determines, not only those peculiar characteristics of God which belong to him solely as he is in himself, but also his attributes as 'relative' to us, that is, the decrees of his freedom, his justice, his mercy, his fidelity, etc. If we do not at once and from the very start understand as incomprehensible also these attributes of God (existentially decisive up to a point for ourselves) which are relative to us, such a statement is mistaken from the outset and does not refer to the true God at all. But are we [95] really doing justice to this insight by working out an apologetical theodicy of the terrible course of world events and the horror of the history of humanity, asserting quickly and unctuously that the good meaning of the course of world events and of mankind's history will dawn upon us in heaven with blinding clarity? Are we not forgetting that, at the very stage when we see God face to face, he is the incomprehensible also in his freedom in which he guides world history and that this very incomprehensibility under which we suffer shines out more especially there in all its terrible splendour? If we take seriously the decisions of the free God, is not what the psalmist says (94:6 in the Vulgate version) particularly true for heaven: 'O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our maker'? Does not Paul say, particularly in regard to God's free salvific action, that his judgments are inpenetrable and his ways inscrutable (Rom. 11:33)? Is this true only as long as we are on pilgrimage on these ways or is it not true particularly when we have reached the end of these ways?

With the question of meaning it is not so simple to appeal to God and at the same time to think that everything is clear, all darkness bright, all problems solved, all the pure fullness of meaning brought out, when God is called the Word. If we really understand this word, we might just as well say that it is out of the question now and for all eternity to think of seeking and finding a meaning in any reality that is perceptible and comprehensible to us.

What shall we say? One thing is certain. If we raise the question of meaning and attempt to answer it in the light of the modern ideal of knowledge, according to which knowledge gains its true nature and reaches its goal only when it sees through and thus dominates what is known, when it breaks down into what for us is unquestionable and obvious, when it seeks to

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work only with clear ideas and seeks to reflect to the very last detail the conditions of its own possibility, when as autonomous it seeks itself to decide the limits of what concerns it and what does not, when it seeks to be silent about those things on which it is impossible to speak clearly, when it is interested only in the functional connections of the details of its world of experience – in a word, when the modern ideal of knowledge prevails as a matter of course and without any need of justification – then any talk of God's incomprehensibility can be understood only [96] as a sentence of death on the question of meaning and how we want to cope with life in face of this prohibition of a universal question of meaning is irrelevant.

TWO BASIC QUESTIONS ON THE CLEAR-OBSCURE 'SOLUTION' OF THE DILEMMA

On the one hand, then, we uphold as inescapable and legitimate the *universal* question of meaning and on the other hand we not only speak of the incomprehensibility of God *somewhere* within the theological system, but also acknowledge the power of this expression over everything else and confront it with this question of meaning. On these assumptions, it seems to us that two questions especially must be raised. First, how must the nature of human knowledge be understood in principle and *a priori*, so that it can raise the question of God's incomprehensibility at all, so that it becomes clear that it cannot regard it as out of the question from the very outset to be occupied with the incomprehensibility of God? Second, how precisely must the act of man be understood in which he allows for God's incomprehensibility without being broken by this incomprehensibility or putting it aside as irrelevant for himself? These two questions of course are closely connected, but are not simply identical, since it is only the second question that makes clear how knowledge as such must transcend itself, must be raised up into the totality of human existence, when it is faced with the incomprehensibility of God.

It is clear without more ado that answering these two questions has something to do with the appropriate statement of the question of meaning and its understanding. For us, absolute meaning exists only in God and for that reason the question of meaning can be rightly understood and answered only if God's incomprehensibility is simultaneously considered and therefore also the two questions just now formulated. Here of course in regard to these two questions it is possible to put forward only a couple of suggestions from which, from the nature of the case, too much is continually expected.

(1) How must knowledge be understood even in its initial stages if it is to be able to have anything at all to do with God's incomprehensibility? [97] If reason from the very start were the power to know the individual realities of consciousness and their reciprocal functional connections, the incomprehensibility of God could not even be considered either as a question or as a statement or it would have to be set aside from the very outset as a nonconcept, like that of a square circle, and be rejected as an expression for what could only apparently be conceived.

Man's knowing mind cannot be understood merely as coming across what we call God in the course of its activities and then assigning to this contingent object the predicate 'incomprehensible' as one attribute among others that belongs to this accidentally discovered individual object of knowledge. If man's reason is thus understood in a modern way, *a posteriori*, positivistically, functionally (even if the rules of the functioning of reason so conceived are developed epistemologically), this reason can never be the power of knowing God's incomprehensibility, if only because God himself cannot be understood as a particular individual object among other data of consciousness and because a reason that has to do *purely and simply in the first place* with what can be defined by functional connections

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cannot subsequently come to deal with something that absolutely contradicts what is thus understood as the *a priori* character of possible data of consciousness. Reason must be understood more fundamentally as precisely the capacity of the incomprehensible, as the capacity of being seized by what is always insurmountable, not essentially as the power of comprehending, of gaining the mastery and subjugating. Reason must be understood (to use Aquinas's terminology) as the capacity of *excessus*, as going out into the inaccessible. If reason is not understood from the very outset as the capacity of incomprehensibility, of unfathomable mystery, as perception of the ineffable, then all subsequent talk of the incomprehensibility of God comes too late, falls on deaf ears, and can be understood only as an intimation of what happens to remain of objectivity, of what has not yet been processed by all-consuming reason but will sooner or perhaps later be so processed.

Actually however reason is of this nature, even if it is inclined to stop at what is clearly understood and comprehended and to linger there, even if it always forgets where the clear brightness of its individual perceptions comes from. For when it grasps and understands any object, it has already transcended the latter into an infinity [98] that is present as unexplored, precisely as such and not otherwise; it always seizes the individual object by being tacitly aware of the fact that the object always is and remains more than what is grasped of it. It locates the individual object within reference systems which themselves are not precisely fixed and determined and in which such an individual reality has a place without being absolutely and for ever settled there. It always has a bad conscience (which, if admitted and accepted, becomes a good conscience) that it has itself never adequately understood and authorized its own assumptions, although to do this would enable it to rely absolutely on its individual perceptions. It perceives, and every perception that gives expression to an individual reality is accompanied by a terrible awareness of its provisional character. It is only because we do not know that we can attempt to know something, only because we direct our questions to what is unanswered and thus in the last resort to the ineffable, that we can hear answers which, the better they are, the more they raise new questions.

Wanting to understand and, consequently, the question aimed at comprehension as such (and in all this the rational subject demanding an explanation from the very outset) are themselves put in question with every answer, so that incomprehension becomes incomprehensibility and the boundless question the sole point at which the question itself becomes the answer, the domicile where incomprehensibility (called God) resides and alone shelters us. If we want to regard it as darkness always to be already beyond the individual object of knowledge as the condition of the possibility of our knowledge, since there can be no point anywhere at which it comes to a stop, then we can confidently say that this darkness is the condition of the light that illumines an individual object, then we can say that it is only in falling into an unfathomable abyss that we grasp the individual reality to which we think we can cling. In brief: the simple fact (inevitably freshly asserted in every perception) that any individual perception is possible only within an infinite process which as far as we are concerned is never ended (and which in theological terms can be ended only by its own goal, approached asymptotically, if this is itself present, but then as naked and unveiled incomprehensibility), always asserting afresh that what is grasped lives by the incomprehensible and that understanding is governed by incomprehensibility.

[99] If we want, we can dismiss all this as idle dialectic and cheap paradox, with the invitation to stick to what is clear and comprehensible. But we can do this only with the aid of rationalistic theory and (whether we want it or not) the bitterness of life's frustrations brings us up continually against this marginal experience, so that at most we may wonder whether what is beyond this field of clear knowledge and autonomously practicable plans amounts to a fall into an abysmal meaninglessness or to being caught up by a sheltering incomprehensibility relieving us purely and simply of ourselves and our question.

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(2) We thus come to the second question, which of course is directly connected with the first. We have been asking about the knowing reason and we defined it in advance of its function of definitively comprehending as the power of coming face to face with incomprehensibility itself. If this is the fundamental definition of cognitive reason itself and not simply what happens to it unexpectedly as it reaches the end of its activity, this does not mean that we are irrationalists; for this fundamental state of being exposed to incomprehensibility is understood precisely as the condition of the possibility of conceptually elaborating, delimiting, and discriminating knowledge. But when we describe reason in this way, we have already gone beyond it; precisely in order to define its nature fundamentally, we have transcended it to reach something greater and more comprehensive, because – in the last resort no one who believes in God can doubt this – it is always possible to comprehend the nature of something in the last resort only by transcending that nature. Once again then we must face our second question. How exactly must the act of man be understood in which he can allow for the incomprehensibility of God without being broken by this incomprehensibility or putting it aside as irrelevant for himself?

Before attempting to answer this question more precisely, we may put forward one or two preliminary observations to protect the answer to this question from the very outset against objections and misunderstandings.

With Aquinas we are absolutely convinced that knowledge on the one hand and will (as freedom and love) on the other can be distinguished as powers emerging as distinct out of an ultimate substantial unity of man and kept together in this unity in a kind of perichoresis ('mutual interpenetration'), to make use analogously of a term of [100] trinitarian theology. At the same time we are sure that Aquinas gets to the depths of this question of the difference of these two powers from one another, not at the point where he marks out one from the other and draws the obvious conclusions (for example, that the essential nature of the beatific vision of God consists in the act of intellect as such) but where he discusses objectively the unity and the mutual interdependence (even though within a system analogous to that which exists in the divine trinity) of the transcendentals *verum* ('truth') and *bonum* ('goodness'). When we consider and take seriously the metaphysics of these transcendentals in their unity and mutual interdependence and in their differentiation, we can give a good Thomistic answer to our question. This act in which man can allow for and accept God's incomprehensibility (and thus the comprehensive meaning of his own existence), without being broken by it and without taking refuge in the banality of his clear knowledge and of a demand for meaning based solely on this complete knowledge as open to manipulation, is the act of self-surrendering love trusting entirely in this very incomprehensibility, in which knowledge surpasses itself, rising to its supernature, and is aware of itself only by becoming love.

This statement, which still requires elucidation, may sound paradoxical, but it does no more than express the paradox of the ultimate unity of man's diverse powers in which in the last resort each power becomes aware of itself only when it is raised up into the other and in which the whole is named after the final element in the system of these elements (it is in this way that we say 'God is Spirit', giving him the name of his third mode of subsistence).

We may adopt the opposite approach in order to make the answer to the second question intelligible, by asking what kind of an act it must be in which man as reason can bear the incomprehensibility of God and does not regard this incomprehensibility as the infinitely high wall, enclosing the small field of his blessedness on all sides, so that he can enjoy his happiness in this small area only by nervously casting his eyes down in order not to have anything to do with this wall looming up to high heaven. What must the act be called (if it exists at all) in which the occurrence of the incomprehensible mystery in its inexorable unambiguity and finality itself amounts to eternal blessedness and not its all-annihilating

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frontier? We can only answer that, if this act exists at all, if it exists because we simply [101] cannot do without it, if we look for a name for it derived from our basic experiences, we can speak only of 'love'. Admittedly, that very thing which we call love must not be defined in the light of anything else, but only in the light of *that* experience which we have in the occurrence of the incomprehensible mystery. In the last resort love is precisely the acceptance of the incomprehensibility which we call God, in his nature and his freedom, as sheltering, as affirmed as for ever valid, as accepting us.

But this nature of God's love, which is revealed particularly and ultimately only in the acceptance of his incomprehensibility as beatifying and not as annihilating, is also accessible to us in the light of lesser experiences that we have otherwise in personal love. At the point where one person encounters another in really personal love is there not an acceptance of what is not comprehended, an acceptance of what we have not ourselves perceived and consequently not mastered in the other person, the person who is loved? Is not personal love a trusting surrender without reassurance to the other person, precisely in so far as the latter is and remains free and incalculable? This is not to say that the absolutely unique love of God, in its real, univocal sense, can be subsumed under an interpersonal love that we can easily experience; the two factors have only an analogous similarity, that is, a similarity in which a greater dissimilarity continually appears (to vary the terminology of the Fourth Lateran Council on the relationship between God and creatures). But interpersonal love nevertheless gives us a hint of our relationship to God; it justifies us in saying that the act in which the subject, leaving aside itself and its own claims, surrenders itself to the incomprehensible and for ever persistently incomprehensible mystery can at best be called love, since knowledge purely as such in our ordinary field of experience (even though not in its fundamental nature) bears in itself the character of appropriation and domination of what is known, while this is not the case in genuine interpersonal love, even in the empirical area of life. At the same time it remains true that only in the act of resigned and self-forsaking surrender of the subject to the incomprehensibility of God as such (which then ceases to be a limitation and becomes the very content of our relationship to God) does the most fundamental nature of love really dawn upon us, of which interpersonal love is merely a creaturely reflection.

[102] Certainly the relationship of the basic act of human beings in regard to the incomprehensibility of God, insofar as this act is knowledge and insofar as it is free love surpassing knowledge, has not yet really been adequately defined. But, as already indicated, this basic definition of the relationship is not to be put forward on the plane of a theory of faculties, as in Aquinas, but with the aid of a theory of the transcendentals 'true' and 'good' and their relationship with one another. For only in this way can it be made clear that love (praxis) – perhaps today we would also say freedom – can be and must be also the condition of knowledge of the true (theory), so that this very relationship of a perichoresis of the two transcendentals reaches its most radical essential realization in the presence of the incomprehensibility of God.

ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT OF MEANING ONLY IN THE FREE AND LOVING ACCEPTANCE OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD

In the course of our reflections on the act of accepting God's incomprehensibility, we seem to have lost sight of the human question of meaning. In reality however this is not so. We may make this clear with one or two closing remarks. Although there is a particular experience of meaning directly in the field of human experience and prior to the question of God, we assume that the question of meaning as a whole can be answered positively only with what we call God, in the sense not only that the fulfillment of the human question of meaning is

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guaranteed and creatively effected by God, but consists in a gracious self-communication of God in his most intimate reality. But this self-communication of God, that alone radically answers the question of meaning, seen from man's standpoint, is and remains the immediate coming into the presence of God's incomprehensibility, which, if we are to talk seriously and without reservation about real and not merely passive fulfillment, must itself be understood and realized, not as the limit but as the content of the final blessed fulfillment of meaning.

If however this is the situation, it is one to which the concrete mode of the promise in Christian proclamation of an ultimate fulfillment of meaning must also really correspond. In this proclamation there cannot be an offer of a God who is secretly subject to human selfishness, not even to the sublime selfishness of human rationality. The God of fulfillment of meaning must be proclaimed as the one who cannot be fitted into the calculations of our life, who simply cannot be regarded as the last item in our bookkeeping, bringing out the meaning of the whole series of our accounts. Our proclamation must boldly declare that the ultimate question of meaning is correctly stated only as the question of free love, which can get away from itself and experience the incomprehensible as what is wondrously and blessedly obvious. The question of meaning must itself be relentlessly clarified as a question by being confronted with the incomprehensibility of God and thus turned into a question of whether it is capable of being understood as the question of an incomprehensibility that brings final happiness or, since a third meaning is impossible, seeks to understand God's incomprehensibility merely as another expression for the empty absurdity of existence.

In this question 'objective' knowledge and ultimate free decision cannot be separated. And it is this very fact that proclamation must clearly show to be inescapably involved in any theory from the very outset; it must make clear that knowledge, too, is itself good or bad according to whether it seeks to understand the incomprehensibility of existence, which is derived from the incomprehensibility of God, as bringing final bliss or in the last resort as hateful. Present-day proclamation, particularly when it recognizes God as the ultimate answer to the question of meaning, is tempted to make God a tiny means for the small man, to permit God only what seems to shortsightedly selfish man to be useful to himself, without radically grasping and proclaiming that man can reach final bliss only with a God who is incomprehensibly greater than himself and for that very reason the true blessedness of man.

Where today does Christian proclamation speak clearly and firmly of the God of judgment, of the eternally incomprehensible ways and decrees of his freedom? Certainly Christianity is the proclamation of the victory of God's grace and not actually merely the ambivalent offer to man's freedom of two possibilities, of salvation or of eternal perdition. But this very message of God's gracious freedom is more powerful than man's freedom and is always ahead of the latter, without destroying it, only if it is heard as the event of the incomprehensibility [103] of God's freedom and not as an obvious insight with which to outwit God's judgments, if it is heard as an appeal to man's freedom to trust entirely in God's incomprehensibility without reservation and without reassurance, since it is only in this way that freedom becomes free and blessed. Recourse to God as answer to the question of meaning of man in his wholeness is right and indispensable. But it becomes the creation of a human idol if it does not bring man, forsaking himself, self-surrendering, and blessed only in that way, into the presence of the incomprehensibility of God.

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6

ONENESS AND THREEFOLDNESS OF GOD IN DISCUSSION WITH ISLAM

The question of God's oneness is certainly one theme (if not the most crucial) that must be discussed in an encounter between Islamic and Christian theologians. The religions of Israel, Christianity, and Islam are the three great world religions which profess a primary monotheism, explicitly regarded by Christianity and Islam as derived from Old Testament monotheism. But, in a history of faith and theology that has become increasingly clear and explicit, Christianity acknowledges the threefoldness of the one God and consequently faces the question from Old Testament monotheism and the faith of Islam and its theology as to whether the profession of faith in the triune God does not amount basically to an absolutely pernicious tritheism and whether the Christian acknowledgment of the oneness of God is no more than a disguise for such tritheism or (if it is not to be stated so radically) simply a doctrine that cannot really be implemented religiously and logically by someone for whom the acknowledgment of the oneness of God is not merely a proposition maintained verbally and theoretically but the very heart of his existence in theory and practice. On the other hand of course this question as such could be put by Christianity to the other two world religions: that is, it could be asked (assuming an actual history of revelation in which the one and basic content of the substance of faith is slowly more clearly articulated in forms that cannot afterward be forgotten) whether these two world religions have not failed to achieve that elucidation and radicalization of monotheism which finds expression precisely in the doctrine of the Trinity. [106] But for the task with which I propose to deal the first way of approaching the question will suffice.

All that we are asking here then is why the Christian doctrine of the Trinity does not cancel or threaten any real acknowledgment of the oneness of God. If the question is stated in this way, it is obvious that not each and every thing can be made equally explicit in the answer, that the doctrine of the Trinity simply cannot in itself be treated expressly thematically in all its fullness and vitality. If, as far as it is given expression here, it seems to the Christian theologian to be put forward somewhat pallidly and with a kind of sceptical restraint, this can be admitted from the outset and is justified by the limited scope of the following reflections. In the task attempted here it is quite impossible to avoid putting forward theologoumena and interpretations of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity that may up to a point be matters of controversy among Christian theologians. We are starting out from the conviction that we shall not do justice to the task before us if we simply repeat the Church's defined doctrine on the Trinity without at the same time interpreting it as theologians on our own account and at our own risk. At the moment when we attempt to present the official teaching of the Church on the Trinity in a way calculated to win the sympathy of an Islamic theologian, we must avert possible misunderstandings of this doctrine which on the one hand do not seem to be entirely removed simply by repeating the Church's official teaching but which on the other hand can certainly be overcome only in a theological reflection which the Christian theologian must admittedly accomplish largely on his own account and at his own risk.

In this undertaking of mine the following points must also be stressed. Unfortunately I am not an expert on Islamic theology. This means that any attempt at an explicit confrontation between Christian and Islamic theology is excluded from the very outset, since Islamic monotheism would then have to be presented and interpreted in its basic teaching, its variations and its history. This however is absolutely impossible for me. I can therefore put

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forward only a few considerations on the relationship between Christian monotheism and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and at the same time hope that these preliminary considerations may be useful for an explicit discussion between Islamic and Christian monotheism, so that the discussion does not break down at the very beginning [107] as a result of misunderstandings of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. It is also my intention not to permit the drift of these merely preliminary considerations to be lost in a purely abstract conceptual dialectic, but, as far as this is possible in a brief space, not to lose sight of what all the sublime and by no means simply avoidable conceptualities in the doctrine of the one and triune God imply existentially and religiously. After these preliminary observations we shall turn immediately to the essential question, without announcing in advance a formal structure of these reflections, since the actual course of the reflections must be justified by its own development.

Christianity is a primarily and not merely secondarily monotheistic religion. It acknowledges the oneness of God, of the God whom the Christian worships, by whom he knows he is created and called to salvation, whom he worships in absolute obedience, in faith, hope, and love. According to the evidence of the Christian Scriptures and the creed of Christendom this belief in the one sole God is not merely any sort of doctrine which *happens* to occur in the diversity of Christian articles of faith, but purely and simply the really basic dogma of Christianity. In regard to the understanding of this basic dogma it must be noted that the acknowledgment of the oneness of God is not primarily a metaphysical statement, even though this acknowledgment necessarily implies something of the kind. It is a question of a statement that is part of the history of salvation and revelation and must be acknowledged within that history. Christianity does not say primarily that there is only one sole absolute, but that he alone is God who is manifested as acting on us in the history of salvation and revelation; to this one alone can we really have that relationship of absolute devotion which constitutes the fundamental nature of religion. The statement on the oneness of God refers therefore not to an abstract absolute, alongside which any other is unthinkable from the very outset, from the very nature of the case, but to the God experienced concretely in his action on us, to the God of Abraham, of Isaac, to the God of the prophets, the God of Jesus.

This however is a statement that is anything but metaphysically obvious; it is not one that could be denied only by someone who had not understood at all the statement about the necessary oneness of an absolute or who thought he could accept in a gnostic or manicheistic sense the metaphysical absurdity of a good and a bad absolute [108] existing side by side. The Christian proposition of God's oneness refers to a concrete absolute. And in this sense it is anything but obvious. For it then implies *either* that whatever is the object of a religious – really radically religious – experience, wherever it appears in the history of religion and is genuine, is the same thing, is that which as one holds together and authenticates by its oneness all history of religious and numinous experience, which in the last resort then turns the diversity and apparent contradictoriness of the history of religion into a *universal* history of salvation; *or* that this religious intentionality purely and simply misses its goal, worships an idol and not God. And again, understood in this way, the statement is anything but obvious. People have always been tempted to attribute their numinous experiences, because of their diversity and inconsistency, to different absolutes, to interpret the pluralism of their religious experiences as an ultimate datum, to be polytheists explicitly or implicitly; or, if for metaphysical reasons they did not venture to take up this attitude, they were inclined to banish the ultimate unity behind this pluralism of religious experiences and their object into a region where it ceased to have any religious implications. But the monotheistic religions – which are not the same thing as monotheistic metaphysics – claim that this ultimate, most fundamental unity, which sustains everything, is infinite and omnipotent, does not merely

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dwell in a remote solitude in principle outside the reach of man, but, without dissipating its oneness, can as itself penetrate into the pluralism even of this world and be present there, can itself become concrete.

The monotheism of Christianity and of the two other world religions therefore must be understood both as concrete monotheism and also as universal, since the concrete God, who appears actively in an authentic religion, is as such the one and absolute and, since this very God because of his absoluteness and oneness is the God of the whole world and because of his universal salvific will, is active everywhere in his world. Understood in this way the monotheism of the genuine monotheistic religions must therefore either see the trend of other numinous experiences and religions as directed to their own concrete God, or reject them as missing their goal, or radically relativize such numinous experiences and set them apart from theism properly so called by interpreting them (as can be observed in all three monotheistic world religions) as experiences of [109] created angelic powers of a good or evil nature. If the God of religious monotheism, despite his infinity, incomprehensibility, and (as Creator) preeminence over the world, is nevertheless the concrete God who appears precisely where we are, without himself disintegrating into a pluralism of numinous powers, then all these three monotheistic religions, each in its own way and more or less radically, have inevitably (in Christian terms) an incarnatory character, since the concreteness of the God who acts in history is meant to allow him to be present precisely in his sole real divinity itself. Whether then this incarnatory character, which is involved in monotheism understood in this way, is related to a 'covenant', to a sacred book that is really God's book itself, to a definite person who is the presence of God – all these are further questions which of course cannot be pursued here.

After these brief indications of the meaning of Christian monotheism, we now ask whether it is compatible with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity of God or not. Is the doctrine of monotheism and that of the divine Trinity to be made compatible only by verbal artifice? Can these two statements be shown to give simultaneous expression to a single, indisputable religious fact? Our basic thesis, put forward here, is meant to show that the doctrine of the Trinity can and must be understood not as a supplement or an attenuation of Christian monotheism, but as its radicalization, assuming only that this monotheism is itself taken really seriously as concrete monotheism based on the experience of salvation history which does not banish God in his oneness out of Christianity's experience of salvation history and into a metaphysically abstract solitude.

With this basic thesis, which must be understood in a positive and not necessarily exclusive sense, our concern, as indicated from the beginning, is not with the assertion that (from the aspect of this thesis about the Trinity as radicalness of monotheism and not as its supplement or attenuation) the whole fullness of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity can be accepted as a datum or whether it must be said that this is not the case. We can leave this question aside here. Before we turn directly to this basic thesis of ours, elucidating and substantiating it, it seems appropriate to attempt to clear up some perhaps crude misunderstandings of this Christian doctrine of the Trinity. These misunderstandings are widespread, not only outside orthodox Christianity (even in liberal theologies from Unitarianism [110] onward, which are meant to be Christian), but also seem to make themselves felt subcutaneously, latent in theologies of Christianity which as such and in principle are orthodox, although it is impossible to produce detailed evidence of this here.

Of course, it is impossible to repeat here the long, difficult and varied history of the doctrine of the Trinity, which objectively (insofar as it is dogma properly speaking) found its dogmatically binding and hitherto final formulation in the age of the great Fathers, was stated again summarily at the Council of Florence, and received further profound interpretations in high scholasticism and afterward; but all this is theology and not dogma of Christianity. All

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that we propose to do here, presupposing this official, binding teaching of the Church and its history, is to put forward a few remarks directed against possible or real misunderstandings inside and outside Christian orthodoxy.

I would like first of all to say frankly and sincerely that the term 'person' in the doctrine of the Trinity seems to me to be misleading or open to misunderstanding. This is not to deny that the term involves a binding linguistic usage for the Catholic theologian, that the proposition, 'The one God in his one sole nature subsists in three persons', rightly understood, is correct and is a defined truth of faith. But even if this is taken for granted, the fact remains that the term 'person' can be and has constantly been misunderstood. It must continually be recalled that the history in dogmatic statements of a particular term (which as actually understood does not retain purely and simply the meaning that the Church wants to give to it) is not a history that has been or can be guided solely by the Church's magisterium. Consequently the possibility is not as such and *a priori* excluded that the continued course of such a history of terminology, taking place outside the sphere of faith and nevertheless influencing the actual understanding of these terms in a dogmatic statement, may threaten or almost destroy the usefulness and intelligibility of terms used officially by the Church and that this sort of thing can be maintained only by difficult and arduous measures of support, put forward specially and subsequently, for the meaning of such a term as understood by the Church. This, it seems to me, is today and has for a long time been the situation with the term 'person'.

If someone today, whether Christian or not, hears the statement that there are three persons in God, he will think instinctively of [111] three subjects differing from one another in their subjectivity, knowledge, and freedom, and wonder what kind of logic it is that permits three persons understood in this way to be simultaneously one and the same God. Even if this modern man uses the definition of official textbook theology, that personality is the subsistence of a rational nature, and if he is told that the rational nature need not be increased numerically in line with the plurality of subsistences, he is still in danger of thinking of the rationality of these subsistences as sharing their plurality, of thinking of them as three reciprocally related centres of mental action, related to one another as such. Or, conversely, if the person hearing about the Trinity does not appreciate these logical difficulties and more or less forgets the proposition about the oneness of the divine nature, if he begins to speak of the three divine persons, he imagines these persons distinct from one another as three realities with reciprocal relationships which are understood in their diversity as at least also founded on or constituted by elements which are by no means really distinct from one another according to the Christian dogma of the Trinity, but belong to the essential sphere of God, which exists in strict identity only as one, this fact however being more or less forgotten in this conception (especially under the tacit but effective influence of a modern notion of person).

This popular, unelaborated idea of the three persons, latent even at the highest levels of theology, but heterodox if thought out radically to the end, is meant (inevitably) to fill out speculatively the reciprocal relationality of the three persons (which, according to the Council of Florence, constitutes them as 'persons') and at the same time consciously or unconsciously borrows from the content of God's essentiality, although it is in fact recognized that this nature of God and all that it contains is absolutely one and unique and that the dogma of this uniqueness of the divine nature must be completely upheld. In this conception the 'persons' know one another, have a mutual love of each other, speak with each other, and so on. If however we get to work on such elucidations of the diversity of the three 'persons', we bring into this reciprocity of their relations as constituting itself the diversity of the persons (at any rate in the light of the modern idea of person which is thrust upon us) essential realities of God which truly exist only as one and which simply cannot constitute distinctions. If, for

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example, it is said that between [112] the divine persons there exists a mutual knowledge and love, this is not to be rejected as heterodox; but it may be asked what precisely statements of this kind are supposed to mean if knowledge and love in any case belong in the first place to the sphere of the one nature of God, if it is not clear what we are to understand by a threefold personal relativity in knowledge and love, if and insofar as this relationality is clearly (if only conceptually) distinguished from the essentiality of knowing and loving, if, for example, it is also considered (for example, in the proposition that the Holy Spirit is the mutual love of Father and Son) that Father and Son by the very fact of possessing the divine nature are necessarily essential love and must be regarded strictly as only a single principle in the spiration of the Spirit. The embarrassment arising from the use of the term 'person' in the theology of the Trinity (at least when the modern notion of person continually and today inevitably comes to mind) was evident in the classical theory of the Trinity as taught by Augustine and in the Middle Ages. According to this theory, it must be said that the Father knows himself *because* he is in possession of the original nature of God, he utters the Logos *because* he is by his nature in his unoriginated knowing self-possession, and nevertheless we want to explain that the Father knows himself *in* and *through* uttering the eternal Logos as distinct from himself. These problems cannot be pursued further or set out in detail here.

It cannot of course be denied that in principle the problems might be endured in the last resort by appealing to the unfathomable mystery of the trinitarian God, without investigating them in a strictly logical way. But an appeal of this kind cannot be allowed to relieve us the problems when they perhaps arise, not inevitably because of the mystery, but as a result of an indiscriminate and speculatively too little considered use of the term 'person'. In the last resort, the above remarks may at least amount to a warning about the problems of an indiscriminate use of the term 'person' in the doctrine of the Trinity.

This warning may be explained from another aspect. In the Church's official teaching on the Trinity 'person' and 'hypostasis' ('subsistence') are used synonymously, if the fact is disregarded that the hypostasis of a person means the subsistence of an intellectual nature (and in God there is only one such nature). Nevertheless, these terms are not simply synonymous either in their historical [113] origins or in their use on the one hand predominantly in Latin theology and on the other hand predominantly by the Greek Fathers, as also in the subsequent history of the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity; they are distinguished from one another at least by clearly perceptible nuances. In any case the idea of hypostasis has not developed in the same way as the idea of person, which is now more closely associated with a modern understanding of subjectivity, so that personality and subjectivity come to the fore to such an extent that the use of the term 'person' in the doctrine of the Trinity becomes increasingly problematic, both in the popular understanding of the doctrine outside orthodox Christianity and also in its speculative utilization inside a theology of the Trinity which seeks to be orthodox and not to obscure the oneness of the divine nature. In view of all this, without questioning the legitimacy of the Church's traditional official linguistic usage, speaking of three persons in God, we might wonder if it would be more appropriate to speak of three hypostases in God (or, to express it in a more modern form, of three modes of subsistence of the one God in his one sole nature) and in this way more easily to prevent popular misunderstandings of the doctrine of the Trinity and also in what really amounts to indiscriminate speculative interpretations of this doctrine in current theology. It seems to me (if it is not too presumptuous on the part of an individual theologian to say this) that the term 'hypostasis' or 'mode of subsistence' on the one hand is quite suitable to express and retain the real substance of the dogma of the Trinity and on the other hand involves fewer dangers of what is in the last resort a tritheistic misunderstanding of the trinitarian dogma. All this however amounts and can amount to no more than very brief and awkwardly expressed suggestions.

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At any rate we cannot be content to make use of any kind of blurred, indistinct concept of 'person', continually in a process of historical development, when speaking about three persons in God, and then to assume that we have understood and correctly expressed the dogma of the Trinity. This warning was really the sole point of these somewhat lengthy reflections. But it is a warning that seems important to me. Even an Islamic theologian may and must allow for the possibility that his denial of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity may be no more than a denial of a proposition that by no means expresses the content of that doctrine, since even a Christian [114] theologian does not find it easy in his own thinking to avoid misunderstandings of the term 'person' which he is continually using.

Coming now at last more immediately and more perceptibly to the basic thesis formulated earlier, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not a supplement or an attenuation, but a radicalization of Christian monotheism, we begin again from a different standpoint. We are starting out from the proposition that the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity and vice versa. I do not know exactly when and by whom this theological axiom was formulated for the first time. But it seems to be established in theology today or is at least a theologoumenon that cannot be *a priori* rejected as heterodox, but can safely be used in theological reflection. No Christian can seriously deny that there is an understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in terms of the economy of salvation, that there is an experience of the history of salvation and revelation of a threefold kind. The history of revelation and salvation brings us up against the ineffable mystery of the unencompassable, unoriginated God who is called Father, who does not live and remain in a metaphysical remoteness, but who seeks in all his incomprehensibility and sovereignty and freedom to impart himself to the creature as its eternal life in truth and love. This one and incomprehensible God is unsurpassably close to man historically in Jesus Christ, who is not simply one prophet in a still continuing series of prophets but the final and unsurpassable self-promise of this one God in history. And this one and the same God imparts himself to man in the innermost centre of human existence as Holy Spirit for salvation and for the consummation which is God himself. For Christian faith then there are two utterly radical and definitive and unsurpassable factualities, modes of existence, of the one God in the world, factualities which are the final salvation freely granted by God to the world, in history and transcendence.

As permanent, these two factualities are always to be distinguished, even though (and this is not to be specially explained here) they are mutually dependent. It is of course not clearly obvious from the outset that there are only *two* such factualities of God himself *in* himself *for* his creation. If we could presuppose the doctrine of the immanent Trinity on the two internal divine processions as *only* two, it would be easy to answer the question of the exclusiveness of the two divine modes of factuality for the world. But, since we must first of all here understand the economic Trinity as immanent, the question [115] is not so easy to answer at this point. But (and this may suffice here) we could say that the diversity, unity, and mutual dependence of man's historicity and transcendality provide an adequate aid to understanding for the distinction, unity, and exclusiveness of the two factualities of God, assuming however that we regard man from the outset as the image of God and do not forget that this image 'man' must from the outset be such that he can be the recipient of God's self-communication: that is, what is to be communicated must necessarily correspond to the nature of the recipient of the communication, and vice versa. If, with all the unity and mutual interdependence, there is really a permanent duality of the divine modes of factuality in God's self-communication to the world, this means at least that there is what we describe as the economic Trinity. The unoriginated God, who imparts himself in two different modes of factuality and because of the unity and diversity of these two modes and because of the unencompassable sovereignty which he retains even in his self-communication, may not be understood simply in a lifeless identity with these two factualities. In this salvific economic Trinity the unoriginated and

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permanently sovereign God is called Father; in his self-communication to history, Logos; in his self-communication to man's transcendentality, Holy Spirit. (We prefer to use here the term 'Logos', which is also authorized by the New Testament, since at this point we want to avoid the question of whether the 'Son' of the Father, who is Jesus according to the New Testament, designates even in the earliest New Testament statements, as distinct from later statements of the New Testament or of the magisterium, an exclusive salvific economic mode of factuality of God and thus an immanent mode of subsistence of God, or more fundamentally the unique unity of the man Jesus with God-Father as such.) For the Christian, then, there is undoubtedly a salvific economic Trinity.

In regard to this statement however it is essential to see and acknowledge that the duality of God's factualities for us does not get in the way of the factuality of God in himself or that the latter is not mediated by something that is not God. Logos and Holy Spirit are not to be regarded as mediating modalities which are different from the one God. For since Christianity rejects any neoplatonic, Plotinian, gnostic or similar idea of a descending self-emptying God, they would then have to be regarded as created realities, which, like all [116] other created realities, would by their nature point to the God who always remains remote, but would not mediate God as such in his innermost reality. In God's *self*-communication to the creature, radically understood, the mediation itself must be God and cannot amount to a creaturely mediation. These reflections however would seem largely irrelevant even to a religious person who is a theist, if he wants to remain obediently and humbly alone looking to the incomprehensible God from an infinite distance, not venturing at all to realize that this infinite and incomprehensible God might also be the God who is utterly close and immediate and not only the infinitely remote Creator-God. But if and when the thirst for God in himself imparted to man by God himself is admitted, if and when the ultimate unsurpassable statement of revelation that God himself as such wills to give himself to men is heard and accepted, in the sense in which this statement emerges clearly in the New Testament in the experience of Jesus and his Spirit, then it is impossible to avoid the admission that there is a twofold self-communication of God in diversity and unity, the modalities of which in their unity and distinction are again God himself strictly as such. But this means first of all in the dimension of the salvific economic Trinity that the statement that the Logos and the Holy Spirit are God himself is not an attenuation or obscuration of monotheism rightly understood, but its radicalization.

In describing monotheism at the beginning as religious and theological, we said that it was not an abstract metaphysical theory about a remote absolute, but a statement about the sole absolute, about the God with whom we have to deal concretely in salvation history. If this God of concrete salvation history realizes there his absolute and unconditional self-communication in history and transcendence, then on the one hand the diversity of these modes of factuality cannot be denied, but on the other hand this mode of factuality cannot be thrust between the one God and the creature graced by God as something merely created, which would then establish God's remoteness and not his closeness. If and insofar as (and this of course cannot be questioned) creaturely mediations between God and men can be conceived and do in fact exist and when these occur in the field of man's religious relationship to God and thus have a numinous quality, there is really always a danger of an explicit or disguised polytheism. Man seizes on such a mediation, [117] grasps it absolutely firmly, affirms it at least implicitly in this firm grasp as God himself, and yet in truth it is no more than a finite creature that cannot by any means convey God in himself.

For the Christian then the religious monotheist is inescapably confronted by certain alternatives. He may demythologize in a theoretical monotheism all (even permanent and unavoidable) mediations of his relationship to God (whether these are understood as word, Scripture, sacrament, or institution, etc.) as purely created, in the last resort thrusting the

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absolute God into an infinite remoteness; thus he becomes a merely theoretical monotheist, for whom God is as distant as the supreme divinity among ancient and primitive religious figures, because in the concrete he has to cling to these particular and finite mediations of explicitly or surreptitiously polytheistic character; *in practice* then religion becomes again devotion belonging to the present world and is simply a numinous transfiguration of that world. *Or* the person takes radical monotheism seriously, but at the same time for his own part refuses to see the mode of factuality of the monotheistic God as itself divine, and then he must see God's mode of factuality as radically creaturely and finite and lying on this side of the abyss between God and creature; thus he ends up again with a merely theoretical and abstract monotheism, which places God at an infinite distance, and in the actual practice of religion necessarily clings to these created mediations as all that he can regard concretely as properly religious, whether they are called commandment, Scripture, covenant of God, or anything else. In either case he will hesitate uncertainly between an abstract monotheism, which simply cannot take entirely seriously what is proper to religious monotheism, and a concealed polytheism, which in practice makes absolute those created realities which are supposed to convey God to him, although they are finite. (It seems to me that we might follow this hesitation between an abstract monotheism and an unadmitted polytheism up to the modern Western history of ideas, in Hölderlin, Rilke, Kerenyi, Heidegger and others.) There is a continual attempt to distinguish between the divine and the gods. *Or*, finally, the religious monotheist, sustained by God's grace itself, has absolute confidence that the absolute God as such has come absolutely close to him. But then he must consider the mediating modes of factuality as themselves divine in the strict sense of the term. He must say both these things, even though he cannot offer for this dual [118] statement any higher synthesis, surpassing it, making intelligible from a more fundamental standpoint the statement that the one sole God as himself is close to man in two modes of factuality and that these two modes of factuality are themselves God.

This absolutely comprehensive dual statement is therefore the radicalization of that monotheism which comes within a religious dimension. For the monotheistic God is the God who is close to us in concrete salvation history. It is only when created modes of mediation (although these *also* exist) in the ultimate sense are denied to him that he is really the sole God, close to us, who is present as himself in salvation history. The proposition of the identity of God's modes of factuality with God himself is only the converse of the proposition that any purely created mediation between God and man removes this God into an absolute remoteness, turns a concrete into an abstract monotheism and permits man to be implicitly polytheistic in the concreteness of his religious life. God must mediate to himself through himself; otherwise he remains remote in the last resort and in this remoteness is present only by the divisive multiplicity of created realities which point to God's remoteness. This is the meaning of the proposition on the divinity of the two fundamental modes of God's factuality in the world and it thus also means that concrete monotheism is taken completely seriously.

When we reassert at this point in our reflections the axiom invoked at an earlier stage of the identity of the salvific economic and the immanent Trinity, we are brought directly to the classical Christian theology of the Trinity. Since these two modes of factuality of the one God in and despite their diversity are themselves God and not something created and different from him, they must belong always and eternally to God himself as such. In order to bring out clearly that they belong to God himself as such, they are called in classical trinitarian theology internal divine processions. The un-originated God (called 'Father') has from eternity the opportunity of an historical self-expression and likewise the opportunity of establishing himself as himself at the innermost centre of the intellectual creature as the latter's dynamism and goal. These two eternal possibilities (which are pure actuality) are

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God, are to be distinguished from each other, and are to be distinguished by this distinction also from the unoriginated God. Insofar as they belong to God himself as such, since they simply could not otherwise be God himself, they [119] can be called modes of subsistence, in order to make clear that the two modes of factuality of God himself as such in regard to the world really belong to himself as such and do not mean a modality which would be brought into existence by a free decree of God and would consequently belong inevitably to the sphere of what is created and finite and not of God himself. It cannot of course be shown here that the classical doctrine of the Trinity could be made intelligible from this starting point. But a traditional Christian theologian could not deny this possibility, if he considers the connection between the two 'missions' and the two 'processions' in God.

In my humble opinion, it cannot be denied that it is possible from our starting point to arrive at a theology of the Trinity which does not *a priori* have to work with the traditional concept of person, but can make use of the concepts of hypostases (as distinct from persons), of modes of subsistence of one and the same God. But we referred earlier to the problems created by the use of the term 'person' in the theology of the Trinity, so that the starting point suggested here cannot *a priori* be regarded with suspicion merely because it does not from the very outset quite clearly lead to a triad precisely of persons. This does not mean at all that it is impossible to arrive at the concept of person from our starting point, assuming of course that this notion of person is itself really clarified and remains continually clear of those misunderstandings which, as we said, at least today tend to cling to it. These however are all questions that could be discussed only in a highly developed theology of the Trinity and not in these brief reflections.

In conclusion, in this apologetic for a correctly understood doctrine of the Trinity compatible with an unambiguous monotheism, we must refer to one or two points to which, for instance, Aquinas himself also drew attention. For the most part, we Christians talk a little too ingenuously of *three* divine persons and then say that each one of these three is God, so that (as we should readily admit to ourselves) we are exposed to the danger of being regarded as tritheists. In the logic of ordinary speech it is possible to add together a number of things only if they are seen as similar, but not different things seen precisely as different. If then we speak of three persons in God, we suggest involuntarily that one and the same term 'person' applies in strictly the same way to Father, Logos, and Spirit and that there is a threefold occurrence of this sameness. But this is [120] contrary to dogmatic teaching on the Trinity, since Father, Logos, and Spirit are absolutely identical at every point where they are the same, so that this sameness exists strictly speaking only once, and since they are *only* distinguished by that in which they differ and consequently cannot really be counted together under one figure. Without wanting to abolish the traditional modes of expression in the doctrine of the Trinity, the difficulty of finding appropriate terms must be kept in mind when we are talking about the mystery of the Trinity in the presence of strict monotheists. Even if we completely respect the linguistic usages of the classical theology of the Trinity, we might say that it is by no means absolutely necessary to speak of '*three persons*' even in regard to the Trinity (a usage which is not to be found anyway in the New Testament) in order to explain what Christianity really means by this doctrine. In religious language we could safely speak of the Father who is ineffably close as himself in his Logos in history and in his Spirit in ourselves; we could admit that this Logos and this Spirit, however much they are to be distinguished from him and from one another and cannot be reduced to a lifeless sameness, are God himself and not intermediate beings, which would have to be regarded as creatures or would introduce a subordinationist process of evolution into God.

If we admitted this and so kept more closely to the linguistic usage of the New Testament, we would – I think – express the substance of the Christian dogma of the Trinity and perhaps be able more easily to allay the misgivings of other monotheists, even though it remains true

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that these other monotheists must continually be urged to make an effort to understand correctly the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, however imperfectly and inevitably also misleadingly it may be formulated. If then the question arises of a formulation of the dogma of the Trinity which strategically and didactically is as easy as possible to assimilate outside the sphere of Christianity and if at the same time restrained formulations are recommended, not to conceal but to avoid superfluous misunderstandings, then of course Christian theology must not be prevented from going more deeply into the mystery of the immanent Trinity on the lines of the speculation of the Greek Fathers, of Augustine, and of medieval theology from Aquinas to Richard of St. Victor, assuming however that it will also consider the same mystery of the salvific economic Trinity [121] really with the utmost intellectual vigour and love and make it fruitful for Christian religious life.

As I said at the very beginning, I am aware that I have not really carried out a dialogue with Islamic theology, but only indicated a few points from the problems within Christianity with reference to monotheism and the doctrine of the Trinity, in the modest hope that it might perhaps be remotely useful for a real dialogue in which Islamic and Christian theologians would talk about a joint profession of faith in the one sole God and ask at the same time why this profession is not curtailed or threatened by the Christian doctrine of the threefoldness of this one sole God.

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[122]

7

DIALOGUE WITH GOD?

Anyone who reads pious Christian literature or listens to sermons on prayer will be familiar with the statement that prayer is a 'dialogue with God'. Consequently there is no need here expressly to produce evidence of this stock theme of Christian spirituality and the theology of prayer.[1] But perhaps it is not entirely pointless to offer some reflections on the question of whether and in what sense prayer can be described as a dialogue with God. For the term 'dialogue' presupposes that in prayer, not only man, but also God himself speaks, addresses us and responds in his own words to what we say. The question which is to occupy us here is not the more general and comprehensive question of the possibility and the preconditions of prayer as such – that is, of the personal address which man directs to God (certainly not a simple problem today) – but only a question of whether and in what sense it can be said that in prayer God addresses man, so that we can really describe prayer as a dialogue between God and man.[2]

Modern man certainly has great difficulty in seeing and acknowledging that in prayer he experiences something like a personal approach of God. If (as is justified in this brief article) we disregard the more comprehensive questions of a personal experience of God as [123] existing and of the relationship between God on the one hand and man and the world on the other[3] – that is, the more comprehensive questions which seem difficult enough to man today – the difficulty of experiencing prayer as dialogue lies in the fact that what people are accustomed or inclined to interpret in an unsophisticated piety as God's speaking to us in prayer is experienced in the first place as their own mental state or activity (which is undoubtedly true, cannot be denied and today can no longer be naively overlooked), and the question may be asked how this can be understood as a special manifestation of God, as his speaking to us. Modern man has the impression up to a point of talking to himself in prayer and of wondering whether this conversation with himself may also be passing *over* God, whether his reflection on himself perhaps takes place '*in the presence of*' God. If he experiences in prayer certain sudden, unexpected, and powerful irruptions and outbursts of new insights and impulses (which, of course, certainly happen), modern man will interpret such occurrences in the first place as events within his own person, as deeper mental processes seeking expression, as the emergence of what has hitherto been suppressed, as a fortunate coordination of subconscious associations, or something of the kind. He will point to the fact that the same somewhat extraordinary mental processes are also present when

[1] From the very beginning, the present author has been continually occupied with the subject of prayer in his publications. We need only refer to the book *Von der Not und dem Segen des Gebetes* ('On the Burden and the Blessing of Prayer'), which appeared for the first time in 1949, and also to the appropriate articles in the volumes of *Theological Investigations*.

[2] For a general survey of the theme of prayer, the reader may consult the article 'Prayer' by J. Sudbrack in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. *5* (London/New York, 1970), pp. 74-81, who also touches briefly on our chosen theme, but then refers for further details to the article 'Word of God' by L. Scheffczyk in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 6 (London/New York, 1970), pp. 362-68.

[3] See the article 'Experience' by K. Lehmann in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 2 (London/New York, 1968), pp. 307-9. But as far as we are concerned, all this involves the problems connected with the term 'person' (cf. 'Person' in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 4 [London/New York, 1969], especially pp. 404-9) and its application to God, which has been discussed in detail from different aspects, particularly in recent times. Cf. 'Observations on the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics' in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 9 (London/New York, 1972), pp. 127-44.

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there is no question of specifically religious contents, in artistic intuitions and fresh ideas that cannot really be preprogrammed, in sudden transformations of the whole person which are not expressly religiously motivated, and so on. Whether he is right or not entirely right is something that need not be investigated here; in any case modern man has the impression that it would mean accepting miracles or old-fashioned mythology, if he were to regard an unexpected and powerful mental experience, because of its suddenness, intensity, and significance, at once as the result of an isolated intervention of God in space and time into the normal course of the history of his consciousness. All this seems to him, at least as a general rule, to be as improbable in the mental [124] sphere as the assumption that miracles occur in the external world as new interventions of God 'from outside' into his world.[4] Even if he acknowledges the existence of God, he explains the course of his inner life by intramundane causes, which still remain intramundane even when they produce less ordinary phenomena in the sphere of consciousness.

Even today however there are many people in the Church, especially in the many groups cherishing an enthusiastic piety, who unhesitatingly regard certain mental experiences, particularly in speaking with tongues, baptism of the Spirit, in complete conversion, etc., as charismatic interventions of the Holy Spirit 'from outside',[5] who more or less ignore the simple fact that all such occurrences are primarily *their own* and (at least until there is conclusive proof of the opposite, which has not yet been produced even by parapsychological phenomena) must be explained as effects of conditions of an internal or external character present in themselves. Moreover, for the outsider, all such enthusiastic phenomena have their parallels in religions outside Christianity which clearly display the singularity, the horizon of consciousness, the language and the limitations of all these mental causes, so that it is scarcely possible to discover or seek there anything that would necessarily have to be attributed to a special and miraculous intervention of God. As a result of these and similar considerations, it is very difficult for modern man to discover in his conscious prayer anything that he might simply interpret as God's speaking as distinct from his own words. To him prayer seems to be a monologue or at best a conversation with himself, not a dialogue with God, not an event that could be described seriously and without too many qualifications as conversation or dialogue.[6]

[125] In this difficult situation we might be tempted to interpret prayer as dialogue with God in the sense that it means coming to terms with the word of God (reading, applying, etc.) which is present in revelation and in Scripture.[7] God speaks to us in Scripture, prayer as meditation on Scripture responds to this word, and thus there is a conversation, a dialogue with God in prayer. For the Christian, who regards Scripture as the word of God, this view certainly makes sense. But this explanation too has its difficulties. On closer examination it is clear that it only shifts the problem. For revelation received in a person's mind (it is not revelation at all unless it 'gets there') and revelation objectified in Scripture are both in

[4] The suddenness of the occurrence of these phenomena – the causes of which have not been grasped and for the most part can be understood only with difficulty – is an aspect which is discussed in connection with miracles, even though not comprehensively or conclusively. Here we can do no more than allude to it. As far as prayer is concerned, in my opinion this aspect has been considered only infrequently and inadequately. There will be more to be said about this in what follows.

[5] Here we need only recall movements like 'Jesus People' and the Pentecostal movement, among others, which are evidently becoming increasingly established in Europe.

[6] On the clarification of the question of how 'conversation' as such is to be understood, cf. the article 'Gespräch' by J. B. Metz in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 4 (Freiburg, 1960), cols. 836-37. In our context it is also useful to consider J. B. Metz, 'Akt, religiöser Akt' in *LThK*, vol. 1 (Freiburg, 1975). cols. 256-59, and also K. Rahner, 'Gebet IV. Dogmatisch' in *LThK*, vol. 4, cols, 542-45.

[7] A first approach to the vast field of 'meditation' opened up here can be found in section III.A of the article 'Spirituality' in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 6 (London/New York, 1970), pp. 157-60.

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principle exposed to the same uncertainty: that is, how a content of consciousness in a person's subjectivity and carrying with it all the limitations of that subjectivity, which must in the first place be interpreted as the effect of this human causality, can be heard and understood as God's word.[8] But, apart from this vast problem, which cannot be pursued further here, there is yet another difficulty about this explanation.

The devout person thinks he perceives in prayer a concrete approach of God, calling him in his individuality and individual life's decision. But if the person praying had to regard the application of the word of Scripture (as such universal) to himself and his concrete situation in life as his own work, undertaken on his own account and at his own risk, merely as the application of universal norms to a concrete situation for an individual decision (where the important thing is what goes beyond the universal), then there would be no dialogue in the sense understood when prayer is described as such. There would be no more than a purely human application of a universal divine word to an individual and the concrete, always unique questions relating to his own life. The person praying remains in a conversation with himself, even though with the aid of a universal divine word. The transition from universal revelation to the concrete [126] imperative is the work of that person alone, even if the transition is understood as coming about with the aid of divine grace, as long as it is not clear how the assistance of grace in the application of the word of Scripture to himself and his life's questions can be interpreted as a divine address, how then also the concrete imperative calling the person praying can be understood as a call of God.

This assistance of grace for concrete decision is known in theology as 'illumination' and 'inspiration', but it is not certain what exactly is meant by this expression. For there is at least one important school in theology[9] which interprets this illumination and inspiration, insofar as they are the condition of salvific acts, as purely 'entitative' and outside consciousness, so that nothing is gained for an understanding of God's speaking to us in prayer. Even if it is said that such an occurrence in prayer, in which a salvific decision is achieved, is accompanied, together with the entitative supernatural grace sustaining it, by 'healing' graces which urge this event on toward a salvific decision,[10] this still does not get us much further with our question. For this healing grace is interpreted as natural in itself and in the first place as the limit of intramundane causes, so that for the question of being addressed by God in prayer it is exposed to the same difficulties from which it started out at the very beginning. This healing grace too is part of intramundane reality involved in the interconnection of causes and effects and in this sense can certainly be understood (like everything else in the world) as God's creation, by which God intends our salvation, but for that very reason no more God's speech to us than is anything else that we encounter in our history.

Not infrequently we try to make the question easy for ourselves by first assuming a knowledge of the personality of God and immediately drawing the conclusion that he can be addressed by us. If we [127] get so far, it seems that we are already in a state of dialogue that

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[8] The author dealt with the fundamental questions of hearing revelation in his work *Hearers of the Word* (London/New York, 1969). This book later came up against a certain amount of criticism. We hope that our remarks here will make a modest contribution to clearing up misunderstandings and to a further development of some of our initiatives.

[9] On this *cf.* the surveys by L. Casutt and J. Auer in the articles 'Erleuchtung' and 'Erleuchtungsgnade' in *LThK*, vol. 3 (Freiburg, 1959), cols. 1014-16. In this connection also two publications by the present author may be considered and compared with one another: *Inspiration in the Bible* (Quaestiones Disputatae I; London/New York, 1958) and *Visions and Prophecies* (QD 10; London/New York, 1963). These references are meant only to underline the fact that there is still more to be done in the treatment of these questions.

[10] These aids were called 'healing graces' (*gratiae sanantes*) in the sense that they turn a free will that is 'sick' because of concupiscence into a 'healthy' free will. Cf. *Indiculus* 9, DS 248: '*liberum arbitrum . . . de languido sanum*' ('free will . . . is brought . . . from sickness to health' [Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith* (Dublin, 1973), n. 1914]).

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can immediately be actualized. But, even if we assume the knowledge that God is to be regarded in himself as wholly and entirely 'personal', this still does not justify the two further steps necessary for an actual dialogue with God. It is still by no means clear that this personal God can be addressed by us; and even more does it need to be made clear that he responds to our approach and does not remain silent. Even if we say in regard to the second step that he has come out of his silence, has spoken and imparted himself to us by his verbal revelation, there remains the question already raised, as to why the dialogue in prayer is more than a conversation with ourselves about God's universal revelation in his history of revelation, why it is more than the acceptance on our own account and at our own risk of what is said to us in this revelation.[11]

We must attempt to get further in a different way. The assumption hitherto taken for granted in our reflections on prayer as dialogue with God was that in prayer God tells us 'something'. The assumption behind our statement of the problem was that a certain individual, categorial content of consciousness, alongside many others, as directly effected in a special and outstanding way by God and in this special effectedness, constitutes something like a dialogue with God. And this assumption carried with it the difficulties of which we were speaking up to now. But how would it be if we were to say and could say that in prayer we experience ourselves as those who are spoken by God, who in the concreteness of our existence have our origin in and are at the disposal of God's supreme freedom? What if we say that what God tells us first of all in prayer we are ourselves in the determinedness of our freedom, in the indeterminability of our future, in the never completely revocable and never functionally rationalizable facticity of our past and present?[12] If in all these reflections we understand our question in this way, this means of [128] course *a priori* that this relationship between God and ourselves as 'partnership' and 'dialogue' is one that is unique and unparalleled and cannot simply be understood univocally according to the pattern of a relationship between human beings in the form of a partnership and a dialogue, so that of course from this standpoint also for our question the idea of 'dialogue' has the character of uniqueness and incomparability if it is meant to characterize the peculiarity of prayer.[13] If we can answer positively the questions now raised, then we are (in our transcendality which as such is experienced as derived, as we might say) ourselves the statement and address of God as heard.

This however is not to be understood simply as a universal proposition, but is a statement about a particular individual in his quite definite, unique, and historical concreteness, who is committed to himself and *in this way* experiences himself as the one spoken by God to himself. God's most fundamental word to us in our free uniqueness is not a word that occurs as something additional or as a single object among other objects of experience, categorically, at a definite point within the wider field of our consciousness; it is we ourselves in unity, totality, and dependence on the incomprehensible mystery that we call God, the word of God that we ourselves are and that as such is spoken to us. As soon as we read these propositions (which apparently sound purely existentially ontological), while assuming that

[11] These ideas are certainly not difficult to understand, but they make clear by their unusualness how very much we are inclined here to take for granted in our thinking and arguing certain assumptions which on closer examination turn out to be far less defensible than we would wish. It is almost self-evident for this reason and in this sense that criticism is an indispensable task for a modern theology.

[12] The questions formulated here are by no means as artificial and arbitrary as they might seem at first sight. These working hypotheses – at this point they are not suggested to the reader as anything else – will turn out in the further course of this train of thought to be intrinsically and objectively substantiated, at least in the sense that such a conception cannot be rejected in principle as impossible and unjustified.

[13] This will have to be stressed in regard to a way of thinking that neglects the analogical character of such speaking and deals too directly with these structures. This is not to deny the fundamental right to do so; in fact we are attempting here to say something about this relationship as partnership and dialogue.

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this transcendentality is always from the outset and everywhere (because of God's universal salvific will) raised and radicalized toward God's *immediacy* by what we call supernatural grace as God's self-communication, they are seen to be directly theological statements)[14] If, by mind and grace in one, man experiences himself as the one spoken by God himself and this constitutes his actual nature, in the concreteness of which the free grace of God's self-communication also participates, and if he allows in prayer for this existence and freely accepts it as God's word in which God promises himself in his *word* to man, then by this very [129] fact prayer (in a primary sense, to be further widened below) is dialogic, a conversation with God. Man hears himself then as God's address, which is filled with God's promise of himself by faith, hope, and love, in God's gracious self-communication. He does not hear 'something' additional to himself as to someone presupposed in his inert facticity, but himself as the word spoken to him, in which God constitutes him a hearer and to whom he promises himself as answer.

It cannot be our task here of course to substantiate the statements just made in terms of a theological or philosophical anthropology.[15] If that could be done here, it would be necessary to see that these statements were made and substantiated not only as objective statements appropriate to man as such and which occur to him only when he thinks and speaks about them in subsequent statements. Statements of this kind ought to be understood and substantiated as transcendental, that is, here simply as propositions whose content is established and known everywhere and always in man's mental and free self-realization as the unthematic condition of the possibility of all human existence, so that this transcendental dialogic existence can be admitted, thematicized up to a point and also accepted in explicit freedom in prayer, and thus prayer can be understood as dialogue. But, as we said, the meaning of these statements can neither be more closely explained nor more precisely substantiated. For that the reader must be referred to an anthropology developed elsewhere.[16]

So far, however, we have mentioned only one aspect of prayer, the 'transcendental' aspect, which enables us to see prayer as dialogue in a quite definite sense. We must now add a second aspect which both provides a real justification of the general understanding of prayer and dialogue and also clears up any mythological or miraculous misunderstandings. If, that is, man accepts unconditionally and genuinely this absolute openness toward God, derived from God [130] and his freedom (which is God's original word to man), if it is not concealed, distorted, or misused by man's prior decision in regard to quite definite categorial contents of his consciousness, then (if I may be allowed what may seem like an arbitrary leap in thought) we have what Ignatius of Loyola described in his *Spiritual Exercises* as 'indifference' and (when this indifference is really radically freely achieved and maintained) 'consolation . . . without any preceding cause'.[17] If, within such an ultimate dialogic freedom, a particular individual object of choice is encountered, which, even after long spiritual experience and questioning, does not distort, confuse, or restrict this pure openness to God, if it is experienced precisely as the medium by which this indifferent openness to God is accepted and remains intact in unconditional surrender to him – that is (conversely), in unconditional acceptance of God's word, that we ourselves are – then this categorial object of choice (however intramundane and relative it may be in itself) can and may be understood as a factor

[14] This means that a genuine, if specific, concreteness is asserted of the reality under consideration.
[15] The article 'Man (Anthropology)' by J. Splett, R. Pesch and K. Rahner in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 3 (London/New York, 1969), pp. 358-70, provides a useful introduction to the subject. It includes a bibliography.
[16] Two articles by the present author may be helpful in this respect: 'The Experience of God Today' in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 11 (London/New York, 1974), pp. 149-65, and 'Experience of Self and Experience of God' in *Theological investigations*, vol. 13 (London/New York, 1975), pp. 122-32.
[17] cf. *The Text of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, translated by John Morris and others (5th ed.; London, 1952), nos. 23 and 330.

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in this dialogic relationship between God and man, because and insofar as this chosen object is incorporated into the totality of the dialogic conversation, without imperiling or removing the latter's boundless and absolute openness. Seen objectively, as purely intramundane and categorial, such a categorial chosen object, on which a person decides in prayer, can always remain problematical, may perhaps turn out later (measured by man's intramundane needs and structures) to be inadequate, provisional, replaceable, and even detrimental; nevertheless, it is here and now the best medium of this indifferent, transcendental openness in which man knows himself as God's spoken word and consequently salvifically God's will.

In this kind of logic of existential knowledge and freedom[18] prayer becomes dialogic even in regard to its categorial individual contents. What appears in consciousness with a kind of surprising suddenness [131] and unexpectedness or as sentimental feeling is not to be regarded simply for that reason as an effect of the Spirit and thus as an approach of God and consequently as needing today to be enthusiastically highly stylized in face of a down-to-earth and sceptical psychology. Where however the particular reality in consciousness, for which we decide, can be sustained as a positive medium in the face of a permanent and unconditional openness toward God (or, as we might say, in the face of an absolute critical freedom), this same particular object can be regarded as spoken to us by God in and together with that fundamental address of God to ourselves which we are ourselves and which we perceive and accept in prayer.

We are not claiming here that the two aspects of prayer, which we tried very briefly to outline, adequately establish the dialogic character of prayer. We shall be satisfied if it is agreed that we have elucidated a little more the dialogic character of prayer. Nor of course is it possible to explain the consequences of this conception of prayer as dialogue)[19] If it now seems more difficult than is generally assumed to see prayer seriously and realistically as dialogue with God and especially to experience it in practice thus 'demythologized' as dialogue, that is not to say that the ordinary believer has to keep all the reflections developed here explicitly in mind in his daily routine. After going through these considerations and this disenchantment, he may experience prayer in a kind of fresh naïvety as dialogue with God, simply because that is what it is in truth.

[18] The author put forward some ideas on this theme some time ago, in the light of a different starting point and with a different objective, in *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (London/New York, 1964), where the initiative in particular of Ignatius of Loyola was used to bring out the knowledge of God's concrete will in a specific situation. For further reflections on these lines cf. 'Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church' in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 12 (London/New York, 1974), pp. 81-97, and also the article in the *Festschrift* for J. Salaverri, entitled 'Einige Bemerkungen zu einer neuen Aufgabe der Fundamentaltheologie'.

[19] It may however be permitted to refer quite generally to 'Theses on the theme: faith and prayer' in *Opportunities for Faith* (London/New York, 1974), pp. 53-61, where the author attempted to formulate a few requirements for prayer today.

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8

THE DEATH OF JESUS AND THE CLOSURE OF REVELATION

There is an old and well-known axiom in Catholic theology that Christian revelation, as addressed with binding force 'publicly' and 'officially' to everyone, was closed with the death of the last apostle and thus the history of revelation properly so-called came to an end, even though the history of the understanding of revelation, the history of faith in this revelation and the history of theology continue. Hence the Second Vatican Council says in *Dei Verbum* no. 4: 'The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away, and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ'. This axiom of the completeness of public divine revelation is substantiated in the council with the reference to Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, who completed the work of salvation, in whose life, death, and resurrection and sending of the Spirit the Father is seen. In this declaration in the Second Vatican Council on the definitiveness of Christian revelation there is no explicit reference to the apostles or to the end of the apostolic age with the death of the last apostle. But, since in the conciliar text it is not a question so much of a precise chronological determination of the end as of indicating the reason for this end, the traditional formulation that revelation was closed with the death of the last apostle is not disowned by the council. On the other hand, however, it is not claimed that this formulation is clear or that it easily stands up to any critical questioning. No lesser person than Cardinal Bea, for example, drew from this axiom in its traditional formulation the conclusion that all the canonical Scriptures of the New Testament would [133] have had to be written before the death of the last apostle, since otherwise there would have been no one to make known the original revelation of the inspiredness of the last of the writings of the New Testament. But if, conversely, the emergence of the last of the inspired writings of the New Testament is placed *after* the presumed death of the last apostle and at the same time inspiration and the knowledge of inspiredness is understood in the traditional sense (a sense which is not immediately obvious), then all that remains to be said is that Christian revelation was closed with the end of the apostolic age, but that this age can safely be extended to the time of the emergence of the last of the writings of the New Testament. But however the end of the epoch of Jesus and his apostles is to be precisely chronologically determined (the age of the Church's coming to be as distinct from that of the fully established Church) the basic substance of the axiom in any case remains clear. God's revelation in Jesus Christ occurred historically once and for all, occupies a definite and limited spatio-temporal position in history, and is nevertheless unsurpassable and for all subsequent time irrevocably valid, so that nothing that is really 'new' can ever again occur in the history of revelation.

This axiom (given more precise expression, which is desirable but cannot be provided here) must be regarded in the light of the doctrine of the new and *eternal* covenant in Jesus Christ as Christian and Catholic dogma, but this certainly does not make it any easier for a modern mentality to assimilate. Joseph Ratzinger draws attention in his commentary on *Dei Verbum* to this difficulty of understanding for modern man. Here we cannot explain more closely either the difficulty or its solution. But, since this difficulty is important for our present question concerning the connection between Jesus' death and the completion of revelation, we must at least briefly give some attention to it. Modern man sees himself as existing in history, as a being absolutely open to the future, as a person who does not simply possess his nature from the beginning as something to which merely accidental modifications are added in the course of history, not permitting this statically conceived nature to be itself truly historical. He sees the necessity of coming to be in freedom, not as the stigma of his

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finiteness, but as the distinguishing mark of his freedom that is always freshly and surprisingly realized in self-transcendence into the future. Consequently man today will [134] always regard the history of religion (particularly if he does not dismiss this as a now obsolete and finished period within his history of emancipation) as opening out on to an unknown future. And if as a Christian he sees the history of *revelation* as always and everywhere at work, at least in the past, in this history of religion, since history is always salvation history and since salvation history is not possible without faith or, consequently, without revelation, then the proposition about the end of the history of revelation in the midst of the continuing course of history as a whole seems to him at least difficult to understand. To say that the history of revelation is at an end seems to him to deprive history as a whole of its ultimate depth and dignity.

If in response to this difficulty it is pointed out that the Spirit of God of course always continues to lead the Church into all truth, that the history of the acceptance of revelation, of its adaptation to the ever new human person, the history of *faith*, continues, then at least it becomes easier than it usually is to see how to work out in theology the unity and continuity of (completed) revelation history and (continuing) history of faith, and thus up to a point to modify more clearly and legitimately the caesura laid down by the axiom. If it is said that the axiom teaches not so much the completeness as the unsurpassability of revelation in Jesus Christ (*Dei Verbum* has *oeconomia christiana . . . nunquam praeteribit*, translated 'the Christian dispensation . . . will never pass away'), then a terminological aid to understanding the axiom is certainly provided for modern man, since the latter can grasp the possibility of a chronologically fixed historical event being authoritative for all later times (but particularly for a genuine future) more easily than a historical event that is itself simply finished, does not continue, and yet claims a significance for later times. If however the axiom is understood in this sense of an historical unsurpassability, it needs to be given first of all a more exact formal explanation in terms of the philosophy and theology of history (something that has not yet been adequately considered in theology) and there must be an indication of the *content* implied in this unsurpassability of revelation in the Christ event.

In regard to this latter task, admittedly, a great deal has been done in theology and also in the Second Vatican Council. Since in Vatican II revelation is no longer understood as a mere communication of propositions (as it used generally to be), but as history (of which of [135] course propositions are also a part), the question of the unsurpassability of Christian revelation has become the question of the unsurpassability of the Christ event. Then of course it can be claimed that nothing further is said after Jesus Christ, not in the sense that a good deal more remains unsaid, but in the sense that all has been said, all is in fact given in the beloved Son in whom God and the world have become one. Then it can be said that God has irrevocably promised himself as historically perceptible in Jesus Christ to the world as its effective salvation in a self-communication of the absolute God himself as the absolute future of the world, a self-communication which from God's side effectively and irreversibly prevails in the world; then, too, it can be said that this promise is unsurpassable, because it is the self-promise of the absolute God in himself to the world. This promise then is not actually closed but opens out into an infinite future and in this sense is unsurpassable. History remains open in all its dimensions, even those of grace and revelation, and now moves in its openness within the historically accomplished promise of an absolute salvation, a promise which, from God's side, encompasses victoriously the ambivalence of the world's freedom for salvation or perdition.

As we said earlier, it is not our intention in these reflections to reconcile this axiom in detail and comprehensively with modern man's self-understanding. For this, something more would be required than the few and fragmentary suggestions just put forward. What will occupy us here is only the specific question as to whether and how the *death* of Jesus as such

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has a significance for the unsurpassability of the revelation event in Jesus Christ, and how in this light it is possible to make a contribution to the reconciliation of the modern mentality of an open future with the dogma of the unsurpassability and 'completedness' of Christian revelation. The latest official formulation of this axiom by the Church (as above-mentioned) at Vatican II does in fact refer to Jesus' death and resurrection in the statements preceding this conciliar axiom. But it is not clear whether this reference to the death (and resurrection) of Jesus occurs only because a mention of Jesus' death and resurrection cannot be omitted in a description of the final bearer of the original revelation or whether the death *as such* (completed of course in the resurrection) has an essential and irreplaceable significance for the establishment of this unsurpassability of Christian revelation.

[136] It is the latter explanation which is upheld in the thesis we are attempting to put forward and substantiate here. The thesis might also be formulated in this way: it is only by the cross of Jesus as such that the unsurpassability of Christian revelation can be and is established; the theology of the cross is an internal constituent of the doctrine of the unsurpassability of the Christian revelation as one and whole. That of course does not mean at all that the theology of the cross is exhausted in this function. What we are saying is that in the reality of man presented in this revelation and in the continuing course of history, the 'end' of a revelation history can come only in the death of the person who is revelation bearer and revelation event in one. The theology of the cross has this aspect and this function, even though it does not come to an end there.

Let us look more closely at what has been said. If history as history of man's freedom is to continue and to persist as salvation history, and thus in a broad sense (that is, implying also the history of faith) as revelation history (since otherwise the history of man as a *whole* in *all* his dimensions would not continue), then the 'conclusive' and 'unsurpassable' character of a revelation event in the continuing course of history can only consist in the historical manifestation of the absolute self-promise of God as such and in fact as the goal of this history itself. Any other 'word' of God that, being finite, is not himself, could essentially be only provisional, leaving the way open for further new words of God, replacing (or perhaps, in the Hegelian sense of *aufheben*, 'canceling and preserving') the earlier word. Otherwise such a word with its finite content would have to be understood as linked with a merely declaratory explanation that it is final because of God's arbitrary decision, even though in principle there could certainly be further new words of revelation. But anything of this kind would not only deny the openness of man's history as he understands it today, but would also in the last resort debase revelation to the state of a now incredible mythologem, would postulate an arbitrary God who would suddenly cease to be a partner in the history in which he had previously become involved. It might also be said, if the terminology is approved, that a *prophetic* word of revelation is always and essentially provisional; the *eschatological* word of revelation can consist only in God's self-promise as the absolute future of the world, leaving open here the question of whether also every prophetic word – if it is to be a personal word of [137] a 'supernatural' character – must carry with it a reference to the future and openness *toward* God's eschatological word, in order to be really God's genuine word of revelation in the Christian sense at all. The (sole) eschatological word of God's self-promise as such, as the absolute goal of history, as the absolute future, implies a further peculiarity which needs to be considered.

God does not offer this eschatological word of his merely as the supreme and unsurpassable opportunity for man's freedom and his history in freedom, leaving open the question of *how* the history of freedom of mankind as a whole will react to the opportunity thus offered. It is God's offer as such – an *opportunity* that alone establishes the history of mankind's freedom as it is in fact, as a whole and always and everywhere, not as an individual event in the history of revelation by which the latter enters into an unsurpassable,

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an eschatological phase. The eschatological word of God's self-promise to the world must be the irreversible triumph of this offer of God of himself to the world, must in a sense be the proclamation, not merely of sufficient grace, but also of efficacious grace, for the world and its history as a whole, even though of course (as the doctrine of the co-existence of efficacious grace from God and of man's freedom implies) the freedom of the history of humanity is not nullified and the proclamation of the victory of God's offer of himself does not involve a theoretical statement by God in favour of the *individual* in regard to the latter's destiny in this history. In the eschatological word God promises himself to the world, not merely as its final and unsurpassable opportunity, but as his own effective fulfillment of this opportunity. This, I think, is also the meaning of Jesus' message that in him a victorious immediacy of God's kingdom is present, as it had not formerly been present and consequently cannot consist solely in the opportunity already existing, albeit through grace, of freedom to decide for God.

How then are we to think concretely of this one eschatological and unsurpassable word of revelation? For the sake of simplicity we assume here that 'this plan of revelation is realized by deeds (*gestis*) and words having an inner unity', as *Dei Verbum* (no. 2) of the Second Vatican Council states. We also assume that the history of humanity has from God and in itself a unity and solidarity of its events among themselves of such a kind that a single event in the course of that history has some meaning and also 'speaks' for all the [138] rest. In the light of these assumptions, we are faced with the question of how God's eschatological word of the irreversible victoriousness of God's promise is to be conceived, if this victorious self-promise of God is to appear historically and in fact in the still continuing course of history? Allowing for these assumptions, we may say somewhat briefly that God's self-promise, if it is to be not merely words but also deeds, can be granted only in a person who has accepted this self-promise freely and definitively. Only in this way can the victoriousness of God's self-promise be seen, can be deeds and not merely words. In addition of course it is necessary for the free and definitive acceptance of this self-promise of God by a human being to become historically perceptible for us.

Before we go on from this point, if our train of thought is to be protected against misunderstandings and any suspicion of heresy, an incidental remark is necessary. It cannot be our task here to work out a Christology uniformly in all its aspects: that is, to show that the bringer of absolute salvation – the reality and the bearer of the absolute, irreversible, and victorious self-promise of God to the world in historical perceptibility – is necessarily the person described in the classical Christology of the hypostatic union. All that is important for us in regard to this question is that this historically manifested self-promise of God to the world (if it is to be eschatological, not merely an offer but the victoriously prevailing offer of God by God himself) must necessarily occur in a person who freely and definitively accepts this self-promise. And this acceptance as definitive must be made historically perceptible for us.

To me all this seems really obvious. A mere word, in which a self-promise of God was thought to be taking place, would in fact be a mere offer to the addressee of this word, an offer to man's freedom; it would then be an offer whose definitive acceptance was still uncertain. If it is said that this word of God assures us also that it is actually accepted and prevails, we may still ask when this acceptance in fact takes place, whether it has already happened or is still to come in the course of history, whether as past or future (if it is not itself the salvation of the world as a whole and thus the end of history) this acceptance occurs in such a way that the blessed outcome of history as a whole is irreversibly decided by a single event in that history. The word of God as such, that guarantees God eschatologically as the actually victorious end of history, must then [139] necessarily occur through an historical event, an event that can occur only in the factual and definitive acceptance of this offer by

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God of himself to the world by a person who of course must be seen as so constituted that *his* acceptance of this self-offering in obedient and increasingly definitive freedom guarantees the salvation of the world as a whole. This might be the starting point for the classical Christology of the hypostatic union, which however would have to be completed in greater detail and more precisely by a theology in which the solidarity of this God-man with all humanity and its history would need to be brought out.

Here, however, only one question remains: how are we to conceive more exactly and concretely this free and definitive acceptance of God's offer of himself as the absolute future of all history, the acceptance by which alone God's offer becomes the eschatologically definitive word of God to humanity? To which the answer must be that this free and definitive acceptance of God's offer of himself, which makes God's word to the world eschatological and predestines world history to salvation, can come about only by the *death* of the person who freely accepts that offer: a death of course which must be seen as redeemed and more palpably as redeemed, that is, taken together with what we describe as the resurrection of Jesus. In this sense the *death* of Jesus is an internal constitutive element of God's eschatological self-promise to the world.

It is of course impossible here to work out a detailed and precise theology of death in general, which was presupposed to the basic thesis, above-stated, of our reflections. In this connection we must refer to other studies of the theology of death in general. But here it is sufficient to say that death (which is something that goes on throughout the whole of life to its very end) understood in wholly human and theological terms, is not a merely biological occurrence at the end, a medical exitus, but a self-realization of creaturely human freedom in which man faces God and disposes of himself completely and finally for or against God: this he does in that final state of creaturely powerlessness that reaches its uttermost realization and manifestation in what we commonly experience as death. For the Christian understanding of freedom, the one act of freedom that centres on finality in a human life takes place in the course of actually dying and not independently of this, even though, as far as our experience goes, the act of freedom of the one life definitively [140] disposing of the person cannot necessarily be chronologically localized at the very moment of its medico-biological termination. For Christian anthropology a definitive self-realization of freedom is inconceivable either as happening independently of death somewhere within the ordinary course of life (in a mystical act, for instance, not continued into death) or as occurring only after death. At the same time the concrete way in which a person dies is in principle irrelevant. But the acceptance of the concrete way in which ultimately death uncontrollably occurs is also part of the successful definitive act of freedom that we describe as death. And a theologian should not be forbidden (if, indeed, he is not required) to consider why and how the concreteness of Jesus' death (its violence in the conflict with the political and religious authorities, the extreme God-forsakenness of this death, etc.) is also essential and significant for the salvific import of this death for Jesus himself and even more for us. But even then the decisive factor is that death, for Jesus also, must be understood fundamentally as the act of supreme freedom in absolute powerlessness, centred at the same time on finality.

If then the final and definitive acceptance of God's offer of himself is supposed to take place in Jesus and he is thus to be the eschatologically victorious word of God to the world, this can come about only in and through his death. Of course the successful achievement of this acceptance in the powerlessness of death must also become perceptible for us in faith; in other words, it must be seen together with his resurrection.

The death of Jesus and consequently his passion as a whole is a necessary constitutive element in the eschatological word of God's self-promise to the world as its absolute future. If, as we said earlier, this word of God and this alone is unsurpassable, if this word and this word alone is the now the unsurpassable revelation of God which reaches its close by itself

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opening up the infinite incomprehensibility of God as such and makes possible and authorizes by this very fact a still continuing history (since the latter now has an infinite goal as victoriously prevailing), then it can and must be said that the death of Jesus is this disclosing closure of revelation and without that death the closure is quite impossible. While textbook theology usually says that revelation was closed with the death of the last apostle, it would be better and more exact to say that revelation closed with the achievement of the death of Jesus, crucified and [141] risen, that is, with the cross, since God himself promised himself irrevocably there to history and God can add nothing more to this final word of God, even though within this final word history also continues as God's revelation – the history that we usually describe as history of the Church and history of faith, which is the history of this final word of God and thus, rightly understood, can also continue to be described as history of revelation.

If the cross as Jesus' death achieved to the point of resurrection must be described as the end of the history of revelation, this is not to deny, but implicitly to assert, that in this cross as the victory of God's offer of himself to the world, the Church, too, of course is established as the historical and (as public) institutional palpability of faith in the crucified and risen Christ, a faith without which God's self-promise to the world in Jesus would not be victorious at all. Today also then it may be said that public Christian revelation was completed with the end of the apostolic age, assuming that this 'completedness' is rightly understood and that this apostolic age is seen as centred in the cross of Christ as such, the cross that is not merely one of the events within this phase but also its gnoseological axis. In the cross of Jesus the transcendental and historical dimensions of man are definitively and irrevocably reconciled; man's absolute dependence on the self-bestowing mystery of God becomes an historical event, realized in fact in the death achieved there as such, and otherwise impossible. That man's transcendence toward God in his immediacy is really finally achieved through God himself and carries the person away beyond all detailed and provisional classifications: this is the substance of the Christian revelation that became an event in the cross of Jesus and was made evident there. And for that reason the cross is the completion of Christian revelation.

We can look at what has been said from a somewhat different standpoint and thus examine again expressly the problems with which these reflections opened. I mean the problems arising from the contrast between the modern mentality of an absolute will for a boundless future on the one hand and the doctrine on the other hand of the completedness of public revelation, which is nevertheless the ultimate content of history itself. As we said, these are problems which cannot be treated comprehensively or adequately here. But if it is the will of modern man not merely to exist like his ancestors as [142] the same person, even though under somewhat different conditions, but also in creative freedom to establish really new futures (individually and collectively, while embracing these two dimensions), then this will of man today is nevertheless continually repudiated and foiled by death, which, by its very contradiction to what is up to a point a new will of man, acquires a new distinctive character and radicalness. This fatal contradiction between man's absolute will for boundless freedom and the death to which he is doomed becomes obvious, even though it is suppressed in all the ideologies of our time and is not compensated for the individual in his own existence by thinking of the succession of the generations of those doomed to death as continuing indefinitely. The fatal contradiction does not become acceptable when understood as continuing for ever and when each generation is seen to be merely the pedestal on which the statue of victory is erected by the next generation, a generation that likewise perishes with its victory.

Each person has a responsibility, not only for those who are to come, but also for the dead who went before; not only for his own life, but also for his own death. If it is not to lie, the modern mentality of an absolute will for the future must therefore recognize the fact that it is

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foiled by death. If then it is possible at all to conceive and hope for a vindication of the intersection of all history by death, it can lie only in the fact that death itself is not the nullifying end of history, but the event in which history is dissolved by God's own act into the infinite freedom of God. That death can be this event, that it has already been achieved as such and as such is promised also in regard to our own death: this the faith of the Christian learns at the cross of Jesus.

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[143]

9

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TODAY TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST?

In regard to this theme I think it is appropriate to begin with some preliminary observations.

First, it is obviously impossible to provide anything like an exhaustive treatment of the theme. It is a theme that aims at Christianity in its wholeness and in its essence, at the totality of human and Christian existence with its unfathomable mystery and with all its dimensions. The theme is concerned especially with the Christology which has been believed, lived, prayed, and sustained for two thousand years, which the best minds of Western history have considered over and over again; it is a theme that really presupposes an entire anthropology and theology, that as such demands the most detailed knowledge of biblical studies and of the history of dogma; it needs to be considered in the light of the present situation of our own time and of the world in which we live. In view of all this, it is obviously impossible to do more in regard to the theme than to put forward a few observations which are inevitably arbitrarily chosen and thus carry with them the danger that precisely what is left unsaid might have been more helpful to the reader than what is actually said.

Second, it is a theme that would fail from the very outset to cover its subject matter if it did not invoke the one whole and mysterious existence of man, if it were understood as one particular object of man's questioning curiosity among countless other equally important objects of his questioning and searching. It can be treated only if the whole person with his ultimate mystery, which is called God, is actively involved, the one human being with his question of salvation [144] and concern for salvation, which he mostly suppresses or leaves aside in the banal variety of his life. Only when the one whole person in his free responsibility for himself as one and whole becomes aware of himself can Christology be properly pursued, since it is meant to be the answer to the one and entire question of human existence. This does not mean that we are concerned here with directly meditative or edifying talking or preaching, that we are to spare ourselves entirely the exertion of conceptual speaking. But what must be clear from the very beginning is the approach to be made by the reader in order to understand these reflections: the approach of a conscious and free responsibility for his existence as one and whole.

Third, access to a modern Christology might be found in a variety of ways. It would be possible to begin with a theology of love of neighbour, with a theology of death, with a theology of the future, and from one of these starting points (which presumably might be still further increased) to show that they lead to a questioning and questing Christology which finds its own answer in the Church's profession of faith in Jesus Christ as the unsurpassable and victorious word of promise of God to man, in which God makes his own self-promise to the world historically tangible and irreversible. By following more explicitly such ways of access to Christology it would certainly be possible to make clearer how today in particular an assent of faith to the Christology of Christianity can be justified. But we must necessarily simplify the matter a little more and, as far as possible, see together the different and as such to be differentiated ways of access to a modern Christology.

Fourth, it cannot be our task in these reflections to present the Church's official Christology as such in its fullness and differentiation in terms of academic theology or even merely in the conventional catechetical form. All that is possible here is to attempt to suggest to a modern person a starting point for such a Christology. The fact that the Church's Christology provides a starting point of this kind, if its content is unfolded and taken seriously, is something that can at best be merely indicated here with the assurance that it is possible to

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find in this very starting point what the official teaching of Catholic Christianity states about Jesus. Consequently, we do not say right from the beginning that Jesus is God, that Jesus is the Word of the eternal God made flesh who existed from all eternity with the [145] Father; we are not speaking from the very beginning about the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the divine Logos; we are not starting out from the Christological formulations of the New Testament in Paul and John which themselves represent a highly developed reflection in faith; we are not assuming the impossibility of going behind such a 'late' New Testament Christology to ask about a more original and somewhat more simple experience of faith with the historical Jesus, in his message, his death, and his achieved finality that we describe as his resurrection; we do not think that it must be *a priori* certain and obvious that the orthodox faith in Jesus as the Christ can be expressed only in *those* formulations which have been adopted in the classical Christology of the Western Church, even though they retain a normative significance for our faith for us today and in the future. What is meant by this fourth preliminary observation cannot be explained more precisely here, but it may perhaps be deduced from what is now to be said.

We begin with a reflection that might perhaps be called questing Christology. What is meant by this? Freely tending toward finality, man has to be concerned with himself as one and whole. Admittedly, he can permit himself to be driven through the diversity of his life, occupied now with one, now with another, detail of his life and its possibilities. But he is expected to have in mind and to be responsible in freedom for the oneness and wholeness of his existence; he has to be concerned with *himself*, with his 'salvation'. If he does this, he will find himself in a peculiarly and fundamentally embarrassing situation. Since it is a question of the totality of his existence, it seems that here this very totality alone as one and whole can be important for salvation, it seems that no particularity of his life, of his individual and collective history, can from the outset, from the nature of the case, be crucial for this one and whole. It seems therefore that, however much in other respects he remains unquestionably an historical being, in the question of his salvation man must become unhistorical.

He may attempt in a variety of ways to place the one totality of his existence before himself, regardless of history: becoming aware of himself in a mystical experience in the depths of his being, seeking salvation in the contemplation of this totality; trying to grasp in a metaphysical upswing the eternal truth that hovers constantly over [146] history and assures him of his everlasting nature beyond the many-coloured variety of his history; seeking his real truth, while exposing in a spirit of sceptical resignation all truths as historically and sociologically conditioned. But all this is irrelevant in the last resort, since in all these and other conceivable ways the person thinks he can find himself as one and whole only outside his authentic historical existence; history as such seems to be beyond salvation, merely the outward show that disguises man's true nature in a thousand empty appearances.

If however a person is sure that he can also achieve and experience his salvation only in his history (since he becomes aware of himself and realizes his freedom in contact with his contemporaries and his environment, that is, in history, and cannot even in metaphysics or mysticism really step out of his history), he looks for another human being in whom, by God's free power of course, such salvation has really been achieved and as achieved becomes perceptible to him, in whom then, because of his solidarity with him, for himself, too, not only the abstract possibility of salvation, but salvation also as promise for his hope, becomes concretely apparent. The person who really seeks his salvation and knows that he is responsible for it in his freedom looks in the history of the one humanity to which he belongs for a human being in whom this salvation has not only occurred as promise to himself, but also becomes *tangible* as victoriously achieved by God's power and permits him to hope for it concretely as more than a merely abstract possibility for himself. Whether such an achieved and thus also experienced salvation event is merely *sought* in history or is already actually

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found there, is not a question that need be considered at this stage in our reflections.

The person at least sought in this way we may call the absolute salvation bringer (although our reflections on this point must be somewhat hasty and spasmodic), since, as we said, it is a question, not merely of the fate of an existing individual solely for his own sake, but of one that promises salvation as a firm hope for *us* and assures us effectively by God's grace of *our* salvation. This of course assumes that the person who is sought and who has reached salvation exists in an absolute solidarity with us and that we can offer and do actually offer to him the same solidarity. In our human situation as it is in fact, this salvation achieved in the persons sought cannot be understood as occurring otherwise than by death, since it [147] is only there that history is completed, freedom becomes definitive, man surrenders himself freely and finally to the mystery of God and thus man's transcendence into God's incomprehensibility and his history reach their definitive unity. But since it is meant to be the effective promise of salvation for us, God's gift of himself to us and not merely the individually isolated fate of this person, this death rescuing the person for salvation, as achieved and saved for us into God, even though in an absolutely once-and-for-all experience, must also become tangible: that is, the death of this person must be capable of being understood as passing into what we describe in traditional Christian terminology as the resurrection of this person. This also implies of course that this person (still being sought) in his life and his self-understanding was such and is historically grasped by us as such that we can believe seriously in this life as redeemed, in his 'resurrection'. But, on these assumptions, such a person, hitherto to some extent projected *a priori* by our question about salvation, can certainly be understood and described as absolute salvation bringer. Seen merely as such a person, he is not himself salvation, for, in view of man's boundless transcendentality beyond any particular good and in view of this transcendence as radicalized by what we describe as grace, this salvation can only be God himself and can be given immediacy and finality only by the self-communication of this God. But this person who is sought is the absolute salvation bringer insofar as his consummation occurring through death and resurrection in the power of God in solidarity with us is for us the irrevocable sign that God has promised himself as the consummation of our salvation.

As we said at the very beginning, we cannot attempt also here to prove expressly and in detail that what is meant, at least implicitly, by the absolute salvation bringer thus depicted and sought is the same as what the classical Christology of the Church means and teaches in talking about incarnation, hypostatic union, God's eternal Word becoming man in the unity of one person and in the unconfused duality of a human and divine reality. But we think that this proof is possible in principle and we presuppose it here as possible and practicable. When *in* the redeemed destiny of one human being and in that destiny experienced *as* redeemed a person grasps God's promise of salvation to himself, he is practising Christology explicitly or implicitly; if in his history he seeks such a human being, he is [148] practising questing Christology explicitly or implicitly. And, since a person can really only culpably suppress the question of his own salvation, such an explicitly or implicitly realized questing Christology involves in every human being today also the presence in transcendence and grace of the prerequisite that he is seeking and will eventually find his own private Christology. The fact is that we do not have to regard classical Christology today merely as an odd and no longer realizable piece of mythology.

It is now time for us to pass from a questing Christology seeking to discover the absolute salvation bringer in history to a Christology which has actually found this salvation bringer in history. In this conviction of having found him lies the real core, the substance, of Christianity. This ecclesial Christianity declares that we have found this absolute salvation bringer in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, the Son of God purely and simply.

Have we any reason or right to say this even today? Of course, seen merely from the

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standpoint of the human being, the statement that Jesus of Nazareth in particular is the salvation event achieved and known in faith as achieved, that he is the absolute salvation bringer who guarantees for us in history the concrete hope of our salvation, is a statement loaded with all the difficulties (uniqueness, historical distance, unrepeatability) which are involved in any statement about an historical event. But, for a person who learns in his own individual history that his concrete existence rests not solely on scientifically verifiable propositions, but more crucially on historically unique experiences, despite their permanent uncertainty, for a person who learns that he must stake and does stake always inescapably his existence on such historical experiences (even if it is only an absolute trust in the love of a neighbour), it is impossible to evade the historical experience of this Jesus by adopting a superficially sceptical attitude and claiming that in the last resort everything in history remains obscure, uncertain and ambiguous. He knows that he must transcend the uncertainty of his historical experiences inevitably and courageously in fundamental decisions in regard to other human beings. Why then should this riot be possible and legitimate also in regard to Jesus?

In the first place it cannot be maintained that we know nothing with adequate certainty today about the historical Jesus, or at any rate nothing that is relevant to faith or theology. It is true that [149] historico-critical exegesis has shown that even in the earliest New Testament writings about Jesus we are dealing with testimonies of *faith* in him as the Christ and not merely historically neutral accounts of his earthly life; it is true that modern biblical theology reveals a history of a great and dramatic development, even within the New Testament, between the preaching of the historical Jesus on the imminent approach of the kingdom of God and the self-understanding of Jesus implied in this on the one hand, and on the other hand a highly developed Christology in Paul and in John's Gospel, which as a whole borders closely on the classical Christology of the Church. But none of this (which is common property, not only of Protestant theology, but also after some delay of Catholic exegesis and theology) means that today we know of the historical Jesus nothing relevant for our Christology or that the legitimacy of the history of faith from Jesus' historical self-understanding to the Christology in Paul and John and to the Christology of the Church cannot be explained, at any rate if Easter is taken into account. The historically still perceptible proclamation of Jesus and his self-understanding implied there have also a peculiar character and unsurpassability, an incomparability, which permit us to say that in him God's self-promise as our salvation became event historically in a matchless and irreversible way and was then finally sealed by his redeemed death, that in his proclamation and his death Jesus thus became God's definitive word to us in history.

We cannot explain this precisely in detail here or (as we said) still less here and now develop explicitly from this starting point the classical Christology of Scripture and the Church, which is implied in the self-understanding of the historical Jesus. Here we need only say that Jesus does not merely proclaim a liberating image of God as the Father, before whom all – even sinners and the socially and politically downgraded – are equal, a God who forgives and liberates, whose grace reaches and relieves all apparently hopeless human situations. Jesus does all this and, even if there were nothing else, in its purity and absoluteness it would certainly not be negligible. But if this were all that Jesus' proclamation contained, it might be asked whether this liberating knowledge of God as Father could not be gained even without Jesus, whether it really goes essentially beyond the greatest heights of prophetic piety in the Old Testament, whether it could not be grasped in hope even without Jesus and [150] whether therefore in the last resort it could be detached from Jesus and in particular from his proclamation. We need not answer these questions here and now. For Jesus did in fact proclaim more than this, wonderful as it may be on its own account and however much it is experienced as liberating and gladdening today in modern 'Jesus movements' of liberty and

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fraternity, of unselfish love between human beings. Regarded simply as a matter of historical fact, Jesus had a more radical message which cannot be separated from his person or eliminated from his proclamation.

His proclamation speaks of a new turning of God to man in a form hitherto unknown, a new coming of the kingdom of God, since this coming does not represent merely an *offer* to man's historical freedom, for which it remains open whether and how it will react by assent or refusal in regard in this offer by God of himself, thus leaving open once more the history of this divine offer by God of himself. Jesus proclaims that this offer by God of himself as salvation and not judgment of humanity on God's side and by his power is irreversibly victorious and as irreversibly victorious becomes historically tangible in him, in his proclamation and then finally in his redeemed death, even though the individual human being is not released by the reality and tangibility of God's victory in the history of humanity from the responsibility of his individual freedom, but can grasp for himself this victory of God only in hope.

It may be asked how the man Jesus can be aware of this actual victory of God in his unreconciled and sinful world as present with himself and his message, how he can know that God's offer of himself not only offers man his last opportunity to find God in immediacy, but itself effects the victory of this offer. The answer can only be that on the one hand Jesus is aware of being in an ineffable and indissoluble unity with his God and sustains this in absolute fidelity through all the disasters of his life up to the point of death and on the other hand Jesus has such an absolute solidarity of love for all men that he does not even consider the dilemma of taking the side either of God or of men, but grasps his own salvation as that of humanity. Of course, from Jesus' standpoint it can be said that this salvific will of God was at work creating not only the possibility but unreservedly the reality throughout the entire length and breath of the history of humanity. But it is only when we look towards Jesus in faith that we can say that he is not merely the offer of the opportunity [151] but the reality becoming effective of itself, that as such he became irreversible in his own history and as such historically tangible. This however is essentially what Jesus said in his messages, about the new and final coming of God's kingdom in that very message which cannot be separated from his person, and this was definitively sealed in his redeemed death. Thus he is the new, invincible, and unsurpassable word of God's promise to us, even though history goes on and what is established in Jesus' message and fate must still be filled out and continue to appear in the whole course of the history of humanity right to its end.

At this point in our reflections we must speak more explicitly about a matter on which we have touched several times: the resurrection of Jesus, which is the historical seal and manifestation of what is involved in the person and message of Jesus, the historically apparent victory of God's self-promise to humanity. We can grasp in faith what is meant by the resurrection of Jesus only if we keep in mind four factors in their indissoluble unity.

First, we must have a correct understanding of what is meant by resurrection. It amounts to a statement about the person as one and whole; it means the definitive redeemed state of the person and the history of a human being with God; it does not mean a return to our spatio-temporal biological life, it is not a raising of the dead in the form of a return to the bodily existence of the present time as described elsewhere in the New Testament and in the history of the saints; our experience of it, gained through the witnesses of the resurrection, has an absolute singularity which in the last resort cannot be compared with other experiences and consequently is 'historical' in a special way; it is historical because and insofar as in it there is experienced the definitive redemption of a history for its elevation.

Second, man can gain such an experience of a unique character only when and insofar as he brings to it his own hope for *himself* that his own existence will be definitively revealed. If this does not happen, there is nothing for a person to do except to adopt a sceptical attitude

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toward the account of the resurrection of Jesus and to leave it aside as something belonging to an inexplicable past that really does not concern him at all. But a person can have his own hope of resurrection without destroying himself, and may not (for himself and also in solidarity with the dead) simply permit human existence [152] and history to sink into the empty nothingness of merely having been. Wherever there is real hoping and loving there is faith in one's own resurrection (which need not necessarily be localized at a 'later' point of time in the remote future), even when a person with this hope and love lacks the ability or courage verbally to thematicize and objectify the hope of resurrection implicit in the mere continuance of his existence. But if a person boldly admits his own hope of resurrection, if he sees himself as the one who is called into the definitiveness of his existence, if he encounters *in this way* the message of the resurrection of Jesus and in view of the claim of the life and death of Jesus in absolute love for God and men, then he knows that he is justified in grasping by faith the resurrection of this Jesus. He is faced with the question whether he would not be denying his own hope of resurrection in a final culpable despair if, in view of *this* life and this death of this Jesus, he did not find the courage to believe that the latter is the definitively redeemed, the Risen One.

Third, this hope of ours of our own resurrection and the encounter with the claim that Jesus' fate makes on us then encounter the disciples' message of his resurrection and the faith of two thousand years of the history of hope of Christendom, and we are faced with the question of whether we can rightly refuse our assent to this message and this faith merely because what is definitive and inconceivable extending to the incomprehensibility of God must be believed. Jesus' disciples attest an Easter experience: 'The Lord is truly risen.' For the reason already given, it is only with difficulty that we can elucidate for ourselves the peculiar character of this experience and distinguish it from apparently similar visionary and mystical phenomena, which cannot in the last resort be compared with this resurrection experience. The individual appearance of the risen Jesus, described in the New Testament accounts which cannot in the last resort be harmonized, may certainly be regarded as vividly arranged presentations and in a variety of ways as already current interpretations of the original and authentic resurrection experience of the first disciples. But this by no means disposes of the experience itself; it was perceived and attested to by men plunged into despair by the sight of the disaster of Jesus' life and in no way inclined to believe anything of this kind, men who were certainly in a position and qualified to distinguish this experience from apparently similar visionary and hallucinatory phenomena with which they [153] were familiar. What reason could we have for not believing their testimony, assuming of course that in the absolute hope of our own existence there is an implicit yearning for our own resurrection and that we face the claim of the life and death of Jesus and are not prepared to permit this unique life of unconditional love to sink into an absolute emptiness of merely having been? Certainly we must be aware of our solidarity with the dead and not simply dismiss them as those who have been, who are good for nothing else except to make possible our own history.

Fourth, if our own transcendence to God's immediacy in freedom is alive in what we describe as grace, if it is realized and becomes explicit in history and in the encounter with history, if with our questing Christology we encounter Jesus of Nazareth, then we certainly have the opportunity for our own experience of the Risen One, even though that experience is not entirely independent of the testimony of the first disciples. The experience of our transcendence toward the immediacy of God in history here reaches its unique pinnacle. In grace we experience an ultimate freedom over all powers and forces of history, of law, of sin, of the tyranny of all human relativities; this experience seeks its tangibility and sealing in history; this experience comes in the Easter testimony of the disciples and the Church to Jesus, finds in him the seal being sought and finds it precisely in *this* Risen One, if only

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because such an offer never took place elsewhere in the religious history of humanity. Experience of freedom in immediacy to God and encounter with this risen one come together in an indissoluble unity and are mutually dependent; we hope absolutely for ourselves, since we encounter this redeemed fate of Jesus as the unsurpassable word of God to us, and we believe in the resurrection, since for ourselves in ultimate freedom we hope for everything, for God in himself. And this unity of experience in mind and history at the same time is certainly an experience of the Risen One in ourselves, even though we can describe it according to the testimony of the first disciples and the Church only with the name of Jesus and this experience would otherwise to some extent remain anonymous.

If the four factors mentioned are clear and seen in faith and hope in their unity, even today we can and may believe in the resurrection of Jesus without on that account getting the impression of being lost in a mythological interpretation of a banal past where in the last [154] resort nothing happened except utopian hope, which perished in a cruel and final emptiness. The Christian has the courage to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, since he seizes on it in a responsibility for the ultimate import of his own existence and ventures hopefully to believe in his own redeemed history.

With these aphoristic observations on our general theme, which leave out and are bound to leave out many important questions (since there is no other way), we may at least draw attention to one particular theme within the whole: to the personal relationship of the individual Christian to Jesus. As risen and exalted, Jesus may, or should at least, not be a mere symbol for a personal relationship of the Christian to the eternal God; particularly as exalted, Jesus should not simply vanish into the nameless mystery that ineffably and incomprehensibly rules over our existence and is called God. He, the person redeemed, with his concrete fate now become definitive, is the guarantor that we can reach God himself in the fullness of his life and his freedom, in his blessed light and his love. But for that very reason this guarantor is eternally effective, the permanent intermediary to the immediacy of God in himself, and consequently as Christians we should have a personal relationship of hope, trust, and love, to this redeemed Jesus in the uniqueness of his human reality. This is something that is possible, something that should be developed and cultivated by Christians.

Why should it not be possible? Even in our own hope of resurrection, in which we anticipate hopefully the redeemed finality of our person and our history, we include the hope that there are such human beings who are redeemed and have become definitive. We have no right to shut out from our world simply and entirely the dead of history and those who have passed from our own circle into the silent eternity of God, those with whom we were united in fidelity and love, and to behave as if they had nothing more to do with us. We shall of course not attempt to set up a relationship with these dead who still live, to get into contact with them with the aid of parapsychology or spiritualism; the Old Testament itself rejected such conjuring up of the dead and practices of this kind are offensive to the majesty of God and to the mysterious redeemed and definitive state of the dead that is beyond our control. But this does not mean that, as Christians who acknowledge the communion of saints in our creed, we could simply abandon our loving fellowship with the dead [155] and behave as if in themselves or at least for us they were no longer living. And if perhaps we did that and allowed the Church's commemoration of all its departed members to be for us an empty ritual, this would not mean that we were acting rightly, but would only show up the incompleteness and partial emptiness of our own existence. But if all this is correct in general, it is true particularly of the relationship that we can have and should have to the living Jesus.

He – the person redeemed in a unique way as guarantor of our own existence – lives in himself and for us. We can hope in him, love him, call to him, we can build on his love and fidelity to us, meditating on his earthly life and death, we can be assured by faith that this

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life's fate is redeemed and deposited for us with God as the eternal guarantee of our own hope. In his Spirit we can learn that he loves us, each of us in a unique way, that we love him, each of us also in a unique way that is part of the uniqueness of every human existence and history. In such love for the concrete Jesus in God's eternity there occurs the final reconciliation of time and eternity, of history and the preeminence of the eternal God over history. In and with Jesus we grasp the blessed inviolability of God in himself, since in him God gave himself to time and history with his infinity and freedom irrevocably for Jesus and in Jesus for us as our own. But in Jesus and in love for him we also grasp that he and we in him with our individuality and history will not be consumed and will not perish if we approach in immediacy the burning absoluteness of the eternal God, but in this very way will be those who are definitively redeemed and enduring. In him and with him we learn that God and world can exist together in blessed unity, without either one or the other having to perish. He, Jesus, is the unique and irrevocable seal of final reconciliation. Consequently, for the Christian, the loving, always unique relationship of the individual to Jesus is not something that must vanish in the presence of the silent and nameless incomprehensibility of God in immediacy, but is in fact an intrinsic, essential element of this immediacy to God by which it is established and confirmed that we shall remain at the very moment when God becomes all in all and history as redeemed reaches God.

If in faith, hope, and love, we enter into the fate of Jesus, into his unconditional love of neighbour and into his death, if we live with him and die with him in the empty darkness of his death, we shall grasp in his Spirit (in the Spirit that we know as his) that we really [156] can enter into contact with God himself beyond all secular reality, that we can fall into this God of incomprehensible judgments and ineffable mystery without perishing there, in order to find there our final and definitive reality. If we love Jesus, quite personally and directly, if in our love we allow his life and his fate to become the internal form and entelechy of our own life, then we learn that he is the way, the truth, and the life, that he leads us to the Father, that we may and can call the incomprehensible God Father despite his namelessness, that God's namelessness and pathlessness can be our own home, bringing us not extinction, but eternal life. We must love Jesus in the unconditional acceptance of his life's fate as our own norm of existence, in order to experience serenely and joyously our own existence as finally redeemed.

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10

FOLLOWING THE CRUCIFIED

The theme of these reflections is ‘following the Crucified’. First of all, two brief preliminary observations. Taking the theme as it stands, it would certainly be possible and indeed appropriate to deal with it expressly in the light of the New Testament. For it was in the New Testament and only there that the message of Jesus, as crucified, and of following him, was first given. But a really unobjectionable and exact exegetical treatment of the theme in the light of the New Testament would require more space than is available here and a professional skill that I do not possess. I hope then to be allowed to put forward a few reflections that come within the scope of systematic theology, even though they are bound to seem rather colourless and abstract and even though they are selected somewhat arbitrarily from the whole range of statements which systematic theology might make on the theme, although it must be admitted that systematic textbook theology has not hitherto been particularly interested in the question and that Christian spirituality (without avoiding or wanting to avoid the theme) very easily becomes a mere exercise in edification. The second preliminary observation is that these reflections are simply reflections and nothing more, not a sermon or a prophetic address seeking to rouse in the hearer that existential situation in which man stands before the Crucified and has to decide whether in his own life the message of the cross is accepted as God’s power and God’s wisdom or rejected with a shrug of the shoulders as folly. These reflections here and now cannot aspire to the function and dignity of such preaching of the cross. As compared with that preaching they remain both tentative and derivative. Moreover our reflections are secondary in the sense [158] that they cannot claim to be systematically constructed or comprehensive, nor will there be any attempt to conceal a certain unsystematic arbitrariness in the choice and sequence of the reflections.

In the exegesis and in the theory of Christian spirituality it is pointed out that ‘following’ and ‘imitation’ (despite the iridescent expression ‘imitation of Christ’ as used in traditional Christian spirituality) are not absolutely synonymous terms, that we must start out from the New Testament idea of following, even though Paul is aware also of the idea of imitation. Certainly we are not really expected to copy and reproduce the life of Jesus as such. We live in historical situations different from those in which Jesus himself lived, we have a different and always unique task which is not the same as that which confronted him in his own historically conditioned and restricted existence; he and we together form the one Christ of the one and unique total history of salvation, in which, for all our crucial dependence on him and on his historical existence in life and death, we do not reproduce him, but (as Paul says) complete his historical individual reality, to become the one Christ in head and members, who is identical with all redeemed humanity, hidden in God and belonging to God himself. In the light of all this, rightly understood, we could say that Christians are followers and not imitators of the Crucified. And yet this is still not the whole truth.

If we were to consider and realize only what has just been said, there would be a danger of turning the imperative of following Jesus in practice into abstract moral principles, perfectly clear in themselves, and reducing Jesus, his life, and his death, to a merely illustrative example of a moral precept which could exist independently of him. But following Jesus, his life, and him as crucified, is in the last resort something different from the realization of a universal ideal, perhaps realized particularly explicitly and purely in Jesus, but in fact simply as an ‘instance’ of a universal idea that in principle is independent of him. In his life and in his death there must be something that is unique and as such the content and norm of our

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following of Jesus, so that this following is itself authenticated as such by him and not because his life and death are in their turn authenticated by an ideal, a norm, claiming validity in themselves and independently of him.

If we keep this in mind and do not explain this unique following solely as being driven by his 'Spirit', regarded also as a suprahistorical [159] factor, it becomes understandable and in principle legitimate that the whole history of Christian piety should have brought an element of imitation of the concrete Jesus into his following, should have been oriented to his stay in the wilderness, his fasting, his nightly prayer, his concrete poverty, his renunciation of concrete power and so on, although it cannot be proved or can be proved only with difficulty that following Jesus, seen theoretically and practically, is not possible without these concrete ways of imitating him. This must be remembered when we are talking of the following of Jesus; this following must not *a priori* be absolutely opposed to the imitation of his concrete life, difficult as it may be to say and obscure as it may be in the meantime what exactly can and should be present concretely in the life of Jesus for this imitative following, which can be found in him alone and by which alone this imitative following can be authenticated. If in this question we were to appeal immediately and solely to a *disposition* in which we follow him and thus attempt to evade all questions about a concrete content of this imitative following, then the question would promptly have to be raised about what this disposition really consists in and why it cannot be made intelligible also without direct recourse to Jesus.

We are thus faced with an obscure problem, the difficulty of which becomes apparent in the whole history of Christian piety. In the earliest Christian times the devout person sought to imitate Jesus by following the example of the first witness, by martyrdom. But when martyrdom ceased to be possible, people imitated him in the wilderness, in nightly prayer, in poverty, in renunciation of marriage, but then became somewhat embarrassed when faced with the question of how *those* Christians were to follow Jesus who could not adopt these particular ways of following him, how this following is possible without having to appeal merely to a 'disposition', a following in the 'Spirit'. Today we might perhaps think that we can and must follow Jesus concretely by a solidarity with the poor and downgraded, by a critical attitude to institutionalizations asserted by power in society and Church, by courage for conflict with the powerful. In principle it is certainly possible in this way for what is up to a point a new form of imitative following of Jesus to enter into the Church's sense of faith and from that standpoint also to resist any retreat to a purely internal and private disposition in the following of Jesus. And, since we certainly ought to follow Jesus not only in [160] death but also in life, the emergence of such a new way of following him is certainly of the greatest importance, particularly since the established forms of this concrete following have hitherto been more or less identical with the ways of life of the religious orders, while the 'laity' found such a life-style alien and had no desire to regard themselves as belonging to the following of Jesus only insofar as they remotely or closely imitated the style and mentality of the religious life. But, even if all this is evident and must be regarded as important, the real question that faced us with reference to an imitative following, not to be reduced to a mere disposition, does not yet seem to be solved.

The preference which Jesus showed and lived out for the poor and downgraded in society and which certainly cannot be deduced from an abstract and universal morality, not even from Christian love of neighbour alone, does not present any style of following for the poor and downgraded themselves in society, unless it is to suggest that these poor and downgraded are to follow Jesus by bearing their lot patiently. This is a conclusion drawn only too often and too recklessly in the course of the history of Christianity; but it seems to make religion the opium of the people, it is highly problematic and fails to grasp the difference between voluntarily showing solidarity with the poor and downgraded as a supremely personal act and being caught up in poverty and distress in a way that simply cannot be completely

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transformed by concrete freedom alone. Moreover, the question will have to be left as it stands, without an absolutely positive answer, whether the preferential treatment of the poor and downgraded on the part of Jesus must be a crucial principle for the style of following on the part of *every* individual Christian or whether this must be said or perhaps desired seriously at most of the community of believers, of the Church as a whole.

This brings us to the question whether there cannot be a particular, concrete, in a sense imitative following of Jesus which must be neither attributed to an internal disposition alone nor merely regarded as taking individual forms and as changing at different periods of Christian history. If we are not to take refuge in an abstract moral idealism, it seems to us that this question can be answered only with the proposition: the Christian, every Christian at all times, follows Jesus by *dying* with him; following Jesus has its ultimate truth and reality and universality in the following of the Crucified. It [161] cannot, I think, be proved that there is any other concrete substance of that following which could hold for *all* Christians taken together and which remains concrete. Our reflections up to now on the following of Jesus thus lead naturally to the reflections on the following of Jesus precisely as crucified.

Before we continue here, there are still some things that must be noted or more clearly stated in advance if the thesis proposed is not to be misunderstood from the very outset. First of all, it is clear of course that the thesis may not be taken to imply a dispensation from following Jesus during life, from a following of his life and not merely of his death. But, if it is not located or diluted in a purely internal attitude or disposition, this following will be very different in the lives of individual Christians and can scarcely be reduced to a common denominator. A socio-critical courage and protest unto death can certainly be a following of Christ, without our having to be able to prove with speculative perspicacity that something of this kind could be found in some sort of homeopathic dilution also in other authentic Christian lives. Life in a Carthusian monastery can certainly be a following of Jesus and in fact also and particularly in what cannot be found in other Christian lives. Jesus' life is reflected diversely and fragmentarily in the lives of Christians. At the same time there is no need to discuss here the question (important for its own sake) whether and how in the life of human beings endowed with grace by the Spirit of God and Christ there can and must be realizations of faith, hope, and love, which as such cannot be found at all actualized in the historically restricted life of Jesus of Nazareth himself and yet are absolutely constitutive of the Christian life of these persons. (Jesus was in fact a man and not a woman, he could not have realized and experienced the burdens and tasks of old age, of a permanent invalid, of a scholar, and so on; and yet these burdens and tasks in their concreteness and not merely in a disposition – which can also be realized elsewhere and otherwise – are part of such Christian lives.) These Christian realities certainly belong to the totality willed by God of the one mystical Christ (with head and members) who is identical with redeemed humanity or the Church. But we shall not pursue further here the question of whether the acceptance of these realities by Christians, by which, according to Paul, they 'complete' Christ's life and suffering, is to be regarded as part of the following of the historical Jesus or not. In any case there [162] are ways of following Jesus which occur in the life of Christians and are not to be regarded as identical with one another, but as particular expressions of that following, which the Spirit of God assigns differently to individuals, as he wills.

There is a further preliminary observation to be made. When we say that the one following of Jesus *common to all* Christians consists particularly in following him in death, this of course does not merely refer to death solely in a medical sense. For death in the sense of dying begins at the very dawn of life, as existential pervades the whole of life in what Gregory the Great described as the *prolixitas mortis*. Consequently, the following of the Crucified as participation in his dying and death goes on of course throughout the whole of life. Christian tradition has always been aware of this in taking the following of Jesus by

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accepting his cross to mean also patience sustained by faith in the midst of suffering, in the inevitable disappointment and bitterness of life as long as it lasts. This must always remain clear now that we have to examine more closely the meaning of the following of the Crucified.

In what exactly does the following of the Crucified as participation in his death consist and why is this equality of fate, the solidarity of death, something in which we not only resemble him, but depend on him in the proper sense of the term (resemble him not only because like him we also die, but rightly die because we imitate him and by imitating him and inasmuch as his death is the imperatively productive model for our death)? This is evidently the question that faces us. A part of this question is of course, to be more precise, also the question of what is peculiar and unique about the death of Jesus, so that only in the imitation (possibly, of course, merely implicit) of his death can there be a true dying.

At first, the very opposite seems to be the case. Despite its extraordinary concrete peculiarities as a violent death, Jesus in his death shares the lot of all of us; in his death he seems to be following in the way of a dying humanity and not humanity following in his way. There is no need to insist at length that our following of Jesus in dying refers to death as such and not to an historically individual peculiarity of his death, which (at least normally) we cannot share at all. But in this respect is he not following us more than we follow him?

We may safely and must ask about the equality of his death and [163] ours, before we raise more explicitly the question why we are dependent on him in this respect – follow him, that is, in the proper sense – and we and he thus do not simply share as equals the same lot that is assigned to all of us. If we ask first of all only about the equality of our death and his, the question is also of course but by no means solely about death as a physiological event. But we are certainly asking too about this physiological event of a medical exitus, since man not only has a body, but also is body, the entire breadth and depth of human existence up to the most sublime actualizations of that existence is realized corporeally, in a true sense: that is, it is not the body that dies, but the person in his body. But this means that death in a human and Christian sense is thus essentially more than a mere medical exitus, in which the heart stops and the electrical brain currents cease. Death rightly understood is an event involving the whole person and might take place at that crucial point where the act of freedom is finalized, not by any means necessarily in the chronological moment of the medical exitus (even though this is a real factor in the finalization of man's history of freedom), but occurs in a true sense throughout the whole of life and reaches a climax at that moment not ascertainable by our reflection in which man's temporally extended history of freedom reaches its finality. But what does the person do when he thus brings his history of freedom to its finality and irreversibility in death, in what way ultimately and at the hidden core of existence does the one decision of freedom become irreversible, the decision which, although temporally extended, is achieved in the one life of man? We cannot answer the question here by developing precisely and at length an existential ontology and theology of death. It is possible to answer this question only briefly.

It is true that the individual decisions of freedom, which are integrated into the one life's decision, occur during life on a categorial individual material of our life presented to us from our milieu and environment. But these individual decisions are elements of the one life's decision only insofar as (over and above their finite and particular content, even though by their mediation) there occurs in them an assent or a refusal to that infinite horizon and objective of freedom which alone makes possible freedom in the proper sense in regard to the subject and its individual objects and in the final understanding is known as God. If and insofar as the decision of freedom [164] in regard to an individual categorial object of an intramundane character is also a transcending of this object, leaving it behind and in a sense renouncing it, and in this respect and in this way the infinite objective of freedom (called

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God) is recognized as such and thus as dissociated from the individual object, such a decision is right, affirms God himself as such, although this does not of course require the innermost structure of the true act of freedom to be present as such explicitly and objectified and verbalized. This innermost structure of every real decision of freedom, insofar as it is an internal factor in human death as an existential act, makes itself clearly felt in what we experience empirically as death. In death, empirically seen, the world withdraws from the subject of freedom, and even the latter is lost to itself. Everything perishes; it is, as Scripture says, the night in which no one can work.

How does the subject of freedom encounter this decline, in which it can cling to nothing individual and not even to itself in its explicit factuality? There are two ways in which the subject of freedom can accept this decline. Either the subject in the last resort culpably refuses to accept any freely bestowed love from another person, regarding itself as condemned to an absolute autonomy and autarchy as to absolute futility, against which only a radical protest is possible; or it accepts with resignation and hope this eclipse of all particular realities as the dawn and approach of that silent infinity into which each particular act of freedom has hitherto always risen above its individual object, in order in a sense to be lost into this merely apparently empty infinity. In the first case death is the event of final perdition, in the second the beginning of redeemed finality in God. It is impossible to explain more precisely here why and how this self-surrender to the loving incomprehensibility of God, in the decline of all particular objects of freedom occurring in death, involves what we describe in Christian terminology as the one triplicity of faith, hope, and love, which justifies us and brings us to final salvation, assuming of course (and this has to be assumed as a datum) that this self-surrender of the subject of freedom to the loving incomprehensibility of God, leaving behind and transcending everything individual, is sustained in the present and only real order of salvation by a self-communication of God (described as grace) always and everywhere forestalling our freedom, by which God himself radicalizes our self-surrender toward his immediacy and gives himself as response [165] to it. Nor can it be explained in more detail why and how this decline of all individual realities, making itself felt in empirical death, why and how this decline is initially present as an internal factor within every act of freedom in life and that it so happens that dying proceeds during the whole of life toward a death in which what is or (better) ought to be done in the whole history of freedom of a lifetime becomes apparent and reaches finality: the relinquishment that does not take or hold any particular good as absolute, but lets go of it, in order to entrust itself to the nameless incomprehensibility that we call God.

Perhaps we can now say a little more clearly in what the common feature in Jesus' death and ours consists, what we do when we follow him in his dying, even though this does not yet explain why in the death that we have in common he is the imperative, productive model, why our dying in the proper sense *depends* on his dying and is thus really a following of the Crucified. According to Scripture we may safely say that Jesus in his life was the *believer* (notwithstanding the traditional teaching that at the innermost centre of his existence he had an immediacy to God such as is given to us only in eternal life) and that he was consequently the one who hopes absolutely and in regard to God and men obviously the one who loves absolutely. In the unity of this triplicity of faith, hope, and love, Jesus surrendered himself in his death unconditionally to the absolute mystery that he called his Father, into whose hands he committed his existence, when in the night of his death and God-forsakenness he was deprived of everything that is otherwise regarded as the content of a human existence: life, honour, acceptance in earthly and religious fellowship, and so on. In the concreteness of his death it becomes only too clear that everything fell away from him, even the perceptible security of the closeness of God's love, and in this trackless dark there prevailed silently only the mystery that in itself and in its freedom has no name and to which he nevertheless calmly

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surrendered himself as to eternal love and not to the hell of futility. In that sense his death is the same as ours, even though the concrete circumstance of dying vary between a gruesome stake at which the cruel madness of human beings tortures another human being to death and a deathbed in a modern hospital where white uniformed doctors do everything possible to prevent the dying person from noticing the state he has reached. Whether we die in one way or [166] another can make a vast difference in many respects, so that we may rightly wish for an easy and gentle death. But in the last resort what happens in death is the same for all: we are deprived of everything, even of ourselves; we all fall, each of us alone, into the dark abyss where there are no further ways. And this death – which in the first place is simply ours – Jesus died; he who came out of God's glory did not merely descend into our human life, but also fell into the abyss of our death, and his dying began when he began to live and came to an end on the cross when he bowed his head and died.

Jesus died as we die. When we say this and visualize up to a point the content of the statement, what we see is Jesus following in our way and not ourselves in his. If and insofar as we continue always to see him as the eternal Word of God, who assumed our human reality, our life, and our death, as his own reality, the statement that Jesus died as we die can of course give ineffable dignity and eternal consolation for our own death. If we believe that our own human reality has been assumed by God, this is true also of course of our death. Since the eternal Logos of the Father suffered it as his own death, this death must be redeemed, sanctified, emptied of final despair and futility, filled with the eternal life of God himself. This can and must be said, if we assume what Christian faith professes about Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of the Father himself and if in the light of this faith we say that he died as we die, even though we shall not go on from this point to develop its implications for our own death as redeemed.

Can we now say however that we have answered the second question above-mentioned, the question of whether and in what sense we really *follow* in our dying the dying Jesus on the cross, so that Jesus' death truly becomes the productive model of our death, that our death is different from what it would be if we did not die precisely as following him. It would certainly be possible to work out an answer to this question by continuing from the point now reached in our reflections. It could be shown more explicitly how the assumption of our death by the eternal Logos as his own does not merely assimilate him to us, but also transforms our death. But we want to try to answer this second question in the light of a somewhat different consideration, since this makes it more simple and more tangible. Jesus died into his resurrection, his death is the event of gaining the finality of his human reality in the life of God himself. Of [167] course it is impossible here to work out a fundamental theology and dogmatic theology of the resurrection of Jesus. All that we can do is to bring out a few points that are particularly important for our question.

First of all, Jesus' resurrection is not merely an event that could not be expected, attached in a singular way to his death. It is the consequence of his death itself as such, if it is seen at the same time as the death of him in whom the eternal God imparts his own life to the world as its gracious endowment and as the event in which this Jesus accepts finally and irrevocably this self-communication of God through death. However the 'three days' between Jesus' death and the awareness of his resurrection are to be more precisely theologically interpreted, the idea of this temporal interval must not be allowed to obstruct our view of the intrinsic unity of the death and resurrection of Jesus. In his resurrection the very thing that happened in his death is completed and made effective: the incomprehensible God finally accepted this human reality as redeemed, precisely because the latter was surrendered unsupported and unreservedly into the incomprehensibility of God himself. We can really say that (in the sense of an indissoluble essential connection) his death is his resurrection and vice versa, since he entered into definitive life precisely in death and in no other way. But since this is

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true in the first place only of the only-begotten Son of the Father and in the radical sinlessness of his faith, hope, and love, as distinct from us sinners, his death, despite all its similarity to ours, is in itself quite different from the death that we for our own part and independently of following him can die and must die. If then his death is to become a real determinant of our own death and in that very peculiarity which as such distinguishes his death as death into resurrection from our death as penalty of sin, he must give us a share of his death. But this again implies two things: on the one hand his death must take place for us; he must die in a community of fate and in solidarity with us, and the Spirit of God, in whom he accepted his death purely and simply as the dawn of life, must be offered to us as the opportunity of a death with him. On the other hand, for our part, this opportunity of dying with him as a beginning of life must be accepted in freedom. Since both preconditions exist or can be realized in freedom, it is possible to die with him; the determinant of unity with the resurrection, essential to his death, can also as grace become a [168] determinant of our death, and this death of ours then has a peculiarity which is not merely (like the other determinants of death) common to his death and ours, but belongs to our death only in virtue of his, so that there is present that peculiarity by which a mere similarity between us and Jesus is turned into a real following. In faith in him and his grace our death is transformed from a manifestation of sinful God-forsakenness or an open question that is involved in the mysterious incomprehensibility of God into a death leading to the loving acceptance of our existence by God into his own life, a death into resurrection. There is still something explicitly to be added however to this consideration of the way in which the similarity of death with Jesus and with us becomes a real following of the Crucified in dying.

Our death and Jesus' death, even and more especially as resurrection, occur as a passing into the silent incomprehensibility and unavailability of God. It is for this reason that death is the supreme and most radical act of faith. The following of the Crucified as such is in itself a supreme act of faith, a surrender in hope and love to the incomprehensibility of God which completely takes away from us who are here the result of this act of death, as into a total extinction. We must say this in the first place about our death as following of the Crucified, but that is not all that is to be said about this singular unity of Jesus' death and our death.

It is true that Jesus by his resurrection vanishes from us into the unavailability of God. But his resurrection is at the same time the event of salvation history which, even if grasped only by faith, is part of this history of this world and this humanity and is grasped and acknowledged precisely by faith as such an historical event that truly changes the world. His resurrection took place in this world, even though it is the event that raises this historical world of becoming into the eternity of God. The resurrection has an absolutely peculiar and unique but nevertheless real tangibility in history. This must be remembered also in regard to his death as entry into this resurrection. If in his following we die with him, the question whether we die into the life of God or into sheer annihilation is not answered in a way that is empirically verifiable in regard to our death as such; there is certainly no tangible assurance of a death leading to a resurrection, since (at least normally) we cannot for our own part make any unambiguous judgment about the final destiny of [169] a dying person. But from the clarity of Jesus' death as the way to his resurrection, from the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, a light is thrown on the ambivalence of our own death and this light, too, is part of our dying with Christ. In this matter the situation is the same as in world history in general.

In the history of the world itself as distinct from God's eternal plans, *before* the resurrection of Jesus, the victorious irreversibility of God's self-communication to the world was not firmly established or tangible, the final outcome of world history was not perceptible as salvation in history itself. The drama of world history as a whole was also still unfinished and ambivalent. Things are different after the resurrection: there the peripeteia of the drama of world history to good, to eternal salvation, has already taken place. It is true that we cannot

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deduce from this any unequivocal conclusion for the individual and his individual destiny of salvation; but even for the individual the situation of hope is different from what it was before Jesus' resurrection. From the one reality already existing the success of other possibilities can be presumed. This is true particularly when an historically and sociologically explicit relationship to Jesus' resurrection is present as promise to the world as a whole. What has been said here in general about the relationship of world history to Jesus' death and resurrection is therefore true also of the relationship of our dying to Jesus' dying, particularly when this relationship is explicitly realized in faith. Our dying admittedly retains an openness and ambivalence, but it is encompassed by the promise that exists for us in the victorious death of Jesus into his resurrection. Paul says: 'Here is a saying you can rely on: if we have died with him, then we shall live with him' (2 Tim. 2:11).

We said earlier that death in a theological sense does not in the last resort coincide chronologically with the medical exitus, but occurs throughout the whole of life and reaches its completion only at the end. Hence, from the nature of the case, it was legitimate for Christian piety in its entire history to seek to realize the following of the *Crucified* in Christian *life*, in the acceptance of everything that Christian usage even up to the present time described as the 'cross': the experiences of human frailty, of sickness, of disappointments, of the nonfulfillment of our expectations, and so on. What occurs in all this is part of man's dying, of the destruction of life's tangible goods. In all these brief moments of dying in installments we are faced with [170] the question of how we are to cope with them: whether we merely protest, merely despair (even for brief moments), become cynical and cling all the more desperately and absolutely to what has not yet been taken from us, *or* whether we abandon with resignation what is taken from us, accept twilight as promise of an eternal Christmas full of light, regard slight breakdowns as events of grace. If in this second way (which cannot by any means be so easily distinguished from the first) we take the cross on ourselves daily, we are accomplishing part of the following of the Crucified, we are practising faith and loving hope in which death is accepted as the advent of eternal life and the following of Jesus, the Crucified, reaches its completion.

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[171]

PART THREE

Experience of the Spirit

[173]

11

EXPERIENCE OF TRANSCENDENCE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF CATHOLIC DOGMATICS

Before attempting to say anything directly on the theme proposed for me, I may be permitted a few preliminary observations. In the first place I am not an Indianolgist, but only a teacher of Catholic dogmatics. I must leave it to the Indianologists, the historians of religion, and the historians of the different interpretations of mystical experience to see for themselves whether these reflections of a teaching theologian can provide them with any assistance in dealing with their own problems. Furthermore, when the title speaks of the view of Catholic dogmatics on the problem of the experience of transcendence, the term 'dogmatics' must be understood in a very wide sense. There would be very little to be gained from these reflections if we were restricted to statements which have an absolutely binding character in Catholic dogmatic theology. The Catholic theologian cannot avoid putting forward here also views, theories, and theologoumena which are neither imposed as binding by the Church's magisterium nor supported in textbook theology by a general consensus, but represent his personal opinions which are worth as much as the reasons which can be adduced or suggested in their favour. Of course it is also assumed and claimed that these personal views of an individual Catholic theologian are at least compatible with the Christian faith as it is presented by the Church's magisterium. I think therefore that these reflections may be useful despite a certain lack of binding force from the standpoint of the Church's magisterium. It must also be observed that it is of course no part of our task to show with the aid of an epistemological and [174] existential-ontological reflection that the experience of transcendence (which forms our present theme) actually exists as such in man: to show that, in its transcendental necessity with which it is present as a condition of human knowledge as a whole, it also includes an equally necessary and irreversible dependence of the mind (in knowledge and freedom) on that which or him whom in Christian terminology we call God. All this is simply presupposed here. All that is to be done here about this transcendental experience (which is not really proved nor actually demonstrated in its essence) is to put forward, more or less as supplementary, some theses which seem to me important for a discussion devoted to a comparative study of *those* experiences of transcendence the *interpretation* of which is a matter of dispute between East and West.

The limits of these reflections must then be expressly stated. We are talking about transcendence; we assume that the experience of transcendence is philosophically objectified and verbalized. But how exactly this happens in the religio-philosophical systems of East and West, whether these philosophical interpretations are more correct, better, or more convincing here or there, how the objective of this experience of transcendence is to be correctly described – whether as absolute nothingness or as absolute being or as absolute mystery – and how these different interpretations can be brought together with some prospect of success into dialogue with one another: these are topics which are not actually to be discussed in my reflections. The questions raised here come before and after these questions. What I can say on this proposed theme will be presented more or less in the form of theses,

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since it would be quite impossible to cope at all with the task assigned to me if the individual theses had to be closely elucidated and substantiated in each case. I must refrain also from any attempt to present these theses in a strictly systematic sequence that is cogent in every respect. I come then to the matter itself.

(1) On the one hand, Christianity refuses to recognize a systematic and more or less technically developed 'mystical' experience of transcendence as the sole and necessary way to man's perfection and, on the other hand, Christian theology, at least in Catholicism, will not cease to regard such mystical experience of transcendence at least as a possible *stage* on the way to perfection and as a paradigmatic elucidation of what happens in faith, hope, and love on the [175] Christian path to the perfection of salvation wherever salvation in the Christian sense is attained.

This first thesis must be further elucidated in its two aspects.

On the first part of the thesis, Christian teaching and the practice of authentic Christianity cannot admit that the 'mystic' (whatever may be the exact meaning of this term, of the phenomena of immersion, of the formless experience of the absolute, etc.) is the only one who has gone or goes on that path to perfection of which the last stage directly and alone borders on man's perfection (however the term 'perfection' is to be more precisely interpreted). The teaching of the New Testament that the fulfillment of God's commandments in the conscientious observance of routine duties in faith, hope, and love for God and men bring the person through death immediately to perfection and unite him finally with God, the description of the last judgment in the eschatological discourses of Jesus (for instance, in Matthew 25), and many other things in the teaching and practice of Christianity that need not be mentioned here: all this forbids us to regard mysticism and particularly its more or less technically and explicitly developed form exclusively as the necessary and final stretch of the way before attaining perfect salvation or all ordinary practice of the Christian life merely as the *preparatory* phase of the way of salvation which leads to perfection only when it ends up on the higher path of contemplative mysticism. Christianity rejects such an elitist interpretation of life, which can see man's perfection as attained only in the trained mystic. This is particularly important, since Christianity rejects the theory of the transmigration of souls and cannot localize such an explicitly mystical phase for the individual in a subsequent life. This in brief is the content of the first part of our first thesis.

This however does *not* mean simply that mystical experience as such could be or ought to be regarded merely as a single and rare exceptional case in individual human beings and Christians which is granted to the latter either by psycho-technical effort or by a special grace of God as a rare privilege or by both together, without really having any constitutive importance for the actual way to perfect salvation. In the Christian theology of mysticism up to the present time views have been maintained which denied to mysticism in *any* way a constitutive importance for the process of salvation or conceded something of this kind at most in cases where it is a question [176] of a special 'heroic' heightening of perfection, of 'holiness', of gaining a particularly high degree of final glory (which, despite its finality, can, according to textbook theology, have varying degrees). But the first part of our thesis does not necessitate such an interpretation of the really crucial phenomena of mysticism, an interpretation of this mysticism in which the latter has absolutely no constitutive importance in any respect for the event and achievement of final perfection. It seems to me (from the nature of the case we shall return to this point) to be the task of Christian theology as a whole and the Christian theology of mysticism in particular to show and to render intelligible the fact that the real basic phenomenon of mystical experience of transcendence is present as innermost sustaining ground (even though unnoticed) in the simple act itself of Christian living in faith, hope, and love, that such (as we may say) implicit transcendence into the nameless mystery known as God is present by grace in this very believing, hoping, and

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loving; it seems to us that mysticism in its explicit sense and as expressly practised may signify a higher degree of the Christian ascent to perfection from the standpoint of an objectively reflecting psychology, but not from a properly theological standpoint, and that mysticism in an explicit experience has therefore (conversely) a paradigmatic character, an exemplary function, to make clear to the Christian what really happens and is meant when his faith tells him that God's self-communication is given to him in grace and accepted in freedom whenever he believes, hopes, and loves. The proof of such a *perichoresis* between the normal and routine practice of the Christian life and an ultimate and absolutely radical experience of transcendence into the mystery of God cannot of course be produced here and now in this first thesis. Otherwise a whole theology of the Holy Spirit, of possession by the Spirit, of experience of the Spirit by grace, of the theological virtues (as event of immediacy to God as distinct from the intramundane moral virtues), would have to be developed (which of course is not possible at this point).

(2) A Christian theology is always required to make clear that an irreversible difference exists between an original experience of transcendence (as 'natural' and as radicalized to immediacy by God's gracious self-communication) on the one hand and the objectifying and verbalizing reflection on this experience of transcendence on the other. Christian theology will always maintain that a creaturely 'mediation' [177] (which would need to be defined more precisely by a developed theology – which is not possible here – distinguished in its different forms and more closely investigated in regard to its specific function of mediation) does not remove, but under certain conditions can even make possible the immediacy of the mind (at least of the mind endowed with grace) to God. These two statements are connected and may therefore be combined in a thesis, but are not simply identical. They cannot be substantiated in detail here in a theological argument, but they may be elucidated a little.

We come to the first part of our second thesis. The original basic realization of man's transcendence as mind and freedom toward the mystery that we Christians call God on the one hand and the categorial and verbal, reflective objectification on this basic realization on the other are never identical; the result is that on the one hand this basic realization can exist even when there is no such theoreticizing and verbalizing objectification of the basic realization of the mental, grace-endowed, and perhaps really mystical transcendentality, and on the other hand that such a theoreticizing and verbalizing statement about this basic realization (even when the latter is genuine) can be true or false, adequate or inadequate, making use of different conceptual systems and forms of imagery. It follows that even the *genuine* 'mystic' can present a philosophy and theology of his mysticism as original experience which by no means corresponds to that original experience. The first statement of our second thesis implies that there can be and are many theologies of mysticism differing from and even contradicting one another and that nevertheless these differences do not *a priori* exclude the possibility that all these theologies are meant to describe the *same* original experience. Even when the attempt is made in principle to produce in such a theology only a pure description of the original experience of transcendence, a merely descriptive theology of mysticism, this inevitably comes about with the aid of conceptual equipment that is by no means acquired from the original experience itself (for then even the description would be bound to remain completely unintelligible to the outsider), but makes use of images, ideas, and horizons of understanding, which are drawn from different sources and carry with them the relativity of the religious, cultural, historical milieu of the person providing the description.

Contradictions in the theologies of mysticism, even when the latter [178] are meant to be no more than descriptions, can thus be due to the fact that the original experiences (which were to be described and theologically interpreted) were themselves actually different, *or* can occur simply because (for the reasons given) the description of what was originally the same

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experience is not so apt that it can be made to coincide with other descriptions. Whether the former or the latter explanation is correct is a fundamental question to which an answer must be sought in a dialogue between the different theories of mysticism. It is not possible to discuss here and now the possible methods of such a comparative mystical theology. It seems to me that such a formal methodology has not yet been adequately developed in the discussion between the world religions. But a methodology of this kind in any case could never forget that mystical experience (of whatever character) on the one hand and talk about it on the other hand always remain two different things.

If hitherto we have stressed the difference between man's original, existential, basic experience of transcendentality on the one hand and its conceptual interpretation and terminological theorization on the other and attempted to draw the appropriate conclusions, this should not of course obscure the fact that these very diverse factors also form a unity, are linked with each other and are mutually dependent. If we disregard any possibility of an absolutely imageless and nonconceptual mystical experience, then in any case, *after* this original experience itself, it is present only as combined with an at least rudimentary imaginative and conceptual interpretation and can be (as it evidently should be) important only in this way for the whole life of the mystic. If moreover, despite their distinction, we did not stress also the unity (which does not mean sameness) of these two factors, the meaning of the actual 'teaching' of the conceptually formulated faith in Christianity could not be made intelligible or authenticated. But Christianity is far from regarding such a conceptually articulated teaching in the last resort as a superfluous, merely accidental, and arbitrary phenomenon within the totality of Christianity. In view of the unity of the two factors, despite their permanent diversity, it is of course also quite possible for a person to identify himself with a particular philosophico-theological interpretation of his whole reality with such decisiveness that this identification (if the interpretation is false) substantially removes or destroys also the original phenomenon, as far as this is possible at all [179] in face of the transcendental necessity of certain ultimate structures and realizations of man. A 'theoretical' atheist, for example, can possibly (not necessarily) identify himself so closely with this interpretation of his existence that in the real depth of his existence in freedom he is an atheist and is not merely erroneously interpreting himself as such, even though there persists an ultimate transcendental necessity of his dependence on God, which, however, he denies not only theoretically but existentially. This sort of thing must also be remembered even when it is a question of the unity and difference between originally mystical experience and its theoretical and conceptual interpretation. In any case a theoretical interpretation of a mystical experience can (but need not) change the latter by existential freedom. But this of course should not be obscured by the first part of our second thesis.

The second part of our second thesis is perhaps even more important. Christian faith and theology see the historical reality of Jesus, the Church, the sacrament, and the proclaimed word, as ways of reaching God, not in the sense that all these things are merely elements of a subsequent reflection on the actual salvific relationship of man to God and not constitutive of the relationship itself, but in the sense that they are themselves internal and constitutive elements of this salvific relationship to God. For Christian theology not only is the recipient of the divine self-communication a created finite reality that does not perish and is not consumed in the event of this divine self-communication and is even perfected and validated in its positive and sound finiteness, but for this Christian faith there are also between the absolute God and the finite recipient of his self-communication created realities (of which some of the more essential have already been mentioned) which have a mediatory function in this relationship. Nevertheless (and this is crucial) Christian faith and its theology, if both are absolutely correctly understood, firmly maintain that this mediation does not remove or obstruct an *immediate* relationship of (grace-endowed) man to God, but makes it possible,

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guarantees it, and attests it in the historical-categorial dimension of man. Christian faith denies that radical immediacy to God, who imparts himself to man as himself in his absolute reality, and creaturely mediation of this self-communication of the absolute are Opposed to one another as mutually exclusive alternatives.

For Christian faith the situation is not such that it is possible in [180] principle to receive absolute reality in its divine purity only when this relationship involves the formless disappearance of any finite reality or when a created reality (even though understood as available by the grace of God) is all that is actually present and merely points vicariously to the always distant God. How this conception of a mediation to immediacy can be more precisely understood and theologically substantiated cannot be more closely explained here. For that, it would be necessary to discuss the difference and the unity between created and uncreated grace, the created *lumen gloriae* in the immediate vision of God (a vision itself constituted by God's own reality), the theological virtues as distinct from the moral virtues, the indwelling of God himself by grace in man, the specific nature of Christ's and the Church's causality of salvation on the one hand and the causality of the divine pneuma on the other. *If* and *insofar as* an Eastern mysticism (however theoretically understood) were to seek to reject such a notion of a mediation to immediacy, its attention would have to be drawn to the fact that it would consistently have to leave the finite recipient of such an immediacy to God himself to perish in the event of such a mystical theophany, that it would have to reject the permanent significance of history in its concreteness and the notion of a sound finiteness. Then it would have to be asked whether such a metaphysics and theology are true in themselves and really covered by the original mystical experience. The second point in dispute, the appeal to the mystical experience itself, would then have to be seen in the light of the understanding formulated in the first statement of our second thesis.

As far as the second part of the second thesis is concerned, it must certainly be pointed out that Christian theology also is aware of many modes and degrees of creaturely mediation to the immediacy of God: that is, it does not hold that the forms of mediation are the *same* always and in every case when a person has to deal directly with God himself. The question, for example, of whether mysticism in the present world can include *that* immediacy to God which Christian theology asserts of the immediate vision of God in the hereafter, is a matter of dispute in the Christian theology of mysticism. If and insofar then as mystical theologies outside Christianity teach an absolutely 'formless', purely and simply 'unobjective' experience of God, this is not a reason why a Christian theology must necessarily be opposed to them, but only why it should point out [181] that this sort of formless immediacy to God is always sustained by the grace of God's Holy Spirit who is irreversibly promised in historical tangibility through the historical event of Jesus Christ; a Christian theology would insist that such a mystical experience of a decline of all 'normal' mediation would be a participation in the death of Jesus who in his actual death as absolute decline came to the final dawning of God himself.

(3) The third thesis may be formulated with the reservation that what is put forward and defended here is not universally accepted among theologians. Whenever there is a final radical self-realization of man in mind and freedom and the person thus commits himself to finality, it may be assumed that such a self-realization (which can also, if not solely, take place in a mystical experience of transcendence) in practice is always sustained and radicalized by what is known in Christian theology as Holy Spirit, supernatural grace, self-communication of God, even though this fact of being sustained by grace is not itself as such made an object of reflection or given thematic expression in this occurrence.

In current textbook theology (which, however, carries no absolutely official guarantee of the Church's magisterium) grace (also described as a supernatural elevation of mental acts) is generally understood as an intermittent happening at isolated points in space and time. But if

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we start out from the Christian teaching of a universal salvific will of God, who offers the concrete opportunity of a supernatural salvation, a salvation, that is, that reaches the immediacy of God himself, always and everywhere in history and thus outside the verbalized message of Christianity and the Church, then we can and indeed must assume that what we Christians describe as Holy Spirit, supernatural grace – at least in the mode of a real offer to man's freedom as radicalizing existential of man's transcendentality – exists as such always and everywhere and therefore also outside institutionalized Christianity, even though of course in the concrete individual this supernatural existential of dynamism toward the immediacy of God can exist *either* in the mode of pure factuality from the outset *or* in the mode of rejection *or* in the mode of free acceptance.

As we said, it is impossible of course here to explain and substantiate more precisely in theological terms the thesis of the universal factuality of grace as God's self-communication. This would require [182] close reflection on the Church's teaching of the universality of God's salvific will, on the possibility as taught today (for example, at the Second Vatican Council) of real supernatural faith always and everywhere and consequently even where the explicit message of Christianity has not yet been heard; it would be necessary to try to show how and why there can be such a universal possibility of faith always and everywhere and even in a person who regards himself as an atheist, without implying a denial of the necessity for salvation of faith in an actual and verbalized revelation; it must be made clear why and how a theology of grace properly understood must interpret the latter as the self-communication of God in his most intimate uncreated reality and how this grace must be understood originally as elevating, radicalizing communication to man's *transcendentality* as such. But all this is impossible here and the thesis can be put forward here only as one that is not supported by a universal consensus, but which can certainly be justified.

If we presuppose this thesis of the universal reality of the offer of grace always and everywhere and primarily to the transcendentality of man as such and if we consider the fact that this grace is present as accepted and justifying if and when this transcendentality of man is accepted and sustained by man's freedom, if moreover we start out from the assumption that such an unconditional acceptance by man's freedom of his own transcendentality can exist also, if not solely, particularly and with a special intensity in mystical experiences of transcendence, then it follows that the mysticism rightly interpreted by Christian theology as a real experience of grace can and must be found even outside institutional Christianity. Nor can this thesis be opposed by the dilemma that mystical experience of transcendence must either be interpreted in an explicitly Christian sense or can at best be only some kind of natural mysticism. It is true that the traditional theology of mysticism in Catholic Christianity has been inclined up to the present time to accept this dilemma as real and inescapable, just as the theology of grace especially from the time of baroque scholasticism has taken it for granted that there are existentially radical mental acts of man (what are known as *actus honesti*) which concretely are not supernatural salutary acts. But if we recall our second thesis and firmly maintain the universality of the factuality of grace from the outset as an existential of man's transcendentality as such, then the possibility of a supernatural, [183] grace-inspired anonymously Christian mysticism outside verbalized and institutionalized Christianity cannot be denied.

The Christian philosopher of religion, therefore, if he is to remain within the limits of Christian orthodoxy, need not assume as a hermeneutical principle of his study the impossibility of discovering outside Christianity any mysticism that can be recognized as substantially the same as Christian mysticism. Whether this philosopher of religion takes into account our second thesis, examining the extra-Christian interpretation of this extra-Christian mysticism in regard to the original mystical phenomenon, and thus in practice succeeds in making such a discovery, or he does not succeed in practice in establishing the discovery with

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historical and psychological realism and exactitude, is not a question to be answered by the Christian dogmatic theologian as such, but one which must be decided by the philosopher of religion himself. But in any case Christian dogmatics does not forbid the philosopher of religion *a priori* to discover grace-inspired mysticism in the experience of God's self-communication by a transcendentality of man radicalized by the Holy Spirit even outside Christianity. If and when such a discovery is made *a posteriori* without premature blurring of distinctions by passing over the points of difference between Christian and extra-Christian subsequent descriptions of the original mystical experience itself, this is a result that should not be surprising for the Christian dogmatic theologian. It is not surprising if only because he does not interpret mystical experience even within Christianity as something that really goes beyond supernatural faith, supernatural hope, and love, but as *one* possible radicalized form of realization of these three theological virtues and because the same Christian dogmatic theologian, if he does not want to contradict the Second Vatican Council, cannot deny today that supernatural faith in the strict sense of the term can exist everywhere, even outside explicit Christianity, and even in a person who regards himself in his theoretical reflection as an atheist, since the original self-realization and verbalizing reflection on it are never identical and can even contradict one another.

(4) The proclamation of the theological possibility of a grace-inspired, salvific mystical experience of transcendence even outside explicit Christianity admittedly does not settle the problem to which the Christian dogmatic theologian for his own part is expected to contribute. I think that the dogmatic theologian ought to add a self-critical [184] thesis defining negatively the limits of his competence. We might attempt to formulate it in this way: the Christian theologian does not know and cannot judge whether there may not be experiences possibly outside everyday psychological experiences which on the one hand we can or must qualify as in some sense 'mystical' and which on the other hand cannot be regarded as experiences of supernatural, grace-inspired mysticism as understood in the third thesis.

In this sense the Christian theologian must practice self-effacement and self-restraint, leave the field of nonroutine experiences to the historian of religion, the psychologist of religion, the phenomenologist; he can only invite these experts themselves to examine the question closely and discriminatingly and not to reduce all nonroutine experiences of man too quickly and too hastily to one and the same denominator.

This very negative and abstract statement calls for some clarification. If and insofar as the third thesis which we put forward is correct, it must be said that all mysticism in which man's ultimate transcendentality toward God is experienced and accepted in freedom is also grace-inspired, supernatural, at least anonymously Christian mystical experience, since this third thesis starts out from the impossibility of there being any *actus honesti* in the concreteness of man's actual existence which are not also supernaturally elevated by grace. But this does not mean that an answer is provided to all the questions that can be raised here. The theology which assumes the real unity of personal-radical acts in which man's ultimate dependence on God is accepted in freedom on the one hand and of supernaturally grace-inspired, salvific acts of man on the other, has no reason to claim that there are no other experiences (apart from these mental-natural and grace-inspired mystical experiences of transcendence) which admittedly do not amount to such a natural-supernatural experience of transcendence and yet go beyond the ordinary routine and can therefore in certain circumstances and in regard to certain peculiarities be subsumed up to a point under the heading of 'mystical', if this term is understood in a sufficiently wide sense. The theology assumed here – for which a properly mental act in the strict sense, permitting the experience of transcendence, radically actualizing personal freedom, is in practice always also a supernatural experience of transcendence – does not for that reason [185] need to claim that all experiences are such

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actus honesti et salutares. Man's experience of his corporality, of his biological-physiological condition, of his subconscious and his depth-consciousness, of collective archetypes, of an 'id' in his consciousness, of an embeddedness of his consciousness in a collective reality, etc., are certainly experiences which exist more or less clearly in man, but which are not identical with what theology describes as mental-supernatural experience of transcendence and can also occur apart from such an experience of transcendence. The theologian will naturally and without prejudice allow for this possibility, just as the older moral theology was aware of the existence of what are known as *actus indifferentes*, lying outside the strictly personal sphere of moral decision and of morality properly so-called. Even though the Christian theologian has no real competence in the question raised here, he can nevertheless without prejudice allow for the fact that the experiences indicated on the one hand reach an intensity and radical clarity and peculiarity in certain people, so that they somehow assume a 'mystical' character, and on the other are not part of a really mentally supernatural experience of transcendence which constitutes the essence of properly Christian mysticism.

Quite apart from *a posteriori* empirical evidence, why should not man as subject establish, for instance, by a psychological training a relationship to his corporality that is different from and more perfect than what exists in the 'normal' human being, without this relationship or its attainment belonging to the sphere of man's actual grace-inspired transcendentality? It is, to mention a further example, quite possible that there are experiences of the emptying of consciousness, of absorption, etc., which belong to the sphere that is prior to the actual experience of transcendentality. Whether then *such* phenomena, whatever their exact form, can be brought about by a psycho-technical training or even by a Christian mystic, for whom they are aids or accompanying phenomena to mysticism properly so-called and are interpreted as subsidiary grace, or whether (as is quite conceivable) they are both in one: this is a question which the dogmatic theologian as such is not required to decide. Presumably (purely hypothetically) it would be appropriate to subsume such phenomena under the heading of parapsychological occurrences and not properly under the heading of mysticism, since they can certainly be largely produced by psychological training and can occur [186] also *outside* a religious sphere, without our being able or having to rescue these secular forms of phenomena for a properly religious mysticism by explaining that as such they are events of religious transcendentality to the absolute, to God, interpreted only subsequently as secular and therefore wrongly. But, since such phenomena of a properly parapsychological (that is, here, prereligious and preexistential) character occur also *together* with a properly religious and radical-existential experience of transcendence, it is understandable that these, too, are generally qualified as 'mystical'.

As a matter of fact, traditional Christian theology treats such phenomena as part of its own, albeit secondary object; it speaks of, ecstasies, elevations, knowledge of the future, telepathic powers, etc., and in the past has been only too much inclined to interpret these things as extraordinary graces, as if they could occur only within mysticism properly so-called. On the other hand the Christian theology of mysticism (especially as represented by John of the Cross) recognizes that in the last resort these phenomena are not essential and ought really to disappear with the attainment of the highest mystical union with God, even though this creates a special problem for Christian mysticism, which cannot *a priori* reject a mediation to immediacy, as can be seen in the distinction between the mystical theology of Teresa of Avila and that of John of the Cross. If and insofar as these phenomena, which as such are prior to the actual experience of transcendence toward the absolute mystery, can be a preparation and aid for these properly mystical experiences, exactly as a normal everyday ability to concentrate is a condition and an aid for the average Christian's ordinary meditation, it is understandable that in the practical business of higher spirituality even in Christianity there

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should emerge more or less spontaneously a psychological training (fasting, solitude, silence, exclusion of the uncoordinated variety of objects of consciousness) directed to experiencing more clearly and appropriating with a more radical freedom even the actual grace-inspired transcendentality of the mind toward God. As we said, the success of such psychological training can be understood without prejudice as subsidiary grace. But, conversely, it follows from our theses that the true grace of the actual experience of transcendence toward the immediacy of God is not present only when and where it is explicitly regarded as grace or (still less) when it is understood as a particular intermittent effect of God, although in [187] reality it is always and everywhere sustained in the mode of an offer by God's self-communication. From the Christian standpoint the actual acceptance in freedom of this self-communication of God is certainly to be understood as a grace of God, since (in Pauline terms) not only the capacity, but also the actual accomplishment, is given by grace and effected by God.

The really important thing about this fourth thesis was simply the understanding that in the concrete realization of the religious relationship to God there can be phenomena (whether regarded as mystical or as parapsychological) which are not really strictly part of the experience of transcendence as elevated by grace and are consequently outside the competence of the theologian. This is the situation even if the theologian thinks that actually any real experience of transcendence in the concrete order of reality is itself an experience of *grace* and therefore that there is no 'natural' mysticism which is not in practice also supernatural mysticism.

In the light of this self-effacement on the part of the theologian, it is possible to find experiences, rules, practices for the creation of more suitable preconditions (perhaps of a parapsychological character) for the better and clearer achievement of mysticism properly so-called: experiences, rules, and practices which exist outside the history of the Christian religion and Christian piety. In principle these can be taken over by Christianity as useful for itself just as readily as it takes over other experiences, rules, and practices of normal everyday psychology and makes use of them in the religious field. This is certainly possible, even if Christian theology is convinced that the reflex interpretation in Christianity of actual experience of transcendence in grace is correct and true (which does not mean that this interpretation and verbalization is adequate, leaving nothing more to be learned).

Christian faith and its theology are persuaded that this mystical experience of transcendence is wrongly or inadequately interpreted when it is objectified and interpreted with a real *denial* of its grace-inspired character as a free personal relationship to a free and personal (or suprapersonal) absolute, with a *denial* of a sound finiteness and of an involvement even of the mystical in a salvifically significant history, with a *denial* (at least implicit) of a universal opportunity of salvation for all human beings even outside an explicit form of mystical absorption. But Christianity must not claim that such a [188] wrong or essentially inadequate interpretation of grace-inspired mysticism (a mysticism which as such it admits to be possible even outside organized Christianity) is what actually occurs always and everywhere outside Christianity. There is no need for Christian theology to make this claim. It will of course say that all mysticism, wherever it exists, has an objective relatedness to Jesus Christ which admittedly is not explicitly grasped in extra-Christian mysticism; this however does not mean conversely that such a mysticism, which has not yet expressly found Jesus Christ, *ipso facto* has no importance for salvation and cannot be salvific faith. Christian theology will in fact consider how and why it can interpret a mysticism of this kind as 'questing' Christology, just as Jesus himself rightly understood an act of love of neighbour done without knowledge of him as in fact done to himself.

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12

EXPERIENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What theme can there be for a meditation at Pentecost other than the Holy Spirit, given to the early Church in the midst of phenomena of enthusiasm, with the promise that he would remain with it always to the very end, with his power, his consolation, and his freedom? In a meditation of this kind we must certainly speak about the Holy Spirit as the gift in which God imparts himself to man.

But what is to be said and how exactly is it to be expressed? Certainly we could look up the Scriptures and read there about the Spirit of the Father, who is given through the Son to all who believe in him; about the Spirit who flows as living water out of the pierced side of the Crucified, as a fount of life, welling up into eternal life and quenching our thirst for eternity; about the Spirit who makes us sons and enables us to say 'Abba', 'Father'; about the Spirit who signifies the coming of the triune God, who gives us a share in God's love, truth, and freedom, in whom we are united with one another and have hope, by whom we are anointed and sealed, who prays in us and with us in ways too deep for speech and in access to the Father gives us assurance of eternal life. These and many other marvellous and sublime things could be found in Scripture, collected for a Pentecost meditation, and offered to the person within us to aid courageous faith and joyful reflection.

To the Christian believer who approaches these words of Scripture with an open mind it is obvious that he can meditate on Pentecost in this way even at the present time. And, even though here and now we are trying to follow a somewhat different way of meditation and want to raise questions about our own experience of the Spirit, [190] it is also obvious, but should be stated expressly, that we always tacitly make use of this teaching of Scripture and that we ourselves could not so clearly grasp our own experience (which is offered to all human beings in the depth of their existence) if it had not been made explicit in the words of Scripture, even before our own efforts.

But, precisely because this Scripture does not speak to us merely doctrinally about this Spirit who is given to us, but at the same time itself appeals to the experience of the Spirit as we know it ourselves (for instance, in the Letter to the Galatians and elsewhere in Paul's letters, in John's writings, and in Scripture as a whole), we may rightly ask when and how such an experience occurs in us.

At the same time we are of course aware from the very outset that this is an experience incommensurable with what we ordinarily describe as 'experience' (especially in a scientific or empirically psychological sense), for the experience of the Spirit begins at the very heart of our existence, at what might be called its subjective pole, and does not signify an encounter with any sort of particular object that happens to come upon us from outside with its effects on us. Apart from experiences explicitly interpreted in a theological way in our consciousness and our reflection, there is an experience in us which is different from and not comparable with the experiences which first come to mind when we hear the word 'experience'.

In the first place the word suggests to us the fact, the impact, of individual realities of our milieu and environment or individual psychological objects in our consciousness: pain, for instance, that can be localized, an individual thought with a particular content, etc. All these individual realities are present to us as individual *within* the total framework of our consciousness; there they fit into some kind of arrangement, they are distinguished from one another and connected with one another.

But, in addition to these individual experiences of certain individual realities, there is a

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quite different experience, not by any means given thematic expression in the ordinary routine of our experiences: the experience of the one subject as such, that has all these experiences as its own and has to answer for them, that is itself present in its original unity and totality, even though it cannot itself be thematically objectified in detail but takes the form only of an apparent void when it passes into the multiplicity of its everyday experiences and seems to forget itself in the process.

[191] There will be no attempt here in an epistemological or existential-ontological reflection to analyze this singular, original, primordial experience by the subject of itself, always and everywhere present behind all representational experiences. (We shall return later to this 'transcendental' character of man as subject.) All that is intended by this reference is to recall the fact here and now that there is in any case a kind of experience which is not commensurable with the ordinary experiences of individual realities, but which nevertheless is always present, even though it is generally overlooked. The experience of the Spirit which we are considering here is therefore not to be rejected *a priori* as nonexistent, merely because, just like the factuality of the subject as present for its own sake in all individual experiences, it can always be overlooked.

Of course, if we think we cannot really discover in ourselves the experience of the Spirit as understood here, we can accept the testimony of its existence as coming, so to speak, authoritatively from outside, from Scripture and the teaching of the Church. But, however much it must be interpreted in faith and given expression in words with the aid of Scripture, if we did not here and now ask also about the actual experience of the Spirit, there would be a danger of regarding sceptically as ideology or mythology all that Scripture tells us of this Spirit in ourselves and we might wonder with some irritation whether or where everything that Scripture says of the glory of the possession of the Spirit is present in us; we might wonder whether it should not all be set in a dimension (particularly when there is an assent in faith to the teaching of Scripture) which lies outside our consciousness and outside our freely realized piety.

Is there such an experience of the Spirit which on the one hand makes understandable and authenticates the testimony of Scripture to the indwelling of the Spirit in us and on the other hand is confirmed and put into words of truth by Scripture? We say that there is such an experience.

This statement is not refuted by the fact that we can and must *ask* with some hesitation and doubt about such an experience, that consequently this is not an absolutely indisputable experience, of the kind we have, for example, of the external world, without feeling (unless we are philosophers in an ivory tower) any need or necessity to ask whether a person really has such an experience of his milieu and environment. There are in any case also other genuine experiences [192] which *exist in fact* and about which questions nevertheless simply must be asked. If, for example, a German idealist philosopher or even a modern Christian philosopher asks about the transcendental subject of knowledge and freedom and about its structures, if the modern depth psychologist tries to track down deeply repressed attitudes, they are all rightly convinced that there can be real experiences in man which are felt only unthematically, which are not verbalized, which are perhaps suppressed and not brought to man's free attention. Experience as such and objectified, representational and verbalized experiences are not simply the same thing, although it might seem so to consciousness lost in the objective reality of ordinary life and worried only about what goes on there. There can therefore be an experience that amounts simultaneously to a genuine question.

The *question* then about the *experience* of the Spirit cannot be dismissed *a priori* as contradictory. But how can it be answered?

Today, as often also in the Church's past, it is perhaps appropriate to recall the fact that there have always been mysticism and enthusiastic occurrences, experiences and movements

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in the Church which, even though in the most diverse forms and interpretations, have been understood as experiences of the Holy Spirit.

There has been and there is mysticism. Here, those who have been so privileged said and continue to say that either in a sudden awakening or in a long and gradual ascent they experience grace, God's immediate proximity, union with him in the Spirit, in a holy night or in blessed light, in a void silently filled by God, and, at least at the moment of the mystical event itself, cannot doubt their experience of the immediate proximity of the self-communicating God as effect and reality of God's sanctifying grace in the depth of their existence: in other words, as 'experience of the Holy Spirit'.

How this experience has been described in the course of the history of mysticism in Christianity factually or in theological terms; how this objectifying and verbalizing interpretation has taken the most diverse forms, dependent on the background of the history of ideas, the history of civilization, of philosophy and theology; how the question is to be answered about the relationship of this Christian mysticism or mysticism interpreted in Christian terms to similar mystical phenomena outside Christianity, particularly in the East and especially in Islam and Buddhism; how such an experience can [193] co-exist with ecclesial-social and sacramental-ritual piety: all these are questions which need not occupy us here and now.

The mystics tell us of an experience of the Spirit and in principle there is nothing to prevent us from regarding their testimony on the whole as credible, particularly if on the one hand we justifiably allow for the fact that the original experience is the one thing and the philosophical and theological interpretation of it another and that consequently diversity and inconsistency in the interpretations need not discredit the original experience, and if on the other hand we remember that among these mystics there have been persons of the utmost sobriety and with acute powers of observation up to the present time, including Carl Albrecht, the mystic who was also an outstanding doctor, psychologist, philosopher, and natural scientist. The fact remains that there are people who have the courage to provide us with credible testimony to the experience of the Spirit.

Admittedly in the theology of Christian mysticism there has been considerable insistence on the extraordinary and elitist character of such mystical phenomena; on the one hand because people (rightly) wanted to stress the grace-inspired character of these phenomena and at the same time were guided by the tacit opinion that what is effected by grace and unmerited must by its very nature be rare and on the other hand because such clearly mystical phenomena are generally accompanied by circumstances of an ecstatic, almost para-psychological nature, which really are rare. Hence it is understandable up to a point that the normal Christian is inclined to leave aside such mysticism as a matter which has nothing to do with him.

But if we were to distinguish (which is not possible here) the really *central* mystical experience more clearly from these rare marginal phenomena such as ecstasy, absorption, etc., then it would be easier to understand that such mystical experiences are certainly not occurrences lying completely outside the experience of an ordinary Christian; that what the mystics talk about is an experience which any Christian (and indeed any human being) can have and can seek, but which is easily overlooked or suppressed. But in any case it is true that mysticism exists and it is not as remote from us as we are at first tempted to assume.

In addition there are enthusiastic phenomena and movements in non-Catholic and Catholic Christianity. Whether these things also involve a mystical closeness to God and union with him in the sense [194] of classical, more or less individual and individualistic mysticism, or whether and how mysticism and (former or present-day) enthusiasm of a more social character must be distinguished phenomenologically and theologically, this is a question into which we cannot directly enter here. It is not really necessary to do so, particularly since the

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classical theology of mysticism recognizes very diverse forms and degrees of mystical experience and consequently allows for the possibility of arranging enthusiastical experiences in a series of steps on the mystical ascent, without making them coincide with the peak of mysticism, the final unification by grace with God in the mystical union.

Enthusiastic movements exist anyway in Christendom at the present time. People are looking for the experience of the Spirit and his power. Lengthy charismatic religious services take place in a community, where people think they perceive the presence of the Spirit and particularly in ecstatic speaking in tongues and marvelous cures of the sick. At these times of prayer there are not a few who think that they are experiencing what they describe as 'baptism of the Spirit', being filled once and for all with the Spirit of God.

Even a solidly rational theology does not need to reject such enthusiastic experiences out of hand and in all cases or to regard them completely sceptically. This is true even though the fire of God often produces a lot of human smoke, even though many of the phenomena of American enthusiasm may not appeal to us, even though many features of these phenomena can be explained (if not theologically interpreted) with the aid of very secular psychology and take exactly the same form outside a religious context.

Even though in such enthusiastic movements the person who is still on pilgrimage in time and history may never assume that he is perfect, that he has received and experienced an absolutely certain and even final promise of the Spirit (something that traditional theology would describe as 'confirmation in grace' and would count among the most sublime mystical experiences), it need not be disputed that there can be particularly impressive liberating experiences of grace here transforming the person and providing quite new horizons of life, which mark for a long time the innermost attitude of the Christian and can certainly be described (if desired) as 'baptism of the Spirit' and also (particularly within such community prayer [195] meetings) experienced as effect of the Spirit given to the congregation.

II

But – and here we really come to our proper theme – where do we stand, who do not venture to describe ourselves as mystics and who, perhaps for the most diverse reasons, can find no personal approach to such enthusiastic movements and practices? Have we no experience of the Spirit? Can we merely bow respectfully before these experiences of others regarded by ourselves as elitist? Do these people merely give us an account of a country that we ourselves have never entered, whose existence we admit as we admit that of Australia which (perhaps) we have never seen.

We say that as Christians, supported by the testimony of Scripture, we *confess* that we can have such an experience of the Spirit and even *necessarily* have it as an offer to our freedom. It is an experience that exists, even though in the routine of ordinary life we mostly overlook it, perhaps suppress it, and do not want to admit it.

If in what follows we try to draw attention to such an experience, it seems impossible to avoid prefacing these concrete references to our own experiences with some more or less theoretical considerations on the intrinsic nature of human knowledge and freedom, even though they can only be brief and to some may seem very abstract. It is only in this way that the actual structure and peculiar nature of our experiences of the Spirit can be made clear and understood, why in our explicit and verbalized representational consciousness we can easily overlook them and thus be led to think that they do not exist at all. We must therefore ask particularly for attention and patience for these theoretical preliminary considerations.

We may consider together man's knowledge and freedom, since, despite their radical difference from each other, in the last resort they have a common structure. In knowledge and

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freedom man is inescapably the being of transcendence. This term may sound pompous, irritating, and redolent of ideology. But it is difficult to avoid, referring as it does to an ultimate, inescapable, essential structure of man, whether the ordinary person or even the empirical scientist is [196] inclined to take note of it or not. In knowledge and freedom man is always both involved with the individual object (nameable and distinguishable from others) of his ordinary experience or of his particular fields of study *and* at the same time carried beyond it, even though he leaves this always implicit trend unconsidered and unnamed. The movement of the mind to the individual object, with which it is occupied, always goes toward the particular object *precisely* by going beyond it. What is objectively known and named as individual is always grasped in a wider unnamed, implicitly present horizon of possible knowledge and freedom as a whole, even though it is always with difficulty and only subsequently that reflection succeeds in making this implicitly present awareness into something like an individual object of consciousness and giving it objective expression in words.

The movement of the mind and freedom, the horizon of this movement, is boundless. Every object of our consciousness which confronts us, making itself felt in our milieu and environment, is only a stage, a continually new starting point of this movement, which passes into the infinite and unnamed. What is present in our ordinary and academic consciousness is no more than a tiny island (even though it is large enough in itself and continually and increasingly enlarged by our objectifying knowledge and action) in a boundless ocean of the nameless mystery which grows and becomes clearer the more precisely we know and will in detail. And if we want to set a limit to this apparently empty horizon of consciousness, we would by that very fact have again transgressed this limit.

In the midst of our everyday consciousness we are saved or damned (as we will) for nameless unencompassable infinity. The concepts and terms that we use subsequently of this infinity to which we are continually referred do not represent the original form of our experience of the nameless mystery that surrounds the island of our ordinary consciousness, but the small signs and images that we set up and must set up to remind us continually of the original, unthematic experience – silently present and silencing its presence – of the strangeness of the mystery in which we live, despite the clarity of ordinary consciousness, as in a night and in a pathless desert, reminding us of the abyss in which we are unfathomably rooted.

Anyone who wants to do so can of course angrily claim that too much is required of him and leave all this aside and continually press [197] on to what is new; he can attempt to disregard the night which alone makes visible our little lights and gives them their brightness. But a person who takes up this attitude is really acting contrary to his fundamental nature, since this experience of being referred to the boundless mystery, seen more closely, is not a superfluous mental luxury, but the condition of the possibility of ordinary knowing and willing, even though in the routine of ordinary life and in academic activity this is generally disregarded and not considered.

If we wanted to describe as ‘mysticism’ this experience of transcendence in which man in the midst of ordinary life is always beyond himself and beyond the particular object with which he is concerned, we might say that mysticism always occurs, concealed and namelessly, in the midst of ordinary life and is the condition of the possibility for the most down-to-earth and most secular experience of ordinary life.

He whom we call God dwells in this nameless and pathless expanse of our consciousness. The mystery purely and simply that we call God is not a particular, especially peculiar, objective piece of reality which we add to the realities named and systematized in our experience and fit in with the latter; he is the encompassing, never encompassed ground and precondition of our experience and its objects. He is known in this strange experience of

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transcendence, even though it is not possible here to define metaphysically more precisely the unity and difference between the experience of transcendence on the part of the intellectual subject in knowledge and freedom on the one hand and the experience of God himself on the other hand that is present in the experience of transcendence. Such a definition would be a difficult philosophical undertaking at this stage and it is not necessary here.

The fact remains that the boundless expanse of our mind in knowledge and freedom, which is inescapably always present unthematically in all ordinary knowledge, permits us to learn what is meant by God as the ground opening up and filling that expanse of the mind and its limitless movement. However and wherever it is brought about by a concrete, categorial object, transcendental experience is always also experience of God in the midst of ordinary life.

At this point an observation must be made, of which the philosophical and theological senses are linked in a peculiar relationship of mutual dependence. The unlimited transcendental movement of [198] the mind toward God has actually a radicalness that makes it tend toward God, not merely as an asymptotic goal, itself remaining always at an infinite distance, but as that which itself forms in immediacy the attainable goal of this movement.

Philosophically we can think of and hope for this radicalness by which God himself becomes in himself the goal of this movement, at least as a possibility that cannot be excluded; *theologically* we grasp this possibility as in fact given by God and describe as grace this actually available radicalness of the transcendental movement toward God's immediacy in himself up to the point one day of the immediate vision of God, for it is in this that the actual and ultimate nature consists of what we call grace, self-communication of God in the Spirit, and of what finds its ultimate fulfillment in the immediate loving intuition of God; *existentially* we freely grasp this radicalness of our movement toward God in immediacy, sustained by God's Spirit, when we surrender ourselves unreservedly and unconditionally to this movement of the Spirit as it actually ranges of itself, when in our freedom we set no limits to it, but let it in a sense swing out in its own boundlessness up to the immediacy of God himself.

If grace is so understood, as it must be grasped philosophically as possibility, seen theologically as reality, and existentially realized (thematically or unthematically) in hope, then, in the actual order of reality, experience of transcendence (which is experience of God) is always also experience of grace, since the radicalness of the experience of transcendence and its dynamism are sustained in the innermost core of our existence by God's self-communication making all this possible, by the self-communication of God as goal and as strength of the movement toward him that we describe as grace, as the Holy Spirit (at least as offer to man's freedom). The experience of transcendence permitting God to be present (because of God's salvific will in regard to all human beings, by which man is oriented to God's immediacy) is in fact always experience of the Holy Spirit, whether a person can or cannot interpret explicitly in this way his inescapable experience of the unknown God, whether or not he has at his disposal theological expressions such as those we have just been using.

There is something more to be added to what has just been said. It is true that all this applies to the average person in the ordinary activity of knowledge and freedom, at least where (but always [199] where) we find really intellectual knowledge and freedom, in which a human being as real subject is aware of himself and definitively disposes of himself. But this transcendental experience of God in the Holy Spirit is present in the ordinary course of human life only unthematically, covered and concealed by preoccupation with the concrete realities with which we are involved in our milieu and environment. In everyday life this transcendental experience of God in the Holy Spirit remains anonymous, implicit, unthematic, like the widely and diffusely spread light of a sun which we do not directly see,

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while we turn only to the individual objects visible in this light in our sense-experience.

But even if we disregard the question whether this transcendental experience of God in the Holy Spirit can occur quite independently (for instance, in phenomena of a formless absorption, in an attitude of consciousness emptied of objects of an individual character, in mystical experience), there are in any case concrete experiences in our existential history in which this transcendental experience of the Spirit always present as such is thrust more clearly to the fore in our consciousness: experiences in which (conversely) the individual objects of knowledge and freedom that concern us in ordinary life, by their singularity, bring to our notice more clearly and more urgently the accompanying transcendental experience of the Spirit; in which these objects of themselves silently refer more clearly than otherwise happens in our ordinary and banal daily life to that incomprehensible mystery of our existence which always surrounds us and also sustains our ordinary consciousness. Everyday reality then becomes itself a pointer to this transcendental experience of the Spirit, which is always present silently and apparently facelessly.

This reference – which our everyday reality grasped in knowledge and freedom as such always carries with it and announces more forcefully in certain situations – can also be implied by the positiveness of this categorial reality in which the greatness and glory, goodness, beauty, and transparency of the individual reality of our experience point with promise to eternal light and eternal life. But it is also understandable without more ado that a pointer of this kind is perceived most clearly where the definable limits of our everyday realities break down and are dissolved, where the decline of these realities is perceived, when lights shining over the tiny island of our ordinary life are extinguished and the question becomes inescapable, [200] whether the night that surrounds us is the void of absurdity and death that engulfs us or the blessed holy night already shining within us is the promise of eternal day. If then in what follows attention is drawn particularly to such experiences which bring to the fore in this second way the transcendental experience of God in the Holy Spirit, this does not mean that the human being and the Christian are forbidden to allow this experience of God to occur also in the first way indicated and to accept it. In the last resort the *via eminentiae* and the *via negationis* are not two ways or two successive stages of the one way, but two aspects of one and the same experience, even though (as we said) it is right for the sake of clarity to stress particularly the *via negationis*.

We may now at last begin to point to concrete experiences of life which, whether we are explicitly aware of it or not, are experiences of the Spirit, assuming only that we cope with them in the right way. In regard to these references to the concrete experience of the Spirit in the midst of the ordinary routine of life there can be no question of analyzing them in detail to their ultimate depth, which is in fact the Spirit. In this connection what was said in a formal preliminary outline of the real nature of all these experiences in general must suffice. Nor can the attempt be made here to offer a systematic chart of such experiences. All that is possible is to give a few arbitrarily and unsystematically selected examples.

Here is someone who cannot get his life's accounts to come out right, who cannot balance the entries in these accounts, consisting of good will, mistakes, sin and disasters, even if he tries (impossible as it may seem) to add repentance to these entries. The accounts simply do not add up and he does not know how he can insert God as an individual entry in order to strike a balance between debit and credit. And this person, unable to balance his life's accounts, surrenders himself to God or, to put it both more and less precisely, to the hope of an incalculable final reconciliation of his existence, marked by the presence of him whom we call God; trusting and hoping, he gets away from his unfathomed and uncalculated existence and does not himself know how this miracle occurs, bringing no advantage to himself and not to be regarded as his own possession.

Here is someone who can manage to forgive, although he gains no reward for it and the

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silent pardon is taken for granted by the other party.

[201] Here is someone who is trying to love God, although there appears to be no response of love from God's silent incomprehensibility, although he is not sustained by any feeling of enthusiasm, although he cannot confuse himself and his desire for life with God, although he thinks he will die of this love which seems to him like death and absolute rejection, which apparently calls him into the void and the wholly unknown: a love that looks like a terrifying leap into unfathomable depths, since everything seems to become intangible and utterly futile.

Here is someone who does his duty even when it seems that he can do it only with a burning sense of really denying and annihilating himself, when he can do it only by doing something terribly stupid for which no one will thank him.

Here is a person who is really good to someone from whom there is no sign of appreciation or gratitude, while the good person does not even have the feeling of satisfaction that he has been 'selfless', decent, and so on.

Here is someone who is silent, although he could defend himself, although he is unjustly treated; who is silent without being able to profit by his silence as evidence of his supreme irreproachability.

Here is someone who has to make a decision purely in the light of an innermost dictate of his conscience, a decision that cannot be made clear to anyone, in which he is quite alone and knows that it is a decision of which he cannot be relieved, for which he has to answer always and eternally.

Here is someone who obeys, not because he must or because he must otherwise put up with some inconvenience, but merely because of that mysterious, silent, impalpable reality that we call God and his will.

Here is a person who renounces something without thanks, recognition, or even any feeling of inward satisfaction.

Here is someone who is utterly lonely, for whom life is drained of all its colour, for whom everything tangible on which he could rely fades into an infinite distance, but who does not run away from this loneliness which is felt as the last moment before drowning, but endures it with resignation in an ultimate hope.

Here is someone who sees that his clearest ideas and the most intellectual operations of his thought are disintegrating, that in the breakdown of all systems the unity of consciousness and what is known consists only in the pain of not being able to cope with the [202] immense variety of questions and yet of not being allowed and not being able to cling to what is clearly known from individual experiences and from learning.

Here is someone who suddenly notices how the small rivulet of his life winds through the desert of banal existence, apparently aimlessly and with the terrifying possibility of completely drying up. And yet he hopes, without knowing how, that this rivulet will find its way to the infinite expanse of the ocean, even though this is concealed from him by the dark sand dunes apparently stretched out endlessly before him.

It would be possible to continue in this way for a long time and even then not to have visualized in particular that experience which for a certain individual is the experience in his life of the Spirit, of freedom, and of grace. For every human being approaches it in the particular historical and individual situation of his own unique life. Every human being? But he must admit it, dig it out, so to speak, from under the refuse of the ordinary business of life, and, when it becomes faintly visible, not irritably turn away from it, as if it only created uncertainty and disturbed the obvious course of his daily routine and his scientific clarities.

Permit me to say it once more, although I am merely repeating the same thing with almost the same words:

When, over and above all individual hopes, there is the one and entire hope that gently

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embraces all upsurges and also all downfalls in silent promise,

when responsibility is undertaken and sustained, even though no evidence of success or advantage can be produced,

when someone experiences and accepts his ultimate freedom, of which no earthly constraints can deprive him,

when the fall into the darkness of death is accepted with resignation as the dawn of incomprehensible promise,

when the sum total of all life's accounts, which we cannot work out ourselves, is seen as good by an incomprehensible 'other', although this cannot be 'proved',

when the fragmentary experience of love, beauty, and joy is felt and accepted as promise of love, beauty, and joy purely and simply, and not regarded with deep cynicism and scepticism as facile consolation in face of ultimate bleakness,

when the bitter, disappointing, and fleeting monotony of ordinary [203] life is borne with serene resignation up to its accepted end out of a strength whose ultimate source cannot be grasped and so cannot be brought under our control,

when we venture to pray into a silent darkness and know that in any case we are heard, although there seems to be no response from there about which it would be possible to reason and argue,

when we get away from ourselves unconditionally and experience this capitulation as the true victory,

when falling becomes standing firm,

when despair is accepted and mysteriously experienced as assurance without any easy consolation,

when man entrusts all his knowledge and all his questions to the silent and all-sheltering mystery which is loved more than all our individual perceptions that turn us into petty lords,

when we practise our death in the course of ordinary life and then attempt to live in the way that we wish to approach death, calmly and with resignation,

when . . . (as we said, it would be possible to go on for a long time),

then God is present with his liberating grace. Then we experience what we Christians describe as the Holy Spirit of God; then an experience occurs that is inescapable in life (even if it is suppressed) and is offered to our freedom with the question of whether we want to accept it or to barricade ourselves against it in a hell of freedom to which we condemn ourselves. The mysticism of everyday life is there, God is found in all things; here is that sober intoxication of the Spirit of which the Church Fathers and the early liturgy spoke, which we may not reject or despise simply because it is sober.

Let us look ourselves for such an experience of our life, let us look for our own experiences in which something of this kind happens precisely to us. If we find them, we have had what we mean by experience of the Spirit. The experience of eternity, the experience that the Spirit is more than a part of this temporal world, the experience that the meaning of man is not absorbed in the meaning and happiness of this world, the experience of risk and of overwhelming trust which really has no demonstrable justification based on success in this world.

From this standpoint we can understand what is the secret passion alive in those people who really belong to the Spirit and in the saints. [204] They want this experience, in a secret fear of being stuck in the world, they want to be continually assured that they are beginning to live in the Spirit. They have acquired the taste for the Spirit. While ordinary people regard experiences of this kind as unwelcome if not entirely avoidable interruptions of normal life with the Spirit merely providing the flavour and the trimmings of another and not wholly real life, the people of the Spirit and the saints have acquired the taste *for* the Spirit purely and simply. Spirit is in a sense drunk pure by them and not merely as a flavouring of earthly

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existence. Hence their odd life, their poverty, their desire for humility, their longing for death, their readiness to suffer, their secret yearning for martyrdom. This does not mean that they are not also weak. It does not mean that they do not also need constantly to return to the ordinary routine. It does not mean that they are unaware of the fact that grace can bless also ordinary life and rational behaviour and can turn all this into an approach to God. Nor does it mean that they do not know that here and now we are not and are not expected to be angels. But they know that man as spirit in his actual existence and not merely as a matter of speculation is meant to live really on the frontier between God and the world, time and eternity, and they are constantly trying to reassure themselves that this in fact is what they are doing, that spirit in them is more than a way of giving a human character to life.

When we have this experience of spirit, then (at least if we are Christians living by faith) it becomes *ipso facto* the experience of the *supernatural*. Perhaps very anonymously and inexplicitly. Probably even in such a way that we may not and cannot at the same time turn to catch sight of the supernatural itself. We know however, when we lose ourselves in this experience of spirit, when the tangible, the demonstrable and available, is lost to sight, when all that is heard is a deathly silence, when everything acquires the flavour of death and corruption, or when everything vanishes as in an ineffable, strangely white, colourless and incomprehensible bliss, we know then that what is active within us is not only spirit but truly the Holy Spirit. This is the moment of his grace. Then the seemingly unfamiliar unfathomability of our existence as we feel it is the unfathomability of God, imparting himself to us, the advent of his infinity that is pathless and appears to us as nothingness, precisely because it is infinity. When we have freed ourselves and no longer belong to [205] ourselves, when we have denied ourselves and no longer dispose of ourselves, when everything (including ourselves) has moved away from us into an infinite distance, then we begin to live in the world of God himself, the God of grace and eternal life.

At first all this may seem bizarre and terrifying and we shall constantly be tempted to take refuge in our more familiar and intimate world, in fact we must and may often do this. Nevertheless, we should gradually get used to the taste of the pure wine of the Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, at least to the extent that we do not thrust back the chalice when it is offered to us by his guidance and providence.

At this point the question might be raised as to whether we have not hitherto extolled a mysticism of ordinary life which is by no means properly Christian and not related to Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, but which can exist even apart from any explicit religious or theological interpretation. It is admittedly a question that cannot be answered adequately here, but for which some few hints of an answer will be given.

First of all, if and insofar as the experience of the Spirit mentioned above is present in a mysticism of ordinary life, even outside a verbalized and institutionalized Christianity, and is discovered there by the Christian in the life he shares with his non-Christian brothers and sisters or in his study of the history of religion, this observation need not upset the Christian. It merely makes clear to him the fact that his God, the God of Jesus Christ, wills the salvation of *all* human beings, offers to *all* his grace as liberation for the incomprehensible mystery, that the grace of Christ is effective in a mysterious way beyond the limits of verbalized and institutionalized Christianity and gives a share in the paschal mystery of Jesus even when someone who is faithful to his conscience has not yet been confronted by a convincing presentation of the explicit message of Christianity and has not yet been marked by the Christian sacraments.

An observation of this kind is not only not forbidden to the Christian when and where he can make it; he must also expect it, since his faith requires him to believe in the universal salvific will of God, which reaches its limit only at the personal mortal sin of an individual and even offers the grace of Christ again and again to every human being in his whole life.

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The grace of God (which the history [206] of the Crucified and Risen One made effective and irreversible in the history of humanity) is consequently the grace of Jesus Christ even when it is not yet explicitly and reflectively grasped and interpreted as such. This is not merely an opinion which a Christian may hold; it is part of his faith, which acknowledges the universal and supernatural salvific will of God for all human beings and forbids him to hold the opinion that this salvific will of God in Jesus Christ effects a person's salvation only when the latter has explicitly become a Christian.

If we also recall what we said about man's experience (radicalized by God's grace) of transcendence into the ineffable mystery of God, it becomes clear that this experience has something to do with the death of Jesus, whether this is explicitly considered or not.

The real experience of transcendence in the Holy Spirit accepted in freedom is primarily and ultimately not a matter of theoretical reason, but something that involves the *whole* person in the *concrete* history of his life and his freedom. In the last resort then it occurs at the point where it is impossible to stop at any individual reality of life as if it were final and absolute, where a final, autonomous self-defence is abandoned in free and liberated hope unsecured by anything else: in a word, at the point where dying is a passing into the incomprehensibility of God.

For the Christian who cannot and will not shut his historical existence out of his relationship with the absolute God, the moment of his mystical union with God and the climax of his experience of the Spirit is present, in the last resort, not in a sublime experience of mystical absorption as such, but in his death, even though the latter event must not necessarily take place at the very moment of his medical exitus and even though (conversely) truly existential dying as the final self-forsaking which is actual death may possibly (but necessarily) occur also in a mystical experience of absorption (assuming only that this experience is not regarded as secure and final before death in the ordinary sense of the term occurs).

It can be seen therefore that there is an identity between experience of the Spirit and participation in the victorious death of Jesus, in which alone the real success of our death is experienced and experienced within a believing community. In this life the chalice of the Holy Spirit is identical with the chalice of Christ. But it is drunk only by someone who has slowly learned up to a point to taste [207] fullness in the void, dawn in doom, discovery in renunciation. A person who learns this experiences the Spirit, the pure Spirit, and this is the experience of the Holy Spirit of grace. For this liberation of the Spirit comes about as a whole and permanently only in faith by the grace of Christ. But when he liberates this Spirit, he liberates him by supernatural grace into the life of God himself.

III

Before closing these reflections, two observations may be put forward, both of which lead us back expressly to the point from which our reflections started and from which, it is to be hoped, they never became entirely remote. What we mean is the connection between experience of the Spirit and the ordinary routine of life.

As always understood here, experience of the Spirit in the first place has nothing to do with an elitist sense on the part of the chosen, claiming to be the only ones so dedicated and setting themselves apart from the great mass of Christians and ordinary people. If what has been said hitherto is really rightly understood, experience of the Spirit in the sense meant here as such occurs always and everywhere in the life of someone who has awakened to personal self-possession and to the act of freedom in which he disposes of himself as a whole. But in most cases in human life this does not come about expressly in meditation, in experiences of

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absorption, etc., but on the material of normal life: that is, when responsibility, fidelity, love, etc., are realized absolutely, while even in the very last resort it remains a secondary question whether this activity is accompanied by an explicitly religious interpretation, although (conversely) it is not denied that a religious interpretation of this kind is right and also important as such. Meditation and similar spiritual 'exercises' are not thereby depreciated. They may be rehearsals, so to speak, for admitting and accepting in radical freedom fundamental experiences of the Spirit whenever they occur in life; these exercises can *also* (but not solely) be the point at which such experiences of the Spirit become clearer and more explicit and are grasped by man's ultimate basic freedom in such a way that they amount to a decision embracing the whole of existence and leading to salvation.

Christianity however is not elitist. The New Testament is aware [208] also of sublime experiences of the Spirit in the most varied forms, which can be summed up under the heading of 'mysticism'; but it also assures to all who love their neighbour unselfishly and thus experience God that final salvation in God's judgment which is not surpassed even by the highest ascent or the deepest absorption of the mystic. The New Testament then (even without expressly considering the matter) is certain that this unsurpassable salvation in the self-communicating Holy Spirit of God can take place even when apparently all that happens is the observance of the harsh duty of ordinary life and the resigned acceptance of death. The fact that such a fundamental experience of the Spirit (contrary to all elitist pride on the part of 'pneumatic' enthusiasts) can happen in the midst of ordinary life and how this can be regarded as possible: these things are just what our reflections as a whole were meant to show.

Admittedly, when there is a genuine concern for salvation, when God is loved, when a person learns increasingly clearly that he may never finally come to a stop on the way of freedom to himself (and thus to God), when he faces the terrifying and blessed excessive demands of the Sermon on the Mount, then neither will he ever refuse to follow at least those explicit ways of meditation and spirituality which are in fact opened up to him in the ultimately uncontrollable history of his life.

In the course of reading the letters of the apostle Paul, we come across his teaching on the charisms. These are not simply identical with a possession of the Spirit and an experience of the Spirit on the part of the person justified by faith; but they are intrinsically connected with this possession of the Spirit and the experience of it. They are regarded by Paul as diverse powers and commissions for building up the Christian community, continually assigned in different ways to individuals, never in their entirety to a single individual. They may (for instance, powers of healing and speaking in tongues) have an extraordinary, almost spectacular character; but they can also certainly be present in the form of more or less secular, everyday abilities, including, for example, ability to manage the funds of a community. Here for the time being the significance of these charisms for the building up of the *community* can be ignored. We can safely say that all powers and possibilities of Christian action, as authorized, sustained, and animated in the last resort by the Holy Spirit of God, are charisms, gifts of the Spirit.

[209] If at the same time we do not forget that the manifold and diversely assigned charisms are distinct from the possession of the Spirit which is one and the same in all those who are justified, it may perhaps be possible to elucidate up to a point the connection and distinction between possession of the Spirit and the charisms. Charisms, seen quite prosaically, are primarily individual commissions, individual abilities and individual offers, which the ordinary routine of a person and of his varied life puts before him. These possibilities are always more than an individual with his limited powers and time can actually realize. He must choose, distinguish. If he makes this selection rightly (that is, in the Spirit and in virtue of it) he can regard what is chosen really as 'charism', as 'God's will'.

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How is a choice of this kind made correctly? The masters of the spiritual life reflected and experimented considerably on the rules of such a discernment of spirits, of finding the will of God in the concreteness of life, particularly since they were sure that finding what is here and now concretely right is not *merely* a matter of rational consideration and theoretical moral theology. We cannot repeat here this teaching of the masters of the spiritual life. But, in the light of all that has been said up to now, we can perhaps very briefly add something of fundamental importance which combines once more the ultimate experience of the Spirit and these ultimately 'charismatic' individual decisions continually demanded by life. When such a choice of an individual object by freedom in the course of ordinary life is not only (this is an obvious assumption) justified rationally and according to the principles of a Christian morality, but also (which is not obvious) does not obstruct and does not obscure an ultimate openness to the real experience of the Spirit in unlimited freedom; when a Christian is aware of the presence of an ultimate synthesis (not to be produced at will, not open to rational analysis, but simply there as a fact) between the basic experience of the Spirit and the will for a particular individual object of his everyday freedom: then he is acting, not only reasonably and morally, but also charismatically. Of course a great deal of practice and spiritual experience is needed to see more clearly when a will for an individual object offered by ordinary life does not obstruct this fundamental experience of the Spirit passing into the apparently empty freedom of God and beyond all individual realities, but precisely as material and starting point of this experience of the Spirit offers it to an [210] effective synthesis between experience of the Spirit and everyday duty. But the experience of such a synthesis, in which a person abandons everything to admit the boundless mystery of God *and* makes the courageous decision for a concrete reality of life and the 'world', is possible and alone constitutes the totality of Christian life. In that life man forsakes everything with the dying Jesus in order to reach the inescapable and formless freedom of God *and* accepts lovingly the individual reality of this world intended for him in ordinary life in order to take it up into this Spirit of God.

Let us look in the very consideration of our life for the experience of the Spirit and of grace. Not to say: 'There it is; I have it'. We cannot find it in order to claim it triumphantly as our property and possession. We can seek it only by forgetting ourselves; we can find it only by seeking God and surrendering ourselves to him in self-forgetting love, without returning to ourselves. But we ought to ask from time to time whether anything like this deadening and reviving experience is alive in us, in order to judge how far the way still is, and how far away from the experience of the Holy Spirit we are still living in what we describe as our spiritual life.

Grandis nobis restat via. *Venite et gustate*, *quam suavis sit Dominus!* ('A long road still lies ahead of us. Come and taste, the Lord is sweet!')

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[211]

13

FAITH AS COURAGE

The theme ‘faith as courage’ was suggested to me by others. However unusual and surprising the suggestion to say something on this subject may sound at first hearing, I gladly accepted it. It gives me an opportunity to explain that Christian faith (and this is what we are talking about), contrary to popular impressions, is really a very simple affair and difficult only because it is the concreteness of something that we can describe as ‘courage’. All this assumes that this kind of ‘courage’ is understood in all its radicalness in relation to the totality of human existence.

Without claiming the competence of a linguistic philosopher, I think nevertheless that it is perhaps possible to distinguish between two groups of substantive terms. In the one group the terms have a quite firmly outlined sense, which can be defined even more closely by the exact sciences: a sense that unambiguously distinguishes them from other terms. Hydrogen, beetle, house, etc., may serve as examples of these terms. They define and distinguish an absolutely definite individual reality in the variety of our empirical experience of the world.

There is however a second group of terms which are quite different, although they cannot be denied sense and reality because of a demand for clear and exact speech. They are terms which have a particular starting point within human existence and nevertheless are not restrictive or conclusive, but – if the radicalness of their meaning is admitted – are open to the totality of human existence and reality as such. They are terms of a specifically human character and always involve the whole person. They involve the human person who as mind and freedom always reaches out beyond the individuality [212] and definability of particular realities within his empirical experience and thus in the last resort is always lost in that mysterious darkness which permeates and encompasses the whole of human existence.

The rationalistic positivist may say that terms like this are unscientific and should not be allowed to occur in science or in sober philosophy, which eschews poetry; what cannot be said clearly (that is, cannot be unambiguously determined in its meaning) must be passed over in silence. But is it possible to be a human person and to exist in a human way, while seeking to avoid terms like freedom, love, fidelity, joy, responsibility, fear, etc.? It is not possible. Terms like this however are lost into the totality of human existence, albeit from a particular starting point, and consequently cannot be defined in the same way as individual realities which have a quite definite place within human existence and its milieu. For this whole existence of man as one and whole is always imposed on the person; in his discouragement or irritation, he cannot therefore simply leave them aside as ‘incomprehensible’ or as ‘not clearly expressible’. When he asks and knows that ‘he’ is doing this, when he decides freely and responsibly and can no longer shift this responsibility on to others, then in fact he is always involved in this totality of his existence, no matter whether he is explicitly aware of it or ‘forgets’ or suppresses it in his preoccupation with a particular individual object which is clear or can be ‘scientifically’ made clear.

When he is very busy a person can in fact allow himself to be driven by the variety of the individual things in his life and by the detailed knowledge of these things and the particular moods they create; he can forget *himself* in all the thousand details of what he is doing and what he has: he can then *try* to make every effort to restrict himself to the area of language of the first group of terms. But even in this way he will never really get away from himself. The totality, the oneness of his existence, that he is trying to suppress and forget in the routine of his everyday life will emerge constantly out of its dark roots and present him and his freedom

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with the one and final question about his attitude to this oneness, what he wants to do with that and not merely with the thousand details of his life. In his concrete life of freedom and responsibility therefore no human being can live only with the first group of terms, which are those of what are known as the exact sciences. If he asks again what science, [213] truth, etc., are themselves, he is landed once more unavoidably in the field of this mysterious second group of words, which are inescapable even when he denies them the character of scientific clarity and unambiguity.

The term 'courage' is also one of those unavoidable terms which point to the mysterious totality of human existence. It is this term which will be considered now. What is to be shown is that this courage, if it is understood in its necessity and radicalness, is precisely what Christian theology describes as faith.

First, however, a brief preliminary observation to prevent the stated intention of these reflections from being misunderstood from the very outset. As we said, the terms of this second group refer to the totality of human existence. If a person speaks of freedom, he is primarily thinking of something different from what he means when he speaks of responsibility. Joy and fear, despair and hope, and so on, look at man's totality from different angles, describe different ways in which man's basic freedom approaches the one totality of existence. But since each of these terms always refers to the one human being in his unity and the boundlessness of his questioning and action, they always merge into one another, draw into themselves (by affirmation or denial) the meaning of the other terms; this means that they are not merely synonymous, but neither are they absolutely clearly distinguished from each other. This strange relationship between such terms (which can be barely indicated here) involves also the possibility of a variety of 'key terms' which become detached up to a point in the course of the history of ideas and faith of humanity. These key terms are meant on each occasion to throw light on the mysterious totality of human existence, but do so every time from a different starting point, are different and yet, if they are understood radically, merge into one another. Consequently, without on each occasion being involved in their ultimate task of giving meaning to the totality of human existence, they can either exist alongside one another or become separated in the course of the history of ideas.

The Christian is familiar with at least three such key terms: faith, hope, and love. All three are found in the New Testament, but the emphasis is different in its individual writings, so that *one* key term can also lead to the understanding of *another*. In Catholic theology (especially at Trent) the attempt has been made to distinguish these [214] three terms, describing the human and Christian basic realization of existence, as clearly as possible from each other and to see them as successive phases in which the one basic realization increasingly enters into consciousness. This effort may be regarded as wholly legitimate. But in the last resort it can be seen again and again that all three terms and each of them apart look to the one whole basic realization of Christian existence. Each of these three terms acquires its radical and full meaning only when it is 'elevated' into the other two.

There are, of course, in the New Testament other similar key terms, all of which belong to our second group: freedom, logos, light, truth, possession of spirit and grace, atonement, peace, righteousness, etc. All these terms (which in themselves are all or can all be key terms of this kind) have had a varied lot in the course of the history of Christian ideas, since of course the peculiar character of the age did not always permit them the same effectiveness in throwing light on the totality of human existence. Hence, in the course of this Christian history of ideas up to the present time terms arising mainly from the dimension of man's knowledge or from his individual concern for salvation – like logos, truth, intuitive vision of God, love, justification – had a function of this kind only for that particular epoch.

Today, however, in the age of creative freedom, of openness toward the future, terms like universal justice, emancipation, and hope can be more effective in this way as key terms.

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These new key terms do not simply abolish the old, but themselves, rightly and radically understood, in turn throw light on the old. If, for instance, someone really and radically hopes, he also believes and loves, since hope has always also an element of knowledge of faith as a constituent of itself and only reaches its own plenitude when hoping means love for the other or when loving is hope for the other.

If today perhaps hope is the 'principle', the key term, the term preferred among those belonging to the second group of which we spoke at the beginning, the term 'courage' promptly springs to mind. For courage in the last resort is hope and hope is not hope if it is not courageous. If then we consider the term 'courage', that is not to confer on it precisely the quality of an epochal key term for Christian existence, for each and everyone. But in the light of the term 'courage' the term 'hope' can be understood better and more radically. [215] It can become clearer that hope is not (as it is always in danger of seeming to be) a way of escape, feeble consolation, or, still less, 'opium of the people.' It can become clearer that hope is decision, deed, venture, all of which are typical of the courageous person. And, as we said, we shall try to show that such courageous hope and hopeful courage, if only they are sufficiently radical, are *eo ipso* the very thing that a Christian theology describes as faith in the strict sense of the term. This is not by any means to deny that the faith present from the outset in this courage must be developed and made concrete as actual Christian faith, if it is to reach its own fullness of being.

It is difficult to say what courage is. Not because we do not know, but because as a peculiar realization of the existence of the whole person it cannot be defined as a particular occurrence distinguished from many others, in the sense of the first group of terms of which we spoke; because it is related to the totality of human existence, because it is no more open to an adequate reflection or definition than is this existence itself; because the courage that we really mean here is not courage for one thing or another that we can do, but courage for ourselves in the one totality of the human reality.

Nevertheless, it is possible to provide many hints of the meaning of courage and in this way to bring it before man's reflex consciousness. Courage has something to do with uncertainty, with the danger of missing the reality to be actualized and sought by freedom, with decision. Certainly courage can and even should be co-existent with planning, calculation of opportunities. But courage is really required when rational reflection is faced by an obvious distance between the calculation of the possibilities of success and the deed as actually posited, a deed of whose success it is impossible to be certain before it actually occurs. The deficit between the precalculation of the goal and its prospect of success is made up in a deed precisely by what we call hopeful courage or the courage of hope. The distance between the deed as not adequately calculable in advance and the real deed is bridged by what we call courage.

The rational human being today has indeed entirely the right and the duty, in his undertakings and actions, to calculate in advance as accurately as possible and to try to achieve certainty. In advance of the deed, he must reduce the distance as much as possible up to the point at which in practice courage ceases to be necessary for the [216] deed. So, for example, the structural engineer knows with almost absolute certainty before the completion of a bridge that the bridge will hold and that consequently no courage is required to walk across it. But in a thousand human actions the distance remains, the effect to be realized cannot be adequately calculated in advance, no adequately comprehensive knowledge of all the factors of an action is possible, and if action has to be taken courage remains indispensable. This is true even in ordinary life with its thousands and thousands of particular undertakings. It is particularly true when there is a question of *that* deed and *that* courage for the deed which are related to the *totality* of the one human existence. In what follows we shall be speaking only of this courage.

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That there is and inevitably must be such a radical and total courage assumes of course that man as subject of freedom has to do, not only with one thing or another, with the thousand particular objective realities of his existence, with this partner, with that professional task, with this vocation and that individual difficulty, etc., but with himself as one and whole. The assumption we make for the notion of courage as it is meant here cannot now be justified more precisely. We assume that man as subject has to do not merely with an enormous mass of details of his life, by which he is driven or permits himself to be driven; in and through all these detailed realizations of his life he is himself absorbed as one and *whole*, whether he knows it explicitly or not. In real freedom man as oriented to finality is himself subject and object in one. He has not only to be concerned with a great deal and with a great variety of things in his life, he is concerned for himself as one: a task that we describe in a theological language as concern for salvation. In the varied business of his life he can forget or suppress this one and ultimate task. From being an 'I' he can become a 'one'. This being absorbed in ourselves, being condemned to freedom, being ultimately always responsible for ourselves, is however present even as suppressed and forgotten, and comes clearly to the fore in moments of solitude and final decisions, in the invocation of a final responsibility applauded by no one, etc.

If we may assume here what has just been merely indicated, it becomes clearer what is meant by that total and radical courage of which we want to speak. Man is imposed on himself in his freedom as one and whole, he is himself his one and ultimate task. But at the [217] same time he knows that the fulfillment of this one and entire task depends on a thousand conditions and causes that he cannot wholly understand and that are not within his own power. And over and above all this he experiences his own freedom as already posited and threatened in itself, he experiences what is most properly his own in his character as subject as mysteriously alien to himself.

For both reasons there exists here in the most radical and irremovable fashion that distance between the acting subject with its capacity, its power, its means which can be calculated in advance, on the one hand, and, on the other, what has to be done in this one life's deed: the ultimate and definitive self-determination in a fulfillment of the boundless possibilities initially present in man as mind and freedom, the ultimate self-understanding that a person does not merely passively accept, but gives himself creatively in freedom. He experiences this distance, since he experiences himself at the same time as the being with unlimited claims, as the person who can never definitively stop at a restricted goal, *and* as one who is powerless, the person doomed to death, who is always fragmentary, an unhappy consciousness. This distance is bridged only by absolute hope, by the anticipation of a fulfillment which is not one's own achievement, by a hope of an absolute future as possibly and actually offered, that we call God and know originally and properly only *in* this hope.

The decision for such hope implies however also that courage with which we are concerned here. In this courage the totality of human existence is hoped for as achieved; the ground of this hope is not an empirical detail which could be completely understood and possessed; this hope is founded on the incomprehensible God, and on this God as free. Man must then entrust himself to another's freedom and accept this, not as imperiling, but as redeeming. This hope has not really anything outside itself which could serve independently as its ground and security, since the ground of hope, called God, is experienced only in hope itself. But such hope is for that reason courage purely and simply.

Before we can prove that this hopeful courage is faith in the strictly theological sense, something important must first be mentioned. We can of course objectify and verbalize the nature, content, and ground of this hopeful courage (just as we have done here and as every religion does with the aid of the most varied formulations) and [218] realize a free act of courageous hope in regard to this reality as so verbalized. In other words it is possible to

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attempt expressly to hope courageously in an explicitly religious act. But however good such an act may be (and, under certain preconditions, even required) it is not simply to be identified with what we mean by this courageous hope. For in the first place it is by no means certain for man's reflective consciousness whether such an explicit individual religious act comes from that deepest centre of the acting subject from which the totality of human existence is really hazarded and surrendered, as redeeming and reconciling, to the ultimate mystery, called God. Not every religious act, however clear and well-meant, really itself disposes of the whole of existence for finality. Even if someone says sincerely, 'God, I hope in you, I love you,' it is far from certain that what is thought and said here really happens, that the person's whole existence moves toward God in a free decision from its innermost centre.

What is still more important, however, is that this hopeful courage can be realized very unthematically and without much reflection in the most varied free acts of life, without any attempt verbally to thematicize its nature in explicitly religious terms. If someone remains faithful to his conscience to the very last, even without reward; if someone succeeds in loving so unselfishly that in reality there is no question of a mere balance or harmony of egoisms; if someone quite calmly and without any final protest allows himself to be taken in the night of death; if the one life of a human being, despite all unceasing evil experiences and sad disappointments, opts for light and goodness; if someone, perhaps in apparently total hopelessness and despair, nevertheless hopes that he is hoping (since even hope itself cannot be established for certain as a solid fact on which further calculations could be securely based, but that very hope must be hoped for), and so on, then that courageous hope is always realized, even if it is not explicitly thematicized in religious terms. At this point man's freedom is at once identified with that hope which is the basic structure of human existence and continually offered to man's freedom throughout all the individual occurrences of life. In that very hope there is experienced and known what is really meant by 'God', even if this expression is not part of the vocabulary ordinarily used by such a person.

What is courageous and final about this free hope in courage is, [219] spread up to a point anonymously over the whole course of the history of human freedom. That, of course, is not to say that explicit realizations, verbalized in religious terms, of courageous hope are superfluous or worthless. On the contrary, they can be so many ways in which this generally anonymous hope becomes fully conscious. They represent the practice of this basic hope in freedom at the heart of existence. They protect the person as much as possible from the danger of failing to make the final act of hope in the decisive moments of his history of darkness and menacing despair.

This courageous hope however is itself faith in the properly theological sense of the term. Many theologians will readily admit that this hopeful courage has the character of a 'trusting belief', of a kind of provisional human form of faith properly so-called, but shrink from describing this courageous hope as itself faith, faith in revelation. They will say that this courage of absolute hope, essential as it is for a person's existence, is not yet to be described as faith, since faith in the strictly theological sense of the term is an assent to God's personal revelation, but this is not present in such a human hope as it were 'from below' and thus cannot be accepted in faith.

Conversely however the theological 'lay person' will perhaps be too quickly inclined to regard this hope as salvific faith, on the assumption that a person who seeks God in hope must certainly find him. This is true, but it does not answer the question raised by the theologian when he declares that faith, properly so-called, in revelation is necessary for salvation, appealing to Scripture, Christian tradition, and (when he thinks he cannot really see how this hope, this total courage, can itself be the response of faith) to God personally revealing himself.

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But it can certainly be said (and it can be admitted that the merely apparently naive lay person is right in this) that such hope is in fact faith in revelation, even though only in a rudimentary form that needs to develop into its full nature. Why? First of all, it must be remembered that freedom is always also an acceptance of what is concealed, unconsidered, in a decision of freedom. Freedom is always acceptance of a 'risk', always takes on more than it explicitly and reflectively intends. This is true especially of *that* act of courageous hope which is being considered here. For here man's one whole and never completely explicable existence is staked on God's incomprehensibility and freedom. Hope is centred on the uttermost [220] reality, on everything, in fact on God himself, transcending all particular individual realities and individual goods which man encounters in the course of his history. That it is possible to hope in this way not merely for a great deal or for one individual reality after another; that hope is of God in himself; that the movement of mind and freedom, transcending all individual realities that can be grasped successively, does not in the last resort peter out into the void or need eventually to come to a stop at any individual reality, however significant, as the sole really possible fulfillment, at a 'creaturely' good, but will reach God himself, the original fullness and creative ground of all individual realities; that God himself is the absolute future of our hope: these things do not amount simply to an obvious possibility of our own, but to a gift that might be refused, purely and simply grace. God himself is the innermost dynamism of this boundless movement of hope toward himself.

The very fact that God himself thus becomes by grace the dynamism and goal of our hope means that revelation has taken place. Grace, given to spirit as such, the possibility of hope founded on grace, anticipating God himself as its goal, this is revelation. It need not be explicitly grasped *as such* or explicitly distinguished from the rest of the experience of the spiritual subject of freedom, nor need it be expressly understood as distinguishable on each occasion from an isolated individual event. But this in no way alters the fact that it is a question of really personal divine revelation. It does not in fact take the form directly of the communication of certain propositions, but starts at the innermost core of the free spirit-person, opens up the latter in his dynamism toward the immediacy of God and thus gives him courage to hope for everything, that is, for God himself. When this innermost dynamism of man is accepted in freedom, when it is not diverted as a result of false modesty (implying a deep-seated secret fear of life) to a particular good as its ultimate goal, then what is described theologically as faith is *ipso facto* present.

Again, this acceptance in freedom of boundless and absolute hope must not be understood primarily as a single explicitly religious individual occurrence. When a person is faithful without any reservations to the dictate of his conscience, when in a final decision (despite all disappointments and adversities of his earthly experience) he does not reject an ultimate and absolute hope, then he surrenders in hope to the unrestricted, not wholly calculable movement [221] of his spirit. At that point there is revelation and faith. From the Christian standpoint, what is present there is the Holy Spirit, whether this can be explained in express terms or not. This courageously hopeful acceptance of one's own existence (which is released into the salvific incomprehensibility of God and his freedom) can take place in the midst of the dull ordinary routine of the average person, since even this ordinary average person cannot avoid such final decisions, even though they generally occur very unobtrusively. Consequently such a faith in courageous absolute hope is certainly something that can occur even where religion does not occur or scarcely occurs in thematic form. Such a faith can be present even when a person, for whatever reasons, hesitates to give a name to the incomprehensible and ineffable character of his existence. Courageous hope, which is real faith, is required everywhere and is found even among those who are merely anonymous Christians. Actual faith in the full sense of the term is possible only in free hope, which is absolute courage; and, conversely, such absolute courage of unconditional hope is itself faith

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in the Christian sense.

We must however also consider the courage of hope (which is faith) from quite a different aspect. We must think about the courage for explicitly Christian faith, for explicitly Christian hope. We might then get the impression that Christian faith with its almost incalculably great quantity of doctrinal propositions, dogmas, etc., in all Christian denominations, despite all denominational differences of opinion, is something quite different from the faith in hope of which we have hitherto been speaking. It might be thought that the courage required for the hopeful acceptance of existence as one and whole, oriented to the incomprehensibility of God, is something quite different from, more simple and more obvious than, the courage to cope in faith with the complicated doctrinal fabric of Christianity with its detailed theology.

Of course the one courage and the other are not simply identical. Not only from the evidence of solid everyday experience, but also in the light of the conviction of Christianity itself, it is certainly possible for a person to have that innermost faith in courageous hope for the totality of his existence as oriented to God, to realize it freely in the commonplace routine of his duty and love and yet *inculpably* to be unable to produce *that* courage which is required in principle from the Christian for faith in regard to Christian teaching as a [222] whole. In the vast confusion of religious and ideological opinions which are part of his life's situation, in view of the intellectual difficulties involved in the understanding of the Christian faith as subtly formulated and so articulated as to be almost incomprehensible, it is certainly possible for a person to abandon that faith without any real fault of his own and to take up toward Christian teaching the attitude of indifference and scepticism widespread today among both educated and uneducated people. But in principle it must be said that the courage for Christian faith properly speaking is nothing but the concreteness of the courageous hope of which we have been speaking up to now. In the last resort then it is a question of the same courage and the two forms of courage, which can certainly be distinguished, differ in fact only more or less as the seed differs from the flower.

In order to appreciate this, we must now ask what exactly Christianity teaches in its message, if the latter is grasped at its deepest level. Our answer can be given in two parts.

First, Christianity declares explicitly precisely what we have indicated up to now as the 'content' of the courageously hopeful faith on which we reflected here as best we could. It states then that we may hope that futility, darkness, and death by no means have the last word, that we may hope absolutely and boundlessly, that we are hoping for God himself and experience him in the unrestrictedness and absoluteness of this hope. It states that we may and must have the courage still to hope even if we have offered to this hope a desperate refusal in what is described in Christian terms as guilt and sin. It tells us that in this hope we may accept forgiveness particularly when our sin is hopeless and insurmountable as far as we ourselves are concerned. This courage, which, sustained by God himself, constantly breaks through the banality of our ordinary life and the weary scepticism of our mind, may be difficult and may call on the very last resources of our heart, resources which in fact are no longer our own. But in this respect the courage for hope that is in our existence and the courage of Christian faith are in the last resort the same thing. It may also be true that the religious explicitness of this hopeful courage within Christianity (as distinct from anonymous faith existing in the secular world outside Christianity) not only, as is certainly true, incites and fosters that anonymous courage for life of an absolute character which is faith, but also up to a point creates a [223] new difficulty for it, akin to the difficulties which an explicit theory of action can create for the spontaneous carrying out of this action instinctively and without reflection.

Second, in addition to this statement to the effect that the one and the other form of the courage of faith are really the same thing, distinguished only as an unthematic and a considered realization of existence, there is in Christianity a second fundamental statement:

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the statement about Jesus Christ. But what does this statement about Jesus crucified and risen really say? Properly speaking, only that here in this man doomed to death the absolute hope which was his and is ours was really achieved, reached its goal; that the consummation of the hope that is also ours became palpable and historical also for us in what we grasp in faith as Jesus' resurrection; that the fulfillment of our hope, which is the heart of our existence, has been promised to us by God in Jesus as also historically irrevocable. This is not the place to make clear that what has just been said about Jesus itself contains the rudiments of the classical orthodox Christology of all Christian churches. That ought of course to be explained in greater detail than is possible here.

If however we start out from the thesis, simply assumed here, which certainly relieves the dogmatic conscience of the ordinary Christian who is not a professional theologian, then the situation of the Christian today in regard to faith, his courage for faith, is relatively simple. He takes hold on Jesus, crucified and risen, on him who is plunged into the radical powerlessness of death and as saved is known in the faith of his disciples and of all Christendom; he grasps him then precisely as the historical happening of what he grasps for himself by hope in that courage of which we spoke in the first part of our reflections as the ultimate achievement of our existence.

Ultimate courage for existence and explicitly Christian faith in Jesus, crucified and risen, are not therefore two areas of the one Christian faith brought together externally as lying alongside each other. What really happens is that Christian faith grasps as fulfilled and achieved in Jesus and there also promised by God to *us* what the Christian (and, in fact, any human being) hopes for himself when he accepts in hope his own existence at the very point at which it is plunged into the incomprehensibility of both God and his own death. Despite the possibility and necessity of a thematic distinction between [224] fundamental courage for life and explicit faith in Jesus Christ, in the last resort these two factors are one. In the Christian they enter into a relationship of mutual dependence; since in his fundamental courage for life he believes in *his* 'resurrection' (that is, in; being redeemed in his own death), he believes in the resurrection of Jesus, which for him is not then a miraculous coincidence within the field of his purely external historical experience, but the historical manifestation of the structure of his own innermost existence grasped in hope. Since he is human, he gives his assent in faith and hope to the Son of Man, crucified and risen in Jesus. But likewise, conversely: since with the disciples of Jesus and a worldwide history of faith of Christendom in past and present he finds courage for faith that Jesus in his death fell into God's redeeming freedom and not into the empty void, the Christian has also the courage expressly to profess his own hope, which he always realizes (if not perhaps explicitly) in his existence, so far as he does not surrender himself in a final culpable despair. Since the Christian believes in the *God*-man, he has also the courage to believe in hope in himself and in his supreme possibility, the possibility of reaching the absolute God as his own most intimate life.

Of course, over and above its innermost core, which is related to its ultimate realization of existence in the courage of hope purely and simply, the Christian faith contains many individual statements, especially about the community of those who believe in Jesus as God's historically palpable self-promise to us (that is, about the Church), about the sacraments as the concrete realization of the Church in the life of the individual, about Christian life and, thus, about Christian morality. But all these further dogmatic and moral theological statements, so far as they become relevant and binding in the light of particular situations in the life of the individual, can always be differentiated at a variety of levels and thus related to and derived from this ultimate faith in the risen Jesus, a faith in Jesus himself which for the Christian is his fundamental courage for life. Hence there is no need to speak here about all these varied explications of Christian faith.

It can happen in the light of his concrete possibilities and situations in life that the

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individual Christian in his fundamental courage for life does not succeed in actively linking the derivations and, references in particular statements of faith to the centre of his faith [225] in Jesus, the Risen One. He should not then deny these individual statements, for he has neither the right nor the obligation to do so in view of the faith of Christendom as a whole; but for the time being he may patiently leave them aside and simply entrust the further explication of his own actively realized faith in the explicit totality of the Church's faith to the further development of his own sense of faith, a development to which he remains open in principle.

It is by no means so certain that we really have an ultimate and total courage for life centred on our existence as definitively achieved. For such courage is always the act of our freedom in the depth of our life. But a person can fail to accomplish this act, however firmly or defiantly he stands up to the thousand details and individual tasks of his life. But when there is such a courage for total hope in the success of our one whole existence, in the success which itself is grace and rooted in the incalculable freedom of another – of God – and precisely in this way hoped for in the ultimate courage of existence, then faith in the Christian sense is present and achieved in freedom. But when a person looking to Jesus, crucified and risen, accepts as historically palpable and as confirming his ultimate courage for life the answer to the question raised by his hopeful courage, then Christian faith is present in its explicit and proper form. This kind of human and explicitly Christian courage of absolute hope is both difficult and easy.

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[226]

14

CHRISTIAN DYING

I. PROLIXITAS MORTIS

1. Introductory Preliminary Remarks

Reflections on Christian dying are prior to eschatology properly speaking, although they are on its borderline. This means on the one hand that theological reflection on dying must refer to those phenomena of human life which are not really part of man's definitive mode of existence in his consummation, but belong to the life of history in the present world and to a freedom not yet fulfilled, and can consequently be experienced in principle in the way in which human experience, enlightened by revelation, is related to other factors of human life and its history of freedom. But on the other hand, despite all experience of dying, we can speak appropriately of Christian dying in the light of the event of death and the dawn of eternal life only by looking to death itself as such and to the permanence of the eschatological consummation which it involves. The experience of dying can thus always be lived and understood in a Christian way only in the light of the knowledge of faith in regard to the condition of being dead and to the final consummation. How these two elements of dying can be coordinated with each other in a Christian death and what hermeneutical principles result from this mutual relationship are questions which would have to be discussed at the beginning of eschatology properly speaking. In this reflection then death will be discussed as the advent of consummation only insofar as this is indispensable for the understanding of Christian [227] dying. If and insofar as we must say of Christian death substantially what is usually said about death in dogmatic theology, this is unavoidable from the nature of the case and creates no special difficulties, as long as it takes into account a preliminary glance at general and individual eschatology. But the fact remains that our theme here properly speaking is Christian dying. And to that extent it is possible to discuss here particular themes which are not usually discussed in a dogmatic theology of death.

For a great variety of reasons arising from the nature of the case and from traditional habits the theme of *dying and death* is never treated completely and comprehensively at any one point in a Christian dogmatic theology, even though this as such would not be impossible, if it is appropriate to conceive a Christian doctrine of faith as an 'anthropology' of salvation history in the comprehensive sense of the term and thus perhaps to concentrate all the themes related to dying and death at one point. However that may be, it is possible to find in different parts of this dogmatic theology important statements on dying and death which must be presupposed here and cannot really be repeated in all their breadth and depth. We may refer particularly to the treatise on man as sinner and to the treatise on the cross, dying, death, and descent of Christ into the underworld, in these two treatises especially, what is essential about dying and death is said, since both are understood in a Christian sense only if they are seen and realized as both the manifestation of the sin of the world and of the sinful condition even of the Christian and also a dying with the redeeming death of Christ. This means that on the one hand not everything mentioned in these two treatises can be entirely omitted here, but on the other hand these things may and must be repeated only in a kind of formal abstractness referring back to their full content in the original treatises. But conversely a number of things must be discussed in regard to the theme of dying and death which could certainly find a

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place in other parts of a dogmatic theology. For, fundamentally, there is no element of a Christian anthropology which, if it is really to be understood in a Christian sense, need not be confronted with the doctrine of death in a Christian understanding, whether this happens or is overlooked in a traditional theology. The orientation of human existence as a whole to death is in reality, as a co-determining factor, part of any treatise on a dimension of human existence, of a theology of mind and knowledge, [228] of a theology of freedom of a theology of human fellowship and love, of a Christian description of the basic realizations of human existence (fear, hope, joy, despair, trust, etc.), and so on, since this 'being for death' co-determines everything in human life and imparts to the latter its uncertainty, its openness to mystery and its ultimate seriousness. This more or less transcendental occurrence of death in the totality of human life, the whole of anthropology as theology of death, can of course be put forward here only in a very rudimentary fashion and in a somewhat arbitrary selection. Otherwise the whole of dogmatic theology would have to be repeated here.

2. Fundamental Option and Clinical Death

The point of the theme of Christian dying to be discussed here would be missed from the very outset if death were seen only in the generally accepted sense, as consisting in those biological and medical occurrences which directly and immediately closely in time lead to death, to being dead. Specifically, Christian dying (insofar as it is supposed to be not sheer suffering, but a Christian deed in freedom) cannot simply and certainly be located in the last hours of a human being, since as human and Christian he may perhaps be no longer capable of such an act of dying and yet the latter may not simply happen (even though this act may be conceived under certain conditions as produced without much reflection and 'anonymously', depending on the individual's disposability even within the history of his freedom). For this reason dying must be recognized as an event that is taking place throughout the whole of life, even though at all times with varying intensity and with a fresh application of the freedom that accepts death in life or protests against it. This *prolixitas mortis* (as Gregory the Great describes it) must be borne in mind. In this connection we must at once issue a warning against a possible misunderstanding: we should not ascribe to death as an event corning at the *end* of life and only there peculiarities (apart from those to be mentioned later) which we deny in principle to other moments of time within the life of a human being.

At the moment (immediately before or in or 'after') of death everything possible can 'happen' that we regard as conceivable, that we [229] may presume, for which we can appeal to accounts given to us by those who have endured more or less the agony of dying and nevertheless escaped. But in principle to ascribe to the moment of medical decease a theological significance that cannot belong to any moment in the rest of life, to assert that in the moment of clinical death and only at that point there occurs man's real and comprehensive act of freedom in the total disposal of his existence for or against God, since this passing alone offers an adequate situation and opportunity for it: this is an assertion which is not probable in the light of empirical psychology and biology,[1] can be supported

[1] Medical and psychological scrutiny of dying people and those who have been 'rescued' after 'death' from heart failure may yield interesting factual conclusions. These facts permit us to hope that in very many cases of a slow passing there occurs a phase in which the individual's physical condition makes his personal surrender to his destiny of death easier and consequently that the basic act of the history of human freedom is possible also at the time of clinical death. But this in no way alters the fact that there is no return to the present life after a real death (from the very nature of actual death as the definitive end of the history of freedom) and that all accounts of dying are accounts of experiences before death and that there is no guarantee that what sometimes happens on these occasions must always happen.

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only with the aid of ideas savouring of mythology, and which theologically is neither probable nor necessary. If and insofar as the total disposal of freedom in regard to our own existence before God (for or against him) has to be understood as localized at all as such at a definite point or at definite points in time, although in our reflection we can never or (apart from a mystical 'confirmation in grace', traditionally accepted in mystical theology as possible, even though considerable misgiving must be expressed in this connection because of man's continuing and always threatened history of freedom) rarely determine with certainty where exactly such a moment lies within the temporal course of our life's history; that moment need not in any case simply coincide with the moment of clinical death, since, as we said, empirically this is extremely unlikely in the majority of cases and theologically in no way necessary. It is the same even if we take an optimistic [230] view of salvation for as many as possible or for all human beings (and this is the hidden motivation for this false hypothesis) and assume that they are saved despite the empirical appearance of their sinful life. For on the one hand our general thesis to the contrary does not exclude the possibility in individual cases of a more or less exact coincidence in time of the final basic option for God and clinical death, and on the other hand it is possible to think of a sufficient number of other ways of an explicit or of an unthematic character in which this fundamental option could occur within the course of life. The assumption behind this understanding of a totally free decision for or against God that does not need to happen mysteriously at the very moment of physical death (as, for example, Ladislaus Boros seems to think) lies in the fact that we understand and take seriously the *prolixitas mortis* in life itself as the permanent and inescapable even though unthematic confrontation of freedom with death in the whole course of its history.

3. Experiences of Oncoming Death

We are not yet going to provide the ultimate existential-ontological and theological justification of this idea of *prolixitas mortis* throughout the whole of life in the light of the nature of human freedom. (This will be attempted in section 2 of the second part of this chapter.) At this point it is a question only of straightforward indications of various experiences which herald the coming of death and do so from very different aspects.

(*a*) There is something like an experience of death even when there is no question of suffering and sickness in the proper and ordinary sense of the terms. The transcendental constitution of man, who in all his mental achievements of knowledge, freedom, production and in all other intellectual-personal achievements aims at a particular categorial object and at the same time (even though generally only unthematically) surpasses it, produces to a continually increasing extent the experience of the finiteness of his milieu and environment and thus, too, of himself and consequently that 'disappointment' as a basic mood of our existence which the Preacher in the Old Testament described in radical terms at an early stage. This very experience itself is a presence of death in which all the 'disappointing' [231] individual realities of life perish and thus the finiteness of the subject itself becomes a matter of radical experience. Here there is an experience of dying inwardly that is not an individual occurrence here and there in the course of life, but a basic mood permeating all things,

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The question whether individuals have been 'raised from the dead' in the sense that they really died and yet returned to this earthly life (Lazarus, etc.) is one that cannot be examined here. It would be impossible to clarify the many preliminary questions. Certainly those who were resuscitated in this way had not died in a theological sense of death as the finality of a personal life's decision. But it is impossible to explain here what this 'not dying' means in the concrete, not even on the assumption that the stories of raising from the dead in Scripture and in the lives of the saints can claim historical validity.

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whether the latter is accepted in freedom and resolution or not.

(*b*) This basic mood makes itself felt as warning and herald of death whenever suffering, failure, and the like are experienced, as something that even an average, everyday consciousness regards as what ought not to be. All this (which need not be presented here in detail in its thousand shapes) is every time a partial death, no matter what attitude a person takes toward it. Something perishes that the person judges to be possible, realizable, and desirable, and yet he is deprived of it. Hence the theodicy relevant to suffering in the world, possible only in the hope inspired by faith, is an element in the theodicy of death, and vice versa. At the same time we should be under no illusion that bravery, rationality, and so on could *so* remold and transform all these disappointing experiences, that the 'maturity' of a person could be so effective and assured and thus the success of 'heroically' coping with death could be established. Consequently there will be no attempt at this point to produce (once again) a theodicy of death in terms only of an unconditional surrender of man to the incomprehensibility of God in what in the last resort is a self-evident hope; it would in fact be nothing but the understanding of faith, hope, and love in regard to God's incomprehensibility in face of death, before which alone the meaning of these basic Christian achievements can be made radically clear. This is true then also of that *prolixitas mortis* which consists in suffering of every kind in individual and social life.

(*c*) This infiltration of death is felt most clearly in real (that is, dangerous) illness, for it is the danger of biological death as directly perceptible. That is why in the Old Testament also death through sickness as distinct from a smooth fading out of life at an advanced age was regarded as particularly hard and problematical and liberation from sickness as a special mark of God's favour. Even apart from all the discoveries of modern psychosomatic medicine, sickness is distinguished as a total human phenomenon and not merely as a disturbance of man's biological dimension, because in the light of our very ordinary experience (even though not clearly verifiable [232] in every individual case) it threatens and reduces even man's intellectual and free subjectivity, diminishes or withdraws from man the possibility of reacting to it, so that this helplessness of the subject itself is an element in a really human and not merely biological sense. But in this way and not as a purely biological disturbance sickness points and tends toward that endpoint of life in which man as a whole is deprived of himself and his sovereignty, and which we call death. The experience of a sickness rendering the whole person helpless up to a point itself shows that human death is not to be identified simply with clinical death understood in terms of natural science with its immediate causes. By its individual peculiarities also sickness proves to be as such preeminently *prolixitas mortis*. The impossibility of completely foreseeing and manipulating sickness; the helplessness into which it thrusts us; the special, remote relationship to society into which it forces us; the solitude and the curtailment of possibilities of communication; the weakening of the capacity for active self-direction; the permanent uncertainty of any interpretation of its 'sense' and its causes within the total structure of a human life; the burden it imposes on the people around the sick person; the withdrawal from an efficiency-oriented society; the sick person's experience of being useless to others; the impossibility of integrating sickness meaningfully into a plan of life, and many other peculiarities of sickness make it a herald of death.

4. Memento mori

In the light of this constant presence of death in the whole course of life Christian wisdom has always been aware of a *memento mori*. If and insofar as dying and death amount not only to a purely passively endured happening at the end of life, but also to an active deed of man

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(as will be explained more precisely in the second part of this chapter) and if this act, as we said, cannot be located simply at the moment of the advent of death in the medical sense, then for the Christian, coming death cannot be something which does not concern him 'for the time being', something that he might now suppress as much as possible. Within life he has to live with death. This happens primarily and fundamentally through all those accomplishments of freedom in which a person accepts with resignation the [233] finiteness of his milieu and environment and of himself in hope of the incomprehensible and thus abandons the attempt to regard as absolute anything that can be experienced in itself; this sort of thing happens also when someone simply accepts as unanswerable the question of his ultimate identity and his relationship to God as sinner and (as he hopes) justified before God. This ultimate acquiescence, too, is an anticipation of that 'night in which no man can work'. But, in addition to these basic, even though unthematic realizations of a *memento mori*, in Christian life and in the life of the Church there is rightly an explicit remembrance of the prospect of death. There is no need to describe here in detail these ways of keeping death in mind, of explicit preparation for death, of organizing life with an eye on death, etc. Despite their derivative character, they are of great importance, since in the light of man's nature the reflex thematicizing and practising of basic realizations, which, whether accepted or rejected, are in any case inescapably present in human life, is of great importance for the very reason that it renders more secure retrospectively the true and radical acceptance of these basic realizations by fundamental freedom and because man is bound in principle (of course, only insofar as it is possible) to make these things secure.

5. *Styles of Dying*

In the history of the Christian life and also in the history of the life of mankind as a whole there can be found obviously varying styles of dying. The method and custom of a particular society presents to its individual members a definite style of dying, to be preferred as right and proper, at least for the 'normal' case. In Christendom, too, there are such 'rules for dying' and they have not always simply remained the same. In particular a certain style of dying was expected from those holding important positions in the Church, a style in which their rank, their responsibility for others, their Christian faith, could be presented as an example. Formerly, a Christian died within his family circle, said goodbye there, blessed them, had a few last words to say, asserted his orthodox faith and his Christian hope, etc. It is very different today, when, as a result of thrusting the sick into the impersonal atmosphere of public hospitals, dying has largely become [234] styleless. This may be deplorable and need not simply be accepted as inevitable; but it is part of that lack of style (that is, shapelessness) which we accept as belonging to death and thus also to dying, which in the last resort is beyond our control. The individual styles of dying possible to a Christian and up to a point being successively eliminated in the course of history need not be described here in detail. Their alteration and the continually changing concrete circumstances of dying, which determine this style on each occasion, are also part of that radical uncontrollability that is proper to death. Thus all that remains to be noted here in theological terms – as distinct from those of a (perhaps ecclesial) cultural history of dying – is that the Christian is bound to the Christian Church's style of dying in the 'normal case', that is, when the concrete possibilities are available and can be realized without recourse to extraordinary measures, insofar as he is 'bound' to die in an explicitly Christian way. Concretely, this means that he is expected to receive the 'last sacraments'. An attitude of this kind, in which there is also realized an indispensable readiness to accept death, is present (to put it circumspectly) according to general Christian feeling also when the dying person can regard himself as being at peace

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with God, as justified, and thus the 'last sacraments' are not for him the obligatory mode of sacramental reconciliation with God and the Church. The exact form of this obligation to an ecclesial 'style of dying' can be examined in a work of moral theology.

6. Advent of Death

The question of the advent of death, that is, the criteria according to which a person is already dead or is still living although unconscious, is in itself primarily a question of a natural empirical anthropology. But it has theological consequences for the Church's practice: for example, for the decision as to whether a Christian can still be given the anointing of the sick. Since and insofar as death in a theological sense is the end of an historically personal life in freedom, it can be said today that death has come at the point where the functions of the brain as the foundation of this life have irreparably ceased, no matter whether other 'organs' of the person continue to 'live' or not.

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II. DYING SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF DEATH

1. Official Statements of the Church

We come at once to the official statements of the Church on death. The reason for this is simply that the Christian tradition on death cannot really be set out in all its fullness at a later stage, so that it is possible only to put forward the essentials of this tradition in a certain formal abstractness.

(*a*) What strikes us first all in these official statements is that not all aspects of death or, consequently, of dying find adequate expression in this teaching. Of course Jesus' death as the crucial salvation event is frequently mentioned, but at the same time the real nature of this death is not clearly considered nor is there any attempt to deduce from it statements of the magisterium about human death as such. It is also shown there that death is the consequence, the 'penalty', of original sin, but its positive significance for salvation is scarcely given clear expression in the statements of the magisterium. In addition to this hamartiological aspect of death, little more is stressed than the fact that 'all' human beings must 'die' and with death the mental-personal history of man passes directly into the definitive permanence of the subject and its history before God; in other words, the idea of a migration of souls, of reincarnation, etc., is incompatible with a Christian understanding of man and his death. In view of these gaps in the teaching of the magisterium on death, it is not very important how we are to arrange these somewhat amorphous statements. Some observations on the meaning and limits of these statements of the magisterium are here directly linked with the presentation of this teaching.

(*b*) Death is seen as penalty (*poena*) of original sin (DS 146, 222, 231, 372, 1511-1512, 1521, 2617). This teaching need not be described here in detail. It is sufficient to refer to the treatise on sin. Insofar as 'original sin' as compared with grave personal sin can be called 'sin' only analogously, can certainly be understood as an historical and universal condition of man's freedom and must be regarded as an element in the 'sin of the world' (while, admittedly, the lack of grace resulting from sin must be seen as part of this situation in the sense that there would be this lack of grace from the [236] dawn of history if it had not been surpassed by the redemption of Christ), death, too, is a penalty only in an analogous sense, a penalty really surpassed by the death of Christ and thus turned as such into a redemptive

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event. The *relativity* of the hamartiological interpretation of death (insofar as it comes from 'Adam') is not explicitly brought out in the texts of the magisterium on death as penalty for sin, but it may be assumed as implicit in them if the other statements of Scripture and tradition on the positive meaning of the death of Christ (and of Mary) and on death as dying with Christ (cf. DS 72, 485, 3901) are given their full force. Neither is this 'penalty' to be understood as an additional element, as God's reaction attached as it were to sin extrinsically, but as a consequence of the intrinsic nature of sin itself. Nor can the penal character of death consist in the appointed ending of man's history of freedom *as such*. For it is part of the nature of a creaturely history of freedom to reach a definitive consummation in a unity of restraint and freedom, a consummation which might as such also be called 'death' and which is prior to the distinction between guilt and innocence. It will be explained at a later stage what exactly is the element that enters into this 'death' in the concrete history of man and makes this 'death' into death in the traditional sense as penalty for sin (as understood in the doctrine of original sin). Then it must also be seen how the character of death as penalty for sin can be compatible with the teaching against Baius and others (DS 1955, 1978, 2617) that death is a 'natural' characteristic of man.

(*c*) With death comes the *finality of man's basic option*, which permeates his history and in which he disposes of himself in confrontation with God, set before him by world and history (DS 410, 839, 858, 926, 1002, 1306, 1488).[2] With this official teaching of the Church, which, with certain qualifications still to be indicated, must be understood as the teaching of faith, a number of theories are rejected as incompatible with the Christian understanding of man and the seriousness of a unique history. These include the theory of an apocatastasis (at least and certainly also merely as a firm, theoretical statement, as distinct from a hope, that respects God's sovereign and unknown disposition and the openness of every history of [237] freedom known to us)[3] or the theory of a migration of souls (metempsychosis, reincarnation). From both aspects however it can be said with some caution that this doctrine of the uniqueness and permanent validity of every personal history secured by death is certainly true when such a history of freedom has actually occurred. Every human being and Christian has to admit that in his own life he must allow concretely for such an absolute and definitive history of freedom has actually occurred. Every human being and Christian has to admit that in his own life he must allow concretely for such an absolute and definitive history of freedom and can never discard the burden of such a responsibility, that he must presume such a history of freedom in every other human being when he encounters rational life in freedom in the course of his secular experience. But, despite the declaration of the Fifth Lateran Council (DS 1440, cf. 2766, 3771, 3998) and the ordinary understanding of faith in the Church, it can be said that in the last resort we do not know how or whether this doctrine of the always unique history of freedom passing through death into finality is to be applied to those who die *before* the moment at which, on the basis of ordinary experience, we would be inclined to ascribe to them an actual decision of freedom in the radical sense; nor do we know whether in fact everyone who is 'adult' in the sense generally understood really makes *that* decision of freedom of which the official teaching of the Church says that it is raised by death into finality. From the Christian standpoint, all that we can really say must be about the 'normal case' of humans and Christian life, we must take this seriously on each occasion for ourselves, read official teachings of the Church which seem to go beyond this normal case

[2] Cf. also *Collectio Lacensis* VII, 567; Pius XII: AAS 47 (1955) 64-65.

[3] At the same time of course we are disregarding our profession of faith on the eternal redeemed state of Christ and of Mary and the teaching of theologians that the saints solemnly canonized by the Church have certainly gained eternal happiness. But it must be remembered that the good news of salvation and of God's victorious salvific will certainly does not permit us unconditionally to expect that the possibilities of life on the one hand and of death on the other form part of the content of the Christian message in precisely the same way.

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more or less as broad, general statements, not intended in the last resort to express anything purely and simply about marginal, if very numerous, cases; for the rest, we must admit an ignorance which in the last resort is obvious from the nature of the case.

[238] The Church's official teaching says nothing about whether death as biological demise (understood of course within the totality of the one person) implies as such the finality of personal history or whether the coincidence of biological death and the end of personal history arises simply from an independent decree of God, who could also have decreed otherwise without destroying the unity of man's body-soul nature. This question has been disputed in theology up to the present time. But, as will be repeated later, it will be appropriate to opt, with Aquinas, for the first alternative and also read the official statements of the Church in the light of this assumption.

(*d*) The Church's official statements on death include also its *universality* (DS 1512), which extends as widely as the universality of original sin. In view of the literary genre of these ancient narratives, the old question as to whether Enoch and Elijah were exempted by a special privilege from this universal law has ceased to be relevant today. The same certainly holds for the question of whether, according to Scripture and tradition, those human beings whom we think of as existing at the end of the whole course of history will die or enter 'alive' into the consummation of history. In any case they will experience 'death' in the sense that it is the consummation decreed by God of their history of freedom. And, beyond this, there is no more to be said except that all, living or dead, come in the end to the consummating immediacy of God in judgment. Insofar as Paul, too, speaks in the light of the hypothesis of his eschatological imagination (1 Cor. 15:51), it is impossible to deduce from his work any dogmatic decision on this question.

2. Death as Close of the History of Freedom in the Presence of the Pardoning God

(*a*) The doctrine of Sheol, as found at least in the older strata of the Old Testament, speaks of a shadowy continued existence of the dead. But if in the first place we read these texts 'literally' (which is not the same as 'correctly') they suggest that these dead are remote after death from God, deprived of his power and care, of no account. But if this doctrine is not to create great difficulties for us in regard to the inerrancy of the inspired Scripture of the Old Testament, this imagery must actually be an expression of the devout person's conviction [239] in Old Testament times that with death an absolute definitiveness and a real end is reached. Despite its vivid imagery, the doctrine of Sheol does not really provide a view of a world beyond death, is not meant to indicate the substance of a 'hereafter' as such, but refers purely and simply to death as such, in order to see it in the radicalness in which death brings to an end the life of man as one and whole. If the later parts of the Old Testament (in the doctrine of the resurrection and in a differentiation of the lot of individuals hereafter according to moral standards) and the New Testament (in developing further belief in the resurrection of the just and in view of Jesus' resurrection and the indissoluble union of the believer with the Lord) offer the dying person a hope, this hope, arising from the basic experience of the Old Testament of the radicalness of death, cannot consist in the fact that the dying person is promised a 'further' life that on the one hand might be understood as 'living on' with different means but in the last resort in the same style, and that on the other hand would be bound to raise the question of why in this further life there might not be new moral decisions, conversion, etc. Only on the ground of the radicalness with which the earlier strata of the Old Testament bring the life of the whole person to an end at death can the later hope of an eternal life hereafter be rightly understood.

This life is not a continuation of earthly life; on the contrary, it is only by this afterlife that

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the impossibility becomes clear of escaping the radical importance and the inalienable seriousness of the responsibility of freedom even by a flight into the void, since this eternal life is nothing but the finality (as redemption or perdition) of this earthly life and its subject possessing it in freedom. If we think in terms of biblical theology and at the same time evaluate positively the Old Testament's radical experience of death and yet (in the same light however) go on to the New Testament hope, it cannot be a question of the conception of an immaterial intellectual subject surviving and 'going on' as soul after the biological death of the body, but of seeing the one human being radically affected by death and nevertheless inescapably burdened and hoping with an absolute responsibility of freedom. That is not to say that a positive appreciation of a Platonic theory of the 'immortality' of the spiritual soul is not at all possible, particularly since even the Western Christian tradition understands the fundamental definition of man within the [240] scheme of a distinction between body and soul and death accordingly as separation of body and soul (cf. DS 991, *animae separatae*; and DS 1000, *ante resumptionem suorum corporum*, etc.).

From the original starting point of Scripture, however, it is understandable that the one fate of the one human being should be seen as a resurrection of the dead, a resurrection that does not come subsequently as the lot of the body as additional to that of the soul; that the doctrine of the judgment (in the last resort impossible to systematize) sometimes places that judgment as an event occurring at the death of the individual and sometimes as what happens for all at the same time at the end of world history. If all this is considered without tacitly assuming a positivistic understanding of revelation, then it must be said that for the theology of Scripture death sets an essential internal limit as a *consummation of freedom* from within and not merely an end of the history of moral freedom assigned arbitrarily by God 'on the occasion' of biological death. Otherwise the ancient doctrine of Sheol could have no *positive* meaning for us, but would raise the unanswerable question as to why it had not been simply erroneous even in its earlier form. The later teaching in the Old Testament and particularly in the New on an eternal life of a positive character could not be understood as a radicalization of what was really meant by the doctrine of Sheol, but would be merely additional, leaving it still obscure why a supplementary teaching had not developed only out of the experience of Jesus' resurrection, but had also been present at an earlier stage. If it were to be said here that this teaching had developed out of the conviction of Yahweh's irrevocable fidelity to the people of the covenant and from the feeling that a history leading pointlessly to breakdowns must have a meaning in the sight of this God of fidelity, this would be merely another way of saying what had hitherto been meant: there is only this one earthly history, which is ended by death as its internal limit, and this history has an irremoveable finality and permanency before God.

It is from this standpoint alone that the fundamental meaning of particular texts, especially of the New Testament, is really to be appreciated. The final sentence of the judge of the world with its irrevocable consequences is related to man's deeds accomplished in his earthly life and to nothing else (Matt. 25:34-46, etc.). The time of earthly life is the day that is followed by the night when no one can [241] work (John 9:4). We must work 'in the body', 'while we have the chance', and this alone is the standard of the final judgment (Gal. 6:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:10). The free sovereignty of God frequently stressed by Scripture, with which he decides on the death of a person, need not mean that the restriction of the opportunity of merit is based on a divine decree external and additional to the nature of death, but is assured simply by the fact that man's death as such by its very nature has in itself a passive, incalculable element not completely at man's disposal.

If we disregard the always sparse remaining supporters of an apocatastasis doctrine from Origen onward or interpret this doctrine as the expression of a universal *hope* impossible to work out in theory and consequently permissible, then it can certainly be said that the

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Christian sense of faith was always and unambiguously sure that death is the end of the history of human freedom, in which that history is raised up into an enduring finality. As we said, it remained and still remains a matter of dispute in this Christian tradition whether the finality of history arises from the nature of death as a biological event (affecting however the totality of man) or whether this death and the end of personal history are linked with each other by a supplementary decree of God. It has also been said that the first alternative is accepted here, because otherwise it is quite impossible in the last resort to see that this connection can be revealed or how it can be revealed. (If someone wanted to say that this link, despite the lack of an essential connection between death and the end of the history of Jesus, arose with his death as *such* and consequently this link had to be accepted also with all other human beings, then it must be recalled that the actual experience of Jesus' resurrection – however much it must be understood as something new and fundamental – is also and indissolubly associated with the belief in a future resurrection of the just: a conviction existing even before Jesus' time, which must have been formed legitimately, and, as indicated above, could have emerged only on the assumption of an essential connection between death and the end of history, even though Scripture never explicitly considers the reasons for this connection.)

(*b*) The understanding of death as the elevation of the history of freedom into its finality must take into account three factors simultaneously: the intrinsic nature of freedom; the unity of the self-realization of the corporeal-historical and spiritual-personal human being; [242] the precise nature of the consummation which is made possible for freedom and required of it. As a result at least of the third factor, the doctrine with which we are concerned here belongs properly to the field of the mysteries of faith and is not merely part of a philosophical anthropology. If the doctrine in question here is derived from these three factors, that is not to deny that a clear and certain understanding of the factors can equally well be conceived up to a point in the light of the conviction of this doctrine, of a conviction attained unthematically but firmly rooted in life. In its fundamental nature freedom is not the ability to do or to omit one thing or another of a categorial nature, but the basic condition of the subject in its transcendentality, in which it disposes of *itself* for finality.

Freedom thus opens up history, but this history is by no means the opportunity of being able permanently to go on into the void, to be occupied with what is irrelevant (since it is always open to revision), but is precisely the opportunity of establishing something really definitive. The inalienable responsibility imposed on the subject in its freedom, which alone makes the subject what it is as such, would not exist if the self-disposal of the subject could at any time be revised, so that each particular decision would become irrelevant since it could always be revised and replaced by another; the subject could always relieve itself of itself and its freedom, continuing into a future of empty opportunity. Freedom would possess an infinite potential which would make it, not more significant, but irrelevant in everything it really brought about. The fundamental nature of freedom is therefore the opportunity of a 'once and for all' disposal by the subject of itself, a definitive self-disposal. This uniqueness of a self-disposal, which aims at being definitive and irrevocable, in man of course has a temporal extension and dispersal throughout the multiplicity of single moments that make up the corporeally historical life of man. The uniqueness of this free self-disposal is not something lying behind man's spatio-temporal life, the latter being merely the ultimately superfluous projection of a fundamental option, timeless in itself, on the part of the subject of freedom on to the conveyor belt of time; this uniqueness occurs within time itself, but is not annulled by the multiplicity of the individual moments of time. For this very reason however the uniqueness of the one total self-disposal by the subject of freedom of itself as one and whole cannot be regarded as bypassing spatio-temporal historical life, it is pointless [243] to think of this corporeal history of freedom as continued beyond death as the end of man's historical

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corporality; otherwise this self-disposal of man would be placed from the very outset and always somewhere outside his spatio-temporal history, but in such a way that this history itself would be understood as no more than an appearance spread around true freedom and concealing it. If the history of freedom continues in death after the end of corporeal history, then history properly so-called was never actually present as such in this spatio-temporal life. But a person who is down-to-earth and Christian is aware of only one history, which is true history of freedom before God and thus possesses unfathomable depth and absolute radicalness, but occurs in the course of the ordinary routine of life.

If we introduce into this context the third factor mentioned above, this both renders more acute and clarifies the problems involved in the conviction that man achieves the uniqueness of a final self-disposal in an earthly history spread over space and time and only there. If this self-determination decides on an ultimate and definitive relationship to God, who makes himself in his most intimate reality and in immediacy the ultimate content of this history of freedom and thus in particular of the finality of this history, this certainly imposes an enormous and ultimately incomprehensible burden on the problem of this unique history of freedom of a spatio-temporal subject of freedom. How can a subject of this kind, with the creaturely finiteness of his freedom and in the poverty of his spatio-temporal history, really and definitively and once and for all decide for or against this infinity of his real life, which is purely and simply God himself? But if we regard this as possible and as Christians *must* so regard it, this possibility also provides some relief to the problem with which we are concerned. A preexistence or migration of souls, the disclosure of opportunities of freedom that lie before or after or behind this corporeal history of ours, even apart from the fact that they are not comprehensible in the light of sober experience, provide no help toward a solution of the actual problems involved here. If it is a question of a decision of freedom, involving radically the infinity and permanent incomprehensibility of God in himself, then this opportunity is not made any easier to understand if we say that man can cope with it if he has a few more opportunities of freedom available to him behind, before, or after his earthly life.

[243] The theory of a migration of souls can be attractive only if we have in mind the particular categorial contents purely of moral life: then the impression may be given that man needs more and better material on which to achieve his moral decisions than he is granted in the course of a short and miserable life. But if we consider the nature of freedom as the one self-disposal into immediacy before the incomprehensible infinity of God, an increase (that always remains finite) of the historical material provided is no answer to the basic question presented by the nature of freedom as self-disposal toward God. Even additional material always remains incommensurable with this basic nature of freedom. If we wanted to avoid this incomprehensibility of a decision for or against God as such, produced by a finite material, then no idea of a migration of souls or anything of that kind would help; all that would remain would be the possibility of a never completed realization of freedom and the denial of the Christian teaching that freedom can really have something to do with God pure and simple. But *such* a freedom would contradict the basic Christian sense that, at least by grace, we have to do with God himself and in the last resort would become irrelevant and irresponsible, since it could only continually choose options open to improvement. What has been said does not of course decide the question touched on above, whether there are not phenomena of human life that do not in fact involve any history of freedom in a Christian sense (ending of life at an embryonic stage, biological life that never comes to ‘the use of reason’, etc.) and whether in such a case the attainment of an eternal consummation must or can be conceived.

(*c*) The history of freedom of the subject’s decision in regard to itself in its relationship to God as self-communicating grace, ending with biological death, is *in a dialectical*

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relationship to man's disposability which finds its radical manifestation in death. Only in the dialectic between freedom and disposability, completely radicalized in death and in such a way that the concreteness of this dialectic is still absolutely hidden from man, is the real nature of 'infralapsarian' death present, that makes it possible for death in this hidden dialectic (beyond our understanding) to be the manifestation of sin and redemption and liberation. As present in knowledge, human freedom has an infinite horizon, particularly since on the one hand in the concrete order of salvation this freedom has to do with God himself [245] in immediacy and on the other hand this freedom is not related solely to those finite realities which it can produce or achieve in a popular sense, but at least in the form of free renunciation or unselfish recognition can be related to everything. But this infinite freedom is nevertheless finite in its concrete realization; it is faced from the outset by certain finite preconditions and restrictions of its possibility; it always has its own place. But if freedom properly so-called is not placed behind or before or after its encounter with the concrete realities which draw this freedom to themselves, then it must be said that, although it is related to the infinite God as such, this freedom retains in itself as realized the finite categorial constituents which draw it to themselves and thus always remains finite and controlled freedom. Only in this way can the consummation of freedom be the permanent finality of man's history. Over and above this, freedom is aware of being finite and under control, since it is aware of itself as set up, as initiated by an infinity which is not itself, just as the boundless transcendentality of man's knowledge does not make the latter an absolute subject, but makes him aware of his beginning as appointed by absolute being and thus of his createdness.

This disposability of finite freedom, both by its nature and also in virtue of the material of its environment and milieu drawing this freedom to itself, is experienced radically and irrepressibly in dying and death, no matter where precisely this radical experience (which must not necessarily occur at the very moment of clinical death) has possibly to be located in life. Wherever the experience is made as an act of freedom accepting its radical finiteness within the one and unique act of freedom of life, it reaches in dying and death its complete realization and manifestation. For at that point man is drawn away from himself and rendered powerless. Because he is deprived of everything of which he can dispose and the subject of freedom is withdrawn from itself, freedom is seen in the last resort as something granted and assigned. Insofar as freedom is aware of itself as finite as it is actually situated, man's radical disposability in death cannot be understood as something external to the one and unique act of freedom by which a person disposes of himself for finality; this disposability of man in death is in fact an *intrinsic* element of the one act of freedom consummated in death by which a person disposes of [246] himself before God. Death is both man's final self-determination *and* final, irrevocable disposability,[4] even if we try to appreciate better the active-passive finalization of man and his freedom by identifying the moment at which he is rendered utterly powerless with the point in time at which clinical death occurs, while assuming the man's free self-disposal of himself takes place at some other moment within the course of life. Even then the unity of the history of freedom, to which the factor of disposability is intrinsic, would keep together these two factors in the unity of a specifically human death. This unity is also involved particularly as a result of the fact that the absolutely proper 'object' of freedom is the very acceptance or rejection of this disposability, that is, of finite creatureliness, which enters into our experience precisely through the infinite horizon of freedom.

[4] It is no different with suicide, which has only the semblance of a self-disposal greater than that which is present in normal death. In this respect, too, freedom acts in the light of existing factualities, not determined by ourselves, and tends toward powerlessness. The theme of suicide, incidentally, must be left to moral theology, however much it needs to be considered as a whole by an anthropology and however often it is there made to seem too easy and too simple.

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At the same time of course this passive disposability of man conceals the nature of freedom as self-disposal. In death it seems as it man no longer has anything on which self-disposal can be achieved as the means of its self-realization or as if all former results of his individual free acts as elements of the one and entire self-disposal had been annihilated. And conversely the act of freedom in the boundless range of its possibilities can always spread the impression of an absolute autonomy and conceal the disposability of freedom, so that eventually biological death would present itself as something that really does not touch the person properly speaking and his freedom. But since the appearance exists on both sides and all appearances are deceptive, since moreover in his fatal impotence man cannot break down this impression, nor can he judge or effect the dialectical relationship between absolute powerlessness and absolute deed from a higher standpoint, particularly also since (because of the impossibility of adequate reflection) the act of freedom as such cannot be judged in its concrete reality with certainty in the light of explicit knowledge: for all these reasons death has the character of hiddenness and of an insoluble question. No one knows [247] concretely what sort of death he will face. He must see it as the event of active finalization of the one act of freedom of his life; he experiences the same death as the height of his powerlessness; he knows that his freedom must accept this powerlessness while hoping to the very end; he cannot tell explicitly and with certainty where and how, in living or dying, the opportunity of such an acceptance by an act of freedom has been given to him in his powerlessness and whether he has actually accepted it. Insofar as this death involves the approach of God's incomprehensible mystery, embracing both the incomprehensibility of his nature and also that of his freedom in regard to man, the incomprehensibility of death becomes definitive in its hiddenness.

3. Death as Manifestation of Sin

(*a*) Attention has already been drawn to the texts of the Church's official teaching which speak of death as the penalty for original sin. But it was also pointed out that statements of the Church's magisterium nevertheless describe death as 'natural', as a consequence of man's natural essential constitution. As the teaching of the Church and of tradition is that in the first justification (at least as achieved in baptism) not only are original sin and personal sins remitted, but also all punishment due to sin, so the traditional theological formulation was that death for the justified person had the character only of a *poenalitas* and not of a *poena*, although and even because death comes also to those who are justified. In the first place the term *poenalitas* is one that conceals rather than illuminates the problem facing us. For it is not clear how the empirically existing factuality, at least apparently permanent for all (justified and sinners) can be at one time a punishment and at another merely a *poenalitas*. Nor does the explanation that the punishment due to original sin is turned by justification into a mere *poenalitas* bring out the positive importance for salvation of the death of the justified person, an importance that cannot be denied to this death as dying with Christ and in view of Jesus' salvific death.

As far as the first problem is concerned, it can of course be said that death can be a pure *poenalitas* also because it is itself natural and a consequence of man's natural being as a biological organism. [248] But then the question again arises as to how death can be conceived and experienced as punishment, if it is a natural essential consequence in human existence. Certainly in human life there are particular occurrences and injuries which are contrary to man's natural being and thus can be seen and experienced under certain conditions as 'punishment'. But if such a penal character is to be assigned to death as a *universal* natural phenomenon, this penal character and the experience of it cannot be seen as

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related to man's natural being. But if something that ought not to be (without which punishment cannot be conceived) is present in death, this can be understood only as relative to the claims which man as a being committed to a supernatural goal and endowed with the offer of God's self-communication by grace rightly raises and simply cannot fail to raise. In order to understand the penal character of death, it must also be made clearer what there is in man that ought not to be (purely relative to his supernatural destiny, since the character of death as the consummation bringing to an end the history of freedom in deed and endurance evidently cannot be seen as something that ought not to be) but under any circumstances belongs to man's nature.

(*b*) The penal character attributed to death can therefore consist only in what was described as the *hiddenness of death*, insofar as this is or can be experienced as something that ought not to be, relative to man's supernatural elevation, at least as a retarding factor that must be overcome in the development of man's life under the influence of grace. In the first place it is at least not unthinkable that a history of freedom can clearly grasp, in the increasing radicalness of the fundamental option gradually integrating all plural elements of human existence, the success of this process of integration and thus the outcome of the history of freedom. This cannot be unthinkable, since man actually has at least partial experiences of this kind of maturing, of the growth of his 'identity', of at least a partial 'integrity' which overcomes (up to a point, at any rate) 'concupiscence' as the nonintegratedness of many of man's realities into his free fundamental option. From this standpoint in the first place it is at least not positively contrary to man's nature as subject of freedom, even though not completely attainable by his natural being, that in his history of freedom, which finds its consummation in the finality of his self-disposal (described in a metaphysical sense as 'death'), he [249] should experience the complete success of this process of integration, which means that the hiddenness of death ceases when it becomes an act of freedom by the endurance of a helpless passivity in which the subject and the outcome of his act of freedom are withdrawn and concealed from him in life. For there are styles of dying and death in which (at any rate, as it appears to us) a death in 'integrity' is attained at least asymptotically, where someone can die 'old and weary of life', where death is freely accepted in complete peace and final composure, in possession of the intrinsic results of a life brought to its fullness.

It should not be claimed that (apart from Jesus) such a death in pure integrity, where what is really meant by 'concupiscence' has been overcome, is ever fully realized. But it can be seen from such approximations that a 'death' in integrity without this hiddenness of death, depriving the subject of freedom of the clear and palpable outcome of a life, is not under all circumstances contrary to man's nature. If then the official teaching of the Church and the teaching of the New Testament explain death as 'payment' for sin and the experience of man (which can or must be seen as affected by grace) in which a protest is made against the darkness of death and its concealing powerlessness is regarded in this teaching as justified and 'encouraging', then it can easily be understood that the real punishment of sin consists in this hiddenness of death; it can be understood that this situation corresponds to man's natural being, but need not be present in human existence under the influence of grace, that this hiddenness of freedom in concupiscence and death would not have appeared if there had been grace at the beginning of the history of mankind and increasingly at the end, and consequently this hiddenness of death is seen in the light of this grace and the experience of it as something that ought not to be, as a punishment of sin.

(*c*) Contrary to a widely held opinion, it must now also be said expressly that death in its hiddenness is not merely an expression and manifestation of that remoteness of God which humanity brought on itself by sin at the beginning, in 'Adam'. Closer consideration of the New Testament statements on death (Rom. 1:32, 6:16, 21, 23; 7:5, 9, 10; 8:2; James 1:15;

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similarly in John) shows that it is regarded there as also the *consequence of serious* (*unremitted*) *personal sins* and (as with original sin) as intrinsic, essential expression [250] and manifestation of these personal sins also in the total corporeal reality of man. Death then is the manifestation of the one 'sin of the world', beginning with 'original sin', built up from the sin of mankind as a whole, and manifested not only in the internal and external situation creating suffering for the individual or in the bad social conditions that can never be completely removed but also in concupiscent death, death as hiddenness.

With the principle that death is the expression and consequence also of personal sins the teaching of Paul can be connected without more ado, that there is a link between *death* and a *law of God* that is not under grace. If the law of God apart from the grace of Christ in fact (even though contrary to its own original and intrinsic intention) becomes the dynamism of sin (1 Cor. 15:56), it is understandable that mere law, by rousing man's sinful protest against itself, produces death as the consequence of this sin, not only death of the soul, but also death purely and simply, including also man's bodily ending in the peculiar form in which-we actually experience it, that is, in its hiddenness (2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 7:5, 10, 13).

(*d*) In this connection attention must be drawn also to the link attested in Scripture and the Church's official teaching between *death resulting from sin and the devil* (Heb. 2:14; John 8:44; Wisd. 2:24; Gen. 3:13, 19; DS 1511). As death is the consequence of sin, so, too, it appears in Scripture as expression of the devil's sphere of power as ruler of the world. If and insofar as the 'sin of the world' is connected with the 'authorities and powers' that we sum up and interpret in the term 'devil' and that are part of the situation in which and in the light of which the sin of the world takes place, the relationship between sin that means death and the devil already exists in principle. To describe this relationship more closely would lead us into an angelology and a demonology that cannot be discussed here.

(*e*) Death is the most universal of all realities and everyone admits that it is natural and a matter of course for us to die. And yet in everyone there is a concealed protest at this end and an irresolvable horror of it. A metaphysical anthropology alone cannot explain this fact. If it recognizes that man as a spiritual being is 'immortal', that his death is 'natural' to a biological nature, and that by the very nature of freedom he cannot want merely to live on endlessly, it is really impossible to see why he is so afraid of death, unless that fear [251] is no more than the expression of frustration of a purely vital drive for self-assertion, the very thing that fades out at death: thus the problem of the fear of death is distorted.

At this point the testimony of Christianity comes in. Man rightly has *a fear of death*. For he was and is expected in the act of his life (carrying with it an element of passivity that admittedly can be integrated as such into his freedom) to raise up his history of freedom into finality and in this sense to 'die'; but he ought not to have to suffer this darkness of death, since even now he has within himself that vitality of divine life which, if it had been able to find pure expression from the beginning in this world of ours, would have outdone death from the outset. The fact that man dies and is not simply brought to fulfillment is the consequence of sin at the dawn of the history of humanity as a whole and of all those sins in which man makes the sin at the beginning and the situation it created his own. This consequence is not a punishment inflicted by God, breaking in upon man from outside, without having any intrinsic material connection with the punishable offence, even though of course death as suffering and as a rupture inflicted from outside, as the 'thief in the night' which it always is, is concretely under God's free decree and thus always carries with it the character of the intervention of a judgment of God. But what especially comes to the fore in death is sin.

Emptiness, hopelessness, surcease, insubstantiality, the indissoluble conjunction of supreme deed and sheer instinctive submission, of utter clarity and fundamental dubiousness: all these peculiarities of the death that we actually die are nothing but manifestations of sin,

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to which the same peculiarities belong analogously in a higher and more hidden dimension of the subject of freedom. But since the creature belonging to God, by its very nature as elevated by grace, shrinks from the ultimate mystery of emptiness and helplessness and nothingness, from the mystery of wickedness, and since – holy or sinful – as long as it lives it is always driven also by the power of the divine life that calls it and is active within it, this creature feels a secret dread (not self-explanatory) of death as the rising to the surface of visible life of that which alone is death properly speaking. If it wanted really existentially to conceal this horror of death by simply interpreting it as a fact of life, whether by taking refuge in superficiality, [252] by taking refuge in despair or in a tragic heroism, then it really would turn this death into that aspect of it which rouses an unadmitted terror: the advent of eternal death.

4. Death as Dying with Jesus and as Event of Grace

(*a*) It was pointed out earlier that death as dying with Christ, so far as a person dies in grace and from it, does not find any clear expression in the Church's official teaching or in textbook theology. Textbook theology only says, with reference to the Council of Trent (DS 1515), that the death of the justified person is not really a punishment for sin, but only, like concupiscence, a mere consequence of sin, *poenalitas* and not *poena*, which God permits for the testing, purifying, and probation for the justified person, something to be wrestled with. We spoke about this at an earlier stage. But the New Testament has more to say about the death of the justified person. There is a 'dying in the Lord' (Rev. 14:13; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:18), a dying that is not really death, since anyone who lives and believes in Christ will never die (John 11:26), a dying with Christ that gives life (2 Tim. 2:11; Rom. 6:8). According to the New Testament, the acceptance in principle of the death of the death of Christ takes place of course by faith and baptism, so that dying with Christ and the gaining of new life even now secretly permeates our present life (Rom. 6:6, 11; 7:4-6; 8:2, 6-12, etc.).

Apart however from the fact that these statements of the New Testament assume that real death must be understood as an axiological factor permeating the whole of life and also as an act of freedom, if dying 'during' an earthly Christ-like life shaped by faith and the justification that comes from faith is not to be dissolved into an ethical-idealistic conception and to lose any connection with the reality of death, we must conclude from these very statements of the New Testament that for the justified person actual dying, too, determined of course by life, considered as the end-event, is a dying in Christ. But this means that death itself in the person endowed with grace is to be regarded as a salvific event, while of course this death must also be seen as an act of freedom recapitulating that person's life; it can then remain an open question at what point in time this act as such occurs in life, to what extent it coincides in time with the [253] biological cessation of life or is distinct from the latter. Those who die in faith are 'dead in Christ', not only because they lived their earthly life in Christ, but also because their dying itself was in Christ. If and insofar as death as an act of man is the event that gathers together the whole personal act of man's life into the one consummation, and if in 'death' there occurs 'pragmatically', as Eutyches said, what had occurred 'mystically' at the sacramental high points of Christian life in baptism and the eucharist (that is, assimilation to the Lord), then death must be regarded as the culmination of the work of salvation and its final acceptance.

(*b*) What has just been said refers only to a fact attested in Scripture, but it has not yet really been made clear how this *dying with Christ* in our death is to be conceived. This further question as such would best be answered by referring to the theology of Jesus' dying and death, since this death as a once and for all event was not only effective of 'objective'

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redemption, but, in view of Jesus' consubstantiality with us as man in grace, it is also of the same nature as our death, and since Scripture says more and speaks more clearly about this dying of Jesus than about our own death as such. But at this point we cannot refer again expressly to Jesus' dying and death. All that can be done is to draw attention once more quite briefly to the fact that Jesus did not redeem us 'on the occasion' of his death in a moral achievement of obedience, love, etc., which would have had nothing to do with death as such, but that this redemption came about by the very fact that death as manifestation of sin, as the visibility of the emptiness and hopelessness of this sin, as domain of eternal darkness and God-forsakenness, was accepted in faith, hope, and love, and transformed in the midst of desolation and loneliness into the manifestation of the obedient surrender of the whole person to the incomprehensibility of the holy God. All this must always be kept in mind, if the dying of the justified person with Christ in grace is to be rightly understood.

(*c*) We are attempting therefore to gain an understanding of death as dying with Christ in the light of the *nature of grace*, while assuming always that this grace is the grace of Christ, which is given by him and for him and incorporates our life into his life and conforms us to him. We must then briefly recall what is the real nature of grace and then show that dying and death constitute a situation corresponding to its nature and excellent for the free realization of grace. [254] Grace consists fundamentally in God's self-communication to enable man in freedom by faith, hope, and love to accept the immediacy to God that is offered to him. Since and insofar as grace makes God purely and simply the immediate goal, content, and condition of the possibility of an immediate relationship to God, grace and its free acceptance always imply a self-abandonment, a self-transcendence above all finite realities (among which the human subject of freedom itself must primarily be counted) toward the incomprehensibility of God as blessed fulfillment, attainable only 'ecstatically'. In that sense, in every act sustained by grace toward God's immediacy there is an element of self-surrendering, 'renouncing', becoming free, which is also explained in Scripture by the assertion that faith, hope, and love 'remain' (1 Cor. 13:13), that is, they are also elements of the eschatological consummation, among which particularly in hope (but also in the vision of God's incomprehensibility and in love) the peculiar character of a self-abandoning getting away from self is plainly evident.

This character of a 'renunciation' does not of course remove the possibility of a blessed consummation, since man as creature (which he remains even in a supernatural consummation) finds himself only when he radically submits to God's disposal, seized and overpowered by God and not an autonomous subject; when, in other words, he summons up courage (again by God's act of grace), embracing and surrendering his whole existence to believe, hope, and love, that he finds himself only when he loses himself to God. But as long as freedom continues in the present world and this realization of its nature has not yet become blessed and obvious factuality, but still remains an overtaxing task which may not be accomplished, as long as freedom still coming to be is situational, there are undoubtedly situations in which the element of renunciation in every realization of grace becomes clearly present as task, manifestation, and import of this realization of grace. Certainly we may not adopt a more or less tragic attitude, assuming that grace and its realization are present only when and insofar as 'renunciation' (to the point of extinction) is imposed on man. This is contradicted by the fact that the bliss of eternal life is the supreme act of the grace of Christ, that the positivity of the finite and not only its negativity has a positive relationship to God, that a positive relationship to reality distinct as such from God can certainly be an internal element of man's relationship [255] by grace to God. But man's experience and the event of the cross of Christ as redemption in death as such show that at least in practice the situation in which the element of renunciation (present as such in every act directed toward God as grace-given goal) appears in a particularly harsh form and to immediate experience as exclusive, is

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the situation preferred for the event of grace in the present order of salvation. Insofar as Christian teaching sees the peculiarity of this situation of renunciation as 'infralapsarian', as consequence of sin and thus of the freedom of sinful man and of God as 'permitting' sin, the situation is not made absolute, as if we knew and could say that it could not be otherwise and that, to use gnostic terminology, it arises solely from the mysteriousness of God himself; but on the other hand this situation of renunciation is explained and maintained as the universal and inescapable situation of our self-realization toward the immediacy of God.

This renunciation as present in the very nature of grace and inescapably required of us in our infralapsarian situation reaches in death its unsurpassable culmination. Since in death as an event affecting all humanity man is deprived of everything and thus even of himself, since in death the actual success of the act of freedom in which as a justified person he accepts and approves this self-withdrawal in death remains hidden, in our infralapsarian situation (in which the subject cannot realize itself in integrity and cannot grasp the effect of this realization in final bliss) death is the culmination of the grace of Christ crucified and thus a dying with Christ. At the same time it cannot be overlooked that part of this renunciation in death is to accept in self-denying freedom the fact that this concealed and concealing death in particular need not have been, that 'essentially' things could have been different, so that death now contains within itself the acceptance of its own not derivable and not 'ideologizable' facticity.

(*d*) None of this of course means that dying and death are the mode of realization only of an 'abstract' renunciation. This self-abandonment radicalized in death is in fact an aspect of the realization of grace as faith, hope, and love. Dying can be an act of *faith*, since it thwarts any recourse by man to a categorial justification of faith or (if that is perhaps an exaggeration) since this justification of faith in terms of fundamental theology in the light of man's intramundane rationality proves to be something that simply cannot produce [256] faith as such. Dying is *love* of God insofar as this renunciation in freedom required in death is brought about as the effect of a love in which God himself is loved for his own sake and consequently the person never recovers himself. The acceptance of death can certainly be seen also as an act of love of *neighbour*, insofar as the historical subject then leaves the mundane sphere of freedom and the stage of history free for others. This of course does not mean that man's dying can be seen only in *this* respect as an act of love of neighbour. If we are obliged in love to bear witness to our neighbour by our whole life of grace, of God's freedom and the hope of eternal life, this is true also of the witness of love that we must bear by our dying. 'Both during his whole life and also and even more at the time of his death,' says Ignatius of Loyola, 'each one . . . ought to strive earnestly that through him God our Lord may be glorified and served and his fellowmen may be edified, at least by the example of his patience and fortitude along with his living faith, hope, and love of the eternal goods which Christ our Lord merited and acquired for us by those altogether incomparable sufferings of his temporal life and death'.*

(*e*) Christian tradition, beginning with Scripture, has always seen *martyrdom*, a death freely endured and accepted to bear witness to the faith as the most perfect way in which a Christian can die with Christ. And rightly so. For in a martyr's death the universal essential constituents of Christian death are most clearly manifested: the indisposability of death, death as free act, death as testimony of faith for others. The secret yearning for martyrdom, which

* This translation is taken from *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, translated and with a commentary by George E. Ganss, (St. Louis, Mo.: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970): 595. – Translator.

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is constantly attested in the course of the history of Christianity, is rooted in the hope that dying with Christ, which is part of every death in grace, is assured most securely by this kind of death.

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[257]

PART FOUR

Grace and World

[259]

15

JUSTIFICATION AND WORLD DEVELOPMENT FROM A CATHOLIC VIEWPOINT

I agreed to the theme of 'justification and world development from a Catholic viewpoint' because it surprised me on the one hand but interested me on the other. In regard to this task, it is true, I feel like a schoolboy unexpectedly presented with a difficult and unusual mathematical problem. But this is the very reason why the theme attracts me, for it is odd in some ways. As far as I know, it is not a familiar theme in Catholic theology. Of course there must be connections between justification and world development. But at the point where justification is explicitly discussed in Catholic theology the theologian considers only the isolated subject in its relationship to God alone and there is no mention of the task of world development. World development may be a theme that certainly receives attention in a variety of theological treatises, particularly in moral theology and Christian sociology. It may have become clearer in 'political theology' and in the 'theology of liberation;' it is now considered much more than formerly and became a conciliar theme in *Gaudium et Spes* at the Second Vatican Council. But this is still far from clearly explaining the connection between the theme of world development and the Catholic doctrine of justification. That, in fact, is to be our theme. In this state of theological reflection it is obvious that there can be no question here of any more than a modest attempt to discover connections between the two ideas, an attempt that is more or less entirely the responsibility of the author alone and which cannot be covered here by explicit declarations of [260] the Church's magisterium (or, at any rate, it is not possible to attempt so much here and now).

It also seems obvious to me that in this essay we are not dealing with a theme that properly belongs to controversial theology, although the title speaks of a 'Catholic viewpoint'. All that is meant by this qualification is that these reflections make use of a terminology familiar in Catholic theology and that our starting point is the Catholic doctrine of justification without any explicit consideration of the Protestant doctrine of justification. But this does not mean at all or at any rate does not certainly mean that we are engaged in controversial theology. For one thing it is no longer possible today to claim that the Catholic doctrine of justification in the sense in which it is absolutely binding on the Catholic as the Church's official teaching is completely opposed to Protestant teaching on justification; more importantly, a Christian theory of world development, of the Christian's world task in history and society, is itself expressed in different ways among Christians of all denominations, different ways that cut right across the denominations, so that none of them (apart from the most extreme cases) can be unambiguously attributed to a particular denomination. In fact and insofar as a theory of the Christian's world task by and large is perhaps common property, it can be approached in the light of different ideas of justification. For it is doubtful whether subtle distinctions of controversial theology in regard to justification need to affect our understanding of world development or whether (when it is a question of concrete and practical precepts for this world task) they can be overcome by a more global and common understanding of Christian

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existence. It seems to me that our theme has nothing to do with controversial theology properly speaking, particularly since the Protestant theory of the relationship between law and Gospel, of the two kingdoms, etc., and the Catholic theory of natural law, of the relationship between nature and grace, etc., are so diversely interpreted even by each denomination on its own account that there is no basis there for a controversy which would mean exactly the same to both parties.

After these preliminary observations, we may come to the actual theme. The reflections put forward here will have to find their way and their method for themselves, without the possibility of assuming a formal structure in advance and as unambiguous from the nature of the case.

[261] These reflections therefore begin, with a certain arbitrariness (which is readily admitted), with the traditional Catholic teaching that the event and effect of justification consist in the realization and free acceptance of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. For the Council of Trent, justification as being justified consists in the possession of these three habitual theological virtues as 'infused' and justification as event in a responsible person consists in the actual realization of these three virtues. The Council of Trent leaves the question open as to whether what is known as 'sanctifying grace' is identical with these three theological virtues or merely inseparably united with them. In any case then, if we want to know what is the grace of justification, we may turn without more ado to the consideration of these three theological virtues. In our context, too, the problem is irrelevant as to how precisely the doctrine of the 'infusedness' and the character of a habitus of grace – that is, an ontically objective conceptuality – can be reconciled with the Reformation teaching on grace, with its more descriptive and existential conceptuality; we assume merely that this is not impossible in principle. Here we can also safely leave aside the fact that the Tridentine doctrine of justification, based on the medieval theology of grace, arbitrarily and tacitly assumes that these three theological virtues are realized in a temporal succession and acquired habitually and therefore that it is possible in principle for the habitus of faith and also of hope to be present without the habitus of love.

If we recall with the Council of Trent that the real and sole justification comes about only by the realization and possession of the three theological virtues together (that is, in *fides spe et caritate formata*) and if we also recall that the council does not forbid us to think existentially and concretely of these three theological virtues as jointly realized and present in this unity, even though, because of their conceptual distinction, they can be seen abstractly as developing in a temporal succession to one another and, in view of the intrinsic temporality of the one realization of the one existence, this is not *a priori* pointless, then we can safely regard the three theological virtues here as one factor. We may see these three terms, faith, hope, and love, as three aspects of the one realization of Christian existence, as three key terms for this realization of existence as one and whole, which inevitably merge into one another conceptually and objectively, even though in the history of the Church's sense of [262] faith and in the history of theology at any particular time one or the other of these three key terms came to the fore and represented the one totality of the Christian understanding of existence (as perhaps today 'hope' is the key term mainly emphasized). For our question about the relationship between justification and world development we may therefore consider without prejudice all three factors of justification and ask what they contribute taken together and as distinct from each other to the understanding of the Christian's world task.

We are asking then whether in this one triplicity of the three theological virtues in their unity there is involved a particular relationship of the Christian to the world, insofar as this world as finite and created on the one hand is distinct from the God to whom in justification man acquires a positive, salvific, and comprehensive relationship and, on the other hand, as historical, presents a task for man's active freedom. If we can answer this question up to a

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point comprehensively and appropriately, we shall have found the answer to the question which is the theme of these reflections. At the same time it is obvious that an answer sought in this way can in any case turn out to be only very formal and abstract. For concrete history as act of man's freedom and as free endurance of the history of nature, in which man is rooted from the outset and never adequately available for his freedom, is and remains precisely history: a history that is never concretely derivable for men from the concepts of justification (which always remain somewhat abstract) or from the incomprehensible mystery called God, to which man is related in justification. With this reservation, however, we are attempting to gain from the Christian teaching about the triplicity of the theological virtues a few insights into man's relationship to the world, into a Christian world development. In this connection we are starting out from statements referring either to the triplicity as a whole or to one particular theological virtue.

In the light of a view that is legitimate, although not universally accepted and binding in Catholic theology, it can be said that this triplicity as a possibility effected by God at least in the mode of an offer to man's freedom is always and everywhere present in the individual human being and in mankind, that this triplicity as a possibility of man's historical freedom effected by God is not merely an event occurring at a definite point in space and time, but an existential [263] (although the effect of God's grace) that always co-determines man's existence and history. At least according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council there is a universal salvific will of God everywhere offering justification; real faith, real hope, and love, imparting God himself and justifying man, are possible spatially and temporally in the whole history of mankind and consequently even outside verbally expressed, sacramental, and sociologically institutionalized Christianity to include also a theoretical verbal atheism. It is not the place here and now to consider how this opportunity of justification in faith, hope, and love, offered by God's salvific will always and everywhere, can be seen to be possible even where man has not been touched by the explicit message of salvation of Christianity. This, too, is something that cannot be discussed here.

We may however assume what may be called this radically optimistic view (contrary to an Augustinian conception of history); we may assume therefore that the possibility of justification as a permanent existential is offered to man always and everywhere and can therefore be accepted by man's freedom even outside explicit Christianity (an acceptance of course, if it actually occurs, which is itself again a grace of God); we may further assume that on the one hand (as will be shown later) this acceptance of justification has also an essential importance for man's relationship to his world and on the other is also actually realized by man's freedom. Assuming all this, we can and must say that man's relationship to the world, his development of the world, is always and everywhere and consequently even outside institutionalized Christianity characterized at least anonymously by what we Christians call justification, that is, by man's liberatedness for the immediacy of God. But from this there results an important insight: much of what we encounter in the history of humanity as interpretation of the world in practice and theory outside and inside explicit Christianity can by no means be taken *a priori* as an interpretation that is without grace outside Christianity and in this sense is unchristian or achristian *or* has something to do with justification only within explicit Christianity. Christian interpretation of the world in theory and more especially in practice can be Christian even outside explicit Christianity and indeed, according to Vatican II, in its realization in practical life is actually Christian (that is, sustained by grace) where a person does not seriously and culpably reject the dictate of his conscience, even [264] though this practical development of the world is not interpreted in explicitly Christian terms and perhaps co-exists with theoretical interpretations of the world and man that Christianity rejects as false, even though such a concrete interpretation of the world in practice occasionally occurs in a way that explicit Christianity has not yet expressly

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and clearly realized in its own historical and sociological situation.

In the Catholic understanding the triplicity of the theological virtues means an immediacy of man to God in a form which would he absolutely impossible without the gift of these theological virtues as God's grace; but, if and insofar as it is accepted in freedom as justifying, this immediacy to God involves a particular relationship to the world that consequently would also be utterly impossible without this justifying grace and conversely is both required and brought about by this justifying grace. This is the second point to be made and elucidated to some extent about the relationship between justification and world development. According to traditional Catholic teaching the triplicity of the three theological virtues does not mean merely the restoration and the factuality of some kind of good and right relationship of man to God as Lord and Creator, merely forgiveness of man's sins, merely a purification of man's moral relationship to God in a form that could be recognized as binding even independently of a divine verbal revelation. Since and insofar as the ultimate salvific relationship to God (as made possible by God and on this assumption required by God) is from the very outset God's free grace, is 'supernatural', it is on the one hand the supreme and most radical realization of man's nature and on the other hand a grace that is in no way due to man, not only as sinner, but to man as such. This is implicit in the Catholic teaching on the distinction between nature and supernatural grace. This supernaturality of grace and the relationship to God that it makes possible and sustains can be explained by the fact that this grace gives man a relationship of radical immediacy to God, not only existentially, but also ontologically; by this grace God is not merely the creative precondition of a creaturely reality that as such in its self-realization would merely remain entangled in its own finiteness and would have God only as its creative ground and only as the always remote mover of its self-realization always remaining within the finite. The truth is that by grace there is present a real and veritable self-communication [265] of God in his own absolute reality to the intellectual creature, so that the latter is moved toward God strictly in himself. For a Catholic doctrine of grace the principle is really inescapable: *finitum capax infiniti*.

This is implied (which can only be briefly indicated here) in the doctrine of uncreated grace, of the communication of the Holy Spirit who is God himself, of the immediate vision of God in eternal life, which is not mediated by any created reality. This doctrine of grace as the most intimate self-communication of God in himself to the intellectual creature has an effect then on the traditional doctrine of the triplicity of the theological virtues. These must be strictly distinguished from the moral virtues, even if the latter require a particular religious relationship to God as Creator and Lord of the creature. All 'moral' virtues have a finite reality, a finite moral value, a creaturely formal object, even though these realities of course always carry within themselves a reference to God as to their ultimate precondition. But in this triplicity of the three theological virtues and only there we have to do with God in himself in immediacy. This of course assumes that the acts in which man is related to God immediately and not mediated by a created reality representing him are themselves sustained by God's self-communication, that God himself is not merely an asymptotic goal of a purely creaturely movement toward him, but with his own reality is himself an internal constitutive element (albeit by grace) of the spiritual movement of the creature toward God himself. In faith God himself is heard and not merely in a finite word 'about' him; what is received and heard is the divine Word who is God himself; in hope God himself is hoped for and not merely a creaturely reality created by him as salvific, because he himself sustains this movement of hope toward its consummation by himself, moves the creature in the goal toward the goal; love for God is itself sustained by God's love for us, in which he gives himself and not merely a gift representing and mediating him and his love. None of this may be understood as a purely verbal emphatic enhancement of the importance of a banal reality, in which the finite creature still remains stuck in its finiteness and God is attained only in the

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sense that he, the absolute Other, unattainable in himself, enables us to grasp and admit our own finiteness.

If and insofar as there is in God such an immediacy to God, either in the mode of an offer to man's freedom or in the mode of free [266] acceptance (then called 'justification', which of course implies forgiveness of sin), then there exists that freedom over all powers and authorities of the world of which Scripture speaks and which constitutes the real nature of the relationship of the justified person to the world and thus characterizes the development of the world which is proper to him. This person justified by grace (whether inside or outside institutional Christianity) is not really turned away by justifying grace from the world and his task in the world (something will be said about this very shortly), he remains turned to his world and thus participates in God's self-communication to the world, a self-communication that establishes God in the world as its most proper goal and innermost dynamism; but for that very reason the justified person is not merely a piece of the world, its servant, its element determined solely by the world, neither collective nor individual, he realizes his relationship to the world in the light of God himself, who is not a part of the world, not even its supreme part. Unfortunately it is not possible here to explain more closely how this relationship to the world, transcending the world, on the part of the Christian, is to be considered and experienced more precisely. It would be possible, for example, to refer to the doctrine current in Christian spirituality of resignation, of indifference, which, rightly understood, is an essential and constant modality of the triplicity and in the last resort can be justified only by the latter; we could also safely refer to a mysticism in East and West of a formless experience of God, which can explain by its radicality such a relationship to the world, even though (as will be pointed out later) it is not the sole form of this Christian relationship to the world. But in any case the attitude to the world produced by the triplicity means a radical, more or less demythologizing relativizing of all secular, finite, immediately present values and tasks in the world, a destruction of all idols (that is, of all absolutizing of intramundane values and tasks), and an ultimate reservation in regard to all these things, a reservation which is really possible, since God in his own self-communication (if only this is grasped) has made himself man's final standpoint.

In this way there is actually a realization of man's existence – in which life and death, rise and decline, historical success and failure, experience of meaning and meaninglessness, and so on, are all caught up together – toward the absolute God, who really permits him self to be attained through the possibility given by himself in his [267] self-communication of an immediate relationship to him in the triplicity of the theological virtues. In other words, the traditional teaching on this triplicity can and must be seen as the doctrine of an ultimate absolute freedom of man in regard to the world (to which, of course, he himself belongs with his essentially finite subjectivity and historical relativity) since in fact in this triplicity, in which God in himself is attained, man experiences also his liberatedness in regard to himself. There is no need to explain further that all this is 'fundamental' also to the Christian character of the task of world development.

To this first statement about the relationship to the world established in the triplicity of the theological virtues (that is, in justification) we must immediately add a second statement which has a certain dialectic relationship with the first. In order to elucidate the radicalness of the immediacy to God involved in this triplicity and thus man's preeminence over the world in his world task, successful or unsuccessful, we referred briefly to formless mysticism in East and West. But that was meant only as a clarification and by no means implies that man has immediacy to God as such primarily or solely in this way. On the contrary. Presumably as essentially distinct from Eastern mysticism, Christianity is assured (paradoxical as it may sound) that there is at least normally a necessary and possible mediation to this immediacy to God.

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This is evident from the very fact that Christianity, when and because it seeks to be the event of immediacy to God and thus to an ultimate preeminence over the world, nevertheless regards itself as founded on a revelation of God that finds objective expression in human words, as Church of the word and sacrament as a historical and sociological institution. It is evident on the other hand from the fact that Christianity believes that man can reject an elitist esotericism and find complete salvation in the straightforward fulfillment of God's commandments (admittedly by faith, hope, and love) in the midst of ordinary life. As this Christianity cannot of course regard the ordinary routine of fulfilling the commandments of God in fidelity to conscience as a substitute for 'mystical' immediacy to God, as ordinary routine fulfillment of duty which only *after* death will be rewarded by something quite different (that is, by this immediacy to God), and as Christian teaching insists that this normal fulfillment of everyday duties as the way of salvation must spring and can spring [268] from the triplicity of the three theological virtues as immediacy to God, so Christianity's understanding of existence implies the conviction that categorial involvement with the world, when it occurs in ultimate freedom, is also the realization of the theological virtues toward the immediacy of God; that this is the categorial mediation, take-off point, and historical concreteness precisely of that absolute transcendentality in grace in which man reaches God himself as such. Man does not realize primarily and still less solely his immediate relationship to God in a formless mysticism in which the world fades out and is dismissed as unreal. The categorial factor, the historical and concrete world task of man, when it is effected under the influence of the triplicity of the theological virtues (and this in fact is both possible and necessary), is mediation to the immediacy of God. The world is rightly grasped and faced precisely when this happens in virtue of that freedom and superiority over the world which God offers to man in his threefold grace and in which he is himself immediately God.

If we disregard the question of an absolutely unworldly mysticism (a question that remains open in Catholic theology and, even if it is answered in the affirmative, raises a new question in regard to the condition of the finite subject itself in such mysticism, the subject which Christianity could not regard as perishing even in this form of mysticism), it must in any case be said that according to the Christian conception of man his immediacy to God and consequently his God-given status over the world and over himself is, must be and can be mediated by his world achievement and world task in his history of freedom. Unfortunately it is not possible here to explain precisely how and why such a mediation to immediacy to God does not contain a contradiction, but is rooted in the fundamental structures of the intellectual subject, whose transcendentality toward the absolute has always been the condition of categorial knowledge and freedom and yet is not totally exhausted in this function, but has a possibility of being radicalized by grace toward God's immediacy without thereby losing its function as condition of the possibility of intramundane categorial knowledge and freedom. Assuming all this however, it can be said that the realization of man's world task at least normally can be and (when this world task is objectively and subjectively rightly accomplished) actually is also the realization of his immediacy to God in the three theological virtues.

[269] In regard to this statement of course it ought to be made clearer than is possible here that such a categorial mediation to God's immediacy can exist not merely where this categoriality is of an explicitly religious character, is explicit faith verbalized in Christian terms and sacramental, but also where it is 'merely' fidelity to one's own conscience and consequently objective and subjective fulfillment of the world task (assuming, of course, that such a secularity of the categorial mediation to God's immediacy does not imply a culpable rejection of those categorial mediations which are explicitly religious and Christian and appear making their demands in the collective or individual history of man and offer

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themselves as such mediations). But at any rate, if what has been said is correct, there is a very differentiated mutual relationship between justifying grace and the Christian's world task. Justification offers man as equipped for absolute freedom for his world task a standpoint over the world from which in ultimate freedom he both accomplishes and endures this task, and this world task itself even to the very limit of its apparent secularity is the mediation for the free acceptance of this immediacy to God which is given to him as the grace offered always and everywhere as supreme possibility and absolute salvific task. Grace, we might also say, has always and everywhere an incarnatory structure; it descends into the world, does not make this world unreal, but gives this world as it is realized in persistence and breakdown the immediacy to God in which the world accepts God himself as such as its consummation.

If there were more space available, what has just been said might be explained very simply and perhaps more understandably by appealing to the traditional Catholic teaching on the unity of love of God and love of neighbour. For traditional textbook theology basing itself on the New Testament, love of neighbour is not merely the fulfillment of another commandment derived from the love of God. If only it attains to its own radical nature, this love of neighbour is understood *as* love of God itself. As textbook theology expresses it, the formal object of love of God and love of neighbour is one and the same (in fact, God himself) without the concrete individual neighbour being reduced in his importance and claim on us to a merely external occasion for loving God himself alone. According to this teaching therefore, love of neighbour at its root is itself the realization of God's love, even if it is not expressly thematicized in [270] this realization; it is the event of the transcendence of the person toward God's immediacy, the assent to God's offer in which God imparts himself to man in the miracle of his own love. When it reaches its own fullness of being unreservedly, when the loving subject really breaks out of the prison of its egoism and really surrenders itself unconditionally, love of neighbour is the event and factuality of justification.

At the same time of course (though it is not possible here) it ought to be shown that, if it reaches its own absoluteness and radicalness, such a love of neighbour includes within itself what are known in theological terms as faith and hope. In regard to this traditional teaching on the unity of love of God and love of neighbour in their mutual perichoresis, it ought also to be remembered that love of neighbour is not restricted here to a sphere merely of feeling or individual intimacy, that it may not be interpreted as a merely private affair; it is realized in deed and action, has a sociological dimension, must be realized in justice and the maintenance of a sphere of freedom for the others, must be seen in the light of a political theology. But then the connection between the one love of God and neighbour, between justification on the one hand and the Christian's world task on the other, is immediately visible, even though the concrete precepts for this world task in a particular historical and sociological situation cannot be deduced solely from that source, but must be found in some other way.

As such, the theological virtue of hope, too, which is a constituent element for justification, ought to be considered expressly with reference to its importance for the Christian's world task. For the theme of hope is now very topical among both Catholics and Protestants, even though less attention is usually paid to hope as a constituent factor of justification in the classical sense of this term. As a theological virtue, which is not to be understood simply in the light of the existential-ontological reflections of an Ernst Bloch or other present-day philosophers alone, it is first and last a hope of the absolute future, which is God in himself, a future given to man purely and simply as free grace and not simply and originally produced by man's own historical efforts and action: a hope for the absolute future which alone can liberate man wholly and finally from his self-alienation. But if in regard to this hope of the absolute future [271] in immediacy to God himself we remember what was said earlier with reference to the whole triplicity of the theological virtues about the categorial (that is,

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intramundane) mediation to the immediacy of God, then of course this hope positively and negatively has a meaning for the hope in which man in his world task anticipates his continually new, historical, individual, and collective future which he creates himself. Such a hope and its objective are necessary mediations for the hope of the absolute future, which is God. Only in the realization of intramundane hope can man realize his hope in the absolute future in genuine freedom. And only if he aspires in this theological hope to his intramundane goals of his history, continually to be seized on creatively in hope, does he gain the right attitude to his desired intramundane goals and tasks. Since he has an absolute hope in which he reaches out to an absolute future, which is granted to him by God throughout victories *and* downfalls, he has the right relationship to his intramundane goals: he will deify neither his present nor his intramundane future, he can accept and endure utterly without fear his continual historical turbulence, he can live genuinely historically without simply being surrendered and subjected to his historicity. He can really live tranquilly; he will not flee from his historical task as something that is ultimately unreal, since it is the categorial and necessary mediation to immediacy toward the absolute future, and he does not cling either to a past or to a present or to a future intramundane future so absolutely as if he could not exist without it.

For the Christian the theological virtue of hope is the ground and liberation of his secular hope, even if he knows that this theological hope can be an event even outside institutional and verbalized Christianity. For him his world task and his salvific task do not simply coincide, but are mutually dependent. In its concrete realization justification may certainly demand the relinquishing of an intramundane value, if and when the realization of faith and hope in an absolute future means giving up some worldly idol; it can therefore imply asceticism, insofar as this is an anticipation in faith and hope of a death in the course of which the absolute future is grasped in all its purity; but it can never mean purely and simply a flight from the world, since escapism of this kind, seen in isolation as a means adopted by man to reach his absolute goal, would be a denial of the [272] fact that the absolute future, which is God, must in the last resort be granted entirely for its own sake as free grace.

There is still a great deal that could be said in regard to our theme as a whole, but which can only be outlined here. For example, the Christian logic of existential decision might be discussed: the question, that is, of how a Christian really knows here and now in a concrete situation, precisely in his world task, that just one and not another intramundane goal as object of his choice is the mediation to God's immediacy required as binding here and now, the material, the bodily presence of his immediacy to God, that justifies him and brings him to salvation. For this knowledge cannot be acquired deductively solely from the universal norms of Christian morality; discovering the concrete will of God in a concrete situation is not merely the application of universal norms to a particular case; practice and freedom do not emerge merely as consequences of theory and universal reason. But how such a logic of existential decision in the light of grace, the 'discernment of spirits', the discovery of an individual decision as willed by God, is arrived at: this is a question that has not been at all adequately considered in the traditional textbook theology of justification and grace, but it cannot be pursued further here. A theology of sin and the cross might be brought to bear much more explicitly on our theme, since it is impossible without these two aspects to understand objectively and realistically either justification or the Christian's world task. If even in a Catholic doctrine of justification man can and must certainly be seen as *simul justus et peccator*, this implies that his 'state' as justified and his world task are always faced by the threat and the actual reality of what in Christian terms is known as 'sin'. In the last resort it remains a secret and must be left unconditionally to God's judgment whether the individual has grasped his justification, whether his world task has been objectively and personally fulfilled as the concreteness of his justification. At the same time (also with recourse to a

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rightly understood doctrine of original sin) it should be remembered that sin is not merely a private matter, an internal disposition, but is also objectified in historical and sociological institutions where there is also the mingling of righteousness and sin which is not completely separable from man. Our theme ought likewise to be confronted with a theology of the cross as the concreteness of both sin and [273] salvation. From this standpoint the peculiar character of the Christian world interpretation and world task would have to be more precisely defined, since the Christian world task obviously shares the peculiar character of the existence of the justified person, who exists in this life before death in the transition between the death of Jesus and his resurrection.

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[274]

16

LAW AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING

Given this theme and knowing that he has only a few pages in which to deal with it, the Catholic theologian cannot fail to have serious misgivings. Where is he to begin? Should he start with the New Testament? Begin with Paul and ask how his very wide-ranging teaching on the law and the righteousness granted us by grace and not by fulfilling the law, how this according to his own perhaps very problematical conception is related to the teaching of the Old Testament and to the Jewish theology of his time, and whether and how Paul's teaching can be incorporated into the teaching of the New Testament as a whole? Is this theologian to follow the history of this doctrine in its vicissitudes through all the periods of Christian theology? Are the contrasts and the compatibility between the teaching of the Reformers and the Catholic teaching on law and righteousness from the time of Luther and the Council of Trent to be discussed? Is this Catholic teaching, which is perhaps by no means as consistent as the theme implies, to be set in the context of a modern mentality in order to bring out clearly its peculiar character? These particular themes present the theologian who has to deal with the relationship between law and righteousness with an immense amount of material, requiring careful, objective, and historical differentiation. Is it surprising if he is discouraged, if he cannot see the forest for the trees and has no idea where to begin?

In this desperate situation I think I have the right to leave aside all learned exegesis, all expertise in the fields of history of dogma and history of ideas, and try to say simply what occurs to me as the quite normal Christian that I want to be, in the light of Christian life and [275] not of theological scholarship, when I hear the terms 'law' and 'righteousness'. If at the same time a joint Christian (and not by any means specifically denominational) statement should emerge, I shall neither be surprised nor shocked. For I think (incidentally) that from Reformation times onward the theories on righteousness and law in Catholic and Protestant theology have been so clarified and more particularly further differentiated in each church that this theme no longer presents any reason for a schism between the churches. Of course, both Protestant and also Catholic theologians will discover in what I say defects and omissions, subjective emphases, etc., with which they certainly cannot simply agree. If the theme here requires the exposition of a *Catholic* understanding of the relationship between law and righteousness, this can mean from the very outset only that the author is persuaded with good reason that his understanding of this relationship is set within the framework of Catholic theology and the Church's proclamation, without claiming to be simply identified with these factors. I shall not venture at all to explain how what I have to say is related to a modern Jewish understanding of life. But, after these preliminary remarks, let us begin with the theme itself.

I hear the word 'law'. It rouses in me thousands of different and mutually contradictory ideas and emotions. I can think of hundreds of kinds of laws, norms, regulations, rules, customs, patterns of behavior, which demand my attention, require the homage of my freedom and my obedience. The origins of these innumerable laws with the most varied names are also very diverse. There are laws of what we call 'nature' and these punish disobedience with sickness, death, disruption of our lives, even when we infringe them in ignorance and inculpably. I try to obey them, even though they create the impression of visibly restricting me as subject of freedom, because I fear the sentence of death they pass upon me and, prior to all deeper considerations, in the last resort do not see much point in opposing, attractive as it may sometimes be, the sentence of death threatened by these laws.

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There are laws, norms, and customs of the society in which I was born and in which I must live. Up to a point they appear to me as a kind of continuation and interpretation of the laws of nature already mentioned, as relatively meaningful, as useful and unavoidable, and I obey them more or less as I obey the laws of nature, as norms [276] which there is not very much point in infringing. But up to a point also these norms and laws of society seem to me questionable, pointless restrictions on my freedom against which it is possible to protest, thrust on me purely from outside, without the opportunity of really internalizing them, making them my own, regarding them as laws given by my own freedom itself. Where these laws of society can be seriously regarded as *merely* such (and there are laws of this kind), the only question that arises is how far we must be prepared to adapt ourselves to them, since it is not worthwhile to infringe them in view of social sanctions, or whether we are shrewd enough to get out of them, since even from a Christian standpoint there is a legitimate demythologizing and 'de-tabooizing' of the binding authority with which a society is accustomed to clothe its norms of this kind in order to secure obedience to them. (The emancipation of early Christianity from the social and religious norms of its Jewish origin can certainly be interpreted primarily as a process of this kind. In the concrete case it is very often not easy to say whether such laws of society are of the first or the second kind; and most of the norms of society as they affect us are an amalgam of the two kinds that we distinguished and consequently are not as such completely homogeneous in their durability or their moral claim.

In addition to all these however, I am aware of laws of a different kind which cannot simply be derived from society or from nature in a physiological sense. In particular, the person who knows he is free (that is, who is not prepared to shift off responsibility for his actions to an anonymous 'it' behind his subjectivity) is faced with requirements which do not have their force from nature and are not objectifications of society alone, but impose themselves on freedom as such, acquit or condemn, rise out of a mysterious depth of the free subject itself, so that, if they are not observed, they bring the subject into a fatal conflict with itself. Truthfulness, love, loyalty, readiness to accept responsibility, the requirement of maintaining the dignity of our own existence and likewise that of other human beings: these and other 'laws', as far as the concrete substance of their claim is concerned here and now, may always have in themselves an element of historical and sociological relativity, but their real meaning and their real dignity are independent in the last resort of this relativity, are the expression of what man as free subject ought to be, have a dignity of absoluteness and unconditionality. Opinions diverge as to [277] how they are to be further and more deeply interpreted in this absoluteness. But it is very doubtful that there are more or less normally developed human beings who have not come across such laws. For even someone who denies the fact of such absolute requirements will make this denial with an awareness, even though perhaps merely implicit, that he must cling to his conviction and not deny it at any price: he thus affirms the absolute binding force of his profession of truth. Nor, as we said, is the existence of such laws brought into question by the fact that their material content with which they make their appearance in particular periods, nations, cultures, societies, is very different, even materially contradictory. The Christian interprets the absolute authority of these laws, at least in their formal claim, as the will of God, as God's law. We shall not argue here for the accuracy of this interpretation, it can simply be assumed as a fact.

This is not a mistake or a feeble excuse, since we can certainly assume that knowledge of God and of his deliberate claim on us is not simply another piece of knowledge added from outside to our experience of absolute laws, with these two items of knowledge being subsequently linked; knowledge of God is nothing but the radical interpretation of the experience of absolute laws, of freedom and its responsibility. When we encounter the dignity of these laws in free obedience we have already learned what is meant by the word

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'God', even if we do not know or understand how to use this explicitly theological vocabulary. But some observations must be made on law as God's will in order to gain an understanding of explicitly Christian theology on this theme.

At any rate in their widest extent (we shall have to speak later of other material) these laws, understood as God's holy will and insofar as they raise claims to concrete fulfillment, are related to finite, intramundane realities and values of man and his society, distinct from God: respect for a meaningful order of society, for the life and scope for freedom of one's neighbour, etc. But this involves a fundamental problem which, it seems to me, has not been considered clearly enough on the whole either by Jewish or by Christian or by 'Mohammedan' theology. How can an absolute claim be based on a finite value, however highly esteemed? Without appealing to God, this question seems to be *a priori* unanswerable. But if it is said that these values raise an absolute claim on our freedom (as Christian [278] theology says) as the will of *God*, the question still remains open as to how God can meaningfully will such finite values as absolute, how he can regard them as more important than they really are (and as they appear in his own attitude to them), how we can perceive this absolute claim of these realities as derived from God. In face of this question, must a Christian have recourse to an ethic of secular realism, calling for rational objectivity, the infringement of which in the last resort leads man to evils that he cannot bring himself to admit are avoidable only hypothetically and conditionally? Are these laws God's will only insofar as we cannot think meaningfully of the God known from other sources except as the one who now wills the finite sum total of realities and values, because he willed them as Creator? But is the will of God as legislator then not simply identical with the will of God as Creator, who willed a very finite and relative world in which there can be nothing at all that is absolutely and unconditionally important?

At this point of course it is possible to refer to the fact that the real and express relationship of man to God, because God is its reference point, has such a dignity and absoluteness that our problem no longer arises in regard to this relationship, that the law of seeking God and being open toward his incomprehensibility, of worshiping him and (which is certainly possible) loving him, has in any case this absolute dignity which permits no doubts in regard to divine laws with an intramundane content. We can insist then that commandments with a finite material content might nevertheless have such an absolute character as law of *this* God to whom we have an absolutely binding relationship, even though their material content as such cannot confer it. But we are then involved in a new question: how is this relationship to God, which is supposed to sustain the absolute dignity of the moral law properly so-called, to be understood more precisely, so that this relationship can sustain that absoluteness of the law or (and this is still far from clear) even of itself curtail it and up to a point relativize it?

With this question we have reached a point at which we must make an entirely fresh start and at which we catch sight of the other, term of our theme as a whole: righteousness. How this comes about will soon be made clear. Righteousness, or 'justice', in the sense understood by Christian theology is not a particular virtue within the sociological sphere, but means purely and simply the right relationship, [279] the relationship that ought to exist, of man to God, bringing man to salvation; it means holiness, peace purely and simply, reconciliation with God, to mention at least a few other words of Scripture and tradition which in the last resort mean the same thing as righteousness, but get rid of the impression given by that term of a legal relationship between God and man, which is regulated by an authority superior to both parties and establishes the right relationship when both parties keep to this higher norm. It is clear that this is a form of righteousness that does not exist for the Christian.

This righteousness of the finite and sinful creature must be seen quite differently from the Christian standpoint. It is the unmerited gift decreed by God's supreme love; although it must be accepted in freedom, it is God's Holy Spirit himself (in a word, God himself) who gives

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himself with his most intimate divine life to the intellectual creature, so that God is not only the creative donor of a finite gift distinct from himself and perfecting man, but is as such the gift itself. It is impossible to explain more clearly here how this is to be understood and how man himself must be seen if he is to be able to be the recipient of such a gift, to be *capax infiniti*. But if the teaching of Christianity on the nature and definition of man, of his perfection and righteousness, is understood radically and we are not content with naive metaphors, there can be no doubt that the right relationship of man to God can be established only by God in his own free initiative, that it cannot really mean a 'between' between us and God, as something also different from God, but is God communicating himself, the Holy Spirit who is himself God. He himself gives himself as the innermost centre of our existence; for in this respect he does not really come upon us from outside as an additional reality, but is from the very outset what is most deeply rooted within us, because what we call the creation of the finite distinct from God occurs in the concrete order as a result of the fact that God as love wants to lavish and does lavish himself and thus at the same time creates the finite on which the miracle of this self-surrendering love of God can occur. Once more, it is not possible here to elucidate more closely what has been said or to make clear that it did not amount to a utopian speculation, of which there is no evidence in the real experience of everyday life.

What has just been said places us in an odd situation in regard to our question about the relationship of law and righteousness. The [280] term 'law' led us to an experience of a sacred unconditional requirement from the subject of freedom, to a law that had to be seen as God's holy will and could only be understood in this way in its true nature. But the term 'righteousness' did not lead us, as might have been expected, to the idea of the status of the subject fulfilling the law in freedom, but to a reality which at least in its initial stages has nothing to do with law or the fulfillment of law, with morality, but is infinitely above this moral sphere and consists in the miracle of love in which God gives himself as innermost life to man. In this properly biblical sense law and righteousness are primarily as remote from each other as objective norms arising from the nature of finite realities are from the infinite God, as the fulfillment of norms reaching man externally and which are up to a point 'external' (if they are demands of the noumenal subject on concrete freedom) is from the love in which God's love and that of the subject of freedom become one: because in the radical freedom of such love the human subject of freedom really becomes completely aware of itself and not merely of a norm from outside; because in this love God gives himself and does not merely authenticate a norm distinct in its content from himself; and because in this self-communication of his he makes possible our love for him, sustains it and so liberates it that it really attains God himself and does not collapse into its own finiteness at an infinite distance from him. For a Christian understanding law and righteousness are in the first place quite disparate factors.

It can of course rightly be said that this God of infinite love imparting himself in this righteousness is in fact the one whose will requires the observance of individual material moral norms, of 'law', so that it is only conditionally on the fulfillment of the law that the miracle occurs of the unity of God and man in righteousness, which is the love between God and man from within. This, of course, is true. The thesis according to which fulfillment of the law is made the precondition or the consequence (these two amount to the same thing) of righteousness as unity of love in no way alters the radical distinction between law and righteousness, which simply is not the fulfillment of the law. It is possible, of course, though only by obscuring the facts, to say that man has a 'commandment' to love God and thus love of God can be subsumed under fulfillment of the law and made a part or (if we want) the whole of the righteousness which is the fulfilling of the law. This kind of language is not simply forbidden to [281] us by the New Testament, since it is in fact occasionally used there.

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But it we not only speak of the commandment of love of God, but go further and subsume this commandment under law in general, it is no longer clear that this love of God is not the fulfillment of a law which by its dignity, albeit finite, demands respect and worship for God's greatness, that it is not, in scholastic terms, *religio* rather than love of God; it is not clear that we are speaking of the most immediate closeness of God and man, where there can really be no talk of law, since the legislator outdoes himself by his self-communication and in man's personal love for God every external norm disappears or is surpassed. This love between God and man knows no commandment, is not law in the real sense, since it does not consist in respect for a moral requirement over and above what is materially commanded, since it is this love alone which itself gives content, meaning, and demand.

This dissociation between law and fulfillment of law on the one hand and righteousness as love on the other of course does not dispose of the problems of the relationship between these two ideas. But neither are they disposed of, as we saw, when fulfillment of the law is proclaimed to be the precondition or indispensable consequence of righteousness as unity of love between God and man, using 'precondition' in the sense of a logical and not chronological priority, although only in a certain respect. We then came up against the problem of how exactly the material content of a moral law can be seen to acquire an absolute character from the will of God. We can now state this question more precisely, although this may mean that the answer is thus made all the more difficult. We may ask: Does the absoluteness of particular moral laws consist in the fact that, over and above their objective (but up to a point hypothetical) significance, their fulfillment is a precondition and consequence of the love between God and man? If we commit ourselves to this assumption, if in other words we assume that individual commandments and laws acquire their absolute binding force by the very fact, and only in this sense, that they are the preconditions and consequences of the love between God and man and that without this connection they might express what is reasonable, appropriate, and preferable, but would not be purely and simply absolute, if we assume all this we would certainly make things easier for ourselves by interpreting the absoluteness of law as theonomy. But this would not [282] dispose of the problem indicated earlier: the question, that is, of whether, why, and how God's holy will can endow finite values, which make up the material content of the law, with such a character of absoluteness if these values nevertheless are and remain finite. At least to modern man it is perhaps not so obvious that it is possible to love God only by respecting intramundane norms, when the values they protect seem very finite and consequently relative and to be continually in conflict with one another; when it also seems as if God did not attach too much importance to their realization through blind nature and its antagonisms. Do these finite values, which form the material content of the laws, acquire an absolute character from the will of God because this will as it refers to them is conveyed to us by a positive revelation of God and it is through, and only through, this revelation that these norms acquire their character of absoluteness which otherwise they would not have at all?

It might be possible perhaps to think in this way, even though such an idea of the unity between objective norms and the will of God can scarcely be reconciled with the traditional doctrine of natural law, since this doctrine ascribes to natural law an absolute binding force, independently of a properly supernatural revelation. But even if we thought we had overcome this difficulty, a great deal would still be far from clear. In the first place it is certainly not yet clear how an absolute will of God, even though now understood as expressly revealed, can be linked with finite values and material norms in such a way that the norms asserting these values become absolute commandments of God and an infringement of them becomes really an offence against God as such. The question would also arise as to how a revelation properly speaking can really be directly related to such material norms, which belong to the world as such, if we have a correct idea of supernatural revelation, which does not permit each and

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every thing that is objectively right to be made a possible object of an actual revelation (unless God *wanted* to reveal something of this kind). It is clear that a divine revelation can be and is related to God's self-communication in grace and the incarnation of the Logos to man's transcendentality and history, since this is what can be communicated only by God himself and not by setting up a finite creaturely reality, which is distinct from God. But, if their real nature is understood in the way indicated, it is not clear that intramundane norms can also be the object of such divine revelation.

[283] It is easy to see that in the light of this understanding of revelation in the properly Christian sense the Old Testament history of revelation and the Old Testament itself as a book create a serious problem, since the essentially New Testament self-communication of God in Jesus, the Word made man and in the Holy Spirit as God himself, had not then occurred. An attempt might be made to overcome these dilemmas by assuming that actual divine revelation occurs *always and everywhere* by God's inward grace, offered to every human being always and everywhere, so that revelation properly speaking as God's self-communication is present unthematically, and in a sense anonymously of course, also in the sphere of the Old Testament, where it can convey the character of absoluteness to the old law and from that standpoint (that is, in the light of God's self-communication as grace and revelation offered to all always and everywhere, even apart from an explicit, thematic, and verbal revelation) the character of absoluteness of the law can be experienced. This would bring us once more to the basic problem of why and how God's holy will, now seen as God's gracious and revealing self-communication, is connected with finite values and thus gives them the character of an absolute obligation. I must admit that the answer to this question, which in fact is identical with the question of the connection between law and justification, is not clear.

Is this connection to be established directly in a general way by saying that the holy God, who imparts himself in his most intimate reality in justifying us, is identical with God the Creator who must demand respect for the structures of reality, since he himself willed them and therefore cannot enter into any loving union with the human subject of freedom if the latter does not respect this will of his? But against this explanation the objection might perhaps be raised: Is this will of God, as related to something finite and relative and often to what is antagonistic to other realities, so absolute that the absolute purely and simply (which is God in himself and in his self-communication) depends on respect for it? We might also be tempted to shift off the solution of the dilemma into a more subjective dimension by saying that in every human life there are constantly concrete situations in which a person knows that he cannot in practice and concretely synthesize the rejection of a particular intramundane finite value of a normative character with an absolute and unconditional openness to God himself, who wants to bestow on him his own reality. But it is still by no means clear in the concrete [284] individual case why this discrepancy and incompatibility can exist and does exist between the rejection of a finite value and the acceptance of God's self-communication. But I think there is nothing to prevent the assumption of an individual revelation, not only making known this discrepancy but also setting it up, a revelation which need not be regarded as striking or miraculous, but would simply be part of the concreteness of God, who according to Christian belief imparts himself in any case at the heart of our existence. If this teaching is concerned, not with God abstractly, as being, but with a God of personal freedom approaching the individual as such on each occasion, the doctrine of an individual revelation making what is right in intramundane terms something absolutely willed by God here and now (that is, actually connected indissolubly with his self-communication) would not be more surprising or incredible than the doctrine of a general revelation.

We cannot pursue further here this problem of the relationship between law and justification as reconciliation with God himself. The distinction between the two factors

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(stressed by Protestant theology) and the connection between these two distinct factors (to which Catholic theology attaches more importance) are both facts which must be clearly seen and realized in Christian life. Human morality has something to do with our relationship to God, and this relationship of unifying love between God and man is something quite different from a man's moral worth which is recognized and rewarded by a Lord of the world.

It is time to point out, at least in a sentence, that we have not hitherto spoken about one aspect of our theme as a whole: namely, that justification in biblical and ecclesiastical usage implies also forgiveness of sin, granted to the sinner by God's free grace, while the initiative in this forgiveness lies exclusively with God and the renewed turning of the sinner to God itself the effect of this divine initiative. But although this aspect of forgiveness of sin would also help to elucidate the radical distinction between righteousness on the one hand and law and fulfillment of law as such on the other, it cannot be further considered here.

A more important consideration must be put forward in conclusion. Hitherto we treated this relationship of law and justification as if it were static, remaining invariably the same. But this is not so. This relationship itself has a history; the two factors involved do not [285] always occupy the same existential place in a person's life and consequently their mutual relationship has a history. Before attempting to say something about this history, we might look at the general history of salvation and revelation. Paul at any rate (to put it cautiously) was acutely sensitive to the historicity of this relationship, to the dividing line drawn by the cross of Christ across this history. It marks a dividing line at least because on the cross the victory of the free grace of God bestowing righteousness over a mere fulfillment of the law took place and was declared irreversible. Nevertheless, this general history of the relationship between law and righteousness is also something that cannot be further considered here. But we may attempt to glance at the particular history of this relationship in the life of the individual.

In the life of the individual, too, there can and should occur this victory of God-given righteousness, of grace, over the sacred dignity of the law which summons and overtaxes man. In the history of his existence a person will normally begin with the experience of the sacred dignity and the claim of the law on him. Even this experience is of essential importance and turns man from an ingeniously selfish living being with knowledge and social training into a person who exercises his freedom responsibly; it is this in the first place that gives man his dignity and his inalienable responsibility. The experience of the moral subject with his moral autonomy, as it was made clear particularly in the ethos of the Enlightenment, is an experience which man cannot renounce and which even today he cannot shrug off by pointing to all the internal and external, psychological, depth-psychological, and sociological determinants to which he is exposed. But the experience of the moral subject (which of course varies greatly with individuals, with their very different opportunities and at different phases of life) is no more than the beginning of religious experience. The law that created and confirmed man's lofty dignity slowly becomes an oppressive burden, a law that makes excessive demands. Slowly we get the impression that we do not know exactly what is really required of us, the impression that the law's demands force us into insoluble dilemmas, the impression that it overtaxes us and thrusts us into sin, leaving man to sink again into the still undrained morass of his shortsightedness and his selfishness. We also feel increasingly that all the splendour of the morally good as man's achievement is very finite, very ambiguous, very [286] selective (where there should be no selection, but complete righteousness), that it becomes pale, until eventually we do not really know if all this splendour of morality does not fade out in the unconsciousness of the history of nature.

In brief, man experiences the finiteness also of what is humanly moral, and this experience is not disposed of by saying that the decisive factor is not the formal dignity of the law as external norm, but that to which this formal normativity protectively points: beauty, love,

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fidelity to truth, etc. For even a law understood in this way and even under God's sanction remains a law of finite man, a law of finite goodness. But in man there is an experience of an infinite claim, even though he cannot authenticate this for himself, a claim that is not satisfied by the finite reality of his fulfillment of the moral law. But man thus comes slowly to experience the secret hope, almost in fear of itself, that, despite the finiteness of human morality and despite what for us is irremoveable guilt, there is a fulfillment of our own existence, an infinite fulfillment that we call God, a righteousness that does not come from us and does not suffer from our finiteness. If this experience continually grows, is increasingly radically accepted by freedom, is increasingly obviously spread over existence as a whole, then our relationship to the moral law is changed. The law is surpassed by this experience, the over-taxing and always overexacting obligation from outside is slowly dissolved into a want and capacity from within, into the inward law of love that the Holy Spirit writes in our hearts (as Ignatius of Loyola says), its fulfillment is turned from an achievement of respecting a holy law from outside into the utterance of a love which, since it possesses God himself, is not a law and lives in the freedom of God himself.

This transformation of course does not take place suddenly and all at once; it is completed only when man has left *everything* in the renunciation of death and in this emptiness receives without mediation the infinite mystery that is God. But, even though it is found at different stages with different individuals, this process of transformation of the holy law (that is not God himself) is following its course from the outset in every human being. The theoretical dialectic between law and righteousness and the history of the relationship between law and righteousness, as it happens and is documented in the wider religious history of humanity, in the history of revelation, [287] in the books of the Old and the New Testament, is no more than a reflection of the history of this relationship as it occurs in the heart of every human being when he slowly turns from being a sinner and a doer of the law into a person justified by God himself, someone who beyond all legal justice receives the life, the holiness, the freedom of God, who is infinitely above all laws. When God, as promised in Jeremiah (31:33), plants his law *deep within* man, writes it in his *heart*; when, as Ezekiel promises (36:26), a new heart and a new spirit is given us instead of a heart of stone, when the law, as Paul says (2 Cor. 3:3) is not written on stone tablets, but by the Spirit of the living God on the tablets of our hearts themselves, then there is no problem between law and righteousness, then the law is fulfilled by a fulfillment that is no longer God's law, but God himself.

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[288]

17

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS FOR SALVATION

The theme presented to me runs: The importance of the non-Christian religions for salvation.

Here, in this question (as distinct from *Nostra aetate* of the Second Vatican Council), the term 'non-Christian religions' must be understood as excluding the Jewish religion and Islam, since the Old Testament contains part of that divine revelation which Christianity regards as its own and Islam is related expressly at least to Christian revelation as a whole. In these reflections a systematic theologian can obviously speak only of what lies within his own field. Consequently he cannot incorporate into his reflections what the empirical sciences of religion, especially history of religion and phenomenology of religion, can contribute to this theme. What is to be said here must therefore inevitably remain very abstract and formal. In the last resort it amounts only to an inquiry in regard to these sciences as to whether they can really discover historically and concretely in the individual religions what the systematic theologian thinks he can find there at least partially and imperfectly. If the systematic theologian, the dogmatic theologian, puts this request to the historical sciences of religion, working with their *a posteriori* method, in order not to exceed the limits of his own competence, what he is doing is only analogous to what the dogmatic theologian expects from the fundamental theologian in the light of the Catholic understanding of the relationship between faith and human experience; his request therefore cannot be *a priori* rejected as impossible or unreasonable; [289] on the contrary, it gives the dogmatic theologian a better right and a better conscience to keep within the limits of his own competence.

For the dogmatic theologian *Nostra aetate* is on the one hand a precious guide and on the other hand leaves to him what is theologically the ultimate and essential question as a *quaestio disputata*. For a variety of reasons this declaration of the Second Vatican Council is an important aid for the dogmatic theologian. The declaration begins with an aspect that the Church had not presented with this clarity before Vatican II. There is a relationship of the Church to the non-Christian religions as such (that is, as concrete sociological realities with their doctrinal structures and their life as such) and not only a relationship to non-Christian individuals. Moreover, the declaration by no means presents its theme from the standpoint of how the Church in its own self-understanding is distinct as a unique force from all other religious communions. This customary apologetic-missionary aspect is deliberately omitted here. The motif of the declaration is taken, not from the missionary command, but from the Church's task 'of fostering unity and love among men, and even among nations'. The council does not for that reason raise doubts either about the Church's self-understanding as the presence of the fullness of revelation or about its pressing obligation to engage in missionary activity. But the council opens up a perspective of a greater tranquillity in its mission and in a missionary method which permits a patient and positive co-existence of the Church with the other religious communions and a dialogue with the latter as such. The council sees the basis for this relationship in the universal salvific will of the sovereign and benevolent God, the author of the universal history of salvation, lasting from the beginning to the final consummation and not abolished even by sin. The declaration recognizes what is 'true' and 'holy' in the different religions and that the concrete forms and doctrines of these religions are to be regarded with straightforward seriousness. The declaration sees the ultimate root of these religions in the quest for an answer to the unsolved riddle of human existence and in a certain perception and acknowledgment of that hidden power which is present in the course of the world and in the events of human life. In a word, the council invites us to take

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seriously the non-Christian religions as such.

In view of the limited scope of our theme *here*, the question can be left aside as to whether the far too brief descriptions of Hinduism [290] and Buddhism are beyond all doubt and whether too little attention has been given to other religions among non-Christians, especially among the culturally less developed peoples. On the other hand it must be said (although this is not meant as a criticism of the declaration) that the essential problem for the theologian has been left open. In the Constitution on the Church (no. 16), in the Decree on Missionary Activity (no. 7), in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (no. 22), it is said that even a person whom the historical message of Christianity has not reached, even an atheist, can be without fault and thus touched ('in ways known to God') by God's redeeming grace, can have a salvific faith in the proper sense of the term and so can gain salvation. Consequently it is really obvious that effects of this inward possession, even in the 'heathen', of the authentic content of salvation, acknowledged in a spirit of vast optimism, must be found in the religions themselves in which such a person concretely lives out his relationship to God. But this conclusion from the premises of the council is not drawn by the council in *Nostra aetate*. In this declaration the properly theological quality of the non-Christian religions remains undefined. Are they religious constructs which human beings themselves in virtue of their 'naturally' religious inclinations, albeit under a certain salvific providence of God, have created with all the limitations and debasements which are attached to such human achievements?

Are they (as institutions and doctrines) merely 'religion' as opposed to 'faith'? If in these and other passages the council admits that properly salvific faith is possible in principle even in pagans and atheists, does this mean that it is achieved only outside the life of these religions as such – for instance, fidelity in the dictates of conscience, in love of neighbour, etc. – so that acts within the sphere of these non-Christian religions as such are not effective of salvation? Or can such acts, achieved *within* the non-Christian religions as *such*, perhaps be evaluated as salvific acts? Despite the depravities occurring there, is it possible to regard the history of these non-Christian religions as a part of the history of revelation properly so-called? Is the contrast between revelation and faith from above on the one hand and religion from below on the other hand terminologically correct, but only in the sense that the real religions from below are always (although in very different ways and to a different extent) also determined by revelation and faith from above? Understandably, [291] *Nostra aetate* gives us no information about these questions. But they are of the greatest importance for a theological appreciation and interpretation of the history of religion, of the right approach to missionary work. In more than a millennium of struggle theology has overcome Augustinian pessimism in regard to the salvation of the individual and reached the optimism of the Second Vatican Council, assuring supernatural salvation in the immediate possession of God to all those who do not freely reject it through their own personal fault; our question now must be whether theology can regard the non-Christian religions with the same optimism. In order to get further with this question, the systematic theologian must consider several things which admittedly are themselves disputed or disputable theologoumena and can be treated only very briefly here.

A doctrine of God's universal and supernatural salvific will and other reasons lead to a theory of the relationship of grace on the one hand and man, mankind, and its history on the other which sees this grace (if it is to be brought at all within the traditional systems) more as 'habitual' than as 'actual'. 'Habitual' of course does not mean here *that* state of grace in which grace is accepted by man's free consent. It means grace seen as present from the outset, as offered to freedom, as we generally think of it, for example, as 'habitual' in the baptized infant. When textbook theology considers supernatural grace (as possibility of faith, hope, and love), seen there also as possible even before baptism and outside an explicitly

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Christian situation, it always assumes that this occurs at isolated points of time, here and there in particular situations. But this grace need not be seen as 'actual' to that extent. Notwithstanding its supernaturality and unmeritedness, it can certainly be seen as a permanent existential of man, of mankind and its history, always and everywhere present, as permanently present possibility of a salvific relationship of freedom to God, as innermost entelechy of the history of the individual and of mankind as a whole, in which the unmerited gracious self-communication of God to the world is the ultimate finality and dynamism of the world and world history, whether the human freedom of any particular individual accepts this innermost entelechy or closes itself up against it.

This endowment of the world and its history with grace, thus understood as 'habitual' by the very nature of grace as supernatural [292] finality of the transcendentality of mind-in-world, is always also the most fundamental event of revelation, since it opens up this transcendentality toward the immediacy of God, whether this is made explicit and objectified or not. Because of this the history of supernatural revelation and the history of supernatural salvation are necessarily co-extensive and co-existent. What we generally call history of revelation and history of faith is therefore the history of the *acceptance* and *objectification* of this innermost deification of the world offered to freedom, which is also an offer of salvation and revelation and a permanent existential of humanity and its history. This 'habitual' existential is nothing other than the reality of God's universal salvific will, which should not be seen as a mere intention of God existing 'inwardly' in him, which is objectified as 'actual' grace only here and there in the world. All that has just been said ought of course as such to be more clearly developed and substantiated. But for the moment this must suffice. Even where it is really present, history of revelation is not *a priori* immune from the possibility of not being fully objectified in objectification and deed by man's reflective knowledge and his freedom, and of being debased in a way contrary to its innermost nature. It is only the history of salvation and revelation in and after Jesus Christ as the eschatological and unsurpassable Word of God, by which God has irreversibly promised himself to the world in *historical* tangibility, that excludes and renders obsolete an ultimate denial by human freedom of the grace-given existentiality of history.

The thesis of the imperfection or even the possible failure of a genuine history of revelation is implied for Christian theology by its teaching on the failure of the Old Covenant and the rejection of the Messiah by the institutional religion of ancient Israel. It is also evident from the whole history of the Old Covenant, in which the incompatibility between the people of God as they actually were with their religious institutions on the one hand and the claim of God represented by the prophets on the other hand was continually present. But this Old Testament history of revelation in particular *before* the coming of the salvation-bringer in Jesus Christ shows that a concrete, verbalized, and institutionalized religion cannot be regarded *a priori* and in principle as either *pure* objectification of the grace and revelation of God, or as the absolute rejection of this offer by God of himself, or as merely a religion 'from below'. The history [293] of the Old Testament shows that an institutionalized religion as objectification of divine revelation in social life can in the last resort appear to human eyes to be no more than an indissoluble mixture of both divine revelation with its sociological institutionalization and also blockages of further development and debasement of this revelation and its history. At the same time it must be remembered that, if we Christians today regard and apply the Old Testament canon as an unambiguous norm for what God willed in the Old Covenant and what was contrary to his will, we are using a criterion which the people of the Old Covenant simply did not possess completely and as clearly defined before Jesus Christ and were thus faced with a question that they could by no means answer adequately and with certainty. For these people the origin of their religion from God was a factor that was no easier to determine than it was for people of other religions. They could

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neither simply accept the actual reality of Old Testament history as entirely caused by God nor could they reject it outright, nor had they an institutionally established criterion of a permanent character in the light of which they could distinguish with certainty between what came from God in the Old Covenant and what was merely a transient phenomenon or a debasement of what God had effected. But if that is true even of the Old Covenant, then it may be regarded as true particularly of non-Christian religious objectifications and institutions. These are not to be regarded either entirely as objectification of divine revelation and grace or merely as a human invention from below or purely and simply as an evil perversion of divine revelation.

A third point must be made. If, according to Vatican II, an opportunity of supernatural salvation and the opportunity of a real faith in revelation is offered always and everywhere to every human being at all times; if revelation properly so-called is not possible without faith in the strict sense and must be offered always and everywhere (and in this connection it is not possible after Vatican II to have recourse to a *fides virtualis* as substitute for actual revelation and faith), then such a revelation and such a faith, whose intrinsic possibilities in the subject we cannot explain at greater length here, occur *concretely* and *on the whole* only by the mediation of those categorial, institutional, and verbal realities which we know as non-Christian religions. In man, his transcendental, mental, and supernatural relationship to God is always mediated by categorial realities of his [294] life, and in the last resort the most sublime and formless mysticism is no exception to this. This categorial mediation of the transcendental relationship of man to God – that is, of the acceptance of the openness of the mind to God in freedom radicalized by faith, an openness we know as faith, hope, and love – can certainly occur also through categorial objectivities (as far as the individual act of this kind is concerned) which are not explicitly religious. For Vatican II, accordingly, there are circumstances where such a mediation exists (for example, an atheist who is faithful to his conscience) which is certainly not thematicized in an explicitly religious way. But since the view cannot be maintained that explicit, verbalized, and institutional religiousness can be irrelevant to man's relationship to God in human life as a whole, this verbalized and institutionalized explicit religious factor certainly cannot be denied this categorial mediatory role for the totality of human life and of mankind. At any rate, a person to whom such a religious factor (of whatever kind) is actually offered in his life and accepted by him in freedom can obviously apply and will in fact apply that factor as a categorial mediation of his relationship to God, unless it is absolutely contrary to the latter. Catholic moral theology, however, admits that an objectivity objectively and as such opposed to God's will can nevertheless mediate a positive moral act; it must consequently be recognized that such objectivities may in principle be ways of mediating positive religious acts, even though objectively and implicitly they are in a certain sense opposed to God. It is, for example, quite possible for a polytheist to act positively in regard to the true, absolute God, for whom in his objective, verbalized consciousness he finds a name from his polytheistic pantheon. In their institutions and theoretical objectifications non-Christian religions can be categorial mediations of genuine salvific acts, both because they always retain some truth (at least the postulate of a transcendentality of man beyond the field of his immediate experience) and also because even false and debased religious objectivity can be a way of mediating a genuine and grace given transcendentality of man.

Non-Christian religions then, even though incomplete, rudimentary, and partially debased, can be realities *within* a *positive* history of salvation and revelation. They are able admittedly to overcome their ambivalence (between objectification of God's first and last self-communication to the world as grace and revelation on the one hand [295] and the incompleteness and debasement of this objectification to the point of an absolute existential rejection of God's self-communication on the other hand) and to reach a final discernment of

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spirits only in the light of Jesus Christ as eschatological Word of God. But this is true also of the Old Testament and, to a lesser extent which cannot be precisely defined here, can be true of non-Christian religions, to which as such therefore a positive salvific function cannot be *a priori* and entirely denied.

Here the systematic theologian must stop and hand over the question to the historian of religion working on experience. At this point the systematic theologian can at most draw the attention of the historian of religion (if the latter wants to work not simply historically, but also up to a point in terms of 'fundamental theology') to certain aspects from which he might consider this history of religion and which might perhaps otherwise escape him. The systematic theologian might, for example, ask the historian of religion if he cannot discover in a concrete and religious form those 'sacraments of nature' which the dogmatic theologian postulates in the abstract and acknowledges as important for salvation. He could offer the empiricist fundamental insights perhaps revealing in and under an apparently solid polytheism a genuine relationship to the absolute God. He could show him that it is not *a priori* forbidden to discover genuine supernatural mysticism in the 'mysticism' of religions of higher cultures, even when this extra-Christian 'mysticism' is not itself by any means thematicized in an explicitly religious form. In a word (and this has largely not happened and is not possible here) the systematic theologian could offer viewpoints and a framework to the historian of religion which would make it easier for the latter, even in all the diversity and sometimes terrible debasement of extra-Christian religions, to discover that God's grace is always and everywhere active for man's salvation and its salvific power, although obscurely and imperfectly, also manifested in the non-Christian religions, making them ways of salvation by which human beings approach God and his Christ.

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VOLUME 18

LIST OF SOURCES

YESTERDAY'S HISTORY OF DOGMA AND THEOLOGY FOR TOMORROW
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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS FOR SALVATION
Lecture at the International Congress of Missiology, 5-12 October 1975, in Rome. The general theme of the congress was 'Evangelization and Culture.'

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[1]

PART ONE

Faith and the Church

[3]

1

FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

I hope it will not seem presumptuous on my part to offer some introductory observations on the purpose and content of my book *Grundkurs des Glaubens*: *Einführung des Christentums*.* In West Germany eleven printings, comprising more than forty thousand copies, have appeared. It has also appeared in the German Democratic Republic. Dutch, Italian, Spanish, French, Anglo-American, and even Japanese editions have been published, all of which would seem to justify these comments.

It is not a question of commending the work or defining its place in modern theological literature. Nor does the author want to praise the book, but to explain quite straightforwardly his purpose in writing it and to describe its contents. It is obvious that this can be done only in a fragmentary fashion. I cannot deal, for instance, with the many reviews and criticisms that have appeared since the book was published. But perhaps I may be permitted to quote the conclusion of the longest review that I have seen up to the time of writing. Joseph Ratzinger, now Cardinal Archbishop of Munich and a well-known German theologian, writes:

> A large book always provokes discussion. Rahner's basic course is a large book. It is sustained by the same passion for knowledge as that which led Anselm of Canterbury to attempt to deduce Christianity *rationibus necessariis*. Even someone who is not disposed to accept in its entirety the 'idea of Christianity' elaborated by Rahner will find here a presentation of the Christian reality which [4] he cannot positively or negatively refuse to consider. We cannot but be grateful to Rahner for producing now, as the fruit of all his past efforts, this impressive synthesis, which will remain a source of inspiration long after much of modern theological work has been forgotten.[1]

That is *Cardinal Ratzinger's* opinion, not mine. But it certainly provides me with a moral justification for saying a few words about my own work.

First of all, the title of the book. For my own part, I would have liked to call it simply *Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums* ('Introduction to the Idea of Christianity'). The publisher wanted the title *Grundkurs des Glaubens* ('Basic Course of Faith'). This title is not wrong, but it could be misleading if it were taken to mean a popular presentation, a kind of catechism, of Christian doctrine in its traditional form for everyone. But this is not what the book was meant to be. Certainly it is to be hoped that the content of the book, when translated and popularized (by others, of course), may form part of the Christian proclamation to *all*; but the book itself is intended as a scholarly work, to be understood only as a result of what Hegel called the 'exertion of the idea.' As the subtitle indicates, it is presented as an introduction to the *idea* of Christianity; there is no question of repeating in their traditional formulations particular statements of Christianity about God and salvation history, but rather

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* Freiburg im Breisgau, 1976; 11th printing 1979. English trans. *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity,* trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad/London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978).

[1] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 'Vom Verstehen des Glaubens: Anmerkungen zu Rahners Grundkurs des Glaubens' in *Theologische Revue* 74 (1978): 177-86.

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(so far as this is possible in view of the historicity of salvation history and of God's freedom) of bringing Christianity as a whole under one *idea*, of reflecting on the ultimate unity and the essential coherence of everything that Christianity proclaims. It is true, of course, that such a study, properly understood, amounts to a basic course of Christianity in the sense of a quest for the ultimate grounds of faith; but it is not a popular catechism for the multitude.

Despite the endeavour to establish a comprehensive idea of Christianity (as is made clear again in the book's closing remarks on brief formularies of faith) and despite the academic level which the book attempts to maintain, its distinctive feature really lies not in its conceptual presentation or its scholarly character but in the firm determination it expresses to pursue the question of the essence of [5] Christianity on what I would describe as a 'primary plane of reflection'. What does this mean? Certainly not that I intend to get involved in deep and serious problems of a theory of knowledge. The term 'primary plane of reflection' means something quite simple, but it also involves the explicit and resolute acceptance of all the consequences. What is the position of the Christian today who wants honestly to justify his faith to himself and others, and to make really clear to himself up to a point what as a Christian he accepts as true and how he must live?

The normal Christian and even the professional theologian (who can really be an expert only in a tiny sector of theology as a whole) are faced today by a philosophy and theology to which there appear to be no limits. It was possible for Francis Suarez (1548-1619), for example, to assume rightly that he could have present in his subjective consciousness more or less everything that might be important for the justification of Christian faith at his time and in his situation (I mean, explicitly and reflectively present). This has become simply impossible for any individual today. No one can know and write everything that would be necessary for the justification of faith 'as such' in the light of the requirements of scholarly reflection (requirements of reflective knowledge, philosophy, and its modern divisions and problems; exegesis and its assumptions; history of dogma that is not adapted from the outset to school use; general linguistics and epistemology, and all the questions about the assumptions derived from the history of ideas and sociology behind religious statements as a whole). No individual can present and justify his Christian faith today in the way that traditional fundamental and dogmatic theology formerly assumed to be possible. If I wanted today to justify the primacy of the pope in the light of a traditional scholarly reflection on Matthew 16:18, I would need to have studied exegesis all my life, to know from the sources the theology of Judaism at the time of Jesus, and to write some hundreds of pages about this problem. But even then I would certainly not know enough about philosophy, epistemology, about the history of the Church, of law, of dogma, to defend in the traditional fashion the legitimacy of the papal primacy – which is certainly not to be found simply and literally in Matthew. Another example: I once had a clever student who wrote a dissertation on the question of how, in the light of the problems of modern philosophy as a whole, we must methodically set to work [6] epistemologically and philosophically merely to raise at all the question of the personal character of God.

When all is said and done, no one today, entirely on his own, can present his Christian faith as substantiated by fundamental theology and in its dogmatic content in the way that really ought to have been possible and was in fact pursued according to the scholarly ideals of former fundamental and dogmatic theologies. (Nor, of course, can someone who interprets himself from the standpoint of unbelief claim support for his opinions in science as understood according to the ideals of the nineteenth century.) Merely incidentally, it is really obvious that it is impossible to get out of this difficulty with the aid of teamwork, since in *this* matter each individual ought to test the conclusions of the other person's scholarship for their soundness: in these disciplines it is not possible as it is in the natural sciences to rely on the conclusions of other scholars.

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Nevertheless, since we can realize Christian faith only as freely responsible subjects, we must be able to justify it rationally and understand its statements. Consequently there must be a way of justifying and understanding Christian faith that does not emerge as a conclusion and synthesis from the study of all the individual theological disciplines. In this respect, in the last resort, it is irrelevant whether or not we describe as a science this justification and understanding of the meaning of Christian faith, which does *not* emerge from the individual theological disciplines (unmanageable for one person in their present-day complexity) but is prior to all such studies. It is also obvious that such efforts by individuals will be made in very different ways and in varying degrees and in varying planes of reflection, dependent on the character of the person involved and the mental climate and the existential situation in which he is placed. If then we speak of a primary plane of reflection, this does not mean that the primary plane is the same for all or that it does not exhibit substantial variations: the term 'primary plane of reflection' is meant to contrast with that scholarly reflection on the Christian faith which is made up of all the methods, considerations, investigations, and conclusions of the many individual historical and philosophical sciences which on the one hand must find expression on this 'secondary' plane of reflection and on the other cannot today be mastered in their entirety by any one person. Consequently the task envisaged in my book was simply to explain how a normal Christian (who cannot [7] be an expert on all the relevant disciplines) can justify the legitimacy and meaning of his faith to himself and to others, without at the same time attempting in a little book to investigate in all their complexity the problems and conclusions of all the individual philosophical and theological disciplines.

Of course, modern works on dogmatics and fundamental theology nowhere actually manage to carry out the abstractly conceivable and scientifically exact study of all the individual disciplines on which they objectively depend; they do not, however, admit expressly and precisely this impossibility, but they are presented as if they were the result of a critical appraisal of all the disciplines they presuppose. A short book of *that kind* on the totality of Christian belief cannot be written today by any one person. That is why I make the explicit claim that this book belongs merely to a primary plane of reflection, that it is not meant to be a learned work, but is itself based on scholarship (if we may use these terms) in its own right and its unavoidability. From what was said about the nature of the primary plane of reflection in the field of existentially important knowledge and decisions it is immediately obvious that a book of this kind must nevertheless be written (as far as one individual can do this) with a view as wide and clear as possible of the problems of the disciplines relevant to theology, that even this work is arduous and perhaps could not be directly accomplished by many people, that it is the sort of book that might be written quite differently. It is impossible to explain here at greater length how and why, even on this primary plane, in practice reflection partly goes on as theology hitherto proceeded (on a plane of higher scholarly reflection), but partly also is compelled, to proceed by other ways. Hence, for example, it is impossible on this primary plane of reflection and in a book like this to examine the question of why a person should be a Catholic and not a Protestant precisely in the way in which traditional fundamental theology discussed it with the aid of an immense amount of historical research; this task is today quite beyond the resources of any one individual, if these reflections are to be exact, based on the sources, and without bias. In a word, this book is meant to be a study on a primary plane of reflection, giving an account of the meaning and credibility of Catholic belief precisely in the way that is possible for one person, for one theologian. The absence of 'scholarship' is admitted and intentional, but, I think, is [8] itself existentially-ontologically and theologically justified; it is a question of an explicitly and deliberately accepted lack of scholarship.

In addition to its form, it seems to me that the contents of the book have their own special

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characteristics. In what follows, I may be permitted to draw attention to some of these.

My theology has often been described as transcendental. I have nothing against this description as long as it is correctly understood and is not meant to suggest that my theology as a whole can quite clearly and unambiguously be characterized in this way. As I understand the term, it simply means that, with reference to all statements of faith and theology (if they are to be justified) the question must be asked how and why man, in virtue of his own nature (which is concrete anyway and thus from the outset irrevocably under the influence of the grace of God's self-communication), is the one with whom these statements can and must actually be concerned. The description does not mean that in my theology man is a subject of faith and religion only in his abstract transcendentality and not in his historicity and his history. For me, he is a subject of faith as a historical being in his concrete history. This, however, is the very thing that is not obvious but must be shown to be possible in a transcendental reflection. It must be shown that history can really be significant for salvation to the intellectual subject, who is always more than space and time. In the last resort it must be shown that man's history is *not* something in which he is involved *over and above* his transcendentality to God as the absolute being and mystery, but that it is only *as* history of this transcendentality in freedom that history is actually history in which salvation can come about.

It is typical and important for this book that grace in its first impact and ultimate meaning is always understood strictly as God's self-communication and consequently that a proper understanding of the Catholic doctrine of grace and a real understanding of the 'supernatural' can be attained only in the light mainly of 'uncreated grace', although this does not mean the denial of the traditional teaching on created grace as (simultaneously) precondition and consequence of uncreated grace. The dimension of the supernatural and also of revelation is primarily established by God's self-communication, in which God with his own nature, albeit as unmerited grace, becomes an actual internal principle of man: that is, when God [9] represents in regard to man not only the principle of efficient causality, but also the principle of a quasi-formal causality by which the finite becomes really capable of the infinite. But this self-communication of God may not be understood, as in Jesuit baroque scholasticism, merely as entitative objectivity, outside the scope of consciousness; it always means essentially also the *a priori* dynamism of man's knowledge and freedom towards the immediacy of God himself. Man's mental transcendentality as knowledge and freedom is the real and original point at which the grace of God's self-communication is received. This grace is originally a transcendental and not a categorial factor in man's existence.

This gracious self-communication of God as the radical orientation of human transcendentality to the immediacy of God (so that this transcendentality does not always merely point to God, while forever remaining at a distance, but also actually attains him in himself) is not something that happens to man as an isolated event in space and time. It is a permanent existential of man, present always and everywhere, even though in man as inarticulate it takes the form merely of an offer and a precondition for his freedom and in man as historically mature in the form of free acceptance or in the form of free rejection.

Insofar as this self-communication of God present everywhere in history as an existential of man involves a radical orientation of man's transcendentality to the immediacy of God, there is also present a genuine, supernatural, personal revelation of God, even though the latter as the radical orientation of man's transcendentality has not yet been consciously considered and objectified, or at any rate not clearly or perhaps badly. Consequently the history of mind co-exists with the history of revelation. What we usually call history of revelation (what is known as primitive revelation, revelation from Abraham and Moses to Jesus Christ) is therefore not the history of revelation as such, but only a particular, selected part of the history of revelation generally and as a whole, which is established by God's self-

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communication as an existential of man and as occurring everywhere on very diverse planes of reflection in the history of mankind. Hence the history of religion, even outside explicit, verbalized, and institutionalized Christianity, together with the Old Testament, is not merely the vain attempt of *man* with the aid of his natural transcendentality to establish from below a relationship [10] to God, but is also always and everywhere from the outset a history of revelation and salvation coming from above, even though this history of grace is *really* history: that is, a slowly increasing articulation of this grace in man's consciousness which can take on a variety of forms and even be terribly debased.

It is in this light also that the meaning of anonymous Christianity and anonymous Christians must be understood. The term as such is not important. Anyone who thinks it implies a depreciation of explicit and institutionalized Christianity need not use it. The thing itself, however, cannot be disputed, at least after Vatican II, since it is taught there that always and everywhere in the world anyone who is faithful to this consciousness is living in the grace of God and united to the paschal mystery of Christ. In such a view of the co-existence and co-extensiveness of the history of humanity's mental existence, of the history of salvation and revelation, the absolute necessity of Jesus Christ must not be obscured; but it is permissible to approach Christology from a universal pneumatology and not only to proceed in the opposite direction, so that Jesus Christ appears as the unsurpassable peak of a universal history of grace as God's self-communication to the world as a whole, a peak at which this universal history of salvation is no longer merely at the stage of an open offer of grace to man's freedom, but where this offer from God has been established victoriously and irreversibly, as far as mankind as a whole is concerned.

Something must now be said about the treatment of Christology in this book. Compared to the total content of the book, Christology occupies a very large space. This is because the fact that Christianity after all is about Christ must not be obscured, even though the most fundamental idea of Christianity as presented here is that of the gracious self-communication of God in himself. It is a Christology which must, of course, make use of historical statements and which cannot be a merely speculative development of a 'Christ-idea' (even though a transcendental Christology is legitimate and has its part in this book), insofar as the history of man's transcendentality and its radicalizing by grace is shown to be directed unquestionably toward a point at which it is established as irreversibly victorious and there appears as historically tangible. The fact remains, however, that in principle (and consequently in this book) there must be a place for an *a posteriori* Christology based on historical experience of Jesus [11] as the Christ: that is, the question must be answered as to where in the concrete course of history it is legitimate to find that God-man toward whom a transcendental Christology is directed as to the irreversible culmination of universal salvation history. A Christology 'from below', an 'ascending Christology', is therefore legitimate and necessary.

All this was understood by traditional theology when it included as part of its fundamental theology a treatise *De Christo legato divino*. In this sense the Christology of the present book is meant to be and is in fact traditional, since it asks in the first place who this Jesus was, what he proclaimed, and what account he gave of himself. But traditional Christology considered Jesus within the scope of fundamental theology only in the light of the formal, abstract idea of a divinely attested prophet and then went on to assume that testimony of the God-manhood, the incarnation, and the hypostatic union was to be found, not only in Johannine and Pauline theology, but also expressly and directly in Jesus' own statements about himself in the Synoptics. According to this traditional theology, the divinely attested prophet Jesus himself proclaims directly and explicitly his divine sonship in the sense of Chalcedonian Christology.

On this point the author of the present book felt it necessary to proceed more cautiously if

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the conclusions of modern exegesis were to be honestly respected. There is no attempt here (at least, no systematic attempt) to find in Jesus' own words a statement about himself which is directly and formally identical with the teaching even of Johannine and Pauline Christology and its further development in the dogma of Chalcedon. This does not mean breaking or denying a genuine, legitimate, and necessary connection between the historically demonstrable self-interpretation of Jesus and the Church's dogma. With reference to this question the basic thesis of the book is that Jesus proclaims that in him – in his person and his teaching – the kingdom of God (that is, God's gracious self-communication) is not merely always present as an offer to man's freedom, but has reached us victoriously and irreversibly, has been actually victoriously established by God, and that the last, definitive word of grace has been irrevocably spoken in history: a word that in Jesus' resurrection, where he is definitively accepted in his solidarity with other human beings, has become the unsurpassable and definitive word of God in history. From this standpoint, the view is [12] maintained in the book that this historically tangible self-interpretation of Jesus as the definitive, unsurpassable prophet, as the definitive word of God's self-promise to the world in its history, also contains implicitly the Chalcedonian Christology and simultaneously offers a critical norm to make sure that the Church's ecclesial Christology, in itself absolutely true and binding, is not misunderstood in a monophysite sense (a misunderstanding that undoubtedly always represents a serious danger in Christendom and psychologically is the reason why the Church's Christology is rejected by many as mythological). In these brief reflections of course it is impossible to bring out in detail the content of the historically demonstrable self-interpretation of Jesus as the last of the prophets and the final bringer of salvation and the connection of this content with the Church's Christology; even in the book itself these themes are only incompletely explained. Here we must be content with having at least indicated the specific nature of the Christology of this book. Nor can we enter more closely here into the book's teaching on Jesus' resurrection. This teaching also has what we may describe as a certain transcendental approach, based not on a Platonic anthropology but on the correctly interpreted unity of spirit and matter in man (which does not mean a monotonous sameness), in its view that man's final achievement of salvation and fulfillment with God itself implies what is really meant by man's resurrection and consummation.

We must pass over the treatment of ecclesiology and eschatology in the sections *after* that of Christology. At the end there is a discussion of a number of 'brief formularies' of faith. These brief credal statements are not meant, of course, to replace or suppress the Apostles' Creed or other official creeds of the Church. But they can help to make clear the fact that Christianity, despite its historicity, can be condensed up to a point in a brief 'compendium' and that there are many ways of acquiring a general understanding of the Christian faith which perhaps have been too much neglected in the traditional forms of proclamation.

Any book by a theologian has its flaws and deficiencies. The most important of these are bound to escape the author's attention, otherwise they would have been avoided. All this is obviously true of the present book. The most important flaws and deficiencies in regard to the themes will have escaped this author's attention, even though he [13] is not to be blamed for the absence of anything which cannot be part of his theme in the light of his method and basic approach. But the author is also aware of deficiencies and faults which might perhaps have been avoided. The treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, has turned out to be perhaps briefer than it might have been in the light of the book's aim and structure. I think however that the charge of modalism in my treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity, made by a German theologian, is unjustified. It has been refuted in fact by a lengthy Roman

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dissertation of a Brazilian theologian[2] and Cardinal Ratzinger did not notice any such modalism. Unlike some other modern theologians, however, I readily admit that I fear the danger of modalism less than that of an implicit tritheism, which cannot easily be avoided. For the rest, I must point to what I said about the Trinity in the large work of dogmatic theology *Mysterium Salutis*.[3]

Another theme perhaps inadequately considered in my book is that of 'evil' in the world and its compatibility with faith in an infinitely holy and purely good God. The book does not put forward any theory of an apocatastasis, but stresses the importance of a legitimate *hope* of an eschatological universal reconciliation, even though man in his still open history of freedom must always and incessantly allow for the possibility of final perdition. But perhaps the theology of evil is not outlined vividly enough in this book. Nevertheless, it seems to me that a Christian with a humble and universal hope that knows no bounds does more credit to God's holy goodness than one who even now wants to know precisely that evil, even though condemned by God, has a certain finality in this world.

There is nothing in this book about angels or devils. Whatever its theological importance, it does not seem to me absolutely necessary to deal with this doctrine in a book mainly concerned with the ultimate basic idea of Christianity. Anyone interested in my views of the subject will find them in the essay 'On Angels' in this volume.[4]

[14] My friend Herbert Vorgrimler[5] has rightly drawn my attention to the omission in the chapter on ecclesiology of any reference to a theme on which I have elsewhere written comparatively freshly and insistently – the theme of the Church of sinners, of the sinful Church – although an impartial consideration of this theme could be of great importance particularly at the present time to enable people to adopt an uninhibited attitude towards the Church. As I said, Vorgrimler is right in this respect. The ecclesiology of this book has turned out to be perhaps too innocuous, even somewhat triumphalist.

Finally, I can see and expressly admit the limitations of the book insofar as it represents a certain individualistic approach to theological problems as a whole. Political theology and the theology of liberation are not expressly represented here. This does not mean that I simply reject these theologies: that would contradict much that I have said about them elsewhere. There are completely orthodox and legitimate political theologies and theologies of liberation, even though we need not for that reason approve them in *all* their forms. There are theologies which rightly bring man's sociality to bear on all theology from the very outset and consequently are not to be identified with the particular discipline of Christian social science. It would be possible therefore, even in an introduction to the idea of Christianity, to work from the outset with the basic conceptions of a political theology and a theology of liberation without for that reason betraying the orthodoxy of an ecclesial theology or reducing theology, contrary to its true nature, to themes which do not cover its entire scope. But I think it is also possible to justify the admitted absence of political theology and the theology of liberation from this book. For one thing, in a comparatively small book in which an attempt is made to consider all the traditional themes of dogmatic and fundamental theology, the limitations of space make it almost impossible to integrate also these theologies, particularly since, as they now exist or continue to exist, they have not shown very clearly or in detail that it is possible in the light of their approach to cope with all that is binding dogma in all its

[2] M. de Franca Miranda, *O mistério de Deus en nova vida*: *A doutrina trinitária de Karl Rahner* (Fé e realidade 1; São Paulo, 1975).
[3] *Mysterium Salutis*: *Grundriß heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, vol. 2 (Zurich, ³ 1978), pp. 517-40. English trans. (as a separate volume) *The Trinity* (London/New York, 1970).
[4] It originally appeared in *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. 13 (Zurich, 1978), pp. 381-428.
[5] Cf. H. Vorgrimler, 'Nachdenken über Jesus und seine kirchlichen Nachfolger' in *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt,* no. 38, 19 September 1976.

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parts. If they are to be justified and to cover the whole of dogma, these theologies, too, [15] need transcendental-speculative reflections and historical material; they must not only proclaim passionately their formal nature, but also engage in a theological activity which they have in common with traditional theology. These theologies anyway are also in danger of becoming so enthusiastic about the novelty and urgency of their task that they are liable to forget difficult and absolutely imperative theological problems and tasks. I agree that my book suffers from a certain one-sidedness, but this may serve to correct the fashionable and misleading exuberance on the part of these theologies which is also possible and actually exists here and there. My book is to be read, not in an exclusive, but in a positive sense. Then, I think, it can be approved even by a defender of a political theology or a theology of liberation.

I would not like this book to be regarded as a systematic, all-integrating presentation of my theology. For this, too many problems with which I have been occupied for some forty years are disregarded here. But on the primary plane of reflection it offers a survey of Christian doctrine as a whole. This is difficult and involves many more risks than are involved in a theological study, however exact, within a particular field. The greater the task, the more likely is it that the result will fall short of complete fulfillment. But we must have the courage to make the attempt, even though the accomplishment of the task remains almost hopelessly inadequate.

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2

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURAL SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY

In the light of its own ultimate intention and its understanding of itself, theology is likely in the first place to adopt an attitude of tacit mistrust towards the natural sciences. Regarded objectively and historically, this is not at all surprising. Directly or indirectly, all natural sciences involve anthropology; they all say something about man. Examined closely and in the end result, what they say is never the expression of a precisely definable material understanding *about* something *in* man; it defines or influences the idea of man *as one and whole*, even when the particular science tries to avoid exceeding the limits of its method or of its content. At this point, however, the theologian almost inevitably begins to feel irritated, since he regards the doctrine of man revealed in the Christian faith (which is the object of his reflections) as the proper, true, and unsurpassable self-understanding of man. He can hardly fail to regard the anthropology of natural science in its method and conclusions as a threat to his own theological anthropology. There is a theological uneasiness in regard to natural science: an uneasiness in principle and (as the history of the last centuries shows) also in practice. Even at the point where no insuperable contradictions can be seen between a theological and a scientific anthropology, where both exercise a wise self-restraint and restrict themselves closely to their own field (being prepared thus to make concessions), this uneasiness continues and, in fact, on both sides (there is always someone on whom no regulations can be imposed and who nevertheless can interfere in the other's business).

In the light of his own self-understanding, the theologian must [17] recognize this situation as legitimate, must admit that his own business does not permit or enable him to abolish the situation, that (to be exact) there is a scientific anthropology existing in its own right which must be acknowledged by the theologian and which in virtue of its contents and in a critical spirit can and may in principle always have something to tell the theologian about his own anthropology. Of course it is true that there can be no absolutely contradictory opposition between faith and knowledge, between theological and scientific anthropology; in the last resort a 'double truth' is nonsense. Of course it is true that very many conflicts between the two anthropologies can be cleared up by a closer reflection on the nature of the methods of each, by a more exact definition and demarcation of their particular subject matter, etc. It is also true that in the course of the history of theology and of the empirical sciences the attempt has repeatedly been made so to define the respective fields of theology and the natural sciences that they could be seen not to border on one another and that conflicts could not only be solved up to a point but were impossible from the outset. But such an oversimplified clarification of the frontiers is not possible.

The natural scientist cannot from the outset always and unambiguously restrict himself only to those anthropological statements which by their very nature and unequivocally are irrelevant for the theologian and in no way touch on the latter's field of study. An unequivocally and radically materialistic biology, materialistic not only in its method, not only considering its object merely insofar as the latter is accessible to its method, but also declaring that there is no reality beyond the reality investigated in this way – a natural science claiming thus to be science purely and simply would be a natural science which could not co-exist with a Christian faith in one person. Consequently it is impossible for natural science and theology to accept a clarification of frontiers which would prevent them from the very outset from coming into conflict. They must coexist, they must exist alongside one another, without being absorbed into one another; they cannot assume from the outset that they have

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nothing to do with each other; hence they inevitably threaten and disturb each other.

This obvious and yet uneasy situation could, of course, be much more fully clarified and more deeply investigated in principle and historically. In this question, too, differences of opinion in the light [18] of controversial theology must be noted between individual theologians of the different Christian churches. If, for example, Catholic teaching states that God can be known by the light of natural reason or if the typical Catholic understanding of fundamental theology is considered, it can also be seen that specifically Catholic teaching in principle allows for a larger field of conflict than does a Protestant theology, which in general has a notion of faith that of its nature is placed at a greater distance from secular science.

However odd it sounds at first, it can nevertheless be said that the relationship between theology and natural science can be defined theologically perhaps most clearly in the light of the theological notion of concupiscence. The assumption behind this at first apparently strange thesis is merely that the understanding of man which finds expression in the notion of concupiscence holds equally for the dimension of knowledge and for that of the will and freedom. This assumption is really obvious in view of man's original unity, in view of the mutual dependence of his individual dimensions and realities, in view of the interconnection of his dimensions. Knowledge is itself one act, even though a specific act, of freedom, and consequently carries with it also all the peculiarities of creaturely and specifically human freedom. Concupiscence in the theological sense means that despite an original unity of man there is a pluralism of his faculties and impulses which in practice can never be integrated into an absolute unity surveyable and controllable from a single point. Concupiscence also means that man nevertheless has the task and obligation of working asymptotically toward such a unity, even though it can never be established completely in man's individual and collective history and within the course of that history; it means finally that this pluralism, which can never adequately be integrated, although not really sinful in itself, can always lead to essentially destructive sin and is in any case the reason for the agonistic character of human existence. This nonintegrated pluralism of human existence known as concupiscence, having always a complete integration before it as a task, leading to sin, unavoidably involving conflict, is a peculiarity also of man's gnoseological dimension. From this standpoint and in the very light of theology as such, it is possible to make something out of the relationship of theology to the natural sciences.

From this standpoint it must be said first of all that man, particularly as a Christian, has to allow for an irreversible pluralism of [19] sciences. These sciences do not originate at a fixed point of unity under man's control and power, from which their multiplicity could be maintained indisputably and harmoniously in unity from the very outset. The sciences exist in a plurality as alien to one another; they arise in the course of man's history without looking for mutual recognition from the outset; subsequently it may perhaps be possible with a great effort for scientific systematology and theory to work out a system of the sciences, but in the last resort this system does not permit the individual sciences to be brought under control, with each of them being assigned its own task and method. Theology, too, must live with and find its place in this insuperable pluralism of the sciences. Theology deals with the one all-embracing and sustaining source of all reality and with the one all-integrating and reconciling goal of all history that we call God. But, insofar as theology acknowledges this God precisely as the incomprehensible mystery and declares man to be eternally distinct from this God of original unity, the singular uniqueness and dignity of theology in principle simply does *not* provide the means and the way to overcome this pluralism of the sciences. Theology (together with metaphysics), known as the supreme science, is not a kind of sovereign ruler reducing the other sciences to acting as its instruments and carrying out its plans; it is *one* science among others, with the special task of providing a living example of the fact that the pluralism of the sciences does not permit any dominion that could be exercised by man in a

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kind of theological totalitarianism.

The traditional teaching of Christianity on concupiscence states also that there is an insuperable pluralism of the sciences which cannot be completely reduced to a humanly comprehensible system, but must be endured with a prudent restraint and the humility befitting the creature. It is therefore the task of theology both constantly to unmask the claim of an individual science to an ideological totalitarianism as an arrogant falsification of reality and also to return itself to the attitude of modesty which permits all sciences to be subject to God but not to itself. In this sense also all the unease which the sciences mutually generate today and all the uneasiness felt by theology in regard to the natural sciences, because of the threat which these present to it, can never mislead theology into denying their autonomy and meaningfulness. Theology is accustomed to declare that in a case of conflict it possesses ultimately the [20] competence to decide between true and false, since it can appeal to divine revelation. This traditional statement of its claims by theology may in principle and formally be completely correct. But, fundamentally and in the light of historical experience, in such cases of conflict between theology and natural science, theology is equally and frequently compelled to reexamine itself, to understand itself better, to give way to natural science. Even in a case like this the revision of theology may certainly consist in a return to a better understanding of its own principles. But this in no way alters the fact that this return to its own principles is in practice caused and necessitated by the conclusions of the natural sciences. In practice, therefore, there is an open relationship between natural science and theology: possible situations of conflict, even though they can be solved in principle, are not *a priori* avoidable. As reflection on divine revelation, theology does not dissolve the pluralism of the sciences in which it is a modest individual science and is not itself the power of a manageable unity.

Seen in the light of the notion of concupiscence, this pluralism of the sciences, including also theology, is not a static reality remaining always the same, but takes the form of a task demanding a truly historical even though asymptotic trend toward an integration and a unity. Pluralism of the sciences does not exist merely in the one human being, whose original unity would not need to have anything to do with man's actual history. Achieving man's unity in the integration of everything with which he is involved and thus also the unity of his sciences is a wholly existential task. Interdisciplinary discussion (as it is described today) is not merely a game or a diversion to be taken up or abandoned at will. If the individual sciences were separate territories without any common frontiers, the striving for unity of the sciences, interdisciplinary discussion, and a general course of studies could be left to the choice of the individual person. But since every science (because of the unity of the one God, of a unity of man, of the *one* human being, in origin, nature, and goal), without detriment to its own character, its specific method, and its formulation of the question, etc., can properly sort itself out only (paradoxical as it sounds) by transcending its own nature; since the individual sciences in each case reach a complete understanding of themselves only when they know more than themselves, the continually fresh, albeit asymptotic, attempt at an integration of the different [21] sciences, including theology, is a task and a moral obligation imposed on man.

There must be universities of knowledge which are more than organized collections of different faculties. This task of integrating the individual sciences (including, that is, the natural and the mental sciences) into a unity will continually achieve positive results; people will continually perceive (at least, bit by bit) how things hitherto merely juxtaposed in consciousness fit in with each other. But there will never be a single, all-inclusive, universal formula in this history of knowledge; and the ultimate unity to be granted to man seeking knowledge pluralistically – already present and yet remaining also a task that is continually new – is the surrender of all knowledge in a *docta ignorantia* to the eternally abiding mystery of God and his underivable will. This unity also, granted and not produced in the entrusting

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of all plurality to the only radically one God, is part of the task of integrating the pluralism of our knowledge into a unity.

Christian teaching on the concupiscent plurality of our unintegrated impulses states that this plurality, although not necessarily and always itself sin and guilt, can lead to sin and in any case causes an agonistic situation in man. The fact that the mirror of our consciousness as such does not reflect all reality as one and entire in unity but has in a certain sense been shattered into a thousand fragments each of which reproduces only a part of reality that is never completely understandable, all this is not yet necessarily sin in man, even though it is interpreted in Christian anthropology as the consequence of a sin at the primordial beginning of the mental history of mankind. But it can lead to sin and in fact continually leads to sin in individual and collective history because this gnoseological pluralism is not endured in patience or continually, freshly, and asymptotically integrated towards greater unity but is simply accepted uneasily and lazily as a matter of course or is supposed to be abolished by an illegitimate claim of an individual science to dominate the others. The indifferences of a particular science and of individual scientists toward other sciences and their representatives, what is known as one-track specialization, the narrow-minded selfishness with which individual scientists or institutions attempt to claim for themselves as much as possible of the limited resources of the state; the attempts (sometimes truly ridiculous) to rig up out of the categories of an individual science a universal formula meant to [22] explain everything without exception; the inclination too often implicitly to refuse to acknowledge as scientific other efforts to acquire knowledge with other methods, as a result of the desire presumptuously to reserve the predicate ‘scientific’ to one’s own field of scholarship – these and similar phenomena in the field of the sciences (whether they are peculiarities of the individual scientist or are institutionalized) are occurrences or evidences of the sin that arises out of the concupiscent pluralism of our knowledge.

A theory of the actual sinfulness of our knowledge and its institutions ought sometime to be developed. Science is not a paradise of innocence. And who knows if the greatest lapses have not already taken place in this area? If – and this is a serious problem – there could be a moral obligation to be content to leave unknown something which, as we are aware proleptically, could be studied and known, there might be moral problems in the field of knowledge which we are presumably completely disregarding today. But in any case, there exists also in the field of knowledge the agonistic situation which is involved permanently and irremoveably in man’s concupiscent state. If the representatives of the different sciences arrogantly make excessive claims for their own special fields, if we regard with amusement or irritation the wrangling of the scientists and their institutions for social esteem and for endowments as large as possible, in the last resort these things are not incidents that could be eliminated with a little wisdom and decisiveness, but tokens of an agonistic situation which could not simply be removed, where the sciences and scientists struggle with one another in conflicts never to be definitively resolved, since there is no earthly authority able to create from the outset a situation in the society of science and scientists in which conflicts simply cannot arise. Knowledge of the agonistic situation even of the sciences (rightly understood) provides no excuse for as much selfish conflict as possible among sciences and scientists, but serves as a reminder humbly to allow for conflicts that are never wholly avoidable even in the field of the sciences and thus to strive for as much peace and integration as possible.

The agonistic situation even in the field of knowledge is one that exists also in the mind and heart of each individual scientist. He wonders which task of knowledge among the many possible tasks open to him should have priority. The older scientist may perhaps wonder in some anxiety whether he should continue his intensive [23] investigation of a single problem within his science or (in the light of the basic problems of his science) become a metaphysical philosopher or a universal guide, if his limited resources and brief lifetime do not permit him

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to do everything together and at one and the same time. For the individual scholar, who even as scientist never can or even should wholly exclude his own existence, the agonistic state of his existence as a scholar has another aspect. In the last resort his struggle ends in a defeat which only the believer knows to be possibly his greatest victory. He grows older, his powers fail, interest in his special field becomes faint and feeble, his achievements are surpassed by his colleagues in that field, he dies. At the same time in the last resort it is no consolation if the contribution he has made to knowledge by his scientific work lives on in the heads of a future generation. For that generation is likewise doomed to death, the death that renders all actual science itself mortal.

In conclusion it may be said once more that the right to existence of the natural sciences cannot be questioned, even by theology, despite the unease which they cause. Faith and theology do not really give the natural sciences their right to exist, but find them already existing and thus see that their validity must be recognized even in the light of the very nature of the understanding of man produced by faith; they see that they must live together with these sciences in an open dialogue the concrete outcome of which cannot exactly be foreseen by either side. At the same time, theology also admittedly has the task of rejecting the arrogance (always present as a temptation) of every science as it tries to establish a monopoly and a totalitarian claim to be the complete solution to all the riddles of the universe. Absurd as such an attempt may seem to us human beings of the present time with our weary scepticism, it has constantly been made from the period of the Enlightenment onward, and even today the danger persists that this arrogance of the empirical sciences will be upheld with the aid of the powers of the state.

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[24]

3

THE CHURCH'S REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL PROVENANCE FROM THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS[1]

I would like first of all to attempt to say something about the problem raised here and about the solution traditionally offered in Catholic textbook theology in the last centuries, together with the problems in turn raised by this traditional but not officially defined solution. After that, I would like to suggest that the same question of the origin of the Church from Jesus Christ can now perhaps be understood and interpreted somewhat differently, so that this possible solution can be more easily and more simply reconciled with the conclusions of modern historical science.

The question before us (which I can consider here only as a systematic theologian, with the opportunities at my disposal, distinct as such from those of an exegete) really amounts simply to the problem of whether we can speak of an institution of the Church by Jesus Christ. When the problem is raised in this way today, in the first place we must ask the question whether Jesus of Nazareth of the pre-Easter period, as historically palpable (perhaps only with difficulty), or the risen Christ is meant.

In practice this distinction does not appear in traditional textbook theology, in traditional ecclesiology, or in fundamental theology. If [25] something connected with the Church is put into the mouth of Jesus, in the Synoptics or in John, whether it is the Jesus of the pre-Easter period or the risen Jesus creates no difficulties for traditional textbook theology. But when the question is raised today, this distinction must obviously be considered. The fact that the approach to a solution as outlined in the second part of my exposition again carries with it a special problem is something that must emerge from our reflections in that second part.

What then does traditional textbook ecclesiology say, as it existed especially in the post-Tridentine period and mainly under the aegis of St. Robert Bellarmine, the Doctor of the Church, with his notion of the Church, and as I heard and learned it myself when I was studying theology forty or more years ago?

It might perhaps be said (I am concentrating the problem, of course, on the questions that are of interest here) that in traditional textbook theology the Church is regarded as instituted by Jesus (of the pre-Easter or post-Easter period) insofar as and because this institution is ascribed to explicit, propositional statements of Jesus, interpreted more or less juridically even at that stage.

The traditional conception is of Jesus appointing Peter to be the first pope, gathering around himself a group of apostles who formed the first college of bishops; and he gives to what I might describe as this society juridically established on the basis of the explicit words of institution, understood in this sense, quite definite powers, which he can give precisely because it is he whom Christian faith perceives in Jesus of Nazareth.

The crucial point of this sort of ecclesiology then is that these ideas of the Church's institution belong *a priori* to a propositional, juridical plane. This ecclesiology is conceived in terms of the institution of a specific society. Consequently, even for Bellarmine's ecclesiology (which, up to Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis*, was, I might say, not the sole and not the complete but certainly the dominant ecclesiology) the idea of the Church up to the present

[1] With reference to the theory of *ius divinum* in the Church's constitutional law as presented here, the reader should also consult the author's 'Reflection on the Concept of "Ius Divinum" in Catholic Thought', *Theological Investigations,* vol. 5 (London/Baltimore, 1966), pp. 221-42.

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century was that of the *societas perfecta*, the perfect society, a juridical organization of Sociological character. Of course it was always known that this Church is something more than a secular society, a secular state or some other secular combination of human beings, but (and here we come closer to our real problem) it cannot be denied that the institution of this society by properly and explicitly juridical statutes can [26] be associated only with difficulty with Jesus as Redeemer, the Crucified and Risen. I said earlier that for this traditional ecclesiology it is basically irrelevant whether Jesus said any of these words of institution as the pre-Easter Jesus (who, for us today, did not from the outset expect the failure of the cross) or as the Risen One. The conception of the Church in fundamental theology as, we might say, a sociological factor, established by Jesus' words of institution, understood juridically, and an ecclesiology which, in Paul's words, regards the Church as the mystical body of Christ, or (as we might express it today) as the basic sacrament of salvation, or (as we could also say) as the enduring presence of the salvific deed of Jesus Christ: these two conceptions (that is, the sociological ecclesiology of fundamental theology and the properly soteriological dogmatic ecclesiology) were formerly not expressly separated, but in fact existed side by side, basically unreconciled and unconsidered in their duality.

Today an ecclesiology of this kind as a part of fundamental theology (as I have just attempted to explain it, if only very briefly) of course presents extraordinarily serious difficulties. It was in fact simply taken for granted in classical fundamental theology up to the 1950s, as we can see by looking up H. Dieckmann or other fundamental theologians. The problems arising from this approach to Jesus' institution of the Church became clear as such sixty or seventy years ago, in the modernist period. But, as things go, it is not surprising that it takes some time and occasionally too long before such problems are faced and not simply pushed aside in a premature conservative reaction, but really admitted, worked out, and surmounted. Hence (at least it seems so to me) we can say in all modesty and cautiously that Catholic ecclesiology needed fifty or sixty years to master to some degree the ecclesiological problems in Catholicism (we are leaving Protestantism aside at present for practical reasons) as they were brought to light by modernism.

What, then, were the difficulties brought to light here? An important fundamental theological problem which, as I said, was so to speak swept under the carpet and not really faced at the time of Pius X by *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi* was, of course, Jesus' imminent expectation. Jesus, it was said, expected (without indicating a precise time) the early advent of the eschatological, definitive kingdom of God in his own generation, and in view of this imminent expectation [27] could not have intended to institute a Church. With the world coming to an end in a few years, who would begin to organize a Church which would be pointless and without any function? All that remained was the early approach of the Last Day, the kingdom of God, the judgment, perhaps the salvific and redeeming judgment of God's mercy. But since, as it was claimed, Jesus was mistaken in his imminent expectation, the Church did come into existence, not however from him, not by his intention. What happened was that this imminent expectation gradually waned and from the community of disciples who believed in him as the Risen One there developed in practice slowly in the course of history what came to be called the Church. Whether this happened more quickly or slowly in one place than in another was regarded as a secondary question and not urgent here and now.

The first problem, then, raised by historical-critical exegesis in regard to the traditional understanding of the Church as instituted by Jesus is that of his expectation of the imminent end of the world. A second problem, among others which could certainly be mentioned but which I am leaving aside at present, is the fact that the Church in New Testament times in Judaistic and Hellenistic areas or elsewhere does not present the image of something absolutely fully constructed as it is described in traditional ecclesiology as the institution of

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Jesus. Thus it is said that in the early Church, in addition to Paul, there might perhaps be discovered somewhere a Peter, but not a pope; that in the first Church of Pauline times there were apparently the most diverse possibilities of a community organization existing alongside one another and formed in accordance with the different sociological conditions present in the Judaistic or Hellenistic areas or elsewhere. It is said that Catholic ecclesiology is episcopal and papal in character and this episcopal and papal structure is explained as a structure instituted by Jesus Christ himself, permanent and unchangeable by divine right –that is how we Catholics expressed it at the time. But within New Testament times it is possible to discover any structure of this kind at most only in its quite modest beginnings. Can we then (and this is the problem) speak at all of Jesus 'instituting' a Church?

Before attempting to answer these questions, I would like to say that I have no doubt that with the pre-Easter Jesus and the group of disciples gathered around him there were already the rudiments of a [28] certain sociality, of a sociological organization, that Peter had already been given a prominent position by Jesus, and so on; that Jesus and his group of disciples did not secede as a Church from Israel and its covenant, but nevertheless had already something of a sociological structure. Of course, I have no wish to obscure or deny these things in the second part of the present essay, but they could be dealt with more precisely only by an exegete or a biblical theologian and I neither can nor will play that role here. The problem facing us in the light of Jesus' imminent expectation and of the appearance of the communities in New Testament times is that Jesus does not seem to have instituted a Church. Despite the Church's radical opposition to modernistic ecclesiology at the time of Pius X and even subsequently, the situation today is such that, for example, Hans Küng can uninhibitedly and, I would like to say, with a sincerity which cannot now be denied or concealed declare that Jesus did not institute a Church. The fact that Küng nevertheless regards the Church as meaningful, necessary, etc., is a different question which must not be obscured by my reference to his statement that Jesus did not institute a Church.

What could I recommend here (without claiming any special competence) as a suitable approach to a solution of this question of the institution of the Church? Again, it is possible only to make a few suggestions.

First of all it is of course obvious that, although the theme attracts me, I cannot here and now in this connection deal with the problem of Jesus' imminent expectation as such. If Jesus expected the advent of God's eschatological kingdom, was he 'mistaken' or can this qualification of his opinion and teaching be rightly avoided? What remains concretely that is absolutely right, still radically important and valid even today, about such an imminent expectation, when we must now obviously admit without hesitation that two thousand years have passed since Jesus' time and the world has not yet been transformed in the fire of God's anger into God's eternal kingdom? These again are of course questions into which I cannot enter here. I mean that (obviously unlike what happened in the time of Pius X) we must admit impartially, sincerely, realistically, and clearly that with Jesus there was a chronological imminent expectation which, as he 'imagined' it and expressed it in words, was not fulfilled. But this is far from saying (I cannot now develop this point) that we ought for [29] this reason to admit that within his horizon of understanding, etc., he was mistaken. If however someone were to say just this, it would not be heresy, but essentially a wrong expression which (without wanting to leave anything obscure) can and should be completely avoided, since behind it is an existentially false notion of truth. But I cannot now discuss this further. And obviously it is of decisive importance (from the nature of the case we shall return to this question anyway with our actual offer of a solution) that there is certainly contained in this imminent expectation of Jesus something that is absolutely essential and enduring, something that even today is of absolute importance for faith for all of us.

Our real problem, however, and our real theme is the question: What can we say and how

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can we speak of an institution of the Church by Jesus or its provenance from him, if and although he proclaimed this imminence of the kingdom of God? Although Hans Küng might perhaps charge me with the dubious tactic of coming to an arrangement, I would like to ask now if there are circumstances in which I can do without the term 'institution' and yet see what is meant by this traditional term and what it is intended to maintain as a matter of faith better and more straightforwardly and nevertheless honestly in the term 'provenance'? The term 'institution', if understood in its varied and possibly analogous usage, need not be synonymous with the description of the juridical organization of a society. Admittedly, the latter is the kind of institution of which we generally and instinctively think when it is said that Jesus instituted the Church, although it is not a conception that could easily be upheld today in face of the critique of historical-critical biblical scholarship. In order, therefore, to maintain what the Church has always said and taught (in asserting that the Church was instituted by Jesus), it is sufficient, I would say, not to replace this term, but at least to interpret it in the sense of 'provenance'.

If something originates from something else in a really understandably practicable way, if reality *a* necessarily involves reality *b* (this must of course be shown to be the case), it can be said either that *b* is 'instituted' by *a* or that *b* quite clearly 'comes from' *a*. This however is merely a preliminary terminological observation.

After this terminological observation, I now come directly to what is implied in the title of this article. The Church comes from the death and resurrection of Jesus as part of the eschatological permanence [30] of the Crucified and Rise One. This is more or less the thesis I am now trying to make to some degree intelligible.

To speak about the redemptive historical, eschatological meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus is, of course, to touch on a theme that in itself is extraordinarily difficult, mysterious, profound, differentiated (more so than can be made clear here). Nor can I at this point deal with questions like those of whether Jesus actually rose or how he himself, the historical Jesus, interpreted his own death, etc. Here, where we are attempting to reflect on the provenance of the Church from Jesus, crucified and risen, we assume the Christian-Catholic dogma and the conviction of the New Testament of the redemptive, historical, universal, and eschatological significance of Jesus Christ himself.

But if, in connection of course with our intention in these reflections, it is asked how we can state quite briefly what came about by Jesus' death and resurrection, this is what we can say: Through Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, the victorious self-communication of God, established by God himself, has been manifested as victorious, as eschatological, as definitively final.

The fact that God loves the world from the very beginning despite all sin, that this God with his grace is always from the beginning and everywhere in the history of the world and humanity the innermost dynamism, the innermost entelechy of this world, driving on this whole, perhaps two-million-year-old history of humanity toward that immediacy of God which we call the beatific vision – all this was really something not known so clearly before the time of Jesus, but even then was the internal structure and dynamism of this world history. From the very outset God himself with his own glory had always been established in the world as power, source, and goal, in the form of an offer to the world's freedom. In relation to the world, God is not merely Creator in the sense of placing as it were something different from himself in the empty space of nothingness surrounding God, not merely keeping this distinct reality, as we might say, at an absolute distance, although he remains Creator and Legislator; but God takes this other world, creatively produced by him, in what we call grace and glory, into his own splendour. He gives us, his creatures, not only something he creates as distinct from himself; but he gives himself to this creature, at least he offers himself as gift to the history of freedom of this humanity. But, in the light of this [31]

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self-offering of God to man's freedom and in the light of the ambivalence of all creaturely freedom, the fate of mankind, the end of history, always remains open; the concrete outcome remains uncertain.

Whether this tremendous offer (in which God gives, not something, but himself) is accepted or rejected, remains for the time being an open question. And all the terror of world history, all the sense that an Augustine had of this *massa damnata* of a world history – none of this seems to suggest from the outset that this tremendous, final, unsurpassable height of the history of humanity which plunges into the glory of God himself is actually scaled by man as one and whole. Where, then, does Jesus Christ come in? What we call the preaching of the kingdom of God, what with Paul we know as justification not by the works of the law but by grace, what is proclaimed in John as the descent of the light into the darkness of this world, really means nothing other than this: that through the death and resurrection of Jesus this actually ambivalent salvation history in acceptance *or* rejection of God's self-offering does in fact have a definitively *good* outcome.

All this of course is far from making anything clear about the fate of each individual, but what it does imply is something wholly unparalleled, something not at all obvious, which is actually left to God's freedom and man's: that this appalling, terrible history, always, as it were, hurtling down into the abyss of death and sin, nevertheless, by the power of God's grace, has in fact a positive outcome. Jesus (if I may put it in this way) enters into solidarity on the one hand unambiguously with God and is aware of himself in an indestructible unity with him whom he calls his Father and this same Jesus enters into solidarity on the other hand unambiguously and indisputably with human beings, with sinners, with wastrels, and hence, as from the outset (sustaining his conviction even throughout his failure), he can scarcely do anything but reject an alternative of deciding either for God or for men and must say: No, this pitiful humanity is victorious, not only by way of offer but by way of real success, it is a humanity victoriously saved by God, loved into God's own glory.

This is then definitively sealed by what we call the resurrection. This Jesus, crucified and risen, is therefore the permanent promise of God himself to the world, not merely in the offer, but in factually [32] definitive victory. This the crucified and risen Jesus can be only if and insofar as this so victorious self-offering of God is permanently present in the world.

From this standpoint we can perhaps even say in a completely positive, albeit not in an exclusive sense, with the exegete Willi Marxsen, that Jesus must rise into the faith of those who believe in him. Not in the sense that he exists only in that faith; but if and insofar as there is not a community of faith, believing in Jesus as crucified and risen, as vindicated Son of God, as the eschatologically unsurpassable, definitive prophet (or however it is expressed), if there is not such a community of faith as permanent presence of this self-communication of God present in history and now victorious over the world, then this very Jesus does not exist at all as God's self-promise to the world.

The Church as eschatologically definitive and nevertheless historical, as a community of faith, is the permanent presence precisely of this eschatological and eschatologically victorious self-promise of God to the world in Jesus Christ. And he is what he is only if this community of faith is always there in the world, to make sure that he remains historically as God's eschatological promise to the world. In what numbers the Church exists or will exist is quite another question. In the last resort, the Church as 'sacrament' of the world's salvation, as the 'primordial baptism' of the world, is not tied to any particular size or sociological power.

All this of course is only by way of suggestion. But at least the implication is clear that from Jesus, crucified and risen, there is a provenance of the Church, which as such a community of faith is itself constitutive of the reality of Jesus and is consequently necessary as such. He would not be what he is if there were no such Church. His proclamation that

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God's salvation is now irreversibly present in the world would not exist at all if the Church were not present as the enduring community always upholding this proclamation in the world. If Jesus is not reduced to a preacher of morality or a revivalist, doing no more than making statements which might perhaps not have been made without him but which anyway can easily be approved and understood; if Jesus is not regarded as a preacher of morality or a revivalist talking about a kind of humanitarianism that depends for its realization on man's freedom and arbitrary choice; if we believe in God and know who God is, and are [33] convinced by faith that this absolute God in his absoluteness, unapproachability, and incomprehensibility has promised himself as himself definitively to the world as its very own salvation, then I think it is clear that this has happened only in Jesus, crucified and risen, and that consequently the Church really exists even now as the permanence of this historically perceptible, eschatologically irreversible self-promise of God.

It might be claimed that what I have just said is all very fine, that a normal Christian, at any rate a devout Protestant who believes in Christ, would not deny it; in this respect at least Catholics and Protestants could certainly agree. But, it might be said, the concrete structure of this eschatologically invincible, enduring community of faith is still not clear. It might be said that if the Crucified and Risen One exists historically as God's irreversible self-promise in the world this promise must obviously remain and there must be a community of faith; but how this is canonically organized is quite a different question; things do not have to proceed (it might be added) episcopally or papally in this Church; it might be said that even according to the New Testament the most diverse sociological organizations of such a community of faith are equally justified and have in fact existed; the claim of the Roman Catholic Church to be the sole legitimate organization of this community of faith of a juridically sociological character must be rejected.

Despite what has just been said about the provenance of the community of faith from Jesus, crucified and risen, we have here undoubtedly a very difficult problem that cannot be solved today as simply as it was formerly solved in traditional fundamental theology.

According to this theology, Jesus chose twelve apostles, thereby instituting the episcopate; when he took Peter from this group, he appointed the first pope. Consequently the problem arises as to how this Peter can be regarded as the first pope (even though he appears here and there in the New Testament to have a certain, even theological, importance) since he seems to have played practically no part in the Pauline communities. Why, it might be asked, did James not get a chance to be a kind of caliph of the community of disciples? Why is this episcopal constitution (which first appears as explicitly developed with Ignatius of Antioch and, in the third century, with Cyprian and others) something that not only can but must be? Why, as it might be formulated with traditional ecclesiology, are such [34] constitutional structures belonging to the later period of Jesus' community of faith really *juris divini*, of divine law, instituted by Jesus Christ himself?

To all this, as I have already ventured to suggest, there appear to be a number of objections. But I would like now to suggest that there is certainly something like a divine law that comes to be, that can come to be. What then is the traditional teaching, stated also in Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*, on the *ius divinum* of the papal primacy and the episcopal constitution, that is, of the monarchical episcopate?

In the first place this teaching states simply that such a structure is binding on the Church of the present time and also of the future and cannot be abolished by it. If we admit this, what is concretely practical about the teaching on *ius divinum* has already been grasped in its essentials. But then it can also be asked whether such a *ius divinum* must always have been clearly directly palpable, even in apostolic times. I ask: *Must* it always have been *so* clearly *palpable* as irreversibly binding? And I would answer that this is not necessary. To dispute such a necessity, such an explicit and formal palpability, such a *ius divinum*, is not to deny

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that these modern constitutional structures of the Church became perceptible more or less slowly (if we recall the First Letter of Clement or Ignatius of Antioch's theology of the Church at the turn of the first century) and then only in later history were increasingly clearly considered and in particular set up by the Church as permanently binding.

In order to make that intelligible I want to say that any history of one and the same reality follows a single track and that such a reality can be collective or individual. In both cases, in the light of a really humanly authentic anthropology, in principle it is quite possible to explain how in the course of a history such a collective or individual reality (a single individual or a collective society that is, however, essentially consolidated into a permanent unity) makes decisions on which it cannot go back and which bind it for later times; in other words, the idea of an historically free act of institution does not in any way imply that this free decision, because freely made, could also be revoked at will, that it remains permanently at the free disposal of the agency that made the decision. The history of freedom, as itself free, also follows a single track, creates what is permanently binding, what can be eliminated only by culpable rejection (if [35] at all), since freedom in the last resort is the institution not of what is momentarily chosen but of what is irrevocable. This need not happen, of course, always and in every case, but in principle it is part of the true nature of a history of freedom.

Someone who has been married can perhaps get a divorce, but this cannot alter the fact that two people were married to one another as a permanent reality, binding for eternity. If I have followed a certain calling for forty years, I simply cannot revise my original, free decision in such a way, as to be able to start again from the beginning at the exact point from which I started out forty years ago. Putting it very simply, history follows a single track, it is a kind of one-way street on which historically irreversible decisions are continually happening. On this one-way street, made up of historically free decisions, it is fundamentally impossible to turn back and start out again from this earlier point in a quite different direction, at least not if we assume that such decisions were admittedly not necessarily made to be binding in the light of the former situation, but are binding as corresponding to the *beginning*, which is the permanent law of the whole route.

In the light of these very simple reflections, I would say that I can imagine without more ado that the history of the Church at least during apostolic times saw decisions made about its sociological structures which, even though not coercive, were in accordance with its original and already theologically interpreted nature and cannot be reversed. And such historical decisions – which continue to be developed in a forward direction, but cannot really be simply abolished (with the Church returning as it were to an earlier stage of its history) as far as the Church's concrete sociological structure is concerned – in the sense of being irreversible, at least in their conformity with its beginning, can certainly be regarded as *ius divinum*. Whether such free decisions *juris divini* are still conceivable or not *after* apostolic times, is a question that can be left open here.

We might venture to say that the Church in apostolic times, from the fetal stage, so to speak, of its first origin, had certainly the right and duty to organize itself, to articulate itself, in a more concretely sociological way and at about the end of apostolic times did in fact acquire a constitution which, even though rudimentary, was nevertheless perceptible: a constitution which we describe today as Catholic, as of divine law, and with reference to which we deny the [36] Church any possibility of changing these ultimate constitutional structures of divine law. This need not imply that the decision in apostolic times in regard to a constitution must itself necessarily be based on an explicit will of Jesus to institute a Church, expressly stated in propositions. This, I think, cannot be proved and, even if we postulated theologically such explicit words of institution by Jesus, it would be useless from the standpoint of fundamental theology. On the other hand, I think we can and must regard such free decisions in apostolic times (a period which must not be unduly shortened, as is evident

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with the formation of the canon and the inclusion of later books) as wholly of divine law, without ascribing them to a verbally explicit will of Jesus to institute a Church. Such irreversible decisions, obviously in accordance with the essential nature and origin of the Church as Jesus' community of faith, cannot, it is true, be deduced juridically from certain historically palpable words of Jesus; but this is not necessary, they can still be regarded as constitutional structures of the Church which are of divine law in the sense explained.

They correspond to the institution or to the origin of the Church and as historical decisions they are authorized by the concrete historical situations into which the Church entered and had to enter. This, I think, is really all that is necessary.

Looking at the matter in this way, it also becomes clear that the Church's future is an open future. That is, if even divine law in the Church (the ultimate constitutional structures of the Church which rightly claim to be derived from Jesus) has a real *history* and, obviously, if this history, in which the Church lives and in the light of which it must assert itself and make its decisions in any particular situation, always continues, it must naturally be assumed that the Church as such in its concrete appearance (without abandoning the divine law which has accrued to it in history and without denying or obscuring its provenance from Jesus Christ, crucified and risen) still has before it an open and quite unpredictable history.

What the Church will look like in the year 2000 or 2500; whether the pope will then be in Rome, or somewhere else; whether there will still be all the bureaucratic machinery that we see and accept today in Rome and under which we perhaps groan; whether perhaps many other things of which we have no idea today will then be taken; for granted; whether the Church will perhaps learn suddenly or [37] slowly that women, too, can be holders of the priestly office; whether it will learn slowly that an academic training for the priest (despite all the respect I have for it as a former teacher) is not perhaps so absolutely necessary as we imagine today; whether it will perhaps become much clearer that leaders of a basic community, themselves emerging charismatically from the base, will also have sacramental approbation from above, and so on and so on: to all these, and to many other perhaps more important questions which we can regard as open, we cannot expect to find an answer purely deductively from theological principles or solely from ancient tradition.

From the very nature of the Church, which is an historical factor and whose *ius divinum* even has a historicity, the possibilities to be expected in all these things are endless. If in such transitional phases of Church history progress is too slow for some and too rapid for others, if in these transitional phases various things seem to be becoming obscure and uncertain, if then some people moan about the insecurity of the faithful, these feelings certainly need not be wholly wrong or stupid; it is a question of the phenomena of transition and of growth, which simply cannot be avoided in a real and genuine history.

From the time of Jesus, crucified and risen, to that of the Church today vast historical developments and transformations have taken place. These should be admitted without prejudice and without assuming, for instance, that Peter, when he heard the words subsequently recorded in Matthew 16, thought of himself as the first pope with a few hundred other popes coming after him and ruling in Rome with the aid of a complicated Curia. Such an idea could never have crossed Peter's mind. Nor did Paul rack his brain about leaving behind a collective or single person to rule a community; the pastoral Letters reflect the conditions of a later period.

The Church is always in history, always in a one-way history in which it never loses its legitimate past; and in this unpredictable, dark history of suffering the Church always comes from Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. Because, however, it is precisely sociologically organized, it testifies that God so loved the world that his love does not fail even as a result of our sin, but that, at least as far as humanity as a whole is concerned, he, the God of the grace that is victorious, not from us, but from God, prevails in the world.

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[38] This simple, straightforward message is simultaneously the most obvious, most mysterious, and most tremendous. That God himself is the ultimate content, the ultimate dynamism, the ultimate goal, definitively of this miserable finite creature, really not only in the plan but in the end result: this is something known only by looking to the risen Christ. That this salvation also actually prevails through him is the message of Christianity, a message that really exists nowhere else. And so that this message will always remain present in the world the Church is there; without it this message would not be definitive and final. Consequently, despite all its historicity and also despite all the historicity of what is called its divine constitutional law, the Church really has its origin in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.

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4

BRIEF THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE 'STATE OF FALLEN NATURE'

I propose to offer here a few somewhat arbitrarily selected observations on the term 'state of fallen nature' (*status naturae lapsae*). The reason for the arbitrariness of the selection lies in the fact that a theologically adequate interpretation of the term would be possible only within the framework of a complete theology of the 'states' of man. In these brief observations, of course, it is not possible to give references to the sources of this theology and to the history of this term. Even so some discussion of the problems involved in these venerable elements of theological tradition may perhaps be useful.

We shall assume a certain acquaintance with the scholastic terminology used in this connection: pure nature, elevated nature, fallen nature, nature elevated and restored (*natura pura*, *natura elevata*, *natura lapsa*, *natura elevata et reformata*). The basis for this distinction is the Catholic teaching that justifying, deifying 'grace' as pledge of the intuitive vision of God (the state of complete union with God and of orientation to eternal life) is not due to man, not only if and because he is a sinner (through original or personal sin), but even prior to this insofar as the state of salvation is not unmerited in the same way as being created by God's free choice is unmerited. For a Catholic theology the created human being faces God and receives his definitive salvation and the orientation it implies of his existence toward this eternal salvation in the vision of God as free unmerited love of God, which in itself God could refuse man even though the latter already exists as a created being. If it is also assumed that man by this free decision can reject God's offer of himself [40] and thus become a sinner; if furthermore it is assumed that God's offer of himself in forgiveness to the sinner as such implies a far more radical unmeritedness of grace than its unmeritedness on the part of the created human being as such; and if again it is assumed that this second and more radical character of unmeritedness is already involved in the grace of every human being by the very fact that the first human being sinned in a solidarity of weal and woe of the community of mankind, then all the above-mentioned distinctions in man's nature are really quite obvious. 'Nature' means man's reality as unity of mind and matter in self-transcendence toward God, insofar as this nature is the recipient of God's self-offering that, on the one hand, perfects man in deification and yet, on the other hand, is in no way due to this nature. 'Fallen nature' means the reality of man insofar as he is unworthy of God's gracious self-offering (as a result of 'original sin' alone or also of his personal sin) and in a certain sense has added a new and more radical unmeritedness to the unmeritedness of deifying grace as such. 'Nature elevated and restored' is man insofar as by God's forgiving grace (despite his previous sinfulness in the form of personal sin) and as a result of his free acceptance of grace he possesses a positive orientation to his own eternal goal, the vision of God.

At first sight then the idea of fallen nature seems to be clear. In Adam mankind fell. As a result of this sin on the part of the first human being, mankind does not possess the grace of deification through God's self-communication which is indeed unmerited but which it nevertheless requires; it is sinful. Humanity is fallen. The traditional view in Catholic theology is that each individual human being (with the exception of Jesus and the 'immaculately conceived' mother of Jesus) possesses this sinfulness before he enters by baptism (and/or by the free acceptance of grace in faith, hope, and love) into possession (the 'state') of sanctifying grace. 'Fallen nature' is a description of man insofar as he culpably lacks possession of sanctifying grace. Certainly it must be added that this state of man as culpably lacking grace (which is, properly speaking, the essence of being fallen) includes

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other peculiarities which determine the reality of man even when he has again obtained divine grace by justification: that is, he is in the state of nature fallen and healed. For the original justice of 'paradise' was associated with a freedom from the necessity of dying, from concupiscence, from suffering and pain, [41] from ignorance and error. But these paradisiacal gifts are not returned to man when he enters, as a result of justification, the state of nature fallen and healed. In that sense then, the justified human being remains in the state of fallen nature, even though this necessity of dying, concupiscence, and involvement in suffering does not have the character of '*punishment* for sin' properly so-called but provides the dimension (in itself 'natural' and 'innocent') within which man is now expected to work out his salvation.

It cannot be denied however that there are many obscurities attached to this term 'fallen nature' which make it very difficult for us to appreciate its meaning today. In what follows we shall deal with these problems, without raising doubts about the fundamental justification of the term.

In our discussion of the problems, for the time being we shall pass over the question of whether and how the idea must or must not be maintained today of a paradisiacal state of freedom from death, concupiscence, and suffering preceding *chronologically* the state of fallen nature. The author has dealt with this question elsewhere[1] and has no wish to take it up again, at least for the time being.

Classical Lutheran theology regarded the essence of original sin and consequently also of fallen nature as consisting in concupiscence, the stirrings of which are opposed to the law of God and sinful, so that persistent concupiscence always makes man a sinner and he therefore remains a sinner even when he is justified by faith in God's forgiving grace: *simul justus et peccator*. The opposing declaration of the Council of Trent starts out from the assumption that the stirrings of concupiscence, unless ratified by man's free will, are not sin (since the justified person – who, as Paul says, is in Christ Jesus – is not condemned). For this reason concupiscence as such cannot constitute the real nature of original sin. The essence of original sin is therefore to be sought in the lack of justifying, sanctifying grace, while concupiscence is merely a consequence (not in itself sinful) of the loss of paradisiacal righteousness, which can remain in us without our being for that reason alone sinners in the proper sense of the term.

In this way, according to Catholic theology, original sin and consequently the state of fallen nature are transferred to a dimension [42] which at least is not as immediately accessible to existential and religious experience as the dimension of concupiscence, which is in fact directly experienced. Original sinfulness here seems to become a mere theological postulate. All that man directly experiences of himself seems to be good: his intellectuality and freedom in which (since this is how he can know God) he has a positive relationship to God; his corporality, involving a 'natural' and as such innocent concupiscence which, after all, is nothing but the ambivalence of the material of freedom that must continually be processed by the history of this freedom. From this standpoint we can understand the axiom of at least one school in Catholic theology that has always remained undisturbed: namely, that fallen nature is distinct from pure nature only in the way that a person who has been robbed of his clothes differs from one who is naked from the start. If we leave aside the question whether and how the obligation and necessity (never, of course, denied in Catholic theology) of possessing justifying supernatural grace must work out empirically in someone who is not actually justified but in the state of fallen nature, what is really involved in such a view of fallen

[1] On this cf. Karl Rahner, 'Erbsünde und Monogenismus' in K.-H. Weger, *Theologie der Erbsünde* (Freiburg, 1970), pp. 176 – 223.

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nature (if not commanded, then at least commended by Trent) is modern optimism as a whole from the time of humanism: man is free and good and the fallenness bound up with his natural being is understood in such a way that it does not infringe the goodness of this natural being. Man's nature as experienced is good and only good, even though it has the obligation of being open to deification by God's gracious self-communication. In this conception of fallen nature originating at Trent the fallenness of this nature properly consists only in the fact that this nature originally ('in paradise') possessed a grace-given perfection that it can now regain only in justification by baptism or by subjective conversion to the God of grace in faith, hope, and love.

Before we continue our investigation of these problems, a very different aspect of the meaning of fallen nature must be made clear. In all these questions Catholic theology in practice works with the model of infant baptism. The unbaptized child is regarded purely and simply as an originally sinful, unjustified human being; at the moment of baptism this human being is changed by the 'infusion' of sanctifying grace from a sinner into a justified, sanctified human being. Thus, from the very outset, an element of time enters into the notion of fallen nature. This does not mean simply that there would [43] be no such thing as fallen nature if the sin of the first human being, understood as a particular historical event, had not occurred. An element of time is involved in the notion of fallen nature also insofar as this nature is regarded as ceasing to be fallen at the moment of baptism or of a subjective justification seen as happening at a point in time and at that point transformed into a nature fallen and restored, in which the original fallenness becomes perceptible only through the persistence of concupiscence and the absence of other preternatural gifts. In any case, within the life of the individual person, fallen nature as such belongs only to a certain period of time in that person's history and ceases with his justification. It is true that this theology is aware of the fact that God's universal salvific will embraces every human being always and everywhere; but in a sense it penetrates into the life of a human being only at a certain point in time, while his fallenness 'in Adam' determined him inwardly from the very beginning, making him a fallen nature; nature restored and elevated comes chronologically *after* fallen nature.

In the traditional textbook notion of fallen nature in Catholic theology then, we find an odd tension. This fallen nature in virtue of its temporality is a highly empirical factor: in the conception suggested by Trent, man *before* baptism is a sinner, deprived of sanctifying grace, under the power of the devil; *after* baptism he is justified and sanctified, divine grace has taken possession of him, is imparted to him after he had previously been without grace. At the same time in post-Tridentine theology this fallen nature is a very abstract transexistential factor, which as such cannot be experienced existentially at all and can become known only by theological indoctrination from outside, since man can experience himself directly only as good, personal-intellectual nature with concupiscence that in itself is inculpable, even though it carries with it also danger and struggle.

With all respect then for the Council of Trent and also recognizing that not everything implied in the textbook notion of fallen nature is *ipso facto* part of the Council's binding teaching, it may be said that the traditional notion does not possess all the clarity and internal homogeneity that might be desired. It suggests a temporality of salvation history prior to the temporality involved in freedom and its history. The unbaptized baby and the baptized baby (or the same child before and after its baptism) are distinct from each other as one human being under the power of the devil and another in the loving [44] embrace of the power of God's sanctifying grace. This enormous difference, producing in the one an objective damnation (even if described as limbo) and in the other eternal bliss, is at the same time a difference which, as a theological postulate and as object of indoctrination from outside, lies beyond human experience in freedom and action. If the internal tensions in the notion of

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fallen are thus elucidated, this is not to deny the existence of theorems within traditional theology as a whole and in certain schools which make these internal tensions less tangible or (if they are fully developed) remove them all together. But they persist in the average textbook notion of fallen nature, even though (particularly as a result of a certain lack of theological interest) they do not disturb the normal theological consumer very much. Such a calm in the field of theology is still far from being a sign that the contentedly accepted answers to theological questions are correct or adequate. The calm is often merely a sign of theological wariness and lack of interest, since people do not understand and cannot show that these old problems have a fundamental significance and importance even today for modern man's self-understanding.

We are attempting, under modern perspectives and assumptions and with the aid of the conceptual equipment at our disposal, to say what is meant by the state of fallen nature and also what importance it has for a modern anthropology. With such a description, of course, problems arise as to how one statement or another is at the same time compatible with the dogmas of the Church's magisterium, which of course we have no wish to dispute or obscure. Here, in a brief essay, it is impossible expressly to examine all these problems. But the author may perhaps not be too presumptuous in thinking that he sees the problems and knows an answer to them, even if it cannot be presented here.

There really is something that can be called *status* or 'state' in anthropology of a philosophical or theological character. 'State' means realities connected with man that, on the one hand, are not simply part of man's metaphysical, transcendentally necessary nature and, on the other hand, are not odd, partial realities of man, but determine him as a whole in all his particular realities. They determine man always and everywhere. If there is about man a definiteness of this kind which, on the one hand, does not belong to his metaphysical, transcendentally necessary and enduring nature and, [45] on the other hand, always and everywhere determines and binds this very nature, then this determination must be grounded either in God's free disposal of this nature or (and purely conceptually this seems at first an obscure and difficult hypothesis) in a free decision of man or of men, a decision which occurred 'at the beginning' of the history of all mankind in its entirety in such a way as to be and remain the factor determining the situation for *all* subsequent history. That this second conceivable possibility has in fact been realized (that is, is really also actually possible) can, of course, be known only from mankind's experience of salvation history. 'State' as concrete and inescapable situation for freedom in salvation history is therefore founded on God's and man's situation-creative freedom at the beginning. This means, of course, that we have developed theologically in terms of salvation history a concept of state that ought to be distinguished more precisely from other concepts expressed by the term 'state'. But we cannot enter further into this question here.

This state of man is originally grounded in God's free will in which the latter offers *himself* with his very own uncreated reality to the freedom of his intellectual creatures as meaning, dynamisms, and goal of man. Insofar as this free self-offering of God to his intellectual creature means always and everywhere the most radical opportunity and thus the most radical obligation for man, insofar as it not only hovers over man as an ideal possibility but is man's most real and innermost possibility (constituting also the possibility of the free acceptance of this self-communication of God), this freedom of love in which God gives himself to man really establishes fundamentally *the* state of man. It is really 'state', since it is not simply involved in the very nature of man who as already really conceived and existing must welcome the love of God imparting God himself as *free* grace that is not owing to him. It is really 'state' in the most fundamental sense, since man with his freedom can never get away from the situation that really determines him in which God with his infinite reality offers himself to man freely and lovingly and at the same time gives man the opportunity freely to

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The state of elevated nature is man's most fundamental determination. It is not part of his nature, not because it is not internal to him, but because God's personal love in the light of God's own nature is always unmerited, must in fact be freedom and love. It is [46] also deeply implanted in man, since (as distinct from the usual perspective in textbook theology from the Middle Ages onwards) the will of God for his own self-externalizing self-communication can certainly be regarded as the actual ground of creation and not as the will for a kind of subsequent elevation of the reality created by God. This state is not lost by man's sin and God's will for this state (assuming the existence of sin in the world) is the cause and not the result of God's salvific action in the world to overcome sin. This state is unconditional and cannot be abolished by sin. Man's freedom can sinfully say no to this state but cannot abolish it any more than man's freedom can abolish his nature and existence by saying no to them. To put it more clearly: this state does not hover above the reality of the world and man as an ideal postulate, which could be known only by a verbal communication from outside, from God, but is established by God's self-communication, which as a real offer to freedom is always and everywhere a real existential (that is, a state) of man, even though, through this self-communication of God, grace exists in the infant merely as an offer, in the mature person either as accepted (as in justification) or, in the sinner, as rejected. The state of elevated nature is really the unavoidable situation of man's freedom from which he can never escape.

He learns of this state as a result of a complex of experiences (in the last resort of a transcendental character) which must now be analyzed a little more closely. In this analysis it is not assumed that it could be made sufficiently clear always and everywhere by a single individual in the privacy of his life. The original and primary analysis takes place in the experience of the salvation history of mankind as a whole, culminating in the experience of Jesus Christ (the genitive is subjective *and* objective). Secondarily this experience is then reflected and interpreted in theology. This interpretation again appeals to the experience of the individual human being and confronts him with the question as to whether and how far in the history of his individual experience he can discover what this analysis in terms of salvation history and theology says about man.

All this is assumed here when we attempt to describe the experience of man's nature as elevated by God's self-communication offered always and everywhere. Man is the being with a radically unlimited transcendentality. But this is experienced *de facto*, not only as the condition of the possibility of a cognitive and active engagement [47] with the categorial realities of the world, but also as endowed with the promise of an infinite fulfillment by God himself. If our transcendentality reaches out, not only to one object or another but also in a kind of paroxysm of absolute hope to the original unlimited unity of all that is, then (whether it can reflect on this or not) it is already sustained by God's self-communication, which we usually describe as sanctifying grace and which, at least in the form of an offer, exists always and everywhere. Insofar as this radical transcendentality of the human mind in knowledge and freedom is in fact the radicalness of a personal spirit, the sustaining ground of this radicalness – God himself – is experienced (reflectively or not) as freedom and love. Grace is experienced always and everywhere in man's existence. This proposition has no postulatory or mythological overtones if this experience is seen in the radicalness of man's transcendentality, a transcendentality that is not merely realized and understood as the condition of man's being-in-the-world, but (as given by God) implies the assurance in faith and hope (at least as an offer to free self-understanding) of finally reaching God himself, of being filled with the reality of God in himself. Man's ineluctable status-assuring self-understanding (which exists even if his ultimate self-destructiveness makes him refuse to admit it) consists in the fact that (also as intelligible subject) he recognizes that he is not God

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and that he respects himself as the recipient of God in himself. This (already existing or accepted or freely and culpably rejected) basic experience of man is originally not an isolated 'thought' occurring only spasmodically with the aid of a difficult reflection, but is veritably man's basic experience involved prior to any reflection in all thought and action.

In practice, however, this basic experience of divine origin and consummation is oddly fragmented in man. It is made by and in a human being who experiences himself simultaneously as one who is doomed to death and as one who is unable to gather the whole of his human existence with his knowledge and impulses integrally into this experience he has of a divine consummation. He experiences a contradiction between his concupiscence and mortality on the one hand and his absolute destiny to the immediacy of God on the other. The existence of such a contradiction cannot perhaps be deduced from abstract ideas of the realities involved here, nor will there be any attempt here to maintain that the individual human being in each case for himself alone experiences the contradiction so clearly as to [48] be able theoretically to reflect on it. Of course, the contradiction also means that the two contradictory elements co-exist in one and the same person and for that very reason the contradiction really exists and can be experienced. What is involved in this contradiction is that man's state of grace, his divine origin and consummation ought 'properly' to exclude man's concupiscent situation, that is, it ought to place man's whole reality integrated and united completely at the disposal of man's freedom, in which, as empowered by God's gracious self-communication, man commits himself entirely to God. (The fact cannot be overlooked that actual death, which is not simply man's perfected self-determination as final and definitive but is also the culmination of man's incapacity to dispose of himself, is nothing but the most radical event of concupiscence in the sense in which it is understood here.)

If we really want to understand existentially and ontologically man's condition and situation, we cannot tacitly start out from the assumption that a particular state of man must either be sinful in the proper sense of the term (as habitual sin) or it must fit in consistently with the wholeness of man. Such an assumption would not only render impossible any understanding of man's 'physical evil' or lead to the conclusion that any evil of this kind can be understood always only as the consequence of moral fault in man. The contradictoriness of which we are speaking is experienced as actually existing and must therefore be conceivable. Man experiences his concupiscent distractedness and unintegratedness as something other than what must be regarded and experienced simply as obvious and innocuous, resulting from his corporality and biological origin. He feels this concupiscent condition as something that really ought not to be, when he measures this state against the claim involved in his transcendentality as radicalized by grace. In the light of this claim he cannot simply accept as justified and as a matter of course categorial realities which prevent him from realizing this infinite claim (and do not merely, as is obvious, fail to fulfill it). In the light of this claim he must protest against his concupiscent situation, and must feel (as Paul already expressed it in his Letter to the Romans) 'unhappy' about it. If this is denied or overlooked in a theory of fallen nature (because man's destiny with his transcendentality to God's immediacy is transferred to a dimension wholly beyond consciousness, where concupiscence can no longer be experienced as something [49] that ought not to be), then the doctrine of fallen nature can be regarded only as a mythological interpretation of man, as an assertion that has no place in religious experience and is only indoctrinated from outside. At the same time, of course, the question of the source of this mythological interpretation of man itself remains unanswered. In brief, man experiences at every turn a contradiction present now and always between the radicalness of the claim of his deified transcendentality and the concupiscent situation in which he must realize it. The claim aims at integrating man as a whole into his assignment to the immediacy of God; but the concupiscent situation prevents this.

In biblical terms, we have the ability and obligation to love God with our *whole* heart, and

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yet we do not succeed in this. In Catholic theological terminology this contradiction (which ought not to be) is not described in itself as 'sin', since in another (Lutheran) usage the difference has been blurred between this contradiction and the act of freedom in which in a personal sinful decision man not only does not love God with his whole heart but actually rejects him. But this legitimate usage should not be allowed to minimize the contradiction between the duty of radical love of God imposed on man and what he actually achieves in his concupiscent situation. This sort of minimizing has often happened in post-Tridentine theology, since in that theology (which paid little attention to the religious experience of devout people) this concupiscence was abstractly related only to 'pure nature' and the fact was overlooked that this concupiscence always exists in the actual human being who by grace is always and everywhere permitted and required to fulfill divine claims, who in practice is never a 'pure nature' and can never experience himself merely as such.

If we maintain and regard as justifiable by the Church's official teaching the view that neither eschatological nor protological statements are part of reports of events from past or future but are legitimate conclusions from man's self-understanding (itself drawn from his present experience, sustained by grace, and thus implying revelation), then the question arises whether and how it is possible to draw from the experience of the contradiction of which we are speaking those protological statements which in traditional theology explain this contradiction by a primordial sin at the dawn of history, or whether these protological explanations are only more or less mythological elucidations of this disintegratedness of man experienced in oneself. Was there, it might be asked, *before* me a sinful 'Adam' whose action was the cause of my concupiscent situation or am I myself 'Adam', without any light really being thrown on my existence by an interpretation based on a cause sought in the most distant past? It must be said that, on the one hand, a Catholic interpretation of one's own existence and the experience of that existence cannot dispense with a recourse to history and that, on the other, all that can be said about this past as the cause of one's own concupiscent situation is no more than what is yielded by the present. If it can be assumed that the contradiction experienced between man's infinite destiny and his concupiscent situation must be understood as universal and that this contradiction moreover cannot be experienced as 'normal', then at the very beginning of mankind's history there must be a culpable event of freedom that explains this universal abnormal fissure in man. This aetiology presupposes the experience existing everywhere that a decision of freedom on the part of one person affects the other person's situation of freedom. But it is then conceivable that a decision of freedom occurring at the beginning on the part of all together provoked this abnormal condition, which as such obviously does not imply any personal guilt on the part of human beings who came after that beginning, but nevertheless creates a situation which as such ought not to be and is experienced as a contradiction.

It is difficult to say exactly how the beginning of mankind's history as set up by God as Creator is related to the 'beginning' of mankind's history established by human freedom of a culpable character. These two beginnings are certainly not identical, since the divine ordering of things as such cannot be understood simply (as Barth at first maintained) as the setting up of the creature precisely *as* contradiction to God, nor, however, can the second 'beginning' be understood as placed at a distance of an empirically *temporal* character in which everything possible within a history of freedom could have happened to prevent a later sin from being understood as a universal determinant of mankind's history. Consequently, the idea of a paradise of mankind at its origin lasting for a period of time is not only scarcely compatible with modern ideas of the evolution of the biosphere and of mankind, not only rouses suspicions of a mythology no longer acceptable, but also contradicts a serious theology of the beginning. The two beginnings must be brought so close [50] to one another that a history in the usual sense of the term coming *between* them is inconceivable. The very first self-

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realization of creaturely human freedom must therefore have been a culpable act and the starting point of history. The idea of a paradise 'previously' implies the real necessity of a distinction between the two 'beginnings': origin of history from God, origin of history from sinful man (even though the establishment of this second origin can and must be conceived as an historical event in a metaphysically more abstract sense).

The idea of paradise has its legitimacy also insofar as it provides an explanation of the abnormality of the concupiscent situation in the light of a divinely given absolute claim. But in the last resort all these protological statements do no more than make man aware of the fact that he may not regard as normal the situation of his freedom between an absolute claim and the actually existing distracting possibilities, that he may not clear up this situation by settling for one side or the other of the contradiction, may not regard himself either as the subject of an absolute freedom for himself alone or as a being that can accept its concupiscent situation contentedly as a matter of course.

If concupiscence thus becomes an element of essential importance in the notion of fallen nature (before and after justification), this does not mean that concupiscence as such constitutes the real nature of original sin. But the essence of original sin will have to be understood now and in the future as the initially culpably caused absence of God's grace, sanctifying man prior to his decision of freedom: a grace that has an absolutely sanctifying quality prior to man's free decision, precisely because it is not a creaturely reality always ambivalent prior to the decision of freedom, but the self-communication of the holy God himself.

If we speak of a 'lack' of this grace, the term does not, or does not necessarily, imply that this 'lack' is chronologically prior to a (later) possession of this at first absent gift. All it means is that man, precisely as a member of this initially sinful humanity, although he ought to possess this gift, does not possess this sanctifying self-communication of God (as offer, as freely accepted, or as freely rejected). Whether he possesses this gift simply and as a matter of fact (at least in the form of a real offer) because of God's gratuitous salvific will in regard to mankind and despite the latter's initial culpability, is quite a different question. If and insofar as this 'infralapsarian' [52] salvific will of God (which cannot be denied) can certainly be regarded as equally comprehensively and concretely effective always and everywhere and is not something at first existing only in God's intentions (in other words, as equally real as the impact of the beginning on all humanity) there exists in man prior to his free decision for or against God a dialectical simultaneity of 'original sin' (as lack of a claim to sanctifying grace from the very origin of mankind) and the grace existing always and everywhere as an offer because of God's infralapsarian salvific will. Prior to his personal decision in freedom man is *simul justus et peccator*.

He experiences the justification offered to him in the question put to his freedom by the absolute, never-to-be-silenced claim in his existence, in the radicalness of his transcendence, the demand for God himself as such. He experiences his sinfulness by experiencing the contradiction between his concupiscent situation and his absolute claim, a claim that can never be satisfied in this situation, since the definitive acceptance of God's absolute self-offering is not possible in a situation where a person cannot use his freedom totally to commit himself to a definitive finality. This does not mean that the experience of concupiscence in face of the absolute claim of proffered grace *is* in identity the experience of original sin, but only that it leads ultimately to this other conclusion about original sin. For if the contradiction between concupiscence and the claim of grace is traced back protologically to a sin at the beginning and man with his concupiscence originating at *that point* thus learns that of himself he has no claim on God's loving self-communication, then he knows his state to be that of original sin. If this original sinfulness as an inability to claim divine grace originating in a history of sin at its beginning is clearly to be understood as merely 'analogous' to personal

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sin, this is no argument against these reflections. For today it is certainly a generally accepted theological conviction that original sin and personal sin are two concepts that agree only analogously.

If this is how man's condition is regarded, the classical conception of original sin (lack of sanctifying grace) can be maintained and yet (as against a post-Tridentine theory) concupiscence can be more closely and more clearly intrinsically linked with original sin. The assumption behind all this is, of course, the proposition that man's concupiscent disintegratedness (that is, the impossibility of totally integrating his whole reality into the basic decision for or against [53] God) as such contradicts a self-communication of God (sanctifying grace) offered to man's freedom, a self-offering of God to man's freedom (at least in the form of an offer) which exists always and everywhere as an existential of man. But when man experiences and accepts his supreme vocation, sustained by God's self-communication, to love God with his whole heart, to love him divinely, then he can no longer experience and accept as a matter of course his concupiscent disintegration, his inability here and now to love God with his whole heart, but must experience it as something that really ought not to be, even though this something that ought not to be is not really sin prior to any personal decision but lies at a point difficult to determine between purely prepersonal evils (physical evil) and personal fault.

If concupiscence and, consequently, fallen nature are understood in this way, it should not be overlooked that this impossibility of a pure integration of human realities into the decision of freedom for God is not to be understood as the reality and experience of a mere privatistic inwardness, but also implies a situation of human corporality and especially of sociability. Sociological disintegratedness, the impossibility of complete harmony in society, unreconciled pluralism in society in all its dimensions, are primarily wholly part of that concupiscent situation of which a theological anthropology is accustomed to speak. This theology however does not merely note the banal fact of the concupiscent situation as now (still) existing, but also explains that this fact will be removed only with the end of history, since it was so firmly planted (even though by creaturely freedom) into the very beginning of this history that it cannot be removed by this history itself, since the latter, striving dutifully for its removal (the removal of alienation, etc.), again works from and with this concupiscent situation.

In the light of such a theology of fallen nature, of its concupiscent situation, the question ought to be raised about the peculiarity of a Christian ethic: that, on the one hand, it involves the precept of an approximative and asymptotic struggling and coping with concupiscence (with alienation, etc.) and, on the other hand, it cannot proceed as if this concupiscent situation could be purely and simply removed within the course of history. But it is impossible to deal further with this question here.

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[55]

PART TWO

Priesthood

[57]

5

CONSECRATION IN THE LIFE AND REFLECTION OF THE CHURCH

In order to anticipate at once the following reflections as a whole, I would like to say that they are meant to make clear in theological terms the fact that in the concrete order of salvation (from which no human being can escape and which extends to man's innermost *a priori* definitive state) there is a sanctifiedness, or what may be called a consecratedness, a sacrality, of man, present in advance as the condition of the possibility of any ecclesial-cultic consecration, even though these latter consecrations elucidate in the most diverse forms and expressions the innermost and inescapable consecratedness of man here envisaged, while manifesting and locating it in the public-sociological area of the Church. Consecrations in the ordinary sense of the term (that is, baptism, confirmation, ordination, forms of consecration generally described as sacramentals for special functions, minor orders as preparation for properly sacramental ordination, and also consecration of virgins, consecration of abbots, etc.) do not establish for the first time a person's consecratedness, as if he had previously existed in a purely profane state; they are the ecclesial-cultic manifestations of a consecratedness conferred by grace, but always existing, embracing, and sustaining man's whole existence, always and everywhere present in the light of God's salvific will as offer of God's self-communication to man's freedom. That is really all that I want to explain and substantiate in the course of this essay. In this respect I think that what must be said has also its practical consequences in the spirituality of the priest and others consecrated by a sacrament or sacramentally [58] and for the life of the Church, even though these more or less practical consequences can at most be mentioned only marginally.

In order to reach the heart of these reflections as quickly and as safely as possible, we may recall in the first place a theological datum that is certainly disputed by no one working in the field of Catholic theology: all consecrations, if they are to be meaningful and effective, are based on baptism. This (we may say, quite without prejudice) is the first basic consecration, the fundamental dedication, the fundamental initiation, which is the indispensable and necessary precondition for all other actual or conceivable consecrations in the Church. It is true that consecrations subsequent to baptism (for example, priestly ordination) in the area of the Church's sociological, public manifestation can assign to someone so consecrated tasks and powers that he would not (at least, not normally) possess without such a subsequent consecration. But this by no means alters the fact that a consecration of this kind, based on baptism, is an ecclesial-sociological expression of a particular kind, with a particular orientation, of *sacramental* consecratedness, of the incorporatedness and membership of a person in the Church, which in the dimension of the Church's sociological visibility is conferred only by baptism. Otherwise, in the very nature of things, it would be quite impossible to understand why all ecclesiastical tasks and functions, transmitted by other consecrations, should not be valid without being preceded by baptism.

Assuming all this, we now ask what is the position of baptism itself? Is it purely and simply the first and fundamental establishment of a person's 'consecratedness', of his

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admission into the dimension of the holy God and his love, in which God by 'consecrating' man imparts to the latter his own holy life? Or is baptism, albeit normally and as such necessarily, the manifestation (but an effective manifestation) of an internal consecratedness of man by grace, ontologically, existentially, and chronologically prior to baptism: a consecratedness which always and from the outset fundamentally determines man's existence, so that he simply cannot escape from this ultimate sacral sphere of his existence, even though he has either not yet reacted at all in freedom to this definitive state or exists freely in opposition to this existential established by grace?

It is the second view of baptism which we are supporting here. We maintain, then, that consecration in the diverse forms in which it [59] appears in the Church is derived from a consecratedness more fundamental than ecclesial-cultic consecration and is not purely and simply a consequence and effect of the latter. This thesis is not obvious, it seems to contradict the view (more or less taken for granted) that any possible consecratedness is simply and solely the consequence of a consecration that takes place at a definite point of time as part of the public worship of the Church. Neither can it be denied that the formularies of the Church's official teaching on the nature and effects of baptism tacitly assume that there occurs for the first time and purely and simply in baptism what is usually described as the effect of baptism: infusion of justifying and sanctifying grace and of the supernatural habits known as the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; remission of original sin; the transposition of man from the kingdom of darkness and evil into the kingdom of God; of love, of friendship with God; the granting of the status of a child of God, etc. (Before pursuing our problems further, in order to avoid misunderstandings it should be stressed that it is not our opinion that simply *every* effect ascribed to baptism exists in man even prior to baptism; it is obvious that those effects which by their very nature belong as historical and sociological factors to the visibly sociological dimension of the Church are produced only by baptism itself, although there is no need to consider here more exactly which effects of baptism are of this character: whether, for example, what we called the sacramental character conferred by baptism must be numbered among these effects.)

We claim, then, that the fundamental effects of baptism (that is, the most fundamental consecratedness of man, man's existential always and everywhere) are present even *before* sacramental consecration, that baptismal consecration therefore comes after and is based on the consecratedness of man which is derived from grace, that this consecratedness as ontological and existential is the ground and not originally the consequence of baptismal consecration. We hasten to observe that this does not mean that the *efficacy* of baptism as sacrament on this fundamental consecratedness of man need be denied, even though our thesis of course makes the elucidation of the efficacy of the sacrament of baptism on this fundamental consecratedness more difficult than it was generally considered to be in normal sacramental theology on the efficacy of the sacraments.

This thesis, whose practical consequences will be indicated only [60] at a later stage, implies, of course, a basic conception of the relationship between God and the world, of the nature of the supernatural endowment of grace and the vocation of the world and humanity to God's immediacy, of the nature of salvation history: a basic conception which, on the one hand, cannot be taken for granted in Catholic theology and whose interpretation, on the other hand, would of course go far beyond the scope of a brief essay. Hence only one or two modest observations in regard to the substantiation of this basic thesis are possible here.

How, we may ask, do we usually imagine the gracious, unmerited, and supernatural sanctification of man in the course of the history of humanity? We imagine the world, mankind and its history, first of all as a spatially and temporally extended reality of a profane character, even though created by God, into which God as distinct from the world and confronting it from outside enters at certain individual points and then acts by the revelation

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of the word and the communication of grace (the latter mainly through the sacraments). This is brought about by individual events coming on top of the otherwise profane course of world history, at different points, as additional to the ordinary course of things and which in principle can be individually located. These individual events produced by grace, occurring at definite points in space and time, may certainly belong together in God's intention and thus form the *history* of revelation and salvation as conceptually a single factor; they can also be linked together in the sociological-institutional dimension by the transmission of this successive revelation and by the religio-sociological institutions willed by God (for example, by the sociological factor of the Old Covenant and by the institution of the Church); but in the last resort this makes no difference to the traditional pattern of ideas, according to which the really constitutive events of revelation and inward sanctification by grace originally made their impact successively and from outside on a profane world and history. We think, however, that such an ideal scheme is inadequate and does not match up to the reality. God, in himself infinitely perfect and existing in glory, does indeed create in freedom a world and history absolutely distinct from himself, but he creates it from the outset as the recipient of his own self-communication by grace, in which from the very outset and always and everywhere he gives himself as the innermost dynamism of world and history and as their proper and very own goal.

What we call revelation history and salvation history is not the [61] sum total of particular interventions of God at different points from outside into an at first merely naturally created world and history, but the history (the interpretation in space and time) of a self-communication of God in free grace in which God from the very beginning established himself in the innermost centre of the world as its salvation. As seen from God's standpoint then, his gracious self-communication to the world is not to be conceived as a kind of second initiative of God in regard to a natural world created in a first initiative, but as God's free will toward a world distinct from himself as the condition of the possibility of a more fundamental free will of God to bestow himself in love to the non-divine. Salvation history and revelation history take place from the innermost centre of the world and history where God as imparting his own sacred glory has always already established himself, is already always in immediacy the dynamism, sanctification, and goal of the world. Of course, this self-communication of God, through which he is the innermost centre of world and history, is always and from the very outset understood and willed as free offer to the freedom of the creature. Consequently, through the freedom of the creature in accepting or rejecting this self-offering of God, the latter has a history: that history which we call the revelation history and salvation history of humanity. But this precisely is the history of this self-offering of God conveyed by man's freedom to man himself, even though the history of man's freedom is itself the act of the free God and of the sovereignty of his own grace. What we otherwise usually call the sanctification of the world and of the individual human being is the free acceptance by creaturely freedom of the sanctification of the world and man, which has always been present in the form of God's real self-offering as the centre of creaturely reality as a whole. World and man become holy in an existential sense through man's freedom in accepting God, since they are always also sanctified prior to this by God as origin, dynamism, and goal precisely of this history.

Once again, may we understand what we call revelation history and salvation history in this way? Once again, I think we can. I would go further and insist that we cannot think of it otherwise if we see the relationship of God and the world to one another as we must see it today: that is, so that God does not appear as a particular element in reality as a whole, as incorporated into what we regard as the whole system of reality.

Why may we think in this way today, even in the light of the [62] familiar data of traditional theology? On this, of course, only a few suggestions are possible here.

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First of all, we may be permitted an allusion to Islamic theology, even though this goes beyond the scope of Christian dogmatics. Fischer-Barnicol writes,

> Islam has kept its understanding of revelation free from the internal contradictions which are unavoidable when the self-communication of the eternal to the temporal is nailed firmly to the historical crossbeam, to the time sequence. Then divine mercy is subjected to temporal ideas, as if it could be imparted only in slices, in installments, more clearly from one chapter to another, and completely only at the close and not in all essentials all the time. Islam's economy of salvation does not allow for a steadily improving performance over the course of history with a final examination at the present time when an official certificate is awarded which states that the truth is now known, understood, and expressed better than *it* was by the generations of believers who went before us. According to the Islamic view, God has revealed himself always and in all respects completely and unrestrictedly. Never provisionally, always finally. It is taken for granted that we shall appreciate this at the end of time when the religions of the book will be discovered in their unity.[1]

We need not and cannot simply share this Islamic view. Nevertheless, it contains a profound truth which we overlook or suppress in current theology. If we understand God's self-communication to the world in the form of an offer to freedom and history as one and whole and always present and allow it as such to have a history in the history of its own free acceptance by mankind's reflection (known as history of revelation in the word, which reflection must itself, of course, be controlled by this self-communication of God) and by freedom (known as salvation history), then we have a reconciliation between God's self-communication (which by its nature cannot be understood as happening 'in slices') and a true salvation history and revelation history as reflected in the Old and the New Testament.

[63] In fact, if man's whole history of freedom is governed by a supernatural, salvific providence of God and is thus as a whole oriented to God's immediacy, if all creation from the outset is established 'in Christ' and oriented to him, then this fundamental determination of all reality cannot be understood as at first existing in the mind and intentions of God. This determination of the world and of mankind's history must be objectively established in the world itself. It is a determination that does not exist only when it is objectified by explicitly verbal revelation; the latter simply makes evident objectively and as open to reflection what has always existed in the world as a result of God's self-communication to it. It is because of the presence in the world of this determination that we know that it exists also in the mind and intentions of God and not vice versa.

This becomes still more clear when we consider with Vatican II the fact that always and everywhere in the history of humanity there has been and is a real possibility of attaining supernatural salvation, that this salvation is possible only by faith in the strict theological sense and that this very faith is itself possible only if and when it is sustained by the grace that imparts God himself as its intrinsic principle. But this means essentially that the grace of faith (which in the last resort is God himself as uncreated grace) must be present always and everywhere in the world in the form of an offer and (as Vatican II expressly states) is rejected only when a person acts against the final decision of his conscience and even in this rejection remains confronted by God's offer of himself. But if this is the situation, then there is no point in regarding what we call the sanctifying grace of faith, hope, and love, as consisting in separate and intermittent offers by God, occurring only occasionally on the time-axis of an otherwise secular history. This grace (free and unmerited, of course) must be understood as an intrinsic existential of the history of humanity, but *in no way due* as a result of being present always as an offer to man's freedom and of having a history in this freedom itself. If

[1] H. A. Fischer-Barnicol. 'Wortwechsel oder Gespräch–Zur Begegnung der Kirche mit dem Islam' in *Una Sancta: Zeitschrift für Okumenische Begegnung* 31, no. 2 (1976): *150.*

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the nature of creaturely freedom does not in the last resort consist in the ability to do something with this or that particular object but is the freedom of the subject to itself, then freedom and salvation history amount in fact to a freedom toward the subject endowed with grace and sanctified in the form of an offer prior to its self-determination. Incidentally, however, it may be noted that no lesser existential-ontological apriority can be ascribed [64] to this *a priori* endowment of grace and sanctification, such as that which traditional theology assigns to what we call original sin.

We cannot go more closely here into the question of how this conception can be reconciled with the certainly correct and traditional view of the sacraments, understood as events of grace occurring at definite points in space and time. To deal with this question we must not start out from the model of infant baptism but must think of individual sacramental events in space and time as they occur in and with adults. But it is obvious here with reference to baptism and penance that these sacraments, even for traditional theology, without detriment to their efficacy, come upon a person who has already accepted in freedom the grace always offered to him and is justified. It is the person who *believes* and is *justified* in faith and love who is baptized, and only in such a person is the sacrament of baptism effective. In the sacrament of penance the penitent receives the word of forgiveness and must approach this word of forgiveness as already converted to God, his conversion being itself salvific and sustained by grace. Traditional theology also therefore presupposes a person already endowed with grace and justified. But this condition, which is presupposed, is itself sustained by the grace always preceding it and reaching the person in the form of an offer. Yet again this offer itself certainly need not be understood as an isolated event occurring for the first time and solely at the particular moment when it is accepted or rejected. Why and how exactly a real efficacy of grace is to be and can be attributed to the sacraments is a question that cannot be further discussed at the moment. In this respect it need only be said that traditional sacramental theology is also faced with the same problem as that which is linked with our own basic conception and that the latter consequently presents no difficulty that does not always exist whenever God's original turning to us in grace, sustaining all salvation history, is understood as an event occurring at a definite point in time.

Before turning finally to the implications for our theme of the basic conception of grace that sanctifies man, presented here by way of suggestion, an interim consideration must be interposed. We are occupied with those sacraments which might be described as sacraments of consecration: that is, with baptism and confirmation, also up to a point with the sacrament of matrimony and especially with the sacrament of order in its different grades. These sacraments [65] have in common the fact that they establish, each in its own specific fashion, a permanent consecratedness on the part of the person who receives them. This consecratedness established by the 'status-conferring' sacraments (and this fact will in no way be denied) is, on the one hand, a reality which certainly cannot be conceived as existing *before* the sacraments but, on the other hand, lies within the historical, sociological dimension of the Church: reception into the visible Church through baptism, explicit authorization to participate in the visible Church's witness to the faith, the permanent bond of marriage, official authorization to participate in the function of leadership on the part of the Church's ministry through the various grades of order. These realities of course do not exist before reception of the sacrament and for this reason they are distinct from the real grace-given consecratedness and holiness which exists always and everywhere in the form of an offer to man's freedom; as such, these realities affect the dimension of the Church as a 'visible' society, leaving aside here the question whether as such they can be identified with the 'sacramental character' which the Church's teaching assigns as an effect to these sacraments *or* (which seems to me less probable) must be distinguished from the sacramental character.

Whether these realities in the sociological dimension of the Church must be understood (as

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appears to be usual) as a consecratedness and holiness already conferred by this Church as such, is in the last resort a question of terminology which in turn depends on the question of whether, in what sense, and with what justification we want to assign the predicate of consecratedness and holiness also to the Church as a sociological factor as distinct from secular societies or think that such a qualification for these realities should as such be strictly avoided, since holiness in the strict sense of the term can be understood only as participation in the glory of the holy God by his self-communication in grace, 'in sanctifying grace', in the grace which alone places the creature in the sphere of the blessed untouchability of the holy God. In whatever way we answer these ultimately terminological questions, while not overlooking the fact that the 'status' given with these 'sacraments of consecration' within the sociological dimension of the Church can exist also in sinners and therefore as such can be described only in a secondary and analogous sense as consecratedness, it is in any case a fact that these realities of the sacraments of consecration, constituting a status [66] in the Church, refer back to the proper consecratedness of man by grace, that they should in principle be sustained by grace and *are* in fact so sustained even in the sinner, insofar as the sinner, too, is always determined by the existential of sanctifying grace in the form of an offer and a demand for its acceptance.

This connection between the real holiness of man through the grace which exists always and everywhere and the 'consecrated-ness' established by the sacraments of consecration has in principle always been seen in the teaching of the Church and of theology: these sacraments of consecration are supposed to be received 'in the state of grace' and they may never be understood as mere conferments of status in the sociological order of the Church, to which man's innermost relationship to God by the free acceptance of his consecratedness by grace is a matter of indifference; the sacraments of consecration are always also signs of this proper and innermost consecratedness of man and are always also the offer (effective by its very nature) of the 'increase' of sanctifying grace, that is, the offer of God's help toward an existentially increasingly radical acceptance by his freedom of the already always proffered holiness of man. The ultimate ground of this connection between the sacraments of status, the sacraments of consecration, and the proper holiness and consecratedness of man by grace lies in the fact that the Church is supposed to be and is the eschatological sign, the basic sacrament, not only of God's self-offering to man's freedom, but is also the basic sacrament which secures that this self-offering of God of itself is actually victoriously established in man's freedom; the Church as a whole is the holy, not only in the dimension of word and sacraments, but also in the existential acceptance of grace by man's freedom.

Presupposing this interim consideration on the relationship between the sacraments of consecration and the 'consecratedness' established by these on the one hand and the holiness and consecratedness of man existing always and everywhere because of God's self-communication on the other (the latter being always and everywhere the innermost centre and dynamism of revelation history and salvation history and not merely something that comes from outside occasionally at certain points upon an otherwise secular history), we can now attempt to consider a number of consequences which will lead us back more closely to the basic theme.

[67] If someone has himself 'consecrated' (we are thinking now mainly of ordination, although what is to be said is true also *mutatis mutandis* of the other sacraments of consecration), he is nevertheless, prior to this consecration, not a secular, unholy person receiving through the sacraments, as something coming from outside in what seems almost a miraculous and magical fashion, a holiness which raises him in an elitist sense above the mass of secular, unsanctified human beings. What really happens in such a sacrament of consecration is the historical manifestation and the sociologically concretizing specification in the dimension of the visible Church of a holiness and consecratedness which has always

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existed inescapably in that person in the form of an offer in virtue of God's salvific will. The external and visible sign of a sacrament of consecration always refers the recipient to the ultimate and most fundamental depth of his own existence in which he has always been consecrated (whether he is explicitly aware of this or merely lives implicitly in accordance with it) by the self-offering of the holy God. The sacrament invokes this innermost consecratedness of the person and charges him to enter increasingly clearly and, existentially, increasingly radically into the experience of this innermost consecratedness of man; it charges and enables him to understand and realize his ecclesial-sociological consecrated status increasingly clearly and radically as the sociological concreteness and specification of his ultimate consecratedness which he possesses in common with all human beings, even outside the circle of those established by baptism as members of the Church in the narrower sense.

It is only from this standpoint that it is possible in the last resort to understand what is being said everywhere in the Church today: that those who are consecrated by ordination are each and all both servants of the Church and its members. The hierarchical separatedness of the person consecrated by ordination exists solely in the dimension of the sacramental sociological reality of the Church as such, not however in the 'hierarchy' of grace, of holiness, that is constituted by the diversity of radicalness in which human beings believe, hope, and love. The ordained person is called continually to discover afresh in himself this ultimate experience of the Holy Spirit, whom he shares with everyone, and to make it fruitful for the special task to which he is appointed by the sacrament of order. His official task in the Church is the concrete form in which he must also [68] concretely accept his grace-given holiness and give it expression. However great the variety of ways of life and callings in which Christianity can be realized, the priestly ministry is not an additional task undertaken by the priest as supplementary to his being a Christian, but for him – for one who is called – it is *the* way of being a Christian. It is from this standpoint that the lifelong character of the priestly office can be made intelligible as the concreteness of inescapably being a Christian, even though this means that the concrete questions of the possibility or impossibility of priesthood for a time are not yet answered. 'Consecratedness' by the transmission of office in the sacrament of order acquires its ultimate truth and urgency in any case from that consecration which exists through grace.

A further problem must now be faced and I hope that the previous reflections may contribute, at least up to a point, to its answer. The problem consists in the fact that in recent decades, apart from the permanent diaconate, pastoral ministries have emerged in the Church, not based on any form of consecration and having behind them no more than a commission from the Church. In the light of this there is a special urgency about the question of the permanent significance and never ceasing importance of consecration in the life and in the reflection of the Church.

Before attempting in the light of our previous reflections to make a contribution directly to answering this question, there are still a number of preliminary observations to be considered.

We assume as a dogma that the papal primacy and the episcopal constitution of the Church are part of the Church's perennially valid essential structures, are of divine law, even though this divine law has had a history in the Church itself. We also assume that there is an office in the Church below the episcopate which is conferred in a sacramental happening called ordination. It is possible also to say without prejudice that imposition of hands is the sacramental sign of conferment of office in the Church today, as it was in the early Church, but that in principle it is within the Church's discretion to determine and to change the precise mode of the sacramental rite of ordination. But, in the light of these assumptions, it must also be said that the extent to which orders are sacramentally conferred and the grades of order are matters which lie within the Church's discretion. Today, for instance, the diaconate is

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undoubtedly a participation in sacramental ordination, but this is not a reason for claiming [68] that Jesus himself expressly instituted the diaconate as a sacrament and as a specific participation in an office that must exist in the Church. In the Church's understanding at the present time the minor orders below the diaconate are not sacraments, but this does not mean that the medieval persuasion of their sacramentality must be rejected in principle; this opinion is still justified in the sense that the Church can institute such grades of order and also confer them sacramentally *if* it wants to do so and considers it opportune at a particular time. Nor is it impossible historically to assign a sacramental character to the consecration of deaconesses in the early Church. In general, then, without coming into conflict with a dogma of the Church, it can be said that there must exist in the Church an office that corresponds to the nature of the Church; that this one office implies a variety of powers corresponding to the Church's nature, such as the power to teach authoritatively, power to govern in the individual churches and in the universal Church or in the larger particular Church, sacramental powers; that the Church has the right and duty to confer in a variable and graded form a share in this one office and also to a limited extent to impart powers that are implicit in this one office; if and insofar as the Church confers, even to a limited extent, a considerable share in this one office (in the light of the importance of this participation and perhaps also in the light of its ultimate lifelong irrevocability), such a participation is or can be regarded as sacramental. Without this understanding, I do not think it is really possible to cope with the actual history of office, of ordination, in the Church. It seems to me that, in regard to the development, articulation, and division of what was originally one office, the Church has greater opportunities of variation than textbook theology ever recognized. This greater breadth of variation extends both to the possibilities of dividing and concentrating the power of office in a variety of ways and also to the determination of the holder of this power (man or woman, individual person or collective holder) and again to the question of the sacramentality or non-sacramentality of such a conferment of office.

In the light of these assumptions, we may now return to the problem. It was said that in the Church today there are pastoral ministries which do not presuppose any consecration, but are based 'solely' on a commissioning by the Church. In order to stress the urgency of the problem, it might immediately be added that, if the [70] present development continues, the greater part of the administration of the one ecclesiastical office will be in the hands of those who undertake it 'solely' in virtue of a commission from the Church, without 'consecration'. I think that the problem should not be stated in the first instance as if its most urgent and most important aspect was the possibility in theological reflection and speculation of preserving enough significance and importance in the consecration of those who are today or will be tomorrow priests or deacons with a consecration whose sacramentality is (rightly) certain from the very outset. What we should and can say in the first place is that those Christians who undertake essential functions of the one office in the Church in virtue of a commission from the Church do not act 'solely' in virtue of this commission. They are in fact members of the Church, they are baptized and through this baptism their ultimate and never-ceasing consecratedness by grace (of which we spoke at the beginning) is symbolically and perennially present in the public, sociological reality of the Church; they regard their office as a participation in the one office of the Church in virtue of this ultimate grace-given consecratedness of their existence and its sacramental actuality in the Church; they, too, concretize and objectify this ultimate and most fundamental consecratedness of theirs in the office which they exercise. If and insofar as this office of theirs, based on a consecration, nevertheless differs (which is certainly not *a priori* to be denied) from the office of the priest or deacon, the real and fundamental difference between these offices lies not in the fact that a special 'consecration' as distinct from a mere commission belongs to the office of the priest or deacon but in the fact that these offices are different and have a different importance in the

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manner and degree of their participation in the one office of the Church. For the conferment of the office of presbyterate or diaconate does not imply a sacramental consecration as an addition to the transmission of the powers involved; it is sacramental because and insofar as it confers these powers and promises the grace necessary for their exercise.

Only in this way, I think, can we reach the real and still unsolved problem, which is twofold and which I can only describe as one that remains open. Whatever the rite by which office is conferred, ought not the Church in future to assign a pastoral ministry of some importance (as I certainly think it could do) in a sacramental rite? Ought it not to do so when this particular pastoral ministry, in practice and [71] seen as a whole, is of the same importance as the pastoral ministry of the priest or deacon? Otherwise, is there not a danger that the ministerial priest properly so-called will be degraded to the rank of a mere cultic functionary when it looks as if all the functions he formerly possessed (that is, leadership of the community and official proclamation of the Gospel) had really nothing essentially to do with his office, since these can also be conferred by a mere non-sacramental commission? If we recall the fact that in the Church in the course of its history there were certainly conferments of office in themselves sacramental but not understood as such in theological reflection (as, for example, episcopal ordination in medieval theology), it is possible to raise even the (second) question: Is it not possible in practice in the Church of today or tomorrow that there will be conferments of important and enduring official powers which are so important that they cannot be conveyed otherwise than by a sacramental authorization, regardless of the manner in which this authorization takes place and even if its sacramentality is not explicitly taken into account?

There is no point in upholding the theoretical principle that the ordained priest is and must remain the proper leader of the congregation if the increasing shortage of priests means that without laymen as leaders the congregations will cease to exist. If this schizophrenia is allowed to proliferate, the Church will be involved in a tacit Protestantization which it has hitherto so abhorred, merely because of the desire (without convincing reasons) to continue to link the priesthood with an academic training and celibacy. Why, in fact? From the time of Pius X onward the requirements for receiving Holy Communion have been reduced to a minimum, while requirements for presiding at the eucharistic celebration have been extended to what might be called a European maximum, which seems unreal at least to the majority of people in the present-day world. If leadership of the community is an intrinsic and essential element of the priesthood, in which this function and that of the presidency of the eucharistic celebration are mutually dependent, then the very people who in fact in the future will be leaders of a priestless community should themselves be ordained priests and thus sacramentally recognized for what they are and what they accomplish as actual leaders.

It cannot be denied that the right of the community to have a [72] sacramentally ordained leader takes precedence over the efforts of the Church (which certainly deserve respect) to have community leaders who accept the obligation of celibacy. No one can claim with certainty that for all times and for all cultural groups the association of priesthood in the unity of its governing and cultic functions on the one hand with academic training and celibacy on the other will be and will remain feasible to a sufficiently large extent. If this were not so, the Church ought incidentally to have pressed long ago for celibacy also in the Eastern churches and to have said that here, too, a sufficiently large number of celibate clergy would be possible. But if this dual trend of which we spoke causes us to have reservations, then certainly we must boldly face the question as to whether differently defined and delimited official powers may be conferred by a special ‘consecration’ in the Church in the new forms of the one sacramental ordination, if the above-mentioned laicization of the Church is to be avoided. Of course, it is clear *also* from our earlier reflections that this again is not simply a question of life and death, since there can be no office of importance in the Church which is

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not based on the holder's ultimate consecratedness and the visibility of the latter through baptism.

Here, I think, are open questions in theology which are not purely academic but have a considerable importance for the self-understanding and the spirituality of the holders of these pastoral ministries. Within the one Church in which all are sanctified at the centre of their existence so that this holiness is the ultimate sustaining ground also of all offices in the Church, there is certainly a real if secondary distinction between lay people and a clergy with a special consecratedness in the dimension of the sacramental sign and of a definite commission for an office which does not belong to everyone in the Church. But where the real dividing line lies between clergy and laity, where it *ought* to lie in the light of a theologically clarified understanding of office, these are questions to which the answer is still far from clear in every respect.

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6

PASTORAL MINISTRIES AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

After working out his ideas on the theme, the author felt that a preliminary observation would be appropriate. These reflections deal only with pastoral assistants who act as permanent and normal pastors in parishes without priests. Other pastoral assistants who are working interparochially and with reference to a particular field of pastoral care do not come within the scope of the present essay. There are pastoral assistants as understood here, and in the future there will inevitably be such in greater numbers (even though today their number varies greatly in different dioceses, and here and there – as a result of the problems with which this essay will deal – can be observed to be declining). This is so and will be so, even though a more general idea of the pastoral assistant can be developed, but to which what is said here does not apply directly and unambiguously.

Of course, it is possible to go to some trouble to avoid the use of pastoral assistants as understood here, to organize the structures of pastoral care in such a way that these pastoral assistants will become to a large extent unnecessary or cease to be so clearly visible. But (and this is what is assumed here) if in the future we are not to leave whole regions without local congregations bordering on other fully constructed communities, then there will be pastoral assistants in the sense understood here or it will be really be possible to find priests in sufficient numbers of the kind required for such communities. But both, as we hope to show, amount to the same thing.

[74]

PRIESTHOOD AND DIACONATE

A problem of considerable importance in pastoral theology and pastoral care in Central Europe today is that of the essential definition of the diaconate and of the function of what are known as pastoral or parish assistants and the relationship of these two ‘offices’ in the Church to the nature and function of the ministerial priesthood.[1]

In the Western Church for many centuries up to the present time, all that was known in practice and concretely of an articulation and gradation of office as one and whole in the Church, involved in the very nature of the Church as a grace-given and yet sociologically organized factor, was the episcopal office and the priestly office. The diaconate as known in the early Church had practically disappeared and remained only as a liturgically defined transitional stage on the way to the priesthood. Vatican II revived in principle the diaconate in the Latin Church as an independent office of a hierarchical and sacramental character. This raises afresh the question of the definition of the exact nature of the diaconate and of the relationship of the diaconate to the priesthood. This question is all the more difficult because the question of the nature of the ministerial priesthood again came to the fore at the same time and for a variety of reasons, with the result that the question of the relationship between diaconate and priesthood had to be worked out from the outset with two factors, neither of which as such was very clearly or comprehensively defined.

[1] It is impossible in a brief essay to give a full account of the relevant literature. Here we can refer only to the declaration of the German Bishops’ Conference of 2 March 1977, ‘Zur Ordnung der pastoralen Dienste’, and the commentaries provided by Bishop K. Hemmerle and Professor K. Forster; the articles by W. Kasper (‘Die schädlichen Nebenwirkungen des Priestermangels’, *Stimmen der Zeit* 195 [1977]: 129-35) and Bishop P. J. Cordes (‘Pastoralassistenten und Diakone’, *Stimmen der Zeit* 195 [1977]: 389-401).

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As far as the priesthood is concerned, the most important groups of problems are well-known. Should the office and task of priesthood be made intelligible in the light of the fact that it is conferred by a sacramental ordination, or is it the other way round? If the latter is the case, how is the nature of this office to be defined? Is its nature to be defined solely in the light of the powers which, according to traditionally Catholic teaching, are reserved exclusively to the sacramentally ordained priest: that is, in the light of the eucharist and [75] the sacrament of penance (together with the anointing of the sick)? Or, if such a definition seems too narrow and to contradict what seems in practice to be the task of the priest and what is suggested by the history of the priesthood, is it possible to produce a more comprehensive definition implicitly accepting these sacramental powers as part of his function but also covering comprehensively more meaningfully and concretely the priest's office as it exists in practice?

This, more or less, is the trend of all reflections on the subject today. By analogy with the bishop, the priest is seen as leader of a Church, as leader of a community which really is the Church in that locality. He must, then, have all the powers which necessarily belong to such a leader of a Church in a particular locality in the light of the theological nature of the Church as such. He is the leader of a local Church insofar as the latter is truly (in the theological sense) the Church at that point. Speaking in the name of the Church as a whole, he is the official proclaimer of the Christian message and at one and the same time the president at the eucharistic celebration; he has the function of guiding and maintaining in unity all other functions and their holders, constituting and sustaining a Christian community as Church, functions which, of course, cannot really belong exclusively to any single individual. It can confidently be said (even if this seems to involve us in theological and practical difficulties) that the task (and consequently the nature) of the priest is *to be a pastor*. Here at least is the basis for any understanding of the nature of priesthood. (This is also clear when the priesthood is seen in the light of the episcopal office, as in fact it must be seen according to the theology of the episcopate expounded at Vatican II.)

This is not to deny the fact that there can be (and, in certain circumstances, ought to be) priests who are concretely not pastors, either in the simple everyday sense of the term or as defined in canon law. That there can also be other priests is obvious from the very nature of a sociological function which, although ultimately one, can be variously differentiated; a particular individual power within the function as a whole can be given prominence in a single holder, the whole power can belong in principle to one person without being realized for that reason in every respect; someone can be the assistant of another person, even while possessing as such the same power, etc. In the light of such considerations the number of [76] priests in the Church who are not pastors properly speaking also becomes understandable (and by and large legitimate). But all this in no way alters the fact that the nature and task of the priest is most simply and clearly understood in the light of the position of community leader, of pastor.

If the essence of the diaconate is to be defined, this definition must of course be framed in such a way that the nature of the diaconate is clearly distinguished from that of the priest. This is not so easy. If, that is, it is desired to define the diaconate as possessing (although under the overall control of the priest), apart from the two above-mentioned powers (eucharist and sacrament of penance), everything that essentially belongs to the priesthood, this must lead to embarrassing consequences. The deacon would then seem like a kind of minor priest and the question arises why he is denied power over the eucharist which, in a more profound and comprehensive view of the priesthood, is part of the function of leadership in regard to the community: a task of leadership also undertaken by the deacon, at least in practice in the present-day situation (especially in parishes without priests).

It seems appropriate, then, to see the task of the diaconate not as a curtailed, partial

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function of the priest and exercised under the priest, but as a distinct and separate function existing as such independently alongside that of the priest; this however does not imply any doubt about the fact that the deacon, with his independent task *alongside* the priest, is also in a congregation *under* the leadership of the priest who guides and unites it. This is no more than a formal outline of a definition of the diaconate; how its material content can be ascertained is something that will not be discussed further here. In this connection there are various theories, but not yet any real agreement.

In any case, it must remain clear that the deacon is not merely an auxiliary worker for the priest in the parish, but has a function which is *a priori* distinct from that of the priest, even though it must not be denied that in practice and concretely the deacon can and should undertake *in a subsidiary fashion* tasks in a parish that come within the scope of the priest's overall task. In the midst of all these difficult and troublesome definitions, which always seem somewhat arbitrary, it should not be forgotten that all these offices are ultimately extensions and concretizations in varying degrees of office as one and [77] whole in the Church and that these extensions are largely a matter for the Church itself to decide and do not by any means need to be undertaken in the same way at all times and in all historical and pastoral situations.

PASTORAL ASSISTANTS

This complex array of questions becomes all the more formidable as a result of the emergence in Central Europe today of the office of what is called the parish or pastoral assistant, in addition to the two hierarchical offices and difficult to harmonize with these, either systematically or in practice. This new function is not a project formed in the light of a systematic and fundamental reflection and afterward put into practice. The opposite is the case. It was practice, without much theological reflection, that led to these pastoral assistants. And only when they had appeared on the scene to perform a task which was far from being theologically clarified did it become apparent that the questions must be asked about the theological significance of their function and its relationship to the two traditional offices in the Church.

There are too few priests willing to accept the obligation of celibacy; there are parishes without priests, where a regular eucharistic celebration and administration of the sacraments is no longer assured. An attempt is made to provide for pastoral care, first by concentrating the activity of the few remaining priests increasingly on functions which are clearly and exclusively reserved to them; then by assigning to persons who are not priests other functions which certainly belong to the nature of the priesthood (such as the official proclamation of the word in a particular community) but which traditional sentiment does not regard as so clearly possible only in virtue of sacramental ordination. For these tasks there are not enough deacons, but there are lay persons who have had a complete theological training and in that sense are on the same level as the priest. These are prepared to undertake in regard to an ecclesial community all functions assigned and transmitted to them by the diocesan authorities; in view of the pastoral needs, the diocesan Church officially assigns to these theologically trained lay people as many as possible of the tasks and powers as, on the one hand, a [78] priestless community needs and as, on the other hand, are not certainly tied to sacramental ordination. That is why we have pastoral assistants. They are there in fact. But theologically they are a problem.

It is a problem that is keenly felt today. The declaration of the German bishops 'On the Organization of Pastoral Ministries' attempts to solve it. If we look more closely at the way in which pastoral assistants emerged, without previous theological reflection, it is easy to

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understand where the problem lies and also how the German bishops reached their conclusions. Pastoral assistants are not to be confused with priests. If we attempt (as we ought to do) to understand priesthood not *solely* in the light of the two sacramental powers (since otherwise the priest could claim exclusively for himself merely the singularly unattractive and humanly frustrating function of the producer of an *opus operatum*), if, then, we rightly understand the priest in principle as the proper and unique community leader sacramentally prepared for this, then we must deny to the pastoral assistant (as the bishops do) the function of a community leader properly so-called. But if his existence is assumed as a fact and as unavoidable today, the attempt must be made painfully and discriminatingly to describe his function in a way that corresponds up to a point to the reality and yet distinguishes him from a community leader properly so-called, who is supposed to be the priest alone.

The same is true of the difference between pastoral assistants and deacons. We start out from the assumption that the diaconate is conferred sacramentally and incorporates the person into the official hierarchy; we observe that pastoral assistants do not receive their office through a sacramental ordination. We conclude that these two offices must be essentially different. We seek to define the diaconate on the one hand and the office of pastoral assistant on the other in such a way that the difference becomes clear, since the two functions must be distinguished in themselves and not merely in the way the office is conferred. A distinction of this kind may be possible in principle, particularly since (as we said earlier) the extension and gradation of what is ultimately and originally the one office of the one Church can be understood in a variety of ways and may vary also with the variations of times and of pastoral requirements. But in practice this distinction between the pastoral assistant and the deacon [79] is also something that can be established only painfully and discriminatingly and the way to do this is by no means obvious.

We shall not however go further here into the difference between pastoral assistants and deacons, since the deacon's own particular function, which exists independently of any need of help for priestless communities, has clearly *a priori* nothing to do with the function of the pastoral assistant. Any attempt to ordain pastoral assistants as deacons in order to link them more clearly with the hierarchy would only obscure the problem: they would then be deacons, whose function as such is different from that of priests or pastoral assistants, and nevertheless exercise the function of both community leader and pastoral assistant. The question would remain as to how their function is distinguished from that of the priestly community leader.

Where does the difficulty lie in distinguishing between the pastoral assistant and the priest? If we consider the matter concretely, realistically, and sincerely, despite all sublime and well-meant distinctions the difficulty lies in the fact that the pastoral assistant in a priestless community has and exercises the function of the priest, with the exception of the two sacramental powers. From the standpoint of the community, such a pastoral assistant is the person linking them with the Church as a whole, just as the pastor is in a priestly community. In practice, concretely, and as distinct from subordinate parish assistants, both men and women, priests are distinguished from pastoral assistants in a priestless community only by the presence in the former and the absence in the latter of the two sacramental powers mentioned. Any assertion to the contrary is pure ideology or means that the pastoral assistant in a community without priests simply does not exercise the function that he ought to exercise in this pastoral situation and that in practice he is merely a subordinate parish assistant. This sort of thing is certainly possible, but it does nothing to alleviate the pastoral need that has led to the institution of pastoral assistants.

But if in practice, despite all sublime theological distinctions, the pastoral assistant in a priestless community exercises all the functions of a priestly community leader (apart from

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the two sacramental powers), we are faced with a dilemma. *Either* the functions actually undertaken by the pastoral assistant are regarded as by no means specifically priestly. Then what is truly priestly about the ministerial [80] priest is reduced to the two sacramental powers reserved to him alone; the priest becomes a purely cultic functionary. It has been said often enough that this interpretation of priesthood is no longer acceptable today and we need not discuss it at length here. This narrowly ritualistic interpretation of the specifically priestly task is not only humanly intolerable, but also theologically wrong, since it is contrary to a modern ecclesiology and to the history of the priesthood. *Or* it is admitted that the functions actually undertaken by the pastoral assistant are at bottom specifically priestly or can be distinguished from priestly functions only by subtle, academic distinctions. But then difficult theological questions arise. If the commission to exercise permanently the functions of a pastoral assistant as a real community leader assigns an office that, judged soberly and sincerely, is more important and more comprehensive than the diaconate (and the lesser offices of the minor orders, which were regarded as sacramental in the Middle Ages), why should not or in principle (at least if the Church wants it) *could* not the conferment of an office of a permanent character be regarded as sacramental?

COMMISSION AND SACRAMENT

It is not a conclusive argument against the sacramentality of this commissioning to say that it does not take the form of an imposition of hands, since it is within the power and the discretion of the Church to decide the concrete form of the rite of conferring office. It also seems far from being theologically settled that a certain rite important for the Church can be sacramental only if its sacramentality is explicitly and reflectively perceived. (If this was necessary what would be the position of marriages of Christians outside the Catholic Church? Could they be sacramental? Were episcopal ordinations not sacramental in the Middle Ages, when their sacramentality was disputed?) If the Church (which is the basic sacrament) confers a permanent office of considerable importance for its own reality, can it simultaneously not want such an office to participate in the promise given by God to the Church? Can the Church prevent such a conferment of office from being an *opus operatum*, if this term is rightly understood and seen in the light of its derivation from the nature of the Church?

[81] A further question: If in practice the leadership of the community is entrusted to pastoral assistants and this commissioning can be distinguished from a priest's community leadership only by subtle theories, if in a modern theology of priesthood the two sacramental powers reserved to ordained priests are basically articulations and extrapolations of the priest's fundamental task as leader of a local Church and official representative of the episcopal major Church and of the Church as a whole, by what right are these two powers denied to the pastoral assistant as community leader in a priestless community?

If someone as pastoral assistant is in fact appointed community leader, he is granted in this capacity the basic nature of the priest and at the same time refused the sacramental powers that flow from this basic nature. Is this theologically consistent? Ought we not almost to say that such a pastoral assistant possesses these sacramental powers in virtue of his basic function, but that they are 'suspended' in the same way as the newly ordained priest's power of absolution (which he possesses as such) is 'suspended' until he is granted the 'jurisdiction' which enables him to exercise it? It is possible, of course, to say that these sacramental powers are conferred only by imposition of hands in priestly ordination, which is the very thing that is lacking in the pastoral assistant. But this kind of argument does not dispose of the real theological problem. For it is not only a question of whether the appointment of a

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pastoral assistant as community leader without these sacramental powers (or perhaps only as 'suspended') is legal and must be respected. It can rightly be asked whether this procedure ideally corresponds to the properly theological nature of the powers and conferring of powers that are involved here. This can certainly be doubted or disputed.

Again, it is possible with the aid of acute perception to describe and with the aid of legal regulations to delimit the nature and task of the pastoral assistant in such a way that the latter is not distinguished from the priest merely because of the absence of the two sacramental powers. There can, of course, be people who have tasks in the Church, especially outside the strictly parochial sphere, whose function is unambiguously and clearly distinguished from that of the priest and who can, if it is so desired, be called pastoral assistants. In the present context however we have in mind only those with tasks in the Church who in practice in a priestless [82] community take over the task (apart from the two sacramental powers) otherwise fulfilled by the pastor. In this case, too, the attempt can be made to distinguish between priests and pastoral assistants with the aid of subtle theological arguments. It is difficult to make an effective response to someone who takes the trouble to do this and is satisfied with the abstract conclusion. But it could at least be asked why these pastoral assistants did not exist in the past. If their office as different from the priestly office and as clearly distinguishable from the latter is supposed to flow from the very nature of the Church's pastoral care, it might be expected to have existed always or at any rate for a long time.

RESPONSIBILITY AND OFFICE

The question is how to resist seriously a tendency for the 'profile of the pastoral assistant to merge into the profile of the priest',[2] if the former is responsible for religious instruction, catechesis, training, counseling, and care for particular groups. If he can be assigned a 'commission to participate in certain tasks of the Church's ministry' and if such a commission leads in a priestless community, whether it is desired or not, to a commission to undertake all the pastoral care of the community, even if the expression 'personally responsible' is avoided, what really remains of the 'irreplaceability of the priest as leader of the community'? If religious instruction, catechesis, training, counseling, and care for particular groups are tasks which are undertaken *together* by *one* pastoral assistant in a community, is this a 'responsibility for certain specific fields' which belong to the lay person as such and have no intrinsic orientation to priestly orders? Why should such a complex and comprehensive task as a whole still not be an 'office in the theological sense of the term'? Is it possible so to organize concretely and in practice the pastoral ministry of a pastoral assistant in a priestless community that no sort of 'office without ordination' emerges alongside ecclesiastical office in the ordinary sense of the term or must we admit that what is exercised here is to a large extent *the* pastoral ministry normally conferred [83] by sacramental ordination? If in a priestless community a pastoral assistant is the person to whom that community as a whole actually relates, it is pure theory to talk about the profile of a pastoral assistant not being alienated by an accumulation of the priest's functions.

The only way to get out of the undergrowth of these theological and practical difficulties is to ask again more precisely what was the situation and what were the circumstances out of which the institution of pastoral assistants emerged and whether these circumstances must be assumed to be unalterable. The institution of pastoral assistants emerged without previous

[2] This and the following quotations refer to the declaration of the German bishops on the organization of pastoral ministries mentioned in note 1.

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deeper reflection simply because it was no longer possible to provide priests for all local communities. On the other hand, there are persons who have had a complete theological training and are prepared to undertake permanently even in a pastoral sense the leadership of a parish, but for their own part reject priestly celibacy. But it is taken for granted that the law of priestly celibacy remains unalterable. On this assumption (but only on this assumption) the institution of pastoral assistants emerges. Community leaders are sought, they are given everything that seems possible by way of powers, they are denied only the functions which are known from tradition to be reserved to the priest, without asking more closely in theological terms whether the powers and functions actually assigned to pastoral assistants are not (according to more exact and objective criteria) quite as important as those which are denied to them. People cannot and will not see this because otherwise pastoral assistants from the nature of the case would have to be regarded as priests; and in the Latin Church only a celibate can be seen as a priest.

It is therefore quite safe to say that the actual reason or the decisive precondition for the emergence of the institution of pastoral assistants is the law of celibacy. (We need only ask whether pastoral assistants would be possible in the Eastern Uniate churches with their married clergy or whether it would not be taken for granted there for a married ‘pastoral assistant’ to be ordained as a priest, since that would merely be a sacramental corroboration of the task which he performs or is expected to perform anyway.) When we say that the actual and necessary precondition of the emergence of this institution is celibacy, we are of course not denying that there are other reasons why someone who would be glad to undertake the [84] office of a pastoral assistant nevertheless does not want to be ordained. But the other reasons involved in the sociological image of the modern secular priest, which create anticlerical prejudice against the priesthood, are so closely linked with celibacy that it is still absolutely correct to maintain that the law of celibacy is the precondition for the institution of pastoral assistants.

Let us assume that there were no law of celibacy for the secular priest. On this assumption there would not be any pastoral assistants in the modern sense, at least none who had undertaken this function as their permanent task in life and been appointed to a specific individual community. They would in fact be the real community leaders. In the light of their task they would regard the power of presiding at the eucharist and pronouncing the words of reconciliation as the natural consequences of their basic office. In a rite appropriate to the conferring of these powers they would receive from the Church the whole power of the community leader which develops out of the Church’s very nature. They would then be sacramentally ordained priests, even though the ecclesial-sociological image of such community leaders (as married and perhaps exercising their office together with an ordinary secular calling) would differ considerably from the image of the priest today or even from that of a priest of the future exercising supra-local functions in the Church. In brief, without the law of celibacy, pastoral assistants in fact and in practice would become priests.

We can approach the question also from the opposite standpoint. We can start out from the axiom that a permanent task of fundamental importance in the Church should also be assigned by the rite envisaged for appointing someone to this task. (For example, if someone exercises as his permanent task the functions of a deacon, he is expected to receive these functions by the sacramental rite known as ordination to the diaconate, even though the individual functions, regarded in the abstract, can be undertaken by a ‘lay person’.) This axiom ought to be obvious, just as the obligation of baptism is obvious for someone who has already been justified by his subjective acts. The pastoral assistant ought therefore to be commissioned in a way appropriate to his actual function. If this function corresponds to the tasks of a deacon, he should be sacramentally ordained deacon. If the function of a pastoral assistant is in fact that of a community leader, he should receive priestly orders, since a [85]

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partition between the function of the community leader and the function of presiding at the eucharist is contrary to their very nature.

CELIBACY

The whole question then centres on the problem of celibacy. In principle it is not denied by anyone but repeatedly stressed that the Church must give up the requirement of celibacy for the pastoral clergy if it becomes clear that this requirement means a considerable loss of badly needed pastoral resources. Provision for sufficiently large numbers of pastoral clergy is an obligation imposed on the Church as a matter of divine law, an obligation that takes precedence in a case of conflict over the Church's legitimate desire for a celibate pastoral clergy. Ten years ago, in an article defending celibacy, I wrote: 'If the Church cannot in fact find everywhere or in certain areas a sufficient number of clergy unless it gives up celibacy, then it *must* give this up, for the duty of providing a sufficient number of pastoral clergy is prior to the possibility and the desire (legitimate in itself) to have a celibate clergy'.[3] The numbers are increasing of those who maintain that this case of conflict exists now in Europe. (The co-existence of the Uniate Eastern churches with a married clergy and the Latin Church with its celibate clergy proves that the very nature of the Church does not require the question of celibacy always and necessarily to be settled uniformly in the Church as a whole.)

This is a problem that cannot be made dependent on the question of how many would want to be ordained priests if the Church abandoned celibacy, or whether giving up celibacy would alleviate the present shortage of priests. A Christian parish which by its situation, its structure, the number of members has the right to exist and live as a local Church, has also the right to a priest as leader of the community and of the eucharistic celebration. This is not a right that exists only when it can be fulfilled, not merely in this particular community, but also in all the others. And it seems to be prior to the right of the Church to a celibate clergy. In this essay, however, we [86] shall not pursue further the question of priestly celibacy and the possible necessity of its abandonment.

What is important in our reflections is only the fact that celibacy is the actual reason for the creation of the institution of pastoral assistants, the actual reason why this institution leads to theological difficulties and pressures which really ought not to exist. If the circumstances which led to the institution of pastoral assistants are allowed simply to persist (that is, especially celibacy and the 'clerical' image of the pastoral priest resulting from it), there will inevitably emerge two classes of clergy: sacramentally ordained priests mainly undertaking supra-local functions in a diocese, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, pastoral assistants who are in fact the leaders in very many local communities and who do not really understand in theological terms why they are denied certain sacramental functions which are properly involved by the very nature of their basic function as community leaders, or why the attempt is made to explain with the aid of theological subtleties that a community leader who is a priest and a community leader who is a pastoral assistant are exercising two different functions.

Certainly we can agree with the claim in the bishops' declaration that 'there could be no justification for starting out to organize the pastoral ministry with a change in the conditions for admission to the priesthood by the Church as a whole.' It is true that we cannot 'start out' from such a change. But we might be faced with a pastoral situation in the Church calling urgently for this change. Neither is it necessary for these changes to occur simultaneously everywhere in the 'whole Church', particularly since the 'whole Church', if it is not to be

[3] *Geist und Leben* 40 (1967) 128.

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identified with the Western Church, does not by any means have a celibate clergy everywhere. When the bishops' declaration says that such a change offers no assurance 'that sufficient priests will be at the Church's disposal in the long run', then, as we said, the counter-question can be raised as to whether a priestless community has the right to a (celibate or married) priest only if this right, which exists in principle, can be fulfilled simultaneously in all communities.

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7

THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY OF PASTORAL WORK IN THE PARISH

The theme of 'theology and spirituality of pastoral work in the parish' was chosen for me. The concrete and practical aspects of the theme must be left largely to others to explain. These *general* reflections are put forward by a priest who is not actively engaged in pastoral work in a parish, but he is sure that the true nature of the Church is more clearly and decisively involved in parochial pastoral work and, of course, in similar self-realizations than it is in theological reflection on the Church's faith as it is to be proclaimed: a reflection that is the business of the theologian, who has merely a secondary, albeit indispensable, function by comparison with this proclamation and the proclaimers. If we recall that, despite the importance of theory, practice is not only the execution of theory, but that the final, decisive, and complete theory emerges only from a practice on which reflection can never be complete, it becomes quite clear that the theorist can approach the practitioner only very modestly and unobtrusively, that he can offer the latter only very humbly whatever can be made of his theory and ask whether any conclusions can be drawn from it to put into practice.

The title, in fact, requires us to consider two themes: theology of parochial pastoral work and spirituality of parochial pastoral work. The first theme, theology of parochial pastoral work, is again, as such, very ambiguous. On the one hand, theology of parochial pastoral work can mean that we are asking about the theological nature of parochial pastoral work, of pastoral ministry precisely in the parish, and about the description in terms of Christian theology of the pastor's activity, since the latter is simply not a secular, social [88] functionary and manager. But on the other hand, theology of parochial pastoral work can also involve the question of whether and how the pastor must be and remain a theologian if he is really to be able to fulfill his task, and why and how a study of theology continually renewed and carried further, a permanent contact with theological scholarship, must retain a place in the life of a pastor. As we said, theology of parochial pastoral work will be the theme of these necessarily brief preliminary considerations. What is to be said under the heading of spirituality of parochial pastoral work will, of course, become clear at a later stage.

THEOLOGY OF PASTORAL WORK IN THE PARISH

There really is something like a theology of parochial pastoral work in the first sense mentioned of the term. The parish and with it, of course, its leader, the pastor, are not merely secular, sociological concepts, but have a religious, dogmatic, spiritual content, which can exist and be understood only in the faith of Christianity.

The Parish as a Reality of Faith

If and insofar as the Church as one and whole is itself a reality of faith and not merely a secular sociological organization (even though the latter would serve a supernatural purpose, comprehensible only in faith) and if, however, this Church as itself a reality of faith has inevitably a spatial character, then it must also be said that a territorial parish within this Church likewise participates in the peculiarity of the one Church as a reality of faith. In the Catholic understanding of faith the Church as a whole is indeed one Church, but an

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episcopically (that is, spatially, territorially) constituted Church. This territorial structure of the Church is obviously in the first place an empirical and secular reality, but this very reality is nevertheless taken up into the mystery of the Church as the unity of human beings in the Holy Spirit and in the profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God, crucified and risen, the historically palpable, irreversible self-promise of God as salvation of the world. This mystery of the Church as sacrament of the world's salvation becomes effective [89] territorially, it becomes effective in space and time. The nature of the Church does not consist merely in the ubiquity of the Spirit of God, who is poured out equally on all flesh as innermost dynamism of humanity and its history. The nature of the Church consists even more in the fact that this undeniable although hidden ubiquity of the Spirit is manifested historically, sacramentally, sociologically, and incarnationally and that this incarnational and sacramental manifestation makes the ubiquity of the Spirit of God (unconfused and undivided) irreversibly and historically palpable in the world.

The Territorial Character of the Church

Thus the Church as sacrament of the world's salvation (as seen from above) has an unquestionably territorial character and this territorial character of the Church as sociological factor (as seen from below) shares in its quality as mystery (as, for instance, the water of baptism is earthly water and yet in baptism becomes the actual and effective manifestation of man's sanctification by grace). The parish, too, as a territorial factor participates in this quality which is part of the territorial organization of the Church. This becomes even clearer when we remember that the most effective and radical sacramental self-realization of the Church as the redeeming unity of human beings together in God occurs in the eucharist. Here the Church is present in its completeness and here it is unquestionably in place, in the local community, which is not absolutely necessarily but preferably and normally the parish community. It is understandable, therefore, that the New Testament, especially Paul, sees the Church first of all as the local Church, as (we may say without prejudice) the parish Church, at a time when there was still no difference between an episcopal and a parochial community Church. There can indeed be communities for the eucharistic celebration which are not parishes in the modern legal sense: personal parishes which do not have a directly perceptible territorial character, eucharistic communities which are not directly supported and authorized by the parish, monastic communities, etc. But when the eucharist is celebrated, people must always meet together in some place; if the eucharist is to be celebrated legitimately in this way at a chosen place, there must always be a relatedness to a local bishop or at least the explicit or [90] tacit reference to the pope, who is not everywhere but resides in Rome. Hence it is clear that the Church's territorial character, particularly in its supreme realization, can nowhere be eliminated. And it is precisely this territorial character which is most simply and normally present in the parish community, *the* community, which is based on a primordial human reality that can never be wholly eliminated, on a group of people living together in a particular area. Precisely because this primordial human phenomenon, despite all opportunities for people to form a community or society for other reasons, can never be excluded from human existence and because it enters into the eucharistic celebration (as the matter of the sacramental sign enters into the sacrament in its unity with sacramental grace), the parish community participates in the territorial structure of the Church, which belongs to the latter's substance, since it is part of the Church's sociological, historical, and incarnational nature.

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The Parish – A Tangible Spiritual Reality

A parish is not merely a secular concern belonging to a religious society as a police district belongs to the state, but a spiritual reality in which a person learns or can and should learn that not only his temporal existence but also his cosmic-spatial existence is sanctified and encompassed by the grace of the holy God of which it is the incarnation. Of course, this theological thesis of the spiritual potentiality of human beings living together is not merely an indicative, but also an imperative. As the person who baptizes is required to provide water, the Church must provide a local group of neighbours in order to be able to celebrate the eucharist and thus fully realize itself historically and sociologically as sacrament of the world's salvation. This sort of local gathering of neighbours, of course, is not to be understood merely as a physical and geographical reality, but as a truly human factor of a genuinely neighbourly fellowship in righteousness and love, such that this human reality can enter into the eucharistic celebration. And it is to this human reality that the imperative resulting from our theological thesis on the spiritual quality of the territorial parish refers. This imperative, of course, must be fulfilled in the first place through all the other functions which belong directly to the parish as such, even though this does not mean that [91] these other tasks of a parish as such are merely means to the end of forming this territorial community which is to be the human substratum of the eucharistic community. But all the rest of the functions of the parish as such (religious education, religious courses for adults, welfare work, etc.) also contribute to the formation of such local neighbourliness in the full human sense of the term, even to the formation of a spiritual community as such, and may and must therefore be appreciated and promoted also from this standpoint.

Advancement of Human Fellowship in the Secular Sphere

This imperative for the formation of local neighbourliness can and should relate, as far as it is possible and necessary, to more than is directly envisaged or implied by the specific tasks and functions of the parish. As far as it is possible and necessary, the work of the parish and the pastor may and should relate to the secular reality of local neighbourliness as such. Let us assume that parish and pastor, when necessary, make the greatest possible effort to see that a spatial agglomeration of human beings becomes even in the secular sphere a genuinely human fellowship, a truly human fraternity living together in mutual knowledge of one another, in sticking together, in trust, and providing mutual help. By this very fact they are contributing to the conditions in which a real spiritual community in common praise of God, in a common acknowledgment of expectation of the coming Lord, in unity in the Holy Spirit, can be realized in the eucharistic celebration; in this way the eucharistic celebration is not merely a casual external assemblage of individuals looking for the satisfaction of their personal needs as they might look for this in a department store. If a country-parish priest, in a place where it is possible and humanly appropriate, meets the farmers and farmhands after mass for a meal in the local inn, this, too, can be a consequence of this spiritual imperative established by the above-mentioned theological thesis. If, as hitherto, we tried to envisage the theological quality of the Christian local community, of the territorial parish, in the light of the eucharistic celebration, this does not mean that the theological character of the parish is solely based on the act of worship; all that was intended was to make clear as simply as possible the fact that the territorial parish has a theological quality.

Insofar as the rest of the functions of a parish have, on the one [92] hand, an independent theological significance and are not merely means to the end of the eucharistic community, but have, on the other hand, more or less necessarily a local basis, even in the light of these

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other functions of the parish there emerges a peculiar theological, spiritual quality; it is not merely an unavoidable secular reality, but is assumed in its human spatiality into the mystery of the Church.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THEOLOGY IN PAROCHIAL PASTORAL WORK

As indicated at the beginning, the term 'theology of parochial pastoral work' has a second and different meaning. In the latter sense the term means purely and simply that theology has and must retain its place and its importance in parochial pastoral work. Parochial pastoral work directly aids the realization by word and sacrament of Christian existence in the community as such and provides also for the Christian life of the individual, who as an individual Christian can never exist in a Christian way entirely outside the Church or, therefore, outside a community, and yet in his individual existence is not simply absorbed collectivistically either in secular or in ecclesial social life.

Priority of Pastoral Activity to Theological Reflection

This task of making the Christian reality effective in word and sacrament, in community and individual existence, is therefore something different from and prior to theology, which, even if it grows out of and is directed to Christian practice, is in fact theoretical and scholarly reflection on this more fundamental Christian reality. To that extent, the pastor is not really a professional theologian and need not be one in the sense of being engaged in scholarly reflection. If we define exactly and straightforwardly the really correct relationship of theory and practice (if, for example, we keep in mind the correct relationship from the Catholic standpoint of bishop and theologian), then we cannot regard the relationship between pastor and theologian as if the pastor were more or less only the retailer distributing to individual consumers the commodities produced by a large-scale [93] theological industry. Proclamation comes *before* professional academic theology and is not simply a way of expressing and transmitting the latter. For theology reflects on the reality presented to it in the proclamation and ritual self-realization of the Church.

Reflection as a Constitutive Element of Practice

True and important as all this is, important as are the consequences of all this also for pastoral work (which cannot be considered here in detail), it remains true nevertheless that even theology properly speaking – academic theology – has its place and its importance in pastoral work. For a certain element of reflection is contained from the beginning as a constituent part in any practice, in any fundamental self-realization of the individual, of society, and of the Church, and cannot be excluded from it without practice itself being destroyed. Practice and theory are not identical, but are not placed side by side as separate areas, purely and simply independent of each other. If only because of these ultimate peculiarities of the relationship of theory and practice, close reflection on the element of reflection known as theology, which is itself a constituent part of practice as such, can never be irrelevant to practice.

Positive Approach to Theology – for the Sake of Human Beings

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The pastor must have a positive attitude to theology properly so-called, since the latter, seen more closely, is itself involved in his proclamation and since this reflex theology helps him to grasp and express more clearly and purely what he proclaims, even though the experience of his own proclamation always contains more than what academic theology as such, working reflectively and systematically and historically, can understand and objectify of it, Today, there are in addition all the necessities of an academic theology that are involved in the present state of proclamation. The pastor is not a ritualist, a magician, or a spellbinder who can simply rely on the *opus operatum* of traditional verbal formularies and sacramental rites. He is required, to the best of his ability and by the word of proclamation and sacrament, to produce in the recipient of his pastoral efforts the existential preconditions for a genuinely human, [94] believing reception of those realities which he offers in word and sacrament to man for the latter's salvation. The recipients of his efforts are not merely simple and straightforward human beings sustained by a homogeneously Christian milieu who rely purely on his formal authority as an ordained expert on religion and accept what he says. They are educated people living in the midst of the contradictions and pluralisms of a secularized world who do not get their view of life only from their pastor; they are also people who are Christians by choice and who live in crises of faith. How is a pastor to proclaim the Gospel and the message of the Church to these people with any hope of success if he has no contact with modern theology, a theology which is attempting to consider and cope with all these critical inquiries addressed to Christianity by the world of today? How can a pastor perform adequately the task imposed on him of interpreting Scripture if he is not to some extent applying the methods of modern exegesis and noting the conclusions of modern biblical studies? Unless he has a basic knowledge of these studies, how can the pastor's homily amount to any more than a lecture on his own pious opinions which he presents as best he can in the light of a biblical text? How can a pastor, addressing educated and uneducated Christians, distinguish between the really binding substance of faith and other perhaps traditional but nevertheless time-conditioned interpretations of this faith? How can he avoid imposing on people today as a matter of faith burdens which they are not bound to bear and perhaps cannot bear, if he is not also aware to some extent of the efforts of modern theology to bring out these distinctions? If he is not constantly in touch with present-day theological work, is it possible for a pastor to go beyond the traditional catechism formulas, to retain, enlarge, and change that vocabulary and those horizons of understanding and ways of access of an up-to-date proclamation which are necessary today and are in fact being established in the first place by academic theology?

Contact with Theologians, *Reading New Books*, *Keeping Up with Periodicals*

It is obvious that the ordinary pastor with so much work to do on the one hand and with his limited intellectual and spiritual possibilities [95] on the other can gain and maintain only a limited contact with modern academic theology. It is also unfortunate that academic theology often makes too little effort to convey its questions and its conclusions to the ordinary priest in such a way that he can utilize them in his pastoral work. But this in no way alters the fact that the pastor in his own way must be engaged in theology and must remain in contact with modern theology. He ought also always to be reading discriminatingly and after consultation selected new publications and unhesitatingly to set aside a certain time for this if he is not to continue forever performing his task with an outmoded theology which he learned many years ago or if he is not to sink back to the theological and spiritual plane of an innocuous childish faith, the faith he brought with him to his first studies in theology, only to lay aside the latter also as useless after he had been ordained. If he is to carry out his mission

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responsibly, the pastor must really exploit the opportunities of further education offered to him in training courses and similar arrangements. Deanery conferences and similar institutions ought not to be merely friendly gatherings of clerical colleagues or conferences of pastoral managers, but should also provide a little theological work and further education. Where it is possible the clergy should also have the courage to do some biblical theology, working together on a text in preparation for a sermon. The existence of theological reviews should not be constantly threatened because of the small number of subscribers; they should be bought and read by the pastoral clergy. In a word, theology of pastoral work in the title of these reflections means also that theology is and must remain an indispensable element of pastoral work itself.

We now come to the second part of our theme.

SPIRITUALITY OF PASTORAL WORK IN THE PARISH

In view of the range and the difficulty of this second theme, it is obvious that only a few, somewhat arbitrarily selected observations are possible here, particularly since spirituality of parochial pastoral work as such of course integrates into itself everything that pertains to Christian spirituality as a whole and consequently cannot be described here in its whole range and in all its depth.

[96]

A Preliminary Reflection

In order to get some idea of the particular themes implied in the overall theme of the spirituality of parochial pastoral work, we may first mention a more general consideration. This preliminary consideration might be summarized in the thesis that the spirituality of parochial pastoral work as such must be the spirituality of a basic community today and of the team directing it.

First of all, there are basic communities of the most varied kinds (which cannot be described here and distinguished from one another) which are justified and meaningful, which are different pastorally and in terms of the present canon law from a parish community. We cannot explain here the meaning, justification, and limits of such basic communities. Without going into that question, we are starting out from the persuasion that, even as compared with these basic communities of the most varied kinds, the parish communities will maintain their irreplaceable importance today and in the foreseeable future, that they are not merely fossils from earlier pastoral epochs, nor are they simply administrative districts of episcopal major Churches, but are, remain or must become real Christian communities on the spot (as we tried to suggest in theological terms in the first section of the first part of this chapter). Allowing for all this, however, it must be said that by their very nature and seen from both sides these basic communities and these parishes do not simply exist separately, side by side, but to some extent interpenetrate and depend on one another. In other words, if and insofar as a parish community is more and should be more than an administrative area of an episcopal major Church, if and insofar as it is or is to become a truly Christian community in all dimensions of Christian existence, with the eucharistic celebration at its heart, actually based on local but authentically human neighbourliness, then the parish, too, has in itself as its centre, as its most compact realization, what might be called a basic community.

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Core Community as Basic Community of the Parish

It is not without reason that we speak today of a 'core community' also with reference to the parish community. A present-day parish [97] must certainly offer a welcome to everyone: it cannot neglect Christians by choice (for example, people who have a merely casual and qualified attitude to Christianity and the Church) and it must not become a ghetto for a few pious Christians from a very particular and restricted social milieu, sheltered from civilisation, society, and politics, and having a sectarian and bourgeois character. Nevertheless, an authentic and living parish today cannot be sustained merely by the power of the major, episcopal Church and its administration; it must likewise be sustained from below, from the base, by the faith and by the spiritual and not merely folkloristic attachment to the Church of convinced Christians and their fellowship; consequently it must itself form and carry within itself something like a basic community. But if all this is assumed, the thesis stated above is understandable: the spirituality of a parish, of its pastoral work and pastor, is today (in a positive, but not, of course, in an exclusive sense) the spirituality of a basic community.

Parochial Pastors – All Priests and Lay People Officially Active in the Parish

All that, of course, amounts only to a very broad and incomplete framework for articulating the question of the spirituality of a parish, of parochial pastoral work and of parochial pastors, particularly since parochial pastoral work and parochial pastors are not in principle to be understood as referring merely to the function of the pastor in charge of the parish, but as related to all those who are engaged together officially and as full-time workers in this pastoral activity. Nevertheless, and even though we are making a somewhat random selection, we may now ask: What must be the special characteristics of the spirituality of parochial pastoral work and parochial pastors, if it is to be the spirituality of a basic community, of a core community and its representatives?

In order to answer this question, even though obviously only very partially, it is possible to suggest two headings which are linked with each other in a kind of dialectical unity: loneliness of faith and fraternal fellowship of faith. With all due reservations, these are the headings under which the spirituality of parochial pastoral work today is to be characterized. What does this mean?

[98]

The Loneliness of the Faith of 'Parochial Pastors'

I shall speak first of all of the loneliness of the faith of those who have to carry out this pastoral work in the parish. In itself *fides qua* was always a matter of personal responsibility, it involved the decision and freedom of the individual: a decision of faith that he could pass on to others less than anything else in his existence, that he could not leave to other authorities and could not base on grounds already present. But formerly this faith found expression in a homogeneously Christian milieu even though the outlook of the public at large was secular and indifferent; it was possible to believe what more or less everyone seemed to believe, at least in public and in ordinary conversation, so that it almost looked as if, within the dimension of faith, the individual could be relieved of what had seemed the irremoveable burden of responsibility, of the decision for faith against unbelief, of hope against all hope, of unrequited love. It is different today. Christian faith must now be continually realized afresh, in the atmosphere of a secularized world, against a background of

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atheism, in face of a technical rationality whose advocates declare *a priori* that all statements which cannot be justified in terms of this rationality are meaningless or (to use Wittgenstein's term) belong to the realm of 'mysticism' about which we can only be silent.

Decision of Faith More Radical Than Formerly

In such a situation the solitary responsibility of the individual in his decision of faith is necessary and required in a much more radical way than was formerly the case. Consequently, part of the present day spirituality of the Christian in general, and in particular of those who have to represent this Christianity publicly by carrying out pastoral work, is the courage for a lonely decision contrary to public opinion, the lonely courage analogous to that of the martyrs of the first centuries of Christianity, the courage for the decision of faith that draws its strength from itself and does not need public support.

[99]
Personal Experience of God and His Spirit

This loneliness of the individual's conscience in regard to faith must have, however, an absolutely positive side in order to be able to endure. If it is to persist, it will live out of a wholly personal experience of God and his Spirit. It has been said that the Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not be a Christian at all. This statement is very true if we mean by mysticism not singular parapsychological phenomena, but a genuine experience of God emerging from the depths of existence. According to Scripture and the Church's teaching, properly understood, the final conviction and decision of faith does not come in the last resort merely from a didactic indoctrination coming from outside, supported by public opinion in secular society or in the Church, nor from the purely rational arguments of fundamental theology, but from the experience of God, of his Spirit, his freedom, bursting out of the innermost centre of human existence where it is wholly real, even though it is an experience that cannot adequately be reflected upon or verbally objectified. Possession of the Spirit is not merely something known to exist as a result of didactic indoctrination from outside, but experienced from within. The solitary Christian in silent prayer in the final decision of conscience, not rewarded by anyone, in unlimited hope that must no longer cling to any calculable assurance, in the radical disappointment of life and the powerlessness of death willingly permitted and accepted, in the night of the senses and the Spirit (as the mystics say), etc.: this solitary Christian experiences God and his liberating grace, as long as he accepts these experiences (just indicated) and does not run away from them in an ultimately culpable fear, even if he cannot interpret and attach a theological label to the experiences of God and his grace transcending all individual realities. The Christian today must live from this loneliness of fundamental religious experience, he must clarify this experience and increasingly appropriate it in radical freedom. Only then does the theological indoctrination of Scripture and the Church's teaching acquire its ultimate credibility and existential practicability.

[100]
Independence of Public Opinion

This loneliness, with the scope it gives for freedom, with its negative side of being independent of ordinary public opinion and its positive side of admitting the experience of God in his Holy Spirit, is above all characteristic of the spirituality of those who represent

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Christianity in their pastoral work in the parish.

The pastor and his assistants in the parish today cannot be functionaries and managers representing a sociological factor called 'Church' and promoting its ideology in competition with others. They must be people who have had in solitude a living experience of the Spirit. They do not really need for that reason to talk about their experience (although Paul eventually did so). But the proclamation of the objective message of the Gospel and the Church must in any case be sustained and inwardly illuminated by their own solitary experience of the Spirit. To put it quite simply: those engaged in parochial pastoral work must themselves be spiritual persons. This is obvious, it is easily said, and yet it is the most difficult thing that is demanded from these people. If they can manage this most difficult thing, then everything else they have to do is easy. If the apparent lack of success in their work, their disappointments in pastoral activity, thrust them back, so to speak, into loneliness and forsakenness, this experience at its deepest level is the mystical phenomenon of that lonely and silent night in which a person silently encounters the mystery of God accepting him, sheltering him, and assuring him as a perhaps bitter but final consolation his ultimate freedom – assuming that the pastoral worker has come to learn better than to run away from the mysterious experience of God in ultimate loneliness and forsakenness. A primary characteristic of the spirituality of pastoral work today is loneliness in the sense in which we have at least tried to outline it.

Fraternal Fellowship and Its Experience of the Spirit

A second characteristic of the spirituality of pastoral work today, linked with the first in a singular dialectical unity, is fraternal fellowship in which the same all-sustaining experience of the Spirit is possible. This is a phenomenon which is perhaps only now becoming [101] clearer, of which we older persons can speak only hesitatingly and cautiously while awaiting its future. It seems to me that this phenomenon is something that we older persons never experienced or experienced only in the traces it left behind. In the light of our background and education we older people were also spiritually individualists, even though we gladly carried out the liturgy together as our obvious, objective task and duty. We need only look back into the past of the Church and of its life. We can see then that experience of the Spirit, 'mysticism', was understood and lived as obviously a purely individual occurrence on the part of the individual person for himself alone. When did anyone think of a common experience of the Spirit, when did anyone long for it or know it as it came about evidently on the Church's first feast of Pentecost, which presumably was not the occasion of a casual local gathering of a number of individualistic mystics, but of an experience of the Spirit by a community as such? An experience of this kind, of course, cannot and is not meant to relieve the individual Christian and to spare him that loneliness of the most radical decision of faith, since human individuality and solidarity are not factors that can be set off against one another or substituted for one another.

From Spiritual Individualism to Common Experience of the Spirit

This does not imply that an experience of the Spirit in a small community as such is *a priori* impossible, even though we older members of the clergy have never or scarcely ever known anything of the sort and still less attempted to bring it about. Why should there not be something of this kind? Why should not younger Christians, including the clergy, find an easier way to such a joint experience of the Spirit? Why should not something of this kind be

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more easily possible and more necessary today and in the future than it was formerly? Why could not phenomena like joint counseling, genuine human communication in the form of properly human conversation and not merely of superficial technical explanations, group dynamics, etc., be accepted, exalted, and sanctified among Christians by a common experience of the Spirit of God, so that a truly fraternal fellowship in the Holy Spirit emerges? In the last resort this sort [102] of thing need not take place in extraordinary, apparently almost parapsychological circumstances like those seen sometimes in enthusiastic groups of American Pentecostal movements. There is no need to speak in tongues, nor need there be any attempt to produce phenomena of healing by imposition of hands. But if people perhaps have little or no time for such things, that is far from saying that there simply cannot be any sort of communitarian experience of the Spirit at all. Why should there not be a really spiritual discernment of spirits undertaken jointly?

Why is the prayer to the Holy Spirit at the beginning of a meeting of a parish council or a pastoral team concretely and practically merely a pious opening ceremony, after which everything goes on as it would at a secular gathering, making use of purely rational arguments in the style of any sort of management? All this can be put forward by older people like us only very humbly and self-critically in the form of a question. But in this connection the younger clergy should at least suspect and try both cautiously and courageously to realize and test opportunities in the Church and consequently in pastoral work which are not yet by any means exhausted.

Growth of a Spiritual Team

A team engaged in pastoral work in the parish might perhaps slowly become a properly spiritual team, a fraternally spiritual fellowship, might have or slowly but courageously try to acquire a spirituality lived together in the proper sense of the term. I will not venture to offer any prescriptions as to how exactly this could happen. But it does not mean that there are not starting points or ways of access for this kind of spirituality in fellowship as such, even though they must first be sought and tested with patience, even though a critical transposition of occurrences in group dynamics into a properly spiritual event has still to be made, even though prayer together and Scripture reading together (purely as such as outward rite and as the study of exegesis by several people together) do not yet amount to a spiritual event. Here only the modest surmise may be expressed that in the future which has already begun a pastoral team must become a spiritual fellowship with a communitarian spirituality if it is really to do justice in adequate measure to its task in pastoral work.

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[103]

8

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SECULAR PRIEST

I must declare from the outset that I am not exactly going to attempt to answer the question raised by this theme in the form of a plain, straightforward thesis, affirming the existence of a spirituality peculiar to the secular priest as distinct from lay persons and members of religious orders and at the same time indicating to some extent in what precisely this peculiarity consists. It is impossible for me to defend a thesis stated so unequivocally, but that is not the same as saying that this spirituality certainly does not have a specific quality of its own. What I can say, then, amounts only to some preliminary observations on the subject, which fall short of an answer but may explain why I am not venturing to make a clear decision on the essential question.

(1) It might be said that there are as many diverse spiritualities as there are different human beings; or, if we want to reduce the number of these spiritualities (which is identical with the number of human beings) to a manageable size, we could say that there are as many spiritualities as there are more or less stable, diverse types of human life and occupation. Every human being has his unique and never recurring individuality. If spirituality is simply a question of coping with our life's work in a Christian way, there are as many spiritualities as there are human beings. But if these human beings, each of them unique, both differ from one another under the most diverse aspects of sex, age, calling, social position, specific historical situation, etc., and come together under these aspects as groups, and if then the peculiarities of such groupings necessarily determine the spirituality of the people in these groups, the most diverse spiritualities [104] can be distinguished in the light of these considerations and we can rightly speak of a specific spirituality related to age, sex, historical period, nationality, calling, function in the Church, etc. This is as obvious as it is important, if we want to elucidate more exactly a spirituality appropriate to a concrete human being and assigned to him by God.

In this sense it is obvious that concrete spirituality (for example, as the concrete Christian way of coping with his life on the part of a secular priest) is inevitably different from that of a lay person or a religious, if and insofar as this calling and task of a secular priest differs from that of a religious or a lay person. But this statement of the obvious, whether the result of reflection or not, is not an answer to our question. A concrete secular priest is also a man, a human being in a particular historical and sociological situation, at a certain age, in a particular situation in the society of the Church and in secular society, with a particular physiological constitution, and so on. The concrete definitive form of his spirituality is therefore dependent on all these factors, a number of which he shares with some human beings, and others with other human beings who are not secular priests, If then we do not want to distinguish too many types of spirituality for the requirements of shaping a life in practice, the question arises as to whether the specific character of the spirituality appropriate to the secular priest as a result of what is certainly the peculiar nature of his vocation is of such consequence that it cannot in practice be neglected in favour of forms of spirituality in which people today are distinguished from one another under other aspects and for other reasons much more essentially than, say, a modern secular priest from a modern religious or from a lay person living a truly and radically Christian life. Seen in this way, the question of a specific quality of the spirituality of the secular priest that is of considerable practical importance as compared with other factors determining a person's concrete spirituality has not yet been answered.

(2) For the time being, however, we may disregard this problem of the question of what

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truly existential import the specific character of his vocation (which must certainly not be denied) brings to the spirituality of the secular priest, if this import is compared to what is brought into his life by other factors which he shares at all times (or at least today) with people who are not secular priests. But if we [105] disregard this question and simply ask about what is specific to the spirituality of the secular priest (which undoubtedly exists) if and insofar as this state of life is distinguished from others, from those of lay persons and religious, we are faced in turn with the question of how to define the nature of the secular priesthood and to deduce from this the peculiar character of the spirituality of that priesthood. But then we are faced with a new question which is not easy to answer, as is evident from the great and confused discussion of recent years about the nature of the ministerial priesthood.

Is this nature to be defined in the light of the sacramental powers which belong to the ordained priest as distinct from the lay person? Is the priest to be understood in the light of his mandate to proclaim the Gospel, even though the ministry of the word has its culmination in the exhibitive word of the sacrament? Is the priest to be regarded fundamentally as a (at least potential) leader of a local Christian Church (regional or personal in character)? Is his nature to be defined in the light of the episcopal office? Is he simply the concrete bearer and representative of all the peculiar qualities with which the Church confronts the individual Christian, from whom it is distinguished, even though he, too, is simultaneously a constituent member of this same Church? These and similar questions cannot, of course, be worked out and answered in detail here. But, even if we assume that they have been answered in a general way and feel certain that the different aspects of the priesthood as indicated are not mutually contradictory but form together an integrated nature, many questions still remain open with reference to this attempt to deduce from the nature of the priesthood a spirituality specific to the secular priest in which these essential elements really gain a considerable existential weight.

We ought first to ask what diverse elements in the nature of the priesthood really have a considerable importance for the priest's spirituality. For example, if we really take seriously the active participation of lay people in the eucharistic celebration, it may not be simply taken for granted, for example, particularly by a young priest today, that the sacramental powers as such have existentially a considerable importance in his life. As distinct from the outlook of an older generation which stressed the existential and consequently spiritual significance of belonging to the sacral sphere distinguishing the priest from the lay person, perhaps a young priest of today will [106] grasp more easily and more clearly the existential importance of his life and consequently the considerable influence on his spirituality of his task of proclaiming the word of God. But, even if we leave aside the delicate question as to which of the different elements of the nature of the priest are of decisive importance for his spirituality, there still remain further questions. For a start, the specific quality of a spirituality derived from the nature of the priesthood belongs, of course, also to priests who are members of a religious order. In this sense, then, there is no difference between the secular priest and the priest belonging to a religious order.

There can be no doubt that spirituality in the orders of priests over the past centuries has been deduced more from the priesthood as such than from what is specific to the religious state as distinct from the secular priesthood and that, consequently, until recently no one saw any problem in the fact that spiritual directors in priests' seminaries were mostly regulars. Although things are now gradually changing, until very recently it was scarcely possible to suggest that such a spiritual director, not being a secular priest, could not understand at all or at best only from outside the spirituality he was supposed to instill in his students. If the spirituality of the secular priest, then, is determined by his priesthood, the question remains open as to how it is distinguished from that of a priest in a religious order. At the same time it is scarcely possible to be satisfied with the explanation that the spirituality of the priest in a

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religious order involves an addition to the priestly character that is determined by the specific qualities of the religious state. This would mean that the spirituality of the secular priest is defined merely negatively and it would still not be clear what distinguishes this spirituality from that of the priest belonging to a religious order.

A further question arises if we want to define the spirituality of a secular priest in the light of the all-around, complete nature of his priesthood. We may ask whether the essential elements of the priesthood are of very considerable weight for the existential Christian attitude, for the spirituality of the secular priest, if we take into account the motivations which assume these essential peculiarities in the different historical, cultural, and sociological situations in the world and in the Church. Of course, if we want to do so, we can deduce from the nature of the priesthood the character of a spirituality corresponding to it. But is not this spirituality utterly pale, or [107] easy to confuse with the spirituality of a Christian as such, or merely the sum total of precepts for fulfilling properly the tasks and the duties of his state on the part of the priest, if it is compared in its abstract nature with that priestly spirituality which differs with different times and situations? If we consider priestly spirituality in the Church under these aspects, differentiations begin to appear that make it impossible to reduce this spirituality to a common denominator, unless we take refuge in what is wholly abstract and therefore cannot be binding.

What did a priest or bishop (in practice, the same thing) look like at the time of the Pastoral Epistles? What did a missionary as mentioned in the *Didache* look like (if we want to regard him as a priest)? What was a cleric like under the strict control of a Cyprian in the third century? What image of the priest did Chrysostom see reflected in his first ‘mirror’ of the priesthood? What is the type of the secular priesthood presented in the community life of Augustine with his clergy? How did a medieval parish priest behave in his parish? Assuming that they were not merely caricatures of the priesthood, what were prince-bishops and warring popes really like? What is the spirituality of a specialist theologian, of a Curial official, of a worker-priest? What is the image of the priest in the *Ecole francaise* or as suggested by Pius X? We have only singled out quite arbitrarily a few of the variations in the course of history of the image of the spirituality of the secular priesthood. But these alone make it clear that the secular priest’s spirituality is so greatly differentiated by the different cultural and ecclesial situations in which it has to be lived that what is common threatens to disappear as a theoretical, abstract idea behind these differences or in practice is scarcely different from the general Christian attitude of all times and all states of life.

In addition to all this, there is a further question to which we can draw attention only in passing. Is the secular priest’s celibacy in the Latin Church to be included among the essential elements of the spirituality of the secular priesthood? If it is, then we have here a spirituality different from that of the priesthood in the Orthodox and Catholic Eastern churches. If not, then this spirituality of the secular priest, deduced from the nature of the priesthood, but in which celibacy has no part, is so general and abstract that it cannot be very helpful, since it leaves out a very typical element in the life of a [108] priest in this Latin Church of ours. But if we decide on an affirmative answer to the question just raised, a great deal still remains obscure. For it is not at all clear from what standpoint the secular priest observes the celibacy that is supposed to determine his spirituality. Is the meaning and motivation of this way of life identical with the meaning and way of life observed in accordance with the evangelical counsel of chastity by members of religious orders? Or is this celibacy of the secular priest in the last resort to be assimilated to the unmarried state contrasted by Jesus in Matthew 19:12 precisely with that accepted ‘for the sake of the kingdom of heaven’, without however suggesting that the former, enforced by circumstances, must necessarily be considered immoral or un-Christian?

If the celibacy of the secular priest has to be regarded as identical with the single state of

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the religious (at least on the assumption that it cannot otherwise be lived truly and in a way commensurate with human dignity), then between the spirituality of the secular priest and that of the member of a religious order there would be a convergence which would render any further distinction between the two spiritualities a matter of idle speculation, since (in Germany, at least) the financial situation of the secular priest and that of the regular on the whole (apart from wealthy professors of theology among the secular clergy) can in practice scarcely be distinguished; it is the same with obedience, which as applied in the religious orders today amounts to little more than the secular priest's acceptance of his bishop's directives. If it is said that secular priests may live as individuals while priests in religious orders have a community life with its own social structures, it can also be pointed out that in practice the life of a religious is often very isolated and, on the other hand, in practice and in theory the secular priest is not debarred from leading a community life, as we see it lived in various forms and to varying degrees of intensity, for example, by Oratorians and other communities of secular priests.

(3) A further difficulty in defining a spirituality peculiar to the secular priest arises from the fact that, for very far-reaching and profound reasons, no human and no Christian life can be lived in the light solely of a single basic attitude or precept. Every human life must necessarily grow out of a plurality of attitudes which can never be wholly united under the control of deliberate human planning, but must be left in obedience to God, to his providence and his decrees. [109] Even the most radical Christian way of life not only cannot but may not be determined and shaped in the light of any single precept. Neither flight from the world nor love of the world, neither action nor contemplation, neither passive identification with the downgraded nor struggle to change social conditions, neither theology of the cross nor theology of glory, neither renunciation nor human enjoyment of the world, neither life nor death, nor any of these things *alone* and as such can be the sole precept or the sole formative principle of a Christian life. We are not going to explain at length here why this is so, why really Christian life-styles in all their variety and differences of emphasis (which are necessary and justified) can essentially have only a single and absolutely final radicalness: that is, to entrust the plurality of life (which can never be completely rationalized) calmly and silently to God; to project life plans and lifestyles, aware that none of these can be realized and certainly may not be realized in 'chemical purity', if they are to remain Christian. Even Francis of Assisi's life of poverty, radical as it was, did not display any monomaniacal exclusiveness; a radical 'corpselike obedience' in a religious order is necessarily combined with a person's own free self-determination which cannot be subject to anyone else's approval. Humility is human only if the humble person is not merely humble, etc.

What is at once so obvious and at the same time supremely wise is what makes the distinction of life-styles and spiritualities so difficult. If we want to set apart the meaning and spirituality of the religious life from the life-style of the Christian in the world, we run into the danger of proclaiming and canonizing a monomaniacal radicalness of certain attitudes – escapism, renunciation, otherworldliness, etc. – which cannot actually be made effective and which are simply not human and still less Christian. If it is claimed that these distinctions between the religious life and life in the world are not completely exclusive, but involve only differences of emphasis, of priorities among possible structural principles of a Christian life, this is certainly important, but it also obscures again the distinctions between the two lifestyles as we first come across them, especially when these variable and fluctuating shifts of emphasis have to be translated once more into the life of the individual or the Christian in the world as such. Then it is possible for the religious, without being disloyal to his vocation, to enjoy life uninhibitedly and spontaneously [110] to a considerable degree, injuring no one, but not experiencing the reality of the law of the cross; and conversely a Christian 'in the world', governed by the law of the cross, can live in the shadow of continually renewed self-

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denial. But if we take refuge (not entirely without justification) in the concrete differences in the outward mode of life in order in this way to clarify the difference between religious life and life in the world, we have certainly pointed out differences (for example, in clothing, in the external life-style, etc.), but we have not answered the question of how these differences have a considerable influence on a person's innermost feelings and on spirituality itself. We have to allow also for this basic difficulty when the nature of the spirituality of the secular priest is to be defined. It is clear from the outset that it is determined by a large number of contrasted peculiarities.

It is also understandable that the concrete situation in which a particular secular priest is living is of decisive importance for the place where the emphasis is to be laid among these dialectically mutually opposed peculiarities of his priestly existence. If a Roman Curial cardinal and an African priest in the bush or a worker priest in a French factory are all priests, the 'dosage', the emphasis among these individual dialectically opposed peculiarities, is vastly different for each of these priests and it is difficult to speak, except in a very abstract way, about a common spirituality. The conditions of life in which the nature of priestly spirituality must be realized are so diverse that the 'mixture' of contrasted essential peculiarities inevitably takes such varied forms that the one spirituality appears concretely to be determined almost by one peculiarity alone, the other spirituality almost solely by the other peculiarity, even though in, every spirituality (if and insofar as it is Christian) *both* peculiarities must exist. Unfortunately, it is not possible here concretely to describe such historical examples of these diverse spiritualities in detail.

(4) With all these difficulties, another solution might be suggested. Let us see in what this consists and whether theoretically or at least practically it is effective. It consists in the thesis that the spirituality of the secular priest in itself is materially the same as that of other Christians in the world and is distinguished from the latter only formally insofar as (in addition to the obligation which rests on other Christians in the world) a second obligation to the same spirituality [111] arises for the priest when he comes to practise it: an obligation arising from his special office, which as such must also urgently impel the secular priest to practice this spirituality.

This thesis certainly has its attraction. In a sense it recognizes completely a spirituality of the secular priesthood, but it evades the painful effort to mark out the content of this spirituality as distinct from that of the Christian simply as such; instead of this it can remind us that *every* Christian is called and obliged to the *perfection* of Christian existence. From that standpoint what we call 'the evangelical counsels' (in certain circumstances, also the celibacy of the secular priest and other spiritual obligations laid down by canon law for him) do not imply a higher degree of Christian perfection as such and thus of the spirituality characterized by the counsels: all that they do is to provide for those aspiring to the one perfection of love of God and neighbour common to all Christians different conditions of life and special aids by which they are distinguished from other Christians. In favour of this thesis it can be said that it provides a simple explanation of the immense variety of spiritualities of the secular priesthood, since this variety is basically identical with the diversity of serious Christian living which is found among normal Christians as a result of differences of age, culture, sociological status, etc. The thesis could also be recommended because it prevents from the very outset any pretence on the part of the clergy to be a spiritual elite; the cleric, too, has nothing else to do but to become as good a Christian as possible, but he has an additional obligation in this respect arising from his special vocation. But, despite its apparently neat solution of the problem, the thesis also has its difficulties.

In the first place, would not this thesis have to be regarded as valid also for the religious, so that no further distinction between different spiritualities in the Church could be made at all? But have we not then thrown out the baby with the bath water? Are we not contradicting a

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unanimous tradition in the theology of spirituality which always sought to distinguish essentially between several spiritualities, at least between that of Christian lay people and that of religious, as Vatican II made clear, even though, as the Würzburg Synod stressed, one and the same goal of perfection of life is common to Christians in the world and to religious and their different ways may not be distinguished as higher and lower realizations of Christian [112] existence? This seems to be a real difficulty, at least when we recall the fact that priestly celibacy in the West brings priestly spirituality very close to the spirituality of the evangelical counsels, despite the query we raised earlier in this respect.

A further difficulty about the thesis just formulated consists in the fact that, at least at first sight, the office of the priest obliges him to fulfill his life in certain ways that do not otherwise occur in a Christian life in the world and that consequently his office does not involve merely a new, additional obligation in a Christian life, but materially determines this life as distinct from that of the Christian lay person. This seems obvious and certainly finds expression in all descriptions of priestly spirituality. There should be really no dispute about this. But we ought to look a little more closely and introduce more exact distinctions if we want to make clear why and how the specific official obligations of the priest also introduce *material* peculiarities into his *spirituality*, assuming that such peculiarities have considerable existential importance in the life of the priest. For example, the question might be raised (however tiresome it might seem to some people) whether participation in the eucharist in the way proper on the one hand to the priest and on the other to the lay person is really considerably different in the existential spirituality as such: in other words, in the *opus operantis* necessarily sustaining the *opus operatum*.

If we raise doubts about the view that the sacramental power proper to the priest as such is what substantially distinguishes the priest's spirituality from that of the laity and then go on to ask what other official tasks and obligations impose a special character on the content of priestly spirituality, then presumably we shall be referred to the ministry of the word: the obligation of the priest in the name of the Church, in a missionary spirit, in season and out of season, with his whole existence, to stand up before an unbelieving or purely secular world for the Gospel of God, his forgiving grace, his crucified and risen Christ as the irreversible self-promise of God to the world. Such a ministry of the word must undoubtedly leave its mark on the innermost life of the priest. So, too, on his spirituality. But if with the Second Vatican Council's theology of the Christian laity we stress the laity's ecclesial mission in the world, if we are clear that a lay person really radically convinced and leading a radically Christian life in the modern atheistic or secularized world simply cannot [113] avoid or may not avoid bearing witness to his Christianity by his life – of which bringing the word to his fellow men is a part – then this determination of the content of the secular priest's spirituality in the light of his ministry of the word is again not so absolutely clearly convincing and does not distinguish priest and layman so obviously, as long as we assume that the layman, too, lives radically a real spirituality, as he ought to do. If we take these things into consideration, the difference between the two spiritualities is very greatly reduced and amounts more or less to the fact that the priest in virtue of his office has simply an additional obligation really to live one and the same Christian life, one and the same spirituality, which he has in common with all, and so also to bear witness to the Gospel which it is his official mission to preach.

The reader may deplore the apparently irregular course of these reflections and blame us for not having the courage to put forward a metaphysically and theologically clear and decisive theory of the spirituality of the secular priest as distinct from that of the laity or of the religious. I think, however, that this vacillation in the last resort springs from the very nature of the problem. The one Christian life from the one Holy Spirit in the one following of Christ takes concrete shape at different times, in different callings, under the influence of different charisms, in thousands and thousands of forms, always new, always different,

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continually surprising, and yet in all these countless variations remaining the same. Both because of the innumerable possibilities of the concrete development and because of the ultimate unity of this life and this spirituality, it is enormously difficult and even a little futile to work out a kind of Linnaean botanical system for all these countless forms of spirituality and set them out neatly within the scheme, only to discover once more that the concrete spirituality of a particular human being, because of the plurality of its elements and the different stress laid on these elements, could again be brought simultaneously under different types of spirituality; and it is by no means certain from the very outset that the specifically priestly element even in the life of a holy priest must be the particularly and all-around determining characteristic of his spirituality.

(5) Bearing in mind all that has been said up to now, including all the queries, we may attempt in conclusion very briefly to say something more about the content of the spirituality of the secular priest. [114] It does not really matter whether what we have to say applies only to the secular priest or whether a priest in a religious order, or even a lay person, can claim it as true also for himself. Neither would we want to claim that what is said here about the spirituality of the secular priest is valid for all times and for all historical and cultural conditions everywhere in the world. We are speaking of the secular priest in our own country and at the present time. But it must again be expressly stated that this spirituality cannot be defined (either theologically or humanly) in the light of the spiritual 'exercises' planned for the secular priest in the Code of Canon Law hitherto in use. The spirituality of the secular priest necessary today in our country will not become a reality as a result of retreats based on monastic spirituality.

It may sound old-fashioned, but it seems to me also that the spirituality of the secular priest needs to be deliberately cultivated, to be systematized and exercised. The importance of this insight, derived from the monastic life (which, it seems to me, still has its value) was formerly exaggerated and the unsuccessful attempt was made to bring the secular priest's spirituality into line with a system aimed at producing ascetical and spiritual profit. This, of course, did not work, and it is even less likely to work today. The spirituality of the secular priest will be a truly Christian endurance of the life that is particularly his own and really involves a spiritual task for him. This, however, does not exclude but, in fact, includes a certain system, exercises, an agenda for each day, planning in advance, the coherent organization of his time, etc.

It can certainly be said that the secular priest today must regard himself as the preacher of the Gospel, commissioned by the Church. He must be convinced that this calling of his can be fulfilled only with the involvement of his personality and his life, that it is consequently not a task only for part of his time, for office hours. From this it follows that the priest's professional task and consequently his spirituality cannot consist merely in the completion of a number of measurable individual achievements, that the rest of his life, too, is subject to the always overwhelming demands of the law of his priestly calling. Precisely in order to be able to fulfill this calling, the priest certainly needs leisure, a sphere of privacy in his life, recreation; but all these things must be determined by what is properly the law of his life and do not amount simply to a right that can be taken [115] for granted and must not be disputed by anyone. If the priest's task, to be paid for by his life, is to spread the message of the Gospel, if that very message requires him with Jesus to take the side of the poor and deprived, then I do not know whether the prosperous lifestyle (adopted as a matter of course by a majority of the clergy in this country) really corresponds to the spirituality required of the priest. In other countries, even in Europe, it is different. There priests are mostly poor, simply because they can scarcely do anything about it. But does not Christian spirituality consist in realizing without affectation a life-style that brings the priest at least close to the poor, so that people can see that there is someone here who renounces, for the sake of the

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kingdom of heaven and without reward, something that no one could prevent him from keeping?

A revision of the average life-style cultivated by the German clergy would do them good, particularly before external circumstances compel them to do so. Such a revision today would certainly be a part of a modern spirituality of the secular priest. If we look to Jesus, it seems to me that it is not absolutely clearly a part of our spirituality to be counted in the German Federal Republic mainly, almost entirely and rightly, among the defenders of present social conditions. To be honest, we priests in this country are not particularly obviously and impressively the conscience of the nation where this conscience ought to prick us – and not only with reference to the struggle about the abortion laws. Such a socio-critical involvement is not merely part of the priest's professional task, but ought also to leave its mark on his spirituality, since it brings with it resistance, opposition, and similar experiences which must be understood as participation in the lot of Jesus. The priest of today can bring life to the preaching of the Gospel only if (as well as and as far as it is granted him) he is a mystagogue of that ultimate, internal, religious experience of God and his grace without which no one today can in the long run resist the pressure of his secularized environment and remain a Christian. But this assumes that the priest himself, as well as and as far as he is capable of it, has that personal internal experience of God without which he would be degraded to a cultic and ecclesiastical official celebrating magical and today no longer credible ceremonies.

We said elsewhere that the Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not be a Christian at all. If this statement is true in any [116] sense, it is true especially of the priest. We may be very sceptical in regard to religious imports from the East. But is the spirituality of the normal priest such that he can rise to the challenge of this Eastern spirituality and that he can have a justified feeling of superiority on the basis of his innermost experience and the treasures of the Christian mystical tradition? Have we not too many priests here who rely on traditional popular piety and help to cultivate it, almost like enthusiastic chairmen of local associations for Christian folklore, but do not see that for socio-political reasons the 'people' are increasingly melting away; who do not see that the 'people of the future' are settled somewhere quite different; who simply ignore their properly missionary task of making new Christians out of pagans? Undoubtedly, there ought to be invested in this priestly task of proclamation rightly understood a spirituality which already exists here and there but has not yet acquired the clarity and obviousness which is the condition of the priest's effectiveness today.

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[117]

9

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE PRIEST IN THE LIGHT OF HIS OFFICE

The theme here is 'starting points for a spirituality of the priest in the light of his office' – of his office, that is, both as it is seen in what is properly the binding teaching of the Church and theology and also as it confronts us today in its historically conditioned concreteness.

First of all, a few preliminary observations:

(1)When I was invited to take part in this conference,[1] I had to stipulate (more from necessity than from my own choice) that I should be allowed to talk *freely*: that is, I would not bring with me a carefully prepared, written address. There may be advantages in this procedure insofar as there will not be any attempt to cover too much ground and consequently there is less danger of talking over people's heads. But the condition put forward and accepted has the disadvantage that I am liable to go round and round the point, to say and to stress some things and leave others in the background or forget them and thus to speak vaguely about a matter which certainly deserves exact and well-considered treatment. I must ask you, then, from the very outset to allow for this disadvantage and forgive me. In view of my declining strength, the pressure of other work, and my age, it would have been simply impossible to adopt a different procedure.

(2)You are listening to an old man. I certainly don't feel young; I am in my seventy-third year and at that age a person knows very exactly his limitations and particularly his limited opportunities of [118] practical experience. *You* are really pastors who have borne the burden and effort of pastoral work for years and decades; I have always been a teacher and, although very occasionally engaged in pastoral work, for the most part theologizing and philosophizing in my ivory tower. I am aware of this and must ask you also to allow for the fact and forgive me if this address turns out accordingly. Moreover, if we are talking about the priestly office and the spirituality it involves, each of us has inevitably a concrete image of this office and the spirituality resulting from it which is concretely determined also by *our* life, by our experience of life, our sociological, ecclesial situation – so much so that none of us can adequately portray this concreteness of our image of the priest and the image of priestly spirituality and consequently we impress on this image features that may well be legitimate, but which are not present in this way in the priestly image of another colleague. And if the same thing is noticeable also in the present lecture, that is, if you have the impression that I am going on and on about things which are of no interest to you, which really do not affect you, which strike you as odd, this, too, of course is an unavoidable situation which, we might say somewhat pretentiously and pompously, is part of the historicity and individual relativity of one man's perception of truth, particularly in his old age.

(3)I would like to say right from the beginning that I completely agree with what Father Zulehner has said about this theme as a whole and I think that what he has said about Type B as the type to be preferred today (since it brings out more clearly than Type A the special features of the present-day priestly situation and spirituality[2]) is in perfect harmony with my own opinion. And I even have the impression that there is nothing particularly that I can add to his comments, except at most to observe that this conception is absolutely legitimate and

[1] This lecture was addressed to priests in 1976. See List of Sources.
[2] P. Zulehner, 'Elemente einer pastoralen Spiritualität' in *Priesterliche Spiritualität heute,* ed. S. László (Vienna, 1977), pp. 13-40.

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can be maintained in the light of the dogma of the priesthood.

(4)Obviously there are plenty of concrete individual types of priestly spirituality. Each of us has the right to give concrete shape to the possibilities of priestly existence and priestly spirituality as they occur in our own life. It is clear that a priest who allows his [119] spirituality to be shaped and conditioned in the light of his particular office and task will have as his ideal (and as what, in fact, he realizes) a spirituality and a priestly image differing according to whether he is a teacher of religion in a city school or living as a country pastor. Each way has its concrete justification. The conservative and the 'progressive', the intellectual and the simple, devout person, the quiet spiritual adviser (or what we might call 'the spiritual man'), and the apostle creating a sensation in the world: all these types can be justified and we must simply get used to accepting one another, acknowledging their right to exist, and not insisting that as priests we must all be molded in the same pattern. Each of us must gradually crystallize out of our own situation, our own temperament, and our own life history the priestly image and the type of spirituality that are right for ourselves, naturally being humbly aware of the fact that what we present is a priest, not *the* priest. All this is obvious, but, if you look into the concrete circumstances of our lives as priests, you will see that it is by no means so simple in practice and that this apparently simple norm is very often infringed.

I would now like to put forward some very general ideas on office and spirituality.

I

We begin with a very simple thesis: priestly spirituality is first of all simply Christian spirituality, Christian life in faith, hope, and love. Priestly spirituality is not (at least, not primarily) a kind of extra to a normal Christian life, but (while, of course, determined by the concrete life task of the priest as distinct from other Christians) the spiritual, Christian life of a Christian purely and simply. Today this is really obvious in the light of the practice and nature of the priesthood. It is obvious in the light of *practice*, for, exactly like other people, we have to live in a secularized milieu, we are impugned and called in question by a world of secularized values with its rationalism, with its technocracy, with its crowds, etc. One way or another, like other Christians today, we are living in a diaspora; neither for them nor for us are faith and Christian life and the hope of eternity to be taken for granted as something that we could pass over, so to speak, as unimportant for us and then find greater scope to develop a [120] sublime spirituality as our special job or as a kind of hobby. We are poor, tormented, frightened, threatened by the world as a whole, by politics and industry; just like the others, we are caught up into the whirlpool of secularization; faith in God, in an eternal life, the persuasion that our freedom is to be exercised responsibly before God, all these things create exactly as many difficulties for us as they do for other people. If this were not the case, it would not be an advantage, but a sign that we are living out of touch not only with our time, but also with our office and our own life, since we cannot really live this office and this life otherwise than in a genuine confrontation with our time and situation, society, culture, and lack of culture.

Priestly spirituality, then, is first of all Christian spirituality which, as such, is required of every Christian if he wants to be a true Christian and not merely a conventional or folkloristic Christian. But if we say this, the question will inevitably be raised as to what exactly this Christian spirituality is. We can, of course, say that it is life out of faith, hope, and love, it is life from the Holy Spirit; we can say that it is life from the Spirit of Christ, life from the Gospel; we can say that it is life from the following of Christ; we can say that it is life from the hope of eternal life, out of an ultimate responsibility in which we are aware that, whether

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we want it or not, we are living our life to the very end in freedom for or against God. We can say that Christian spirituality is life oriented to God's judgment, it means coping with sin that cannot be eliminated by referring to social or psychological constraints, etc. We can say all that, it is all true, and here and now there is really nothing more that I can say; to say anything more precise would require at least an eight-day retreat.

Simply to provide a spur, a question that is meant to be disturbing, I would like to add the following in regard to this Christian spirituality which is basically identical with priestly spirituality. When we speak of 'spirituality' (whether the term is a good one, very understandable, or pastorally useful is another question) we mean 'life from the Spirit'. But then the question arises as to just what this is supposed to mean. And the crucial point for us personally and in our pastoral work today is whether we not only succeed in getting this 'pneumatic', spiritual dimension of our existence into our own heads or the heads of other people by an abstract, conceptual indoctrination (which today will be more or less ineffective), but whether we can discover this Spirit as what we really experience in ourselves. [121] And this is extraordinarily difficult today in the age of sociological criticism of ideologies, in the age of natural science, in the age of Freud, in the age of depth psychology and of the psychological corruption of human beings. Is there in fact anything of this kind? Have you ever really experienced the Spirit of God? Suppose you say: 'Yes, I was once touched, or I was at one time devout, or I had the impression that there is some sort of God who is good, who quite likes me, although he allows children in Vietnam to be killed by napalm bombs'. In that case you ought to unleash on this claim of yours to have discovered the Spirit in yourself all the corrupting elements of psychology, of sociological criticism of ideologies, of rational psychology, technology, etc., and then ask if anything remains or if all that is left are merely words like 'God of love, grace, Holy Spirit, God's indwelling', etc., to which we cling because of some sort of feeling that in the long run we cannot do without this sort of thing. Are these words not all mere husks, long ago deprived of meaning in a long historical process from the time of the Enlightenment?

I said earlier that I cannot answer this question now. The reason why I raise it at all is in order to make clear what are the innermost structures that a Christian, and consequently a priestly, spirituality must have in order really to cope with these problems.

At most I can add only a few words which seem to be even more abstract and merely refer to the matter under discussion without getting to the root of it. In the last resort spirituality is man's absolute transcendence, beyond any categorial reality in him or outside him, into the absolute mystery that we call God; it is ultimately a transcendentality dying, crucified, becoming torn apart with Christ, not as a theory but as what happens in us in our concrete existence when we confront this life with its ultimate dependence on the incomprehensible mystery of God and achieve the acceptance, the endurance, of this life concretely with Christ through all categorial breakdowns, through all death, through all disappointment. Of course, such an experience of our own absolute transcendentality, crucified with Jesus into the absolute mystery, has a history in us. This is something that comes into existence slowly, we reach these things only gradually; perhaps there will be some people who never notice it or do not consider and cannot express in words what has taken place in them. At the present time, I think, at least the priest [122] (we shall come to practical matters later) should slowly come to see that something of this kind exists.

For the moment that must suffice to mark out the problems involved in the first statement that I wanted to make, to the effect that priestly spirituality today more than ever is simply Christian spirituality and not an addition to the Christian life. In this sense spirituality is understood as truly Christian life emerging from the innermost centre of our own existence and not merely as a fulfillment of religious conventions prevailing in Christianity and in the Church. Spirituality, Christian spirituality, is the active participation in the death of Jesus and,

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since he is risen, in that death as successful and as assumed into that ineffable, incomprehensible, not controllable, not manoeuvrable ultimate mystery *quod omnes* (as Aquinas would say) *vocant Deum*.

II

Coming now from the first part of our reflections to the question of priestly office. It is obvious that our priestly office must also determine the character of our spirituality and even provide its essential foundation. Not, properly speaking, as an external addition to our Christian life, but as the radicalness of that life which is required from us as official representatives of Christianity and the Church. From that standpoint we must ask what we actually understand by this priestly office. For you know just as well as I do that in the last decades there has been a tremendous amount of writing and discussion about the nature of the ministerial priesthood and some very diverse opinions have been expressed. Clearly, I cannot explain and work out all these things again here. I would like to say from the outset that what I am putting forward here by way of commentary on these themes is not to be understood and interpreted as the sole possible, more or less official theory. In Catholic theology today there is a great deal that is obscure, that is being discussed and giving rise to very varied opinions. This is because very many questions in the history of dogma confront us today as a result of our attempt to gain a more exact and impartial understanding of these things: questions, for instance, of the relationship and connection between Jesus and the Church, of the existence of seven sacraments, [123] of the relationship of the sacraments to the Church, of the possibility of a further development, and of the possibilities and limits of changes in the sacramental life of the Church.

If you read Hans Küng to the effect that Jesus did not institute a Church, or if theologians like him are saying that (whatever Trent may have defined) the sacraments are, of course, not instituted by Jesus Christ, however little I share these views and however much I have opposed them, I do not advise you to raise an outcry against them in the name of orthodoxy, but quite impartially to ask first of all how these views came to be expressed. We must note, for example, that it was about a thousand years before it was known that there are seven sacraments. Or if you really take seriously the most modern exegesis on what is known as Jesus' 'imminent expectation', if you take seriously the historical, concrete, theological relativity of the human consciousness of Jesus (a consciousness that could be developed, gain new experiences, produce new formulations), then, of course, questions like those on the understanding of the Church and the priestly office are not actually as simple to answer as Catholic theology assumed even as recently as thirty years ago. So much by way of preliminary remarks.

In regard to the priestly office I want firstly to issue a warning against a misunderstanding. To express it very cautiously, as this office is conceived today in concrete practice and in the Church's official teaching, normally (not allowing for emergency situations, but leaving these aside for the moment) only the legitimately ordained priest in virtue of his sacramental ordination can preside over and lead a legitimate eucharistic celebration. This we can certainly assume as a fixed point of theology on the nature of the priestly office, notwithstanding all the problems it implies. But we need not deduce from this that the priest must necessarily see his actual nature in the light of that fixed point or give expression to it in his spirituality. Not that anyone is forbidden to do so. But to say, because this power of consecration as part of his priestly existence is reserved (at least in the ordinary way and in the normal case) exclusively to him, that this is also necessarily the proper, most fundamental, and most decisive point from which he gains his own total understanding of his

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nature is something that is not (at any rate, not logically) demonstrated by this priestly reservation.

For we can also see an extraordinarily great historical variability [124] in the official nature of the priesthood. No one denies, for example, that Ignatius of Loyola wanted to found an order of priests, and Pope Paul firmly restrained us Jesuits from imperiling or dissolving the priestly character of the order. If we look at the life of Ignatius of Loyola, it is clear that he certainly wanted to be ordained. I would say, however, that this was simply because, for him, it was concretely the most practical way and the condition of the possibility of getting on with what he really wanted to do. In his own spirituality he was not at all terribly insistent about saying mass; if I remember rightly, he waited for a whole year after his ordination before he got as far as that, but then he said mass very gladly and with immense devotion. But with his first companions he went into prisons and ministered to the sick. For him it was enormously important to be in the closest possible contact with the poor and the socially underprivileged of his time in the prisons and to go into the hideous hospitals of that period, to convert prostitutes in Rome, perhaps also to run a school to inspire pious princesses, etc. In a word, what he in fact did seems open to the inane verdict or objection that it could all have been achieved by people who were not priests. Against this, it must be pointed out that precisely in view of historical variability and of theology it is impossible to describe anything as properly and solely priestly, as what *only* the priest can do. That is to say: preaching the Gospel, ministering to the poor, defending the underprivileged, following Jesus in this sense, prayer, a mystical sphere of one's own existence, are just as much part of the priestly office as – and I do not mean it in a pejorative sense – 'being able to say mass'.

How can this thesis be substantiated merely with an appeal to actual images of the priest in history, in which the function of presiding (in the strict sense) at the eucharist was by no means always and necessarily the central feature? How can such a thesis or such an image of the priest be demonstrated more precisely in terms of dogmatic theology? Here I am touching on opinions and theses which I really do not want to pass off as the Church's official teaching, views about which we can think what we like. In a question like this, where there is no really clear and binding official teaching of the Church, the theologian has no choice except to follow his own opinion.

Dogmatically and 'ontologically', from the nature of the case, the [125] absolutely primary datum is not the pope, not the bishops, and not the priests, but Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, who simply would not be the Risen One, would not be, as Vatican II says, the indefectible, irreversible sign of the salvation of the whole world, who would not be the sacrament of salvation for all times, if he had not with him by the invincible power of his grace the Church of the believers, of those who love him, of those who follow him. Such a Church which, as one and whole, is primarily the permanent sign of salvation, the permanent sacrament, which is God's presence permanently established in the world, such a Church as a sociological reality has an office, a power of government, which must be seen in the first place as one and whole.

Such a power of government can and must be split up into definite individual functions. The Church has always a function of government – not just of any kind like that of the state or of some other society, but one which is part of this indefectible nature of the Church which maintains to the end of time the presence of Jesus Christ as the irreversible sign of salvation. This one office is first and foremost one and whole. We cannot go on for ten hours or so here about dogmatics or ecclesiology and consequently cannot worry about how this ultimately one office is split up, articulated, and shared, and where in all of this divine law ends and merely ecclesiastical law begins; this is true even if we say that the papacy and the episcopate (and perhaps also a presbyterate split off from the episcopate) are of divine law – all of which is by no means obvious.

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I would venture to say that, abstractly and in principle, I could imagine the whole Church as consisting of pope and bishops (in the sense that every priest is also a bishop). I would not want this. But what articulations of the ultimately one office are present unchangeably in the Church itself by its very nature (or, we might say, by the will of Christ), and what further articulations of office are left to the Church's free decision, is an extraordinarily difficult and obscure question. All through the Middle Ages there were minor orders and St. Thomas was sure that all minor orders were also sacraments, that, consequently, the conferring of these orders was also sacramental; the subdiaconate, too, was obviously regarded as a sacrament. In addition, of course – and this again is a difficult and obscure question which I cannot examine closely here – even when people speak of a divine right of papacy, episcopate, and presbyterate, it must be [126] remembered that these factors as expositions and articulations of the one office nevertheless have had a history in the Church. How am I to answer a Protestant exegete when he says that the primitive Church, as described in Paul's Letters (or elsewhere before Ignatius of Antioch), had a presbyteral constitution, since the apostles were still alive and were the true bishops, and so on? I can get out of the problem by admitting absolutely that even divine law has had a historical development in the Church and yet remains divine law, even though there was a long struggle before this development itself came to be recognized in the later Church in its own irreversibility and validity. Such a development toward irreversibility can certainly involve also an element of decision and of free institution by the Church, and yet the result of the development can be described as of divine law.

Why am I talking about all these odd things? It is from this standpoint that we can understand the great variability of the image of the presbyter in the Church, in other words, how functions expressly portrayed there can later fall into the background or even drop out completely, while other elements which were present at most in a rudimentary or potential way stand out more clearly than formerly. Consequently, even among such a large number of factors involved in a concrete priestly mandate, one or another may become more relevant to priestly spirituality and later cease to be so. Father Zulehner has drawn attention to some of these factors: representative of God, the person leading the community, etc. These are features which were wholly legitimate in a former priestly image, since they could also have a positive meaning even in their ambivalence; they could even have predominated in the image of the priest in former times, but that is no reason why they should have the same importance for all times. Nor can this plurality of features in the priestly image be regarded as a basis for the question of whether there are certain things that can be done by someone who is not a priest. Even if there are, it is wrong to conclude that these things are not fundamental for priestly existence and priestly spirituality. A priest might say: 'My priestly self-understanding and my priestly spirituality have their living roots in the fact that, welcome or unwelcome, I proclaim the unique message of the kingdom of God, of the crucified and risen Christ, to rich and poor, to privileged and underprivileged, that I commit my life to this task which I regard constantly as the [127] centre of my life, that I do not regard it as any kind of casual occupation, but as something in which I am investing my whole life'. Such a person has a concept of the priesthood that excludes as irrelevant the question as to whether another person, a pastoral assistant, a layman, can do anything of this kind. This is not to deny that priestly existence can also be seen in the perspective of the altar.

It might be said that the actual core of a priestly existence and spirituality, in the light of which the latter can be understood, may also be grasped and lived by someone who is by no means a priest. I would answer that such a person obviously ought to be ordained a priest. I would also say that if there are or must be pastoral assistants today who are permanent official leaders of a parish which is without a priest, then in God's name let them be ordained. Why? Because it would mean no more than giving them the sacramental ratification and

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palpability of what they really are. The same is true of someone who in practice does what is essentially the task of the deacon. By ordination nothing is really added that he did not already possess, but what he had is sacramentally palpably secured in the dimension of office in the Church. If someone were to tell me that this is an outrageous idea, I would ask him how he would cope with another situation. Suppose a person comes to the priest and tells him: 'I am really living as a Christian in imitation of the crucified Christ, I believe, I hope, I love, I sacrifice my life for my neighbour, I live my life more or less after the fashion of Mother Teresa in Calcutta, but now, Father, I have discovered that I was never baptized'. Is the answer: 'For God's sake, whatever you did up to now was of no account; it was certainly not Christianity, it was not life coming from the Holy Spirit'? No, here was a Christian, here *is* a Christian. Baptize him. Why? So that the life he is already living can be seen expressly in the dimension of the sociological and historical palpability of the Church.

We find the same thing in Aquinas. In his theology it was taken for granted that anyone who came into the confessional had in reality (in virtue of his repentance) already been forgiven by God. The whole late scholastic and post-Tridentine controversy about attrition and contrition and the like would have had no real meaning for Aquinas. In other words, for St. Thomas, the penitent received the sacrament *because* he was the sinner once more justified, which does not [128] mean, however, that the efficacy or the causality of the sacrament is denied. This is something I cannot explain here and now. In other words, the conception of a human and official task which in a sense precedes its sacramental ratification is certainly one that is involved in other comparable cases of the Church's sacramental life. What I wanted to say ought, of course, to be developed in a more exact theology of the relationship between word and sacrament, but this is not possible here. All I want to say now is that the priest can certainly regard himself today as the officially commissioned mystagogue of the faith of the parish and as its leader, as minister in all dimensions of its life, including the eucharist as the culmination of the sacramental word in the Church, and, therefore, I think, could by all means consider his priestly spirituality as the radicalness of his Christian existence and not as something added to it.

It would be possible, of course, to ask more closely what is 'official', to raise the question of whether it is necessarily identical (in the light of the Church's dogma, not that of its present legal practice) with 'lifelong'. But all that must be left aside here.

Before attempting to pass on to some more concrete images resulting from this way of understanding the priestly office (today both dogmatically justifiable and appropriate to our time), I would like to call attention only to one more assumption: that is, that with priestly spirituality, office absorbs a person's own life and life absorbs office. Here we find a difference from all other forms of work in society. Of course, a master shoemaker or a businessman, a diplomat or a politician, will develop out of his specific calling (if he pursues it in the right way) quite definite attitudes also for his personal life, his ethic, etc. But, from the nature of the case, since the officeholder here attests the whole of human and (by God's self-communication) deified life as such, and works for and must concern himself with the formation of the Church as the historico-sociological presence of this vast, gracious endowment of the world as a whole, this is something that cannot be understood as a particular calling *in addition to which* it is possible to have an independent private life in the strict sense. And, conversely, if the priest is someone who wants to be radically Christian and surrenders power over his whole life to this Spirit of God whom he can experience at the heart of his existence, then priestly existence is not a supplementary task, obligation, and burden of Christian life, as it might perhaps otherwise seem to be. Of [129] course, just like members of religious orders in their own way, the priest is thus up to a point authorized and condemned to be (if I may use the ugly word) something of a religious 'pro'. All this involves problems: the danger of overexertion, the danger of a mere legalistic ritualism, the danger of

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attempting to reserve for oneself a private sphere which cannot absorb one's personality. I did not want to do more than allude to these things.

III

In the first part of my comments I could do no more than mark out the questions of office and understanding of office on the one hand and that of spirituality on the other. I am well aware of the aphoristic and very vaguely selective character of what I have said up to now. I want to attempt now to become a little more concrete and to point to aspects of the image of the priest today which belong to it possibly from the dogmatic nature of this office and necessarily in our present situation.

When I was considering these things, I did not pay much attention to the very cleverly and correctly designed chart of such aspects by Father Zulehner. I approve of it and find it very good, but I shall permit myself to allude to these aspects in a slightly different way.

The first thing to be said perhaps is that the priest of today must be someone who can pray in a personal way. This does not mean, of course, that someone else, a lay person, who is not a priest in the Catholic Church, could not manage, cultivate, and do the same thing just as well. And it certainly does not mean that this capacity for personal prayer for a priest (since he is the official representative and the commissioned mystagogue of the faith of the parish and its leader) is something that is merely *presupposed* to his priestly existence *as such*. No, the priest as such ought to be someone who is able to pray personally and not only as officially carrying out the liturgy or reading his breviary, but by his very nature and going far beyond these duties. This ability to pray ought not to be seen as a sectoral occupation in his life, but as a basic structure of his existence, since he is the very man who ought always to accept, as dependent on it, the presence of the absolute mystery facing every man and truly to live it in freedom.

[130] I have, of course, a very bad conscience and almost an aversion, in face of my own inadequacy, to saying anything of this kind. But how can a priest today, confronted by man's rational scepticism, proclaim something of the faith if he has not a genuine, original, religious, and spiritual experience in a sense entirely absorbing him, from which he simply cannot escape? How can he do this unless in his concrete experience of life, in his disappointments and in his fundamental joys, in his love, in fidelity, in his dependence on other people, in his responsibility, in his grief, in his confrontation with death, he is always someone for whom all this means the approach, the closeness of God himself? At a time when there is not a homogeneous Christian public opinion to support our proclamation of the faith and to make it almost inescapable for the normal human being, at a time when none of this exists any longer, we cannot simply say in the light of Scripture: 'That's how it is, there is a loving God and there are grace and eternity, etc.' I must discover in myself and also in others and make increasingly clear such a religious, original experience of existence (which can be freely rejected but is inescapable) open to the mystery of God, and then speak from this centre. How precisely this is done and how it 'comes off', and how an actual failure in this respect can be given a religious interpretation, are additional questions which cannot be discussed here, since that would take us too far. But we ought to be able to start out from an original, religious experience in this sense, which is prior, not in time, but by its nature, to verbalized, objectified Christianity as officially taught and institutionalized; otherwise we shall get nowhere today. How many people we then reach or do not reach is another question and not one that is really of the greatest importance.

Anyone, I might say, who has taken up music seriously will not allow his attitude to music to be affected by the fact that there are musical philistines for whom it is no more than

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complicated noise. It is more or less similar in the sphere of religion. The priest under any circumstances ought to be a man of personal prayer, a mystic. I do not want to presuppose or to develop any theology of mysticism. In the classical understanding of mysticism it has been seen too much as a higher sphere of religious experience, accessible only to a very few chosen individuals. I do not deny that such a conception has a certain importance and contains some truth. But in the last resort, [131] measured against the extraordinary psychological states of mystics like John of the Cross and others, faith, hope, and love are not something lying beneath these states, something merely ordinary, but that which permeates these extraordinary phenomena of submergence and the like and is wholly accessible as properly religious experience also to the normal Christian and particularly to the priest – in fact, to anyone who faces in freedom the radical incomprehensibility, depth, and absoluteness of his existence toward God.

A second thing that might be said is that the priest of today and tomorrow is the poor priest who willingly admits this poverty into his actual existence and gives it a positive emphasis there. There can be no doubt that the Church, measured against social conditions elsewhere, is increasingly becoming a poor Church; the only question is whether or not we accept this poverty as the occurrence, the jump-off base, for man's ultimate crucified transcendentality (radicalized by grace) into the incomprehensible mystery of God. In this sense poverty has of course, not only an economic, but also a cultural dimension. Certainly the priest today (like yesterday and tomorrow) should not be a philistine, an uncouth person, or anything of that kind. But the fact remains that if a professional ventures to carry his whole existence into a very special dimension of possible human existence, he must in some sense be the poorer, must be prepared for renunciation in regard to other dimensions. This holds quite generally. Could you imagine a musician practising at the piano for eight hours every day and then having an equal interest in other hobbies and occupations which are possible without any reservations for other people? He renounces one thing or another and we priests, who, in a sense, invest our whole life with all its resources, tasks, and possibilities in this religious existence, can nevertheless enjoy a glass of wine, do a little photography, or get away for a holiday, etc. The priest should certainly not use his piety as an excuse for cultural, intellectual, scientific philistinism, but he should see clearly that he must have the courage to be poor even from a cultural standpoint, not to have his finger in every pie everywhere, not to be keeping up with everything, not even to be tempted to do this sort of thing, and not to think he has to use a thousand secular privileges to win support for his task.

In this sense there is also a kind of cultural poverty of the priest that is part of his nature and his life. It is by no means our task or our [132] duty to want to be in the top class in all the dimensions of the very differentiated cultural, intellectual, scientific, and artistic life of the present time. We should not renounce these things out of philistinism, uncouthness, laziness, or lack of interest, but in this respect we should *want* (occasionally to a very considerable extent) to be poor, if only because no one, with his time, with the finiteness of his resources, and even with the finiteness of his heart, can do everything at once and because this kind of renunciation, this crucifixion of the inward person, a renunciation of quite legitimate dimensions of human existence, is in fact the way in which we constantly break through into the mystery of God himself.

The fact that there is then also something like a spiritual poverty is really obvious to someone who provides himself with a few key words from the theology of mysticism. I get worried and uncomfortable sometimes when I hear my fellow Christians and preachers of the Gospel proclaiming that the meaning and fulfillment of life can be found only with and through and in God. Of course, in the last resort, this is true. But at the same time do we not often forget that God is the meaning of our life as the God of incomprehensible judgments, as the God whom we simply cannot take into account as a fixed and definite factor in our life, as

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the God of freedom, as the God of incomprehensibility? In mystical experience there is something that is described as 'night': in other words, as poverty, as an ultimate innermost threat to our existence, to which the only response is to summon up the last resources of faith, hope, and love for this incomprehensible God. Of course, we Christians should be cheerful, serene, uninhibited, showing people that it is possible and desirable even at the present time to find space in our lives for something like joy in the senses, for festivity, celebration, serenity, for laughter, lightheartedness, and frankness.

All this is true and enormously important, but we need not act as if we did not also break free from ourselves to fall into God's incomprehensibility where we know nothing more. In face of this world of horrors, of inevitabilities, of dead ends, of terrors, of 'Auschwitzes', how can I offer today a theodicy, a justification of God? How can I put forward credibly such a theodicy, if I am not sure that there is in the last resort nothing left but man's capitulation, also in spiritual poverty, before God. If someone today can go to his death serene and composed, confidently and happily, there can certainly be no [133] objection to this. But neither can there be any objection if, in an ultimate tribulation, in an ultimate poverty, torn away from ourselves, we have to die into the darkness of what is called God. In brief, there is a kind of spiritual poverty that we by no means want to deny or suppose. The troubled Christian who feels that too much is asked of him, the Christian who prays with Jesus 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?', who consequently does not by any means die with Socratic serenity, is not perhaps the only possible and conceivable Christian, but he is also a genuine Christian who attains the peak of his perfection precisely in the abyss of his spiritual emptiness and poverty.

This threefold poverty – economic, cultural, and spiritual – is part of Christianity, of Christian existence, and of Christian spirituality in general, but nevertheless for that very reason is something required particularly from the priest and particularly today.

In the third place it must be said that the priest today is primarily the servant of the faith of others. Father Zulehner has rightly made the extraordinarily important statement that we cannot assume today the existence of Christians as baptized, as already indoctrinated and structured by a universal, homogeneous, Christian public opinion, but must be mystagogues of faith for them. Consequently we have no reason for not accepting without prejudice this necessity of ours to be continually learning the faith afresh. We need not behave as if we were not threatened in our faith and could take it for granted. We should not trifle with temptations of faith on the ground that they are not doubts of faith in the strictly moral theological sense; we do not need to make blunders like this. There is certainly also a religious experience that embraces all these possibilities of a Christian existence in struggling with temptation, in poverty, in darkness, in a sense in joy and peace, and that can really give a person the feeling or, better, the existential experience, a final awareness, of actually not being able at all to escape or lose God, since God's apparent remoteness itself attests and makes present God precisely as God. But this again does not exclude the fact that we ourselves have also a history of faith, that we must be lifelong adventurers of God in ever new situations.

Formerly, Christian spirituality was conceived as an ascent to a height of what was called 'Christian perfection', with the ways and stages of this ascent in a sense outlined and marked out in advance [134] by the theology of the spiritual life. Today the older priest is less likely to have the impression that he has become more perfect than he was at the beginning; he will see himself as someone who is led by God's providence in his life history through continually new and surprising situations, in which he can never say from the outset what will happen and how he must cope with it. When St. Teresa of Lisieux was apparently tempted most of all in the final stages of her life (as compared with earlier stages), for that very reason she had reached the summit of her perfection. The courage to recognize from the outset that we are

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involved in a lifelong adventure which cannot be calculated in advance is part of our priestly existence today if we want to be the servants of the faith of others.

There is a further point. And now I really am getting onto thin ice. I am absolutely convinced that, apart from a special vocation from God (which may certainly exist), a priest like myself should and must devote his life – all his time and all his strength – to normal priestly functions, and that the present shortage of priests makes it impossible for the Church to do without this kind of commitment. Nevertheless, as a result of a number of experiences, I think that a certain spirituality associated with true worker-priests (if not the concrete calling itself) might be a critical, generative factor for our priestly life. The courage to be and to remain sociologically inferior, to live a life in which one belongs in some way to the underprivileged, to the plebes; the courage to lead a life in which one is no longer the village pope, in which one does not simply belong to the educated classes and where academic status counts for nothing; the courage to live shoulder to shoulder with the poor where life is bitter, monotonous, dull: all these things are characteristic of the mentality of genuine worker-priests (and I know some of them) who do not want to be worker-priests in order to abandon (like certain types) their priestly self-understanding. This is a mentality which could have a critical sting, an evocative power for us.

I must say that for me these people represent something of a threat to a well-provided bourgeois existence and may frighten us out of assuming that this existence is normal and to be taken for granted. A number of conclusions may be drawn. Although what I said earlier remains important, I think that the priest today must be something of a nonconformist. That is not to say that he should be an inveterate grumbler, forever complaining, continually at odds [135] with his bishop and with Rome: all these infantilisms are ruled out from the beginning. But if the Church is permanently a Church also of sinners and if this sinfulness has its effect on the exercise of office, if, in this way, office by its nature necessarily leads to the temptation to institutional harshness, crudeness, reactionary attitudes, it cannot be said that a certain critical dissociation from what is actually practised in the name of office in the Church is something that is incompatible with a present-day priestly image. This should be sufficient on this topic.

The priest of today will necessarily always be overtaxed: overtaxed between what he is and what (as he himself knows) he ought to be, overtaxed by people, overtaxed by the Gospel, overtaxed by his office, overtaxed by his time. It should be noticed that this is itself the concreteness of his existential transcendence, not his speculation about transcendence. Consequently it is possible to face this continually excessive pressure with a certain composure. It acquires a positive meaning. It can be admitted that it would be terrible if I no longer had to distinguish between what ought to be and what in fact I am and what I achieve. To be able and to have to entrust our own finiteness, wretchedness, even sinfulness, completely and utterly to God and his grace: all this is part of Christian and priestly existence. As priests, we are not and need not be the sort of people who can imagine that they have done everything well and as the great experts and men of achievement ought to make a triumphant entry with flying colours into God's eternity. With Teresa of Lisieux we shall have to admit that we come at the end of our life as wretched sinners to God and it would be a terrible self-deception to think that we had 'made it'; we have the right (if I may put it in that way) to feel in a blessed defiance that we are the people from whom too much is expected. The fewer priests there are, the more we shall be in this sense the ones who are overtaxed.

It is impossible to do much more here than to suggest the headings under which some other points might be considered. In his present day priestly existence the priest must be familiar with theology. I am not saying this simply because I have been teaching this strange science all my life. Anyone who has to proclaim the Gospel responsibly today – not merely to a few

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schoolchildren eager to learn and young enough to accept everything without reserve, but to the present-day despisers of Christianity – is in a difficult situation. He [136] cannot preach that kind of neo-Protestantism which is prepared to sell off cheaply the true, Christian, completely Catholic faith, he may not offer people no more than what their superficial humanism prepares them to accept from the outset; but neither may he use expressions or adopt attitudes in regard to the faith he offers which create unnecessary difficulties for others. I think it must also be said that Rome, feeling bound to address the whole world at once, is in a desperately difficult situation. And it seems to me that Rome has not yet come round to saying the things that have to be said in a way that avoids sufficiently the difficulties and abrasions which could and ought to be avoided. Rome, too, ought to do more theology. But this is true also for us. Despite all 'mystical existential experience' coming from this innermost centre, we are the ones who have to present a verbalized doctrine which itself comes from the Church and requires, not only personal religious experience, but also a continually fresh recourse to the Church's teaching and to the work that is and must be accomplished by theology for the understanding of the Church's teaching.

There is a further point that I can indicate also only as a problem, without answering it. In the Church's practice there was a period of sacramental enthusiasm when it was tacitly assumed, if not explicitly taught, that grace is conveyed primarily and actually more or less solely in the sacraments as such and exclusively there. This is wrong and contrary also to present-day mystical, religious experience. It remains an open question also for our spirituality whether we are really drawn in an ultimate existential radicalness into our destiny precisely in the sacramental celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus, or at the point where we see our life as a failure, or where we die, or where we go on living in an ultimate incomprehensibility of an unselfish love or freely exercising a responsibility that is not radically accepted or recognized by anyone else. Obviously a priest should attempt to direct his religious life so patiently, so impartially, so lovingly that he has always a positive relationship (one that stimulates his religious existence) to sacramental events in the Church. But a religious life of grace, experience of the Spirit, and sacramental life are not simply identical, and the priest, although he is the functionary of the sacramental aspect of the Church, need not act as if they were. If for any reasons at all, connected with his individual lot in life, someone cannot honestly [137] claim that carrying out the eucharistic cult or administering the sacraments is even existentially the high point of his life, he has no need to lie, no need to talk or act as if it were. He can always do this sort of thing with sufficient involvement, if he goes about it in a reasonable way; he can also, of course, celebrate the eucharist simply when he wants to do so, like Ignatius of Loyola or Philip Neri, the latter having his full, consecrated chalice in front of him for hours, sipping from it every quarter of an hour and for the rest living immersed in God. All I wanted to do was to point out that experience of grace and sacramental celebration are not simply the same thing and that the two are often separated even in priestly life and a person's individual organization of his life and lot can be readily and naturally accepted in this respect.

I had wanted finally in a nonpolitical sense to refer at least briefly to the political dimension of priestly spirituality. What I mean by this will be understood by anyone who reads without prejudice and with good will the paper produced by the joint synod of the dioceses of the German Federal Republic in 1978: 'Our Hope: A Profession of Faith in Our Time'.[3] I do not think that we must or should practise politics in a banal, commonplace sense. But I think that the unity of love of God and love of neighbour, the knowledge that where we stand by the poor, persecuted, underprivileged there is or can be an intimate experience of

[3] 'Unsere Hoffnung' in *Gemeinsame Synode der Bistümer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Official complete edition, vol. 1, ed. L. Bertsch, S. J., et al. (Freiburg, 1978), pp. 84-111.

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grace, and that an ultimate transcendentality of man radicalized by grace into the mystery of God and a self-renunciation in love of neighbour represent the two aspects of the one Christian life, the unity of love of God and love of neighbour – in the last resort, that is what I understand here as the political dimension of priestly spirituality; and that is something quite important.

In so far as we experience this transcendentality of grace in the following of Christ, we cannot say as a result of an abstract reflection that we are equally indifferent to poverty and riches, higher status and lower status. Jesus fought (but not as a political revolutionary) unequivocally on the side of the poor, the persecuted, the plebs, and did not rise above them in glorious neutrality. The synodal paper says more or less that we can put up with the opposition of the educated and the clever, but that the Church cannot dissociate [138] itself from the disappointment of the poor, of the disappointed, of the persecuted; nevertheless, the Church has been and remains today too much a Church of the middle classes. This does not mean breaking out at once in wild revolution against it. But it does mean that we ought to feel a sting and an unease in regard to the image of our Church and that the priest ought to feel these things in his spirituality since he, too, experiences God's grace only where he becomes poor with the poor and counts them among his friends. In that sense there is something like a political dimension to our own spirituality.

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[139]

PART THREE

Life in the Church

[141]

10

ON THE THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

It is obvious that in an essay of a few pages only one or two somewhat arbitrarily chosen remarks can be made on the theology of worship. From the outset there is no intention of having recourse explicitly to the teaching of Scripture or the Church's magisterium. If the starting point of these reflections consists mainly in general questions of sacramental theology as a whole and of the Church's actual worship as such, as distinct from other sacramental happenings that thus remain somewhat in the background, this may be admitted from the outset. Anyone who understands and can accept what is said here can easily draw for himself further conclusions with references to worship in the strict sense.[1]

It seems to me that in the Church's consciousness there are two different conceptual models for God's grace as it operates in human history. I use the expression 'conceptual models' because the question of whether the ways envisaged here of considering grace are in reality mutually contradictory will not be raised at all, still less decided. Nor will it be claimed that they are regarded in the Church's actual sense of faith as strictly isolated and wholly disconnected from one another and mutually contradictory; it is not denied that the two models exist together in the Church's concrete awareness, even though the emphasis on one or the other is considerably different. Nevertheless, they are different. And this diversity itself arises from a still more universal and fundamental difference in the ways in [142] which God's relationship to the world is seen. But this, too, is something that cannot be discussed here.

The *first* way of seeing the operation of divine grace in the world considers that operation first of all and primarily as an intervention of God in the world at a definite point in space and time. The world is regarded in the first place as secular, both because of what we call 'nature' and because of the inherited sinful state of this history of the world and humanity. If, then, forgiving and deifying salutary grace (as God's self-communication) is supposed nevertheless to be present in the world, this presence is conceived as an intervention of God at a certain point in space and time, as (we might say) 'actual grace'. This conceptual model of grace is based on the implicit assumption that grace can be an unmerited gift of God only if it becomes present and only where it becomes present in a secular and sinful world to which it is mostly denied. From this initial position it is easy to understand the sacraments. They are then seen as events at certain points in space and time (with a quite definite modality which need not be examined more closely here) where grace comes to be in a world otherwise deprived of it. It is easy then to understand the causality of the sacraments: they produce something not otherwise available. From this standpoint also it can be understood why in a

[1] The reflections in this essay touch closely on those put forward under the title 'Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event' in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 14 (London/New York, 1976), pp. 161-84.

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theology of the sacraments dominated by this conceptual model the baptism of infants (who are assumed to be previously lacking grace) is regarded as the ideal type for sacraments as such, even though with particular sacraments (of the 'living', etc.) qualifications and reservations have to be made. But even in cases in which a sacramental event presupposes a 'state of grace', this state is regarded merely as an objective and moral *precondition* and not a something which itself acts as a cause and is manifested in this sacramental event (as such always coming freshly 'from outside'). Even with the sacraments of the 'living', which presuppose the presence of justifying grace, the model of infant baptism remains predominant: grace is effected in the sacraments, not as being brought there to historical and ecclesial manifestation, but as produced purely as the effect of the sacraments.

The *second* way of considering the operation of grace starts out from the assumption that the secular world from the outset is always encompassed and permeated with the grace of the divine self-communication. This grace is always and everywhere present in the [143] world. It is, of course, present either in the form of a pure offer to freedom (not yet decisively possessed) with 'infants', or in the form of acceptance with the 'justified' person or of rejection with the sinner (a rejection which does not mean that it ceases to be the sinner's demanding and orienting existential); but it *is*, always and everywhere. Its unmeritedness does not prevent it from being the existential always and everywhere present at the very heart of human existence. In the last resort, world as 'nature' is not plain and obvious reality, totally involved with itself, to which grace is added (so to speak) subsequently as the result of a kind of secondary decision of God; from the outset God is lovingly seeking in freedom to bestow himself and, because he so wills in freedom, because he wills grace, he must create a 'nature' to which he can impart himself as free love. Nature is, because grace has to be. From the outset, as ground of nature, grace is the innermost centre of this nature. Consequently, nature is never actually purely and simply secular; it is always nature graciously endowed with God himself. When and where it finds expression in personal freedom, this freedom means the acceptance of this innermost centre of reality, acceptance of God and thus of salvation history.

This salvation history is not made up of successive spatio-temporal interventions of God in an otherwise secular world, but is the history of freedom (of God and man) which accepts this innermost and enduring deification of the world, gives it historical expression and thus itself constitutes the history of this deification of the world. In this way grace is understood, not primarily as 'actual', but as 'habitual' grace. There is a salvation history as history of divine and human freedom, but the latter is precisely the history of the ever present deification of the world by God's self-communication, through which alone salvation history can be conceived at all and hence the history of the world must be understood even in a true and radical sense as history of God. The sacraments accordingly are not really to be understood as successive individual incursions of God into a secular world, but as 'outbursts' (if we can express it in this Way) of the innermost, ever present gracious endowment of the World with God himself into history.

This manifestation of the ever present deification of the world in historical events is, of course, involved not only in the sacraments, but wherever man accepts himself as such in freedom. Properly [144] speaking, this is something taken for granted in Catholic theology. For this theology teaches that *every* 'salutary act' sustained by divine grace is a realization of this grace and consequently its 'augmentation' implies a more radical acceptance by man's freedom and the establishment of deeper roots in man's existence. Grace, then, occurs, not only and not even primarily in the sacraments, but wherever a person accepts and realizes in freedom his existence as it is, as radically and immediately dependent on God. If this Catholic teaching on the deification of our free acts by grace (by the 'theological virtues') is correct and taken seriously, then there is actually no merely secular sphere (in the dimension

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of truly existential freedom) lying *alongside* the sacral sphere, the latter being made up of sacramental and ecclesial occurrences. In ordinary language what is known as the sacral sphere (comprising sacraments, liturgy, worship) is better understood simply as a definite individual materialization (fundamentally necessary and binding on man) *within* that sacral sphere which is brought into existence by the grace that is everywhere present and effective and which coincides concretely with the sphere of existential freedom as a whole as a reflex self-awareness of the grace everywhere present and effective, finding expression in the sphere of the explicit word and the ecclesial community.

As we said earlier, we wanted first of all only to put forward two conceptual models of grace, without opting absolutely for one or the other. The first conceptual model will certainly not be simply rejected here: it elucidates the unmeritedness of grace, the unpredictable historicity of grace in its realization, the sacraments as causes of grace (a doctrine which must be maintained in accordance with the Council of Trent), although this does not imply that these truths can be maintained and expressed only in the light of this conceptual model. This, it seems to me, is not the case. If grace is understood (as in the second model) as universal ground of salvation history, it does not for that reason cease to have an actual history, for it must be realized concretely in the history of man's freedom. As man's 'nature' is realized in history and nevertheless is the universal ground of this history, the same is true of grace. It is the ground of salvation history, which is itself realized in that history. Without simply rejecting the first conceptual model, then, it is possible to maintain that the second is at least more intelligible and easier [145] to reconstruct for people today. In particular it gets away from the idea that salvific grace necessarily takes the form of an intervention by God from outside at a definite point in space and time: an idea which for people today somehow savours of the miraculous and mythological. In a more extensive substantiation of the legitimacy and sufficiency of the second conceptual model, it would, of course, have to be shown more precisely that here, too, there is a place for a rightly understood theory of sacramental causality, that there is a difference between a baptized and an unbaptized infant, that infant baptism, even if not absolutely necessary, is at least meaningful and something for which parents must accept responsibility in an ecclesial community. It is impossible to explain all this more closely here; but it can be done and has been done elsewhere. All we are looking for here is a further elucidation of the nature of Christian worship in the light of this second conceptual model.

Admittedly there are many aspects of the nature of Christian worship which are left out of consideration here. We are not considering really explicitly the communal and sociological character of Christian worship, which is derived from the nature of the Church and ultimately from the unity of humanity in its salvation history. We are not considering the differentiations of the Church's worship as they arise out of the diversity and the unity of word and sacrament. We are not asking here when we have liturgy in the proper sense of the term or how it is distinguished from private prayer and private gatherings for prayer. The idea of 'feast', or 'celebration', which finds expression preeminently in worship, is not under consideration here. We are not speaking about the political or eschatological character of worship. We are not asking whether or how the sociological and hierarchical character of the Church must be brought out in worship. The general anthropological presuppositions of worship are left aside. Many other things which ought to be considered in a theology of Christian worship remain unmentioned. As we said, all we are attempting here is to consider a little more concretely the conclusions in regard to worship that can be drawn from the second conceptual model of grace. If all aspects of grace itself could be explicitly described or assumed as clear and apparent, it would also be possible to deduce from this second conceptual model of grace an entire theology of worship in all its aspects. The possibility is all the more obvious since grace by its very nature has a communal, sociological [146]

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character, orienting man in every respect, and consequently also as a social being, to God. But, since it is impossible here either to elucidate or simply to presuppose these aspects of grace, our reflections must remain fragmentary.

In the light of this second conceptual model the Church's worship is not the installation of a primarily sacramental sphere in a profane, secular world, it is not an event otherwise without roots in reality, but the explicit and reflex, symbolic presentation of the salvation event which is occurring always and everywhere in the world; the liturgy of the Church is the symbolic presentation of the liturgy of the world. This does not diminish its significance. For its significance consists in the very fact that it presents the liturgy of the world spatio-temporally and in sociological explicitness and thus conveys to man an explicit and reflex enactment of this liturgy of the world, of salvation history. The liturgy of the world, in which anyway we are always involved and which reaches its culmination in the cross of the Son, is seen by man in his dreary existence only through a haze, obscured by the banal ordinariness of life. It has to be reflected and elevated to the explicitness of the word and its sociological presence. It is true that something of the explicitness and reflection of this liturgy, which is identical with the whole history of humanity, is necessarily always part of man and his history, and consequently there are religions always and everywhere. But this reflex explicitness of the world liturgy as it comes to be has its own history and it is not left to our discretion what point we want to occupy in the history of this process, of becoming explicit. As history of the world's freedom, this liturgy attains its irreversibility in Jesus Christ, his cross and resurrection; and if and insofar as we have come in the history of our individual freedom to know this culmination of the universal history of salvation, of the world liturgy, it is no longer left to our discretion whether or not we want to allow this historical achievement of the explicit irreversibility of salvation history in Jesus Christ to be reflected and made explicit also in our life, whether or not we take part in bringing out the reflex explicitness of the culmination of the liturgy of the world in the liturgy of the Church.

As existences incarnate in space and time, we Christians are subject not only to the 'must' of allowing man's transcendental essential realities and his existentials (of which grace, too, is always and [147] everywhere a part) to find explicitness in some conceivable way in space and time, but also to the 'must' of giving to the actually attained culmination of this history of spatio-temporal explicitness of grace in Jesus Christ space and time in our own life: of celebrating (which is the same thing) the Church's worship. When we say that we celebrate the death of the Lord until he returns, we are saying that we are giving space and time explicitly in our own life to the culmination of the history of the world liturgy which is present in the cross of Jesus (the culmination of both this history itself and also its spatio-temporal reflex explicitness). Consequently what happens in worship of this kind is not something that does not occur or has not permanently occurred elsewhere in the world, but something that occurs always and everywhere or has occurred for all time and for everywhere in the world, and is explicitly celebrated, stated, and appropriated. This ecclesial worship is important and significant, not because something happens in it that does not happen elsewhere, but because there is present and explicit in it that which makes the world important, since it is everywhere blessed by grace, by faith, hope, and love, and in it there occurred the cross of Christ, which is the culmination of its engraced history and the culmination of the historical explicitness of this history of grace. To anyone who has (or might have had) absolutely no experience in his own life of this history of grace of the world, no experience of the cosmic liturgy, the Church's liturgy could only seem like a strange ritualism, as strange as the sacrificial action of a Vedic priest who feeds the gods and thinks that by his action he is keeping the world on its tracks.

As we said earlier, at this point the essential qualities of Christian grace, as they find expression in the Church's worship, ought to be explained more precisely. It ought to be

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shown how this grace is the ground of an ultimate unity of mankind in itself and with God; its eschatological character as pledge of the final consummation stressed, it ought to be made clear how in the history of freedom of the world this grace has already found its irreversible victory in the cross of Christ. It ought to be shown (and this is of decisive importance) how this grace has its history in man's day-to-day existence with its splendours and failures and is actually experienced there. Only then could it be really shown and made clear how these aspects and characteristics of this grace are given a new, reflex manifestation and presence in the celebration of the act of worship. It is [148] impossible to explain all this in greater detail here. But perhaps enough has been said to indicate in what the real ground of the Church's worship and the right understanding of it consists.

The pastoral situation for gaining a genuine understanding of the Church's worship is very complex today and consequently obscure. Certainly there are many people even today who come to learn through worship itself, through its outward shape and through the natural way in which it is carried out, that God's grace becomes an event here in the midst of a world which they experience only as profane and godless. There are certainly people like this. It is certainly right to use every possible means to shape the act of worship in such a way that it operates on its own account as an event of grace in a secular world. Where there are (still) people like this (for a great variety of historical and sociological reasons) and where the attempt to leave the Church's worship to make its own impact and its own appeal is largely successful, it will be possible still to bring home the idea of worship from the standpoint of the first conceptual model of grace. But the fact cannot be concealed that to very many people today worship is at first seen as a kind of magical procedure and as an old-fashioned ritual now devoid of meaning, while they have the impression that a true encounter with God (if it is possible at all) must take place in the dull bitterness of ordinary life with its experiences of hope, responsibility, love, and death.

These are people who find themselves and God in 'life' (as they say) and not in ecclesial-liturgical ceremonial. If a way of access to the Church's liturgy is to be opened up for them (and they seem to be the great majority today), it can only be from the standpoint of the second conceptual model of grace. It must be admitted readily and without hesitation to such people that grace, encounter with God, can occur and does actually occur in the ordinary routine of secular life. Prior to any kind of defence of the Church's liturgy, for these people in the first place there must be produced a clear way of access to the depths of their own existence, where God has communicated himself from the very beginning and where he offers himself to man's freedom. In the first place a mystagogy (if we may use the term) of the mysticism of ordinary life is necessary; it must be shown that he whom we call God is always present from the very outset and even already accepted, as infinite offer, as silent love, as absolute future, wherever a person is faithful to his conscience [149] and breaks out of the prison walls of his selfishness. With these people such a mystagogy is a necessary presupposition for an understanding of the Church's worship. If this understanding is to be awakened, they must be shown that worship is the explicit celebration of the divine depth of their ordinary life, that what clearly appears in it and consequently can be more decisively accepted in freedom is what occurs always and everywhere in the ordinary course of life. These people must be helped to understand that the very fact that God is worshiped in spirit everywhere (and not only in Jerusalem) is itself made explicit and celebrated in the worship of the Church.

It is perhaps an exaggeration to describe (as I once did) the transition from the first to the second conceptual model of grace as a 'Copernican turning point.' It is an exaggeration, since the first conceptual model never entirely alone and on its own account determined the sense of faith of people in the Church; an exaggeration also because care must certainly be taken in preaching not to overlook for the practice of the Christian life *those* aspects and

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characteristics of grace which are less explicit in the second conceptual model. The transition cannot be regarded as so sharp, since the second conceptual model does not exclude the fact that the acceptance of grace offered universally is always a free act of the human person and thus makes the salvation event into an *historical* happening and since this free acceptance of universal grace itself depends again on God's free decision, which can neither be theoretically explained nor worked out in advance. But these aspects of grace, which are more clearly and more immediately evident in the first conceptual model, may also not be overlooked or passed over in silence in a theology of worship. On the other hand, it also remains true that the second conceptual scheme offers people today a better way of access to the understanding of grace and thus also of worship. Consequently priests ought to make sure that this model is really present in their concrete preaching. Then worship will be seen, not as a strange, reserved, special region in secular life, not as divine liturgy *in* the world, but as the divine liturgy of the world, as manifestation of the divine liturgy which is identical with salvation history.

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[150]

11

THE SUNDAY PRECEPT IN AN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

MEMORIAL OF SALVATION

In order to say something intelligent about Sunday and to cover somehow all the problems involved, we ought *first* to ask about the exact meaning in the Old Testament of the Sabbath precept, of sanctifying the Sabbath. Undoubtedly there were religious and social reasons for it. The precept was meant for all in Israel: slaves, as far as there were any, normal and ordinary people, the better off, and even the beasts. But I do not want to say more here about this Sabbath precept.

Second, something ought to be said about the historical and theological aspects of the adoption of this precept in the Church of Jesus Christ. Here of course (and this has primarily and directly nothing to do with Israel) should be mentioned the peculiarity that the Church continually celebrates afresh in the weekly liturgical sequence the resurrection of Jesus as a unique historical and fundamental salvation event. A theological content is thus available which was not present in the Old Testament celebration of the Sabbath, even though behind all these celebrations there is a basic human datum: the fact that man can celebrate and should celebrate in a temporal sequence the anamnesis (memory) of events that occurred once and for all in salvation history. Admittedly, this is a theological problem for its own sake and extends to these solemnities as a whole. I do not know exactly what the situation was in the Old Testament or in later Jewish times, if and in what sense the Sabbath observance had anything to do with the exodus from Egypt. It might be said anyway [151] that the Sabbath precept in Israel, too, had an anamnestic (commemorative) dimension in terms of salvation history and was related at least to God's rest on the seventh day of creation. In a word and in any case, in the Christian celebration of Sunday there is a reference to a quite definite event of salvation history, so that the question arises as to how, why, and for what existential-ontological reasons man is the being that can celebrate historical events which are apparently simply past. And what is the meaning of such an anamnesis? Is it merely historicist reflection, inspired by a certain historical curiosity, on a past event which nevertheless cannot in this way really be brought up again out of the depths of the past? Is it possible with the aid of this kind of recollection to make something like this present in the proper sense of the term or, so to speak, continually to repeat it? But in regard to this second point also I should not discuss here the Christian acceptance of the Sabbath precept as a way of recalling the death and resurrection of Jesus.

PRECEPT OF THE CHURCH

Third, however, I want to say something quite different. Although somewhat disguised in the ordinary course of preaching, according to the Church's universal teaching, there is no Old Testament precept which, as such, is still binding on Christians. And among these abrogated precepts is that of the Sabbath observance. If a Christian preacher insists on the Church's Sunday precept by recalling the thunder and lightning of God's holy covenant on Sinai, he is telling lies, he is asserting something that simply does not make sense. We must say, then, that the Sunday precept properly speaking is not a divine precept, either in the light of man's

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permanent nature (as preternaturally or supernaturally elevated) or in the light of the Old Testament: it is and remains a precept of the Church. That the Church has a right to issue a precept of this kind and that this right and the fulfillment of the precept by the individual Christian have also deeper, more universal foundations and grounds, this again is a different question. That a human person is a worshiping being, that the Christian in his religious existence must necessarily relate again and again to the death and resurrection of Jesus, that, consequently, he must (to express it somewhat prosaically in terms of moral theology) [152] from time to time take part in the eucharistic memorial celebration of this death and resurrection of Jesus, all these are deeper reasons justifying the Church's Sunday precept; but the requirement of attending mass on Sundays and, as we used to say, abstaining from servile work is a precept of the Church and basically no more than that. That the concrete form of this precept, its interpretation, the strictness or elasticity of the interpretation, are conditioned historically is something we have certainly experienced in recent decades.

BINDING UNDER PAIN OF GRAVE SIN?

Fourth, if we recognize soberly, honestly, and without dissimulation, that it is a question here of a positive precept of the Church, then (independently now of the question of a conceivable or not conceivable, a desirable or not desirable, further development of the concrete shape of this precept) it is in any case clear that the precept is open to all the restrictions and interpretations appropriate to a human precept, which simply does not directly involve man's eternal nature nor, consequently, his permanent supernatural determination by grace as such. Obviously, a positive precept of the Church is open to many more possible interpretations and can more easily cease to bind in the concrete individual case as a result of excusing causes or other reasons than a properly divine precept of natural law or a divine precept of the supernatural order as such. It can really be taken for granted also today that an individual can consider himself dispensed in the concrete from the Sunday precept of participation at mass, not only because of sickness, but for other sound reasons. There is no need here to go into the casuistry of how there can be reasons for dispensation from the obligation of Sunday mass, or what these are. That is a different question, with which other people can amuse themselves. In any case, on the one hand we should take this Sunday precept seriously (even though it is no more than a precept of the Church) and, on the other hand, we have the Christian's liberty to interpret and apply these human statutes and precepts with a certain magnanimity and inner freedom. I do not know if this could be a practical rule of thumb (that is something for the moralists to consider), but I would say that whenever and in whatever cases the [153] inner existential and supernatural justification of the Sunday precept is not conclusive for the individual case, the Church's precept as such is not to be regarded in that individual case as binding under pain of grave sin.

We might presumably attempt to justify this proposition from various aspects. It might even be said that the Church can by no means impose an obligation, as we say, under pain of grave sin, unless it is also required for deeper reasons by natural law or supernaturally by law or morality. But we may also perhaps leave aside a universal justification of this kind and face the situation at the present time. There now exists in fact in the Church a mentality (which is not opposed by the institutional Church) which regards the Church's precept (even though it amounts to more than this in its formal implications and authority) as not really binding under pain of grave sin, unless participation in the eucharistic sacrifice is seriously required as a result of an existential and mental-spiritual necessity. What exactly do I mean by this?

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ANALOGY WITH OTHER PRECEPTS

From the very nature of the case and in the light of his faith, a normal Christian is obviously aware that he must frequently take part in the celebration of the eucharist, whether there is a precept of the Church to that effect or not. An obligation of this kind, which arises, so to speak, from the nature of things and which already or again exists as an institutional arrangement quite independently of the properly official precept of the Church, can certainly not be proved to be binding in the concrete every Sunday. But a Christian should have the good sense to admit that he would certainly be basically, if not perhaps also expressly, denying his inner, fundamental, essential relatedness (conferred by baptism) to the incarnational structure of the death of the Lord (that is, to his sacramental presence in the eucharist) if he simply did not bother about mass over a long period. This is an obligation that can, of course, become concrete, even if it is impossible to demonstrate mathematically exactly when and where. It is like living in the same house with my mother: Who is to say when I have to talk to her? And if she lives elsewhere, it is impossible to demonstrate on what day I must visit [154] her or for how long. Nevertheless, as a human being and as her child, I have a serious moral obligation toward this woman to realize my personal relatedness to her in the concrete by visiting her. How often that should be cannot be calculated mathematically. Attendance at mass likewise may depend on all kinds of circumstances: on the state of my religious development, on my opportunities or difficulties of being present, on my entire subjective, particular character, etc. One person will perhaps commit a serious offence against love for his mother if he is living in the same town and does not visit her for months. For another, a quarterly visit may be quite sufficient.

EXISTENTIAL OBLIGATION

It is rather similar with the mass. I would say that a Christian ought to know (precept of the Church or not) that he has an obligatory relationship to the Church's eucharistic celebration as the memorial of Jesus' death and resurrection by which he is redeemed. And where an obligation of this kind seems in the light of a reasonable, serious, and scarcely disputable human judgment to find concrete expression, so to speak, and to be concentrated in an actual celebration of mass on a particular Sunday, the Church's precept becomes one that we normally describe as a morally grave obligation. It becomes binding under pain of grave sin.

Where this is not the case, the Christian ought to take part in the eucharistic celebration at least every Sunday, if only because he really should occasionally do something Christian, the omission of which does not bring him at once into serious conflict with God. But apart from that radical obligation, I would claim that the Church's precept is not concretely binding here and now under pain of grave sin. Like the speed limit on the motorway, it is a standard which we must observe in a spirit of both Christian freedom and seriousness. At the same time, the question remains completely open as to when and where in a normal human life there can be an absolute dilemma between the fulfillment of a precept and grave sin (which would lead to eternal perdition). This is not to be tried out in regard to the Sunday precept in particular, since this is not an appropriate test case.

[155] *Fifth*, we must have regard for a number of consequences of the development of modern industrial society. These include the five-day work week, the varying work periods, the fact that it is very difficult to impose the Sunday precept and participation in the eucharist as binding on people in certain occupations (bus conductors, for example, and the service

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sector as a whole); the fact that in some places the obligation can be fulfilled by attendance at Saturday evening mass, which, despite biblical analogies, really amounts to a departure from the Sunday precept; the present-day opportunity of other evening masses which in a religious sense and existentially may be more appropriate and convenient for modern people on a weekday than a Sunday mass in particular; the fact that the weekend of Saturday to Sunday or even merely Sunday is rightly seized on by people in the large industrial centres as an opportunity to escape from the concrete cage of the metropolis, to enjoy a longer period of recreation, etc. These and similar facts raise for the Church the question of the situation in principle and generally today in regard to what is known as the Sunday precept.

Briefly, it might be said that this Sunday precept as such, being a positive precept of the Church and not directly a commandment of God, is subject to the Church's discretionary decision and consequently could be abolished. That is not to say that the Church could dispense itself from the task of continually reminding Christians of their relatedness, to be concretely realized, to the sacramental celebration of mass and not merely to the death of the Lord as such. Nevertheless, the Church could abolish the Sunday precept properly so-called and, for example, leave it to individual Christians to decide how to realize this essential relatedness to the eucharistic celebration in their concrete life, likewise how often they would do this and on what days, etc. This is a real possibility.

REASONS FOR MAINTAINING THE TRADITION

At the same time, however, it must be pointed out that it is difficult to say whether the Church *ought* to make its pastoral decision (which cannot be simply arbitrary) on these lines, or could even be *permitted* concretely from a pastoral and human standpoint to do so. In the first place, even at the present time in our modern industrial [156] society, the individual days are not absolutely reduced to a secular level. Monday to Friday amounts in fact to something different from Saturday and Sunday. It might even be said that the two days of the weekend have acquired, as a result of secular cultural and civilisatory developments, more clearly and firmly a special position in regard to the other days. They are freer than they could be formerly. If the farmer's wife nowadays gets her milking machine working comparatively quickly on Sunday, she has in any case more leisure than she had even twenty or thirty years ago, when each cow had to be milked separately. And there is ample evidence that the weekend in secular terms possesses more clearly that civilisatory and cultural status which makes it suitable for a special and even religious demarcation of Saturday and Sunday, or simply of Sunday. Allowing for the greatest magnanimity in detail and in regard to particular groups of people, these and similar reasons could quite appropriately move the Church to keep to the *joint* celebration of the eucharist and the death of the Lord on a particular day.

Of course, many other reasons could be mentioned. Even in a modern society of people supposed to have come of age, the stability of a general practice is something wholly appropriate and useful. It might be said that, even in regard to religious matters, it is unreasonable to leave people too much to their own initiative as isolated individuals. We might point to the fact that even at the present time there are also secular celebrations of important historical events, commemorated in a joint service on a particular day. Whether these are national feast days or youth initiations is immaterial. In any case, while admitting the Church's freedom in principle, as emphasized above, to abolish the Sunday precept (if it seemed better to do so), it might nevertheless be asked if the Church today could and should uphold the precept if it is rightly understood. For whatever cannot be proved conclusively to be necessary in the light of man's nature must not be regarded on that account as superfluous.

It must be remembered that man lives and can live not only from those things whose

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metaphysical and transcendental necessity can be proved. It must be remembered that a person cannot expect whatever he does or ought to do or what is perhaps even required of him to be proved to be irrevocably necessary. It is impossible to prove transcendentally that we ought to shake hands when we meet or part from someone. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to do so and [157] anyone who denies this in principle, maintaining that theoretically we might just as well rub noses, is an idiot who is determined from the very outset not to admit the undemonstrable and yet factual and meaningful realities of human life which must be respected if life is to go on. Of course, the Church can appropriately keep to the Sunday precept, as we said, justifying this by a reasonable explanation, interpretation and eventually the application of casuistry to the precept. In my opinion, if the Sunday precept is maintained and interpreted with Christian freedom, it will not involve any unsurmountable pastoral difficulties, not even in the present-day society.

INFLUENCE ON SECULAR SOCIETY

There is a further consideration. It is basically true that the cultural and civilisatory development of modern society, with its faceless masses, its flexible working hours, etc., has brought with it a situation which is not particularly favourable to the Church's Sunday precept. But we can at least raise the question of whether the Church must look on, so to speak, indifferently or passively at these secular developments and then introduce slight changes in present arrangements in order to give effect to the pastoral conclusions from secular reality as it is and otherwise to do nothing. We could certainly ask why the Church (for good reasons and without claiming a predominance over the secularized, profane society) should not intervene to influence directly the trend of development in that society. After the Russians, at the beginning of the Bolshevist regime, had introduced an absolutely flexible working week which inevitably made no distinction between Sunday and any other day, they apparently gradually came to see that their plan humanly and reasonably was not particularly wonderful or glorious and, if I am correctly informed, returned to a common rest day. The opportunity could arise for the Church to contribute, perhaps even with merely secular and human arguments, to the further development of secular society in a direction more favourable to the Sunday rest, the Sunday precept, the Sunday celebration, more than the trend seems to have been up to now. It would indeed be a good thing if on one day the noise in the streets were to cease more or less entirely, if there were one day no lorries were traveling, etc. All these and similar things [158] are quite possible. It is not by chance that, in West Germany at least, league football matches are played on Saturdays.

All I wanted to do here was to suggest briefly that there are circumstances in which the Church has not only the abstract right but also the concrete opportunity, without offending non-Christians, positively to steer the development of secular society to a point at which the Sunday precept and the Sunday celebration would fit more conveniently into the total framework of civil life. Perhaps we could find more suitable times for the celebration on Sunday. Perhaps a number of things which at present appear merely as reluctantly granted concessions might one day become normal and obvious, while some other things, now maintained as part of the tradition from former times, may be dropped. If, as J. A. Jungmann always insisted, the Sunday celebration is to be seen in the first place as a responsibility of the parish as such and not, properly speaking, the individual's wholly personal responsibility, we might eventually come to the conclusion that masses at six or seven o'clock on Sunday mornings impose unnecessary torment on the clergy. We might perhaps arrange a splendid and beautiful common celebration only in the evening of Sunday, or even on Saturday. We could then say that any particular individual (a bus conductor, for instance, who has to work

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at this time) has no need at all to attend mass on that Sunday, since this is not primarily his own private and personal religious obligation, but, if he has any obligation at all, it is as a member of this parish, which can in fact choose to have a joint celebration and at a time which, from the nature of the case, cannot be convenient to every individual.

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[159]

12

BASIC COMMUNITIES

Action 365[1] forms and gives life to something that can be described as, or aspires to be, a basic community. On such a sociological and theological theme it is possible, of course, only to put forward a few aphorisms, and even then only very vaguely and without substantiation. Only with these reservations can I venture to consider the theme. I want first to consider Christian basic communities as they exist in the different churches and secondly to say something about ecumenical basic communities.

BASIC COMMUNITIES IN THE CHURCH

Basic communities are necessary for the churches today. The churches of the future will be built up from below by basic communities formed by free initiative and association. Everything should be done, not to suppress, but to promote this development (which has already begun) and to keep it on the right lines. In order to understand what this means, we must consider the situation of the churches as it is to a large extent today and as it may come to be on an even larger scale.

Concretely and sociologically regarded, the churches will not exist as formerly simply in virtue of their ministry, their sociologically [160] firm structures and in virtue of an awareness of being taken for granted by public opinion, nor will they recruit new members on this basis simply because children adopt and continue the life-style of their parents and are baptized and indoctrinated by the Church. The Church will exist actually and not merely theoretically only by being renewed again and again by the free decision of faith and the formation of conscience on the part of individuals in the midst of a secular society which does not from the outset bear a Christian imprint. The fact that this is one description (more sociological than theological, at least under certain aspects) of the Church's continual self-renewal and that this renewal must always adopt and recognize in historical fidelity the traditional message of the Gospel and the ministry derived from Jesus does not alter anything in the new form (as distinct from the old) in which the Church comes to be today and will come to be in the future.

Faith in Jesus Christ, which is always necessary if someone is really to be a Christian in virtue of his free decision, was formed at one time in a situation which, even from the secular sociological standpoint, was more or less homogeneously Christian; today this faith must itself form and sustain its own sociological sphere. If in this way several or many individuals become Christians and join together, despite the pressure of a secularized society, they form basic communities, set up a community Church, as distinct from the people's Church of past centuries (that is, a Church which was sustained and in which the individual was sustained by a consensus of the people as a whole, institutionalized in all its sociological dimensions and thus not living in a diaspora).

Such basic communities must not be seen as contrasting with or opposed to the traditional

[1] Action 365 consists in ecumenically constituted basic communities seeking to undertake practical responsibility for the world (action) in the light of daily Scripture reading (365 days a year). The main fields of activity are ecumenism in practice, Christian publicity work, fraternal service, and third-world work. In this way a renewal of the churches is meant to be brought about. The address of Action 365 is Kennedyallee 111a, D-6000 Frankfurt 70. Tel. 0611/632063.

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Church and its institutions. Basic communities, if they are Christian, do not merely adopt the Gospel, the faith of the Church. They do not merely respect authority in the Church and, despite all conceivable individual conflicts (which, of course, can always occur again and again), seek to live in peace and as far as possible positively recognized by ecclesiastical authority, expecting from the latter at least a benevolent toleration, even if authority by right (real or assumed) feels that it is not yet in a position to approve or recognize a particular basic community. Genuinely Christian basic communities also remain positively open to the whole wealth of tradition of spiritual experience, of theological [161] reflection, of liturgical practice, of socio-political theory and practice which the history of the Church offers to us.

A genuine basic community is not to be understood as the opposite of the parish. But not every genuine basic community needs to be identical with a parish; in this respect it can also be sociologically disparate from a parish or it may belong to the latter's substructures, since no one can maintain that everything Christian on the plane of local sociability must or even can be organized only in parishes properly so-called. The churches have always recognized in principle that there can be free associations from below which pursue specifically Christian aims and yet do not spring from the direct initiative of authority in the Church and are not subject to the control of this authority. But, on the other hand, none of this excludes the possibility that a parish institutionalized in the first place from above could and should also be at the same time a living basic community from below. The more this happens, the better it is for the Church. For in this way as much as possible may be transferred into the Church of the future from the older Church with its wealth of history, experience, and rootedness in broad strata of the people. This is something to be attempted, since even the Church of the future (which is actually built up from the communities which are most alive) must not try to become a Church of elitist groups, a Church of a holy remnant without any secular sociological significance. Even if it patiently accepts its actual future from God's decree in history, of itself it always has the task of becoming the Church of as many as possible, the Church rooted as widely as possible in secular society, to be and (again) to become a Church of the people.

None of this means that even in an ideal situation parish and basic community are in all circumstances identical with each other. Even a parish as official institution, which is or is becoming a basic community, can have under itself and alongside itself differently structured, living basic communities which in the light of their origin, their objective, and their charism are not simply merged in a parish, however much the latter is sustained from below by the living faith and love of Christians. This, of course, is not the place to discuss the legally and practically feasible forms of a deliberately planned coexistence of living basic communities with a particular objective, on the one hand, and of parishes, on the other hand, which are themselves [162] basic communities. In this connection we may say only that where such a basic community with its own particular objective is so developed that it integrates into itself alone more or less the whole Christian life of its members in worship, prayer, love, responsibility for society, proclamation of the Gospel, and so on, it must be understood either as a parish already recognized or seeking recognition by the greater Church or as a development which cannot be recognized ecclesiologically as legitimate, since it would then have become a cancerous structure in the total organism of the Church. In practice this means that basic communities in the ordinary sense of the term should not seek to suppress parishes, unless they are themselves recognized as parishes (in the old style, as 'personal parishes') by the greater Church.

Basic communities, as they are actually formed today, are an experiment. This statement has a number of implications. First of all, very diverse forms of basic communities are conceivable in principle. Such forms in their legitimacy and variety cannot simply be deduced from a theoretical ecclesiology. In the last resort these forms are based on the

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underivability of history in general and of the history of secular society in particular, which is the presupposition for these basic communities and their concrete forms.

Hence it is also implied that these basic communities are an experiment in the strict sense of the term. That is to say, in the last resort they are not authorized or refuted by *a priori* ecclesiological theory, but only (despite the legitimacy of theoretical ecclesiology and despite all fidelity to the history of the Church) by experience and the future. This means that concrete basic communities (now understood as distinct from officially institutionalized communities) are always a venture of hope. But this again means that such living basic communities may not be accepted or at least tolerated by the institutional Church only if it is certain that the venture has actually been successful.[2]

These basic communities obviously have a duty to maintain unity with the diocesan greater Church; for this reason they must also be established as members of the greater Church, even if this requires [163] certain 'sacrifices' and some renunciation on their part alone; they have to observe the laws (which are legitimate and can be concretely fulfilled) of the Church as a whole; despite their (even theological) singularity, they may not develop a sectarian and heretical theology of their own; they must remain open in a spirit of self-criticism to the life of the Church as a whole in truth and love and also make a concrete contribution to this beyond their own frontiers; their singularity must not go to such extremes that certain necessary functions, the fulfillment of which is under the supervision of the diocesan Church, simply collapse or wither away. But none of this prevents a basic community from having its own marked peculiarity, from giving itself a certain structure and what we might call a constitution, from really demanding from members who have freely joined it something that goes completely beyond what a parishioner is expected to do today for his own parish. The 'constitutions' of such basic communities can be considerably different in individual cases. In it the sustaining function and 'right of co-determination' of lay people may be considerably greater than that to which we have hitherto been generally accustomed, although, of course, in the past also, behind apparently very 'authoritarian' official structures, lay people very often had a much greater share in decision making in the parish. Hence there is no reason for not recognizing legally what often exists in fact.

ECUMENICAL BASIC COMMUNITIES

I propose to add a few remarks on ecumenical basic communities, since Action 365 is concerned with these.

First of all it must be said that such ecumenical groups of Christians are legitimate and necessary. All Christians and all churches have a mandate and an obligation to work for the unity of Christians and of the churches. This mandate is more urgent today than ever. But it cannot be fulfilled if the authorities alone in the churches are working from above for unity or if this work merely takes the form of academic discussions by theologians on points of controversy and ecumenism. It is at the base of the churches that people must get to know one another, must come more closely together; it is here that strangeness and mutual misunderstanding must be broken down, [164] here people must pray together, exchange spiritual experience, and jointly undertake responsibility for the world, for secular society.

When, therefore, the groups of Christians of Action 365 are formed, aware of their socio-political responsibility in the light of their basic Christian attitude, it is possible and appropriate for them to cross denominational frontiers and come together to form ecumenical basic communities. This is particularly appropriate and even indispensable when it is a

[2] Cf. K. Rahner, 'Mut und Mühe den Glauben zu bezeugen' in *Entschluss* 1 (1980): 7-10.

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question of undertaking social responsibility for justice, love, and freedom, when there is not merely talk of this responsibility, but action in the light of it in concrete everyday life, so that the liberating power of the Gospel is attested in deed and truth before the world. In this field of social responsibility to the world on the part of Christians, however, a common task is possible for Christians of different denominations and must be undertaken jointly, because it is likely to be better and more successfully achieved in this way. Ecumenical groups with an objective, as in Action 365, are legitimate and necessary today. Otherwise, Christians do not fulfill effectively enough their common task in regard to the secular world, and the ecumenical task remains pure theory which adjourns the actual unification of Christians to the Last Day.

The special task of a socio-political character which Action 365 undertakes for its own (admittedly modest) part does not exclude but in fact includes the meeting of such groups together, even for religious and for Christian activities, for prayer. For these groups want to undertake their specific task, not in a merely secular, humanitarian spirit, but in the spirit of Christ, in the power of his death and his resurrection, in the Holy Spirit. Hence it is justified and necessary for such groups themselves to guard and continually secure afresh the innermost centre of their motivation by which their real task is sustained.

In this connection it would take us too far to enter into the problem of actual and mutual intercommunion. We can only say that in principle there can be and are legitimate wishes and attempts at the base and that, on the other hand, such intercommunion cannot be put in practice impatiently and hastily in a form which dismisses the still existing separation of the churches as simply negligible in religious and Christian terms. The exact and concrete conclusion from the dialectic of these two principles cannot be further considered at the moment.

[165] Nevertheless, there is one thing more I would like to say in this connection. It is that ecumenical basic communities like those of Action 365 must beware of the danger of becoming a kind of third denomination. I do not, of course, assume or presume that Action 365 has even a remote intention of doing anything of this kind. But there are also unforeseen dangers. A third denomination, even if it results from the intention of overcoming denominational limits, will not in fact overcome but only intensify the divisions in Christendom. Ecumenical basic communities like those of Action 365 cannot have any hope merely from their own resources, independently of the authority and the historically and sociologically existing institutions of the Church. If such basic communities were to cut themselves off in an elitist and ghettolike form from the actual churches and attempt to integrate autarchically the whole of Christian life in themselves, they would in practice form a third denomination and would therefore only increase the misery of a divided Christendom.

In such ecumenical groups, Christians belonging to particular denominations, if they are not to compromise the very thing about which they are most intimately concerned, must remain in vital contact with their own churches, must help to sustain the life of these churches (and not merely their own as communities), in patience, inward participation, and unselfish love; they must be a leaven in the churches, not seeking to remain in isolation, but intermingled with the whole mass of the Christian people. Even if it is difficult, ecumenical basic communities must share the historical burden of the old churches, maintain and cherish a living union of integration and trust with the authorities in the churches; at once humble and proud, they may perhaps regard themselves as the vanguard of the Church on pilgrimage through history, but not as an army that can be seen more closely to be fighting only for its own victories.

With all the freedom that rightly belongs to a community from below, ecumenical basic communities must always regard themselves as incorporated in the churches to which their members actively belong and want to belong, not merely accepting this situation as

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something to which they have been doomed by the past; they must in this way seek to serve the Church that is to come.

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[167]

PART FOUR

The Future of the Church

[169]

13

ETERNITY FROM TIME

SCEPTICISM IN REGARD TO ETERNAL LIFE

There can be no doubt that belief in eternal life as a consequence of survival after death has grown weaker in the consciousness of modern people. This fundamental doctrine of Christianity, scarcely affected at first by the Enlightenment from the eighteenth century onward, is now questioned, or at any rate has lost its place among those things which mainly interest people today. It is true that at all times there have been some who thought (as they put it) that death is the end of everything; but the conviction that man lives on into a definitive permanent existence was generally taken for granted and firmly established in the public mind, at least among Christian nations, but also far beyond these, even though the ideas of this life after death were and are very diverse. Today, even among Christians, what was once a basic Christian conviction is largely threatened. There are Christians who are sure of the existence of God and who lead lives according to the tenets of their religion, but who do not think it necessary to show any great interest in the question of an eternal life that is not simply identical with life here and now.

Of course, the fact that this scepticism in regard to eternal life exists in modern society does not mean that it is justified. Faced by the essential and ultimate questions of human existence, we cannot hide behind the prestige and allure of popular opinion at the present time. The lofty and sublime persuasion of a few can be the truth that holds for all, even though there are not many who acknowledge it. The ultimate truths are not found in the popular press, nor are they established by thoughtless chatter in a public house.

[170] Of course, it can readily be admitted by a Christian that the ways of presenting the idea of the perennially valid truth of eternal life are more inadequate than is necessary or avoidable, obscuring rather than elucidating the real meaning. Among these unsatisfactory ideas of eternity is that of a never ending time running on into infinity. Up to very recently preachers have too often made indiscriminate use of this idea with reference to the eternity of hell. But even modern physics knows that in order to express certain facts or realities of the physical world without getting lost in mathematical abstractness (which is also incapable by itself of bringing out what is really meant) we must work with very inadequate ideas, perhaps even with several apparently mutually contradictory ideas, which, however, can bring home to us only up to a point the meaning of the reality under discussion. If this sort of thing happens even in physics, people today ought really not to be put off (as they so readily are) by the fact that in the sphere of religion, also, more or less apt terms and ideas (for example, in regard to eternal life) can be worked out only imperfectly and arduously.

Within our present scope it is, of course, not possible even to a slight degree to make clear the existence and nature of the eternal life awaiting us. Here and now we are attempting to draw attention only to one point from this immense theme: that is, that we experience eternity in the present time in a way that constantly eludes reflection and can learn from this that the

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eternity which emerges through death out of the present time and becomes definitive cannot be conceived as a continuation of time into eternity.

THE TYRANNY OF OUR CONCEPT OF TIME

By way of preparation for our main reflections, it must again be made more clear what are the difficulties that arise if we understand eternity 'after' death as the unlimited continuation of time. If we understand eternity (which is the definitiveness of our life, emerging in time) as the running on of time with one section coming after another, each to be filled out in a new way and each different from the others, then, of course, all the semiclever and semistupid questions arise that tempt today's semiclever person to regard belief in eternal life as incredible, if not downright ridiculous. For then he can [171] ask what is to be used to fill up these ever new periods of time. Will it not gradually become boring if, as devout people think, this never stopping conveyor belt of time has its individual parts stacked again and again with the same thing, with the eternal glorification of the infinite God by his creature's praise? Why then is there no opportunity in this ever continuing time for the damned to be converted, change their outlook, repent, and thus turn their hell into heaven? Are they prevented by a God who, in a final act of despotism, refuses to accept a change of mind on the part of the lost, although there would be place for such a change and it could happen at some point in these ever continuing times ('aeons', as they are called in Scripture)?

If eternity is conceived, then, as time open to infinity, have not the world, man and his history always ahead of them that which is not yet (in other words, that which can find its place only in a future space of time), and is not heaven the very thing that may not enter into this scheme of ever continuing, continual succession in time? But if it is to go on forever, if everything that exists is no more than the starting point for attaining what is to come, and so on and so on, is not the eternity of this kind of time the damnation of Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, doomed always to roam, without ever finally arriving anywhere? Under the tyranny of this concept of time, is not the eternal heaven dissolved into an eternal hell, and vice versa? It is easy to see how dangerous and pernicious is the idea of eternity as an endless running on of time.

In order to get out of this difficulty we can, of course, in the first place say quite appropriately that a notion of eternity can be formed with the aid of a negation; excluding from the notion of the real, the permanent, and the definitive the element of sequence, of succession, of one thing after another. This method of forming a new concept by the negation of certain aspects of the present concept is not always illegitimate in principle. It is a method that is often unavoidable. With its aid a blind person, for example, can form an idea, if not a visualization, of colour and consequently gain the assurance that there are colours, even though he has never seen them; he can also hope, although blind from birth, that perhaps one day he will see. But it is a method that also has its problems. How are we to know in the concrete case whether what is conceptually grasped can really exist, even when a particular element of what is [172] experienced is excluded by a negation of this kind? In our case can there really be something permanent, if we exclude from its notion the succession that exists in all the enduring things that we directly experience?

HINTS OF AN ETERNAL REALITY

In order to gain further confidence that there can also be something permanent and eternal which is not subject to the domination of endless succession, let us take a closer look at our

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experience of time and (so I think) discover there something ‘eternal’: that is, at least something that is not simply in the ‘now’, in the mere moment of time, perishing and giving way to something else that is different from what went before, replacing this, only to be itself replaced and thrust into nothingness. We are considering the paradox of time itself which lives in secret from an eternity.

A kind of permanency in time appears at three levels. There is the necessary permanency of any reality (what we used to describe as ‘substance’) which persists while sustaining the alternation of qualities, phenomena, and occurrences. There is mental experience which combines past, present, and future in a unity. There is free personal decision which, by its very nature, does not permit what it has posited purely and simply to disappear into the void of nothingness. Let us look again a little more closely at these three hints of something eternal in the world of our experience.

THE TOTALITY OF A HISTORY

Time appears to us in the first place as a chain of individual occurrences stretching forward and backward into infinity, with each occurrence replacing the one before it and itself disappearing to make way for what follows. But at the same time, even though we are much less attentive to the fact, we are sure that these changing phenomena replacing one another are nevertheless manifestations of something permanent which (at least for a longer or shorter period) persists as the same reality, sustaining the changing appearances, bringing them together into a totality, into a history, which is in fact [173] one and does not disintegrate or crumble into a dust of pure individual moments. Something of this can be seen, for instance, in the history of a flower, continuing in varying stages from the seed until it finally withers. Or we may consider our own life history from beginning to end, in which every moment is different from the one before it and yet each is a determination of one and the same reality, which persists as the same throughout this changing history, and, as one and the same, claims for itself all these alternating moments. These identities, lying behind the alternation and contents of the moments of time and thus holding together the infinitesimally tiny elements of time, shaping out of the dust of these elements a greater, structured history, cannot as such share the quality of time itself as it divides and passes away, if they are to fulfill their task of sustaining and unifying time. If time is to make sense as a greater unity and more definite shape, as history, there must be something that we always take for granted in ordinary life and that is not simply the succession of moments of time flashing out and then fading again. There is in time something that is not identical with time itself. This something may perhaps need to expand over time if it is to be itself, but it is not identical with this extension in moments of time. Even what is properly temporal contains more than time: at least something that persists and gives a unity to time in historical temporal shapes.

MENTAL EXPERIENCE

This supra-temporal element in time becomes still more clear when we reflect on the way in which time is unified and shaped in the mental process of experiencing it. Time is not simply there; it is experienced by us, not by merely submitting to its sequence, but by confronting it, gathering together past, present, and future and mentally binding them into a unity and shape which is more than the pure succession of time where the next moment triumphs over the last by annihilating it. Someone observing this mental unifying of time, this interruption of time’s course, might retort sceptically that this time so unified, in which bare succession is

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eliminated, this time that 'stands still', ceases to run on, and consequently does not run out, is nothing but an *idea* of time, and the subject reflecting on time in this [174] way is hopelessly borne along and passes away in real time. But, if time as such is nothing but the flow of time atoms, each of which extinguishes its predecessor and is then extinguished by its successor, how can it be unified meaningfully and truly (even if merely 'in thought') into such instant time-configurations, into a history of meaning and structure, unless there is more to time itself than mere passing away?

And, even more importantly, how is the thinking subject, conferring unity and shape in time as it runs on, to be understood as capable of doing this? How can a thinking subject of this kind create a time that stands still, even merely in thought, if it is completely dependent on flowing time for its own true being, when thinking itself is also a reality, and thinking and what is thought are mutually dependent? No, if and insofar as there is a thought of time, something happens which does in fact occur in time's course, but as an event which has a peculiar superiority over time, an event intimating eternity, since the thought that thinks time is not simply time's subject.

FREE DECISIONS

Eternity is experienced in time itself most clearly when the intellectual subject in man makes a free decision which concerns and involves the one and entire person. We cannot analyze decisions of this kind in all their dimensions here. That would take too long. All that we can say is that there are free decisions in man, involving the person's total self-disposal, for which he bears an ultimate, inescapable responsibility, a responsibility which he cannot shift off to anyone or anything else, neither by a psychology seeking to break down the ultimate character of man as subject nor by social sciences seeking to reduce man to a pure effect of social conditions. But (and this in the long run is unavoidable and inexorably occurs at certain points, whether there is any very explicit and theoretical reflection on it or not) if someone says as he proceeds to act, 'I am inexorably and inescapably responsible for this, there is nothing in the last resort to which I can appeal to relieve me of responsibility', he can simultaneously think and say, 'Not that all this is so important or so bad. For when the end really comes I can always take refuge in the [175] empty void where no one can reach me any longer, neither the voice of conscience nor world history nor any God.' No, ultimate personal decisions, at least when they involve a life in its totality, are irrevocable, they are truly eternity coming to be in time. Of course, if we had time to do so, we would have to ask here about the possibility of repentance and conversion within the continuing course of the time and history of man, we would have to bear in mind the essentially dialogic character of human freedom, to which God assigns a decisive role in this history of freedom. But none of these things would remove the basic fact, rooted in the nature of this freedom and its inextricable responsibility, that freedom in the last resort (and, indeed, freedom alone) wills and posits finality and unrevisability, that this implies the finality, the eternity of the existence of this freedom and consequently does not permit this freedom any flight from responsibility into the void. Here time really creates eternity and eternity is experienced in time.

ACCEPTING INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

There may perhaps be some doubt as to whether our suggestions provide adequate illumination for the understanding of that eternity which we as Christians hope to reach as

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our definitive life after death. But I think that these suggestions at least show that it cannot be said that each and every thing within the range of our experience is so exclusively and solely temporal that we can think meaningfully of something as real only by thinking of it either as existing simply here and now and then disappearing into the void or as a reality consisting merely of an unlimited number of moments of time continuing always without end and incapable in principle of offering any scope for a decision of freedom that posits a real finality. Both these ideas (that is, of time as ending in the void or of time as never ceasing) are equally incompatible with the Christian belief in eternal life. And neither of these ideas can appeal to the actual experience we have of time if we unhesitatingly permit the *whole* experience to speak for itself.

These merely tentatively outlined considerations must, however, allow us to draw a few conclusions for concrete life. First of all, even in this way, it becomes evident that we cannot positively imagine [176] here the concreteness of our eternal life. We know, it is true, that it will be an existence and life that has God himself in himself as its content, a life that implies love, limitless knowledge, supreme happiness, and so on. But how all this can be experienced in the concreteness of a state beyond time, what is the meaning of transfigured corporality, eternal fellowship with the redeemed, and so on: this is something we cannot concretely imagine or picture to ourselves here and now. We Christians need not be disturbed today if we can scarcely summon up the courage to see it all as depicted from Scripture up to Dante, and even subsequently. For we are actually going into the unknown, the unimaginable, and, properly speaking, know only that it is filled with the incomprehensibility of God and his love and that it is final. It is sufficient to accept for ourselves now the incomprehensibility of our eternal life and nevertheless to go on hoping and trusting. Our experience of time (which is always a mysterious experience of something more than time) certainly gives us the right not to hold suspect as empty speculation our ‘no’ to time in the concept of eternity; but it certainly does not relieve us of the decision to say this ‘no’ to time in our ‘yes’ to eternity. Thus it leaves our life one of faith and hope that must still wait for the definitive end and has no power triumphantly to exhibit it before the fact.

VICTORY OF GOD’S LOVE

In the third case of eternity in time, which we considered briefly, it becomes clear, if we look closely enough, that our eternal life, however much it will then be filled with God himself, will he the definitiveness of that moral and free act of our life in which (beyond all the dividedness of time) as one and whole, we made ourselves the persons we wanted finally to be. But if our eternity is thus nothing but the now definitive history which we ourselves freely made, then we can see with both horror and supreme delight the immense grandeur, depth, and density of those acts in which our whole life is involved. Of course, in our life there is a great deal of routine and superficiality that is unavoidable, in which freedom occurs without bearing any trace of finality or eternity. If, however, there is such a thing as eternal life at all, if it is not merely something different added to our [177] temporal life and likewise stretching out over time, if it is truly the finality of this present life of freedom which fittingly comes to a final and definitive consummation, only then can be seen the unfathomable depths and the richness of our existence, of that existence which often gives the impression of consisting of nothing but banalities. Where an ultimate responsibility is assumed in obedience to a person’s own conscience, where ultimate selfless love and fidelity are given, where an ultimate selfless obedience to truth regardless of self is lived out, and so on, at this point there is really in our life something that is infinitely precious, that of itself has the right and reality not to perish, that is able to fill out an eternity, that actually deserves not merely to be rewarded (a

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misleading expression, savouring of selfishness) by perpetual eternity but to claim this as its most authentic right, as its most intimate nature.

This is the dignity and potentiality with which we human beings are endowed – all of us, not merely the great geniuses of mankind, not merely a Buddha or a Socrates, but all of us, even though there are far too many who seem to be terribly mediocre, mayflies, as it were. But the truth proclaimed by Christianity is that in this time (apparently stretching out endlessly, in order to reproduce in an eternal recurrence always the same thing and always that which perishes in the eternal cycle of coming and going), whenever life is lived in faith, hope, and love, eternity truly occurs: eternity which does not come only to depart, which persists and (this is what matters) is such that its persistence means supreme happiness and not hell, since it has received God himself and thus is really worthy of being definitive and forever. Of course, in principle, it must be firmly maintained that man's history of freedom can also produce a person's similarly timeless definitive perdition. But what Christianity really proclaims as essential is not the equal possibility of these *two* ways of passing from time to eternity, but the victory of the love of God who bestows himself in and through our freedom: it points to the cross and resurrection of Jesus as to the event of this now manifest victory of God's love. This love is the cause and guarantee that our brief time, which passes away, creates an eternity which is not made up out of time. If it seems that we perish in death, since the dead do not become perceptible again anywhere where time goes on, this is merely a sign that eternity, born from time, is something other than what can readily be seen here and now.

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[179]

PART FIVE

Sin and Suffering

[181]

14

PURGATORY

When people belonging to the same profession are talking together about their professional concerns they naturally use a highly specialized language not easily understood by outsiders. Not only has this language its own peculiar terminology but it is often spoken in a very casual and offhand manner. It is the same with theologians.

A short time ago one theologian said to another, 'The pope insisted again yesterday on the traditional doctrine of purgatory.' The other replied, 'I've nothing against that. But if I only knew what exactly I am supposed to believe in this respect! Do you know? Can you look into the pope's mind to see what he was thinking? I can't. Anyway, if you could, it would presumably still be doubtful whether what the pope precisely understood by purgatory in this declaration would as such be absolutely binding on me as a matter of faith.' 'But', the first theologian then said, 'You and the pope know the other doctrinal declarations of the Church to which this new exhortation refers, and, without looking into the pope's mind, you can see precisely what purgatory means by reading these older and lengthy declarations.'

'O Lord,' said the second theologian, 'if only it was as simple as you think. These older definitions in Denzinger – or am I to consult also as many theologians as possible? – must first of all be scrutinized to see to what extent they are regarded as binding by the teaching authority. This, in fact, varies. It can vary considerably. Think, for instance, of the ideas of purgatory formerly implied in declarations about the extent of "temporal punishment" remitted by indulgences: the kind of declarations which the Church today somewhat [182] shamefacedly almost completely avoids. And if I examine critically and sift through these official teachings of the Church on purgatory (which is not only my right but also my duty as a theologian), am I then bound to believe in what Paul VI still described as "expiation in the fire" of purgatory, or can I be content with the Tridentine profession of faith, which states that there is a place of purification and that the souls detained there are helped by the intercession of the faithful? And if I do not feel particularly tied to the idea of fire and torment (St. Catherine of Genoa also had a different idea of purgatory) and consequently need not rack my brain to find a way of imagining this fire, without having to resort to mythology, what is the meaning in other parts of this teaching on purgatory of "souls" (if the term is not to be taken in a mainly Platonic sense)? How are they "detained"? By what means are they "purified"? Why is this purification a "penalty"? Can we say that what is apparently to be removed by this purification is an internal state produced in these "souls" by sins committed during life and not yet completely eradicated by turning to God and being forgiven? Or is it a question of penalties imposed as it were from outside by God's justice, penalties which quite simply have to be paid? But how are these penalties conceivable if it is assumed that they bear no relation to the internal moral quality of the "poor souls"? Must we regard purgatory as a process which goes on in a temporal succession which is more or less the same as the time we experience here in our history?

'These and similar questions cannot simply be thrust aside. If we are to believe the

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Church's teaching on purgatory, we must believe *something* that can be given formal expression. Or are we simply not to pursue these questions further? Can we answer them without going back to the complicated and obscure history of this doctrine? But how are we to do that if it only means that everything will become more obscure and more difficult than before and if the normal believer cannot by any means investigate these things for himself? There is not much to be got out of Scripture, whether of the Old or the New Testament, particularly if we may hold the opinion that prayers for the dead do not necessarily imply a doctrine of purgatory. If we turn to the Fathers of the Church, there are certainly not a few whom we could name as upholding some kind of doctrine of purgatory. But does this mean *ipso facto* that such an idea is part of revealed doctrine and binding as such or might it not be merely an [183] ideal type which in the last resort remains without binding force and which enables us to satisfy our curiosity by finding answers to questions which we ought to leave unanswered in the presence of the silent majesty of death?

'Of course, people can always insist that the Church's sense of faith at least from the Middle Ages onward has clung stubbornly to the existence of purgatory, even though the emergence of this decision of faith came after an obscure earlier history, and, consequently, the essential question has in fact already been decided. But even if we leave aside the question of how precisely the nature of divine revelation is to be understood and how from that standpoint a material criterion can be established to settle the question of what can belong *a priori* to the real substance of revelation and what from the very outset cannot (a question which might lead to considerable difficulties when applied to the doctrine of purgatory), this kind of dogmatic positivism does not take us very much farther. For (as I have said frequently enough already) the question remains of what is the binding content of this official teaching of the Church on purgatory.'

The other theologian broke in impatiently, 'Can we not formulate this teaching in a way that, on the one hand, completely accords with the Church's older doctrinal statements and with Rome's exhortations at the present time and yet, on the other hand, permits us to see in this formulation something that seems "realizable", intelligible, credible, and compatible with the rest of our anthropology?'

'How, then?' asked the other.

'I shall try to do so as well as I can', was the answer. 'Of course, I assume here (without attempting to justify this belief) the permanency of the person in death. I say "permanency" because I think it will be a good thing to refrain from the outset from more precise suggestions as to how this permanency might be more concretely imagined, how it might be given more tangible form, if it were associated with the permanency that is realized in a sequence of events in time. For it seems to me that things cannot simply go on after death in temporal extension, since that would mean that the finality of judgment at death (at least for someone who has come to a radical personal decision in his earthly life) is no longer credible. Over and above this, the problems raised in regard to time in a modern metaphysics or even physics of cognition certainly permit me to think [184] that what we know and take for granted as time is far from being a determination of reality that is always and everywhere valid. I have no intention of forgetting what I have just said in what I am about to say. I assume that the one human being, despite the unity of his origin and goal, is also an inwardly plural being, about whom, from the very nature of the case, diverse statements can rightly be made which are really true of *him* and yet determine him in different ways and refer to different realities in him.

'I am expressing myself in this roundabout way because I want to avoid the term "part", which is constantly liable to lead to the mistaken assumption that unity (even in man) must subsequently be regarded as made up of "parts", or (conversely) that we can quite naturally and simply discover and say something about one part of the one reality without qualifying

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the whole at the same time. But let us leave aside the difficult problems and paradoxes associated with an existent that is really one and yet plural in the sense that a determination does not affect everything about it in the same way, that opposites can be predicated of it, even though these contradictory statements cannot be made about it simply (as we usually say) in the same respect. This singular state of affairs can, of course, be "visualized" simply by regarding the contradictory statements as true of different "pieces" or "parts", but this is to forget that these "parts" are really those of an existent that is absolutely truly one. But again let us leave aside the metaphysics and epistemology of a plural "one" in which plurality and unity are really true in the same way.

'We assume that a human being has a history in which not everything happens at one and the same time, that something "about" him can be completed, without this completedness having to be or being able to be predicated immediately of each and every thing "about" him. In his normal self-understanding everyone makes this (abstractly formulated) assumption, not merely with reference to his body (in which a person's pain "in" his leg is not actually a pain "in" his arm, although in both instances it is "his" pain), but also in much more "existential" events and situations. He is perhaps sure that he loves God and yet does not venture to assert that he loves God with all his heart, that his whole existence is integrated into this love: he admits that in him are abysmal depths, a mass of instincts, a subconscious, an "id", etc., as realities of which it certainly cannot [185] be said that they are all completely integrated into the personal decision of the subject that has decided or can decide finally for or against God. At this point, however, it must be noted that a Christian anthropology which upholds the fundamental unity of the one human being and takes this seriously cannot assume that these unintegrated realities of the person simply cease with death as the "separation of body and soul" and thus become irrelevant to the permanent existence of the personal subject, or that they are abolished by what can be regarded as a purely juridical decree of God. Under these circumstances death presumably opens up several possibilities. Perhaps the unintegrated elements in man are incorporated into the final personal decision, now become definitive in death, in a lengthy "process" which (while still maintaining what I said earlier about the release of the deceased person from our time) might nevertheless be seen as analogous to the present time in a way that by and large corresponds to the traditional idea of purgatory. With the aid of an idea of this kind it might be possible to see that death as a task to be accomplished within quite definite spatio-temporal limits does not necessarily mean a pure and simple departure from this material world as a whole, so that the subject now become definitive in principle in its personal decision can and must still continue in its own way to participate in the fundamental temporality and historicity of the world, even if it has reached its consummation in the immediate vision of God. It could also be pointed out that the idea of the lot of a "dead" person as a kind of process is so widespread in the history of religion that these convictions should not be too quickly laid aside in a spirit of modern rationalistic scepticism, particularly since (for the Christian) such convictions and ideas have also exercised an influence on Christian doctrine and its development and presumably had a good deal to do with the ready acceptance of Christian teaching on purgatory in former times.

'There is another way of looking at the question. Perhaps what happens is not, properly speaking, a process; but, nevertheless, this total integration in and through death, which comes to prevail in the whole length and breadth of the person's existence as the result of a final basic decision, can be seen at least analogously as taking place in time. Under these circumstances the notions of time used univocally or analogously in the traditional doctrine of purgatory would not refer directly to the properties of what is understood as real in [186] the doctrine of purgatory, but would serve as vivid illustrations of the fact that a person is really a plural being, the total existence of which is not actually realized at one stroke from the very outset, and, consequently, that the actual realization of the totality of its existence is

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dependent in the most varied and indeterminable ways on preconditions which are not simply implicit in the "good will" of the basic decision. It is difficult to say whether I am not getting lost in this web of ideas that I have spun, whether I am not getting involved in contradictions or theological impossibilities. But are we simply to remain silent from the very outset in face of the majestic darkness of death, content with the assumption that the Christian sustained by hope falls through death into the incomprehensibility of God, to regard this as "beatifying", and thus to refrain from all further differentiations in regard to life "after" death? If, however, we want to take seriously the traditional teaching on purgatory, with its bold differentiation, and yet not to picture the hereafter to ourselves as if we had already been there and were quite familiar with it (an impression only too obviously created by the doctrine of purgatory as traditionally formulated), then we are faced by the question of whether, without contradicting the official teaching on purgatory, we may take it to mean that everything happens in death itself, that the "purification" in purgatory is an aspect of death itself and can be made intelligible in the light of the different characteristics of death itself. Can we then say that the doctrine of purgatory is in fact a kind of thanatology presented with a different imagery and under different aspects, but uncurtailed and not oversimplified? Even if we attempt to eliminate all temporal elements in this imagery, we must still give some explanation of how the elements of the traditional imagery can be understood as realized in the very event of death.

'Why should that be absolutely impossible? Why could not the "duration" of the event of purification be identified with the (diverse) depth and intensity of the pain that man experiences in death itself, since there is a terrible difference between what he actually is and what he ought to be? Why should this pain (which is concretely identical with the individual character of dying proper to each person in accordance with his state) not itself be the purifying event which is supposed to constitute the essence of purgatory? Why could suffrages for the deceased in "purgatory" not be related to the occurrence of death? If we do not know even in the light of the [187] traditional idea of purgatory whether the deceased for whom we pray are "still" in purgatory and if we nevertheless regard these suffrages as appropriate in any case, then it cannot be unreasonable to relate our intercessions to that death, no matter when precisely in our earthly time these prayers were said. (Jesus' prayer on the cross was certainly meaningful even for those people who had lived long before him.) It is not indeed particularly easy to see how it is possible on account of God's retributive justice to detain in purgatory someone who has already completed his true inward development (including, of course, the integration of his whole being into the love of God) and has still to suffer only outwardly through God's retributive justice, even though this suffering does not bring him to a greater maturity. But if we reject such an idea, there is really no longer any reason to deny that purgatory takes place in death itself. If someone were to introduce an element of time into the very occurrence of death (in the withdrawal from the present world), which need not be regarded as *a priori* unreasonable, then it would still be possible to avoid the idea of a time in "purgatory" "after" death and there would be no need subsequently to qualify this idea with the statement that time in purgatory is only "analogous" to the time with which we are familiar.

'But now', said the theologian, 'I have been talking far too long and not made the matter any clearer. To be honest', he said, 'it must be admitted that the doctrine of purgatory does not seem particularly important today even to the devout Christian. The latter (as he hopes) submits willingly to death and thinks that he falls then into the hands of an infinite, loving God who brings everything to perfection, even though (as far as our experience goes) we surrender ourselves to him as imperfect beings. We think, moreover, that we can pray with the Church for the deceased, that we ourselves can thus entrust those with whom we are united to eternal light and unending peace. Is that not sufficient? Does the traditional doctrine

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of purgatory really amount to more in existential faith? I don't know. But when I recall the modest statements of Scripture I am inclined to answer this question in the negative. This does not at all mean that I would blame for this reason the people who can see more clearly in the traditional doctrine of purgatory what we all certainly maintain and who therefore cling to this traditional statement.'

The other theologian had listened patiently to these lengthy explanations, [188] without interrupting. But now he suggested that the whole problem should be considered again from a completely different aspect. 'All you have said up to now', he declared, 'is true enough. But you really ought not to take this doctrine of purgatory straight from Denzinger and then try to interpret it "speculatively" in isolation. This traditional teaching was not simply telephoned down from heaven just as it stands; it was not inscribed by heaven on our minds as on a *tabula rasa*, but has also at least historical roots in human thought and speculation which can be traced back long before the time of Christian revelation properly so-called. But if this doctrine has emerged out of a context and milieu of this kind, then we ought also today to reflect again more explicitly on this context. At the same time, what interests me here is not precisely the concrete form in which belief in a life after death was actually portrayed in the course of the history of religion. But the conviction that the human person survives beyond death and leads a life of a very definite kind is immensely widespread in the whole breadth and depth of the history of mankind and of religion. Has all this nothing to do with the doctrine of purgatory?

'Of the many questions into which this question could be split up, there is one that particularly interests me. I shall attempt to state and explain it. Christian eschatology tends basically to assume that the death of the individual directly and immediately involves the "particular judgment", that this person's history is definitively completed and (leaving aside the possibility of definitive perdition in "hell") that the beatific vision unites him to the primal ground of all reality radically anticipating everything in itself and thus any further development of personal history is superseded. But can we really admit that this description of the human condition after death tells the whole story? We can think also of a plurality of acts on the part of the blessed in heaven, we can portray the "communion of saints" as one in which individuals are involved with one another, etc. By and large we have few speculative misgivings as to why the most radical act of existence in the immediate vicinity of the one and absolute being of God should not have superseded from the very outset the development of any plurality of existence on man's part; nor does it matter very much or at all if we console ourselves with the thought that unity with the deepest source of all reality brings a person into immediate contact with all that emerges in continuous [189] creation from this source. Christianity regards man's consummation as so radical that it leaves no scope for a pluralistic self-realization. In the beatific vision the variety of connections to the pluralistic world is already grasped in its originally single ground. It may then be thought that as we descend with this plural world set up by God in his generous love, we share in a way in its consummation. But if we express it in this way, in order to safeguard the closeness of the blessed to the world unfolded in its plurality, we are really saying that the relationship of the deceased person to the world is quite different from what it was before death.

'The doctrine of purgatory brings a peculiar qualification to this eschatological idea of Christianity, which sees survival as from God in the beatific vision and not as emerging from history. It places between death and radical eschatology understood in the light of God a (brief) intermediate state in which, on the one hand, man's radical consummation is not yet supposed to exist (whether this "not yet" is imagined or contrasted with our normal categories of time) and in which, on the other hand, things do not simply go on as before. What happens, then, in this intermediate state? The answer found in the traditional doctrine of purgatory is that through suffering, expiation for sin is made here and the soul is purified. But it cannot be

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denied that an answer of this kind is, first, terribly formal and abstract and, second, really has no connection with what such a "soul" inevitably is, what it has and does, since we cannot really imagine that its life and activity is nothing but "suffering".

'Here, I think, it might be helpful to recall the religious tradition of mankind on life beyond the grave. Complex, confusing, and in many ways contradictory as this tradition may be and however much our reservations in regard to ideas of time in this connection must be maintained, nevertheless in these traditions of mankind there are ideas of a further development of those who have died, partly even of wholly welcome further developments, of an enduring and active relationship with the world, the environment, and the milieu to which they formerly belonged. If and insofar as these ideas could be based on experience (and from a theological standpoint this ought not to be denied outright from the very outset, since it is a question of realities coming *before* a person's radical withdrawal from the world by the beatific vision), the question might be asked whether humanly speaking (even if not properly in the light of faith) we have [190] not the opportunity and the right to introduce into the traditional doctrine of purgatory such ideas where they are appropriate and not mythological portrayals of the hereafter (which are completely useless today). The traditional doctrine of purgatory, reduced to what is really binding as a matter of faith, leaves ample abstractly formal scope for the use perhaps of some of the material derived from these traditions of mankind. In this way we might make a little progress. These traditions of humanity, in which there is in fact no trace of the absolutely radical doctrine of the immediate vision of God, would then not be opposed to this properly Christian eschatology, but would refer to the human dimension and the human consummation which are asserted in principle, even though very abstractly, by the doctrine of purgatory and distinguished from the beatific vision.

'What has just been said, merely by way of suggestion, may not seem particularly exciting to an average Christian. But perhaps what has been said might be grasped somewhat more "existentially" in the light of further questions. Are the eschatological statements of Christianity really binding as a matter of faith insofar as they refer absolutely to *all* human beings, to all who were human biologically and in their mental capacity? Or are they statements of faith only with reference to people who have fulfilled themselves and reached finality in a free decision? The traditional teaching assumes that the first of these alternatives is obviously true, as, for instance, the teaching of the Fifth Lateran Council on the immortality of the soul as true of any soul that ever existed, whatever its state may have been immediately before death. But is that certainly true? To put it more cautiously, is this doctrine of the final permanency of human spirit-persons and of their final destiny in the immediate possession of God or in eternal perdition true and binding as a matter of faith with regard to those who never reached finality as a result of self-fulfillment in freedom?

'If we accept this, we ought to admit (at least with further assumptions, which however are taken for granted in traditional eschatology) that the majority of heaven's inhabitants (at least if we include today, as opposed to the Augustinian tradition, children who die unbaptized) consists of people who never came to a personal decision, that eternal bliss must be regarded partly as the fruit of a free act (under the influence of grace, of course) and partly as the fruit of a merely natural happening. (But, despite Romano Guardini, it cannot [191] be said that the eternal happiness of baptized infants demonstrates the free unmeritedness of divine grace, for freedom gained by salvation is itself supreme grace, since freedom and grace are not in competition.) It can, of course, be said that in the last resort we know nothing about all these things. But the traditional doctrine of limbo in particular and of the salvation of the baptized who died in infancy crosses this frontier, at which people would be glad to come to a stop, by regarding statements about the hereafter as absolutely binding only with reference to the person who has reached his consummation in the realization of his radical freedom. Would a

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mid-way solution (in the light of the doctrine of purgatory) be conceivable here, by seeing an opportunity of free personal decision as open to these others within the confines of "purgatory"?

'At this point, I think, we should not apply too hastily or too summarily the principle that with the death of a person his history of freedom is always and inevitably at an end, that he is definitively judged according to his works in this life. The principle is correct. But in the cases to be considered here this history of freedom has not even begun and the death to be considered here is not by any means death in the full theological sense as freedom made definitive, the freedom with which a person radically disposes of himself for finality. If there is such a state as purgatory which does not come into existence merely by an external decree and intervention of God, but is a connatural consequence of the nature of the plural human being, then I could imagine that it might offer opportunities and scope for a postmortal history of freedom to someone who had been denied such a history in his earthly life. To be honest, the thought of something like this seems to me more probable than the idea that there are people who continue to exist and to whom God has refused for all eternity to permit this eternity of theirs to be also the finality of their act of freedom. These "blessed ones" would be people who had never freely loved God for all eternity, whose eternal love had never passed into finality through the gate of their freedom. I find an idea of this kind dreadful.

'It may, of course, be asked if there is not some way of avoiding this conclusion other than the one we have suggested. But how? I cannot see any other distinct possibility. The theory put forward by Ladislaus Boros (that such a decision occurs "in" death, and even with "infants"), examined more closely, seems to be merely another [192] way of expressing what was meant here. For this theory allows for an opportunity which is opened up *through* the medical exitus and does not precede the latter: that is, it comes "after" death, particularly since there is no solid empirical basis for the assumption that the people considered here have the opportunity of a decision of this kind before death. On the other hand, the intention in our reflections was to bring purgatory (if we may express it in this way) into the closest proximity to death.

'For my own part I really have little time for the theory of a "migration of souls", or similar ideas. But, if we consider how widespread is this idea in space and time, not to be found today only in some narrower cultural group, if we do not assume far too hastily and as a matter of course that our Western attitude alone is the correct one, then we may wonder whether there may not be some truth in this theory of the migration of souls. Then, however we may want to modify this theory from the standpoint of a metaphysical and realistic anthropology, we might raise the question as to whether there could not be a place in the light of the doctrine of purgatory for such a modified theory of the transmigration of souls even within the scheme of Christian dogmatics. I say "modified", since the doctrine of purgatory could be understood as providing an opportunity for *those* who did not reach a final personal decision in this earthly (or, first) life and, of course, not for others. Christianity, it is true, rightly presumes that such a definitive personal decision is certainly made in the normal case of *one* human life, even though it is a life that has to be lived in a very primitive way, and, conversely, a tolerable theory of the migration of souls also assumes that the eternal cycle of a person's birth and death can be brought to a halt: in other words, there is that decision which Christianity assumes as normally happening in every life.

'The traditional teaching on the lot of infants, however, also assumes without hesitation that these children, if baptized, enter into their eternal happiness without a personal decision in freedom, since it has no doubt about a happy lot of such baptized infants. Even according to traditional Christian teaching then, there are cases in which a personal decision in freedom does not take place: in other words, the question cannot be avoided as to whether and how something can still happen that was not possible in a particular life. If someone does not, in

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the light of a Western mentality, for metaphysical [193] or existential-ontological reasons regard the migration of souls as *a priori* absurd, he might, I think, raise the question of whether an Eastern person could find it possible to tolerate a modified theory of the migration of souls without contradicting Christian dogma.

'Once more, this theory would have to be modified for a Christian, since the latter in any case has the opportunity (and indeed the presumption) of a definitive decision for or against God and consequently may not raise doubts about the end of temporal history, and, of course, must also reject a reincarnation in subhuman creatures. At the same time, after all, it must be remembered that in any case the Christian (despite the presumption just mentioned) and the advocate of a theory of migration of souls know nothing that is absolutely certain about how many cases there are of human beings for whom there is not an absolute decision for or against God in a particular life. The former cannot deny that there are such cases, according to traditional doctrine; the latter cannot know if such a case is normal in relation to the totality of human beings.'

'It seems to me', said the first theologian, now more or less exhausted, 'that we have terribly little exact knowledge when it comes to eschatology. Whenever we reflect more closely on what is really meant by the traditional formularies, we get involved in obscurities and uncertainties.'

'What do you mean, obscure and uncertain?' retorted the other. 'If, when I pray, I say that I hope and believe in eternal life, I know what I am saying and all the obscurities and uncertainties surrounding this statement amount for me only to the assumption that I am surrendering myself unreservedly but in hope to the eternal mystery which is called God and says yes to myself.'

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[194]

15

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW US TO SUFFER?

Why does God allow us to suffer? is the question with which we now propose to deal. It can scarcely be denied that this is one of the most fundamental questions of human existence. Here and there perhaps there may be a fortunate few who do not appreciate its importance. But most people are not so fortunate and it is certain that those who are will sooner or later be faced with suffering and then they, too, will be unable to avoid this question which is universal, universally oppressive, and touches our existence at its very roots. At the beginning, then, we need say only that this is not an easy question, prompted like many others by idle curiosity, but we are not going to approach it from the outset in a spirit of world-weariness or to talk about its terrible import in terms of sentimental lyricism.

PERMISSIVE SUFFERING

Why does God allow us to suffer? This does not seem to me a bad way of formulating our question. If, for the moment, we understand the term ‘God’ as referring to the one and primal reality which sustains everything and which, as such, can authenticate the question of the unity and meaning of all realities experienced or open to experience by us (so that we are not forbidden from the very outset to raise the question of the unity, meaning, and goal of all realities, as if it were pointless), then it is clear from the outset not only that we can and must ask whether there is suffering, what it is, and where it comes from, but that we also may and must immediately ask why [195] *God* allows us to suffer in this way. Although this is an absolutely fundamental question, it is not by any means settled in advance from the very outset that we are bringing an absolutely firm notion of God to our question of suffering; the possibility remains entirely open that we shall gain a more or less correct idea of God only when we attempt to answer this question of ours and that the idea would not be accessible to us at all apart from our question.

Why does God *allow* us to suffer? This, too, seems to me an appropriate way of formulating the question, since it embraces deliberately in summary form without discrimination the different real or conceivable possibilities of God’s relationship to our suffering: in other words, in this connection it does not make the traditional distinctions, for instance, between permitting and causing. And rightly so.

Obviously, the legitimacy, or in other words, the objective justification of such a distinction (especially that between causing and permitting), is not to be questioned, since respect for God’s absolute holiness and goodness forbids us to attribute to him the sin of the free creature and the resultant suffering simply in the same way as we attribute that suffering which does not arise in the first and last place from a creaturely sin and nevertheless is present in the world. But, even if the legitimacy of this traditional and inevitable distinction remains unaffected, it can and must be said at once here that in the last resort the distinction is of secondary importance and does not forbid us to ask in one and the same question and at the same time about God’s relationship to all suffering in every form. For what does ‘permitting’ mean when we are talking about a God who is purely and simply the ground and cause of all reality, who, moreover, in the absolute sovereignty of his freedom and power, in no way restricted by anyone or anything, encompasses all creaturely freedom and does not come up against any limit there? All this (perhaps regarded as more obvious than it really is)

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was stated in particular by all classical schools of Christian theology from Augustine onward more radically than would be assumed by popular thought on the relationship between God and the world. What does 'permitting' mean, if according to the theology (particularly of the classical schools) on the relationship between divine and human freedom there can be no doubt that God, without in any way infringing or diminishing the freedom of the creature, in his predestination [196] could so forestall creaturely freedom that in practice sin as 'no' to his holy will did not occur in the world; if in the last resort it is contrary to classical theological metaphysics to assert (as a widespread popular apologetics asserts) that God *must* 'permit' sin in his world if, as is his right, he wants to have creaturely freedom in his world?

On this point it is irrelevant in the last resort whether this classical theological metaphysics has grasped the situation accurately enough or in fact has overlooked something. Particularly from this standpoint, it *cannot* be said that there is an indissoluble connection between this freedom willed by God in the world and the actual sin of the creature. If there is not this connection, the distinction between God's permitting and his causing something may still be meaningful. But the distinction does not itself provide an answer to the question of how and why God can permit sin and consequently the suffering that sin incurs. Having regard to God's omnipotent freedom, which knows no bounds, causing and permitting seem to us to come so closely together that we can ask quite simply why God allows us to suffer, without having to distinguish *a priori* in this 'allowing' by God between permitting and causing. We are still only at the preliminary stage of scrutinizing our question as such.

It must be asked whether the question makes sense if everything that can be described as suffering is reduced to one concept or covered by a single word. If this happens, utterly different realities are subsumed under one notion: a procedure that is always extremely dangerous. Without denying the interconnection of the most diverse realities in the world, we must certainly make a clear distinction between the suffering, on the one hand, that is involved *with* and *in* man's free act of sin or arises directly out of it and, on the other hand, all the incidents that involve suffering but cannot be ascribed on the basis of our ordinary experience to man's freely committed sin and nevertheless constitute the greater part of the suffering in the world, particularly since they are largely very obviously partial causes and preconditions of that moral evil in the world which is itself suffering and produces suffering. Since, then, sin arising from creaturely freedom (which is never absolute) is itself by its very nature interwoven in an indissoluble and undelimitable way with other suffering; since, in other words, it is not by any means self-explanatory on its own account; since (and this will have to be [197] stated more precisely later) it points to the mystery of God and the mystery of other innocent suffering and since for this reason, of course, an appeal to *other* creaturely freedom (for instance, of the 'angels' or of the 'devils') in the last resort does not get us any further, even though it might be justified in itself, our basic question is then justified if it concentrates on suffering in its entirety without for that reason denying the distinctions involved: How can God let us suffer?

ATTEMPTS AT A THEISTIC ANSWER

If we want to consider how this question might be answered, we must first of all scrutinize the answers usually given. In accordance with the question as stated here, we are, of course, at the moment scrutinizing only answers that come within the scope of a *theistic* world vision. We are therefore not interested in what a convinced atheist or a sceptical positivist would say, in what would be the attitude of a thinker for whom the world from the outset and also in its ultimate roots exists in an absolute dualism of good and evil or for whom the co-existence of light and darkness, day and night, good and evil, is something simply to be taken for granted

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and requires no elucidation or justification; for these, what we call 'evil' – as a *necessary* dialectic to the good – could not by any means arouse that protest which the theist in particular raises against suffering in the name of an infinitely good God. Within the scope of a theistic basic conviction there are always several possible answers to our basic question. None of them, it should be stressed, need be pointless or absolutely exclude a different answer. The only question is whether these traditional answers are sufficient in the last resort or whether they simply do not provide any solution to the basic question. Let us see.

Suffering as a Natural Side Effect in an Evolving World

A first attempt to answer our question, more or less distinctly articulated, tends to see suffering as a practically unavoidable side effect [198] in a pluralistic and evolving world. If we look more closely (it is claimed) the world is not a particularly bad place; it consists in fact of many complex realities which do not *a priori* fit in smoothly with one another. The struggle for existence is part of biological development: it is unavoidable and there is no reason to sing sad dirges because the pike swallows the young whitefish or because the female insect sometimes devours the male after copulation. To interpret biological activity as suffering is merely stupid: it is a simple fact and in no way open to an interpretation of this kind. What we call pain and death in this sphere are no more than a ruse of nature, an artifice, to gain more life.

According to this theory, in the last resort moral evil and the suffering that it involves must also be understood in the same way. These, too, are frictional phenomena which necessarily accompany mind, freedom, and moral development. Evil is no more than the good that is not yet perfect or the inescapable tribute which the finite mind must pay to its material foundations on which it rests and which it has to use. In the last resort, evil is to be ascribed merely to what is otherwise known as suffering in the material world, to be explained entirely as a consequence of heredity, social conditions, psychological misdirections, bad education, etc. An adequate elucidation might well lead to an understanding and explanation of physical and moral suffering of such a kind as to show up a serious protest against it as a foolish exaggeration of the demands which a materially conditioned mind can properly make on reality. We must see without illusions the limits of the possible and not to be too demanding. Then it becomes immediately clear that God created a really good world and the question of whether it is the best of all possible worlds can be left aside.

What is to be said about this first attempt to interpret suffering in the world and at the same time to provide a justification of God the Creator? As outlined here it is certainly not to be regarded as superficial or stupid. It is also an answer to be considered more seriously by some of those who indulge in self-torment with their protests against this dark world and their own terrible existence; they might perhaps wonder whether their protest is not permeated by an exaggerated self-esteem which only creates further suffering by its implicit complaint about an injury done to itself. But in the last resort this answer is in fact unsatisfactory and superficial. In view of the [199] limited scope of the question as formulated here, let us leave aside the problem of how pain and death are to be viewed within the dimension of purely biological existence as such. Strictly within this dimension many a protest against suffering may well be inappropriate. We shall refrain from any judgment about this here, even though the groaning of the nonhuman creature, of which Paul speaks, can provide food for thought and suggest a degree of caution. But this first answer breaks down as soon as we see how these physico-biological contradictions are projected into the dimension of spiritual personality and freedom.

Of course, there is a great deal in the realm of freedom and personal history that is

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determined or co-determined by material or biological conditions and, in fact, to an extent that can scarcely be exaggerated. But the observation of the fact that the realization of the spirit, of freedom and personal decision, is thus materially conditioned does not as such solve the problem of this conditioning. There ought to be freedom, self-determination, unrepeatable uniqueness. When the attempt is made to realize these things, it can only be by coming up against the anonymous constraint of biological necessity and universal law; what is meant to be spirit in unique freedom becomes matter under universal compulsion. Under these circumstances pain could be eliminated and explained only if it were possible to regard spirit as a secondary manifestation of matter. But that is impossible. Moreover the history of freedom does not permit suffering to be played down. It is not sufficient to ascribe suffering to the hardships arising from the material world as such. Freedom as such itself produces suffering and pain and death.

It is possible to imagine freedom and its dignity existing without suffering in paradisiacal harmony. But in practice, freedom as such has produced immense and indescribable suffering that cannot be blamed on material and biological conditions. Responsibility for the march into the gas chambers of Auschwitz cannot be spread over the phenomena leading to the plunge of a swarm of migratory ants into an abyss. Evil is not merely a complicated case of what is biologically unpleasant or of death prevailing everywhere. The vast protest rising up from world history is not simply an intensification of the noise that always and everywhere accompanies a life and death that can basically be taken for granted; to play down in this way the pain in world history is a betrayal of personal dignity, of [200] freedom, and of the absolute imperative of morality, and it is possible to cope on these cheap terms with suffering and death in the history of humanity only as long as this suffering touches a person merely from a distance. There are certainly stoics who uphold a theory that minimizes the importance of suffering and death and yet go calmly and with dignity into death. But, whether they reflect on it or not, they are then living in the light of a deeper understanding of existence than is implied in this theory.

Suffering as Effect of Creaturely, Sinful Freedom

There is a second interpretation of suffering in the world that is not adequate in itself. This seeks to derive suffering exclusively from creaturely freedom and to explain it in this light. Suffering, pain, and death are said to be always and everywhere and in every respect the effect and manifestation of the evil decision of creaturely freedom and nothing else. A bold theory. It is then not *a priori* absurd to take into account a creaturely freedom which is not identical with human freedom and which has created a history prior to the history of the biological nature of this earth, thus co-determining *a priori* the peculiar character of this history of nature and the history of humanity and marking it with suffering. Without this hypothesis, which has often been adopted in different variations in the history of Christian thought, an adequate derivation of all suffering from creaturely freedom alone would not be possible. Admittedly an attempt has also been made to deduce at least all human suffering from human freedom alone, without recourse to a supra- and pre-human history, in the sense of the traditional claim that, prior to a human free decision at the dawn of history, man did not have to die and existed in a paradisiacal immunity from suffering. In this way it is possible to maintain the theory that, in the last resort, all our human suffering arises entirely from freedom (that is, from man's freedom).

If, in the first place, we leave aside the problems created by the assumptions behind these two varieties of the basic theory, the latter seems to have something very seductive about it. Facing, as it were, God's glory and goodness, it tells man (or the free creature as such): You

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alone, you entirely alone, are responsible for all the horror of creaturely history. You, through your freedom, are to blame: [201] through the freedom with which you made a decision that by its very nature could not be shifted off to anyone else and least of all to God. Creaturely freedom is thus set up as somehow purely and simply absolute and underivable in its decision. Then it is clear that the blessed radiance of God's holy grace is not imperiled by the cry of despair that inevitably follows the evil decision of creaturely freedom.

But (we touched briefly on this problem at the very beginning) for a really Christian understanding, the creature's freedom is not so absolute and underivable as is assumed in this arrogant conception, which refuses to admit that in the last resort there cannot be something in the world that is independent of God, that even this free decision of the creature cannot be made by the latter entirely alone and with an absolutely undivided responsibility. According to Christian understanding, freedom of this kind simply does not exist. The freedom of men and angels is a *created* freedom, sustained in its existence and nature always and everywhere by God's supreme providence, in its power and action, in its capacity and concrete decision. We may not be able to see how true creaturely freedom can so exist with the inalienability of its decision *and* at the same time with the inescapability from God's sovereignty, in which God sustains this creaturely freedom and places it in its freedom, but for that very reason does not share his sovereignty with the creature's freedom; this in no way alters the fact that our freedom is completely embraced in God's supreme providence.

Distinctions can rightly be introduced into the permanent origination of our free decisions in the light of the way in which these decisions on each occasion turn out to be good or bad; within the scope of Catholic theology it is possible to work out the most diverse theories of the way in which this attribution of our free decisions to God's disposition is to be conceptualized and interpreted. Or it might be decided *a priori* and in principle to refrain from all attempts of this kind and to assume that it is fundamentally impossible for us here and now to get any nearer to a solution of this problem. None of this in any way changes the basic conviction of all Christian theology that to regard our freedom *in this way* as absolute and autonomous is contrary to the Christian understanding of God.

We are free, we cannot shift on to God the responsibility for our free decisions, but these very decisions of ours are in fact completely [202] embraced solely by God's disposition, which has its ground in him alone and in nothing else. As is evident from all attempts of the different permissible Catholic systems of grace, it is impossible to reconcile into a higher synthesis the statement that we cannot shift on to God our freedom decisions as our own and the statement that these also come within the scope of God's disposition (whether this disposition is to be understood as causing or permitting). But this in no way alters the fact that even our free decision as such is nevertheless in every respect and in its whole reality dependent on God.

If, however, this is the situation in the light of the Christian idea of God, the statement that suffering arises from freedom is not a final and definitive conclusion, but a hint that, important as it may be, again disappears into the mystery of the sovereign freedom of God himself. And if in truth we have to admit that we are responsible and may not escape from this responsibility, it also remains true that this permanent responsibility of ours must be and will be assumed by God himself, even though we do not know how that is possible. If, then, we point to our freedom as an answer to the question of why God allows us to suffer, this answer is largely true and is not to be dismissed, but it is not final. We are not permitted to be content with this answer, but neither are we permitted to assume that there is an answer going beyond this which would be completely comprehensible to us.

In these circumstances, how far suffering in the world is to be ascribed to man's creaturely freedom and eventually to that of the angels and the devils, and how far suffering exists that is truly man's suffering and yet does not spring from an evil use of freedom, is more or less

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merely a question of theoretical curiosity, the answer to which in no way alters our existential situation. Whatever form the answer takes, it remains in any case provisional and in the end is lost in God's incomprehensibility and in his freedom. Consequently there is no need to discuss at greater length here all the questions with which we were faced at the beginning. As far as our question is concerned, it is irrelevant in the last resort whether our cosmos bears the traces of a disaster occurring in the course of the angels' history of freedom, whether and how humanity lived in paradise before its sin, in what sense death can be understood as the price of sin, etc. These are questions which may be imposed on us by a [203] Christian self-understanding. Here, however, they can be left aside, since they certainly cannot yield the final answer to our essential question.

Suffering as a Situation of Trial and Maturing

A third traditional answer to our question suggests that God allows us to suffer in order to test us and bring us to maturity. Suffering, it is claimed, is the necessary situation in which alone a mature person can grow in patience, hope, and wisdom, and in the pattern of Christ.

We need not examine the implications of this third answer more closely here. It contains an important truth which is certainly not to be minimized or obscured here and, taking for granted the fact that suffering comes to everyone and occurs in every milieu, this third answer can and must be seen as a true imperative, binding on each individual: Live in such a way that the suffering affecting you and your milieu does not in the last resort turn your attitude to God into one of despair, but perfects you, even though the process of maturing leads through all the abysses of dying and death with Jesus. Nevertheless, this third suggestion still does not provide an answer to our real question. And this is not only because there is such a terrible amount of suffering in the world, to which only a fraudulent and unrealistic piety could ascribe such a humane effect.

The children burned to death by napalm bombs were not going through a process of human maturing. Elsewhere, too, in innumerable cases there is suffering which is destructive in its effects, despite all good will to endure it in a human and Christian way, which simply demands too much from a person, warps and damages his character, leaves him preoccupied solely with satisfying the most primitive needs of existence, makes him stupid or wicked. In desperation it might almost be said that suffering as a means of human and Christian maturing is something that can be endured only by a noble mind untouched by any real distress, practising spiritual massage in an ivory tower.

This again is a one-sided and unfair way of expressing it and fails to appreciate the range of opportunities of coping with a terrible existence in faith, hope, and love. But all this in no way alters the [204] fact that there is infinitely diverse, terrible suffering in the history of humanity (including the uncertain lot of children dying in infancy and old people in senile decline) which cannot be integrated into a process of maturing and personal probation, so that this third attempt at an explanation also remains inadequate. The question might also be raised quite plainly and sincerely whether humanity might be better enabled to reach moral maturity in a situation less fraught with suffering. How could it be proved that really genuine happiness must necessarily soften and corrupt man?

In principle, a situation free from suffering would seem to be as such morally better. On this point Christian ascetics are not always completely consistent. They say that suffering springs from sin and extol emphatically (and somewhat theoretically) this situation of suffering as the authentic climate in which the Christian virtues can flourish. Of course, accepting the fact that suffering exists, such Christian imperatives are wholly appropriate and salutary and rightly call for the imitation of the crucified Christ. But this does not answer the

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question of why God allows us to endure sufferings which simply cannot have this humane educative function (and there are innumerable examples of these). The most appalling sufferings have no such function at all; they are cruelties of nature which far transcend our moral resources.

Suffering as a Pointer to Another, Eternal life

A fourth attempt to answer our basic question consists in referring to eternal life after death and after our history of suffering. This suggestion should certainly not be dismissed with the stupid claim that it contains only a dubious analgesic, opium of the people and for the people. As Christians we certainly cherish a courageous hope, which only God's grace can give us, looking for eternal life without death, pain, and tears. But this suggestion is not an answer to our basic question. For no one can prove that this suffering is the absolutely necessary means for attaining eternal life, that death under any circumstances is the sole gateway to eternal life. In fact, Christian tradition tells us that death did not have to be. But neither can it be said that sin, which is supposed to be the cause of death, is itself [205] unavoidable or that it does not in the last resort represent an unanswered question to God himself.

If, moreover, eternal life cannot simply be used as a way of brushing aside the history of cruelty, then a crudely understood future state of happiness does not justify the horrors that preceded it. And how is eternal life to be conceived, if we can be happy there looking back to the torment of history? *This* question, at least, still remains open. How are we to avoid the temptation to return the admission ticket to eternal life, if this eternal life cannot consist in forgetting history to such an extent that the identity of the person now in bliss with his existence in history is canceled? In brief, since it is possible to think of an eternal life achieved without suffering, it can indeed be seen as a conquest of suffering but not as an authorization of the latter.

The Incomprehensibility of Suffering as Part of the Incomprehensibility of God

What then are we to say? Is no justification to be found of suffering in man's history? Must we simply leave our basic question unanswered? Let us begin our reflections once more from a quite different starting point. Christian faith declares that God is the incomprehensible mystery. This he is now and for all eternity, this he will be even when we see him face to face. Even then, the terrible radiance of the incomprehensible God will remain, unveiled and eternal. It will be, we might say, endurable only if we *love* God and exist unconditionally and selflessly in *this* love that affirms God as he is; the never comprehensible and never transparent mystery of the infinite God can be our eternal bliss only in the act in which we selflessly affirm him. Apart from a love of this kind, in which man forsakes himself, never really to return to himself, the sole appropriate basic act of our existence would only be the act of a radical protest that we are not ourselves God and also that we cannot cope with him: the act which constitutes hell. This love, dispossessing man until he is absorbed selflessly into the mystery of God, has no justification outside itself any more than the mystery of God to which it surrenders man.

[206] This mystery of God's incomprehensibility, however, is not merely the mystery of a being to be understood as static, but is also the mystery of God's freedom, of his underivable disposition, which has not to be justified before any other authority. It is to *this* that man surrenders himself even when he loves God face to face in eternal life and abandons himself unconditionally to God's incomprehensibility. God is loved in his freedom, God himself and

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not only what we have grasped of him in what must remain eternally no more than a fleeting glance. Only the knowledge which is itself dissolved and transfigured in love, which, in the last resort, is not acquired as knowledge is otherwise acquired, but which is surrendered, lovingly lost in God's incomprehensibility and sees there (and not elsewhere) its fulfillment, its true nature: this alone is the knowledge that saves us and makes us free by the very fact that it is turned into unselfish love, the incomprehensible miracle demanded from man who seems to be the subject that by its very nature is egoistic and wholly self-centered. When we consider all this, our basic question can be seen from quite different aspects. What was hitherto regarded as its unanswerability is then no longer the scandal in our existence, to be removed as quickly as possible, which must be elucidated as clearly as possible, but an element in the incomprehensibility that penetrates, challenges, and lays claim to our whole life.

The incomprehensibility of suffering is part of the incomprehensibility of God. Not in the sense that we could deduce it as necessary and thus inevitably as clarified from something else that we already know of God. If this were so it would not be at all incomprehensible. But the very fact that it is really and eternally incomprehensible means that suffering is truly a manifestation of God's incomprehensibility in his nature and in his freedom. In his nature because, despite what might be described as the terrible amorality of suffering (at least on the part of children and innocent people), we have to acknowledge the pure goodness of God, which needs no acquittal before our tribunal. In his freedom, because this, too, if it wills the suffering of the creature, is incomprehensible, since it could achieve without suffering the sacred aims of the freedom that wills suffering. Suffering, then, is the form (as such, again, underivable) in which the incomprehensibility of God himself appears.

Without wanting to introduce a logical system of assumptions and conclusions, it might be said at most that, concretely, within our [207] existence which can be realized only historically in freedom, suffering is unavoidable insofar as its absence would mean that God would not be taken seriously as the incomprehensible mystery with which we have to cope here and now, but would remain an abstract theorem giving us no further trouble in the concreteness of our life. In the actual course of our existence the fact is that the acceptance of God as the intractable mystery and the silent acceptance of the inexplicability and unanswerability of suffering are one and the same event. Theoretically it might perhaps be said that the impossibility of tracing back a free disposition of God, which is understandable only in itself and in its loving acceptance by us, without being ascribed to something else, understandable in love and not in theory, is itself an exercise of absolute surrender to the mystery of God, even if this free disposition of God does not really involve suffering. But it might just as well be said that the very fact of such a capitulation to freedom, without expecting it to be justified by anything other than itself, involves pain in a sublime sense, compared to which suffering in a more physico-biological sense must ultimately seem insignificant, particularly since for us, at least at the present time, subjective assessment of a pain and its real depth, superficiality, or radicalness are not identical. Thus, the ecstatic outburst of the creaturely subject from itself, in order to surrender unconditionally to God's freedom, in truth might also involve pain in a sublime sense: pain with which in any case the bliss of escaping from oneself has to be paid for, so that what we otherwise regard as suffering is no more than its counterpart on a lower plane of being. However that may be, in our present concrete state, the acceptance of suffering without an answer other than the incomprehensibility of God and his freedom is the concrete form in which we accept God himself and allow him to be God. If there is not directly or indirectly this absolute acceptance of the incomprehensibility of suffering, all that can really happen is the affirmation of our own idea of God and not the affirmation of God himself.

Walter Dirks tells of a visit to Romano Guardini, when the latter already bore the marks of

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his fatal illness:

> To hear what the old man confided on his sick bed was an unforgettable experience. At the Last Judgment he would not only allow himself to be questioned, but would also in his turn ask questions. [208] He firmly hoped that the angel would not deny him the true answer to the question which no book, not even the Bible, no dogma and no teaching authority, no 'theodicy' or theology, not even his own theology, had been able to answer for him: Why, God, these fearful detours on the way to salvation, the suffering of the innocent, why sin?[1]

All that we want to say here and now is that Guardini rightly could not discover any answer to this question, that the question can certainly be answered only by the angel at the judgment, and even then the true answer must still be only the incomprehensible God in his freedom and nothing else. In other words, this answer can be heard only if we surrender ourselves in unconditionally adoring love as answer to God. If we do not achieve this love, forgetting itself for God, or, better, if we do not accept it as given to us, there is nothing left but naked despair at the absurdity of our suffering, a despair which is really the only form of atheism that must be taken seriously. There is no blessed light to illumine the dark abyss of suffering other than God himself. And we find him only when we lovingly assent to the incomprehensibility of God[2] himself, without which he would not be God.

[1] Cited in E. Biser, *Interpretation und Veränderung* (Paderborn, 1979), pp. 132-33.
[2] Cf. K. Rahner 'The Human Question of Meaning in Face of the Absolute Mystery of *God', Theological Investigations,* vol. 18 (London/New York, 1983), pp. 89-104. See also K. Rahner, 'Ignatius of Loyola Speaks to a Modern Jesuit', in K. Rahner, P. Imhof, and H. N. Loose, *Ignatius of Loyola* (London/New York, 1979), p. 17.

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[209]

PART SIX

Mary and Woman

[211]

16

MARY AND THE CHRISTIAN IMAGE OF WOMAN

The Church from the beginning never regarded Mary merely as a person who inevitably appears, like many others, in a biography of Jesus. Mary has her proper and unique function in salvation history as such and the Church accordingly in its liturgy and piety pays special reverence to the Blessed Virgin, whom it acknowledges as Mother of God. The Church sees in Mary its own image in pure perfection, the image of the nature of the Christian in its purity and fullness and therefore also the perfect image of woman.

This image of woman must not be lost sight of today. It is this image that has enabled the Church in past centuries, perhaps without any very close reflection, to prevent society (with which it often enough too uncritically identified itself) from setting up a purely male domination. The Church itself had also to learn slowly and painfully, amid the changes in secular society, to give woman what is due to her by nature and by right: an historical process which is still far from complete. But in its understanding of faith the Church has a starting point of its own and a dynamism of its own for this process. And what is its own is in fact present as an archetype in its image of Mary.

Like the Christian faith as a whole, the image of Mary has obviously a history in the Church. Consequently, the image of woman, as available to the Church in Mary, also has its history which is not told and elucidated simply by presenting the history of the Marian dogmas from the Council of Ephesus (431) to Pius XII and up to chapter 8 of the constitution *Lumen Gentium* or to the Apostolic [212] Exhortation of Paul VI on Marian devotion (1974). This is right particularly since it was only at the Second Vatican Council and in the teaching of Paul VI that the process began explicitly of seeing in the image of Mary the image of woman as such, even though, of course, Christendom had at all times (perhaps occasionally not very discreetly) stamped its knowledge of woman on to the image of Mary. The image of woman in the image of Mary has a history which still continues today and is as unfinished, incomplete, and unforeseeable as anything that belongs to history.

CHANGES IN THE IMAGE OF MARY

While we talk of changes in the image of the Blessed Virgin as image of woman, the fact must not be overlooked that there is something permanent about this image. For the faith also of the Church of the future, Mary will remain the believer who, with and in her existence, in her faith, and in her person, received the eternal Word of the Father as God’s irrevocable promise to the world, Jesus, the blessed fruit of her womb. She will always be recognized as the person whose existence from the beginning – despite the sin of the world, which she also had to endure – was encompassed by the victorious grace of God which preserved her and her freedom by its unobtrusive power as ‘immaculate’. The Church will always confess that

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Mary with her whole existence ('body and soul') has 'already' reached her consummation, whether or not this is regarded as a 'temporal' privilege for her alone. The Church will always see in Mary the one who had a unique function in salvation history, who reached her eschatological goal in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, however this unique function is described more precisely in its different aspects ('first of the redeemed', 'co-redemptrix', 'mediatrix of grace'). At the same time, the Church will neither obscure the nature of Jesus and his function as mediator of salvation nor give way to a pseudo-democratic resentment, unwilling to accept a situation in which everyone does not have the same task in history. It will confess that man receives from others and has himself the whole fullness of being human (by nature and grace) only because in unselfish love he sees it as present in all others together.

If we ask about possible and conceivable changes in the image of [213] the Blessed Virgin today or in future, some basic considerations must first be put forward. In the first place, Christian dogma also has its history. Its truth is always present only in an historical form and particularly when we are not reflecting on such an historical form of truth. Perhaps we cannot do so adequately because this form is that of our own time and, consequently, there is lacking the distance at which we recall in historical reflection forms of truth other than our own. This is true also of Marian dogmas. Historically there has been an historical development up to the definition of the assumption of Mary with body and soul into her consummation (1950) in which individual Marian dogmas (divine maturity, immaculate conception, assumption into heaven) were added to one another, so to speak, to form the Mariology that we acknowledge today as part of our faith. These individual Marian dogmas have grown out of a single Mariological basic principle.

I do not think that Mariology will develop further in this 'quantitative' way (as not a few Mariologists hoped, even as recently as twenty years ago) so that in the foreseeable future there might, for example, be definitions of Mary as 'co-redemptrix' or 'mediatrix of grace'. After the events at the Second Vatican Council, linked with the controversial formulation of Mariology, this seems to me improbable. That is not to say that Catholic Mariology will have no history in the future. But presumably this will not consist (to put it crudely) in a 'quantitative' augmentation of Marian dogma. What is more likely to happen is that the old dogma will be both reconsidered and theologically assimilated under new aspects and against new backgrounds of understanding, which formerly were not so explicitly present. In what follows we shall reflect a little on these things.

Here is a second consideration. If we legitimately disregard sublime speculations on Mary's dignity in the light of her divine maternity which points directly to the incomprehensibility of the infinite God, Mariological statements refer to a particular individual, an historical and finite human being, who has a definite (albeit unique) place in mankind as a whole and in its history. This person's unique function in history does not permit us to see her in the light of what is ultimately a mistaken Platonism and to ascribe to her alone the whole fullness of human reality which can be realized only in mankind as a whole and in its whole history.

[214] This is really obvious. But it seems to me that Mariology in the past did not always 'subcutaneously' take this obviousness seriously enough and was exposed to the danger of attributing to Mary, even as an individual human being, all those privileges (at least *eminenter*) which are at all possible in a human being, but in fact realizable only in the whole of mankind taken together. The individual Christian was thus bound to regard himself only as a defective repetition of what had been realized perfectly in Mary as an individual person. But this is not true. Just as (in Augustine's terminology) the whole Christ is present only in head and body (of the Church) together, and the body (of the Church) also helps the head to reach its whole fullness, so it is analogously with Mary. It is only the Church as a whole that

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gives reality to Mary and in its loving unity gives to this individual person her whole fullness, which she does not have when considered independently. This is true particularly when we consider Mary as the perfect woman in her relationship to all women in the human race. Only the whole – with Mary – is Mary.

NEW VIEW OF JESUS CHRIST

A first alteration of the horizons of understanding for Mary results from the change in modern Christology. Traditional Christology (despite the treatise *De legato divino* in fundamental theology) was a pure descendence Christology, a Christology from above, a doctrine of the descent of the preexistent Logos into flesh, into history. There was indeed always a fundamental theology of the encounter with the historical, concrete Jesus, but as a purely fundamental theological formulation of the question and as a presupposition to dogmatics it remained outside dogmatic Christology in the form in which the latter appeared as early as Paul's Letters to the Philippians and Colossians and more especially in the prologue to John's Gospel.

A dogmatic Christology today (notwithstanding the rights of an independent fundamental theology) must itself start with the historical Jesus and show that the self-understanding of the historical Jesus (at least when his resurrection is taken into account) justifies this descendence Christology which, as we said, is present even in the New Testament but needs a separate justification. Fundamental theology [215] and dogmatic Christology must find a clearer internal unity. This, too, is attempted in recent Christologies, which are dogmatic Christologies and yet incorporate the questions of fundamental theology. We may recall, for instance, the works of Walter Kasper, Edward Schillebeeckx and, although to be read with reserve and critically, Hans Kung. They all practise an 'ascendence Christology', a Christology 'from below', not to suppress the older Christology, but to take it in and authenticate it before the historical conscience of modern man.

It is time for something similar to happen in Mariology today. Here, too, there must be something like an 'ascendence Mariology', a Mariology 'from below'. This means in the first place that the formulations of the questions, the methods of answering them, and the answers themselves, which refer to Mary and are usual in modern exegesis working historically, are taken into account by dogmatic Mariology. It must be asked, for example, what is really the precise literary genre of the narratives referring to Mary in Matthew, Luke, and John; other statements of Scripture which make Mary's role in the life of Jesus seem restricted must be evaluated more impartially than has hitherto been the case generally in Mariology. If the 'historical' element in these Marian narratives is cautiously and critically estimated as more slight than was hitherto thought, this need not turn out to the disadvantage of a dogmatic Mariology. Such narratives are not only reportage, but also theology, which as inspired scriptural statements are binding on us and set us the task of showing how these statements emerge from the experience which early Christendom had of Mary in connection with Jesus.

Under these assumptions of modern exegesis, a Mariology from below can be developed which, of course, must take in classical Mariology, but which sees it from new aspects and can purify it from pious exaggerations. The questions involved in the doctrine of the 'virgin birth' must be thought out afresh. Mary must be seen also as the woman of the people, as poor, as a learner, who lives in the light of the historical, social, and religious situation of her time and her people. She is to be seen, not as a heavenly being, but as a human person, as active and suffering for herself and others, as learning in the midst of many uncertainties, as accepting her function in salvation history in faith, hope, and love, and by this very fact, as model and mother of believers.

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[216]

MARY AS IMAGE OF WOMAN

Mariology can be set in motion today from another aspect. Mary should be and remain for the Christian the pure image of woman, not merely a model for believers in general. Nor is an orthodox Christology subcutaneously monophysite or monothelite, but takes absolutely seriously the true and undiminished reality of Jesus as the one who confronts God in creaturely freedom. If at the same time it is remembered that he was a man, then, notwithstanding the unique importance of Jesus for both sexes, it can certainly be said that Mary represents the pure image of woman in her relationship to God in the same way that Jesus as man presents that image for man as such.

If we ask what exactly this means for Mary as model for woman, serious questions emerge which have not yet been adequately recognized. The various anthropological sciences of the present time (for all their fundamental equality, from which the Church's theory and practice have something to learn) say a great deal and much that is important about the distinction of the sexes and, thus, also about the peculiar nature of woman which determines all dimensions of her existence. In principle, therefore, there can be no doubt that woman even in her grace-given relationship to God is a woman and not a sexless being. But if we begin to describe concretely the religious character of woman, anthropologically and theologically (from human experience, from the Old and the New Testament), we are at once involved (not to speak too poetically) in great embarrassment.

Such concrete descriptions of woman's religious existence are based often and hastily on characteristics which really do not belong to the external, authentic nature of woman, but are historically, culturally, and sociologically conditioned. The charge might be made today that these descriptions purporting to be a theologically guaranteed understanding of her nature are really opposed to woman's emancipation. The danger then arises that Mary's image will be drawn with the aid of such an historically and culturally conditioned image of woman and then used theologically to sanction and perpetuate this older and today in many respects dubious image.

On the other hand, on closer inspection it becomes clear that many features (authentic in themselves) introduced into the image of Mary as woman in her relationship to God are by no means specifically and exclusively feminine. Is it not true that a man also in his [217] approach to God must be able to be silent, be wholly receptive, commit himself, listen in humility and faith, serve and not dominate? In describing the religious existence we seize only too easily and too often on characteristics which are really generally human and can and must be predicated of both sexes.

If we add that such attributes of woman are present in a specifically feminine and not masculine form, the question arises of what exactly and concretely is meant by this. It does not seem very easy to give a clear answer to this question by attempting to characterize this specifically feminine way of religious existence with the aid of modalities which are sociologically and culturally conditioned and do not belong simply to woman's nature always and everywhere.

Mariology today and in future still has a great deal to do if it wants to have an image of Mary that will really be true also for the religious existence of woman as such. It is an image that can perhaps be produced authentically today only by women, by women theologians. But this means that Mariology, despite its autonomy as a dogmatic treatise, is caught up in that mental and spiritual history in which woman even today looks for the nature she always had and which nevertheless is continually freshly assigned to her. Mariology is not at an end. Even today it has a history stretching into the future, which has still to be found. In this

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history the Church is seeking the nature of woman, of Mary, and also its own nature.

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[218]

17

MARY'S VIRGINITY

The following reflections are concerned simply with Mary's virginity as a single theme. Apart from possible exceptions, which we reserve to ourselves, this is a legitimate procedure in the light both of the material and of the apologetic and kerygmatic intention behind the reflections, since on the whole the questions of the origin, meaning, and binding force in faith and of the possibility of conveying these doctrines to modern man's sense of faith involve more or less the same difficulties in regard to *virginitas ante partum* (VAP), *in partu* (VIP), and *post partum* (VPP), and since Rudolph Pesch,[1] too, questions only the VPP, but by that very fact also raises the question of the VAP.

The reflections presented here are not directly concerned with the question of the meaning and the limits to the meaning of the doctrine of the virginity of Mary and the binding force of this doctrine in faith. In this connection nothing will be directly settled here, since an adequate treatment of *these* questions would require much more space than is available here and since the trend of these reflections does not seem to me to call for so broad a theme. In *these* reflections all that is to be asked is what group of questions would have to be kept in mind, considered, and possibly discussed if any representatives of the Church's magisterium wanted to comment on the questions raised again by Pesch. For only when we are clear about these preliminary questions can we decide properly the question of whether the Church's magisterium at the present moment should or [219] can comment on the problems raised again by Pesch, whether this is possible and opportune. What is to be said from the exegetical standpoint on the question as formulated here is explained elsewhere and cannot and need not be repeated here. This involves a further limitation of the task to be undertaken here. But the formulation of the theme as so restricted includes two things: it must not only be asked what preliminary theological reflections (in terms of systematic theology and history of dogma) are necessary today if we want to give an appropriate answer that is 'as such' correct and binding in faith in regard to the doctrine of Mary's virginity; it must *also* be asked what preliminary reflections of this kind are necessary if an authoritative teaching of the Church on this virginity is really to have any prospect of actually 'getting through' to the understanding of faith of *those* members of the Church whom the authoritative declaration is meant to reach. The Church has the duty, not only of saying the right thing, but also of saying this right thing 'rightly': that is, so that there is the greatest possible prospect that its right teaching will also actually be believed. These two aspects of our theme will be given equal consideration here, although they do not need always to be expressly distinguished.

PRELIMINARY METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

(1) If the essential problem (particularly as including VAP) is to be treated correctly today dogmatically and kerygmatically, the question of an objectively and apologetically correct understanding of a 'miracle' cannot be excluded, since VAP, at least in the traditional and 'biological' sense, includes such a miracle. Both from the nature of the case (that is, in the light of a correct and clear idea of God and of his relationship to the world) and from the

[1] R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, vol. 1 (HThk II; Freiburg, 1976), 'Excursus: Zur Frage der Bruder und Schwestern Jesu', pp. 322-24.

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standpoint of a modern mentality (which is not in itself a criterion of truth, but cannot be disregarded if proclamation of the faith is to be effective) the idea of miracle (in itself and with reference to its credibility) as a breach of suspension of the 'laws of nature' has become highly problematic, quite apart from the question of whether miracles in this sense can be proved empirically to be facts. (The resurrection of Jesus as a miracle cannot and may not be brought into the present discussion, [220] since this miracle as eschatological event is *a priori sui generis*.[2]) But in any case, an appropriate and apologetically and kerygmatically effective teaching on VAP cannot be established on the basis of a procedure that ignores the general problems in regard to a 'miracle' arising from the nature of the case and for the modern mentality prior to the question of VAP.

(2) If the doctrine of Mary's virginity is to be really effectively conveyed to the Christian (particularly the educated Christian) today, the conclusions of recent studies on the development of dogma cannot be disregarded; here, too, what has been learned at other points of the history of dogma and even from the New Testament itself must be kept in mind. But, among other things (which cannot be explicitly considered here), this means at least the following:

(*a*) With reference to its individual statements and expressions the Church's dogma cannot be set out today as merely the sum total of a number of individual propositions, each of which is presented simply as based on individual statements of Scripture, or of former declarations of the magisterium. Each individual statement must be made in its coherence both with the one totality of faith and with the original and unifying centre of the reality of faith. Otherwise, the teaching of Vatican II on the hierarchy of truths amounts to no more than empty talk and a feeble excuse. The original one and unifying event of the final revelation in Christianity is not a sum total of individual propositions to be simply accepted, arbitrarily communicated by God in their individual form, but the event of God's most intimate self-communication which finds its full historical tangibility and its eschatological irreversibility in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. The Church's teaching on Mary, too, must be seen and made intelligible from this standpoint, even though this does not necessarily mean a simply logically deductive argument. This is true in particular of VAP, VIP, and VPP. If there is not a clear and explicit recourse to that event, the proclamation of this doctrine remains ineffective and the magisterium does not achieve what is unconditionally required of it today. We are speaking of no more than a [221] postulate, and how it can be fulfilled remains obscure. But the realization of this postulate is obviously not possible here.

(*b*) An appropriate and effective proclamation of the doctrine of Mary's virginity (including VAP) must see without prejudice that the content of this doctrine (as correct and therefore to be more precisely defined) is not in itself alone a single primary datum, based on purely empirical observations, but a factor deduced from a previous conviction in regard to Mary and her function in salvation history. Even if and insofar as such empirical observations were possible and can or could be assumed to be established, they would not *ipso facto* yield the real content of the theological teaching. In the first place it is perceptible from the history of dogma that VIP is not based on such empirical (physiological) observations or on information given by Mary, but is a theological 'conclusion' (in the widest sense of the term and as such needing to be more precisely defined), which has become established only in the course of time in the Church's consciousness. But the same is true *mutatis mutandis* of VAP. The mere fact that, for example, the intervention of a male person is not perceptible in Jesus' coming into existence or that there might be historical information as given by Mary available in this

[2] *Cf.*, for example, Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (London/New York, 1978), pp. 264-85. The whole question of an idea of miracle in general that is possible and convincing today cannot, of course, be discussed here. On this cf. B. Weissmahr, *Gottes Wirken in der Welt* (Frankfurt, 1973).

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connection could not on its own account authenticate VAP in the sense intended here, either in itself or as an object of a theological belief as such. Nor would an empirical observation of VPP, in the sense that Mary in fact had no more children, alone and independently authenticate the content of VPP as understood in the traditional sense. The fact remains, then, that this whole doctrine, insofar as and in the sense in which it can be an object of faith and binding in faith, must be a factor deduced from a more fundamental global understanding of Mary and her function in salvation history and can be justified only in this way in terms of the history of faith and the history of dogma. But how is this to come about? This is the question which the one Mariology of today cannot evade.

(*c*) If this question is really objectively and convincingly answered, then undoubtedly for our question, too, the result will be the same as that which can be observed in the history of dogma in regard to very many other doctrines and in these cases is impartially noted by the Church's magisterium today when it appears in the work of theologians. It can rightly be said that the development of dogma (that is, the explication of the original global experience of [222] revelation in individual propositions) is a 'one way' course: that is, *if* and when such an explication leads on the part of the Church to an *absolute* assent to a particular individual proposition, it is no longer retrospectively revisable in the sense that such a proposition could later be declared erroneous. Nor is this the case even if this explication of faith, which has in fact taken place at an earlier stage, cannot be achieved conclusively in a purely logical argument. But this understanding of the development of dogma does not exclude, but positively includes, a recourse to the original understanding of faith. (Otherwise we would need, for example, to practise only Denzinger theology and could do without a biblical theology or see the latter as merely historical curiosity.)

Despite the 'one way' character of the history of dogma, recourse to the original understanding of faith, from which the later teaching developed, can be a criterion for the right understanding of the later dogma. It could, in fact, be shown from very many examples (accepted or even confirmed by the Church's magisterium) that recourse to the earlier understanding of faith as source of later teaching can be a criterion for the right and really binding understanding of faith. We ask, for example, what is 'really' meant when we speak of original sin, what is 'really' meant when we say that Jesus founded the Church, instituted seven sacraments, etc.; and we are then asking not *only* what people generally make of the answers of traditional theology, but *also* at the same time about the sources of these answers, whether they lead unambiguously to these answers *or* whether in such traditional answers, despite their genuine origin as a whole from these sources, there have been amalgamated indiscriminately also ideas and interpretations which are not part of the binding content of the article of faith as so established, but have not hitherto been eliminated from it in traditional theology or in the Church's dogmatic pronouncements and for historical reasons could not hitherto have been eliminated.

Not everything that was actually and implicitly assumed at a particular time to be necessary for the clarification of the meaning of an article of faith is really and in principle an inseparable part of this article of faith itself. If, for instance, it is shown historically that the Fathers of Trent in practice had something in mind that they took for granted and did not eliminate from their understanding of the term 'substance', this is far from saying that their notion of substance is [223] binding for the present-day interpretation of transubstantiation. Or if Augustine thought that libido is the necessary means of transmitting original sin and *in this way* explained original sin as Catholic dogma, this is far from saying that we must or even can regard this understanding of original sin today as dogma. If Pius XII still thought that monogenism was an indispensable and unrenounceable element of the Catholic doctrine of original sin, we may nevertheless hold a different opinion today and, while maintaining the doctrine of original sin and its essential meaning, eliminate a monogenistic interpretation of

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this doctrine as an historically conditioned amalgam, even though theology hitherto and the magisterium never thought and could not have thought of such a possibility. Pius XII declared that it was part of Catholic faith (DC 3896) that the human soul is directly created by God. But as can easily be proved historically, in making this statement (correct in itself) he had in mind a conceptual model of the immediacy of this act of creation that is no longer shared by many theologians today,[3] without thinking of the possibility of distinguishing between what was really meant and the conceptual model that could be eliminated.

Perhaps the most important and almost startling example in the history of faith and the history of ideas lies in the unity and distinction between the imminent expectation of the historical pre-Easter Jesus, on the one hand, and what the Church today believes to be really meant by this imminent expectation. Here is a process beginning as early as the New Testament and not really closed even today, and which is nevertheless legitimate. Because of the historically changing horizons of understanding of people and the Church, this critical recourse to the ultimate origin of particular theological propositions is constantly necessary in order to cope with new queries about the really binding sense of these theological propositions; but it then provides the opportunity of preserving what is really binding in faith, even though amalgams have to be eliminated or distinguished from its previous formulation as no longer possible or as not binding in faith. At the same time, as we said, such opportunities of distinguishing need not have been explicitly grasped as possible in earlier theology. The claim that these distinctions are or can be legitimate is then reinforced particularly today by the proof that [224] the original understanding of faith did not explicitly contain these amalgams, nor can the latter be conclusively deduced from that understanding. It is not an argument against the partial theory indicated here of the development of the history of dogma that practical difficulties and conflicts arise in the concrete history of the Church's faith as a result of such processes of distinguishing between what was really meant in a later proposition in the history of dogma in the light of the earlier global sense of faith and the concrete conceptual model with the aid of which the later proposition hitherto presented what had really been meant. This is clear precisely from this history of faith. Once such an individual process is closed, it usually does not create any great emotional or existential difficulty for the believer or the theologian. We may recall, for instance, the teaching of the Council of Florence (DS 1551) that all those who are not Catholics at the time of their death are lost and then compare this teaching with that of Vatican II and the mentality corresponding to it in the Church today. But as long as such a process of fresh interpretation of theological teaching goes on (even while preserving what is really meant by it and what is binding), conflicts and differences of opinion are simply unavoidable and must be endured with patience and tolerance.

In the present reflection the question is not whether a new insight and of what kind might emerge in regard to the doctrine of Mary's virginity if it were thought out afresh from the standpoint of the history of dogma and of systematic theology, while keeping in mind the above-mentioned conclusions from the history of dogma and the development of the Church's sense of faith. Possibly nothing 'new' would 'come out' with the use of such a method. But it is also possible that very important new conclusions might emerge on the sense in which this doctrine is binding in faith. None of this is material for discussion here. The important thing here is to stress urgently the absolute necessity of a confrontation of the doctrine of Mary's virginity with present-day ideas of the possibilities of development of dogma. In principle this dogma, too, is open to further development. It cannot be said that the Mariology of the last centuries has allowed precisely and impartially enough for this fundamental possibility.

[3] Cf., for example, B. Weissmahr, pp. 31-39.

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(*d*) The systematic theologian in his Mariology needs to ask the exegete and biblical theologian what the latter's investigations have [225] shown to be the exact literary genre of the infancy stories in the New Testament, especially those in Matthew and Luke. If this question is to be answered according to the principles of modern exegesis, very many distinctions will certainly be required. The alternative of historical account or legend is certainly too simple. If we allow for midrash-like narratives and do so in principle even when the theological tradition in Mariology did not hitherto allow for this, the question raised here is still far from adequately answered. The intention of the statement and the mode of the statement in the account of the infancy of Jesus must be more closely defined and distinguished from each other. It can be asked if and when an evangelist transmits narrative traditions (since in any case they have a theological meaning and point) without *ipso facto* ascribing to such a narrative an absolute binding force in faith. Something of this kind is possible in principle. When, for example, Luke makes Jesus eat after his resurrection, it may be asked whether something of this kind belongs simply and without interpretation to the dimension of historical reality. It is only when questions of this kind have been answered by the exegete that the systematic theologian can consider what conclusions to draw for his Mariology. This is a difficult question.

It is then possible that the subsequent history of faith on Mary will state more than New Testament Mariology alone suggests, if it is considered merely in the light of the hermeneutic of the definition of such a literary genre. (If and why this 'more' is conceivable is something that cannot be further discussed here.) But in principle the opposite is possible. Tradition transmits the account of the Gospels, referring purely and simply to their authority, without itself considering separately in a strict sense the meaning and limits of what the Gospels report, and without considering independently the exact literary genre and thus the hermeneutic in the light of which the Gospel accounts must be read today; it must be defined quite precisely what they are meant to convey to us as binding in faith and what is not so binding. This second possibility, too, exists in principle. When, for example, Paul, according to Luke (Acts 17:26), says in regard to the narrative in Genesis that all mankind stems from *one* man, or when Paul spontaneously assumes the same thing in Romans 5, this does not mean that we are forbidden ourselves to define more precisely the literary genre of the narrative in Genesis and from that standpoint to appreciate the fact that monogenism in the [226] biological sense is not a principle that is binding in faith. Collaboration of this kind between exegesis and systematic theology in a relationship of mutual dependence and reciprocal questioning is necessary today. We may get the impression that this collaboration has not yet gone far enough in the field of Mariology and could bring further results, if it is impartially and seriously attempted.

(*e*) What has been said or suggested up to now could perhaps be recapitulated and at the same time generalized by saying that Christianity has been engaged from the Enlightenment onward in a vast process of fresh interpretation of its dogma: that is, of the transposition of this dogma from the horizons of understanding of antiquity and the Middle Ages into those of the present time. Such a transposition contains, of course, a lot of individual dogmatic questions, even though this transposition also amounts to a single and entire task which aims at the innermost and real core of the nature of Christianity. The particular tasks involved in this transposition vary greatly with the content of the individual dogma, are undertaken sooner or later with a certain historical fortuitousness, are accomplished quickly or slowly, unobtrusively or with obvious conflicts. But it would *a priori* be wrong to see and to interpret this transposition process as a kind of demolition or reduction (described as 'demythologizing' etc.). Even when it is achieved courageously and impartially, step by step, considering the detail and the whole, the process can in fact convey to the believer and the theologian the experience which, as such, seen purely historically, is by no means obvious,

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but is part of the believer's hope in faith: that is, this transposition process does not cancel the identity of the Christian faith and the Church throughout all the radically changing epochs of the history of ideas, but confirms the fact that the new faith is the old and the old faith is continually becoming new.

Certainly it cannot be maintained *a priori* that Mariology is not also involved in this transposition process. Until the middle of the twentieth century, among theologians and devout Catholics there was a certain feeling of pride and gratification in the way that Mariology was explicated into materially continually freshly articulated propositions (a process that now seems to have been brought to a halt), while today a new task must be historically assigned to Mariology if it is not to become sterile, to be a museum piece, kept in storage as part of the Church's official teaching but with no role to [227] play in the present-day Christian's life of faith. Mariology, too, must be seen today as part of this transposition process in which the old becomes new in order to endure. What all this means concretely has, of course, not by any means been sufficiently considered and here we cannot even give a hint of it. But these connections between a history of Mariological doctrine and the present rapidly moving history of faith of the Church as a whole must be seen and made relevant: what has been learned from the history of dogma in general, the modern conclusions of a hermeneutics of statements of faith, of a theology (and philosophy) of religious language, and the results of historically critical exegesis must be brought to bear on and made relevant to Mariology, if the latter is to remain as a theological discipline and retain a religious significance for life.

(3) If a position established by a purely exegetical and historical effort is perhaps assigned a merely 'greater probability' than its opposite, the systematic theologian must be careful to avoid exploiting such a situation too quickly and thoughtlessly by declaring as a result of a purely formal logical reasoning that the exegetically slighter probability in virtue of his own premises and reflections has turned out to be the truth, even though historically there is a greater probability (but no more than that) opposed to it. In terms of formal logic this is correct. But such an argument must be handled (if at all) with the utmost caution. In the first place the question must be asked quite strictly and straightforwardly whether the systematic theologian in the light of his own principles can really be so unambiguously and exclusively certain of his position that he can declare the historically more probable to be false and the historically less probable to be true. In such cases it must also be remembered that in many questions of fundamental theology it is possible only to reach historical probabilities and yet to regard these as an existentially adequate fundamental-theological basis for an assent of faith directed to the same object, to assign, that is, to greater probabilities in existential decisions a considerable weight that cannot simply be dismissed by the above-mentioned operation in formal logic. In the end however, as far as it is possible, we must try to the best of our ability to avoid a kind of schizophrenia in which a person gives an assent of faith precisely to what he regards as historically less probable.

(4) Finally, what follows may be put in the form of a question. Is it really necessary, after all, always to give an unambiguous answer [228] immediately to all questions which arise in faith and in theology? Even in the dimension of faith a space may be left open for what is uncertain and unanswered, if this space is devoutly respected by all sides and no one side attempts immediately and decidedly to fill it with an answer with which the other side is not satisfied in the light of faith or intellectually. In all fields of theology there are in fact open questions, different schools, theological controversies. History teaches us that questions of this kind are by no means always and *a priori* regarded by theologians and believers as such, that is, recognized *as* open. In the famous controversy on grace, the great majority of the papal commission was decidedly of the opinion that Molinism should be condemned as heretical; in other words, that the alternative between the two systems was certainly not an

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open question. Nevertheless, it has remained so for centuries, although Paul V acted as if the pope would decide the issue before long. The question of *Humanae Vitae* likewise is still open, although Paul VI did not expressly admit this.

There are then open questions in theology, even though this openness often creates difficulties of conscience for the faith of believers and theologians; people call impatiently for a settlement of these questions and there are those who declare that a decision is of considerable importance for their faith and its clarity and can and must be made quickly and unambiguously in a definite form. Where this is possible it may or should be done. But we should not be too impatient and as a result of weakness of faith be too ready to think that a decision is always and everywhere possible and required. In regard to our question of Mary's virginity, we are all certainly convinced in faith that Mary was incorporated with her whole body-soul existence into the historical salvific mission of Jesus. Have we not then jointly a basic understanding of what her 'virginity' means for all of us, even though we do not think that we all know with equal certainty and clarity what exactly this integratedness means 'biologically', particularly since we are all sure that this absolute integratedness must also include Mary's participation in the ordinariness and lowliness of Jesus' human existence?

CONCLUSIONS

What follows then from these reflections in regard to the concrete purpose for the sake of which this expert report was requested?

[229] (1) In the first place it seems wholly inopportune for the episcopal magisterium in Germany to comment expressly, directly, and solely on the positions taken up by Rudolf Pesch in regard to the question of the 'brothers of Jesus' in his commentary on Mark. His theme is not expressly *virginitas ante partum*, but *virginitas post partum*, and even then only to the extent that this question is to be answered solely by the methods of exegesis as such and at the same time without any attempt to do more than establish a greater or lesser probability. What then is the magisterium to say about these positions of Pesch as such, if it seeks to restrict itself to these? If it were to say that other theological sources and studies in other fields of theology would establish as certain and as an object of faith the position opposed to that adopted by Pesch as exegetically probable, then in order to teach, not only correctly, but also effectively, the magisterium would have no alternative but to expound and justify at length its teaching on the virginity of Mary, taking into account the aspects of the question to which we referred in the first part of these reflections. But we would then be faced with the difficulties of such a declaration (which are to be discussed below). Obviously, too, it is not the business of the magisterium to judge the greater or lesser exegetical and historical probability of Pesch's position as such.

It is also to be remembered that the magisterium today must make clear in its procedure that it allows adequate scope and maintains respect for the freedom of theological studies. There will, of course, be Christians (conservative members of the clergy, for example) who demand an unambiguous reaction to our question as quickly as possible on the part of the magisterium, since these theological controversies make them feel insecure in their faith. But a *brief* comment by the magisterium on traditional lines, on the one hand, in practice would not clear up this insecurity and, on the other hand, would plunge more and other Christians into the opposite kind of insecurity and would be too brief to provide the latter with any real aid to their faith. In particular the German magisterium which is involved here, from the nature of the case, does not possess an authority such that its declaration could add any considerable weight to the traditional teaching. Such a brief declaration, issued directly against Pesch alone, as a matter of what we might call 'intellectual policy', therefore would

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not be of much help against 'insecurity' on whatever side this is mainly to be found. This situation in regard to intellectual policy is such that it cannot be [230] substantially changed by brief declarations of the magisterium, but must certainly continue to be endured for a considerable time in patience and hope, since a really effective clarification in the Church's sense of faith would also require time.

(2) Could the German Bishops' Conference perhaps regard Pesch's study as providing, not indeed the essential and comprehensive theme, but an occasion for issuing a lengthy instruction on the question raised here? From a practical standpoint this suggestion, too, must be rejected. However desirable it may be in itself, who is to compose this instruction? Where are the theologians who want and are able to take on this task? It would mean taking into account all those aspects (and more) which were mentioned in our first part. Definite positions would have to be adopted in regard to too many individual theological questions. Could both these things be achieved so that the instruction, composed in this way, would reproduce the joint and binding teaching of the episcopate and would thus be more than a theological treatise the importance of which depends entirely on the force of its arguments? In the light of these and similar considerations it has to be said that an official instruction of this kind, if it is to be both correct *and* effective, is not possible at the present time. This negative answer does not mean, of course, that the episcopate has no task and no possibility of exercising an influence in regard to this question as a whole. It can encourage theologians to apply themselves more urgently than in the last decades to this group of questions, it can perhaps supply technical and material aids, it can help to make sure that such theological work is carried out in a climate of seriousness, of mutual respect, and with due regard to the mentality in matters of faith also of the average Christian, and so on.

(3) If, however, the German episcopate's commission on faith or the episcopate itself felt that a declaration on the outstanding question could not be neglected, then in order to be effective it would not only have to consider the aspects indicated in our first part (and many others). It would seem expedient to go beyond this and for the instruction regarded as unavoidable to choose from the outset a more general theme as a continuation and amplification of the former instruction of the German episcopate on the Church's magisterium and incorporate into this the question raised here and similar current questions of a concrete character (as raised recently by [231] Hans Küng, for instance) which might then serve as examples and illustrations of the more general theme. In such an instruction of a more general and fundamental character it would be possible to discuss a great deal of what is disturbing, explicitly or implicitly, the sense of faith of the (educated) Christian today: the permanent identity of the Christian teaching on faith despite and in its historicity, the problems of development of dogma, the change of horizons of understanding in the history of faith, the consequences of the doctrine of the hierarchy of truths, the diversity of degrees of binding force of official doctrinal pronouncements of the Church, the meaning and limitations of the magisterium, the latter's real existential location in the individual's sense of faith, etc. – all themes that can only be indicated here and not exhaustively enumerated. Within this larger framework questions raised by Pesch, Küng, or others can be mentioned as examples of a concrete character which can both elucidate the general theme and conversely be correctly answered in the light of this theme itself. Since Pesch's question can certainly be answered appropriately and effectively (in a form that can be assimilated) only in the light of this more general theme, it seems that the latter must also be the theme of an instruction, *if* such an instruction is regarded as objectively necessary and opportune in the situation. Of course, the objection can be raised that it is much more difficult to cope with the comprehensive theme than with the more restricted theme (although doubts were expressed above about the possibility of coping with the latter). But again it must be said on the contrary that the narrower problem of Mary's virginity today compels us to face the more

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general problem and that this general problem (particularly in the light of experiences of the past history of dogma) can lead to fundamental solutions, which can then be helpful to the still continuing process of the history of Mariology.

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[233]

PART SEVEN

Angels

[235]

18

ON ANGELS

After the existence of the devil and of demons had been taken for granted in the teaching and practice of Christianity as a whole in all denominations for almost two thousand years, it has today become an acute problem. For obvious reasons, interest centres on the devil and on demons, but the essential question is inevitably about the existence of nonhuman, created, personal beings: that is, a question about the existence of 'angels', whether these are understood as good and finally perfected, or as bad and lost. It is to this general question that we shall devote some reflections here. Our reflections will not be related to all the questions that as such are involved in the problem of the existence of 'angels'. While presupposing the present state of the question in Catholic theology, we are attempting only to put forward some considerations which perhaps have not been very explicitly examined in the course of the controversy up to now.

The present state of the controversy can be briefly and simply indicated. Angels and demons appear in the later parts of the Old Testament and in the New Testament (these include the devil, who is seen in some sense as representative and head of the demonic realm, although there is a difference in origin and nature between Satan and the demons which may not simply be overlooked). In the light of the history of religion this teaching in the later part of the Old Testament and in the New Testament is not the original teaching of these inspired Scriptures of Christianity, but has entered into it from the religious milieu of late Judaism and early Christianity, although this observation does not in principle imply anything decisive about the exact meaning and the binding force in faith of this teaching, [236] since it is not *a priori* impossible for a doctrine accepted 'from outside' to be binding in faith. This teaching of the New Testament assumes as a matter of course the existence of angels and demons and for that very reason the real purpose of the New Testament statements is not to insist on this existence, but to show that these 'principalities and powers' will finally be deprived of power by Jesus Christ and his Spirit; the familiar teaching on angelology and demonology is merely reproduced in a more developed form and its practical consequences indicated (devotion to guardian angels, exorcism, possession).

This traditional teaching amounts to an attempt to contribute to the understanding of evil in the world: the latter is not merely the effect and consequence of man's freedom, but has a previous, more general causal ground in the sinister domination of evil powers and agencies, even though these do not eliminate man's free responsibility. The speculative angelology of Christian theology has, of course, been enriched (especially in the Middle Ages) by many philosophical ideas and theories which are certainly not binding in faith. The doctrine of demons has certainly led in practice in Christian life to terrible abnormalities, including the horrors of the witch trials. The most important statement of the traditional teaching by the magisterium is found in the profession of faith of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, where it is said that God

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> by his almighty power from the beginning of time created from nothing both the spiritual and the corporeal creature, the angelic and the earthly; then the human creature as belonging to both orders, being composed of spirit and body. For the devil and the other demons were created by God as good by nature, but became evil from themselves. Man, however, sinned at the prompting of the devil.

This teaching, which can also be found in many other documents of the magisterium, was repeated by Paul VI in an address on 15 November 1972.

In the present controversy within *Catholic* theology (which is all that we shall consider), three positions can be distinguished.

The *first* view is that the doctrine of created (definitively) good and (definitively) evil personal spiritual beings, alongside and above man (including their influence on the calamitous history of the human [237] world), is a strictly binding truth of faith which must be unconditionally upheld even today. At the same time in the last resort it is irrelevant whether this teaching (which, however, is clearly present in the New Testament, in Paul's writings and also in the words and practice of Jesus himself) can be deduced with purely exegetical methods from Scripture as a real statement of faith, or whether this 'literal' interpretation of Scripture becomes the object of binding faith only by the Church's dogmatic definition which is not open to doubt. But, even admitting the correctness of this first position, there can be no doubt that it has had to be curtailed in the course of history and has in fact been curtailed without protest. No one today will maintain that the space between the earth and the moon is the real and essential locality of the demons. Even the defenders of this first position will be more cautious today in the interpretation of certain illnesses as demonic possession and will be glad that there are no witches or witch trials today, which were formerly regarded as obvious conclusions from the traditional teaching. The defenders of the first position will also refrain from producing bulky theological treatises on demonology, such as those formerly composed, especially in post-Tridentine theology up to the present century (the two volumes by von Petersdorff appeared as recently as 1956). It can be said even at this point that the defenders of the first position will have to proceed cautiously and modestly, since the tradition they invoke is not entirely credible in each and every aspect that it presents.

The defenders of a *second* position today deny forthrightly and unequivocally the existence of the devil and the demons. They insist that the doctrine of the devil has entered into Scripture from outside, that an exact historico-critical exegesis shows that Scripture does not teach but only assumes the existence of the devil and demons (and angels), and in the light of this hypothesis makes statements the real content of which persists if the hypothesis is dropped. If and insofar as the permanent binding force of definitions of the magisterium is maintained, these declarations, in the sense that they are supposed to remain binding, are interpreted in this second position like the statements of Scripture: the existence of demons (and angels) is not defined, but all that is said is that, *if* and insofar as they exist (which is spontaneously assumed, but not really taught), they are created good by God and are evil only through their own fault, [238] they do not represent any absolute and original power of evil, but remain subject to the greater power of good, to God's salvific will and to his grace. This second position does not make use merely of historico-critical exegesis in an attempt to relativize the statements of Scripture (together with those of tradition drawn from Scripture and those of the magisterium), but tries with the aid of psychology, parapsychology, and sociology to show how it was possible to reach a theory of the devil which of its nature is no more than a projection and personification of evil in the world, experienced by man as overwhelmingly powerful and ineradicable. These personifying projections are meant to help man to understand the existence of evil everywhere present in the world and at the same time to relieve him of responsibility for it. When evil appears in a particularly terrifying form, it is

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said to be due not really to man, but to the activity of the devil; when a human being in the midst of conflicting impulses feels almost schizophrenically the tendency to evil, it is a question of a diabolic whispered temptation. In defence of this second position attention is also drawn to the harmful effects of belief in the devil on the life of the individual and on society.

At this point, however, the defenders of the second position need to be reminded that it is very difficult epistemologically to prove the nonexistence of an entity by showing the inconclusiveness of the arguments hitherto adduced to establish its existence. They need to be warned against an innate temptation to trivialize the evil in the world and to interpret it as an inevitable and ultimately innocuous irritating phenomenon and as an unavoidable drawback in a changing world, evolving from the very outset toward its consummation and *unable* actually to plunge into final perdition. In regard to this second position (which is easily linked with a denial of 'original sin'), the question needs constantly to be asked whether it upholds the seriousness of sin and guilt as revealed on the cross of the Son of God; the question must constantly be asked what *the evil* and the demonic, permeating all dimensions of existence and the world and not to be eliminated in a spirit of naive bourgeois optimism, really is, if we are not to elucidate it with the aid of the traditional teaching on demons.

A *third* position admits that there is something that is still not clear about this question: it is not unequivocally certain that the traditional teaching of Scripture and the Church asserts absolutely and [239] not merely hypothetically the existence of nonhuman, created, good and evil personal beings, that it upholds absolutely (over and above the doctrine of the createdness of all things other than the one God, of the creaturely finiteness of evil, of the rejection of a manicheistic dualism) the existence of these angels and demons. This third position, therefore, represents a certain neutrality between the other two positions and entrusts the problem to the future history of faith and theology. Those who hold it cannot admit to being clearly convinced by the arguments of either the first or second position. In the light of what has been learned from the history of dogma, a position of this kind is not surprising. In the course of this history views and doctrines have continually been put forward (not as definitions in the strict sense, or only as definitions open to a variety of interpretations) by the magisterium in its ordinary or extraordinary teaching (also with an appeal to Scripture) which later turned out to be mistaken and which the magisterium eventually tacitly or expressly withdrew. Cases like this (which do not need to be presented here) have constantly occurred, in which a considerable time had to elapse between the appearance of a new problem and its settlement in one way or another, a period of time that could be of varying length depending on the peculiar nature of the particular problem and the preconditions of its solution. Those who hold this position cannot therefore be blamed for cowardice or laziness in seeking an easy way out by simply refusing to express a clear view on this question, particularly since what is involved here is not merely the expression of a personal opinion, but a decision as to how the two first positions are judged by the sense of faith of the whole Church – a question that can be answered only with difficulty, since this sense of faith is difficult to grasp and is continually developing in the course of history.

It is to be hoped that the present *status quaestionis* in regard to this problem has now been defined up to a point, although, of course, the essential objective arguments supporting the three positions were not developed in detail. In what follows the theological problem of the existence of angels and devils will not be investigated further from all the aspects hitherto mentioned in this controversy. There will not be any exegetical investigations or studies in the history of religion here, nor will the declarations of the Church's magisterium be examined in regard to their content and their binding [240] force, although all these inquiries are obviously indispensable for an answer to the actual problem. Instead of this, we want to point to a few questions which have not hitherto been discussed or at most only marginally

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discussed in this controversy. These questions, selected from the total complex of problems, cannot individually decide the problem as a whole, since even a clear answer to any one of them leaves the main problem unsettled and since they raise further problems which are perhaps more obscure and have been less considered hitherto than their own immediate object. With the reservation that the reader may endure patiently the somewhat high-sounding nomenclature, we would like to distinguish three questions which will occupy us here: an epistemological question, an existential-ontological question, and a question of the theology of the cosmos. What is meant by these questions will become clear without more ado in the course of the discussion.

1. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTION

We come to the first, the epistemological question, which is seen here as a specifically theological and not a universally philosophical question. We are asking what can fall in principle and *a priori* in any way into the sphere of an actual supernatural revelation, and (if this general question can be and has been answered) whether the existence of the angels can in any way be among the objects belonging to *this* sphere. The general epistemological question – in the light of which the question is to be decided whether the existence of the angels is or is not (can be or cannot be) a revealed truth of faith – is a very obscure question and one which perhaps has never hitherto been sufficiently clearly formulated. This general epistemological question of the possibility of defining in principle and *a priori* the field of reality which comes into question at all for a supernatural divine revelation obviously therefore cannot be thematicized and answered *here* with the detail and the theological precision with which the question of the existence of the angels as object of revelation could be clearly answered. (It will in fact become clear, even assuming that the general epistemological question has been answered and assuming the existence of angels, that there are still two possibilities on which the answer to the general epistemological [241] question alone cannot throw much light.) It is, however, possible to raise this general epistemological problem, and it undoubtedly has an importance for the question of the existence of the angels. And, consequently, some suggestions at least should be put forward in regard to this general problem of theological knowledge.

Is it possible to answer the question of whether there is a formal principle permitting *a priori* a distinction between objects that from the very outset simply cannot be regarded as an object of revelation and those which can be the object of a supernatural revelation? Is it possible perhaps to say of certain propositions on the existence and nature of particular realities that they could never be revealed because their content from the very outset could never be the object of revelation? Unless we are completely mistaken, this is the sort of question that is scarcely or never raised in Catholic theology. (This assertion may be due to my own ignorance; apart from touching on the question elsewhere in my own reflections, I have come across it in Catholic theology only in P. Knauer's fundamental theology;[1] without my knowing it, of course, the question may have been dealt with elsewhere, from different aspects and with a different terminology.)

The absence of this formulation of the question is easy to understand. We start out tacitly and as a matter of course from the assumption that God is omniscient, can communicate himself 'externally', is free in this communication; thus any truth, if God wills it, can also be the object of his supernatural verbal revelation. It seems therefore from the very outset that there cannot be an axiom that excludes *a priori* and in principle certain propositions from the

[1] P. Knauer, *Der Glaube kommt vom Hören: Ökumenische Fundamentaltheologie* (Graz, 1977).

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area of possible divine revelation. In addition to this consideration, assumed tacitly and as a matter of course, the fact is that Catholic theology (clearly, for example, at Vatican I) assumes that there are propositions within the scope of revelation which are really part of revelation (for example, on the existence of God, of a natural law, etc.), but which can also in principle be established by 'natural' reason without the aid of supernatural revelation, so that the revelation of such propositions only gives them a greater clarity and certainty for man in working out his salvation. In textbook theology [242] there has scarcely been any consideration (over and above what has been indicated) of how revelation of facts and truths, as such accessible to natural reason alone, is related to the revelation of mysteries of faith properly so-called, which in principle can be known only by personal supernatural revelation: for this very reason (it seems to me) it was assumed quite generally and without further reflection as a matter of course that God, if he only wants to do so and regards it as appropriate (as important for salvation) in particular situations, can reveal any conceivable truth. This belief was confirmed by the impression commonly gained from the history of revelation: since all bearers of revelation (from Moses and the prophets up to Jesus and his final revelation) were regarded tacitly as formally equal in status, distinguished only in the content of their revelation and not in the event itself of revelation (although this did not exclude the use of 'revelation' as a merely analogous common generic term), and since the most diverse contents (from the political maxims of a prophet to the eschatologically victorious communication of the Spirit to the world) were observed in the history of revelation regarded in this way as formally leveled down, it was really quite impossible to think of the question of whether the content of one proposition or another could be *a priori* excluded from the field of revelation properly so-called. In practice the only question recognized was that of whether one thing or another (for example, the existence of angels) had actually been revealed (not the question of whether one proposition or another in the light of its content measured against the nature of divine revelation *could* be revealed at all or must from the very outset be excluded from this field).

Here the view will be maintained that there is such an *a priori* axiom to determine the possibility of such a revelation. The axiom runs (with the reservation that further qualifications will be introduced at a later stage): in a supernatural revelation (in its unity, here assumed as necessary, of communication of the Spirit and word, by which alone a verbal revelation can in any way be God's word and not merely a word about God) properly and primarily only God himself (in his self-communication) can reveal himself. Everything else (that is, everything as created distinct from God) can as such by no means be the original object of an actual, supernatural revelation and thus an original object of faith. (At a later stage special consideration must be given to the question of whether and how there can be [243] secondary objects of revelation, dependent in event and content on revelation properly so-called as God's self-communication, which are not God himself.) This basic axiom ought really to be self-evident and immediately comprehensible. If we do not think anthropomorphically of the relationship between God and the world, if we admit that God is the free cause of the world and not a particular part of reality, any special intervention of God inside the world, which is both distinction from world realities and yet in some way belongs to them, must be rejected as a merely mythological idea or this 'particularity' must consist in the fact that God himself as such communicates himself by himself directly to the world and that the history of salvation *and* revelation in *one* consists in this. The fact that God cannot really become a particular element of a partial character in the world and its history does not amount to a limitation of God, but is precisely identical with a rightly understood and radically seriously accepted divinity of God. What is meant here can also be seen from the opposite standpoint. If God, revealing and communicating himself, were to communicate himself through *something else*, created by him and distinct from him, because this other

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created thing would carry with it a reference to him, if then God's revelation were established by something 'creaturely', this created reality would in principle be accessible to man's reason, since the formal object of this reason cannot exclude anything finite from its range, since reason as unlimited transcendentality can in principle comprehend all that is finite, and consequently nothing finite can in principle be an absolute mystery. Revelation properly speaking can have as its object only God himself as such.

Of course, this basic axiom is bound at first to rouse bewilderment and protest. It is indeed easy to see that the three fundamental mysteries of Christianity – Trinity, incarnation, and imparting of the Spirit – are covered and summed up in their formal solidarity by this axiom. It is also possible to see comparatively quickly that the mystery of the Church as such can be traced back to the mystery of God's self-communication established by God irreversibly in Christ. But it cannot be denied that there are apparently other articles of faith which, on the one hand, are understood as mysteries properly so-called and are accessible only by God's revelation, and which, on the other hand, since they at least give the impression of expressing a finite reality, seem to contradict the basic axiom as formulated (we [244] may recall, for example, the dogma of transubstantiation). This difficulty, of course, cannot be cleared up here, if only because the task would presuppose that we are clear about which and how many real mysteries of faith exist and are to be distinguished. We simply assume here that our basic axiom can be compatible with the Church's conviction in regard to articles which it regards as real mysteries of faith, while admittedly also assuming that these other mysteries of faith are themselves correctly interpreted in regard to their character as mysteries, which is by no means so simple in individual cases. But with all this the real difficulty which must occupy us here in regard to this basic axiom is not even envisaged. It seems, that is, to be simply obvious that the Church's sense of faith is aware of propositions which are understood as real revelation, although they express a finite object and by no means raise any claim to be mysteries properly so-called. There seems to be a whole lot of such truths of faith, although it seems that no effort has been made hitherto to distinguish these truths of faith in their diversity and to arrange them formally in a lucid system.

It is impossible here, of course, to undertake a systematization of such propositions which on the one hand are supposed to be revealed and on the other hand do not contain any real mysteries and thus create much greater difficulties in regard to our basic axiom than do those possible mysteries which are not *a priori* compatible with this axiom. On this problem a few hints must suffice. In the first place there are certainly propositions the content of which amounts to a precondition, immediately perceptible and understandable as absolutely necessary, on man's part for the possibility of revelation properly so-called as God's self-communication. That man is a being who really can have something to do with God is a proposition that directly expresses a finite reality and one in fact that can be known 'naturally' (or can be regarded as so knowable), but which on the other hand is guaranteed by the event of actual revelation as its precondition. Such propositions can certainly be regarded in a secondary and derived sense as revealed statements, since and insofar as their content is inevitably perceived as God's self-communication *in* the event of revelation. Rightly understood and interpreted, these propositions do not conflict with our basic axiom but confirm it. We may well take the view that the majority of revealed statements, which do not contain any absolute mysteries, can be interpreted in [245] this way and thus do not contradict our basic axiom. But can this be said of all propositions that the Church's sense of faith sees as revealed?

This question is difficult to answer, if only because there is no complete register of propositions likely to emerge clearly set out and immediately understandable. If, for example, a prophet in the Old Testament proclaims a political axiom for a particular historical situation as the 'word of Yahweh', as a word of revelation, even if his claim is recognized it is still by

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no means clear what exactly is the sense in which this word is revelation. (As compared with the medieval theology of prophecy, it is in fact striking how little attention is paid by modern fundamental theology to the concrete happening in the prophet's consciousness, to the claim made that his word, which is primarily a datum of his own consciousness, is God's word. In modern fundamental theology attention is fixed too hastily on the external authentication of the words of the bearer of revelation, on the miracle as distinct from the event of revelation itself, without closer reflection 'psychologically' on the very event of revelation in its bearer, even though the latter has no recourse at all to miracle to support his conviction that he has received inwardly a divine revelation.) In any event such propositions ought to be more closely examined and more clearly distinguished in their content and in their psychological and sociological origins, so that even the assertion that they are divine revelation might and should take very diverse forms. Although it is impossible to go into all this here, the embarrassment arising with regard to this basic axiom cannot simply be concealed; therefore a basic solution of the problem facing us may be briefly outlined, so that it can perhaps be made clear that we can insist on our basic axiom, without on that account simply denying that there are propositions which on the one hand directly express a *finite* truth and yet on the other hand claim to be revealed.

With regard to this suggestion we assume that revelation can always be approached only in faith and that such a faith always and at all times, even though completely unthematically and without verbal objectivation, must be sustained by God's self-communication (by what we are accustomed to call 'uncreated grace') and that (even though implicitly and unthematically) it always affirms the actual self-communication and self-revelation of God in the sense of our basic axiom. On this assumption, it can certainly be said that a finite [246] reality and the proposition related to it can be affirmed as revealed when and insofar as their being sustained by faith properly so-called as immediacy to the absolute God and their synthesis are thus directly and conclusively experienced. When (to put it somewhat boldly) the mysticism of the transcendental experience of grace is encountered in an indissoluble synthesis (not distorting the openness of this mysticism) with a categorial experience, this, too, may be understood as willed by God, as the will and sign of God, as revealed. But this is always in the light of the actual experience of grace, in which a person submits in faith to the absolute mystery of God, to the latter's actual revelation in the sense of our basic axiom, even though this experience of grace as such may itself remain merely implicit in many instances and depending on the particular situation in the history of revelation, while the attention of the recipient of revelation is fixed on the categorial content of his experience.

It seems to me that a Catholic theology cannot really reject the theory above outlined if it admits that revelation, if it is to be understood as revelation no matter what its particular content, must be accepted in *faith*, and that in the last resort faith always and everywhere has the same nature and cannot be defined solely in the light of its individual object where there occurs God's self-communication as such in the Holy Spirit. This theory might be elucidated and supported by a theology of mysticism and private revelations, although the distinction between public and private revelation would have to be made clear, while admitting that in the last resort they have the same fundamental nature There are certainly instances in the Church's ordinary theology and practice when we cannot do without the theory outlined. The obligation of an assent of faith, which a Catholic admits in regard to an *ex cathedra* decision of the pope, is in fact dependent on the legitimacy of the election of this pope and on the certain knowledge of the promulgation of that decision. These things and the knowledge of them seem to be purely natural, historical, and contingent, not in themselves amounting to an object of faith, nor belonging to the group of those truths and facts of which we spoke above and which must necessarily also be involved in the acceptance of revelation properly so-called, and which nevertheless are supposed to be the foundation of a decision of faith.

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Although in textbook theology in the *analysis fidei* an attempt is [247] generally made in a somewhat different way to provide help in regard to this problem, the solution offered here still seems to be the most intelligible, even for these cases. The Catholic's experience in the Holy Spirit of faith directed toward the immediacy of God authenticates and confirms for him also the categorial starting point and mediation of his own actual faith, in this case the actual legitimacy of the election of the pope, etc. In the last resort, however, it seems unimportant whether we describe a proposition about an historically contingent reality as a revealed article of faith or as a proposition that is affirmed absolutely only in a decision of faith, whether it is regarded as the content of a *fides divina* or of a mere *fides ecclesiastica* (if the latter exists at all), particularly since today this traditional distinction between divine and purely ecclesiastical faith seems to have little support. If we understand and interpret in this way truths of revelation, whose content seems to be finite and historically contingent, without necessarily having been implicitly affirmed in the former sense in the act of faith, then we are compelled to adopt a differentiated view of revealed truth as it normally exists, but we must not deny a rightly understood revealedness of such truths and need not see them as contradicting our basic axiom in this question.

After these circumstantial and yet far too brief preliminary reflections, we can now return to our proper question. *Can* the existence of angels (and demons) be revealed at all? If our basic axiom and the qualifications subsequently added are correct, then the answer to this question must be: Since the existence of angels (if it is a fact) involves at most a finite and creaturely reality which can in no way be a mystery of faith properly speaking, this existence of angels cannot be understood as more than a content of revelation of a secondary and derived character, *if* it can be proved that this reality as such is known naturally *and* at the same time has such a religious significance that we can seriously assume that this existence can enter into a synthesis with the proper reality of faith and its expression, such as we demanded for a secondary and derived object of faith of this kind. Before we can inquire whether this condition is fulfilled, we must draw attention also to the fact that not every reality of a finite and knowable character *about which* a statement of faith can be made or which might be known by faith can *ipso facto* be regarded as such a secondary and derived object of faith. If a [248] person enjoys a glass of wine, for instance, and regards it with gratitude as part of God's creation, he is not making the creation of wine an object of faith by making a statement (perhaps of considerable importance) in the light of faith *about* what remains a secular object of natural knowledge. If, then, we assume that the existence of angels as such is the object of natural knowledge, we can and must make theological statements about this fact (that they are created and finite, that as such they are created good, that they can have become evil only through their own freedom, while remaining subject to God's supreme decrees).

Such a statement can be of great religious importance; but it does not for that reason necessarily turn its object into an object of faith, in the sense that the denial of the existence of this object would be an offense against faith itself; the statement can certainly be made hypothetically, that is, its object as such can be left to a purely natural appraisal. But this does not mean on the other hand that such a finite object, which in itself is accessible to natural knowledge, can never and under no circumstances become an object of faith, even though of a secondary and derived character. Whether the one or the other alternative applies is decided by the question of whether this object enters into a synthesis with the actual realization of faith and its original content in such a way that the Church's sense of faith as a whole sees that in practice the original realization of faith can be concretely achieved only while affirming this secondary object. (What is meant by these admittedly not very clear or familiar propositions may be illustrated by an example. The legitimacy of Vatican I was dependent on the legitimacy of the election of Pope Pius IX, a legitimacy which is certainly a finite,

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contingent fact accessible to natural knowledge and not derivable from the nature of the Church; and yet the concrete act of faith of the Church as a whole, in which it accepts its concrete nature together with its historical continuity throughout the ages, must assume as absolute this legitimacy of Pius IX, that is, as a secondary object of faith and not merely as a hypothetical presupposition for a judgment of faith. Of course, from the very nature of the case more ought to be said and in more exact detail about this synthesis; perhaps the peculiar character and even the distinction of *various* syntheses of this kind ought to be worked out. But this is not possible here.)

What we are asking is: When the existence of angels is mentioned [249] in Scripture and tradition, when at the same time, according to our basic axiom about possible objects of revelation, there can be no question of a primary and original object of faith, is this existence merely assumed hypothetically as the object of natural knowledge, about which the statement of faith (that they are created, etc.) is made while allowing for the permanently hypothetical character of its object (*if* there are angels – of which we are convinced naturally, but not as a matter of faith – *then* they are created, etc.), *or* does the natural knowledge of the existence of angels enter into a synthesis with faith (in the createdness of everything outside God) in such a way that this existence (although in itself of a natural and hypothetical character) becomes a secondary and derived object of faith? After all that has been said up to now, this statement of the question forbids us to work purely and simply with the straightforward dilemma that the existence of the angels is either an object of revelation (of a primary, undifferentiated character) or a mere assertion of natural knowledge which in itself can be mistaken, the origin of which can be explained psychologically, sociologically, and so on, and in regard to which faith makes a purely hypothetical statement. It is not as simple as that. The claim that something is 'revealed' must be distinguished, and in regard to the term 'natural knowledge' it cannot simply be assumed that its object can never and under no circumstances enter into the sphere of derived and secondary objects of faith.

If, however, these distinctions are introduced into the formulation of the question, it must be said that it cannot be answered unambiguously here and now at the present stage of the controversy. Certainly it can be said that, if angels exist, they are as such and primarily the object of a natural knowledge, while the term 'natural' can leave entirely open the question of whether such a 'natural' knowledge would be possible on the assumption of the existence of a 'nature' existing purely as such as understood in the scholastic distinction between nature and grace. All that 'natural knowledge' need mean here is that it has emerged outside and independently of the history of revelation of the Old and the New Covenant and remains valid, but as such it does not have the guarantee of being divinely revealed. That the existence of angels is the object of natural knowledge in this sense (while the question of whether this is true or false remains, of course, completely open) can certainly be disputed. For [250] not only must the supporters of the first position admit that the doctrine of angels came into the Old and New Testament from outside and did not originate there, but the supporters of the second position also affirm such a natural knowledge, which, however, they regard as false and are thus able to deny the revealed character of this doctrine.

Two questions thus arise for us. First, can the origin of such a natural knowledge of the existence of angels not only be made intelligible in the light of psychology, sociology, and the history of ideas, but also be proved to be objectively true and still valid today (or at least shown to be probable and meaningful), or is this not the case, and is therefore the existence of the angels for us an absolute mythological notion? Second, if the existence of the angels can be proved to be the object of a natural knowledge which remains correct even today, is it then an object of faith in Scripture and tradition or merely an object of natural knowledge *about* which faith makes a hypothetical statement, without raising it to the level of an object of faith and thus without forbidding its denial? The first of these two questions must be considered

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further in the third section of our reflections. But if we assume a positive answer (that is, the opinion that the existence of angels can be affirmed and shown to be probable even today), the second question mentioned above still remains open; it would still be necessary to ask whether this existence of angels remains hypothetical or is made into a secondary object of faith in statements about it. But this question must obviously remain open. For on the assumptions made with our basic axiom it would have to be proved that in Scripture and tradition faith really finds inescapable that synthesis which must exist between the original faith oriented to God himself alone and a finite object which is not an original object of faith, if such a finite reality is supposed to be a secondary object of faith. It will not be asserted apodictically here that such a synthesis (of a kind that needs to be more closely described) certainly does not exist in our case. But it can be proved only with difficulty or not at all convincingly that such a synthesis, conceivable in itself and necessary for a statement of faith in this connection, certainly does exist.

In an intellectual and historical milieu in which belief in superhuman spirits was taken for granted (which is evident in any case from the arguments for the second position), Christian faith naturally [251] entered into a close and obvious symbiosis (which has remained a matter of course for many people, even up to the present time) with belief in the existence of such spiritual beings, a symbiosis which can certainly give the impression that it is identical with that peculiar synthesis which sets up a reality of natural experience as a secondary and derived object of faith. This is all the more likely since, for reasons arising from the sociology of ideas, such a symbiosis is liable to persist in the consciousness of official representatives of the Church's mind when it has begun to break down elsewhere. But it is still far from being clearly established that this symbiosis really amounts to the synthesis we are seeking. Parallels are not hard to find. The existence of witches was still affirmed unambiguously and without embarrassment in the churches in the seventeenth century and this affirmation was certainly regarded as a consequence or as an undoubted concrete expression of Christian belief in demons. Up to the present century the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was regarded in Catholic circles as an obvious concrete expression of belief in the inspiration of Scripture. It would be possible to cite many more of such and similar examples of the breakdown of a unity at first accepted unreservedly between real faith and transitory human opinion. Of course, these examples do not prove that whenever and wherever there is such a connection it is a question merely of a transitory symbiosis and not of a synthesis in which the Church's sense of faith seizes on an essentially natural truth as a secondary and derived object of faith. Whether there is a mere symbiosis or a genuine synthesis in our case is not to be decided at the present moment; it will have to be seen whether in the near or more distant future the Church's sense of faith will abandon a transitory symbiosis of this kind, or even explicitly affirm a synthesis in which the existence of angels is accepted as a secondary object of faith.

At this point in our reflections, the view may perhaps be tentatively expressed that we now seem to have reached a stage in the history of the reflective awareness of faith in regard to our question at which an explicit intervention of the magisterium scarcely appears to be opportune. Not that the justification in principle of such an intervention need be disputed. But what is the use of it at this point? In practice and concretely it cannot take the form of an *ex cathedra* decision on the part of pope or council, since the preconditions for such a decision are lacking. This is evident from the fact [252] that Vatican II nowhere pronounced new definitions, and after the council Paul VI, even in questions where he considered a new declaration of his magisterium appropriate, did not put forward any *ex cathedra* decisions. But if nondefining albeit authentic declarations of the magisterium are issued, they do not, as the experience of recent decades shows, bring the discussion to an end. The discussion and, consequently, the history of the Church's sense of faith continue. In regard to our question it

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is possible, of course, to appeal to former definitions and to explain that the question now facing us was definitively settled there. But even if we have no wish to deny to the Fourth Lateran Council the character of a general council of the Church, there is still a question about what was really defined there and what was not. This remains a matter for serious argument. The appeal to the Church's universal sense of faith and to the ordinary magisterium certainly does not bring a clear ending to the discussion. For the history of dogma shows that even defined truths of faith were amalgamated in the minds of the Church's members with opinions that were only later clearly and explicitly seen to be different from the dogmatic statement as originally understood and only then could this amalgam be eliminated.

These lengthy reflections do not seem to have taken us very far, for we are still discussing the third position as described at the beginning. But, with the reservation that many reflections of an exegetical character and on the history of dogma would need to be added, it can nevertheless be said that the path to be trodden in order to get back from this third position to the first has now been more clearly indicated. We may then (and this is the result of the previous reflections) not merely attempt to assert and to prove that the existence of angels and demons is an object of faith; we ought also to attempt to define the peculiar character of this object of faith as now understood and from that standpoint perceive how exactly an object of faith of this kind can be proved.

2. THE EXISTENTIAL-ONTOLOGICAL QUESTION

In our reflections we have now reached the second of the themes announced above. Even if it is assumed that angels and demons exist and that this existence is asserted by revelation (direct or indirect, [253] as original or derived and secondary object of faith), there remains the great question of what appropriately is to be understood today by these angels and demons. The question could, of course, be answered satisfactorily only by a complete angelology and demonology and this is something that cannot be developed here. But neither can the question be settled by referring to a few Scripture texts. For even in regard to these texts it must be asked what in them is a time-conditioned conceptual model and what is the content really asserted and intended to be binding. But this question requires a criterion for distinguishing between the conceptual model and the actual content of the statement, which is scarcely or never provided by Scripture itself. Nor is it easy to expect a clear answer from tradition to this question of the nature of the angels. For traditional angelology and demonology is itself a very odd conglomerate of biblical passages, philosophical assumptions and views, and popular ideas laboriously worked up into a system. The controversy about the existence of angels and demons ought not be conducted as if it were clear *what* angels and demons are and as if the controversy were only about their existence. The popular indignation of many, especially of devout, Christians at any questioning of the existence of angels and demons is undoubtedly often and to a very considerable extent based on primitive ideas about these beings which are urgently in need of a 'demythologization', even if we want to maintain the existence of angels and demons as an object of faith.

In this second section of our reflections we propose to offer one or two modest suggestions for a demythologizing of a folkloristic, primitive belief in angels and demons. These critical reflections will not by any means start out from ideas that are particularly new and controversial. We shall appeal instead to principles that really cannot be questioned in Catholic theology or at any rate must not be questioned from the standpoint of positions clearly established in the light of faith. Even if the existence of angels and demons is admitted, these suggestions for a necessary demythologization of angelology and

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demonology are perhaps somewhat arbitrarily selected without any intention of a comprehensive and uniform replacement of these fragments of traditional theology.

In the first place, we may be allowed to register a protest against the generally accepted view in angelology and demonology that these created 'spirits' must be seen as 'pure' spirits without necessarily [254] possessing an essential relationship to matter. These beings may be 'pure' spirits insofar as they neither are merely material realities nor possess *that* materiality which belongs to man in virtue of his bodily nature. But to go beyond this in describing the angels and demons as 'pure' spirits may be Neoplatonic philosophy; it is neither the Church's teaching as binding in faith nor logically implied in the fact that these beings have no body in the form that we ourselves know it as human beings. An assumption of this kind is completely unproved and arbitrary. Here, of course, it is impossible to argue in detail and with philosophical exactitude for the opposite view: that is, for an essential relatedness to matter on the part of personal subjectivities such as angels and demons (if they exist and if we are able to say anything at all about them). For then we would have to go into the question of what matter is in a philosophical sense; it would have to be shown that, particularly in a Thomistic understanding, matter as such cannot really be split in itself into many pieces of matter, but is the original albeit precisely the differentiating unity, the one 'field' of the cosmos, the condition of the possibility of the separatedness and the interaction of the individual concrete realities. It would also have to be shown (perhaps in a critique of the traditional textbook philosophy in the Church) that the internal dualism in a finite entity necessary for the understanding of its createdness is reflected twice in that philosophy: in the dualism of essence and existence and in the dualism of matter and form, two dualisms which are understandable and cogent in their duality only if it is assumed as a matter of course, as in Neoplatonism or in the philosophy of Aquinas (contrary to the intrinsic tendency of his system), that there are immaterial beings, *formae separatae*. But even if we leave aside such metaphysical reflections as impossible to pursue here, it can be said that the idea of good and bad angels as purely immaterial beings is contrary to the basic trend of the biblical teaching on angels. For traditional angelology contains in itself an odd contradiction which can only be scantily concealed in words. In the first place, in traditional angelology the angels are set up as Leibnizian monads which can draw the content of their existence (apart from its relationship to God) purely from their own internal resources, since as *formae separatae* they are always aware of themselves from the outset without the mediation of another being; and yet these monads (according to Scripture) are then suddenly [255] supposed to be powers and authorities of this material world of ours, are supposed to have something to do with winds, fire, and water, are localized in this earthly world, in the last resort form together with human beings one and the same history of salvation, can be angels of individual nations, and are understood as effectively helpful and seductive in this world and its history.

It is possible to cope with these internal tensions and contradictions of traditional angelology only by resolutely discarding Neoplatonic ideas and assigning *a priori* to the angels (if they exist) an essential intrinsic relationship to *that* matter which is the sustaining ground of the finiteness of the world, of the unity of the cosmos and its history of personal beings. It is, of course, difficult to say *how* exactly this 'materiality' of the angels is to be understood as distinct from the materiality of that personal consciousness which is man. Nevertheless, it can be imagined that the kind of mastery and formation of space-time reality which comes about through the human body and the personal entelechy corresponding to it is not unique, that there can be greater and more differentiated unities of space-time reality than that of a human body and its synthesis and interiorization of materiality. The idea of a form related to matter producing a greater material unity and configuration than that of the human body is not more difficult to conceive than the idea of a *forma separata*, to which traditional angelology has become accustomed and thus finds understandable, without perceiving the

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tensions and (to be honest) the contradictions in it. In any case, the idea of such a superhuman principle establishing unity and interiority is more capable of being grasped by natural knowledge than are the monadic angels of a traditional angelology. But as was shown in the first section of our reflections, we cannot give up the possibility of a natural knowledge of angels, if these are not to be suspected *a priori* of being merely mythological figures. These reflections, however, must be continued in our third section.

Even if the existence of demons is assumed and upheld as a fact, the concrete ideas of them in popular theology and more especially in the ordinary piety of Catholics need a decisive demythologization. This is something that must be considered for a while here. As such, this demythologizing has no need of any particularly modern insights. It is sufficient to apply to the ideas of the demons those fundamental and universal insights on evil which were long ago [256] developed by a Christian metaphysic of finite freedom, of the nature of the good and of culpable evil. There is no absolute evil. All evil is finite; it is not a positive reality in itself, but a want of good in an entity that remains good in its substance as coming from God and indestructable. In its origin, in its possibility of becoming definitive, in its co-existence with an absolute God and his unrestrictedly good freedom and power, freely posed wickedness is certainly a mystery which resists a rationalistic solution and cannot simply be understood as merely the unavoidable reverse side of the good, as an irritating phenomenon in the coming to be of the good. But this need not prevent us from seeing the wickedness of the wicked, the guilt of the guilty, even in its possible finality, as deficiency (although freely posited) of the good in a good entity, as something that would not and never could be evil if it were not and did not still remain good in very many respects and dimensions of reality. We can be evil and do evil only if we remain good and behave well (even though in a defective way). Even in an evil action of freedom of the most radical kind the good is affirmed as condition of the possibility of freedom and goodness and realized in a positive sense, although not to the extent and in the radicalness possible and required in the particular concrete situation. If we do not want to be Manichees and if we do not want to see evil and good as consisting in an absolute dualism of two equal powers, we must always and everywhere keep in mind the fact that even evil lives by the good and always continues to realize the good, that evil as absolute and forthright corruption would utterly destroy as an entity this entity that had become evil.

All this, however, is true of the devils and demons, if they exist. They have a nature that is good and created by God, that is not removed, but, again, posited, even by their free and definitive decision against God. Not that the finalized decision by these demons against God can be seen as a superficial patina clinging only externally to a reality created by God, so that the question might be asked why this patina is not swept away and the reality created good by God preserved. Wickedness freely chosen is certainly a determination reaching to the very heart of the personal reality created by God. But it is a determination of this reality created by God and therefore good and remaining good in its substance and self-realization. A popular idea of devils, however, is that they are beings consisting of nothing but opposition to God, of hatred and negation. [257] This popular idea confuses evil with what has become evil, *malitia* as such with actual *malum*; it identifies evil beings with the pure essence of evil, with what is nothing but wickedness. But there are not and cannot be any such evil beings. If the demons reject God, their rejection is a defective mode of their always positive nature and its realization, which always has a positive meaning and positively contributes only to the goodness of the world. Even more mythological would be an idea of demons as impish, malignant spirits whose action and behavior really contain in their substance nothing but a destruction of positive realities, although that action can be understood only as a realization of what is positively good. It is a mythological idea to suppose that in order to realize their nature in the world, with the good necessarily involved in it and with the negative present in

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and about this good through their decision, these evil spirits need a 'permission', understood up to a point juridically and legally, from God who permits them in one place and forbids them in another to inflict damage, without this having anything really to do with the nature and the cosmic function they possess, whether good or bad. If and insofar as events in the cosmos and its history are also conditioned by the existence and self-realization of such powers and authorities, these events are not properly to be understood as effects of new initiatives on the part of these demons, oriented only to evil as such, but as consequences of their nature and their cosmic function, which are always the expression of an essentially good nature *and* determined also by the evil decision. When the effects produced by these demonic cosmic powers are regarded *merely* as purely destructive, we are involved in principle (whether we notice it or not) in a kind of Manicheism, or we adopt a childish attitude and ascribe to the demons behaviour like that of small boys throwing stones at the windows of their school. Mythological, too, is the idea of a conflict and opposition between God and the demons, with God and the devil struggling against each other as more or less equally matched partners, engaged in an absolute antagonism. The demons (if they exist) are radically dependent on God, sustained entirely in their activity by a positive collaboration of God, planned from the outset in their activity together with the evil involved in it by God's providence totally independently of any other influence; in a properly metaphysical sense there cannot be a struggle between God and the devil, since the latter from the very [258] outset, always and at every moment, in all his powers and in all his activity, is completely dependent on God.

The difference between the demons and God and their dependence on him are, in any case, as great as the difference and dependence on our part: that is, infinite. Compared with one another, they and we may display considerable differences in knowledge and power. But the difference does not place the demons in the role of an anti-God. And if, in particular with traditional textbook theology, we ascribe to them a superhuman measure of intelligence and power, we should certainly not regard them as present in almost childishly trivial manifestations which are of little importance either to world history or to salvation history. And if with traditional textbook theology we take seriously into account the intelligence and power of these agencies, we shall not suspect that they are involved when a saint falls down the stairs or some poor girl shows symptoms of schizophrenia or epilepsy which in other cases are certainly due to natural causes and are not interpreted there in terms of demonology. If we recognize the existence of such nonhuman spirit-persons, particularly if we regard them as belonging to a higher order despite their relationship to the world, we simply cannot conceive their activity as a sporadic interference intended *only* to do harm in the chain of causes and effects otherwise perceptible to us, but must see it as the effect of this higher order as such, which does not cancel the essential achievement and connection of the lesser orders, but takes up the latter intact into the higher order.

We no longer assume today that the biosphere can establish its power and its own internal laws only by partially abolishing and disturbing the normal course of the sphere of the physical and chemical. Higher systems do not remove the lower ones, but incorporate the latter while preserving them in their own existence. If there are superhuman created-and-personal realities, they form within the unity of the one cosmos a higher order in the world as a whole. Nor is this structural system, produced from the unity of all created realities in the one cosmos, removed by the sin of personal realities within this system of the one cosmos as a whole; for whole 'evil spirits' by their decision can give a false direction to other individual realities (or, if the latter are personal in character, at least can attempt to do this), and they can realize these evil intentions of theirs only in a positive affirmation of their nature and function. If we [259] wanted to continue with such speculations within the scope of a traditional Catholic angelology and demonology, we could point to the vast intelligence and

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great freedom of these beings which mean that their radical and definitive culpability makes sense only as a result of wanting to be like God in the sense of rejecting such a deification through *grace*. But if this is assumed, it becomes even more clear that the natural cosmic function of the demons (like that of the other angels) must not be seen as canceled, but only as determined also by their refusal of God's offer of himself out of free, gracious love. Then the really demonic element in the world would be that fainthearted despondency in which the creature fears for itself and will not venture freely to entrust itself to the absoluteness of the love in which God seeks to bestow, not something befitting the creature, but himself. In brief: if we want to pursue angelology and demonology at all, we must remain on the level of the first initiative for such a theory and not degrade these cosmic powers and authorities to goblinlike, ghostly, malicious spirits who are more stupid and more wretched than feeble human beings.

3. THE QUESTION OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE COSMOS

We come to our third section. In the first section we came to the conclusion that if the existence of good and bad angels must be affirmed in theological terms, this proposition as revealed assumes both a natural knowledge of angels and also that synthesis between a natural knowledge and the original act of faith which not only makes this object of natural knowledge as such into one *about* which a theological statement can be made, but also elevates it to be a secondary and derived object of faith itself. In the first question, then, the question remained completely open whether the angels can be an object of natural knowledge, particularly since the supporters of both the first and the second positions outlined at the beginning start out today more or less from the assumption that the existence of the angels is either directly and solely an object of revelation or is not demonstrable at all. In the second section of our reflections we worked simply on the still-unverified assumption that there are angels, and the only question was how, *if* they exist, they are to be understood in the light of a Christian monotheism. In this third [260] section, then, we have to ask if it makes sense to allow for the existence of angels as coming within the scope of natural knowledge. The new question is formulated cautiously, since we do not want to venture here on our own account and at our own risk to assert more than that the acceptance of the existence of angels is not inconsistent with natural reason. It cannot be denied that a statement of this kind does not mean that we have clearly reached the point which must be reached if we want to elevate this natural perception to a properly theological level. And even if it were claimed that the existence of the angels had been established with adequate natural certainty, the question would still be completely open as to whether faith makes a statement *merely about* this object of natural knowledge or synthesizes it as a secondary object of faith. The third section, therefore, does not aim at a conclusion which would amount to a decision between the first two positions outlined at the beginning. After these reflections, the third position still does not seem to have been eliminated. But perhaps our reflections in this third section may serve to upset somewhat the self-assurance of the supporters of the second position and thus to elucidate a little the justification of the third position as against the second.

In our reflections we are starting out from the assumption that if there are angels, they are to be understood, not *a priori* as Leibnizian monads, but as cosmic powers and authorities for which, with all their subjectivity and personality, a cosmic function (that is, one related to the world) is an essential constituent. If we could not make this assumption, then obviously there could be no talk of a primarily natural knowledge of the existence of angels.

It may certainly be claimed, particularly at the present time, that a theology of the cosmos

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is very undeveloped. Of course, elements of such a theology of the cosmos are to be found scattered in a traditional textbook theology. The createdness and temporal nature of the world as a whole are mentioned there; an angelology of the traditional kind can scarcely fail to include some cosmic aspects; a defence of the unity of the human race must include some consideration of the biosphere, particularly if there is no longer any attempt to defend traditional monogenism; in anthropology a substantial unity of mind and matter is maintained with reference to man, even though the older metaphysic of *materia prima* scarcely appears in textbook theology and consequently little can be seen of the unity of [261] mind and matter as a cosmic unity; in eschatology there is usually a brief mention of the new heaven and the new earth, but it really does not become very clear whether, why, and how the definitive consummation of created spirit-persons and of their history carries with it also the consummation of the material cosmos or has little to do with this material cosmos. Perhaps all the questions that ought to be raised in a theology of the cosmos are so obscure in themselves that it is easy to understand the ineffectiveness of such a theology. The fact remains that in theology man and his relationship to God are at the centre of attention and it is in this light that all theological statements must be understood in their meaning and validity. This corresponds to the nature of revelation and theology and to an absolutely fundamentally legitimate development of the philosophical understanding of man, in which the latter gradually came to be seen, not so much as part of a cosmos, but as a transcendental subject with a world of his own which he projects in thought and action. But this development of the history of ideas in modern times was also coexistent with a contrary tendency: the earth moved away from the centre of the cosmos and became an insignificant particle in an immense cosmos which continually became, and is still becoming, greater for human knowledge; but man himself became increasingly clearly perceptible as the product (intentionally or accidentally) of a history of nature of the material cosmos. From this standpoint, too, a theology of the cosmos is required, particularly since the doctrine of the substantial unity of mind and matter in man (with all its consequences: salvific importance of history as such, incarnation of the Logos, resurrection of the body, etc.) simply forbids us to pursue an absolutely acosmic theology and anthropology.

Such a theology of the cosmos would have to work out the theological significance of the interpretation of the cosmos as a world continually *coming to be*. The older premodern world on the whole understood world and earth as static factors created by God once and for all, offering for all time a fixed stage on which man and man alone could carry on his history. Today we rightly speak of a history of nature, we are aware of a world that is always and everywhere coming to be and we understand the history of humanity also as a part of this history or at least as conditioned by it, even though a serious and cautious metaphysic of grades and orders of being (taking really seriously the differentiatedness of the world) recognizes [262] essential differences between entities in the cosmos and is consequently aware of qualitative leaps, of real self-transcendence of one grade of being into a higher grade, which is possible only as a result of God's creative dynamism in the world. The recognition of essentially different grades of being (from real subjectivity, personality, and transcendentality to being as a whole) does not, however, imply a denial of the one material cosmos and its evolution taking place in a continually new self-transcendence of an inferior grade.

In the light of such a basic conception of the world (in which man is no longer seen without more ado as the centre of a world constructed statically around him, as the one who is absolutely and in every respect underivable, but in which he represents a peak and an effect of a world evolution), the question can no longer be avoided as to whether that subjectivity rooted in materiality which we know as man is the only one toward which this world evolution of the material cosmos has developed in continually new self-transcendence. This

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question must be raised in view of the vast immensity of the material cosmos as a world coming to be. If we imagine the cosmos as a world coming to be, and as oriented in its becoming to subjectivity, then it is really not to be taken for granted that this aim has been successful only at the tiny point we know as our earth. At this stage in our reflections, admittedly we should not forget what has been learned from this history of man's subjectivity. A personal and free subjectivity oriented in unlimited transcendentality to being purely and simply (and, consequently, to the ground of being which is God) is the centre of the cosmos, even though this human subjectivity rests on a materiality which as such cannot be regarded as the centre of all that is material, even if it made sense at all to speak of a material centre of this material cosmos. But even if we do not forget this human subjectivity, through which *everything* is the world of man, the world he has, however great it may be and however great it may still come to be, the question in fact remains open as to whether the immense growth of the material cosmos has served only for the emergence in particular of human subjectivity. Traditional theology especially, with its conviction of the existence of angels (of angels who have a common salvation history together with human beings), cannot start out from the axiom that in regard to God there can really only be human subjectivities. The question, then, can seriously [263] be raised even if we have not or would not have any opportunity of answering it unequivocally.

If this question is raised, it does not mean (although this perhaps is possible and justifiable) that we are asking here about beings existing on other 'stars' as subjects with more or less the same biological corporality as that which we know as our own. It is true that the latter question could also be raised, because it cannot be regarded simply and absolutely as improbable that somewhere else in such an immeasurable cosmos there are the same chemical and physical preconditions as with us for the 'chance' of the emergence of life and that this life then develops according to the strict laws of evolution (with and in qualitative leaps) toward something essentially like ourselves. This question about 'human beings on other planets' is one that has recently been raised afresh and more urgently because it inevitably also brings up theological problems. But it is a question that will not be pursued further here, since at the present time it is not only unanswerable, but refers to living beings which at least up to now have not been incorporated in our own existential and theological sphere of life and thus existentially and theologically have no more relevance for us than any sort of 'dead' star anywhere in the universe.

The question will, however, be raised here as to whether this general starting point of a world coming to be, oriented to subjectivity, might not lead to some conclusions about the conceivability and probability of angels. If we speak of 'angels', it is assumed from the outset that (1) they have an essential connection with the world and (2) they have for us an existential relevance that we denied to possible 'human beings on other planets', since the existential sphere of life of the latter (at least up to now) does not overlap with ours. If there are such 'angels' who fulfill this second precondition, their relationship to matter, essential as it must be, is to be understood as different from ours and from that of the hypothetically assumed 'human beings on other planets'. Such an essential relationship of subjectivity and matter must by its very notion be understood always as a limited regionality of matter, which is interiorized and (if desired) organized and subjectivized by this finite subjectivity. But this limited regionality of a subjectivity need not be understood as like that of a human corporality. This material regionality can be [264] understood as much more plural and more differentiated, more complex, and as embracing more material individual realities than is the case with human corporality, *and* this greater and more comprehensive, subjectively interiorized regionality ought also to be able to incorporate into itself as partial elements those individual realities that we know as human beings. It would be wrong to regard such an idea *a priori* as too abstruse. A free subjectivity of man, open to the whole of reality, which at

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the same time is the ultimate organizing principle of a peristalsis of the digestive organs, is not *a priori* more probable than the idea envisaged here.

As already pointed out, such a higher principle of unity and order of a material regionality, greater and more differentiated than the human body, does not mean that the individual realities incorporated into this more comprehensive system are in any sense suppressed by this principle and no longer realizable in accordance with their proper nature. A higher principle of order respects the essential nature of the individual realities it organizes and gives them a further determination only in the directions in which they are ambivalent and open. Nor is it inconceivable from this standpoint that such a higher principle of unity and order of a material regionality should incorporate into this unity and order also realities which are themselves already subjectively polarized and interiorized. In other words, even a human reality which itself represents a corporeally limited system of matter and subjectivity can be conceived as integrated into such a higher system, if and insofar as this corporality itself has a potentiality for a higher and more comprehensive order. If two subjectivities are thus understood as graded principles of unity and order, with one above the other, then, of course, such a gradation and sub- and super-ordination is originally present in connection with this organizing function in regard to matter as such only insofar as these two principles extend to a smaller (‘body’) or greater material area (‘angelic region’), but not (as is obvious) insofar as both principles as intellectual subjects of freedom have an infinite openness to being as a whole and to God: that is, they are distinguished in the light of the range of their starting point within materiality and not in the light of their goal (God).

It can readily be admitted that we seem at first sight to have become involved in our reflections in a consideration of the nature of the ‘angels’ and have apparently moved away from the question of [265] their existence, returning to points already touched on in the second section. But in the last resort this apparent deviation is justified. For the question can now be more clearly stated: If angels are understood in this way, can they be thought of as existing in the light of the conception of an essentially material world, moving progressively toward increasingly higher subjectivity and a genuine unity of plural material realities? We might think in the first place that a continually advancing subjectivizing and interiorizing of the material cosmos is also man’s task, going beyond the area of his biological corporality in his knowledge and activity into the world as such (and not merely set in his environment as fixed by his corporality), thus subjectivizing and interiorizing the cosmos in possibilities and ways which he is only now beginning slowly to discover (astronautics, for example). The question, of course, might also be asked whether the time of the world must now be regarded as having lasted so long and being so far advanced that those more comprehensive subjectivities to which the evolution of the world is tending must already exist, or whether they belong to a future still to come. (By analogy with some other theological problems it might then be said that the angels are perhaps not protological, but eschatological beings.) But man’s destiny of activating in deed and thought a greater subjectivizing and interiorizing of the cosmos does not exclude the possibility that this goal of the cosmos can and should be attained in other and higher ways, particularly since man’s somatic starting point imposes on the fulfillment of this task limits which (as can easily be understood) cannot in fact be surmounted, although they are prior to the absolute fulfillment of this task.

The question of time seems more difficult to us. It might be asked whether the evolution of the world has ‘already’ arrived at ‘angels’. Our conception of angels seems to see them mainly as the end product of an evolution of the world, while traditional theology regards them as (also cosmic) principles at the beginning of the world. Here there are certainly difficulties and obscurities which are not to be denied or minimized, but it can admittedly be asked whether that finite physical time which begins according to currently accepted ideas of modern physics with the ‘big bang’ (which can certainly not itself be simply identified with

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the beginning of the world in a theological sense) is the very time in which the material cosmos evolves under the necessary and already present principles [266] of order which we call 'angels'. Whatever we think exactly of the way in which such angels come to be, they have in any case an essential relationship to matter, and, consequently, the history of the latter is also their own history, so that they do not become acosmic if we place them as principles of unity and order at the beginning of the history of the material cosmos, the history that we know as that of our material cosmos. In this history, then, angels, too, would reach the fulfillment of their nature as organizing and unifying regional principles of the material cosmos. It might then be asked if they could not (without any inconsistency) be both at the beginning and at the end of a material history, in a way similar to that in which the human intellectual subject is at the beginning and end of a history of the body, without implying that the 'soul' (which must be seen as present at the beginning of this corporeal history) had no history itself. Over and above all this, in principle, the possibility cannot be *a priori* excluded that the history of nature in regard to matter may develop toward such more widely ranging regional and interiorizing principles more rapidly than it did toward the emergence of man. It could certainly be assumed that subjectivity on the narrow basis of our biological corporality is attainable only with greater difficulty and more slowly (and also more 'casually') than on the basis of a more comprehensive materiality, that nature's feat of subjectivity within a small corporality (known as man) needed a longer start (called the biosphere) than would be required for cosmic subjectivity as a whole. It cannot then simply be claimed that 'angels' in this sense must be no more than goals still to be reached in a cosmic evolution. Nor can it be claimed, in the light of their nature and existence, that world evolution (with qualitative leaps) has already reached those subjectivities with a greater material regionality which we can call angels.

All our reflections hitherto in this third section seem to have made the existence and nature of 'angels' *conceivable*, but no more than that. Are there in fact in the world of our experience any indications that this thing, whose nature and existence can be conceived and expected, actually exists and makes itself known? With our conception of these 'angels' in particular we certainly do not expect the existence of such 'angels' to be made known by their effects, suddenly and unexpectedly interposed in isolation at certain individual points in the natural and normal course of material events. *A priori* [267] we do not count on this sort of miraculous intervention of angels at purely individual points in space and time to make known their existence. But, we might ask, can the existence of such principles of the cosmos become known only in this way or is there a possibility of such an experience which does not necessitate the interruption of the material course of things and which is described and investigated by physics and chemistry? A possibility of this kind seems conceivable if the negative criterion just mentioned is kept in mind and in the light of the nature of angels as understood here. If man becomes aware of unities and orders of a greater, but particular, kind, which, on the one hand, are conceivable in the light of the individual elements of such a unity and order and are sustained by these elements without detriment to their own immanent laws, and which, on the other hand, exist without being required or necessitated by these structural elements themselves, so that in order to 'explain' them we would need to have recourse to mere 'chance' or even directly (which is unlikely) to a creative institution by God alone, then man has the right to think of organizing and unifying principles of these unities and orders, whose existence is not adequately explained by that of their elements.

Man seems to have always had and to be able to have today such experiences of unities and orders in the world of nature and the history of humanity, to be interpreted and explained in this way; in fact, it seems that in the course of the history of humanity such experiences have been the real although less obvious reason for belief in angels, and not only those dubious 'spiritistic' experiences with which supporters and opponents of the existence of

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angels are usually occupied. Both in nature and also in human history, and, moreover, in the interconnection and unity of nature and history, there are experiences of unity and order, experiences which seem to be adequately interpreted only if such principles of unity and order are presupposed and if it is understood that the materialities out of which these unities and orders are constructed do not themselves provide an explanation of these orders. *Non enim plura secundum se uniuntur*, as Aquinas rightly says.

At this stage of course, even before we catch sight concretely of these particular orders and unities, the old problems emerge from the debate between hylomorphism, holism, reduction of the biological to cybernetically interpreted chemical systems. For all these and [268] similar theories are meant to provide the right answer to the question of exactly how complex unities are to be understood, when they seek to prevail against their 'environment' and thus to make their unity clear. But, although it might seem appropriate, we cannot, of course, go into all these difficult problems here. The problems are particularly difficult in the field of theology, since theology *of itself* cannot defend the principle of a fundamental essential difference between the purely material and the biological, but must remain neutral on this point and leave it entirely to the free discussion of the philosophy of nature. For theology as such, this kind of essential difference (despite all the unity of evolution and self-transcendence) is certainly present only when it is a question of man's intellectual subjectivity in unlimited transcendentality toward being as a whole and so toward God. Which of these systems of the philosophy of nature (apart from anthropology) is right is a question on which theology cannot have an independent opinion in the light of its own principles. But since the interpretation, of those greater unities and orders (which are more comprehensive than any of the particular, material, living, individual human realities taken in isolation) is supposed to be a matter of natural knowledge, this incompetence of theology in regard to the theories mentioned is not simply irrelevant for our question.

It can, however, be said that if and insofar as a theological anthropology accepts as a fact the existence of material systems (at least in man) whose unity and order is at least partially determined by a unifying substantial principle, it cannot appeal to interpretations available in the philosophy of nature of the order and unity of individual biological realities, excluding holistically or cybernetically any higher principle for this order and unity, and then assert *a priori* that there cannot be higher and more complex unities within the material cosmos established by higher substantial principles. This should be obvious particularly because we must certainly distinguish in principle between the structure of a complex entity on the one hand and the unifying ground of this structure on the other and cannot assume *a priori* that the elements of such a structure alone in their diversity themselves contain the ground of the unity of this structure.

Of course, it is impossible, particularly here, to deal terminologically and objectively with the complex of questions coming ontologically [269] under the heading of substance and structure. These two terms may offer an immense field for debate; but if the term 'structure' is understood in its traditional sense (that is, as the result of a unification, and not as the principle of this unification and unity), if, moreover, we at least leave open the question of whether a synthesizing 'from below' is not for us a concretely tangible process of a self-transcendence (in the sense indicated, of creating something qualitatively new), then we cannot regard structure at any rate as an unequivocal alternative to substance, substantial form, etc., and claim the right to go back from the structure to the real principle of this structure.

Where then, we ask finally, is it possible to discover concretely such unities and orders of a particular but greater kind, for which a proper principle of unity, order, and structure can be postulated: a principle which, since the unity and order it establishes are more comprehensive than those of the human body, possesses at least that subjectivity and transcendentality which

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is proper to the intellectual principle of man? It is, of course, possible here to do no more than hint at an answer to this question, since more concrete and better substantiated answers would lead us into the whole length and breadth of the particular sciences, and since, in view of the technically rationalistic mentality of modern man and the mathematically-quantitatively operating sciences involved in this, a mystagogy would be required for the genuine experience of such orders and unities – a mystagogy correcting the modern mentality and thus making effective the experience of these unities and orders. Nevertheless, both within the history of nature as such and also in the history of mankind, as well as in the interconnection of the history of nature and human history, embracing a variety of material realities in space of time, there are unities distinguishable from one another and containing in themselves a unity and order which at least gives the impression that it is not explicable purely and simply by the casual assemblage of its formative elements and preconditions, although, of course, quite definite circumstances and conditions must be present in these elements for such an ordered unity to be able to emerge in a particular form within the cosmos as a whole. The necessity of such conditions 'from below' may not, of course, be disputed or obscured. But it would not really contradict the explanation of this ordered unity envisaged here if it were clearly proved [270] that such an ordered unity always and necessarily emerges if these conditions are fulfilled from below. (The theologian, for instance, will not deny that, if the biological preconditions and factualities are present for human procreation, a human being will necessarily emerge, although the 'human soul' thus emerging qualitatively transcends the event of such a biological procreation as much as the intellectual subjectivity of man always surpasses his biological reality as such, although the latter is incorporated into the former as an intrinsic constituent.)

In the history of the evolution of life, it seems that there are such ordered unities, complexes of plural meanings, which go beyond the biological individual realities. At the particular stages of evolution of flora and fauna, together with their mutual interdependence, unities delimitable from one another can be distinguished; a particular period of evolution is characterized by a uniform style which is common also to those individualities in such a period which are not directly derived from one another; by and large in an individual period everything is coherent, although this common physiognomy of an epoch cannot be interpreted merely as our own subjective impression. Many causes can be suggested, of course, for the rise and decline of such an epoch in the history of the evolution of life, just as the most diverse individual causes can be assigned for the death of a human being; but the impression is given (despite all these possible external causes) that in the last resort such a period dies from within itself, outgrows itself and *wants* to die, just as with the individual human being (despite his external breakdown) death is his own death coming from within, and what we call 'chance' is the executor of an internal necessity. If someone considers such a period in the history of nature with its unity, its common style, and its one destiny and does not think that he has understood the one totality as such when he has grasped its elements and their 'accidental' coordination, despite all the positivism of the sciences at the present time, he can have the courage to perceive a unifying principle in such a unity.

The same can certainly be said (and more emphatically) in regard to the periods of the history of mankind and in regard to the histories of individual nations and other historical unities that can be observed. Here, too, things do not go in utter shapelessness; here in particular there are unities clearly distinguishable from one another, [271] each with a particular style of its own; here, too, each period of universal history, of the history of a nation, or of a particular civilisation has its internal drama and dialectic, its beginning and its end, has a common physiognomy, although this entire unity and peculiarity cannot be made intelligible solely by human beings, who directly carry on this history and realize throughout time unities of meaning that they themselves had by no means foreseen. These historical

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structures of meaning, extending in time over several generations, have, of course, their preconditions from below in all the individual empirical causes (geographical, biological, meteorological, sociological, etc.). But the very fact that these causes from below are really plural in character and mutually independent may lead us to wonder whether their blind, casual concurrence alone can explain the historical structures of meaning emerging from that concurrence. If the Christian in face of such a question is inclined to find an answer promptly and directly in an appeal to God's providence ruling over and in history, this answer is not wrong but raises the further question of *how* this providence of God is to be understood as concretely *carried out*, whether it does not itself come to prevail through real principles, created by God, establishing order and unity, principles described in the Book of Daniel as angels of the nations. When we observe that such unities of meaning of a greater even though particular spatio-temporality emerge in history, when we learn that they are not wholly and ultimately due solely to shortsighted historical planning by human beings or still less have their ground in 'chance', in the unplanned coincidence of subhuman causes, but when at the same time in seeking for the sufficient reason of such unities today particularly it is impossible to appeal to a 'direct' intervention of God's providence, the presumption at least of such 'angels of the nations' is justified.

Man in history need not regard such an assumption as degrading him as a historical being in freedom. For, within the framework of such a principle of unity, he still remains free in his history of freedom even in its earthly character, his relationship to God is not threatened; and, without these principles of unity and order, man's scope for freedom would not be wider, but more disorganized and diminished in meaning. At the same time it should not be forgotten that the meaning and function of such principles of unity and order are not intended properly and primarily to influence man's freedom, [272] but to establish a unity and order (within a particular region) in the material world, although they can take the form of a temptation for man, if and insofar as such orders may in their principles imply a rejection of God's gracious self-communication, carrying in themselves a tendency to be closed up, to become absolute.

Another kind of such a unity and order and of the principles lying behind it may be seen in a singular unity (obvious, however, to a contemplative gaze) of nature and culture in certain areas developed by man in which the peculiar character of nature and the peculiar character of a culture created by man converge in an odd way, while this convergence is not entirely explained by an accidental concurrence of its elements of a natural and cultural character, particularly since there are natural areas for human habitation in which such a synthesis of nature and culture has evidently not been achieved and where man remains without roots and nature remains inhuman.

The existence of these cosmic powers can be experienced from another aspect: in the antagonism in which greater ordered unities encounter one another, as, for instance, in the conflict between the angels of the nations in Daniel. By the very diversity of their individual elements, the individual cosmic realities in the different spheres of this cosmos are in opposition to and in conflict with one another; but it looks as if greater, more differentiated unities, containing within themselves many individual elements of the most diverse character, each for their own part have a tendency to unity and permanence (like an individual living being), and nevertheless are in opposition to and in conflict with one another, presenting a threat to one another. It does not look as if all antagonism in the cosmos could be reduced to the mere diversity and mutual interaction of the ultimate rudimentary particles which form the cosmos. The world does not seem to be merely the regular drift and thrust of these rudimentary particles; there seem to be greater unities and orders which, on the one hand, are not the result of the fortuitous concurrence of these individual rudimentary realities, but which, on the other hand, by their diversity are in an opposition and antagonism toward one another that is more fundamental than the opposition between the rudimentary details. This at

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least is true from the biosphere onward and continuing into the human sphere, in the history of which there are antagonisms and struggles for existence that are prior to any properly moral decision and that establish between the greater human unities a state of real war or of real peace.

[273] The question, then, is whether such antagonisms can be ascribed solely and directly to their institution by the Creator, in the sense that he sets up in their own nature the realities through which the antagonisms arise. It can be said, of course, that if we ascribe such cosmic antagonisms (in the biosphere and the history of humanity) to 'angelic powers and authorities' in order in a sense to take away the responsibility from God (who seems in his unity and inner concord not to be sufficiently effective in the world), we are merely shifting the problem, since in the last resort God must have created these antagonistic powers and authorities. But, when we experience such terrible antagonisms as struggles of life and death in the cosmos, we are led to postulate the principles necessary as preconditions for these things. Not in order to take away the responsibility from the God of eternal peace and of infinite concord in himself, but simply in order to give a name to the causes of such conflict in the cosmos which would not be present or visible if we were to think only of those rudimentary basic structures of the cosmos, even though these by their very diversity (which, admittedly, is itself an object of metaphysical astonishment and terror) contribute to these cosmic antagonisms. It is certainly a part of the nature and freedom of the infinite God, in whom all conceivable reality is always from the outset rooted in harmony as in its ground, that he can institute a cosmos of conflict and discord. But this very creative power of instituting conflict and discord in a cosmos coming to be (even prior to possible conflict and possible discord brought about freely by the creature's own fault) must be given an object, must create antagonistic realities. But the assumption that these consist first and last in the diversity and fortuitous concurrence of the rudimentary structures of the cosmos, or were introduced into the cosmos only by the deliberate fault of creatures, is an idea that does not seem to do justice to the greatness and radicalness of such antagonisms, of such cosmic conflicts, which still have to be settled. The higher 'powers and authorities' seem to exist and (prior to any possible fault which, if it exists, intensifies such antagonism) to be placed by God himself in a state of bellicose opposition to one another.

What has been said, of course, has not produced either conclusive evidence of the existence of angelic powers or a differentiated mystagogy into the experience of them. All that has been done is to indicate regions of possible experience in which man's natural knowledge might encounter (if it is possible at all) something like [274] angels, without giving to these experiences an incredible or mythical interpretation as experiences of realities interposed between the experiences with which modern empirical sciences in accordance with their own method are occupied. Insofar as this evidence and the mystagogy to be presupposed for it cannot really be offered here, the third position (which we defended at the beginning of these reflections) has not yet been eliminated in favour of the first position. If we have achieved anything at all, it can consist in the last resort only in a number of warnings: in the warning not to adopt a biblicistic fundamentalism and too quickly and too naively be persuaded of the existence of good and bad angels; in the warning to take seriously the hermeneutic principles arising from the actual nature of a divine revelation, which must be observed if we attempt to prove theologically the existence of angels, although the latter cannot be part of the primary and original object of revelation; in the warning not to adopt a primitive rationalism and to think that *a priori* no creaturely subjectivity can be conceived in addition to and 'above' man, or that such a subjectivity is purely and simply outside the field of possible experience or must be imagined in the way in which it frequently occurs in popular opinion.

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[275-277]

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[1]

PART ONE

Faith and the Church

[3]

1

COURAGE FOR AN ECCLESIAL CHRISTIANITY

The question as to why I am a Christian is radically different from, say, that of a preference to live in one country rather than in another. The second question refers to a particular aspect of life which must be linked with other, quite different aspects: it must find its place within a co-ordinated system. But a really living Christianity involves the totality of human existence. A Christian life therefore cannot be justified by establishing its place within a greater and more comprehensive co-ordinated system, the latter being already accepted as legitimate. How then is it possible to answer this question at all? This is particularly difficult today when – as distinct from former times – scarcely anything is generally accepted that can also be assumed to be approved by the person who raises the question in a critical spirit. Anyone who tries to extort an answer to a question like this, about a totality of existence and reality must – to be fair – really allow for the fact that the answer will be very fragmentary and perhaps fail to deal with the very point about which the questioner, rightly from his own standpoint, is inquiring.

For me the self and the world create a question to which there can never be a complete answer. It is obvious to me that even in the most distant future of the history of human experience and – secondarily – of science there will never be a point at which all questions will be answered, all problems cleared up and finally settled. I am really surprised how and on what grounds probably most of my contemporaries share this conviction of mine, even those who deny that what or whom I call God exists. These people really ought to think it possible in principle to get behind each and every thing, behind the particular reality that I am [4] myself; that ultimately everything – since it is merely the sum-total of such particularities – can be seen through and then allowed to drop back into its banality, in the last resort into nothingness. That very nothingness, to which questions of this kind would bring us, need not raise any problems nor does it require any explanation, if it really is nothingness and if the term ‘nothingness’ is not at all mysterious and as such does not mean something entirely different.

But what encompasses and permeates me is the eternal mystery, the infinite mystery, which is anything but the sum-total of the scraps left over of what is not currently known or has not yet been experienced: the mystery which in its infinity and density is both farthest from and most deeply rooted in the thousand fragmented realities which we describe as our world of experience. This mystery is present and finds expression by remaining silent; it is unperturbed when people claim that talking about it is nothing but idle chatter. I can understand the indignation and irritability of those who make this claim. As soon as a person fails to come with loving adoration to this mystery, which silently encompasses everything, it becomes an irritant. It is present and cannot be brought into a system. It seems only to be silent and to dissolve all our own clarities and certainties. If we do not lovingly yield to it, we

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can only spend our time in indignantly denying it; or we suppress it, taking refuge in everyday affairs and attaching to these more importance than their fleeting and fading existence can yield.

This mystery, which provides the ground of all individual reality and scope and background for all knowledge and freedom, I call God. It does not have to be proved circumstantially, even though those who try to prove it may well reflect on the fact that we always tacitly assume it and give it a name whenever we begin to speak about a thousand and one things in ordinary conversation or in the lecture halls of universities. If I pause and remain silent, allowing all the many individual realities of my life to subside into their one ground and all individual questions to be reduced to *that* question which cannot be answered through all the individual questions taken together but itself permits the infinite mystery to stand out, then the mystery is present and I am in the last resort no longer disturbed by whatever sceptical opinions a rationalistic science may choose to express on the subject. I do not think then that I am lost in irrational 'feelings', but that I have reached the point of the mind, of reason and understanding, at which all rationality arises in the very first place.

[5] I do not despise the traditional proofs of God; I read them as meaningful and necessary, but also secondary interpretations and verbalizations of that experience in which I come silently before the infinite mystery. The tremendous, earth-shattering experience is that I can approach this all-encompassing, all-sustaining and permeating mystery, setting all things at a distance and yet regaining all things; I can address it, I can pray. I know that the occurrence of such a prayerful approach is itself the act of this mystery; but by this very fact I am in the presence of this mystery, distinct from it, placed there in my own reality, so that, if I approach it, I do not cease to be but I come to share precisely in this infinite mystery. In what Christians know as grace, I learn that this mystery, in order to be itself, does not need merely to place me at an infinite distance, but gives itself as our fulfilment.

The Christian is forbidden (a unique prohibition, which must be taken quite seriously) to be content with less than the infinite fullness of God; forbidden to make himself at home definitively in the finite or to become absorbed in its limitations, to assume with false modesty that God cannot really take seriously the finite creature in all its relativity. The world did not only begin to become aware of itself in man (and elsewhere, for all I know), but God himself began to come to man and man to come to God. There may in future be still thousands of evolutional peaks, qualitative leaps and so on, which do not yet exist but are still to come. But the infinite, unsurpassable self-promise of God to man is here, penetrates everything, is the innermost entelechy and dynamic force of the world. In this business of course God does not cease to be the ultimate dynamic force and entelechy of the world and its history; we might say that the 'Big Bang' proclaimed, not the birth of God himself, but our own beginning. Otherwise God would simply not be himself.

It is part of the mystery that we can 'need' it only when it does not 'need' us. Only in the act of love on both sides can we say that God could not live without us. For it is only in this act that we receive in such a way that what is received is absolutely released. This is the mystery of love and this love is the mystery that has promised itself to us. When this self-promise of God makes its impact on the personal spirit of man, directs the latter's dynamic force on God's immediacy itself and makes God in himself (even though *as* the incomprehensible mystery) the goal and also the dynamic force of the human mind and its history, then what we properly call Christian revelation is already present, albeit still in an implicit and non-verbalized sense. This (as a disclosure of an infinite [6] horizon, as a movement toward the infinite mystery as such, as a freedom transcending all particularities) has existed as a secret force in the whole history of human freedom wherever man has accepted in thousands of forms the incomprehensible mystery of God. It has been particularly effective in the whole length and breadth of the history of religion. Although in this history

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which makes objective, verbalizes and institutionalizes God's revelation in the sense just indicated, although in this objectification what is really meant fails to find adequate expression or is debased, the Christian has nevertheless the right and duty to look reverently toward the history of religion in its breadth and length, since the Spirit of God in the divine self-communication is always active there and continually fills man with an ultimate reverence and an unconditional devotion to the infinite mystery of his life. Because I consider the history of religion under this aspect and am aware of an ultimate unity in it, despite all its diversity and disintegration into contradictions, it does not infect me with that sceptical relativism of many contemporaries who can see religion only as a concoction of primitive states of consciousness, which is slowly dying out. Many one-sided and inadequate objectifications of this fundamental immediacy of the mind to God may be allowed to die out. The threat here is only to the corruption, not to the essence of religion.

I look confidently to the future of religion. If – this of course is an absurd idea – man were to evolve, evolve backwards as it were, to become a being without any yearning for the absolute, without 'metaphysics', to become merely a clever animal or the subject of his own computer, then this would only mean that the end of humanity had come, albeit in a hitherto unexpected fashion: an end which, as such, the believer had always regarded as part of his creed to expect. This end would not amount to a negative judgement on the previous history of religion as the history of an infinite hope. It would be a deliberately planned suicide of humanity, proving those to be right who had lived and believed previously. A suicide is not a judgement pronounced by a higher authority against life. The future history of religion and thus also the history of the Church may produce hitherto completely inconceivable forms of religion; it is difficult to say what the place will look like which a verbalized and institutionalized relationship of man to the eternal mystery will occupy. But as long as man is the man of God's infinite mystery, there will also be religion, which in some way will be attested in the ordinary course of life. Whether the number of those who live their [7] religion in a socially institutionalized form will be greater or less as compared with the total number of human beings is a question to which I have no answer, but which has no fundamental significance for the person whose conscience obliges him to accept such a social expression of his religion. That Christianity as such will survive is a question which must be discussed in what follows.

My Christianity however means not only radical frankness in adoration, devotion and love for the ineffable mystery of God; it has not only what we might call a transcendental, 'pneumatological' character. My Christianity has also and essentially an historical dimension. For it acknowledges that this self-offering of the infinite mystery as fulfilment of man is not only the God-given uttermost and most radical opportunity of man for the history of his freedom, but (at least as seen in relation to the totality of the history of mankind) is also in virtue of this offering victoriously established in the world and has already been manifested in its irreversibility and in its victory in history. This historical event, in which God's offer to mankind became irreversible and is also historically palpable in this victory, is what Christian faith finds in Jesus Christ. It was this One, crucified and risen, who also proclaimed this irreversible promise by God of himself by proclaiming the immediate advent of God's Kingdom; it was he who in his unity with God and in his unconditional solidarity with all men was also aware of himself as the event of this now irremovable closeness of God to the world, who upheld the reality of this advent even when plunged into the emptiness and impotence of death and was encountered as the one who in this death as the one and complete surrender to the mystery really came with his whole existence to be with God, vindicated, encountered as the 'Risen One'. For me Jesus is the promise – no longer to be deferred or revoked – by God of himself to me in history: the ultimate unsurpassable, irrevocable Word of God, the WORD. It is in this light that I gain access to the meaning and credibility of

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classical Christology, of an incarnational and descendence Christology such as can be found already in the New Testament. In this light the classical Christology of Ephesus and Chalcedon has no mythological implications, even though I must admit that the Christology of many devout fellow-Christians and sometimes that of the Church's official representatives, despite their verbal orthodoxy, do not seem to me to be entirely free from mythological overtones.

To be honest, I have the impression that a proposition like 'Jesus is God' can be ineffably true and productive of salvation but that it can also [8] be terribly misunderstood as a result of over-simplification. In the first sense it is a proposition about a unique unity, in the second it suggests an identity and can be understood only in a heterodox fashion as a shibboleth of orthodoxy, although there are some who feel they must sacrifice reason in order to assert this identity. In Christology also (with the Council of Chalcedon) it is possible to be much more rational than many people think. The ultimate and most authentic mystery of Christology is implied anyway in what we expect, what we may and must expect for all of us: that God as himself can impart himself to man without having to be represented by a creaturely reality and without man himself being dissolved into nothingness in this communication. Consequently my faith in my own fulfilment in God himself and faith in God's 'becoming man' in Jesus are closely linked for me; they belong to the one fundamental persuasion that God, without ceasing to be the infinite mystery, willed to be a God of ineffable closeness and does not revoke this will. Christology and pneumatology are linked indissolubly together in Christian faith. The fact that the historical manifestation of the irrevocable union of God and the world took place precisely in Jesus Christ is something that cannot of course be deduced speculatively but is part of the indissoluble facticity and singularity of history. Nevertheless I can understand that the real encounter with the Absolute, if it is not merely conceived but accepted and realized, occurs in the facticity of history and not solely in the abstract dimension of ideas.

We can love ideas and speculation, we can regard these things as part of authentic human existence, we must not depreciate them as superfluous luxuries and pastimes. But even if such an ascent to the heights of the spirit were to lead to full 'illumination', in which all veils of illusory perishability seem to fall away, this illumination as the high point of the spirit would still have to go through the night of death in order to become definitive and credible. And into that night a person would have to take everything – even though it is changed – that he is and has, his whole history with body and soul. The way of transcendence and mysticism is at an end only when the way of history ends at death. And that is why I look to him who in history has died with and for me and in whom, with an immense number of my Christian brethren, I have the courage to trust (a trust that no one elsewhere in history dares to demand from me) that this death has passed into the life of God himself. I am never merely an idea; I cannot leave history out of my idea. Consequently I know that I cannot get away from the history of Jesus, although it is inevitably [9] burdened with all the relativity of historical reality and all the obscurity of historical knowledge.

Since I am a human being and a Christian, in the last resort it is obvious to me that I am a Christian in the Church, an ecclesial Christian. I do not want to 'socialize' thinking and free decision, to surrender understanding and freedom in a collective. But I cannot consider myself so important that my own conviction would be as radically important to me as faith must be when it involves a total life's decision which is a priori meant to be mine alone. If religion involves what is most real in man and man in his wholeness, then it cannot a priori be merely what is individual and the innermost reality of the individual person alone. Religion must be my own proper and free conviction, must be capable of being experienced at the very heart of existence. But this existence is itself found only in a community and society, being revealed in giving and receiving. Moreover Christianity is a historical religion

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bound up with the one Jesus Christ. I heard of him only through the Church and not otherwise. Hence I cannot be content with a purely private Christianity which would repudiate its origins. Attachment to the Church is the price I pay for this historical origin. We have still not by any means explained all or even the most important reasons for a Christian's attachment to the Church. But these must suffice.

An ecclesial Christian of this kind must of course be aware of the historicity of the Church. He knows therefore about all the far-too-human and inhuman aspects of what has happened in the Church 'in head and members', in the past and in the present. A Christian who believes that the Church truly comes from Jesus Christ and consequently that it is the basic sacrament of salvation for the whole world, in face of this only too often very human history of the Church, cannot simply ingenuously point to other historical structures and appeal to the fact that it is a history of feeble human beings who behave atrociously everywhere on the stage of world history; what he ought to do is to hope and expect the victory of grace, which the Church even in its visible manifestation is meant to promise to the world, to be revealed in radiant splendour in its own history. Here is the revelation which only the gloomy despiser of mankind can overlook as a matter of principle. But the Christian could wish for a considerably brighter radiance.

The Christian will accept this humbling experience realistically as a matter of fact, even if he cannot entirely explain it and still less justify it in terms of cheap triumphalism (as it was called at the last general [10] council). But, because a sincere Christian who acknowledges himself to be a poor sinner makes his own contribution to reducing the clarity of the Church's manifestation, he will certainly not pharisaically deduce from this lack of clarity a right to dissociate himself from this Church of sinners. Of course he always has a right to criticize. An ultimate identification with the fundamental nature of the Church – which it has not lost and never will lose – does not imply agreement with each and everything that is done in the Church. Not even with all that the hierarchy or the Pope does, nor with each and every item that is put forward as official teaching in the Church. For me the real dogma of the Church is an absolutely binding factor and as a Christian and as a theologian I have not infrequently had to make an effort to discover what was really meant by a particular statement put forward as a dogma by the Church's magisterium, in order to give my assent honestly and confidently. But I have never known an instance in the course of my life where it became impossible to give this assent; at least not when I had seen clearly that even these dogmas could all be understood rightly only as far as their meaning was related to the mystery of God himself, that they always appear in a form that is historically conditioned, are always and unavoidably blended with certain elements which do not properly belong to the content of what is said and can render the latter misleading, that these dogmas as formulated are partly linguistic rules which need not always take precisely this form to express the essential meaning.

It is however different in regard to the odd item of more or less secondary importance in the field of exegesis, systematic theology, moral theology, which has been or is put forward by the Roman magisterium as official and binding teaching, even though no definition is involved. To mention only recent examples, I do not see either in the arguments used or in the formal teaching authority of the Church as actually asserted a convincing or conclusive reason for assenting to the controversial teaching in Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* or to the Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith which seems to exclude the ordination of women in principle and for all time. But the Church does not require from me such an identification with each and every declaration of the magisterium – apart from dogma properly so-called – either in practice or according to the principles related to this question as laid down in the normal course of its theology.

In this situation a Christian and a theologian need not feel that his attitude in dissociating himself from such teaching places him on the [11] fringe of the Church. Things may not then

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always be too easy for him as a theologian. Even today objectively unjustified administrative measures are adopted which unduly restrict the theologian's legitimate freedom of opinion and research. But it is impossible to guard against such narrow-minded procedures from the outset in the Church as it actually exists, by facing the magisterium with the dilemma of proclaiming and protecting pure dogma alone or of remaining completely silent. All that is left to the theologian is to go as far as he can to ensure that blunders of this kind on the part of the official teaching authorities occur as rarely as possible, even though there is no a priori recipe for avoiding them all together; for the rest, he must patiently allow for such mistakes among the defects and sins that will never be lacking in the history of the Church of sinners. But in the last resort none of this disturbs the ecclesial allegiance of a Christian theologian in his actual existential relationship to the Church. I can understand that there are Christians who feel authorized or even bound in conscience to leave the Church exactly as I can recognize that many people can act with a clear conscience in the moral field in a way which my conscience would compel me to reject absolutely in practice and in principle. That is why I can still take for granted the ecclesial character of my being a Christian and of my theology.

This opportunity for a legitimate compromise arises of course most obviously in regard to participation in the life of the Church. If we examine them more closely, we can observe that the official norms for life in the Church, even in the Catholic Church, allow extraordinarily wide scope for diversities of organization. The house of the Church is much larger and for a long time has not merely consisted of tiny and stifling rooms. That is not to say that we should underestimate the importance, the religious strength and even a certain theological normative character of popular devotion, which is often much more noble, and understands more about God than anaemic rationalism or bourgeois respectability. But in 'our Father's house' there are many rooms among which we can and indeed must choose, if we want to justify out own life before God. At the same time we might wish that the Church's proclamation and its approved practice as expressed in the average sermon and in church newspapers would permit a little more of the spaciousness of the Church and the freedom of the Christian to be perceived. We cannot have a fatherland unless we are prepared to live with its philistines and slackers. It is the same with the Church. We must not simply identify [12] the 'Catholicism' of a particular country with the Church as a whole and blame the latter for the narrowness and hard-heartedness of a particular regional Catholicism. But, even in a local church where this narrow-minded Catholicism prevails, the word of God and his grace is proclaimed, his forgiveness granted and the death and resurrection of Jesus celebrated until he returns.

It seems to me that those who suffer far too much through the Church have not properly understood its true nature and their ultimate relationship to it. If I live my Christianity quite naturally and without inhibitions, even somewhat casually as a result of habit, if I live it also within the Church, there can of course be moments when I am stirred into asking: 'What am I really doing here?' Then I tell myself (in regard to what is present even though inexpressible): 'You cannot flee to a greater clarity than what you have and you have no right to allow yourself, by attempting to take a more radical decision for your life, to fall into a greater darkness, simply because you could wish for a more radiant and compelling clarity than what you now possess.' I also tell myself: 'Accept the incomprehensible mystery with equanimity and serene hope; what then could go wrong?' What other choice could I make that was not long ago encompassed by this mystery? I tell myself: 'You will die and your death will strike at your whole existence and even the theory you have constructed about it; is it not pointless to do anything but die with Jesus into his death (and, consequently, to live now with him)?' I then tell myself: 'Is not this the sum-total of Christianity? Can we not simply accept everything else about Christianity, however difficult it is to understand and to bear, since it can only be had in its wholeness?' If I put these questions to myself and answer

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in this way, then it seems to me permissible to take my Christianity for granted, to think and to live the Incomprehensible very comprehensibly.[1]

1 On all this cf. *Rechenschaft des Glaubens*, *Karl Rahner-Lesebuch*, ed. K. Lehmann and A. Raffelt (Freiburg/Zurich 1979). On Karl Rahner's status see especially A. Raffelt, 'Bibliographie der Sekundarliteratur', in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Wagnis Theologie*. *Erfahrungen mit der Theologie Karl Rahner* (Freiburg 1979), pp. 598 -622.

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2

ON THE SITUATION OF FAITH

Our theme in the following reflections is faith: faith, that is, as understood by the magisterium of the Catholic Church and by traditional theology. Hence the author will not be disturbed by the objection that he is creating a lot of trouble and work for himself by discussing theologically a concept of faith that no longer corresponds to what people today and many modern theologians understand by the term.

What must be considered first of all in theological terms is the impossibility, only now becoming evident, of a positive integration of faith with the rest of what is known (at least by educated people and at least in the West). What do we mean in the first place by this impossibility of (reciprocal) integration? Because of the contingency of his history and because of the plurality of the sources of knowledge (beginning with the multiplicity of his senses), the diverse contents of a person's consciousness are not reciprocally integrated from the outset. Harmony does not prevail everywhere from the beginning. One of the main tasks of human knowledge as of *one* subject, despite the multiplicity of realities making up a human being, is to synthesize the many and at first sight very disparate experiences. Man strives for a completely structured world-view in which every object of his individual experiences has its definite place and in which all details are reciprocally explained and rendered intelligible, in which no contradictions appear. Because of the unity of consciousness and from the nature of the case it is necessary and understandable that the realities of his secular experience and those of the Christian faith should be integrated together into such a homogeneous world-vision.

The reality of faith is not simply a world to itself alone, separate from [14] the world of secular experience, if only because this faith raises quite concrete claims and demands which must be fulfilled in the concrete world of secular experience and activity, in moral life and in the ecclesial society, which is a very concrete reality of everyday existence. For this very reason the desire for a synthesis, for the integration of the reality of faith and of secular reality, must be recognized as legitimate in principle. The Christian rightly demands a homogeneous, completely structured 'world-view' in which his Christian faith properly so-called and the rest of his experience, the rest of his knowledge (including academic knowledge), are integrated. This 'world-view' is not simply present from the outset, otherwise the revelation of faith as such would have to supply also as its own content the totality of man's possible knowledge. But it does nothing of the kind, for revelation and Christian faith by their very nature exclude the possibility of such a homogeneous world-view present from the outset, arising out of the unity of the sources of knowledge.

Although man cannot live by faith alone (this essential limitation of revelation and faith is by no means obvious, but it is a fact), but can in fact live this faith only with the aid of the rest of his experience, a clearly and palpably completely structured world-view cannot exist from the outset: it must be sought and established, a task which for a Christian is a duty arising from his faith. Of course the task was accomplished at all times only as an asymptotic convergence toward the goal and, from the standpoint of the individual and his life-task, to be completed only in death. Nor of course was this task ever fully achieved even in a society. There were always elements of secular experience (in nature and history) not clearly synthesized with Christian faith or combined with the latter into a world-view, even though they had a certain relevance from the standpoint of faith. But in former times such relics of an experience subjectively already existing but not yet positively integrated into a homogeneous

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Christian world-view were comparatively slight, if only because people knew nothing at all about many secular facts relevant to faith but difficult to integrate. In Francis Suarez' world-vision, for instance, his faith with his theology and his secular knowledge of nature and history did not form an original unity from the outset, but they were easily and clearly visibly integrated into a unity. Everything fitted together and this harmony was not merely a fundamental postulate of his faith and of the original unity of his consciousness, but a perceptible fact.

Despite these elements of unresolved problems, in earlier Christian times there existed an assured, homogeneous world-vision, a completely [15] structured world-view, which was not only that of the individual and the solitary isolated person on his own account and at his own risk, but that of a society where, despite individual heretics and dissidents, it was more or less taken for granted and undisputed, at least in its basic features. And, in so far as the fact was known existentially and taken seriously that there were and are also other religions and ideologies outside the Christian cultural complex, it was easily integrated into the Christian world-view by being explained in the light of data understood in Christian terms (original sin, culpable error, etc.) or by simply regarding supporters of these other religions and ideologies as enemies with whom from the outset there could be no dialogue, since the latter would constitute a threat to one's own world-view. At a still earlier stage these other ideologies were not regarded as unintegrated facts, threatening one's own world-view, but more or less as I might today regard a Tibetan medicine as irrelevant to my needs and leave it aside without trying to find out more about it. Of course, even in former times there were brief periods when a world-vision lost its clarity or disintegrated, periods also of struggle between several world-views. But such critical phases (for instance, the transition from the ancient 'pagan' world-vision to the Christian world-vision of the West) were comparatively brief, because a geographically restricted society, content through all the changes with its self-understanding, maintained a world-view which had its own unity and consistency.

It is different today, nor can it be foreseen how and when this new situation might change in the future, even though no one can say that this is simply impossible. There are two reasons why man today finds it impossible positively to integrate all the data of his consciousness with his faith. These are the extent of his secular knowledge and the necessity and real possibility of an existentially genuine dialogue with all existing forms of faith and ideologies.

First of all the present range of secular knowledge, as it exists or is in principle easily attainable for the individual, is so great that for him at least a positive synthesis with the Christian faith is concretely and practically impossible.

The abundance of knowledge yielded by the natural and historical sciences is so vast and increases so quickly that, even apart from faith, it can no longer be really synthesized in the head of any single individual. For the individual a system of knowledge into which new insights were slowly and cautiously integrated has now become an exploded chaos [16] with which he cannot cope. Not only is there an endless number of things supposed to be 'known' today that he does not know, but as a matter of real and concrete experience he knows *that* he does not know all this. (This comes home to him particularly in the presence of a modern computer.) This is a quite different and new form of ignorance and it is accompanied by a feeling of helplessness and powerlessness which in former times would arise in face only of nature as a whole and not of human works.

This present and still unsurmounted mass of knowledge (always prior to any confrontation with faith) places man in a new and unique situation in regard to knowledge. Formerly there was an immense number of things that he did not know, but he was not aware or at the most only slightly aware of this ignorance existentially at the margin of consciousness. What was known was also known on the whole securely and without feeling threatened. Hence a person

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expressed his knowledge mainly in the form of a firm and more or less absolute statement of what he knew. Today the individual knows that a vast number of things of which he is ignorant is present all around him and that this number is speedily and enormously increasing, raising questions about the knowledge he already possesses as provisional and subject to revision. Consequently the individual today does not normally express his knowledge in the form of a firm statement, meant to be permanently certain and more or less absolute, but as provisional, open to question, hypothetical, valid for the time being; if further knowledge is acquired, this is seen only as superseding a hitherto accepted hypothesis. What results from all this is a diffuse but everywhere prevailing sceptical relativism. We no longer live in solid houses of absolutely sound convictions, accepted by society at large and everywhere taken for granted, but in tents hastily pitched for a journey into the unforeseeable, simply because we know so much and discover new things so quickly and each individual by himself becomes increasingly stupid in face of the range of what as such is immediately knowable or can be 'looked up', although technical inventions enable him to live continually with what he does not understand.

In his present state of knowledge the attitude of the individual to the Christian faith cannot simply be the same as formerly. A positive, uniform and clearly visible synthesis of this modern knowledge with faith to form a homogeneous world-view is not possible either objectively or subjectively. Christian faith can no longer be experienced so simply and obviously as formerly as the ultimate structural principle of knowledge [17] as a whole. In principle at least, there does not seem to be any absolutely clear and as such certainly palpable contradiction between faith and modern knowledge, although psychologically and existentially it is not so simple to keep to the somewhat vague midway between the non-perceptibility of an absolute contradiction and the impossibility of seeing a positive reconciliation and synthesis between the two. But even if an absolute contradiction cannot be proved and if modern Christian apologetics is frequently content to restrict itself to this negatively protective defence, it must be clearly seen and carefully noted that for the individual such a positive synthesis between modern knowledge and ancient faith is largely impossible.

This needs to be elucidated in the light of individual, concrete examples. We might be expected to produce examples of the impossibility of such a positive reconciliation between modern knowledge and Christian faith in the fields of both the natural sciences and the historical and social sciences. We might ask, for example, what an individual modern physicist is supposed to make of transubstantiation in the Tridentine teaching on the Eucharist. We might ask whether an individual historian of religion for his own part would also regard as certain the self-understanding of Jesus presented by traditional Catholic fundamental theology as historically certainly demonstrable. We might ask whether the historian or social scientist today can be so completely certain that Christianity (especially in the historical form of the Church) is palpably beyond comparison with other religions, as Vatican I declared it to be, claiming that this incomparability in terms of fundamental theology (that is, in historical empiricism) amounted to a comprehensible and conclusive argument for the supernatural origin of the Christian revelation, valid for all times and adapted to the intelligence of all. It might be asked what such present-day thinkers would make of the statements about miracles and even prophecies (tacitly passed over today, by contrast with Vatican I). It might be asked whether today they could without more ado regard the spread of the Church as miraculous, its moral state as one of outstanding holiness, its activity as inexhaustibly fruitful in all that is good, and thus see the Church itself – as Vatican I claimed – as an invincible testimony to its own divine mission.

We could go on at length in this way. It should not be maintained that there can be no appropriate suggestions or answers in regard to all these and many, many other questions. All

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that can be said here is that such answers, even if they are or can be assumed to be correct 'in themselves', [18] do not make it any easier for the individual to integrate modern knowledge and Christian faith into a positively grasped unity of a world-view. No remedy has been found for this situation, no way of rendering such an integration possible. We must simply put up with this state of affairs, while showing that its real burden would not be removed from modern man even if he abandoned his faith and with that the possibility of the coexistence of Christian faith and modern knowledge. For the coexistence of convictions held as absolute and the immense number of opinions accepted only hypothetically and provisionally simply cannot be removed.

It is necessary now to consider more precisely the consequences for Christian faith as concretely lived, if it has to be lived in this atmosphere of sceptical relativism, of knowledge assumed to be provisional. The observations to be made here in response to the question are very unsystematic and are not meant to create an impression of being exhaustive.

First of all, the Church's teaching authority in practice and existentially takes a very secondary place in a person's 'system of faith' today. Of course it is part of the Catholic understanding of Christian faith to accept a magisterium which teaches with binding force. If this is *forthrightly rejected*, there can be no question of a truly Catholic understanding of faith. The authority of the Church and its magisterium however is certainly not the first and last foundation of the faith of a person today, but deduced as a very secondary factor, even though the latter – *if* and in so far as it is grasped by faith – helps to determine the faith of the individual Catholic in its totality. The teaching authority of the Church is certainly part of the substance of the Catholic faith, but, from the standpoint of fundamental theology, not its beginning nor its ultimate ground. Theoretically this had always been the position of Catholic fundamental theology, since it explained and justified its doctrine of the existence of God, of the possibility and reality of revelation, its doctrine of Jesus Christ as divine legate, *before* putting forward an ecclesiology, a doctrine of the Church's magisterium, of Scripture as inspired source of revelation. But in practice and kerygmatically, at an earlier stage, at least subliminally, a different mentality had existed. This was in line with Augustine's statement that he would not believe the gospel if he had not been moved to do so by the authority of the Church. In this view the Church, its authority, the stubborn absoluteness of its teaching, were regarded as the proper and sole refuge where people could be secure against their own scepticism and the breakdown of all certainties. From [19] this standpoint they had an immediate and more or less natural understanding of the fact stressed (somewhat triumphalistically) by the Church that it was itself by its life and history an invincible motive of faith as a whole and not only a particular object of this faith with a relatively secondary place in its total structure and total justification.

Obviously there are many people even today who feel like this, because of their psychological make-up and sociological background. Here we shall not indulge in any prognosis as to whether this experience of the Church might not perhaps once again become generally the more or less obvious way of access to Christian faith as a whole. For it cannot at all be taken for granted that people must regard and will in future regard the sociological relativity of their convictions always as a reason for their uncertainty and not as a reason for their accuracy. But, granted all this and making allowance for it, it remains a fact that faith in the Church and particularly in its binding teaching authority is a conviction which today generally appears late and as a secondary element in the genesis and total structure of the Catholic faith. Man today is too well aware of the difficulty of deriving conclusions with logical necessity from the Church's history of dogma, as an explanation clearly emerging from the sense of faith of the primitive Church or even from the teaching of the historical Jesus. Even though this might be possible in theory, modern man as an individual cannot manage it; nor can he get very far by having recourse to the Church's authority in its present-

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day understanding of itself, since this very self-understanding appears as the result of a history the legitimacy of which he himself cannot clearly grasp. Man today has a different, prosaic and more or less demythologized attitude to authorities in general and to those who possess authority, since their history with its upheavals and mistakes is more obvious to him than it was to people in earlier times, and hence he knows also about the mistakes and wrong decisions in the history of the Church's magisterium.

The explanation that these mistakes – which cannot be denied – on the part of the Church's magisterium are involved in authentic doctrinal statements and not in definitions is of course objectively correct, but not easy for the individual to accept in practice today. For even statements that do not involve a definition can occasionally have very concrete and solid effects in the life of the Church and affect the individual very closely (we may recall, for example, *Humanae Vitae* or the Declaration on Women and the Priesthood). Moreover, in concrete cases, the Roman magisterium itself tends more to obscure than to clarify the difference [20] between merely authentic statements and those involving a definition, thus creating the impression that it regards all doctrinal statements concretely and in practice as irreformable. But for this very reason the individual today is inclined to suspect that there is nothing to choose between statements involving a definition and merely authentic declarations of the magisterium. This impression is all the more widespread since the more simple Christian – not a professional theologian, but perhaps well-educated and even an 'intellectual' – often feels that modern theology puts forward interpretations even with reference to many dogmas that are so remote from the previous (popular) understanding that it is difficult for him to see how this new interpretation can be identified with the old dogma. In principle these interpretations can be necessary and legitimate today without posing a threat to the permanence of the old dogma. But the new interpretations make it more difficult for the individual Christian to adopt an unprejudiced attitude toward the Church's magisterium.

We shall not attempt here to deal further with the problems involved, still less to solve them. What should be noted here is that even existentially the Church's magisterium today is no longer the obvious starting point of faith, the obvious court of appeal which does not create any problems of its own, to which the preacher can have recourse; it is a comparatively secondary factor in the continually freshly realized genesis of faith, an object of proclamation and not the latter's essential foundation. Consequently, in proclaiming the Church's teaching on faith, the appeal to the authority of the magisterium must be handled very cautiously, particularly since it has also to be observed in this proclamation that the appeal to the sense of faith of the whole Church irrevocably upholding a particular doctrine (an appeal which even today still has an apologetic importance) and the appeal to the formal authority of the Roman magisterium are not precisely the same thing. Today this authority is in fact and in practice a permanent object of proclamation which must itself continually be made intelligible and credible in terms of fundamental theology and apologetics; it is not simply to be taken for granted everywhere and always as the ground of proclamation.

The further conclusion follows however that, if a particular dogma of the Church is to be made understandable and credible, the effort of proclamation cannot every time simply end with an appeal to the formal authority of the Church's magisterium: the dogma involved must be substantiated in terms of fundamental theology and apologetics in itself [21] or in the light of more fundamental articles of Christian faith. This statement of course is a truism even for traditional fundamental theology. Hitherto however sermons generally started out too readily from the assumption that they took place within the dimension of the Church, the latter being regarded as an obvious and indisputable factor so that the sermon had only to be oriented to its teaching. Today even in the mystagogical sermon within the Church the person to be addressed is someone whose attitude to the magisterium and even to the sense of faith of the

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whole Church is not so ingenuous and naive as it was formerly. Proclamation within the Church must take the same form as outside it: in principle the dogmatic sermon must have an apologetic aspect; dogmatics and fundamental theology must mutually interpenetrate. Today no fundamental theology can exist or be presupposed in sermons which is assumed to have proved once and for all in a formal way the existence of a binding revelation, so that it can and must be asked only subsequently what in fact has been communicated by God in this revelation. Today it is the credibility (that is, the meaningfulness and existential assimilability and human unrenounceability) of the fundamental dogmas of Christianity that makes credible the existence of a supernatural revelation (rightly understood) and not *vice versa*.

The existence of the Church's magisterium and also its concrete importance as norm of faith for the individual may not be given up even today, but at the present time it has a different rank and a different place in the structure and in the 'system' of faith of a person today. The Church today – this may (and must, if the preacher is to be credible) be said without prejudice – is a burden: a burden which may not be thrown off, since that would be fatal in the long run to Christian faith (and recourse to the authority of Scripture alone also creates the same problems and difficulties in view of our present awareness of the historical relativity even of Scripture). But this burden must not be concealed, a person ought to feel the whole weight of the often terrifying history of the Church when the latter's authority is invoked; and it is only when the scandal of the cross – which is part of Christian faith – is honestly accepted without any triumphalism – and preached in the same spirit that this burden can be turned into a blessing and the Church, despite everything, can be experienced as the obvious centre of faith, at which God's pledge of himself with irrevocable force in Jesus Christ is accepted.

We have to remember moreover a very different question with reference to the Christian faith which arises when we see this faith in the [22] concrete human being in a situation which no longer permits a positive integration of faith and modern knowledge (in its own specific character). This situation poses a threat to that absolute assent which is part of the essence of Christian faith. The assent should be absolute, unconditional, firmer than anything else. As J. Beumer expresses it, the act of faith is 'by its nature a total surrender of man to God. But, in so far as this surrender is the free act of his knowledge precisely as response to God's word in revelation, it means certainty of faith. This implies (over and above the question of the relative certainty of the *praeambula fidei*)* an absoluteness (firmness) of the 'decision for' (also as norm of knowledge) the object (*certitudo adhaesionis*) and of the (free) apprehension of the formal object of assent as such, absolutely and objectively guaranteeing the truth of the true and truthful testimony of God (*certitudo infallibilitatis*), so that the believer makes what is attested also epistemologically the absolute fixed point and the *norma non normata* of his knowledge' (*LThK* vol. iv, col. 942). According to traditional teaching, then, faith is supposed to be absolutely and unconditionally the unambiguous first fixed point of all human convictions which (since God's truth has itself become its ground and formal object) is under no higher human authority, in the light of which it could be subjected to criticism and called in question. The problems involved in this doctrine of the certainty of faith, as they have always existed and for a long time been considered in traditional theology,

* In traditional fundamental theology or apologetics the *praeambula fidei* included those truths, such as the existence of God, the possibility and historical fact of revelation, which could be shown to be accessible to reason, and the preliminary conditions – not the cause – of the assent of supernatural faith. Today these 'preliminaries' are seen to be more complex and less accessible to rational investigation, including psychological dispositions and openness to the workings of grace. Cf. Karl Rahner/Herbert Vorgrimler, 'Praeambula Fidei', in *Concise Theological Dictionary* (Freiburg/London 1965), pp. 368-70. – Translator.

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and the diverse answers given in the traditional *analysis fidei*,[†] cannot directly concern us here but are presupposed as known.

The basic problem in this connection consists in the fact that this divine truth, which is supposed to guarantee the absolute certainty and firmness of faith, is always conveyed through human knowledge; the [23] question therefore arises why this human mediation with its dubiousness and uncertainty does not also affect the individual person's concrete faith, so that the latter cannot by any means have that certainty which the Church's teaching claims for it. Even though, as we said, we do not want to deal with this old and ever-new problem, it is obvious that the problem will take a different form and become more acute if the concrete situation in which God's absolute revelation to man must be conveyed in a human way is itself changed and becomes more critical.

In fact, in a mental climate in which in other matters the firm and indisputable statement (in any form and to any, albeit varied, extent) was the normal expression of human knowledge, the absolute assent of faith itself was not a particularly striking or unusual phenomenon in a person's consciousness as a whole. It appeared as a climax – not surprisingly – in a total system of securely, firmly and unchangeably maintained statements of a secular character. But, in a consciousness where a sceptical relativism normally prevails and all secular knowledge is regarded as merely provisional, to be superseded in the light of later experience, such an absolute assent of faith is bound to be seen as an alien element, as a demand which simply cannot be taken seriously by man today and which also shares in the changing, provisional and unforeseeable condition of all knowledge. In this situation the old problems of the *analysis fidei* acquire a wholly new importance and have consequences quite different from those of the past. Metaphorically speaking, when the king was an obvious, indisputable factor whose necessity in principle no critique would venture to question (at least not within the individual's sphere of existence), it was also easy to believe in the Pope; now that there are no more kings, belief in the Pope can no longer be taken for granted as it was formerly. Speaking without metaphors, formerly in the historical and sociological situation it was easier to perceive the certainty of the *praeambula fidei* and they posed no threat to faith itself, although of course it was even then clear that their certainty and the firmness of assent given to them were less than the certainty and firmness claimed by faith for itself. But today the concrete individual without a professional knowledge of theology, faced also with an abundance of historical and metaphysical problems beyond his control, unable to integrate modern knowledge and faith into a homogeneous world-vision, cannot be so certain as formerly of the *praeambula fidei* and this fact must also affect his faith. He feels insecure; he can no longer see clearly how to maintain the absoluteness and unconditional firmness of his faith.

[24] Formerly, in the course of the analysis of the act of faith, it was easy to say that knowledge of the *praeambula fidei* was merely an external precondition of faith and, with its merely relative certainty, did not enter inwardly into faith and into its very structure, so that faith itself was determined only by its own internal formal object and was not affected by the relatively slight certainty of the *praeambula fidei* (the situation was said to be analogous to that of someone who gives absolute love and loyalty to a couple of human beings as his parents, although the certainty that these two really are his parents is not as absolute as his actual turning to them). But at that time the individual felt so certain about the *praeambula fidei* and took them so much for granted that he was easily satisfied with the explanation (in

[†] The analysis of the act of faith as discussed in the older manuals of dogmatics was intended to show how God could be directly attained only by faith, while faith itself is based on his authority as revealer. As with the *praeambula fidei* the problem is now seen to be more complex than formerly but also to be resolved only in the light of man's personal encounter with God in Christ. Cf. Rahner/Vorgrimler, *Concise Dictionary*, p. 19. – Translator.

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itself certainly theoretically correct) that the *praeambula fidei* (likewise certain and regarded as certain) did not enter at all into the inner nature of faith and were not themselves necessary to substantiate and justify the absoluteness of the assent of faith. But it is really not so simple today when the average person rightly or wrongly feels that his grasp of the *praeambula fidei is* much less secure or even non-existent. In practice and concretely this feeling is bound to be detrimental to the certainty of the assent of faith, whether this effect is logically necessary or not. For it is a question, not merely of the abstract nature of faith, but of its concrete existence in the consciousness of a person today, and this existence is undoubtedly also dependent on the existence and the specific character of the *praeambula fidei* at the present time in man's consciousness. He has the impression that for the time being he can believe to the best of his knowledge and in all conscience (in its actual state) in the same way as he finds it possible at the moment rationally to defend an opinion; he must however at the same time adopt the reservation, as with all other human knowledge, that he might later be better informed and then revise his previous view of faith; but there can be no talk of an absolute assent, excluding from the outset and in principle any later revision. We may well think that what has just been said expresses more or less accurately the present mentality in the western world, although of course the degree of explicit reflection on this epistemological situation of faith may vary considerably.

What however must be said of this imperilled state of faith in the light of faith's own understanding of itself? Can it exist also today with that absolute assent and that indisputable certainty which it formerly claimed for itself? Can the spiritual man judge everything while refusing to be judged himself, without making the hopeless attempt to escape from the [25] mental climate of his time? What is to be said if we do not start out from the assumption that the traditional distinction between the rational grounds of assent to the *praeambula fidei* and the intrinsic formal object and motive of faith is a sufficient answer to our contemporary problem? If we attempt to give an answer to the question raised in this form, this does not mean that we regard the answer as exhaustive or that we might not bring in quite different considerations in order to find a comprehensive answer to our question.

In this connection it seems to me worth considering first of all that faith as *fides quae*[*] is a many-sided factor. However much in itself and especially in the present mental climate it seems advisable and necessary to make clear the unity of faith, the internal connection of its individual statements, nevertheless the content of faith – particularly in the Church's official proclamation – is a many-sided and complex factor. Hence it can come about that a particular reality can actually be believed with a genuine theological faith, even though another part of the content of this same faith is simultaneously rejected as false. It can perhaps be said that someone who explicitly and publicly rejects a single dogma of the Catholic Church is a heretic and no longer belongs to that Church; but it cannot be said that the inculpable rejection of a certain dogma cannot coexist with a theological faith (as infused virtue and as act). For the Second Vatican Council declares that even a 'pagan' or an atheist, as long as he is true to his own conscience, can have a theological faith of the quality necessary for salvation.

If this is the situation, it is also conceivable that a Catholic Christian might not bring to certain dogmas of the Church that absolute assent which is part of the essence of faith and yet could be a believer in the theological sense of the term and also a Catholic, at least as long as he does not explicitly and publicly deny a particular dogma and as long as he remains in good faith. This is the position of many Catholics today. In the light of their mental attitude and psychological make-up, as these exist in the present age of sceptical relativism, despite their

[*] *Fides quae* = 'faith which (is believed)', the content of faith, as distinct from *fides qua* ='faith by which (we believe)', the virtue of faith – Translator.

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good will, they will not in fact succeed in bringing an absolute assent of faith to one dogma or another and yet it cannot be said on that account that they do not possess the faith necessary for salvation. The objection cannot be raised that such people are Catholics only if they affirm the Church and [26] its magisterium with an absolute assent of faith; if they do this, their absolute assent extends implicitly and necessarily to everything that the Church teaches with ultimate binding force; hence the situation described here simply could not arise for people who are Catholic and in practice lead a Christian life in the Church. This objection is not valid, since the statement that the Church is necessary for salvation and possesses an infallible magisterium, as a particular article of faith which entered comparatively late into the structure of faith, can itself be one of those articles to which a person inculpably fails to give an absolute assent of faith. It can be said then that, if there are very many people in the Church today who cannot manage a 'complete identification with the Church' (a favourite expression at the present time), if they give even to dogmas only that provisional and conditional assent which they give to statements of purely secular knowledge, if they live and 'practise' in this way in the Church, it cannot be simply claimed without more ado that they have no theological faith or do not belong to the Church.

Even a faith like this, still coming to be, not yet articulating certain elements of the one and entire faith with an absolute assent, can be an ecclesial faith leading to salvation. All that is required is that it does not imply an *absolute* rejection of a dogma of the Church. For the most part this will not happen today, since this modern man with his universal sceptical relativism (even in regard to his own opinions) will not be able or willing – even in regard to the Church's dogmas of faith – *absolutely* to reject a binding teaching of the Church merely because he cannot positively cope with it at the moment. If all this is true, then we can see quite dispassionately and in its concrete reality the faith of very many Catholics today and yet be optimistic about the salvation of this large number of Catholic Christians and about their attachment to the Church. Admittedly, they do not have the faith entirely as it is (rightly) described in the theological text-books; they do not say: 'I believe firmly and forever, with an irrevocable assent, everything that the Church teaches.' Or, if formularies of this kind are used at all, in practice these declarations are coloured by that sceptical relativism which affects all areas of consciousness today. Nevertheless, these people are Christians and Catholics.

This however is still far from being a sufficient answer to the question we raised. Is it possible to speak of a theological faith when there is nothing at all in the content of this 'faith' which is affirmed with an absolute assent of faith, when virtually everything that is 'believed' is [27] accepted and lived only with that relativity and provisional character which are typical of the present time? Or in such a faith must there not be somewhere and somehow an absolute assent at least to certain articles without which the traditional teaching cannot conceive faith? Certainly justice is not done to the Church's teaching, the absolute importance of faith for a person who determines himself for his eternal destiny only by an absolute disposal of his freedom is not understood, if we purely and simply drop the whole idea of an absolute assent of faith. But where and how can a phenomenological description of faith today discover such an absolute assent among average human beings or even among ordinary Catholics? We could of course say that, because of the multiplicity of possible matters of faith, because of the plurality of human consciousness and the impossibility of adequate reflection, there is no difficulty in assuming that a Catholic who wants in principle to be a believer will somewhere and somehow come to a matter of faith which he grasps with an absolute assent, even though it is impossible to say precisely *what* is this matter of faith. This statement is certainly not simply false, but in itself it is an over-simplification. It is certainly possible to say something about this question without merely appealing to the fact that in the consciousness of a Christian attached to the Church there must inevitably be one

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thing or another that he apprehends with an absolute assent.

To get any further here, it must be remembered that man's freedom, in so far as it is not merely freedom of choice of a particular categorial object within the unrestricted range of consciousness, but the possibility of an inalienable disposal by the subject of itself as a whole in a basic decision, always exists absolutely in one way or another in the adult human being. In other words, man does not exist as a permanently neutral subject, doing one thing after another freely in a temporal succession, but as a subject which has decided about itself in a fundamental option (which of course does not mean that such a basic decision once made can never be changed). While it can always be revised, such an existential-personal decision is by its very nature an absolute decision in freedom and consequently the gnoseological element is also absolutely affirmed in it and yet this affirmation is free. Hence it cannot be said that for someone who has reached the use of reason and freedom absolutely everything in his consciousness is apprehended only conditionally and provisionally in knowledge and freedom. Even if this were so in the objectifying and verbalizing representational consciousness, even if a particular individual in his reflection were not able to apprehend something [28] in his representational consciousness that he affirms as absolutely valid, if then in his reflective consciousness he were to mark every single objective reality of an external or internal character with the sign of sceptical relativism, none of this would prove that the free fundamental option in which the subject posits and understands himself is not an absolute assent in knowledge and freedom. At least the original protest of the subject against an absolute positing, the basic option for a universal sceptical relativism, would itself be an absolute positing. The necessity of an absolute decision is imposed on freedom, because the attempt at a universal abstention from such a decision in the concreteness of reality would itself be an absolute decision.

In the concrete order of reality however such a decision is always either belief or unbelief in the theological sense of the term. The freedom with which a person disposes of himself in a fundamental decision is the freedom of a subject with a 'supernatural existential', with an enduring actual offer of God, an offer presented to freedom as the innermost subjective principle of the orientation of men to the immediacy of God. The radicalizing of human transcendentality to the immediacy of God, which is involved in this continuous offering of supernatural grace, has the character of a revelation in the strictly theological sense of the term. If a person in his free, absolute self-understanding does not withdraw in culpable fear into his own finiteness but trustfully yields to the transcendentality of his mind oriented as it is to the incomprehensibility of God, he accepts himself in the transcendentality radicalized by grace to the immediacy of God: he believes and does so with an absolute assent. Even if someone tries to subject his representational and reflexive consciousness to a universal sceptical relativism, in the original, unreflecting realization of his freedom he is a believer or unbeliever with an absolute assent. Perhaps his inadequate means of reflection make it impossible for him to represent objectively the absoluteness of his fundamental option for belief or unbelief, but he does in fact believe or not believe, since a forthright existential abstention from a decision is impossible for the subject, placed as he is in his transcendental openness inescapably before God's gracious self-offering which he accepts or rejects.

Against this theory, which attempts to explain that even in face of a modern sceptical relativism an absolute assent of faith must be possible and does in fact occur, the objection might be raised that an absolute assent to a specific matter (or a particular aspect) of faith is not thereby made intelligible. *This*, it is claimed, is the kind of assent required by [29] traditional theology when the latter speaks of an absolute assent of faith: it must be an assent to this or that in particular, 'something' must be believed and Christian faith must not (as it seems to be with Bultmann) be reduced to a formal *fides qua* without an assignable *fides quae*. But, according to this theory, the absolute assent remains restricted to the assumption

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of the subject's own objectless transcendentality, even though the latter is understood as radicalized by grace to the immediacy of God. What must be said with regard to this objection which creates the impression that the theory put forward dissolves Christian faith in a sublime existential ontology, since – according to this theory – what is in fact believed cannot be understood at all as coming from an historical revelation?

There is a great deal to be said in response to this objection. In the first place the assent of faith envisaged in this theory is clearly established by God's free self-communication to man's transcendentality. But where God's free action is involved, history in a sense – but in a true sense – exists, even though this free act of God does not take place at a definite point in place and time as part of the course of history, but is always and everywhere the condition – freely posited, but perceived as such – of the possibility of salvation history. The dilemma that something either fits *into* history at a definite and particular place and is therefore historical or is part of an 'essence' which as such is unhistorical, is false. Moreover, it must be said that the free acceptance of man's reference to God's immediacy, established by grace, normally takes place, not in an isolated mystical interiority, but – like everything pertaining to man's transcendentality – is brought about by the encounter with an *a posteriori* 'objective reality' in other persons or in the environment. By his concrete encounter with his historical world a person becomes aware of himself and thus also of his transcendentality to God in himself radicalized by grace. This mediating historical reality as such does not itself necessarily have the character of being revealed in the strictly theological sense; in itself it can be secular and worldly, as long as it is assumed that it can mediate an act in which the subject really disposes of himself in freedom and accepts himself as he is: that is, also (implicitly) with its reference by grace to God.

Expressed in scholastic terminology: in the present order of salvation, in which by God's offer of himself man is ultimately referred always and everywhere to God's immediacy, it follows that every *actus honestus* is also in practice an *actus salutaris*, even if this act is not expressly concerned [30] with a revealed reality and motivation of an objective and verbalized nature (to deny this would be to contradict Vatican II, according to which even an atheist or a 'pagan' can posit a salutary act of faith). Such an objective reality, which has a moral significance and (at least implicitly) is in any case covered by the 'authority' of God (which indeed is an essential aspect of an *actus honestus*), can however be regarded in an adequate sense as a categorial object of revelation, even though it is not 'revealed' as such for its own sake nor (to express it better and more precisely) presented in this sense for our reflection. For it is certainly possible to deny at once that there is a moral object for an *actus honestus* which is not *also* revealed as such (however theology may explain more precisely the revealed character of matters that are already part of the natural moral law). But if the object of an *actus honestus* does not lie purely and simply outside the dimension of revelation and (this must not be overlooked) is grasped in the subject's mental activity as a whole, radicalized by grace and consequently no longer simply 'natural', then it can confidently be maintained that such a mediation to itself of the subject elevated by grace is to an adequate degree an object of revelation: that is, not only the *fides qua* but also the *fides quae* belonging to the sphere of revelation. These problems could perhaps be given a better and clearer treatment than has been attempted here. But they are problems not only arising from the thesis that an absolute assent is possible for every human being who is not culpably an unbeliever and that it exists even in today's mental climate of sceptical relativism, but also imposed on every theologian who does not reject Vatican II's optimism in regard to salvation, who does not deny the possibility of a really salvific faith even on the part of someone who in his reflection inculpably regards himself as a 'pagan' or atheist.

It may be said then that there will be many Christians and Catholics today who include at least in their reflective consciousness many individual dogmas of Christianity to which they

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do not give an absolute assent or which they even reject 'conjecturally' – reacting, that is, in a spirit of sceptical relativism – and thus very often finding themselves facing the question of whether they are still Christians and Catholics. From what has been said up to now it is possible to answer this last question in the affirmative, since even with such people there is or can be an absolute assent, since the 'rejection' of particular dogmas does not take the form of absolute unbelief in a theological sense: it is not really a public repudiation in the sight of the Church.

[31] It is from this standpoint that the question should be considered more closely in practical theology as to how such Christians and Catholics are to be treated in the course of concrete pastoral activity. They are often called 'marginal Catholics' as if theirs was a perfectly simple albeit very unstable relationship to the Church. From what has been said it should really be clear that this view is not as unproblematical as it is often assumed to be in the pastoral care of these people. The essential theological problem for practical theology does not lie in the simple fact that this is the state of the faith of some Catholics and is tacitly accepted and tolerated (which is what largely happens), but in the fact that they may be told to stay like that for the time being, so that they do not simply and completely turn their backs on the Church. An educated Catholic might be addressed, for instance, in this way: 'If you think you don't understand some particular dogma, that you can't grasp it inwardly, that you can't believe it, you should not say that the dogma is false, absurd and must simply be rejected; this does not fit in with your general mental attitude, your fundamental sceptical relativism. Don't get on your high horse as if you were a professional theologian making a final, academic decision about a particular question of theology. You would not deal with other metaphysical questions in that way. If on the other hand you affirm the ultimate basic substance of Christianity, the existence of God, a prayerful relationship to him, an ultimate trust in Jesus as the unsurpassable self-promise of God to you, if you practise also a religious life in the Church so far as this is declared by the Church to be really indispensable – and, if we look at it more closely, not very much is required – then you need not hesitate to regard yourself as a Catholic and you can confidently leave to the future the further development of your religious life, for which you want to remain open; you have no reason to think that intellectual honesty requires you to leave the Church.'

There is no doubt that some people are inclined as representatives of the Church to speak in this way to 'educated' Catholics at the present time. It should be clear from our reflections that it is *permissible* to speak in this way (with discretion of course and in a form adapted to the concrete case). At the same time (this must be stated explicitly once more) the dogma of the Church's teaching authority is not a special case for which an exception should be made. For precisely this absolute teaching authority of the Church is one of the dogmas which, despite its truth, a person today will find difficult to accept with an absolute assent of faith. And what has been said of the Church's dogma in general is true [32] also of this particular dogma. If such a dogma is not (yet) accepted with an absolute assent of faith, there can nevertheless be a faith in the form of an absolute assent (under given circumstances) in the theological and ecclesial sense. This is a thesis which may lead to the frontier between ecclesial and non-ecclesial Christians becoming somewhat less clear than had hitherto been the case. But for the Church's pastoral practice this frontier – although rarely considered as such – was always very vague and fluid. The thesis put forward here really does not change anything of this. All it does (and this is important) is to make possible an approach with a clear and secure theological conscience to very many modern Christians as they really are, to justify an attitude of frankness and sympathy towards such people. It is an attitude often adopted in practice, but it should also be based on a clear conscience.

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[33]

PART TWO

Priesthood

[35]

3

WOMEN AND THE PRIESTHOOD

On 15 October 1976 the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published with the approval of Pope Paul VI a 'Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood'. In what follows we shall put forward some theological reflections on this declaration. These – if only because of the limits of space on the one hand and the vast range of the theme on the other – will be restricted to the properly theological aspect of the question involved and in fact to the theological aspect of *this* declaration, not to all the theological problems raised by the question of the possibility or non-possibility of the ordination of women as such. This restriction must be noted from the very outset. Consequently a number of questions are excluded which could be and perhaps ought to be raised in connection with our theme: questions emerging from a secular anthropology of the sexes, from the history of civilization, from an analysis of modern society with its demand for equality of the sexes, and so on. Neither are we dealing with all the present-day problems of pastoral theology which make the question of the admission of women to the priestly ministry relevant in quite a new way. If then we limit our reflections to the strictly theological aspect – that is, to the question as to whether it is certain that the Christian revelation in its unchangeable substance excludes women from the priestly ministry in the Catholic Church – we shall be able to avoid those emotions which so much affect the public debate on one side or another.

[36]

THE DECLARATION OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH OF 15 OCTOBER 1976

The Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which takes up fifteen pages in the official translation,[*] begins within an introduction on the role of women in modern society and in the Church and is then divided into six parts. The first part refers to the 'constant tradition' which always and everywhere in the whole course of Church history (apart from some heretical sects) indisputably and uniformly excluded women from the priestly ministry, so that the magisterium never needed to intervene to reinforce a principle and a law which had never been questioned. In the second part the attitude of Christ is examined and it is pointed out that he did not call any woman 'to become part of the Twelve', although his attitude to women otherwise was quite different from that of his milieu and represents a deliberate and courageous break with it. The conclusion is drawn that Jesus

[*] English translation by Catholic Truth Society (London 1976), Do. 493.

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intended in principle to exclude women from the 'priestly ministry for all times and under all sociological conditions, although it is admitted that a purely historical exegesis of the texts of Scripture does not 'make the matter immediately obvious'.

In a third section the Declaration refers to the practice of the Apostles who had a higher appreciation of women than Jewish customs suggested and were aware of emancipatory trends in the Hellenistic world. Yet they never thought of conferring ordination on women, since they were convinced of their duty of fidelity to the Lord on this point. In a fourth section of the Declaration the permanent value of the attitude of Jesus and the Apostles is stressed. It is said that their attitude cannot be shown to have been inspired solely by social and cultural motives, since in fact they disregarded these when they rose above the discriminations practised against women at the time. It is then also pointed out that the Church certainly has power over the sacraments with reference to the exact shaping of the outward sign and the details of their administration, but has no power over the substance of the sacraments. At the end of a none too lucid argument the conclusion is then drawn that the Church's practice of excluding women from the priesthood has a normative character. In any case therefore the Church's power over the sacraments [37] cannot be used as an argument for admitting women to the priesthood.

In the fifth and sixth parts the priesthood is considered in the light of the mystery of Christ and the Church in order to clarify with the aid of the 'analogy of faith' the conclusions reached in the first four parts. Since at the same time it is expressly observed that these reflections do not present a conclusive argument, but since their conclusions are apparent only to someone already convinced by the reasons actually invoked while making a very speculative impression on others, even though these sections occupy a comparatively large part of the Declaration, there is no need to refer to them at length in the present article. For reasons of space, therefore, we shall leave them aside in the course of our further reflections, while admitting of course that they very often provoke counter-questions and opposition.

THE THEOLOGICAL QUALIFICATION OF THE ROMAN DECLARATION

If a theologian seeking a strictly theological statement of the question does not approach the basic content of the Declaration from the outset with an unambiguously preconceived opinion or with strong but understandable feeling, if he is ready to respect in principle the teaching authority of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he will first of all raise the question of the theological qualification of the Declaration. The answer must be given straightforwardly and without prejudice that it is an authentic declaration of the Roman authorities on faith. Such a declaration obviously carries a certain weight merely in virtue of the formal authority of the Roman magisterium, independently of the arguments put forward by that authority; it cannot be judged by a theologian simply as a statement by some other theologian, the importance of which would be no more than the importance of the arguments put forward. Nevertheless, despite papal approval, the Declaration is not a definitive decision; it is in principle reformable and it can (that is not to say *a priori* that it must) be erroneous.

If the Declaration appeals to an uninterrupted tradition, this appeal is not necessarily and justifiably an appeal to an absolutely and definitively binding tradition, an appeal to a tradition which simply presents and transmits a 'divine' revelation in the strict sense, since there is obviously a purely human tradition in the Church which offers no guarantee of [38] truth even if it has long been undisputed and taken for granted. With this Declaration, which has an authentic but not defining character, the fundamental question is whether the appeal is to a 'divine' or a merely human tradition. The decision itself of course seems to imply the former, but does not make this absolutely clear, particularly since it is admitted that hitherto

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the undisputed practice did not call for any more precise and closer reflection: that is, there has been scarcely any reflection on the precise nature of this tradition in actual practice.

We are then, dealing here, with an authentic but in principle reformable declaration from which error is not certainly *a priori* excluded and not with a simple reference to an absolutely certain doctrine of faith which is clearly and irreformably binding for other reasons. What should be the attitude of the theologian and believer to such an authentic but in principle reformable declaration of the Roman magisterium is perhaps expressed most clearly in the letter of the German bishops on 22 September 1967 to all those charged by the Church with the proclamation of the faith, which need not be quoted at length here.[1] This instruction speaks unashamedly of the fact that 'errors can occur and have occurred in the exercise of the Church's teaching authority', that the Church has always been aware of this possibility, says so in its theology and has worked out rules for dealing with the situation.

The situation of the theologian with regard to the theological qualification of the Roman Declaration in question is not a simple one. He must bring to such a decree the respect it deserves; nevertheless he has not only the right but also the duty of examining it critically and under certain circumstances of contradicting it. The theologian respects this decree by attempting to appreciate as impartially as possible the reasons it puts forward, by respecting as a matter of course the consequent practice of the Church as binding for him (at least for the present), by seeing as reinforced by the decree the conclusion that the general awareness of the Church in regard to the legitimate opportunities of women in the Church as a whole has not yet reached the point at which we could speak of a general change of awareness.

The theologian however has also the right and duty of critically examining this Roman Declaration, even to the point of regarding it as objectively erroneous in its basic thesis. In the nineteenth and twentieth [39] centuries (to say nothing at all about earlier times) there is a whole series of declarations of the Roman authorities on faith which have meanwhile been shown to be erroneous or at least largely obsolete. Such progress in knowledge is absolutely necessary for the effectiveness of the Church's proclamation and simply cannot be conceived in practice without this sort of critical co-operation on the part of the theologians. It might indeed be said that such processes of revision have frequently taken too slow a course during the past hundred and fifty years, to the detriment of the Church, because theologians exercised their indispensable function too nervously and under the threat of the Church's disciplinary measures. With the increasingly rapid development and change of awareness in secular society today, these processes of revision can sometimes become more urgent and require more than formerly the honest and sincere work of theologians, even if this is wearisome and can at first expect little gratitude or recognition on the part of the Roman magisterium.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ARGUMENTATION

In these circumstances the theologian has the right and duty to examine the arguments contained in the decree and to assume that, if this examination produces a negative result, the basic thesis of the Roman Declaration can itself be questioned and even be impugned as erroneous. What then is the value of the arguments put forward in the second to the fourth section of the Roman Declaration? (As we said earlier, we are leaving aside the fifth and sixth sections of the Declaration, since this argument from the 'analogy of faith' is admitted there to be convincing only to someone who has accepted the basic thesis in virtue of the arguments in the second to the fourth section.) The essential argument of the Declaration

[1] Cf. J.Neuner/H.Roos, *Der Glaube in den Urkunden der Lehrverkündigung* (1971), nn.468-69.

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takes the lint that the practice of Jesus and the Apostles, which makes no suggestion of the ordination of women to the priesthood, cannot be explained in the light of the sociological and cultural situation at the time and therefore assumes an intention on the part of Jesus which is not historically and sociologically conditioned: that is, it holds for all times and must be respected faithfully by the Church at all times. This argument is clarified by a reference to the fact that Jesus (and, up to a point, also Paul) in his sociological and religious appraisal of women took up a position completely opposed to the depreciation of women at [40] the time and thus could have spoken out against the exclusion of women from positions of leadership in a secular or religious community, if he too had regarded this exclusion as caused merely by the sociological situation at the time. What must be said about these arguments?

Before reaching the crucial point of our own opinion after a proper critique of this argumentation, here are some brief preliminary observations. In the entire course of the argumentation it is never made sufficiently clear on whom the burden of proof really lies in the whole controversy. If the Declaration says, for example, that the opposite thesis is not and cannot be proved, it shifts the real burden of proof to its opponents. But is this really justified as long as the basic thesis of the Declaration has not been established as certain or (in other words) when at least the possibility must be envisaged of explaining the practice of Jesus and the Apostles simply by the sociological and cultural conditions of their time, particularly since the Declaration admits that some of Paul's ordinances on the behaviour of women are influenced by 'the customs of the period' and therefore 'no longer have a normative value'?

The argumentation of the Declaration is defective also in other ways. Thus the transition from the concept of the apostle and the Twelve to the concept of the priest (and bishop) in the Declaration is too simple to fit in with our present-day knowledge of the origins, structure and organization of the primitive Church. If we appreciate the difficulties created by these discoveries, which cannot be ignored, we may wonder whether it is possible to deduce from Jesus' choice of men for the college of the Twelve any definite and unambiguous conclusions with regard to the question of an ordinary, simple leader of the community and president of the eucharistic celebration in a particular congregation of a later period. The Declaration leaves out all the difficult questions about the concrete emergence of the Church and its origin from Jesus, although they are of the greatest importance for its theme.

It might also be asked whether, in view of the cultural and sociological situation at the time on the one hand and the 'immediate expectation' (generally admitted today as a fact) on the other, it is possible to look at all to Jesus and the Apostles for a plan in regard to the structure of the communities which (over and above what might be deduced for the Church from the event of salvation in Jesus' death and resurrection) could really be related to later times unambiguously and for ever.

Nor does the Declaration make use of a clear and comprehensive concept of the priestly ministry. In the fifth and sixth sections especially [41] the proper function of the priest seems to be restricted more or less to the sacramental power of consecration, so that we almost get the impression that the Declaration would be prepared to concede to women practically all ecclesiastical functions except this one (and 'the official and public proclamation of the message', which hardly seems consistent with Jesus' commission to the women – mentioned in the second section – 'to take the first paschal message to the Apostles themselves'). But there can be no doubt that such a narrowing down of the concept of 'priest' must rouse very serious dogmatic and particularly pastoral misgivings.

The Declaration admits that its arguments 'do not make the matter immediately obvious'. If it has been established that a particular statement is indeed part of the content of revelation, we certainly cannot expect the arguments to make this 'immediately obvious'. But what is the situation if such a statement has not been proved to be certainly contained in revelation, if in particular the question persists as to whether a long and undisputed practice of the Church

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(and the teaching implied in it) rests on a truly divine revelation or represents merely a human tradition, which can also exist for a long time and be undisputed in the Church and yet need not be revealed and can even be erroneous or possess no permanent normative value? In such cases it cannot simply be maintained that a theological argument does not need to be immediately obvious from the historical exegesis of the texts, even if it is admitted that the term 'obvious' is very ambiguous and that there are many varieties and degrees of 'obviousness'.

WAS THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS AND THE APOSTLES CULTURALLY AND SOCIOLOGICALLY CONDITIONED?

We come finally to the crucial point in the argumentation of the Roman Declaration. Once more a preliminary observation must be made. A practical rule of action can be culturally and sociologically conditioned and be open to change and actually changed as a result of a changed cultural and sociological situation and yet at an earlier stage may not only have existed and been sociologically recognized, but may even have been morally binding. Such a situation and the rules derived from it may have been 'objectively' opposed to more general and more fundamental moral principles also recognized and affirmed at the time, but not then seen or only slowly seen clearly as opposed in the consciousness of a [42] society. As a result the more general principle only slowly changed the situation in that society and made it aware of a new and more concrete rule of action, although previously a contrary concrete rule not only existed in fact but was at the time morally permitted or even binding, since it was impossible or only possible by immoral violence to change the sociological situation from which it had emerged.

This fundamental consideration certainly does not need to be supported by examples or substantiated in principle. If someone wants examples, he has only to recall the institution of slavery during the first Christian centuries, polygamy in the Old Testament, the laws of war in the Old Testament, or the Church's prohibition of usury until well into the eighteenth century. In all these cases it is decisively important to observe that a concrete rule of action coexisted with more general moral principles, while being really 'in the abstract' opposed to the latter, although this basic contradiction could not in practice be perceived in the earlier sociological situation. Hence this particular rule of action could be permitted, *rebus sic stantibus*, and even be required, thus slowing down change in the situation on which it depended.

If we keep in mind these assumptions – obvious enough in themselves – then we can say confidently and with adequately certain historical knowledge that in the cultural and sociological situation at the time Jesus and the early Church could not in practice have considered and still less set up any female congregational leaders or presidents of the eucharistic celebration; their procedure could even have been morally required in the light of the existing concrete situation; in their concrete situation they simply did not need to observe and could not have observed a contradiction 'as such' and in the abstract between their general appreciation of woman (in which they dissociated themselves from the mentality of their time) and their concrete practice with the concrete rules that this implied, any more than Jesus or Paul could have been expected to notice explicitly the contradiction between their fundamental appreciation of human dignity and the acceptance of slavery as it existed at the time and still less to attempt expressly to oppose and to abolish this slavery.

The practical existence of a situation causing and explaining all this is not disproved by pointing to the fact that even under these conditions there were marginal phenomena which were really opposed to the cultural and sociological situation as a whole, since such

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unnoticed and in the last resort unnoticeable contradictions are an essential part of human existence and of the continual change in the course of history. But [43] Judaism in Jesus' time (as is clearly noticeable still in Paul's writings) was based on a male domination so much taken for granted that it is quite impossible to think that Jesus and his Apostles (and with them their Hellenistic congregations under the influence of Judaism) could have abolished or even have been permitted to abolish this male preponderance in their congregations, despite the more fundamental and more general recognition of the equal dignity and equal rights of women which they themselves were bringing about in the religious sphere and – up to a point – even within the dimension of secular society.

At the same time the fact should not be overlooked that, if its basic thesis is not assumed as *a priori* certain, the burden of proof evidently lies with the Declaration and not with its opponents. In any case the cultural and sociological situation with regard to the position of women at the time of Jesus was such that there would have been considerable resistance (if nothing more) to the appointment of women as leaders in the congregations. At the same time the question must be considered from the standpoint of leadership in the congregation and not from that of strictly sacramental powers, if we are not *a priori* to interpret the primitive Church quite unhistorically while overlooking the fact that there is no immediate evidence of a special power over the Eucharist anywhere in the New Testament. If then in any case there are cultural and sociological reasons for not making a woman leader of the congregation, it ought to be clearly proved that these reasons are not of themselves sufficient to explain the attitude of Jesus and the Apostles. But the Declaration makes no attempt to provide such a proof.

Moreover, if it is assumed that Jesus and the Apostles had different and more substantial reasons for their action than the existing cultural and sociological situation, then it should be explained more precisely and in detail in what these other reasons consist; otherwise their attitude would appear to be based on an arbitrary decision. But in this respect too the Declaration is completely silent. The mere fact that Jesus was of the male sex is no answer here, since it is not clear that a person acting with Christ's mandate and in that sense (but not otherwise) *in persona Christi* must at the same time represent Christ precisely in his *maleness*. But if we were to appeal to the 'divine order of creation' in order to find and try to develop such reasons, then it would certainly be difficult (as is evident from the mistaken arguments of the Fathers of the Church and the medieval theologians) to avoid appealing to an anthropology which [44] would again threaten what the Declaration recognizes as the equal dignity and equal rights of woman.

It is not possible at this point to set out in detail the historical material explaining why Jesus and the Apostles in their concrete cultural and sociological milieu could not (without attempting what was impossible at the time) have thought of appointing women to be properly speaking leaders of the congregation or to preside at the Eucharist or even why nothing of this kind could have emerged in that situation as a serious possibility; why the assumption of such an outlook on their part would be like expecting them expressly to oppose the institution of slavery at the time or at least to abolish it among Christians, merely because they were convinced of the fundamental equality and dignity of all men. For the historical material in general the reader must be referred to the specialist works of reference. For the non-specialist the material (including additional literature) presented and evaluated by Haye van der Meer in his book *Priestertum der Frau?*[2] is still adequate.

If in scrutinizing and evaluating this historical material we must differentiate between the Jewish and the Hellenistic milieu (on which the Declaration insists), this distinction in the last

[2] Freiburg 1969. ET: *Women Priests in the Catholic Church? A Theological-Historical Investigation*, trans. Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler (Philadelphia 1973).

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resort is of little importance for our question, since the structure of a Hellenistic Christian community was considerably influenced by primitive Jewish Christianity and since there was serious discrimination against women also in the Hellenistic milieu; the existence of priestesses in some of the cults of pagan deities (cults which were deeply loathed anyway by Christians under the influence of Judaism) made no difference to this. What otherwise is the explanation of the fact that the Fathers of the Church (and also the medieval theologians) under the influence of Hellenistic society and philosophy enormously depreciated woman – as the Declaration itself admits, albeit somewhat tentatively – and that they brought forward largely these (and not other) reasons against the admission of women to the priesthood, if they had other and better reasons based on the gospel? Once again the historical material will not and cannot be set out here.

If however the assumptions stated above and the methodical considerations likewise merely indicated can be recognized, then the conclusion seems inescapable that the attitude of Jesus and his Apostles is sufficiently [45] explained by the cultural and sociological milieu in which they acted and had to act as they did, while their behaviour did not need to have a normative significance for all times – that is, for the time when this cultural and social milieu had been substantially changed. It does not seem to be proved that the actual behaviour of Jesus and the Apostles implies a norm of divine revelation in the strict sense of the term. This practice (even if it existed for a long time and without being questioned) can certainly be understood as 'human' tradition like other traditions in the Church which were once unquestioned, had existed for a long time and nevertheless became obsolete as a result of a sociological and cultural change.

THE DISCUSSION MUST CONTINUE

The theologian is now faced with a Declaration of the Roman magisterium, authentic but open to revision and reform, which he must treat with respect while having the right and duty to consider it critically. To some theologians at least and perhaps to many such a critical examination seems to show that the arguments of the Declaration are not adequate. Hence all that we can say is that the discussion may and must continue on the problem at issue even after this Declaration; the discussion is not yet at an end and it cannot consist merely in a defence of the basic thesis and arguments of the Declaration. If this is the state of affairs, then the discussion must no longer be centred merely on the dogmatic question in the strict sense, whether in the attitude of Jesus and the Apostles there is or is not implied a doctrine of revelation properly so called.

The discussion must and can be extended again to all the aspects and questions which have been more explicitly or freshly involved in the theological discussion of the last decades. These include questions about the sociological emancipation of woman in theory and practice, questions about the consequences of woman's sociological emancipation in the life of the Church (questions which are there anyway), questions about overcoming discrimination against women in the Church (a discrimination which is still far from being eliminated, even if we disregard our main theme); questions about the authentic and integral essential image of the priest, which cannot be restricted to his purely sacramental power; questions about present-day requirements for the structure of a Christian congregation and about the function of women in the Church [46] as determined by that structure; questions about the concrete methods and measures by which the discrimination against women in Church and society persisting before and after merely theoretical ideals can be effectively overcome in life and in society and about the different requirements in different cultural groups; questions about ways and means of educating and changing the consciousness of the

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Church as a whole, where the causes of such a change of consciousness are to be found and what are the factors preventing it, how and in what form due consideration can and must be given – in accordance with Paul's teaching – to the 'weakness' of this consciousness in many members and parts of the Church (a matter which is of great importance also for our main question); questions of principle finally about methods, how in fact the essential problem that occupies us here must be realistically tackled and surmounted (questions which are still far from finding a clear and generally accepted solution in detail, since we really have no clear answer, for example, to the problem of how to distinguish in principle between a 'divine' tradition and a generally and long-enduring 'human' tradition).

Our main problem ought to be set against the background of all the questions and of the answers to them, if we are to hope for an answer to it in the foreseeable future: an answer on which believers in the Church and the magisterium in Rome can be in complete agreement in theory and practice. Despite its argumentation, theology also is always and simply cannot fail to be historically conditioned and dependent on the pre-scientific milieu, on cultural and sociological preconceptions, attitudes and experiences of life, on the ethos of a society and its life-style. These assumptions can sometimes be very variable, but cannot be changed merely by theoretical scientific reflection, but in the last resort only by life and history in freedom, action and decision.

If in this way the total situation of woman in the society and also in the Church of the immediate future is everywhere further changed, if defenders and opponents of the Declaration work for it, since such a common effort is possible and necessary and since the still persisting discriminations against women in the Church are admitted by both sides, then the common effort can bring about that cultural and religious situation in which the problem of the Declaration still remaining but at present insoluble in practice in the Church can be left to await a solution acceptable *to all sides*. In other words, when woman has acquired practically and institutionally in the Church that importance which as such she ought to have, which this Declaration also concedes to her in practice [47] but which in fact she does not yet possess, then only are the vital presuppositions present for a solution satisfying to all sides of the main problem which occupied us here. Then we can and must wait patiently to see how the solution turns out.

This of course is not to say that until then a moratorium must be declared in theology. Theology ought even now to continue its reflections, since this effort too can and must help to bring about that mental and religious outlook which is a necessary presupposition of a generally accepted solution of the problem. The opponents of the Roman Declaration will of course even now think and hope that a development will lead to a clarification of the Church's sense of faith which will prove them right; they will regard such a development as analogous to that which led from Gregory XVI and from Pius IX's Syllabus to the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the Declaration on Religious Freedom at the last council. But, as we said, we can wait for all this with patience and confidence. Nevertheless, too many demands must not be imposed on this patience, for time presses and we cannot wait again for a hundred years for an analogous development without detriment to the Church.

The Roman Declaration says that in this question the Church must remain faithful to Jesus Christ. This is of course true in principle. But what fidelity means in connection with this problem remains an open question. Consequently the discussion must continue. Cautiously, with mutual respect, critical of bad arguments on both sides, critical of irrelevant emotionalism expressly or tacitly influencing both sides, but also with that courage for historical change which is part of the fidelity which the Church owes to its Lord.

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[49]

PART THREE

Life in the Church

[51]

4

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL

So many obscure questions are implicit in this theme, its scope as such is so wide, that I must from the outset issue a warning and offer an apology for the fact that my treatment of it is very fragmentary and my selection of the points it offers for reflection and discussion very arbitrary. For what is freedom? Does anything like this exist at all? Is freedom not a lovely mirage hovering behind genetic, psychological and sociological determinisms and constraints? How are we to define philosophically the concept of freedom? How are we to make clear the transcendental necessity compelling man, despite the sheer factuality of his existence, to see himself as a subject of freedom, even though his reflection never enables him adequately to distinguish in his concrete action between the consequences of the factors determining his existence and the inescapable and inalienable consequences of his freedom. What are we supposed to be talking about when we use this term 'freedom'? About freedom and the scope for freedom in a society, despite and as opposed to its power-structures, freedom of the subject as such against internal constraints and overpowering forces in his own nature with all its strata, the unity and distinction between these two freedoms? What is meant by that freedom in Paul's sense which is the essence and peculiarity of redemption, justification and grace? What is the relationship of this freedom as eschatological possession of salvation to man's freedoms from internal and external constraints and from alienations? What is the relationship between the will and hope for eschatological freedom, which is ultimately God's gift, and the will and hope for a greater socio-political freedom?

What has the Church to do with all this? Is it the mediator of that [52] eschatological freedom which comes from God in the liberation by grace from all 'authorities and powers' enslaving man externally and, even more, internally? Has the Church – which of course is also a society – from its very nature a mandate to promote greater freedom within itself?[1] Is it not itself also continually in danger of becoming enslaved to that very thing which it is its proper mandate to oppose. Why in its proclamation and theology is there so comparatively little talk of *that* freedom which is notably at the heart of Pauline teaching on salvation? Why is the proclamation of the law so far from being clearly the proclamation of the freedom of the Christian, aware in his immediacy to God of only one 'law': that is, the law of freedom in the Spirit of God himself who is love? What is the Church's task in regard to all the aspirations and struggles of nations, of groups and individuals, for more freedom, emancipation, the abolition of illegitimate power-structures in the world? Has it any such task? How did it fulfil its task in the past? Did it betray this? What is the position today? The theme contains thousands of questions and those mentioned are certainly not all.

[1] Cf. also Karl Rahner, *Toleranz in der Kirche* (Freiburg 1977).

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I

The first thing I want to say about this endless theme – and, however paradoxical it may sound, it amounts to a contribution of the Church to the freedom of the individual – is that Christian teaching as upheld by the Church holds, not that man is simply free but that real, true, total and definitive freedom consists in the eschatological possession of salvation itself which, although secretly effective in history, is the sheer gift of God bringing history to its end.

The normal adult human being has of course up to a point a psychological freedom of choice which in the last resort is not merely oriented to particular objects in his life but is identified with himself as one and whole and – through the transcendentality of this freedom of decision – places him beyond the particular deed and its individual objects in a free relationship to the ground of all reality and freedom, to God. However obscure in many respects the enigmas connected with this psychological freedom of choice may be, Christianity (at least Catholic Christianity) maintains firmly that it is the precondition of the salvation-event and of [53] man's final destiny: that is, it invites the individual always to allow for the fact that in the concrete course of his life he performs acts for which he can never entirely escape responsibility, even though reflection does not show him with absolute certainty what in his individual action is the result of his free decision and what is the result of the influence on him of already existing predetermining factors. But this freedom of choice – which can be realized at least by accepting or by protesting against the plain facts of his existence – does not itself simply make man free in the sense and in every respect in which he wants ultimately to be free or in the way freedom is promised him as definitive possession of salvation.

Creaturely freedom always starts out from internal (psychological) and external (historical and sociological) existing facts, always operates with existing material from which no further selection is made, and in this sense is always finite, limited and self-alienated. Subjectively infinite freedom is always restricted by the material on which it has to work. The individual (by what is in the last resort an act of self-deception) can regard his freedom as so much in harmony with the existing internal and external facts that he acquires a kind of philistine self-satisfaction and simply does not notice the hiatus between the subjectively infinite claim of freedom and the opportunities actually offered by the available material. For Christian anthropology however the repression of this unresolved hiatus in the last resort is not a laudable act of sober and unpretentious realism but the sin of a truly commonplace person renouncing his freedom's supreme claim to be infinite (explicitly or by repressing it), because he does not find any fulfilment immediately in himself or in the palpable and usable opportunities among the persons and things surrounding him.

The forthright realism of Christianity assures us that our freedom is finite, that the restrictedness and stubborn facts of the psychological, historical and sociological material of our freedom can never be abolished in the course of history, not even as a result of the greatest psychological and sociological changes for the better in our state of freedom; as long as our earthly history endures, we are always faced with the unresolved contradiction between the claim of our freedom and its actual opportunities; in this sense we are not free, our freedom can be liberated only by the act of God giving himself. This hard basic statement of Christian anthropology has a *dual* significance.

It disenchants man, who is always in danger of succumbing to the divine intoxication of his freedom's infinite claim, of thinking that it [54] needs only one or another of the practicable changes in his internal or sociological situation for him to be infinitely free. Christianity deprives man of his illusion that infinite freedom can be attained in the course of history

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itself, shows him that man's impiety and self-destructiveness in the truest and most immediate sense of these terms lead him to look for such Utopias; that, by the very fact of struggling, albeit legitimately, for greater scope for psychological and sociological freedom, man continually produces *new limitations* of his own or another's freedom; that no possible genetic, psychological or sociological manipulation can produce the absolutely free human being, since this very manipulation must inevitably start out from certain limited, existing facts and then in turn produce the actual conditions for the other person's freedom and which are rightly regarded by the latter as restrictions of his freedom.

This kind of disenchantment has a truly positive significance in man's struggle for more freedom, for greater scope for freedom for the individual, for more and better material to be placed at the disposal of the individual for his free self-realization. It cannot of course be denied that this disenchantment carries with it the danger and the temptation – realized often enough in the history of Christianity – of abandoning the struggle for greater freedom, since everything might be changed but not improved, since every struggle for greater freedom only leads again and again to new constraints and self-alienations. If this terrible danger to Christian teaching on the freedom which in history always remains finite and on the permanent hiatus between the infinite claim of the subject of freedom and the historically always merely finite opportunities for the realization of freedom must always be seen clearly and continually brought to mind afresh in face of the guilt of historical Christianity, then this sober realism will have at bottom a positive significance precisely for the struggle for greater freedom.

The person thus disenchanted is better protected against Utopias in the bad sense: that is, against those which are the result of an outrageous monomania and assert the impossible claim to construct concrete reality in the light of a single principle, thus ultimately having a destructive influence on man. This realistic outlook prevents us from simply sacrificing man today to man tomorrow, from seeing the present merely and monotonously as that which must be outdated as quickly as possible by a future. Such sobriety can prevent a person from 'enjoying' the good opportunities of the present time with what is really a bad conscience, too readily open to suggestion: a bad conscience, since the present opportunities [55] of freedom, being finite, derive their legitimacy *solely* from the fact that they can be surpassed and thus lead into a greater future. This Christian realism in estimating the actual opportunities of freedom has a further significance.

When a person does not succumb to an absolute banality of *carpe diem* in face of the finite scope of his freedom, he will not endure the unresolved hiatus between the absolute claim of freedom and its finite opportunities of realization within history unless he believes and hopes in what Christianity calls the eternal Kingdom of God: the realization of absolute freedom for the immediate 'possession' of God, which is approached throughout the course of history but actually attained only by the consummation and dissolution of history. But if someone does believe and hope, he is free here and now in a unique way in regard to the finite goods of freedom which are presented to him to possess and enjoy. Hoping for an absolute fulfilment, he can place himself at a distance from his finite present; he does not need to make this absolute. But, as a result of this very realism, he can approach more frankly and courageously even a *future* that is possible in this world; he can take the risk of giving up his experience and enjoyment of the present for the sake of a merely creatively surmised, almost utopian future more easily and unhesitatingly than if he were faced with the dilemma *either* of having to defend *unconditionally* a present that is finite *or* of simply failing in the end to seize on a future that is not attained or is again unmasked as nothing more than a different form of internal or external constraints and self-alienations. A hopeful faith in a consummation of freedom by God is also a risk, and indeed the supreme risk of which man is capable; but it is only this faith which frees man from the necessity of clinging to the illusion that the future

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which can be realized in this world will one day be the realm of absolute freedom.

Christian realism in face of the opportunities of freedom within history, rightly understood, does not paralyse man, forcing him to a passive acceptance of the present, to sterile conservatism, but gives him as a human being and a Christian the right to take a risk without the assurance of certain success, since success *and* failure are embraced together by the one promise of a definitive liberation of freedom for its immeasurable consummation. If Christianity and the Church thus proclaim realistically the impossibility of a consummation of freedom within history, this does not mean that they have set up any concrete programmes and directives as to how even in the present world man can always struggle [56] afresh to gain more scope for freedom in his interior and exterior existence while his history continues – which is certainly his duty – but they have given to man's freedom an infinite promise; this they give even to someone who perishes as a victim in this struggle within history; in an evenly balanced dialectic between present and future they protect the person who is rightly hungry for the future from what might be merely self-destructive Utopias. None of this of course means removing or minimizing the torment of individual historical decisions, the conflicts between concrete projects of an internal and external future of individuals and sociological groups, the harsh necessity of these conflicts and antagonisms; but for the individual all this struggle and all the risk is for a future which is always finite and uncertain, threatened by failure, but nevertheless enveloped by an ultimately ineffable peace, a future possessed by the person who knows that fidelity to conscience and unselfish service to others lead in the end to a fall into God's blessed freedom, whether this fall appears in the world to be victory or defeat. The Church's gospel of Christian realism is and remains the primary service that Christianity performs for the freedom of the individual and society.

II

Since this primary service belongs purely and simply to the nature of the gospel and the Church, I think that the Church has always provided it for man up to a point and in a variety of ways, often enough anonymously. That is not to deny of course that in its ministry and its people the Church has failed frequently and terribly to fulfil this task of promoting the freedom of the individual. Only too often, naively or culpably, it has certainly been associated with the powerful, presented its message as opium of the people, glorified in a conservative spirit the existing state of affairs which was not good and where freedom was lacking, and issued warnings against projects for the future which could have brought and often – contrary to its wishes and prognoses – did bring greater freedom. It is certainly therefore also the task of the Church honestly to admit the guilt it has incurred and in a spirit of self-criticism to ask how it might now and in the future better serve the individual's intramundane and sociological freedom. If raised here and now the question would have to be broken down into many individual questions and separate answers given to each of these.

[57] Conscious of the fact that we are making a very arbitrary selection, we shall attempt to provide two answers in particular. Without giving a more detailed or precise explanation, we start out from the assumption that the Catholic Church, despite the permanence of its ultimate nature and its ultimate sociological structure, is open in principle to very far-reaching changes in its concrete structures. In the light of this assumption, if the Church would cautiously and courageously carry out such structural changes, we think that these changes in its own structure could be useful for the freedom of the individual in his secular life and promote the individual's freedom in secular society.

The fact that people in the Church believe in the living Lord of all history and in what he has promised to be the blessed outcome of this history; that people in the Church hope against

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all the hopelessness which is repeatedly justified by history; that there is prayer in the Church; that the Church regards itself as responsible for the poor and oppressed, for those who have had a raw deal in history and for the dead; that it prevents history (as J. B. Metz puts it) from being merely a history of the victors and those who have got off lightly; that the Church always maintains a position in the world from which both the assured tradition and the enticing future can be realistically and critically questioned and which does not permit any tangible reality in history to pretend, either in theory or in practice, to be God: these and many other things in the Church's faith and life can also be of the greatest importance for secular society in the future as they were in the past, more important than *we here* can explain. But, since we are asking about the importance of *structural change* in the Church for secular society and for the freedom of the individual and not about the importance of the Church as such for the world, the limitation imposed on our reflections here is legitimate and necessary.

Two possible consequences of structural change in the Church will now be considered. They can only be very vaguely indicated. And the question largely remains obscure and uncertain whether the peculiarities of this structural change in the Church *can* really have consequences for secular society: that is, whether and how such changes can be transferred into the secular sphere and can instigate analogous structures in secular society. If something of this kind were possible, if these new structures – which as such should be produced in the Church in the light of the latter's minority status – could be reproduced analogously in secular society, if the minority status of the Church were to force it – in view of [58] its own needs – to form such structures *more rapidly* than is possible in secular society, then, despite the Church's minority status in a pluralist society, there might perhaps again come a time when the Church would not be trying to catch up with secular historical change but would be setting an example by going ahead of this. We certainly do not need to make our Christian faith and our membership of the Church dependent on *such* a hope, but neither should we *a priori* forbid this hope, as if it was certain that the Church's power to make history to a considerable extent in the present world had been clearly exhausted.

COMMON CONVICTIONS IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

In order to come to the *primary* contribution of the Church envisaged here, we may start at a point which at first sight seems to have little to do with our problem. I venture to suggest that a secular society together with its institutions, even though it regards itself as liberal and pluralistic, cannot manage or exist without a certain foundation of common convictions respected by all who belong to that society. I do not think that this basis of common convictions – which cannot either consist in the very obvious usefulness of certain rules of life and institutionalisms or be replaced by the sheer brute force of the state – can simply consist in an absolutely inexhaustible heritage of tradition from the past or be continually regenerated simply and solely from man's nature, without society itself having the task, duty and necessity of deliberately working with its *own* means on the maintenance, necessary regeneration and transformation of this foundation. In the light of the dignity of every human being, I am also sure that in principle *all* have the power and opportunity to undertake the task of preserving and bringing this foundation up to date, but in the concrete it must be undertaken mainly by those who actually exercise power – that is, by the state. At the same time I assume that state and society are never identical in the concrete and that such an identity would not even be desirable. Desirable though it may be to break down power-structures, to eliminate the constraints and self-alienation in which human beings are involved, I also assume – because of the impossibility of considering adequately all processes

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of decision in the individual and in society and the consequent impossibility for authority (as determining cause of the individual's scope for freedom prior to his consent) to give *adequately* clear expression in institutional [59] form to these processes of decision – that there will always be some who are more powerful and others less powerful in the state and therefore the task of preserving this foundation will lie with those who exercise power in a state and must be achieved by power.

In my opinion therefore the only question can be *how* the power of the state attempts concretely to obtain the necessary and continually freshly renewed regeneration of the foundation of common convictions and rules of life necessary to a society, while leaving as much scope as possible for freedom of opinion and freedom to shape one's own life. As can be seen at a glance anywhere in the world, without going into details here, this continually renewed attempt to establish the coexistence of freedom of opinion together with its public manifestation and concrete realization on the one hand and of the positive cultivation on the other of a common sociological basic conviction in the whole world, in communist and western (democratic or more or less authoritarian) societies and states, is a very difficult task and cannot be solved simply by a radical option for one side or the other. And, if we take seriously the historicity of all human truth, it is also obvious that it is impossible to find any formal principles which could simply be applied in order to solve the problem once and for all in a concrete society and to spare the latter the embarrassment of seeking, experimenting and struggling for an historical decision without a visible arbitrator. On the other hand, this does not mean that it is impossible to develop better models than those which previously existed to show how this continually renewed struggle between freedom of opinion and the necessity of a common 'ideology' of society (if the term is understood in a neutral sense) can be conducted with mutual respect and a balance – even though precarious and always merely temporary – be found between the two coexisting factors. It can be stated here without further arguments that such new models are necessary but largely lacking in secular society everywhere in the world.

In this respect the Church with its structures and structural changes might set an example but is not yet in a position to do so adequately, since it has not yet properly developed the models for the balance of authority and freedom in the internal life of the Church which its minority status requires it to provide. In the past the Church undoubtedly developed for the protection of its common beliefs authoritarian forms which are no longer effective today in view of its minority status and the impossibility of appealing to the 'secular arm', when the person against whose opinion the protest of the Church and its magisterium is directed accepts in [60] principle the Church's teaching authority. Even for authentic declarations of the magisterium a comparatively wide consensus in the Church's sense of faith and in the Church's theology is an assumption without which the magisterium cannot act legitimately at all and still less be really effective. With the present pluralism in theology, which can never be completely overcome, with the frequent absence of obviously common horizons of understanding, with historical or historicist reflection on the formerly wholly disregarded horizons of understanding, assumptions and their historical relativity, a statement of the Church's magisterium commonly recognized as binding on all and understood by all is no longer so easy. A statement of this kind, which the Church's magisterium finds it easy to make in an authentic but not defining declaration, will mostly not be very effectively binding or make a very effective impact on the actual awareness of the Church's members.

New definitions of the magisterium today however, as distinct from those of former times in a different mental climate and in a different climate of belief, presuppose so many conditions that are difficult to fulfil that definitions going beyond an emphatic repetition of older defined statements can be expected only rarely or not at all in the future. The historically considered or unconsidered variety of horizons of understanding which cannot be

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really synthesized in the concrete awareness of the individual or of the officials of the Church's magisterium, over and above the difficulties which have always existed, today create an increasingly disturbing question as to whether even the officially valid formulations of faith really express the same beliefs as those which are present in the awareness of the individual members of the Church and of the diverse groups in the Church. The doctrine of the hierarchy of truths in the Second Vatican Council and the ecumenical efforts to bring about a union of the Churches which will not involve the abandonment of diversity in their histories of faith also show that the uniformity of the sense of faith as conceived in the measures of the Church's magisterium in the past as its presupposition and task is not so easy to maintain and establish as it was once thought. In addition there are all the peculiarities of the human condition today for which the Church's magisterium must make allowances in a way different from that adopted in former times when the good faith of the individual believer or theologian apparently deviating from the Church's sense of faith was not taken for granted as it must be today in a society that proclaims freedom of conscience.

With what has just been said and much more that really ought to be [61] added, we do not mean of course that we in the Church know already *how today* as distinct from formerly the authority of the ecclesial community of the same faith and the authority of freedom must be made mutually compatible, what institutionalisms there ought to be in the Church today so that authority and the enduring importance of the magisterium can coexist in a positive (even though perhaps always somewhat strained) fashion with freedom of conscience, the further historical *development* of the Church's sense of faith – which cannot simply be controlled by the teaching office – with the legitimate freedom of theology and with the diversity of the development of the individual's sense of faith, which is not simply identical with the Church's sense of faith and which may nevertheless be publicly made known. Nor of course does what we have said mean that *secular* society must adopt the same style as that in which the *Church* in the future must overcome the difficulties involved in our question. For this, sociological and ecclesial awareness are too diverse in origin, content and goal. But, since the new problems arising here for the Church and for secular society to a large extent have a common cause, by working more quickly on this question and finding more quickly forms of institution to cope with the outstanding problems, the Church could also set an example for secular society as long as it did not relapse into a more or less medieval set-up but were to look for a way in which freedom of thought *and* the maintenance and further development of a common basic conviction, without which a society must break down, can coexist and exercise a vital influence on one another.

I shall not attempt to put forward any further considerations as to how in the Church a liberal, anti-authoritarian and yet effective function of the Church's magisterium could be conceived today or tomorrow. For this a long haul would be required; and, incidentally, it must also be remembered that the politically constituted secular society on the one hand and the Church within a pluralistic society on the other are distinguished by the fact that it is not possible to get out of the former while it is possible to leave the latter, resulting in a very complicated dialectic of a dual character with reference to strictness and mildness in interpreting the different requirements for membership of the one or the other society. For this question also a new ecclesiology needs to be developed with reference to an ecclesiological marginality – a state which is still mainly considered as that of the 'catechumen', which does not get us much further.

A theology of the coexistence of apparently merely logically inconsistent [62] propositions ought to be developed, so far as these exist on existentially and sociologically different planes and in this light are by no means actually 'incompatible'. So we might continue. But it is not possible now. All that can be said is that the Church ought to develop new ways of acting and new forms of institution for the coexistence in the Church of freedom of belief and a

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commonly binding profession of faith; since such a development can be more rapid (if we want it to be), the Church could set an example up to a point for the solution of an analogous problem of modern society, which is more or less helpless in face of the dilemma between an ideology of society and the state imposed by authority and an increasingly rapid disappearance of common basic convictions without which society cannot exist except by being turned into anarchy or being placed under the tyranny of an enforced ideology.

THE CHURCH AS MINORITY IN SOCIETY

In a minority situation in which neither the Church itself nor its ministry is supported by the power of the secular society, it is clear that the groups freely emerging at the base must and will acquire quite a new importance for the Church as such and also for its ministry and for the effectiveness of the latter. Of course we ought now to explain more precisely what this means, how initiatives for such free activity from the base were developed at Vatican II, what trends exist for a further development of these initiatives, how greatly such efforts have been frustrated since the council, whether and under what conditions and assumptions these more personal basic communities can be regarded as basic cells of the Church today, how they are related to traditional parishes, what new image of the priest and his function can and must be derived from them. And so on. We cannot go into all these things here. But, in this minority situation in which the Church is no longer propped up by secular sociological powers, it is obvious that it can be seen increasingly only as a Church from below and no longer (from the sociological standpoint) as a Church *facing* its people, that relations between base and ministry will and must be given a form very different from that to which we have been accustomed. Similarly structures and institutions must be changed.

It seems to me however that an analogous problem exists in secular society. Whether it is a question of western democracies with their very diverse interpretations of the term ‘democracy’ or of socialist countries [63] with their very diverse forms of party-oligarchies, everywhere in the world the relationship between the mass, the base, the people, on the one hand, and the elitist controlling bodies on the other seems to be disturbed. The distance between the two sides seems to be too great; parliamentary representative democracy is losing respect and not infrequently gives the impression that it is merely a *façade* behind which other forces and agencies exercise uncontrolled power, the *identity of* these small and mostly anonymous groups holding power being *in the last resort* irrelevant. And if in socialist countries the people is supposed to be the active carrier of the economy and the state itself, here too – as a result of the various attempts to find really genuinely practicable models – it can be seen that the basic *problem* remains the same: how – that is, on what principles and with what technical means – the enormous mass of a people, educated up to a point and consequently not to be kept in a state of tutelage, can be brought into closer contact with the indispensable machinery of the higher functionaries so that a decision by the people itself becomes possible. In this matter also situation, task and means are quite certainly very different in the Church and in secular society. But the active participation from below on the part of the base in the decisions of the controlling powers represents a problem common to Church and society. There is a search for new forms and structures for this participation; even in the West we cannot assume that everything is clear in regard to this question and that we must merely be loyal to the democratic constitution or shape one in a purer form.

Might not the Church in its own sphere develop a model solution to this problem which could then be helpful to those trying to cope with the same problem in the secular sphere? Long ago it was said: ‘See how these Christians love one another.’ Could we hope that one day people might say: ‘See how they really live *with* one another in *freedom* and with as few

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constraints as possible'? All this is of course very vague and the hope just expressed is consequently very utopian, particularly since there is still scarcely any understanding or desire in the Church for such far-reaching structural changes and since such an attitude will presumably become more obvious and inescapable only when the Church and its ministry are made more generally aware of the minority status of the Church and its inexorable consequences. But might not the Church's sense of responsibility for secular society, proclaimed afresh at Vatican II, permit it to become more clearly aware of its duty and more determined so to shape its own structures for the relationship between base [64] and ministry that they will provide a valuable example also for secular society and for the realization of the freedom of the individual; that the old models will not continue to be the basis of human life together in the Church long after they have been abandoned as obsolete in secular society?

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[65]

5

THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH'S DEVELOPMENT WORK

On the theme here presented for our reflections, as it is expressed in the title, from the very nature of the case, more could and really should be said and said more precisely than is possible in these few pages. With the reservation, then, that much that is important and perhaps more fundamental is being disregarded, we may put forward here some reflections on the question why even apparently secular development aid is one of the tasks which the Church by its very nature must undertake, although of course development aid is never a task and obligation for the Church (for its authority and its people) alone. But at this very point the question arises: why must the Church *also* be concerned with development aid if other sociological agencies and authorities are mainly bound to do the same thing? The question becomes even more difficult when we recall the fact that the Church can have and will have an ultimate – its own specific – motivation for such a task, but evidently may not regard the latter merely as a means to an end (openly or tacitly), as a means to those tasks and ends at which it aims by its very nature: that is, it must not see and utilize development aid as publicity material and as a way of entry for the evangelization and Christianization of the peoples, as a superficial reading, for instance, of the Decree of Vatican II on missionary activity might suggest.[1] In its radical form therefore the question is obviously: How can a task be that of the Church as such and at the same time remain within what seems to be essentially a wholly secular sphere?

Although it seems to hold also for other activities which the Church [66] still undertakes today, this idea seems to contradict *a priori* that distinction, which has become increasingly clear in recent centuries and has been increasingly accepted unreservedly by the Church, between the religious sphere properly so called, for which the Church is responsible, and the secular sphere, for which secular society has a more or less independent responsibility. In raising this question we assume that development aid is really a genuine task for the Church and not merely undertaken in a subsidiary fashion when those who are properly called to the work do not sufficiently match up to their task and responsibility. In answering this question we assume moreover that a task which is that of churchgoing Christians is also that of the Church as such (to some extent and in some way), even though this assumption leaves many questions still open and many distinctions disregarded which should be considered if we regard the task of Christians as that of the Church. Despite the many problems it involves, this assumption can presumably be made here, since *Misereor*[*] – of its nature and despite its more or less official ecclesiastical character – is based, at least for its effectiveness, on the free will of individual Christians in the Church.

We shall try to answer the question from two aspects: that of love and that of hope, since the Church must be a community of love and the eschatological hope of the world.

Has there been sufficient and sufficiently radical reflection in the Church's traditional theology[2] on the words of Jesus making Christian existence and salvation consist in a duality

[1] Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes* 11-12.

[*] The fund-raising organization for overseas aid set up by the German Catholic bishops. It is wholly concerned with material help and has nothing to do with missionary activity. – Translator.

[2] On what follows see Karl Rahner, 'Über die Einheit von Gottes- und Nächstenliebe', in *Schriften zur Theologie,* vol. VI (Zurich 1965), pp. 277-98; ET 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God,' in *Theological Investigations,* vol. VI (Baltimore/London 1969), pp. 231-49.

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– not in itself bad – of love of God and love of neighbour which can be raised up to a higher unity, a duality in which, as a unity, the two commandments are equal to one another? Has this theology been sufficiently influenced and challenged to radical reflection by Paul's saying that whoever loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law? Has the theology of the unity of love of God and love of neighbour, which is put forward in a rudimentary form in the first letter of John, really become a theme which is squarely faced in traditional theology? Has there been sufficient reflection on the fact that, according [67] to Jesus' speech on the judgement in Matthew 25, men are judged – it might almost be said 'atheistically' – solely in the light of their attitude to their neighbour?

Imagine that these (and similar) texts, to which we have just referred, were not in sacred Scripture but had been formulated by a modern theologian. What would 'normal' theology then say? It would certainly say that love of neighbour is indeed a commandment of the infinite, holy God, the observance of which is binding on anyone who wants to love God with his whole heart and must therefore fulfil his commandments; the two precepts however cannot be placed alongside one another as of equal importance, but the second must be subsumed under the first as a simple and somewhat remote conclusion from it. This theology would say that love of neighbour is far from being the fulfilment of the whole law. It would say that it is possible to know for certain by reason and faith the existence of a personal God, although we cannot see him, and hence we can have a personal relationship with him that is not brought about by loving our neighbour whom we do see, even though this love of neighbour is a commandment of the same God and must be fulfilled. This theology would say that it is an unpardonable curtailment of the idea of the last judgement to suggest that man is not judged there according to the first tablet of the Law.

Of course it cannot be our task here to give an adequate answer exegetically, systematically and existentially-ontologically to the problems indicated. But evidently such an answer must bring out a greater unity and a clearer mutual integration of love of God and love of neighbour than is suggested in the theory of run-of-the-mill-theology as outlined above. Love of neighbour (we are only indicating a possible way towards a solution), when it reaches its full nature and its ultimate depths, must itself be explicitly or perhaps only unthematically and implicitly but nevertheless truly love of God; real love of God, which enables us to love and is productive of salvation, cannot be attained in a purely theoretical reflection (however important this may be), but only at the point where and when a person achieves that total self-realization and that radical self-transcendence which in fact is brought about only in love for our neighbour and there knows, at least unthematically, what is meant by God as condition of the possibility of such personal self-transcendence. If what we have just suggested is correct (as the presupposition of a full understanding of the words of Scripture to which we referred and whose importance must not be minimized), then we must [68] conclude that in the last resort (despite the distinction between love of God and love of neighbour and despite a categorial pluralism of the concrete realizations of love of neighbour in individual cases and in the different requirements of life and society) love of neighbour is not an individual task to be fulfilled within a particular *area* of human life, but a universal determinant of human existence as one and whole, a determinant which must expressly or tacitly affect and make its mark on all that is good and salvational in human life.

In the whole extent of categorial, historical and sociological life there are of course many realities and achievements which are different, do not mean the same, among which one can be present while the other is absent. But, as distinct from individual tasks and achievements in this historical and sociological spatiotemporality, that which really can and must be called love of neighbour in its basic nature is more deeply rooted in human existence and thus brings the totality of this existence and not merely one area of it to its true and full nature and in fact to God. From this standpoint (if what has been said were developed at greater length

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and more precisely substantiated) it could be made clear that in principle in human life there must always be a thematicized, explicitly religious attitude and worship of God, but that this does not mean that love of neighbour is merely a particular area of this human life, lying outside the field of man's relationship to God and thus linked with that relationship at most by a formally conceived precept of this God. When it reaches its real and full nature and is really selfless (not merely a reasonable compromise between egoisms), love of neighbour is itself a religious attitude, love of God, whether it explicitly thematizes this nature of its own or not.

From all this we may conclude on the other hand that explicitly denominational religion expressed in specific forms of worship (in the purity and radicalness in which it comes to us from revelation and grace) cannot be indifferent to its own self-realization precisely in love of neighbour, discovers itself in its full nature only if it abandons itself and loses itself up to a point to those dimensions of an apparently secular, worldly character in which the 'secular' and 'worldly' realizations of love of neighbour take place. To some extent love of God must forget itself in love of neighbour in order to reach its own full nature and simultaneously its ever freshly productive source. What at first sight is the secularity of love of neighbour is the source and sphere of realization of the love of God itself as such. The secular world exists where it is the sphere of [69] man's total self-realization (which it can and ultimately must be, since love of neighbour must be concretely realized in the 'world'), established as such by love of neighbour – which is love of God – since the latter needs this space in which love really seeks and finds the other person, without returning to itself or being absorbed in itself.

At this point two things must be remembered. Firstly, the Church as one and not merely as the external sum-total of individuals, and also as an historical and sociological factor, is the subject of love of God and neighbour. As one it must realize and attest love of neighbour in historical and sociological tangibility. It must do so always out of love of God, but truly out of self-forgetting love of neighbour, reaching and remaining with the other person and precisely in this way finding its own ground and its own potential, which is love of God: thus love of God and love of neighbour justify one another mutually in their distinction and unity. The secularity, the very worldliness of the world is consequently the field also of the self-realization of the Church as one, in so far as the latter is the sociologically constituted community of love. Secondly, love of neighbour – at least today in the present state of the world in which sociological structures are not merely simple facts, but also the object of man's freedom to plan – is not merely a private relationship between individuals within the static, existing structures of society. Love of neighbour has as its concrete object the changing of these sociological conditions under which love of neighbour as a private activity has to be practised. Changing society in order to provide more opportunities of love of neighbour, man's sociopolitical and socio-critical task, the struggle for greater freedom and justice: all these are requirements and tasks of love of neighbour, if the latter is understood rightly, in this rapidly changing but planned society. And thus – at least today – the love which the Church is expected to live and attest by its action has also this task. It shares the task, as we said at the very beginning, with other sociological groups and authorities, even though its relationship in the task with these other groups and authorities cannot be more precisely defined. But it cannot simply leave this task merely to other groups and authorities alone, since it would otherwise betray the love of neighbour which in fact it must itself practise and attest and which it cannot simply leave to others.

Misereor must be seen against this background of understanding (here of course merely indicated and needing more profound and precise expression in a variety of ways). At the same time – important as this [70] question is in itself – we are not concerned here with the constitution and the exact legal status of *Misereor*. Whether *Misereor* (although inaugurated and promoted by authority from above) is to be seen more as an institution formed and

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sustained from the base of the Church or as a really official ecclesiastical agency or as a mixture of the two possibilities, of which there are many examples in the Church, need not be considered here. For both authority and the people of the Church (also as such) are charged with the task of active love: a love that goes out to the other person in the 'world' and is not understood as a means to something else, however sublime; a love that carries with it a will to justice and, today at least, has also sociopolitical tasks; a love that carries with it as its condition and ultimate ground God's love for us as it became eschatologically irreversible and victorious in Jesus Christ and our love for God in Jesus Christ. But this is a love that can become so 'worldly' precisely because it has to be given to our neighbour purely and simply, and not only to those who belong to the household of the faith, because it must be extended as widely as God's love for man is itself extended. In a word, it is love seen from the Christian standpoint: not merely an inward disposition, but something that must be realized in action in which alone a person really gets away from himself. The peculiarity of *Misereor* is that it is a task – and one which is particularly urgent in the present world-situation – of that love which constitutes the Church and which in the last resort is the only total and comprehensive way of access to the knowledge of God and to his love.

We must consider *Misereor* from yet another aspect, in order to make clear up to a point at least its theological location. In the Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, of Vatican II, in n35, we read that lay-people ought to show themselves to be 'children of the promise, . . . strong in faith and *hope*', awaiting the glory to come. This hope (says the Council) they must not conceal in the depths of their hearts, but must express it in turning to God and in struggle 'even in the framework of secular life'. Christian hope of definitive freedom, reconciliation and glory, being an eschatological gift of God and not the autonomous work of man realizable in history, is often under suspicion as 'opium of the people', as destructive of the courage and action needed in the historical struggle in the present world for greater freedom and justice. There should really be no dispute about the fact that in practice Christian eschatological hope has often exercised an influence in this wrong direction. In this connection it would be possible to produce plenty of factual [71] evidence and even passages from the declarations of the magisterium. But in principle this is not and cannot be the situation, even though the ultimate proof of the opposite cannot be established by theoretical considerations or by referring back to the past history of the Church with its contributions to greater freedom and justice and emancipation, but only by the action of Christians *today* for a better world and its society. In principle it must be clear that the eschatological hope of Christians for a final reconciliation does not discourage or weaken the struggle for a better world here and now, but even endows that struggle with a final absoluteness, despite the relativity and provisional character of all that it can achieve in the course of history.

The eschatological hope of Christians awaits the consummation dissolving history as sovereign deed and gift of God himself, since this consummation in God's self-communication (called grace and glory) consists in an immediacy which alone can reconcile and dissolve the contradictions of this world. But this eschatological gift of God is addressed to man's act of freedom and can reach the latter only by producing this very act by its own power. This act of freedom, which accepts the gift of God, is realized however, not only in a dimension of interiority, of spirituality, of mysticism, of a quietist and pietist attitude, but in all the breadth and depth of human existence which (as indicated above) is essentially also love of neighbour. The other person, who is loved, is the sacrament in which we receive God. But this also means essentially that Christian hope is brought to its own nature and its own fullness by an intramundane hope. If this were not so, how could the Council say that the eschatological hope of Christians must also find expression 'in the framework of secular life', through the *vitae saecularis structurae*? If God's eternal life is to 'be hoped for in truth and action, this cannot come about by making absolute in practice the goods of this world as they

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exist in the concrete, while getting a kind of reassurance from the fact that eternal life is granted at the moment when the goods of this world and this life, once held absolutely firmly, are snatched away from us.

Christian hope can be what it must be as a genuine and total act of life only if it relativizes the goods we possess and is *thus* in truth and not merely in an optimal pious ideology a profession of faith in God's eternal life. This relativization however is not merely negative. It makes us free for other possibilities in the present world. It relativizes the here and now existing (sometimes positive) realities of life and society; it makes us free and open for future possibilities of history and society; it makes us free [72] for an unprejudiced approach to a still open, uncontrollable and even dangerous future; it is a critique and rejection of a false, merely static conservatism, defending only things as they exist, without courage for risk or for any experiment which cannot be adequately calculated at every turn. Anyone who really has a genuine eschatological hope and wants to realize it can do so only by acquiring a real receptivity for an open future in the present world. The Christian should really be the last person to cling absolutely to what remains of his present happiness, while explaining merely ideologically that in his pietist interiority he also has his mind on eternity. In order to hope for what is not yet possessed, it is necessary also to let go of what we possess here and now. This holds for the Christian in his hope also for the sociological dimensions in which his love and his hope must (also) be realized and brought home to themselves. Only someone who is prepared here for change and experiment – which, despite all necessary planning, can never be adequately calculated in advance – can be a hoping Christian, whose hope also decides his eternal salvation. In his hope the Christian rises above all attempts to establish autonomously as a secular Utopia the definitive kingdom of reconciliation and above a hardened conservatism clinging absolutely to present possessions, since he does not know (beyond what can clearly be calculated) whether something better is coming in the future.

Misereor then is an action and institution of Christian hope. *Misereor* demands aid which makes the helper poorer without promising him that in the long term (which he perhaps will not experience himself) his assistance will turn out to be clearly and certainly advantageous and useful to him. In the last resort *Misereor* does not appeal to a well-understood self-interest, but to the hope of eternal life which implies courage and power to give up intramundane values already possessed in an act of faith which by this very fact realizes and simultaneously attests hope in God himself. Development aid, regarded as a purely secular effort to provide economic assistance, might be no more than a desperate attempt to balance off a number of egoisms (perhaps justified in themselves) against each other. To this secular enterprise *Misereor* brings a surplus of courage for unselfish, self-risking adventure, without denying that the same kind of loving hope might also exist outside the Church as a sociological institution, among 'anonymous' Christians.

We have attempted to make clear the fact that, in the present-day unity of the world and in its sociological and economic situation, development [73] aid is required as task and duty also and particularly from the Church if the latter is really to be seen as the community of Christian love and hope. If it has such a task, then its activity enters into the secular field of the world. This must not be merely the disposition and action of individual Christians, but also the action of the Church as such, whether represented by its authority or by groups which expressly belong to it. We have thus touched on the problem why and how – despite the actual autonomy of the world with its own spheres of action – the Church as such can and must make its impact on this field and be made relevant within this dimension, without setting out the implications of the problem and still less producing a solution of it. But it seems that the theological problem *qua* theological must not necessarily be considered here. For if we do not adopt a totalitarian theory of the state, assigning to the latter alone all sociopolitical questions and tasks, but concede to other sociological groups their autonomous

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right to undertake such tasks in a free pluralist and democratic society, then we cannot deny the same right to the Church also in our society when it claims this in the light of its own self-understanding.

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[75]

PART FOUR

Future of the Church

[77]

6

BASIC THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

If we are to discuss here a basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, it is certainly appropriate to make a few preliminary remarks about the treatment of the essential theme. If we speak of a basic interpretation, we mean one which is not imposed on the Council from outside, but suggested by the Council itself, so that here basic nature and basic interpretation amount to the same thing. The assumption of this basic interpretation is of course the fact and the assurance that this Council, despite the historical contingencies involved in such an event, was not merely an arbitrary accumulation of individual events and decisions, but an internal essential coherence of incidents which was not produced merely by its formal juridical character. At the same time and in the last resort it is irrelevant how far, how clearly and how urgently the organizers of the Council had this basic conception explicitly in mind. If the meaning and nature of existentially important events in the life of an individual human being encompass more than this individual explicitly objectifies and aims at in his consciousness, this is even more true of important events in the history of the Church which to a specifically unique extent are under the direction of the Spirit of the Church. If we are able to say about John XXIII's explicit intentions in regard to the Council not much more than that this Pope regarded a council as appropriate and opportune even after Vatican I with its 'papalism' and that he wanted a 'pastoral' council, this does not mean that a basic theological conception of a deeper and more comprehensive kind was not possible.

We are looking for a basic *theological* interpretation, because – without being able here to enter more precisely into the problem of the [78] relationship between theology and church history – we think that church history is specifically distinct from secular history and in the last resort has to describe particularly the *history of the nature* of the Church, a nature which both supplies the hermeneutic principle of church history and is itself – as nature in history – revealed from this history in a mutual relationship of dependence.

Difficult as it may be to understand and although it can be expressed only in a rudimentary way, we must attempt to formulate in advance the basic idea with which the question raised is concerned, so that we do not lose sight of the coherence of the many individual observations and individual considerations. What we are saying is that the Second Vatican Council is the beginning of a tentative approach by the Church to the discovery and official realization of itself as *world-Church*. This thesis may seem exaggerated and it certainly needs to be explained much more precisely before it can be made to sound acceptable. It is of course also misleading if only because the Church was always *in potentia* world-Church and because the actualizing of this potentiality itself involved a long historical process of coming-to-be, the origins of which coincide with the beginning of European colonialism and of the modern world-mission of the Church from the sixteenth century, an actualizing which is not

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completely finished even today. But if we look at the macroscopic and official action of the Church and at the same time become more clearly aware that the concrete, real activity of the Church – despite the contradiction to its own nature involved in its attitude to the world outside Europe – was what we might venture to describe as that of an export firm, exporting to the whole world a European religion along with other elements of this supposedly superior culture and civilization, and not really attempting to change the commodity, then it seems appropriate and justified to regard Vatican II as the first great official event in which the Church came to be realized *as world*-Church.

There were of course precedents for this event: for example, the consecration of native bishops (but for the most part only in the present century), the discontinuance in missionary practice of Europeanisms which had been consolidated by Rome in the Eastern Rites controversy, and so on. The significance of these precedents is not to be concealed or minimized, but it must also be observed that they had no repercussions on the European – North American church until their influence began to be felt at Vatican II. At that point they could be seen simply as precedents for what we observed – albeit only rudimentarily and tentatively, [79] often overlaid by the former style of the European church – at Vatican II, when a world-Church began to act as such with all its parts exercising a reciprocal influence on one another.

In this general thesis on the basic conception of Vatican II, as already mentioned, it cannot be denied that the actualization of the Church's nature as world-Church was manifested at the Council only in a very rudimentary way and hesitatingly. Nor can it be concealed that there are movements in the opposite direction. Can we be certain, for instance, that the danger will be avoided in the coming years of the new canon law, now being prepared in Rome, emerging as a western canon law but being imposed on the world-Church in Latin America, Asia and Africa? Have not the Roman Congregations always had the mentality of a centralized bureaucracy, claiming to know what is best everywhere in the world for the service of the Kingdom of God and the salvation of souls and do not their decisions appear to be shockingly naive, based as they are on the assumption that the Roman or Italian mentality is the obvious standard of judgement? It must of course be admitted that the theoretical problems arising from the Europeanization of the Church are anything but clear. Must the marital morality of the Masai in East Africa be substantially no more than a repetition of the morality of European Christianity or would it not be possible for an African chief, even if he is a Christian, to live in the style of the Patriarch Abraham? Must the Eucharist be celebrated even in Alaska with wine from the grape? These and similar questions perhaps not infrequently present theoretical impediments to the actualization of the world-Church as such. Together with many other reasons they explain why the great official actualization of the world-Church as such was manifested only more or less rudimentarily and hesitantly at Vatican II. At the Mass before the individual sessions, in which the different rites of the Church were represented, there was still no African dancing to be seen.

Finally, in regard to the manifestation of the world-Church as such at the Council and afterwards, the fact cannot be overlooked that the individual cultures in the world, to which the Church must be culturally adapted in order to be a world-Church, are themselves involved today in change to an extent and at a speed hitherto unknown, so that it is not easy to say what really valuable material for the future the individual cultures might offer to enable this Church really to become a world-Church. Whatever may be the answer to this question, it cannot be denied that the Church was officially manifested at the highest level at [80] Vatican II for the first time *as world*-Church. In what follows this statement will be more concretely substantiated, considered and questioned in regard to future consequences.

In the first place the Council was for the first time in a formal way a Council of the world-Church as such. We need only compare it with Vatican I to see its uniqueness in the formal

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juridical sense. It is true that there were representatives of episcopal sees in Asia or Africa present at Vatican I. But these were missionary bishops of European or American origin. At that time there was not yet a native episcopate anywhere in the Church. But one appeared at Vatican II. Perhaps this was far from being proportionate to the representation from European episcopates. But it was there. These bishops did not come as individual, simple visitors, *ad limina* to give an account of their dioceses and to take home missionary alms; Vatican II really was a first assembly of the world-episcopate, not acting as an advisory body to the Pope, but with him and under him as itself the supreme teaching and decision-making authority in the Church. There really was a world-council with a world-episcopate such as had not hitherto existed and with its own autonomous function. The actual significance of the non-European part of this total episcopate may have been comparatively slight; the consequences of this conciliar event for the post-conciliar life of the Church may still be very limited, as the Roman synods of bishops have shown since then; none of this alters the essential fact that the Council made manifest and brought into activity a Church which was no longer the European church with its American areas of dissemination and its exports to Asia and Africa. Here, under the guise of a natural and gradual development, something like a qualitative leap took place, even though this new nature of a world-Church that is not only *in potentia* but also *in actu* is still largely obscured by the particular characteristics of the older European church.

The meaning of this leap to the world-Church can be seen more clearly in a glance at the decrees of this council. The Constitution on the Liturgy – as far as the use of the vernacular is concerned – may already be essentially obsolete; without it and without the Council the victory of the vernacular would not have been conceivable. Latin had its origins in secular life and there became the common standard language of educated people. It was *for this reason* and not really for any other that it became the language of the liturgy in the western Church and remained so long after it had lost its importance elsewhere. But, as the language of a small and particular cultural sphere, Latin could not be the language of a [81] world-Church. The victory of the vernacular languages in the Church's liturgy is a clear and urgent signal of the coming-to-be of a world-Church, with its particular churches each existing autarchically in its own cultural group, rooted in that culture and no longer exported from Europe. It is of course also the signal of all the new problems of a world-Church whose non-European particular churches – despite their bonds with Rome – can no longer be governed by Europe and the European mentality.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, in an act of the whole Church as such, the Church as a whole became expressly aware of its responsibility for the future history of mankind. Although in detail it is largely the expression of a European mentality, the fact remains that this Constitution reveals the presence of the Third World as part of the Church and as the object of the latter's responsibility. Although it is only with great difficulty and terribly slowly that European churchgoers are becoming aware of the Church's world-responsibility, this responsibility, political theology, can no longer be excluded from the consciousness of a world-Church.

As far as the dogmatic decrees of the Council – on the Church and on Divine Revelation – are concerned, much that is said there emerges from a specifically European mentality and the problems considered are mainly or solely relevant to a European theology. But it can be said that an effort has been made in these decrees to produce statements that are not much affected by the linguistic style of a neoscholastic theology and can be more easily made intelligible in the whole world. This becomes more obvious if we compare these texts with the corresponding late neoscholastic schemata which had been prepared in Rome before the Council. It is possible also to point to the fact that in the teaching on the episcopate as a whole and its function in the Church and on the importance of regional particular churches doctrinal assumptions were set up or elucidated which are fundamental to the Church's

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understanding of itself as world-Church. We may well think that the Constitution on revelation – which assumes that revelation begins in the Old Testament, with Abraham – does not exactly present a concept of 'revelation' which is easily accessible to African and Asian cultures, particularly since the millennia between 'primitive revelation' and Abraham remain unfilled.

We can however show that the Council in its teaching did two things which are of fundamental importance for a world-wide missionary activity. In the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, for the first time in the history of the Church's [82] teaching, the way was prepared for a positive appraisal of the great world-religions. Moreover, in the Constitution on the Church, in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity and in *Gaudium et Spes*, a salvific will of God – even after the Fall – is proclaimed as so universal and effective that it can be restricted only by a person's decision made with a bad conscience and at no other point; an opportunity of really salvific faith in revelation is admitted even outside Christian verbal revelation, which is such that – by comparison with earlier theology – basic assumptions for the world-Church's world-mission are created which had not previously existed. It is against this background that we can see the Declaration on Religious Freedom, in which the Church expressly renounces for all situations in the whole world the use of any powers in proclaiming its message that are not implied in the power of the gospel itself. Everyone knows what a great impediment the division of the Churches in Christendom is to the propagation of Christianity in the whole world, in what were known as the 'missionary countries'. That is why all ecumenical activities which the Council itself developed, approved or instigated, must be appreciated as contributions of the Council to Christianity's becoming a world-Church. In a word, at this Council, at least in a rudimentary way, the Church in its teaching began to act *as* a world-Church. We might say that, under the still largely existing phenotype of a European and North American Church, it made itself apparent as the genotype of a world-Church as such.

Perhaps however we can attempt to grasp this process of the coming-to-be of a world-Church at a somewhat deeper level. Those who are concerned with ecclesiastical historiography rightly struggle continually to find a theologically appropriate division of church history. At least it is clear that the division of European history into antiquity, Middle Ages and modern times is not a theologically satisfying scheme for church history. We are of course leaving aside here the question of a theologically appropriate subdivision of the great epochs of church history. Moreover, in regard to history in general and the history of the Church in particular, we are sure that there is not as much happening nor is it equally important in each individual section of history, measured as a period of time, while a comparatively short period of time can represent a great epoch in history. In the light of these assumptions, from the theological standpoint, we can say that there are three great epochs in church history, the third of which has only just begun and was authoritatively brought to notice at Vatican II:

[83]

1. The short period of Judaeo-Christianity;
2. The period of the Church in a particular cultural group, that of Hellenism and European culture and civilization;
3. The period in which the Church's living space is from the very outset the whole world.

These three periods, representing three essential basic situations of Christianity, of its proclamation and of the Church, distinct from each other, can of course for their own part be subdivided in a very far-reaching way: so, for instance, the second period by the caesurae marking the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages and the transition from medieval civilization at the time of European colonialism and of the Enlightenment; at the same time

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the causes of these caesurae – which are frequent and nevertheless connected with each other – would have to be made clear.

I think that this tripartite division of church history as such is theologically correct, even though the first period was very brief. This first period of Judaeo-Christianity (together with its own specific repercussions through Jewish proselytism and the phenomenon of the 'God-fearers', the *eusebomenoi*, known from Philo, the Acts of the Apostles and Jewish propaganda literature) derives its peculiarity and singularity from the fact that its mental climate is that of the fundamental Christian salvation-event as such – the death and resurrection of Jesus himself – and the proclamation of this event *within* its *own* historical situation (not in any other situation) is in fact proclamation in Israel and to Israel. Precisely because something like a mission to the Gentiles had become completely conceivable on this basis, it is clear that what Paul inaugurated – the transition from a Judaeo-Christianity to a Christianity of the Gentiles as such – is not something theologically obvious, but introduces a radically new period of church history, a Christianity that was not an export of Judaeo-Christianity to the Diaspora, but – despite its relatedness to the historical Jesus – a Christianity that grew out of the soil of paganism. I know that all this is vague and not very clear. But I think this is due in the last resort to the fact that the theological problems involved in this transition from Judaeo-Christianity to Gentile Christianity are not at all as simple as people think and that the difficulties have never been properly cleared up. Hence it is not by any means completely clear what Paul 'started' when he declared that circumcision and all that it involved was superfluous for non-Jews (and perhaps only for them).

[84] However this may be, if we want a more precise and truly theological division of church history up to now, it seems to me that the suggested tripartite division is the only right one. It means that the transition from one historical and theological situation into an essentially new one happened only once before in the history of Christianity and is now set to occur for the second time in the transition from the Christianity of Europe (with its American appendages) to an actual world-religion. We can risk making an assertion like this of course only if we regard the transition from the ancient Gentile Christianity of the Mediterranean world to the medieval and modern Christianity of Europe as less theologically incisive than the two caesurae with which we are concerned here. But this seems completely justified in view of the unity of the Roman Hellenistic Mediterranean culture and its transmission to the Germanic peoples – a unity that need not be examined more closely here.

If what has just been said is at all correct, two questions arise: firstly, in what precisely does the theological and not merely cultural-historical singularity of such a transition, or such a caesura, consist? and secondly, what follows if we apply the theology of this transition to the transition in which we are living today and for which Vatican II was a kind of official ecclesiastical beginning?

So far as the first question is concerned, we can at least say that it refers to an event that is theologically relevant and part of salvation-history, not merely relevant to the history of civilization. This, it seems to me, is obvious from Paul's writings. The abolition of circumcision for Gentile Christians, which he proclaimed – an abolition which Jesus certainly did not foresee and can certainly scarcely be conclusively deduced from his explicit proclamation and from the importance for salvation of his death and resurrection – is for Paul a principle that belongs to his gospel and in some sense a part of revelation; it is an interruption of a continuity of salvation-history which man cannot bring about on his own authority. In this way there arises the theological question properly so called – which even Paul did not sufficiently consider – of what could and must remain from the salvation-history and the Church of the Old Testament if this reality of circumcision, embracing for every Jew the ultimate substance of his existence as oriented to salvation, is abolished and yet –

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according to Paul – could and should remain for the Jewish Christians of his own time.[1] For him this transition really involved a caesura [85] in the original sense of the term. It should also be remembered that many other abrogations and interruptions in salvation history were linked with this caesura: the abolition of the Sabbath, the transference of the centre of the Church from Jerusalem to Rome, far-reaching modifications in moral teaching, the emergence of new canonical Scriptures with priority over the old, etc. For us here it is unimportant whether these drastic changes can be shown to have the support of Jesus or explicitly only that of Paul or whether they took place otherwise and elsewhere during the apostolic age. Since, even as distinct from patristic and medieval theology, there is no clear and explicitly considered theology of this caesura, of this new beginning of Christianity with Paul as its inaugurator, and since it will have to be worked out gradually only in a dialogue with the Synagogue of today, no one can blame me for not being able to say anything beyond the suggestions already made. And yet I would like to take the risk of putting forward the thesis that today we are for the first time living again in a period of a caesura like that involved in the transition from Judaeo-Christianity to Gentile Christianity.

Is it possible to put forward this thesis and in the light of it explain that Vatican II derives its importance from the fact that it proclaimed – even though only in a rudimentary and vague sort of fashion – a transition from the western Church to the world-Church similar in character to the transition which occurred for the first and only time when the Church ceased to be the Church of the Jews and became the Church of the Gentiles? Once again, I think that this question can be answered in the affirmative. Obviously this does not mean that these two caesurae and transitions are simply alike in their content. No historical event occurs twice. And if someone insists that the caesura inaugurated by Paul has peculiarities also in a formal-theological sense which are not repeated and that therefore the transition to a world-Church is not in every respect comparable to the transition from the Christianity of the Jewish Jesus to the Christianity of Paul, I shall certainly not contradict him. Neither do I doubt that such transitions occur for the most part without premeditation; they are not first thought out and planned in theological terms and only afterwards put into effect, but are realized more or less spontaneously out of a secret instinct of the Spirit and of grace, although what occurs at the same time by way of reflection is not to be despised or regarded as superfluous. With these reservations I would like to affirm and defend this thesis which I put forward.

First of all, I venture to assert that the difference between the historical [86] situation of Judaeo-Christianity and the situation into which Paul transplanted Christianity as in a radically new creation was not greater than the difference between European culture and the modern cultures of Asia and Africa as a whole to which Christianity has to be adapted, if it is really to become the world-Church it has begun to be. The modern difference may be concealed up to a point by the fact that a stratum of the rational-industrial culture of Europe and the USA lies above these other cultures, reducing them to the same level and so disguising the difference between our culture and the other cultures that it is possible to gain the impression that Christianity continues to reach any point in the whole world in the form of a commodity exported from the West and bringing with it the dubious blessings of the West. But, apart from the fact that there was a parallel to this in antiquity – the Diaspora of the Jews with their proselytism (and the phenomenon of the ‘God-fearers’ which alone made this possible) in the whole world – on the basis of which a Judaeo-Christianity might apparently have sent its exports all over the ancient world, the modern history of the missions shows with comparatively slight exceptions that Christianity as a western export has not in practice made any impact on the advanced civilizations of the East or in the world of Islam. It made no impact because it was western Christianity and sought to establish itself as such in

[1] Cf. Gal. 2:7-10; 1 Cor. 7:17-19; Acts 15:1-29; 21: 18-25.

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the rest of the world without the risk of a really new beginning, breaking with some of the continuities which had been taken for granted, as was shown in the various rites controversies, in the export of the Latin liturgical language into countries where Latin had never been an historical factor, in the way in which western, Roman law was exported as a matter of course in Canon Law, in the naive way in which it was taken for granted that the bourgeois morality of the West could be imposed in every detail on people of alien cultures, in the rejection of religious experiences of other cultures, etc. This, then, is the situation: either the Church sees and recognizes these essential differences of the other cultures, into which it has to enter as world-Church, and accepts with a Pauline boldness the necessary consequences of this recognition or it remains a western Church and thus in the last resort betrays the meaning of Vatican II.

We come to the second question. What is meant more concretely by making this claim for the significance of Vatican II? It is difficult to say. For one thing, the second caesura – to the world-Church – has or must of course have a material content quite different from that of the first, to the Gentile Church of antiquity and the Middle Ages. For another [87] thing, the question remains open and unclarified as to whether and how far the Church still retained in the post-apostolic age the creative potential and powers which it had in the period of its first coming-to-be, in apostolic times, and claimed in irreversible or apparently irreversible decisions constituting its concrete nature and going beyond what belonged to it as coming to it directly from Jesus the Risen One himself. The question remains open as to whether with such historical caesurae as this second one the Church can legitimately seize opportunities of which it never made use during its second great epoch, since it would have seemed pointless and therefore illegitimate to do so at the time. The third reason why it is difficult to explain more concretely the importance of the claim that Vatican II marks the transition to the world-Church is that, despite all modern futurology, no one can predict the secular future accurately enough to enable the Church to do justice to it in the new interpretation of its faith and its nature as world-Church. In this sense Vatican II of course provides only a very abstract and formal outline of the task facing the Church as world-Church. Nevertheless, the attempt must be made to say something about the image of the Church as world-Church, about the still outstanding task of the Church. This, I think, is part of the theme of our reflections, since a theological interpretation of the basic nature of Vatican II must be undertaken in the light of its *causa finalis*: that is, of the future of the Church to which this Council was committed.

First of all, we have the Christian proclamation. None of us can say how exactly, with what terminology, under what new aspects, the ancient message of Christianity must be proclaimed in the future in Asia, Africa, the Islamic regions, perhaps also in South America, in order to make this message really present everywhere in the world. The other peoples and cultures must slowly find this out for themselves, although of course we cannot stop at a formal declaration of the necessity of these other proclamations, nor can the latter be deduced from an analysis – itself problematic – of the special characteristics of these peoples. In this task, which is still to be accomplished and which properly speaking is not for us Europeans, it will be necessary to have recourse – while invoking the hierarchy of truths, mentioned by Vatican Il – to the basic substance of the Christian message and from that point in spontaneous creativity corresponding to the particular historical situation to formulate again the Church's faith as a whole.

This reduction of the Christian message to its ultimate basic substance [88] as a first step to a fresh statement of the whole content of faith is not easy; it will be necessary in this connection to take advantage of the efforts made in recent years to find basic formularies of faith; but it will also be necessary to raise the question hitherto scarcely considered as to whether there is a formal criterion in the light of which it can be decided what might and what might not be part originally of a supernatural revelation strictly so-called. If this task

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were fulfilled, there would then be a pluralism of proclamations or, better, the real pluralism which is much more significant than a pluralism of proclamations and theologies within the western Church. Since in principle all men can talk with all others and can reach agreement with one another, these plural proclamations would not simply be disparate factors. They could mutually criticize and enrich each other, but everyone of them would nevertheless have an historical individuality which in the last resort would be incommensurable with any other. Hence the question emerges as to how a unity of faith can be maintained and established together with a plurality of proclamations, how the Church's supreme authority in Rome could work towards this end, since it is obviously a task quite different from that undertaken hitherto by the Roman authorities on faith against a common European background of understanding.

It has frequently been observed that a similar pluralism of liturgies is required, which cannot consist merely in the use of different vernacular languages. Quite apart from the fact that genuine progress towards unity in the ecumenical question cannot otherwise be expected, it is really quite obvious that a considerable pluralism with reference to Canon Law (and also the rest of the Church's practice) must be developed in the larger particular churches. All these of course are formal, abstract statements which say little about the concrete shape of the future world-Church. But is it possible to say something more?

We have reached the conclusion. All our reflections were meant to deal with the question of how the Second Vatican Council is to be theologically interpreted. We tried to make clear why it was the event in church history in which the world-Church began hesitatingly to act as such. With a few problematical reflections we tried to make clear that the coming-to-be of the world-Church as such does not mean merely a quantitative augmentation of the earlier Church, but contains a theological caesura in church history which has not by any means been clearly considered, which can be compared perhaps only with the transition from Judaeo-Christianity to Gentile Christianity, the caesura which occupied [89] Paul, although we do not need to think that he had given adequate theological consideration to this transition of which he was the protagonist. This is all that really had to be said. Everything else has been examined only vaguely, perhaps developed very unsystematically and without clarity; problems scarcely considered in traditional theology have only been indicated here.

In closing, attention may be drawn to a peculiarity of Vatican II with which I have dealt elsewhere and into which I cannot now enter at greater length. At least in *Gaudium et Spes* the Council adopted spontaneously a mode of expression which had the character neither of dogmatic teaching valid for all time nor of canonical enactments, but was perhaps to be understood as the expression of 'instructions' or 'appeals' (presupposing a theory about official ecclesiastical statements which is not yet by any means explicit, since in this respect we are familiar only with *dogmatic* statements and official ecclesiastical *enactments* and orders). Will this new mode of expression acquire a greater importance in the future? Under what conditions can such instructions be made effective? These too are questions into which we cannot enter more closely here, although their investigation might help us from another angle to answer the question of the specifically theological character of this Council.

Finally there is something that can be expressly stated or repeated. Together with and under the Pope, the Council was the active subject of the supreme powers in the Church in whatever direction these powers are exercised. This is obvious, it was expressly taught, nor was it actually questioned by Paul VI. But how this supreme power, whose holders are the Pope 'alone' *and* the Council, can exist in and be exercised by two at least partially different subjects, has not become really clear in theory, nor is it clear in practice what is permanently relevant in the fact that the whole college of bishops with and under the Pope – but actually *with* the Pope – is the supreme collegial governing body of the Church. Up to now the permanent relevance of this principle of the collegial constitution of the Church has not been

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clear and was thrust into the background after the Council by Paul VI. Will John Paul II change anything in this respect? In a real world-Church something of the kind is necessary, since a world-Church simply cannot be ruled by that Roman centralism which was usual in the time of Pius XII.

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7

THE ABIDING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Has the Second Vatican Council a lasting significance? This is a question already being raised today, often with some embarrassment and a kind of resignation, by Christians to whom the Church still means something. Before attempting to answer this question, we may begin with a few preliminary observations.

At the moment when it occurs, every historical event is clouded over, accompanied by contradictory feelings, by a variety of expectations and apprehensions, often arbitrary and fanciful, and is contrary to the interpretation of contemporaries. All this of course fades very quickly, but has nothing to do with the question of the true significance of an historical event. Napoleon's significance is still a factor of our history even today, although explicitly it rouses the curiosity only of specialist historians and scarcely anyone else ever mentions it.

The question of the significance of a council can be raised with reference to the Church as a whole or it can be a question referring to an individual regional church. The two questions are not identical. If the question of the meaning of the Council for a particular regional church is one that frequently necessitates a negative answer, this may be sad for the regional church, but it is in no way prejudicial to the Church as a whole.

The answer to our basic question may be given in the indicative, but in the last resort it is an imperative, addressed to the Church of today and tomorrow. Such an imperative implies prognoses, expectations, apprehensions, which at present can only be somewhat uncertainly conjectured. Behind our basic question lies the conviction that this Council brought to the future Church new tasks and new challenges to which [91] reactions must still be expected. If this is so, then in any case the Council has a great importance, since a task is there which becomes a blessing or a judgement for us and for the future generation, depending on whether we cope with the task or not. If this Council presents us with a task of this kind (and I am sure it does), then the Council has a meaning. It then belongs not merely to the past, but is present now – as the herald of a task for the future. I would like to suggest the following thesis for the theological interpretation of the Council, in order to use it as the starting point for answering the essential question.

COUNCIL OF THE WORLD-CHURCH

Without disputing previous initiatives, the Council seems to me to be the first act in a history in which the world-Church first began to exist as such. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Church moved slowly and tentatively from being a potential to becoming an actual world-Church, from being a European and western Church with European exports to the whole world to becoming a world-Church which is present, albeit in very varied degrees of intensity, in the whole world and no longer merely as a European and North American export. Everywhere it has a native clergy, now aware of their autonomy and responsibility. This world-Church acted in the Council for the first time in historical clarity in the dimension of doctrine and law.

The Council was a council of the world-Church as such, even though it cannot be denied that the European and North American regional churches largely predominated. The simplest proof of this obvious and yet unprecedented and unique fact is that the responsibility for this Council – as distinct from all previous councils, not excepting Vatican I – was in the hands of

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an episcopate from the whole world and not merely, as at the First Vatican Council, an episcopate of European missionary bishops exported to the whole world.

This thesis is not really to be proved here, nor will its meaning be developed; it is meant only as an aid to answering our own question. That is to say, if we start out from this thesis, we do not need *a priori* to ask from a narrow intra-European standpoint what is there new that the Council has brought to us (in fact, a great deal), but we have to ask what is the permanent significance of this Council as a council of the world Church. It is then again obvious that this significance by way of repercussion [92] is also a significance for a European regional church and that questions may be raised also in this connection.

We may begin with the fact that the Council was the cause of the abolition of Latin as the common liturgical language. We can safely say that without the Council Latin would still be the liturgical language throughout the world. We need not be prophets to say that this change can never be reversed. Nor is this situation changed at all by the fact that, for the time being, the basic pattern set up in Rome for the regional vernacular liturgies is itself in Latin. In the light of the Church's unity and the theological continuity of Christian worship there will always be an ultimate liturgical unity behind the regional liturgies. But, as a result of the diversity of liturgical languages, there will be a necessary and irreversible process of development of a variety of liturgies, even though it is impossible to predict with certainty and accuracy the relationship between similarity and diversity of the regional liturgies. In the long run the liturgy of the Church as a whole will not simply be the liturgy of the Roman church in translation, but a unity in the variety of regional liturgies, each of which will have its own peculiar character which will not consist merely in its language.

If however the nature of the Church and consequently the nature and peculiar character of a regional church is also derived substantially from the liturgy in which it finds its supreme actualizations, then the result will be the formation of truly autonomous regional churches which are more than administrative districts of a totally and homogeneously organized state; these will emerge from the development of autonomous liturgies which began with the replacement of the Latin liturgical language by the national languages. Of course it will not be possible to think of these slowly emerging liturgies simply in the light of the pattern of the ancient Near East. The new liturgies do not need to deny their historical descent from the Roman liturgy. It cannot yet be predicted how great their differences will be.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD

In several decrees – among which the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) and the Declaration on Religious Freedom are especially important – the Church attempted to describe its fundamental relationship to the secular world, which arises [93] from its own nature and is not imposed on it by external circumstances. What was said there about renouncing external means of power in matters of religion, about the respect due even to an erroneous conscience, about the development of a legitimately secular world outside the Church's control, at first came up against a certain amount of stubborn resistance on the part of conservative groups at the Council and could be regarded as exceptional, as a statement forced by a secular world on the Church contrary to the latter's innermost feelings or as objectifications of the outlook of liberal-minded Christians but not as objectifications of Christianity itself.

If however we remember that, even where it has or could have a greater power in the secular sphere, the Church now must observe the restraint of which it spoke at the Council, since this is required by its very nature, although in its history this requirement was only too often disregarded on the plea that to do so was to render a service to God; if we remember

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also that the temptation may arise again and again, albeit in new forms and shapes, for the Church to abandon this restraint wholly or partially, but that in principle and generally the post-conciliar Church can no longer yield to this temptation, then it can be perceived that something permanent has come to be through the Council. Individual churches, individual bishops and militant laymen in particular may be repeatedly faced with the temptation to use means of power to impose on non-Christians what is really or supposedly true and helpful to salvation in Christianity and the Church, and here and there they will yield to it. But, while the power politicians (in the most sublime sense of the word) in the Church could act with a clear conscience in a clerical-fascist way before the Council, because – as they said – falsehood and evil have no rights and can at most be tactically tolerated, such trends can now be condemned and opposed in the name of Christianity itself. According to the decrees of the Council, it is no longer so easy to give a Christian *façade* to the restriction of freedom in the name of what is claimed to be alone good and right.

Of course that is not to say that these decrees of the Council can be interpreted only in this way. But the importance of this interpretation can be seen from a glance at the trends in modern Islamic states. There attempts are being made to set up an ecclesiastical polity or a theocracy in which the Koran is the basic law of the state and twenty strokes of the whip is the punishment for not fasting during the month of Ramadan. Are we as Christians merely too sluggish or too cowardly to attempt [94] something of the kind in our own milieu? Would we do it if we could? Or do we refrain from such religious power-politics as a matter of principle, even though it might still be possible, at least in small doses.

In this respect too the Second Vatican Council is still relevant and sets us a task. As the Council says, for the sake of the common weal, it will never be possible to do without force and power; we Christians are under no obligation here to chase after unreal Utopias. But in principle the Church at the Council surrendered a good deal of power that it had formerly assumed, whenever possible, as a matter of course. At this point a frontier has been crossed behind which it will never again be possible to return, even to a slight degree.

THEOLOGY OF THE COUNCIL

Theology at the Council was in a transitional situation that was difficult to define. On the one hand neoscholastic theology was taken for granted. It predominated to an almost alarming extent in the drafts prepared for the Council by the Roman commissions. In these, among other doctrines proposed for definition, were the descent of all human beings from a single couple (monogenism) and ‘limbo’ as the destiny of unbaptized children: theologoumena which today have almost entirely disappeared. At the Council Latin predominated as the language in which this neoscholastic theology was expressed, the New Testament being used as a collection of proof-texts while little or no attempt was made to bring a biblical theology to bear on the problems. This was one aspect of the Council’s theology. It should not however be inferred that this aspect was merely obscure and negative. On the contrary, one could wish that students of theology even today were a little more aware of the conceptual exactitude of neoscholasticism and of its orientation to declarations of the magisterium.

There was however another aspect of the Council’s theology. It was more biblical than neoscholasticism. It had proposed, a little timidly and cautiously, themes which had not been drawn simply from the repertoire of neoscholasticism. It exercised a moderating influence on any sort of theological exuberance (for example, in Mariology). As far as possible, it made an effort to take ecumenical needs into account: something which had not hitherto been taken for granted in Rome, not even under the level-headed and judicious Pius XI. It was convinced that it is possible [95] to say something that is theologically important without solemnly

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proclaiming it as a dogma. In the field of dogmatic theology properly so-called it brought more clearly to the fore of the Church's awareness a series of doctrines which in themselves were not really new or unprecedented or particularly controversial, but which had not previously been stated clearly enough to make an impact on the practical life of the Church. Among these may be mentioned the sacramentality of episcopal ordination, the doctrine of the episcopate as a whole (with and under the Pope) as the supreme ecclesiastical authority in regard to proclaiming the faith and in matters of law, the doctrine that the human authors of Scripture were not secretaries of the God who inspired them but truly human composers of these Scriptures, the cautious formulation of the inerrancy of Scripture, and many another theme that cannot be listed individually here.

The theology of the Council has two aspects. It is the theology of a transition. The question remains of course whether, how and how rapidly this theology will continue to develop after acquiring a certain official authorization at the Council. The theology acquired and proclaimed after the Council by the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith may perhaps still show some traces of the influence of conciliar theology, but it is too neoscholastic in its nervous opposition to modern theological experiments, too nervous and too little creative in regard to the questions with which modern theology is occupied. The theology of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith is a defensive theology, warning and prohibiting, but not really succeeding in justifying its prohibitions and warnings (which, as such, are perhaps not always unjustified or superfluous) in the light of a living and broad coherence of faith as a whole, in a way that renders them intelligible to anyone who is prepared to think and live by this totality of faith. But the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith need not remain for ever as it is now and it will not be able to lead back the theology of the Church as a whole behind the frontier crossed at the Council, eyen though the crossing was more or less unpremeditated. Of course only tasks and hopes can be formulated here and no prophecies can be made, particularly since signs of fatigue can be detected in the theology of the last ten years: an escape into pastoral studies and religious educational theory or to a false anthropocentrism which closes man up in himself.

Theology however will go on living, renewing continually its strength and vitality. Corresponding to the Council itself, it will become a world-theology: [96] that is, it will exist in the non-European, non-North American countries, but no longer merely as an export from the West. Latin America has already staked its claim to a theology of its own. 'Theology of Liberation' is not the only title that might be given to such an autonomous Latin American theology. Perhaps Africa also and the Far East will soon develop theologies of a specific character as a result of coming to terms creatively with their own cultures. That however is no reason why we in the West should abandon our own efforts on these lines.

It is not as if the theology of the West no longer had any function, and not only because theology necessarily has a function as long as history continues and as long therefore as new situations continue to emerge and to require a new proclamation of the Christian faith. Even today the theology of the West has a quite incalculable back-log to make up. It has to be a missionary theology; it cannot think and speak merely in the assured, traditional forms, addressing those who still feel at home in Christianity and in the Church; it must direct its thinking to the others to whom, for a variety of reasons, Christianity has become something alien. At every step, then, it must be dogmatic and fundamental theology in one. In the West it could certainly accomplish some preliminary work for the theologies of the rest of the world, even though these are expected to be autonomous, since the West with its enlightenment and technological rationality is becoming increasingly involved in the destiny of the rest of the world.

It cannot be our task here to describe exactly this theology of the future, the demands on it, its novelty, and so on. It may however be said that the Council made a new start possible and

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legitimate. Because of the Council and after it, theology of itself no longer presents the appearance of a monotonous neoscholasticism intended to be acceptable in the whole world. Neither is it any longer the case that every more intelligent candidate for the priesthood and the episcopal office, coming from what have been known as the missionary countries, must study in Rome and there be initiated with all the others into one and the same neoscholasticism. Theology will be everywhere in the world-Church and it will inevitably have to deal with the more urgent questions in any particular cultural group and which are not now the same everywhere. And the resultant, undeniable diversity will make its mark on the specific character of theology as a whole. It is obvious that the Roman magisterium will consequently have different tasks and have to develop modes of procedure other than those of the times when it had to address as a matter [97] of course a single cultural group. Whether this prospect is sufficiently clearly seen is another question.

ECUMENICAL CHANGE OF MIND

The Council represents a caesura in the history of the relations of the Catholic Church both with other Christian Churches and communities and with non-Christian world-religions. Of course the Church's sense of faith at all times implied convictions which in the last resort and in principle authorized the newly established relationship of the Catholic Church with other Christian Churches and communities and with the non-Christian religions. But formerly these convictions had no effect on this relationship. Non-Christians were regarded simply as living in the darkness of paganism and assured of salvation only through the preaching of the gospel. Non-Catholic Christendom was seen as a whole as a mass of heretics who were to be invited either in a friendly or threatening way to be converted and to return to the one true Catholic Church, without any thought that this return to unity might also carry with it important changes in the Catholic Church itself.

It is not at all easy to create a theological awareness of the caesura resulting from the Council. The theological reasons for the caesura were indeed present at an earlier stage: the assumption of God's universal salvific will in Christ, the doctrine of the opportunity of salvation without sacraments, of the implicit desire of membership of the Church, of the validity of baptism even outside the Catholic Church, and so on. These ever-present theological truisms might give the impression that nothing has really changed in the relationship between the Church and the rest of mankind. On the other hand, the Catholic theologian, as distinct from the disinterested non-theologian, cannot take the new closeness and the positive relationship between the Christian denominations and the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions to mean that there are no serious differences, divisions and tasks in the way of unification, as if the Catholic Church were simply any kind of structure resulting from historical chance, among the many others of more or less equal importance produced by the history of religion or the history of the Church. These two difficulties, to right and left, make it difficult to see the change that began with the Second Vatican Council and is now [98] irreversible. We shall try to throw some light on this change, even though this means perhaps saying too much for some and too little for others.

Christianity has always maintained that there is a true history of revelation and of faith in which what happens is not always the same but includes new, far-reaching changes. With the event of Jesus Christ of course the history of revelation reached an unsurpassable peak and an unparalleled irreversibility, which are not to be disguised or minimized here. But the Church's sense of faith does not cease to be an historical reality following a single track and with far-reaching caesurae, even though this is not made clear in the usual theory of the history of dogma, which has hitherto interpreted the development of dogma as a matter of

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logical deduction from the original data of revelation. If we ask what the Council has produced that is new in this one-track, irreversible progress, the main answer must be that at this Council, Catholic Christendom adopted expressly a different, a new attitude toward other Christians and their Churches and toward the non-Christian world-religions and ratified it as truly Christian.

The decisive thing about this ecumenical change of mind in the widest sense of the term lies in the fact that the greatness and radicality of this change are concealed and minimized in our ordinary consciousness by a modern, liberal and relativistic mentality which from the very outset regards the new ecumenical openness and readiness to learn as simply to be taken for granted. People like this see what happened in this respect at the Council as nothing really important or as merely obvious; the Council merely noted what had long been a matter of course outside a clerical-ecclesiastical ghetto. Nor can it be denied that, historically speaking, this modern liberalist mentality was in fact the climate in which alone the new ecumenical awareness could grow. Nevertheless, this awareness grew from genuinely Christian roots and is as such Christian. It definitively abandons an older mentality, which prevailed for fifteen hundred years, and remains obligatory for the future of the Church, like other great events in the history of faith.

All in all, without denying that the seeds of the future were already present in the past, it has to be said that, before the Council, the Catholic Church regarded the non-Roman Catholic Churches and communities as organizations of heretics, as societies of human beings differing from the old Church only by their errors and defects and needing to return to it, in order to find there the whole truth and fullness of Christianity. For the old view, the non-Christian religions as a whole were no more [99] than the terrible darkness of paganism, all that man in his sin and without grace could produce from his own resources by way of religion. That in an ecumenical unification the non-Catholic Churches might also bring with them to the one Church of the future a positive heritage from the history of Christianity in a form not known in the old Church; that the non-Christian religions even in their institutional form might exercise a positive salvific function for non-Christian humanity: none of this was actually explicit in the Church's awareness, but is present there now and can never again be excluded, since it is understood, not as a liberal mentality of modern times, but as an element of the Christian outlook as such.

Once again, no one who maintains in principle the radical differences between truth and error, who has recognized a true claim to absoluteness on the part of Christianity and the Church, who grants in principle to certain formulated insights and religious institutions a significance that has a part in deciding man's eternal destiny, can regard the caesura which came in with the Council as something to be taken for granted. He must recognize it as a fundamentally Christian event, as a victory of Christianity and not of liberalism. He must be prepared to put up with and work on all the theological problems involved in such a change – something that is not at all easy and will remain as a task for a long time.

OPTIMISM OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION

The implications of the above brief suggestions may be investigated more deeply and more radically, in order to see – despite the lack of interest of so many Christians – what this Council means for the Church. Even though the enormous variety of his theology means that we may be doing Augustine an injustice by the following description, even though the fact cannot be overlooked that the history of the Church's sense of faith has continued in many small steps from him to us, even though, as we have said, many historical causes have co-operated as catalysts in this change in the Church's sense of faith, nevertheless it can be said

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that Augustine inaugurated and taught to Christendom a view of world-history according to which – in the incomprehensibility of God's providence – world history remained the history of the *massa damnata* from which in the last resort, by a rarely granted grace of election, only a few were saved. For him the world was dark and only weakly illuminated by the light [100] of God's grace, a grace that can be seen by its rarity to be unmerited. Even though Augustine from time to time showed that he was aware of the presence in the Church of many who seemed to be outside it and vice-versa, nevertheless for him the group of those who are saved and enter into glory is more or less identical with the community of those who believe explicitly in Christianity and the Church. As a result of an incomprehensibly just judgement of God, the rest remain in the *massa damnata* of humanity, and on the whole the outcome of world-history is to be found in hell.

This pessimism of Augustine in regard to salvation was reconstructed and slowly transformed in an inexpressibly wearisome process in the Church's theoretical and existential consciousness. From the assumption that unbaptized children are tormented by the fires of hell to the abolition by modern theologians of limbo – although a draft prepared for the Council still tried to maintain this doctrine – was a very long way. But all these insights, acquired bit by bit, leading to an optimistic view of the prospect of salvation, a salvation which could be prevented only by the evil will of the individual and which might still be hoped for in virtue of the power of grace transforming this malice again into a free love of God, these insights the Church had not ratified and taught absolutely firmly before the Council.

The Council however says that even someone who regards himself as an atheist, if only he follows his conscience, is united to the paschal mystery of Christ; that every human being in a way known only to God is in touch with God's revelation and can really believe by an act that is salutary in a theological sense. There too it is said that even those who seek the unknown God in shadows and images are not far from the true God, who wills all men to be saved if they only strive to lead a righteous life. The Council also stressed the fact that the Church is not so much the community only of those who are saved as the sacramental primordial sign and germ-cell of salvation for the whole world.

Of course it could be said that this optimism of the Council in regard to universal salvation also remains hypothetical, that it could break down as a result of an individual's final culpability, that in this hypothetical way it was the normal teaching of the Church even before the Council. It is indeed true that even after the Council the Church has not proclaimed any doctrine of universal reconciliation (*apocatastasis*) and before it had also taught God's universal salvific will. But this preconciliar teaching was understood in a very abstract way and qualified with not [101] a few ifs and buts, which cannot be maintained after the Council. The Council tacitly buried the doctrine of 'limbo' for children dying before baptism; it boldly postulated a revelation properly so called, and consequently a real opportunity of faith even where the Christian message had not been proclaimed; it did not regard even the profession of atheism as an unambiguous proof that a person could not be saved – which certainly is not in agreement with the traditional teaching before the Council.

There are other points that should also be remembered. It can be said that in theory and also largely in religious practice those were regarded in the first place as culpable (if not absolutely condemned) who were objectively opposed to Christianity and the Church, at least if they could not be counted among religious 'primitives'. This sort of attitude was not so unintelligible then as it seems today. If, according to the teaching of Vatican I, there are clear, unequivocal arguments, adapted to all times and people, for the existence of God, for revelation and for the divine foundation of the Church, then it was not too difficult to conclude that a person could reject these arguments only culpably, and consequently that the culpability of heretics and non-Christians had to be assumed from the start.

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Certainly there can be no talk of such an assumption in the decrees of Vatican II and in all that happened in connection with the Council. The Pope embraces non-Catholic church leaders and pagans; a Roman cardinal declared in Tunis that Mohammed had been a true prophet; all ecumenical conversations assume that all the partners to the discussion are living in the grace of God. Although rejecting a theoretical doctrine of universal reconciliation, the Church in the Council and in its practical conduct starts out from the assumption that God's grace is not only offered to man's free decision, but also that it largely prevails universally in this freedom. This attitude of the Church came into existence of course only after a very long period of development. But it became clear and irreversible in the Second Vatican Council; for such a hope can certainly grow, while it can no longer really decline.

Formerly theology asked apprehensively, how many are saved from the *massa damnata* of world-history. Today we ask whether we may hope that all are saved. This question, this attitude, is more Christian than the former and is the fruit of a more mature Christian awareness that has grown over a long period and is slowly coming to terms more closely with the ultimate basic message of Jesus on the victory of God's Kingdom. It is an attitude which may seem obvious to the liberalistic, [102] bourgeois philistine, since he knows nothing of the incomprehensibility of God's judgements and of his all-consuming holiness and consequently thinks that the message of the victory of God's grace in the world is something that God might perhaps use to justify himself before man's tribunal. But if someone has even a remote idea of who God is, is really aware of the terrible darkness of the history of humanity, he will find the optimism of universal salvation which the Church has struggled to acquire an almost frightening message to which he has to respond with the ultimate resources of his faith.

At the beginning, we put forward the thesis that this Council was the first great official action of a world-Church that had now become relevant. The world-Church as such has appeared on the scene and it now tells the world – inexplicably marvellous and yet taken for granted – that, with all the depths of its history and all the grim possibilities of its future, it is embraced by God and his will, through whose unfathomable love God himself in his self-communication offers himself to the world as ground, power and goal, and of himself makes this offer effective in the freedom of history. The Church became new at this Council, since it had become a world-Church and as such it gives the world a message which, although always the heart of the message of Jesus, is today proclaimed more unconditionally and courageously than formerly and therefore in a new way. In both respects, in the messenger and his message, something new has happened, something irreversible, something that remains. It is another question, whether, in the dull mediocrity of our activity in the Church, we seize and live here and now on this new reality. But this is our task.

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[103]

8

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

If we are to speak of the Church's future, the obvious question arises as to which Church is meant. Is it the Catholic Church in our own country? The western Church? Or the world-Church as a whole? It must be made clear from the outset that these three questions are different and that the answer to each of them is not necessarily the same. It might, for example, be necessary to take a very pessimistic view of the future of Christianity in our own country and in Europe, while at the same time seeing the future of the world-Church of South America and Africa in a very different light. At any rate these three questions must be distinguished. Here, in what must be only a brief reflection, we shall look mainly to the world-Church as a whole and its future; in other words, we shall not be concerned, properly speaking and expressly, with prognoses in regard to our own country, our own native land, or to Europe. If then we are dealing with the world-Church and its future as a whole, we must be content with very general considerations and cannot at the same time analyse more exactly the sociopolitical situation of individual countries and continents and its possible effect on the future of the Church. We assume that our interest in the future of the world-Church will not really distract us from our concern and hopes for the Church in our own country but will reveal a horizon within which alone it is possible to understand correctly this concern and these hopes.

We are speaking here of the future of our Church, of the Roman Catholic Church. But this does not mean raising subliminally and tacitly the question of the opportunities open to our Church in competition with other Christian Churches and communities. This is not the meaning of our chosen theme. As long as the Christian Churches have not achieved [104] complete unity, they are inevitably in competition and present contrasts with each other and one Church's opportunities for the future are not necessarily equal to those of another Church in the same country. But this is not what concerns us here. Even though we are talking about the Roman Catholic Church and its future, our interest lies in this Church as a part of Christendom as one and whole, we are really looking to the future of Christianity as a whole in the secularized world of today, in which all Christian Churches have to live: in the world of a rational, technical civilization; in a world where the individual parts are increasingly growing together into a unity and a common destiny; in a world which, as never before, is marked by a militant atheism, not as a private influence, but as a world-wide public power. If then we refer explicitly here to the Catholic Church and its future, in the last resort we are looking in an ecumenical spirit to Christendom in its unity and wholeness and to its future.

If we are to speak of the future of the world-Church, we can do so only in the light of an understanding of its *nature* that is based on faith and theologically correct. In its ultimate nature the Church is the sociologically and historically tangible and structured community of those who believe in Jesus Christ crucified and risen as the definitive and victoriously prevailing self-promise of the one and living God to the world. Hence this Church is the basic sacrament of the salvation of the world: of the world, and not only of those who belong to the Church itself expressly and in a sociologically tangible way. The Church is the historically perceptible assurance of the victory of God's self-promise as the ultimate meaning and absolute future of the world. To this world the Church promises God's salvation, a salvation that will be realized by God's mysterious grace even where the Church itself has not been established visibly in its word and its sacraments. It is to this very world that the grace of God is offered and attested as victorious by the Church. If the Church is thus the sacrament of

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salvation for the non-ecclesial world, that is not to say of course that those may remain aloof from the Church who have been offered the grace of belonging to the Church and are expected, as a result of their publicly professed faith in Jesus Christ as God's one and definitive promise of salvation to the world, to take their part in sustaining the Church as basic sacrament: to remain aloof would imperil their eternal salvation.

This essential task of the Church, which has been merely outlined here, is of the utmost importance for a correct understanding of the [105] future of the Church. As a result of the history of the Church over two thousand years, devout churchgoing Christians have been misled into thinking of the future history of the Church as one of ever-increasing numerical growth, not only in an absolute sense, but also relatively to the numbers of the human race as a whole. This feeling about the future of the Church, originating in its past history, was highly problematic even formerly, if only because the size, historical weight and future of non-Christian humanity outside Europe at that time had not really seriously been taken into account. However that may be, as Christians today, we must certainly allow for the fact that the Church will increase numerically in an absolute sense in the future, but will decrease and become smaller by comparison with the numbers of the human race as a whole. This will come about simply because of the more rapid growth of non-Christian peoples, quite apart from the progressive de-Christianization of formerly Christian nations and the consequences of a state-supported militant atheism. But this probably correct prognosis does not do away with the fact that the Church in the last hundred and fifty years, from being a Church of the West, of the purely European civilization and its colonial exports, has gradually become really a world-Church which is present to a varying extent in all parts of the world and everywhere becoming a genuine element of all cultures and nations. The decline relatively to the total population of the Church and Christianity as a whole, now beginning, does not eliminate the coming-to-be and the being of the world-Church as such. Today more than ever it is present everywhere as the basic sacrament of the salvation of the world, a fact however that must not lead us to forget or to assume that we can leave unanswered, for instance, the obscure question of the situation of China as representing a quarter of mankind as a whole.

If we clearly realize the essentially theological nature of the Church as the basic sacrament of salvation, promising salvation to the world and not merely to itself, if in our modern ecclesiology we prefer the metaphor of the basic sacrament to the older metaphor of the Church as the sole ark of salvation on the sea of a perishing world, then we can look more impartially to the future. The Church is everywhere: in the last resort its nature and its function remain independent of the question of its numerical relationship to the total world-population.

This reminder to take a realistic and not a triumphalist view of the Church's future – based on theological grounds and not merely the expression of a momentary defeatism – must not lead us to assume that the [106] prospects are dim for the Church historically and in the mental climate of the world of the future. If in 1973 695 million Catholics formed 18.3 percent of the population of the world, if in this Church alone in some 230 thousand parishes in more than two thousand dioceses about 420 thousand priests were proclaiming the gospel, if, for example, in Africa even now there are 44 million Catholics, in Central and South America about 270 million and in Asia 56 million Catholics (even though only 2.5 percent of these are Asians), if we remember the 320 million Catholics in Europe and North America, if in addition we accept the many hundreds of millions of non-Catholic Christians as parts of the one Christendom, then it can and must be said that the Catholic Church and still more Christendom as a whole represent a world-wide historically and sociologically powerful reality which cannot be left out of account even for a purely worldly and secular prognosis for later centuries. Nor is this secular prognosis invalidated by the fact that enormous numbers of these Catholics and Christians are only nominally such and are only very loosely

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attached to the Church and Christianity. It is the sort of thing that is found, not only in the Churches, but with all historical and sociological forces which claim to have a mission to mankind and to a more distant future. Even in the 'Churches' of materialism and militant atheism a large number are uninterested fellow-travellers or count as members merely sociologically and statistically. And yet these numbers have some importance for the future in all historical and sociological groups. In the light merely of the numerical size of the Church and of Christianity as a whole, it can still be said that the latter will remain – even in a secular estimate of future possibilities – significant factors in mankind for an unforeseeable period.

For the real Christian, however, such reflections are essentially provisional and external. The real Christian judges the future opportunities of the Church and Christianity from quite a different standpoint, that of faith in the proper sense of the term and of hope that is given by God. For the churchgoing Christian, faith and hope are constitutive elements of his relationship to the Church itself. He does not come to the Church from outside with the question of the future, as to a factor distinct from himself, in order to ask in a neutral spirit about its future possibilities. In fact, with an absolute decision of his free existence, he believes in God as his own eternal life and in Jesus Christ as the historical seal by his victorious power of God's self-promise to the world. And if the Christian believes and hopes in this way and does so together with others through [107] whose mediation he receives the message of God and of Jesus Christ, be is setting up the Church by this very faith and hope in God's victory. The Christian thus affirms the Church with that absolute, unconditional decision with which in faith and hope he reaches out for God in Jesus Christ. The Church itself is the object of Christian faith. And, just as in the last resort the content of faith as a whole is not affirmed by individual human considerations, devious or straightforward, but by the comprehensive basic act of existence in which this whole existence is trustfully surrendered in the light of Jesus' victorious death to the incomprehensible mystery of God, so hope in the future of the Church in the last resort is exalted in this faith above everything and independently of secular futurological considerations and calculations.

Since the Christian sets up and grasps unconditionally and unreservedly the hope of his own salvation (hoping against hope, as Paul says) and since this hope includes the affirmation of the Church, since he has the same absolute hope for the Church's future, it does not matter for him whether the prognoses for the future of the Church, from a purely human standpoint, are favourable or unfavourable. Since the Christian may not, will not and does not despair of his own salvation, neither can he despair of the Church, since this salvific faith itself – if it is rightly understood and is revealed in its whole nature – continually renews the Church about whose future he might have been tempted to doubt. From this standpoint the Christian can also look into the history of faith and perceive there, in what is truly the history of the Church itself, the continual recurrence of phases and moments at which, humanly speaking, there was a strong temptation to predict the decline of the Church and after which again and again everything went on as before. A similar scrutiny of the history of faith might begin with ancient Israel which, considered in the light of secular history, ought long ago to have vanished from the historical scene and yet continues to live by its invincible faith. Likewise, a glance at the history of faith could reveal over and over again in the two thousand years of the Church's history situations in which, humanly speaking, it seemed impossible that everything would continue as before, when it seemed that the end had really come.

Again, however, over and above such empirical assurances, drawn from the history of faith and of the Church, the Christian believes by an ultimate decision of faith, rooted in the depths of his existence, that the Church will exist also in the future. For he believes in God, who grants to man's existence an infinite dignity and an eternal life through his [108] radical fall into death; he believes in Jesus Christ who, by his death, reaches this eternal life as the Risen One and thus definitively seals our hope. But when the Christian believes in this way, it is

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always an event of the Church; if he so believes and hopes for himself and his salvation, he simply cannot fail to be hoping also for the coming generations: that is, be is sure that these too, believing and hoping, by the power of God's grace, will seize on their salvation and so form the Church, the community of those who with Jesus place their hope in God himself. In the last resort, the future of the Church is not a theme for secular futurology, but an object of the faith that relies unconditionally on God himself.

If we are to talk about the future of the Church, we must not say simply that it has a future; we must also ask whether and how, even at the present time, we can know something about the content and the essential character of this future.

First of all, with reference to this new question, it must be said that, if we are thinking of longer periods of time, we know little or nothing about the character of this future. Even the prediction of the future course of secular world history by philosophers of history, sociologists and futurologists, is a highly problematic business. Today we can certainly say quite a lot about how technical civilization can be expected to develop; we can perhaps estimate more or less accurately the size of the population of the world in the year 2000. But, even from the viewpoint of secular history, at bottom we know nothing about what the Church will look like really concretely in a few decades. In the history of nature and particularly of freedom there are too many unknowns, with all the unforeseeable feed-back effects even of the known factors, for us to be able really to know what the world will be like concretely in fifty years' time. This unforeseeability of future history is particularly relevant to the Church. We cannot form any concrete picture of its future. For, in the first place, we know too little and nothing at all concrete about the secular future. But it is on this as the situation of the Church and its history that the Church's future largely depends. If the course of secular history runs into a future that cannot be clarified in advance, this is even more true of the Church's future. Moreover, the future history of the Church as history of faith and salvation is always governed also by God's freedom and man's freedom, effecting salvation or disaster, whether we think of this freedom of God and man in the history of salvation and consequently of the Church as effective through secular causes or in addition to these.

[109] This unforeseeability of the Church's concrete future may not however be understood properly as an unfortunate impediment for someone who wants to move into a future calculated in advance as accurately as possible. The unforeseeability of future history is in fact a condition of the possibility of true freedom which produces what is original and underivable – since this is unique – and brings to the light the future by itself and not by an advance calculation; it is in particular a condition of the possibility of faith properly so called, which surrenders itself regardless of detailed calculations and unconditionally to God's incomprehensibility and his freedom. The incalculability of the Church's future is part of its nature and that of faith. Anyone who really believes regards this situation in the last resort, not as menacing or intimidating, but as natural and obvious. Faith can make its way into the unfathomable, since all individual unfathomabilities of history are surpassed from the outset by the unfathomable incomprehensibility of God and his freedom itself, which faith as such seeks to grasp.

Even though we cannot know anything about the substance of the Church's concrete future, two statements at least may be made about this future, since on the one hand it is *history* and on the other the history of one and the same enduring Church. That is to say: the Church's future will be different in many respects from the present, in which we ourselves live and which we therefore know. Nevertheless, the future is that of the one and enduring Church in which we believe and live. Change and endurance belong equally to the nature of the Church, while it is obvious that we cannot distinguish so completely in human reflection the changeable from the permanent in this historical factor as to know in advance of its concrete history precisely and conceptually where the dividing line lies between the perishing

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and the permanent: we must always experience in history the unforeseeable miracle that the Church changes to a quite unforeseeable extent and yet discover that it has remained the same.

Assuming all this, we can safely say that the Church of the future will look very different from that of today. In this respect we must remember that, for the most varied reasons, the tempo of history has enormously increased and consequently that a human being in his very brief life-time now experiences with joy and even more with pain, and with increasing insecurity, more changes in history than could possibly have been known to anyone in former times. We have all – even now – experienced the joy and pain of such changes in the Church, which today occur unavoidably [110] at a greater speed than formerly, simply because secular history also runs its course very much more rapidly.

Such unavoidable changes occurring more rapidly than formerly should not make us feel insecure, should not lead to indignation and protests, as if the old, to which we were accustomed, had always been better. If then it is asked what changes may be expected in the immediate future, over and above those experienced in recent decades, we may be a little embarrassed, if we are not clairvoyants or prophets. There is however something we can say. In a secularized world, in which nothing Christian can anywhere be simply taken for granted, the Church must be sustained even in its institutions and in its ministry much more than it is now by a readiness to believe freely on the part of its members at the base, on the part of basic communities; the latter will not be content simply to be cared for by an institutional Church, but will themselves on their own responsibility take an active part in forming the Church and will have a right to be taken seriously in their activity and responsibility by the authorities. At the same time, not a few things which are taken for granted in our own country as distinct from many other Churches in other countries will not continue to be so regarded, but will either disappear or demand for their maintenance a new and resolute sociopolitical commitment and also readiness for sacrifice on the part of Catholics. In many details of the symbiosis of the politically organized society and the Church – for example, with reference to the church-tax, religious instruction in state schools, theological faculties in state universities, state assistance for the Church's social institutions, the special sociological status of the Church, etc. – we cannot assume that everything in the future will go on as hitherto, peacefully and without question.

As far as the Church as a whole is concerned, it will turn to an increasing extent and increasingly rapidly from a European church with Christian exports to all the world into a world-Church, in which the churches of Africa, South America and even Asia, will be really autonomous elements with their own specific character and their own importance in the whole Church, justifying independently their existence and mission. We have already seen that, geographically speaking, Europe and Rome are by no means any longer at the centre of the Church. Such a world-Church as it exists outside Europe cannot simply import and imitate the life-style, law, liturgy and theology of the European church. In all these respects the churches outside Europe must be really independent [111] and culturally firmly rooted in their own countries and – while maintaining the unity of faith and the link with the Pope – develop a new life of their own which we simply cannot imagine today and which at first sight might seem as alien to us as if we were attending today a Mass in the Syro-Malabar rite in South India. Of course, such a future prospect of the differentiation of the world-Church assumes that, despite the rational-technical world-civilization, the diversity of national and continental cultures will be maintained and even acquire a new vitality. In this world-Church, according to our Catholic faith, there will always be a Petrine ministry with its permanent and perhaps in some respects increasingly important tasks. Nevertheless, in the concrete way in which this ministry is exercised, a great deal will be changed, can be changed and must be changed.

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It might perhaps be said briefly that the Pope for many centuries exercised his Petrine ministry to the whole Church in the style of a Patriarch of the West, that he tried to spread over the whole world the Latin Church of the West. Now however the churches that began as exports from Europe have become independent and force us clearly to distinguish between the dogmatically assured, authentic Petrine ministry to the whole Church and the Pope's function as Patriarch of the West, which remains a respectable but less important part of the Church as a whole and which in its concrete shape will no longer be oriented from Rome towards the whole Church. The Second Vatican Council marks a fresh start in the dialogue of Christianity and especially the Catholic Church with the present historical situation. But the beginning of this dialogue is not its end. From the very outset, correctly understood, this dialogue does not mean a faint-hearted compromise with any sort of spirit of the age. It can and must take place in the form of a critical and absolute opposition to a godless and greedy consumer mentality, largely drained of all authentic human feeling. It remains true however that the dialogue between the Church and the world must continue and that it demands also from the Church changes in its life-style, in the style of proclamation of the Christian faith, in the treatment of people who have come of age, in respect for freedom of conscience, in making apparent the workings of its official machinery, etc.

These changes in the Church as a whole necessarily have consequences for the church of our immediate neighbourhood, the church of our own country, of our homeland. As a result of the Council itself we have experienced such consequences in the last decade and we shall experience [112] similar changes in the future. If we regard them as inevitable consequences of changes in the Church as a whole, they will seem less surprising and less depressing. Of course the opposite is also true. The changes arising in our own immediate neighbourhood, in our own country and in Europe, because of the shortage of priests, changes in the mental climate, changes in the concrete relations between Church and state, etc., will also have consequences for the Church as a whole.

In this unavoidably changing Church however something will endure. And this is also the unwavering answer of Christian faith to the question about the future of the Church. When we say that the Church will remain in the future, since its real message cannot perish, we are not merely setting out a prognosis of permanence on the grounds that there are constants even in history in the light of the true and lasting nature of man, but our prognosis of the future is based on the real message of Christianity itself, rightly understood. This message is not subject to time and time's changes, since it is itself the proclamation of the end of all time, since in the last resort and properly speaking it does not say that something remains of what we have now, that we are not deprived of our possessions: what it does say is that the absolute future – which is the eternal God himself, beyond all limits of time – will reach us as the fulfilment of time and history, whether the course of the changing times is long or short, whether it is filled with victories or with defeats. Since Christianity proclaims this end of history as the victory of God, its message can never be superseded by the announcement of something that always remains part of history as an interim goal. Within the course of time and a history that remains open, there may be much still to come, to be hoped for or feared, to be done or suffered: much that is always new, of which as yet we know nothing. But whatever is to come in the present world, however much and however surprising, is already encompassed by the message of Christianity which tells, not of this or that, but of all in one, of God as beginning and end and as such as our own consummation. This message – not only issued in words, but present and sealed in the event of Jesus Christ, who died into the incomprehensibility of God and was thus vindicated – can never again be lost to humanity as a whole. For it is the supreme and unsurpassable hope, nourished by humanity's victories *and* defeats, since the brief moments of light in history and the times of great darkness alike bear witness to the eternal light, the light announced in Jesus Christ as forever victorious.

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How could the message of Christianity be superseded, when it proclaims, [113] not just one thing or another, but the pure infinity of God as the absolute future of humanity? How could this message be unmasked as an unreal Utopia when it arises from the very event which unmasks all illusions, from death itself, from the death of Jesus, in face of which humanity did not despair but learned to hope absolutely? The message of Christianity for a future does not proclaim the replacement of what exists here and now by something else that is likewise under the law of coming to be and perishing, but the salvation of all by that infinite, incomprehensible reality, exalted above all coming to be and perishing, which we call God. If this message does not perish and cannot perish, since it is the answer to humanity's infinite hope, then neither does the Church perish, being the fellowship of those who in faith and hope make this message the centre of their existence.

As we pointed out at the beginning, this message and the community of those who carry it are ultimately independent of the proportion between the number of these believers and the total number of human beings. The message is the promise for mankind as a whole, even though it is expressly supported only by a few. It is a message that has in fact been implicitly accepted and taken to heart by those who hope absolutely, even though they do not venture to express the immensity of their hopes in words and phrases. But, if this infinite message of Christianity is brought quite clearly to an individual and in a way that demands his faith, it is not for him alone as an individual to decide whether he will accept it or not. If the message reaches him in this way, he must take his place in the company of those who form the Church and thus proclaim the message to the world and keep it alive in the world's-history. That is the way in which the message was brought to us; it reached us in such a way that we must be its heralds and not merely its recipients and hearers. The Christian and the communities of Christians, as present or as represented here, are the Church which has to bear the burden of its own past, which must face its present with the courage to profess Christianity in word and life, with courage for the changes required by the existing situation, in loyalty in faith to the Christian message and in unshakeable hope for the future of the Church, since it is the profession of eternal hope which will not perish.

The future of the Church of our European nations can be predicted only with difficulty or not at all. It is the object, not of futurological calculation, but of each individual's eternal responsibility; and it grows, not out of futurology, but out of the unconditional loyalty of faith on the [114] part of each individual. But we know that, if the European nations, if we, let fall the torch of faith, hope and love, then other peoples will carry it through history to its end. The future of the Church is God and consequently eternal life for us.

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[115]

9

STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

The theme presented to the author here is so broad and complex that only a few remarks of an aphoristic character are possible within the space at his disposal; the reader then cannot expect a really systematic and comprehensive treatment. These limitations arise also from the fact that the author is not a church historian, nor a futurologist, nor a canonist, and consequently cannot claim any special competence in these fields of study which as such are relevant to the subject. He is merely a systematic, dogmatic theologian, for whom what is important and must be important is the permanent and perennially valid element of ecclesiology in the light of revelation. For the dogmatic theologian therefore the essential question is that of the possibilities of a structural change of the Church in a future secular society, in the light of the Catholic Church's existing and permanent self-understanding based on revelation. But, even if the question is raised in this way from the outset, the author is sure that such opportunities for structural change in the Church are extraordinarily great, although they are often not seen clearly enough even as mere opportunities and the institutional Church here in Germany and also in Rome (the author would not claim to be able to say anything significant about other regional churches, which are parts of the one Church) looks too hesitatingly and too nervously at these possible changes of the Church's structures.[1]

Leaving aside any subtle politological and juridical definitions of terms, by 'structures' here is meant simply everything that exists in fact [116] in the Church (as a whole or in a regional church) permanently and universally as a reality determining the action and decisions of the officeholders and church-members or as a norm for this action and these decisions. In this respect it is in the last resort a matter of indifference whether these determinants of action are simply factual conditions or legally constituted norms, whether they affect that action as the result of an explicit, considered decision or simply exercise their influence in practice, whether in themselves they are really ecclesial in character or (in the light of the Church's theological understanding of its nature) purely secular, as factors belonging to secular society.

I

During the 'Pian epoch' of the Church (if we may so describe the period of restoration in society and the Church after the French Revolution of 1789 up to the Second Vatican Council), in the Church's self-understanding the stress was laid on its 'unchangeability'. The Church was regarded as the stronghold and sign of what was eternally valid in an increasingly rapidly changing course of history, moving towards an indeterminate future in which nothing would any longer be secure and permanent. The Church insisted on its constitution *jure divino* as unchangeable, given to it from the outset by God himself in Jesus Christ (at the same time the fact that this knowledge of its divine foundation became explicit only in the course of history had little effect in practice on the Church's actual self-awareness). The Church insisted that its papal and episcopal constitutional structure was of divine law, coming from 'above', from Jesus Christ, and had not been set up 'democratically'

[1] Cf. Karl Rahner, *Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance* (Freiburg 1972); ET: The Shape of the Church to Come (London/New York 1974).

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from below. The First Vatican Council sanctioned as part of the immutable content of faith and of the Church's divinely established constitutional structure the Bishop of Rome's universal primacy of jurisdiction and supreme teaching authority – independently of the consent of the Church – over the Church as a whole and over all its particular churches.

There was a similar insistence during this period on an immutable natural law, from which concrete conclusions were drawn in regard to the most diverse fields of men's moral and social life. At least tacitly and in practice the impression prevailed that the institutional Church's life and action, even in their concrete expression, by and large, were the quite straightforward and immediately obvious, indisputable consequences of [117] the Church's perennially valid constitutional law and of the natural law: the institutional Church's concrete action was regarded as the almost self-evident manifestation of what is permanently valid in the Church.

Even during this Pian epoch there were of course some not inconsiderable changes in the structures (in the sense explained above) of the Church. With the secularized states concordats of various kinds were concluded, also with important consequences for the internal life of the Church. The liturgy continued to develop towards the far-reaching changes at the Second Vatican Council. There were quite significant changes in the Church's marriage laws. The college of cardinals as an elective body was slowly internationalized. If, on the whole, the 'new' Canon Law under Benedict XV was no more than an adjustment of the Church's existing law and practice, it really was 'new' in some respects and brought about a degree of change in the Church. In addition to these and similar changes in the structures of the Church at this time, there were certainly many others that could be mentioned. But on the whole the stress and the feeling of the self-understanding of the Church were concentrated during this period on unchangeability. And even for those who were aware of the great and lively history of the dogma and constitution of the Church in this self-understanding from the primitive Church to the Pian epoch, the impression prevailed that the Church had reached in its development a point from which there could be no return and beyond which not much really new or surprising was likely to happen. All this was worked out in terms of neoscholastic theology.

There were certainly two reasons why the stress (itself historically conditioned and changeable) in this self-understanding of the Church was laid on its 'unchangeability'. On the one hand, in face of a world which had been increasingly rapidly secularized from the time of the Enlightenment onwards, the Church was bound to feel threatened and had to find its means of existence in itself and no longer in a homogeneous Christian society; the forms of the intellectual life of secular society seemed alien to its own traditional shape; from the time of the Enlightenment also, it felt itself increasingly confronted by a militant anticlericalism. Not surprisingly in this situation, the Church became much more clearly aware of its own nature as distinct from the world and unchangeable. The other reason, closely linked with the first, lay in the fact that medieval and baroque theology (as preserved and revived in neoscholasticism) was and remains oriented *a priori* more or less unhistorically to the eternal essences of things, to what is permanently valid, and did not [118] and does not sufficiently allow for the fact that history itself is precisely the history of essences and of man's transcendence to God, not merely the sphere of the contingent, surrounded externally by the realm of eternal essences. In brief, during this epoch culminating in the First Vatican Council, the stress of the Church's self-understanding lay on its unchangeability, on the permanent validity of its nature and those constitutional structures which must be seriously taken into account, as well as elements admittedly changeable in themselves but regarded as participating to a certain extent in this permanent validity. (In a scholastic Denzinger-theology, for example, authentic statements of the magisterium were treated in practice as if they had the binding force of dogma and measures passed by curial officials regarded almost

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as straightforward decisions of the Pope using his supreme power of jurisdiction.)

There is no doubt that the feeling has grown and become more distinct since the Second Vatican Council that the Church is changeable in all its structures to a far greater extent than people thought during the Pian epoch. The reasons for this change in the Church's concrete self-understanding will not be set out here, particularly since they are obviously many and varied. In exegesis and history of dogma, theology has gradually roused an awareness generally in the Church of the historicity even of dogma and of the dogmatically formulated structures of the Church. It has now become clearer, and the view was sanctioned to a certain extent by Vatican II (despite reactionary trends after the Council in recent years), that the Church, now become a world-Church, must live in a secularized and pluralistic world and yet be engaged in missionary activity and present in quite new cultural fields beyond that of an older Europe; that it cannot simply live on the defensive, in a traditional and merely reactionary way; that – while remaining faithful to its message and to its own nature arising from that message – it needs an *aggiornamento*, an adaptation, to the world in which it must live and grow; that it must become involved in new, unforeseen situations, not brought about by itself but by which it is itself necessarily changed, since today in the age of scientific planning and futurology such changes (which have always existed) cannot take place tacitly and unobtrusively, without premeditation, but must also be considered and planned in advance. But – as we said – we are not going to consider here the reasons for this change of feeling and its necessity. All that can be done is to point to a number of somewhat arbitrarily chosen and unsystematically presented particular examples that show, even to the Catholic who completely [119] accepts the defined dogma of the nature of the Church, that the possibilities of such structural changes in the Church are much greater than they were thought to be in the Pian epoch. Whether the realization of particular individual possibilities is opportune or appropriate to the present and future external situation of the Church is another question.

First of all we have the Roman See, the task and function of the Pope, as these were defined by Vatican I and acknowledged as continuing to be valid by Vatican II. It is becoming increasingly clear and more apparent in the Church's self-understanding that this supreme and permanent power of jurisdiction of the Pope for the whole Church is not simply identical with the whole gigantic administrative machinery which has developed historically and continues to exist and operate up to the present time in Rome. The demarcation between what the Pope admits and up to a point must admit to belong to the autonomous competence of the particular churches and what he reserves to himself for the most part is not a matter of divine law, but has come to existence historically and is therefore changeable. For it cannot be claimed that the concrete and changeable settlement of this demarcation is simply dependent on a decision of the Pope, not rationally to be justified and not open to appeal, solely because the Pope is not subject to any higher earthly decision-making authority in the Church to which an appeal might legally be made. This demarcation, which is constantly in need of revision, can certainly be decided by objective arguments, even if the latter also take into account the Pope's understanding of the issue; with reference to the relationship between the universal government of the whole Church in Rome and the individual particular churches and their life, all general norms of Christian morality and of a system of law understood in a truly Christian sense (norms for exceptional cases, *epikeia*, tacit excuse, etc.) are genuinely valid and should be applied without hesitation.

The creation of concrete individual norms, which are to be valid for the Church as a whole, should be brought about with an institutionalized and obvious collaboration of the regional churches. In the light of the Church's constitution as based on divine law, all this is certainly feasible and could be urgently necessary to prevent wrong decisions or norms imposing too many restrictions on individual particular churches; but in practice this collaboration has not

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yet been institutionalized and made obvious to a sufficiently large extent and where progress has been made it has been dependent on the good will of the Roman authorities in regard [120] to a particular case. The internationalization of the Roman Curia has certainly made considerable progress since Vatican II, but it has not come about with the obvious collaboration of the authorities of the particular churches, the result being that the Curia has been internationalized more or less only in regard to the birthplace of its members: the latter cannot really be regarded as representatives of the churches from which they come, although this is really supposed to be the point of internationalization. (This is not to say that these internationally qualified curial officials ought to be representatives of their countries of origin in a strictly legal sense. But, on the other hand, it is noticeable that members of the Curia become quickly 'romanized', lose any real contacts with their countries of origin and become more Roman than the Romans.)

If what follows has a wider reference than merely to the relationship between Rome and the particular churches, it should be observed in the present context that it is quite compatible with the Pope's universal jurisdiction defined at Vatican I as in a certain sense 'unlimited' (and thus allowing for possibilities of changing the concrete structures of the Church) that this primatial power of the Pope is also restricted and by human law can impose on itself limits required by a particular historical situation. It is limited in the first place (apart from the limits imposed by Christian morality, which even the Pope may infringe under certain circumstances by a concrete act in such a way that the latter not only offends morality, but perhaps also is legally invalid) by divine law, in so far as the Pope – according to the teaching of Vatican Il – cannot abolish the episcopate, cannot replace it by office-holders who would be merely his officials; in so far also as the individual bishop governs his church, not only in the name of the Pope, but immediately in the name of Christ himself. This principle of Vatican II sounds innocuous, particularly since, according to current legislation (which of course is not unchangeable, even though the individual bishop, if he wants to govern legitimately, must live in unity and peace with the Roman See), the Pope appoints the individual bishop. But this principle, if taken seriously and given concrete expression, could also have far-reaching effects on the concrete structures of the Church. For it means that an individual bishop is not merely a regional executive official of Rome, carrying out on the spot what is decreed by Rome for the whole Church. On the contrary, he can take spiritual and administrative initiatives; these need not be seen from the very outset and always purely as applications of Roman norms and [121] authorized for that reason; in teaching also (for example, in concrete questions of morality) the bishop as such has his own initiative from the spirit of the gospel and need not always – for example, in concrete questions of Christian morality and of real life – be positively supported by Roman approval, merely because these questions have their importance everywhere in the Church. We might get the impression that our own bishops do not sufficiently appreciate the scope which this principle accords them or the possibilities of structural change it implies, that they act too frequently as if they were merely carrying out orders from Rome and wanting in every case to be positively 'covered' from there.

There are however limits to the Roman primatial power which that authority itself can and under certain circumstances must lay down in human law and which in the concrete involve changes in the actual historical form of papal constitutional law. In the first place no one will dispute the fact that the Holy See has made and can legitimately make concordats with states. And in such concordats (however they are to be interpreted in the light of the different theories on the subject), not infrequently, the Roman See restricts by a legal agreement the rights and the authority belonging to it 'as such'. For example, it may concede to a state a considerable degree of collaboration in the selection of candidates for the episcopate, it may grant to other authorities *jure humano* real and permanent rights that belong as such *jure*

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divino to itself alone. If this sort of thing is possible in relations between Church and state, it can be possible also in relations between the Roman See and other authorities and groups within the Church. There are in fact situations in which it would be not only possible, but also opportune and even morally necessary. Rights in regard to the appointment of bishops, to the organization of the liturgy, to sacramental practice, the laws of marriage, etc., which the Holy See claims in virtue of its authority *jure divino*, can be restricted by itself in favour of the particular churches and their independent existence appropriate to their own situation. (At the same time the original claim to these rights need not be simply unambiguous, even though for the sake of unity and peace in the Church the Pope must be granted the competence to decide his own competence and consequently not all Canon Law in the concrete is simply deduced from first principles, nor can it be established by a strictly rational argument.) Consequently, something of this kind can be wholly opportune and even concretely necessary.

It is not as if the appointment of bishops, the norms for selecting [122] priests (e.g., the law of celibacy, exclusion of women from the priesthood, definition of the grades of the sacramental ministry), etc., had *necessarily* to be laid down by Rome for the whole Church. In these and similar matters Rome could leave a great deal to the particular churches and should not from the very outset invoke the Pope's universal power of jurisdiction or the necessary unity of the Church in order to block such possibilities (it is not a question of more than this). Greater rights could be conceded to the particular churches, even if this concession meant or could at least be interpreted as an act of the supreme authority in the Church. (Not that every such concession necessarily has to be interpreted as a free act of favour on the part of Rome. Even Rome will not claim that the greater autonomy of the Eastern Uniate Churches – which it recognizes – is due simply to a free act of favour on the part of Rome which it could withdraw without more ado. The attitude which Rome adopts towards these autonomies of the Eastern Church, arising from the past, could also become at least a moral obligation in regard to autonomies of the particular churches to be acknowledged by Rome in view of the requirements of the future.) In brief, the right (which can also be a duty) of the supreme universal authority of Rome to decide its own limits in the Church permits in principle considerable flexibility in the concrete expression of this *jus divinum*: despite and even in its permanent validity, the latter is a historical factor open to change and continually permitting new forms of expression of its own nature and practice, even though these cannot directly be foreseen and will depend on future historical conditions. The great centralistic machinery of Rome, the multiplicity and allocation of offices, the range of tasks which Rome reserves to itself, the form of papal elections, the universal Canon Law covering the smallest details, the frequency of Rome's reactions to particular questions arising in all parts of the world, etc., are certainly not matters of divine law; they are changeable and always open to the critical question as to whether such concrete forms of the exercise of the universal papal authority are really appropriate to the concrete historical situation. (For the moment, it may be noticed incidentally that this is a question of great ecumenical importance.)

As far as the possibilities of structural change in the greater regional, particular churches are concerned, the question today is concretely that of the possibility and opportuneness of fitting 'more democratic' structures into these individual churches (dioceses, national churches). What is important in this connection is certainly not the term 'democracy'; it [123] is obvious that these churches neither can nor should simply copy the decision-making 'democratic' structures in the secular field in their own countries, but they must take into account realistically the problems of 'democracy' even in that field (we need only recall, apart from other things, the threat to such 'democracy' from 'democratic centralism' in what are known as the 'socialist' countries). What is important in the concrete is the necessity (particularly today and always involved in the very nature of the Church) for the collaboration of churchpeople in the life of the Church and the decisions of authority. In the

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light of the Church's nature churchpeople are not merely recipients of what is done by the institutional Church but are themselves the Church. And today (later we must speak of this at greater length) the real efficacy of the Church's ministries (proclamation, administration of the sacraments, government, etc.) depends largely on the free collaboration of churchgoers themselves. This however is not to be expected, unless the people are obviously involved to the greatest possible extent in the decision-making of the institutional Church. Nor is this necessary participation to be expected in practice if it is to be merely informal; it needs juridical and visible structures which themselves are not in every case necessarily dependent on the good will of the office-holders strictly so called.

The duties of such collaboration by the churchpeople, stressed as they are on all sides, can be concretely fulfilled only if they correspond to real and perceptible rights. Certainly, since the Second Vatican Council, people have been engaged everywhere in creating such new juridically constituted structures for the collaboration of churchgoers in the Church's life and decision-making, beginning perhaps with parish councils. Nor should the fact be overlooked that, by the very nature of the Church, this collaboration and the legal structures on which it depends can and must take very different forms in the light of the concrete issues to be settled. (Collaboration in regard to the Church's finances can and must certainly take a different form from that of organizing the innermost centre of the liturgy or dealing with a question relating to the faith of the Church as a whole.) The particular opportunities for such new structures of the collaboration of the churchpeople in the Church's life and decision-making cannot of course be considered here.

All that we can do is to point to a fundamental principle that can be put into effect without more ado in the formation of such new structures. In principle even the *jure divino* episcopal constitution of the Church does not mean that the collaboration of churchgoers can and must [124] always and in every case be merely informative and advisory, merely of a consultative character. If in the early Church the people and the ordinary clergy had the right to an essential part in the deliberations leading to the appointment of a new bishop, this was certainly not an infringement of the perennially valid episcopal constitution any more than the proprietary Church (*Eigenkirche*) of the early Middle Ages (where ecclesiastical appointments were under the control of the secular ruler), even though such juridical conditions cannot be copied without more ado for present or future times. Certainly there are matters to be decided even today and in the future in which the collaboration of the people, not only in a consultative but also in a deliberative form, would be possible and appropriate.

There are certainly many issues where the churchpeople could and even should share in decision-making and in which the individual bishop or a bishops' conference could not be bound by the decision only if that authority could declare conscientiously that it was clearly contrary to the substance of the Church's faith or to the *jure divino* constitution of the Church: that is, in a situation analogous to that of a state where the supreme constitutional court (like the episcopate in the Church) declares that a law passed by Parliament is unconstitutional. In no other case should the episcopate (or an individual bishop in his own diocese) invoke episcopal authority in a decision contrary to the will of the majority of the people, if only because such decisions today are likely to remain ineffective in practice. That in fact was the situation at the Würzburg Synod in 1971, when in not a few cases – even those in which no conscientious reservation could be made – the German bishops actually decided in a way contrary to that of the existing or foreseeable majority of the people attending there. This sort of thing is not necessary in virtue of the Church's constitutional law and not appropriate today, since it creates the impression that the bishops eventually decide solely according to their own discretion (even after listening to the representatives of the laity and the clergy) and in questions in which it is not at all necessary to reserve such a competence to themselves.

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If the principle of a possible deliberative and not merely consultative collaboration of the people in the decisions of the institutional Church were seen more clearly and institutionalized more courageously, this would do something to rouse the laity from mere acquiescence and indifference. And in particular, regional churches the opportunities of structural change in the Church are still far from being exhausted, even [125] though there remain very many unanswered questions as to how this sort of thing could and should be brought about in an appropriate way and in the light of a realistic appraisal of the concrete situation.

II

The full title of this chapter is: 'Structural change of the Church in the *future* society'.

To be honest, it must be admitted that what has been said up to now – properly speaking – does not really even touch on this theme or at best touches on it only remotely. For all that has hitherto been said, and in a very abstract way, is that structural change is *possible* in the Church, despite the latter's enduring nature. What possible changes of the Church's structures are opportune and desirable for the Church's endurance and life cannot be settled merely by such theoretical reflections. In order to answer the question which was really supposed to be the theme of these reflections, we would have to know what is likely to be the shape of the secular society in which the Church will have to live and in which it must develop its concrete structures in dialogue and confrontation, in order to secure as well as possible its endurance, its life and its missionary activity in that future society.

But what will this future society look like? Can anyone say? It is possible to maintain – and, up to a point, rightly – that the present structures of the Church are not sufficiently adapted even to society *today* and that in this respect also there is still a good deal of leeway to be made up. It can be said that much in the present-day structures of the Church has not yet been brought into line adequately (naturally, with the aid of dialogue) with the conditions of a secularized and pluralistic society; that the Church in many respects relies too much on sociological conditions (what remains of the symbiosis of state, society and Church, peculiarities of a rural or middle-class society, relics of Christian values even in the secularized society, etc.) which still exist up to a point, but meet with increasing resistance and are now being rapidly eliminated. Certainly it can also be said that even today the actual effectiveness of the institutional Church in regard to individuals is no longer backed by a consensus on a Christian weltanschauung that is taken for granted in civic society, but needs to be sustained by living basic communities built up from below, formed by a free decision of faith on the part of individuals *against* [126] public trends in society; that the institutional structures of the Church no longer sustain the faith of individuals as in former times, but (so far as their actual efficacy is concerned) are themselves sustained by this faith.

In face of this simple observation of the Church's present situation, it is certainly possible to set up very diverse postulates for a change in the Church's structures, while upholding the permanence of its ultimate nature: for a greater 'democratization' (rightly understood) of the Church, not restricting the collaborations of the 'laity' to purely consultative functions but giving it a form appropriate to each particular issue; for greater openness in decision-making in the Church's life, even for the non-clerical members of the Church; for greater autonomy of the major, particular, regional churches within the one Church; for the opportuneness or necessity today of those things which we have already suggested as possible in principle in the light of the Church's nature. If we could bring them under the heading of structural change in the widest sense of the term, it would be possible in such reflections even today to speak of a declericalized, serving, caring Church, preaching morality without moralizing,

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being open to secular society, boldly giving concrete directives for public life without always declaring these to be permanently valid dogma or part of the unchanging content of natural law, socially critical without seeking to dictate to secular society or restrict its autonomy. But we shall not go into further detail here about these postulates of structural change perceptible from the very situation of present-day society, however much reflections of this kind in terms of practical (and political) theology are still required today.

In speaking about these things however, have we or could we have really said anything about structural change of the Church in the society of the *future*? Is it possible at the present time to say anything *about this* or can we speak about it only when the future society actually exists? Or are we to say, we must talk about it now, since the Church must approach its future looking forward to it and equipped for it? Or are we to say that it is impossible to talk about it yet, since secular futurology predicts much about the world of the future but says scarcely anything that is at present obviously relevant to a structural change by which the *Church* can and must be prepared for a future society? What special features of a future epoch could perhaps be foreseen which might be important for a structural change in the Church to be prepared even now? (For example, is it not even now time to begin a theological [127] reflection about whether the seat of the primacy in the Church will have to remain in Rome in the future, when the real centres of power and authority will no longer lie in the older Europe?) These are hard questions. The Church must always be aware of the fact that questions like this are not irrelevant and are not to be suppressed merely because there is no obvious answer to them, acceptable to all sides. For even open, unsolved questions – if they are not suppressed – keep alive the willingness to bring about such structural changes promptly when they become necessary: they have then a very concrete significance.

For the time being however, one thing at least can be said. In a future society, in a secularized world, all the elements of which are everywhere interdependent, Christendom will be able adequately to fulfil its function as sacrament of the salvation of the world only by itself becoming more of a unity than it has been hitherto. Everything that is sought by the ecumenical movement is also a task imposed on Christendom by and for a future society. But this also necessarily means that the Catholic Church even now must boldly set to work on all those structural changes which on the one hand are possible in the light of its nature and on the other hand can help the separated Christian Churches more easily to appreciate their solidarity and more easily to unite with one another until a real unity of the one Church of Christ is reached. Ecumenism is a task which is certainly imposed also by a future society and must carry with it considerable structural changes in the Catholic Church, particularly since in the future even more than now this Catholic Church cannot remain the Church of the West, sending small exports to the rest of the world, but must really be a world-Church where the different cultures and spheres of history enjoy equal rights.

When ecumenism is becoming an urgent task of the Catholic Church, acquiring quite new dimensions, because of the future society, must not the great, particular churches (for example, in Africa, Asia and Latin America) be granted quite new fields for the actualizations of their own natures? Can those theological questions which once divided the churches in the world of the Mediterranean and of Europe retain their importance in the world of today? Can the law of the world-Church remain as ‘Roman’ as it was formerly? Must not the question of mutual recognition of ministries be tackled with much more theological energy and confidence, while aiming at a generous (and possible) solution, than it has been hitherto when there was too much fear and (if we may so express it) too little theological imagination? When this sort of thing and so much [128] else is appreciated and its realization facilitated, does it not necessitate in the Catholic Church very considerable structural changes, which must be seen to be possible and must be prepared for the sake of the future society, so that as far as possible a united Christendom can exist and fulfil its task in this future society?

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It is very difficult and may well be impossible to predict anything about the future situation of the Church (as starting point for postulates of structural change), since it is difficult to foresee anything about the future society that is also relevant to the Church. When we say that the life of the future society will be that of a rational and technical world-civilization, in which all the formerly separate cultural and historical fields will be intensely concentrated, in an urban culture, in a society which will have developed higher sociological structures than existed or were necessary formerly, we are saying something which is true on the whole but from which anything about a necessary structural change in the Church can be deduced only with difficulty. One thing however should be clear: nowhere in the world will the Church of the future live in a society homogeneously Christian by nature and, as a secular society, taking for granted and supporting the Church's activity. That much can be said, even if the question remains open as to what economic systems (themselves understood as ideologically binding) will prevail or be alone dominant in this one world-civilization. Everywhere in the world the Church will be a Diaspora-Church, no longer existing within the homogeneous ambience of a Christian Europe, even though the numerical relationship between Christians (who are actually such) and non-Christians (who never were Christians or who have again become non-Christians) may remain very different in the different individual cultural and sociological areas of the one world-civilization.

If the Church in a future society will everywhere be a Diaspora-Church, its mission and message in the world will no longer be favoured and supported from the very outset by a homogeneous public opinion, by laws it has itself inspired, by a general acceptance of the position of its leaders. The Church will be an individual sociological group in a pluralist society and then only if the rest of society is tolerantly pluralistic in a liberal sense – something also which cannot be predicted with certainty. Consequently the real effectiveness of such a Church and of its authorities will depend – and in fact much more decisively than in Europe in the past – on the assent of faith freely given by individuals and the commitment of its members 'from below'. What has hitherto been [129] regarded more or less as an 'established' Church will become a community-Church; parishes (as administrative districts set up by ecclesiastical authority and evenly spread over a certain territory) will have to become living communities from below, not from the outset directly bordering territorially on one another, sharing much more clearly than formerly in the determination of their ecclesial life-style, in the selection of their 'officials', and deciding the mode of life of the latter (allowing always for the permanent necessity of common ecclesial structures and the unity – maintained by bishops – of the individual congregations with one another), maintaining unity of faith with a diversity of emphasis on the various aspects of their Christian and ecclesial life, etc.

The community Church is not in opposition to the Church as made up of territorial parishes, even though the latter as locally constituted will exist in future alongside personally constituted parishes with a different basis, in greater numbers and having greater significance. Parishes in the traditional sense will themselves have to become living community parishes more clearly than hitherto and can no longer remain (more or less) institutions by which the official Church provides for the individual religious needs of isolated individuals.

In the light of this Diaspora situation of the future Church, then, considerable structural changes in the Church must be expected and are clearly beginning to take shape even now, although in our own country we might get the impression that the institutional Church is giving way to pressure in regard to these changes or merely tolerating them, not anticipating or leading. The future Church consisting of communities in Diaspora situations will of course always be in danger of becoming a 'sect' in a negative sense in terms of the sociology of religion. This danger of becoming a 'little flock' in the wrong sense of the term, with an elitist self-consciousness and an ideologically justified incapsulation of the community and

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its members from the general cultural and sociological life to windward of history, must be recognized and opposed. Difficult as this may be in detail, the structures of the future community-churches must be shaped so as to face as squarely as possible the danger that the community might become the refuge of people whom life has treated badly, who have suffered at the hands of society and its members; the community must be open to all and aware of its continuing function toward the 'world'. If we thus anticipate future and necessary structural changes on a large scale in the Church, if a timid conservatism does not blind us to the necessity and depth of these future changes, although of [130] course the continuity beneath the change from today to tomorrow cannot be denied, then there emerges as a postulate of the Church's strategy what has been called a tutiorism of change.

What is required now is not timid conservatism, uncreatively yielding when it seems that nothing more can be done, least of all at the present time. In the long run, the safest course and the one that will do least harm is to muster the courage now to attempt what in all probability will be demanded of the institutional Church tomorrow. Why is it so timid and hesitant about the question of the rights that can be granted to lay-people in the Church without detriment to its papal and episcopal structure, even though it knows that tomorrow it will presumably have as members only those who acknowledge it as a result of a deeply felt Christian decision and not as liberal-minded traditional Christians? Why are people so fearful and concerned about a Roman centralism that is always in danger of imposing an undue uniformity on the living structures and forces in individual major particular churches, thus rendering the latter ineffective? Why does not Rome have the courage to attempt a *new* language in declarations and decisions which might then have some prospect of 'getting across' to the world? These and many other similar questions could be raised. A mentality regarding risk and experiment – the outcome of which is not yet certain – perhaps as the safest and necessary course for today and tomorrow, without immediately holding back in fear of disorder and diverging trends in the particular churches, certainly could and should creatively and courageously inaugurate many structural changes in the Church.

III

As in every society, so too in the Church, there will always be conservative *and* progressive trends, both of which in principle are necessary and useful when change must be combined with continuity. If then we are talking about structural change in the Church and if our endeavours are to find concrete expression, there will always be people, including office-holders, in the Church who are for and against these changes, particularly since the latter cannot simply be deduced from the very nature of the Church or from an analysis of the situation at the time – an analysis which can never be really complete – but remain matters of discretion, so that the antagonism between conservative and progressive forces in [131] the Church can never be wholly eliminated. It might even be said that, despite the enduring unity of the Church and the love that must prevail in it, this antagonism in some respects is more acute than it is in any other, secular society. It is really easy to see the reason for this and the clear awareness of the reason could help to a certain extent to defuse the antagonism. In secular societies decisions for or against structural change (unless they are radically revolutionary decisions in face of radically revolutionary situations) are mostly matters of discretion and refer to objects which can easily be seen to be of merely relative importance.

Within the Church also structural changes as such are concerned with similarly relative realities which are part of the present world and the sphere of the human. But churchgoing believers regard these things (rightly, in principle) as related in some sense 'sacramentally' to the properly divine sphere, to man's eternal destiny and salvation. That is why, despite their

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essential relativity, these things have a significance and importance for the believer going substantially beyond that of purely secular realities. These things (the word of Scripture, the properly sacramental signs and a great deal more of what is involved in the concrete structures of the Church) secure the relationship of the believer to the eternal. If he then gets the impression that these familiar realities in the Church establish authentically and vitally his relationship to God and his salvation or if he begins to feel that they are making this relationship difficult or even obstructing it, he will be inclined to apply himself with a passion for the eternal to defend the permanence of these realities or to insist on changing them. That is why dogmatic conflicts, even though they appear at first sight to be merely about 'forms', are carried on so passionately and stubbornly in the Church; that is why wars of religion have been carried on so relentlessly; that is why, over and over again in the Church, there have been passionate and stubborn conflicts about what might seem to outsiders or to those living at a later time to be almost ludicrously unimportant (from the date of Easter in the early Church to the modern reform of the Mass liturgy).

The struggle about earthly things in the Church is often carried on with a passion usually devoted to the eternal, since the two cannot very easily be clearly distinguished either objectively or emotionally. But if the distinction is seen and made clear in regard to the controversies on true or false structural changes in the Church it could help to defuse the struggles up to a point. The 'progressives' should not assume that their wishes are absolute (new proclamation of the gospel, new shaping of the [132] liturgy, more 'democratic' structures of the internal life of the Church, better and bolder fulfilment of the Church's mission to the world, etc.). They must see that it is possible to work for salvation, to love God and neighbour, even in the 'old' Church; that in this Church too, despite all justified desires for reform, it is possible to be a Christian; that in the traditional Church also (even if it ought to be different and better and if we must work and struggle to make it so) there is nothing in principle to deny the Christian a true and radical Christianity, particularly since a critical approach to the traditional structures of the Church is itself not only a natural right of man but a Christian right and a specific task of the Christian as such in the Church as such. On the other hand, the 'conservatives' must learn that in individual cases they may well judge rightly on matters of discretion, but that what they want is likewise only of relative importance. (For instance, the controversy about Latin or the vernacular in the liturgy: both are of relative importance, both are purely matters of discretion, it is possible to pray in both languages, it is possible to fight for either side, everyone can and must accept in patience and the love of unity a decision which always remains provisional, on whatever lines it is made by one authority or another.) Conservatives and progressives can prematurely and by over-simplification associate or even identify what is relative and historically conditioned with what is eternal and perennially valid. Then the conflict between the opportuneness or inopportuneness of structural changes in the Church becomes radicalized and poisoned; then the necessary tolerance, with which such a conflict and the decisions in such a conflict must take place, no longer exists and the conflict becomes profoundly un-Christian, because – on one side or the other or even on both sides – God, his salvation and his grace, are identified with things that simply are not God, but are subject to the changes of history, which demands change in continuity and continuity through change.

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[133]

10

DREAM OF THE CHURCH

NOT TOO FANTASTIC

I have a dream to relate. This is difficult. For, as far as I can discover subsequently, I rarely dream. Moreover, this dream that I have to relate has to do with the Church. And in this respect it is easy to have nightmares. But this is to be a fine, hopeful dream. All of which creates further difficulties. Nor, on the whole, is the Church a particularly attractive object for a dream. But if I am to dream of something vividly concrete, being a Catholic theologian, what occurs to me almost inevitably is Rome with the Pope; and, since it is to be linked with the future, the dream must create hope for the future unity of Christendom. Since however a good dream should not be too fantastic, this dream was in fact as I shall relate it.

With a former student of mine I was going up one of the fine staircases in the Vatican. Oddly enough this student had been employed as a theologian in the Vatican itself. This was not something that might have been taken for granted. For my students are more likely to be regarded there with suspicion. But sometimes things turn out well. Perhaps the reason for this lucky chance was that it was spring 1985 when we were going up this staircase, although there had been lifts even in the Vatican for a long time.

'I am taking you with me', said the student, 'to one of the sessions which are taking place here at the present time, at which about a dozen of the leading representatives of the Christian Churches from all over the world come to meet the Pope for a friendly conversation about the possibility at last of the ecumenical movement going beyond non-committal expressions of friendship by church leaders and profound discussions [134] by theologians, after it has been stagnating for ten years. The churchmen sit at a round table, so that it is not obvious who is above and who is below. The Pope permits one or two theologians to listen to the debates, a little to one side, particularly since they were engaged in preparing the documents for these discussions. It is not the first session, everything has been going well for some time, supervision at the door is a mere formality; I can easily take you with me without being noticed.'

Soon the session started. The people really had come from all parts of the world. You could see it in their faces. The whites were very numerous, but no longer a majority. The actual participants at first stood around talking in a relaxed way, then the Pope also came. Mutual greetings took place without ceremony, as between old friends. An African Protestant clergyman said a prayer. I did not get the impression that this was a mere ritual, of the kind usual before official church business is transacted. The Pope gave an impression of frankness and cheerfulness, reminding me by his lack of solemn dignity agreeably of John XXIII. He spoke English. What else could he have done? What he said was more or less as follows.

THE POPE'S SUGGESTION

'Gentlemen, dear brothers! We have certainly made good progress in our common efforts, even though we are still involved in the first – the dogmatic – section of our discussions and have not yet got down at all to any of the canonical, liturgical, pastoral questions. Today we come to what is certainly the most difficult of these dogmatic questions – that of the papal primacy in the Church – and in this first part of our negotiations to the question of the papal

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primacy of teaching, as this is understood in the Roman Catholic Church. What I have to say on this question is explained at greater length in the papers you have already received and – I assume – submitted to a critical examination. Consequently I will only indicate briefly once again the decisive points of this written report.

First of all, this report assumes that the question before us cannot be solved by drawing a practical conclusion from exegetical and historical investigations, important as these may be. This is what the Churches have been trying to do for four hundred years, but without result. We must at last accept the consequences and try a different method. I think we should start out from those convictions in the Churches which are [135] regarded in a given Church as essential to the Christian faith. With convictions of this kind, regarded as absolute (not that all opinions in the Churches are so regarded), it should be assumed in principle that they are true and consequently compatible with one another, although hitherto no one could or would see this compatibility. We should also start out from the assumption that in the Churches to be united not every proposition which one Church expressly affirms with an absolute commitment of faith is bound to have the same weight also in every other Church and must likewise be taught – even here and now – as an indisputable article of faith. All that needs to be assumed is that it is not absolutely rejected in this other Church, but that the possibility of a positive appropriation is left confidently to the history of faith as it will work out in the future. If there is – and none of us doubts this – a real history of faith, a history of dogma and not merely a history of theology, we cannot expect this history to take precisely the same form at exactly the same time in all the Churches, but can only assume that this lack of simultaneity is accepted by all the Churches.

I am quite sure that the Roman See in our time cannot merely rest secure in the possession of its traditional self-understanding, as it has done on the whole hitherto, until the other Churches come to recognize what we believe to be the legitimate authority of the Bishop of Rome, but must itself-even though apparently at great sacrifice – do something actively to bring about an agreement on this question. Certainly no Roman theologian has hitherto supposed that every individual power and every concrete style adopted by the popes over many centuries in fulfilling their task and exercising their authority pertained unambiguously and necessarily to the dogmatic nature of the Petrine ministry. But the Holy See itself has not hitherto made much effort to bring out clearly in practice the distinction between what must be absolutely firmly held as a matter of faith by the Catholic conscience and those matters of doctrine and practice relating to the Roman primacy which are time-conditioned and can be given up if a particular situation requires this. The paper I have handed to you attempts to make this distinction with reference to the teaching primacy. On this theme here are one or two further remarks.

Gentlemen, dear brothers in Christ! I think I can appreciate the difficulties you feel in regard to the teaching authority of the Pope as accorded to him at the First Vatican Council and left unchanged at the Second. At the moment we may leave aside the two Marian dogmas proclaimed [136] by Pius IX and Pius XII, since it has been made clear to us on other occasions that the objective content of these two Catholic dogmas are not necessarily to be rejected by non-Catholic Christians as absolutely incompatible with their faith. As we already said, there can be mutual agreement on the fact that purely exegetical investigations or historical investigations carried out by methods of purely secular history do not lead to a joint conclusion. For – I would like to say – the real difficulty of non-Catholic Christians is in regard to *future* possibilities, to conceivable future *ex cathedra* decisions by the Pope. In this connection, even though they are prepared in principle to recognize a Petrine ministry, such Christians think that they are not in a position to make out a kind of blank cheque for the Pope in regard to the future. It does not seem to them to be clear and unequivocal that divine providence, which keeps the Church in the truth of Christ, is necessarily bound to be

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victorious in its effects when the Pope defines something and not at another point and in a different way. To the non-Catholic Christian it seems that the Catholic concentration of the victorious grace of truth promised to the Church precisely on a particular and juridically determinable act of the Pope is a human materialization of the grace of truth. This legalization seems incredible to these Christians also because, according to the evidence of history, on the one hand the ordinary magisterium of the Pope in authentic doctrinal decisions at least in the past and up to very recent times was often involved in error and on the other hand Rome was accustomed to put forward and insist on such decisions as if there could be no doubt about their ultimate correctness and as if any further discussion of them was unbecoming for a Catholic theologian.

I wanted to say this once and for all without prejudice and explicitly, since even the Second Vatican Council did not speak clearly enough about such authentic but reformable Roman doctrinal decisions and since Roman procedure after the Council left something to be desired by way of straightforward clarity and modesty. Purely theoretical arguments on our side have little prospect of success in practice in face of these inhibitions on the non-Catholic side. But – and this is my firm intention – here in Rome we can attempt to show more clearly and in a more mandatory fashion than hitherto that the concrete mode of procedure before and for an eventual papal *ex cathedra* decision in future will certainly be of such a kind that a non-Catholic Christian will not need to fear in practice and concretely that his blank cheque will be filled in with a papal teaching that is bound to be opposed to his conscience in [137] regard to matters of faith. I am determined to codify a precise and transparent procedure defining exactly how the course of decision-making must run in Roman doctrinal decisions, if and as far as these decisions can still be expected in the future. Obviously I am prepared to accept suggestions as concrete as possible in regard to the content of such norms of procedure. At the moment however I want only to explain to you again briefly why such a procedure, although it does not yet exist, is compatible with the self-understanding of the Roman teaching primacy in the form binding on Catholics.

First of all it is a clear and conciliar teaching that a Pope even in *ex cathedra* decisions does not receive any new revelation from heaven. Consequently, when preparing for a doctrinal decision, the Pope must make use of all the human means at his disposal in this particular situation. But the moral norms implicit in this principle can be more clearly articulated and codified today in view of the present situation and the opportunities it offers. I would like to suggest what these norms could and should contain in at least one respect. When we learn from the First and Second Vatican Council that the Pope is infallible in an *ex cathedra* decision and that such decisions are irreformable of themselves and not in virtue of the consent of the Church, this merely means that these definitions do not acquire their definitive validity only by the *subsequent juridical* verification of their correctness by a higher legal authority in the Church, distinct from the Pope. But nothing of this implies anything more precise about the way in which such a papal decision itself comes to be.

The First Vatican Council also shows that papal infallibility is not independent of the irreversibly victorious promise of God to the Church as a whole. In an *ex cathedra* decision the Pope acts as head of the Church and of the whole episcopate as an authority that is restricted by the Church as a whole and its infallible faith. Consequently, in preparing *ex cathedra* decisions, the Pope must necessarily have recourse to the sense of faith of the whole Church, not in the form of a public opinion poll, but by looking to what is truly the Church's sense of faith. If such a recourse were not necessary, the Pope would need to appeal to a new revelation. But the Pope does not possess or receive any such revelation. He is the authentic spokesman of the Church's sense of faith and for this he has the assistance of the Spirit, an assistance which must not be understood as psychological inspiration, but which must mean the success, actually coming in the last resort from God, of his appeal to the [138] infallible

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sense of faith of the Church as a whole. This reference to the whole Church's sense of faith of course takes different forms at the different stages of the Church's history in the light of the opportunities available at any particular time. Today certainly an explicit recourse to the episcopate as a whole is absolutely morally necessary from the nature of the case. Today also this recourse is possible in the most varied ways. But it is not now merely a laudable practice, maintained also by my predecessors Pius IX and Pius XII (perhaps in ways that were not satisfactory in every respect), but an absolute requirement. Such an explicit appeal is technically quite feasible today, even apart from a general council. But in that case it is also a moral obligation. For how could the Pope today say honestly that he had done what was humanly possible and morally required to acquire a human certainty that his teaching was a part of the Church's assured sense of faith if he had wanted to dispense with this inquiry which is quite feasible at the present time?

It is obvious that such a consultation today would have to take place in certain forms now possible of explicitness, transparency, facilitating dialogue, discussion with theologians, investigation of the believers' sense of faith, and so on – in a word, in straightforward sincerity and making use of the publicity now taken for granted – even though I must admit that even up to recent times these procedures have not been considered clearly enough or practised in Rome, as is evident from a glance at very recent dogmatic declarations by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. If such procedures were clearly articulated, expressly laid down as binding and applied in practice, if moreover in addition to the consultation of the episcopate as a whole there were included a consultation of the more important church leaders whose Churches had entered into a union with Rome respecting their independence, the papal decision emerging from all this would be both a decision of faith of the Church as a whole and also a papal *ex cathedra* decision in the sense of Vatican I. With such procedures even non-Catholic Christians would no longer need to fear an arbitrary manipulation of the papal teaching authority opposed to the Spirit of Jesus and of the Church.

My dear brothers, I must ask your patience for a second consideration. The Roman Catholic faith in the existence of a papal teaching authority, which in principle is always involved in the permanent nature of the Church, even though it has not always been clearly explained, does not [139] imply that the actual exercise of this authority is the same at all times – even in the past this was not so – nor does it imply that it is independent of any historical and consequently varying preconditions. Because of the way in which the history of dogma of the first two millennia of the Church has usually been interpreted, we Catholics are accustomed to regard it as an increasingly progressive unfolding and articulation of the ultimate substance of faith in an increasing number of fresh individual explicit articles and consequently involuntarily to see the papal teaching primacy as actively involved in the emergence of these new and differentiating articles. Hitherto we have involuntarily assumed that the exercise of the Pope's teaching primacy, when he spoke *ex cathedra*, took the form of an explanation and laying down of articles which, although in the last resort implicit in the tradition of faith, nevertheless appeared to be somehow materially new and as previously scarcely explicitly palpable, as – for example – the two Marian dogmas of 1854 and 1950. But it seems to me that it is completely unproven and not at all probable that the papal teaching authority will continue to be exercised in this way in the future. The future history of doctrine of Christianity and the Church does not seem to be tending towards a further material differentiation of the substance of the Christian faith, but towards a new expression of the ultimate basic substance of Christianity, corresponding to the mental climate and sociopolitical situation of today and tomorrow. Consequently, it would be necessary to consider also how the papal teaching authority should be exercised in its diverse grades up to the highest if it is to endure into the future.

I do not need here to put forward an exact justification of this prognosis of the future

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history of dogma or, consequently, of the concrete way in which the papal teaching authority will be exercised. I would otherwise have to provide a more precise analysis of the mental climate of the world, of the present-day irreversible pluralism in a world that is nevertheless one, and thus clarify the assumptions drawn from secular history which affect the experience of faith of the world-Church today. Of course, this is not possible here. I appeal simply to your experience, brothers. In fulfilling your task, you all find that the message of the gospel offers a real hope for the future only when its innermost redeeming and liberating basic truth emerges from a direct, vital contact with men and the world as they are today and will be tomorrow. From that standpoint, I think, the future concrete exercise of the papal teaching primacy cannot be and cannot seek to be anything but a defence and [140] up-to-date new statement of the basic substance of Christianity, that is, of the faith which is as obvious to you as it is to us Catholics.

I do not want to pursue further this perspective of the future with reference to the material content of the papal teaching primacy. But if this perspective is on the whole correct and if the formal way of exercising this teaching authority is clearly and juridically assured also by the Roman See, then, I think, for non-Catholic Christians there is no longer any reason in *this* respect to refuse to enter into a union even with the Roman Church, leaving entirely open the question as to whether these other great, particular Churches, living in unity and peace with the Roman Church, also have to proclaim explicitly the doctrine of the papacy precisely in the form presented to us in Vatican I. If a concrete and practical agreement on the papal teaching primacy, on the lines I have just indicated, could be attained among the Christian Churches, it would not alone remove all difficulties felt by non-Catholic Christians in regard to the Pope.

What has been said does not of course answer the whole question of the concrete exercise of the power of *leadership* in regard to the whole Church as this is claimed by the papacy. But we have made progress on this question in the past twenty years, since even according to explicit declarations the Apostolic See is convinced that the future unity of the Church will not mean reducing all the Churches to a uniformity modelled on the present-day Roman Church of the West, but that the particular Churches in uniting with Peter may and should retain to the greatest possible extent their own laws, their fidelity to their own tradition and history, that even in regard to the mutual recognition of ministries such an agreement has been or can be attained in a form which the Apostolic See thought it could not accept even a short time ago. This however is no part of the theme at the present moment.

My dear brothers, I am leaving you alone for today. For it may be a good thing, without regard for me, for you to discuss with each other the questions which the memorandum I presented to you and the remarks I have just made attempted to answer.'

SPONTANEOUS REACTIONS

The Pope took leave of the others with very little ceremony. The whole team had got to work so well, each one knowing everyone else, that no [141] one thought it odd that all the former court ceremonial had disappeared. The other churchmen present stayed on, formed themselves into different groups and went on talking to each other. From our observation point in the background we could see that the conversation continued frankly and honestly, without bothering about subtle theological assurances. Admittedly I was able to catch only fragments of the conversation and I cannot now recall exactly who said the things that I managed to hear. To repeat: it was clear from their tone that none of them wanted to proclaim eternal truths or issue solemn decrees, but only to give their first impressions and explain their spontaneous reactions. Then one of them (I think it was an African) said: 'O God, I

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really can't understand why the whole thing should be such a terrible problem. Although we want to retain the autonomy of our Churches, we do really want *one* Church. And, while we co-operate in a "parliamentary" spirit, it is obvious to us that a concrete, living person must be the bearer and representative of this unity and must naturally have something to say about it. It would really seem ridiculous to me if we were to set out afresh to discover a representative of this kind, when we know from the history of the Church that one is already available.' He laughed and said: 'Perhaps that does not sound like very profound theology; there is really nothing in it about the nature of the Petrine ministry in the light of faith; we can leave it to others to think that one out. But why should not this simple consideration impose on me an obligation of coming to a realistic, concrete arrangement with the Roman See, so long as the latter requires from me no more than I can honestly give?'

Another person, who gave the impression of being a subtle theologian of the European style, began what almost amounted to a theological lecture. It could be seen that he was still under the influence of anti-Roman feelings from former times. This is more or less what he said: 'We have been listening to an account of a shrewd strategic retreat on the part of modern Roman theology, but that is not to say that this retreat is not acceptable or cannot be taken seriously. But what did we hear exactly? The Roman See hitherto and even at the Second Vatican Council insisted that an *ex cathedra* decision is infallible "of itself" and not in virtue of the consent of the Church. Now the Pope has simply placed this consent of the whole Church – which he had rejected – before instead of after the *ex cathedra* decision. Verbally he has not given up anything that he formerly claimed and yet he has admitted that we are right. He has got himself out of the noose. And who are we to object to this?'

[142] A third, evidently from the West, but looking a little more 'spiritual' than the second speaker, disagreed with this. 'I do not think', he said, 'that we can regard the Pope's declaration today in this way. After all, he justified his new attitude entirely with arguments drawn from his own tradition and always recognized as the starting point in Roman theology, even though no one had hitherto drawn from them the conclusions which the Pope put forward today and which he is prepared to put into practice. This sort of thing should not be suspected as a Roman trick. What in fact is happening is that progress is being made towards a unification by which it will become clear that it is possible to remain faithful to our own decision of faith without having to reject that of the others. As a result of this progress, after centuries-old obscurities, we can now see clearly that many more truths, the real meaning of which need not be abandoned, can enter into the one truth of Christ, more at any rate than we had hitherto thought, when we assumed that we had to interpret these many truths as contradicting each other. If the Pope really clearly, transparently and – for, all men of good will – palpably refers the decision he has reached back to the faith of the Church as a whole, we ought not to pronounce a decided "No" to the teaching primacy of the Pope.'

In my dream the churchmen's conversation continued in this way for a long time after the Pope's departure. It roused hopes because the impression evidently prevailed that a more concrete offer had to be made in response to the Pope's suggestion.

My dream had come to an end. When I told a friend about it, he suggested drily that it was the sort of dream that could be expected of a teacher of theology. For only someone who was forever teaching could make people go on talking so long in a dream: it was not a real dream pointing to a glorious future, but the continuation into the night of theological reflections begun during the day. But I maintained that it was better to dream of something that could be realized and realized soon than to dream in a general way of a future of the Church that no one could foresee. My friend said: 'Let us hope that you have dreamed of something that will really come about in a few years; at present, unfortunately, it does not seem likely.' But we may dream and hope.

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[143]

11

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

Our theme is ‘spirituality’, not an easy topic for discussion. The term itself is not by any means clear, but ‘piety’ or ‘devotion’ is even less apt to express the reality. Spirituality is a mysterious and tender thing, about which we can speak only with difficulty. As intense self-realization of the Christian reality in the individual person as individual, it is inevitably very different in every Christian, according the natural disposition, age, life-history, cultural and sociological milieu, the ultimate free and never wholly comprehensible uniqueness of the individual. For that very reason our theme is an exacting one and difficult to cope with. Moreover we are to consider the factors characterizing the spirituality of the Church of the *future* as such. But what do we know of the future of our history? What do we know of the future of the Church? Despite all modern futurology, how little, can we predict the secular future? How far is the future of the Church also beyond the scope of the planning and calculation of its people and ministers? Because of their formal authority and the unchangeability of their proper message, the latter are of course always liable to think that they are the masters of the Church’s history and can make unambiguous plans and issue clear directives; or, on the other hand, they might think that in the last resort nothing really important or surprising could happen, because in the ocean of history the Church is built on the rock of God’s eternity.

What far-reaching changes however of the most surprising kind do in fact take place in the Church! How little did we older people and ministers of the Church, who grew up in the Pian epoch of the Church with its monolithism, how little did we expect a Church of the kind we have [144] today? Those who brought Vatican II to a close wanted to break with the triumphalism of the Pian epoch and at the same time in a singularly ingenuous way and almost joyously proclaimed an *aggiornamento* of the Church in the world of today and tomorrow. How little did they reckon with what is going on in the Church today, something the Council did not cause but for which it acted almost as a catalyst? It is therefore almost impossible to speak of a future spirituality in the Church, since this spirituality is in fact also related to the unforeseeable destiny of the Church in its individual parts and in its totality. All this must be kept in mind from the beginning if we want to try to cope with this theme.

Nevertheless, we may venture to approach this theme directly if somewhat boldly. We are speaking – it must be made clear – of spirituality only in the Roman Catholic Church. From the outset, therefore, we are leaving aside the spirituality which obviously exists also in other Christian Churches as well as in the non-Christian religions, even though a good deal of what we have to say about this Catholic spirituality of the future may be true also of course of these other spiritualities and *vice versa*. We are leaving aside also the question – important enough for its own sake – about the changes Catholic spirituality may expect to undergo in the future as a result of the fact that the Christian Churches are coming closer together by their ecumenical efforts and that a more intensive interchange between the religious history of the Christian Churches and their future spiritual experiences is becoming possible. In dealing with our question we are also assuming without prejudice the faith as and in so far as it is proclaimed with ultimate binding force by the Church and its magisterium and as and in so far as we interpret appropriately this faith and the obligation it imposes, and grasp it as the firm basis of the spirituality of which we have to speak. In view of the impossibility of clearly predicting the future of the Church in the concrete and its future secular historical and sociological situation, we must not and may not be too worried as to whether we are talking

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of a spirituality existing or able to exist even now or of one that is coming into existence only tomorrow; whether and how far we are speaking of something that exists or will exist or only of something that ought to be today or tomorrow, whether we are proclaiming realities or unrealized ideals.

For a Catholic the *first* thing to be said about a future spirituality is quite obviously that, despite all change coming or to come, it is and will remain, albeit in a mysterious identity, the old spirituality of the [145] Church's history up to the present time. Consequently the spirituality of the future will be one related to the living God, who has revealed himself in the history of humanity, who has established himself in his most intimate reality – even as basic ground, as innermost dynamism and final end – at the very heart of the world and the humanity created by him.

Christian spirituality of the future also will be about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of Jesus Christ. This spirituality can never and may never degenerate into a mere humanism of a horizontal type. It will always be a spirituality of adoration of the incomprehensible God in spirit and in truth. This spirituality will always be related to Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen, as to the ultimate, victorious and irreversible self-promise of God, historically manifested to the world; it will be a discipleship of Jesus and will receive from him and from the concreteness of his life a norm, an internal structural principle, that can no longer disintegrate into a theoretical morality; it will always be an acceptance of the death of Jesus who, without any reassurance and yet absolutely openly, allowed himself in his death to fall into the abyss of God's incomprehensibility and incalculable decrees, in faith, hope and love, so that in this way and no other we attain to the infinite truth, freedom and salvation of God.

The spirituality of the future will also always be one living in the Church, receiving from it, giving itself to the Church, founded in it and sustaining it, even though it is as yet perhaps very uncertain what this implies exactly and concretely in the future. Such a spirituality of the future will also always be one that finds concrete expression and an ecclesial manifestation historically and sociologically in the sacraments of the Church, even though the concreteness of the relationship between the existentiality and the sacramentality of the self-realization of the Christian as such is in principle very variable even now and consequently can change considerably in the course of history. The Church's spirituality in the future – for the Church must always have a spirituality – will also have a sociological, political dimension facing on to the world, bearing a responsibility for this merely apparently secular world; and it may be said at once that this very dimension – which also pertains to spirituality as such – will in future presumably be more clearly possessed and filled up by the latter.

The spirituality of the future will be a spirituality of the Sermon on the Mount and of the evangelical counsels, continually involved in renewing its protest against the idols of wealth, pleasure and power. The [146] spirituality of the future will be a spirituality of hope, awaiting an absolute future, enabling man to be grimly realistic and continually to break down the illusion that he could himself, by his own power and shrewdness, produce in this world and in its continuing history the eternal kingdom of truth and freedom. The spirituality of the future will always preserve the memory of the past history of piety, will regard as stupid, inhuman and unchristian the view that man's piety is continually making a fresh start – unhistorically – at zero and consists in nothing but wild revolutions.

This future spirituality therefore will learn over and over again positively and negatively from the Church's past. On the one hand therefore it will always, as in the past, be open for new pentecostal beginnings emerging from the base, not organized and regulated from the outset by authority from above, but bursting out charismatically where the Spirit breathes as he wills, even though such new charismatic departures prove in the discernment of spirits to be truly produced by the Spirit, since, apparently hoping desperately and almost self-

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destructively, they also establish themselves humbly in the institutional Church without having first negotiated legalistically principles to ensure that they do not perish in this Church of institutions. The spirituality of the future will always be lovingly and familiarly immersed in the documents of the history of the piety of past times, since this is its own history. It will never leave aside as of no interest to itself the history of the saints, of the liturgy, of mysticism; in the future it will perhaps also develop quite new forms of evangelical fellowship and yet have love and sympathy for the spirit and concrete form of older religious orders which are still alive. The spirituality of the future will preserve the history of the Church's piety and will continually discover afresh that what is apparently old and past can offer the true future to our present time. That was the *first* thing to be said about the spirituality of the future. This first statement of course does not exclude but includes the possibility that many individual forms and shapes of the piety of the past in their concreteness are no more than what has been and the Church must have the sober courage forthrightly to abandon them.

A *second* thing can certainly be predicted of the spirituality of the future: compared to the spirituality of former times, it will certainly have to concentrate very clearly on what is most essential to Christian piety. Since what is essential and decisive in the Christian faith was more or less taken for granted and undisputed in our cultural group of the western [147] Church, during the past 1500 years, in public opinion and in society even in its secular fields, that faith was of course living and found expression in spirituality, but, really became interesting and attractive only when it ceased to be merely obvious and took concrete shape in the most varied individual types of piety, often in competition with one another. Devout people were deeply interested in the most diverse forms of devotion, particular religious practices, greatly varying styles of the religious life, each clearly distinguished from the others. For example (and all this is merely by way of example), succeeding one another and alongside one another, there were devotion to the Precious Blood, devotion to the Child Jesus and to Mary's Seven Dolours, a thoroughly organized intercession for the Holy Souls, an intensively cultivated practice of indulgences, etc.; clearly distinguished from one another were the very diverse spiritualities of the individual religious orders, the varying trends and tendencies in mysticism and their theological interpretation, a widespread practice of pilgrimage, the veneration of certain sanctuaries and miraculous pictures, and interest – sometimes scarcely intelligible today – in particular dogmas and theological opinions reflected in the piety of the time, etc.

All this will certainly not simply disappear from the consciousness and the life of the Church as such. For it can be observed that Rome even today is trying to keep alive some of these concrete individual forms of devotion. It would also be deplorable if everything were to disappear in a grey homogeneous spirituality and no one can say whether new and surprising concrete forms and practices of spirituality may not take shape in the future. But, in a bleak age of world-wide secularism and atheism, it may be presumed that far fewer individual flowers of Christian spirituality will be able to bloom. In this situation, even in the field of spirituality, concentration on the essential Christian beliefs is unavoidable and indispensable. There will certainly be Marian devotion and the veneration of saints in the future. And we can certainly only wish – and indeed in the light of the ultimate grounds of faith – that something of this kind will exist and even take on a new life. But we shall speak of Jesus and not of the Infant of Prague. We shall speak of Mary but have less to do with Lourdes and Fatima. In the future also there will be a eucharistic piety, including (we may hope) adoration of our Lord under the sacramental species. But this does not mean that the eucharistic cult with all its developments will retain in a living spirituality of the future the same position as in the past. I do not think that the piety of the future [148] will have the same interest in new dogmas as was the case – for example, in the field of Mariology – up to our own time.

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The spirituality of the future will be concentrated on the ultimate data of revelation: that God is, that we can speak to him, that his ineffable incomprehensibility is itself the very heart of our existence and consequently of our spirituality; that we can live and die with Jesus and properly with him alone in an ultimate freedom from all powers and authorities; that his incomprehensible cross is set up above our life and that this scandal reveals the true, liberating and beatifying significance of our life. These and similar things were not lacking of course even in the spirituality of former times, but they will make their impact more clearly, more forcefully and with a certain exclusiveness on the future spirituality of a bleaker age. Why should not this be so, if man and the Church actively realize that they are not masters of their history, but must so shape their spirituality that it is adapted to the historical situation imposed on us and not made by us and consequently should be credible even for non-Christians. Even this statement is of course burdened with all the reservations that are involved in the unforeseeability of the future.

There is a *third* point to be made. The spirituality of the future will not be supported or at any rate will be much less supported by a sociologically Christian homogeneity of its situation; it will have to live much more clearly than hitherto out of a solitary, immediate experience of God and his Spirit in the individual. Of course as such and in principle *fides qua*, which stamps all spirituality, has always been understood as an event involving personal responsibility, the decision and freedom of the individual. For this decision of faith in particular is less than anything else in a person's existence something for which he can shift responsibility to others, to other causes or to other causes preceding it. But formerly this act of faith on the part of the individual took place within a homogeneously Christian milieu, even though of the secular and bourgeois society; it was possible to believe what was believed by more or less everyone at least in the public sphere and in verbal communication, so that it almost seemed as if a person was relieved – particularly in the dimension of faith – from the supposedly untransferable burden of responsibility, of the decision of faith against unbelief, of hope against all hope, of unrewarded love; and in the area of spirituality it was a question only of the intensity by which we ourselves choose on a particular occasion what is taken for granted by everyone. Today it is different. [149] Christian faith today (and consequently spirituality) must be continually freshly realized: in the dimension of a secularized world, in the dimension of atheism, in the sphere of a technical rationality, declaring from the very outset that all statements which cannot be justified in the light of this rationality are meaningless or amount (in Wittgenstein's words) to 'mysticism' about which we can only be silent if we want to retain our integrity and sobriety.

In such a situation the lonely responsibility of the individual in his decision of faith is necessary and required in a way much more radical than it was in former times. That is why the modern spirituality of the Christian involves courage for solitary decision contrary to public opinion, the lonely courage analogous to that of the martyrs of the first century of Christianity, the courage for a spiritual decision of faith, drawing its strength from itself and not needing to be supported by public agreement, particularly since even the Church's public opinion does not so much sustain the individual in his decision of faith, but is itself sustained by the latter. Such a solitary courage however can exist only if it lives out of a wholly personal experience of God and his Spirit.

It has already been pointed out that the Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all. If by mysticism we mean, not singular parapsychological phenomena, but a genuine experience of God emerging from the very heart of our existence, this statement is very true and its truth and importance will become still clearer in the spirituality of the future. For, according to Scripture and the Church's teaching, rightly understood, the ultimate conviction and decision of faith comes in the last resort, not from a pedagogic indoctrination from 'outside, supported by public opinion in secular society or in the Church, nor from a

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merely rational argumentation of fundamental theology, but from the experience of God, of his Spirit, of his freedom, bursting out of the very heart of human existence and able to be really experienced there, even though this experience cannot be wholly a matter, for reflection or be verbally objectified. Possession of the Spirit is not something of which we are made factually aware merely by pedagogic indoctrination as a reality beyond our existential awareness (as great theological schools, especially of post-Tridentine theology asserted), but is experienced inwardly. This cannot be explained here in detail and at length. But the facts are there: the solitary Christian makes the experience of God and his liberating grace in silent prayer, in the final decision of conscience, unrewarded by anyone, in the unlimited hope which can no longer cling [150] to any particular calculable assurance, in the radical disappointment of life and in the powerlessness of death – if these things are only voluntarily borne and accepted in hope, in the night of the senses and the spirit (without, as the mystics say, being able in this respect to claim a special privilege), etc. All this however assumes that he accepts the experiences merely indicated here and does not run away from them in what is in the last resort a culpable fear; under these circumstances he really has the experience, even though he cannot attempt to interpret it or give it a theological label.' It is only in the light of this experience of God, which is the real basic phenomenon of spirituality, that theological indoctrination by Scripture and the Church's teaching acquires its ultimate credibility and existential enforceability.

As we said, this personal experience of God,[1] cannot be more precisely explained, described or – better – invoked. In so far, on the one hand, as it is the very heart of all spirituality, while we on the other hand are asking here about the peculiarities of the spirituality of the future, we shall examine some typical characteristics of this original human experience of God in both transcendence and grace which will belong (or belong even now) to this spirituality of the future.

We may now attempt to describe a *fourth* characteristic of the spirituality of the future which is part of a singular dialectical unity with the third, the solitary experience of God on the part of the individual. What we mean is the fraternal fellowship in which the same all-sustaining experience of the Spirit becomes possible: fraternal community as a real and essential element of the spirituality of tomorrow. By this is meant a phenomenon perhaps only slowly becoming clear, something of which we older people can speak only hesitantly and cautiously while still awaiting its future. I think that we older people did not formerly perceive what is meant by this phenomenon or at best perceived only traces of it, even though in looking back over the whole course of the history of spirituality it is possible frequently to discover something of the kind. By origin and education we older people were spiritually individualists, even though we gladly carried out the communal liturgy as our obvious, objective duty. Even though the phenomenon we mean, apparently being revived occasionally today, might also be discovered as existing in former times, on the whole the experience of the Spirit properly so called, [151] spirituality in its true sense, 'mysticism', was understood and lived as obviously a purely individual occurrence for one person and for himself alone occasionally in solitary meditation, in the individual experience of conversion, in the course of a retreat, in the monastic cell, etc.

Where was there a communal experience of the Spirit, clearly conceived, desired and experienced, in a general way – as it evidently was at the Church's first Pentecost – that was not presumably an accidental local gathering of a number of individualistic mystics, but an experience of the Spirit on the part of a community as such? Such a 'collective experience' cannot and of course is not meant to take away from the individual Christian his radical

[1] Cf. K. Rahner/P. Imhof/H. N. Loose, *Ignatius von Loyola* (Freiburg 1978), pp. 10 ff.; ET: *Ignatius of Loyola* (New York/Toronto/London 1979), pp. 11-13.

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decision for faith coming from his solitary experience of God nor to spare him this, since human individuality and solidarity are not factors to be balanced against each other nor can they replace each other. But this is not to say that an experience of the Spirit in a small community is as such a priori inconceivable, even though we older clerics at least never or scarcely ever experienced anything of this kind and still less attempted to practice it. Why should it not happen? Why should not younger people and clergy now and even more in the future have easier access to such a communal experience of the Spirit? Why should not – as part of the spirituality of the future – phenomena like joint consultation among Christians, genuinely human communication in truly human and not merely external technical dimensions, events in group dynamics, etc., be embraced, exalted and sanctified by a communal experience of the Spirit of God and thus become a truly fraternal fellowship in the Holy Spirit? For this kind of thing in the last resort does not need to take place under extravagant accompanying circumstances apparently almost of a parapsychological character, such as are seen occasionally in American enthusiastic groups of the Pentecostal movements. There is no need to speak in tongues, no need to attempt to produce any phenomenon of healing by laying on of hands. In tomorrow's spirituality also sound psychology with all its critical conclusions must remain valid. But even if this factor is not naively ignored, even if not every kind of singular eruption from consciousness or sub-consciousness, not every transmission of insights and feelings from one person to another, is immediately interpreted as an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this is far from saying that there cannot be anything like a communitarian experience of the Spirit at all.

Why could there not also be jointly a really spiritual discernment of spirits? Is the prayer to the Holy Spirit at the beginning of a consultation [152] between Christians concretely and practically merely a pious opening ceremony, after which everything goes on as otherwise at a secular board meeting with the management making use of purely rational arguments? In the spirituality of the future can there not be a kind of guru, a spiritual father giving to another person an instruction filled with the Spirit, which cannot be completely broken down into psychology, theoretical, dogmatic and moral theology? In the spirituality of the future as such, I suspect anyway that the element of a fraternal, spiritual fellowship, of a communally lived spirituality, can play a greater part and be slowly but courageously acquired and developed. I have no recipes to offer as to how exactly all this might happen. But this certainly does not mean that there are no starting points and ways of access for such a spirituality in fellowship as such, even though a critical transposition of group-dynamics and similar occurrences into a truly spiritual happening is still to be sought, even though communal prayer as an external rite and communal Scripture reading as the study of exegesis by several people together and an instructive sermon in the traditional sense do not constitute that communal spiritual event which is here envisaged as an important element of future spirituality.

In conclusion, a *fifth* element of the spirituality of the future may be mentioned here: it will have a new ecclesial aspect. Regarded abstractly and in principle, this ecclesial character of Catholic spirituality is in itself something that must be taken for granted at all times, since we are talking about a spirituality rooted in a common faith and always to be sacramentally realized. But there is no need to deny or conceal the fact that this ecclesial aspect of a Catholic spirituality in the future will take a form somewhat different from that to which we were accustomed, especially in the last century and a half of the Pian epoch of the Church. At least once in this period the Church was the object of an almost fanatical love, regarded as our natural home, sustaining and sheltering us in our spirituality, where whatever we needed was available as a matter of course and had only to be willingly and joyfully appropriated. The Church supported us, it did not need to be supported by us.

Today all this is different. We do not see the Church so much as the *signum elevatum in*

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nationes, as it was acclaimed at the First Vatican Council. What we now see is the poor Church of sinners, the tent of the pilgrim people of God, pitched in the desert and shaken by all the storms of history, the Church laboriously seeking its way into the future, groping and suffering many internal afflictions, striving over and over again [153] to make sure of its faith; we are aware of a Church of internal tensions and conflicts, we feel burdened in the Church both by the reactionary callousness of the institutional factor and by the reckless modernism that threatens to squander the sacred heritage of faith and to destroy the memory of its historical experience. The Church can be an oppressive burden for the individual's spirituality by doctrinalism, legalism and ritualism, to which true spirituality, if it really is authentic and genuine, can have no positive relationship. But none of this can dispense the spirituality of the individual from having an ecclesial character, least of all at a time when solidarity and sociability in the secular field are obviously bound in the future to increase and cannot decline. Why then could not the spirituality of the future take the form of a superior, duplicate naivety, marked by wisdom and patience, which has an ecclesial character because of the fact and in the very fact that it bears and endures as a matter of course the misery and inadequacy of the Church? Even Origen in his day knew that the Pneumatomachians could not be allowed to leave the Church, but, in patience, humility, bringing about the descent of God into the flesh of the world and the Church, and in love, would have to establish their possession of the Spirit in the concrete Church just as it is and as, in spite of all necessary and due reforms, it will remain.[2]

This kind of attachment to the Church must be part also of the spirituality of the future. Otherwise it is elitist arrogance and a form of unbelief, failing to grasp the fact that the holy Word of God has come into the flesh of the world and sanctifies this world by taking on himself the sin of the world and also of the Church. The ecclesial aspect of the spirituality of the future will be less triumphalist than formerly. But attachment to the Church will also in the future be an absolutely necessary criterion for genuine spirituality: patience with the Church's form of a servant in the future also is an indispensable way into God's freedom, since, by not following this way, we shall eventually get no further than our own arbitrary opinions and the uncertainties of our own life selfishly caught up in itself.

Allowing for all reservations about the unforeseeability of the concrete shape of future Catholic spirituality, have I succeeded in naming some few perhaps arbitrarily selected particular characteristics of this spirituality? I can't be certain, but may I hope so?

[2] Cf. K. Rahner, *Erfahrung des Geistes,* 2nd ed. (Freiburg 1977).

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[154]

12

UNITY OF THE CHURCH – UNITY OF MANKIND

I. UNITY

1. The Concept 'Unity'

Before dealing with the essential theme, I would like first of all to put forward some more or less general reflections, enabling us to make a preliminary examination of a number of concepts that will be useful later when we come to the theme itself. In the scholastic philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages there are quite detailed and penetrating reflections to be found on the four transcendental notions: *ens*, *unum*, *verum*, *bonum* (being, one, true, good). For this philosophy, 'one' or 'unity' is a transcendental notion, transcendentality – that is, super-categoriality, super-regionality – being understood in the light of both the knowing subject and its object. For Aquinas the transcendentality of the notion of *unum* also directly implies the profound, obvious and simultaneously unmanageable axiom: *Non enim plura secundum se uniuntur* – plurality as such is not a ground of unity. That is to say: what is absolutely disparate, that which has nothing common in any respect, in any way, is impossible and inconceivable. And, conversely, everything that is, that is possible and conceivable, rests on an ultimate solidarity which both embraces the difference of existents from one another and the difference between existentiality and knowability, between subject and object, and means in the last resort what we understand by God: the unity that exists in itself, preceding all plurality and sustaining all diversity. (It should also be noted that the metaphysical [155] monotheism, briefly indicated above, respected by all the great metaphysical systems, is of course not the same thing as the religious and theological monotheism which Christianity together with the Old Testament and Islam professes. But for the moment there is no need to discuss this.) In the light of this ultimate primal unity, every individual existent – whose true and not merely apparent difference from other things is presupposed here as a primal datum – necessarily possesses both an internal unity of essential elements that are nevertheless distinguishable from one another and also a real and untransferable relationship to whatever else is real.

2. Unity as Existing and as Task

If, together with the above assumption, we also assume that everything other than the divine primal unity itself is not simply present as wholly static but is part of a world of becoming, then, within this world distinct from God, we must necessarily distinguish several concepts of unity. In the individual existent there is a unity already present which implies both the positivity of the sensible unitedness of the plural essential constitutive elements together with the unity of quiddity and actuality and also the negativity of being different and thus delimited and distinguished from other realities. Without such a unity already present in the existent with its positivity and negativity, any meaningful individual statement as also subjectivity and responsible freedom would in the last resort be inconceivable. An integrating and delimiting unity thus present from the beginning does not exclude the relatedness of each individual existent to reality as a whole, nor does it ever deny a world of becoming in which every existent is dependent on all the rest, in which under the dynamism of absolute being

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evolution proceeds with qualitative leaps.

If and in so far as each individual existent with its initial unity belongs to a world of *becoming* and unity is a transcendental determination of every existent as such – that is, must also belong to the goal of this becoming itself – then to every existent there belongs also a unity imposed on it *as a task*, a *unity still to be realized* as *telos* (goal) of its becoming. In its becoming every existent is oriented to a unity to be acquired, to unity as a goal of this becoming, even though the concrete content of the unity to be attained cannot be deduced from the formal and somewhat empty concept of unity, even though – where it is a question [156] of the existing reality of the subject – the unity to be acquired is an act of freedom and of history, the content of which cannot simply be deduced from the unity already present, but must be realized and only in this way reaches an understanding of itself.

3. Unifying Unity

If and in so far as coming to be can never be understood as originating from empty nothingness, both the unity already present in the individual existent and also the unity imposed as a task must be understood as sustained by the unifying unity of the absolute being that we call 'God', so that the *already present unity* of the individual existent and the *unity to be acquired* of the existent coming to be presuppose an ultimate *unifying unity*. At the same time, as participating in the divine unity, *partial* unifying unities are wholly conceivable and even demonstrable in the world distinct from God.

Unity as the task of an individual existent can be related both to the greater internal unity of an existent and to a greater unity of such an existent with the rest of the world's reality. This duality of the unity to be acquired is not in principle self-contradictory; growing, reconciliatory unity of the internal, constitutive elements of an individual existent and reconciliatory incorporations of the realities outside the particular existent – in principle, at least – are mutually dependent. The unity to be achieved of an increasing interiorization and the increasingly far-ranging quest to include a wider environment are correlative. But this implies that the increasingly close approach to the unity to be achieved carries with it also a continual growth of the internal and external elements of that unity. In this way unity as task remains within the world of becoming and of history as such always as a goal approached merely asymptotically, never finally attained, since advancing unity is always producing new material that has still to be integrated into unity. The realization (even though asymptotically) of unity as a task, as distinct from the unity present from the beginning, is not an external, additional reality, but the completion of the initial unity itself; the history of the realization of unity as a task is the history of the unity present from the beginning, the latter being found again in the former.

[157]

4. Unity through Love

Corresponding to the transcendentality of the concept of unity, initial unity, unity as task and unifying unity, are analogical concepts which are realized or to be achieved in essentially different ways, depending on whether it is a question of the dimension of nature or that of the history of free subjects. In so far as the history of free subjects – although it cannot be reduced to the pure history of nature – carries with it the history of nature as an intrinsic element of itself and as environment, with the question of the initial unity and the realization of the unity to be achieved of the personal history of mankind, the counter-question of the history of nature cannot be left out of consideration.

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Since however in the dimension of the free history of personal subjects unity as a task can never consist of a *homogenization* of the subjects that are its elements but only in a *reconciliation* of innumerable subjects, each different from the others and simultaneously (as subjects of unlimited transcendentality) possessing the whole in each individual and each in a unique way, the asymptotic realization of the unity to be achieved in the dimension of personal history can be produced only by what cannot be described except as *love*, not in the sense of mere sentimentality or as merely personal feeling but understood in a real and ontological sense. For love understood in this way is wholly the consummation of unity in accepting the absolute otherness of *everyone* else (in accepting *this* other as one's very own) and thus the reconciliation between universal unity and enduring plurality, which itself is accepted as good, as its own, by the loving subject.

5. Absolute Unifying Unity – God

Within a world coming to be and continually producing new plurality – plurality to be again unified and reconciled – in the dimension of free subjects and of history, unity as a task always remains a goal attainable only asymptotically. Consequently, without a fatal levelling out of the plurality and diversity of personal subjects, an absolute reconciliation and unity is conceivable only if the absolute unifying unity that we call God imparts himself to, reconciling and unifying, this plurality, and in this offer of himself by his own power is accepted also in the love of the plural realities of the world for one another and for this absolute unifying [158] unity. This absolute reconciliation is not merely abstractly conceivable, but the innermost dynamism of reality and a goal to be victoriously attained: such is the faith of Christianity, for which unity is not merely always a still awaited Utopia but a real hope, since the unifying unity that we call God is not only the sustaining ground of the world's continually renewed will for unity, but has established itself in this world as the ultimate determination of the world itself.

In view of the transcendentality of the concept of unity it is obvious that everything said hitherto remains in an abstract vacuum. Indeed, in so far as all man's transcendentality and consequently his concepts are necessarily lost, yielding and being reduced to silence, in the absolute mystery of God and his incomprehensibility, this obscurity of all transcendental notions belongs necessarily also to the notion of unity, without the intellectual subject being permitted – overtaxed and frustrated – to dissociate himself from such concepts.

II. UNITY OF MANKIND

Under what we may hope is not an entirely false assumption, that the concepts just discussed and their correlations might be useful for our main reflections, let us turn, somewhat abruptly, to our more precise theme.

1. A Theological Theme

We shall look first of all at the unity of mankind, regarding this theme, not as merely philosophical or anthropological, historical or socio-political, but as theological. A theological statement about the unity of mankind is meant on the one hand to be understood as properly theological – that is, one made in the light of revelation – but on the other hand is concerned with a reality or task which at first sight we are accustomed to regard as secular,

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on which in theory and practice there are *others* besides preachers of the Christian faith and theologians who consider themselves competent. The theoretical question arising from this may not be very clear, but cannot be explicitly discussed at this point. If and in so far as Christian faith makes statements about what first appears to be a secular unity of mankind, while the authorization [159] for such statements remains at present far from clear, we can be content at this point in our reflections with the fact that the statements are made as an *offer* to man's secular self-understanding so that it can be asked whether the latter is in agreement with them. If the offer is accepted, it could strengthen in a very radical way man's secular understanding of the unity of mankind, as long as it is assumed that the Christian message of this unity still retains considerable historical force at the present time and for the future.

The conviction of the unity of mankind is part of the Christian message. Perhaps today we take this belief very much for granted and perhaps also have the impression that we can manage without the agreement of the Christian faith in this respect, even though we are not at all sure what this unity of mankind implies and what not. If this is our impression, we ought at least to wonder, apart from anything else, whether its obviousness is not a secularized heritage from Christianity, a heritage which would be fatally threatened if once the sun of Christianity were really to sink entirely behind the horizon of history.

2. Biological Unity

Christianity however in any case declares its belief in the unity of mankind, regardless of whether this belief is to be understood as a proper and immediate object of Christian revelation or as an assumption with which – even though in itself secular – the essential content of Christian faith cannot dispense and which it consequently also affirms. This unity of mankind is first of all understood as a datum. Whether it reflects on this or not, whether it wants to be or not, mankind is one. The traditional statement about this original unity of mankind interpreted it in terms of what was known as monogenism – the doctrine that the human race as a whole descends from a numerically single human couple – which was strongly emphasized in Pius XII's encyclical *Humani generis*, then even prepared as a definition in a preconciliar scheme of Vatican II and later sank without trace at the Council itself.

If today we regard this biological monogenism as a model to represent the permanently valid unity of mankind and not as the actual content of the theological statement about this unity, we do not mean that the unity of mankind is no longer part of the content of faith. All that needs to be done is to interpret and substantiate it in a different way. We cannot [160] explain it more closely here, but the fact is that this unity extends throughout all man's dimensions, finding appropriate expression at each point. Despite their biological descent from the animal kingdom, all human beings share a biological solidarity such that it clearly separates them from all – even higher – animals. They are all capable of reproducing their species with one another and only with one another. Their biological existence is not merely the basis of their authentic humanness and culture, but, conversely – unlike any other animals – it is in turn affected by these things. All human beings are able to enter reciprocally into a specifically human intercommunication and association in all man's dimensions. Actual barriers between geographically settled areas, between races and languages, in principle, can always and everywhere be surmounted. The differences of racially, geographically, historically conditioned mentalities do not constitute an absolute impediment to mutual understanding and cultural exchange in which individual nations each in its specific history can communicate and have always communicated with one another. By and large, whenever and wherever human beings recognize themselves as intellectually personal subjects with an

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ultimately unlimited transcendentality and thus as subjects of a free history, which always has also a religious dimension, and so too as moral beings with an absolute reciprocal moral claim; if then they cannot detect this particular kind of reciprocal relationship among other living beings in this world, they become aware of an exclusive unity on the part of mankind which is unknown among other – even biological – earthly realities.

3. One Salvation for All

Christianity radicalizes this existing and known unity of mankind with its teaching that all human beings, despite differences of race and history, diversity of cultures, are not only called into existence by one and the same God, but also have one and the same final destiny, which consists in attaining God's self-communication in itself. Christian faith is aware of a universal history of salvation, common to all mankind, existing from the very outset, always effective, universally present as the most radical element of the unity of mankind, not first slowly spreading out from a particular and regional history of salvation, but ultimately preceding the latter, which is no more than its particular and tangible [161] manifestation. The universalism of the one salvific will of God in regard to all mankind, which establishes the final unity of mankind, is the sustaining ground of all particular history of salvation and religion.

Even at this point of our reflections more concrete questions could of course be raised, but we cannot enter into these now. Thus the question might be raised about a human, moral and Christian justification of racial intermarriage: a question which has not always been answered in the same way in Christendom, although it has not merely a secular human but also a religious and Christian aspect.

4. Sin

Christian teaching about the already existing unity of mankind involves further distinctions. It was pointed out earlier that this initial unity within the dimension of personal, free subjects and history is not simply static, but, as a task for mankind's historical freedom, has itself a history and thus can also be damaged and destroyed. The Christian doctrine of original sin, the full implications of which cannot of course be developed here, seems to me to involve the conviction that sin as selfishness, opposed to the unifying force of love, always and everywhere – not merely in the dimension of a personal interiority, but also in social life – affects the history of mankind and that this tragic situation will remain a permanent existential of mankind's history to the very end. But this means that the present unity of mankind is not merely not yet completed with the realization of mankind's unity as task, but is also damaged and disturbed, even though not simply destroyed, and will remain so – albeit in continually changing shapes and forms – to the end of history. Striving to realize the unity of mankind as task, an effort that always grows out of the sinful primal ground of history, will also continue in fact to produce new shapes and sociological objectivations of the disturbed state of mankind's unity.

From that standpoint the achievement of the unity of mankind as a task does indeed remain the goal always set before mankind in its history of freedom in the light of its initially present unity, but always retains at the same time the character of a Utopia never entirely to be realized within the course of history. Awareness of the permanent sinfulness of humanity – and thus of the always utopian and unattained pure realization of its unity – does not imply any authorization for adopting a static [162] conservative mentality and renouncing both

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evolutionary and revolutionary attempts to realize a greater unity of mankind; but it forbids us to regard any concretely attained unity of mankind as pure, as absolute, as *alone* legitimate, and for that very reason really to lapse into a static conservatism.

5. Finite Unifying Unity

In the first part of these reflections we attempted, at least by way of suggestion, to gain some idea of a unifying unity. In an absolute sense of course God, and he alone, is the initially existing unifying unity, the dynamism of that unity which arises as a task, growing out of a unity already existing in mankind's history of freedom. But at least in the history of humanity there are also finite, particular and regional unifying unities. Over and over again in the history of mankind there emerge personal or sociological factors which, rightly or wrongly, claim not only to attain their own unity in themselves and in peace with their environment and with the people around them, but also to be for other sociological groups the bearers and protagonists of unity as a task. The claim to exercise such an unselfish function of a unifying unity towards others has often been made in the course of mankind's history. Those responsible include groups, nations, concrete supporters of a particular ideology, individuals.

Ancient Rome claimed such a function for its *Orbis*; Byzantium and, up to the nineteenth century, the Holy Roman Empire ascribed to themselves such a task for the peace and unity of human beings; in the ideologies of modern Spanish and Anglo-Saxon colonialism the idea of an active agent, a bearer of such unifying unity lived on. And today, when ideas of this kind of supremacy in the unselfish realization of a peaceful unity of mankind seem taboo, they continue to be secretly at work. In the sense of mission for freedom and order in the world continually revived by the U.S.A., in Moscow's claim to be the centre of orientation of the socialist world as a kind of 'third Rome', even today the ideas of the bearer of a unifying unity really live on.

If and in so far as Christianity, despite its proclamation of a universal salvation already present and effective everywhere, is also aware of a geographically and nationally particular bearer of this mission (ancient Israel, the primitive Church, Rome, etc.), it evidently regards the idea [163] of such bearers of unifying unity as legitimate in principle and not merely as one that inevitably arises from time to time. The question might be raised at this point as to whether the older Europe did not give up too quickly and in too cowardly a fashion its claim to exercise such a function in regard to the rest of the world, whether it now sees its mission as consisting merely in defending itself as a consumer society, at the same time of course making excuses in a few well-chosen words for its abandonment of its former mission to the world.

Is unity – we must ask more precisely – even today still a task for mankind? And, at least as a goal to be approached asymptotically, in what is it supposed to consist? It cannot be disputed and need not be explained at length that, despite all disunity, all dissension and all increasingly menacing conflicts, there is in practice in contemporary history a trend towards a greater unity. Histories of nations, formerly largely separated by a no man's land, are moving more closely to one another today; individual cultural groups, profoundly different among themselves, even today under the influence of a rapid development, are overlaid by a rational-technical world-civilization. Every political or cultural event anywhere in the world has a significance for all nations and regions of the world. Everywhere there are militant ideologies in the most diverse forms expecting and working to gain their victory everywhere in the world. There are the United Nations and industrial organizations that are supranational. There is cultural exchange to an extent formerly impossible, networks of news communication becoming increasingly closely interwoven, continually growing tourism, scientific

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organizations which are international by their very nature, and so on. There is no doubt that the unity of mankind is in fact growing.

6. Unifying Atheism?

It might be said that this fact, being concrete and inexorable, must also have its justification as a real task of mankind. We might therefore try also to justify at a deeper level as a truly human and moral task the pursuit of the unity of mankind: a unity which is being increasingly clearly realized. In accordance with what we said at an earlier stage, we could point to the fact that the differentiation of mankind, its cultures and mentalities – that is, the creation of a greater amount of material not yet united and still to be reconciled in unity – is increasing to the same [164] extent and consequently that every success in achieving the unity of mankind in its turn creates new tasks. We could point to the fact that the unity of mankind as a task to be realized in history is always veiled by the unpredictability of history, where there is apparently no really palpable and absolutely effective individual authority planning in advance and effectively carrying out its plan for the whole course of history. We cannot deal at greater length here with this and many other matters connected with the unity of mankind as a task. All that we shall do is to point to some, mainly theological aspects of the problem as a preparation for the theological reflections on the unity of the Church that we still have to work out.

Wherever and in so far as it is realized, the formally and fundamentally legitimate unity of mankind as a task of its history is marked concretely by the stigma of sin. Since good and evil can never be clearly separated within the course of history, any unity that is achieved will always have something of the character of an enforced, oppressive unity; never and nowhere will it be purely the expression of conciliatory love and justice. It is from this standpoint, I think, that the permanent theological significance of the saga of the Tower of Babel becomes intelligible. The separation of peoples and languages, rendering impossible any attempt to unify the histories of individual nations, can be seen as a barrier set up by God's salvific providence against a collective revolt by a humanity united against God. Is it surprising then that, at the same time and to the same extent as mankind becomes united and as collective representatives of unifying unity again make their appearance in order to achieve this unity, a militant atheism comes to the fore, hoping and aspiring to become the one 'world-religion' of united humanity? The representatives of such an atheism and the incentives to it are very varied even today; its prospects may be very diversely estimated; a theological interpretation that discovers in it a positive function for salvation-history need not be excluded. But this world-wide and militant atheism as an obvious sociological phenomenon is nevertheless something radically new in the history of humanity, even though the believer is sure that the very person who claims to be an atheist cannot from the very outset be entirely deaf to the silent call of God. At any rate for the theologian of the history of humanity, at the point where the unity of mankind as a task is beginning to be realized, atheism is a phenomenon that he cannot lightly dismiss on the plea that there have always been atheists and now there are a few more of them. The unity of mankind and atheism as a sociological [165] phenomenon have something to do with each other and theology must think hard about this, if on the one hand it explains the growing unity of mankind as a positive task for mankind but is aware at the same time that it is thus inevitably forcing faith into a situation which has never hitherto existed.

7. Unifying Christian Europe?

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The unity of mankind, increasingly prevailing today, started out in fact from what was once Christian Europe. Rational and technical civilization, with its sociological and political power-potential, is of European origin; the West was the bearer of the unifying unity which inaugurated the realization of the task of uniting mankind. None of this is altered by the fact that this bearer did not merely or primarily regard itself as the representative of a Christian mission, but as the bearer of a technical and rational civilization which it thrust peacefully or forcefully on mankind as a whole, particularly since this secular civilization had itself essentially Christian origins, even though its distortions and consequences cannot simply be blamed solely on Christianity as such with its desacralization of the world. But the question then is: What is the theological meaning – that is, what is the meaning for salvation-history – of this fact, which certainly no one will simply and forthrightly dispute? Despite the necessity of making careful distinctions in answering this question, it can certainly be said that Christianity – whose active missionary bearer was in fact Europe as set between the great spatial blocks of Asia, Africa and America – through this united civilization for the whole world proceeding from it, but becoming itself depraved, actually even though largely unintentionally created the concrete conditions to enable Christianity to become a world-religion.

None of this can be regarded as a matter of course, since even a group of nations without a Christian history could be conceived in principle and abstractly as active bearer of the unification of mankind. But on the other hand it is actually and concretely scarcely conceivable that Christianity should acquire a real presence (which is not necessarily the same thing as a majority) in the world as a whole by a purely verbal mission without the substructure of a historical, cultural and civilizatory intercommunication between Christian and non-Christian nations. The global mission of Christianity may not strive (as it often has done) for a [166] homogenization of the nations, following the European pattern, and by and large did not in fact achieve anything of this kind. But this in no way alters the fact that Christian missionary work not only made its own contribution to the unification of mankind, but itself needed concretely and practically a greater historical and cultural unity of mankind of a secular character and that this greater unity itself in fact started out from the Christian nations, whatever very secular, selfish and power-political motives may have inspired them. This is something that can certainly be given a theological interpretation. If it is to be realized, the universal mission of Christianity must presuppose a unity of mankind such as we are coming to know today: this unity the Christian nations created, even though always as sinful, selfish nations and while building this sinfulness of theirs also into it, a unity however which on its own account has a positive importance for salvation.

III. UNITY OF THE CHURCH – AND UNITY OF MANKIND

1. Church as Basic Sacrament

Now is the time, in accordance with our basic theme, to say something about the unity of the Church. We assume first of all that what is meant by ‘Church’ is not simply and solely the interior conviction of many of its members that God has offered himself as absolute salvation and absolute future in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and proclaimed this offer as historically victorious in word and sacrament. In fact, the Church has regarded itself always and everywhere as a real community and an institutional society, seeing this institutionality not merely as something humanly unavoidable but as its indispensable essential element, even though this essential ‘visibility’ of the Church has been diversely interpreted and put

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into practice in the different Christian denominations. It is only as such an historical factor in the word as proclaimed, in the sacramental word and the sociological character implied in all this, that it can be what it has to be: the permanent historical presence of God's victorious self-promise in Jesus Christ, the sacrament of the world's salvation, as Vatican II described it.

In order to be this basic sacrament, the Church must have an historical presence in the world to the end of time and do its utmost to carry out [167] this mission to establish its presence *everywhere* in the world, even though of course nothing is yet decided in advance about the numerical extent of this world-Church and about its socio-political power, all this being left to the course of history itself which is not predictable even by the Church. The more mankind acquires a concrete unity, the clearer is the Church's character as basic sacrament manifested to the whole world, even when the sociological significance and the number of its members are very different in the different parts of the world. The particular question however with which we are obviously faced here is that of the Church's unity in face of its division and disintegration into many Churches and Christian communities which are not in communion with each other.

2. Scandal of Separation – Existing Unity

It must be admitted that the actual present-day divisions of the Christian Churches vary greatly in their theological and sociological character and it is also true that there are differences of opinion in both theory and practice about the exact nature and extent of the unity binding on all Christians. Nevertheless, for the Christian, according to the will of God, in the light of Jesus Christ and of the nature of the Church, the state of affairs is one that simply should not be. The sociological separateness of the Churches *as* Churches is a scandal that amounts to a terrible accusation against Christians in general and their office-holders in particular. On this there exists a theoretical unanimity in Christendom as a whole, since only a few Christian groups properly so-called are opposed in principle to ecumenical efforts to achieve unity; that is, Christendom as a whole acknowledges that its present state is an offence against the necessary unity of the Church.

This terrible scandal, a continual contradiction of the Church's mission, must not however blind us to the fact that, despite this sinful state of affairs, an initial unity has been maintained and remains effective to a very fundamental extent through God in Jesus Christ in the separated Churches. At least the Churches belonging to the World Council of Churches profess their faith in the triune God, in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, practise one and the same baptism for the forgiveness of sins, acknowledge the same holy Scriptures as norm of their faith and life. However much – over and above all this – the reciprocal recognition [168] of their ministries in the individual Churches remains theoretically a matter of dispute, my opinion is that the really dogmatic question remains open, even on the Catholic side.

Unlike the situation formerly, the unity of the Churches actually existing today means that they are not only co-operating in many tasks and at least up to a point join in united services, but also try in principle to distribute the blame for the divisions fairly among all the Churches and – over and above this – recognize in the separated and separately institutionalized Christian communities as such a positive salvific significance for their present members. All these things are constitutive elements of the actually existing unity of the Churches and are of fundamental importance. If then we evaluate all this according to the criterion proclaimed by Vatican II of the 'hierarchy of truths' and (we may add) realities, remembering at the same time (especially on the Roman side) that the unity of the Church set before us and still to be realized is not (as Rome thought during the hundred and fifty years of the 'Pian epoch') a uniformity of the whole Church, suppressing the peculiar character of the historically

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emerging and regional particular churches, then we may say without hesitation that the already existing unity of the Church is not as far from the unity which it is still the Churches' task to realize as we are perhaps tempted to think as a result of our certainly justified and impatient indignation at the scandal of divided Christendom.

This does not mean however that the scandal of divided Christendom has been eliminated. The existing unity of Christendom is not a static factor which cowardice and hopelessness might lead us to accept as final, but a factor which seeks and is bound to develop towards its full realization: that is, towards a unity set before us as a task to be fulfilled. What more can be said briefly here?

Christians, theologians and ecclesiastical office-holders should not assume that the divisions of the Churches have the same character today as they had at their beginning. Even ecclesial realities are essentially dependent for their concrete expression on the secular aspect of the historical and sociological situation in which they exist. Neither in regard to the expression of Christian truths of faith nor in regard to their sociological problems can any of the Christian Churches act as if they were still living at the time of the Reformation or even of the First Vatican Council.

[169]

3. Unity in the Profession of Faith

As far as the unity to be achieved in the question of truth and agreement in faith is concerned, the situation at the present time is substantially different from that of the past as a result of the work of the theologians in explicitly controversial theology and ecumenicism. If for the time being we exclude the question of the papacy, regarding this as part of the question of true or complete institutionality, then we can really raise today the question whether there are differences in matters of faith between the separated Churches which strictly require those who belong to the individual Churches to reject in conscience any unification between these Churches. My impression is that this is not the case. Of course, as against this impression, it is very difficult to say on the one side – the Protestant – what can be regarded as dividing the Church, as *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, as 'an article by which the Church stands and falls', and by whom this can be decided; this is a deep problem, particularly since it is difficult here to identify anybody who can speak with final authority on the question. On the other hand, it must be seen that the Roman Catholic Church on the whole has never or only rarely interpreted in its official teaching (and not merely privately by the work of its theologians) dogma which it regards as indispensable from the time of Trent to that of the Second Vatican Council in such a way as to make this more understandable for Protestants and easier to assimilate in a positive reappraisal of its theology. Here, it seems to me, is a challenge to the authorities in the Churches on both sides; they cannot continue merely to invite the theologians to go on with their ecumenical work, while they themselves do little or nothing. It seems to me that the *decisive* initiatives and actions also in the dimension of truth, in the light of the present state of things, are required from the authorities in the Churches.

It also seems to me however that a piece of work for the theologians themselves, and especially on the Roman Catholic side, has not yet been done. To put it briefly and, unfortunately, not too clearly, what I mean is this: how, within this Church, a binding unity of faith and a new way of functioning to be developed by its magisterium on the one hand and on the other a pluralism of theology and interpretations of the one and binding faith, which simply cannot be avoided and cannot be adequately synthesized in the present mental climate, are compatible in theory and particularly in practice. Here, especially on the Catholic side, there [170] remain deep questions that have not yet been answered, particularly in connection with the practical functioning of the Roman magisterium in the concrete, which – in my

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humble opinion – continues even today to make quite considerable mistakes: these are questions whose solution is of the greatest importance for a possible recognition of such a magisterium by Protestant Christendom. On this too however Catholic theologians must continue to work, but it really is time also for the Roman magisterium to be concerned boldly to explain and, especially in practice, to present itself in such a way that Protestants can have no justifiable excuse for not professing together with the Catholic Church the true basic substance of the Christian faith.

4. Unity and Institution

As far as the achievement of the unity of Christendom is concerned with institutions, the authorities in all Churches might be expected and required to embark in Christian hope on bolder plans, since in this respect also more seems possible than is actually being done in the present state of tacit acquiescence and stagnation in ecumenism. Here rank and file Christians in all the Churches should and could boldly seek from their authorities an opportunity to make their voice felt. Certainly they should avoid irresponsible actions which might lead in practice to a kind of third denomination: something that would not remove, but only intensify the divisions of the Churches. But if even an institutional unity is not merely an innocuous Utopia of the future but a binding obligation which is becoming increasingly urgent in the present historical situation of the world, then the authorities in all Churches – we might say, with the courage of despair and with keen theological imagination – should take action, even if only gradually, to establish an institutional unity of the Churches. In Rome the papacy should not be content to repeat the very general statements of Vatican II to the effect that, within the one Church, there is ample scope for a multiplicity of particular Churches differing by reason of locality or of historical origins. Rome ought courageously and unselfishly to prove by concrete deeds that it is determined to renounce an ecclesiological monoculture in the Roman Catholic Church of the type attempted and largely realized especially during the Pian epoch of the Church of the last hundred and fifty years: a situation in which, in practice as opposed to official theory, individual bishops acted as petty [171] administrative officials of the Pope of Rome and, for the sake of a supposed, but by no means necessary unity, were given no scope for any really important decision-making.

In this respect, as I said, the question of a reciprocal recognition of ministries seems to be more open than is usually admitted on the Catholic side. Of course, analogous questions and demands might be raised also before the Protestant authorities. But this is something that Protestants themselves must do. It seems to me that all that needs saying on this point can be stated as follows: Let the Roman Curia show bold resolution and dare to hope to achieve something of which the end-result cannot be calculated in advance, thus displaying itself in its ministries of teaching and leadership in a way demanded by the whole historical situation today; let it eliminate many features of a centralist and bureaucratically administered state, seeking to decree from above more or less everything that is at all important; let the limits of the universal primacy as they arise from dogma or can be restricted by the papacy itself be more clearly defined. If these things were done, I would hope that on the one hand the real substance of the dogma of the First Vatican Council could be fully preserved and yet that Protestants could see clearly that their evangelical freedom remains assured even within a united Church with a Petrine ministry.

5. Unity of the Church and Unity of Mankind

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We must break off at this point. Our reflections should really be directed to the question of the relationship between a unity of the world still to be achieved on the one hand, and on the other a unity of the Church as already existing and as still to be realized. But perhaps we have said too little about this relationship, about this 'and'. At least however we may have touched on the essential point. The achievement of a greater unity of mankind is an urgent task for people today, if mankind is to survive and exist in a human way, even though this unity itself represents a mysterious and complex task, the precise meaning and content of which become clear only slowly in the historical process itself, and which is repeatedly debased by the sin of human beings and yet remains also their religious and moral task. The achievement of this unity of mankind is consequently also a task for Christians: not a mere side-interest for them, [172] but a task for which all Christians and especially the authorities in the Churches have to answer before God's judgement.

What then might seem to be a purely secular task for Christians and their Churches – working to achieve the unity of mankind – has for them also a Christian aspect. By this work they create conditions to enable Christianity to become concretely a true world-religion or increasingly so, for the Church to become increasingly a true world-Church, for the Church to become increasingly clearly *one* everywhere in the world and thus more clearly the basic sacrament of salvation for the whole world. And, conversely, if Christians resolutely work and pray in an ecumenical spirit for the unity of their Churches, they will also make a very considerable contribution to the unity of human beings. The one dual mandate of the Christian for the unity of mankind and for that of the Church is not nullified by the fact that both unities continually and always in new ways carry with them conflicts and constraints detrimental to their true meaning, as long as the Kingdom of God is not present and God with the unity belonging to him alone is not yet all in all.

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[173]

13

THE INEXHAUSTIBLE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD AND OUR CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE

'Hope in the crisis of survival' was the theme of the ninth conference of humanists at Salzburg. Could a theologian be permitted to say something on this subject? The theme of the conference, after all, was about the future of our world with its history, which, according to Christian principles, is entrusted to man himself, to his freedom and responsibility, so that he may himself subjugate this world. Has the theologian anything to say in this respect that is not *either* a repetition of general humanistic principles and claims, which do not require a theologian to state them, *or* the proclamation of the God distinct from the world as a whole and of eternal life, which seems to make little or no contribution to the surmounting of our earthly crisis? On the other hand, in the notification of this conference as a whole and in many of its particular themes so much was said about religion and Christianity that we can almost take it for granted that the participants regarded these things as being implied in the theme of the whole conference on 'hope in the crisis of survival'; we can assume that this crisis represents a challenge to the Christian religion, that it alters this religion and at the same time provokes the latter's potential for hope, if it is to be overcome. If then it can be assumed that the theologian can and should seek an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, it is still not clear what he is to speak about. He has an almost inexhaustible number of themes from which to choose, as was clear from the theological implications of many of the papers delivered at this conference.

While recognizing that so many of these themes provide suitable material for a theologian, I would like to attempt – almost in a kind of [174] burlesque sermon – to say only one thing. The Christian message of God, who offers himself as himself in grace as our eternal life, is offered and brought to us as a message beyond earthly hopes and fears, beyond optimism and pessimism, but only on the absolutely indispensable condition that from first to last we do not make this God the instrument of our concern for the future and the amalgam of our neurotic fear of life, but succeed by God's grace in leaving God's transcendence (if we may put it this way) unexhausted. This (perhaps with a brief glance at the consequences for our own concern for the future) is all that I want to say and what I am trying to make a little more intelligible.

In the light of the average sermon in our churches we Christians are inclined to assume that human life in the long run and in society and history as a whole is impossible without God. World-wide atheism, whether of militant communism or of bourgeois indifferentism, takes a different view. But we Christians stick to our thesis and perhaps even cherish a secret hope that the world-crisis, which is becoming increasingly obvious, may provide many people with a new appreciation of this thesis. Of course, this conviction of the necessity and irreplaceability of God in our individual and social life is correct in the very last resort, if there is a God at all and if moreover this God is not, will not and cannot be, simply (and this is not immediately obvious) one who can make himself superfluous to the reality he sets up. But, even if we assume all this, the necessity of God and his usefulness for our own existence – particularly according to Christian principles – are much more mysterious and more difficult than the proclamation of a popularized, minimal Christianity would have us believe.

If all the questions coming into our mind find their ultimate answer only in the knowledge of God, while this God remains for all eternity the incomprehensible mystery, even when we come to see him face to face in the light of glory, what prospect is there of obtaining this ultimate answer? If God is supposed to be the ultimate target of all our deeds and ways, at

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which all our plans and calculations are aimed, while he is himself the mystery of an absolute freedom that cannot be fitted into a co-ordinate system in such a way that an understanding of the system would render this freedom also intelligible, how are clarity and palpable meaning to enter into these plans and calculations of ours? It is evidently not so easy to look to the true God of Christianity – who simply is not himself world-reason and this world's glory – in order to cope with our own existence and our concern for our future.

[175] This God might equally appear to us to be the fundamental impossibility of 'solving' our own vital questions, whether individual or collective. All the more so since in the Christian message he has not offered himself as guarantor that all will always go well throughout our history, but as the finisher of this history – not only of the individual, but (as it seems, at least) of mankind as a whole – while the end of this universal history is represented in this revelation in its perspectives of the future in terms of catastrophe. The assumption is reinforced quite drastically by the fact that Christians are forbidden to hold the *theoretical* opinion that the future of mankind at the end of and beyond its history is on the whole and for everyone certainly a blessed consummation and that hell is *a priori* theoretically inconceivable. Seen in this way, does the word 'God', its acknowledgment of him, relieve us of any concern for the future, does it really brighten up our existence? Can we really invoke him by pronouncing this word, when confronted with the terrible existential fear which arises today in minds and hearts? If the God of Christianity is the incomprehensible God of unfathomable judgements, in our present distress, is it not better to leave him completely out of our calculations and instead to console ourselves with the thought that it will not be so bad without him and that we shall get along somehow?

In this darkness it is necessary to consider the true relationship between us and God, as acknowledged by authentic Christianity.

In order to see this relationship more clearly, we may begin with a preliminary general reflection on a particular kind of relationship which can exist between two realities, especially personal realities. It is easy to think that relationships or connections between two realities, being mutual, are of the same character or the same value on either side. But this is not always the case. The assumption of a particular relationship to another reality, if it is to succeed, may depend precisely on the fact that it does not intrinsically need to find a response of exactly the same kind from the other side. Without mentioning other examples of the most varied kinds, in order to understand what is meant here, we need only reflect on interpersonal love. If this is not to be selfishness in twos, love on the part of one must really be meant for the other, really for that person as such and in himself, and not for his importance to the one who loves him, not for the happiness he gives to the lover, not for the security he assures, but actually for himself, as he is meaningful, good and lovely for himself in his uniqueness, impregnability and unexploitability. That is not to say that it could not be expected, would not be hoped, that this [176] other person, who is loved, would impart himself to someone who would respond to the love he received, would grant understanding, security and everything else that blooms in mutual love. But if in love in the last resort and tacitly what is sought is one's own happiness and the loved one is not loved for his own sake, if that loved one's gratitude is not accepted by the other partner as a wholly gratuitous miracle but was the very thing sought tacitly and without admitting it by one's outgoing love, then this love has already lost its true nature and been turned into selfishness, no matter how gratifying it now seems to be. True love is self-abandoning, never returning to itself.

The irreversibility of this movement of love is in no way changed by the fact that a person can be and must be the essence of such love and thus discovers his own true nature only by loving, is truly aware of himself only when he forgets himself in loving, gets at his real nature only when he succeeds in the miracle of getting away from it without any prospect of returning. This paradox is man's true nature. He takes in by letting go, he acquires stability

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by not seeking to avoid a fall; his happiness is attained only by seeking and finding something else; selflessness is the only way the self can come to be; man's most sinister temptation lies in the fact that he tries tacitly to turn unselfish love into an instrument solely of his own being. There is a genuine existential fear in the question which we ask ourselves and to which no amount of reflection can provide an answer: whether in the last resort we entrust ourselves in real love without any safeguards to the other person or make that person the means of our own happiness, which is the sole really definitive fixed point of our own existence.

We gave only one example of what was meant here, but it was not arbitrarily chosen and a more general description is not really very important: I know of no generally and immediately intelligible expression of it. Let us call it something like this: principle of the irreversibility of a relationship, of the non-congruence of reciprocal relationships, or (if the relationships as understood here involve something in the nature of a transcendence toward another) principle of the inexhaustibility of transcendence.

What has all this to do with the question that occupies us here? Normal, authentic Christianity proclaims that man's final salvation for all eternity can be gained only in the one love for God and men, love of God and love of neighbour being mutually dependent in a unique fashion on each occasion. What is meant in this teaching of normal and authentic [177] Christianity is real love of God and neighbour for their own sake, which, if it is to be truly love and productive of salvation, must be directed to God and neighbour in an irreversible and inexhaustible transcendence, not returning to itself and not being debased as an instrument for one's own self-realization.

How vast are the implications of this hackneyed catechism statement! Here are the benefactors of mankind, together with the futurologists and all the scientists, and the theologians intermingle discreetly and somewhat intimidated; all are asking, among other things, if God must still remain as an item in the world's accounts if these are to balance, whether we need God or not if we are to hope for a bearable future and avoid an apocalyptic disaster. Then, over this whole conference, where the completely understandable and legitimate egoisms of all people of the present time are accumulated, there appears the message of Christianity:

> All your cares, all your fears, all your exertions, your futurological optimism and pessimism, your heights and your depths, your triumphs and your defeats, are ultimately pointless and doomed to destruction, unless in this whole history there occurs that one love in which we forget ourselves for. God, love him for his own sake, adore him; unless we succeed in living in an irreversible and inexhaustible transcendence to God, with no prospect of a return. Christianity stubbornly proclaims that happiness, quality of life, a better or a sound future for the world, for mankind, are not the ultimate, obvious standard values governing our actions; and, if they are made such, will lead us into eternal ruin. Christianity knows that to will one's own reality, to be intent on self-development and to seek happiness, are legitimate enterprises and that this determination, even if it has not yet been transformed into a radical love of God for his own sake, is not for that reason alone sinful and hostile to God. But Christianity stubbornly insists that only love of God for his own sake will save us in the end. Christianity is aware of the apparently excessive and even absurd demands it makes on man and in the course of its history there have been enough attempts – deliberate or not deliberate – to reinterpret the inexorability of that love for God which tears man away from himself and thrusts him into God's incomprehensibility as into an unfathomable, dark abyss: new interpretations which turn all this into a sublime form of self-assertion in which a holy egoism can also be put – fortunately – at the service of God and thus be able to assert itself forever. Christianity knows and expressly states that this love for God, in which man must lose himself, is possible only by God's love approaching man and being itself offered from its innermost centre as the power of *that* love in which man has the courage to get away from himself, [178] to abandon himself, as the only obvious thing to do: to allow himself to fall, to regard mystery as the true light illuminating everything, to know that death is the gate to life and that the love which seeks, not itself, but the God who is loved as such, means true life and eternity.

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All this of course appears to demand too much of man. It is true that we can make sense of it in abstract, metaphysical terms by saying that man by his very nature is *a priori* that being which is related to the other, needing to get away from himself in order to discover himself, to forget himself in order to become truly aware of himself. But what kind of assurance does this metaphysical consolation provide in face of the all-too-obvious solid egoism, hardening hearts and apparently taken for granted in a struggle for existence in which victory is only for the strong and all ethics of selflessness and love apparently serve merely to conceal this selfishness at the roots of existence or to permit compromises between these egoisms, so that they become more bearable and offer more individuals a chance of survival? In face of the radical demand of Christianity for real love – without which there is no salvation – on the one hand and the monotonous routine of our earthly lives on the other, what is the use of this metaphysical consolation? Christianity cannot and will not relieve us of our deadly terror at this demand involving life or death; it offers no facile optimism, no magic by which from the very outset, as if it could not be otherwise, good people and criminals, murderers and their victims, are brought together into heaven.

In the course of its history however Christianity has rightly come to understand better than it did at the beginning that this incomprehensible love – the only love that is salvific – making apparently excessive demands on man can grow up mysteriously and as it were invisibly in many different shapes and on apparently completely unfertile soil. This love can be fidelity to one's own conscience, can be an ultimate, solitary unrewarded responsibility for others, can perhaps mean that composure by which a person, calmly and unconditionally hoping to the very end, submits in death to the inscrutable decree of providence and finds there shelter and protection. The mystery of salvific love, which draws us away into the sheltering mystery of God and liberates us from ourselves in order to make us free, can take on unexpected shapes and thus lead us to hope that there is more love at work in the world than our own experience might suggest, particularly since this experience can be clouded and distorted by our own selfishness isolating us from any encounter [179] with real love. The fact remains that this love alone produces salvation and redeems man, the love that seems radically to overtax us. That is why, in the last resort, Christianity alone knows the answer to the terrible question of how man can escape from his prison of selfishness into redeeming freedom: the answer that God is greater than our hearts, that his promise of the victorious advent of his kingdom means that his love in its incomprehensible externalization can also accomplish the miracle of *our* love for him.

What then is the significance of this message of Christianity for the question of 'Hope in the crisis of survival'? First of all, the Christian message cuts right across the tasks and concerns of the kind of humanism seeking expression at this conference. It might be said – and of course quite rightly – that this conference is sustained and filled with that humanity which Christianity itself proclaims under the heading of true love of neighbour. Humanism and the love of neighbour it requires is understandably merely the rational harmonization of many egoisms, while love of neighbour only too readily makes use of the arguments of egoism, seeking to demonstrate (and this is very illuminating) that it is itself, egoism properly understood and that love of neighbour properly understood will quite certainly never do any harm to one's own interests; a rational compromise between merely apparently mutually contradictory interests (it is claimed) is completely feasible. Yet, if we leave all this aside, it remains true that the Christian message offers and requires a real and unselfish love for God which is quite beyond comparison with the humanitarian device of the balance of interests. No, while recognizing a mutual dependence between love of God and love of neighbour, the ultimate message of Christianity cuts right across an intramundane humanism, since it involves a love for God in himself and for himself in which man simply does not pursue his own interests and the mutual balance of these interests, but in the last resort forgets his own

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assertion of himself above God, his glory and his honour; only in this way is God himself loved in himself and the 'advantage' of this love is for us merely the objective presupposition and practical consequence, but can never be what is sought in this love, can never be its motive.

The message of Christianity imposes on us at the very heart of our existence something utterly different from a humanism – however wise and however considerate of man's dignity – that tries to strike a balance between any conceivable primitive or sublime interests of men. This absolutely incomparable, disparate demand of Christianity on man is not [180] for some sort of optional commitment; it is for something that a person must put at the very heart of his whole existence, knowing that, if God's kingdom is first sought, all the rest – as Jesus said – will be added anyway; and, if it does not seem to be added, this does not mean that he has attached too much importance to the love of God. Must not the Churches today make sure that their concrete proclamation in its emphasis and intonation does not blur what they have to preach as the first and last precept: 'Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength' (Mark 12:29)? There can be no objection to world-responsibility, to intervention for justice in the world, for the Third World, for responsibility for the environment; no objection to protests against all violations of human rights and human dignity, no objection to involvement for the poor and oppressed. Declarations like *Gaudium et spes* are a good thing and even an obligation. There may be revolutions in which even the harsh exercise of power can be given a Christian justification. Theology may work out increasingly clearly and relentlessly the closeness of the link between love of God and love of men, may show ever more radically that the first commandment is implied in the second. But if Christianity is not to be stifled in the finite, God and the world must not be made to coincide simply in a dead sameness. And consequently there is a love of God that is not simply identical with love of men. We cannot behave as if only the death of God could bring man really to life. That is why we have the message of the absolute love of God from our whole heart and for God's sake alone, a love that is not simply summed up in the precept: 'Save the world!' This is the love that must be proclaimed in the first place by Christianity and its Churches.

Christianity would cease to exist if it no longer had the courage to speak of the blessed uselessness of love for God: absolutely useless, since it would not be itself if man were to seek in it his own advantage, his self-assertion, his own fulfilment. This divine uselessness of love for God, its inexhaustibility, the impossibility of turning back from the radicality of our transcendence to God, made possible by God in his Spirit: these things Christianity and its Churches must proclaim, aiming directly at the proud and despairing dialogue carried on by people about their certainly desperate worries and fears of the future. Where today are the prophets who cry aloud: 'Seek first the kingdom of God'? Prophets who do not confuse this kingdom of God himself with a more sublime plane of happiness and well-being in this world, prophets who do not make this [181] proclamation merely because – one way or the other – they find this world quite bearable, but who raise their voice in the midst of apocalyptic fears?

However much the ultimate possibility and indisputable task of the Christian – and indeed of every human being – lies right across or even beyond his own concern for the future and his own fears for the future, within man's unity *that* task and *these* concerns have something to do with each other. This is what we have to speak about now. At the same time it is of decisive importance for the Christian interpretation of existence that man's inexhaustible transcendence to the incomprehensible mystery of God, his love of God for God's sake and not for the sake of man himself, should not again be tacitly reinterpreted as a useful, perhaps unrenounceable and necessary help for man himself in the problems of life. It is absolutely

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true that man needs God. But this need simply is not a justification of God. Indeed, if God were understood merely as a means and a guarantor of man's concern for himself, God himself would become unintelligible, for this very reason would cease to be the authentication and guarantor of man's humanity, could rightly be fatally struck by Feuerbach's opinion that he is only the projection of human needs and consequently would not exist at all. If then we ask what is the meaning for man of his inexhaustible transcendence to God in loving God for his own sake, it is a meaning that exists only when it is not sought for its own sake, when it does not put God at man's disposal, when God is loved not for the sake of this meaning but for his own sake, when the miracle of genuine love is realized, when its movement towards God does not spring back on man and does not again find its endpoint in man himself. Only on this assumption can all that is said about the meaning for man of his transcendence towards God be true and salutary. This at any rate is the way in which we can and must talk about this meaning. For – since God is a God of the living and not of the dead and despite the irreversibility of its orientation to God – love of God is not a love in which finite man is burned up and consumed, but a love that brings him to life, upholding and saving the person who loves unselfishly – precisely and only such a one.

This love of God for his own sake – which of course always includes belief in God's self-revealing self-communication and hope in the fulfilment of this self-communication of God, the inexhaustible transcendence of man to God without return – means freedom and what Scripture generally calls 'consolation'. Freedom: 'I am certain of this', says Paul [182] (Rom. 8:38-39), 'neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.' If this love is present, then the Apostle's statement is really self-evident. We are torn apart in this love by the immense variety and vitality of the powers that sustain, determine and threaten our life. None of these uncontrollable and incalculable powers and forces threatening our existence any longer takes first and last place in our lives; in this love we are ourselves grasped sheltered in the infinite God of eternal fullness and security, infinity without a name, which is not the sum-total of the realities immediately encountering us. We are free, since there is nothing more that we set up as absolute, since there can be neither an absolute optimism nor an absolute pessimism in regard to the future.

The question is not whether in this love, which liberates us from everything, even from a precarious self-possession, we have infinite freedom in God, but only whether we actually *manage* to love God in this way. But this very love for God exists only when love's concern for itself is surpassed and relativized by love for God himself, when this love loves God and is not concerned with itself. And, since at the very heart of our existence God has revealed to us in the Holy Spirit and in the word of revelation in Jesus Christ that he is always prepared to bring about this love for him through his own Spirit, we can resolutely believe and hope that we love God, even though our impoverished hearts are scarcely aware of it and the miracle of this love is forever incomprehensible, if it is credible only to someone who – when the awful question arises – tries to take refuge in God's love itself and has the courage in the last resort to leave the question unanswered. But at that point there is freedom and peace. Nevertheless, this freedom in peace could never become in the present life a state of solid firmness on which we could rely as fixed and existing for all time. The situation is more like that of a swimmer whose head keeps appearing above the surface of the water that is threatening to engulf him.

In this continually fresh realization of love for God for his own sake, however, in which in the last resort we forget ourselves and the vulnerability of this love, freedom over all powers and authorities comes again and again as a sheer gift, and in this way alone comes also the one, silent consolation of which the New Testament speaks. Man today is tempted to make

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disintegration, unhappiness and despair the very essence of his [183] life-style. But this is impossible when disintegration and unhappiness are really dominant and not merely an incidental phenomenon in an otherwise easy-going, contented life. Someone who is continually struggling to entrust himself in love, unconditionally, to the incomprehensibility that we call God cannot take up a triumphalist attitude – claiming freedom, peace and consolation as his indisputable possession – towards another person who does nothing of this kind and does not pretend to do so; nevertheless, he has these things because he has found God by losing himself in him.

Has this inexhaustible transcendence of man to God any impact on concrete life in space and time, in society and in history as it is experienced? This is our final question and we shall attempt a brief comment on it. Once again this comment must be preceded by a reminder that a positive answer to the question cannot be expected to provide a justification of this inexhaustible transcendence of man to God. Any attempt to justify man's transcendence to God in terms of its positive consequences in the world and in history and to make it a part of the present course of events would simply destroy it. Truth is useful; but if someone wanted to make utility the criterion of truth, he would miss the very truth that is most useful. Love creates happiness; but only if it does not seek its own happiness. God is our ultimate meaning, but only when this meaning is sought for its own sake and not as a means for our fulfilment. Only under this condition can what is still to be said be rightly done and consequently rightly understood.

Before agreeing to the 'usefulness' of this inexhaustible transcendence of man to God, however, a further preliminary observation must be made. I do not know whether world-history will continue as it obviously ought to continue, if mankind as a whole expressly and absolutely radically throughout all its dimensions is to realize fully that love of God, that radical self-commitment to the infinite mystery, which as such is required of it in principle. Perhaps if something like this were to be realized, we should have what Christians call the consummated kingdom of God, bringing this history to its end into the glory of God. It is therefore conceivable that the apparent or obvious lack or even decline of a transcendence towards God in this world has a positive meaning for the continuation of an earthly history and of the further development of mankind and its potentialities, even though it would remain or does remain true (as already indicated) that in this apparently godless world love for God is actually realized in a thousand forms and it is still possible [184] to hope for the transcendent salvation of mankind as a whole. It remains true of course that anyone who is called and enabled to realize an intensive love for God cannot refuse the call merely because elsewhere world-history is perhaps continuing meaningfully even without such an explicit and intensive love. If then there is to be a positive answer to the significance of an inexhaustible transcendence to God even for the world and its history here and now, this does not mean that the course of this history will certainly be good up to a point or bearable only as long as this love for God occurs precisely in *those* forms and shapes which we have in mind when we speak of love for God and which are required from us in our own special situation.

We do not say once and for all, with regard to particular instances and possibilities, that the actual realizations of this transcendent love for God as such are under no circumstances detrimental to the realization of intramundane possibilities. If Pascal had not only remained healthy, but had also renounced his mysticism and his Jansenist theology, he would certainly have achieved results in mathematics and other secular sciences which he might be said now to owe to mankind. Moreover, it should not be claimed – however much it appears to be becoming again necessary, particularly today, for this earthly history – that man's inexhaustible transcendence to God itself alone could render superfluous all those intramundane objectives which must be jointly and freshly discovered, the absence of which

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we lament in the present great historical turning point brought about by technological developments. All this can be realistically and honestly admitted and must be respected, since otherwise all attempts to maintain the necessity of a religious significance of human existence would be dishonest.

Nevertheless, it can and must be said that if someone lives out his inexhaustible transcendence towards God, without expecting a reward, he is in fact 'rewarded' even in this life, even though he is not spared the bitter tragedy of individual and collective history which must be endured equally by both just and sinners. It is only through love for God that the norms for appropriate action in the world acquire practically and effectively the dignity of a commandment expressing the divine will and only in this way does it really become clear that respect for such commandments must be justified before the judgement seat of the God of absolute holiness. The intramundane relevance and the consequent requirement of ethical action may certainly not be neglected or bypassed. Nor is it very easy to explain why and how such a requirement of finite and [185] relative values can emerge with the majesty and inexorability of an expression of the divine will imposing an absolute obligation. But, since there are such finite and relative values which come upon man as a divine requirement, moral action in the present world on the part of someone who loves God acquires for him a dignity and inexorability which undoubtedly determine in a specifically new way his intramundane action in accordance with these values and a motivation and an obligation that can only be beneficial to that action.

In addition to what has just been indicated, man's transcendence towards God confers a further significance on his action in the world: it relativizes and deprives his immediate goals and tasks of their idolatrous character. If we look dispassionately and without prejudice into contemporary history, we find in theory and in practice a shocking absolutizing of particular realities and possibilities, although this cannot be explained here in detail. This terrible trend to set up individual finite realities and values as absolute, to deify, to idolize, in order to have some absolute reality in the vacuum of lost meanings – not an absolute to which we surrender, but which we seek to control in order to exercise power – results in fanaticism of ideologies, the awful intolerance of social systems, the raging blast of propaganda, the arrogant and terribly stupid habit in politics of painting everything in either black or white. When man has no God into whose incomprehensibility he is willing to fall, he comes under the domination of particular idols, setting up monomaniacally rational calculation, technology, pride in being able to do everything, the perfect functioning of a system, sex, power, etc., absolutely as the only starting point and making them the sole criterion of action and life on each occasion, If someone does not and will not manage to love God for his own sake, apparently with nothing to show for it, he must necessarily absolutize a particular reality in its individuality and make it the final criterion; he must construct a pantheon with a supreme god, since otherwise he would become disoriented and be lost in the multiplicity of realities and possibilities seeking to become God. But such an individual god, even declared to be supreme god, remains an individual and the conflict between these gods would continue restlessly until the final doom of all. We may not set up anything individual, even ourselves, as absolute; we should attach absolute importance to everything and yet not attach absolute importance to anything; we should not think we know everything and can dominate everything; we must be able to set ourselves free without any guarantee, tested in advance, of getting anywhere [186] and yet hope to do so (we might almost say) with childish simplicity; we must venture out into pathless incomprehensibility without fear of losing the way; we must really get away from ourselves.

If we do this, keep on trying, keep on believing that what we demand – with such an incomprehensibly excessive demand – from ourselves will be granted us, then we love God: only then do we understand anything of what is meant by this word; then the idolatrous

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images on our life's way are broken, even the idols we made of legitimate future planning and of only-too-understandable fear of the future. We know then that in our own existence and in the destiny of mankind, whether by life or death, we fall into the hands of the God whom we must leave nameless and of whom it can nevertheless be said that for us he is eternal light, eternal life, ineffable glory, peace without end, since he has enabled us to forget ourselves and to be for him.

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PREFACE

This new volume of *Theological investigations* brings the series up to twenty-one volumes (fifteen in the German). it is similar to the preceding volumes and therefore requires no lengthy introduction. Like the previous volumes, it, too, has been provided with a title: *Science and Christian Faith.* This volume is also a collection of individual essays, composed separately for various occasions and to meet different demands, and so the title is meant to serve only as a focal point for the entire book. In the lectures requested of me as a dogmatic theologian topics frequently presented themselves that I had already treated earlier, and so a certain overlapping is unavoidable in my renewed treatment of them here. Still, I hope that I am not merely repeating *what* I have already said.

In the preface to German volume 14 (English volumes *19 and 20*) I announced that that volume would be the last in the series. I must explain why contrary to this announcement, several further volumes are now appearing. The reason for this is quite simple. When we unexpectedly discover in our old age that we are still capable of working and so feel obliged to continue, we may still publish the results of our work, which we ourselves look upon as a gift.

Starting with the thirteenth volume of the series (English volumes 17 and 18) my fellow Jesuit, Father Paul Imhof, has been my faithful and selfless assistant. He has also taken care of this volume. To him my cordial thanks for this.

Innsbruck, November 1982 Karl Rahner SJ

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[1]

PART ONE

Science and Theology

[3]

1

PROFANE HISTORY AND SALVATION HISTORY

LIMITATIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE INQUIRY FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

Pure historians discern in history a coherence of individual elements for which they are able to find an explanation. Without doubt they also discern individual experiences invested with a meaning which is not only of practical import but which is also "perfectly" beautiful, good, and true (even though these experiences are constantly destined to perish). However, when they contemplate the whole of history from the perspectives of their science and with the tools available to it, they must capitulate. They are not able to discover the meaning of the whole, nor do they know why the ascent of meaningful individual phenomena in history also involves the decline of others that are just as valid. Does Christian faith go beyond this melancholic end result of all historical enterprise?

If something is to be said about this question, then it naturally cannot be a demonstration of the justification and credibility of Christian faith in the face of a sincerely truthful conscience. One can only say what Christian faith says about the question that has just been raised. And on this question only a few remarks will be made here without making any claim to presenting an actual theology of history with all the historical and systematic topics that would have to be dealt with in such a theology. This is quite impossible here because, among other reasons, such a comprehensive theology of history in the ordinary Christian sense cannot be constructed at all [4] in view of the diversity and contradictions contained in the theological history of Christian dogma.

We presume, then, the Christian confession of faith in "life everlasting." With this the rejection of historical materialism is already presupposed. A history of the conflicts of classes does indeed exist, but within, below, and above these sociopolitical struggles there takes place as well a history of freedom, faith, hope, and love before God, a history which tends toward his eternal life. And this history is not to be found in the place occupied by the conquerors in history, but in the history of the "oppressed" and of the "failures," whose history can really be the true history of freedom. The Christian confession of eternal life will not ultimately come to grips with the history of the suffering of the world by considering this eternal life to be an all-enlightening consolation for this history of suffering. This eternal life will only be attained when human beings unconditionally and without question abandon themselves to a God of love who could have spared his world this history of suffering, but who, instead, has willed it to be in his freedom beyond which there is no appeal. If one understands the attainment of eternal life in this way and speaks about it in this manner, then one certainly has the right to say that past injustice is not yet a closed matter and that those slain in this injustice still live. Nor can the remarks which follow have anything to do with the

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philosophy of history which likewise is unable pragmatically and analytically to discover any partial meaningful phenomena and which maintains that it is the human being alone who invests history with meaning, and that in a universal history as such no mention of God is possible. With the awareness of these presuppositions and limitations the following are some comments, then, on the meaning of history which are offered from the position of a presumed basic Christian conviction.

THE HISTORY OF HUMANITY AS THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM BEFORE GOD

Christian theology will hold fast to the idea that the history of humanity, despite all the conditions indicated by the natural sciences today and the anthropologies which are oriented toward the natural sciences, is a history of freedom. To say what freedom is and how far [5] it extends is, of course, difficult. Not only from the standpoint of psychological experience but also for theological reasons it is impossible in the concrete reality of the history of humanity to make a pure and simple distinction between the constraints at work in history and the freedom of the individual which is operative in this history. But since it is the Christian conviction that there are such things as freedoms in history and that these freedoms are not something absolutely transempirical, but occur in our concrete experience of history, then everything which the Christian understanding of faith asserts about freedom takes place in history.

Now it is not our purpose here to describe all the characteristics and dimensions of freedom, even though all of these are operating in concrete history. It is sufficient to say that the Christian idea of freedom is so radical that it looks upon freedom not merely as an immanent phenomenon but also as apart of the concrete relationship of the human being to *God* himself. At the same time Christian theology is aware that this human freedom, which tends toward God, is also dependent on the free and sovereign disposition of God without its being thereby abrogated. The Christian teaching about heaven and “hell” also implies that this human freedom in its ultimate sense does not contain the possibility of acting differently again and again. This freedom is, rather, a freedom which tends toward finality; it is the capacity to commit an act of one’s own that is ultimately irreversible (even though this capacity, as has already been said, is, for its part, dependent on the free disposition of God, which is known as predestination).

The teaching of human freedom understood in this way and the teaching of an absolute sovereignty of God’s freedom over human freedom cannot be resolved for us here and now into a higher synthesis. All the attempts to do this in Christian theology (in Augustine, Thomas, Calvin, Bañez, Molina) have been doomed to failure. One can only say that both teachings must be true and ultimately in their coexistence are nothing other than the highest way of expressing that an absolute God and a world distinct from him, yet real, can coexist because they actually do coexist. In any case, the essence of freedom as act tending toward finality leads us to the following conclusion. History is temporal history with a final result, even if we do not know how long this history will last, nor even if it will be resolved into a true finality before God. If (as Christianity [6] teaches) this finality as it applies to the personal core of freedom of spiritual beings in their most immediate unity of life with God (seeing God face to face) can be understood, in an extrapolatory sense, to some extent as the completion of the present relationship of the human being to God, then it is, of course, difficult for us to form even the slightest concrete notion of what the completion of the physical world might be. This problem remains even though one, perhaps, cannot simply exclude the completion of the physical world when one poses the question about the meaning of nature (“resurrection of the body”) and thinks about the continuing unity of the human

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being with nature. However, it may be that an end to physical time is not implicit in Christian eschatology at all. In any event, however, the history of personal freedom yields a final return which is no longer subject to an infinitely continuing development in time and space.

This finality in which the terrestrial history of freedom is transformed and at the same time acquires its definitive character by its coming into immediacy with God must be considered by the Christian as a *twofold possibility*: as a blessed completion in which God in his inmost essence communicates himself to the human being, and as an eternal loss in which the human being speaks a definitive no to God's offer of himself. Human beings as Christians have the right and the sacred obligation to hope that for themselves and for all others (or better still, for others and therefore for themselves) there will be a blessed conclusion to the history of freedom, even though guilt, darkness, and futility in this history do not exactly recommend such hope and hardly make it easy. However, since Christians believe in the infinite goodness and the true salvific will of God and lay hold on the promise of Jesus of the victorious coming of the kingdom of God through the act of God and not merely through the human being's own goodwill, they *hope* for a universal redemption, a blessed completion of the whole of history. This hope, however, gives them no justification for a theoretical doctrine of *apokatastasis*, even though such a doctrine has constantly recurred in the doctrinal history of Christianity since Origen. The authentic Christian attitude regarding the end of the history of the individual and of humankind as a whole remains one of hope, despite all (empirical) experience to the contrary, and silent surrender before the unfathomable disposition of the Lord of history. From that position one might say that for Christian faith history (by the power of God's grace) brings forth a definitive [7] meaning. But on the basis of our empirical evidence and the impossibility of making a definitive judgment (God alone is judge and the history of the world is not the judgment of the world, even if this judgment properly understood occurs in this world) the history of the world is open and no one can say (except within the hopeful repetition of the promise of Jesus) whether history will end in a divine meaning or in absolute meaninglessness. (According to Thomas and Calvin only God could bring meaning for himself alone out of such meaninglessness: the manifestation of his holy justice.)

One might also state the case in this way: history has to have an eternal meaning and with the ultimate confidence of the hoping heart one may expect that history as a whole and not merely in a few chosen ones will truly attain this meaning. The traditional "world view" – at least in its conceptual paradigms, even if probably not in its actual definitive statements – expected just about down to our present day that history even in its definitive result would forever leave behind a disgusting rubbish heap of guilt and depravity. If one does not subscribe to the opinion that rogues and villains might be able in the end to slip unpunished through the scenery of world history and step out of it into nothingness, then present-day historical experience does not exactly stimulate the hope that at the end the whole of history will resolve itself into the pure harmony of a blissful playing before God. Christians, however, may entertain this hope. And even if they must hope for such a completion for themselves while faced with the threat of the loss of salvation elsewhere – and this is radical optimism – then how can they dispense themselves from entertaining the same hope for everybody? The character of hope which determines and (if you will) restricts the ultimate attitude of the Christian now affects not only the thing we hope for, but it also affects the very hope itself. I hope that I hope. For the Christian nothing more than this is possible and nothing more is necessary. This is also valid in respect to the meaning of history insofar as it is considered to be ours.

THE DEFINITIVE MEANING OF HISTORY HIDDEN IN GOD

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When Christians talk about the meaning of history they give the impression by and large of being convinced that this meaning of their individual history as well as of the history of the whole of humanity [8] will be resolved in luminous brightness and transparency, if not just at present, then, at the end – at least in eternity. There is of course a good deal of truth to this idea. After all, why shouldn't we eventually understand the sense of "accidents" in this history which at the present moment appears to us as pure arbitrariness? If we are convinced that God, the Lord of history, is a God of eternal meaning and of love, then history must ultimately be something more than a chaotic confusion compounded of senselessness, absurdities, and meanness It cannot really be that only a few fragments of finite meaning are being tossed about in the churning sea of meaninglessness which are sufficient to satisfy us in the banality of our everyday life without our really knowing where they are coming from or why this sea does not in the end swallow them up. The bravely hopeful song of praise to the meaning of history must not pass this over in silence either. The actual completion of the personal history of freedom takes place only in the unconditional, loving acceptance of God as he is. Only through this does the ultimate meaning of history arise. According to the teaching of Christianity, however, this God is the eternal God who cannot be encompassed, the one who is incomprehensible in his essence and in his freedom, and this incomprehensibility will only yield itself to knowledge when knowledge is dissolved in love. The ultimate meaning of history will only be brought about and attained when God in his grace grants it to free, finite subjects to abandon themselves in love in the incomprehensibility of God without the will to return once again to the false autonomy of themselves. One can only bring about and come into possession of the meaning of one's own existence when the quest for an autonomous meaning to be possessed and enjoyed for oneself is forgotten in one's love for God who is loved for himself even in his incomprehensibility.

If Christians possess a hopeful universal optimism that history will reach a meaningful completion and if at the same time they know that this will only be possible when all in this completion abandon themselves in love, then the question necessarily arises in their mind, when they see on all sides the frightful pervasiveness of human egoism, as to how this is going to be possible. One might apply here a variation of a saying of Jesus that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a human being to enter the kingdom of heaven. But with Jesus one can also say that what is impossible for human beings is possible for God. (Lk. 18:24ff.) Here [9] of course the theologian can reflect on how this possibility on God's part can be realized through the freedom of human beings, on how somewhere, despite all empirical evidence to the contrary, the evil human heart can attain the one good of the love of God. Still, the definitive meaning of history is hidden in God and the loving recognition of this incomprehensibility is the supreme act of history, which can and must come forth in it if history is to find its consummation.

ON THE DIALECTIC CHARACTER OF THE MEANING OF HISTORY

Thus the meaning of history lies in a peculiarly dialectic way beyond history, yet at the same time in history. It lies *beyond* history inasmuch as God is not only the Lord of history, guiding it with his own freedom, but is himself the goal of history as well, communicating himself to this world in its spiritual apex, yet at the same time abiding in absolute reality which is independent of this world. Yet God is also present *in* history or in its definitive result since, despite his infinite eminence above the world, he is nonetheless by virtue of creation, grace, and direct regard its inmost core without which the world would not come to its completion. Whether this consummating end of history is a finite end when also surveyed

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from the standpoint of history itself, whether history as a whole, and not just from the beginning, represents a finite time which will also be completed in time and which, to a certain extent, will proceed no further – this is an obscure question which theologians seem to have reached no agreement upon. In any case, history is transformed into a finality before God, even if in a linear sense of time we would not have to foresee any definitive end, but rather the "Last Judgment" would occur parallel to the history of the world instead of at a finite point of time at the end of the world. On the other hand, precisely today, more than ever before, an actual temporal end of history could be expected, since it is clear that the biological presuppositions of human existence will probably not last forever.

ON THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HISTORY OF REVELATION AND THE PROFANE HISTORY OF HUMANKIND

When Christian faith proclaims the transcendence of the final and total meaning of the history of the world, a meaning which will be [10] grasped through faith and not be a purely immanent empiricism, it by no means denies the possibility of grasping a partial coherence of meaning. Love, truth, beauty have a "meaning" in themselves and can be found to some extent in history. And this is true not only in the history experienced by any individual but to a certain degree as well in the history of societies. The emancipation of the slaves in America had a rightful, truly palpable meaning with a moral justification which could not be claimed by its opposite, no matter how many "human elements" and even how much immorality were actually involved in it, and no matter how much a concrete general historical situation demanded it, in order for it to be seen and made reality. It is these partial complexes of meaning which Christianity must recognize most of all if the actual history of salvation is not to transpire in a purely transempirical way outside of real history (while the cup of water given to the thirsty person will not be without significance before the tribunal of God). This raises the question of whether these complexes of meaning can be ordered and connected to one another in the objective and temporal order. Evil and culpability can of themselves yield no principle of order regardless of how much they may be inextricably interwoven with what is good and meaningful in concrete history

This question seems to be the objectively and properly posed question of the division and arrangement of materials in the writing of history. For its part, this linking of individual complexes of meaning in an objective and especially in a temporal way does not seem to succeed at all for the most part, or if it does, then at best in an imperfect way or only in respect to brief periods of time. Nevertheless, Christianity has in itself an interest in such a question. Christianity, after all, proclaims not merely a protology and an eschatology but it speaks as well of a "fullness of time," of Jesus Christ as the central point of history. Furthermore, it is a Christian conviction that in this Jesus Christ the history of salvation as a whole has entered into a new phase which was heretofore not present and that in this phase it is salvation and not its opposite that has become irreversible as the end of history, no matter how long the clock of history may continue to tick. In addition to this, in an evolutionary view of the world we have come to recognize an enormously long history of humankind which but a few decades ago was not even known. Therefore theology must ask itself how it can interpret *this* long [11] history as history of salvation, as history of faith and grace, and for theology this history can no longer begin with the historical Abraham who now appears as one of the last pages of the history of humankind up to the present.

If the history of salvation, when viewed in this way, requires an entirely new ordering in its structural principles and individual phases, then the question certainly arises as to the relationship of such a conception of the history of salvation and revelation to an ordering, at

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least in broad strokes, of the profane history of humanity. These questions must of course be addressed to the universal history of religion because in this history it is, perhaps, easiest to determine points of demarcation which are also of import for the universal history of humanity and the way of structuring it. This is not to deny, of course, that this history of religion, for its part, is conditioned by many causes belonging to the universal cultural history of humanity. In any case, it would be desirable today to replace the divisions of the history of revelation customary up to now (the primeval revelation of paradise, Abraham, Moses, the history of Israel, etc.) with a contemporarily more convincing way of structuring the history of revelation or to incorporate them into a structure in which the great religions of the world could also be accorded a significant place in a Christian sense. A similar list of requests must be presented to church history, the history of Christianity in the narrower sense.

THE REALIZATION OF TRANSCENDENCE IN HISTORY ACCORDING TO THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING

When historians describe structures of meaning in the past with sensitive interpretation, when they try to "understand," that is, when they do not limit themselves to pure reports of what is "factual" (which is, in the last analysis, impossible – a report of what simply "has been" would be quite uninteresting and would mark the end of historical writing), then they are presuming that in the history being described something true and abidingly valid presents itself to us despite the historical contingency which no longer obligates us, and that this can be for us a challenge and a binding model. That this kind of historical writing can come upon norms (naturally in quite [12] varying degrees of importance) is a basic presupposition accepted and defended by Christianity. For in contrast to an overt or tacit opinion current since the Enlightenment, Christian faith is convinced that the Christ-event has significance, has "meaning" for the whole of history and that it is a constituent part of the history of salvation for all time. In the Christian theologies there may be considerable differences of opinion as to *how* such a universal meaning within history can be apprehended. This, however, alters nothing in the common Christian conviction which is at the root of the ultimate dignity of historical science, and which maintains that in history itself the final meaning of history, the irrevocable promise of a blessed meaning of history to be revealed at the end, has appeared, and ever since that time this meaning can in principle be apprehended in faith.

Due to the influence of this Christ-event the theology of history can no longer be seen in accordance with the pattern of an ascending development. Rather will history present ever new but ultimately equivalent ways for the realization of human development and for the relationship to God. Of course there is in many respects something that may be described as an ascending development of humanity and this belongs to the meaning of history. It is not necessary to confine this development to the dimensions of the human being's dominion over nature through natural science or to the social structures which are becoming increasingly complex. But even in history the human being remains – a human being. One cannot imagine possible evolutionary tendencies in which a creative leap of development would one day transform the human being into a being which could no longer be called human, similar to the way in which one imagines the biological development in the origin of new species. Future history will also be the history of human beings who are of "one race" with one another and with the God-man. To speak in this way does not restrict the meaning of history to the confines of a narrow-minded philistinism. Even now the meaning of history lies in a unity with God which by definition cannot be surpassed. Within this realm of human possibilities thus described there may be numerous possibilities which we presently cannot even conceive,

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even though in many areas earthly limits to human development are beginning to appear. But even the idea that human beings could bring about considerable changes in themselves through gene manipulation does not mean that the boundary of their essential humanness would be [13] overstepped, because human beings are already creatures of unlimited transcendence.

In future history human beings may attempt to fill out to some degree this unlimited transcendence in knowing and willing by individual achievements which we cannot even conceive. Yet even now in their knowledge and in their freedom they are through Christian faith directly confronted with the total fulfillment of their unlimited transcendence. True, they reach this fulfillment in a definitive way only through their death. Over history stands the cross. Even in this world every ascent is always paid for with a decline. Without this, a continuation of history cannot be conceived. Therefore it comes as no surprise that social and historical utopias which see history as being played out on this our stage of time and space have precious little to tell us about what will happen in history when the conditions which they are aiming for are finally achieved. Because Christians expect their fulfillment only from that God whom they themselves cannot create, they remain skeptical of all utopias which they are supposed to bring about themselves and which always lie beyond their capacity. Because they know that they must answer in their lives before the judgment seat of the eternal and holy God and that the question of their love of their neighbor will be put to them (according to the words of Jesus, Mt. 25, this will be the only question), they are still permitted to be least of all the persons within history who defend their own property selfishly. Christians refuse to let themselves and their Christianity be cornered in the either-or position, whether it be conservative or revolutionary. The gospel requires them to undertake special efforts for the poor. This is understandable. The neighbor who is poor is loved by God, and only by loving their neighbor selflessly can they find the way to break out of their egoism and open themselves to the love of God. This may all sound somewhat individualistic, but in the objective order the poor neighbor whom we are supposed to serve can just as well be an oppressed class or the people of the Third World.

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COLLECTIVE AND THE INDIVIDUAL HISTORY OF SALVATION

The foregoing considerations might give rise to the question whether we want to apprehend the meaning of history by letting individuals [14] with their own history of freedom and in their salvation as individuals enter into the incomprehensibility of God. As far as the question of the meaning of history goes we seem to be pure individualists. Quite candidly and without any apology to the spirit of the times it must first of all be said that there are in the world histories of freedom for which individuals as such are responsible and these cannot be transferred or sloughed off. As far as the meaning of history is concerned, no one is dissolved in a collective mass, be it secular or ecclesiastical. But there is more to the problem than just that, even when one grants that both aspects of reality as well as of the meaning of history cannot really be resolved into a higher synthesis.

We have already said that the historian certainly has the right and possibility of apprehending supraindividual complexes of meaning in history even when these are still only partial segments. If this is correct (and if the history of salvation takes place not parallel to but within ordinary history), then one must also grant that these good, supraindividual segments of history achieve their finality in and with God in the same way as individual persons as such achieve theirs. Holy Scripture itself, after all, does recognize “peoples” as the subjects of salvation history The gospel is preached to them, their angels are spoken of,

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God's name is invoked over them, and he is the God of all peoples, and so on. It is no more possible to dissolve the salvation history of these "peoples" into the history of individual persons belonging to these peoples than it is to dissolve profane history into the chaotic confusion of individual histories. Both are conditioned by one another, but beyond that they do not yield a single and entire structure of meaning. We Christians talk about an eternal "kingdom" of God, about the communion of the saints with God. If we do not just want to imagine a hierarchy of individual beings in this finality of history with God, who are ordered according to a mere formal moral criterion, then in this eternal kingdom of the finality of freedom we must recognize and allow for the individuality of specific supraindividual collective histories of peoples. How, exactly, the diversity of history is supposed to be able to enter concretely into the definitive kingdom of freedom is something that goes quite beyond our present power of imagining. It must, however, be possible, if history itself, in all its diversity, is to arrive at the finality of God, instead of vaporizing into nothing more than a colorless extract consisting of moral actions performed by individuals.

[15]

THE "GREATS OF HISTORY" AND THE "GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"

Perhaps we should state more explicitly than we have done up to now that the definitive harvest of the meaning of history brought in before God is not identical with what the heroic figures of history and culture have contributed to this harvest. According to Christian faith, which on this point is radically antielitist, it is the blessed of the Father who are going to possess the Kingdom, the poor and the little ones, the anonymous "masses" who for the writers of history have served as not much more than the compost out of which they saw the great deeds springing up which alone they deem worthy of historical note.

It is true that in the Christian view there is also found in the eternal kingdom of God a sort of structure and hierarchy, because Catholic teaching maintains something like a differentiation of merits on the part of the saints, and Jesus in his human perfection and Mary occupy the highest places in this hierarchy of "merits" and thus the highest places in the definitive balance of history. Now while this idea cannot simply be ignored, since we cannot consider everything in history to be of equal value and importance, history being in its ultimate meaning not just a homogeneous mass, still history in the Christian view is made by individuals each of whom is unique and irreplaceable, who do form a community, who manifest the "kingdom of God," but these individuals do not recur, rather they are always unique. God alone knows who of these are the "greatest in the kingdom of heaven." No one knows for sure whether these persons (prescinding from Jesus and Mary) are identical with the great figures of history to whom historical writing devotes its attention. Among them can also be the poor, the little ones, the despised, and the failures. But this problem as well will not simply resolve itself into a rightful hierarchy of individuals which will be revealed in history's definitive outcome. Rather, it will find its resolution by being elevated into that timeless love in which every individual will participate in the totality of the entire history of all who have loved unselfishly.

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2

NATURAL SCIENCE AND REASONABLE FAITH

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR DIALOGUE WITH THE NATURAL SCIENCES

Any observations that theology is to contribute here to the expositions of the natural sciences must necessarily be very brief and hence fragmentary. It is clear that in recent decades theology has not occupied itself very intensively with borderline questions between the natural sciences and itself. So what is presented here cannot be a compendium of lucid conclusions which enjoy the blessing of Christian theology in the sense of being its common property.

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS ON THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Theologians would certainly consider it desirable in such an interdisciplinary undertaking for both sides (theology and the natural sciences), first of all, to treat in general some epistemological questions and some questions of the philosophy of science regarding the essence, autonomy, points of tangency, lines of demarcation, and possible areas of conflict in these sciences. Today's serious natural scientists pay homage to epistemological realism, and they are not accustomed to spending any great length of time puzzling over [17] ultimate questions of the theory and metaphysics of knowledge, not even when, as persons schooled in the history of the modern natural sciences, they themselves subject their own science to objective criticism as they see it over and over again drawing them to falsifications, and not even when a kind of skepticism nowadays, more than in the past, makes them hesitate to extrapolate in an all too facile way a total world view based on the conclusions of natural science.

Given the peculiar nature of their discipline, theologians, on the other hand, evince more spontaneous interest in general questions of epistemology, since theology is almost always conducted in dialogue with philosophy. Moreover, fundamental theology cannot do without ongoing dialogue with traditional epistemology, with the analogous efforts of existential philosophy in this area, and with the present-day philosophy of science, logic, and linguistic philosophy, especially of Anglo-Saxon origin. This, however, does not alleviate the extreme difficulty of dialogue between the natural sciences and theology starting right from the general problems of epistemology. Even apart from the fact that natural scientists today are themselves obviously puzzling over the methodological problems of their own science without really coming to any consensus within the different branches of their science, one side of the dialogue being sought for is that of the natural scientists, who evince less interest in the more general questions of epistemology. Then there is the other side, which is that of the theologians. While it is true that theologians deal with more general questions such as these, they themselves cannot appeal to a consensus among one another in this area.

In a dialogue of this kind (and this is what makes it even more difficult) a distinction has to be made between the actual material question regarding the fundamental possibilities and real results of such a dialogue, and the more psychological and cultural-historical question regarding the difficulties that have to be taken into account in such a dialogue, given the psychological and cultural-historical background peculiar to the dialogue partners. In a

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dialogue of this kind perhaps, "in itself" it might often be relatively easy to come by a result in the objective order. The actual given peculiarities of the dialogue partners (the limits of their knowledge, the bias toward which their professions have inclined them, the actual difference of importance that they attach to their interests, the respective "blind spots" in their capacity for understanding, the sociologically diverse [18] backgrounds of the dialogue partners, the psychological influence of their respective milieu with its prejudices, etc.) can, in fact, prevent an outcome of the dialogue, even if it were in itself possible in the objective order.

POSSIBLE COEXISTENCE OF CONVICTIONS AND ELEMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE NOT YET SYNTHESIZED

At this point it is time to draw attention to the question of an existentiell epistemology (if one may put it that way), the question of a basic justification (in the order of insight) for a permissible and sustained coexistence of simultaneous convictions in the same subject, wherein a *positive* and intelligible synthesis has not, or, at least, has not yet been achieved. The legitimacy of such a coexistence of convictions or opinions which have not yet been positively reconciled with one another can be understood and is of great importance for a peaceful relationship between theology (faith) and natural science.

For example, why shouldn't a natural scientist as such feel inclined toward a kind of pantheism, without turning this into an absolute system, and, at the same time, as a religious person, turn in prayer to a personal God, without having to reconcile in a fully positive way this existentiell pluralism? The possibility of such convictions or tendencies not yet positively reconciled, which are induced in the same subject by the multiplicity of the sciences, should be frankly admitted. After all, this does not amount to an affirmation of a fundamental and absolute irreconcilability, not even if such a positive reconciliation in the intellectual history of an individual and of the history of science remains on the whole a goal toward which one strives only in an asymptotic way. Between positive synthesization of elements of knowledge from diverse disciplines and the determination of an absolute contradiction positively recognized as such there is a wide area, and this is the place for real, ongoing dialogue.

ON THE FUNDAMENTAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND NATURAL SCIENCE

A preliminary consideration of the fundamental relationship between theology and natural science, prior to a treatment of individual [19] problems, can lead to the formulation of the following general principle. Theology and natural science cannot in principle contradict one another since both *right from the outset* are distinct from one another in their area of investigation and in their methodology.

Natural Science: *The Investigation of Concrete Individual Phenomena and Their Interrelation in A Posteriori Experience*

Natural science investigates in a posteriori experience individual phenomena which human beings (ultimately through the experience of their senses) encounter in their world, and the relationship of these phenomena to one another. Theology has to do with the totality of reality as such, and with the ground of this reality, and its method is ultimately one of a priori

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questioning. Consequently, there need be no fear of a conflict of competence between natural science and theology, provided that neither acts contrary to its own nature when crossing the other's boundaries, and provided that, when such unintentional violations do occur, they inform one another of them. Such a basic thesis is of course a generalization and requires explanation in respect to the borderline cases. At least in the case of a Catholic theory of faith, in which rationality and affirmations about the world and about history are implicit right from the outset, cases of this kind cannot be absolutely excluded. More of this later.

First of all, there is a clear and simple distinction between theology (as faith) and natural science, so that at least at the outset it is possible in principle to resolve any conflict. The natural sciences investigate concrete individual phenomena which people encounter in their objective experience. They seek to determine these experiences and link them to one another in a meaningful way. The following points need not be investigated here: the question of how, exactly, these phenomena can be related to one another; how such interrelations are verified or falsified; what more precise insights into the essence of natural science and into its methodology result from the answers to these questions; to what extent prognoses based on such interrelations can be made in respect to future experiences not yet existing; and what the relationship is between the theoretical and practical intentions of the natural sciences.

[20] The main point here is this: with the methods of natural science it is not possible at all for human beings to let themselves be confronted all at once with all possible phenomena of reality as such for an a posteriori experience. These sciences as such offer no possibility of doing this. They necessarily proceed from an individual phenomenon within a larger spectrum of realities and experiences which are possible but which have not yet been realized. They thereby tacitly presume as self-evident that this individual experience and this individual reality have an objective link to other realities of previous or future experience and that thereby, in principle, an intelligible network of such interrelations can be progressively set up. Two things flow from this assumption, which, incidentally, the methods of natural science alone cannot prove.

Natural science is making steady progress in the addition of new elements of knowledge. It is able to do this, of course, because it begins with the particular object and so none of these elements of knowledge can, in principle, possess a universal formula which encompasses absolutely everything and on the basis of which all of reality would fall into the possession of natural science.

Furthermore, in this sort of a priori postulate of the interdependence of all reality as envisaged by natural science, there is implicit the fact that every newly acquired particular element of knowledge is always in principle a revision of previous elements, since the previously recognized reality is codetermined by those realities which have not been recognized until afterwards. Whether such a fundamental progressiveness, which is always revising the previous elements of knowledge, actually imports a falsification of these previous elements or whether, in the retrospective revision, the previous truth still has validity as such – this question, and maybe it is only one of terminology, need not concern us here. (Ancient philosophy insists that the abstraction which always takes place in every individual cognition does not import an error. In natural science this ancient axiom is, perhaps, not quite as valid as the philosophers and the natural scientists are accustomed to presume.)

Theology: *The A Priori Question about the Totality of Reality and Its Ground*

Theology, on the other hand, makes an affirmation about God as the one and absolute ground of all realities. It grounds the multiplicity [21] of all realities which can be

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experienced as individual realities in an absolute reality, which is not one individual element *within* this manifold world, but rather its ground, which, although incommensurable with this multiplicity, establishes it and holds it together. There is of course the one tremendous question whether such an original unity preceeding the multiplicity is conceivable; whether this unity exists; whether in its relationship to the world it can be so conceived as being understood to be the foundation of the world without at the same time being dissolved in it as a particular element; and then again, whether a human being can have a real relationship to this original unity as such, which is called God, even though this God is not a part of the world, while the human being is just that. There are of course many other questions such as these.

But because these are questions about the original one and whole as such, and not questions about the result of a subsequent summation of all individual experiences (which summation both from the nature of natural science as well as from the nature of the questioners, who are never able to gain total possession of themselves, can never really be completed), then such questions are, in any case, not questions of natural science. Due to the fact that natural science necessarily proceeds from the particular object, the original one and whole cannot in principle be found in it. So natural science may and should be methodologically atheistic. In explaining one individual phenomenon and linking it to another there is no need to presume that in the course of this undertaking one individual phenomenon as such should suddenly bring God into the picture. One experience is always to be explained by means of a further particular experience within the whole, and not by means of the original one and whole. God is not to be classified as an individual factor in the series of phenomena. (Incidentally, one would do well to give heed to this in the theological interpretation of what are known as miracles.) The whole, when viewed as a sum which has been added up, requires a whole which is originally one single whole. But this step is not the task of the natural sciences, but of metaphysics and theology. To legitimize this step, however, these two need not justify themselves before the natural sciences. They may not demand any theological tribute from the natural sciences, but at the same time they do not depend on the consent of the natural sciences. The question and the method of a metaphysical theology do not occur as a consequence of [22] the natural sciences having reached their utmost limits, nor are they extrapolated from these sciences. Rather, they precede them in the logical order (if not of course in the temporal and psychological order). They occur when the knowing subject, instead of focusing its attention on this or that particular object of the a posteriori experience, asks itself, in a total return to itself, about the conditions of the possibility of subject and of a knowledge and a freedom which have a reflexive knowledge of themselves; when thinking and freedom think themselves. In this transcendental reflection on oneself there is contained a metaphysical anthropology which is not constituted by an empirical anthropology of natural science, however legitimate and important that may be.

Of course in the natural sciences themselves there do arise questions of a transcendent nature, inasmuch as the individuals pursuing this science cannot entirely prescind from them. Natural science is done by natural scientists. True, these scientists as such do not appear in it. But when they ask why they are pursuing the natural sciences; what the direction of their inquiry is as they carry it on to the exclusion of other possible sciences; what ethical norms have to be observed by them in their occupation (presuming that they are not covertly pursuing the business of their own annihilation); how their scientific work fits into the ever-growing complex of their own existence; how they are supposed to be the loving, artistic, political persons that they have to be over and above their natural science; then natural scientists are perforce confronted by questions of life and death for which they can find no answer in their natural science, no matter how strongly they are inclined (rightly or wrongly) to apply knowledge, analogies, terminologies of their own science to this universal question.

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Of course (and this must be said right away) the beginning of the autonomy of theology as distinct from natural science in the metaphysical question concerning the original one and whole and our original relationship to this original one, which precedes our particular point of departure into the manifold world, is a starting point which gives rise to the question whether it can really be a point of departure for *that* faith and *that* theology which consider themselves to be based upon a historical revelation. There naturally arise at this point extremely difficult questions that cannot be answered here. It is enough for us to assert that such a point of departure, rightly and [23] properly understood in its essence, is likewise sufficient as foundation and point of departure for theology as the science of revelation. Here we need only say: when and to the extent that theology contains, at least as one essential element, the transcendental and a priori relationship to the original one and whole, then it is from its very outset essentially distinct from natural science and is, therefore, not subject to its judgment. Whether theology can justify itself at all in the face of reason is a question. But it is not theology's duty and task to legitimize itself beyond that legitimation which is the obvious duty (but a mutual one!) of human consciousness in all its individual contents.

Of course there is a mentality which can easily develop in natural scientists, given their a posteriori pursuit of science, and – when this tends to become absolute – it is that mentality of positivism, that annoyance with metaphysics, that exclusive confinement to what can be demonstrated by direct experiment, which is liable to produce the arrogance of persons who can present their conclusions as beyond dispute, a mentality which does not have much patience with theology. But even natural scientists might realize, or at least entertain as a hypothesis, that their science of the particular object can induce a partial blindness as an occupational hazard which makes it difficult or impossible for them to see other realities.

If natural scientists put the question to themselves critically whether they seriously believe that they can interpret and determine by their science the totality of their existence, if they critically espouse the position that the things in their lives which defy such a scientific determination are not for that reason unimportant, unessential, and beyond intellectual responsibility, then they must realize that there is an intellectual interpretation of their existence which cannot be disputed by natural science and the measure of which, in point of certainty and commitment, cannot be taken by the criteria of this science. If a natural scientist wanted to persist in a fundamental agnosticism in respect to the whole of his or her existence as though it were the true summation of his or her life experience (something that seems to be rather common among natural scientists), then by this very fact alone he or she would already have opted for a metaphysical system and not a system of natural science, and thereby would have adopted a standpoint which, just as that of the theologian, lies outside of the realm of natural science.

[24]

THE POSSIBILITY OF SECONDARY CONFLICTS BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND NATURAL SCIENCE

Even if theology and natural science, from their different starting points, are two entities which do not fundamentally threaten or negate one another, still secondary conflicts are nonetheless possible and such conflicts have occurred over and over again since the Enlightenment. In principle they can be solved and have been solved over and over again. At least in this sense a truce can regularly be achieved as soon as one sees that the affirmations of both sides cannot be shown to be absolutely contradictory.

The Mutual Trespassing of Boundaries: *Example and Background*

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The basic reason for such conflicts is found of course in the trespassing of boundaries on either or both sides in respect to an objective question of theology or of natural science. It may well be the case that such trespassing will not be easily and immediately noticed, but will only come to light when the other side voices its objection. From the epistemological standpoint this failure to respect the proper domain of the other science is perceived only when the science in question, on the one hand, actually becomes aware of its mistake through the protest of the other science, and, on the other hand, is then forced to recognize the mistake as a violation of its own principles and methodological norms, even if this knowledge is of itself the result of this problematic dialogue. Without this dialogue this awareness would not even occur, given the historicity of human knowledge and its conditioning by the situation.

Theology has often been guilty of overstepping its boundaries in this way. This does not mean to say that the ecclesial teaching office has been guilty of this regarding those dogmas which are actually intended to be definitively binding. (In establishing this, one is not asserting that there have never been opinions and teachings in the Church whose nondefinitive nature has been quite clear even before the objection of natural science. Nor is one asserting that, humanly and historically seen, such an opinion which oversteps the boundary *would* certainly not have been defined in the event that such a decision would have been forced by other circumstances *prior* to the [25] entrance of secular science. This kind of historical vulnerability, along with the dangers entailed in it, is part of the nature of divine revelation, which is also a historical reality.) For a long time the Church resisted the heliocentric system of Copernicus. For a long time it tried to hold onto a fixity of the kinds of living beings by appealing to the account of creation in the Book of Genesis. For a long time it rejected the biological emergence of humankind from the animal kingdom and fought against it. In *Humani Generis* and in a schema prepared for Vatican II it taught the origin of all human beings from a numerically single pair. In reprimanding Teilhard de Chardin and repressing his endeavors it manifested too little understanding for an ontology in which created being is conceived in principle and in the very beginning as being which is in the process of becoming within an entire evolution of the cosmos, which is still in the process of becoming. The Church has often shown too little understanding toward those branches of anthropology in which the material, biological reality of the human being as such is validated. The Church's relationship to genetics, to depth psychology, to the development of the social life and morals of humankind as conditioned by natural science was never especially benevolent, was not sufficiently differentiated. The Church was always quicker to say no than to say yes.

Behind these facts, which could easily be multiplied, a problem is of course concealed which can only be sketched here: the transition from a medieval mentality to the modern mentality of today's world determined by the Enlightenment. This process lasted a long time, and in the different regions and social groups of the Christian West it did not just run its course simultaneously, and even today it is not everywhere simply over and done with. As regards this total process, there is present a more difficult problem than in the case of a concrete individual pronouncement of the Church's teaching office standing in apparent conflict with an individual affirmation of natural science. Even if one can safely say that a great many of the conflicts have been resolved in regard to individual question, if not in regard to the general mentalities of historical epochs, still, on closer inspection, the question nonetheless remains whether *all* such individual problems have been settled which *can* exist between what is known by natural science and the traditional teachings of the Church. Right now there is no extraordinary and clearly defined case of conflict, [26] none, anyway, that the ecclesial teaching office has taken notice of. Nowadays the Church pursues a more tolerant and prudently tactful course in its dealings with natural scientists than previously. But there

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are still some more individual questions that have, it seems, not as yet been sufficiently cleared up, and in the following pages they will be considered. The selection and the sequence are necessarily arbitrary. Furthermore, it is not going to be possible to deal with them in the depth and detail that they deserve.

"Truce" or Peace Treaty? Presuppositions and Possibilities of Dialogue

In view of the vast extent of the sciences today, even with the will to interdisciplinary dialogue, natural scientists do not really have enough understanding of metaphysics, much less theology. Theologians, for their part, are even worse off, since they do not really get much beyond a somewhat dilettantish acquaintance with the conclusions and methods of the natural sciences. So dialogue is extremely laborious and usually breaks down before more precise and clear results are obtained by both sides. Nothing in the following considerations can do much to alter this sad fact. It may very well be that in the long run the very impossibility of mastering this situation is the very theme itself of dialogue between natural scientists and theologians. What right do theologians have to make statements touching upon the natural sciences without really understanding the conclusions of these sciences (modern physics and the biological sciences)? This right exists, but its legitimation cannot be demonstrated by a direct clarification of the objective problems at issue. This is a question that cannot be sidestepped. And how can modern natural scientists honestly be believing Christians when they have scarcely understood how the affirmations of faith can be brought into harmony with their scientific insights? As a matter of principle they cannot just carry these two realms of affirmation around with them in separate compartments of their consciousness.

Along with this problem and the requirement of an indirect solution in the form of a kind of truce rather than a direct solution of the problems, there emerges another broader problem. The question can [27] also be posed whether, to what extent, and according to what future timetable the actual conclusions of the most modern physics and biology (which are characterized by abstractness and a transposition into mathematical terms, etc.) can find their way into the general consciousness of the average person, in which the affirmations of faith actually reside, notwithstanding all subtle philosophy and academic theology.

In the last analysis, the most modern natural science really does remain inaccessible to the consciousness of the average person, even despite the osmosis which takes place through popularization. Yet it is precisely to this normal human consciousness that faith is addressed within and despite the theology which this faith produces. Presumably, then, there are consequences for the dialogue between natural science and theology which have not been adequately thought through and which do point in the direction of a legitimately certified "truce" which, at least in the actual consciousness of the average person, cannot for the most part be superseded by a "peace treaty." This sort of "truce" (and the legitimacy of this arrangement should be recognized) would, in fact, only be a radically unique case of the intellectual situation of people today, who, in comparison to people of earlier times, are becoming more and more ignorant, if one measures their knowledge by the yardstick of the relationship between what they really know and understand and the mass of knowledge which is directly available to them in their time and which is known by others.

With all these presuppositions and restrictions the attempt will still be made in the following pages to say something about the individual themes from the standpoint of theology (or, better still, of one theologian), which themes, while originating in natural science, must still be of concern to the theologian as theologian.

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A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE BASIC THEMES OF DIALOGUE

First, a few basic themes will at most be touched upon in a very general way because here anything more would be impossible, and [28] one or the other will be taken up again in a later context. There are certainly ultimate basic themes of natural science, or at least of cosmology (philosophical problems of physics and of biology) to which theologians cannot be indifferent. What is matter? What is space? What is time?

Spirit and Matter in Traditional Metaphysics and in Natural Science Today

In dealing with the question of the ultimate essence of matter (physicists might actually or in principle dispense themselves from this question) theologians will inquire especially into the relationship between spirit and matter, between matter and a personal consciousness that realizes an unlimited transcendentality. Spurred on by today's natural science, theologians can no longer be satisfied with their traditional positions on this question. The average manual of theology has had up until now the following contours. God created spirit and matter (spirit in the angels even before matter). The two are essentially distinct from one another and a closer unity of the two as a particular and subsidiary problem emerges in a critical way only in anthropology by virtue of the substantial unity posited by anthropology of a spiritual soul and a biologically material element. (The *forma* of the living being, the entelechy, integrated in a somewhat obscure way into the material element, belonged to the material element by virtue of its *eductio e potentia materiae*; it was essentially distinct from the physical matter, and, in any case, it was only a marginal problem of slight importance to the general relationship of spirit and matter.)

Because of the commonly held theory of evolution, it is no longer easy for theologians today to conceive spirit and matter as being more or less disparate realities which originate only in the creator of the two and then continue to encounter one another only in the case of human beings. Moreover, the question of the relationship between these two entities has become more difficult because of the fact that today one can imagine or experience productions of highly complex material realities (computers) formerly considered to be accomplishments specifically of the spirit. Hence the boundaries between spirit [29] and matter can no longer be as easily drawn, not even if one rejects pure materialism. Conversely, however, traditional metaphysics and theology do assuredly contain elements in themselves which could be the starting point for a further development of theology, moving it closer to the tendencies of today's natural sciences, without at the same time capitulating to gross materialism.

Textbook theology does not do much to develop the idea that matter, by virtue of its origin and the end toward which it tends, must, after all, be quite "spiritual," inasmuch as its creator is absolute spirit and can hardly be the cause of something that is purely spiritless. Medieval ontology has said more about the "spirituality" of the material object on the basis of "forms," which are in themselves "ideas," than today's average Christians are conscious of.

If one were to conceive of "angels" (presuming that they "exist") as self-aware principles of organization for large material complexes in space and time and not just as purely nonmaterial monads – and this is quite possible from Holy Scripture – and if one were further to understand the concept of matter on the basis of medieval speculation as the most general indication of finiteness, then an ontology of finite being would also include materiality as an essential constitutive element, and the absolute God would project his creative distinctness and eminence above everything finite in the world by creating material being which goes on

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to realize itself step by step.

In any case, with all the justified and necessary distinction between the material and the spiritual *within* finite being, one cannot conclude that what has been created, in its very fire moment, divides into a separate material element and a purely spiritual element, and not that both, albeit in a quite different way, are inner essential constitutive elements of every created being. What is called the purely unconscious and the merely material can, likewise, on the basis of medieval ontology, be understood as something spiritual which only possesses its own spiritual essence *alone*. The prohibition against considering the spiritual and the material to be continuous essential constitutive elements of every finite being is, in any case, not a proposition of faith, but perhaps rather nothing more than a traditional, albeit somewhat awkward conception, designed to make clear the diversity and gradation of reality. Of course consideration must also be given to how the most general concept of [30] matter, as it appears in modern physics, and the concept of matter, as it has appeared in Western metaphysics, can be brought into closer harmony with one another.

Matter and Individual Singular Substance

To the question about matter in general, insofar as this is of interest to the theologian, there also pertains the question whether the traditional conceptions of an individual singular substance, as also used in theology (e.g., the substance of bread in the Eucharist), can nowadays still be validly applied on the purely inorganic level, or whether on this level a genuine multiplicity of individual singular substances can no longer be accepted in the old sense without thereby being forced to conceive of the entire material world as one single, really uniform individual substance. If particular beings on the organic level also certainly possess a high degree of unity and individuality (although at least the boundaries in this area cannot always be exactly discerned by us), then a problem arises in the organic area in respect to the individual substantiality of the actual difference of essence, at least in view of the thinking of the most recent cosmology, which, for the most part, conceives the evolution of living being in such a way that in this evolution the new appearance of underived entelechies is no longer necessary. Thus the question of the essential differences in the (subhuman) organic area must be reformulated. One may be permitted to say that theology can get along without an actual right of intervention in these questions, although it has, in fact, overstepped its boundaries by using the customary concepts from common experience and from cosmology up to now in its affirmations about the human being and the subhuman stages of reality.

The concept of one individual substance essentially different from anything else finds its legitimation in the experience of the spiritual, personal, and free subject in the human being, and in regard to the human being it must be defended by theologians even against natural scientists who might be tempted to overstep the boundaries of their area of experience by denying the individual substantiality of the human subject. However, the question of what concepts are most [31] suitable for the appropriate description of the subhuman and particularly of the inorganic world in its unity and multiplicity does not lie within the competence of theologians. It is even conceivable that new concepts (e.g., “field,” etc.) can be of use to theologians, both in an analogous application as well as from the fact that the subhuman world cannot be bracketed out of a real anthropology.

CREATEDNESS OF THE FINITE WORLD AS A PROBLEM OF TEMPORALITY

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The problems connected with the createdness of the world, with its finite temporality and spatiality, are not simply the same problems, but they are, at least at first glance, interconnected, and they seem to be problems, which come up both in theology and in natural science. Since conflicts in these questions are obviously possible, some attempt must be made here to say something about them. Here, too, great caution is required and the possibility of error cannot be excluded since the positions which theology has taken up on these questions are not as clear as it might at first seem.

That the world has been created is a theological affirmation, not one of natural science. So on *this* point there can be no quarrel either. Nor is the natural scientist who is a Christian required to hold the created character of the world as a whole, or even that there has been a creation event of a specific kind within the world. Every conclusion from the world as a whole to an absolute cause is, when understood properly, not the application of a general (univocal) principle of causality, but rather the objectivation of the unique relationship, implicit in every statement about an existing object, between the individually existing object and absolute being, which is always implied and affirmed. Beyond this indication about the nature of the knowledge of God nothing more can and need be said here. God, then, is not a factor to be viewed as an individual element within a series of individual phenomena, which are the concern of the natural scientist as such. Creation is not something that happens at the beginning of time, but is rather the continuing relationship of the world to its transcendent ground.

When Christian thinking speaks of the creation at the "beginning" [32] of time, it means precisely that time, as a characteristic of the reality (interior and exterior) directly experienced by us, is itself created, that God from the very outset stands outside of temporality, that his creative act, eternal in itself and identical with God himself, establishes a world which in itself is temporal. When and to the extent that Christian teaching speaks of the finiteness of this created time and declares that this time is not "eternal," that is, when it not only asserts a continuing radical dependence of the world on God but also apparently says that the world's duration is finite (a statement which is obscure for theologians and which requires additional metaphysical consideration), then it is not asserting that the first moment of this temporal series, which is ordered to finiteness, is identical with the "big bang" which is spoken of by natural science today and whose distance from us in time science is trying to determine. It is certainly not necessary for theology to identify this concept with the concept of the beginning in a theological sense. Among other things this would present the difficulty that a temporally determinable distance between us and the big bang would put the big bang into a temporal order, while the beginning in a theological sense posits time as timeless, and the concept of a first moment in a temporal series so posited (even though theology does use this concept too) causes great intellectual difficulties which cannot be further analyzed here.

For the concept of time that it really needs theology will, in any event, appeal to the *inner* experience of the free subject. In this experience a human being finds a genuine beginning, temporality which has a genuine direction and which cannot be reversed, and genuine finality. How and whether physically external temporality and time can be understood in this light as deficient modes of this actual time of the free subject is a question of interest for theologians, but not one that causes fundamental alarm. If the temporality of the inner experience of the senses is comprehended and thought through with sufficient clarity to the effect that in this experience as such the materiality of the world as such, which is an inner element of this sense experience, is directly experienced, that here too, then, the observer and the reality observed cannot be completely distinguished from one another, then perhaps it can be made clear that even scientific concepts of time with all the problems they raise are not as far removed from the common experience of time as they sometimes seem to be.

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THE PROBLEM OF EVOLUTION AS SEEN BY THEOLOGY

Because and to the extent that an evolutionary understanding of the world is one of the basic elements of today's conception of the world and one that does not harmonize completely with the traditional Christian understanding of the world, this problem must be addressed here.

The Methodological Point of Departure in the Theological Formulation of the Question

If one proceeds from the assumption that an evolutionary origination of the biosphere as a whole from the "mere" material world is likewise one of the elements of this evolutionary conception of the world, that "creation" of living being does not actually mean an intervention of God as a factor which can be located on a definite individual point of time in the history of reality, then for the theologian the question of the evolution of living being and the idea of a *universal* evolutionary development of the cosmos come down ultimately to one and the same question.

If in what follows we do not make a sharp distinction between the question of the development of the world as a whole and the question of evolution within the biosphere, that need not necessarily mean a reproach for the theologian. We are proceeding from the assumption that it is correct that there is a development which determines the entire cosmic reality and continues on through it. Our only question is whether a theologian who is *against* this has to raise an objection in the name of Christian faith. Whether this assumption is really correct; whether it has to be restricted; for what areas of universal development of this kind natural science can offer solid arguments and for what areas it cannot; what more precise kinds of "mechanisms" must be presumed and can be demonstrated for the individual stages of development: all of these are questions primarily for the natural scientist and, at least at the outset, lie beyond the competence of the theologian.

Methodologically, then, theologians have the right to presume the most extreme positions of evolutionary thinking (provided these make some degree of sense and do not actually constitute manifest [34] metaphysical disregard for the boundaries on the part of the natural sciences). Then they ask themselves whether they can live with these positions. Theologians do not have to defend these positions themselves, since that is the business of natural scientists when espousing these extreme positions (which certainly is not always the case pure and simple). The theologians' position, then, is always a hypothetical one: *if* the exponents of the natural sciences maintain this or that, then . . .

In answering this question we are going to try to forge a link between theology and the basic concepts of an evolutionary "world view," as daring as this may sound. It is of course obvious that this attempt is being made only because such a world view exists. But this does not alter the fact that theologians with their data and their assumptions can try on their part to pave the way for an understanding of evolution and thereby determine whether evolution is compatible with the positions of theology.

Belief in Creation as the Transcendental Experience of the Origination of All Being from Absolute Being

Theologians proceed from the assumption that absolutely everything that is not God is created by one and the same God. This God they recognize as absolute spirit, pure meaning, intelligibility, and love, even though in all these affirmations they know that this God is

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above everything that exists or can be conceived of outside himself, that he is infinitely sublime and therefore they know that all affirmations about him become lost in his incomprehensibility. Everything that is, therefore, must bear the stamp of origin of this one primordial ground of being; everything must have an ultimate unity and community. The postulate of an ultimate unity of the whole world which cannot be resolved into a definitive, ultimately unthinkable disparity of several worlds, and of an ultimate spiritual nature which manifests itself in intelligibility, and of a being present to itself even though it admits of the highest degrees of differentiation, is implicit in the belief in creation. Materiality must be understood as the lowest stage of this spirit (even when this may perhaps be irrelevant to the pure natural scientist). Otherwise materiality cannot be conceived as originating from an absolute spirit, since this spirit cannot create something [35] that is absolutely disparate from itself. Moreover, this spirit cannot form its creation into a materiality which would in an eternally unrelated way coexist side-by-side with it. Many in antiquity tried to explain the nonspiritual nature of the material world in this way.

If (by way of anticipation) we conceive created reality as manifold and yet one, that is, if we must assume an ultimately intelligible relationship of the individual realities of the world, then this relationship of the individual realities to one another cannot be conceived as anything but final, that is, as an interrelationship that has been ultimately intended and planned. It is not required that this finality of the individual realities of the world can always and in every case be discerned in a clear-cut way in the individual realities themselves with the limited modes of cognition available to natural science. This finality is already implicitly contained in the transcendental experience of the origination of all being from absolute being (and here, without difficulty, we may identify this experience with belief in creation). Elements of finality which come to our attention empirically may by all means be integrated into this transcendental experience of finality, since accident, strictly speaking, is no basis of understanding at all, but only points to the fact that in a limited area of understanding a reason cannot be found why this or that happens in this way and not some other.

Divine Causality: *On the Ontology of the Relationship between God and What Is Created*

God created finite beings. How can these be conceived in themselves, in their unity among one another, and in their relationship to God? These three questions must be considered in their corresponding unity. First of all, the individual being's relationship of origin from God is not a relationship effected at some time previously "in the beginning," but is, rather, the single creation and the "preservation" (to use the traditional expression) in equal reference to the temporal being and its temporality. This touches upon a difficult point in the traditional doctrine of God. This relationship of a created being to God can on the one hand be identified with the reality of this being; in an idea of creation which rejects every form of pantheism one may [36] not say that God himself is an inner constitutive element of a created being. But in this affirmation theologians must exercise caution for theological reasons which have nothing to do with natural science.

For theologians recognize in the theology of grace and in the beatific vision a relationship of God to a creaturely reality in which reality God's own being is the quasi-formal cause and not merely the external efficient cause of a determination of the finite being. This theological datum already indicates that an efficacy of God through himself and not through a created mediation must be rejected as a pantheistic view only if God at the same time be conceived as an inner essential constitutive element belonging to the essence of the finite being. The distinction between God and creature which rejects pantheism therefore does not exclude a determination of a finite being by God himself as such, a determination which can no longer

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be adequately subsumed under the category of an "ontic," transient efficient causality. In a more profound ontology concerning the relationship of God's absolute being and finite being, which is being continuously constituted by God, one could show that the example from which we have just proceeded (uncreated grace and the beatific vision) does indeed imply an essentially supernatural relationship to God, accessible only through revelation, but that on the other hand this relationship always and everywhere is nevertheless valid in an analogous way for the relationship between God's absolute being and being which originates from him.

This relationship cannot be grasped solely by just subsuming it under the general category of an efficient causality, such as otherwise exists between two finite beings which are already distinct from one another prior to such a causal relationship of a particular kind. The reason why this is not possible is that divine causality does not presuppose the distinction between God and creature, but itself establishes this distinction and precisely in so doing keeps it with itself in a unique way. Understandably the ontology of the relationship between God and what is created cannot be further developed and established here. It must, however, be emphasized that this singular relationship between absolute being and finite being, which is not really taken into consideration by a superficial theology of creation, is a subject which belongs to a transcendental knowledge of the origination of created being from absolute being, just as metaphysics is something aprioristic to the knowledge of natural [37] science, is not part of this knowledge as such, and cannot be treated thematically in it. The important thing for the question of evolution in what has been indicated here is simply the plain sentence that the determination and events of a finite being are subject to the constant "pressure" (if one may use this term) of the divine being. This "pressure" is not one of the essential constitutive elements of a finite being. It can, however, always make this being into something more than it is "in itself," or, as the case may be, it is that which in the first place makes the finite being what it is. For metaphysical knowledge this "pressure" is a given; for a purely ontically a posteriori knowledge, which is that of the natural scientist, it cannot be discerned.

What is meant by this will become clearer when explicit consideration is devoted to a "being in the process of becoming." Then it must become clear that its character of being capable of becoming, which is no mere passive condition, ultimately in an ontological way can only be made comprehensible by this relationship of God to the finite being, without this relationship being, for its part, an individual ontic phenomenon.

On the Compatibility of the Teachings of Evolution and the Christian Conception of the World

Again we proceed from the a posteriori experience of natural science as it exists or is interpreted in the general and the particular theory of evolution. This theory states that all observable phenomena of the world which are accessible to the natural sciences are interrelated, that the world has undergone a development. Whether this development had a meaningful (final) direction from the outset and whether or not it continues to have one; what, exactly, such statements really mean; what part accident plays in a development of this kind, and what accident means – on these things and many others connected with them the natural sciences themselves are not in agreement. Nor has agreement yet been reached concerning the more precise mechanisms of biological development in particular, for on the question as to what extent a continuous connection in the development of living being can be assumed even over and above the larger spheres of form; whether *such* transitions are accessible to Observation or whether this cannot be expected from the very outset. [38] All of these questions are and continue to be questions of the natural sciences which do not touch

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directly upon theology.

Here we are simply presupposing the extreme in evolution as a given or as a hypothetical assumption of the natural scientist, and we are asking only whether something of this sort must be rejected by theology or not. (The emergence of the human being will receive special consideration later.) This, then, is the question: Is a continuous development of the cosmos from its simplest and most original components right up to its present differentiation and complexity, the realm of living being included, acceptable to Christian faith in such a way that it can leave this whole evolution to natural science as a thesis or hypothesis, and then, at most, afterwards include this evolution in a Christian conception of the world?

Our answer is yes. If we at first prescind from the question as to where and to what extent the concept of the fixity of a being, which can be explained only by an act of creation outside of an evolution, is realized in the cosmos; if we put aside the question whether something like this exists beyond the very first and most primordial data of the cosmos, which data modern physics with a certain differentiation simply presupposes (because otherwise the big bang could not be conceived), then this sort of general and continuous development implies only that all respective individual realities in their further development possess in the physical and biological realm the characteristic of the possibility of self-transcendence. Each in its own stage can become something else, can change and become "more" ("higher"), whereby this "more" can of course be quite different, cannot, however, be excluded in the development in favor of simply "being different," regardless of whether such a being different would really contain fewer metaphysical questions than a "being more."

In such a change to more, natural science (if it does not want to abolish itself) will presume on the one hand that at the starting point of such a "development" certain things must necessarily be presupposed without which the result of such a development cannot be achieved. Yet, on the other hand, today's natural science apparently does not wish to understand this development in the sense of a mechanically functioning causality on the basis of which the higher stage could be accounted for in a strictly predictable way (at least in principle), if this were the case, it would actually be questionable whether the starting point of such a development would really have [39] been "less" than its end point, if this starting point would, in fact, have contained in itself the effect *in this way* as cause. From this it appears that natural science today (when it approaches such borderline questions at all) inclines to the view that in the development more really comes from less, that the old ontological principle is no longer acceptable to it according to which the cause in its reality of being must contain at least as much power of being as its effect in order for it really to be able to be the adequate cause of its effect.

It seems that for faith the actual problem of a continuous and ascending line of development lies here. But faith can still say yes to such a development if the presupposition is granted that, *first*, divine causality in respect to the finite cosmos is an object of knowledge, and that this knowledge, as knowledge of the transcendental relationship between absolute being and finite being, precedes an application of a general principle of causality, and correspondingly is aprioristic to the knowledge of natural science, *second*, that with this relationship between absolute being and finite being in the process of becoming there is present (always and everywhere) a determination of self-transcendence coming from absolute being itself, and that this determination is not a particular characteristic which could along with other characteristics be discerned in the finite being with the methods of natural science. The capacity to become more is an ontological determination of every finite being which is necessarily implied in this being, and which includes that more precise relationship of God as continuing creator, which we have indicated above.

So if natural scientists who espouse the idea of a continuous evolution should say that the reality accessible to them with their methods always presents a piece of the cosmos in which

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more is constantly coming out of less, then an affirmation of this kind pertaining to the empirical area accessible to natural science would not stand in contradiction to the affirmation of faith which declares that this developing cosmos with its stages of constantly recurring self-transcendence presupposes the divine reality and its unique relationship to the world.

It is true that here only the most fundamental problem of evolution as a whole is solved in the most abstract and formal way. The individual elements of self-transcendence which must occur in an entire evolution of this kind are of course, at least at first glance, quite [40] different in kind. Especially the complex systems in the biological realm which replicate themselves seem at first to be quite different in kind from complex systems in the purely physical realm. If, however (still prescinding for the time being from humankind), biology today believes that it can reject a vitalism of ancient or modern origin and sees living systems as developing only "from below," then it does not seem opportune to lodge a protest in the name of faith against such a conception of development toward living being, if one accepts as valid only the theological interpretation of evolution as it has just been explained. It is of course quite true that the emergence of animal consciousness in such a development only from below poses a special difficulty which is not removed by pointing to "thinking" computers which we ourselves construct, and which then surprise us by their achievements.

But it cannot be said with certainty either that the origin of animal consciousness cannot be understood in the framework of the general principle of evolution, since this principle asserts an evolution from the lower to the higher, and theologians do not have to object to this if this development is conceived as standing under that divine influence mentioned before, which does not imply any intervention of God as an individual factor, such as is required by the old vitalism. That the "leap" of development to animal consciousness goes beyond the possibilities of development in general would have to be proved. One must call to mind that even according to the old scholastic ontology of sensory knowledge the material element is an inner constitutive element of such consciousness and not just an external material basis which the animal consciousness merely "rests upon." Finally, we must call to mind that the old ontology recognized an *eductio e potentia materiae* for living animal being and obviously saw no ontological problem in this kind of emergence of consciousness from below, even granting that the empirical presuppositions of this conception were not correct.

By way of conclusion, perhaps one might point modestly to the previously mentioned idea of scholastic ontology which says that the *forma* of each and every being is actually something spiritual, the consciousness of which is impeded only by its being imbedded in matter (in the metaphysical sense). The metaphysician of old would have conceded consciousness to this *forma*, if it were freed from matter; today's theoretician of evolution could concede the same [41] consciousness to this *forma*, not indeed if it were freed from matter, but if it is present in a sufficiently elevated organization of matter.

THE QUESTION OF THE HUMAN BEING IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A GENERAL THEORY OF EVOLUTION

Some consideration must be given to the question of how a human being can be conceived in this kind of a general theory of evolution without thereby necessarily posing a threat to the anthropology to which the ecclesial teaching office adheres.

Empirical-Biological Anthropology and Fundamental Propositions of Theological Anthropology

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Since Pius XII the ecclesial teaching office has declared that it raises no objection to the teaching of the biological origin of the human being in the animal kingdom, provided only that one upholds the immediate creation by God of the spiritual soul. Although it is not really quite so self-evident in theology (further treatment cannot be presented here), the ecclesial teaching office today apparently has no objection to register either against the view which sees *Homo sapiens* (that is, the theological subject of real salvation history) as existing for an extraordinary length of time, that is, long before those times reflected in the Old Testament writings (paradise excluded). To all appearances the teaching office has also abandoned its opposition to polygenism despite Paul VI's original intention to adhere to monogenism. The consequences here for the interpretation of the dogma of original sin, given the assumption of polygenism, which, incidentally, holds to an emergence of the human being within a period of time and in an area which are limited, cannot be treated here, because theology today offers very many different explanations of original sin, even within Catholic theology.

A universal theological anthropology cannot of course be presented here, even though the question of the compatibility of Christian anthropology with the theorem of a general evolution which also includes the human being can be dealt with only in that framework. A few observations will have to suffice. Even if the previously [42] mentioned boundaries between human beings and animals in the "fluctuating transitions" between the two are in many respects difficult to determine and many of the arguments formerly advanced to support this distinction are no longer convincing, still theological anthropology will inexorably uphold the idea that human beings are spiritual, personal subjects who, essentially distinct from animals, pursue their history of freedom and salvation directed toward God. Of course the question immediately arises as to how these human beings in their original nature are to be circumscribed so that they can distinguish themselves from animals and be the subjects of a history in freedom and dialogue with God. This question can of course have different answers which, while not necessarily contradictory, nonetheless proceed from different formulations of the question and employ different terminologies. In our context the main point in such a determination of human beings is to distinguish them as clearly as possible from animals without at the same time obscuring their bodily and sensory characteristics, which, while not simply identical to those of the animals, nonetheless are comparable to them. In doing this one must take care not to suggest an anthropological dualism in virtue of the traditional distinction between body and soul, which (to put it simply) is repugnant to modern scientific anthropology. But at the same time one cannot grant natural science the right to reduce humankind to the level of the animals, thereby overlooking the fact that human beings are creatures with a language proper to themselves, creatures of culture and of history.

Therefore we say: human beings are bodily creatures who have a fundamentally unlimited transcendentality and unlimited openness to being as such in knowledge and freedom. This "definition" says that in the last analysis it is a matter of indifference whether human beings as distinct from animals, even in the categorical realm with the possibilities of connection present there, possess an absolutely unambiguous and essential superiority to animal "intelligence," even though it naturally cannot be denied either that in this respect they are extraordinarily superior to animals. But it is idle for theologians to quarrel about whether an animals has tools, whether it possesses the beginnings of speech, or has consciousness of what is abstract (just what does that mean?), and so on. These are all questions of an empirical anthropology and in the last analysis they are of no import for theologians. Theologians need only be able to affirm that human [43] consciousness possesses that unlimited transcendentality in which there is present an openness, capable of legitimizing itself, to the absolute reality of God. If this transcendentality is peculiar to human beings, if

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there is present in it the possibility of a confrontation in freedom with themselves, if they can rethink their own thinking (as the modern expression goes) and if this transcendentality is not present in the animals (has anyone ever tried to demonstrate this in animals?), then theologians have what is required for human beings and their essential difference from animals. To what extent human beings are distinct from animals even in the categorical realm; just bow their transcendentality more precisely operates for the humanness of their categorical realm and then distinguishes this realm to quite a degree from that of the animal; to what extent this realm is the same in animals as in human beings and functions on the psychological and neurological level with the same possibilities – these are all questions which no longer touch directly on theology.

The Transcendentality of the Human Subject and the Conception of a Universal Evolution

In our "definition" we have spoken of the human being's "bodily nature." We thereby mean to indicate that this unlimited transcendentality builds upon and is mediated through an empirically sensory consciousness of individual objects, which consciousness itself consists of an inner material component. The consequences that flow from this for the transcendentality of human beings cannot be considered at greater length here. But in any case there exists in human beings by virtue of this interdependence of sensory characteristics and spirit a unity of spirit and matter, which, on the one hand, in Christian anthropology up to now has been in danger of being weakened in favor of the spirit and which, on the other hand, in the modern anthropology of modern science is often misunderstood in a primitive "materialistic" way. It appears that neither the traditional metaphysical anthropology of Christians nor the anthropology of natural science has really answered these more precise questions with sufficient clarity.

If spirit is absolute openness to being as such, and if humanly embodied spirit is always mediated and sustained by its existence in [44] the world of matter, of body and of sensory experience, then this single nature of the human being can be brought to the level of reflexive clarity only with difficulty, even if it is always present to itself in a nonreflexive way in the unity of its dual nature. The distinction of former times between "matter" and "form" can hardly be found anymore because of the commonplace empiricism of the subhuman sphere. So the use of these categories for stating that in the consciousness and existence of human beings "spirit" as transcendence and "body" as concrete mediation of the spirit are present as "form" and "matter" is no longer as helpful as it once was, despite the fact that the affirmation of unity and distinction contained in this ancient formulation is still valid. But in any case, because of the transcendentality of human beings, they possess an element in their nature which forbids us simply to reduce them to that reality which otherwise appears in natural science and which also limits its area.

Can this nature of the human being, a nature that due to it transcendentality is unlimited in kind and never completely definable, be nevertheless placed within the conception of a universal evolution? According to the view of the ecclesial teaching office common today the answer is: yes, in respect to its corporeality; but its "soul" depends on a creative act of God. If this answer is meant to emphasize that the transcendentality of the human subject cannot be derived simply from its material presuppositions with their material foundations, since one must still make a distinction between body and soul (even if it is now more difficult than before to affirm their unity and diversity ontologically), then this ecclesiastical formulation is right. However, it must be emphasized that the modern theory of evolution does itself recognize a self-transcendence of the lower to the higher, which is more than what has preceded and which always implies an element of the unexpected and the unpredictable. To

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this extent, then, there need be no contradiction between the present-day teaching of the Church (in Pius XII) and an inclusion of the human being in the general evolution.

The matter becomes more difficult when one reflects that the present-day teaching of the Church seems to understand the "creation of the soul" as an event resulting from an intervention of God which is viewed as an act occurring at a point of time when the human reproductive cells unite. (True, it is clear that in this conception [45] of the ecclesial teaching office there are reasons why a certain caution is called for in the understanding of it. One reason is that an actual intervention of this kind does not exclude the creation of a second soul in the division of the cells which leads to the formation of identical twins. Another reason is that this creation of the soul obviously takes place even when the procreation is morally reprehensible. A third reason is that nowadays this creation can be transferred to a test tube and one must reckon at least with the theoretical possibility that a human being will one day be produced by clones.)

If one is clear about the fact that in such a creation of the human soul the human parents produce a human being and not just the material substratum for one (we cannot think otherwise and this thought is also significant for a theologically genuine view of the incarnation of the Logos); if we further consider that the divine causality which we have postulated above, not as an individual phenomenon of natural science but as the dynamic ground and bearer of all evolution, specifies itself according to the respective goal of a transcendence from below to above, this causality being the ontological ground for this goal, then one can say that the divine causality which bears the evolution in general, in the way that it must be operating *here* can be identified with the "creation of the soul" in the way in which Pius XII teaches.

One should note, by the way, that in the ancient teaching tradition of the Church the doctrine of the origin of the human soul did not always clearly enunciate an immediate creation of the individual human soul. So this can serve as an indication even today that this dogma may permit a certain latitude in its interpretation. From the scholastic standpoint one must also consider that the creation of a form which, while always subsisting in itself, is still always actually the form of something material, cannot be univocally the same as the creation of a whole substance residing in itself. Thus theology does not have to issue a prohibition to natural science when the latter places the origin of the human being (as humankind and as individual) in the general evolution without at the same time in the question of the distinction between body and soul making different affirmations about these two parts of the human being (which are real, when Properly understood). The only condition for this abstention on the part of theology is that in this stage of human evolution it is conceded [46] that a level has been reached different from the previous stage, on which level the human being is essentially distinct from the animal, and that natural science does not lay sole claim to the description of the nature of the human being as long as natural science and metaphysical anthropology have to be differentiated (and rightly so).

THE PROBLEM OF DEATH: THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF NATURAL SCIENCE

In connection with the integration of the human being into the evolution of living being natural scientists will ask theologians how they are supposed to understand the teaching of theology that death, the wages of sin, stands at the beginning of the history of humanity.

Death as Consequence of Sin?

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No matter how natural science may explain death more exactly in the biological realm by saying, for example, that biological death was obviously present *before* the emergence of humankind; that human beings, as part of this life which is subject to death, participate in death too; that there is no place here for a consideration of sin as the cause of death unless one postulates a miraculous intervention of God who has prepared a paradise for humankind, something which, honestly speaking, is not compatible with the findings of paleontology – this is not the place to deal with the theological question of the primeval state in general or the question of the statements of biblical protology. In this problem area we are going to confine ourselves to the question of death as the consequence of sin. This question is obscure and difficult because original sin, which is claimed to be the cause of death, has, despite the fact that it is a dogma of the Council of Trent, again become a difficult subject in present-day theology and it is being subjected to quite different interpretations, at least where it is not denied outright.

There is no doubt that Scripture portrays the primeval state in mythological images and this portrayal extends right up to Pauline [47] theology. And so it is difficult in these protological accounts to make a clear distinction between their real meaning and the mythological images in which this meaning is clothed. (Recourse to statements of the ecclesial teaching office is certainly a help, but it seems that this alone is not sufficient because in these very statements themselves, in a way that is sometimes simple and without reflection, there are echoes of these mythological modes of speaking, or they are simply handed on.)

For this biblical protology, and thus for original sin, one would have to inquire more exactly than has been done heretofore whether these statements are really referring to definite individual human persons in the beginning viewed as a point of time (or to a first population, if one does not insist on monogenism) or whether they are referring to "the human being" at all times and in all places; whether the human fall in paradise might eventually be objectively identified with a profound social and cultural upheaval which inaugurated a whole new "sinful" situation of humanity; whether and how original sin right from the beginning is a no on the part of historical humanity to its "supernatural" relationship to God in grace, which no, if freedom exists at all, can also be conceived of under those conditions such as today's scientific anthropology conceives them to be in the first phases subsequent to the emergence of humankind.

A Distinction on Theological Grounds

All of these questions cannot be answered here. But perhaps the question at issue can be answered in the following, albeit somewhat formal, way. Modern natural science and paleontology aside, theologians certainly cannot maintain that the individual human being's history of freedom in relationship to God would have continued forever. Indeed, they cannot deny that this history would, precisely from the very inmost nature of freedom, be directed toward a final perfection. "Death" as the definitive consummation of the history of freedom would always have necessarily existed. Humankind would not have lived forever in "paradise," as this is traditionally conceived, nor would it have wanted to. Considered in this way death can, on purely theological grounds, be the "wages of sin" only in virtue of a certain mode of dying and not simply by being the end of [48] the history of freedom in its biological termination. Since death has many specifically human and existential aspects which cannot be deduced from its biological nature alone – and we need not go into detail here – it is quite conceivable that one or the other of these aspects is present only in and with the condition of humankind in a state of "original sin" and would not be experienced or

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suffered without sin.

If a distinction of this sort is unavoidable on theological grounds, then natural scientists may be permitted to say that death, as far as they can observe it empirically, is independent of the sin of humankind and that it is inherited from the biological prehistory of humanity. Thus they would not have to assert that the concrete mode of human death has nothing to do with the sin of humanity and that it can in no way be the wages of sin, as *Paul* says. How this abstract-formal clarification of our problem can be concretized and its content explained is something that belongs to the more exact determination of "original sin" and is of no further interest to natural scientists as such. They, too, die as human beings in an external and internal condition in which sin is one of the constituent elements, and this condition exercises its influence in all kinds of different directions in their deaths too.

THE SIZE OF THE COSMOS AS AN EXISTENTIELL AND THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

A further question that must be touched upon in this discussion pertains to the size of the cosmos as understood by natural science today. While it is true that in this question there is not even the semblance of a direct contradiction between the affirmations of natural science and those of traditional theology, since neither of them have put forth statements about the size of the universe, the question does contain, nonetheless, a difficulty of considerable proportions.

Being Lost in the Cosmos as the Expression and Mediation of an Ultimate Experience of Contingency

For at least as long as the geocentric view of the world prevailed, the cosmos was in the naive experience of Christians their dwelling [49] place. Created by God for them and for their history of salvation, they could see its contours. It was built for them and it was there for them. True, the earlier idea of the cosmos as the determining factor of their religious experience was not structured in a unified way. For example, it was not easy to fit angels into it. On the one hand, being pure spirits, they could not quite be accommodated in this edifice and yet, on the other hand, they were supposed to dwell in one of the heavenly spheres. But when Suarez, for example, was still trying to fit the "ascension of Christ" to the *caelum empyreum* into the ancient cosmos even to the point of asking the question whether the ascended Christ was dwelling in the uppermost sphere of heaven or over it, then we can see how closely the ancient view of the world was amalgamated with Christian dogmas, extending even to the idea of a connection between the fires of hell and known volcanoes.

Nowadays the Christian has to live on a tiny planet in a solar system which in its turn is part of a galaxy of a hundred thousand light years with thirty billion stars and whereby this galaxy is estimated to be only one of a billion such galaxies in the universe. In such a universe it is certainly not easy for human beings to feel that they are the ones for whom this cosmos ultimately exists. In a cosmos of proportions so tremendous that they even defy the power of the imagination, it is quite possible for human beings to feel that they are an accidental, marginal phenomenon, particularly when they know themselves to be the product of an evolution which itself has to work with numerous and improbable accidents. Under this aspect people accustomed to think in the categories of natural science will experience a further feeling of existentiell dizziness if they are then expected to realize that the eternal Logos of God who moves these billion galaxies is supposed to have become man on this tiny planet which, like a grain of sand, exists somewhere or other in this universe.

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This feeling of dizziness, repressed of course, because of the narrow horizon of everyday life, cannot be kept away by sublime reflections on time and space on the part of modern physics, which undeniably is becoming more and more abstract. The question remains whether and how ordinary Christians and ordinary people in everyday life can gradually get used to being lost this way in the cosmos. What people believe about themselves, their destiny and their worth will not turn out to be deceptive because of their vulnerability in this vast cosmos (theological reasons are still at least as [50] good as those of modern physics, even if both require different ultimate positions in order to achieve existentiell realization). The question is simply how both views of the world can coexist in the same consciousness without the one or the other to mutual disadvantage consuming people's existentiell strength for itself alone. First of all, one will simply have to accept this situation and live with it, especially since people who perceive things in a scientific way (even outside of Christianity) in the existentiell decisions of their lives also take themselves with a greater seriousness – and this rightly and unavoidably – than would seem to be warranted when they consider their cosmic insignificance.

Today, and more than ever in the future, human beings and Christians are also going to have to realize more clearly and more radically that their very *recognition* and *acceptance* of the fact of being lost in the cosmos actually raises them above it and enables them to realize it as an expression and a mediation of that ultimate experience of contingency which they, in virtue of their ancient faith, must perceive and accept before the infinite God as finite creatures. In this light one is justified in saying that the cosmos has become "more theological" for humankind, which is to say that it points more inexorably than before to the experience and acceptance of the fact of being created. In this way the feeling of cosmic dizziness can be understood as an element in the development of people's theological consciousness. If people's scientific consciousness today proceeds from the obvious assumption (although this assumption is not so obvious at all) that the scientific investigation of the cosmos can never come to an end, and if this conviction is a theological datum based on the fundamental incomprehensibility of God, then this experience that the universe is in a way immeasurable is, to a certain extent, nothing other than the spatial counterpart to the theological datum, and it is something that might be expected (after the fact, of course). If people have to give up their feeling of being at home in the universe in exchange for a feeling of not being at home, which reflects the character of their religious experience, then this is at root a legitimate element of humankind's fate. When, in addition, modern physics undertakes at the same time to calculate the finite extent of the actual universe, it is thereby once again documenting the peculiarity of the spirit in contrast to matter, which can reflect upon itself and its world, and then again place its world over against itself. In [51] this way people can perceive the created finiteness of the world, despite its immeasurability.

A History of "Spirit" on Another Star?

In this context we cannot entirely neglect a question which is again laying claim to our attention, although it is not entirely new. Is it conceivable that on other "stars" there are creatures consisting of body and soul equal or similar to human beings? The modern natural sciences will ultimately not be able to give any answer to the question of the *fact*. As far as the concrete *possibility* is concerned an answer is hardly to be expected either, since the probability, given the enormous number of stars, and the difficulty of the development of life up to the point where the "human being" emerges can hardly be factored out together. Still it must be said that in contrast to the ancient view of the world the fundamental possibility of a development of life to the point of intelligent consciousness can today no longer be excluded.

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This holds true especially because it would be an anthropomorphic idea that God the creator would bring the cosmic development at some other point so far that the direct possibility of conscious life would be present, but that then he would arbitrarily break off this development.

One should also note that traditional angelology points to the fact that theological tradition also reckons with the coexistence of other personal creatures along with human beings. In this context a number of theological problems have emerged even prior to our problem (a common vocation to the same final goal; Christ as head of all creation, etc.).

Should one wish to speculate further on this existentielly rather remote problem, one might say that it would make sense to ascribe to these creatures of body and spirit a supernatural destiny immediately directed to God (notwithstanding the gratuity of grace), but that we, of course, can discern nothing about the presumable history of freedom of these creatures. In view of the immutability of God in himself and the identity of the Logos with God, it cannot be proved that a multiple incarnation in different histories of salvation is absolutely unthinkable.

Our only purpose in bringing all these things up is to show that [52] theology need not put any absolute veto on the idea of history of "spirit" on another star. Theologians will not be able to say anything further on this question. They will point to the fact that the purpose of Christian revelation is the salvation of humankind, not to provide an answer to questions which really have no important bearing on the realization of this salvation in freedom.

THE HISTORY OF HUMAN SALVATION AND THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ENTIRE COSMOS

A final word must be said as to whether and how the history of human salvation as conceived by faith and theology can be integrated into the evaluation and natural history of the entire cosmos. We have already touched on some aspects of this problem; many of them cannot be dealt with here in much greater scope. We shall, however, attempt to offer a few ideas.

Within evolution as a whole and history there is also a history of freedom of personal creatures consisting of a bodily and spiritual nature (known as human beings) for whom the entire cosmos is the presupposition and place of their existence and (in different degrees) even the inner element of this existence (because of their corporeality and sensory characteristics). This fact causes no difficulty if matter and spirit are conceived not as absolutely disparate and contradictory, but rather if matter is conceived as ultimately spiritual and oriented toward spirit (consciousness) and furthermore (albeit in essentially different degrees) as an inner constitutive element of the spiritual nature of created beings, all of which Christian faith requires, rather than forbids us to do. The Christian understanding of the history of human salvation as the apex of the history of the cosmos toward which the cosmos is tending in the normal course of its development, even if this apex has a specific quality of its own, presents us with this difficulty: the "result" of this salvation history can today no longer really be located in the cosmos (of the modern natural sciences, or so, at least, it would seem); yet on the other hand, Christian faith, rooted in the dogma of the "resurrection of the body," seems to prohibit a simple shifting of this result of salvation history to a point outside of this material cosmos.

The old theology had it easy. In the cosmos, which was viewed in [53] principle as being accessible to empirical observation, it had a place for the risen Christ, for the angels, for those who had reached beatitude, for the evil spirits and for hell. Places like these are no longer conceivable in the modern cosmos considered in the light of an evolutionary world view: At this point, of course, one can appeal to the principle which has often been mentioned and which states that, given the original multiplicity of the elements of human knowledge, the

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ability or the obligation to achieve in every case a positive synthesis of our affirmations, which are at first disparate, cannot be expected from the outset; that the absence of such a synthesis is therefore no reason for denying a part of what has not been synthesized; and that consequently legitimate affirmations of an existentiell eschatology may not be rejected just because we do not know how to synthesize them positively with our ideas of history and the cosmos.

But this does not mean that the Christian view from the outset rules out the possibility that these eschatological affirmations about the eternal life of the individual, the glorified body, and so on, might be in some way related to the material cosmos, since, after all, those who have reached beatitude are not different persons from those that they were on earth, and there is a belief in the resurrection of the body and hope for a "new earth." But in affirmations of this kind one cannot "demythologize" in such a way that the ultimate meaning intended by the affirmation is turned into the opposite of what the affirmation really intended to say. Doing this only adds to the difficulties. That much should be said. Eschatological realities which faith affirms cannot be made acceptable to Catholic theology by simply declaring them to be there as something in the future, only at the end of the history of the cosmos or of humanity. At least the risen Christ (and Mary) must be considered as a glorified element in the reality of the world which is present even now. But is it possible and is it permitted to conceive this as separated from the cosmos and its material character here and now? In today's conception of matter in its unity, which is viewed as a field, new questions have certainly arisen for theologians which they must somehow or other face up to, even if they might not really be able to give a positive answer to them, and have to admit this frankly.

But on the other hand, one must say the following. The history of freedom in the free subject's presence to itself, and the world's self-presence [54] that is implicit in this, is an empirical fact. Those who maintain that universal evolution is the basic pattern which underlies the reality of the world and is the key to its understanding must integrate this fact into this conception of the world. They must recognize that the whole of reality has developed toward this history of freedom in an evolutionary process which, despite all the elements of accident, has followed a consistent line of development toward this goal, and that the previous phases of the world's evolution have developed, by virtue of self-transcendence, into this history of freedom (which, at least in many respects, cannot be surpassed). In this light the possibility of defective developments, dead ends, and calamities as conceived by the theological history of salvation no longer comes as a surprise.

Furthermore, the question can remain open as to which spatial and temporal points this self-transcendence of the world's evolution into the history of freedom has reached. In any case, this self-transcendence has been achieved in our realm of experience. If, then, given these premises and in this framework Christian revelation (the more precise formal nature of which need not be discussed here, but which does not postulate an additional miraculous intervention of God, but rather, in the realm of our own experience, actually occurs freely wherever the created spirit's unlimited transcendentality is present) maintains that this world evolution, which at the highest point of its development evolves into spirit, once again actually moves beyond itself (in what is called grace and glory) toward an immediacy to the absolute God, then that can be understood, even when it is nothing more than a datum of revelation, as a prolongation of the world's evolution which, through the power of God himself tends toward that spirit which has an immediacy to God himself.

In a world evolution of this kind matter cannot be conceived as a mere launching pad which is left behind, or the first stage of a movement which is simply cast off. The dogma of the resurrection of the body prevents the Christian thinker from subscribing to this idea.

Even though it is not possible to have much of any positive notion as to what function the material element itself will have and what part it will still have to play in this kind of a final

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phase of spirit in its immediate unity with absolute spirit, still this dogma which says that matter will be taken up into the finality of the unsurpassable perfection of created spirit, is an apotheosis of matter the likes of which a wretched materialism does not even dare to conceive. (Incidentally, [55] if one conceives the angels in a Platonic but not unbiblical way as having some sort of relationship to matter, then their glory is still no argument against what we have said.) From this, natural scientists would have to take warning that they do not have the right to let the material world disappear at the end, for example, through a gravitational collapse in the black hole of nothingness. Just as they have no right or obligation to "inquire beyond" the big bang, so too it is not their part to speculate about an absolute end of all material reality.

In this kind of integration of salvation history into the entire evolution of the cosmos, something which is at least conceivable, there is a further element for Christian faith. In an evolution of this kind, properly understood, one must allow for surprises, defective developments, dead ends, for a total halt to progress as such. It is precisely for this reason that Christian faith goes on to affirm, with an optimism which stems from God's grace and goes beyond all conceivable pessimism, that this world evolution in the phase of its spiritual history is not only *capable* of arriving at an immediacy to God, but that even now it has entered upon a phase through which, in a way that is irreversible for the totality of the history of freedom (prescinding from a theoretical affirmation about the individual person), this goal will actually be attained, and that the catastrophe, which in itself is possible, and the total halt to progress will *not* come to pass. This irreversibility and this orientation toward a future goal that will actually be attained, which are characteristic of the world's evolution and its history of freedom, are present for Christians in the Christian dogma of Jesus Christ as the "Logos of God made flesh," as God's irrevocable promise of salvation in Jesus of Nazareth.

In our context it is especially worthy of note that the point at which God in a final self-communication irrevocably and definitively lays hold on the totality of the reality created by him is characterized not as spirit but as flesh. It is this which authorizes the Christian to integrate the history of salvation into the history of the cosmos, even when myriad questions remain unanswered, as can happen. No matter how clearly and precisely theology and natural science have to be distinguished from one another and the line of demarcation drawn between them, they both have to do with one another, because human beings in all their dimensions, who are nature, endure nature, and pursue the science of nature, are called to that salvation which is the incomprehensible God himself.

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3

THEOLOGY TODAY

One might proceed from Christian theology's understanding of itself and from this standpoint survey the other sciences which have gathered together in a university to create an *universitas litterarum* with the express purpose of being more than just items in a huge shopping center with scarcely any relationship to one another beyond the common purpose of being sold to the individual customers. Conversely, one could proceed from the stand point of the other sciences in the university and ask theology to justify its presence in this gathering. Using today's methods of the philosophy of science a plan could be drawn up containing the whole spectrum of all possible human sciences and then the question could be asked whether in the purpose of this general plan there would be any place for something like theology. One could continue the almost two-centuries-old debate by asking if theology can lay claim to being a science and what its justification is for this claim and what right it has to demand a place in the university.

Well, what about this? Do we theologians feel at home in today's university? Do they not tolerate us simply because the other faculties have problems enough of their own without wrangling with theology, which, after all, does not do anybody any harm? Does the state tolerate theology in the university simply because it does not overburden the budget and because the political parties and public opinion are not as anticlerical as they were a hundred years ago, not because people have become more devout, but because nowadays it is easier to adopt a stance of tolerant indifference than it used to be? Since my treatment of this subject is going to aim at something [57] different than my preliminary remarks indicate, as will soon become evident, I think that the following observations are in order by way of anticipation.

Can anyone tell me why a university should not have theology? Because it is not a science? Well, does anyone really know for sure just what a science is in a university today? Is it because the theological faculties, divided as they are according to confessions, do not represent all Christians, much less those citizens who have no intention of being Christians? But how would it be if these faculties, separated along confessional lines, would work together in an ecumenical spirit and each would positively affirm the other? Must an area of learning which has its proper place in a university be sustained by the interest of the public as a whole? If this were the case, then quite a few university subjects would have to be dropped due to lack of interest on the part of the public at large. Do not large segments of the citizenry who are characterized by a certain philosophy of life have the right to insist that at a university supported by their own taxes questions which are crucial to their own existence be dealt with from the standpoint of scientific reflection? This argument would be especially valid if these Christian groups within a secular society should have no fundamental objection to according a place of scientific reflection in the university to other fundamental ideological conceptions along with that of Christianity, in the case where the size of their membership and the social stability of their organization manifest a more or less similar significance in society to that of the Christian churches.

THE HISTORY OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY

Is not most of what theological faculties pursue as object of their science a part of the intellectual heritage of our culture and our people, so that this object is as worthy of reflection

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in a university as other objects belonging to our historical tradition, which are studied in the historical branches of the most diverse sciences such as the history of art, the history of medicine, folklore, and so on? If theology were to disappear from the universities, would it not have to be let in again through the back, door, into philosophy, the history of culture, and so on? Nowadays the universities throw open their [58] portals to the most exotic fields of interest such as parapsychology, and so on. Would it be sensible and would it be just to banish theology?

People who want to banish theology from the university in the name of ideological neutrality, which would have the sciences unencumbered by previous assumptions, as they say – something which only the nineteenth century considered viable – or because they have latent anticlerical or antireligious sentiments, should bear in mind that theology would continue to exist even after this banishment, but that serious harm would be done to its spirit of objectivity, of tolerance, and of unemotional reflection. Yet these are the very things which the adversaries of university theology esteem most highly.

Nowadays Christian theologies are looking out beyond their own boundary posts in a very intensive way; they are drawing into their ken all of the world religions and the important ideological positions. Even someone who does not otherwise have much use for theology should appreciate this contribution to cultural cooperation on a global level. And finally, both theological faculties (Catholic and Protestant) work just as seriously and produce just as much as similar humanistic disciplines. A university science would demean itself if it were to measure its ultimate value by the yardstick of commercial utility. Truth is under no obligation to vindicate itself to purely pragmatic or financial interests. My teacher Heidegger once said in a lecture that metaphysics was a subject that had no practical value, something that housemaids made fun of. Well, that is precisely its dignity. And that goes for theology as well. Even today it may move about with unperturbed pace in the halls of a university. The fact that it cannot do this in many other countries is no benefit to the scientific enterprise of those countries but rather a detriment which dates back to a time which the German-speaking countries were lucky enough to survive without incurring this damage.

THE TASK OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY

Here I would like to speak about one particular task of theology vis-à-vis all other sciences in the university. I do not claim that this task can be accomplished in principle only by theology conducted in the academic framework of a university. I have no quarrel with anyone [59] who says that he or she is taking up and accomplishing this task without wanting to be a theologian. What I mean is that this task is so inextricably bound up with theological science that theology would disown its own inmost nature should it fail to address itself to this task. It might appear that philosophy, at least in its classical form, accomplishes this task which I am claiming for theology. If philosophy does this, then that is alright by me. It will have to see how far it gets in accomplishing this task. It is just that I have the feeling that the more modern, theoretical, and scientific philosophy becomes, the less it accomplishes this task. I am not saying that theology alone and in all of the university has *solely* that task that I am going to treat of today. I only mean that theology would not really be theology should it fail to do this one task. In this discussion it will not be possible to point up the connection between this task and the other tasks which theology has to accomplish in its historical and systematic work.

The Concern of Theology Is God

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What, then, is this task that I have been leading up to in this vague and roundabout way? I cannot answer this question by giving a simple formula that everyone can understand. Let me offer a consideration which might help you to understand what I mean. The concern of theology is God. What if someone should say that theology does not really have to do with God, but rather with speaking of God, with particular reference to the problem of *whether* one can speak of God at all, and hence this speaking of God is best left to people who have the courage to do so? I would say that ultimately it is God himself that is meant both when we speak of God and when we speak about the words we are using when we speak of God. If this is not the case, then theology would have to be dismissed as a lot of idle chatter replete with old-fashioned images and one should not waste a lot of time and energy fabricating a theology of the death of God. It would be a shame to invest so much time in composing these funeral orations for God; the positivistic natural scientist who makes no mention of God at all would be more honest and he or she would be more preferable to the theologian who literally talks himself or herself to death. I am assuming here – without pretending to justify [60] this assumption right now – that it is possible in all seriousness to speak of God as God, not only because he exists but also because he has made it possible for us to speak of him. It is without doubt terribly difficult to give a more precise explanation of how finite human beings can speak of God without losing sight of the object they want to speak of when they begin to speak of God. The various Christian theologies differ widely in their attempts to explain this. Despite all this one can speak of God in theology. The courage to advance this claim is essential to theology. If and when theology no longer speaks of God and cannot speak of God in a way that God is meant per se, even if it stammers in the attempt to do this and has to hedge itself in with unnumerable reservations; if speaking of God did not mean for us that we were ultimately speaking of God per se, or at least that it would be possible for us to speak about the existence of God per se no matter where we might experience this existence, then theology would have died by its own hand.

Who is meant, then, by this God whom theology claims that it is able to speak of? If God is really to be God and to remain God, then what is meant by this God is the unutterable mystery, he who is ineffable and that which is ineffable, the *mysterium ineffabile*. To speak of him means only that we have come to that final instant after which we must lapse into a silence that fills all the heavens for all eternity. We Christians, of course, confess that it is precisely this ineffable mystery, which cannot be expressed in words, that has drawn near to us in Jesus, who is our forgiveness and our eternal life. But this God who has drawn near to us would be transformed into a finite creature had he not come precisely as the incomprehensible one who as such cannot be encompassed, if the beatific vision of God face to face were not also the unconditional surrender of blissful love before the incomprehensibility of God, in which surrender the knowledge which reaches out to take possession of its object dissolves itself in freedom in the eternal orthopraxis of love.

Theology is the speaking about the incomprehensible mystery which we call God. If a science always presupposes an object which can be palpably grasped and classified, then theology may not presume to be a science given this presupposition It must aspire to something beyond this. It must break through the borders which are imposed upon an individual science by its very nature. It must extend its interest to everything if it is required to speak of the [41] unfathomable primordial ground of all reality. The object of its interest can be nothing but God, if this true God is exalted in a way that no words can express above all that exists or can be conceived outside of himself. It must address itself to everyone since God is the concern of every human being whether he or she wants this or not, and because every form of indifference to the all-encompassing mystery of his existence has as its result the most frightening relationship to this God, and does not really bring about his absence.

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This theology must always speak in such a way as to be always aware that it is only repeating in feeble and inadequate words what the existence of every human being, who is constantly being pursued by God, bears testimony to – and it must continue to do this whether people listen or not. Theology must, of course, always point to Jesus Christ, not because he is the explanation of this burning mystery but because he plunges us into it by the accomplishment of his death and forbids us once and for all to stop short of it and to occupy ourselves exclusively with what we can perceive within the narrow horizons of our own life. Even when theology speaks of Jesus Christ, then this speaking can only be understood when it speaks of him as the one who has passed into this mystery through death. This death is itself a part of the fate of this mystery and it has given us the strength of faith, hope, and love which enables us to participate in this consuming mystery without being destroyed by it or turning away from it by acting as though it did not exist.

Theology and the Natural Sciences

What strange things happen when theology establishes itself within the university as though it had every right to do so! The sciences are assembled there; each one of them says, with a kind of suspect modesty, of course, that the research in its field is far from completed, that important and exciting discoveries lie ahead. But each science does know what its own field is, and it is the business of science to bring to light the things that are as yet unknown in this field by pushing forward the frontiers of its assiduous research. Theology thrusts itself into this illustrious circle with a sincerely respectful bow. At the outset theology arrives on the scene in a way that the other sciences do not even recognize it for what it really is; [62] they mistake it for a part of the thoroughly acceptable science of history and culture which is known as the science of religion. And then this theology, with a mixture of embarrassment and audacity, takes it upon itself to speak in this circle, and it is not only addressing the world beyond this temple of science, but it is actually addressing the other sciences themselves. It claims that it has a right to do this and insists that it is fully justified in remaining in this circle and going about its business.

Theology is quite aware that as soon as it opens its mouth the other sciences will gang up on it and declare that the subject of theology can be of no possible interest to the other sciences as such, because the object of theology by definition cannot be found in these other sciences. The other sciences even begin to utter threats about expelling theology or bringing about its demise by applying the impressive array of highly effective means at their disposal: by means of philology, which annuls or relativizes the sacred texts of theology, by means of psychology and social science, which are able to trace in an all too painfully clear way the origin of this odd cultural phenomenon, now gasping in the final throes of its existence, and show how it is involved in a last-ditch attempt to keep its head above water.

Even nowadays, of course, not a few exponents of these other sciences can be found who admit that they are personally religious themselves, but only in their lives as private persons outside of their scientific profession. And in certain circumstances they can even get interested in theology in much the same way as a professor of Sumerian history might take note of a recent moon landing from the daily newspaper. But by and large these scientists do not want to have anything to do with God in the area of their own science. A crucifix might just about be tolerated in a room of a university clinic, but certainly not in a lecture hall. They consider it to be a sign of benign tolerance when the individual sciences do not involve themselves in matters theological, but beyond this nothing at all is owed to theology, except of course to treat it as a cultural phenomenon or as an element of human consciousness which remains a factor to be reckoned with in psychology or psychoanalysis.

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But conversely, theology today vis-à-vis the other sciences has become cautious and reserved even to the point of timidity. It is glad that it is even tolerated. And when its representatives discourse with other scientists, it is a distinct rarity that theology itself is the [63] principal partner in the dialogue. This timidity on the part of theology is, in the last analysis, not engendered by the external situation in which it has to live in today's world, but is rather a consequence of its own history. It is theology itself which prompted and affirmed the idea of today's secular world, and then issued a declaration of its own incompetence in this world. The God of theology seems today to be shrouded in silence; the Christ of theology can no longer be found in the uppermost sphere of the *caelum empyreum*.

Well, then, should not theology withdraw from the university? Can it be that interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and the other sciences is really not possible or that it can only take place in the limited framework of the problems which come up in the other sciences in which theology perforce has a special interest, even when these problems do not really constitute its primary object? My answer is no. Despite all these fundamental difficulties, theology still has something to say to the other sciences, because theology speaks of God and in so doing lays open a dimension which human beings in their autocratic autonomy cannot be the custodians of, because this dimension of God's incomprehensibility is something which does not belong to human beings, but rather human beings belong to it. And for this very reason human beings must be ultimately understood as creatures who are always and fundamentally incomprehensible, creatures whose definition cannot be circumscribed by any limits.

For this reason theology stands as the official representative of a radical opposition to any attempt to absolutize any reality which can be experienced immanently and any immanent value, and the servants of these realities and values are also the natural sciences. Our late-bourgeois mode of thought always perceives the Church and its theology as the guarantor for a perduring conservatism. That is a terrible delusion, but one for which churchmen really must bear a good deal of the blame. Because if we are serious in proclaiming that the incomprehensible God is the only center, the only fixed point which really does exist and is subject to no conditions whatsoever, then everything which exists outside of him – who is not at our disposal but rather we are at his disposal – is relative, temporary, conditioned, and constantly subject to relentless provisions. And this is precisely what theology must say and say it to the other sciences as well.

[64] This theological criticism will not become a part of the principles and methodologies of the individual science as such, but rather it will surround them like a distant horizon; it will address itself to the scientist and not to the individual science in its abstract form. At a time where we have come to recognize that theory and practice, objective science and the subjective pursuit of science, the aim of a science as determined by its intrinsic laws and the political manipulation of this aim cannot be exactly and clearly distinguished even to the point where the demand for objective science unencumbered by any previous assumptions is itself subject to the suspicion of standing at the service of an extremely dangerous ideology, it does not really make any difference ultimately whether the theological criticism is directed to scientists or to their science.

If someone should raise the objection that criticism which relativizes a science is the business of the science itself and need not be delivered by theology, then due attention should be paid to the following point. In point of fact scientists really do run a high risk of positing their science as absolute, of considering their own categories and horizons of understanding as the only useful ones for explaining everything. In point of fact the history of any given science has always been the history of arrogance and self-glorification as well. Furthermore, when and to the extent that any given science in the history of its own development to maturity becomes more modest, when it comes up against the limits which its own horizons

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of understanding and questioning have set for it, when it recognizes its boundaries either intrinsically or due to the power of another science and thereby transcends these boundaries, then it fortunately ceases to be itself, and its representatives move out of the area of their own science (a thing that can be often observed among the sages of antiquity) and begin to pursue theology (or, if you will, theology under the label of philosophy), whether they realize it or not. But when they do this and candidly own up to the fact that they are doing it, then they can have no serious objection to theology doing precisely the same thing in a formal and systematic way that they are doing on the basis of the mature wisdom of their own science or of their personal life experience. And theology does this in a way so radical that it knows no limit save that of losing itself in the incomprehensibility of God. When a science relativizes itself in this way, then what we have is not some marginal phenomenon but rather [65] something that permeates the science through and through, in each science, of course, in a different way.

Take the historical sciences as a concrete example of what we mean. They spend a lot of time and energy in pedantic devotion to detail in the area of verifiable facts. The price they pay for all this is that the rest of humanity could not care less. Does it not make a difference if, on the one hand, historians are convinced in their heart of hearts that history is the repository of a mysterious meaning even if the ultimate point of that meaning is always shrouded in the incomprehensibility of God, and, on the other hand, they are really and truly convinced that they cannot pass judgment and that the history of the world as we experience it is not the final judgment of the world? Need it have no bearing on the writing of history, even if not demonstrable in detail, when one is convinced that history as the history of freedom, which is almost impossible to discern and yet is present, produces something which attains eternal validity before God? Does the person who in his or her heart believes that this history together with its chronicle terminates in sheer nothingness write ultimately the same history as another person? Does history not contain enough realities which are actually there to be discerned but which are overlooked when the questions which theology raises are bracketed out right from the start?

The natural sciences might have their secret pride in being “exact” and for this reason not having God come up in their experiments, and today it is not only the natural scientists but even the theologians as well who combat the real or supposed illusion that God has to appear as an individual datum in the area of scientific empiricism. Of course, when they asked Kekulé* what his religious persuasion was, he answered, “Chemist.” It is true that even today not a few natural scientists are susceptible to this crass stupidity manifested by this great scientist. But natural scientists too should constantly accept theology’s reminder that the world view which is actually a part of their lives and not just something conceived by the monopolistic claims of the natural sciences is something which cannot be determined by their natural science alone; that spirit, freedom, fidelity, love, the infinite question of existence cannot be “explained” by natural science alone, even though the attempt is made over and over [66] again; that people in their thinking always proceed from an infinite question before they begin to ask the experimental questions of natural science – and this infinite question is not merely the extrapolation of the questions posed in the natural sciences and answered soberly as individual questions of limited extent. Is it really prejudicial to objective and modest natural scientists when they are reminded by theologians that the principal and ultimate questions of humanity have already been reflected upon in a profound way and with the utmost existentiell seriousness even before natural science in today’s sense of that term began to exist; that this reflection in antiquity was more profound and more differentiated than natural scientists imagine, given their limited field of research, and that this reflection is

* Friedrich August Kekulé, 1829-1896, German chemist.

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not something that passes so rapidly into obsolescence? Is spirit merely the product of an evolution from below which in its turn is destined to disappear again, or do matter and spirit originate from an ultimate mystery which establishes both as distinct and lets both be related to one another without dissolving them by merging them into a common inert identity?

However one may determine the more precise relationship between theology and the natural sciences, one thing is clear and theology must insist on this relentlessly: from the point of their inception and in their end result the things that natural scientists themselves personally pursue in their science reach beyond the immediate object of these sciences and in an existentiell sense they are more dangerous than this object. Scientific activity is the free and responsible act of human beings, and this act is always something greater than what natural scientists as scientists are able to apprehend. And this it is which compels them to be something more than natural scientists.

Social scientists have an involvement with theologians because religion and church are social entities which readily admit of critical analysis. But conversely, social scientists have the obligation to open themselves to theologians' questions. For the more strictly and exactly they conceive and understand their science, the easier it is for them to yield to the temptation to view human beings merely as objects of general functional laws, merely in terms of what can be comprehended in a scientific way. But even when human beings are reduced to objects of a social blueprint, even when in theory or practice they are degraded to nothing more than elementary particles [67] of a universal social process that functions blindly, then they still remain free subjects with a history which must ultimately be experienced and which cannot be calculated in advance; they still remain creatures with an openness which always reaches out beyond any administrative manipulation toward that incomprehensibility which we call God.

But if this nature of the human being is not recognized, if methodologically it simply is not taken into account, then what we are left with are at the very most men and women who are living here as completely domesticated animals, no matter what elements of resourcefulness we might attribute to them. If such a thing should be possible contrary to all probability, then men and women would have become in an unexpected way creatures geared to consumption, death, and biological reproduction; in a way we did not expect, the end of humanity would have come through universal suicide. This end of humanity as such is also expected by Christians, but they see it in a much different light.

Whether or not they are aware of it, the social sciences are carried on within the most general horizons of understanding and within these horizons there belongs the question of whether human beings can be understood as *nothing more* than social creatures or whether they are creatures who constantly defy all clear-cut definitions and tend toward the incomprehensibility of God. Both East and West are in danger of understanding human beings in a materialistic way and in consequence of this of making them objects of mechanical manipulation. When theology rises in protest against this in the university even though its tiny voice might be faint and hesitant, then the social sciences ought to welcome this protest.

Theology and Universitas

If we assign to theology within the university always and especially nowadays the role of troublemaker, the role of the one who uncompromisingly relativizes everything which can be presumed to be unequivocal, the role of the one who constantly sounds the tocsin about a movement toward completion that knows no end, the role of skepticism properly understood, which is at once existentiell but at the same time something that we can live with, then this

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does not [68] mean (and I repeat this) that this is the same function of theology vis-à-vis the university as a whole. But I do deem this to be one of theology's functions, and not the least significant one. In this function theology finds itself in an awfully precarious position due both to its nature, which compels it to be concerned with God, and its job in the university. It is precisely in the university that theologians go about their task – which is not a particular one, or, if you will, not a scientific one – in the manner of a particular science with all the narrow-mindedness and egoism characteristic of specialists in any field, with the aggressiveness, with the myopic focus on the minutiae of their discipline which thrusts everything else aside, with the pomposity and the indefatigable production of books, in a word, with, all those things which characterize the representatives of any other established science. What theologians have to do then first of all is to subject their own science to all the criticism of that mysteriously silent humane element, of the absolute mystery which alone makes all science truly humane. Theologians know how poorly they accomplish this task of subjecting their own science to self-critical questioning in the name of God. For they are sinners, and this assessment of themselves as persons, which their own science imposes on them, applies to them also *as* theologians and scientists.

Because theologians do not do a very good job of practicing what they preach to the other sciences, the holy relativism and the silent openness to the ineffable mystery, it comes as no surprise to them, when they are received in the circle of the other sciences of the university with a certain indifference, and endured with a somewhat quietly impatient tolerance. The justification for this kind of treatment may often be attempted on grounds which theologians themselves are not entirely willing to accept. Nevertheless, they will understand their fate within the university as something which is due to other reasons. Those who speak of God and do it poorly, because it is difficult to speak of him at all, and half heartedly, because theologians' hearts are also divided, should not be surprised if what they say sounds jaded and encounters people who are not eve listening or only half listening. And yet they must go on speaking. For God must be spoken of, because there is no place from which his mystery can be absolutely excluded. It may be that when theologians speak of God in the university they have to speak in a manner that is different from the preacher in the pulpit or in the marketplace. There [69] is this difference, but it is a secondary one. Theologians must speak of God and not only of the words used in speaking about God. They would make their task easier for themselves and more acceptable if they would only speak about the words used in speaking of God. But if they did this, they would betray their true and ultimate task. Then they would be nothing more than philosophers of religion or scientists of religion. But in the university God himself must be spoken of. This speaking can only be hesitant. It would not be genuine at all, unless one had the impression that it were grappling with the ultimate problems of life, death, and existence, and if it were not totally different from what is otherwise spoken of at the university. Theological language of this sort, if one adds its orientation toward love, faithfulness, and commitment, can be nothing other then the final word before the human being becomes mute before the blessed mystery of God. But there is this word. It must also be spoken in the university, if this is to be the *universitas* of that which moves human beings.

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THE PRESENT SITUATION OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

Today Catholic theology is no longer an exclusively European enterprise. In the United States Catholic theology has taken on contours that did not exist thirty years ago when it was still a mere outgrowth of European theology. Today, however, it has achieved a marked independence, particularly in the field of moral theology as well as in its critical encounter with Anglo-Saxon philosophy. There is a South American theology known as the theology of liberation which is working toward an explicit emancipation from European theology. The African, Indian, and Japanese Christians are also becoming conscious of their individuality, and they are addressing themselves to the task of developing an indigenous theology which was hardly even conceived of before the Second Vatican Council.

Furthermore, Catholic theology is also inevitably bound by the present trend to turn everything human into a science. Theology, therefore, must now come to terms with those sciences which it was not yet concerned with a few decades ago: linguistic philosophy, the philosophy of science, social sciences, the ever more refined and distinctly developed branches and methods of philology and history. Theology itself has evolved into such a variety of separate disciplines that they cannot possibly be mastered by an individual theologian; only with difficulty can these disciplines maintain contact with each other. In the fields of moral theology and pastoral theology new topics and problems are emerging which simply did not exist in former times. For these and many other reasons it is actually [71] impossible to give an exact account of *the* present situation of Catholic theology *as such* today. We must therefore be permitted to allude to various aspects which touch upon this subject as well as others through an arbitrary selection. Many details, and, above all, names will have to be omitted.

THE CHANGE IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

In the middle of the present century a profound change took place in Catholic theology. Neoscholasticism had been dominant until that time; its mentality had an effect on the methods in the historical branches of theology as well as on exegesis and the writing of church history. It was essentially an ecclesiastical science, which preferred to use Latin; by and large it had its established, clearly defined canon of topics and problems promulgated throughout the world. Neoscholasticism resolutely worked within the framework of these topics but rarely considered that its methodology was questionable. Its stance toward Protestant theology and modern intellectual movements was – with some exceptions – defensive and polemic. One withdrew, and this withdrawal took place in a way in which courageous and genuine faith and fearful repression interacted in a peculiar way, and *this* was considered to be the authentic spirit of the Church. One tried to live as far as possible in an ecclesial autarchy.

The questions which modernism, with its liberal biblical criticism and its evolutionary understanding of the history of dogma, put to the Church and its theology at the beginning of this century were partially answered and partially repressed by this anxious and defensive theology. Rather than being mastered in an open, self-assured, and creative way that would have permitted a positive synthesis between the old Christian faith and the modern mentality to be forged, they were dismissed by the administration of the Church. If we say that

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neoscholastic theology was the theology of an ecclesial community which was as far as possible turned in upon itself, a defensive, ivory tower theology which was associated with a certain middle-class stratum of society, then this is certainly not a definitive characterization which is accurate in every respect. It may, however, give us some idea of the difference between neoscholasticism and the theology that arose in the middle of this century which has taken [72] over from neoscholastic theology without giving rise to the dramatic internal discord that occurred at the beginning of this century during the crisis of modernism.

THE NEW THEOLOGY

This new theology cannot be characterized simply as the theology of the Second Vatican Council. With all of the progressiveness of the Council, traditional theology still predominated with its topics, its Latin, its terminology, its use of Scripture, and so on. Nevertheless, the new theology was present during the Council, and already had its effects without the occurrence of any dramatic controversies between the two theologies. This new theology, not purely identical with the *nouvelle theologie* in France after World War II which still encountered vehement opposition from Pius XII, is a theology which now quite naturally takes up the results of modern exegesis – and especially Protestant exegesis – and engages in biblical theology as it has developed under the influence of the historical critical method.

This new theology, less introspective than in former times, opens itself to the results of research in the history of dogma and the history of theology. With all due respect for the dogma of the Church, it does not strive to construe the results of this research in such a way that one would have to find the present-day teaching of the Church explicitly formulated in all ages and in all places. This new theology is more conversant with modern philosophy since Descartes and Kant. It sees the modern philosophy of German idealism, of existentialism, the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of language, and the scientific theories not simply as the enemy to be opposed, as they were for traditional neoscholasticism, but rather – without compromising its own individuality or shunning critical dialogue with these philosophies – purely and simply as the index of that milieu in which a Christian must also live and critically discern how to be a Christian.

More than in the past the new theology is consciously affected by the concrete questions of the present-day individual, who is a person of technical rationalism and sobriety, a person who is critically engaged in social legislation, and who therefore can appreciate a political theology and a theology of liberation. Because of all these [73] influences, the new theology will inevitably embody a diversity of directions and tendencies; it will inevitably be more fragmented than it was before. It cannot offer a comprehensive systematic construct. It inevitably will be more susceptible to certain fashionable trends which only appear to be Christian: for example, the theology of the death of God. It will be more endangered by tendencies to reduce the Christian faith to a few easily accessible teachings and attitudes, reductions which would ultimately transform Christianity into a vague humanism.

If we say that this new theology replaced neoscholasticism between the middle of the nineteenth and the middle of the twentieth century, then this assertion can only be understood as a straightforward statement of fact, not as an evaluation. The new theology must not consider neoscholasticism the defeated predecessor which it can simply leave behind. This past history is likewise a reality whose values are to be acquired anew; that reality must carry out a critical function vis-à-vis its successor, because it was precisely in this past that the true and full Christianity was alive which, in the present, this new theology must serve. On the other hand, there is, despite spasmodic efforts, no return to neoscholasticism.

One might possibly say that this new theology, with certain fluctuations within individual

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countries and disciplines, came into existence and was accepted between 1940 and 1965. I refrain from naming particular countries, particular theologians, and particular theological disciplines for that span of time. It would require too much time and would be unfair because one theologian would be mentioned, another omitted. Just one observation: in this transition from neoscholasticism to the new theology, specific questions found new answers, which were not merely extensions of neoscholastic theses. Consider, for example, those problems which were of importance during the Council: freedom of conscience, the proper understanding of the inerrancy of Sacred Scripture, the theological interpretation of non-Christian religions, and the universal history of revelation. It would be even easier to cite examples in moral theology.

THEOLOGY TODAY

We now inquire about the *present-day* situation in Catholic theology. Until now we have been speaking about the recent past, not about [74] the present. If we say that at the end of the Council and in the succeeding years inspired by the Council the new theology prevailed and took over from neoscholastic theology under the Piuses up to Pope Pius XII, then the question which is posed to us here is all the more clear: What was going on in Catholic theology since Vatican II and is going on at the present time?

An initial reply to this question would be: the new theology has remained. This statement looks simultaneously to the past and to the present. This means: the theology which developed in the middle of the twentieth century is not seriously threatened by the previous neoscholastic theology, even though certain tendencies in this direction can be observed in the Roman Curia. A future historical phase has not yet taken over from this new theology, provided one sees political theology and liberation theology as themselves variations of this new theology.

A Patient Continuation

With these assumptions in mind it must now be said that this new theology itself has entered a phase that differs from the groundbreaking up to the end of the Council and the few succeeding years. In this earlier phase new ground was broken with a certain enthusiasm. Today one can speak of patient continuation at the most. In this second period everything has become a little more pallid. There is unmistakably a certain resignation, almost a danger of the actual Christian-ecclesial life no longer operating in the field of theological discipline but wandering off into other fields, and of scientific theological reflection becoming something like a withered branch on the tree called Church. It has not come to this yet and probably will not, but voices can already be heard that would like to discard such a theology of scientific reflection as old-fashioned and irrelevant.

Perhaps one cannot deny that the generation of theologians associated with the groundbreaking of the new theology, men like von Balthasar, Chenu, Congar, Daniélou, de Lubac, Malmberg, Schillebeeckx, Schoonenberg, has now grown old. They have – I hope I am wrong – not really found successors of the same stature, even though there is certainly work being done in the field of systematic theology and fundamental theology by significant theologians [75] of the succeeding generation such as G. Greshake, W. Kasper, H. Küng, K. Lehmann, J. B. Metz, H. Vorgrimler, and others (to mention only German theologians at this point). If I thus seem to detect a little less brilliance in the present theology of the second stage of the new theology, it is possible that this view may be influenced by the fact that I

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myself am one of the old people for whom the young ones can never do anything completely right. This opinion is possibly to a great extent also the expression of the fact that *new* periods in the humanities cannot possibly occur every ten years.

This viewpoint does not deny and obscure the fact that within the individual disciplines good and very successful work is being done. Consider, for example, the great scientific exegetical commentaries by R. Pesch, H. Schlier, R. Schnackenburg, and others; the research into the history of dogma found in the *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, or in A. Grillmeier, or the history of the Council of Trent by H. Jedin. There are still many specific disciplines in which work is being done diligently and successfully, above all in moral theology, in the fields of liturgy and pastoral theology. All this should not be underestimated or taken lightly. But does this contradict the view that theology in the Church today is less vibrant and active than it was in the first phase of the new theology? Does not the validity of this viewpoint manifest itself in a certain stagnation of ecumenical theology, and in a dearth of high-level theology which would bring Christianity to the unbelievers of our time while speaking in new tongues, confidently and obviously out of the mentality of our time? All things taken into consideration I really do feel that Catholic theology today by and large does not rate a higher mark than Grade C. Such a judgment must not be seen as a reprimand; it is merely a comment, which, in the end, is derived from the unpredictability of all history.

The Advancement of Theology

Every science is also influenced and sustained by factors which are external to itself and to the scientists who pursue it. A science can, for instance, be supported or obstructed by politicians. Theology as well is dependent on external factors for its development, [76] particularly in the ecclesial realm. It can be assisted by benevolent encouragement from officials of the Church; it can be paralyzed by mistrust, indifference, and unjustified restriction of its freedom on the part of these officials. When asked about the present situation of Catholic theology one could raise the question concerning measures which are indispensable for theology's advancement today. The question could be raised whether today's Church in its official role, aside from verbal assurances, really takes the theological enterprise seriously, if there are funds available for its advancement, if enough people are encouraged to pursue it.

The Tasks of Theology

What should theology do today? By theology we are not referring to its historical disciplines because it is easy for them to know what they have to do. We refer rather to the systematic branches, to fundamental theology and dogmatics. This theology must not evolve along esoteric lines dealing with sublime questions which are of interest to specialists in that field alone. Even today the history of dogma must be pursued; one need not, however, be of the opinion, as eminent theologians like Grabmann and Landgraf were, that new scientific achievements can nowadays be produced in historical theology that looks only to the past.

Theology must serve as a science of proclamation of the gospel and must serve the people of our time. It must resolutely and open-mindedly face the mentality of modern men and women. It cannot consider only those who are believers, but it must also consider those who doubt and think that the message of Christianity is indeed a rather beautiful but ultimately old-fashioned myth, a myth that one can tolerate but no longer live by in honesty. Modern theology, in a totally new and radical way, must be a unity of fundamental theology and

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dogmatic theology. It cannot prove once and for all in an abstract and formal way, as in former times, that divine revelation has happened, and then in dogmatic theology, relying exclusively on Scripture and quotes from the councils, declare that certain things are, simply divine revelation. Without becoming rationalistic, theology must expound ever anew and for every question of dogmatic theology that the article of faith in question is indeed credible and can [77] be lived out in a genuine way; that it truly fits into the fundamentally simple structure of faith, and that it is part of an authentic answer to those questions which human beings find in the center of their existence without the ability to answer them of their own accord.

The proclamation of the Church, including high official statements from Rome, all too often has the tone of a decree from on high which scarcely conceals an inner insecurity. It has a legalistic sound, which relies on the letter rather than on the spirit. This proclamation takes place all too often in a language which, as pious and faith-filled as it may be, speaks only to the devout faithful, or which discusses sociopolitical problems with the others, but does not dare to offer the holy mysteries of Christianity to this secular world. This is where theology should be helpful and should precede the proclamation with good example. While grounded in faith it must nevertheless be consistent with the mentality of today, especially where it rightfully summons that mentality to the judgment seat of God. This is burdensome, difficult work which in the Church itself seldom receives praise or gratitude because it frightens some with an unfamiliar accent that is not traditional enough and for others does not "chime in" with fashionable argon. We still do not have enough of that kind of theology. The kind of theology normally pursued in the Church, which is concerned with its scientific character and fearful of contradictions from the left and from the right, is sometimes put to shame by outsiders. Even if a journalist who is a layman and a theological amateur succeeds in writing a book of three hundred pages bearing the imprimatur of Turin, and in selling 400,000 copies in Italy alone, theology certainly cannot always operate on the level of a Vittorio Messori.[1] It can, however, question whether a certain resigned mediocrity, which we seem to have detected in the present situation of Catholic theology, is appropriate or should, preferably, be overcome.

[1] Vittorio Messori, *Faith's Answer: The Mystery of Jesus,* ed. Eugene Brown, trans. Kenneth Whitehead (New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco, Multimedia, 1986).

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5

ASPECTS OF EUROPEAN THEOLOGY

We propose here to consider systematic theology as it exists subject to the influence of conditions prevalent in the principal regions of the world today. Up to now this topic has hardly been dealt with in systematic theology.

GENERAL PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Nowadays a science can no longer afford to pursue research only in its own proper area. In addition to this it must enter into a reflection on itself. This kind of reflection goes beyond the mere development of a fundamental scientific theory which serves to legitimize the science and describe its nature. It must also be a reflection which takes into consideration the historical, cultural, and social circumstances which are interacting with it as it goes about the accomplishment of its task. A reflection on its "environment" is imperative because only in this way will it be able to bring to light the hidden factors at work shaping the peculiarities which constitute its own nature and define its limits. Theology cannot have done with this task simply by relegating it to a mere secular science of the history of civilization which describes the peculiarities of any given science with reference to its temporal and environmental framework. Theology has to perform this task without outside help because the science of faith, being the highest human science, can only be "constituted" by itself ultimately, no matter how heavily this undertaking of critical self-reflection might be indebted to continuing dialogue [79] with many other sciences whose aim it is to explore the history and particular characteristics of different civilizations.

Different Forms of Theology

When systematic theology embarks upon this undertaking of self-analysis one can expect right from the outset to encounter a variety of forms in Christian and Catholic theology which are a reflection of the major civilizations in which this theology has taken root. These forms in both their unity and diversity constitute at the same time that single Catholic theology which is the scientific reflection on the unity and variety present in the Church's consciousness of its own faith. If this were not the case, there could ultimately be no history of dogma or of theology, no different schools of theology which the Church and its teaching office have positively affirmed, and the difference which the Church has always consciously acknowledged in theory as well as in practice between the Christian churches of the East and the Latin church in the West would be an illegitimate one. It is obvious that differences in theology which have always been accepted as something quite natural and legitimate, are also (but not exclusively!) the result of factors which are bound up with the diversities of geographical areas and of peoples, with their own mentalities and histories within which each theology has had to unfold.

This diversity, which has always been accepted and assumed to be something quite legitimate (also in Vatican II which affirmed it in a special way), contains larger theological problems than has commonly been recognized. We should like to point out a few of them

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here because they have a bearing on our present topic. The fact that there have always been various schools of theology which, despite their differences and even mutual contradictions, have received in the past and continue to receive the blessing and support of the Church's authoritative teaching office seems at first glance to present no problem. The Church's teaching office and the theologians apparently see no cause for alarm in this theological pluralism because they feel that all the schools are equally committed to propounding the content of Christian faith and that they are at odds with one [80] another only on questions which do not touch on the actual substance of faith or endanger it.

On closer inspection, however, the question arises whether this distinction between universally binding dogma (along with other authoritative teaching of the Church) and controversial theological opinions (in further interpretation of dogma or in conclusions which theologians derive from dogma on their own accord and at their own risk) is really so clear and simple as is customarily assumed. And one can further ask what the consequences are for the Church's consciousness of truth if this distinction is not as simple as it seems to be.

For example, expert defenders of Bañez's theology of grace will not be convinced that their dispute with the Molinists comes down to nothing more than an insignificant subtlety of theological speculation. Rather, they will discern in the theory of their Molinistic opponents a mentality which is identical with the secular idea of existence characteristic of modern times, which (knowingly or unknowingly) is carrying forward the emancipation from God in a "godless" way. Genuine "Bañesians" will grant that the dispute naturally amounts to nothing more than theological hair-splitting when both sides lost sight of this radical danger. But they will insist that the dispute is of far greater significance, that the very faith itself is at stake in this dispute. Innumerable examples of this kind can be cited. Only when the problem is seen in this light can one understand the fierceness with which theological disputes have been carried on in the past in which the successors to these disputes, who have become superficial and weary of it all, can find nothing more than theological squabbling.

But if it is true that tremendous decisions of faith lie concealed below the surface of these officially tolerated differences of opinion, decisions which reach down into the ultimate foundations of faith and of how one understands God and the world, then what about the unity of faith amid this theological pluralism? How, then, can these schools attain the one and the same truth of faith when their disputes, stemming as they do from quite different basic conceptions are anything but trifling? Does not this situation of theological pluralism, which we try to deal with in a sociopolitical way rather than with reference to the truth manifest the historicity of faith, a historicity which is not something extrinsic to faith? Does this not reveal [81] that in this Christian faith and its unity there is also contained an essential eschatological element of hope that we shall one day attain the one truth in the light of the eternal God himself only by the grace of faith (and never without this grace)? Can we solve this problem in any other way than by assuming that the grace of God in the Church, which is visibly and sacramentally one, invests these different modes of belief with an overarching orientation toward the one truth of God in the Church? And that this is true even despite the fact that these modes of belief, due to their historical and social relativity (which has not been the object of conscious reflection and formulation and therefore cannot be eliminated directly), are also bound up with contradictory interpretations, one of which, at least, must be false?

The church is necessarily and rightly concerned with its unity amid social and cultural diversity. But this legitimate concern must not make us lose sight of the fact that the truth as one truth in the Church necessarily possesses in itself an indispensable element of grace. If this grace is not presupposed, then there is no way of knowing with certainty whether a unity of faith really exists in the Church. Given all these different and antagonistic schools of theology in the Church no one can know exactly whether behind the rules which the teaching office imposes on them for the formulation of their controversial opinions there might not be

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concealed a difference which could dissolve the real unity of faith.

It is naive to think that a real unity of faith is actually present and historically and socially palpable in the one Church simply because a normative imposition of linguistic rules provides identical formulations of the propositions of faith confessed by all in the public arena of the Church. (One cannot look into the consciousness of the individual. Furthermore, the question remains at least whether the official propositions of faith are understood in the individual's consciousness on the basis of the conflicting theologies with the result that they are not really the same propositions at all; or whether these conflicting theologies are rendered relative by these propositions of faith and so become to a certain extent existentielly neutral.) So one can really insist on this real unity of faith only by presuming that the actual dogmatic pronouncements in the Church as a whole are so established in a really existentiell way by a formal predestination of grace that the theological interpretations which might eventually contradict them are rendered innocuous to faith itself.

[82] In dealing with this problematic area we must keep this background in mind even though we cannot fully elucidate it here. In any case it would be a mistake to minimize the differences within Catholic theology in a way that would lead to the assumption that they can be clearly and certainly disentangled from the actual substance of faith; or that with some effort (not yet exerted but possible in the future) they could doubtlessly be elevated into a higher synthesis, in which the affirmations of the various schools could readily be put into their proper and distinct place. Syntheses of this kind which settle the disagreements between the schools are always desirable and quite often they are partially successful. But here on earth no universal synthesis is possible which would "resolve" *all* differences (in the Hegelian sense), as long as human beings live in history, proceed from different assumptions which have not been and cannot be adequately reflected upon, and have different cultural backgrounds, whose fundamental unification is not possible at all and (despite all the cultural intercommunication which is possible today and which ought to be intensified) not even desirable.

Theology in a Worldwide Church

Today this problem of the unity and pluralism of theological schools within one faith has become qualitatively more acute. Until now the theology of the Catholic Church has been located in the framework of a single civilization even though it was exported on a massive scale to other civilizations – beginning with the time of European colonialism right up to the present. Christian theology was a theology which grew up on the soil of Western civilization whose basis was the world of the Old Testament and Greco-Roman civilization. (Here we can omit the historical question of whether there were minor theologies like those of Armenia, Ethiopia, and so on which cannot be subsumed under the theology of the "West.") In any case it is legitimate to include the theology of the Near East and of Orthodoxy in the theology of Western civilization. While these differ considerably from the actual theology of the West, they still belong to the same civilization and their different elements were developed in a constant historical exchange.

Today, however, the situation of theology has become radically [83] different or is on the point of becoming so. Today the Church has become a worldwide Church. It is no longer the Church of the West with exports conveyed to the whole world (since the sixteenth century) by the modern missionary activity of the Church. And the theology which was exported was not altered in the process of exportation. Today the Church is in fact and not just potentially the worldwide Church with regional churches which have either already inculturated themselves in various civilizations which in their history and social structures are different

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from Europe, or are now on the point of doing this.

This is not the place to consider the enormous question of whether and how a religion which, as a historically revealed religion, obviously has very definite historical roots which are not identical with all the historical forces at work in the world, can make a serious claim to being a world religion for all peoples and civilizations. It would be wrong to answer this question in terms of the propagation of a universal truth which, upon being discovered in a certain place, begins to branch out in all directions. The question is how a concrete religion with its specific modes of existence, its rites, images, and so on can be universally present in all civilizations without forfeiting its historical identity.

Now a religion is something which has to be practiced in real life situations and so it cannot be based solely on concepts and propositions, but rather it is realized and must be realized with the help of *all* those realities which are part of human existence. Even the proper understanding of the theoretical propositions of a religion is codetermined by all these other realities even if this is not expressly reflected upon. This being the case, one could justifiably entertain doubts as to whether that religion which has really inculturated itself in one civilization is really the same religion as the one which has taken root in another civilization, even though both claim to be one and the same religion by appealing to identical theoretical affirmations and to social relationships. The real core of the problem that has to be dealt with here is that the unity of faith must not be endangered in favor of the diverse civilizations, yet at the same time it would be wrong to minimize in a superficial way the diversity of the theologies in the individual civilizations in favor of the unity of faith.

But if the Church today is present in the whole world, and thus in [84] all civilizations, and if each theology must be codetermined by the respective historical and cultural milieu in which it exists and out of which it must unfold itself – and this is something necessary and indispensable precisely for the fulfillment of its task in the service of proclaiming the gospel – then the question emerges in an entirely new way as to how these different theologies in the one Church and within a common consciousness of faith can coexist. They just cannot exist without taking notice of one another. Each theology is responsible for the truth and unity of the faith of the whole Church. Each theology must serve all the other theologies in the world. In considering this difference of the theologies, which is no longer a difference within one single civilization that is ultimately homogeneous but rather the difference of the theologies in totally disparate civilizations, one must bear in mind what we have already emphasized: that these different theologies, even though they exist in the one Church with its one faith, are really different and they remain different; each one exhibits its own unique and noninterchangeable individuality (even in the process of historical development); and therefore these theologies can never be synthesized into a single homogeneous theology by casting aside the historical elements that condition them.

Here, of course, the question might be asked (and this is, again, a problem which cannot be adequately treated here) how these theologies can be understood ultimately as one theology standing at the service of one faith and how this unity remains *tangible* for them. Only a brief answer can be indicated here – and we are actually presuming that the question can be answered. All of these theologies are related to the unity and immediacy of the absolute God which are really attainable in grace and faith. (This relationship implies the possibility of communication among the theologies.) All of these theologies are related to Jesus, crucified and risen, as the absolute God's promise of himself which has become historically concrete and irrevocable, who is believed and grasped precisely in his radical sovereignty over all culturally conditioned images of God.

Despite cultural diversities and individual human differences which cannot be reduced to a common denominator and which obviously do color the thinking and teachings of the different theologies, these theologies do communicate with one another on the primary

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assumption that human beings are able to reach mutual [85] understanding not only on the level of practical signs rooted in their biological nature, but also that they are able to communicate with one another on the level of truth, and that on this level they can understand one another and offer meaningful criticism to one another. But over and above this, the unity of Christian theology is ultimately based on the fact that the signs which occur in the dimension of faith, in and despite the divergency which may accrue to them as a result of cultural conditioning, all these signs – being filled with the grace of God which is God himself – point to an incomprehensible mystery which is God and which extends beyond all differences, and come to their final terminus in him.

Moreover, these different theologies exist in obedience and peace in the one Church which, despite its extension and its "diaspora" throughout the whole world, retains its social, ritual, and sacramental unity and reveals this unity in ever new ways.

When we inquire in this way about the coexistence and intercommunication of these theologies in the one Church, theologies which are and will remain different, then it is irrelevant to our question that many of these theologies have not yet achieved the stature and obvious individuality which the theology in the Church of the West possesses. An Indian, East Asian, African, Latin American theology does not yet possess the scope and articulation of Western theology. But if the Church has just entered the era of a truly worldwide Church, then our question has become inevitable.

EUROPEAN THEOLOGY

At this point one might think that we would first have to describe the character of European theology in order to show its particular task within the entire theology of the Church. But as a matter of fact we cannot proceed in this way. In view of its two-thousand-year history and its enormous differentiation, the attempt at such a characterization of the theology of Europe would be doomed to failure. Moreover, such a procedure would be meaningful only if the character of European theology could be presented in contrast to the other theologies of the worldwide Church. This is even more impossible because the true character of these theologies is still unknown for the most part and it cannot be made clear by superficial references to the [86] Asian mentality, to the Negroid peoples, and the like. We must be content here with considerations of a less complex nature.

The Theology of Rome *and the Theology of the Worldwide Church*

When inquiring here into the theology of Rome in its relationship to the theologies of the worldwide Church now and in the future, we are talking about the concrete theology of the concrete Roman teaching office. There was in the past, and there is of course now also a Roman theology to the extent that there are theologians, theological academies, and theological literature in Rome, and this theology in Rome vis-à-vis the rest of European theology may also manifest a certain character of its own due to sociological reasons, which cannot be treated here, and due to the relationship of this theology to the Roman teaching office as a social entity as well (even as an unavoidably "bureaucratic" entity). But the Roman theology in this sense vis-à-vis the rest of European (and North American) theology does not possess a character of such importance as to warrant a special treatment. What we are going to consider here, then, is exclusively the theology of the Roman teaching office as it relates to our questions. In doing this we shall of course take for granted the mandate and the authority of this Roman teaching office in respect to the Church as a whole and hence to all

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the theologies of the worldwide Church.

This teaching office possesses a definite European theology. This teaching office as a concrete institution (the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, etc.) is of course charged with the responsibility of expounding and safeguarding the one binding faith of the one Catholic Church everywhere, and that is assuredly its sole intent and purpose. But it cannot discharge this duty without the help of what is known as theology. It has recourse to Holy Scripture by means of exegesis; it has recourse to tradition, in which the Church's consciousness of faith is palpable, by means of historical and systematic investigations – in a word, by means of theology. The work of the ecclesial teaching office is certainly carried on in the awareness that its teaching authority has its ultimate foundation in the assistance of the Spirit for the Church. But to accomplish its task it must avail itself of theology as a means, and it has always done this. [87] Up to now this theology has been European theology (how could it be otherwise?) and for the past two centuries it has been neoscholastic theology. Can this situation in the worldwide Church simply remain unchanged in the future?

One cannot maintain that this Roman teaching office is absolutely protected from every error and blunder by the assistance of the Holy Spirit regardless of what theology it might employ as a means. Even with all the undoubted infallibility of the pope in his *ex cathedra* decisions, the Roman teaching office can go astray in other actions, interpretations, and decisions (even if this is not to be presumed in contrast to a fashionable modern trend); in the twentieth century as well it has often made mistakes or taken steps which were objectively wrong. It is of course unavoidable that these dangers will increase in a worldwide Church in which there are or will be different theologies – historically and culturally conditioned – which can no longer simply be resolved by virtue of an absolutely successful synthesis into a unified theology for which representatives and experts can be easily found. The dangers of misunderstandings among theologians and the danger of an unjustified tutelage and regimentation of the non-European theologies on the part of the ecclesial teaching office with its European theology is increasing. (Examples of these dangers are perhaps not yet quite evident today. But when one considers questions of moral theology and the dogmatic implications contained in the juridical and liturgical measures of Rome, then one becomes aware that dangers of this kind are something more than a bad dream.) How can we counter these dangers?

The question is a difficult one because we may by no means presume that the Roman teaching office has no duty toward the non-European theologies unless there is a question of *ex cathedra* decisions. It still has a duty toward these theologies when there is a question of the authoritative, authentic teaching power, even when this is not exercised in the area of defined dogma. For this reason there is also a real possibility that this teaching office can be derelict in its duty just as much by omission as by a premature interference in the life of these non-European theologies which ultimately proves to be a mistake. One might suppose that in the process of internationalizing the Roman Curia a sufficient counterweight to these dangers has been provided by placing enough representatives of the other theologies from the other world cultures even in the Congregation [88] for the Doctrine of the Faith and the other Roman curial offices which are in charge of these matters. It is certainly desirable that the major regional churches of the world together with their theologies have a representation within the institutions of the Roman teaching office. Something of this sort is certainly present in the move initiated by Paul VI to internationalize the Roman Curia. Technically, however, it is not very feasible for competent representatives of all the different theologies in the world to be present in Rome itself. There would be too little for them to do and their presence elsewhere would be more imperative. They would serve to swell the bureaucratic machinery in Rome even further, and thus be counterproductive to a necessary decentralization in the Church. In addition to this, it is psychologically understandable and

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something which seems to be borne out by experience that non-Italians who have been living in Rome for a long time "acclimatize" themselves so well that a real understanding of the culture and theology of their former homeland slowly begins to erode and so they become the least suitable representatives of their homeland, yet they still continue to appeal to their origin. So when an issue of one of these major theologies has developed to such a point that Rome itself can no longer avoid taking a stand on it, then sufficient contacts would have to be set up and cultivated with the exponents of these individual theologies who are based in their own home countries. In addition to this, Rome would have to take the initiative in promoting dialogue among the individual schools of theology in the world so that the problems which have arisen could be settled to the greatest possible extent by the theologies themselves without the necessity of an authoritative intervention on Rome's part.

It would further be desirable to set up institutions in these areas of different cultures which would be invested with the effective powers to permit the teaching authority of the bishops or the bishops' conferences, especially those of the major regions and continents, to have a concrete and effectual representation. Institutions of this sort would be better able to pass positive or negative judgment on the theology in question because they would consist of individuals who share the same cultural background in which this theology has its roots. Practically speaking, the bishops by and large leave the exercise of the ecclesial teaching authority to Rome alone, except in the case of very local problems. For a worldwide Church which has [89] major regional churches of high profile this solution cannot be satisfactory in the long run. If an official ecclesial teaching authority competent for the theology of its own region could be placed in the hands of the major regional churches, then the ecclesial teaching authority could be exercised more judiciously, Rome's work load could be reduced, and the blunders could be avoided which almost necessarily occur when the theology of a totally different world has to be judged from a completely different cultural background. But in any event, the utmost reserve and circumspection is called for on the part of the official Roman teaching authorities when they are called upon to pass judgment on the theology which is indigenous to another culture if they proceed on the basis of their own particular theological position – and this is something which, to a certain extent, can hardly be avoided.

European Theology as the Guardian of Tradition

Even if the Church is a worldwide Church or is in the process of becoming one, even if this means that there are going to be different theologies in this Church notwithstanding its unity and the oneness of its faith, theologies which cannot be reduced to a common denominator, the fact still remains that Europe along with its theology is the "elder daughter" to most of the other churches in the world and their theologies, and the word of God in Jesus Christ due to a mysterious disposition of God reached her before it reached most of the churches which make up the one Church now and will comprise it in the future.

There is a relationship (at least analogously) similar to the one Paul sees between Israel and the Gentile Church (Rom. 11:13ff.). "Favoritism" and "discrimination" of this kind are part and parcel of a historically revealed religion and they have to be accepted by those peoples who were not converted to Christianity until later, or who are just now in the process of conversion, with the same simplicity that Europe in its obedience of faith accepted the fact that the Word of God was made flesh in Asia and not in Europe. This sort of "favoritism" shown in Europe, however, confers not only a privilege but also imposes an obligation on the Christian West and its theology, a responsibility which cannot be abdicated by this European theology even if it is no longer *the* theology of the Church, but has become one theology among many. For as far into the future as one can see, European theology will remain the

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guardian and preserver of the tradition of faith of the first two millennia of formal Christianity. The languages used by Christian faith to express itself are by and large the languages of Europe. It was in this civilization that the Church's dogma in a long and turbulent history was forged into the formal expression which we have today and from which the other parts of humanity cannot turn back in their future history of faith, even though the future history of these peoples will not be characterized by the mere reception and repetition of this European history of faith. For this European history of faith will also become a part of their own past and it will remain historically binding when they become Christian.

Therefore, by preserving its own history and keeping it alive in its theology, the theology of Europe is preserving the normative past of these other peoples. In a Church which remains one and the same Church of Jesus Christ despite all the diversity of the individual regional churches, the historical experience accumulated in the theology of one of these regional churches is a part of the heritage and trust bequeathed to all the other regional churches. But it is precisely there where these things had their origin that the greatest efforts must be made to preserve and foster them. This applies to all the "material" realities in the framework of which theology must be pursued, beginning with the study of the languages in which the basic texts of Christianity are composed, on through the enormous literature of all these Christian centuries, the cultivation of the other monuments of Christian faith, and right up to the establishment of scientific institutes, libraries, and the like.

But above and beyond this, a living European theology must offer to the other theologies of the world an ever new and credible witness to what Christian faith has achieved in Europe and what remains as living tradition. Taking a critical view of itself, European theology must, of course, help these other theologies to distinguish between the normative and binding elements contained in it and those elements which are specifically European and therefore cannot be looked upon as a directly determining factor for these other theologies. It is precisely out of its own tradition that European theology must help the other theologies to find their own identity and [91] become self-reliant. For it is precisely on the basis of its own tradition, which in Europe bears the hallmarks of differentiation as a result of a long historical process, that European theology – provided that it does not become autocratic, but remains humble – has the ability, perhaps in greater measure than other younger theologies, to distinguish in a self-critical way between what is specifically Christian and what is merely European.

That specific character of European culture which enables a science to take a critical look at itself and call itself into question will probably remain for some time because in this culture, more than anywhere else, the Enlightenment, rational and critical science, the reflexive philosophy of science, all had their origin. Because this belongs to the wisdom of age, younger cultures will not be able to assume such an attitude and maintain it to any intense degree. And so European theology, to a greater degree than theology in other cultures, possesses the capacity and the "technique" of calling itself into question. It is therefore called upon in its position of self-critical reflection to prevent "burdens" from being imposed upon the younger churches and their theologies, burdens which faith is not tempted to impose, but rather which the all too self-assured mentality of one culture is tempted to impose on other cultures and theologies. This self-critical task of European theology becomes more urgent but also easier to accomplish when it encounters the theologies of other cultures, dares to undertake open dialogue with them and in this way is also disposed to learn something from them. We shall have to devote special attention to this point.

European Theology and Today's World Civilization

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No one can overlook the fact that in the wake of European colonialism a rational-technical civilization (as distinct from cultures which are viewed as the social realization of human beings in *all* their dimensions) has spread throughout the whole world and is influencing the lives of all human beings and nations to an ever greater degree. The rapid and enormous increase of the world population as well as other factors indicate that this rational-technical civilization is not going to disappear from the lives of the peoples, unless one reckons with a decimation of humanity in an atomic war. If one does [92] not expect this purely rational-technical civilization to simply suppress the real cultures which take human beings in all their dimensions into account and to set itself up in their place, but instead if one perhaps reckons with the possibility that the major cultures of the world will enter into a new and as yet undiscovered synthesis with this external civilization, which has spread or will spread everywhere, and which also has a positive service to perform for the unity and peace of humankind; thus if one considers the preservation and further development of these world cultures within a desirable pluralism of humanity to be an obligation of the nations of the world, then European theology can discern a new task for itself in respect to an undertaking of this kind.

It is beyond question that this modern global civilization with all the threats it poses to an authentic realization of humanity owes its origin and its existence to the European mentality and history in which Christianity has been and continues to be an essential factor. There are even some who maintain that Christianity is responsible for those characteristics of European culture and civilization (taking the two together as one) which have now developed into a threat of annihilation for the whole human race. They maintain that the loss of the sense of the "numinous" in today's world, its God-lessness, its reduction to rationalistic-technical means and ends, and its destruction are to be charged squarely to the debit account of Christianity, or at least European Christianity, which fails to utter any protest against the inhumanity of this civilization but rather has been instrumental in legitimizing it by a definite proclamation of the distance between God and the world.

Even if an accusation of this kind is groundless when leveled against the really authentic nature of Christianity and of the Church, still European Christianity along with its theology cannot sidestep the question of whether and to what extent it has taken on a burden of guilt in the actual course of its history by creating through the hands of people who supposedly chose to be Christians a world civilization whose consequences today confront us with the specter of annihilation. European theology must ask itself if it has not perhaps contributed to these developments – culpably or inculpably – by presenting a view of humankind (along with its ideological distortions) which in truth can find no legitimation and acceptance in [93] Christianity. Theology, too, is a theology of sinful human beings. The theology of the fathers can with its shortcomings, its short-sightedness, and its omissions revenge itself on the children. Therefore, European theology today would have the task of examining its conscience and of taking a kind of inventory of itself so as to be able to offer the other theologies, and along with them the peoples who are represented and influenced by these theologies, a Christianity which is less entangled with the errors and false attitudes which are current in modern civilization and which are perhaps covertly present in those very characteristics of modern civilization which this civilization so warmly recommends to other peoples as a reason for embracing it.

Here, too, there would be a task for "political theology" since this is supposed to reflect on the sociopolitical implications of the whole of Christian theology and in the light of the pure gospel message to make a critical inquiry as well into the social and cultural realities which a false ecclesiastical conservatism passes off in an all too facile way as genuine Christian achievements. European theology as political theology would have to warn the other peoples of a lot of things in our society which are uncritically accepted by us as a matter of course

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and which we are fond of defending with a pseudo-Christian ideology.

European Theology as Mediator among the Other Theologies

Perhaps at some point in the future, European theology will give the representatives of the other theologies the impression of being a somewhat hoary Alexandrianism. Perhaps the day will soon come when an African theologian will ask (even if he has received his doctorate in Europe) whether, for example, a huge volume of church history with thousands of bibliographical entries really has to appear every year in order to broaden theology's horizons and enkindle its fires and make it an instrument for the proclamation of the living word. But on the purely "technical" level (i.e., as far as the number and size of scientific institutes, the amount of literature produced, the number of professors, the financial support for theological undertakings, [94] etc. are concerned) European theology (along with North American theology) will continue far into the future to be that theology among all others which has the broadest and most intensive scope as a scientific undertaking.

For this reason alone it is on the technical level a foregone conclusion that European theology take on the role of mediator and coordinator among the theologies. But it must have the will to carry out this technical and practical task. For example, it is not really proper for all the theologians of the former mission countries who possess the aptitude and calling to do work in scientific theology to pursue their studies at European or North American faculties of theology with the consequence that the native theologates in the other countries are necessarily reduced to a lowly and wretched existence. But for a long time to come young theologians from these countries will be obliged to study in Europe, and rightly so. European theology has to support these programs by practical measures (scholarships, seminaries, and the like).

But above and beyond this, European theology must act as mediator in a higher intellectual sense among the theologies of the world. It is, after all, the starting point and presupposition of these other theologies. Since the Christianity represented by these other theologies came from Europe and these other theologies necessarily bear the stamp of this origin, but at the same time manifest no further relationship to one another than what they have in common with European theology, European theology is in the best position to exercise the function of mediator among them. Within the one Church these theologies simply cannot be permitted to exist parallel to one another in a state of isolation. Intercommunication must be cultivated. The higher the degree of individual development they have attained the greater is the danger that they will go their own separate ways and become estranged from one another. European theology is called upon to surmount this danger since it is equidistant to all these other theologies as the historical starting point. At just the time when Europe has politically and historically lost its role of leadership in the world and given it up to other powers, the theology of this Europe which has grown old will be the last to give the impression that it lays claim to a dominating role which would compromise its authentic role as mediator.

[95]

European Theology as a Safeguard against the Dangers Threatening the Other Theologies

Certain dangers threaten young theologies in cultures which up to now have not been Christian. Since it is precisely their task to inculturate the Christian message in these non-Western cultures, they are naturally exposed to the danger that the mentality of these non-Christian cultures will exert a negative influence on these theologies; that it will act as an obstacle to the understanding of this or that part of the complete Christian message; that it

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will reject or ignore teachings and attitudes which are deemed to be European but which are in fact indispensable to a genuine Christianity and may not be lost. European theology can be a help to these other theologies in confronting these dangers. In its long history any number of theological directions have been tried out and the most diverse models have been tested. Under certain circumstances European theology possessing a clear view and being well versed in the understanding of foreign cultures, is able to discover elements in the spiritual history of foreign peoples which are useful for the reception and understanding of the Christian message. Today these elements are overlooked by the exponents of a culture of this kind who emphasize certain other elements and tendencies in their spiritual history as being representative and these alone as being really decisive for their culture. But in the spiritual history of every culture the most diverse and conflicting ideas and tendencies may be found. In this lies the possibility and the danger that definite elements of this sort of mentality which has a long history behind it will be treated as the only legitimate ones to the exclusion of the others. Thus Christian theologians will be tempted to try to construct a synthesis with Christianity using these elements in contrast to others which could also be found. The result would then be detrimental to a genuine and complete Christianity.

It is often easier for an outsider to discern the elements in a culture which correspond internally to the Christian message than it is for someone who belongs to that culture, and who is more easily taken in by the fashionable slogans which claim to express the sole and true nature of a culture and its mentality with the result that these people want to compel the Christian theologian to reconcile Christianity [96] with this "nature." In a familial and at the same time modest manner European theology with its historical experience can bring these dangers to the attention of the other theologies and thereby right from the start render superfluous more stringent and more bitter interventions on the part of the highest teaching office in the Church against these theologies.

European Theology in the Process of Learning

If we consider the matter in a realistic and objective way, we have to admit that the non-European theologies that we are considering here hardly exist as yet. But they are coming because they have to come in a Church which is really and truly on the way to becoming a worldwide Church or actually is such. The universal history of thought, the universal history of civilization, and the phenomenology of cultures – which could not have their birth until the European era of the Enlightenment and of historicism – might perhaps even now provide us with some notion of what a theology of this kind might look like in other cultures. This notion, vague though it might be, should even now start to become operative in European theology. These foreign cultures and their mentalities can even now make European theology attentive to the fact that in its scientific work and teaching, for example, it works with plausibilities which are not even present in these other cultures; that it works with terminologies which cannot be carried over into the language of these other cultures, or only with the greatest of difficulty; that it can learn from these other mentalities of aspects and problems of the whole of reality which up to now it has not given much thought to.

If European theology even now would include in its considerations the problematic areas which these foreign cultures confront us with, it could learn a great deal for itself. It cannot, of course, in this way artificially prefabricate the future theologies of other cultures, but it can learn something for itself from these things and it can pave the way for the emergence of these other theologies, even though they can be made only by the people of these cultures in a manner that gives them their own true and unique characteristics. By taking foreign cultures into account along with the problematic areas they give rise to, European theology would not

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only do a little advance [97] thinking for those who are going to come later but it could also learn for itself and be enriched in the process.

New knowledge of this kind or knowledge which has become clearer and has increased in significance is also "interesting" for European theologians and for the people whom they serve directly. For one reason, the mentalities of these other cultures have already begun to exert their influence to a greater or lesser degree on the spiritual and intellectual world of Europe. In the past, for example, dogmatic theology or Christian philosophical anthropology was able to dismiss the "transmigration of souls" in a few lines. Today, however, this idea of Eastern cultures has become so important in Europe that European theology has to start taking this subject seriously and accord it a more differentiated and thorough treatment than it has done in the past. A second example: the way of spiritual ascent and meditation in Eastern anthropology could alert European theology to the fact that it should devote more attention to the neglected areas of prayer and mysticism and not abandon the field exclusively to prescientific spirituality as is done in dogmatic and moral theology.

Numerous other examples of this kind would have to be given to show how these foreign cultures could stimulate European theology to a learning process which could result in some preliminary work being done for theologies which are going to develop outside of Europe. One example of a more general and hence fundamental nature should be given here. As a matter of course, theology has been accustomed to thinking in personalistic and therefore historical terms. The idea that the universal salvation of all humankind should depend on an event which was seen as taking place at a point in time and space presented no particular problem. It was almost taken for granted. This was also true for the conviction that revelation could have an actual history of its own. For this reason it was more or less obvious that Christology should be accorded a place prior to pneumatology and the doctrine of grace, even though in traditional theology there were, of course, convictions and teachings which could call into question this all too facile theological perspective. Perhaps an Eastern theology will one day reverse this perspective. Because of the universal salvific will of God and in legitimate respect for all the major world religions outside of Christianity, it may perhaps make a pneumatology, a teaching of the inmost, divinizing gift of grace for all [98] human beings (as an offer to their freedom), the fundamental point of departure for its entire theology, and then attempt from this point – and this is something that might be achieved only with considerable effort – to gain a real and radical understanding of Christology. For a theology of this kind John 7:39 ("There was no Spirit as yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified") will perhaps be less suitable and intelligible than scriptural passages which extol the universal salvific will of God and which let the Spirit speak through all the prophets and know that the Spirit has been poured out on all flesh.

If we can imagine a theology of Eastern character in this way, then this can also be of use to European theology. For it would have to ask itself in respect to its own task and mission whether the prognosis it is making for another theology in the future might not perhaps be of significance for itself today. For even today European theology has to develop for its own people a credible theology of non-Christian religions. It cannot limit the history of revelation to the revelation in "paradise" and the Old Testament history of revelation from Moses to Jesus. It must provide a better and more understandable interpretation of the conclusion of revelation in Christ. It must grapple with the problems of Islam in a theological way and not just politically and polemically, and so on. To accomplish this task it certainly has within its own tradition the necessary presuppositions and elements, but this all must be carried out in a way that has real clarity and significance for today. And the inducement for this could be, for example, a dialogue with the mentality of the East as a modest preparation for a genuine and original Eastern theology.

With its ideas about other theologies in the future, European theology can really learn

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something for itself and become something of a pioneer for these future theologies. It can certainly do no more than this. The essential work must be done by others in other, cultures. Should European theology accomplish this modest task which does lie within its power, then this would be a blessing for itself most of all.

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[99]

6

A THEOLOGY THAT WE CAN LIVE WITH

If our task is not to present apologetics for the life value of one definite individual theology but rather to speak about theology in general as one and the same thing, does this mean that one single branch of this theology is the main point at issue? Perhaps because I do not really understand anything about these other theological disciplines and especially because it is difficult to praise all of them at once? Do I really mean theology as distinct from the faith upon which it reflects scientifically? Or perhaps I should in the last analysis extol the Christian and Catholic faith as worth living since the distinction between faith and theology is something which is not so easy to make.

THEOLOGY FOR LIFE – BUT FOR WHAT LIFE?

Let me begin with a counter question to the question I am supposed to answer here. Is there a theology that one can live with? The presumption contained in a question of this kind is that people know how they are supposed to live and that they know what is worthwhile in life and now theology is going to be measured by this supposedly obvious criterion in order to test whether theology, too, can to some extent be fit into this general scheme of life. By the demand that theology must be something that one can live with, I cannot imagine that nothing more is meant than a brief list of humdrum requests addressed to the theological schools. I cannot imagine that the only [100] thing meant is that the professors be especially learned and competent; that theology should not be divided up into too many disciplines; that not just the professor's voice should be heard in the seminars; that the examination questions should not be too recondite; that the number of lectures should be decreased and not increased, and so on and on. It goes without saying that these banal, day-to-day demands made on theology should be met as far as is realistically possible so that young theologians can live with their theology.

But when people ask the question about the "livableness" of theology (if I may use that term), then I can counter with the question as to just what kind of a life is meant that theology has to prove and justify itself to as a science that one can live with. Really, just what kind of a life is actually meant? If what is meant is the life of the people of the West in their consumer-oriented society, people earning money, people at play and recreation, people in pursuit of culture which has turned into a kind of self-important industry whose real purpose, if you take a close look at things, is to drown out lethal boredom; if it were absolutely clear that the skeptical positivist is right in forbidding us to talk about something that cannot be demonstrated experimentally; if it is absolutely clear and obvious that the mystical experience of God (I dare to use this term), faith, prayer, the experience of an absolute responsibility, and so on are excluded from that life – if this is the kind of life that is meant, then of course theology is not something that one can live with, because right from the start all of those realities which theology has as the object of its reflection are excluded from this kind of life.

THEOLOGY AND THE REALITY OF FAITH

A further implication of this obvious statement is that one should not pursue theology unless

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one is prepared to open all the areas of one's life to the realities which are the object of theological reflection. We, have, for example, the philosophy of religion, the history of religion, the phenomenology of religions. One can do work in these fields prompted by human and scientific curiosity to a greater or lesser degree. One can even turn these sciences into a bread-and-butter job on the academic level if the state sends the paycheck regularly. We [101] are not going to discuss here how one can live with these sciences. All of that is not theology. In order to be able to make a claim to being worthwhile for life theology presupposes an existentiell relationship to the reality of faith. People who intend to do theology without this Christian or even ecclesial faith had better change their theology pretty quickly into the science of religion, otherwise they will soon discover that they cannot live with it.

When I was a young theology student we still used to pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit before class began. Nowadays, of course, this has been dropped, but the idea behind it is still valid. Theology is a science of faith in the bosom of the Church, and this is the only way it can be pursued, pursued, that is, in a way that one can live with it.

It is quite conceivable, of course, and legitimate for young theologians, whose faith is wavering and who are plagued by the contradictions of their time and of their own lives, to enroll in theology. At this point they are just beginning to do theology in order to live, since they are beginning to discover that they cannot sidestep the question of faith in their lives, that they cannot have done with this question by shunting it off into a convenient and superficial skepticism and relativism. And so if it is economically feasible for them and if they have the intellectual talent to do it, they try to find an answer to the question of their lives not by themselves alone but with the means of scientific, that is, metaphysical and theological reflection. Persons like these may and should do theology because they cannot live without doing theology. They should, however, beware of the idea that people can get out of theology what they want for their own lives if they should try to do theology with a kind of rationalistic mentality – which does not really exist – without putting themselves into it heart and soul and without trying in supreme seriousness to get to the very root of the question of the experience of the contingency of human existence in such a way that the only answer left for this question is the answer of faith with the grace of God.

The first thing, then, that I wanted to point out here is the insight that not just any conceivable life can coexist with theology, but only a very definite one. In this, of course, there is also contained a question which cannot be answered here. What is the more precise relationship between a Christian life of faith and the theological reflection which purports to give an account of this faith given the [102] fact that the two are conditioned by one another? From the standpoint of fundamental theology the scientific reflection on the reasons for believing contained in faith itself can and ought to be significant for the life of faith. As true as that is, the fact still remains that the realization of faith, even when it transpires in a legitimately naive faith, is the presupposition of theology without which one cannot live with theology. The reflexive argumentation can never completely catch up with this kind of naive faith, nor does it have to.

THEOLOGY AS A SPECIAL DISCIPLINE

Even if we grant all this, one can of course still ask whether one can really live with theology as we know it today. Since theology as a reality is something that is not absolutely immune to change, but always exists in the process of history, this question is transformed into the question of what concrete shape theology must have today in the lives of young theologians in order for them to be able to live with it. Permit me to make a few remarks on this question

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even though I realize that not every professional academic theologian will necessarily share my views.

I am not calling into question any theological discipline in the academic area. Naturally there is also a thoroughly legitimate human and scientific curiosity about things pertaining to religion and the Church which only in a very remote way have anything to do with the reality which is existentielly grasped in faith. These things can still be the object of scientific research and teaching. These scientific areas are the domain of certain theological specialists who do a creditable job in their specialized fields. It may perhaps be true that the young theologians who are studying theology with a view to their future life and work in the Church attach little or no importance to them, and so they can get the impression that specialized disciplines are of no practical use to them, that they cannot live with them.

If humanly speaking it is entirely legitimate for scholars to devote their whole lives and energy, for example, to the investigation of an Inca civilization which has long since disappeared, then of course it stands to reason that theological sciences which are devoted to Christian archaeology, which also dig up secondary theological schoolbooks of the Middle Ages, which turn exegetics into philology [103] so that one could begin to get the impression that all these things are being done for their own sake, and so on, are all the more legitimate, and these sciences quite rightly argue that they are useful members in the whole area of the one theology which deals with the question of the ultimate meaning of human existence. But one cannot take it ill if young theologians, who have no intention of becoming specialists, even though all of these undertakings are meaningful, evince no particular interest in these specialized theological disciplines, but rather search for a theology that they can live with both now and later in the concrete situation of their existence.

Today there is certainly a regrettable slackening of interest in the actual scientific pursuit of the individual disciplines of theology without at the same time there being any noticeable decline in actual and scientific interest in the field of theology. But during their training young theologians want a theology that they can live with now as a help to orient themselves among the conflicting ideological claims of the world they live in and to lead religious lives and that will mean something to them in their future lives and work for the Church. If this is the kind of theology they are looking for, then there is no reason why they should not treat the scientific character of theology and its fragmentation into many compartmentalized disciplines as a problem of secondary importance.

This does not mean that they can absolve themselves of the hard work and concentration that the study of theology requires. It does not mean that theology could be a pleasant free-time hobby. But the theology which they have every right to expect if they are supposed to be able to live with it is in the first instance a theology which cannot be a *pure* science because it is the reflection on a Christianity which is lived and believed existentielly in the Church. And this reflection, indispensable and justified though it be, is different from that of the individual secular sciences in that it is necessarily subsequent to the actualization of the Christian life and there is no reason for it to be otherwise. In structuring the program of theological studies there should be no hesitation in making allowance for this. The sheer boundless nature of the scientific endeavor together with its almost self-defeating methodology and hermeneutics need not be the supreme law of theology, not even if theology in its particular and unique character may call itself a science.

[104]

SUPRASCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY

Theology must be understood as an undertaking that reaches beyond the confines of what is known as a science. For the sake of a term we might call this “suprascientific” theology, if we

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tell young theologians to pursue theology in this wider perspective, what we are actually saying is that they should concentrate on the really fundamental problems of theo1ogy. In saying this we do not mean to belittle the legitimacy and usefulness of the minor theological disciplines. But it is certainly not of paramount importance for young theologians to master every fine point of the synoptic question or, when they take up the study of church history, to give a fully nuanced account of all the factors involved in the condemnation of John Hus. What *is* important, if their theology is going to be relevant to their lives, is that they invest every drop of their life's blood and every ounce of their intelligence in an attempt to understand what revelation really means; what the relationship is between the history of religions and a particular and local history or revelation; whether and how one can still seriously and intelligibly speak of God in today's world secularized and riddled with positivistic skepticism; what is actually meant by the word *God*; how they as human beings in the humdrum existence of their everyday lives can go about discovering something in themselves that they can call an experience of God; how one can in upright integrity of spirit maintain that the incomprehensible God, who, though myriad light years distant from our little planet, lets the cosmos disperse like a cloud of dust, has become a human being, and whether one can understand with some degree of accuracy what this means and also what this does not mean; whether one can understand that the execution that took place two thousand years ago on Golgotha can be seriously accepted by people today as the ground of their own existence; whether the resurrection of Jesus can be something more to people than an ancient myth and what one can honestly understand when one thinks about this resurrection; whether one can really take seriously the idea that this Jesus is coming again to conclude a human history of a few million years and perhaps even a cosmic history of a few billion years beginning with the big bang; whether human beings despite all of their evolution from the animal kingdom, despite psychoanalysis and all their social contingencies are still the same [105] human beings that Christianity understands them to be, as those who in freedom determine what they are ultimately going to be for all eternity and accept this definitiveness before the judgment seat of God (what does that mean?); whether one can seriously maintain that people must in order to be completely human and Christian also have something to do with a Church and its bureaucracy and practice their religion using *those* rites which are customary in the Roman Catholic Church; how a Church which has a historical origin and has grown up in one very limited corner of history can still seriously strive today to become a worldwide Church present in all cultures.

Questions such as these and many like them are life-and-death questions for Christianity if it still envisages a future for itself today. These are the questions that must form the core of a theology which young theologians must devote themselves to with their whole heart and mind, even at the risk of remaining ignorant of any number of other things which are also done in theology.

A HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS

At the last Ecumenical Council the Church spoke of a hierarchy of the truths of revelation. There is, no doubt, an objective hierarchy present in the substance of Christian revelation and the objective difference among the truths of faith. But there is just as certainly a hierarchy of truths which is governed by the historical moment in which a person has to live his life, as well as by his own personal character and calling. This is the kind of threefold hierarchy that young theologians have to set up for themselves and that is why they must concentrate on those fundamental questions of their faith which we have just outlined.

The Council spoke quite rightly of a "sufficiently long introductory course into the mystery

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of salvation." I have the impression – and I hope it is mistaken – that in the various German theological departments practically nothing has come of this demand of the Council. This basic course would be somewhat different from the theological encyclopedia that was offered in the last century; it would be somewhat different from the first gentle contact with the theological disciplines; for a person living in today's world it would have to manifest a serious responsibility toward the fundamental [106] problems which lie at the root of faith, a responsibility which precedes the multiplicity of the theological disciplines, and by so doing legitimize itself

A COURSE IN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF FAITH

It seems to me that fundamental theology in closer and more obvious cooperation with systematic theology could in fact meet the requirements of a basic course of this kind in a department of theology, but one must not lose sight of the fact that fundamental theology, as traditionally and legitimately understood, has other things to do than setting up a basic course and therefore in concrete practice might run into a number of difficulties in trying to construct a basic course of this kind which is so desperately needed. For example, it falls within the scope of fundamental theology to deal in the traditionally scientific way with the whole range of problems from Jesus to something like the founding of the Church and from Matthew 16 right up to the primacy of the pope as defined in the First Vatican Council. Problems come up like the Aramaic original of the words of Jesus as given in Matthew, tracing the stages in the evolution of the primacy in the complexity of their historical background, and so on.

These problems cannot be handled in such detail in a basic course. Nevertheless, the problems as such are an essential part of any fundamental theology. For this reason a basic course would necessarily be obliged to deal with the question of how I can in honesty be an ordinary Roman Catholic Christian and affirm my belief in Vatican I without having gone down the long and difficult road of studying the historical development of the Church and the primacy in conformity with the exigencies of today's historical science. Young theologians would have to shoulder the personal responsibility of hammering out a very definite basic course of this kind for themselves if none were to be offered in the curriculum of today's theological faculties. They would have to do this if they really want to live seriously with their theology today and do not consider their theological training to be nothing more than an unavoidable drudgery that they have to suffer through if they want to serve the Church as priests, teachers, or in some other capacity, with the idea in the back [107] of their minds that not much theology is needed for this kind of work and what is needed can be found by and large somewhere else. Naturally the courses of the ordinary theological curriculum in the way that they are customarily presented can and must afford essential help for the basic course which they give to themselves for the purpose of assembling their own hierarchy of truths so that they can really live with their theology.

ECCLESIAL THEOLOGY

I would like to make two remarks about this theology which can be classified under the general title of a basic course but which would probably not be restricted to the first semester only and would run through the entire course of theological training. First, this kind of a theology must be an ecclesial theology so that one can live with it in the Church and do this honestly. If young theologians begin to get interested in theology only when it comes into

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conflict with the Church and its concrete teaching office in Rome, then there is something amiss with the way they are studying their theology. If theology is done properly there is no reason for it to be dull or remote from life when it is pursued in harmony with the ordinary teaching of the Church under the auspices of the Roman teaching office. It goes without saying that theologians have not only the right but also the obligation to take note of the different degrees of binding force entailed in the statements of the Church's teaching office, and in certain circumstances they certainly have the right to bring forth their critical objections on questions that have not been definitively settled by the ecclesial teaching office. On this point one would like to hear a word of encouragement from time to time which acknowledges the possibility and necessity of criticizing the Church out of love for it.

Even today one can continue to discuss the morality of the pill and whether women a hundred years from now will still be excluded from the office of the priesthood. But if theologians want to live in the Church with the theology they want to live with, then their theology must really be an ecclesial one, and it must have in principle an open and positive relationship to the ecclesial teaching office. Those days are certainly gone when theology could be a Denzinger theology in [108] the neoscholastic style of the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century. But that is a far cry from saying that the only way young theologians can make their theology studies relevant today is by being asinine enough to eschew all contact with the doctrinal decisions of the Church and by attempting to pursue theology without formal and continuing dialogue with the Church, its teaching office, and its theological history.

One can certainly pursue a political theology in the properly understood sense of that term and a theology of liberation as well which lives and works in the Church, even if for me personally it still seems to be an open question whether the totality of Christian revelation and its theology can be subsumed under the basic elements giving rise to a political theology or a theology of liberation. In any event, these theologies too can and must be ecclesial. If young theologians feel that they can construct their own theology from these theologies and make it relevant, then they should go ahead and do it, but in the process they should set their sights on the whole of the theology which corresponds to all the dimensions of Christian life in the Church, and they should not think that there was no theology done before that could be useful to them now.

A THINKING THEOLOGY

The second thing I want to say about studies which have to do with the actual essence of theology is this: even today one has to *think* in theology. Whether and to what extent the traditional philosophy in the Church is still adequate for theology; whether and to what extent modern philosophies from Descartes through Kant, German idealism, existentialism right up to Anglo-Saxon positivism and its philosophy of science can serve as useful partners – these things are not the present subject under discussion. In any event, you have to think in theology. Sharply and precisely. Logic and its principle of contradiction are not the enemies of theology. In theology there are real, basic, and ultimate mysteries, but one must not have recourse to mystery or conjure up a *sacrficium intellectus* simply because one has not done enough exact thinking. In the process of rational thinking in theology itself one should strive to employ as far as is [109] humanly possible all the insights of philosophy together with its individual disciplines which one has at one's disposal.

Here I should like to add that in the long run you will not have a theology you can live with if you have not come to grips sufficiently with the problems which what is called modernism gave rise to in Catholic theology at the beginning of this century and for which,

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when you come right down to it, it really presented very shortsighted solutions. In my humble opinion these problems have still not been sufficiently worked out and made understandable to the larger public of Christians who possess a higher education.

You cannot legitimately do Catholic exegesis if you think that you can just bypass the dogmatic teaching on the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture. Conversely, however, you must have some idea of inspiration and inerrancy which fits the historical-critical conclusions of today's exegesis. You cannot just separate Jesus from the Church which comes after him and consider them as antagonists; at the same time you have to get an objective and clear understanding of how to conceive the origin of the Church from the historical Jesus. You have to adhere to the doctrine that there are divinely ordained structures in the Church which will continue to be binding on the Church in the future. Yet you must understand this divine ordination and any possible history of this ordination even after the time of Jesus himself in such a way that as a Church historian you will not have to put forward historically untenable assertions. You would have to work out a concept of sacrament which does not convey the impression that it is some kind of magic instrument without at the same time abandoning a properly understood doctrine of the *opus operatum*.

You must be able to give rational acceptance to the uniqueness and unsurpassable nature of Christianity without using this as a reason for overlooking or obscuring its historical character and its connection to the whole history of religion. You have to understand what is right and what is wrong in the postulate of demythologization and be able to distinguish between the two. You ought to try to work out for yourself and others a reconciliation between the Christian conception of the world and that of the natural sciences which would spare modern Christians some painful embarrassment, because there is still a great deal to be done in this area even if we have now concluded a partial truce. Only if you are modern in an antimodernistic [110] sense and live your lives in open-minded dialogue with the modern world of the natural sciences and, of course, with the world of culture as well, will you be able in the long run to live with your theology. This does not mean that you are supposed to become know-it-alls trying to talk to everybody about everything, but persons who try to make their contribution where nothing is known or where people are searching for a more exact answer or where, despite the best of intentions, people cannot forge any manifestly *positive* reconciliation between modern knowledge and the affirmations of Christian faith – a case which is quite possible and need not by any means be understood as a contradiction pure and simple. And, at all events, it should be clear to you why and how human beings must and may live with a multiplicity of elements of knowledge which they have not yet succeeded in synthesizing positively without being permitted to conclude from this that they have the right to abandon one or the other of those elements of knowledge which has not yet been synthesized.

A THEOLOGY OF REVELATION

Certainly the revelation with which theology is concerned is the revelation of the free God. But that is a far cry from saying that a positively revealed religion consists of a number of individual propositions which are collated in a merely external way and in this sense would have to be positivistic Denzinger theology in the pejorative sense of the term. The revelation of God who is primordially one has a unity. A fundamental theology could work out the unity and coherence of the individual truths of faith in a clearer and more concrete way than is customarily done. God's favor to humankind in what is called grace, and which must be understood from start to finish on the basis of the uncreated grace of God's self-communication, and the revelation in the unity of word and event (in the words of Vatican II)

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have a much more manifest unity than has heretofore been understood. Belief in the Holy Trinity which can be actualized in a truly existentiell way above and beyond a mere verbal acquiescence to the formal authority of the Church can be realized only if the identity between self-inherent Trinity and Trinity as it manifests itself in the divine economy of salvation history is understood.

[111] A theology which seeks the unity amid the diversity of revelation must clearly show the unity and coherence of word and sacrament so as to overcome once and for all the absurd temptation to divide the Church into a Church of word and a Church of sacrament. Salvation history in the revelation of the Old and the New Testament does not begin only with Abraham and Moses but encompasses the whole history of the human race even if it has presumably lasted several million years. And so, in the entire length and breadth of this history, revelation, grace, and hence faith are possible. But thought must be given to how this is to be understood. Just to spare theology the effort, one cannot be too quick to say along with the last Council that all of this is possible in ways known to God alone. The Apostles' Creed will always retain its validity as the fundamental statement of Christian faith, but, in my opinion, if theologians do not succeed in condensing the whole of Christian faith without any essential omission into a brief creedal statement, then they have not made sufficient effort in their theology to lay hold of the unity of the Christian message. If this is the case, then, of course life will be difficult with a theology which looks almost as if it had been pulverized.

A THEOLOGY OF MYSTERY

In my concluding words about a theology that one can live with I would like to say more explicitly than I have before that this theology is and must be a theology of mystery. A theology which in its individual affirmations forgets that all of its propositions have to be broken open and understood in this sense of openness if they are going to be true in reference to the mystery of the incomprehensible and ineffable God would not be a true Christian theology. The mystery before which human beings bow in silent adoration after uttering the last word required of them is in theology not an embarrassing remnant and marginal phenomenon which makes its appearance where rational clarity and unequivocalness reach their ultimate limits; it is, rather, precisely the innermost reality with which theology is concerned. Theology concerns itself with God and not merely with social criticism and human emancipation clothed in old-fashioned terminology. God, and what is meant by God, can only be grasped when we surrender our own conceptual understanding to [112] the ineffable and holy mystery which lays hold on us as the mystery which is near to us and which embraces us in love.

The theologian is not the purely intellectual expositor but the one who thrusts all duly explained earthly realities into the incomprehensible mystery of God. The theologian is the one who shows that no human proposition, no matter how correct and useful it may and should be, is ultimately really understood unless it is released into the blessed incomprehensibility of God. Indeed, the theologian in a radical anthropology of the spirit and of freedom must have understood that the holy mystery we call God does not appear only after we have cheerfully and lightheartedly traversed all the ways of the human spirit and of freedom open to us, but rather that this holy mystery is already a silent presence even there where we make our beginning and that it sends us on our own ways. Only when it has understood that knowledge and freedom are themselves grounded in this mystery can a theology which, empowered and called upon by God himself dares to call the ineffable mystery by name, be a courageous and open theology and in the last analysis, even with all

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its necessary dialogue with all the other sciences and branches of knowledge, it need tolerate no meddling on the part of other human knowledge.

Those who live in hope, love, and adoration in the shelter of this mystery can and should pursue theology within the limits of their earthly possibilities, and pursue it in the ambience of this mystery. And then they will come to see that this is a theology that one can live with; indeed, they will experience that it is the beginning and the foretaste of that eternal life on which we set our hope.

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[113]

PART TWO

Faith

[115]

7

THE MATURE CHRISTIAN

There are, admittedly, more momentous subjects than "the mature Christian." The threat posed to the whole of humankind by nuclear warfare, the destruction of the human environment by human beings themselves, the "neuroticization" of the whole of society and the human being's relationship to God in faith and love as well – these are some of the more important subjects. But since things are as they are, human beings are creatures who are forced to occupy themselves with any number of things and so, too, with matters of secondary importance. Therefore one is justified in devoting some attention to the maturity of Christians today, at least to the maturity that is expected of them.

"Mature Christian" is a familiar catchword; everybody is using it. For the most part there is not too much thought behind this slogan, and very little that is Christian. It is a slogan currently circulating among Christians in the Church, something that can mean an authentic challenge for Christians and at the same time jeopardize their attachment to the Church. Therefore it is worth making the effort to consider the subject more exactly, even though little of a sensational nature can be said about it.

How is it that nowadays, and especially as a result of the Second Vatican Council, this phrase about the mature Christian is in circulation? It must first of all be said that a Christian must, of course, at all times be a mature Christian to a certain extent. Maturity is something that admits of degrees; it can be smaller or larger. No human being is totally and in every respect mature. This is impossible because one cannot possibly summon to the tribunal of a lucid and [116] decisive conscience all the things and events of one's life with its vast multiplicity in order to decide with total clarity and freedom whether to accept and do a certain thing or to reject it and not to do it. Any number of things in our lives are borne along and done without being scrutinized. There is no avoiding this, and this is why we are never mature persons in every respect and in all the things that concern our lives, but rather in large measure we are persons who are manipulated by our biological constitution and by our society.

Not just today but at all times human beings have had the right as well as the duty to accept the increasing burden of conscious responsibility for their own spirit and their own freedom, to be responsible to themselves, to become mature. Catholic moral theology has always spoken of the person who has reached the use of reason as distinct from a child; various phases of life were distinguished in respect to the responsibility that was expected of them; the point of time was determined at which a person became subject to punishment by law, received the right to vote and to exercise active and passive voice, was old enough to be confirmed and to contract marriage. Thus mature persons have always been distinguished from immature persons. It has always been recognized that people are not simply mature, but that they have to become mature. Perhaps in the past people did not reflect sufficiently on the

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fact that a person who has reached his or her legal majority and is considered to be mature is still subject, or ought to be subject, to a maturing process in his or her life thereafter. Being mature and becoming mature – and this within the Church as well – is not something new, but something that is quite obvious. People have been aware of this for quite a long time.

THE SITUATION TODAY

Still, in our days, the question of a human being's maturity both in the secular as well as in the ecclesial sphere has entered upon an essentially new phase. This may not apply equally to all societies, nations, and cultural complexes in today's world, but for our own society it certainly holds true. Why is this so? To answer this question our explicit reflections must be aimed not primarily at Christians in the Church but at people and their lives in secular areas. In these areas people have become more mature, or at least they are expected [117] to become more mature and they are obliged to do so. What we understand here by maturity is purely and simply the sum of those things which may be presumed of a person's explicit and free responsibility in a definite social or individual situation. The number of the things that may be presumed varies considerably. Without doubt it is something that is individual (in the case of a child or of an adult person) and something that is social (in the different phases of history and according to the degree of development that various cultures have attained, etc.). The number of things presented to the free and responsible decision of a woman in the African bush is much smaller than in the case of a political leader in a modern society, someone who perhaps might even have an atomic bomb at his disposal.

In this sense maturity or the historical responsibility to become mature can grow in an almost incalculable degree, and nowadays this is enormous. The world in which we live is, in contrast to former times, characterized by a vast *complexity* which is brought about by the mutual dependence of all the peoples and societies of the earth, by the complexity of our individual societies, by the myriad possibilities of subjugating and transforming nature, by the sheer plethora of wants and needs which previously did not exist, by a multiplicity of opinions which no individual person is capable of mastering and which today are no longer separated from one another geographically, but rather are compacted together in one and the same society as in a highly explosive mixture, and by the rapid advances in the sciences, the results of which make our life situation more and more complicated.

Human beings with their spirit and with their freedom are confronted with this life situation which has become vastly complex. First of all, in relation to their own life situation people now have actually become more immature. In those areas of their lives which presented themselves to their freedom of decision people in the past had a situation consisting of relatively few elements which they were in control of; it was relatively easy for them to survey this situation and thus to act in a responsible way with mature freedom.

Nowadays, in relation to our own complex situation, we have become to a certain extent less mature due to the fact that the elements of our own life situation which can be freely manipulated have in their number, amount, and complexity moved beyond our [118] ken. Can the average person today tell us concretely how industrial progress can be brought into harmony with environmental protection or how the struggle to maintain political freedom can succeed without the insanity of modern armaments? How can truly viable alternatives be found for our kind of life with its stress and its unremitting excess of sensual stimuli, a life we are groaning under? If in a certain sense it can be said that we are encountering our life situation in a more immature and helpless way than previously, then there arise the inexorable necessity as well as the moral obligation of becoming more mature. This means that in the individual and social area we must undertake every effort so as to be able in

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lucidity of spirit and in genuine freedom to come to grips with our situation today in a responsible way, and this means that we must become more mature.

The situation in which we are living and in the face of which we have to become more mature has yet another component that we must reflect upon. What we have to do cannot, as opposed to former times, be regulated by universal and clear norms. It goes without saying that norms for moral and social life also exist today and these must be respected. But the leeway and the significance of the things which these universal norms alone cannot clearly regulate have become considerably larger. It is true that in previous times there did exist an area which universal norms could not of themselves determine. Even in previous times vocational choice or the choice of one's spouse could not be undertaken by the mere application of universal rules.

Today the *area of what cannot be clearly determined only by universal norms* in society, in politics, in cultural life, and in one's individual lifestyle has become more extensive. As soon as an aware person is expected to make a concrete decision of greater importance, he or she begins to experience a sense of helplessness and these persons get the feeling that the universal norms, which they are aware of, have forsaken them, even if they are compelled to recognize and respect the usefulness and binding force of theses norms. How are people supposed to invest their money? What vocational choice should they make in their earlier years? What political party should they vote for? What should their exact position be on questions of the politics of disarmament, of environmental pollution, of alternative lifestyles? What concrete shape should a [119] necessary family planning take if it is to be human and morally unreprehensible?

People today are beleaguered by these questions and similar ones. Even if people are aware of the universal norms and respect them and try to apply them to their concrete decisions, even if they engage in mature discussion with other people and examine the different attempts at solution which are often contradictory, even then they really will not know exactly what to do in the concrete, individual case, and this is the thing that really counts ultimately. One may go so far as to say that it is undeniable that an individual person today is in respect to a number of questions no longer capable of reaching a clear decision and one that for him or for her is certain. Given the availability of education and of information, the complexity of the factual questions is increasing and hand in hand with this people's incompetence in many areas is increasing with ever greater rapidity.

THE ESSENCE OF MATURITY

We do not intend here to reflect further on how people can act conscientiously in cases like these where uncertainty regarding the propriety of a particular decision cannot possibly be resolved. Today, however, there is also a wide spectrum of questions of this kind regarding which, even though the application of universal norms affords no real solution, individuals can still reach clarity and certainty in their decisions "on their own responsibility and at their own risk," provided that they have attained a sufficient degree of maturity. If we try to delineate maturity in this light, we can say the following. Maturity is, first of all, the *courage* and the *resolve* to make decisions and to take responsibility for them even if they cannot be legitimized any longer by universal and universally accepted norms. It should be clear from what has been said before that this does not mean that such norms may simply be passed over and violated. It should, however, be added that universal norms do not for the most part possess the absolute clarity and unambiguousness which are often ascribed to them and that in this light the area which is open to individuals in their decisions and which may be presumed by them can be wider than what society or even the Church understands in the

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interpretation of norms.

[120] Maturity further presumes the will and the resolute effort to *inform* oneself of the norms which are to be applied in coming to a decision without overlooking their multiplicity and complexity, and to *weigh* them. The readiness to criticize oneself is also a part of maturity. Through self-criticism people become aware that they have to reckon in themselves with an inadequate level of information, with errors, with prejudices, with the frightful tyranny of public opinion, with elements of egoism which act as though they were something entirely natural, so that one can only too readily take a course of action and claim something as a morally justified decision simply because it is useful for one or convenient. Part of the true nature of maturity (and this holds for the secular area as well) consists of what is commonly known in the religious sphere as wisdom, illumination, a grace-given moral instinct, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, things which for their part presume an openness of spirit, freedom from fanaticism, a willingness to learn, a mastery of one's own aggressiveness, and patience.

The mature person is the person who examines things with equanimity, who is docile to instruction, the person who also appreciates the importance of judgments on the part of experts and other legitimate authorities. A part of maturity is the courage to carry through an honestly made decision which cannot be put off indefinitely, even if it remains open to internal and external criticism, even if that does not necessarily mean that one seeks to propagandize one's decision as the only right one and impose it on others, or that one assails a universal norm of society because it is not at first glance clearly and certainly compatible with one's own decision. The mature person is the person who has grown up. Anyone who leads a life of moral striving and responsibility has some understanding of what *human maturity* is. A person of this kind also understands this brief definition of maturity, and knows that every human being is always on the way to it and will fully achieve it only when he or she reaches fulfillment in death accepted in serenity and hope.

THE MATURITY OF THE CHRISTIAN IN THE CHURCH

In the Church, too, individuals are individuals in a society; their individuality and their social character can never be torn asunder, yet they cannot be brought into a completely satisfactory consonance [121] with one another either. Thus what we have said about people in society for the purpose of elucidating the concept of maturity is also valid for Christians in the Church.

It must first of all be said that the situation of the individual Christian in the Church has become more complex than in former times, and this manifests itself in the area of theology and moral theology, as well in the framework of the Church viewed as a society. When persons who are Christians enter into the sphere of the Church they do not, after all, leave their complex secular society behind them. Their growth as Christians runs parallel to their character today as rational persons, as persons whose scientific and historical knowledge has advanced enormously in contrast to earlier times. As far as knowledge is concerned, the Church in bygone epochs encountered extremely simple, naive people to whom it was just beginning to make accessible a more sublime knowledge which goes beyond the knowledge of how to master the rudimentary problems of everyday life. Today, however, the Church must communicate its knowledge of faith to people who are already characterized by highly complex knowledge. In earlier times the Church could rely on the fact that a Christian and ecclesial milieu would introduce people into a definite world of thought and belief. Today, however, the Church is forced to come to the realization that a pluralism of values prevails and that this determines the entire life situation of modern Christians.

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From a theological standpoint, then, Christians who possess some degree of education and awareness are in the position of always having to compare the Church's proclamation of faith with all those other numerous things known and experienced by them today. Whenever and wherever the Church proclaims its message as well, it will of course be a help for Christians in the necessary synthesis of faith and modern knowledge. But the knowledge and experience of individuals today varies considerably, and so too, therefore, do the problems confronting individual Christians, particularly when they are more highly educated and also as a result of the enormous complexity and differentiation of the modern sciences. For individual Christians many problems remain to be mastered by themselves [122] in synthesizing their faith with their total consciousness and their total knowledge. Then they must differentiate between the greater and lesser degree of binding force of individual Church teachings; even in ultimately binding pronouncements they must reject something, as, for example, in the case of a paleontologist who in the year 1910 was convinced of the relationship between human beings and the animal kingdom when this teaching was rejected by the ecclesial teaching office at that time, albeit not in an ultimately binding way.

If they are to avoid getting into difficulties of faith in certain circumstances – difficulties which really can be avoided – then today's Christians must learn how to make more precise distinctions in many cases of Church teachings between what is certainly affirmed in a teaching and what is, perhaps, only an explanation which is bound up with this teaching. They must have some knowledge of the "hierarchy of the truths of faith." They must know what the really central, existentielly significant, fundamental convictions of their faith are, so that they can acquire an ever more profound understanding of these convictions, while at the same time not denying secondary teachings, but rather relegating them to a secondary position, even to the point of actually ignoring them. Educated Christians must forge for themselves a concept of God and of his eternal salvation grounded in Jesus Christ. It need not be a cause for alarm if they do not know exactly what an indulgence is or how many sacraments there are. By managing the explicit contents of their minds in this economical way, people can quite properly reduce the number of things which are enormously overburdening and cluttering their minds.

In view of the modern state of mind, characterized as it is by a complexity which cannot be adequately reduced to homogeneous terms, the following should be considered in its bearing on Christians' consciousness of faith. Even in the area of secular knowledge people today are conscious of certain things; they have opinions and convictions (and all of this simultaneously) whose objective and logical compatibility is not clearly evident to them. But they do not for that reason reject a conviction simply because its compatibility is not clear to them. This state of affairs, which might be called a truce rather than a state of peace, is quite legitimate and something that is unavoidable; it must be borne with patience. This is likewise true in the case of religious consciousness. One can adhere to secular scientific knowledge and to a teaching of faith simultaneously without [123] having understood their positive compatibility. One should not rush into self-assured assertions concerning this or that teaching of faith, claiming that they manifestly contradict the knowledge of modern science and therefore should be rejected. Reality has a much more complex structure than we are able to recognize at first glance. The patience to sustain limited truces of this kind and to wait calmly for a peace consisting of positive insight is often part of the maturity of faith required of educated Christians today.

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Tensions of this kind and growth processes which are part of a mature faith are of course to be found especially in the area of moral theology, Christian ethics, and the practice of Christian life. There is no denying that the complexity of individual and social life today and the insights of modern anthropology have given rise to many problems in the area of ethics which admit of no easy solution for people today and which lead to conflicts with traditional church teaching which cannot always be easily resolved. Sexual morality is an example of this, as well as all those questions that have to do with altering social structures with a view to greater justice.

Everything that has been said about Christian doctrine in general has of course special validity when applied to the Church's moral teaching and requires no repetition. Precisely in the area of moral theology it is entirely possible for the Church's magisterium to issue teachings, albeit not in the form of ultimately binding definitions in the strict sense, which do not take into sufficient account the matter itself, its history or a new phase in its development, teachings which are not sufficiently differentiated and which in a certain sense miss the very point at issue, teachings which are simply erroneous. In cases of this kind – and they are entirely possible – the mature faith of the Christian is faced with a great and difficult challenge.

I should like to describe this challenge simply by quoting from the "Letter of the German Bishops to All Who Are Entrusted by the Church with the Proclamation of the Faith," issued on 22 September 1967. One need only read this text attentively and one will see that the situation and the real test of a mature Christian today is honestly described. In numbers 17-21 one reads:

> At this point a difficult problem must be discussed in an objective way. For many Catholics today more than in the past it is a [124] problem that poses a threat either to their faith or to their relationship of unreserved trust to the Church's teaching authority. We are referring to the fact that in the exercise of its office the Church's magisterium can make mistakes and has made mistakes. The Church has always been aware of this possibility, has also admitted it in its theology and has drawn up rules of conduct applying to a situation of this kind. This possibility of error does not extend to those doctrinal propositions proclaimed by a solemn definition of a pope or an ecumenical council or by the ordinary magisterium which are to be adhered to with an absolute assent of faith. Furthermore, the assertion that an error on the Church's part has been later discovered in these dogmas is historically incorrect. This does not deny, of course, that while the original sense of a dogma is upheld an increased understanding of it is always possible and always necessary; one that takes place by sifting out misunderstandings that might previously have been associated with it. Nor should the obvious fact that in addition to immutable divine law in the Church there are also elements of human law that are subject to change be confused with the question at issue. This kind of change has nothing to do with error. At the most it raises the question as to whether an earlier or later regulation was opportune.
>
> Concerning error or the possibility of error in the case of non-defined doctrinal statements of the Church, and these can differ considerably in their degree of binding force, one must admit clearly and unhesitatingly that human life even on its most general terms must always be lived conscientiously according to the best of one's knowledge on the basis of knowledge that on the one hand cannot lay claim to absolute certainty on the theoretical level and yet "here and now," since there is no way of going beyond it at the moment, must be respected as a valid norm for thinking and acting. Every human being is aware of this in the concrete situation of his or her own life. Doctors know this when they make a diagnosis; people who guide the destiny of nations are aware of this that when they have to analyze a political situation and come to a practical decision on the basis of their analysis. And the Church, too, in its teaching and its practice cannot always and in every case let itself be maneuvered into the dilemma of either making an ultimately binding doctrinal decision or of simply remaining silent and leaving everything to the arbitrary opinion of the individual. To safeguard the ultimate substance of faith proper to it the Church must, even at the risk of error in detail, issue doctrinal guidelines that have a definite degree of binding force and yet, because they are not definitions of faith, are stamped with a certain provisional character that extends even to the possibility of error. There is

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simply no [125] other way for the Church to proclaim its faith as a reality that shapes life, to expound it, and to apply it to the constantly changing human situation. In such a case the individual Christian's relationship to the Church is first of all analogous to that of a person who realizes the obligation of accepting the decision of an expert even though being aware at the time that this decision is not infallible.

In any event, an opinion contrary to the Church's provisional doctrinal statement has no place in a sermon or catechetical instruction, even if under certain circumstances the faithful must be instructed about the nature and limited applicability of such a provisional doctrinal statement. This point has already been discussed. People who feel that they may entertain a private opinion of their own which even now supposedly anticipates a better insight of the Church in the future must ask themselves whether they possess the requisite breadth and depth of expert theological knowledge to warrant deviating in their private theory and practice from the current official church teaching. In principle a case like this is conceivable. However, personal arrogance and the presumptuous attitude of the "know-it-all" will be called to an accounting before the judgment seat of God.

The right attitude of faith on a Catholic's part manifests itself in a serious effort to appreciate even a provisional doctrinal statement of the Church and to appropriate it for oneself. And in Church matters there is no need for one to feel embarrassed or taken advantage of in entrusting one's own insights to the Church's teaching even in cases where this teaching cannot be considered as absolutely definitive any more than one would have such feelings in secular life where one also makes far-reaching decisions on the basis of fallible insights provided by other people in good conscience according to the best of their knowledge. It is possible that the Church's teaching does develop too slowly in certain cases. But even in a judgment of this kind caution and modesty are called for. In a Church composed of human beings who live in history doctrinal development of this kind takes time because it cannot proceed more rapidly than is consonant with safeguarding the substance of faith from being lost.

When thinking with the Church in the way that has been described, we need have no fear that we are turning our backs on the demands of the times. The urgent questions of our times which demand an answer from our faith often enough compel us to rethink the truths of faith. But this does not mean that we are calling faith into question. It serves, rather, to deepen our grasp of the truth of divine revelation and our understanding of the Church's [126] teaching. For it is our firm conviction, and we see this borne out by experience, that there is no need for us to deny a truth for the sake of the Catholic faith, nor to deny the Catholic faith for the sake of a truth, provided only that we strive to understand this faith in the spirit of the Church and to grasp it ever more profoundly.

One can readily see why this text fits into our context here, even though it could have been quoted in connection with the question of maturity in the area of dogma and not just in the area of moral theology. It is also an essential function of the Church's magisterium not only to set up binding teachings but also to leave Christians alone, to impose on them alone the responsibility for the ultimate decision in those cases where the magisterium no longer considers itself capable of setting up an ultimately binding dogmatic teaching or a norm of moral theology. In a case of this kind the magisterium leaves the Christian alone, responsible to himself or to herself for his or her ultimate decision. This does not mean that mere convenience, arbitrariness, or an attitude of arrogance and egoism are permitted to hold sway. But because now, even though they continue to be accompanied by the Church's advice and direction, people must ultimately ask themselves in the face of God and his judgment, in the relentlessness of an enlightened mind, an upright conscience, and of course using all the means which are also at the disposal of a Christian and a human being in these cases, what their own conviction and decision is in such a case.

If a person acts in this way, then he or she is in matters of faith a mature Christian. The assessment of one's own capacity for judgment in these areas, at once self-critical as well as courageous, is, of course also a part of this maturity, to mention this point explicitly once again. But however self-critical and modest a self-assessment of this kind must be, it nonetheless is itself a part of the tasks, the responsibility and the risk of Christian maturity because it can be undertaken by no one else.

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MATURITY AND CHURCH LAW

A third challenge to the maturity of a Christian in the Church extends beyond the Church's dogmatic and moral teaching to the area of church law and church life in which the lay person is involved in manifold ways. There is a Sunday obligation; there is an ecclesiastical [127] administration of the sacraments; there are ecclesiastical laws governing matrimony; there are church taxes; there is an ecclesiastical administration which assigns certain priests to Christians for the performance of the liturgy and for the religious instruction of their children without having asked for their assent to these administrative decisions in advance. Things like these and many others like them touch upon the life of the Christian. As a rule they have a dogmatic core of a binding nature inasmuch as the Church and its sacraments have their origin in Jesus Christ. But their concrete form, their concrete norms and the way in which they are implemented are, first of all, things which are determined by human beings; they are subject to the flow of history; they are human traditions containing individual decisions of ecclesiastical authorities which in themselves and of themselves alone are by no means binding. Even if it is true that the Church willed by God could not exist without this kind of earthly incarnation of God's Spirit, nevertheless all of these things remain human, earthly, and open to question. The Church could, if it should choose to do so, do away with the Sunday obligation. Priestly celibacy is good and meaningful, yet the Church could do away with it. Marriage even as a sacrament would not necessarily have to be contracted before a priest in church. It is merely a commandment of the Church that Christians are obliged to receive Holy Communion during the Easter time.

In regard to all of these quite unavoidable and human realities the maturity of the Christian has a special function and hallmark which is different from the maturity in regard to the dogmatic and moral teaching of the Church. The latter had to do with borderline areas of divine revelation; the former are in the first place human realities, even if these are established and approved by legitimate authority in the Church which itself is founded by Jesus Christ. In regard to these human-ecclesiastical realities the maturity of the Christian has another and broader kind of leeway than in regard to the ecclesial teaching office.

Now it is difficult to provide an explanation for something as obvious as this without almost being forced into developing a highly differentiated casuistry, and this is something we cannot become involved in here. We can at most point out a few random examples. The Church grants indulgences; the Christian is free to take them or leave them. There are numerous church laws of human right in which the application of what is known as *epikeia* is justified, that is, laws [128] which, despite their possessing an apparently universally binding force, are not binding in the case where one can make a reasonable judgment that the lawgiver would not at all have intended to include this case under this law, had the lawgiver been acquainted with the case or had reflected on it. If a person knows before God and after an honest examination of conscience that his or her marriage is also invalid in the eyes of the Church, but is unable to prove this in the forum of the Church so that the Church can allow a new marriage, then a Christian of this kind should contract a civil marriage and he or she is justified before God in doing this. There can also be other cases of conflict between the Church's law and the legitimate claims of individuals and of their moral obligations which can no longer be settled by church authorities themselves.

All of the examples suggested here are rather poor and perhaps they sound a little bit bizarre. They might, however, serve to make clear that in the area of church life there is yet another special challenge to the maturity of the Christian. Precisely in this area further information and explanation might be considered desirable, since day-to-day life gives rise to justifiable desires of this kind. (One need only think of the question of what a Christian should do whose second marriage is invalid according to the norms of the Church and yet the

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dissolution of this marriage as it now stands would for its part be immoral) However, in this place we can do no more than point to the particular function of the maturity of the Christian in the area of church life and church law.

COURAGE FOR GREATER FREEDOM

Perhaps it has become somewhat clearer what Christian maturity in the Church is. Maturity means courage for greater freedom and this freedom means greater responsibility. Courage is anything but mere whim and subjective capriciousness. Maturity in its authentic form makes human beings lonely in a certain sense. They have to make their decisions by themselves, without being told in advance what to do. When they are entrusted with their own problems in this way, they are not really left alone but are made to stand before God with the dictates of their own conscience, which is theirs alone and no on else's. They have to pray, to seek divine light and guidance. They [129] must have the courage to make use of this mature responsibility of their own and they must not whine that the world and the Church have left them alone.

There are many questions of individual and social life for which the Church can offer guidelines as a help in solving them and can stake out the area of decisions which are morally possible, but the Church cannot in advance provide the concrete solution to these questions. Otherwise it can too easily happen today, as it has happened in the not too distant past, that Christians assume that they have no further obligation to make a decision or that within the areas drawn up by the Church – and they are wide ones – they can simply do whatever they want or whatever is most convenient or requires the least possible cost to themselves. In the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (no. 43) the Second Vatican Council emphasizes explicitly that in sociopolitical questions there can be grave differences of opinion among Christians who appeal to the same gospel, and that these differences are not resolved by a verdict on the part of the Church in its official capacity. The Church, however, presumes that in a situation of this kind the decision on the part of individuals is not an arbitrary one, but rather that before God and according to the dictates of their conscience they must make a very definite decision undertaken solely on their own responsibility, and that they must implement, sustain, and answer for this decision even in contradiction to other Christians.*

Only the mature Christian can do this. Maturity, however, is the burden of responsibility, the sublime task in the Christian's process of growth and a part of the unshackling of freedom to attain its full nature which the grace of God bestows.

* See also the recent answers of Karl Rahner to letters from young people in *Mein Problem: Karl Rahner antwortet jungen Menschen* (Freiburg, 1982). For the horizontal and vertical dimensions in which responsible decisions are to be made, see, by way of example, Karl Rahner, *The Love of Jesus and the Love of Neighbor*, translated by Robert Barr (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

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[130]

8

JUSTIFYING FAITH IN AN AGNOSTIC WORLD

In the history of humanity there has never yet been as much knowledge as there is today, and the acquisition of knowledge on the part of the sciences is proceeding at breathtaking speed. Precisely because of this, the fact that individuals, judged by the amount of knowledge actually offered to them, are becoming increasingly more ignorant than people of earlier times, judged by the knowledge they had at their disposal, is quite another matter. At the same time humanity is certainly more skeptical than at any other previous time. In earlier times people knew little, but they knew it with certainty (or at least they thought they did) and the incomprehensible (which was called God or gods) was also something quite natural, something that existed and was calculated into life as an obvious reality. If this incomprehensible reality threatened to become unpredictable, then that, too, was just another thing that was also quite natural. The incomprehensible did not give rise to any agnosticism, but was itself clear in its own way.

THE ROOTS OF AGNOSTICISM

Today things are different. The enormous amount of knowledge offered leads to uncertainty. The speed at which the sciences are racing into the future makes every individual element of knowledge already acquired appear to be temporary and subject to revision, presuming of course that each element has a connection with all the [131] others. While it is true that people in practical life muddle through in any number of instances as though the presumed knowledge were certain, and in many cases, of course, they do not have to back down on this, still the doubt remains that everything might in the end turn out quite differently than was originally supposed. An element of the unfathomable surrounds all this knowledge and life in a way that is impenetrable. But people hardly dare anymore to call this unfathomable element by name; they let the matter drop with a certain uneasiness or they declare with a certain testiness that things that cannot be spoken of clearly should be left as they are. And finally, fear begins to spread over all of these things, the fear that all of the thoughts that we have, aside from practical indications referring to the needs of life that we are not yet consciously aware of, are, after all, basically nothing more than a nebulous haze that has nothing at all to do with true reality.

ON THE SITUATION OF AGNOSTICISM

That seems to me to be more or less the picture of agnosticism today, a fate that is apparently something new for us. This “fundamental dimension of life” or whatever else one chooses to call it, is of course repressed for the most part in the public consciousness as well as by the individual person in the banality of everyday life. Scientists continue to thump their breasts with the self-assurance of their individual knowledge which they are constantly increasing and differentiating; philosophers continue to construct their systems, or, if they espouse relativism or skepticism as a system, then it is for its part a system in which they lose sight of the fact that they actually want to reject every system, and their theory does not bring forth in them any fear and trembling at all; politicians continue to churn out the old clichés about

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official ideals and values for want of something else to say. And even churchmen, too, often give the impression that they are talking about a God whom they say is incomprehensible, but whom they innocuously calculate into their bill under this heading as an obvious item which serves to legitimize the norms of a well mannered and reasonable life. Today there is an atheism which is to some extent the norm of an official state doctrine and it claims to know for certain that there is no God. But a theory of this sort, when [132] measured against the power of agnosticism, is nothing more than the petit-bourgeois cleverness of the nineteenth century, which is now obsolete.

One can of course make the desperate attempt for oneself to deny once again the experience of this agnosticism, to dismiss it as a phantom, something that objective people who know their own limits would not get involved with. But is an abstention of this kind possible? Can it always be sustained? Can one abstain from the experience of this agnosticism without falling into a suffocating banality? Can one do this without losing the ability to take other people and the terrible things that have happened to them really seriously anymore?

I would not attempt to say anything to people who might manage to erect a peaceful barricade around themselves, ensconcing themselves calmly, securely, and definitively in the triviality of everyday life. But I doubt that people like this exist who can do this throughout the whole of their lives, and should people of this sort really exist, then I would not enter into a discussion with them, but rather I would attempt for my part to interpret this brave and responsible determination to turn one's back on a total question of life as an anonymous way of believing.

But how can one cope with this agnosticism, which is our fate, if one cannot and will not repress it, but rather face up to it decisively? It seems to me that this situation of agnosticism is something new. For in earlier times the incomprehensibility of God, which is the actual concern of agnosticism, was for reflexive theology a relatively subsidiary thesis of a special kind within a complex of affirmations about God, but it was not the original experience of God that sustained everything else. And for this reason the theism which is capable of being realized in a really existentiell way (it does not matter whether it is understood here as philosophy or theology) is possible today only in a radical as well as an open encounter with agnosticism. This of course does not mean an encounter with an agnosticism of a kind produced by narrow-minded indifference which does not bother at all about the incomprehensibility of our existence and our inability to cope with it, but rather with an "agnosticism" which is part of our ultimate experience and which is actually the burning pain of our existence.

[133]

AGNOSTICISM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

An agnosticism of this kind, which from the very outset has superseded every self-complacent form of atheism, is, when properly understood and sustained in hope, nothing other than the way in which God is experienced today Before this conviction can be explained and substantiated, a reservation has to be made. If the experience of agnosticism is going to be interpreted as the root and driving force of a positive experience of God, then this does not mean that this agnosticism is the only access to an experience of God.

Every reality can point to God, and human beings are not simply identical with their experience of agnosticism. In all human beings the concrete experience of God is as complex and multidimensional as human beings themselves are. In this experience of God there is contained the experience of meaning, of love, of fidelity, of history, and of all the other realities which go to make up human beings, which are presented to them and which

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ultimately cannot be completely managed by them, But nowadays it is also a part of these human beings to have as well the burning experience of agnosticism, of the incomprehensibility of their existence.

THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD

The crux of the matter here is how this incomprehensibility is really understood: as the thing that people are trying to repress by being indifferent to it; as the thing that is interpreted as ultimate meaninglessness; or as the mystery that despite its incomprehensibility, yes, even because of this incomprehensibility, is accepted as something salvific. The first interpretation is that of the narrow-minded, and it is irresponsible. The second interpretation, if it were adopted not only in words but actually taken up in the total act of one's life, would be the "mortal" sin of one's life, the hell that may be wished to no one. The third interpretation seems to me to be the fundamental essence of faith. One does not turn away; one remains steadfast; one really accepts the incomprehensibility of one's existence, and does this as a meaningful act of acceptance, one that contains in itself [134] hope. But if one really does this, then God is already basically accepted, and this is actually what is meant by this word and is ultimately understood only in an acceptance of this kind.

At this point the professional theologian and perhaps the ordinary Christian as well will be tempted to raise a warning finger and say, "You are talking about an impersonal 'It' and that is not the personal God who addresses us and loves us and to whom I pray." But this objection may signalize a danger that can be real in what has been said (and perhaps manifests itself in Eastern mysticism), but it is not relevant to what is really meant. Of course there is a personal God, even if in the use of this sentence attention must be drawn to the fact that according to the Fourth Lateran Council there can be posited of God no similarity with us (and thus no "person" either) which is not surpassed by an even greater dissimilarity of the "ineffable" God. If one considers this, then one no longer has the right to evaluate the experience that we are appealing to as the experience of an impersonal "It," but rather one is required to release the valid "personhood" of God himself once again into the incomprehensibility of God. One must, of course, hasten to add: this incomprehensibility of God is really accepted only if one prays to the incomprehensible God, if one says "You" to him.

The question of whether the possibility of a mutually personal relationship of this kind between us and God has always belonged to the spiritual nature of the human being or whether it is only made possible by "grace," in other words, whether for a pure humanness without grace an indifference toward the incomprehensible mystery would be legitimate – this is a point that need not be labored here. In point of fact we experience ourselves as persons who are addressed by this mystery, as persons who can and should have the enormous courage in hope, love, and prayer to draw nigh to this incomprehensibility of God as the sheltering mystery. If we do not turn and run away from this mystery which seems to make a lethal demand on us far beyond our power, but instead, if we require of ourselves the unbelievable conviction that this mystery as it is itself gives itself to us and will itself once be our completion, then we believe. Then we accept the *agnostos* God, who is the ground of our true agnosticism, as true fulfillment.

Indeed, this "blinding" darkness into which we plunge ourselves and become incomprehensible to ourselves is also of such a nature [135] that we can never say to ourselves with reflexive certainty whether we are really accepting it or whether, despite all the pious and impious chatter, we are ultimately taking refuge in a desperate act of self-assertion. Let us *hope* that we are accepting this darkness and thus that we are really

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believing. Can one dare to hope that one has really entrusted oneself to the incomprehensibility that is called God even if one never knows whether one, in culpable freedom, is not positing as something absolute comprehensible realities which most assuredly are not truly God? Can one in the inmost core of one's existence hear the assurance of this love of God, a love which not only makes possible our love of him, but which is also the very cause of this love? And even if one dares to do this (one has to dare it), still as a human being who is possessed both of a body and a history one looks to an experience of another human being whom one is more inclined to trust than oneself, to a human being of whom one can be truly convinced that in the very act of his life and not merely in empty words he has accepted the incomprehensible God as such and in so doing has been accepted by him.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

Christians know a historical event of this kind, ultimately only one, in which all other "cases" for which they dare to hope have their foundation, their certainty and the ultimate witness: Jesus of Nazareth. He has truly plunged unconditionally into the incomprehensibility of God ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"). He has been accepted by this incomprehensibility of God ("Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."). And in this he is the eternally valid one, the one who has been saved. It is he to whom, as the one who has risen, the faith of his disciples, the faith of two thousand years of Christianity and one's own hope bear witness, a hope which would give itself up if it were to let this Jesus be swallowed up as by an ultimate absurdity, although he, in contrast to us infatuated worldlings, had always surrendered to the incomprehensible will of the one whom he dared to call Father. But because this Jesus at the same time lived with us in unconditional solidarity, he is the one who is the irrevocable and victorious promise of God to us that the incomprehensible God will bring us to a blessed [136] salvation and will endow us with the gift of himself forever. Jesus, crucified and risen, is the incomprehensible God's unsurpassable word of commitment to us, because he is the one who is eternally accepted by God.

TRUE AGNOSTICISM

What has been briefly indicated here is this: the unconditional surrender of oneself to the incomprehensibility of God is radical agnosticism, and actually this is the only true agnosticism because every other view of agnosticism is innocuous. Whether one surrenders to this mystery is of course an open question for every individual. One can try to accept this certainty once again as the concrete way in which the incomprehensibility of God encounters us. Christians who have such fear for their own salvation must of course hope unconditionally for the salvation of others. It remains incomprehensible to them when they gaze into the darkness of history's wickedness and stupidity how others in the midst of the banality and cruelty of life really accomplish this surrender to God which alone can save them. They can only say that God is greater than our hearts and so in this way they can also realize this incomprehensibility and thus bear their agnosticism as to how they themselves and others really are ultimately. The agnosticism of the philistine and of self-important philosophers is only the unsuccessful attempt at the true agnosticism which is required of Christians. For Christians adore in hope and love the incomprehensibility which is called God, and in this their faith transpires.

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[137]

9

THE CHURCH AND ATHEISM

Despite all the undeniable interrelationships, today's atheism is not the same as the atheism at the time of the Enlightenment, nor is it even the same as the atheism that was either presupposed as something obvious or propagated by the criticism of religion in the nineteenth century, especially as found in Feuerbach and Marx. Even if atheism today appears once again in a great variety of forms and subject to widely differing social presuppositions, nonetheless all of these atheisms today share common assumptions and characteristics which permit one to speak of today's atheism in the singular. Everywhere it is an atheism conditioned by today's rationalistic and technological society.

For individuals and for Christians it may be of utmost significance whether they live in bourgeois pluralistic society which is religiously neutral and permits them to live their theism as a matter of private opinion, or whether they have to exist in a society where atheism is propagated by force as a state doctrine – despite all lipservice to freedom of conscience. But both of these atheisms are, after all, consequences of the social, rational, and technological development of today's world, even if these consequences are not absolutely necessary. And because this world civilization is present everywhere, albeit in widely varying degrees and in quite diverse stages of development, there is today something that has no precedent in history, namely a worldwide, omnipresent atheism which is no longer a condition of various individual persons, but which is rather a socially recognized phenomenon and one that has gained universal acceptance.

[138] It is, then, a given fact that Christianity has entered upon an epoch which presents it with a fundamental challenge and for which there has never yet been a precedent. I venture the opinion that church-related Christianity has not yet become sufficiently aware of its radically new situation today, that it is conducting itself with more or less anxious defensiveness and that it is consoling itself by taking refuge in those social classes and areas into which the consequences of the new historical situation, which have given rise to the worldwide and now manifest atheism, have not yet penetrated to a sufficiently radical degree. It is obvious that the mentality that produces this atheism has not yet reached its full effect among peasants and in the middle- and lower-middle-class of society. This fact, however, does not give us church-related Christians the right to console ourselves with the religiosity which is still present in these groups. It may well be that certain new religious currents can be observed even outside of these social classes that are "still" religious. It may well be that in South America, for example, the Church will succeed in belonging to the vanguard of sociopolitical change and thus be spared the European and North American shock produced by the antagonism between the rationality of the Enlightenment and traditional religiosity. In my humble opinion, however, none of these things will eliminate that technological, rational mentality which in ever new ways and on a global level is actually, if not necessarily producing atheism.

We cannot see into the future, and no one can absolutely rule out the possibility of historical and radical changes of a kind that will one day make atheism appear to be an antiquated crisis in humanity's history. But if we Christians are reckoning with a world more or less as it actually is and will be in the future, and if we middle class European Christians have no serious desire to have this world otherwise but prefer rather to continue business more or less as usual even in the Church, as has been customary up to now, then we must face the fact that in the foreseeable future we are going to have to live with a worldwide and

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socially acceptable atheism, however small the possibility may be of predicting numerically and statistically the exact relationship between atheists and theists, especially in view of the fact that we are unable to make any prognosis about the future fate of the other world religions that honor God.

Christianity has to take into account this atheism of today, and [139] despite all Christian hope it cannot seriously expect to overcome this atheism to a degree that it will simply cease to exist as a worldwide and social phenomenon. Of course this does not mean that we will have to give up the struggle against atheism, using all the weapons of the Spirit and of love and all other legitimate means consonant with that basic respect for freedom of conscience as recognized by Vatican II even in the face of older traditions. This is our sacred duty as men and women of the Church. Nor does this mean that we should cease to reflect more profoundly and more intensively on our strategy for this battle and how we can conduct it in expectation of success. But the continuing coexistence of atheism with a theism and particularly with the Christian belief in God demands of us in addition the development of a theology which takes into account precisely this atheism and our coexistence with it. We cannot simply consider atheism and the necessity of Christianity's coexisting with it as nothing other than an absolutely incomprehensible phenomenon that has caught Christianity by surprise, a foreign element that renders us speechless and awakens in us only anxious and nervous reactions. Some observations on these questions will be presented here. The selection is arbitrary and lays no claim to being a strictly systematic arrangement.

READINESS FOR DIALOGUE

First of all, the Church has expressly indicated its desire for "dialogue conducted solely out of love for truth and with the exercise of appropriate measures of prudence" with "those who cultivate high qualities of the human spirit, but do not yet acknowledge the Source of these qualities," therefore with atheists (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *[Gaudium et Spes]*, no. 92). While maintaining its decisive repudiation of atheism the Church strives in this dialogue "to detect in the atheistic mentality the hidden causes for the denial of God and is conscious of how weighty the questions are which atheism raises, and motivated by love for all human beings, the Church believes that these questions ought to be examined seriously and more profoundly" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 21). This willingness for dialogue is thus solemnly declared. Yet, despite all the good and praiseworthy attempts to put [140] into practice this readiness for dialogue, very little of it has as yet been concretely realized.

Without doubt, the fault for this inadequate realization is to be sought not only with us but also on the other side. For years I was editor of an international periodical for dialogue which had as its purpose the advancement of dialogue with atheistic socialism. This periodical ceased publication due to a lack of continued financial support which was necessary on the part of the German bishops and also due to a lack of cooperation from the other side because the opposing parties, who are also at odds with one another in the camp of materialistic-atheistic socialism – the antagonism between socialists who are conformists and those who are critical of the system – managed to achieve a mutual blockade.

It is more important for us, however, to seek among ourselves the reasons for wearying of this dialogue and its lack of success. There is, indeed, in Rome a Secretariat for Non-Believers, and (as the saying goes) people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. But it must be admitted that as yet not much has been forthcoming that has penetrated the consciousness of the Church in general or its teaching office in such a way as to be translated into the palpable proclamation, preaching, and other activity of the Church. Assuredly there

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are today a number of subjects of fundamental importance which demand a living proclamation in the Church both as an official institution as well as a union of hearts: human rights, for example, or the new challenges arising out of concern for justice in the Third World. But the proclamation of the reality of the living God – and dialogue with atheism is a part of this, and indeed one of the very foremost parts – is also one of these fundamental tasks of the Church. And we are still very far from realizing this to any satisfactory degree. In both of the newest catechisms in Germany, for example, the question of the living experience of God and with it the question of the possible recognition of God's existence fall far short of anything resembling adequate treatment.

What we are still basically working with is a form of theism which stems from the era of the Enlightenment. This theism has quite obvious contours and proffers the impossibly naive explanation that all of the vexing problems of humanity can be solved by the existence of God. Present-day existential philosophy, linguistic analysis, and Anglo-Saxon pragmatism are far from being mastered by Christian [141] philosophers in a way that their findings have had any real influence on the Church's consciousness as a whole or as an official institution. We are still living much too much with a precritical mentality in which God is a particular – albeit the highest – element of reality as a whole. We defend the thesis that God and the world cannot be brought together in a univocal concept, while at the same time we lose sight of this thesis in our affirmations about God prior and subsequent to it and we speak of God as of an element of reality that is located on individual points of experience.

The incomprehensibility of God is the content of an individual thesis about God, but this incomprehensibility does not from the very outset always and everywhere permeate our understanding of God and the way we speak of him. Where can we find an epistemology that has penetrated the average consciousness of both herald and believer which from the very outset, from the original essence of human knowledge, takes into account its relationship to this incomprehensibility of God? We Christian philosophers and theologians should really be open to repentance and self-criticism in respect to our theoretical affirmations and we should constantly remind ourselves that our statements about God are too naive and too superficial to convince atheists; in other words, that we have by no means attained that capacity and willingness for dialogue which is the prerequisite for real dialogue with atheism.

There is, in addition, another factor. The vast majority of atheists today in East and West are not people for whom the question of God is really an alarming and agonizing problem. The experience of the existentiell unavoidability of the question of God is something that for the most part has yet to be awakened. In our average textbook philosophy and theology, which form the basis of our ordinary proclamation, where is there to be found a painstakingly and seriously worked-out chapter containing a mystagogy which deals with the experience of an inescapable question about God? Among us Christians the traditional teaching of the schools – in contrast to a Pascal, a Newman, or a Gabriel Marcel and others – continues on its merry and rationalistic way to proffer us the traditional proofs of the existence of God, which, however objectively unassailable they may be, give us no clue as to how one might go about expressing these rational paradigms in a way that they can be understood as the verbal objectification of an existentiell process in human beings whereby [142] they silently experience the unfathomable grounding of their existence in the mystery of God. A chapter like this does not exist in Christian textbook theology; in this theology one begins to have something to do with God only after one has established his existence by rational proofs.

It is no wonder that nowadays traditional proclamation for the most part does not even try anymore to communicate the traditional proofs of the existence of God to the addressee of the proclamation, despite the fact that these proofs are correct in themselves. Instead, in an embarrassed or in a high and mighty way (both come down ultimately to the same thing) it satisfies itself with the simple assertion of the existence of God, and, as an appendage to this

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at most, additionally assures humanity of the usefulness of this theism. Thus it has God existing for humanity, instead of humanity existing for God. And so it does not really convince people today, apart from those who think that they already believe in God's existence anyway. It is my opinion that the Church must maintain dialogue with atheism, and the Church as it now stands has on the whole a great deal of catching up to do if it really is to be itself capable of dialogue.

THE CHURCH AS UNIVERSAL SIGN OF SALVATION

My second statement in respect to the relationship between the Church and atheism is this: the Church is the sacrament of salvation for the atheist also. What does this statement mean? First of all, we know from the Second Vatican Council that the Church understands, itself to be the universal sacrament of salvation for the world. This statement is itself not easy to understand. But when one considers that the Second Vatican Council, relying on its faith in the salvific will of God and in optimism born of hope, is convinced that without doubt God's grace actually effects the salvation of humankind far beyond the radius of Catholics and of baptized Christians and does this for the most part without the saved being incorporated into the visible Church by baptism; and when a Catholic Christian at the same time believes that the salvation of these innumerable people has, nevertheless, a relationship to the Church, then this statement about the Church as universal sacrament of the salvation of all humankind takes on tangible meaning.

[143] The Church viewed as a tangible, historical, and institutional entity is the abiding presence of Christ in history. This Jesus Christ is the historically concrete presence of God's promise of himself to all humankind at all times and in all p1aces, and the Church is the reality of God's historical promise of himself to all humankind, the reality which always continues to make this self-promise historically present and which constantly bears witness to its irrevocability, and it does this for all people whether they have lived before or after Christ and not only when these people have become members of the visible Church by baptism, something that for the most part does not actually happen. The Church is the promise of salvation precisely for those as well who are part of its visible membership. The incorporation of a person by baptism into the visible Church is first of all the continuation of this sign of salvation in time and in history for the people who are not members of the Church in a visible way.

This function of the Church as sacrament of salvation for the non-Christian world is obviously valid for atheists too. We are prescinding here from the question of whether the Church also has this function directly toward atheists who have not heeded the dictates of their conscience (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 19). But it has validity in any case for those atheists who are atheists not due to any fault of their own, that is, who have not been disobedient to the dictates of their conscience. That atheists of this kind might exist, in other words, that the existence of a theoretical atheism in a person even over a long period of time would not necessarily be proof of a subjective state of serious guilt – of this the Second Vatican Council is convinced, in opposition to a previous traditional teaching of the schools.

But the Second Vatican Council concedes to persons of this sort even in their present condition a true possibility of salvation. "Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation for those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to lead a good life with the help of God's grace" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *[Lumen Gentium]*, no. 16). It also holds true for atheists that they, as persons of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way, are linked with the paschal mystery (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22), that they can be led in ways

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known to God himself to saving faith even though they [144] are inculpably ignorant of the gospel (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *[Ad Gentes]*, no. 7).

But even if such a possibility of salvation exists even for atheists, who are outside of the Church's visible membership, the theological question still remains unanswered as to how in inculpable atheists of this kind the faith that is also necessary for them can be present, how they are not dispensed from this faith but rather how they are conducted to it in a mysterious way. But in any case, by way of preliminary answer to this difficult question, it may be stated that the Church is for these inculpable atheists the historically tangible, sacramental sign, that in them this mysterious, salvific grace of faith is nonetheless at work above and beyond their explicit atheism. The Church is also the sacrament of faith and of the grace of faith which is present and efficacious in inculpable atheists beyond their atheism.

One could of course be first tempted to dismiss the theory of the Church as sacrament of universal grace for the whole world as something that amounts to idle speculation. One could say that one can understand that the grace of Christ even outside of the visible bond of the Church is everywhere at work producing salvation and that the positively upright conscience that we can, in principle, also concede to an atheist is already in an unreflexive way an anonymous actualization of faith through the grace of Christ. But then one could object that the relationship of the Church to this nonexplicit salvific process of faith and salvation is not brought out clearly in this way and hence is superfluous. But we must call to mind that at all times and in all places the inner, metahistorical dimension of grace and faith and the dimension of a historical, social, ultimately sacramental tangibility of this grace in the explicit word, in the social character of the Church, in the sacrament, have both a necessary interdependence as well as a variability in their relationship to one another.

The grace of God, which always intends to bring human beings in all their historical dimensions into God's salvation, has of its very nature the tendency to become historically tangible in word, Church, and sacrament, and at the same time this process whereby this grace becomes embodied and historically palpable takes place in very diverse phases. Thus the grace which produces faith in the least explicit way in inculpable atheists is precisely the grace which has [145] brought about in the whole of human history its incarnational, irrevocable embodiment and tangibility, namely, the Church. And conversely, this historical tangibility of grace known as the Church points back to the history of its own workings, which is still present in inculpable atheists who think that they are atheists and nothing else and who are not capable of reflecting on the depths of their existence, even though they are there, depths in which the inculpable conscience without knowing it reflexively does actually accept God in faith.

Because God in his grace wills the salvation of all of humankind there can really be no night of atheism which would not be pierced within by a ray of light as long as human beings do not close themselves off to God by an act of ultimate culpability. And this night of atheism has always been illumined in this way; the existence of the Church as universal sacrament of salvation has borne witness to this over and over again Atheists gaze inculpably into their night. They do not reflect that on the horizon behind them the sun is already rising and that for this reason their night is not as absolutely pitch black as it would be if God and his grace were not at work behind them, thus giving witness to himself as they stand with their backs turned gazing in the other direction.

It goes without saying that inculpable atheists themselves, as long as they remain such, will reject such an interpretation in their theoretical self-reflection. Something of this sort is possible inasmuch as the theoretically reflexive self-interpretation of human beings and their existentiell condition adequate to this need not to be identical nor need they correspond to one another completely.

Christians, however, who for their part believe that the salvation of all humankind is

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effected by God's grace in Christ who continues to be historically present in the world through the Church; Christians who at the same time possess the confident hope that God's grace can be victorious even in those who in their own reflexive theory interpret themselves as godless and without grace – these Christians cannot help but interpret inculpable atheists themselves theoretically reject.

One may, perhaps give to this existence of inculpable atheists, with its mysterious participation in salvation, the name of anonymous Christianity or reject this terminology as open to misunderstanding [146] and emphasize the fact that this terminology cannot itself be used in dialogue with atheists. This, however, does not alter the fact that, at least from the time of the Second Vatican Council, the Church in the history of its understanding of Christianity and of its own self-understanding has itself also arrived at the conviction that inculpable atheists who stand in God's grace do exist and that the existence of the Church in the world bears sacramental witness to this universal possibility of salvation. Before Christ and his abiding presence in the Church the salvation of all human beings as something possible on God's part was not attested in a way that was so historically palpable. This salvation was always there, but its irrevocably victorious efficaciousness was not attested. It is precisely this that constitutes the eschatological nature of the Church. As a particular reality in the world, even in the world of salvation, the Church is not identical with the world's salvation itself. But to the world the Church is witness to this salvation, not, indeed, as a manifestation extrinsic to this salvation but itself as the eschatologically irrevocable appearance of this salvation, as the historical incarnation of God's grace which, poured out over all the world, is the world's salvation. In this sense the Church also bears witness to salvation for atheists who are inculpably such. As the historically concrete presence of grace, the Church already has a function toward atheists even before they themselves have explicitly found and recognized the Church. This does not exclude the fact, but rather includes it, that the Church can be rejected only with culpability wherever it is explicitly recognized as such a sign of salvation for all, and that only with culpability can one refuse one's allegiance to it as sign of salvation for all.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ATHEISM

A third statement must be added to what has already been said. From its own very inmost nature the Church must struggle courageously and with all legitimate means against atheism. With the reservation that a more exact universal history and phenomenology of religion would be obliged to make very differentiated statements in respect to the image of God contained in the individual religions of, the world, one can nonetheless say that a socially legitimized and [147] socially widespread atheism has begun to exist only since the time of the Enlightenment. This means that prior to this time the Church was not confronted historically with a radical atheism, but it also means that if such an atheism has begun, then it is a new and fundamental task of the Church to combat it.

The preceding interpretation of inculpable atheists with its optimism as regards salvation – the idea that atheists are to be presumed inculpable according to an authentic Christian understanding in opposition to a previously widespread theological teaching – does not mean, of course, that atheism in the dimension of theoretical reflection and verbalization is not a phenomenon that radically contradicts Christianity in its explicitly confessional dimension and in the dimension of the reflexive practice of Christian life. The proper and traditional understanding of Christian faith requires one to say that the confession of the infinite and eternal God is objectively and in principle the most fundamental confession of Christian faith and that this may not be superseded by a modern "Jesus-ism" or by today's humanism. This

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most fundamental affirmation of Christianity is contradicted by atheism whether it be interpreted as theoretically explicit atheism or as indifference to God in the conduct of one's life.

Thus the Church has no choice but to struggle against this atheism with all legitimate means. As has already been said, according to Church teaching there are certainly inculpable atheists who find salvation, whose lives conducted in the light of an upright conscience contradict their theoretical atheism in the last resort. However, the terrible danger remains that a theoretical atheism of this kind will also have a feedback effect on a person's existentiell attitude whereby the conviction begins to insinuate itself that it is also old-fashioned and superfluous to heed the dictates of one's conscience. Moreover, God as origin and ultimate goal of all reality is supposed to be present and hold sway not only in the most profound depths of the moral conscience but also in all the dimensions of human history, therefore in human theory and in society. The Church knows, of course, that as long as history continues its course this goal of God's explicit presence and sovereignty in all the dimensions of human beings will never be fully attained and that in approaching this goal there will always be new and unexpected setbacks. But the Church, that is, concretely, the people of the church, cannot simply regard their theism as an indestructible patrimony; in the darkness [148] of private and collective history they must struggle over and over again to make this theism their own and give missionary witness of their faith in God to the secular and secularized world.

What has been said at the beginning must be repeated here. This struggle against atheism is always and foremost a struggle against a view of God which is in danger of replacing the true, incomprehensible God by a human idol. If there is stupidity and malice even in the Church, this can contribute to such a danger. The purity of the teachings about God at the highest official church levels will not prevent the ordinary proclamation of God from fashioning an image of God that is primitive and unworthy of belief, especially since a proclamation that would do nothing more than repeat conciliar and other official teachings about God would be no real proclamation at all and would at all events be devoid of effect. Unavoidably, then, ordinary proclamation offers ample room for the danger of talking about God in such a way that this proclamation of God becomes unworthy of belief. Moreover, as has already been said, a mystagogy of the experience of God in the Church and of its proclamation would have to be developed much more intensively than has actually been the case up to now. The struggle against atheism is foremost and of necessity a struggle against the inadequacy of our own theism. Of course that is not the only element of the struggle against atheism. We must bear witness in public to our faith in God. Openly and without that obtuse arrogance that might awaken the impression that one considers atheists to be either stupid or malicious, that one is oneself a theist who knows nothing of the burden and the wounds that are necessarily involved in a confession of God that can no longer rely on the common sense of society.

For this struggle is there any reason why an attempt should not be made to find a genuine, honest, and practically effective alliance among all religions and ideological groups that acknowledge God and therefore have something in common despite all the divergencies they might have in the interpretation of what they share with one another? It seems to me that Christian ecumenism, despite all verbal assurances to the contrary from every side and despite all goodwill, has reached a point of stagnation. And yet a theistic ecumenism, if one may use the term, is a bitter necessity today. An alliance of this kind should in no way violate any of those principles of religious freedom and freedom of conscience which the Church in the Council [149] has declared to be its own even in contrast to a great deal that was done in its previous practice. This alliance should certainly not be conceived as one among societies or nations which would in one way or another accord theism the status of a state religion.

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But a theistic ecumenism of this kind could really be effective in many ways. One effect, at least, could be that the theistic religions of the world would stop fighting against one another in practice, and instead consider it be a tremendous miracle of grace that all are striving to adore God explicitly in spirit and in truth. Furthermore, this theological ecumenism could help the theistic religions to learn something from one another for their respective faith in God. Christian theism, too, is immersed in the flow of history. It has not yet reached its final point of development in leading people to truth in its totality, and for its continued progress it can learn something from other theistic religions and their mystagogies. And this learning process can of course be mutual. When we Christians and people of the Church make the alarming discovery how little echo our own mystagogy of the experience of God has among other theistic religions and especially among modern atheists, how our own posture in this area has become defensive to the point of embarrassment, then this can serve as a real impetus for us both to reappraise our own theism and understand it more profoundly as well as to learn something in addition for ourselves from other theisms.

For this struggle of theism we would have to rearrange our proclamation to a certain extent. The Church in its proclamation cannot of course relinquish anything of what it has once believed and taught to be authentic divine revelation. This, however, does not rule out shifts of emphasis and rearrangement of certain materials in its proclamation. Using a variety pf approaches and all possible points of connection, a pastor should frequently preach on how people today in all seriousness can have a living faith in God and truly adore him, how this divine faith is the most natural, and yet at the same time through grace the supreme and most difficult act for a human being if it is to succeed not only theoretically but existentielly as well. If this pastor cannot actually find any more time and energy to preach on indulgences and their benefits, then there is really no great harm done nowadays.

This shift of emphasis in our proclamation, which is required for the struggle against atheism, is far from being carried out to a [150] sufficient degree. I cannot recall any papal encyclical devoted to the problem of atheism and how it is possible today to have faith in God in spirit and truth. The preparation of such an encyclical should not of course be entrusted to neoscholastic theologians alone. It would have to be rational, but not rationalistic. It would have to be addressed to human beings in all their dimensions and in the way that they are today. It would have to be something that people would not put aside in boredom with the theological babble of an old-fashioned clericalism for which God is nothing more than a stabilizing factor for society as it is, and which one would like to keep that way once one has achieved one’s own niche in it among the haves rather than among the have-nots. Why should there not be an encyclical like this? The purpose of my question is not to utter warnings, which ill become me, but only to point out that for a theism which is to combat worldwide atheism in the East and in the West a shift of emphasis in our proclamation is absolutely indispensable. Then it will also be a matter of course that we shall be able to learn from one another in the framework of a theistic ecumenism.

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THE ACT OF FAITH AND THE CONTENT OF FAITH

The distinction between *fides qua* and *fides quae*, between the act of faith and the content of faith is well known in theological tradition. As intelligible as this distinction between the act of confessing and the creed might at first glance appear, it nevertheless conceals a number of problems. Some of these problems will be considered here without making claim to a systematic or exhaustive treatment.

FAITH IS REALITY IN THE HUMAN BEING

In ordinary, everyday thinking no one usually perceives any problem with the distinction between the act of knowledge and the content of knowledge. There is an express or tacit presumption that this or that statement can be made about the *act* of knowledge as such as distinct from the object of knowledge (the former's immaterial nature, its location within a specific character and historical background of the person knowing, etc.), and these characteristics of the act of knowledge will not at all, or at most vaguely, be brought into relationship with the content of knowledge itself But this content of knowledge will be judged according to criteria that hardly have anything to do with the structure of the act of knowledge as such; questions will be asked about the internal coherence of its individual elements, about its demonstrability, about its relationship to other contents of knowledge, and so on. In point of fact the relationship [152] between the content of knowledge and the metaphysics of knowledge or, as the case may be, an empirical psychology of knowledge, cannot of course be described without a theory of the more precise relationship between act and content. One could, for example, show that Thomas Aquinas's metaphysics of knowledge rests ultimately on the fundamental axiom that being, knowing, and being known are originally and ultimately one and the same thing, therefore that ultimately the object known is nothing other than the act of knowing present to itself so that the difference between the act of knowledge and the object of knowledge and the distinct character of this difference which is also present between the two are secondary phenomena which are the expression of the creatureliness of finite being.

In this light the difference between *fides quae and fides qua* is also an obscure and difficult matter. However, the questions that this raises will not be pursued further here in an explicit way. There are enough problems of a specifically theological nature. Thus, for example, with a justifiable theological optimism one will concede to human beings of the most diverse kind and condition a faith which leads them to salvation and (given the further assumptions) justification, even though the contents of their faith, their *fides quae*, are of the most diverse and often contradictory kind. In this one cannot help reasonably presuming, after all, that their faith (as *fides qua*) is the same, inasmuch as its effect is the same, namely, salvation and justification. One is forced, then, to describe more exactly this *fides qua*, which is the same everywhere, in order to make clear how it is the same in different cases and has the same salvific effect. On the other hand, one must do this in such a way that the fides *quae*, the object and content of faith, will retain its essential religious and theological significance. For Christian revelation and proclamation assume most assuredly that "something" is revealed and proclaimed that is accepted in faith and becomes the content of this faith. How can both of these requirements be met simultaneously, requirements which presuppose and maintain

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the distinction between *fides quae* and fides *qua*, without degrading the *fides qua* as such to a basically neutral, in itself colorless reception of the only important thing in itself the revealed and proclaimed content of faith, and yet at the same time still respect the salutary and theological significance of the content of faith, the fides *quae*?

In my opinion more thought could be given to this problem and [153] this would not mean *only* belaboring the obvious in regard to a theological problem that has long since been dealt with in the past from every conceivable angle. After all, the problem does have an ecumenical significance as well as an importance in respect to the religious assessment Christians make of people whom they consider to be non-Christian, at least at first glance and in reference to these people's interpretations of themselves. The significance of our problem requires no further elucidation here. Even for those Christians and theologians who are oriented toward *biblical* theology the problem is troublesome and difficult because by and large one is forced to incline more to the opinion that the New Testament extols the *fides quae* and insists on its necessity as the thing that leads to salvation and justification without devoting much attention to the problems of the state of those persons who might perhaps possess a *fides qua* without being aware of the specific contents of faith, or who do not accept them, contents the acceptance of which in faith are presented by the New Testament as the conditions for justification and salvation.

One cannot deny that Holy Scripture in some respects does, on the other hand, relativize certain contents of faith as far as their necessity for salvation is concerned, and this holds true especially since Scripture has passages about these contents of faith which vary to a considerable degree and which are not systematized. But the Second Vatican Council's affirmation of the possibility of salvation even for those who, in fidelity to their conscience, consider themselves to be atheists is something that is difficult to conceive of in the explicit context of the New Testament. The fact remains that the New Testament puts the emphasis on the *fides quae* in such a way that the *acceptance* of this *fides quae* as the salvific element is extolled and demanded. In view of the current optimism about the salvation of all human beings, however problematic this may be from a theological standpoint, the explicit question about the *fides qua* is something that can no longer be evaded.

As an answer to this question we shall attempt to formulate a basic thesis. There is a *fides qua* which exists as something that is a possibility for every human being (albeit something that is offered to a person's freedom) and which makes its significance for salvation and justification understandable through itself and yet at the same time this *fides qua* possesses a reality of content in its own right, the [154] free acceptance of which can be acknowledged as the acceptance of revelation in faith. In this acceptance, the reality of content, which in the ordinary use of language we recognize to be the content of Old and New Testament revelation in its historical framework, does not lose its salutary and theological significance. The reason why it does not lose this significance is not to be found in the fact that it also implies an objective reality in the salvific-theological sense which would come absolutely from outside and as an additional element to the reality of content of the *fides qua*, which is always and everywhere possible, but rather because it is the historical (taking place in event and word) self-realization (and, indeed, a self-realization of an irreversible kind) of the reality which in germ and originally is grasped in every *fides qua* (even though this, perhaps, is not objectively verbalized).

This basic thesis cannot of course be substantiated here in detail in the framework of a Catholic theology. For me it remains to be seen to what extent a Protestant theology (perhaps proceeding from other points of departure and using another terminology) might be able to adopt this basic thesis, especially since the experiences I have had in this regard contain many conflicting elements. It goes without saying that all of these considerations also proceed on the assumption that an optimism in regard to universal salvation in time and space (at least as

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a *possibility* of universal salvation) can never at any time or in any place bypass Jesus Christ and his unique act of salvation. So it is always a question of how one could conceive in theological terms this Christian possibility of salvation even in a place to which (before or after Christ) the specific Christian message of revelation has not at all penetrated, or could not be presented in a way that its rejection can seriously be considered to be a decision which imports spiritual peril. A few observations will be added here to this basic thesis which cannot of course exhaust the subject matter of the thesis.

REVELATION: THE RADICALIZING OF TRANSCENDENTALITY

First of all, we must consider that in the consciousness, in its realization, realities can be present (of a subjective but ultimately also of an objective kind) which are conscious without necessarily [155] having to be verbally objectified as objects which have been explicitly reflected upon. This is a truism that should not be overlooked especially in the age of Freud, but also in a traditional metaphysics of knowledge, one, however, that is easily forgotten in concrete cases. In principle, then, a knowledge can also be present in a *fides qua* (however more precisely this may be conceived), which knowledge need not at all be an object known and verbalized in the consciousness, a knowledge which the reflexive consciousness even denies possessing.

The Catholic doctrine of grace traditionally speaks of the infused "theological virtues." They are called infused because, coming as they do from the initiative of God's grace they precede the individual act, which receives its content through a posteriori instruction, as permanent capabilities, as conditions of possibility for positing any salutary acts at all (of faith, hope, and love). How these infused capabilities are to be more precisely conceived, particularly their significance as the divine *self*-communication in the Holy Spirit, need not be discussed more exactly here. In any event, this traditional (in scholastic theology more or less obvious) doctrine presupposes that these theological virtues are characterized by a very definite "formal object" which as a priori goal *as* formal object can be attained by no other capacity of knowledge (just as ears are not capable of grasping colors).

What has just been said can be quite properly understood as nothing more than the transposition of the teaching of Scripture into the terms of the metaphysics of knowledge, when Scripture says that the reality of faith can be grasped only in the Holy Spirit, and this transposition can be understood as a legitimate attempt to understand the statements of Scripture in a way that is not pietistically "emotional" and hence unworthy of belief.

These God-given "capabilities" may not of course be understood as individual capabilities located in an area alongside of and in addition to the spiritual capabilities of a transcendentally unlimited human knowledge and freedom (as if, for example, a sensory capacity for perceiving electric currents were added to our other five senses), but only as radicalizations of our transcendentality to the *immediacy* of God, by means of which an understanding of the connection between the human being's endowment with grace in the Holy Spirit and the immediate vision of God promised to us in [156] eternity is also attained. This radicalization of our transcendentality to the immediacy of God, a radicalization which is the formal object of the theological virtues (which, of course, as such may not be confused with its verbalized objectification as an individual object of our consciousness), is, as an interpretation of what is actually meant by divine grace, also a safeguard against an understanding of grace which considers grace to be an individual reality within our consciousness, experienced emotionally and capable of being reflected upon directly, an understanding which in view of modern psychology would have to consider grace to be an old-fashioned instrument used to interpret phenomena of psychology or of depth psychology.

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However indisputable it may be that grace in its intrinsic nature can also have effects in the individual phenomena of the consciousness, still grace as such must be understood as an element of the actual transcendentality of human beings by means of which they are always and of necessity open to the absolute reality of God. Otherwise grace could be understood as an old-fashioned interpretation of quite ordinary phenomena of the consciousness. Thus grace, even though it is of course God's unmerited grace, can, because of God's universal salvific will, always and everywhere be present, at least in the mode of an offer, even if it remains entirely open whether this grace will be accepted or rejected by human freedom (much as humans can possess their human nature by way of freely acquiescing to it or by way of desperate protest against themselves).

This radical ordination and this radicalizing of human transcendentality to the immediacy of God, even though it is not the object of explicit reflection and verbalization, can be quite rightly understood as "revelation." For it is gratuitous, whereby the "gratuitous character" must not be confused with the idea of a gift that is fine or exclusive because it is rare or with an endowment which is bestowed at a definite point in place and time, both of which are conceivable but do not belong to the essence of an unmerited grace of God. This radicalizing of human transcendentality to the immediacy of God can further be understood as revelation because it gives to knowledge and freedom a new, otherwise unattainable, formal object. It is a personal revelation of God because it is given through God's free, personal self-communication, which constitutes the actual essence of grace. This revelation can quite properly be understood as fundamentally historical (despite the criticism of Eicher and others) because [157] it is obvious that every transcendental human experience is always mediated by a historical experience and forms a unity with it. (Human beings come to a grasp of themselves as transcendent creatures oriented to God's incomprehensibility only through human intercommunication and by experiencing the world, in the case of an original experience of their transcendentality, and not merely of a secondary or tertiary reflection on this transcendentality.)

In the unity of history and in the divine providence of salvation this mediatory historical experience (and historical realities that are structures of explicitly religious reflection can quite properly be a part of this experience) is always and in every case connected (in a relationship of cause and effect, etc.) with something essentially religious which is the effect and objectification of the original revelatory transcendental endowment of the human being with grace. As part of a history in which, taken as a whole, revelation takes place at all events, a mediation of this kind participates always and everywhere in this history of revelation, even if this mediation, viewed solely in itself be not a historical event of revelation in the strict sense. Those who would in *every* case require revelation to have a clearer and fuller character for this kind of mediation of a gratuitous experience in time and space in order for this unity of historical aposteriority and gratuitous transcendentality to deserve the name of historical revelation would be obliged either (while upholding the universality of the salvific will of God) to deny that faith in a historical revelation is always necessary for salvation (something that Vatican II, however, also emphasizes), or they would have to postulate a private revelation for many cases. Such a private revelation and its relationship to Christ is more than improbable for reasons which I cannot of course develop in detail here.

HISTORY: THE PLACE WHERE REVELATION OCCURS

If a theological reality of content for the *fides qua* is vindicated in this way, one that in certain circumstances is sufficiently salutary (even though in certain circumstances the a posteriori

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mediation of the gratuitous a priori experience is merely an object of moral significance which in itself does not also belong to the sphere of actual revelation), then the salvific significance of the *fides quae* in its [158] reality of content is not thereby diminished. Without sharing the views of "revelation" as found in classical modernists such as G. Tyrell, for whom "revelation" was nothing more than a consequence, in itself unimportant, of a naturally religious disposition, one can without hesitation view the material contents of historical revelation as verbalized objectifications of *the* "revelation" which is already present in the gratuitous radicalizing of human transcendentality in God's self-communication. This, of course, with the presupposition that these objectifications are essential for this transcendental and aprioristic endowment of the human being with grace; that these objectifications have a collective history guided by the divine providence of salvation; that these objectifications when realized also have of course a normative significance for the future and for other people whose endowment with grace is to be objectified in such a way that the history of this objectification is itself historical revelation and must be termed such, and in this way – not merely in actual words but prior to these – is objectified by historical events.

In this way, individuals as historical beings are part of the history of revelation as the history of grace; they cannot choose their place in this history according to their own whim; they must in principle acknowledge the genuine objectifications of grace in this history as objectifications of their own grace; they must have the *fides quae* possible for them in their historical situation and presented to them as the objectification of the salvation history of humanity in the order of grace. The *fides quae* may be quite minimal in content; in certain circumstances (as mediation of the free acceptance of grace) it can consist of that fidelity to one's own conscience in which, according to Vatican II, even persons who in a reflexive way consider themselves to be atheists can still be in union with the salvific mystery of Christ. But in principle the reality of content of this fides *quae* is not subject to the arbitrariness of the human being. Where a theological reality of content is offered to the conscience of a person in the order of belief as an objectification of grace and thus of revelation, the rejection of it or indifference toward it would be a free no to one's human endowment with grace, to one's *fides qua* itself. Other considerations on the difference between *fides qua* and *fides quae* and on the relationship to one another can easily be added. A few of them will be presented here without any claim to a systematic arrangement.

The fides quae of an individual and the *fides quae* of the Christian [159] community of faith, the Church, are not simply identical. For the most part the *fides quae* of the Church as a whole will be richer and more differentiated than the *fides quae* of an individual, especially when the Church is surveyed not only in a brief, individual period of time, but rather when the *fides quae* of the Church as a whole over a longer period or in the entire history of its faith is compared to the *fides quae* of an individual. The explicit faith of an individual is less differentiated for the most part; it is of a more fragmentary nature; it is crisscrossed in a nonreflexive way with currents and amalgamations that are subject to prevailing times and circumstances; it is penetrated by opinions that are not part of faith. And yet in a definite period of time the *fides quae* of individuals can also be richer and more fully developed than the average faith of the entire believing community, even including the official pronouncements of its teaching office, because the faith of these individuals can be more advanced from the standpoint of the history of faith than the average faith of the believing community as a whole, and perhaps only later will it become exemplary and normative for the community.

This is obvious if Catholic theologians recognize not only a history of theology but an actual history of *dogmas* in which individuals have been able to grasp something as an actual reality of faith even before the teaching office in its official decisions. At certain times in the Church's history some elements of the *fides quae* have doubtlessly been emphasized, while at

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other times the emphasis has changed or is being changed. Inasmuch as the Church's teaching office is dependent on varied emphasis of this kind, on the formation of concepts that takes place first in nonofficial theology, on religious currents, on changes in the spirituality of the Church or of individual regions of the Church, and inasmuch as the official Church does go along with these changes not only in point of fact, but must go along with them in the very nature of things – a pope today, for example, could no longer put forward a doctrine of redemption as a way of outwitting the devil – the actual faith in the Church manifests a normative significance in a certain sense even for the teaching office itself. By no means does the teaching office always and in every respect have the "leading role" in the development of the *fides quae* that actually exists in the Church, but is, rather, dependent on it. Thus a Catholic understanding of the ecclesial teaching office does not conceive theological work as nothing more than the explanation [160] and defense of that doctrine which is explicitly put forward by the ecclesial teaching office itself.

JUSTIFYING FAITH ON ITS "GROUNDS'

The actual *fides quae* of the individual Christian in the Church has a structure that is not only particular and conditioned by prevailing circumstances – something that is obvious – but it has in the interplay of individual and collective history focal points that form the original approaches for the whole content of faith and represent those realities of content which in reflexive clarity are also actually affirmed with an absolute assent of faith. For a theory of the *fides quae* in a Catholic sense it is of course correct that in itself everything that God has revealed and the Church has put forward for belief must be believed with this kind of absolute assent of faith. But if one considers the assent of faith really present concretely in individuals, then the matter becomes somewhat more complicated. The formal teaching office's normative authority in matters of faith may (it is to be hoped) in the belief of individual Catholics be one of the realities that their faith grasps. Nowadays, however, this will rarely be the reality of their faith that they affirm first, and starting from which they grasp the remaining realities of content of their faith and organize them intellectually. Actually it cannot be that way at all in the light of traditional fundamental theology in which the authority of Scripture and the Church's teaching authority are never the first chapter, but they come very late. Thus, for example, Augustine's maxim that he would not believe the gospel unless the authority of the Church moved him to do so is, at the very least, highly problematical. In the objective and existentiell structure of the *fides quae* of a Christian the experience of God and of his Christ can obviously occupy a more original and more fundamental position than the teaching authority of the Church.

Furthermore, in the mentality even of Catholic Christians the authority of the ecclesial teaching office in the sense of Vatican II is very often called into question today, even when more fundamental Christian truths are grasped with an absolute assent of faith. This may be regrettable, but it is a fact. Even in today's secular sphere the general consciousness of individuals is not characterized as much by statements affirmed in an absolute and unquestioning way as it is by ones that are rather accepted with reservations "for the time being", [161] until fuller knowledge has been attained. People today have the impression that scientific progress basically consists of nothing but laying bare the erroneousness of previous opinions. This mentality is carried over to the actual structuring of the *fides quae* of today's average Christian. There is of course no human being who does not have, either explicitly or implicitly, at least some statements that he or she grasps with absolute assent, even though the transcendental necessity of such statements might not be known in a reflexive way. This is likewise true in its own way in the case of Christian faith.

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It is, however, difficult to say exactly *which* statements are the ones that are grasped with this kind of absolute assent (at least implicitly) in the faith of the individual believer. The answer to this question, if indeed there really is an answer, must be sought among individuals themselves as well as in the belief characteristic of individual periods in the history of faith, and this answer will always be a new and different one. Therefore all of the Christian confessions in their theology would have to engage in continued and intensive reflection in order to ascertain what contents of a *fides quae* as it exists in today's world can presumably be grasped by people today and can thus constitute the foundation and the existentiell principle of organization for the entire reality of content of Christian faith. Assuredly, neither the authority of Scripture nor that of the Catholic Church's teaching office will appear among the most original primary data today. On the Catholic side both of these things are *part* of the contents of faith, but they are more or less secondary appendages to the content of a faith that must be objectively and existentielly erected on the basis of quite different and more original points of departure. This also leads, for example, to the insight that the Church's official proclamation of the Christian message should not tacitly presume that the formal authority of the teaching office prevails among those, at least, to whom the message is directed, even among practicing Catholics, and therefore that the only thing required is to put forward a definite teaching as one that has binding force for Catholics. In contrast to past times, Christian proclamation today can no longer reliably build on an already existing acknowledgement of the teaching office's formal authority. Much more than in the past the teaching office must put forward and defend what is taught on its own grounds. Should it succeed in doing this, it would also recover people's confidence in its formal teaching authority in matters of faith.

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[162]

11

A HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS

CENTRAL TRUTHS AND REMOTE TRUTHS

Among the many incentives the Second Vatican Council conveyed or at least offered to the Church as a stimulation to pastoral care and pastoral theology the notion of a "hierarchy of truths" was not the most important and the most decisive one on the Council's part, yet it was an impulse that should not be overlooked and one that will assuredly continue to have an effect far into the future of theology and pastoral practice.

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL'S DECREE ON ECUMENISM

In the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 11) the Council speaks of an order of priority or a hierarchy of truths within Catholic teaching according to the different kind of relationship these truths have to the foundation of Christian faith. In this decree the Council exhorts Catholics to give heed to this hierarchy of the truths of the faith when engaging in ecumenical dialogue. The Council does not specify what is to be understood by this hierarchy of the truths of the faith. It says only that this hierarchy results from the varied relationship the individual truths of faith have with the "foundation" of the faith. Nor is it stated what this "foundation" is.

Apparently the phase "hierarchy of truths" found its way into the Council as a result of an address on this decree delivered by the archbishop of Görz, A. Pangrazio, to the Seventy-Fourth General [163] Congregation on 11 November, 1963, in which he spoke of the hierarchial order of revealed truths and also of the *hierarchia veritatum*. By emphasizing in his address that even in a hierarchy of this kind all revealed truths must still be held with the same divine faith, he countered in advance a false, but quite widespread interpretation of this teaching of the hierarchy of truths according to which it is permissible to cast aside certain revealed truths, perhaps even ones that have been explicitly defined, or simply to treat them with indifference or pass over them entirely if and when they are more or less remote from the "foundation," that is, from the basic substance of Christianity. It is certainly right to repudiate this false interpretation of the hierarchy of truths, but in so doing one becomes aware of an unsolved problem, one that admits of no simple solution.

First of all, it is not entirely obvious that Christian faith is related in exactly the same way to all the truths of faith, even though it is of course beyond dispute that all of these truths in themselves lay claim to the faith of Christians and can be the object of the *fides qua*. For it is certain that only in the totality of revelation and of Christian faith is this Christian faith as a human act related to an individual truth which may, perhaps, be quite remote from the foundation of faith. To this extent one can certainly say that the *fides qua* itself also participates in the hierarchial structure of the *fides quae* and therefore the statement that all the truths are to be held with the same Christian faith must be taken with a grain of salt. Moreover, the archbishop of Görz's warning must certainly not be construed in such a way that the Council's teaching of the hierarchy of truths would be practically meaningless for the life of Christian faith, the Church's pastoral work, and ecumenical dialogue if one did nothing more than simply insist that all the truths of the faith are to be held with the same divine faith. A. Pangrazio himself, as a matter of fact, uses his teaching only to demonstrate that

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Christians *are* already in agreement on the "primary" truths of the Christian religion. The Decree on Ecumenism gives us no further information on the meaning and significance attached to its use of the term "hierarchy of the truths of the faith."

THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

So if we ask what the foundation of faith is in order to gain an understanding of the hierarchy of truths from this standpoint, then of [164] course one can first of all quite properly say that it consists of the fundamental truths of faith, those truths, therefore, on which everything else is based and which themselves are not actually derived from other truths. Such basic summaries of faith which have this foundation as their object and which state it can certainly already be found in the New Testament. This point will not be developed here. In the Apostles' Creed as baptismal profession we certainly also have a basic creedal statement which has this foundation as its object, while later professions of faith certainly add a great deal to this "foundation" which can no longer be considered as part of the "foundation" itself. A simple proof that this is the case even as early as the professions of faith of Nicaea and Constantinople can be seen in the fact that even though this creed was recently reaffirmed by all the churches in Germany as the common profession of faith, and this rightly so, nevertheless the Orthodox Church does not say the Filioque in this creed, and the Anglican Church, without rejecting it, wants to omit it in the explicit creed. That later professions of faith, for example the Tridentine profession of faith, make statements that go far beyond the foundation of faith is obvious.

If the Council's phrase "foundation" of faith simply refers us to the Apostles' Creed, that assuredly does not mean that no other basic creedal statements are conceivable which also have this foundation as their object and which perhaps could be more immediately intelligible to people today than the Apostles' Creed. For the question might at least be posed, for example, whether the Apostles' Creed does not too readily take for granted a genuine and vital understanding of the word *God*, something that would have to be brought home to people today more explicitly in a modern basic creedal statement. Thus, when speaking pastorally about the hierarchy of truths and its foundation, one should not fasten upon *the* formulation of this foundation as found in the Apostles' Creed as though nothing further could be said on the matter. If one wants to get this foundation across to people, one will always state it in the words of the Apostles' Creed as well, but not only in these words.

THE "EXISTENTIELL" HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS

From a pastoral point of view the hierarchy of truths and its foundation must be considered under entirely different aspects. There is [165] certainly an "objective" hierarchy of truths, one that theologians and preachers have to reflect upon more profoundly so as to be able to express it in a way that is intelligible and credible. But obviously there is also an "existentiell" hierarchy of truths which is not simply the equivalent of the objective hierarchy of truths. It is determined by the objective relationship of the truths of faith, and this does not mean that they simply condition one another reciprocally, but it is rather a relationship that stems from the "importance" of the individual truths and it is obvious that the importance varies. The existentiell hierarchy of truths does of course have something to do with the objective hierarchy, because the totality of faith as it actually exists in the consciousness of an individual, of an ecclesial group or of a definite period of the Church must continually submit itself to guidance and correction from the objective hierarchy of truths.

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For example, if a *campesino* in Mexico were to have no more or less explicit knowledge of anything except Our Lady of Guadalupe, then one could in all reverence still discover a salvific faith in God even despite the scantiness of such notions. It would not be wrong, however, to hope that this faith would have a closer proximity to the objective hierarchy of the truths of faith. Nonetheless, even in the faith that can really be attained and reasonably expected of a person there is a difference between an existentiell hierarchy of truths and the objective hierarchy. This holds true both for individual periods of church history and for individual groups in the Church as well as for individuals' consciousness of faith in the history of their own lives. Otherwise a *history* of dogmas would in principle be impossible. It would not be justifiable to speak of the different "spiritualities" that are characteristic of each of the religious orders. Differences in the popular piety of different countries would have to be discountenanced. One could not agree with Pope Paul VI when speaking of indulgences who said that Christians could exercise the option of their Christian freedom to take them or leave them.

The differences in the structures that form the concrete framework for faith are quite justifiable, and that applies to the *fides quae* as well as the *fides qua*. It is quite legitimate, since it is absolutely unavoidable, for the truths of faith to be present throughout the world in different ways in the consciousness of faith, sometimes moving to the foreground of this consciousness, sometimes receding to the background, since the persons possessing this faith are themselves different. There are age differences, differences in the times in which [166] they lead their lives, sociological differences, personal differences, and so on. (The Immaculate Conception occupied a place in the foreground of the religious consciousness of a Saint Maximilian Kolbe in a way that was not and should not be the same elsewhere, not even among religious people and saints.) In the concrete religious consciousness the power that these truths of faith have to influence history and the way people live varies considerably. (In earlier times the "Holy Land" produced Crusades; nowadays it produces at most religious tourism.)

CHANGING PLAUSIBILITIES

From a pastoral point of view we ought to become more aware of this existentiell hierarchy of truths and analyze it more profoundly in its application to our times and to the countries of Western Europe. The plausibilities change on the basis of which – without subjecting them to a critical analysis – people of a particular time and in a particular society live their lives and also find a way to understand their faith. Today, for example, many people consider it obvious (at least in theory) that they have to love their neighbor, that they have to work at changing and improving social structures, and in certain circumstances these people will strive in light of this to acquire an understanding of Christian faith and in this way they will of course construct for themselves an existentiell hierarchy in their faith. No doubt it will be different from the hierarchy of Christians who lived, at a time when wars of religion, a feudally structured society, and so, on prevailed. Above and beyond the plausibilities of a particular time and definite society there are, of course, also plausibilities which are characteristic of individuals and so the hierarchy of their faith will be contingent on these.

QUESTIONS TO THOSE ENGAGED IN PASTORAL WORK

This subject of the hierarchy of truths cannot be developed in greater scope here, although much more could be said about it. This brief essay will close, then, with a few questions to

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those engaged in pastoral work and entrusted with the proclamation of Christian faith today.

[167] Given no more than a quarter of an hour can you tell pagans in one of Europe's big cities who have never experienced a really challenging encounter with Christianity what a Christian really believes? Can you tell these people briefly what is meant by the word *God*, without having this word conjure up in them the image of a supreme tyrant and chief constable whose primary job it is to hunt them down when they get confused about their moral problems? Without compromising one iota of binding faith can you talk to them about Jesus without having Christology sound to these pagans like mythology that they can make no sense of whatsoever for their own lives, and without giving them the impression that you are claiming something about Jesus that might just as well be claimed about the Dalai Lama today, something that they would categorically reject without the slightest qualms of an informed conscience? Can you speak about the modern plausibilities of these present-day pagans so that they can recognize themselves in what you are saying and find the key in these plausibilities that would open their understanding to their need of redemption? In a relatively brief time can you make clear to these pagans that the Church is more than just a huge conglomerate managed by pope, bishops, and pastors, membership in which has as its consequence the obligation of Sunday mass, which they do not understand, and church taxes? If those engaged in pastoral work feel that questions like these cannot be answered with mere clichés and if they make the constant effort to try to answer these questions in the affirmative, then they understand what the hierarchy of truths means, even though this phrase might not be part of their own vocabulary.

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[169]

PART THREE

Christianity

[171]

12

CHRISTIANITY'S ABSOLUTE CLAIM

Young people especially have obvious difficulties in understanding Christian faith. Since human beings are enormously complicated and since faith touches on all the dimensions of their existence, it is obvious that the complexity of these difficulties knows no end. This being the case we can treat here only a very limited number of topics that focus around this problem, but they are topics of widespread concern to everybody.

Quite a few people today have the impression that Christian faith is out of date. Owing to historical conditions it is a reality, like so many other things of the past, that has not entirely disappeared from our society. They know that it still exists, but they feel that there is no real justification for its existence anymore and that it is slowly but surely dying out and will one day disappear entirely. History is full of such examples: monarchs, the nobility, certain social conventions and ways of life. The theory of the slow demise of religion is one of communism's basic tenets and other philosophies of history and culture also subscribe to this view. What is to be said about this attitude toward Christian faith?

CHANGING FORMS AND VIEWS

First of all, we must frankly admit that much of what is concretely expressed in all religions including Christianity is conditioned by times and circumstances and that it can die out. Half a century ago it was customary to approach the pope in private audience with a triple genuflection. Even the most conservative of today's popes would not [172] even think of such a thing anymore. The door opens, the pope is standing there, and you shake hands with him. Religious practices such as these and many others like them are historically conditioned; they depend on attitudes and conventions prevalent in secular society and for this reason they are constantly in a state of historical flux.

Assuredly this also holds true for any number of theological views. In earlier times the papacy was conceived more or less as an absolute universal monarchy. In view of the quite different social orders that we are accustomed to today, we must, to some degree at least, have recourse to completely different concepts and notions derived from our own experience to explain the pope's function in the Church; for example, guarantor and guardian of unity. As long as the geocentric world view with its separation of the world into entirely different spheres (globe-shaped shells) prevailed – a view derived from secular science in antiquity and in the Middle Ages – it was no wonder that Christ's ascension was conceived as a kind of journey into the highest "heavenly" sphere. And even as late as the seventeenth century one theologian saw a connection between Mount Vesuvius and hell.

These fusions of what is actually meant by faith and the contemporary views of the secular

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sciences have existed in the past and continue to exist now in innumerable forms. The continuous development that this implies takes place not only in society and its mentality as a whole but also in the life history of the individual. When a child says, "The good Lord is in heaven," and when an educated adult prays, "Our Father who art in heaven," then both of them mean ultimately the same thing, even though the adult perhaps no longer points up to "heaven" with his finger. Ultimately they mean the same thing, and yet the images they use to express this to themselves are really quite different.

So it comes as no surprise either that in the Church there can be differences of opinion on specific questions. When examining a definite teaching of faith the question arises as to where the conception – which is conditioned by its times and is in a process of change – ends, and where the thing that is actually meant by this conception "begins."

Questions like these exist and they are often quite difficult to answer because when an old conception that is no longer tenable is eliminated (for example, the conception of heaven as a particular [173] place), then what is actually meant cannot simply be conceived in itself alone but must be conceived in association with a new, contemporary model, one that is more intelligible to us. Indeed, it often happens that this new conception can not yet be clearly expressed. It is still far from being accepted by everybody. To put it briefly: in respect to its content and so too in respect to the way it is realized (the faith and the act of believing), Christian faith is involved in a constant process both historical and in the lives of individuals, not in respect to what is actually meant, but in respect to the way in which it is conceived.

HAS CHRISTIANITY'S TIME PASSED?

Is Christian faith dying out? Since nobody can prophesy history completely, we cannot know how many Christians there will be in proportion to the world's population in a distant future. This holds true even if Christian faith itself is convinced that it will never disappear from history on the one hand and even if the secular prognoses of futurologists and the most recent experiences of the history of religion can present no convincing objections to this assumption on the part of Christian faith on the other. One need only call to mind the reawakening of Islam, the new religious movements that are emerging in Christianity and the fact that Christian faith is still alive in communist countries, even now in the third generation.

The question has to be put another way. In respect to the things that it actually means to express does Christian faith have a content which warrants the opinion that this content is itself a conception conditioned by the times and subject to historical decline, one that future generations might one day be able to cast aside?

We must proceed here with the utmost caution. Certainly conceptions conditioned by the times have existed in the past and still exist now. When using these conceptions people did not and could not notice their concrete historical nature and transiency. An example of this from theology: The "substance" of bread spoken of by the Council of Trent in its doctrine of the Eucharist was certainly a concept the temporal relativity of which could not be recognized in the way that this concept was *concretely* conceived at that time. However – speaking in general terms at first – there are in fact concepts the permanent validity of which can be recognized, and this [174] does not mean that such concepts must necessarily be located outside of history. For example, the concepts contained in the principle of contradiction (two directly contradictory statements cannot both be true at one and the same time) cannot be conceived as existing only in finite time, because the conception of a mere temporally limited validity of the principle of contradiction nullifies itself inasmuch as the statement denying the principle of contradiction has meaning only in its implicit affirmation of this principle. Moreover, there are also historical statements a later refutation of which cannot be seriously

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considered. Future historians will not discover that Charlemagne did not exist. Finally, there are statements that cannot be thought of as one day being destined to pass out of existence because a future refutation would annul the meaningfulness of the present moral existence of human beings. For example, if I say: in the future the moral demand of fidelity will have no validity at all, and therefore even now I can dispense myself from this demand, thereby ushering in the period of its nonvalidity.

These presuppositions and similar ones form the frame of reference for treating the question of whether Christianity's message has a mere temporally conditioned validity that will one day pass away.

To state this explicitly once again: one must definitely take into account the possibility that historical events would not have to lose the validity they once had simply because they first took place at a definite point in time and did not take place previous to this and have not always taken place. To be sure, this statement contains some presuppositions that cannot be discussed here, namely, the existence of God first and foremost, the one-way direction of history which retains its past and does not simply cast it off as something that has dissolved completely, and the nature of freedom which does not keep placing one thing after another on a chain of arbitrary succession, but rather is capable of positing something that has irrevocable finality.

WHAT DOES "CHRISTIANITY" ACTUALLY MEAN?

Let us consider what Christianity's message actually is. Here we are putting aside all the things of secondary value that can be understood from the ultimate essence of Christianity First of all, Christianity says the following. The finite world, this world which – despite the earlier way of conceiving it as almost boundless – has been [175] recognized as finite (in space and time: the world of the hundred billion suns that stem from the big bang) has an absolute, infinite primordial ground which is different from it, and we call this primordial ground God. However intimately the relationship between the world and its primordial ground must be conceived, God cannot be understood as simply being identical with the world since a multiplicity as such presupposes a unity of a more original kind. The "many" can belong to one another only if one excludes the possibility of its absolute mutual disparity on the basis of a single origin. Christianity – which, incidentally, shares this "monotheism" (that is, belief in one God) with other world religions and hence is not the historical product of one definite culture alone – says in its affirmation of an incomprehensible miracle of grace that this God is not merely the eternally distant mystery beyond the world and our existence. Rather, this God has made himself the innermost principle of the world's movement in such a way that this world with the power of its movement and with its goal will arrive at a unity in immediate knowledge and love with this its distant origin at that point where it reaches its completion in its historically unfolding spirit.

In the history of the free, personal spirit what we call God becomes an immediately present goal. It is Christianity's conviction that this innermost, divine, fundamental dynamism is at work everywhere in the world and everywhere in history, and in the history of religion too, and this despite the culpable failure of the freedom of individuals and despite all the dark sides of history and the distortions of religions. This divine fundamental dynamism provides the possibility over and over again for human beings at some point in their existence – and this point can be quite different and needs hardly any express reflection – to open themselves "in faith" and surrender themselves to the incomprehensible mystery of their existence and in this way to find their goal: God in the completion of their history.

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DOES HISTORY HAVE A GOAL?

Now in addition to this, Christianity makes still another affirmation, one that is new and crucial. Christians experience the world as a history – just as every human being in the world would have to – and this history is experienced as a history of freedom in human beings themselves. They experience this history at least at that point where [176] it is a history of freedom in personal responsibility and decision, and also as a history of horrendous catastrophes, incomprehensible guilt and senselessness which they themselves cannot set right. In the light of the nature of freedom and the experience of how this freedom is culpably intertwined in an indissoluable unity with catastrophes both great and small, human beings must ask themselves how this history of humanity whose finiteness, despite the millennia of history that still might come, has never been so clearly predictable as it is today, will finally end. Since individuals cannot be reflexively certain of their own goodness, they cannot declare with certainty that they themselves will in any event escape a chaotic collapse of world history as a whole in virtue of the total moral act of their own lives.

But where does the total history of the created spirit end, a spirit that we recognize only in *us* – prescinding from the "angels" – as the apex of the world's development (as apex because undeniably the world has come to a self-presence – if only in an initial stage – in us)? Does it end by being lost culpably and definitively? Does it end only in ever new efforts that do not result in anything really being achieved definitively? Is God nothing more than a presupposition for us in our freedom to be taxed beyond our strength in the face of our powerlessness and the wickedness of which we are capable? Above and beyond our *interior*, free *hope* in a completion in the immediacy of God is there a historical event that can demonstrate to us (even if it is a part of history's continuing course) that the entire history of the world's freedom possesses that inner power which will really arrive at an immediacy with God? Contrary to all (all?) probability is there some place in history where our hope has appeared bearing the guarantee of victory? This question cannot be evaded if we are serious about adhering to a hope that is without any reservations and that extends beyond any limitations of convenience, and we must search in history for a confirmation of this hope, since we, however supremely elevated our spiritual nature may be, still remain concrete historical beings, and for this reason we cannot consider this history as something unimportant for the highest activity of our spirit, the search for God.

JESUS – GOD'S DEFINITIVE PROMISE OF HIMSELF IN HISTORY

Our encounter with Jesus crucified and his triumph over total defeat (his resurrection by which the "definitive triumph of life in his [177] acceptance by God" and "resurrection" are mutually explained) convince us Christians as we confidently live the history of Christian faith that in Jesus and his word, his fate and his triumph in death God's irrevocable promise of himself to human history has taken on historically concrete form as history that actually reaches its goal in God. Basically this is also the statement of the Church's faith in Jesus Christ as formulated by the Council of Chalcedon (451).

But when we say "God" and "Jesus" in this sense: "God" as the mystery that is most real and sublime over every reality of the world, the mystery that as ultimate ground, as innermost dynamism and as final goal gives itself to its world in immediacy; "Jesus" as God's promise of himself to the world and its history, a self-promise that is definitive, irrevocable, and establishes itself by the power of God himself – then actually we have already stated the core content of Christianity. If we assume that this irrevocable self-promise of God which has

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become historically concrete in Jesus must in its palpable mode of appearance and in its irrevocability be permanently present in history then our statement also implies the historical continuance of a community of faith which is related to this self-promise of God and gives it a permanent presence. As a fellowship of faith of this kind the community must possess all those characteristics which are known to Christian faith as the essential elements of the Church (the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church).

CHRISTIAN FAITH CANNOT BECOME OBSOLETE

Can a message of this kind actually become obsolete, outdated and so disappear from history? In skeptical resignation one might perhaps speculate that humankind – having lost its courage and grown weary and superficial – will one day fail to reach its potential, that it will lose its power of radical optimism that reaches toward the incomprehensible infinity and glory of God, and that like particularly resourceful creatures it will occupy itself exclusively with its perpetual concern for what goes by the name of progress, with ever more elaborate objects presented for its consumption and with the rivalry that results from its egoism. For those who choose to subscribe to this kind of weary and melancholy skeptical resignation or who think that they can cheerily immerse themselves in the ongoing business of humankind, which is never at a loss for something to do [178] but has no clear goal (and do this until death takes them) – for these people, of course, no prescription can be offered.

Christian hope, on the other hand, is convinced that there will always be people who – in many different ways, on quite different occasions, and on the basis of a great variety of modes of mutual understanding and cooperation – will continue to hope and believe in an unsurpassable completion of their own history and of the world, and for this reason that the Church of invincible hope in an absolute future known as “God” will always exist. But if we look at these skeptical relativists who refuse to think their existence through to the end, who set out on journeys without making inquiries as to their destination and who are, in fact, the only real alternative to absolute Christian hope, then it simply does not become evident how this Christian message one day gone out-of-date could, as something obsolete, be replaced by another religion or be thrust aside by the end of all religion. For Christianity does not reject one thing or another thing; it does not consider itself as an antithesis or denial of future human possibilities as yet not even conceived of, things that can one day come at a future time, always, of course, as individual things in space and time, formed out of finite “matter,” which in a material and spiritual way are or will be at the disposal of human beings. Christianity says only that beyond these individual and finite possibilities, whether they be already realized or planned or not even conceived of, an infinite, already open reality is offered to individuals and to the entire history of humankind, a reality that has long since existed, indeed one that always exists and that does not first have to be made, but is rather a reality that must be attained through the freedom of unconditional love, and this reality is called God.

Perhaps someone will say that this is too beautiful to be true. But no one can name a higher, more comprehensive goal that could replace this Christian hope and render it obsolete. In principle that is impossible. For every goal that is in any way meaningful and that can be named and perhaps even programmed in the future has already been anticipated in the Christian conception, even if it is not known as such, because it is already contained and surpassed in the incomprehensible and infinite completion.

In their narrow-mindedness many Christians are inclined to reduce their hope to something less than this. But Christians are always talking about God, and if they take this word seriously as [179] really meaning the content of the indescribable completion, and meaning

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only this and meaning it seriously, then they have no choice but to understand their Christianity in the sense just explained, even though what is meant in this explanation can be expressed in a thousand other ways and obviously much better. But whoever in one way or another has understood what is meant here as belonging to the essence of Christianity cannot imagine or fear that Christianity could become obsolete.

The nameless incomprehensible one who nonetheless wills to give himself to us and has already done so (we need but admit him in silence in a freedom which for its part is itself called grace) has no one beside him, nor will he have a later competitor, because for God there is absolutely no “beside” or “later.” Paul says that God is all in all. But one must have the courage to enter a relationship with him, a relationship with him in adoration and love and not one of hairsplitting argumentation about him and about the paradox that one might really be able to say you to him because he brings it about that we are capable of doing this. It is possible; one need only make the attempt. In the act of unconditional surrender to the incomprehensibility of God who is loved the fear that this might one day be obsolete is dissolved. And this is Christianity. Therefore Christianity cannot be superseded. One can only remain behind it – through one’s own fault or because one has been arrested at an earlier stage of one’s spiritual development.

THE ABIDING SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS FOR US

And Jesus? Is he not eliminated from this absoluteness of Christianity as an unimportant factor? Is he nothing more than the occasion of our considerations, someone who is interchangeable, hence ultimately superfluous? Is it perhaps necessary for Christianity to move beyond Jesus and develop into a universal religion of a contemplative or active (both in one) immediacy to God, one that no longer disperses the pure white light of divinity into individually colored refractions (with different names) and hence one that can be silent about Jesus?

Before attempting a direct answer to this question we must remind ourselves in all sobriety that a mystical-universal religion of an [180] abstract idea of God (Islam wanted to realize this to a certain degree and in the French Revolution there were similar ideas), if it is to be something real and concrete, would require a social order necessarily conditioned by history with rites, laws, officials, and the like, and thus the question would immediately rise again as to how the concrete form of the religious reality could be reconciled with the veneration of the God who has no name.

But apart from considerations of this kind, in answering our question one must once again make clear what the real and precise content of Christian faith in Jesus is. What is its relationship to the God of Christianity who is acknowledged in his truth only when one surrenders oneself unconditionally to his incomprehensibility? The human doctrine implied in this does not, of course, nullify the properly understood belief in God, but rather says and brings to realization precisely that God is in this way the nameless incomprehensibility by which we allow ourselves to be seized in faith, hope, and love. But for Christian faith Jesus, his life and the accomplishment of his death, is nothing other than God’s definitive invitation to this surrender and the irrevocable promise that this surrender is really accomplished through God’s powerful love and not ultimately by the efforts of our own goodwill. The Church’s entire teaching about Jesus Christ can certainly be deduced from this fundamental conviction of the significance of Jesus for us (“for us and for our salvation,” as the Creed says). This entire Christology, however, is always subject to the belief that this Jesus and his salvific work gave witness to and made available nothing other than the really effective possibility of arriving at immediacy to the true God. If, then, Jesus Christ is the unassailable

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witness (the one who effects what he gives witness to) for this belief in God, then it is precisely he who in his life and in his fate is for himself and for us the most real testimony, one that in its "success" is palpable, and the event of a belief in God that can never perish.

Another testimony of this kind has yet to appear in our history because all the other great figures in the history of religion did not provide this testimony, and they did not even intend to do so. Every other "prophet" considered himself quite rightly to be only temporary and open to a revelation that was yet to come. And if there were someone after Jesus who made such an absolute claim or who will make one, then his or her arrival is in any case too late, because [181] Jesus has already existed and he has promised "everything" (the absolute God in himself) *in such a way* that nothing more can be said above and beyond it. The unsurpassability of the Christian belief in God is not threatened but rather confirmed when Christians devote themselves to the event that took place in Jesus in which a human being succeeded in a way that is concrete for us in really reaching God himself as God's affirmation for us.

If for Christians who have such a radical relationship to God it is nonetheless obvious that this incomprehensible God himself has established a historical world in its reality and propels it even intrinsically as well as in its colorful variety toward its goal, then of course, for human beings too, on the basis of their relationship to God of mystical purity and namelessness, a colorful variety of relationships, interconnections, tasks, and so on is just as possible and called for as is present in the variety of their world and of their own nature.

And this also holds true, of course, for the relationship of the Christian to Jesus. Believers have the kind of relationship to Jesus that we have attempted to indicate before as fundamental: a relationship to the authentic and sole witness who is given to them for their lives as a way of leaping into the blessed and saving incomprehensibility of God. This has a very concrete meaning. Christians may and should love Jesus, imitate him in contemplation and action, confess him, pray to him, belong to him in the community of the Church's liturgy and its proclamation. All of this is then the obvious concrete human way of a person's holding fast to Jesus when he or she explicitly and consciously comes into that strange undertow of existence in which one is drawn into the mysterious fascination of God (by everything that happens in one's life up to and including death, whether explicitly reflected upon or not). Jesus is the unique and effective exemplar, wrought by God's power, replete with victorious promise, for belief in God. And so he may and must be and remain for us unreservedly the one who he is in traditional Christian teaching and piety.

IS CHRISTIANITY'S EXISTENCE THREATENED FROM WITHIN?

Do all the other remaining elements, particularly those of the Church's concrete life, pose a threat to the current and future existence [182] of this imperishable and irreplaceable Christianity? This is a final question in the framework of our general considerations that requires at least the beginnings of an answer. Beyond doubt much of what the Church and average Christians do blurs and distorts the Christian's truly authentic relationship to God and reduces the concrete chances of Christianity and the Church in the future. Over and over again such weaknesses and mistakes must be acknowledged and eradicated. There is in the Church a great deal of legalism, ritualism, thirst for power, and worldliness. As in every social body, so too in the Church there is a danger of the institution's asserting itself in a self-serving way. Despite all goodwill on the part of the Church's officials and its people, the necessary renewal is actually carried out too late. This has been true in the past and it will also remain true in the future. Moreover, no reliable forecast for the course of secular history can be provided, not even for the next few decades. Therefore we cannot exactly foresee what the future of the worldwide Church will be like even for this brief period of time.

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But does all of this really give us reason to fear that Christianity in its concrete institutional form might die of old age? If it is true that Christianity's actual essence cannot be superseded, then the real existence of this essence is something that is assured, provided only that an essence of this kind is something that corresponds to the most fundamental human need for ultimate meaning (it actually goes beyond this!), and this essence will continue to have a real existence in history as long as human beings continue to exist.

This consideration provides no basis for predicting the absolute or relative number of Christians or their significance in the humanity of the future. Even if we believe and are convinced of the permanence of the Church's present social and institutional structures, we are still far from knowing what concrete form the future realization of these structures will take. The original community in Jerusalem, the imperial Church of Constantine at the time of the Fathers, the feudal Church of the Middle Ages (with its Papal States and its popes who waged war), the bourgeois Church after the French Revolution, which has lasted practically up to our own days, were always one and the same structured community of faith in Jesus – and yet what [183] transformations took place within this entity that is one and the same! No bishop or Christian (apart from the boldness of their Christian faith in Jesus) could ever have imagined that the Church, whose epoch they themselves experienced in the brief span of their own lives, could change so radically without perishing, and yet the Church continued to live just as if it had always been more or less that way. Perhaps at some time in the future the pope will live in the Philippine Islands, perhaps there will be much less Roman organization and bureaucracy (even if that is just as inconceivable for many people as the final disappearance of the Papal States was for a Roman prelate a hundred and fifty years ago). Perhaps even with all of the bishop's power remaining the responsible initiative of Christians at the basis will be much larger than it is today. None of these things can be foreseen and every Christian is free to imagine his or her ideal form for the Church of the future. But there can be and there will be in the future a Church of those people who, united in their gaze on Jesus in faith, hope, and love, go forth to the promise that is infinite.

As a mysterious goal, which at the same time includes creative freedom and human freedom in creative response, this future form of Christian faith and life has already been given to us as a gift now because God himself with his own life and his own freedom has granted himself in grace to the history of the world. For this reason the Christian of today has a responsibility for the future of Christianity. For the present is always the fulfillment of the task of daring the future, of executing the testament of the past precisely by something new that is not already present in an evolutionary way in the old.

Where should one begin when one says that one might have the courage of faith and wants to bear witness to this?

Here is where I begin. At the outset I found myself as a believer, and no reason arose compelling or causing me not to believe. I was born a Catholic because I was born and baptized in a believing environment. I place my hope in God that this faith which has been handed on by tradition has been transformed into my own decision, into an actual faith of my own; that I am also a Catholic Christian in the core of my being, something that ultimately remains God's mystery and the mystery in the depth of my being that is not accessible to reflection and that I am not capable of stating to myself. I say: to me as a believer there has occured first of all no reason that would cause me to stop being the person who I am.

[184] It is my understanding that one would have to have reasons to change in a way that goes contrary to the law according to which one took one's original place. For whoever

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would change without such reasons, whoever would not first of all be willing to remain faithful to the received situation of one's existence, to what has once been realized in the spiritual nature of one's own person, would be a person who would fall into a void, a person who interiorly could only be in a state of dissolution. What has first been given must, until the opposite has been proved, be regarded as the thing that is to be taken over and preserved, if a human being does not want to give himself or herself up. One can live and grow only out of the roots that already live in the way that they are, only out of the beginning to which one gives the primal trust of existence.

If one received from tradition gifts that are sacred, if it opened vistas and summoned one with an absolute and eternal call, then it may well be true that this alone as unreflected experience and simple realization without suspicion and doubt is still no explicit and reflexive justification for this tradition as something that is absolutely true in the face of a critical conscience and an inquiring mind. But in the challenge of faith which I, too, think that I have experienced one thing has always remained clear to me, has sustained me as I have held to it. It is the conviction that what has been inherited and received must not simply be consumed by the emptiness of everyday existence, of spiritual obtuseness, of dark and gloomy skepticism, but at most by what is more powerful and calls to greater freedom, and more irresistible light. The faith I inherited was certainly always the faith that was challenged and could be challenged as well. But this faith was always experienced as that person who asked me: "Will you too go away?" and to whom one could only say always: "Lord, to whom shall I go?" It was experienced as faith that was powerful and good, which I could have given up only if the opposite had been shown.[1] Therefore, until the opposite has been proved. And now: no one has proved the opposite to me, not even the experience of my own life.

[1] An extensive and systematic handbook of spirituality reflecting this faith has been recently published: Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*, edited by Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

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THE SPECIFIC CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD

The question concerning the specific character of the Christian concept of God is more difficult to answer than is commonly believed. Since numerous concepts of God can be distinguished in the history of thought and in the history of religion, and since Christianity itself emerges as a particular phenomenon within this history of religion, one will assume arbitrarily from the outset that Christianity has its own specific concept of God, and hence that the only question is what this specific character consists of. The matter, however, is not quite as simple as it seems.

THE ABILITY TO KNOW GOD BY NATURAL REASON

When dealing with this problem two things must be borne in mind. In the Catholic doctrine on faith the First Vatican Council asserts that the existence of God, of the true God, can be known with certainty by the light of natural reason. It is true that the council makes no unequivocal statement as to *how*, in what way, and with what concrete reservations the fundamental *possibility* of a natural knowledge of God is actually realized in detail and in the history of religion, and it teaches that the assistance of the divine revelation in word is a moral necessity for a pure and complete realization of this possibility in the concrete history of humanity. On the basis of this definition, however, Catholic theologians do not have the right to assume that [186] the knowledge of the true God does not occur at all in the history of human thought and religion outside of Christian revelation.[1]

But if a knowledge of the true God can and actually does exist everywhere in the world, even though it be imperfect, dim and fragmentary, if the entire history of religion despite its depravities and its contradictions is the history of the knowledge of the God whom Christians confess, then the question concerning a specific character of the Christian concept of God obviously cannot be answered as simply as might first appear.

There might at least be the fundamental possibility that one or another element which is ascribed to the character of the Christian concept of God could be demonstrated outside of Christianity and its history. And vice versa. No matter how strong the Christian believer's conviction is in the integrity and permanence of the Christian concept of God, supported also by revelation in the proper sense, still it cannot be denied that this concept as well has a history of its own, that this history is a great deal more than the history of this concept emerging in ever brighter clarity but that it also contains a history of darkness and distortion, so that comparing non-Christian and Christian concepts of God is an extremely difficult undertaking and one that requires the most subtle distinctions.

[1] Even among Christian theologians there is today an allergy to metaphysics and natural knowledge of God. This allergy is in part explained by a justifiable reaction to a nonreflexive rationalism characteristic of Catholic fundamental theology particularly since the nineteenth century which more or less right down to our own day has continued to exercise its influence, much of it quite harmful. However, one should not for this reason espouse the view that God has indeed been spoken of in many ways beyond the confines of the Old Testament and the New Testament, but that something totally different is meant from what Christianity means when it uses the term *God*.

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THE EFFICACY OF REVELATION EVEN OUTSIDE OF ISRAELITE AND CHRISTIAN HISTORY OF RELIGION

There is also a second and perhaps more fundamental difficulty. In Catholic as well as in Protestant theology it is customary not only to make a distinction in terms between divine revelation and the human attempt to know the absolute from below, from the human standpoint, to separate on a conceptual level faith that comes from hearing [187] and metaphysics as a product of one's own human capacity. Further, one proceeded on the more or less tacit assumption that this divine revelation took place only within the historically definable area of Old Testament and New Testament religion, that it could be found only there, and that the remaining field of the history of religion was the field of religion produced by human effort alone and from below. Given this presupposition, it must of course be relatively easy to establish a radical distinction between the Christian concept of God and the concepts of God found in other religions.

The question that we are dealing with here, however, takes on another and more difficult form if one does not go along with this presupposition. For if one accepts with Vatican II the possibility and the reality of a really salutary faith as something that is always and everywhere present in principle in space and time due to the universal salvific will of God, and hence also revelation in the properly theological sense, then one cannot say that it is clear from the outset that the Christian concept of God, stemming from God's revelation, can be found exclusively within the history of revelation as found in the Old and the New Testament, that is, in the Bible.

Furthermore, if one does not take care to use as a basis for the other interpretations of God a hermeneutic which determines the individual statements as far as possible on their immediate wording alone, and which neglects contrary implications as well as the things that are actually meant in the background of the immediate statement and are realized existentielly in order to work out as far as possible clear contours and characteristics of the phenomena of the history of religion, but rather makes a reverential attempt to discover a common element in all religions, Christianity included, then historians of religion and Christian theologians will necessarily have great difficulties in naming a specific characteristic of the Christian concept of God.[2]

THE ANCIENT BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF GOD AND THE NEAR EASTERN HISTORY OF RELIGION

For example, the attempt has been made to distinguish the specific character of the ancient biblical concept of God from its Near Eastern environment by saying that in this environment gods were known only as representatives of a historical, cyclical forces of nature, while the God of ancient Israel was a God of history and of the covenant. But if an expert in this Near Eastern history of religion thinks that it is possible in principle to identify a concept of God like that of Israel even outside of Israel, then Christian theologians need not lodge an a priori objection. They can quite easily leave this question to a neutral a posteriori research, and there is no need for them to assert a priori that a concept of God like that of Israel cannot and may not be found outside of the Old Testament.

[2] Due to lack of time and my own incompetence the attempt cannot be made here and now to make a critical appraisal of the correctness of traditional determinations of the specific character of the Christian concept of God. In principle, Catholic theologians will have no a priori objection if and when an attempt of this kind succeeds in a convincing way. But they would not be obliged to object either if historians of religion maintain that this or that attempt is a failure owing to the facts of the history of religion.

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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD

When the inquiry itself is pursued in this objective framework a further element must be taken into consideration. The Christian concept of God has had a history of its own. If we presume that this history as a whole is not about to come to an end, then we must at least take into account a continuation of the history of this concept, one that may well be subject to numerous transformations and unexpected turns. If this history of the presumed specifically Christian concept of God is going to continue, then dialogue between Christianity and the other world religions will certainly have an influence in shaping this history. This dialogue will be characterized less by an enrichment of this concept of God due to extraneous elements than by a reawakened awareness of its own particular character which, in the divine economy of revelation, has first of all taken root and developed more clearly outside of specifically Christian history. Is it unthinkable that we might learn something from the monotheism of Islam? Why should it not be possible to come to an even clearer realization of a Christian personalism contained in the Christian concept of God by bringing in elements of truth contained in the religions and philosophies of the East in respect to a seemingly [189] nonpersonal nature of absolute being? In any case, when we conceive a specific element in the Christian concept of God we must not lose sight of the fact that this concept of God has not yet finished its own historical course, and that if this concept confesses the infinity and the incomprehensibility of God, then it actually postulates thereby a history of our own concept of God that can never be concluded.

POSITIVE STATEMENTS ON THE SPECIFIC CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD

Can nothing at all be said, then, about a specific character of the Christian concept of God? Does Christian theology from the very outset forbid such an attempt in every respect? We are now going to attempt to make a positive statement about the specific character of the Christian concept of God without the intention of asserting that this is the only possible statement. We shall attempt to overcome the difficulty which up to now has rendered a positive statement seemingly impossible.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD

One must consider the following. If religion makes a distinction between human beings and the world on the one hand and God on the other, yet at the same time places these in a relationship to one another, then one can conceive this relationship in a twofold manner.

The God Who Dwells beyond the World

This relationship can be conceived (albeit in manifold variations) as the relationship of the primordial ground of being to what has been grounded in existence, of the creator to what has been created, of the guarantor to the moral order that has been guaranteed, and the like. In all of these relationships God remains strictly speaking the one who dwells beyond the world, the one who is related to this world by what he creates and effects different from himself His

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[190] intervention in this world takes place always through something different from himself however glorious and beatific this might be and however much it may serve as a guarantee for existence. At least where the difference between an absolute God and a relative world is clearly maintained in contrast to pantheism or panentheism, the relationship between God and the world must be conceived as mediated always by something that is different from God even though it has an orientation to him. Regardless of whether this mediation is conceived as a gift, as a word that represents God, as a sacrament, as happiness effected by God, as the eternal validity of our reality sustained by him, or what you will, God is always related to us in these ways by means of something he establishes different from himself. Indeed, it seems that this cannot be otherwise the more radically one conceives the concept of God. Finite creatures who, if they really want to be devout, may not presume to identify themselves with God, seem to be ultimately *non capax infiniti*, and the recognition of this distance seems to be what alone constitutes their salvation.

God's Self-Communication

But through Christianity human beings are given the courage that faith, hope, and love bring them to conceive a totally different relationship between God and themselves. In this relationship God is not the one who establishes and guarantees human existence and ultimately brings it to completion, all the while remaining distant from it; rather, he is himself in his own reality the fulfillment of this finite existence, an existence which is really *capax infiniti*. No matter how radically the difference between a pantheistic and a Christian concept of God may be conceived, the Christian concept of God, when it is really conceived in a Christian way and not in a crudely popular way, is totally different from what the average Christian perceives. For the average Christian God is the Lord, the guarantor of the world, also the one who sees to it that given the requisite good conduct human beings with their lot in life come to a blessed completion (but, to be honest, this is viewed ultimately as a paradise of happiness not much different from the way Moslems conceive it). [191] But for the average Christian God is not the one who in an incomprehensible and improbable outpouring of his love communicates himself with his inmost reality to his creatures and as creator provides that these finite creatures, without being consumed in the fire of divinity, are able to receive God's life, his very glory as their own perfection. The creature is really *capax infiniti*.

God is not merely the one who as creator establishes a world distant from himself as something different, but rather he is the one who gives himself away to this world and who has his own fate in and with this world. God is not only himself the giver, but he is also the gift. For a pantheistic understanding of existence this statement may be completely obvious. For a Christian understanding of God, in which God and the world are not fused but remain separate for all eternity, this is the most tremendous statement that can be made about God at all. Only when this statement is made, when, within a concept of God that makes a radical distinction between God and the world, God himself is still the very core of the world's reality and the world is truly the fate of God himself, only then is the concept of God attained that is really Christian. It may then perhaps be understood as a paradox, something that cannot be comprehended except in a dialectic way, only as the ultimate point at which human thought plunges into the incomprehensibility of God. But why should it not be a paradox, when one is dealing with the God of eternal incomprehensibility?

THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP OF FREEDOM

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Something further must be said about this Christian concept of God and its specific character. Christianity conceives humankind's relationship to God as a reciprocal relationship of freedom, God's freedom and the freedom of humankind. It may well be true that the concept of freedom, especially when it is applied in such a universal and fundamental way, is permeated by all the darkness and incomprehensibility which are characteristic of the whole of being, of God, and of humankind in the gradual realization of its orientation to God. It may well be true that freedom in the reciprocal relationship [192] between God and creatures might appear to be a concept that can no longer be realized when one considers creatures in their total dependence on God. It may well be that nowadays freedom is in danger of being devoured by the concept of evolution as the basic pattern of our contemporary thinking. As true as all of these things may be, Christianity still cannot conceive reality in any way other than a history of freedom between God and personal, spiritual creatures, whom the sovereign power of God has constituted in their own reality in such a way that they have a free relationship to God himself, whereby creaturely freedom and the scope of this freedom and God's freedom do not cancel one another out. When divine and human freedom are present in this sense, history is present, unique history, which is not the arbitrary repetition of the same thing, not the possibility of reversing arbitrarily what has been freely done, but rather the event of the coming into existence of what is definitive, unique history of human and divine freedom in a unique dialogue.

This history is really the history of God himself because he has made his most proper untouchable reality the ground, the innermost dynamism, the real content and the goal of this history. It may well be true that the relationship of this history, insofar as it implies created reality, to God's eternal knowledge of this history beyond all time is obscure, but in any case this history is itself something real – it is history that is still running its course, reaching toward a definite goal which is yet to come, history which for its part has a knowledge of itself as an internal element of its own reality, history which in each current moment is in a phase which had not previously existed in its specific character within the whole of history and which will not exist in the future.

At least in principle, this history can ask itself what phase it is in, how far it has advanced, since the element of origination out of the past and the element of futurity in a future yet to come are a part of every instant of history, of every present time. The determination of the specific character of a definite phase of this entire history of freedom is then, because it is a question of the history of God himself, also an element of the concept of God itself. To this extent, then, we may ask whether the revelation that takes place in the history of salvation can provide us with information as to what phase this history has reached, whereby what is characteristic of this phase [193] and the fact of its disclosure are part of the history of salvation and revelation itself

THE HISTORY OF REVELATION AND THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

The history of salvation and revelation actually answers this question for us. This history, which as history of salvation and spiritual peril is actually an open dialogue between divine and human freedom whose final issue cannot be known from the history itself, so that it is an open question whether it will end in definitive salvation or in a state of being lost definitively, does in fact say that it has entered upon a phase in which it has irreversible assurance of salvation for itself as a single and entire history of humanity, even though no theoretical statement is yet allowed about definitive success in regard to the history of a particular individual and even though the history of human freedom as a whole has not yet come to an end. Through God's revelation, and this originally not by means of a theoretical statement

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with which it would have indoctrinated us, but by means of the single historical event of God's incarnation in this history, we know that God's freedom has offered this history not merely a *possibility* of salvation but rather that God has through himself transformed this possibility of salvation into reality – and this in an irrevocable way. Without being abrogated the creature's freedom for evil has already been surpassed by the greater power of God's own freedom. He has willed absolutely and attained the realization of the world's salvation, not only in the sense that he merely "willed" to offer it to human freedom.

God's self-communication to what is other than himself posits creaturely freedom, and so it is as such conditioned. The history of this self-offer has advanced so far, however, not only in God's eternal plans but in itself that this self-communication actually and irrevocably succeeds, without thereby ceasing to be a history of freedom as well. As has already been said, since the history of this self-communication of God to the world is a history of God himself, and indeed only as the latter can it be the former, the irrevocability of God's blessed self-communication to the world as something that is [194] already present in the world implies an irrevocability of the history of God himself even though this irrevocability must not be understood as a natural necessity but rather as the free decision becoming definitive.[3]

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD

If we ask in this way what the specific character of the Christian concept of God is, then we would have to make the following cautious statement without claiming that the answer is exhaustive. First of all, of course, this Christian concept of God will stand out over the others that exist by the fact that contrary to all atheism, pantheism, panentheism, deism, and concealed polytheism it lets God really be God, as, for example, the First Vatican Council describes him:

> The true and living God is one, the creator and Lord of heaven and earth, almighty, eternal, infinite, incomprehensible, infinite in understanding, will, and every perfection. Since he is a unique, spiritual being, subsisting in himself, he must be proclaimed as really and essentially different from the world, totally blissful in and from himself and unspeakably sublime over everything that exists and can be thought of outside of himself.

However, since Christianity in its historical makeup in principle makes no claim at all to being able to attain this pure concept of God by itself alone, then with the concept of God just described, however historically Christian it may be, there is still no fundamental assertion of any characteristic of a specifically Christian kind.

If the Christian concept of God is to be grasped in its specific character, then it is clear that the concept in question is one that must be derived from actual revelation as distinct from a metaphysical knowledge of God from the creaturely world as such. In undertaking this, however, one must bear in mind that Christian [195] theology has no right to equate actual, supernatural, personal revelation simply and solely with Old and New Testament revelation in its historical area and its oral and written word.

If, then, one asks what this revelation says about the peculiar nature of God and about what cannot be attained outside of itself, then one may say the following. Precisely this God,

[3] However, the definitiveness of God's history must not be understood in a Gnostic or Hegelian way or in the sense of many of today's Christian theologies among Catholic and Protestant theologians. These no longer really uphold the immutability and the blessed sovereignty of God in himself beyond creaturely history. Instead they want to move beyond the statement that God himself really has a history in the world to an assertion of a history of God in his own most proper divinity in itself.

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whom Christianity radically distinguishes from the world as free creator, is the God who has in his most proper reality, and not merely by the mediation of created realities, as inmost dynamism and definitive goal offered and communicated himself to the world in its spiritual creatures so that the otherness of the world can be understood as the condition of the possibility of this self-communication of God; creation exists as the presupposition of grace, and creaturely history actually takes place as an element of the history of God himself. And God's revelation says further that this history of God in his world in the dialogue of human and divine freedom in Jesus Christ has already attained the phase of the irrevocability of an actually blessed conclusion.

In my opinion this is what the specific characteristic of the Christian concept of God is at least in fact, even though this is far from being always attained in the average sermon and in popular piety because these have been retarded in a notion of God who has created the world as something that remains at an eternal distance from him and that is the recipient of his finite gifts. Should it be possible in the history of religion to discover both of these characteristics of the Christian concept of God in non-Christian ideas of God as well, at least in traces and in the vaguest of notions, then Christian theologians would not have to take issue with this. They would simply attribute it to that self-revelation of God which according to their own principles must always and everywhere be present in history, because owing to God's universal salvific will salvation and faith must always and everywhere be possible.

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[196]

14

THE QUESTION OF MEANING AS A QUESTION OF GOD

Everyone knows that there is a great deal of talk today about meaning, about the loss of meaning. It seems that the word *meaning* is out to displace the old word *truth* to a certain extent. It would seem that people today are no longer seeking truth, comprehensive truth, but rather meaning. In this change of terms one can perhaps also notice that it is human beings themselves who are becoming the focal point of human questioning and human seeking. People occupy themselves with a great deal of knowledge in numerous sciences; they are seeking truths in the plural rather than the absolute truth that Scripture tells us will make us free; and so people today are more inclined to inquire about meaning in the singular. Here, of course, the question remains open – and it will not be given explicit thematic treatment here – whether with this shift of interest from truth to meaning the really one and true meaning of human existence is perhaps being lost sight of as a result of this intellectual egoism (if one may use that term). Inasmuch as we are going to consider the question of meaning as a question of God, this problem has been superseded, because God, if one really understands that term correctly, is at once absolute meaning and absolute truth.

UNDERSTANDING MEANING IN ITS TOTALITY

When discussing meaning, or more precisely the meaning of human life, we are of course not referring to particular, individual interrelations [197] between realities which are themselves particular, as, for example, the obviously meaningful connection between the ability to fly and the structure of a bird's wing. Nor are we referring to the meaning experienced, for example, in a definite, individual artistic experience, the content of which is perceived not as a means to some other end but as something that is meaningful in itself, and thus finds legitimation through itself and not merely through its usefulness for some other purpose. The meaning that we are talking about here is the one and total, universal and definitive meaning of the whole of human existence, which a human being is once supposed to experience and which will manifest itself in this experience as something that is itself perfectly good and beatific. It is our intention to make clear that the question of meaning understood in this sense is to be considered as identical with God. These two terms and the reality meant by them are to be understood in the sense that one explains the other; what absolute meaning is can be understood by the word *God* and vice versa.

If we want to explain the question of meaning as a question of God, we presume the existence of such a universal and absolute question of meaning and the possibility of meaningful inquiry into such meaning, indeed that the very assertion that a question of meaning is really meaningful and not meaningless from the very outset already includes in itself the reality of such meaning. An assumption of this kind is of course not self-evident. Agnostics and skeptics will indeed admit that in living their lives, however they might decide to do this, people always experience partial elements of purposefulness and meaning. They set up goals for themselves, achieve them, evaluate the results as positive, as gratifying and enjoyable in contrast to failures and disappointments, both because they distinguish these things from other conditions of their lives that they want to avoid or eliminate and because they have experiences in themselves not bound up with any specific purpose and which they evaluate as positive. But skeptics and agnostics will say that a total and definitive meaning of

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existence cannot be found. Life ultimately fades away into a void; the question of and the demand for a definitive, all-embracing meaning of existence are meaningless from the very outset. Two experiences in particular give rise to this attitude.

First, it seems that this all-embracing meaning that integrates everything into itself and brings it to completion does not occur in [198] our experience. It seems that our experiences of meaning are only piecemeal and no one of them results in total meaning. Despite their meaningfulness for a specific purpose, they time and again point away to another experience and thus into an indeterminate void, and in any event they pass away. Second, people experience not only the apparently eternal continuation of individual experiences that are always finite but also the senselessness which seems to occur in nature and which is also perpetrated to a hideous extent by their own freedom within human history. The apparent lack of the experience of total meaning, the evanescence of everything temporal, the frightful experience of senselessness seem to give the agnostic and skeptic every justification for denying that human existence has an absolute and universal meaning, or at least for not reckoning with this meaning.

EXERTING REASON AND FREEDOM

But if, despite this, there is still to be a total meaning of human life, then it is obvious from the start that the affirmation of this meaning will require the utmost effort of human reason *and* of human freedom. The totality of a real meaning of the whole of existence can only be attained by a complete commitment of this existence with all its dimensions. However little this obvious fact dispenses people from exerting all their knowledge with all of its possibilities, it is just as obvious that the real affirmation of this all-embracing meaning of existence is also an act of their freedom in an ultimately reciprocal interpenetration of knowledge and freedom, of theory and practice, of insight and love. Therefore those who uphold the reality of this absolute and universal meaning need not waver because there are sluggish people, people entangled in the details of their existence, people who are overwhelmed by the previously mentioned difficulties of an absolute affirmation of meaning. Indeed, those who commit themselves to an affirmation of an absolute meaning of existence need not hesitate to assume that many agnostics, skeptics, and smug people, who claim objectivity for themselves alone, at some point or other in their existence when, for example, they are selfless contrary to all advantage and profit of their own, affirm in the actual realization of their existence an absolute meaning of their lives contrary to the way they themselves interpret their lives. It can also [199] be quite possible that an agnostic self-interpretation, the admission that with all one’s individual knowledge one has still become lost and confused in the darkness of unknowing, at that point where this apparently agnostic admission is accepted in humble serenity as the ultimate wisdom of life, is no longer an infernally empty agnosticism, but rather a serene acceptance in hope of the mystery that we quite rightly call God.

So as human beings compelled by the very fact of their own existence to be present to themselves and to be responsible to themselves, we are confronted with the question directed particularly to our knowledge and freedom whether we affirm such an all-embracing and definitive meaning of our existence or whether our answer to this question is negative or whether we at least want to try to leave it wearily aside.

The following questions are posed to our mind. Where do the particular experiences of meaning that one necessarily has ultimately originate? How do these experiences coalesce over and over again to more comprehensive, though still finite, interrelations of meaning? Do a little light and meaning emerge from a pure darkness and emptiness of meaning or through

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an infinite meaning, even though this has not yet been experienced in itself and cannot be grasped?

The question is posed to our *freedom*, whether it is allowed to understand itself as an absurd damnation, as a freedom that strives toward the infinite, is never satisfied, and yet achieves only what is insignificant and transitory in human life and becomes entangled in these things. The question is posed to our freedom how it finds it possible without affirming an absolute meaning to make a distinction between infidelity and fidelity, truth and falsehood, love and deadly egoism, if all acts, both the good and the base, perish in an ultimate meaninglessness in which nothing can be distinguished anymore. The question is posed to our freedom what responsibility carried through to the end might mean if there is no ultimate meaning; whether without this kind of affirmation responsibility might plainly and simply choose to give itself up by denying itself.

Once again: if the question is posed to our mind and to our freedom whether they say yes to a comprehensive and definitive meaning, this does not mean that this question *compels* the true answer in a concrete individual. One can of course evade this question. [200] One can feel overtaxed by the question. One can say that one cannot formulate the question clearly, let alone the answer, and so remain silent about such matters right from the outset. One can say that this question and its eventual answer, being themselves universal, have from the outset no preceding system of coordinates from which point question and answer could be rendered intelligible, with the result that question and answer could for this reason have no tangible meaning at all.

These objections are not entirely wrong. Surely they demonstrate that the relationship of thinking human beings to this absolute and universal question of meaning is essentially different from their relationship to the individual objects of their consciousness, which, as individual objects, can be determined in the light of other objects and of formal norms of thought, and for this reason make a different impression of comprehensibility and clarity than the one that is present when individuals in their entirety are all at once confronted by the totality of all questions and by the universality of meaning viewed absolutely.

In a question of this kind an obscurity and ultimate element of the unmasterable must be expected by the mind. In fact these are such an essential part of the matter itself that when one fails to see and accept them, it is obvious right from the start that the question has not been understood and the answer will miss the mark. But despite every possibility of evading this one and total basic question, both mind and freedom are still asked whether they are justified in refusing to face this question. This refusal is of course altogether possible, and its justification must be denied. The total question of meaning must be asked, and mind and freedom must say that they must have a fulfilment by a meaning that is one and infinite, and this for the reasons we have just indicated.

THE HUMAN BEING CONFRONTED WITH THE QUESTION OF MEANING

This conviction is valid among other reasons due to the fact that human beings simply cannot avoid being faced with the total question of meaning. In their theoretical consciousness they may try nervously to avoid facing this question. If the question occurs in an [201] explicitly theoretical way, they may try to thrust it aside as unanswerable or senseless. But in living their lives human beings are necessarily confronted with this question and they have to answer it, regardless of whether their answer is yes or no, regardless of whether and to what extent they once again make this ineluctable answer the object of reflection and verbalization. For there are concrete questions of life which are posed to the freedom of individuals in their entirety; these are called questions of conscience and they must be answered with an

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unconditional yes or no on the part of individual subjects in their entirety. These questions allow no neutral abstention because the very attempt to abstain from them would itself be a decision for its part, and a bad one at that. But in decisions like this an absolute meaning is affirmed or denied, because an absolute life and death decision, and one of irrevocable definitiveness, is not possible at all vis-à-vis a particular object alone as such.

It is now immediately evident that this total meaning of existence, which is all embracing and fulfills every demand that meaning can make, cannot be pieced together from things that yield a partial fulfillment of meaning. The attempt to grasp the universal and definitive meaning in this way would only mean a series of things that yield a partial fulfillment of meaning and move on into a void; each one of them would offer only the permanently unfulfilled promise of a total fulfillment of meaning. To attempt to do this would be tantamount to a perpetual condemnation to the toil of Sisyphus; it would be the constantly repeated attempt to attain the whole in something that is only a part.

If in this light a total fulfillment of meaning is conceivable only “outside” of the course of history which proceeds in a fragmentary way, this does not mean, of course, that this total fulfillment of meaning is not at the same time the eternal fruit of history into which this history is elevated. The comprehensive meaning of history itself, however, cannot be a mere fragment of history because freedom, by willing and realizing the particular and individual object in temporal history, always preapprehends the entirety of a definitive and total realization of the free subject, who wills an infinite fulfillment of meaning.

So even though freedom and the spirit in and with this freedom will a “transcendent” fulfillment of meaning for current history, this is always something that at present lies beyond the spirit and freedom, [202] is not yet a definitively grasped, “transcendent” answer of meaning, and yet it is full of meaning for the concrete life that we have to lead here and now. We must not pass over “the hope of eternity” (to express it in biblical terms) with a mere shrug of the shoulders and leave it to dreamers, as though what we have to do here cannot be changed by such metaphysical dreams. For wherever human beings in the present time realize with earnest faith an ultimate openness to a total and definitive meaning of their lives as their own hope, their relationship to the realities of this world and to the tasks of their everyday existence changes, and this change is liberating, brings relief, and provides objective clarity.

Those who in hope believe in and accept an absolute meaning for their lives, which, notwithstanding all their own responsibility for achieving or failing to reach this goal, they do not have to piece together by means of their own achievements, are free persons vis-à-vis the individual realities, tasks, and obligations of their own lives, which would otherwise enslave them. The affirmation of an absolute meaning which overpowers our practical experience is not a matter of idle speculation, but has quite real and tangible consequences.

Should someone object that even other people who do not affirm and hope for this absolute fulfillment of meaning for their lives can nonetheless come to grips with them just as well and as bravely, objectively and serenely as people who strive toward this fulfillment of meaning as their goal, then one would have to answer that this kind of assurance has presumably not yet been confronted with the ultimate abyss and with the despair of human existence if it thinks it can come to grips with life without letting itself be bothered about ultimate meaning. And the further question would have to be asked whether this assertion about being able to come to grips with one’s life without despairing about its ultimate meaninglessness is not really sustained by an ultimate affirmation of meaning at the root of one’s existence, an affirmation that is only concealed by a theoretical counter interpretation on the surface of the consciousness. And finally, one would have to say that a profound despair about the ultimate meaninglessness of existence need not necessarily express itself in concrete psychiatric or psychoanalytic phenomena. The further question would have to be asked whether a serene and quiet resignation which is willing to accept reality as it is,

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patiently and without reservation, is not, in fact, a real form of hope, even though it [203] appears modest and unassuming, in the sense in which we Christians call this final acquiescence in reality which is still on the way.

But before we bring our observations on the absolute and definitive meaning of our life into direct relationship with a statement about God, these observations permit us to say something further about this absolute meaning itself. The meaning about which we are inquiring in contrast to individually meaningful realities must always be and must always remain the mystery that cannot be encompassed, that can never be penetrated or manipulated. The demand for the universal meaning that brings the total reality of meaning in itself into an integral unity would imply a contradiction *in se* if this meaning were at the same time something that we could penetrate and manipulate. The universal meaning cannot have outside of itself a system of coordinates that reaches beyond this meaning itself, a system on the basis of which it could be penetrated and manipulated.

Thus, for the person who is not identical with this meaning but rather approaches it as one who is questioning and seeking, this meaning must of necessity be unencompassable. Human knowledge reaches out beyond any individual reality, and so, too, does human freedom. But this means that this infinite meaning cannot itself be once again encompassed and mastered in the same way as the individual objects of knowledge and of freedom. Thus human beings are essentially and inexorably confronted with the unencompassable mystery In a preapprehension of knowledge and freedom they move beyond the individual object in order to grasp it by surpassing it in this way, and so they arrive in the presence of the universal meaning as a permanent mystery. Owing to this mystery they “fail” (so to speak) and this is how they find their fulfillment, by the loving acceptance of this mystery as their own completion.

However, when human beings accept the unspeakableness of the meaning that encompasses them and that cannot be encompassed by them and thereby also accept the unspeakableness of their own existence, when they admit it and surrender to it in love, they have found and accepted their own true nature. They accept the total meaning not as one dominated by them, but rather they let themselves be overpowered by it. The learned ignorance in respect to this total meaning, which has the most radical knowledge when it accepts the incomprehensibility of what is known, is the true essence of today’s widespread agnosticism and skepticism, which is not radical [204] enough when it pretends to a profound penetration of the nothingness of all reality, but rather when it really admits the mystery that accepts us and overwhelms us.

Thus our question of meaning is now beset by an odd crisis. We demand meaning – and, quite rightly, a total meaning. Thereby we are tempted almost automatically and unreflexively to understand this meaning as the thing that “can be penetrated,” and “has been penetrated,” as the thing that has been elucidated and therefore sheds light on the darkness of our existence. We demand light and automatically imagine this light, which is supposed to illuminate everything and make it meaningful, as something similar to the kind of lights that we ourselves use when groping about in our darkness. We think that something is known if its individual elements are grasped in their reciprocal relationship and can be incorporated into the larger context of our needs and questions. But the point is precisely that it may not be a question of this when we acknowledge the total meaning as the unencompassable mystery, when we have the experience of the incomprehensibility of the total meaning, in which experience it is not some individually known thing that is accepted as a regrettable remnant of a penetrating knowledge, but rather the mystery is experienced as the ultimate meaning of our entire existence.

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FROM THE QUESTION OF MEANING TO THE QUESTION OF GOD

But now it is time to understand the question of meaning explicitly as the question of God. Actually we have always been talking of God up to now without using that term. The presupposition is only that we grasp that the total, comprehensive, and definitive meaning of our life, the meaning toward which we are tending in spirit and in freedom without being able to produce this meaning by settling upon individual aims which have meaning in themselves, is a reality.

For if this meaning were nothing more than a mental construct, something that is only an ideological postulate, then our question of meaning, insofar as it is the question of an actual human being, would end up in a void, in a nothingness which explains nothing and which can have no motive force, something that is not at all capable of sustaining the radical seriousness of our question of meaning.

[205] If someone thinks that a statement of this kind is something that we have merely concocted in our heads because we have to speak of it in order to tell it to ourselves; if someone believes that only the things that directly strike the experience of our senses are the things that have true reality; if someone feels that things are real and not just mental constructs only in virtue of the realities which we cannot avoid even through our freedom, then of course this person cannot be helped. Persons such as these can only be reminded that these presuppositions have also been thought up by them, therefore that for them they would also have to fall under the suspicion of unreality, that these presuppositions have not been proved and ultimately, even though this is not apparent at first glance, contain contradictions.

Our question of a total meaning is something we take seriously; we consider our answer to this question to be valid; therefore we consider the existence of this universal meaning toward which we are tending without creating it ourselves to be present as an absolute reality, and we call this reality God. Thus for us the question of meaning and the question of God are identical. The reality of an absolute meaning and the reality of God are identical.

When we come in this way from the answer to the question of meaning to the answer to the question of God, we do not mean to say that this way, in its conceptual explicitness, is the only way to a knowledge of God. Ultimately all the ways leading to the knowledge of God will be identical when viewed in final exactness, and so in the last analysis it is not so important whether one calls these ways, or some of them, “proofs of the existence of God.” But we do not wish to assert that the process of coming to a knowledge of God necessarily and for everyone would have to be accessible in a way that is equally good precisely under the catchword “meaning.” We cannot maintain this because the traditional formulations of these ways to the knowledge of God, of these proofs of the existence of God, are accustomed to work in other conceptual frameworks and we certainly have no intention here of calling them into question. Conversely, it is correct that all genuine ways to the knowledge of God, if they do not want to run aground on the rationalistic shoals of a superficial cause-and-effect mode of thought, must always lead over the totality of human existence with its limitless transcendentality and freedom, and so in any event they cannot run very far from the explicit question of meaning and its answer.

[206] If the ultimate answer attainable by human beings to the universal question of meaning contains an ultimate affirmation of the reality of the infinite God, indeed if both are identical, this does not mean that it is possible on the part of human beings alone and of the freedom and spiritual nature proper to them to attain an ultimate and definitive determination of the exact relationship of human beings to this absolute meaning of their existence called God. On the part of human beings alone it remains an open question, even when the ultimate question of meaning is answered, how and to what degree of nearness or distance human beings in the definitive character of their freedom arrive at this divine meaning of their lives.

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On this point it is only Christian revelation that provides a precise and radical answer. God, the absolute meaning, the infinite reality, the eternally hidden one that always remains a mystery gives himself to human beings in their completion by what we call the direct vision of God face to face. And in this, God, no longer through the mediation of a finite reality and of a created happiness, but through himself, is the ultimate, unsurpassable answer of meaning to that question which ultimately human beings themselves are.

It should be once again expressly emphasized that we are not actually answering the absolute question of meaning, which we declare to be justified and unavoidable (even though it can be present in a repressed way), with a God or a concept of God which is brought in from somewhere else as an answer to this question of meaning. Rather, the question about an absolute meaning, if it is really accepted and if it is permitted to articulate itself in its ultimate form, yields of itself the existence of an absolute meaning as something real and thus the existence of God himself There are of course individual human questions which can be answered through an experience quite different from this and through their object. But the total question of meaning, if not denied and if permitted full articulation, contains its answer in itself

Therefore this question together with its answer says originally and through itself what is actually meant by God. Therefore a knowledge of God is also already present when the question of meaning as a question that is meaningful and that answers itself is accepted in the concrete actualization of human life with its decisions of conscience, even when some people have the impression that they can make nothing out of the word *God* or even out of the words *absolute* [207] *meaning*, and similar words. In the inexorable responsibility of their lives as lived concretely these people are confronted by the question of whether there is an ultimate meaning; they, too, answer this question with yes or no and in this way take an ultimate position in respect to God and to his incomprehensibility.

On the other hand, this does not mean that an explicit verbalization of human beings' relationship to the ultimate, divine meaning of their existence is only an idle question for those who are engaged in metaphysical or theological speculation. By no means, since you, the person who is reading these reflections, laborious though they may be, are confronted in a more explicit and inescapable way with this question. Do you want to continue in a life consisting of nothing more than particular experiences of meaning, as though you were on a desert journey passing through an oasis here and there only to die of thirst in the end in the desolate wasteland? Or do you want to structure the life that you are living on the basis of the hopeful conviction that there is an ultimate meaning that beckons with infinite promise, while at the same time committing you to radical responsibility?

And so, if these reflections have proved to be something more than mere human chatter, then something has really happened in which the ultimate degree of promise and of responsibility have announced themselves, perhaps in a hesitant and obscure way, but nonetheless in a way that cannot be passed over. It does make sense to talk about meaning, and this meaning that we have been talking about is not to be found only in those few little fragments of meaning that we encounter on our life journey with all its absurdities. This meaning is infinite and it cannot be encompassed. It is our meaning and it is called God.

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[208]

15

JESUS CHRIST – THE MEANING OF LIFE

Perhaps these reflections are disappointing for many since they are not so much an intonation of a triumphal hymn of praise to the Christian answer to the question of the meaning of life, but they serve instead to delineate the boundaries of what is also a Christian answer to the question of the meaning of life. For the most that these reflections can do in the last analysis is to summon people to entrust the endless quest for the meaning that will fulfill them as human beings to the intangible mystery of God in the decisiveness of a hopeful faith and to accept the entry into the divine darkness as the only way to gain access to the ascent of the true light.

After all, a Christian answer to the question of the total meaning of human existence must take into account from the very outset that the total answer does not spare us the trouble of seeking in our lives answers to partial and individual questions of meaning. And of course we must not be disappointed if the answer to the question of total meaning remains a very formal one in this earthly history. We must not be disappointed if this answer does not of itself slake our unquenched thirst for a concrete, albeit particular, fulfillment of meaning. The declaration that God is infinite goodness who contains every fulfillment in himself is not going to satisfy our desire to have our cup of coffee sweetened with a lump of sugar.

THE QUESTION OF MEANING

First of all, some clarifications are called for when we speak of Jesus Christ as the meaning of life. When using the term meaning we are of [209] course not referring to particular, individual interrelations between realities which are themselves particular, as, for example, the obviously meaningful connection between the ability to fly and the structure of a bird's wing. Nor are we referring to the insight that a definite, individual artistic experience has a meaning in itself and legitimizes its existence through itself and not merely through its usefulness for some other purpose. The meaning that we are talking about here is the one and total, universal and definitive meaning of the whole of human existence. We presume, then, that there can really be such a meaning, that its essence is conceivable, and that its existence can be realized.

This assumption is not self-evident. Agnostics and skeptics will say that people always experience partial elements of purposefulness and of meaning when they set up goals for themselves and achieve them and when they strive for experiences which they evaluate as positive, as gratifying and enjoyable. But they will say that a total and definitive meaning cannot be found and attained. Life ultimately fades away into a void; the question of and the demand for a definitive, all-embracing meaning of existence are meaningless from the very outset.

Christians are convinced that the opposite is the case. They believe that a comprehensive realization of meaning is possible. They view this as a task of their own freedom to be fulfilled through the completion of this history of their freedom and through the gift of the one whom we call God. It is not until they posit this all-embracing fulfillment of meaning that they can begin to see what is actually meant by the word *God*.

It would take us too far afield here to justify this fundamental conviction held by Christians and to demonstrate its credibility. Concerning this total meaning, however, two points have to

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be made.

First. It is immediately evident that this total meaning of existence, which is all embracing and fulfills every demand that meaning can make, cannot be pieced together from things that yield a partial fulfillment of meaning. The attempt to achieve *such* a fulfillment of meaning would mean only an infinite progression of things that yield a partial fulfillment of meaning; each one of them would offer only the permanently unfulfilled promise of a total fulfillment of meaning.

Christians seek the total fulfillment of meaning "outside" of the course of history as eternal life given by God himself. By doing this they commit themselves to an answer to their total question of [210] meaning, the only conceivable alternative to which would be simply to waive any claim to an answer at all. But even though the answer of meaning is "transcendent," this answer is, as the only total one, full of meaning for the concrete life that we have to lead here and now. We must not pass over the hope of eternity with a mere shrug of the shoulders and leave it to dreamers as though what we have to do here cannot be changed by such metaphysical dreams. For wherever human beings in the present time realize with earnest faith an ultimate openness to God and his eternal life as their own hope, their relationship to the realities and tasks of this world changes, and this change is liberating, brings relief and provides objective clarity.

This, too, is something that cannot be further elaborated here. One point, however, must be insisted upon. Our quest for meaning here and now, no matter how much it has as its goal that God who overwhelms our practical experience, is not a question of idle speculation, but one that has quite real and tangible consequences.

Conversely, it is true and it must be emphasized that our total question of meaning has God as its goal, and he does not appear in our day-to-day empirical experience, particularly in the way in which this experience is circumscribed by the modern sciences which are oriented toward natural science. But even with this limitation the problem of a metaphysical-existentiell – and thus in some way or other empirical – experience of God is anything but one that has to be answered in a negative way.

Second. It must be stated that the God whom Christianity declares to be the fulfillment of the total question of meaning is and will remain for all eternity the mystery that cannot be encompassed, that can never be penetrated or manipulated. We cannot offer here a justification for this statement which indicates that human knowledge is ultimately oriented to this mystery as such, that owing to this mystery it "fails" (so to speak) and *only* in this way does it find its fulfillment. We are presuming here the Christian conviction of the incomprehensibility of God which remains a mystery. In the last resort the human being can draw nigh to this only in loving surrender, not, however, with a knowledge which brings the object known before the higher tribunal of knowing.

However, if God is the infinite mystery that can never be encompassed, then the total question of meaning is beset by an odd crisis. We demand meaning, and, quite rightly, a total meaning. Thereby we [211] are tempted almost automatically and unreflexively to understand this meaning as the thing that "can be penetrated and has been penetrated," as the thing that has been elucidated and therefore sheds light on the darkness of our existence. We demand light and automatically imagine this light, which is supposed to illuminate everything and make it meaningful, as something similar to the kind of lights that we ourselves use when groping about in our own darkness. We think that something is known if its individual elements are grasped in their reciprocal relationship and the whole can be incorporated into the larger context of our needs and questions. But the point is precisely that it *may not* be a question of this when we acknowledge God as the unencompassable mystery. For this experience of the incomprehensible does not consist of a regrettable remnant of a penetrating knowledge, but rather this experience constitutes the ultimate and original essence of

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knowledge.

If it is a question of the total and definitive meaning of human existence and if this meaning is supposed to be the incomprehensible God, then this meaning becomes the mystery to which one must surrender in the silence of adoring love in order to draw nigh to it. This quite different and unexpected interpretation does not imply a meaning which we can penetrate, seize upon and make subservient to ourselves. This meaning is the mystery that divests us of our very selves. Its blessedness will be bestowed upon us only if we affirm and love this holy mystery for its own sake and not for our sake, only if we give ourselves away instead of covertly turning God into a means of our own self-assertion.

THE QUESTION OF JESUS

Proceeding from these assumptions the question must be asked whether and how *Jesus Christ* is the Christian answer to the human question of meaning.

The proper and ultimate answer to the question of meaning is of course God, God in the sense that we have just indicated. Insofar as by Jesus Christ we mean the eternal Logos of God who is of one and the same divine substance with the Father, the statement that Jesus Christ is the ultimate answer to the ultimate question of human meaning is identical with the other statement which says that God is [212] this answer, he and no one else and nothing else. But it is obvious that this is not what is meant by the statement that Jesus Christ is the answer to the human question of meaning. This would contain nothing new, characteristic, or specifically Christian. Certainly by Jesus Christ the eternal Logos of God is meant, but precisely insofar as it has become flesh, as John says; insofar as it has entered upon a real, substantial unity with the whole human reality of Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus the question is to what extent this Jesus of Nazareth as a human being with a concrete human history, as one who has died and risen, has a constitutive significance (let us attempt to formulate the question in this way) for the total meaning of our lives. This is not simply meant to coincide with the statement that the eternal Logos is the meaning of our lives. And so Jesus Christ in his human reality and history cannot be the total meaning of our existence in exactly the same way that this can be predicated of God as God.

For Christian faith and Christian life it is clear that this questioning is of fundamental importance. On the one hand, Jesus Christ in his humanity is not simply identical with God, but rather he is one with God in the hypostatic union (to use the traditional expression). This unity in which we believe asserts at the same time the distinction between the human and the divine reality. On the other hand, God alone can be the ultimate goal of human meaning.

What this humanity of Jesus means more precisely for actual salvation, for the total meaning of the human being, is today an urgent question for Christianity.

This question is of course answered in Scripture and in Christian tradition and proclamation in manifold formulations which partially; complement one another and partially say the same thing, statements like the following. In the incarnation of the eternal Logos in Jesus of Nazareth God has accepted the whole of humanity and in this, since he has the same nature as we do, he has become one with the whole of humanity. The eternal Logos has redeemed us in the suffering and obedient death of his human history. For in this way he has made satisfaction to God’s eternal justice and thus become the reason for God’s salvific will; the reason that God holds out to us, despite humanity’s sin, his forgiving grace, which grace is God himself. Jesus of Nazareth is to a certain extent the historical event that; is sustained not only like all of history by the eternal, metahistorical [213] God, but the event in which God himself deals with the world on the stage of history and with it suffers its tragic character through to the end. By the obedience of his passion Jesus, as the loving immaculate one who

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was utterly guiltless, has opened to us sinners the way to the Father. For he has been totally one with us. Many other statements such as these and similar ones which explain the salvific significance of Jesus Christ – thus his constitutive significance and function for the total meaning of our existence – can be found.[1]

The soteriological (referring to redemption) affirmation of Christian tradition can be divided into two kinds, those which belong more to a pure Chalcedonism and those which come rather under the category of neo-Chalcedonism. This abstruse technical term of theology means the following. In contemplating the unity of divinity and humanity as the ground of redemption, many theologians lay such emphasis on the unity that they – even while upholding the dogma of Chalcedon which asserts that in Jesus the divinity and the humanity remain unmixed – consider the fate of Jesus to be the fate of God in himself. Thus in their interpretation of the dogma of Chalcedon they rely on the theology of Cyril of Alexandria which says that God has suffered, the eternal Logos of God himself has experienced our fate and our death and it is in this way that this fate of ours and our death have been saved and redeemed. The very Logos of the Father has taken upon itself our fate with its debt of sin and death and in this way has redeemed our fate.

Even in our days this "neo-Chalcedonian" theory of redemption can be found – for the most part of course without explicit reference to neo-Chalcedonism. The affirmation in itself is part of the patrimony of faith of Catholic Christianity. For when taken on its own terms it contains the *communicatio idiomatum*, literally, the communication of properties, that is, the teaching that everything that is predicated of the human being Jesus is also to be predicated of Jesus Christ who is God (and this does not mean: "insofar as" he is God!). [214] But a fine difference, not easily perceptible but nonetheless profound, manifests itself in respect to the neo-Chalcedonian interpretation described above as soon as this affirmation is read in the sense of a pure "Chalcedonism" which insists that the two natures are unmixed.

According to the "neo-Chalcedonian" interpretation of the redemption (even though it fully upholds the mystery), God has suffered and died and in so doing he has redeemed us. Though aware that this remains a mystery, it still understands this affirmation of the "obedient death of Jesus" as applying to the divinity itself. But at this point the exponents of pure Chalcedonism will insist that in the unity of divinity and humanity it must be maintained that the two are at the same time not mixed – even though they fully uphold the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in Jesus. Death and finiteness belong only to the created reality of Jesus; they are located on this side of the infinite distance between God and what is created, on the created side of the one God-man; the eternal Logos in its *divinity*, however, cannot as such take on a historical character and suffer an obedient death.

Pure Chalcedonism was always suspicious that the other soteriology would covertly evolve from a communication of properties (of the two natures) into an identity of properties (of both). The eternal God himself who stands beyond all history and suffering is permitted to suffer in himself (in a Gnostic sense or as understood by Schelling or in whatever sense you will). One presumes that our fate can be redeemed by transposing it into the interiority of God himself. Pure Chalcedonism – even though it fully acknowledges the hypostatic union and the corresponding possibility of the communication of properties, to be understood, however, also in a Chalcedonian sense – will emphasize that finiteness and death are, first of all, our fate that has to be redeemed. It is redeemed in that it was also the fate of Jesus; and in

[1] At the moment we are prescinding from the fact that such formulations – as often happens and no doubt with justification – can be divided into statements of which some are more ontical in nature and others tend to employ moral concepts and paradigms. Thus there are statements of an ontological unity of the Logos with the created reality which in itself is viewed not merely as a presupposition of salvation, but as a process of salvation itself. Then there are other statements about sacrifice, blood, obedience, etc., in which the salvific happening is discerned in its proper sense.

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him this fate can and must, due to the hypostatic union, also be predicated of the Logos with all legitimacy. But this should not be done in such a way that this affirmation forges an identity between subject and predicate, the eternity of the divinity and the suffering of the humanity. The hypostatic union is an assertion of that unique unity, which does not otherwise occur and is otherwise unknown to us, which includes in itself distinctiveness and nonmergence, and which was proclaimed as a dogma at Chalcedon. [215] Thus for theologians who espouse pure Chalcedonism, then, the question remains in what way this unity of God and a human being bears in itself its function and its significance for redemption.

The question remains how it is that we are redeemed when God demands of the human reality of Jesus our existence which is determined by guilt and death. Jesus' fate is in a true sense God's own fate. But this fate does not impinge upon God's own life, with its meta-historical character and its freedom from suffering and its beatitude without guilt, since God's reality and Jesus' creatureliness remain unmixed. The "pure Chalcedonian" will always say that it is God's holy beatitude; which is not subject to suffering, that has redeemed us *formaliter*, and not something terrestrial and finite that has been speculated into the interior of God – as he is in himself. The death of Jesus, however further that is to be explained, can only be the cause of why and how God gives us his beatitude free of suffering as our own, but it is not in itself this very redemption (thus *formaliter*).

If in this way reservations are registered here as well as a certain embarrassment in respect to the neo-Chalcedonian soteriology, this by no means denies that the doctrine of the hypostatic union is the basis of the soteriological, of the "redemption" significance of the fate of Jesus, or that it represents an indispensable element of the redemption.

The question remains whether the understanding of the christological dogma – also of the hypostatic union – might be better served if one proceeds in a way opposite to the one customary in traditional theology, that is, if one does not inquire about the reality of redemption by starting with Jesus' divinity, his hypostatic union, but rather if one tries to reach an understanding of the meaning of the hypostatic union by beginning with the soteriological significance for us of Jesus and his fate. The way suggested leads, then, "from Christ for us" to "Christ in himself." To put it simply: the hypostatic union is understood as the presupposition, in itself perhaps not entirely explicable, for what we experience in Jesus, namely, that he is the ultimate, irrevocable word of God's forgiveness and promise of himself to us. The Christian dogma of Jesus as God and as a human being should be understood as the formulation of the unique and irreplaceable significance of Jesus for our salvation. The hypostatic union is thus the presupposition that is always contained in this statement about Jesus' salvific significance.

[216]

JESUS CHRIST, MEANING AND SALVATION OF HUMANKIND

The salvific significance of Jesus for us is definitive and it cannot be superseded. In order to understand this, let us start at the very bottom. We see a human being whose life is characterized by an unsurpassable nearness to God. It is a life of absolute obedience to God and at the same time of unconditional solidarity with the human race regardless of how these human being might act toward him. This twofold solidarity with God and with humankind is sustained by Jesus unconditionally. The fate of Jesus which comes as a result of this is death in which he surrenders definitively and completely to God and to his inscrutable decree, while still maintaining his unconditional love for humankind. In this plunge into the absolute powerlessness of death, however, he is the one who is definitively affirmed and accepted by God *and* this is the way we experience him, precisely as the "risen one." (That is Christian

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faith as experienced by Jesus' disciples and by the Church, the validity of which cannot be accorded specific treatment here.) The fate and the person of Jesus have, therefore, a significance of their own which goes beyond their usual humanness. This Jesus proclaims that with him God turns to us definitively and irrevocably in a love that is forgiving and that contains the offer of himself; that the "kingdom of God" has come irrevocably; that on God's part the triumph of God's forgiving love establishes itself in human history in a way that cannot be overcome. Jesus' claim that with him God's self-communication to the world, despite its sin and its finiteness and its being under the thrall of death, definitively establishes itself is validated and sealed by the fact of Jesus' being definitively accepted by God through his resurrection.

But if this is the case, then Jesus in his self-interpretation, his death and his resurrection, is the unsurpassable, definitive word of God's affirmation of himself to the world. This already contains the traditional doctrine of the substantial, hypostatic unity of the Logos with the human reality of Jesus, if it is understood with radical seriousness. By accepting Jesus as God's irreversible, definitive self-promise to us we are already confessing him as the consubstantial Son of God.

Why is this so? Every created, finite reality exists in its own right within a larger sphere of possibilities. Alongside of it something else [218] is possible, even something contradictory. God, its free creator, has not established himself definitively in this reality alone. Everything that is finite and subject to a historical process, when considered as such in itself, remains retractable, revocable, always the object of a divine freedom which never establishes itself absolutely through this finite object as such alone, nor is it able to do so. Therefore every revelation in which God objectifies and manifests his will through a finite word or a historical occurrence remains open-ended, capable of revision, provisional. Something that as such is merely finite in itself alone is of its very nature incapable of signifying and mediating to us a divine communication which cannot be superseded. The communication always remains provisional in view of the infinity of God's possibilities and the sovereignty of his freedom. If, however, God communicates to us his self-promise as one that is irrevocable and definitive, then the created reality through which this takes place cannot simply stand at the same distance from God as other created realities. It must be the reality of God himself in such a unique way that God would disown *his very self* if he should supersede it because of its created finiteness.

Only a finite reality which God accepts as his own reality can make something that he establishes in the world irrevocable. God's word of revelation for us beyond which there can be no other must be God's own reality; otherwise it would remain subject to conditions and to revision just as any finite object is. While mere prophets can speak in God's name, the finite utterance that they communicate in word and deed can never proclaim anything more than what is open-ended and capable of being superseded. To put it in biblical terms, only the Son, who is God's Word and not only its finite utterance, can be the definitive, final prophet beyond whom there can be no further one. But Jesus lays claim to being God's definitive self-promise in a way that is unconditional and irreversible, and Jesus' self-interpretation and his claim are confirmed by God through the definitiveness of his existence in death and resurrection. Therefore Jesus' human reality, notwithstanding its historical and finite character, must be something that is not merely established by the God who is beyond the world, but it must be God's own reality – regardless of how limited our capacity is to understand how a divine reality which stands in identity to God is different from a reality of God which is God in virtue of its being accepted, as unity without selfhood.

[218] If the basic thrust of these reflections is correct, even though their formulations are imperfect, we can say the following. Jesus is the consubstantial Son of God. His human reality, notwithstanding its genuine, free, human subjectivity, is the reality of the eternal

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Logos of God. For Jesus is the irrevocable, unsurpassable, and definitive self-promise of God to us. And he can only be this as the consubstantial Son.

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

It is now evident that it is quite possible to have a Christology beginning "from below" with the experience of Jesus, experiencing him as our salvation, that is, as the historical experience of God's self-promise. From this point we can easily come to classical Christology's metaphysical statements. The proposition that Jesus is God's definitive self-promise to us and the proposition that Jesus is the incarnate Logos of God are interchangeable, provided only that the first proposition be taken with radical seriousness and that the second proposition concerning the true *unity* of the Logos and the human reality of Jesus (and not the mere identity) be understood in a Chalcedonian and not a monophysite sense.

There is an ascending Christology (proceeding from the human being Jesus) which coincides with the classical descending Christology (God becomes a human being). This ascending theology shows us how and why an apparently simple relationship trust in Jesus can contain within itself the whole of classical Christology. And this relationship is one that ordinary Christians who are not professional theologians can be expected to achieve. It is of course desirable that such Christians possess some familiarity with the formulations of classical Christology, and if they are educated, this may be expected of them. If, however, they find this difficult and that it involves too much of a metaphysical strain, they need not consider themselves to be poor Christians whose orthodoxy is questionable.

If a Christian can trustingly say: "In Jesus of Nazareth, in his life, his teaching, his cataclysmic death, his victory (which is called resurrection) God has pledged to me himself, his forgiveness, his own life that goes beyond all finite fulfillment"; if a Christian believes that this pledge is unconditional, irreversible, and definitive on God's [219] part and that it will never be superseded or surpassed in some age yet to come, indeed that it cannot be superseded since it is God's final word; if a Christian is committed to this with unreserved faith and gives this unsurpassable hope more validity than all doubts, skepticism, and reservations, then he or she is an orthodox Christian. This Christian has an existentiell realization of classical Christology. This Christian finds and accepts Jesus in a real and properly understood sense as his or her salvation.

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[220]

16

CHRISTOLOGY TODAY

First of all, I feel that even today Catholic theologians should not simply ignore the classical formulations of Catholic theology. The traditional formulation of a dogma and the way in which the Church's teaching office expresses it are of course not simply identical to the dogma itself. But when we come to deal with Christology, we cannot move beyond the traditional formulation of the dogma to the point where we can do without it entirely. Our own formulations do not reach a degree that is sufficiently adequate on the level of proclamation or of the expression of our personal belief to permit us to depart entirely from the old formulation, or to treat it as nothing more than a statement that belongs exclusively to the past history of the understanding of faith, even though this history is still normative for those engaged in theological reflection.

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL TRADITION

We theologians of today are expected to be objective and to engage in self-criticism. We have to be people not only who think that they have learned something from the history of faith but also who are still willing to learn from it. If we really do have this willingness, how could we possibly entertain the desire simply to abandon the old christological formulations in favor of new formulations of our own? Even if we grant that at some time in the future historical transformations in language might justify our expressing the reality contained in Christology in a totally different way (and in proclamation [221] in yet another, totally different way), objectively and from the standpoint of the history of ideas this future has certainly not yet arrived. And theologians who feel called upon to pioneer the Church into this future must take care not to lose contact with the mass of the faithful behind them and with the bishops. This concern is also an essential part of a genuinely Catholic theology, even if the pace of the march into the future of faith seems to the impatient to be rather slow.

On the other hand, it is just as important to recognize that even the most sacrosanct and abiding formulations of faith require explanation, and this means that they inevitably have to be expanded by the addition of other statements, even though these have widely differing degrees of binding force. (John Paul II insists on the word *transubstantiation* in the doctrine of the Eucharist. But a poor theologian like myself has no alternative but to start asking questions and to say what is really meant here by the phrases "substance of bread" and "transformation of substance," because they can be taken to mean many things that are not correct and that rightly seem nonsensical to a modern physicist.)

However, if we explain the binding propositions of dogma without succumbing to the illusion that such explanations are simple and obvious or that they might not perhaps be misleading; if in this process we engage in profound intellectual reflection and to the best of our abilities explore all the implications, then the old formulations themselves, and fidelity to them, lead in certain circumstances to statements in Christology that will astonish many people who up to now have heard the old formulas in tranquil familiarity and assumed they understood what they were saying. (For example, the doctrine of the true humanity of Jesus as traditionally proclaimed yields insights about the historical contingency of Jesus' consciousness and about the possibility that his consciousness might even undergo a religious development. In the past these insights were overlooked or even denied by those who

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explained this dogma.)

So Catholic theologians should, in addition to their other approaches, always strive to obtain from the old formulations of Christology new insights which seem important and indispensable for bringing their present-day Christology into a positive relationship to current ways of thinking. This is one way for them to arrive at new formulations without discarding the old ones, and they need not be obtained at the price of a merely negative criticism or by doing away [222] with the classical formulations of Christology. The effect of such a coexistence of old and (quite necessary and legitimate) new formulations on the Church's concrete awareness of faith, in view of the more precise "blending" of the old and new statements in the ordinary Christian's consciousness of faith and in the Church's official proclamation, is something that naturally cannot be exactly programmed in advance and can confidently be left to the future history of faith.

But it is obvious that even in Christology history has not ground to a halt. Genuine orthodoxy demands more than a (desperate and obstinate) repetition of the old christological formulations which are products of history and which will continue to be part of that history. But this historical reality is the very reason why we may not pass them over in silence as though they were now devoid of any binding force for us. Exegetes must tend to their exegesis and biblical theology, but I have no patience with Catholic exegetes whose work manifests no awareness whatsoever of the Council of Chalcedon. There must be an authentic integration of the past if Christology is to have any future. Rome must truly keep watch over the purity of christological doctrine and it must insist on the normative character of the Church's old official Christology. But to do this in such a way as to deny the need of new christological formulations would be a betrayal of the task of future proclamation.

I can accept the words of the Johannine prologue with a faith so steadfast that I am ready to die for it. These words will always be accepted as a real and vital foundation of my own theology. With joyous abandon born of firm faith I can let myself be overwhelmed by the bright darkness of God's revelation and refuse to be a clever rationalist, but even in doing this I may also tremble in the depth of my heart and spirit when I read: "And the Word was made flesh," and I may wonder what this really means and what it does not mean. I may ask this question if at the same I begin to think of the incomprehensibility and immeasurability of the God of a tremendous cosmos and if I also maintain in faith that this God is and remains unchangeable in himself, that he is unspeakably greater than anything that is or can be conceived of outside of himself (and therefore greater than Jesus' created reality). And I must believe that Jesus' human soul, as a human soul, contemplates in adoration from an infinite distance of creatureliness what is or it, too, the enduring [223] incomprehensibility of God. In all of this it remains true that the Word was made flesh.

When considering this article of faith, I refuse to lose sight of the other articles of faith just to make things easier for myself. For this reason we must constantly ask what Christology really means to say and what it does not mean to say, even if classical Christology must always remain one of the starting points for this inquiry. The more recent contributions to present-day Christology may not always be felicitous in their formulations, nevertheless they should be examined with benevolent respect and we should beware of imagining ourselves superior to them in an orthodoxy that ultimately remains sterile. When a little while ago a professor in Rome began his lecture with the observation that E. Schillebeeckx's Christology was heretical and therefore he would not discuss it, such a Christology is condemning itself out of its own mouth to being ignored by people of today and to being no more than an internal ideology of a steadily diminishing group.

A CHRISTOLOGY OF ASCENT

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Any present-day Christology must include a *Christology of ascent*. The terminology is not the important thing here. But a Catholic theology which upholds the necessity and importance of a fundamental theology which takes history seriously as the place where revelation occurs and which is compelled today to develop a more intense interaction between fundamental theology and dogmatics must start from the concrete historical Jesus of Nazareth. When one starts from here, the historical reports about Jesus should not be considered first of all as dogmatic propositions deriving their inspiration from revelation. In the ordinary objective development of theology faith in Jesus precedes convictions about the Church and its teaching office and the inspiration of the New Testament. A degree of *reciprocal* influence among all the elements of the one Christian faith need not be denied, but ultimately this does not alter the fact that it is Jesus who is the source of belief in the Church and Scripture, and in principle this cannot be the other way around.

In such a theology of ascent it is entirely legitimate to begin with statements about the significance of Jesus "for us" (which of course [224] express a reality "in itself'), because statements about something existing purely "in itself," whose significance is explained only subsequently, will not be listened to, at least not by people of today, and these statements have no effect. One need not hesitate to say the *propter nos* at the beginning of the Credo. When this is done in the right way it turns out that what seems to be extremely anthropocentric refers in fact to a person who finds himself only by abandoning himself to the incomprehensibility of God. At the beginning of Christology the question is, "What does he mean for us?" Then comes the question, "Who must he be if he has this significance for us?"

This significance can be described in a great variety of ways, and then of course the demonstration of this significance will have to be correspondingly varied. But the starting point for all of this will always be the encounter with the historical Jesus and the courage (itself shown "transcendentally" to be legitimate and necessary) to endure all the unavoidable difficulties involved when an absolute decision has its origin in a historical reality. All such arguments for the absolute significance of Jesus for us, since they are always and necessarily finite, will in the details of their exposition make one point clear, express another only vaguely, and perhaps overlook and, forget a third. The individual contours of these arguments will vary with people, cultures, and historical periods. It would not be praiseworthy but rather problematic and alarming if these arguments were, too uniform in the Church.

TWO ASPECTS OF AN ORTHODOX CHRISTOLOGY

With this reservation about the absolute validity of this necessary plurality of approaches to and aspects of the significance of Jesus for us, I would still venture to say that these approaches and aspects (combining the two) inevitably yield *two fundamental insights*.

Jesus Christ, God's Irreversible Pledge

First, I have to see Jesus, through his reality and his word, as the unsurpassable access to the immediacy of God in himself, not just as an access to this immediacy as idea and possibility but as the inherently [225] victorious promise of the realization of this immediacy. I shall try to make this a little clearer, leaving the question open to what extent the required constituents of an absolute religion are to be found only in him or whether the idea is intelligible apart from him and only in its realization has to be recognized in and through

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Jesus.

Absolute and fundamentally unsurpassable immediacy to God, such as finds its completion in the beatific vision, is the presupposition for the genuine *universality* of a religion. Without this a religion can only be regional, particular, popular, restricted to a specific culture, and so on, because its concern cannot extend beyond a finite element of salvation alongside which, by definition, other elements exist. If this closeness is to involve God in himself, it can only be understood as grace emanating from God's loving freedom. This grace can be thought of either in the form of a more or less neutral offer to human freedom or in the form of the actual God-given victory of this offer, establishing itself by its own power in and through human freedom. Theoretically, there is of course another conceivable form: rejection by human beings, resulting in the definitive catastrophe of human history.

In Jesus (and ultimately only through him) we experience through his life and his word that the history of the offer of an unsurpassable and absolute self-communication of God to humankind has entered a phase which can rightly be interpreted as the final phase of the history of human freedom as well as its first real beginning. In this phase the victory of God's offer of himself to humankind has become irrevocable, as a result of God's action and not merely a posteriori as a result of the actual exercise of human freedom. Jesus is God's promise of himself to humankind, essentially absolutely unlimited and existentielly now in a phase of eschatological irrevocability

It is not my task here to verify this interpretation of Jesus historically. It is, however, implicit in Jesus' proclamation that the kingdom of God has come in him, his message and his work, when one realizes that the kingdom of God, if it is really to be definitive and more than an earthly kingdom, must be identical with God himself and must burst the bounds of a model in which God is related to the world only as the creator and preserver of a world different from him, with its own possibilities and goals.

With the obvious assumption that salvation history is such that another way in which it is a reality is through word, and as a word [226] which occurs as a reality, I venture to say: the statement that Jesus is the irreversible pledge of the God who communicates himself as the content and goal of history and not a reality created by him, is necessarily coterminous with the classical statement of Christology concerning the hypostatic union. This will not be developed further here. But if these statements are really coterminous (and I am convinced that they are), then it is possible to make an "orthodox" christological statement which both implies from the very outset a "Christology for us" and also stands alongside the classical formulation of Christology and so performs a critical function in relation to possible misunderstandings of classical Christology (especially monophysite views which are still strong today). Of course the same critical function is also performed in the opposite direction by classical Christology on the newly proposed formulation.

Jesus' Death and Resurrection

Second, there is one point where I must clarify and elaborate what I have just said. If Jesus is to be God's victorious self-promise in history, the historical fact of this victory and its manifestation is conceivable only if it is seen as the irrevocable acceptance of this divine self-offer in Jesus. But this definitive and irrevocable acceptance of God's promise of himself, visible in history, can be conceived as taking place only through what we call, in Christian terms, *Jesus' death and resurrection*. However many ways there may be of conceiving the concrete response of freedom to its ultimate determination by "death," a theology of freedom could show that death – and only death – is the event by which freedom's choice becomes definitive. Even though the specific form of Jesus death may be an essential part of salvation

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history, Jesus' death is of fundamental importance to salvation history because it makes definitive the acceptance of God's offer of himself to Jesus (and in him to humankind). Of course either here or at another point in our discussion there would have to be an explanation of why and how there exists an unbreakable solidarity between Jesus and his fate, and humankind, such that God's promise of himself to Jesus and Jesus' acceptance of this promise through himself in his own death are really God's [227] promise of himself to humankind as a whole. But that cannot be presented here.

What has been offered here is nothing more than a few isolated and fragmentary suggestions for the kind of Christology required today. Any number of things could be added to what has been said. It would do no harm for a present-day Christology to take up the ideas of a Teilhard de Chardin and to elaborate them with more precision and clarity, even though in his work it is not very easy to find an intelligible and orthodox connection between Jesus of Nazareth and the cosmic Christ, the Omega Point of world evolution.

Above all, however, such a Christology for today and tomorrow would have to say much more than in the past about the highly personal loving relationship of the individual human being to Jesus of Nazareth. This could perhaps be described very simply and yet radically in such a way as to actually include in it the whole of classical Christology with the result that this classical Christology would lose some of the alien appearance that it often has today even for firmly believing Christians. If this relationship of the individual to Jesus were from the outset clearly understood as *a dying with Jesus* (*in absolute hope*) *in a surrender to the incomprehensibility of the eternal God*, Christology would no longer appear to the other world religions and the other forms of human desire for God as something compatible only with a particular religion, which cannot be the religion of all human beings.

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[228]

17

BRIEF OBSERVATIONS ON SYSTEMATIC CHRISTOLOGY TODAY

THE PERMANENCE OF FAITH

Young theologians who study theology today without learning in Christology what the Council of Chalcedon says, what person, nature, hypostatic union, and communication of properties mean, would be deprived of the obvious and requisite tools of Catholic Christology. It goes without saying that things like these are indispensable even today. If we show just a little respect for two millennia of the history of thought, if we still regard Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Descartes, and others as our masters and can still learn something new from them even though we philosophers of today are of an entirely different breed, then the same obviously holds true in the case of the Church's traditional two-thousand-year Christology. Far from being embarrassed, we ought to feel obliged to dig deeper into this christological tradition.

I cannot, nor do I have any intention here of explaining and clarifying in detail the unique permanence of Christian faith or that of Christian theology seen in the light of this faith, even though the latter is of a derived and secondary nature. The general contours of intellectual and spiritual history give evidence of this permanence and so does theology in particular. The past is still a vital reality and must always remain such. We have a responsibility toward it. If our own Christology in discharging the obligation and task of theological development encumbent on it today should fail to take issue with this [229] old traditional Christology or in this confrontation should come only to the conclusion that the old and the new have nothing to do with one another or that they contradict one another, this would be an indication that something is amiss with our own Christology, and not vice versa. Permit me this observation, since on this matter I have never held any other opinion in my whole life.

The Church's teaching – to the extent and on the level and in the way it is put forth by the Church – is assuredly a binding norm for a Catholic theology of today, just as it always has been in the past. This is of course particularly true in the case of a teaching as central as Christology. While it is true that all the statements about Jesus Christ can never give full expression to our final, interior, personal relationship to him, to Jesus of Nazareth, in the unique significance he has for living and dying, and that we always have and must have a relationship to him, Jesus of Nazareth, extending far beyond all of these theoretical statements of Christology, this is of course something else again. But we do have the duty – both toward ourselves as well as toward those whom we instruct and to whom we proclaim Christianity – of making it clear to some extent who this Jesus of Nazareth is for us, and this relationship must be clearly distinguished from other personal relationships to other historical figures. We have to involve ourselves in Christology, and this Christology must be the Church's Christology and this Christology of the Church has found its expression in traditional Christology, whose keystone – at least until now – has been Chalcedon, and this Christology must also be ours. That this Christology must nonetheless be anchored in the New Testament and must move forward in concert with *our own* total intellectual and spiritual situation, with our anxieties, our needs, our happiness, and so on, is something that is obvious.

That this Chalcedonian Christology can also easily fall under the suspicion of being mythological – this is a word I have often used – is yet another matter. If people say today, "Jesus is God," they have on the basis of the Church's normative and traditional Christology

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the right, you can even say the obligation, to make that statement, provided that they are not capable of saying the same thing in another, more intelligible way. I shall come back to this point presently. But there is no denying that a statement of this kind sounds mythological, is open to misunderstanding, and in certain circumstances [230] is simply not credible. And for this reason modern Catholic Christology, with all fidelity, all respect, all deference to the past, with all the normative force established by traditional Chalcedonian Christology, has the duty to reflect and to state in another way what is actually meant when traditional Christology makes a statement of this kind.

A NEW FORMULATION OF FAITH

There are of course devout souls among us, from the simplest of the faithful right up to the bishops, whose psychological and intellectual background enables them to accept these traditional formulations without the slightest difficulty or scruple. It is quite another question whether such people, if they are serious about proclaiming the Church's abiding gospel today, might be better advised to entertain a few scruples that might goad them to do some real thinking and make a real attempt to say what they are obliged to say.

But on the whole there is no escaping the fact that the ontological formulations of traditional Christology, particularly in their abbreviated and simplified form, make people wonder whether these statements are really credible or, for that matter, whether they are intelligible. Therefore, in all loyalty to the Church's traditional Christology, it must be admitted that the same truth of traditional Christology can, in principle at least, be stated in another way. Whether the attempt at another formulation of the same statement will be successful in a particular case (another formulation which, since it is different, will naturally open new, different, additional, and perhaps surprising perspectives on the same matter) – whether such a new and, in principle, possible formulation in a given case will measure up to the Church's consciousness of faith and hold its ground in the face of new theological criticism is an individual question that can be settled only by detailed and specific investigation and reflection.

Whether or not Küng's Christology in his book *On Being a Christian* meets these simple requirements is a question that cannot be dealt with here, and we do not intend to do so. But an example like this shows us that present-day theologians have the right and the duty in certain circumstances to translate the old Christology, with [231] all deference to its normative character, into a new language, to understand it in a new way, to open up new horizons of understanding, and so on, and then to submit these new attempts to the Church's consciousness of faith (of which the Church's teaching office is also the representative, but not the only one), asking whether this concrete Church of ordinary Christians and perhaps even of frequently rather soporific traditionalist bishops can ultimately accept them or not. Of course this will then obviously serve as a touchstone for one's own Christology.

Permit me to make a personal remark here. When considering my own Christology, I often ask myself with a certain concern and uneasiness whether my attempt at Christology, as far as it goes, really transposes traditional Christology into a new conception or whether certain indispensable elements and statements of the Church's official theology have been omitted, damaged, overlooked, and so on. When my friend Walter Kasper asks certain questions in connection with this, when he seems to be saying that my Christology of ascent (I shall come back to this term later) does not really take traditional theology into adequate account, I am bold enough to venture the opinion that he is wrong. Which one of us is right is obviously a matter of dispute, something that has to be thought through further as far as this is of interest to theologians.

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What I originally intended to say is the following simple sentence. Even traditional Christology, especially nowadays, has not only the right but also the duty to ask whether and how the same thing can be stated in another, a new, a more intelligible way, one that circumvents certain dangers of mythology. A detailed elaboration of this, the success or failure of individual attempts, Catholic or Protestant, pose yet a further question that obviously cannot be answered here.

My own formulation, and even for me it is not the only one, and I never intended it to be such, is the formulation that Jesus is the final, unsurpassable word of God in his self-promise to humankind. It is my opinion, and this is open to dispute, that from this standpoint Chalcedonian Christology can be reached while at the same time numerous mythological misunderstandings in traditional Christology can be avoided from the outset.

I am further of the opinion that many things can be understood when put in a simpler way without denying or oversimplifying the profundity of the christological mystery. Naturally if someone stands [232] in a sort of almost mythical awe of the traditional christological formulation and loves it for just this reason – *credo, quia absurdum* – and sees in it the fulfillment, so to speak, of his or her intellectual aspirations, that is this person's privilege. But it is my opinion that the Christian mysteries, the Christian mystery in general and particularly in Christology, can also be formulated in a way that will both preserve the tremendousness of the statement, something that may not be compromised, and will nonetheless not as easily awaken the impression that fairy tales or mythologies are being narrated that people of today can no longer be expected to believe.

When I say that in Jesus, in all that he is, in his teaching, person, behavior, self-interpretation, death and resurrection, God has committed himself visibly in history in a way that this commitment cannot be surpassed and reversed, I have in fact spoken of the incomprehensible profundity of the mystery of God. For me, then, this mystery contained in Christology is virtually already the mystery of Christianity itself. And so I need no additional mysteries, so to speak, in order to have the feeling: *credo, quia absurdum*. But in this way the incomprehensible is the thing that for its part becomes the most obvious.

But as I have already said, I do not insist that this sort of original formulation of what Jesus is for us, and so what he is in himself, is the only conceivable formulation on the basis of which classical Christology can be derived anew and made really intelligible. I readily admit that there can be all manner of primal christological statements and their wording can be quite varied. As someone who is unfortunately not an exegete, I of course know how difficult it is to match a statement of this kind with the biblical statements whereby a further difficulty arises due to the many different Christologies presented in fact by the Bible itself. But I think – and this is all I wanted to say – that even loyalty to the faith of Chalcedon permits us and obliges us to inquire beyond these formulations of classical Christology and to search for other more original or at least equally original christological statements which are perhaps closer to Scripture or at least to the Christology of the synoptic statements, which we can understand more readily, which sound more credible, and which still yield classical Christology as implicitly contained in them. There is no doubt, of course, that many individual questions in classical Christology pose problems of their own.

[233] I should like to imagine that my work as systematic theologian has in one way or another served to remove many an obstacle in classical textbook theology, thus enabling exegetes to present to the Church the results of their New Testament (synoptics) research with fewer inhibitions than would have been possible thirty or forty years ago and without coming into conflict with church officials. Specific problems about Jesus' consciousness of the imminence of the end, his knowledge, and so on, have to be dealt with in detailed analysis, of course, and on these questions, in all fidelity to the total theology of the classical tradition, there are still enough individual points which have not yet been laid to rest in the

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archives or for which the archives must perhaps be reopened.

Let me give you one little example of this. Volume 19 of my *Theological Investigations* contains a brief essay in which I have presented something in a position paper delivered to the bishops' conference on the problem of the Virgin Birth, the brothers of Jesus, and so on.[1] In regard to my respected colleague Leo Scheffczyk in Munich I would also like to enter a plea for more freedom for exegetes. If forty years ago you had said that Jesus proclaimed an imminence of the end which "taken out of the context of his total proclamation in this way is not true when considered in itself," your ecclesiastical permission to teach would most assuredly have been withdrawn. If the way is clear for you to say this today, I think that even exegetes might feel just a little bit of sincere gratitude toward systematic theologians who with great effort and danger to themselves opened just such doors as these, openings that are now taken for granted as obvious truisms, as though they were always open doors that were never closed. That was not as easy as it might seem when one is acquainted with the details of individual cases.

THE UNITY OF CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY

It is true that traditional textbook theology devoted too little attention to the unity of Christology and soteriology. It was not Luther but we Catholic, neoscholastic textbook theologians who had developed [234] a Christology of the hypostatic union, the communication of properties, and so on, which initially had nothing at all to do with soteriology, with "Christ for us." After this Christology we turned over the page to a new treatise entitled *De Deo redemptore*. We cannot do it this way anymore of course, and not just because people today are so convinced of their own importance and central position, and so on, that they cannot imagine a theology which does not constantly talk about human beings and their needs. This kind of mentality is, when all is said and done, highly questionable, even though nowadays it gives the appearance of being terribly obvious. But we do confess: *qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis*. From the outset Christology must be soteriology. The simple implication of this is of course that we have every right in the light of the New Testament or other more speculative viewpoints to attempt a formulation of the nature and meaning of Jesus which is from the outset a soteriological statement and at the same time really expresses the "nature" of Jesus Christ in a truly orthodox way.

It is my considered opinion that a reasonable ontology (or whatever else you want to call it) can and should be convinced from the outset that statements of function and statements of essence do not necessarily contradict one another. But from this it follows that one can quite properly construct a Christology which is called functional in full awareness that in so doing one has also constructed the essential Christology of classical church doctrine. I have already suggested a small example of such a formulation. But I cannot go into this in detail here.

TRANSCENDENTAL CHRISTOLOGY

There is Christology from below and there is transcendental Christology, and there have to be both of these in a Catholic Christology. First, Christology from below is really quite obvious. During a conversation I once had with Hans Küng – I believe it was in Brussels – I told him, much to his surprise, (if I am interpreting him correctly) that Catholic fundamental theology,

[1] "Mary's Virginity," in *Theological Investigations* 19 (New York: Crossroad, 1983), pp. 218-31.

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which always had a treatise *De Christo legato divino*, obviously recognized in practice that there was and had to be a Christology from below. Catholic [235] theology was never simply erected on a *sacrificium intellectus* or merely sustained by a purely new beginning in the New Testament alone. A traditional, fundamental-theological Christology has always been aware that we have to begin with Jesus, with his actual existence, preaching, self-witness, self-interpretation, and so on, and that we cannot begin there, first of all, with those statements of a Christology of descent which are part of incarnational Christology, but rather with altogether different data. That this ultimately finds its continuation in a classical theology of descent is quite another matter.

However, I still feel that there is also something that can be called a transcendental Christology and that it is indispensable. If someone objects to the term itself, it can be dropped without any problem. But one can imagine a human self-interpretation which can serve as a starting point for something like a Christology which at least appears to be within the realm of the possible. I think that a Christology which is searching in this direction, which has the conception of an absolute messenger of salvation, of an event in history that appears as the unsurpassable word of God, is certainly not something that is detrimental to the mystery, to the incomprehensibility of the incarnation of the eternal Logos, or however else you want to formulate it.

Speaking in the most general terms, there is no transcendental theology that would limit itself so exclusively to the realm of the transcendental, the aprioristic, and the speculative that it would omit any attempt to bring in a posteriori experience and to interpret it. Aristotle's logic, for example, is an aprioristic transcendental logic. But even with its a priori character, universal validity, and transcendental validity it is obvious that it exists only because the peasants' wives who sold potatoes in the marketplace engaged in logic. And so I would naturally not claim to have designed a transcendental theology if there had not been the a posteriori experience of Jesus of Nazareth. But if this empirical reality does exist, and because it does exist, I may and I must reflect on its aprioristic conditions so that I can understand this kind of a posteriori reality occurring in history. There is a reason for this.

I cannot illustrate this now in detail with examples. Let us take, however, at least one example. If we were convinced from the outset that a resurrection of the dead would be something absolutely senseless or something that would not have the slightest thing to do with [236] us in the concrete experience of our existence, the news of Jesus' resurrection would also be something that we could hear only with a shake of the head or a shrug of the shoulders and put aside as something that for us makes just about as much sense (or nonsense) as though we were hearing on the horizons of our own understanding that the Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of Buddha, or some such thing as that.

A searching and transcendental Christology and an a posteriori, empirical, historical Christology necessarily encounter one another, and if they do not, it is to the detriment of the ordinary Catholic empirical a posteriori Christology of Jesus of Nazareth. It is my opinion that an extraordinary amount of work still has to be done in this area of traditional Christology despite all the exegetes. For example, have we thought out in a reflexive way (I am not talking here about the concrete practice of piety in our lives) how it is that another human being *is able* to have such an absolute meaning for me as an individual, that is, for another human being at all, in the way that we ascribe to Jesus Christ this absolute meaning he has for us? How do I encounter another human being? What dimensions does an encounter of this kind have? How can I encounter someone from the past, Thutmosis or Napoleon or Goethe, and somehow or other discover in their person and work a meaning that challenges me and summons me to decision?

These and similar general anthropological, existential-ontological considerations would have to be made and developed by us Christians with much more exactitude, love,

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thoroughness, and discernment in order to have some kind of a framework of understanding, a horizon that has been reflected upon, for the teaching that tells us, "There is something crucial in my relationship to Jesus of Nazareth." When I was young there were very many things in our traditional Christology which were simply presumed and taken for granted, but they are no longer taken for granted, at least not for us today. *How* one proceeds in detail is of course another question.

Viewed from this perspective, I feel that many things that have not been considered should be taken up in the chapter of a transcendental existential-ontological preparation for a Christology. For example, there is also the question of a personal relationship to Jesus. Here we have to be much more honest. Is it really so obvious that we can have an interest in Jesus of Nazareth not only as a great historical [237] personality like Thutmosis, Napoleon, or Goethe but also that *he can* have something essentially to do with me? He can, but I find that this fact is by no means obvious. By the fact that he died and really rose again has he not disappeared into God's enormous darkness only so that I more or less can have virtually nothing more to do with him? How can the exegetes make it clear to me that there is something in his life to be laid hold on which is really concrete and cannot be derived from any other source *and* which can be normative for me?

In regard to Hans Küng's book *On Being a Christian*, Eugen Biser only recently raised the legitimate question whether, despite all the beautiful and wonderful things that Küng says about Jesus, at the end the only thing one really knows about Jesus is that he is the one who is "totally different from all others." That is obviously not enough. It is too abstract. The question remains how Jesus, who is a concrete reality, can be a norm for me, not as a universally valid reality but in his historically concrete reality.

No doubt there are many young people today who are carried along by an enthusiastic wave of "Jesus-ism." (I do not mean this sarcastically; I respect them.) They are enthusiastic because they feel that Jesus puts himself more on the side of the underprivileged and the poor than of the rich. But how do I really know that this is just right, that it has to be this way? Or how do I know that this is right not only for Jesus himself, but that it might also be a norm for me? These are questions that have to do with the personal relationship of Jesus to me and I feel that the concrete implications of these questions and the basic conceptual terminology for dealing with them have not even begun to emerge in any really clear form. In Christian spirituality things like these are simply taken for granted and put into practice, but theologians as theologians have not really reflected on them, with a few exceptions here and there, as, for example, Bérulle, a representative of the French school of spirituality in the seventeenth century

THEOLOGY AND FAITH

What I set out to say is really quite simple.

First, traditional, classical Christology still has a normative significance.

[238] *Second*, an ignorant and superficial parroting of these traditional christological formulations, coupled with the perhaps highly questionable feeling of having understood what they mean, does no service to the Church, to the faith, or to Christianity.

Third, there are in fact other ways of formulating the same Christology. This difference in formulation will perforce cause the object being treated to emerge in a somewhat different light.

Fourth, in traditional Catholic Christology there should be a closer unity between Christology and soteriology because statements of function and statements of essence condition and imply one another, and it is absolutely impossible to conceive them apart from

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this reciprocal interaction.

Fifth, a much clearer Christology of ascent[2] could be developed and a transcendental Christology as well because if I were not in reality already a crypto-Christian thanks to the grace of God I receive from the Spirit of Jesus, I could not make any sense of what is being said about this Jesus as the Christ.

[2] For a further development of this subject, see Karl Rahner, "Approaches to Theological Thinking," in *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982*, edited by Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, translation edited by Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 123-33.

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[239]

18

THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF REDEMPTION

If I am to present something here about the Christian idea of redemption, I must preface it with the remark that I can suggest no more than a few fragmentary notions chosen at random. My observations will not go beyond the framework of those propositions that Catholic dogmatic theologians as such have at their disposal.

REDEMPTION TAKES PLACE IN THE REALIZATION OF FREEDOM

In the Christian view redemption understood as the final salvation of humankind (and of the world in its totality) is bound up with human freedom as an event that takes place in the very exercise of this freedom. Freedom in this sense is of course not to be understood as the ability to make ever new individual choices at one's own discretion, but in the sense of a unique human self-realization (even though this is spread out over a period of time) which tends toward ultimate validity.

Catholic theology of course contains tortuous and abstruse discussions dealing with possibilities and ways of salvation for those who have died before reaching the use of reason. This problem is especially difficult for Christian theology because it rejects the transmigration of souls and insists that redemption must take place in a unique life here in time and space. It finds it very hard to conceive that a (probably rather small) number of the redeemed achieve [240] salvation by exercising their freedom, while the rest (probably the majority) receive their perfection in consequence of a sheer gift of God. Furthermore, it finds it difficult to conceive that a history of freedom can take place in the brief span of existence allotted to someone who dies before reaching the use of reason. The argument that the gratuitous character of God-given redemption manifests itself in an especially clear light in the case of those who attain salvation without the use of reason is a fallacy, because grace and freedom do not rule one another out, since freedom, a God-given capability and act, must itself be looked upon as grace.

In my opinion we do not know what to say about this problem. Actual revelation is silent on the matter. Theological reflection of necessity always peters out in dead ends. There is really no need for us to rack our brains about marginal problems of this sort, and certainly not here, since in my humble opinion we can leave it an open question whether it is really true, as is traditionally believed, that the Fifth Lateran Council's article of faith upholding the immortality of the soul can be construed as necessarily valid also in respect to spiritual persons who have never undergone a history of freedom.

In any case, in respect to ordinary human beings Christian faith does not view redemption as something that just happens to them as a result of an act of God which has nothing to do with their freedom. Redemption is the ultimate validity of this free human act itself, however much this act is first and foremost God's action in the human being. For this very act of freedom, in the conditions which make it possible, in its nature which is radicalized by God in grace toward immediacy to him and even in its very exercise as an act which is in fact good, is something freely determined by God himself in which he in his love communicates himself. This statement, reduced here to bare essentials, is actually obvious for a Christian theology that thinks to some degree on a metaphysical level and that is capable of grasping the relationship between God and creatures.

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But it follows directly from this that there is no real and genuine opposition between redemption that comes "from outside" and what is known as self-redemption, since in a Christian understanding of God it is clear from the outset that the "self" is established by God himself, who is, to be sure, someone other than the self, yet not a "stranger" to the self, because we, in our own selves, cannot be conceived apart from him and his freedom. Both in Catholic apologetics [241] and in an anti-Christian view of redemption these two concepts are frequently used. But this either-or alternative is wrong from the very beginning.

For a Catholic doctrine of grace, as opposed to many popular notions, God is not just the partner who stands opposite a human being in such a way that as a result of an odd synergism and reciprocal influence something or other happens that goes by the name of human redemption. God is, rather, the one who creates human beings as well as their freedom, both as possibility and as concrete realization despite all the genuine freedom human beings have and despite the relationship which this implies and which can be viewed as one of partnership. And it is this God who by his free and absolute act of grace makes it possible for human beings to redeem themselves, so to speak. The compatibility of this assertion of the interaction of redemption from outside and self-redemption, both properly understood, with the Christian dogma of redemption by Christ will have to be discussed later.

However, if we take seriously the doctrine of the infused virtues as God-given capabilities of a self-transcendence oriented to immediacy with God and the doctrine that we can perform an act of genuine freedom as a result of God's liberating grace; if we understand that according to Christian teaching redemption in the sense of ultimate salvation is impossible without faith, hope, and love, and that this redemption in its ultimate phase is nothing other than the perfection of faith, hope, and love, then it is simply wrong to maintain that self-redemption and redemption from outside are two things that are mutually exclusive. When these two notions are placed in antagonism to each other, they imply an unmetaphysical and properly speaking even an unchristian understanding of the relationship between God and humankind, because the truth is that human beings are creatures whose own existence and freedom are established by God's creative and grace-bestowing power. Hence what we call redemption is not something that happens without their collaboration.

To be sure, this authentic Christian understanding also implies that this redemption does not redeem human beings from themselves but unto themselves, whereby being positively redeemed unto themselves means that they come to God himself in ecstatic love. If one were to say that human beings are those creatures who realize their absolute transcendence in faith, hope, and love in an act of their own [242] freedom and in this way redeem themselves, this statement would be unobjectionable from a Christian point of view. One would only have to expand the statement by adding that this human self-interpretation understood and realized in this way is for its part (explicitly or implicitly) based on human beings' freely accepted knowledge that they are established by the absolute God, that is, that it is realized as a gift of this God through creation and grace.

REDEMPTION IMPLIES THE SALVATION OF HUMAN BEINGS IN ALL THEIR DIMENSIONS

Redemption in the Christian sense means the salvation of human beings in all their dimensions. Human beings are redeemed in the concrete reality of their existence and this includes what we call their bodily nature and their history. They are not redeemed from these realities, but rather they come to the perfection of these realities themselves, a perfection which transforms them.

Let us elucidate this brief statement which implies the doctrine of the resurrection of the

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dead, of the meaning that history itself has for salvation, of the eschatological orientation of history, and of the coming of God's kingdom, by determining the relationship between history and transcendence.

Theories dealing with the possibility of redemption in the history of the human race could be divided conveniently into two groups. There are the theories which view redemption as purely a matter of human transcendentality alone or of the transcendentality of history alone, *or* there are the theories which reject this alternative and see redemption as taking place in the total history in which the history of this transcendentality takes place. Where redemption is seen as an exit from concrete history into an other-worldly transcendentality of nameless silence or as a future in a (secular) history within which the perfection of history is attained as the actual outcome of this history alone, we have conceptions of redemption that imply an either-or alternative between transcendence and history. In a really Christian idea of redemption, however, history is always a history of that human freedom which is absolutely oriented to God in absolute transcendentality; vice versa, transcendentality is truly realized and [243] has a salvific effect for humankind only when it is realized in the concrete reality of history.

For Christianity there is no transcendence in a mystical a historical reality alone existing alongside ordinary human historical reality, in an esoteric mysticism alone. Human transcendentality occurs in concrete historical reality, and an essential part of this reality, but not the only one, is necessarily renunciation and death. But free human transcendentality occurs in the *total* height and breadth of historical human existence, so that here in the widest variety of forms which go to make up this historical reality redemption can take place. Therefore the Christian theology of redemption does not make a distinction on the one hand between a sort of purely spiritual-subjective, transcendental agent as subject of salvation and a historically concrete bodily nature and incarnate historical reality on the other, which would only be cast aside when salvation occurs, but rather salvation is proper to both, and this of course is the reason why the redemption of the body and the ultimate validity of history are themselves intrinsic elements of Christian redemption. With the church fathers one might not only say, "What is assumed [by God], is redeemed," but also "*Everything* is assumed and thereby everything is redeemed without having to perish."

For this very reason redemption understood in the Christian sense is most radically excluded from any human possibility of recognizing it or producing it, precisely because for human beings reality taken as a whole has and can have no particular place from which this totality could be adequately determined. When Christianity undertakes criticism of the ideology of other conceptions of redemption, to the extent that they really are not Christian, this is where it would have to begin; in other words, it would have to show that another conception of redemption pretends to know too much of redemption because it does not extend to the redemption of all reality.

REDEMPTION OCCURS IN GOD'S DEFINITIVE COMMUNICATION OF HIMSELF

In the Christian view redemption takes place only when God definitively communicates himself as himself because the Catholic [244] doctrine of grace and creation views the finite as being really *capax infiniti*. What this means is that the finite cannot really reach its completion unless it has been determined by the infinite, incomprehensible God as God, and that once this determination has been given it will not disintegrate and vanish more or less of its own accord.

Here we touch upon the most radical problem that Christian ontology faces, the coexistence of the absolute God's plenitude of being and finite, subjective being. For

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Christians the truth of redemption does not consist in the disappearance of the finite in itself alongside of the infinite God who would then be seen as nothing more than the extrinsic cause of this perfection, located outside of the perfection itself, and the one who guarantees it. This infinite plenitude of being is, rather, itself the perfection of the finite. It does not bring about the perfection, but rather it is itself the perfection.

That there can be this kind of relationship between the absolute and the dependent, between the infinite and the finite; that the nameless infinite can be the perfection of the manifold finite; that the arrival of the infinite means the life of the finite and not its dissolution, is Christianity's fundamental metaphysical conviction, a conviction that can be really sustained in human existence only if it is borne by God's grace, that is, by God's own self-communication. But the opposite is also true. Any view which fundamentally does not explicitly or implicitly conceive of ultimate human satisfaction, happiness or fulfillment as the absoluteness of the triune God, would not do justice to the idea of Christian redemption, but it would be rather what one might call the blissful form of human damnation, and nothing other than that. The fact that God calls human beings to be redeemed in this way and makes them capable of it is what comprises the ultimate dignity of human existence and the extremely excessive demand that is placed upon it.

REDEMPTION PRECEDES SINFULNESS

The human need of redemption should not be conceived first and foremost, purely and inherently, as the need of human beings to have their own sinfulness removed. The human need of redemption precedes human sinfulness which is of course an actual fact. To experience [245] and understand Christianity's ultimate essence more is necessary than human sinfulness and deliverance from guilt. It may be (I would not care to make any judgment here) that this is a specifically Catholic thesis that distinguishes the Catholic doctrine of grace and redemption from that of the Reformation. In any case, this thesis is only another way Catholic doctrine has of saying that given the distinction between nature and grace real salvation, even prior to personal human guilt and also to what is known as original sin, is an event of free divine love to which human beings have no claim on the basis of their nature. In other words, salvation is grace.

No Catholic doctrine of grace can do away with the distinction between nature and grace even prior to sin. And so grace and remission of guilt are not simply identical. This does not deny the fact that in post-Tridentine theology (with some elements already present in the Middle Ages) the distinction between nature and grace was often naively conceived in too static a way and so it looked as if the concept of "pure nature," which is a marginal concept, permitted us to conceive positively a world and a human race capable of coming to perfection in themselves, alongside of God and without grace. The distinction between nature and grace need not remove the paradox that individual human beings can only reach beatitude in a love of God which, despite its "necessity" for them, they must accept as the free love of God to which they have no inherent claim.

Human beings even prior to their sinfulness, to their explicit contradiction of God by their own free acts, are already the ones who can find their perfection only through an absolutely gratuitous self-communication of God which originates from God's free love. This much may in any case be said, whatever the situation may be in respect to all these troublesome questions, if one prescinds from the ultimately mere terminological question of whether one chooses to call the need of a perfection by God in grace prior to guilt a need of *redemption*, or whether one chooses to use the term *need of redemption* only in reference to the necessity of the removal of an actual state of sin, of an explicit contradiction between God and human

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freedom.

That in addition human beings are in the most diverse ways also the ones who as sinners need God's forgiveness and in this sense need redemption is quite another, and obviously (if not in the same sense) also a fundamental matter, even though *this* need of redemption [246] need not be presented in Catholic theology with the same emotional vehemence as was the case from Augustine right up to the times when people really had a deep-seated Reformation mentality and perceived forgiveness of hellish guilt as the absolute leitmotif of Christianity.

If someone in a kind of naive innocence should think that he or she is actually living without reservation in a loving union with God and that it is rather God than humankind that needs to be justified in view of all the absurd darkness in the world, that what is called guilt and sin should be interpreted rather as a phenomenon of friction in the world and an unavoidable detour necessitated by a development in a world that is still in the process of becoming, this mentality need not be rejected out of hand by Catholic theology as unchristian. Instead this theology would have to interpret such a blithe and naively innocent soul as this as a person whose hellish possibilities have been overcome from the outset and who has already been placed in this state of harmless innocence.

However, if people of this sort want to interpret the world on Christian terms and understand what redemption means, they have no choice but to interpret their buoyant disposition as a gift of God's grace, and they must not deny a capacity for redemption to those people who through the actions of their lives find themselves in an infernal void, in despair and far distant from God.

This interpretation of existence, blithe, unencumbered, free of anxiety, can rightly be understood as a reflection of or an analogy to what Catholic theology teaches about the sinlessness of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the beginning of her existence. That the need of redemption can be present as sin which an individual actually commits *or* merely as original sin, which is something different from personal guilt, *or* in the form of a gratuitous preservation from actual guilt *or* even in the form of a coexistence of these other forms that can be reflexively differentiated is something that can be expected from the outset in Catholic theology when the human need of redemption is properly understood.

On the one hand, I am quite convinced that the innocuousness of people today who no longer take sin and thus the need of redemption seriously, and who instead reproach God when sin appears in the world or see it as a reason for despairing of their existence, is an attempt to minimize the depth and perilousness of human existence. [247] We as Christians cannot simply regard this as something that is a matter of course because it can just as well be an indication of how corrosively guilt can seep into the ultimate root of human existence. But on the other hand, I also believe that there is a real history of faith, and thus alternating phases in the consciousness of faith, in which one or the other aspect of the totality of Christian existence can be more or even less present in the center of the actual consciousness of Christians. I believe that this shift of emphasis can for its part be itself something that God wills also as a part of human historical reality.

Consequently, one phase cannot be summarily condemned by appealing to an earlier phase on the grounds that it is different from the earlier phase. The uncontestable fact that the Christian penitential sermon today has less to say about hell, less than in earlier times even in papal proclamation, certainly ought not to be hailed unreservedly in a naive belief in progress as a praiseworthy step forward. But at the same time it should not necessarily be deplored as symptomatic of a decadence of authentic Christianity. The Christian idea of redemption has a history behind it and it will continue to have a history. There is room for this in Catholic theology's traditional conception of redemption, because redemption and redemption from actual guilt are not identical concepts.

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REDEMPTION ORIGINATES FROM JESUS CHRIST

We must now turn to the question of the origin of redemption from Jesus Christ, his history, his cross and his resurrection. For Christians the redemption of the human race means redemption through Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection. For Christians there can be no doubting this. This is a central truth of their faith. However, it is not easy to say exactly what this statement means and also what it does not mean. As in the case of all Christian dogmas it is possible that in the actual understanding of faith, at least on the part of average Christians and even of theologians and of those officially entrusted with proclaiming the faith, this dogma of redemption is in fact bound up with opinions which are really transitory.

The fundamental question regarding the origin of redemption from Jesus Christ as a historical event is the question of how redemption [248] as God's self-communication can depend on this historical event and how it can be conceived as dependent on it, when we are faced with the obvious fact that this historical event of Jesus Christ is itself the result and the historical manifestation of a salvific and redemptive will of God that has always existed and therefore which is both cause of this event of the cross itself as well as the effect which flows from it.

Before treating this fundamental problem of redemption through Jesus Christ in greater detail, I would like to apply our first thesis to our question in the following way. Redemption by Jesus Christ does not negate human self-redemption; on the contrary, it constitutes it. The (explicit or implicit) denial of this statement can presumably be attributed to a false understanding of the thoroughly valid statement that the human race is redeemed by the "vicarious" suffering of Jesus. This misapprehension of how the human race is vicariously represented by Christ presumes tacitly that Jesus, taking the place of others, has done something that is absolutely necessary to redeem the human race from sin, something that human beings themselves cannot do, but that Christ can do.

For the moment let us prescind from the problem of how the origin of the unmerited grace of divinization prior to sin as distinct from the remission of *guilt* can be fit into this – mostly subliminal – conception of vicarious representation. It would certainly not be easy to synthesize the two. Let us also prescind from the question of how in seriousness Christ acting merely as representative of humankind has had to do what humankind cannot in principle do for itself and which therefore cannot really be demanded of it. (That humankind is not able to do what it is nevertheless obliged to do is something that is at least presumed in the theory of vicarious representation as contained in the theory of satisfaction.)

A conception of vicarious redemption in which Jesus does for me, what I actually ought to do myself but am not capable of doing, and which will then be "credited" to me is a conception that I consider to be wrong or at least a misleading formulation of the dogmatic truth that my redemption is dependent on Jesus and his cross. After all, it is precisely through Jesus that it is possible that I myself, by the power of God's self-communication, am really able to aspire to God, to have faith and hope in him and to love him; in other words, that I can really perform the highest act that can be expected of a human [249] being given the highest possible requirements. Through Jesus my own freedom itself contains the possibility of redemption, liberation, and sanctification the like of which cannot be conceived in a higher, more tremendous or more radical way. In view of this undeniable origin of redemption from Christ, one can clearly see that this cause of redemption (in what sense the cross can be the cause of redemption must be explained more clearly) is a result of God's redeeming love.

Wherever we find primarily the idea of an angry God who, as it were, has to be conciliated by great effort on the part of Jesus, we have an ultimately unchristian, popular notion of redemption that is incorrect. This by no means denies that the holy God rejects sin absolutely

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and in that sense is "angry" with the sinner. But this rejection always coexists in God with his desire to forgive and to overcome human sin. The cross, the reality of Christ, his love, his faith, his hope, his surrender to God's incomprehensibility are, however, the result of a redeeming love of God which itself has no cause outside of itself. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, and it was not because the Son gave himself that an angry God with great effort changed his mind about the world.

One need have no reservations in using the formulation of Scotus which says that God would never have permitted sin in the world if he had not loved the world in so radical a way, that sin, without becoming meaningless, would always be overcome by the fact that God willed Jesus Christ crucified and risen. Certainly God's freedom can assume other positions toward the world and one is free to discuss them. But in the practical and concrete order Christians can say that if God had not willed this Jesus of Nazareth with his absolute solidarity both with sinners and with God, he never would have permitted the horror of this sinful world.

At this point the question naturally arises whether this redemptive will of God of its own accord so restricted itself that its mercy leaves behind for all eternity a rubbish heap of history, so to speak, a kind of hell. With Pope John Paul II one can say that while God's mercy is of itself unlimited, it comes up against boundaries when confronted by human freedom. In a certain sense this is correct. However, this may not be understood to assert that God's mercy, should it choose to do so, is not able to remove the guilt of human freedom without overcoming this guilt. Consequently, the final question whether one [250] might possibly be damned and in the end remain unredeemed is a question the answer to which is dependent on God's sovereign disposition. At this point theoretical statements have to stop. Christians, however, are not forbidden to hope for universal redemption.

We must now finally formulate more clearly the specific character of the redemptive causality of Christ's cross. If this cross is the result and not the morally efficient cause of God's redeeming love, then I think some light can be shed on the problem by drawing on a concept of Catholic sacramental theology which is used to elucidate the specific character of sacramental causality.

Let me put it this way. The cross is the *signum efficax*, the efficacious sign of the redeeming love that communicates God himself because the cross establishes God's love in the world in a definitive and historically irreversible way. I think that today this concept may be validly transferred to soteriology in view of the fact that the concept of sacrament as found in the statement, "The Church is the *sacramentum universale salutis mundi*, the universal sacrament of the world's salvation," already implies a transfer of this kind, which from the standpoint of the history of dogma is really the return of a concept to its original place of origin. In the concept *signum efficax* sign and cause condition one another reciprocally. This is what one must give heed to in this concept: cause, because it is an efficacious sign, because it is a real symbol with exhibitive character; sign, because it is caused by what is signified. (Instead of *signum efficax*, we can just as well use the concept real symbol, which might perhaps be more intelligible to many people: the symbol by the establishment of which the thing symbolized establishes itself and is itself present in the symbol.)

Furthermore, we must make a distinction, as has already been done in the Letter to the Ephesians, between a salvific will hidden in God and a salvific will which, coming forth from its concealment in God, manifests itself to the world, realizes itself in this way, and thereby also makes itself into something that cannot be taken back, a historical definitiveness which, given the assumption that there is a "hypostatic union" between God himself and the manifestation of his will in the world, really makes this manifestation something that really cannot be taken back, something that is irreversible and really eschatological.

Given these presuppositions the cross of Christ can really be seen [251] as the efficacious

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sign of God's salvific will in the world. The cross has a real causality, not in the sense that it causes God's salvific will, which itself establishes the cross as its cause, but precisely because the cross is the result of God's salvific will, and yet the cross makes this will irreversible through its historical appearance in the world in a historically tangible way. To be ontologically precise, this causality belongs primarily more to the category of formal and material causes, but *transient* efficient causes cannot otherwise be deduced from them.

What transpires in the event of the cross may be compared to what transpires in the process of human freedom. In certain circumstances this freedom reveals its own original decision precisely through a material fact. This material fact is different from the freedom because the freedom is more original. The factual manifestation reveals the original free decision, but then it also makes the decision irreversible. So in this sense the free decision can be said to be caused by its factual manifestation.

This notion presents no insuperable difficulty if we consider the doctrine of the hypostatic union. Because of the hypostatic union Jesus' suffering and death in the incarnation are an intrinsic element of God's salvific will. This will reveals itself in this suffering and death and it makes itself definitive by manifesting itself in this objective way. In Jesus Christ God is performing his own act, the act of turning to the world in an irrevocable way. However, one should in passing take note of the fact that this revelation of God's turning to the world in the cross, the cross being the real symbol (which is also a way of expressing it) of God's definitive and victorious love for the world, also implies in Jesus' obedience unto death the human acceptance of this offer on the part of the world.

Consequently, if one considers the Son of Man as an intrinsic element of the actual world to be part of the world itself – and this is unavoidable if one takes Jesus' incarnation and his solidarity with the human race seriously – actually one could also speak of a self-redemption of the world (a self-redemption that is of course a gift of God in every respect) which experiences its arrival with God himself as the absolute culmination of its own history.

In suggesting this theory of what is meant by the origin of redemption from Jesus Christ we do not mean to assert that all the other aspects of redemption and all the elements that the Christian tradition [252] of faith gives us to explain the redemption more precisely should be eliminated or ignored. But I feel that all of these elements, to the extent that they are really a norm of faith, can be derived from this starting point, and that from this same point misleading interpretations of the redemption, which as a matter of fact do exist – one need only think, for example, of the theory of Jesus' being punished in our stead – can be subjected to a critical analysis and be brought back in line with what belief in redemption really means. We cannot give a detailed analysis of this here.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

There is a legitimate history of change, and one that is by no means closed, in the way we consider the need of redemption and redemption itself, a change that does not simply deny or ignore any of the aspects which have come up in the actual history of faith. But this development does have as its effect that, in the existentiell history of the realization of these aspects and in the theoretical reflection on them, now one, now another comes into clearer focus. This has always been true in the previous history of Christian belief in redemption, and there is no reason for thinking that this history has now come to its conclusion in a dogmatic theology that is just going to remain static forever.

It is even possible for us to name such possible aspects of a future theology of redemption. For example, a Christology elaborated in the framework of an evolutionary world view could certainly work out aspects of soteriology which up to now have not been given much

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attention. A theology of the redemption of the *body* would certainly have a lot more to say than traditional textbook theology. A soteriology worked out in conjunction with the cosmic significance of the Christ-event would presumably bring out some elements of soteriology which up to now have been overlooked. A soteriology of this kind would naturally have to be reconciled with the notions of the entire cosmos that we necessarily have today, and which differ in the extreme from the ancient conception of the world which formed the framework for earlier soteriology. In the continuing history of soteriology it is quite conceivable that on the basis of other religions aspects of redemption will be seen better and more clearly in a [253] soteriology which Christianity does not actually take from outside of itself but only in its own more profound reflection discovers in itself, as a result of a catalytic encounter with other religions.

AGAINST AN ABRIDGEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION

First, let me formulate my reservation in this way. It seems to me that Christian theology in its eschatological statements is frequently not sufficiently aware of the abstract and formal character of the concepts it uses. To put it another way: in eschatological soteriology the huge distance between what is really meant and the requisite metaphorical notions and concepts is not perceived clearly enough. One fails to notice what gaps these concepts leave open, gaps that could be closed in a great many different ways without thereby denying binding elements of dogma.

It is altogether possible that the basically legitimate “demythologization” of the concepts used in soteriology and eschatology (hell as a place, notions of heaven based on terrestrial realities, the sufferings of purgatory) overlooks the fact that through this demythologization the actual matter itself is not simply presented in its pure form, but rather accretions, amalgamations, and so on, are removed without being replaced by a new and better statement more appropriate to the matter in question. This creates lacunae in our knowledge which simply go unnoticed. For example, if one conceives final redemption *only* as the product of a little bit of plain old-fashioned morality, only as the result of a formally and juridically conceived remission of sins and an arrival at the beatific vision, ignoring the radical changes involved in this that a human being must undergo, then this kind of demythologization is not very illuminating.

One can certainly emphasize our inability to speak about eschatological perfection except in very abstract and formal terms since we are talking about the goal of our transcendence and hope, something that cannot be expressed in words since it becomes lost in the mystery of God (and in respect to the real nature of beatitude this may be quite justifiable). But that is no reason for being sure that this says everything that can be said about the realities which are ontologically [254] (not necessarily temporally) antecedent to this *final* nature of the perfection of redemption, but which are still a part of this perfection. And because they are realities of this kind, they need not be subject to the verdict of a “more exact” statement about the most essential nature of the eschaton.

Christian and non-Christian statements about events after death, journeys of the soul, gradual purgation after death, cannot as a rule be considered as binding doctrine in the strict sense. But does this necessarily mean that they are wrong, that they are devoid of any meaningful content? Or is it possible that they might serve to bridge the gaps left by the abstract eschatological statements? Do we Christian dogmatic theologians have to claim that we know everything about the nature of perfection and its process or development, about the process of perfection even after death? Might it not be possible to interpret our current formal and abstract teaching on “purgatory” by supplementing it with ideas and statements which

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would be quite acceptable to us even today and which could be found (at least more clearly) in other religions? Notions such as these need not lay claim to possessing the qualitative character of redemption in the strict sense. But there is also no dogma that says we can know absolutely nothing about the human "other-worldly" realities that (ontologically) precede the actual perfection of redemption. An anthropology of the process of maturity leading to perfection can presumably say a great deal more than what is usually said by a highly formalized and moralistically honed soteriology. This topic cannot be elaborated here at great length. But I felt that a warning was called for against abridging the doctrine of redemption.

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[255]

19

RECONCILIATION AND VICARIOUS REPRESENTATION

Without doubt, one of the central ideas of Christian teaching is the idea of reconciliation. Saint Paul uses the word *katallagē* (from the verb *katallassō*). Even though this word actually means reconciliation of the world with God, it is worthy of note that the New Testament uses the word *diallassō* to express the reconciliation of human beings with one another. This fact prompts us to reflect on the relationship between our reconciliation with God and our reconciliation with one another, particularly because the New Testament sees a connection between forgiveness by God and forgiveness among one another. "For if you forgive people their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Mt. 6:14).

MINIMIZING OR EXAGGERATING THE IDEA OF SIN

When using the term *reconciliation*, the New Testament proceeds on the assumption that the world and the individuals in it find themselves in a situation of sin, spiritual peril, discord, and enmity, a situation that determines radically human beings' relationship to God and to one another. We must pause already at this sentence.

For us whose ears are accustomed to religious phrases the Church's teaching about a situation of spiritual peril as a presupposition of reconciliation and redemption seems perfectly obvious. But it is not obvious. We need not even look beyond our own cultural [256] sphere to awaken to the fact that Christianity's teaching about a situation of spiritual peril is being profoundly threatened. In my opinion the threat is coming principally from two opposite directions. *On the one hand, the universal peril that sin implies is not being grasped in its full import*. What we Christians call sin,[1] real evil in the world, is not evil but only "What is known as evil."[2] It is a manifestation of unavoidable friction in the process of evolution, depending only on conditions prevalent in society which can be restructured in such a way that this evil will once and for, all vanish from the world, from society and from the life of the individual. In depth psychology sin is dissipated as though it were nothing more than an anxiety dream. Society can form and train people in such a way as to produce pure harmony both in the individual and on the social level, even though it might still take a little while until this universal pacification is achieved. And if all that does not suffice we are told that good and evil, day and night are equally parts of the basic and obvious elements of reality which condition one another reciprocally. This being the case, one can and must make one's final peace with evil; one must live with one's "shadow."[3] Evil is just as necessary as good to bring reality to its perfection, and if we are wise, we will not let it provoke any short-sighted protests.

Evil is rendered innocuous. It is no longer affected by the radical protest of the holy God to whom we ascribe no evil, separated from it as he is by an infinite distance, and who says an inexorable no to this evil of real guilt incurred by creaturely freedom – even though we

[1] See A. Görres and K. Rahner, *Das Böse: Wege zu seiner Bewältigung in Psychotherapie und Christentum* (Freiburg/Breisgau, 1982).
[2] See K. Lorenz, *Das sogennante Böse: Zur Naturgeschichte der Aggression*, 25th ptg. (Vienna, 1970).
[3] See C. G. Jung, esp. *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, *Collected Works* XIV, translated by R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed. (Princeton University Press, 1970).

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cannot understand how God nevertheless could will misery, pain, and death to his creatures and permit the real evil of guilt freely incurred to enter a world which has been created by him and for all of whose reality he must bear the responsibility. In the mental climate of today the radical nature of the Christian idea of sin is not being grasped in its full import. But the Christian idea of sin is so radical that the holy and all-merciful God's response to it, wherever [257] and whenever it is not extirpated, must be condemnation to that eternal loss which is hell. And this remains true and retains its radical existentiell significance even if we have the right to hope – but not the certainty of a theoretical assertion – that God will have mercy on all.

But there is also a second, fundamental heresy that contradicts the Christian idea of sin. *The free decision within history is so absolute that this decision, if really made in radical freedom, is irrevocable and no one can reverse it*. Here freedom is conceived to be so autonomous that it is no longer encompassed by the greater power and freedom of God, and so the culpable decision of a human being is inherently so irreversible that this evil decision can neither be forgiven by God, nor does freedom ever forgive itself its evil decision. According to this view evil is something absolute. Human beings are not even permitted to have the desire of having their abysmal guilt forgiven. This guilt would not really be the radical act of freedom – so the argument goes – unless it were understood as radically definitive and irreversible.

THE HOPELESSNESS OF GUILT

Between these two extremes which form, as it were, two sides of a single coin, stands the Christian teaching of the guilt of human freedom and its capability of being forgiven by God alone. In order to understand what reconciliation is, we must, before speaking about the forgiveness of guilt by God, deal more explicitly with the question why human guilt cannot be overcome by human beings *alone*.

The Dialogical Structure of Becoming Guilty

The inability of human beings *alone* to overcome real guilt must not be understood according to the model prevalent in civil law where one person commits an offense against another person and remains liable for this even though the perpetrator regrets the offense and wishes it had never happened. In this inadequate model it would not make any difference whether the offense in question caused material damage to the other person or whether it was detrimental to [258] the personal dignity of the other. In any event the "civil law" model is inadequate for an understanding of why human beings are incapable of overcoming guilt incurred before God.

To understand why guilt cannot be overcome we must take into account that a turning back to God, a free repudiation of one's previous decision, being solely a human act as such, still does not mean that guilt is overcome. The inherent hopelessness of guilt is a character of guilt that is obscure and can be explained only with difficulty. The very acceptance of the experience of this hopelessness, our desire to repress which is itself a part of the mystery of guilt, is already a kind of beginning of conversion.

The primary reason for the hopeless insuperability of guilt (as far as one can attempt to give a more precise explanation of this at all) lies in the peculiar dialogical character of human existence in its orientation to God. If this relationship is a free history – free on both sides, therefore on God's side as well – this kind of positive relationship between God and

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human beings is not reestablished simply by guilty human beings' attempting to revoke their no to God. God's free action is so integral to this salvific love between God and human beings that human beings must interpret even their own love for God, their freedom notwithstanding, as a gift of God's free love for them. God's personal disclosure and communication of himself in his love for human beings is, however, both in itself and as the possibility of our love for him, God's *freedom*, and it always remains this, regardless of whether one chooses to interpret this love bestowed on the repenting sinner as the abiding *presence* of this unmerited love or as a *new* bestowal of this love on God's part.

The Ultimate Validity of Free Human Decision

To gain an understanding of the inherent hopelessness of guilt, some further elements must be explained. Human freedom must not be understood as the ability to make a choice that always remains open, that can be continually revised and therefore as something that veers off into a void. In spite of its temporal historical character, freedom is inherently the will toward ultimate validity. Only on this basis is it possible to comprehend why a brief temporal human history ending with a person's death can understandably result in [259] salvation or eternal loss. One cannot imagine God as the one who in an arbitrary act extrinsic to it stops this history of freedom which of itself would choose to continue, and nonetheless responds to it with a judgment that is eternally valid. And Christianity does not allow for a "transmigration of souls" that goes on indefinitely.

In this light the real nature of the experience becomes intelligible whereby human beings, even though they exist in a continuous flow of history have the feeling that past events in their history of freedom are not over and done with. Human beings do not experience the past as something that is overcome simply because their present intentions and actions are in contradiction to their past decisions. If people perceive their previous free actions as abiding and irrevocable, if forgetting their actions or repudiating them is experienced as something that is powerless over against the "eternal" element that has occurred in their previous free actions, they do not attach an excessive importance to their previous history. Rather, they experience the real and mysterious nature of their freedom. And if they nonetheless have hope in the possibility that the mysterious "eternity" of their guilt will be overcome, even though a possibility of this kind cannot be discovered in the realm of mere human experience, this kind of hope is an appeal precisely to that mystery which encompasses all human freedom together with its "eternity," the mystery that we call God. If they hope for the forgiveness of their guilt, although they have, for example, the experience that they are and will for all eternity remain persons who have betrayed their love and fidelity and that this stigma of infidelity does not point to what once was and is now over and done with, but identifies them for what they now are, then the basis of this hope is what we Christians call grace and what human beings experience as something that utterly transcends their own freedom.

Is it not almost necessary to say that people have not understood anything about God until they believe and hope that there is one who contrary to all personal experience of freedom is able to overcome the eternity of the evil deed, whereby, as has already been said, this eternity must not be reduced to the idea that what is done can of course not be undone, but that there is really no reason to get upset about this since the past, even though it cannot be undone, is something that is of itself past – as is the case with anything that is temporal and transitory.

[260] One can, if one chooses to do so, render the mystery of the eternity of a deed freely done more intelligible by distinguishing between a transient action and its permanent consequences. But then again, the understanding gained in this way obscures precisely the

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mystery of the freely done deed the eternity of which knows only one who is alone more powerful: God, whose love really overcomes the guilt itself, a love whose incomprehensibility as manifested in this forgiveness is part of the incomprehensibility of God as he is in himself.

THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

In respect to this kind of guilt which affects God himself, which should neither be minimized nor simply absolutized, which human beings alone cannot overcome – although they hope in the possibility of its being overcome and thus they hope in God – Christian doctrine says that God is always ready and willing to overcome it, to forgive it, to be reconciled with humankind and to reconcile humankind to himself. The past is ultimately not an empty room of what once was but is no more, but the room filled with what has been irrevocably done in freedom. Christians believe that God penetrates this room, makes it "empty" and reconciles human beings not only with God himself but also with their own past. If human beings were really to understand their freedom and their guilty actions, they would have to admit that they cannot grant eternal pardon to themselves for these deeds, that they would annihilate themselves if they were to attempt by their own power to separate their free actions from themselves.

However, God bids them to have this hope of reconciliation and forgiveness; he lets them disown themselves without thereby obliterating themselves. We are really allowed to forget our guilt, even though we do not understand how it is possible for us to forget and how it is that our guilt does not eternally remain before us. The incomprehensibility of this ability to forget is ultimately identical with God's forgiving love. We have not accepted this love until we have the confidence in its capability of really overcoming by its own power the eternity of our guilt and of letting it be forgotten.

God's love which forgives and reconciles is really incomprehensible. We are certainly permitted to say that God has allowed guilt to [261] enter this world only because this world from the beginning and irrevocably is already encompassed by this forgiving and reconciling love. From the beginning God has made himself the world's innermost heart in such a way that the freely incurred guilt of humankind pierces God's heart, and even in the face of this thrust his heart is merciful, forgiving and reconciling love. For love would then turn into the judgment of damnation only if a person were to reject it in a final act of freedom.

Reconciliation through Jesus Christ

Christians know full well that God's forgiving and reconciling love that encompasses all guilt has entered the world in such a way that it can never be revoked. This love has revealed itself in the cross of Jesus Christ who has become our reconciliation. Through Jesus' unconditional solidarity with all sinful human beings, as well as in his unconditional love for the Father, God's forgiving love has reached its historically visible culmination in Jesus' death on the cross, because this love has become irrevocable and has found its acceptance in a human being who was conscious of and who willed his absolute solidarity with all human beings. This is why God has reconciled the world to himself in Jesus the crucified. God has not only offered humankind his merciful love that overcomes guilt, but in addition to this he has revealed that this omnipotent forgiving love is so powerful and victorious that it even manifests itself when accepted by human freedom. And so it also becomes reality for its part when human beings accept it.

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Forgiveness through God's Grace

If we further inquire how this reconciliation through forgiveness of inherently insuperable guilt is to be conceived, we must first point out that Catholic theology must not conceive this forgiveness as a juridical act, an act that is more or less merely intellectual, upon which there merely follows the communication of divine grace, which is justification. Rather, this forgiveness takes place *through* divine grace, God's very communication of himself. Therefore we [262] must say that guilt is so radical that it can only be forgiven in that God himself in the infinite power of his love and holiness must communicate himself and must make himself a part of the offense of guilt in order that forgiveness and reconciliation may take place. Only in the love which God himself *is* can guilt be eradicated and reconciliation occur. But this is something that happens in a really radical way. Colossians 1:19f., which states that "all the fullness of God" dwelling in Jesus Christ "reconciles all things," cannot be taken literally enough.

The Objective Nature of What Happens in Christ's Death on the Cross

We have now explained the "subjective" nature of the reconciliation of God and the human race, and perhaps we have failed to emphasize that this reconciliation takes place in an "objective" way as is emphasized by Scripture and the teaching of the Church. A more exact idea of this objective universal reconciliation of the world with God cannot be easily expressed in a few words.

Everyone is aware of the attempt to explain this objective redemption and reconciliation by using the concept of the (vicarious) satisfaction which God's eternal Son has made to God's holy justice by his obedience unto death on the cross, thereby wiping out the "sins of the world." No doubt the Son's obedience has an unsurpassable moral value which manifests God's holiness and justice in the world. However, the notion of an exchange of goods or even of guilt being punished in the person of the guiltless Jesus must not be allowed to obtrude itself on the notion of satisfaction for the sins of the world by the Son's obedience. Furthermore, one must not lose sight of the fact that the event of the cross is itself the *effect* and ultimately not the cause of an initiative of God himself which is a result of nothing other than God's free love and his unmerited grace, of a God who reconciles because he is the love that forgives and overcomes all guilt. So for our understanding of this objective reconciliation it might perhaps be sufficient to say here that the Son's obedience, both in radical love for the Father and at the same time in unconditional solidarity with the human race, is the historical event in which God's forgiving love has itself appeared in the world and become irreversible.

[263]

Reconciliation with God as the Source of Reconciliation with One Another

We must point out yet a further aspect of this reconciliation. If there is a unity between God's love and love among human beings, if love among us human beings, as it must be, is possible in its ultimately radical form only because it happens in God and in the mutual love between God and human beings, this necessarily means that a really radical reconciliation among human beings is possible only in God and in the event in which his reconciliation with the world occurs. Discord among human beings, the sheer impossibility of human beings to forgive one another their guilt by their own unaided power is so relentless that only the

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reconciling power of God himself can overcome the gulf that divides human beings from one another as a result of their horrible deeds.

Worldly wisdom often demands that people forgive one another, but it is at a loss to know how this can really come about. It feels that people ought perhaps to forgive, but that they are not able to forgive. Hatred, infidelity, elemental injustice, and murder can deal such a lethal blow to our fellow human beings, one from which they can never recover, that it is impossible in this world and its history to see what reconciliation and forgiveness might bring about. Only God's self-communication in love can wipe out that guilt which has created these unfathomable gulfs dividing human beings from one another. But then again this unity between love of neighbor and love of God also means this: when human beings really forgive one another's guilt, something that they are not capable of doing by their own power and therefore when they do it they are consciously or without even recognizing it being borne by God's forgiving love, there is also a reconciliation of the world with God.

Indeed, when one says all these things so glibly and in the routine language of traditional theology, one becomes dismayed and afraid that one is talking recondite theology. But if we pause, reflect, and somehow or other beyond all the routine of everyday existence catch a glimpse of the deadly guilt that puts us at odds with God's holy love and with our fellow human beings, and if we summon up our last energy to hope that this guilt is not the last word in our existence; if we hope with a power which we sense is not our own that our guilt is overcome by an all-reconciling forgiveness, then in this hope we [264] have already said *yes* to him who reconciles all, to him whom we call God. We have affirmed that the dreadful abysses of guilt have even now been overcome by the love of this God, and that in respect to forgiveness there is only one thing that we may not do, and that is to take it for granted rather than to accept it with the trembling and humble adoration of guilty creatures who give honor to God and know that through him they are reconciled with him and with all others.

VICARIOUS RECONCILATION

Up to this point we have spoken about reconciliation with God. We have seen that God's reconciliation with the world in Jesus Christ manifests itself whenever human beings find the power to forgive one another their unfathomable guilt. Without formulating it explicitly we have, then, already touched upon a phenomenon that can be perceived in the life of a saint like Maximilian Kolbe. His life is a convincing witness of that reconciling love for the world. His exam-pie brings us face to face with the idea of vicarious representation.

However, this idea admits of no simple explanation, and if we want to use it to help interpret our own existence we cannot treat it superficially.

The Inadequacy of the Juridical Interpretation

This notion of vicarious representation can of course be found in the juridical sphere. Without going into a detailed explanation of how one person receives the authorization to act on behalf of another, it is quite clear that one person acting on another's behalf can bring about a situation in which provisions and stipulations are set up which are morally binding on the other person.

For example, you can contract marriage through a proxy. You can authorize another person to make a contract on your own behalf and you are then bound by this contract. But this legal idea of vicarious representation is no help for the problem we are dealing with here. Our question is whether it is conceivable that another person can [265] relieve me of a moral debt

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before God which, in fact, I myself owe to God. If the final answer to this question is no, does anything remain of the notion of vicarious representation in its application to the religious dimension of the relationship between God and human beings?

The Action of Another Cannot Be Substituted for a Free Human Action

The term *vicarious representation* is frequently used in religious language. The pope is called *Vicarius Christi* (the Vicar of Christ) in the Church viewed as a social institution, but this usage is something that pertains to the juridical sphere and need not concern us here. But when we are talking about the vicarious suffering of Christ and understand the phrase "He has suffered and made satisfaction for us" in the sense of vicarious representation, our language is moving on a religious level and raises a question that cannot be easily answered. Can another person really relieve me of a task, or an attitude or a deed before God and oriented to him, of demands which are in fact imposed on me, but which I am not capable of meeting?

This question must not be obfuscated by the obvious fact that the moral actions of one person can be important for another person, and even have a bearing on salvation. If one were to make "vicarious representation" a central feature in the actual realization of salvation as such, it would mean that another person could relieve me of an action that has significance for salvation and results in salvation, one that I myself would be obliged to perform. Thus I would no longer have to perform the action myself and yet I would still attain salvation. Obviously vicarious representation cannot be understood in this sense.

One cannot appeal to the New Testament term *hyper hemōn* to justify this notion of vicarious representation. It is certain that *hyper* is used in a great number of passages to mean "for the benefit of," and in none of these passages is it necessary to understand it in a different sense. Furthermore, if we look at the totality of Christian theology, we see that its entire tendency excludes vicarious representation in this sense. If one proceeds on the assumption that in the [266] moral sphere people cannot be seriously expected to do something that they are absolutely incapable of doing, that this kind of failure can never be considered culpable, one must also say that as far as salvation is concerned God demands of each individual that he or she do everything significant for salvation and no one is exempted from anything.

To illustrate this obvious fact one can quite properly assert that every human being redeems himself or herself by his or her own free activity, that self-redemption and redemption from outside are not two mutually exclusive concepts. "Redemption from outside" by Jesus Christ does not mean that human beings would be exempted from doing something that they are obliged to do by means of their own freedom or that something would be conceded to them that they cannot do themselves and which would nevertheless be demanded of them. It means that God by his grace, in view of Jesus Christ and his cross, grants and offers people the possibility, in the most radical self-surrender of their existence through faith, hope, and love, of constituting their own ultimate validity in the order of salvation.

Every act of creaturely freedom presupposes that this possibility is given by God. And so the possibility of salvation through God's free love and therefore through grace is present. But this possibility is realized through our own free action, and we are not exempted from this even though both our ability to act and our very activity are themselves a gift of God's grace for which we may and must praise him.

To put it another way, redemption from outside is the gratuitous bestowal of our own self-redemption. When this kind of free act through which human beings save themselves is

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impossible due to an absence of the presuppositions required for its performance, such persons who have not reached the use of reason may still receive eternal salvation even without having to exercise their own freedom – but this happens only because they have no possibility whatsoever of exercising their freedom in a concrete way. This, however, does not alter anything in the previously formulated axiom asserting the interaction of redemption from outside and self-redemption. So it seems to me that the concept of vicarious representation, when used in the area pertaining to the realization of salvation, is at the very least a concept that leads to misunderstandings, and it would do no harm if we avoided it.

[267]

The Solidarity of Human Beings Extends to Their Free Acts

What, then, are the true and valid elements that are evidently envisaged in this problematical notion of vicarious representation? What it means is that there is a solidarity of human beings with one another and with the God-man that extends right into the ultimate root of our existence, into the area of those decisions that are relevant to salvation. What it means is that there is a human solidarity that has a bearing on *salvation*; in other words, that the concrete reality of every spiritual subject, known as a human being, is codetermined by the totality of this world and such a reality cannot be completely expressed without codetermining the totality of the world. A distinguished physicist once observed that Sirius trembles when a child throws its doll out of its crib. The history of the physical world together with intellectual and spiritual history, that is, the sum total of everything that happens and the deeds that other people do are the biological and social elements which are always at work determining us, and there is no escaping them. In every one of the free actions we perform we are the beneficiaries of our historical heritage and we are dependent on it, regardless of whether we appropriate it to ourselves or protest against it.

In the Christian understanding of the world and of our existence this solidarity extends right into the area where our ultimate decision of salvation is made. This human solidarity is not just something that pertains to our visible society and our secular history; it is also present in that area where we freely determine our ultimate relationship to God extending beyond all immanent reality even though it might seem that our decision is being made in radical loneliness and isolation. Each one of us determines by our own free actions what we will ultimately be in eternity, and this ultimate validity is our own and it cannot be transferred to someone else. But this ultimate validity – no matter whether it amounts to a final yes or a final no – is compounded of all the presuppositions of such an ultimate validity as has resulted from our own free actions, and therefore it consists of all the elements of necessity and freedom that have been present in human history as a whole.

Indeed, it is a conviction of Christian faith – regardless of how this can be explained more precisely – that even the future, which obviously [268] means nothing more than what has not yet come to be, is already present as a codetermining factor in our own situation of freedom. Otherwise there would be no sense in saying, for example, that those people who before Christ achieved a Christian salvation in freedom are also essentially affected by Christ.

In the one single history of the world and of salvation throughout all times and places all human beings stand in solidarity with one another; the situation and the possibilities of the freedom of all are jointly conditioned by all for all. And this is still a reality even where someone might raise a final protest in freedom against this solidarity This solidarity extends to the utmost limits of reality, even though this one single “field” of that free existence does not, of course, simply manifest a purely homogeneous structure, even though each person does not stand in solidarity with the other in exactly the same way.

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SOLIDARITY IN JESUS CHRIST

Our Christian faith further affirms that this single field of unlimited solidarity is ultimately constituted, or, if you will, consolidated by the deed of the one Jesus Christ who in love freely given remained steadfast in his predestined solidarity with human beings and did not renounce it even when it meant for him the cross and the death of one forsaken by God. That each one of us is in this sense responsible for the salvation of the other is, in the words of Pope Pius XII, a mystery that makes us tremble.[4]

The truth of mutual responsibility also implies the converse. Our own salvation, however much it be our own act, remains a gift bestowed on us by the love and fidelity of all the people in the entire history of humankind.

If we consider this sentence from a human point of view, its interpretation would have to be restricted exclusively to the idea that [269] the acts of all other human beings are an essential element of the situation of freedom which constitutes a part of the final and definitive free act of a human being. But if we consider this sentence in the light of God's initiative, its interpretation can be expanded. We must call to mind the words of Paul (Phil. 2:13) that not only the ability to perform a free act but also the very act itself, however much it is inalienably our own, is God's doing, who causes our own action in accordance with his loving purpose. And we must further call to mind that this action of ours is given to us by God as his grace because and to the extent that he wills the salutary good of this entire history of humankind. Therefore we can also say that the solidarity linking us to one another and to Jesus Christ is an essential element not only of the structure of our situation of freedom but also of our free acts themselves that result in eternal salvation.

The freely given love of Jesus and of all human beings who throughout the whole of history have attained their salvation in Jesus is present in the freedom of our own final decision. The bond that links us to one another is not only one of example and instruction. Our solidarity extends into the inmost recesses that lie at the mysterious roots of our existence known only to God in his omniscience, since he alone is the one who sees and wills the totality of the world and its history in the interdependence of all its parts. Extravagant and absurd as the conclusion may sound, it remains nonetheless true in the light of what we have said that, in the most fundamental sense, we live and attain our final validity in eternity not only as a result of Jesus' love, but also that in our own existence *our* lives and actions stem from a solidarity with Maximilian Kolbe. And we may even say that *he* took his martyrdom upon himself in virtue of his solidarity with our good and evil actions.

It may truthfully be said that the entire history of humankind and the history of salvation is one great symphony of praise to the love of the God who moves the sun and the stars.

[4] See *Mystici Corporis,* no. 43: "A truly awesome mystery that can never be considered sufficiently: that the salvation of many is dependent on the prayers and voluntary acts of penance of the members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ which they take upon themselves for this purpose, and on the collaboration that our divine redeemer requires on the part of the shepherds and the faithful, particularly the fathers and mothers of families."

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PROFANE HISTORY AND SALVATION HISTORY
Published in *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft*, vol. 23 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1982), pp. 111—23. This contribution is the second part of the article "Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte." The first part of this article was written by G. Mann.

NATURAL SCIENCE AND REASONABLE FAITH
Published in *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft*, vol. 3 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1981), pp. 34—78. This contribution is the second part of the article "Weltall—Erde—Mensch." The first part of this article was written by K. Rawer.

THEOLOGY TODAY
Lecture given on April 14, 1980, in Münster, Westphalia, on the occasion of the jubilee celebration of Wilhelm University. Published in *Akademische Festreden zum Jubililum 1980. Schriftenreihe der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster*, ed. H. Dollinger, no. 1 (Münster, 1980), pp. *43—54*.

THE PRESENT SITUATION OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY
Hitherto unpublished radio address broadcast by the Bavarian Radio Network on September 26, 1979, under the title “Stand der katholischen Theologie heute.”

ASPECTS OF EUROPEAN THEOLOGY
Published in *Problemi e prospettive di teologia dogmatica*, ed. K.-H. Neufeld (Brescia, 1983)

A THEOLOGY THAT WE CAN LIVE WITH
Hitherto unpublished lecture held before the faculty of theology of the University of Würzburg on July 22, 1982, and subsequently delivered in Regensburg, Frankfurt am Main, and St. Polten.

THE MATURE CHRISTIAN
Published in *Stimmen derZeit* 200 (1982) 3—13.

[272]

JUSTIFYING FAITH IN AN AGNOSTIC WORLD
Published in the *Frankfurter Aligemeine Zeirung*, March 15, 1982. Saturday Supplement, no. 84. The main title of the essay is “Der brennender Schmerz unserer Existenz.”

THE CHURCH AND ATHEISM
Lecture given at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome on October 6, 1980. Published in *Stimmen derZeit* 199 (1981) 3—13.

THE ACT OF FAITH AND THE CONTENT OF FAITH
Published under the title "Fides qua—fides quae" in *Bekennendes Bekenntnis. Form und Formulierung christlichen Glaubens*, ed. E. Hultsch and K. Lüthi (Gütersloh, 1982), pp. 63—71.

A HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS
Published in *Diakonia* 13 (1982) 376—82.

CHRISTIANITY'S ABSOLUTE CLAIM
Published under the title "Stirbt das Christentum aus?" in *Antwort des Glaubens*, no. 21

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(Freiburg im Breisgau, 1981), published by the Informationszentrum Berufe der Kirche. Also published under the title "über den Absolutheitsanspruch des Christentums" in *Universalität als Auftrag des Glaubens*, ed. D. Bader (Munich, 1982), pp. 61—74.

THE SPECIFIC CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD
Guest lecture given in Vienna on December 10, 1981, for the Club Pro Wien., Published under the title "über die Eigenart des christlichen Gottesbegriff's" in *Diakonia* 13 (1982) 150—59.

THE QUESTION OF MEANING AS A QUESTION OF GOD
Lecture held at the Reinhold-Schneider-Stiftung, Freiburg im Breisgau, on June 11, 1982. The lecture has hitherto appeared only in the publications of this Foundation, *Reinhold-Schneider-Stiftung Hamburg*, no. 20 (1982), pp.21—28.

JESUS CHRIST—THE MEANING OF LIFE
Lecture given on May 30, 1980, on the occasion of the convention of Austrian Physicians in Bad Ischl. Published in *Wege zu sinnvollem Leben*, ed. K. E. Schiller (Linz, 1980), pp. 45—66. Also published in *Geist und Leber* 53 (1980) 406-16.

CHRISTOLOGY TODAY
Published in *Concilium* 18 (1982) 212—16.

[273]

BRIEF OBSERVATIONS ON SYSTEMATIC CHRISTOLOGY TODAY
Published in *Glaube an Jesus Christus*, ed. J. Blank and G. Hasenhüttl (Düsseldorf, 1980), pp. 134—44.

THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF REDEMPTION
Lecture given at the Institut für Indologie of the University of Vienna on February 26, 1981. Published in *Epiphanie des Heils. Zur Heilsgegenwart in indischer und christlicher Religion*, ed. G. Oberhammer (Vienna, 1982), pp. 149—60. Also published in *Erlösung in Christentum und Buddhismus*, ed. A. Bsteh (Mödling, 1982), pp. 112—27. This contribution is for the most part identical with the lecture presented for the celebration of the sixty-fifth birthday of Prof. Dr. Eugen Biset on January 6, 1983. The lecture was given at the Cari-Friedrich-von-Siemens-Stiftung in Munich on January 13, 1983.

RECONCILIATION AND VICARIOUS REPRESENTATION
Lecture given on the occasion of the convention of the Academy of the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart in Stuttgart on November 20, 1982, under the title "Maximilian Kolbe und die Kraft der Versöhnung." Published in *Geist und Leben 56* (1982) 98—110.

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[1]

PART ONE

Humane Society

[3]

1

CONSCIENCE

FREEDOM AND THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN DECISION

Despite many necessary reservations theology is convinced that it has said the ultimately decisive thing about conscience. In doing so theology is aware that theological statements as such tend to introduce conscience into the mystery that we call God. And thus theological statements unavoidably take on some of the vagueness and obscurity that belong to religious language.

THE MANY QUESTIONS THAT MAY AND SHOULD BE ASKED

There are many aspects of the problem which I do not intend to discuss. Here are a few of them: What the Old Testament has to say about conscience, which it called the "heart"; how conscience refers to God, as mentioned already in the Old Testament; what Jesus taught about conscience, which he too called the heart; how the technical term for "conscience" (*syneidesis*), deriving from popular Stoic philosophy and already adopted in everyday language during the first century, entered Christian literature in Paul's letters; how this notion was transformed by early Christianity; what the Fathers of the Church (e.g., Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, and especially Augustine) taught about conscience; what medieval theology said about it, especially as, starting in the twelfth century, it commented on a text of Jerome about *synteresis* and *conscientia*; [4] how medieval theology understood with Thomas that an invincibly erroneous conscience remains validly normative;[1] against a secularized conception of conscience that tends to emphasize moral autonomy as opposed to the theonomy of conscience, to uphold the conviction that conscience refers to God; how the idea of conscience continued to develop in Christian theology through new insights coming from modern psychology and depth psychology, sociology and ethnology, leading to the admission of freedom of conscience and religion, as happened for the Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council. Such are the topics that I cannot discuss here, without implying that they are not important for the theology of conscience.

Likewise many points cannot be brought up which the theologian should say about non-theological theories of conscience. Thus we cannot speak of the fact that conscience cannot be explained by admitting the existence of inborn moral ideas. There will be no explicit

[1] S. Th., 1, 2, q. 19a. 5; De ver., q. 17a. 4 ad 2. Cf. Rudolf Hofmann, "Die Gewissenslehre des Walter von Brügge O.F.M. und die Entwicklung der Gewissenslehre in der Hochscholastik," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters* XXXVI/5-6 (Münster 1941), esp. 145-204.

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confrontation with Kant's description of conscience as a transcendental power. We cannot explicitly speak of the origin of the superego according to the psychology of Freud. No explicit evaluation need be expected of the findings of modern existential philosophy, of ethology, of ethnology, of biological evolutionism, and so on. It stands to reason that theology does not ignore all the contributions of the modern anthropological sciences that are important for a full understanding of what is meant by conscience. Of course, there is a development of conscience; of course, it is in part conditioned by biological ways of behaving, for which ethologists discover analogies among animals. Of course, early childhood shows a development of conscience, with all the antecedents and factors of such development. Of course, the concrete formation of conscience is conditioned biologically, sociologically, and culturally by the orders and prohibitions which that formation itself imposes. Of course, we do not clearly discover in the history of prehistoric humanity, cultures, and civilizations any clear and verbalized knowledge of the theonomous nature of conscience. Nor is it possible, even today, to explain it quickly to everybody. But, as we said, we cannot discuss all of this here, because if we did [5] we would be unable to explain thoroughly and clearly enough that which interests the theologian about this topic. I mean the relation that exists between conscience and God.

STARTING FROM THE ERRONEOUS CONSCIENCE

I do not intend to use here the method of a transcendental reflection on the nature of conscience as the unconditional way in which the spirit accepts its freedom. Let me start rather from a quite different consideration, even if at first it seems to be secondary. I will try to reflect on the absolutely binding character of what is called an erroneous conscience.

The Absolutely Binding Character of the Dictates of Conscience

It will soon be evident that, terminologically, it is a mistake to speak of an erroneous conscience. But for the time being this hardly matters.

No ethics, regardless of how radically "objective" it may be, can ever forego subjective human consciousness, because objective moral norms and the objective relationship that exists between freedom and God, which renders the individual norms absolute, become present only through the intermediary of a personal decision of conscience. In other words, even the norms of morality that are considered most objective must appeal to human freedom in order to become real and effective for freedom. Moral norms and commands can become effective only when they are known and understood. Therefore a subjective judgment is a last court of appeal beyond which there can be no other. Objective norms have to be grasped as absolutely binding. That is why a dictate of conscience is absolutely binding for a decision of human freedom.

This is not an endorsement of arbitrary subjectivism. Human beings are obliged to harmonize their knowledge with objective reality, as presented to them, and to accept it as a norm. Theoretically, all those who have the use of their intelligence admit this obligation, since they cannot avoid conforming their knowledge to the reality that forces itself upon them. And so all persons know at least implicitly, but really, that before they make a decision they [6] must look for information and be guided by the reality of objective morality. They know that they cannot act as they please nor make up the laws of their conduct; they know that they must, to the best of their ability and knowledge, submit wholeheartedly to the rules of objective morality. This shows that not every opinion, every preference, every arbitrary

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prejudice can claim to be a real dictate of conscience. Yet it is true that in situations where people must make decisions and act within the framework of their possibilities, after having given the alternatives sufficient thought, if they reach the conclusion that one of the alternatives is the right one, then their decision is absolutely binding on them. It is a dictate of conscience that obliges them absolutely.

We do not treat explicitly the problem of what people should consider their duty when, in a doubtful case, they feel unable to conclude clearly which of two possible answers is the right one. In such a perplexing case, when there is a lack of conclusive grounds for deciding, and a decision has to be taken, and no greater practical clarity can be reached, we say then that either of the two possibilities is morally acceptable.

So henceforth we will take it for granted that, where a choice has to be made, our decision is a dictate of conscience, if it looks absolutely binding to the subject.

Erroneous Conscience

Before we inquire further what is implied in such a decision, which imposes upon subjects and their freedom an absolute responsibility that cannot be transferred to anybody or anything else, we must keep in mind that even such a decision of conscience can, in a sense that has to be further explained, be an erroneous one. The possibility of an erroneous yet binding dictate of conscience is admitted by Christian moral theology, at least by Thomas Aquinas, and it has revealed its radical consequences in the texts of Vatican II on freedom of conscience and of religion. It has taken the Church a long time to reach this insight, because the doctrine of the possibility of an erroneous decision of conscience is not as obvious as we may think. And also because nowadays almost everyone is inclined to present even pet opinions, which one is unwilling to defend too strenuously, as dictates of conscience. But Christian [7] moral theology does admit that people's opinions about their concrete moral conduct may be erroneous and, at the same time, real dictates of conscience that oblige them absolutely and render them personally responsible. This case is far from obvious. A person's moral judgment may be erroneous, may truly contradict the objective order of values, and yet also be a real self-understanding of the subject. That is evident. It happens everyday; everyone has encountered such cases. We are often mistaken, even in the field of moral values. But that such an erroneous judgment may nevertheless – not always, but often – be a genuine dictate of conscience; that it obliges the erring person absolutely; that, speaking as Christians, it is here and now for that person a command of God; that disobeying it would make the person be rejected by God; that a judgment whose content is morally false may nonetheless constitute a categorical imperative whose transgression would render the person evil – all of this is not obvious.

There are several ways of showing why it is not obvious. One might point out that the moral non-values to which this judgment refers cannot constitute a positive moral injunction for the subject, so that a real dictate of conscience would be excluded. One might say that a dictate of conscience concerning an obligation sent from God cannot oblige one to something that God positively rejects and orders us to avoid. One might say that a moral non-value, unlike a moral value in its absolute sovereignty, cannot give rise to the unconditional decisiveness that belongs to the nature of a dictate of conscience. Yet Christian moral theology as well as human and Christian opinion hold that there are such dictates of conscience, although error and absolute obligation seem to be totally contradictory concepts that cannot coexist in the same reality. Yet according to Vatican II, "conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 16). How does it not lose its dignity when it errs?

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The Dignity of a Dictate of Conscience

This question can be answered only when one sees that, even in the event of an erroneous decision of conscience, a person performs an act that is founded in the positive dignity and binding character of a dictate of conscience. This dignity and binding character [8] cannot be situated in the categorical object (some moral value or non-value), but must derive from elsewhere, if we are to explain the binding character of even an erroneous dictate of conscience. How is this possible? We can answer this question only by examining the nature and structure of a decision of conscience.

The absolute dignity and obligation of a dictate of conscience does not come properly and solely from the single categorical concrete value with which it is concerned. Why would a single human life, which is perishable after all, be able to demand for itself the absolute right to be respected? How can individuals demand, on the basis of their insignificant reality, that their person be respected in absolute fidelity and love? Where can two persons by themselves alone find a basis for a demand of absolute honesty and integrity in their dealings with each other?

If one wishes to achieve a goal, one must use the necessary means to reach it. If a number of people wish to live peacefully together, some rules will have to be observed. But all these considerations remain hypothetical. They always assume the following form: *If* you do not want to harm your liver, use alcohol with moderation. But do I personally have to want my liver to stay healthy? Are health, peace, and some kind of happiness values that must be *unconditionally* achieved? Once more: The world of concrete realities and values, to which binding decisions of conscience refer, cannot by itself alone justify such an absolute claim. So, if such claims exist, their absolute and obligatory character must come from elsewhere.

If there exists a more basic and general source of obligation, prior to all individual values, we see right away that this source of absolute moral claims can be effective also in an erroneous conscience, one that errs about individual concrete realities, without erring about the foundation of their absolute claim. In other words: In both the right *and* the erroneous decision of conscience, despite their disagreement about the concrete moral value, one and the same basic moral reality is at work. The error refers only to the concrete data, not to what bestows upon them their absolute obligation. That is why the concept “erroneous conscience” is a misnomer. There are no truly erroneous dictates of conscience. If there were, they would not be dictates of conscience because they would not claim an absolute obligation.

The Transcendental Ground of the Absolute Claim

What is the foundation of the absolute character of morality prior to the actual appeal of particular values? This has not yet been made clear by the preceding discussion. In order to answer that question we must go back to what was hinted at above, before we considered the problem of erroneous conscience.

In every dictate of conscience, including the so-called erroneous one, we affirm and accept as unconditionally evident that fundamental and permanent distinction between good and evil, between what ought and what ought not to be, whether or not this distinction is also affirmed for the immediate object of our activity. Every dictate of conscience affirms this basic distinction as permanent. Just as every judgment affirms the principle of contradiction as universally valid and ineradicable, so that even its very denial reaffirms it, thus acknowledging its transcendental necessity, so a dictate of conscience that refers to a free

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action asserts the transcendental necessity of the distinction between good and evil. Even those who say explicitly that in dictates of conscience this basic distinction is relative and can be denied and ignored would, in their denial, implicitly maintain that their own judgment is valid and the only absolutely correct norm for their freedom. In other words, a transcendental experience of freedom and responsibility does exist, and it cannot be one datum among others within our consciousness. Empirical psychological reflection may, absolutely speaking, reduce every single datum to another one, so that it is unable to discover freedom and responsibility. But still there exists a transcendental experience of our being free and responsible subjects. It is still there when one calls it in doubt, when one is unable to discover it as one datum among others in spatio-temporal experience. One may try to run away from one's freedom and responsibility and interpret oneself as a product of others, of non-I's. But even this self-interpretation is the action of the subject as such. It is an action by which the subject denies itself or interprets its freedom as an enslavement to the arbitrary whim of something alien. It is a self-interpretation that misses its self. Yet in this very action one acts as a free subject and reveals oneself as such in the very misinterpretation. It is a mistake to confuse that which one affirms in this interpretation (the absence of freedom) with the [10] fact of affirming it, the affirmed with the affirming. Of course, the undeniable fact that we are responsible for ourselves is always mediated by some concrete object. But with this mediation, which is not identical with our transcendental self-responsibility, we experience our freedom and genuine responsibility, that is, our conscience. It is an unconditional appeal addressed to me, as a responsible subject; the response to the appeal is up to my freedom, not to my whim. For even if the subject in freedom refuses to heed it, the appeal continues to live in the refusal. All this occurs whenever a person errs about concrete data. That is why every real decision of conscience is to be accepted as an absolute summons to freedom and responsibility, even when it is "erroneous."

Conscience As God's Voice

What are the further implications of this unavoidable transcendental self-givenness of the subject to itself in freedom and responsibility? One becomes a subject only on account of the transcendentality of the spirit and of freedom, both of them unlimited, because of the subject's openness for being as such and in its totality. Without such unlimited transcendentality the subject cannot be really self-possessed and free. Such an unlimited transcendentality implies what we may call the person's dynamic reaching to the infinite and unfathomable Mystery, to God, who is anonymously affirmed whenever unlimited transcendentality with it ensuing freedom and responsibility is accepted. Thus, it is possible to explain the theonomous nature of conscience.

When one interprets conscience as the voice of God, one is basically right. For this does not mean that God intrudes miraculously into our consciousness as a concrete datum. Nor does it mean that the judgment needed in a decision of conscience is always and necessarily right about the concrete reality to which it refers. It means that in every decision of conscience, even in an erroneous one, there arise an absolute obligation and the responsibility of freedom that subjects can reject only by destroying themselves. Such a decision always and necessarily implies an affirmation of God.

[11]

The Freedom of Conscience

By interpreting conscience as a reference to God we understand the principal text of Vatican

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II about conscience, although that text is formulated in religious language. It reads:

> In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience can when necessary speak to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged.
>
> Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor. In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals and from social relationships. Hence the more that a correct conscience holds sway, the more persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and strive to be guided by objective norms of morality.
>
> Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity. The same cannot be said of a man who cares but little for truth and goodness, or of a conscience which by degrees grows practically sightless as a result of habitual sin. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 16 in *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter Abbott)

There is no need to interpret this text of the Council in more detail. Attention should be drawn, however, to a few points that follow from this understanding of the nature of conscience, especially to what today is called freedom of conscience and of religion. Through their conscience human beings are real subjects; they may not be treated like objects. Conscience must be respected by all social and ecclesiastical authorities, since their immediate function concerns the objective structures of reality. One's freedom of conscience and of religion should not infringe upon that of others because this would constitute what is usually called a violation of the common good. This brings up further questions about conflicts between freedom of conscience and the common good, that is, the freedom of others. We cannot discuss these questions here. [12] No wonder that, in this respect, the Church's doctrine and practice have undergone developments and changes.

Both society and the Church have the right and the duty to teach people about objective norms of morality and to exhort them to observe these norms. In other words: They teach the right way of applying conscience to concrete realities. This does not infringe upon freedom of conscience. The increasing complexity of the human situation and people's activities, both individually and collectively, renders it quite difficult to decide exactly for any concrete case what is objectively true or false. In defending human rights, neither the Church nor society can give up its right to present and defend norms of objective morality. But the Church at least would be well advised if she concentrated her efforts in another direction: namely, to point out more clearly that humanity strives irresistibly for God and that, in this striving, human morality becomes theonomous and, as a result, really autonomous.

It is good and practically indispensable to hold as morally binding and to obey the concrete everyday obligations that make life in society tolerable. But if people are not aware of the exalted dignity of conscience, of the individual's ultimate responsibility before God, or one's irresistible yearning for God, all objective morality and every instance of living up to it would, in the final analysis, be nothing but a higher kind of dog training that is unworthy of human dignity and unworthy of God. To put it a bit too strongly, but in fact correctly, one might say: A dictate of conscience that errs about concrete morality is more important and wonderful than an objectively correct "dictate of conscience" (not really one at all) that would neither explicitly nor implicitly affirm in freedom the transcendental dimension that refers to God.

In instances where one party must presume the presence of a real decision of conscience in another party, they have something in common before God, although there may exist a contradiction in the material content of their decisions, with the result that either one (or often perhaps both) could be false. Should both sides really understand this, should they be aware

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that before God and in God's grace they share a bond that is more important than bitter discord about the material content of their conscientious decisions, they might develop a genuine tolerance that surpasses by far what is meant by tolerance in the social and political arena. Bitter quarrels about lofty human values and goods may not be considered [13] innocuous; they should not lead to cheap compromises. Rather they are founded in the luminous peace for which every genuine decision of conscience strives, however bitter may be the feud that in such cases we have to endure for the sake of conscience.

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DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE AS THE FOUNDATION OF A HUMANE SOCIETY

Dialogue and tolerance as the foundation of a humane society sounds at first rather problematic. When one declares that one reality is the foundation of another, one generally presupposes two things: that one has a clear and distinct idea of the second reality, which needs a foundation; and that the first reality, which is clearly distinct from the second, is absolutely presupposed by the latter. But if one understands the title of this article, the first presupposition becomes very doubtful. When is a society "humane"?

At the time of the Reformation a ruler who expelled subjects unwilling to share his religion, and who refused dialogue and rejected religious tolerance, might have said that this was the only way to establish and protect a humane society in his country, because only a society that belonged to his denomination, which he considered the true one, could be really humane in all respects. For such a ruler the refusal of open dialogue and the practice of intolerance would have been the unconditional presupposition of a humane society. On closer inspection one would have to say that all fascist and radically socialist regimes share this opinion, because they are convinced that, in the final analysis, philosophical intolerance makes for the actual happiness of the greatest number in a society, and thus for real humanism. That is why they defend their political and social ideology not only with logical arguments but [15] also with intolerance and compulsion, through censorship, removal from office, and so on.

So when we say that dialogue and tolerance are the foundation of a humane society, we presuppose, contrary to the opinion or conviction of others around us, a society whose essential features include dialogue and tolerance. That is why we readily grant that the title of this article contains a tautology. A society is humane only if it allows the widest possible tolerance in social dialogue. And the other way around: Dialogue and tolerance characterize a humane society; it cannot exist without them.

At this point even those who, without hesitation, define a humane society as one characterized by dialogue and tolerance should be cautious. The history of human societies shows clearly that what people mean by dialogue and tolerance has not always been exactly the same. A Greek *polis* considered itself a seat of freedom and dialogue, although it held as obvious that an economy without slaves was impossible and that it had the right to condemn a Socrates to death, on account of ungodliness. Throughout the centuries the freedom of the Christian has been extolled. Yet, when we measure it with our standards, the history of Christianity has been, to a dreadful extent, a history of intolerance, of persecution of heretics, of wars of religion, and of coercion of conscience by leaders of Church and State.

LIMITS OF DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE – THE COMMON GOOD

It is precisely this history that saddens the Christian and the humanist, that warns us to be prudent and moderate. Today can we always welcome dialogue? Are we supposed never to terminate or to interrupt it except when the parties have reached an agreement? Is it possible in public life to forego every decision that does not translate a general consensus reached through dialogue? Who has the last word and declares that everything has been sufficiently "thrashed out"? Can a dialogue ever reach an end by itself alone? And again, is it possible in every instance to be tolerant in one's dealings with others?

It is often said (also in modern church declarations as in those of Vatican II) that the

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tolerance one should harbor for the freedom [16] of others has its limits in the common good, which may not be harmed. Nowadays efforts are being made to eliminate from the idea of the common good certain elements that derive from religious beliefs and, from the start, to use this secularized idea of the common good to do away with whatever may lead to religious discord. Are these efforts successful? Is it, for instance, a blatant case of intolerance when some state legislatures in the United States forbid the teaching of evolution in the public schools? Is it a violation of tolerance and the equal rights of an atheistic philosophy when in West Germany the state universities have theological faculties but no faculty whose task it would be to develop a radically atheistic critique of religion?

But even if one was to admit that in our modern progressive society there are still remnants of intolerance to be eliminated, the question would remain what exactly is meant by the common good and who is to decide on its meaning. For even in the most progressive and tolerant society, the common good continues to have the right and the duty to defend itself against encroachments by individuals, without the consent of these individuals. It has the right to be intolerant, if one wishes to define intolerance as treating the freedom of others in a way that they do not approve. So if, on account of the common good, such restriction of freedom is simply unavoidable, and if in this sense intolerance cannot be completely avoided and is in fact not being avoided in any society whatsoever, who determines the common good that legitimates such intolerance?

In a society where (except for a few offenders) there exists no real difference of opinion about the common good, the above question does not arise. If, on the other hand, there exist serious differences of opinion even about the fundamental questions of the common good, how does one then determine the range of dialogue and tolerance as well as its unavoidable limits? True, the genuine conception of the common good is itself one that changes in the course of history; society must continually revise it. But this constant revision burdens the individual human mind and especially the moral conscience with the burning question of what standards to use and what direction to follow in order to live up to its responsibility. At the same time, the idea of the common good, the idea of possible dialogue and of tolerance, are in a process of continual revision.

What degree of tolerance in open dialogue should one favor, if [17] one cannot simply admit that there should be no limits to one’s readiness for dialogue and tolerance? One may, for instance, be morally opposed to abortion, while admitting in a discussion that such an action should not fall under the penal law. A dialogue may present the opportunity to discuss the question of whether the abettors of a voluntary suicide should be prosecuted. However, the Nazi regime, for instance, did things and imposed burdens that are to be rejected out of hand, that are no fitting topic for tolerant dialogue among people who consider each other equally intelligent and humane, even though they disagree about practical matters.

If therefore it is not so easy to explain exactly what is meant by the willingness to welcome dialogue and tolerance, and to explain what it does not include, it is not so simple to divide people into those who are for and those who are against dialogue and tolerance. A sober appraisal of human reality and history will have to grant that there will always be disagreement about the nature of real humanism, hence also about the correct idea of tolerance and willingness to dialogue.

At this rather dim point of our reflections one might wonder whether the point on which all people might agree would not be that they should acknowledge this situation and welcome the greatest possible tolerance and openness to dialogue. But there will be no unanimity about this conclusion either. There will always be those who claim that at times one must force others to reach happiness. This idea of a legitimate intolerance undoubtedly prevails in modern Muslim nations and socialist countries. In both of them an official ideology is imposed on all, and efforts are made to carry it out even if individuals do not agree.

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The proponents of such official ideologies might of course reply to us "Westerners," that we too would restrict our tolerance by appealing to an indefinable common good. We would differ from intolerant official ideologies only in our different conceptions of the common good. We of the tolerant West would answer that our idea of the common good is wider, more tolerant, and, therefore, more correct than that of these State ideologies, because freedom, hence also tolerance, is preferable to a common good and a general happiness imposed by force from above. To us in the West that view seems quite obvious, since we cannot conceive of a genuine common good without the greatest possible amount of freedom [18] for the individual, a freedom which is itself an essential element of human well being.

But the other side might inquire whether the amount of tolerance favored by us does not seriously threaten the common good that all have to strive for, so that this threat to the common good would amount to a serious threat to freedom. We might be asked by the other side whether the common good, as we understand it, is not reduced by an exaggerated tolerance to the function of a mere economy of consumption, an inhuman economy headed for absurdity.

These considerations show how problematic are the idea and the ideal of tolerance. It is impossible to conceive of tolerance as wholly independent of the common good. The latter brings up the metaphysical question of the exact nature of the common good. It brings up a social and political problem: How does a given society at a given time envision the longed for reconciliation between the freedom of individuals and groups, on the one hand, and the limits which the structure of society necessarily imposes on that freedom, on the other? This reconciliation cannot be reached once and for all but is a part of ongoing history. So the question which interests both individuals and groups is how real reconciliation in a given society, situation, and period of history will be reached, and whether this society is really determined to stand by it in the future. We in the West will, I hope, resolutely cling to what we call our "free self-government," although we must keep in mind that this free self-government with its concrete tolerance needs to be further developed and that tolerance is not the only and absolute standard of our existence.

TOLERANCE AS REQUIRED BY CHRISTIANITY

We must now consider the nature of tolerance from another point of view, which will better show how thoroughly Christian and how radical the demand for tolerance is. Let us start by insisting once more that, as we show how Christian the radical demand for tolerance is, we do not at all imply that Christianity and the Church have, during the two thousand years of their history, always practiced the tolerance that is demanded by the Christian conception of humanity. To a frightful extent the opposite has very often been [19] the case. We must not forget that a reality in history discovers and realizes itself very slowly. There is always some contradiction between what it is and what it ought to be. But our task here is neither to attack nor to defend the churches' record in the matter of tolerance.

We are speaking rather of the tolerance that should exist, that is demanded by a basic understanding of human freedom, such as it exists in Christians and is available to all. In a short article we cannot, of course, develop a metaphysical and Christian anthropology. Hence we start from an idea that belongs, or should belong, to every kind of humanism. In a lengthy process of spiritual growth Christianity and the churches have painfully discovered that tolerance is part of the Christian message. We mean the idea that even the invincibly erroneous conscience constitutes an unconditional moral demand, to which persons owe unconditional obedience before themselves and before God, and with which nobody has a right to interfere. Hence there arises a demand for tolerance that stands far above all

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utilitarian considerations about peace or peaceful coexistence in a society of various individuals and opinions.

THE ERRONEOUS CONSCIENCE

We start from the idea that even an invincibly erroneous conscience constitutes an unconditiona1 moral duty, to which persons owe, before themselves and before God, an unconditional obedience. We are not inquiring here how the absolute dictate of conscience should be interpreted metaphysically and theologically. Neither are we inquiring how an unconditional moral obligation should be interpreted or even whether or not it should be interpreted. We are not asking whether or not one should stop at a categorical imperative as an ultimate datum of human existence and freedom, or whether one explains this obligation through a previous knowledge about God and God's will, or whether it is precisely from the unconditionality of moral duty that we begin to understand what is meant by God. As a Christian theologian I am allowed to presuppose that the unconditionality of a moral duty has something to do with the one we call God, without having to try to clarify the connection. In any case, we take for granted that [20] there exist absolute obligations in human existence, which cannot be reduced to psychological, utilitarian, or sociological factors.

Granting therefore that the dictate of conscience possesses this ultimate unconditionality even when it is objectively erroneous, we must first make it clear that not every opinion, every preference, every arbitrary prejudice that people hold and about which they are at least implicitly aware that they are unjustified in holding, can claim to be a dictate of conscience, especially since such opinions are not held with the full commitment of one's existence.

Yet the following statement is still true. When in a given situation persons have to act, and when, to the extent of their possibilities, they reach a decision which they consider true and morally right, and preferable to another available one, this judgment is binding for them; it is a dictate of conscience that is absolutely obliging.

But everyday experience shows that according to objective norms such a judgment may in fact be erroneous. Yet a judgment that is factually erroneous can be a real dictate of conscience that is absolutely binding on a person. This doctrine of the possibility of an erroneous yet absolutely binding dictate of conscience has – albeit only slowly and with all the implied consequences – been generally admitted in Christian moral theology at least since Thomas Aquinas and has, in a slow learning process of the Church, led to radical consequences for freedom of conscience and of religion, as was evidenced in Vatican II.

It is not as obvious as we tend to feel today that it is possible for a decision to come from one's inner existence and to constitute an absolutely binding decision of conscience, even though that decision is wrong. Today people are too prone to present as a decision of conscience their favorite opinions that they are unwilling to justify in a radical way. But current Christian moral theology admits such a possibility, and this with respect to *all* possible objects of such a decision of conscience. This means (once more): One's judgment concerning one's concrete moral attitude and decision may be wrong and still be a real, radical decision of conscience that obliges one absolutely in an inescapable responsibility, in which the innermost nature of a radically free decision is realized.

This is not an obvious platitude. Everyday life and our individual experience show that we are often wrong, even in the domain of moral values. What is not obvious is that such a judgment can nevertheless be a genuine dictate of conscience with its absolute [21] obligation, so that ignoring it makes one guilty in God's eyes and renders one evil. Yet Christian moral theology as well as human and Christian life-experience insist on the fact that such erroneous, yet absolutely obliging, dictates of conscience may occur in a person's

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concrete situation, although error and absolute obligation seem to be utterly contradictory notions. “Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity,” says the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, 16).

We will have to forego a more detailed explanation of why and how such a decision imposes an absolute obligation, in spite of the error about its immediate object. We can only say that a definite moral decision, in which persons realize their definitive desire of the absolute good and their definitive stance as free subjects, can occur, even through the intermediary of the categorical object of such a decision, which objectively and in itself is not legitimate.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE DIGNITY OF FREEDOM

What is important for our topic is this: What we usually call tolerance is not only a maxim for peaceful coexistence, in which people with different opinions and goals get along without harming each other physically. It is rather the respect we pay to the freedom of other persons as they make their decisions of conscience. These decisions are absolutely binding on them, even when we believe, rightly perhaps, that they are wrong. Because a decision of conscience is absolutely binding, even when in fact it is wrong, it represents an absolute (we do not say infinite) value that must be respected by the person who has made the decision.

During the Council many who opposed the Council’s teaching on freedom of religion declared that error has no rights. The defenders of freedom of religion were right when they answered: Error in itself has no rights, but erring people do. For such a factually wrong dictate of conscience still stands for the dignity of conscience, the dignity of freedom, the dignity of each individual’s personal responsibility, which one can neither shake off nor transfer to another, the dignity that everybody must respect. That is why tolerance is not merely a rule in a game played by realistic and intelligent people who want to get along with one another. It is an acknowledgment of the absolute dignity of the freedom and [22] the personality of human beings. That dignity is still present in erroneous decisions of conscience. It would be rejected and denied if it were given up in behalf of the merely factual correctness of some piece of knowledge. It is precisely because a dictate of conscience may not simply be confused with a shallow opinion and yet may coexist with error that it took Christianity centuries of reflection before it was able to draw the ultimate consequences from the lofty dignity of even an erroneous conscience. It took Christianity a long time to discover that tolerance has something to do with the innermost nature of the human person as a free subject, that tolerance must be practiced even where it is not foisted on one by the physical power of one’s opponents, even where nobody can prevent one from being intolerant. Intolerance cannot be practiced even when we are absolutely convinced that we are speaking for the truth and for the greater good of our opponents, because intolerance would eliminate or unduly restrict the freedom of others, without which they cannot be what they want to be or ought to be, namely, free persons, whose reality, as far as possible, is of their own making. Understood in this way tolerance derives from the human self-understanding that belongs both to Western humanism and to genuine Christianity. It is a tolerance that we would wish to be part of the self-understanding of all human beings.

TOLERANCE AND INTOLERANCE

But here the real problem of tolerance begins. Let us remember what was said in the first part of our reflections where tolerance was presented as a good that, although legitimate and

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desirable, is nevertheless limited by the common good of others. The common good does not allow everything to be tolerated in everybody. Tolerance has its limits, in view of the doctrine that in the common good the right of one person is restricted by the equal rights of others. In the second part of our considerations tolerance was seen as acknowledgment that there are possibilities of freedom which free subjects, on account of their dignity, require to be themselves and that a person's possibilities are not limited by others' possibilities of freedom, but are without limits.

Such tolerance necessarily engenders conflict because it postulates possibilities of freedom for one person that are, or may [23] already be, preempted by another person. For these possibilities of different subjects are not separate, they overlap. And we cannot expect the common possibilities of freedom to be divided peacefully and naturally among free subjects in such a way that there is no conflict, that no one person claims more possibilities than another. The freedom supposed by tolerance, as mentioned in the second part of our reflections, is loaded with conflicts. The common good, the freedom of others, imposes limits on our freedom, which our freedom would not impose on itself if left alone.

The tolerance that lets itself be restricted by the common good is intolerant of the tolerance which free subjects demand spontaneously as their unrestricted right. Although we readily grant that free subjects spontaneously impose some essential norms on themselves, that they do not aim simply at unrestricted subjectivity, at the same time they will often be inclined to do things that they will find impossible to carry out because of the simple reality of the intolerance of others, which, prior to any ill will, imposes limits on the possibilities of others. Reality is not such that everything will always be harmonized.

These propositions have been put quite abstractly, so that the inexorable difficulty meant here may not be too quickly and too cheaply talked away. In their private and public lives people must often be intolerant toward one another, in order to show their tolerance by securing and protecting the possibilities of freedom of others. This bitter necessity is one of the factors of human existence, although it is frequently overlooked. Some people seem to bring off the trick of making everyone feel free without impairing the freedom of anyone else.

This unavoidable difficulty, that there can be no tolerance without some intolerance, that there really exists an intolerance that is a condition of generous tolerance, has another unpalatable aspect: There is no clear and handy criterion that would allow us to determine the exact dosage of tolerance and intolerance, of tolerance for one party and intolerance for the other, and the other way around. Who would be able to set up such a criterion? Is not the whole of human history with its unceasing conflicts between freedom and coercion, with its ceaseless efforts to combine the greatest possible freedom with the least possible coercion, not an ever new proof that there does not exist any handy criterion that will solve all conflicts?

[24] True, from the second part of our remarks one may certainly deduce the maxim that there should be as much freedom and room for freedom as possible and as few instances of restricting and intolerant coercion as possible. But what is the meaning of "as much as possible" and "as few as possible," since freedom ought to exist and since coercion, which contradicts freedom, has to exist as well in order for there to be freedom? There is no such criterion. Should it exist, history would stop and vanish. Neither socialism, which openly wants to restrict everyone's possibilities of freedom and reconcile them in the name of the common good, nor an absolute liberalism, which would give total freedom to all parties, can serve as such a criterion. We cannot escape history, in which the concrete coexistence of freedom and necessity must always be determined ever anew and always in a different way. However, even if this situation cannot be changed, one thing is possible and, as shown above, is in agreement with human and Christian principles. It is also for us a duty for the future.

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PRE-EMINENCE OF FREEDOM

The presumption favors freedom. There can exist unavoidable necessities, coercions, and restrictions of freedom. But in the final analysis they have to justify themselves before the bench of freedom, and not the other way around. People may be firmly of this mind. Whether they really are, or only expect others to be, while they themselves betray this maxim in their own attitudes and actions, can quite simply be found out from their answer to the following question: Are you really willing to grant freedom to the other person, insofar as it can be done without harming others, even when you hold a different opinion and have the power to prevent others from doing what they want? Are you willing and patient enough, as far as possible, to find out and to try to feel what others (or another group) want to be and how they want to understand themselves?

The sincere answer to this question with a genuine yes might show whether such tolerance and readiness for dialogue are at hand. But since this question too includes the condition “as far as possible,” the sincerity of the answer is ultimately hidden in the solitude of the individual conscience that can be judged only by [25] God, although the effort must be made, in dialogue, to find out whether the answer was really honest. This allows the theologian to say that all persons will one day be judged before God about this point: whether they have really granted to their neighbor, individually and collectively, the freedom that is their inalienable and most personal right, whether they have in that sense been tolerant and willing to dialogue.

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3

UTOPIA AND REALITY: THE SHAPE OF CHRISTIAN EXISTENCE CAUGHT BETWEEN THE IDEAL AND THE REAL

The combination of the words “utopia” and “reality” points to a basic dualism in human existence. Biologically humans have a lower and an upper, an inner and an outer, component. Their personal reality proceeds from a present that is the product of a past and moves toward a still to be realized future. By experiencing the given realities they discover the basic norms of their activity, by which they measure the positive or negative value of their reality. They speak of an earth and look forward to a heaven. They would like to be sober realists as well as persons who strive creatively for higher goals. Whether happy or unhappy, they measure their reality by standards that are distinct from it. Fortune and misfortune, success and failure, life and death, truth and error, and thousands of like dualisms show that they do not live in complete identity with themselves, that from countless points of view they exist as a unity that remains a diversity. No wonder then that the two words “utopia” and “reality” are juxtaposed and experienced in both their distinction and their mutual relationship.

THE DUALISM OF UTOPIA AND REALITY

But what is utopia? What do we mean by it? What is reality? Which one is meant here? And what have all these ideas and questions to [27] do with the way Christians shape their life and their world? The words “ideal” and “reality” in the subtitle of this article should, for clarity’s sake, be understood in the same sense as utopia and reality. What we are doing is to inquire about the Christian way of shaping life and the world, insofar as this shaping is caught between utopia and reality.

What do we mean here by utopia? This word, coined by St. Thomas More, should not be taken as referring to everything that has not yet been realized, and for which we keep striving, although reaching it is arduous, uncertain, and even unlikely. We beg to be allowed to understand utopia here as those goals and tasks that persons not only *can* but *ought* to strive for. As task and duty they stand unrealized before us, they seem to demand too much of us, they look as though they will never be realized.

Humanity seems to be burdened with countless such utopias. We want biological and social security, and we feel threatened and uncertain in our biological and economic existence. We want to *know*, that is, to get a *well-organized* picture of reality in our minds, and we admit that we do not succeed very well. We realize that the gap between what we might know and what we actually do know keeps growing, because the knowledge made available to human beings by the sciences is growing much faster than what an individual can assimilate. We admit that we should practice justice and charity in our relations with others, yet at the same time we are aware of a pervasive and virulent selfishness. We cannot get rid of our metaphysical need, our groping awareness of God. Yet we feel inclined to resist God, preferring to stay on earth, the earth we investigate and use with our own power, to our own profit. We want to realize ourselves (as the saying goes) and yet we keep failing. Our life goals remain unrealized. We set up high standards for our environment and society; we fight for a more ideal organization of our society. And the new organization is as much a disappointment as the former one. It is ephemeral, premature, dragging along the unforeseen consequences of what we had in mind. There is no need to go on with a description of this

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dualism between utopia and reality. We all know of it, suffer from it in our own lives, and in our dealings with Church and State.

[28]

THE IDEALISTIC AND THE REALISTIC SOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT

Equally well known are the many false ways that are used to take care of this basic human situation. A brief mention of them will suffice.

First there are the idealists who cannot get along with reality and try to escape into the heaven of their ideals. Countless are the ways and methods of such false idealism that we, sinners that we are, all practice to some extent. Here is the person who wants to get out of public life, who is unwilling to dirty his hands with politics, who is looking for a quiet realm of private happiness, of leisure, of mere estheticism, of pure ideas. There are the snobs, the homesick, the romantics, the people whose slogan is Horace's "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*" (I hate the vulgar mob and I keep it away from me). There are the Christian idealists whose main occupation is to *suffer* on account of their Church. There is the person who regrets the greatness and splendor of the former German Reich. There are those who have fathomed the shabbiness and wretchedness of their fellow human beings (generally not their own; however, when they have unmasked themselves, they enjoy this too as the most sublime form of idealism and truth). All these and many other forms of idealism have this in common: that they consider what they discover in human reality, explicitly or implicitly in human conduct, as *hopelessly* and pitifully wanting. Idealists in this sense are basically people whose "ideals" are not contained in reality, even in germ, but merely hover above so-called reality as its condemnation. This attitude, as we said, does not have to take shape in a theory. It is present where one can only suffer from reality; where one tries to keep away from everything painful, like cardiac patients who avoid whatever might upset them; where one finds in one's beloved ideals solace for failures in real life; where one looks instinctively for protection from present social crises, there to remain as unbothered as possible; where one knows everything better than others, especially politicians and church leaders, who are responsible for the lamentable everyday reality.

The second way in which one wrongly tries to tackle the basic human condition and its dualism is that of the so-called realists. They are proud of the sober outlook with which they view the shabbiness of life and of humanity, without getting upset about it. [29] They are ethical Darwinists, who take it for granted that human life is a struggle for existence in which the hardiest come out on top. They coldly consider the utterances of politicians and clergy to be unrealistic fog, which others – but not they themselves – need as analgesic for life's woes. They hold on to the solid pleasures of life, while carefully avoiding excess. If they still think occasionally of God, they consider their success in life a concrete proof of the divine blessings they deserve. They are fierce and convinced defenders of the social order as the best protector of their own profitable situation. We might add, of course, that there are such closet realists in the Church.

FRAGMENTS OF A CHRISTIAN ANSWER

Keeping in mind this dualism, which is ineradicably rooted in human nature, and the false attitudes, made possible although not justified by this dualism, a few things are to be said about the Christian way of shaping life and the world between the ideal and the real. Let it be said at once that we can, of course, not give practical prescriptions, and that whatever can be said is presented here in rather arbitrarily selected fragments. We are not offering advice for a

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specific purpose, for which concrete directions should be given. We are speaking in general about self-realization and self-understanding, which cannot be put down in something like a system of coordinates, from a position outside of them. If therefore appeal has to be made to our all-encompassing existence, which loses itself in God's incomprehensibility, it stands to reason that this appeal can be made only in rather arbitrarily chosen fragments.

TAKING THE UTOPIA OF GOD SERIOUSLY

It is possible to define the Christian understanding of existence as the conviction that what seems to be utopian is the true reality. Hence so-called reality must be viewed as utterly dependent, as provisional, as that which possesses the lower degree of reality, even though we should not, like some Eastern mystics, consider it a mere unreal appearance. This in fact is obvious or, rather, should gradually become obvious through the experience of a long [30] Christian life. Do we not say: There exists an infinite, absolute, eternal God, who is distinct from the world and for whom we are intended; the history of our freedom terminates inexorably in the very immediacy of this God, whom we hope to meet as our redeeming, forgiving, liberating judgment. At the same time, however, Christian faith does not overlook the fact that this God dwells in inaccessible light, that even in face to face vision, God remains for all eternity unfathomable in his nature and in the decisions of his freedom. That is precisely why Christian faith exhorts us to take seriously the world and our tasks in it, with all their humdrum, apparently ephemeral trifles. Our faith tells us that we are responsible before God for this world and our tasks in it, insofar as they depend on the freedom with which we are entrusted. As St. Paul says, this is the way we must work out our salvation: in fear and trembling. For our innermost existence in freedom, as it is inexorably imposed upon us, God is not just a random or even doubtful factor at the edge of our existence, one we might discreetly and somewhat skeptically ignore. God is the reality that suffuses everything, orders everything, attracts everything toward himself and away from us. And precisely as this incomprehensible reality, God renders all other realities around us questionable, relative, and imbued with their own incomprehensibility.

Are we Christians not the people who call this utopia, which we cannot control either in thought or in action, God, whom we consider the true and genuine reality? Are we Christians not the people who consider heaven not only an additional boon that one might (and why not?) welcome at the end but as an integral part of our earthly reckoning and of our "real" life? Of course, one should proclaim a Gospel that loves the earth. Of course, it is impossible to take the tasks of this earth, if correctly understood, seriously enough; of course, one should praise the beauty of the earth, the greatness of humanity, the splendor of love. But it remains true that the God for whom we are headed, for whom we exist, to whom we will have to render an account, is totally other, totally different from the "real" realities with which our experience is concerned. And this God may not be reduced to being the mere splendor with which we exalt our own reality, or try at least to render it somewhat more cheerful. As Christians we are deeply convinced that we exist for God. In his sovereign absolute majesty God is not just an additional item that must balance the budget of our life. Only when we [31] have decided to adore God in his absolute sovereignty, only when we even try to love God with a boldness that seems to be wholly beyond our power, only when in awed silence we capitulate before his incomprehensibility and welcome this capitulation of our knowledge and our life as the beginning of our deepest freedom and our eternal salvation, only then do we start to be Christians. Are we then not the people of a holy utopia and not the people of a so-called realism? Are we not convinced that by thinking and living in this way we grasp genuine reality, whereas we consider and treat what we call reality as merely a stage,

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something provisional, even something that is secretly already suffused with and saved by the so-called utopia.

And so the theme of Christian existence between utopia and reality confronts us with the inexorable question: Are we successful in our attempts to consider and to treat as the genuine reality a remote utopia which seems at first very unreal, very difficult to measure and hard to handle, compared to which the obvious solid reality becomes unreal? Do we Christians have the courage to reverse the standards with which we measure what we consider to be the real? Do we have the courage to feel that we are, as the Bible says, pilgrims and aliens in a world that allows one to speak of God at most only at the graveside or from the pulpit, and that finds it embarrassing to talk about God anywhere else? Is all of this too weighty for the idealist, too utopian for the realist? Are God and faith in eternal life part of our everyday life, or is this reality only, an object of pious devotion on Sundays, whereas our everyday morality does not really differ from that of an atheist? Let there be no doubt about it: The "between" of the duality "utopia and reality" truly means that we must turn upside down the standards with which we judge reality and that the appeal of the so-called utopia should be for us the most solid reality.

ENDURING THE LASTING TENSION BETWEEN FULFILLMENT AND LACK OF IT

What all of this really means for us becomes clear when we keep in mind that this tension between utopia and reality, the ideal and the real, is not accepted as soon as we affirm a theoretical statement [32] about it. What is ultimately at stake is not that we Christians affirm *theoretically* the lasting tension between the ideal and the real, between heaven and earth. Accepting such a theoretical statement is not the same as reacting in the right way to this tension. Theoretically one can be a Christian and still unconsciously in practical life, by siding either with idealism or with so-called realism, not live up to this tension that confronts our freedom. As long as the history of our freedom has not reached its goal, we are always *in via*, always pilgrims, and thus always people who disrupt to some extent the unity in diversity that is given with this tension. We are people who half-heartedly avoid the radical appeal that is called God, who overlook the fact that we must always correspond to this absolute appeal by faithfully fulfilling our earthly tasks. We are told that we must love God with our whole heart and our whole strength, and, at the same time, admit that we are sinners. Does this not imply that we never totally answer God's absolute appeal, that like idealists we do not take the familiar reality of our existence seriously enough as the way of obeying God's appeal, or that we do it in the wrong way by claiming, like the realists, that daily duty has nothing to do with God's absolute appeal. We are in fact, all of us, half-hearted, unable to discover the right stance between that appeal and so-called reality. We are always swinging back and forth between the danger of losing our hearts to an idealistic dreamlike heaven and the danger of godlessly loving the earth. Moreover, the Christian message teaches that we cannot even tell ourselves with conscious certitude *exactly which* position we occupy within this tension. We are invited to be full of hope and leave to God's judgment the question of how things really stand with us, of whether we have a good or a bad conscience. We come from a beginning that we ourselves did not initiate. We plod along like pilgrims on a road whose end disappears in the incomprehensibility and the freedom of God; we are stretched between heaven and earth, and we have neither the right nor the possibility of giving up either one. One is not the other, yet neither can be realized without the other. We never know with absolute certitude how our deepest freedom stands with regard to this unavoidable situation of our existence; we have to accept our origin, and we must give our deepest love to the appeal and the end that are called God. And whether or not we really do this, even that we

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must hopefully leave to God. Christian existence cannot forego any of these [33] requirements. That constitutes its greatness, its radical difficulty, and its ultimate obviousness, because outside of it there is nothing that it might question.

LIVING WITH HOPE IN GOD

To accept in the right and salutary way the unavoidable dualism between the ideal and the so-called real is called in usual Christian terminology "hope borne by God's grace." Hope is one of the three basic attitudes that establish humanity in a right relationship to God. It is obvious that the salutary acceptance of the enduring tension between the ideal and the so-called real can be called Christian hope. Christians cannot decide for themselves what their "ideal" is to be. Rather they are obliged to strive for the absolute reality of God in immediacy. If they did not do this they would miss the essential destiny that they cannot refuse. Christians have no right to be satisfied with a fulfillment that would be less than God in himself. They have no right to settle down forever in their own finiteness, which would remain familiar and could be arranged as they please. They have to make God their hope, their absolute hope. The eternally incomprehensible God cannot be put, with his essence and his freedom, into a system of coordinates that would be more comprehensive than God. That is why this hopeful striving for God necessarily appears to be totally beyond our power. It can be endured only because God, through his own reality, renders us able to endure it. In that sense we have a right to say that Christian hope is a utopia, since God alone, whom we can neither grasp nor manipulate, allows us to demonstrate that it is possible and meaningful.

Accepting a permanent dualism between the ideal and the real is, when interpreted in a Christian way, really utopian, not only because of the end for which our hope strives but also because of the starting point of this striving. The dualism which we have to endure between the ideal and the so-called real asks us to strive for God, who is not one available object among the so-called realities with which we deal in our daily activities. This hope that aims beyond everything graspable is not supposed to leave the so-called realities behind in their empty glitter, it must carry them along in this hopeful movement, bringing them to perfection as a [34] mediation of its own irresistible dynamism toward God, without identifying God with this mediation. The so-called realities remain different, provisional, impossible to harmonize, yet precisely because we endure and accept them in their limitation, conditionality, and contradiction, they make it possible for us really to accept God as the only absolute goal to our hope and striving. We hope in God when we accept the earthly realities in fidelity as provisional, perishable, and fragile, without trying to find in them a definite end. Hope keeps on advancing and always carries along with itself, while mysteriously transforming, the things which it seems patiently to skip.

PATIENTLY WAITING FOR THE DAWNING OF GOD'S MYSTERY AMID THE GROWING PERPLEXITY

But as we try in this way patiently to accept the immediate so-called realities as mediation of our absolute hope, this so-called reality remains nonetheless what it is and as it is imposed upon us: incomprehensible, forever unfinished, forever resisting a harmonious synthesis. All of this is getting worse today in a way that could not have been imagined in former times. While more and more of reality falls within human powers, at the same time it remains as incomprehensible and unfinished as ever. These features affect our own activity and freedom; they are turning into a burden that humankind has never before experienced to this extent. Let

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us honestly admit it: Our bewilderment keeps growing. True, we are forced, individually and collectively, to make decisions, an obligation we cannot shirk. But the presuppositions of these decisions are becoming less and less transparent. The more the natural and human sciences develop, continually providing more data for consideration before any major decision, the less transparent are the conditions for our decision. So many possibilities and points of view are presented that we get lost. Today only the simpleminded and the foolish know exactly what should be done by individuals and groups. In earlier times, it seemed as though nature, without consulting us, had imposed on us or preprogrammed for our decision most of what made up our life. That is why more things were obvious to us than is the case today. Individually [35] and collectively, painfully groping and half-blind, we advance along life's path.

To accept such perplexity, to admit and bear it, belongs to our Christian task. We must today carry it out soberly and without idealistic obfuscation. For Christians, perplexity in life is, in the final analysis, nothing but the concrete dawning of the sacred mystery that we call God. Our perplexity should ultimately not astonish us. Wherever we can, we should get rid of it, try to clear it up. But even if we fight it bravely and resolutely, we will not overcome it. It lingers, it overpowers individuals in their lives. The only question is whether we take it as the unveiling of the basic absurdity of life *or* as the concrete dawning of the Mystery that we accept as our saving, forgiving, fulfilling, and absolute future. This is ultimately the only alternative, from which we cannot run away.

However, the option for either alternative can once more become strangely veiled and ambiguous. An attitude that pretends to be a quiet hope of eternal life may in reality be the veil hiding a so-called realistic way of life that is satisfied in false moderation with the scanty happiness of the present life. And the passionate, seemingly desperate protest against the absurdity of our existence may be the, way in which a fundamental hope may be realized, a hope that finds what it is looking for nowhere on earth, a hope for infinite fulfillment.

Although we may still hear the last echoes of a triumphant humanism that claims to have reached the limits of its self-made fulfillment, today we are assailed by a feeling that we have lost our way, a feeling that all our beautiful ideals are quickly becoming threadbare. Dissonant voices urge us to do a thousand things at once; hopelessness is spreading so inexorably that all ideals, old and new, all programs for the future, which still have a following, look pitiful and lack impact.

In this situation we Christians are not allowed to give up, we must continue to do what our times and every-day life expect from us. We do not even have the right to hope for an end to earthly progress in our history and society. We Christians know that ultimately we should not and cannot choose at our liking the time for the history of our salvation. That is why as human beings and as Christians we have no reason to pretend to be very cheerful nowadays. It seems to me that, if we are honest, we must [36] say that we are living in a wintry season, wintry in both society and Church. Undoubtedly we always have good reasons to demand more from ourselves than we can actually accomplish. But we do not have to ask too much from ourselves, nor from politicians, nor from church leaders. We do not have to act as if, with a little more courage and good will, our individual and collective situation would be changed into one of sheer pleasure and joy. Demanding too much would show that we are putting our hope not in God, but in ourselves.

If the global situation that we are living through, which looks like a harsh winter, is imposed on us, then, having done what we are able with resignation and patience, we have the right to accept the situation as the mysterious dawning of the eternal mystery of God, the end we can and must reach. Christians should not try to avoid failure, disappointment, and adversity by means of strange ideological nostrums that are for sale in society and in the Church. They can, with faith, hope, and charity, accept these adversities as the nearing of the

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incomprehensible God. The more frightful, the more hopeless everything looks, the more certain is God's arrival.

THE TEST OF DEATH

What we have said must now be put somewhat more concretely, even at the risk of sounding pietistic, of smacking of that private interiority that can be defended today only by an old-fashioned theology. Each of us has to answer before God questions of whether we have fulfilled our political task, whether we have loved our neighbor, whether we have respected people's freedom and treated them with justice. If this life of ours, with its unavoidable "political" component, has been lived the right way, it will be gloriously harvested in our eternity. Yet it moves inexorably toward death, which does not carry us away into nothingness, but forever surrenders us with the history of our freedom. Our death must be endured by us in loneliness before God. And that is where it will be revealed to each of us once and for all whether we have faced in our life the tension between the ideal and the so-called real; whether we have run away from that tension, either into a pseudo-idealism or a pseudo-realism; whether we have always [37] renewed our efforts to overcome the tension between the ideal and the real, aiming at the point where our contribution might be tendered, where we ourselves, having been enabled by God's grace fully to realize our ideal, will have been united in blessed union with the eternal God in his infinite, holy, incomprehensible splendor.

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[38]

4

THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF PEACE

Peace is a very complex reality. That is why the topic of peace has many aspects to it. I would like to say a few words here about a theological dimension of peace. Peace has in fact many theological dimensions, for all the complex realities that make for peace in the family, in the neighborhood, in the state, in the international community of peoples, refer, each one in its own way, to God; hence the many aspects of the theological dimension of peace. But I intend to shed some light only on one of these dimension, without touching the others.

Let us, for brevity's sake, call "conflict" the opposite of peace. We may then inquire: How does conflict arise? The answer is that conflict among people presupposes that the many realities, particularities, and dimensions that make up humankind, the human community, and its environment do not from the start harmonize without friction. No wonder, since in this world created by God created, hence finite, realities do not constitute a harmony in which every reality immediately fits in with all others. Possibly there are explanations for this beyond the fact that the world and whatever is in it are finite and borne by history. At any rate, this is the way things are, and we have simply to accept this fact humbly and soberly. The multifarious realities do not – at least to the human mind – fit together harmoniously.

[39]

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND COMPROMISES

As a result of this situation conflict arises among people because they disagree about the way of fitting together the various components of human existence. Every person defends, so to speak, the particular nature of a certain reality, and is unwilling to yield anything on behalf of another element within human existence, which in turn makes its own claims. There is, for instance, only a limited amount of wealth. Everyone lays claim to a greater part of it. Total harmony must be brought about at the cost of some sacrifices to be made by the individual components. When people cannot agree where and from whom such sacrifices, such restrictions, such concessions should be demanded, conflict arises among them.

Now it is clear that almost every such conflict might be settled with the help of some common sense, moderation, and peaceableness. We only have to find out where and to what extent certain concessions can be imposed so as to reach some balance among the various claims of the different realities. We might say that, roughly speaking, all conflicts can be settled. Peace can be reached in the various personal and social domains if everyone is willing to accept such reasonable and obvious restrictions, sacrifices, and concessions. Basically all efforts to reach peace aim at an equilibrium between the claims of individuals and those of groups. As a rule, resolution of conflict is brought about by reasonable adjustments and compromises.

THE REALM OF UNCONDITIONED FREEDOM

Yet, on closer examination, there are in human life many cases of conflicts and endeavors to settle them where things are not so simple. For in many instances – possibly in all conflicts of some importance – it happens that one of the parties in such a conflict may be forced to forego something for the sake of peace and yet receive no perceptible compensation in return.

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True, very often we cay say that a compromise that leads to peace is better for all parties than if one party tries to prevail, without foregoing its own wishes or needs. In a trade war or in a modern nuclear war all parties would fare worse than if they are agreed on a reasonable [40] compromise whereby each one of them would have given up some advantages.

Yet, as we said above, in many cases at least, or maybe even in all serious conflicts, there are situations in which peace is possible only if either or both parties forego something without any compensation, or even without a word of thanks from the other side, as if the outcome were obvious. How would the woman who in midlife has been hurt by the infidelity of her husband be rewarded if, for the sake of the children, she foregoes a divorce? What about a politician who in a political conflict respects the truth and, in order to stay honest, admits that he was wrong, showing that he has regard for the rights of his opponent as much as for his own? Do people respect and thank him for it? Or is he not publicly or privately mocked as an idiot who cannot take care of himself? There are in human life then situations in which concessions and sacrifices are expected that are not really and manifestly rewarded in a sufficient and visible way by the peace that ensures. Life's accounts, even with regard to peace, never come out exactly and smoothly through nicely balanced human computations.

This is the area where a religious dimension of peace comes up, of which we intend to say a few words. In the final analysis, if we do not want to destroy ourselves, we cannot simply give up all claims to things that are radically important for our own existence and self-realization, or that are generally considered such, without demanding that this sacrifice be compensated in some other way. But how will this sacrifice be compensated, when such a compensation is obviously impossible in ordinary experience? There are enough conflicts in which we wonder bitterly, and not without reason, why we ourselves should be the "sucker" who has to pay so that there may be peace.

In such cases persons can have the generosity and inner freedom to accept such sacrifices in silence and without reward only if they are open to that reality and fulfillment which we call God. We might almost say by way of definition: God is the real, universal, and all-encompassing possibility of that peace, the possibility and meaningfulness of which can no longer be shown by means of the individual elements that constitute human reality. In the final analysis only those persons can be peace-loving who are convinced that there is a being able to bestow upon human existence an ultimate, undeniable, indestructible meaningfulness. We call that being God.

[41] Those who believe in God feel no need frantically to defend as absolute something that is so meaningful to them that, even in a radical human conflict, they would be unwilling to give it up. Only those persons who are open to God and to their own fulfillment in God do not have to accept an all-out conflict, when they are faced with the need of sacrifice for the sake of peace, even a sacrifice that takes away from them important values. That is why the question of the presuppositions of peace points to a religious dimension. Persons who, for the sake of peace, succeed in renouncing very important values without thanks or approbation, and even at times without being rewarded by the feeling of their own unselfishness, only such persons have, whether they know it or not, reached the realm of unconditional peace, the realm of the grace of God.

NOT PUTTING UP WITH EVERYTHING

We have referred to God as the condition of the possibility of peace through a renunciation that is not rewarded by some other advantage. This does not mean, of course, that every conflict can be settled in this way. There have always been powerful rulers who, for the sake of a peace that suits them well, urge others to give in, to be quiet and reasonable. Such rulers

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selfishly want to turn religion into the opium of the people. To reach their own purposes they exhort others to be submissive, reasonable, willing to make sacrifices, and to yield without protest. Persons who are totally open to God and who discover in God the ultimate unsurpassable justification of their way of acting may also in some instances resist, fight, and incur the risk of war, even though they cannot be certain of a favorable outcome. Those who have God for an ally do not have to put up with everything; when their conduct is lawful in God's eyes, they cannot perish in such a conflict.

What we should do in individual cases, whether we should fight for the sake of legitimate earthly realities or, prompted by God, make some sacrifice for the sake of peace, cannot be decided in the light of such general considerations. Persons who are free in God may, in some instances, either venture into conflict or avoid it, and they may do this on the ground of the same ultimate relation to God. In the domain of everyday experience, there exists a love [42] of peace that goes without reward and that people can harbor only if they are open to God. Naturally this also implies that such peace-loving people are open to God, even if they cannot explicitly ten themselves that they are.

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[43]

5

THE PROBLEM OF EUROPE'S FUTURE

I shall start with a few preliminary remarks that may, perhaps somewhat immodestly, be called part of a philosophy and theology of history. It is, of course, impossible in an article of this length to offer a philosophy and theology of history with all their many and different themes. Nor may we take for granted that they are known and apply them to our problem of Europe's future. The only thing we can do is choose, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, a few considerations from this philosophy and theology. Explaining them rather than starting from an empirical analysis of the present situation may show more clearly why we have a right to inquire about Europe's future. Let me present some considerations without explicitly distinguishing between a *philosophy* and a *theology* of history.

THE FUTURE AND THE PROBLEM OF THE WHOLE

Mere historical curiosity naturally gives thought not only to the present but also to the possibilities of the future. Positivistic pragmatism, after the manner of politicians and futurologists, probes the foreseeable future of the world as well as of Europe. The question we are about to examine might for a start be formulated as follows: Are there other reasons and considerations showing that it is meaningful and necessary to inquire about Europe's future?

Today's sceptics understand rather easily that such an inquiry does not immediately make sense. It is true that Europe refers to [44] a certain region distinct from other parts of the world. Its history too has some unity that separates it from other historical developments. With all its diversity it shows some "cultural" unity that distinguishes it from other cultures. It possesses a common biological (ethnic) substratum; it has its European community, and so on. Nevertheless, one might wonder whether the word "Europe" does not signify an object that, on closer examination, disintegrates before the observer into the destinies of individuals or into a network of causes and effects that, despite all artificial delimitations, is, or is slowly becoming, identical with the totality of human history.

Today's sceptics will further inquire whether it is possible to make any even slightly reliable predictions about the real future of Europe and of the world. Is it not a fact that, except for the very near future and for foreseeable developments, especially of a technical nature, we know and can know, nothing about the future?

Today's sceptics will ask whether it is possible to say anything serious about the "meaning" of the future of humanity in general and of Europe in particular. They have the impression that one can discover *particular* connections between aspects of their history and their society, which may at times mean something like real progress. But such particular findings, like small islands of meaning in an ocean of the unknown and the unknowable, do not yield any clear meaning of the whole. Nor do they yield any norms that tell us how things *ought* to go further, either for the "meaning" of the history of humankind as a whole or for Europe in particular.

Finally, today's sceptics will admit a few moral norms for their private lives and their immediate environment, but they will be inclined to doubt whether it is possible to enunciate binding moral norms for history and politics in general. Determining factors in biology and economics may allow some predictions, but it is doubtful whether norms, ideals, and

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directions can be formulated for the way in which Europe itself should envisage its own future. Even if we overlook the skeptical experiences of the present, the problem of Europe's future seems to be a very obscure problem.

It is not a particular or a "regional" problem within the totality of individuals and their world. It concerns the totality itself. That is why (although it needs the help of particular sciences and human experience) it is ultimately a problem of metaphysics, of faith, of an option that can supply an answer only to those who fully trust this special kind of knowledge, in which persons are involved as [45] a whole with the whole of their reality. All these decisions about the future of Europe directly or indirectly concern the *entire* person amid the peoples of Europe as a whole and, given the present unity of world history, the totality of humankind. Such questions are ultimately no longer questions about this or that fragment in the whole of reality. They are questions about the whole world. That is also why such questions can be asked and answered only as a result of a precomprehension of the whole of reality. They are, as it were, not questions about a single point *in* a system of coordinates but questions *about* the system itself as a whole – and thus questions of a metaphysical anthropology and of the way persons understand themselves in faith. Moreover, they are questions that cannot be answered only through an abstract theory. In order to be answered "rationally" and in a responsible way, they require a free decision, faith, and the help of praxis. One would misunderstand human existence if one were to think that ultimate clarity and certainty can be reached by abstract knowledge alone, independently of an existential option.

ABOUT THE REALITY OF EUROPE

We are now trying to reflect on the different elements of our problem and to do it in the manner mentioned above, which, compared with the historical sciences and with an empirical analysis of the present time is somewhat a priori.

Here is our first question: Can we take it for granted that Europe is a "reality" about whose present and future state we can seriously say anything really important? The question itself is not very clear and should first be explained. When Christian metaphysicians and theologians say something about individual persons, they are convinced (or at least were until the Enlightenment) that these persons have a lasting and definitive value in their nature and in the history of their freedom, that they are "immortal," that, with the enduring achievements of their history and despite all necessary transformations, they end up forever in the eternity of God. This continues to be the conviction of Christians, at least on the basis of their faith. In this sense persons, at least as individuals, have absolute significance, absolute importance. They cannot be reduced to disparate elements and thus be eliminated.

[46] Hence, as a Christian metaphysician and theologian, one can inquire whether such absolute significance and importance also belongs to human collectivities, or whether such units (a social group, a people, a historical epoch, a culture, and so on) belong only to those unavoidable but purely provisional phenomena within whose ephemeral reality persons must develop the history of their own freedom, mere phenomena that disappear as soon as the proper meaning and achievement of history have been reached in the definitiveness of each persons before God. When one seriously considers the possibility that human collectivities may have, at least analogically, such absolute significance as, according to our Christian faith, belongs to human persons, one may also be emboldened to inquire whether "Europe" belongs to the collectivities that are endowed with eternal significance. This does not mean, of course, that Europe will certainly exist *in time* as long as humankind as a whole exists. It means that Europe as such enters into the definitiveness of history, as does each human

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being, despite the brevity of human life.

Inquiring about the significance of collective human reality in general, and eventually of Europe in particular, may seem to people, in the humdrum of their everyday lives, like a meaningless and empty speculation. But when historical decisions have to be made for such a collectivity, in this instance for Europe, is it not of the greatest importance to know whether they are being made in the perspective of such an absolute meaning, rather than with the implicit, politically fashionable, rhetorically touted conviction that at the end everything turns to nought or, at most, retains some importance only in the fate of individuals? One may ignore this question as unrealistic and artificial. But a Christian remains convinced that politicians as persons are responsible for their decisions before the tribunal of God. And thus we may wonder whether they do not have to submit to God's judgment not only the "intention" that motivated their political decisions but also the real consequences of those decisions in history. Are there then collectivities that have a significance which stands somehow (difficult to determine, of course) on the same level as that of individual subjects, although that significance is naturally not quite the same? If the answer to this question is affirmative, one may further inquire whether this may also apply to the collectivity "Europe," since [47] it stands to reason that all collectivities do not have the same importance.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COLLECTIVE REALITIES

It is clear that this question can be answered only in connection with a human existential ontology. We can touch on it only briefly here. In the history of anthropology a perennial conflict exists between two conceptions of humanity. According to the first, persons are, in the final analysis, absolute individuals, free subjects, who ultimately exist in radical loneliness. All their "social" dimensions, starting from their biological dependence and extending to the most exalted and sublime creations of their social life, may be understood only as subordinate conditions that make it possible for them to be truly unique persons in freedom. According to the second conception, individuals are not only in fact members of a collectivity, they also exist and can be understood *only as such*. Individuals exist only so that the collectivity may exist, whatever the nature of this collectivity. Human individuality and human sociality probably represent (I do not want to put it more strongly) two ontological determinations of the human. They cannot exist independently of one another. Neither can one be reduced to the other as a mere aspect of it, as a condition of its possibility, and so on. These are two fundamental determinations of humanity, whose unity and difference are given simultaneously. In both this difference in unity and this unity in difference they refer to the mystery of the one God. It is in God's transcendent unity that the possibility of unity in diversity is rooted, in such a way that the different realities cannot be reduced to each other, while nevertheless constituting a real unity. (It stands to reason that this dialectic of unity and diversity, which finite realities cannot surmount, must be understood in many different ways, according to the degree of being and the multiple composition of each one of them.)

Let us suppose then (we might almost say with metaphysical boldness) that individuality and sociality are determinations of one and the same person that originate together and cannot be adequately reduced to each other. It follows then that, if persons have an absolute and eternal importance and significance, the same characteristics must also be ascribed to their sociality. Consequently, [48] human collectivities too have an analogous (although different) importance and definitiveness before God, similar to the one which a solid anthropology and Christian faith attribute to the person as an individual subject of freedom.

From the point of view of the history of Christian faith as well, the significance of collective human realities is almost obvious. In the history of salvation and faith (of both the

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Old and the New Testament) an almost frightful development has occurred. Christian faith can assimilate it only by presupposing that the convictions that explicitly succeed each other in this history constitute the totality of the Christian understanding of humanity only if they are taken together, and that the stages of this history do not obliterate each other. In the Old Testament God made a covenant with a people, not strictly speaking with individuals. It does not matter here whether God, in privileging this partner Israel among a multitude of peoples, has chosen *only* that people, or whether an analogous relation of God to all other peoples cannot also be accepted. Such a relation would then have been more explicitly grasped by Israel; it became the foundation of the existence of Israel as a people. At any rate, here a *people* is the addressee of the divine activity. Individuals are important only if and insofar as they take part in the righteous activity of this people, as directed by its covenant with God. Individuals (in their explicit conscious mind) feel safe and know that they are approved and accepted by God if this people continues to live in an obedient relationship to the God of the covenant. The least we can say is that, through long centuries of Israel's history of faith, the question of the eternal significance of the individual is less important than the significance of the people before God.

In the New Testament, after a pre-history of the specifically Christian anthropology that still belongs to the history of Israel, the way humankind is considered undergoes a change. It is true that we still hear of the Christian message being announced to peoples. Other similar Old Testament allusions to collectivities do not simply disappear, especially since the Church, as the main source of salvation, is herself a collectivity. Yet individuals and their salvation are now clearly occupying the foreground. Each one decides in freedom about his or her salvation and will with an inalienable responsibility, stand as an individual before the judgment seat of God.

[49] We should not say that these two conceptions are mutually exclusive, and that a New Testament "individualism" (if we can call it that) is the only valid position to be seriously considered in a Christian interpretation of history. Old Testament theology *also* remains valid. It recognizes "peoples" as subjects of salvation history, as it occurs within profane history. It speaks of their angels, God's name is invoked over them, a God of all *peoples*. To these peoples the Gospel of Jesus is preached. Hence it is difficult simply to reduce the salvation history of these peoples (hence their profane history as well) to that of individuals, even as the profane history of peoples cannot be reduced to the mere random interaction of individual histories. They undoubtedly influence each other, but together they also constitute a single meaningful whole. We Christians speak of God's eternal Reign, of the eternal communion of the saints with God. If we do not want to imagine, in the definitiveness of history in God, a kind of hierarchical grouping of individuals organized merely according to a formally moral standard, then, in this eternal realm of the definitiveness of freedom, the individuality of the supraindividual collective histories of peoples should also be maintained and recognized. *How* the diverse histories of such collectivities can enter into the definitive realm of freedom is beyond our present powers of comprehension, but it should be possible if history is not to have an ephemeral meaning but is itself to reach God's definitiveness. It should be possible if its contribution is to be more than some colorless production of morality or a mere sum of isolated free subjects who do not take with them into the definitiveness of history their collective historical unity. So we may boldly claim that historical collectivities also enter as such into the final consummation of history. They are more than ephemeral realities.

EUROPE AS PART OF THE DEFINITIVE CONSUMMATION OF HISTORY

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At this point the question arises whether Europe belongs to these realities to which one may attribute an absolute eternal significance, so that the problem of its future would derive its ultimate right and importance from that eternal significance.

First let us say that a positive answer to this question does not [50] imply that Europe as a historical entity and not just as a geographical reality must remain forever ("until the end of time") a notable historical reality. True, on the authority of the letter to the Romans, traditional Christian doctrine ascribes to the people of Israel as a historical reality a duration until the end of human history. We do not have to consider the question whether this idea is a dogma of the Christian theology of history or only a plausible idea. For people of earlier times, realities that were spatially, and even more temporally, very small and limited made up the history of humankind. People thought that history would not last very long, thus they could easily imagine that a single people might endure until the end of time, even while they were witnessing the downfall of whole peoples. Still, the thesis of the eternal significance of Europe before God does not imply the conviction that Europe as a historical collectivity has to be historically important forever to an extent that is in some way comparable to its importance today beyond its spatial reality. Even if Europe in that sense should "vanish" from the history of humankind, like other peoples that have disappeared, it might nevertheless belong to those historical realities that remain significant before God in and through the definitive salvation of their members. Of course, our inquiry also implies the question why and how Europe, through the *content* of its history, could continue as a collective individuality that would remain forever significant in the definitive consummation of universal history. Clearly we cannot present a detailed discussion of this question here.

The historical significance of Europe within the total definitive meaning of history before God derives from two reasons: first, from the special nature and importance of its profane history in itself and for the whole of humankind, an importance that has significance "anonymously" for salvation history; next, from the special contribution made by Europe in the history of its faith and its explicit salvation history, a contribution that is peculiar to it, as compared with the faith and salvation history of other peoples, and in this way is important also for other peoples.

While trying to demonstrate the "eternal" significance and importance of Europe by means of its function and achievements in the history of salvation, we do not mean, of course, that this is the only reason we attribute to it such eternal significance. We mean only that this is the easiest way to show its importance. These [51] achievements in the history of faith and salvation could concretely occur only in connection with the secular and temporal accomplishment of Europe. Moreover, many things happen in secular history that, through God's grace, are anonymously Christian. That is why the secular history of Europe and its peoples has eternal significance when we attribute to Europe a specific and unique task and achievement in the world's history of salvation and faith.

We do not have to consider the question of whether and how "Europe" should or should not be distinguished from the West, and how exactly its derivation from the history of Israel and from the Roman-Greek-Byzantine culture should be considered as part of its nature. These and similar questions cannot be explicitly discussed here.

Even though the concept "Europe" is not exactly unequivocal, we can say that in the unity and despite the diversity of its peoples, Europe is a reality that belongs to salvation history in a way that is analogous to the special position which the Christian theology of history ascribes to the people of Israel. We say analogous because we do not want to answer the question of how far this resemblance goes and yet how great the essential difference is, from the point of view of salvation history, between Israel and Europe. Neither do we have to examine here whether God's "covenant" with Israelis so unique in the salvation history of humankind, that the fact of being a "covenant people" should be denied to all other peoples,

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or whether the unique character of God's covenant with Israel means only *that* uniqueness with which God, in his goodness, speaks in an ever unique way to each people. We must also not forget to mention that the Christ of all peoples is descended, in that concrete uniqueness that belongs to every event in history, from the people of Israel and from no other people. But if, despite God's universal salvific will, which embraces every place and time, and by which God makes himself into the innermost entelechy and the ultimate end of the whole world, there exists a real *history* of salvation, then, Europe really has a function, with respect to the salvation of the whole world, resembling that of Israel.

The salvation of the world, starting from Israel, has proceeded throughout the whole of history since Christ from Europe. The importance of all peoples in universal history itself has a history, in which these peoples do not make their decisive contribution to universal history all at the same time. Thus it is not a disparagement [52] or a belittling of the historical vocation of peoples in Asia and Africa to admit that, despite its reprehensible colonialism, Europe has had for all peoples a unique significance. We can say with John that all peoples are called to adore God everywhere in spirit and in truth. They do not have to do it only in Jerusalem. It remains true however that the salvation of the whole world, in its enfleshment and explicitness, has a history. It is also true that salvation has come and continues to come through Europe in historical, ecclesial, and verbal concreteness to other peoples, somewhat in the way in which salvation originated from Israel. This historical uniqueness of Europe within salvation history allows us to consider Europe as one of the peoples that are also of eschatological importance before God, as they must be found in a theology of history that is not one-sidedly individualistic. It stands to reason that Europe's importance in salvation history is of particular significance in universal history, and that this can be seen in profane history as well.

It is true, as we will presently emphasize, that the future of humankind is for us practically unknown. Therefore we cannot know what special contribution Europe and other peoples will yet make to the *future* common history of humanity. This is true because, in a philosophy of history, it remains quite impossible to explain the factual course of history in the past, the present, and the future in such a way that the several stages and contributions of single peoples become clear for the whole of history. Nevertheless, we can mention some specific contributions of Europe to universal history, contributions that were morally required and that may rightly be considered as "progress" in the history of humanity.

Europe has brought about the unification of the diverse histories of peoples and cultures which used to be divided up regionally to a great extent. This unification into a single history of humankind makes all people interdependent. In this way Europe has introduced into what has become a unified history many features that the whole of humankind has adopted. We mean not only rational technical civilization but also higher human values in cultural and social life. But this topic belongs to the following sections. At any rate, Europe's function in salvation history, which presupposes and includes the secular, human contributions of Europe to the history of humanity, entails a reality and significance that does not depend [53] on individual preferences. For a theology of history, Europe is, at the least, a reality and challenge.

GOD'S SALVIFIC WILL FOR EUROPE

Perhaps we can explain what we said above more precisely. If Europe has a function in and a significance for the salvation history of the whole of humankind, and to some extent for profane history as well, and if this function and significance are analogous to that of Israel, then we may say analogically of Europe what, with Paul, the Christian theology of history

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says of Israel: God's promises are irrevocable; they are never withdrawn. We have already said that this does not necessarily mean that Europe will constitute an important historical reality for all times. But it does mean that Europe has made a contribution to the definitive reality and meaning of universal history before God, a contribution that, in the final analysis, is undoubtedly *positive*. This is not readily obvious.

In a rational appraisal and in the light of a Christian conscience, when one thinks of all the historical absurdities and horrors that have filled Europe's history, it is not obvious that Europe has brought forth many positive results or that it deserves to be saved by God. We might make the same appraisal of the history of Israel, filled as it was with guilt and rebellion against God. Yet revelation tells us that, against almost all expectation, God pronounced a judgment on Israel that is definitively positive. Can we have the same hope for Europe? True, without being able to give theoretical reasons, Christians have the right to hope that the history of freedom *as a whole* will have a positive meaning. But this alone does not allow them to attribute positive value to particular historical realities and developments. If, on scriptural grounds, Christians can hold these convictions with regard to Israel, then, without venturing to prophesy about the world's future, they also have the right to the conviction that God harbors for Europe a salvific will that is active and irrevocable. Although this conviction is by no means indisputable, it seems that Christians can hold it.

This allows the European rightly to feel self-respect and a certain pride, which does not imply a boastful comparison with other Peoples and cultures. Rather it allows the European to be convinced that Europe, through its influence on salvation history and [54] therefore on profane history also, has had and still has a positive significance for universal history that matters before God. It also means that, although ignorant of the future of the world and of universal history, Europeans have no reason to lose heart.

EUROPE AS THE OUTCOME OF A FREE HISTORY

With the reality and significance that we have ascribed to it, Europe is not a mere matter of fact, but the outcome of the free history of real people, who have freely shaped this Europe in spite of all kinds of difficulties and obstacles. And thus the question necessarily arises how the freedom of those who are shaping Europe is related to Europe and its future. The following paragraphs offer a few considerations in response to this question, although they are perhaps no more than questions and guesses and merely an arbitrary selection from among such possible questions.

If Europe is the result of the freedom of former times, and if one may presuppose that the history of this freedom is not at an end, but that it goes on, then the problem of Europe's future is one that confronts the freedom and responsibility of the individuals who are shaping Europe today and who will shape it tomorrow.

About this freedom and responsibility for Europe, one must first say that Europe's future cannot be predicted with certainty. At first sight this statement is undoubtedly a platitude. Who would venture a precise and comprehensive answer to the question of how Europe will look in the year 2200? But we must add that a concrete prognosis, which would give one knowledge of what will happen in the future, is *in principle* impossible. Of course, there exists the science of futurology; research is being conducted that uses current data and the forces they contain to predict the future of the world and of Europe in particular. Presently we will have to say that such efforts to look into the future constitute a task that cannot be disregarded. But first we should emphasize that, despite all predictions and efforts to foretell it, of its very nature the future will always remain unknown. Much as concrete history in the present, past, and future is ultimately an inextricable unity of necessity and freedom, so every

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dimension of the human situation is also determined in part by human freedom. But this freedom is not only a carrying out of what is necessary and foreseeable. It always contains an element [55] of creativity that, strictly speaking, cannot be deduced from what has gone before. It is a free choice, a decision.

It is, of course, not possible to demonstrate here that, despite all coercive and determining factors forever acting upon them, persons are free beings. Nor is it possible to explain further *where* and how *within* human existence freedom is concretely at work, how human reflection is unable to pinpoint it exactly, how that which is immediately given to reflection is always an inextricable synthesis of necessity and freedom, and how therefore it remains always possible to declare that this concrete event was determined. Yet we must hold on to the conviction that freedom is not merely a metaempirical postulate behind an objective world of mere necessity, which would only conceal the subject's freedom, if such freedom exists at all. At least for the subjects who are facing history, who experience their own freedom and responsibility, it is something that always in some way becomes manifest in history itself.

Freedom is not merely the permanent moving factor of reason, praxis not merely that which follows from theory (and its defects). Freedom always creates the new and the unexpected. The many possibilities offered to freedom are not simply objective data, they become such only through the intervention of creative freedom. That is why history is always the merging of the unforeseeable and therefore a journey into an unknown future. Moreover, even if we were to consider history as the mere unrolling of necessary causal connections, ultimately the future would not be predictable. An all-encompassing and exact knowledge of the whole of reality, which would be presupposed for a clear prognosis, is beyond the reach of the human mind, since humanity is only part of the whole of reality. Finally, it is not clear to what extent some kind of indeterminism may be admitted within the subatomic domain.

UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE FUTURE

The journey into the future is therefore also a journey into the dark unpredictability of this future. A responsible activity cannot simply ignore this situation and, with shallow naïveté, content itself with the clear predictability of the immediate future. This uncertain situation means that human activity calls for certain 'virtues" Without which this journey into a dark future cannot be made in [56] a worthy and realistic manner. We should act courageously and take risks, we should decide to attempt more than the obvious, the tried, and the tested. Our "tutiorism" should be a tutiorism of taking risks, which never forgets that a healthy future, one that does not depend only on humans, can be reached only if we are ready to eschew a lazy conservatism, for which what is tried and tested is the supreme norm of activity.

The "principle of hope" – unlike a mere reliance on what is certain – belongs to the essence of a freedom that accepts risks. It belongs also to freedom as a journey into darkness when the future of Europe is at stake. Of course principle alone does not enable us to demonstrate which of the competing historical forces at work in Europe represents a program that is right and that promises Europe a healthy future. But all such competing elements in the concert of Europe should always be ready to answer the question whether they really have the courage to venture into a dark future, whether they have decided to let the future itself do what it has a right to do.

FUTUROLOGY

For those who are aware of their responsibility for Europe's future, that future is always, of

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its very nature, veiled in darkness; it can never be adequately foreseen by rational reflection and examination. This does not mean, of course, that prevision and planning for the future are not tasks that are unconditionally incumbent on people. They can and must plan for the future. Time and again they must ask: Where can we go from here and where should we go? These questions belong to the nature of persons as free subjects in history, and nowadays their answers are even more necessary and more widely possible. Futurology, in the strict sense of the word, such as is possible in our time, did not exist in earlier times; in fact it was not possible to any extent. Today, as free subjects, persons have entered a new stage. They have become responsible for themselves in a way and to an extent that did not exist in the past despite all the planning that occurred.

For today's futurology the whole world, in its great complexity and the mutual interaction of its parts, is open to careful scrutiny. Formerly people commanded a view of only a small section of the earth's total reality. For their philosophy and theology of history the [57] whole of humankind was but a formal postulate, an "Idea." Today futurology can try to predict the probable size of the human race a hundred years from now. To some extent, it can also compute in advance the quantity of resources available for humankind's biological survival in the future. Unlike former times, when people stumbled upon new and greater resources only by chance, it can systematically organized the search for them. In these and many other ways the future of humanity is entrusted in an entirely new way to people themselves and their active planning.

Persons are not and never will be absolute creators of themselves. Their creativity always involves presuppositions that do not depend on themselves, and involves inner and outer limits of their activity. Nevertheless, today persons are, to an extent that was unthinkable in the past, their own planners and creators, even though the experience of the *limits* of this self-shaping are once more and in new ways becoming clearer and harder to bear. Futurology, by which persons can shape their future, implies a wholly new responsibility. Not only can they plan, they must plan. This rational and technical pre-planning of their material and social environment, and even of their own biological make-up, is for free human subjects a duty that they cannot reject in a nostalgic yearning for the past when everything was simpler and more obvious. All of this applies to those who are responsible for the future of Europe as well.

THE COURAGE TO RISK AND TO PLAN

It is not easy for the Europeans who know that they are responsible for Europe's future to fulfill simultaneously and harmoniously the two obligations that we have mentioned: on the one hand, the courage to incur the risk of a future that basically cannot be computed in advance but that has to be shaped in creative freedom; on the other hand, sober and rational planning. If both obligations are simultaneously required, then Europeans also have the duty to give serious thought to the diverse sources of information and the criteria for such a futurology. The future of Europe, which demands the coordination of both these attitudes and tasks, should be the work not of a single person or of a select few, but ultimately of all Europeans. This brings up the question (as it always [58] did, but always in a new way) of how this collective free subject, composed of a multiplicity of individuals, can discover Europe's future.

The problem of the right composition of the collective agents to shape Europe's future cannot be decided by means of general abstract criteria, such as democratic equality of rights. Attention must be paid to the qualifications that will enable them to carry out their task. The ordinary way of conceiving the legitimacy of a democratic society and of a parliamentary regime may be based too simply and rather naively on the conviction that political decisions

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are ultimately not decisions of a creative freedom, but are merely the result of a synthesis of moral principles that are always and everywhere valid ("human rights" for example) together with the "necessities of the moment," which can be ascertained by means of scientific and demographic methods. Political decisions are, or certainly should be, partially of this kind, but they are also the real decisions of a collective freedom that always demands that those who make them are really capable of such decisions.

HISTORICAL AND FUTURE IDENTITY OF EUROPE IN A WORLDWIDE SOCIETY

The question of Europe's future is undoubtedly a question about a real future that must freely be shaped by standing the test of future historical situations. But of its very nature it is also the task of safeguarding the basic identity of Europe with its past history. Otherwise Europe would still have its former name and geographical localization, but it would no longer really be Europe.

This brings up a fundamental problem for the philosophy of history: Can we expect the values that have taken shape in Europe's past history to survive? Or will these values in their specifically European peculiarity unavoidably and inexorably disappear in the future, because that future belongs to a global civilization that is more or less the same all over the world? This problem does not refer to the survival of so called cultural values and historical "moments" as remnants of former times. If Europe is not physically obliterated, to some extent they will continue to exist. [59] Nor are we trying to find out whether Europe will *in fact* keep its own specific cultural values. The question is rather whether it is at all conceivable that a given regional culture *can* simply hold on to its own specific cultural characteristics and values in the global civilization that already exists and promises to exist in the future. Of course, in such a future worldwide civilization all historical regions will be interdependent, in universal communication with each other, sharing rational and technical knowledge. In such an environment the specific characteristics and values of a given culture will no longer be the same as they once were. The question is whether they can still survive at all. Or does the universal history of humankind tend inexorably toward a point where peoples and individuals, though they differ from each other in the color of their skin and the place where they live, no longer differ in what formerly distinguished the great cultures from one another?

There is no doubt that today we are still far from such a radical cultural uniformity in a generalized way of life (American, Russian or Chinese?). Nor can we doubt that in all great national and other cultures the trend toward uniformity is still counteracted by a resolve to insert one's own culture into the future of humankind in such a way that, despite peaceful coexistence and cultural exchange, contributory cultures may each remain distinct. But the question is whether such efforts in the future can be only a nostalgically delaying factor in history, or whether such a resolve (of Europe in our case) to keep its cultural originality and to transmit it to the future development of the whole of humankind can be a meaningful task and a right and a duty. The question is whether the resolve to remain faithful to oneself and to one's former history and characteristic ways of being human, and to continue to exist in this way in the future, can be justified before the historical and political conscience of Europe. Once more, the question is not whether Europe has this resolve and to what extent it will be carried out in the future. The question is only whether here and flow such a resolve, aiming at the future, really makes sense. That is not quite clear.

Cultures may perish, as has frequently happened in the past, even though heirs of such deceased cultures have always survived. Now, if such a cultural death is possible, the question may arise whether it would not be better and more courageous for a doomed culture

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to [60] realize that death is not far away and to accept it with resignation, just as individuals are supposed to do for their own unavoidable death. It might well be that, in the case of a dying culture, only shallow and ignorant people would behave as if their history were still to have a real future, while wise and courageous people would consciously forego such a spectacle. That is how Benedict left dying Rome, became a hermit in Subiaco and, in this and in no other way, became the "patron saint" of the West.

On the other hand, Christians draw from their theology of history the conviction that in principle it is possible for some specific cultural values, which are not to be found everywhere and always, to survive into a future that remains open. Their faith firmly holds that despite its particular origin an explicit Christianity will continue forever, although they cannot foresee what importance it will possess in the future empirical history, as compared with other historical influences and realities, and how exactly this historically imperishable Christianity will look in times to come. For instance, Holy Scripture, which will forever remain the foundation of Christianity, will retain the characteristics of its historical origins and still remain important for the future. That is why Christians cannot doubt that not every given historical particularity must eventually perish simply because it originated in history. We have demonstrated this conviction through the theology of history. This does not mean that this conviction might not also be derived, in a philosophy of history, from a study of actual history. We only wanted to submit one reason for this conviction, which, for a Christian humanist, may well be the simplest and the strongest.

DOWNFALL OR FUTURE OF EUROPE?

As to maintaining Europe's identity in future history, European Christians must face, in principle and in theory, two possibilities since neither may be rejected a priori: Europe may disappear as an autonomous and distinct cultural reality, fading into a global civilization that will absorb it; or it may in all essential respects retain its identity. The question is which of these abstract possibilities will be the one to be taken into account in making historical decisions. One will probably have to say that pondering this historical problem [61] will, at present, not lead to a clear and unequivocal answer, so that Europe's future still remains uncertain for us. As mentioned above, such a situation is to be expected, since it belongs to the very nature of historical freedom.

This uncertainty is no reason for giving up in the matter. It means that we can freely choose a course that may not a priori be considered impossible, that we can live with the resolve not to despair of the future of Europe but to safeguard it in its characteristic distinctiveness, even in the world's unknown future. Generally speaking, the full development of humanity does not consist in shaping a universal human being, who is everywhere the same, but rather in developing the open-minded and loving unity of all persons who, in the plurality of their distinctive characteristics, make up *the* human person. Hence the resolve to preserve Europe for the future, with its own values and peculiarities, should not be called a utopia or a meaningless selfishness that simply refuses to disappear into a uniform and homogenized world civilization. So the question that concerns us is no longer purely theoretical. It becomes an invitation to freedom, an invitation to undertake a struggle whose outcome is uncertain.

Moreover Christians at least can take heart from their theology of history, which tells them that something of Europe will continue to exist, even in its historical distinctiveness, insofar as Christianity will not perish in the world. Despite its universal appeal, and even because of it, Christianity can never deny, indeed it must always remember, its historical origin and even the way it has been historically transmitted. Now it happens that this transmission occurred through Europe. For the faith, which European Christians expect will become the faith to be

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found *in* the whole world (even if perhaps not the faith of the whole world), is the faith that must forever keep in touch with its origins, which took place in the West, in the very roots of the West. The Christianity of the future all over the world may (so we hope!) look quite different from European Christianity, because it will have taken root in totally different Cultures and in the coming unified world civilization. Yet one of its characteristics will always remain its historical origin; it will always continue to speak of Europe, because the Christianity of the future, flourishing in other countries too, will not be an abstract idea, but a reality that has a history and that preserves its history.

[62]

VALUES AND NORMS OF EUROPE

This does not mean, of course, that only specifically Christian characteristics of European culture should be transmitted and be important in the future for the rest of the world. There are undoubtedly many other important human values and characteristics that have become history in Europe. They deserve to survive and to be important for the rest of the world. So again we have to tackle the question whether these European values have a prospect of survival and meaningfulness for the rest of the world *insofar as* they grow into universal values that may be understood and actualized equally well by all people, or whether they will in the future actually retain a European particularity and, in this way only, become significant for the rest of the world.

For there is no doubt that certain values and norms, which have become explicit and accepted in European history, have continued to develop. They became universal in such a way that they have also become values and norms in other cultures and societies outside of Europe. This is the case, for instance, with all the ideals and purposes that are intended by the words “universal human rights,” “democracy,” “women’s liberation,” and so on. In regard to these human values, this might lead us to think that the task of Europe means only that these values, which historically speaking are of European origin, continue to be valid for Europe and the rest of the world in their universal human significance. The process is like higher mathematics, which historically began in Europe but has now – at least at first sight – become equally well understood and valid everywhere. And thus it seems to have lost its erstwhile European provenance.

Yet one might say and therefore have the right to hope that in individual cultures, whose variety should continue to exist even in a common world civilization, these universal human values would in their turn keep their distinctive cultural stamp and become significant for other cultures precisely in their distinctiveness. In the narrower circle of interpersonal relations, we each act in *our* own way, which is *not* the way of others; we are all important for others, as incentives for their further development, as people whose opinion they value, and so on. All members of such a circle accept and welcome one another in their own distinctive way which embodies common shared humanity. Something similar can and should [63] occur in the family of peoples and in world cultures. The different cultures and peoples might embody their common humanity in each one’s distinctive manner, and in this way – not through a formal and abstract realization of their humanity in the most homogeneous way possible – serve other peoples and cultures.

Of course, the differences among the ways of embodying the universally human can also occasion the danger of mutual misunderstanding and conflict, as we see now all over the world, even where appeal is made to the highest human values and principles. Yet the purpose cannot be to render people as uniform as possible, in order to make such conflicts impossible. Time and again problems crop up with efforts that are constantly being made to reconcile what is common to all people with the various forms this common nature has

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assumed. Take, for instance, the frequent conflicts in Communist countries about the right relation between shared communist principles and the different ways in which these principles are applied in different countries. This is also true for Europe. Europe should keep its own way of embodying the humanity it shares with all others in all dimensions of a culture. And it is precisely in this way – and not by giving up its own distinctiveness – that it must make its own unique contribution to the common culture and future of humankind.

It is often difficult to realize the difference between the universally human as such and its concrete application in a given culture, and this for many reasons. The bearers of something that is really universal may exaggerate the importance of the concrete way they embody and realize this universal value; they might consider it an essential part of the value and call it obligatory for all. On the other hand, it is possible to overlook or reject something that belongs to a universal value on the pretext that it originated in a certain historically contingent spot in history and can therefore have no universal validity. Finally it may happen that incomplete ways of embodying what is truly universal are nevertheless taken over by others, as they exchange values and styles, some of which have no universal value.

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[65]

PART TWO

Ecumenism

[67]

6

REALISTIC POSSIBILITY OF A UNIFICATION IN FAITH?

I would like to submit a few reflections about the as yet unrealized possibilities contained in our efforts for ecumenical unity. I wish to emphasize that these reflections are submitted in my own name, at my own risk, and that they might be rejected by the Protestant as well by the Catholic side.

All sides claim that ecumenical efforts can and must continue. Yet they seem to stagnate. Is it not allowable then to make suggestions, even if they seem bold or desperate? We are not looking merely for a greater rapprochement between the churches, although this is undoubtedly a worthwhile goal. Our goal is a real unity of the great Christian churches, a goal that seems to be out of reach. Efforts to bring it about seem to stagnate hopelessly. Yet we must seriously consider that efforts aiming at the goal itself, and not merely efforts for a greater rapprochement, are possible, since all Christians have received from their common Lord a command to realize this unity, a command to which they must attach the greatest importance. That is why new, almost utopian suggestions of how we might make progress should not be rejected out of hand as heretical or unrealistic.

The following considerations refer to the *dogmatic* aspect of the ecumenical problem. We do not consider here the practical problems and those that derive from canon law. This does not mean, of course, that they are not as important as the theological problems. Much more thought should be given to problems coming from canon law. It is indisputable that the one Church of the future [68] cannot come about through a simple assimilation of the great Protestant or Orthodox churches into the Roman Catholic Church as it is juridically organized in the Latin West. And it is obvious that great obstacles will also have to be overcome in the practical life of the churches, both in their ordinary ways of looking at things and in their unconscious moods and habits, if Christians of all separated churches are to feel at ease, like brothers and sisters, in the one Church. It stands to reason that the Church of the future must make room for a broad pluralism in the practical aspects of Christian life. However, as mentioned above, in these reflections we are considering only the dogmatic side of the ecumenical problem, that is, the problem of how the one Church of the future can hold and profess the same Christian faith.

THE FUNDAMENTAL THESIS OF THE DOGMATIC SIDE OF THE ECUMENICAL PROBLEM

This thesis points out that the mentality of people today in spiritual matters is quite different from that of former times. Of course, the real substance of the Christian faith and that which the existing churches have considered as belonging to it cannot have changed and should not be given up. But the manner in which the faith of the existing churches can be brought

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together into the one faith of the Church of the future may be quite different from the way we thought of this unity in faith during the controversies between the churches.

This fundamental thesis can be explained only if we go back somewhat further to shed light on the spiritual climate in which people of today, and therefore the churches as well, have to live. We wish to describe this spiritual climate, to explain how it has changed in the course of history, to contrast our present situation with the situation in which all the controversies about church unity used to take place, and which naturally lingers on to some extent in our time. It follows, of course, that a description of these situations and of the differences among them will necessarily be oversimplified, that the differences will be emphasized more than those elements which are common and permanent, so that it will be easy to raise objections against such a description.

Yet I believe that what will be said about this topic is more or [69] less correct and of decisive importance for the question of how, at the present time, a unity in faith may be envisaged and demanded.

THE PRESENT SPIRITUAL CLIMATE

How shall we describe today's spiritual climate in which the Christian faith must be proclaimed? How does it differ from the situation in the West when the churches broke away from one another?

Let me put this in a simple and straightforward way. Formerly, the spiritual material, so to speak, with which people worked was relatively limited, affording a general view of the whole. Although they disagreed about many things, especially in their philosophy of life, they rightly took it for granted that they could be mutually understood in their conversations and in their controversies. It was easy to get an overall view of the ideas with which one worked and argued. At least theologians on all sides could take it for granted that they were in command of their discipline and all the problems that it might entail. They could also take it for granted that they were able to make themselves understood by their opponents, who operated with the same very limited conceptual material and experiential data. All sides were convinced therefore that they knew what they were talking about. It does not matter whether this common self-understanding was "objectively" correct, or whether even then controversies arose from an unconscious difference in basic attitudes, fundamental presuppositions, and so on. The self-understanding was there. Catholics, for instance, said that there were seven sacraments, while Protestants denied it. Both of them took for granted that they understood themselves and their opponents, that they were not talking at cross purposes.

This common self-understanding, this homogeneity at the verbal and conceptual levels on which each side was operating, derived, of course, from a fairly widespread cultural unity and shared experience, both of them rather narrow and, as a whole, easy to keep in mind. It was like a conflict between brothers and sisters of the same family. Whatever could be known at that time could be known by an individual, at least by one of sufficient culture and learning. This was not the case with many others, the uneducated, the common people. But that hardly mattered. From the start they were Condemned to keep quiet while learned people argued among themselves [70] and to follow the opinion accepted by the authorities and the learned, wherever they lived.

The world view of an earlier cultural epoch was, insofar as it could be consciously verbalized, relatively simple and easy to grasp in its entirety. Or it became such again after short critical periods between spiritual epochs. Such a world view referred to a geographically and historically limited area. That is why it was easy to view it as a whole and

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not too difficult to defend it in controversies. In the spiritual domain the opponents played, so to speak, with a limited number of balls, and were able, even where the game consisted in a difference of opinions, to play it with skill. They were convinced that they knew exactly their own opinions and the opinions, which they rejected, of their opponents.

Today the situation as it existed at the time of the breakup of the churches (it has been described very roughly here) has changed considerably. We might even speak not only of a quantitative but also of a qualitative change, even if historically the change occurred slowly and has become noticeable only in the present.

Today we know infinitely more and, as a result (however paradoxical it may sound), each individual, even the most cultured and the most learned, becomes ever more ignorant. Books become ever more numerous, and nobody can read them all. The number of computers keeps growing, as does their input and output. It is still possible to try to build synthetic surveys that will make an otherwise uncontrollable amount of detailed knowledge available to an individual. But the data that can be stored in computers cannot be viewed and controlled in their entirety by the individual.

As an individual, one becomes ever more ignorant. One must rely more and more upon the knowledge of others, without being able to master and to control it. The more skilled and better educated people are, the more they notice how, in every dimension of life, they are in certain respects becoming more ignorant; they have to rely more and more on others. There are more and more experts for countless theoretical and practical questions who behave toward others as authorities used to act toward ignorant people. But these experts understand each other only with the greatest difficulty or not at all. And so they form a dissonant chorus of voices offering their knowledge and their wisdom to others. Everywhere in the world consensus in society tends to move away from an agreement about basic convictions to a consensus that consists merely [71] in the identity of material needs and presuppositions. This situation derives ultimately from the fact that the mass of what can actually be known has become so unwieldy that it can no longer be synthesized in the simple way that used to be possible.

That is why, in comparison with former times, the boundaries between the educated and the uneducated become very unclear. Today there are no longer people who are really educated and others who are not. Today all are educated in some respect and very ignorant in others. The universal savant is extinct.

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ECUMENICAL QUESTION

This situation affects theology as well. Here too, compared with former times, there is an enormous amount of knowledge available. Consequently the individual theologian, and a fortiori the individual Christian, becomes ever more ignorant in comparison to the total knowledge presently available in theology. Today the biblical scholar can no longer also be a systematic theologian to the extent required by systematic theology itself. The expert in the history of dogma, not without reason, mocks systematic theologians who play with many fewer balls than the history of dogma might offer them. Biblical studies has turned into such an exacting science, one that works with the most diverse methods, that even individual scholars realize that they are able to master only a small part of their own discipline. Of course, there still exist in theology people who try to perform the function of universal experts. Some even must try to do so if, for instance, they happen to belong to the small group in the Congregation of the Faith who have to watch over and judge the orthodoxy of other theologians.

It becomes more and more questionable whether and to what extent such a universal

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theological erudition can still be attained by an individual, especially since, in the humanities, technical scientific means are of little use. Theologians too know more and more, and that is why they can understand each other less and less. Individual theologians are becoming steadily less certain that they have understood other theologians. It can be assumed that other theologians can be correctly understood only if their presuppositions are kept in mind. And these presuppositions are no longer within reach. There are, of course, many theologians and church [72] leaders who do not admit that such is the present situation in theology, who repress it, who are still trying to think and work as if the situation had not changed. In a certain sense, they even have the right to do so, since our right to understand others and even to judge whether they are right or wrong cannot be denied. Yet it must be honestly admitted that the present situation exists and that it differs qualitatively from the earlier one.

Before we examine what follows from this situation for the ecumenical question itself we will say a few words about an epistemological problem. When one refrains from affirming a proposition that is certainly or possibly true one does not err. This obvious truth applies not only to cases where the persons in question do not know the proposition or do not understand it. They may know about it, understand it to some extent, and at the same time have serious reasons for refusing to admit it. These reasons do not necessarily have to derive from the actual inner difficulty of the proposition; they may be of another kind. The proposition may, for instance, be unimportant for the person's own situation; taking the trouble to verify its truth, before accepting it, would not be worth the effort. Or the proposition, while correct, may be presented in an unfamiliar terminology or context that makes it hard to understand. In such cases, one cannot say that a given proposition obliges one to give a positive and explicit assent, for the simple reason that one must take its truth into account. In certain cases one may respectfully leave the proposition alone, without infringing upon one's duty to honor the truth.

What is true for individuals applies, of course, to the larger group as well. In their case too a lack of existential interest in certain propositions may be lawful for other reasons, even when the propositions in question are not positively denied and when their truth should be taken into account.

What has been said in general is also true for the statements of a creed and for the people of a Church. It seems evident to me that, in practice, the churches (the Catholic Church too) accept what we have said, at least implicitly. When Christians have been baptized, when they lead a life that is to some extent Christian, the Church considers them legitimate members of the Christian community. The Church does not carefully inquire exactly what statements of the faith are explicitly present in their consciousness or to what extent they are aware of the complete dogma of the Church. She [73] does not try to find out how they feel about certain things that she teaches and may even, in some historical situations, expressly proclaim. She is satisfied if, on the one hand, it is clear from the religious practice of these people that they evidently accept – even if only in a global and rudimentary way – the basic dogmas, the ultimate foundations in the hierarchy of truths of the faith, and if, on the other hand, they do not mentally or verbally explicitly reject statements that the Church claims objectively belong to the heart of the faith. The Church knows that in the individual consciousness of most of her members there exist plenty of religious and profane ideas that do not objectively agree with one another. She knows that, even where one of her members agrees with one of her statement, repeats and professes it, she herself cannot be absolutely certain that this person, when repeating this statement, really understands and accepts what the Church herself means by it.

All the churches, including the Catholic Church, are satisfied when their members live as baptized and practicing believers in a human, juridical, and liturgical unity and when they live up to the essential elements of the Christian faith. (This must be presumed for the

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external forum at least.) She does not require from every member an explicit assent to every statement which she herself considers part of her binding profession of faith. This epistemological, somewhat minimalistic, tolerance is quite unavoidable, and it is also legitimate in the churches.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCHES

These considerations about the spiritual situation today, as contrasted with that of earlier times, allow us to say the following.

From the dogmatic point of view and with respect to the faith of the Church, unity of the separated churches is conceivable, if no Church declares that a statement held to be binding by another Church is absolutely irreconcilable with her own understanding of the faith. As long as such disagreements existed, or continue to exist, a unity of the churches in faith is naturally unthinkable. But do such discrepancies still exist? I am inclined to doubt it. Theological discussions among theologians of the different churches have not yet sufficiently come to the awareness of church leaders. It is certainly not that the theologians of the different churches [74] who may seriously be considered as representing the faith consciousness of their respective churches (which does not apply to all those who pursue theology as the science of religion) have already reached a positive agreement among themselves in all dogmatic questions. But are there still many serious theologians around today who would declare that the statements which theologians in another confession consider absolutely binding on their Church are irreconcilable with the former theologians' own faith, the faith which they confess as decisive for salvation?

It is certain that in many questions or controversies theologians are not yet in total agreement. But the climate of their conversations has fundamentally changed in comparison with the time of the Reformation. Then they faced each other with positions which the other side always called objectively and absolutely irreconcilable with the foundations of Christianity. Salvation for the other side – if possible at all – was seen as possible only because, for some strange subjective reasons, the others were not responsible for their false doctrine, a doctrine whose falsity they might, with some good will, be able to recognize. Today theologians whose tenets may not yet be totally reconcilable take a different stance toward each other. Both sides take into account not only that a mysterious subjectivity exonerates at times the other before God and before the truth of the Gospel but also that the statements of both sides, when further developed and understood in a wider context, sometimes do not really contradict each other, even when one does not yet clearly see that, in such a wider interpretation, the two sides positively agree.

It seems to me that, in such a new situation, a sufficient unity in faith may have already been achieved among the churches. Protestants would not right away have to give a positive assent of faith to many propositions that Catholics consider binding in faith. Neither would they have to reject them because – as shown by historical development and by today's spiritual climate – they cannot say that accepting these specifically Catholic tenets would mean giving up their own faith, that it would mean denying truths that *they* rightly consider essential to their faith. Neither does the fact that they refrain from making a judgment about these tenets imply that they are moving toward the Catholic position. These Protestant Christians may assume that, in the ongoing history of the Church's faith-awareness, there is hope that these Catholic tenets will find [75] a clarification and an interpretation that will allow a positive assent. Although they cannot assent at present, they should not feel obliged to reject Roman Catholic teachings out of hand.

On the other hand, it seems to me that the leadership of the Catholic Church could find this

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position acceptable for a unification of the churches. It implies that the properly fundamental truths of Christian revelation are expressly affirmed by both sides. But a positive assent is not required for every proposition that, in the historical development of the faith-awareness of the Roman Catholic Church, is considered to be objectively given with divine revelation. On their side, the Orthodox and Protestant churches may be willing to refrain from judging (as part of the faith) that some specifically Roman Catholic tenets are utterly irreconcilable with divine revelation and gospel truth, as they judged them at the time of the Reformation.

Suppose that both sides accept this kind of existential and epistemological tolerance, whereby that which is explicitly and expressly taught is not coerced into radical contradiction. There would still be leeway for those issues that, although not yet positively compatible, are admittedly reconcilable. In such a case it seems to me that, from the dogmatic point of view, church unity is possible right away.[1]

This statement may sound bold, utopian, perhaps even dogmatically vulnerable. But if one is unwilling to consider unification of the churches absolutely impossible in the present spiritual climate – something forbidden by the basic convictions of Christianity and the Church – then one would have to say that any unification in faith other than the one we have mentioned above is utterly impossible. The suggested approach could therefore be considered legitimate.

OTHER WAYS OF CONCEIVING UNITY

Let us imagine a more ideal and more radical unity of the churches, as always an obvious goal still dreamed of in ecumenical discussions. Let us imagine what this unification would look like if it were really brought about. Would theologians in today's spiritual climate [76] not continue to disagree? Would the faith formulas explicitly accepted by all not continue to be interpreted in very different ways? Would this not follow from the different intellectual horizons, with the different terminologies that would unavoidably continue to exist in this world characterized by cultural pluralism? Consider the narrow personal situation of many of the faithful. Would they not admit that they are not interested in some of the doctrines? Or would they not simply and quietly refrain from giving a positive assent to such doctrines? In an ideal unity of faith these things are not supposed to happen. In the unification we have suggested it would be admitted and legitimate.

What I mean is this: Either one makes of the unification of faith an ideal that is really unreachable and merely pays lip service to it, or one strives for a unification that is realistically possible and that should therefore be admitted as legitimate and rendered theologically understandable. In other words, the unity in faith that, for all practical purposes, exists and must be regarded as legitimate in the Catholic Church differs from the one that ecclesiology implicitly takes for granted and presupposes, and which implies (explicit or at least implicit) positive assent to all that church leadership teaches as a doctrine binding for faith.

Now the unity in faith that actually exists, even within the Catholic Church, differs from this theoretically postulated unity. Yet it is legitimate and should be explicitly acknowledged as such. It follows that for the unity in faith of the future world-Church, one should not demand more than the unity that exists in the Catholic Church, and that one should expressly acknowledge such unity as sufficient and legitimate. Of course, this conception of unity

[1] See the recent important contribution to this topic by H. Fries and K. Rahner, *Unity of the Churches*: *An Actual Possibility* (Mahway, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1985). This book contains eight crucial theses about the ecumenical situation.

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should also be admitted as sufficient by the Orthodox and Protestant churches. But that should cause no difficulty, since it is easy to see that, even at the present, they are already satisfied with the unity that we consider sufficient for the one Church of the future. In this respect, the only requirement is that these other churches should not positively reject an explicit doctrine of the Catholic Church as irreconcilable with the foundations of their Christianity.

To my mind such a development of ecclesial consciousness has made so much progress that this situation has become possible, although probably not for every individual Christian or theologian in these churches. But one can admit that a majority of individual Christians and theologians in the other churches will no longer [77] anathematize specific Roman Catholic doctrines in the name of faith, so that the leadership in these churches will not anathematize them either. This being granted, it seems to me that there is no need to demand that these churches give a positive assent of faith to specific Roman Catholic teachings and that a sufficient unity of faith may be reached among those who, confessing the triune God and Jesus as Lord and Savior, believe the essential foundations of Christianity and have been baptized. The main thesis that I dared to present points out therefore that in today's spiritual climate no greater unity of faith can be reached than the one I suggested, that this unity must therefore be legitimate if, despite all assurances to the contrary, one does not want to give up the hope of such a unity of the churches in faith.

FURTHER UNSOLVED QUESTIONS

Even if one accepts this theory, much arduous reflection is still needed for a real unity of the churches; many problems remain to be solved. Not much thought has yet been given on all sides to the question of how the Church of the future will look *juridically*, so that church unity may be a real possibility. It stands to reason that there can be no question of the Protestant and Orthodox churches simply disappearing into the Roman Catholic Church, while the latter would simply remain as she is, with her own liturgy, canon law, manner of appointing bishops, and Roman Curia with all its various functions.

Of course, more reflection is required to find out how exactly this, as it were, more prudent and discreet unity can be maintained and lived in the Church of the future. For in the future too some juridical organization will undoubtedly be required for that purpose. Even today there exists in Germany's Protestant churches the possibility of proceedings for enforcing doctrinal orthodoxy. This shows that the Church of the future should be enabled to defend herself against serious errors that threaten the essentials of her faith, exclude fundamental heresies that will, of course, also be Possible in the future. But the concrete juridical way in which the faith of the Church is presented and defended does not have to be the one used today in the Roman Catholic Church.

Along with this necessary and sufficient unity in faith, the Church [78] of the future will be characterized by a greater pluralism in the laws of individual churches, as well as in Christian life, liturgy, and theology than had been allowed in the Roman Catholic Church. In this respect the Roman Catholic Church could learn from her relationship to the small Uniate churches of the East and take over a few things that could serve as a model for this lawful pluralism in the Church of the future. But this pluralism in the Church of the future will undoubtedly have to be broader than the one we Roman Catholics are used to, especially since the pluralism that has been accepted as basically legitimate among us, on account of the Uniate Eastern churches, has hardly had any practical effects on Western Christians and the Roman Curia.

Orthodox and Protestant partner churches, without positively rejecting as contrary to the

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faith the dogmatic teaching of the First Vatican Council, have not expressly taken it over into their understanding of faith. A difficult question therefore for theory and practice will be how this fact can be reconciled with a concrete acknowledgment, translated into practice, of the function of the Petrine office. This is so especially since no one can forbid the Roman See to exercise that fullness of teaching power that Vatican I attributes to it.

But if the Roman papacy were expressly to promise that, should it ever wish to proclaim a definition *ex cathedra*, it would use a procedure through which practically, even without a real council, such a definition would be based on the assent of the bishops of all partner churches, this most delicate problem might also be solved. In that way the Orthodox or Protestant churches in the Church of the future would not get the impression that any kind of acceptance of the Petrine function would at once deliver them so much to the doctrinal authority of Rome that there would be a real danger that their own awareness of the faith might be jeopardized.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Even if one were ready to accept the suggested main thesis, the road leading to the unity of all Christian churches would naturally be long, not only for the reasons mentioned above. The churches, should, in their practice and mentality, get used to one another even more than they have up to the present, so that a visible unity [78] may become possible and achievable. That is why all great and small ecumenical endeavors are very important. Even if they are made with some skepticism about the possibility of a real unity of the churches, they bring us ever closer to this unity.

Christians of the different denominations come closer to each other through such endeavors; they really get to know each other; they become aware of the fact that they are already united in the essential elements of the Christian faith. The feeling of unfamiliarity and indifference that has prevailed among them is decreasing. And so the day may slowly dawn when the churches will in fact wonder: Do we not, after all, have the same Christian faith? Can we not confess it together in greater unity without straining the conscience of the churches that have until now been separated?

By way of conclusion I would say: If we take into account the diversity of the partner churches and the tolerance in matters of faith that will be required and even legitimate in the Church of the future, and if we then compare this Church of the future with the present situation among the churches, we will have to admit that our present ecumenical situation is not as bad as one might at first be tempted to think. The partner churches of the one Church of the future may show very important differences in their way of life. But so does our own Church nowadays. Therefore the present situation in our Church does not differ as much as we might think from the one Church of the future, which will include a great diversity among its partners. As ecumenical convergence continues, we may suddenly notice that we are already much closer to each other than we had thought and than we give credit for to the churches.

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[80]

7

CONCRETE OFFICIAL STEPS TOWARD UNIFICATION

Not all properly theological questions that are considered controversial by the Christian churches have been answered with full agreement on all sides. Yet it does seem that today the unification of the churches must become mainly a concern of church leaders. They can no longer plead the fact that, since theologians do not yet agree, they themselves have, for the time being, nothing to do but utter a few friendly words of ecumenical good will. Is it not possible for these church leaders to do something tangible right now? Let me try to say something about this question with respect to the Roman Catholic Church. Two things come to mind.

First, concrete problems of an interconfessional nature that occur today in pastoral work might be reexamined and courageously solved. Germany's Protestant churches have already requested this of the Catholic Church in Germany, but they have had no concrete and encouraging answer. Would it not be possible, with regard to intercommunion, to make new arrangements that the Catholic side has not yet dared to make? Would it not be possible for a Catholic who has married a Protestant to fulfill his or her "Sunday obligation" by attending a Protestant Sunday service occasionally? Would it not be possible to agree upon a more broadminded cooperation among the churches for the education of children of "mixed marriages?" Would it not be possible to invent cooperative ventures in religious education that could be shared by both churches? After all, this education as it now exists can impart little more than [81] the understanding and practice of the most fundamental Christian convictions, and these are shared by both churches.

An answer to these practical questions of pastoral care that is as ecumenical as possible is imperative for both churches and must be found. Certainly Catholic theologians may have to confront limits that cannot be crossed, although the other side would like to see them crossed and believes that it can be done. Have these limits, in theory or in practice, already been reached on the Catholic side? Ecumenically speaking, is it now impossible to go further? I see no proof that it is not.

Furthermore there are many questions about the Church's self-understanding, about canon law and canonical procedures that are ecumenically of great importance and that might be answered by the Catholic Church in a different and better way. The answers to such questions should not be postponed until the time of unification, but should be given as they come up, clearly, officially, and as partial steps toward complete church unity. We should avail ourselves of these possibilities not only in very general declarations of principles, or in non-binding statements of theologians, but in official declarations. In this way, we would make credible our real resolve to make ecumenical progress.

Why should the Holy See not declare right away, every time a case comes up, the possibilities it sees for a real unity of the churches, the possibilities it is willing to grant? This would not imply that, in theory and practice, the Protestant churches would simply and uniformly be taken over by the Latin Church of the West. Or what juridical ways of finding and appointing a bishop are possible that, while differing considerably from the procedure prescribed by the present Roman canon law, still agree with Catholic dogma and might more easily be accepted by the Protestant churches? During the Council the bishops of the Uniate churches of the Near East declared that they were willing to resign at once if the Orthodox churches entered into union with Rome. Would it not be possible for Rome officially to make arrangements like this obligatory in principle?

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Such partial but binding agreements would be possible in the domain of dogmatic theology itself. For instance, would it not be possible for the magisterium to make a declaration about the Mass as a sacrifice that would do away with the misgivings of Protestants who believe that Catholics consider the Mass a repetition, [82] not merely a rendering present, of the sacrifice of the cross? Would it not be possible to make a magisterial declaration, clearer even than that of the Council of Trent, to the effect that every justifying human activity is supported by the free, gratuitous action of God's grace and that every good free human action is itself a grace of God, that we reject a naive synergism? Would it not be possible to make officially clear that an *ex cathedra* decision of the pope is, outside a council, of its very nature an exception and occasioned by particular circumstances? Could it also be made clear that such a decision today, when worldwide communications facilitate the Church's search for truth, will take place in such a way that it is practically a conciliar decision, because the whole Church has cooperated in its elaboration? Hence, if Protestant Christians should recognize the First Vatican Council, they would not have to fear papal decisions that might take them by surprise and demand too much from them. Would it not be quite simple to expound, even officially, a doctrine of the sacraments that would not make people think of magic and sorcery? Would it not be possible to describe the required conditions for a sacramental intention in marriage in such a way that one might more clearly and easily notice the absence of such an intention, so frequent nowadays in civil marriages? These are only a few examples. There are certainly many others that will not be mentioned here.

The conclusions of every theological dialogue among the Christians churches during the last few decades should be published officially. Otherwise, the theological interchurch dialogue does not have the effect that it might have; rather, there is much talk with no tangible results. The importance of developing an awareness that consists in more mutual trust and that aims at practical intercommunion should not be underestimated. But this general awareness will lead to a real unification of the churches only if it can take shape in detailed dogmatic statements. They should be made not only in the ongoing theological discussions that are influenced by theological trends but they should also become statements of the magisterium.

The magisterium of the Catholic Church may not only define doctrines, it may also make authentic statements. Today it must have the courage to use its possibilities, not just through admonitions and restrictions that betray a lack of ecumenism, but through ecumenical measures aiming at unification. When in its encyclicals, [83] for instance, the magisterium not only rejects errors but also positively proclaims the Christian truth, one cannot a priori hold that the Congregation of the Faith has only a supervisory function that expresses itself by rejecting heterodox or dangerous doctrines. The Congregation of the Faith might also, in collaboration with the Secretariat for Unity, propose positive doctrines that contain the results of interchurch discussions among theologians. Only then will one get a concrete idea of what has already been achieved, and of what is still to be achieved in the quest for dogmatic unity.[1]

It seems to me that the Protestant churches too must do some of the things that are here suggested to the Catholic Church. Could they not declare that one has not betrayed the pure grace of God in Jesus Christ if one accepts the Council of Trent's doctrine of justification? But here again the old difficulty comes up. Who can speak with binding power for Protestant Christians?

It seems to me that our ecumenical efforts should little by little produce concrete results.

[1] See on this H. Fries, "Das Petrusamt in anglikanish-katholischen Dialog," in *Stimmen der Zeit* 200 (1982) 723-38. This article has been written in agreement with K. Rahner.

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Interchurch commissions, proceedings of private groups without official binding power, all fall short of the results that are more and more expected today.

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[84]

8

ECUMENICAL TOGETHERNESS TODAY

In what follows I would like to submit a couple of simple considerations about the question of ecumenical unity: Here and now at a time when the ultimate goal of all ecumenical endeavors has not yet been reached, what must Christians and their churches do to get closer to that goal and to overcome a certain stagnation, resignation, and listlessness, which seem to be hampering the progress of ecumenical work?

As we try to address that question, it is obvious that only a couple of fragments of an answer can be presented, and that we must formulate them not so much as demands made to church leaders on both sides, but as demands made to ourselves, the Christian rank and file.

RADICALIZATION IN THE DIRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

The first and in fact the most important demand involves the invitation to all Christians, in all churches, to become more intensively, more radically Christian. In its innermost core Christianity is not a theory, joined to a harmonious way of life, which has been transmitted once and for all and which we have accepted and now continue to confess and practice. Real Christianity is spirit and life, a readiness to be overtaxed, a constant new beginning, a pilgrimage that has not yet reached its definitive home, a willingness always to welcome new experiences. Clearly, then, it would be preposterous [85] and un-Christian for the Christian churches simply to carry on, conservatively, in their traditional *status quo*. They can keep their lawful inheritance for the future only if they are willing to change. They must be attuned to their times. This does not mean that everything is allowed, that alien fashions are arbitrarily accepted. It means an ever renewed and radical return to the innermost heart of the faith, to which both Christians and the churches must bear witness. Christians must become more Christian; then automatically they will come closer to each other. What is required is not a liberalizing diluting of Christianity into a worldwide humanism.

From the time of the Enlightenment, theology and science in the Western world have discovered many truths that are now taken for granted. They should be quietly accepted by the churches. It has been shown, time and again, and ever more clearly, that none of this threatens or questions a radical Christian faith, that the natural sciences, the historical sciences, the historical-critical approach to the Bible, and even a modern sense of the world and of life can really be combined with a genuine Christian faith. That is why in all churches a lively Christianity, which lives ever more intensively from the roots of its faith, is a task that is possible today and required for the sake of ecumenism. True, we cannot simply eliminate by arbitrary decree the old problems of theological controversy among the Christian churches, nor can we call the controversies irrelevant. But all of them would acquire new perspectives and a fresh impact. It would be possible to confront and master them and to solve them together, if they were pondered within the common task of the churches and of Christians, a task that consists of understanding and practicing original, genuine, truly orthodox Christianity, as it grapples with the common problems of our time.

Do we Christians not all confess the ultimate, real incomprehensibility into which we are plunged and which we call God? And with a boldness that finds no justification in ourselves, do we not dare to speak to this uncontrollable incomprehensibility, have dealings with it and trust it, convinced that we are sheltered in it, accepted by it, that we arrive at it in the

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bottomless pit of our death, and that we are absolved by it as it promises itself to us? Are we not the ones who venture upon this dreadful journey called faith as we look at Jesus and the abyss of his death on the cross, recognizing him as the one who is saved, and accepting because [86] of him the invincible conviction that we too, without being destroyed, will blessedly attain the one whom Jesus calls his Father and to whom he yielded himself unconditionally, while feeling utterly forsaken by him? Have we not all let Jesus tell us the first, the last, and the supreme word, in which God promises himself to us as our goal and our end, as our judgment and our reconciliation? Have we not all been baptized in this final word of God in Jesus, so that – whether we want it or not – we already enjoy, through baptism, a basic unity in the Spirit and in the tangibleness of social testimony? If we remember these realities and if we live them more radically, then slowly and inexorably a unity in faith and belief will grow. Over and above the unity that already exists, this unity will give rise to a community of faith, the goal of the ecumenical movement.

It seems possible for a Christianity that is lived from its innermost core to achieve unity in the doctrines that are to some extent secondary and in which the churches still feel that they are not yet united. Or it may become clear that the apparently controversial statements of the different churches do not really cancel each other out, but rather are attempts to elucidate the inexhaustible fullness of Christianity from different points of view. The attempts to harmonize the theologies of the Christian churches have been very successful during the past few decades. In almost all the major churches – not always in the others – there are theologians who hold that in theological controversy there are no longer any differences of opinion that should really *separate* the churches. These theologians think that church leaders should now draw the appropriate consequences from this state of affairs, and that they should not, through canon law or otherwise, maintain divisions that no longer exist theologically. The opinion of such theologians may be somewhat too optimistic and ahead of the facts. But it does show that a return to the basic substance of Christianity in the context of a courageous encounter with today's world and a reexamination of the old problems of theological controversy from that point of view may be very important and promising for ecumenism.

The presupposition is, of course, that church leaders feel responsible not only for the past of their churches but even more for their future. The presupposition is that contemporary Christianity is not just theoretically known but practically lived. Here lies our greatest deficiency. If Christians not only thought their truth but lived it, [87] if they were as concerned for orthopraxy as for orthodoxy, if this orthopraxy meant not only social criticism and social change (although here too we notice how frightfully wanting narrowminded conservatism is) but worshipping God in spirit and in truth, since we exist for God and not God for us, then they would soon be able to agree about controversial theological questions that, like it or not, no longer have the same importance as at the time of the Reformation. They are now of secondary importance, not because they would be such in their deepest meaning – grace and justification are not in themselves of secondary importance – but because today we must view such topics in a much wider context, and against a much deeper background. The answers therefore, necessarily display more nuances and can converge more easily than was formerly the case.

NO THIRD CONFESSION

A second maxim that is important today in ecumenical work might be formulated as follows: It is meaningless and even, in the long run, harmful for ecumenical work, when practical ecumenical projects are conducted with so much speed that something like a third confession is created. Ecumenical services are good and Christians may work together harmoniously in

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the most diverse undertakings. I myself have no objection if a married couple from two churches, when their conscience and their love urges them, attend the same divine service, and eventually the same celebration of the Lord's Supper. But agreements that simply ignore or deny the still existing differences in faith and canon law do not lead toward Christian unity. In both churches the majority of Christians will not take part in such moves, with the result that these efforts lead to a new split, some kind of third confession. Then we have Protestant Christians, Catholic Christians, and overeager ecumenists, who wrongly believe that the Christianity that they practice is the fullness of Christianity and a sufficient foundation of unity. At present such a self-evaluation by these ecumenists may be quite understandable. Yet it amounts to overestimating oneself and ignoring the Christian past and the faith of former times, which we may not give up for the sake of some cheap unity but must introduce into the genuine and complete unity of the Church of the future.

[88] It is quite true that all churches must get rid of much historical baggage if they seriously desire the coming unity. With all due respect to church leaders, we have to wonder, not without fear and worry, whether they really possess enough ecumenical resolve and daring. Yet it is impossible to establish unity by being indifferent to the faith of former times, by building unity on the basis of a minimal content of faith, about which one is not quite sure whether it still is specifically Christian. We cannot simply set aside legitimate church authority and its directives in order to attain a unity of a new splinter group. Efforts toward unity should try to comprise *all* Christians, even those who more traditionally identify with the present condition of the transmitted creeds and churches. Unity must be realized *with*, not against, church authorities. The road to such unity may be longer and harder. But building an awareness in the churches that can later bring about and bear a genuine unity cannot be the product of a liberalism that is, after all, just a passing fashion. It must be the product of a real history of faith. That is very difficult and supposes great patience. All of this should not be used by authorities and by lazy Christians as a theological pretext for doing nothing and for putting off the unity of the churches to the day of eternity. But if the ecumenical movement should lead to the establishment of a third confession, it would have missed its goal and produced division instead of unity.

AGAINST CONFESSIONALISM

A third maxim for today's ecumenism might be formulated as follows: Are not some obstacles to unity in reality only creations of a narrow confessionalism? It is quite possible that, until recently, Roman prelates could imagine a union of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in Germany only in the following way: Protestant-Christians would return to the Catholic Church through massive individual conversions, as it were, whereupon they would be subject to Rome just like lifelong Catholics. For Rome the way in which the churches of the West would be unified (the East is a different case) could be conceived, insofar as they tried to conceive it at all, only as a surrender of the other churches to the Roman Church. The latter would remain unchanged, only growing in numbers. I might ask whether fervent Reformed Christians [89] from Geneva would imagine that the Catholic Church of the future, should it be united with their Church, would become like that Church: sober and without images, temples of the word, not of sacrament. Such imagined models of the coming unity, which have prevailed unconsciously on both sides and still exist today, are obstacles to unity. For a genuine Christian faith they are mere fantasy.

Unity does not mean uniformity. The chimera of uniformity is a big obstacle to ecumenical activity. I cannot help thinking that Rome has not yet clearly, and in concrete details, explained what she would be willing and able to give up, without damage to her faith, for the

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sake of unity. I would ask whether a similar willingness to yield would not in many respects be possible on the Protestant side.

In her canon law the Catholic Church already admits several jurisdictions in the same territory; it cannot therefore be impossible a priori for her to admit, in the same territory, the existence of several partner churches with a different past history, which remain distinct while nevertheless living in the unity demanded by faith and love. We have, for instance, in the Catholic Church in Germany, a special jurisdiction for the Ukrainians, with its own hierarchy and liturgy, which lives nevertheless in unity and peace with Rome. Why would it not be possible to have, in Hesse, a diocese of "old" Catholics, with Mainz as episcopal see, and alongside it a united Hessian Church, whose historical origin and valid traditions date from the time of the Reformation? A certain amount of creative imagination and spiritual freedom is required in order to envisage something of the kind for the future. But might not such virtues be expected of us, Christians of today and of tomorrow? It stands to reason that both the decision to live in unity and church unity itself must be translated into practice and ensured by a number of juridical norms and laws. This can be done. However, the creation of a unity that includes different churches should by no means imply that the one Church, without changing herself, would lord it over the others and simply absorb them.

To my mind one might even, in this connection, give some thought to the question of whether the unity of faith that is naturally required allows not only for a considerable pluralism in the theologies of the individual partner churches but also for a diversity in the hierarchy of religious truths that are held in these [90] churches. For instance, would a united Hessian Church have to celebrate the feast of the Assumption, or might this be foregone? In Rome's relation to the Uniate churches of the Near East, many major and minor paradigms can be found for the different ways in which a partner Church may be united with Rome, ways that differ considerably one from the other. Rome has apparently seen no insuperable obstacles to unity because of the regional and geographical differences between West and East in the Catholic Church. Although in the Christian churches of the West the geographical separation does not occur, it is not clear why the different historical development of these churches of the West might not give them the same right to a lasting differentiation.

GETTING TO KNOW THE OTHER CONFESSIONS

A fourth maxim might go like this: Get to know each other really well! This maxim sounds utterly obvious. All Christians tell the registry office to what denomination they belong; on the street they see the churches of other denominations; they know that these other denominations are communities of Christians with the same baptism they have received themselves and have the same kind of church organization they know in their own Church. A mixed marriage among their acquaintances gives rise to personal and canonical problems that bring home to them more clearly the pluralism of Christian creeds and confessions.

One would like to believe that this fourth maxim is a necessary presupposition of all ecumenical activities, one that, as a rule, is always and everywhere fulfilled. In fact this is not true. Even today it is still the case that, with regard to other churches, one knows only what can be seen of them in public, what is therefore not especially important for Christian existence itself. Christians who are fully committed to their own Church know little or nothing about the other churches, except some rather insignificant details. They live in the sacred purview of their own Church, they are (we hope) in touch with the pastors of their Church. If they are not theologians, their religious reading matter is more or less supplied only by their own churches (we readily grant that of late there are exceptions to this rule). On close examination, Christians committed to the life of their own Church know little of the

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properly religious [91] and Christian life of the other churches. There is no reason to consider this as simply wrong, since a historically conditioned position belongs to each person's life. But today we must broaden our knowledge and experience of the life of our fellow Christians in the other churches.

What matters in this respect is not so much an increase of theoretical knowledge about the other churches as a vivid experience of the concrete Christian life of these other Christians. Otherwise the real chasm between the churches today, the main obstacle to unity of Christians, will not be bridged. For it consists not so much in differences among controverted theological opinions stemming from the past as in the feeling of unfamiliarity with a different religious style of life and in the inability to share that other life spontaneously and naturally. From the point of view of theology and faith, that unfamiliarity may be wholly unimportant, yet practically it is a greater obstacle than all the theological disagreements at the time of the Reformation. Many Protestant Christians will consider the Catholic sign of the cross or a May devotion unacceptable. A Catholic may find the prayer offered by a Protestant pastor pathetic and unctuous. These and a thousand similar differences in the daily life of the churches do not have any theological significance, yet they impede the work of the ecumenical movement. All of us still have much to learn in this respect. We have to acquire a concrete understanding of the way in which Christians of other churches live their Christianity.

It is good but not enough that during the last few decades the number of hymns shared by all Christian churches in Germany has increased, that in public meetings of Catholics and Protestants a speaker from another Church is invited, that in problems in which the churches confront the State or public opinion they adopt a common stand, and so on. The feeling of unfamiliarity and mutual indifference must still be overcome at the grass roots level among individual Christians in their daily lives. It is not easy to say how this should be done, since we can hardly use official directives for this purpose. Those who preach should try to listen to themselves with one ear, as it were, to find out whether what they say would be accepted by Christians of another Church, or would be understood as un-Christian. The same is also true for those who organize a liturgical service for their own Church. Each time they too should ask themselves whether this service would also be acceptable to a [92] Christian of another Church. That is why joint ecumenical services should not merely be tolerated as exercises required by ecumenical good will. They should be humble and brave attempts really to adore God with Jesus in spirit and truth, and to do it together with others better than they can do it alone.

Have we been brave and impartial enough in our attempts to consider the possibility of sharing divine services in places where, for lack of a priest or for other reasons, a service is impossible in one's own Church? Can a Christian not meaningfully make of the church of another denomination a place for private prayer and quiet recollection? Would any harm be done if, in the meeting room of a rectory, both one's own diocesan paper and current religious literature of other churches were on display? Are we still not much too prudent and cautious about tasks shared by the churches in the secular and public domain? In mixed marriages or when the question of the child's baptism comes up, is more attention not being paid to a precise drawing of limits than to unity? Shared practical ecumenical activities, like those of "Action 365," for instance, are not sufficiently emphasized in the average life of the churches. Opposing parties cannot be united if they do not understand each other; they cannot understand each other if they do not know each other; they cannot get to know each other if, out of distrust or indifference, they do not cultivate contacts through which alone they can come to know each other, and finally discover that they are all Christians, able to live in the one large and comprehensive Church of Jesus Christ, in the Church that, from its very nature and not merely by way of concession, comprises a wealth of regional and historically

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conditioned partner churches, because this is the only way in which the richness of Christ can become manifest in the world.

THE PRESENT UNITY

A last maxim: In order to achieve the unity of Christians, as we are enjoined to do, we should also rejoice on account of the unity that God has already bestowed on us. Have we all not been baptized in the name of the triune God? Do we all not try to live by the merciful grace of God, which we have received without any merit or title of our own? Do we all not read in the word of both Testaments [93] the word of God himself, which judges and pardons us? Do we all not celebrate, as well as we can, the commemoration of the death of Jesus, until the day when the transforming power of this death will become wholly manifest and put an end to history? With the crucified Jesus, do we all not try to take up our own death into the incomprehensibility of God and of our own life? Are we Christians not convinced that in the struggle for justice and freedom in the world we have a frightful task that we have not yet completed? Are these not indications of a unity among Christians that has already been granted to us?

It is not true therefore that we Christians differ as much from each other in our world view and lifestyle as we differ from other political, social, and cultural groups in the world. But it is true that the unity which already unites all of us is not yet being fully used for the good of the whole world. As Christians, we already possess a unity given to us by God, which should fill us with a deep gratitude and joy. But we must also keep a few important things in mind. Even ecumenical unity that, as our proper task, is still ahead of us cannot and should not suppress considerable pluralism in the one Church. Such a pluralism will continue to be both a burden and a temptation in a unified Church of Christ. Even in a unified Church we will have to bear mutual lack of understanding, antagonism, and the like. Even a united Church cannot anticipate within history the blessed unity of the final kingdom of God.

But if we keep this humbly and soberly in mind, if we know that even a possible and necessary unity of Christians cannot anticipate here on earth the realm of eternal peace, and if we hope, with an optimism that comes from God, that God’s grace can bring good even out of human sin and failure, that God can write straight with crooked lines and produce out of disunity a fullness of Christianity that could not have been reached through unity, then we may calmly and gratefully rejoice because of the imperishable unity that God has already granted to Christians. This joy should not turn into an excuse for a resigned stagnation of ecumenical activities. But those who do their share of this work, even if it is small and humble, may, in the glory of God’s mighty grace, rejoice because of the unity that has already been granted to us Christians by God.

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[95]

PART THREE

The Future of the Church

[97]

9

FORGOTTEN DOGMATIC INITIATIVES OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

In connection with this topic I intend to consider only dogmatic themes. The Council's intent was to be a pastoral council and that is what it was. Its strongest and most far reaching suggestions referred to the homiletic and pastoral fields and to the strategy of a Church that has now become a world-Church. I will not take them up here. I speak of "initiatives." That means that the Council did not clearly and explicitly teach and interpret doctrines of a dogmatic sort; rather, it said things that are a start, a suggestion, an invitation to further dogmatic reflection and elaboration. Therefore I cannot quote any clear and unquestionable doctrines of the Council for my purpose. I can only point to conciliar statements that lead theologians to new questions requiring further reflection. These questions are important for preaching the faith now and in the future, although they have not yet received a clear answer that is generally accepted in the theology of the Church.

The title of this chapter speaks of "forgotten" initiatives. That does not mean, of course, that I am the only one who thinks of them. That would clearly be nonsense. What I mean is that, to my mind, they have generally not yet received sufficient attention and elaboration in current Catholic theology. I will not mention all possible initiatives. Important and unimportant ones are mentioned at random. I will start with a question that is not unimportant and that will shed light on the formal method of our considerations.

[98]

ATHEISM AND PERSONAL GUILT

Fifty years ago, when I was studying theology, we young theologians were taught as certain doctrine that in the long run positive atheism could not exist in a person without grave personal guilt. There is no need to explain at length what influence such a doctrine would have on the way in which Catholics might treat an atheist in their environment if the doctrine were applied to daily life. For this doctrine, the existence of God was so clear and so easy to demonstrate from reason, and the concept *God* in the statement "God exists" so obvious that, given normal intelligence and sufficient length of time, only a scoundrel could fail to be convinced of the existence of God. According to this doctrine nowadays we could be sure that we live among countless scoundrels and draw appropriate conclusions for our daily conduct.

During the Council nobody ever mentioned this traditional doctrine, not even the most conservative bishops and theologians; nor was it mentioned in the context of the conciliar debates and deliberations, where one would have expected it to come up. No serious discussions arose when the Council said: "Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an

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explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to lead a good life, thanks to His Grace" (*Lumen Gentium*, 16). Or elsewhere when the Council, speaking of "all persons of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way," says: "We ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every human being the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

I believe that a hundred years ago few theologians would have dared to make these and other statements of the Council about atheism and atheists. For the average person in the street today such declarations may sound utterly obvious. For a Church that is resolved at all costs to be faithful to both divine revelation and tradition, such statements in the history of her awareness of the faith are milestones to which she will not return. While positive atheism is always objectively false and a dreadful danger for a person's salvation, it cannot, as concretely present in human consciousness, simply and absolutely be identified with a deadly guilt to which [99] God can react only by a no of damnation. The Church admits also (not only!) a guiltless atheism, at least insofar as individuals in their own salvation history are concerned. So she must also – I say also – admit a positive significance of atheism for salvation at the same time as she fights unbelief in today's world. But with the declarations mentioned above the Church has reached a point in her awareness of the faith that she had not reached before, and she has clarified a position from which a really loving dialogue may be held with all people in the world.

When we consider what has been said, two things become clear. First, formally speaking, in the teaching of the Council on such dramatic questions we must pay attention to the things that are only hinted at or suggested by what has been omitted, even though they are of great importance. And secondly, such suggestions are an initiative for further reflection in theology. The tolerance of the Council, which does not deny that atheists as individuals may be guiltless before God, does not mean that everything here is clear, peaceful, and able to be solved in a liberal way. Rather, theologians are confronted with a pressing and difficult question that requires their attention. They cannot, in a sort of cheap liberalism, take it for granted that persons who have reached the age of reason and can make moral decisions can simply go on living free from guilt before God and enter into God's immediacy in eternal life without having known God.

Are there such guiltless atheists? Given the historical development that has led to the spiritual climate of today and tomorrow, it is hard to doubt it. Then the question comes up how, despite their professed atheism, they can have a real knowledge of God that leads to salvation and renders faith possible, although that faith is hidden, in the foreground of their consciousness, behind the atheism that they express in words. We are facing the problem of an anonymous theism, although quite a number of theologians detest the word "anonymous" in this connection. The word does not matter; what matters is the reality indicated by the statement of the Council, which brings up other more general questions of anthropology in theology as well. There must be more dimensions to human consciousness in its knowing and free decision-making, more foreground and background, more data, verbalized or not, accepted or repressed, than traditional theology has explicitly recognized.

[100]

RELATION OF THE TEACHING AND JURISDICTIONAL PRIMACY OF THE POPE TO THE FULLNESS OF POWER OF THE COLLEGE OF BISHOPS

Here is another initiative that gives us food for thought: the question of the precise relation, in theory and practice, between the universal teaching and jurisdictional primacy of the pope and the same fullness of power that belongs to the college of bishops – with and under the pope to be sure, but really to the college of bishops as such. The Council made a declaration,

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which had never before been made in a council, about the college of bishops as the highest bearer of the fullness of all sacramental and canonical power in the Church. The declaration led to rather intense discussions during the Council, although in fact it did not go beyond what the theologians of the First Vatican Council had said. It is known that Pope Paul VI watched anxiously lest the declaration about the nature and the function of the college of bishops overshadow the doctrine of Vatican I about the pope's supreme and universal primacy of jurisdiction and the fullness of his teaching power. These two teachings of the Council are now juxtaposed; both are of equal importance and validity. But the question of how these two subjects endowed with the fullness of power in the Church are related to each other remained unanswered in the Second Vatican Council. For theology, it is something that demands further study. It is easy to see that this question is of great importance for the life of the Church. Yet it looks as though theologians, canon lawyers, and church leaders do not consider it very difficult and worrisome.

In a single society there cannot exist two different subjects endowed with the fullness of power, because this would do away with the unity of the society. We might say however that this is not the case here, because the college of bishops is the bearer of the fullness of power only with and under the pope, so that there can be no question of an adequate distinction between the two subjects of this power. While this statement is true, it removes neither in theory nor in practice the problem brought up for theology and canon law by these two declarations.

In order to reconcile the two declarations it seems to me that we should start by emphasizing that, even when the pope acts on his own in matters of doctrine or law, he exercises his fullness of power *as* head of the universal episcopate. Otherwise the latter, [101] not being identical with the pope, would be degraded to the rank of an advisory board in the universal Church. The pope's fullness of power must always and everywhere – even when he "acts alone" (which he may do of course) – be integrated into that of the body of bishops. And this body too cannot be understood aside from the unique power of the pope. Even if we hold this speculatively, it does not solve the problem for either theory or practice. The theoretical and practical problems met by Rome in the postconciliar synods of bishops are well known.

Pope Paul VI decided to organize these synods and intended to go on holding them, in order to live up to the teaching and the spirit of the Council about the college of bishops. We should not be surprised that the pope did not want to grant to a synod the rights and full powers of a council, either in theory or in practice. So, up to now, synods have been only meetings of an advisory body, while the pope has reserved to himself – at least in the area of juridical decisions – the full powers of his primacy. During a council the bishops themselves are *judices*, together with the pope; they are not simply advisors. They should not be and they have not been *judices* during these synods of bishops. They are only advisors, as was repeatedly made clear in these synods. But if this is the way things are, the ecclesiological problem remains unsolved, that is, whether the highest and universal fullness of power in the Church, which the Council attributed to the universal episcopate, can operate only in a council, or whether there are other ways as well in which these full powers might be active. If there are other ways, what would they look like in the concrete practice of the Church?

If this is impossible a priori, then in reality only the pope would be the bearer of the highest power in the Church, especially since only he can convene a council. This is one reason why the Council's doctrine about the body of bishops as subject of the supreme power in the Church is not easy to understand. We mentioned above that the synod of bishops has only an advisory function for the ruling of the Church by the pope, as indicated rather pointedly by the new Code of Canon Law. These synods of bishops may therefore be considered a modest contribution to a somewhat greater democratization. But one cannot appeal to them to clarify

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the meaning and realization of the Council's doctrine about the world episcopate.

[102] Hence the Council proposes a theological task, which it does not carry out itself: to make it clear, in theory and practice, that the body of bishops directs the Church and how it does this. It is true that theoretically one may answer this question by saying that the college of bishops does it through the pope, who exercises his own full powers as head and as representative of the world episcopate. But this answer is not sufficient. For in practice it is not easy to see that the pope exercises his full powers precisely *as* head and as representative of the college of bishops. Yet he can exercise full power in this way, even though he does not receive his power from the college of bishops, since the latter does not exist without him. There is no need to show, by concrete examples, that Roman church leaders do not in practice make it clear that they exercise their power by virtue of a sort of feedback to the body of bishops. Yet we might say that such feedback is given by its very nature, although traditional ecclesiology does not clearly state it and the doctrine of the Council on the college of bishops teaches it only implicitly.

The Council's teaching about two somewhat distinct subjects of the highest power in the Church presents theology with a task for further reflection although theologians may be unable to come up with a solution that is absolutely clear. In the juridical field there are problems concerning the coexistence of rights that preclude the hope of a clear solution by means of a higher synthesis. (It seems to me, for instance, that the coexistence in a society of both unity and the need to delegate power is one such problem. It is impossible to solve it completely within a precise juridical framework. Outside the juridical domain we are referred to practice and history, to love and humility.) Yet the task is still there. Ecclesiology and canon law must first clearly explain the theoretical impossibility of solving the problem and draw the necessary conclusions. And for the domain of practice, they must examine how the significance of the college of bishops both within and outside of the papal government can come more fully into its own.

The pope could, for instance, at least *jure humano*, grant to the synod of bishops a *votum deliberativum*; canon law admits this possibility. Further, the powers of the individual bishop should be limited as little as possible. He leads the diocese in the name of Christ, not in the name of the pope. Thus it is possible to avoid the impression that individual bishops are merely regional deputies of [103] the pope, whose mission and power are merely delegated to them by the pope.

There is no need to explain at length that the task thus entrusted to theology and canon law is of the highest ecumenical significance. It is enough to think of the problem of the appointment of bishops in the Church. The Church's nature does not demand that these appointments depend solely on the pope's free choice. They can also be made in some other way, under a particular law. The new code (can. 304, para. 1) admits this, although, typically, this admission has been inserted in the code almost as an afterthought.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SALVATION

Another point that must be considered in connection with our theme, one which I no longer have to explain in detail,[1] is the hope that clearly emerged in the Council of a really universal salvation of the whole world and our ensuing new relationship to the other churches and communities, as well as to the non-Christian world religions. This hope of universal salvation explains why, in contrast to earlier times, the Council presumes good faith, a right moral

[1] See Karl Rahner, *Concern for the Church: Theological Investigations* 20, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), pp. 97-102.

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attitude. It professes that grace is offered to all human beings, although not all of them accept it. This new worldview, which has become irreversible only with the Council, implies a great number of new theological suggestions that are evident and do not have to be explained in detail.

This universal hope is part of the folly of the cross that is expected from us, today's Christians. Despite all hope of progress, peace, and a better life, for a sober realist it is a hope against all hope (Rom. 4:18). In the long run it is the hope of eternal life – but for all. The Council encourages us to harbor this universal hope. Sober and realistic persons will find it hard to entertain such a hope, because every instance of progress they know of also means more dreadful violence and hopeless dying. But for us Christians this hope is obligatory. We are no longer allowed to hold in cold blood, as theoretically certain, like our Christian ancestors, that the definitive and permanent outcome of world history [104] consists mostly in eternal damnation. This universal hope is also a burden. It is hard and we would betray it if we did not exert ourselves not to despair of our society and our history. Universal hope is a lasting gift from the Council; it is both a solace and a summons.

Does this not imply tasks that theology is still far from having carried out? When we keep in mind what the Council teaches about the universal salvific will of God at work everywhere, can grace still be conceived as circumscribed by space and time, as simply effected from without and from above, only given now and then – albeit always again – in a history that otherwise remains natural and profane? How must we interpret the dreadful evil in the world without belittling it, so that the doctrine of the universal, eschatologically irreversible, lasting, and effective salvific will of God does not remain just a verbal theorem, which is repeatedly being refuted by human malice?

How can there exist a real salvific faith in revelation where the verbal revelation of both Old and New Testaments has not penetrated? Is it still possible, in trying to answer this question, to appeal mythologically and naively to the primordial revelation in Paradise? We must now admit millions of years of salvation history, a long history of faith. Are we to explain it by assuming vaguely that the time elapsed between the beginning of humankind and Moses, a period of millions of years, has been taken care of by divine Providence, and without explaining how real revelation and faith in that revelation are possible? Is it enough to say with the Council that there are roads to salvation known only to God? How can, we reconcile the absolute character of Christianity with the admission of a positive significance for salvation of non-Christian religions? Why can we, contrary to the trend that still prevailed under Pius XII, call non-Catholic communities "churches"? Exactly what does the Council mean when it says (*Lumen Gentium*, 8) that the Church of Jesus Christ is realized (*subsistit*) in the Roman Catholic Church, while avoiding an absolute identification that would be indicated by the word "is" (*esse*)? These and many other suggestions and questions that I cannot mention here are offered to us with this universal hope of salvation. That hope embraces all persons, all Christian communities, all non-Christian religions, so that it may gradually dawn on us how Christ has really died for all and how the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation for the whole world.

[105]

TASKS FOR SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Here are a few more suggestions and questions that theology has not yet worked out. What theology of freedom stands behind the Declaration on Religious Freedom? What enormous theological tasks are presented to us by the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World? What is implied by the fact that, contrary to the opinion of almost all theologians after the Council of Trent, the Council sees in the sacrament of penance a

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reconciliation with the Church as well? The Constitution on Divine Revelation tells us that the authors of Scripture are to be understood as truly independent authors, and not just persons who wrote what God dictated. How then shall we understand the inspiration of Scripture, the formation of the canon, and how we know about it? These and many other initiatives along the lines of dogmatic theology cannot be considered here. Today a certain weariness and resignation seems to have settled on systematic theology. This is certainly not due to the Council, which supplied theologians with many half-forgotten questions. These questions will have to be tackled bravely so that the proclamation of divine revelation by the Church today may be as it should and can be, and we may do our share so that God's word may be heard and God's grace be active and glorified.

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[106]

10

PERSPECTIVES FOR PASTORAL THEOLOGY IN THE FUTURE

A PASTORAL STRATEGY FOR THE WORLD-CHURCH

What follows will contain a few considerations about the necessity of finding a strategy for pastoral theology that will be valid and workable for the world-Church. I do not believe, of course, that I can discover or develop such a plan, or even present it in this short article. I am convinced that such a pastoral strategy for the world-Church does not yet exist. So obviously I cannot develop it. But I hold that we should slowly begin to see that the time for such a global strategy in the Church has definitely come and is demanded by our times. We leave open the question *who* might develop it. Should it simply be the college of bishops with and under the pope, or the pastoral theologians of the world as they become aware of the problem, or a special Roman body to be organized for that purpose, or finally all of these agencies together?

When I say that the awareness of this task is hardly alive in the Church, I am not pronouncing a judgment on what takes place in the pastoral-theological consciousness of those who bear an immediate responsibility for the universal Church. Nor do I deny that there are tangible beginnings of this planning for a pastoral theological strategy for the world-Church, as for instance in the works of Walbert Bühlmann. I mean only that it is not clearly present and tangible in existing institutions either in the Church at large or in Rome.

[107] What I will say here is a timid attempt, whose only purpose is to contribute, to some extent, to awareness that the Church, in her pastoral theology and planning, has a duty to develop an explicit strategy for her pastoral task as a world-Church.

PASTORAL STRATEGY AND THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

It might be said that the organization of the synod of bishops by Paul VI showed that such a duty had been recognized and undertaken. If this is true, I do not intend to underestimate the importance of these synods. But it seems to me that up to now the synod has considered what the individual local churches and their bishops have to do in carrying out their immediate duties for the present. I wonder whether in these synods of bishops the Church as *world*-Church, the Church as a *whole*, has explicitly pondered her pastoral strategy, as the strategy of the whole Church and as a strategy for the future. Even those who say “Yes” should not object to my present intent: to reflect on the need and the possibility of a pastoral strategy of the world-Church as such, and to hope that this planning, which did not and could not exist formerly, may have an appropriate subject. Should that subject be the college of bishops, or the synod of bishops, or a special Roman body set up for that purpose? This is a question of secondary importance, one that will easily be answered in theory and practice once the conviction is clearly alive in the Church’s collective consciousness that today such a strategic pastoral plan is a necessity. Here then are a few ideas on the nature and need of such a plan.

PASTORAL STRATEGY AND ROMAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

One more preliminary remark may be appropriate. One might think that the different bodies

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of the Church's Roman central government were taking care of this problem. There exists a Roman congregation for the evangelization of peoples (a general staff for the missions), a congregation for the oriental churches, one for the bishops, for the clergy, for the discipline of the sacraments [108] and the liturgy, for religious and secular institutes, for education, and so on. There is a Secretariat of State. So, we might think that all these Roman bodies have some vision, that they do not worry only about what is to be done here and now but that in their inquiries and reflection they keep their eyes on the future. We might think that in this way all of them together would have a broad strategic plan for the pastoral tasks of the world Church. Far be it from me to belittle these endeavors, if they exist.

Yet we might be slightly skeptical and wonder whether such a plan really is being developed in Rome. First, because in that case it would be a well-kept secret of the Roman central government. But should not the universal Church know of it, since it can be worked out in the right way only if the whole Church contributes her experience? Yet I do not believe that any member of the synod of bishops has ever heard of such a basic pastoral strategy for the world-Church. Moreover historically the Roman congregations were established and arranged in a random way, which was not modified by the reform of the curia under Paul VI. Can they be an effective and perceptive instrument for developing and carrying out such a plan? One might wonder whether, in their traditional aloofness from each other, the individual congregations are the right agency for such a common plan and its realization. The difficulties with regard to the respective jurisdictions of the Secretariat of State and the individual congregations and secretariats show that an ideal chain of authority and the ensuing collaboration, based on a single carefully worked out strategic plan, are still a desideratum. Finally even if all this had been nicely worked out in Rome, it would not be forbidden to lend a hand in this task.

As we reflect on the nature and the need of a strategic pastoral plan for the Church as a whole, we must not overlook two new facts that characterize the situation of the Church today. Together they make clear the possibility, nature, and necessity of such a pastoral plan for the world-Church, and they tell us who should develop and carry it out. Both the existence of a *world*-Church and the beginnings of a secular strategy for the future help us understand the nature and necessity of a strategic pastoral plan for the world Church as such.

[109]

Today There Exists a World-Church

Christianity with its message of salvation was, of course, always destined for the whole of humankind and therefore potentially always a world-Church. But in fact neither as Judeo-Christian, nor as the Church of Roman-Christian culture and of the West, was the Church a world-Church in the actual sense of the word. And when, in the wake of European colonialism and imperialism in the sixteenth century, the Church started her expansion into the whole world and to all peoples, the result of her missionary activity was nothing more than Western Christianity exported throughout the world. The Church remained in fact an occidental Church with exports all over the globe. Today, as a result of the policies developed during the Second Vatican Council, the Church has really started to become a world-Church. Everywhere there are native bishops and clergy. The autonomy of the great regional churches was recognized in principle during the last Council. Everywhere, albeit with different intensity, initial moves are being made toward a theology that corresponds to the different cultures. Everywhere the inculturation of Christianity into the different cultures is, at least in principle, admitted as a duty of the Church. The former missionary churches are already starting, although quite timidly, to make their positive and active contribution to the life of the universal Church. Everywhere we notice difficulties and attempted solutions to the

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question of how to reconcile the unity of the Church with a lawful pluralism of the regional churches, so that the Church may really act and look like a world-Church.

The emergence of the Church as a world-Church is in fact, although not in its deepest nature, brought about by a newly emerging unity of humankind and by the ensuing development of global social activity and planning for this unified humankind. Formerly the fate and the history of individual peoples and groups were separated by a no man's land. At the time of Frederick William, the Great Elector (1620-88), the reality and history of Prussia were practically independent of the reality and history of Thailand. Today everything is interconnected. The life and destiny of every part of the earth are definitely and tangibly conditioned by whatever happens elsewhere in the world. That is why there have been world wars, which in former times were quite impossible. That is why there exists a United Nations and great superpowers with a [110] global sphere of influence and power. Nowadays human history constitutes a unity; humanity is a unity not only on account of its origin, not only as an idea born in our heads, but as a directly tangible reality.

Humankind Begins to Plan Its Unity

At the same time, both as a result and a cause of this unity, humankind is planning its future and knows that such planning is a necessity. The future used to be considered the more or less unplanned and unconscious result of what befell people as a passively suffered natural fate and of what they themselves could do in their lifetime, without any desire or possibility of planning ahead. Today we are aware, or at least we are becoming aware, that the future is the realization of a *plan* for the future. In this way world and nature are not so much the available and natural places where people live but rather the material for a place to live, which people themselves plan and construct. That is why there are artificial substances that do not exist in nature, and why energies are tapped that are not of themselves available to humans, and so on.

Of course, this global planning of humanity's future is still in its infancy, because any kind of peaceful world government has still to be established. Such planning necessarily has its limits because, without mentioning other reasons, nobody would ever be able to assimilate all the data provided by a universal computer of rational world planning. Of course, this rational world planning entails enormous dangers for the self-destruction of humanity in the most diverse ways, which as we may notice, are already at work: atomic destruction, overpopulation with all its consequences, destruction of the indispensable requirements of human life, psychic dangers for humankind's global consciousness, of which we have hardly an inkling. But all of this does not change the fact that humankind is about to become a unified, active subject that plans and must plan for the future.

The idea that humanity might return to a more naive and spontaneous stage of consciousness and activity is a nostalgic utopia, whose realization would have to be paid for by the extinction of a great part of humankind. Humanity has reached the stage of conscious, rational self-planning; at least the beginning of this self-planning [111] is evident. In the long run Marxist socialism may prove to be a fashion that will soon be outmoded. At the same time the individualism, which the West was able to afford with the restricted population of former times, is also a way of life of the past. Humankind therefore will have to look for newer and higher forms of socialization.

We can no longer do without global political planning, for which the United Nations is only a modest beginning. It aims at some kind of world government that, it is to be hoped, will not do away with the pluralism of peoples and cultures. One hundred years ago a neo-scholastic philosopher-jurist had already claimed that such a government was demanded by

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the natural law. It is probable that we will be practically unable and morally forbidden to control and modify human nature biogentically. But this does not mean that our biological existence will not and should not be planned and controlled – and not merely by curbing population growth. It stands to reason that in the future the management, increase, and protection of the prerequisites of human life in nature have to be rationally and globally planned. All these efforts at planning are but the first intimations that humanity's collective awareness is slowly entering the stage of a conscious planning for humankind itself.

It is precisely at this stage of human development, when humankind is slowly becoming the actively planning subject of its own self-realization, that the Church has at least begun to be a real world-Church. In the context of humanity's new theoretical and practical consciousness the Church too must plan for herself and her future in a new way.

PLAN AND FREEDOM

There is a need for an active global pastoral-planning strategy for the world-Church. Before trying to translate this thesis into more concrete language, I have to add a qualification which derives from the nature of human freedom, a freedom that is, of its very nature, never absolute. It is clear that humankind's active self-planning as a secular reality is never complete. The planners themselves are also the planned, and the future is always the coming of the unexpected. Even though we are supremely free, we have to do with available materials, which are never completely transparent. [112] As a result, in spite of all our planning, there are always unforeseen surprises. Moreover, by definition, freedom itself, time and again, upsets its own planning with unplanned decisions. A fortiori, all planning by the Church, every futurological approach to the Church, will in principle be an unfinished business. The Church must move into an unpredictable future. Indeed, the Church is the community of people who expect as their salvation that which cannot be planned, who accept as their everlasting bliss the incomprehensibility of God in the dawning of God's kingdom, who consider expectant waiting and watching for this incalculable future a fundamental duty of the Church. The Church in the world is the sacrament of the unplanned future because this future is the incomprehensibility of God himself.

However, this does not mean that human freedom and the Church's duty do not need any planning. We will be able to see the blessed heavens open above us when all we have built collapses on top of us. Nevertheless, we must always plan ahead and keep on trying to build a better dwelling place for ourselves. And the Church that is watching hopefully for the coming of God's incomprehensibility must also be a Church of social justice, of order, of missionary activity, of human rights, and also of human planning. In principle she has always been such. Today, however, she has to be all of these things as one world-Church, in the new context of a unified world, global human planning, and rational futurology.

DUTIES OF THE WORLD CHURCH

All of this means new problems ahead, which are hardly suspected as yet but which must be solved. For the solution of these problems the Church may have to look for wholly new, totally reorganized agencies. The following are a few comments about this. They do not claim to be systematic or to cover all aspects of the problem.

Building a New Awareness of the Faith

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To mention a first example of a strategy for the world-Church, I believe that thorough reflection and planning are required with regard to the Church's consciousness, by which I mean the concrete [113] awareness of the faith in the Church. The difference between what is officially taught as the faith of the Church and what is actually believed by the majority of the faithful has, for diverse reasons which cannot be analyzed here, become unbelievably greater than used to be the case. The Church should not and cannot manipulate collective consciousness, as happens in totalitarian states. Yet the connection required today between the official doctrine of the Church and the actual faith of the people can no longer be brought about through means that used to suffice for that purpose. The Congregation of the Faith as it is organized today, the encyclicals and allocutions of the pope in traditional vocabulary, the pastoral letters of bishops with their traditional accent and content, the usual preaching from the pulpit whose content is aimed at a few people and has little appeal to unbelievers and marginal Catholics, catechisms that continue to be as inbred as ever, all these are no longer adequate to bring the marvelous message of Christianity to people as they really are. They are unable to bridge the gap between the official faith of the Church and Christian doctrine as it really lives in the heads and hearts of Christians and in the more or less correct information of non-Catholics.

How should such a new shaping and erecting of the actual awareness of the faith be planned and organized? Who is to be entrusted with this task? The instruction of people through mere reliance on church authority keeps losing its efficacy. How can we change it into a formation that persuades through the inner splendor of the truth itself? I have no answer to all these questions. But they cannot be evaded, they must be answered within the framework of the Church's global strategy. The task involves a great diversity of theological problems. To solve them church leaders cannot passively wait for answers from theologians. They must actively cooperate, do their share, so that such questions may be clearly grasped and answered as well as possible.

Recently I asked why there was no papal encyclical about today's atheism. I continue to be amazed that papal encyclicals treat (correctly of course) the Incarnation of the eternal Word, without making the slightest attempt to render this fundamental doctrine of Christianity more accessible to today's unbelievers, to whom it sounds utterly absurd. (Recently a member of the Congregation of the Faith told me that the task of the magisterium was to see to it that Christian doctrine is not falsified or weakened, and that [114] the positive interpretation and defense of this doctrine is the task of theologians.) That is not the way it should be today. Rather, the defense and interpretation of Christian doctrine by theologians should be encouraged and promoted by the magisterium. Eventually the latter should at least draw theologians' attention to the large number of questions that have been neglected. But it seems to me that the magisterium notices these questions even later than do theologians. Does, for instance, the frightening decrease in the frequency of confessions not involve a variety of theological questions, most of which both the magisterium and theologians simply ignore?

Here is a concrete point where, to my mind, what has just been said becomes clear. I suppose that in the old Church people knew what they had to believe upon hearing the Apostles' Creed (at least with a very short explanation). I suspect that, in spite of the normative significance that this creed has and will continue to have, people today understand little or nothing when they recite it, even if I try to explain it to them. They will ask me what they should understand by the word God, since, if God exists at all, he is certainly not living in the empyrean heaven and be still active two hundred million light years from us. Where can we find new, up-to-date, short formulations of the faith, by means of which today's unbelievers begin to *understand* what we Christians really believe?

A plan for systematic and pastoral theology should calmly and courageously head in the

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direction of a theology and proclamation that are open to the whole world. It is true that Christianity cannot deny in theory and practice its own historical origin. Everywhere in the world and in all its cultures it should always be clear that Christianity hails from Palestine and that it has passed through Western culture. But if and when Christianity is to become a world religion, that is, the religion of the peoples and cultures that did not originate near the Mediterranean or in the West, the only possible course is to be open to the whole world. This means that, in theory and practice, Christianity must become historically more neutral; it must let its historical origins, insofar as they do not affect its own nature, quietly fade away into history. We may ask what Christianity will look like when, in the non-Western world, its historical provenance has disappeared into a distant past, somewhat like the Jewish theology of Jesus' time that is no longer known to us and is of no interest. Such changes will certainly occur. But both systematic [115] and pastoral theology should make it a policy to teach us to recognize the changes.

Universal Church and Particular Churches

Another important group of questions for a real global strategy of the Church refers to the still unsolved problem of the relation between the universal Church and the great regional churches. True, the Second Vatican Council solemnly declared that these churches are not simply administrative districts of the one universal Church, differing from each other only in a few small details. However, on the whole (if we overlook the small Uniate churches of the Near East) nothing has come of this general principle. Rome continues to look for the most uniform canon law possible. For example, the approved liturgies are in fact nothing but translations of the Roman liturgy.

Of course, some may claim that the Church's unity renders such uniformity necessary in the universal Church. But by holding such a position, they can easily sabotage the principle of the relative independence and diversity of the great regional churches and reduce the principle to mere lip service. What degree of autonomy, what tangible initiatives has Rome really granted to the churches of South America or of Indonesia? Of course in practice it is not easy to work out the consequences of the dialectical relationship between universal and particular churches. But where is the authority that, together with the universal Church, courageously thinks these problems through and sees to it that these consequences are realized?

The World Responsibility of the Church

In the Second Vatican Council the Church loudly and expressly proclaimed her global responsibility, her responsibility for peace and justice in the world. During the past few decades she has certainly done much in this regard, although much of what has been said and done by the highest authority in the Church has afterward been sabotaged by the indolence or quiet resistance of subordinates. Would it not be possible for the Christian churches to think [116] of even more steps, especially more concrete ones, in this regard? Does the Church today have the courage to come up with more concrete demands for social change, for peace and disarmament, even when they are rejected within the Church herself, especially by politicians? Is there an agency in Rome that really studies all these questions systematically and accurately (and not just because of some official's praiseworthy good will) and, with real courage, strives for concrete solutions? Naturally there are those in Rome who busy themselves with such problems, who represent the Holy See at various congresses and

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meetings. But it is difficult for the average Christian to find a single courageous voice in Rome speaking on behalf of the Church's global responsibility. Indeed, it looks as if in Rome, despite the pope's world travels, the courage for such tasks is decreasing, not increasing. It seems that Rome is anxious and nervous, preferring to call back to the sacristy those Christians who are actively trying to carry out their task of social criticism in the world.

The Diaspora Situation of Christians

It seems to me that this elusive topic of a global pastoral strategy for the world-Church has a further task, in addition to the many others that will not be mentioned here. I would like to call this task the problem of the Church's diaspora situation. For all practical purposes the Church acts on the unstated presupposition that there still exists a more or less intact homogeneous Catholic Christianity, as was the case until well into the twentieth century, and as may still be the case in Poland today. For instance, it was taken for granted that Catholics married Catholics. A mixed marriage could be treated as an unusual exception, which was patiently and cautiously tolerated. It was easy to organize Catholic social organizations, to press for Catholic schools, and to keep artistic, literary, and leisure activities mostly within the Church, under Catholic auspices.

Today this situation is practically finished. Christians live so much in the diaspora that, even in groups controlled by the Church, committed and fervent Catholics are often only a small majority. Although this situation exists in traditionally Christian countries as well as in the so-called missions, it seems to me that it has not [117] yet led the Church to really systematic and courageous theological and pastoral reflection. Everywhere Catholics of the diaspora speak the language of their environment, a secular language. All of this being the case, what religious language can the Church use to make itself understood? What do people today take for granted in their personal lives? Could these questions be the starting point for attempts to make Christianity understandable and believable? The ancient Church tolerated a moral doctrine that included slavery as practiced by the general population. What opinions are "taken for granted" today, although in fact they may be morally questionable or false? Might not the Church quietly, but this time with full awareness, ignore this without wasting its energy in unsuccessful protests?

Can the Church today simply continue to presume as she used to do that outside, and even within, the Church all so-called marriages start with the intention that is required for a really indissoluble marriage? As the Church endeavors to promote morality, should she not more carefully and more impartially take into account the social and political presuppositions of the different cultures than she did formerly, when Western Christian morality was simply exported to mission countries? Recently a bishop from South America asked how useful it was for the Church naively to sing the praise of marriage in a country where the majority of children are born out of wedlock. On what specific fronts of the campaign for morality (and not on all of them at once) should the Church fight resolutely in order to witness in the world to the grandeur and dignity of Christian morality?

Today, as was always the case, Christian morality emphasizes certain points without thereby rescinding or denying other principles. Would it not make more sense to a secularized world if the rejection of the arms race that is becoming more and more insane were a more important characteristic of Christianity than the rejection of artificial contraception? Such shifts in what morality emphasizes have always occurred. (During the reign of Louis XIV the popes did not lose any sleep because of that king's immoral war policy, and who will blame them for it?) But today such shifts in emphasis should be considered in a global pastoral strategy. If the Church does not simply look perfunctorily at

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this diaspora situation and forget about it, she has to make a choice. Is she going to try by all means possible to hold on [118] to the policy of spreading out pastoral care everywhere as uniformly as possible. Or should she try to develop, somewhat like oases in the desert of our secularized world, instances of pastoral ministry, even if this means the end of a uniformly thin and not very attractive presence? Whatever the solution the universal diaspora situation has confronted our global pastoral strategy with tasks that are far from being sufficiently recognized and fulfilled.

Turning Away from a Bourgeois Church

Today we often talk about turning away from a bourgeois Christianity, from a service Church. What is right in such a demand? What can be done about it today? What is better left for the future? What have we rightly taken over, and what perhaps not so rightly, from other countries and cultures? What is so utopian that it cannot be realized in the future as our secularized society continues to develop? It is, of course, impossible to answer all these questions here.

Yet the demand to turn away from a bourgeois Church includes an important and correct view of the future, which we have to think about and plan for. If, for instance, the Church really wants to hold on to celibacy in the future, this position will entail far-reaching changes. Today's church leaders do not clearly see them and intend them even less, yet changes will inexorably come if the Church is not to shrink into an insignificant sect.

Lay people will necessarily enjoy more independence, power, and importance. In base Christian communities they will, to a large extent, do the work of the Church. As ordinary Christians we will firmly expect that the Church of the future will continue to be the Church of the ancient Christian faith, with that organization which her present faith declares to belong to divine and immutable right.

Nonetheless, in the year 2200 the Church in her visible features will look quite different from what we are used to. Is this transformation of the Church something unwanted and unforeseen but that will happen anyway? Is it going to "happen" gradually without much foresight, imposed upon her piecemeal by the present situation, in the way in which the Church of medieval feudalism followed upon the Church of the Fathers? Or, given the present [119] condition of collective human consciousness, should it not also be – although not primarily – a duty of the Church to foresee and, as much as possible, to *plan* in advance this coming transformation of the Church? Should there not exist in the Church a global pastoral strategy that looks to the future more than has been the case up to now? And is this not possible? To my mind this is a real problem for the Church of today, which has not yet received sufficient attention.

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[120]

11

THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Something must be said about the future of the Christian communities that, for all practical purposes, are identified with our parishes. No prophecies are to be made for the next five years; we have to look further ahead into the future. So we have to start from a point that is quite different from what might at first be expected. That is why we ask the reader to be patient.

Christianity has been in existence for two thousand years. Yet the greater part of humanity has not really come under the Church's influence, and so is not yet Christian. If I ask Christians whether we should send missionaries to try to convert these peoples, really good Christians will say, "of course." They will say: "Even if these people who are not Christians are to be saved through the hidden grace of God in a manner that, as the Council says, is known only to God, and provided they have not decisively and definitively acted against their conscience, even then all human beings should become Christians." And they are quite right. But still the question remains how God, in his Providence, after two thousand years, can allow the greater part of humanity to still be living outside Christianity. God must have a reason for this strange fact. While we can say that these reasons are hidden in the unfathomable will of God and should therefore be adored in silent submission, we can still give them some thought.

[121]

A CHRISTIAN WORLD?

Let us suppose for a moment that Christianity has spread all over the world. Everywhere there exist only Christian peoples. Even public opinion is Christian. Everywhere there are churches and bishops that are held in high esteem; the pope is welcomed all over the world with great enthusiasm. Even then the situation of each individual person would still be that of a mysterious radical struggle between light and darkness, between God and evil, between the option for God and eternal life and the option for definitive perdition. In other words, in spite of all the appearances of Christianity, the world would still be one in which darkness and light struggle with each other in a fight whose outcome we cannot predict according to merely human criteria.

If God lets individuals live to the end of their lives in a struggle between good and evil, we must also apply this to ordinary history. According to God's will this struggle must be manifest in a social manner; it cannot remain hidden in the interiority of the individual. So even supposing that one day all of humanity were externally christianized in a certain sense, things would not be very different. In the public eye there would still persist anti-Christian powers; in history, in politics, and in the arts, a lasting struggle would still go on for and against Christ. That is the way God seems to have willed it: God wants humanity to make free decisions, and not merely in each individual's interiority, but in the full view of history.

If we assume this view (although we cannot foresee exactly what it would look like in a humanity that, to all appearances, would everywhere be Christian), we understand at once that in such a situation real Christians would continue to be a minority. Even in such an ideal future, one which popes and bishops may have in mind and long for, real Christians would still be an embattled segment of humankind; they would, as we said, be challenged, opposed, and fought against, not only in the intimacy of each one's moral decision making, but also in

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the public eye. In other words true Christians cannot seriously expect to live in a uniformly Christian world.

[122]

OASES IN A NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD

Let us presuppose all this and ask ourselves how one should envisage the near future of a Christian community. First, it is not certain that in our so-called Christian Europe there will ever be communities that completely cover the whole territory of a country or state. This statement does not proclaim an ideal for the future; it simply makes a sober realistic conjecture about how things will look in reality. There will be too few priests. Of course, we can hope that the number of priests starts growing again, but in a population in which only 10 to 15 percent of the people are actually "practicing" Catholics, we cannot expect that this small percentage will provide so many priests that the other 85 percent will be provided for. So we will have communities that will constitute a minority of the total population. For a realist, it is not probable that European secularized society will in the foreseeable future become Christian again, explicitly and in practice. In other words, we will have small communities with few priests. Thus, in the long run, it will probably not be possible for these communities with their few priests to reach immediately and directly, like police precincts, the whole population, the dechristianized.

It seems to me that, as a result, future communities, as well as so-called parishes, will no longer be able to feel responsible administratively for the total population of a country, as they have up to the present. Today, if we ask a pastor, "How many people are in your parish?" he will say, for instance, "ten thousand." By this he means that perhaps 1,500 of them are practicing Christians but that he also feels immediately responsible for the 8,500 others. It will be impossible for this to go on in the foreseeable future. It is not un-Christian and un-Catholic to expect that in the near future (in a matter of decades) Christian communities will be somewhat like oases in a non-Christian world. Communities of the future should, of course, not withdraw into a shell or a ghetto. They should be thoroughly missionary. They will have to present Christianity in a really attractive way. (We will have to come back to this point.) But these separate communities should not feel as though they were pitiful remnants of a larger community to which many more, five times more, people ought to belong. The same also applies to pastors, spiritual leaders, and all who direct such a community.

[123] Once one gets rid of the idea (not out of pessimism or laziness, but in a sober analysis of the situation of Christians in today's Western world) that the Christian parish community must be so organized and administered that it extends all the way to the neighboring parish and that all the members of these parishes should be equal to the total population, one has a picture of the situation in our country that can be expected for the Church in the world at large. Everywhere else in the world there are regions in which Christianity, whether Catholic or not, constitutes only minorities, only isolated oases. So when this situation carries over to Europe, and when the appearance of a universal, public christianization of Europe vanishes, one has only to be concerned with what in principle is to be expected from the Church's nature and from human freedom. We say this in consideration of the Church's situation in the world and in the public eye.

SO THAT GOD'S SALVATION MAY BECOME VISIBLE

One can really say to each community what the Second Vatican Council said about the self-

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understanding of the universal Church as present in the world: The Church is the sacrament of universal salvation. What does this mean? She is a historically tangible sign, willed by God, a sign that God loves the world as a whole, that he does not release it from the grip of his powerful love, and that he intends to lead it to its blessed consummation in ways that are not known to us. The Church is the great sacramental sign of all these things. But a sign is never simply identical with what it signifies. Therefore, while the Church is the sacramental *sign* of the world's salvation, we know that salvation extends far beyond it.

We can also apply this conception of the nature of the Church to a particular community, as it is now, or as it shows signs of becoming. Such a community is an oasis in a world that is secretly always filled with God's grace but that, seen from without, socially, looks very unholy, very pagan. The community is the visible sign of salvation that God has established in this seemingly godless world. Through this community God says: I am here in this world and I remain with my grace; secretly I fill the deepest depths of humanity, keeping people in the love that I, the eternal God, have for my only-begotten Son, the Incarnate Word. Of this, each Christian [124] community is the sacramental sign for its environment. The sign is different from what it signifies, namely the quiet, hidden salvific will of God in the whole secular world. God desired a sign because, as the God of the Incarnation, as the God become visible, he wanted not only to be the deepest hidden life of the world but also to let his universal love become manifest in history. God desired this to happen in such a way that the salvation which God proffers to the whole world might become visible in its ultimate Christian explicitness.

At this point a Christian might say: If that is true, I myself might make my life easier. I am going over to the world, which, according to what we have just said, is not living outside of God's salvific will, which can attain its salvation even outside the visible Church. I will therefore forego explicit Christianity with all the obligations that go with it: Sunday Mass, receiving the sacraments, being controlled by church authorities, and so on.

Christians, however, may not speak this way. Why? Because they have come under the influence of God's grace in Jesus Christ and in the Church, unlike many others, even though we cannot draw an exact boundary between the two. But those Christians who have expressly encountered Jesus Christ and his Church cannot say: I look for my salvation *outside* explicit Christianity, which refers to and believes in Jesus Christ and his Church, with her sacraments, and so on. Should they speak that way, after having been specially chosen by God, they would be rejecting their very salvation. In other words: This conception of an oasis-like Christian community, as a sacramental sign of salvation for the world around it by no means implies that Christians would be allowed to break away, as it were, from this sign to which they belong in order to join anonymous Christianity, for which God's salvific will is at work mysteriously – albeit always on account of Christ.

MADE FREE FOR A MISSIONARY TASK

It is time to show that, for reasons derived from the nature of Christianity, the community understood as an oasis will not be surprised that, although only a minority, it stands under order to engage in missionary activity. And the community will understand that, by accepting this minority status, it can accomplish so much [125] more naturally and freely. First, it is clear that this community, as a sign of salvation for others, must take care that the sign does not perish. The visible and tangible presence of the world's salvation, related to Jesus Christ and called Church, must be present in the world until the end of time. We cannot determine how large and powerful this sign is in proportion to the totality of humankind, but it must by all means continue to exist.

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Those who know that they have been called to this explicit form of salvation as a sign for others and who therefore cannot ignore their social responsibility, their love for neighbor, must see to it that this community remains alive, that it continues to grow, and that it gains new members from the surrounding secular society. Those who have been taken over by God's grace, not in a wordless anonymous way, that is not without awareness of their privilege, those who know that they really are God's beloved children and who realize that they have been called to an everlasting life in God's immediacy, should also make this privilege known to others. They are aware of the blessing that has come to them. Let them therefore tell others about it so that this sign of the world's salvation that is called Church may keep radiating from them ever more intensely, so that it may win over more people and fill them with the awareness of this innermost blessing of grace.

A community that does not continually lament because only 15 percent of its members are practicing Catholics, but rather rejoices because of those who are active, has a better chance of being filled with missionary zeal than a community in which, like a cancerous growth, the depressing feeling prevails that it is really not what it ought to be, because 85 percent of its members have turned away. The former, impelled by what it knows about itself from faith, is the sacramental sign of salvation for those who do not yet properly and actively belong to it; it can be filed with a much less biased and more lively missionary zeal.

THE TASK OF THE PRIEST

Some time ago I said that a priest or a bishop should be asked how many *new* Christians he had gained in his so-called Christian, but in rea1ity un-Christian, territory. He should attach more importance to this than to the question of how many "still" belong to his [126] community or his diocese. This question also allows us to understand the proper task of a priest as community leader in the parish of the future. Through his existence, his deeds, and his words, he is, as it were, the living, believing, hoping, loving witness of God's message. That is why he tries to win over at least a few followers.

It is from the characteristics of a spiritual guru (if I may speak this way) that a priest of the future should get an idea of his function. He is not first and foremost the one who must see to it that all those who in fact do not know what it really means receive baptism, be married in the church, and be buried from the church. He is not the one who should in a precise way find out what percentage of his so-called parishioners actually fulfill their Easter duty. Rather, he is one who is filled with a salutary faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Aware of the fact that be has been freed and redeemed, he is impelled by his faith in life eternal to share with as many people as possible (how many is unimportant) his own experience of redemption and liberation. He would, of course, also share the faith by means of the sacraments, especially the celebration of the Lord's Supper. But all of this must be included in the proclamation of the liberating, redeeming, and saving grace of God.

Such a pastor will feel at ease in a so-called base Christian community. I cannot discuss here the extent to which such base Christian communities should in the future coincide with parish communities. It is quite possible that even in a wonderfully active parish community there may still, or perhaps even there should still, exist base communities, as parts of such a parish. In any case, because of the powerful influence of such a pastor, the parish community itself should become a base community.

BASE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND CHANGES

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Persons who share a profound love of God should also share other concerns, and the love that the Holy Spirit inspires for God and neighbor should practically and concretely become manifest in a true community of mutual love and service. The priest, inspired by such true Christian fervor, feels naturally drawn to such a base community, his parish. And such a parish is a missionary parish. Trusting in God, it is not upset by the fact of being only a small [127] minority in the great wide world, because it is a minority that promises and that actually brings God's salvation to the world at large.

This allows us to answer a number of other questions. First, such a base community, with their priest (we might almost call him their "spiritual father"), will be interested in ecumenical work. Its members are those who have come under the mighty spell of God (we might almost call them, by God's grace, mystics of daily life), and they want to live like brothers and sisters. In such a community differences among churches are not, to be sure, simply ignored (this would lead to a third confession), but its genuine Christian spirit renders those differences less important, so that there is hope that they may be overcome. Should a pastor use a chasuble at Mass, or simply a gown, like a minister? Should we make frequent pilgrimages to Rome, or should our reverence for the Petrine office be more reserved, as befits its position in the hierarchy of Christian truths? For such questions, these base charismatic communities may well supply an answer that leads to real church unity.

In such a base community the relationship between priests and lay people undergoes a change. Not in the sense that there should be no more priests in the Church, and not in the sense that in a community needing some kind of organization there would not be different functions and tasks, whose distribution would be accepted by all with respect and love. But in such a community there is a function for *everyone*. In addition to the function of leading the community, especially at the Lord's Supper, there are many other indispensable functions. The pastor's function would, of course, not be limited to ritual. As community leader, he should feel a responsibility to be, through his whole life, a living and powerful example of Christian life for his brothers and sisters. There will, nevertheless, always remain some difference between an official function in such a community and the real meaning of the community.

THE EXAMPLE OF A CHESS CLUB

I will try to explain this first by means of an example, although that example has often been attacked (for instance by Gisbert Greshake). The main purpose of a chess club is to see to it that its [128] members are good, even outstanding, chess players. That is the purpose and the meaning of a chess club. Yet such a club needs a president, a treasurer, and other officers who arrange everything so that good chess may be played. It is desirable for the president to know something about chess, even to be a very good chess player. That helps him or her understand better how a chess club should be organized. But it is also quite possible that the president is not the best player, that other members are better players.

Something similar happens in the Church. The saints are the best chess players in the chess club of God's Church. Her leaders too, that is, the pope and the bishops, should, of course, be as holy as possible. But nobody can take it amiss (nor has this ever happened in the Church) if they are not as holy, as radically Christian, as powerfully influential for the good as the Church's great saints. I should not call for the resignation of the club president because he or she lost a game with one of the members. Likewise, we cannot demand too much from the leaders of the Church as a "society," as if, in order to be leaders, they had to be the best Christians. A bishop may at times stand spiritually lower than his chauffeur, who is a humble and unselfish Christian, foregoing more lucrative employment to work for his bishop as a

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service to the Church. It does not follow that the chauffeur should take over the bishop's function. On the other hand, priests, pastors, bishops, and religious, who have specific functions and tasks in the Church, must often remind themselves that, in the long run, they can carry them out in the right way only if they endeavor to be radically Christian.

NEW FUNCTIONS IN THE CHURCH

The Church has a social organization which, she is convinced, is part of her nature. She is convinced that there will be deacons, priests, and bishops in the Church in the future, as there are today. But two points remain undecided.

First, it is not clear what exactly the task of these three hierarchic functions should be in a given historical and social setting. Possibly, as Franz Xaver Kaufmann has pointed out, a Church of the future would have much smaller dioceses, because more than in the past their vitality will depend on the vitality of their leaders. In the course of history priests have assumed many tasks that do [129] not necessarily belong to their function of presiding at the eucharistic celebration, tasks they have given up at other times. Deacons, priests, and bishops will not necessarily have the same functions in the future as they had in the past.

In the second place, this permanent hierarchic structure of the Church does not mean that all the functions that she has to fulfill as Church belong necessarily to members of the hierarchy. Where, for instance, does the hierarchical structure indicate the need for teachers in the Church? We might say, of course, that the bishop is the official teacher within his diocese. But this does not exclude the possibility, or even the necessity, of specially appointed teachers outside the hierarchic structure. There might also be a special function of official church charity. The Church must practice charity, not only in her members as they take care of the poor, but also as Church. So there could be a function like that of the deacons mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (6:2 ff.). It is not certain that this task can be carried out as it should by priests, pastors, directors of Catholic Charities, or the permanent deacons who are now being ordained. There might also be a function of social criticism that would call attention to social grievances, or a function of explicitly Catholic education or psychotherapy, and so on. All these examples should only make it clear that, besides the three traditional functions mentioned above, there could also exist in the Church other official tasks, which would deserve respect and a certain autonomy. These tasks and functions should not depend on the arbitrary power of the pastor or of the individual bishop. Rather, they should be accepted by the hierarchy as present-day specializations of the one all-embracing function of the Church as required by today's circumstances.

This does not mean that individual laypersons and groups of laypeople would not be important in the Church. The Church does not live only, and certainly not principally, in the hierarchy and its different members. As People of God on its pilgrimage through history, she lives in all her members. And wherever Christians, impelled by their faith, perform their Christian duties in family or society, there the Church lives and there she may have more of an impact than she has through the hierarchy. In the past holy kings did not live in vain. Saints can be found outside the silence of cloistered monasteries. For example, Saint Teresa of Avila regretted that in her time women had so little influence. It is as a missionary [130] for the salvation of the world that Saint Thérèse of Lisieux chose to be a contemplative Carmelite nun, because, as she said, for her there was no other way of doing it. Wherever they are, as members of the Church Christians have a duty to influence the Church as well as the world and public opinion.

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TEMPORARY PRIESTS

Many more questions might be brought up about minor points. For instance, without going against the sacramental character of the priesthood, could the Church not admit an easier way for, persons to resign from the priestly life, one that does not morally disqualify the person in question? We might wonder, of course, whether allowing some kind of temporary priesthood might not have an adverse psychological and social influence on the priesthood. This is a question that requires reflection and perhaps some experimentation. But, theoretically speaking, I do not believe that the so-called lasting character of the priesthood, which according to the Council of Trent can never be lost, would dogmatically make priesthood for a time absolutely impossible. The Church does indeed laicize priests, and it is not clear why in the eyes of the Church the grounds for laicization can only consist in some moral lapse. The question comes up then whether a correctly conceived temporary priesthood might not attract more young men who are afraid of assuming the priesthood because they are not sure they can shoulder a commitment for life.

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Moreover, in my humble opinion, the question remains open whether, in a social and, we might say, anthropological setting that differs considerably from our present male-dominated one, the ordination of women is dogmatically impossible. True, the Congregation of the Faith has declared that it is. Therefore, realistically, we need not expect that in the foreseeable future the Church will withdraw this opinion and take the consequences. This declaration of the Congregation of the Faith is not an infallible dogma; it stands in history and might eventually be revised.

[131] The Church's teaching authority has revised and practically withdrawn much more fundamental declarations. To take an example at random: The declaration made by the Biblical Commission under Pius X stating that Moses is, quite literally, the author of the whole Pentateuch was intended to have at least the same authority as the one claiming that women cannot be ordained. Yet after sixty years this declaration has become obsolete and without authority. Could the same thing happen in the present case? Will it happen? How long will it take before it happens? It is impossible to answer these questions. There are undoubtedly many people in North America and also to some extent in Europe who consider it discriminatory against women that they cannot be ordained.

Yet we should not exaggerate. Returning to our chess club we might say, metaphorically: It is much more important for women to be good chess players, that is, to live the Christian life as radically as possible, to live Christianity as the religion of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen one, as the religion of freedom and of love. This is something that nobody forbids them to do. This matters much more than – in the chess club again – being a pastor or a priest or a bishop in the Church. When we keep in mind the main purpose of Christianity, the question of admissibility to a function in the Church's social dimension is secondary, compared with the question of how a woman today can be autonomous and emancipated and, at the same time, live Christianity as a woman.

THE FARTHEST BECOME THE NEAREST

Today humankind has become a single global entity in the world. Each one's fate depends on all the others. The different groups and nations are no longer separated by historically empty

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intervals. What happens in Latin America in the next fifty years will influence what happens in Europe, and the other way round. Even the most remote peoples have now become the nearest. A thousand years ago, if we overlook the Turkish danger, what happened in India or East Asia was a matter of indifference to Christians in Europe. Europeans were unable to influence the situation in these countries, and the command of Christian charity had little meaning for their abstract relationship to these peoples. Today the situation is totally different. Ecological concerns, international peace, development of [132] Third World countries, and so on, are the responsibility of every Christian and of every Christian community.

In our time a parish must have an effective relationship with a parish in Nigeria. Problems of disarmament, of peace all over the world, of aid to the Third World, problems that today's so-called Greens bring up (although often in a very emotional and naive way) are problems that must become the responsibility of individual Christians and Christian communities. It is not clear how much individuals can do in this respect. Yet can they do nothing? While that might be true for beggars on the street (and even they can pray for the Third World), ordinary Christians can at least see to it that their representatives in larger social organizations, for instance in political parties and in the State, carry out their obligations and responsibilities with regard to these problems.

How many Christians have protested to their parties, because less than one percent of the gross national product is devoted to the Third World? How many Christians have made it known to their parties that they are willing to give up one percent of their salary for the Third World? In Berlin there are a few university professors who give up a considerable amount of their salary, so that the State, in its eagerness for savings, will not abolish a certain number of academic chairs. A famous educator who is already retired told me that she would honestly have to admit that she could live quite well if her pension were 10 percent less than it is, and that she was willing to take such a cut. If West Germany had civil servants who were willing to take a cut of a few percentage points in their salaries, a great amount of poverty would disappear. Why are there so few Christians who are ready to do something of the kind, and who do not hide this readiness in their heart but make it publicly known? Such things should be considered more openly and critically, with a greater readiness for change, than is the case at present.

A COMMUNITY OF PRAYER

A Christian community should not be a service station, where people come just to satisfy their individual need for piety and salvation. Such a community also has political and social obligations that should be clearly mentioned from the pulpit. (On the other hand, a priest who is mostly concerned with social and political [133] topics should also speak of God, eternal life, faith in and hope of eternity.) However, a truly Christian community should not be just a social or political group, working for justice in the world. It must also be a community that looks to God in worship and prayer.

A community that is no longer attuned to common prayer, to a kind of prayer that is not simply a legalistic fulfillment of an obligation but really prayer in spirit and in truth, prayer that soars beyond all earthly goods to be a prayer of radical hope in the eternal life of God – such a community is no longer a Christian community. There are prayer meetings and services that may and even should have a more private character than the parish liturgy. But even the liturgy should be planned in such a way, with a kind of creative imagination and feeling of religious intimacy, that people can pray personally and fervently and can lift their whole hearts in praise of God in song.

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[134]

12

RITES CONTROVERSY: NEW TASKS FOR THE CHURCH

There is at present no controversy over rites, such as the Church endured a few centuries ago, and which was settled only under Pius XI. The enculturation of Christianity and church life in foreign cultures is no longer bound by rigid rules, called useful and necessary by some and totally un-Christian by others. In that original sense there is no more rites controversy today. Yet the real problems behind it are becoming more urgent than ever.

For two reasons. First, Christianity has become a world religion, the Church has really started to be a world-Church. That is why the question of how to make Christianity and the Church acceptable in all cultural milieux has become an urgent question everywhere. There is a second reason too. Until the middle of the twentieth century the West European and North American cultures were predominant in the world, and they considered it their duty to impose their lifestyles as a blessing all over the world. Today this cultural predominance of the West has vanished. There is no doubt that formerly even the Church's missionaries were to a great extent imbued with this idea. Today the superiority of the European style of life has become questionable, and the problem of the enculturation of Christianity in other countries and societies more difficult.

[135]

NO SYNTHESIS

The question first emerged clearly in Matteo Ricci's time. Earlier, for instance, when the Church moved from the Roman to the Germanic culture, it was not so urgent. Today it is more urgent than ever and it points to a fundamental task of the Church. We may believe, as some church pronouncements still believe, that if we dropped or slightly modified some peculiarities generally used in organizing our Christian life or formulating our faith, we would more or less automatically enculturate Christianity in other peoples. There is no need to build gothic churches in China or Japan, or to introduce in these countries the kind of music we use in Europe. The task is quite simple and easy.

I for one believe that it is very, very difficult. Of course, some adaptations must be made, perhaps much more than in the past. But even as the differences between two individuals may be so great that no higher idea or synthesis can bridge them, so there are individual cultures that cannot come to understand each other simply by making a few practical adjustments and adaptations. It is in fact a profound theological problem whether one and the same Church can exist in different cultural milieux. We Christians are convinced that it can.

The Church must have a visible unity in worship, law, and faith. But how to achieve this unity while respecting the profound differences among cultures remains an unsolved problem. At present we expect and admit a pluralism in theologies. Although Rome, of course, keeps putting on the brakes, we admit in principle the possibility, and even the necessity, of great regional churches, with different liturgies and even, despite a basic unity in canon law, with very great differences in the laws of these churches.

The new Code of Canon Law applies only to the Latin Church. But if we overlook the Eastern churches of the Near East, this Latin Church coincides in fact with the Roman Catholic Church of the West, which has spread all over the earth. The trouble is that it is not clear yet whether church leaders sufficiently trust the regional churches to let them develop in their own way. The real rites controversy is still ahead of us. What will the Africans, with

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their way of understanding marriage, family, and tribal feeling, do with our European moral teachings? To what extent can these moral teachings be transplanted into other cultures? How will religious life [136] look in East Asia, if we allow the Asians to follow their own ways. There can be no doubt that religious life, religious garb, and maybe even the liturgy will look quite different from the way they look today. All this will not be merely a slightly adapted translation of *our* Christianity, but something quite different. On the other hand, the whole of Christianity must continue to derive from the concrete historical Jesus, and we must maintain the unity of the Church in a real and practical way. There will, of course, always be a pope, although we might wonder with Bühlmann whether it would not be better for him to have his diocese in the Philippines.[1]

NEW TASKS

There is no need to consider this new universal rites controversy as something distasteful. It is a task that devolves upon the whole Church. And here the courage, the confidence, the optimism, and the open mindedness with which Matteo Ricci viewed foreign cultures can continue to serve as an example. First steps have already been taken. The decrees on the Eastern Church acknowledge that a real autonomy and diversity of the regional churches are a positive characteristic of the Church. It is not a Catholic ideal to render the Church so uniform, so homogeneous, that it is made up merely of regionally different branches of one universal church administration. The same problem exists for ecumenism. We should not aim at a Church in which the Latin Roman Catholic Church swallows up the other Christian churches and becomes the Church of all Christians without any inner change, merely through a quantitative increase in members. If the ecumenical question can be solved at all, it will happen only if we grant to the other great Christian churches the right to be *partner* churches in the one Catholic Church.

Within the Roman Catholic Church we have already experienced a relatively intense pluralism. Thus the Latin American Church is developing a theology of liberation that probably cannot simply be [137] adopted by us. In Germany and in Western Europe there is a great diversity of theological trends.

UNITY IN CHRIST

Pope Paul VI told me once that theological pluralism should not turn into anarchy. That is quite true. But where does a lawful pluralism start, and how do we distinguish it from an anarchistic pluralism? When that question is asked in concrete cases, it often remains unanswered. Africans too will want to develop an African theology. The question will be how it can be their own while remaining a lawful theology within the one Church. We should probably admit that very often these different theologies cannot quite understand each other. For if they did, we would once more have a synthesis of several theologies, and there would be no more pluralism. In canon law, in theology, in liturgy, and so on, there should prevail in the Church a tolerance which allows everyone to tell the other: I do not quite understand everything you say, and yet you are my brother or sister in the one Church.

I believe that the Church will have to do some rehearsing for this tolerance of different

[1] See W. Bühlmann, *Wenn Gott zu allen Menschen geht: Für eine neue Erfahrung der Auserwählten* (Basel, 1981), *Wo der Glaube lebt: Einblicke in die Lage der Weltkirche* (Freiburg i. Br., 1974), and *All Have the Same God* (Slough, U.K.: St. Paul Publications, 1988).

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opinions which we do not quite understand. The present attitude seems to be somewhat as follows: What I do not understand in the other, what does not *positively* agree with what I have in mind, cannot be acceptable in the Church. And that is wrong. If we wonder how these theologies that we cannot reconcile with our own can exist in the one Church with her one faith, I would say: We are one because we are all baptized, because we all look on Jesus as the mediator of our salvation. And we are also one because we remain legally and liturgically in communion with one another. This framework provides a unity that enables us to bear and to respect a plurality of opinions. An encounter between two human beings never overcomes an ultimate residue that is unfamiliar and not understandable. Should they perfectly understand each other, they would in fact have become one and the same person. Not only would that be most unreal, it would not be at all interesting. Human beings are such that they accept the other person *as* one whom they do not understand perfectly, *as* unfamiliar, as the one who, to some extent, seems strange. This must also be recognized and accepted in the Church.

[138]

LIMITS OF TOLERANCE

But there is also an anarchistic pluralism. When a regional Church, the Church of a given cultural milieu or theology, entrenches and isolates itself, when it solemnly declares that it has nothing to learn from another Church – at that moment the love which tolerates pluralism without giving up unity would vanished. Gone would be the resolve to adhere to the truth of God's universal revelation. So this kind of disunity cannot be accepted.

In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries the Jesuits and the Dominicans would have acted against their own nature if they had not followed their own ways. *But* one of these ways is precisely – and this is decisive – a loving openness, a desire to learn from others and to exchange ideas with others, even when these others are at first unfamiliar and to some extent always remain unfamiliar. This rule of thumb is very important and useful for the discernment of spirits. Are the different churches in the world with their peculiar features willing to learn from one another? Or are they convinced that their own nature would be radically threatened and falsified if in an endless process they continue to assimilate more from others? We can safeguard and develop that which is our own only by having the courage to borrow from others.

The Church and theology should not go so far that, impelled by a love and tolerance that make no distinctions, they say Yes and Amen to everything. When a theologian seeks not merely to reflect on ancient dogma in ever new ways but squarely denies it, then the limit has been reached.

THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEANS

We take it for granted now that in the present era of a Church that has become a world-Church all missions either have already become autonomous churches, rooted in their own culture and supported by their own people, or that they are approaching this stage. That is why it is imperative that missionaries from Europe and North America have the courage to yield first place as soon as possible to native priests and bishops. I believe that even today these new churches are happy when Europeans and North Americans work with them – discreetly, as subordinates, [139] but also actively and courageously. There are still many things that European Christianity can say to other cultures.

Of course, the opposite also is true. The Latin American Church can tell us quite a number

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of things about base Christian communities, and the Church of East Asia can share with us Eastern spirituality, which it has assimilated and made truly Christian. It will not be enough simply to exchange imports and leave them as they were in their country of origin. The present situation of a unified humankind demands that every people be a missionary for other people. We continue to have the right, and perhaps the duty, to send missionaries to foreign countries. But this is no longer a one-way street. What we need today is a real exchange, wherein each one gives and receives.

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[140]

13

THE RELATION BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND POPULAR RELIGION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a few introductory, hence very general, considerations about the relation between popular religion and theology. We admit right away as our main point that, if scientific theology is to be true to its own nature, it will have to reflect on the religion of the people much more than it usually does. Yet this theme of our considerations is very obscure.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

We might, of course, try to answer the question of the relation between theology and popular religion by starting to explain the relation that exists between theory and practice. Whatever that relation may be, theology would be considered as theory and popular religion as practice, so that the general relation between theory and practice would be the same as the relation between theology and popular religion.

However, the conviction is gaining ground, for a number of different reasons, that practice is not simply the execution of an independently built theory, but that theory consists, at least in part, of a reflection on practice. We might conclude that theology, as theory and science, not only has a relation to practice, which it directs, but that it derives from practice, insofar as practice is the source, or [141] at least *one* source, of scientific theology. This is true, even though this scientific reflection itself is a constitutive moment of practice, in our case of popular religion. However, this very general scientific foundation for a correct answer to our initial question will not be further examined here.

THEOLOGY AND POPULAR FAITH

It is not possible to determine the relation between theology and popular religion adequately without having a clear idea of them both. This, however, is extraordinarily difficult. Indeed, it is very difficult to explain what theology is. That makes it difficult as well to explain theology's relation to popular religion. A distinction is often made between theology and religious science, where theology is defined as the scientific investigation of the Christian faith, as this faith is taught in the Christian churches and as a given and normative value for theology. Such a definition of theology might be accepted, more or less, by Christian theologians who refuse simply to equate theology with a "neutral" science of religion. But by itself this definition cannot serve as a bridge between theology and popular religion. First, because this vaguely defined "theology" comprises quite different disciplines (systematic, historical, fundamental, dogmatic, theoretical, practical), none of which can be related in the same way to popular religion. Next, because this definition leaves open many questions that are of the greatest importance for the relation between theology and popular religion.

What faith (of the Church) does theology, in its own self-understanding, presuppose as its object of study? Only the one laid down in the canonical Scriptures? If the answer is yes, how may we then understand the relation between this kind of theology and popular religion? Would it be possible for theology to understand popular religion as nothing more than human (religious and sociological) objectifications falling under the judgment (of rejection or

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forgiveness) of Scripture? But if we accepted this understanding and were then to discover in normative Scripture itself ("sola Scriptura") more popular religion, and would thus again have to look for a canon within the canon, what then?

If we wish to emphasize more clearly and firmly the fundamental relation of theology to the faith of the *Church*, what Church [142] do we mean? And how do we then explain the relation of theology to popular religion? Do we mean a Church that is organized hierarchically, with an apostolic succession, with a supreme magisterium? Suppose that, in our question, Church is meant clearly and exclusively as a magisterium with its institutional and juridical activities, would we then not have to understand the relation between the Church's theology and popular religion as simply the subordination of popular religion to the Church of the magisterium and its theology? Popular religion then would be lawful only if it put into practice the religion proclaimed by the magisterium and explained by its theology.

But if the Church, despite its institutional character and hierarchical organization, is the Church of the "People of God," a pilgrim Church, in which everyone not only receives but also gives and serves, is "popular religion" then not a constitutive moment of this Church of the one and entire people of God, whose faith is the point of reference for theology and the real object of its reflection? We would then still have to determine within this one Church as the People of God the precise relation, one to another, of the magisterium, official church doctrine, the life of faith, popular religion, and so on. But it would be impossible to deny that popular religion has a fundamental importance for theology (and not just the other way round). We will have to come back to this point.

RELIGION OF THE PEOPLE

Bridging the gap is very difficult, not only if we start from the idea of theology as a church science but also if we do so from the idea of popular religion, that is, the religion of the people. What do we mean here by "people"? Certainly not simply the "People of God" in its usual sense. If this were the intended meaning the statement "theology has an essential relation to popular religion" would be identical with the statement "theology has an essential relation to the faith of the Church." The latter statement could be rejected or doubted only by those who acknowledge, within the faith and the life of the one, entire Church, two essentially distinct realities: the genuine revelation of God coming from above, which we can clearly and safely separate from everything else, *and* the human response to it, conceived as something clearly distinct from [143] revelation as such, from the pure Word of God. Therefore this human response might be called popular religion, even if it were practiced by the whole People of God, the sum total of all those who have been baptized and lead a Christian life. However, such a complete and clear distinction between revelation and the living faith that accepts it is actually impossible. That is why such an interpretation of Christian popular religion does not make much sense and is of little use.

The notion popular religion, the religion of the people, has meaning only if the term "people" is used as a sociological term. Then it would mean that not everybody necessarily belongs to this people, that there are considerable differences in ways of belonging to it, that therefore the religion of the people is not simply and necessarily the religion of all the members of the Church. The final and decisive point is this: Despite these qualifications, the religion of the people has a theological significance; it exerts on theology itself an influence that is to some extent normative and creative.

Let us examine whether these postulates for a popular religion may be realized, at least in their major dimensions. For the sociological meaning of the concept "people" there is no difficulty, even if such a "people" is presumed to exist in the Church. We might add that, for

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our theological reflection, the precise meaning of the term is relatively indifferent. It is up to the sociologist to find out whether this "people" is characterized by its lower level of education, by the idea of the "masses," by its economic standing, by its marginalization in society as a whole, by its inability clearly to objectify its thoughts and wishes in cultural creations, by its lack of social power, and so on. Such features are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is ultimately a question of terminology, which feature is essential for the concept of people.

At any rate, there is such a "people" also in the Church, because these features belong to human beings and characterize them insofar as they are members of the Church, live in her, and are influenced in their religious life by these features. It is, for instance, evident that in the Church too there are differences in cultural levels and that these differences influence people's religious life. It is (another example) all too clear from history that differences in secular power held by individuals affect their position in the Church, although the gospels and the Letter of James warn against this.

So the only real purpose of our question is to know whether it [144] is possible, and even necessary, for the "people" *in* the Church (as distinguished from the Church as the People of God), with their popular religion, to have a creative and normative influence upon (scientific) theology. It is clear that, if the answer is affirmative, we must also explain more precisely what this influence consists of. For in a revealed religion, one that admits an initiative of the God who transcends world and history, popular religion cannot by itself alone be the first and last source of theology.

REVELATION AND PEOPLE

It seems that we must answer the above question affirmatively. To show this I offer a few necessarily fragmentary remarks. First, revelation exists concretely only as a revelation that has been heard and is believed. Now, without having to accept the errors of modernism, we may say that the first addressee and recipient of this revelation that is believed is the human person in general. Because of God's universal salvific will and the need of a real faith in revelation for salvation, owing to God's universal standing invitation to accept divinization through grace, the human person is already the addressee of divine revelation. The prophets, on the other hand, the *legati divini*, those who announce revelation, are, to be sure, the authentic interpreters who put into words God's self-revelation which occurs always and everywhere through God's grace. But the prophets are not the very first and only recipients of revelation, sent to announce something that would simply not exist without this message. Humanity as a whole, under God's universal salvific will, is the first addressee of divine revelation. Yet this revelation has, and must have, its history, in which it must be expounded and become irreversible in the history of revelation. Humanity, as the first addressee of revelation, is naturally not just the sum total of individuals, but humanity as it always exists in social groups, in peoples, and in nations with their history.

The "people," this collectivity of which we are speaking here, always lives in the social groups that constitute humanity as the first recipient of revelation. It too is an element in the first addressee of revelation. Such a "people," in all its diversity, in whatever ways its religious life may be organized, is, for the most diverse reasons, not at all acquainted with those human pursuits that presuppose [145] an intense reflection and attention, that is, with science and especially with theology. Now original revelation, as mentioned above, is addressed to the whole of humankind, because the possibility at least of salvation is given to all of humanity. And the "people" may be considered to be the recipient of original revelation that has been least influenced by theology as a product of human reflection. Theology, as a

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human undertaking, is subject to all the historical limitations of any human enterprise. On the other hand, the faith of the people, although exposed (as the history of religions shows) to countless deformations and corruptions, is, nevertheless, because it is not so freely directed by human beings, closer to that first source of genuine religiosity and real faith that consists in God's universal standing invitation to accept divinization. The superiority of popular religion to theology does not properly consist in the fact that the former has, through critical reflection, freed itself better from corruptions and misinterpretations of original revelation. It consists in the fact that popular religion is continually being unconsciously inspired and carried by original revelation, and it has not passed through the screen of systematic, hence narrowing, theology. That is why popular religion, borne by the power of grace, may spontaneously welcome and realize every human possibility, and, in that sense, have the courage simply to be human.

CHURCH AND PEOPLE

The "people" can and may exist in the Church as well, although as the community in which faith has become historically irreversible in Christ, the Church has the most developed theology. It is also the Church of the written word of Scripture and of formulated doctrine, which is already theology. But the Church would not be herself if she were not built and carried on by persons who are the recipients of God's gracious self-communication (as revelation and not merely as salvation). Every doctrine in the Church is ultimately an interpretation and a verbalization of this innermost divinization of persons in the Church, whether primarily as doctrine and proclamation or secondarily as theology. Proclamation and theology necessarily refer to this primitive revelation occurring as God's self-communication to the members of the Church. This self-communication that reveals God must be objectified here and [146] now and translated into the human words of proclamation and consciously shared faith. It depends also on the previous self-awareness of the primitive revelation as guaranteed by God; hence it depends on the Church, along with the Scriptures and the magisterium. And this objectified faith of the Church in its turn depends on and refers to the primordial revelation given through the "unction of the Spirit," by which every individual is taught by God.

That is why the Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Church says that Christ fulfils this prophetic function not only by the hierarchy with its magisterium but also by the laity who possess a sense of the faith (no. 35). The same Constitution states:

> The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. Jn. 2:20, 27), cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith which characterizes the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, "from the bishops down to the last member of the laity," it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.
>
> For, by this sense of faith which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, God's People accepts not the word of men but the very Word of God (cf. 1 Th. 2:13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life. (*Lumen Gentium*, 12, Abbott edition)

Of course, here this declaration of the Council refers to the whole People of God, which is the Church, and not merely to the people *in* the Church, of which we are speaking in this chapter. Yet what the Council says must also apply to the people in the Church, since they are part of the people that is identical with the Church. It would not make sense to deny to the people *in* the Church what we affirm of the Church as a whole. We can, of course, say of the people in the Church what the Council says of the *sensus fidelium* only insofar as this people

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is, and continues to be, part of the Church, living in intimate union with her other parts and her leaders. But when we attentively read the text of the Council quoted above it is clear that, although this *sensus fidelium* must remain in constant union with the magisterium, with Scripture, and so on, it does not simply proceed from them. For this sense of faith comes from the Spirit of Truth, the unction of the saints, and it is given to all.

[147]

POPULAR RELIGION IN THE CHURCH

This brings us to the point where we can start reflecting on the creative and normative significance of popular religion in the Church. God's revelation occurs as divine self-communication to the People of God, to the Church, and thus also to the people *in* the Church. It is heard only when this self-communication is perceived and accepted, not as theory, but more profoundly in the very living of human life, to which also belong – but not only – the spoken word and a beginning of reflection and theory. That is why revelation, when it has been heard and explained in theology, is a revelation that has already been mediated by the concrete life of its hearers.

This mediation also happens in the Church through the concrete life of the people in the Church. That is why, in a theology of popular faith, we would have to inquire how God's original revelation is also mediated by the religious life of the people in the Church and thus becomes a revelation that is heard and believed. We would have to inquire what is revealed in this way and only in this way. For we cannot suppose that every human reality (as life and as word) is equally fit to mediate every aspect of divine revelation. There exists a history not only of theology but also of faith and of the revelation contained in it. This history of faith and revelation is in part determined and kept alive by all that occurs in human history. That is why we must ask what contribution the people in the Church have made and continue to make to this history of faith and revelation through themselves, and through their life and history. It may happen that at times scientific theology does not notice this contribution, that it overlooks developments in the history of the people's faith and never catches up with these developments.

So the real and urgent question is: What does popular religion have to say to learned theology? It has something to say, not only because popular religion is the popular application of an official proclamation of the Church and of theology, but also because the people themselves (within the whole Church) are an addressee of primitive revelation.

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[148]

14

SOUTH AMERICAN BASE COMMUNITIES IN A EUROPEAN CHURCH

The purpose of this chapter is to present a few remarks about base communities. These remarks can only be very general and abstract; they cannot give concrete pastoral suggestions for the formation and success of base communities.

What is a base community? How does it compare with our traditional parishes? What can we learn from South America? Where are the boundaries between a sect and a prayer group?

WHAT IS PROPERLY MEANT BY BASE COMMUNITIES?

First, we might say: Every Christian community should be a base community. A base community cannot simply be understood as being in competition with or an alternative to a *real* parish. Wherever Christians come together and establish a Christian community, they must support each other, really love each other in a truly tangible way, help each other in need, and answer to each other. As Paul would put it, they must edify each other, that is, they must help one another to be genuine Christians who adore and love God, who look to Jesus Christ and his cross and resurrection, who, strengthened by this Jesus, assume responsibility for their own lives, and who love their neighbor as themselves, not only in word and theory but in deed and in truth. When Christians establish [149] a Christian community of this kind, it is a base community. In fact, every parish should be a base community.

It has rightly been said that at present our communities are only groups of people who have a priest to take care of their religious needs. When this happens in a public gathering it is called a religious service. But in such a parish there is hardly any inner bond between people. That is why they do not constitute a base community.

Yet, during the last decades or centuries, we have seen in our countries remarkable substitutes for these base communities that should be identical with a true parish. In this country there have been Holy Name societies, sodalities, the Legion of Mary, the Catholic Youth Organization, and so on. In these groups there often was something that began to look like a base community. Members knew each other, kept together, looked together for ways and means of leading a common Christian life. They met socially, their religious and secular life coincided, at least to some extent. In short, these associations possessed something that should properly be realized in a parish: truly shared Christian life, in which everyone tries, as the Gospel demands, to help bear the burdens of others; where all, impelled by an inner feeling of solidarity, pray and work together and try together to solve the problems of life. The fact that formerly these active groups existed, as well as many others, shows that Christians of former times had not totally forgotten that a parish should not look like a place where a church attendant, called a priest, takes care, on an individual basis, of the people’s religious needs.

This simple fact alone shows that there is a need for base communities. Christians are Christians insofar as they are brothers and sisters to one other in the Christian community. Otherwise something essential is lacking in their Christianity. Communities must become real at a certain place, in a common life. They should not be service stations where church officials try to satisfy the religious needs of individuals. Christians must come together to constitute their Church – always of course in communion with the hierarchy, always with their priests – through officially approved religious services and the reception of the

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sacraments. And even more importantly: By the very fact that they themselves constitute a Church, a local Church, they realize what is properly meant by a base community.

[150]

CONTACT AND UNITY WITH THE PARISHES

The need for base communities is obvious. Every parish should turn from being an administrative district in the care of the official Church into a real community of faith, hope, and love, into a pilgrim people. That is, of course, quite difficult in our countries. We cannot simply take over the organization and lifestyle of base communities as they exist in Latin America, where they have become the hope of the Church and of Christianity.

The expression “base community,” which speaks today to the minds and hearts of Christians in our countries, is undoubtedly imported from Latin America. So we are naturally tempted to imitate the way in which those communities are organized there, especially in Brazil. In that country there are thousands of lively base communities that start from the grassroots, not in opposition to the official Church, but because Christians are aware that, wherever they really live in the faith and hope of Jesus Christ, they naturally come together in true community. Animated by that faith, they feel responsible for secular society and they naturally build base communities. That is especially true because of the shortage of priests in Latin-American countries; not every community can have its pastor, as was still customary thirty or forty years ago in our country, where even the smallest village had its own Church and its own pastor.

The example of Latin America, where base communities are numerous and active, may be a warning for us in Europe and in the U.S. and an incentive to build active base communities, especially since we are also experiencing a shortage of priests. But the way in which these base communities should be organized among us cannot simply be taken over from Latin America.

There are two reasons for this. We simply cannot overlook our many parishes and the way in which they are still set up among us. Almost nothing of the kind exists in Latin America; therefore base communities compete much less with traditional parishes, such as they are in our country. Of course, even in our countries there may exist small base communities that are not the same as a parish. When a pastor has no interest in religion and shows no initiative, it may happen, in certain circumstances, that Christians have the right, while remaining in communion with the sacramental Church, to come together to help each other, to read Holy Scripture, [151] to pray together. They may do all this, even when their efforts are hardly aided and understood by this or that pastor who may be little more than a routine church employee. Nevertheless, among us a base community should, as much as possible, be organized in such a way that the parish itself becomes the base community of people who really live Christianity.

In other words, if base communities emerge among us, they have a more urgent responsibility to seek to make contact with and eventually to unite with existing parishes and pastors. We cannot act as if, here in Central Europe, we might use base communities to build up a Church that would ignore the rather bureaucratic Church of the traditional parishes and dioceses. That could lead to no other result than a number of small sects that would soon wither and die.

NO BLIND IMITATION OF SOUTH-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

As mentioned above, in some circumstances, when Christians have no priest or do not find a

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priest with an active Christian faith, they may organize a small Christian cell, a base community. But in our countries such praiseworthy initiatives should not lead to sect-like small groups that stay apart from the clerical Church, from the legitimate administration of the sacraments and the authority of bishops. At least for the time being, this may not be a problem in other countries, such as in Latin America, but it would be a problem for us. Our base communities cannot simply be a copy of the South-American communities, because we have a legitimate and meaningful hierarchically organized Church that is still important and with which the base communities would have to compete. There is a *second* reason, of a more secular and social kind. In Latin-American society, where there are few secular organizations, a true Christian community necessarily has duties that it must fulfill and can legitimately fulfill, but which do *not* exist for our Christian communities. In our countries many social tasks, which must be fulfilled to make life more human, are assumed by secular society, so that these tasks are no longer the sole responsibilities of Christian community. When a woman is taken sick in a South-American rain forest and the nearest hospital is a hundred miles away, it is quite natural for her neighbor to nurse her and [152] to take care of her children. In a society where people are hungry and perhaps even starving, and where the State does nothing about it, Christian charity sees that these people do not starve. But in a country with unemployment compensation, social security, and so on, many obligations have been taken over by secular society. They need no longer be fulfilled by base Christian communities.

During the Middle Ages almost all schools and hospitals were run by the Church. It would make no sense if the base communities, in order to be really Christian, tried to assume again these functions in education and public health, which secular society has taken over and can probably carry out better than a small base community. It may still make sense that a few really Christian schools are run by a religious order or a parish. But that adds nothing to the fact that today most schools are run by the State. Reviving medieval models along these lines, so that the Christian communities might have something to do, is a utopia, and not even a good utopia.

DIFFERENCE FROM A SECT

In our countries base communities are facing a difficult dilemma: Can they and should they – in order to be really active and useful – be more than merely religious organizations in the strict sense of the word? Or should they be communities whose only activities are praying, preaching the Gospel, and administering the sacraments, since they find no other fields of activity? Such is the dilemma that faces a base community in our countries. That dilemma should undoubtedly be solved in favor of base communities that do more than pray, worship, receive the sacraments, and preach the Gospel. It seems to me that a base community can be that only when, going beyond a pure abstract devotion, it becomes a group of people with a feeling of togetherness, a community, a real family, and a union of love. United in genuine Christian faith, this community should be a family where Christian love is not only preached but is actually practiced. Otherwise it would not be a base community, but would revert to the style of the parish, precisely the style we are trying to overcome by means of base communities.

Are there tasks and activities that go beyond the narrow circle of abstract and theoretical religiosity and that have not been taken over by secular society and its organizations? It seems to me [153] that there are. Of course, a base community does not have to become self-sufficient for all personal needs, wishes, aspirations, and activities. Music does not necessarily belong only in a base community; we may attend concerts that have not been

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organized by it. There are countless aspects of adult education that do not have to come, as in a ghetto, from a base community. In such things a base community should clearly differ from a sect.

A sect is a religious organization that not only breaks away from the larger religious group for some reason but that also tries to provide everything for its members. They keep together for all human activities, they are afraid of the chilly winds of secular life, they are striving in fact for an ideal that, until quite recently, very strongly stamped the life of the Church and the faithful. My grandmother did not go to the public library or a secular bookstore when she wanted novels. She went to the library of the Borromeo Society. The books she gave us for Christmas also came through a gift certificate from the Borromeo Society. I have nothing against parish libraries. Why should they not exist, if they are well run and meet a true religious need, which today's secular libraries do not satisfy? But a modern base community should not try to realize the ideal of a sectarian community that is self-sufficient in all domains and for all activities. That would be wrong.

MORE THAN A PRAYER GROUP

What then are the human needs, not strictly religious yet truly human, that secular groups and associations do not fill and that might be tasks for a true base community? Of course, a genuine base community should be a community that prays together, reads and studies Holy Scripture together, and practices Christian charity. However, although we cannot simply imitate the South-American base communities, base communities in our countries too must be more than a group of Christians who, not satisfied with their everyday life, feel a religious need and look for religious activities. Much creative imagination is needed in order to discover and to realize among us today some of the possibilities for a base community. People everywhere complain that, despite social protection and organization, they feel lonely, they lack a warm trusting contact with others, and they do not feel that they can rely [154] on others and love others. So there should be plenty of opportunities for a base community that does not wish to be just a prayer group in the strict sense of the word.

It does not follow that Christians should be able to find only in such base communities what they excel at providing. A more individualistic kind of Christianity is not excluded, where Christians attend Sunday Mass, receive the sacraments, read Holy Scripture privately, and keep up their interest in religious problems. Such Christians may live a good life and not belong to a base community. But there are certainly many people who feel alone, cold in their religious life, who experience a stronger desire to praise and adore God together with their brothers and sisters, who would like to speak heart to heart about religious questions and problems. There are certainly people who are convinced that they cannot practice real and unselfish love for others if they cannot, in a really Christian community, hence in a base community, meet others and help them bear their burdens.

There are certainly many people who rightly feel that they are far from having fulfilled their human and Christian duty of unselfish love, if they just pay their taxes to the State and contribute to the Red Cross and other praiseworthy organizations. Why then should there not exist real Christian base communities, in which people are united by the bond of love, that is by the Holy Spirit, and not only by human affection, where they not only praise God together but also help each other, whenever possible, to carry the burdens of life? Of course, no Christian should be obliged by any authority to belong to such communities. But there are undoubtedly many opportunities for them today, which we should discover with the eyes of love, and try to use in the power of the Spirit.

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[155]

15

CHRISTIAN PESSIMISM

The following considerations have been inspired by what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:8. To describe, from the human point of view, his situation as an apostle, he dialectically uses the opposition *aporoumenoi all' ouk exaporoumenoi*. These words may be translated in many different ways: "sore pressed, but not destitute," "sometimes in doubt, but never in despair," "perplexed, but not even driven to despair," "at a loss, but never despairing," are a few translations in modern editions of the New Testament. They show how difficult it is to translate the Apostle's words.

Whatever the translation, this is the way in which Paul characterizes his situation as an apostle. He feels that this situation is a permanent, not merely a passing feature of his life. We may add, without demonstrating it further, that it is also a feature of Christian life always and everywhere.

The second part of this dialectical unity, as occurring in human life, *exaporoumenoi* (destitute, in despair) is especially obscure, because in the same letter (1:8) the Apostle seems to affirm of himself what he denies in 4:8. At any rate, it shows that the perplexity mentioned in the first part of 4:8 must be taken very seriously. We might say that, for Paul, Christians are people who live in radical perplexity. We might even wonder how we are able to see this existentiell[1] perplexity in every human dimension without abolishing [156] it, and at the same time how it is, in turn, enveloped and saved by what is specifically Christian. That is the question I intend to consider in what follows.

HUMANITY'S FUNDAMENTAL SITUATION

Our existence is one of radical perplexity. We have neither the right nor the possibility to ignore this situation or to believe that we can abolish it in any dimension of our experience. I need not point out, or bemoan in detail, the daily experiences that make us perplexed.

In the beginning of Scripture God tells us that we must rule over nature and her powers. When we do it we start misusing them. We invent all kinds of social systems, and every one of them turns without fail into an occasion of injustice and abuse of power. We claim that we are looking for peace among all peoples, and we get ready for war in order to find peace. The whole of human history is a perpetual swinging back and forth between individualism and collectivism, and humanity has never succeeded in discovering a permanent and universally acceptable compromise between these basic demands of human nature.

What matters here however is to understand that, for a Christian anthropology, this perplexity in human existence is not merely a transitory stage that, with patience and creative imagination, might eventually be removed from human existence. It is a permanent existential of humanity in history and, although it keeps assuming new forms, it can never be

[1] The two spellings, "existentiell" here and "existential" later, follow the German usage. "Existential,' as in Rahner's phrase 'supernatural existential,' refers to an element in [the human] ontological constitution precisely as human being, an element which is constitutive of [one's] existence as [human] prior to [one's] exercise of freedom. It is an aspect of concrete human nature precisely as human. 'Existentiell,' as in Rahner's phrase 'existentiell Christology' refers to the free, personal and subjective appropriation and actualization of something which can also be spoken of in abstract theory of objective concepts without such a subjective and personal realization" (Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith,* p. 16, translator's note).

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wholly overcome in history. This is an essential feature of a Christian pessimism. It does not matter here whether we explain this pessimism through the fact that we are creatures, and finite creatures at that, or through an appeal to original sin, or by making our ineradicable sinfulness an argument for pessimism.

Of course, we cannot say that human finitude and historicity alone explain the fact that history cannot follow its course without friction and without blind alleys. Nor can this Christian [157] pessimism be justified merely by the fact that it is impossible fully to harmonize all human knowledge with its many disparate sources, or to build a fully harmonious praxis on the basis of such disparate knowledge. We might also mention that we can never fully understand the meaning of suffering and death. Yet in spite of all this, the Christian interpretation of human existence says that, within history, it is never possible wholly and definitively to overcome the riddles of human existence and history, which we experience so clearly and so painfully. Such a hope is excluded by the Christian conviction that we arrive at God's definitive realm only by passing through death, which itself is the ultimate and all-embracing enigma of human existence. It is true that Christian hope has the right and the duty to project, in the empirical space of our human existence, an image and a promise of a definitive existence. But ultimately this is only the manner in which we practice faith in the consummation that God alone gives, that God's self is.

TASK OF CHRISTIAN PREACHING

People are afraid of this pessimism. They do not accept it. They repress it. That is why it is the first task of Christian preaching to speak up for it. We used to say that the Christian message must convince people of their sinfulness, which they refuse to acknowledge. Undoubtedly this continues to be a task of Christianity and of the Church. And today we may rightly emphasize it, because we are still to a great extent living in a period of euphoric belief in progress. That belief is still far from dead, although our recent experiences have led us to be more pessimistic about the human situation. But we take it for granted that better times lie ahead and that our precarious situation will be easy to correct. Preaching Christian pessimism is quite legitimate, because the Christian message is convinced that a great part of human suffering is caused by sin, so that, in the final analysis, to admit sin is the same as to admit suffering.

I wonder whether the Church is sufficiently opposed to the repression of Christian pessimism. We were quite upset when the Nazis reproached Christianity for speaking of a "valley of tears." Although I took part in the elaboration of *Gaudium et Spes* at the [158] Council, I would not deny that its undertone is too euphoric in its evaluation of humanity and the human condition. What it says may be true, but it produces the overall impression that it is enough to observe its norms, and everything will more or less turn out well.

It does not insist enough on the fact that all human endeavors, with all their sagacity and good will, often end up in blind alleys; that in questions of morality, when we really face the whole of reality, we get lost in obscurities which no moral formula can wholly remove. In short, as Scripture says, the world is in a bad way and it will stay that way, even if, as we are obliged to do, we fight against evil to the death. The Council wishes to get rid of triumphalism, but some of it has lingered on. The idea that, if only the unbelieving world were to accept the living Church and her message, it would find salvation and happiness, is subconsciously present and continues to be voiced frequently in declarations of the magisterium. That the Church herself is a Church of sinners, that even her true and salutary doctrines lead to riddles, that the Church too, in the final analysis, does not know exactly, clearly, and convincingly how we should go about it, is not the most clearly voiced

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conviction of the living Church.

TASKS FOR AN ACADEMY

Even Christians meet insoluble perplexities in every dimension of their existence. While the Church really has neither the power nor the desire to solve them, she must help people to admit their true situation or universal perplexity. She should be careful not to promote an unreal and un-Christian repression of this pessimism.

Might this not be the first, if not the last or only task, of a Catholic learned society? Such an academy is not supposed to be the source of cheap Cassandra-like prophecies, because this pessimism cannot be the pretext for a lame and cheap resignation. Its function is to explain situations in which we can act realistically, fight and win partial victories, and soberly and courageously accept partial defeats. But it really is a duty of such an academy to speak for a realistic pessimism, for an insight into our perplexed situation. Should it not tell all parties in society that none of them has a clear-cut formula for happiness, that all parties are lying when they act as if it were possible to discover such a formula, that political leaders [159] act in a cowardly and un-Christian way when they are not ready honestly to admit the mistakes they have made? Should the academy not be a place where thought is honestly and soberly given to riddles in the Church's message, where the conscience of the Church of *sinners* may be voiced, where the praises of the Church are not sung in sacred euphoria? The Church's theology can no longer boast of that neo-scholastic homogeneity that has been customary since the time of Pius IX. Should it not be possible for such a fact to become evident at least in an academy? Should an academy not resist the current tendency to claim that there is unity in theology, where such a unity can honestly not exist? Such a claim is made only in order to place in opposition a militant, aggressive Church and a wicked world. Should an academy not be the place where human rights even in the Church are defended, because it is not evident that such rights are always respected in the Church? All unrest does not come from an evil source, every doubt is not destructive, not every fight is worse than a graveyard peace, not every little conflict is bad. The really bad situation would be if church leaders never had the courage to admit that, with all their good will and conscientiousness, they had made mistakes. Thus, for instance, I cannot help regretting that, with one possible exception, the mistakes of the magisterium under Pius X have never been officially rescinded. A Catholic academy should be a place that acknowledges the perplexities that occur in every dimension of human and ecclesial life.

It is obvious that this does not amount to a license for ceaseless grumbling in Church and society, or permission to fight the hierarchy in the Church and authorities in the State, and to reject their legitimate decisions. True pessimists, with all their perplexities, will be tolerant with regard to an existing situation, because they know that another, possibly preferable situation, for which they may certainly fight, will not be heaven on earth either. There is no need to glorify a pope in order to live with him in peace and obedience.

THE SOLUTION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

What we have said above has not yet led us to the question brought up by the Apostle's two dialectically opposed expressions. For Paul not only tells us that, even as Christians, we will never grow out [160] of our perplexities in this world, that we must see them and bear them, but also that in spite of them we are *ouk exaporoumenoi* (not driven to despair). It is true that as Christians we put our trust in God, and that we are freed and consoled in all our needs and

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fears by the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that Christianity is a message of joy, courage, and unshakable confidence. All of this means that, as Christians, we have the sacred duty, for which we will be held accountable before God, to fight for this very history of ours joyfully, courageously, confidently. We also have the duty to bring about a foretaste of God's eternal reign through our solidarity, unselfishness, willingness to share, and love of peace.

Yet it seems to me that we have not yet mastered the problem of the two existentials put together by Paul. How can we be perplexed pessimists, how can we admit that we are lost in existence, how can we acknowledge that this situation is at present irremediable, yet in Paul's words "not be driven to despair"? Do these two attitudes not cancel each other out? Are there only two possibilities open to Christians? Do Christians simply capitulate before the insuperable darkness of existence and honestly admit that they are capitulating? Or do they simply ignore their perplexity and become right away persons who have victoriously overcome the hopelessness of life? Is it possible for Christians neither simply to despair nor overlook in a false optimism the bitter hopelessness of their existence? It seems to me that it is not easy to answer these questions theoretically. Yet the questions and their answers are of the greatest importance for Christian life, even if they occur only in the more or less unconscious praxis of life, and even if the very question about this Christian perplexity falls under the law of this same perplexity. This situation make it impossible to give clear answers to the questions.

The coexistence of these two existentials, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, is evidently based on the fundamental difference between a knowledge that all persons can attain by their own powers and the knowledge that believers alone receive from God and God's grace. Because these two ways of knowing, and the truths known through each one of them, are incompatible, the two existentials may coexist in human life. Christians may feel the hopelessness of their existence, accept it without illusion, and for these very reasons be free, cheerful, and (in a certain sense) persons who have already arrived.

[161] Christians, helped by God's grace, let themselves fall into the abyss of God's incomprehensibility and discover that this ultimate and permanent mystery of God's incomprehensibility is itself true fulfillment, freedom, and forgiving salvation. They experience their radical fall into the abyss of divinity as their deepest perplexity. They continue to experience this darkness, always more intensely and more bitterly, in a certain sense, until the dreadful absurdity of death. They see that this experience of darkness is confirmed by the fate of Jesus. At the same time, in a mysterious paradox, they feel that this very experience is sent to them by God and is the experience of the arrival of God near them. The perplexity and the fact that it is lifted by God's grace are not really two successive stages of human existence. God's grace does not totally remove the perplexity of existence. The lifting, the *ouk exaporoumenoi*, accepted and filled with grace, is the real truth of the perplexity itself.

For if it is true that we shall one day see God as he is, immediately, face to face, and if he is seen there precisely *as* the ineffable, unfathomable mystery that can be accepted and endured only in love, that is, in a total yielding up of self, then fulfillment for Christians is the height of human perplexity. Compared to it, all our riddles, our ignorance, our disappointments are but forerunners and first installments of the perplexity that consists in losing ourselves entirely through love in the mystery that is God. In the bliss of accepting the infinite mystery, that is, in absolute perplexity, all our partial perplexities, bewilderments, and disappointments disappear. The reverse is also true. As we expect and accept this end of our existence, our present perplexities are not removed, but encompassed. We are liberated, because they no longer dominate us. They have become the occasion and the mediation of our welcoming of the unfathomable mystery that gives itself to us and causes us to accept it in love.

While we are thus freed from every enslaving power and domination, the world remains

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what it is: the task, the challenge, the battlefield, with its victories and its defeats, as they succeed and overlap each other. We are unable to control them completely; we must accept them with their own perplexities. Within the ultimate freedom and even serenity of those for whom night and day, defeat and victory, are encompassed by the reality of God who is for us, nothing seems to have changed. We remain the [162] *aporoumenoi*. And even the fact that we are more than saved and liberated *aporoumenoi* remains mysteriously hidden from us (often or forever, I do not know). But even then the fact remains that our perplexity is redeemed.

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[163]

PART FOUR

Doctrine and Magisterium

[165]

16

WHAT THE CHURCH OFFICIALLY TEACHES AND WHAT THE PEOPLE ACTUALLY BELIEVE

If we consider the material content of the faith, nobody can deny that there exists a considerable difference between that which is explicitly and officially taught as part of the content of the faith and that which the average Christian in the Church knows about the faith and believes. Most Christians believe explicitly much less than what is explicitly present in the doctrine of the magisterium. This actual faith is to a considerable extent riddled with misunderstandings. Many things are held as belonging to this faith that in reality do not belong to it.

A PRELIMINARY REMARK

As matters stand it is not so easy to avoid the difficulty by insisting that, despite its weakness, the actual faith of these Christians includes the absolute assent of faith, whereby people believe, at least implicitly, all that the Church tells them to believe. For in their actual faith many Christians not only do not affirm this or that truth of the faith with absolute assent, they do not even affirm the absolute authority of the Church's magisterium (even in its definitive decisions) with an absolute assent of faith. Therefore it is not as easy as it might appear to avoid the difficulty by appealing to the implicit faith of the average believer.

[166] True, the great majority of average Christians give an absolute assent of faith to this or that fundamental point of faith. Other points which may be true or false are held only in such a way that they do not destroy the absolute assent of faith that is also present in their mind. Their faith then really is a salutary faith. But this changes nothing in the description we gave of the average Christian, because the object of the absolute assent of faith, which for all that may indeed exist, is not precisely the teaching authority of the Church.

The difference between what the Church officially believes and what the average Christian actually believes has always existed. We might safely say that the pluralism of New Testament theologies is already a proof of it. One can distinguish, for instance, several levels in Origen's understanding of faith, and one is pressed to make theological heads or tails out of that. We hear of Christians who, as they were dying, professed their full assent to the faith of the Church. This implies that a material identity between the official faith of the Church and their own personal faith is not to be taken for granted and that eventually they wanted to make sure of that identity by this profession. Moral theology has inquired what truths of the faith have to be known and professed explicitly by all Christians. This question takes for granted therefore that there is a considerable difference between the official faith of the Church and the actual faith of many Christians. Attempts have been made, by the way, to

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narrow this difference by means of the doctrine that, in the long run, a positive atheism is not possible without serious subjective guilt. But it looks as if Vatican II has quietly dropped this doctrine.

So although the situation we are discussing has always been recognized to some extent, theological reflection has never probed it very intensively. Today it has assumed an important new aspect. Among average Christians of former times, those who could barely read or write (the "unlearned"), the awareness of the content of the faith might have been fragmentary and incomplete. But it was not opposed to other opinions, to other *Weltanschauungen*, because they did not exist in the consciousness of such people. A "primitive" awareness of the faith was, roughly speaking, matched only with ignorance. That is why in a feudal society, in which authorities decided on the faith of their subjects, one could suppose that everybody naturally shared the same faith and that there [167] really existed Christian or Catholic peoples. This is no longer true today.

A fragmentary and imperfect faith coexists today with countless other ideas, many of which – at least as they are actually understood – stand in logical contradiction to the content of faith, whether people are clearly aware of it or not. It follows that the material defectiveness of actual faith is quite different from what it used to be. This explains why, as mentioned above, even the formal principle of faith, the formal authority of the Church, is threatened. Today's faith is not like the fragmentary faith through simple ignorance of former times, but coexists with positively contradictory elements in some kind of mostly unconscious schizoid state. Even if we suppose that no objective contradictions exist among the particulars in an individual's consciousness (statements of faith included), these contents are incredibly complex and almost impossible to harmonize. It is practically impossible for individuals to harmonize all the data of consciousness with the contents of the faith, although it is a tenet of that faith that such a harmonization is theoretically possible. This is one more reason why the gap between the official faith of the Church and the actual faith of the people differs essentially today from what it used to be.

THE REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS

The first points to be mentioned about this fact is that it has not been sufficiently noticed by the official Church and that theology has not yet investigated it with sufficient care. Of course, as we said above, the fact is not denied and occasionally it is the object of some rather perfunctory theological reflection. Although we are aware of the fact, we relegate it to the edge of our consciousness. And in our official jargon, we continue to speak of "Christians" or "Catholics," wherever such people have not explicitly left a Christian Church or the Catholic Church or have not in some other way explicitly made known their total dissent from Christianity.

Thus "Catholics" are opposed to the new laws on abortion. Some "central committee" speaks in the name of "German Catholics." With the use of colors on maps, religious statisticians continue to designate regions that are more than 50 percent "Catholic." There is, of course, nothing wrong in this way of speaking, but the statistics [168] have nothing to do with the inner faith of the people. They misrepresent the fact that the percentage of "practicing" Christians is quite low. Spain is a Catholic country, even though on Sundays only 10 percent of the people of Madrid attend Sunday mass. In theological discussions (for instance, with Hans Küng) official reports anxiously refrain from asking what percentage of Catholics might agree with the official position and what percentage might agree with the condemned opinion.

As a rule official announcements simply presuppose that those who read them have no

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doubts about the formal authority of the magisterium. That is why they generally do not take the trouble to explain to these "Catholics" the intrinsic reason for their decision. (A theologian who used to be influential in Rome told me once that this custom is quite legitimate, since it derives from the very nature of the magisterium. Defending the decision with rational arguments should be the task of theologians, not of the magisterium.)

This mentality takes for granted that Catholics are well informed. As a rule it does not try to address non-Catholics and the many very poorly educated Catholics. As a result, in their properly theological parts, important Roman documents of the Church use an esoteric theological language. They presuppose that their readers admit many things which these readers do not. They ignore fundamental theology and continue to use Scripture in the old way by quoting *dicta probantia*. In a word, the official Church and its magisterium presuppose, without ever saying so, that, when they address Catholics, they have to do with a relatively homogeneous group of people whose *Weltanschauung* contains, in fact, nothing but a clearly articulated Christian faith, together with a more or less absolute respect for the authority of the Church's magisterium.

While this situation, naturally, is not explicitly affirmed and many statements and actions presuppose the opposite, yet, roughly speaking, what we have said is true. In theory and practice, hardly any notice is taken of the extraordinarily large difference between the official faith of the Church and the actual faith of a large percentage of Catholics. This might open up to fundamental, dogmatic, and pastoral theology a wide field for reflection. I would like to add a couple of simple remarks, although I am afraid that they do not yet reach the heart of the matter.

[169]

POSITIVE THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE DIFFERENCE

First, if seems to me that this difference does not have a merely negative value, but a theologically positive aspect as well. The fact that the *index systematicus* of *Denzinger* can rarely be found in the heads of ordinary Christians is not as deplorable as it may seem to many people who are tempted to identify saving faith with theological formation. Sophisticated knowledge of something may even be a great obstacle to its personal assimilation. I suspect that today's catechisms, however modern they claim to be, still contain too many things and that they do not present the heart of the Christian message, that which must by all means be said in a striking, really intelligible way. Moreover, it is the faith in the Church that actually exists in beads and hearts, and not properly official Church doctrine, that immediately and in itself is *the faith* that constitutes the Church.

Of course, we can rightly say that the often fragmentary and undifferentiated faith of the individual, and therefore also of many individuals, stands in relation to the faith of the whole Church. It is within the faith of the whole Church that the great and luminous totality of Christian faith is believed and practiced. One of its essential components is the faith of the saints, the heroes of faith, the mystics. But the Church does not consist only of its saints. The faith of the average Christian is not just a pitiable sketch of the official faith. It is a salutary faith borne by God's self-communication. It is really the faith that God's grace wishes to bring forth and keep alive in the Church.

We may not judge this faith by its objective verbal contents. Even when its objectification in words and concepts is very poor and deficient, it is still God's action in us, constituted by the self-communication of God in the Holy Spirit. As such, it infinitely transcends the most sublime theological objectification of the faith. The *depositum fidei* is not first and foremost a sum of statements formulated in human language. It is God's Spirit, irrevocably communicated to humankind, activating in persons the salutary faith that they really possess.

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Of course, the same Spirit also brings forth in this way the community of the faithful, in which the unity and fullness of Christian faith are objectified and brought to consciousness in what we perceive as the official faith of the institutional [170] Church. Nevertheless, what matters above all is the faith that really lives in the ordinary Christian. That is the faith that actually saves, in which God communicates himself to humanity, however pitiful and fragmentary its conceptualization may be.

Human transcendence, which is created by the Spirit of God, borne by God's self-communication, and enabled by God's self to aim at God's immediacy, is called faith. It always has a starting point in the world, a mediation, some individual "object" that is believed. But this mediation leading to ultimate salvation may, under God's Providence, be of different kinds. It may be paltry, it may be rich, and it has its own history. It is obviously not God's intention that every individual believer should enjoy all at once the fullness of this history of mediation – not even the faithful in the Church, although the Church makes possible a richer and more detailed knowledge of the totality of these historical mediations.

THE NORMATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF POPULAR FAITH FOR THE MAGISTERIUM

These considerations allow us to say that the actual faith of the faithful in the Church has a normative significance for the official faith of the Church. The latter, of course, has a normative significance for the former, a point that is rightly emphasized by the teaching of the Church. Certainly we may not say that the faith of the magisterium should be directed by that of the faithful, as discovered by an opinion poll. That would be false, not only because of the very nature of the faith but also because it is impossible to discover, by the usual canvassing methods, what the faithful believe.

The official faith of the Church contains data that derive from the history of the Church's faith, data that have become irreversible and are normative for the faith of the present-day Church. The Church possesses an authoritative magisterium that is, in principle, normative for the faith of the individual, although this magisterium, while remaining essentially the same, is itself affected by historical change in its existence and its praxis. But this does not exclude the fact that the actual faith of Christians has a normative influence on the magisterium and on the official faith of the Church. However, this "normativeness" is essentially different [171] from the one we attribute to the magisterium and its faith. These two influences *mutually* condition each other, although we must add that mutual does not mean equal.

First, it is obvious that, considered historically, the official faith of the Church depends for its growth and differentiation on the growth and differentiation of the actual faith of the faithful. Among them are theologians with their work, even though this work, just like the faith of others, in the Church, operates in constant dialogue with the Church's official doctrine. To put it with a bit of malice: *Before* the doctrine of the Council of Florence on the Trinity, theologians held a similar doctrine that had not yet received the blessing of the magisterium. The doctrine of the seven sacraments or of transubstantiation were theologumena *before* the Church's magisterium declared them defined propositions.

We should keep this in mind in looking at the last few centuries, when some popes have spoken as if the task of theologians consisted merely in defending and explaining the statements of the magisterium. If we do not want to make of theologians a special group in the Church, like that of the bishops, we must say that theologians belong to the People of God. To be sure, their concern is also the traditional faith that has already been officially approved. But it is broader than that. And whatever they work at, they do as members of the People of God with its concrete "theology." That is why their theologumena belong to the

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actual faith of the People of God, especially since they too may be called to order by the magisterium.

It is from these elements of the actual faith of the People of God that the Church's magisterium learns and should continue to learn. While it thus keeps learning, the magisterium declares that the doctrine discovered in this way is binding because it belongs to the actual faith of the Church and shares therefore in the infallibility of the believing Church. It follows that the actual faith of the Church has not only an actual but also a normative influence upon the Church's official faith. Distinguishing what merely happens to be present in the consciousness of the People of God from what is binding in faith may, in the final analysis, be a prerogative of the magisterium of the Church. The magisterium is then considered an indispensable component of the Church, as a community of faith. Yet it remains true that the faith of the People of God, as actually existing and not merely as officially approved, is [172] a source of, and to some extent also a norm for, the official faith of the Church. Nor does it follow that there would have originally existed a believing Church without a magisterium (the first apostolic "witnesses") or that there would have been a time in which these two realities would not have mutually, although differently, influenced each other.

We might also put it as follows: In the eschatologically definitive and invincible community of faith that is the Church, there can be no teaching that would not be accepted by some obedient faith. That is why this obedient faith is also a necessary and rightful norm and criterion for the preaching of the faith, and not the other way around.

WHY THE ACCENT SHOULD SHIFT

The official faith of the Church is a norm for the actual faith of the Church. The faithful should be clearly aware of this. On the other hand, in its preaching, the magisterium should also pay attention to the actual faith of the faithful as it has always unconsciously done to some extent. It praised the devotion to the Sacred Heart after this devotion had already been promoted by the faithful in the Church. Countless such examples might be mentioned. However, in our age when people have become more aware of such things even in the Church, the question may be raised whether this influence on the magisterium by the actual faith of the people might not to some extent occur in a more conscious way, by means of surveys, adapted for this special purpose and different from other opinion polls.

This would not amount simply to a yielding to modern trends in the actual faith of the people. It might be possible that the official teaching from above is already being influenced by the faith from below, without noticing it, and that this would become clear only if this faith from below were better known. For instance, has the preaching of the possibility of eternal rejection of a person, that is, of hell, not become considerably more subdued during the last few decades, under the influence of today's general mentality? Whether this is a legitimate development is, of course, quite a different question and does not have to be decided here. It is not clear what form such "feedback" of actual faith upon the magisterium [173] and its teaching should take. But it is certain that there can be no question in Catholic theology of withdrawing a defined doctrine because a considerable part of the faithful have refused to accept it.

However, this does not answer a further question: Should this widespread non-reception not induce the magisterium to give more thought to its doctrine (even if defined), to formulate it in a wider and newer context, and to remove the accretions that do not really belong to the faith and that may unconsciously adhere to a defined doctrine? Time and again, in the Church's awareness of the faith the accent has shifted. The history of dogma shows this very

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clearly. Would it not be possible today, prudently and discreetly, and with an eye on the actual faith of the people in the Church, to make such shifts consciously?

Let us take an example. The Church continues to give the impression that she makes known moral alternatives between which people must choose for their salvation or their perdition. That is the prevailing impression, while teachings about God's saving activity have a slighter impact. At the same time, compared with former times, people worry much less about their eternal salvation. Rather than feeling guilty in the presence of God they ask God to answer for the dreadful world he has created. Might not such remarks lead to a very important shift of emphasis in official teachings, without the need for the Church to deny any dogma that she has already proclaimed?

ACKNOWLEDGING POPULAR FAITH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR CHURCH AND THEOLOGY

Even if we did not touch the real core of the question, it is easy to see that such considerations are important for ecumenical endeavors. Between the actual faith of devout Protestants and that of practicing Catholics (we are not speaking of their church organization or of their liturgy) there is today hardly any difference. In our ecumenical efforts should we not attach to this simple fact the importance it deserves? To be sure, in the eventuality of the unification of the Catholic Church with the Reformed churches, the Catholic Church would not withdraw the dogmas which the other side challenges. But does she necessarily have to insist that, when [174] the churches have united, these dogmas be expressly taught by the magisterium as absolutely binding? This is really a valid question, when we see how the Catholic Church keeps very quiet about the fact that her own members do not accept quite a number of dogmas. It is a question when we see that the *filioque* does not have to be expressly mentioned everywhere in the profession of faith, when we may doubt that the procession of the Spirit "from the Son" and the procession "through the Son" mean absolutely the same thing. It is a question when we keep in mind the diversity of the material mediations of the one salvific faith in all stages of the history of salvation.

Our mentality today is not the same as it used to be. In earlier times people thought along simple either-or lines, or according to propositions to which an absolute assent was at least presumed. Today they rather presume that a simple either-or is a priori false. And propositions are as a rule affirmed conditionally, until, as is always possible, the opposite is demonstrated. It would be wrong to attach an absolute value to today's mentality. That would contradict its own nature. But even if we attach only a relative value to it, we may still wonder whether the differences between the Christian churches must be formulated in the same way in which they were and had to be formulated under a different mentality.

Can we seriously still think, as at the time of the Reformation, of an either-or with regard to the number of sacraments? If we take the modern mentality into account, might we not iron out differences concerning Vatican I, for instance, by explaining more clearly how the pope's decision is connected with the faith of the whole Church, by emphasizing more simply and clearly the fact that even a papal definition is historically conditioned, and so on? If the great regional churches in the Catholic Church have a certain autonomy, and if that also implies an autonomy of their theologies which do not simply echo Roman theology, something similar should also be true for the churches of the Reformation if they are again united with Rome. What this means more precisely should, of course, first be explained. And that would undoubtedly also involve some reflection on the actual faith of the people in the churches.

A last consequence of our reflections deserves to be explicitly mentioned. All salutary

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Christian faith must contain a moment of absolute assent. This assent, even as absolute with regard to the salvific and saving incomprehensibility of God, contains an empirical [175] moment of mediation. But as pointed out above, this empirical moment of mediation has been incredibly varied in the course of salvation history. On the evidence of empirical facts, this moment in the Catholic Church has not always and everywhere been the infallible authority of the Church's magisterium. That authority is often questioned or ignored, and believers have in mind quite different mediations for their absolute assent to God's saving self-communication, for instance the Christ event or an unconditional hope.

That is why the Church's teaching should try to find the most efficient and obvious moment of such a mediation *in our time*. We should not preach indiscriminately everything that belongs to the fullness of the faith of the official Church. Judicious emphasis is needed. And it should be put where the actual faith, or a real possibility of faith, for humanity today exists. From this point of view too, the actual faith of people would have a (correctly understood) "normative" significance for the Church's official faith and teaching. This actual faith must certainly not be the whole of what is taught, but it should serve as a starting point. That may be a platitude, but it is a very important one, and one that is too often forgotten.

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[176]

17

THEOLOGY AND THE ROMAN MAGISTERIUM

Despite everything that has already been said in the traditional fundamental theologies and ecclesiologies, and despite many declarations of the Church's magisterium from the nineteen century until the second Vatican Council (and even recently by Pope John Paul II), the precise relation between the magisterium of the Roman Church and theologians remains very obscure. We need not expect it ever to be so lucidly set forth that conflicts between both parties would be excluded a priori, even if the rules were quite clear, easy to follow, and faithfully observed. Such an ideal and unruffled peace cannot be reached even with the best norms and principles. On both sides there are finite human beings, with a mutual incommensurability in thinking and willing that cannot be removed even by good will, Christian virtue, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Yet we might say that some principles could be stated more clearly than they have been, principles that would make for more peace and harmony.

The Roman magisterium takes for granted that for listeners of good will and with some theological formation its declarations are immediately understandable. This refers to the meaning of such a declaration as well as to the degree of obligation ascribed to it by the magisterium itself. It also takes for granted that in relation to theologians the magisterium has the final word, which theologians must simply respect in its (relative) binding power. More or less underlying such a declaration is the opinion that theologians' only [177] task is to defend these declarations of the magisterium (by showing how they derive from the primary sources of revelation) and to explain them, insofar as this may be required for a given cultural and social situation.

On the other hand, while readily granting the Holy Spirit's assistance to the Church, theologians remark that such declarations of the magisterium are also the work of theologians and that, as a result, they are affected by the historical and human limitations of their authors, limitations that are often quite evident. Such declarations must be examined by using a method that can be very complicated, because their unconscious presuppositions make them less clear than their authors believe them to be. Such an interpretation is unavoidable, although Roman theologians often dislike it. It gives rise to new formulations that are as correct as the previous ones, although they may not be too well received in Rome.

Theologians insist that it is not at all true that their work begins and ends with the declarations of the magisterium. In countless cases these declarations are the result of theological activity that from the start has not been directed from above. Theology can and must ask many questions that have not yet been settled by official declarations. Theology that has not been officially approved can be very important for the progress of Christian faith, in the world and for practical life. Theologians say that for this kind of work they need a certain amount of freedom and the opportunity to do research that is not controlled. They would be unable to do this kind of work if, from the start and at every moment, they were worried about avoiding the danger of erring, if uniformity in theology were desirable, and if a legitimate pluralism were suppressed as impossible or dangerous.

These demands of the magisterium and of theologians do not necessarily contradict each other. The trouble is that it is not easy to see how they can be easily reconciled. Also each "party" generally admits the demands of the other "party" sotto voce, while loudly defending its own side, as if in practice only that one really mattered.

We are trying to make some progress by attempting to formulate what each side must grant

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to the other more expressly than is usually done and try then to put it into practice.

[178]

SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND PRAXIS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

Those who represent the magisterium should explicitly say in its name, and put in to practice, something along the following lines: We too are human beings when we make our decisions. We are men who should not be rash and full of prejudice, yet we cannot help being such. Abstracting from the fact that strictly binding decisions of the pope and a council are preserved from error by the Holy Spirit, we, the pope too, can err in our decisions, and we have often done so in the past. This is obvious and it does not imply that the magisterium is either illegitimate or unnecessary. It is our duty to work with this risk, because we have a duty and a function, even when the presuppositions and conditions of strictly binding decisions are not given, exactly as a physician can make diagnoses even when he is not absolutely certain of them. Moreover, you theologians do not have the right to assume that our decisions are wrong for the simple reason that they contradict the opinions that you, or quite a number of you, have defended.

On the other hand, we have a duty that up to now we have generally shirked. We should expressly indicate in a text that a given declaration is not absolutely binding. You theologians should understand that up to now we have not done this enough and thus have made it look as though whatever we say is absolutely binding, with no possibility of error. Of course, with our tacit consent, every ecclesiology says the opposite. But that is the only place where it is being said. It does not come to the knowledge, nor act upon the conscience, of the faithful. What the German Bishops' Conference said about this in its Königstein declaration of 1968 has unfortunately evoked little attention and imitation. In this way our official declarations too easily produce the impression that, for reasons of faith, not the slightest doubt may exist or be tolerated about their truth. That is where we should modify our praxis, not only saying that our declarations are really binding (although not all to the same degree) but also mentioning more precisely the degree and relativity of the obligation they impose. A few decades ago the magisterium ordered you expressly to indicate in your theology lectures the theological qualification of your theses. Why should we not do the same when we issue official declarations?

But you theologians must also help to bring about what is required [179] for us to proceed differently in the future. If you or members of the faithful simply presuppose that a non-defining declaration has practically no importance, and so you lay it aside with a shrug and a smile, you must not be surprised if we speak as though our declarations were irreformable. So you must collaborate to bring about a spiritual climate in which authentic declarations, even when they are not strictly binding, really have some importance in the Church.

REACTIONS OF THE THEOLOGIANS TO MEASURES TAKEN BY THE MAGISTERIUM

There is a great variety of possible reactions. They have not been fairly described by the Council in *Lumen Gentium*, and they cannot be set forth exactly by means of general rules. When should a theologian expressly, head on as it were, come up against a declaration that is not irreformable? When and how might it be a theologian's duty to do the opposite (presumption favors this course) and expressly defend and supply evidence for a Roman declaration? Where might a *silentium obsequiosum*, an obedient silence, be desirable? Where and when would it be opportune to examine and evaluate a Roman declaration with due care,

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make the necessary distinctions, and in this way suggest corrections or possible interpretations not expressly seen in Rome? When or where would it be indicated to put the content of such a Roman declaration in a wider context which we have not explicitly thought of so far, removing from the start perspectives that are too short-sighted? In this way we who are also willing to learn may understand that, even if one ignores the immediate text of the declaration, that which we properly meant survives.

We are honestly ready to expect such distinctions and not to take offense at those who do not wholly agree with our provisional decisions. It may be desirable that a time of *silentium obsequiosum* not last too long before one expressly requests a revision. (The present pope speaks calmly of the Yahwist, whereas seventy years ago we would not have been indulgent toward a Catholic exegete who spoke that way.) For concrete cases, however, there are no general and easy rules to help us decide whether a reaction takes place for good reasons and with sufficient respect for the Church's [180] magisterium. In such a judgment you may be wrong and we may be wrong. Especially since this is also a question of spiritual discernment. We cannot adopt as our policy that our reactions to your opinions must not allow the slightest possibility of a doubt or that we should not react at all. Everyone must expect that in such cases mistakes may be made and injustices committed.

While these points can be granted, no license is given to commit the sins of pride, rashness, or self-righteousness. Rather, we are warned to feel gravely responsible to fulfill our duty courageously, and at the same time to consider realistically the possibility that we may blunder. But you, as the Christians you want to be, must patiently bear the burden that is so often put on your shoulders without good reason or necessity. To be removed from office, to be condemned, is certainly not pretty, and you may defend yourself against it with every lawful means, and you may fight to insure that these lawful means are not withheld from you. But if all this does not help, then removal from office and other measures can also be the fate of a Christian, just as when some public authority or terminal disease puts an end to someone. Life is that way. In the world and in history things do not always work out smoothly when several people and groups fulfill their duties and avail themselves of their rights.

You should not a priori and in general deny the right of the pope or the bishops to take administrative measures as consequences of doctrinal decisions. When, for instance, a theology professor teaches candidates for the priesthood on behalf of the bishop, the bishop can and must eventually withdraw that commission if he reaches the conclusion that it is not being carried out in accordance with the faith of the Church, for which the pope and bishops are more authentic spokesmen than anyone else. Of course, we office bearers should proceed in all this with utmost prudence and fairness. Who among us would claim that this has always been the case? But there are decisions in the world that have to be upheld, even if one knows that they may offend against truth and justice.

STRICTLY BINDING DECISIONS

We come now to the cases where we are dealing with a strictly binding conciliar or papal decision. We office holders do not wish [181] to demonstrate here and now, from the nature of the eschatological Church, that there must exist in the Church such strictly binding propositions of faith expressed in human words, and that we are not reduced to living in the truth without being able to grasp any part of it. We wish only to formulate a few practical maxims, some of them for us, some for you. If there are such definitions, it is evident at once that the magisterium cannot tolerate theologians who publicly, in direct confrontation, reject such truths of the divine and Catholic faith. Whatever may be the case with the private faith of individual Christians who absolutely reject for themselves certain dogmas of the Church, it

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is clear that no one may act as a church theologian and at the same time publicly reject church dogmas. Where that happens, the magisterium must intervene, officially declare this contradiction, and exercise the basic right to draw administrative consequences from this declaration.

But other cases are conceivable and concretely possible, in which theologians deny that their positions are irreconcilable with the Church's dogma, whereas the magisterium is convinced of the opposite. In such cases these theologians may, of course, be summoned to declare their express consent to the defined dogma and its normativity for their own theology.

When we go further and demand that they withdraw their own positions ("*laudabiliter se subiecit*"), of course, the situation becomes complicated, as we should admit more openly than we have done so far. In this case what does it mean to withdraw such positions? Does it mean that those theologians have reached the conclusion that their positions cannot be reconciled with dogma, although they had held the opposite opinion? How quickly do they have to reach this new conviction? How is it that we who speak for the magisterium have the right to demand such a declaration, since it is naturally also possible that we are mistaken when we assert that the positions are irreconcilable? After all, our assertion does not belong to the content of the revealed faith. Is the following attitude acceptable? A theologian has been censured. He or she claims to accept the dogma in question, and also the legitimacy of the way in which the Church formulates it. He or she accepts the imposed terminology (language used for a dogma that is not simply identical with its content) as normative for his or her own theology. As for the rest, the theologian holds on to his or her theological freedom of opinion, even if the Roman authorities do [183] not like it very much in this case. Well, we in Rome have not yet given enough thought to such questions. And so we are tempted to treat you simply in the old-fashioned feudal way. We have not pondered enough what we want and what we do not want from you in questions of faith.

We in Rome cannot investigate the ideas of theologians with any precision. Their faith is based on a very complex process of consciousness, which is unavoidably an amalgam of correct propositions and a subjective way of understanding them. We cannot make sure whether, in all of this, that which must be believed in our dogma is really present, or whether it is practically eliminated by arbitrary interpretations and we are able to prove none of this. Moreover, in many other domains, the Church has already learned to distinguish in individuals a public and a private dimension and to avoid intruding into the private sphere. There are things that we ought to consider more carefully in Rome, so that we may draw conclusions from them with regard to what we may honestly and fairly require from censured theologians. In this respect we should find better formulas that no longer sound like submission formulas out of a feudal age. If, in this respect, a few fundamental adjustments were worked out, theologians would, in a concrete case, have to declare that they accept these general rules as applicable to their case. That would be enough.

It is not to be expected that in the foreseeable future pending disputes in theology will be decided through real definitions. We all agree that past definitions entail an undeniable obligation for your further theological work. It is evident that former definitions may not through your silence be driven into oblivion. On the other hand, we should admit that such definitions cannot be the beginning and end of your work, but that they can and must be "re-examined." Their meaning, the differences that exist between them and the interpretations that have been passed on with them without being identical with them, their meaning within the context of the whole of faith and of a new mentality, are not necessarily as clear and as unequivocal as today's preaching of the Gospel demands. It is certainly often the case that we in Rome, with its clerical milieu, do not notice how necessary such interpretations are, and that without them it is impossible, at least outside of Rome, to proclaim the Christian message in a convincing way.

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[183]

REINTERPRETATION OF THE DOGMAS

It is quite possibly a sign of health and vitality that conflicts arise between the theology that we are traditionally used to here in Rome and the theology that you hold, as you interpret dogma. In these attempts and their evaluation by us both of us may have differences of opinion, we may get into conflicts and make mistakes. In that case (provided no theologian radically denies a dogma) everything that applies to declarations of the magisterium that are not strictly binding applies also to the interpretation of dogma, because the conflict is not between dogma and the denial of it, but between two interpretations, neither of which is infallible.

We should become more clearly aware in Rome that nowadays this work of interpretation is needed to a much greater extent than is actually being done or than suits our theological laziness. If basic dogmas of Christianity are to be announced in a credible way in a milieu that is not traditionally Christian, a reinterpretation of dogma is required that is much more extensive and intensive than your theology is already providing. What would an average Christian have in mind when he or she says that there are three persons in God? (I am afraid a heresy, which he or she considers to be a tenet of the faith!) If there is a history of dogma still going on, it is certain that the traditional formulas of classic Christology are not absolutely beyond improvement and that their meaning can be expressed in a different way.

In your thinking, theologians, you have certainly not caught up with all that an evolutionary conception of the world, a universal history of salvation, a positive significance for salvation of non-Christian religious, a positive interpretation of the divisions in Christianity, today's secular world, and many other things have added to your task. Moreover, there is also the problem of pluralism in theology, the problem of the different theologies of Africa, Latin America, and East Asia. Here are assignments that should render you humble and modest and inspire us only with good will toward you. We should rather be upset when you do not upset us, when dogma looks more like sacrosanct immobility than like living power.

Even a definition does not put an end to the history of truth. Our task in Rome is not merely to condemn. We must also make positive statements, that is, perform theological work in the strict [184] sense. The pope cannot always write his encyclicals by himself. As a rule he should not. (Bellarmine cautioned the pope not to prepare his decisions by means of his private theology.) So we are in need of your collaboration. Why does the International Commission of Theologians lead such a pitiful existence beside the Congregation of the Faith, whose head has expressly refused to consult this international group of theologians? The theologians who belong to the Congregation of the Faith should have an international reputation, and it should be public knowledge which one of them has collaborated in a given decision. May we not hope that the Church would have that much openness?

ABOUT THE PROCEDURE OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE FAITH

It stands to reason that, when the Congregation of the Faith has summoned a theologian, it must submit to him or her all the pertinent data of the trial in all its stages. It was still happening just a few years ago that a thick dossier was compiled against a theologian and printed up like a book, with numerous letters of denunciation, and yet it was forbidden to be shown to the theologian in question. Quite recently the *relator pro autore,* the counsel for the defense, who is officially appointed in such a procedure, was not made known to the defendant. He was not even allowed to know who would defend him. Such secretiveness is

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absurd and must end. In such things Roman authority violates human rights which the Church claims to defend.

I consider it also out-dated and impractical for the Congregation of the Faith to run the procedure in two different panels. A case is first discussed by the *consulta* of theologians. The result is then presented to ten cardinals, who alone make the decision. Of course, in the final analysis, the authority of the magisterium does not derive from the weight of theological arguments and the shrewdness of theologians, although the magisterium is obliged to use these means with the greatest energy. Yet this does not imply that the higher "panel" of cardinals alone should discuss and decide what will then be finally submitted to the formal authority of the pope, especially since these cardinals, *salva omni reverentia*, for the most part understand nothing of theology that is to be found [185] outside their old textbooks. What harm would it do if theologians and a couple of really competent cardinals worked together from the start, even if the theologians were present only in an advisory capacity? One more remark: Such procedures should be terminated more rapidly. It is wrong for a theologian to have to wait in fear for many years until the Roman bureaucracy has reached a decision. Prudence and careful scrutiny do not justify such long delays. And in the international curia of a world-Church, which Rome claims to be, it should be possible for the colloquy between the theologian and the Roman authority to be held in all the usual international languages.

SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND PRAXIS OF THEOLOGY

On the other hand, theologians should say something like this: First, we are not a mafia, where everyone can speak in the name of theology and for all theologians. Neither do we feel obliged, whenever an individual theologian comes in conflict with Rome, to voice our indignation at once in the name of freedom and theology. Undoubtedly, we have the right and the duty to side with Rome against another theologian, when we are convinced that a Roman declaration is correct. Among theologians too cronyism is repugnant. Have we reached the point where theologians have compromised themselves when they support a Roman decision?

Collective declarations of theologians deserve the serious attention of the Roman authorities. In principle they should not ignore them. They should not think that every dialogue with theologians goes against the nature of the Roman magisterium, because according to canon law, it is "the highest chair" independent of any other human power.

Nevertheless such declarations are a questionable thing. The fact that they are frequently used in the world, that they are modern, is not yet a convincing argument for such collective declarations. They very quickly lose their usefulness. They easily indulge in generalities that nobody denies. God and the devil, however, are to be found in the details that such declarations often glibly ignore. Appeals for more freedom in theology are especially questionable and useless if they do not state clearly what they mean and what they do not mean.

[186]

ACKNOWLEDGING THE MAGISTERIUM

The first thing that we from our side, as theologians, have to say is therefore that we acknowledge our duty with regard to the Roman magisterium. As theologians we have, of course, an autonomous function and a pastoral responsibility in the Church; we are not just the handymen of the magisterium and church authorities. But the magisterium is for us

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theologians a binding authority, and we discharge our function within the hierarchical Roman Catholic Church and according to her rules. This task goes beyond a mere defense and interpretation of the magisterium, for the simple reason that the development of the faith in the Church cannot be adequately directed by the magisterium. At the same time, this task can be carried out only in basic agreement with the Church's magisterium.

As declarations about the relation between the magisterium and theology keep multiplying so quickly that nobody can keep up with them, we theologians should not in one breath formally acknowledge the magisterium, and in the next emphatically and emotionally demand our freedom. We should also insist somewhat more on how to respect the magisterium. The latter does not act presumptuously when it censures us. Such a procedure is not basically a threat to the freedom of our theological research. The relationship between faith and the teaching of it, on the one hand, and scientific theology, on the other, may be fluid and vague. Yet a theology that would have no connection with the preaching and the practice of faith would no longer be a Christian theology, but at the most a secular science of religion. That is also why there are no clearly delimited domains or methods in scientific theology that are absolutely outside the competence of the magisterium.

It has already been emphasized that there is a difference between publications of scientific theology and those intended for a wider public. Disregarding the fact that such a distinction is difficult to make, because the media inform everyone about everything, the distinction continues to make sense. It invites the magisterium to a greater tolerance toward scientific theological writings, especially when they are composed and written in the tentative and hypothetical way that belongs to scientific research. However, as long as theology does not degenerate [187] into mere religious science, as long as it lives and thinks within the faith of the Church, scientific publications and periodicals cannot in principle reject the supervision of the magisterium.

On the other hand, we must now tell the Church's magisterium that we theologians do not clearly see, in many cases, what respect for the magisterium and the fact that it is a norm for us concretely requires of us and what it does not. That this norm has different levels and degrees follows from the official doctrine that all the declarations of the Church's magisterium do not impose the same degree of obligation. This situation entails a difference in our reaction to such declarations. But the magisterium does not at all clarify for us theologians what these differences are and what they are not. Or it publishes norms that are so vague that either they are false or they do not help us.

TO WHAT DO OFFICIAL DECLARATIONS OBLIGE?

If, for instance, the statements of *Lumen Gentium* (no. 25) about this question were absolutely valid, the world-wide dissent of Catholic moral theologians from the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* would be a massive and global offense against the authority of the magisterium. Yet the magisterium accepts this offense, showing that the norm of *Lumen Gentium*, and of many similar declarations of the last hundred years, does not describe precisely enough the relation between the magisterium and theologians. Should Catholic exegetes have kept silent so long about their problems under Pius X? They have respectfully done so and thus made it harder for educated Catholics to believe. What should moral theologians do with Roman declarations about sexual morality that they consider lacking in distinctions? Should they keep quiet, or should they contradict them and make the necessary distinctions?

The absence of more precise norms may derive from the difficulty of the problem. So in every case we ourselves have to look for a way out with courage and prudence. We cannot stop at being prudent, not even at the risk of our jobs; we must also have the courage to take

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risks, that is, we must consider the possibility of being censured by Rome.

[188] But this does not quite answer the question. Suppose that the censure of a theologian or of a group of theologians is accepted by them with all due respect and docility, but that it is not certain that the traditional theology, the opinion that has to that point been held in the Church and to which Rome appeals, is identical with a clearly defined dogma. In such a case the formal authority of the magisterium is not irreformable. As history has shown, it has often been wrong. Let us further suppose that, despite an obvious docility, the arguments of the magisterium do not convince the theologian in question, and that we have to do with an important question, which implies that this theologian has a duty to speak for the truth, and which at the same time increases the interest of the magisterium. What happens in such a case? Is a *silentium obsequiosum* sufficient? Is the theologian allowed, is he or she obliged, publicly to contradict? If we say yes, what happens then to the "sincere assent" which the Council's decree expects from the theologian? If the disagreement is only on this one point, and the theologian maintains an inner respect and submission, how can the magisterium make sure of this? Should it be satisfied with this general attitude and quietly tolerate the disagreement on this point? If we say that, on this one point, the theologian should simply keep quiet, the important question arises how the progress of knowledge, which is necessary for the life of the Church and for the credibility of her teaching, can be assured since the magisterium may be wrong in such a declaration. If, for instance, all theologians had shown this "sincere assent" by an obedient silence with regard to the biblical decrees of Pius X, the present pope could not speak of the Yahwist, and no introduction to the New Testament would be allowed to say that Luke's Gospel was written after the fall of Jerusalem.

It seems to me that, after mature consideration, the theologian has the right, and frequently the duty, to contradict a declaration of the magisterium and to maintain his or her opposition. The magisterium could tolerate this contradiction and use it to improve its own arguments without suppressing the theologians that side with it. The best policy would be to let the question of which side is right be decided by ongoing discussion and by the future history of the faith.

[189]

TOLERANCE OF THE MAGISTERIUM WITH REGARD TO THEOLOGY

The magisterium should not give up the right to put an end to a theological controversy by means of a decision. But this basic right does not mean that the magisterium should put an end to every discussion, nor that there are always good reasons for doing so, nor that a non-defining decision would always terminate a controversy in such a way as to preclude further discussion. Through its administrative measures, the magisterium can, in individual cases, unreasonably and unjustly curtail the freedom of theology. Such cases have happened and do happen time and again. Far be it from me to assume that every intervention of the magisterium is a restriction of the freedom of theologians. Yet I must say that the number of cases of unjustified curtailment of freedom that I have seen inflicted on other theologians during my lifetime is considerable. The situation is especially serious since the Holy Office is also responsible for measures that it requires superiors of religious orders to impose on their theologians.

Tolerance for statements of theologians who disagree with non-defining declarations of the magisterium has been widely practiced during the past few years. Is this de facto tolerance the result of circumstances, namely that, given the great number of cases, Rome can no longer "keep up" with them? Is it the consequence of a practical powerlessness that one would prefer to overcome? Or does it result from an insight into the legitimacy of such tolerance? We would like to think that the latter possibility is true, and we would be happy if

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Rome expressly told us so.

No end, not even a good and important end, justifies the means one uses to reach it. This principle holds for the magisterium, which must not yield to the temptation to use wrong means to attain mandatory and praiseworthy goals. It must respect the tolerance toward theological discussion that should be acknowledged by Rome. One of the questionable methods is the denial of the freedom required by theology, a denial that derives from a secret distrust of the power of truth. A dead orthodoxy is no true orthodoxy. Allowing a legitimate freedom to theology does not consist in making a few harmless theoretical declarations. It means that the authorities, while having the power of preventing it, allow a theologian to express an opinion [190] that they consider false (although either side's opinion may be wrong).

Powerful people live in constant temptation. This principle holds even for the Roman magisterium, even if we presume that they act in good faith when they obstruct theological freedom. In concrete cases, theologians should not, as has frequently happened of late, react with proud and unkind moralistic reproaches, an attitude that does not quite reflect the spirit of Jesus. All human beings are sinners; all are tempted. Even church leaders are not presumed to be immune from these weaknesses in the exercise of their official duties.

That is why, with all due respect, we are allowed to call the attention of these leaders to the fact that the burden of proof does not generally rest with the freedom of theology, but with the curtailment of this freedom. Once more: Why does Rome itself not expressly state these evident truths? Is Rome afraid? Why does Rome not understand that such expressly acknowledged principles would not diminish, but rather increase, the authority of the magisterium?

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[191]

18

THE PERENNIAL ACTUALITY OF THE PAPACY

Presenting an ideal picture of a pope for the future should not mean that we criticize popes, past or present. The only certainty we have about the future is that it will differ from both the past and the present. If we do not wish simply to present a few dogmatic reflections on the permanent nature of the papacy, but to allow our thoughts to scan the future, we will have to give some thought, or at least indulge in vague conjectures, about what the papacy may look like in the near future.

Because I had already been invited once to relate my dream about the pope of the future,[1] I started to dream again. I dreamed about the letter which follows. Dreams, of course, are always quite arbitrary and vague. It is evident that they may tell more about the dreamer than about the thing dreamed. Even in dreams I cannot see the future. That is why what my pope writes remains necessarily very abstract, why it says nothing about the concrete future that an inscrutable Providence is also preparing for the papacy.

Vatican City
Rome

Dear Peppino:

Now your old friend has become pope. Which one of us would ever have thought this would happen when we were studying together [192] in Rome in the 1960s. You must have been startled when you heard the news. So was I. But we can do nothing about it and, to tell the truth, I am rather happy that an Italian has again become pope. True, the pope, as Peter, is bishop of the whole Church, but he is also bishop of Rome, in Italy. When we were studying ecclesiology, we never found out whether the pope is also bishop of Rome, or the bishop of Rome also pope. But he is bishop of Rome. And that might as well be evident in the person of the pope. I say this because, during the last few centuries, we Italians have not been any worse at discharging this function than have people of other nations. This is true even if the history of Italy during the last century has not been too glorious. (But don't worry, I will not speak much of Italy, except when speaking to Italians.) At any rate, this is the only cheerful thing in my election as pope.

Undoubtedly there have often been ambitious popes; you will admit that I am not one of them. When I look not only at the task but also at the situation in which I will have to carry out the papacy now and in the near future, I see no reason for being ambitious or for coveting such a job. There is no way to perform it as it should be performed; and in the years to come less than ever.

Peppino, during the coming months I will, of course, have no time for the luxury of writing letters. But I am thinking of Giovanni, our teacher, who said, "Don't take yourself too seriously." So get ready for a long letter from your old friend. By the way, for you I remain the old Leone, even if I am now called Paul VII, for reasons that I do not have to explain to you. Another reason for this letter is that it allows me to give some thought to how I myself view this pontificate. Before the election, as a cardinal, I never racked my brain about this. I

[1] See Karl Rahner, "Dream of the Church," in *Concern for the Church: Theological Investigations* 20, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), pp. 133-42.

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let my colleagues do it. I am telling you what I think, because I expect your criticism. Peppino, for heaven's sake always be the kind of person who breaks through the haze with which people, and even cardinals, piously but stupidly surround the pope with their acclaim. It is quite possible – I am a normal man, who loves to be praised – that I will react crossly to your sober criticism. But this is your duty, as my friend and as a priest. And I will certainly not throw you out when you come to me. We may even have our meals together. Starting with John Paul II the court ceremonial became a little more human and reasonable. At the very start, as I think of my task, a few things come to mind that I want you to know. It is not a [193] program for my administration. That will come out in my first encyclical, which I will soon have to write or ask someone to write for me.

First, I will be the kind of pope that quite a number of popes have been before me. I hope not to be the worst one (which is perhaps not so very difficult). I will live and act with the conviction, which we learned and made our own as Christians and young theologians, that my office possesses the fullness of power. Vatican I remains, of course, fully valid for me. Yet I must tell you now, vested as I am with this fullness of power, that this conviction, based on faith, has become quite mysterious to me. Do you remember, when we were students, how Congar criticized the titles given to the pope? I will try to see to it that, while maintaining the dogma, there is not too much talk of the "Vicar of Christ." Christ does not need a vicar, be stays with his Church, and even with her pope, in whose very weakness he remains effective. The practical demythologization of the pope has made much progress in recent years. There is no more tiara, no more *sedia gestatoria*. In a private audience a visitor no longer has to make the triple genuflection, thanks be to God! Certainly there are still plenty of antiquated customs in the Vatican that may have to go. That much I may be able to bring about. It is no easy task, because so many nice, pious people simply love this traditional ceremonial. Do you remember that, as a student, I said that I would like to see a pope playing tennis in white slacks? I will probably not go that far. And I know, of course, that even a mixture of Catholic dogma and an analysis of the modern mentality will not provide us with a concrete image of how a pope ought to live and rule. So I will certainly leave many things as they have developed historically, even though it is not evident that they belong to the nature of the papacy, as many traditionalists involuntarily and unconsciously feel they do. On the other hand, I would not like to be a pope who drags along too much old-fashioned baggage from the past.

THE BUREAUCRACY MIGHT BE SIMPLIFIED

For instance, I am not at all convinced that the enormous bureaucracy that has grown in Rome during the last two centuries follows naturally from the dogma of the pope's universal primacy. If, as [194] we hope, the Holy Spirit not only helps the pope (although unfortunately, as we once learned, mostly through an *assistentia per se negativa*) but is at work everywhere in the Church, it cannot be necessary that every good, holy, and wise thing starting to grow in the Church should first be blessed by a Roman authority. What I mean is that the pope and his helpers should imitate God and operate with an *assistentia per se negativa*, that is, prevent what is wrong and not imagine that they are the only ones able to plant the seeds of new growth.

I intend to consider whether in the Roman Curia it would not be wise to employ only priests who have successfully performed normal priestly duties for fifteen years. That would eliminate some of the often-deplored arrogance and smugness that the Roman "staff officers" (read: the members of the curia) display in their dealings with the "frontline officers" (read: the bishops). Of course, I do not know yet what precisely can and should be changed in

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Rome. However, my Peppino's ideal of a pope, humble and poor like Jesus, will probably not induce me to leave the Vatican and settle in a simple house in Trastevere or in the Philippines, as Bühlmann had suggested when we were students. But the bureaucracy of the curia can certainly be simplified to a great extent, for the simple reason that a Church that is no longer the Church of Europe with a few outlying sections, but which has become a world-Church, can no longer be "ruled" in such a centralized way as before. I am the sort of person who likes to delegate responsibility and power, who does not want to know and to do everything myself. Exactly what this means, as I said before, still has to be settled.

It seems to me that a pope too has the right to be a normal human being, a struggling Christian, an individual among many others, and to show this without affectation, humbly, if you wish At one time, both of us studied the history of the popes. Peppino, how many frightful, stupid, narrow-minded, backward things have happened in that history! We say this even as we remember that this history is the inscrutable will of the eternal God and that not even the pope is God's private counselor. Of course, we will not repeat the horrors and stupidities of former times. But still should I not fear that, as pope, I may commit other stupidities, despite all my good will and honest endeavors? Human beings, and therefore popes as well, always perform their duties poorly. Otherwise we [195] would not be poor sinners, finite creatures, who painfully grope along in history's darkness.

Even if I do not impute to any of my predecessors, or at least to my immediate predecessors, a lack of humility and modesty, it seems to me that today a pope may, even publicly, make this critical self-evaluation more clearly than it used to be done. Important people in the history of both the world and the Church used to have the idea that their legitimate authority would be jeopardized, if they let their "subjects" see that they too were only human beings who committed blunders. It is only after their death that church historians were allowed to discover faults, mistakes, or backwardness in a pope. But if I am convinced that even as pope I remain a human being who will commit faults, perhaps even serious ones, why would I not be allowed to admit this even during my lifetime? Is the mentality of people who really matter not such today that authority does not suffer damage, but rather profits, when its bearer openly admits the limitations of a poor and sinful human being, and is not afraid to acknowledge them? For the time being at least, I am willing to listen to public discussions in my presence, eventually to learn from others, and to admit that I have learned.

Even as pope I would like to continue to learn. Let people notice that a pope can err, make mistakes, be poorly informed, and choose the wrong kind of assistants. All of this is evident and I believe that no recent pope has seriously doubted it. But why must such evidence remain hidden and covered up? Peter allowed Paul to confront him to his face, and I suppose that Peter acknowledged that Paul was right. Even today a pope may allow himself something of the kind. I for one, lay claim to that right and I am willing, if necessary, to let my authority suffer a loss, which it would be my duty to accept.

A MODEST PONTIFICATE AS COUNTERBALANCE

Peppino, there is something else I want to tell you. I shall not be a great pope. I do not have the wherewithal. You know that too. We have never fooled ourselves; so much the better. So I will not have an inferiority complex if I look quite modest compared with the great popes of the twentieth century. To me that seems [196] providential. I have a feeling that through their grandeur these popes had an influence in the Church that they probably never intended and that had its questionable side, an influence that I will try to offset with my more modest pontificate.

Is it not true? Have these great popes not involuntarily fostered a mentality in the Church

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that overestimates the pope's proper function, as it should be according to dogma, and as it was in most of the history of the popes? Does this mentality not imply that a pope must in all respects be the greatest one in the Church, a point of reference for all initiatives, a teacher who is superior to all thinkers and theologians, a saint and a prophet, a man who conquers all hearts with his fascinating personality, a great leader who molds his century and makes statesmen and other great personalities pale into insignificance, a pontiff, whom all bishops respectfully approach, like petty officials before their king, in order to listen obediently to his words and orders? Peppino, I will not become such a pope and I do not consider it necessary at all. The pope has a task in the Church that is strictly limited, despite the universal jurisdiction and the fullness of teaching authority mentioned by the First Vatican council. I will exercise this fullness of power, but within the limits imposed on me by the limitations of my own nature. That, and nothing more. I will not be the holiest one in the Church. Before God I am less than the saints who live today in the Church, those who pray in silence, those who are mystically enraptured, those who perish for their faith in the prisons of the enemies of Christ and the Church, those who love unselfishly, as Teresa of Calcutta did, all the unknown and unrewarded heroes of everyday duty and abnegation. Nobody can deny that even an Innocent III pales before Francis of Assisi, and that the popes named Pius of the last two centuries are less important than a Curé d'Ars or a St. Thérèse of Lisieux. You may say, of course, that I am comparing realities that cannot be compared. However, in the life of the Church and before God's eternal tribunal, saints and great theologians, like a Thomas Aquinas or a John Henry Newman, are more important than most popes, and especially more important than I will ever be.

There are many charisms in the Church, and the pope does not have all of them himself. If it is true that we can really understand only our own charisms, even a pope must tell himself that he cannot evaluate everything that develops in the Church, and that God [197] alone, and not the pope, stands where all that is good and holy in the Church merges into a perfect symphony.

That is why no harm will be done if my pontificate corrects, to some extent, the mentality of those pious Christians who wrongly expect from the popes what they can receive only from saints and great minds in the Church and possibly from themselves. Are there Christians, and perhaps popes, who remember that when they pray the Our Father with impatient hope for the coming of God's eternal kingdom they are praying also for the end of the papacy? An insignificant pope too may be providential.

However, I confess that I feel responsible for real progress in ecumenism, and I fear God's judgment if I were not to do absolutely everything in my power to promote it. During the past century all sides have been asserting that the churches have no right simply to go on as they have since the separation of East and West and the Reformation. We can say that, during the last fifty years and especially since the Second Vatican Council, a great deal has happened in the ecumenical domain. I am quite willing to admit that some people have done excellent work. But we may also say that we have not made real progress. The great churches are still disunited, and the rapprochement that has been growing between them does not change that fact. I wonder desperately whether this must go on.

Of course, the unity to which all Christians are obliged does not depend only on Rome. But I wonder whether we might not do more, even though we have been convinced up to now that we have done everything possible. I do not know how to proceed from here; I really do not see it. But I will honestly say that I do not see it, and I will ask others where they see new possibilities of making progress. I am determined to have the courage of ecumenical probabilism. In other words, I feel obliged in this question to try all measures and steps that are proposed to me, where no clear veto of my faith or conscience speaks against such measures and steps. In this question we must push to the utmost limit of what is theologically

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possible, we must adopt the tutiorism of boldness. Why, for instance, should we ask more for unity in faith than we, in fact, require today from people within the Roman Catholic Church? Why should the Christian churches, with their long histories, not be allowed to go on existing as partner churches and particular rites within the one Church? Why should I not be allowed to declare expressly that neither I nor future popes will proclaim an *ex cathedra* [198] decision except when we are in clear and obvious agreement with the body of bishops of the whole Church, to which the other churches too will belong as permanent partner churches?

Did Pius IX and Pius XI not act in this way when proclaiming such decisions? Why could we not expressly consider such a procedure a valid norm? Would it not be possible to assure the leaders of the churches of the Reformation, expressly and solemnly, that in the one Church these churches will enjoy at least as much autonomy and historical continuity as Rome grants to the partner churches of the East? It simply has to be possible to make progress in the ecumenical question. If I admit that all persons are of good will, have honest motives, and are open to the Holy Spirit, I can simply not believe that, as some would say, "for the time being, unfortunately, nothing can be done."

INTELLIGENT EXPERTS INSTEAD OF SOLEMN DIGNITARIES

During the first years of my pontificate, I will advance very slowly, I intentionally so, because I am convinced that it is impossible to devise a program for the Church's history and life in the crucible of abstract theology and without the help of secular futurology. In the era into which we are clearly entering the Church will have to do more ecclesial futurology and programming of her future than she has done up to now. I will not convoke an ecumenical council, and it is for me still an open question whether the synods of bishops in Rome are the best way to achieve what I have in mind I would prefer to call together a group of intelligent theologians, sociologists, futurologists, and historians. Such a group would exhibit real competence, courage, and a certain amount of creative imagination, and would try to formulate how the Church should proceed, insofar as it is possible to plan such things. We have to develop a strategic pastoral plan for the world-Church. Nothing of the kind exists as yet.

Today in the secular world, in society at large, history is not constructed step by step in some improvised way. Rather, history is planned ahead of time. Well, the Church too should do something of the kind. Especially now that she has become a world-Church and is no longer the self-confident Western Church, [199] exporting missionaries all over the world with the help of European colonialism.

As yet I do not see clearly what I have in mind. Today, humankind is clearly interdependent in all its parts, economies, and cultures, such as has never existed before. In order not to perish, humankind has had to come to a self-awareness that was impossible in earlier times. Thus it actively assumes, in a wholly new way, the conscious responsibility of its own future. The world-Church faces a similar new situation. My new group of experts in pastoral strategy should tell me and the Roman congregations exactly what this new situation is.

The canon law of the universal Church cannot remain in the twenty-first century what it was in the 1980s. In a world of enlightened rationality, of technical civilization, of a global interdependence of all cultural powers, the preaching of the one and forever valid Gospel message cannot proceed as it did in the beginning of the twentieth century. Then we had the Church's antimodernism, her reactionary distrust of all profound social and economic change. We must change our methods, and we must do it consciously and intentionally. We must ask ourselves in a new and explicit way how the Church's responsibility for peace and

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justice is to be carried out in ways and forms that we do not even suspect, that perhaps we even oppose. Liturgy throughout the world must not forever be the Roman liturgy translated into the vernacular. Is the valid hierarchical structure of the Church wholly reconciled with all the social changes that have been introduced, or at least planned, and that also have a right to exist in the Church of the future?

Undoubtedly the Christian message will remain what it has always been: that God gives himself in grace and in life eternal, that this and nothing else is the end of all evolution, and that it has been definitively and irrevocably promised to us in Jesus, who died on the cross and rose from the dead.

But this message must also be expressed in wholly other ways; it must be seen from wholly other points of view and in wholly other contexts than those we learned long ago at the Gregorian University in Rome. And the old message may grow in itself, not only in the way we express it. What else would really be the meaning of the Gospel's word that the Holy Spirit will slowly introduce us into all truth? This "progress" cannot be brought about by the pope or [200] by the Congregation of the Faith. What we can do here in Rome is to encourage others to work for it and to respect courageous efforts, even though they are not always the final word in wisdom or orthodoxy. Despite all the pluralism in theology that cannot be abolished today, it is still possible to see where the true substance of Christianity is being impaired by foolish or brash theologians and then have the courage to stop them. For theologians are not the highest court in the Church.

I would like to write an encyclical showing that we can express the fundamental truths of Jesus' message in a way that differs from the one we are used to because we learned it in school. Will I ever be able to do it? I doubt it, because such an encyclical will not speak of relatively secondary points in the "hierarchy of truths," which is rather easy to do. I will have to say, against every form of atheism, that the living God exists (and we ought to understand atheism if we wish to overcome it), that God has come among us in this world and in this history (although the reality that is distinct from God is billions of years old), and that the experience of death is not the ultimate experience.

Of course, one who teaches what is highest and most important may be somewhat behind the times with regard to what is less important (otherwise the eternal kingdom of truth and love would already be here). But that must not mean that the Church (as in the centuries since the Enlightenment) should always be afflicted with a certain old-fashioned clerical futility. I am afraid that there are people in Rome (and naturally elsewhere as well) who try to justify this stance with profound ideological reasons such as "the folly of the cross," or "Christianity can never be fashionable," and try to push Rome's activity in that direction. That was also Lefebvre's idea some time ago.

THREE FACTS MUST BE KEPT IN MIND

My good and faithful Peppino, I want to tell you something. I hope that during my pontificate I will not forget three things (in addition to many others naturally). *First*, for two million years, human beings had to seek and were able to find the eternal God without a papacy. That is a truism, for the papacy is conceivable only at "the end of time" after Jesus Christ. But that truism deserves to be kept [201] in mind especially by a pope. Strictly speaking, the old ways of finding God have not been abolished by the papacy. They have only been strengthened and radicalized. Theologians should give more thought to the question of how a headhunter in the Stone Age, who pierced the head of the foe he had killed, might have anything to do with God, with eternal life – and this in Jesus Christ, without passing him by. Theologians should not take the easy way out by referring to the Second Vatican Council, which on this question

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speaks of "ways known only to God." Ultimately I too am saved in ways known only to God, yet I must try to understand them. And people today can accept that only in Jesus Christ will they find their salvation, if they can understand, to some extent, how this possibility also existed for those who lived before Christ.

The *second* thing I would like not to forget is that there are still today countless persons for whom the papacy does not exist, and whose consciences are often challenged in life and death-threatening ways: The billions of Chinese, the people who live in societies where atheism is the state religion, the hundreds of millions of Muslims, the millions of baptized Christians who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Messiah and yet do not want to have anything to do with the pope, the other people whom we usually call "pagans," the many Catholics who, in fact if not expressly, feel nothing for the papacy. Yet even in this final phase of salvation history, in which there is a papacy, I have a right and a duty to hope, and even in my way of acting to presume, that all these people find the God of Jesus Christ, in whom everything moves and has its being, and reach God as their eternal destiny.

If this is true, the papacy, although objectively binding, is not the highest or most fundamental truth in the hierarchy of truths. It is a reality and a truth that can be reached by inference only by those who have already found God in Jesus Christ. It is also possible that countless persons who find God and Jesus Christ are unable to make this inference, without any fault of their own. They may even be convinced that the papacy cannot be inferred from their basic faith or that they are forbidden to make such an inference. How modest, how prudent, how mild a pope should be before this world, for which the papacy is either unknown or, at most, a strange happening in history.

A *third* point must influence my way of acting as a pope in the world. The pope has to be a witness to the basic truth of salvation [202] that concerns all human beings. But, as he preaches the Gospel, he must not give the impression of believing that he can solve all the problems people meet in their private or public lives. I cannot tell any man what woman he should marry, although for him this is an important matter for time and eternity. During our studies in the sixties, we both noticed how many questions of capital importance the sociology of the Church could not clearly answer, but had to leave to secular intelligence and to history's experiments. Although these issues are of great interest to many people, there are thousands and thousands of questions in the human and natural sciences for which the Church has no answer. I do not have the slightest doubt that the Christian message about God and eternal life in Jesus Christ, when properly conveyed and really accepted, has a strong and creative importance for our life on earth, for both individuals and society, with regard to the problems that ultimately they have to solve by themselves. But that adds nothing to the fact that, like everyone else, a pope, when his message about eternity concerns concrete human problems, must entrust the world to God, to God's inscrutable grace and the historical freedom of human beings. The pope has no prescriptions that must be followed as exactly as possible so that nothing but peace and happiness may reign in the world.

Despite its great importance for the Church and the world, the papacy is only one factor in the strife and harmony of a world that God alone grasps and directs. These things are evident, of course, and it is to be hoped that no pope has ever doubted them. But I will do my utmost never, in my conduct or in my words, to produce the slightest impression that I have forgotten these obvious truths. I will speak gently and modestly. When presenting to people the truths of the Gospel that are so important for their everyday lives, I will always, in a true dialogue, ask them how these truths can be translated into the reality of their lives, something that I cannot clearly know from the start.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE AND SECULAR KNOWLEDGE COMPLETE EACH

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The truth of Christianity is not subject to the secular self-understanding of human beings or of their sciences. Yet, if we [203] really wish to understand this Christian truth, we need an ongoing dialogue between those who announce the Christian message and those who voice the secular self-understanding. God has not willed that this double knowledge fully exist in a unified way in a single human being, not even in a pope. Undoubtedly the pope must lay claim to the teaching authority that Christ and the Church have given him; he must speak like one who has power and not like the scribes; but he must always also convey his message in open dialogue.

I will try to speak and to be silent in such a way that my words and my silence may reach the immense multitude of those who cannot yet acknowledge the papacy as a reality of their faith. I will speak and be silent, aware that the true message can reach its fulness only through dialogue, when it has been accepted by human self-understanding in a synthesis that ultimately God alone, and not the pope, brings about. I believe that this is the real reason why the full doctrinal authority of the pope must shun any kind of triumphalism.

Peppino, with all these reservations, I believe in the papacy and I accept it as my task, according to the teaching of the holy Catholic faith. What then is the true nature of the papacy, as it operates in word and sacrament for the whole Church? We live in the endtimes, even if that end lasts a very long time. Who knows how long it will last, since human beings now have the power of committing collective suicide? “The end of times has already come and the renewal of the world has already and irrevocably begun” – words of the Second Vatican Council that theologians do not ponder sufficiently.

The true and happy outcome of world history is irrevocable. It consists in the communication of the absolute God to his creatures. By dying on the cross and rising from the dead Jesus has made it irrevocable. That is the reason for the papacy; to this it is the basic and definitive witness, from this it derives its task and its fulness of power. Because this message can never die, because this message is one that can never be surpassed, this message about the end of time is also the promise that the gates of death will not prevail against the papacy during this endtime until the Lord comes, who will also put an end to the papacy.

The message and the messenger will always be with us. That is why it is ultimately a secondary question how many people acknowledge as legitimate the messenger who, at all events, brings a [204] message announcing the salvation even of those who believe that they are not allowed to acknowledge the messenger! That is why, to my mind, the question of the visible success or failure of the papacy during my pontificate should not bother me too much. My pontificate will not be very glorious. I do not have what it takes, and God is not obliged always and in every instance to make up for the shortcomings of those who convey his eternal message hesitantly and inadequately, but truly.

Peppino, I believe that what the fourteenth chapter of Matthew says about Peter is as important for the papacy and for me as the scripture texts that are usually quoted. I am a Peter who tries to reach the Lord by walking on water, who always fears that he will drown, whom Jesus time and again takes by the hand and brings into the boat that really reaches the shores of eternity.

Dear Peppino, I wish to bring up something else, even if I cannot finish my letter today. If that is impossible, I’ll go on tomorrow. Listen: My head is as empty as it used to be when we faced our examiners at the Gregorian. I must admit that I really do not know more about what a pope is now than I knew then, when we studied the doctrine of the papacy in ecclesiology. Of course, I also know what I have learned from experience during the past few decades, although this experience itself is for me a problem that I find difficult to solve. I am discovering in myself what the Second Vatican Council says about the pope, that he receives

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no new revelations. Although this is very much the case with me, I hope for God's help. But because this help is very unobtrusive it is very difficult to distinguish it from human considerations and impulses. So, I do not know more about the papacy than you do. But I know that the doctrine of the papacy, like all other truths of our faith, is surrounded by all the obscurities that, despite the greatest possible conceptual precision, lead into the mystery of God. I know that the doctrine of the papacy is valid throughout all time, like all the other truths of our faith, although we express them with concepts and images that are somehow – in different ways, of course – historically conditioned. I know that all these statements about our faith, including those on the papacy, stand in history and are therefore mixed with "accretions" (as we used to call them) which do not belong to what has been revealed. These accretions are recognized as such only in the course of time and are then removed. Then, the truth that is meant and asserted is stated once more under other historically [205] conditioned concepts and images, but we are not yet aware that they too are conditioned.

Do you remember how years ago we used to speculate about transubstantiation, as defined by Trent, and how we wondered, without doubting what was meant, what we might mean today by substance, since we do not even know whether atoms and subatomic particles can be considered individual substances in the way in which the Fathers of Trent conceived of the substance of bread and wine. I do not have to insist on this or to bring up examples of other dogmas in which it is clear how an eternal truth of the faith is stated with concepts and images whose problematic and questionable nature is noticed only much later. You know enough examples of this kind, and even then we said that it is impossible to avoid the difficulty as easily as Pius XII thought, by claiming that in such dogmatic statements we have to do with concepts whose meaning and validity are evident to every mind at all times.

And now, Peppino, I suddenly wonder, much more intensively than I used to, what consequences the above-mentioned evident facts have when we apply them to the doctrine of the papacy and the pope's universal primacy of jurisdiction. That primacy exists; I am convinced of it. But what exactly does it mean? The Church's doctrine speaks of a *plena potestas*. But what does that mean and what does it not mean? I believe that there never was a pope who did not know that his power had limits. That is clear. The pope cannot create an eighth sacrament. He cannot make the Letters of Ignatius part of the canon or remove an epistle from the canon that some people consider "insipid." I cannot command you, Peppino, to become a Carthusian, or tell them to admit an old fellow like you. The pope's fullness of power is undoubtedly limited. True, I do not doubt that eventually I would have the competence of the competence (I do not have to explain to you what this is). But if this full primacy of jurisdiction has its limits, imposed by both divine and human law, and, what is more, if the pope may be forbidden, for *moral* reasons, to do something which we cannot prove lies outside his *juridical* competence, where then are the precise limits of this full primacy of jurisdiction? It would, for instance, be impossible for me to impose upon the Eastern Uniate churches the procedure for appointing bishops that has become customary in the Latin Church. It would be impossible for me to prescribe Latin as the language for the Eastern Church, somewhat [206] as Muslims have made Arabic the language for the recitation of the Quran all over the world. I cannot at my whim impose upon a religious order, which grows through the free decisions of its members, every conceivable (maybe even reasonable) rule of life, which these members never envisaged when they joined it. I cannot transform the Jesuit order – whether I like it or not – into an order of discalced priests.

All these things are evident. As a rule they are respected in church history for the simple reason that the opposite would simply be impossible to carry out. But this does not mean that, in concrete instances, a pope does not, in good faith, transgress the limits of his fulness of power.

That is why I would like to hear more precisely from canonists where these limits are, not

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only in general but also in particular. Such limits exist, as I said, in the governing as well as in the teaching authority of the pope, limits that may in fact be transgressed. Was the Church allowed and obliged to give up all claims to the Papal States only under Pius XI? Did the wise Leo XIII not assign to Thomas Aquinas, whom both of us love so much, a position and a function in Catholic theology that an individual theologian simply cannot have? Have we not, by appealing to papal primacy, tried to force on the Eastern Church norms that, speaking plainly and honestly, belong among such transgressions? You can probably think of other instances. I intend not to commit such transgressions. I intend to see clearly, insofar as this is possible, where the limits are that I may not transgress. And that is why I would like professors of dogma and canonists to examine this question more accurately than they have done up to now. I will not cut them short at once if they do so loudly and become guilty of infringing their own limits.

Something else worries me on this topic, even if I may tell myself (thanks be to God) that during my pontificate, which will be very short, these difficulties will not become much more serious than they are now. The concepts describing the duties of a pope in governing the Church derive from our own culture and history. That is why we may suspect that, unknown to us, they are mixed with certain accretions that do not really belong to the revealed truth itself, although we are unable to separate them from it. It is obvious that such a fact has practical consequences. What happens when doctrine (with the praxis made lawful by it) has to be transferred, "inculturated," into other cultures? Such cultures exist, of course, [207] and they have equal rights in the Church as a *world*-Church. But their way of thinking, of feeling, and of living is quite different from ours in the West. Although the West long ago ceased to dominate the world, it has not readily given up the dominance it still enjoyed in the Church during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I often think of this problem, although it cannot be solved during my pontificate.

There are other questions too that worry me and that I cannot evade during my pontificate. What I have written to you undoubtedly shows that I must be very prudent, very tactful, when I have to use my authority in doctrine and government. Such prudence and discretion do not mean, of course, that I might not act or make decisions. I must have the courage to act, even if my action entails the risk of initiating developments whose final outcome cannot be foreseen or of eventually slowing down developments that will gain acceptance in the future. That belongs to the burden of history which even a pope cannot shake off. Does it surprise you then when I tell you that, for all these reasons, I wonder already whether or not I should remain pope until I die. I am allowed to resign, if I realize that this would be more useful to the Church and if I am willing to do so. But might it not happen that I live to an age when I am no longer able to understand this, and when, in spite of my senility, nobody can depose me? A frightening thought! Or maybe, in the final analysis, a comforting thought, because it shows that, even in the Church, God's gracious Providence does not accomplish everything through the activity of a wise and strong pope. We will see.

It is time to stop. I have come to the end of my sheet and of my time. And yet I have not told you most of what I wanted to write to you, my old friend. What I have written is very imperfect and problematic. And I would not like (I am joking) to submit this letter to the Holy Office. Burn it when you have read it. Drop in soon. Friuli is not that far from Rome. *Patet porta et cor magis*. I hug you.

Your old friend Leone, who is now called Paul VII.

P.S. Our old friend Rosa recently died. Both of us have become the poorer for it.

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19

UNDERSTANDING THE PRIESTLY OFFICE

Many years ago I published a short essay on preliminary questions concerning an ecumenical understanding of the priestly office.[1] I do not have the impression that my paper has attracted much attention. I suspect that Protestant ecumenists feel that in this essay I stated the obvious, as I painstakingly tried to make plausible something that for them is absolutely evident. I suspect that there are some Catholic ecumenists who agree at least with the basic thrust of my paper. They share my conviction that the opinion, traditional among Catholics, of the invalidity of orders in the Protestant churches (at least, as a rule) and of what this implies for the validity of the Lord's Supper and the words of absolution is not above all doubt. But generally speaking, and especially in the statements of the official Church, my work has been courteously ignored. Moreover, they speak as if the ancient denial of the sacramental validity of orders outside of the Catholic and Orthodox churches would, in the future too, remain a point that brooked no discussion. I cannot, in the pages that follow, tackle this problem again as a whole in all its details. So this is an outline of the considerations that belong to this group of questions.

[209]

THE SACRAMENTS AS SIGNIFYING AND AS EFFECTIVE

Our traditional Catholic position on the ecumenical problem of the priestly office derives almost naturally and tacitly from a conception of the activity of the sacraments that I consider too narrow and that, nevertheless, implies consequences for the problem of the priestly office.

Our conception of sacramental powers (the power of celebrating the Eucharist, of confirming, of forgiving sins in the sacrament of reconciliation, of anointing the sick, and of ordaining priests) presupposes (if we use a traditional scholastic term) a rather narrow efficient causality of the sacraments. This conception forgets the well-known axiom that the sacraments are efficient causes of grace *insofar as* and because they signify this grace. If the priest who performs the sacraments brings about the sacramental grace in the way in which we usually think of efficient causality, it is evident that he does not, by himself possess the power of exerting such a causality. He must receive it from elsewhere.

Now the way in which such a power is passed on is a very special one, without which the imparting of such a grace and other sacramental operations (transubstantiation and so on) are simply not possible. According to this conception of sacramentality, the fact that sacraments are signs has no decisive influence on our way of understanding their effectiveness, that is, sacramental causality. It is merely an additional statement that is added to the statement that they are efficient causes of grace. Strictly speaking, in the traditional doctrine of the sacraments, we should say: *Sacramenta significant gratiam et efficiunt* (the sacraments signify grace and bring it about), but not: *Sacramenta significando efficiunt gratiam* (the sacraments bring about grace by signifying it). Only the second proposition would state the deepest understanding of the Catholic doctrine of the sacraments. That understanding is contained in it, yet the usual totally objectifying explanations tend to obscure it.

If we want to see what might follow from this for the question of priestly office, we must

[1] See "Pseudo-Problems in Ecumenical Discussion," in *Theological Investigations* 18, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), pp. 35-53.

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show just *what* the sacraments "signify," that is, ritually make manifest in space and time within the Church's social dimension. It would be erroneous and would dim the nature of the Christian eschatological expectation of salvation, if we were to think that the sacraments simply and in isolation signify only the grace that is here and now imparted to the individual [210] recipient of the sacraments. If this were so, the sacraments would signify only that which they still have to produce. But prior to this and beyond this they are the manifestation, in space and time, of the grace that has its origin in Christ, which has irrevocably and victoriously been introduced into the world.

Because of this eschatological irrevocability, this grace presents itself through its becoming-manifest concretely *ex opere operato*, to individuals and to their freedom, and is (normally) accepted by them. Of their very nature the sacraments are the becoming-manifest of God's grace in Christ, which has become eschatologically irrevocable.

If we were to substantiate this statement in more detail, we would have to describe the very special nature of the possibilities of salvation originating from Christ. We would have to describe the nature of the Church as eschatological sign, the *sacramentum salutis mundi* (the sacrament of the world's salvation). We would have to explain that only through the eschatologically sacramental nature of the Church can we really explain (without using magic) the true meaning of the fact that the sacraments work *ex opere operato*. Today we know from biblical theology and the history of dogma that the sacraments cannot, with historical plausibility, simply be traced back to words by which Christ would have instituted them. Yet, in all truth, they must derive from him. So we would have to show that the real sacramentality of the sacraments and their provenance from Christ can be rendered intelligible only if they are conceived as basic activities of the Church that derive from Christ and is the real fundamental sacrament of the world's salvation. This fundamental sacrament is the permanent historical tangibility of God's self-promise to the world in Christ. The sacraments are the innermost activities of the Church, in which she actualizes her own nature in individuals. We would have to show that this is the only way of settling the tiresome old dispute about the number of sacraments.

The reality of the Church, as an indissoluble unity of truth and grace, on the one hand, and of historical tangibility, on the other, underlies the activities of the sacraments. It confers upon them their nature and their effectiveness. It is this ecclesial reality that the sacraments originally "signify": *significant ecclesiam ut sacramentum salutis mundi* (they signify the Church as the sacrament of the world's salvation). What the sacraments signify first and foremost [211] is not what they bring forth, but that which brings them forth and which they are enabled to signify because they are brought forth by it, that is, by the Church.

HOW THE CHURCH BECOMES MANIFEST AS BASIC SACRAMENT

If we may presuppose what has been mentioned briefly, that sacramental operations refer to the historically and socially tangible manifestation of grace and salvation that bestows on them their reality and power, the question comes up precisely *how* we are to conceive of this disclosure in space and time of the *sacramentum mundi*. The question comes up whether such signifying disclosures of the manifestation of the one *sacramentum mundi* at a certain place and time may not be considered to have many degrees. They might be called sacraments only under certain presuppositions. We may not deny that other activities in which the sacrament of the world becomes manifest also have a positive Christian significance and power. Some of these activities are: praying together in the name of Jesus and the religious rites that we Catholics call sacramentals. Actually, sacramentals exist under other names, with other theological interpretations, everywhere in the Christian churches. There are undoubtedly,

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over and above the signs of salvation offered by the Church that we call "sacraments," other signs that, for whatever reason, are not and should not be called "sacraments," although they are genuine attestations of the fundamental sacrament of salvation called Church, and they share therefore the effectiveness of that fundamental sacrament and its properly sacramental testimony.

Such social-historical and ritual references to the fundamental sacrament that is the Church, whence they derive their meaning and power, may be classified in quite different ways. For instance, they could be classified according to their content, according to their user, and so on. Such references should be considered legitimate. They constitute the historical becoming-manifest of the fundamental sacrament when their content refers to it in the right way, when they appeal to it, and when they are performed with Christian faith. More cannot be required for the legitimacy of such references.

[212] What makes these signs into legitimate references is not that they constitute that to which they refer. It is rather the fact that what they refer to already exists: the Church as *sacramentum salutis mundi* and God's salvific will, by which God has already offered himself to every human being. Moreover, we must presume, unless the opposite is proven, that those who use this sign have the right disposition. This presumption is sufficient for the validity of such a reference, since, where the Church uses signs that are undoubtedly valid, such a presumption about the presence of an "intention" is presupposed and considered sufficient. In this connection it is also clear that the legitimacy of such a reference does not require a priori that these signs be used expressly within the juridical sphere of the Roman Catholic Church. If this were so, the Church would be unable to admit the validity of baptisms conferred by heretics.

Of course, it might be objected that for every sacrament, except baptism, the very nature of the sacrament may suppose conditions for its validity that are not present when the one who performs the rite has not received Roman Catholic ordination

However, even then this ritual action refers to the objective and permanent fundamental *sacramentum salutis mundi*. It is performed in Christian faith, with a holy intention, in a church, in a religious environment, in which the good faith of those who perform it must be taken for granted. Where then would be the distinction between a sacrament that is valid for traditional Catholic theology and such a rite outside the normal Catholic sacramental order? It seems that it would consist in this: In the first case, we have to do with a "normal" sacramental signifying action. In the second case, we have to do with a sign that stands outside this normal order, with the result that it cannot be called a valid sacrament. This supposes, of course, that we have adopted a terminology that calls such a sign a "sacrament" only when it is used in the "normal" Catholic sacramental order. But is this the possible terminology? And even if we say that it is, must we then claim that a ritual referring to the universal sacrament of salvation, a ritual performed in faith outside the "normal" order, has no effectiveness? Would the normal sacramental order in such a case not stand above God, although God is above this order and cannot be subject to it, when the fact that it is not observed implies no fault in those who perform the action, and when in a concrete situation it is impossible to observe the "normal" order?

[213] There exist certain important subjective events inspired by grace (for instance, the implicit "baptism of desire") among persons who have never had any contact with explicit Christianity. These events cannot be called "sacraments," although they bring about or deepen justification. But does this certainly and clearly show that we must call every ritual action invalid if it is performed by somebody who is not, according to Catholic norms, validly ordained (although according to these norms ordination is normally required for validity). All sacramental signs, including the usual ones, hold their efficacy from a previous, ever present, eschatological salvific situation called Church. And this situation is witnessed to

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(in ritual words) even where this is not done and cannot be done in the usual way that the Roman Catholic Church imposes. Is the Roman Catholic Church's right to impose norms for the validity of the sacramental signs so apodictic that it excludes even the possibility of exceptions?

These are questions for which I wanted to suggest a few viewpoints. There are only questions, without any clear answer. Our whole discussion presupposed, without mentioning it, something that Protestant theologians do not admit, namely, that the question of the validity of orders is asked here from a Catholic point of view, that the Catholic administration of the sacraments is therefore presupposed as the norm. It is with this presupposition in mind that we have asked whether the non-Catholic administration of the sacraments (the Lord's Supper and so on) may be considered valid even when it does not comply with the usual Catholic norms for celebrating the sacraments. Naturally, Protestant theologians will immediately reject this presupposition of our considerations. They will refuse to confront the ritual ceremonies of their Church with the question of their validity according to the Roman norms. Yet even such theologians might be interested in the question whether even the Catholic doctrine of sacraments might not eventually admit (even for cases other than baptism) the validity of Protestant orders and their exercise in a more comprehensive way than is usually the case in traditional Catholic theology and preaching.

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20

BOOK OF GOD – BOOK OF HUMAN BEINGS

In our innermost being there exists an uncanny awareness of our creaturely finitude, whether or not we admit this awareness or whether it has reached the surface of our consciousness. And just as in nature where the groundwater is fed by rain coming from above, so the hidden ground-knowledge of our creatureliness is fed ever anew by the experiences of humanity in its history and through its sciences. To this basic knowledge belong the mysterious experience we all have of being afloat in a world that is billions of light years old, and the experience therefore of the frightening relativity and insignificance of all that individuals, as well as humankind in its totality, do and experience in their concrete life situations, in the short history allotted to them within the enormous timespan of the universe.

HUMANKIND IN THE UNIVERSE

When we think of ourselves in relation to the universe, we seem like puny ants hauling a small pine needle a few inches at a time and considering this an important achievement without realizing how insignificant their laborious efforts are on the earth as a whole, which is itself only a tiny mote of a universe that extends over billions of light years and continues to expand in an enormous burst of energy. Viewed from this creaturely experience of our unimportance, whatever we do or undergo, whatever we consider as [215] happiness or fear as misfortune, all vanish into insignificance. Considered from a cosmic point of view, the most horrible thing that we might fear for all of humankind would be like a bit of friction in the enormous machinery of the universe. This might lead us to think that the whole history of humanity is basically nothing but a small, forlorn anthill in a universe that, among countless other things, has brought forth, incidentally as it were and quite indifferently, this three million years of human history to let it, after a brief time, wither away and die.

Yet the reality of the universe is in fact totally different from what this experience of our nothingness and forlornness in a cosmos ruthlessly going its way tries to make us believe. First, because this enormous power and energy that posits the cosmos in its reality and keeps unfolding it into an endlessly growing diversity is the most simple, most radical unity. This unity does not itself expand with the cosmos and thus disintegrate with it into multiplicity, but as one and as a whole, it is everywhere totally present at every point of the cosmos. This primordial power, which as an undivided totality subsists omnipotently everywhere at ever point, we call *God*.

However, this God, who in his entirety and omnipotence is present everywhere – even in the fir needle that the tiny ant is dragging along – has, in his power and overflowing love, freely decided to communicate himself, to insinuate himself entirely into this universe at a few seemingly forlorn points in it. Indeed, God has let this whole universe, in its apparently immeasurable and enormous size, come into being only so that the stage might be set for the occurrence of that divine self-communication to what is not divine, a self-communication that does not divide or scatter God, but bestows him entirely on the universe.

The points at which the universe is not only borne by God's undergirding power, but at which God is received in his unity and totality, are called human persons. To make possible this inconceivable marvel of divine, self-lavishing love, human beings must have already received from God an infinite openness and receptivity for God. The clearest sign of the fact that such an unlimited openness and receptivity constitutes human nature consists in the fact

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that human beings can objectively represent themselves to themselves, as well as all parts of their cosmic environment and the universe as a whole. It consists in the fact that in the tiny part of the universe inhabited by humans the whole universe finds a place, that in [216] their consciousness human persons are always at once parts of the universe and parts that know about the whole – they are "ants" in which the whole universe is enacted. Persons with this infinite capacity can and should accept and experience God in his infinity, incomprehensibility, and freedom; they should accept and experience God as such and possess him as the absolute future beyond which extend no more possibilities.

Are there still other places in the cosmos in which, individually, the cosmos as a whole is aware of itself and which also receive God's own infinity? We do not know. But we might in connection with our question think, parenthetically, of the angels. We do not have to think of them as realities that exist absolutely and from the start beyond a material cosmos. If we admit that they too have a relationship, albeit a more comprehensive one, to the material cosmos, then our question, whether on other planets there also exist personal spiritual beings who receive God's grace, would already have been anticipated. Or, at least, it would lose a special actuality and importance. Really, the cosmos, which at first sight frightens us so badly, crushing us into insignificance, helps us to realize the importance, the uniqueness, and the definitiveness of humankind and of human history, as Christian anthropology has always held.

MEETING OF GOD AND WORLD

We must now make clear that the event in which through humankind the cosmos is aware of itself and its origin itself has a history. This history is an ultimate ongoing unity in a multiplicity of single events, in which humanity gradually reaches self-awareness and the free self-communication of God. Ultimately, the whole cultural and religious history of humanity is identical with this history, in which humanity increasingly becomes aware of itself and of the fact that it is called to God's immediacy. This is not the place to discover more precisely how the enduring fundamental structure of this history stands in relation to the real changes and significant breaks that occur in it.

It may be quite difficult to make out whether and how this history of humanity is the history of an ascent and a progress toward higher perfection in the most diverse dimensions of being human. But Christian faith is convinced that, in the history of humankind, [217] there have been decisive breaks and periods that subdivide this whole history and direct it toward something definitive. If there were not, Christianity would not speak of the Old and the New Testament, of a covenant of God with Israel, of the new and eternal covenant of God with humanity in Christ.

From this basic perspective of the history of the cosmos and of humankind we Christians may say: The new and definitive stage of the history of the cosmos and of humanity consists in this, that at least in humanity (although maybe elsewhere too) the world has come to itself and to the conviction that its real end is its immediacy to its ultimate origin. And this is so, not only as a possibility presented to human freedom but also as a reality already existing for the future through the victorious power of God. In other words, although the history of the cosmos is always a history of freedom, this history has already entered a stage in which the arrival of the world near God, or the arrival in the world of God in his innermost reality, is already and irrevocably a fact. We might mention here that this was expressly asserted by the Second Vatican Council.

This meeting of God and world, which can no longer be nullified, is not only an event in the ultimate depths of created free subjects, it has also become manifest in collective history

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and, precisely in this way, has itself become irrevocable. This event of an historically borne, definitive unity of God (who freely communicates himself) and humanity (who freely accepts this communication) is called Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose from the dead. In Jesus Christ the dialogue between God and creature has reached an ultimate agreement that cannot be revoked. Because this Jesus is the unity between God's pledge and the acceptance of this pledge in faith, because Jesus always acts in an unbroken (by him) solidarity with individuals and with all humanity, this event of the indissoluble unity of God and world in Jesus is also a pledge of salvation for the whole of humanity.

In Jesus the irrevocable self-promise of God to the world, as the creative origin and ground of the cosmos and as its end that can really be reached in itself, has become a definitive event. It can no longer disappear from the world and its history. Thus in its eschatological irrevocability, it remains present in the indestructible community of those who believe: the Church. The Church is not just some kind of institution for the promotion of individual religiosity and virtuous living. She is first and last, in her faith, the [218] sacramental presence of God's self-promise to the world, a promise that, from God's side, is forever victorious.

HOLY SCRIPTURE AS CONSTITUTIVE OF THE PRIMITIVE COMMUNITY

Now we can finally arrive at an understanding of what we call Holy Scripture. This historical and irrevocable presence of the eschatological and irreversible salvific will of God has its origin in Jesus Christ and the primitive community around him. The historically continuing existence of this community of faith, as the presence of God's victorious salvation, is essentially related to the unique and unrepeatable event of the God-man and of the primitive community. Both of them remain forever the norm.

However, this does not mean that it was a particular religious phenomenon in the history of humanity, beside which other equally important phenomena and objectifications might exist. For Jesus and his original community are the event and the attestation of humanity's arrival near the infinite God, an arrival that is not merely a possibility but a reality. When we consider where humanity arrives, such an arrival has, of its very nature, no equivalent. And the historical attestation by Jesus Christ of this "having-arrived" has in fact, before him or next to him, no equivalent and it can have none after him, because beyond it nothing more can be said.

The primitive community given with Jesus, as the eschatological self-promise of God, must necessarily be constituted in the way in which such a community unavoidably had to have been constituted in its then cultural situation, and as it still has to be constituted, if it is to be the norm and the permanent standard for the faith community that continually renews itself generation after generation, as the sacramental salvific presence of God. This means concretely: One of the constitutive elements of this primitive community is a *book*. We say this without prejudging a further precision required by this statement, as will be shown later on.

In the cultural situation of humanity at that time, which had already reached the stage of writing and of putting together something like a book, a faith-community with a shared faith-consciousness is not conceivable except with the help of a book that has set down what is being believed and hoped. That book is [219] a medium through which individuals communicate in their faith-consciousness, enabling them to constitute a unity. It is the medium of language and, at that time undoubtedly, also the medium of writing and of books. One of the constitutive factors of the primitive community of those who believe in Jesus is the book. This is true of this community in itself and of its function as norm for the future.

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We must therefore consider this book as a constitutive element of the primitive community in its function of norm for all time to come. At the same time, this primitive community must be considered as the eschatological presence of God's promise of salvation irrevocably wrought by God's power. In this way, it seems to me that all that is being said about the Sacred Scripture of the Old and New Testaments – about God as the main author of Scripture, about inspiration, about Scripture as norm, about the inerrancy of Scripture – can be understood without recourse to the miraculous, which does not find credence today. It shows also how a reference to the sacred writings of other great cultural religions should not confuse Christians in their way of understanding the Holy Scriptures of Christianity.

HOLY SCRIPTURE – WORD OF GOD AND WORD OF HUMAN BEINGS

The Second Vatican Council expressly emphasizes that the human authors of the Holy Scriptures truly composed these writings. They did not merely write what was dictated to them by God, who alone would be their "author." We may here ignore the question of whether a Catholic theology of Scripture after the Second Vatican Council is able to speak of verbal inspiration. God did not dictate the Scriptures in the usually understood sense of one person dictating to another. There was no need for God to feed statements into the consciousness of the writers through a miraculous intervention. If the human authors really wrote the Scriptures, God's authorship of Holy Scripture, which is a clear doctrine of our faith, must be understood in a way that does not imply that God composed them. Human beings composed the Scriptures. The fact that God is their author must mean something else.

We are entitled to say what follows: God, in his unchallenged and powerful grace, which does not cancel human freedom, causes [220] the salvific event consisting of Christ and the primitive faith-community. God wills and guarantees that they will forever be the norm of faith. Now this primitive community cannot possibly exist nor be such a norm without the written objectification of its faith. If and insofar as this is true, it is also true that God is in a real way the author of Scripture, having already "inspired" it, and guarantees its "inerrancy" in the sense and with the limits that fit the proper task of Scripture. In other words: In the power of his grace God produces the primitive community. He produces it as a permanent norm for the future Church. He produces it as objectifying itself in special writings, which are the norm of the coming Church. In this way God produces these writings.

This leaves open all the possibilities of the individuality and freedom of the human composers in the primitive community as well as the fact that they were influenced by the situation in which they lived. These persons are the writers and their writings mirror their individuality. The writings originate through theological reflection on their experience of Jesus Christ, as the definitive and irrevocable self-promise of God in history. From the human point of view these writings often come into being fortuitously. They were not intentionally planned as a unity according to some basic system; they manifest a diversity of theological starting points, terminologies, and plausibilities. But even in their variety and differences they are valid witnesses to the faith of the primitive community. As such they were willed and brought forth by divine Providence, in God's perennial salvific grace, as the norm of faith for the coming Church throughout all generations.

Of course, besides the Scriptures transmitted to us, in the primitive community there were certainly other written objectifications of the faith of that community. Some of them would have been unfit to serve as normative objectifications of the faith of the primitive community, but others might have been accepted as such (for instance, the lost letters of Paul). The discernment made by the primitive community between written productions that would serve as norm and witness for later times and those that would not, in other words, the constitution

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and delimitation of the so-called canon of the Scriptures, must be attributed to the faith-instinct of the Church, as she moved from apostolic to post-apostolic times. We of later generations might notice that this discernment was very broadminded, and that as a result writings were admitted into the [221] canon that we might not easily admit today. On the other hand, we might say that it was so strict that even today, despite their considerable differences in points of view and in Christian warmth and depth, all these writings constitute a genuine corpus of Scripture, serving as a lucid testimony of the Christian faith.

We must now say something about the Old Testament. Insofar as it was the Holy Scripture of Jesus, and as it belongs to the prehistory of Christianity and is acknowledged as such by the Christ-event, the Old Testament too belongs to the Holy Scriptures of Christianity. Christians discover it through Christ. Would we be able to discover it today as divinely produced Holy Scripture independently of Christ? Or would we, without Christ, consider it for our own existence and salvation only as a document of the history of religions, a document stemming from the Middle East, although a very important one, unsurpassed in ancient history? We will not try to answer this question.

The Old Testament is Holy Scripture for us, in the concrete situation of our faith and salvation, insofar as it was the Holy Scripture of Jesus, insofar as it "is about Christ." This does not deny the further religious significance of the Old Testament. It only emphasizes the fact that Christians arrive at it only through Jesus, that we must always read it with an eye on him who was crucified and rose from the dead. Although God's salvific will emerges and is already manifest in it, the Old Testament as such does not yet attest that this salvific will of God has come down to us, not as an ambivalent possibility of salvation, but as triumphant and irreversible. That is why it is rightly called the Old Testament.

Scripture is a human word, a human product, insofar as in it human beings bear witness that God is no longer the mysterious ground of a history that presses on into the unforeseeable future, but that God hastens to meet history as its absolute future and introduces it into his own infinity and luminous sovereignty. As human word, Scripture does not bear witness to what God, in his creative power, does here and there to finite reality. But Scripture is also God's word, and as God's word, it bears witness to God himself, as infinite gift to the world. Such an attestation is possible only if it is made by God himself, in a unique manner that goes beyond God's usual creative activity.

If Scripture did not, through God himself (through what we call the light of faith), bear witness to God, as a gift that victoriously [222] makes its way, it would speak only of realities that are distinct from God, even if it spoke of them in their relation to God. In that case the content of its statements would not differ basically from content that, in principle, might also be reached by unaided human words. And then that essential difference from other human words, which Scripture itself attests, would no longer exist. Of course, this essential difference between Scripture as God's word and human words can ultimately be conceived and defended only if we grasp Scripture's essential relation to the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. For only in these eschatological salvific events is the triumph of God's self-promise to the world presented historically and therefore in words. The words of Scripture are, when we read them with faith, once more animated by this self-communication of God. Thus they are not only words about God (although authorized by God) and thus only human words. They are indeed words of God. If Scripture is to be God's word reaching us and mediating God, it must, of course, also speak of humanity; it must also be human speech about humans. Thus human word about humanity has, in Scripture as elsewhere, diverse dimensions and degrees of binding force, in and with which human beings can speak about themselves and bear witness to themselves and their history. Thus much may be said in Scripture about humanity that may be important and, in some cases, remain forever valid for them. But all of this derives its ultimate binding power and importance from the fact that it happens in the

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context of the statement that God, in his infinity and absolute sovereignty, has not only offered himself to human beings, making possible their salvation, but also victoriously realizes this possibility. Every Christian anthropology that is intended to agree with Scripture should never forget this basic principle, and it should always remember that, because of human historicity, what it tells us about humanity does not always have the same degree of binding force.

HOLY SCRIPTURE AS A BOOK

Scripture as God's word, the Christian book of the Old and the New Testaments, was certainly, for all essentials, already present with and in the Church of apostolic times, that Church which is the lasting normative beginning of the eschatological stage of salvation [223] history. But when we start speaking of the *book* of Holy Scripture, we should not overlook the fact that this book as a book has had a further history, in which its proper nature has been realized even more fully than before. Scripture is a message for all humanity and for each human person. This feature of Scripture is more radically realized, when it can immediately reach everybody everywhere. This has happened only since the time Scripture became a book that could be so easily reproduced that it could become everybody's book, that is, through the momentous breakthrough in our cultural history signified by the name Gutenberg.

Before the invention of printing Scripture existed, but not Scripture as *book* for *everyone*. That is Scripture's purpose, although, on the conscious level, the Catholic Church has clearly grasped this fact only through a long and laborious process, and said expressly, for the first time, in the Second Vatican Council that she wishes Scripture to be in everybody's hands. Formerly she treated Scripture almost like some secret writing that should be used only by experts in theology and in official preaching. It was only at the end of the fifteenth century that Scripture entered the stage of the full realization of its own nature. Every book, every library, every bookshop tells those for whom history derives its basic meaning from the fact that it is the salvation history of eternal life that the word of God, as incarnated in human words and hence in the written word, has reached the fullness of its nature.

Let us, at the end of these considerations, return once more to their start. The immense and breathtaking history of the cosmos derives its ultimate meaning from the fact that within this history there may emerge an immeasurable quantity of seemingly minute histories of spirit and freedom, in each of which the history of the cosmos comes to itself. And this history of spirit and freedom that occurs countless times as the coming-to-itself of the cosmos is at the same time the history of the self-communication of God as absolute future to this history of the freedom and the spirit of the cosmos.

The final outcome of this whole history of spirit and freedom, in which the cosmos comes to itself, and keeps striving for God, is called the everlasting kingdom of God. But in this history of the cosmos, of the spirit, and of freedom, the irrevocable victory of history is already attested and has already started. This beginning of the blessed fulfillment of the cosmos is called Jesus Christ, [224] the one who passed through death to resurrection. The permanent presence of this victorious promise of God in Jesus Christ) is called the Church of those who believe in Jesus, who love him and love God in him, and who, full of hope, die with him into the incomprehensibility of God

Countless are the witnesses of this blessed fulfillment. In the reality of what is attested is already present. Because of our bodily being God has provided an incarnational objectification of these witnesses. We call it Holy Scripture. It must, of course, be read with faith, else it would be only a human book that would perish in the fire of doomsday. Its word

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must ever and again be enacted in the sacramental word and in the word of preaching. However, because the history of humankind is not only human history but also the history of God (unconfused and undivided), there exists in it not only sculptures, buildings, poems, and books, in which human beings express their own nature in order to realize it, but also the man Jesus and his history, recorded in a book that must truly be called God's book, because in it God pledges himself to us as our eternal life.

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[225-227]

VOLUME 22

LIST OF SOURCES

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Minderheit bleiben."

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[1]

PART ONE

Christian Life

[3]

1

ANXIETY AND CHRISTIAN TRUST IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our point of departure will be the customary distinction between fear and anxiety. Fear refers to a definite object that we know and that appears threatening to us. Thus fear is a relationship between the conscious subject and a specific, "categorical" object within consciousness.

THE THEOLOGICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN ANXIETY AND FEAR

At this point, of course, the theologian might ask whether one can "fear" God, whether the expression "the fear of God" and similar ones are correct or whether they are used inaccurately. Since the word and the concept "God" occupy a definite, individual place within our consciousness and thus understandably provoke feelings of fear and awe, the expression "the fear of God" can of course be readily understood and its use is justified. However, if we proceed from the understanding that "God" does not really mean a particular object viewed individually which in the ordinary way is present alongside other individual contents of our consciousness and the objects presumed to be there, but rather that "God" means a reality that is totally unique, incommensurable, all-encompassing but itself never encompassable, already antecedent to every individual specification, a reality that implies an impenetrable mystery, it is understandable that the expressions "fear of God" and "awe of God" can be used only in a terminology that is highly inaccurate.

[4] If we understand it in this way, this reality of God (despite the word *God*) is not a reality that comes to rest as an individual object within our conceptual systems. The subject's original relationship to God does not come about in the otherwise usual manner of knowing an object (Australia, for example), but rather it is present as spirit and freedom in the human being's original transcendentality which underlies all individual knowledge as the condition which makes this knowledge possible. So this relationship is one in respect to which the word and the concept "God" within our consciousness can only mean a subsequent secondary representation standing for what is originally meant. Only in a terminology that is highly inaccurate can one speak of "fear of God" or "awe of God." The expression "anxiety of God" would actually be more accurate, but this expression is not common and could be introduced only with difficulty.

But if theology has to treat of anxiety and fear, and when it does the two words have to be distinguished, and if theology treats of God and the human being's relationship to God, then strictly speaking it is obliged to speak of anxiety and not of fear. One could even go so far as to say that when the expression "fear of God" is used, and this expression is taken in a really strict sense rather than in a broad and imprecise sense, then we are talking about a God who

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does not even exist. In the strict sense of the word one can really fear only an idol which from the outset is viewed as a particular, albeit extremely threatening individual reality existing along with many others that are equally justified.

It is of course annoying and impractical that we cannot really use the expression "anxiety of God," since in the ordinary use of language anxiety is understood as something that has to do more or less with a nameless and bewildering terror of an interiorly destructive nature. But of course this should have nothing to do with anxiety before God (if we may use such an expression). Nor can we get around this linguistic difficulty by speaking merely of awe, adoration, a feeling of absolute dependence, submission, and so on. It is not as though words like these that characterize the relationship human beings are supposed to have to God were not justified or that they ought to be eliminated in favor of the word *anxiety*. All of them are justified and perhaps, too, in the ordinary way of speaking about human beings' relationship to God, they are more readily understood and more useful for proclamation. However, since the word *anxiety* does exist, and since the thing that is meant by this word and that has to be described more exactly also exists, the question [5] whether and how this anxiety itself, properly understood, is relevant to those dimensions of the human being that are the concern of Christian faith and theology is an indispensable one.

Necessary Distinctions between Fear and Anxiety

But before delving deeper into this question we have to consider further what we said at the beginning. We have made a distinction between "categorical" fear and "objectless transcendental" anxiety. There are transcendental conditions for the possibility of knowledge (and of freedom), which are nonobjective and therefore conscious in a way that can be overlooked. The question can be raised as to whether and in what way this spiritual transcendentality of the human being, without its being actualized by being grasped as a particular object, can be conscious for itself alone in mystical states, in inward communion or in some other way; whether and how the empty, unlimited consciousness, oriented to being as such (or to "nothingness") can be present to itself alone. This question will not be dealt with here. But then we must presuppose and say – and we have every right to do this – that in the normal case of everyday consciousness transcendental anxiety exists in a synthesis with an individual conscious object of fear.

If for Kant concrete sense perception and the abstract concept always and of necessity belong together, if for Thomas Aquinas a particular intellectual concept cannot be known except in a *conversio ad phantasma*, then the same holds true for the relationship between anxiety and fear. Anxiety is experienced only in a synthesis with fear (at least in the ordinary case, and that is the only one we want to talk about here). In the individual case the relationship between the two realities is quite varied. A person can have fear without adverting in a really reflexive way to the fundamental condition of existence with its characteristic anxiety which this fear actually implies. Even when vegetables are being sold in a market, the transcendentally necessary logic is more or less present and operative even though the woman selling the vegetables does not "notice" it and has never even heard of such a thing. And conversely, in an experience of fear that exists without being reflected upon, the bottomless insecurity of existence as such can occupy the consciousness so completely and nameless anxiety can spread so far that one no longer even notices what the original source of the anxiety was. These variations of the more precise relationship between fear and anxiety in their [6] differences and their unity are subjects of psychology and existential philosophy and not so much the tasks of theology.

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Anxiety Concerning Salvation or the Ultimate Security of Existence before God?

If theologians are to speak of anxiety and have of course to put this in relationship to God, they are confronted with a difficult situation. To people today it seems obvious beyond dispute that one may not and need not have any anxiety before God. They think that anxiety before God is inherently an improper, foolishly pagan perversion of the human being's relationship to God. They perceive God (even though this perception is not necessarily justified) as the one who gives the ultimate guarantee that existential anxiety is unnecessary. On the other hand, religious people, relying on Scripture, find it a matter of course to speak of the holy fear of God, of working out their salvation in fear and trembling, of the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom. They view the overcoming of anxiety about salvation and of sinfulness and mortality as precisely the achievement of that faith which alone saves. And so they presume that this anxiety about salvation is always present in human beings who do not sinfully repress the truth of their existence.

Are we, then, threatened by God in such a way that we would have to have anxiety before him? The average, everyday Christian whose mental makeup is not overly complicated will be of the opinion that God can only be threatening if one sins. However, good-living Christians avoid sin and so they do not have to have any anxiety before God. In respect to definite individual sins, fear before God is, then, a specific matter that can actually be cleared up by the simple expedient of contrition and the avoidance of sin in the future. But this, then, is the peace with God that excludes anxiety and fear. Therefore spasms of fear and anxiety are to be struggled against; it is possible to overcome them over and over again by courageous trust in God and in one's own integrity and to dismiss them from one's consciousness. In this way the ordinary Christian could virtually arrive at that state of mind which is obvious from the outset to secular people today; namely, that before God, if he exists, there is no need to have any anxiety because God is, after all, by definition, the guarantee of the ultimate security of existence. How can we find a way out of this awkward terminology and the obscurity of the matter itself?

[7]

EXISTENTIELL INSECURITY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF CONTINGENCY AS THE REASON FOR THE EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY OF HUMAN BEINGS

We proceed on the assumption that human beings experience an ultimate insecurity of their reality, of their existence. This insecurity of existence as such need not necessarily be understood as something negative. It can initially be perceived as simply a fact that is so universal and inevitable that there is nothing particularly surprising about it. We do not originate from ourselves. We have had a beginning and we did not establish and decide this beginning ourselves. We are constantly thrown back upon and dependent upon realities, situations, and helps that are not our own and that are not ours to dispose of as we see fit. We are proceeding toward an end that we ourselves cannot determine (not even by suicide). As free agents we would like to take up this or that position toward everything in our lives. But this "everything" has not been chosen by us; rather, it is given to us and taken from us without our being consulted. We are people who have been put here without being consulted, dependent people who came from somewhere but who are not able to determine this origin and future ourselves. Even the ultimate free subjectivity is experienced as something that is not self-evident, something that is limited, that functions on the basis of elements outside ourselves, that cannot achieve pure reflection, that is condemned to itself. In brief, human beings experience themselves as those who are not secure in themselves alone, as beings who

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are not self-evident.

Human beings can repress this experience. People can forget this contingency in the face of the variety of things that make up their day-to-day life experience right up to their highest ideals, those, however, that they themselves have reflected upon. But the experience is there. It constantly thrusts itself forward. This experience of contingency can certainly be given different reflexive interpretations. It can be interpreted as the experience of createdness; atheistic philosophies can give it some other name. But it is there and it inexorably bears the character of what may be called anxiety in distinction to fear. This anxiety need not be a particular, physiologically and psychologically determinable individual event, and it cannot be such in its proper nature as distinct from its objectified reflection. As such it need not even be reflected upon or judged as something negative for reflection. It is entirely possible for human beings to flee into the routine of everyday life and to brush aside the desire of this anxiety to manifest itself as reprehensible depression, [8] as a mental quirk. They are able to live with this anxiety in a happy-go-lucky way and it is possible that they will not even find a word for it.

In the light of a Christian anthropology of free subjects who as such are not only capable of performing this or that act in the objective order but also have free disposition over themselves in a radical way oriented to ultimate validity, we must say that this continuing condition of createdness, this origin of our existence from elements not at our disposal, and the anxiety that this implies, can exist either in the form of something merely given antecedently for freedom (for those who do not have the use of reason) or in the form of acceptance by freedom (usually without theoretical reflection) or in the form of rejection, of protest on the part of freedom. In the light of traditional ontology (which cannot be presented here) and Christian optimism motivated by the divine revelation of salvation, we may say that in general human beings accept themselves in this origin that is not at their disposal, despite all individual protests and despite the moral and objective shortcomings and individual contradictions to their nature (sins as distinct from “sin”) which give these protests their concrete form, and that they freely accept the final existential anxiety that this also implies. And so we may say that they “are in agreement with themselves and satisfied.”

But even then their existential anxiety is not simply removed. Even then their origin and their standpoint is not at their disposal. But their anxiety is in a state (difficult to describe because it is quite common) of release; it is a matter of course; it takes the form of an inner conviction, requiring no additional reflection, that we will not fall even though we are not holding on tightly. It is the conviction that the things that are not at our disposal and not reflected upon are ultimately more worthy of our trust than all of our clear calculations, that the obscure origin is more self-evident than what we think we can penetrate with our knowledge, that ultimately it is not better and more secure if we think that we alone should have free disposal of ourselves.

EXISTENCE IN ANXIETY AND EXISTENTIAL FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN TRUST

This is not the place to give a more detailed description of what has just been said and to transpose it into theological concepts with their [9] numerous differentiations. We shall confine ourselves to the following statement. If our origin, which is not at our disposal, is the result of the creative act of the God who is and will always remains incomprehensible, who (both in fact and in freely given grace) sets us on a course whose goal is immediacy to himself (known as grace and the beatific vision), this fundamental redemptive acceptance of our existence in anxiety can develop into three fundamental Christian existential components:

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faith, hope, and love.

We cannot and need not occupy ourselves here with the question whether and how these three basic conditions are to be distinguished, or whether and how under different aspects they always mean one and the same totality of the redemptive acceptance of existence (as it is established by God in grace). If we consider the ordinary unity of these three basic acts within the single totality of the realization of existence, without thereby denying that a real distinction can be made among these three basic existential acts in the process of the realization of existence (the process of justification), we can also view this single totality under the aspect of hope; then we can describe this single totality as a final, comprehensive trust in this existence which is given anterior to freedom, which freedom cannot dispose of as it sees fit, and therefore which is an existence in anxiety.

This trust as understood here is not trust that we place in this or that individual element *in* our existence that might appear to us as something we can hold onto. Rather, it is a free acquiescence in existence in its totality and oneness in which the subject as such assumes the risk of self-abandonment. As we have already said, this single basic act of existence known as trust is not of course something that ordinarily happens in the isolation of mystical experience as such. Rather, it is accomplished by turning to the concrete tasks that are posed to freedom in dealing with individual material, social, and historical realities. These three aspects of our realities, as we have them in the world, for their part condition one another reciprocally, but this does not cause them to lose their individual identities. It follows obviously from this, by the way, that faith and love (despite their movement in the direction of the incomprehensible infinity of God as he is in himself) are realized in historical encounters which reach their unsurpassable culmination in the believing and loving human being's relationship to Jesus Christ.

[10]

TRUST AND DESPAIR AS ACTS OF HUMAN FREEDOM

The ("transcendental") trust that exists in union with an anxiety that is just as aprioristic must be described in further detail. As we have already said, traditional ontology (which views evil as a deficiency of being and not as another kind of being in a Manichaean duality, although this Manichaeism is a constant threat in the form of a latent reality that is not reflected upon) and Christian optimism (which proclaims the eschatological victory of God's love in the consummation of his kingdom and which in hope, and not in theoretical analysis, transcends all the limits that can be possibly be placed upon it) do not view human freedom as something that is confronted by two equally valid, albeit radically opposed possibilities. Furthermore, they do not view this freedom as something that would choose between two such radically opposed possibilities without its being for its part encompassed by the free sovereignty of God, who wills the good, a thing which in no way detracts from this freedom. Nor should one say that the sovereign and free God would necessarily require a hell so that both human freedom and the manifest character of God's justice might be upheld. But despite this, Christians must not be so presumptuous as to construct in theory or in fact a system for their existence which would absolutely exclude the possibility of saying a no to God which would mean eternal loss. Therefore, one must always allow for the possibility that the insecurity of existence over which we have no control and which implies anxiety might also lead to a free protest against this existence, and that the primordial trust as described, having been freely rejected, one might choose despair rather than trust.

What name we should give to this despair, the ways in which it appears, whether tacit or overt, unreflected or systematized, the wide variety of forms it assumes in its involvement with history which is necessary for it, too (forms that perhaps go by quite different names and

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only with great difficulty can be recognized as expressions of a final, free, culpable despair) – all of these things cannot be discussed here. We must leave this to a descriptive psychology that will have to try at least indirectly to detect this despair which can be the object of this psychology only to a limited degree because this despair as such is itself not an individual object within consciousness but rather an experience of the totality of existence as such.

The ultimate fundamental condition of existence (this primordial trust or this final despair) can be reflected upon to a certain degree; [11] then it also becomes present in the consciousness as a particular quasi-categorical object, whereby, however, the really basic existentiell attitude and its quasi-categorical objective reality need not coincide, but rather they can contradict one another (all of which is the presupposition for the impossibility of our "judging" ourselves of which Scripture speaks). And so it is quite possible, for example, for people to construct a theoretical system of the absurdity of existence, while at the same time being in their real fundamental condition hoping and trusting persons who do not even notice the contradiction between their innermost realization of existence and their reflexive system of existence.

The converse is also possible. In their theoretical reflection and on the level of the objective reality of their actions, people think that they must have trust and that they do, in fact, have trust, while in truth their innermost fundamental condition is one of sheer despair, which of course can then assume the widest variety of forms. This implies that it is not possible for concrete individual human beings to have a reflexive certainty concerning the existence of this primordial trust.

In theological terms this means that human beings (according to the Council of Trent) cannot be absolutely certain whether they are in the state of grace. They do not even have the obligation and the right to entertain the desire to bring about, more or less by force, such an absolute certitude in itself. Just the mere hope that we have this trust, that we have this primordial hope as distinct from a certainty subject to our control and with which we could have sovereign disposal over our existence, is an intrinsic element of that confidence whereby in anxiety we may let go of ourselves in a way that is without anxiety and yet not fall (or fall into the hands of him and of him alone whom we call God and about whom to know in faith is granted to us only when this trust is realized).

This kind of trust that determines the whole of our existence cannot of its very nature be brought about by putting together individual contents of our consciousness either. We do this when we reflect on these contents, but in so doing we do not bring about real trust itself but only its reflexive representation within our consciousness. Real trust can be discerned only indirectly (in that we once again trust and are not compelled to make an explicit theoretical determination and analysis), and so this is why it is experienced as "grace."

Ultimately we come to a state of equanimity, despite the ever-present anxiety. Existential anxiety and anxiety about salvation mean ultimately [12] one and the same thing, since "salvation" does not mean a particular event within existence; rather, it is the totality of an existence that has succeeded, an existence that as such and taken as a whole is a threatening one, and not a neutral terrain on which happy and unhappy events occur. Our equanimity comes from the conviction that when all is said and done nothing can really happen to us, and in this sense we are secure (despite the insecurity of existence which can become secure only when we accept its insecurity).

We examine our conscience whose individual contents and objects are always assessed as symptoms and manifestations of our actual free fundamental condition. We are at peace with our conscience; we reject what we disapprove of; and we have the conviction that while this contrition does not actually cause the forgiveness of our guilt, it is itself the sign that the forgiving grace of God, who alone can forgive real guilt that once freely incurred cannot otherwise be overcome by us, is reaching us. We experience in ourselves (despite all the

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anxiety) a lightheartedness, a feeling of relief and a cheerfulness (for no apparent reason), all of which gives us the right to hope that in the depth of our being that cannot be penetrated by the categorical judgments of our reflection everything is as it should be, that there is a peace which, as Scripture says, surpasses all understanding. We turn lovingly to our neighbor (without again subjecting this love to a test of truth) and in so doing we forget ourselves and are at peace. The apparently overwhelming anxiety that we shall never escape from ourselves and therefore that we shall be lost is a condition that for its part is imbedded in the truth that God is greater than our hearts, that he knows everything, and that even when our own strength fails, we are really forgiven and this failure is transformed from a burden into a relief.

All of the things that have been said here about a certain possibility of ascertaining this salvific primordial trust should not of course be looked upon as recipes with which the father confessor or psychotherapist can produce this primordial trust or demonstrate its existence with logical certainty. This is just as impossible as wanting to produce faith itself by having recourse to arguments for the trustworthiness of faith. All of these things can be nothing more than an appeal to the freedom that trusts, whereby, however, this act of freedom can and ultimately even must occur in such a way that for its part does not seek reassurance of itself, and its willingness to do without this reassurance is part of its own nature.

[13]

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL PASTORAL CARE

All that has been said has primarily nothing to do with a psychology geared to the therapeutic treatment of demonstrable psychic disorders. What has been said about an anxiety at the root of created being applies to the most ordinary of people who in a matter-of-fact way declare that they have no anxiety whatsoever and that they just take life as it comes and enjoy it. On the other hand, things that are the proper and praiseworthy concern of psychotherapy can have nothing to do with this fundamental anxiety, and so it is neither proper nor necessary for this psychotherapy to claim that it brings about in freedom the fundamental trust in existence that is supposed to extend to all the remaining fundamental anxiety. It is of course entirely possible that phenomena which fall under the scope and treatment of psychotherapy are ultimately rooted in a person’s refusal of free primordial trust in existence as a whole. But this need not necessarily be the case.

An example might help to illustrate this more clearly. If someone suffers from insomnia after surreptitiously committing a “deliberate murder,” and if this murder can be quite properly interpreted as the categorical objectification of a freely chosen despair concerning the meaning of existence, the insomnia that psychotherapy has to treat is certainly related to this actual origin of the phenomenon requiring clinical treatment. But it is altogether conceivable that a profound conversion to an innocent trust in existence will still not cure this insomnia; conversely, it is just as conceivable that this insomnia can be cured without overcoming the actual guilt. For while it is true that there is a connection between cause and effect, the effect can remain even though the original cause is no longer present, and under certain circumstances an effect can be overcome by means other than simply removing the first cause. This is the reason why psychotherapy and pastoral care are in the theological sense interdependent. However, they are not identical and one cannot replace the other.

It is obvious that in this brief essay we cannot go into further detail about the relationship between psychotherapy and pastoral care, even though this would be a highly rewarding task. However, we do want to bring out one point. All of psychotherapy can concern itself with all the psychic disorders that are accessible to it. It may even attempt to remove those disorders whose actual cause must be presumed to be in an area beyond its competence. On the other

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hand, it should not be the purpose [14] of theological pastoral care to undertake a healing process in respect to phenomena that fall under the scope and analysis of psychotherapy, not even if it is justified in hoping that success in its own proper sphere of activity will produce results that will be psychotherapeutically beneficial. Since the goal of pastoral care (for example, in the sacrament of penance and in penitential sermons) is this salvific primordial trust, it is of its nature essentially different from the psychotherapeutic art of healing, even if it is able to avail itself of ordinary human, and hence psychotherapeutic means when they can be useful. Its proper means, however, are the word of proclamation and its culminations in the history of the individual, the sacraments. This word is not only the word of a human being, just like any other human word, but, strictly speaking, the word of God, since the human word exists (to some degree in a hypostatic union analogous to that in Christology) in union (not identity) with the grace of God in which God in his own reality offers himself to human freedom as the ground of this primordial trust, as its source and its goal.

This real offer, once accepted, is experienced (which does not mean that it is grasped with the certainty of reflection) in the experience of a human transcendentality accepted in hope free of anxiety, which does not tend toward nothingness but rather toward God's reality which cannot be encompassed and so will remain a mystery.

The refusal of trust in the face of and despite the insecurity of existence which is called despair finds expression in the widest variety of forms and shapes corresponding to the objective categorical reality within which and on the basis of which this refusal is actualized. These multiple forms of despair must be classified and described by psychology, depth psychology, and categorical moral theology. In doing this, one should bear in mind that an experience of the psychological and moral fathomlessness and impenetrability of existence which presses in upon a person intensely and floods the day-to-day consciousness – an experience that can be very much physiologically conditioned – is not yet despair in a theological sense, unless it were freely accepted by freely rejecting that ultimately divine security which for its part encompasses this experience of extreme insecurity. Whether this security is accepted in hope or whether it is really rejected, if only tacitly, is something which, as we have already said, cannot for its part be ascertained with reflexive certainty. (The Council of 'Trent was of the opinion that according to Luther's theology of faith this kind of reflexive certainty would have to be forced and could be forced, although Luther himself, of course, [15] was aware of the constant challenge to faith, to trust in the fulfillment of salvation.)

In order to explain the radical nature of this lack of certitude ("the dark night of the senses and of the spirit"), one need not maintain that it implies a real and ultimate abandonment by God (a participation in such an abandonment by God as is attributed – quite wrongly, ultimately – to Jesus on the cross). One could readily say that given such a presupposition, this abandonment by God would be beyond the realm of experience. A particularly intense description of such phenomena belongs to the field of mystical theology (even if in their most proper essentials they are simply a part of human existence).

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2

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE CHRISTIAN

We shall now address ourselves to the problem of the moral justification of nuclear weapons as a political and military instrument. This limitation of the subject must not be misunderstood. The question of ethical responsibility raised by other kinds of armaments and methods of waging war confronts the human conscience with extremely difficult problems. For human beings are in conscience responsible for every kind of violence and suffering that they inflict on their fellow human beings.

However, we must first make the following objective observation. In conventional armaments we have possibilities ranging from collective self-defense, which in fact has always been permitted by the Church under the limitations of the just war teaching, right up to a holocaust which conventional weapons can cause and whose effects differ only in quantitative degree from a nuclear holocaust. But in the practical and concrete order there is a qualitative distinction (one that is still repressed in the consciousness of many Christians) in respect to the moral judgments of war today as opposed to earlier times because the threat of nuclear war as opposed to any previous war, due to its immediate and long-term consequences, affects not only the nations waging the war but also the entire human family and its future. However, that still does not mean that there has ever been a conventional war or that there can even be one today that really raises no problem for the Christian conscience.

[17]

JUST WAR TEACHING

Just war teaching – however much it intended to restrict war's murderous consequences and sought to uphold or restore justice as opposed to violence – has in the reality of history also served as a salve for the conscience which enabled Christian kings and emperors, Christian generals right on down to Christian foot soldiers to carry on their wars and colonial conquests without any noticeable scruples, to the extent that they recognized power politics at all as a profound moral problem. There have always been people who have equated the power to act in a particular way with the moral right to do so. For example, we need only call to mind the highly developed cultures that were sacrificed to the wars of colonial conquest in the age of Charles V or Philip II, the Christian generals who wore hair shirts and went on pilgrimages and yet at the same time waged wars; of them we must ask the question today how it was possible to wage wars like these while at the same time probably maintaining what is known as a "good" conscience, for the most part unchallenged. Consider the strange attitude that enabled even devout Christians to justify Hitler's war of aggression against the Soviet Union as a crusade against Bolshevism.

Therefore solicitude for the future of the human race demands today that we have the existentiell courage to pose anew the question concerning the forms and limits of our resistance when confronted with the problem of maintaining or restoring the right to life, justice, and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. When reconsidering the question we must not simply proceed on the assumption that the conventional evaluation of the wars that have been waged in the history of the Christian West was absolutely correct. We must take the risk of departing from traditional paradigms for the interpretation of war since they are more an outgrowth of the political role played by Christianity beginning with the epoch of Constantine than a reflection of the Christian churches' basic truths of faith.

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If people expect theological casuistry based on a conventional understanding of war to tell them under what circumstances, with what weapons, and within what limits even a *modern* war may be waged, they have not yet faced the gravity of the problem and the perilousness of the historical times in which they live. Traditional attitudes toward war are simply adopted as a point of departure for distinguishing between responsible and irresponsible actions without asking whether these traditional attitudes have been rendered obsolete, at least by the course [18] of history even if they were supposed to have been justified in earlier times. People refuse to recognize the extreme danger that war in the modern world will result in an explosion of extreme and boundless violence – comparable to a nuclear chain reaction that has gone out of control – that will sweep all the sophisticated distinctions of casuistry onto the rubbish heap of history.

Furthermore, people are not sufficiently aware at the present moment of human history that ultimately every individual's decision of conscience is made alone and is answerable to the incomprehensible God; therefore, despite all of its obvious dependence on the historical circumstances in which it is made, it may not of itself always appeal to this dependence and let others make this decision for it. Human beings' dignity consists in a responsibility to God that they cannot delegate to others. But people who have experienced the loneliness entailed in this ultimate and direct responsibility to God and who have to fear their own capacity for error as well as their culpable self-deception will not consider it to be a presumptuous encroachment on their own freedom of decision if they are required to form their conscience in the community of the Church and as hearers of the word of God.

This formation of conscience on a question of such fundamental importance as has been indicated above really cannot consist in the unreflected adoption of, for example, the casuistry of a learned theological commission or in the adoption of reassuring declarations of individual ecclesiastical personalities or institutions, much less of political parties. It cannot consist in the opinion that the problem of present-day armaments is much too complicated for average Christians, that it is in fact beyond their responsibility and therefore must be left to the responsibility of experts. Rather, the formation of conscience must consist in guiding people to a fresh experience of the basic tenets of Christian faith.

REJECTION OF NUCLEAR ARMAMENT

After these preliminary observations we come to the presentation of our own position on nuclear weaponry. This position has two parts.

1. The acknowledgement of the theoretical uncertainty of *every* definite position on this question and the evaluation of the opponents of one's own position that this uncertainty implies.

[19] 2. The decision for a definite position. We reject unconditionally the use of nuclear weapons regardless of whether these weapons are to be used offensively or defensively.

As a consequence of this decision we reject nuclear armament and we opt for unilateral steps toward disarmament, without waiting for guarantees or reciprocal action from the other side. Our decision for this position arises ultimately from a Christian motivation since a decision must be made despite the theoretical uncertainty of a definite opinion, and this Christian decision can be made.

Epistemological Uncertainties

In our opinion, ways of securing peace and political freedom that are really effective and

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justifiable from a Christian viewpoint fall under the competence of human prudence and discretion, and such questions cannot really be clearly settled on a purely theoretical level. To maintain the opposite, in our opinion, amounts to overconfidence in the rational argumentation put forth in support of one or the other ways of securing peace. More will be said on this matter when the arguments are presented which the human conscience can appeal to in favor of nuclear disarmament, even that form of disarmament which commits us to taking "unilateral steps." Among Christians one should from the outset not attempt to conjure up the possibility of absolute theoretical certainty on questions such as these, and one should refrain from using such false certainties as a means of imputing ignorance, false pacifism, or (vice versa) bellicose desires to people who have a different opinion. This by no means implies that the definite position that we ourselves have chosen can be rejected as arbitrary and the Christian who opposes our position may not assert that this position cannot arise from a Christian motivation.

As a matter of fact, the epistemological situation that we are considering here in connection with nuclear armament is not unknown in Christian moral theology. In principle, Christian moral theologians have always been aware that both for the individual and for the churches there are ethical questions that cannot be resolved in a way that is really certain and beyond doubt, questions that are disputed even among Christians with a basic Christian attitude without their coming to a commonly accepted conviction, questions, however, which nonetheless ineluctably require a definite decision this way or that way on the part [20] of those who have to take a course of action and so in a certain sense have to be decided *absolutely*.

For such a situation where a theoretical decision is impossible, moral theologians, and especially teachers of the spiritual life, have sought to develop norms and rules of conduct to assist individual Christians in arriving at a practical decision for which they can answer to God despite this theoretical uncertainty. Among Christians it has been the conviction, at least in general, that in cases where a theoretical decision is impossible individual Christians may not simply decide their course of action arbitrarily. Despite this theoretical uncertainty, they can and must make a definite, concrete decision in another way, one that is not simply left to their own individual fancy. In this context one relied on the gifts of prudence enlightened by grace, on the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, on inspiration. In any case, however, it is acknowledged that in such questions that cannot be theoretically resolved Christians in their concrete decisions can appeal to the ultimate sources of Christian motivation, to the actual decision of their conscience, and they may also attempt to explain this to others as far as this is possible.

The Second Vatican Council's pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (no. 43) states explicitly that parties involved in a dispute within the Church (therefore not one party or the other, but both parties) may appeal to a Christian motivation. The only thing that is forbidden in such disputes is for one party to claim official church approval for itself alone. A sober reserve is required of both sides in assessing their own competence in the area in question and their own motivation. In what follows it will become clear that we are not talking about an objectively impossible attempt to "harmonize" different decisions of conscience in respect to the concrete questions of nuclear armaments.

Preventing War

We must first point out that all reasonable people and all Christians are asking themselves *how a nuclear war can be prevented.* Christians, therefore, have no disagreement on the point that all possible measures must be taken to prevent such a war. The problem at issue is how

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to do this in a way that promises the greatest possible success. Given this presupposition, we say frankly and honestly that we do not impute bad faith or [21] mere unreasonableness to those who endorse nuclear armaments under definite conditions as a way of securing peace, even though we cannot subscribe to the illusion that everyone involved in the process of nuclear armament really has an honest and upright conscience.

But as far as Christians are concerned, we further presume that they recognize the teaching of the churches condemning total war itself under any and all circumstances. We know that the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 80) calls *every* act of war aimed indiscriminately at destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their populations a crime against God and humankind. A nuclear war essentially consisting of a chain of such actions, is, then, absolutely rejected. In the context of what is meant this holds true not only for the readiness and willingness to conduct a first nuclear strike in certain circumstances. In this condemnation it is obviously a question of the objective structure of such actions themselves which cannot be justified by any intention, therefore not even by the intention of defense. This unconditional rejection of such acts of war, which comprise the essence of a total war, must also be considered, each in itself, by those Christians and reasonable people who today consider further nuclear armament to be a meaningful way precisely of *avoiding* a total war. These people must, however, face the dilemma of how deterrence is to be maintained in a "credible" way against an adversary who also possesses nuclear armaments if, as has been presumed, they are not willing under any circumstances to engage in a nuclear war.

REASONS FOR A POSITION OF PACIFISM

In what follows we want to try to present the reasons for a "pacifist" position. Some of them are based on objective human considerations; others have their origin in ultimate Christian motivations. In our opinion these reasons have a right to serious consideration on the part of a really Christian conscience. Whether they move such a conscience to a concrete decision for this position or whether it decides on the basis of human and Christian motivation for the opposite course of action is something that can be decided only in the suprarational way that has been indicated above.

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Rational-Humane Objection

It is our deliberate intention to present the rational-humane objection to nuclear armament in question form because we do not want to convey the impression that our argumentation is necessarily beyond all doubt. The reader who here expects fully worked out theses and answers instead of questions should also be aware that problem areas are being addressed on whose answer the survival of entire nations depends. We should not like to conceal from ourselves or others by the use of clever rhetoric the necessity of the utmost efforts of reflection or the fact that answers supported by a consensus have not yet been found.

First of all, we consider the distinction between nuclear armament and nuclear war as something that ultimately can seriously be called into question as far as real life is concerned. Do those who consider this distinction to be viable in practice allow in a sufficiently realistic way, even on their own side, for the malevolence, the craving for power, the misinterpretation of social realities as the Christian conviction of human sinfulness compels us to do? Will such nuclear armament not lead to a destruction of social equilibrium and of peace even among us, so that there will be an ever-increasing temptation (as history teaches us) to

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overcome the internal problems of society by waging external wars? Can this armament really be justified except by attributing to political adversaries from the outset *only* the bad motives of an absolute addiction to power and the will to assault their opponents? Why is it that in these controversies the adversaries always depict one another in the most diabolical light, unless this shabby and poor argumentation were necessary to justify armament?

If from the bottom of their hearts people place their hope exclusively on nuclear armament and summarily reject as unrealistic all attempts to develop conceptions for securing peace in which the use of weapons of mass destruction as an option for human action is rejected in principle, they are tacitly presuming that on the other side, and not only on the part of individuals but also of nations, at least among the power elites, they would have to expect as a matter of principle that the basest instincts, only the other side's aggressiveness and its urge to destroy, will as a rule prevail. This is just the way to foster the mental climate in which aggressiveness leading precisely to nuclear wars will thrive, a mentality which does not really consider a nuclear war to be basically immoral but endeavors to avoid it only as long as there is no chance of waging it victoriously in its own interest. It is of course true that Christians may [23] not assume in guileless idealism that the others are not also sinners. This is why many Christians justify nuclear armament precisely with the argument that only in this way can adversaries be made to understand "that the effort required for an attack or a blackmail attempt does not correspond in any way to the advantages they might gain from it and therefore that it does not seem advisable."[1]

But if we are convinced that this legitimate right may be defended by a constant readiness for total war and that it can be defended in this way, do we not run the risk of claiming every right for ourselves while in fact ascribing total blame to the opposite side? Yet as Christians we ought to be far more afraid of the enticements and temptations to evil on our own side, a fear that is singularly absent in the current widespread mentality. It is precisely for this reason that we should also fear nuclear armament on our own side as a temptation to a nuclear war that threatens to annihilate the human race, even though it was originally intended only as a means of deterrence.

Does not nuclear armament tacitly foster the conviction that we have to advance the welfare of our own nation instead of considering from the outset the well-being of the whole family of nations? Does it make sense for us to say that we must continue to increase our nuclear armaments so that we can later bring about a situation in which we can seriously and successfully negotiate a really effective disarmament? Will this not result in a permanent postponement of such a situation, because the adversary will take immediate steps to catch up with us and the stalemate will remain, only this time worse, that we wanted to overcome in order to have more successful negotiations, and in which we are forever wrangling about the meaning of advance armament and subsequent armament?

Can anyone prove that nuclear armament really prevents the frightful chaos that we are all afraid of? Are those who are for nuclear armament for the purpose of preventing a nuclear war entirely sure that they really reject this war under any and all circumstances? To make this deterrence policy "credible," they at least have to pretend to the adversary that they are willing to embark on nuclear war, and this means that they have to dupe at least their own soldiers into believing that such a war is justified when they equip them with nuclear weapons, all the while taking pains to avoid any public discussion of the matter.

[24] Does this not inevitably produce a frame of mind that views geographically limited nuclear wars as a real option under certain circumstances and feels that it is possible to wage such wars? Are we fully aware that the development of new and more effective nuclear weapons can be a temptation for one side to take immediate advantage of its presumably

[1] See the position paper of the Central Committee of German Catholics, *Zur aktuellen Friedensdiskussion.*

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superior position in order to forestall the adversary to whom we undoubtedly impute bellicose intentions? And in this process it is obvious that the possibilities afforded by the rapidly increasing development in the field of microelectronics increase the temptation to develop first-strike technologies and even to make use of them as soon as we think that a first-strike can be successfully carried out, even without our ascribing to the present-day political leadership of a country the intention of unleashing a first strike. With this kind of armament can we really have a guarantee that a nuclear war will not break out due to technical defects and miscalculation, even though it is not fully intended? Even if we could rely on technical fail-safe measures (experts doubt this possibility), has the adversaries' increasing fear of one another in an escalating arms race been assessed with sufficient realism, a fear that can lead to the outbreak of a total war even though neither side has actually entertained an aggressive intention?

We doubt that many of the proponents of further armament, who are convinced of their own sense of realism, are even sufficiently aware of their own fear and the fear of others. And we further doubt that this fear can be kept subject to political control in the long run. In addition to this the fixation that the tendency to this kind of armament gives rise to must necessarily lead to a neglect of the other tasks within the family of nations. Will not this preoccupation itself turn into a temptation to settle the unresolved conflicts within this family of nations by recourse to wars? In the long run, what effective means do we propose to prevent nuclear armament on the part of an ever-increasing number of countries? And finally, does not the continuation of nuclear armament lead to the loss of our possibility of preserving and developing those very values and goals whose defense we consider today to be the reason for nuclear deterrence?

The questions brought up here describe the magnitude of the danger with which nuclear armament is threatening us. Hence it is our wish that those who defend further nuclear armament under definite conditions would not present their arguments in such a way as to give the impression that they must appear as immediately evident to all persons of intelligence and good will.

[25] When, for example, the Central Committee of German Catholics declares without a trace of scruple that the NATO double-track decision is an example of a policy that has as its aim the reduction of armaments, détente, and peace by providing a balance of military power, far be it from us to call into question the upright intentions of the Central Committee or of NATO. However, it would be advisable to temper this assertion with a bit of skepticism which would allow for a more open-minded evaluation of the different views current even on the side of the West concerning the criteria to be employed in judging the other side's willingness for détente and peace, and concerning the nature and the extent of the armaments that are required. In view of the way that the Central Committee formulates its case, can there be any room left to agree with Cardinal Höffner's declaration that Christians of equal conscientiousness can arrive at different decisions about how to secure peace?

When expressing judgments of our own about how peace is to be secured, our formulations should make it clear that we acknowledge equal conscientiousness on the part of Christians who have come to an opposite judgment. Beyond this it will hardly be possible to demonstrate which side possesses the greater intelligence and expertise, because an analysis of this kind and the results it yields will still encounter the same differences of opinion.

The Message of God's Kingdom

For those of us who are trying to be Christians there is a further horizon that impels us to oppose nuclear armament. It would be well both for our partners and our adversaries to pay

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close heed to the arguments that originate from this horizon too. The message of the cross, the resurrection, and the advent of God's kingdom moves on a level that is different from the level of ordinary moral activity. In their private as well as their public lives Christians have to deal not only with "commandments" and "norms" which they acknowledge as reasonable and justified and which they can make clear to a certain degree even to non-Christians. They are also aware of other criteria and motivations, "appeals" and "calls" through which God makes particularly urgent demands on them. This means that their decisions will be formed on a totally different horizon. What takes place on this level is described by Scripture with the words, "He that can take it, let him take it."

[26] When called upon to make decisions involving the whole of their being, non-Christians also find themselves propelled by a force which likewise bursts the bonds of the reality that is subject to rational analysis. Even though the reasons they give for it are different, both Christians and non-Christians can come to the same decision of conscience, one for which neither they themselves nor others can give a completely adequate rational explanation. When this happens, Christians will rejoice in the knowledge that their own decision is being confirmed from another quarter. Just as they hope for themselves that God's grace is at work in their own decision, so, too, they quite naturally see this same grace at work in their non-Christian contemporaries drawing them, too, beyond the bounds of objective knowledge.

In their decisions Christians and non-Christians alike must adhere to their conscience. Both, however, must also be cautious in assessing their own motivation because the ultimate and real wellsprings of the motivation from which their decisions actually flow themselves defy transparent reflexive analysis. Christians are of the belief that they must leave it to God to pass judgment on what their real motivation is. In this world there is no final word about themselves or others.

The decision of Christians must ultimately be made before the cross of Christ. This is their salvation; this is where the true meaning of their existence shines forth in clear light. But, as Saint Paul says, it is in the cross that God is victorious through the powerlessness and folly of him who dies upon it, even though he was unshakably convinced that with him God's kingdom had come. Christians' decisions must conform to the proclamation of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. They must accept the folly of the cross which lays claim to Christians as their true wisdom. Saint Paul says that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of human beings, that what is lowly and rejected has been chosen by God that no flesh may glory in his sight and that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says that God's strength fulfills itself in weakness. This sentence sounds unworldly, indeed even pathetic and silly to those who wish to make God an immanent element of human history whose job it is to see to it that this history can always be understood and calculated and be brought to an outcome satisfactory to us. However, our reliance is not on a God who blesses weapons and guarantees success in this world. We try to believe in the incomprehensible God to whom we entrust ourselves precisely in view of the folly of the cross.

The horizon on which Christians have to make their decisions and which we have not described with anything even remotely approaching [27] the full treatment it deserves is valid, of course, not only for the conduct of private life. The Sermon on the Mount has political significance too. It is also a touchstone for public activity. It may not simply be relegated to the private sphere because it is the constitution of God's kingdom, and this kingdom extends to the peoples of the earth and is striving to manifest itself in concrete history. To be sure, the particular, objective individual norms governing public life and politics are different from those of the personal and private sphere and those used to shape the lifestyle of individuals for the simple reason that the realities that these norms are meant to regulate are different. When the plain and simple business of living obviously requires a

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definite way of acting, no one will hesitate to agree that there is no need whatever to appeal to the Sermon on the Mount and one can refrain from invoking the folly of the cross.

Anyone who is considering the construction of a bridge even as a form of moral achievement certainly need not bother about a blueprint that contradicts the most elementary rules of statics. But when we are dealing with questions of what it means to be a human being in the fullest sense of the term, with questions of a complexity that is beyond measure and that defies total analysis, with questions that do not admit of a universally accepted solution through the application of immediately evident objective norms, Christians have the right and the duty to appeal to the Sermon on the Mount and to make their decisions under the cross, under its folly and its powerlessness. Christian politicians must also make their decisions on this horizon. They are not permitted to be merely representatives of a lifestyle which in its understandable bourgeois character is first and foremost *in possessione*. Christianity is, after all, not a preservative, to be used as sparingly as possible, for the purpose of safeguarding a humane, rational, bourgeois lifestyle from excesses that also threaten it. However much the bearers of political power in a democratic society depend on the voters for their mandate and have to submit their power to the controls of constitutionally established institutions and not least of all to the cross fire of public opinion, they nonetheless still may not pass off their personal responsibility to others for what they do or fail to do.

The question of a truly Christian moral theology, precisely how the ethos of the Sermon on the Mount is to be interpreted, how its “appeals” and “calls” can be validated in the political arena, has of course not been answered in a complete and precise way in the few indications we have given here. What concrete chances the Sermon on the Mount actually has of becoming an element that helps to determine history and politics [28] is of course also an open question. It is sufficient here to avow that for Christians the Sermon on the Mount does have a part to play in political decision-making. Even our secular and political life will go astray if we fail to take into account the folly of the cross and the hope of eternal life in God.

If we now put the question of nuclear armament in this framework of the Christian horizon of decision and of specific Christian motivation, our conviction is that we must say no to nuclear armament. If precisely on the question of war and peace in the nuclear age, on such a radical and comprehensive question, we disallow this horizon of decision, how could we possibly continue to convince ourselves that the Sermon on the Mount and the folly of the cross still have a really radical meaning in our lives? If someone should reproach us with the fact that the principles of the Sermon on the Mount and of the folly of the cross are not otherwise tangibly evident in our lives either, we could still not accept this as a reason for not letting them have an effect in the question of nuclear armament.

Nuclear Disarmament

So from this standpoint we are for nuclear disarmament even if it means committing ourselves to unilateral steps. Thereby we actually consider the term “unilateral steps” to be one that discriminates against what Christians are really deciding when they renounce armament. For this term insinuates that it is a question of cunning calculation and of a trick that is not to be taken with total seriousness because one expects the other side to follow suit with “subsequent steps” and is resolved to rearm as quickly as possible should the other side fail to follow suit, or in any case does not follow quickly enough. What is meant here by the Christian decision is precisely that it is not part of a deal, but rather it moves beyond the area of this kind of give and take. Christians motivated by the appeal of the Sermon on the Mount, humanists basing their actions on radical-human considerations and on a consciousness of their responsibility for the future of humankind and of the totality of life – something for

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which there can be no completely adequate rational explanation – who decide to take this road must be aware of the danger it involves. The possibility of losing political freedom is something that cannot be excluded. It is part of their credibility to admit this danger.

But if they opt for disarmament even with unilateral steps – and if [29] this option in some way succeeds in influencing the practical politics of their country – they may also have the hope and the expectation that this decision will be a blessing for the world. Why should this hope be denied them? Should it be a reason for writing them off as absolutely unrealistic dreamers? If large-scale disarmament were obviously taking place and the other side began to be convinced that it was meant seriously, can anyone say for sure that the adversary's response would only be continued armament or even war or some other kind of political aggression? And if this kind of power politics were the only response we received for our disarmament, can anyone really prove that this would cost us our political freedom in the long run, or that this loss would not be overcome by some other form of resistance (as we have seen in the example of Gandhi)[2] even against a foreign enemy. How can we maintain that this kind of disarmament in the form of unilateral steps would not bring about profound changes in the Warsaw Pact countries or that the people in power there would always be able to maintain their present course and cling to *those* intentions that many of the proponents of armament are accustomed to impute to them?

The demand for disarmament is necessarily and inseparably bound up with the demand for a change of attitude and a change in our political modes of thought in many respects. If this kind of change does not occur among the countries of the world, alternative conceptions of political security will not be able to exercise a historical influence. As long as this change does not reach the politically influential groups in the different societies, these alternative conceptions will be either ignored by the significant part of the political and military experts in East and West who opt for the current conception of the threat of "assured mutual destruction," or these alternative conceptions of political security will be rejected outright as unrealistic and dangerous. The proponents of assured mutual destruction will argue that their conception, while expensive, is at least something that in the long run could be managed by the experts. They will talk about the conceivable "military use of nuclear force," deploring as irrational and as a danger to peace all the fear that such talk engenders in people.

To be sure, this change must occur in both of the power blocks if a new order of peace, or at least initially a coexistence of the different social systems *without* the threat of mutual destruction, is to be a real [30] political possibility. Here, however, we are concentrating the discussion on a change of attitude on our side, because without this change it is useless to expect that appeals to the other side will bear any fruit. What we are dealing with here is a lifesaving task; it is the most difficult political challenge of modern times. Both to us and to many reasonable and responsible people it is painfully clear that given the present political reality, there is no comprehensive and clearly viable solution in sight. This is something that has to be worked out step by step. Nonetheless we are relying on the possibility that there is a way out of the peril of a nuclear holocaust, one that is justifiable from a Christian point of view and that can be translated into practical politics, and from this standpoint we consider it our right and our duty to point out some directions that we (together with many others) see as lifesaving.

Even in the democracies of the West there is an inherent unrest that has to be overcome, but it cannot be overcome by armaments but only by a change in people's attitude, a change which in our opinion cannot be seriously expected by those who in fact consider armament to be our only solution. Despite all the threatening signs of a worldwide crisis for whose scope

[2] For a treatment of this difficult question, see the document of the Evangelical Church in Germany, *Frieden wahren, fördern und erneuern*.

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history provides no relevant example, the West, even up to the present day, does not seem to be capable of presenting an ethically, economically, and ecologically convincing conception for the further development of peace and freedom for the entire family of nations or of seriously dealing with the notions that the Third World has in this regard. Without a conception of this kind how could peace and freedom be guaranteed even for the West alone? Without a conception of this kind, which would certainly also include profound changes that are now becoming necessary in the capitalistic way of life, how could there be a permanently peaceful solution to the North-South conflict? If, then, this kind of change has become an inescapable necessity today at all events, why should we overlook this when dealing with the question of armament and say instead that in these questions a change in our way of thinking that has moral, economic, and ecological consequences has nothing to do with the question of our chance for disarmament?

We are for disarmament in explicit conjunction with a change of consciousness among ourselves which will make us attach a higher priority to the misery of several hundred million people living in absolute poverty than to our own need of security. But a policy that really takes this misery seriously is impeded from the very outset if economic assets and human talent are increasingly tied up in armament. And the industrial nations must also acknowledge their share of the responsibility for the [31] proliferation of armaments in the Third World. Not only do they bear part of the blame for many of the unresolved conflicts that have broken out in these countries, but they are also the chief exporters of munitions. And again, no one with two eyes in his or her head can be done with the matter by putting all the blame for this state of affairs on the Soviet striving for hegemony. Those who want to use the argument of legitimate security interests on the part of the receiver countries in individual cases should not close their eyes to the part played by the struggle of the superpowers on both sides for political and economic spheres of influence and by the desire to reap a profit from the sickness of deterrence, armament, and war that afflicts world society today.

THE BURDEN OF PROOF LIES ON THE POWERFUL

We now return to the point where our considerations began. In this peril our conscience points out two directional markers to us: the inescapable no to every use of nuclear weapons and, what for us is bound up with this, the demand for disarmament even with unilateral steps. First of all, we have to pause and become aware of the danger. So we support the appeal of the American peace movement calling for a freeze of nuclear weapons first of all in East and West – at least no further armament. This is still not enough, but halting is a presupposition for conversion. Markers are indispensable on a way that leads along dangerous precipices. Those who leave these markers out of fear and look for the way haphazardly are lost.

Others with a manifestly upright conscience are convinced that unilateral renunciation of nuclear armament, and especially large-scale unilateral disarmament, will only increase the danger of war. They consider the risks of nuclear armament even today to be smaller than the risks of a “pacifistic” position. We have given our reasons which show in an objective and in particular a Christian way what has led us to our position. We have also stated, and we repeat here, that we respect those who, even though they are working with us toward the goal of outlawing nuclear weapons unconditionally and toward the goal of total nuclear disarmament, and affirm the necessity of making a “constant and continuing effort” to abolish war in the atomic age, yet do not agree with us on the way to achieve this goal. People who claim for themselves the right and duty to form their own opinion in a situation of lethal danger would do well to call to mind Saint Thomas More’s attitude in taking up [32] his position. He

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claimed the right and the duty to sustain his conviction to the point of death, but he did not set himself up as moral judge of those who took up a contrary position.

At the conclusion of our considerations, we should like to present two additional thoughts. The first is addressed to Christian and non-Christian opponents of our position. We are not dealing here with questions of personal morality. In the question of nuclear armament nations must make historical decisions that cannot be postponed and these decisions have to be borne alone. The opponents of our position also make decisions involving the greatest risk for those who do not go along with them. Therefore they have no right to say that those who oppose nuclear armaments do indeed have praiseworthy motives, but they should keep these motives for themselves and may not elevate them into norms that help to determine the political life of others.

The second thought concerns the question of the justification of a definite position and is addressed to the people who have to make the decisions. The burden of justifying a definite way as being pleasing to God rests first of all on the powerful and not on the powerless, on the rich and not on the poor, on the successful and not on the unsuccessful, on the shrewd and not on the simple. Those who ponder this will not place on the powerless who support disarmament the entire burden of proving how their way can be realized in the clash of the political powers. Rather, it is the powerful themselves who have the constant burden of proving why they do not decisively take this way. Can we not say that in case of doubt the way that God is showing us is the way of disarmament and not the way of nuclear armament? However Christians decide, they must proceed from the conviction that what is acknowledged by them to be evil cannot be justified even if in the judgment of those involved in the action a lofty and noble goal is to be achieved.[3]

[3] See Karl Rahner, 'The Catholic Church and the Peace Movement," *in Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982*, ed. Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 359-61; and 'The Theological Dimension of Peace," in *Theological Investigations* 22, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1991), 38-42.

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[33]

3

PLEA FOR A NAMELESS VIRTUE

All over the world people have explicitly recognized virtues, that is, ways of behaving that are morally good, and they have given these virtues names. It may be that they often did this only so as to be able to make demands on others. But still, nomenclatures and distinctions of this sort are unavoidable and they are useful. We see more clearly what we have to do. It makes it easier for us to check whether we are really living up to the moral demands placed upon us by our own nature and by our own life. Moral theologians and moral philosophers have worked out entire systems of virtues, subdividing them and showing their relationship to one another, and they have seen to it that there are no blank spaces on the map of our moral obligations.

The reason why ethics and moral theology today devote less attention to these catalogues of individual virtues may, perhaps, be due to the fact that they are concerned with questions antecedent to these descriptions and catalogues of individual modes of moral behavior. It may also be that we have the impression that this kind of greenhouse of individual virtues is not particularly useful for real life. But if in addition to knowing the things we are allowed to do as human beings and Christians, we also have to know how and why we are to act in face of the sheer variety of life and the multiplicity of its tasks, and if reflection also has its necessary and rightful place in the area of moral freedom, we must constantly inquire into the virtues, however we may choose to do it and whatever be the terminology we use in dealing with questions of this sort.

Are there virtues which have gone unnamed but which, even though practiced (we hope) in life, have received no explicit treatment in the reflection of moral theology and moral philosophy? Since all human tasks and modes of activity are interrelated, it is quite improbable that [34] a definite moral mode of behavior, even though it has not been given much reflection, could not be classified at all as belonging to an already known and explicitly named virtue, that is, that it has really remained nameless.

It is, however, possible that the theoretical reflection on the whole of morality has not grasped each and every individual element with equal clarity and explicitness with the result that one or other moral mode of behavior does remain nameless and is mostly lost sight of in a universal and abstract concept. The simple fact that the catalogues of virtues, ethical systems, and terminologies belonging to individual eras, civilizations, and styles of life were and are quite different and can hardly be brought into conformity with one another shows that something like this is quite conceivable. The lifestyle in one period of history unintentionally and unavoidably neglects this or that virtue which another lifestyle explicitly recognizes and cultivates. This cannot be explained solely by the fact that the extramoral and premoral conditions of human life vary and for this reason also require morally different ways of acting.

ANONYMOUS VIRTUE

Is it possible to give a concrete example that would substantiate the a priori expectation that there must be virtues that have remained anonymous? As has already been said, when something like this is attempted, one must always allow for the objection that what is meant has long since been known and that it has been named and is called this or that. But this is no

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problem, provided only that what is meant is now seen more clearly and is marked off from something else and something of a more universal nature under which it has been concealed until now. The remaining difficulty, of course, consists in whether or not a brief and understandable new name can also be suggested for what is meant. But even if a brief and clear baptismal name can still not be suggested for what is meant and has been discovered, the problem presented can still have a meaning and a solution. One simply draws attention with many words to a definite moral mode of behavior and leaves it to others to find an individual and understandable word for it.

We proceed from the distinction often or usually prevailing in moral activity between the problematic uncertainty of the rational-reflexive justification of a moral attitude and the absoluteness of a free decision as such. We always, or almost always (it is to be hoped), have good reasons [35] for a moral decision, but these are rarely absolutely beyond doubt. There are usually serious reasons and justifications on the other side for an opposite decision, and yet the free act as such is itself unambiguous and absolute, and, if we examine it more closely, irreversible. It cannot be reached by that "on the one hand – on the other hand" consideration, by those reservations which are part of the nature of rational reflection. All of the traditional "moral systems" in Catholic moral theology presuppose this divergence between an ambiguous theory and practice that must be unambiguous, and they endeavor to provide principles that will enable a person to deal with this dichotomy. These principles are of no further interest to us here. What is important here is what all of these systems presuppose – namely, that quite often the moral reflection antecedent to the action itself cannot provide that unambiguousness and unquestionable certainty with which, whether we want it or not, we nonetheless perform the action itself.

SKEPTICAL RELATIVISM

In this situation that confronts us countless times in our lives a twofold (false) reaction is initially conceivable. In a *skeptical relativism* the significance of the moral reflection preceding the action can be devalued with the idea that this is not the important thing since it cannot provide the absolute unambiguousness which necessarily characterizes the action. This attitude of relativism is widespread, especially in respect to religious and ideological problems. We are aware of the problematic nature of all rational, fundamental-theological justification antecedent to an ideological decision of this kind, and so we consider it to be useless and superfluous. We feel justified in making the decision arbitrarily, according to whim, origin, and so on. On the theoretical level, we remain in an attitude of indecisiveness that refuses to be pinned down and think that in this way we have escaped making a decision. But that is not really the case at all since the refusal to make a decision is the very decision itself and quite assuredly not the best one. Or we refuse to accept the problematic nature of the moral reflections antecedent to a decision; we deny to ourselves and others that there is a problem; we declare that the rational reflexive justification of our own decision is in every respect absolutely obvious and that there are no serious grounds to the contrary that have not long since been convincingly refuted for every honest and intelligent person.

[36]

IDEOLOGICAL FANATICISM

Right up to our own day this kind of ideological fanaticism has been all too common among Christians in their confessional disputes. Even in the area of ideological, fundamental-theological and apologetic argumentation people on both sides acted all too often as though

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the justification for their own standpoint were completely clear and only ignorance and ill will could prevent people from recognizing this. Even the language of the First Vatican Council (DS 3009) proceeds somewhat naively on the assumption that the true religion must necessarily contain fundamental-theological arguments which must be immediately evident to every well-instructed person of goodwill. Catholic fundamental theology was not always and everywhere immune to the error that the certainty of fundamental-theological argumentation must more or less coincide with the absoluteness of the assent of faith itself.

In all areas (not only in the religious area) this kind of attitude, which wants to see the unavoidable absoluteness of the free decision as something already present in the antecedent examination of its objective and ethical justification, is precisely what constitutes the real nature of ideological fanaticism. Skeptical relativism which thinks that it can dispense itself from making a decision and ideological fanaticism which wants to derive the absoluteness of the free decision from an absoluteness of the rational consideration, an absoluteness which does not really exist, are the two false consequences that can very easily result from the insuperable difference between the problematic nature of reflection and the absoluteness of decision, between theory and practice.

THE MIDDLE WAY BETWEEN THE TWO EXTREMES

Between these two extremes there is a middle way. It is a virtue and it seems to me that this virtue is nameless. This middle way which takes seriously the antecedent reflection on the justification of a decision and which nonetheless does not demand more of the reflection than it can provide, which honestly admits its problematic nature and despite this does not stand in the way of the courage for a serene and brave decision, is the hallmark of the proper self-understanding of a person who is neither the god of an absolute and universal certainty and clarity nor the creature of a sterile arbitrariness which views everything as equally right and equally wrong, a person who has human qualities that command [37] respect even if these qualities do not have the effulgence of the divine or the transparence of the obvious.

It is difficult to steer this middle course because there is no way of justifying its concrete application by referring back to an absolutely obvious and indisputable principle. It belongs to that area of life wisdom which intellectual acumen cannot alone provide. Ultimately it does not matter whether one along with Saint Thomas Aquinas calls this virtue an intellectual virtue or whether one calls it a moral virtue. It is the virtue that takes theoretical rationality seriously and yet does not turn practice into a merely secondary derivation of theory, but rather acknowledges an ultimate independence and underivability of freedom and of practice. It is the virtue of active respect for the mutual relationship of theory and practice, of knowledge and freedom, *and* at the same time for their disconsonance. It is the virtue of the unity and diversity of the two realities without which one would be sacrificed in favor of the other.

It seems to me that there is a behavior of this kind and therefore that a human virtue of this kind does exist. But what name are we to give it? That is difficult to say. If we were to call it the courage to make a decision that is meaningful and is still not simply the product of rationality, we would have chosen a too general and indefinite name because it would obviously contain more than is meant here. And so it would seem that this important virtue has no brief and generally understandable name. Presumably the ultimate reason for this is to be found in the fact that the relationship between theory and practice even today remains an obscure problem in philosophy. The virtue we are looking for can of course be subsumed under the virtue of prudence or perhaps that of wisdom. But if we subsume it in this way, something particular becomes lost in something that is general.

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Whether or not this virtue's name is known is in the end not so important. But this virtue ought to be practiced. Today, especially, when one could get the impression that the majority of humankind is divided into weary relativists and obstinate fanatics.

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[38]

4

INTELLECTUAL PATIENCE WITH OURSELVES

The simplest things that wise people do spontaneously are often the things that can be talked about only in a cumbersome and tedious way. One of these simple things is, in my opinion, having patience with ourselves.

IS PATIENCE SOMETHING OBVIOUS?

It seems obvious to me that in general people need to have patience with themselves. But it is one of those obvious things that we do not really succeed at very well. There may be people who feel that they do not need to have patience with themselves because they are living in complete accord with themselves and what they are doing. But I hope we will not envy the good fortune of these simple souls. If we look at ourselves honestly, we shall see quite readily that we are not yet done with ourselves; we cannot produce a state of total accord with ourselves by a simple command, nor by a psychological trick or something of that sort. And so, in the absence of such complete accord with ourselves and in view of the fact that we are powerless to achieve this peace, we need to have patience with ourselves.

The person inside us that we really are greets painfully the person that we want to be. Here we are omitting the question whether we would be people who are still in a process of becoming and who have a future before us if this difference did not exist; the question whether this peace with ourselves would not be death; the question how one might conceive [39] this peace so that it would be worth striving for as eternal life and eternal peace. In any event, however, we are now on the way; we are living between a past and a future, both of which, each in its own way, is concealed from us. We never have everything together that we have to live from. We are always conditioned historically, manipulated sociologically, and threatened biologically – and we know it. We can try to repress our knowledge of this situation; we can try to accept stoically what we cannot change; we can misuse the really good things of life as an anodyne for the mysterious disquietude of our existence and when this concealed disquietude manifests itself, we can interpret it as psychic depression that we have to weather or combat with a wide array of tranquilizers.

But if we have the courage to let this disquietude encounter us, if we do not turn from it but rather accept it without simply interpreting it as the stuff that forges heroes and without letting it reduce us to despair, then we have patience with ourselves; we are in agreement that we have not yet found pure harmony with ourselves. There are many people who think they have this patience and that it is the most obvious thing in the world. But if these people would take a closer look at themselves, they would see that they are not really accepting patiently the pain of their own disquietude, untransfigured and without animosity, but rather that they are seeking refuge in the routine of day-to-day existence, and in this way are claiming to be objective and sober. Or they would see that they are dominated by a despair that they do not admit or by a desperate resignation, and that they really feel that there is no sense in living. They would see that they are not practicing patience in the face of the questionableness of existence, but rather are practicing how to look the other way and get the substitute for patience with which they think life can also be lived.

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THE PATIENT PERSON IS SERENE

People who are truly patient, however, really endure their disquietude. They accept it and do not turn away from the pain it brings. Truly patient people further endure the fact that they do not know for sure whether they are really accepting this disquietude in patience or whether they are not really rejecting it by erecting a cheap façade of patience. Patient people are patient with their own impatience and so serenely and almost cheerfully renounce any final accord with themselves. They do not really [40] know the origin of this serenity in which they acquiesce; they hope that they have it. Indeed, in cheerful confidence they make no attempt to close themselves off from the anodynes of the impatient because they are precisely the ones who can handle them since they do not allow them to have any lasting effect. Patient people are serene and so they are free.

What we have become involved in when we acquiesce in this serene patience is a question that we cannot consider further here. In respect to this question there will be people who think that they have become involved in nothingness and so they could be the victors who from this standpoint overcome in themselves the dissonance of finite realities. There are other people who are convinced that nothingness, when understood in its true sense, is useless, that it has no power to produce peace. It is their conviction, rather, that when they really let go of themselves and accept the unrest, they have, whether they reflect on it or not, become involved with the one who is called God in the sense that this word is really understood in everyday existence, and that this involvement in God's silent incomprehensibility can succeed only because God in his grace accepts those who "let go of themselves."

Perhaps you yourselves have already grown impatient and feel that your impatience is justified. Your impatience may be justified in respect to my discourse on patience; however, it would not be justified if it were directed against the reality itself that I am attempting to indicate with my stammering words, if it were directed against that patient composure in the face of ambiguity, the composure that I presume exists among you and that is known as patience.

THE MENTAL CLIMATE OF OUR TIMES: BOUNDLESS KNOWLEDGE

If we are to speak further about intellectual patience or, better, about patience with the limitations and incalculability of our knowledge, we must first speak about an inescapable mental climate in which we find ourselves today as opposed to former times. Never before has humankind known as much as it knows today. People today have more than just a vague notion of how to keep body and soul together; they do more than just keep the memory of the past alive in myth, saga, and perhaps with a smattering of history; they work at more than just a bit of metaphysics with a lot of effort and a great many setbacks; they [41] do not just practice religion and stammer about the divine in many tongues.

Today people work at science. They explore nature systematically; in psychology and psychoanalysis they see what makes them tick; in more recent times they have conquered new fields of knowledge like the social sciences. They develop a philosophy of their own sciences and then investigate the history of all these sciences. Even their everyday life experiences are erected into structures of systematic knowledge. They develop data processing systems and methods of storing their own knowledge.

Today all the countries in the world and the lives of everybody living in them have become part of this systematic process of science and they are involved in a continuous exchange. The number of books published is increasing at a dizzying pace; libraries are getting bigger and bigger; new methods of storing scientific data are being discovered; the progress of

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knowledge is no longer being left to chance or to arbitrary insight and inspiration but is being systematically calculated in advance, even though precisely in this way new elements are emerging that cannot be calculated, and the unity of all these sciences and the directions they are going to take are not things that can be planned in advance.

But if "people" know infinitely more than they used to, they at once become terribly embarrassed when asked who these "people" actually are that know so much and are increasing their knowledge as such a rate of speed. I am not one of these "people"; there can no longer be any one human being who can stand for these "people" who have such enormous knowledge. The desire to become a universal polymath is something we have had to forgo. The most intelligent are condemned to being narrow specialists (to use the current derogatory term) and to remaining such.

Of course even today we can strive for the broadest possible education; we can put a few encyclopedic reference works on our bookshelves which always contain a ludicrously small number of books; we can frequent reference libraries; in what are known as interdisciplinary dialogues we can listen to what others know and what they have to tell us and come away with the impression that we do not after all really understand what we are being told by one of the representatives of another science.

To a certain extent, of course, we can profit from the knowledge of others by turning on the radio or by using a computer that we would be Incapable of constructing ourselves. We can master the necessary tricks [42] that show us how to make an ostensible contribution to every discussion without at the same time betraying our ignorance, but in the end that is no help either.

Measured by the yardstick of the amount of knowledge available in principle at any given time, the individual person today is becoming progressively more ignorant. In former times people knew relatively little but an individual person could know almost all of what was then known. Today people know a great deal, but the individual can know only a tiny fragment of this. To be sure, this enormous amount of knowledge available in principle today can be stored in libraries and computers, and means can certainly be found to enable individuals quickly and conveniently to call up from this mass of knowledge just what they need right here and now or what they might be curious about. This, however, presupposes that these individuals are still capable of realizing that there is something of interest or use to them here and now that they do not yet know, a presupposition that is by no means obvious anymore.

But all this knowledge stored in books and computers is in itself alone only the material distillation of real knowledge and it will become real knowledge only when it is once again restored to the consciousness of real human beings. A human library on Mars would in fact no longer be a human library. But as opposed to former times, this knowledge that has taken on material form can no longer in its totality be translated back into the consciousness of the individual as such. So the fact remains: the individual as such, who alone can be the real repository of true knowledge, is becoming progressively more ignorant.

That might not be so bad because, as the saying goes, "What you don't know won't hurt you." In the case of individuals, however, this applies only when they are unaware of their lack of knowledge. Almost everyone knows today how enormously this ignorance can be repressed and how people can take an all-too-naive pleasure in the number of things really known to them. People who think that the really crucial knowledge the world needs is stored in their own little brains can actually fancy themselves to be educated people and they can even be pompous, narrow specialists. But today in a way never before possible, we can also become aware of the distance between what we do know and what we can know. Whether or not this dawning awareness of our ignorance may be called a *docta ignorantia*, a learned ignorance, is a question we can leave open. In any case, however, this ignorance is very painful for us and it is humiliating.

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[43]

THE FUNDAMENTAL LACK OF CONCEPTUAL CLARITY

Before proceeding any further we must point out another characteristic of our actual knowledge. This particular element has its origin in the enormous sphere of ignorance that surrounds our knowledge. To a degree heretofore unknown, this ignorance is relentlessly corroding the clarity of our concepts and the intrinsic consistency of our knowledge and threatening them. Conceptual precision and clarity, the delight of previous generations, is now diminishing rapidly. To be sure, in the past this clarity may to a great extent have been due to an ignorance that people were simply not aware of, and this made clear and simple thinking easy. It is easy to draw straight lines on a plane surface; in the past it was easy for people to define something if they were unaware of the obscure and problematic nature of the elements used in defining the concept.

For us today, however, each and every individual reality that we contemplate is related in many ways to countless other individual realities that would have to be taken into account if the first reality is to be rendered clear and distinct; and all the other individual realities, which would have to be understood in order to understand the first, begin to blur and disappear in a dense fog of the obscure and the unknown.

In the area of material realities who can still tell us what substance, time, space, and place mean? Can we still make a plain and simple statement about the human being today without being constantly tormented by the awareness that we have neglected or been ignorant of a thousand things that we really should have known and taken into consideration if we wanted to make an honest and responsible attempt to make such a statement? Is there anyone of us today who can use a concept of theology or philosophy without worrying about whether this concept has been used much too naively and superficially if we really do not know the whole complicated history of this concept? Do we not constantly have to ask ourselves whether we may use such concepts when we really know that their history has been treated somewhere or other in scholarly tomes that we have not had time to read in our brief lifetime? Are we not becoming increasingly unsure of what we are saying? Is it so easy to counter this by a reflexively produced naiveté?

In view of all this, the decline in the consistency of our knowledge is obvious. In former times we had at our disposal only a relatively limited [44] amount of knowledge that could be kept in clear view and that was more or less – at least to our own satisfaction – structured in clear concepts, and for this reason its intrinsic coherence and its freedom from inconsistency was also obvious. However limited an individual's knowledge is when compared with the knowledge actually available today, it is, nonetheless, still enormous taken in itself and thus it is no longer possible for an individual to gain a full grasp of the mutual consistency of its individual elements. If an individual today should subject his or her knowledge to an honest and objective appraisal, he or she would have to say, "So much knowledge, so many opinions and views from every side have found their way into the storehouse of my consciousness that, try as I may, I really couldn't tell you anymore if and how it all fits together, and I couldn't even tell you how even in principle it could be synthesized into a consistent 'system.' "

All things considered, however, this has been the lot of human beings from time immemorial, since people have always been burdened with errors which were incompatible with other true insights that they had. But this situation of an insuperable inconsistency in the whole of our knowledge in itself has been exacerbated tremendously. Our knowledge is too vast for us to bring it even to some small degree of harmony. What we say today contradicts what we said yesterday and we do not even notice it. What can also happen, of course, is that given the lack of clarity in our concepts, we think we have discovered a contradiction

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between two statements and we challenge someone, even though these two statements might really be quite compatible if the concepts used and the limitations implied in both statements were clear.

In any event, the fragmentation of our consciousness has increased and we are aware of it. Indeed, we cannot refrain from considering others to be obtuse, naive, and primitive if they are not aware of this fragmentation and fail in their utterances to realize the lack of clarity in their concepts and the inconsistency in their knowledge.

That is the situation of our consciousness today. Overcoming this situation to the extent that it can be overcome is certainly a constant challenge and a task that we have to master. But we must also have the courage to see and to admit that this situation of increasing "stupidity," of an increasing lack of clarity in our concepts, and an inconsistency in our knowledge is ultimately insuperable, that it is the price that we constantly have to pay for the immense increase of our knowledge.

[45]

THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUE OF PATIENCE

What are we to do in the face of this situation that holds inexorable sway over us? As we said at the beginning of our discourse: patience is necessary. We must have patience even in the face of our own ignorance. We have got to understand that this patience is anything but obvious, that it is no easy task. Those who are only ignorant are not even aware of their own ignorance and so they need no patience with their intellectual situation. But those who are wise in their ignorance – and I hope that we belong to this group – experience the bitter pain of their ignorance and must learn how to bear it in patience.

In this situation we must always ask ourselves whether we are avoiding the danger of letting ourselves sink impatiently into a skeptical resignation, whether we are not covertly attempting to rid ourselves of this task of patience in some other way, by repressing the situation or by taking naive pleasure in the knowledge we do have. We must ask ourselves whether we really do have this patience and are practicing it even when it seems to us to be obviously present among the virtues that we possess. If on this question we feel that we can quite readily set our conscience at ease, we would have to ask ourselves whether we have really faced the pain of our ignorance that today more than ever before is imposed upon us or whether we are wrongly allowing ourselves to be satisfied with our paltry knowledge, a satisfaction that is not permitted us.

I would now like to make a timorous attempt to show some of the implications of this patience that our situation requires of us. This might help us to understand a little better what is actually meant by this intellectual virtue of patience, this unknown virtue.

Patience as a Way to God

First of all, this patience is akin to that real *docta ignorantia* of which philosophers remotely speak and which mystics in East and West strive to attain, if we experience that an infinite ocean of nameless mystery spreads out beyond the pitifully small island of our knowledge, and if we interpret this experience in the light of the experience that we have previously been speaking about, perhaps the unity of this twofold experience can bring us a little closer to the enormous courage of the saints and mystics who submerged their soul in its source, and awaken [46] this courage in us too. For they experience this ocean of holy mystery bounding "the tiny island of their knowledge" no longer as a boundary that confines them; they dare to set out on this ocean; they are not afraid that its silent immensity will swallow them up; they

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entrust themselves to this "unknown that is known," seeing in it the blessed mystery that shelters them. They dare to enter the void of their consciousness. The individual elements of knowledge cease to exist, and in the ensuing "nothingness" they experience the real and comprehensive truth that can no longer be divided up into a number of individual propositions.

We may proceed no further here in our discussion of this ineffable mystery which transforms the pain of ignorance and of our own obtuseness into the blessedness of the light which to our everyday consciousness appears as a dark night. Nor need we spend much time here warning of the dangers that at least Christians are aware of who know that the patient endurance of our earthly multiplicity and inconsistency is ultimately the only way that leads through the reality of death with Jesus, the crucified, to the blessed incomprehensibility of the true God; who know that true mystics must always be ready to leave their sublime contemplation, their mystical silence, and divide their bread with the needy; and that the solemn festival of blessed union with the incomprehensible mystery can be celebrated only when they have plodded through the drudgery of everyday existence and its duties. Here we only wanted to suggest briefly the notion that the patience we have undertaken to praise might also be the entrance gate to that *docta ignorantia* that brings all human knowledge in its distracting details into the light which we Christians even today do not hesitate to call God.

Patience and Tolerance

But this patience with our intellectual situation contains still other implications. Let us consider tolerance first. On the one hand, we say that people should be tolerant of one another, but that truth is inexorably intolerant of error. That is assuredly a maxim that we can and must subscribe to. It is really not our intention here to talk about a convenient relativism. Nor are we denying the fact that the legitimate freedom to make concrete decisions necessarily involves a certain unyielding intolerance toward those who want to decide differently, even if we might wish this to be otherwise. Not everything in the world can always be settled by a compromise that suits everybody.

[47] Nevertheless, if the reasons we have given for intellectual patience are correct, we can see that the truth which is our human truth and not God's divine truth involves in and of itself a dimension of tolerance. For our statements and concepts, however correct and true they maybe, and hence certainly not willing to accept a contrary statement as equally justified, point of their very nature to unknown elements which, had they been known and taken into consideration, would also cause these statements and concepts to appear in a different light, inasmuch as these are always statements and concepts that point beyond themselves. The unknown elements would require us to be more cautious in interpreting these statements in their approximate truth. They would make it understandable that these finite and historical statements of ours, even if their validity remains intact, would have much less need of rejecting as error the things that someone else is attempting to assert as truth.

It was an axiom of scholastic philosophy that an abstraction did not necessarily imply an error: *Abstrahentium non est mendacium*. This axiom is correct, but it is also a dangerous axiom which those with excessive zeal for their own convictions pervert over and over again. Not only in God's heaven are there many rooms, but also in the house of the one, all-embracing truth.

Those who experience the pain of their own ignorance and endure it with patience can be more tolerant, and genuinely tolerant, in the area of ideology than those who view this tolerance as nothing more than a convenience for people who have to live with one another

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but are divided in their views. To anyone who has the impression that the legitimate and inexorable claim of truth over all the facile forms of relativism hardly leaves room for the tolerance which we have just tried to show as an intrinsic characteristic of our human truth, then, prior to the quite necessary and altogether possible attempts to reconcile this apparent contradiction, I would say that an admittedly temporary lack of compatibility between the adamant stand on behalf of the truth on the one hand and tolerance on the other has to be endured with the patience we are talking about. It is quite possible that this reconciliation of tolerance with inexorable conviction is also a task that has to be mastered anew as is true in thousands of other cases where we adhere to two truths and convictions without clearly seeing that they are inherently compatible even though they are apparently contradictory. Those who really manage to have intellectual patience with themselves will also be tolerant toward their neighbors and will not behave as though they were absolute truth in person.

[48]

Knowledge and Freedom

We are all called upon to exercise this patience in yet another way. There is always a radical tension between our knowledge and our freedom. In a certain sense our free acts are irrevocable and hence absolute, while the knowledge leading to these decisions cannot fully justify their irrevocability. There are always reasons for deciding one way or another, even though this does not mean that the reasons are equally valid. Choosing among these reasons, freedom makes its decision for one course of action and translates this into reality, leaving the other course perpetually unrealized. For us today, the ever-present condition of incalculability between insight and freedom which then turns freedom into something more than the mere executor of reason has become more acute as a result of the situation now calling upon our patience.

More than ever before, the insight that forms the basis of our decisions is fragmentary and vague. We have to make our decisions knowing that we are ignorant of many things which, if they were known to us, would actually render our free decisions transparent and innocuous. Today, more than ever before, we know that all our decisions are hazardous ventures into the unknown. Of course we do have to decide because usually the attempt to abstain from making an unambiguous decision would itself amount to a decision, one that would usually be the worst possible decision and the one least capable of being justified. But these decisions that must be made and so in principle have a moral right to stand despite their lack of lucidity must still be made on the basis of a rational justification which is always strained beyond its limits, and this tension causes us pain. But this is why patience, the endurance of the present-day tension between rational insight and free decision, is especially difficult and yet at the same time more necessary than ever.

Today our intellect, when called upon to make a free decision possible and to justify this decision, is harassed by countless contradictory reasons; yet it still may not permit us to cast aside our rational responsibility and make things easier for ourselves by making our decisions in a purely arbitrary way. How difficult it is today to steer between the extremes of succumbing, on the one hand, to a weary skepticism and relativism that see everything as equally right and equally wrong, and boast of a detachment and wisdom capable of dissolving everything into a void, and of paying homage, on the other hand, to a fanaticism that sees no need of a rational justification that requires us to bridle the vehemence of our emotions and subject its concepts and arguments to an [49] objective examination if we are going to use it as a basis for acting. Our times and our generation would, however, probably not seek refuge in a voluntaristic irrationalism because the rationality that we are capable of having sees more clearly today how fragmentary and arduous everything is, provided that it does not

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overestimate itself and that it has patience with its own inadequacy that it has realized and suffered through.

IN WINTRY TIMES: PATIENCE

Presumably we could expand our considerations into a treatise on one of the dianoetic virtues as they used to be called. It was a conviction in former times that the dimension of knowledge viewed in itself contained not only technically developed skills, but that this cognitive dimension itself was also composed of elements that called for a moral qualification, that is, virtues, as paradoxical as this statement might appear at first glance. The times we live in are to a great extent blind and can see no virtue in cognition and knowledge but only a proficiency that is ultimately not subject to value-judgment, and hence is more or less free of responsibility. The potential for catastrophe present in this cognition that is blind to values is therefore usually not noticed until it is too late. But this cannot be treated in greater detail here.

I shall speak no further of the patience that we must have today in view of our cognitive limitations. I hope that I have not overtaxed your patience. It seems to me that as a result of the progress we are experiencing today in all the dimensions of knowledge, individuals have the growing feeling that they know very little and are not able to overcome the inadequacy of their knowledge; that the intoxicating pleasure of former times that accompanied the acquisition of ever new knowledge is denied them, without their being allowed for these reasons to commit mental suicide; that therefore they must have patience with themselves as in wintry times.

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5

A BASIC THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF OLD AGE

You could say that I must be the right person for this job. I am a theologian and I shall soon be eighty years old. But things are not quite as simple as that. After all, in traditional theology aging and old age are not subjects that have been explicitly treated in any great detail. Hence any theology of old age would have to begin with research in other anthropological disciplines to ascertain what they know about old age. It would then have to ask whether and how this knowledge has theological significance and whether theology can bring this knowledge to a deeper level.

But an investigation of this kind also presumes a competence that I do not possess and at my age am no longer capable of attaining – not even for a contribution to a theological gerontology. For example, when I delve into Simone de Beauvoir's huge tome on old age and am confronted with the enormous amount of information contained in this book (information which, however, has not always been effectively synthesized), the task I am expected to perform could discourage a person of my age.[1] But I have the feeling (and this itself is a tiny contribution to this theology of old age) that a touch of timidity is permitted because honest patience with one's own weakness and pusillanimity is both a prerogative of old age as well as a challenge to it.

Nor can I simply collate and assemble the explicit theological statements that Scripture and tradition have made on the subject of old age. [51] Scripture itself has perhaps said a great many important and wonderful things on this subject, but it assuredly does not contain an explicit and consistently structured theology of old age. Hence any attempt to construct a systematic teaching from the statements of Scripture would, properly speaking, yield only the system of the particular theologian making this attempt, but not really that of Scripture itself. Recourse to the Church's tradition would quite quickly find it necessary to move beyond this tradition into the immeasurable breadth and multiplicity of the most diverse styles characteristic of aging and old age and their interpretation in human history because human life experience and life experience that is explicitly Christian cannot be completely distinguished from one another.

OLD AGE AS A HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PHENOMENON

The human process of aging and old age that we ourselves experience is a union of nature and history, physiology and social situation (or however one wants to describe this indissoluble unity in duality that determines the total existence of human beings throughout all of their dimensions) that defies total analysis. Human beings have a "nature" about which the natural sciences today, from physics to biology, from paleontology to modern medicine, can tell us an enormous number of things that can be used in a scientific gerontology. This gerontology tells us how this biological creature, the human being, grows old and how this aging process affects all the dimensions of human beings reaching right up to the very tip of their highest mental and spiritual faculties.

These natural sciences (along with a psychology of old age that is also based on natural

[1] Simone de Beauvoir, *La vieillesse* (Paris, 1970).

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science) can also describe how this aging proceeds, even though they perhaps do not ultimately know why this complex biological reality known as a human being inevitably grows old and dies. But even though all these natural sciences together have developed their gerontology, human aging and old age have not been completely described, and so it is not possible to say that individuals understand their own old age and know how to deal with it properly on the basis of scientific information alone. Rather, aging and old age, despite their ultimately inseparable union with their biological side, are phenomena of a social, historical, and cultural kind.

One can say (from the standpoint of natural science) that human beings always grow old and die in the same way. (For example, in the [52] mummies of the most ancient times physicians can discover the same illnesses that we still have today.) One can also say (from the social and historical standpoint) that aging, old age, and dying in every historical period and social situation (both of which are constantly changing) are completely different. The second statement is also true.

In primitive tribes old age and dying are experienced differently from the way we experience them today in a home for the aged. The way society views old age, the power or lack of power that old people have, the number of old people and their average life expectancy, economic and medical possibilities of dealing with the situation of old age, and so on in different cultures, different economic systems and social orders reveal an enormous variety of forms, so that one might almost say that in the different historical periods and cultures almost the only point of agreement in respect to old age is that it ends in death.

Moreover, the explicit interpretation of old age and death in different cultures, religions, and worldviews itself works retroactively in helping to determine how aging and dying will be experienced in the concrete, so that from this standpoint as well the most diverse styles characteristic of the way old people live and die can be found. And finally, human beings for their part in their unity and incalculable quality are not merely random specimens of a genus or of a collective entity but also unique individuals who help to shape their own lives in inalienable freedom. So in this light, too, old age is not merely a social and cultural-historical phenomenon in a socio-cultural context but also a part of the ever unique individual that every human being is.

If, then, old age is both a union of nature and history that cannot ultimately be completely dissolved and an existence that is ever unique, for us old people this has a simple, yet strange consequence, and dealing with this is also part of the burden and the challenge of our old age. We are nature; that is, we have to accept ourselves as people who are growing old biologically together with everything that this inexorably implies in regard to the waning of our vitality and of our intellectual powers as well, without making a senseless protest against God and the nature willed by him. Our old age is also a historical and social phenomenon. We do indeed have the right and the duty to attempt to influence present history and our society and to change them so that they will become more humane and more just, but this historical and social situation which our old age helps to determine and which itself is a part of our old age is for the most part practically unalterable in the time still remaining to us. And so this situation must be accepted with [53] serenity and patience, and this acceptance is something that is part of our old age if we live it successfully.

OLD AGE AND THE PAST

Old age also inexorably means that, as a matter of fact, we have most of our life behind us. This is a truism, but we have to consider this statement closely in order to understand what it really means. If we are talking about “a matter of fact,” this term is just the right one. Our

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past (at least at first glance – we shall also have to take a second look) is an objective "matter" which came to be through the "way" in which we exercised our freedom, and in a true sense this past has become definitive. But the person who thinks more exactly and profoundly, particularly if he or she is a Christian, must be taken aback by our remark that we have our life "behind us." For we should really have to say that in old age we now have our life present "before us." Out of countless possibilities, as though out of a dark ground, which lies behind us as something "given" and not subject to our disposal, the free history of our life, by means of our free actions, brought the concrete shape of our life forth and brought it before us. And this concrete shape of our life is something that *is* and it stands before the critical gaze of our memory and what we have stored up there. Whatever may be the case in regard to the events of mere natural history once they have happened and are past, the human being's past with its history of actual freedom is not just something that once was and has now simply fallen down into the nothingness of what has ceased to exist, something that is dissolved and is nothing anymore.

Precisely because in freedom it once became the way it is, our life *is*, not gone, but rather it has gone forth from the dark ground of the merely possible as something eternally real. However one may explain this fact of the eternally abiding character of the history of freedom, and it is certainly not easy, the fact remains. To understand it better one may have recourse to the idea of the "Book of Life," the heavenly book in which God has inscribed all of our deeds according to which he will judge us. Or one may prefer to understand it in terms of the soul. The substantial and abiding ground of our spiritual soul receives from the actions of our lives permanent impressions which no longer pass away, even though we forget them and other waters of time flow over this ground. Or perhaps we can succeed in making present to ourselves the [54] permanence of our free history, which only seems to be past, in contrast to our dangerous "forgetfulness." Whatever explanation we choose, it is ultimately secondary. The inescapable fact remains that now in old age we are the persons that we have become throughout the whole of our lives.

We can try to forget this or to repress it. In old age our brain undergoes physiological changes that can make it impossible for us to recollect many things from our past or can cause us to remember events long past more clearly than things that have recently happened. Our remembrance of our own past can be colored in a way that does not correspond to its reality; we see things in a kindlier or more terrifying light than is really warranted. None of these things alter the fact that in old age we are *the* persons that we have become throughout the whole of our lives. Herein lies an immense challenge for us in our old age. It is not the only one, not entirely, since we are still living our lives and we do still have some future that we have to shape. When we old people think frequently and intensely about our past life, this is not an idle exercise nor need it make us sad. Old age still has a great deal of work to do on the history of its past life. The shape that we have given to our lives and that we now are is not yet complete.

Under certain circumstances this shape can be changed quite radically and improved. If we were now to proceed under the catchword "contrition," our considerations would be too limited. Christians are certainly aware that when they turn to God in repentance and conversion, to God who is also Lord of their own past, the God of forgiveness, they can give their past life an entirely new interpretation, they can give it another shape, a radically new meaning. But as true as it is that we cannot forgive ourselves the evil of our past life, but rather must and can let ourselves be forgiven by God in humble love, still the notion of contrition and forgiveness can easily lead to the misunderstanding that the evil past is only blotted out and thus simply sinks into the abyss of what is merely past. If we consider the matter more exactly, however, contrition and conversion do not erase the past but transform it by God's action in our lives. The past, even the evil past, receives a new meaning. But this

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gives old age a great and positive task in respect to life past, and it makes it possible to accomplish this task.

There is a lot of talk today about "overcoming the past." This is mostly idle chatter that does not even understand itself. But the person who is old has a really blessed task and one that can be accomplished. Perhaps it would be better to call this a new shaping of the past rather than overcoming [55] the past. Old people can still learn; they can learn things from the past that help to interpret this past anew. They can eliminate the bitterness that has accumulated in them like sediment. They can acquire a better understanding of their lives than they have had before. They can become wiser and more serene. By turning to God and together with him they themselves may once again with the forgiving God judge the shortcomings and dark elements of their lives mercifully and grant pardon; with the Church's liturgy they may interpret all this *felix culpa*, "happy fault."

Looking at our own past life can make us more tolerant of others. We can try to reduce the lifetime accumulation of aggression and prejudices against ourselves, against others, and against the outward circumstances of our lives. (In an hour of peace and quiet we need but attempt such a "revision of life" to see how much has to be done in this area and how much could be done.) In a word, old age has not only the eventual task of repentance, in the narrower sense of the word, in respect to guilt incurred in past life, a guilt which has not ceased to exist merely because it is part of the temporal past; over and above this, old age has also an almost boundless task in respect to what we have become in the past and now still are. We old people are not finished with our lives yet. In a true sense everything is still open; only the future will reveal the outcome of life's drama. And everything that is inexorable in the light of the past is subject to the verdict of the God of a love that can transform everything, and who can also change our past life into blessed freedom without having to wipe it out. In his eternity all our time can remain valid and yet be so transformed that our time has been preserved and can then be accepted without regret. To be sure, our hope of this has its source in a faith that is credible only in the light of Jesus Christ and his message. That faith must be proclaimed in the Church over and over again.

At this point perhaps another remark is called for by way of afterthought. From the standpoint of our biological and physiological life, which in the highest degree helps to determine even our mental and spiritual life, it is quite possible for us in our old age to be beset by a physical and mental condition which makes it more or less or even completely impossible for us to accomplish all of these beautiful tasks of old age that we have spoken about or propose to speak about. Let us be honest and let us face up to the harsh realities that can strike even us. We can become piteously senile. A softening of the brain can occur. No moral theologian, much less any other reasonable human being, will [56] deny that in our old age we can be assailed by excruciating physical pain and deep, physiologically conditioned depression and mental confusion of such a kind that one can no longer seriously say that we are really morally accountable for the things we do in states such as these. We can admire saints in their martyrdom and Indians at the stake for the unrelenting clarity of their mind even unto death. In the end, however, it is not within our power or the power of our freedom, but it is within God's to say whether a similar state of mind will be possible for us in our old age and when we are dying.

We can hope that in death our mind will be tranquil, lucid, and composed. We must do everything in our power to cope, in courage and resignation to God's will, with the pain and depression that assail us in old age. But we are not obliged to do more than lies within our power, and Christian teaching does not expect the impossible of us. If physical pain and psychic depression plunge us into a state in which we can no longer do what we are, presumably, obliged to do, then we have come to the point where the eternal God in his love gently relieves us of all responsibility for our life. What "happens" after that is, humanly

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speaking irrelevant and does not matter in God's eyes. If a person in this state seems to be desperately cursing God, this must be viewed as a physiological occurrence and not as a human act, just as in the case of a dying person whose mind begins to wander. We can pray for a cheerful old age and a "happy" death, but the shape in which old age and death will come to us is something that lies in God's hands. It is one of the tasks of old age to prepare ourselves to accept this situation of old age and death that is approaching us in a way we cannot foresee, and to know that everything can be grace, even when there is nothing more left to us but the helplessness of the vanquished.

OLD AGE AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN GENERATIONS

We shall now speak of a special task that old age can perform. Old people can often try to be a bridge between generations. We should not harbor illusions or promote utopian ideas in this matter. The elderly poor reduced to living in a crowded home for the aged, more or less forgotten by their own kin, have practically no way of taking on the task we are about to describe, and as human beings and Christians they must find other ways of coping with their old age. But many old people do [57] have the opportunity to perform this task. But they have to be willing to see what it is and seize the opportunity of doing it.

The role played by "grandpa" and "grandma" in many families is well-known and prized. For the two generations with whom they live the youngsters love to have them as go-betweens and the grown-ups cherish them for this. In former times old people had an almost institutionalized function of giving counsel, handing on traditions, and serving as a stabilizing force. This intermediary function of old people need not be restricted to family and clan in the narrower sense. It can be expanded far beyond these. Just because the leaders who have the decision-making power in the various organizations of society do not let old people have "the last word" is no reason for them to withdraw in a huff from these organizations, condemn themselves to the limbo of old age, and feel that they have been put on the shelf. They should demand a little bit of modesty and self-effacement of themselves and not hesitate to continue in these organizations in a cheerful and matter-of-fact way, even though now they might perhaps not always be given a seat in the front row. Continuing to make an appearance at the customary social get-togethers with friends and acquaintances, even if one is a little bit hard of hearing and does not catch everything that is said and so is now forced to play second fiddle, can really be a Christian task of old age. One must want to be present here and there, even though sometimes it can be a little bit boring for the elderly person. Just going to a lecture can be a task of old age in mediating between the generations. The elderly man need not try to look and behave like a young fellow and the elderly lady need not feel obliged to turn up at every party. But old people should not be afraid to stay with the rest of humankind without feeling inhibited and self-conscious about it. Their life experience is capital that can yield interest for coming generations.

The same can also be said about continuing to work in church organizations and parish societies. In these, elderly people can still perform any number of functions which might appear too lowly to others and yet are still important for church life, even though it might be nothing more than collecting used postage stamps and getting them ready for shipment to the missions. Old people have to act as intermediaries between the generations. They just have to be willing to see this intermediary function and perform it, even though it might seem to be only a modest one.

[58]

FAITH IN ETERNAL LIFE

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In all the phases of our lives all of us live on the border of God's eternity. Younger and middle-aged people can be victims of heart attacks, traffic accidents, and other fatalities. But we old people are living in a situation in which, both from within and from without, we receive special signals warning us of our closer proximity to this end allotted to all human beings, warning us that death is approaching inescapably. We are still living, but we are looking toward the end.

Our Christian belief in eternal life accompanies this. This eternal life should evoke something more in us than the grumbling admission that we have no objection to it since, after all, we cannot go on living here forever, and so almost with a kind of resignation whose lack of faith is scarcely concealed we let them give us the message of eternal life. We must look toward this eternal life in loving hope. And so we old people live in a strange and unique state of tension between the courage to live here and now and the hope of eternal life. We are still living and so we must strive to go on living. To be sure, the candle of our earthly life is burning lower now and its flame casts a dimmer light and often flickers anxiously. To be sure, this limits our possibilities and we have no need of talking ourselves into the illusion that it is just a matter of willpower to keep up our former stride. There are a lot of shallow slogans for this ("You're as old as you feel," etc.) that we should not goad ourselves with, but rather honestly and objectively admit the fact that our vitality is ebbing in all the dimensions of our life (including the intellectual one). Nonetheless, the fact remains that we are still living and we should have the desire really to live the life still remaining to us and live it to completion.

Some old people let themselves go. They neglect the rules of physical hygiene and do not otherwise keep themselves up even though they are perfectly capable of doing this. That is stupid and cowardly. The elderly lady who takes care to make a well-groomed appearance without trying to imitate young girls is doing just the right thing. People quite advanced in years can have all sorts of interests; they can keep up their personal acquaintanceships, take up new hobbies, and soon. To be sure, we know that the time is coming when we will be lying on our deathbed and will not be able to do these things anymore. But what we still can do, we really should do, instead of letting ourselves get cranky, and with false resignation and cowardice wish to thrust ourselves prematurely into that darkness into which God will one day lead us; but he will do it gently [59] and softly and not in the way we do it to ourselves. In old age we can talk about something other than our illnesses and our aches and pains. As long as we still have ourselves under control – and we should not try to convince ourselves prematurely of the opposite – we can forbid ourselves this kind of talk which is useless to ourselves and a burden to others.

In a word, as long as we live we should also want to live. But for Christians, life here on earth is seen in the perspective of eternal life. This hope of eternal life is not a cheap consolation when we have nothing else left; it is a sacred task. Is there any reason why old people should pray less than in their earlier years? It is stupid and mean to consider every form of religious devotion practiced by ourselves or others in old age as suspect, and to want to expose it as the cowardly grovelling of a person in the last decrepit stages of life who now wants to become "religious" quickly. Without doubt, there are forms of religious devotion in old age that are bogus and cowardly. But these are not the only ones. Might a person not become more mature, wiser, and therefore more devout as well in old age? Why should a person's religious development have to be arrested at an earlier, perhaps quite infantile stage? Just to avoid having to admit that one has learned a little more and is forced to abandon a number of things formerly considered to be right? If we now perhaps take a critical look at many of the things we have done in the past, this can no longer change these things externally, but that is still no reason for us to persist in our old standpoint, since even the

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things that can no longer be changed by us can still be transformed by God's incomprehensible goodness and power. In old age we should not hesitate to have the courage to become more devout.

It is true, of course, that the expectation of eternal life that is implied in this, and that has to be shaped more intensively, can have very different shapes and forms. So we are not obliged to demand of ourselves a particular shape such as is customarily described in the lives of the saints. "Till we meet again in heaven, you dumbbell,"[2] the sister of one of my deaf brethren said to him, and died. This kind of lighthearted trust is not bestowed upon everyone. Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus died in a quite different way in the throes of her consumption, assailed by the indescribable darkness by which she was engulfed. And yet she trusted and hoped.

[60] The hope of eternal life takes on different forms in death, and to die in the way that God has disposed is also a part of true hope itself. With Jesus we must pray, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," but in death one may also pray with Jesus the words of the psalm, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" because God will answer this prayer, too, by giving us his eternal life. And so the forms of the hopeful expectation of eternal life that we have while living our old age vary considerably. The hope of eternal life can fill the hearts of some as a wonderfully consoling light and thus they can draw nigh to the final hour in joy. To others it is given (this is ultimately the same grace) to live in the steadfastness of a prosaic faith without desiring to paint heaven in their own colors: "I believe in life everlasting." People such as these will say to themselves, "My own heart is weak and narrow. I am almost afraid to look for a place where there is still room for this faith alongside the weariness and barrenness of my old age. But God is greater than my heart and does not demand more of me than I am honestly capable of doing." Old people are placed on the borderline between time and eternity. And there is where they have their most sacred task. This can be a heavy burden. But God bears it with us and takes it from us when we can really bear it no longer.

[2] The word play here is not apparent in English. The expression *taube Nuss*, here rendered "dumbbell," literally "empty nut," is a colloquialism like our "old coot." However, the word *taub* also means "deaf." – Editor

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6

AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY IN GENERAL

We are presupposing that the etymology of the word *authority* provides very little help for an inquiry into the intrinsic nature of authority.

Preliminary Remarks on Conceptual Methodology and Limitation of the Inquiry

Auctoritas in the sense of "authorship" obviously implies that the thing caused is dependent on its cause and thus in certain circumstances that the cause can continue to exercise a determining influence on the thing caused. However, in the various human societies the idea of authority is commonly understood as a relationship between the person holding the authority and the person determined by the authority in which relationship a causal and total origination of the person determined from the person determining is not implied or at least need not be implied.

At the beginning of our considerations it is of course not really certain that the different realities characterized as authority can really be subsumed under a more or less univocal concept. Nevertheless, the attempt may be made to elucidate the one and the same concept that more or less fits all "authorities." If this attempt is successful, it will enable us at least to draw a few general lines of demarcation and to set up a few general norms which from the outset are valid in their application to all "authorities." It must, however, be understood that the general concept of authority being sought here can only be a very "analogous" one. [62] Furthermore, it remains beyond doubt that concrete "authorities" are necessarily and to a very great degree different from one another despite the unity of this general concept. Therefore this must always be kept clearly in mind if lines of demarcation and norms are to be predicated about individual "authorities."

It would no doubt be methodologically wrong, even in an ultimately theological treatment, to begin here with the "authority of God" as the point of departure. For in the presumed origin from God (and if one will, from his authority) of any and all legitimate authority, it is clear from the start that God's authority (if one wants to apply this concept to him) is of an absolutely unique kind. A Christian theology and a sober rational philosophy can always and everywhere "ascend" to God, but they cannot proceed from him as that which is first known. Even when making this ascent they must use a large number of a posteriori empirical concepts, one of which is of course the concept "authority." And finally, God's authority is not part of the sphere of social relationships in which we are quite rightly seeking our concept of authority.

Possible "Frictions" among Free Subjects as a Starting Point for a General Concept of Authority

We proceed from general and very elementary phenomena which can be observed in human life, quite rightly acknowledging in them, without going into detailed analysis, an ontological dignity and a transcendental necessity. Both things and persons make up the environment in

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which human beings exist in this world. There is a plurality of individual realities which (quite apart from a reciprocal dependence on one another) cannot simply be understood as mere determinations of one and the same reality. Rather, they are really different from one another, demarcated from one another, each standing in itself, each a "substantial" reality. This "substantial" difference of the individual realities comprising the things and persons of the human being's environment may for its own part be a very variable concept. And even the relationship between independence and relativity to other things may also for its part be quite different in individual cases (even to the point of plural determinations which can be conceived of one and the same reality).

There is no doubt, however, that at least human beings as subjects, who are aware of themselves and have a free history, each with a responsibility of his or her own, are not simply mere determinations of [63] the world or of a higher collective entity to which individuals are simply subordinate, but rather that they really have in themselves a specific independence that cannot be derived from anything else. At the same time, however, these nonderivable individuals are determined from outside: they stem from their parents; they are physically and biologically dependent on others for their existence; they are involved in intellectual and personal exchange (with other cultures) without which not even the physical-biological existence of human beings could in fact continue.

In their actual realization the free independence of human beings and their mutual interdependence condition each other reciprocally. The interdependence and determination from outside necessary for the existence of human beings in all their dimensions would not attain their goal of securing human existence if the free subject, instead of choosing to affirm them, simply wanted to close itself off to them. The free subject, even as free subject, is not absolutely self-sufficient. Rather, its condition is necessarily one of reaction to determination from outside, without which it could not as such exist. Conversely, however, even the determining element from outside is itself often the product of the free action of the subject, which product is then retroactively operative on the subject itself and on other subjects.

The plurality and diversity of the realities existing in the world, and especially among human beings, and the reciprocally conditioned relationship of independence and determination from outside are not, at least in fact, present in such a way that the individual entities fit together in a way that is "frictionless." "Frictionless" may be a very unphilosophical word. It refers to all sorts of realities. Two bodies cannot simply be present simultaneously in one and the same place, at least according to our empirical observations in the macrocosm; the biological realm is dominated by a "struggle for existence" concomitant with death and annihilation, and this assessment from the standpoint of the individual living organism is not without justification; the physical and changing environment of the biological realm is not always and to the same degree favorable to the individual living organisms; at least from the outset, harmony and peace in the area of the freedoms that cannot be derived from one another do not prevail in such a way that the exercise of freedom on the part of one person is likewise always positively the goal and the presupposition of the freedom of another. But all of these very different realities taken together – and these are what we mean when we say that they are not "frictionless" – do reach a common point of agreement in that they are resistant to one another, do [64] not simply fit together smoothly, tend to contradict one another when making claim to a common space where they can exist.

Authority as the Mandatory Power to Regulate "Frictions"

Thus the question arises as to how these "frictions" are to be eliminated. They cannot mean simply that there is an absolute "struggle for existence" in which one entity considers the

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other as an enemy pure and simple whose existence is simply to be ruled out due to this threatening friction.

Thus the "regulation" that is required varies quite considerably according to the concrete cases and the different levels of being. In certain circumstances it is even quite possible for it to be identical with the right of the stronger, or with what are known as physical and biological laws. In our search for regulations of this kind we are restricting our reflections here exclusively to the relations of personal, free subjects among one another. Material and biological dimensions are also obviously included in these human free subjects. Thus, in this regulation being sought, such regulations as are part of the human being's subhuman dimensions must not be omitted (or just simply excluded by an ethical idealism). We must insist on this, even though the "frictions" that this implies and the subhuman regulations of these frictions, being susceptible to the influence of free, human decisions, themselves raise a problem and constitute an object requiring regulations which derive from the dimension of the free subject as such.

One could stop here and ask whether an approach beginning with the possible "friction" among free subjects might not be too narrow to provide an understanding of authority from the outset, or whether it might not lead in a false direction. One might also ask whether this approach does not from the outset conceal the real nature of authority in its majesty and dignity. However, if authority means the mandatory power to regulate human beings' social relations on the one hand, and if one acknowledges on the other that the free subject has a dignity and legitimacy that takes precedence over the regulations imposed upon it by other natural instances (something that could be demonstrated in an ontology and a theology of the free subject, and would have to be demonstrated, and this is of course impossible here), this approach cannot be summarily dismissed as inadequate or misleading. Overcoming frictions can quite properly be understood positively as providing a free [65] subject with the possibility of self-realizations which are inconceivable apart from the overcoming of such frictions. But in this way authority as the mandatory power to remove these frictions can quite properly be vested with a dignity and importance which, at first glance, one might think is ignored in an approach of this kind.

Human Freedom Presupposes the Necessity of Social Regulations

The kind of regulations that we are seeking can serve to eliminate frictions arising in the interpersonal relations of individuals as such without their having to be part of the actual social sphere. Or they can be regulations that serve to eliminate actual social tensions. This distinction is to be expected because we are presupposing here that the relationship between the human being as an individual and an individual free subject on the one hand and the human being as a member of a society on the other is not one of absolute identity, in virtue of which one aspect of the human being could be completely transferred to the other. With this presupposition it is our intention here to inquire only about regulations pertinent to frictions in the social sphere. Therefore we are prescinding here from a consideration of regulations that can be sought, for example, in the area of personal love and the possible cases of conflict there, however important and necessary for human beings these regulations may be.

No one will deny that in the social sphere there can in fact be disharmony and contradictions arising from the needs of individuals and of particular groups in a society, and that frictions like these – or whatever else you want to call them – do actually exist in all societies. There will of course be social systems and theories which implicitly or explicitly proceed on the assumption that there really is an ideal social order capable of being grasped and put into practice, and that once this order is realized it will necessarily and permanently

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exclude these frictions among this society's concrete members, and this will mean that everyone can live in perfect harmony, peace, and happiness with everyone else. Given this presupposition, the regulations to be sought would consist of structures and norms which would have to be realized once and for all in this society along with instructions on how to bring about this not yet existing society.

Here, however, we are proceeding on the conviction that a society [66] of this kind is impossible. The course of the world in general, which is one of the factors conditioning this society, cannot be foreseen in its ultimate concrete form and so it certainly cannot be manipulated in a completely effective way. And human freedom, after all, in its own history is constantly creating new and unforeseeable situations, tendencies, desires, and so on, which for their part are not just secondary material for the social order, but rather themselves help to change it and to call it into question.

So if this presupposition is the starting point, the rules being sought for the elimination of social frictions can also contain some sort of ideal conceptions about a desirable social structure or one that is desirable for the immediate future. But these rules cannot simply correspond identically to this social structure. Rather, they must of necessity also contain elements that are always merely provisional; they must be rules of temporary assistance and of improvisation; they must be capable of being implemented in such a way that the regulation governing one case here and now may and must be different for another case. The necessity of having the kind of regulations (and people responsible for them) which admit of improvised temporary assistance is simply a consequence of the impossibility of having a definitively ideal social order in which the necessity of regulations on a case-by-case basis would have abolished itself. This necessity is also a consequence of the nature of human freedom (here it does not matter whether and how this second reason is identical with the first). Freedom does not mean that we simply do what is commanded by general laws which would only have to be known precisely enough and their purpose comprehended for them to transform freedom into the peace which makes us happy in the knowledge that we have done what is necessary. If freedom really creates something new that cannot be completely and positively known and deduced from its presuppositions (at least by us), the regulations which such new realities require are not already present in the general constitutive structures of the realities alone, but they themselves must be set up anew.

At this point it still does not matter whether this new regulation required by a definite act of freedom is itself one that must be derived in a (morally) unambiguous and compulsory way from the situation at hand or whether it is itself, rather, a (morally legitimate) free regulation which could justifiably be different. In very many instances the second is certainly the case. But at the moment that is not the point at issue. Despite the necessity of a balanced regulation of conflicts in a society, that is, of "frictions" which are present in a society due to the plurality [67] of realities that have not yet been harmonized a priori, such regulations are obviously not always present in advance. They have to be decided upon first and constantly be set up anew, and for this reason they require concrete agents who are themselves present in history. When eliminating these frictions in a pluralistic society, these agents have the task of respecting the demands arising from the objective circumstances. Thus they have to be "just" and respect the legitimate claims of all the competing and conflicting realities, and when making these regulations they may not lose sight of the unity of the social system. But it is a necessary and unavoidable part of their legitimate duties and rights to make a decision that does not and cannot completely arise from the objective claims of the matters at hand. There are various reasons why this is true, but they cannot be enumerated exhaustively here.

First of all, the reality to which this regulation is supposed to react has either come to be through an exercise of freedom or such exercises of freedom have helped to determine it. Even apart from the fact that no reality involving ourselves can be known by us completely

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and therefore does not present all the persons involved in the action the same aspects determining their decision to act, at least those established realities to which the regulation is supposed to respond are realities that cannot ultimately be derived or foreseen, so that in this light the indeterminability which is already peculiar to every reality becomes essentially more acute. It is precisely the ambiguity of the reality that makes it impossible to respond to it with only one single legitimate reaction.

Furthermore, it is part of the nature of the freedom claimed by the agent of such a regulation, a freedom also claimed to make this regulation (at least until the opposite is proved), that in the case of categorical decisions it can choose among *several* possibilities, all of which are morally permissible. For it is senseless to assume that freedom means only the choice between two alternatives, one morally good and the other morally reprehensible, that there is no freedom when freedom's choice is limited only to what is morally good, that real freedom exists only when it has to take into account what is morally reprehensible as well as what is morally good. But if this regulation is a *free* one, if and because it cannot be made in any way other than an act of freedom, it necessarily contains, partially at least, the nonderivability, the "arbitrariness" characteristic of an act of freedom. It must of course be "objectively sound"; that is, it must take into account as far as possible the nature, the independence, and the freedom of the realities which have to be balanced in making this regulation. But this regulation will [68] not labor under the opinion that there can only be *one* objectively sound regulation and that this may not contain an element of the free, nonderivable decision.

THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF AUTHORITY

We have seen the necessity and the reality of a phenomenon that we call "authority."

The General Concept and the Concrete Manifestation of Authority

The word *authority* is known to us from the everyday use of language, and time and again we have experienced a reality that we call by this name. And now we declare that what we have just seen in the preceding reflection is to be called "authority." The justification for making these two terms identical is found in the fact that there are no demonstrable phenomena which would not perforce have to be called "authority" in the ordinary use of language that would not be identical with what we have come upon in our preparatory consideration. It is of course conceivable, as a matter of fact it is to be expected from the outset, that those realities which we encounter concretely and which in day-to-day life we usually call "authority" also manifest peculiarities which were not discovered in our previous consideration. Even presuming that this were the case, without citing examples for it at the moment, this still need not be evidence in refutation of our making "authority" identical with the phenomenon that we have in mind. For it is conceivable that the concrete reality of a definite authority possesses peculiarities which really are a part of the correct concept of this authority already envisaged by us, even though our correct conceptual approach has not yet worked out distinctly this peculiarity of this definite authority. That is quite possible.

It is also conceivable that the concrete phenomenon of authority that is our point of reference is amalgamated with realities from which it is not clearly distinguished, realities which in principle are not part of its essence and which have to be eliminated from the really essential concept of authority as such. For example, for authority to be recognized and to function in a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century society a [69] particular style was required

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that is not necessarily bound up with the actual essence of authority. The manner of recognizing papal primacy still customary at the end of the twentieth century does not necessarily derive from the essence of the pope's primacy in the Church. If we allow for both of these possibilities, there is no reason why we cannot say that we have indeed envisaged in a general way the real essence of authority in our preparatory considerations. One must bear in mind that the essence of authority described here in a general way will be considerably modified according to the concrete nature of the society in question. Therefore we must dismiss the objection that this or that concrete authority in a definite society manifests peculiarities which cannot be positively deduced or understood from our concept of authority.

An Attempt to Describe Briefly the Reality of Authority

For a reality such as authority it cannot be expected that an actual definition or a succinct description can be found. Those realities which refer to being as such or to a subject that is open to absolute being in an unlimited way occupy no position that would permit one to "define" them from outside. If we keep this in mind, we need not be upset by the expected objection that such definitions work with tautologies.

In a brief description that still has to be explained, we "define" authority as "the morally justified capacity of a human being to regulate and determine social relations among members of society in a way that is binding on these members." According to this description, the holder of authority is a human being. Whether and how such a concept can be applied to God to denote a relationship of God to creatures, ultimately, of course, unique and nontransferable, need not for the moment concern us here, as we have already indicated in our introduction. As a creaturely reality, authority falls in any event under those statements which characterize all finite realities as creatures of God. It comes from God, is constantly sustained by him, is directed to him, is responsible to him, is finite and conditioned, and its establishment in a way that is absolute is forbidden. There is a danger that it can be corrupted and turned into an idol. It always exists in a historical process whose future outcome cannot be foreseen. It can be a means of redemption as well as a vehicle of guilt.

[70]

Individual and Collective Bearers of Authority

If the bearers of authority thus described are human beings, it is understood that they are in full possession of their essential being in a way that can be actualized directly. Human beings in any other condition (as embryos, as legally incapacitated persons, etc.) can receive authority potentially, but they cannot have it in act. It has been pointed out above that there must be authority in societies. The necessity of socialization arises from the nature of human beings, and so there are societies which, without prejudice to their mutability in individual detail, participate as such in the necessity of socialization. And then there are certainly societies which stem from free establishment on the part of human beings or as such have only a remote and tenuous connection with a participation in the social nature of human beings. But if both necessary and freely established societies are presumed to exist, the necessity of having authority and those who bear authority holds true for both. *How* exactly these bearers of human authority are constituted concretely is at this point an entirely open, question. The fact that the bearers of authority might really be identical with the totality of the members of the society in question does not in principle preclude the necessity of authority. The only presupposition for this is that these collective bearers who are really identical with the society (or with a definite group in it) are capable of freely making a

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regulation because of which there must be such an authority. Whether or in what more concrete forms such collective bearers of authority can be conceived is a question that we can for the moment leave open.

Of course it also conceivable that the possibility of a regulatory activity on the part of collective bearers of authority will increase or decrease in stages which are difficult to determine and recognize, and for this reason a conflict can even arise as to whether or not this possibility still exists. In our previous considerations what we had in mind was rather an individual bearer of authority because the regulation that he or she must make has a margin of freedom and must) be made freely. In the ordinary case it seems to us that the bearer of authority is the individual human being. In saying this, however, it is still an open question how this individual bearer will be found and appointed.

[71]

Basic Elements concerning the Appointment of Bearers of Authority

The agent responsible for this appointment can of course be a collective body. One can object that this collective body (a town or city council, a parliament, a senate of cardinals, a meeting of members of an association) which appoints a bearer of authority exercises thereby a function of social regulation and so it must itself have authority. Therefore this authority must be conceived as something more original than that borne by a collective body. The following must be said in regard to this objection. First, it is not an a priori fact that all legitimate bearers of authority must be appointed by a collective bearer of authority. The history of human socializations obviously contains examples of bearers of authority who do not derive from collective appointments. (How the college of cardinals is a bearer of authority will be an obscure problem in church law.)

The moral dignity of personal subjects certainly means that a society consisting of such subjects has both the right and obligation to live in an orderly fashion. It follows from this that it also has the right and the obligation to appoint someone to regulate social relations if (in the abstract or due to concrete historical circumstances) such a person does not yet exist. But, apart from the fact that a larger society, if it is to undertake such an appointment, must be conceived as one already ordered and constituted in some way or other, indeed even as one already provided with bearers of authority, the question remains whether one should even call this right and obligation of a society “authority,” if it is actually directed by all to all at the same time and does not yet possess the peculiar element of a one-way claim on an individual by society through the medium of a concrete bearer of authority. A community’s right to make such an appointment is, after all, not being called into question just because one does not want to call the community’s possibility of making this appointment “authority.” In democratic societies we are accustomed to trace back the authority of the individual functionaries to an appointment by this society itself, thereby quite understandably ascribing “authority” to the collective body, the society itself. But the problem that then arises is whether one is to conceive the appointment of the functionary as creation, as communication of authority itself, or as mere designation of its bearer to whom his or her authority then comes from some other source (from God, from the natural law, etc.).

But does the capacity for appointing a bearer of authority always and [72] necessarily presuppose actual authority on the part of those who make the appointment? Or is this capacity (where it must be conceived as present in a collective body as such) actually rather a consequence of the fact that no authority is as yet present? Is it not rather an expression of the obligation to see to it that there is a bearer of authority and thus to ensure the concrete existence of authority? The usual contrary notion is presumably based on a feudal conception which views bearers of authority as persons who authoritatively through themselves directly

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create moral obligations in their "subjects," and who are endowed with a sovereignty ultimately emanating from God that bestows on them a special dignity over and above all other members of the society in question.

This of course gives rise to the following questions. What is the source of an authority so conceived? Does not the society bestowing the authority have to possess this kind of authority from the outset? Or is this authority bestowed directly by God as soon as the bearer is designated? If one leaves aside these notions of a special dignity on the part of the bearer of authority, there is nothing preventing the society – if and to the extent that it may be conceived as not being in advance possession of an agent for regulating social relations (some-thing that is not obvious) – from providing itself with a bearer of authority of this kind, even though it does not antecedently possess real authority in the sense in which we understand it. In this light, then, it is always individual persons who are the bearers of real authority, as is, in fact, the case in democratic forms of government. The fact that a small group is the bearer of one and the same authority may be viewed as a marginal case as far as this fundamental principle is concerned, because even in this case there must be a very small, manageable group, and even though equality of the members is the goal sought by this group, it still must have *primus inter pares*, a first among equals. And so here, too, we see that the principle ultimately prevails according to which the bearer of authority is fundamentally an individual person.

The Theory of Delegation and the Theory of Designation

Scholastic social teaching treats the question that we have just come upon as the problem of what it calls "the theory of designation" and "the theory of delegation," and asks which of the two theories is the correct [73] one. Both theories presuppose a social reality in which the concrete bearers of authority together with their authority come from a society.

The *delegation theory* presupposes that the society in question itself possesses the authority and transmits it to concrete and legally competent bearers of authority. As far as the authority of the state is concerned, the presupposition here is that this authority cannot be retained by the society as a whole, but for its really concrete exercise must be delegated to concrete bearers of authority, no matter whether the bearer of authority is a democratic parliament and a democratic government or a monarch. This view of course raises the question whether one can speak of authority in the proper sense if it cannot be exercised by its own bearer but must unavoidably be transferred.

According to the *designation theory*, the social entity from which the concrete bearer of authority comes does not itself initially possess this authority. It only constitutes or designates the concrete bearer of authority to whom this authority itself then comes from elsewhere (from the objective necessity of having an ordered society, from God, etc.). This theory is certainly applicable in very definite cases (for example, when the college of cardinals elects a pope during a vacancy of the papal see, and must elect one, although this college without a pope cannot be said to be in possession of the papal powers). However, the question still remains whether this designation theory applies in the case of constituting the authority of the *state*, or whether the people of the state are themselves originally in possession of the state's authority and transfer it in this way to a government (in the sense that all the power of the state "comes from the people"). In this designation theory this legitimate *capacity* for designating marks off its bearer from others who might eventually lay claim to this designation, and a mandatory power, a right, is ascribed to this bearer in regard to which the question may be asked whether this right might not also be called authority.

Thus on closer inspection it would seem that the two theories differ only in their

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terminology but not in fact. The delegation theory cannot deny that the "delegated" authority in the concrete is vastly different from the authority residing in the social entity that makes the delegation. The designation theory, on the other hand, must presuppose that something resembling a mandatory power, or authority, is present in the entity that makes the designation. It is no longer possible to discern a really objective difference in the legitimacy that those social entities have to constitute a concrete social authority. Of course one can imagine cases where in view of concrete circumstances a social entity (for [74] example, the totality of the male members of a small tribe, etc.) holds full and total social ("state") authority and then in particular instances delegates this authority as such (for practical reasons). Such cases, however, are marginal; they are due to concrete circumstances and do not by and large stem from the necessity of the general nature of authority.

The Dignity of Authority and the Order of Precedence among its Bearers

The moral necessity for the existence of a bearer of authority, the moral demand that the exercise of this authority makes in respect to the observance of a social regulation are not identical with authority itself. They are extremely variable and correlate to the nature of the society in question and to its necessity or nonnecessity. One can say that authority in any society derives as such from that society's necessity of having functionaries. There is a moral obligation to respect both those who bear these functions and the necessary functions they perform, even in cases where their individual decisions unavoidably involve an element of the "subjective" freedom of the bearer of authority. One can say that this authority also has a certain dignity due to the fact that it also makes a moral demand on the society's members. But this dignity does not actually elevate the bearers of authority to the highest position in the society in question. Judged from the standpoint of a society's nature and meaning, this highest position (if one chooses to view a society as structured on a vertical axis from above to below and the converse) is occupied by those whose activity contributes the most to the realization of this nature and meaning. In principle, however, it is not necessarily the functionaries who do this, "those who govern," but rather, in a secular society constituted in form of a state, for example, either those who are indispensable for its continued existence or those who make the greatest cultural contributions. In the Church it is not the bishops and popes as such, but rather the saints (both those who are known and those who remain hidden).

The Relationship between Authority and Coercive Power

The opposite impression (the notion that bearers of authority have a particular rank that places them on a level above others) is probably [75] due to the fact that in the societies actually existing the bearers of authority do in fact have a position of power as a presupposition or a consequence of their authority as such, through which they compel a particular respect for themselves. But this power, which can extend to the actual use of physical force, is not identical with actual authority. This more or less demythologizing view of authority as a function of society, an authority that on the one hand is necessary but on the other hand secondary vis-à-vis the actual nature of a society and its task and its life, does not, however, deny that in view of the great and often essential diversity among societies there is also a great, and under certain circumstances essential, diversity among the authorities and their dignity.

If a distinction must be made between authority and an actual power to coerce, because the former in its regulations in themselves appeals to the free moral consent of the members of

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the society in question while the latter means that the area in which a subject (in itself) can exercise its freedom can be changed without the subject's prior consent, this distinction still does not tell us very much in advance about the more precise relationship of these two entities to each other. Fundamentally one will have to say that authority can be quite real even if it is not linked with "coercive power" (even with coercive power that is morally beyond reproach). There is no cogent reason for thinking that the possibility of establishing even a moral obligation would always and of necessity have to be conjoined with the possibility of using physical force. The mutual moral obligations arising from a personal love do not possess a power of coercion for their realization either.

Conversely, authority does not necessarily exclude in its bearer every capacity for the application of physical force. The only presupposition is that one does not consider the use of force to be always and inherently immoral, and that in a definite society for definite regulations of social relations the application of this force can be shown to be indispensable for the efficient functioning of these regulations. In this case, of course, a concrete authority in a concrete society is of its nature and in a morally legitimate way equipped with the capacity for using force. It is obvious that the concrete use of the force necessary in certain circumstances for the exercise of authority must be proportional to the greater or lesser importance of the social regulation that has to be undertaken by the authority, and that one does not overstep the boundaries imposed by the situation.

[76] If and to the extent that the regulation intends an order that includes a morally absolute value, this power to coerce connatural to authority has more or less the character of punitive justice. Here, however, one must bear in mind that a social authority together with the coercive power connatural to it is not properly and directly the guardian of the God-given moral order as such, but is only tangential to it in an indirect way to the extent that it is required to establish and protect a social order. When and if moral values and transgressions against these values have no (grave) consequences for the social order as far as can be judged (and this assessment is historically quite variable), a secular authority should not presume any punitive power either. Whether or not this is different in the ecclesial society is a question that will be treated later and depends on the question whether or not an ecclesial authority is equipped with a power to coerce vis-à-vis the members of the Church.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Authority is necessary for a society's existence and therefore it participates in the (graduated) necessity of a definite society, the necessity of which can in its turn be absolute or hypothetical. Therefore a distinct bestowal of authority is not necessary. The only thing necessary is to determine in an objective and morally irreproachable way who in a concrete society the bearer of this authority is, an authority that must of necessity be present in this society. The interrelationship between a particular individual and this individual's function of being bearer of authority can vary considerably. This interrelationship can even be conceived in such a way that a particular individual actually and beyond challenge exercises this function and that if this function were to be wrested from the society, great damage would in fact be inflicted on the society and its well-being. It cannot be said that the democratic claim that every member of the society must be involved in the appointment of a bearer of authority is an inalienable and abidingly subsisting valid right of every human being. A democratic right of this kind does not issue simply from the abstract nature of any society nor does it emanate from the fundamental rights of every human being. This right, however, can exist in a derived way if without it the society in question would itself incur great damage in its

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nature and its activity.

[77]

AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

If one wants to discuss authority in the Church in a context of philosophical reflection, a fundamental difficulty arises right from the outset.

The Necessity of Church Authority as a Result of the Socialization of a Common Faith

A Christian church, and especially the Roman Catholic Church, certainly considers itself to be a society. In so doing it simply cannot avoid having its self-interpretation confronted by concepts and insights that come from a secular sphere of human experience and social theory. Otherwise ecclesiology would have to avoid using the word *society*, and the churches would not be permitted to manifest empirical realities whereby they obviously occupy a prominent place in earthly societies. How the individual churches more precisely determine the relationship of their social realities to their actual proper nature according to their different denominational self-interpretations is a matter of indifference. This proper, intrinsic nature of the Church may be conceived in a variety of ways in the different Christian denominations; such individual Christian socializations may or may not merit the name “church,” (and if they do not, then they are called “sects”); a Christian conviction or mentality may even exist in an individual instance without there being a real socialization. But a common Christian mentality, a common faith, and a common way of life are inconceivable apart from some form or other of socialization. But if Christianity at all times and in all places does factually manifest a socialization, a society, that is, a Church, then an authority is also present everywhere that lays claim to making binding regulations for the relations of the members in this Christian social reality, relations which of course even here are not simply and permanently regulated already. In the different Christian churches and churchlike societies the authority that is always and unavoidably present will be interpreted and exercised differently (according to the total self-understanding that each of these societies has of itself). Since, despite all the diversity of their self-understanding, all these Christian churches still derive their nature and their justification for existence from Jesus Christ, albeit in very different ways (indirectly or directly, exclusively or otherwise), in all of them it is actually unavoidable that the authority be conceived, whether explicitly or not, as coming from Jesus Christ.

[78] Because of the limited space available to us here, we must restrict our observations to the question of authority in the Roman Catholic Church. Since this Church has the most stringent understanding of authority, the authority present in it is not something that has validity for the other churches. Still, as an extreme instance of something that has ultimately one and the same nature, the Roman Catholic Church’s understanding of authority can be instructive for the self-understanding of the other churches and their understanding of authority. It is obvious that we cannot present here a Catholic ecclesiology in the proper sense, that is, a doctrine of the concrete constitution of the Catholic Church, for the purpose of developing from it a concrete understanding of authority in this Church. Rather, it is our intention to present only a few disparate observations on this matter in a way that is not entirely systematic and by no means exhaustive.

THE ORIGIN OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

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The nature of authority in this Church is conditioned by its origination. Initially this matter seems to be simple in Catholic ecclesiology.

Church Authority and the Problem of the Church's Foundation

Whatever the case may be in respect to the question of the origin of authority in the Church as seen in the ecclesiologies of the other churches, Catholic ecclesiology at least has taught for centuries that the following is part of the dogmatic, absolutely binding self-understanding of the Church. Authority in the Church does not come from below, from a mandate given by the Church's people, but from Jesus Christ, the founder of the Church. It has been handed on by "apostolic succession" beginning with Jesus Christ through the officeholders themselves and in this way it has come to the present-day bearers of this authority.

If we prescind at first from other questions of this doctrine's precise interpretation which is concerned with the problems of the more concrete and historically variable appointment of officeholders in the Church, we find not only in Protestant, but today even in Catholic ecclesiology and fundamental theology, a problem in regard to the origin of church authority that was not clearly discerned in former times. Beginning with the twentieth century the general and comprehensive problem [79] of the Church's foundation by the historical Jesus has been one of the acute problems among the questions raised by what is known as modernism. Today the response to this problem must be more differentiated than was possible or necessary in the past.

In earlier times one proceeded on the assumption that the historical Jesus in his earthly life, partly after his resurrection (at the time no real difference was seen between Jesus' life before and after his resurrection as far as the question of the foundation of the Church was concerned), founded the Church by explicit and formally expressed words of institution, that through Peter and the Twelve he appointed in an unambiguously juridical sense a college of officeholders for this Church with the explicitly expressed intention that this college of officeholders should continue to propagate itself in a Church which was explicitly assigned a task even for a distant future. In connection with this the problem of the imminent expectation of the eschatological end, even in the consciousness of Jesus, was passed over completely. While it is true that even the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council does not teach this conception with a definitively binding force, it is still more or less tacitly presupposed as obvious. But what this conception basically means of course is that the Church really comes from Jesus, crucified and risen, as the eschatologically unsurpassable self-promise of God grasped in the faith of a community, wherein definite social realities of the pre-Easter life and activity of Jesus can and indeed must also be conceived as being a constitutive part of the post-Easter community of faith (the circle of disciples, the position of Peter, the institution of the Last Supper, etc.).

If Jesus crucified and risen is to be God's unsurpassable, historical self-promise for the whole world, there must exist for all times a community of faith that accepts this self-promise of God in faith and bears witness to it before the world. Such a community of faith, if it is to be the historically abiding presence of God's eschatological self-promise to the world in Jesus, must necessarily be a socially constituted entity, and thus it must also come in a legitimate way from the historical Jesus and his circle of disciples. Conversely, however, one will not have to ascribe to the consciousness of Jesus that ecclesiology which is a description of the local churches and the one Church in apostolic times, much less the completely structured Church from the second century to the First Vatican Council. Here, of course, we cannot go into further detail on the problem of the Church's foundation by Jesus. Here we are simply presupposing that the Church can and does come from Jesus in a way that [80] is

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binding even though we cannot adhere to an act of church institution on the part of Jesus in exactly the same way as this act was formerly conceived.

The Historical Margin of Freedom for Shaping Church Office and Its Authority

Presuming what has been said above, authority in the Church can indeed be understood as coming from Jesus (the pre-Easter Jesus and the risen Jesus) without having to have unambiguous recourse to a verbal and juridical mandate and to the institution of a juridical form of succession for this mandate. This means that the concrete modalities governing the exercise of this church authority (even as Jesus' authority) can be ascribed to a development of the post-Easter Church to a greater extent than has been previously conceived according to the old model of institution. This thesis need not mean, at least not in every case, that concrete structures of this church authority, the specific characteristics and requirements on the part of its bearers, the mode of handing on the authority, and so on, would have to be liable to change for all future times just because they are historical forms that emerged in the apostolic Church and cannot simply make claim to explicit verbal instructions of Jesus, particularly because such instructions cannot be demonstrated historically and it is senseless to postulate them simply for the purpose of maintaining the old model of institution.

I have explained elsewhere[1] that a constitutional structure in the concrete Church can be conceived as being *juris divini*, (of divine, irreversible command) and is to be expected even though it did not take on historical form until the time of the apostolic Church, and that it nonetheless belongs to the irreversible decisions of the Church's history, and that this is a history that the historical subject "Church" can no longer go back beyond. Those who consider this to be absolutely inconceivable would have the burden of explaining how the canon is part of the Church's normative faith for all times, even though it did not take shape and was not constituted as such, albeit relatively early, until after the "death of the apostles." On the other hand, as has already been said, this conception implies that for its historical development, even [81] in what pertains to the shaping of office and its authority, the Church has been given a wide margin of freedom. This margin of freedom must not be prematurely narrowed by a constitutional doctrine that retrojects present-day church structures into the earlier times in a way that is too unhistorical so as to exclude other possibilities with dogmatic absoluteness.

The authority of the Church originates from Jesus and for this very reason it is historically quite flexible. It need not deny itself as though it were nothing other than a mere human construct; at the same time it need not simply identify itself with historical shapes and forms of its constitution and its authority under which it has appeared in the course of history if these shapes and forms can themselves be recognized as things that have developed historically. It is entirely possible in a dogmatically binding way to define particular church structures and the authority contained in them as things that are permanently normative, for example, the primacy of the pope. In so doing, however, one should not overlook the fact that a definition of this kind unavoidably occurs according to a concrete conceptual model (indeed, that it cannot be abstracted from this model in an absolutely perfect way) which is not, after all, a part of the abiding essence of the thing itself.

The origin of church authority from Jesus and the origin of the Church as God's irreversible self-promise to the world in Jesus crucified and risen are for us, therefore, not two things that cancel each other out. In order to understand this, the Church, from whose

[1] See *Concern for the Church: Theological Investigations* 20, translated by Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981).

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nature and reality its authority derives, should not be understood as an abstract idea from whose speculatively conceived nature its authority can be postulated. From the very beginning the Church is the concrete community of faith, and it is this as the historical permanence of God's promise of himself in Jesus. And since it is and always has been socially constituted in a concrete way, albeit originally in a very modest form, it lays claim to possessing authority. There is no necessity of deducing speculatively from the Church's abstract nature the concreteness of its authority together with the bearers of this authority. It is quite sufficient to grasp that the concrete Church makes its legitimate claim to concrete authority on the basis of its theological-metaphysical nature. To put it more concretely: one cannot deduce speculatively that there would *have* to be a *Peter*. One can, however, experience that the concrete reality of this entity "Church" is present in this post-Easter community of faith and that otherwise it is not present, and that it claims its authority on the basis of its nature.

[82] For the origination of church authority from Jesus in later times, it is sufficient to demonstrate how and where the later Church in the clearest possible way can trace itself back to the earlier Church without a revolutionary rupture between the earlier and the later historical form of the Church. Even prescinding here from the question whether and in what sense other Christian churches and societies can rightfully lay claim to some of the authority of Jesus (something that cannot be denied and in fact has never really been totally denied by the Catholic Church because the Catholic Church has never denied the existence of valid sacraments in other Christian churches), in any case it is the conviction of the Roman Catholic Church that it stems from the first Church in a continuity that is historically unassailable and most complete, and therefore that it possesses from Jesus the authority which comes to the concrete, eschatologically permanent faith community of Jesus.

ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF AUTHORITY AND COERCIVE POWER IN THE CHURCH

We have already pointed out that authority in a society and the legitimate possession of the power of physical coercion need not necessarily exist together in every case. Naturally the concrete exercise of authority always implies a change in the freedom possessed by a member of this society prior to his or her consent. To this extent one may say that authority necessarily includes an element of coercive power. But undoubtedly there are societies in which this authority is legitimately equipped with the possibility of exercising coercive power that goes beyond what is already necessarily implied in authority as such. If this is true, then there is a real question whether the Church's authority according to the dogmatically certain self-understanding of the Church is equipped with a legitimate coercive power which goes beyond what is already necessarily implied in the exercise of authority (and which in concrete cases can have a very considerable impact, as, for example, when the bearers of church authority withdraw a person's ecclesiastical teaching license). As has been stated already, traditional canon law teaching has given an affirmative answer to this question right up to most recent times. This teaching proceeded on the assumption that while the Church had no right to use force in respect to non-Christians, a baptized person, by the very fact of his or her being [83] baptized, belonged irrevocably to the Church, and that the Church has in regard to such a person a power of coercion which as a matter of course was conceived as something going beyond the exercise of its authority.

If we make bold to answer this question in the negative, both for today and tomorrow, it does not mean that we are passing a negative judgment on former times in the Church. It is entirely possible to conceive of social situations, a symbiosis of Church and secular society

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and so on, in which the exercise of such a power of coercion was legitimate. If today one denies both the possibility and the meaningfulness of a papal church-state and says that this cannot be derived from the permanent nature of the Church, this is not tantamount to asserting that the church-state of the tenth or of the sixteenth century stood in absolute contradiction to the nature of the Church.

If today we not only take into account the sacramental nature of baptism and its permanent sacramental character in regard to the question of church membership in a concrete social sense, but also take seriously the teachings of the Second Vatican Council concerning the freedom of religion in which the argumentation proceeds from the nature of faith as a free personal act and hence must have validity for the baptized as well; furthermore, if we take into consideration the Church's understanding of itself as a free community of like-minded persons in contrast to societies existing from a natural necessity, we will be permitted to say that the Church in the light of its intrinsic nature does not have to be conceived of as being equipped with a power of social coercion. According to this kind of understanding, then, attempts to exercise such coercive power are either part of the remnants of an earlier social situation of the Church and its consequences which perhaps might *still* be legitimate here and there. Or, on the other hand, they should be assessed as attempts to claim for the Church a power which it does not possess either on the basis of its own nature or its present-day situation in a pluralistic society. Therefore the Church should nowhere respond to a conflict between itself and one of its members with civil and material consequences. In this connection, it should not be denied that the blunt reaction of bearers of authority can in particular cases unavoidably involve unpleasant consequences even in the material and civil sphere. But fundamentally authority in the Church pertains to the regulations of those relations in it which are implied in the *nature* of the Church.

[84]

TEACHING AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

It is beyond doubt that according to the Catholic Church's understanding of itself there is a teaching authority, a teaching office in the Church. Yet the question about the nature of this teaching office is more obscure than is commonly supposed. That the Church is a community with a common faith and creed oriented to the unsurpassable salvific significance of Jesus Christ, and thus that the Church has something to do with teaching, is something that requires no further explanation. It should also remain clear that the teaching authority, however it is to be conceived in a more precise analysis, derives its sustenance and its life from the "authority" of the truth to which the Church bears witness. A mere appeal to formal teaching authority on the part of the ecclesial teaching office, if it is not combined with an ongoing, intensive effort to elucidate the meaning of what is proclaimed and taught, would ultimately result in a destruction of faith itself because faith implies an existentiell, practical, and theoretical relationship to the truth of faith itself; hence faith may not be reduced to mere obedience to the formal teaching authority of the Church. Furthermore, the existence and the claim of an ecclesial teaching instance is itself an object, and a secondary one at that, of that faith which, antecedent to this recognition of a teaching authority, lives from the compelling power of the truth contained in God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ.

The recognition of the ecclesial teaching authority is dependent on the "authority" of revelation which ultimately (despite all the *reciprocally* conditioned relationships that the concrete realization of faith involves) sustains the teaching authority and is not sustained by it. This is an obvious teaching of Catholic fundamental theology which forbids us to see in this teaching authority an absolutely primary datum. The question concerning the actual nature of the ecclesial teaching authority focuses on whether this authority itself implies a

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completely theoretical instance of truth instituted as such by the omniscient and self-revealing God, or whether it must be deduced from the nature of the Church as an eschatologically permanent and socially constituted creedal community. This question is not a theoretical quibble because there are some important consequences involved regarding the more precise exercise of this teaching authority depending on how we answer it. In our opinion, the second answer to the question is the right one. The teaching authority is a necessary element of sociopolitical authority in the Church, but only if the nature of the Church as a socially constituted [85] creedal community that receives God's historical promise of himself to the world in an eschatologically permanent way is taken into proper account. But it is not more than this.

There is a teaching authority in the Church not because the truth of revelation as such must be guaranteed for itself but because there must be an eschatologically permanent presence of Christ's word in the history of the last days. If this were not the case, one would have to expect that God's salvific truth of revelation, which has always been present, would everywhere and at all times be furnished with an authority of this kind. This limitation of the teaching authority in the Church does not mean that we are denying the theoretical character of the truth of revelation itself which, after all, is not simply and absolutely coterminous materially and logically with the object of the Church's teaching authority. Therefore one could say that it is the task of the teaching authority in the Church to see to it that in the Church the truth of revelation is given proper witness and proclamation. Only to this degree and extent does this teaching authority extend as well to the correct belief of the individual who, so to speak, has to take it upon himself or herself to see to it that his or her faith corresponds to this social presence of Christ's truth in the Church and through the Church in the world. The Church's teaching office can provide this pure presence of the truth of revelation in the Church, but it is not in a position to supervise the conformity of the individual's specific faith with the Church's doctrine.

In respect to the individual's faith, when this faith takes on tangible form in society, the teaching office can only ascertain that this particular expression of faith does not contradict the universal faith of the Church. The teaching office cannot actually go beyond this negative form of certification, a kind of *nihil obstat* that this expression of an individual's faith is not open to objection on grounds of orthodoxy. The more concrete norms governing the practical activity of the ecclesial teaching office that result from this interpretation of its authority cannot be considered further here. What has been said can of course also be applied to the concrete exercise of church authority in regard to the other dimensions of the Church (the practice of Christian life, the administration of the sacraments, etc.), which are part of the nature of this community of faith.

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[87]

PART TWO

The Society of Jesus

[89]

7

THE SITUATION OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS SINCE ITS DIFFICULTIES WITH THE VATICAN

I am dividing my presentation into three parts. In the first section I would like to present some general and fundamental considerations that in some way or other have a bearing on all the events that have occurred and the declarations that have been made since the pope appointed a personal delegate.[1] In the second section I would like to present some reflections on a paper of Father Dezza in which he treats of our relationship to the ecclesial teaching office. In the third part of my considerations I make reference to a further paper of Father Dezza that discusses our apostolate and the norms for this apostolate set up by the thirty-second General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.[2] It is obvious that the remarks I intend to make will not be able to deal with every aspect of the subject. So it is naturally to be expected that relatively unimportant matters will be dealt with in detail and much more important things will only be touched upon briefly or not even mentioned at all. I shall certainly try not to speak in a disrespectful way. However, in a case of conflict between honesty and respect I am for honesty. It is likewise obvious that many questions will be treated for which there is [90] either no unambiguous and generally accepted answer at all or for which the answer will at least have to remain outstanding on my part. I do not intend to develop a fully balanced casuistry concerning obedience in a religious order.

I also want to admit in advance that while my remarks concerning our relationship to the ecclesial teaching office will indicate the difficult and problematical nature of this relationship, they will not really provide any simple rules that can be neatly applied to specific cases involving possible conflict between the teaching office and the individual theologian or the truthful conscience of a Jesuit. Many of my brethren will certainly regret this.

THE CONDITIONS OF OUR TIMES AS A CAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

First, I would like to present a fundamental and general consideration. It goes without saying that our order has its difficulties and that there are some things that are not as they should be.

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[1] On 5 October 1981 Pope John Paul II appointed Father Paolo Dezza, SJ., as papal delegate entrusted with the leadership of the Society of Jesus.

[2] In connection with this, see the recent *Letter of Father Dezza to the whole Society of Jesus* (2 March 1982), esp. the appendix, “Guidelines (direct norms) for putting into practice the wishes of the Holy Father” (nos. 1-9). On 8 December 1982 the convocation of a General Congregation was announced.

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In times past this was also the case, and it is quite legitimate to ask whether the difficulties we are having today are greater than those we had in the eighteenth century. Specific abuses which can be remedied by a little bit of effort and clear thinking should be remedied.[3] But the difficulties we are having today, taken as a whole, are conditioned by the general situation of the Church and the world. If we look at the matter closely, we shall see that it is the intellectual, spiritual, cultural, and social situation of today's world that is at the root of the difficulties and problems that we are experiencing and suffering in our day-to-day life in the order. Every period in world history has to some degree or other labored under the impression that it was standing at a precarious turning point between two worlds and that it was threatened by enormous dangers; so caution is certainly called for when analyzing such situations and Cassandralike cries should be uttered sparingly The fact remains, however, that today we are really living in a time of violent upheavals and cataclysmic dangers the likes of which have simply never been known before.

Never before has the world population numbered six billion and there has never before been a time when this population could increase to [91] ten billion within the space of a few decades. Rational technology has never before existed, as we know it today, nor has the secularization on a global level that we are experiencing today. There has never before been such an interlocking of individual societies and countries on this earth. There has never before been a religion which, as an organized social entity, set out to be a world religion, to move out beyond its own limited cultural roots and to inculturate itself in many historical periods and civilizations, even though it has a historically and regionally limited origin, an origin which cannot simply be discarded.

This then, briefly indicated, is the general situation of our historical era and of the Church in which we live today even in our religious order. If this radical situation, which has never before existed, had no determining influence on our order, the order would be dead. However, if the order is a living reality, it is necessarily involved in an intensive communication with the total situation on the intellectual, spiritual, and social level. Is it any wonder, then, that we share in the sufferings brought on by the problems, the insecurities, and the uncertainties? Should our question not rather be whether we are bearing too little of the burden of this totality of the world's fate? Should our first question not rather be whether we really want to perpetuate too anxiously and conservatively that mentality and manner of living characteristic of the religious ghetto into which the Church maneuvered itself during the epoch of the pian popes, even though it should actually be clear to us that genuine conservatism consists in having the courage to do something new?

What I want to say is simply this. We really ought to view all of our difficulties, honestly admitting them, ultimately as a matter of course, and in the final analysis we should rather be amazed that these difficulties are not greater, since it is by no means certain and obvious that the absence of such difficulties is a sign of health. It is only the dead or those groups ossified in their conservatism who have no difficulties.

There is no use in considering reforms in our course of studies or training unless we put them in the framework of this kind of analysis of our spiritual and intellectual situation. When reflecting upon our external lifestyle, we must take into account realistically that the difference between our own present-day lifestyle and that of our contemporaries must not and cannot be essentially greater than the difference between an eighteenth-century Jesuit's lifestyle and that of the other people of that time; in other words, that the practical norms for this lifestyle cannot be derived from that of the eighteenth century. This is of course a truism. However, if one calls to mind that a few decades ago the installation [92] of an elevator in the

[3] In connection with this, see V. Seibel, 'Die Gesellschaft Jesu auf dem Prüfstand," *Geist und Leben* 3 (1982): 213-23.

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Biblical Institute in Rome was still a problem requiring a solution on the part of the superior general of the order, or if one recalls Father General Janssen's regulation determining the transportation of typewriters from one house to another or his attempts to make us wear a cassock, then one sees that such truisms are apparently not always grasped.

Recollections such as these are not intended as a reproach for the past but only to draw attention to the fact that the dangers of such mischievous conservatism has not yet been completely eliminated even today. I am not talking about laxity or worldliness in our lifestyle, but I would like to express my concern about possible renewed attempts to impose a lifestyle on us which perhaps in Poland or in Rome does not yet manifest that difference from the lifestyle of the rest of the world as it does here among us. In our theology, in our training, and in our lifestyle there can obviously be defects even today which perhaps can be more clearly seen and corrected by looking at the past. But in a falsely understood fidelity to its history, an order should not create difficulties for itself or let such difficulties be created by restoration attempts which would make sense and have durability only if we could reverse conditions that are simply beyond our control, on the assumption that only the old days were shaped according to God's will.

Honestly and objectively speaking, I have the impression that from this standpoint all these fundamental considerations are not being given sufficient weight in the declarations of our curia. Obviously the Constitutions of Saint Ignatius should be heard in these Roman declarations. Obviously these decrees will always refer to declarations of previous General Congregations and generals. But if a present-day dogmatic theology cannot be simply put together from texts of Holy Scripture, even despite the permanent immutability of divine revelation, then it is even less appropriate for such Roman decrees to give rise to the impression that they are doing nothing more than reiterating the old norms and that everything beyond this is only a reluctant and peevishly granted concession to what even Rome itself sees as something that can no longer be reversed. Should not the declarations from Rome also have the courage and clarity to give expression to the difficulties which, after all, do exist and which cannot be gotten rid of simply by adhering to a few naively formulated principles?

When recently one of our brethren, no doubt with polemical exaggeration, wrote to Rome saying that many of the statements coming from the curia of our order sounded like a Soviet declaration on the occasion [93] of an armed intervention in a foreign country interpreting the action as one of brotherly assistance and friendship, that was surely an exaggeration. But it would certainly do us no harm if the people in Rome exercised more consideration of the way in which we perceive style, a way that is more honest and open. I shall come back to this point later.

Obedience

However, when "total obedience to the Holy See" is being spoken about, given the necessary distinctions, one can certainly recognize elements that are quite important and correct, but in our part of the world we do in fact have the impression that there is in reality no total obedience (and that Ignatius did not really demand this), that a "total obedience" of this kind cannot be achieved so easily because it is not exactly known what this obedience really commands us to do and what in definite circumstances it does not command, that one indeed hears from Ignatius that obedience reaches its limits when confronted with a conscience that protests against sin. Roman declarations are stylistically formulated in such a way as to lead one to think that such limits can never seriously occur in real life, something that is just not true even if one attributes to the Roman offices at least as much moral capacity for judgment

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as to oneself.

The Notion of Church

A further problem that constantly comes up when one reads the Roman declarations is the following. It seems to me that these declarations are undergirded by a notion of Church, a notion that cannot be readily grasped and is certainly not explicitly formulated, which I consider to be false from a dogmatic, human, and realistic standpoint. One has the impression that it is presupposed that all true and legitimate activities in the Church, all new initiatives and ideas, proceed from the highest powers in Rome or at least that they cannot be legitimate unless they have the explicit or at least tacit approbation of Rome. This notion of Church, which in the secular sphere would be called totalitarianism, is, however, wrong.

Certainly everything that occurs in the name of Jesus must ultimately occur fundamentally within the Church and its unity, and everything [94] that factually occurs outside of this Church under the inspiration of the gospel contains an internal dynamism oriented to the one Church of Jesus Christ. But even if this is true and even if the Holy See bears ultimate responsibility for the unity of this Church to the extent that it is tangibly present in society, a responsibility that has no higher earthly power beyond it, this does not mean that there can be no legitimate pluralism of initiatives and ways of shaping Christian life.

Historically there is always this kind of pluralism which from the outset is not positively inaugurated and shaped by Rome, even if one on formal grounds chooses to see in the existence of this pluralism without contradiction on Rome's part a tacitly granted approbation. This pluralism is legitimate. The first desert fathers went out into the desert without a positive approbation that would have been obligatory for them. The poor man of Assisi gave his clothes back to his father without having positive approbation for this from the official Church. The veneration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus arose and was propagated when those in Rome did not want to hear about it. The new exegesis arose in the face of opposition from the Biblical Commission under Pius X. Saint Teresa of Avila established her convents only in the face of massive difficulties with Rome. In the quarrel between the Catholic workers' associations and the Christian labor unions under Pius X, the German Jesuits were certainly not the ones who fulfilled the wishes and intentions of the pope, but they were right nonetheless. Saint Ignatius might not have been seized by a fit of trembling when Paul IV was elected pope if no tendencies had been permitted to exist in the Church which the Holy See had not given its positive blessing to from the outset.

I certainly do not maintain that things as obvious as these would be challenged in Rome if thematically presented in a clear-cut way. But one should not pretend either that things were different from the way they really were, or simply cover over decisions with a cloak of silence, when afterwards they have proved to be wrong and have been revised. Such measures should also be revoked explicitly. (The prior censorship, imposed on me before the council was never revoked either by the Holy Office or by our curia; therefore it would actually still be in force.)

What I want to say is this. In our relationship with Rome we should never act as if this legitimate pluralism did not exist in the Church, as if we were nothing other than executors of the Holy See's commands and wishes. We stand in the true and Catholic relationship to Rome precisely when we serve the pope gladly and with genuine self-effacement, but not only when we do this. The Holy Spirit does not grant his initiatives to [95] the Church solely and exclusively through the pope. Therefore there are no principles that can be facilely applied to the Church's life whereby, if we only adhere to them exactly, every conflict between Christians and the Church's officeholders right up to the pope would be absolutely

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excluded. Somebody once told me that the biggest obstacle to the beatification of Vincent Palotti was the fact that he once said that Pius IX was obtuse. Was this an unecclesial utterance or is it quite permissible in an honest, down-to-earth, and thus Christian and Catholic mentality? In any event, difficulties in all these things cannot be eliminated by paying covert obeisance to an ecclesiastical totalitarianism.

THE JESUIT ORDER AND THE TEACHING OFFICE

It is obvious that Father Dezza's statements contain a number of elements that are quite correct and important for Jesuits. Papal teaching, even if it does not contain a dogmatic definition, must in principle be accorded the proper respect due to it, corresponding, of course, in its turn to the degree of binding force that this teaching itself intends, and which in the nature of things can be quite minimal. (For example, if the pope speaks of the Yahwist in one of his Wednesday audiences, Old Testament exegetes will be happy at the recognition thus accorded to their teaching which from Pius X on had been proscribed for decades. It is, however, obvious that they can ascribe no real theological importance to a remark of this kind.) It is also obvious that criticism of papal statements must be made in a manner that manifests a basic respect for the ecclesial teaching office. It is obvious that criticism of this kind has no place in sermons or in catechetical instruction, as, for example, has been emphasized by the 1967 instruction of the German bishops, "even if the faithful under certain circumstances are to be instructed concerning the nature and restricted scope of such a provisional doctrinal decision," as the bishops remark.[4] To put it briefly: "A serious effort to evaluate positively and to appropriate even a provisional doctrinal statement of the Church is part of the proper attitude of faith on the part of a Catholic," and this is especially true of a Jesuit.

But, as the German bishops emphasize, there is no denying that there can be cases in which the well-informed conscience of a Christian and [96] of a Jesuit can disagree with such an authoritatively proposed teaching, withhold assent to it, and also give expression to this with the required respect because the ecclesial teaching office can err and has erred in making such merely authoritative doctrinal declarations. "The Church has always been aware of this possibility and has also admitted it in its theology and has developed rules of conduct for such a situation." This fact, which no one seriously doubts, does not really emerge clearly in Father Dezza's paper, it is more or less covered up and repressed. There are conclusions resulting from this that are really unacceptable even to the most ecclesial of Jesuit theologians, and if, despite this, they should be insisted upon, they would do great harm to an objective and responsible theology, would make Jesuit theology unworthy of trust in the eyes of the public, and would even engender a climate of dishonesty. We shall now treat this in detail.

On the Theology of the Jesuits

The following contains eight points.

1. First of all, Father Dezza's paper is extremely imprecise, since it does not tell us clearly whether the rules of conduct developed in it are valid only for us Jesuits or for all theologians who think with the Church. This lack of clarity has nothing to do with the question whether

[4] J. Neuner and H. Roos, eds., *Der Glaube der Kirche in den Urkunden der Lehrerkündigung,* 10th ed., no. 469.

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the Jesuits have a proper and special obligation to respect the ecclesial teaching office that non-Jesuits do not have. An additional moral obligation, which one need not hesitate to admit, does not answer the question whether other and additional norms apply to Jesuit theologians or not. In the first case Jesuit theology would lose its public credibility; it would be perceived as a mere mouthpiece for an authoritarian teaching power.

The question then arises as to how to justify this kind of difference of Jesuit theology in doctrinal matters as opposed to any other theology. There can be no such justification. From the spirit of their order the Jesuits can be obligated to special fidelity to the ecclesial teaching office, but this fidelity can only manifest itself in the exact observation of the rules that apply to all theologians. In the following, then, we presume a negative answer to the question just asked.

2. Father Dezza's observations concerning our attitude toward declarations of the ecclesial teaching office that contain an ultimate dogmatic [97] binding force need not be challenged. These observations may be taken for granted. But they are too simple to provide much help for a theologian. There is no doubt that under certain circumstances, even in the case of those definitions proclaimed by the Church, theologians present very different interpretations, even though the theologians recognize the absolutely binding force of these definitions as a matter of course. In such a case, it may well be that the official magisterium inclines to one definite interpretation rather than to another, even though this does not mean that this preference has itself the force of a definition. What is to be done in a case like this? At this point Father Dezza abandons the theologian, failing to take into account that even today the obligation in regard to a dogma almost necessarily leads to the question of the theologian's attitude toward the merely authoritative teaching office of the Church. According to the teaching of Vatican I, it is certainly correct that further explanation of a dogma may not alter its original sense.

But things are not as simple as Father Dezza makes them out to be when he makes a distinction between the content of the statement and the way the statement is expressed. Father Dezza employs a massive oversimplification that is no help for the theologian. For it is undeniable that even perpetually binding dogmas can be bound up with conceptions, patterns of thought, and so on, that have to be eliminated, so that the question arises as to where the boundary lies between those conceptions that can be amalgamated with the dogmas and the actual dogma itself and what criteria must be found to enable one to draw this boundary. (For example, does the doctrine of original sin, which was certainly formulated under the presupposition of monogenism, imply an absolute obligation to this monogenism, or can monogenism be given up as was permitted by a commission directed by Dhanis in Rome under Paul VI, although a scheme of Vatican II and *Humani Generis* were of another opinion?)

3. What Father Dezza says about the Catholic theologian's relationship to nondefined but authoritative doctrinal statements of the ecclesial teaching office is, to say the least, so imprecise and one-sided that if these rules were to be proclaimed, one could fear that they would cause conflicts of a most profound nature. According to Father Dezza, a critical position toward such official teaching on the part of a Jesuit theologian can be presented only privately to the Roman teaching office. Father Dezza does not even allow for the publication of critical positions in scientific journals. But to forbid or to suppress this would mean [98] the death of theology. How can we seriously be expected to make the progress absolutely necessary for the efficaciousness of the gospel and the faith of the Church if every advance should first be required to have the positive blessing of the Roman doctrinal office which, at least up to now, has *in* many cases taken up a position that is objectively wrong? At the time of Pius X, how could one have taken those positions that are accepted today by the whole of

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Catholic Old and New Testament exegesis if a prior approbation for them had been required by the Biblical Commission? How would the teaching of the biological link between the human being and the animal kingdom have become possible – a teaching that was even permitted by Pius XII in 1950 – if all the theologians and biologists between Darwin and the middle of our century would have had to get previous approval from Rome?

The fact of the matter is that the ecclesial teaching office can err and has erred quite often, even in our own century, and that in the concrete such errors that are detrimental to the Christian message can be over-come only if public criticism of these errors is possible, no matter how cautious and respectful such criticism may be. This criticism must be possible at least in scientific journals and books. In unpublished theses circulating in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which I happened to see, the legitimacy of this kind of scientific criticism on the part of theologians is fully recognized for journals and scientific works. Father Dezza does not say anything about this; as a matter of fact, he rules this out for Jesuits. He does not really even mention the possibility that the teaching office can err and has erred, something, for example, that the German bishops explicitly admit. Or is this something that still has to be proved? Do we have to point to doctrinal statements of a very authoritative kind under Pius X which no exegete today any longer accepts and which have been retracted by Rome only partially and half-heartedly? Do we have to make a point of referring to numerous declarations in the struggle against modernism which emanated from the teaching office at the time and which are hardly accepted today by any theologian trained in the history of dogma in the form in which they were presented at that time? Shall we point to the development of Christian social and economic teaching which contains a large number of official declarations that objectively contradict one another? Are we to understand official declarations on the liturgy containing differences that verge on contradiction merely as declarations that have nothing at all to do with the actual teaching office?

Such errors do in fact exist and we might have expected from Father [99] Dezza practical and down-to-earth advice on what to do in such cases. The concession of an “internal difference of opinion” will not suffice. This internal difference of opinion alone is not enough to keep scientific research “open,” to use Father Dezza’s term. The possibility of bringing one’s objection only before the “teaching authorities of the Church” is simply not enough. If the possibility of airing an objection in the “social media of communication” is excluded, then it seems that critical positions on the scientific level as well are also excluded by Father Dezza. But that would be the death of theology in the way it is required to function for the salvation of souls. However, if Father Dezza does not want to exclude criticism on the scientific level, why does he not say so explicitly, since this is of the utmost importance for the work of the theologian?

If the teaching office can make errors in its teaching, how can one go along with Father Dezza’s demand that our teaching “must be in complete agreement with that of the magisterium,” always and absolutely. If we really take this word *complete* with total seriousness, we would be required to teach, defend, and propagate errors even when we recognize them to be such; we would have to vouch for these errors until the teaching office revokes them explicitly. Or perhaps the word *complete* does not really mean complete at all. If this is the case, then one might warmly recommend a use of language that is more in keeping with our ordinary German usage that esteems sobriety and honesty. Father Dezza’s statement that teachings which in the sense expounded above are not in agreement with the magisterium must “not be disseminated in publications by Jesuits” is at the very least so undifferentiated that it can be used as an instrument for suppressing any free theological research that is also required to be critical.

4. We must also draw attention to the following difficulty. It is obviously correct that

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theologians must keep in mind the people they are talking to, and so not every theological statement is suitable for everybody. But one must honestly and realistically admit that modern communications media make it very difficult to keep theological reflections locked up in the *camera caritatis* of the theological sciences. No matter how esoteric the language of theological criticism may be or how obscure the place of its publication, we may be sure that journalists will bring it to the attention of a broad public. While it is true that the customary distinction, and the one also made in the previously mentioned theses of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, between scientific and [100] nonscientific publications even today is not devoid of all meaning, still it is not really helpful for the activities of theologians and contributes, little to the ecclesial teaching office's legitimate attempt to direct theological work into proper channels. Father Dezza does not give us any really helpful rules for dealing with this problem.

Father Dezza does admit that there can be "difficulties" and that "it seems important that they be made public." But what does that mean? Does it mean then that we really may publish these "difficulties," or could an exegete even as early as 1930 state that the traditional way of making Genesis dependent on the historical Moses is not only "difficult" but also wrong? What does a Jesuit theologian do when an educated lay Catholic asks him for information on a theological question concerning which the Jesuit's conscience in all honesty forbids him to do nothing more than just repeat and positively defend the magisterium's authoritative, but nondefined teaching? When it is a question of his own conscience and the salvation of the questioner's soul, can he communicate his own conviction when it diverges from Rome's authoritative teaching? Would he have been allowed to do this, for example, as early as 1930 in regard to the biological origin of the human being, even though Rome did not explicitly permit him to do this until 1950? How is a Jesuit supposed to conceal his opinion which he might perhaps share with the overwhelming majority of Catholic moral theologians in Germany who are not in total agreement with the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*? If the curia of our order is going to provide helpful instructions" for Jesuit theologians, it will have to address itself to questions such as these.

5. Father Dezza's instruction does not contain a fully realistic understanding of the task of theology. If we should take Father Dezza's remarks at their face value, we would be forced to come to the conclusion that theology's only task is to accept, explain, and defend the explicit teaching of the teaching office. This, however, is a view of theology that does not correspond, for example, to the view propounded by John Paul II in Germany (in Altötting). It is simply not true that the teaching office "is based" only on the direct "assistance of the Holy Spirit" and not on the work of theologians as well. Naturally the teaching office has a function different from that of theology, and this function cannot be reduced to scientific theology alone, If, however, the teaching office does not receive any new revelations and if besides this the Holy Spirit's assistance is an *assistentia per se negativa*, then it is simply [101] impossible for the teaching office to manage without the work of the theologian, even though perhaps in former times theologians and official teachers were one and the same persons.

Have there ever been formulations or advances on the part of the teaching office that were not first to be found among "theologians"? One could cite any number of examples showing that the teaching office at first mistrusted theological work and tried to slow it down, then finally accepted it and perhaps even acted as if these findings had always been clear and obvious to the ecclesial teaching office. Are not many of the present pope's pronouncements in regard to human rights, religious freedom, and the interpretation of Christian marriage drawn from these findings of theological science which the official Church first looked upon with deep suspicion?

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6. Does not Father Dezza even elevate a papal encyclical practically to the level of a solemn definition, even though an encyclical does not intend to be such and is not such? Why does Father Dezza declare that the sole duty of the servants of the Church is to "communicate" the teaching of an encyclical to the faithful "and to help them to live it"? How are we to argue against Hans Kung's objectively false criticism of papal infallibility when Kung says that *Humanae Vitae* lays practical claim to infallibility while at the same time containing a teaching that large segments of the Church are justifiably opposed to? What are we supposed to say when Father Dezza practically forbids each and every objection to a papal encyclical?

7. In view of all these considerations it seems to me justifiable, with all due respect to the papal delegate Father Paolo Dezza, to express the urgent desire that before the general publication of the guidelines being discussed here, he should once again in a detailed and open way avail himself of the counsel of really competent theologians who really understand all the particulars and difficulties contained in the questions under discussion and who themselves possess experience in their own field of work.

8. What has been presented here had to be composed very hastily and makes no claim to being perfectly systematized. It is the pope's desire that we Jesuits be required to uphold the Second Vatican Council. If this is done by means of a detailed and precise study of the entire teaching of the council, many other important things bearing on the questions [102] under discussion could be found. What about the *consensus fidelium* if it is brought to bear on our question? Would it not be possible in the council's sense to understand even the theologian's mission as a charism and the theologian as one who in a peculiar way receives the promise of the Holy Spirit's assistance? Could not insights be gained from the teaching of this council that would open perspectives for a legitimate pluralism even in theology, insights that cannot be attained by mere conformity to the Roman teaching office alone? If the council's teaching contains insights on freedom of religion which were previously not recognized by the official ecclesial teaching office in the nineteenth century, could not this fact lead to further insights which are important for our question? If statements in the council were deliberately avoided that were previously put forth by the Church's official teaching office and that had also found their way into preconciliar schemata (statements, for example, concerning monogenism, the relationship between Scripture and tradition, the nature of inspiration, etc), could insights not be deduced from these statements concerning a legitimate distance even from authoritative doctrinal statements, if such previous statements under certain circumstances were also tacitly abandoned even in the council?

THE APOSTOLATE OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

In the third and final section of my talk, I want to deal with Father Dezza's third paper of 26 February 1982 which takes up the question of our apostolate.

Faith and Justice

It must first of all be stated that Pope John Paul II in his address to the fathers provincial, and Father Dezza as well, appropriated the fourth decree of the thirty-second General Congregation which says that our mission today consists in the service of faith and the advancement of justice, just as the Synod of Bishops recognized in 1971 that the advancement of justice is an integral part of evangelization.

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This of course, does not answer all the questions concerning the more exact relationship of these two tasks and their unity. But perhaps one might put it in the following simple terms. Just as Christians are commanded to love God and their neighbor, just as these two tasks condition [103] each other, and while one cannot be simply reduced to the other, still they form an indissoluble unity, so too is the case with the twofold task which our order has set for itself in the thirty-second General Congregation. Both the popes and Father Dezza as well make it obvious to me that the attacks voiced in some quarters among us against the twofold nature of our task as established in the thirty-second General Congregation are certainly not justified.

Excesses which assuredly occur here and there in our work for justice in the world cannot be avoided or combatted by rejecting the position of the thirty-second General Congregation itself. One might even go so far as to say that it is by no means obvious that the Society of Jesus is everywhere shouldering sufficient responsibility for this second task (the efforts to promote justice). It goes without saying that we must reject any attempt to reduce our total task in the wrong sense to the horizontal plane of a mere struggle for social justice in the world. A genuinely serious political theology will share this opinion. As always in life, the difficulties of course lie in managing the details. The emphasis will differ according to the different countries, social situations, the possibilities that the different provinces have at their disposal and also the capabilities and talents of individual Jesuits. The dangers of a false or excessive emphasis will likewise be different.

In this connection, Father Dezza's remark also seems to me to be noteworthy when he says that the social apostolate has not only a fundamental place in the planning of our apostolate but that in all other forms of our apostolate the social dimension must also be taken into account. If we really take this statement of Father Dezza seriously, we could deduce from it the legitimacy of what is known as "political theology," for all that this theology really wants to do is to introduce into all the dimensions of theology an explicit reflection on the social aspect of all the realities that come under theology's scope and give this social aspect its proper due. When Father Dezza says that the advancement of justice is to be understood "as necessary in the light of the service of faith," that can certainly be understood correctly, provided that "faith" is understood as the absolute totality of the Christian life and the Christian task. It may, however, be feared that someone might take this as the occasion of once again trying to reduce the advancement of justice to the proclamation of faith, which was the exclusive understanding of the concrete advancement of justice in former times. Assuredly one can speak of a "primary goal of our religious and priestly apostolate which consists in the proclamation of the gospel and in the communication [104] of faith in the grace of Christ," and naturally at all times and in all places human beings, and so, too, priests who proclaim faith, have a relationship to God in faith, hope, and love that infinitely transcends all immanent and interpersonal values.

But when using the word *primary* we must bear in mind that even in an order of priests love of neighbor together with all the challenges and possibilities this involves cannot ultimately be simply made equivalent to this transcendent love of God and be dissolved in it, since God has created a real world which is truly different from him, and m addition to this he has himself become a man, divinizing the world unto himself in such a way that he has communicated to it that it is precisely only in the world that he can be reached, but that it is indeed he himself, and therefore the first commandment of love of God and the second commandment of love of neighbor can no longer be separated from one another.

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In human life and its socializations and so, too, in the Church it happens that individuals have different functions and tasks. Our order, at least according to its status under church law up to now, happens to be an order of priests. And so we who have taken upon ourselves this priestly task and function in the Church and in society can expect to be just that, priests, and that we want to be priests. Whatever more precise theological interpretation this priesthood may undergo (and in this respect theology even today faces momentous tasks particularly because the priest, too, in a historically changing world cannot simply remain exactly the way he was in former times), in any event the fact remains that we have taken on a particular task with our religious priesthood. Therefore a Jesuit cannot occupy himself with anything and everything that is good and even necessary in our own day and age. And so when popes Paul VI, John Paul I, and John Paul II insist that in principle we are to keep within the limits of our priestly task given by the nature of the priesthood and established by canon law, this is something that may actually be taken for granted. We Jesuits need not feel called to do anything and everything.

Both the history of our order and our present-day activity show that our radius of action is really quite broad. It should not be our desire to take upon ourselves anything and everything in the world just because [105] it is good and perhaps absolutely necessary. Mother Teresa is doing wonderful things in Calcutta. In Central America I have no difficulty imagining a mission under Christian inspiration that is accomplished with a rifle. But this is a far cry from saying that things like these must also be a part of our tasks and even that they must be a normal part of our tasks. In the ordinary case it is quite right for the priest to leave to lay Christians tasks which are not his but which belong to lay persons. It is the part of reasonable human beings and Christians to limit themselves soberly to a particular task in the human race and in society.

Those who feel called to the Carthusian life of contemplative solitude should not become Jesuits. And those who have the entirely conceivable Christian vocation to become social revolutionaries should likewise not become Jesuits either. We have the right not to want everything. Only those who are able to affirm this limitation of the order's tasks should become and remain members of the order. For when we accept this limitation, and it is, after all, not really a straitjacket, we serve the whole of the Church and humankind better than if we wanted to carry the whole world on our shoulders.

True, the popes and Father Dezza as well admit that there can also be "extraordinary cases" in which a Jesuit may move beyond the limits actually imposed on him in principle by his priestly task, that he might indeed even be required to do this. When Father Dezza says that this might be conceivable only in "really extraordinary cases," this restriction cannot reasonably be construed to mean that there can be no such cases like these at all. When Father Dezza says that such cases require the "consent of the bishops and of father general" one will be permitted to take the liberty of adding that a consent of this kind coming from the other side is in certain circumstances even demanded and is not something that merely lies within the discretion of these superiors. One may ask which bishops are meant since it is a well-known fact that the bishops have considerable differences of opinions concerning critical social questions. In all realism one will also make allowance for the case that someone who knows with certainty that he is called to this kind of direct political mission will depart from the Society of Jesus in peace as Hermann Muckermann did in a similar case a few decades ago. Naturally our efforts to promote justice must be in "accordance with the directives of the local hierarchy." But it must also be honestly admitted that in the concrete situations of life this norm cannot be the only principle governing our action. Particularly in this area conflicts can arise similar to those that can arise with the teaching office in the theoretical area of [106] theology. So, too, in the advancement of justice obedience cannot simply be blind obedience, nor can it be the sole norm. In the final analysis, abstract norms alone will prove insufficient

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for overcoming conflicts in this area too.

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[107]

PART THREE

Piety

[109]

8

DIMENSIONS OF MARTYRDOM

I would like to make a plea here for a certain widening of the traditional concept of martyrdom.

The traditional concept as used in the Church is well known. We are not inquiring here how it developed during the history of the Church, or bow it is related to the biblical concept of martyrdom, or how this New Testament concept itself is further connected with such notions as preaching, prophecy, confession, death, and so on.

Here we start with the traditional concept of martyrdom. As used in dogmatic and fundamental theology, this concept means the freely endured (not actively fighting, like a soldier) acceptance of death for the sake of faith. “Faith” includes Christian morality, as clearly shown by the fact that Saint Maria Goretti, who was killed in 1902 by a youth from the neighborhood because she strenuously resisted his importunities, is honored by the Church as a martyr. “Faith” may mean the whole of the Christian confession, or one single truth of the Christian doctrine of faith or morals. Of course, in such a case, this single truth is viewed within the totality of the Christian message. Death *in odium fidei* (because of hatred for the faith) must be consciously accepted; therefore, martyrdom and “baptism by blood” must be distinguished.

What is peculiar is that the Church currently excludes from the concept of martyrdom a death suffered in active combat. So our question is whether death suffered in active combat on behalf of the Christian faith and its moral demands (including social ones) must necessarily remain excluded from the concept of martyrdom. This question is very important for Christian life in the Church, because granting the title of martyr to a fighting Christian would amount to a strong recommendation by [110] the official Church of such active combat as something to be imitated by other Christians.

First it is evident that such concepts as those of which we are speaking have a history and may legitimately vary in meaning. The only question here is whether in this case the passive endurance of death for the sake of the faith and suffering death in active combat for the faith, or some of its demands, might not be brought together under the one concept of martyrdom. Although they are different, these two kinds of death have many features in common, and putting both of them under *one* concept does not deny the lasting distinction between them. There are many concepts that put two realities together because of their resemblance, without thereby denying or necessarily obscuring their differences For example, the concept of “sin” is used by the Church both for original sin and for freely committed personal sins, without denying the radical differences between these two conditions.

Of course, it is certainly true that the *endured* suffering of death for the sake of faith has a special relation to the death of Jesus, who became *the* faithful and reliable witness precisely

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through the death that he suffered. But this undeniable difference between the two kinds of death does not prevent us from bringing them together under the one concept and using the same word, martyrdom.

In order to see this and in order to make clear the inner and essential similarity between these two ways of dying, despite their differences, we must consider many things. First, the "passively undergone" death of Jesus is the consequence of his fight against the religious and political authorities of his time. He died because he fought; his death may not be seen apart from his life. On the other hand, those who die in active combat for the demands of their Christian conviction (at times, of course, also for social causes) also "endure" their death. Even such a death is not directly intended; it includes a passive element just as the death of martyrs in the traditional sense also includes an active element because, through their active witness and life, they too brought about the situation in which they could have escaped death only by denying their faith.

The question is, of course, how to describe the active struggle more precisely and how to distinguish it from similar events, so that this death could be called martyrdom. Not everyone who dies in a religious war on the Christian side should be called a martyr. In religious wars too many worldly motives intervene. The question remains open whether every combatant in such wars confronts the possibility of dying and really accepts death. But why wouldn't Archbishop Oscar Romero, for instance, who fell in the struggle for social justice, a struggle that he carried on because of his deeply Christian conviction, be a martyr? He certainly considered the possibility of dying.

We must not imagine the passive endurance of death solely in the way in which we habitually picture the first Christian martyrs standing before the tribunal and being condemned. The passive endurance of death, accepted in a voluntary decision, may happen quite differently. The modern "persecutors of Christians" will not give today's Christians any chance at all to confess their faith in the way in which it was done in the first Christian centuries and to accept the death which the tribunal decrees for them. Yet death in the more anonymous forms of modern persecution may be foreseen and accepted as it was by the ancient martyrs. And this death can be a consequence of an active struggle for justice and other Christian values. It is strange that the Church canonizes Maximilian Kolbe as a confessor and not a martyr. Rather than focus on his earlier life, an unprejudiced understanding of Maximilian Kolbe will consider his behavior in the concentration camp and at the moment of death, and understand him as a martyr of unselfish Christian love.

The difference between a death in active combat for the sake of faith and death passively endured for the sake of faith is too subtle and too difficult to determine to make it worthwhile to separate them conceptually or verbally. Ultimately, both express the same resolute acceptance of death prompted by the same Christian motivation; in both cases death means acceptance of the death of Christ, which, as the highest act of love and courage, puts humanity unreservedly at God's disposal. It is a radical unity of active love and endurance of the painful being-snatched-away-from-oneself, while facing the incomprehensible but powerful no of men and women to the love of God revealing itself. In both cases death appears as the complete and public manifestation of the true nature of Christian death. Where death is suffered in a struggle for Christian conviction, it also bears witness to an unshakable faith that, inspired by God's grace, is ready to go all the way up to and including death, and all this is patiently endured in an experience of the deepest inner and outer powerlessness. That applies also to death in combat, because, like the martyr who suffers in the traditional sense, the combatant experiences in his apparent failure the power of evil and his own impotence.

In this plea for a certain widening of the traditional concept of martyrdom, we may also appeal to Thomas Aquinas. He says that, through [112] a death that has a clear relation to

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Christ, one is a martyr when one defends the commonwealth (*res publica*) against the assaults of its foes, who would try to destroy the Christian faith, and in doing so suffers death.[1] The destruction of the faith in Christ, against which such a defender fights, may also refer to a single dimension of the Christian faith. If it did not we could not call martyrdom the passive enduring of death for the sake of a single Christian moral demand. Thus Thomas proposes in his *Commentary on the Sentences* a broad concept of martyrdom, such as the one we are suggesting here.

A legitimate "political theology" and a theology of liberation should take up this conceptual widening. It has a very concrete practical meaning for a Christianity and a Church that wish to become aware of their responsibility for justice and peace.

[1] *IV Sent.* dist. 49 q. *5* a. 3 qc. 2 ad 11.

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[113]

9

EUCHARISTIC WORSHIP

The Church has a history that is still far from over, that is difficult to foresee, and that time and again surprises us. This applies also to piety, both that of individuals in the Church and that of the Church herself and of large groups in the Church. So there exists a *history* of piety. Such a history always brings about changes that provide novelties wrought by the Spirit of God. But unavoidably it also contains its dangers.

Throughout the changes in her history in general and in her piety in particular, the Church of Jesus Christ, because it is assisted by the Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ, can and will not lose her identity. Hence in this history the nature of the Church remains the same through all change. Moreover, the past never disappears in such a way that it would have nothing more to say to the future. As history goes on, something ancient can again become new, can instruct and inspire later history. That is why, if we wish to create a new future, we may have to return to the sources. The ancient customs that are continually revived in this way do not come into later times as something lifeless and dead, or as a respectfully preserved museum piece; they stay alive by insinuating themselves actively into the future. They change while keeping their ancient nature.

What has been said in general about the Church, her history, and the history of piety applies also to eucharistic piety, to the piety with which the institution of the Lord's Supper must always be celebrated. The purpose of this short essay is to say a few words about the possibility of reviving ancient customs in the history of eucharistic piety, of not indifferently giving them up as out-dated, but of viewing them as a new possibility and task for the future.

[114] When we honestly consider the present life of the Church, we cannot deny that eucharistic piety has experienced a certain decline. Is adoration before the tabernacle, with the sanctuary lamp burning, still practiced as it used to be in the past? How many monasteries continue to have "perpetual adoration"? Has the Corpus Christi procession in many places not been given up or at least considerably reduced? In how many churches is the monstrance still used today? Genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament is frequently omitted. Most people who come to Mass sit down in the pews right away and wait impatiently for the service to begin. That it would be possible to kneel down for a few moments and to adore the Lord present in the Eucharist never seems to occur to most of them. Receiving communion as one attends Mass has, more than formerly, become almost a natural Sunday practice, but possibly too often only a routine. Giving thanks privately after communion and at the end of the Mass used to be almost taken for granted. Nowadays it seems to be more or less forgotten. Certainly there exists no necessary connection between the sacrament of "confession" and the reception of the Eucharist, although only a few decades ago, many Christians considered it obligatory. But are average Christians today sufficiently aware of the obligation of going to confession before receiving communion when they have committed a serious sin? More examples might be mentioned of a decline in eucharistic piety. What should we say about it?

It is, of course, not possible here and now to consider all the manifestations of eucharistic piety that were customary during past centuries and to wonder whether they might be revived. Many of these practices will certainly not have any promise for the future, although they may have been very pious and we may regret their loss, if we used them in our own lives. I do not know whether a beautiful monstrance will always remain part of the usual furnishings of a church. But undoubtedly in the eucharistic piety of the past there were many

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things that should be kept, that make sense even for the future, and that should not perish. They belong to that past which the future must recover, if it is to be great. Today I will mention only one of them and say a few words about it: quiet individual prayer before the tabernacle.

To be sure, we may adore God everywhere in spirit and in truth. God hears the prayer that we say alone in our room. It is true that Christians should learn to find God everywhere and in all things, thus making their daily life into a religious service. But if we are honest, we will have to admit that only those who are always and everywhere united with God in love will really value the liturgy, public prayer in the Church with [115] their brothers and sisters, and the explicit and bodily expressions of their nearness to God. Those who wish to be united to God will value the explicit and bodily manifestations of their piety as lovingly performed high points of their union with God. They know of no opposition between the permanent devotion of their daily life and the hours that are expressly consecrated to God.

This applies especially to eucharistic piety. It is part of the Catholic faith that Jesus Christ is truly present with his divinity and his humanity under the eucharistic species. It is true that this presence under symbols of human food points to the reception and enjoyment of this eucharistic nourishment. Nevertheless, in this nourishment Jesus Christ is present with his divinity and his humanity not only when received but also before that, so that he may be received in a bodily way. That is why Catholics may, under the eucharistic signs, adore Jesus, the divine pledge of their salvation. True, compared with the real reception of the heavenly bread, such adoration is not the highest point of the sacramental happening. But it is a practice that follows legitimately from the Catholic belief in the true presence of the Lord in the sacrament.

Therefore this worshipping of Jesus in the sacrament must not disappear. Its history may have started from almost unnoticeable beginnings. However, in salvation history and in the history of the Church something cannot disappear simply because it started almost without being noticed. No, as Catholics we wish, individually and together, to look to the sign of the presence of the one who has loved us and has offered himself up for us. It should not be unusual for us to kneel at times in private prayer before the Lord who has saved us.

Forty years ago in Vienna I still saw people in the trolley car make the sign of the cross or tip their hat when the car passed a church. Such a custom may have become strange for us, and not without reason, so that we should not try to revive such expressions of piety. However, real worship of the sacrament of the altar, both in private and in common, even apart from Holy Communion, must not disappear. We should examine ourselves and ask whether this holy tradition of eucharistic piety still appeals to us. Do we not want to carry it on? This ancient custom contains a blessing for the future, a blessing we should not miss.

It seems to me that in the Church of the future as well as of the past, and not only on exceptional occasions, we should see Christians kneeling in church, alone and in silence, before the tabernacle in which the bread of life is kept, so that it may be received. These Christians know that God is everywhere, that he carries everything with his power and [116] his love, and is incredibly near to everything; they know that the whole world is the cathedral where he is eternally adored. But these Christians also know that their own adoring love is not always near the God who is always near them. They know that they themselves must continue to try to be near God. And they know that the God who is everywhere present in power and in love has, because we are not always near him, created a few places and realities that make it easier for us, prisoners of space and time, to reach his presence.

Now Jesus is *the* event in which God has granted his salvific presence to finite human beings in an unsurpassable and irrevocably way. And it is before this Jesus, present in the body although hidden under sacramental signs, that these Christians are kneeling. In Jesus God has, in an unsurpassable and definitive way, become world. In this sacrament we

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discover how he leads this world back into the splendor of God. Christians kneel before him. They look at the one who has been pierced. They are in the bodily presence of the one in whom God has assumed the world as his own reality. These Christians pray silently, they allow the quiet peace of this sacrament to fill them, they can tell this sacramentally present Lord of their life about their concerns. But ultimately they only desire to be introduced by this sacramentally present Jesus into the truth and love of God, which radiate silently from this sacramental sign.

It seems to me that even today and in the future we must not forget what our Christian forebears practiced. The sanctuary lamp of our Catholic churches continues to invite us to a silent lingering before the mystery of our redemption.

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[117]

10

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART TODAY

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is going through a crisis. Yet it has a long history, it has been strongly supported by recent popes, even until Paul VI, and it occupies a very high rank in the liturgy.

In Western Europe at least the heart of Jesus is hardly ever mentioned in a sermon. Writings about this devotion have clearly become scarcer during the last few decades, the Messengers of the Sacred Heart are obsolete. Even Rome's official utterances are less numerous and more reserved. And in the religious orders that have made this devotion their special task the members seem to have lost courage, to have been intimidated by a modern trend in spirituality that seems to be almost unable to do anything at all with a devotion to the Sacred Heart.

I intend to defend the position that, even today, the worship of the divine heart of Jesus Christ can and should be meaningful and significant. Although I will try to explain who might be expected to promote this exercise of Catholic piety of the last few centuries and who may continue to find it useful, my conviction does not derive from a pessimistic evaluation of the present situation of the Church and of modern spirituality in general.

THE CHURCH IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

The Church and her piety are part of history. Therefore not only in the past but in the present and the future as well, they are legitimately subject [118] to change. The same God-given realities do not always occupy the foreground of Christian faith, although that one and selfsame faith always centers around the eternal God, Jesus Christ, and the irrevocable self-communication of the incomprehensible God in Jesus Christ. That is why it is natural that in an age of universal atheism and of a secularization that is more than the legitimate acknowledgment of the autonomy of earthly realities, in an age that knows less and less about the central message of Christianity, in an age of deadly danger for the whole world and of hitherto unknown and arduous challenges in organizing social life and the international community, in such a time the theme of an explicit verbalized devotion to the Sacred Heart cannot have, in the general awareness of the Church or in the ordinary awareness of the faithful in the world, the same "central position" that it supposedly occupied for the two past centuries, up to the middle of our own.

In the darkness of our times, which are threatened by the death of both spirit and body, we cry to the incomprehensible God of our history we announce, with the last power of the faith, that we have kept the crucified one as our own fate; we hope that this fate hanging over us individually and socially will end up in salvation.

It is not surprising then that, in the presence of these ultimate questions and of the answers to them which we grasp with all the courage of our existence, devotion to the Sacred Heart no longer attracts us. It sounds too bland, too individualistic, too merely "introspective." We no longer see why we should translate, even if it were possible, the ultimate answers to the ultimate questions, which are forced upon us and expected from us, into the language of a devotion to the Sacred Heart. We have the impression that this devotion is slowly entering the domain of ways of acting and speaking that belong to a Christian past. These ways existed once, they were lively and good, but they no longer appeal to us. It is like the special

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veneration of Jesus' Five Wounds, the Infant of Prague, the Precious Blood, and many other practices of Christian piety, which once captivated and delighted the spirit and heart of Christians.

As we recall from history how important indulgences once were in the Church (fifty years ago we ourselves may still have had high esteem for them), and as we consider that even a pope who cared as much for tradition as Paul VI did, while maintaining the traditional doctrine of indulgences, admitted without hesitation that Christians were free with regard to indulgences, and as we notice that they continue in use only in small religious subcultures, playing no more role in the life of the universal [119] Church, we can naturally wonder whether devotion to the Sacred Heart will not meet the same fate.

THE CHURCH NEEDS PEOPLE WITH MYSTICAL-CHARISMATIC EXPERIENCE

However, I am convinced that the opposite is true. I have pointed this out previously, and I intend to submit here a few considerations in defense of this conviction. This conviction does not include the opinion that devotion to the Sacred Heart should in the future loom as large in the awareness of large numbers of people in the Church as it still did under Pius XI and Pius XII. If in the Church's consciousness, as constituted by all Christians, this devotion should not in the future be as natural and as intense as it was formerly, I would not protest against this or try to oppose this trend.

However, there is also in the Church, and there ought to be, a somewhat esoteric elite, which is not made up of specially trained people, such as theologians and officeholders, but is an elite to which may belong the poor and those who are socially weak. I mean here the elite of the saints, of those who, on account of their mystical-charismatic experience, are always for the Church a source of new life and a witness to God's grace in the world. Such a secret elite must exist even in the more democratic Church of the People of God. It stands to reason that this elite should contain as many priests as possible. Although they have a social function in the Church, these representatives of the Church should, as much as possible, combine letter and spirit, law and freedom, rite and grace, official function and free charism. I am convinced that in such a properly understood humble and unselfish elite, including priests, devotion to the Sacred Heart should and will have a future. This devotion must have a distinct character, even though it may differ considerably in its style and way of speaking from what used to be. It will differ less explicitly than before from ordinary Christian and priestly spirituality. Such a conviction is not to be understood as a prophecy, but rather as an invitation to shape priestly piety, a shaping that is not only grace but also an act of our freedom.

With this conviction in mind I can offer only a few short considerations on behalf of devotion to the Sacred Heart. We cannot appeal here to the Gospel of Saint John to defend devotion to the heart of Jesus. It is impossible to bring up the great history of this devotion, in order to [120] ask whether we, the Church's present-day philistines, intend to betray this wonderful history of piety. We cannot surrey every dimension of this devotion which Pius XI did not hesitate to declare the sum of the Christian religion. It is impossible to explain the dogmatic and theological meaning of worship of the Sacred Heart, which should be known before one ventures to present one's own opinion about it. It is impossible to say anything here about the archetypes in the depths of human existence of such perennial and universal words as *heart*, even though we know more about the physiological cardiac muscle and are capable of replacing it in heart transplants.

Here and now I would like to call attention to two ideas. The first one belongs to the history of theology. The other one considers the very unusual historical situation in which the Church exists today. Taken together, both considerations may at least make us wonder whether it

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would not be theologically imprudent, and even foolish, to expect a disappearance of devotion to the Sacred Heart, even though in the Church we can never simply passively await the future or predict it by means of rationalistic computations, since the future remains entrusted to our freedom, responsibility, and action.

THE CHURCH – A UNITY THAT KEEPS ITS IDENTITY IN HISTORY

The first consideration refers to the irreversibility of the history of the Church's consciousness. The Church is one. Despite all great, often terrible, and absolutely unforeseeable changes she does not lose her identity. This implies that new events may occur in her, events that are really important, that determine her future destiny, that truly cannot be rationally deduced from what came before. They are new, surprising interventions of God's Spirit in the Church. It does not follow, and it is even excluded, that important events which shape the whole Christian Church fade away without leaving a lasting trace simply because they occurred after the time of the primitive Church.

Possibly there exists a true history of *jus divinum* in the Church. This divine law is not simply transmitted all the way from Jesus to the present without any changes. Rather it attains its reality only through later historical decisions. The binding decisions of the councils cannot be rejected later on. They cannot even be totally forgotten. The history of the liturgy is not only a series of changes, but it is also one unified history. [121 In that history the inner nature of Christian public worship not only remains the same; in its new forms it realizes itself in such a way that the basic nature of former historical forms is maintained and becomes manifest.

Many things in the Church's life, in her piety, her relation to the secular world, her interpretation of nature and of humankind, and the organization of ordinary life, may at first sight seem to disappear and be replaced by something quite different. However, as this history is the history of the one Church, the history of the one body of the one Christ, it is more than an external succession of single events, even if these events are considered to be grounded in a reality and a doctrine that remains rigidly the same. The Church grows while remaining the same. That is why she cannot simply lay aside and forget her former history. She is always the one that she has become. She always acts according to the experiences gathered in her history. She is always young, but this youth, with its possibilities of the surprisingly new, is the youth in which her past history resides. This is something like the case of the adult who, as Paul says, lays aside what is childish, without thus becoming a new child who simply starts over. The Church always brings her history with her into the present and in this way carries it on.

The memory of the past, a memory that keeps things alive and out of which the present emerges in ever new ways, thus preserving the past, is a basic category of ecclesiology. Without it the history of the Church cannot be understood and lived. Of course, that which remains of the past in the present and the future of the Church varies according to the relationship between an historical event and the basic nature of the Church, a relationship that, naturally, can vary much in the single events that occur in the Church.

Today there may be no hermits living atop a column. They have become an oddity of historical curiosity. But the real spirit of the fathers of the desert and the experience of that time may nevertheless have a meaning for us today. We would not belong in the Church today, if we left all this behind us as wholly unimportant, if we did not keep it as an experience that challenges us now, or that will challenge us later, in a wholly new way. Even in the future with all the changes that are still possible in eucharistic piety, we will never be able simply to forget the knowledge that, in the twelfth century, was given to the Church

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about the presence of Jesus in the Lord's Supper and under the eucharistic signs, and which she professed officially in the dogma of Trent. That is why eucharistic worship will not simply return to the simplicity it had in [122] the time of the fathers of the Church. In this respect too, the Church, having reached greater maturity, will not simply return to her childhood, even though we cannot say just what this worship will look like in Africa two hundred years from now.

In a Church that only now is slowly turning into a real *world*-Church, the papacy too will experience, in its relation to the worldwide territorial churches, changes that cannot now be foreseen. But it will certainly not return to its beginnings at the time of Cyprian. Because the Church is an ecclesial unity that keeps its identity in history, she carries along from the past into the future, not only her abstract essence but also her history. She does this in many different ways, of course, according to the significance of these historical developments in the past, in ways that we cannot theoretically deduce and thus predict. But because of her own identity in history, and in spite of the fact that her historical achievements and decisions originated in time, her past will never simply disappear.

THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART BELONGS TO THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

I am convinced that this is true also of the veneration of the Sacred Heart with an explicit spirituality and a particular worship. It is true that, despite its roots in John's theology of the pierced side as the source of water and Spirit from which the Church is born, and despite the beginnings of an explicit devotion in the Middle Ages, this devotion is an historical event and an historical experience that were given to the Church only in the modern age. Naturally, this spiritual experience has its human-historical limitations that do not always have to remain the same. Christian faith and theological reflection have only slowly understood the proper nature of this spiritual experience, and what is properly meant when we speak of the heart of Jesus. We do not have to hold onto everything that has ever been said in the theology of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, in its efforts to assimilate spiritual experience. Nor are we supposed to hold onto the concrete devotional practices that were very much alive in former times. But when we consider the history of devotion to the Sacred Heart – not superficially, superciliously, or with scorn – and when we see the wealth of spiritual and charismatic experience it contained, when we bear in mind all the Church's official declarations about it, when we remember the liturgical worship of the [123] heart of Jesus in all its grandeur and impressiveness, we should not venture to say that we can simply forget about this devotion as something antiquated. If we were to think and to act that way, we would have to say that we were about to give up something that belongs to the Church's past and therefore something of our own spiritual experience in the Church as well.

We may feel that we *can* easily forget about this past of our Church. In the laziness of our heart we are all too tempted to do so. But this does not prove that we are *allowed* to do so before God and considering our responsibility for the continuity of the Church's history. Such a feeling must rather frighten us. We should face the question whether such a lazy slipping back into a primitive spirituality that wrongly appeals to ancient times, when the Sacred Heart devotion was unknown, is not something that we must overcome in a spirit of hopeful determination, if we do not want to be condemned by our past, we should wonder whether it is possible to expect a renewed understanding of the nature of this devotion and a renewed practice of it. What today seems utterly plausible, all that is everywhere bought and sold, are not always the only things that make us great and holy before God, nor important for the future of the Church. That which is patiently and laboriously learned might also deserve our

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attention.

THE CHURCH HARBORS A UNIVERSAL HOPE FOR ALL HUMANITY

A second consideration is in order. Humanity – and humanity in the Church also – is living today in a situation of frightening ambivalence. Humanity is coming out of a modern enlightened optimism, for which the human is naturally good and about to build an earthly paradise of freedom, universal justice, and happiness. In this era of naive optimism, something happened in the Church's consciousness that *looks* like the result or the echo of this bourgeois enlightened optimism, finding in it a favorable climate for growth, although, in the final analysis, it has a quite different cause and justification. Divine revelation, given to the Church in Jesus, makes her *hope* that all human beings not only may be saved but will be saved. True, she will never preach a theoretical doctrine of universal salvation, because, while carefully eschewing theoretical curiosity in eschatology, she will always humbly submit to the fear instilled by the threatening apocalyptic sermons of Jesus. But it seems to me that [124] the Church has learned to have a universal hope for all and to forgo making any theoretical and dogmatically binding statements about the actual occurrence of definitive damnation for a part of humankind.

Thomas Aquinas was of the opinion that we may hope only for ourselves, not for others. Today we hope for ourselves, because we know that we *may*; but we *must* hope for others and we may hope for all. Formerly Christians discussed what percentage of the *massa damnata* (the damned mass) of humanity and of Christians were actually saved. Because of Saint Augustine's doctrine of original sin they considered the failure of human existence through definitive perdition as the normal case, as the outcome of divine predestination, of an unfathomable divine justice. The salvation of a few chosen ones was felt to be a work of God; only in this way could God show that he willed to be not only the God of justice with regard to the many who were doomed but also a God of mercy for the few elect. Today we no longer preach about hell as we used to do, even though in our life and in our preaching we must always realize that we are sinners, who by ourselves are lost, and who do not possess God's incomprehensible grace as something that is at our disposition.

As the Second Vatican Council shows, almost without being aware of it, there exists today a universal hope for the blessed outcome of the whole of history – no *more* than that. But this is a legitimate fruit, granted to the Church today, which, in the long history of her understanding of the faith, has been given to her by Jesus, who was crucified, burdened with the guilt of all humankind, and in this way plunged into the abyss of happiness. And here is the amazing thing which can deeply upset us: with this optimism about salvation gathered in the history of her faith, with this optimism that seemed to be a product of an enlightened world's presumptuous optimism, the Church advances into the future, while maintaining the optimism that she received from God.

But this future which she enters with her courageous hope of universal salvation is, if all the signs are not misleading, a time that is totally different from the past out of which the Church and the world are emerging. Although those who continue to harbor great secular optimism are not forbidden to do so, this dawning time is one in which people are, to a large extent, running into limits they can no longer exceed. It is a time of crisis offering no possible alternatives, a time of resignation, of weariness, sterility, and exhaustion, a time in which individuals become ever more ignorant because they feel increasingly helpless before the enormity of what needs to be known. It is a time [125] in which, despite all the talk of freedom and democracy, individuals are subject to ever more planning, and must be, because otherwise the enormous mass of people could not coexist, because otherwise people would

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exterminate a great part of the rest of the world by means of nuclear wars, just so that the survivors might have enough space in which to live. We are living in a time in which the anthropological sciences madly endeavor to smash people's illusions, to unmask human beings as the mere product of fortuitous evolution, of the powers of their unconscious, of their drives, and of a society that does not know where it comes from and where it is going. Nature, exploited by humans, threatens them, and they themselves have learned how to bring about the universal suicide of humankind.

It is into such a humanity that the Church enters with Jesus Christ's message of universal salvation. It is because of Christ that we are emboldened to hope that the individual and humankind are advancing irreversibly, singlemindedly, toward eternal salvation in God, when they seem only to be plunging into the dark abyss of death.

The Church keeps this hope, because she wishes to be faithful to the true God and the crucified Jesus. She holds on to it, while being fully aware of the dreadful, seemingly unabating wickedness of world history, which only discovers new and unprecedented ways of spending itself in hopeless guilt. In all this hopelessness for the present and the future, the Church remains the one that harbors universal hope, that even dares to hope more thoroughly than she did in the past.

This universal hope is not an easy painkiller in the wretchedness of our time, but, considered from the human point of view, it is an exorbitant demand. It is a modern form of the folly of the Cross, of hoping against all hope. It is a folly that sets God's wisdom against the world's wisdom, a wisdom in which the world begins to have doubts about itself. It is the courage to live that alone makes us really free; that, without uselessly counting the cost, teaches to let go and to give; that alone can prefer being to having and that can even love the enemy by whom one is killed. True, this hope does not exempt us from thinking about how to make the earth habitable for as many people as possible, from working hard to that effect, fighting for it, even with violence, if we have to.

But this universal hope alone, which the Church herself has only slowly reached as an evident truth, can shed some light in the darkness in which we are drifting, a darkness that we have to bear today and tomorrow, even if we allow ourselves to think that historically such times of darkness have been followed by more luminous periods. And if our [126] thinking nowadays is less individualistic, but more political and collective (or if at least we imagine that it is), the universal hope that the whole of history is not rushing into a final abyss of nothingness and that there cannot be an eternal and definitive rubbish heap for part of this universal history is the final confirmation and the crowning conviction of such a way of thinking and of a political theology.

The universal hope that lives in all individuals and that accompanies them in their inescapable death is for them the form their hope takes today, that hope which, as one of the three theological virtues, saves them and secures their happiness. Who would have the courage today of proudly trusting that their absolute future will be one of fulfillment, if they did not assume the blessed obligation to hope in the same end for all others?

THE HEART AS THE INNERMOST CENTER

But what is the connection between devotion to the Sacred Heart and this frightfully strange situation, in which the Church must proclaim the foolish message of a universal hope for a despairing humanity?

If we wanted to give a really clear answer to this question (we cannot do it here) we would have to say that, despite God's fundamental oneness for which human beings are heading, persons in their religious existence have to do with a great number of religious realities that

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time and again overwhelm them. If this were not the case, the council would have found it impossible to speak of a hierarchy of truths that is presented to those who believe and that, under the guidance of the Spirit, all persons have to build for themselves and for their own situation. When religious-minded people wish time and again to summarize and organize this huge number of religious realities and to center it around the ultimate mystery of God, they look for basic words, words that in a mysterious way contain infinity. As single words they refer to *everything*. They emerge from the innermost center of one's own existence, where all is still one, and call forth the ultimate unity of all reality. There are many such basic words. Everyone may have his or her own, that tells one everything.

The word "heart" is certainly one of these basic words. It refers to the innermost center where the multiple is still one. So when we say "heart of Jesus" we evoke the innermost core of Jesus Christ, and we say that it is filled with the mystery of God. We say, in a way that frightens us [127] to death while yet making us utterly happy, in a way that contradicts all our experiences of emptiness, futility, and death, that there reigns in this heart the infinite love of God's self-giving. That is what we believe and confess, with all the power of our heart, when we say "heart of Jesus." That is what we confess in the desolation that settles upon us and induces us powerfully to look to the one whose heart was pierced. Many Christians may feel – and it may even be true for them – that "heart of Jesus" is but a verbal duplicate for "Jesus Christ." But those who, in the adventure of their religious existence, are willing to experience more clearly the enormous height and depth, length and breadth of salvation, must remind themselves time and again of the innermost center and the ultimate truth of this great blend of life and death, doom and happiness, laughing and weeping, light and darkness. And then they say, "heart of Jesus." Then they turn toward the heart that was pierced, that loves, that loves us in the darkness of our hopelessness, that is God's very heart and that, without abolishing it, discloses to us God's fundamental mystery.

There is only one place in which, without being destroyed, without falling into despair, we may totally and unconditionally let go of that which is most our own, the salvation which we basically are in the definitiveness of our free decision. It is God whom we experience as mercy. Not as though we were to detach this forgiving and saving mercy from God and from the depths of God's incomprehensibility and sovereignty, and not as though we were to appropriate it as if it were directed by ourselves, but we must surrender to God totally, unconditionally, and without reserve in what we call faith and hope. We can do this only if we commit ourselves to God as to that love in which we must believe, of which we may hope that it is given to us.

This act can be consciously performed only before Jesus Christ, the one who has been crucified and raised from the dead. It is possible only before his heart, his pierced heart, the heart that has known the extreme plight of death and of being forsaken by God, the heart that has surrendered to God's judgment over the world. It is possible only before the heart that, in the ever new and surprising wonder of grace, gives us the unselfish courage to believe in its love as a love granted to each one personally, or, more precisely, the courage to hope for this love in that act of hope which is more than faith, which is already the beginning of love.

We look at the heart of the Lord and the question that is decisive for eternity fills our innermost being, our innermost heart and life: Do you love me? Do you love me in such a way that this love generates a blessed eternity, that it truly, powerfully, and invincibly generates my everlasting [128] life? This question is not answered because the answer would no longer be a secret; we could give it to ourselves. The question enters the mystery that has come near to us in the heart of the Lord. But when it enters this heart, because it is asked with faith, hope, and love, that question is not answered but overpowered by the mystery that is love, by the unquestionable reality of the mystery of God.

God, eternal mystery, immensity without name, blessed abyss, containing everything,

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contained by nothing, you have uttered your eternal Word in creation and in our being, so that your everlasting mystery might become the unutterable sheltering nearness for us and the very center of the world! We look at this your uttered Word, we look at the one who is the heart of the world, we look at the heart of the Son that we have pierced. All the incomprehensibility that we and our existence are is hidden in this heart. All the anxiety of existence remains in its grip; whatever is lofty and holy returns to this, its origin. There everything finds its true nature and recognizes itself as love. Everything enters the mystery that is blessed love.

It is impossible properly to teach devotion to the Sacred Heart. With confidence in the Church and the Spirit, we must try to approach its mystery. We must eventually, in the luminous and in the dark hours of life, try to pray: “Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.”

We should perhaps try to practice a prayer like the Jesus prayer of the Russian pilgrim. We might venture to use this word like a mantra in Eastern style meditation. But over and above all that, we must experience in life that it is most improbable, most impossible, and so most evident that God, the incomprehensible, truly loves us and that in the heart of Jesus Christ this love has become irrevocable. There first, but, so we dare to hope, there for all.

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11

COURAGE FOR DEVOTION TO MARY

Mariology and devotion to Mary have had a very stormy time during the last fifty years. Let us remember that on November 1, 1950, Pius XII solemnly defined the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, body and soul, into God's glory. Let us remember the great efforts made during the 1950s to declare Mary the co-redemptrix and mediatrix of all grace. Let us think of the serious discussions about whether the Second Vatican Council should promulgate a separate dogmatic constitution about Mary, or whether a chapter of the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) should expressly treat of Mary and, if it did, what the content of the chapter would be. As a result of this discussion the Constitution on the Church contains, after its seventh chapter on the eschatological nature of the pilgrim Church and its connection with the Church in heaven, an eighth chapter on the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and her function in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that during the same decades, zeal for and emphasis on devotion to Mary have known great changes. Efforts to define a doctrine of mediation of all grace by Mary seem to have faded away since the council. While attributing to Mary a special function within the economy of salvation, the council avoided speaking of any other mediation of grace than that of the one mediator, Jesus Christ. We get the impression that the practice of the rosary has considerably declined. We might notice that the Sodalities of Our Lady are being called "Christian life communities." Prevailing church architecture does not favor the construction of beautiful altars to the Blessed [130] Mother. May devotions are far from having the importance they used to have in the piety of great numbers of people. Pilgrimages to great Marian shrines have not disappeared; in our age of mass tourism they are even enjoying a revival here and there. But one cannot say that, in the religious life of the average educated Catholic in our rational and enlightened world, devotion to Mary is either intense or explicit.

On the other hand, the council not only presented in the chapter mentioned above a relatively extensive Mariology, it also added a special section on "Devotion to the Blessed Virgin in the Church." The number of writings in theology or spirituality is increasing, which seek to create a new understanding of the dogma of and devotion to Mary and which try "carefully and equally avoid the falsity of exaggeration on the one hand, and the excess of narrow-mindedness on the other" in considering "the unique dignity of the Mother of God" (*Lumen Gentium*, 67). Therefore the theme of devotion to Mary may today again deserve the attention of those who, as Christians, really believe in redemption through Jesus Christ.

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

When we wish to reflect on the veneration of Mary, we should not deny in Catholic theology and piety the human motivation that undoubtedly influenced the traditional cult of Mary in the past. Why would we disown the human (secular, if you prefer) inspiration for this veneration? It is evident that in the ancient veneration of Mary human reverence for the woman, the mother, the spotless virgin, etc., were at work. Should someone say (as indeed it has often been said) that the veneration of Mary is a continuation of the cult of mother divinities of pre-Christian religions, we should not consider this, if it is rightly understood, an objection to the veneration of Mary. At the most it proves the wonderful fact that in its

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religiosity Christianity does not omit a single human dimension, that it is not afraid of points of contact, that it does not consider the loftiness of its relation to God through grace to be endangered when Christian existence becomes earthly, carnal, full-blooded, willing to assume whatever is human. If today, when compared with its past, devotion to Mary seems to have become abstract and anemic, then discovering human influences in the ancient cult is a challenge for us today.

How little understanding we have today for all the marvelously human features that used to be alive in devotion to Mary. Is it not a sign [131] of the banality of our modern sensitivity when we see what little interest we show in erecting an image of the great, beautiful, and pure woman and decorating it with flowers? A democratization of society and a legitimate emancipation of women are certainly unavoidable and, in themselves, lawful developments in today's society and culture. But they should not stifle in us the capacity for honoring the majestic image of an exalted human being. They should not smother in us the secular mysticism (so to speak) of the cult of woman, as still presented to us in our time in Paul Claudel's *Satin Slipper*, for instance. The weakness of the veneration of Mary is basically the result of a *human* weakness in us.

CHRISTIAN ROOTS OF THE VENERATION OF MARY

The Christian and truly Catholic veneration of Mary has, of course, deep roots in the Christian message itself. Its decline is ultimately a sign of the decline of our ability to realize in a deeply human and religious way what is properly Christian. It is praiseworthy that excesses of piety and false emphases have been eliminated from piety that often produced the impression that the radical relationship to the incomprehensible God was replaced by a piety that referred only to the powerful reality of the "Immaculate Virgin."

Solidarity with the Deceased

Let me start by asking whether we still possess a genuine relationship with our deceased that derives from the basic tenets of Christianity. Or while as Christians we do not deny that they remain, beyond death, true and real before God, do we give up any living relationship to them? Do we believe in the "communion of saints," the living solidarity of all who are sheltered by and united in God's holy love, whether they are living on earth or have already reached their fulfillment?[1] One of the latest trends in theology starts from the premise that all our Christian convictions, as well as the possibility of speaking theologically, can only be based on our solidarity with those who have been abused in history and with those who are dead. It is held that we give up this solidarity [132] only at the risk of a banal and inhuman egoism, whereby we reduce the history of the dead and of those who have been unjustly treated in history to being the humus on which our pitiable happiness has been flowering, because we are the ones who came later and so are closer to the future paradise. But is such solidarity with the deceased a reality in our religious life? Do the deceased still live for us or have they, so to speak, totally vanished from our life? Does the city-dweller still feel a need, like the peasant, to visit the cemetery on Sunday after Mass? Appealing to the great number of historical monographs and to the, cult of heroes that is manifest in them does not answer our question. For this hero worship of the saints and of other great people in history may be

[1] About this see K. Rahner and Johannes B. Metz, "Prayer to the Saints," in *The Courage to Pray*, trans. Sarah O'Brien Twohig (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 29-87.

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very praiseworthy, but it is turned only toward a historical past, to Napoleon or Bodelschwingh or Charles de Foucauld or Maximilian Kolbe. It does not imply a relationship to a person who is still alive and who has reached fulfillment in God.

Living Relation to the Deceased

The Catholic doctrine of the communion of saints, of the unity of the Church militant and the Church triumphant, of devotion to the saints, tells us that in our religious life we can and should succeed in developing a strong relationship to living persons who have reached fulfillment, even when they seem to have moved infinitely far away from us beyond the gates of death. We may not, of course, use the methods of modern spiritualists in order to fulfil this duty. They believe that through their mediums they can establish contact with the deceased. Yet they get in touch only with persons who have not really overcome the narrowness and the wretchedness of our life on earth. Christian faith, on the other hand, in its veneration of the saints and through a living relationship with all those who have reached fulfillment in God's grace and love, is looking for persons who have really entered the nameless mystery that we call God.

Thus we meet the fundamental difficulty that, for us today, seems to render almost impossible this living relationship to the dead who are really alive. In earlier times people clearly did not have this difficulty. However, their greater ease in becoming religiously aware of the living existence of the deceased does not necessarily speak in their favor. It may also be explained in part by the fact that they did not sufficiently realize the incomprehensibility and absolute sovereignty of God. But [133] the way we feel about all this gives us the impression that the deceased vanish into the namelessness and the unavailability of God, and this precisely to the extent that we believe them to be with God and not merely to have reached some creaturely fulfillment. It is precisely here, however, that Christian faith protests against what looks so plausible to us, namely, that the more God's infinity and incomprehensibility invade our existence, the closer we finite creatures come to nothingness.

Christian faith teaches – even though this message seems to expect too much from our spirit and heart – that the following two things are true at the same time: that God is all in all, and that, nevertheless, precisely when he has really come to us as the Absolute, he causes us to exist and reach fulfillment. Christian faith says that God does not compete with the creature that is distinct from him. Christian faith confesses that God as God can arrive with his infinity and incomprehensibility in the land of our finiteness – God himself near us – without the need for him to become finite, without the need for *us* to perish in the burning absoluteness of his divinity. Hence the radical optimism of Christianity commands us to seek God as God where, according to our pitiful opinion, he cannot be without destroying finiteness. It commands us to look for God among us on earth and not only in heaven.

Veneration of the Saints

It is only from this starting point that the Catholic veneration of the saints can be understood in its ultimate meaning, the praise of God's arrival near humanity. The veneration of the saints affirms human persons, their definitive salvation with God, the definitive consummation of their history on this earth. It is intended for real people who are known to us from their history and recognized as having reached consummation in their history.

But this consummation is ultimately and basically God, who does not create a creaturely reality that consummates persons, but who imparts to persons his own reality and splendor

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and thus consummates them through himself. That is why the veneration of the saints is something permanent within the most authentic *theo*logy. It is a statement about the history of God who, in fulfillment of the incarnation of his eternal Logos, gives himself to persons and thus both has a history and consummates his own history in this history of the saints. That is why the veneration of the saints means that we find and praise God in his own [134] splendor where he has himself deigned to come. We can understand the veneration of the saints only if we understand in faith that God is not only the one who is infinitely exalted above every created reality and to be adored as such, but that in his grace he has decided to become the innermost reality of his creatures, as a real consequence and completion of the incarnation of the eternal Word. It is true that God and his world do not coincide in simple identity. Yet where the world is consummated and is truly assumed by God as his own reality in the incarnate Son, we may not simply conceive them as being juxtaposed. We find God when we encounter human beings who are filled with grace, saved, and perfected. There the summit of the unity of love of God and love of neighbor is reached. There in the vehemence of the love uniting God and humanity we may almost confuse the two, because in grace the really innermost center of the human is God himself.

It is by starting from such a theology, a theology of God's descent into the world and of God's solidarity with humanity, a true theology of the veneration of saints, that we must understand the veneration of Mary.

If it is possible to find God in the person who is loved by God, filled with God's own reality, it is even more true of the holy Virgin, the Mother of Jesus, the one who is blessed among women, and who, according to the words of Scripture, is to be praised by all generations.

MARY'S IMPORTANCE IN THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

However, before we apply to Mary the theology of the veneration of saints, we should also justify and explain it in a quite different way. The veneration of saints does not refer to the abstract idea of humanity in general, but to real persons with their concrete and completed history. True, all the saints have reached consummation. But all of them reached it in their ultimately unique way with their own history, important for themselves and for all others. All of them reached their fulfillment with their own God-given personality, with which they are, without envy, accepted by all the others in the unity of God's love that embraces all of, them and that, in this way, grants to each of them their own personal kind of holiness. That is why the personal way in which Mary is important for all in the history of salvation must first be explained before the veneration of Mary may be understood theologically in connection with the veneration of all other saints.

Mary is certainly the humble handmaid of the Lord. We do no damage [135] to her honor if we view her first as a modest young woman, a poor and unimportant woman among many women, in a forsaken corner of the world. We do no damage to her honor if, from the religious and spiritual point of view, we allow her to remain in the circle of pious women among her people and in her time. Yet, when God looks upon the humility of his handmaid, the power of God's grace can work great things in that person, even very great things, without removing her humanity in a miraculous way. This grace induced Mary to allow the incarnation of the eternal God to happen in her, freely, through her faith, in order to share with the world this extreme nearness of God.

She is certainly not a wholly independent partner in the dialogue between God and the world in which the world's salvation is at stake. Her freedom and her free yes are themselves the gracious gift of God's sovereign love, whose only cause is itself. But God's grace itself

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posits human freedom and the consent of this freedom to the grace of God. God's grace itself brings it about that it has to do with a human partner. That is why the omnipotent predominance of grace is really acknowledged and praised only when it is discerned in the partner whom it faces, because this grace is able to bring forth a free yes to itself.

And thus Mary stands at a place where a humble and unimportant person has, for the salvation of the whole of humankind, freely accepted the enfleshed Grace, first in her faith and then in her womb, for herself and for all of us. The one mediator between God and humanity was able to bring it about that he was freely accepted, that his being freely accepted was one more grace, and that, at the same time, grace would bring forth its own free acceptance. It is at this unique point in salvation history, so important for all times and places of human history, that Mary stands. She is not grace, she is not the one mediator, but she is the free acceptance of grace and of the one mediator, that in the history of salvation occurred once for all of us. In this sense she is really the one who has begotten God, the mother of God, even though, of course, the divinity of her child is not the fruit of her body.

May we call Mary co-redemptrix and mediatrix of all graces, as has been suggested and even said in pontifical declarations of secondary importance? Or should we avoid it in order to prevent misunderstandings and in order not to overshadow the one unique mediation of Jesus Christ? This is not an essential question for theology and faith. Catholic faith acknowledges that Mary has an extraordinary and unique place in the one history of salvation, in which ultimately all persons constitute a [136] common community of salvation. She is the second Eve, the mother of Jesus and thus of all those who believe. Her yes, through which it was done to her according to the Angel's word, is one of the constitutive grounds and dimensions of salvation for Christians, if they really believe in Jesus Christ, their Messiah and Savior, and in the insurpassable nearness of God to him in history, because, although it was this same Jesus who granted this yes to his mother, he himself entered the world on account of it.

ABOUT THE EQUALITY OF MEN AND WOMEN

Nowadays we are quite convinced of the equality and the equal rights of the sexes, unlike ancient anthropology that has continued massively to influence the history of theology, causing a regrettable lack of appreciation of women that we must overcome. That is why, as Christians and as theologians, we are asked how this way of evaluating the sexes, how the equal rights of women must be translated and realized in our theology of salvation history. And, if we are to be honest, this at once brings up a question whose answer is not quite obvious: Why do we have to acknowledge the one mediator as a man, and not as a woman? We will no doubt say that, for his universal and salvific importance, the masculinity of the one mediator is, in the final analysis, unimportant for us and belongs among the contingent particularities which God's eternal Word has to accept in one way or another in wishing to assume our history in a single human nature. Or we will at least entrust this question in obedient resignation to God's sovereign disposition, especially since we ourselves could not be consulted whether we wished to become a human person as a man or as a woman. Our unlimited destiny transcends every sexual difference, while not suppressing it.

In this connection we must also keep in mind that the real human reality of the mediator Jesus Christ also had to be filled with the divine self-communication called grace, which God wants to impart to all human beings, whether men or women. When in this context we consider the unique and irreplaceable position and function of the Holy Virgin, we will no longer be able to say that, from the point of view of theology, we must, in that salvation history that involves all people in solidarity, attribute to woman a function and task that is

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lower than that of man.

[137] It seems to me that today, on the basis of the anthropology which we accept, every theology faces the question of what rank to attribute to women in salvation history. In Mariology traditional Catholic theology has already upheld the specific nature and the uniqueness of women in general. Now theology should more widely and resolutely than before develop this Marian starting point in the whole of theology and of Christian life.

VENERATION OF THE SAINTS AND VENERATION OF MARY ON THE BASIS OF FINAL SALVATION IN GOD

If we explain the veneration of Mary by means of the theology of the veneration of the saints in general and if we realize through our faith the unique function of Mary in salvation history, it is possible to develop a rationale for this devotion to Mary. The salvation history that underlies the way in which each one of us reaches salvation and human fulfillment has not wholly vanished in the past. It goes on really and definitively in all *those* persons who are already fulfilled in God and have definitively reached their highest reality in God's seemingly silent incomprehensibility. These are the real persons whom the cult of the saints has in mind, finding in them God himself, whose grace has found in them embodiment and consummation. This is true also for Mary, provided our faith does not overlook her unique place in salvation history.

Those who have reached blessed salvation are not abstract uniform models but real persons, whose history on earth has been definitively saved in its uniqueness. We mentioned already that our relationship to them today has become more difficult. It takes all the strength of our faith to overcome the impression that the silent infinity of God into which the deceased have entered has obliterated them, to believe rather that it has confirmed them and made them real for themselves and for us. This power to continue to see individuals in the mysterious reality of God, to trust that God does not let them perish but introduces them as individuals into definitiveness, is already assured for Christians, since they can have such a relationship with the glorified man Jesus. Even in God's incomprehensibility this man may be known and loved. He shows us that God's supreme power transcends every metaphysics of infinity.

CONCRETE VENERATION OF MARY

To what extent do individual Christians succeed in doing this in their religious life? Can they clearly, or only vaguely and darkly, still distinguish, as it were, the individual blessed beings in the supraluminous darkness of God without falsely transforming them into magic-working minor deities? This is a question for the religious history of each individual. It cannot be answered for everyone in general. Jesus says that there are many dwelling places in his Father's house. Everyone does not have every charism which the Holy Spirit may grant to people It is quite legitimate for individuals modestly to admit that they do not possess a certain charism that they discover and admire in another person, or that they have it only to a very small extent, provided only that they do not, in principle, absolutely reject such a charism if it is offered to them by God's grace in the course of their religious development. This is also true for the veneration of Mary.

It may be present in someone only as a germ, only as good will that is not skeptical or does not feel superior to the veneration which others pay to Mary. We may be good Christians in the Catholic Church, even if we can discover in ourselves little of the deep faith and heartfelt enthusiasm that others feel in venerating the Blessed Mother. It is not always a sign of

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neurotic sensitivity when married women suspect in many an image of the Virgin Mother a quiet kind of discrimination. Do we not often have to do with a myth about Mary rather than with faith in Mary (V. Schurr)? Undoubtedly we have the right to reject certain forms of the veneration of Mary, as the Second Vatican Council emphasizes, when such forms turn into superstitions or employ practices that contradict the uniqueness of the mediation of Jesus Christ or the free sovereignty of divine grace, or when they hold the absurd opinion that it is easier to be certain of Mary's love than of the infinite mercy and love of the eternal God.

So it is quite legitimate to keep our own religious practice away from a legitimate devotion to Mary. Yet even though this aloofness is allowed, we should not hold it up as a principle It is better to remain open to a further development in our religious life, in which a more intense and explicit veneration of Mary can also have a place. As often emphasized above, a truly radical Christian relationship to God does not imply that we fade away the closer we come to God and his incomprehensibility.

Moreover, we should not overlook the fact that in the one communion of saints, m the mystical body of Christ, individual Christians have [139] different talents and different duties. Hence the Church as a whole can foster veneration of Mary in a way that is not the way of each individual. The Church as whole has a relationship to Mary, even though the same relationship cannot be expected to the same degree from each individual.

From her beginnings the Church as a whole has honored and praised Mary, as we can see in the Gospels of Luke and of John. About the exact content and meaning of Mary's title as Mother of the Church, which the council avoided and Pope Paul VI adopted all the same,[2] we may think what we will. At any rate the Church as a whole has at all times honored the Blessed Mother, although, of course, with different emphasis at different times in an eventful history. This praise of Mary simply belongs to the idea the Church has of herself. Despite all the dangers and the sinfulness that threaten her, the Church in her ongoing history is the holy community of those who believe not only in an abstract *possibility* of salvation but in its reality. They hold the firm hope and conviction that the power of God's grace actually transforms the possibility of salvation into a reality. That is why acknowledging the victorious arrival of God's power among the dangers that threaten our existence is part of the idea the Church has of herself.

Now how would the Church more clearly and more concretely realize this way of understanding herself, this way of praising God, than by singling out a human being in whom this wonder of God's triumphant grace has operated in all dimensions of this person, and who belongs in this way to the Church? By praising and honoring Mary, the Church welcomes and calls by name that which God has done and continues to do for her until the end of time. The Church fulfills Mary's prophecy that all generations will call her blessed because God has looked graciously upon the lowliness of his handmaid. And as the Church thus praises Mary, she becomes actually, and not just theoretically, aware of her own vocation: that God may become all in all in her and that precisely in this way the blessed perfection of human beings may be achieved.

[2] See the apostolic letter *Marialis cultus* (1975) on devotion to Mary.

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[140]

12

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTMAS

THE MESSAGE OF THE BIRTH

The message of Christmas is first the message of the birth of a man. Jesus' beginning, his birth, must be understood by starting from his *life* and from his death, from the destiny of a man, a very special man, of course. As Christians, we can gain real access to the fact and the meaning of Christmas only by starting from the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We celebrate the birth of the one whom we have discovered, in his death and resurrection, as our redeemer and lord, as God's irrevocable promise of salvation. Only thus can Jesus' birth be radically significant for us, namely, as the beginning of that life and death in which our life received the irrevocable promise of eternal freedom. Christmas may remain the lovely feast of a gracious child, but we would not be able to grasp its meaning if we did not understand it as the beginning of a life that, by traveling through the depths of human experience, leads us to the blessed fulfillment hidden in the incomprehensible mystery of God.

Without suppressing our freedom the knowledge and will of God contain and carry forward the whole of human life. Through his own will God disposes of the beginning of life and leads it to its end and completion. Since a life and its completion reveal what its beginning already contained, life and its completion disclose the beginning as it was willed and destined by God for this very concrete end. That is why Christmas is for Jesus, as it is for us, the beginning of death.

Death suffuses the whole length and breadth of our life; it is not simply something that happens at the end and that does not yet concern us. [141] In our everyday life, therefore, if we live in a sober but not dull fashion, and if we always try to accept our death, then we may celebrate Christmas in a very sober way.

Christmas is really the beginning of that consummation in which Jesus unreservedly and without clinging to anything but God let himself fall into the incomprehensibility of God as his own consummation, a consummation which he himself did not control. Christmas is the beginning of the man who, like us, would have to die in an act that is the most profound act of his faith and obedience.

When, full of faith, we stand before the crib of the newly born child, we must see that here begins the downfall that is called death and that alone saves us, because its emptiness is filled with the nameless incomprehensibility of God. That incomprehensibility alone answers all the questions that come up in our life in the guise of thousands of partial questions. It answers them because it transcends them. Of course, we are speaking here of death as it is saved by God, filled with God, of death that for us means the end of our existence and for God means God's dawning in what we call resurrection. Christmas is the start of this redeemed death, and it can really be understood only from this point of view.

The light of Christmas and the song of the angels, as they praise God and announce to human beings their ultimate reconciliation through the grace of God, must fall into the abyss of death. Otherwise they are neither seen nor heard. Christmas is not a cheerful feast, to make us forget for a while the mystery of our destiny. It should be celebrated where we are living, in the looming shadow of our death, because the birth of Jesus was the beginning of his death.

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THE CENTRAL DIFFICULTY

We must now consider the principal difficulty that we meet when we celebrate Christmas, a difficulty that we meet even if, from lack of interest, indifference, or boredom, we do not simply capitulate to what has become routine. This general difficulty is rather complex. It has two main aspects: the remoteness in time of the event and its contingent historicity make it difficult for us to understand Christmas as the foundation of the salvation of our whole existence.

[142]

REMOTENESS IN TIME

The remoteness of Christmas in time frightens us; it happened so terribly long ago. Like other events out of a distance past, Christmas too seems to demand too much from us. As human beings we cannot help wondering whether history in general can tell us anything, whether we are people who can still react with grief or pride to any event of our history, whether decisions made by our forebears have the power of binding us, whether we are endowed with a historical, memory.

If we are honest we will have to admit that m the average person today the sense of history is underdeveloped. The knowledge of general immutable laws of nature and the planning for a future that has not yet come to be are the main concern of modern consciousness and produce, forgetting of the past that is often inhuman.

To the extent that people neglect history they become inhuman and disoriented. Their life should be the creative conquest of an unknown future. But the future will always turn out to be the completion of the beginning, the product of a history that started long before the tiny light of our individual consciousness began to shine.

Christmas is a question addressed to us. It asks whether we are persons without a memory, in the proper sense of the word, living only for the everyday bustle of the present and unable to build a future because we have no past, or whether our mind and heart can stand the living tension within ourselves that introduced the past into the present and carries it into an everlasting future. If we find it difficult to celebrate Christmas, the reason might be that, having no history, we have allowed the roots of our existence to die away in whole or in part, the roots that reach back into the past, into the beginning, to find there the fullness of the future. If Christmas is a strain for us, there is no harm in that. It may be the strain that unavoidably accompanies that return into the past which means a true return to being truly human.

A SINGLE EVENT IN HISTORY WITH A UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICANCE?

Next we consider that difficulty of faith in Christmas that is supposed to be the hardest and the most specific. It has been known ever since the [143] time of the Enlightenment and it remains worth considering. Is it possible that a unique event, localized in time and space, would be decisive for the total salvation of the whole person and of all of humanity; that an historical truth would have universal meaning for human existence; that a single point in history would decide the whole of history, a history that we know today is a history of perhaps millions of years? Is it possible that the whole chain of history, which in its origin and in its end is lost in the unknown, would not only be carried by the Lord of history who lives outside of it in eternity, but that it would also be suspended from a single line of the chain?

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For three hundred years theology and philosophy, and secretly even the preaching of the gospel, have struggled with this problem. The faith of Christians may clearly refer to this one event, "Jesus Christ," within time and history, as to the Lord and key of this whole history, and never falter in that respect. But this does not imply that efforts to understand this fact of our faith are finished, or that all Christian theologies have reached the same conclusion. In order better to understand this central difficulty we must go way back and start from the central point of Christology itself.

THE DESCENT OF THE WORD OF GOD INTO THE WORLD

With the amazing boldness of John and of Paul, especially in the letter to the Colossians and in the hymn to Christ in the letter to the Philippians, we can start with the descent of the divine Logos of God into the world. 'And the Word was made flesh." This implies that God has not only created a world distinct from himself, which he encompasses and directs without being affected by it, but that he wishes to communicate himself with his divine splendor, to insinuate himself into the very heart of the world, as its innermost dynamism and definitive goal. Hence we confess that this penetration of God into the world has irrevocably happened in Jesus, with the result that Jesus, as one who was from the start of his existence definitively and irrevocably accepted, is the definitive, historically tangible self-promise of God to his world.

In this way we let God, apparently straight from above, enter the world for its salvation only at the point "Jesus." However, we cannot forget that this apparently unique event, being historical in a historical world, was actually prepared for by a prehistory, and that this history of [144] the world, as a preparation for the arrival of the divine Logos would not really have been his prehistory if it had not been filled and borne by the working of the Holy Spirit of God, who, from the beginning of history, was already the innermost dynamism of the world.

And thus this invasion from above of the self-communicating God into his world may be equally well understood as the irruption of the Holy Spirit of God from the innermost center of history into the tangibility of this history. In this way God confers upon his work, including humanity's free history, definitiveness and irreversibility.

JESUS, THE BEGINNING OF THE REALIZATION OF ALL HUMAN HOPE

The important point in our study of Christmas is the following: when we meet the historical Jesus as the unity of human question and divine answer in his life, death, and resurrection, when we accept this life as the measure and strength of our own life, then we are at a point from which Christmas may be understood. Christmas is the start of that life, the birth that is able to initiate such a life.

What does it properly mean when we say: The eternal Word, in which the eternal God, called the Father, expressed himself from all eternity for himself, while being with himself, has become man, he who is the ground directing everything, positing all things in their diversity and keeping them together, the foundation of this inconceivably immense world of matter, life, and spirit, which we know today is still becoming? Is this God not at once too near and yet too remote from all things, so that we might think of him, almost as in Greek mythology, as if he were someone walking around on the small forlorn planet that we call our earth? We say 'And the Word was made flesh," and we say, "The man Jesus from the start was so radically accepted by God and remained so to the end, that because of him we may also hope to be accepted by God." And, if we understand them well, these two statements say

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the same thing.

In Jesus the human question and God's answer have become one, unconfounded and undivided. In him God and humanity are one without suppressing the other. In Jesus God as the unutterable mystery has totally and irrevocably expressed himself as Word; in him the Word is present as spoken to all of us, as the God of nearness, inexpressible intimacy, and forgiveness.

[145]

THE CHILD – BORN UKE US

So this is how we stand before the crib of Jesus; the stable and the cattle in it do not surprise us. Things still look the same today where we were born, even if it happens in the sterile elegance of a modern obstetrical ward. There, in that crib, someone starts to be a human being. He has not decided to do this; he has not been consulted. His whole existence has been imposed on him with the inexorability of the will of another – of God – so inexorably that every question, every conceivable protest, comes too late.

This child fares like us: it is there without having been consulted. But there is a difference between the child and us. We are tempted to experience this inexorable necessity to *be*, the fact that we cannot step out of our existence, as a stifling constraint, just like the terrible fact that it is impossible for us not to be. Because this child is a true man, indeed the man who, when the time came, went down into the depths of his humanity in a Godforsaken death, this child has undoubtedly also gone through the dreadful experience of being unable not to exist. However (and there he may differ from us, who philistines that we are, never quite know whether, we do not deep down in ourselves hate this necessity) this child accepted this experience as the experience of the effect of love. The inexorability of his being born without being consulted was for him but the blessed inexorability of love, the marvel of being chosen, the obviousness of being, that must answer for itself in the presence of nothingness.

The child possessed this terrible, seemingly destructive knowledge: I am once more encompassed by a love that is a gift and the result of my own free response. I am allowed to be, I want to be, and accept the necessity of my being, as the product of an infinite love that has posited me in a sovereignty that is answerable to none, only in order to give itself boldly away to what it has posited. That is the fundamental act of this child, that he had to carry on throughout his life, until he used it also to illuminate the dark abyss of death.

ACCEPTING OUR EXISTENCE

We are standing before the crib of this child, and we ask ourselves whether we too manage to accept the existence imposed on us. Do we accept it? The fact that we actually exist is not yet a proof that we have [146] really accepted our existence, as it was, as it is, and as it will unexpectedly turn out to be for us. We have certainly not yet accepted it wholeheartedly in all its dimensions. It always remains with us an open question, a question which we do not as a rule even admit: that is, whether we love or hate the one who has imposed our existence on us, whether we lovingly accept that existence as the marvel of love or reject it in secret protest.

The child in the crib had to start his life under Caesar Augustus, at that very moment, no sooner, no later. At that moment the wheel of his time started to turn, the moments started to run, one after the other, each one only once, all of them in an inexorable course that, without stopping, headed for the end of time. In that child, eternity assumed time, for that child and so for the whole world, encompassing it from beginning to end, carrying each one of its

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moments. Otherwise our time would really be what it seems to be to us: a fleeting time, in which moment by moment our life dwindles away. But where through faith, hope, and love our time turns into the time of this child, becomes a continuation of his life in ours, there death has died in our earthly life, and we live the time whose end is the beginning of eternal reality.

We are standing before the crib. There, in that stable, starts the earthly life in which God expressed himself, even though this expression seems to be as frightfully ordinary as in every human life. There, in that stable, starts the self-uttering of God. The stage of this divine drama seems to be pitifully narrow and small, with a few worn props where not much can be shown. The place is narrow and remains narrow, exactly like our existence.

Yet in this child God succeeds in squeezing his infinity into a small existence. That God may be wholly everywhere may seem relatively obvious to a metaphysical mind, but that he might give himself away, with his infinity, to the puny existence that we are is vouched for only by the child in the crib on Christmas day. Our existence may seem to us as narrow as a crib in a stable, tedious, not smelling too good, suffocating. We would hardly have the courage to hope that we would ever get out of it, if God had not entered into this child in this stable, and thus made obsolete the terrible question of how the eternal creature might ever get out of its narrowness.

[147]

SAVED AND LIBERATED BY THE CHILD

We are standing before the crib. The frightful narrowness of our existence may squeeze our heart – so much so that we believe we have lost the breath we need to hope that we might escape. Alas, we are so tired, resigned without admitting it, so that even the word of unending hope seems to make us more irritated and overtaxed. The night seems to become even darker when we begin to speak of the dawning day. Yet we are standing before the crib. It is no easy pretence but – since we ourselves say it with the last strength of our heart – it is the truth, that this child also hopes for us, when our hope seems to die, when we feel that we can only save ourselves by fleeing into the humdrum of everyday where we do not have to believe, hope, and love, and where therefore we do not feel threatened by despair.

But the child has come. And just as we were not asked whether we wanted to exist, neither are we asked whether we want to be saved and liberated. We are saved and liberated by that child. God's grace will undoubtedly induce us to accept this salvation. For this acceptance too, the last action of our life, is one more grace. Paul also said it: God who is faithful has called us, and will bring it about in us.

We are placed before the crib. We will not succeed in running away from it. Christmas has occurred in the night of our existence.

GOD IS NEAR US

Those who in the quiet of peaceful recollection, of docile resignation, in the silent Christmas of their own heart, let the press of things, of people, of desires fall back, which would otherwise obstruct their view of infinity, those who for a while at least extinguish the earthly lights that prevent them from seeing the stars in the sky, only those who, in a silent night of their heart, allow themselves to be called by the ineffable, wordless nearness of God speaking through its own silence, if we have the right ears for it, only they celebrate Christmas as it should be celebrated, if it is not to degenerate into a mere worldly holiday. We should feel as we do on a clear winter night, when we walk under the starry sky: far away the lights of

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human nearness and the security of home are still calling us. But above us stretches the sky, and we feel the silent night, which may at times impress us as uncanny and frightening, like the quiet nearness [148] of the infinite mystery of our existence that is at once sheltering love and wide expanse.

The eternal future has entered our time. Its brightness is still dazzling, so that we believe it to be night. But it is a blessed night, a night that is already warmed and illuminated, a beautiful night, cozy and sheltering, because of the eternal day that it carries in its dark womb. It is silent night, holy night. But it is so for us only if we allow the stillness of that night to enter our inner person, then m our heart too “all is calm “And that is not difficult. For such a loneliness and stillness are not heavy. Its only heaviness is that which belongs to all sublime things that are both simple and great.

Yes, we are lonely. There exists in our heart an inner land, where we are alone, to which nobody finds the way except God. This innermost unreachable chamber in our heart exists. The question is whether we, in a foolishly guilty way, avoid it, because nobody else and nothing of what is familiar to us on earth can enter into it with us. Let us enter there ever so quietly! Let us shut the door behind us! Let us listen to the ineffable melody that fills the silence of that night. Here the silent and lonely soul sings for the God of her heart her finest and most personal song. And she may be sure that God hears it. For this song no longer has to seek the beloved God beyond the stars in that inaccessible light where he dwells and where no one can see him. Because it is Christmas, because the Word was made flesh, God is near, and the faintest word in the quiet chamber of our heart, the word of love, reaches his ear and his heart.

We must be quiet and not fear the night, else we will hear nothing. For the ultimate message is uttered only in the night’s stillness ever since, through the gracious arrival of the Word into the night of our life, Christmas’ silent night, holy night came down among us.

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[149]

13

THE THEOLOGY OF THE RELIGIOUS MEANING OF IMAGES

As I try to write a few things about this topic, I must start by saying that I do not claim to possess the competence that belongs to an expert in the philosophy or history of art, whether sacred or secular. I understand little about these things. I do not even believe that I belong among those who have more than an average background in these fields. In my theological and "philosophical" considerations (if they can be called such) statements will be blended somewhat. I feel entitled to do this because I believe that the "philosophical" statements are either sufficiently supported by the theological assertions or they meaningfully complement them.

CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

I would like first to present a few considerations about the insuperable pluralism in empirical human experience. First, for a Christian anthropology persons are beings of an a posteriori, historical, and sensory experience. This holds also for that dimension of their existence in which they face God in their religion. Until recent years repeated efforts were made to devise a metaphysical anthropology that postulated for human beings a specific source of religious knowledge, which would not depend at all on sensory or historical experience. These efforts derived generally from the conviction that only through such a source of knowledge could religion be possible as a relationship to the absolute and personal God.

[150] We do not have to consider in more detail how this source of knowledge was explained, whether as a mystical experience that is within one's reach, or in the sense of ontologism, or as the operation of a religious organ that is more or less independent of other cognitive powers. Ordinary Christian anthropology is convinced that in human knowledge two levels must be distinguished: sense knowledge, that is, one having a strictly material component, and spiritual conceptual knowledge, that is, one reaching out to being as such. However, against all kinds of ontologism, against all attempts to safeguard religious knowledge by detaching it from other kinds of knowledge, traditional Christian anthropology has always clearly insisted that sense knowledge and spiritual knowledge constitute a unity, that all spiritual knowledge, however sublime it may be, is initiated and filled with content by sense experience. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, emphasizes expressly in his metaphysics of knowledge that even the most spiritual, most "transcendental," most sublime concept can be reached by human beings on this earth only through a "*conversio ad phantasmata*," that is (in Kantian language) that every concept without sense intuition is empty, that is, nonexistent. This statement applies also to religious knowledge. That knowledge too is necessarily reached by an intuition that depends on sensory, and therefore also historical experience.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE – SENSE INTUITION

It is, of course, not our task here to show, against a large segment of modern philosophy, why, even when we admit that metaphysical knowledge depends on sense experience, a real knowledge of God is possible, although this God is infinitely exalted above all that can be grasped with the senses. Although this task may be very difficult, we must presuppose that it

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can be carried out. The only thing that concerns us here is that every religious experience has its origin in sense experience and exists only by referring – ever so implicitly – to some sense intuition. There exist in religious language very concrete concepts, representations, and images, and beside them a language that, as we say, sounds abstract, imageless, purely conceptual. But, in the final analysis, even in the religious domain, concepts and words can only be understood if and insofar as they contain a sensory moment. Once more it is not possible to show here in detail, by means of examples, [151] how such a sensory element is present in all religious operations that contain a conscious component or are simply states of consciousness. The livelier these religious operations are, the clearer is the sensory component. This is evident especially in Catholic piety. Central to it is the preaching of the Word, whose concepts also are always carried by representations that enter into consciousness through sense experience and that are present in the concepts even when, to ordinary people, the latter seem to be wholly abstract and devoid of imagery. Moreover in this piety there are also sacramental signs, bodily attitudes for prayer, pilgrimages, songs, vestments, incense, and a thousand other things, through which human sensory corporality is involved in religious activity.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES INVOLVE THE BODY, REFER TO THE NAMELESS GOD

Meanwhile there will always exist a certain antagonism between this corporality of religious activities and their transcendental reference to the nameless God, whom, as we are told in John 1:18, nobody has ever seen. Catholic doctrine and devotion too speak of a mystical ascent to contemplation, which is experienced as being without images, without object, as being engulfed in the incomprehensibility of God. They emphasize that we will one day contemplate God directly, without the help of any created concepts or images. Nevertheless, by emphasizing the resurrection of the flesh, the lasting incarnation of the eternal Logos, Christianity remains the religion that can conceive of human fulfillment only as the consummation of the whole human being, in which that being, although transformed in a way that we do not understand, reaches its consummation with all the dimensions of its reality in their unity, hence not by shedding some dimensions that would belong to it only in this life. For Christianity, human beings take with them, in their consummation, albeit in a way that we can neither conceive nor imagine, their whole reality, hence also their body, their senses, their history. We must reject the idea stemming from the Enlightenment, according to which the “immortal soul” would already be such that, without a radical transformation but simply by shedding the body as a merely provisional instrument, it might enter the realm of final fulfillment.

[152]

SENSE POWERS – A COMPLEX REALITY

All of this, although indicated very roughly, is here presupposed. What concerns us here, as we continue to reflect on it, is that what Christian philosophical and theological anthropology generally calls corporality, more exactly the human sense level, is a very complex reality. Despite the unity of the human subject it consists truly of many and ultimately incommensurable powers. Let me mention now that it is only when we understand this clearly that we will be able really to understand the meaning of images in religion.

What do we mean when we speak of the plurality of sense experience as ultimately incommensurable? Let us start very simply. Everyone has heard of the five senses. We do not have to examine here whether there really are five senses or more, whether sense perception

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as a whole should be subdivided and arranged in another and better way, how the plurality of sense powers has slowly developed during the evolution of animal life. In any case, there is a plurality of sense experiences. We hear, we see, we touch, we feel the movements of our body from within; we smell, we taste, we feel pain and we experience bodily well-being. We cannot suppress this plurality of sense experiences; we cannot, as we experience them in space and time through our bodily nature, reduce this plurality to a unity. True, we may combine them under the concept and word *sensorium* as the a posteriori power of experiencing things in space and time. We may even abstractly, through concepts, think that there might still exist other such powers, for instance, the power of seeing ultra violet light or others that are supposed to exist in bats, and so on. Biochemistry can certainly discover and describe common features in all these different senses and thus also explain the possibility of a differentiation that happened during evolution.

INCOMMENSURABLE PLURALITY OF SENSE EXPERIENCES

It is undeniable that there exists a plurality of sense experiences that cannot be reduced to each other. Seeing and hearing are not the same. It is true that we can, through our power of abstract concepts, through words and ideas, describe seeing and hearing together in their diversity as well as in their abstract similarity. But from such a description [153] a person who has never seen would understand about seeing about as much as an individual born blind to whom we try to explain what seeing is. The same is true for the other sense experiences. They are in themselves incommensurable with each other; they remain such in the unity of the experiencing subject, even if, as spiritual, that subject can reflect on these experiences with concepts. By mentioning this incommensurability of sense experiences we are not denying the unity of the experiencing subject, through which these sense experiences communicate with each other and thus bring about a unity of this plurality. Nor do we claim that every one of these sense powers and dimensions occupies the same rank and is equally important for the subject.

What is implied in the thesis of an incommensurable plurality of the sense powers and experiences is that, where one is totally (insofar as this is possible at all) self-aware and self-present, all these various sense faculties must enter into action together. In other words, to be completely human, persons must produce a work of art for which all their powers collaborate. This may be beyond their reach. Because of their immersion in time it is possible that they can fully realize themselves, even on the sense level, only partially and in successive attempts. At any rate, every human sense power has an essential importance and cannot be replaced or repressed by another one. We are and we should be persons in whom the many incommensurable dimensions of our *sensorium* enter into activity.

THE EYES OF FAITH – THE ETERNAL LOGOS AS GOD'S ETERNAL IMAGE

What we have said applies also to human sense powers insofar as they are an essential element of the human capacity for religion. For Christianity, as one of the principal religions, this is evident with regard to the word, to hearing. In a positive (but, as we intend to explain it here, not exclusive) sense Luther is right when he says: the ears are the organ of the Christian. Paul is right when he says: faith comes from hearing. But if persons are fully themselves only when all their sense powers work together, if these powers are incommensurable, if the complete person and complete Christian are identical, then Christianity can be present in persons fully and completely only if it has entered them

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through all [154] the gates of their senses, and not merely through their ears, through the word.

It is not true that the divine reality which must penetrate into human beings can enter their existence fully and completely through the single gate of the ears, of hearing. This statement does not imply that all these sensory gates are equally wide and important for God's self-communication to humanity. So we are not rejecting what Luther said or, more importantly, what a lengthy Christian tradition holds, namely, that revelation and God's gracious self-communication happen fundamentally through the word and through the hearing of the message conveyed by words.

However, Christian language speaks also of the eyes of faith, the eternal Logos is conceived not only as God's self-utterance but also as God's eternal image. Eternal happiness is presented primarily as a seeing of the triune God face to face, not as a hearing. So, in principle, we may not deny that sight is a power that cannot be replaced by other sources of experience within human sense faculties, that sight also belongs to the sensory foundation of religious knowledge.

We cannot here, in a philosophical and theological epistemology, explain in more detail how reality perceived by the senses is a starting point and a moment of religious experience and knowledge. That would lead us too far. Therefore what we said above about the function of sight, which can be replaced by no other sensory power, not even by hearing, is at first still a very vague and obscure formal statement, which does not bring us much light. But it might perhaps serve as a basis for a few considerations about religious images, which we will presently submit.

WHY RELIGIOUS IMAGES ARE IMPORTANT IN CHRISTIANITY

Religious images have always had a great importance in Christianity. The production, the appreciation, even the veneration of images is one of the features that distinguish Christianity and its from the piety of the Old Testament, with its prohibition of image and from Islam, hence from the two other great monotheistic world religions. The fact that these two other monotheistic religions reject religious images, at least in principle, is also time and again a new incentive for rejecting religious images in Christianity as well. Well known [155] are the rejection of images in the East, between 730 and 843; a similar Carolingian opposition to images at the end of the eighth century; the rejection of images by Karlstadt, Zwingli and Calvin; and the iconoclasm in Zurich, France, and the Low Countries in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Upon closer examination, the Orthodox and the Roman-Catholic defense of images derives from very different mentalities and arguments. In the East (if we may put it so briefly and simplistically) the veneration of images is supported by the mystical feeling of an "incarnational" identity between the image and its object (Christ, the saints, God). In the West a more rational feeling prevails; images are legitimate in the religious domain. Compared with the importance of the word they are a kind of *biblia pauperum* (poor people's Bible), which makes the story and the doctrine that have been explained more vivid for those who cannot read.

OUR OWN STARTING POINT

These two basic ways of understanding religious images are of course generally combined in practice and in the theory that tries to interpret it. They led to the complicated theories (from

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John Damascene to Thomas Aquinas to Bellarmine) that justified in more detail the veneration and cult of images and that, within the domain of piety too, are still today, even in the Catholic Church, very different in different countries and popular mentalities. I do not have to insist here on these questions, which are generally treated in the theology of the veneration of the saints. I will rather try, by using my own starting point, to submit a few considerations about religious images. At first, no attention will be paid to the distinction between properly religious icons that enjoy a cultic veneration (in places of pilgrimage, etc.) and religious images in general.

THEOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS SEEING

Our starting point leads us to say that because they can be seen religious images have a religious significance that cannot be replaced by the word. Religious images are in principle more than simply a poor people's Bible, a way of illustrating, for pedagogical reasons, the religious [156] realities that can be conveyed wholly to people only through the word. Even though, within a religion based on a historical and social revelation, we must attribute to the word an irreplaceable and fundamental importance, the viewing of images is not a mere illustration of the spoken word, but it has its own religious significance. We may naturally speak of this significance, interpret it, and thus once more explain the image by means of words. Yet these words are no substitute for the viewing in itself and as a religious activity. The fact that theology speaks of this specific and irreplaceable significance of religious viewing not at all or very rarely, and practically only in passing, is not an argument against this assertion. Theology does not say more about religious dance either. In the doctrine of the sacraments, after having spoken abstractly of the sacramental matter, it speaks only of the "form," the word, of the sacrament. And one has the impression that the "matter" of the sacraments (washing, anointing, imposition of hands) is only a more or less arbitrarily prescribed ceremony, which could just as well have been replaced by another.

REACHING GOD WITH THE EARTH

In connection with this basic thesis, if we ask how this irreplaceable function of viewing images is to be conceived in the total religious act, we should first emphasize again that we are speaking here of a fundamental and irreducible moment of the total religious act. Now this moment can be rendered intelligible only by performing it, not by talking about it. Here analogically we may apply the old adage: use images, artists, no words! If this basic thesis is correct, the modern attempts to meditate with images may be recommended, even though, as mentioned above, it remains a difficult question to reconcile contemplation without any object with the significance of meditating with images. This question is connected with a question that refers to Christianity as a whole, which, in its efforts to arrive at the absolute God, intends to take along the earth as a whole, the glorified earth. It is only if we accept this basic thesis that it is possible ultimately to understand the Ignatian method of meditation, for example, in which contemplation has an important role, one which requires frequent practice and in which the "application of the senses" is to be considered not the lowest but a most sublime level of meditation.

[157]

EVENTS OF SALVATION HISTORY MUST ALSO BE CONTEMPLATED

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But once more: how shall we more precisely conceive of the function of seeing, as compared with that of hearing, as an irreplaceable moment in the total religious act? We might start by saying: insofar as religious images represent events of salvation history that may be grasped by the senses, this question presents no special problem. Such images provide the experience of visible historical events. In this way the problem is moved further, transformed into the question how the first historical and visible experience of salvation history could have a religious significance. This is a question that we cannot examine any further. But we can say: one irreplaceable way of getting to know a person is to see and not just to hear that person; a portrait cannot be totally replaced by a biography. The same is true of salvation-historical events. They must also be seen, and seen in an image, if we are not actually present to see them.

VIEWING A PROPERLY RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

But still we have not totally grasped the proper nature of images and of seeing as a properly religious phenomenon. A religious reality is truly such only when it helps us to refer directly to the absolute God. It stands to reason that such a direct reference of an innerworldly reality to the true and sovereign God is conceivable only in connection with what we Christians call grace, whether or not we are aware of this grace when referring to God. We do not have to spend more time on this problem, nor on other presuppositions of an innerworldly reality's mediating function with regard to God.

RELIGIOUS IMAGE – ITS MEDIATING FUNCTION TO THE ABSOLUTE GOD

An important point for us here is the following: if religious images may exist, it must be possible for them to have such a mediating function with regard to the absolute God. Such a function should not belong exclusively to the word. This assumption is implicitly present in our basic thesis, which holds that all peak experiences of every *sense* domain, and [158] not only those of the sense of hearing, may be the basis and element of a religious act. We must grant, of course, that such a function is more immediately and easily understandable in the case of words than in that of images, insofar as words contain essentially a moment of negation, enabling them at once to transcend beyond the finite object toward the absolute God.

At first it may seem as though viewing stops at the finite object which is immediately seen, making it thus impossible to transcend it toward the absolute God. But we may reject this and say: every experience of an object, even though the object is always a single and finite one, is carried by an a priori pre-apprehension of the whole breadth of the formal object of the sense power. It is more than the grasping of the concrete single object that is being known. This is not true for hearing alone. It is not true only for the spirit as such with its unlimited transcendentality. It is true that the senses and the spirit differ from each other by the fact that the latter has an unlimited formal object, an unlimited a priori pre-apprehension, whereas this is not true for the senses. Yet, even so, every act of the sense powers as such implies some experience of transcendence. Thus every time we hear a certain sound we also hear the stillness that surrounds it and constitutes the space in which a single sound may be heard.

SEEING TOO IMPLIES A SENSORY EXPERIENCE OF TRANSCENDENCE

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Such an experience of transcendence, although a limited one, is also necessarily given in the act of seeing. Every time we see an object, we look, as it were, beyond it, into the expanse of all that may be seen. We see something as well determined because, in this seeing, we are also aware of the unseen fullness of what may be seen. We can experience the limits and the proper nature of what we directly see only because our glance goes beyond this limit into the expanse of what might be seen, without being seen. Hence in seeing too, and not only in hearing, there is a kind of sensory experience of transcendence, that serves as foundation and mediation in referring the sense-endowed spiritual subject to God.

[159]

RELIGIOUS IMAGES WITHOUT IMMEDIATE RELIGIOUS THEMES

If this is so it follows, rather surprisingly, that even an image that does not have a specifically religious theme can be a religious image, when viewing it helps to bring about, through a sensory experience of transcendence (if we may call it so), that properly religious experience of transcendence. This consequence, which chooses sides in a strongly disputed question from an angle that is perhaps otherwise not explicitly mentioned, should not surprise the theologian too much. A naive theology will spontaneously think or silently presuppose that only explicitly religious acts (of prayer, of expressed love of God, of explicit observation of a moral norm *as* a command of God) will bring about a salutary relation to God. But, theologically speaking, that is false. Moral acts may be conducive to salvation; by God's grace they may be finalized toward God's immediacy, without any objectively represented or verbalized reference to God. Salutary acts do not always and necessarily have to be accompanied by a "good intention." The totality of a free subject's way of life is always and undeniably a yes or a no to God, even when this subject is not aware of it or does not put it into words. Hence the statement that viewing an image that has no explicitly religious object may be the experience of a freely accepted transcendence toward God, may be a religious act, and that, in this sense, the image may have a religious significance, is not as surprising for the theologian as it may seem at first.

IMAGES THAT POINT TO SALVATION HISTORY

This does not deny the necessity of specifically religious images for Christians. In their piety, Christians have always to keep in mind their faith in a special salvation history, which can be narrated and visualized, as part of the whole of secular history. So they cannot express and visualize their religiosity only by means of abstract paintings without using, for instance, the crucifix and other explicitly religious images. This is especially true for the Church as a community that is constituted by professing the same faith in words used and understood by all its members. It needs images that are basically understood by all and that refer explicitly to the history of salvation that all believe in and confess. On the other hand, as we have said, this does not exclude the possibility of [160] images that may be religious, although their object is not directly and clearly such.

IMAGE AND WORD HAVE COMPLEMENTARY FUNCFIONS

So when we affirm the special and irreplaceable religious significance of images, we do not deny (to say it once again and more explicitly) that images need a verbal explanation, both to

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be recognized as expressly Christian by those who see them, and in order that, as the religious images of a Christian community, they may perform a social function in the Church. There exists naturally no visible reality from which alone its Christian significance might be gathered. That this image of the crucified Jesus Christ refers to the historical savior cannot be gathered just from seeing it, although the religious significance of this image of the crucified Lord is not totally explained by the words used to interpret it. That is why images that serve as Christian images for a community particularly require a verbal explanation. Such an explanation is given also when it is presented with conventional signs and symbols. In this way word and image have complementary functions and work together in constituting the religious act. It is, of course, not possible to expatiate here on this statement by pointing to other sense experiences that could be added to this word-image unity in the religious act. Such are spatial features provided by architecture; experiences of movement provided by liturgical gestures, walking in pilgrimages, or religious dance; olfactory experiences deriving from incense; experiences of touching or of tasting in sacramental activities. All the sense powers may, in their mutually irreducible experiences, and in countless different ways and combinations, enter into the religious act.

THE COLLECTIVE FUNCFION OF THE CULTIC IMAGE

One more remark based on what has been said above must still be added about the properly cultic image, the icon, insofar as it is more than an ordinary religious image with a content taken from salvation history. As a rule, the proper character of a cultic image, in the strict sense, is gathered from the fact that it is actually an object of veneration, and it enjoys some kind of official approbation. Hence the main question [161] for the theological interpretation of the cultic image is how veneration of such a cultic image may be justified and how this veneration should more precisely be interpreted. Is it being paid in some way to the image itself, or does the veneration, as it were, through and beyond the image, aim only at the person who is represented? And is it possible to show that the different interpretations of this veneration of an image do not cancel each other out?

Our previous considerations allow us to say: an image is cultic if the image is always considered religious in the experience of a great number of Christians, and if this collective meaning is known and acknowledged. The cultic image is “venerated” because it has for many people a lasting religious meaning. From this point of view, it is an additional and secondary question whether, and in what sense, this image is “venerated.” In whatever way this veneration may be described more precisely, it is based on the image’s collective function as a religious image, the viewing of which has become an essential element of the religious act. On account of this function such an image may be highly esteemed and put above other religious images. In that sense it may itself be “venerated.” We do not have to insist on the fact that the veneration belongs only to the reality represented by the image.

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[162]

14

ART AGAINST THE HORIZON OF THEOLOGY AND PIETY

We must perhaps first inquire precisely what art is. It is already difficult to decide whether the different arts – sculpture, painting, music, poetry – may really be subsumed under the one concept "art." In connection with our discussion, I would like to defer consideration of the arts that operate with human words. For such *Wortkunst* ("word-art"), as we say in German, is, of its very nature, quite similar to theology, which expresses itself also by means of words. If we consider only those arts that do not use words – architecture, sculpture, painting, music – we may start by saying that all these arts are also ways in which people express themselves, in some way return to themselves. And thus the question arises again whether self-expression in the arts that do not use words is of the same level and importance as in the arts that do use words.

Musicians will certainly claim that their music is not a lower kind of human self-expression, but a special and irreplaceable one, which cannot be replaced even by words and by the arts that use words. The same might be said about painting and sculpture. Standing before a Rembrandt painting, we may, of course, try to translate by means of words what this painting expresses. But even though it is possible to translate from one art into another one, we will eventually conclude that sculpture, painting, and music (let us not speak of architecture, because it is more utilitarian) may be considered autonomous ways of human self-expression that cannot be adequately translated into words.

[163]

ART – ACTIVE ELEMENT OF THEOLOGY

If we admit that it is impossible to reduce all the arts to the art of words, the question comes up: what is the precise relation between theology and *these* arts? Insofar as in all the arts, and in theology as well, persons express themselves, although in different ways, these different arts and theology are mutually related. But the situation is more complicated than it would appear to be. If theology is the conscious self-expression of persons about themselves from the point of view of divine revelation, we might submit the thesis that the most perfect kind of theology would be the one that appropriates these arts as an integral part of itself. We might then argue that the self-expression contained in a Rembrandt painting or in a Bruckner symphony is so strongly inspired and borne by divine revelation, by grace, and by the self-communication of God that it tells us, in a way that cannot be translated adequately in a verbal theology, what persons really are in the sight of God. If, from the start, we do not identify theology with a theology that uses words, but understand it as the total human self-expression, insofar as it is backed up by God's self-communication, religious phenomena in the arts themselves would be constituent elements of an adequate theology.

Practically speaking, this is rarely being done. Yet, when listening to a Bach oratorio, why would we not have the impression that, not only through its text but also through its music, we are in a very special way brought into a relationship with divine revelation about humanity? Why would we not believe that this too is theology? Of course, if we arbitrarily define theology as being identical with the theology that uses words, we cannot say this. But the question comes up then whether, by thus reducing all theology to a theology that uses words, we do not unfairly degrade the dignity and the special nature of these other arts as well as the fact that God uses them for divine purposes.

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A ROAD TO THE ORIGINAL EXPERIENCE

If we come back to the distinction made above, and separate art that uses words from the other arts and think only of lyric, dramatic, and epic art, this kind of art should presumably be characterized, from the theological standpoint, by the fact that in different ways and by what is peculiar to it, it succeeds in making people aware of their original religious experience. When I say for instance, "We must love God," I have [164] said something very profound in a simple statement, but in the shallow dullness of life I have not really brought it home. However, when I read a lyrical poem in the style of John of the Cross or a novel by Julian Green, through which, to be sure, the immediate genuine religious experience cannot be conveyed (because that is quite impossible), but my own religious experience may be evoked, then this religious work of literature has a function which an explicit, purely conceptual and rational theology cannot perform.

There are theologians in the stricter sense – I am thinking of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas with his eucharistic hymns – in whom religious experience and explicit conceptualization are closely connected. But this is rather exceptional and something that is hard to find in modern theology, at the most perhaps in a sermon by Newman. Hans Urs van Balthasar said once that our modern times lack a *kniende Theologie* (a theology on its knees). We might also say that our times also lack a poetic theology. That is a real lack. But we must be prudent. There is also a theology that, holding its breath, as it were, patiently and rightly undertakes long conceptual explorations from which we cannot expect immediate religious or mystical experiences. We have to leave it to individual theologians to decide to what extent they appeal or do not appeal to religious experience in their theology. But we must admit that it is a consequence as well as a defect of a theology that is rationalistic and proceeds only "scientifically" that the poetic touch is lacking. Nowadays we demand from theology something which, although not new, has been neglected during the last few centuries: theology must somehow be "mystagogical," that is, it should not merely speak about objects in abstract concepts, but it must encourage people really to experience that which is expressed in such concepts. To that extent we might understand poetic theology as one method of a mystagogical theology.

DIFFICULTY OF A NEW SYMBOLIZATION

We say generally that a poet speaks in images and metaphors. The possibility of such religious language is ultimately based on the analogy of being, meaning that all realities have an inner connection, refer to each other, are in some way related, and can in the final analysis be understood only when we transcend them, as individual things, in the direction of the whole of reality. This *analogia entis* enables poets to understand a certain human experience as mysteriously pointing to God. They can [165] present human love in its mysteriousness as an analogous reference to God's love. Faithfulness, responsibility, resignation to the mystery of life, et cetera are, even when they are mentioned in a context that is not explicitly religious, references to that of which theology expressly speaks.

I am not certain that there is today so much less Christian religious literature of a poetic or artistic kind. It is possible that the symbols used today by real poets have changed and can therefore not be correctly understood by traditionally pious people, although their authors are basically treating religious topics by means of unfamiliar symbols. This question should be carefully examined.

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The whole of Christian theology should, in the right sense of the word, be "subjective." It cannot speak of objects that are situated beyond the spiritual, personal, free human reality. We cannot make a theological statement about a ladybug. That is why, a priori, no object studied by the positive sciences falls within the domain of theology. So we might say that theology starts only where it becomes really subjective. This does not mean that theology can say anything at all, that it can swear that black is white.

Christian theology must be subjective because it speaks of faith, hope, and love, of our personal relationship to God. It must be subjective because, in the final analysis, it describes and evokes directly or indirectly these personal spiritual relationships of persons with God, because it introduces them mystagogically into those relationships. In other words: theology, even as theology of revelation, is precisely that which transmits God's invitation to human subjectivity. Where theology no longer manages to do that, where, in the wrong sense of the word, theology becomes objective, it is no longer a good theology, but a bad one.

THE ETERNAL IN HISTORICAL PECULIARITY

Analogy makes it possible to understand a given reality as a secret revelation of a higher, different, more comprehensive reality. Whatever is expressed in art is a product of that human transcendentality by which, as spiritual and free beings, we strive for the totality of all reality. It is only because from the start we are beings that transcend every limit, that can never stop, that are always reaching for the incomprehensible mystery; it is only because we are transcendental beings that art and theology can really exist.

[166] Another question is why and how this human transcendence in art is expressed in a certain historical way. Genuine art is the result of a well determined historical event of human transcendentality. That is why art can and must always be historical. There exists a real history of art. Artists do not always say the same thing.

Of their very nature artists are discoverers of a concrete situation in which persons concretely realize their transcendental being in a new way, one that differs from former ways. This does not entail an opposition between historicity and transcendence, but their necessary mutual relationship. Real artists undoubtedly announce what is eternal in truth, love, and eternal yearning. But they are artists and not. concept-mongering rationalists They announce what is eternal m a unique manner, in which their historical peculiarity and their longing for eternity are combined m a unity that constitutes the essence of the work of art. I may understand Dürer's hare as the most concrete aspect of a well-determined insignificant human experience, but when I look at it with the eyes of an artist, I am beholding, if I may say so the infinity and incomprehensibility of God.

THE WHOLE PERSON LISTENS

The difficulty is that the eye as an optical instrument or the ear as an acoustical instrument cannot, as such, perceive God. To claim the opposite would be nonsense. In the Middle Ages the question was raised whether the human senses are used in heaven in the contemplation of God, and the answer was negative. But when something exceptionally intense is seen or heard, is it not possible for the whole person, with all one's powers, to have a very powerful religious experience? In other words, might it happen that, when the whole person is absorbed in seeing or hearing, a religious experience takes place? Let us, for instance, take the German song, "Dear moon, how quietly you glide," a trite song that has nothing to do with religion. They say that the melody of that song is the same as one we used for the

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Tantum Ergo Sacramentum. It follows that an acoustical phenomenon – depending on the human context in which it takes place – may be religious or not. If hearing is not the work of the ears alone, but of the whole person, an acoustical phenomenon is religious or not depending on the disposition and the concrete situation of the person listening. The religious quality of this melody depends simply on this: is the melody evaluated only in [167] an acoustical context, or is the overall human situation also taken into account? In the latter case even acoustics are different – not in themselves, but because of the situation.

The statement "God is everywhere with his grace" does not mean that every reality has the same relation to me or to God. God is not present in the same way in a physico-chemical reaction occurring in my stomach as when I practice faithfulness, love, or responsibility on behalf of others. Likewise, the problem of art with regard to religion is a difficult one. I may say, for instance, that the paintings of Impressionism are not religious because basically they try only to reproduce the color impressions of one's immediate surroundings. If this is their only purpose and result, we will probably have to say that they are not religious art. And we must, without hesitation, say that there may exist art that is not religious. It does not have to be anti-religious. But it moves in a dimension of humanity where the relationship to God is not yet present.

But it is quite another question when I put the painting of an Impressionist of the early twentieth century in a wider context, a more human one, which would also bring up the question of its religiosity. This might allow us to speak of the anonymous piety even of an Impressionistic picture. Especially since a religious painting is not simply identical with one that represents an explicitly religious object.

When I paint the crib with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, using aureoles to show from the outset what is being represented, I have, objectively speaking, a religious picture. It may, in fact, not be very religious, because it is unable to evoke in those who see it a genuine and deep religious reaction. There exists what we call religious *Kitsch*. We might perhaps say that basically the pictures in the nineteenth century of the Holy Family were painted with the best intentions by pious people, but nevertheless, they were not truly religious paintings, because they do not affect us deeply enough to elicit religious feelings. On the other hand, it is quite possible that a Rembrandt painting, which is not intended as religious, moves people so deeply, bringing up the question of life's ultimate meaning, that it is, strictly speaking, a religious painting.

BEING HOLY AND HUMAN

We are touching here a real problem. We might defend the thesis that real saints are those who have developed all their human potentialities. When people are fully attuned to life, have wholly developed their [168] power of seeing and hearing, their experience is at once identical with their religious attitude. One of the reasons why we may say this is that in heaven one is obviously not only very pious but also absolutely human, enjoying the full development of all one's human capabilities. That is one side.

However, if we proceed empirically, we may easily reach an opposite opinion. Are there not people who are really genuine saints, who love God and their neighbor in a radically unselfish way, and who, nevertheless, have hardly developed any artistic capabilities, who in matters of art are real lowbrows, capable only of rudimentary reactions? On the other hand, there are those who have developed an extraordinary artistic sensibility without being saints. We probably have once more to distinguish here between innate and freely accepted religious possibilities.

Thus a case might be made for asserting that Goethe had developed his humanity to such a

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breadth and depth that, if he had started to love God, he would have done it with the whole fullness and intensity of his humanity, therefore in a much greater, wider, freer, more differentiated way than a nice pious saint. Nonetheless, possibly Goethe might, in fact, not have done this, might not have used these possibilities sufficiently to actualize his developed humanity in the service of God, whereas the lesser, more modest possibilities of a nice humble saint may have been better utilized. Here we touch upon the old problem: to what extent does holiness mean psychic health? This too is a difficult question. Wasn't St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, as many Catholic psychotherapists say today, a very neurotic person? Wasn't St. Alphonsus Liguori, the founder of the Redemptorists, in his old age both a real saint and a neurotic one? All these questions might be transposed into the following one: what is the relation between artistic talent and holiness?

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[169]

15

AGAINST THE WITCH HYSTERIA

WHAT CAN FRIEDRICH SPEE TELL US TODAY?

When a modern Jesuit of the older generation considers the life of Friedrich Spee (1591-1635), he may notice how the way a man like Spee lived in the Society of Jesus has survived until today: two years of novitiate, three years of philosophy, a few years of activity in the education of young men, four years of theology, and then (often soon thereafter) tertianship. And then the normal activity, which, then as today, was generally quite diversified: pastoral work, teaching of philosophy and theology, writing, and so on. Thus a Jesuit today (if we overlook the latest changes) could have the impression that, both then and now, life was much the same in the order.

This may give rise to some surprise, to some joy too, that a program of life adopted by an order could be maintained and remain viable for such a long time. One might also wonder whether many of these old customs have not become outdated, or whether many of today's novelties have not been too easily adopted.

But (you will excuse me for saying this) it is a beautiful thing to live centuries later in the same order as a man like Spee, and to notice how great was the basic conception of Ignatius Loyola who, impelled by a mystical experience of God, tried for God's sake to work in the service of others serving and building up the Church, and who was thus capable of transmitting a charism that is still active centuries later.

[170]

IMITATING THE CRUCIFIED ONE: DYING IN ORDER TO LWE

But when a Jesuit of today considers Spee's life, something else occurs to him. Ignatius Loyola wished to see his followers imitate the crucified Jesus. They had to understand that one had to die with Christ in order to live with him, as is written in the Second Letter to Timothy (2:11). That was realized in a frightful way in Spee's life, but it is generally overlooked, when the greatness of this man is praised in the history of humanitarianism and of poetry. The very fact that Spee led the ordinary life of a Jesuit shows his courage in faith and hope, which enabled him to lead with many others a regulated life that was quite dull and ordinary. He was put to all sorts of tasks without being consulted; he lived according to the will of his superiors, in a restless age, in many places, with many occupations, which generally, he did not choose himself. His special difficulties with the order will be mentioned later.

But there was much more. He lived during the fearsome Thirty Years War, amid dreadful epidemics and in immediate contact with the stake at which poor women, after much torture, were burned alive as witches. He was firmly convinced, in mind and heart, that these women were innocent. How bitter a life, yet how ordinary! Moreover, the word of Jesus about the grain of wheat that must die was fulfilled in his life. Many of his hymns passed anonymously into the Church's repertoire. Two of his books came out only after his death. His *Cautio criminalis* had to come out without his name;[1] his moral theology disappeared anonymously

[1] Friedrich Spee von Langenfeld, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1968); idem, *Cautio criminalis oder rechtliches Bedenken wegen der Hexenprozesse* (Munich, 1982).

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into that of his successor H. Busenbaum, whose work reached a couple of hundred editions by the end of the eighteenth century. Spee always had to start all over again and never really saw the full results of his work and of his unselfish service. His death was undoubtedly the completion of an unselfish love for people of all kinds, but to die in a pestilential epidemic is a pitiful thing, when one has to die at the early age of 44.

Nowadays together with Leibniz, Brentano, Ricarda Huch and other important witnesses we sing the praises of Spee. But we should not forget how socially narrow, how ordinary, and how bitter was this man's life. And that is why I believe that this life, almost more through its normalcy than through its grandeur, asks us whether we can cope with our life today; whether (like Spee before the witches' stake) we can believe [171] in God in a time of the Holocaust and still dare to hope for humanity; whether, even amid the constraints of our society and beyond all protests against its inhumanity, we still understand our life as an imitation of the crucified Jesus and feel able to grasp, even now, ultimate freedom in God; whether we can hold out to the end despite our frightful anxiety amid ominous dangers; whether (as Boll says in praise of Spee) although wholly disconsolate, we reject both cheap consolation and despondency.

Even though the blessed ecstasy of the pious child in Spee may seem far away from us, this Christian's brave common sense amid life's bitterness might continue to be a reminder.

A FEARLESS FIGHTER AGAINST THE INHUMANITY OF HIS TIME

When we start to acknowledge and praise Spee's greatness as a poet, this praise is generally introduced with the remark that nowadays we can no longer do much with his spiritual bucolic poetry, with his bridal mysticism and his mystique of the wounds of Jesus, and with his talk about "sweet Jesus." We are even tempted to add that for us such ways of speaking about religion have become utterly insufferable. Now it is quite true that every epoch has a right to its own religiosity and that our piety and that of Spee are not and should not be of the same kind. But, prompted by the peculiar nature of Spee's religious lyricism, if we read it not only as poetry but also as a religious witness, we should also be willing to face the question whether the reason why Spee's piety has become so strange to us that we are unable to share it is because our own piety has become lukewarm. After all, although he enjoyed mystical familiarity with God and Jesus, he was not naive or timid or inclined to flee from reality into sentimentality. Rather, he fought fearlessly against the inhumanity of his time, against stupidity and superstition, against envy and a frightful sadism that was on the rampage at all levels of society. He publicly exposed the untruthfulness and cruelty of the penal system of his time. He visited prisons. He rescued and nursed the wounded, and he shared the death pangs of the poor women who were to be burned alive. For him the experience of God's nearness in ecstatic love was translated into looking for the poor and the sick in the city, buying a basket of white bread for the sick in the hospitals, paying for poor students' schoolbooks.

[172]

OUT OF AN UNCONDITIONAL, WORSHIPFUL LOVE OF GOD

Spee shows us that his spiritual bucolic poetry probably had a different meaning from what we gather today from his verses. He asks us whether our love for neighbor and our commitment to justice in the world are not, despite all our noisy slogans, so pitiful and so prone to drown time and again in our narrowminded selfishness, because we do not love God with our whole heart, as evidenced by the prosaic scantiness of today's piety. According to a

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modern historian of literature, Spee's prose and poetry "combine strength and sweetness, inner musicality and festive exuberance in perfectly constructed writing." These are not only literary qualities in Spee's work that we can still appreciate and enjoy today, they emerge from a most intimate experience of God that enabled him to overcome all anxiety and to enjoy the sweet intimacy of an unconditional worshipful love for God in Jesus Christ. It is a Protestant prejudice that induced Ricarda Huch to believe that the young Spee had entered the cloister so that he would not have to see, the sufferings of so many people. He joined the order so that he might be sent to the missions, where he would certainly have been unable to avoid encountering the world's suffering. Nor did he foster any illusions about it, since in that time missionaries had to envisage the possibility of real martyrdom.

The intimacy of his experience of God and the will to help people bear their sufferings were for him always inseparably united, even as in the gospels the commandment of love for neighbor and of love for God form a unity. That is why the intimacy of his rapturous love for which affects us as truly baroque, should not simply be shrugged off as the style of life of a time that is passé. It should rather make us face the question whether we ourselves really love our neighbor in deed and in truth, or whether we imagine that such an unselfish love of others does not require an ardent love of God.

MASS HYSTERIA – FORMERLY, YESTERDAY, AND TODAY

Spee has been generally admired for the undaunted courage with which, in his *Cautio criminalis*, he spoke up for the victims of witchhunts. He did so with all the sagacity of a mind trained in scholastic philosophy and theology, and also with the full power of a heart that loved others and [173] shared their plight. Even today his *Cautio criminalis* is a work that may still captivate our mind and our heart. It contains maxims that have not yet become self-evident. For instance, Spee wrote: "Christ's command in Matthew chapter 13 said: When there is danger that the wheat may be uprooted, one must not destroy the weeds." Even today this maxim does not appear obvious to us, although it is based on the gospel. Penologists especially might let Spee invite them to have a good look at the way people are punished in prisons, so that they may see what in fact they are sponsoring with the penal norms that are in force.

There is another point, however, where the *Cautio criminalis* challenges us today. True, the frightful mass hysteria of Spee's time and of long thereafter has disappeared. But even if the obsession with witches as it existed then is a thing of the past, it demonstrates that even so-called Christian countries, at all social levels, may become victims of mass hysteria. People might keep a good conscience and defend this hysteria in the name of reason or the gospel, as something that is evident, not subject to discussion, something that only people who arc not quite normal could call into doubt.

Are we so sure that today these kinds of hysteria do not exist among us? Has the mass hysteria of National Socialism disappeared so long ago and so completely into the past that we can now imagine ourselves free of such mass psychoses, which may exist even among intelligent people and popular leaders, without anyone noticing or admitting it? Is the arms race all over the world, at costs that allow millions of people to starve and die, not such a mass psychosis? Should other maxims of certain lifestyles, which present themselves as obvious, not be unmasked by a "political theology" and shown to be norms suggested by mass hysteria? Is it not a fact that in all our present social organizations similar false ideas, considered to be self-evident, are at work, as they were in Spee's time? Do we have enough men and women who, prompted by a sound mind and the selfless love of their heart and guided by the basic truth of the gospel, spot these erroneous ideas, expose and combat them

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with all their strength, even if they are opposed and mocked as naive idealists or cranks, even if people tell them they are choosing pious utopias that a clearheaded realist cannot share? Should we, who cannot at least a priori let false opinions go unnoticed, not try to be more prudent and kinder to contemporary prophets in the style of Spee? Are there not still today church dignitaries who react to warning voices like that of Spee, as they did to Spee, in the frightfully naive conviction that nobody could seriously deny that numerous witches really existed? Do [174] we today have enough courageous people who criticize the false plausibilities with which we live quite comfortably, without wanting to be disturbed?

True, there are quite a few gospel norms that are defended by church authorities against prevailing opinions. We must admit this, although it is sometimes difficult totally to get rid of the suspicion that these Christian norms are so strongly defended by the Church because they are supported by what was plausible in the past. But are there not norms that should be defended against a present lifestyle, considered sanctioned by the past, norms that most church authorities ignore or defend too faintheartedly and too weakly? Should not many *Cautiones criminales* be written against the madness of our times, and for which we wait in vain? Nor would it be a bad idea if such a *Cautio* were written for a change not by the highest authorities, but first by some humble and unimportant priest or lay person, as was done by Spee.

BETWEEN THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE

A Jesuit of today might be allowed to say a few things about Spee's relation to his order. Spee wanted to be a Jesuit, to remain a Jesuit, and he was one until his death. Today too we ought to respect this unconditional decision of this great man, if we want to do him justice. Many peculiarities of his life in the order, which may surprise an outsider, are, viewed from within the order, more or less ordinary harmless events. In an order made up of men, each man has his own ways and convictions, which he cannot simply turn off in community life.

In a religious order, when a man's request to be sent to the missions is turned down, when that man is sent to work in many different places, at many different occupations, when it happens that he is discharged from some function, when he cannot always live in perfect harmony with his superiors, all of this is for a true Jesuit, as Spee was, a matter of course, something that is unavoidable, that he has to expect in the order, even though he does not like it, and with which he tries to cope with common sense. In this respect many things in Spee's life are not surprising for those who are familiar with the way Jesuits live. However, when he spoke out against the witch hysteria, a situation did occur in Spee's life that cannot simply be considered a matter of course for one who lives in a religious order.

[175] Apparently, Spee really wrote the *Cautio criminalis* hoping that it would be read by others and aware that, by so doing, he ran the risk of entering into conflict with his superiors and his vow of obedience. However, if we understand religious obedience correctly, we may not claim that one offends against the spirit of one's order by assuming such a risk

In doing so, one is not looking out for oneself, for one's own opinion, fame, "self-realization," or convenience, but wants to obey the voice of conscience and an unselfish love for neighbor. Jesuit obedience does not at all mean that a Jesuit is forbidden to assume personal responsibility, to take initiatives that have not already been approved from above. The opposite is true; both belong basically to this obedience as understood in this order. Therefore Spee could write his *Cautio criminalis* without a previous order or permission of his superiors.

It is a question for historians whether Spee himself secretly arranged the first and second editions of his *Cautio* in order to bypass the order's censorship or whether he really knew

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nothing about it and the *Cautio* was printed without his knowledge and permission. But even should the first supposition be correct, we must not accuse Spee of having offended against his vow of obedience and the spirit of his order in this particular case. Every moral theologian will admit that, in the concreteness of a human life, situations may occur in which two distinct demands present themselves in such a way that they cannot be satisfied harmoniously at the same time, but that only one or the other can be carried out.

Ignatius Loyola deems it possible that a superior may, in good faith and clear conscience, give a Jesuit an order that the latter cannot, in conscience, not consider a sin, and therefore would refuse to obey. That is why we may admit in principle that Spee might have considered the task of speaking up against the witch hysteria so unconditionally binding on his conscience that an eventual order of his superiors in the opposite sense could not impose any real obligation on him. He would then have had to accept all the consequences of this decision of conscience, consequences which his superiors, on account of their own conscience, deemed necessary. Such bitter situations often occur in human and Christian life. In a religious order, they may occur as a dilemma between a decision of conscience, responsibly taken before God, and the command of a religious superior, even when the latter is fully credited with good will.

God's providence saw to it that in fact Spee did not have to face an ultimate conflict between his legitimate mission and his obedience as a Jesuit. It is useless to rack one's brain about how Spee should or would [176] have acted, if he had been confronted with an absolute dilemma: either to obey his superiors' orders or to give up the *Cautio criminalis* and its publication. I for one consider it a comforting fact that in Spee's case such a clear dilemma was avoided until his death. Indeed his provincial superior in Cologne, Goswin Nickel, who kindly and gently defended Spee against the general of the order at the time, later became general superior himself. Conflicts such as the one Spee confronted may still arise in the Church, even with the best intentions of both parties. This is one more reason why Spee's life could be an important example for priests and lay persons in the Church. His life shows that an artificially contrived harmony among all members of the Church would in fact amount to a graveyard peace, and is by no means an ideal to be sought in all circumstances.

EXAMPLE FOR BOTH HIGH AND LOW

In his life Spee was not only the courageous author of the *Cautio criminalis* and the tender author of poetry, he was an ordinary priest, active in schools, in young people's sodalities, in jails, in village pulpits, a chairs of theology, which in his time did not bestow a special distinction on those who occupied them. Thus Spee is not only a patron and model for courageous critics of the mentality of their time, not only a great figure in German literature, but also a model for the ordinary workers in God's vineyard who, without expecting much gratitude and fame, bear the heat and burden of the day. If the widow's mite in God's poorbox is more highly appreciated than the fat alms of the wealthy, something similar may apply to the everyday work of an average parish priest compared to the spectacular deeds of exalted leaders in the world and in the Church. In a strange way Spee belongs among both the great ones and the little ones in the Church and in the world. He was by nature intent only on the ideal of a good and pious life in his order. But it happened that in that life great possibilities were presented to him and much was expected from him. In the valiant love of his heart he answered the call.

A SAINT?

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Some have wondered why Spee has not been canonized by the Church. As far as we can judge, he would have deserved it, as does also Wilhelm [177] Eberschweiler, who is buried in the same church as Spee and who represents a quite different type of Jesuit. But there is no need for every saintly person to be officially declared holy. We may try to imitate them and pray that they intercede for us before God, even if they are not expressly mentioned in the missal of the Church.

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[179]

PART FOUR

Sacraments

[181]

16

FAITH AND SACRAMENT

When we remember how Paul and, in fact, the whole New Testament emphasize the unique and fundamental importance of faith for our salvation, we may be somewhat surprised that faith and sacrament are mentioned in the same breath. This seems to imply that they are equally important. Faith means our total personal dedication, as free subjects, to God in response to God's self-manifesting and self-communicating revelation. It does not seem possible that, compared with faith, any other reality in our lives could have the same salvific significance.

Indeed Christians are convinced that salvation even without sacraments is possible, whereas no salvation is possible without real faith. And since the Second Vatican Council it is impossible to admit that in many cases a more fundamental moral attitude could replace real theological faith. This position makes it very difficult to find an answer to the question of how a genuine faith in response to a real revelation is possible for the incalculable multitude of people who have not been reached by the historically revealed message of the Old and the New Testament. Compared to faith, sacrament seems to play only a secondary role, if any at all.

On the other hand, Catholic Christianity at least, almost naively, considers it self-evident that infants, when baptized, experience the basic event of salvation. It claims (although this is rightly being called into question today) that children who die unbaptized are not saved but are consigned to limbo. When, on reaching the age of reason, baptized children make a conscious act of faith, this faith is almost considered as just a secondary actualization of the habit of faith received in baptism. Belonging to the Church is considered an effect of baptism alone, so that [182] it is deemed impossible for those who are not baptized to belong to the Church, even when they openly declare that they are convinced of the Christian message. However, as a result of a theology of the catechumenate, the exact limits of the Church have again become somewhat imprecise.

All this goes to show that the real relationship between faith and sacrament is not as clear and obvious as may seem to follow from traditional theology, which tends, somewhat too positively, to juxtapose the different doctrines of the faith. Of course (let me say this at once and in a very imprecise way) behind the difficulty of the relationship between faith and sacrament lurks the difficulty of determining and clearly expressing the exact relationship between existence and essence (in the modern sense of these words), between persons as free subjects and persons as "nature," between persons as unique individuals and persons as generic beings, between persons who cannot adequately objectify their true self-realization and persons who necessarily reach this self-realization as bodily, social, and historical beings, and in history, and in this way alone take full possession of themselves. All these and other dialectical relationships of diversity and mutuality make up the background of the dialectical

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unity and diversity of faith and sacrament. But here we cannot expressly study the background of our topic. We will start immediately from faith and sacrament in order to shed some light on their mutual relationship.

Faith comes from hearing says theology with Paul and with a history of revelation that reaches back into the Old Testament. Faith is the answer to the hearing of God's self-revelation. By starting from this point we might (at least so it seems) make rapid progress in our study. Faith is based on a revelation, which is understood as one that has been spoken in history. In Christianity that revelation, which has been heard in history, is of an eschatological nature, because it is unsurpassable and irreversible, because it is the sovereign and victorious pledge to the world of God's innermost reality.

That is why the word that proclaims the eschatological and, as far as it is concerned, victorious self-promise of God has an exhibitive character, which means that what it says is not merely a word about God, but a word of God who promises himself, hence necessarily it is also a conferring of grace. God speaks and he is heard because, by communicating himself to the messenger and to the hearer, he contributes to this conferring of grace by means of his own reality. Thus the revealed word has an historical and exhibitive character; it produces grace, and [183] in this sense it works "ex opere operato," as a sacrament. That is why a sacrament in the traditional sense is but the most intensive instance of God's revealing word, insofar as it is addressed to individuals, in a peak moment of their life of faith, by the proper and ultimate messenger of this revealed word, that is, by the Church.

Let me mention by the way that, in the final analysis, as we face the historical difficulties of sacramental theology, we will be able to vindicate the traditional and binding doctrine of the nature of the sacraments, of their differentiation and their number, only by using the above starting point. Moreover, and once more by the way, from the exegetical point of view and quite unlike the situation at the time of the Reformation, today the difficulty of vindicating the sacramentality of most sacraments is not greater than it is for baptism and the Lord's Supper, so that ecumenical agreement in the doctrine of sacraments is possibly easier.

In the eschatological stage of our faith it is through the very nature of this faith that the sacramental character of faith itself, hence the sacraments also, may be rendered intelligible. The sacraments are presented as the high points of the history of revelation and of our faith. They are not presented as additions to faith. In this way may our binary title "Faith and Sacrament," be read correctly and it is relatively simple to answer the basic question that we have brought up. There is no need to explain in more detail or more exactly what we have only briefly mentioned.

FAITH AND REVELATION

But we must speak of a difficulty that could be brought up against this basic conception of faith as the foundation of the sacraments. More or less consciously, in many ways, in the most diverse theological contexts, and under the most different labels, this difficulty has always been at work. In the time of the Fathers people had already given thought to the possibility of salvation for pagans, or at least for catechumens. But for all practical purposes, until way into the nineteenth century, even almost up to the Second Vatican Council, the possibility of salvation was said to exist only for those who in some explicit way had entered into contact with the revelation of the Old and the New Testament. Some authors used hypotheses that sounded very mythological; some of them substituted other realities for revelation or for theological faith in revelation; [184] others, with a humanitarian optimism, simply allowed the majority of humankind to reach salvation without any faith at all in revelation.

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Today, after Vatican II, the theological situation in this question has become more difficult. On the other hand, according to the council's decree on the missions, one can no longer admit a possibility of salvation without supernatural faith in revelation in the strict sense of the word. On the other hand, considering the universal optimism of the council about salvation, which does not exclude even guiltless atheists and polytheistic pagans, we must admit that faith in revelation, inspired by grace, is a universal possibility even for those who are not reached by the revelation of the Old and New Testament, as they are understood traditionally as well as in the council's Constitution on Divine Revelation, which, after the so-called primordial revelation, blithely skips a few million years and lets the history of revelation continue with Abraham and Moses.

The following explanation is one to fill this gap. The supernatural grace of salvation that is offered to all (without necessarily becoming conscious or verbalized) provides the spiritual free subject with a new formal object, because through it the subject strives for God's immediacy. This new formal object realizes fundamentally the idea of a genuine personal and free self-revelation of God. And thus the free acceptance by a subjectivity that is aiming for the immediacy of God truly means theological faith in the proper sense of the word. I accept this interpretation, and I do not see it we can defend the doctrine that the true faith is universally, always and everywhere, offered to human beings without it. At the council the magisterium did not have to defend it because it is not its function to construct theological theories. But in theology, when we try to vindicate Christianity, we may not content ourselves with saying simply that God will find some way to lead to a faith in revelation those who are cut off from every historical revelation.

However, if we solve the problem of the universal possibility of faith for all human beings in this or some similar way, we meet the difficulty that claims our attention in this paper. It is possible to render intelligible the universal possibility of faith, and thus the universality of a revelation that reaches all only by approaching the question "transcendentally" (if I may be allowed to use this way of speaking). By claiming that this possibility of faith is already given by the proffer of supernatural salvific grace wherever spirit and freedom exist, we are saying that, through the always offered grace of God, spirit and freedom are being directed toward God's immediacy. If we establish the universal possibility of faith in this [185] way, "transcendentally," by appealing to the grace that is everywhere and always proffered and that, despite its universality, remains gratuitous and freely given, faith seems to be possible. However, both faith and revelation seem to lose their historical and their fully sacramental character. The way we have suggested for defending the universality of faith seems to rob faith of its relation (as explained above) to sacrament (to the sacramentality of the exhibitive word of grace, to the Church as the sacrament of salvation). This is obviously a fundamental problem for Christianity.

HISTORY AND GRACE

Christianity is an historical religion, in which revelation itself (and not only the human theological reflection on it) happens historically. And the same Christianity intends to be the universal religion, destined for all, required for salvation even by those who lived before Christianity started. Christianity wants to be both universal and sacramental, and if we consider these two concepts more attentively and do not indulge in primitive pragmatism, these concepts seem difficult to reconcile. The problem does not consist in the fact that faith is possible even without sacrament in the traditional sense of that word. The fact that faith and the grace of faith may exist, without (collectively or individually) its full historical development in the sacrament of faith, in baptism (and in the other sacraments of the

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Church), is admitted by all and is not a special problem for those who can think of grace as an existential of historical humanity.

But this does not yet explain how this grace (established transcendentally) always and everywhere possesses a sacramental character in the broadest sense of the word, an incarnational character that ultimately refers to the Church. That grace must always and everywhere, at least initially, be historical, incarnational, and sacramental (which does not mean: mediated by a real sacrament of the Church). Are these conditions fulfilled simply by the fact that it is the grace of historical human beings, who mediate their transcendental essence (in the domain of nature or of grace) always and everywhere by means of historical activities, and never without them? It is true that human beings never possess their spiritual nature as intellect and freedom in abstract purity, but only as concrete historical beings. They do not live their transcendentality apart from their history (as in some pure mysticism, for instance), but in and [186] through their history. It is in history and not outside of it that we experience for the first time what spirit and freedom is. This applies also therefore to that transcendental, existential endowment of human beings that we call grace, in which through his self-communication God has become the inner principle of the creature's striving for God's immediacy.

The primordial revelation in paradise seems to be an old mythological idea that we are no longer able to accept. Moreover, in a realistic history of religion, it is difficult to imagine how such a revelation would have been developed and transmitted in later times. However, if we understand the primordial revelation of paradise as the primordial historical mediation of God's self-revelation that is always provided by grace, a historical mediation at the very beginnings, which belongs to the nature of a human being who has received grace (even though, of course, we cannot imagine that mediation and we may think of it as very primitive and barely conscious), then primordial revelation loses its mythological appearance. It becomes self-evident for those who can think that wherever there is spirit and freedom, hence human beings even in their most primitive guise, these beings are already, although quite unconsciously, striving for God's immediacy under the influence of grace, and they have accepted themselves as what they are. This may rightly be called "faith as the acceptance of God's self-revelation" because human spiritual transcendence has been radicalized toward God's immediacy.

GRACE AND REVELATION

Our problem is solved if we accept two things: first, if we construe grace transcendentally as a revelation of God and admit that it is always transmitted to spirit and freedom through historical concreteness. Secondly, if we understand this historical transmission of the grace of revelation to human spirit and freedom as historical revelation. The latter point may sound bold and unusual; it may produce the impression that we downgrade the history of revelation to the level of the general history of freedom that goes on always and everywhere. But in reality, history and the history of revelation are not simply identical, but the history of revelation is coextensive with history as such. This cannot be denied by a Christian who admits that salvation may occur always and everywhere in history and that this salvation must always and everywhere be salvation [187] produced by faith. What we add here to this conviction of Christianity today is only the assertion that the indispensable categorial and historical mediation of the grace of faith may occur everywhere in human life. Hence it occurs where "only" the voice of moral conscience is being heard and where this apparently merely "natural" message is nevertheless the transcendental proffer of grace, the self-revelation of God, thus constituting what we necessarily call the historical revelation of God.

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Theologically speaking we cannot require more.

Whoever, on the one hand, with Vatican II, considers as necessary for salvation a genuine faith in divine revelation, which is more than what the old terminology called natural revelation, and who, on the other hand, says that nevertheless the guiltless atheist finds salvation, cannot demand more for the salvific faith of this guiltless atheist (who remains an atheist) than the grace of a radicalization and orientation of his moral activity toward God's immediacy (which includes God's self-revelation) and the historical mediation of the free acceptance of the subjectivity that has thus been raised by grace. This mediation, despite its seemingly natural character, transforms the moral decision, elevated by grace, into an historical revelation.

This position implies of course that, on account of the unity of human history, every moment in it includes an objective reference to the totality of this history, hence also to its summits, among which belongs that which, in the traditional sense of the word, we call the explicit history of revelation with its highest summit in Jesus Christ. It also implies that it belongs to the nature of freedom to accept, when making absolute decisions, those implications of reality of which we cannot become expressly aware in a free decision. If we accept these presuppositions (and nothing seems to make this absolutely impossible), we may understand all real faith as referring to its origin in the historical event of revelation. This applies also to that grace which we must consider as universally given because of the universal infralapsarian salvific will of God. On this point, we wondered, because of its transcendence, how it was possible to discover in it any incarnational character.

True, every grace that makes for faith and salvation is rooted in human transcendence. But, since that grace is necessarily mediated historically, and because of the unity of human history, in which every moment is related to the whole and influenced by all other moments, we may say that this grace is to a sufficient degree incarnational, historically mediated, and in this sense a sacramental grace. We do not even have to deny the sacramentality of a grace that is not immediately mediated [188] through an historically visible relationship to the revelation of the Old or of the New Testament.

Those who require more than what we considered necessary, but also sufficient, for the sacramental character of all grace that leads to salvation must wonder how they will handle the following dilemma: either one excludes too many human beings from a concrete possibility of salvation, which we believe today to be excluded only by personal guilt and by nothing else (not even by original sin); or one grants to many persons a possibility of salvation that bears no relation to Christian revelation and to God's grace founded on Jesus Christ. It may require some arduous theological thinking to reconcile the universality of Christian salvation with the historicity of revelation and of Christianity. It is only when we succeed in doing this, only when we show that *every* divine grace, in which God communicates himself to humanity, has an inner dynamism pushing it to become historically and irreversibly manifest in Jesus Christ, in the Church, and in the sacraments, that the binary expression "Faith and Sacrament" may be understood as a real unity of two realities that condition and require each other. Only then does the expression "Faith and Sacrament" have a real theological importance.

For today's proclamation of Christian faith it is of decisive importance that the connection among the individual mysteries of the faith be established by theology as accurately as possible and proclaimed in the Christian message. When the realities of faith are merely enumerated one after the other, as so many ideas happening to occur in God's mind, they become hard to believe. That is why we should explain that the one and entire self-communication of God to the one and entire world in its one history itself has a history. God's self-communication has a history not in the sense that this coming of grace into history occurs only here and there amid other natural and secular events, but in the sense that this

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universal and permanent descent of grace into the world has a history, has gradually become manifest, and that it is God's will that in the history of creaturely freedom it may reach its eschatological definitiveness. Where the universal and permanent descent of grace into the world reaches the historical stage of irreversibility, there is the Church, there are the sacraments.

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[189]

17

QUESTIONS ON THE THEOLOGY OF SACRAMENTS

If we wish to understand sacraments, we must first keep in mind that everywhere in human life, and not only in the religious domain, there are gestures that express something, signify something, but, in addition, that also really *bring about* that which they signify. This is not obvious; there are many gestures that do not bring about what they signify. When I telephone to somebody and tell him that we are having a thunderstorm, that storm is not affected at all by my message. But when somebody consciously and spitefully slaps another person in the face, such a slap expresses the offender's contempt and hatred. But the expressions of these feelings sometimes produces an increase of this contempt and hatred in the offender, and it may make them insurmountable. Persons who are in love certainly give each other kisses that are not only an expression of love but also the concrete activation of this love, so that it would not be the same love if it were not expressed in this way.

EXPRESSION AND EFFECT

There are gestures that bring about what they express. If this is true for human life in general, we may apply it to the properly religious domain: God, Jesus, and the Church – the three of them considered, as it were, as *one* acting subject – make a sign or a gesture that expresses not only that the person to whom it is addressed has a loving relationship to God but that also brings about this relationship. There are certainly [190] many such gestures in the religious domain. When a father blesses his child, when a mother traces the sign of the cross on her child's forehead, when somebody kneels or kisses a crucifix, these are all religious gestures and signs of an inner human happening, and to some extent at least they effect that which they express. Where the Church addresses such a gesture to a person, in a solemn and official way, we have to do, in this gesture of the Church, with what we call a sacrament. When the Church admits a baby into the community, when she lets a person share the Lord's Supper, her bond of unity, when during a serious illness she comforts people by imposing her hand, which tells them in a dark hour of their life that, despite all, God is merciful to them – in such gestures decisive situations are marked with holy signs, and such gestures effect what they signify.

DERIVING FROM JESUS

In a long history of reflection on her faith the Church has become aware that she has seven such fundamental gestures for individual Christians, which through God's power effect what they signify. These seven fundamental signs or gestures, possessing this power, are called sacraments. Such a "gesture" will generally consist of an action and the words that go with it. It may also consist only of words. The Church is aware that these gestures and signs have been given to her in virtue of the authority of Jesus.

How can these holy gestures of the Church be traced back to Jesus? That is a rather difficult theological question. It is at once clear from the New Testament that Jesus instituted the Eucharist. And we may refer to Matthew 28, where Jesus gives the command to baptize his followers.) However, we might bring up a difficultly against this point: does this

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injunction to baptize, as mentioned there, really go back to the historical Jesus? The trinitarian formula used in baptism and mentioned in this text cannot so easily be considered as having been used by Jesus.

However, even if we cannot trace the sacraments back to Jesus in this way, by appealing to the words by which he would have instituted them, this does not by any means deny or cast doubt on the real connection between the Church's individual sacraments and Jesus. First, it is not necessary that every single sacrament be traced back to Jesus, in exactly the same way. The Council of Trent teaches explicitly that the individual sacraments differ considerably from one another in their [191] nature and significance. It is also possible to apply this teaching to the way in which the individual sacraments were instituted by Jesus. It is not impossible, it is even probable, when we consider the way in which the sacraments grew in the early Church, that for serious reasons, using the power given to her, the Church, so to speak, divided a sacrament. Thus the early Church was convinced that baptism not only forgave sins, made the person a member of the Church, but also imparted the Holy Spirit in a very special way to the neophyte. It is easy to see how baptism with water and the imparting of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, which immediately followed, have been separated and thus represent two sacraments for the later reflection of the Church.

However, the decisive point in this question of the origin of the sacraments is the following one: he who was crucified and rose from the dead is the last, unsurpassable, definitive, and victorious pledge through which God communicated himself definitively to the world. He is, as we might say in our terminology, the sign of God's grace whereby that which the sign means and intends to say is irrevocably given to the world.

THE PERMANENT ACCEPTANCE

If this permanent and definitive pledge addressed to the whole world and to the whole of human history is really to stay with the world, it can do so only as accepted, therefore as really believed, by persons throughout all times to come. God's pledge to the world, a pledge called Jesus Christ, must be and remain the pledge that is accepted and believed. The permanent presence of this divine pledge in Jesus Christ is called Church, the community of those who believe, who not only accept something that Jesus said but who, with their faith, help to constitute through all times the permanence in the world of the divine pledge in Jesus. We must not hesitate to say this in other words, as the Second Vatican Council did: the Church is the irrevocable sacrament of the salvation of the world that perdures in the world. The Church is the great and unique gesture of God and the accepting gesture of humankind, in which divine love, reconciliation, and the self-communication of God are forever manifested and imparted.

Now when the Church diversifies, as it were, this word which she herself is and utters it in the individual histories of persons at the decisive points of their existence, such a tangible instance of the sacrament that is called Church has, with regard to individuals, the very characteristics [192] that belong to the nature of the Church. It is the active word of the Church, a word which imparts what it says, a word that is infallibly effective by itself. When the Church addresses this word to a certain person, a word in which she, as it were, diversifies and embodies herself; this word must be accepted by the faith of the person who receives it. Failing this, it is and remains inoperative.

This victorious, definitive, irrevocable significance of the Church's word in the sacramental signs is also called the effectiveness of the sacraments of and by themselves: in Latin *opus operatum*. This by no means denies or obscures the fact that what God on his side tells people unconditionally in the word of the Church can reach them only in faith, hope, and

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charity. But it is God's word, and it is either a person's happiness or, if received without faith, their judgment, as Paul expressly says about the Eucharist.

HISTORY IS NOT FINISHED

The way in which the Church promises to individuals her innermost being as the presence of God's victorious grace has itself, in the course of two millennia, had a varied history. The rite of baptism has not always been the same. It is necessarily different for babies and for adults. The way in which the Eucharist was received has changed at different times: in the manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper, in the kind of bread, in the question of whether only the bread or also the chalice would be received by the faithful, in the secondary question of communion received on the tongue or in the hand. The same happened for the other sacraments. The conditions under which the Church allows the word of lasting love between two human beings to have the value of a sacrament have changed and have been changing until the present day. For the most diverse reasons (among them social ones) the frequency of the anointing of the sick has varied considerably at different times. The same is true for confirmation. In the Eastern churches it continues to be conferred immediately after baptism. In the West many years of religious education separate baptism and confirmation.

The sacrament of reconciliation has had an enormously eventful history. And it does not look as if this history has yet reached a praxis that will forever remain unchanged. For many and justified reasons, deriving from the concrete social and historical situation, the indispensable priestly function, which, in the final analysis, is *one* in the Church, had [193] to be divided into different partial functions. Very early the functions of priests, bishops, and deacons had already become different, and accordingly the concrete rites under which the corresponding powers were conferred have been shaped differently. Thus until the pontificate of Pius XII it was not absolutely certain in the West whether the laying on of hands was the decisive rite, or whether the validity of priestly ordination required that the bishop hand over paten and chalice to the candidate for the priesthood. Such developments are not definitively excluded for the future. It is, for instance, quite conceivable that in fact the Church performs a holy rite, hence a gesture of God that confers grace, without knowing expressly and certainly that this is a sacramental rite. In the Middle Ages Saint Thomas said that episcopal consecration was not a sacrament. It was performed at that time almost in the same way as today, but it was not clear to the Church of that period that this gesture carried the dignity of a real sacrament of Jesus Christ. Today, in the Second Vatican Council, the Church has expressly affirmed the sacramentality of episcopal consecration. She has, so to speak, made progress in her reflection.

We might think today that other functions, too, that are entrusted to different people in the Church might share the sacramentality of the transmission of functions in the Church, although the Church is not yet clearly aware of it. I do not believe that it would be heretical to claim that the official, solemn, and permanent appointment of a pastoral assistant might share the sacramentality of the transmission of functions in the Church, since Saint Thomas claimed that this was the case for the function of acolyte in the Church. This is not a terribly important question. But it shows that in the Catholic theology of sacraments all questions have not yet been elucidated. And new questions may come up that have a serious religious significance.

A GREATER LATITUDE

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We already said above that the reception of such a sign and gesture of the Church, which confers what it signifies, is meaningful and morally justified only when it takes place in a way that corresponds to this gesture. The mere receiving of the eucharistic bread by those who do not have the right moral disposition, who routinely accompany the others to the altar, is absurd and immoral. Paul already demanded that those who attend the Lord's Supper first examine themselves to find out whether [194] they have the right disposition and really discern the eucharistic bread from other bread. This requires not only that they have a certain, even if rudimentary, knowledge of the Eucharist; they must also have the right fundamental moral attitude.

As for the so-called "disposition," that is, that which is presupposed in soul and body for the true and fruitful reception of Holy Communion, the Church teaches that those who objectively and subjectively are aware of serious guilt, which they have not yet erased in the sacrament of reconciliation, should receive the Eucharist only after having been sacramentally absolved. This applies to normal situations. Exceptionally, an inner return to God in sincere contrition for sins committed may be sufficient.

However, the question of when and in what circumstances we have to do with objectively and subjectively serious guilt (not yet sacramentally remitted) is a difficult one and not easy to answer. In previous decades average Christians had the impression that, when they missed Sunday Mass out of laziness they had committed a serious sin, which they had to erase through confession before they could receive communion again. Today there may be many good Christians who are convinced that such a missing of Sunday Mass does not constitute before God, at least subjectively, a serious offense that must be blotted out sacramentally before a new reception of communion.

Because these questions cannot clearly be answered by the Church, they leave a very great latitude to individual Christians with regard to the question: may they or may they not allow themselves to receive Holy Communion without previous confession? We cannot deny that during the past few decades certain changes have occurred with respect to these questions. It is praiseworthy and quite unlike the praxis of former times that nowadays an ordinary Christian is convinced that, as a rule, attending the Eucharist implies also that one personally receives communion. However, this also entails the danger that Christians may admit a certain laxity of which we cannot approve.

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[195]

18

BAPTISM AND THE RENEWAL OF BAPTISM

The Church understands baptism as the sacramental entrance into the Church and thus into the fullness of Christian life. That is why we really understand baptism only to the extent that we understand Christianity and the Church. So if we wish to render baptism understandable, we must in fact speak of Christianity and of the Church herself. Since it is, of course, impossible to explain sufficiently, in a short paper, what Christianity means in the Church, what we will say about baptism is necessarily fragmentary, not more than a rather arbitrary selection among things that should be said about baptism.

According to Christian doctrine baptism, as we read in the New Testament, is the sacrament of faith and justification. Hence it imparts that life which God gives us through his self-communication, or indwelling, or sealing with the Holy Spirit, in order to make us capable of eternal life in immediate unity and community with God. So, when we wish to explain baptism, we should in fact speak of God, his eternal life, his self-communication to us through the grace of the Holy Spirit. But that would no longer be the doctrine about one single sacrament or active sign of grace, but the doctrine about Christian humanity in general.

That is why for our considerations we will use another approach, which may help us better and more clearly to handle the main difficulty concerning baptism which today troubles quite a number of people even in the Church. They ask why baptism, and even baptism of infants, exists, when we know, or at least hope, that God leads to eternal salvation every person of good will, hence also non-Christians, “heathens,” and [196] even atheists (if they obey the voice of conscience). Before trying to answer this difficulty, a few preliminary remarks are in order.

DISPOSITION AND GESTURE

Persons are one yet manifold. Their unity is the unity of many things that are distinct but still constitute a unity. These differences condition each other in this unity and neither difference nor unity can reach its own perfection without the other. We have put this very abstractly. But what we mean is universally observable in human life. For example, the love of one person for another, considered as an inner disposition, differs from a glance, a gesture, a caress, and so on. Yet the inner disposition of love can often fully develop only if it is also expressed and “embodied” in such a bodily gesture. The inner solidarity of several people is something in their disposition. Yet it often becomes wholly itself only when these people share a common meal.

In such cases and in countless others there is in people an interior and an exterior. They differ from each other, yet they belong together. The interior reaches its perfection wholly and clearly only when it manifests and embodies itself in the exterior. Occasionally the exterior may deceive (as in a Judas-kiss) when the exterior, which should be actualized and manifested by it, is not really present. But when people perform the exterior action sincerely and readily, that action may bring about the interior disposition. Thus many people have suddenly and intimately understood the meaning of prayer simply by kneeling down. Love itself may increase as innermost reality simply through the fact that one person treats another person with love. We will suppose that these remarks have been understood and accepted. The question remains what they may mean for an understanding of baptism.

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IRREVOCABLE OFFER

Let us quietly and confidently start from this certitude: God loves all human beings, having called them by their name. At the moment of calling them into existence, God has already, in free love, inserted him-self with all his reality in each person as innermost strength and as final end. God offers himself to all persons and to their freedom as their goal and, at the same time, as their innermost strength and their dynamism [197] toward that goal, even though human freedom may reject that offer that is always given and always irrevocable. This is possible because human beings are undeniably spiritual beings, who nevertheless may freely, in an animal way, contradict their inalienable being. Seen from God's side, this ever-present offer of divine life exists, whether we know it or not, because God has willed the whole of humankind for the sake of the Word-made-flesh, because the whole of humanity has been adopted by God in Jesus, in the one who was crucified and raised from among the dead. That is why God's innermost offer of grace, from which no human being is ever excluded, is also essentially "Christian."

Now this innermost presence of grace in each person wants to embody itself in all the dimensions of humanity and to become manifest as a divine and "Christian" reality. It is intended for the individual as irreplaceably individual and as member of the whole of humanity. Of course, this inner presence of grace in persons can also exist without the appropriate outer embodiment and manifestation. Christian faith has always known this: it speaks of baptism of desire as justifying, that is, as endowing persons with divine life, even before they are baptized with water. It speaks of perfect contrition through which persons, even before receiving the sacrament of reconciliation, freely accept the divine life that is always proffered to them.

Yet this does not mean that the embodiment and manifestation of divine grace through the sacrament (baptism or sacrament of reconciliation) is something that is up to individuals. For, of its very nature, this divine life in the grace of the Holy Spirit wants to embody itself, to become visible in the social domain of believers, called the Church. Those who freely and guiltily resist this tendency of divine life to become visible in a bodily and social way not only reject this embodiment as such but also the very offer of grace. It is as though we said in our heart that we love a person with whom we live while refusing to render that person a necessary service through which this inner love should be experienced. Refusing to render the service is tantamount to denying the inner love, even though love and service are not the same thing. This applies also to baptism.

If someone knows nothing about baptism or is unable to receive it, divine life nevertheless lives, in the innermost heart of this person, as proffered or as freely accepted divine life. As accepted, even if not in some expressly conscious way, the person welcomes this divine offer in what we call faith, hope, and love. These virtues may be present, even in a wholly unconscious way, in unselfish acts of love for neighbor [198] and in other decisions through which one gets involved in the divine life.

BODY OF GRACE

However, when people are living in a situation where the bodily and social manifestation of divine life, called baptism, is possible, they cannot say that they desire divine life while rejecting its bodily manifestation. That would be as if someone refused a concrete act of love while, at the same time, affirming one's love. Or, as if a person refused to grow because it is

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said that even as an embryo one is already a human being and, for that reason, the person forgoes further development. Baptism is the concrete becoming-visible of the divine life, insofar as this life is also a Christian and therefore an ecclesial life. Because this embodiment of the divine life is also an ecclesial reality, it is not up to individuals in what way they will shape this bodily expression of divine life. They must shape it in *the way* that is prescribed to them by this ecclesial community. And this way is precisely baptism with water and the invocation of the triune God. When somebody wants to state a juridically effective intention to bequeath an estate to a freely chosen heir, his intention, in order to be effective, must be stated in a will that is valid according to the laws of society. Something similar is true for baptism with water.

We must still give some thought to two questions that follow from what precedes and that present some difficulties. The first question derives from the way in which we have approached the problem: sacramental causality with regard to grace seems to be less intelligible than it would be if we simply thought of the sacramental activity as the cause of grace, without first seeing baptism as manifestation and so as sign of the inner conferring of grace. The second difficulty that we must consider refers to the baptism of children.

ACTION OF GOD HIMSELF

Up to now we have seen baptism as the historical and social manifestation of divine grace, of God's coming into our innermost being and God's offering of self to our freedom as the power of faith, hope, and love directed toward God. Seen in this way baptism seems only to be the disclosure of a reality that is also given without it. However, the doctrine [199] of the Church speaks of an efficient causality of the sacraments, which is also applied to baptism with regard to grace. Can these two statements be reconciled? Or can we say that the character of baptism as a sign disclosing grace on the one hand and the efficient causality of baptism on the other mutually condition each other, so that we may affirm baptism as the cause of grace *because* it is the sign of grace? It stands to reason that, if we are to speak this way, we cannot make use of an arbitrary concept of cause, but we must have a correct and meaningful notion of the causality that is at work here. Even traditional textbook theology draws our attention to this point when it states that in baptism God is the real and the only creative cause of divine grace, that baptism may be conceived only as an "instrumental cause." Theologians offer the most diverse theories to explain this instrumental causality of the sacraments. One cannot reject a priori our approach to an understanding of baptism, which started from the fact that baptism is a sign, for the following reason. When adults are baptized they must, in order to receive the sacrament worthily, bring to baptism faith, hope, and charity. The usual expectation is that this charity is love of God for God's own sake. It must be "perfect love," as distinguished from the love that is implied in "imperfect contrition," that is, contrition caused by fear. When these conditions are fulfilled, the common doctrine of the Church and of theologians holds that these adults come to baptism already "justified"; they have already accepted the divine life offered to them; they are, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, children of God. In such a case at least those who are baptized already possess what baptism is supposed to give them, the grace of justification.

Theologians try to avoid this difficulty by saying that the baptism of persons who are already justified causes an increase of this grace of justification and gives them besides something which they do not yet possess, namely, the "baptismal character" and social and juridical incorporation in the visible Church. This explanation seems to be rather artificial, but we cannot insist on this point.

In order to proceed, let us start from a consideration that was presented at the beginning.

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What happens when someone sincerely loves another person and, although for one reason or another he or she may not find it easy, addresses the decisive word of love to this other person? This word is a declaration and a decision about one's love. Yet this love is realized in its full intensity and definitiveness *through* this word; the love would not be the same if it did not express itself in its disclosure and so translate *itself* into reality. To that extent we may consider this [200] word, the sign of this love, as being also its cause, because this love renders itself real through the disclosure that is, at the same time, distinct from it.

Let us apply this to the baptism of those who are already justified. They bring to their baptism the grace of God that has already freely been accepted. But through the ceremony of baptism this very grace wants to make itself visible historically (in time and space, in the body) and socially (in the Church). And by becoming visible in this way it becomes present also in the bodily and social dimensions of the baptized person. Baptism is an effect of grace in such a way that through it this grace itself assumes full reality. And to that extent baptism is also the cause of grace. (The explanation mentioned above, is correct in itself: that baptism "increases sanctifying grace" in the person who is already justified before being baptized. Only it understands this "increase" almost as a quantitative addition, not as a self-realization of the same grace that is fully realized on account of the sacramental sign.) When we look at it this way, we understand what we mean when we say that the sacrament, *as* sign of grace, is the cause of grace. If we understand things correctly, sacramental sign and sacramental cause do not occur next to each other, but in each other.

THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

Finally we must present a few considerations about the baptism of children, which for so many centuries was taken for granted in the Church. Today it has again come under attack because (as some say) there is no mention of it in the New Testament and it contradicts the personal character of becoming a Christian. The Church nevertheless clings inexorably to the fundamental correctness and meaningfulness of the baptism of children, although we may not affirm with the same assurance the obligation of baptizing children.

Why is the baptism of children meaningful? Why should it not be rejected by parents who say that becoming a Christian and a member of the Church should be left to the free decision of the child, that the child should therefore not be baptized before it is of age? First, that which baptism reveals visibly and socially is not something optional, something about which people may decide as they please. For God's love, through which God becomes the innermost dynamism of human beings [201] and of their history, is irrevocably and always prior to a personal free decision. God asks us whether or not we are willing to accept the challenging love of God, whether it is to turn, through our free decision, into our salvation or our judgment. We are necessarily being invited – whatever our answer to the invitation – and baptism discloses this iv-revocable "being-invited" by the holy love of God. When we are born, we may accept or we may hate our existence, but we cannot get rid of it. Human freedom is always and unquestionably a reaction to something that we have not chosen; it is not merely creative in an empty space. So if in baptism that which a human person really is becomes manifest – namely the creature loved by God, destined to receive divine life – then freedom does not suffer any injustice, because, with regard to God and the world, it is always a responsive freedom that never has the first word.

Should someone object that baptism not only manifests the inescapable relationship between human persons and God, but that it also makes them members of a visible Church, something which they ought to be allowed to choose freely, we would answer: in her real nature the Church understands herself as the historical and social manifestation of the fact

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that all persons are called by God. That is why the Church feels that belonging to it is a natural "becoming-visible" of the standing invitation addressed to everyone by God. We may admit, without going into detail, that in earlier times the Church concluded from this fact that the baptized belong in the Church, a conclusion that is questionable. She also concluded that she had the right to use compulsion against baptized people, a right which, as she understands herself, she did not have with regard to the non-baptized. But the Church no longer draws such a conclusion, because she admits that both the baptized and the nonbaptized enjoy the same freedom of conscience. Thus the difficulty deriving from church membership no longer exists. Baptism is the obvious manifestation of the fact that every human being should belong to the Church. As such it is not an anticipation of a decision that depends only on human freedom.

But something else deserves our attention with respect to the baptism of children. In our region of the world it is overlooked because here baptisms of children are frequent and baptisms of adults unusual. If baptism is the effective becoming-visible of God's love for human beings, bestowing upon them not some created good but God's love for human beings, it is of its very nature an invitation to accept this love. That is why we [202] can say that the baptism of children reaches its real meaning and completion when eventually they accept in faith, hope, and love this love of God which is offered to them. The baptism of children reaches its full meaning and purpose only in adults.

The decisive question is not whether, through the love and fidelity of their ordinary Christian life, they accept God's self-donation offered to them when they were children or whether, time and again, explicitly in Christian freedom, they ratify the baptism they received as children. The ultimate and decisive acceptance of baptism in personal freedom takes place throughout the length and breadth of human and Christian life. Yet it is certainly good and helpful to revive explicitly, with faith and confidence, the memory of the baptism received at the start of life.

That which the liturgy presents to each Christian during the Easter Vigil in the renewal of the baptismal vows might also take place independently of the official liturgy in the life of every Christian. They look back upon their life, knowing that from the start they have been accompanied by God's power and love and that, in his providence, God has lovingly disposed that this love should be manifest to them, in a bodily and explicit way, by means of their baptism at the beginning of their life. Christians may time and again render the event of their baptism present and accept it. When we read in 2 Timothy 1:6f., "Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control," all Christians can take this word, which was originally said about the conferring of a church function, and apply it to their own baptism. In it they received the divine Spirit of love and they have the duty to keep this divine fire burning. We should also, in the privacy of our room, renew our baptismal vows.

RENEWAL OF BAPTISM

To help us understand what is meant by renewal of baptism, we should first remember that a Christian's life of grace is a real life. It develops, grows, and increases during a life lived in free Christian responsibility. There is a life and expansion of grace wherever people freely direct their life toward God, hence also in the seeming banality of everyday life. Now this growing and maturing life is, of course, the life and growth of [203] the grace that is received with sacramental tangibility in baptism. So it is a life and increase and ripening of baptismal grace. When we are honest, when we work hard and unselfishly in the service of our

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neighbor, when we are courageous and control our moods, when we remain cheerful, even when it is far from easy, but especially when we make the great and heavy decisions of life in a Christian way, we also come nearer to God (even though we do not always explicitly think of God), and the grace of our baptism keeps growing. In order to avoid expressions that are too simplistic and quantitative, we might better say: baptismal grace is more and more assimilated, becomes more deeply rooted in the center of a human existence.

All of this is properly already a renewal of baptism, even when we do not expressly think of the fact that we are baptized Christians; baptismal grace lives and grows in the whole length and breadth of Christian life. Yet in daily life we might also once in a while tell ourselves explicitly, "You have been baptized. The Holy Spirit lives and wants to operate in the innermost core of your being. God has called you by your name, sanctifying and divinizing you. God wishes this divine life to grow strong in your life, all the way down to the smallest details. It is not enough for you to be sealed with the Holy Spirit; you must also bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, which according to Paul are love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, fidelity, meekness and self-control." When we try in this way explicitly to remember our baptismal grace and expressly urge ourselves to live out of its spirit and power, we explicitly renew our baptism. If we seriously mean it and we honestly try to do what we prompt ourselves to do, baptismal grace really increases, it acquires increasing influence in our life, and we become what we were in the seed planted at baptism: Christians.

The words "renewal of baptism" should also remind us of the renewal of baptism that is celebrated in common by a Christian community in liturgical solemnity during the Easter Vigil. Over and beyond what was mentioned above, such a feast can call our attention to two main points: in such a renewal of baptism we also renew our rejection of the dark powers of evil that are always trying to take over our life. We are reminded therefore that a renewal of baptism, whether or not it is made explicitly in everyday life, also has to include the fight against evil in and around ourselves, in individual life and in society. We are also reminded that the grace of our baptism can stay alive and active in us only if we are always ready to deny ourselves certain pleasures, if we have the courage to say a Christian no. The renewal of baptism in a Christian community [204] reminds us also that the life and growth of baptismal grace is not an individualistic event, but that we can ultimately bring our Christian existence to maturity only in common prayer, love, and solidarity in grace, even as the different members of a body or the branches of a vine can reach their full development only in union with the whole of which they are a member or a branch.

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19

THE STATUS OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Recently a new development has occurred in the sacrament of reconciliation that deserves to be examined.[1] For many centuries (since the early Middle Ages) the practice of this sacrament had hardly changed. Catholics had the impression that they were obliged to confess their sins at least once a year to their parish priest. And besides this the so-called confession of devotion was taken for granted by pious Catholics, who confessed minor sins in the sacrament of reconciliation more than once a year, or even as often as they received Holy Communion.

Today the sacrament of reconciliation is going through a critical stage. To put it in a few words, people go less frequently to confession, in many cases the sacrament is not received at all by Catholics who consider themselves devout Christians and who most likely receive Holy Communion every time they attend Mass. We wish to give some thought to the way one might pass judgment on such a crisis.

It is, of course, not true that every new development in the Church must be evaluated positively. There are undoubtedly developments of longer or shorter duration that are less desirable, that might even have to be resisted and suppressed. Because such a thing is quite possible in the Church, the question arises how the present state of the sacrament of reconciliation should be evaluated. This question must be asked, but the answer is not immediately clear. To answer it, we must first say something about another question, namely, what obligation divine law [206] imposes and does not impose on Christians with regard to individual sacramental confession.

CONFESSION AND SERIOUS SIN

The answer to the question about the obligation of divine law is that Catholics are obliged to receive the sacrament of reconciliation if, and only if, they have committed a sin that is subjectively and objectively grave. We will not inquire here how quickly they have to fulfill this obligation. This may be considered a secondary question, which we do not have to take up here. Actually this question has been answered by a commandment of the Church issued by the Fourth Lateran Council, which obliges a Catholic who has committed a sin that is objectively and subjectively grave to fulfill this obligation of the divine law within a year.

But we have to give some more attention to the general principle that we have mentioned above. According to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, it is difficult to question the obligation of Catholics who have committed a serious sin to erase their guilt by receiving the sacrament of reconciliation in individual confession, although even here a few theologians would have questions to ask. In such a case, neither purely subjective contrition with a private prayer for forgiveness nor a so-called penitential service is sufficient. Let us then take as our starting point that in such a case there exists the obligation of an “auricular” confession, an obligation imposed by divine law, which follows both from the nature of a person’s relation to the Church and from the nature of the Church herself and of the sacrament of reconciliation within the Church. Hence it is not within the Church’s power to

[1] On this see also K. Rahner, “Vom Geheimnis menschlicher Schuld und göttlicher Vergebung,” in *Geist und Leben* 55 (1982): 39-54.

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abolish this obligation.

However, with such a principle the concrete practical question facing us is not yet answered. For when we admit this principle and want to translate it into practice, the question unavoidably arises about when such an objectively and subjectively grave sin exists. It is obvious that there are sins which do not belong to this category, which therefore a Christian does not have to confess. In catechism jargon we usually call them venial sins, as opposed to so-called grave or mortal sins. In other words, the question comes up now how to distinguish these two kinds of sins, which are essentially different. We are speaking not only of the *objective* difference between a grave and a venial sin, for instance, the objective difference between a murder and a voluntary inattention or distraction during prayer, or a voluntary but slight unkindness with regard to another person.

That there exists such an objective difference is a doctrine of the Church, which was clearly stated by the Council of Trent. But when we speak of an obligation to confess, we have to consider not only an objective distinction between grave and venial sins (only the former having to be confessed) but also the question of the person's subjective guilt. Certainly a person may violate an obligation that is, of its very nature, objectively grave in such a way that in God's eyes this person is not really guilty. It is wrong to poison somebody. But if, through some negligence, a pharmacist makes a mistake in preparing a prescription, and the client dies as a result, we may speak of an objectively grave offense. Yet subjectively, the error does not in the proper sense render the pharmacist absolutely guilty before God, that between God and this person there would occur an absolute, albeit remediable, separation.

So this principle, that we must have grave sins forgiven by means of an individual sacramental confession, must be understood for sins that are both objectively *and* subjectively grave. In the case of a sin that is objectively grave, but not really experienced as such by the person in question, there is, according to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, no absolute duty, obliging under pain of another grave sin, to make use of individual sacramental confession.

SUBJECTIVELY AND OBJECTIVELY GRAVE SIN

For many centuries – at least from the early Middle Ages until the present time – religious education in the Church more or less neglected this fundamental distinction between a sin that is both subjectively and objectively grave and one that is grave *only* objectively speaking. Ordinary Catholics in the sacramental confession that they made at least once a year, or even more often, simply confessed whatever the usual moral teaching called objectively grave. Not much thought had been given to the question whether the traditional evaluation of a sin by moral theologians was truly certain, or only a more or less reasonable but not absolutely certain opinion of theologians.

The obligation of Catholics, if not legitimately prevented, to attend Sunday Mass was called a grave obligation by theologians. Whoever did not fulfil it had committed a grave sin. Not much attention has been paid to the fact that in many cases the question came up whether an objective [208] transgression of this commandment of the Church was also subjectively a grave sin. Catholics simply confessed: "I have missed Sunday Mass so many times, although I would have been able to attend it, since I was not sick or in some other way legitimately prevented." And they have considered this the concrete performance of their obligation to confess serious sins.

Quite recently, for a number of reasons, there has been much discussion about what constitutes not only objectively serious sin but also one that is subjectively serious as well. First, even moral theologians now admit that, in a great number of cases, notwithstanding

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traditional moral teaching, things that were formerly considered to be serious obligations or objectively grave sins are really not such. It is difficult to affirm today that every voluntary omission of a single Sunday Mass plunges Catholics into the same utter enmity with God that they would have incurred if they had treacherously murdered another person.

When we speak of sin today, we will make more distinctions and, in many cases, be more lenient with regard to *objective* gravity. We will also rightly and without any moral laxity say that, in many cases, there is no subjectively grave guilt. Many people do not in fact possess that power of moral discernment by which every objectively serious conflict with the divine will is felt to be so grave that they tell themselves: "If I do this anyway I say a really radical no to God and to God's will."

We know more clearly today than ever before that a great number of people have little power of discernment with regard to the urgency of a moral duty. That ability is often weaker than would be desirable. But it is weak. We know from modern psychology how often we may admit a lower degree of responsibility, not only in criminal cases but also in everyday life. Moreover, we also have the impression, rightly, that people who are poor, weak, living in a difficult environment will not so easily and so often enter into such a conflict with the divine will that this conflict (if not settled through contrition) would have to be punished with eternal damnation by God's holy justice. We may even – and once more not without good reason – be of the opinion that a really subjectively serious sin, one that deserves eternal damnation, is not something that will occur very often and very easily in the life of a decent Christian. In this respect we are more optimistic, and why would we not have the right to be?

We do not have too high an opinion of the moral quality of the average Christian. We know that they are weak and strongly influenced by a public opinion that may be very un-Christian. Because of their background, [209] their lack of education, and the ups and downs of life, they may have a relatively obtuse and primitive moral sense. We cannot be very enthusiastic about the moral standards of most people today.

But at the same time, as Christians, we cannot rightly claim that people today are, as a rule, so wicked in the very core of their free will, that they address an absolute no to God, which is but the reverse side of eternal perdition. Basically we are more optimistic than Saint Augustine, who considered humanity *massa damnata* out of which only a few were saved through the exceptional grace of God.

DECREASE IN THE FREQUENCY OF CONFESSION

However, while on the question of the existence of subjectively grave guilt we take a more cautious position than formerly, and while we have a right to have an optimistic opinion of human beings in spite of their primitive moral sense, the question of when and how often a Catholic is strictly obliged to receive the sacrament of reconciliation is much more difficult. In its pastoral activity the Church has not tried very hard to make the faithful aware of the difference between objectively grave and subjectively grave guilt, nor has it elaborated this doctrine. But according to the Church's official teaching it is undoubtedly true that only when the faithful have a sufficient moral (albeit not absolute) certitude that their sin is also subjectively grave are they obliged by divine law to go to confession. And if today, as explained above, we judge for good reasons that subjectively grave sins do not occur often or naturally in the life of an ordinary Christian, we have a right to say that the existence of a divine command to receive the sacrament of reconciliation does not occur as frequently as the formal pastoral doctrine practically and tacitly assumed.

We might, of course, say much more about what I explained above. We might speak of the problem of the difference between venial and grave sin, a question that is not as simple as I

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have presented it above and as it is also assumed to be in our ordinary moral theology. We might inquire how, in the practice of Christian life, we might, with a certain moral certitude, reach a reasonable conclusion that in this case we have to do only with a subjectively venial sin, and in another case with a subjectively grave sin, and so on.

But here and now we cannot further discuss all these very important questions. We can only observe that, if we interpret more accurately [210] the obligation to confess, we will find it not so strange and inconsistent that people go less frequently to confession. Is this decline in the frequency of confession desirable or deplorable? Should it be stopped and reversed by means of prudent pastoral education? This is another question, about which we will have to say something later on. However, should someone ask whether the decreasing number of confessions is a clear proof that a great number of Catholics ignore the obligation to go to confession when they have committed a subjectively serious sin, we would answer this question negatively. The purely numerical decrease in the number of confessions does not allow us to conclude with certitude that today's Catholics transgress an important divine command. This might be said only if, on the one hand, people rarely went to confession and, on the other hand, if really subjectively grave sins occurred not rarely, but frequently. But since the latter statement cannot be made with certainty, and since we may certainly hope that such sins which render human beings worthy of eternal damnation do not, at least in a normal Christian life, occur frequently, or even at all, we may not, from the lower frequency of confessions, conclude with certainty that Catholics do not in fact comply with an obligation to confess that is objectively binding for them.

True, there are also Catholics who infringe such an obligation, while committing really serious sins, sins that are both objectively and subjectively grave. When a mother, who might very well have another child, who economically and personally would be quite capable of it, who is not living in cramped external conditions, but who merely out of laziness or for other shabby reasons, accepts an abortion, there is a real possibility that we are dealing not only with an objectively but also with a subjectively serious transgression of the fifth commandment.

But even if this is granted, it is not yet certain that subjectively serious guilt occurs so frequently in the life of the ordinary Christian that we may conclude, because of the infringement of the obligation to confess, that there exists a frightful and massive dechristianization. The praxis of the Church in pastoral activity, in sermons, in promoting the use of the confessional, and in catechetical instruction in the schools should not try to bring back a more frequent use of the sacrament by using false and invalid arguments, or by concealing principles that apply objectively in this matter and that we have mentioned above. Even a very devout Christian, on the authority of God's command, might say even at Easter: "I am not going to confession, and I am not thereby infringing the Church's commandment, because thanks to God's grace I know [211] that I am not guilty of any subjectively grave sin; therefore even at Easter there is no obligation for me to receive this sacrament."

I used to know a pious old lady who, possibly on account of a strange set of psychological reasons, was simply unable to enter the confessional and there to whisper something in the priest's ear. And she was a devout, prayerful woman, who would never hurt anybody and who loved God with her whole heart. We should tell her: If you have these subjective inhibitions against confession, you do not have to confess, even at Easter. That is perfectly all right, in full agreement with the doctrine of the Church and her commandments.

However, the considerations outlined above do not solve the problem. If only that which we have said up to now were important and taken into account, we might say that the present falling off in the frequency of confession is legitimate and nothing but the fulfillment of the divine precept that only really serious sins have to be confessed. We are rightly convinced that such sins are not all too frequent, or at least that there is no proof that they are very

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frequent within the Church. Therefore, we might conclude, if today confessions are so scarce, this is nothing but the obvious application of the dogma which the Church proclaimed at the Council of Trent. However, things are not quite that simple.

CONFESSION – NOT PUT OFF UNTIL DEATH

To proceed further we must first submit a general consideration. There are necessarily in the Church many important things that are not immediately covered by a divine order, by the church institution itself. There are, for example, religious orders in the Church. The fact that a Franciscan, a Jesuit, a Benedictine order, and so on exists may not be considered a divine command strictly obliging on the Church. Yet there must exist in the Church the kind of life that flourishes in religious orders, that is organized and protected by them. We might say that the divine instructions about the Church and its life are, as it were, something like the skeleton of a living organism. Yet much more than bones are needed in the organism. There must be flesh, there must be metabolism, and so on. Something similar is true in the Church. There are religious orders, there are certain devotions, there are certain developments in theology, there are theological schools, there are special ways of leading a Christian life. All of these aspects of Christian life are present in the Church not simply as the result of a divine obligation.

[212] Almost paradoxically we might say: The Church is obliged by God to include realities, activities, signs of life that in themselves are not imposed by God. Whoever would claim that whatever expresses the life of the Church, of Christianity, needs a divine authentication *juris divini* would state something that is absolutely false and would – however strange this may sound – suppress the real life of the Church. In order to be fully alive the Church must include activities and lifestyles that cannot themselves immediately appeal to a divine authorization and that nevertheless belong more or less necessarily to the full life of the Church.

Something similar applies to frequent confession. The first evidence we might bring up is the simple fact noticed even by a few of the church fathers that, if only very serious sins were confessed, this obligation would in fact cancel itself out or be put off until the individual's death. If, for instance, it was certain that all the people waiting at the confessional had committed very grave sins – perjuring themselves, breaking their marriage vows in a really terrible way, and so on – it would be obvious that these people would not be waiting at the confessional, because, in that way they publicly accuse themselves of very grave sins. We cannot expect this from people.

This simple reason would already allow us to say that, if only grave sins were confessed because they have to be confessed, none would be confessed at all. From the pastoral point of view, it is clear that the Church will see to it that the sacrament of reconciliation is received also by those who are not obliged to receive it on account of a really grave sin. The ancient Church in fact experimentally demonstrates this. In the beginning only very grave sins were confessed. The result was that Christians often postponed confession until their deathbed

From the point of view of divine law it would be hard to demonstrate that such a postponement of confession of serious sins until the time of death is explicitly contrary to God's law. But everyone understands that a truly active Christian life, which supposes that one takes sin very seriously and that one is firmly resolved to be at peace with God, would be destroyed more or less by such a practice.

So from this point of view, the Church is right in her desire that the sacrament of reconciliation be used more often than is absolutely commanded. And ancient practice thoroughly convinced her that she may naturally use her powers of forgiving not only for

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grave sins, in the strict sense of the word, but also for other offenses and sins. Jesus' statement in John 20:23, that when the Church forgives sins, she does so before [213] God, does not make any a priori distinction between sins. That is why it would be foolish to claim that the Church can only forgive very serious sins and cannot use for other sins the full power of forgiving given her by Jesus.

Moreover, there are still many other reasons that render frequent confessions of devotion meaningful. We cannot fully present and develop them here, because this would lead us too much into a theology of sin, into a theology of the life of a Christian between grace and sin, into a complete theology of the Church and of her nature as the sacrament of forgiveness in general. That is not possible here. We will only briefly mention a few points.

SACRAMENTAL AND EXISTENTIELL FORGIVENESS

First, for many centuries Christians have had the impression that their sins were more certainly and clearly forgiven when they submitted them to the sacramental judgment of the Church and heard God's forgiving word expressly from the mouth of the Church. If we are honest and use sober theological reflection, this conviction is not so obvious, for it is obviously true that, apart from grave sins, such sins can also be forgiven by God if we are truly sorry for them and refrain from them. Without such an inner disposition, which basically already brings about the forgiveness of such sins, the sacrament of reconciliation too would not have any effect. For those who only admit their imperfections and sins without at the same time being sincerely sorry and resolved to avoid them, sacramental confession is perfectly meaningless and useless. It was obvious to Saint Thomas Aquinas that whoever receives the sacrament of reconciliation must normally come to it in a state of mind that by itself before reception of the sacrament, already brings about the forgiveness of the sins for which one is truly sorry. From this point of view it is not so obvious why ordinary Christians feel that they may have more confidence in the remission of their sins when they receive sacramental absolution. It would be better not to separate this inner – we might say existentiell[2] – process of grace, justification, and forgiveness from the sacramental, ecclesial, bodily signifying process in the sacrament. It stands to reason, for instance, that if unbaptized adults believe, hope, and love before being baptized and turn with an inner heart-felt decision toward [214] the God of love, forgiveness, and grace, they are already justified *before* their baptism. Yet nobody will say: Therefore these adults, who are justified by their subjective acts, should forgo baptism. According to the principle stated above, baptism would be unnecessary, since its purpose is to render persons justified, and since these persons, before their baptism, are already justified, in the state of grace, bound to God in love through grace, and so on. This example, taken from another sacrament, from the most fundamental sacrament, shows that we should not consider the inner process and its outer sacramental embodiment to be two processes lying next to each other without any connection. They must be viewed as an inner unity. The sacramental sign must be the ecclesial incarnation of that which happens in the innermost center of a person's existence.

SACRAMENTAL ACTIVITY AS EMBODIMENT

In other domains too it is true that we almost necessarily translate through bodily expressions the inner sentiments of our heart. We do not simply love each other, we embrace each other,

[2] *Existentiell* might also be rendered "personally felt." –Translator.

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kiss each other, and perhaps caress each other. We do not in inner secret loathing turn away from some outrage, we clench our fists. We do not merely adore God in the innermost core of our heart, we kneel down before God. In short, our innermost religious life in our relation to God spontaneously has the tendency to embody itself.

For the baptized sinner the fullest ecclesial embodiment of our turning away from guilt, of our turning back to God, is the Church's sacrament of reconciliation. There we not only hear mysteriously, intangibly, with the ears of faith, in the core of our heart, God's gentle word of forgiveness, we also hear with our bodily ears: "Your sins are forgiven." In God's place, commissioned by the Church, the priest causes the Church to make perceptible the intimate spiritual process, which – such is the nature of bodily humanity – has a congenital desire to be embodied.

Of course, this embodiment has many different degrees. When I like somebody I may shake hands with him, pat his back, I may perhaps also embrace him. And two people who love each other, who are really in love with each other, as a married couple, will express this innermost communion of their hearts not only by shaking hands or kissing each other, but in a much more intimate way. This embodiment of the most intimate subjective processes runs the whole gamut of intensities. Thus [215] people may really pray in the Lord's prayer, "forgive us our trespasses," while having the genuine and true awareness, based on their faith, that God forgives them their sins. But they may also express this embodiment of their contrition, their hope of forgiveness, and their confidence in God in a much clearer and more solid way, precisely by having recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation. And even from the purely human point of view, independently of the Church's teaching on sacramental activity, such an expression of a human attitude rooted in our bodily nature not only expresses this inner attitude, but reciprocally it strengthens and deepens it.

When, for instance, two persons who love each other in true communion have in some way offended each other, it may happen – as is often the case in everyday life – that this is settled simply by carrying on as before without mentioning it further. Each party thinks, as it were, "Let bygones be bygones, let's forget it." But it may also happen that such an inner readiness to forgive becomes more radical, more genuine, more determined, if they express their forgiveness to each other. Pascal knew that a gesture expressing humility is not only the expression but also the cause of inner humility. There have been many people who have, as it were, finally had the courage to capitulate in love and hope before God only *after* kneeling down and not before.

In other words, the sacramental embodiment of contrition and forgiveness between God and humanity serves not only to express the fact of forgiveness in a human incarnational way, it also has the purpose of arousing that inner attitude of which it is a sign and an expression. This is the remarkable thing in human beings, that the body shapes the soul and the soul shapes the body. The inner and outer life are intimately connected, hence that *mutual* relation between that which in our body expresses our feelings and that which induces them.

SOCIAL DIMENSION OF SIN AND FORGIVENESS

Many more considerations might, of course, be presented, but we cannot take them up here. For instance, the fact that practically, in all minor or major offenses and mistakes, we not only go astray as individuals, but we also assume a social debt. That too, among many other points, should be more carefully considered. Thinking up again a conviction that seemed obvious in the ancient and medieval Church until Luther, the Second Vatican Council taught that ecclesial forgiveness of sins also means our [216] reconciliation with the *Church*. The sinner offends not only God but also, more or less intensely, the Body of Christ. And this

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offense inflicted on the Body of Christ is forgiven when one turns back to God with sorrow. It is therefore natural that this peace with the Church be embodied in and sealed by an act of the Church.

Much more might be said about this question that refers more to the usefulness of confession for one's supernatural growth, but we cannot do so here. It is a fact that most people clearly and deliberately face their sinfulness only when these sins are acknowledged and forgiven in the sacrament of reconciliation. Christians who lead a really Christian life must, of course, attach great importance to the petition for forgiveness of their sins in the Our Father. They should likewise take part in the confession of sins at the beginning of the eucharistic celebration, even though this is not in the strictest sense a sacramental action. They should occasionally attend a penitential service. Every night, in their evening prayers they should ask God's pardon for their sins, and so on. But individual sacramental confession, even though not imposed by divine law, is a concrete action that helps ordinary Christians to live up to this inner disposition which makes them constantly turn away from sin and turn back to God. The more searching examination of conscience, the possibility of making, on the occasion of such a sacramental confession, what the French call a *revision de vie*, all these and many other advantages are given with sacramental confession, advantages that Christian should not scorn and by which they may be induced to make use of sacramental confession when they are not strictly obliged to do so.

FREQUENCY OF CONFESSION

The question of the frequency of confession can probably be answered only on an individual basis. It depends on so many things: on the possibility or the practical impossibility of going frequently to confession, on the individual disposition of each person, and on the kind of life each one has to lead and in which more or less serious and numerous occasions of sin may occur. These and other factors make it difficult to suggest a general norm for the frequency of devotional confession. So we will not try to do it. But we will say that we surely may be excused from sacramental confession if, on looking back over a short span of our life, we can say, with some reason, that nothing has happened of which we might seriously repent.

[217] Of course, we may be sorry for more things than the ordinary Christian might consider. There is unkindness, indifference with regard to one's duties, lack of interest for one's environment, lack of care for one's neighbor, for whom one is perhaps responsible. There are such things that spread over a whole life almost unnoticeably. Thus a serious examination of conscience may make it eventually more possible for us seriously to repent and to change than we would suspect in our everyday unfeeling mood. On the other hand, as we said, nobody should feel obliged or bound to go to confession who can really say: "Here and now I really have nothing to repent. My daily life has proceeded so normally, albeit in a rather bourgeois way, that I cannot feel it right now as the proper object of a sacramental accusation."

When we look at both parts of our reflections a few more remarks seem called for. They are, to my knowledge, rarely mentioned or suggested in usual pastoral practice. If lay people (I am speaking of them here) are inclined to receive the sacrament more frequently, even though they are convinced that, strictly speaking they do not need sacramental absolution, they should make a wise choice of confessor. It stands to reason that, although all elements of a sacramental procedure must be present in every confession – examination of conscience, contrition, confession of sin, absolution – in a confession of devotion the emphasis shifts more to the subjective life of the penitent than is the case in the absolution given for a serious sin. In other words, frequent confession merely out of routine, in which practically nothing

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happens for the subject's inner life, makes no sense as a sacramental activity.

The possibility of taking such a confession of devotion seriously also depends on which confessor one chooses. Ever since the Middle Ages the Church has tried more and more to put a great selection of confessors at the disposal of lay people. While the Fourth Lateran Council still prescribed that the yearly confession be made to the local pastor, the Church in canon law, made it more possible and pastorally feasible to choose a confessor freely. In a confession of devotion as we understand it today, quite correctly to my mind, it is evident that a mere sacramental absolution does not, in this case, make much sense. That is why the inner attitude of the penitent is of decisive importance, and such an attitude may be strongly influenced by a suitable confessor. There have been and there still are, of course, pastors who see in the greatest possible number of absolutions on Saturdays a triumph for their pastoral activity. There used to be Christians, for instance in convents where this was possible, who asked for absolution everyday in the sacrament of reconciliation. [218] Such practices that make no real sense for the life of the soul should be dropped. Ultimately the number of times we receive a sacrament does not matter. And that is why it is also important to choose the right kind of confessor for the correctly understood confession of devotion.

It is really not evident that every priest who has the liturgical and sacramental power of giving absolution is for this reason alone a suitable confessor. We should not exaggerate the effects of a sacrament. I believe that in the pious practice of the last few centuries there have frequently been confessions that were practically invalid. The accusation referred very often to sins which people really, in their heart, did not wish to give up. It followed that there was no real contrition; therefore the absolution was useless and ineffective. This may very often have happened in good faith, yet it is not to be recommended.

A good confessor should occasionally be ready for a serious conversation during confession. He should have an ear for things that have perhaps not been completely stated in the accusation, not in order to discover sins which the penitent would have forgotten or withheld – as happened with Don Bosco – but to discover real difficulties in the penitent's psychic life and to help him or her to the extent of his abilities. The confessor does not have to be a real psychotherapist in the sacrament. He has before him a penitent who is looking for forgiveness from God and the Church, not for psychotherapeutic advice. This may be quite true, yet the priest should not be an absolution-machine, because this makes no sense and is of no use. It contradicts the nature of a sacrament, in which, according to the doctrine of Saint Thomas, the person's inner personal collaboration is an inner element of sacramental activity and not merely a preparation for it. How can one find such a confessor? How should one speak to him in confession so that he may really be of help? The answers to these questions differ according to the penitent's different situations, and we cannot give any precise answers and directives

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[219-221]

VOLUME 23

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AKKR	Archiv für Katholisches Kirchenrecht
ASS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
Am. Eccl. Rev.	American Ecclesiastical Review
Arch T. Gran	Archivo Teologico Granadino
Bijdr.	Bijdragen
Blätter f. d. Philos.	Blätter für die Philosophie
Bull. Thom.	Bulletin Thomiste
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici
Coll. Theol.	Collectanea Theologica
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DAFC	Dictionnaire Apologétique de la Foi Catholique
DDC	Dictionnaire de Droit Canoigue
Denz.	Denzinger-Rahner, Enchiridion Symbolorum (1953)
DS	Denzinger Schönmetzer, Enchiridion Symbolorum
DSAM	Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique
DTC	Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique
D. Th.	Divus Thomas
Estud. Eccl.	Estudios Ecclesiasticos
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
Franz. Stud	Franziskaner Studien
GCS	Griechische Christliche Schrifttsteller
Greg.	Gregorianum
GuL	Geist und Leben
LTK	Lexicn für Theologie und Kirche (2nd ed.)
Mar.	Marianum. Ephemerides Mariologicae
Münch. Theol. Z.	Münchener Theolgische Zeitschrift
NRT	Nouvelle Revue Théologique
PG	Patrologiae graecae, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris 1844-)
Phil. Jahrb. D. Görreges.	Philologisches Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft
PL	Patrologiae latinae, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris 1857-)
RAM	Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique
Rev. Dioc. Nam.	Revue Diocésaine de Namur
Rev M. A. Lat.	Revue du Moyen Age Latin
Rev. Univ. Ottawa	Revue d l'Université d'Ottawa
RGG	Die Religion in Geschicte und Gegenwart
RSPT	Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques
RSR	Recherches de Science Religieuse
RT	Revue Thomiste
Sc. Eccl.	Sciences Ecclésiastiques
Schol.	Scholastik
Stud. Cath	Studia Catholica
Stud. Gen.	Studia Generalia
Theol. Lit. Z.	Theologische Literaturzeitung
Th. Gl.	Theologie und Glaube

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ThPQ	Theologische Praktische Quartalschrift
Th. Rv.	Theologische Revue
TQ	Theologische Quartalschrift
TS	Theological Studies
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
Tüb. Th. Quartalschrift	Tübinge Theologische Quartalschrift
TWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (Kittel)
Wi. Wei.	Wissenschaft und Weisheit
ZKG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte
ZKT	Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie
Z. Phil. Forsch	Zeitschrift der Philosophischen Forschung